

Namibia

Country Overview

Politics

Namibia is a constitutional multi-party democracy in Southern Africa. Although it is a multi-party democracy, its ruling party has gained and retained control over a large majority of parliament, regional council seats, and local authorities. The ruling party is the Southwest Africa People's Organization, known as SWAPO. Recent elections in November 2019 contributed to SWAPO's large majority among elected positions, while President Hage Geingob won his second five-year term. The elections were identified by international observers as generally free and fair.¹ These elections reflect the World Bank's description of Namibia as politically stable.²

Economy

Namibia is classified by the World Bank as an upper middle income economy, with a GDP per capita of USD 4,211 in 2020.³ Between 1991 and 2015, the economy grew at an average of 4.4 percent per annum, but it slowed to 0.03 percent in 2016.⁴ The recession has been tied to low prices for minerals and a regional drought, among other factors, and reflect World Bank observations that the country's economy is vulnerable to external shocks and environmental issues.⁵ The economic slowdown was further exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic with the economy contracting by 7.98 percent in 2020.⁶

Despite Namibia's small domestic market, high transport costs, high energy prices, and limited access to skilled labor, the World Bank reports that Namibia remains attractive for foreign direct investment (FDI) due to its political stability and favorable macroeconomic environment.⁷ FDI is present in uranium, diamond, zinc and copper mining, banking, oil exploration, and fisheries sectors, with 50 percent of foreign exchange earnings coming from mining.⁸ Major exports to the United States include uranium ore and diamonds.⁹

Social/Human Development

Namibia is in the medium human development category, having undergone an increase in Human Development Index (HDI) value from 0.550 to 0.646 between 1980 and 2020.¹⁰ The Ovambo people are the largest ethnic group in the country



accounting for 50 percent of the population.¹¹ Other ethnic groups include the Kavangos, Herero, Damara, Europeans, Nam, Caprivian, San, Baster, and Tswana.¹² The country's annual population growth has greatly reduced from 3.79 in 1988 to 1.84 in 2020¹³ as a result of women's growing participation in education and the labour force as well as rising contraceptive use.¹⁴ The U.S. Department of State reports that the human rights abuses of Namibia include discrimination against women, children, LGBT persons, and members of the San indigenous group.¹⁵ Namibia has one of the highest incidences of HIV/AIDs in the world at 12.7 percent in 2019, which further exacerbates poverty and vulnerability among the rural population.¹⁶

U.S. Department of State TIP Report Summary

U.S. Department of State TIP Ranking: Tier 1

In 2020 the U.S. Department of State upgraded Namibia from Tier 2 to Tier 1 due to significant efforts of the government to combat trafficking in persons. This included the implementation of the Trafficking in Persons Act of 2018, a large increase in prosecution and conviction rates, the launch of a nation-wide awareness campaign, and improvements in victim identification. Forced labour risk still remains present among children, especially from the Zemba and San people, as traffickers subject children to work in cattle herding, agriculture, domestic servitude, as well as sex trafficking to Windhoek and Walvis Bay.¹⁷

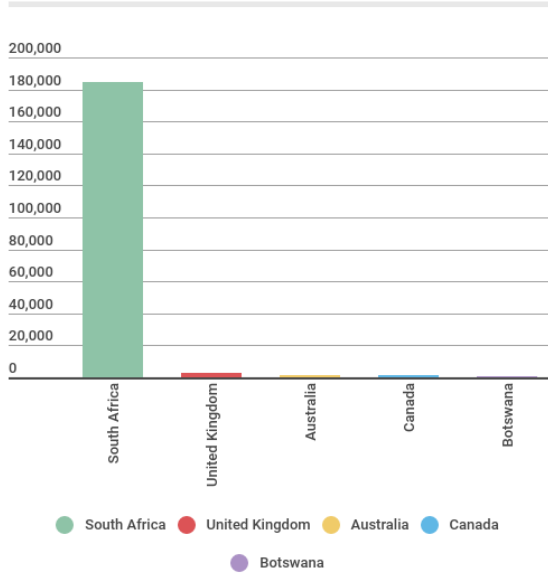
Read the full TIP Report at: <https://www.state.gov/reports/2021-trafficking-in-persons-report/namibia/>

