

Ghana

Ethnicity in Ghana

Group selection

The Ga and Adangbe are combined to one ethnic group, in accordance with Asante and Gyimah-Boadi (²¹³³).

²¹³³ [Asante & Gyimah-Boadi, 2004]

The only really important cleavage between the different Akan subgroups concerning national politics (e.g. voting behavior) affects the Asante group. There is a certain aversion against the Asante (stemming from historical rivalries), and also a fear of Asante dominance among other Akan subgroups (e.g. the Fanti and Brong). Because of this unique position, the Asante are listed as a separate ethnic (sub-)group (similar to the Baule group in Cote d'Ivoire). All other Akans are combined to one ethnic category as they only seem to be politically relevant in distinction to the Asante.

The three northern groups Mole-Dagbani, Gurma and Grusi are combined to one category "northern groups". There are marked differences between these groups (as between the northern groups in Cote d'Ivoire) and often also local tensions, but from a national perspective - considering the economic underdevelopment of the whole north of the country and the broad religious distinction between the Christian south and the Muslim north - it makes sense to combine them into one ethnic category of national political importance (as was done in the case of the different northern groups in Cote d'Ivoire). Looking at the national constellation, other scholars decided to do the same (e.g. ²¹³⁴; ²¹³⁵).

²¹³⁴ [Asante & Gyimah-Boadi, 2004]

²¹³⁵ [McKown, 1976]

No evidence was found suggesting political relevance (according to the definition used in EPR) of the Guan group.

All group sizes from Asante (²¹³⁶) and Gyimah-Boadi (²¹³⁷), rounded to half percentages.

²¹³⁶ [Asante & Gyimah-Boadi, 2004]

²¹³⁷ [Gyimah-Boadi, 2010]

Power relations

The following assessment of ethnic group access to executive power is based on Asante and Gyimah-Boadi (²¹³⁸), unless otherwise noted.

²¹³⁸ [Asante & Gyimah-Boadi, 2004]

1957-1966: Nkrumah era. Nkrumah was a Nzema. In general, the **Other Akans** dominated Nkrumah's cabinets (with his own Nzema group clearly over-represented). However, all important ethnic groups were included during most of Nkrumah's regime. Only during one year (1965) in his 4th cabinet, until he was overthrown by a military coup, there were no **Ewe** included in his government.

Therefore, the other Akans group is coded as “senior partner” and the **Asante**, Ewe, the **Northern Groups**, and the **Ga-Adangbe** all as “junior partners”.

1967-1969: military coup in February 1966. According to EPR’s January-1st-rule, the new period is coded as starting in 1967.

The coup brought Lt. Gen. Ankrah to power. Ankrah was a Ga, and the Ga ethnic group had another member in the military junta that was installed (the National Liberation Council). Thus, the Ga are coded as “senior partner” during these years.

The Asante as well as the other Akan groups, the northerners, and the Ewe can all be regarded as “junior partners” since they all had representatives in the junta.

Note that in accordance with EPR’s policy to focus on major power changes, the short interregnum of Brig. Gen. Afrifa (an Asante) from Feb. 1969 to Oct. 1969 is disregarded here.

1970-1971: 2nd Republic, Busia’s government. Prime Minister Busia was a Brong, which is why the Other Akans are coded as “senior partner”, and the Asante, Ga and northern groups as “junior partners”.

The Ewe group found itself excluded from the government (although without any targeted discrimination). Hence, the group is coded as “powerless” in this period.

1972-1981: Acheampong’s rule, two palace coups by Akuffo and Rawlings, and Limann’s government. In the different military juntas, the northerners can be considered a “junior partner” at most, and although Hilla Limann was a northerner, his government (1979-1981) was Akan-dominated. Therefore, the years from 1972 to 1981 are summarized into one single period here, with the northern groups coded as “junior partner”. Since Acheampong, whose reign lasted from 1972 to 1978, was an Asante, the Asante are coded as “senior partner”. Other Akans, and the Ewe and Ga groups all had access to executive state power, both during the Acheampong era (and after the two palace coups) and in Limann’s government. Therefore, they are coded here as “junior partners”.

