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Central African Republique at 60

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

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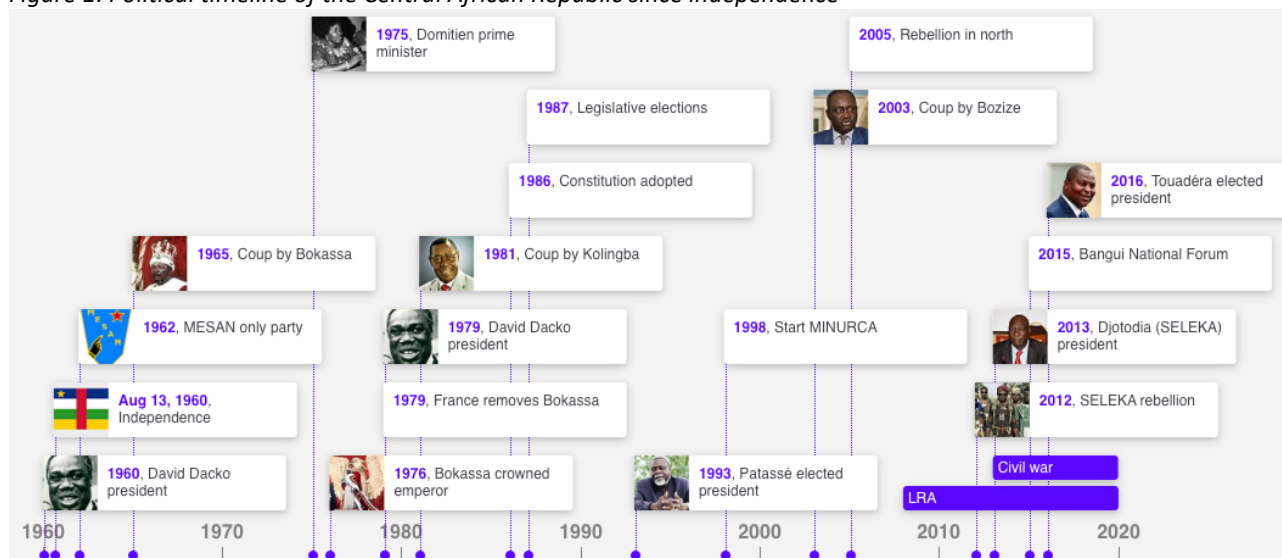
Central African Republic at 60

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, the Central

African Republic (CAR) was the twelfth one: on August 13. The CAR had been a French colony from 1903 onwards (as Oubangui Chari), from 1910 onwards as part of French Equatorial Africa (see Figure 1 for a political timeline).

Figure 1: Political timeline of the Central African Republic since independence



Source: Encyclopaedia Britannica

The Central African Republic has had a tumultuous history since its independence from France in 1960. Under David Dacko’s presidency, the country moved quickly to remove competitive elections and establish a one-party state, led by MESAN. In 1965, then, the commander of the army, Jean-Bédél Bokassa, moved to take power and would rule the country for the next 14 years as one of Africa’s most notorious dictators. Although he installed the first female prime minister in Sub-Saharan Africa in 1975 (Domitien), Bokassa would become known for his repressive governance and extravagant lifestyle, supported by the French. He crowned himself “Emperor” in 1976, only to be removed from office (again, by France) in 1979. David Dacko would, briefly, return to succeed him. In 1981, General Kolingba removed Dacko from office to usher in another period of extractive and repressive military rule.

The early 1990s saw increasing public resistance against Kolingba, which resulted in the first elected president taking office in 1993: Ange-Félix Patassé. Patassé, however, inherited a country in deep trouble, and

struggled to gain control and create stability, even with extensive French and, from 1998 through MINURCA, UN support. Several unsuccessful coups were attempted, until Bozizé overthrew Patassé in 2003. Bozizé re-established elections in 2005, and was elected president. Yet this year would also usher in a rebellion in the north of the country, and begin a long period of insurgency by the Lord’s Resistance Army (LRA) in the south. Fighting between government and rebel forces witnessed ebbs and flows, interacting also with conflicts in countries neighbouring the CAR (especially DRC and Sudan).

