



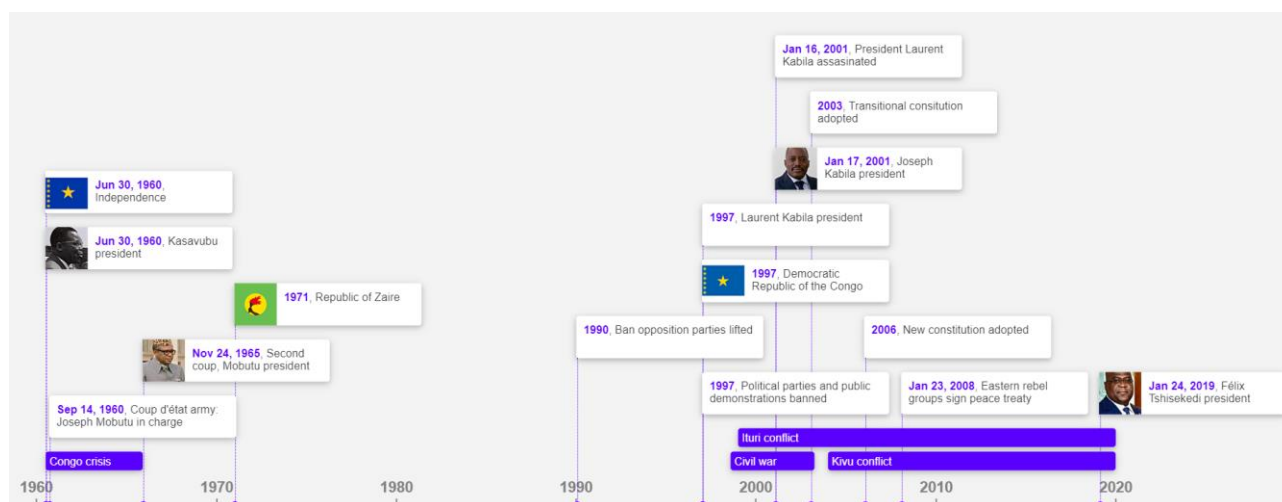
D.R. Congo at 60

Political history

1960 was the ‘Year of Africa’: many former colonies in Africa became politically independent. Of the seventeen colonies gaining independence in that year, Congo (earlier known as Zaire, nowadays called the Democratic Republic of the Congo, or Congo-Kinshasa, not to be confused with the Republic of the Congo, or

Congo-Brazzaville) was the fifth one: on June 30th. Congo had been a Belgian colony from 1908 until 1960, after having been a ‘Free State’ under a company owned by the Belgian King Leopold II from 1884 (see Figure 1 for a political timeline after independence).

Figure 1: Political timeline of D.R. Congo since independence¹



Upon independence from Belgium in June 1960, the Congo was facing difficult circumstances: from poor average education levels of its citizens to strong regional pressures for secession. As a result, between 1960 and 1965, the Congo’s politics was in turmoil, with an early coup d’état by Joseph Mobutu in 1960 and internal conflict in the central government, in particular between President Kasavubu and Premiers Lumumba and, later, Tshombe. The central government in Léopoldville (now Kinshasa) was also challenged by uprisings in several disgruntled regions, in particular resource-rich Katanga. This political fragility provided an opportunity for Joseph Mobutu, then-leader of the country’s armed forces, to attempt a second coup in

1965 – and this time, it was to be the start of a regime that lasted for over three decades.

The Mobutu years, from 1965 to 1997, started out as a period of relative stability and promise. But over the years, Mobutu’s regime would gain notoriety as one of the continent’s most extractive and corrupt postcolonial dictatorships, in which Mobutu used rents, an anticolonial policy centered on ‘national authenticity’ (including a new name, Zaire), and a pervasive personality cult to hold onto power – without delivering much in terms of development for the Congolese people. The Cold War context also supported his tenure, as Western powers strengthened Mobutu’s power as a bulwark against communism. As the Cold War faded, however, so did Mobutu’s

¹ Thanks to Iris Iedema for help with drawing up the timeline.

strength, and towards the early 1990s more and more international as well as domestic forces began to push for reform. These pressures led to an opening of the political sphere from 1990, but it took until 1997, three months before his death, for Mobutu to be ousted from government (and the country) and replaced by Laurent Kabila.

