

TRADE UNIONS AND TRADE



Namibia Trade Fact Sheet

African Continental Free Trade Area



NAMIBIA TRADE FACT SHEET

Trade unions, Trade and AfCFTA

Trade Union Congress of Namibia (TUCNA)

Labour Research Service

Labour Resource and Research Institute

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The AfCFTA will influence national policies that affect employment, income, and livelihoods – trade unions need to be prepared to engage with this process.

The practicalities of the AfCFTA, how it will affect trade, policies, and employment, are unknown and need to be better understood.

This resource provides insight into trade dynamics in Namibia and helps trade unions think about trade and their interests in the AfCFTA.

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AFRICAN CONTINENTAL FREE TRADE AREA

SECTION 1:

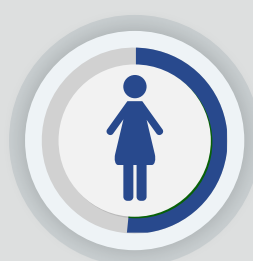
COUNTRY DEMOGRAPHICS

1.1 Population



NAMIBIA'S
POPULATION IN 2023
3.02 MILLION

(Namibia Statistics Agency (NSA), 2024)



FEMALES
51%



MALES
49%

Namibia has a youthful population. As shown in Table 1, approximately 73 percent of the country's population was under 35 years in 2023.

Table 1: Age distribution

Age cohort	Total	Percent	Cumulative percent
0-14 years	1,118,288.37	37	37
14-34 years	1,030,638.74	34.1	71.1
35-59 years	667,950.62	22.1	93.2
60 years plus	205,523.27	6.8	100
Total	3022401	100	

Source: UNFPA (2024)

There are slightly more residents in rural areas than in urban areas. The population distribution was 49.5 percent in urban areas and 50.5 percent in rural areas in 2023.

Table 2: Population distribution by location

Location	Total	Percent
Urban	1,494,992	49.5
Rural	1,527,409	50.5
All	3,022,401	100.0

Source: Namibia Statistics Agency (2024)



SECTION 2: ECONOMIC INDICATORS

2.1 Gross domestic Product (GDP)

The GDP was US\$12.35 billion in 2023 (World Bank, n.d.). As illustrated in Figure 1, the services sector has accounted for more than half of the country's GDP since 2019.

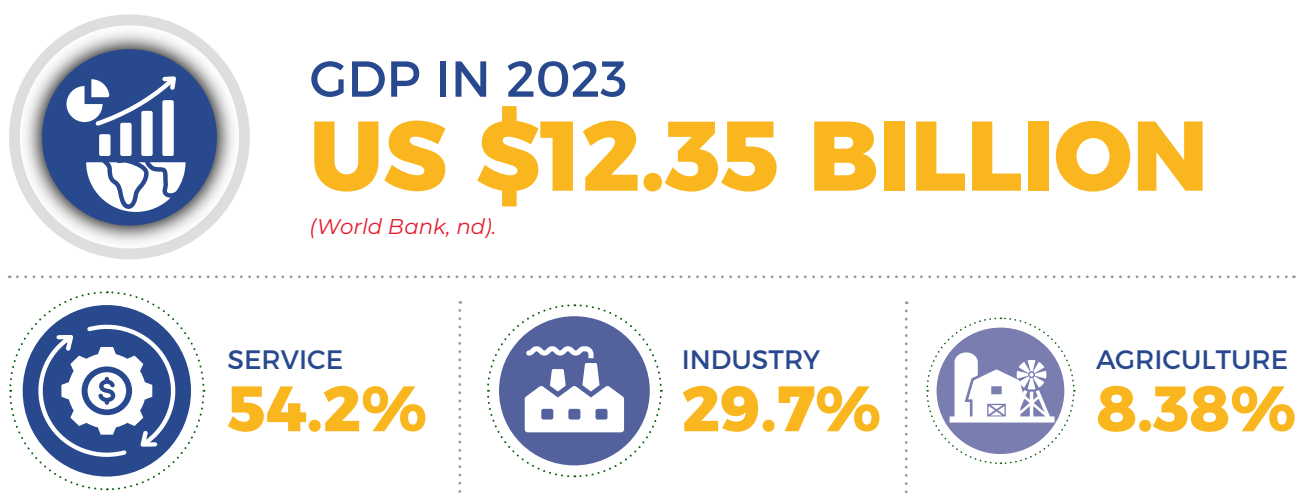
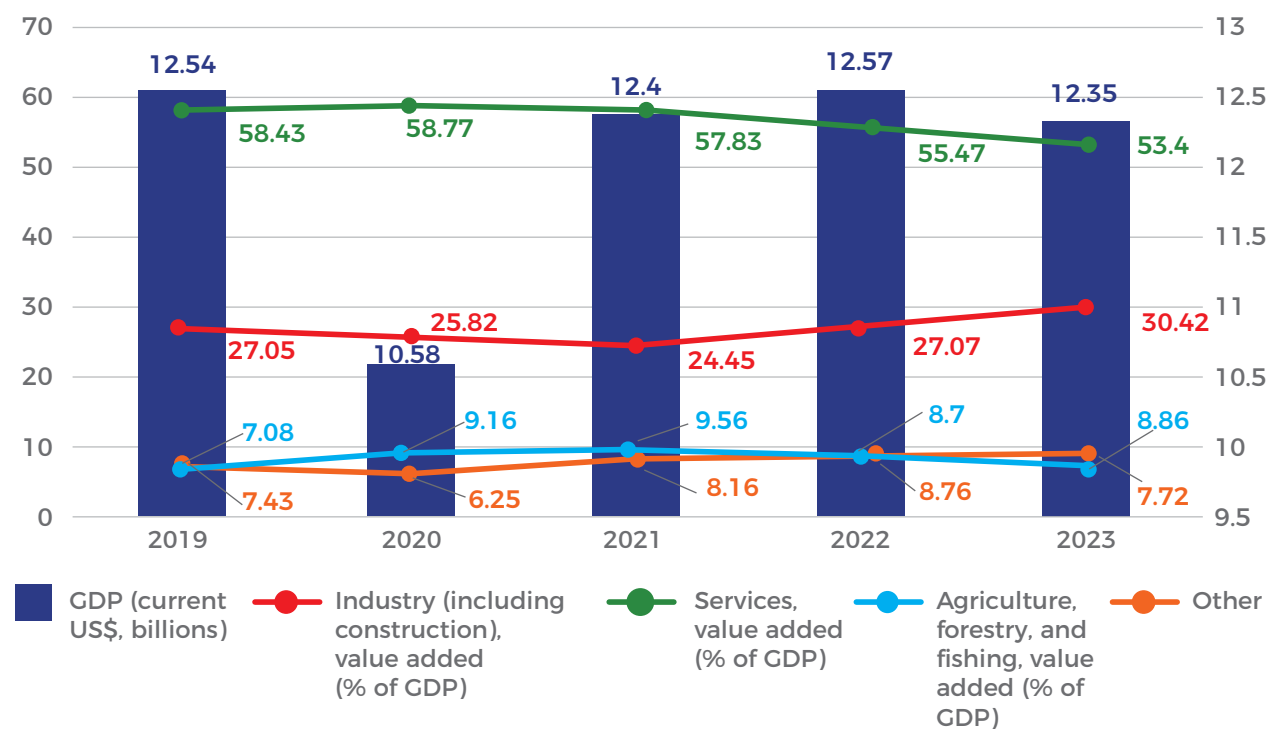


