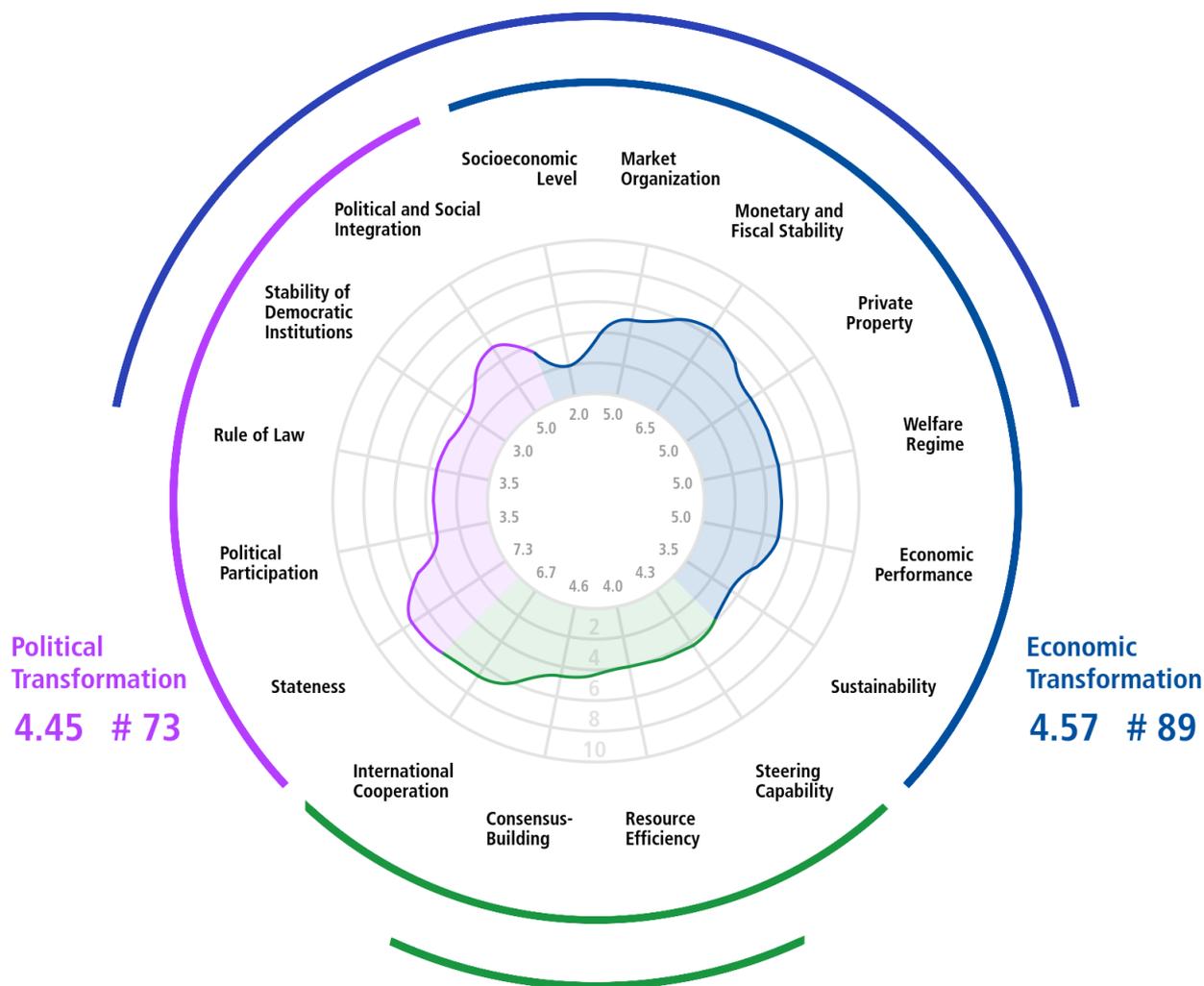


Angola

Status Index

4.51 # 89

on 1-10 scale out of 137



Political Transformation
4.45 # 73

Economic Transformation
4.57 # 89

Governance Index

4.48 # 74

on 1-10 scale out of 137

This report is part of the **Bertelsmann Stiftung's Transformation Index (BTI) 2026**. It covers the period from February 1, 2023 to January 31, 2025. The BTI assesses the transformation toward democracy and a market economy as well as the quality of governance in 137 countries. More on the BTI at <https://www.bti-project.org>.

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Key Indicators

Population	M	37.9	HDI	0.616	GDP p.c., PPP \$	8348
Pop. growth ¹	% p.a.	3.0	HDI rank of 193	148	Gini Index	51.3
Life expectancy	years	64.6	UN Education Index	0.537	Poverty ³	% 52.9
Urban population	%	69.3	Gender inequality ²	0.515	Aid per capita \$	4.0

Sources (as of December 2025): The World Bank, World Development Indicators | UNDP, Human Development Report 2025. Footnotes: (1) Average annual growth rate. (2) Gender Inequality Index (GII). (3) Percentage of population living on less than \$3.65 a day at 2017 international prices.

Executive Summary

Following the contested and flawed 2022 elections, in which the ruling MPLA and President João Lourenço were re-elected with a reduced majority, disillusionment persists over the political system's capacity to deliver meaningful change and genuine representation. If the 2027 election lacks credibility, public frustration could spill into protests, as recently occurred in Mozambique, Angola's Lusophone neighbor.

The human rights situation remains uneven, and press freedom has deteriorated. The health and education systems continue to be severely underfunded, with workers in both sectors repeatedly staging strikes over poor working conditions. Members of an emerging middle class that benefited from the postwar economic boom have grown increasingly disillusioned, with some considering emigration amid limited personal opportunities and weak prospects for broader societal progress.

President Lourenço has recorded some successes in Angola's external relations, notably during the state visit by outgoing U.S. President Joe Biden in December 2024, when the United States pledged up to \$6 billion in investment for the Lobito Development Corridor. He has also cultivated constructive relations with countries across Southern and Central Africa. Domestically, however, conditions remain bleak. The MPLA continues to dominate the political landscape through both formal and informal means, while the economy remains in crisis, constrained by the lack of meaningful diversification.

Although the opposition demonstrated increased assertiveness by launching the first-ever parliamentary attempt to impeach a sitting president, the MPLA's control over both parliament and the judiciary ensured that the effort failed to produce any tangible consequences.

History and Characteristics of Transformation

Following a turbulent transition to independence from Portugal in 1975, the MPLA, one of Angola's three armed liberation movements, declared independence and, with support from Cuba, secured control of the capital. A civil war soon erupted between the MPLA and UNITA. Although both movements had fought for independence and initially embraced variants of socialism, they differed in leadership, constituencies and political orientation. The MPLA's leadership was drawn largely from a cosmopolitan, urban, mixed-race bourgeoisie, while UNITA appealed primarily to marginalized, mission-educated elites in the central highlands. During the Cold War, these divisions deepened as the MPLA received backing from the Soviet Union and Cuba, while UNITA was supported by the apartheid regime in South Africa, the United States and other Western powers. The third liberation movement, the National Front for the Liberation of Angola (FNLA), was defeated after independence and ceased to exist as an armed force.

Throughout the civil war, the MPLA harshly suppressed internal dissent, while the inefficiencies of a planned economy and a shortage of skilled labor compounded wartime hardships. After the conflict formally ended, the first democratic elections in 1992 were derailed by renewed fighting. Both sides rejected power-sharing arrangements and retained their armed forces. Following violent clashes in Luanda, the civil war resumed, resulting in even higher civilian casualties than during its initial phase.

In February 2002, UNITA leader Jonas Savimbi was killed by government troops. The following month, UNITA's weakened and leaderless military command signed the Luena Memorandum of Understanding with the Angolan Armed Forces, formally ending nearly three decades of conflict. The agreement, however, functioned largely as a technical cease-fire. President José Eduardo dos Santos oversaw the process while presenting himself as a neutral arbiter rather than a party to the conflict.

In the first decade after the war, the MPLA government recast itself as the guarantor of stability and peace and launched an ambitious reconstruction program financed by rising oil revenues and oil-backed credit lines. While the effort transformed Angola's physical landscape, income inequality widened sharply, with most of the population living on less than \$2 a day. The first postwar legislative elections were held in 2008, with the MPLA exploiting incumbency advantages, including access to state resources, control of the media, intimidation of the opposition and electoral manipulation. The party also warned that an opposition victory could trigger renewed conflict. After winning 82% of the vote, the MPLA pushed through a constitutional revision in 2010 that abolished direct presidential elections and introduced a system under which the head of the majority party or coalition's candidate list automatically became president.

This change deliberately blurred the separation between the executive and legislative branches, as well as between party and state. In the 2012 elections, despite a decline in the MPLA's share of the vote to 71%, President dos Santos retained office. The resulting "parliamentary-presidential"

system enabled him to further consolidate power and facilitated the concentration of economic assets in the hands of his children after 2012. Public dissatisfaction intensified, both within society and the ruling party, and was aggravated by a severe economic crisis in 2015 following the collapse of global oil prices in late 2014. Many Angolans blamed the downturn on dos Santos' economic mismanagement and the unchecked accumulation of wealth he had encouraged.

Amid declining health, dos Santos selected João Lourenço as the MPLA's candidate for the 2017 elections while remaining party leader, fueling expectations that he would continue to rule from behind the scenes. Instead, during his first two years in office, Lourenço moved against the dos Santos family's economic interests, temporarily easing some of the most acute pressures.

Nonetheless, the MPLA's dominance endured, and Angola's political economy remained heavily dependent on oil revenues and shaped by politically connected private interests. Despite implementing austerity measures backed by the International Monetary Fund, Lourenço made limited progress during his first term (2017 – 2022) in resolving the structural economic crisis, leaving much of the population facing bleak prospects and contributing to rising social discontent.

Many of Lourenço's early reform signals were reversed in the run-up to the 2022 elections, which were marked by increased repression and electoral manipulation. Although the opposition mounted a credible challenge, the official results returned the MPLA to power with a further reduced majority of 51% and the loss of Angola's main urban centers to UNITA.

The BTI combines text analysis and numerical assessments. The score for each question is provided below its respective title. The scale ranges from 1 (worst) to 10 (best).

