

Burkina Faso

Burkina Faso: Current Path

Table of contents

Burkina Faso: Current Path	3
Burkina Faso: Current Path forecast	3
Demographics: Current Path	4
Economics: Current Path	6
Poverty: Current Path	8
Carbon Emissions/Energy: Current Path	9
Endnotes	10
Donors and Sponsors	10
Reuse our work	10
Cite this research	10

Burkina Faso: Current Path

- [Burkina Faso: Current Path forecast](#)
- [Demographics: Current Path](#)
- [Economics: Current Path](#)
- [Poverty: Current Path](#)
- [Carbon Emissions/Energy: Current Path](#)

Burkina Faso: Current Path forecast

Chart 1: Political map of Burkina Faso

This page provides an overview of the key characteristics of Burkina Faso along its likely (or Current Path) development trajectory. The Current Path forecast from the International Futures forecasting (IFs) platform is a dynamic scenario that imitates continuing current policies and environmental conditions. The Current Path is, therefore, in congruence with historical patterns and produces a series of dynamic forecasts endogenised in relationships across crucial global systems. We use 2019 as a standard reference year, and the estimates generally extend to 2043 to coincide with the end of the third ten-year implementation plan of the African Union's Agenda 2063 long-term development vision.

Burkina Faso is a landlocked country in West Africa with a land area of 274 200 km². It lies between the Sahara desert and the Gulf of Guinea, south of the loop of the Niger River. Burkina Faso borders Mali to the northwest, Niger to the northeast, Benin to the southeast, Togo and Ghana to the south, and Côte d'Ivoire to the southwest.

In 2019, Burkina Faso had a population of about 20.3 million, making it the fifth-largest country in West Africa. Its capital and largest city is Ouagadougou, with an estimated population of 2.5 million in 2019. The country's economy is based primarily on subsistence farming and livestock raising. Highly variable rainfall, poor soil, and the lack of adequate communications and other infrastructure are longstanding problems.

In 1896, Burkina Faso was colonised by the French as part of French West Africa and gained independence in 1960. The country's post-colonial history was characterised by several coups (in 1966, 1980, 1982, 1983, 1987) and coup attempts (in 1989, 2015, and recently in 2022). Thomas Sankara ruled the country from 1982 until he was killed in the 1987 coup led by Blaise Compaoré, who became president and ruled until his removal on 31 October 2014. On 23 January 2022, a military coup led by Paul-Henri Sandaogo Damiba ousted then president Kaboré. On 31 January 2022, the military junta restored the constitution and appointed Damiba president. However, in September 2022, military leaders headed by Captain Ibrahim Traore seized power, vowing to improve security after years of attacks by groups affiliated with al-Qaida and Islamic State groups. Subsequently, relations with France deteriorated, and the country left the G5 anti-jihadi force created by several countries in the Sahel and ECOWAS to join the Alliance for Sahel States (AES). Constitutionally, Burkina Faso is governed as a semi-presidential republic with executive, legislative and judicial powers.

According to the World Bank's income classification, Burkina Faso is a low-income country. The country is a member of the United Nations, the Organisation Internationale de la Francophonie, the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation and the Community of Sahel-Saharan States. Burkina Faso was suspended from the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) and the African Union after the 2022 military coup^[1] and subsequently announced that it would establish a [confederation](#) with Mali and Niger.

Demographics: Current Path

Burkina Faso has a young and fast-growing population. Coming from a baseline of about 8.8 million people in 1990, by 2019 its population had more than doubled to 20.3 million people. Over the coming two decades, the country's population is expected to grow significantly and reach 37.31 million people by 2043. In 2019, the population growth rate stood at 2.85% — the seventh highest in West Africa, although significantly lower than neighbouring Niger's or Mali's at about 3.9%. Population growth in Burkina Faso is driven by natural population growth. In other words, births are outstripping deaths.

