

# Cabo Verde

## Country Overview

### Politics

Cabo Verde is a parliamentary republic with a president who acts as head of state, and a prime minister who acts as head of government. The law enforcement branch, the National Police under the Ministry of Internal Affairs, and The Judiciary Police, are responsible for law enforcement and investigations, respectively.<sup>1</sup> The first multiparty elections in Cabo Verde were held in 1990, after 15 years of single party rule by the African Party for the Independence of Cabo Verde (PAICV) following the country's independence in 1975. Since then, the small island nation located off the coast of Senegal has remained a relatively stable democracy.<sup>2</sup> Cabo Verde was noted as one of the most improved countries over the past decade, measured by the Fragile States Index in 2019.<sup>3</sup> President Jose Maria Neves and Prime Minister Ulisses Correia e Silva of the Movement for Democracy (MpD) were elected in April 2021.<sup>4</sup>

### Economy

The World Bank classifies Cabo Verde as a “lower middle income” country.<sup>5</sup> The Cabo Verdean economy is largely driven by tourism and related service industries, and is supplemented by foreign aid and remittances from a large Cabo Verdean emigrant population.<sup>6</sup> The country mainly exports fuel, shoes, garments, fish, fish products, footwear products,<sup>7</sup> and animal hides.<sup>8</sup> Cabo Verde has high levels of specialization in processed fish and non-fillet frozen fish products.<sup>9</sup>

The tourism sector represents 25 percent of the country's GDP and enables 40 percent of all economic activity in the country. Due to tourism halting during the COVID-19 pandemic, there was a 14.8 percent contraction in the economy of Cabo Verde in 2020.<sup>10</sup> Cabo Verde's product exports were USD \$83.4 million, ranking 195th in the world for a country's total exports, and had a total of USD \$1.12 billion in imports in 2020, ranking 171st in total imports.<sup>11</sup>

### Social/Human Development

Cabo Verde scores 0.665 on the U.N. Human Development Index (HDI), ranking it 126 out of 189 countries.<sup>12</sup> Cabo Verde has an HDI score of 0.547, which is above the average for countries



in Sub-Saharan Africa.<sup>13</sup> Poverty reduction in Cabo Verde has increased, with the poverty rate declining by 6 percentage points between 2015 and 2019, or from 41 percent to 35 percent.<sup>14</sup>

Various issues such as disease, drought, and low economic opportunities have sparked large migrations of people to the mainland in search of work and stability. 68 percent of the total population is classified as living in urban areas, and people are dispersed unevenly among the nine islands in the country. Islands in the east are more sparsely populated and are used primarily for their large salt deposits, while the islands in the south tend to receive higher levels of rainfall and support higher population densities.<sup>15</sup>

## **U.S. Department of State TIP Report Summary (2021)**

### **U.S. Department of State TIP Ranking: Tier 2**

According to the Trafficking in Persons Report, trafficking risk may be found among Cabo Verdean children in export supply chains, including agriculture and fishing.<sup>16</sup>

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

### **Migrants and Other Vulnerable Populations**

Cabo Verde has a net migration rate of -0.69 migrant(s)/1,000 population.<sup>17</sup> Cabo Verde's net migration rate is negative, with the number abroad estimated at 700,000, with the most emigrants residing in the United States and Portugal.<sup>18</sup>

