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## **Niger at 60**

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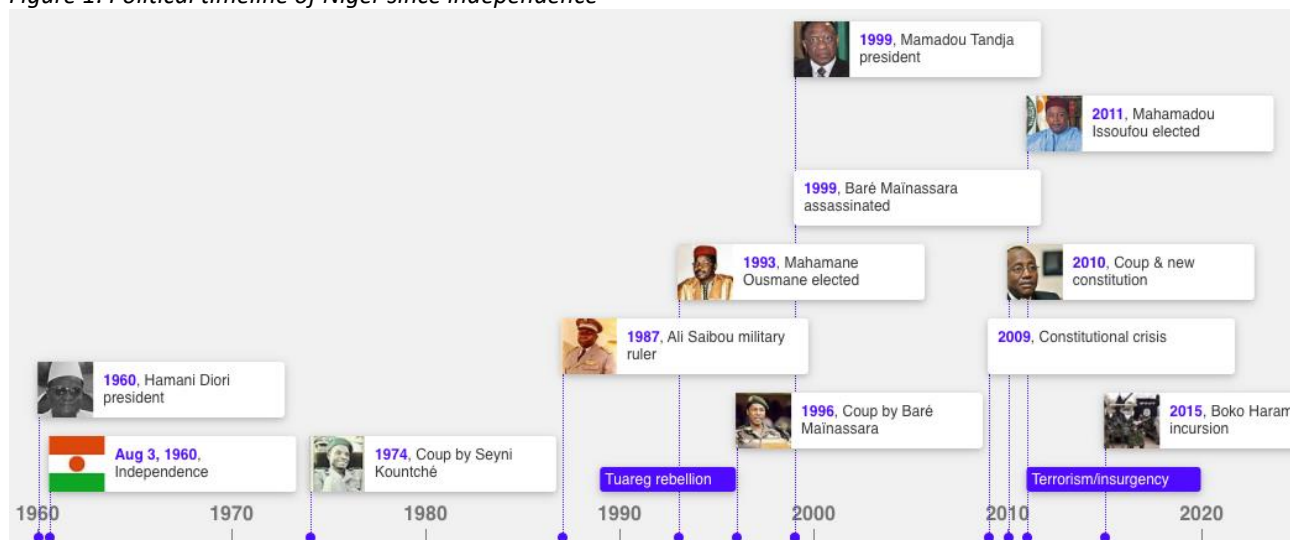
## Niger at 60

### 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, Niger was the eighth one: on August 3. Niger had been a French colony

from 1922 onwards, as part of French West Africa, but it was part of 'Sénégalie et Niger' between 1902 and 1904 and 'Haute Sénégalie et Niger' between 1904 and 1922 (see Figure 1 for a post-independence political timeline).

Figure 1: Political timeline of Niger since independence



Source: Encyclopaedia Britannica

Upon independence, Niger was governed by a single political party, the Progressive Party of Niger (PPN) led by Niger's first post-independence president, Hamani Diori. His elite regime remained in power until a military coup in 1974, which ushered in a military dictatorship that ruled until 1993, led successively by Seyni Kountché and Ali Saibou. The early 1990s witnessed political liberalisation as well as the rise of the Tuareg rebellion in the north of the country. The first multiparty elections in 1993 allowed the Social Democratic Convention, and its leader Mahamane Ousmane, to take up the presidency. A second coup, led by Colonel Ibrahim Baré Maïnassara in 1996, interrupted the democratic experiment for three years, until Baré Maïnassara's assassination in 1999. In the wake of these events, a new democratic constitution was designed and implemented, allowing a new democratic government to start in 1999 under the leadership of President Mamadou Tandja.

Tandja's early years as president coincided with a period of relative political stability, even as Islam became an issue of contestation and focal point of political, and ultimately violent, mobilisation. The political settlement was brought to an end in 2009 by Tandja's attempts at instituting constitutional reforms to allow a third presidential term. The resulting constitutional crisis was cut short by another military coup, which instituted a Supreme Council for the Restoration of Democracy and, by 2011, facilitated multiparty elections that were to be won by opposition leader Mahamadou Issoufou. 2011 was also the year in which radical Islamic groups, including Al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb, increased their terrorist and insurgent activities. Boko Haram entered the scene prominently in 2015, with a major incursion into southern Niger, pushing the Nigerien government to join Chad and Nigeria in the fight against this insurgent organisation.