Burkina Faso's population is young. In 2019, 44.2% of it was younger than 15 years old. The country's median age is 17.5 years which is roughly in line with the average median age of 17.9 years for the group of Africa's low-income economies. On the Current Path, Burkina Faso's demographic structure is expected to change only slowly. Historically, the country's fertility rate has been high. In 2019, it stood at an average of 5.2 births per woman, among the highest globally and above the average of 4.96 for its low-income peer group. By 2043, Burkina Faso's fertility rate is expected to drop to 3.5 births per woman. As a consequence, the median age is projected to increase to 21.8 years, still the 14th lowest globally and the tenth lowest among Africa's 23 low-income economies.

In 2019, the country's average life expectancy was 62.3 years. On average, women reach 63.6 and men 62.3 years of age. The country's low life expectancy stems from a high disease burden, driven to a large extent by low access to safe water and improved sanitation. With a death rate of 4.7 deaths per 1 000 people, Burkina Faso's communicable-disease burden is higher than the average rate of its income peer group which stands at 4.1.

On the Current Path and over the coming two decades, the average citizen of Burkina Faso can expect to add close to 8 years to their life expectancy and live to 70.3 years — just slightly less than the average 70.8 years for Africa's low-income economies. A higher life expectancy would be a boost to Burkina Faso's workforce. By 2043, the country's working-age population is expected to account for about 60% of the population compared to 53.3 in 2019. Indeed, the ratio of people of working age relative to the dependant population is improving but not fast enough.

Burkina Faso is a latecomer to the global trend of urbanisation. In 2019, more than two-thirds (70.3%) of the country's population lived in rural areas, and less than one-third (29.7%) of the population lived in urban areas. Burkina Faso is on par with the average for Africa's low-income countries with a rural-urban split of 69.1% versus 31% in 2019. On the Current Path, Burkina Faso's rate of urbanisation is expected to increase to 43.1% by 2043. The population living in rural areas will account for 56.9% of the overall population. The anticipated ratio for Africa's low-income economies is 40.7% urban versus 59.3% rural.

Chart 4: Population density map for 2019

Burkina Faso's population of about 20.3 million people is concentrated in the south-west and the centre of the country. At 0.741 people per hectare, overall population density is high compared to the average for Africa and Africa's low-income countries. The high densities in the centre and south-east areas paired with difficult economic conditions as well as frequent droughts cause significant migratory flows to Ivory Coast and Ghana for seasonal agricultural work.

Burkina Faso's capital and largest city is Ouagadougou, which is located on the central plateau, followed by Bobo Dioulasso in the west. Bobo Dioulasso used to be the economic and business capital of the country before the railroad to the port of Abidjan in Côte d'Ivoire was extended to Ouagadougou. Burkina Faso is divided into 13 administrative regions that are administered by one governor each. The regions include 45 provinces and 301 departments.

Burkina Faso's people belong to two major West African cultural groups: the Gur (Voltaic) and the Mandé. The Voltaic are in the majority and include the Mossi, who make up about 50% of the population.

Economics: Current Path

Between 1990 and 2019, Burkina Faso's GDP increased more than fourfold from US\$4.13 billion in 1990 to US\$20.4 billion in 2019. The country ranks sixth out of 23 African low-income economies with Sudan and Ethiopia being the lead economies. In 2043, Burkina Faso's GDP is forecast to be US\$76.5 billion, 3.75 times as large as in 2019. In other words, the economy is expected to expand, but with projected average annual growth rates around 6% over the coming two decades, such expansion is insufficient to allow for significant progress in human development.

Burkina Faso's economy is primarily based on subsistence farming and livestock raising. The country is severely affected by desertification and soil degradation.

Although many of the charts in the sectoral scenarios also include GDP per capita, this overview is an essential point of departure for interpreting the general economic outlook of Burkina Faso.

In 2019, Burkina Faso's GDP per capita ranked eighth among low-income African countries. The country's per capita income of US\$1 972 in 2019 was US\$312 above the average per capita income of its low-income peers. On the Current Path, the country's per capita income is expected to increase to US\$3 640 per capita by 2043, US\$150 below the average for low-income Africa and falling to 11th position among its peer group.

In 2019, Burkina Faso's informal sector accounted for approximately 33.2% of GDP compared to an average share of 30.1% in Africa's low-income economies. By 2043, Burkina Faso's informal sector will decline, reflecting improvements in overall state capacity, including for taxation. However, the contribution of the country's informal sector to its economy will remain significantly high at 28.9% by 2043, higher than the average for Africa and Africa's low-income economies.

