



# Côte d'Ivoire

## Côte d'Ivoire: Introduction

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Chart 1: Political map of Côte d'Ivoire

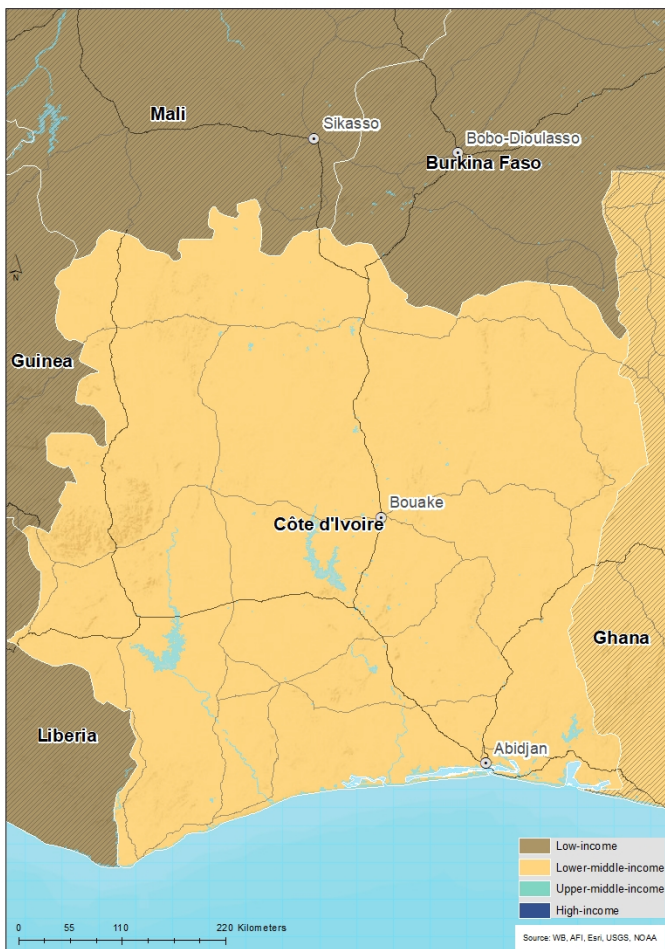


Chart 1 is a political map of Côte d'Ivoire.

Côte d'Ivoire is a lower-middle-income country located in West Africa, bordered to the north by Mali and Burkina Faso, to the east by Ghana, to the south by the Gulf of Guinea and to the west by Liberia and Guinea.

The country is a member of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) and the West African Economic and Monetary Union (WAEMU/UEMOA). It is the world's leading cocoa exporter and the economic hub of francophone West Africa. It exerts a significant influence in the region. It has the third-largest economy in ECOWAS, after Nigeria and Ghana, and accounts for more than 30% of WAEMU's GDP.

Côte d'Ivoire suffered an unstable socio-political environment from the late 1990s to the first decade of this century. In 2010, elections plunged the country into deep chaos, which ended with the inauguration of Alassane Ouattara, a former IMF Economist, as Côte d'Ivoire's president in May 2011. He was first re-elected in October 2015 and won the more recent elections held in October 2020, which were boycotted by the major political parties. The political landscape has been peaceful and stable for nearly four consecutive years since the last presidential election. All attention is now focused on the upcoming presidential election scheduled for October 2025.

Due to considerable public investment in infrastructure, education, and health, as well as domestic reforms in the administration and key economic sectors under the auspices of President Ouattara, the country's overall macroeconomic performance has improved enormously since 2011. However, high levels of corruption and unemployment threaten the country's development prospects. The main challenge remains the implementation of a reform that fosters inclusive growth by encouraging the private sector to create better jobs, build capacity in the agricultural sector and develop human capital for the sustainable improvement of development indices.