The year 2012 formed a new turning point with the formation of the rebel coalition Seleka in the north of the CAR. It was successful militarily and moved quickly to Bangui, the country’s capital. After attempted negotiations and cease-fires, Seleka took over the government and installed Michel Djotodia as its head of state in 2013. As Seleka gained power, however, resistance militias (Anti-balaka) rose up against their (mis)conduct and civil war ensued. The Bangui National Forum in 2015 produced an agreement that included most

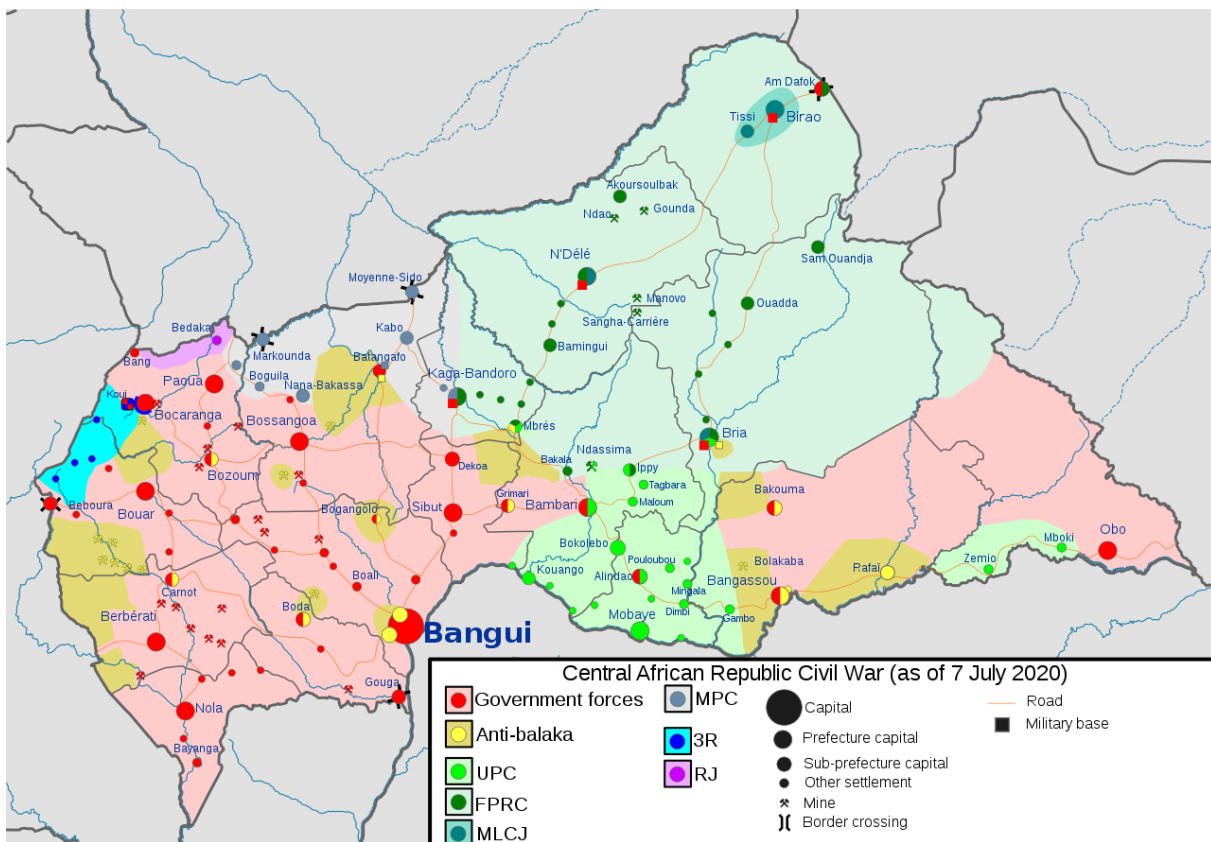
conflicting parties, and subsequent elections produced a newly elected president: Faustin-Archange Touadéra. But government control over its territory remains weak, and insecurity remains rife throughout many parts of the CAR.