The IFs platform uses data from the Global Trade and Analysis Project (GTAP) to classify economic activity into six sectors: agriculture, energy, materials (including mining), manufacturing, service and information and communication technologies (ICT). Most other sources use a threefold distinction between only agriculture, industry and services with the result that data may differ.

In 2019, Burkina Faso's service sector accounted for half of the country's GDP, followed by the agriculture sector, which represented about 26.2%. In the future, the service sector is expected to remain the most important contributor to Burkina Faso's GDP — its share is set to grow to 56.3% by 2043. At the same time, the contribution of the agriculture sector is forecast to shrink to 9.4%. The manufacturing sector, on the other hand, at 14.54%, currently the third largest contributor to Burkina Faso's GDP, is forecast to increase by more than 8 percentage points to 22.9% in 2043.

Burkina Faso's expected trajectory roughly mirrors that of its low-income peers with the service sector representing both the current and future lion's share of contribution to GDP, followed by agriculture and manufacturing sectors, which are respectively expected to lose and gain ground. This growth in the secondary sectors indicates a transition of the economy that could open up more employment opportunities.

The data on agricultural production and demand in the IFs forecasting platform initialises from data provided on food balances by the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO). IFs contains data on numerous types of agriculture but aggregates its forecast into crops, meat and fish, presented in million metric tons. Chart 9 shows agricultural production and demand as a total of all three categories.

At 2.1 million metric tons per hectare in 2019, Burkina Faso's crop yield is lower than the average of Africa's low-income economies that stood at 2.7 million metric tons per hectare. Rwanda, the frontrunner in this category, has a crop yield of 8.3 million metric tons per hectare, followed by Malawi with a yield of 7.2 million metric tons per hectare. By 2043, Burkina Faso's crop yield is expected to increase to 2.7 million metric tons per hectare.

The lion's share of Burkina Faso's agricultural output is crops — mainly subsistence foodstuffs, with the surplus being sold as cash crops. Surplus cotton, shea nuts, sesame and sugarcane are exported, while sorghum, millet, corn (maize), peanuts (groundnuts) and rice are grown for local consumption. In 2019, the country's crop production amounted to about 11.9 million metric tons compared to the average output of 13.8 million metric tons of its low-income peer group. This gap is projected to widen by 2043 with Burkina Faso expected to increase its output to 15.5 million metric tons versus the group's average output reaching 20.05 million metric tons.

More importantly, already at present, Burkina Faso's agricultural production does not meet demand. In 2019, the gap between production and demand amounted to almost 1 million (0.96) metric tons. By 2043, this gap is expected to be more than 10 times as big standing at 9.92 million metric tons. Fast population growth is rapidly fuelling agricultural demand. In combination with low productivity, competition over scarce resources is resulting in insecurity, as well as environmental degradation and high exposure to climate change related risks, food insecurity is a significant growing risk.

Poverty: Current Path

There are numerous methodologies for and approaches to defining poverty. We measure income poverty and use GDP per capita as a proxy. In 2015, the World Bank adopted the measure of US\$1.90 per person per day (in 2011 international prices), also used to measure progress towards the achievement of Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 1 of eradicating extreme poverty. To account for extreme poverty in richer countries occurring at slightly higher levels of income than in poor countries, the World Bank introduced three additional poverty lines in 2017:

- US\$3.20 for lower middle-income countries
- US\$5.50 for upper middle-income countries
- US\$22.70 for high-income countries.

As a low-income country, Burkina Faso uses the US\$1.90 benchmark to define extreme poverty. The country's poverty burden is high. In 2019, 37% of the population, which corresponds to 7.5 million people, was living below the poverty line. However, Burkina Faso's poverty rate lies more than 10 percentage points below the average of its low-income African peers at 47.75%.

In 2019, Burkina Faso had the fifth lowest poverty rate among Africa's low-income economies. The COVID-19 pandemic impacted food prices and worsened living conditions resulting in a significant increase in poverty.[2] By 2043, in the Current Path forecast the country's position is expected to drop by 5 ranks. The number of people living in extreme poverty will increase to 7.71 million people by 2043, owing to the large population increase forecast for Burkina Faso.

