

Returns to Burundi: Challenges in access to services and assistance



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This infographic explores the reintegration experiences of Burundian returnees in the provinces of Makamba and Ruyigi. Drawing upon 537 surveys with Burundian returnees, it analyses the challenges they have faced upon their return, their level of access to essential services, and their most pressing assistance needs.

METHODOLOGY

DATA COLLECTION SITES:

Ruyigi* (n=284)
Makamba* (n=253)

DATA COLLECTION PERIOD:

16 May – 04 June 2025

METHODOLOGY OF DATA COLLECTION:

Face-to-face interviews

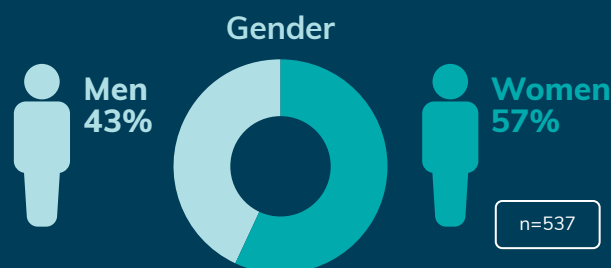
SAMPLE SIZE AND CRITERIA:

537 Burundian returnees who had returned between six months and two years before the interview

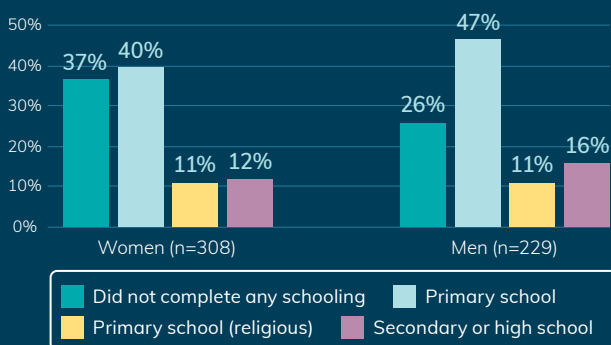
Background

- Between 2017 and 2024, approximately 254,100 Burundian refugees returned to Burundi, mainly from neighbouring countries.¹
- Many Burundians had initially fled the country during periods of political instability and conflict, including the 2015 electoral crisis that saw more than 400,000 flee the country.²
- Burundi remains one of the least developed countries in the world. With 63% of its population living on less than \$2.15 per day, and a scarcity of employment opportunities, many returnees struggle with economic insecurity.³
- Competition over land and livelihood opportunities is prompting tensions between returnees and host communities, who often face similar hardships.⁴

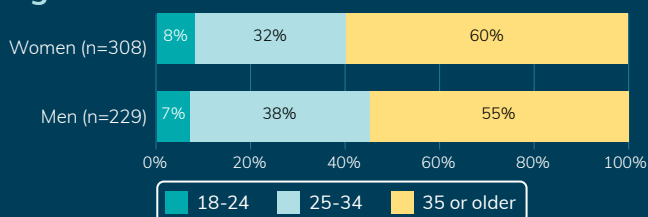
Respondents profiles



Education



Age

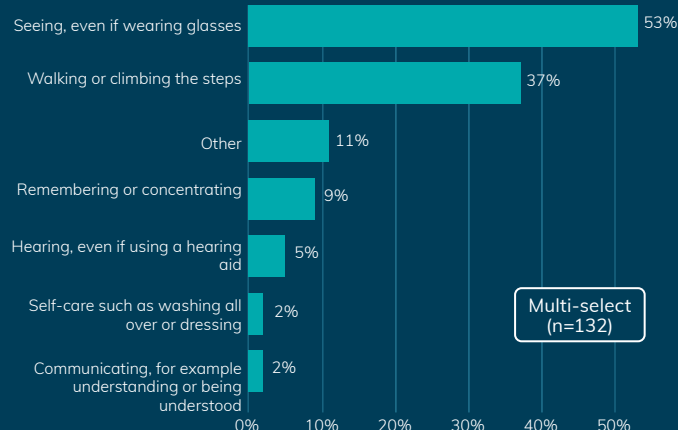


Previous host country

Tanzania	95%
Democratic Republic of Congo	2%
Kenya	1%
Malawi	1%
Rwanda	1%

25% reported experiencing serious difficulties in undertaking basic functions (e.g. hearing, seeing, self-care, etc.)