Transformation Status

I. Political Transformation

1 | Stateness

In general, the Angolan government maintains firm control over most of the country’s territory, with two main yet clearly delimited exceptions:

In the northern exclave province of Cabinda, the separatist Cabinda Enclave Liberation Front (Frente de Libertação do Enclave de Cabinda, FLEC) continues to wage a low-level guerrilla insurgency against the Angolan state. Its primary targets are government army units located in remote parts of the province. As recently as February 2024, FLEC claimed to control all territory in the province outside the cities and claimed responsibility for an attack that killed seven government soldiers and three Brazilian mining workers near the municipality of Belize, an attack not confirmed by Angolan or Brazilian authorities. Despite regular calls for the resumption of political dialogue from FLEC, various civil society organizations and opposition politicians, the government of Angola (GoA) has not responded to any of these initiatives since the last “agreement” in 2006, opting for military “pacification” instead.

In the diamond-producing eastern provinces of Lunda Norte and Lunda Sul, the Movement for the Lunda-Tchokwe Protectorate advocates greater autonomy. The government views this movement with suspicion and tends to respond to any attempts to demonstrate with violent repression.

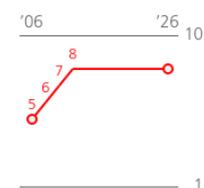
While most Angolans identify with and accept the legitimacy of the nation-state, there are exceptions, such as the two separatist/autonomist movements mentioned above. However, not all citizens benefit equally from full citizenship rights. Factors including lower socioeconomic status and political affiliation with the opposition can negatively affect access to essential documents, such as identity papers.

Furthermore, citizenship rights are restricted among specific marginalized rural populations. For instance, the San community in southern Angola has little or no access to state services; undocumented Kikongo speakers in the north and east of the country regularly face the threat of violent expulsion on suspicion of being “illegal immigrants” from the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC).

Question
Score

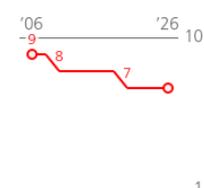
Monopoly on the
use of force

8



State identity

7



Since the era of the socialist, nominally state-atheist, single-party regime (1975 – 1991), Angola has been a secular state in which religious bodies have had no influence on political decisions. Because of the dominance of the MPLA regime, certain Christian denominations have aligned with the ruling party and consistently expressed their support for it, particularly during the four postwar elections.

However, in the late 1990s and early 2000s, and increasingly again since the 2012 elections, some church leaders, including bishops of the Episcopal Conference of Angola and São Tomé (Conferência Episcopal de Angola e São Tomé, CEAST) – the leading Catholic Church authority – have begun to voice somewhat more assertive positions against the government. They have criticized political intolerance, poverty and a lack of care and solidarity.

In March 2023, for example, the Justice and Peace Commission of CEAST adopted an unusually direct tone. At the conclusion of its annual National Peace and Reconciliation Day, it stated that Angola needed a new constitution because, in practice, state institutions had become “hostage” to the ruling party. “Institutions are losing credibility at the national and international levels because of corruption and impunity, although the state media endeavors to project a different image of Angola,” the bishops wrote. The statement, however, had no discernible impact on government conduct.

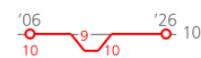
The state’s approach to Islam remains ambiguous. The destruction of mosques in 2013 – reportedly justified on the grounds that Islam lacked official recognition – has not been repeated, but Islamic religious communities continue to operate without legal status. The rationale behind the mosque demolitions remains unclear. The actions reflected populist and xenophobic sentiments directed at a community perceived as external to Angolan society and were reinforced by the legacy of a colonial legal framework and prevailing public attitudes that framed Angola as a Christian nation.

Despite long-standing plans to introduce administrative and political decentralization in Angola, the state remains highly centralized. Local elections have yet to be held, despite constitutional provisions mandating them. Successive governments have cited logistical and financial constraints – and more recently the COVID-19 pandemic – as reasons for repeated postponements. Many Angolans and opposition parties, however, view these explanations as pretexts, arguing that local elections could weaken the MPLA’s dominance at the local level. The principal obstacle is widely seen not as a lack of resources but as insufficient political will to devolve authority to local governments, including fiscal and budgetary autonomy. As a result, local administrations operate with limited political discretion and minimal financial capacity to address the needs of their communities..

As a result, administrative structures at the district, municipal, village and neighborhood levels often extend the ruling MPLA’s reach. Administrators frequently serve as leaders of local MPLA committees. Traditional authorities, with

No interference of religious dogmas

10



1

Basic administration

4



1

a few exceptions, have also been incorporated into the state's administrative framework. They serve as intermediaries between the administration and the local population and provide jurisdiction at the local level. The creation of three new provinces as of January 1, 2025 (by splitting some of the larger provinces) is unlikely to do much to reverse this situation but will instead further entrench central government control.

In many parts of the country, citizens lack access to basic public services, including health care, education and civil registry services. As of 2022 (the latest available data), only 57.7% of the population had access to basic water, 52.2% to sanitation and 48.5% to electricity, with all indicators showing only minimal improvement over the past five years.

The urban-rural divide plays a significant role in these disparities, with southern regions particularly affected. Recurring droughts in Cunene and Namibe provinces have periodically triggered famine. In May 2024, civil society organizations reported that severe hunger had driven some residents to cross into Namibia to search for food in garbage dumps.

The government announced infrastructure projects worth \$5.7 million in late 2019 to address structural weaknesses in Cunene. However, there are ongoing concerns that the population was not involved in planning and allegations that a substantial portion of the budget was embezzled. Thus, the pandemic has not significantly improved or worsened the already inconsistent provision of services.

2 | Political Participation

Angola has a long record of electoral manipulation and fraud, and none of the postwar elections can be considered fully transparent, free or fair. The MPLA has consistently exploited the advantages of incumbency, including control over the state apparatus and public finances, voter intimidation and vote-buying – particularly in rural areas – and dominance of print, radio and television media. Administrative barriers have also hindered the registration and legalization of new political parties. While voter registration procedures have become faster and more efficient, individuals lacking proper identity documents, especially in rural areas, continue to face difficulties registering. Opposition parties have repeatedly raised concerns about the inclusion of deceased individuals, perceived as pro-government voters, on the electoral rolls.

Despite this context, the MPLA's share of the vote has declined steadily, from 82% in 2008 to 71% in 2012, 61% in 2017 and 51% in August 2022. Two unofficial parallel vote counts gave the opposition party UNITA 51% of the vote, compared with 44.5% for the MPLA. An opposition complaint filed with the Constitutional Court was dismissed. Despite widespread doubts about the credibility of the official results, UNITA won the capital, Luanda, by a wide margin, securing 63% of the vote.

Free and fair elections

4

'06 '26 10



The transition from former President dos Santos to President Lourenço in 2017 significantly reduced the ability of an unelected elite, namely the dos Santos family and its allies, to undermine the authority of elected political representatives.

Despite the removal of the elite from its formerly unchallenged position of power, the fundamental power structures have not changed substantially. President Lourenço was elected the head of the MPLA's candidate list in the imperfect 2017 and 2022 elections, making him a formally democratically elected political representative with significant executive authority to govern.

Because the president directly appoints ministers and provincial governors, Lourenço and his inner circle in the office of the presidency remain the ultimate decision-makers in all political matters. By contrast, the National Assembly (parliament) is subservient to the executive branch. House rules provide limited time for opposition representatives to express their views, and the MPLA, due to its majority, has little incentive to engage in meaningful dialogue with the opposition beyond symbolic gestures. Furthermore, even within the MPLA, there is limited room for policy innovation, with members of parliament largely rubber-stamping the directives issued by the president.

The rights of association and assembly are regularly subject to interference and government restrictions. Citizens and associations that criticize the government face several barriers to exercising these rights. After President Lourenço's 2017 election, the political climate briefly relaxed, but beginning in 2019 the government again restricted these liberties.

Despite initial signs of progress, President João Lourenço's measures proved ineffective in easing the severe economic crisis or improving living conditions. As a result, public discontent with the government intensified, particularly as Lourenço faced an electoral challenge in 2022 and authorities tightened restrictions on protests. The COVID-19 pandemic also provided a convenient pretext to limit freedom of association and assembly for much of the period from 2020 to 2022, with no meaningful relaxation following the official end of the pandemic or the conclusion of the electoral period. A "Law of Crimes of Vandalism of Public Goods and Services," adopted on August 29, 2024, was widely criticized by the opposition and civil society as an additional tool to curb civil liberties.

Even gatherings that were not overtly critical of the government were banned or obstructed during the review period. In March 2023, residents of Luanda attempting to hold a vigil for the recently deceased Mozambican rapper Azagaia were dispersed by police. Yanick Bernardo, the national director of human rights, later stated that the vigil had been prohibited because authorities had not been properly notified. During the period under review, protests against rising fuel prices were also met with force. In May 2023, police in Huambo opened fire on demonstrators, killing five people. A similar protest in Cabinda was prevented from forming after police violently detained

Effective power to govern

2

'06 _____ '26 10



Association / assembly rights

4

'06 _____ '26 10



organizers. In June, police used what observers described as excessive force to disperse a protest by ambulant women vendors in Luanda. In October, 200 people were arrested in Saurimo, Lunda Sul, on charges of “creating disorder”; by November, most remained in detention without charge.

Following Lourenço’s 2017 election, press freedom initially improved, a notable development in the Angolan context. However, a degree of self-censorship remains apparent in content produced by most major media outlets, many of which are state-controlled or owned by individuals affiliated with the regime. Media laws and libel regulations are relatively broad, providing the government with tools to control and curtail press freedom as it deems necessary. Journalists who report critically on the government, especially regarding corruption and human rights abuses, often face legal action, harassment and even physical violence.

Although the complete shutdown of independent weekly publications or the pulping of entire print runs is no longer common, independent outlets continue to have limited reach, largely confined to Luanda. In addition, as part of President João Lourenço’s anti-corruption campaign, several privately owned media organizations have been confiscated and placed under state control, prompting concerns among Angolan journalists about declining media pluralism and press freedom.

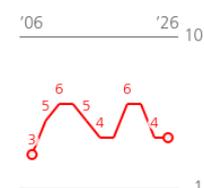
On World Press Freedom Day in May 2023, the Angolan Union of Journalists warned of setbacks to press freedom, with reporters citing an increasingly constrained professional environment. In the Press Freedom Index published by Reporters Without Borders, Angola fell 25 places from the previous year to 125th out of 180 countries, making it the only Portuguese-speaking African state to experience such a decline and to be classified as “unfree.” The country’s ranking improved modestly in the 2024 index, rising to 104th place, largely because of fewer reported incidents rather than a substantive change in the legal or regulatory environment.