1982-2000: Rawlings’ (second) era, democratization until elections and power shift of 2000/2001. Rawlings was the dominant person in the country’s executive. Therefore, his Ewe group is coded as “senior partner” in this period.

Both in his military junta and in his democratically elected governments, all other important ethnic groups were included. Therefore, the Asante and other Akans, the northern groups and the Ga-Adangbe are all coded as “junior partners”.

2001-2008: Kufour, newly elected president in the 2000 election and reelected in 2004, is an Asante and his party, the NPP, is rooted

in the Ashanti Region (and also still perceived as an ethnic Asante party) (²¹³⁹, 308). Therefore, the Asante are coded as “senior partner” during Kufour’s rule. His second term lasted until the end of 2008.

Other Akan groups, Ga, Ewe and northerners are also well represented in both of his first cabinets. (Kufour’s vice-president, Aliu Mahama, for example, was a northerner.) Hence, they can all be considered “junior partners”.

There were no signs of Kufour’s government becoming ethnically more exclusive during his second term. Northerner Aliu Mahama remained vice-president. There were accusations of “insufficient ethnic inclusion” (²¹⁴⁰, 2) and favoritism towards Asante and other Akans in high position appointments, according to the Human Rights Reports 2006-2008 of the U.S. State Department (²¹⁴¹). However, this appears to be too little evidence to code other ethnic groups as excluded. Thus, the years 2006-2008 are added to the earlier period of 2001-2005, featuring the same list of relevant groups with the same power status codings. This results in one combined period from 2001 to 2008, with the Asante coded as “senior partner”, and other Akans, Ga, Ewe, and northern groups as “junior partners”.

2009-2012: John Atta-Mills was elected in 2008 as Ghana’s new president. His term began in January 2009 and ended with his death in July 2012.

Atta-Mills was from the NDC (the former ruling party of Rawlings and in the opposition during Kufour’s rule), had served as vice-president under Rawlings from 1997 to 2000, and stood unsuccessfully as presidential candidate twice in 2000 and 2004. He was from the Western Region and of Fante ethnic origin (an Akan subgroup), and apparently some of his close advisors were Fante as well, according to the 2009 Human Rights Report of the U.S. State Department (²¹⁴²). Therefore, the group of “other Akans” is coded as “senior partner” in this period.

Mills’ vice-president, John Dramani Mahama, is a northerner. The NDC in general is still conceived as the party of Ewe interests (the NPP that of Asante interests)(²¹⁴³, 4). According to the list of ministers provided by the Ghanaian government’s official homepage, the cabinet also included members of the Akan (and Asante) groups. Overall, there is no evidence of ethnic exclusion. Hence, it seems reasonable to code all other ethnic groups as included (“junior partners”) in this period.

2013-2017: After Atta-Mills’ death, it is his vice-president John Dramani Mahama (NDC) who takes over as Ghana’s president, being narrowly confirmed in office in the December 2012 election.

The list of government ministers (²¹⁴⁴) suggests that members of all ethnic groups have significant access to executive power. Moreover, none of the current sources consulted (²¹⁴⁵; ²¹⁴⁶; ²¹⁴⁷) refers to any patterns of ethnic exclusion in these years. Also according

²¹³⁹ [Nugent, 1999]

²¹⁴⁰ [Gyimah-Boadi, 2010]

²¹⁴¹ [US State Department, 1999–2019]

²¹⁴² [US State Department, 1999–2019]

²¹⁴³ [Jockers, Kohnert & Nugent, 2009]

²¹⁴⁴ [Government of Ghana, 2014]

²¹⁴⁵ [Freedom House, 2012-2016]

²¹⁴⁶ [Bertelsmann Stiftung, 2012-2020]

²¹⁴⁷ [US State Department, 1999–2019]

to Franklin Oduro (Ghana Center for Democratic Development, personal communication, May 22, 2014), “all major ethnic groups in Ghana are represented in Dramani Mahama’s government as of now.” Hence, this period is coded as a power-sharing arrangement again, with the northerners coded as “senior partner” (due to Mahama’s presidency) and all other groups as “junior partners”.