Migrant and Other Vulnerable Populations

Namibia has net negative migration rate of -2 percent.¹⁸ Approximately 3.8 percent of the country's population are migrants. According to the UN High Commissioner for Refugees there are 5,809 total persons of concern, including 3,588 refugees and 2,214 asylum-seekers.¹⁹ The most popular country for migrants of Namibian origin is by far South Africa, followed by the United Kingdom, Australia, Canada, and Botswana.²⁰

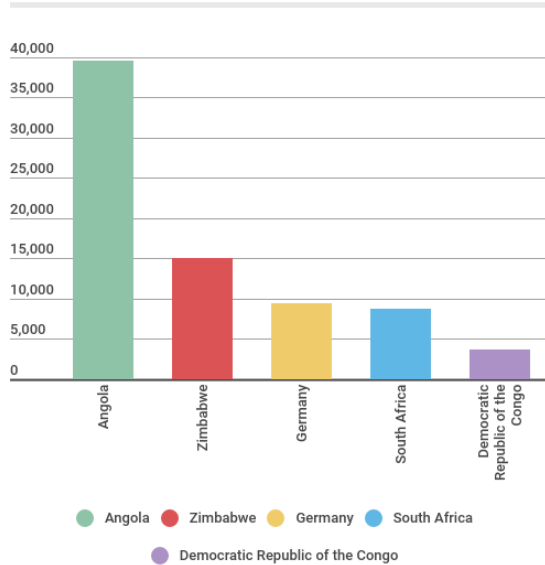


Migrants from Namibia



The top five countries sending migrants to Namibia include Angola, Zimbabwe, Germany, South Africa, and Democratic Republic of the Congo.²¹

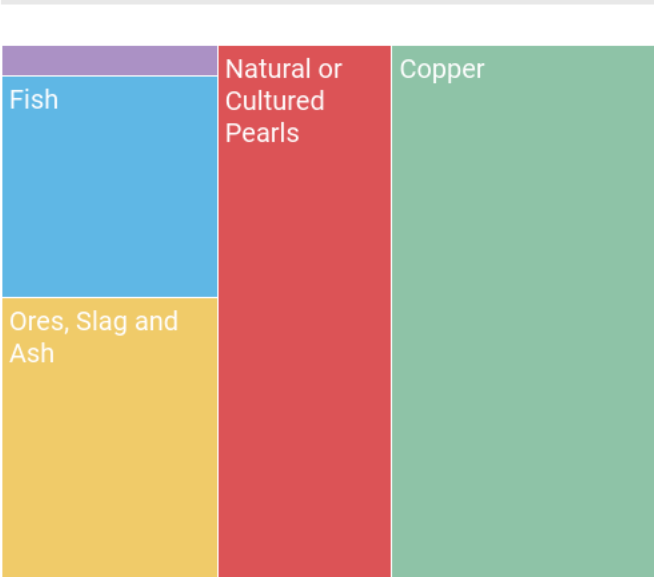
Migrants to Namibia



Exports and Trade

Namibia’s top exports in 2020 include copper, natural or cultured pearls, ores slag and ash, fish, and live animals. Machinery, inorganic chemicals (specifically cobalt oxides), and mineral fuels are also key exports.²²