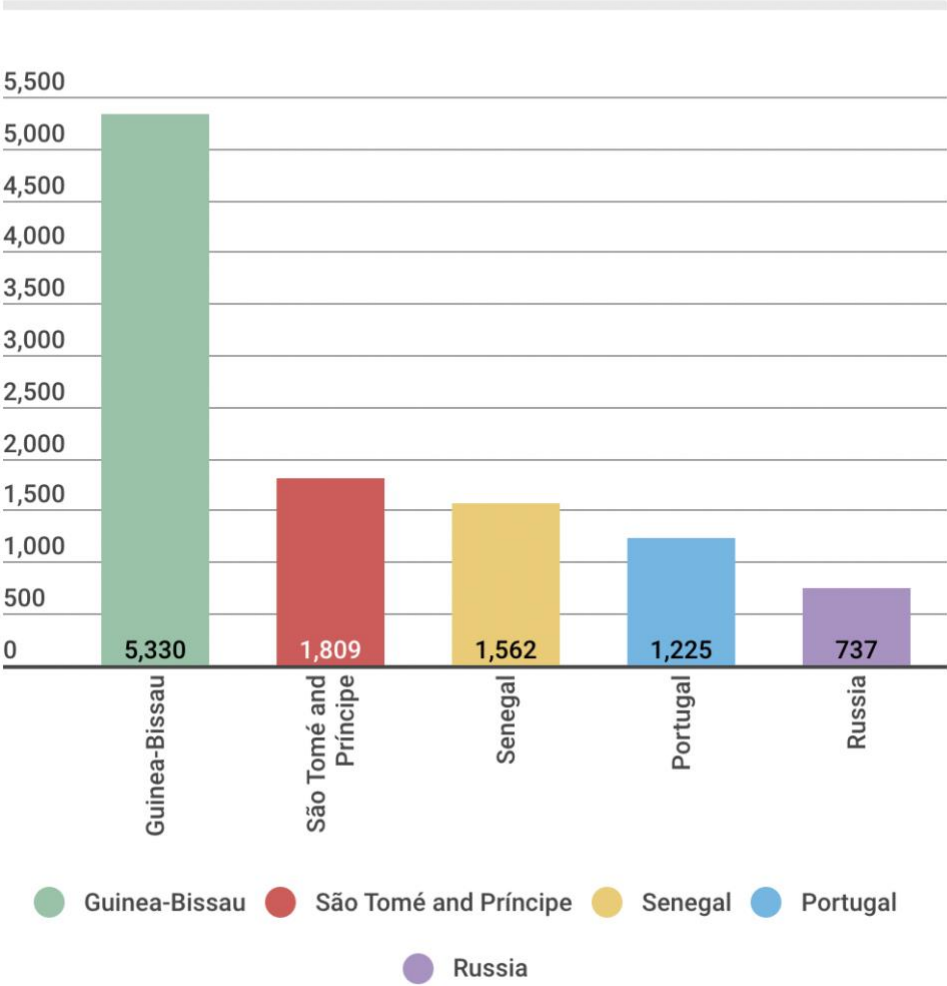
Tourism and construction sectors, both formally and informally, rely heavily on immigrant labor. The majority of migrants come from Portuguese-Speaking African countries, as well as Portugal, China, Nigeria, and Senegal.<sup>19</sup>

The Government of Cabo Verde has been implementing the "II Action Plan for Immigration and Social Inclusion of Immigrants (2018-2021)" to strengthen the country's policies for the reception and inclusion of immigrants.<sup>20</sup> However, no central authority manages the cases of refugees in Cabo Verde because the 1951 UN Protocol on the Status of Refugees has not been implemented.<sup>21</sup>

