

World
Watch
Research

Mali: Country Dossier

December 2019



OpenDoors

Serving persecuted **Christians** worldwide

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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 / Mali

Brief country details

Pop 2019	Christians	Chr%
Mali		
19,689,000	461,000	2.3

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

World Watch List Mali	Points	WWL Rank
WWL 2020	66	29
WWL 2019	68	24
WWL 2018	59	37
WWL 2017	59	32
WWL 2016	55	44

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

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

When radical Islamic groups took control of the northern part of the country in 2012, churches were burned down and Christians had to flee. The displacement of Christians that occurred at that time still affects Christians who lost their homes and whose churches were destroyed. Although some Christians and congregations have returned to the north under police protection, they still live under the threat of attack by Islamic militants. Evangelistic activities in the north are especially risky and could lead to being attacked by radical Muslims. Christian missionaries operating in Mali also live under the constant threat of abduction and some have indeed been kidnapped by jihadists. Christians with a Muslim background risk violence (especially in the north) and pressure from their relatives and family members if their conversion to Christianity is discovered. This part of the country is also unsafe for operating NGOs.

Specific examples of persecution in the reporting period

Numerous attacks were carried out by Islamic militants against Christians. It is important to note that most of the attacks on Christians have not been specifically reported either because their religion was eclipsed by the ethnic side to the clashes, or because the narrative was deliberately shaped by media outlets wanting to portray the situation as 'merely ethnic clashes' or 'general security problems' and not a specific targeting of Christians.

The following example occurred in June 2019. As reported by [CBN News](#): "Armed Fulani Muslim militants invaded a predominately Christian village in Sobame Da, and killed men, women, and children." Most of the victims were believed to be Christians.

External Links - WWL 2020: Persecution summary

- Specific examples of persecution in the reporting period: CBN News - <https://www1.cbn.com/cbnnews/world/2019/june/christian-village-in-mali-virtually-wiped-out-after-jihadists-massacre-100-men-women-children%20>

WWL 2020: Keys to understanding / Mali

Link for general background information

BBC country profile: <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-africa-13881370>.

Recent history

Before modern-day Mali came into existence, there were several kingdoms and empires that flourished in the territory that covers part of Mali today. After the short-lived Wassoulou Empire, France established a colony called French Sudan in 1892. French colonial administration came to an end in 1960 and Mali became independent. After experimenting with one-party rule and military rule for decades, Mali adopted a new constitution in 1992 and made a successful transition to democratic rule. Before the coup that overthrew the democratically elected Malian government in March 2012, the country was considered exemplary among African countries for protecting civil liberties and political rights. The media, in particular, was vibrant and open and not subject to governmental pressure or restrictions. For instance, during the presidential election of 2007, the results were considered valid and there was little or no electoral violence. 70 parties ran in the election and the right to vote was extended to all citizens of Mali.

However, in 2012 Tuareg rebels (who had been active in northern Mali for a number of years) formed an alliance with radical Islamic groups, including some foreign fighters mainly coming from Algeria. They overran government forces and took control of several cities and a sizable portion of northern Mali. Consequently, a military coup ousted the civilian administration, but civilian administration was restored after the presidential election in 2013 was won by Ibrahim Boubacar Keïta, a veteran politician and a former prime minister. The Malian government was able to push back the advance of the rebels and reclaim most of the occupied territory with the help of French troops. Despite the persistence of occasional clashes between rebels and government forces, a [ceasefire](#) was concluded in 2013 between the rebels and the government. The UN sent a 12,000 strong peacekeeping force called the Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali. However, the central government has still not managed to regain control and assert its authority over a significant portion of Malian territory. In addition to this political problem, the country faces several economic challenges related to the high poverty level. Most people live in remote parts of the country which face various environmental problems like rapid desertification and lack of access to water.

In July/August 2018, the country conducted a successful presidential election in which President Keïta managed to win a second term. Despite opposition [allegations of fraud](#), this can be seen as a positive development in the country, but there is a long way to go before Mali can ever be considered a 'model for African democracy' again.