Figure 1: Composition of GDP

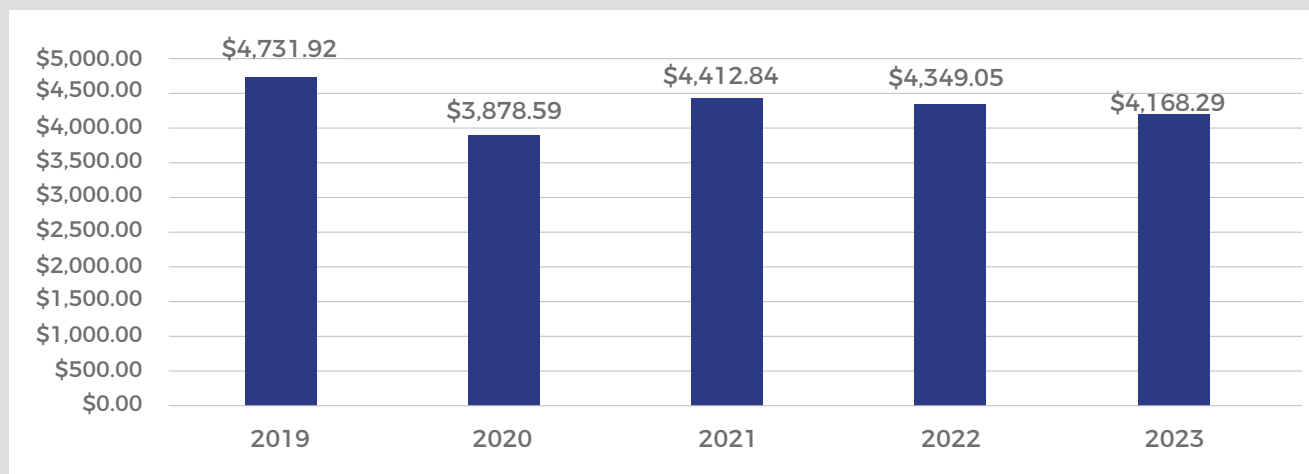


Source: World Bank (n.d.).

2.2 GDP per capita

Figure 2 shows that GDP per capita reached US\$4,168.29 in 2023, the highest since the COVID-19 pandemic. However, Namibia remains one of the most unequal countries in the world (World Bank, 2021), with a Gini coefficient of 57.2 (UNFPA, n.d.).

Figure 2: GDP per capita (US\$)