3 | Rule of Law

Although there is a formal separation of powers, the executive branch wields significant influence over both parliament and the judiciary. The National Assembly, consisting of 220 members, is heavily controlled by the ruling party, which maintains strict party discipline among its members. Objections and walkouts by the opposition have proved ineffective at holding the executive branch accountable. Furthermore, the president appoints judges based on their political loyalty, and they routinely face political interference, particularly in the Supreme and Constitutional Courts.

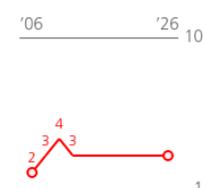
Freedom of expression

4



Separation of powers

3



Although Angola has formal institutions such as the Supreme Court, the Constitutional Court, the Office of the Attorney General and the Ombudsman of Justice, the appointment of judges and magistrates is largely driven by political loyalty. As a result, members of the judiciary frequently engage in anticipatory compliance with the ruling authorities and remain vulnerable to political influence. Investigations and rulings often follow so-called “higher instructions,” understood as directives originating from the president himself. Consequently, opposition parties and individuals are frequently subjected to judicial harassment. By contrast, the government, the ruling party and individuals linked to the MPLA rarely face prosecution, except when it serves political purposes, such as corruption cases brought against senior party figures who have become insufficiently compliant or politically independent.

Since taking office in late 2017, President Lourenço has emphasized combating corruption. The prosecution of high-profile individuals with ties to former President dos Santos, most notably his daughter Isabel and his son José Filomeno, initially drew widespread praise at home and abroad.

Over time, however, it became increasingly apparent that the anti-corruption campaign was selective. While those targeted had been major beneficiaries of corruption under the previous administration, other regime figures remained in positions of power despite credible allegations of wrongdoing. At the same time, members of President Lourenço’s family and close associates gained greater economic prominence.

Despite some initial improvements early in President Lourenço’s first term, Angola’s human rights situation remains deeply troubling. While civil rights are protected by law, fundamental rights such as the rights to life, liberty and physical integrity are frequently violated, particularly for marginalized groups and government critics.

Instances of arbitrary arrests, torture and extrajudicial killings by state security forces – though not widespread – continue despite existing legal safeguards. These abuses are especially prevalent in Cabinda, where civil society activists and suspected supporters of the separatist FLEC movement, along with their family members, face arbitrary house searches, unlawful detention and torture. In the diamond-producing regions of Lunda Norte and Lunda Sul, the local population is subjected to human rights abuses by the military, police and private security forces, including torture and extrajudicial killings. In urban areas such as Luanda and provincial capitals, female street vendors are routinely pursued and physically assaulted by the police and often experience sexual harassment. Their merchandise is frequently confiscated or destroyed. Additionally, “marginals” – a term for unemployed youth suspected of being gang members – are regularly killed by the police in summary executions.

While Angola’s legal framework protects religious freedom and the rights of individuals based on sexual orientation and identity, fringe Christian movements and the small Angolan Muslim community have faced systematic repression. This

Independent judiciary

3

'06 _____ '26 10



Prosecution of office abuse

4

'06 _____ '26 10



Civil rights

4

'06 _____ '26 10



includes the demolition of “unauthorized” places of worship and instances of police violence. The country’s first and only LGBTQ+ association, Associação Íris Angola (named after “rainbow” in Portuguese), was legalized only in 2018, after years of bureaucratic and legal obstacles following its establishment in 2013. According to the association, violence and discrimination against LGBTQ+ individuals remain pervasive in Angola. In January 2019, however, a new penal code abolished a colonial-era provision related to “vices against nature” that had effectively banned homosexual practices and introduced a law criminalizing discrimination based on sexual orientation. Nonetheless, the same penal code also introduced a provision penalizing “insults against the state, its symbols, and its organs,” effectively criminalizing any criticism of the president.

4 | Stability of Democratic Institutions

Despite the successful transition of power from dos Santos to Lourenço, democratic institutions in Angola still primarily serve as a facade of democracy and are subject to political interference and control by the ruling party.

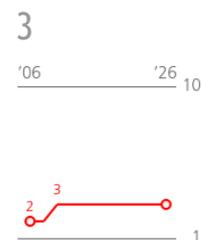
Both parliament and the judiciary are heavily influenced by the executive branch. Provincial governors, appointed directly by the president, exercise significant authority in their provinces, which often resemble small fiefdoms. Municipal administrations, despite isolated efforts to improve local residents’ lives, lack substantial budgetary and political autonomy.

While certain aspects of public administration, such as the Customs and Revenue Authority (Autoridade Tributária), have undergone some professionalization in recent years, the smooth functioning of these institutions is often undermined by a lack of transparency, excessive hierarchy, internal rivalries and regulatory inconsistencies. In addition, the allocation of administrative positions is often based on personal connections or political affiliations, impeding the progress of professionalization.

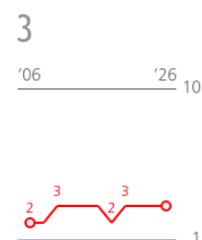
Since the transition to multiparty democracy in 1990, both the MPLA government and opposition parties have officially recognized democratic institutions as legitimate. Various entities, such as the military, churches and civic associations, including those critical of the government, have adhered to democratic principles. However, the ruling MPLA’s commitment to democratic principles serves primarily to maintain its grip on power.

In practice, the MPLA often subverts democratic norms – especially in areas related to campaigning, electoral processes, the rule of law, media freedom and civic rights – even as it publicly endorses democracy as a fundamental value and common good. Opposition parties consistently raise concerns about the fairness of the system. They specifically highlight issues such as the highly centralized nature of the constitution, manipulation of the judiciary and electoral mechanisms, including the composition of the National Electoral Commission.

Performance of democratic institutions



Commitment to democratic institutions



Opposition parties regularly question the fairness of the political system. They point in particular to the constitution’s “hyper-presidential” design, the politicization of the judiciary and electoral arrangements such as the composition of the National Electoral Commission. With the exception of the autonomy movements in Cabinda and Lunda, and despite grievances over what they view as a rigged system, opposition parties and civil society actors have largely opted to pursue parliamentary engagement and legal avenues. In October 2023, for example, UNITA submitted an impeachment motion in parliament, accusing President João Lourenço of acting against democracy, social peace and national independence. UNITA argued that he had “subverted the democratic process in the country and consolidated an authoritarian regime that undermines peace.” The motion was rejected without debate by the MPLA majority. In December 2023, UNITA filed a petition with the Constitutional Court, alongside a complaint challenging what it described as the MPLA’s “illegal voting” practices in parliament, with the stated aim of compelling ruling-party lawmakers to “respect the constitution.” In its submission, UNITA cited and denounced more than 170 alleged violations of the Public Procurement Law, as well as what it described as a “frightening increase” in breaches of budget execution rules. The complaint was dismissed in April 2024.

5 | Political and Social Integration

Angola formally operates as a multiparty democracy, but in practice it has evolved into a de facto two-party system dominated by the ruling party and characterized by pronounced authoritarian features.

The MPLA and UNITA, both rooted in the country’s anti-colonial liberation struggle, are the two major political parties. The MPLA claims more than 4 million registered members, including many who joined for pragmatic reasons, often to advance business interests. Dissatisfaction has been growing even among long-standing party members. For younger voters, political allegiance based on wartime affiliations or family ties has become less significant.

Owing to the legacy of the civil war and the subsequent period of single-party socialist rule, the MPLA retains extensive control over state institutions and politics.

UNITA, the MPLA’s former wartime adversary, has developed into an increasingly assertive and capable opposition party, though it continues to face structural disadvantages stemming from its limited access to executive authority and state resources. A significant moment in recent Angolan politics was the formation of the United Patriotic Front ahead of the 2022 elections, bringing together several opposition parties in an ad hoc coalition to challenge MPLA dominance. While the alliance failed to secure a transfer of power, it marked the first time leading opposition figures united under a single banner, offering a credible alternative for voters disenchanted with the MPLA’s long-standing rule.

Party system

5



CASA-CE, which placed third in the 2017 elections, lost all its parliamentary representation in 2022. Its decline was largely driven by internal conflicts that culminated in the expulsion of its founder, Abel Chivukuvuku, who went on to establish a new political movement, PRA-JA, and joined the united opposition front in 2022.

Since the formal transition to multiparty democracy in 1991, numerous smaller parties have emerged. However, given the structure of Angola's electoral system, they have achieved only limited success in challenging the MPLA–UNITA duopoly. Many have proved short-lived, surviving only a single electoral cycle. Three have shown greater durability: the FNLA, Angola's oldest liberation movement turned political party, now marginalized in parliamentary politics after decades of internal conflict, often exacerbated by MPLA interference; the PRS, which draws support primarily from the two Lunda provinces and advocates federalism; and the Bloco Democrático, founded by MPLA dissidents in Luanda and a participant in the United Patriotic Front in 2022.

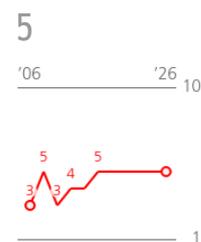
Associational life in Angola can be divided into two main groups: independent associations and those affiliated with the ruling MPLA, including historically linked organizations such as the Organization of Angolan Women (Organização da Mulher Angolana, OMA). Since the 1990s, the government has also played a role in creating or promoting civil society organizations, some with telling names such as the “Spontaneous National Movement.” Many associations within the country's so-called organized civil society primarily function to signal support for the government and to bolster the public image of the president and the ruling party.

In parallel, nonpartisan community and advocacy associations exist and – especially at the local level – have succeeded in engaging in dialogue with local authorities to enhance service delivery. In recent years, some of these associations have become critical of the government, particularly regarding housing, food security and other human rights issues. Nevertheless, independent associations face significant bureaucratic and legal obstacles. Individuals who openly criticize the government often face harassment, imprisonment or violence.

Angola's largest labor union, the National Union of Angolan Workers (União Nacional dos Trabalhadores Angolanos, UNTA), was the only union permitted during the socialist era and has maintained structural ties to the MPLA. Independent unions have gradually become more outspoken, particularly in the education and transportation sectors. In the crucial oil sector, however, labor unions are relatively weak.

Loosely organized interest groups, including youth activists, street vendors and women's rights advocates, have shown their potential to mobilize protests. While public support for such movements often remains limited because of fear of reprisals, civil society has grown more vocal and assertive in the past decade.