Chart 2: Population structure in the Current Path, 1990-2043

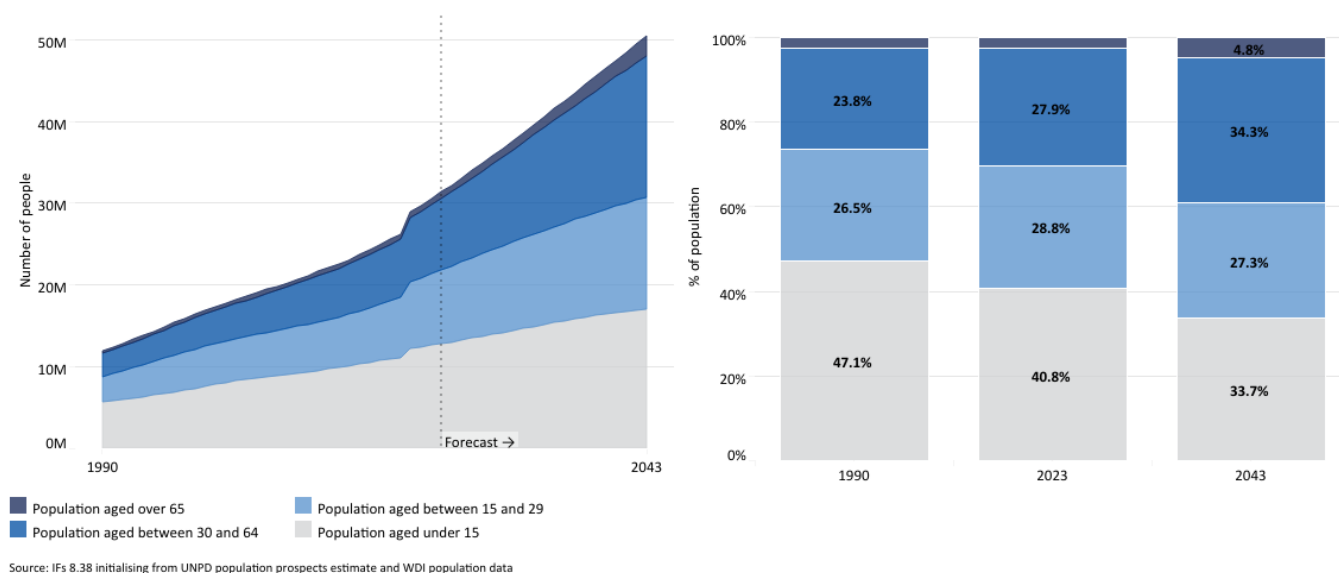


Chart 2 presents the Current Path of the population structure, from 1990 to 2043.

During the latter half of the 20th century, Côte d'Ivoire had one of the highest population growth rates in sub-Saharan Africa. Its high rate of natural increase, together with the massive influx of immigrants from neighbouring countries like Burkina Faso, Mali and Benin, attracted by its comparatively strong economy, were the main reasons for its rapid growth. Migrants account for between 10% and 25% of the Ivorian population. On the entire continent, only South Africa, which has more than double Côte d'Ivoire's population and a much bigger economy, has more migrants. However, the country's population growth rate declined from about 4.9% in 1980 to 2.7% in 2023, above the average of 2.2% for lower-middle-income countries in Africa. The population of Côte d'Ivoire was 31.3 million in 2023, and on the Current Path, it will be 50.3 million by 2043, about a 61% increase over the next 20 years.

The structure of Côte d'Ivoire's population is typical of countries with a low life expectancy and high fertility rates. The total fertility rate (TFR) declined from 6.7 births per woman in 1990 to 4.3 births per woman in 2023, above the average for African lower-middle-income countries at 3.8. In the Current Path, TFR will slowly decline to about three births per woman by 2043.

As of 2023, 40.8% of the population was in the below 15 years of age dependency age group, while 2.5% were in the 65 and above dependency age group. In the Current Path, the share of these two dependency age groups is projected to be 33.7% and 4.8%, respectively, by 2043. Consequently, about 56.7% of the Ivorian population is in the 15–64 working-age group as of 2023, which will increase to 61.6% by 2043.

The working-age group, 15 to 64 years of age, is the largest share of the population, and this can be a potential source of growth provided the labour force is well trained with the skills that are demanded by the economy, and sufficient jobs are

created.

