



Universiteit  
Leiden  
The Netherlands

## Burkina Faso at 60

Dietz A.J., Ehrhardt D.W.L., Veldkamp F.

### Citation

Dietz A.J., E. D. W. L. , V. F. (2020). Burkina Faso at 60. *Ascl Infosheet*. Retrieved from <https://hdl.handle.net/1887/135645>

Version: Not Applicable (or Unknown)

License: [Leiden University Non-exclusive license](#)

Downloaded from: <https://hdl.handle.net/1887/135645>

**Note:** To cite this publication please use the final published version (if applicable).



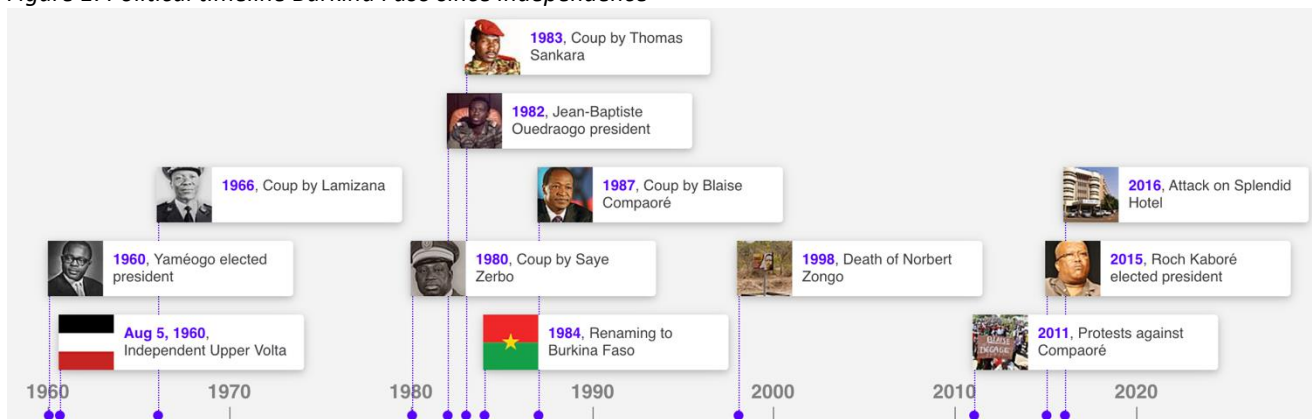
## Burkina Faso at 60

### 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, Burkina Faso (earlier known as Upper Volta/Haute Volta) was the ninth

one: on August 5. Haute Volta/Burkina Faso had been a French colony from 1896 onwards, as part of French West Africa. Between 1919 and 1933 and again between 1947 and 1960 it was a separate French colony (see Figure 1 for a political timeline).

Figure 1: Political timeline Burkina Faso since independence



Source: Encyclopaedia Britannica

Burkina Faso became independent as Upper Volta in August 1960, led by elected President Yaméogo. By 1966, however, a military coup had installed Sangoulé Lamizana as head of state, who would rule the country until a new coup in 1980 would give power to Saye Zerbo. Several years of political instability made way for Captain Thomas Sankara to rule the country, who would not only rename it to Burkina Faso but also implement a range of developmental reforms. Sankara also presided over a short conflict with Mali over the Agacher Strip, which was mediated by the International Court of Justice in The Hague in 1986. A year later, however, Sankara would be overthrown and assassinated by Blaise Compaoré, who would become the country’s longest serving head of state until 2014.

Compaoré maintained a stable regime, although not unchallenged - for example, after the suspicious death of journalist Norbert Zongo in 1998, or the widespread protests against his rule in 2011. Subsequent years would witness recurring protests until, in 2014, they pushed Compaoré to give up his executive powers. The resulting power vacuum allowed for the regular army to come into conflict with the autonomous Presidential Guard. By late

2015, however, the Presidential Guard had been disarmed and new elections allowed Roch Marc Christian Kaboré to become Burkina Faso’s new elected president. In the year following his election, however, Burkina Faso became a target of terrorist attacks, some of which have been claimed by Al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghrib (AQIM).