### Conflict, state fragility, and travel risks

For African standards Niger is very high on the 'security risk' indices. Before the corona crisis, in December 2019, the Netherlands Ministry of Foreign Affairs had put most of the country in the 'red' zone (= very high risks, 'don't travel'), and the southern part in the 'orange' zone (= high risks, 'only travel if really necessary' [Currently, August 2020, all 'danger zoning' has been disturbed by the global COVID-19 crisis]. Niger was destabilised after the turmoil in Libya in and after 2011, when many heavily-armed soldiers originating from Niger and Mali (including many Tuareg) returned to their countries.

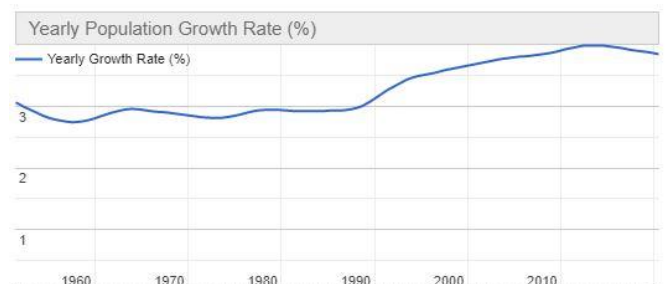
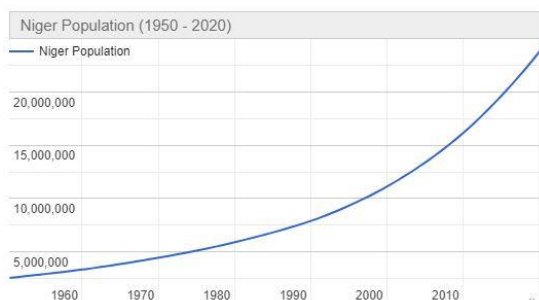
The State Fragility Index of the Fund for Peace puts Niger in the 'alert range', with 96.2 points (most negative score would be 120.0 points; for Africa, 'alert' is a relatively bad category) (<https://fundforpeace.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/04/9511904-fragilestatesindex.pdf>). The index consists of twelve variables, and Niger has relatively good scores for 'human rights and the rule of law', 'economic decline' and 'state legitimacy' (but these scores are all around 7.0 out of 10.0, 10 being the worst possible score, which means that also for the relatively good scores Niger is in the 'warning' range). Niger has very problematic scores for the 'quality of public services', for 'factionalised elites', and for 'demographic pressure'.



Source of the map:  
<https://geology.com/world/niger-map.gif>

### Demography

Niger's population increased more than sevenfold between 1960 and 2020, from 3.4 million in 1960 to 24.2 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). Niger is among the world's highest population growth countries. Population growth figures were close to 3% per year until 1989 and beyond 3% from 1989 onwards. Currently the average growth rate is around 3.8 percent per year. Total fertility was around 7.4 live-born children per woman in 1960; it first increased to 7.9 around 1985, and then started to diminish slowly, with currently 7.0 births per average woman in Niger during her lifetime, again: one of the highest in the world. As a result of these demographic developments Niger has a very skewed population pyramid, with many more young people than adults and elderly people. The median age changed from 15.8 years old in 1960 to only 14.9 years old in 2015, and currently 15.2 years old. Urbanisation is on the increase, but relatively speaking still very low.





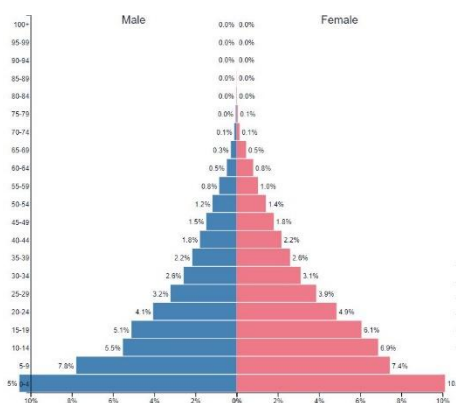
Total Fertility Rate in Niger, 1955–Present



