



Somalia 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, Somalia was the fourth one: on June 26th former

British Somaliland became independent, followed by Italian Somaliland on 1 July, immediately forming the Republic of Somalia (see Figure 1 for a political timeline).

Figure 1: Political timeline of Somalia since independence



Somalia's post-independence political landscape has been fragile from its inception. The first decade (1960s) was characterised by attempts to incorporate Somali-dominated areas across its borders, in particular in Ethiopia and Kenya. These efforts, however, proved infeasible, and sowed some of the seeds for subsequent instability by stimulating rebel movements outside the country's borders. Siad Barre held the presidency of the country for 21 years, from 1969 to his violent overthrow in 1991 – which also marked the escalation of the Somali civil war that has characterised the country for close to 30 years. Barre oversaw Somalia joining the Arab League in 1974 and the brief but significant Ogaden war with Ethiopia in 1977-1978.

Barre's demise created a political vacuum in which civil war raged, bringing devastation and famine. International efforts at peacekeeping were notoriously ineffective, perhaps best exemplified by the infamous Battle of Mogadishu ('Black Hawk Down') under UNOSOM II. Recent years have seen a splintering of some of the earlier fighting factions, including the violent Islamic organisation Al-Shabaab, but also an overall reduction in violence and the formation of transitional and, in 2012, permanent federal-

governmental institutions. It has several strongly autonomous regions, including Puntland and Somaliland in the north of the country, some of which have declared independent statehood (although none are internationally recognised).

Conflict, state fragility, and travel risks

Since the start of the civil war in Somalia around 1990, Somalia has always been regarded as a 'no-go area' by the Netherlands Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and also currently, it is a 'red zone', meaning: "don't travel". This is also true for the northern area, the de-facto independent Somaliland, a travel advice that is disputed in some circles. Currently, the wikipedia site for Somalia shows a map, showing the political fragmentation in April 2017, with light blue the Federal Republic of Somalia, yellow the 'separatists' of Somaliland, grey-blue the 'unionists' of Puntland, green the 'Islamists' of Al-Shabaab and related groups, and grey a few 'neutral' areas in Somaliland.

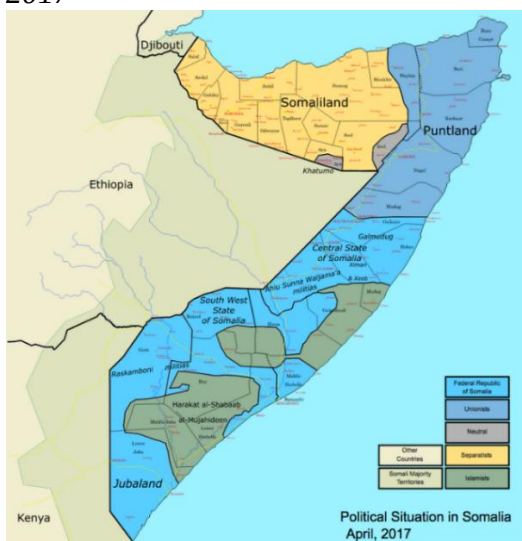
Figure 2: Travel advice from the Netherlands Ministry of Foreign Affairs, February 2020



Source:

<https://www.nederlandwereldwijd.nl/landen/somalie/reizen/reisadvies>

Figure 3: Political situation in Somalia, April 2017



Source:

https://nl.wikipedia.org/wiki/Somalische_Burgeroorlog#/media/Bestand:Somalia_map_states_regions_districts.png

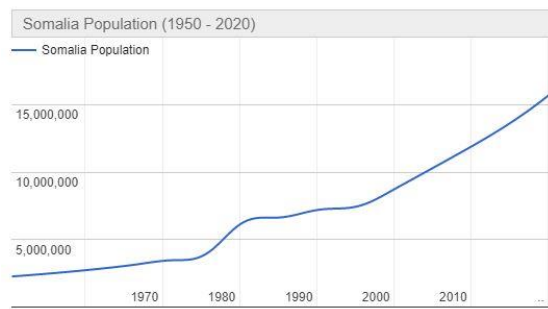
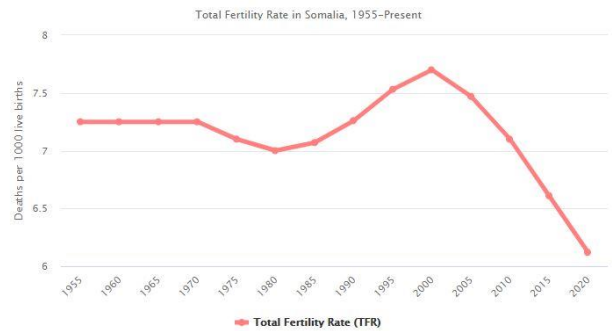
The State Fragility Index of the Fund for Peace puts Somalia in the 'very high alert' cases, almost at the