Conflict, state fragility, and travel risks

For African standards the CAR is in the very risky range on the 'security risk' indices. Before the COVID-19 crisis, in December 2019, the Netherlands Ministry of Foreign Affairs had put the whole country in the 'red' zone (= don't travel). [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 the CAR in the 'high alert range', with 108.9 points (most

negative score would be 120.0 points; for Africa, 'high alert' is almost the highest risk category) (<https://fundforpeace.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/04/9511904-fragilestatesindex.pdf>). The index consists of twelve variables, and the CAR has the least negative scores for human flight and braindrain (a score of 7.1 out of 10), but extremely problematic scores for human rights abuses (score: 10.0), for external interventions (10.0), and for uneven development (score: 9.9). The country has had long periods of conflict and civil war, particularly since 2012, which lasts until today.



Map of the Central African Republic Civil War:

■ Under control of government forces and Allies ■ Under control of Anti-balaka forces ■ Under control of the "Peace in the Central African Republic" (UPC) ■ Under control of the "The Popular Front for the Rebirth of Central African Republic" (FPRC) and "Central African Patriotic Movement" (MPC) ■ Under control of the "Movement of Central African Liberators for Justice" (MLCJ) ■ Under control of the "Return, Reclamation, Rehabilitation" (3R)

The map is based on the [Module: Central African Republic Civil War detailed map](#). Also see: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Template:Central_African_Republic_Civil_War_detailed_map.

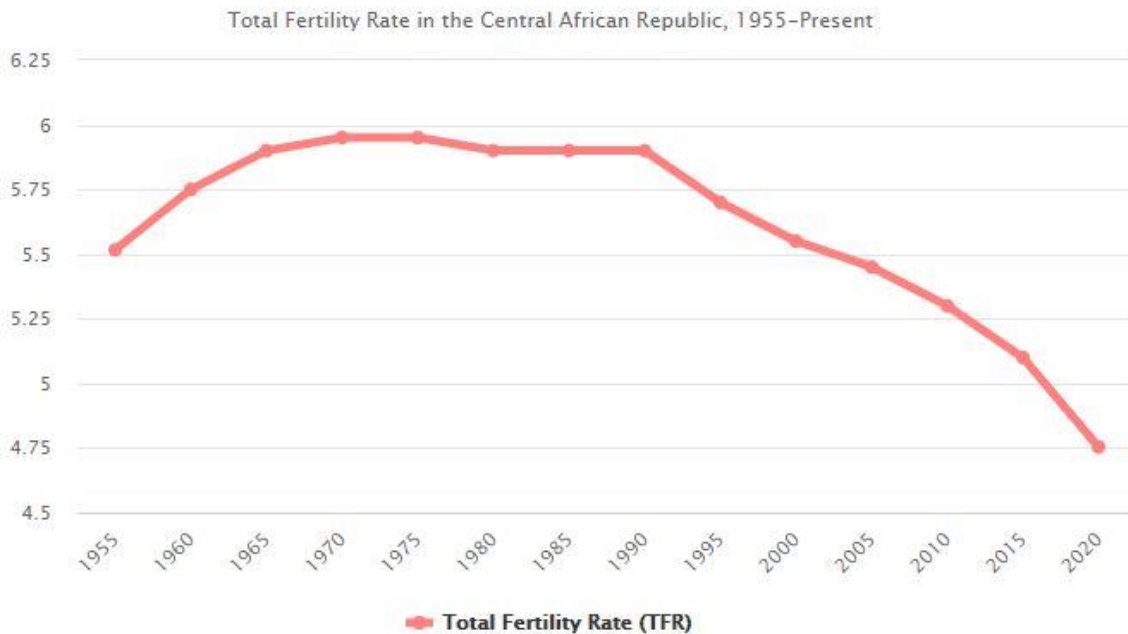
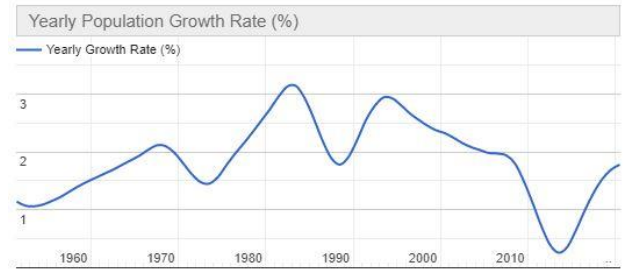
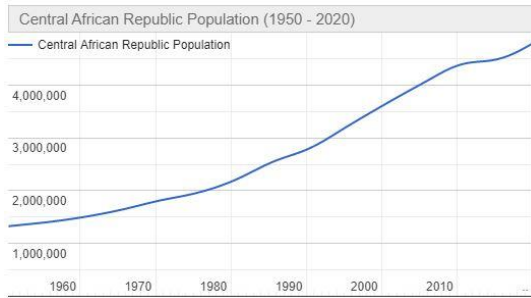
Demography

