

# WHO WANTS TO FORGIVE AND FORGET ?

## Civilian attitudes toward post-conflict justice and truth in Burundi

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*A French version of this report is also available.*

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## I. Introduction

The establishment of a transitional justice mechanism involves the management of important dilemmas. The first dilemma is the “truth-justice” dilemma. The logic in this dilemma is that the more punitive is the justice mechanism, the more difficult it is for truth to come to the surface, because perpetrators will have reason to try and hide what they have done.

The second dilemma is the “stability-norms” dilemma. The logic in this dilemma is that people in countries emerging from civil wars may prefer to avoid pursuing punitive justice in their own country, because they feel that it may threaten the stability that has come about. However, the development of strong norm of accountability requires that people in all countries pursue such justice all the time. Only in this way can all people enjoy the benefits of a strong norm of accountability.

How should these dilemmas be managed in establishing a transitional justice mechanism in a post-conflict country? In a democratic context, consultation with the public is necessary in deciding how to do this. However, we know very little about how ordinary people deal with these trade-offs. Very little scientific work has been done to study how ordinary people think about transitional justice issues in post-conflict countries. This report aims to start filling that gap.

Burundi is currently facing the challenge of establishing a transitional justice mechanism. While the contours of a mechanism have been outlined in the Arusha Accords and in statements by the political parties, many questions still remain about what would be the most appropriate format to pursue truth and justice. Plans are currently underway to conduct public consultations on these questions. These consultations will help to ensure that the transitional justice process that is put in place best serves the interests of Burundi’s citizens. This report was produced with the intention of providing some background on public perceptions in the run-up to the consultations.

## II. Description of the Survey

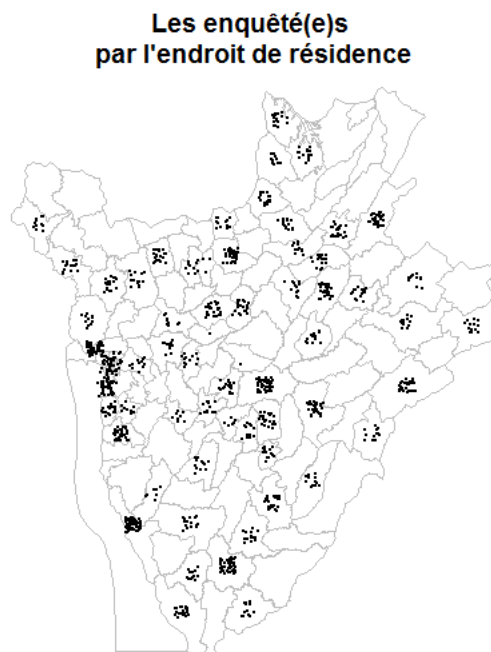


Figure 1: Carte des enquête(e)s, par l'endroit de résidence.

The survey was implemented in Burundi in June and July 2007.<sup>1</sup> Figure 1 shows the geographic distribution of the 1175 civilian respondents. The survey included respondents who live in all of Burundi's 17 provinces, including in 68 communes. Table 1 shows the breakdown of the sample by gender, ethnicity, and education level. Men were intentionally over-sampled in the survey. We did this because the *Wartime and Postconflict Experiences in Burundi* project also includes other studies focusing on participation in armed groups and reintegration of demobilized combatants.<sup>2</sup> These are in addition to the present study on attitudes toward justice and truth. The survey was designed with these multiple studies in mind. The survey included separate samples of demobilized combatants as well as members of the army and police. However, in this report, *we focus only on the responses of civilians*. We use survey weights to correct for unequal sampling rates for men and women and also to correct for our use of geographic stratification. The survey weights are based on current population information provided by ISTEEDU and on statistical analyses of demographic variables from the survey data.<sup>3</sup> Table 1 below shows the sample distribution over demographic variables with and without the weights.

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<sup>1</sup> For technical details on the sampling design, please contact the author.

<sup>2</sup> More information on these other studies is available at <http://www.columbia.edu/~cds81/burundisurvey/>

<sup>3</sup> For technical details on weighting methods, please contact the author.

<b>Sample total:</b>		<b>1175 civilians</b>	
<b>Category</b>		<b>Raw sample %</b>	<b>Weighted sample %</b>
Gender:			
	Men	86%	47%
	Women	14%	53%
Ethnicity:			
	Hutu	71%	74%
	Tutsi	28%	26%
	Others	1%	<1%
Highest level of education:			
	Primary not completed	43%	46%
	Primary	37%	36%
	Junior secondary	11%	10%
	Senior secondary	7%	7%
	University+	2%	1%

Table 1: Sample description.