Chart 3: Population distribution map, 2023

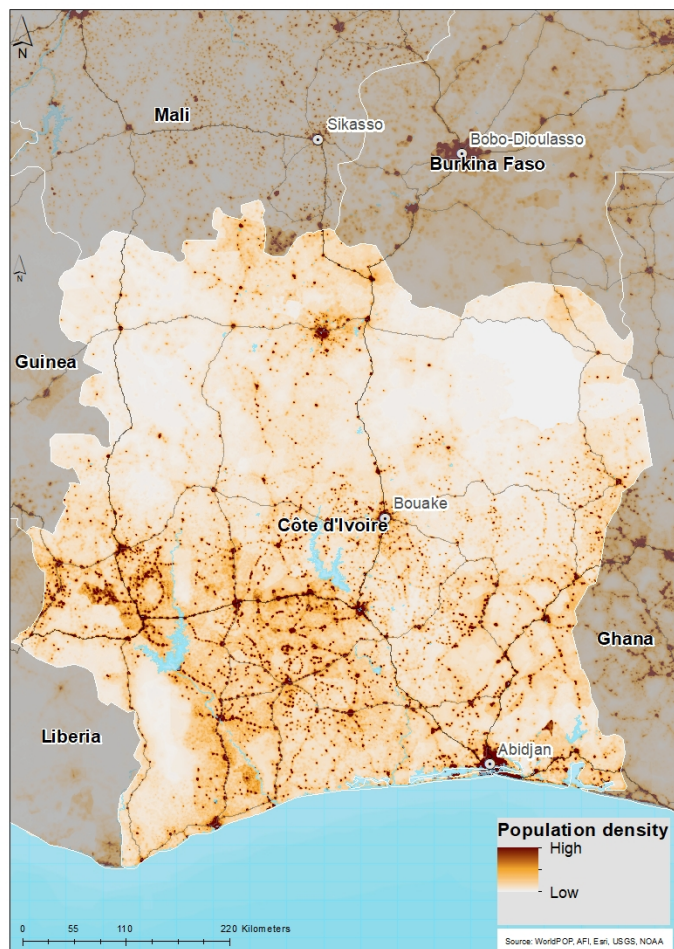


Chart 3 presents a population distribution map for 2023.

The population of Côte d'Ivoire is concentrated in the central and the wetter south-eastern regions, dominated by Abidjan, the largest city and the country's main maritime outlet. The drier north is, in comparison, much less populated, while the south-western forest zone (specifically the Tai National Park) is almost completely empty.

The density of Côte d'Ivoire's population amounted to 0.96 inhabitants per hectare in 2023, 0.28 above the average for lower-middle-income countries in Africa, and almost double the total average for Africa at 0.50. On the Current Path, the population density will increase to 1.6 inhabitants per hectare in 2043, still above the total average for Africa and lower-middle-income African countries.

Chart 4: Urban and rural population in the Current Path, 1990-2043

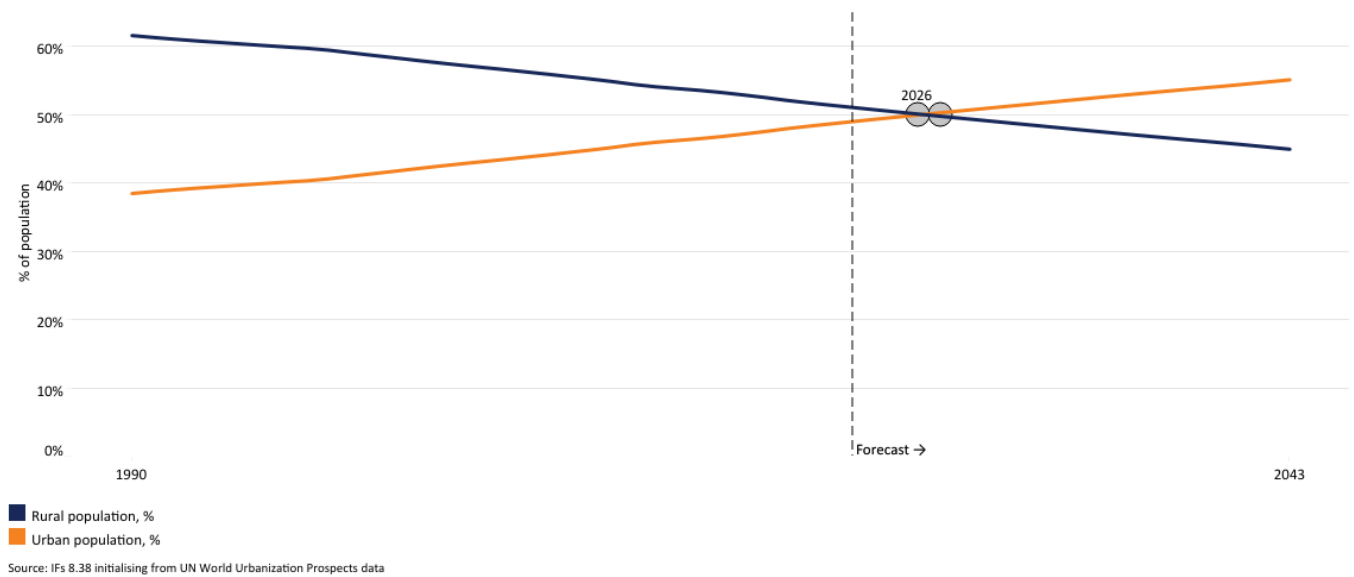


Chart 4 presents the urban and rural population in the Current Path, from 1990 to 2043.