The CAR's population increased more than threefold between 1960 and 2020 (which is low for African standards), from 1.5 million in 1960 to 4.8 million in mid 2020, mostly through high fertility rates and longer life expectancy for both males and females (also because of improving child and infant mortality figures), but growth

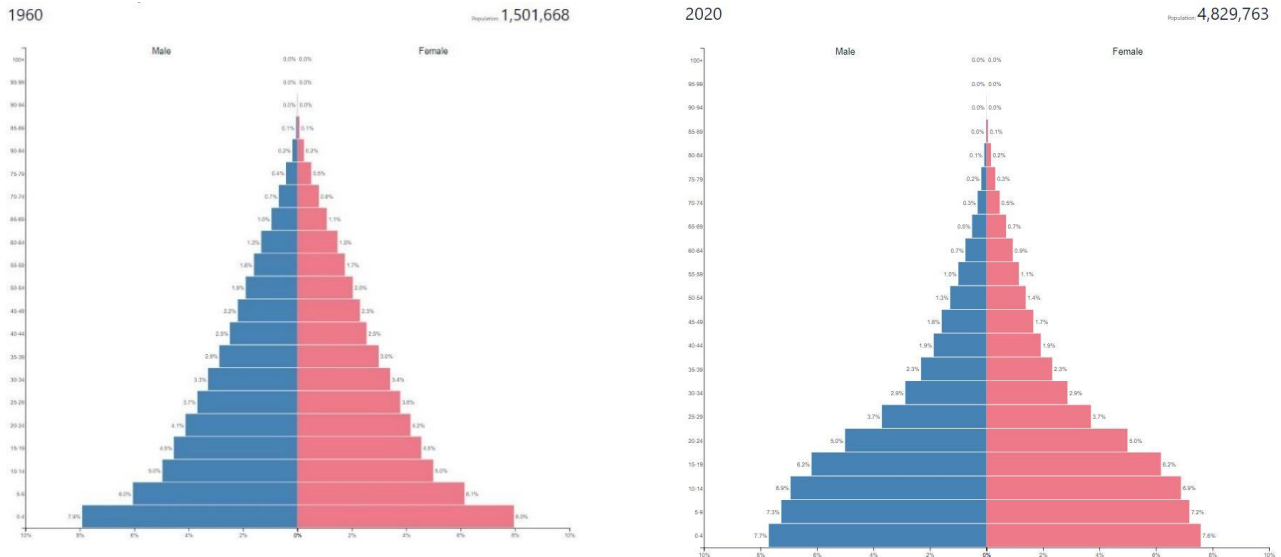
was negatively influenced by violent deaths and because of high outmigration figures around 1975, 1990 and from 2005 onwards (see later). Population growth figures were more than two percent per year in 1966-1968, 1977-1986, and 1990-2004, and more than three percent per year in 1982-1983. Currently the average growth rate is around 1.8 percent per year, recovering from only 0.3% during

2013, after the start of a new civil war. Total fertility was around 5.8 per woman in 1960; it first increased to 6.0 during the 1970s, and then started to diminish, with currently 4.8 births per average woman in the CAR during her lifetime. As a result of these demographic developments the CAR has a very skewed population pyramid, with many more young people than adults and elderly people. The median age changed from 21.7 years

old in 1960, to 17.1 years old during 2015, and currently 17.6 years old. Urbanisation is on the increase, and has almost reached majority status: currently 43 percent of the total population lives in cities. Between 1985 and 2000 the life expectancy figures in the CAR dropped from 50 in 1985 to 44 in 2000, due to the impact of HIV-AIDS, violence and neglect, after which a recovery started, despite the civil war after 2012.



