

**Guyana**

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**Distribution of ASM minerals**

![Map of ASM minerals in Guyana](map.png)

**Materials mined by ASM**

- Gold: 481,103 ounces (declared total production of ASM and LSM in 2013)
- Diamond: 55,930 metric carats (declared production of ASM and LSM in 2013)
- Development minerals (sand, stone, loam)

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154 Map created by Daniel Stapper. Using base map from US National Parks Service, 2017 and data from GeoNode, 2018 data platform. However, the map does not show many of the known deposits and licensing areas as shown in maps in Pasha et al., 2017. The exercise and challenges of developing customized ASM maps for each country profile also demonstrate significant data gaps.

155 Pasha et al., 2017.
Mineral governance framework

Government priorities
- Encourage growth and foreign direct investment in mining
- Address issues of under-declaration of gold production by miners and buyers
- Develop harmonized data collection and collation methods, software systems, and data platforms

Laws and policy
- Guyana Gold Board Act, 1981
- Mining Act, 1989 (Cap. 65:01) and its amendments and regulations
- Amerindian Act, 2006

Government institutions
- Ministry of Natural Resources
- Guyana Geology and Mines Commission
- Guyana Gold Board

Associations and member organizations
- Guyana Women Miners Organization (GWMO)
- Guyana Gold and Diamond Miners Association (GGDMA)
- National Mining Syndicate (NMS)
Economic and development data

2017 Population\textsuperscript{156}

\begin{itemize}
  \item Total: 777,859
  \item Labor force: 318,670
  \item Women: 49.518\%
  \item Men: 50.482\%
\end{itemize}

2017 Classification (GNI per capita)\textsuperscript{157}

\begin{itemize}
  \item Upper middle income: USD 4,460
\end{itemize}

2017 Gross Domestic Product\textsuperscript{158}

\begin{itemize}
  \item USD 3.676 Billion
\end{itemize}

Poverty headcount ratio\textsuperscript{159}

\begin{itemize}
  \item No data
\end{itemize}

Livelihoods

Employment\textsuperscript{160}

\begin{itemize}
  \item ASM: 10,000–35,000
  \item Dredging permits: 1,203 (in 2013)
  \item Small-scale claims: 19,471 (in 2013)
\end{itemize}

Gender participation in ASM

\begin{itemize}
  \item Women: unknown
\end{itemize}

\textsuperscript{156} World Bank, 2017b.
\textsuperscript{157} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{158} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{159} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{160} Various sources. See Guyana country profile text under “livelihoods.”
**FIGURE 5** GUYANA EXPORTS BY ITEM AND VALUE, JANUARY TO DECEMBER 2017

- Gold, USD 817.5 million, 56.8%
- Rice and paddy, USD 201.0 million, 14%
- Bauxite, USD 104.5 million, 7%
- Shrimp and prawns, USD 59.3 million, 4%
- Sugar, USD 48.5 million, 3%
- Fish and by products, USD 45.6 million, 3%
- Timber, USD 35.7 million, 2%
- Prepared foods, USD 28.5 millions, 2%
- Bottled rum and spirits, USD 27.1 million, 2%
- Diamonds, USD 13.6 million, 1%
- Re-exports, USD 11.1 million, 1%
- Other exports, USD 59.1 million, 4%
- Prepared foods, USD 28.5 millions, 2%
- Bottled rum and spirits, USD 27.1 million, 2%
- Diamonds, USD 13.6 million, 1%
- Re-exports, USD 11.1 million, 1%
- Other exports, USD 59.1 million, 4%

**TABLE 5** NUMBER OF REGISTERED DREDGES AND LICENSE HOLDERS IN GUYANA BY CATEGORY

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>2006</th>
<th>2007</th>
<th>2008</th>
<th>2009</th>
<th>2010</th>
<th>2011</th>
<th>2012</th>
<th>2013</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Registered dredges</td>
<td>1,617</td>
<td>1,794</td>
<td>2,072</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>3,102</td>
<td>1,524</td>
<td>1,803</td>
<td>1,203</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Small-scale</td>
<td>9,408</td>
<td>10,563</td>
<td>12,582</td>
<td>13,476</td>
<td>14,355</td>
<td>15,032</td>
<td>18,610</td>
<td>19,471</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Medium-scale</td>
<td>270</td>
<td>374</td>
<td>550</td>
<td>646</td>
<td>742</td>
<td>1,161</td>
<td>1,546</td>
<td>1,979</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Large-scale</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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162 Various sources as reported in Bulkan and Palmer, 2016, and Pasha et al., 2017.
**Mining sector summary**

