



Namibia



KEY FACTS

Joined Commonwealth: 1990

Population: 2,303,000 (2013)

GDP p.c. growth: 2.1% p.a. 1990–2013

UN HDI 2014: World ranking 127

Official language: English

Time: GMT plus 1–2 hrs

Currency: Namibia dollar (N\$)

Geography

Area: 824,269 sq km

Coastline: 1,570 km

Capital: Windhoek

Namibia in south-west Africa is one of the driest and most sparsely populated countries on Earth. It is bounded by the South Atlantic Ocean on the west, Angola to the north, Botswana to the east and South Africa to the south. The Caprivi Strip, a narrow extension of land in the extreme north-east, connects it to Zambia.

Namibia comprises 14 regions (from south to north): !Karas (formerly spelt Karas), Hardap, Khomas, Erongo, Omaheke, Otjozondjupa, Kunene, Oshikoto, Omusati, Oshana, Kavango East, Kavango West, Zambezi (formerly Caprivi) and Ohangwena.

Time: GMT plus 1 hr. The clock is advanced by one hour from the first Sunday in September to the first Sunday in April.

Area: 824,269 sq km (including Walvis Bay 1,124 sq km).

Topography: The country has three broad zones: the Namib Desert to the west; the Kalahari Desert to the east; and the Central

Plateau. The plateau, made up of mountains, rocky outcrops, sand-filled valleys and undulating upland plains, covers over 50 per cent of the land area. It includes Windhoek, the capital, and slopes eastward to the Kalahari Basin and northward to the Etosha Pan, the largest of Namibia's saline lakes. The Skeleton Coast, from Swakopmund to the northern border, is a waterless stretch of high sand dunes pounded by a high surf, much celebrated in tales of the sea. The Kaokoveld Mountains run parallel, covering 66,000 sq km. Shifting sand dunes of the Namib Desert spread inland for 80–130 km, covering 15 per cent of the land area.

Climate: Arid, semi-arid and sub-humid. Prolonged periods of drought are characteristic. There is little precipitation apart from rare thunderstorms in the arid zone of the Namib Desert coast, with rainfall rising to 600 mm or more in the sub-humid north-eastern border with Angola and the Caprivi Strip. Rain falls in summer (October–April). The cold Benguela current gives the Namib Desert thick coastal fog.

Environment: The most significant environmental issues are the scarcity of natural freshwater resources and desertification.

Vegetation: Much of the terrain is grassland, or plains dotted with scrub. Namibia supports at least 345 different grasses and 2,400 types of flowering plant. Characteristic native plants are acacias, balsam trees, omwandi trees, fig and date palms, makalani palms, mopane (shrubs or trees), monkey-bread trees, marula trees, yellow-blossomed omuparara trees, violet-blossomed apple-leaf trees and shrubs such as the raisin-bush, coffee bush and camphor bush. Aloes, mesembryanthemums and other succulents flower on the Southern Namib dunes after rainfall. White-flowering ana trees flourish in dry river beds. Forest covers nine per cent of the land area, having declined at 0.9 per cent p.a. 1990–2010. Arable land comprises one per cent of the total land area.

Wildlife: Namibia's wildlife is famous, particularly the exceptional range of bird species found in the wetlands. There are some 200 recorded species of birds, with 27 thought to be endangered (2014). The pans in game parks provide drinking water for most of the typical African wild mammal species. The Etosha National Park, the

country's most famous reserve and one of the largest in the world, contains lions, leopards, elephants, rhinos and zebras. The government has a strong conservation policy, but game poaching in the reserves is diminishing stocks of many species. The Namibian seas are naturally rich in fish, and in seabirds which prey on fish.