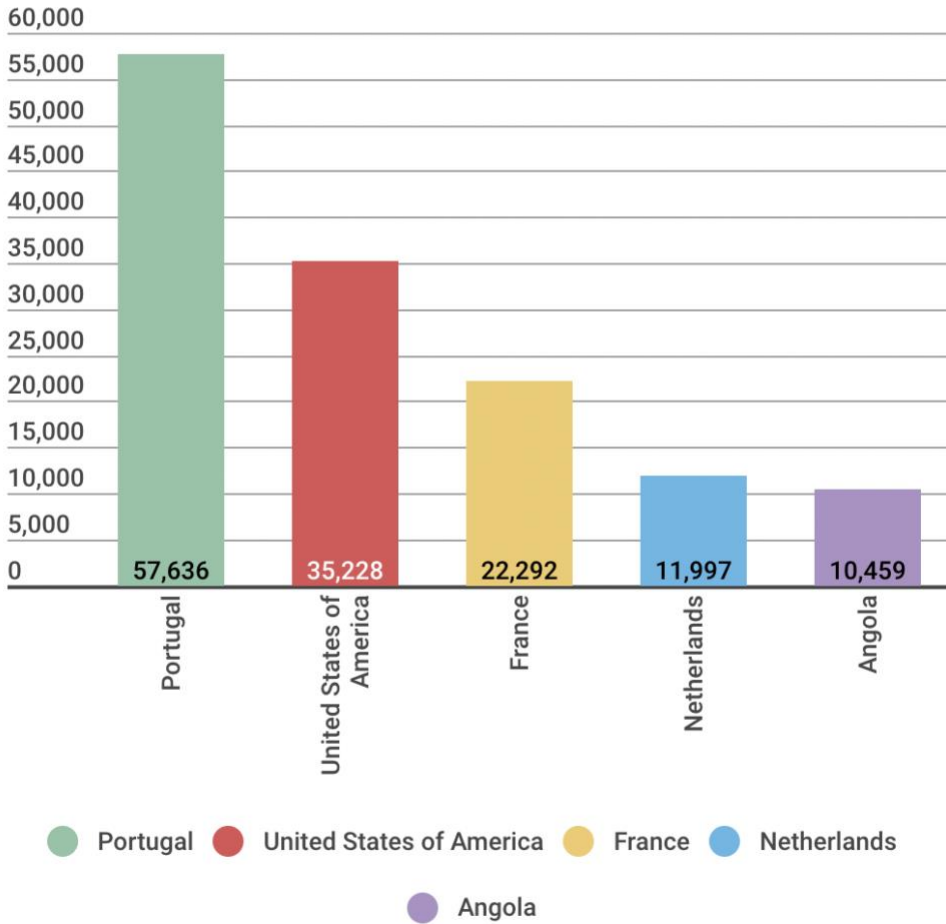
During the COVID-19 pandemic, the Government of Cabo Verde repatriated thousands of citizens who were stranded abroad when travel was heavily restricted.<sup>22</sup>



### Migrants to Cabo Verde



### Migrants from Cabo Verde

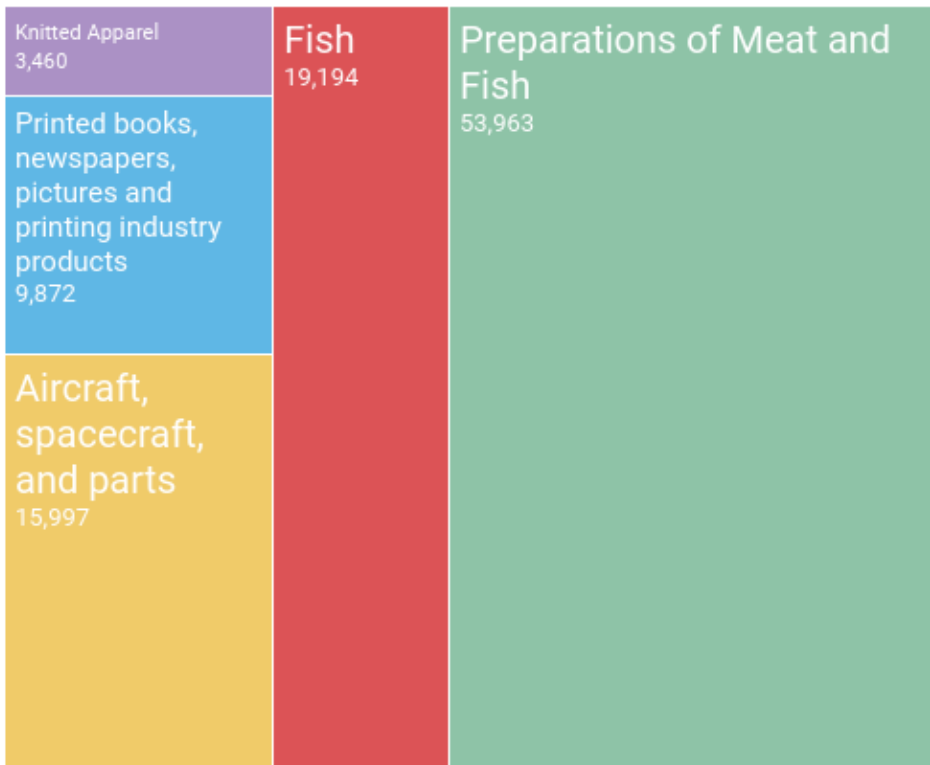


## Exports and Trade

The top exports from Cabo Verde in 2021 were prepared fish, mollusks, aircraft parts, printed industry products, and apparel.<sup>23</sup>

