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Burkina Faso: Country Dossier

December 2019



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Introduction

World Watch List 2020

Rank	Country	Private life	Family life	Community life	National life	Church life	Violence	Total Score WWL 2020	Total Score WWL 2019	Total Score WWL 2018	Total Score WWL 2017	Total Score WWL 2016
1	North Korea	16.7	16.7	16.7	16.7	16.7	11.1	94	94	94	92	92
2	Afghanistan	16.7	16.7	16.7	16.7	16.7	10.0	93	94	93	89	88
3	Somalia	16.5	16.7	16.6	16.6	16.5	9.4	92	91	91	91	87
4	Libya	15.3	15.5	15.8	16.0	16.4	11.3	90	87	86	78	79
5	Pakistan	14.0	13.9	15.0	14.9	13.7	16.7	88	87	86	88	87
6	Eritrea	14.5	14.9	15.9	15.9	15.4	10.9	87	86	86	82	89
7	Sudan	14.2	14.6	14.5	15.7	16.1	10.4	85	87	87	87	84
8	Yemen	16.6	16.4	16.4	16.7	16.7	2.6	85	86	85	85	78
9	Iran	14.1	14.3	14.1	15.8	16.5	10.4	85	85	85	85	83
10	India	12.9	13.0	13.5	15.0	13.5	14.8	83	83	81	73	68
11	Syria	13.5	14.2	13.0	13.9	14.4	12.6	82	82	76	86	87
12	Nigeria	12.2	11.9	13.5	12.8	13.0	16.7	80	80	77	78	78
13	Saudi Arabia	15.1	14.9	14.1	15.5	16.5	2.4	79	77	79	76	76
14	Maldives	15.4	15.6	14.0	15.9	16.6	0.7	78	78	78	76	76
15	Iraq	14.0	14.6	13.9	14.5	13.6	5.6	76	79	86	86	90
16	Egypt	12.1	13.1	10.7	13.2	10.5	16.1	76	76	70	65	64
17	Algeria	13.5	14.3	10.4	12.8	13.2	9.3	73	70	58	58	56
18	Uzbekistan	15.1	12.9	14.1	12.2	15.7	3.0	73	74	73	71	70
19	Myanmar	11.8	11.9	13.5	12.5	12.2	10.7	73	71	65	62	62
20	Laos	12.8	9.9	14.1	14.4	14.9	5.6	72	71	67	64	58
21	Vietnam	12.3	8.5	12.9	13.6	14.5	9.8	72	70	69	71	66
22	Turkmenistan	14.5	11.2	13.8	13.3	15.7	1.9	70	69	68	67	66
23	China	11.6	8.4	11.6	12.8	15.1	10.2	70	65	57	57	57
24	Mauritania	13.9	14.0	13.0	13.7	13.4	0.2	68	67	57	55	50
25	Central African Republic	10.1	9.1	13.1	9.8	10.2	15.6	68	70	61	58	59
26	Morocco	12.4	13.3	10.8	11.7	14.1	4.1	66	63	51	49	47
27	Qatar	13.6	13.4	10.8	12.2	14.1	2.2	66	62	63	66	65
28	Burkina Faso	9.4	9.7	10.2	9.4	11.8	15.6	66	48	-	-	-
29	Mali	9.2	8.2	12.8	10.0	11.7	13.7	66	68	59	59	55
30	Sri Lanka	11.5	9.0	11.0	10.9	9.6	13.1	65	58	57	55	53
31	Tajikistan	13.9	12.3	11.9	12.4	13.1	1.1	65	65	65	58	58
32	Nepal	12.4	10.8	9.9	12.1	12.2	7.0	64	64	64	53	53
33	Jordan	13.1	14.1	10.7	11.7	12.5	1.7	64	65	66	63	59

34	Tunisia	12.0	12.8	10.3	10.8	12.3	5.4	64	63	62	61	58
35	Kazakhstan	13.2	11.5	10.7	12.4	14.0	1.7	64	63	63	56	55
36	Turkey	12.6	11.8	10.7	13.3	11.3	3.7	63	66	62	57	55
37	Brunei	13.8	14.3	10.7	10.3	13.5	0.6	63	63	64	64	61
38	Bangladesh	11.1	9.9	12.7	11.1	8.9	9.3	63	58	58	63	57
39	Ethiopia	10.0	9.2	10.6	10.8	10.4	11.9	63	65	62	64	67
40	Malaysia	12.1	14.6	12.7	12.0	9.6	1.5	62	60	65	60	58
41	Colombia	8.9	7.8	11.9	9.8	8.9	15.0	62	58	56	53	55
42	Oman	12.7	13.1	10.0	11.5	12.7	2.0	62	59	57	53	53
43	Kuwait	13.2	13.1	9.9	11.5	13.4	0.7	62	60	61	57	56
44	Kenya	11.7	10.5	10.9	8.3	10.9	9.1	61	61	62	68	68
45	Bhutan	12.8	10.9	11.8	11.6	13.9	0.0	61	64	62	61	56
46	Russian Federation	12.2	8.3	10.7	10.4	12.1	6.9	60	60	51	46	48
47	United Arab Emirates	12.9	13.0	9.5	11.1	12.6	1.1	60	58	58	55	55
48	Cameroon	8.8	7.2	11.6	7.0	10.4	15.0	60	54	38	-	45
49	Indonesia	10.9	11.1	11.6	10.2	9.5	6.5	60	65	59	55	55
50	Niger	9.4	9.5	13.3	7.2	11.1	9.3	60	52	45	47	53
51	Palestinian Territories	12.2	13.0	9.2	10.2	11.9	3.1	60	57	60	64	62
52	Mexico	8.4	6.8	12.2	10.6	10.0	11.5	60	61	59	57	56
53	Azerbaijan	13.0	10.0	9.3	11.1	12.4	1.5	57	57	57	52	57
54	Comoros	11.7	11.5	9.1	9.9	13.9	0.9	57	56	56	56	56
55	Kyrgyzstan	12.9	10.3	11.1	9.4	11.9	1.1	57	56	54	48	46
56	Djibouti	12.3	12.3	10.3	10.0	11.2	0.2	56	56	56	57	58
57	Democratic Republic of the Congo	5.6	6.7	10.6	7.4	10.4	15.6	56	55	33	-	53
58	Chad	11.5	8.2	10.2	9.6	10.3	5.9	56	48	40	-	51
59	Bahrain	12.1	12.3	9.1	10.1	10.5	0.9	55	55	57	54	54
60	Tanzania	9.3	10.8	10.3	8.6	8.7	7.0	55	52	53	59	57
61	Cuba	9.6	5.6	9.5	11.8	12.0	3.5	52	49	49	47	42
62	Uganda	8.1	4.6	6.7	6.7	9.1	13.0	48	47	46	53	45
63	Burundi	5.1	5.8	9.7	9.2	9.6	8.7	48	43	-	-	-
64	Guinea	10.3	7.5	8.3	7.0	8.1	3.7	45	46	-	-	-
65	South Sudan	5.7	1.5	7.0	6.3	7.8	15.6	44	44	-	-	-
66	Mozambique	6.9	4.6	7.1	5.2	8.0	11.7	43	43	-	-	-
67	Gambia	8.3	8.2	8.7	8.3	8.8	1.1	43	43	-	-	-
68	Angola	6.4	3.6	7.0	8.7	10.4	6.7	43	42	-	-	-
69	Venezuela	3.8	4.4	10.6	9.3	9.5	4.8	42	41	34	-	-
70	Ivory Coast	9.8	8.6	8.2	5.5	6.6	3.5	42	43	-	-	-
71	Rwanda	5.3	4.4	6.7	7.8	10.1	7.2	42	41	-	-	-

72	Nicaragua	5.8	4.2	8.5	9.8	9.0	4.1	41	41	-	-	-
73	Togo	8.6	6.7	8.5	7.1	8.4	1.1	41	42	-	-	-

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Brief note on sources and definitions

This country report is a collation of data and analysis based around Open Doors World Watch List (WWL) and includes statistical information on world religions, Christian denominations and people groups prepared by the World Christian Database (WCD). The highlighted links in the text can be found written out in full at the conclusion of each main section under the heading “External links”. The WWL 2020 reporting period was 1 November 2018 - 31 October 2019.

