

Uganda

Country Overview

Politics

The current president, Yoweri Museveni, has been in power since 1986. The most recent presidential elections were held in 2021 and international observers claimed that the process was “fundamentally flawed” citing incidents of violence and harassment and the arrest of civil service organization workers.¹ The Lord’s Resistance Army (LRA) has waged an insurgency in the north for about 20 years, although violence has fallen off in recent years.²

Economy

Uganda is classified as a low-income economy by the World Bank. Uganda’s economy rebounded in the latter half of 2017 due to growth in information and communication technology (ICT) services and favorable weather conditions for the agricultural sector. In 2020 the economy grew at a rate of 2.9%, less than half the 6.8% of growth the country experienced in 2019. The economy grew at a slower pace, averaging an annual growth rate of 4.5 percent in the five years to 2016 compared to the 7 percent achieved during the 1990s and early 2000s. The slowdown during that time was attributed to adverse weather that disrupted the agricultural sector, unrest in neighboring South Sudan, private sector credit constraints, and poor execution of public projects.³ The economy shifted positively at the end of 2017, driven by favorable weather conditions for the agricultural sector, a recovery in private sector credit, and continued government investment in infrastructure. Agriculture is one of the economy’s most important sectors and employs 71 percent of the work force.⁴

Social/Human Development

As of 2018, the World Bank reported that 21.4 percent of the population was living at or below national poverty lines.⁵ Since 1995, the Ugandan life expectancy has steadily increased from 43.7 to 63 years in 2019.⁶ Uganda’s Human Development Index (HDI) for 2021 was 0.544, placing Uganda 159 of 189 countries. When adjusted for inequality, Uganda’s fell to 0.399.⁷

The largest ethnic groups are the Bantu-speaking tribes like the Baganda, Bayankole, and Bakiga, as well as the Nilotic Langi, Acholi, Iteso and Karamojong.⁸

Uganda hosts many refugees, primarily from South Sudan.

U.S. Department of State TIP Report Summary (2021)

U.S. Department of State TIP Ranking: Tier 2

The U.S. Department of State’s *Trafficking in Persons* report notes trafficking or trafficking risk in potentially exported supply chains including agriculture, fishing, forestry, cattle herding, and mining.

Read the full report at: <https://www.state.gov/reports/2021-trafficking-in-persons-report/>

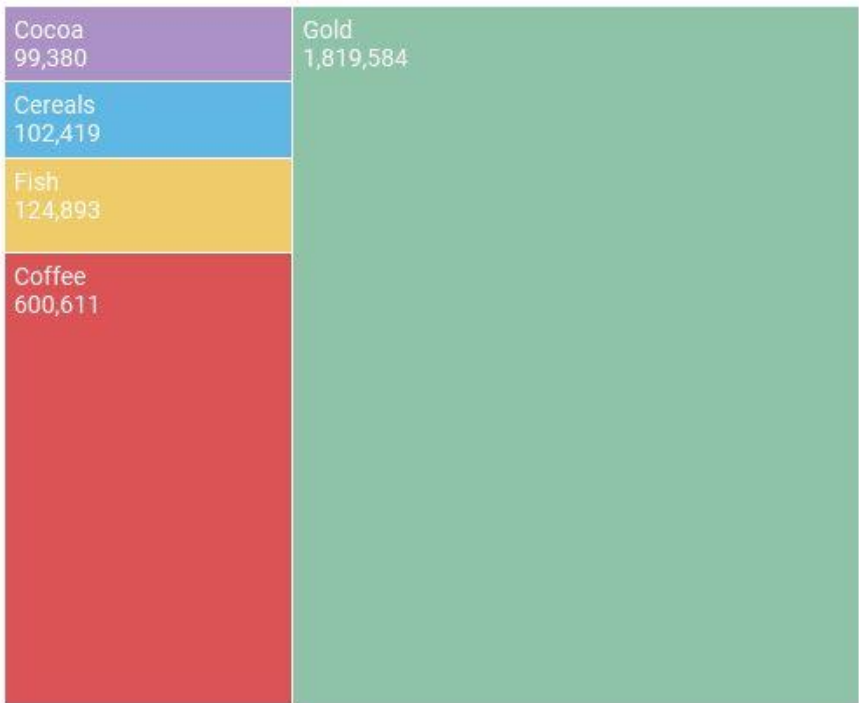
Migrants and Other Vulnerable Populations

