



EDUCATION FACT SHEET - BURUNDI

<p>In brief</p>	<p>Population: 13,162,952 (2023 est.)¹ Size: 27,830 sq. kilometers²</p> <p>National Languages:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Kirundi (official, universally spoken) French (official, administrative) English (official, not widely spoken)³ <p>Literacy: 75%⁴ Youth Literacy: 93%⁵ Female Youth Literacy: 92%⁶</p> <p>National Curriculum: Yes Years of Public School: 12 Primary (Fundamental) School: 9 years Secondary (Post-Fundamental) School: 3 years <i>Note: Previously, Burundi had a 13-year school system. Students graduating in 2019 were the inaugural class for the new 12-year system.</i></p> <p>Primary Language of Instruction: French</p> <p>High School Leaving Exams: Yes (Examen d'État) Date of Exams: July</p>
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¹ <https://www.cia.gov/the-world-factbook/countries/burundi/#people-and-society>

² <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/AG.SRF.TOTL.K2?locations=BI>

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<https://web.archive.org/web/20151117024558/http://www.iwacu-burundi.org/blogs/english/english-is-now-official-language-of-burundi/>

⁴ <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SE.ADT.LITR.ZS?locations=BI>

⁵ <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SE.ADT.1524.LT.ZS?locations=BI>

⁶ <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SE.ADT.1524.LT.FE.ZS?locations=BI>

Academic Calendar	<p>Primary, secondary: Starting month: September Ending month: July</p> <p>Public Tertiary: Starting month: October Ending month: September</p> <p>Private Tertiary: Depends on school</p>
Education System Overview	<p><i>Note: the new academic model does not split secondary education into two tiers, like most school systems. Its equivalent to primary education is also longer, a total of 9 years. These two qualities make it unique from all other major school systems globally. Note also that in 2016, public schools changed to a 12- year system. The class graduating upper secondary school in 2018 was the last class under the 13-year system. Students graduating in 2020 and later will all have studied under the new 12-year system.</i></p> <p>The primary school cycle lasts 9 years and secondary lasts 3 years, with the cycles named “Fondamental” and “Post-Fondamental” respectively. Children officially enter Fondamental education at age 6 to 7.</p> <p>The primary school completion rate is about 60% of the population; secondary completion is 30% of the population; and just 6.5% start university.⁷</p> <p>Fondamental (Primary) Education Primary education is compulsory, and the net matriculation rate for primary schools is around 93%.⁸ However, the most recent available data (2019) suggests that about 50% of these students drop out before completing the primary cycle.⁹ Gender representation at the primary level is well balanced.</p> <p>Public primary education is tuition-free. However, costs such as uniforms and notebooks (both of which are strictly required) can be prohibitive for low-income students. In rural areas, the opportunity cost of not having children participate in agriculture can also prevent participation. All these effects contribute to low primary completion rates especially in rural areas.</p> <p>Post-Fundamental (Secondary) Education</p>

⁷ <https://tradingeconomics.com/burundi/school-enrollment-tertiary-percent-gross-wb-data.html>

⁸ <https://tradingeconomics.com/burundi/total-enrollment-primary-percent-net-wb-data.html>

⁹ <https://tradingeconomics.com/burundi/persistence-to-last-grade-of-primary-total-percent-of-cohort-wb-data.html>