Interest groups



Official data on public support for democracy in Angola are not available. Since 2019, however, the country has been included in the Afrobarometer survey. Findings from the 2019, 2022 and 2024 rounds indicate a medium-to-high level of acceptance of democratic norms and procedures, alongside widespread dissatisfaction with government performance.

In the March 2024 survey, 45% of respondents expressed approval of democracy as a form of government. Support for specific democratic principles was higher, with 61% endorsing presidential term limits and 48% favoring multiparty elections. By contrast, between 58% and 66% rejected alternatives such as “strongman” rule or military dictatorship. All of these indicators, however, declined somewhat compared with 2022, the year of the most recent – widely viewed as flawed – elections. This downward trend is also reflected in measures of democratic satisfaction. The share of respondents who said they were “very satisfied” with the way democracy functions fell from 24% to 18%. When asked about corruption in the presidency, 43% said that most or all officials were corrupt, while another 26% believed that some were corrupt. Only 11% said that no one in the presidency was corrupt. Similarly, while 67% of respondents reported that they were free to choose whom to vote for, only 32% believed that the 2022 elections were free and fair.

Data on social capital collected through public opinion surveys are not available. However, discussions of declining solidarity, particularly when compared with the period of socialism and the hardships of the 1980s, are common. In practice, solidarity and social trust remain strong, though they are often confined to close family circles, church communities and neighborhood networks.

These networks play a crucial role at the grassroots level by filling gaps left by the absence of state social welfare programs. Any more organized form of associational life, however, draws the attention of authorities and is often limited to “non-political” work on issues such as water and sanitation, health, microcredit or food security.

At the local level, these associations are, to some extent, able to compensate for the dearth of state welfare and social safety nets. Nevertheless, open and vocal criticism of the government remains rare and carries significant risks of political reprisals. In recent years, some exceptions to this trend have included associations advocating for land and housing rights, particularly in the southern regions of the country.

Approval of
democracy

n/a

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n/a _____ 1

Social capital

5

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II. Economic Transformation

6 | Level of Socioeconomic Development

Despite a decade-long oil boom, Angola remains a deeply unequal and poor society, ranking 150th of 191 countries on the 2022 HDI.

The post-2014 economic downturn (following a drop in crude oil prices on world markets) plunged the country into a protracted economic crisis from which it has not yet emerged. Aside from a small, politically connected economic elite, a large majority of citizens are struggling with the high cost of living, rampant inflation and unemployment, and unequal access to food and basic services (electricity and water). This includes not only the poor, who make up the vast majority, but also the small urban middle class that became accustomed to a better standard of living after 2002, only to see their expectations lowered after 2014.

The socioeconomic indicators reflect a troubling situation: The Gini coefficient was 51.3 in 2018, and UNDP’s 2024 multidimensional poverty index, based on 2022 data, estimates that 51.1% of the population is multidimensionally poor, with another 15.5% vulnerable to poverty.

Austerity measures introduced by the Lourenço government after it signed an Extended Fund Facility with the IMF in 2018 have not yet significantly improved the macroeconomic outlook, let alone eased hardship for ordinary citizens.

Although Angola has nominally promoted women in the public sphere and into political positions, gender inequality remains an issue, especially in the labor market, where women are often the main breadwinners for families engaged in the informal subsistence economy.

Economic indicators		2021	2022	2023	2024
GDP	\$ M	66505.1	104399.7	84875.2	80396.9
GDP growth	%	1.2	3.0	1.1	4.4
Inflation (CPI)	%	25.8	21.4	13.6	28.2
Unemployment	%	15.8	14.6	14.5	14.5

Question
Score

Socioeconomic
barriers



Economic indicators		2021	2022	2023	2024
Foreign direct investment	% of GDP	-6.5	-6.3	-2.5	-1.4
Export growth	%	-8.6	3.3	-6.2	5.0
Import growth	%	-3.8	26.1	-6.8	-6.2
Current account balance	\$ M	8399.5	11762.9	4185.0	6309.8
Public debt	% of GDP	74.3	56.1	72.4	59.9
External debt	\$ M	66019.7	60445.7	57031.7	-
Total debt service	\$ M	9954.0	15280.3	12546.6	-
Net lending/borrowing	% of GDP	-	-	-	-
Tax revenue	% of GDP	-	-	-	-
Government consumption	% of GDP	7.7	8.1	5.2	6.3
Public education spending	% of GDP	2.3	2.4	2.5	-
Public health spending	% of GDP	1.7	1.5	-	-
R&D expenditure	% of GDP	-	-	-	-
Military expenditure	% of GDP	1.3	1.3	1.3	-

Sources (as of December 2025): The World Bank, World Development Indicators | International Monetary Fund (IMF), World Economic Outlook | Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI), Military Expenditure Database.

7 | Organization of the Market and Competition

Angola seeks to position itself as an attractive destination for FDI and has made significant strides to remove barriers to entry for new market participants. These efforts include establishing streamlined processes, such as single-window solutions, to facilitate business setup and customs duty declarations. However, Angola's appeal as an investment destination is heavily dependent on government oil revenues and foreign exchange availability.

The country's currency, AOA, remains sensitive to fluctuations in oil prices. The sharp drop in crude oil prices in 2014 and the resulting reduction in the supply of U.S. dollars to the Angolan economy have led to measures such as restrictions and taxes on foreign transfers as well as controls on currency convertibility.

Market organization

4

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Especially during his first term (2017 – 2022), President Lourenço took steps to dismantle some of the oligopolies associated with former President dos Santos. However, in the meantime, new ventures rumored to be linked to President Lourenço and his family have come to dominate key sectors of the economy.

Certain critical industries – including the strategic oil and gas sector and shipping – restrict foreign ownership, limiting foreign participation to 49%.

2021 data from the National Institute of Statistics and the International Labour Organization (ILO) indicate that more than 90% of the population is engaged in the informal sector. Women and young people, in particular, have difficulty accessing formal employment.

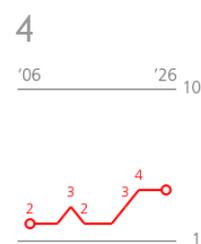
In 2018, Angola adopted its first competition law, leading to the creation of the Competition Regulatory Authority (ARC). The law defines abuses of dominant market positions and relationships of economic dependence as harmful to competition and establishes sanctions for such violations. Together, the legal framework and the new authority provide a foundation for safeguarding competition. In parallel, President João Lourenço launched initiatives aimed at curbing the influence of politically connected oligopolies in lucrative sectors of the economy. These efforts notably targeted the business empire of former President José Eduardo dos Santos' daughter, Isabel dos Santos.

Since its inception, the ARC has opened investigations into companies operating in the oil and food and beverage sectors. It has also issued public notices on proposed mergers and acquisitions, allowing time for objections. In September 2024, however, the ARC approved the acquisition of Banco Keve by the Carrinho Group, a sprawling service provider widely rumored to have close ties to President Lourenço.

At the same time, measures to lower barriers for foreign investors reduced pressure on international firms to include silent Angolan minority shareholders, a practice that had previously contributed to the emergence of oligopolistic structures. While some reforms – such as stronger oversight of the central bank and the creation of a new regulatory authority for the oil sector – have had positive effects, there are growing indications that entrenched beneficiary networks have been replaced by new ones linked to President Lourenço.

In April 2023, for example, Africa Intelligence reported that since Lourenço took office in 2017, the construction firm Omatapalo had secured the equivalent of \$3 billion in state contracts, 90% of them awarded through simplified procedures by presidential decree rather than public tender. More broadly, the use of presidential decrees for public contracting has become widespread under Lourenço. In 2021, Finance Minister Vera Daves warned in a letter later leaked to the public that the presidency was violating public procurement law and disregarding her ministry's advice.

Competition policy



As mentioned earlier, the regulations governing private foreign investment were liberalized in 2018. This eliminated the previous requirement that at least 35% of shares be held by Angolan partners and removed the minimum initial investment requirement of AOA 50 million (approximately \$160,000). Additionally, the 2018 import code reduced or eliminated import duties on various basic foodstuffs as well as machinery used in construction and agriculture.

However, currency controls and strict limitations on the export of profits continue to make business ventures in Angola a high-risk endeavor. Import regulations tend to change quickly and arbitrarily, often driven by political expediency – for example, to “promote import substitution” – without being backed by domestic production capacity, leading to regular import bottlenecks. Furthermore, despite the existence of a legal framework to promote exports from Angola (with certain limitations on protected timber), there is relatively little domestic production beyond oil, diamonds and beer that could be exported.

Nevertheless, in November 2020, Angola became the 30th country to ratify the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA). In January 2022, it announced plans to gradually phase out import duties for goods originating from other AfCFTA member countries. In 2019, after a decade of delay, Angola finally submitted an offer to join the Southern African Development Community (SADC) Free Trade Area (FTA), paving the way for ongoing negotiations to access the EU-SADC Economic Partnership Agreement. Overall, Angola is selectively integrated into global markets, particularly in the oil sector, and is making some progress toward integrating other sectors as well.

Angola’s banking system has experienced remarkable growth, expanding from nine commercial banks in 2003 to 26 by 2019. This growth made it Africa’s third-largest banking sector, after South Africa and Nigeria. However, the rapid expansion was driven primarily by oil revenue, and banks often extended credit liberally to politically connected individuals and companies amid inadequate oversight and regulatory frameworks. Across all commercial banks, state-owned entities such as the state oil company Sonangol hold a majority of shares, and individuals connected to the regime hold significant stakes. This arrangement has led to substantial systemic risks.

During the oil-boom years, most commercial banks in Angola extended generous credit to regime-connected figures, a practice that led to significant bad debt on their balance sheets despite formal adherence to international liquidity reserve standards. A notable example was Banco Espírito Santo Angola, which experienced financial difficulties and collapsed in 2014. The regulatory framework was weak, particularly during the final years of President dos Santos’ tenure, as the National Bank of Angola (BNA) effectively served as a source of funding for his family’s business ventures.

Liberalization of foreign trade

6

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1

Banking system

6

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1

However, after a reshuffle following President Lourenço's election and the indictment of the BNA's former head, efforts have been made to reassure investors and strengthen regulations. These steps toward stabilizing the banking system appear to have yielded some positive results. The most recent data on the country's capital-to-assets ratio, from 2021, show that it stood at 10%, down from 14% in 2018. Over the same period, the share of non-performing loans declined from 25% in 2017 to 15% in 2021.

