

Reviewing Africa's 2024 Election Year

Trends and stories from
the 2024 Ibrahim Index of
African Governance (IIAG)

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4 13 out of the 17 scheduled elections held

The world has seen a multitude of countries carry out elections in the past twelve months. From the United States to India to South Africa, hundreds of millions of citizens cast their votes and headed to the ballot boxes, within vastly different political contexts. For some, these elections have been contested, others have ushered in new leaders, while many saw the continuation of ruling parties.

2024 has been a major election year in Africa too. At the beginning of the year, 17 African countries were scheduled to hold presidential or general elections. With four postponed elections in Burkina Faso, Mali, South Sudan and Guinea-Bissau, 13 countries held elections in 2024, the last one being Ghana on 7 December.

In seven countries incumbent leaders won elections: Algeria, Chad, Comoros, Mauritania, Rwanda, South Africa and Tunisia. In six countries new leaders were elected, seven if including self-declared Republic of Somaliland. A historic four transfers of power took place in Botswana, Ghana, Mauritius and Senegal, five including self-declared Republic of Somaliland.


Governance deteriorations in most election countries between 2014 and 2023

Published since 2007, the IIAG assesses governance performance in 54 African countries over the latest available 10-year period. It provides a framework and dashboard for any interested audience to assess the delivery of public goods and services and public policy outcomes in African countries.


The IIAG constitutes the most comprehensive dataset measuring African governance, providing specific scores and trends at continental, regional, and national level, on a whole spectrum of thematic governance dimensions, from security to justice to rights and economic opportunity to health.

Covering the 2014-2023 decade, the latest IIAG provides an assessment of the governance performance in election countries, allowing us to delve deeper into key trends in participatory and democratic measures over the years leading up to 2024.


The 17 countries scheduled to hold elections in 2024 range from 2nd (Mauritius) to 54th (South Sudan) rank in *Overall Governance*, of these, 11 showcase deteriorations in governance performance since 2014. Six showcase increasing deterioration trajectories over the decade: Botswana, Burkina Faso, Mauritius, Mozambique, Senegal and Tunisia. Five countries showcase warning signs, meaning that even if the level reached in 2023 is better than in 2014, deterioration has been registered over the second part of the decade (2019-2023): Algeria, Chad, Ghana, Guinea-Bissau and Rwanda. Only one country, Mauritania, manages to progress both over the whole decade and in the latest five years, even though at a slightly slower pace of improvement in the latter period.




In 2024: Out of 17 scheduled elections, 13 were held



Out of 13 elections, 7 incumbent leaders retained power and 6 new leaders were elected

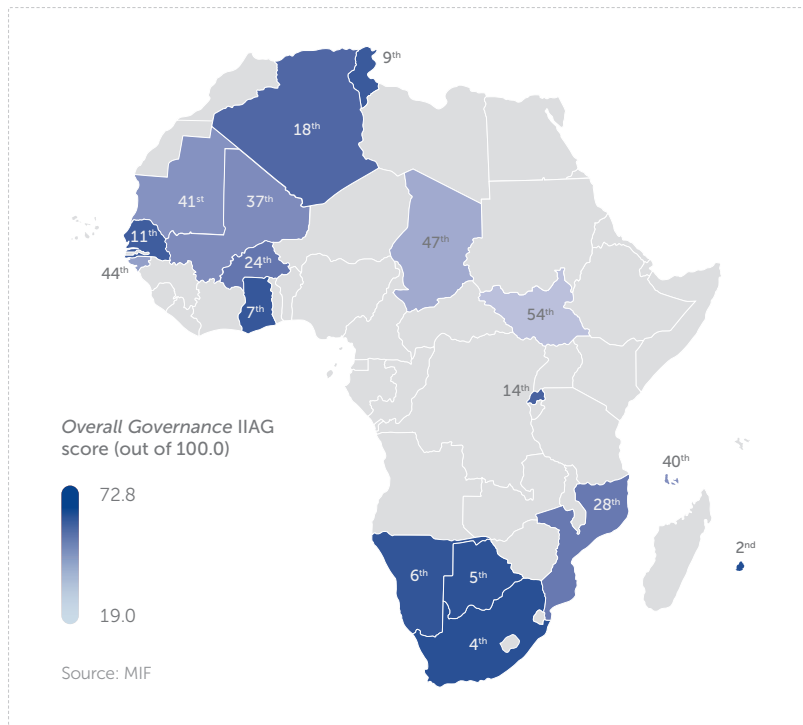


A transfer of power took place in Botswana, Ghana, Mauritius and Senegal



Four elections have been postponed in Burkina Faso, Mali, South Sudan and Guinea-Bissau