	<p>Somewhere between 5% and 30% will attend secondary studies. Gender representation at the Post-Fundamental level is also well- balanced.</p> <p>Entry into the Post-Fundamental school system is mediated by a national exam. Students are placed into specialized tracks based on the results of this examination, taken at the end of primary studies.</p> <p>Both public and private schools charge tuition at the secondary level. This severely limits access for low-income students.</p> <p>Public and Private Secondary Schools</p> <p>At the primary level, public schools are free. At the secondary level, tuition is charged in both public and private institutions. While public secondary tuition is low compared to its private counterpart, the cost is still a barrier for a majority of Burundians especially those in rural communities.</p> <p>Private schools exist throughout the country, and will generally provide a more consistent education for students. However, they are prohibitively expensive for nearly the entire population.</p> <p>There are also a few public schools with reputations for academic excellence that surpass even the top private schools. These elite institutions are highly selective and have separate admissions policies. These schools provide a more rigorous education. They were established in 2016 and dubbed “Excellence” Schools by the Ministry of Education. The Education Ministry places students in these schools based on their exam results at the end of their primary studies.</p> <p><u>Rural and Urban Schools</u></p> <p>All factors constant, urban schools tend to be more rigorous and provide a more consistent education. However, a number of boarding schools exist throughout the country that provide students with a relatively higher quality education.</p> <p>Tertiary Education</p> <p>One national university and around a half-dozen private universities provide traditional tertiary studies to around 5% of tertiary-aged students each year. At the tertiary level, a student is about 3 times as likely to be male as to be female.</p> <p><u>Government Scholarships Abroad</u></p> <p>The Burundian Government has established partnerships with some foreign governments, such as Russia, Algeria, and Morocco, which offer a</p>
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	<p>limited number of scholarships for Burundians to study at universities in those countries. However, these scholarships primarily benefit students from urban schools, and the scholarships are highly competitive.</p>
National School System	<p>Education Tracks and Exams</p> <p>Entrance into secondary studies is mediated by a national exam taken during the final year of primary school (grade 9). This exam determines whether a student will be allowed to begin Post-Fondamental studies, and is used by the Ministry of Education to place students at secondary schools throughout the country. The exam is called “Concours National.”</p> <p>The results of this exam determine whether a student will be admitted to one of seven university-bound tracks at the secondary level, or will be assigned to a variety of other technical school options.</p> <p>State technical schools are attended in lieu of a traditional secondary education. They teach disciplines such as agriculture, nursing, tailoring, culinary arts, and accounting; or prepare students to be electricians or mechanics. The A3 diploma indicates that the student attended a two-year technical school and is eligible for trade work. The A2 diploma is issued after a three- or four-year technical school and prepares a student either for further studies at the university level (<i>e.g.</i> in accounting) or for work.</p> <p>What would usually be considered upper secondary education is split into seven main specialization tracks. Graduates of these tracks who pass the national exit examination are eligible for university studies.</p> <p>English Language</p> <p>In public schools, English is introduced as a foreign language in 2nd or 3rd grade of Fondamental cycle. The quality of English education is highly dependent on teacher qualifications and availability; it is not uncommon for an English teacher to have little or no formal training in the subject. This issue is especially prevalent in rural schools.</p> <p>Secondary Education</p> <p>College-bound students mainly specialize in one of seven areas at the secondary level. Students are placed into these tracks by the Ministry of Education based on their 9th grade leaving exam, Concours National. While it is theoretically possible for a student to appeal their placement, this is somewhat rare and dependent on the available slots.</p>

	<p>The seven specialization tracks are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Economics, which focuses on the social sciences and finance; ● Languages, which focuses on languages and humanities; ● Math-Physics-Technology, which focuses on math and physics; ● Biology-Chemistry-Earth Science, which focuses on biology and chemistry; ● Social Sciences and Humanities; ● Pedagogy, which focuses on teaching strategies and techniques through understanding the theories of learning; and ● Statistics, which was introduced in 2021. <p>The students take common courses in all the 9 years of Fondamental education, but courses are concentrated according to the tracks students take as they progress to higher classes in Post-Fondamental studies. Students in all tracks take the following courses in Post-Fondamental:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Languages (English, French, Kirundi, and Kiswahili) ● Entrepreneurship, ● Math*, ● Biology**, but not taken in Statistics ● Physics**, ● Civics, and ● Physical education. <p>* Done during all years of post-fundamental</p> <p>School Grades – Secondary</p> <p>Students are graded on a percentage-based system; they also receive a class ranking. Equivalent grades in Burundi are much lower than their US counterparts, with the typical median yearly grade somewhere between 55% and 60%.</p> <p>Interpretation:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Grades for each school year will almost always fall between 40% and 85%. ● Anything less than 55% is considered failing and requires repetition of the grade; typical class repetition rates are between 5% and 10%. ● Scores higher than 70% are highly uncommon and considered stellar. ● Scores between different specialization tracks should be considered equivalent. <p>Class Rank – Post-Fondamental</p> <p>Class rank is assigned within each specialization track, with somewhere between 10 and 50 students per track per school.</p> <p>A select number of schools in Burundi (both public and private), such as</p>
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the Excellence Schools, function as “elite institutions” with admission based on test results. In these cases, class rank may not be a useful metrics for student evaluation, as all students should be considered highly qualified.

