



Guinea-Bissau

Republic of Guinea-Bissau

Africa

Geography

Area 36,125 sq km. Coastal state wedged between Senegal and Guinea, including the Bijagos archipelago.

Population	Ann Gr	Density
2010	1,647,380	2.27%
2020	2,064,988	2.24%
2030	2,536,229	2.01%

Capital Bissau 309,000. **Urbanites** 30%. **Population under 15 yrs** 43%. **Life expectancy** 47.5 yrs.

Peoples

Over 27 ethnic groups. Major people clusters: **Atlantic** (17 groups) 53.5%. Balanta 22.9%; Manjaco 11.0%; Papel 8.0%; Mankanya 2.8%; Biafada 2.8%; Bijago 1.9%; Jola/Felupe 1.5%.

Fulbe (2 groups) 21.7%. Fulakunda 16.6%.

Malinke (5 groups) 11.9%. Mandinka 9.9%.

Criolo 11.9%.

Other 1%. Other African groups, European, Arab, Chinese. This number may be much higher.

Literacy 39.6%. **Official language** Portuguese.

National language Portuguese Creole, spoken by as much as half the population. **All languages** 25. **Indigenous languages** 21. **Languages with Scriptures** 5Bi 6NT 5por 7wi.p.

Economy

Little developed in colonial times. Devastated by the long war of independence, by subsequent socialist policies and conflict and by both civil war and clashes with Senegalese Casamance rebels. One of the world's poorest countries, it

relies mainly on cash crops of cashew nuts, but also on fish, hardwood and other agricultural products. Massive foreign debt. It is a major transshipment point of cocaine from Colombia to Europe, a most dangerous development given the gripping poverty, poor enforcement and lucrative nature of the drug trade.

HDI Rank 173rd/182. **Public debt** 327% of GDP. **Income/person** \$264 (1% of USA).

Politics

Independent of Portugal in 1974. One-party revolutionary government until 1994, when multiparty elections took place. In 1998, another uprising led to a civil war, resolved in 2000 with a new government elected. After a bloodless coup in 2004, yet another president was elected in 2005, but he was murdered in 2009 – apparently as a reprisal for the killing of the armed forces leader mere hours before. Subsequent elections were postponed, but results finally saw the new president take office in 2009.

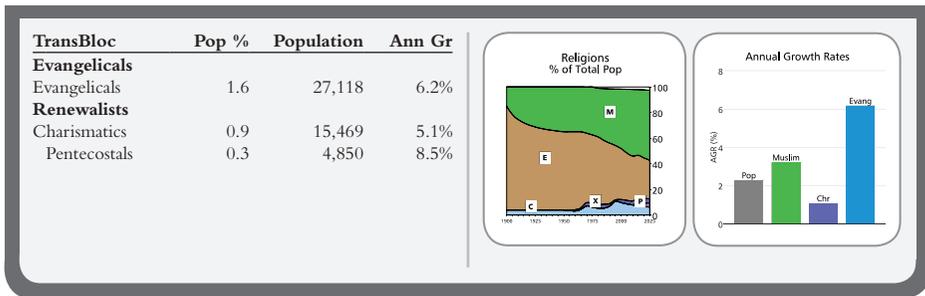
Religion

Under Portuguese rule, the Catholic Church functioned almost as an arm of the colonial government, and evangelicals were forbidden or discriminated against. Since independence, the measure of freedom for Christian activities has steadily increased. Until 1990, only one Protestant mission (WEC) was allowed in the country, but since then, several more have entered. Freedom of religion exists for all groups. Syncretism of Islam and Catholicism with African traditional religions is such that accurate figures are difficult to obtain.

Religions	Pop %	Population	Ann Gr
Muslim	52.05	857,461	3.2%
Ethnoreligionist	35.10	578,230	1.3%
Christian	10.90	179,564	1.1%
Non-religious	1.95	32,124	3.9%

Christians	Denoms	Pop %	Affiliates	Ann Gr
Protestant	5	1.43	24,000	5.6%
Independent	16	0.24	4,000	9.9%
Catholic	1	7.92	130,000	0.4%
Marginal	2	0.07	1,000	2.3%
Unaffiliated		1.24	20,000	-2.8%

Churches	MegaBloc	Congs	Members	Affiliates
Catholic Church	C	63	78,144	130,500
Evang Ch of G-B	P	160	12,500	20,000
Seventh-day Adventist	P	2	1,175	2,350
Church of Pentecost	I	19	868	1,250
Assemblies of God	P	7	258	850
Other denominations[19]		61	1,908	4,333
Total Christians[24]		312	94,853	159,283



Answers to Prayer

1 Praise the Lord for continued receptivity to the gospel and for religious freedom, a contrast to many other countries in the region. Evangelicals assisted with humanitarian needs during the civil war and worked with Catholics and Muslims in the political reconciliation efforts. The Evangelical Church of Guinea-Bissau is therefore viewed with a good deal of respect by the government and has garnered freedom to operate as a result. Pray that the Church might continue to lead in showing practical love and compassion and in encouraging peace and reconciliation.