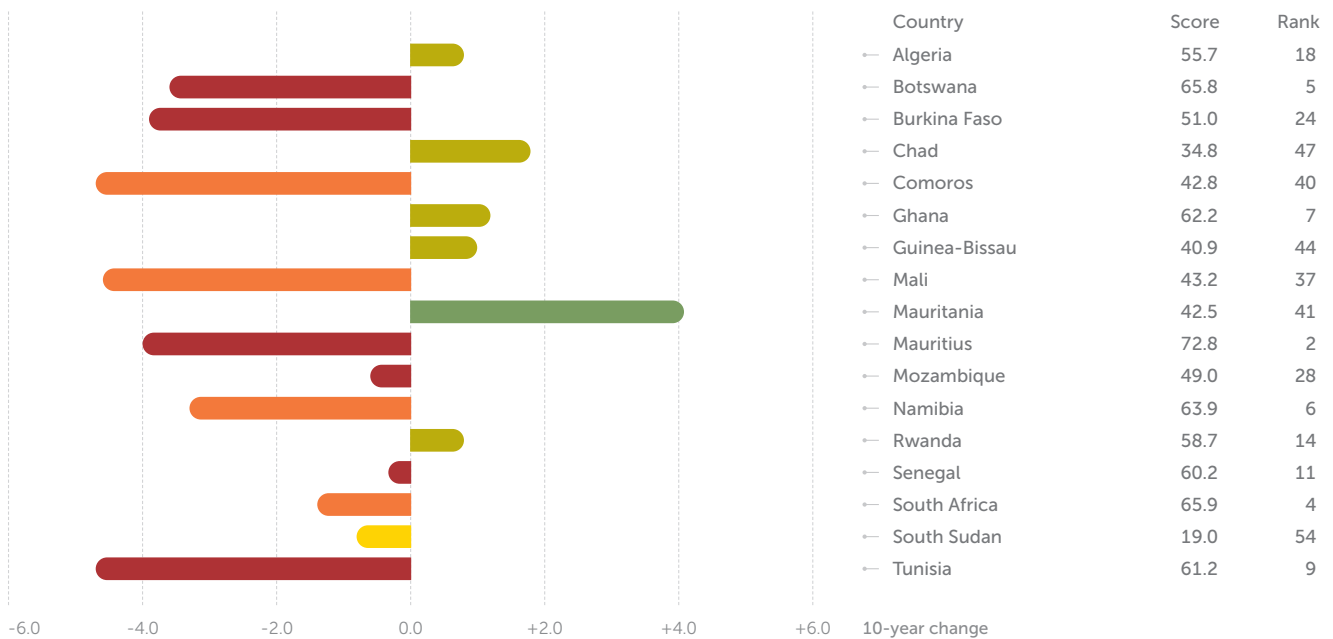
African countries with scheduled elections in 2024: *Overall Governance* scores & ranks (2023)



In *Overall Governance*, Comoros and Tunisia have been the most declined countries between 2014 and 2023 (-4.7)

Among the 17 countries with scheduled election in 2024, Mauritius ranks highest (72.8/2nd) and South Sudan lowest (19.0/54th) in *Overall Governance* in 2023

African countries with scheduled elections in 2024: *Overall Governance*, 2023 scores, 2023 ranks, 10-year changes & trends (2014-2023)



Trend 2014-2023

● Increasing Improvement ● Slowing Improvement ● Warning Signs ● Bouncing Back ● Slowing Deterioration ● Increasing Deterioration