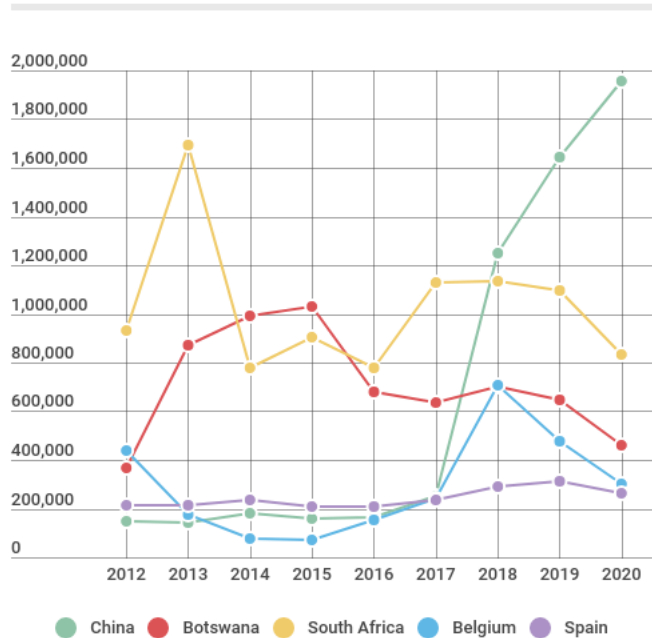
Top Commodity Exports (USD/Thousands)



Namibia primarily exports diamonds, ores, and uranium to the United States and was the 113th largest supplier of goods to the U.S. in the last year for which data was available.²³



Namibia Export Partners (USD/Thousands)



Trafficking in Persons Risk Factor Analysis

Legal/Policy Risk Factors

Level of Legal Protection for Civil Liberties and Workers’ Rights

Freedom of Association

The U.S. Department of State and Freedom House report that freedom of association and assembly is respected and effectively enforced in Namibia, where 25 percent of the labour force is unionized.²⁴ The law guarantees workers the ability to join independent unions, bargain both collectively and individually, as well as participate in legal strikes.²⁵ However this exempts some essential workers, such as police and military, who are prohibited from joining unions.²⁶ Collective bargaining is mostly prevalent in agriculture, mining, construction, and public sector workers.²⁷

Working Conditions



In Namibia, there is no generally applicable minimum wage law, however industry-specific minimum wages are applied nationally and surpassed the poverty line.²⁸ Other sectors set their basic levels of pay through collective bargaining, which include the mining, construction, security, and agricultural sectors.²⁹ The legal workweek is 45 hours, with at least 36 consecutive hours of rest between workweeks, as well as equal pay for equal work. Employees may work no more than 10 hours overtime per week and must be paid premium pay for that time.³⁰

The Ministry of Labor, Industrial Relations, and Employment Creation mandates occupational safety and health standards, and the law empowers authorities to enforce these standards through inspections and criminal penalties.³¹ The law covers all employers and employees in the country, including those employed through a private employment agency and requires that employers to provide for the health, safety, and welfare of their employees.³² Although labour laws are effectively enforced in the formal sector, penalties are rarely applied in the informal sector, which employs 57 percent of the population.³³

It has been reported that Chinese firms fail to adhere to the labor code regarding hiring and firing and also fail to pay sector-wide established minimum wages and benefits in certain industries, do not respect workhour regulations for public holidays and Sundays, and do not adhere to occupational health and safety standards. For example, Chinese firms often require construction workers to sleep on site.³⁴

Discrimination

According to the U.S. Department of State, the Government of Namibia prohibits discrimination in employment and occupation based on race, sex, religion, political opinion, national origin or citizenship, pregnancy, family responsibility, disability, age, language, social status, HIV-positive status, and the government generally upholds the law. However, gender discrimination in employment and occupation occurs frequently in the mining and construction industries, which are predominantly male occupied.³⁵

Forced Labor

The law prohibits all forms of forced or compulsory labor. The U.S. Department of State reports this law was effectively enforced and penalties were comparable with those for similar serious crimes. The law mandates seamen may be sentenced to imprisonment with labor. Although the International Labour Organization categorizes this as forced labour, the penalty has reportedly never been applied.³⁶



Child Labor

In Namibia, primary school is free and compulsory from age six through the end of primary school or the age of 16, whichever comes first.³⁷ Forced labor by children is prohibited by law. While the minimum age for employment is 14, individuals under the age of 18 are not allowed to engage in strenuous activities like night work or in sectors like mining and construction.³⁸ Despite the government’s inadequate resources to report formal allegations of forced labor, allegations made in relation to child labor are investigated.³⁹ Children in rural areas have been found to be working on communal farms owned by families herding cattle, goats, and sheep or working as domestic servants or in family businesses.⁴⁰

