

Senegal

Country Overview

Politics

Senegal is a presidential republic located in northwestern Africa. The country gained independence from France on 4 April 1960 and has since developed into one of the most stable electoral democracies in Africa.¹ Senegal has notably undergone several peaceful transitions of power. The country's current president is Macky Sall, who, initially elected in 2012, is serving his second five-year term in office after being reelected in February of 2019.

The legal system consists of a civil law system based on French law, with a Supreme Court and Constitutional Council comprised of seven members. The legislative branch includes a unicameral National Assembly, whose members are elected by a nationwide proportional representation vote every five years.²

Economy

Since 2018, World Bank designates Senegal as a lower-middle income economy, an improvement from the low-income status it had held from 2017 and before.³

For 2021 World Bank ranked Senegal 105th out of 207 with a GDP of 27.6 billion, and 102nd for Gross National Income. Per capita gross national income was \$1,430 in 2020. Senegal's economy averaged an over 6% growth rate in GDP per year between 2014 and 2018. Senegal's GDP growth dropped to 0.87% in 2020 during the coronavirus pandemic. The pandemic had a particularly negative impact on Senegal's tourism, transport, and export industries. The government introduced multiple measures to reverse the economic downturn, including an Economic and Social Resilience Program, but a lack of fiscal buffers and safety nets coupled with a large informal sector has posed greater challenges.⁴

While in 2021 real GDP growth reached pre-pandemic levels (6.1%) again, further economic recovery has been hindered by the conflict in Ukraine, which has caused gas prices to surge and investment to decline. World Bank predicts that Senegal's economic recovery will be gradual and will require substantial government intervention. World Bank also identified Senegal's key development challenges as lowering energy costs, promoting the services economy, increasing human capital for productivity growth, and boosting the country's resilience to macro-fiscal, environmental, and social risks.⁵



Social/Human Development

In 2021, Senegal received a Human Development Index (HDI) value of 0.51, placing it in the “low” category for human development classification. Senegal ranked 170th out of 191 countries and territories. This value has grown from 0.373 in 1990. Senegal’s life expectancy at birth has similarly experienced a similar upwards trend, increasing by over ten years since 1990. Also as of 2021, Senegal’s Gender Inequality Index scored 0.530 from the UN Human Development Reports, ranking it 131 out of 170 countries for gender inequality.⁶ The main ethnic groups in Senegal include Wolof, Pular, Serer, Mandinka, Jola, and Soninke.⁷

Senegal has a large youth population, with over 90% of the country under the age of 54 and the median age being 19.4, but has not been successful in developing potential human capital. The country’s low literacy rates (51%), low mean years of schooling, high unemployment, and pervasive poverty (the 2011 estimate placed the population living below the poverty line at 46.7%) provide clear roadblocks to this development, and further impede hopes for Senegalese youth.⁸

U.S. Department of State TIP Report Summary (2022)

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

According to the *Trafficking in Persons Report*, Senegal does not fully meet the standards for the elimination of trafficking. Nevertheless, the government has made significant efforts to increase trafficking investigations and prosecutions, provide anti-trafficking training to judicial and law enforcement officials, and increase the penalties for trafficking. The state has also devoted resources to a written plan to combat trafficking. The report noted, however, that in the previous two years Senegal has not made significant efforts to implement anti-trafficking measures. There have been no recent convictions or prosecutions of child trafficking, the government has identified significantly fewer trafficking victims, and referred fewer victims to services.⁹