The country's poverty rate is projected to decline to 20.7% by 2043 — a solid reduction by about 16.3%, although a bit slower than the average rate of reduction in Africa's low-income economies which will be 22.6%.

Carbon Emissions/Energy: Current Path

The IFs platform forecasts six types of energy, namely oil, gas, coal, hydro, nuclear and other renewables. To allow comparisons between different types of energy, the data is converted into billion barrels of oil equivalent (BBOE). The energy contained in a barrel of oil is approximately 5.8 million British thermal units (MBTUs) or 1 700 kilowatt-hours (kWh) of energy.

In 2019, Burkina Faso's total energy production was 13 million barrels of oil equivalent. By 2043, it is estimated to increase to 20 million barrels. The country's current energy mix is heavily reliant on gas, which accounted for over 80% of total production in 2019, followed by hydro at 10% and other renewables at 7%.

The Current Path forecast bodes for a gradual transition towards less gas and more renewables in Burkina Faso's energy mix in the future. Hydro is set to remain more or less stable. By 2043, other renewables are expected to account for 78% of total energy production. Gas is set to drop to represent 15% of total production with the share of hydro accounting for about 6%. The anticipated share of other renewables in Burkina Faso's energy production profile by far exceeds the average of 39% that is expected for Africa's low-income economies. This can be explained by Burkina Faso's significant renewable energy resources (mostly solar and wind) that can be exploited to power the growing economy.

Carbon is released in many ways, but the three most important contributors to greenhouse gases are carbon dioxide (CO₂), carbon monoxide (CO) and methane (CH₄). Since each has a different molecular weight, IFs uses carbon. Many other sites and calculations use CO₂ equivalent.

Burkina Faso's carbon emissions at 1.4 million tons of carbon in 2019 make the country a low emitter. Carbon emissions are forecast to increase almost sixfold to 8 million tons of carbon by 2043, in line with a growing economy forecasted for the country.

Endnotes

1. M Echenberg, [Burkina Faso](#), Britannica
2. S Eimieho, [Impact of COVID-19 on Burkina Faso](#), The Borgen Project

Donors and sponsors

Reuse our work

- All visualizations, data, and text produced by African Futures are completely open access under the [Creative Commons BY license](#). You have the permission to use, distribute, and reproduce these in any medium, provided the source and authors are credited.
- The data produced by third parties and made available by African Futures is subject to the license terms from the original third-party authors. We will always indicate the original source of the data in our documentation, so you should always check the license of any such third-party data before use and redistribution.
- All of our charts [can be embedded](#) in any site.

Cite this research

Alize le Roux (2024) Burkina Faso. Published online at futures.issafrica.org. Retrieved from <https://futures.issafrica.org/geographic/countries/burkina-faso/> [Online Resource] Updated 19 February 2024.

About the authors

Ms Alize le Roux joined the AFI in May 2021 as a senior researcher. Before joining the ISS, she worked as a principal geo-informatics researcher at the CSIR, supporting various local and national policy- and decision-makers with long-term planning support. Alize has 14 years of experience in spatial data analysis, disaster risk reduction and urban and regional modelling. She has a master's degree in geographical sciences from the University of Utrecht, specialising in multi-hazard risk assessments and spatial decision support systems.

About African Futures & Innovation

Scenarios and forecasting can help Africa identify and respond to opportunities and threats. The work of the African Futures & Innovation (AFI) program at the Institute for Security Studies aims to understand and address a widening gap between indices of wellbeing in Africa and elsewhere in the world. The AFI helps stakeholders understand likely future developments. Research findings and their policy implications are widely disseminated, often in collaboration with in-country partners. Forecasting tools inspire debate and provide insights into possible trajectories that inform planning, prioritisation and effective resource allocation. Africa's future depends on today's choices and actions by governments and their non-governmental and international partners. The AFI provides empirical data that informs short- and medium-term decisions with long-term implications. The AFI enhances Africa's capacity to prepare for and respond to future challenges. The program is headed by Dr Jakkie Cilliers.