The definition of persecution used in WWL analysis is: “Any hostility experienced as a result of one’s identification with Christ. This can include hostile attitudes, words and actions towards Christians”.

This broad definition includes (but is not limited to) restrictions, pressure, discrimination, opposition, disinformation, injustice, intimidation, mistreatment, marginalization, oppression, intolerance, infringement, violation, ostracism, hostilities, harassment, abuse, violence, ethnic cleansing and genocide.

The latest update of WWL Methodology including appendices can be found on the [World Watch List Documentation](#) page of the Open Doors Analytical website (password: freedom).

WWL 2020: Persecution summary / Burkina Faso

Brief country details

Pop 2019	Christians	Chr%
Burkina Faso		
20,322,000	5,157,000	25.4

Data source: Johnson T M and Zurlo G A, eds., *World Christian Database* (Leiden/Boston: Brill, accessed April 2019).

World Watch List Burkina Faso	Points	WWL Rank
WWL 2020	66	28
WWL 2019	48	61
WWL 2018	-	-
WWL 2017	-	-
WWL 2016	-	-

Scores and ranks are shown above whenever the country scored 41 points or more in the WWL 2016-2020 reporting periods.

Dominant persecution engines and drivers

Burkina Faso: Main Persecution engines	Main drivers
Islamic oppression	Violent religious groups, Citizens (people from the broader society), including mobs, One's own (extended) family, Non-Christian religious leaders, Ethnic group leaders, Organized crime cartels or networks
Clan and ethnic antagonism	Ethnic group leaders
Organized corruption and crime	Violent religious groups, Organized crime cartels or networks

Engines and Drivers are listed in order of strength. Only Very strong / Strong / Medium are shown here.

Brief description of persecution situation

In the WWL 2020 reporting period, Christians were targeted and killed and churches were destroyed. Christians of Muslim background are the most persecuted Christian group in the country. Family and community members reject them and try to force them to renounce their Christian faith. They are afraid to express their faith in public because of such threats.

Specific examples of persecution in the reporting period

- In April 2019, gunmen [killed](#) a Protestant pastor and five other Christians in a church in northern Burkina. The attackers were on motorbikes and opened fire as the Christians were leaving the Sunday church service.
- On 12 May 2019, a Catholic priest and five other Christians were [killed](#) in an attack in the central town of Dablo. Gunmen first stormed the church during the Sunday service and then set fire to the church and surrounding buildings.
- [In June 2019](#), militants stormed a village in northern Burkina Faso and ordered people who had been chatting outside to lie down. Then the armed group checked everyone's necks, looking at the chains worn. They found four men wearing chains with crosses, indicating that they were Christians, and executed them.
- In September 2019, a Christian man and four of his sons [were killed](#). They were shot dead in the villages of Pissele and Boulkiba by gunmen.

External Links - WWL 2020: Persecution summary

- Specific examples of persecution in the reporting period: killed - <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-48094789>
- Specific examples of persecution in the reporting period: killed - <https://www.cnn.com/2019/05/12/africa/burkina-faso-church-attack/index.html>
- Specific examples of persecution in the reporting period: In June 2019 - <https://www1.cbn.com/cbnnews/cwn/2019/june/christians-flee-as-islamic-terrorists-murder-at-least-19-in-africas-burkina-faso>
- Specific examples of persecution in the reporting period: were killed - <https://barnabasfund.org/en/news/five-christian-men-from-same-family-killed-in-one-of-four-murderous-islamist-attacks-in-burkina>

WWL 2020: Keys to understanding / Burkina Faso

Link for general background information

BBC country profile: <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-africa-13072774>.

Recent history

Burkina Faso is located in the Sahel region of West Africa. The country was formerly a French colony known as Upper Volta and gained independence in 1960. Throughout its post-independence history, Burkina Faso has gone through several episodes of political unrest and instability.

Like most African countries, the territorial borders are a product of the 19th-century European colonial demarcation process called the “[scramble for Africa](#)”. The independence movement to become free from French control was led by the Voltaic Democratic Union (UDV) party. The leader of the UDV, Maurice Yaméogo, became the country’s first president. After coming into power, President Yaméogo banned all political parties apart from UDV and declared the country to be a single-party state. The regime favored the policies of the French and other western powers.

The UDV regime became unpopular, which led to an outbreak of political unrest in 1966 and Colonel Sangoulé Lamizana orchestrated a successful military coup. Lamizana took control and remained in power until 1980. He ruled the country for the next fourteen years first with a full military government and then with a military government including some civilians holding limited power. Political protests led by the country’s trade unions forced the regime to introduce a democratic constitution in 1977. The country held an open election in 1978 which Lamizana won. This election, like most earlier elections, was not free and fair.

The country then experienced a second military coup when the Lamizana regime was overthrown by Colonel Saye Zerbo in 1980. Zerbo regime was unpopular and faced considerable opposition. Consequently, his regime lasted only two years. A military council called the Council of Popular Salvation (CSP) led by Jean-Baptiste Ouédraogo [overthrew](#) the Zerbo regime in 1982. The country then went through more political unrest due to the infighting among various factions of the CSP leaders. On 4 August 1983 the Ouedrago regime was overthrown by the CSP faction led by Thomas Sankara and Blaise Compaoré. Sankara was installed as the president of the republic.

In 1984 President Sankara changed the name of the country to Burkina Faso (“land of honest men”). Sankara was one of the most popular leaders in Africa. He introduced numerous political and social reforms that included more rights for women and workers. However, it seems that his Socialist economic policies were unpopular among Western powers and he was killed in a coup led by Blaise Compaoré in October 1987.

Blaise Compaoré's military government was dictatorial and unpopular among the people. Opposition to the regime was met by violent reprisals and many opposition leaders were arrested, tortured, killed or forced to leave the country. Opposition came to a height in the 2014 uprising which forced Compaoré to leave the country in October 2014 after 27 years of rule. After a brief transitional period, there was another military coup in September 2015. However, the coup leaders agreed to transfer power to a civilian government through elections. A democratic election was held in November 2015 and Roch Kaboré became the first democratically elected president of Burkina Faso.

Although there has been significant development in terms of democracy and human rights since Kaboré came to office, his presidency has been overshadowed by numerous attacks by Islamic militants operating in the region.

The bloodshed of the preceding few years continued unabated in 2018 in Burkina Faso; there were reports of recurrent attacks that claimed several lives and terrorized communities. The attacks which occurred in March and September 2018 were particularly significant in the way targets were identified and how the attacks were carried out. In March 2018, coordinated attacks [targeted](#) the French embassy and army headquarters in the capital, Ouagadougou, and claimed the lives of at least 16 people (including militants). In September 2018, two attacks were carried out by militants in the same night in eastern parts of the country killing civilians, one of them targeting the home of a [religious leader](#) who was killed. Regular attacks by Islamic militants throughout the year caused a growing security crisis in the east and north of the country, in response to which President Kaboré declared a [state of emergency](#) in December 2018.