Source: Worldometers

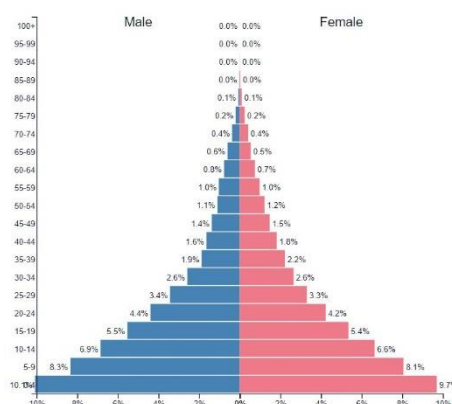
1960

Population: 3,388,774



2020

Population: 24,206,636



Source: <https://www.populationpyramid.net/niger/2020/>

**Demographic statistics, Niger as a whole, 1960 and 2020**

	1960	2020
Population	3.4 million	24.2 million
Fertility rate	7.4	7.0
Life expectancy (males)	34.8	62.4
Idem (females)	35.7	64.9
Median age	15.8	15.2
Infant mortality (< 1 yr)	158/1000	39/1000
Under-5 mortality	323/1000	72/1000
Urbanisation rate	5.8%	16.5%
Urban population	0.2 million	4.0 million
Rural population	3.2 million	20.2 million

Source: Worldometers

### Human Development Index, Niger as a whole, 1990 and 2018

Human Development Index data exist since 1990, with annual UNDP updates. In 1990, Niger's Human Development Index started at a level of 0.213, very low for African standards. 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. For Niger the various components of the HDI mostly show gradual improvement, except the income index, and the GDP/capita (both were at its lowest in 2000,

with recovery afterwards). Between 1990 and 2018 Niger's population increased from 8.0 million people to 22.4 million people. The increase in the HDI between 1990 and 2018 can be attributed to improvements in all components: health, education and standard of living (but the last one only slightly), and can also be seen in the data for life expectancy. However, the most significant growth took place in education. Average income levels per capita (in US\$ of 2011, PPP) only show slight improvements (and in fact first went down between 1990 and 2000, and started to recover and further improve mainly after 2013).

### Niger: Human Development Index, its composition, and other indicators; data for 1990 and 2018

	1990	2018	2018/1990
Health Index	0.362	0.646	1.78
Income Index *	0.327	0.334	1.02
GNI/capita **	872	912	1.05
Education Index	0.082	0.247	3.01
Mean years of schooling	0.69	2.03	2.94
Expected years of schooling	2.11	6.47	3.07
Life Expectancy	44	62	1.41
Total HDI index	0.213	0.376	1.77

Source: <https://globaldatalab.org> 4.0; \* = for 2018 called 'standard of living component'.

\*\* GNI/capita in US \$ of 2011, PPP).

### Trade statistics, Niger: exports and imports, 2017

In 2017 Niger exported products for a total value of 603 million \$, and imported for a total value of 938 million \$ (mostly from France, India, China, Ghana and Belgium, in

that order), resulting in a major negative trade balance. Leading import products were medical needs, rice, palm oil, pesticides and cement, in that order. Both exports and imports have been much higher in the past (e.g., in 2012: 1.42 billion exports and 1.83 billion imports).

### 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)	
Uranium/radioactive chemicals	329	France	269
Refined petroleum	96	Mali	97
Groundnuts & other oily seeds	93	China	94
Gold	29	South Korea	65
Petroleum and gas	20	India	18

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

### Protected areas and Forests

Niger currently has one national park, one regional park, three national reserves (two strict ones), two national game reserves, and one special (partial) fauna reserve. Internationally twelve Ramsar sites, and three UNESCO-MAB biosphere reserves have been recognized, besides two world heritage sites. According to Protectedplanet, currently 21.7 million hectares are protected areas (18 % of Niger's total area)<sup>1</sup>. Niger has 1.2 million hectares of forests, only 1% of its total land area). However, between 1990 and 2010 Niger has lost 38% of its forest cover, a total

of 741,000 ha<sup>2</sup>. In recent years some re-afforestation took place; part of the Great Green Wall project<sup>3</sup>. Other areas are mainly 'other wooded land', and areas for agriculture, livestock, hunting and gathering. But major parts of Niger are part of the Sahara desert.