Kabila reintroduced the country's earlier name, the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), in 1997 and managed to present an image of reform and stability towards the international community. However, many democratic procedures were suspended quickly, and soon Kabila's regime became challenged by regional uprisings and civil war in the eastern provinces. Since then, the DRC has contained near-constant civil war, even though the geographic 'hot spots' varied and shifted over time. The Ituri conflict, involving primarily the Hema and Lendu peoples in Ituri district, has been a notable example, as have been the conflicts in the eastern Kivu provinces, in which the DRC armed forces fought the Hutu Power movement FDLR (Democratic Forces for the Liberation of Rwanda). As a result of this protracted violence, security in the DRC is low.

Politically, the assassination of Laurent Kabila allowed for the creation of a new political dynasty, as his son Joseph took over the presidency. A transitional constitution was introduced under his leadership in 2003, and Kabila attempted to initiate economic and political reform and rebuilding, including a new constitution in 2006. Yet his control over the country remained tenuous and violence and insecurity remained rife. A peace treaty was signed in January 2008 that included the government and many armed groups, but it would not hold for long. Throughout the civil war and political turbulence that would follow, however, Joseph Kabila would nominally hold onto power until 2019, when he voluntarily allowed Félix Tshisekedi, the son of a former prime minister, to take over.

Conflict, state fragility, and travel risks

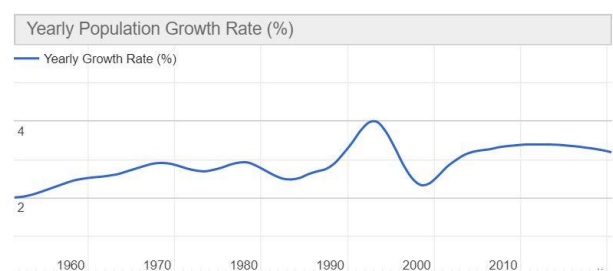
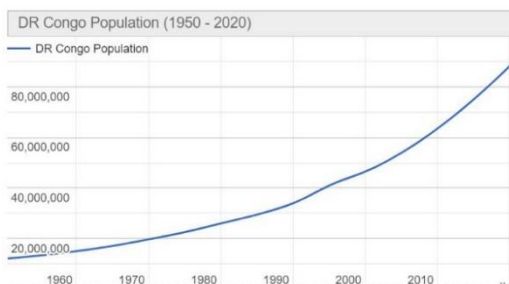
D.R. Congo is very high on the 'security risk' indices. For instance, in December 2019 the Netherlands Ministry

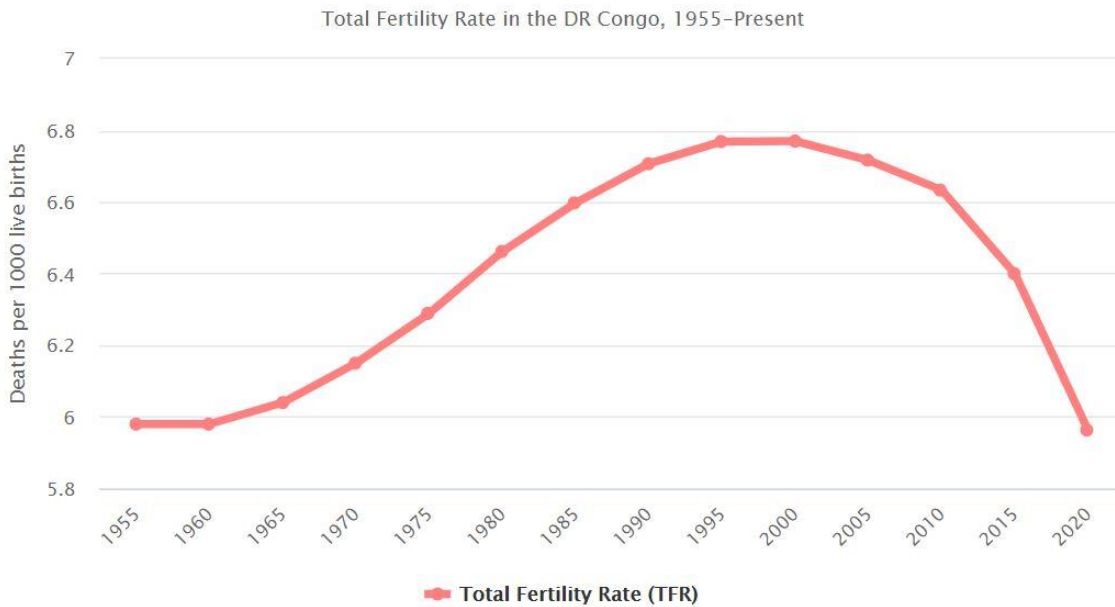
of Foreign Affairs had put most of the country in the 'orange' zone (= only travel if really necessary), and the east and south of the country in the red zone (= don't travel) [Currently, June 2020, all 'danger zoning' has been disturbed by the global Covid-19 crisis].