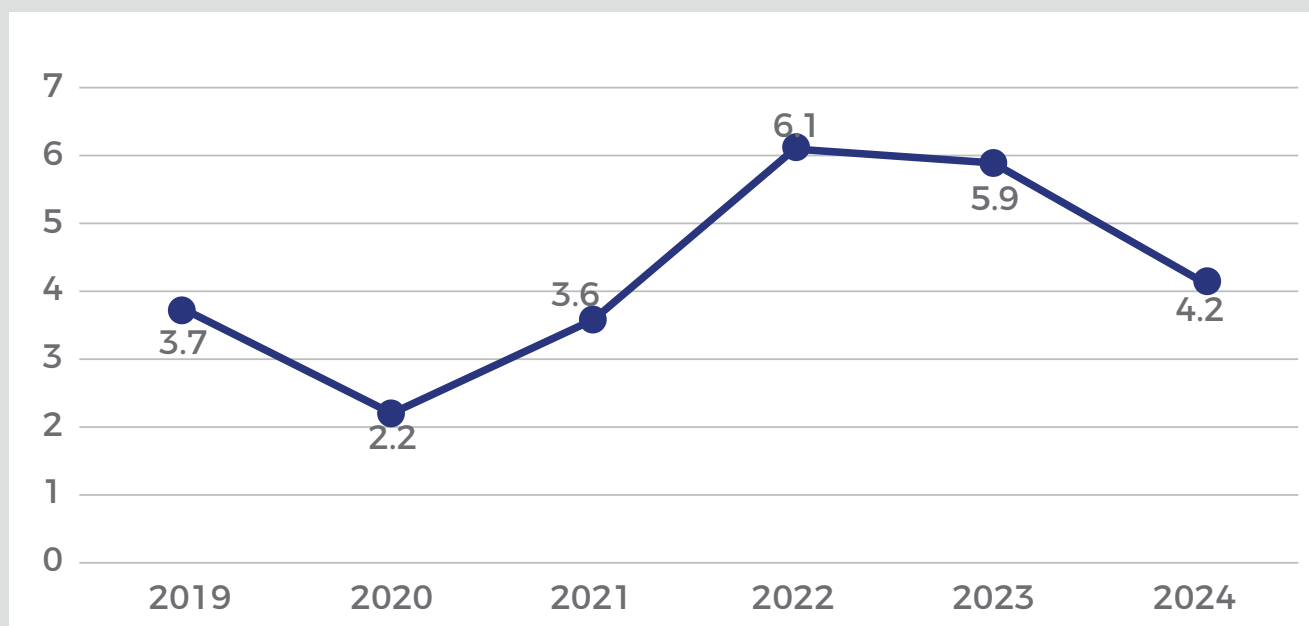


Source: World Development Indicators (2025)

2.3 Inflation

Inflation has been below 7 percent since 2019 (see Figure 3).

Figure 3: Annual Inflation (2019-2024)

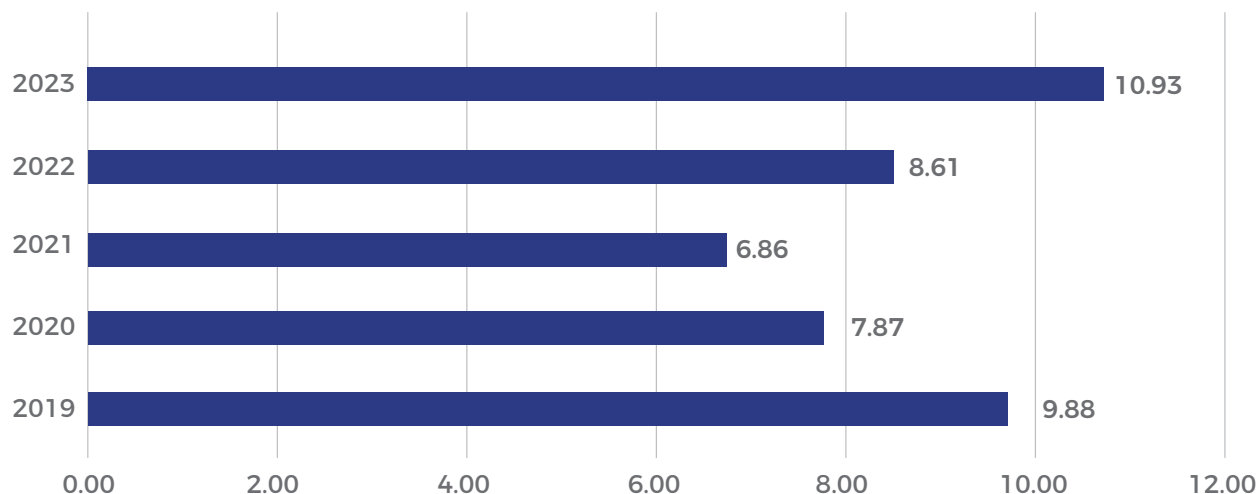


Source: NSA (n.d.)

2.4 Lending interest rate

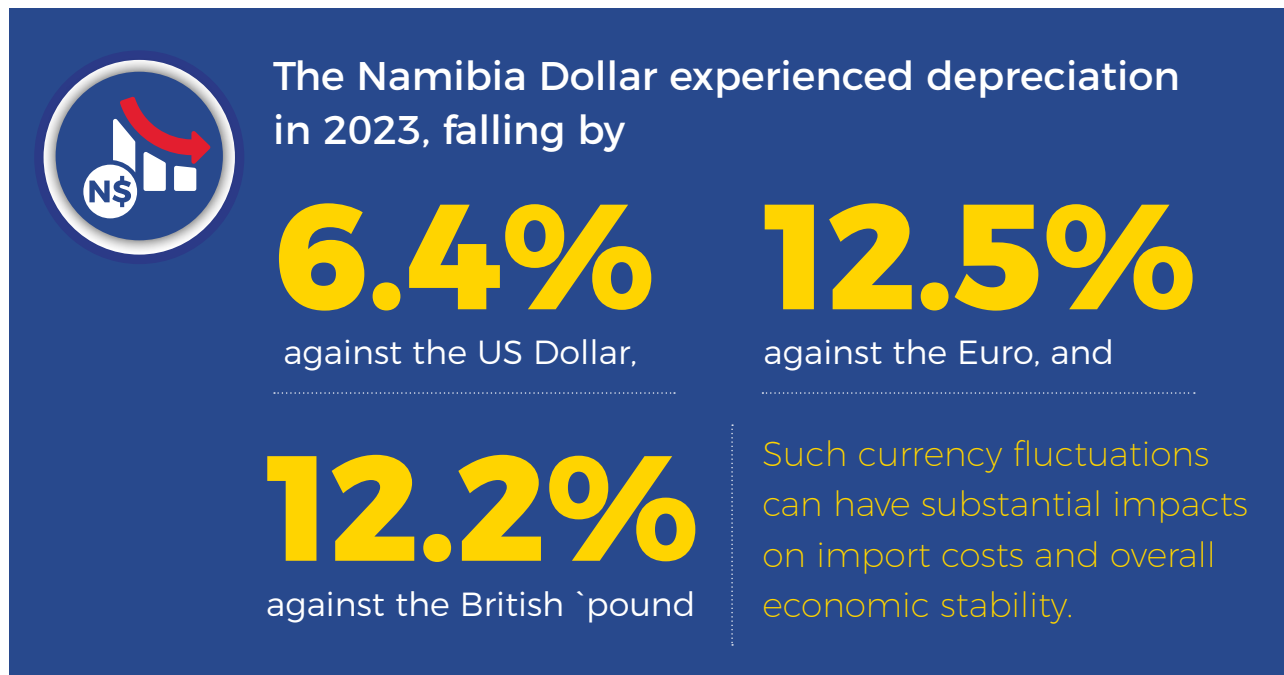
The lending interest rate - the rate at which banks provide short- and medium-term financing to individuals and firms - was 10.9 percent in 2023. Lower lending rates reduce the cost of doing business and enhance the competitiveness of firms.