National Exam

A state-administered exam, tailored to each specialization track, is taken by all graduating students upon completion of their final year of secondary school. The name of the exam is called “**Examen d’État.**” Score distribution varies wildly around the country, but scores of above 70% designate the very top scholars. Previously, student scores on the national exam were combined with their scores from the final year Post-Fondamental studies, to get a final weighted score. The final weighted score determined whether a student got a “Diplôme d’État” and their eligibility to apply for university programs. The respective weight given to the national exam raw score and the final year score was 80% and 20%. Nowadays, however, the Diplôme d’État contains only the national exam raw score.

This national exam score is what is reported in the student’s “Attestation de Reussite” and “Releve des Resultats.” The latter gives a breakdown of the score per subject.

- Only about one third of scholars will score above a 50% on the exam.
- Scores higher than 60% qualify a student to study at the national university.
- Private universities will generally accept students with scores above 50%.
- Scores higher than 70% are considered excellent, and anything in the 90% range is considered high distinction and extremely rare.

Certifications:

The “Certificat des Humanités Générales” is issued to students upon completion of their secondary studies. These are usually available to students in August, immediately after graduation.

The “Diplôme d’État” is issued to students if they pass the national leaving exam. These are usually available to students between nine and twelve months after graduation.

Diplomas (at both the secondary and tertiary levels) include the following indicators, based on grades and/or national exam results:

- 90-100% : Excellent
- 80-89% : Plus grand fruit (“The highest distinction”)
- 70-79% : Grand fruit (“High distinction”)

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 60-69% : Fruit (“Distinction”) • 50-59% : Pass/Satisfaction <p>Tertiary Studies</p> <p>Public University</p> <p>The University of Burundi is the premiere institution of higher education in the country. Students are admitted based on the weighted score of the national exam. Students are assigned a concentration by the Ministry of Education, also based on national exam results. It is possible, though uncommon, for students to request a different concentration than assigned.</p> <p>The university includes faculties of education, engineering, agriculture, various languages, and various sciences. There are also specialized institutes of applied pedagogy, applied economics, and statistics.</p> <p>All students who are admitted to the national university receive free tuition and are given a loan to help offset the cost of living expenses in the city. However, many students from low-income rural backgrounds still find the extra costs associated with study prohibitive and are unable to continue their studies for financial reasons.</p> <p>Students matriculate at the national university directly after graduating from secondary studies. This policy has been in effect since the school year 2023-2024. For instance, students who graduated high school in July 2023 have already commenced university in October 2023, alongside students who graduated in October 2022. The latter group had to wait due to the previous system.</p> <p>Private Universities</p> <p>Private universities are generally perceived as less prestigious than the national university, but they may offer students more opportunities to choose their area of study and they would allow a student to avoid a year and a half interruption in studies. Private universities generally accept matriculating students with lower national exam results than the public university. Most private universities offer programs in French, though there are also some English-language programs.</p>
SAT test centers	<p>BURUNDI AMERICAN INTL ACADEMY, Behind Kings Conference Center, Bujumbura, Burundi, Center Code: 76500</p> <p>Assorted test center options in Rwanda</p>

ACT test centers	Assorted test center options in Rwanda
IELTS/TOEFL	<p>TOEFL: U.S. Embassy – American Corner in Bujumbura, Burundi iBT Home Edition ONLY</p> <p>Kigali, Rwanda iBT Available</p> <p>IELTS: British Council Rwanda (Kigali)</p>
Best time for Admission Officers to visit	<p>May (final trimester of the year) Late September/October (first trimester) February (second trimester)</p>
HALI contacts	<p>Tujenge Africa Foundation info@tujenge.org +257 22 27 98 75</p> <p>Carol Jean Gallo (Program Director) carol@tujenge.org</p> <p>David Kimeli Bett (Lead College Counselor) david@tujenge.org</p> <p>Jean de Dieu Ndayishimiye (College Counselor) jndayishimiye@tujenge.org</p>