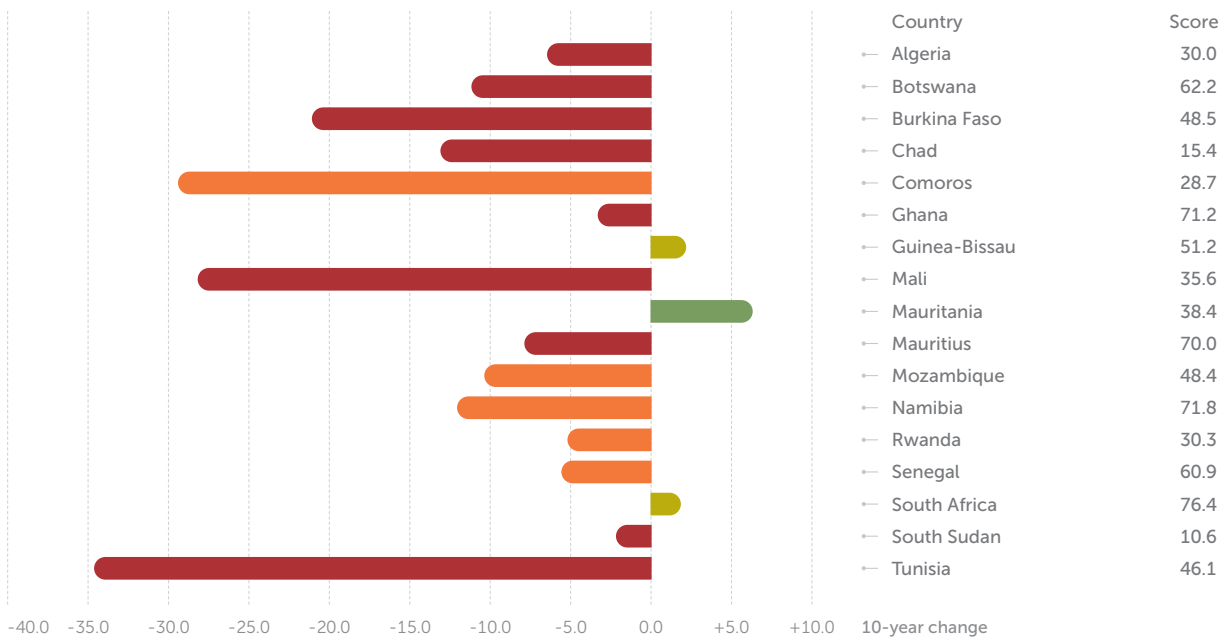
Source: MIF

6 Participatory and democratic measures have fallen in the majority of election countries between 2014 and 2023

Over the past decade, across the 17 countries with scheduled elections, the 2024 IAG shows concerning deteriorations in critical participatory and democratic measures. Although security and rule of law has shown considerable decline, participation, rights and inclusion are also crucial in driving the continental stagnation in overall governance.

Participation: 14 countries (out of the 17 with elections scheduled) have deteriorated since 2014, nine of which at an accelerated pace since 2019

African countries with scheduled elections in 2024: *Participation* sub-category, 2023 scores, 10-year changes & trends (2014-2023)



Trend 2014-2023

● Increasing Improvement ● Slowing Improvement ● Warning Signs ● Bouncing Back ● Slowing Deterioration ● Increasing Deterioration

Source: MIF

Over the decade, all but three election countries: Guinea-Bissau, Mauritania and South Africa have deteriorated. Two of which (Guinea-Bissau and South Africa) are on warning signs trends.

Looking more closely at the two years leading up to the 2024 election year, indicators such as *Political Pluralism* and *Civil Society Space* have declined in several countries, pointing to a shrinking participatory space.

Deteriorations in *Participation* are registered for election countries across the *Overall Governance* rankings table from Mauritius (2nd) to South Sudan (54th)

Political Pluralism has deteriorated in seven out of the 17 countries in the two years leading up to election year

African countries with scheduled elections in 2024: *Political Pluralism* indicator scores (2021-2023)

Country	2021	2022	2023
Algeria	43.4	54.7	55.8
Botswana	40.4	38.2	38.2
Burkina Faso	75.8	75.7	59.4
Chad	13.3	13.3	14.4
Comoros	19.3	16.9	16.9
Ghana	53.1	53.5	54.1
Guinea-Bissau	47.1	47.4	47.4
Mali	46.6	47.3	47.3
Mauritania	24.1	22.8	22.8
Mauritius	48.1	43.1	43.1
Mozambique	58.8	58.8	59.7
Namibia	79.2	81.4	81.4
Rwanda	27.6	28.5	25.9
Senegal	47.1	55.4	50.6
South Africa	90.1	90.5	90.5
South Sudan	4.9	8.5	10.5
Tunisia	76.1	44.5	39.4

Key

- Improvement
- Decline

Source: MIF

The IAG measures *Political Pluralism** as the extent to which political parties are free to operate as well as have access to state-owned media and public financing for campaigns. Of all 17 countries with expected elections in 2024, South Sudan has the lowest score at 10.5 in 2023 which is up from the 2021 score of 4.9. Along with South Sudan, in 2023, Chad and Comoros both score below 20.0 at 14.4 and 16.9, respectively.