2018-2021: Presidential elections took place in December 2016. Nana Akufo-Addo, an ethnic Ashanti and member of the NPP party, won the election against the incumbent president. It was the third time Akufo-Addo had participated in presidential elections, and he enjoyed most support in the Ashanti and Eastern regions of the state (²¹⁴⁸; ²¹⁴⁹). Although ethnic divisions can still be observed in Ghanaian politics, international observers noted that Akufo-Addo refrained from ethnic claims during his electoral campaign. In contrast, Akufo-Addo has been vocal in distancing himself from any ethnic-oriented policies during his tenure in office (²¹⁵⁰).

Akufo-Addo assumed office in January 2017. According to EPR coding rules (the January 1st rule), the change in the power constellation is therefore coded from 2018. With Akufo-Addo in office as President, the Asante are coded as "senior partner" in the power-sharing constellation. Since the council of state, the executive body in Ghana, maintains a system where the different regions in Ghana elect a member into the executive body, no evidence suggests the exclusion of any of the other ethnic groups in the new government (²¹⁵¹; ²¹⁵²). In accordance, the Ewe, Ga-Adangbe, the Northern ethnic groups, and the other Akans are represented as "junior partners".

²¹⁴⁸ [Heise.de, 2016]

²¹⁴⁹ [Reuters, 2012]

²¹⁵⁰ [Bertelsmann Stiftung, 2012-2020]

²¹⁵¹ [Bertelsmann Stiftung, 2012-2020]

²¹⁵² [US State Department, 1999–2019]

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Political status of ethnic groups in Ghana

From 1957 until 1966

Group name	Proportional size	Political status
Other Akans	0.345	SENIOR PARTNER
Northern Groups (Mole-Dagbani, Gurma, Grusi)	0.235	JUNIOR PARTNER
Asante (Akan)	0.15	JUNIOR PARTNER
Ewe	0.13	JUNIOR PARTNER
Ga-Adangbe	0.08	JUNIOR PARTNER

From 1967 until 1969

Group name	Proportional size	Political status
Other Akans	0.345	JUNIOR PARTNER
Northern Groups (Mole-Dagbani, Gurma, Grusi)	0.235	JUNIOR PARTNER
Asante (Akan)	0.15	JUNIOR PARTNER
Ewe	0.13	JUNIOR PARTNER
Ga-Adangbe	0.08	SENIOR PARTNER

From 1970 until 1971

Group name	Proportional size	Political status
Other Akans	0.345	SENIOR PARTNER
Northern Groups (Mole-Dagbani, Gurma, Grusi)	0.235	JUNIOR PARTNER
Asante (Akan)	0.15	JUNIOR PARTNER
Ewe	0.13	POWERLESS
Ga-Adangbe	0.08	JUNIOR PARTNER

From 1972 until 1981



Figure 398: Political status of ethnic groups in Ghana during 1957-1966.



Figure 399: Political status of ethnic groups in Ghana during 1967-1969.

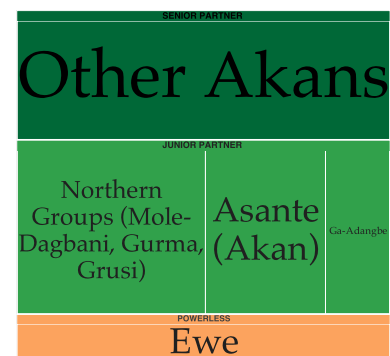


Figure 400: Political status of ethnic groups in Ghana during 1970-1971.

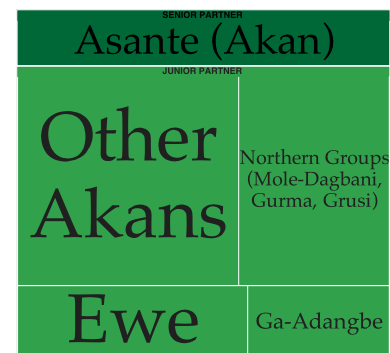


Figure 401: Political status of ethnic groups in Ghana during 1972-1981.