8 | Monetary and fiscal stability

The National Bank of Angola (BNA) was historically dependent on, and subordinate to, directives from the executive branch. In June 2021, however, a limited constitutional reform was adopted to strengthen the BNA's independence. The reform formally enshrined its core mandates: combating inflation and preserving monetary stability.

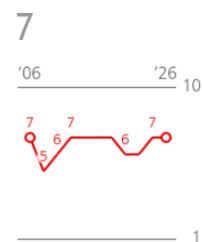
After a decade of maintaining an artificially strong exchange rate, the BNA was forced to abandon its informal peg of roughly 1:100 to the U.S. dollar following the collapse in global oil prices in late 2014, allowing the kwanza to float. Since then, the currency has depreciated substantially, underscoring its vulnerability to external shocks. Inflation declined from 21.4% in 2022 to 13.6% in 2023, but surged again in 2024, marking the highest inflation rate in eight years. According to *Expansão*, inflation peaked at 31.1% in July 2024 and averaged 27.5% by year's end. The exchange rate against the U.S. dollar reached AOA 960 in October 2024 and stabilized at around AOA 920 between November 2024 and January 2025.

Since the end of the war in 2002, Angola has implemented significant macroeconomic reforms aimed at opening and stabilizing the economy. The limitations of these measures, however, became evident during the 2014 oil price shock, which forced the country to seek additional external financing.

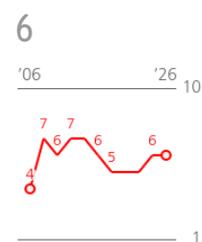
In 2018, the government negotiated a credit arrangement with the International Monetary Fund under its Extended Fund Facility. Subsequent program reviews resulted in the rescheduling of some external debt repayments, with several obligations suspended during the COVID-19 pandemic. By the end of 2022, Angola's external debt stood at \$60.1 billion, equivalent to about 68% of GDP. Debt service obligations increased again in 2023 following the expiration of a previous debt moratorium.

As of late 2023, Angola's current account balance was \$4.18 billion, and its public debt was 73.7% of GDP.

Monetary stability



Fiscal stability



9 | Private Property

Since the end of state socialism, Angola has formally adopted a market-based economic system, including legal protections for private property. These measures include the 2003 Voluntary Arbitration Law, which in principle allows for international arbitration, and the establishment of arbitration centers in 2006. In 2019, the government introduced a new private investment law, which was updated in 2021 and provides foreign investors with standard safeguards against expropriation. Angola has also concluded bilateral investment treaties with several countries, including Portugal, Brazil, Spain, Türkiye, Italy, Germany, Russia, Cape Verde and the United Arab Emirates.

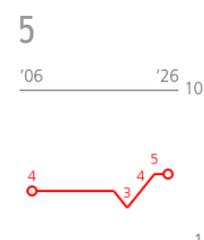
It is important to note that all land in Angola is formally owned by the state, though individuals and businesses may obtain long-term leaseholds. In the years following the end of the civil war in 2002, however, there were documented cases of large-scale land acquisition and enclosure in rural areas by military officials, provincial governors and public administrators. These practices occurred despite legal provisions intended to safeguard the customary land rights of local communities engaged in agriculture and herding. While the problem is most acute in rural regions, forced evictions of low-income urban residents from informal settlements have also occurred, notably in Luanda and several provincial capitals. Affected residents are often relocated to social housing on the urban periphery, where housing quality and compensation are frequently inadequate.

During the 2010s, the government periodically threatened to nationalize assets or revoke licenses in the oil, mining and banking sectors to avoid stricter oversight by U.S. and EU regulatory authorities, though it rarely acted on these threats. As a result, property rights for individual citizens and domestic firms remain insecure in practice, while international commercial assets are generally better protected.

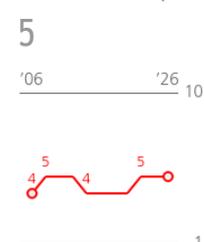
The Angolan government has clearly articulated a market-oriented policy approach, and private companies operate across all sectors of the economy, with private enterprise formally encouraged. In practice, however, these policies have often disproportionately benefited elite interests. Since the transition from state socialism to a market-based democracy in 1992, Angola has pursued privatization programs involving a range of state-owned enterprises. These processes have at times lacked transparency, including transactions conducted without public tender and the sale of valuable assets at below-market prices to individuals connected to the regime.

In several sectors, state-owned enterprises continue to play a central role, particularly in basic service provision such as water and electricity and in strategically important industries, including oil and diamonds. Under a 2018 agreement with the International Monetary Fund, the government committed to privatizing or partially privatizing 195 state-owned enterprises. To support this effort, the Ministry of

Property rights



Private enterprise



Finance launched an online bidding platform. Despite delays caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, 109 state-owned enterprises had been privatized under the PROPRIV initiative as of September 2024. Angolan economists have criticized the program, arguing that no company of significant strategic value has yet been privatized and that revenues have fallen well short of expectations. Moreover, as the government nationalized certain assets during the same period, the overall balance has tilted toward an expanded, rather than reduced, state presence in the economy.

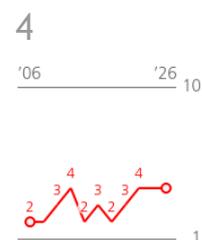
10 | Welfare Regime

Public spending on health care remains particularly low by international standards. The 2024 budget allocated just 5.5% of total government spending to health care – roughly one-third to one-quarter of the level recommended under the Abuja Declaration – and execution of the 2023 health budget reached only 64%. Public hospitals, while formally free of charge, are chronically underfunded and understaffed. Patients are frequently required to supply basic medical necessities, including clean water, sterile dressings, needles and gloves. Requests for informal payments in exchange for treatment are common. According to World Health Organization’s 2023 tuberculosis report, Angola recorded the highest incidence and fatality rates among Lusophone countries in the previous year, at 119,000 cases and 19,000 deaths, respectively. In the first quarter of 2023, hospitals in Luanda also reported a rise in malaria-related deaths, which medical professionals attributed to widespread poverty and inadequate sanitation, including poor waste management.

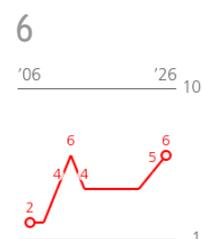
To partially offset these gaps, charitable organizations and local associations occasionally distribute basic food baskets. Some larger firms provide in-kind benefits to employees, such as health insurance, food or housing. Since 2015, however, reduced access to foreign exchange has led many companies to scale back such benefits. Formal-sector employment opportunities are limited and have declined since 2015. Private health insurance, pension schemes and retirement benefits are largely confined to workers with stable employment in the private sector or, to a lesser extent, the public sector, leaving the vast majority of the population – given the predominance of informal employment – without coverage.

Women in Angola have comparatively high levels of representation in politics, public administration and the security forces relative to many other African countries. This reflects policies promoting gender equality during the socialist period. In practice, however, women remain overrepresented in the informal economy and underrepresented in postprimary education. This disparity contributes to lower adult literacy rates: in 2021, literacy stood at 62% for women compared with 82% for men. Among those younger than 25, the gap has narrowed, with literacy rates of 80% for women and 85% for men.

Social safety nets



Equal opportunity



Following the 2022 elections, women’s representation in parliament increased, reversing a previous decline. After the 2017 elections, women accounted for 26% of members of parliament, or 59 seats. In 2022, women won 83 of the 220 seats, representing 37.7% of the legislature – well above the global average of 23%.

Angola has legal provisions aimed at promoting gender equality and prohibiting discrimination based on sexual orientation, gender identity or religious belief. Nonetheless, domestic violence remains widespread. The legal framework does not clearly define sanctions for domestic violence, and police officers often hesitate to register complaints. In some cases, they attempt to dissuade victims from pursuing charges, encouraging resolution through mediation instead. When cases do proceed, the law mandates family reconciliation, which police may require before advancing investigations or prosecutions. Although the legal framework was strengthened in 2021 with the adoption of a new penal code, institutional enforcement remains weak because of financial constraints, staffing shortages and insufficient training.

Muslim citizens, though a minority, regularly experience discrimination. In addition, a large share of the population lacks formal identity documents, particularly in rural and border regions. Undocumented individuals and Angolans with ethnic or familial ties to neighboring countries are frequently treated as “illegal immigrants” and are vulnerable to police abuse and discriminatory practices.

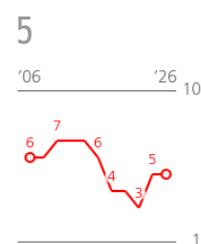
11 | Economic Performance

Angola’s economy remains heavily dependent on oil exports and is therefore highly vulnerable to fluctuations in global oil prices. GDP per capita rose modestly to \$8,041 in 2023 from \$7,929 a year earlier, but overall GDP growth remained negative for a ninth consecutive year, contracting by 2.2%.

This underscores the persistent structural imbalance and Angola’s continued reliance on the oil sector. Despite long-standing government commitments to economic diversification, oil still accounts for roughly half of GDP, generates more than 70% of state revenue and represents over 90% of exports.

According to forecasts by the International Monetary Fund, average economic growth is expected to reach about 2.6% in 2025/26, with the non-oil sector projected to expand faster than the oil sector. Even so, overall GDP growth is unlikely to keep pace with the country’s anticipated population growth.

Output strength



12 | Sustainability

On paper, Angola has taken steps to strengthen environmental protection, introducing a range of policy measures and legislative instruments aimed at improving the management of environmental challenges. These include the adoption in 2017 of a National Strategy for Climate Change covering the period from 2018 to 2030, designed to advance the country's commitments under the Paris Agreement. Angola has also concluded several environmental cooperation agreements, including with neighboring Namibia, addressing the joint management of cross-border national parks and shared fishing grounds. In addition, Angola has been selected to train environmental inspectors from across the Southern African Development Community at the Missombo Polytechnic Institute in Kuando Kubango province. At the 2022 and 2023 U.N. climate conferences, Angola presented its climate strategy. Local environmental organizations, however, called for the issue to move beyond political declarations and be addressed through concrete implementation measures. Recurring drought cycles in the country's south have also not been adequately tackled by the government, despite some localized initiatives. A 2022 academic study found that local communities' knowledge and perspectives were insufficiently considered and that drought and famine remained unresolved problems in 2024.

Urban waste disposal, along with its associated public health concerns, continues to pose a serious challenge.