### Conflict, state fragility, and travel risks

For African standards Burkina Faso is currently high on the ‘security risk’ indices since the civil war in Mali also hit the northern areas of Burkina Faso. Before the corona crisis, in December 2019, the Netherlands Ministry of Foreign Affairs had put the northern and eastern parts of the country in the ‘red’ zone (= ‘do not travel’), and the southern and western areas in the ‘orange’ zone (only travel if really necessary. [Currently, August 2020, all ‘danger zoning’ has been disturbed by the global COVID-19 crisis].

The State Fragility Index of the Fund for Peace puts Burkina Faso in the ‘high warning range’, with 83.9 points (most negative score would be 120.0 points; for Africa, ‘high warning’ approaches the highest risk categories)

(<https://fundforpeace.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/04/9511904-fragilestatesindex.pdf>). The index consists of twelve variables, and Burkina Faso has relatively good scores for

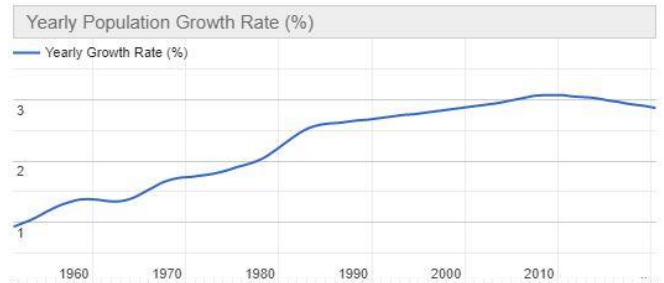
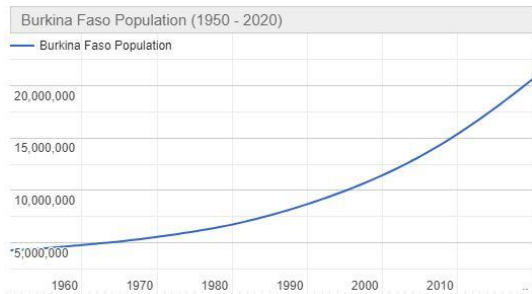
‘group grievances’ and for human rights, but problematic scores for demographic pressures, the quality and reliability of the security apparatus, and the quality of public services.