The World Bank reports Uganda’s net migration to be negative 150,000 people as of 2017,⁹ and in 2021 there is estimated to be over 1.4 million international migrants in the country.¹⁰ The U.N. reports that 3.9 percent of the Ugandan population are migrants.¹¹ There were 1.5 million “persons of concern” in Uganda estimated in 2021. In 2016 more refugees entered Uganda than crossed the Mediterranean. These refugees are primarily fleeing from conflict in South Sudan. This influx of refugees from South Sudan has continued into 2021, with an estimated 938,000 refugees entering Uganda by the end of the year, mostly through unofficial entry points.

Exports and Trade

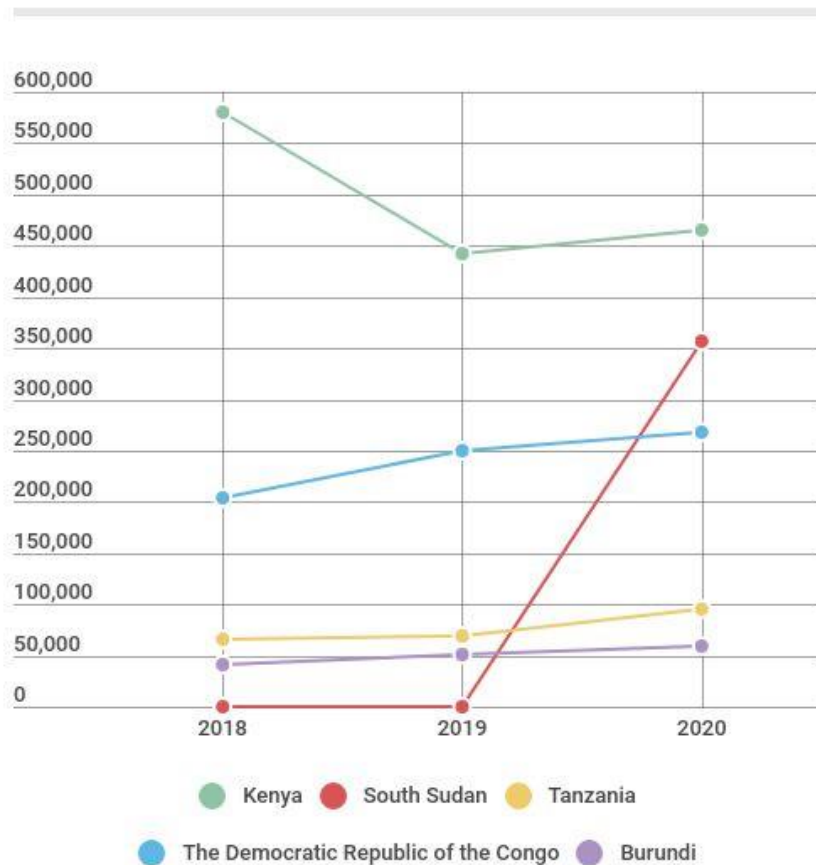
The top exports from Uganda include gold, coffee, fish, cereals, and cocoa.¹²

Top Commodity Exports (USD/Thousands)



The top importing countries of goods from Uganda include Kenya, South Sudan, Tanzania, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, and Burundi.¹³

Uganda Export Partners (USD/Thousands)



Trafficking in Persons Risk Factors Analysis

Legal/Policy Risk Factors

Level of Legal Protection for Civil Liberties and Workers' Rights

Freedom of Association

Ugandan law allows workers to form and join independent unions, bargain collectively, and take industrial action against their employers. Members of the armed forces are exempt from such legal protections. While the law in Uganda protects workers' right to bargain collectively, in practice the government reportedly does not adequately ensure that these rights are protected. The ITUC Survey of Annual Violations reports that arrests are common among trade unionists. Collective agreement is ignored, the right to organize is denied, and a lack of collective bargaining in the public sector is common.¹⁴ The ITUC rated Uganda a "3" out of 5 in their 2015 report. A "3" rating states that a country "regularly violated rights" of workers and a 5 rating states that a country does not guarantee rights.¹⁵

