

Seychelles

Country Overview

Politics

Seychelles is a democratic republic located off of the southeastern coast of Africa. Wavel Ramkalawan was elected president in 2020, the first opposition candidate to win the presidency since independence in 1976. The country was once uprooted by a coup d'état in 1981 but has had fair elections since 1993. Seychelles is a member of the Southern African Development Community, an inter-governmental group in southern Africa working to achieve economic development and regional stability.¹

Economy

Seychelles is classified by the World Bank as a high-income economy and has the highest gross domestic product (GDP) per capita in Sub-Saharan Africa at USD 10,764 as of 2023.² According to the World Bank, Seychelles' economy expanded strongly in 2023, growing by 3.6 percent. The tourism sector is a primary driver of economic growth in the country, which means that it is highly susceptible to global disruptions. This was evident in 2020, when GDP growth declined to -7.7 percent due to travel restrictions from COVID-19, which significantly weakened the tourism sector.³ The services sector represents 83.7 percent of the country's GDP, industry represents 13.8 percent, and agriculture represents 2.5 percent.⁴ The country's primary agricultural products are coconuts, vegetables, bananas, fruit, and fish.⁵

Social/Human Development

Seychelles has no identified Indigenous population. The five groups represented in the Seychellois population are a mix of French, British, African, Indian, Chinese, and Arab.⁶ The primary spoken languages are Seychellois Creole, English, and French. The Seselwa fertility rate sits just below replacement, at 1.81 children per woman. This population decline poses a threat to the sustainability of government pensions and universal healthcare.⁷

Seychelles has low poverty rates in comparison to other sub-Saharan African countries. The rate of extreme poverty (measured as below USD 2.15 a day) sits at 0.5 percent, and moderate poverty (measured as below USD 3.65 per day) at one percent according to 2018 figures.⁸



U.S. Department of State TIP Report Summary (2023)

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

The U.S. Department of State's *Trafficking in Persons Report* notes that the Seychelles government "fully meets the minimum standards for the elimination of trafficking."⁹ However, migrant workers, who account for approximately 25 percent of the workforce are reported to be exploited in sectors such as fishing and agriculture, construction, and service occupations. Employers are reported to retain migrant workers' identity documents, restrict their movements, and withhold wages. Labor inspectors do not inspect workplaces in the Seychelles International Trade Zone (SITZ) where migrant workers are employed; however, health inspectors did visit the SITZ in the 2023 reporting period.

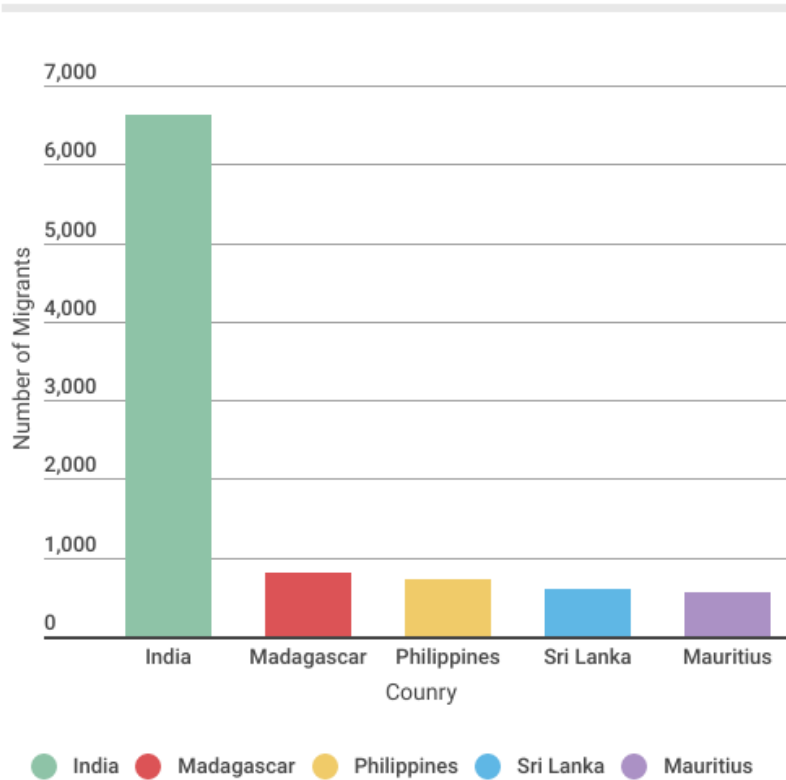
Read the full TIP Report at: <https://www.state.gov/reports/2023-trafficking-in-persons-report/seychelles/>