Figure 4: Lending Interest Rate



Source: World Development Indicators (2025)

2.5 Exchange rate



(African Development Bank, 2024).

SECTION 3: LABOUR MARKET INDICATORS

3.1 Unemployment

In 2023, Namibia's labour force had 320,442 unemployed individuals, leading to an overall unemployment rate of 36.9% (NSA, n.d.). Youth unemployment was even higher, reaching 44.1% (ibid.).

The combined rate of unemployment and potential labour force (CRUPLF) stood at 54.8%. CRUPLF represents the share of the working-age population that is either unemployed or underutilised, including those not actively seeking employment but available and willing to work. Among the youth, this rate was even higher, reaching 64.1% (ibid.).

3.2 Economically inactive population



ECONOMICALLY INACTIVE PEOPLE IN 2023

320,442

(Namibia Statistics Agency, n.d.)



YOUTH
UNEMPLOYMENT -

44.1%



THE COMBINED RATE OF
UNEMPLOYMENT AND
POTENTIAL LABOUR FORCE
(CRUPLF).

54.8%

3.3 Industrial distribution of employment

Agriculture dominates employment in Namibia. Table 3 shows that about 16 percent of employed persons in the country work in agriculture in 2023.

Table 3: Industrial distribution of employment

Industry	Both Sexes		Male		Female	
	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%
Agriculture, forestry, and fishing	88,277	16.14	69,624	23.15	18,653	7.58
Mining and quarrying	14,337	2.62	11,900	3.96	2,437	0.99
Manufacturing	53,491	9.78	35,386	11.76	18,105	7.36
Electricity, gas, steam, and air condition	1,601	0.29	1,210	0.40	391	0.16
Water supply; sewerage, waste management	2,379	0.44	1,553	0.52	826	0.34
Construction	28,661	5.24	26,671	8.87	1,990	0.81
Wholesale and retail trade	54,618	9.99	24,544	8.16	30,074	12.22
Transportation and storage	18,137	3.32	15,969	5.31	2,168	0.88
Accommodation and food service activities	29,324	5.36	7,486	2.49	21,838	8.88
Information and communication	8,164	1.49	4,461	1.48	3,703	1.51
Financial and insurance activities	16,691	3.05	6,254	2.08	10,437	4.24
Real estate activities	1,011	0.18	454	0.15	557	0.23
Professional, scientific, and technical	15,736	2.88	7,357	2.45	8,379	3.41
Administrative and support service activities	50,884	9.31	26,967	8.97	23,917	9.72
Public administration and defence; communication	36,012	6.59	19,337	6.43	16,675	6.78
Education	38,209	6.99	11,854	3.94	26,355	10.71
Human health and social work activities	18,448	3.37	4,987	1.66	13,461	5.47
Arts, entertainment, and recreation	3,175	0.58	1,694	0.56	1,481	0.60
Other service activities	24,064	4.40	10,573	3.52	13,491	5.48
Activities of households as employers;	43,149	7.89	12,286	4.08	30,863	12.55
Activities of extraterritorial organization	401	0.07	209	0.07	192	0.08
Not elsewhere classified	36	0.01	18	0.01	18	0.01
Namibia	546,805	100.00	300,794	100.00	246,011	100.00

Source: adapted from NSA (n.d.)

SECTION 4: INTERNATIONAL TRADE

4.1 Trade agreements and economic community memberships

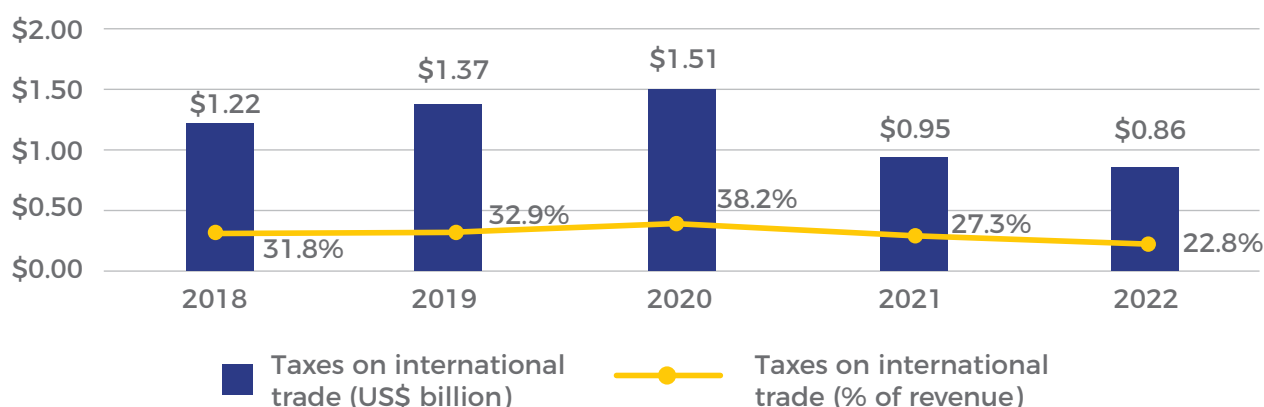
Namibia is a member and signatory of various regional and multilateral trade agreements and economic groupings. These include:

1. Southern African Customs Union (SACU),
2. Southern African Development Community (SADC),
3. Africa, Caribbean and Pacific (ACP) countries
4. World Trade Organisation (WTO)
5. SACU-European Free Trade Area (Iceland, Liechtenstein, Norway and Switzerland) Trade Agreement
6. SACU-MERCOSUR (Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Paraguay and Uruguay) Trade Agreement
7. SACU-India Preferential Trade Agreement
8. Economic Partnership Agreement (EPA)
9. African Growth and Opportunity Act (AGOA)
10. African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA)

4.2 Trade taxes

Namibia's total revenue from international trade taxes reached US\$862.99 million in 2022, accounting for 22.8% of total revenue. This includes import and export duties, profits from export or import monopolies, as well as exchange profits and taxes.

Figure 5: Taxes on international trade



Source: World Development Indicators (2025)

4.3 Exports and imports

Namibia recorded negative merchandise trade balances in 2023, meaning its imports exceeded exports in that year. In 2023, the total value of Namibia's imports was approximately US\$7.44 billion, while its exports amounted to US\$5.63 billion, resulting in a trade deficit of around US\$1.80 billion.



MERCHANDISE IMPORTS IN 2023:
US\$7.44 BILLION



EXPORTS IN 2023:
US\$5.63 BILLION



TRADE DEFICIT:
US\$1.80 BILLION

Table 5: total exports and imports

	2023 (Jan-Dec)	2024 (Jan-Nov)
Total exports (US\$ billion)	5.63	5.88
Total imports (US\$ billion)	7.44	8.23
Trade balance	(1.80)	(2.34)

Source: adapted from NSA (n.d.)

4.4 Main export destinations

In November 2024, the primary destination for Namibia's exports was China, which received approximately 26% of the country's total exports. South Africa ranked second, receiving about 17 percent of Namibia's exports.



Table 4: Main export destinations

November 23				November 2024			
Rank	Country	Amount (US\$ millions)	%Share	Rank	Country	Amount (US\$ millions)	% Share
1	China	151.90	24.25	1	China	180.8	26.8
2	Botswana	138.00	22.03	2	South Africa	117.3	17.4
3	South Africa	119.80	19.13	3	Botswana	96.3	14.3
4	Zambia	41.90	6.69	4	Belgium	81.6	12.1
5	Belgium	34.90	5.57	5	Zambia	63.2	9.4
6	Netherlands	21.70	3.46	6	United Arab Emirates	19.6	2.9
7	Canada	20.20	3.22	7	Netherlands	18.3	2.7
8	United Arab Emirates	13.50	2.16	8	Spain	14	2.1
9	Spain	13.40	2.14	9	Democratic Republic of Congo	11.3	1.7
10	Hong Kong	8.20	1.31	10	Switzerland	8.5	1.3
11	Others	62.90	10.04	11	Others	62.8	9.3
Total		626.40	100	Total		673.7	100

Source: adapted from NSA (n.d.)

4.5 Main export commodities

The main export commodity of Namibia were uranium ores and concentrates, accounting for about 20% total export of the country in November 2024.

Table 5: Main export commodities

November 2023				November 2024			
Rank	Commodities	Amount (US\$ millions)	% Share	Rank	Commodity	Amount (US\$ million)	% Share
1	Uranium or thorium ores and concentrates	147.9	23.61	1	Uranium or thorium ores and concentrates	135.31	20.1
2	Pearls and precious or semiprecious stones, unworked or worked	129.6	20.69	2	Pearls and precious or semiprecious stones, unworked or worked	108.87	16.2
3	Gold, non-monetary (excluding gold ores and concentrates)	78.0	12.45	3	Copper and articles of copper	94.49	14.0
4	Fish, fresh (live or dead), chilled or frozen	35.4	5.65	4	Gold, non-monetary (excluding gold ores and concentrates)	83.90	12.5
5	Copper and articles of copper	33.1	5.28	5	Fish, fresh (live or dead), chilled or frozen	31.75	4.7
6	Fruit and nuts (not including oil nuts), fresh or dried	26.0	4.15	6	Fruit and nuts (not including oil nuts), fresh or dried	27.63	4.1
7	Petroleum oils and oils obtained from bituminous minerals (other than crude); preparations, n.e.s.,	25.3	4.04	7	Petroleum oils and oils obtained from bituminous minerals (other than crude); preparations, n.e.s.,	22.07	3.3

November 2023				November 2024			
Rank	Commodities	Amount (US\$ millions)	% Share	Rank	Commodity	Amount (US\$ million)	% Share
8	Nickel ores and concentrates; nickel mattes, nickel oxide sinters and other intermediate products of nickel metallurgy	13.3	2.12	8	Inorganic chemical elements, oxides and halogen salts	17.95	2.7
9	Other crude minerals	11.0	1.76	9	Fertilizers (other than those of group 272)	14.31	2.1
10	Live animals other than animals of division 03	9.3	1.48	10	Ores and concentrates of base metals,	11.91	1.8
11	Others	117.5	18.76	11	Others	125.57	18.6
Total		626.4	100.00	Total		673.75	100.0

Source: adapted from NSA (n.d.)

4.6 Main sources of imports

IN NOVEMBER 2024, MAJORITY OF NAMIBIA'S IMPORTS ORIGINATED WITH SOUTH AFRICA, which accounted for approximately 35% of total imports.

