

Côte d'Ivoire

Type of Government: Unitary presidential republic

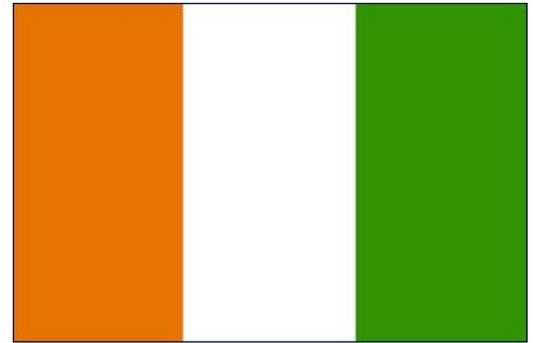
President: Alassane Ouattara

Capital City: Yamoussoukro

Ideology: Liberal, democratic (since 2011 civil war)

Region: Africa

Neighbours: Liberia, Guinea, Mali, Burkina Faso, Ghana



DEMOGRAPHICS

- **Population:** 25 million (over 60% is under the age of 25)
- **Religion** (including non-Ivorians): 51.8% Christian, 24.9% Islam, 22.8% none
- **Age:** Median age 20.9 years, life expectancy 59 years
- **Ethnicity:** 42.1% Akan, 17.6% Voltaïque or Gur, 16.5% Northern Mande, 11% Krou, 10% Southern Mande, 23% non-Ivorian
- **Language:** French (official), 70+ native dialects.



POLITICS

Domestic politics

- The country's first post-independence leader, Félix Houphouët-Boigny, ruled from 1960 to 1993, presiding over one of Africa's most successful decolonization periods. Despite his tendencies towards one-party rule, he is well-remembered, and his policies have experienced a resurgence in recent years.
- 2002 saw the country descend into politically-motivated civil war. French forces and, later, UN peacekeepers, were deployed, to disputed effectiveness. Various tenuous ceasefires and Security Council resolutions were reached from 2002-2007, between intermittent conflict; this period of conflict ended with President Gbagbo strengthening his hold on power through a peace deal.
- The 2010 election, the first Ivorian election in 10 years, was recognised by most international observers as a victory of Alassane Ouattara. President Gbagbo contested the result, eventually triggering another civil war (despite international mediation efforts); the war ended in 2011 with the capture of Gbagbo, who is now in the custody of the International Criminal Court. Both sides were accused of human rights violations.
- Ouattara now serves as President, having been re-elected in 2015 with nearly 84% of the vote. His greatest challenges remain the growth and diversification of the economy, as well as the restoration of infrastructure, particularly water and sanitation facilities.
- Media are kept under close government scrutiny, and the largest media outlets are state-owned. There are some concerns that freedom of assembly and expression are not upheld.
- There are ongoing issues with violent crime and the prison system.

Foreign relations

- A key part of President Houphouët-Boigny's decolonization strategy was the maintenance of close ties with the West, particularly France. These relationships remain pivotal to Ivorian foreign relations.
- Côte d'Ivoire plays a significant role in African regional dialogues. It has been a strong supporter of African co-operation, particularly in West Africa, being a member of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) and the Organization of African Unity (OAU) among others.
- In the 21st century, Côte d'Ivoire has experienced the effects of both China's and India's foreign policy pivots to Africa. Its economic relations with both have increased notably in scale.

ECONOMY

- In the mid-20th century, Côte d'Ivoire was one of the strongest economies in Africa, owing to its world-leading cocoa and coffee agriculture industries. Along with palm oil, these industries still dominate its economy, and it is still the biggest cocoa exporter in the world.
- In 2012, Côte d'Ivoire was the subject of significant IMF funding, with the aim of helping the country recover from prolonged civil war. Growth initiatives, such as the growth of its food processing, mining and electricity industries, are progressing well, with Côte d'Ivoire's economy becoming one of the fastest-growing in the world.
- There are ongoing concerns about the use of child labour, particularly in cocoa farms.
- Major export partners are the Netherlands (11.3%), the USA (8.2%), France (6.5%), Belgium (6.5%), Germany (6.1%) and India (4.2%)
- Major import partners are Nigeria (15%), France (13%), China (11%), and the Bahamas (6.2%).

MILITARY

- The existing Ivorian military, the *Forces Republicaines de Côte d'Ivoire*, is descended mostly from the forces of the rebel coalition that fought (with French support) to depose President Gbagbo in 2011.
- Altogether, the military contains an estimated 22,000 active personnel. They are divided into an army, an air force, a paramilitary police force (the *gendarmerie*), and a very minimal navy.
- In 2017, there were a number of large-scale army mutinies. This did not reoccur in 2018, although many of the mutinies' underlying causes (particularly the lack of control over the ex-rebels serving in the army) remain unaddressed.
- France maintains a force of 900 personnel in the port city of Abidjan. This number was increased from 500 in 2016, partially in response to concerns about terrorism; this force is regarded as a key base for any French external operation in West Africa.



More Information

Wiki: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ivory_Coast

CIA: <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/iv.html>

Ivorian foreign relations: <https://www.cfr.org/sub-saharan-africa/ivory-coast>

Latest news from the **New York Times**: <https://www.nytimes.com/topic/destination/ivory-coast>