In the WWL 2020 reporting period, many attacks were conducted by Islamic militants; Fulani militias have also committed atrocities. [Human Rights Watch](#) reported on 7 December 2018: "Ethnic militias have killed over 200 civilians and burned dozens of villages in communal violence in central Mali during 2018 Most victims have been ethnic Peuhl villagers targeted by Dogon and Bambara 'self-defense groups' for their alleged support of Islamist armed groups linked to al-Qaeda." Ethnic tension is also stirring up religious conflicts.

Political and legal landscape

Despite Mali's positive record on civil liberties and political rights, prior to 2012 there were large inconsistencies on how these rights were applied in the northern two-thirds of the country, a reality which was often overlooked by foreign observers. Political power in Mali was concentrated in the southern one-third of the country, dominated by Muslim Sub-Saharan African tribes such as the Songhai and Zarma, while the more conservative Muslim northern tribes, such as the Tuareg and the Arabs, were often left out of power. While discrimination against the Tuareg and Arabs was not official policy, in practice they received a smaller proportion of government revenue and services, which had led the Tuareg into intermittent open rebellion over several decades.

The insecurity and instability that has resulted from the 2012 civil war and the continued attacks by Islamic militants are major challenges in the current political landscape. Unless the peace-deal between the rebels and the government is fully implemented and the grievances of the Tuareg are addressed, an improvement in the political situation in Mali is unlikely, which will mean continued insecurity and anxiety for Christians in the country.

The highly contested elections in the summer of 2018 concluded with the re-election of Ibrahim Boubacar Keita for a second term as president. Given that his election required a second round of voting and that his main challenger alleged that the election had been rigged, Keita's mandate and legitimacy does not seem to be very robust. This, in turn, might hamper his ability to effectively tackle the political and security challenges his government faces.

French government involvement in the country's political affairs has been a major problem for the country. Although the country claimed its independence half a century ago, France continues to influence its political decisions. France was, for instance, the first country to send troops in order to contain the Tuareg uprising.

Religious landscape

Mali is a predominantly Muslim country and most Malians are adherents of Maliki Sunni Islam which is a version of Islam influenced by Sufism. This brand of Islam is moderate and tolerant of other faiths. In northern Mali, especially among the ethnic Tuareg, the influence of more radical versions of Islam has grown over the past few years. There is also a significant presence of Ethno-religionists or Animists in Mali.

Religious Context: Mali	Numbers	%
Christians	461,000	2.3
Muslim	17,524,000	89.0
Hindu	0	0.0
Buddhist	0	0.0

Ethno-religionist	1,677,000	8.5
Jewish	0	0.0
Bahai	1,800	0.0
Atheist	1,100	0.0
Agnostic	22,800	0.1
Other	1,200	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.

An estimated 89% of the population are Muslim, according to WCD 2019 data. Radical Islamic groups from the Arab and Tuareg tribes in northern Mali have little respect for Sufi-influenced religious practices, as evidenced by the destruction of 13th century Sufi shrines in Timbuktu when radical Islamic groups controlled the city in 2012.

Malian Muslims have a reputation for being moderate and tolerant of other religious beliefs. There was also a high tolerance level towards converts to Christianity during the colonial period. This tolerance, however, faded as time went by and it is now highly dangerous to be known as a Christian of Muslim origin. As with many Muslims in Mali, Malian Christians (the majority being Roman Catholic) tend to combine their faith with indigenous animist beliefs. Even though most Malian Christians live in the south of the country, they have come under increasing pressure as a result of the threat from radical Islamic activities in the north.

Economic landscape

Mali is one of the least developed countries in the world and finds itself ranked 182 out of 188 countries in the 2018 [UNDP Human Development Index](#). The annual Gross National Income per capita is 1,953 USD. Most of the Malian territory is arid or semi-arid making a significant portion of the country ill-suited for farming. However, Mali, like its neighbors, has an economy based on subsistence agriculture, including rice, sorghum and livestock. Mali is also rich in gold and other minerals, which are exploited by South African and European companies. Despite this, the main economic development model relies on foreign aid, including the World Bank and other international donors, and bilateral donations from the European Union, European countries and the USA. In addition, France is a main commercial partner and other countries (e.g. China and Middle-Eastern states) trade with and invest in Mali. Mali used to have strong ties with Russia and a number of its elite were trained in Russia (including Dioncounda Traoré who served as president from April 2012 to September 2013 after the military coup). However, Russia no longer has a strong economic presence.