### III. Basic demographic and regional patterns

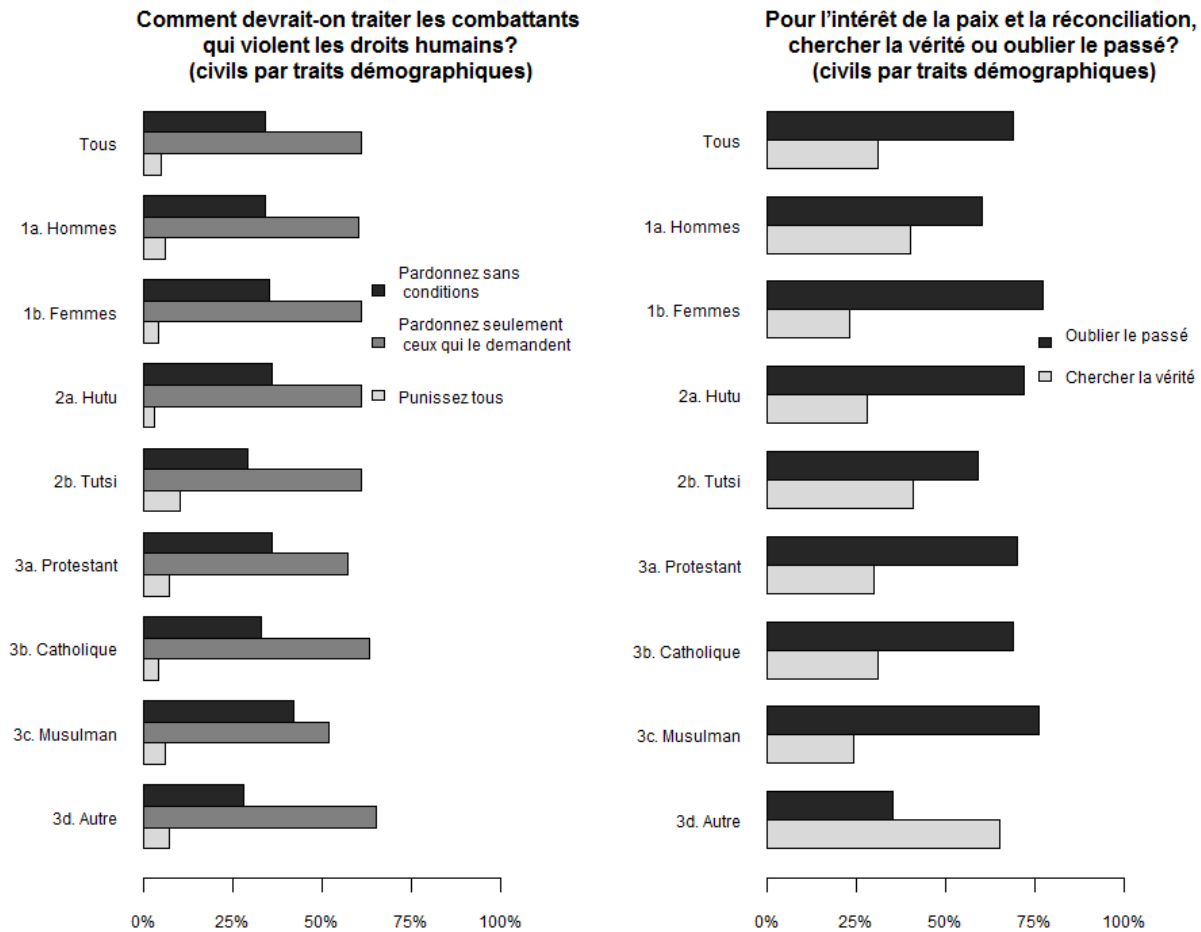


Figure 2: Demand for justice and truth by basic demographic traits.

Figure 2 shows basic patterns in civilians' demands for justice and truth. On the question of justice-seeking, we asked civilians to tell us what they think should be done to former combatants (both army and PMPA) who were known to have violated human rights. Here is how the question appeared on an actual survey instrument:

- RE.4.c Abantu bamwe bamwe bavugako abahoze ari abarwanyi bishe abanyagihugu canke bafashe kunguvu abakenyezi batotegerejwe kwakirwa mu miryango yabo uko vyogenda kwose kandi botegerejwe guhanwa. Abandi nabo bavugako botegerejwe kwakirwa, hama ivyabaye bikibagirwa. Umugwi ugira gatatu uvuga ko boshobora kwakirwa mu gihe basavye ikigongwe. Muri abo ushigikiye abahe ?**
- Ntibotegerejwe kwakirwa bagarutse uko vyogenda kwose kandi botegerejwe guhanwa.
  - Botegerejwe kwakirwa kandi ivyabaye bikwiye kwibagirwa.
  - Botegerejwe kwakirwa mu gihe basavye ikigongwe.

Civilians are most likely by far to prefer to *pardon those who ask for it* (61% overall), followed by *unconditional pardon* (34%). A very small percentage preferred to punish all known human rights violators (5%). The desire to pardon is nearly the same across men and women, and it is

much stronger among Hutu respondents. We also see slight differences between religious groups.