Among the significant events that unfolded in 2018 was one involving former President Blaise Compaore and his brother. An international arrest warrant was issued in May 2018 against the former president's brother, Françoise Compaore, for the murder of a journalist back in 1998. The trial of President Blaise Compaore himself was [temporarily suspended](#) by the Constitutional Council in June 2018. The news that Burkina Faso's parliament adopted a new penal code providing for the formal [abolition of the death penalty](#), even while the country remained abolitionist in practice, was also an important development in 2018.

In April 2019, Protestant Christian worshippers and a pastor were killed as Islamic militants launched what is regarded as the [first attack on a church](#) since the recent sectarian violence erupted. This was followed by deadly attacks on two consecutive days in May 2019 targeting Catholic Christians in two different parts of the country.

Political and legal landscape

The country is in a period of transition, moving towards democracy after years of political turmoil and military dictatorship. According to the [Constitution of 2012](#), Burkina Faso is a secular state and guarantees the right of individuals to choose, practice and change their religion at will. The laws allow all organizations, religious or otherwise to register with the Ministry of Territorial Administration, Decentralization and Internal Security.

The current Constitution was first approved in 1991 and has been amended multiple times since then. The last amendment in 2012 established a semi-presidential system. The president is elected every fifth year and selects the prime minister with the approval of the parliament. The country's legislature is a bicameral body with the National Assembly as the lower house and the Senate as the upper house. The national assembly consists of 111 elected members.

The country made significant progress towards democracy after the transfer of power in 2015. A general election was held in Burkina Faso in November 2015, the first national elections since the 2014 Burkinabe uprising and [departure](#) of President Blaise Compaoré who had ruled Burkina Faso for 27 years. Political freedom and the situation of human rights have [improved](#) dramatically since then. Fourteen different political parties held National Assembly seats in the 2015 election. The country's constitutional court approved a law preventing anyone associated with the previous regime to run for office. The next election is scheduled for November 2020.

Religious landscape

Located in the Sahel region of Africa, Burkina Faso is a Muslim majority country. Muslims are dominant in the northern and eastern parts of the country, whereas the Christians are concentrated in the central and southern parts of the country. Followers of indigenous traditional African religions dominate the southern part of the country. Historically, the country has experienced a history of harmonious coexistence among the different religious groups.

The 2012 Constitution [guarantees](#) freedom of religion and the principle of separation of church and state. The government requires all religious groups to register with the Ministry of Territorial Administration and Security to operate in the country. Moreover, the government does not fund religious schools, which thus operate independently. However, in the WWL 2020 reporting period, there have been anti-Christian campaigns and sentiment propagated by Islamic militants.

Religious Context: Burkina Faso	Numbers	%
Christians	5,157,000	25.4
Muslim	11,045,000	54.3
Hindu	0	0.0
Buddhist	0	0.0
Ethnoreligionist	4,002,000	19.7
Jewish	0	0.0
Bahai	3,900	0.0
Atheist	730	0.0

Agnostic	111,000	0.5
Other	780	0.0

Data source: Johnson T M and Zurlo G A, eds., World Christian Database (Leiden/Boston: Brill, accessed April 2019). OTHER includes Chinese folk, New religionist, Sikh, Spiritist, Taoist, Confucianist, Jain, Shintoist, Zoroastrian.

According to WCD 2019, almost 20% of the population follow traditional African religions. Many Christians and Muslims in the country also mix their faiths with various forms of traditional beliefs and practices. For instance, some Christians have embraced such traditional African practices as polygamy. However, there has been a noticeable decline in the number of adherents of traditional religions in recent years.

Economic landscape

Burkina Faso is one of the least developed countries in the world. It is dependent on other West African countries for exporting its products. Nearly 80% of the people are dependent on subsistence farming. Cotton remains the leading export followed by [gold](#). Rises in gold prices have increased the country's export income.

According to the [World Bank](#): "Burkina Faso is a low-income, landlocked Sub-Saharan African country with limited natural resources. Its population, which is growing at an average annual rate of 3.1%, was estimated at almost 18.6 million inhabitants in 2016. The next General Census of Population and Housing (RGPH) will be conducted in late 2019. The economy is heavily reliant on agriculture, with close to 80% of the active population employed in the sector. Cotton is the country's most important cash crop, while gold exports have gained importance in recent years." World Bank adds: "The economic outlook remains favorable in the medium term, with GDP growth projected to stabilize around 6% over the period 2019-2021, supported by the services and mining sectors as well as exports. Inflation is projected to remain below the 3% threshold set by the West African Economic and Monetary Union (WAEMU)."

Social and cultural landscape

Before European colonization took place in the 19th century, different Sahelian kingdoms ruled the region. The ancient empire of Ghana controlled much of the present territory of Burkina Faso. By the 14th century, the Mossi people, who migrated from the present northern part of Ghana, established the Mossi kingdoms of Tenkodogo, Wagadugu and Yatenga. The Mossi kingdom of Wagadugu (with Ouagadougou as its capital) was dominant. By the 17th century, the Mossi kingdoms were engaged in a perpetual power struggle with the Mali and Songhai empires. Although the Mossi kingdoms gradually lost much power by the end of the 18th, they still held control of the central and northern parts of Burkina Faso. The French defeated the Mossi kingdom of Ouagadougou in 1896 and took control of the area. Then in 1919, the French established the colonial province of Upper Volta.

The Mossi people are the major [ethnic group](#) in the country constituting around 50.2% of the population. Although the Mossi are dominant in Burkina Faso there are also a significant number of Mossi people in other West African countries including Benin, Ivory Coast, Ghana, Mali and Togo. They are the second-largest ethnic group in Ivory Coast. They are predominantly Muslim with some Christians and followers of traditional beliefs. After the Mossi, the Fulani constitute around 9.4% of Burkina Faso's population today, and the Bobo 5.9%. The rest of Burkina Faso's population consists of twenty-six distinct ethnic groups.

Technological landscape

Burkina Faso is not advanced in technology. It is in the Sahel region and much of its territory is desert and semi-desert. According to [Datareportal](#) reporting on 31 January 2019, Burkina Faso has 3.81 million Internet users (a penetration rate of 19%), 1.30 million active social media users and 19.68 million mobile phone users.

Security situation

There are several militant Islamic groups operating in the country. Such groups include Jamaat Nusrat al-Islam wal Muslimeen (JNIM), Islamic State West Africa (ISWA), Islamic State Greater Sahara (ISGS), al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM), al-Murabitoun, Ansar Dine and Boko Haram. These groups have been responsible for various attacks and are gaining ground, especially following the political instability in neighboring Mali.

As [World Bank](#) states: "Like other countries in the sub-region, Burkina Faso is experiencing increasingly challenging security conditions. Although protected for a long time, the country has entered a cycle of more frequent terrorist attacks, particularly in the north of the country, near to the border with Mali and Niger."

[International Crisis Group](#) also highlights the challenges that the security forces of the country are facing: "Burkina Faso's security forces are struggling to cope with increasing insurgent attacks, particularly in the country's north and east. Violence in the north has spread from Soum Province, the epicenter of the Ansarul Islam insurgency, to other provinces, particularly Sourou. Ansarul Islam continues to launch attacks, mostly on security forces. The Group for the Support of Islam and Muslims (JNIM), which also operates in central and northern Mali and parts of Niger, has struck in the north, though whether it has ties to Ansarul Islam is uncertain."

