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## Africa at 60

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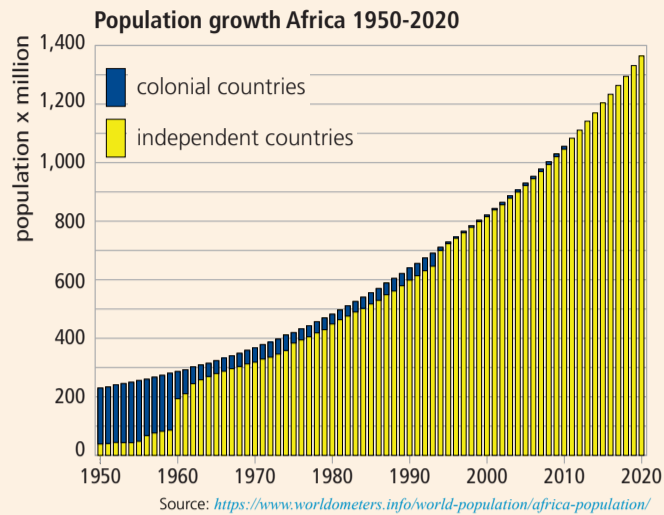
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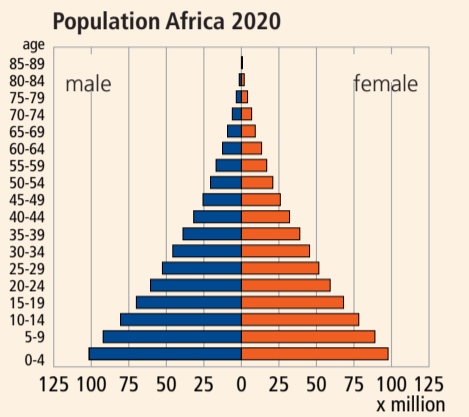
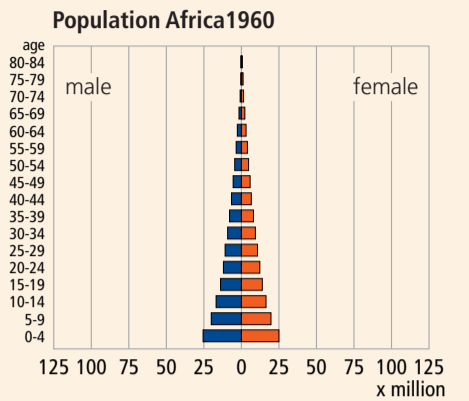
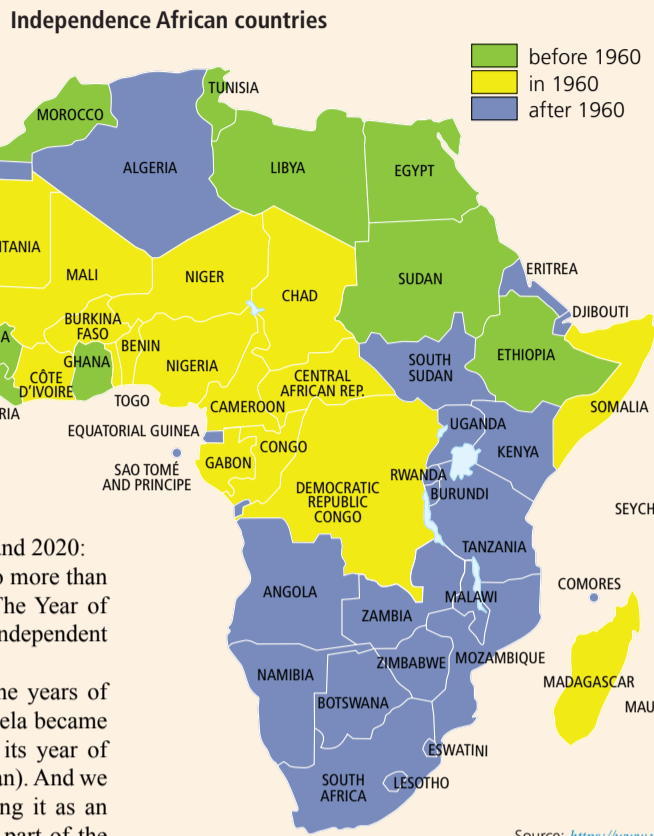
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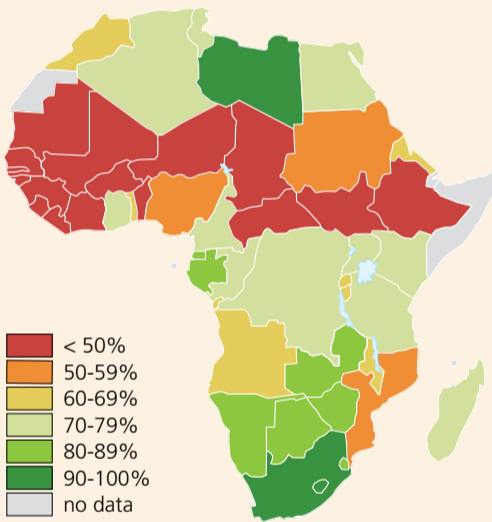
The graph shows that Africa's population has been growing fast between 1950 and 2020: from slightly more than 200 million in 1950 and close to 300 million in 1960 to more than 1.3 billion in 2020. It also shows that 1960 was indeed a watershed year ('The Year of Africa'): before 1960 only 30% of Africa's population lived in politically independent countries. At the end of 1960 this percentage had increased to 68. Making this graph meant taking a few politically sensitive decisions about the years of independence. For South Africa we used 1994, the year in which Nelson Mandela became the first President after free democratic elections. For South Sudan we took its year of independence, 2011 (so before 2011 it was regarded as an internal colony of Sudan). And we used the approach of the African Union towards the Western Sahara, regarding it as an independent country from 1975 onwards, despite the fact that in practice it is part of the Kingdom of Morocco. The graph clearly shows that for many Africans living now (most of them young), the colonial period is long ago; something belonging to the stories of their grandparents.