Civil Society Organizations

Domestic and international human rights groups report being able to operate in Namibia without government restriction and with cooperation with government officials.⁴¹

Immigration Policies Limiting the Employment Options or Movement of Migrants

According to the U.S. Department of State, refugees and immigrants with legal work status enjoy the same labor rights and wages as citizens. However, the government did not provide freedom of movement within the country for refugees as they were required to live in the Osire refugee settlement. Refugees wishing to travel outside of the camp need government permission to obtain identification cards and exit permits.⁴²

Ratification of ILO Conventions Related to Human Trafficking or Rights of Workers and Migrants

ILO 29 Forced Labor	In force
ILO 87 Freedom of Association and Protection of the Right to Organize	In force
ILO 98 Right to Organize and Collective Bargaining	In force
ILO 100 Equal Remuneration	In force
ILO 105 Abolition of Forced Labor	In force
ILO 111 Discrimination	In force
ILO 138 Minimum Age	In force



ILO 181 Private Employment Agencies	Not ratified
ILO 182 Worst Forms of Child Labor	In force
ILO 97 Migration for Employment	Not ratified

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Use of Export Processing Zones (EPZs)

The U.S. Department of State reports that the law provides for the protection of all workers, including those in export processing zones.⁴⁴ However, a report by the Labor Resource and Research Institute (LaRRI) in Namibia describes multiple violations of the Namibian Labor Act committed by EPZ companies. EPZ companies in Namibia have been reported to disregard health and safety regulations as well as paying wages lower than local employers.⁴⁵ Collective bargaining in EPZ companies is almost absent, with only a single EPZ company having signed a recognition agreement with a trade union.⁴⁶ As of 2020, there were 9 operational EPZ companies present in Namibia.⁴⁷

Political Factors

Political Instability or Conflict

Namibia scores a 64.3 in the 2021 Fragile States Index, placing it in the “Elevated Warning” Category,⁴⁸ although the U.S. Department of State Investment Climate Report notes that it is overall a stable country.⁴⁹ Major labor supply countries Angola and Zimbabwe scored with higher risk, at 89.0 and 99.1 respectively.⁵⁰

Level of Crime and Violence

The World Economic Forum 2017-2018 Global Competitiveness Report [MN1] ranks Namibia at 103 out of 137 and 81 out of 137 for business costs of violence and crime and organized crime, respectively.⁵¹ The World Health Organization (WHO) reported a homicide rate of 14.6 homicides per 100,000 people in 2015, a decrease of 4.4 from 2000.⁵² The Overseas Security Advisory Council (OSAC) reports crime in Windhoek is at critical level due to the prevalence of non-violent opportunity crimes such as pickpocketing.⁵³

State Persecution

Members of the San ethnic group are reportedly unable to exercise their rights due to minimal access to education, economic opportunities, overall isolation, and lack of government identification. Without proper identification, the San are



not able to access government social programs or vote.⁵⁴ The U.S. Department of State notes that the San may be at increased risk for trafficking within Namibia.⁵⁵

Level of Corruption

According to the U.S. Department of State Human Rights Report, although the law provides for penalties for corruption by officials, officials engage in corrupt activities with impunity.⁵⁶ The Transparency International Corruption Perception Index ranks Namibia 57 out of 180 countries, with a score of 51 out of 100, where a score of zero is “Highly Corrupt.”⁵⁷

Socio-Economic Factors

Level of National Economic Development

Namibia has a Gross National Income (GNI) per capita (constant 2017 PPP\$) at 9,375.⁵⁸ It has a higher Human Development Index (HDI) score than labor sending countries Angola and Zimbabwe, however it remains significantly lower than neighboring South Africa.⁵⁹ When Namibia’s HDI is adjusted for inequality, the score drops by 35.3 percent, suggesting a high rate of inequality within the country.⁶⁰