Source: Worldometers



Source: <https://www.populationpyramid.net/central-african-republic>

Demographic statistics, the Central African Republic as a whole, 1960 and 2020

	1960	2020
Population	1.5 million	4.8 million
Fertility rate	5.8 children per woman	4.8 children per woman
Life expectancy (males)	36 years	52 years
Idem (females)	39 years	57 years
Median age	21.7 years	17.6 years
Infant mortality (< 1 yr)	158/1000	71/1000
Under-5 mortality	295/1000	107/1000
Urbanization rate	20%	43%
Urban population	0.3 million	2.1 million
Rural population	1.2 million	2.8 million

Source: Worldometers

Human Development Index, the Central African Republic as a whole, 1990 and 2018

Human Development Index data exist since 1990, with annual UNDP updates. In 1990, the CAR’s Human Development Index started at a level of 0.320, very low for world standards, and it first decreased to 0.299 in 1993 and 0.307 in 2000, and afterwards improved somewhat to 0.381 in 2018, still the one but lowest score of the world (after Niger). 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 the CAR the various components of the HDI show a

deterioration around 2000, and afterwards gradual improvements. Between 1990 and 2018 the CAR’s population increased from 2.8 million people to 4.7 million people. The increase in the HDI between 1990 and 2018 can be attributed to improvements in the health and education components, but the average standard of living was deteriorating considerably. Average income levels per capita (in US\$ of 2011, PPP) decreased from 968\$ in 1990, via 681\$ in 2013, to only 777\$ in 2018, very low for African (and world) standards. Life expectancy only improved a little bit. The most significant growth took place in education.

Central African Republic: HDI and its composition, and indicators; data for 1990, and 2018

	1990	2018	2018/1990
Health Index	0.448	0.505	1.13
Income Index *	0.343	0.310	0.90
Education Index	0.214	0.353	1.65
Life Expectancy	49.1	52.8	1.08
GNI/capita in US\$ (2011PPP)	968	777	0.80
Mean years of schooling	2.1	4.3	2.05
Expected years of schooling	5.2	7.6	1.46
Total HDI index	0.320	0.381	1.19

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

Trade statistics, the CAR: exports and imports, 2018

In 2018 the CAR exported products for a total value of only 94 million \$, and imported for a total value of 213 million \$ (mostly from France, India, China, Belgium, and Italy, in

that order), resulting in a major negative trade balance. Leading import products were refined petroleum, broadcasting equipment, and packaged medicaments, in that order.

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

Main export products (value in \$ million)		Main export destinations (value in \$ million)	
Rough wood	59	China	54
Diamonds	17	UAE	9
Sawn wood	12	India	7
Raw cotton	2	Belgium	4
Gold	2	Portugal	4

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

If we compare Gross Domestic Product, Exports and Imports, and we use Macrotrends data (which differ from

the data from OEC), we get the following average picture for the four-year period of 2016-2019:

0.9 b\$	1.7 b\$	0.4 b\$
	Home use	Exports
Imports	Gross Domestic Product: 2.1 b\$	

Source: <https://www.macrotrends.net/countries/CAF/central-african-republic/gdp-gross-domestic-product>; <https://www.macrotrends.net/countries/CAF/central-african-republic/imports>; and <https://www.macrotrends.net/countries/CAF/central-african-republic/exports>.

Protected areas and Forests

The CAR currently has four national parks, one presidential park, two national reserves and eight fauna or special reserves. There is one UNESCO-MAB biosphere reserve (<http://www.parks.it/world/CF/index.html>). According to Protectedplanet, currently 11.2 million hectares are protected areas (18 % of the CAR's total area; and this source mentions 38 protected areas (<https://www.protectedplanet.net/country/CF>). The CAR has 22.8 million hectares of forests; 37% of its total land

area). However, between 1990 and 2005 the CAR has lost 448,000 ha of its forest cover (<https://rainforests.mongabay.com/20car.htm>). Other areas are mainly 'other wooded land', and areas for agriculture, livestock, hunting and gathering.