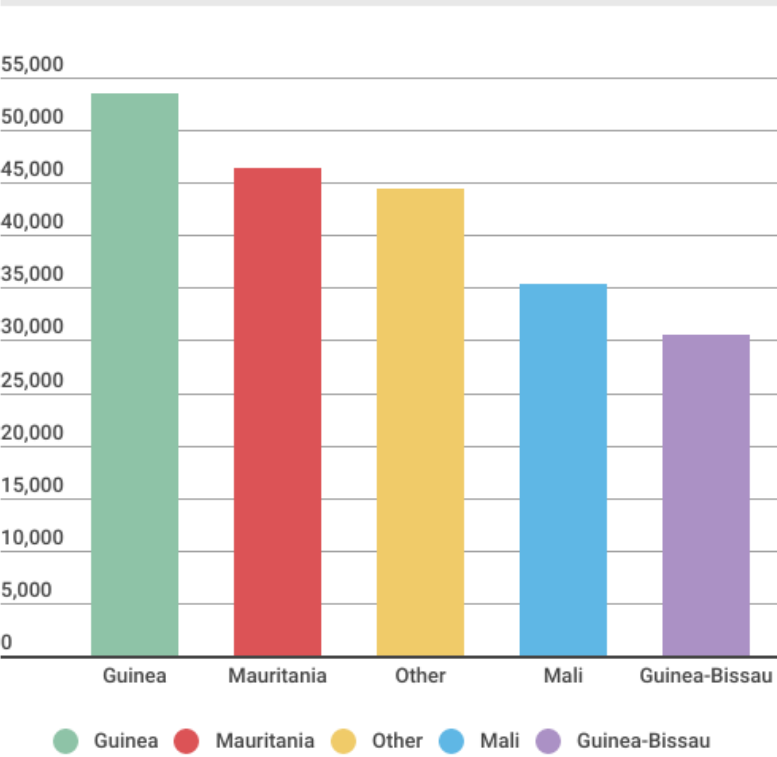
Migrant and Other Vulnerable Populations

Senegal has a net migration rate of -0.71 migrants/1,000 population. Around 14% of the population are internal migrants.¹⁰ The UNHCR reported 13,730 refugees present in Senegal in 2022.¹¹



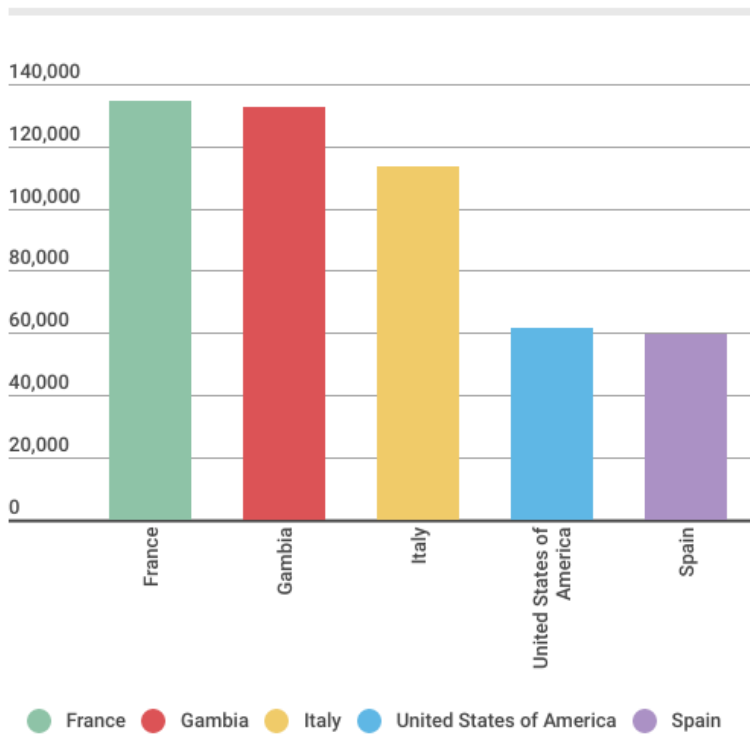
The largest source country for migrants is Guinea, followed closely by Mauritania, “other,” (migrants who have travelled through multiple countries or whose origins are unknown), as well as Mali, and Guinea-Bissau.

Migrants to Senegal



The top destination countries for migrants from Senegal are France, Gambia, Italy, the United States, and Spain.

