



Universiteit  
Leiden  
The Netherlands

## **Burundi at 60**

Dietz, A.J.; Ehrhardt, D.W.L.; Berckmoes, L.H.

### **Citation**

Dietz, A. J., Ehrhardt, D. W. L., & Berckmoes, L. H. (2022). Burundi at 60. *Ascl Infosheet*. Retrieved from <https://hdl.handle.net/1887/3486290>

Version: Publisher's Version

License: [Leiden University Non-exclusive license](#)

Downloaded from: <https://hdl.handle.net/1887/3486290>

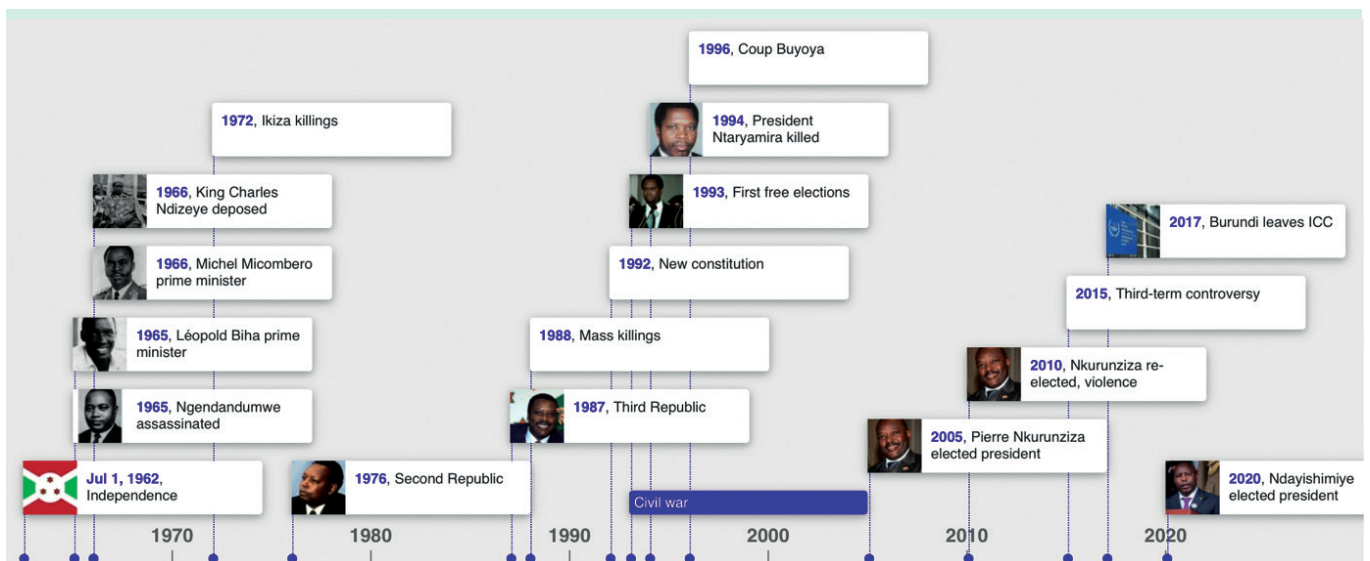
**Note:** To cite this publication please use the final published version (if applicable).

# Burundi at 60

## Political history

Burundi's current borders largely coincide with the territorial limits of the Burundi Kingdom around 1850. In 1903, Burundi became part of German East Africa after the fierce resistance of King Mwezi Gisabo failed due to the Germans' manipulation of internal divisions and their use of machinegun fire. After the First World War, in 1924, Belgium officially

accepted the mandate over 'Ruanda-Urundi' obtained from the League of Nations (later Rwanda and Burundi). On 1 July 1962 both Rwanda and Burundi became politically independent. Rwanda became a Republic after a revolt in 1959 made an end to the indigenous Kingdom. Burundi remained a Kingdom until the army successfully staged a coup in November 1966, when also that country became a Republic.