What do the difficulties relate to?



Note: The 4Mi sample is purposive. Data presented in this snapshot cannot be considered as representative of the full population.

*Burundi has undergone an administrative boundary restructuring starting with legislation passed in 2022, and implemented in 2025, going from 18 provinces to five. Data collection was conducted in the former provinces of Ruyigi and Makamba, which are now a part of the provinces of Buhumaza and Burunga (respectively). See: Breaking Burundi (2025) [Senate approves Five New Provincial Governors After Major Administrative Reform](#).

1 UNHCR (2024) [Burundi Operational Overview](#). At the time of writing, consolidate data from 2025 was not available.

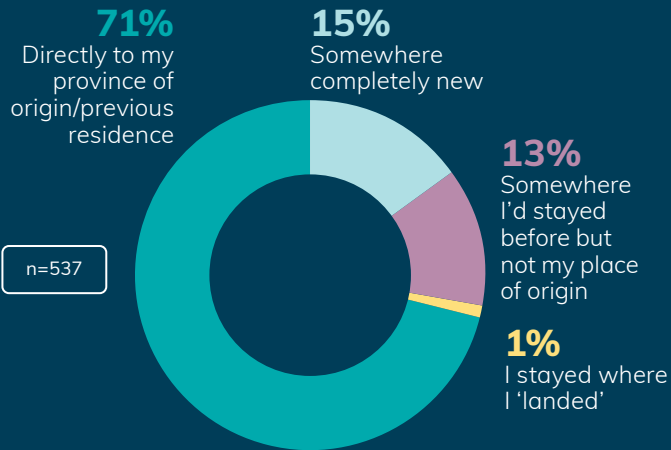
2 UNHCR (2018) [Burundi risks becoming a forgotten refugee crisis without support](#).

3 World Bank (2025) [Burundi MPO](#).

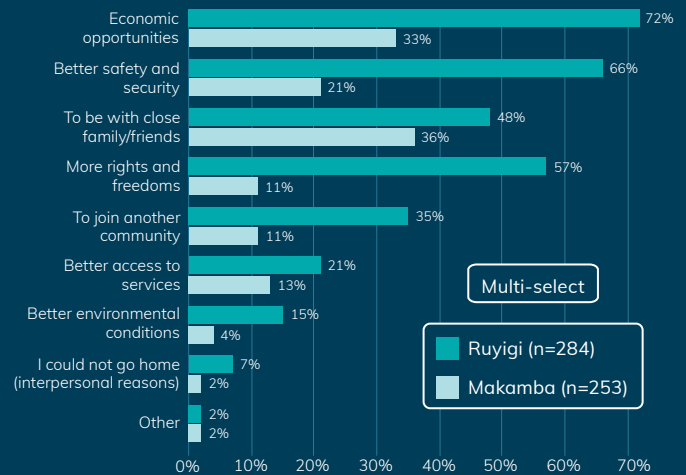
4 IOM (2023) [Host Communities and Returnees in Burundi Scoring for Peace through Sports](#).

Locations of return

Where did you go upon your arrival?