Working Conditions

The 2021 minimum wage in Uganda is UGX 6,000 shillings (USD 1.6). This has not changed since January 1, 1984. The maximum workweek is 48 hours, and the minimum workweek is 10 hours. The workweek may be 56 hours a week with the worker’s consent. Occupational Health and Safety is responsible for enforcing safety regulations. Workers in the informal sector are not fully covered by labor law. There are 49 district labor officers for the 112 districts.¹⁶

Discrimination

The U.S. Department of State reports that discrimination (often in the form of violent acts) is common among marginalized groups such as women, disabled people, the LGBTQ+, and children. Women have reported discrimination when trying to access employment, credit, and income.¹⁷

Forced Labor

Ugandan laws prohibit forced labor by all, including children. However, the law does not protect the labor rights of prisoners.¹⁸

Child Labor

Under Ugandan law, children who are 15 years of age and older who have completed their education may work seven hours a day and are not to exceed 35 hours a week. Children 13 years of age may partake in “light work” if it does not interfere with their education. Children cannot work between 7 p.m. and 7 a.m. Violating child labor laws results in a UGX 685,055 shilling (USD 188) fine. A conviction under child labor law has not occurred since 2006.¹⁹

Civil Society Organizations

In 2016, Amnesty International reported that Uganda experienced large levels of police brutality as well as attacks against activists, journalists, and media workers. Hostility between civil society organizations and authorities continued throughout the year and to the present.²⁰

Ratification Status of ILO Conventions Related to Human Trafficking or Rights of Workers and Migrants

ILO 29 FL	In force
ILO 87 FOA	In force
ILO 98 CB	In force
ILO 100 Equal Remuneration	In force
ILO 105 Abolition of FL	In force
ILO 111 Discrimination	In force
ILO 138 Minimum Age	In force
ILO 181 PEA	Not ratified
ILO 182 CL	In force
ILO 97 Migration for Employment	Not ratified ²¹

Political Risk Factors

Political Instability or Conflict

In 2019, the Fund for Peace (FFP) reports that Uganda is 95.3 out of 120 (being the most unstable). Placing the nation in the “Alert” category for fragility and instability. Uganda is also ranked by the FFP as the twentieth most unstable nation out of 178 countries assessed.²² Violence from the Lord’s Resistance Army increased in the weeks leading up to the 2021 presidential election. State forces were reported to perpetrate abuses including killing, arrests and beatings of opposition supporters and journalists, disruption of opposition rallies, and a shutdown of the internet.²³

Level of Crime and Violence

Organized crime is not common in Uganda. The risk for political, economic, religious and ethnic violence is rated as “medium” by the Overseas Security Advisory Council (OSAC).²⁴ The Allied Democratic Forces are active near the border with the Democratic Republic of the Congo.²⁵

State Persecution

State forces have used force with impunity against anti-government protestors, including arbitrary arrests, torture, and extrajudicial killings.²⁶ The police have also been documented systematically targeting LGBTQI groups with violence and intimidation throughout the year.²⁷

Level of Corruption

The Transparency International Corruption Perception Index scores Uganda as 26 out of 100. A 100 signifies “Very Clean” while a 0 signifies “Highly Corrupt.” Internationally, Uganda is ranked at 142 of 180 countries assessed in 2020.²⁸

Socio-Economic Risk Factors

Level of National Economic Development

The United Nations Development Program (UNDP) reports a 24.2 percent inequality in income. As of 2019, Uganda’s HDI was valued at .544.²⁹ The African Development Bank Group reported that Uganda’s GDP declined to 7% in 2020 after growing to 7.5% in 2019. Uganda is facing many challenges to growth due in part to the COVID-19 pandemic and global travel restrictions. Consequently, tourism and hospitality are predicted to remain subdued, but manufacturing, construction, and retail trade should rebound in 2021.³⁰