Trends analysis

1. There is progress in democracy

Burkina Faso has shown dramatic progress towards democracy since the overthrow of Compaore's dictatorship. The electoral process had become more open and credible and the government has also taken numerous measures to improve human rights. Despite extreme poverty, Islamic militancy and corruption, the country is trying to make progress in terms of democracy and rule of law. The 2015 general elections brought a new face to the leadership role - Roch Marc Christian Kaboré of the People's Movement for Progress became the first democratically elected president in 27 years.

2. Islamic militancy is gaining ground

Burkina Faso is losing the religious tolerance it has otherwise practiced throughout its earlier history. A radicalization of the Islamic population is now taking place. The recent expansion of Islamic militancy in the Sahel region threatens the developing democracy. Radical Islamic groups like AQIM and Boko Haram are clearly gaining ground. Although the government is taking various precautionary measures to prevent the expansion of such groups, it will also need to look for grassroots solutions to combat the growing Islamist influence. There have also been inter-communal clashes that have at times resulted in civilian deaths. In 2019, much communal violence and attacks by jihadist groups have led to deaths and displacements. What is more worrying is that these attacks often target Christians.

The Burkina Faso government needs to increase the country's security (by combating Islamic militants in the region) and actively encourage a more tolerant environment where different religious traditions can live side by side without major tension. If the country can keep progressing toward democracy, it can aim to provide a strong multi-party system for the elections in November 2020.

External Links - WWL 2020: Keys to understanding

- Recent history: scramble for Africa - <https://www.lonelyplanet.com/burkina-faso/history>
- Recent history: overthrew - <https://www.britannica.com/place/Burkina-Faso>
- Recent history: targeted - <http://www.aljazeera.com/news/2018/03/blast-rocks-burkina-faso-ouagadougou-reports-180302110142186.html%Ef%BB%BF%20>
- Recent history: religious leader - <http://www.aljazeera.com/news/2018/09/civilians-killed-twin-attacks-burkina-faso-180915163351654.html%20>
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WWL 2020: Church information / Burkina Faso

Christian origins

Throughout recent history, the Sahel region has been dominated by Islamic states like the empire of Mali and the Mossi kingdom. Although Muslim rulers controlled these kingdoms, most of the population kept their traditional beliefs. For example, as recently as the 19th century, most people in the Mossi kingdom were not Muslim. Christianity was introduced during the French colonial period, and most Christians today are the ancestors of followers of traditional African religion (ATR).

Christianity came to the country in 1896 with French. The Roman Catholic White Fathers entered the country in 1900 and opened their first mission at Ouagadougou in 1901. In 1922, an indigenous Catholic order called the Black Sisters of the Immaculate Conception was formed. The Catholic Church decided to make Ouagadougou an archdiocese in 1955. For further details, see: Rupley L and Bangali L, *Historical Dictionary of Burkina Faso* (2013, third edition). p. 36ff.

Protestants first came to the country in the early 1920s. Missionaries from the Assemblies of God established themselves in Ouagadougou in 1921. That was followed by the opening of a Bible school in 1933. In 1923 the Christian and Missionary Alliance started working in Dioulasso. For further details, see: Melton J G and Baumann M, *Religions of The World (Second Edition): A Comprehensive Encyclopedia Of Beliefs And Practices* (2010) pp. 444-445.

From the middle of the 20th century onwards, many indigenous churches and new denominations emerged. Temple Apostolic was the first independent indigenous church congregation in the capital city. The Federation of Evangelical Churches and Missions, the country's primary Christian cooperative association, was created in 1961 by conservative Evangelicals.

Church spectrum today

Church networks: Burkina Faso	Christians	%
Orthodox	0	0.0
Catholic	3,084,000	59.8
Protestant	2,076,000	40.3
Independent	103,000	2.0
Unaffiliated	7,400	0.1
Doubly-affiliated Christians	-113,000	-2.2
Total	5,157,400	100.0

<i>(Any deviation from the total number of Christians stated above is due to the rounding of decimals)</i>		
Evangelical movement	1,815,000	35.2
Renewalist movement	1,979,000	38.4

Data source: Johnson T M and Zurlò G A, eds., *World Christian Database* (Leiden/Boston: Brill, accessed April 2019).

Orthodox: Eastern (Chalcedonian), Oriental (Pre-Chalcedonian, Non-Chalcedonian, Monophysite), Nestorian (Assyrian), and non-historical Orthodox. Roman Catholics: All Christians in communion with the Church of Rome. Protestants: Christians in churches originating in or in communion with the Western world's 16th-century Protestant Reformation. Includes Anglicans, Lutherans and Baptists (any of whom may be Charismatic) and denominational Pentecostals, but not Independent traditions such as Independent Baptists nor independent Charismatics. Independents: Believers who do not identify with the major Christian traditions (Orthodox, Roman Catholic, Protestant). Unaffiliated Christians: Persons professing publicly to be Christians but who are not affiliated to churches. Doubly-affiliated Christians: Persons affiliated to or claimed by 2 denominations at once. Evangelical movement: Churches, denominations, and individuals who identify themselves as evangelicals by membership in denominations linked to evangelical alliances (e.g., World Evangelical Alliance) or by self-identification in polls. Renewalist movement: Church members involved in Pentecostal/Charismatic renewal.

WWL 2020: Persecution Dynamics / Burkina Faso

Reporting period

1 November 2018 – 31 October 2019

Position on World Watch List (WWL)

With a score of 66 points, Burkina Faso ranked 28 in WWL 2020. This is a rise of 18 points compared to WWL 2019 when the country scored 48 points and ranked 61 (and was hence classed as a Persecution Watch Country).

The sharp rise of 18 points compared to WWL 2019 was due mainly to the increase in violence in the country that has in turn led to a further increase in pressure. Christians were specifically targeted and altogether more than 50 Christians were killed in the WWL 2020 reporting period. These killings have created an environment of fear, with many Christians being too scared to attend church services or send their children to school. Schools and Christian NGOs are specifically targeted and found it difficult to operate in the country. Some community members outside the main cities are also becoming conservative and informants for the jihadists. A society that was very tolerant in the past has become very intolerant for people with a different religion. This is also aided by the fact that there are ethnic conflicts with religious dimensions. As a result, converts and other Christian groups have faced extreme pressure. It is a combination of all the above factors that led to the increase in score.

Persecution engines

Persecution engines: Burkina Faso	Abbreviation	Level of influence
Islamic oppression	IO	Very strong
Religious nationalism	RN	Not at all
Clan and ethnic antagonism	CEA	Medium
Christian denominational protectionism	CDP	Very weak
Communist and post - Communist oppression	CPCO	Not at all
Secular intolerance	SI	Not at all
Dictatorial paranoia	DPA	Not at all
Organized corruption and crime	OCC	Medium

The scale for the level of influence of Persecution engines in society is: Not at all / Very weak / Weak / Medium / Strong / Very strong. For more information see WWL Methodology.

Islamic oppression (Very strong): Burkina Faso has experienced several Islamist attacks in recent years, especially in the northern region and occasionally in the capital. These can be seen as violent attempts at "Islamizing" the country. *Ansar ul Islam* was formed in 2016 and has tried to impose its laws in the northern part of the country through violent and non-violent means. There is also *Nusrat al-Islam wal Muslim* ("Group supporting Islam and Muslims") operating in the country and has ties with local militant groups. Currently, they seem to be more focused on combatting the French presence and countries allied to France. Its preachers influence the youth into blaming their misfortune on the French and on the corruption of morals through the West. There have been attacks on churches and Christians by Islamic militants in the WWL 2020 reporting period and some churches have stepped up security, fearing further attacks may be planned.