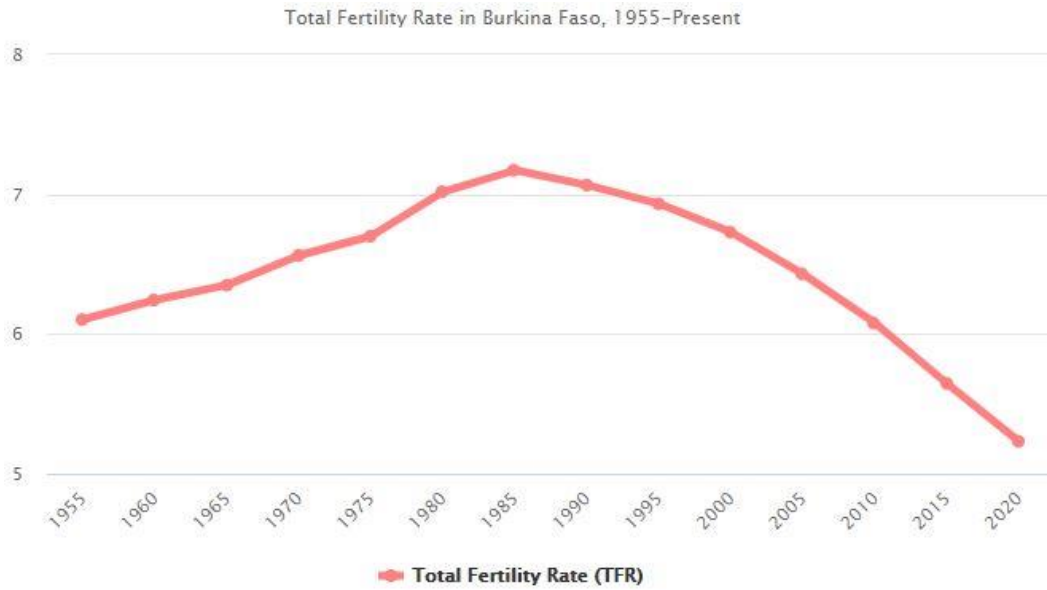


Source of the map: <https://geology.com/world/burkina-faso-map.gif>

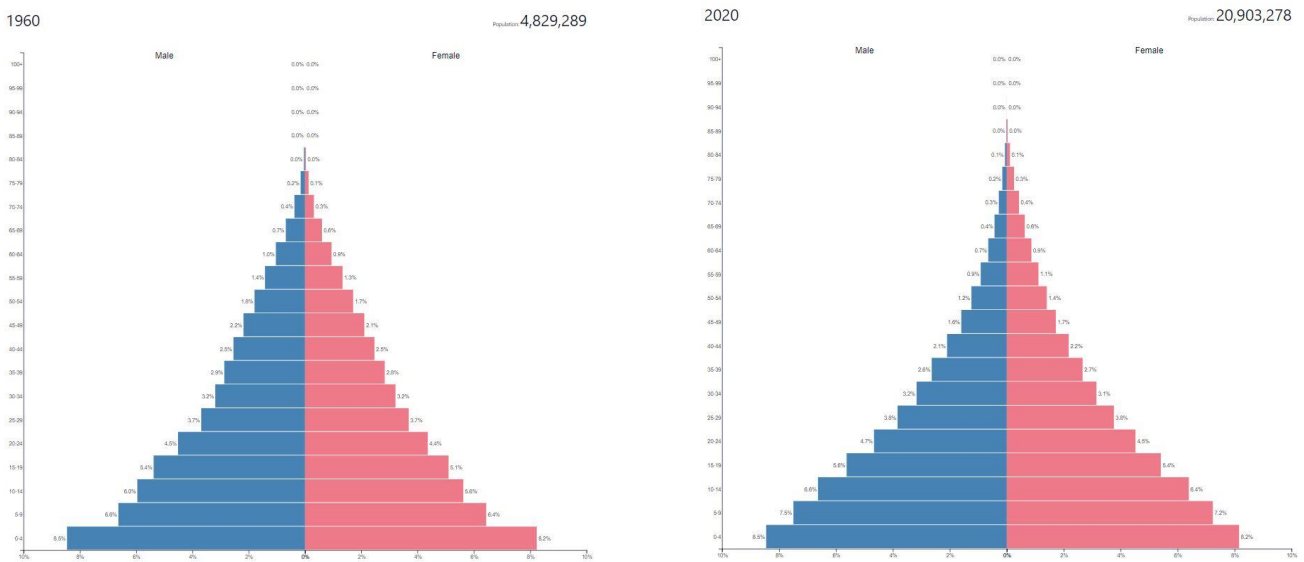
**Demography**

Burkina Faso’s population increased more than fourfold between 1960 and 2020, from 4.8 million in 1960 to 20.9 million in mid 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). Population growth figures were always more than two percent per year since 1978, and around three percent per year since 2006. Currently the average growth rate is around 2.9 percent per year. Total fertility was around 6.2 per woman in 1960; it first increased to 7.2 around 1985, and then started to diminish, with currently 5.2 births per average woman in Burkina Faso during her lifetime. As a result of these demographic developments Burkina Faso has a very skewed population pyramid, with many more young people than adults and elderly people. The median age changed from 19.1 years old in 1960, to only 16.3 years old in 1990-1995, and is currently 19.1 years old. Urbanisation is on the increase, but is still relatively low, with currently 31 percent of the total population.





Source: Worldometers



Source: <https://www.populationpyramid.net/burkina-faso/>

**Demographic statistics, Burkina Faso as a whole, 1960 and 2020**

	1960	2020
Population	4.8 million	20.9 million
Fertility rate	6.2 children per woman	5.2 children per woman
Life expectancy (males)	34.6 years	62.1 years
Idem (females)	36.7 years	63.8 years
Median age	19.1 years	17.6 years
Infant mortality (< 1 yr)	192/1000	45/1000
Under-5 mortality	327/1000	70/1000
Urbanisation rate	5%	31%
Urban population	0.2 million	6.4 million
Rural population	4.6 million	14.5 million

Source: Worldometers

**Human Development Index, Burkina Faso as a whole, 2000 and 2018**

Human Development Index data exist since 1990, with annual UNDP updates. However, for Burkina Faso the Global Data Lab only gives yearly figures from 2000 onwards. In 2000, Burkina Faso's Human Development Index started at a level of 0.286, extremely low for world standards, and one of the lowest in Africa. 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 Burkina Faso the various

components of the HDI all show gradual improvements. Between 2000 and 2018 Burkina Faso's population increased from 11.6 million people to 19.8 million people. The increase in the HDI between 2000 and 2018 can be attributed to improvements in all components: health, education and standard of living, 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) increased consistently between 2000 and 2018, but income inequality is high, and regional inequality is extremely high (see later).