Source: <https://www.worldometers.info/demographics/demographics-of-africa/#population-pyramid>

Both in 1960 and in 2020 Africa's population composition really shows a pyramid, although the base in 1960 was even more extreme than in 2020, showing a gradual (but slow) shift to lower fertility levels.

**Adult literacy rates Africa 2016**



Source Adult literacy rate: <http://uis.unesco.org/sites/default/files/documents/fs45-literacy-rates-continue-rise-generation-to-next-en-2017.pdf>

Although Africa is still lagging behind all other continents, social indicators show major improvements and rapid changes between 1960-1990 and 1990-2020, with faster change during the last thirty years than during the first thirty years. Within Africa there are major differences, though, as the map of adult literacy clearly shows: the highest literacy rates can be found in South Africa and Libya, and the lowest rates in a belt from West Africa to Ethiopia, and also with low figures in Mozambique, Angola, and Morocco. And almost everywhere there is a better performance among men than among women.

Social indicators Africa 1960, 1990 and 2020	1960	1990	2020
Median age (years)	18.7	17.6	19.7
Total fertility rate (children per woman)	6.6	6.2	4.4
Life expectancy males	41	50	62
Life expectancy females	44	54	66
Deaths under age 5 per 1000	259	166	63
Deaths under age 1 per 1000 (infant mortality)	155	101	42
Urban population (million)	53	200	588
Urbanization rate	19	32	44
Adult literacy rate SSA %	20	52	65*

\* 2016: m72/f57

**Population composition Africa 1960 and 2020**  
age and gender, absolute and relative figures

	1960		2020					
	male	female	male	female				
	million	%	million	%				
Children	61	22	60	21	274	20	267	20
Youth	36	13	36	13	183	14	181	13
35-65	39	14	41	14	192	14	198	15
Senior	4	1	5	2	21	2	26	2
Total	141	50	142	50	670	50	671	50