Like many African countries, Côte d'Ivoire is experiencing rapid urbanisation. In 2023, 49% of the population lived in urban areas, up from 38.4% in 1990. This trend is partly the result of **development policies** since the 1960s that prioritised urbanisation as a driver of socio-economic growth, establishing cities as key engines of national development. Côte d'Ivoire's urbanisation rate is above that of Africa and below that of lower-middle-income African countries by 4.8 and 2 percentage points, respectively. On the current development trajectory, the rate of urbanisation in Côte d'Ivoire will increase to 55% by 2043, while the rural population is expected to drop to 44.9% from 61.6% in 1990 and 51% in 2023.

This rapid urbanisation will undoubtedly place enormous pressure on the delivery of housing and basic services. If not well managed and planned for, this will lead to inadequate healthcare, poor sanitation, urban slums, and environmental degradation, especially in the main cities such as Abidjan (the largest city), which is the home to about **36%** of the urban population in the country. Good urban planning could foster an inclusive economy by improving service delivery and reducing urban poverty. In addition, adequate and appropriate urban planning is essential to mitigate the impacts of climate change, such as flooding, which is recurrent in Abidjan during the rainy season.

Chart 5: GDP (MER) and growth in the Current Path, 1990-2043

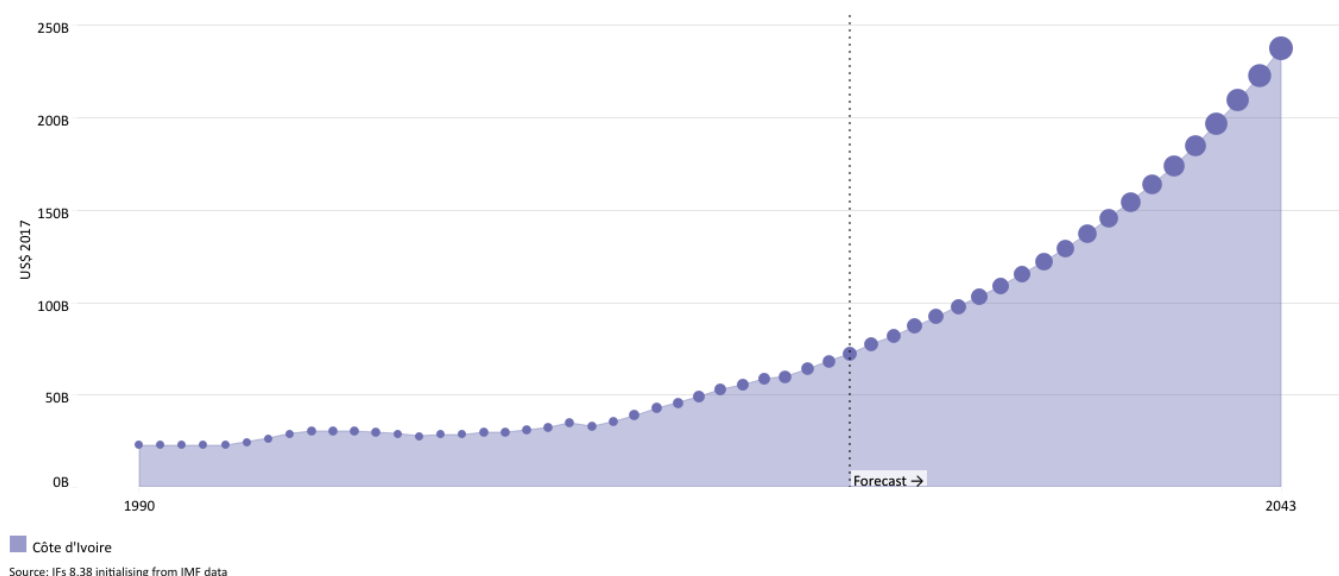


Chart 5 presents GDP in market exchange rates (MER) and growth rate in the Current Path, from 1990 to 2043.