On the question of truth-seeking, we asked civilians to tell us whether they think that, for peace and reconciliation, it is better to seek truth or try to forget the past. Here is how the question appeared on an actual survey instrument:

CP.7 Muñ ibi bikunkira ni ikihe cegereye icyumviro cawe? [Lis les deux choix]
1 <input type="checkbox"/> Kugira haboneke amahoro n'ugusubizahamwe birakenewe ko dushira ahabona ukuri ku vyabaye imbere y'intambara.
2 <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Kugira haboneke amahoro n'ugusubizahamure nivyiza kwibagira kahise. JP R

Here, civilians are much more likely to express a desire to “forget” (69%). The desire to forget is significantly stronger among women as well as among Hutu respondents. Differences among religious groups are also evident.

When we look at the two outcomes together, we find that the most common combination for people is to express a desire for conditional pardon combined with a desire to forget (39%). This is followed by a desire for unconditional pardon and forgetting (27%), conditional pardon and seeking the truth (22%), unconditional pardon and seeking the truth (7%), punishment and forgetting (3%), and punishment and seeking the truth (2%).

Figure 3 shows responses by province. We see a few important differences. In Bubanza, Ngozi, Gitega, and Kayanza, people tend to express both a strong desire for pardon *and* for forgetting the past. It is in these provinces where we might expect the greatest skepticism about any kind of transitional justice mechanisms. In contrast, in Cibitoke and Cankuzo, and to a certain extent in Bujumbura-Mairie, the desire for punishment and truth are relatively strong. Here, people may be most receptive to justice-seeking and truth-seeking initiatives. In Ruyigi, Muramvya, and Muyinga, civilians express a strong desire to offer conditional pardon combined with an interest in forgetting the past. In Bururi, Mwaro, and Karuzi, we see a combination of a strong desire for pardon—either conditional or unconditional—combined with heightened demand for truth. In these areas, we might expect receptiveness to truth and reconciliation processes, but skepticism toward punitive justice mechanisms. In Kirundo and Rutana, the population is rather polarized over the question of justice, while also being close to the average with respect to truth-seeking in Kirundo, and quite aggressive in the demand for truth in Rutana.

We used statistical regression methods to study *inter-ethnic polarization* in the different provinces.<sup>4</sup> With respect to attitudes toward justice, we found strong evidence of inter-ethnic polarization in Cankuzo, Cibitoke, Kirundo, Muramvya, and Muyinga. With respect to truth-

<sup>4</sup> In section V below, I provide more detail on the survey-design-corrected regression techniques that we used. For this analysis of inter-ethnic polarization, we first removed all effects of age, gender, education, and victimization, and then measured ethnic differences from province to province.

seeking, we found high inter-ethnic polarization in Kayanza, Kirundo, and Muyinga. These are areas where inter-ethnic reconciliation efforts might be fruitfully targeted.