Clan and ethnic antagonism (Medium): This engine is often mixed with Islamic oppression. In itself, it has been classified as "Medium" in the WWL 2020 reporting period as there has been much ethnic-based violence involving both faith and ethnicity. A country researcher writes: "Generally speaking, the ethnic groups are tolerant but with the increasing influence of Islamic expansion, Muslim leaders from various tribes have become sources of persecution. ATR leaders are also becoming sources of persecution to the Church. Three churches have been destroyed by ATR adherents in the Bobo Dioulasso region following the conversion of some of their members to Christianity."

Organized corruption and crime (Medium): In many countries in the Sahel region, organized corruption is enabling the jihadists to recruit, buy weapons and operate with impunity. A country researcher indicated: "There is a high level of corruption in governance. Crimes such as robbery and kidnapping are being committed in various regions of the country. The government is doing little or nothing to contain such crime, even in the capital city, Ouagadougou."

Drivers of persecution

Drivers of Persecution: Burkina Faso	IO	RN	CEA	CDP	CPCO	SI	DPA	OCC
	VERY STRONG	-	MEDIUM	VERY WEAK	-	-	-	MEDIUM
Government officials	Very weak	-	Weak	-	-	-	-	Weak
Ethnic group leaders	Medium	-	Medium	-	-	-	-	Weak
Non-Christian religious leaders	Strong	-	-	-	-	-	-	-

Religious leaders of other churches	-	-	-	Very weak	-	-	-	-
Violent religious groups	Very strong	-	Weak	-	-	-	-	Strong
Ideological pressure groups	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Citizens (people from the broader society), including mobs	Strong	-	Weak	-	-	-	-	-
One's own (extended) family	Strong	-	Weak	-	-	-	-	-
Political parties	-	-	Weak	-	-	-	-	-
Revolutionaries or paramilitary groups	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Organized crime cartels or networks	Medium	-	Weak	-	-	-	-	Medium
Multilateral organizations (e.g. UN, OIC etc.) and embassies	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-

The scale for the level of influence of Drivers of persecution in society is: Not at all / Very weak / Weak / Medium / Strong / Very strong. Please note that "-" denotes "not at all". For more information see WWL Methodology.

Drivers of Islamic oppression:

- **Violent religious groups (Strong):** There are several radical Islamic groups operating in the country (e.g. those affiliated with Islamic State and al-Qaeda and Boko Haram). These groups have been responsible for various attacks.
- **Citizens (Strong):** Ordinary citizens in local communities and mob violence have been responsible for putting converts from Islam under pressure. As a result, converts do not express their Christian faith in public.
- **Extended family (Strong):** Christians of Muslim background experience severe pressure from their families to return to Islam.
- **Ethnic group leaders (Medium):** In areas dominated by traditional African religion, ethnic group leaders act as a source of persecution, particularly opposing Christian groups who actively encourage conversion. Many ethnic group leaders living in Muslim-dominated areas also harass Christians who have encouraged Muslims to convert to the Christian faith.
- **Non-Christian religious leaders (Medium):** In remote areas, preachers have been actively inciting violence against Christians and spreading hatred towards Christians.
- **Organized crime networks (Medium):** Criminal networks are creating an environment whereby jihadists flourish, since these need to be able to act with impunity. Thus, the role of organized corruption is increasing in the country and as a result the rule of law is being weakened.

Drivers of Organized corruption and crime:

- **Violent religious groups (Strong):** Militant groups have committed atrocities against foreign Christians in the past and are likely to continue to do so when the opportunities arise. In the WWL 2020 reporting period, attacks by these groups have caused a high number of killings and displacement.
- **Organized crime networks (Medium)** The types of crimes committed range from kidnapping and theft and are conducted by a variety of groups in various parts of the country. This is increasingly becoming a cause of concern, especially since foreign aid workers are a favorite target. It seems that a parallel state structure has been established outside the normal state machinery.

Drivers of Clan and ethnic antagonism:

- **Ethnic group leaders (Medium):** In the context of the current crisis in the country, there have been instances where Muslim ethnic groups have attacked Christian ethnic groups.

Geographical hotspots of persecution

The northern and eastern parts of the country are the main hotspots for persecution, particularly outside the main cities.

Christian communities and how they are affected

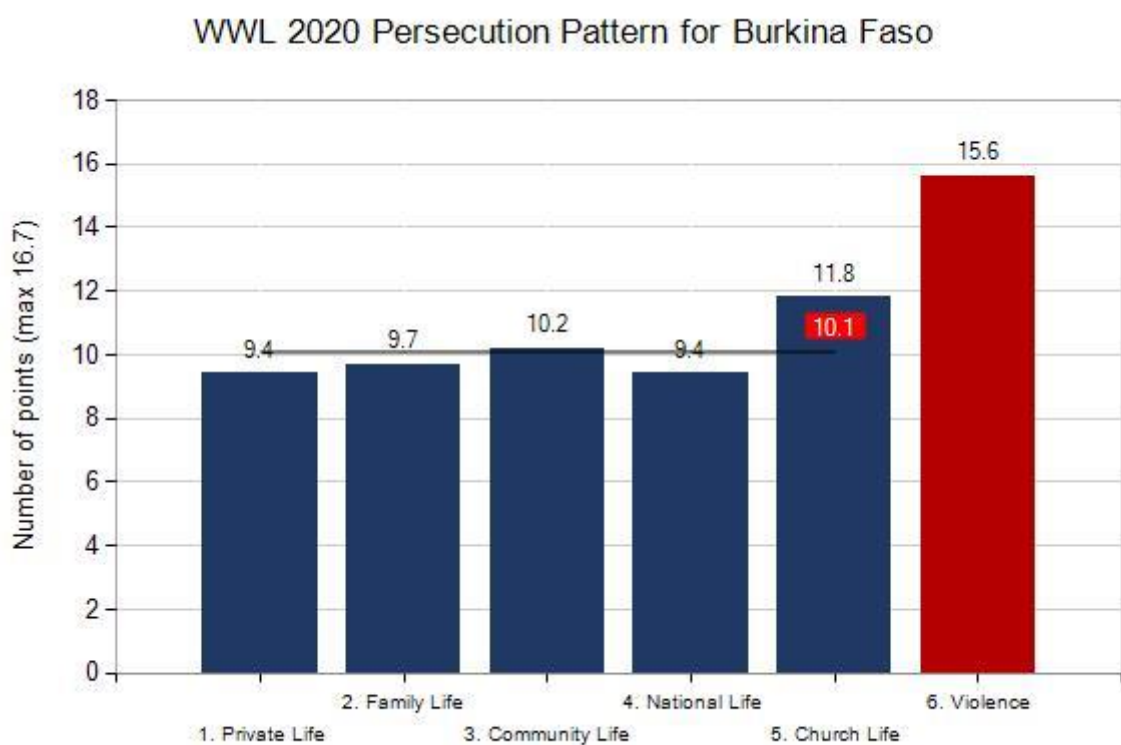
Communities of expatriate Christians: Expatriate Christians are not involuntarily isolated and are therefore not treated as a separate WWL category.

Historical Christian communities: The Roman Catholic Church is the most dominant Christian denomination in the country. Most of the country’s leaders have been Catholics. Catholics face less persecution compared to other Christian groups due to their large numbers.

Converts: This category includes Christians of Muslim or traditional African religion background, and inter-denominational Christian converts. Converts from a Muslim background experience the most serious persecution from their families and communities.

Non-traditional Christian communities: Baptist, Evangelical and Pentecostal congregations are concentrated mostly in the major cities. They are targeted more often than historical Christian groups by Islamic militants.