Level and Extent of Poverty

In 2017, Uganda had a Multidimensional Poverty Index (MPI) of 0.269.³¹ 55.1 percent of the Ugandan population lives in multidimensional poverty, and an additional 24.9 percent of the population is vulnerable to multidimensional poverty. 41.7 percent of the population is reported to be living on less than USD 1.90 a day (2011 PPP).³²

Degree of Gender Inequality

Ugandan law provides for equal rights for men and women, but discrimination against women reportedly remains widespread. Some forms of local customary law prohibit women from owning property, and there is discrimination against women in divorce, employment, and education. Sexual

harassment reportedly remains widespread.³³ Domestic violence also remains a widespread problem and is reportedly not adequately punished by legal authorities.³⁴

Landlessness and Dispossession

Land conflicts are common in Uganda and often result in violence. Land conflicts often arise in Hoima and Amuru District tied to tension arising from oil discoveries.³⁵ Large-scale land acquisition has also been documented around palm oil plantation development.³⁶

Environmental Factors

The main environmental issues in Uganda are widespread poaching, the draining of wetlands for agricultural irrigation projects, and invasive species in Lake Victoria.³⁷

Documented Trafficking Risk in Key Commodity Supply Chains

Sugarcane

Sugarcane Overview

The sugar industry is one of the oldest industries in the country.³⁸ Sugarcane production in Uganda has increased by nearly 20% per year over the last 10 years. The boom stems from poverty eradication efforts and prosperity for all Ugandans. The central government has encouraged farmers to invest in commercial agricultural enterprises, with sugarcane cultivation being highly preferred as it is perceived to be more profitable and economically valuable.³⁹ Farmers are currently supplying about 50% of the total cane requirement of the major sugar factories. Sugarcane is sourced from the Lake Victoria region and other parts of the country where farmers usually grow it in large- and small-scale operations.⁴⁰ As of 2021, Uganda ranks as the number one sugar producer in East Africa.

Documented Trafficking in Persons Risk in Sugarcane

The Ugandan sugarcane sector uses vulnerable workers including children, migrants and casual hired workers. The U.S. Department of State's *Trafficking in Persons* indicates that sugarcane is produced with child labor in Uganda.⁴¹ A recent study showed that child labor instances in sugarcane have been found in the Central and Eastern Regions of Uganda. Reports further claim that children work on out-growers' farms as both planters and harvesters and are subject to exploitation, sexual abuse, increased sexually transmitted infections, and deprivation of education.⁴² There is a high level of high school dropouts and those that do attend school often leave school to work on sugarcane plantations. Child labour is present at all stages of sugarcane production including growing, harvesting, production and supply chains.

Coffee

Coffee Overview

Uganda had a record year for coffee production in 2015 - 2016, with 4.5 million bags produced during the marketing year.⁴³ Coffee exports declined in 2021 by 4.9% because of lower yields from arabica trees.⁴⁴ The country previously shipped 469,951 60kg bags in 2020 compared with 446,560 bags in 2021. The primary reasons for the export drop comes from the decreased demand for Ugandan coffee and thus a lower market price for the commodity. There are more than thirty companies engaged in exporting Ugandan coffee, but ten companies control over 80 percent of the market. Germany and Italy are the main destination countries for Ugandan coffee.⁴⁵ Over 98 percent of coffee in Uganda is grown

on smallholder farms.⁴⁶ Smallholder farms often intercrop coffee with other crops such as grains, fruits, or vegetables.