The most significant advance toward sustainability in recent decades has been the expansion of hydropower, which now supplies roughly 75% of Angola's domestic energy needs from renewable sources. Despite this progress, the country remains heavily dependent on petroleum exports for foreign revenue.

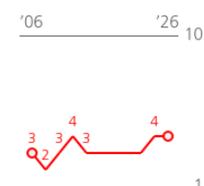
Angola has made notable progress in expanding access to education since the end of the war. Over the past three years, however, its score on the United Nations Education Index has stagnated at 0.532.

Historically, public spending on education was extremely low, at around 2% of GDP. Funding levels have increased since 2022, with allocations rising to 6.6% of GDP in 2024 and a planned 6.5% in 2025. Even so, these figures remain well below continentwide benchmarks of 15% to 20%.

Despite higher funding, public schools continue to face overcrowding and severe staffing shortages. The lack of qualified teachers is particularly acute, with many primary school educators having completed only secondary education. These challenges are even more pronounced in rural areas, where access to primary schooling remains uneven.

Environmental
policy

4



Education policy /
R&D

3



Angola's six public universities do not offer enough places to meet demand, and deteriorating working conditions have prompted repeated strikes by academic staff since 2022. As a result, private postsecondary institutions have expanded rapidly, offering comparatively expensive degree programs to a large and growing student population. Many of these institutions maintain partnerships with, or operate as subsidiaries of, higher education institutions in Portugal, providing a degree of quality assurance. By law, however, they are limited to offering programs in only three academic fields, restricting curricular diversity.

Angola's university curricula follow the Portuguese pre-Bologna reform model, with four-year licenciaturas (undergraduate) and two-year mestrados (graduate, equivalent to an MA/MSc). However, not all universities offer master's degrees, and there are no provisions for postgraduate research. Furthermore, there is no comprehensive research and development (R&D) policy. Aspiring doctoral candidates must therefore seek opportunities abroad, as public funding for academic research at Angolan universities is minimal or nonexistent.

Governance

I. Level of Difficulty

During the economic boom years, the Angolan government prioritized infrastructure construction and rehabilitation. These efforts restored primary and secondary roads, railways, schools and health centers across much of the country. While the improved transport network facilitated the movement of people and goods, schools and health facilities have continued to face shortages of qualified personnel. Moreover, the economic downturn after 2014 led to the suspension of most construction and maintenance projects. Even before the crisis, irregular upkeep was common because of corruption and weak institutional oversight, and many major overland routes subsequently deteriorated to their previous condition.

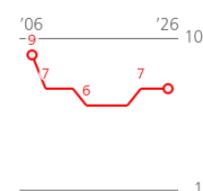
Similarly, despite official commitments to improve service provision, economic activity remains constrained by an unreliable electricity supply, and only about half of the population has access to clean drinking water. Rapid urbanization has fueled the growth of large, densely populated informal settlements, where residents often lack basic services, including water, electricity, sanitation, health care and education.

Angola faces additional challenges stemming from widespread poverty and a shortage of skilled workers. The Catholic University's Center for Scientific Study (CEIC) estimated in a 2024 report that 50.7% of the population lived below the \$1.25-per-day poverty line, a notable increase from the 2019 figure (41.7%). CEIC projected that this trend would likely persist at least through 2027. The southern provinces continue to suffer from recurrent droughts, a problem the government has addressed only inadequately.

Although the COVID-19 pandemic exacerbated these constraints, they were deeply embedded well before 2020. As a result, the pandemic's relative impact was less pronounced than it might have been in a less constrained context. COVID-19-related deaths have also been overshadowed by fatalities from other diseases, including malaria – estimated at 17,000 deaths in 2020, or about 3% of global malaria mortality – HIV/AIDS, with at least 16,000 deaths annually and one of the world's highest mother-to-child transmission rates, at 15%, as well as cholera and tuberculosis. According to the World Health Organization's 2023 tuberculosis report, Angola recorded the highest incidence and fatality figures among Lusophone countries in the previous year, at 119,000 cases and 19,000 deaths. In the first trimester, hospitals in Luanda also reported an increase in malaria deaths, which medical professionals attributed to widespread poverty and inadequate sanitation, including deficient waste disposal.

Structural
constraints

7



Civil society activity in Angola faces substantial structural constraints and deliberate obstacles imposed by the regime. During the 1990s, civic activism expanded markedly, with civil society organizations – primarily churches – playing a visible role in advocating peace and a negotiated end to the conflict. Since the run-up to the first postwar elections in 2008, however, the government has progressively narrowed the space for independent civil society action.

At the same time, authorities have promoted the expansion of what they term “organized civil society,” comprising associations active in ostensibly non-political fields such as education, health, water and sanitation, which deliver services on behalf of the state. In parallel, the government has fostered or created “dependent” civil society organizations that channel funding toward activities designed to enhance the regime’s public image.

Since 2011, independent and loosely organized activism by trade unions and civil society groups has gradually increased. Youth activists organized anti-government demonstrations in 2011 to protest then-President José Eduardo dos Santos’ prolonged hold on power, weak governance and the lack of basic services. Protest activity has generally remained limited in scale, however, as security forces have responded quickly and forcefully to public demonstrations. A brief period of relative openness followed the election of President João Lourenço in 2017, but growing dissatisfaction with his handling of the economic crisis since 2019 has prompted a renewed hardening of the government’s stance toward civic protest. Although the 2022 elections secured Lourenço a second term and dampened opposition activists’ expectations, they also revealed a greater mobilization capacity among civil society groups and opposition parties.

Churches, including the Catholic Church, which had largely aligned with the government until the 2017 elections, have since adopted more critical and independent positions and have openly challenged government policies. Established independent non-governmental organizations – such as Action for Rural Development and Environment (ADRA), Omunga and SOS Habitat – have also remained active in rural and peri-urban areas, successfully pressing the government on specific issues, including rural livelihoods and housing rights.

The MPLA’s overwhelming control over political and economic affairs severely limits space for dissenting voices. Despite the potential for class conflict and social unrest driven by mounting frustration among marginalized urban youth, Angola currently experiences very few open conflicts. While frustration because of the ongoing economic crisis and lack of opportunities is palpable, it has not escalated into violence, and grievances are expressed mainly through peaceful, albeit regularly suppressed, protests.

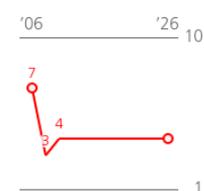
Civil society traditions

6



Conflict intensity

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The separatist rebellion in the northern Cabinda province remains active – albeit localized and low-level – and sporadic incidents of violence occur in the diamond-producing Lunda provinces. These regions are also the only ones where ethnoregional identities play a role in local conflicts. Otherwise, there are no open divisions along ethnic or religious fault lines.

II. Governance Performance

14 | Steering Capability

The dominance of the presidency across all branches of government frequently results in the sidelining of administrative institutions that could otherwise advance reform, often in response to “higher orders.” Historically, strategic prioritization has centered on maintaining political power and maximizing economic gains for the ruling elite – objectives the government has pursued with relative success. By contrast, there is limited institutional capacity or willingness to mobilize domestic or foreign expertise or to ground policymaking in systematic assessment and evidence.

Consequently, policy objectives such as economic diversification away from oil – which has been part of the government’s rhetoric for over a decade – have not materialized because of a lack of follow-through beyond high-level declarations.

President João Lourenço has launched a series of reforms aimed at improving Angola’s international standing, attracting foreign investment and stabilizing the economy. These initiatives include restructuring governance in the oil sector, expanding the regulatory authority of the National Bank of Angola over the banking system and pursuing a highly visible, though selective, anti-corruption campaign. In these areas, strategic priorities have broadly aligned with requirements set by the International Monetary Fund. Any gains in transparency, however, have been undermined by continued practices such as awarding public contracts by presidential decree rather than through competitive tender.

During the period under review, some evidence of effective prioritization was apparent, including increased social spending in the 2022 and 2023 budgets, higher external debt repayments following an upswing in oil prices and another electoral victory for the MPLA in the 2022 elections.

Question
Score

Prioritization

4

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Because of Angola's highly centralized, top-heavy agenda-setting process, policy implementation has been uneven. Measures aligned with regime priorities – such as political stability, internal and external security, and positioning the country as an attractive destination for foreign investment – have generally been implemented relatively quickly. By contrast, policy objectives not directly tied to these priorities, including improving the provision of basic services, creating jobs, expanding social housing (frequently emphasized in MPLA electoral rhetoric) and diversifying the economy away from oil, have been pursued only partially and inconsistently.

Import tariff adjustments in 2021, for example, seemed to have been decided on the spur of the moment rather than on the basis of macroeconomic analyses. Similarly, in June 2023, the government abruptly eliminated fuel subsidies in response to budgetary pressures, raising the price of a liter of gasoline overnight from AOA 160 to AOA 300 (\$0.20 to \$0.35). A loosely defined plan to provide drivers of collective taxis – on which most Angolans depend for daily transportation – with refueling cards worth AOA 7,000 per day was implemented late and unevenly, contributing to widespread confusion and protests.

Efforts to impose greater order and regulation, including Operation Rescue, launched in 2018, and initiatives to formalize informal street vending, have also been carried out sporadically and inconsistently. Although authorities have presented Operation Rescue as a success, street vendors' associations have reported police harassment, violence and extortion, and noted that promised operating permits were often unavailable from municipal administrations.

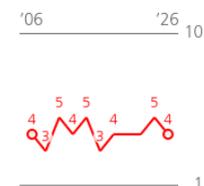
The repeated postponement of local elections – initially justified by financial and logistical constraints, later by the COVID-19 pandemic and more recent logistical concerns – is widely viewed by many Angolans, particularly opposition parties, as a deliberate political strategy rather than the result of genuine capacity constraints.

These patterns reflect three interrelated factors: the concentration of decision-making authority in the presidency, where dissenting views are rarely voiced; the absence of meaningful political and fiscal decentralization, which limits the responsiveness of local administrations to local needs; and public sector appointments – especially at senior levels – that are frequently based more on political loyalty or personal connections than on technical competence.

The impact of the oil price drop in late 2014, which took Angola by surprise, highlighted a lack of policy learning from the previous oil price downturn in 2008/09. During that earlier episode, the government sought a standby credit arrangement with the International Monetary Fund and introduced incremental improvements in budget transparency and spending coordination. These reforms, however, were quickly abandoned once oil prices recovered.