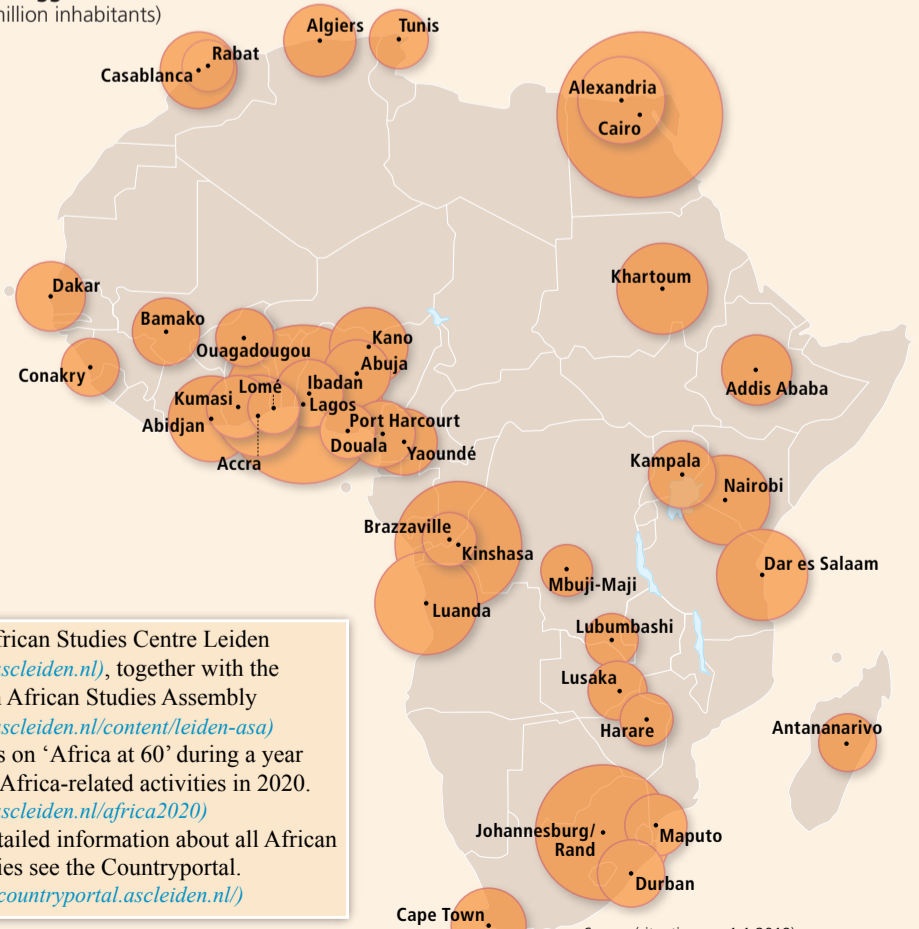
The table not only shows the tremendous growth in population numbers in all categories, but also the slow but gradual shift to a more balanced population in age categories. The overall gender balance was and is almost complete. The dependency ratio (children and seniors compared to the 'working age' population) was and is high, but decreasing: 0.85 in 1960 and 0.79 in 2020.

Source Tables: Worldometers

**African agglomerations 1960**



**African agglomerations 2019**  
(> 2 million inhabitants)



The African Studies Centre Leiden ([www.ascleiden.nl](http://www.ascleiden.nl)), together with the Leiden African Studies Assembly ([www.ascleiden.nl/content/leiden-asa](http://www.ascleiden.nl/content/leiden-asa)) reflects on 'Africa at 60' during a year full of Africa-related activities in 2020. For detailed information about all African countries see the Countryportal. (<http://countryportal.ascleiden.nl/>)





**Africa as a whole: population growth, crop volume growth and livestock numbers growth, 1961 and 2017**

	1961	2017	change
Population (million)	295	1264	x4.3
Cereals (million tonnes)	46	201	x4.3
Roots and tubers (million tonnes)	48	318	x6.6
Stock units* (million)	121	376	x3.1

\* calculated as camel = 1; cattle = 0.7; goats, sheep and pigs = 0.1; chicken = 0.01

Despite Africa's enormous growth in population numbers, cereal production (most important: maize, sorghum, rice, wheat and millet) kept pace with population growth; roots and tubers (most important: cassava, yams, sweet potatoes and potatoes) increased much faster and livestock numbers (measured in stock units) lagged behind, but also increased a lot in absolute numbers.