From 1960 to 1979, Côte d'Ivoire had a strong economy, though this began to change in the late 1980s when the country experienced almost seven straight years of recession from 1987 to 1993 due to a significant fall in cocoa and coffee prices and high indebtedness. During that time, the country could not meet its foreign debt obligations, but new financial arrangements by creditor banks and a 50% devaluation of its currency (the CFA franc) helped the country toward economic recovery by the mid-1990s. However, political instability from the late 1990s and during the first decade of this century significantly stunted economic growth. Macroeconomic stability, the business environment and public investment in infrastructure have improved markedly since 2012. As a result, Côte d'Ivoire has become one of the fastest-growing economies globally, with an average growth rate of 8% between 2012 and 2019.

The country's vibrant, robust and stable economic growth since 2012 experienced a slowdown and reached 1.8% in 2020 owing to the COVID-19 pandemic. Yet, it is one of the few countries that recorded positive GDP growth in 2020. Since 2021, Côte d'Ivoire has returned to its high-growth trajectory. The resilience of the Ivorian economy can be explained in part by the relative diversification of its productive fabric and the monetary stability conferred by its membership in the WAEMU.

In 2023, the size of Côte d'Ivoire's economy was US\$72.4 billion, up from US\$22.7 billion in 1990. Between 2012 and 2023, the size of GDP more than doubled, increasing by 106%. Looking forward, the growth prospects for Côte d'Ivoire remain positive, driven by sustained investment in infrastructure, especially in the transport sector, alongside the expected increase in oil production and sound macroeconomic policies. Real GDP growth is projected to average about 6.5% between 2024 and 2026. By 2043, the economy will grow to US\$237.1 billion, making it the 8th largest economy in Africa in the Current Path, improving two places from 2023 when Côte d'Ivoire ranked 10th on the continent. However, this outlook could be jeopardised by a deterioration of the security situation in the north, worsened by high youth unemployment and climate hazards. Strengthening macroeconomic stability, inclusiveness, sustainability of growth, and security and institutional stability should make it possible to contain these risks.

Chart 6: Size of the informal economy in the Current Path, 2020-2043

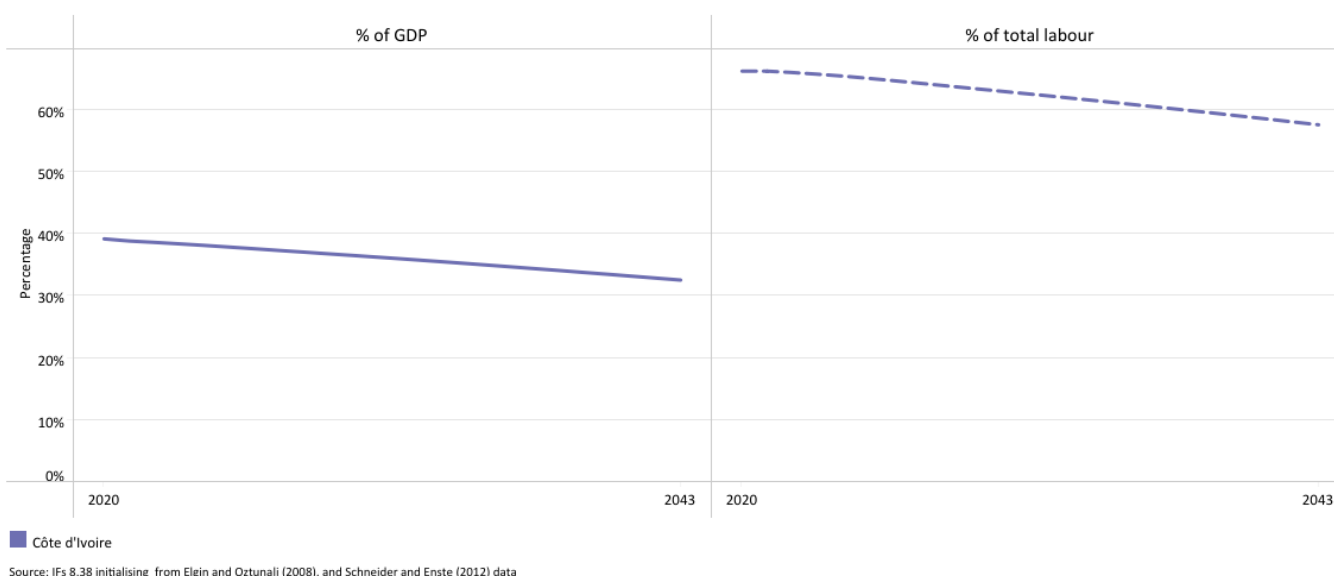


Chart 6 presents the size of the informal economy as per cent of GDP and per cent of total labour (non-agriculture), from 2020 to 2043. The data in our modelling are largely estimates and therefore may differ from other sources.