Guyana has a long history of mining, rumored at one time by 16th Century European explorers to be the possible home of the mythical lost city of El Dorado—said to contain vast riches of gold.\(^{163}\) To this day, Guyana remains known for its significant deposits of gold, as well as diamond and bauxite, around which formalized and regulated mining activities began to emerge in the 1880s. A unique feature of the Guyanese ASM landscape, this long-established security of tenure has promoted greater investment in ASM operations and resulted in a wider level of mechanization, organization, and formalization than may be found elsewhere. Mining has played and continues to play a very important role in the development of the Guyanese economy. In the absence of any substantial and sustained large-scale activities and land-use competition with agriculture, ASM has enjoyed a relative level of support over the years and dominates mining activities in the country. However, while a relatively large amount and variety of data are being collected and generated (though gaps do certainly exist), more robust and unified database management systems are needed to use the details and information effectively and make it more accessible.

**Mineral governance framework**

All mining activities in Guyana are regulated and managed by the Guyana Geology and Mines Commission (GGMC). Set within the Ministry of Natural Resources,\(^ {164}\) the GGMC is a semiautonomous state agency that combines regulatory, law enforcement, and technical functions and is divided into five divisions: Geological Services, Mines, Environment, Petroleum, and Land Management. The GGMC reports to a board of directors, including the Minister of Natural Resources, and oversees the administration of the sector according to six geographical districts.\(^ {165}\)

The Mining Act of 1989 is the main regulatory instrument for the sector, stipulating that the state is the owner of all subsurface mineral rights in the country and authorizing the GGMC to manage and regulate activities and award prospecting permits and mining licenses for gold, diamonds, stone, and sand. Prior to obtaining a mining license, all activities (including ASM) must undertake a formal period of exploration. The GGMC issues three categories of prospecting permits: small-, medium-, and large-scale, all valid for one year. The small-scale permit costs approximately USD 2.50 and, like the medium-scale, are reserved for Guyanese citizens, making them easily accessible. Small- and medium-scale prospectors may also enter into joint ventures with foreign investors. Once an ASM claim has been located, prospective miners must mark all four corners with claim boards stating the name of the area, permit number, and date of location; inform the GGMC within 60 days; and complete a notice of location. After the GGMC inspects the claim, the prospective miner can apply for a license. Additional requirements (e.g., environment management agreement, use of mercury retorts, life-cycle plans) are needed for medium- and large-scale prospectors. There are four types of license categories with different requirements (Table 6).

**TABLE 6 Mining license categories in Guyana**\(^ {166}\)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type</th>
<th>Details</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| River location (dredger) and Small-scale | River: No longer that one mile of navigable river, cost USD 10.00 per acre per annum (presumed to be per mile)  
Small-scale: 1,500 feet long by 800 feet wide (27.5 acres or 11 hectares), cost USD 5.00 per acre per annum  
Both river and small-scale licenses:  
- No topographic description required  
- Guyanese only, joint venture with foreigners allowed  
- Must be renewed annually  
- Gold must be sold to buyer licensed by the Guyana Gold Board (GGB) or authorized buyers  
- Environmental guidelines and advisories  
- Legal requirement for environmental permit not enforced  
- Costs USD 10.00 (presumed to be per mile) |

\(^{163}\) El Dorado translates to “the golden one” in Spanish.  
\(^{164}\) The Ministry of Natural Resources has three government agencies: Guyana Gold Board, GGMC, and Guyana Forestry Commission.  
\(^{165}\) The mining districts are named One to Six and cover Berbice, Potaro, Mazaruni, Cuyuni, North West, and Rupununi.  
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type</th>
<th>Details</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Medium-scale | • 150–1,200 acres (61–486 hectares)  
• Costs USD 1.00 per acre per annum  
• Topographic description required  
• Guyanese only, joint venture with foreigners allowed  
• Renewable every five years  
• Gold must be sold to buyer licensed by GGB or authorized buyers  
• Environmental Management Agreement must be signed  
• Legal requirement for environmental permit not enforced |
| Large-scale | • 500–12,800 acres (202–5,180 hectares)  
• Costs USD 5.00 (foreign ownership) per acre per annum  
• Topographic description required  
• 100% foreign ownership allowed  
• License value for 20 years  
• Requires proof of financial and technical capabilities, lodging of performance bond, and submission of progress reports  
• Gold can be exported direct from mine site  
• License to mine on a property  
• Environmental Impact Statement and Environmental Management Plan must be submitted |

