



# Madagascar

## Madagascar: Introduction

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Chart 1: Political map of Madagascar



Chart 1 is a political map of Madagascar.

This page provides an overview of the key characteristics of Madagascar along its likely (or Current Path) development trajectory. The Current Path is a dynamic scenario that imitates the continuation of current policies and environmental conditions. The Current Path is therefore in congruence with historical patterns and produces a series of dynamic forecasts endogenised in relationships across crucial global systems. We use 2023 as a standard reference year and the forecasts generally extend to 2043, to coincide with the end of the third ten-year implementation plan of the African Union’s Agenda 2063 long-term development vision.

The Republic of Madagascar is the world’s fifth-largest island, situated in the Indian Ocean off the coast of southern Africa. The country falls into the low-income category even though it is endowed with considerable natural resources and unparalleled biodiversity. It comprises the main island of Madagascar as well as multiple smaller peripheral islands. Neighbouring islands include the French territory of Réunion and the country of Mauritius to the east, as well as Comoros and the French territory of Mayotte to the north-west. The nearest mainland state is Mozambique, located to the west.

Madagascar has a diverse precipitation pattern due to its large size, varied topography and location in the southwestern Indian Ocean. Rainfall is highly seasonal and varies dramatically from east to west and north to south. Rainfall on the east coast can reach up to 3 500-4 000 mm per year, compared to the central highlands with much more moderate rainfall

between 1 200-1 500 mm per year. The west coast is drier with around 800-1 200 mm per year, and the south and southwest are characterised by semi-arid to arid conditions. The northwest is seasonally wet, affected by monsoons and cyclones.

Madagascar faces severe climate risks. Due to its location, topography and socioeconomic conditions, the country is very vulnerable to extreme weather events, especially cyclones, flooding and drought.

From the early 19th century, most of the island was united and ruled as the Kingdom of Madagascar. The monarchy ended in 1897 when the French colonised the island. Madagascar gained independence in 1960, and since 1992, it has officially been governed as a constitutional democracy. In 2023, Madagascar had a population of about 31.3 million people. Its capital and largest city is Antananarivo, with approximately 3 million inhabitants. The country's economy is based primarily on (subsistence) agriculture, mining, tourism and textiles.

Madagascar is ethnically diverse with at least 18 different ethnic groups. The two main groups are the Merina people, who predominantly live in the central, more urban highlands and the Côtier people, the nominal grouping of the country's coastal ethnic groups. The Merina ruled Madagascar in the period immediately preceding French annexation in 1896. They were heavily represented within the small Malagasy elite that was favoured under colonial rule and continued to be well represented in government functions.

In 2001, a disputed presidential election between Didier Ratsiraka (incumbent) and Marc Ravalomanana led to a severe political standoff. Both candidates declared themselves president, leading to two rival governments and widespread civil unrest throughout 2002. In 2009, growing dissatisfaction with President Marc Ravalomanana over authoritarian tendencies and controversial decisions sparked opposition led by the then mayor of Antananarivo, Andry Rajoelina. In March 2009, with the backing of the military, Rajoelina ousted Ravalomanana in a coup d'état.

Rajoelina assumed power as head of a transitional government, despite international condemnation and suspension of foreign aid. The African Union's (AU) Peace and Security Council declared it an unconstitutional change of government and suspended Madagascar from participating in all AU organs and activities. As a consequence of the coup, Madagascar faced economic hardship, diplomatic isolation and years of political uncertainty until elections were eventually held in 2013. Hery Rajaonarimampianina, backed by Rajoelina, won the run-off, and Madagascar was readmitted to the AU and international financial institutions—marking the official return to democracy. The country restored constitutional order in January 2014.

In December 2023, Andry Rajoelina was re-elected President of Madagascar. Christian Ntsay was reappointed as Prime Minister. In the legislative elections held in May 2024, the presidential party secured an absolute majority in the National Assembly, with 84 out of 163 deputies belonging to the presidential platform. In the communal and municipal elections held in December 2024, the presidential coalition won over 960 out of 1 695 mayoral seats nationwide.

Madagascar is a member of the United Nations, the AU, the Southern African Development Community (SADC) and the Organisation Internationale de la Francophonie.

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