Main towns: Windhoek (capital, Khomas region, pop. 325,858 in 2011), Rundu (Kavango East, 63,431), Walvis Bay (Erongo, 62,096), Swakopmund (Erongo, 44,725), Oshakati (Oshana, 36,451), Rehoboth (Hardap, 28,843), Katima Mulilo (Zambezi, 28,362), Otjiwarongo (Otjozondjupa, 28,249), Okahandja (Otjozondjupa, 22,639), Keetmanshoop (!Karas, 20,977), Tsumeb (Oshikoto, 19,257), Gobabis (Omaheke, 19,101), Grootfontein (Otjozondjupa, 16,632), Lüderitz (!Karas, 12,537) and Usakos (Erongo, 3,583).

Transport: There are 44,140 km of roads, 15 per cent paved. Two long-haul road projects were completed in the late 1990s: the Trans-Caprivi Highway and the Trans-Kalahari Highway through Botswana to South Africa. These arteries enable Namibia to provide landlocked central African countries with an outlet to the sea as well as greatly reducing the journey to Johannesburg.

The 2,400 km railway network was established under German colonial rule and much-needed upgrading was carried out from the mid-1990s. Walvis Bay, the only deep-water port, which incorporates an export processing zone, is the main outlet for exports. Use of Lüderitz, Namibia's second port, has increased, due to a rise in fishing activities.

Air transport is important because of Namibia's size. There are more than 350 aerodromes and airstrips, with licensed airports in the main towns and mining centres, including the international airport some 40 km from Windhoek.

Society

KEY FACTS 2013

Population per sq km: 3

Life expectancy: 64 years

Net primary enrolment: 88%

Population: 2,303,000 (2013); density is extremely low overall and 45 per cent of

people live in urban areas; growth 2.1 per cent p.a. 1990–2013; birth rate 26 per 1,000 people (43 in 1970); life expectancy 64 years (53 in 1970 and 62 in 1990).

The Ovambo and Kavango together constitute about 60 per cent of the total population. Other groups are the Herero, Damara, Nama and the Caprivians. The San (Bushmen), who are among the world's oldest surviving hunter-gatherers, have lived in this territory for more than 11,000 years. The Basters, who settled in Rehoboth in 1870, stem from marriages between white farmers and Khoi mothers in the Cape. The 'Cape Coloureds', immigrants from South Africa, tend to live in the urban areas. Of the white group of approximately 90,000, about 50 per cent are of South African and 25 per cent of German ancestry; about 20 per cent are Afrikaners (longer-established migrants); and a small minority are of UK ancestry.

Language: English, Oshiwambo, Herero, Nama, Afrikaans and German. The official language is English, first or second language to only about 20 per cent. Oshiwambo is spoken throughout most of the north. The Caprivians speak Lozi as their main language. Afrikaans is widely spoken and is the traditional language of the Cape Coloureds and Baster communities.

Religion: Christians 80–90 per cent (predominantly Lutherans), the rest holding traditional beliefs.

Health: Public spending on health was five per cent of GDP in 2012. Some 92 per cent of the population uses an improved drinking water source and 32 per cent have access to adequate sanitation facilities (2012). Tuberculosis and malaria are widespread in the north. Infant mortality was 35 per 1,000 live births in 2013 (129 in 1960). AIDS is a serious problem. In 2013, 14 per cent of people aged 15–49 were HIV positive.

Education: Public spending on education was 8.4 per cent of GDP in 2010. There are ten years of compulsory education starting at the age of seven. Primary school comprises seven years and secondary five, with cycles of three and two years. In 1993 English replaced Afrikaans as the main language of instruction. The Namibian Constitution provides free education until the age of 16 or completion of primary education. Some 84 per cent of pupils complete primary school (2009). The school year starts in January.

The principal tertiary institution is the University of Namibia, established in 1993, with its main campus in Windhoek and nine other campuses across the country. The university offers courses in agriculture and natural resources, economics and management sciences, education,

engineering and information technology, medical and health sciences, and law. There are also polytechnic, technical and agricultural colleges, and four national teacher-training colleges. Namibian College of Open Learning provides open and distance learning. The female–male ratio for gross enrolment in tertiary education is 1.30:1 (2008). Literacy among people aged 15–24 is 93 per cent (2010). There are extensive adult literacy programmes.