Social and cultural landscape

Mali is one of the Africa's richest countries in terms of history and culture. It is the home of Timbuktu, one of the oldest trade and intellectual centers in the world and was added to the World Heritage List by UNESCO in 1988. On UNESCO's [website](#), it says: "Founded in the 5th century, the economic and cultural apogee of Timbuktu came about during the 15th and 16th centuries. It was an important center for the diffusion of Islamic culture with the University of Sankore, with 180 Koranic schools and 25,000 students. It was also a crossroads and an important market place where the trading of manuscripts was negotiated, and salt from Teghaza in the north, gold was sold, and cattle and grain from the south." It has now been "placed on the [List of World Heritage in Danger](#) because of threats related to armed conflict."

The country has a variety of ethnic groups with different languages. According to the [World Atlas](#) website: Bambara make up 34% of the population, Fulani 15%, Sarakole 11%, Senufo 11%, Dogon 9%, Malinke 9%, Bobo 3%, Songhai 2%, Tuareg 1%, and other ethnic groups 5%.

According to the 2018 [UNDP Human Development Index](#), the average life expectancy of Malians is 58.5 and the adult literacy rate is 33.1%.

Technological landscape

Mali is not well advanced in technology, although there is a science and technology University in Bamako.

According to the Communications section of the 2018 [UNDP Human Development Index](#), Internet users make up 11.1% of the population and mobile phone subscriptions per 100 people are 112.4.

Other [sources](#) indicate that Mali has a strong Internet penetration in the Sahel region with 12,480,176 Internet users as of 30 June 2019 (which is listed as 63.4% of the population) and 1,500,000 Facebook users as of 31 December 2018 which is 7.6% penetration rate. But it has to be noted that the population is centered around the town and cities which have made it easy for developing infrastructure.

Security situation

Due to its better democratic and civil liberties record compared to other Muslim majority countries in the region - as well as the influence of Sufiism - Mali was a relatively tolerant country for Christians. However, the 2012 civil war and the opportunity that it gave Islamic militant groups changed this situation and since then there has been a serious risk and challenge to Christians. Militant Islamic groups - such as al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM) - are still active, especially in the northern region, and target UN peacekeepers. The UN Security Council has increased the number of peacekeeping troops in the country and has also expanded its mandate to allow a more robust military action against militant groups. The situation in Mali is still fragile and it will take a number of years before there is peace and stability in the country. In July 2019, the UK government also decided to send troops to fight Islamic militants in the country.

With the proliferation of jihadist groups like Islamic State in the Greater Sahara, the vast territory of Mali that is not under effective government control is becoming a sanctuary for Islamic militants who are a threat to the security of the entire region. As Mali is located in one of the hotbed regions for jihadists, the situation in the country cannot be seen in isolation; it is part of the overall rise of Islamic militancy and Wahhabism in the entire Sahel region. Therefore, the trajectory of the political and security situation in the whole region is crucial for the future of Mali. Furthermore, even if the government of Mali and other regional states manage to crush the armed Islamic militancy of groups like AQIM, the radicalization of the youth and society at large by this group is a more intractable problem and is creating a hostile environment for Christians for years to come.

In the WWL 2020 reporting period, instability and violence have created fear and chaos in the country. Impunity is rampant and the government is not in a position to stop or bring the perpetrators to justice. As Human Rights Watch's Sahel director stated in a [report](#) on 18 December 2018: "Militia killings of civilians in central and northern Mali are spiraling out of control." In 2018, there was an upsurge in attacks by armed Islamist groups against civilians, the army committed atrocities during counter-terrorism operations, and over 100 incidents of intercommunal violence killed at least 300 civilians and caused the destruction of dozens of villages and displacement of tens of thousands. On 2 April 2018, a [mass grave](#) was discovered following military operations in a deepening security crisis that also affected hundreds of thousands of students as schools closed due to the growing instability. The Malian government later admitted that [troops were implicated](#) in the massacre associated with the mass grave.