The Persecution pattern



The WWL 2020 Persecution pattern for Burkina Faso shows:

- The average pressure in WWL 2020 is 10.1 points, rising from 8.1 points in WWL 2019.
- Pressure is highest in the Church sphere followed by the Community sphere - a reflection of what has happened to the Church and the pressure Christians have faced in their communities due to the activities of Islamic militants.
- The score for violence is 15.6, more than double the score (7.2 points) in WWL 2019. This is an indication of the extreme level of violence Christians are experiencing in the country.

Pressure in the 5 spheres of life

In each of the five spheres of life discussed below, details are shown from four of the highest scoring block questions, with those items scoring highest listed first. In some cases, an additional paragraph per sphere is included to give further information deemed important. (To see how individual questions are scored on a scale 0 – 4 points, please see the “WWL Scoring example” in the WWL Methodology, available at: <http://opendoorsanalytical.org/world-watch-list-documentation/>, password: freedom).

Private sphere:

- ***It has been risky for Christians to discuss their faith with whose other than immediate family members (extended family, others) (Block 1:8 / Score: 3.00 points):*** Christians, particularly converts from Islam, face hostile reactions if they discuss their faith with others. For example, in some remote areas, Christians have to make sure that they do not possess Christians materials at home because militants can easily show up at their door and search. Conversion is not forbidden by law, however, most Muslims oppose conversion and it has been risky for converts to speak about their faith with family members for fear of stigmatization and of being treated as an outcast.
- ***It has been risky for Christians to meet with other Christians (Block 1:9 / Score 2.50 points):*** Converts from ATR or Islam are very often in danger if meeting with other Christians because their families may react violently to see them engaging with people of another religion.
- ***Has it been risky for Christians to display Christian images or symbols (Block 1:5 / Score 2.50 points):*** For fear of being attacked, mocked or rejected, some Christians from Muslim and ATR backgrounds avoid displaying Christian images or symbols.
- ***It has been risky for Christians to speak about their faith with immediate family members (Block 1:7 / Score 2.25 points):*** In Muslim families, both male and female young adults tend to hide the fact that they might want to convert to Christianity for fear of disappointing their parents and of maybe being disowned by them. If one decides to convert, he or she avoids discussing this with any family members.

Family sphere:

- ***Christian children have been pressured to attend anti-Christian or majority religion teaching at any level of education (Block 2:8 / Score 3.00 points):*** In some schools where the senior teachers (and sometimes the founders) are predominantly Muslim, students of all kinds (including Christians) face pressure to receive Islamic teachings. This is happening in Ouagadougou, Bobo Dioulasso and other cities. Christian families belonging to non-traditional church groups also find it difficult to raise their children according to their religious convictions. It has been reported that Islamic militants have killed teachers who did not teach Islam and that they have threatened to kill more unless Islamic classes are taught to all students, including Christian students.

- **Parents have been hindered in raising their children according to their Christian beliefs (Block 2:7 / Score 3.00 points):** This issue is particularly serious for converts. Parents who are converts are hindered from raising their children according to their Christian faith. Converts lose their inheritance rights. Christians have to be very careful not to attract any attention from local leaders or jihadists who are operating in many areas of the country (or even outside the country). One way of being careful is to try to tell their children about the Christian faith in a way that does not expose them.
- **Christians have been hindered in celebrating a Christian wedding for faith-related reasons (Block 2:3 / Score 3.00 points):** All Christian groups have to make sure that they do not celebrate Christian weddings or Christian holidays in areas that are prone to attacks by jihadists. Christians have to be very careful not to attract any attention from local leaders or Islamic militants in the area and thus make sure that they hide any Christian wedding celebration. Muslim parents with children who have converted to Christianity oppose any plans to marry another Christian, since that would bring shame upon the family.
- **Children of Christians have been harassed or discriminated against because of their parents' faith (Block 2:9/ Score 3.00 points):** The reporting period has seen a rise in violence and attacks. In the northern, eastern, and western border regions of the country, Christians often face discrimination in many aspects of their lives. This includes children being targeted.

Community sphere:

- **Christians have been harassed, threatened or obstructed in their daily lives for faith-related reasons (e.g. for not meeting majority religion or traditional dress codes, beard codes etc.)(Block 3:1 / Score 3.25 points):** In many parts of the country (except in the capital city where Christians are significant in numbers), Christians are frequently being targeted, especially in the northern region which shares a border with Mali. In this region, especially in Soum Province which seems to be the center of Islamic militant activity, Islamic militants have kidnapped Christians and carried out attacks against security forces causing levels of fear to rise. Malam Ibrahim Dicko's Ansar al-Islam movement operates from its bases along the border in the Foularé Forest and has launched attacks and intimidated school teachers into replacing French with Arabic as the language of instruction in schools. Schools not offering classes on Islam have been burned down. Many Christians have fled and in Soum Province the Red Cross estimates the number of displaced persons (Christians and Muslims) to be at least 15,000 people.
- **Christians have been under threat of abduction and/or forced marriage (Block 3:3 / Score 3.25 points):** This happens within animist and Muslim families. Also due to high poverty rates, girls are often victims of child marriage and forced marriage, etc.. Cases of kidnapping by Islamic militants occur most often in the north. Forced marriages have also been used as a weapon to force female converts to return to Islam.
- **Christians have been hindered in sharing community resources because of their faith (e.g. clean drinking water)(Block 3:4 / Score 3.00 points):** The worsening security situation, assaults on social services and social service providers, attacks on civic institutions and religious leaders have created widespread instability in Burkina Faso, that is hindering the delivery of social and educational services. Where Christians are a minority they are often hindered from accessing community resources.

- **Christians have been hindered in participating in communal institutions, forums, etc., for faith-related reasons (Block 3:6 / Score 3.00 points):** In areas with high rates of ATR adherents, Christians are expected to participate in cultural practices such as ceremonies of initiation and excision. They do not have the right to active involvement in the communal institutions and are often sidelined when it comes to using communal resources. Christians are often ostracized, which particularly affects converts. Converts with a Muslim background face more problems in community life than other Christian groups.

National sphere:

- **Christians, churches or Christian organizations have been hindered in publicly displaying religious symbols. (Block 4: 12 / Score 3.25 points):** Christians are sometimes in danger if they publicly display Christian symbols in remote areas dominated by a Muslim population.
- **Christians have been hindered in traveling for faith-related reasons. (Block 4: 4 / Score 2.50 points):** Although the government recognizes freedom of religion, most Muslim officials have been harassing and discriminating convert Christians and members of the non-traditional church groups.
- **Christians have been subject to smear campaigns or hate speech. (Block 4: 11 / Score 2.50 points):** The government has been fighting against this for years. The spreading of anti-Christian sentiment has helped create the jihadist mindset which regards Christians as enemies. This is true especially in northern, eastern and western parts of the country, where Islam is strongly represented.
- **Christians have been discriminated against when engaging with the authorities (local administration, government, army, etc.) for faith-related reasons. (Block 4: 5 / Score 2.50 points):** Churches experience difficulties in obtaining permits from the administrative authorities for obtaining land or concerning other matters.