**Burkina Faso: HDI and its composition, and indicators; data for 2000, and 2018**

	2000	2018	2018/2000
Health Index	0.469	0.633	X 1.4
Income Index *	0.358	0.428	X 1.2
Education Index	0.139	0.301	X 2.2
Life Expectancy	50	61	X 1.2
GNI/capita	1,069\$	1.705\$	X 1.6
Mean years of schooling	1.3	1.6	X 1.3
Expected years of schooling	3.5	8.9	X 2.5
Total HDI index	0.286	0.434	X 1.5

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

**Trade statistics, Burkina Faso: exports and imports, 2018**

In 2018 Burkina Faso exported products for a total value of 5.7 billion \$, and imported for a total value of 4.1 billion \$ (mostly from Côte d'Ivoire [its major 'life line' to the Atlantic Coast], China, France, Ghana, and India, in that

order), resulting in a major positive trade balance. Leading import products were refined petroleum, medicaments, rice, cement, and delivery trucks, in that order.

The most important export products and most and most important export destinations in 2018 were:

Main export products (value in \$ billion)		Main export destinations (value in \$ billion)	
Gold	4.3	Switzerland	3.2
Zinc	0.4	India	1.2
Raw cotton	0.3	Singapore	0.3
Nuts	0.2	Côte d'Ivoire	0.2
Groundnuts	0.2	Ghana	0.1

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

If we compare Gross Domestic Product, exports and imports, and we use Macrotrends data for the average of the four-year period of 2016-2019 (for exports and

imports these differ from OEC data), we get the following picture:

4.8 b\$	10.7 b\$	4.0 b\$
Imports	Home use	Exports
	Gross Domestic Product:	14.7 b\$

Source GDP: <https://tradingeconomics.com/burkina-faso/gdp>

Source (merchandise) imports and exports: <https://trendeconomy.com/data/h2/BurkinaFaso/total>

**Protected areas and Forests**

Burkina Faso currently has two national parks, nine full or partial fauna reserves, two bird sanctuaries, three Ramsar sites, and two UNESCO-MAB biosphere reserves (<http://www.parks.it/world/BF/index.html>). According to

Protectedplanet, currently 4.1 million hectares are protected areas (15 % of Burkina Faso's total area; and this source mentions 97 protected areas (<https://www.protectedplanet.net/country/BFA>). Burkina

Faso has 10.4 million hectares of forests; 33% of its total land area). However, between 1990 and 2005 Burkina Faso has lost 183,000 ha of its forest cover (<https://rainforests.mongabay.com/20burkina.htm>).

Other areas are mainly 'other wooded land', and areas for agriculture, livestock, hunting and gathering.

### Agricultural Burkina Faso

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

	1961		2018		2018/1961	
	Area	Prod.	Area	Prod.	Area	Prod.
Sorghum	908	411	1908	1930	2.1	4.7
Millet	615	195	1394	1189	2.3	6.1
Cow peas	186	74	1307	631	7.0	8.5
Maize	149	75	1019	1700	6.8	22.8
Seed cotton	23	2	473	482	20.6	209.6
Sesame seeds	10	2	439	254	43.9	133.7
Groundnuts	130	70	394	330	3.0	4.7
Rice	54	30	170	161	3.1	5.4
Cashew nuts	-	-	100	103	+++	+++
Other vegetables	41	151	100	389	2.4	2.6
Other nuts	15	38	38	43	2.5	1.1
Fruits incl. sugarcane	0	30	24	616	237.0	20.5
Other crops	81	100	57	148	0.7	1.5
Total (area)	2212		7423		3.4	

2018/1961: red = 2018 is below 1961; green: 2018 is more than 4.0 times the 1961 figures (that is: more than population increase in Burkina Faso from 4.9 to 19.8 million between 1961 and 2018); black: in-between. Source: Faostat data.