Agricultural CAR

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.
Cassava	220	720	253	715	1.2	1.0
Groundnuts	80	63	115	153	1.4	2.4
Maize	75	40	99	87	1.3	2.2
Melonseed	..	7	62	42	..	6.0
Yams	20	100	61	513	3.1	5.1
Vegetables	13	32	57	146	4.4	4.6
Fruits and sugarcane	8	60	53	272	6.6	4.5
Cotton (seedcotton, cotton seed and lint)	129	54	50	39	0.4	0.7
Taro or cocoyam	16	40	41	139	2.6	3.5
Sesame seed	27	5	39	27	1.4	5.4
Oil seeds	-	-	37	19	+++	+++
Sorghum	59	20	32	30	0.5	1.5
Plantains	18	48	31	88	1.7	1.8
Coffee	33	8	27	9	0.8	1.1
Other grains (rice, millet)	20	8	15	21	0.8	2.6
Other crops	9	29	7	8	0.8	0.3
Total crops (area)	727		979		1.3	

2018/1961: red = 2018 is below 1961; green: 2018 is more than 3.1 times the 1961 figures (that is: more than population increase in the CAR from 1.5 million to 4.7 million between 1961 and 2018); black: in-between. Source: Faostat data.

The CAR's land area is 62.5 million hectares, and its crop area increased from 1.2% to 1.6% of its land area between 1961 and 2018. Almost all food crop areas expanded a bit, although expansion was rapid for melon seeds, sesame seeds, yams, vegetables, fruits and sugarcane. The total crop area increased only 30% in these almost sixty years, and production volumes for the most important staple crops increased less than population numbers. Traditional agricultural exports decreased in area and volumes (cotton), or in area (coffee), although the production area and volumes of groundnuts increased, but less than population numbers. Crop production in the CAR has

never been very significant, but its importance decreased over the years.

However, the numbers of all live animals, measured in stock units, and for all individual species, expanded much more rapidly than the CAR's population: in total 1120% compared with 310%. Per capita the numbers of live animals in the country (measured in stock units) increased from 0.22 in 1961 to 0.89 in 2018, a very high increase. The best performance can be seen for pigs, goats, and cattle. The livestock wealth story is a completely different one than the agricultural story or the economic story as a whole.

Livestock numbers (x 1000)

	1961	2018	2018/1961
Cattle	403	4680	11.6
Chicken	750	7595	10.1
Goats	450	6516	14.5
Pigs	20	1114	55.7
Sheep	50	447	8.9
Livestock units	342	4160	12.2

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

International migration

In 2015 441,000 people who were born in the CAR lived outside the country (8.9% of the CAR's total population of 4.9 million people inside and outside the country during that year), of which 422,000 elsewhere in Africa (mainly Cameroon, Chad, DRC, Congo and Sudan, in that order), and 19,000 outside Africa (0.4% of the CAR's total population: most of them in France; UN migration report

2015). In 2017 the Central African Republic had around 88,000 immigrants, mainly from Sudan, the DRC and Chad, but also from France; UN Migration Report 2017; in 2015 there were almost 10,000 people from France in the country). Between 1990 and 2017 the number of immigrants has gone up and down: 67,000 in 1990, up to 124,000 in 2000, down again to 82,000 in 2015, and up again in 2017.

Urban Central African Republic

The CAR's urban population increased from only 201,000 people in 1960 (only 20% of its national population at

Independence) to 2.1 million in 2020 (43%). There is one major city: Bangui. Growth has been rapid.

Map of the cities in the CAR



https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/4/47/Central_African_Republic-CIA_WFB_Map.png

Major urban areas in the Central African Republic

Cities	Population in thousands of inhabitants			
	Macrotrends: 1960	Worldometers, city, as given in 2020	Macrotrends: 2020	Wikipedia 1988 (census) and 2012 (estimates)
Bangui	94	542	889	452 and 734
Bimbo	11 and 250
Berbérati	42 and 105

Sources:

<https://www.worldometers.info/world-population/central-african-republic-population/>;

<https://archive.is/20130111112114/http://www.world-gazetteer.com/wg.php?x=&men=gcis&lng=en&des=wg&geo=-47&srt=npan&col=abcdefghinog&msz=1500&pt=c&va=&srt=pan>

and for macrotrends (1960 and 2020):

<https://www.macrotrends.net/cities/20410/bangui/population>.