However, the most declined countries by far in the two years prior to elections are Tunisia (-36.7) and Burkina Faso (-16.4). In the case of Burkina Faso, this trend is mainly driven by the sudden reduction in the freedom of political parties between 2021 and 2023. While in Tunisia, deterioration is driven by the lack of public party campaign finance available to opposition parties.

Tunisia experienced a 'self-coup' in 2021 following President Kais Saied dismissal of government and suspension of the national assembly. The centralisation of power in Tunisia has left little space for opposition. Burkina Faso experienced two coups within 2022 alone, first in January and then September, leading to the dissolution of parliament.

On a positive note, ten out of 17 countries experienced improvements in their *Political Pluralism* scores between 2021 and 2023. However, ten out of the 17 countries have a score in 2023, the year prior to election, below 50.0 points. This election year in Africa has been one for the records with transfers of powers in Botswana, Ghana, Mauritius, Senegal and self-declared Republic of Somaliland.

Between 2021 and 2023, *Political Pluralism* plummeted the most in Tunisia (-36.7) and Burkina Faso (-16.4)

* Source: African Institute for Development Policy (AFIDEP) & Varieties of Democracy Institute (V-DEM)

Civil Society Space shrunk in 13 out of the 17 countries between 2021 and 2023

African countries with scheduled elections in 2024: *Civil Society Space* indicator scores (2021-2023)

Country	2021	2022	2023
Algeria	17.1	17.1	10.9
Botswana	89.1	86.8	84.8
Burkina Faso	76.0	67.5	59.7
Chad	17.6	11.6	11.6
Comoros	75.5	54.8	54.8
Ghana	84.3	87.6	87.6
Guinea-Bissau	81.8	75.6	75.6
Mali	42.7	41.2	33.5
Mauritania	42.3	42.3	42.3
Mauritius	89.8	89.8	89.8
Mozambique	71.0	62.4	55.1
Namibia	97.6	91.4	89.2
Rwanda	33.7	32.4	29.5
Senegal	89.4	83.2	81.5
South Africa	75.9	75.9	75.9
South Sudan	27.4	19.3	22.6
Tunisia	84.3	79.9	64.2

Ghana is the only country to register progress in *Civil Society Space* between 2021 and 2023 out of the 17 election countries

Key

- Improvement
- Decline
- No Change

Source: MIF

Civic spaces allow different groups and people to participate in the political, economic, social and cultural aspects of their society.

The IIAG's *Civil Society Space** indicator measures the extent to which civil society or non-governmental organisations are free to establish and operate without repression or persecution.

In the two years before expected elections, 13 out of the 17 countries registered declines in their *Civil Society Space*. The most deteriorated countries are Comoros and Tunisia, falling by -20.7 and -20.1, respectively. Ghana is the only country among the group to improve in this period by +3.3 points. With a score of 87.6 in 2023, it is among five countries out of 17 with a score above 80.0 points: Botswana (84.8), Mauritius (89.8), Namibia (89.2) and Senegal (81.5).

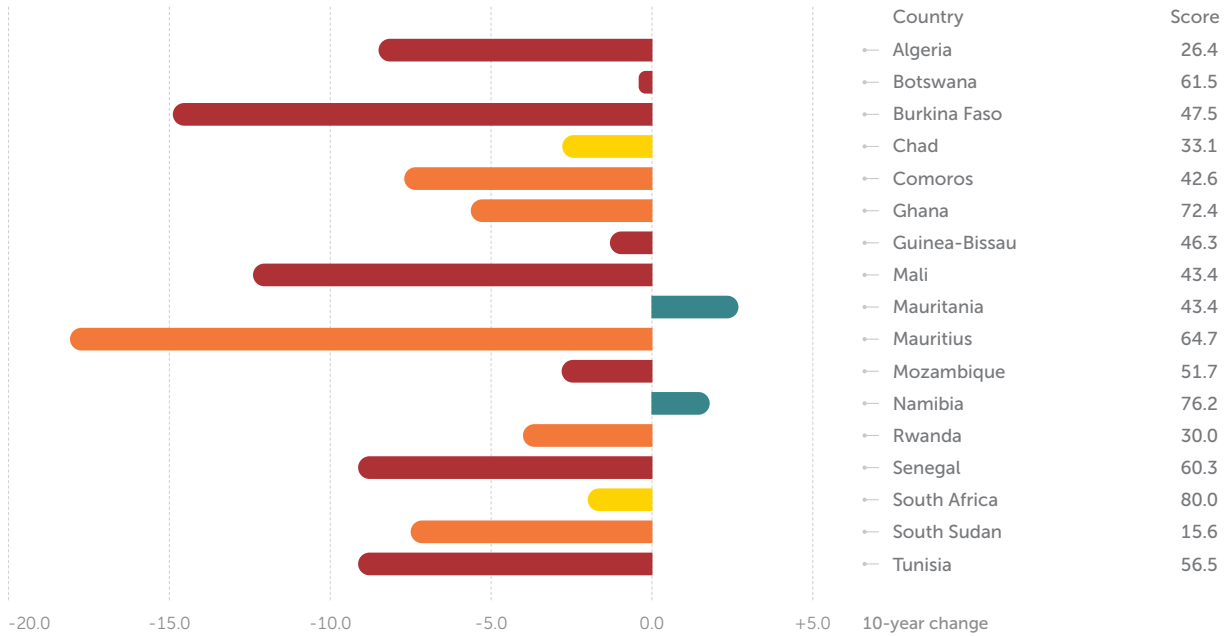
Coup countries Burkina Faso, Chad and Mali have unsurprisingly declined. Mozambique has also registered notable deterioration of -15.9. With unrest and contestation following the vote in October, a weakened civil society may be linked to the distrust in the electoral process.

