



The Gambia

Republic of The Gambia

Africa

Geography

Area 10,689 sq km. A narrow, 400-km-long riverine enclave that virtually divides Senegal's Casamance from the rest of the country.

Population	Ann Gr	Density
2010	1,750,732	2.78%
2020	2,227,413	2.33%
2030	2,736,133	2.00%

Capital Banjul 455,000. **Urbanites** 58.1%. Half the population lives in the greater Banjul area. **Pop under 15 yrs** 42%. **Life expectancy** 55.7 yrs.

Peoples

Over 25 ethnic groups that are very intermingled.

Malinke 42.5%. **Mandinka (Mandingo)** 40.5%.

Atlantic 5.9%. **Serere-Sine** 2.0%; **Balanta** 2.0%; **Manjaco** 1.7%.

Jola 4.7%. Three groups, mostly Jola-Fonyi.

Wolof 12.6%.

Fulani/Fula 17.3%.

Soninke/Serahule 9.9%.

Other sub-Saharan African 10.1%.

Other 1.7%. **Maure** 1.5%.

Literacy 38%. **Official language** English. **Trade languages** Mandinka, Wolof. **All languages** 23.

Indigenous languages 10. **Languages with Scriptures** 2Bi 3NT 7por.

Economy

Subsistence agriculture and dependence on groundnut cultivation, tourism, foreign aid and the "grey economy" over the porous border with Senegal. Remittances from Gambians overseas are a large economic boost. Possible oil and gas reserves.

HDI Rank 168th/182. **Public debt** 114% of GDP. **Income/person** \$497 (1% of USA).

Politics

Independent from Britain in 1965. Senegalese intervention to quell the 1981 coup resulted in abortive efforts to create a Senegambian confederacy, which finally collapsed in 1989. A bloodless coup in 1994 ushered in a military government that in turn became a civilian government through multiparty elections, despite tight state controls over political and media activity.

Religion

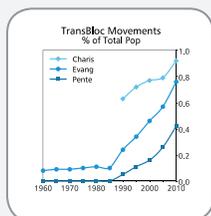
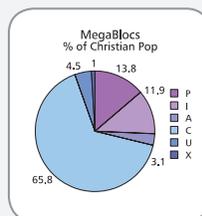
Relative religious freedom, with easy-going tolerance among communities despite the large Muslim majority.

Religions	Pop %	Population	Ann Gr
Muslim	89.49	1,566,730	2.8%
Ethnoreligionist	5.60	98,041	1.4%
Christian	4.48	78,433	3.6%
Baha'i	0.35	6,128	0.1%
Non-religious	0.07	1,226	15.0%
Buddhist	0.01	175	2.8%

Christians	Denoms	Pop %	Affiliates	Ann Gr
Protestant	52	0.58	10,000	4.8%
Independent	15	0.71	13,000	6.2%
Anglican	1	0.13	2,000	4.7%
Catholic	1	2.77	48,000	3.2%
Marginal	1	0.04	1,000	5.9%
Unaffiliated		0.25	4,000	-4.4%

Churches	MegaBloc	Congs	Members	Affiliates
Catholic Church	C	48	24,250	48,500
Anglican Church	A	17	759	2,300
Lutheran churches	P	13	1,000	2,000
Methodist Church	P	5	1,099	2,000
Seventh-day Adventist	P	5	1,180	1,653
Church of Pentecost	I	23	958	1,150
Assemblies of God	P	4	490	980
Winners Chapel	I	3	700	1,000
Deeper Life Church	I	10	300	650
Evang Ch of Gambia	P	9	150	484
Other denominations[57]		206	7,264	12,284
Total Christians[67]		347	38,731	74,056

TransBloc	Pop %	Population	Ann Gr
Evangelicals			
Evangelicals	0.8	13,351	8.9%
Renewalists			
Charismatics	0.9	16,099	6.0%
Pentecostals	0.4	7,350	13.0%



Answers to Prayer

1 **The degree of religious freedom and relatively amicable relationships** between Islam and Christianity in the Gambia are noteworthy. There is greater openness than in most Muslim countries, although much of the freedom may be from a lack of ambition by the Gambian Church to do more direct outreach to Muslims. Even so, pray that the relative harmony and freedom in the religious sphere might enable the good news to impact this nation to a much greater degree.

Challenges for Prayer

1 **Islam is dominant**, but the traditional Gambian expression is a gentler version rather than the more strident edition from Libya and Saudi Arabia seeking to exert influence over the education and economic systems and the political process. Most Christian work and presence have been near the coast, with few involved in reaching out to the Muslim majority, especially those living upriver. Pray for continued ability to minister to all peoples and for Christians to take advantage of the religious freedom to share and demonstrate the gospel to all parts and all peoples of the Gambia.