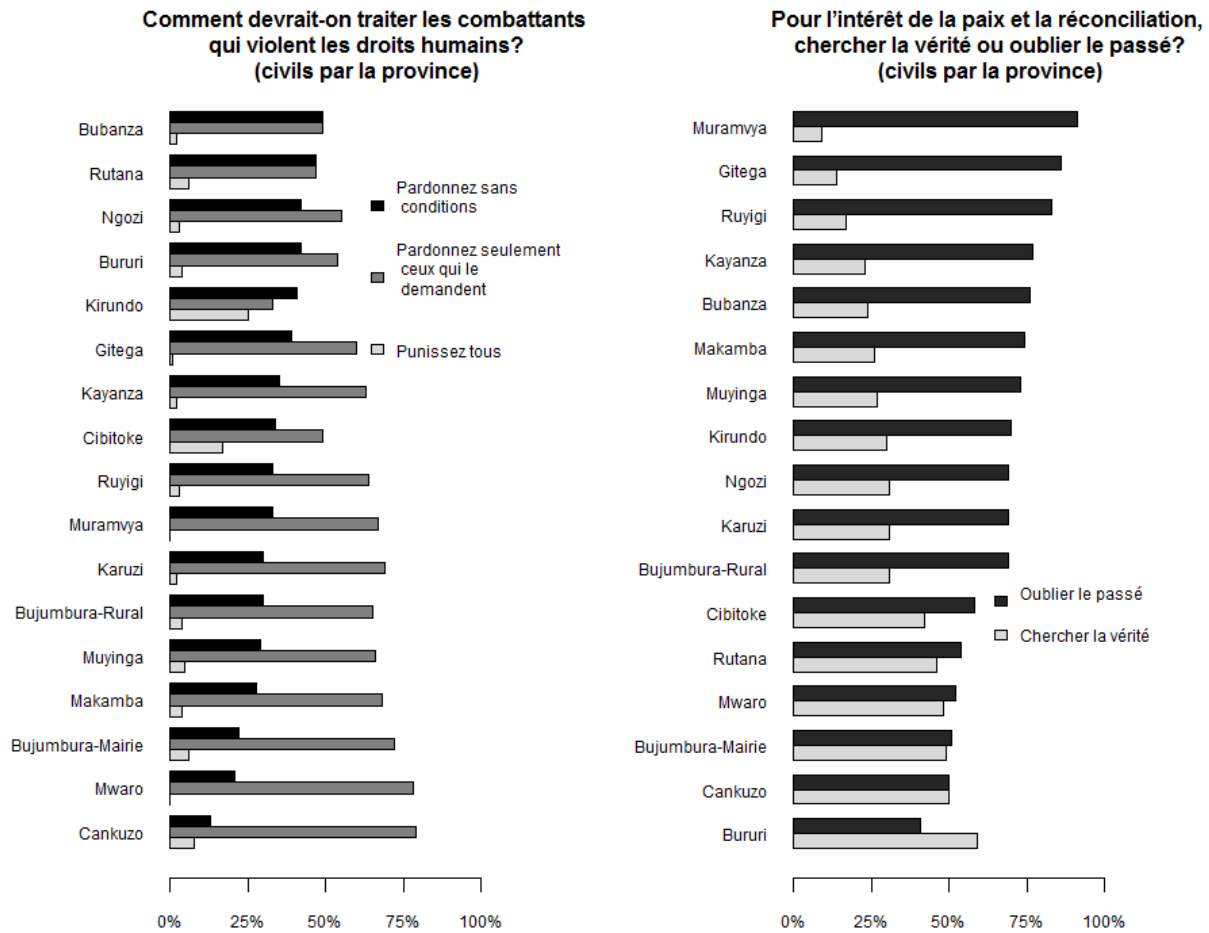


Figure 3: Demand for justice and truth by province.

#### IV. Stability of Expressions to Forgive

We might ask ourselves whether the responses people gave about their desire to forgive and forget represent firmly held views, or whether people were responding in a manner that is random. Answering this question helps us to understand how seriously we should take the results shown above. In the survey, we studied this question with respect to people’s opinions on the appropriate way to treat combatants who abused human rights. We used a “deliberation experiment.”<sup>5</sup> For each of the three responses, we constructed counter-arguments. For a half of the respondents, we had the interviewers give content-laden counter-arguments to the respondents’ initial answers. That is, if the respondent said that human rights abusers should be punished, the interviewer would give the following argument:

<sup>5</sup> The experiment is modeled on the following study of French citizens’ attitudes toward labor policies: Simon Jackman and Paul Sniderman (2006), “The Limits of Deliberative Discussion: A Model of Everyday Political Arguments,” *The Journal of Politics*, Volume 68, pp. 272-83.

*But there are people who say that both sides have committed many crimes during the war, thus it is the time for people to forgive so that we can progress. So I would like to ask you again. Do you think it is good to: (1) punish them, (2) accept them when they come back, (3) ask them to beg for forgiveness?*

If the respondent said that human rights abusers should be forgiven if they ask for it, the interviewer would give the following argument:

*But there are some people who think that justice is not necessary, while others assert that both sides have committed many crimes and that it is time for reconciliation. So I would like to ask you again. Do you think it is good to: (1) punish them, (2) accept them when they come back, (3) ask them to beg for forgiveness?*

And if the respondent said that all abusers should be forgiven, then the interviewer would give the following argument:

*But if we ignore what happened, people could be angry and take revenge. So I would like to ask you again. Do you think it is good to: (1) punish them, (2) accept them when they come back, (3) ask them to beg for forgiveness?*

The other half of the respondents, were treated as a "control group" so that we could study the effects of the counter-arguments. For these respondents, the interviewer would always give the same vacant counter-argument:

*However this can lead to some difficulties. So I would like to ask you again. Do you think it is good to (1) punish them, (2) accept them when they come back, (3) ask them to beg for forgiveness?*

Below is a picture of how the experiment appeared on an actual questionnaire for a respondent that received the content-laden counter-arguments. The vacant counter-argument was delivered in a similar manner:

RE.4.c Abantu bamwe bamwe bavugako abahoze ari abarwanyi bishe abanyagihugu canke bafashe kunguvu abakenyezi batotegerejwe kwakirwa mu mityango yabo uko vyogenda kwose kandi botegerejwe guhanwa. Abandi nabo bavugako botegerejwe kwakirwa, hama ivyabaye bikibagirwa. Umugwi ugira gatafu uvuga ko boshobora kwakirwa mu gihe basavye ikigongwe. Muri abo ushigikiye abahe ?

1.  Ntibotegerejwe kwakirwa bagarutse uko vyogenda kwose kandi botegerejwe guhanwa.
2.  Botegerejwe kwakirwa kandi ivyabaye bikwiye kwibagirwa.
3.  Botegerejwe kwakirwa mu gihe basavye ikigongwe.

**ARI 1:** RE.5.c1 Ariko hano abavuga ko impande zose muntambara zakoze amabi menshi, none harageze ko abantu barekuriranira tugatera imbere. None rero ngomba nsubire ndakubaze kandi. Wibazako ari vyiza : (1) kubahana, (2) kubakira bagarutse (3) kudasaba ko busaba ikigongwe? 1 2 3 JP R

**ARI 2:** RE.5.c2 Ariko mugihe twokwibagira ivyo bakoze abantu boshobora gushavura bakarondera kwihanira. None rero ngomba nsubire ndakubaze kandi. Wibazako ari vyiza : (1) kubahana, (2) kubakira bagarutse (3) kudasaba ko busaba ikigongwe? 1 2 3 JP R

**ARI 3:** RE.5.c3. Ariko abantu bamwe bibaza ko bidakwiye kugira habe ubutungane, mugihe abandi bemeza yuko impande zose zakoze amabi menshi kandi ko hageze ko turekuriranira. None rero ngomba nsubire ndakubaze kandi. Wibazako ari vyiza : (1) kubahana, (2) kubakira bagarutse (3) kudasaba ko busaba ikigongwe? 1 2 3 JP R

The results of the experiment are displayed in Table 2 below.