Between 2021 and 2023, the largest declines in *Civil Society Space* are seen in Comoros (-20.7) and Tunisia (-20.1)

* Source: African Institute for Development Policy (AFIDEP) & Varieties of Democracy Institute (V-DEM)

Rights: 15 countries (out of the 17) have deteriorated since 2014, eight of which at an accelerated pace since 2019

African countries with scheduled elections in 2024: *Rights* sub-category, 2023 scores, 10-year changes & trends (2014-2023)



Trend 2014-2023
 ● Increasing Improvement ● Slowing Improvement ● Warning Signs ● Bouncing Back ● Slowing Deterioration ● Increasing Deterioration Source: MIF

Between 2014 and 2023, 15 out of the 17 countries have shown declines in the *Rights* sub-category, while the only two countries to progress are also both on increasing improvement trajectories (Mauritania and Namibia).

The two years prior to elections reveal a similar story in the underlying *Rights* indicator *Media Freedom*.

Media Freedom restricted between 2021 and 2023 in 15 out of the 17 countries

Media Freedom allows different groups such as media broadcasters, journalists and political commentators to report freely on matters of public interest. The IIAG's *Media Freedom** indicator assesses the extent to which the legislative framework and the political, economic and sociocultural context allow journalists to do their work freely without abuse.

In all but two countries (15 out of 17) that were scheduled to have elections this year, *Media Freedom* has fallen in the two years leading up. The most dramatic fall can be seen in Burkina Faso (-26.0), followed by Tunisia (-16.3) and Senegal (-10.7), these are the only three countries to register declines above -10.0 points. In recent months, Tunisia has cracked down on media and freedom of expression, most notably with the arrests of journalists. In Senegal, private news broadcasters had licenses revoked during the election period.

Only two out of the 17 election countries have shown progress in *Rights* between 2014 and 2023: Mauritius and Namibia

* Source: African Institute for Development Policy (AFIDEP), Reporters sans frontières (Reporters Without Borders) (RSF) and Varieties of Democracy Institute (V-DEM)

African countries with scheduled elections in 2024: *Media Freedom* scores (2021-2023)

Country	2021	2022	2023
Algeria	41.4	38.9	33.8
Botswana	63.1	66.6	60.9
Burkina Faso	79.4	71.3	53.4
Chad	52.4	51.2	51.1
Comoros	58.0	59.9	58.1
Ghana	70.0	69.8	69.7
Guinea-Bissau	57.8	59.6	53.7
Mali	58.7	52.0	53.5
Mauritania	59.2	61.7	73.8
Mauritius	70.4	69.8	68.7
Mozambique	50.6	54.1	50.1
Namibia	90.2	89.1	83.1
Rwanda	35.1	35.7	30.5
Senegal	70.7	62.5	60.0
South Africa	81.9	85.7	80.7
South Sudan	33.3	36.3	30.7
Tunisia	70.6	57.5	54.3

Key ● Improvement ● Decline

Source: MIF

Comoros and Mauritania are the only two countries to improve in *Media Freedom* out of the 17 election countries between 2021 and 2023

Burkina Faso recorded the largest fall in *Media Freedom* between 2021 and 2023

Democracy has driven transfers of power in four countries

In 2024 the continent experienced significant progress in political alternance, with as many as 4 of the 13 African election countries experiencing a transfer of power. In Botswana, Mauritius, Senegal and Ghana, opposition parties gained power - after as many as 60 years of same-party rule in Botswana. Additionally, in South Africa, while the ANC and incumbent leader remained in power, the party lost their majority for the first time.