**Africa as a whole: livestock numbers (live animals), 1961 and 2017**

Stock numbers in million	1961	2017	change
Camels	9	30	x3.5
Cattle	123	347	x2.8
Goats	94	423	x4.5
Sheep	135	381	x2.8
Pigs	6	38	x6.6
Chicken	274	1919	x7.0
Stock units*	121	376	x3.1
Stock units* / person	0.41	0.30	x0.7

\* calculated as camel = 1; cattle = 0.7; goats, sheep and pigs = 0.1; chicken = 0.01

Africa's population increased with a factor 4.3 during this period. All livestock numbers have increased considerably, but in total below the growth of Africa's population. However, chicken, pigs, and goats numbers increased faster than Africa's population, cattle and sheep numbers lagged behind population growth.

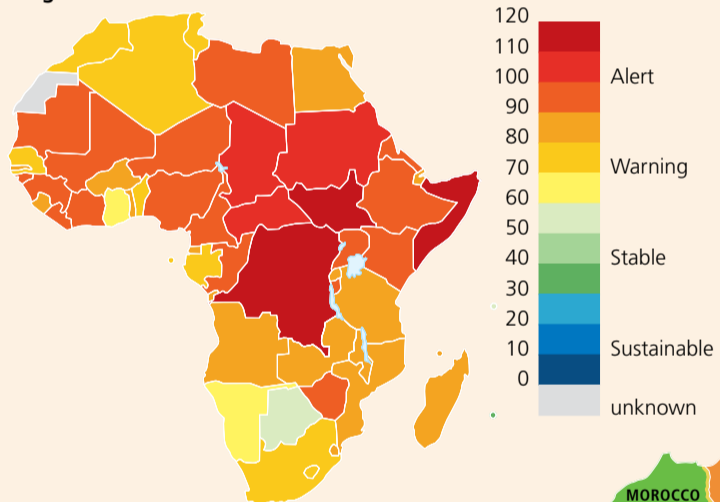
**Africa as a whole: crop area and yield levels, 1961 and 2017**

Crops	1961		2017	
	area (million ha)	yield (ton/ha)	area (million ha)	yield (ton/ha)
Cereals total	57.0	0.8	123.0	1.6
- maize	15.0	1.0	41.0	2.1
- sorghum	13.0	0.8	27.0	1.0
- millet	11.0	0.6	20.0	0.7
- wheat	7.0	0.7	10.0	2.6
- barley	4.0	0.4	5.0	1.3
- rice	3.0	1.6	15.0	2.4
Roots & Tubers	8.0	5.8	38.0	8.3
- cassava	5.6	5.7	20.0	8.8
- yams	1.1	7.2	8.0	8.5
- cocyam	0.6	4.8	1.5	4.9
- sweet potatoes	0.6	5.3	4.7	5.9
- potatoes	0.3	8.2	1.9	13.2
Pulses	7.1	0.5	25.1	0.8
Bananas	0.5	6.0	2.1	9.6
Sugarcane	0.4	65.9	1.6	58.0
Treenuts	0.4	0.6	4.3	0.5
Groundnuts	5.9	0.8	14.7	0.8
Coconuts	0.4	3.2	1.2	1.7
Oil palm	3.4	3.3	4.6	4.3
Soybeans	0.2	0.4	2.3	1.4
Fruits	4.5	5.7	12.4	8.9
Vegetables	1.9	6.4	9.4	8.5
Cocoa	3.3	0.3	8.1	0.5
Sheanuts	0.1	2.0	0.6	0.9
Coffee	2.2	0.4	2.9	0.4
Tea	0.1	0.9	0.4	2.0
Cotton	3.8	0.6	4.3	1.0
Tobacco	0.3	0.8	0.6	1.2
Sisal	0.4	0.9	0.1	0.8

With only one exception (sisal) Africa's major crop areas expanded (green in the table), and for most major crops also yields increased (green as well). For cereals areas expanded by a factor 2.2, while yields doubled. For roots and tubers the area expanded much more (with a factor 4.8), while yields increased with 43%. Very rapid expanses in crop areas can be seen for rice, yams, sweet potatoes, potatoes, treenuts, soybeans, vegetables, and sheanuts. Most food harvests are eaten in Africa itself, and there has been a rapid growth in urban demand. That growth of demand has been higher than the growth of production, resulting in increasing food imports.