bottom of the list of countries, with a score of 112.3 points out of a negative maximum of 120.0 (<https://fundforpeace.org/2019/04/10/fragile-states-index-2019/>). On almost each of the twelve variables Somalia scores extremely negative values, starting with factionalised elites, and demographic pressures, to the quality of the security apparatus, the quality of public services, uneven development, refugees and internally displaced people, human rights and the rule of law, external interventions, human flight and braindrain to a lack of state legitimacy. The 'best' score still is 8.8 out of a maximum negative of 10.0 (for 'economic decline').

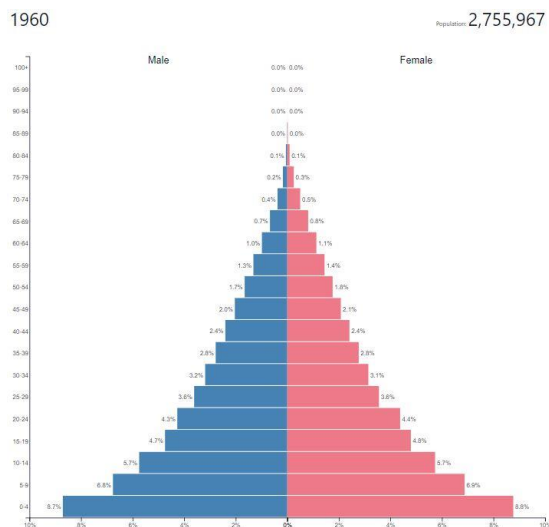
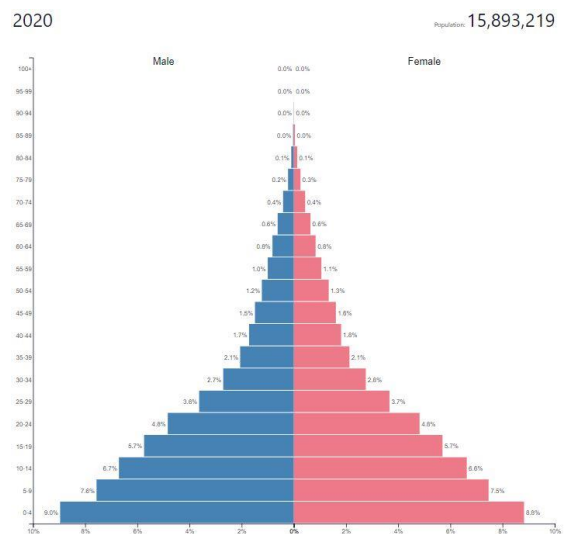
Demography

Somalia's population increased almost sixfold between 1960 and 2020, despite the enormous turmoil in the country during most of this period. Growth was erratic, though, with very high growth figures in the late 1970s, due to a massive influx of Somali refugees from Ethiopia, while in early 1975, around 1984 (droughts) and around 1993 (civil war) population growth was zero, or negative, with high death rates and high refugee outmigration (mainly to Kenya, but also to Ethiopia). Fertility rates were and still are very high and there is a longer life expectancy for both males and females (also because of rapidly improving child and infant mortality figures, again: despite the turmoil). Currently the average population growth rate is around 2.9 percent per year. As a result of these demographic developments Somalia has an extremely skewed population pyramid, with many more young people, than adults and elderly people. The median age changed from 18.9 years old in 1960, to only 15.9 years old in 2010 and currently only 16.7 years old. Urbanization is on the increase, and has almost reached 50 percent. All demographic and other data about Somalia should be interpreted with care, as most data are assessments.

Next to 15.9 million people in Somalia, there are currently 6 million Somali people in the regional state Somali in Ethiopia, 2.5 million Somali people in the districts Garissa, Wajir and Mandera in Kenya, and 0.6 million Somali (Issa) people in Djibouti. In addition there are more than one million Somali diaspora people elsewhere in the world (see further down).