### Top Commodity Exports (USD/Thousands)

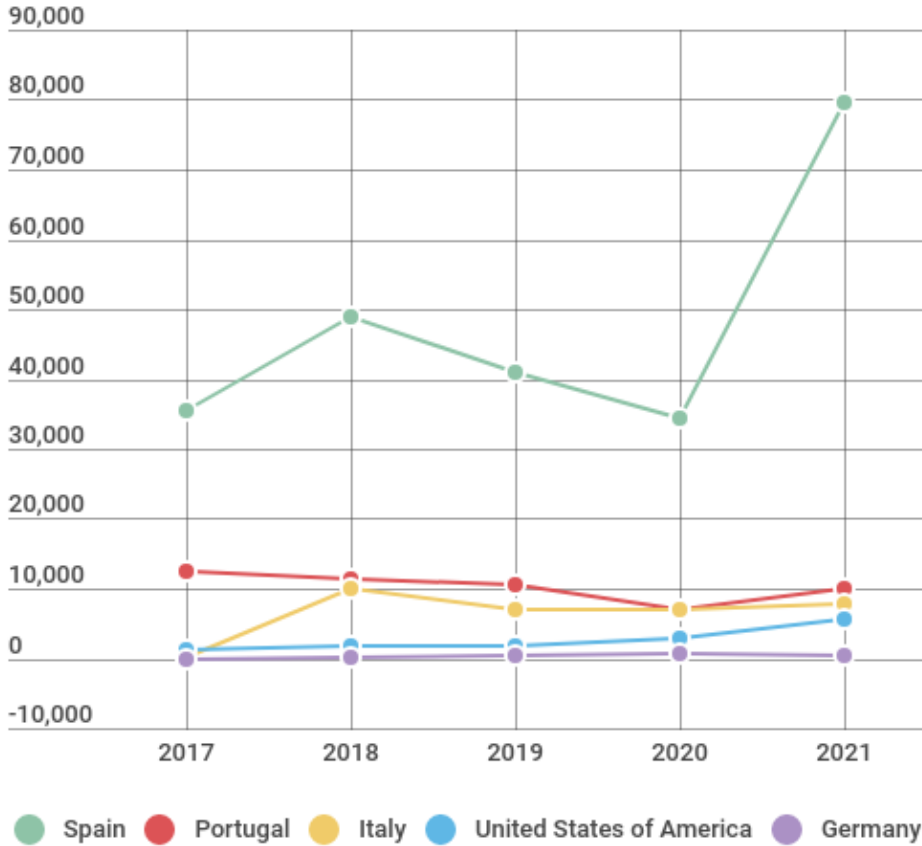
2021



The top importers of goods from Cabo Verde were Spain, Portugal, Italy, the United States, and Germany.<sup>24</sup>



**Cabo Verde Export Partners (USD/Thousands)**



**Trafficking in Persons Risk Factors Analysis**

**Legal/Policy Risk Factors**

**Level of Legal Protection for Civil Liberties and Workers’ Rights**

**Freedom of Association**

Workers in Cabo Verde have the legal right to form and join labor unions, bargain collectively, and strike without fear of reprisal from the government or employers. There are certain sectors of the economy deemed “essential” in which workers’ right to strike could legally be restricted.<sup>25</sup>



According to Freedom House, Cabo Verde scores 38 out of 40 for Political rights and 54 out of 60 for Civil liberties.<sup>26</sup> The ILO is currently working with unions and employers in the country to expand dialogues between the two parties, as collective bargaining is new to many sectors of the Cabo Verdean economy.<sup>27</sup>

## Working Conditions

The law stipulates a minimum monthly wage of ESC 11,000 (USD \$101.59) for the public sector workforce, and ESC 12,000 (USD \$110.83) for entry level workers.<sup>28</sup> The government defines the poverty income level as ESC 105 (USD \$1.12) per day. Workers can legally refuse hazardous and/or unsafe working conditions, and governmental authorities reportedly protect workers making such claims.<sup>29</sup>