Sources Tables: Faostat.org (see definitions there)

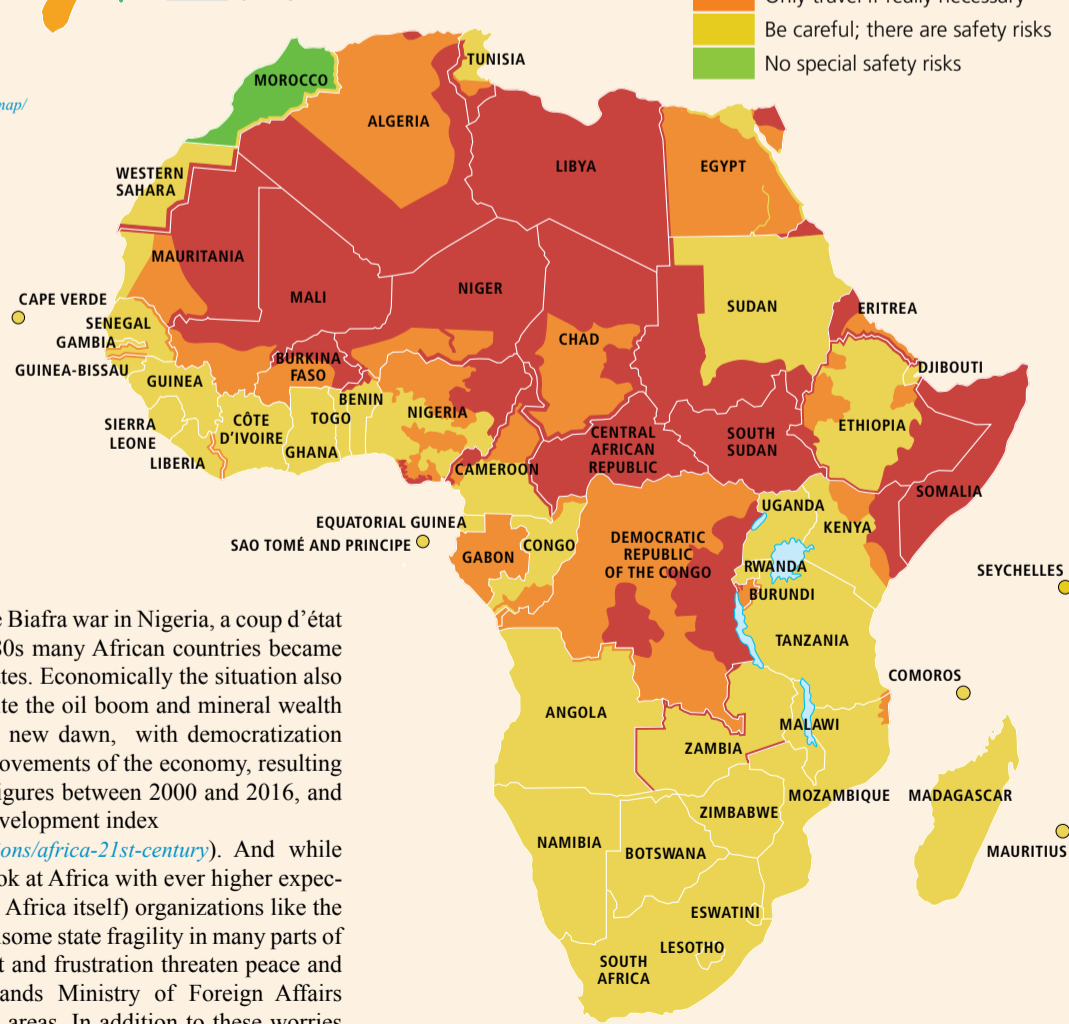
**Fragile states 2019**



Source: <http://fragilestatesindex.org/analytics/fsi-heat-map/>

In 1960 many newly independent African countries looked at the future with high expectations. Although some areas experienced violent contestations (the civil war in Algeria was still going on, Apartheid in South Africa, South-west Africa and Rhodesia deepened, the situation in Portuguese colonies was grim, and soon after independence there were violent break-aways in Congo) most populations in Africa were living in peace, and independence was seen as a new dawn, full of promises. This positive outlook changed to despair later during the 1960s (e.g. the Biafra war in Nigeria, a coup d'état in Ghana) and in the 1970s and 1980s many African countries became military dictatorships or one-party states. Economically the situation also deteriorated for many Africans, despite the oil boom and mineral wealth exploitation. After 1990 there was a new dawn, with democratization almost everywhere, and gradual improvements of the economy, resulting in high economic and trade growth figures between 2000 and 2016, and major improvements in the human development index (see: <https://www.ascleiden.nl/publications/africa-21st-century>). And while many observers in business circles look at Africa with ever higher expectations (many of those in Asia, and in Africa itself) organizations like the Fund for Peace currently show a worrisome state fragility in many parts of Africa, massive youth unemployment and frustration threaten peace and political stability, and The Netherlands Ministry of Foreign Affairs regards many African areas as no-go areas. In addition to these worries there are the threats of climate change for Africa. After 60 years of independence, for the majority of Africans there are both great opportunities and big worries. But it is also clear that Africa and Africans will become more prominent in the 21st Century.

**Africa's no-go areas, in December 2019**



Source: <https://www.nederlandwereldwijd.nl/reizen/reisadviezen>

This thematic map was made by Ton Dietz and Nel de Vink. The Leiden African Studies Assembly activities are coordinated by David Ehrhardt, Maaike Westra, and Ton Dietz, supported by the director of the African Studies Centre Leiden, Jan-Bart Gewald, and by Marieke van Winden, Rik Jongenelen and Fenneken Veldkamp.

**The African Studies Centre Leiden (ASCL)**

The African Studies Centre Leiden, founded in 1947, is the only knowledge institute in the Netherlands devoted entirely to the study of Africa. It undertakes research and is involved in teaching about Africa and aims to promote a better understanding of African societies. The Centre is part of Leiden University and participates in the LeidenGlobal network. The ASCL's work is not only of importance to researchers but also to policymakers, journalists, NGOs, businesses and other organizations.