Documented Trafficking in Persons Risk in Coffee

The Ugandan coffee sector uses vulnerable workers including children, migrants and casual hired workers. The U.S. Department of Labor's *2020 List of Goods Made with Forced Labor and Child Labor* indicates that coffee is produced with child labor in Uganda.⁴⁷ One study found that the average age at which children begin working in coffee in Uganda is eleven, and that 48 percent of children working in the sector reported physical injuries.⁴⁸ A 2014 study on workers in Uganda and Ethiopia noted the presence of seasonal migrants, but did not specify their origins.⁴⁹ There is currently an information gap on migrant workers in the country making it difficult to regulate working conditions of both skilled and less skilled immigrants.⁵⁰ Casual hired labor was also noted as widespread in a 2014 study of coffee production in Ethiopia and Uganda.⁵¹

Tea

Tea Overview

Tea production takes place on roughly 40,000 hectares of land. Tea production dropped sharply between 2015 and 2016, largely due to drought and lack of industry regulation.⁵² During this time, Kenya and Rwanda's tea production created greater competition in the tea industry, further hurting Uganda's tea exports. Kenya increased their acreage dedicated to tea crops fourfold more than Uganda's dedicated acreage and Rwanda had the added advantage of good soil and competitive prices.⁵³ Most tea production in Uganda takes place on large estates, although smallholders are also present.⁵⁴

Documented Trafficking in Persons Risk in Tea

Like coffee, vulnerable workers are present in tea production. According to the U.S. Department of Labor *2020 List of Goods Produced by Child Labor or Forced Labor*, tea is produced using child labor in Uganda.⁵⁵ A recent BBC investigation found hazardous child labor on a tea plantation in Uganda, where children carried seedlings up a steep hill and weeded rows.⁵⁶

Among a sampled population in a small-holder tea-producing region in Uganda, over 50 percent of respondents had participated in waged labor on small tea farms in the past year.⁵⁷ Commercial estates utilize hired labor, but among these workers there is likely to be heterogeneity in status: some may be permanent, some may be temporary, and some may be casual or hired by a third-party labor provider.

A recent news report in Uganda reported Rwandans being "trafficked" into the country for work on tea plantations, although it is unclear whether the Rwandans were trafficked or participating in smuggling for voluntary migration. That said, it does point to the presence of migrant workers in the sector.⁵⁸ A UN report supports this finding, noting that "work on tea estates [in Uganda] is shunned by the local indigenous people of tea growing areas—they regard it as below their status. For this reason, workers come from other districts and even as far as Rwanda." That report anecdotally estimates that migrants are 40-60 percent of the tea workforce.⁵⁹

Gold

Gold Overview

Gold is Uganda's second largest export product, largely due to the recent introduction of gold refining operations, thereby increasing the product's export value. Uganda, which has refining capability, is thought to be a major regional receiver of gold smuggled from Sudan and the Democratic Republic of the Congo.⁶⁰

Documented Trafficking in Persons Risk in Gold

Global Witness has reported that unlicensed mines lack any government oversight or necessary safety provisions, exposing workers, including children, to potential mine shaft collapse and hazardous chemicals.⁶¹ According to the 2020 U.S. Department of Labor's *List of Goods Produced by Child Labor or Forced Labor*, gold is produced with child labor in Burkina Faso, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Ethiopia, Ghana, Guinea, Mali, Niger, Senegal, Sudan, Tanzania, and Uganda.⁶² There are an estimated 50,000 migrants in mining camps.⁶³

Mineral Fuels

Mineral Fuels Overview

The Ugandan oil and gas industry is still very young. About 1.3 billion of Uganda's estimated 6.5 billion barrels of oil are thought to be economically recoverable. Oil companies Total and Tullow Oil hold licenses to develop these resources but have yet to reach final investment agreements with the Ugandan government.⁶⁴ As of June 2021, the East African Oil Pipeline project is set to produce its first oil as early as 2025 with production expected to increase to 230,000 barrels per day by 2026.⁶⁵ These wells are being drilled on Lake Albert and Lake Edward, in addition to some land-based sites.⁶⁶ Oil in these areas was first discovered in 2006, but projects to export the oil have been delayed due to civil unrest, fiscal disputes, and the proposed route of the pipeline. The pipeline project will be the longest constructed in over 20 years and will provide Uganda with a route for oil export into international markets.⁶⁷

Documented Trafficking in Persons Risk in Mineral Fuels

Land speculators in Uganda buy land from farmers in anticipation that they can resell the land to oil developers. The speculators work with District Land Boards to obtain titles to land and work to aggregate small properties into larger, more valuable parcels. There have been reports of violence and intimidation against local people who are not cooperative.⁶⁸

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