In general, Cabo Verdean state authorities and employers enforce and adhere to the legal regime governing workers' rights.<sup>30</sup> There is a Labor Inspection System in Cabo Verde under the Labor Code, which has arbitration powers, technical autonomy, and power of authority to visit workplaces to pressure employers to adopt protective measures to prevent risks of breaking labor laws.<sup>31</sup> Legal protections for workers extend to those working in the informal sectors of the economy. Unions and authorities agree that enforcement capabilities of labor laws need to be increased (shortcomings have been attributed to the lack of trained inspectors working for agencies monitoring working conditions, especially in the less-populated islands).<sup>32</sup> The most prevalent labor abuse in the Cabo Verdean economy is related to workers working more hours than legally permitted. This primarily affects domestic workers, health professionals, farmers, and anglers in fishing, among others.<sup>33</sup>

The U.S. State Department has indicated that migrant workers are more likely to face abuse and/or illegal working conditions.<sup>34</sup>

## Discrimination

The Cabo Verdean labor law prohibits discrimination in employment and occupation based on race, color, sex, gender, disability, language, sexual orientation, gender identity, political opinion, ethnic origin, age, HIV-positive status or having other communicable diseases, or social status, and the government, in general, has effectively enforced the law.<sup>35</sup>

Gender-based discrimination remains an issue in the Cabo Verdean workforce, and it has been reported that women often face discrimination in hiring and receiving lower salaries than men.<sup>36</sup>

There are also reports that migrant workers have often worked without contracts, therefore excluding them from applicable laws.<sup>37</sup>



## Forced Labor

The law prohibits all forms of forced labor, and these laws have reportedly been well enforced by Cape Verdean authorities.<sup>38</sup> The government particularly recognizes the vulnerability of West African migrants to forced labor in the construction and hospitality sectors.<sup>39</sup>

## Child Labor

The minimum work age for children in Cabo Verde is 15, and children between the ages of 15-18 are not permitted to work more than 38 hours a week by law.<sup>40</sup>

Despite several laws prohibiting child labor, enforcement is inconsistent and ineffective. Many citizens do not consider children working to help support their families as negative, even if the law deems their work as dangerous. Furthermore, the government has little to no control in the informal sector, which accounts for approximately 12 percent of the economy.<sup>41</sup> The Institute for Children and Adolescents in Cabo Verde reported 24 child labor cases in 2020 related to domestic service, agriculture, garbage collection, and drug trafficking, among others.<sup>42</sup> The tourism industry presents the most evident risk of human trafficking and commercial sexual exploitation of children, with the Sal and Boa Vista islands registering the highest instances of child sexual exploitation.<sup>43</sup>

The US Department of Labor recognizes moderate advancement in Cabo Verde to eliminate the most dangerous forms of child labor, such as drafting the law on Crimes of Aggression and Sexual Abuse Against Children and Adolescents to fight child sex tourism. However, there are weaknesses in enforcement by the State Police, Judicial Police, and National Police.<sup>44</sup>

## Civil Society Organizations

Domestic and international human rights organizations have been able to operate freely and publish their findings without government interference. Government authorities have also been receptive to these groups' views and recommendations and have worked with them on issues of child abuse and providing services to persons with disabilities.<sup>45</sup>

The most prominent organizations in Cabo Verde mobilize to advocate for land rights for indigenous people and for women's representation in local decision-making.<sup>46</sup>





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

Conventions	Status
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

### Promotion of Emigration/Remittance Economy

Emigration is widespread among the Cabo Verdean population, and the diaspora outnumbers the number of citizens living in the country. Many emigrate to West Africa, Europe, or the United States illegally, overstaying tourist visas to work.<sup>47</sup> Remittance flows into the country from the diaspora are among the highest in all of Africa (in terms of percentage of GDP).<sup>48</sup>

While there are high rates of emigration from Cabo Verde, the nation’s economy also relies on large numbers of migrant workers from other countries, which has been linked to trafficking risks for migrant workers. The Committee on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of their Families met in 2022 to restart dialogue to implement the International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families to improve investment in Cabo Verde, permanent channels for foreign nationals to access residency permits, labor contracts, as well as promoting stronger ties between the islands and other countries.<sup>49</sup>