Media: Daily newspapers include *The Namibian* (in English and Oshiwambo), *Namibia Economist*, *New Era* (government-owned), *Die Republikein* (in Afrikaans) and *Allgemeine Zeitung* (in German). *Namibian Sun* and *Windhoek Observer* are published weekly.

The Namibian Broadcasting Corporation provides public TV and radio services. Several private and international TV channels are available via cable or satellite and there are many private radio stations broadcasting in the country.

Some 42 per cent of households have TV sets (2009). There are 239 personal computers per 1,000 people (2007).

Communications: Country code 264; internet domain '.na'. Mobile phone coverage is good in the towns but patchy in rural areas. Internet connection is available in main towns; there are internet cafes in Walvis Bay, Swakopmund and Windhoek; and a good postal service.

For every 1,000 people there are 80 landlines, 1,102 mobile phone subscriptions and 139 internet users (2013).

Public holidays: New Year's Day, Independence Day (21 March), Workers' Day (1 May), Cassinga Day (4 May), Africa Day (25 May), Heroes' Day (26 August), Human Rights Day (10 December), Christmas Day and Family Day (26 December).

Cassinga Day remembers those killed in 1978 when the South African Defence Force attacked a SWAPO refugee camp at Cassinga in southern Angola. Africa Day commemorates the founding of the Organization of African Unity in 1963 (now African Union). Heroes' Day commemorates the start of SWAPO's armed struggle against South African rule and those killed in the struggle. Human Rights Day remembers those killed in 1959 when residents of a black township near Windhoek resisted forcible removal to the present-day Katutura.

Religious holidays whose dates vary from year to year include Good Friday and Easter Monday.

Economy

KEY FACTS 2013

GNI: US\$12.5bn

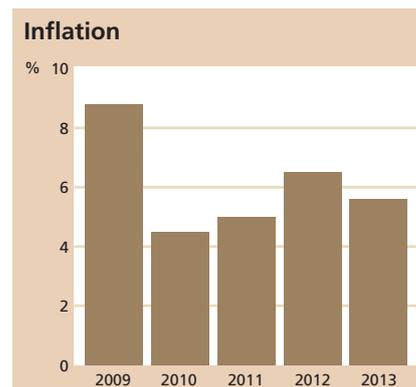
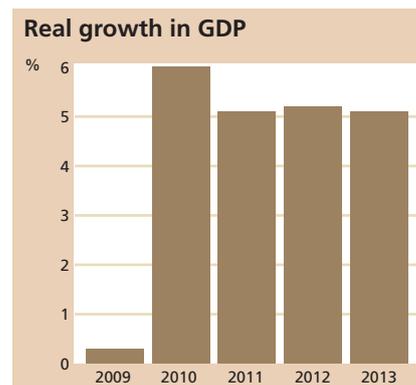
GNI p.c.: US\$5,840

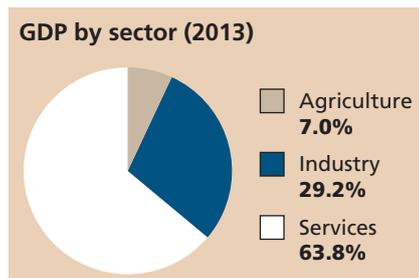
GDP growth: 4.3% p.a. 2009–13

Inflation: 6.1% p.a. 2009–13

Namibia's economy is driven by mining and fish processing. Since independence in 1990, exports of diamonds, uranium, zinc and fish products have grown strongly. Most people in rural areas of this vast country, however, remain largely unaffected by these activities. Government policy is to raise per capita income, to develop the private sector and to encourage diversification into manufacturing activities, such as clothing and textiles, and eco-tourism. It is also committed to restraining growth in public spending and controlling inflation.