The State Fragility Index of the Fund for Peace puts D.R. Congo in the 'very high alert range', with 110.2 points (most negative score would be 120.0 points; 'very high alert' is the most problematic category) (<https://fundforpeace.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/04/9511904-fragilestatesindex.pdf>). The index consists of twelve variables, and Congo has very problematic scores for almost all scores, with maximum negative scores for group grievances and refugees/internally displaced people.

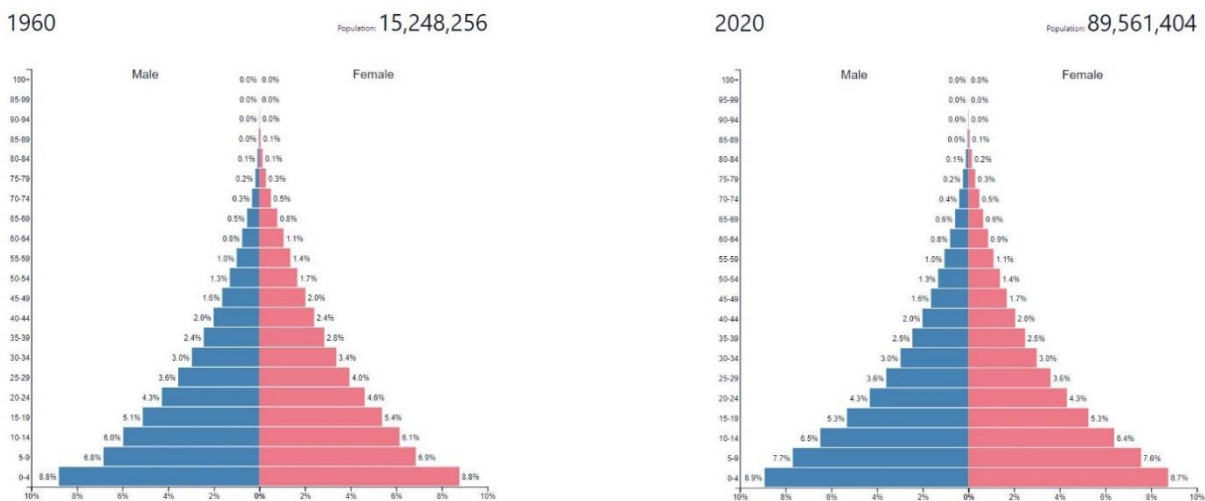
Demography

D.R. Congo's population increased almost sixfold between 1960 and 2020, from 15.2 million in 1960 to 89.6 million in early 2020, mostly through high fertility rates and longer life expectancy for both males and females (also because of rapidly improving child and infant mortality figures), but also as a result of immigration by refugees, mostly from Rwanda and Burundi. Population growth figures were always more than 2,5 percent per year since the late 1950s, and beyond 3 percent per year between 1989 and 1995, and again from 2003 onwards. Currently the average growth rate is around 3.2 percent per year. Total fertility was around 6.0 per woman in 1960; it first increased to 6.8 during 1995-2000, and then started to diminish slightly, with currently 6.0 births per average woman in D.R. Congo during her lifetime. As a result of these demographic developments, D.R. Congo has an extremely skewed population pyramid, with many more young people than adults and elderly people. The median age changed from 18.2 years old in 1960, to only 16.8 years old in 2015-2019, and currently 17.0 years old. Urbanisation is on the increase, but the majority of the people in D.R. Congo still live in rural villages and homesteads.





Source: Worldometers



Source: <https://www.populationpyramid.net/democratic-republic-of-the-congo/>

Demographic statistics, D.R. Congo as a whole, 1960 and 2020

	1960	2020
Population	15.2 million	89.6 million
Fertility rate	6.0 children per woman	6.0 children per woman
Life expectancy (males)	40.2 years	60.0 years
Idem (females)	43.0 years	63.2 years
Median age	18.2 years	17.0 years
Infant mortality (< 1 yr)	151/1000	60/1000
Under-5 mortality	255/1000	91/1000
Urbanisation rate	22%	46%
Urban population	3.4 million	40.8 million
Rural population	11.8 million	48.8 million

Source: Worldometers