Migrant and Other Vulnerable Populations

Approximately 13.3 percent of Seychelles' population is comprised of immigrants as of 2020.¹⁰ The top sending countries for immigrants to Seychelles are India, Madagascar, the Philippines, Sri Lanka, and Mauritius as of 2020.¹¹



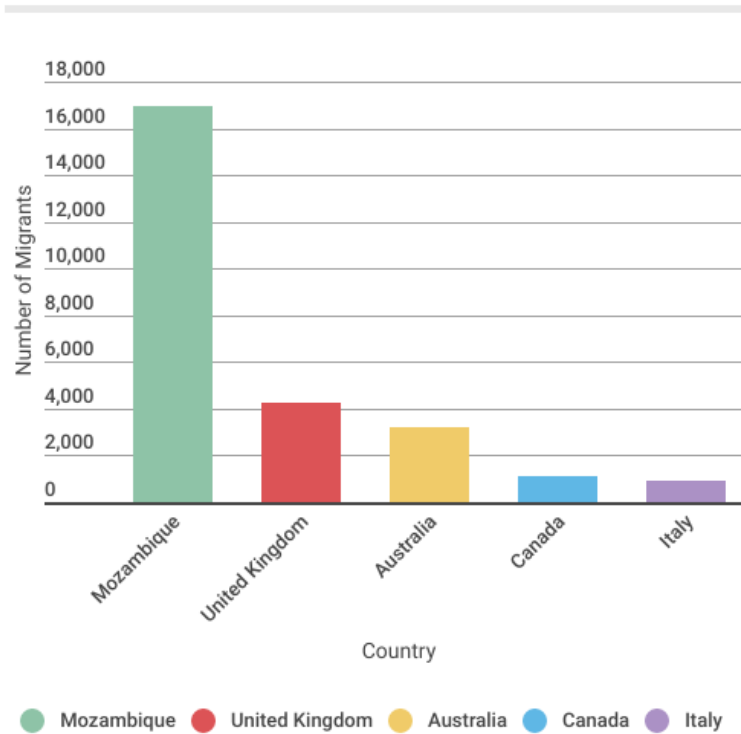
2020 Top Sending Countries for Migrants to Seychelles



The top destination country for emigrants from Seychelles is Mozambique, followed by the United Kingdom, Australia, Canada, and Italy.¹²



2020 Top Destination Countries for Migrants from Seychelles



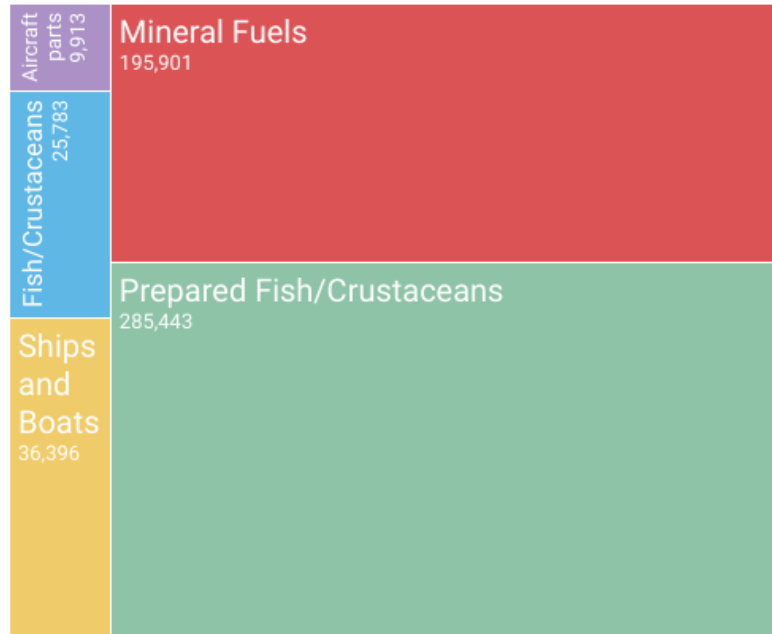
Exports and Trade

Seychelles’ top exports in 2022 were prepared fish and crustaceans, mineral fuels, ships or boats, live fish and crustaceans, and aircraft components.¹³



Top Commodity Exports (USD/Thousands)