Violence continued in 2019: In January, suspected Islamic militants [killed](#) 10 Chadian UN peacekeepers in northern Mali. Then in March, armed men from an [ethnic vigilante group](#) wearing Dogon traditional hunters' clothing surrounded a villagers at dawn in their homes and carried out a massacre against members of the Fulani ethnic community accused of having ties to jihadists, killing more than 130 and burning down all the huts in the village. The massacre shocked the nation and the pressure from protesters demanding action forced the prime minister and entire government to [resign](#) four weeks later.

Trends analysis

The main trend facing Mali is the growing influence of militant Islam and Wahhabism. It will take a long time to build up a Christian presence again in the north of Mali. Islamic militants continue to be active in Mali, notwithstanding the peace-deal that was [signed in 2015](#), and will remain a threat in the years to come. The peace-deal is very fragile, and the government and UN peacekeepers are still unable to establish the authority of the government in some parts of the country. Despite all the challenges that the country has faced in the past five years, it managed to hold a relatively peaceful and successful presidential election in 2018.

External Links - WWL 2020: Keys to understanding

- Link for general background information: <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-africa-13881370>. - <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-africa-13881370>
- Recent history: ceasefire - <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2013/jun/19/mali-peace-deal-tuareg-insurgents-aid>

- Recent history: allegations of fraud - <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2018/08/mali-candidate-soumaila-cisse-court-alleging-vote-fraud-180805154952537.html>
- Recent history: Human Rights Watch - <https://www.hrw.org/news/2018/12/07/mali-dangerous-upturge-abuse-ethnic-militias>
- Economic landscape: UNDP Human Development Index - <http://hdr.undp.org/en/countries/profiles/MLI>
- Social and cultural landscape: website - <https://whc.unesco.org/en/list/119>
- Social and cultural landscape: List of World Heritage in Danger - <https://whc.unesco.org/en/danger/>
- Social and cultural landscape: World Atlas - <https://www.worldatlas.com/articles/largest-ethnic-groups-in-mali.html>
- Social and cultural landscape: UNDP Human Development Index - <http://hdr.undp.org/en/countries/profiles/MLI>
- Technological landscape: UNDP Human Development Index - <http://hdr.undp.org/en/countries/profiles/MLI>
- Technological landscape: sources - <https://internetworldstats.com/stats1.htm>
- Security situation: report - <https://www.ecoi.net/en/document/1455233.html>
- Security situation: mass grave - <https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2018/04/mali-mass-grave-discovered-as-security-crisis-deepens/>
- Security situation: troops were implicated - <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2018/06/mali-troops-implicated-killings-mass-graves-180619160456325.html>
- Security situation: killed - <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-46941711>
- Security situation: ethnic vigilante group - <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-47680836>
- Security situation: resign - <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2019/04/mali-pm-government-resign-ogossagou-massacre-190418233823439.html>
- Trends analysis: signed in 2015 - <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-africa-33213931>

WWL 2020: Church information / Mali

Christian origins

The present area called Mali was dominated by various Muslim empires and kingdoms before the French colonization. Especially the northern part of the country was predominantly Muslim and there were some followers of traditional African religion in parts of the southern areas. It was the White Fathers, a Roman Catholic missionary order, who brought Christianity to Mali in 1895. However, the growth of Christianity in Mali was very slow. Most of today's Christians are descendants of former Muslims and Animists who converted to Christianity during the colonial period. It was only in 1936 that the first African Roman Catholic priest was ordained, and it was only in 1962 that the first Malian bishop was consecrated. Protestants came to the country in 1919 via the Gospel Missionary Union (GMU) from the USA. That was followed by the arrival of the Christian and Missionary Alliance in 1923.

Church spectrum today

Church networks: Mali	Christians	%
Orthodox	0	0.0
Catholic	279,000	60.5
Protestant	156,000	33.8
Independent	24,100	5.2
Unaffiliated	1,800	0.4
Doubly-affiliated Christians	0	0.0
Total	460,900	100.0
<i>(Any deviation from the total number of Christians stated above is due to the rounding of decimals)</i>		
Evangelical movement	161,000	34.9
Renewalist movement	48,400	10.5

Data source: Johnson T M and Zurlo 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 / Mali

Reporting period

1 November 2018 – 31 October 2019

Position on World Watch List (WWL)

With a score of 66 points, Mali ranked 29 in WWL 2020.