Migrants from Senegal

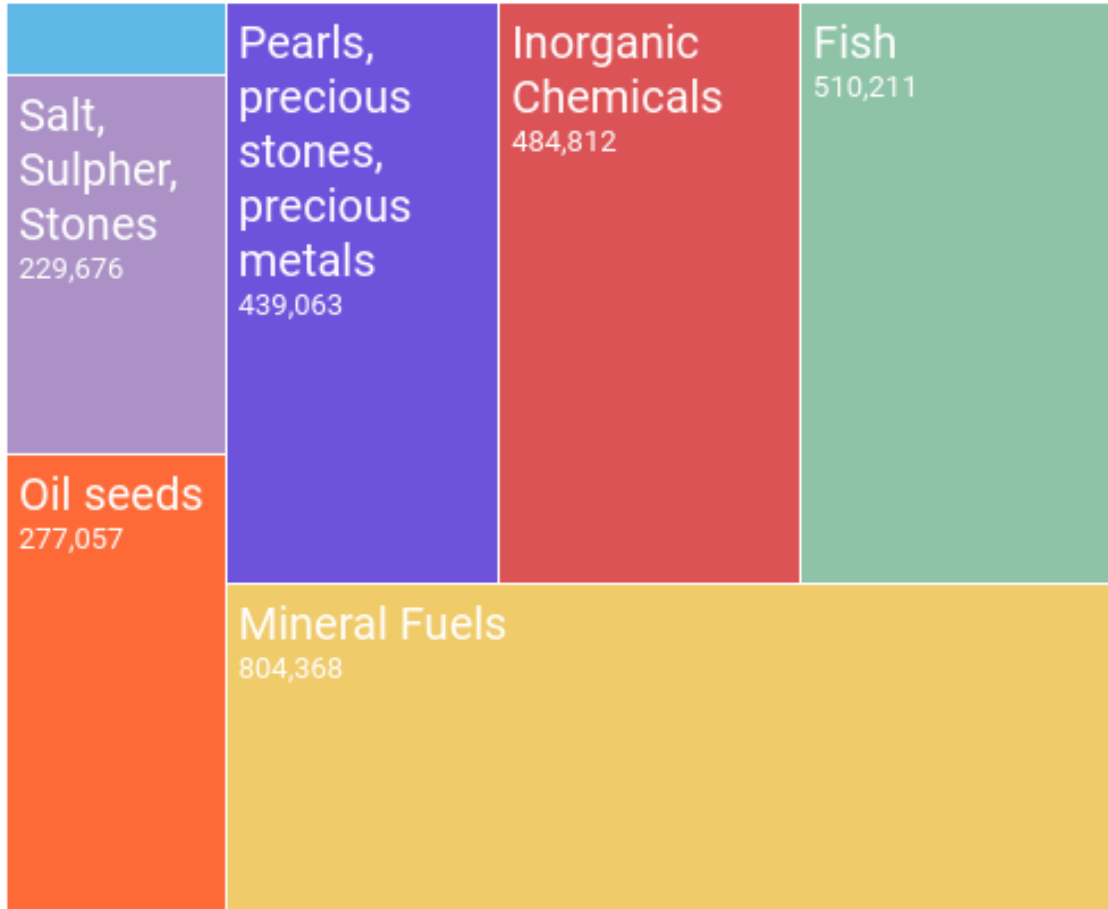


Exports and Trade

Senegal's top exports in 2021 were mineral fuels, fish, inorganic chemicals, pearls and precious stones, and oil seeds.¹²