Argument au contenu vide	«punissez tous»	«pardonnez seulement ceux qui le demandent»	«pardonnez sans conditions»
Si 1ere réponse «punissez tous» ...	78%	22%	<1%
Si 1ere réponse «pardonnez seulement ceux qui le demandent» ...	5%	89%	6%
Si 1ere réponse «pardonnez sans conditions» ...	5%	18%	77%
Argument au contenu charge	«punissez tous»	«pardonnez seulement ceux qui le demandent»	«pardonnez sans conditions»
Si 1ere réponse «punissez tous» ...	95%	3%	2%
Si 1ere réponse «pardonnez seulement ceux qui le demandent» ...	7%	84%	9%
Si 1ere réponse «pardonnez sans conditions» ...	<1%	16%	84%

Table 2: Deliberation experiment results.

Two important conclusions can be drawn from this experiment. First, respondents were quite consistent. In all cases, at least 77% of respondents gave the same response after receiving the counter-arguments. As such, we can have confidence that we are measuring stable dispositions. Second, the counter-arguments had a peculiar effect on the respondents. For respondents that took *extreme* positions—either “punish all” or “pardon without conditions”—the content-laden counter-arguments actually made it significantly *more* likely that

respondents would stay with their initial answer. Thus, there seemed to be a “digging-in” effect for those taking extreme positions. The counter-arguments seemed to stiffen the resolve of those taking extreme positions. The effect was especially strong among those who initially answered “punish all.” It seems that combative debate can have the effect of hardening people positions, rather than making them more “open-minded.”

## **V. Who wants to forgive and forget?**

The basic analysis above shows that most Burundians express a desire to forgive, whether conditionally or unconditionally, and to forget. However, there are significant differences across demographic groups and across regions of the country. We have also seen that people’s attitudes are quite stable.

We may wonder what deeper factors are causing people to express these attitudes. How do victims’ perspectives differ? Are expressions of the desire to forgive and forget based on insecurity? Are they based on a lack of understanding? Are they associated with political satisfaction and the desire for political consolidation?

To assess the relative contribution of each of these factors to people’s desire to forgive and forget, we use statistical regression analysis. A survey-design-corrected ordered logistic regression was used to study expressions of the desire to pardon, since there are three potential responses (punish all, pardon only those who ask for it, or pardon all). A survey-design-corrected logistic regression was used to study expressions of the desire to forget, since there were only two possible responses (search for the truth or forget).<sup>6</sup>

Our analysis estimated the relationship between various measures of victimization, insecurity, naivete, or political satisfaction, and people’s willingness to forgive or forget. Before doing this, we first removed any effects of gender, ethnicity, and age. We have already seen that the gender has a very weak relationship with desire to pardon or forget, and ethnicity has a very strong relationship. With respect to age, we found that older people are slightly less likely to express a desire to pardon—whether conditional or unconditional—but slightly more likely to express a desire to forget. The following pages present the results of this analysis.

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<sup>6</sup> Please contact the author for technical details of the analysis.

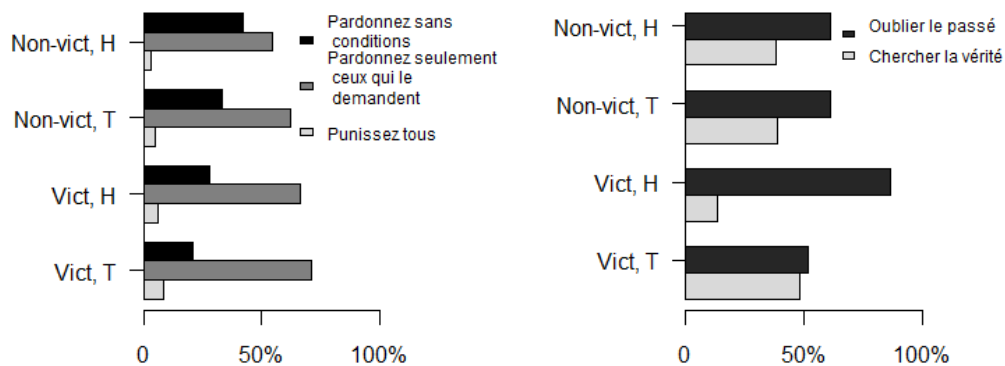


Figure 4: Overall effects of victimization. The figure shows patterns estimated from the regression analysis. The labels on the left axes refer to the following types of people:

- “Non-vict, H”: Hutu man, 31 years old, primary school education, no members of family killed by rebels or rebel-aligned forces.
- “Non-vict, T”: Tutsi man, 31 years old, primary school education, no members of family killed by rebels or rebel-aligned forces.
- “Vict, H”: Hutu man, 31 years old, primary school education, at least one member of family killed by rebels or rebel-aligned forces.
- “Vict, T”: Tutsi man, 31 years old, primary school education, at least one member of family killed by rebels or rebel-aligned forces.