In addition to regulating the sector throughout the mining life cycle, the GGMC is also responsible for being the main repository for all geological and geophysical data for industry. However, despite repeated attempts since the 1990s and again in 2012 and 2015 to develop an integrated land-use management plan and associated management database, there are still challenges with overlapping land-use claims. This is because the various natural resource commissions operating under the Ministry of Natural Resources use separate GIS systems software.\(^{167}\) There is therefore a need to improve the coordination of data collection, sharing, and use through an integrated online platform. The GGMC also faces challenges with implementation at the local level and needs more support to improve its capacity and effectiveness in this regard. In some cases, single GGMC offices, with staff of approximately 10 people, may be responsible for areas as large as 30,000 km\(^2\) containing several thousand licensees.\(^{168}\) Despite the mineral governance framework for ASM in Guyana being relatively robust on paper, in reality, as is the case of many institutions in developing countries, the GGMC needs more funding, staffing, and support in order to improve its efficiency and effectiveness.

A second notable agency is the GGB, which markets and is responsible for overseeing all gold bought and sold in the country. Created by the Guyana Gold Board Act, 1982, it prescribes that only the Board and Licensed Gold Dealers (of which there are nine to facilitate the purchase of gold from sellers located across the country) can buy and sell the precious metal at a standard price, which is fixed twice daily. The GGB has offices in Georgetown, Bartica, and Charity.\(^{169}\)

A final key piece of the mineral governance framework in Guyana is the Amerindian Acts of 1976 and 2006. There are approximately 80,000 Amerindians in Guyana, the majority of which are located in the hinterland. Ninety-seven of the 138 communities hold legal title to aboveground resources covering approximately 14% of the country. Gold mining on Amerindian titled land is regulated by Sections 48–53, which require that ASM activities have good faith negotiations with village councils, get consent of at least two-thirds of the community eligible to vote, and comply with all rules. While the GGMC has the power to issue concessions over Amerindian land, a village can veto small- and medium-scale operations. The acts also stipulate that communities must receive a minimum of 7% tribute for use of their land.\(^{170}\)

\(^{167}\) Bulkan and Palmer, 2016.  
\(^{168}\) Clifford, 2011.  
\(^{169}\) GGB, 2018.  
Economy

Guyana is a country with diverse natural resources. In terms of contribution to GDP, in 2017, services account for approximately 50%; second was agriculture, forestry, and fishing at 16%; and third was the mining and quarrying sector at 13%. Of this, gold mining contributed 10% to total GDP, bauxite 1.2%, and “other” 1.6%.\(^1\) Gold (unrefined) was the leading export in 2017, worth USD 817.5 million and accounting for over 50% of the total value of exports in the same year (Figure 5).

While the GGMC does not regularly publish data on gold production disaggregated by small and medium concession holders, a recent publication by Bulkan and Palmer (2016) presents a line graph that shows artisanal gold production in troy ounces against percentage of GDP over the years 1990–2014. The sources for these primary data appear to be directly from the GGB, Bank of Guyana, and Bureau of Statistics but are not included in the reference list. The figures report that in 2014, artisanal gold mining in Guyana produced approximately 1,500,000 troy ounces, valued at almost 15% of GDP.\(^2\) Comparing this figure with the value of gold exported in 2017 suggests that artisanal gold mining may account for approximately 37.5% of gold production. This is supported by the detailed data contained within the Bank of Guyana’s 2017 report which states that “total gold declaration was recorded at 653,753 troy ounces” and that small- and medium-scale miners “represent nearly two-thirds of total declarations.”\(^3\) However, the figures for artisanal gold production shown in the graph for 2014 and that of the previous year (2,000,000 troy ounces) do not tally well with the 481,103 ounces of total gold declared by all mining districts in 2013.\(^4\) There is an obvious need to reconcile these data sets, with one possible explanation being issues with under-declaration.\(^5\)