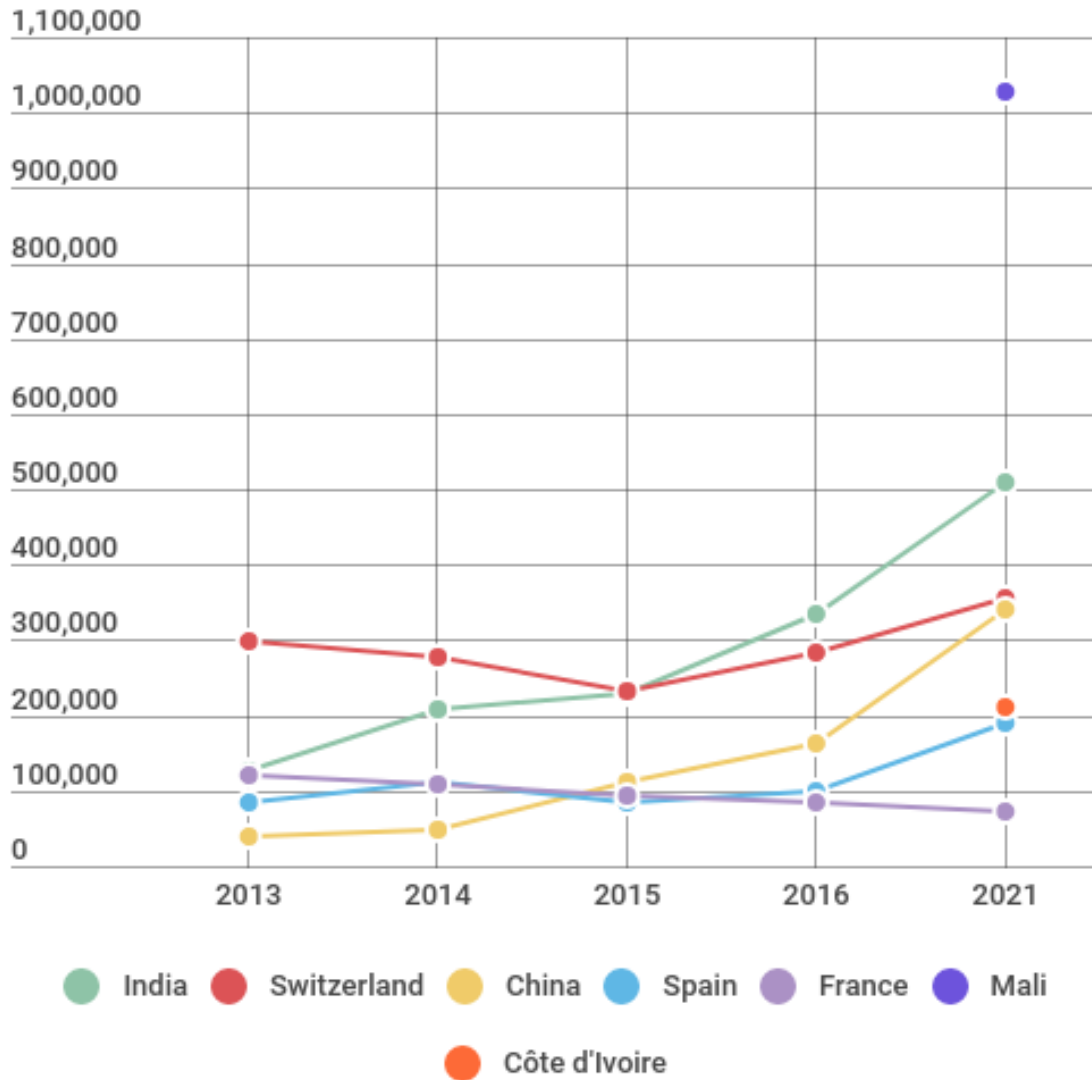
2021



The top importers of all goods from Senegal were Mali, India, Switzerland, China, and Côte D'Ivoire.



Senegal 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

While freedom of association is a constitutional right, in practice there are serious government limitations on protests and freedom of assembly. All protests must be approved in advance by the Ministry of Interior, while demonstrations around sensitive political moments have been outright banned or violently dispersed by the state security forces. Furthermore, some assembly restrictions introduced as COVID-19 measures still remain in place and inhibit citizens ability to gather in protest.¹³

Working Conditions

There is a national minimum wage in place, which is higher than the estimated poverty income rate, for both agricultural and nonagricultural workers. The Ministry of Labor, however, purportedly enforces the minimum wage inadequately, and labor unions, although limited in their actions, are often expected to intervene on the behalf of workers' needs.

Discrimination

The law calls for equal legal rights for women, although discrimination is widespread and especially common in rural areas. Paternal rights are a major obstacle to women's equal treatment, as women are deprived of the legal responsibility for their children. Likewise, it is difficult for women to purchase property, and gain access to land or capital independently of their husbands. While there are legal penalties in place, sexual harassment of women is reportedly a pervasive issue and the government often failed to properly implement the law.¹⁴ Women also often experienced discrimination in employment and are not guaranteed the equal right to work for certain occupations.

The laws which proscribe all acts of racial, ethnic, or religious discrimination are enforced effectively. Discrimination against persons with disabilities is similarly prohibited by law, but enforcement of these measures is inadequate, and many legally guaranteed services are absent or ignored in practice. The law does not offer protections against discrimination based on sexual orientation or gender identity. LGBTQ+ persons are often the victims of violence and social stigma that is tolerated by officials. Consensual same-sex activity between adults is criminalized, although the law is rarely enforced. Moreover, nongovernmental organizations that advocate for LGBTQ+ rights are curtailed by the government.¹⁵ Conversely, the government prohibits discrimination against those suffering from HIV and AIDS and has even conducted several awareness campaigns to decrease societal stigma around the issue.