Source: Encyclopedia Britannica

**Figure 1: Political timeline Burundi since independence**

Just prior to Independence, the Ganwa prince Louis Rwagasore, who served as the second prime minister of Burundi and who pushed for independence and national unity from Belgian, was assassinated by a Greek mercenary probably with involvement of the Belgian representation in Burundi. His death entailed a troubled start of the country when it attained independence, 1 July 1962. During the first years of independence, under the two last kings, Mwambutsa IV and Ntare V, Burundi was ruled by a succession of prime ministers from the political party that had been led by Rwagasore, namely Union for National Progress (UPRONA). Instability in these years led to the murder of one of the UPRONA Hutu prime ministers, Ngendandumwe in 1965. Political instability

ultimately led to the deposition of the last monarch, King Charles Ndzizeye (or Ntare V) in 1966. In the new republic, Tutsi dominated politically, and tensions between Tutsi and Hutu intensified. The Ikiza killings in 1972 stand out, when a rebellion staged in southern Burundi sparked genocidal violence targeting especially educated Hutu, with several hundred thousand dead. The violence caused many Hutu to seek refuge in neighboring countries, particularly Tanzania, and entrenched tensions between the Hutu and Tutsi groups.

The coup of 1987 brought to power Major Pierre Buyoya, who was from the same region and even hill (colline) as his two predecessors. He established the Third Republic and, pushed by international

sponsors, attempted to liberalise Burundi's politics. Yet progress was slow, and further violence ensued in 1988, when attacks on Tutsi communities in the northern part of Burundi led to heavy reprisals against Hutu communities. Despite setbacks, Buyoya led the process of constitutional reform, and the 1992 constitution facilitated the country's first free elections in 1993. Contrary to the expectations of those in positions of influence, primarily Tutsi, Melchior Ndadaye, a Hutu, was elected president. He was assassinated only three months later, in an attempted coup in November 1993. His death sparked the start of the country's decade-long civil war. Politics remained unstable during the war, for example with the death of president Ntaryamira in 1994 who died with Rwandan president Habyarimana in the plane crash that set off the Genocide against the Tutsi in Rwanda, and the coup 1996 by Buyoya, who sought to bring stability in the country ravaged by war, but who by many was regarded as responsible for many of the killings. International sanctions, meanwhile, depressed Burundi's economic situation.

Peace talks began to produce longer-term results in the early 2000s, as a new power-sharing constitution was implemented (2005), elections produced a new Hutu president (Pierre Nkurunziza) from one of the largest rebel groups (CNDD-FDD, National Council for the Defense of Democracy-Forces for the Defense of Democracy), and the last Hutu rebel group finally signed peace agreements in 2008. Stability followed, and Burundi engaged actively with regional and international organisations to buttress its economy. Nkurunziza's government, however, allowed increasingly limited political freedom, especially after the 2010 elections, where, after the withdrawal of many opposition parties, he was reelected with over 90% of the vote. In 2015, Nkurunziza pushed for a controversial third term as president. These sparked popular protests especially in the then capital Bujumbura. The protests were brutally suppressed and, despite international pressure and a coup attempt, he was re-elected in July of that year. Burundi found itself again in a political crisis, leading to more than a thousand deaths, many disappeared and more than three hundred thousand refugees in the region. Meanwhile, international sanctions further impoverished Burundi, which was already among the poorest of the world. October 2016 then saw Burundi withdraw from the ICC, as the first country to do so in the wake of concerns over the alleged ICC bias against African countries. Nkurunziza passed away in June 2020, only days before the inauguration of the new president, Evariste Ndayishimiye, who is reputed to be a hard-liner of the same party.

### Political philately



1. 1884-1916: part of German East Africa;
2. 1916: Belgian Occupation of 'Urundi';
3. 1922-1962: Ruanda-Urundi as a Belgian protectorate.