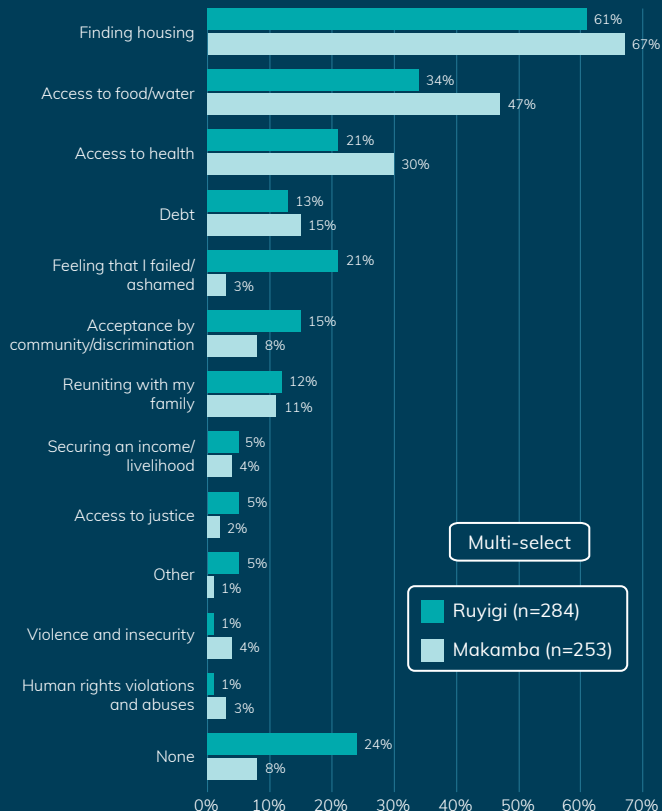


Why this location?

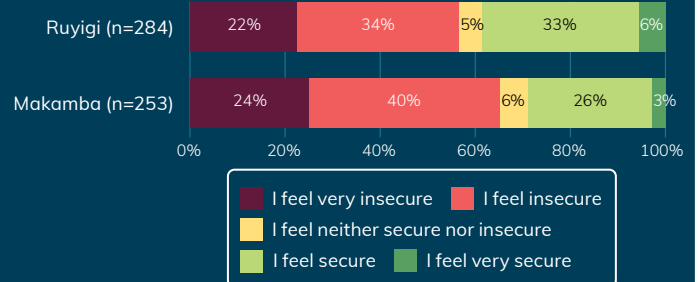


Major challenges experienced after returning to Burundi

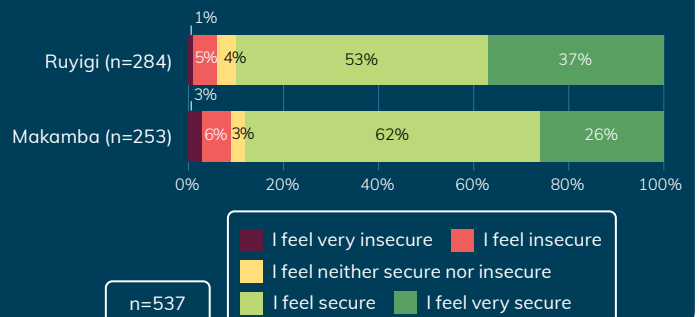
Challenges by location of interview



To what extent do you agree with the following statement: "I feel economically secure in Burundi"?



To what extent do you agree with the following statement: "I feel socially secure in Burundi"?