### Agricultural Niger

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

<sup>1</sup> <https://www.protectedplanet.net/country/NER>; slightly different data in <http://www.parks.it/world/NE/index.html>

<sup>2</sup> <https://rainforests.mongabay.com/deforestation/2000/Niger.htm>  
<sup>3</sup> E.g. see: <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2018/aug/16/regreening-niger-how-magical-gaas-transformed-land>



	1961		2018		2018/1961	
	Area	Prod.	Area	Prod.	Area	Prod.
Millet	1640	776	7034	3856	4.3	5.0
Cow peas (dry)	427	50	5890	2377	13.8	47.5
Sorghum	453	275	3896	2100	8.6	7.3
Groundnuts	349	167	920	594	2.6	3.6
Other vegetables	35	136	460	3866	13.1	28.4
Sesame seeds	-	-	191	90	+++	+++
Potatoes	-	-	6	169	+++	+++
Fruits	0	21	106	625	+++	29.8
Other crops	36	148	104	573	2.9	3.9
Total Niger	2946	1596	18770	14122	6.4	8.8

2018/1961: **red** = 2018 is below 1961; **green**: 2018 is more than 6.4 times the 1961 figures (that is: more than population increase in Niger from 3.5 million to 22.4 million between 1961 and 2018); black: in-between. Source: Faostat data.

Niger's land area is 127 million hectares, and its crop area increased from 2.3% to 14.8% of its land area between 1961 and 2018. Almost all food crop areas expanded, and expansion was very rapid for cow peas (a major staple crop in Niger), vegetables, fruits, and sorghum. Not only the areas of many crops have 1expanded (much) more than Niger's population numbers, also crop yields became higher for cow peas (from 117 kg/ha in 1961 to 404 kg/ha in 2018), groundnuts (from 479 kg/ha to 646 kg/ha), and millet (473 kg/ha to 548 kg/ha). However, sorghum yields have decreased (from 607 kg/ha to 539 kg/ha), but sorghum areas have expanded so much that the total production of that important staple crop has increased

more than Niger's population. Niger can feed its population better than in 1961, and with the sharp increase in many types of vegetables and fruits its food diet also became much more diverse.

The numbers of all live animals, measured in stock units, expanded less rapidly than Niger's population: 380% compared with 640%. Per capita the numbers of live animals in the country decreased from 1.3 livestock units per capita in 1961 to 0.80 livestock units per capita. The best growth performance can be seen for sheep and asses (but also for camels); the growth of the number of horses and goats lagged behind.

#### Livestock numbers (x million)

	1961	2018	2018/1961
Asses	0.3	1.9	6.3
Camels	0.4	1.8	4.5
Cattle	3.5	14.4	4.1
Chicken	4.7	19.8	4.2
Goats	4.9	17.4	3.6
Horses	1.2	2.5	2.1
Sheep	2.0	12.7	6.4
Livestock units	4.7	18.0	3.8

Source: Faostat data; 1 livestock unit = based on 1.0 camels, 0.7 cattle/horses/asses; 0.1 goats/sheep; 0.01 chicken.

#### International migration

In 2015, 357,000 people who were born in Niger lived outside the country (only 1.8% of Niger's total population of 20.4 million people inside and outside the country during that year), of which 345,000 million elsewhere in Africa (mainly Nigeria, Benin, Togo and Côte d'Ivoire, in