Human Development Index, D.R. Congo as a whole, 1990 and 2018

Human Development Index data exist since 1990, with annual UNDP updates. In 1990, D.R. Congo’s Human Development Index started at a level of 0.377. The HDI consists of a health index, an income index and an education index, while UNDP also provides data about life expectancy, and some other indicators. Between 1990 and 1999 D.R. Congo’s HDI deteriorated considerably (to 0.331), and particularly the income index (from 0.457 to only 0.265, one of the lowest in Africa). Between 1999 and 2018 D.R. Congo’s total HDI increased again with 0.128 points to 0.459 (179th out of 189 ranked countries). Between 1990 and 2018 D.R. Congo’s population increased from 34.6 million people to 84.1 million people. The increase in the HDI between 1999 and 2018 can particularly be attributed to

improvements in education, and somewhat in health, but the income index in 2018 was still far below the situation in 1990. The improvements in education are also clear from additional data that show that the calculated years of schooling for six-year-olds had increased from 6.8 years in 1990 to 9.7 years in 2018, while the average years adults older than 25 years had gone to school increased from 2.2 years in 1990 to 6.8 years in 2018. Health levels and also the average life expectancy had increased during this period. Average income levels per capita (in US\$ of 2011, PPP) deteriorated a lot, though: from 2054 US\$/capita (PPP levels for 2011) in 1990, via 729 \$/cap. in 1994, to 522\$/cap. in the worst year 2001, after which the situation slightly improved to a level of 800\$/cap. in 2018.

D.R. Congo: HDI composition, and life expectancy; data for 1990, 1999, and 2018

	1990	1999	2018	2018/1990
Health Index	0.447	0.455	0.621	1.39
Income Index	0.457	0.265	0.314	0.69
Education Index	0.263	0.300	0.495	1.88
Life Expectancy	49 years	50 years	60 years	1.23
Total HDI index	0.377	0.331	0.459	1.22

Source: <https://globaldatalab.org> 4.0

Trade statistics, D.R. Congo: exports and imports, 2017

In 2017 D.R. Congo exported products for a total value of 7.23 billion \$, and imported for a total value of 4,64 billion \$ (mostly from South Africa, China, Zambia, Belgium, and India, in that order), resulting in a major

positive trade balance. Leading import products were refined medicaments (including blood and vaccins), refined petrol, poultry meat, and excavation machinery.