Having fallen short of the national development plan target of five per cent p.a. in the latter 1990s and early 2000s – due to environmental factors such as drought and the finite stocks of fish – growth picked up from 2002 on account of increased diamond production, the opening of a new zinc mine and refinery, and increased textiles output. It averaged 5.7 per cent p.a. during 2004–08. But in the face of the world economic downturn and consequent falls in demand for Namibia's minerals, the economy stalled in the latter part of 2008, recovering in 2010





(6.0 per cent) and continuing with growth of four to six per cent p.a. 2011–15.

Mining

The sector is the largest source of export earnings. Namibia has great mineral wealth, including diamonds, uranium, copper, zinc, gold, silver, phosphate and oil. Zinc production rose rapidly from the mid-1990s. Onshore reserves of diamonds are becoming depleted, but offshore output has risen quickly, helped by new mining technology. Namibia is one of the world's largest producers of uranium. Large offshore phosphate deposits have been discovered near Walvis Bay. Offshore oil and gas exploration is also under way and there are plans for several new exploration wells to be drilled in 2015–16.

History

The San (Bushmen), who are among the world's oldest surviving hunter-gatherers, have lived in this territory for over 11,000 years.

In the 19th century, taking advantage of tribal conflicts, Europeans acquired land from chiefs in return for weapons. The British authorities in the Cape annexed the Penguin Islands in 1866 and Walvis Bay in 1878, in response to a request for protection from missionaries. Germany declared a protectorate in 1884 over a 20 km-wide belt of land from Lüderitz to the Orange River, and then gained control of the interior. The inhabitants were relegated to 'native reserves' from 1898 and a 1905 German decree expropriated all Herero land and prohibited Herero people from keeping cattle. This led to the Great Resistance War, 1904–08, during which a large proportion of the Herero and Nama population was massacred by the German military. Pass laws were introduced in 1907, as was the institutionalisation of

migrant contract labour. Diamond and copper mining began in 1908–09.

During World War I, German South-West Africa was occupied by South Africa; after the war South Africa extended its control to the northern Namibian communities, helped by the Portuguese rulers of Angola. The Allied Powers refused to allow South Africa to annex the country, renamed South-West Africa (SWA). Instead, South Africa became the designated power under a League of Nations mandate.

Following the founding of the UN in 1945, South Africa refused to convert its mandate into a UN trusteeship. In 1949, 1955 and 1956, disputes between South Africa and the UN over SWA were taken to the International Court of Justice.

A series of petitions to the UN from black leaders in SWA sought to end South African rule. The first black nationalist movement, the South-West Africa National Union (SWANU), was set up in 1959 with the support of the Herero Chiefs Council. In 1960 the South-West Africa People's Organisation (SWAPO) was founded, Ovambo migrant workers forming the base of its membership. SWAPO launched a guerrilla campaign inside Namibia, first clashing with South African police in August 1966. In October 1966, the UN terminated South Africa's mandate and called for it to withdraw from the country, formally named Namibia in 1968. The International Court of Justice ruled in 1971 that South Africa's administration was illegal.

In 1977 a UN contact group comprising the five Western members of the Security Council – the UK, France, the US, Canada and West Germany – began to negotiate plans for Namibia's independence directly with South Africa and SWAPO. In 1978 South Africa announced its acceptance of the contact group's settlement proposal. However, in May that year, South African forces attacked SWAPO's refugee transit camp at Cassinga in southern Angola, leaving 600 dead.

Independence discussions continued for ten years, in the course of which South Africa made several further attacks on SWAPO bases in Angola. In 1981 South Africa demanded that Cuban troops (which were in Angola assisting the Angolan government in a civil war against UNITA rebels) should withdraw from Angola, and made this a

condition of its agreement to the UN plan.

At the same time, South Africa began to ease its grip on Namibia, allowing a 'transitional government of national unity' (a coalition of six parties) control over internal affairs from June 1985.