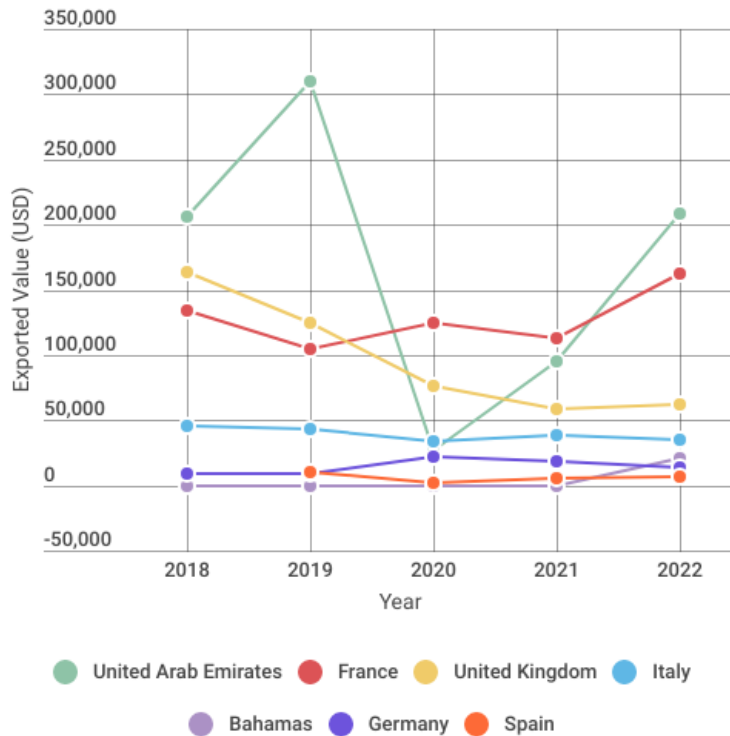
2022



The top importers of all goods from Seychelles via mirror data are the United Arab Emirates, France, United Kingdom, Italy, and the Bahamas.¹⁴



Seychelles 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

The constitution and the law in Seychelles allow for some degree of freedom of association. The U.S. Department of State has reported that those in civil service do not participate in opposition activities due to fear of reprisal from the government. The law also allows workers (outside of police, military, prison, and firefighting personnel) the right to join unions and collectively bargain. The registrar has the legal power to deny a union government registration. The government has the right to call a “60 day cooling off period” if workers do vote for a strike



within a union. The government can declare a strike unlawful if it would “endanger public order or the national economy.”

The law prevents antiunion discrimination, but does not explicitly give foreign workers the right to join unions. In the Seychelles International Trade Zone (SITZ), the country’s export-processing zone, the government does not require adherence to labor and collective bargaining laws.¹⁵ The Employment Tribunal deals with private sector labor disputes, the Public Services Appeals Board deals with public sector labor disputes, and the Financial Services Agency handles labor disputes in the SITZ. The U.S. Department of State has reported that the government generally respects workers’ rights and enforces laws regarding association and collective bargaining.¹⁶ As of 2022, there are no reports that workers were fired for union activity.

Working Conditions

In the public sector (where 30 percent of the labor force is employed) the government set a minimum hourly wage of SCR 26.70 (USD 2.02) as of 2023.¹⁷ ¹⁸ The maximum workweek varies by sector, but ranges from 45 to 55 hours per week. All full-time workers are legally provided a one hour break each day, and 21 days of paid annual leave (including overtime). Premium pay is legally required for overtime, and employers can permit overtime work for up to 60 hours per month. The law allows citizen workers to remove themselves from hazardous work situations, and to report those situations to the Health and Safety Commission of the Department of Employment. The law also protects foreign workers in the public sector. The U.S. Department of State has reported that the government generally abides by these standards but does not enforce them in all sectors, and that foreign workers (primarily in commercial fishing, construction, and any industry within the informal sector) do not have the same legal protections as citizens.¹⁹

Discrimination

The Seychellois law prohibits discrimination with respect to employment based on race, sex, religion, gender, political opinion, national origin or citizenship, social origin, disability, language, sexual orientation or gender identity, HIV-positive status or other communicable diseases, or social status.²⁰ The U.S. Department of State has reported that the government effectively enforces these laws and that employment discrimination generally does not occur in practice. Women must receive equal pay for equal work.²¹

Unlike Seychellois citizens, migrant workers reportedly face discrimination in the workplace. This includes rights violations, discriminatory wages, and hazardous or abusive conditions.²²



Forced Labor

The law prohibits forced or compulsory labor, but enforcement has been reported to be ineffective. There were 11 investigations of forced labor in 2022.²³ Forced labor primarily occurred in the fishing, agriculture, and construction sectors. Most of the Seychelles' migrant workers work in these sectors.²⁴ As of 2023, Seychelles fully meets the standards for eliminating trafficking; however, risk of trafficking for the purposes of forced labor persists in the country, particularly among migrant workers.²⁵