Source: Worldometers



www.populationpyramid.net/somalia/1960/

www.populationpyramid.net/somalia/2020/

Demographic statistics, Somalia as a whole, 1960 and 2020

	1960	2020
Population	2.8 million	15.9 million
Fertility rate	7.3 children per woman	6.1 children per woman
Life expectancy (males)	36.5 years	56.6 years
Idem (females)	39.5 years	60.1 years
Median age	18.9 years	16.7 years
Infant mortality (< 1 yr)	173/1000	63/1000
Under-5 mortality	291/1000	104/1000
Urbanization rate	20%	47%
Urban population	0.6 million	7.4 million
Rural population	2.1 million	8.5 million

Source: Worldometers

Human Development Index, Somalia as a whole, 2006 and 2017

Human Development Index data exist since 1990, with annual UNDP updates. However, for Somalia the data in the Global Data Lab only start in 2006. Somalia's Human Development Index started at a level of 0.386, low for world 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. Between 2006 and 2017 total HDI decreased to a level of 0.351. Between 2006 and 2017 Somalia's population increased from 8.7 million people to 14.7 million people. During those years the UNDP assessment is that the health index and the life expectancy more or less stayed the same, but the income index and particularly the education index deteriorated, and hence also the HDI as a whole. Somalia's gross national income (in US\$2011 PPP value) was assessed to have decreased from a level of 1,422\$ in 2006 to a level of 1.205 in 2017. The dramatic deterioration of the education situation shows by the figures for 'expected years of schooling for those at age 6': from 7.7 to only 1.9. For adults aged 25 year and higher the mean years of schooling

had increased, though, from only 2 to 5.1, as a result of improvements during the decades before the rapid deterioration of formal education.

Somalia: HDI composition, and data for 1990 and 2017

	2006	2017	2017/2006
Health Index	512	514	1.00
Income Index	401	376	0.94
Education Index	281	223	0.79
Life Expectancy	53.3	53.4	1.00
Total HDI index	386	351	0.91

Source: <https://globaldatalab.org/shdi/>; Indexes x 1000. Life expectancy in years.

Trade statistics, Somalia's exports and imports, 2017

In 2017 Somalia (without Somaliland) exported products for a total value of 198 million \$, but imported for a total value of 2.23 billion (mostly from China, India, Oman, Kenya and Turkey, in that order), which results in an enormous trade deficit.

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)
Sheep and goats	88 Oman 137
Bovine	44 China 12
Insect resins	25 Japan 11
molluscs	17 France 11
Frozen fish	5 Bulgaria 7

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

For Somaliland a study published in 2016 (https://www.researchgate.net/publication/307513306_Somaliland_Trade_Exports_and_Imports_An_Overview_Developing_Country_Studies_Vol6_No12_2016) showed that livestock is the most important export product (with 3.4 million heads exported, mainly to Saudi Arabia and Yemen), while sugar, rice, wheat flour, and petrol/diesel are the most important import products, mainly coming from Ethiopia, Yemen, Brazil, Thailand, and China.

Protected areas and Forests

In 2017 there were no effectively protected areas (<https://www.protectedplanet.net/country/SOM>), although on paper 21 'protected areas' exist. Other areas are mainly unprotected forests, and areas for livestock, hunting and gathering. Forest cover was approximately 83,000 hectares in 1990, and less than 63,000 ha hectares in 2017 (derived from <https://knoema.com/atlas/Somalia/topics/Land->

[Use/Area/Forest-area](#)), about 10% of Somalia's land area.

Agricultural Somalia

Crop Area (in 1000 hectares), and total production (in 1000 tonnes), 1961 and 2018

	1961		2018		2018/1961	
	Area	Prod.	Area	Prod.	Area	Prod.
sorghum	383	135	243	130	0.63	0.96
maize	138	120	93	139	0.67	1.16
dry beans	4	1	88	27	22.0	27.0
sesame seed	10	5	46	26	4.6	5.2
vegetables	4	24	24	107	6.0	4.5
Fruits, incl bananas	21	198	23	208	1.1	1.1
seed cotton	15	4	18	7	1.2	1.8
cassava	2	16	10	93	5.0	5.8
Other crops (area)	6		29			
Total crop area	583		574		0.98	

2018/1961: red = 2018 is below 1961; green: 2018 is more than 5.3 times the 1961 figures (that is: more than population increase in Somalia between 1961 and 2018); black: in-between. Source: Faostat data.