Level and Extent of Poverty

According to the United Nations Development Program (UNDP), the most recent survey data available for Namibia’s multidimensional poverty index (MPI) finds that 38.0 percent of Namibians are multidimensionally poor while an additional 20.3 percent live near multidimensional poverty.⁶¹ Poverty is concentrated in the northern regions of Kavango and Ohangwena, where over 58.3 and 53.3 percent of the population respectively are employed in subsistence farming.⁶²

Degree of Gender Inequality

Namibia has a Gender Inequality Index (GII) value of 0.440, ranking it 106 out of 162 countries in the 2019 Index.⁶³ The Gender Development Index value for the country is 1.007, placing it in the Group 1 category for gender parity in HDI values.⁶⁴ The Namibian Government prohibits gender-based discrimination, including employment discrimination, yet women still experience discrimination in areas such as access to credit, salary level, owning and managing businesses, education, and housing.⁶⁵ The U.S. Department of State reports gender-based



violence as a widespread problem.⁶⁶ The prevalence of domestic violence against women during their lifetime is recorded at 25 percent.⁶⁷

There are no formal legal barriers to women’s access to land but non-land assets are dependent on the type of marriage. For example, women married under the community of property regime have equal rights, such as they both must equally agree to sell their property. However, women may experience discrimination in accessing property in customary marriages where such provisions are not provided.⁶⁸ Another difference in civil and customary marriage is that there is a minimum age of marriage under civil law but not customary.⁶⁹

Landlessness and Dispossession

According to the U.S. Department of State, the indigenous lands of Namibia are demarcated to the respective ethnic groups but poorly managed.⁷⁰ The San people live on conservancy lands but are not capable of preventing surrounding, larger ethnic groups from exploiting their land, and the government has reportedly not taken significant steps to stop dispossession.⁷¹

Environmental Factors

Namibia’s climate is prone to extreme temperatures as it is an arid, semi-desert, yet is susceptible to flooding in the rainy season which can limit accessibility in central and northern regions.⁷² Agricultural land accounts for 47.2 percent of land use, with only 1 percent arable land.⁷³

Documented Trafficking Risk in Key Commodity Supply Chains

Fish

Fishing Overview

Namibia currently has two ports, one located at Walvis Bay near the center of the Namibian coastline and the other at Lüderitz in the south.⁷⁴ According to the Food and Agriculture Organization’s Fisheries and Aquaculture Information and Statistics Branch, the Namibian fisheries industry captured around 467,050 metric tons of fish, crustaceans, mollusks, and aquatic invertebrates in 2019.⁷⁵ An important part of the country’s economy, the fisheries sector is responsible for approximately 3 percent of Namibia’s GDP and accounts for 20



percent of exports earnings.⁷⁶ The industry employs around 13,000 people, with a large majority of the economic output generated by marine industrial fisheries.⁷⁷ Due to strong enforcement measures, Namibia has maintained relatively low levels of illegal, unreported, and unregulated (IUU) fishing when compared to other sub-Saharan African countries, including South Africa.⁷⁸

Documented TIP Risk in Fishing

In 2013, there was widespread media coverage of a Chinese-owned commercial vessel, MV Leader, which exploited Namibian, Indonesian, and Chinese workers.⁷⁹ Media articles noted that workers on MV Leader had been recruited via “labour hire.”⁸⁰

In general, reports have noted that while fishing is one of the most important employment areas in Namibia and workers appear to be relatively well-organized, there is some concern over wage payments that are highly seasonally variable and can lead to indebted workers, although this does not appear to rise to the level of trafficking.⁸¹

Sex trafficking has been reported in the fishing areas of Windhoek and Walvis Bay. As a result of both commercial sex work and highly mobile populations, including migrant populations living in and around Namibia’s ports, rates of HIV transmission are reportedly high.⁸²

Livestock

Livestock Overview

Livestock is critical to the Namibian economy, constituting two thirds of agricultural exports by value.⁸³ Beef production is the largest segment of the Namibian livestock sector. In addition to many subsistence herders – over 40 percent of the population raises cattle – the commercial sector is the largest private employment source, employing over 25,000 workers.⁸⁴ Most exports of meat and animals are for the South African market.⁸⁵ In March 2020, Namibia became the first African country to export beef to the United States.⁸⁶