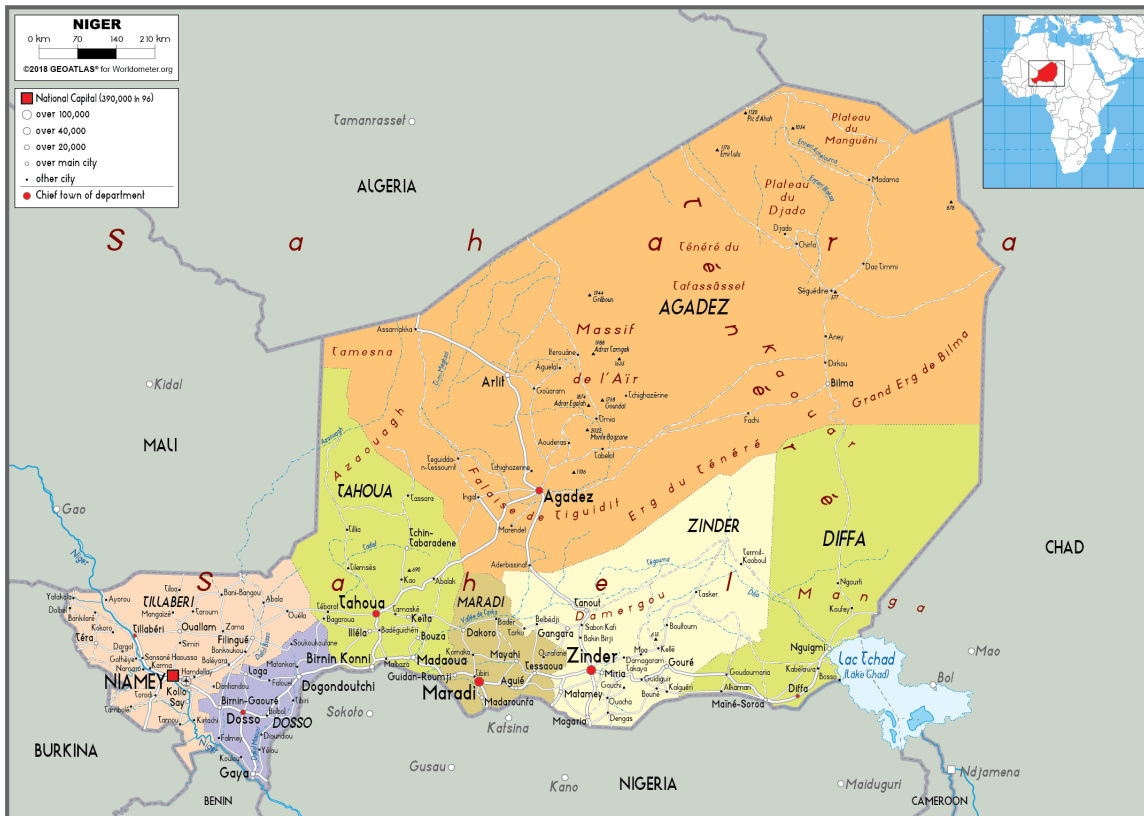
that order), and only 12,000 outside Africa (less than 0.1% of Niger's total population: most of them in France; UN migration report 2015). In 2017 Niger had around 296,000 immigrants, mainly from Mali, but also from other neighbouring countries. Immigration more than doubled between 2010 and 2015 as a result of the trouble in Mali;

UN Migration Report 2017). Between 1990 and 2017 the number of immigrants increased from 115,000 to 296,000.

### Urban Niger

Niger is one of the least urbanised countries in the world. Niger's urban population increased from only 200,000 people in 1960 (only 6% of its national population at

Independence) to 4.0 million in 2020 (17%). However, growth has been rapid for all cities. Between 1960 and 2020 the population increase was at least tenfold in the two major cities. The most rapid development took place in the capital city Niamey.







Major urban areas in Niger

Cities (and region)	Population in thousands of inhabitants			
	Macrotrends: 1960	Population census 2012	Worldometers, city, as given in 2020	Populationstat, Urban area, 2019
Niamey	58	978	774	1287
Zinder	19	236	191	486
Maradi	?	267	163	..
Agadez	?	110	124	..
Tahoua	?	117	..	..

Source for 2020: <https://www.worldometers.info/world-population/niger-population/>; also: <https://populationstat.com/niger/>; <https://www.macrotrends.net/cities/21972/niamey/population>; <https://www.macrotrends.net/cities/21973/zinder/population>; <https://fr.wikipedia.org/wiki/Maradi>: population in 2012: 267,000 = Maradi I, II, and III; and in 1977: 44,000; <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Agadez>: population in 1977: 21,000 and in 2012: 110,000; [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List\\_of\\_cities\\_in\\_Niger](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_cities_in_Niger).

Regional Inequality

	Region / Région		Population x 1000		'18/ '90
	1990	2018	1990	2018	
	1 = Agadez (North)	140	430	3.1	
	2 = Diffa (Southeast)	100	660	6.6	
	3 = Dosso (Southwest)	1080	2720	2.5	
	4 = Maradi (South)	1650	5020	3.1	
	5 = Tahoua (Northwest)	1360	4890	3.6	
	6 = Tillabery (around Niamey)	1960	4110	2.1	
	7 = Zinder (South)	1740	4600	2.6	
Total Niger		8300	22400	2.7	

Source: <https://globaldatalab.org> 4.0, map: [https://www.worldometers.info/img/maps/niger\\_political\\_map.gif](https://www.worldometers.info/img/maps/niger_political_map.gif); Tillabery includes Niamey.