Implementation

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Policy learning

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Development projects in Angola often appear to be driven more by grand political intentions and wishful thinking than by specific empirical needs. There appears to be limited interest in conducting studies or considering existing research findings to shape and adjust policies. For instance, ambitious plans to revitalize cross-border rail cargo routes to export minerals from the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) and Zambia through the Angolan port of Lobito largely failed to materialize because of a lack of rehabilitation on the DRC side.

By contrast, although COVID-19 containment measures were widely perceived by citizens as relatively stringent, they were implemented rapidly and comprehensively during the initial phase of the pandemic in 2020. While these measures appear to have coincided with comparatively low infection and mortality rates, the absence of reliable health data makes it difficult to assess the extent to which these outcomes can be directly attributed to policy interventions.

Since 2018, the government has closely followed orthodox macroeconomic policy prescriptions advanced by multilateral lenders. While this reflects a degree of responsiveness to external pressure, it has also underscored the limited ambition or capacity to develop more innovative policy solutions. Overall, the government's most notable success has been its ability to leverage competition among external partners to its own advantage, most recently amid renewed interest by the United States in Africa and its critical mineral resources as part of broader efforts to counter the perceived influence of China.

15 | Resource Efficiency

Angola's postwar political economy has been marked by excessive and often wasteful public spending, contributing to entrenched patterns of grand corruption. Even after the economic downturn, public resources have continued to be allocated inefficiently. A prominent example is the proposed "surface metro," or tram network, for Luanda. The government has repeatedly announced the imminent start of construction since at least 2020, yet as of this writing, no track has been laid. In its current form, the project is envisioned as a public-private partnership with Siemens, with an estimated total cost of \$3 billion. Authorities have also announced that seven young Angolans are undergoing training in Germany to maintain and repair tram vehicles.

A similar pattern is evident in the case of the new Luanda international airport, which was under construction for more than 13 years some 50 kilometers outside the city at an estimated cost of \$7.5 billion. The airport was finally inaugurated in November 2023 but has drawn criticism for being oversized relative to Angola's needs and for lacking adequate transport links to the capital. To date, it has handled only domestic flights.

Efficient use of assets

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In late 2021, agronomist Fernando Pacheco of the non-governmental organization Action for Rural Development and Environment (ADRA) offered a sharp critique of government planning, likening it to purchasing 500 tractors for war veterans without providing the conditions necessary for their effective use. He cited missing elements such as access to arable land, fuel supplies, spare parts, trained mechanics, marketing channels and conflict-resolution mechanisms to manage tensions within communities.

These challenges are exacerbated by the strong centralization and hierarchical organization of public administration and government, which stifles initiative and hampers autonomous decision-making at the provincial and municipal levels.

Policy formulation and coordination ultimately rest with the president. During dos Santos' presidency, overlapping competencies and competition among the presidency, line ministries and ad hoc commissions created by the president were deliberately encouraged.

However, since taking office in 2017, João Lourenço has taken steps to broaden participation and improve coordination. One early initiative was the establishment of the Commission for the Reform of the Oil Sector, which brought together representatives of major oil companies, the state-owned oil firm Sonangol and the Ministries of Petroleum and Finance. The move was widely welcomed as an important step toward strengthening oversight of the strategic oil sector, as it removed regulatory authority from Sonangol and led to the creation of a separate regulatory body. In addition, under an agreement with the International Monetary Fund to curb public spending, the government reduced the number of ministries from 28 to 21.

Despite these changes, the hierarchical nature of decision-making continues to constrain effective policy coordination. The appointment and dismissal of provincial governors, particularly in the capital, Luanda, illustrate this dynamic. Governors have been removed and reassigned elsewhere to signal dissatisfaction with persistent service delivery failures – most notably in waste management – and with uneven urban planning. Specialized commissions responsible for urban planning and waste collection operate with limited autonomy, while municipal and district administrations have little independent authority and frequently see their decisions overridden by higher levels of government.

Angola's anti-corruption efforts have been extremely selective at best. Since taking office, President João Lourenço has pursued high-profile cases of grand corruption, particularly targeting the children of former President José Eduardo dos Santos and their allies within the public administration. These investigations have resulted in trials, convictions and the seizure and nationalization of economic assets. At the same time, many Angolans have voiced concerns that these actions may have merely replaced entrenched beneficiary networks with new ones. Nevertheless, Lourenço's anti-corruption campaign has helped bolster confidence among foreign investors and multilateral donors.

Policy coordination

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Anti-corruption policy

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Under Lourenço's leadership, Attorney General Hélder Pitta-Grós has made significant progress by initiating investigations of individuals from the dos Santos government. Several of these high-profile cases have resulted in asset seizures and convictions. For example, in August 2020, José Filomeno "Zénú" dos Santos, the former head of Angola's Sovereign Wealth Fund and son of the former president, was sentenced by the Angolan Supreme Court to five years in prison for fraud and influence peddling. In November 2022, an international arrest warrant was issued for Isabel dos Santos, also known as "Africa's richest woman," on charges of embezzlement, qualified fraud, illegal participation in business, criminal association, influence peddling and money-laundering. Additionally, the expiration of former Vice President Manuel Vicente's political immunity allowed an investigation into his dealings with the China Investment Fund.

However, during Lourenço's tenure, certain companies have gained significant economic prominence across sectors nationwide. This has fueled speculation that the president or members of his family may hold undisclosed ownership interests, despite Lourenço's denial in a January 2022 interview with the newspaper *Expansão* that he had benefited from preferential state contracts. Public procurement procedures frequently lack transparency, and the ruling MPLA continues to enjoy privileged access to state resources unavailable to other political parties.

A prominent controversy emerged in March 2023, when eight Supreme Court judges submitted a motion to the Superior Council of the Judicial Magistracy (*Conselho Superior da Magistratura Judicial*, CSMJ) seeking the suspension of the court's president, Joel Leonardo, while a corruption investigation launched by the attorney general's office was underway. The CSMJ, chaired by Leonardo himself, announced it would review the motion's legality. Only hours before being formally challenged by his colleagues, Leonardo reportedly appointed several family members to positions within the court's administration. In April 2023, investigative journalist Rafael Marques reported that Leonardo had also ordered the unfreezing of the bank accounts of Higinio Carneiro while Carneiro was under investigation for corruption and money-laundering. In May 2023, the Angolan Bar Association (*Ordem dos Advogados*) formally called on President Lourenço to "invite" Leonardo to resign from his post, "without prejudice to the presumption of innocence," while the investigation continued. The request followed Lourenço's public expression of concern in March about an investigation into the president of the audit court, Exalgina Gambôa, who subsequently stepped down. In June 2023, however, Leonardo remained in office, joined the president's official reception committee and authorized a tender for food procurement cards for Supreme Court judges. According to calculations by *Novo Jornal*, the cards would allow judges to spend the equivalent of about \$1,200 per month, in addition to already substantial salaries and in-kind benefits.

Beyond high-level corruption, petty corruption remains widespread, particularly in interactions with public administration and law enforcement. At the same time, citizens have increasingly begun to report attempted bribery.

16 | Consensus-Building

There is broad consensus among political actors and civil society that democracy is the preferred form of government and that its consolidation represents a shared long-term objective. Within this framework, however, the ruling MPLA appears to view its continued hold on power as both legitimate and permanent. While limited political opposition and dissent are formally tolerated, the party has a long-established record of suppressing initiatives and actors perceived as posing a threat to its dominance.

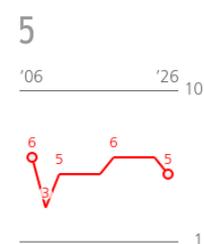
A similar consensus exists around the principle of a market economy, although views differ on the degree of redistribution the state should pursue. In practice, however, the market system remains structurally tilted in favor of a relatively small, politically connected elite. While President João Lourenço has taken initial steps to dismantle oligopolistic structures established under his predecessor, it remains unclear whether these efforts will translate into a genuine broadening of market opportunities for Angolans across the political spectrum or merely result in the replacement of one group of beneficiaries with another.

President João Lourenço initially portrayed himself as a reformer and sought engagement with opposition parties and civil society actors, an approach that was particularly visible at the outset of his first term. During the period under review, however, there was a clear shift toward a more confrontational posture toward regime critics. Protesters were met with violence, and opposition parties faced administrative and financial constraints, especially in the run-up to the 2022 elections.

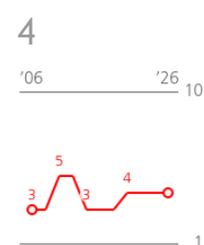
The MPLA has a long-standing practice of co-opting or neutralizing potential challengers, including figures within the military hierarchy and civil society activists, although the latter are generally critical of the regime rather than of democracy itself. In practice, the MPLA leadership remains the principal barrier to true democratic progress.

At the same time, non-state actors such as the separatist FLEC in Cabinda and the autonomist Movement for the Lunda-Tchokwe Protectorate are labeled anti-democratic by the government because they advocate independence or greater autonomy from the Angolan state, at times through violent means. Nevertheless, the government's own democratic credentials remain contested, and these movements are largely contained through military force.

Consensus on goals



Anti-democratic actors



The primary cleavage in Angola is social, dividing a large share of the population that continues to live in poverty from a small, affluent elite, partially buffered by a limited urban middle class. This divide also reflects a pronounced gap between urban and rural areas. Inequality intensified during the later years of José Eduardo dos Santos' rule, contributing to rising social tension. Some of this pressure eased following the election of João Lourenço, who initially adopted a reform-oriented approach and responded to several core demands raised by parliamentary and civic opposition actors.

Ethnic and regional divisions have largely been absent from formal political competition since the end of the civil war. Both the MPLA and UNITA have avoided mobilizing such cleavages, reflecting a shared interest in preventing renewed conflict. With the exception of separatist movements in Cabinda and autonomist movements in the Lunda regions, the main political parties emphasize national unity. Only the minor opposition Social Renovation Party (PRS) advocates a federal model that would grant greater autonomy to the provinces.

Although internal inequalities are generally downplayed or treated as taboo in public discourse, the government has at times instrumentalized latent suspicion toward foreigners to advance its own interests. This has been evident in periodic expressions of anti-Islamic sentiment by certain regime supporters.

The government occasionally engages with civil society actors and opposition parties but generally considers only those interests that align with its own policy agenda. At the local level, consultation mechanisms exist, including Social Consultation and Coordination Councils (CACS). Academic studies and research by non-governmental organizations, however, have questioned their effectiveness in influencing local policymaking.