4. Independent Kingdom 1962-1966
5. Republic, 1966 onwards

### Conflict, state fragility, and travel risks

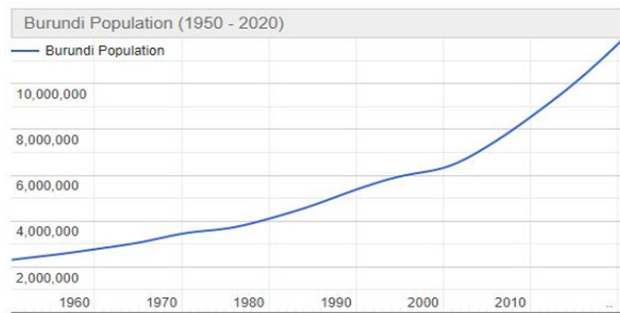
The Fragile States Index of the Washington-based Fund for Peace puts Burundi in the 20th position of 'worst performers', with an overall score of 95.4 in 2022, which indicates an 'alert' position (the worst score can be 120) (<https://fragilestatesindex.org/excel/>). The index consists of twelve variables, and for Burundi the most worrying variables are the lack of state legitimacy (9.4 out of 10), the bad human rights situation (8.9) and the extreme demographic pressure (8.9). While demographic pressure has been worrisome already since the 1960s, especially the controversial elections and violent repression of the political opposition and civil society since 2010 and more so in 2015 help explain these troubling figures. The least worrying variable is 'human flight and brain drain' (5,5). But even this 'best score' is close to the 'warning' category. The travel advice of the Netherlands' Ministry of Foreign Affairs in July 2022 is mostly 'yellow', indicating a relatively safe environment for travellers, with some security risks. However, for the northwestern boundary with the Democratic Republic of the Congo and with Rwanda the travel advice is 'red', indicating very severe security risks due to the presence of rebel and state authorized armed groups in these border areas. See: <https://www.nederlandwereldwijd.nl/reisadvies/burundi>.

### Demography

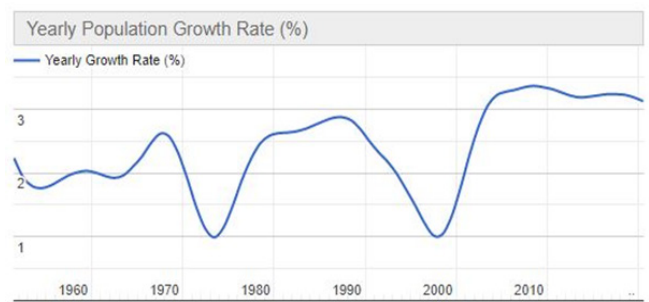
Burundi's population increased more than fourfold between 1960 and 2020, from 2.8 million in 1960 to 11.9 million in 2020, mostly through high fertility rates and longer life expectancy for both males and females (also because of rapidly improving child and infant mortality figures). Population growth figures were always more than two percent per year (with the

exception of 1970-1976, and 1993-2001, informed by mass violence – a ‘selective genocide’ targeting mainly Hutu intellectuals in 1972 – and the decade-long civil war that started in 1993), and beyond three percent per after 2002. Currently, the average growth rate is around 3.1 percent per year. Total fertility was around 6.9 children per woman in 1960; afterwards it diminished somewhat, with currently 5.5 births per average woman in Burundi during her lifetime. As a result of these demographic developments Burundi has a very skewed population pyramid, with many more young people than adults and elderly people. The median age changed from 18.3 years old in 1960 to 17.3 years old in 2020, with the lowest figures at the height of the civil war in 1995 (14.9 years, one of

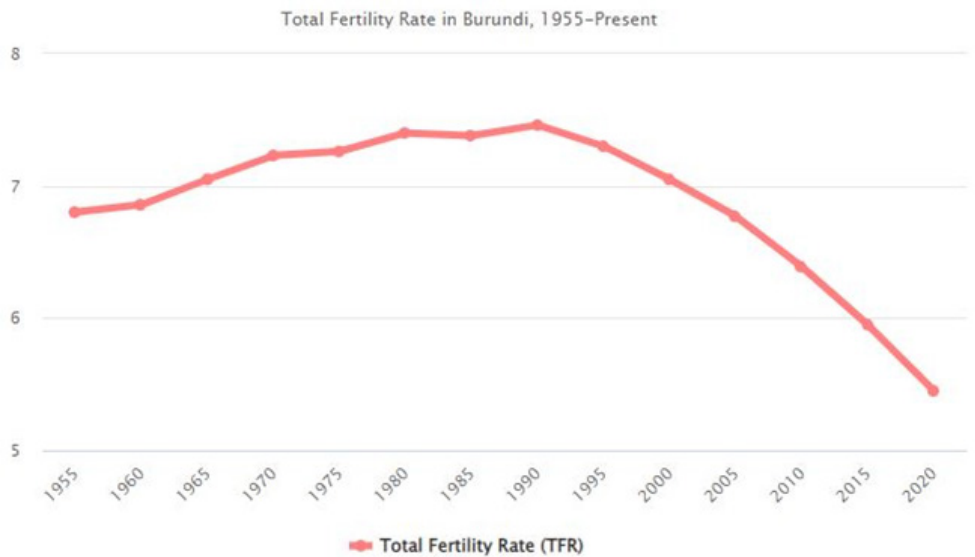
the lowest median age figures ever measured in Africa). Urbanisation has always been very low, although on the increase, and currently 14 % of the population lives in cities. The urban population increased 28 times between 1960 and 2020. The expectation of UN demographers is that Burundi will have 25.3 million people in 2050, but also then only with 28% of these inhabitants living in cities. Population densities in the rural areas are very high, though. Currently the population density for the country as a whole is among the highest in Africa, with 463 people/km<sup>2</sup>, and in 2050 this will have increased to almost 1000 inhabitants per km<sup>2</sup> (Burundi’s total area is only 25,680 km<sup>2</sup>).