Child Labor

The law sets the minimum age for employment at 15 and permits children as young as 12 to be engaged in "light work," which means part-time work or work with limited hours.²⁶ There is no defined minimum age for hazardous work, although the law does provide a list of hazardous jobs in which children under 15 may not participate and a list of occupations that cannot employ children under the age of 18. The U.S. Department of State has reported that the government has generally enforced these laws.²⁷

Civil Society Organizations

The U.S. Department of State has reported that the government permitted the work of domestic and international human rights groups. Many domestic groups operate within an umbrella organization known as the Citizens Engagement Platform Seychelles (CEPS), which is funded by the Seychellois government.²⁸ Freedom House also reports that "human rights groups and other nongovernmental organizations operate without restriction."²⁹

Immigration Policies Limiting the Employment Options or Movement of Migrants

There are no reported discriminatory immigration laws in Seychelles. The U.S. Department of State did report that The Seychelles Trade Zone Act supersedes many immigration laws, and that immigration laws are not often respected in the SITZ.³⁰ Whereas the Ministry of Employment (MOE) regularly conducts inspections in most of the Seychelles, the Financial Services Authority (FSA) manages oversight in the SITZ, an agency that is not equipped to screen migrant workers like the MOE.³¹ Because of this, the government also does not inspect migrant working conditions in the SITZ.

Migrants (or foreign workers) comprise a quarter of the workforce as of 2022.³² Migrant workers are seen as temporary solutions to rising employment needs in the country. They face issues of worker safety and rights violations. The issue of migrant worker safety is being pushed in Seychelles. For example, the International Labor Organization (ILO) and International Organization for Migration (IOM) began conducting workshops and discussions on migration management for Seychellois companies in 2022.³³ This includes education on the recruitment process of migrant workers.³⁴



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	In force
ILO 182 Worst Forms of Child Labor	In force
ILO 97 Migration for Employment	Not ratified ³⁵

Use of Export Processing Zones (EPZs)

The U.S. Department of State reports that the Seychelles International Trade Zone (SITZ) Act of 1995 created international trade zones, which act as both free ports and export processing zones. These zones include: exemptions from customs duties on capital equipment to be used in SITZ, exemption from Seychellois business tax, trade tax, and withholding tax, exemption from social security contributions, exemption from fees with respect to work permits, entitlement to full foreign ownership, and exemption from Seychellois labor laws.³⁶ The Seychelles Financial Service Authority regulates the SITZ.

In the SITZ, the government does not require that companies adhere to labor, property tax, and business or immigration law. It has been reported that companies in the SITZ retained foreign passports, paid lower wages to migrant workers, and restricted migrant workers' movement outside of working hours.³⁷

Political Risk Factors

Political Instability or Conflict

Seychelles scores a 53.3 in the 2023 Fragile States Index. Seychelles has seen a 3.5-point decrease in their score since 2018, signaling positive change. Seychelles is ranked 128 out of



179 countries on this same index.³⁸ Seychelles' percentile rank for political stability and absence of violence/terrorism was 71.70 on the World Bank's 2021 Worldwide Governance Indicators report.³⁹ In this index, 100 represents the highest stability and safety from violence/terrorism, whereas 0 represents the highest instability and violence rate.

Level of Crime and Violence

Seychelles was given a score on the Mo Ibrahim Foundation Index of African Governance Safety & Rule of Law category of 76.5 with 0 being the lowest performing and 100 being the highest performing in security and anti-corruption governance.⁴⁰ The Safety & Rule of Law category evaluates the state's capabilities at security and safety, rule of law over its population, transparency, and anti-corruption measures. Seychelles ranks first out of the 54 African countries in the index on these standards, meaning the government is highly protective of and transparent with its citizens.

State Persecution

The U.S. Department of State has reported that Seychelles exhibits safe and regulated policing. In 2022, there were no reports of arbitrary killings or arrests, physical abuse, or policy brutality.⁴¹

Level of Corruption

The Transparency International Corruption Perception Index scores Seychelles as 70 out of 100 in 2022, where 0 signals "Highly Corrupt" and 100 signals "Very Clean." Seychelles is ranked 23 out of 180 on that index.⁴² According to the World Bank's Worldwide Governance Index, Seychelles has taken steps to combat corruption over the past decade.⁴³

In 2022, Seychelles took increasing measures to eliminate corruption within policing and other governmental agencies. For example, the government dissolved the Anti-Narcotics Bureau after investigating corruption allegations and charged three individuals with corruption in regard to loans in the Small Business Financing Agency.⁴⁴

Freedom House reports that government corruption is centered on a lack of transparency surrounding privatization and allocation of government-owned land, as well as international financial transactions. Until October 2021, Seychelles was previously listed as a tax haven by the European Union, but the government has since reformed its tax regime.⁴⁵ Freedom House points out that though Seychelles has made steps towards legislatively cracking down on corruption, there are still issues concerning Seychellois firms transferring offshore wealth.⁴⁶