Guyana has carried out a series of economic reforms since the late 1990s to liberalize the mining sector, and there has been an intensification of natural resources extraction in the interior, in part through awarding mineral and forestry concessions to multinational companies. Guyana’s mining sector has been identified as a vital and very significant potential driver of economic growth, and the government is actively working with the industry to support growth and attract foreign direct investment. Looking ahead and based on statements made during the November 2017 budget speech, the mining and quarrying sector for the year was anticipated to contract by 1.9%, compared to the 46.1% expansion in 2016. While gold declarations were expected to remain stable, bauxite production and other mining activities were said to decline by 2.3% and 12.6%, respectively. Gold declaration was expected to amount to approximately 712,706 ounces for 2017.\(^6\)

Livelihoods

The exact number of people engaged in ASM activities in Guyana is challenging to accurately determine. One 2005 study provided a range of 10,000–12,000 people, based on the number of registered ASM dredges and an estimate of the average number of people working each dredge.\(^7\) However, another scholar noted in 2011 that “this is likely to be a conservative estimate, both for the time it was put forward and certainly now, given the scale and growth of the sector in recent times; gold production has more than doubled since 2005, from 116,527 oz to 305,178 oz being registered with the GGMC in 2009.”\(^8\) The author goes on to suggest that if using the ILO’s much-cited ratio of 100 million individuals dependent on a global ASM sector of 11–13 million, it could be calculated that there are 100,000 people working in ASM in Guyana, equivalent to 12–14% of the country’s population of 763,437 in 2010.

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1\(^{1}\)Bank of Guyana, 2017, p. 145.
2\(^{2}\)Bulkan and Palmer, 2016, p. 684.
3\(^{3}\)Bank of Guyana, 2017, p. 11.
4\(^{4}\)Pasha et al., 2017, p. 9.
5\(^{5}\)Walrond et al., 2015; Bulkan and Palmer, 2016.
6\(^{6}\)Cooperative Republic of Guyana, 2017.
7\(^{7}\)Lowe, 2006.
8\(^{8}\)Clifford, 2011.
Other sources, all of which are referenced in a paper by Bulkan and Palmer (2016), provide additional data with which to gain an understanding of the sector’s size and extent. In 2011, there were 15,032 small-scale claim licenses, up from 10,563 in 2007, thereby showing an increase of roughly a third. Meanwhile, in 2013, there were 1,203 registered river dredges; yet this does not include the unregistered dredges estimated to number 9,000 in 2005. Table 5 depicts these figures, which are from a separate source, thereby providing some degree of triangulation, given that neither author cites the other paper as the data source. Taking these figures alone would reach a total in excess of 25,000 claims/dredges, which does not account for the number of people employed by each operation (or whether they are active), nor those engaged in associated livelihood activities. Meanwhile, the IGF (2017) reported a maximum of 35,000 in 2014 and an average of 30,000 based on a review of the literature. Clearly there is a need for a baseline study and ground-truthing exercise to be carried out in Guyana.

In terms of organizational arrangements, as elsewhere, ASM activities in Guyana are unique and a product of the surrounding historical, geological, and social context. In particular, the very early emergence of a formalized ASM sector in the 1880s, which was a product of trying to fairly manage the growing scarcity of near-surface gold deposits at the time, it is argued, has ensured security of tenure encouraging miners and sponsors to invest in their activities, thereby resulting in more mechanized and formalized operations. Second, due to the country being large relative to its population and with 90% of inhabitants and agricultural activities found in coastal regions while gold deposits are located inland, miners in Guyana have not had to compete with other land-use activities, meaning ASM has had a relative level of support, stability, and productivity over the years. There are also few large-scale mines in Guyana, again meaning that ASM has not had to compete for land or state support. Further, many mining operations often employ members of indigenous Amerindian communities in their mining operations because they prefer to hire community members to work in areas that far from their homes.

While there is basic socioeconomic information, such as declared gold sales and license applications, much of the data are contained within applications to the GGMC, aggregated at district and national levels, and not easily accessible remotely. There is also little to no livelihood information on exact numbers, ethnicity, nationality, ages, gender, educational levels, and qualifications and income of miners.

**Key data needs**

- Developing a harmonized and comprehensive land-use database and GIS system
- Clarifying the role of women in ASM
- Disaggregating data between ASM and LSM activities
- Reconciling declared production and actual production of gold and diamonds
- Establishing remote access and sharing of data collected and held by government institutions, such as GGMC and GGB
- Detailed and disaggregated livelihood and economic data

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179 Pasha et al., 2017.
180 Clifford, 2011.
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