**Burundi Population, 1950 - 2000**

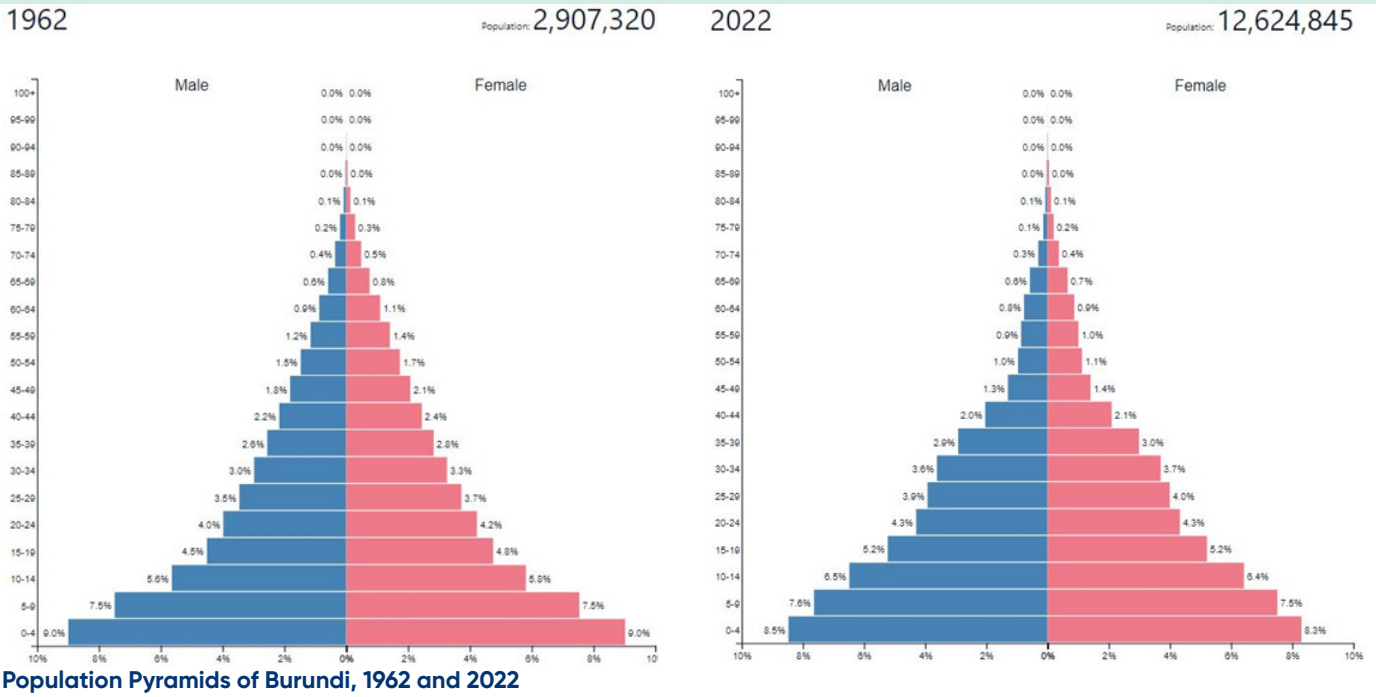


**Yearly Population Growth Rate (%)**



**Total Fertility Rate in Burundi, 1955 - Present**

Source: <https://www.worldometers.info/world-population/burundi-population/>



Population Pyramids of Burundi, 1962 and 2022

Source: <https://www.populationpyramid.net/burundi/>

	1960	2020
Population	2.8 million	11.9 million
Fertility rate	6.9 children per women	5.5 children per women
Life expectancy (males)	40 years	61 years
idem (females)	44 years	65 years
Median age	18.3 years	17.3 years
Infant mortality (<1 yr)	149/1000	37/1000
Under-5 mortality	251/1000	54/1000
Urbanisation rate	2%	14%
Urban population	0.06 million	1.6 million
Rural population	2.7 million	10.3 million