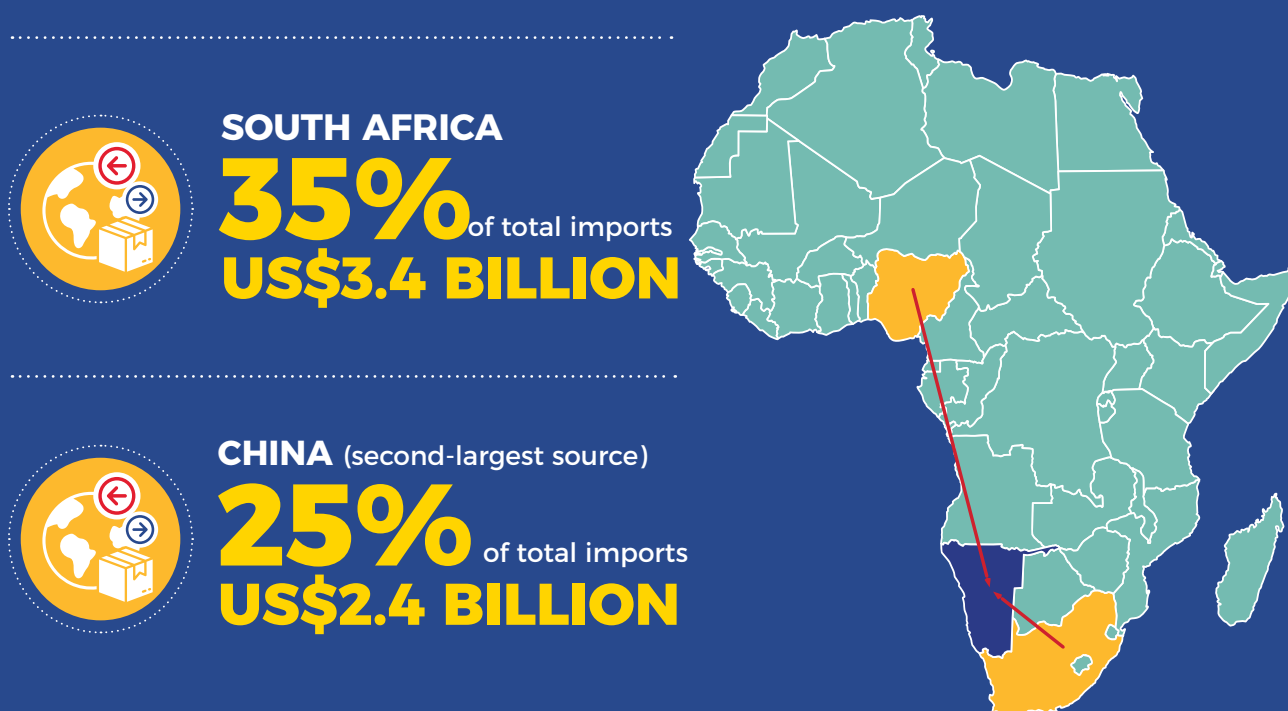


Table 6: Main sources of imports

November 2023				November 2024			
Rank	Country	Amount (US\$ millions)	% Share	Rank	Country	Amount (US\$ millions)	% Share
1	South Africa	308.29	36.57	1	South Africa	341.02	34.86
2	India	106.67	12.65	2	China	240.54	24.59
3	China	68.77	8.16	3	India	42.24	4.32
4	United Arab Emirates	62.19	7.38	4	Zambia	34.85	3.56
5	Malaysia	32.67	3.88	5	Democratic Republic of Congo	31.63	3.23
6	United States of America	32.27	3.83	6	Oman	28.22	2.88
7	Democratic Republic of Congo	22.3	2.65	7	Germany	26.78	2.74
8	Spain	16.07	1.91	8	United States of America	23.88	2.44
9	Zambia	14.44	1.71	9	Japan	14.7	1.50
10	Korea	14.25	1.69	10	United Arab Emirates	12.27	1.25
11	Other countries	165.15	19.59	11	Other countries	182.10	18.62
		843.07	100.00		Total	978.23	100.00

Source: adapted from NSA (n.d.)

4.7 Main import commodities

In November 2024, aircraft and associated equipment were the largest imports into Namibia, making up approximately 13% of the country's total imports. In contrast, a year earlier, petroleum products accounted for about 27% of Namibia's imports."

Table 7: Main import commodities

November 2023				November 2024			
Rank	Commodity	Amount (US\$ million)	% Share	Rank	Commodity	Amount (US\$ million)	% Share
1	Petroleum oils and oils obtained from bituminous minerals (other than crude); preparations	229.32	27.20	1	Aircraft and associated equipment; spacecraft (including satellites) and spacecraft launch vehicles; parts thereof	124.61	12.74
2	Inorganic chemical elements, oxides and halogen salts	28.74	3.41	2	Petroleum oils and oils obtained from bituminous minerals (other than crude); preparations, n.e.s.,	94.02	9.61
3	Civil engineering and contractors' plant and equipment; parts thereof	25.21	2.99	3	Pearls and precious or semiprecious stones, unworked or worked	39.5	4.04