Differences associated with victimization are significant at 98% confidence level or higher.

## Victimization

We asked respondents if they experienced physical abuse during the war, either by rebel forces (8% said yes) or government forces (14%); whether anyone in their family had experienced such abuse (24% said yes with respect to rebel forces, 32% for government), or whether members of their families were killed by rebel forces or militia aligned with them (25%), or by government forces or militia aligned with them (23%).

The regression analysis shows that only certain types of victimization are strongly associated with expressed desire to pardon or forget. All types of victimization by government forces or government-aligned militia were much more frequently reported by Hutu respondents. But such victimization did not have a strong relationship to expressed desires to pardon or forget. Physical abuse by rebel forces or rebel-aligned militia was evenly spread across ethnicities, but Tutsi respondents were much more likely to report family members killed by rebels or rebel-aligned militia. For both Hutu and Tutsi respondents, reports of having family members killed by such forces had a strong relationship to attitudes toward pardon and forgetting. These patterns are illustrated in Figure 3. With respect to pardon, such victimization induces stronger desires for punishment or conditional pardon over unconditional pardon. With respect to truth and forgetting, an unusual pattern is that Hutu respondents who attributed deaths in their families to rebel forces or militia exhibited a very strong preference to forget. In sharp contrast, Tutsi respondents who attribute deaths in their families to rebel forces or rebel-aligned militia express a heightened desire to seek the truth.

## **Insecurity**

As a measure of local insecurity, we collected data on armed violence, armed crime, banditry, and other insecurity-related events during the three years prior to the survey.<sup>7</sup> We estimate that about 26% of the population faced such insecurity in the period just prior to the survey. We also asked respondents about how hopeful they were about the sustainability of peace in Burundi. 54% said that they were very hopeful, 27% were hopeful, 17% were skeptical, and 2% were very skeptical.

We studied whether insecurity seemed to be inducing victims to *suppress* expressions of a desire for justice and truth. That is, we studied whether there was a “chilling effect” of insecurity on victims. There is some evidence of such an effect with respect to demands for justice, but the evidence is weak. Victims living in insecure communes are less likely to express a desire for punishment (by about 2.5% and 5.5% on average, for Hutu and Tutsi respondents, respectively) or conditional pardon (7.5% and 11% on average) relative to unconditional pardon. However, these differences are significant only at about 80% confidence level, which is quite low.<sup>8</sup> In addition, the percentage of the population that can be considered both victims of this sort and residents of insecure localities amounts to only about 7%. Thus, there may be a slight chilling effect with respect to demands for justice in insecure localities, but this is not likely to be a major force shaping attitudes across the population. With respect to search for truth, differences are negligible. No effects of this kind were detected in relation to whether people were hopeful or skeptical about prospects for peace.

## **Political understanding**

The survey measured respondents’ political understanding in various ways. We used data on respondents’ education levels (refer to Table 1). We also asked whether people were familiar with the Arusha Accords (84% said yes), whether they had some understanding about the goals of the rebellion (82% said yes), and whether they had an opinion about whether the peace accords were likely to last (80% said yes). For political self-confidence, we asked whether they felt like they usually understood what their politicians were doing (19% said yes).

With these measurements, we studied whether the tendency for people to express desires to forgive or forget was associated with a lack of education or political knowledge. The hypothesis is that more educated people and more politically aware people have deeper understanding of how society can benefit from transitional justice mechanisms. Thus, more educated and more

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<sup>7</sup> We recorded events as having taken place in the following 28 communes between 2004 and the time of the survey in 2007: Bubanza, Buganda, Bugarama, Bukinanyana, Buterere, Buyengerero, Cibitoke, Gatara, Gihanga, Isale, Kabezi, Kamenge, Kanyosha, Kinama, Kinindo, Kiremba, Matongo, Mubimbi, Muhuta, Murwi, Musigati, Mutambu, Mutimbuzi, Mutumba, Ngagara, Nyakabiga, Rohero, and Rumonge.

<sup>8</sup> The “confidence level” measures the likelihood that the pattern that is observed is real, rather than a product of mere chance. If we have 80% confidence, that implies that we would expect to find the same pattern in 8 out of 10 samples that we drew from the same population. Conventionally, scientists consider 95% confidence to be the minimal acceptable level for a result to be considered robust.

politically aware people should be more willing to express a demand for justice and truth, rather than forgiving and forgetting. We find that education is strongly associated with the demand for truth: more educated people are consistently much more likely to desire truth. This is true for all ethnicities and whether or not the person is a victim. However, education is related to the demand for justice in complicated ways. The strongest demands for punishment tend to come from people with either *no education* or *very high education*, but people in-between tend to prefer pardon. These patterns are shown in Figure 5. Contrary to the patterns associated with education, other measures of political awareness tend to be associated with stronger expressions of the desire to *forgive* and *forget*, although the relationships are not very strong (rarely significant above the 80% confidence level). Thus, we can conclude that the strong tendency among Burundians to express a desire to *forgive* is clearly *not* a product of a lack of political awareness. The strong tendency among Burundians to express a desire to *forget* may result from a lack of appreciation of the benefits of truth processes. But the evidence is mixed on this too, since other measures of political awareness are associated with a stronger desire to “forget.”