Source: Worldometers

**Demographic statistics, Burundi as a whole, 1960 and 2020**

**Human Development Index, Burundi as a whole, 1990 and 2019**

Human Development Index data exist since 1990, with annual UNDP updates. In 1990, Burundi's Human Development Index started at a level of 0.298, one of the lowest in Africa. The HDI consists of a health index, an income index and an education index, while UNDP also provides data about life expectancy, and some other indicators. For Burundi the various components of the HDI show very different trends: from a strong improvement in the education index to a severe deterioration in the income index. Between 1990 and 2019 Burundi's population increased from 2.8 million people to 11.9 million people. The increase in the HDI between 1990 and 2019 (from 0.0.298 to 0.434) can mainly be attrib-

ted to improvements in education (and in the 'mean years of schooling', and 'expected years of schooling' variables). After the civil war, primary school fees were abolished to improve access to education particularly among historically disadvantaged population groups. At some distance, HDI figures increased due to improvements in health, which can also be seen in the data for life expectancy. However, the economic situation in the country can be described as bad and worsening, partly due to the crippling effects of the civil war (1993-2005) and recent political crisis (2015) in an overall context of lacking economic governance.

	1990	2019	2019/1990
Health Index	0.428	0.640	1.50
Income Index	0.365	0.305	0.84
GNI/capita *	7.025	6.625	0.94
Education Index	0.169	0.418	2.47
Mean years of schooling	1.4	3.3	2.36
Expected years of schooling	4.4	11.1	2.52
Life Expectancy	48	62	1.29
Total HDI Index	0.298	0.434	1.46

Source: <https://globaldatalab.org>

### Burundi: HDI composition and life expectancy, data for 1990 and 2019

\* GNI/capita in US \$ of 2011, PPP.

#### International migration

In 2019 623,000 people who were born in Burundi lived outside the country (ca 5% of Burundi's total population of 12.2 million people inside and outside the country during that year), of which 587,000 elsewhere in Africa (mainly in Tanzania, Rwanda, the DRC, and Uganda, in that order), and 36,000 outside Africa (only 0.3% of Burundi's total population: most of them in Belgium and the USA; UN migration report 2019). In 2019 Burundi had around 321,000 immigrants, according to the UN demographic statistics. The registered immigrants mainly came from the DRC, Rwanda, and Tanzania (UN Migration Report 2019). Between 1990 and 2020 the number of outmigrants went up and down as a result of the human rights crises in the country, which caused various refugee crises. Between 1990 and 2000 the situation became especially problematic because of the country-wide civil war, with 337,000 outmigrants in 1990, 540,000 in 1995 and 758,000 in 2000. After 2000 the internal situation did somewhat improve: from 615,000 outmigrants in 2005, when a democra-

tically elected transition government was installed, to 284,000 in 2010. And after 2010 when controversial elections took place and a new political crisis following popular uprisings in 2015 as well as severe economic problems, the situation became problematic again: 462,000 in 2015 and 623,000 in 2019 (UN Migration Report 2019).

#### Trade statistics, Burundi: exports and imports, 2020

In 2020, Burundi exported products for a total value of \$ 218 million, and services for a total of \$ 105 million, and imported products and services for a total value of \$ 1141 million (products mostly from China, Saudi Arabia, India, Tanzania and the UAE, in that order), resulting in a very negative trade balance. Leading import products were petroleum (products), medicaments, fertilizers, sugars, and motor cars, in that order.