Socio-Economic Risk Factors

Level of National Economic Development

Seychelles is scored in the high human development category, according to the 2021 UN Human Development Index (HDI), with a rank of 72 out of 191 countries and a score of 0.785.⁴⁷ Seychelles' human development score is higher than its southern island neighbors, Madagascar and Comoros, as well as its coastal neighbors, Tanzania, Kenya, and Somalia. Seychelles' HDI increased 5.5 percent since 2000 with increases in factors such as life expectancy and expected years of schooling.⁴⁸

Level and Extent of Poverty

The rate of those living on under USD 3.65 per day was 1.1 percent in 2022.⁴⁹ When adjusted for inequality, Seychelles' 2021 HDI decreases from 0.785 to 0.661.⁵⁰ Seychelles' gross national income (GNI) per capita was USD 14,540 in 2021.⁵¹

Degree of Gender Inequality

As reported by the World Bank, Seychelles had an adolescent birth rate of 54 per 1,000 births in 2020.⁵² Women hold 22.9 percent of seats in parliament, comprising 8 of 35 seats.⁵³

The U.S. Department of State reports that there are no laws preventing women from fully engaging in politics, although female representation in the National Assembly declined from 44 percent in 2015 to 22.9 percent in 2022.⁵⁴ Rape, spousal rape, and domestic abuse are all criminal offences.⁵⁵

Sexual harassment is prohibited under Seychellois law, but there is no specified penalty within the penal code.⁵⁶

Environmental Factors

The country experiences occasional droughts, and the water supply is dependent on catchments to collect rainwater. Droughts can threaten potable water supplies.⁵⁷

Climate change directly threatens the economy and general livelihood of Seychelles. Eighty percent of the population and economic activity occur in the coastal regions.⁵⁸ Coastal erosion and rising sea temperatures have had catastrophic effects on the marine life which in turn affects the Seychellois population that depend on it.⁵⁹ Significant efforts have been made to mitigate the effects of climate change in the region, including the preservation of coral reefs and seagrass meadows that control carbon dioxide levels and sea temperatures.⁶⁰



Documented Trafficking in Persons Risk Factors in Key Commodity Supply Chains

Fish

Fish Overview

Artisanal, semi-industrial, and industrial fishing operations are active in Seychelles' fisheries. Industrial fishing activities are primarily carried out by foreign purse-seine vessels fishing for tuna. There is an onshore fish processing sector, including canning for the export market. One of the tuna canning factories is one of the largest employers of the country.⁶¹ Because the sector is heavily dependent on tuna fishing, initiatives aimed at slowing the overfishing of tuna stocks in the Indian Ocean have had economic impacts for the country.⁶²

Documented Trafficking in Persons Risk Factors in Fish

According to the U.S. Department of State's 2023 *Trafficking in Persons Report*, forced labor and exploitation of migrant workers is reported in the fishing sector in Seychelles.⁶³ The report describes more than 15,000 migrant workers from Bangladesh, India, China, Kenya, Madagascar, and Southeast Asian countries in the fishing sector and notes NGO reports that workers are exploited in fish processing plants and onboard foreign vessels. Workers on foreign vessels may experience non-payment of wages and physical abuse.⁶⁴ Serious abuses of workers from Southeast Asian countries – Cambodia in particular – have been documented on Thai vessels operating in Indian Ocean waters between Mauritius and the Seychelles. The lack of adequate government patrol in the area appeals to “reefer” vessels that may stay in the area for up to 18 months, relying on transshipment for supplies and to offload their catch.⁶⁵ A 2016 Greenpeace report documented how Cambodian workers were charged high fees by recruiters and given advances to induce indebtedness.⁶⁶ The workers lacked any written employment arrangement but, in some cases, were verbally promised a lump sum of earnings after working for a two-year period. Workers were subject to extreme abuse and health and safety hazards while on board fishing vessels.⁶⁷

Recent developments in Seychelles have led to a crackdown on migrant and general labor exploitation. Nine labor trafficking cases were investigated, and 14 labor traffickers were convicted in 2022.⁶⁸ The UN Global Maritime Crime Program (GMCP) began its training of Seychellois law enforcement in 2020. The GMCP's goal is strengthen law enforcement capacity to crackdown on unregulated fishing, document fraud, labor exploitation, and human trafficking.⁶⁹ While efforts have been made to control the fishing industry, there is still a lack of inspection of migrant working conditions in the Seychelles International Trade Zone.⁷⁰



Endnotes

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