## Political Risk Factors

### Political Instability or Conflict

Cabo Verde scored 64.2 in the 2021 Fragile States Index (FSI), placing it in the “warning” category and ranking the country 110 out of 179.<sup>50</sup> The FSI scale ranges from 0 (“sustainable” political system) to 120 (a political system on “high alert”). In 2021, Cabo Verde was one of the most improved countries measured by the Fragile States Index in the past decade.<sup>51</sup>

### Level of Corruption

The Transparency International Corruption Perception Index scores Cabo Verde as 58 out of 100, where 0 signals “Highly Corrupt” and 100 signals “Very Clean.”<sup>52</sup> Furthermore, Cabo Verde is ranked 39 out of 180 countries, showcasing lower perceptions of corruption among the public.<sup>53</sup>

### Level of Crime and Violence

The U.S. State Department considers crime to be a “serious risk” in Cabo Verde.<sup>54</sup> According to the U.N. Office on Drugs and Crime, Cabo Verde had a homicide rate of 11.5 for every 100,000 people in 2016.<sup>55</sup>

## Socio-Economic Risk Factors

### Level of National Economic Development

Cabo Verde scores 0.65 on the Human Development Index (HDI), ranking it 125 out of 189 countries. Cabo Verde scored higher on the HDI scale than neighboring countries, Sao Tome and Principe and Equatorial Guinea.<sup>56</sup>

### Level and Extent of Poverty

Between 2015 and 2019, poverty rates decreased from 41.3 percent to 34.2 percent. However, the COVID-19 pandemic was estimated to have increased the population of those below the poverty line by 7 percentage points.<sup>57</sup>

### Environmental Factors and Climate Change

Deforestation, water shortages, droughts, and unregulated land use for grazing and farming have led to desertification and environmental damage.<sup>58</sup> The western islands have highly damaged soil fertility due to higher population densities.<sup>59</sup> The effects of climate change, such as rising sea levels, coastal erosion, and flooding, are a significant environmental risk in Cabo Verde.<sup>60</sup>



## Documented Trafficking Risk in Key Commodity Supply Chains

### Fishing

#### Fishing Overview

The fishing industry is vital to the Cabo Verdean economy, with processed fish accounting for approximately USD \$36 million, or 43.1 percent, of total exports in 2020.<sup>61</sup>

Illegal, unreported, and unregulated (IUU) fishing destabilizes economic activity by overtaking smaller fisheries, which leads to food shortages, and even acts as a front for illegal drug trafficking on fishing vessels.<sup>62</sup> The IUU Fishing Index ranks Cabo Verde 117 out of 152 countries, with a score of 1.98, with 1 representing the best, and 5 the worst.<sup>63</sup> The exclusive economic zone size score is 4 out of 5, signaling that a very small area that is available for fishing activity.<sup>64</sup>

Additionally, Cabo Verde has a low Marine Stewardship Council (MSC) certified fishery score of 5, as well as a score of 5 for the provision of vessel data for global record-keeping, and a score of 5 for registered vessels with foreign/unknown ownership.<sup>65</sup> Cabo Verde is also vulnerable to an unequal trade balance for fisheries products and has a score of 4 on gross national income per capita by volume of catches and trade value for their goods.<sup>66</sup>

In 2019, the EU and Cabo Verde signed a new protocol, the Sustainable Fishing Partnership Agreement (SFPA), to promote legal and sustainable fishing practices and management, as well as increase control and surveillance for illegal fishing.<sup>67</sup>

#### Documented TIP Risk in Fishing

The U.S. Department of State lists children in impoverished neighborhoods and those engaged in the agriculture industry, including fishing, among the highest at risk of trafficking.<sup>68</sup> While the estimated number of children working in fishing is only 3.2 percent or an estimated 2,392 children, the U.S. Department of Labor reports that 79.2 percent of children working in Cabo Verde are in the agriculture sector, which is dominated by the fishing industry.<sup>69</sup>



## Endnotes

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