Burkina Faso's land area is 27.4 million hectares, and its crop area increased from 8.1% to 27.1% of its land area between 1961 and 2018. Almost all food crop areas expanded, and expansion was very rapid for cotton and sesame seeds. Not only the areas of many crops have expanded (much) more than Burkina Faso's population numbers, also crop yields became (much) higher (maize yields tripled, and sorghum, millet, and rice yields doubled), and total production figures have increased (much) faster than population numbers, including all major grains and pulses. Burkina Faso's crop history is a major African success story. Burkina Faso can feed its population much better than in 1961, but it also increased its exports, based on crop production, and this is

particularly true for cotton, but also for fruits, sesame seeds and groundnuts.

The numbers of all live animals, measured in stock units, and for all individual species, expanded more rapidly than Burkina Faso's population: in total 637% compared with 403%. Per capita the numbers of live animals in the country (measured in stock units) increased from 0.35 in 1961 to 0.56 in 2018. The best performance can be seen for pigs and sheep. The situation in 2018 is much better than it was in 1961, while in between (during the 1970s and 1980s) there have been periods of dramatic droughts and livestock deaths.

### Livestock numbers (x 1000)

	1961	2018	2018/1961
Asses	140	1230	8.8
Cattle	1800	9788	5.4
Chicken	8700	42499	4.9
Goats	1700	15586	9.2
Pigs	93	2538	27.3
Sheep	1000	10395	10.4
Livestock units	1724	10990	6.4

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

### International migration

In 2015 1,453,000 people who were born in Burkina Faso lived outside the country (7.4% of Burkina Faso's total population of 19.6 million people inside and outside the

country during that year), of which 1,426,000 elsewhere in Africa (mainly Côte d'Ivoire, but also Ghana, Mali, Niger and Benin, in that order), and 27,000 outside Africa (0.1% of Burkina Faso's total population: most of them in Italy

and France; UN migration report 2015). In 2017 Burkina Faso had around 709,000 immigrants, mainly from Côte d'Ivoire, but also from Mali and Ghana; UN Migration Report 2017). Between 1990 and 2017 the number of immigrants increased from 350,000 to 709,000, but the number of emigrants has always been double the number of immigrants, with a particularly strong migration connection with Côte d'Ivoire.

**Urban Burkina Faso**

Burkina Faso's urban population increased from only 227,000 people in 1960 (only 5% of its national population at Independence) to 6.4 million in 2020 (31%). There are two major cities: Ouagadougou and Bobo-Dioulasso. Growth has been very rapid for all cities, but particularly for Greater Ouagadougou.



Map: [https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/3/3b/Burkina\\_Faso\\_map.png](https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/3/3b/Burkina_Faso_map.png)

Major urban areas in Burkina Faso

Cities (and region)	Population in thousands of inhabitants		
	Macrotrends: 1960	Worldometers, city, as given in 2020	Populationstat, City and Urban area, 2019
Ouagadougou	59	1,087	2,775
Bobo-Dioulasso	54	360	970
Koudougou	..	87	..
Ouahigouya	..	61	..
Banfora	..	60	..

Source for 2020:

<https://www.worldometers.info/world-population/burkina-faso-population/>

Also: <https://populationstat.com/burkina-faso/>; <https://www.macrotrends.net/cities/23192/ouagadougou/population>; <https://www.macrotrends.net/cities/23191/bobo-dioulasso/population>

Regional Inequality

Map	Region / Région	Population x 1000		'18/'00
		2000	2018	
	1 = B. d. Mouhoun	1160	2210	1.9
	2 = Cascades	310	780	2.5
	3 = Centre	1100	2370	2.2
	4 = Centre-Est	970	1520	1.6
	5 = Centre-Nord	1260	1530	1.2
	6 = Centre-Ouest	990	1510	1.5
	7 = Centre-Sud	610	970	1.6
	8 = Est	1090	1880	1.7
	9 = Hauts-Bassins	1260	2150	1.7
	10 = Nord	1160	1470	1.3
	11 = Plateau-Central	680	960	1.4
	12 = Sahel	620	1570	2.5
	13 = Sud-Ouest	410	840	2.0
Total Burkina Faso		11600	19800	1.7

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

[https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/thumb/a/ae/BurkinaFaso\\_Regions.png/440px-BurkinaFaso\\_Regions.png](https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/thumb/a/ae/BurkinaFaso_Regions.png/440px-BurkinaFaso_Regions.png)

Burkina Faso has 13 Regions, and the Global Data Lab presents data for 2000 and 2018 (and for the years in between). Between 2000 and 2018 all regions experienced population growth, but the highest growth happened in Cascades in the southwest, in the Sahel Region in the far north, and in Centre, the area around Ouagadougou. High population growth was not so much experienced in the area of Nord and Centre-Nord. If we look at the regional

data for human development, which for Burkina Faso exist since 2000, we see that across the board improvements have taken place between 2000 and 2018. Both in 2000 and in 2018 the best conditions existed in Centre/Ouagadougou (but with the highest life expectancy shifting from Centre to Centre-Est). The worst conditions existed in the Sahel region.