Bimbo is a satellite town of Bangui, 10 kms to the south.

Regional Inequality in the Central African Republic

Map	Region / Région		Population x 1000		'18/'90
	1990	2018	1990	2018	
	1 = Bangui	620	900	1.45	
	2 = Region I	580	1,090	1.88	
	3 = Region II	470	820	1.74	
	4 = Region III	510	960	1.88	
	5 = Region IV	310	370	1.19	
	6 = Region V	320	530	1.66	
Central African Republic as a whole	2,810	4,670	1.66		

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

Region I = Ombella-Mpoko + Lobaye + Kémo (-Gribingui) + Nana Grebizi (= South around Bangui)

Region II = Mambéré-Kadéï + Nana-Mambéré + Sangha Mbaére (= West)

Region III = Ouham-Pendé + Ouham (= Northwest)

Region IV = Ouaka + Haute Kotto + Bamingui-Bangoran + Vakaga (= Centre and Northeast)

Region V = Basse Kotto + Mbomou + Haut-Mbomou (= Southeast)

Map: <https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/0/07/Zentralafrikanische-republik-karte-politisch.png>

The Central African Republic has 17 Regions, and the Global Data Lab presents data for 1990 and 2018 (and for the years in between) for six regions, where administrative regions have been joined together. The history of the CAR's regions is quite chaotic. Between 1990 and 2018 all regions experienced population growth, but the highest growth happened in the area near Bangui and in the northwest. Population growth was low in the northeast. If we look at the regional data for human development,

which for the CAR exist since 1990, we see that across the board improvements have taken place between 1990 and 2018 (but NOT in income). Both in 1990 and in 2018 the best conditions existed in the capital city Bangui. The worst conditions existed in the Northwest region in 1990 (with the lowest life expectancy in the West). The worst conditions shifted to the East towards 2018, and particularly to the southeast region.

Region	Subregional HDI/1000			Life expectancy (years)			Education index/1000		
	1990	2018	18/90	1990	2018	18/90	1990	2018	18/90
1	429	513	1.20	52.9	58.6	1.11	363	554	1.53
2	313	378	1.21	47.7	52.5	1.10	217	357	1.65
3	274	342	1.25	47.2	52.0	1.10	149	273	1.83
4	269	339	1.26	48.4	51.7	1.07	138	278	2.01
5	310	355	1.15	51.2	53.7	1.05	189	301	1.59
6	282	324	1.15	49.5	50.9	1.03	156	265	1.70
CAR	320	381	1.19	49.1	52.8	1.08	214	353	1.65
Ineq	1.59	1.58		1.12	1.15		2.63	2.09	

If we compare 2018 with 1990 the education situation has improved considerably, with the fastest improvements in Northwestern region, and the relatively slowest improvements in the area of Bangui, which started on a higher level in 1990. The regional differences in education

became a bit less pronounced, but are still considerable. The subregional HDI as a whole and life expectancy did not show a major trend towards more or less regional inequality between 1990 and 2018.

Region	Income per capita (in US\$ PPP 2011)		
	1990	2018	18/90
1	1,724	1,524	0.88
2	900	737	0.82
3	900	721	0.80
4	848	671	0.79
5	883	663	0.75
6	852	601	0.71
CAR	968	777	0.80
Ineq	2.02	2.54	

Finally, the GNI/capita figures show severe economic deterioration between 1990 and 2018, and in fact the deterioration between 1990 and 2013 was even worse (between 2013 and 2018 there was some improvement). The deterioration was least severe in Bangui, and most severe in the southeast, and as a result the regional inequality became more extreme. Income inequality

between the rich and the poor in the CAR was very extreme in 1992 (with 61.3%), became less extreme towards 2003 (43.6%) and more extreme again in 2008 (56.2%)

(https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SI.POV.GINI?locations=CF&most_recent_year_desc=true&view=chart).

Developments after 2008 are unclear.

Further Reading

Country Portal: <http://countryportal.ascleiden.nl/central-af-rican-republic>

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



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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