The informal sector is a crucial lifeline for many people in Côte d'Ivoire. Informal employment has **grown** by more than 90% since the process of liberalisation of the economy in the 1980s. In 2024, 65.3% of Ivorians found employment in the informal sector, a slight decrease from 2020, when 66% of Ivorians were employed in the informal sector.

In urban areas especially, **informal work** is present in Côte d'Ivoire. From street vendors and taxi drivers to hairdressers, mechanics and metal workers, small-scale businesses shape the daily economy of cities across the country.

With the formal job market unable to keep up with the pace of urban population growth, the informal urban sector has stepped in to absorb much of the workforce. It now accounts for nearly 7 million jobs, more than both the formal economy and agriculture. Notably, women play a leading role, making up about two-thirds of informal business owners.

In 2023, the size of the informal economy represented about 38.3% of the country's GDP, and by 2043, it is projected to modestly decline to 32.4%, above the average of 26.4% for lower-middle-income countries in Africa for that year.

Although the informal economy provides a safety net for the large and growing working-age population in the country, it impedes economic growth. Reducing informality will allow more people to benefit from better wages and increased security from shocks, such as the COVID-19 pandemic, that severely hurt those in the informal sector. Currently, the informal urban sector is the largest employment provider in Côte d'Ivoire. Up to a **third** of the informal firms could significantly benefit from formalisation, both in terms of personal security for the firm owners and economic productivity for Côte d'Ivoire as a whole.

Chart 7: GDP per capita in Current Path, 1990-2043

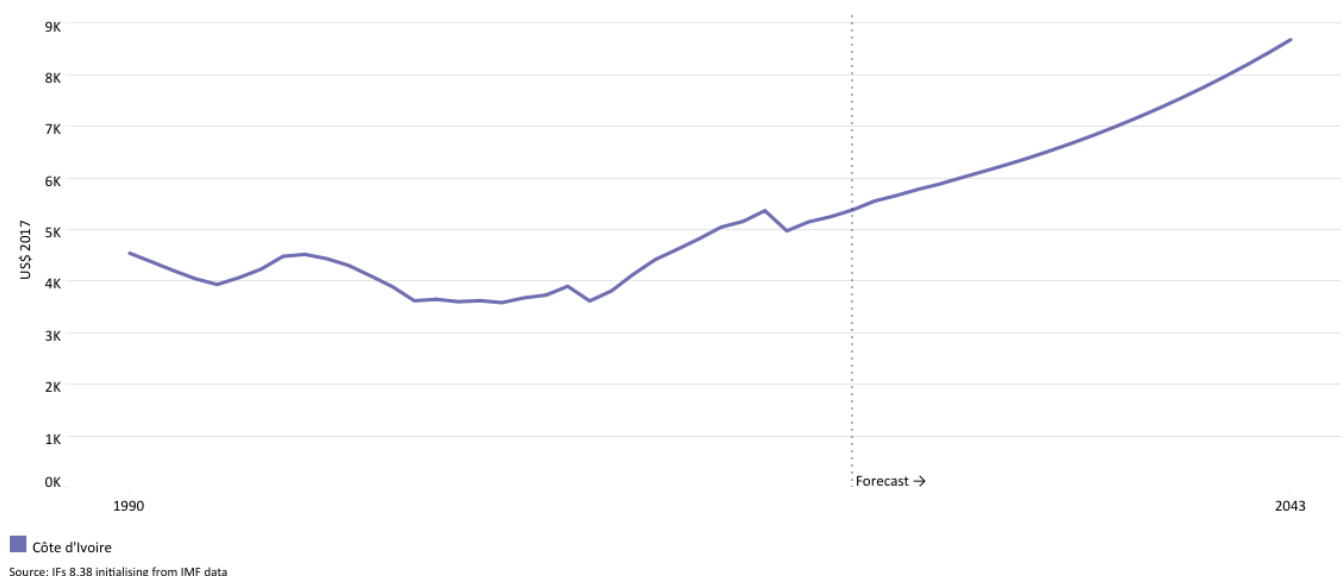


Chart 7 presents GDP per capita in the Current Path, from 1990 to 2043, compared with the average for the Africa income group.