The most important export products and most important export destination in 2017 were:

Main export products (value in \$ million)		Main export destinations (value in \$ million)	
Cobalt and products	3,133	China	3,200
Copper and products	2,750	Zambia	1,780
Crude petrol	427	South Korea	591
Diamonds	258	Italy	263
Tin	56	India	235

Source: <https://oec.world/en/profile/country/cod/>

Protected areas and Forests

D.R. Congo currently has seven national parks, one marine park, one special fauna reserve, five global heritage sites, and two Ramsar sites (<http://www.parks.it/world/CD/index.html>). According to this source, currently 20 million hectares are protected areas (8 % of D.R. Congo’s total area; another source mentions 52 protected areas, covering 14% of the total area; <https://www.protectedplanet.net/country/COD>). A small part of D.R. Congo’s maritime area has protected status as well. D.R. Congo has 134 million hectares of

forests (60% of total land area), most of it primary forests. However, every year ca 0.3 million hectares of forests have disappeared (<https://rainforests.mongabay.com/20zaire.htm>). Other areas are mainly ‘other wooded land’, and areas for agriculture, livestock, hunting and gathering.

Agricultural D.R. Congo

Crop Area (in 1000 hectares), and total production (in 1000 tonnes), 1961 and 2018, in the order of the crop areas in 2018.

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	1961		2018		2018/1961	
	Area	Prod.	Area	Prod.	Area	Prod.
Cassava	1340	8680	3678	29952	2.7	3.5
Maize	540	370	2680	2079	5.0	5.6
Rice (paddy)	88	71	1303	990	14.8	13.9
Plantains	220	960	1088	4756	4.9	5.0
Groundnuts	270	190	452	308	1.7	1.6
Dry beans	123	60	377	205	3.1	3.4
Other vegetables	86	320	355	737	4.1	2.3
Other roots & tubers	67	413	283	1710	4.2	4.1
Oil palm (fruits)	229	1580	181	1193	0.8	0.8
Cow peas dry	51	29	169	73	3.3	2.5
Fruits	100	783	151	1274	1.5	1.6
Melon seed	45	18	101	63	2.2	3.5
Coffee green	180	54	76	30	0.4	0.6
Other grains	92	62	74	52	0.8	0.8
Seedcotton	101	64	67	28	0.7	0.4
Rubber	85	38	64	15	0.8	0.4
Sugarcane	8	480	50	2359	6.3	4.9
Other crops	44	29	43	20	1.0	0.7
Total (area)	3669		11192		3.1	

2018/1961: **red** = 2018 is below 1961; **green**: 2018 is more than 5.2 times the 1961 figures (that is: more than population increase in D.R. Congo from 16.0 to 84.1 million between 1961 and 2018); black: in-between. Source: Faostat data.

D.R. Congo's land area is 226.7 million hectares, and its crop area increased from 1.6% to 4.9% of its land area between 1961 and 2018. Almost all food crop areas expanded, and expansion was very rapid for rice. Most traditional export crop areas decreased. Crop yields did not increase much for most crops. The total production of food crops like rice and maize expanded more rapidly than D.R. Congo's population, but the production of more traditional food crops, like cassava, and other roots and tubers expanded less rapidly; there has been a clear shift towards 'modern grains'. D.R. Congo's food security based on own food crops probably decreased during these almost sixty years.

The numbers of all live animals expanded less rapidly than the production of most food crops; in fact, with a population increase with 520% during these almost sixty years, livestock units only increased with 140%: per capita the numbers of live animals in the country decreased a lot. The best performance can be seen for chickens, livestock that is important for 'quick cash earnings' if needed, and particularly for women. But also for chickens, the increase was less rapid than population growth. In total one can say that, unlike most other parts of Africa, D.R. Congo's agricultural sector has not been doing very well in those almost sixty years.

Livestock numbers (x million)

	1961	2018	2018/1961
Cattle	1.0	1.0	1.0
Chicken	4.3	19.4	4.5
Goats	2.0	4.1	2.0
Pigs	0.5	1.0	2.2
Sheep	0.6	0.9	1.6
Livestock units	1.1	1.5	1.4

Source: Faostat data; 1 livestock unit = based on 0.7 cattle; 0.1 goats/sheep/pigs; 0.01 chicken.