Niger has 7 Regions. Between 1990 and 2018 all regions experienced population growth, at least a doubling of population everywhere, but the highest growth happened in Diffa, near Chad and Northeast Nigeria. High population growth was not so much experienced in the southwest, the area of and around the capital city Niamey. If we look at the regional data for human development, which for Niger 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 the region of Agadez in the Sahara, the area with the uranium site at Arlit, both for the HDI index as a whole, and for the income per capita situation, while average life expectancy

was also relatively high in the North in 2018 (together with Diffa in the Southeast). In 1990 Agadez also had the best education situation (but with low figures, like the rest of Niger), and, relatively speaking, the education situation in Agadez was still good in 2018, but the region with the best education performance had shifted to Tillabery/Niamey. If we look at the most problematic figures, for subregional HDI as a whole these can be found in the Tahoua Region in the Northwest, bordering Mali. In 1990 that region also had the lowest life expectancy, but that 'worst' position had shifted to Dosso in 2018. The education index in Tahoua was the lowest in 1990 and almost the lowest in 2018 (the worst position had shifted to Diffa Region in the



extreme Southeast). Per capita income in Tahoua was very low in both years (one of the lowest in the world), but in

2018 the worst position had shifted to Zinder in the South, bordering Nigeria.

Region	Subregional HDI			Life expectancy			Education index			K\$/capita		
	1990	2018	18/90	1990	2018	18/90	1990	2018	18/90	1990	2018	18/90
1	333	474	1.42	45	68	1.51	221	371	1.68	1.8	1.3	0.73
2	239	355	1.49	45	68	1.51	110	170	1.55	0.9	1.1	1.22
3	215	356	1.66	44	59	1.34	87	235	2.70	0.8	0.8	1.03
4	196	358	1.83	46	61	1.33	58	221	3.81	0.9	0.9	1.01
5	170	331	1.95	44	63	1.43	44	172	3.91	0.8	0.8	1.09
6	258	471	1.83	44	63	1.43	128	410	3.20	1.1	1.3	1.21
7	193	341	1.77	45	61	1.36	60	202	3.37	0.8	0.8	0.95
Niger	213	376	1.77	44	62	1.41	82	247	3.01	0.9	0.9	1.05
Ineq	2.0	1.4		1.05	1.15		5.0	2.4		2.4	1.7	

HDI and education figures X 1000; life expectancy: years; k\$/capita: 1000 US \$ (2011), PPP (comparisons between the years on the basis of more detailed figures).

If we compare 2018 with 1990, the education situation has improved very much, with the fastest improvements in Tahoua, and relatively slow improvements in Diffa. The regional differences in education became less pronounced, but are still considerable. The same is true for subregional HDI as a whole: a slightly lower level of regional inequality. The regional differences in life expectancy became a bit more pronounced, though. The per capita income situation became more equal between 1990 and 2018, but one of the reasons was a considerable reduction of per capita income in the relatively most prosperous region, Agadez. Here one wonders, though, whether wealth generated by uranium mining really benefited the local population, and particularly the relatively poor people there. For Niger as a whole and all regions except Agadez, income per capita improved, but only slightly. It seems that whatever economic growth happened, the area around the capital city Niamey (Tillabery) and the area in the southeast, Diffa, benefited most. Again: one wonders how much of that increase really benefited the poor in these regions. If we look at the measure for income inequality, the Gini coefficient, it jumped up and down: income inequality was very high in 1994 (42%), and 2005 (44%) and the income situation was judged to be more equal in 1992 (36%), and again in 2007 (37%), 2011 (32%), and 2014 (34%); there are no more recent figures (<https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SI.POV.GINI?locations=NE>).

#### Further reading

Country Portal: <http://countryportal.ascleiden.nl/niger>

Selected publications: <https://www.ascleiden.nl/content/af-rica-2020-further-reading#Niger>



Reflecting on  
60 years  
of independence



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<https://www.ascleiden.nl/africa2020>

Country Information: Ton Dietz, David Ehrhardt and Fenneken Veldkamp

Country Portal: Harro Westra

Selected publications: Germa Seuren

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