Documented TIP Risk in Livestock

According to the U.S. Department of State 2020 Trafficking in Persons Report, forced labor or forced child labor is involved in cattle production in Namibia.⁸⁷ The U.S. Department of State also reports that San and Zemba children in Namibia are at increased risk to trafficking vulnerability.⁸⁸ However, in 2020 the



U.S. Department of Labor removed Namibia from the List of Goods Produced by Child Labor or Forced Labor after 10 years.⁸⁹ The Bureau of International Labour Affairs had determined there had been a significant reduction of incidences of child labour in the livestock industry. This has been attributed to greater access to export markets for farmers, significant efforts by the government and civil societies, and greater access to education.⁹⁰

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² World Bank. Overview: Namibia. 2021. <http://www.worldbank.org/en/country/namibia/overview>

³ World Bank. *Namibia Data*. <http://data.worldbank.org/?locations=XT-NA>

⁴ World Bank. *Namibia Data*. <http://data.worldbank.org/?locations=XT-NA>

⁵ World Bank. Overview: Namibia. 2021. <http://www.worldbank.org/en/country/namibia/overview>

⁶ World Bank. *Namibia Data*. <http://data.worldbank.org/?locations=XT-NA>

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⁸ Central Intelligence Agency. *The World Factbook: Namibia*. 2021 <https://www.cia.gov/the-world-factbook/countries/namibia/>

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¹¹ Central Intelligence Agency. *The World Factbook: Namibia*. 2021 <https://www.cia.gov/the-world-factbook/countries/namibia/>

¹² Central Intelligence Agency. *The World Factbook: Namibia*. 2021 <https://www.cia.gov/the-world-factbook/countries/namibia/>

¹³ World Bank. *Namibia Data*. <http://data.worldbank.org/?locations=XT-NA>

¹⁴ Central Intelligence Agency. *The World Factbook: Namibia*. 2021 <https://www.cia.gov/the-world-factbook/countries/namibia/>

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¹⁷ U.S. Department of State. *Trafficking in Persons Report. Namibia*. 2021. <https://www.state.gov/reports/2021-trafficking-in-persons-report/namibia/>

¹⁸ World Bank. *Namibia Data*. <http://data.worldbank.org/?locations=XT-NA>

¹⁹ The UN Refugee Agency (UNHCR). *Populations*. <https://reporting.unhcr.org/population>

²⁰ United Nations. Department of Economic and Social Affairs. *International Migrant Stock 2019: By Destination and Origin*. 2019. <https://www.un.org/en/development/desa/population/migration/data/estimates2/estimates19.asp>

²¹ United Nations. Department of Economic and Social Affairs. *International Migrant Stock 2019: By Destination and Origin*. 2019. <https://www.un.org/en/development/desa/population/migration/data/estimates2/estimates19.asp>

²² International Trade Centre. *Trade Map*. www.trademap.org.

²³ Office of the U.S. Trade Representative. *Namibia*. <https://ustr.gov/countries-regions/africa/namibia>

²⁴ U.S. Department of State. Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor. *Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2020: Namibia*. 2020. <https://www.state.gov/reports/2020-country-reports-on-human-rights-practices/namibia/>

²⁵ U.S. Department of State. Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor. *Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2020: Namibia*. 2020. <https://www.state.gov/reports/2020-country-reports-on-human-rights-practices/namibia/>

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³⁰ U.S. Department of State. Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor. *Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2020: Namibia*. 2020. <https://www.state.gov/reports/2020-country-reports-on-human-rights-practices/namibia/>

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- ⁶¹ United Nations Development Program. Human Development Report. Namibia Explanatory Note. 2020. <http://hdr.undp.org/sites/default/files/Country-Profiles/NAM.pdf>
- ⁶² United Nations Development Program. *Poverty and Deprivation in Namibia 2015*. <https://www.na.undp.org/content/namibia/en/home/library/poverty/nimdpoymao2015.html>
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