Over the period 1960–1977, the GDP per capita of Côte d'Ivoire was higher than that of South Korea as a result of strong economic growth underpinned by massive public investment and high prices of cocoa and coffee on the international markets. The GDP per capita grew about 90% between 1960 and 1979.

However, after years of steady growth, the GDP per capita started to decline in the late 1980s due to deep recessions following both adverse external shocks and subsequent inappropriate domestic policy responses. The GDP per capita shrank by 54.1% between 1980 and 1994, before slightly improving by 5.5% between 1995 and 1999. GDP per capita growth again started to decline from 2000 due to socio-political instability that undermined economic growth.

Since 2012, Côte d'Ivoire has experienced a steady increase in GDP per capita: it increased by 48.8% between 2012 and 2023. As a result, the GDP per capita (PPP) was US\$5 434 in 2023 and, on the Current Path, is forecast to increase to US\$9 235 by 2043. This would also mean that Côte d'Ivoire will surpass its previous peak GDP per capita, US\$5 645 in 1979, by 2025.



Chart 8: Extreme poverty in Current Path, 2020-2043

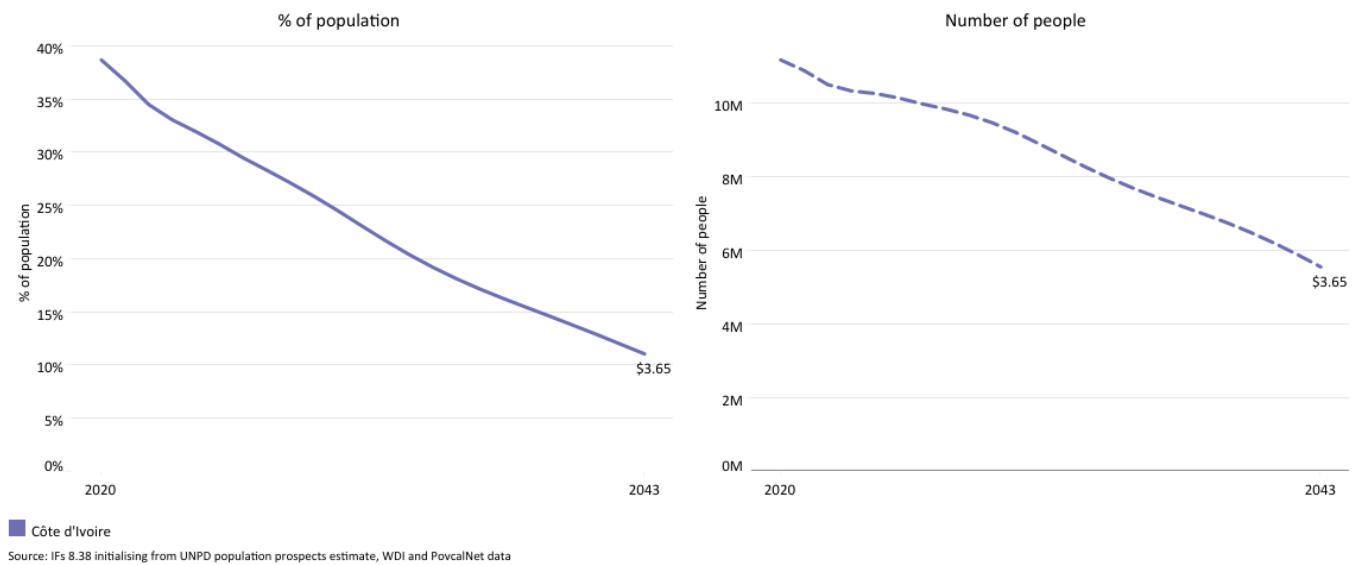


Chart 8 presents the rate and numbers of extremely poor people in the Current Path from 2020 to 2043.

In 2022, the World Bank updated the poverty lines to 2017 constant dollar values as follows:

- The previous US\$1.90 extreme poverty line is now set at US\$2.15, also for use with low-income countries.
- US\$3.20 for lower-middle-income countries, now US\$3.65 in 2017 values.
- US\$5.50 for upper-middle-income countries, now US\$6.85 in 2017 values.
- US\$22.70 for high-income countries. The Bank has not yet announced the new poverty line in 2017 US\$ prices for high-income countries.

