

Longest Continuous Periods of Lifespan Reduction

Introduction

This page addresses the question "which country has experienced the longest continuous period of reduction in life expectancy?" Data is from [Life Expectancy](#).

Since available data includes gaps in dates for some countries and date ranges, the question may have two answers, depending on our definition. We analyze in two ways:

1. data that provides an observation for each year in the sequence, in other words one data row per year consecutively
2. data that has gaps in the sequence - for instance observations every 5 years for a period of history

We will address each option.

Countries with One Observation per Year in Sequence

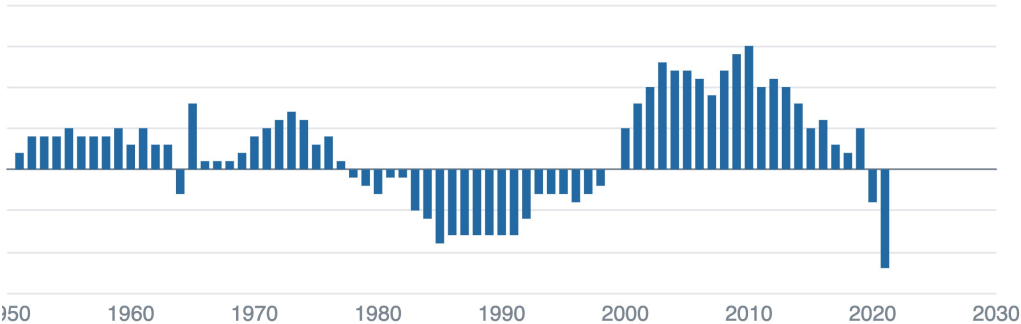
The top 10 countries that share this misfortune are all in Africa, with Zambia taking the lead.

Entity	Start	End	Years
Zambia	1978	1998	21
Botswana	1987	2002	16
Eswatini	1991	2005	15
Kenya	1984	1998	15
Zimbabwe	1987	2001	15
Central African Republic	1987	2000	14
Cote d'Ivoire	1988	2000	13
Lesotho	1995	2006	12

Entity	Start	End	Years
Namibia	1990	2001	12
South Africa	1993	2004	12

Analysis of Zambia's 21 years of Life Expectancy Reduction

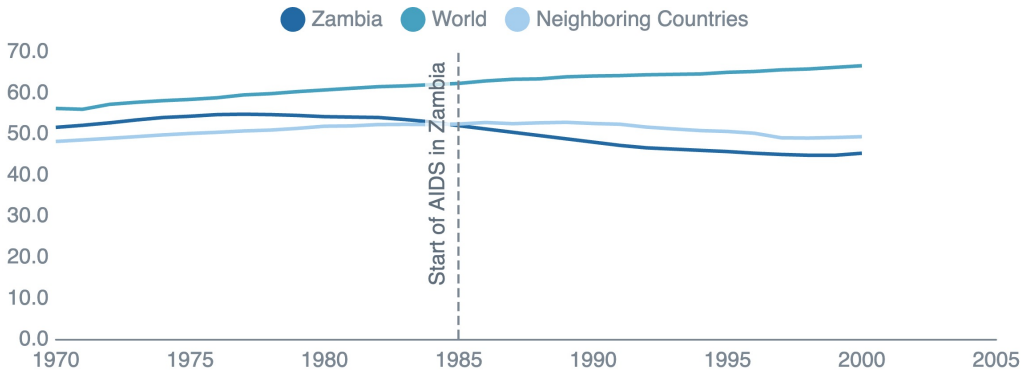
Changes in lifespan in Zambia 1951 - 2020



Comparison between Zambia, the World Average and Average of Neighboring Countries

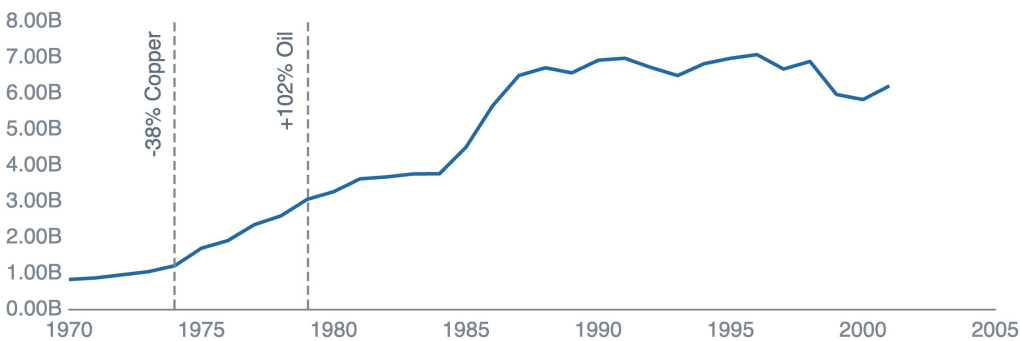
Zambia's life expectancy tracked slightly above neighboring countries, until the period of continual decline began in 1978.

[Washington Post, 1985 - Zambia Trapped in Poverty's Vise](#)



National External Debt of Zambia

Copper is the leading export of Zambia. At the end of the Vietnam war, the world copper market crashed. Soon after energy prices began a notable rise. Since Zambia is a land locked country without rail access to shipping ports, copper exports must be shipped by truck, depending heavily on petroleum.



Countries with Gaps in yearly data

The top 10 countries with gaps in reported data are in more developed areas, with gaps occurring in earlier time periods.

Entity	Start	End	Years
Bangladesh	1886	1906	30
Russia	1900	1920	24
Finland	1855	1865	20
India	1891	1901	20
United Kingdom	1713	1728	20
Germany	1946	1946	11
Argentina	1880	1885	10
Japan	1945	1945	10
Sri Lanka	1911	1911	10
Uruguay	1930	1930	10

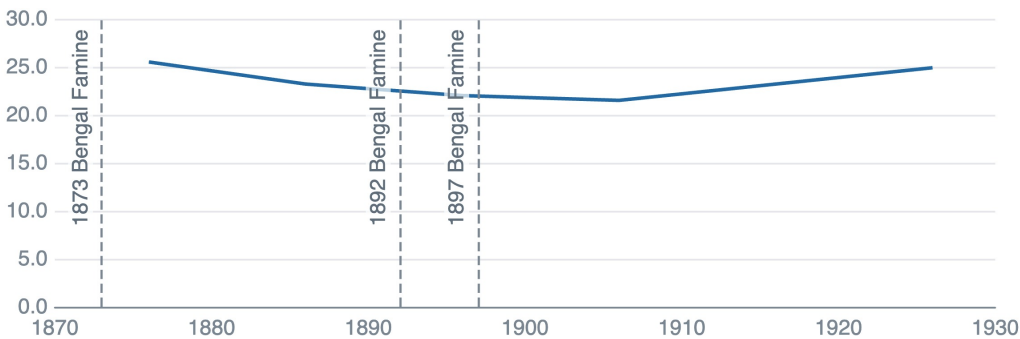
Analysis of Bangladesh's Estimated 30 years of Life Expectancy Reduction

Changes in lifespan in Bangladesh, 1876 - 1950

Life expectancy in Bangladesh was dismally low in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. British Raj rule hit what was then called Bengal particularly hard.

The Bengal Famine

Year	Life Expectancy
1876	25.5
1886	23.2
1896	22.0
1906	21.5
1926	24.9



Fortunately, Bangladesh's life expectancy rose to world averages in the second half of the 20th century.