Botswana: President Duma Boko's win ends almost 60 years BDP party rule

The voting in of 54 year old President Duma Boko saw the end of ruling party Botswana Democratic Party's (BDP) nearly 60-year rule. Many see this as a new political dawn for a country already seen as one of the most stable democracies in the continent, a fact reaffirmed by the smooth transition of power with the former President conceding the election defeat swiftly.

Despite the fact that the three most declined sub-categories between 2014 and 2023 for Botswana are *Anti-Corruption* (-15.8), *Participation* (-11.2) and *Accountability & Transparency* (-10.9), the country's scores remain above 50.0 points in all three sub-categories. The second, third and fourth most deteriorated indicators for Botswana infer an underlying issue in anti-corruption and accountability: *Public Procurement Procedures* (-30.7), *Anti-Corruption Mechanisms* (-28.5) and *Public Perception of Accountability* (-27.8).


Citizens' perceptions of corruption and lack of government accountability may have been the impetus for a change of leadership and breakaway from the ruling party. In recent years, youth unemployment has been a key topic of concern for people in Botswana. Hence, it is no surprise that the most declined indicator for the country is *Public Perception of Economic Opportunities* (-37.2).

Ghana: former president back in power after opposition victory

Elections in Ghana saw the return of former president John Dramani Mahama, and a defeat for the ruling party. The New Patriotic Party, which has been in charge for eight years under President Nana Akufo-Addo, was marred by economic instability and growing frustration over the cost of living. This period has also seen Ghana grapple with high inflation and debt default, all concerns that citizens inevitably took to the ballot boxes.

President-elect Mahama's National Democratic Congress is estimated to have received around 56% of the vote according to preliminary result. The transfer of power is not out of the ordinary for Ghana which is considered one of Africa's most stable democracies, often switching leadership between the two main parties since 1992.

According to the 2024 IAG, core democratic sub-categories like *Rights* (-5.6) and *Participation* (-3.3) were the third and fourth most declined. Interestingly, eight of Ghana's ten most declined indicators between 2014 and 2023 belong to the *Security & Rule of Law* category, among them *Impartiality of the Judicial System* (-27.0), *Absence of Undue Influence* (-16.7) and *Anti-Corruption Mechanisms* (-16.1). While Ghana has made impressive progress in economic indicators such as *Labour Relations* (+22.6), *Access to Banking Services* (+21.3) and *Regional Integration* (+20.2), public perceptions have not improved at the same pace. *Public Perception of Economic Opportunities* is the country's overall lowest scoring indicator at only 15.3 points, also featuring in the bottom ten is *Public Perception of Social Protection & Lived Poverty* (37.4 points). This points to a disgruntled electorate, dissatisfied with elite corruption and perceived economic disadvantages of the majority population.



Opposition parties won 4 elections in 2024: Botswana, Mauritius, Senegal and Ghana

Mauritius: ruling party MSM suffers landslide defeat

Mauritius' ruling party was toppled in what was described as an electoral wipe out. The opposition party Alliance for Change (AOC) won 60 of 64 parliamentary seats, led by their leader and now appointed Prime Minister Navin Ramgoolam*.

Similarly to Botswana, the incumbent leader, Pravind Jugnauth, accepted defeat even before all votes were counted. The electorate expressed varied reasonings for their dissatisfaction with the former government, mainly corruption and the rising cost of living.

According to the 2024 IIAG, *Rights* (-18.1) is the most declined sub-category between 2014 and 2023 for the country followed by *Participation* (-7.9) and *Public Administration* (-6.1). The most declined indicator is *Protection against Discrimination* (-44.5) followed by *Public Perception of Health Provision* (-29.9), *Public Perception of Infrastructure* (-25.6) and *Public Perception of Economic Opportunities* (-24.4).

Senegal: postponed elections bolstered opposition into pole position

Senegal's election took an unexpected route when just a few weeks before the planned February vote, then President Macky Sall announced its indefinite postponement. A dispute over the candidate list for the election was cited as justification but opposition saw this as a way to extend power for the ruling party, leading to civil unrest. Nevertheless, President Macky Sall eventually stepped down after his constitutionally limited second term and the election ushered in the leader of Pastef opposition party for the first time in over a decade.