Forced Labor

All forms of compulsory or forced labor are prohibited by law. Compulsory labor in prison, however, is present, including of those imprisoned for participation in strikes in essential services or “occupying the workplace or its immediate surroundings during strike actions.” While there are severe penalties in place for forced labor practices, the government did not effectively enforce these laws. Forced labor notably continues in artisanal mining, farm labor, sex trafficking, and domestic servitude.¹⁶

Child Labor

The minimum working age is set by law at 15. Hazardous work is prohibited until the legal age of adulthood, which is 18, but certain exceptions expose children to dangerous working conditions, nonetheless. For instance, boys below the age of 16 are allowed to engage in “light work” in mines and quarries, where they are subjected to hazardous conditions. In the agricultural sector, children as young as 12 are allowed to work on family farms. There are penalties for using child labor, which often go unenforced and are not commensurate with other serious crimes.

The Ministry of Labor investigates child labor in the formal economy, but the vast majority of child labor occurs in the informal sector, which is not effectively monitored and where laws against child labor are not thoroughly enforced. Furthermore, the Child Labor Division within the Ministry of Labor is understaffed and only based in large cities, resulting in child labor in rural areas going unmonitored and unnoticed by officials. There is also no clear system to report child labor violations, and the government depends on unions to report such incidents.¹⁷

The International Labor Organization reported that 28 percent of Senegalese children participated in the workforce. The most common form of forced child labor is begging by children in Quranic schools. The National Anti-Trafficking Task Force and the Child Protection Special Unit attempted to combat forced child begging, and the government even conducted seminars with local officials and civil society organizations to increase awareness of the exploitation of children. However, authorities did not generally prosecute these schools at even the minimum sentencing guidelines.¹⁸

Child labor is most common in the Tambacounda, Louga, and Fatick regions. In these areas, economic pressures and inadequate educational opportunities have driven up to 90 percent of children into informal and family-based work. Child labor was reported in fishing, artisanal gold mining, agriculture, rock quarrying, metal and woodworking shops, and more. The artisanal gold mining sector is unregulated and particularly dangerous for child laborers: some child gold washers are even exposed to mercury and toxic chemicals for several hours each day without proper training or protective wear.¹⁹



The exploitation of children for commercial sex and pornography is proscribed by the law. Although this law is not effectively applied, reports referred to authorities are investigated. Sex trafficking is particularly prevalent in Kedougou, a gold-mining region in southeast Senegal. While there were no government reports of child sex tourism, the country is considered a destination for child sex tourism by European tourists.²⁰

Civil Society Organizations

Discrimination against unions is prohibited by the law, although the government does wield significant influence over union registration. Trade unions are vetted by the Minister of the Interior, who is granted complete discretion in his decision making, and unions are sometimes denied on arbitrary or ambiguous grounds. Furthermore, there is no independent body for a refused union to contact or appeal their case. The right to collective bargaining is legally guaranteed but strictly regulated by the government. There are no clear or appropriate mechanisms to encourage collective bargaining in place. The Constitution enshrines the right to strike, but again, in practice, the government effectively limits civil society groups' actions and rights.

The government has adopted a contentious approach to unions and union workers. The National Workers Confederation of Senegal criticized the government in 2009 for the long, opaque process of registration, alleging activists were harassed and intimidated, and that the reinstatement of dismissed trade unionist managers was an unnecessarily slow process.²¹ Nongovernmental organizations are generally allowed and able to operate without government interference, but NGOs representing certain causes, such as LGBTQ+ rights, do face restrictions.²²

Immigration Policies Limiting the Employment Options or Movement of Migrants

Per Senegalese law, migrants and foreign workers are entitled to the same minimum wage standards as citizens. Within the past few years, Senegal has transitioned from a destination country for migrants in Africa to a transition country for migrants to travel through West Africa. Over half of Senegal's immigrant population is comprised of Mauritians, Malians, and Guineans, and most are employed in low-skilled labor.²³

The government enables refugees and asylum seekers to integrate themselves into Senegalese life, advocating for their local integration, naturalization, long term residence permits, and even including refugees in national social service programs.