Somalia's land area is 63.7 million hectares, and its crop area is only 0.9% of that land area, and it decreased somewhat between 1961 and 2018, despite a more than fivefold increase of Somalia's population. The most important crop areas (sorghum and maize) decreased most, while crops like dry beans, vegetables and cassava increased their acreage a lot. Crop yields per hectare increased, though, for all major crops. In terms of local food availability per person there was a very dramatic decrease, and also the few commercial crops (like bananas) decreased a lot. Somalia is and always has been a livestock country, and many livelihoods are organised around nomadic pastoralism in the arid and semi-arid areas of the country. Hence, livestock numbers are a crucial indicator of the state of affairs of the country's economy. As can be seen in the table below, the numbers of live animals have mostly expanded with the exception of goats. However, the livestock numbers (measured in total stock units) have increased much less (x 1.9) than the number of people (x 5.3), and as a result the stock units per capita in the country as a whole decreased from 2.5 in 1961 to 1.3 in 2018, a clear sign of a major crisis.

Livestock numbers (x million)

	1961	2018	2018/1961
Camels	2.9	7.2	X 2.5
Cattle	3.2	4.8	X 1.5
Chicken	1.4	3.7	X 2.6
Goats	11.8	11.5	X 1.0
Sheep	6.2	10.7	X 1.7
Livestock units	6.9	12.8	X 1.9

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

International migration

In 2015 almost 2 million people who were born in Somalia lived outside the country (13% of Somalia's population of 15.8 million inside outside the country). Of Somalia's international migrants 64% live elsewhere in Africa (mainly in neighbouring Ethiopia and Kenya, but also many in Libya, Djibouti and South Africa), and 36% outside Africa (5% of Somalia's total population): 261,000 in West Asia, mainly in Yemen, 280,000 in Europe, mainly the UK (111,000 in 2015), but also in Scandinavia (112,000 in 2015), and the Netherlands (27,000 in 2015), and 170,000 in North America, mainly the USA, but also in Canada (UN migration report 2015). In 2015 Somalia only had around 25,000 immigrants, mainly from unspecified countries of origin (UN Migration Report 2017). In and before 1990, though, Somalia hosted 478,000 refugees from Ethiopia, who had returned by 1995.

Urban Somalia



Source: Wikimedia

Almost half of Somalia's population currently lives in urban areas, while this was only 20% in 1960. While all statistics about Somalia should be interpreted with care, the data about urban populations seem to be extremely uncertain. Major sources vary greatly in

their assessment of the urban populations of current Somalia. To give an idea about the orders of magnitude three sources will be given. It is also clear from the comparisons between 1960 and 2020 that there has been an urban explosion in many areas, with Mogadishu growing between 1400 and 2700%, but also other cities have increased their population a lot (Hargeysa between 9 and 19 times, Kismayo even more than 50 times).

Cities (in Regions)	Population in thousands of inhabitants			
	1960	2020		Populationstat (urban/city)
		wikipedia	worldometers	
Mogadisho [Muqdisho] (Banadir)	94	1240	2587	2282/2246
Hargeisa [Hargeysa] (W. Galbeed)	52	900	477	974 (478)
Bosaso [Boosaaso] (Bari)		550	74	
Burco [Burao] (Togdheer)		340	99	
Kismayo (L. Juba)	9	340	235	464 (235)
Awdal (Borama)		320		
Baydhabo [Baidoa] (Bay)		300	130	
Beledweyne (Hiraan)		221		
Berbera (Sahil)	19		242	491 (242)
Marka (L. Shebelle)	48	101	230	656 (230)
Jamaama (L. Juba)			185	

Sources:

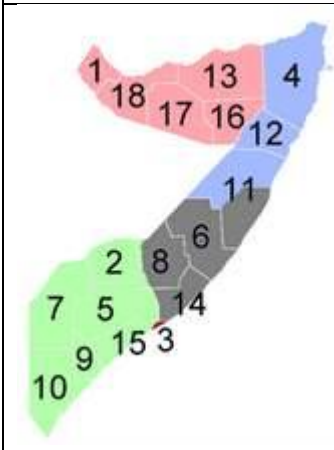
https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_cities_in_Somalia_by_population,
<http://worldpopulationreview.com/countries/somalia-population/>,
<https://www.citypopulation.de/en/world/agglomerations/>,
<https://www.worldometers.info/world-population/somalia-population/>
and <https://populationstat.com/somalia> (a.o., 1960 data).