Group name	Proportional size	Political status
Other Akans	0.345	JUNIOR PARTNER
Northern Groups (Mole-Dagbani, Gurma, Grusi)	0.235	JUNIOR PARTNER
Asante (Akan)	0.15	SENIOR PARTNER
Ewe	0.13	JUNIOR PARTNER
Ga-Adangbe	0.08	JUNIOR PARTNER

From 1982 until 2000

Group name	Proportional size	Political status
Other Akans	0.345	JUNIOR PARTNER
Northern Groups (Mole-Dagbani, Gurma, Grusi)	0.235	JUNIOR PARTNER
Asante (Akan)	0.15	JUNIOR PARTNER
Ewe	0.13	SENIOR PARTNER
Ga-Adangbe	0.08	JUNIOR PARTNER

From 2001 until 2008

Group name	Proportional size	Political status
Other Akans	0.345	JUNIOR PARTNER
Northern Groups (Mole-Dagbani, Gurma, Grusi)	0.235	JUNIOR PARTNER
Asante (Akan)	0.15	SENIOR PARTNER
Ewe	0.13	JUNIOR PARTNER
Ga-Adangbe	0.08	JUNIOR PARTNER

From 2009 until 2012

Group name	Proportional size	Political status
Other Akans	0.345	SENIOR PARTNER
Northern Groups (Mole-Dagbani, Gurma, Grusi)	0.235	JUNIOR PARTNER
Asante (Akan)	0.15	JUNIOR PARTNER
Ewe	0.13	JUNIOR PARTNER
Ga-Adangbe	0.08	JUNIOR PARTNER

From 2013 until 2017

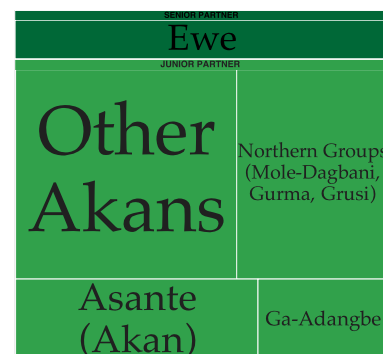


Figure 402: Political status of ethnic groups in Ghana during 1982-2000.

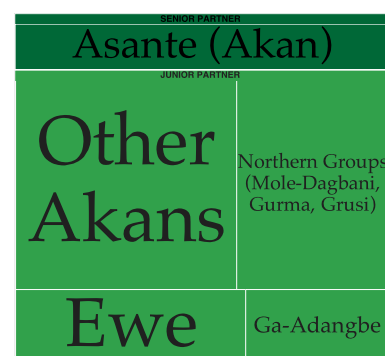


Figure 403: Political status of ethnic groups in Ghana during 2001-2008.

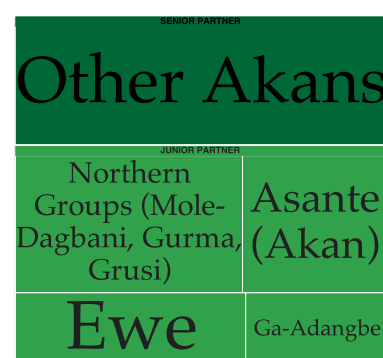


Figure 404: Political status of ethnic groups in Ghana during 2009-2012.

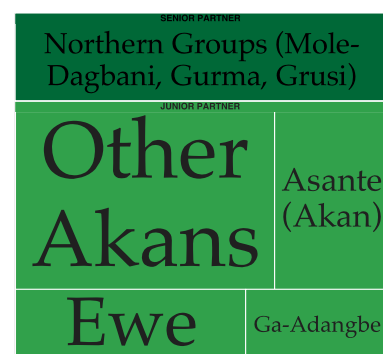


Figure 405: Political status of ethnic groups in Ghana during 2013-2017.