International migration

In 2015 1.4 million people who were born in D.R. Congo lived outside the country (1.8% of D.R. Congo's total population of 77.6 million people inside and outside the country during that year), of which 1.2 million elsewhere in Africa (mainly Uganda, Rwanda, Republic of the Congo, Burundi, South Sudan, South Africa and Tanzania), and 210,000 outside Africa (less than 0.3% of D.R. Congo's total population: most of them in Europe, mainly in France, Belgium, and the UK, but also in North America). In 2017 D.R. Congo had around 879,000 immigrants, mainly from Angola, Rwanda, and the Central African Republic (UN Migration Report 2017). D.R. Congo has a turbulent migration history. Between 1990 and 1995 the number of immigrants increased from 754,000 to 1.8 million, mainly refugees from the genocidal civil war in Rwanda. After 1995 the figure returned to around the level of 1990 (744,000), to slightly increase again afterwards.

Urban D.R. Congo

D.R. Congo's urban population increased from 3.4 million people in 1960 (22% of its national population at independence) to 40.8 million in 2020 (46%). Growth has been rapid for all cities, but the data are not very trustworthy and different sources give very different figures. The capital city Kinshasa is the biggest agglomeration of the country. Some sources combine the built-up area of Kinshasa and its suburbs, with that of Brazzaville (capital city of the Republic of the Congo) and its suburbs on the other side of the Congo River, and regard that as one agglomeration, with around 13 million inhabitants (see:

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_urban_agglomerations_in_Africa).



Map No. 4007 Rev. 8 UNITED NATIONS
January 2004

Department of Peacekeeping Operations
Cartographic Section

Source: <http://citypopulation.de/en/drcongo/cities> and for the map: <http://www.mappery.com/map-of/Democratic-Republic-of-Congo-Map>

Cities (in Regions)	Population in thousands of inhabitants			
	Macrotrends: 1960	Worldometers as given in 2020	Citypopulation census 2004	Macrotrends 2020
Kinshasa	443	7,786	7,274	14,300
Lubumbashi	194	1,374	1,284	2,478
Mbuji-Mayi	136	875	1,214	2,525
Kananga	73	464	720	1,458
Kisangani	134	539	683	1,261
Bukavu	48	225	472	1,078
Tshikapa	18	267	367	919
Beni/Bunia	13	232	81	679
Goma*	16	-	-	634
Uvira	5	-	-	590
Likasi	87	422	367	568
Kikwit	27	-	-	507
Kolwezi	48	418	456	495

Source for 2020:


<https://www.worldometers.info/demographics/democratic-republic-of-the-congo-demographics/#urb>; for 2004: <http://citypopulation.de/en/drcongo/cities/> *Goma: according to wikipedia-NL that city has 1-2 million inhabitants (<https://nl.wikipedia.org/wiki/Goma>); also: <https://www.macrotrends.net/cities> .

Regional Inequality

D.R. Congo has 11 Regions. Between 1990 and 2018 all regions experienced population growth, but the highest growth happened in Nord Kivu and in Sud Kivu, areas that had experienced massive refugee migration from mainly Rwanda. High population growth was not so much experienced in the area of the capital city (but a lot in the two regions north and south of Kinshasa) and in Kasai Occidental. If we look at the regional data for human development, which for D.R. Congo exist since 1990, we see that, across the board, improvements have taken place between 1990 and 2018. Both in 1990 and in 2018 the best conditions existed in Kinshasa, the area of and around the capital city, both for the HDI index as a whole, and for the education situation, while average life expectancy was

also relatively high (but no longer the highest in 2018, that position had been taken over by Nord Kivu, the area with many foreign health-related NGOs; Nord Kivu also showed the best improvements in education). Orientale (formerly called Haut-Zaïre) was the least developed region in 1990, but that worst position had been taken over by Sud Kivu in 2018, where also the education index and the life expectancy indicator showed the worst situation. As a result of these gradual, but differentiated improvements, the regional inequality in D.R. Congo became a bit more pronounced (but for education and life expectation the inequality levels became more equal; the differences became particularly more extreme in income levels). In education there are still major differences between the leading regions (the capital city in particular), and the lagging areas, particularly in the northeast and east.