November 2023				November 2024			
Rank	Commodity	Amount (US\$ million)	% Share	Rank	Commodity	Amount (US\$ million)	% Share
4	Motor vehicles for the transport of goods and special-purpose motor vehicles	22.89	2.72	4	Motor vehicles for the transport of goods and special-purpose motor vehicles	36.5	3.73
5	Electric power machinery (other than rotating electric plant of group 716) and parts thereof	14.98	1.78	5	Nickel ores and concentrates; nickel mattes, nickel oxide sinters and other intermediate products of nickel metallurgy	31.67	3.24
6	Alcoholic beverages	14.22	1.69	6	Inorganic chemical elements, oxides and halogen salts	21.1	2.16
7	Medicaments (including veterinary medicaments)	12.91	1.53	7	Fertilizers (other than those of group 272)	20.37	2.08
8	Motor cars and other motor vehicles principally designed for the transport of persons (other than motor vehicles for the transport of ten or more persons, including the driver), including station-wagons and racing cars	12.53	1.49	8	Telecommunications equipment, parts, and accessories of apparatus falling within division 76	19.67	2.01
9	Rubber tyres, interchangeable tyre treads, tyre flaps and inner tubes for wheels of all kinds	11.45	1.36	9	Rubber tyres, interchangeable tyre treads, tyre flaps and inner tubes for wheels of all kinds	18.75	1.92
10	Measuring, checking, analysing and controlling instruments and apparatus	10.69	1.27	10	Alcoholic beverages	18.2	1.86
	Others	460.07	54.57		Others	553.96	56.62
	total	843.01	100			978.35	100

Source: adapted from NSA (n.d.)

4.8 Informal Cross-border trade (ICBT)

The total recorded value of ICBT in Namibia (imports plus exports) was N\$10.3 million (US\$553,499) in November 2023 (NSA, 2023). Exports dominated Namibia's ICBT, accounting for 88.5% of the total trade during the month. As a result, the country recorded a trade surplus of N\$7.9 million (US\$521,257).

Table 8 indicates that cane or beet sugar was Namibia's leading ICBT export in November 2023, accounting for approximately 12%. In contrast, cereal grain had the largest share of ICBT imports, making up 9% of the total.

Table 8: ICBT Commodities

Export			Import		
Rank	Commodities	% Share	Rank	Commodities	% Share
1	Cane or beet sugar	12.4	1	Cereal grain	9.2
2	Cereal flours (Excl. wheat or Meslin)	8.1	2	Other fresh vegetables	8.5
3	Bread, pastry, cakes	5.3	3	Pasta, such as Spaghetti, Macaroni, Noodles	7.6
4	Medicaments	4.6	4	Grain Sorghum	7.2
5	Sunflower seed or cotton-Seed oil	3.6	5	Fuel wood	4.6
	others	66		Others	62.9
	Total	100			100

Source: adapted from NSA (2023)

SECTION 5: EXPORT PROCESSING ZONES (EPZS)

5.1 Legal and institutional framework

The primary legal and institutional frameworks governing Export Processing Zones (EPZs) in Namibia are **Act 26** and the **Offshore Development Company (ODC)**. Established by Article 26, the ODC is responsible for promoting, marketing, monitoring, and coordinating EPZ activities. Additionally, it is mandated to provide support services to EPZ enterprises. The ODC also oversees the management of industrial and business parks, leasing these facilities to both foreign and domestic investors to stimulate investment and development within the EPZs.

5.2 Tax incentives

Namibia offers tax incentives to EPZ enterprises. These include exemptions from corporate income tax, as well as duties and value-added tax (VAT) on machinery, equipment, and raw materials imported for manufacturing purposes. While EPZ enterprises are subject to a **10% withholding tax** on declared dividends paid to non-resident shareholders, they also have the advantage of being able to maintain foreign currency bank accounts and repatriate their capital and profits.

5.3 Main location

EPZs are located at Oshikango, Katima Mulilo, Katwitwi and Omahenene. A new park is being developed in Omahenene. The ODC also manages two gemstones' centres Karibib and Keetmanshoop. The Oshikango Park consists of 14 warehouses.



SECTION 6: INDUSTRIAL POLICY


6.1 The Vision

Namibia's Industrial Policy is aligned with the country's Vision 2030, which envisions Namibia as “a prosperous and industrialized nation developed through its human resources, while enjoying peace, harmony, and political stability”

6.2 The Objectives

The objectives of Namibia's Industrial Policy include changing production and export structures and enabling wealth creation by small- and medium-scale enterprises (SMEs). The policy emphasises job creation and labour-intensive growth strategies. Namibia's industrialisation targets include ensuring:

1. Manufacturing and services sectors constitute about 80 percent of the country's GDP;
2. The country largely exports processed goods, which account for not less than 70% of total exports;
3. Namibia has an established network of modern infrastructure that includes railways, roads, telecommunications and port facilities, and
4. Namibia has a critical mass of knowledge workers, and the contribution of SMEs to GDP is not less than 30 percent.



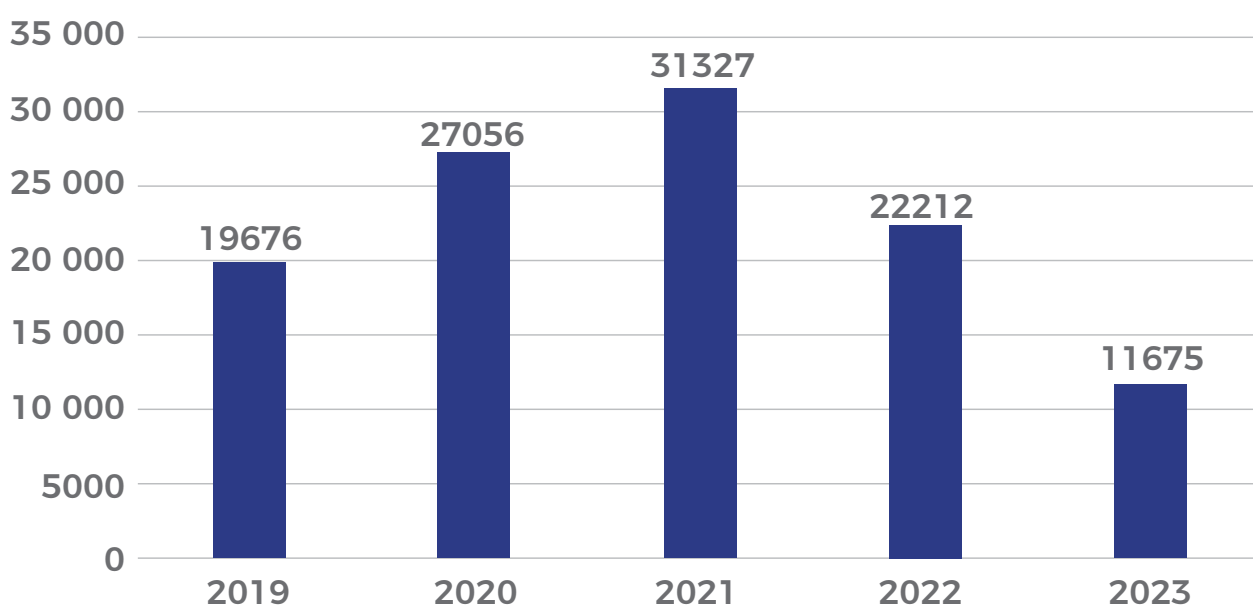
Namibia's Industrial Policy is aligned with the country's **Vision 2030**, which envisions Namibia as **“a prosperous and industrialized nation developed through its human resources, while enjoying peace, harmony, and political stability”**