Senegal is a member of the Treaty of the Economic Community of West African States and the Treaty of the West African Economic Monetary Unit, which establish the "freedom of movement of persons, goods services, and capital for citizens for Member States, as well as the



right to residence and establishment.”²⁴ Senegal is also a signatory to the 1951 Convention relating to the Status of Refugees and the 1990 international convention on the Protection of the Right of All Migrants Workers and Their Families. There are numerous international and domestic organizations within Senegal promoting the safety, wellbeing, and rights of economic migrants.²⁵

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

Use of “Export Processing Zones”

Senegal initially passed legislation to form Special Economic Zones in 2017. Since 2017, three Special Economic Zones have been launched-- in Diamniadio Sandiara, and in Ndiass—relatively near to Dakar.²⁶

Promotion of Emigration/Remittance Economy

Remittances are important for Senegal’s economy, and the diaspora is valued and represented in government.²⁷

Political Risk Factors



Political Instability or Conflict

While Senegal’s government has remained stable over Macky Sall’s administration, increasing political conflict between the state and civil society has been noted. In 2022, the Fragile States Index, which measures cohesion, economic, political, and social indicators, gave Senegal the score of 72.1, placing the country into the “elevated warning” category.²⁸ In 2021, Senegal ranked in the 41st percentile for Political Stability and Absence of Violence/Terrorism.²⁹

In the latter half of 2022, the National Assembly introduced several laws to combat terrorism. However, critics have viewed these laws as a move to silence dissent and expand state surveillance.³⁰ The counterterrorism measures included “seriously disturbing public order,” and offenses linked to “information and communication technologies” as criteria for life imprisonment. The laws also threatened harsh penalties for the crime of “incitement,” which is vaguely defined and could be exploited to silence political opposition groups.³¹ In June 2022, the Movement for the Defense of Democracy protested these counterterrorism laws and were met with brutal force by police; at least 20 protestors were arrested.

In March of 2021, a lethal government crackdown of protests in support of the prominent opposition leader Ousmane Sonko, who was arrested on charges of rape, resulted in the deaths of 14 demonstrators, with hundreds more injured.³²

Level of Crime and Violence

The OCI noted the growth of foreign directed crime in Senegal, including drug trafficking, cybercrime, human trafficking, and illegal mining and smuggling in Kedougou. There has also been the development of “criminal networks” in Senegal involved in the selling and trafficking drugs.³³

State Persecution

State persecution of LGBTQ+ persons is prevalent. The Senegalese legal code carries a five-year sentence for “acts against nature.” LGBTQ+ people were also the victims of dozens of assaults in the first half of 2022 that went unpunished by the state.³⁴ In May 2022, a high school teacher in Dakar was fired after he asked a class to write about homosexuality for an English exam.

Level of Corruption



In 2021, Senegal scored in the 58th percentile for “control of corruption.”³⁵ Senegal’s government is generally stable, but there have been corruption charges put forth by civil society organizations and local media. One particularly high-profile case involved officials who were engaging in timber trafficking in Casamance. There have also been allegations of the government overlooking the trafficking of certain counterfeit medicines by influential religious families that have undue influence over government decision making.³⁶

Socio-Economic Risk Factors

Level of National Economic Development

World Bank classifies Senegal as a “lower-middle” income economy. President Macky Sall came to power under a reformist economic agenda and eventually enacted the Emerging Senegal Plan (ESP), which sought to “implement priority economic reforms and investment projects to increase economic growth while preserving macroeconomic stability and debt sustainability.” Macky Sall’s plans also included significant structural infrastructure changes, including the construction of a new highway and international airport near Dakar, and upgrading energy infrastructure. The ESP has suffered from Senegal’s challenging business climate, namely high energy costs and a culture of overspending. Nevertheless, Senegal has received support from the IMF to implement President Macky Sall’s economic program, and international investors have demonstrated confidence in the plan. The country’s real GDP in 2020 was estimated to be \$55.26 billion. Real GDP per capita was estimated at \$3,300 for 2020.³⁷