Church sphere:

- **Activities of churches have been monitored, hindered, disturbed, or obstructed (Block 5:1 / Score 3.75 points):** Despite the fact that the country is officially secular and Christians make up over 25% of the population, churches in Burkina Faso still suffer from fear due to the threat of unpredictable attack and due to social constraints in many parts of the country. They are closely monitored by militant groups and community leaders in the northern, eastern and western parts of the country.
- **Churches have been hindered from organizing Christian activities outside church buildings (Block 5:5 / Score 3.75 points):** Some evangelistic campaigns in public places have been prohibited. Local authorities hostile to the Christian faith do their best to stop such church programs in public. Christian leaders are targets of harassment, particularly where non-traditional Christian groups operate without authorization from the Protestant federation and have opposed the federation's stance on religious tolerance.
- **Work among youth, in particular, has been restricted (Block 5:6 / Score 3.50 points):** Access to work is open to all, in general, but in practice, there are restrictions on the numbers of young Christians gaining employment. Some Muslim recruiters take the membership of Islam as a basic criterion.

- **Openly selling or distributing Bibles and other Christian materials have been hindered. (Block 5:14 / Score 3.50 points):** The sale or distribution of Bibles or Christian articles/materials are not impeded by the state, but these activities cannot be done by converts from ATR or Islam without risking serious trouble. This particularly affects Christians living in areas where militants are active and could lead to them being killed.

Violence

The following table is based on reported cases as much as possible. Since many incidents go unreported, the numbers below must be understood as being minimum figures. In cases where it has been impossible to count exactly, a symbolic round figure (10, 100 or 1000) is given. (A symbolic number of 10 could in reality even be 100 or more but the real number is uncertain. A symbolic number of 100 could go well over 1000 but the real number is uncertain. A symbolic number of 1000 could go well over 10,000 but, again, the real number is uncertain.) In cases where it is clear that (many) more Christians are affected, but a concrete number could be given according to the number of incidents reported, the number given has to be understood as being an absolutely minimum figure.

Burkina Faso	Reporting period	Christians killed	Christians attacked	Christians arrested	Churches attacked	Christian-owned houses and shops attacked
WWL 2020	01 Nov 2018 - 31 Oct 2019	50	1040	0	50	20
WWL 2019	01 Nov 2017 - 31 Oct 2018	10	17	0	0	0
WWL 2018	01 Nov 2016 - 31 Oct 2017	0	1	0	0	0

Christians killed refers to the number of Christians killed for faith-related reasons (including state-sanctioned executions). *Christians attacked* refers to the number of Christians abducted, raped or otherwise sexually harassed, forced into marriage to non-Christians or otherwise physically or mentally abused (including beatings and death-threats) for faith-related reasons. *Christians arrested* refers to the number of Christians detained without trial or sentenced to jail, labor camp, sent to psychiatric hospital as punishment or similar things for faith-related reasons. *Churches attacked* refers to the number of churches or Christian buildings (schools, hospitals, cemeteries, etc.) attacked, damaged, bombed, looted, destroyed, burned down, closed or confiscated for faith-related reasons. *Christian-owned houses and shops attacked* refers to the number of houses of Christians or other property (including shops and businesses of Christians) attacked, damaged, bombed, looted, destroyed, burned down, closed or confiscated for faith-related reasons.

For the WWL 2020 reporting period:

- **Christians killed:** Over 50 Christians were killed in the country. Examples: In April 2019, gunmen [killed](#) a Protestant pastor and five other Christians in a church in northern Burkina. The attackers were on motorbikes and opened fire as the Christians were leaving the Sunday church service.

On 12 May 2019, a Catholic priest and five other Christians were [killed](#) in an attack in the central town of Dablo. Gunmen first stormed the church during the Sunday service and then set fire to the church and surrounding buildings; [In June 2019](#), militants stormed a village in northern Burkina Faso and singled out men wearing crosses for execution; in September 2019, a Christian man and four of his sons [were killed](#). They were shot dead in the villages of Pissele and Boulkiba by gunmen.

- **Christians attacked:** Over a thousand Christians were attacked and wounded in the WWL 2020 reporting period. Christians were specifically targeted and killed and [International Christian Concern](#) (ICC) also reported that, in the WWL 2020 reporting period, an estimated 82 pastors and 11,245 Christians were displaced by the violence. ICC also reported that 2 attacks left 29 Christians dead: "The twin attacks, which took place on June 9 and 10, specifically targeted Christians and came on the heels of a series of attacks targeting churches in the West African nation." These attacks are systematic, well-planned and often executed so that only Christians are hurt.
- **Churches attacked:** Over 50 churches were attacked in the WWL 2020 reporting period. Most attacks in Burkina Faso target churches and other Christians gatherings. This is done for two main purposes: First of all, it is done so that the attack will have a maximum impact on the Christian community; secondly, these attacks will have more media coverage than when individuals are targeted. As a result, churches were a constant target for jihadist attacks in the country. In May 2019, an attack on a [Catholic Church](#) also resulted in the deaths of more than five Christians.
- **Christian homes/shops attacked:** At least 20 Christian properties and shops were looted and destroyed. Jihadists in the country target churches and Christian villages, looting, burning and damaging property..

5 Year trends

Please note that there is no data currently available for the reporting periods prior to WWL 2019.

Chart 1:

For years, Burkina Faso was more or less spared from attacks by violent Islamic militants in the Sahel region. However, in the past two years, this has changed and the activities of Islamic militancy have been increasing. In WWL 2019, the average pressure on Christians was at 8.1 points. In the WWL 2020 reporting period, the chart shows that the average pressure is 10.1, an increase of 2 points. The rise in violence (see chart 3) is having a huge impact on pressure in the spheres of life.

WWL 2016 - WWL 2020 Persecution Pattern history: Burkina Faso	Average pressure over 5 Spheres of life
2020	10.1
2019	8.1
2018	0.0
2017	0.0
2016	0.0

Chart 2:

The chart below indicates that - in WWL 2019 - Christians were facing the highest levels of pressure in the Private sphere of life - an indication that converts from Islam were most affected. In WWL 2020, the Church life scored highest, followed by the Community sphere of life. This change indicates that persecution in the country is now targeting all Christians in the country.