According to the 2024 IIAG, the most declined sub-categories between 2014 and 2023 for Senegal were *Rights* (-9.1), *Accountability & Transparency* (-8.4) and *Rule of Law & Justice* (-5.6). The most deteriorated indicators were *Public Perception of Anti-Corruption* (-39.2), *Freedom of Association & Assembly* (-37.5) and *Public Perception of Accountability* (-27.9).

South Africa: ANC loses majority for the first time

For the first time since the country first held free elections in 1994, the African National Congress (ANC) lost its majority in the South African general elections in May 2024. Coming in at only just over 40% of votes, the once-dominant party had to enter a coalition, including Democratic Alliance (DA), Inkatha Freedom Party and Patriotic Alliance, in order to form a government. While the ANC lost over 17 percentage points compared to 2019's turnout, most opposition parties gained considerably.

Voter turnout has been on a decline since 1994, when almost 87% of eligible voters went to the polls. In 2024, it was just over 58% of the 27.8 million South Africans registered to vote.

This is reflected in relatively high scores in key IIAG indicators: *Freedom of Association & Assembly* (87.5/1st), *Political Pluralism* (90.5/1st), *Democratic Elections* (81.1/3rd) and *Media Freedom* (80.7/2nd). All of these have slightly improved between 2014 and 2023. However, most indicators in the *Social Protection & Welfare* sub-category have declined substantially, as have almost all public perception indicators of various aspects of governance, led by *Public Perception of Infrastructure* (-34.9) and *Public Perception of Social Protection & Lived Poverty* (-22.3).

*Already Executive Head of Mauritius in 1995-2000 and 2005-2014.

Tunisia and Mozambique’s disputed elections foreshadowed in 2024 IIAG

Following their respective elections, both Tunisia and Mozambique have seen the integrity of their elections called into question. Interestingly, for both countries the most declined 2024 IIAG sub-categories between 2014 and 2023 are *Participation* and *Accountability & Transparency*.

Tunisia’s incumbent President Kais Saied was re-elected for a second term, an election that rights groups had criticised. Only 29% of the more than nine million registered voters took part in the election and of more than a dozen candidates only two were eventually allowed to stand. It was noted that no campaign rallies or public debates took place, with numerous political parties urging the elections to be boycotted as they would not be free or fair. The final results of the vote saw President Saied win more than 90% of the vote.

The 2024 IIAG shows that Tunisia has declined in a number of democratic-related measures between 2014 and 2023. It declined in three key sub-categories: *Participation* (-34.7), *Rights* (-9.1) and *Inclusion & Equality* (-4.4). Tunisia’s five most declined indicators foreshadow a contentious political environment: *Anti-Corruption Mechanisms* (-52.7), *Freedom*

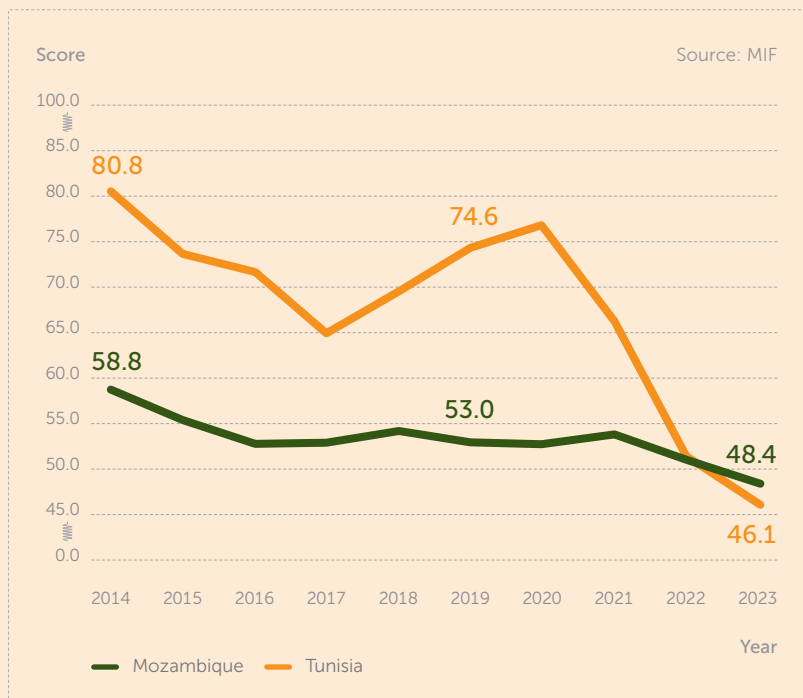
of Association & Assembly (-50.0), *Political Pluralism* (-49.1), *Impartiality of the Judicial System* (-49.0) and *Democratic Elections* (-47.4).