Regional Inequality

Somalia has 18 Regions, according to the HDI classification. In the map indicating these regions they have been positioned in four larger units (Somaliland, Puntland, Central, and Jubaland/Southwest). According to Wikipedia the last three regions have been re-organised in five autonomous regions in 2016: From North to South: Puntland, Galmudug,

Hirshabelle, South West State of Somalia/Banadir, and Jubaland. Population figures are a (wild?) guess: the 2006 population has been multiplied by the (assumed) population growth rate between 2006 and 2017 to arrive at the 2017 estimates per region. Also the changes of the life expectancy for the country as a whole and per region are an undifferentiated guess: almost no change during these eleven years. However, the regional HDI data as well as the regional education assessments are very specific, and differentiated per region. As we have seen before, Somalia's HDI has deteriorated a lot, and the same is even more true for its education situation. The biggest negative change can be noticed for Bay (region 5) and Lower Shabelle (region 14), regions very much affected by Al-Shabaab governance.

There are big differences in the various HDI situations within Somalia. The highest HDI positions are for the two regions around the capital cities (Mogadishu for Somalia and Hargeisa for Somaliland), and the same is true for the education situation. However, in terms of life expectancy the Mogadishu area has relatively low figures, while Hiraan (in Central, bordering Kenya's Somali areas) and also most of Somaliland has relatively high figures. The lowest life expectancy assessments can be found in Lower Juba and Lower Shabelle. The lowest HDIs can be found in Middle Juba and Galgaduud; the lowest education situations in Middle Juba as well, and in Hiraan, which is surprising.

Map	Region / Région	Population x 1000		'17/ '06
		2006	2017	
	1 = Awdal	342	576	1.7
	2 = Bakool	350	590	1.7
	3 = Banadir (Mogadishu)	1122	1892	1.7
	4 = Bari	352	593	1.7
	5 = Bay	675	1138	1.7
	6 = Galgaduud	419	706	1.7
	7 = Gedo	403	680	1.7
	8 = Hiraan	362	610	1.7
	9 = Middle Juba	249	420	1.7
	10 = Lower Juba	443	747	1.7
	11 = Mudug/Galmudug	371	625	1.7
	12 = Nugal	185	313	1.7
	13 = Sanaag	316	533	1.7
	14 = Middle Shabelle	631	1064	1.7
	15 = Lower Shabelle	944	1593	1.7
	16 = Sool	184	310	1.7
	17 = Togdhere	411	694	1.7
	18 = Woqooyi Galbeed & Saaxil	959	1617	1.7
	Total	8720	14700	1.7

Source: <https://globaldatalab.org/shdi>, map: www.statemaster.com + Wikipedia: states and regions of Somalia (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/States_and_regions_of_Somalia).

ASCL Infosheet 35/2020

Region	Subregional HDI			Life expectancy			Education index		
	2006	2017	17/06	2006	2017	17/06	2006	2017	17/06
1	422	383	0.91	66.3	66.4	1	258	204	0.79
2	334	287	0.86	53.2	53.3	1	221	151	0.68
3	471	448	0.95	51.3	51.4	1	418	379	0.91
4	445	414	0.93	57.5	57.6	1	332	282	0.85
5	341	287	0.84	50.9	51.6	1	246	157	0.64
6	311	270	0.87	53.5	53.6	1	167	117	0.70
7	370	318	0.86	54.2	54.3	1	270	183	0.68
8	318	277	0.87	67.2	67.3	1	124	88	0.71
9	231	224	0.97	58.2	58.3	1	62	61	0.98
10	329	292	0.89	49.8	49.9	1	228	171	0.75
11	407	362	0.89	56.7	56.8	1	288	216	0.75
12	410	365	0.89	56.7	56.2	1	317	238	0.75
13	467	430	0.92	61.9	62.7	1	377	313	0.83
14	360	303	0.84	56.7	56.1	1	226	144	0.64
15	345	316	0.92	49.6	49.7	1	243	198	0.81
16	355	325	0.92	58.9	59.6	1	200	163	0.82
17	357	313	0.88	52.4	52.5	1	259	187	0.72
18	471	442	0.94	54.7	54.8	1	391	343	0.88
Somalia	386	351	0.91	53.3	53.4	1	281	223	0.79
Ineq	2.04	2.00		1.35	1.35	1	6.64	6.21	

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

Further Reading

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

Selected publications:

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



Reflecting on
60 years
of independence



Universiteit
Leiden

www.ascleiden.nl/africa2020

Country Information: Ton Dietz, David Ehrhardt and Fenneken Veldkamp.

Country Portal: Harro Westra

Selected publications: Germa Seuren