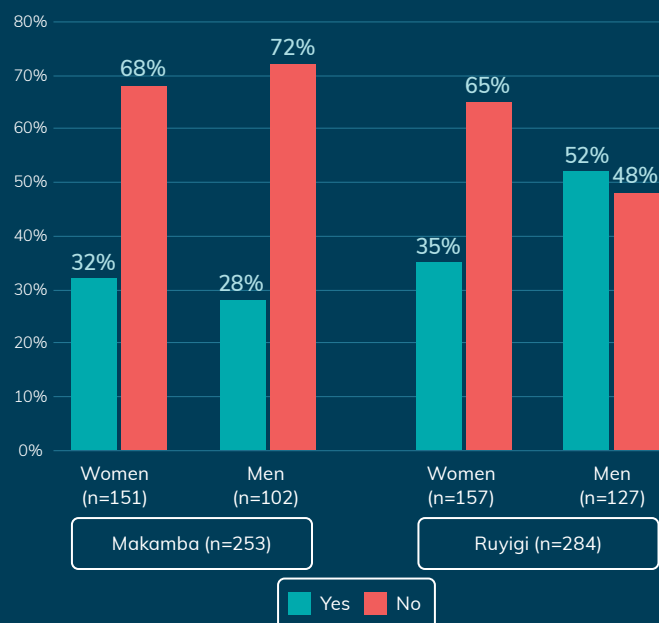


Key findings

- **Returnees struggled most with securing their basic needs**, particularly finding housing (64%) and food and water (40%). These issues were reported by all respondents regardless of gender or location of settlement, and mirrors findings from previous MMC research on returns to Burundi.⁵
- Despite respondents citing economic opportunities, better safety, and family connections as having shaped their decision to return to Ruyigi, their challenges and feelings of safety and social security were only marginally better than respondents in Makamba. Perhaps linked to their stronger social ties, **respondents in Ruyigi reported higher rates of shame (21% vs. 3%) and discrimination (15% vs. 8%)** than those in Makamba.
- Overall, 91% of respondents felt socially secure, but just 35% felt economically secure. This highlights a **sharp disparity between social and economic security among returnees** and may reflect the country's overwhelming economic challenges.
- **Returnees with serious difficulties (n=132) more often cited a lack of access to healthcare (34%)** as a major challenge compared to those not experiencing serious difficulties (22%).

Access to economic opportunities in Burundi

Are you currently making money?



37% of all respondents were making money at the time of the interview



74% of the 198 respondents who were making money were working in the agricultural sector



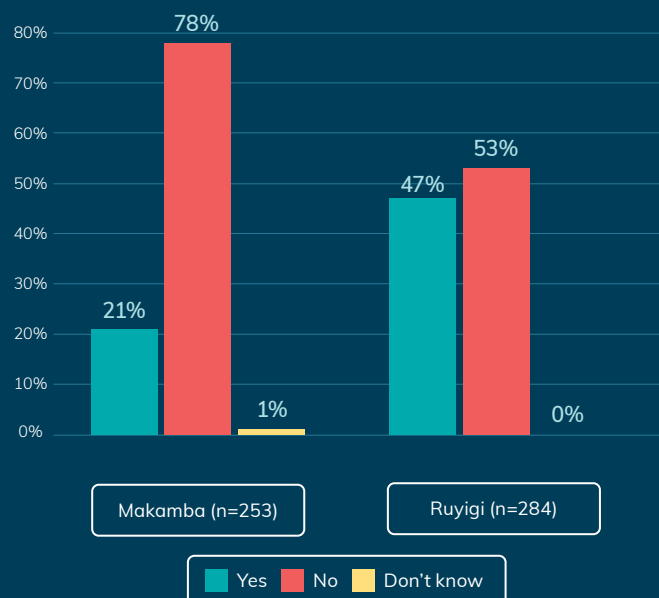
50% of the 339 respondents who were not making money were unable to find work, while **45%** were taking care of the home/children



65% of all respondents reported their household income did not meet their needs

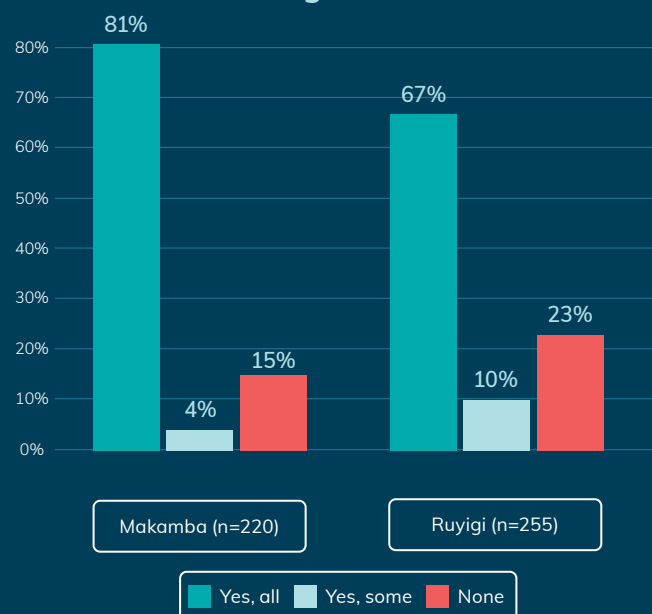
Access to health care and education services in Burundi

Do you have access to health care?



65% of respondents who lacked access to healthcare (n=347), could not afford healthcare costs

Are the school-aged children in your household attending school?