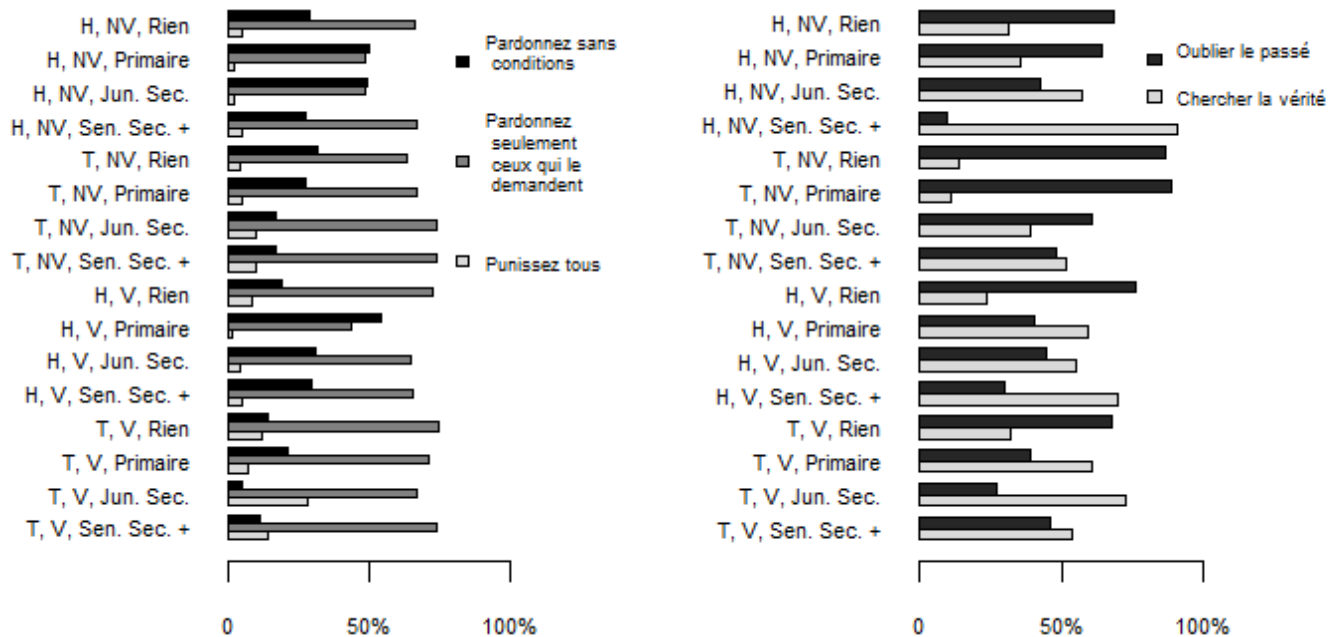


Figure 5: Education and the desire to forgive and forget. “H” refers to Hutu, “T” refers to Tutsi, “NV” refers to non-victim in the same terms as for Figure 4, and “V” refers to victim in those same terms. “Rien” refers to a person with no formal education completed, “primaire” means primary school is the highest level of formal education, “Jun. Sec.” means that junior secondary school is the highest level of school completed, and “Sen. Sec. +” means that the person completed senior secondary school or more (e.g. university).

### Political satisfaction

We asked people where whether they were satisfied with the peace accords. 59% said they were very satisfied, 38% said they were satisfied, and 3% said they were not satisfied. We also asked whether people thought they had more rights now than before the war. 59% said they had more rights, 13% said nothing had changed, and 28% said they had fewer rights. We asked

whether people thought that we should be patient with the government, and 84% said yes. Finally, we asked each respondent whether they thought that the government had done things that were useful to “people like you”, and 90% said yes.

With these measurements, we studied whether attitudes toward justice and truth were associated with satisfaction with the political outcome of the civil war. The hypothesis is that people who feel that the war has brought about beneficial political change will have a stronger interest in simply “moving on.” For these people, the pursuit of justice and truth could be seen as an obstacle to consolidating the political changes that have been achieved. In contrast, those who are dissatisfied by the political changes that the war has brought about may see justice and truth processes as ways to block further consolidation of the political changes. On average, there is a strong relationship between political satisfaction and the desire to *forgive*, lending support to the hypothesis as it applies to the pursuit of justice. Those who claimed that they were *satisfied with the peace accords* expressed a desire to pardon without conditions at a rate that was about 9% higher than those who claimed that they were not satisfied (significant at the 99.9% confidence level). Those who claimed that *they had more rights today* expressed a desire to pardon without conditions at a rate that was about 5% higher than those who did not claim that they had more rights (significant at the 99.9% confidence level). Those who claimed that *we should be more patient with the government* expressed a desire to pardon without conditions at a rate that was about 13% higher than those who said we should consider changing the government (significant at the 95% confidence level). The relationship between these variables and the desire to *forget* is not so strong, however. Those who claimed that they were satisfied with the peace accords expressed a desire to forget at a rate that was about 7% higher than those who were not satisfied, but this difference was significant at only the 85% confidence level, which is quite low. None of the other measures of political satisfaction had any noteworthy relationship to the desire to forget. We conclude that the *desire to pardon* is strongly related to people’s level of satisfaction with the political changes that resulted from the war, although desire to forget is mostly based on other factors.