Mozambique’s October election, which saw the Frelimo party extend its 49-year rule, was met with deadly protests. Opposition disputed the election result as fraudulent, a claim corroborated by EU election observers. President-elect Daniel Chapo is said to have won 71% of the vote and is the first president of the country to be born after its independence in 1975. However, despite a new president, many in Mozambique see this as a continuation of the ruling party’s nearly half-century grip on power.

According to the 2024 IIAG, Mozambique’s most declined sub-category is *Participation* (-10.4); followed by *Rights* (-2.8) and *Inclusion & Equality* (-4.5) and, within the *Security & Rule of Law* category, in *Accountability & Transparency* (-7.4). *Political Pluralism* (-30.1) is the most declined indicator during the ten-year period for the country followed by *Absence of Undue Influence* (-27.8).

Falling *Participation* in the lead up to election-year for Mozambique and Tunisia

Mozambique & Tunisia: *Participation* scores (2014-2023)



Namibia elects first female president amidst declining participatory environment

Following polls on 27th November 2024, Namibia elected its first female president, Netumbo Nandi-Ndaitwah, who had been serving as vice president since February 2024 and also served as deputy prime minister between 2015 and 2024. Nandi-Ndaitwah represents the South West African People's Organisation (SWAPO) party which has governed Namibia since it gained independence from South Africa in 1990.

In the 2024 IIAG, Namibia has deteriorated in all four categories, declining by -4.7 in *Security & Rule of Law*, -2.5 in *Human Development*, -2.2 in *Foundations for Economic Opportunity* and, most crucially for a country experiencing an election, by -4.0 in *Participation, Rights & Inclusion*.

Further, Namibia's most declined sub-category was *Participation*, declining by -12.1 over the period, driven by declines in every underlying indicator, with large declines of -25.0 and -18.7 points registered in *Freedom of Association & Assembly* and *Public Perception of Political Participation*, respectively.



The incoming NDC administration in Ghana has the unenviable task of restoring citizens' trust in democracy by improving the quality of governance and addressing structural weaknesses in the economy.

Lolan Sagoe-Moses, Founding member, Ghana Compact for Political and Economic Transformation, MIF NGN Member



We hope that the democratic winds of change that swept across Botswana, Ghana & Senegal will inspire other countries to ensure that the peoples collective rights and voices are upheld and respected.

Gaokgakala Sobatha, Principal Urban Planner, Ministry of Local Government, Botswana, MIF NGN Member



Youth redefined freedom on their own terms in Africa's 2024 elections by asserting agency beyond the ballot box and reshaping governance through innovation and activism across the continent.

Mike Mpanya, CEO of Nubi AI and Founder of Ubuma Leadership, South Africa, MIF NGN Member

Conclusion

Overall, this past election year has seen significant changes on the continent, with a significant number of transfers of power, it can be considered the year of the opposition in five countries. Contested elections in Tunisia and Mozambique however, lay bare the fragility of political processes that exclude the will of the people. While the majority of elections took place, four elections have been postponed most notably in South Sudan which is still yet to have a first presidential election since gaining independence in 2011. Without proper planning, transitional governments such as those in Burkina Faso and Mali will continue on, only delaying the return to civilian rule. As 2024 draws to a close and another year begins with another cohort of countries expected to put their democracies to the test. No doubt the successes of this year will embolden many millions of citizens in Africa to take part in whatever capacity.

2025 is set to be another busy election year for Africa

In 2025, eleven African countries are scheduled to hold either general or presidential elections: Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Central African Republic, Côte d'Ivoire, Gabon, Guinea-Bissau, Malawi, Niger, Seychelles, Tanzania and Togo. Burkina Faso and Guinea-Bissau, both originally scheduled to hold elections in 2024, are expected to hold them in 2025. Cameroon, whose leader Paul Biya, is one of the longest serving African heads of state, entering office in 1982, will hold elections. A scheduled election in Gabon in 2025 will start the process for a transition to civilian rule following the coup in 2023. While Tanzania's President Samia Suluhu Hassan, the country's first female president, may face her first election as President after assuming power in 2021 following the death of President John Magufuli.

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