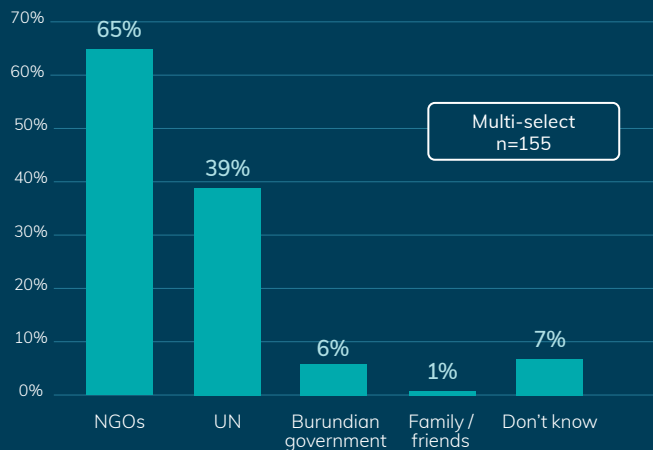
66% of respondents with school-aged children out of school (n=91) could not afford education costs

Key findings

- **Access to income-generating activities was low, especially when compared to the national labour participation rate of 79%,⁶ and varied by gender**, with 33% of women earning an income compared to 41% of men, though this varied considerably by location. The main barriers for women were domestic responsibilities (50%) and lack of job opportunities (43%).
- **Access to healthcare was a major challenge in Makamba**, where 78% of returnees lacked access. The high cost of healthcare was cited as the main barrier by 65% of respondents who lacked access to healthcare (n=347), suggesting that while facilities may exist, financial barriers make them inaccessible.
- Of respondents with school-aged children (n=475), **21% have at least one child out of school** (n=91), citing the inability to pay costs related to education as the primary reason (66%).

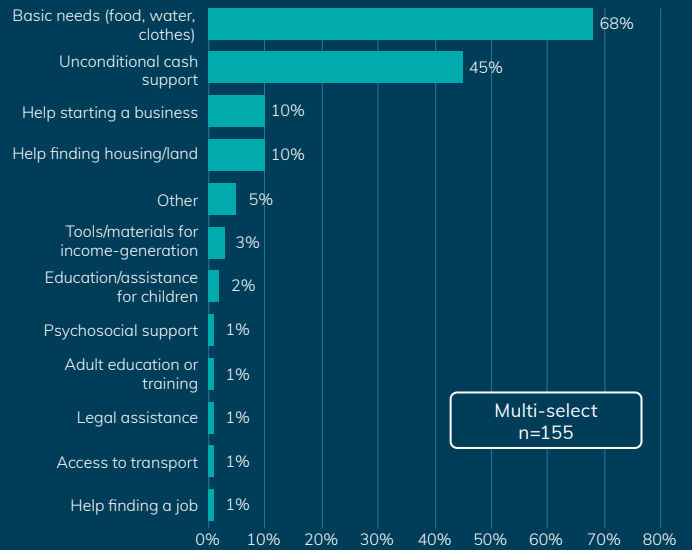
Access to assistance in Burundi

Who did you receive assistance or support from?