ASCL Infosheet 39/2020

Map	Region / Région	Population x 1000		'18/ '90
		1990	2018	
	1 = Bandundu	4,910	13,300	2.7
	2 = Bas-Congo	1,380	3,680	2.7
	3 = Equateur	4,500	11,500	2.6
	4 = Kasai Occidental	3,350	5,590	1.7
	5 = Kasai Oriental	4,200	8,780	2.1
	6 = Katanga	3,640	8,740	2.4
	7 = Kinshasa	4,520	7,870	1.7
	8 = Maniema	1,140	2,850	2.5
	9 = Nord Kivu	1,310	7.140	5.5
	10 = Orientale/Haut-Zaire	4,100	8,430	2.1
	11 = Sud Kivu	1,580	6,410	4.1
Total D.R. Congo				

Source: <https://globaldatalab.org> 4.0, map: <https://www.mapsopensource.com/images/democratic-republic-of-congo-provinces-map.gif>

Region	Subregional HDI			Life expectancy			Education index		
	1990	2018	18/90	1990	2018	18/90	1990	2018	18/90
1	361	461	1.28	49.1	62.9	1.28	254	528	2.08
2	368	455	1.24	47.3	59.1	1.25	261	483	1.85
3	354	426	1.20	48.3	58.3	1.21	250	476	1.90
4	351	427	1.22	48.9	58.1	1.19	239	477	2.00
5	387	449	1.16	49.8	59.3	1.19	270	510	1.89
6	391	458	1.17	49.2	59.4	1.21	277	479	1.73
7	483	607	1.26	53.6	63.4	1.18	355	671	1.89
8	366	453	1.24	45.5	61.2	1.35	280	484	1.73
9	348	456	1.31	53.5	66.0	1.23	187	422	2.26
10	332	431	1.30	47.6	60.3	1.27	205	426	2.08
11	364	414	1.14	47.2	57.8	1.22	241	409	1.70
D.R. Congo	377	459	1.22	49.0	60.4	1.23	263	495	1.88
Ineq	1.45	1.47		1.18	1.14		1.90	1.64	

Source: <https://globaldatalab.org/shdi>. Ineq = Inequality: high/low. Indexes are x 1000.

Region	GRI/capita (2011US\$ PPP)				
	1990	2001	2018	01/90	18/90
1	1538	412	638	0.27	0.41
2	2027	516	855	0.25	0.42
3	1496	402	623	0.27	0.42
4	1491	401	631	0.27	0.42
5	2239	560	700	0.25	0.31
6	2395	592	890	0.25	0.37
7	5849	1231	2710	0.21	0.46
8	1845	478	744	0.26	0.40
9	1824	473	817	0.26	0.45
10	1625	430	743	0.26	0.46
11	2233	559	721	0.25	0.32
D.R. Congo	2054	522	800	0.25	0.37
Ineq	3.9	3.1	4.3		

Source: <https://globaldatalab.org/shdi>. Ineq = Inequality: high/low.

The regional data about income levels show the dramatic deterioration between 1990 and 2001 for all regions, and some improvement everywhere, but to levels that are still much below the 1990 situation. The highest income levels in all periods were in Kinshasa, and also the least deterioration (together with Orientale) if we compare 2018 with 1990, but the worst deterioration between 1990 and 2001. The worst income situation in 1990 and 2001 could be found in Kasai Occidental, shifting to Equateur in 2018. The deepest deterioration between 1990 and 2018 was in Kasai Oriental.

Further Reading

Country Portal: <http://countryportal.ascleiden.nl/democratic-republic-congo-kinshasa>

Selected publications: <https://www.ascleiden.nl/content/africa-2020-further-reading#DR Congo>



Reflecting on
60 years
of independence



Universiteit
Leiden

www.ascleiden.nl/africa2020

Country Information: Ton Dietz, David Ehrhardt and Fenneken Veldkamp

Countryportal: Harro Westra

Selected publications: Germa Seuren

African Studies Centre Leiden, June 2020