Group name	Proportional size	Political status
Other Akans	0.345	JUNIOR PARTNER
Northern Groups (Mole-Dagbani, Gurma, Grusi)	0.235	SENIOR PARTNER
Asante (Akan)	0.15	JUNIOR PARTNER
Ewe	0.13	JUNIOR PARTNER
Ga-Adangbe	0.08	JUNIOR PARTNER

From 2018 until 2021

Group name	Proportional size	Political status
Other Akans	0.345	JUNIOR PARTNER
Northern Groups (Mole-Dagbani, Gurma, Grusi)	0.235	JUNIOR PARTNER
Asante (Akan)	0.15	SENIOR PARTNER
Ewe	0.13	JUNIOR PARTNER
Ga-Adangbe	0.08	JUNIOR PARTNER

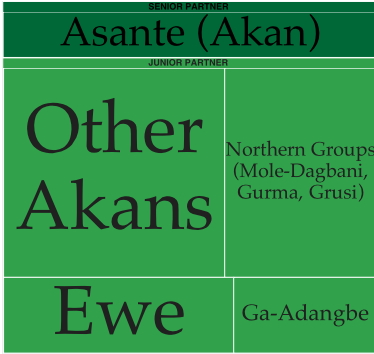


Figure 406: Political status of ethnic groups in Ghana during 2018-2021.

Geographical coverage of ethnic groups in Ghana

From 1957 until 1957

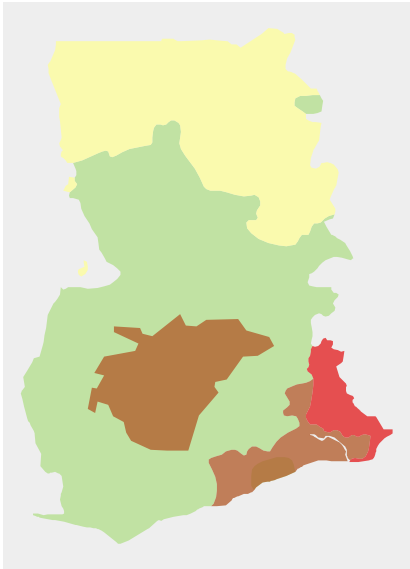


Figure 407: Map of ethnic groups in Ghana during 1957-1957.

Group name		Area in km ²	Type
■	Other Akans	148 447	Regionally based
■	Northern Groups (Mole-Dagbani, Gurma, Grusi)	65 169	Regionally based
■	Asante (Akan)	25 359	Regionally based
■	Ga-Adangbe	11 902	Regionally based
■	Ewe	7570	Regionally based

Table 145: List of ethnic groups in Ghana during 1957-1957.

From 1958 until 2021

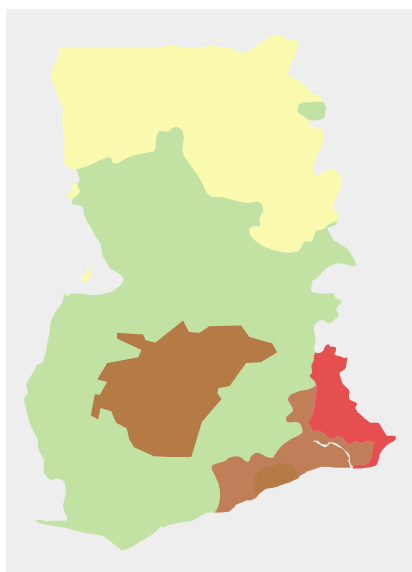


Figure 408: Map of ethnic groups in Ghana during 1958-2021.

	Group name	Area in km ²	Type
■	Other Akans	148 447	Regionally based
■	Northern Groups (Mole-Dagbani, Gurma, Grusi)	65 169	Regionally based
■	Asante (Akan)	25 359	Regionally based
■	Ga-Adangbe	11 902	Regionally based
■	Ewe	7570	Regionally based

Table 146: List of ethnic groups in Ghana during 1958-2021.

Conflicts in Ghana

Starting on 1966-02-23

Side A	Side B	Group name	Start	Claim	Recruitment	Support
Government of Ghana	NLC	Ewe	1966-02-23	No	Yes, from EGIP	Split
Government of Ghana	Military faction (forces of Jerry John Rawlings)	Ewe	1981-12-30	Presumed	Yes	
Government of Ghana	Military faction (forces of Ekow Dennis and Edward Adjei-Ampofo)		1983-06-18			