Challenges for Prayer

1 Poverty, political unrest and violent conflict combine to grind down the population of this land. There is some limited potential in untapped natural resources, but the opportunity for genuine progress and development seems distant. The influence of narcotics shipments has great potential to corrupt police, army and government figures, and enslave otherwise impoverished people. The short but strife-filled political history of Guinea-Bissau points to the need for stability, forgiveness and true peacemakers. Pray that God might raise up righteous leaders to lead their people.

2 Church leadership is solid, mature and indigenous, with increasingly well-organized training programmes for general discipleship and for pastoral training. The Bible Institute of the Evangelical Church is key to this process, with evening Bible classes and sponsorship of promising pastors to study in Brazil. But poorer and more remote rural congregations are much less appealing to workers and are therefore neglected. Those who do minister rurally must often care for several congregations at once. Pray for the vision of the evangelical Church to be fulfilled, and for trained, passionate national workers to go to the remote and unreached parts of Guinea-Bissau and to the entire region.

3 There is an increasing number of missionaries in the country, mostly Latin American and Asian, but notably fewer Westerners. The largest agencies are WEC, YWAM and Kairos (Brazil). Many new groups are arriving, including some theologically marginal bodies. Some set up denominations near existing churches rather than going to needy and unreached areas. The majority do not stay long term, and many are sent by their supporting churches without real accountability or support. Pray for missionaries to cooperate across organizational lines and with the national Church; pray also that a greater emphasis might be given to working among the unevangelized.

4 The less-reached groups for whom prayer is needed:

a) *The Muslim Fula/Fulbe and Mandinka.* Both are large, dominant groups in many West African countries with a rich history and much influence. They are largely responsible for bringing Islam to Guinea-Bissau; may they instead become responsible for spreading the good news. The Fula are increasingly responsive to the gospel, and in a few locations, groups of believers are forming. The Mandinkas are more resistant but have some individual believers in the cities.

b) *Smaller-population peoples of mixed Muslim and animist beliefs.* The Biafada, Nalu, Masoanke, Jahanka, Jola-Fonyi, Soninke, Susu and Badyara have had very little, if any, work concentrated on

them using their language and culture. Pray for ministry among them, and that fruit might be forthcoming.

- c) **Traditional-religion peoples** are much more evangelized than the Muslim peoples. Praise God that there are Christians from almost all of these groups. These include the Balanta, Papel, Bijago, Manjaco, Mancanha, Jola-Felupe and Bayote. Pray also for the gospel to reach the other smaller, and often overlooked, peoples.

5 Scripture and literature are areas of great need and great potential. Poverty and low literacy make this a challenge, but the spiritual need and pressure from other faiths make this ministry essential.

- a) **Bible translation.** The Bible in Creole is a great success. Almost all churches use it, and it is already on a fourth printing. NTs are available in Papel, Bijago, Fula and Mandinka and soon in Balanta, though not used nearly as much. SIL/ALEM, The Bible Society, The Seed Company, KIMON and the national Church all partner for further translation and literacy work as well as training.
- b) **Christian books** have low circulation, few readers and high costs, and there are only two Christian bookshops in the country. Pray for the development of helpful written material to equip the saints. Pray for the Church to gain a vision for Christian literature.
- c) **Literacy** must be enhanced to maximize the benefits of new material being printed. Pray for the educational infrastructure – including many primary schools for locals set up and run by the national Church and mission agencies – and for literacy courses for adults to have a great effect that generates a hunger for reading material and in turn leads people to Scripture. Greater coordination is needed for the local education provided by Protestant churches, which is currently a fragmented scene, including how these many groups are represented before the government's Ministry of Education.

6 Media ministry:

- a) **Christian radio.** A programme is broadcast every week on national radio. Pray for the producers to be able to improve its quality and for continued permission to broadcast. Pray for the new Christian radio station in the Bafata area; it broadcasts in several languages. Many towns have local radio stations, and most give time to local pastors for weekly programmes.
- b) **Audio resources,** including cassettes, have great potential in a largely oral society. The Creole NT is available on cassette, and **GRN** has recordings in 28 languages and dialects. The Proclaimer and Megavoice are two solid-state audio players with Scripture and Bible storying. Pray that all these resources be used well.
- c) **The JESUS film,** now available in 14 languages, is used widely in evangelism. Availability of the film in tribal languages is limited; praise God for the development of a DVD that includes tribal languages, Creole and Portuguese. Pray for its greater availability and for lasting fruit that yields notable church growth.