Level and Extent of Poverty

Poverty is widespread in Senegal, with 27 percent of the population living in severe “multi-dimensional poverty,” and 46 percent of the population living below the national income poverty line. Senegal holds an inequality adjusted HDI score of 0.354, placing it in the low human development category.³⁸

Degree of Gender Inequality

In 2021, Senegal received a Gender Inequality Index value of 0.530, and a rank of 131 out of 191 countries for gender equality. There are women involved in governance, and 43 percent of parliamentary seats are held by women, but there are still major achievement gaps between genders. While a mere 11 percent of women have access to at least some secondary education, over 30 percent of men receive some secondary education. The discrepancy in labor force population rate, with 33 percent of women participating compared to 56.7 percent of men, reflects a similar trend.³⁹



Moreover, Senegalese girls and women experience high rates of gender-based violence and sexual assault. Girls are frequently abused by their teachers, school officials, and other students.⁴⁰

Environmental Factors

Key environmental risks facing Senegal include periods of drought; deforestation; overgrazing; soil erosion; desertification; seasonal flooding; sea level rise; and coastal erosion.⁴¹ The country has weak environmental protective laws, and wildlife populations are at times seriously threatened by poaching.⁴²

Documented Trafficking in Persons Risk Factors in Key Commodity Supply Chains

Gold Mining

Gold Mining Overview

Gold is one of Senegal's primary and most profitable exports. Over 98 percent of Senegal's gold mining operations occur in the Kedougou region in southeastern Senegal by the border of Mali and Guinea. Artisanal gold mining developed with strong government encouragement in the early 2000s with the emergence of industrial mining companies. As gold prices rose, more farmers became interested in earning a living working at the mines. In 2018, Senegalese gold mines produced over four tons of product, worth \$138.6 million, and provided jobs for over 30,000 people.⁴³ Gold mining along the Gambia river attracts prospectors from across Senegal and the surrounding area.⁴⁴

Documented Trafficking in Persons Risk Factors in Gold Mining

There are several areas of concern within Senegal's gold mining industry. The mines are in almost constant operation, and many workers take on multiple shifts a day. There are links to both human and drug trafficking, as well as violence. There is little government regulation or oversight at the mines. Women and children treat and wash the gold after it is mined with dangerous chemicals, such as mercury, without protective wear.⁴⁵

Sex trafficking is common in the Kedougou region, although the government began to work with an NGO to combat the prevalence of sex trafficking near gold mines. Women and children



are deceptively recruited through the system of Confiage, where parents send their children to live with other family members to be closer to educational and economic opportunities, and then are forced into sex trafficking and labor in gold mining. Forced laborers in the mines are generally from Senegal, but many more are also taken transnationally from Burkina Faso, The Gambia, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, and Mali. Most sex trafficking victims are taken from Nigeria, Senegal, Ghana, Mali, Guinea, and Sierra Leone, and have been tricked into a system of debt bondage. These women are given fake documents to be transported across the border while their real identification documents are confiscated from them. One NGO ascribes the growing demand for sex workers in the gold mining districts to cultural and religious beliefs that link sex with an increased chance of finding gold.⁴⁶

Fishing

Fishing Overview

Fishing is one of Senegal's main export industries, comprising over 3.2 percent of the country's GDP and providing jobs for over 600,000 Senegalese workers. Dakar is a central port to the industry, offering an important landing and transit location for industrial vessels in West Africa. A major issue facing the fishing sector, however, is the abundance of illegal, unreported, and unregulated fishing (IUU), particularly from foreign vessels.⁴⁷

Documented Trafficking in Persons Risk Factors in Fishing

Chinese operated fishing vessels contain both foreign and domestic workers who are at risk for trafficking.⁴⁸ The presence of Spanish and Chinese fishing vessels along Senegalese shores has led to the decimation of the local fishing population. These vessels often infringe on set agreements with Senegal such as the distance from the shore they are allowed to fish and the number of certain kinds of fish they are allowed to harvest.⁴⁹ Such a dramatic decline in the local fishing industry has forced many Senegalese workers to search for work abroad, namely in Spain, where they are at major risk for trafficking.⁵⁰





Gift of the United States Government

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