**Research** The ASCL's research programme lasts for a period of five years. Projects are multidisciplinary, empirical in nature and are carried out in cooperation with African colleagues and institutions by the Centre's researchers, Collaborative Research Groups and PhD and Research Master's students.

**Education** The ASCL organizes a one-year Master and a two-year Research Master in African Studies in cooperation with Leiden University's Faculty of Humanities. The ASCL co-organizes two joint LDE-minors on Africa.

**Library** The ASCL's Library, Documentation and Information Department has the most extensive and specialized collection on Africa in the Netherlands in the fields of the social sciences (including law and economics) and the humanities. The library, which is open to the general public, has more than 90,000 books, 1700 documentaries and feature films from and about Africa, and subscribes to nearly 750 (e-)periodicals. Digital Open Access publications form an important part of the library. African Studies Abstracts Online offers some 10,000 abstracts and journal articles, and web dossiers provide background information on specific topical events and themes.

[www.ascleiden.nl/content/library](http://www.ascleiden.nl/content/library)

**Publications** ASCL researchers publish in many different journals and with well-known publishing houses. The Centre also has several publication series of its own: Afrika-Studiecentrum Series, African Dynamics, African Studies Collection, ASC Infosheets and ASC thematic maps.

**Seminars** Regular seminars are held at the ASCL on Thursday afternoons on a wide range of topics. These are given by prominent local and international Africanists and are open to the general public.

**Visiting Fellows** Between six and nine African academics are invited to Leiden every year on three-month fellowships to promote an effective academic dialogue between Africa and the North. These scholars use their stay in Leiden for data analysis and writing, and present a seminar.

**Africa Thesis Award** A prize is awarded annually for the best Masters thesis on Africa by a student at a university in the Netherlands or in Africa. The winning thesis is published in the African Studies Collection series.

**ASCL Community** The ASCL Community includes (honorary) fellows, affiliates, artists and associates of the Centre, and people with a professional interest in Africa who are working in business, policymaking, NGOs and in media circles. We would like to welcome you as a member of the ASCL Community!

[www.ascleiden.nl/content/ascl-community](http://www.ascleiden.nl/content/ascl-community)

**LeidenASA** The Leiden African Studies Assembly, founded in December 2015, is a network connecting the ASCL with other Leiden-based Africanists (and also Africanists based in knowledge centres in Rotterdam, The Hague and Delft).

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