## **VI. Comparisons to other post-conflict countries**

Are public attitudes in Burundi unusual? Or are they representative of a more general phenomenon in post-conflict countries? A similar study was conducted by the author in Cote d’Ivoire, in which we interviewed 1206 adults from all parts of the country in the autumn of 2008. In that study, 52% of respondents expressed a preference for pardon without conditions, 38% expressed a preference for offering pardon to those who ask for it, and 10% of respondents expressed a preference for punishing all human rights abusers. In addition, 78% expressed a preference for forgetting rather than seeking the truth. It is clear that attitudes toward *justice* in Cote d’Ivoire are much more polarized than in Burundi, and the desire to “forget” is actually a bit stronger there. The International Center for Transitional Justice conducted a survey in spring/summer 2007 in northern Ugandan districts “most affected by the



conflict”.<sup>9</sup> They report that “more than two-thirds of respondents (70%) said it was important to hold accountable those responsible for committing violations of human rights” and “over 90 percent supported the establishment of a truth commission.” It is difficult to compare these results to the results from Burundi, since the northern Uganda survey was limited to areas in the north “most affected by the conflict.” However, if we restrict our analysis to respondents from communes that are outside Bujumbura but experienced exceptionally high levels of violence during the war, we find that 58% of respondents prefer pardon with conditions, and 5% prefer punishment.<sup>10</sup> This implies a total of about 63% of people in heavily war-affected areas outside Bujumbura who demand some kind of accountability. This figure is somewhat less than what was found in northern Uganda. Looking at the demand for truth in these heavily conflict-affected areas, we find that 74% prefer to “forget”, which is higher than the national average in Burundi. It is also very different than what was found in northern Uganda, although much of this difference is likely due to differences in the ways the questions were asked. Thus, in conclusion, we find that results in Burundi correspond loosely to general patterns that we find in post-conflict countries.

## VIII. Conclusion

This report has presented findings on people’s attitudes toward justice and truth in post-conflict Burundi. Below is a summary of the findings:

First, very few people express a desire to punish former combatants that violated human rights. Most people express a desire for conditional pardon. Thus, there is demand for accountability, but few are willing to express a demand for *punitive* accountability. When it comes to attitudes toward justice, a person’s *level of satisfaction with the political changes caused by the war* is a very important factor. It does *not* seem that preferences for pardon are a result of insecurity or a lack of political understanding. Furthermore, people’s attitudes toward justice are quite firm. Thus, the process of establishing a transitional justice mechanism cannot be disentangled from *the broader political transition and people’s strong feelings about what the political transition should achieve*. To put it another way, transitional justice in post-conflict Burundi cannot be detached from perceptions of social justice. Those who believe that social justice has been delivered appear to be much less concerned about transitional justice.

Second, the demand for “truth” is muted by a commonly-held belief that it is “better to try to forget about what has happened.” Some have suggested that this may be due to a sense that “the truth is already known,” and that it contains stories that are either too dangerous or too

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<sup>9</sup> International Center for Transitional Justice, *When the War Ends: A Population Based Survey on Attitudes about Peace, Justice, and Reconstruction in Northern Uganda*, December 2007.

<sup>10</sup> The communes included in this analysis are Bubanza, Gitega, Isale, Kabezi, Kanyosha, Mutambu, Mutimbuzi, Ngozi, Rugombo, and Tangara.

upsetting to be brought into the open.<sup>11</sup> This would be consistent with the findings in this report. Those who demand “truth” tend to be the more educated, and they may have a different sense of what such “truth” means compared to the rest of the population. Perhaps through *sensitization* and provision of *assurances*, a deeper interest in pursuing a “common history” may be stimulated.

Third, views on justice and truth differ from province to province and across ethnicities. Provinces also vary considerably in the amount of ethnic polarization that they exhibit. Although this report did not attempt to explain these differences, it may have to do with the different histories, leaders, and wartime experiences in the provinces. This is a question worthy of further examination. In any case, the public consultation process should keep these differences in mind and try to promote a context of reconciliation.

Fourth, we have seen that public perceptions in Burundi are not so different than perceptions elsewhere—indeed, perceptions in Burundi are less polarized than some other places, perhaps giving reason for hope about reconciliation.

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<sup>11</sup> For example, see some of the testimonials in RCN Justice et Democratie (2007), *Paroles de Burundais sur la justice après-guerre*, Bujumbura.