The most important export products and most important export destinations in 2020 were:

Main export products (value in \$ million)		Main export destinations (value in \$ million)	
Gold	91	UAE	73
Coffee	44	Uganda	34
Tea	23	DRC	24
Iron+	6	Pakistan	10
Tobacco products	6	Tanzania	8

Source: <https://oecworld/en/profile/country/bdi>

Gold production in Burundi has been erratic, with an average production level of 500,000 kg/year between 1990 and 2020, but with 2.8 million kg in 2003, and 1.0 million kg in 2017, but much less in some other years (at least as far as registration took place). In 2019 gold production was 567,000 kgs.

#### Protected areas and Forests

Burundi currently has three national parks, eight national reserves, one Ramsar site, and two tropical mountain forests (<http://www.parks.it/world/BI/index.html>). According to Protectedplanet, currently 207,000 hectares are protected land areas (8% of

Burundi's total land area; and this source mentions 21 protected areas <https://www.protectedplanet.net/country/bdi> ). Burundi had 94,000 hectares of forests in 2020 (<https://rainforests.mongabay.com/stats/Burundi.htm>), so forests currently cover less than 4% of Burundi's total land area, with a gradual decrease during the last few decades.

#### Agricultural Burundi

Crop Area (in 1000 hectares), and total production (in 1000 tonnes), 1961 and 2020, in the order of the crop areas in 2019:

Crops	1961		2021		2020/1961	
	Area	Prod.	Area	Prod.	Area	Prod.
Beans(dry)	210	230	746	461	3.6	2.0
Cassava	41	370	304	2440	7.4	6.6
Cashewnuts	-	-	278	301	+++	+++
Maize	99	95	224	260	2.3	2.7
Plantains and bananas	190	1000	205	1595	1.1	1.6
Sweet potatoes	60	380	88	950	1.5	2.5
Other vegetables	19	105	60	489	3.2	4.7
Sorghum	20	20	47	25	2.4	1.3
Rice, millet, wheat and other cereals	19	59	40	181	2.1	3.1
Potatoes	8	30	30	295	3.8	9.8
Other fruits	9	37	25	129	2.8	3.5
Coffee (green)	18	14	18	16	1.0	1.1
Groundnuts	4	3	15	9	3.8	3.0
Tea	-	-	12	16	+++	+++
Taro/Cocoyam & Yams	20	101	11	246	0.6	2.4
Oil palm fruit	1	6	9	85	9.0	14.2
Peas (dry)	52	29	3	14	0.1	0.5
Sugarcane	-	-	3	196	+++	+++
Other crops	16	10	4	3	0.3	0.3
<b>Total</b>	<b>786</b>	<b>2.489</b>	<b>2.122</b>	<b>7.708</b>	<b>2.7</b>	<b>3.1</b>

2020/1961: **red** = 2020 is below 1961; **green**: 2020 is more than 4.2 times the 1961 figures (that is: more than population increase in Burundi from 2.9 million to 11.9 million between 1961 and 2020); **black**: in-between. Source: Faostat data.

Burundi's land area is 2.6 million hectares, and its crop area increased from 31% to 83% of its land area between 1961 and 2020, an expansion of 270%. Due to yield increases for most crops production figures increased somewhat more, but in total considerably below Burundi's 420% population increase between 1961 and 2020. New crops, that did well, were sugarcane, tea, and particularly cashewnuts. Existing crops for which the production volumes have increased faster than population growth were oil palm fruit, potatoes, vegetables other than beans and peas, and cassava. However, important food crops, like beans, maize, plantains and bananas, sorghum, and other roots and tubers could not or not at all keep pace with population increases.

If we look at the total food value of cereals, beans and peas, roots, tubers and plantains/bananas (ignoring all other food crops for this calculation)<sup>1</sup>, in terms of food production values Burundi can currently no longer feed its population with a healthy diet (total food value for these crops in 2020: 2052 Cal/day/capita, of which 62% came from roots, tubers, and

plantains/bananas). In 1961 the food situation was much better: with a total food value for these crops of only 3,250 Cal/day/capita, of which 55% came from roots, tubers, and plantains/bananas. However, food production figures don't tell the whole story: there is food wastage between production and consumption, and some food is being used for animals, for beer production, and as seed for the next year. Burundi's crop production history of the last sixty years must be one of the few in Africa in which cereals have not become more important in terms of overall food value than roots, tubers and plantains.