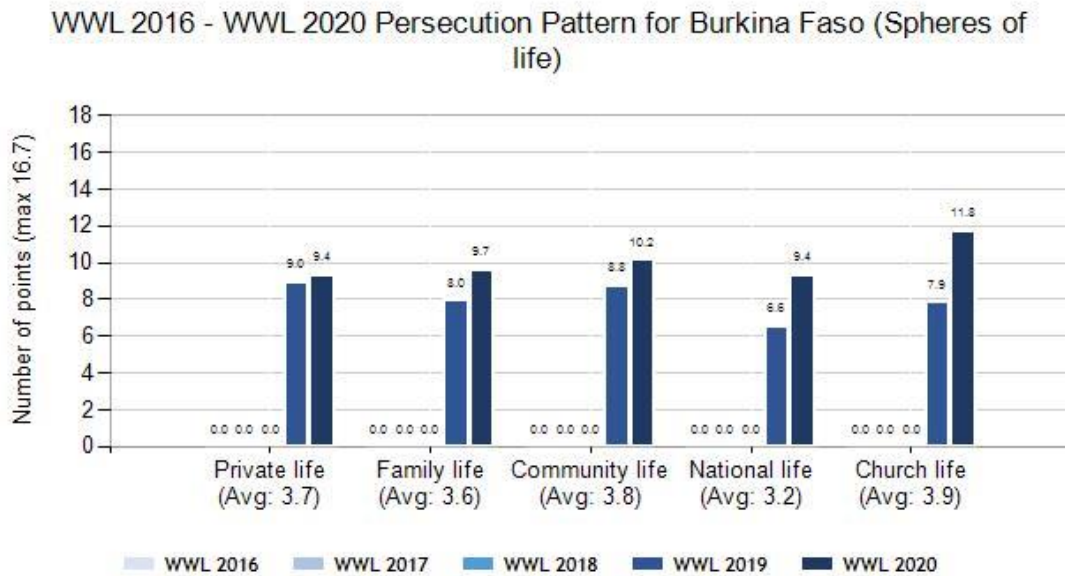
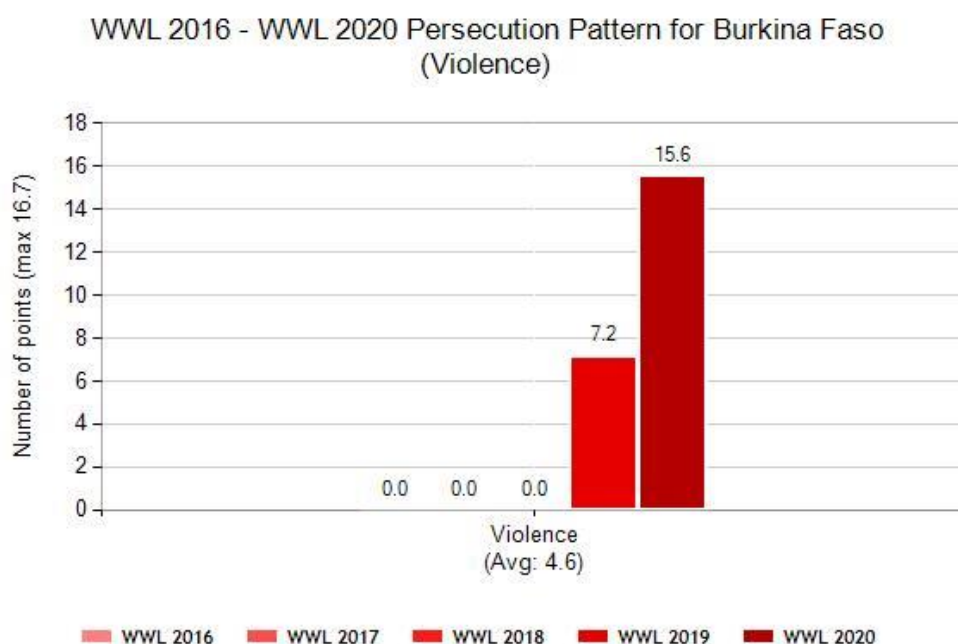


Chart 3:

In the WWL 2020 reporting period, Christians have been specifically attacked, killed and wounded. Churches were targeted and Christian businesses were demolished and looted. As a result, the score for violence more than doubled, reaching the extreme level of 15.6 points compared to 7.2 points in WWL 2019.



Gender profile of persecution

Female Pressure Points:

- ***Denied access to social community/networks***
- ***Denied inheritance or possessions***
- ***Discrimination/Harassment via education***
- ***Enforced dress code***
- ***Forced marriage***
- ***Forced out of home/expulsion***
- ***Forced to flee town/country***
- ***Targeted seduction***
- ***Violence – physical***
- ***Violence – sexual***

Burkina Faso is located in a region where Islamist groups have vast influence and the central government is very weak. As a result, there is always a high potential for girls and women to be abducted and/or forced to marry. In addition, most of the time they are forced to remain in their family's religion at least until they are married. Christian girls are placed under pressured (and at times forced) to convert to Islam if their future husband is Muslim. It is possible that as more people are radicalized in the north, they might also want to get married early to form families and this would entail forcing girls to marry those who join the ranks of militant groups.

Although Burkina Faso is a CEDAW signatory and has committed to end [child, early and forced marriage](#) by 2030, 52% of girls are marriage before their 18th birthday. In many areas, there is very little understanding about women's rights, so many people consider it normal to sexually assault a woman. However, girls and women who are abused think that they have brought shame and stigma to the family, and the feeling of worthlessness can weaken the family spiritually if not addressed.

One of the strategies of radical Muslims is to marry Christian girls, and recently a daughter of a Pastor was forcefully taken away and married to a Muslim man in Ouagadougou. In other situations, similar incidents are reported as targeted seduction.

Male Pressure Points:

- ***Abduction***
- ***Discrimination/harassment via education***
- ***Forced out of town/country***
- ***Violence – physical***
- ***Violence – psychological***

Islamic militant groups operating in the Sahel region often recruit their members from countries like Niger and Burkina Faso. Christian men and boys can be targeted. Furthermore, many of them are forced to go to Quranic schools - against their will - and are exploited by their guardians.

It is possible that as more people become radicalized in the north, their family members (brothers, uncles etc.) are put under pressure to join the ranks of Islamic militant groups. In conflict areas, men are victims of physical attacks by violent Islamic militants. When Christian men and boys are forcibly displaced from their homes and towns because of their faith, the families are seriously affected by the persecution as well. Furthermore, these displaced men and boys are at risk of not receiving proper education, which will prevent them from fully integrating into society and the economy.

Persecution of other religious minorities

Burkina Faso is a country where Islamic radicalization is growing. The peripheries of the country are under the influence of Islamic militants and the mosques and madrassas teach radical versions of Sunni Islam, thus causing even Sufi Muslims to be under threat. In these areas, there is no place for religious minorities. It was even reported that teachers in schools were threatened to hold Quran classes or face repercussions. This is also making the life difficult for more moderate Muslims; in October 2019 there was a militant attack on a [mosque](#) in the village of Salmossi in the northern province of Oudalan.

Future outlook for the church

The outlook for Christians as viewed through the lens of:

- **Islamic oppression:** The country is losing the religious tolerance it has otherwise practiced throughout its earlier history. Christians are afraid of abductions and attacks in some parts of the country due to the resurgence of attacks by Islamic militants. Christians know that they are potential targets for Islamist groups and the fear can be seen by the increase in security measures at churches.
- **Organized corruption and crime:** In the absence of rule of law and order, organized crime is growing. This is also the main means for Islamic militants to transfer weapons across borders and remain active in the country.
- **Clan and ethnic antagonism:** The various ethnic groups in Burkina Faso were tolerant of each other in the past. However, the constant rhetoric and inflammatory remarks by jihadists have created a situation where certain ethnic groups have started to target Christians. Such targeting will continue if initiatives are not put in place to defuse the situation.

External Links - WWL 2020: Persecution Dynamics

- Violence: killed - <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-48094789>
- Violence: killed - <https://www.cnn.com/2019/05/12/africa/burkina-faso-church-attack/index.html>
- Violence: In June 2019 - <https://www1.cbn.com/cbnnews/cwn/2019/june/christians-flee-as-islamic-terrorists-murder-at-least-19-in-africas-burkina-faso>
- Violence: were killed - <https://barnabasfund.org/en/news/five-christian-men-from-same-family-killed-in-one-of-four-murderous-islamist-attacks-in-burkina>
- Violence: International Christian Concern - <https://www.persecution.org/2019/06/12/terrorists-kill-twenty-nine-christians-two-attacks-burkina-faso/>

- Violence: Catholic Church - <https://www.france24.com/en/20190512-attack-catholic-church-burkina-faso-sahel>
- Gender profile of persecution: child, early and forced marriage - <https://www.girlsnotbrides.org/child-marriage/burkina-faso/>
- Persecution of other religious minorities: mosque - <https://www.rt.com/news/470800-burkina-faso-mosque-attack/%20>

Additional reports and articles

WWR in-depth reports

A selection of in-depth reports is available at: <http://opendoorsanalytical.org/reports/>
(password: freedom).

World Watch Monitor news articles

Articles are available at: <https://www.worldwatchmonitor.org/countries/burkina-faso/>.

Recent country developments

Up-to-date articles are available at: <http://opendoorsanalytical.org/?s=Burkina+Faso>
(password: freedom).