2 **Missionary work was pioneered** by Anglicans and Methodists and mostly confined to the Aku (Creole-speaking descendants of freed slaves in Banjul). Nominalism is a challenge in most denominations, although the ministries of the above and of the Mennonites have had a valuable impact in development, education and medical work, especially among the Jola and Manjako. Many newer ministries from Nigeria, Sierra Leone, Ghana, Liberia and Cameroon have recently started. These have greatly added to the harvest force and the vitality of church and mission efforts. In all cases, the nominal Christian population receives much more spiritual attention than the unreached Muslim majority. Pray for effective ministry of expatriate Christian groups in demonstrating the good news. Pray also for nominal Christians to discover a genuine life in Jesus.

3 **The Gambian evangelical Church is small**, and committed believers are few. Active Christians are usually overstretched in their ministries; the need is great for discipleship and leadership training. Many pastors work in the Greater Banjul area, but few feel called to go into the hinterland, where there is less development and few amenities; financial support is difficult to maintain for those who are willing. Pray for Gambians to have a vision to reach their own people; pray for wisdom in knowing how to support those who do move into more isolated areas. Pray that the indigenous Church might be set free by the Holy Spirit from the restraints of fear and lack of confidence; pray that Christians might minister powerfully and effectively to their fellow Gambians.

4 **Ministries concentrating on the non-Christian majority are few.** WEC and the ECG Church have planted congregations of believers from Muslim backgrounds. The House of Wisdom specifically trains these MBBs in spiritual development and self-sustainability. Pray for new believers from Muslim backgrounds to become strong in their faith and able to witness to their extended families; pray also for more Gambian Christians to gain a burden for reaching their compatriots with the gospel. Pray that those reaching out already might be wise, effective and fruitful in their labours.

5 **Unreached peoples in the Gambia:**

a) **Mandinka.** Ninety-five percent of all Mandinkas are Muslim, believing in a mixture of Islam and traditional customs. Due to tremendous social and family pressures, few Mandinkas leave Islam. Those who have converted to Christianity are viewed as traitors to their families and their heritage. The entire NT and two-thirds of the OT are available in Roman-scripted Mandinka.

b) **Fulani.** Largely sedentary in the Gambia despite traditional associations with nomadic pastoralism, the Fulani are considered to be custodians of Islam in West Africa. There is some response to Christian witness in the region from the Fula, but their unique culture requires a different expression of church from the sedentary majority.

- c) **Jola.** The majority of Jolas are from an animistic background and are beholden to the spirit powers they revere. Jolas in Gambia are increasingly being Islamized, with a small number of Christians. Only some Scripture portions are available in their language. Pray for more Jolas to come to freedom in Christ, and pray for effectiveness in the medical, translation and church planting ministries in their areas (**WEC, IMB**).
- d) **Wolof, Serahule, and Serer** – all more prevalent in neighbouring Senegal, all very much unevangelized and with little outreach or mission directed toward them. There are probably fewer than 10 known Christians among the 180,000 Serahule of Gambia. Medical work has opened doors in some villages. Pray for more groups of believers to be formed who can withstand the pressure from family and society to return to Islam.

6 **Young people** have flocked to Banjul and are increasingly subject to Western culture at the expense of their traditional values. Ministries include **GAMFES(IFES)**, with several groups meeting, **SU** and **YFC**. The first **YWAM** DTS took place in 2008. Pray that God would raise up a new generation of Christian young people who will lead their peers into a lifestyle of godliness. Most youth work is in the capital and outlying areas, though **WEC** also has ministry inland.

7 Pray for specialized Christian ministries:

- a) **Prison evangelism** is particularly fruitful. Pray both for conversions and for integration of converts into their communities and churches upon their release.
- b) **Bible translation** continues for Mandinka and Jola Fonyi. None of the indigenous Gambian languages has a full translation of the Bible; pray for an accurate assessment of the needs and for wide distribution of existing portions and NTs. The Mandinka Bible and Jola NT should be ready in 2011.
- c) **The JESUS film** has been shown all over the country in seven languages. Pray for the ongoing dubbing into new languages and the fruitful use of this key resource.
- d) **Christian radio.** Chronological Bible teaching, *The Way of Righteousness*, is recorded in Mandinka, Wolof, Fula, Jola-Fonyi and Hassaniya and is broadcast on national radio. **CMF** has a radio ministry in Manjako focused on evangelism and discipleship. A number of African-originated churches also have radio ministry in English. Pray for more broadcasts in local languages.
- e) **Christian TV programmes.** Abiding Word Ministries, the Gambia Christian Council, the Network of Biblical Storytellers and others have gained wide acceptance for the gospel through their much-appreciated weekly TV programmes. Pray for lasting fruit.
- f) **GRN** offers gospel material on tape in 16 language groups of the Gambia.