Although President João Lourenço made several symbolic overtures toward critics during his first term, suggesting a potential break with past practices, such consultations have remained sporadic and have not resulted in substantive policy change. Overall, policymaking in Angola continues to follow a top-down model directed by the presidency. For example, in January 2023, the Ministry of Territorial Administration announced that it had completed public consultations and had received positive feedback on a proposal to divide two existing provinces to create four new ones. Several civil society organizations subsequently stated that they had not been consulted or invited to provide input. The new territorial division nonetheless entered into force on January 1, 2025.

Cleavage /
conflict
management

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Public
consultation

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A comprehensive reconciliation process remains largely absent from public discourse in Angola. The government promotes a dominant narrative that frames the civil war as a national tragedy that affected the entire population and resulted primarily in widespread infrastructure destruction and loss of life. To avoid acknowledging its role as a belligerent in the conflict, the state has effectively reduced reconciliation to the material task of postwar reconstruction.

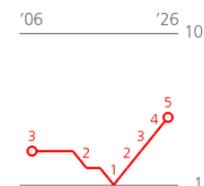
However, the government regularly invokes the civil war legacy of UNITA as a former rebel movement when the opposition criticizes the postwar political or economic order. Such criticism is often portrayed as an attempt to destabilize the country and undermine economic recovery.

Despite this, some positive signs of reconciliation emerged in 2019. President João Lourenço authorized the reburial of the remains of Jonas Savimbi, UNITA's former leader, who was killed by government forces in 2002, an event that effectively ended the war. Until then, Savimbi's remains had been held in a secret location. In addition, the remains of other senior UNITA figures who died in South Africa during the conflict were repatriated for burial in Angola.

Beyond the civil war, one of the most divisive episodes in Angola's modern history was the popular uprising of May 27, 1977, widely described as a failed coup attempt. The uprising was followed by violent reprisals carried out by the government against alleged conspirators and their families, including members of the ruling MPLA. For decades, the official response to these events was characterized by denial and fear, rendering May 27 a taboo subject for an entire generation. However, in a significant departure from previous practice, President Lourenço created a commission in April 2019 (Comissão de Reconciliação em Memória das Vítimas dos Conflitos Políticos, CIVICOP), coordinated by the minister of justice and human rights, to draw up a general plan to honor the victims of the political conflicts that took place in Angola between independence in 1975 and the end of the war in 2002. One of the commission's first tasks was to find and identify the mortal remains of some key "coup leaders" of the infamous 27 de Maio in 1977. As a result of this process, in May 2021 Lourenço issued a public apology for the state's role in the 1977 repression. He acknowledged that the government's response had been "disproportionate," asked forgiveness from the victims' families on behalf of the state and authorized the exhumation and return of remains to relatives. During this gesture of reconciliation, he also called on other actors involved in Angola's political conflicts – including those responsible for killings and attacks attributed to UNITA during the civil war – to acknowledge past abuses and pursue reconciliation.

Reconciliation

5



17 | International Cooperation

Angola has a mixed record in its engagement with multilateral assistance. The end of the civil war in 2002 coincided with the onset of a global commodity supercycle, generating substantial oil revenues that enabled the government to pursue an ambitious postwar reconstruction program without recourse to international financial institutions. As a result, the government could avoid the political conditions typically associated with loans from these institutions.

However, this approach shifted in 2009, when a decline in global oil prices prompted the government to seek a standby credit arrangement with the International Monetary Fund. While this marked a departure from earlier policy, momentum toward greater fiscal transparency faded once oil prices recovered. In 2015, negotiations with the IMF were abandoned after then-President José Eduardo dos Santos publicly declared that Angola did not require IMF support and instead turned to new borrowing from China.

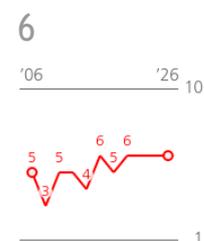
Faced with a persistent economic crisis, President João Lourenço's government initiated new negotiations with the IMF, leading to the signing of an Extended Fund Facility (EFF) agreement in August 2018. The \$3.7 billion program includes technical support from the IMF to broaden the taxpayer base, reduce wasteful spending and enhance fiscal transparency. It was part of the government's macroeconomic stabilization program launched in January 2018. Subsequent annual reviews of the program have been successful, resulting in additional disbursements under the agreement.

Additionally, Lourenço successfully renegotiated debt repayment schedules with bilateral lenders, particularly China, and capitalized on renewed interest by the United States in Africa to secure significant financial support from the outgoing administration of Joe Biden for the development of the Lobito Corridor.

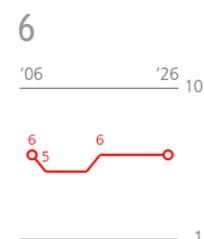
Angola's economic credibility suffered significantly in the final years of dos Santos's presidency. This was due primarily to contract and corruption risks as well as the Angolan economy's overall poor performance. One of President João Lourenço's key political priorities upon taking office was to improve Angola's international image, an effort that has met with relative success. This improvement is attributable to reforms launched by his administration, including a high-profile – though selective – anti-corruption campaign targeting figures from the previous government and the successful negotiation of financial assistance with the International Monetary Fund. Higher global oil prices have also supported this turnaround by drawing international investors back to the country.

In the realm of international politics, the dos Santos administration sought to position Angola as a regional power broker, with the president acting as an elder statesman engaged in conflict mediation in the subregion. Although Angola's record in peace

Effective use of support



Credibility



brokerage has been uneven, the country was elected to serve a two-year term on the United Nations Security Council from 2015 to 2017. President Lourenço has continued this outward-facing role, with mixed results. Notable initiatives include the deployment of Angolan troops to Lesotho in 2018 to help address a political crisis and repeated public endorsements of regional peace efforts at international summits. By contrast, Angola's contribution to the Southern African Development Community mission in Mozambique was limited to 20 troops and a single transport aircraft.

In 2022, President Lourenço received the title “Champion of Peace and Reconciliation in Africa” at an African Union summit for his commitment to resolving political-military crises in Lesotho and the Great Lakes region over the previous four years. Angola also committed to the African Continental Free Trade Area, announcing in January a gradual phaseout of import duties on goods from other member states. In 2023, the government further liberalized its visa regime.

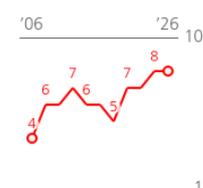
Angola regularly participates in the United Nations Universal Periodic Review (UPR) of its human rights record and successfully completed the 2020 review in Geneva. The country is a party to numerous international treaties and arbitration frameworks, most of which have yet to be tested in practice. President Lourenço has continued to build on this international engagement, placing greater emphasis on regional cooperation than his predecessor.

Angola is a member of several regional and international organizations, including the Southern African Development Community (SADC), the Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS), the International Conference for the Great Lakes Region (ICGLR), the Community of Portuguese-Speaking Countries (CPLP), the African Union (AU) and the Gulf of Guinea Council (GGC). Angola is also a member of the World Trade Organization. It belonged to the Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries until late 2023, when it withdrew, stating that the organization no longer served its interests.

One of the most notable departures in Angola's foreign policy under President João Lourenço has been its engagement with SADC. Previously, Angola's participation in regional organizations was often limited and driven primarily by narrow national interests. Early in his tenure, Lourenço signed a visa-free travel agreement with South Africa, marking a significant step toward deeper regional integration. In 2020, Angola applied to join the SADC Free Trade Area, signaling a stronger commitment to regional economic cooperation. Ongoing negotiations with Namibia on the joint management of national parks and shared fishing grounds further underscore this approach. In January 2020, Angola also decided to share its satellite infrastructure with other SADC member states. More recently, Angola has cooperated with the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Zambia on the development of the Lobito Development Corridor.

Regional cooperation

8



Angola has a record of effective bilateral cooperation with a range of partners, particularly during the economic boom years. Western multinational companies played a key role in developing expertise in the oil sector, while governments in Europe and the United States often prioritized commercial interests over political considerations. Although some European countries and the United States have supported non-oil development initiatives, such as agribusiness and agritech training programs, these efforts have generally remained secondary to oil-related cooperation.

During the Cold War, Angola established security and intelligence cooperation with Eastern Bloc countries, a pattern that has expanded in recent years to include Israel. Chinese oil-backed credit lines played a central role in financing postwar infrastructure development. Under Lourenço, cooperation with South Africa has intensified and improved. Angola has also worked with countries such as Cuba, Russia, Vietnam and Brazil across sectors including education, health, security and defense, and infrastructure, although some of these programs were curtailed following the oil price collapse.

Strategic Outlook

The MPLA's continued dominance over political, administrative and state security institutions remains the main obstacle to genuine democratic transformation. The ruling party appears both institutionally ill-prepared and politically unwilling to address the country's most acute economic and sociopolitical challenges.

Since 2015, Angola has been mired in a deep recession from which it has yet to emerge. Austerity measures negotiated with the International Monetary Fund in exchange for new lending have been welcomed by creditors and investors but have significantly deepened hardship for much of the population. These "reforms," including the gradual removal of fuel subsidies and the introduction of value-added and personal income taxes, have disproportionately affected the poorest segments of society, which are already struggling with rising living costs and inflation. Despite repeated commitments to diversify the economy away from oil, tangible progress has remained limited. Although the oil price shock should have prompted greater investment in agriculture, domestic industry, education and health care, the government continues to allocate a substantial share of public spending to debt servicing and defense.

The postponement of local elections due to the pandemic dealt a further setback to the advancement of democracy in Angola. These local elections, which were provided for in the 2010 constitution but have never been held, would constitute an important step toward decentralization and provide opposition parties with opportunities to govern at the local level. The outcome of the 2022 general elections, which returned the MPLA to power amid credible opposition challenges, is likely to further weaken public confidence in democratic institutions and elected officials.

Meaningful progress would require constructive engagement with both parliamentary and extraparliamentary opposition forces, greater openness and independence in institutions such as the National Electoral Commission and the judiciary – long dominated by the MPLA – and the holding of local elections that enable real decentralization, including a degree of fiscal autonomy.

Rather than adhering rigidly to macroeconomic orthodoxy and prioritizing austerity, the government could reassess its spending priorities to improve living conditions and invest more decisively in transforming Angola's oil-dependent, elite-centered economic model.

In sum, while Angola has made formal advances toward multiparty democracy and a market economy since the transition from socialism in the late 1980s, the ruling elite continues to consolidate political and economic power through institutions and practices that function largely as democratic façades.