In December 1988, two agreements were signed: one between South Africa, Angola and Cuba, creating the conditions for implementation of the UN plan, the second between Angola and Cuba, setting out a timetable for withdrawal of Cuban troops. A formal ceasefire came into effect in April 1989; this was followed by clashes in northern Namibia between SWAPO and South African forces, resulting in the deaths of some 300 SWAPO fighters.

Nonetheless, progress towards independence continued through 1989. The interim government was dissolved and, by September, 43,000 exiled Namibians had returned home. Many SWAPO members had been in exile for 27 years. Namibia achieved independence on 21 March 1990 and became the Commonwealth's 50th member.

In 1977 South Africa had annexed Walvis Bay, Namibia's only deep-water port, together with a surrounding 1,124 sq km enclave and the 12 offshore Penguin Islands. Walvis Bay remained a subject of dispute until March 1994, when it and the islands were returned to Namibia.

Independent state

UN-supervised elections were held in November 1989. Ten political parties stood, including SWAPO, which gained 57 per cent of the votes and 41 of 72 seats in the Constituent Assembly. In February 1990 Dr Sam Nujoma was elected by the Constituent Assembly to be the first President of an independent Namibia. Nujoma (76 per cent of the popular vote in the first presidential election) and SWAPO (73 per cent in the National Assembly elections) were returned to power in the December 1994 elections.

In late November 1998, Parliament passed a constitutional amendment to allow Nujoma to serve more than two terms. Namibia's High Commissioner to the UK, Ben Ulenga, resigned in protest against both the amendment and Namibia's military involvement in the Democratic Republic of Congo. Ulenga later formed a new political grouping which was registered as the Congress of Democrats.

Constitution

Status: Republic with executive President

Legislature: Parliament of Namibia

Independence: 21 March 1990

The constitution provides for a multiparty democracy in a unitary republic. The President is

Namibia on the international stage

Frank Fredericks, born in Windhoek in 1967, took the Commonwealth Games Men's 200 Metres record at the 1994 Games in Victoria, Canada.

Filmmaker and Namibia native Bridget Pickering was an executive producer on *Hotel Rwanda* and was involved in the casting for *The Last of the Mohicans*.

With population density of less than three per sq km, Namibia is the most sparsely populated country in the Commonwealth and in Africa.

Further information

Government of Namibia:	www.grnnet.gov.na
Electoral Commission of Namibia:	www.ecn.na
Parliament of Namibia:	www.parliament.gov.na
Namibia Statistics Agency:	www.nsa.org.na
Bank of Namibia:	www.bon.com.na
Namibia Tourism Board:	www.namibiatourism.com.na
Commonwealth Secretariat:	www.thecommonwealth.org
Commonwealth of Nations:	www.commonwealthofnations.org/country/Namibia

Media

<i>Namibia Economist:</i>	www.economist.com.na
<i>New Era:</i>	www.newera.com.na
<i>The Namibian:</i>	www.namibian.com.na
<i>Die Republikein:</i>	www.republikein.com.na
<i>Allgemeine Zeitung:</i>	www.az.com.na
<i>Namibian Sun:</i>	sun.com.na
<i>Windhoek Observer:</i>	observer24.com.na
Namibian Broadcasting Corporation:	www.nbc.na
Namibia Press Agency:	www.nampa.org

head of state and government and commander-in-chief of the defence force. Elected by direct universal adult suffrage at intervals of not more than five years, he or she must receive more than 50 per cent of the votes cast. The President appoints the government, the armed forces chief of staff and members of a Public Service Commission, but the National Assembly may revoke any appointment. He or she can only serve two successive directly elected five-year terms. The President may dissolve the National Assembly, and may also proclaim a state of national emergency and rule by decree, subject to the approval of the National Assembly.

