

Mayors Dialogue on Growth and Solidarity

City profile: Agadez, Niger



Population: 137,354 (2017)

GDP per capita: \$555 (2019, national)

Major industries: trade and logistics, livestock, agriculture

Percentage of migrants: 1% (2017, national)

Mayor's name: Dr Boukari Mamane | **Next election date:** 2021

Socioeconomic profile

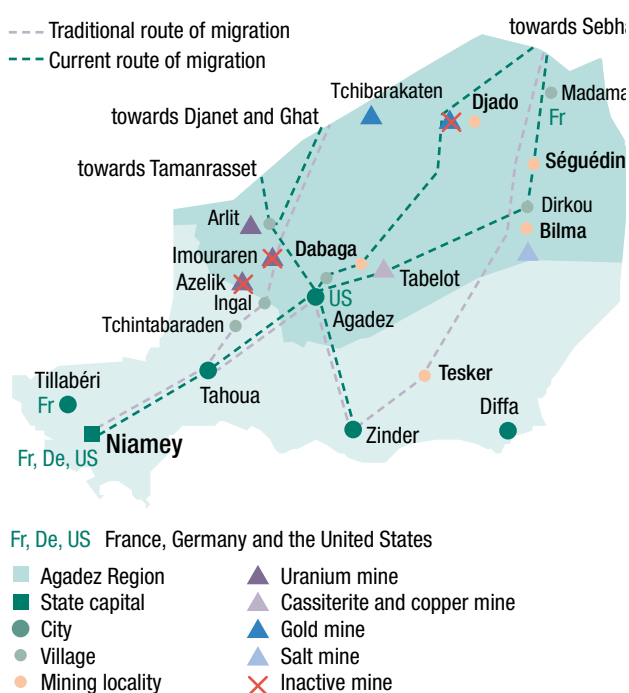
Agadez is the fifth largest city in Niger, capital of both the Agadez Region and Aïr, a traditional Tuareg–Berber federation (Institut National de la Statistique, 2014). The city is geographically dispersed and is home to 137,354 individuals over an area of 213 km² (Institut National de la Statistique du Niger, 2020a). Since 2000, the population has been growing by 3.17% annually (Institut National de la Statistique du Niger, 2019). A substantial proportion of Agadez residents are nomadic or semi-nomadic people (Molenaar et al., 2017). The city's population is younger than the Nigerien average, with 40% between the ages of 15 and 39 (Institut National de la Statistique du Niger, 2020b). The city's historic centre is divided into 11 quarters with irregular shapes, and was designated as a UNESCO world heritage site in 2013 (UNESCO, n.d.).

Agadez has been a crossroad for trade through the Sahel region for centuries and is therefore known as the 'Gateway to the Sahara' (IOM, 2018). Although the city once served as the major gateway for African exports to North Africa, the Middle East and Europe, these trade routes declined with the advent of less expensive sea- and air-based transport. Between 1985 and 2007 the area attracted approximately 5,000 tourists annually, but the sector was unable to recover following the violence of the 2007–2009 Tuareg Rebellion (Hoffman et al., 2017). The decline in tourism also badly affected demand for other local products such as artisanal handicrafts and jewellery. Gold and uranium mines temporarily offset some of these employment losses, although many sites have recently closed. Local authorities report an increase in crime associated with the loss of these major livelihoods. Agadez residents now mainly depend on the agricultural and livestock sectors, in addition to trade and commerce (Hoffman et al., 2017). The World Bank reports GDP per capita for Niger as \$555 in 2019 (World Bank data, 2019). There is little information available to estimate the GDP per capita of Agadez.

Migration profile

Agadez is home to a large number of internal rural migrants who moved to the city in the 1970s and 1980s to escape severe droughts. Changes in rainfall causing both drought and flash floods continue to displace people across Niger (121,000 in 2019) (Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre, n.d.). In terms of international migration, Niger is home to 295,600 foreign-born residents, mostly from nearby countries (Nigeria, Mali and Burkina Faso) (EU Commission, 2019). Out of Niger's population of around 21.5 million, this implies a national migrant population of around 1% (EU Commission, 2019). In 2017, there were also 165,700 refugees and 300 asylum-seekers in Niger, mainly from Nigeria and Mali (EU Commission, 2019).

Map of Niger



Source: Hoffman et al. (2017)

Agadez has been a major transit city for West African migrants heading to Libya and on to Europe. In 2016, it was estimated that 5,000 individuals left Agadez per week en route to Libya (IOM, 2018). In 2014, more than half of migrants on the Italian island of Lampedusa had passed through Agadez, although the 2015 Law Against the Illicit Smuggling of Migrants led to a 75% decrease in migrant transit (IOM, 2018). The UN Initiative on Sustainability, Stability, and Security (3S) has established a site in Agadez where would-be migrants are trained in land restoration techniques, then reintegrated into their countries of origin with a plot of land and access to credit (UN Chronicle, 2016).

Agadez is described as a culturally heterogeneous city, home to a large number of residents from the Tuareg and Toubou ethnic groups, as well as a Libyan-descended Arab population (Via Tourism Review, 2012). The ethnic groups have reached an informal understanding of their economic niches: the Toubou oversee trade and transit to Libya as well as transportation to the Djado gold mines, while the Tuareg do the same for Algeria and the Tchinchaden gold mines. The Arabs manage cross-border trade of agro-food products from Libya and Algeria and have recently expanded into transportation, construction and public works (Molenaar et al., 2017).

Governance structure

Niger has a multi-layered structure of municipal governance, consisting of four types of state authority. Central government authorities pass policies to be implemented at the municipal level by ‘devolved administration’ authorities (representatives of central ministries in the local government). These efforts are also informed by locally elected authorities and traditional (tribal) authorities. Decentralisation in Niger began in 2002, with the central government transferring authority over development, education, transportation, healthcare, land management and local taxes to city councils. However, these efforts have met with severe delays due to a shortage of qualified personnel and municipalities lacking their own tax infrastructure (Molenaar et al., 2017). The municipal council of Agadez is elected every five years through local universal suffrage. The city has 20 councillors, of which currently 15% are female (Institut National de la Statistique du Niger, 2020a). There are six specialised committees within the municipal council, including financial affairs, development and environment, economic affairs and land affairs (Molenaar et al., 2017).

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