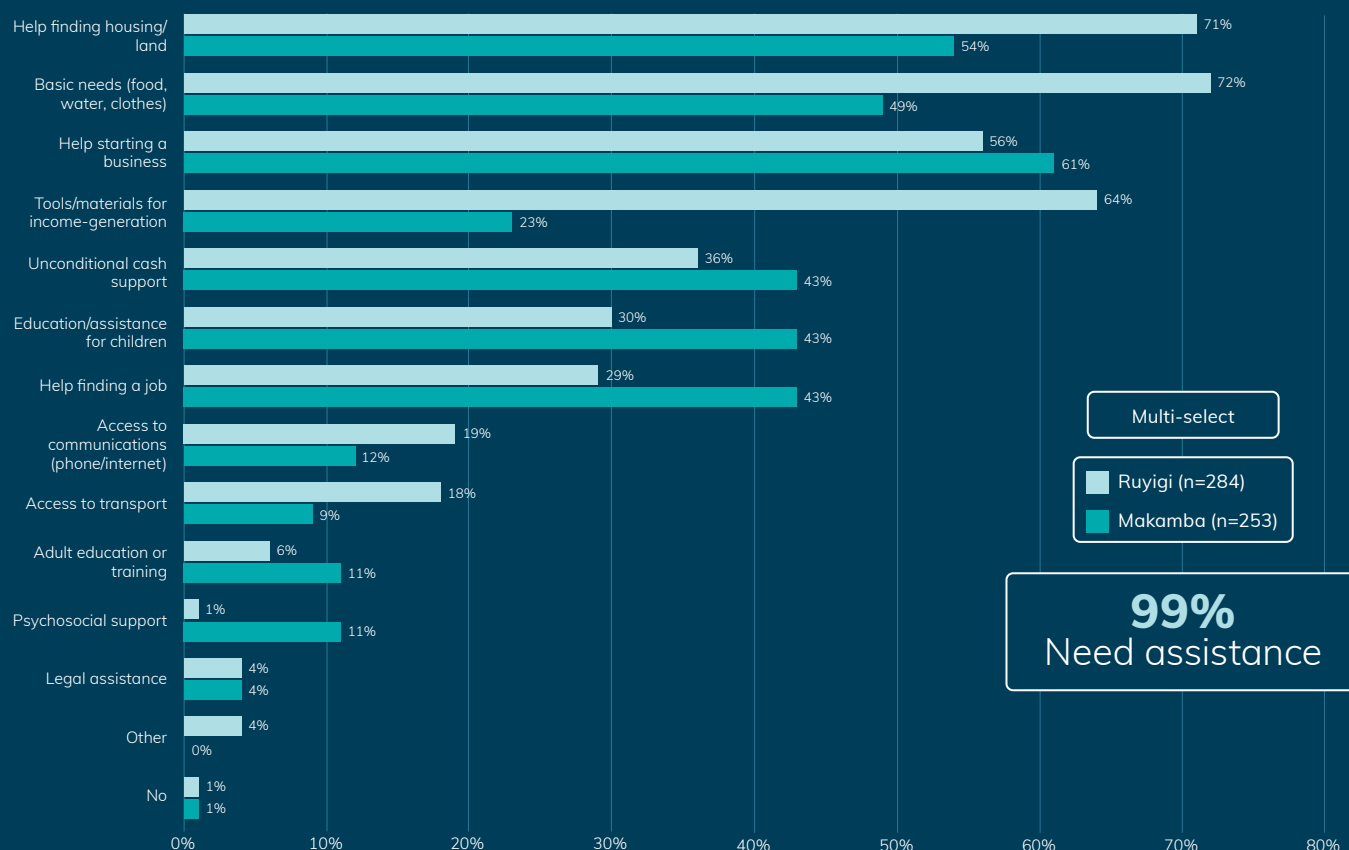
29% Received assistance after arriving in Burundi

What kind of assistance or support have you received?



Current assistance needs

Do you currently need assistance?



Key findings

- **Just under one-third (29%) of respondents had received assistance since their return to Burundi**, mainly in the form of basic needs and unconditional cash support.
- However, **nearly all (99%) needed assistance** at the time of interview, with the majority requiring housing or land and basic needs.
- **Needs varied by location:** respondents in Ruyigi had a greater need for housing (71% vs. 54%), basic needs (72% vs. 49%), and tools for income generation (64% vs. 23%), while those in Makamba more often needed cash support (43% vs. 36%), assistance for children (43% vs. 30%), and help finding a job (43% vs. 29%).



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4Mi data collection

4Mi is the Mixed Migration Centre's flagship primary data collection system, an innovative approach that helps fill knowledge gaps and inform policy and response regarding the nature of mixed migration and the protection risks for migrants on the move. 4Mi field enumerators are currently collecting data through direct interviews with migrants in Asia and the Pacific, Eastern and Southern Africa, Europe, Latin America and the Caribbean, North Africa, and West Africa.

Note that the sampling approach means that the findings derived from the surveyed sample provide rich insights, but the figures cannot be used to make inferences about the total population. See more 4Mi analysis and details on methodology at: www.mixedmigration.org/4mi



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