SECTION 7: LABOUR MIGRATION

7.1 Net migration

Namibia experienced a trend of greater emigration than immigration between 2019 and 2021. In 2023, the number of Namibians who left the country exceeded those who entered by approximately 11,700 individuals.

Figure 6: Net migration (2019-2023)



Sources: adapted from World Development Indicators (2023)



In 2023, the number of Namibians who left the country exceeded those who entered by approximately

11,700
individuals.

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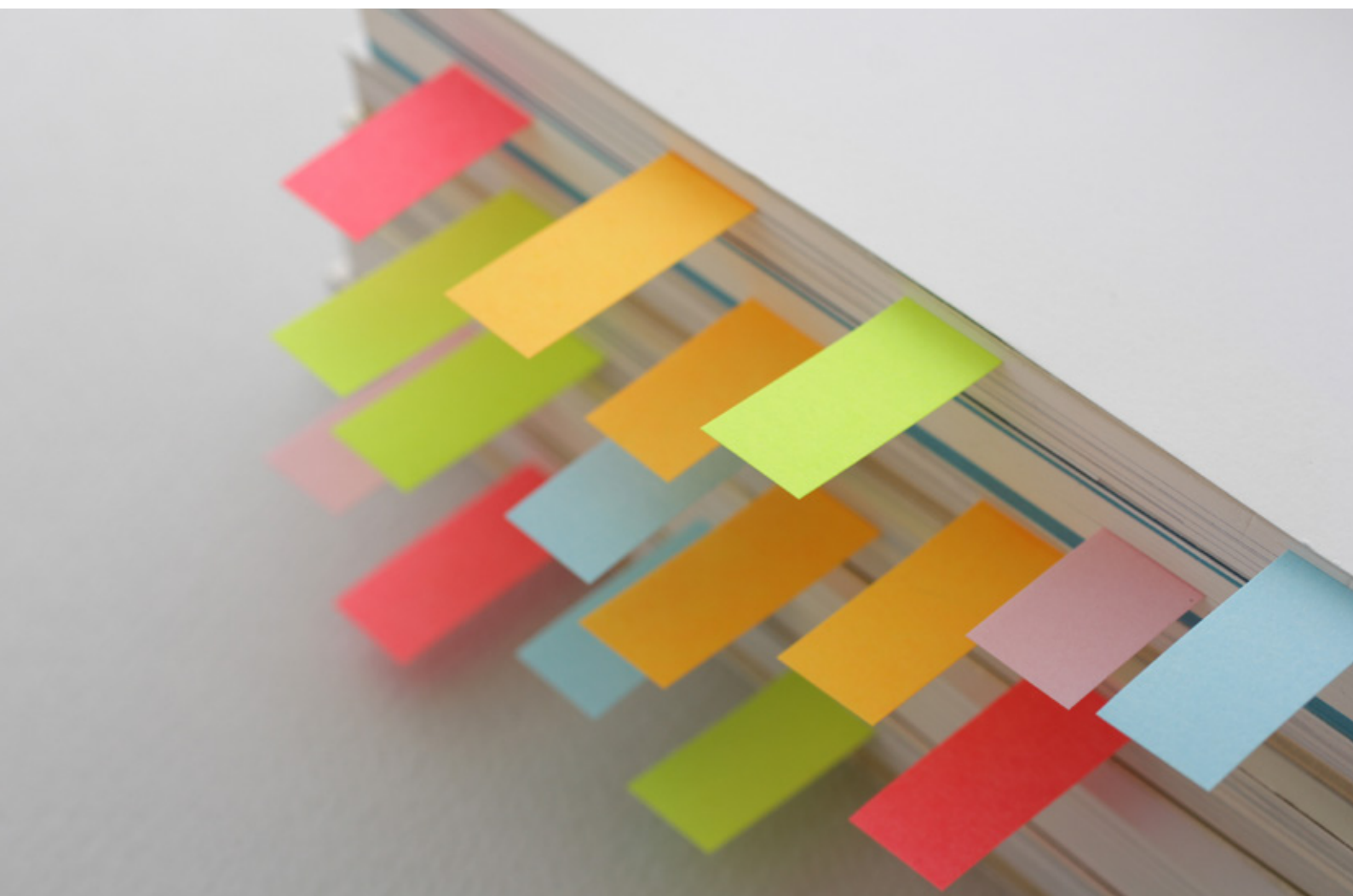
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Ministry for Foreign
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