Poverty in Côte d'Ivoire is driven by a mix of economic, social and structural issues. A large portion of the population relies on agriculture, particularly cocoa farming, which is highly susceptible to global price fluctuations and changing weather patterns, leaving many farmers earning less than a dollar per day. Limited access to healthcare services, worsened by the aftermath of civil war, has left many Ivorians without adequate medical care, making diseases like malaria prevalent and putting additional strain on household incomes. Educational barriers, such as low school enrolment rates and limited access to quality education, hinder opportunities for upward mobility, trapping many families in cycles of poverty. Past political instability and conflicts have disrupted economic activities, displaced communities and destroyed vital infrastructure, leaving lasting effects on poverty levels. Furthermore, inadequate infrastructure, such as roads and electricity, restricts economic opportunities and access to essential services, particularly in rural areas.

The economic crisis in the 1980s and the socio-political instability from the late 1990s onward significantly increased poverty in Côte d'Ivoire. The extreme poverty rate at US\$2.15, which was about 4.4% in 1981, reached its peak in 2011 at 38.6% of the population.

In the current development trajectory, the extreme poverty rate will decline to 3.6% by 2043, well below the average of 18% for lower-middle-income countries in Africa.

However, using US\$3.65 as the poverty threshold, Côte d'Ivoire had 31.94% of its population living below the lower-middle-income threshold as of 2024. This is about eight percentage points lower than the projected average for lower-middle-income countries in Africa. Although the poverty rate has declined, it is characterised by regional **disparities** and remains unfavourable for women (51.05% of poor individuals are women) and in rural areas ( 54.7% in 2018).

Going forward, the poverty level at US\$3.65 will maintain its downward trend to decline to 13.2% (6.2 million people) by 2043, well below the projected average for lower-middle-income countries in Africa, which will then be at 38.3%.

To sustain economic growth in the long term, it must be inclusive. These projections are by no means guaranteed, and it is the impetus of policymakers to ensure that these trends come to pass in the Ivorian economy. The government should ensure that the most vulnerable members of society, such as minority groups and women, are uplifted by the positive trends in the broader economy. Inequality, which has historically been pervasive in Côte d'Ivoire, may pose a serious threat to the gains across the economy and should be accounted for in economic policy going forward.

The Human Poverty Index (HPI) takes into account poverty as understood by income levels, weighted equally with indicators for health, education and standards of living. Similar to the projected progress in decreasing monetary poverty, Côte d'Ivoire is projected to decrease its poverty as measured by the HPI. Côte d'Ivoire's HPI will decrease from 12.6 in 2023 to 6.7 in 2043. This indicates that, as well as bringing people above the monetary poverty lines, Côte d'Ivoire will see improvements in the quality of life for the poorest members of society through increased access to education, health care, infrastructure improvements and standard of living.

Chart 9: National Development Plan of Côte d'Ivoire



Chart 9 depicts the National Development Plan of Côte d'Ivoire.

The 2021-2025 National Development Plan (NDP) capitalises on international and regional development priorities, in particular the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and the African Union's 2063 vision.

The main objective of Côte d'Ivoire's NDP 2021-2025 is to achieve the economic and social transformation necessary to elevate the country to upper-middle-income status by 2030.

With this objective, the NDP 2021-2025 focuses on six pillars: accelerating the structural transformation of the economy through industrialisation; developing human capital and promoting employment; developing the private sector and investment; strengthening inclusion, national solidarity and social action; achieving balanced regional development, preserving the environment and combating climate change; and strengthening governance and modernising the state.

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## About the authors

**Ms Tumi Mkhize-Malebo** is Research Officer in the AFI team. She joined the ISS in May 2023. Before that, Tumi worked as an operations intern at Uber. She holds a Bachelor's degree in economics and econometrics from the University of Johannesburg and an Honours degree in economics from the University of South Africa.

**Dr Jakkie Cilliers** is the ISS's founder and former executive director. He currently serves as chair of the ISS Board of Trustees, head of the African Futures and Innovation (AFI) programme at the Pretoria office of the Institute, and is an extraordinary professor at the University of Pretoria. His 2017 best-seller *Fate of the Nation* addresses South Africa's futures from political, economic and social perspectives. His three most recent books, *Africa First! Igniting a Growth Revolution* (March 2020), *The Future of Africa: Challenges and Opportunities* (April 2021), and *Africa Tomorrow: Pathways to Prosperity* (June 2022) take a rigorous look at the continent as a whole.

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