The numbers of all live animals, measured in stock units, all expanded, and for goats and sheep, and particularly for pigs (much) more rapidly than population increases. However, because of the slow growth of cattle numbers, total livestock units only increased with 257% (compared with 420% for population growth). Per capita the numbers of live animals in the country (measured in livestock units) diminished from 0.13 to 0.08. Most Burundian farmers are predominantly crop farmers-with-some animals.

1 And using 3,600 Cal/kg for cereals and beans/peas, and a conservative 1,000 Cal/kg for roots, tubers and plantains/bananas.

	1961	2020	2020/1961
Cattle	430	628	X1.46
Chicken	1100	2569	X2.34
Goats	470	3366	X7.2
Pigs	4	847	X211.75
Sheep	160	747	X4.67
Livestock unites	375	963	X2.57

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

**Livestock numbers (x 1000)**

**Urban Burundi**

Burundi's urban population increased from only 100,000 people in 1961 (only 2% of its national population at Independence) to 1.6 million in 2020 (14%). Growth has been rapid for Bujumbura and all

other current cities that were still (small) villages in 1960. Data for urban population numbers show very different results, though, and it is unclear what 'city' definition these sources use.



Source: <https://www.istockphoto.com/nl/vector/burundi-politi-cdi-mop-qm525738199-525944226>



Cities (and region)	Population in thousands of inhabitants			
	Population in 1960	Census in 2008	Wikipedia (in 2022)	Worldometers, city, as given in 2022
Bujumbura	46	497	1124	332
Gitega		42	126	23
Muyinga		10	96	71
Ngozi		40	87	22
Ruyigi		7	77	38
Kayanza		22	71	20
Bururi		4	57	20
Muramvya		5	51	18
Makamba		9	45	20
Rumonge		36	..	..

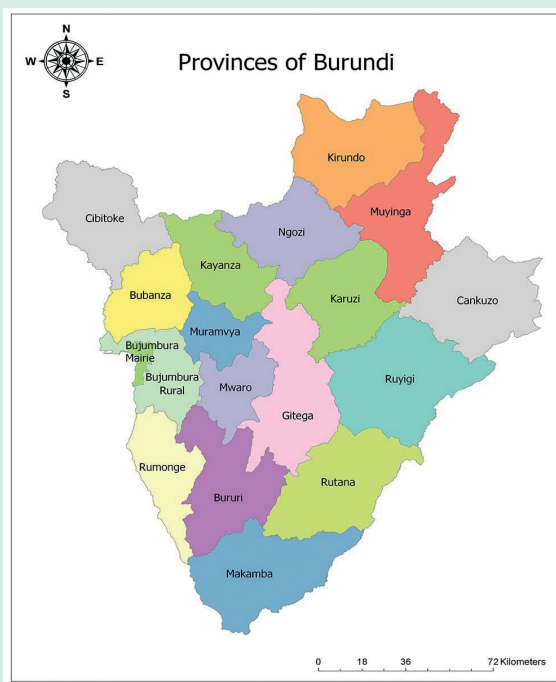
### Major urban areas in Burundi

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List\\_of\\_cities\\_in\\_Burundi](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_cities_in_Burundi). For historical data and trends for Bujumbura see: <https://worldpopulationreview.com/world-cities/bujumbura-population>. The data for the latest population census (in 2008) come from <https://www.citypopulation.de/en/burundi/cities/>. This source also gives the results of the 1990 census.

### Regional Inequality

Region/ Région	Population x 1000		'19/'90
	1990	2019	
East	384	1432	x3.7
Middle	1197	2284	x1.9
North	1790	3437	x1.9
South	878	1735	x2.0
West	1190	2644	x2.2
<b>Total Burundi</b>	<b>5439</b>	<b>11531</b>	<b>x2.1</b>

East = Cankuzo, Rutana and Ruyigi  
Middle = Gitega, Karuri, Muramvya, and Mwaro  
North = Kayanza, Kirundo, Muyinga, and Ngozi  
South = Bururi and Makamba  
West = Bubanza, Buja Rural, Cibitoke and Mairie de Bujumbura