Region	Subregional HDI x1000			Life expectancy (years)			Education index x1000		
	2000	2018	18/00	2000	2018	18/00	2000	2018	18/00
1	238	402	1.7	51.2	62.3	1.22	85	248	2.9
2	276	444	1.6	49.6	59.4	1.20	125	324	2.6
3	478	620	1.3	54.9	67.0	1.22	437	605	1.4
4	292	420	1.4	51.1	68.5	1.34	145	234	1.6
5	250	389	1.6	50.4	64.2	1.27	99	210	2.1
6	280	438	1.6	50.0	61.3	1.23	136	314	2.3
7	255	440	1.7	51.7	63.1	1.22	97	314	3.2
8	188	341	1.8	50.4	58.3	1.16	44	175	4.0
9	332	478	1.4	51.1	61.7	1.21	197	369	1.9
10	247	421	1.7	49.5	60.7	1.23	96	285	3.0
11	228	423	1.9	51.5	62.1	1.21	72	276	3.8
12	177	279	1.6	49.2	56.1	1.14	40	110	2.8
13	242	358	1.5	52.5	57.8	1.10	88	205	2.3
Burkina Faso	286	434	1.5	50.5	61.2	1.21	139	301	2.2
Ineq	2.7	2.2		1.12	1.22		10.9	5.5	

If we compare 2018 with 2000, the education situation has improved very much, with the fastest improvements in Est, and the relatively slowest improvements in Centre/Ouagadougou, which started at a much higher level than all other regions in 2000. The regional differences in education became less pronounced over time, but are still considerable, and probably the most extreme in the whole of Africa. The same is true for

subregional HDI as a whole: a slightly lower level of regional inequality, but the highest level of regional inequality anywhere in Africa. The regional differences in life expectancy became a bit more pronounced, though, and particularly the Sahel region was and is lagging behind. Centre-Est showed the biggest improvements for this variable.



Region	Income per capita (US \$ 2011 PPP)		
	2000	2018	'18/'00
1	903	1421	1.57
2	1152	1911	1.66
3	2158	3703	1.72
4	1072	1647	1.54
5	935	1515	1.62
6	1031	1576	1.53
7	1025	1506	1.47
8	856	1279	1.49
9	1301	2124	1.63
10	978	1600	1.64
11	959	1660	1.73
12	770	1039	1.35
13	839	1283	1.53
Burkina Faso	1069	1705	1.59
Ineq	2.8	3.6	

Finally, the GNI/capita figures also show extreme regional inequality, with Centre/Ouagadougou improving from

2.158\$/capita in 2000 to 3.703\$/capita in 2018, while the Sahel region only improved from 770\$/capita in 2000 to 1,039\$/capita in 2018 [these are 2011US\$, PPP values]. In 2000 the area with the best average income position was 2.8 times richer than the area with the worst average income position. This difference increased to 3.6 times in 2018. The areas of and around Ouagadougou improved its income per capita position most, while the worst areas improved the least. The current violence and emergency in the north (including the Sahel region) does not make things easier, and probably means that also foreign non-governmental agencies have left the area, with very detrimental effects to the health and education situation in these troubled areas.

Income inequality for Burkina Faso as a whole did improve quite a lot, though: from a Gini coefficient level of 48% in 1994 and 50% in 1998 (very high for world standards) to 43% in 2003, 40% in 2009 and 35% in 2014 (modest for African standards).

**Further Reading**

Country Portal: <http://countryportal.ascleiden.nl/burkina-faso>

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



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

Country Information: Ton Dietz, David Ehrhardt and Fenneken Veldkamp

Country Portal: Harro Westra

Selected publications: Germa Seuren

*African Studies Centre Leiden, August 2020*