Legislative power is vested in a National Assembly of 96 elected members, and up to eight nominated but non-voting members, all members serving for a maximum of five years. Before the elections in November 2014 there were 72 elected members and up to six nominated but non-voting members. The National Assembly can remove the President from office by passing an impeachment motion with a two-thirds majority. The Prime Minister is leader of government business in Parliament.

An upper house, the National Council, is provided for in the constitution and was formally convened in February 1993. Until the National Council elections in 2016, it comprises two members from each of 13 regions, elected by regional councils and serving for a term of six years. From 2016 it is to comprise three members from each of 14 regions. The National Council has limited powers to review legislation passed by the National Assembly and can block bills.

The constitution includes 25 entrenched clauses regarding fundamental human rights and freedoms. There is no death sentence nor detention without trial and the practice and ideology of apartheid is expressly forbidden. Private property rights are guaranteed. Amendments to the constitution can only be made by two-thirds majorities of both houses.

Politics

Last elections: 28 November 2014 (presidential and legislative)

Next elections: 2019

Head of state: President Hage Geingob

Head of government: The President

Ruling party: SWAPO

Women MPs: 41%

The elections in November/December 1999 produced a clear win for both the South-West Africa People's Organisation (SWAPO) and President Sam Nujoma. Nujoma secured close to 75 per cent of the votes cast in the presidential poll, while Ben Ulenga of the recently formed Congress of Democrats (CoD) took 11 per cent and the Democratic Turnhalle Alliance (DTA) candidate Kautuutire Kaura ten per cent. In the parliamentary contest, SWAPO won 55 seats (76 per cent of the votes), the CoD seven (ten per cent) and the DTA seven (9.5 per cent).

In 2001 Nujoma announced he would not seek a fourth term of office and, at its 2004 congress, Hifikepunye Pohamba was chosen as the SWAPO candidate for the presidential election in November 2004.

The November 2004 presidential and legislative elections were won in landslide victories by Pohamba (76.4 per cent of votes) and SWAPO (55 of 72 seats and 75 per cent of the votes). Ulenga (CoD) received 7.3 per cent of the votes in the presidential election and Kaura (DTA) 5.1 per cent, while the CoD won five seats and DTA four.

Pohamba and SWAPO were again returned to government in November 2009 in another landslide. In the presidential poll Pohamba received 76.4 per cent of votes and his main challenger, Hidipo Hamutenya of the Rally for Democracy and Progress (RDP), 11.1 per cent. In the legislative elections SWAPO won 54 seats (and 75.3 per cent of votes) and the RDP eight seats (11.3 per cent).

On 28 November 2014, in Africa's first electronic ballot, SWAPO's presidential candidate, Hage Geingob, secured 86.7 per cent of the votes. DTA's presidential candidate, McHenry Venaani, received 5.0 per cent of the votes and RDP's Hidipo Hamutenya 3.4 per cent. In the legislative elections on the same day SWAPO won 77 seats (80.0 per cent of the votes), DTA five and RDP three. President Geingob and his new government were sworn in on 21 March 2015.

International relations

Namibia is a member of the African, Caribbean and Pacific Group of States, African Union, Non-Aligned Movement, Southern African Customs Union, Southern African Development Community, United Nations and World Trade Organization.

Namibia hosts the secretariat of the Southern African Customs Union; the SADC Tribunal; and the SADC Parliamentary Forum.

Traveller information

Immigration and customs: Passports must be valid for at least six months from the date of entry. Visas are required by almost all Commonwealth nationals. Prohibited imports include plants and plant material.

Travel within the country: Traffic drives on the left. Visitors wishing to hire a car need an international driving permit.

Scheduled flights link Windhoek and other main towns. Rail services are generally slow and most trains run overnight. Taxis are available in Windhoek.

Travel health: Prevalent diseases where appropriate precautionary measures are recommended include cholera, diphtheria, hepatitis A, hepatitis B, rabies, schistosomiasis (bilharzia) and typhoid.

There were 1,027,000 tourist arrivals in 2011.

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