Map: <https://cdn.mapppr.co/wp-content/uploads/2021/04/image-356.jpeg>

Burundi has 18 administrative regions, called Provinces. The Globaldatalab website uses 5 Regions. Between 1990 and 2019 all regions experienced population growth; the highest growth (almost fourfold) happened in the Eastern Region, bordering Tanzania. The population of all other regions more or less doubled between 1990 and 2019. If we look at the regional data for human development, which for Burundi exist since 1990, we see that improvements have taken place everywhere between 1990 and 2019. Both in 1990 and in 2019 the best conditions

existed in the western region (with Bujumbura) for the HDI index as a whole, and for education. For life expectancy the best conditions existed in the southern region. The worst conditions existed in the northern region (bordering Rwanda) for all variables, except for the education index in 1990 (when the worst education conditions existed in the eastern region). Regional inequality in the country has never been very extreme. But the inequality has increased between 1990 and 2019 for all variables.

Region	Subregional HDI			Life expectancy			Education index		
	1990	2019	19/90	1990	2019	19/90	1990	2019	19/90
East	0.282	0.417	1.48	49	63	1.29	0.146	0.369	2.53
Middle	0.303	0.437	1.44	48	63	1.31	0.178	0.424	2.38
North	0.281	0.385	1.37	47	58	1.23	0.150	0.344	2.29
South	0.306	0.468	1.53	50	65	1.30	0.170	0.465	2.74
West	0.319	0.483	1.51	48	63	1.31	0.195	0.503	2.58
Total	0.298	0.434	1.46	48	62	1.29	0.169	0.418	2.47
Regional inequality	1.14	1.25		1.06	1.12		1.34	1.46	

Source: <https://globaldatalab.org> 50

If we compare 2019 with 1990, the education situation has improved significantly, with the fastest improvements in the southern region, and the relatively slowest improvements in the northern region. However, compared with many other African countries, the education index is very low. Life expectancy

also improved, with the fastest improvements in the middle and western regions, and slow improvements in the northern region. The subregional human development as a whole also improved, with the fastest improvements in the southern region, but, again, relatively slow improvements in the northern region.

Region	Income/capita (2011 US\$ PPP)		
	1990	2019	'19/'90
East	6907	6547	0.95
Middle	6983	6591	0.94
North	6998	6479	0.93
South	7013	6709	0.96
West	7159	6855	0.96
Total	7025	6625	0.94
Regional inequality	1.04	1.05	

The economic situation, as measured by the average income per capita situation, deteriorated everywhere, but the worst deterioration was experienced in the northern region. During this period, the best year has been 1991, prior to the civil war, and the worst year, after a decade of war, 2003. The highest average incomes existed and exist in Bujumbura and its adjacent rural provinces, and the economic deterioration there (and in the southern region) was less severe than elsewhere. The worst income situations existed in the eastern region, both in 1990 and in 2019. Regional income inequality in Burundi was, and still is relatively low in 1990 for African standards. Burundi is one of the few countries in Africa with a deteriora-

tion of the average income situation for its population during these thirty years. Also the income index deteriorated: from 0.365 in 1990 to 0.305 in 2019, one of the lowest country scores for Africa (and hence the world). The income index of the Bujumbura region also deteriorated: from 0.386 to 0.340.

Of course, these are average income figures and based on (rough) estimates. Regional inequality is not the same as income or wealth inequality. According to World Bank data the GINI-coefficient has been erratic: in 1992 it was 33, in 1998 42, and in 2006 again down to 33. The latest figure (for 2013) is 39 (<https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SI.POV.GINI?locations=BI>).

#### Further reading

<http://countryportal.ascleiden.nl/burundi>

Africa2020: <https://www.ascleiden.nl/africa2020>

Country Information: Ton Dietz, David Ehrhardt and Lidewyde Berckmoes

Country Portal: Harro Westra

*African Studies Centre Leiden, November 2022*

#### African Studies Centre Leiden (ASCL)

The African Studies Centre Leiden, founded in 1947, is the only knowledge institute in the Netherlands devoted entirely to the study of Africa.



- 🌐 [www.ascleiden.nl](http://www.ascleiden.nl)
- 📘 [www.facebook.com/ASCLeiden](https://www.facebook.com/ASCLeiden)
- 🐦 [www.twitter.com/ASCLeiden](https://www.twitter.com/ASCLeiden)
- 📍 [@africanstudiescentreleiden](https://www.instagram.com/africanstudiescentreleiden)



Universiteit  
Leiden  
The Netherlands