In WWL 2019, Mali ranked 24 with a score of 68 points. The fall of two points is due to the lower score in violence. This does not mean that there was less violence, but the situation has become complex in which it is difficult to distinguish clearly between religious-based and ethnic-based violence.

Persecution engines

Persecution engines: Mali	Abbreviation	Level of influence
Islamic oppression	IO	Very strong
Religious nationalism	RN	Not at all
Clan and ethnic antagonism	CEA	Strong
Christian denominational protectionism	CDP	Not at all
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):

Mali, as is typical for other West African states, has been dominated by Islam for centuries (in a mostly moderate form) and by a constitutionally secular political system which prohibits religious political parties. Apart from the northern part of the country which had always been problematic for Christians, Christians used to enjoy a fair amount of freedom in Malian society, which also allowed the presence of foreign Christian missionaries. The situation changed when the creation of the independent state of Azawad in northern Mali was proclaimed in April 2012. The Islamists, most of whom can be identified as Wahhabis, soon established an Islamic state system with a strict Sharia regime in the north. Most Christians fled before the Islamists took over. In the meantime, they destroyed churches and other Christian buildings. The Church in southern Mali has also been negatively affected by the increasing visibility of various Wahhabi groups. Although the rebels and the government reached a peace agreement in 2015 and international peacekeepers are in place, Islamic radicalization in Malian society is continuing to put pressure on (and physically harming) the lives of Christians and their churches.

Organized corruption and crime (Strong):

The country is situated in the Sahel region of West Africa where there are a vast desert and arid areas which are difficult to control. Criminal gangs use this as an opportunity to expand their activities for transporting illegal substances to Western Europe. Most criminal organizations have allied themselves with radical Islamic groups and persecute Christians. The former Tuareg rebel forces have now basically become criminal operators.

Clan and ethnic antagonism (Medium):

Although most of the Malian population are Muslims, they still intermix their Islamic beliefs with several forms of witchcraft and sorcery. The current Wahhabi movement is trying to 'purify' Islam from such traditional practices. Many Malian Christians also combine tribal practices with Christian beliefs. Most tribal or ethnic leaders in the remote parts of the country are hostile towards Muslims or Christians who oppose such practices and there have been clashes between tribal leaders and Christians in some instances.

Drivers of persecution

Drivers of Persecution: Mali	IO	RN	CEA	CDP	CPCO	SI	DPA	OCC
	VERY STRONG	-	STRONG	-	-	-	-	MEDIUM
Government officials	Weak	-	Weak	-	-	-	-	Strong
Ethnic group leaders	Strong	-	Strong	-	-	-	-	-
Non-Christian religious leaders	Strong	-	Weak	-	-	-	-	-
Religious leaders of other churches	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Violent religious groups	Very strong	-	Weak	-	-	-	-	Strong
Ideological pressure groups	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Citizens (people from the broader society), including mobs	Medium	-	Weak	-	-	-	-	-
One's own (extended) family	Medium	-	Weak	-	-	-	-	-
Political parties	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Revolutionaries or paramilitary groups	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Organized crime cartels or networks	Strong	-	-	-	-	-	-	Strong
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 (Very strong):** The main drivers of Islamic oppression in Mali are militant Islamic groups such as al-Qaeda in the Maghreb (AQIM) who are active mainly in the northern part of the country but also conduct attacks and kidnappings in southern regions. Segments of the population influenced by the radical and intolerant teaching of Wahhabism are also drivers of persecution and especially target Christians with a Muslim background.
- **Non-Christian religious leaders (Strong):** In some areas where jihadists are operating, Muslim religious leaders teach the same radical sentiment. These religious leaders provide a platform for the jihadists to have a strong presence in the community.
- **Ethnic leaders (Strong):** Islamic oppression in Mali is combined with ethnic motivation as well, and Tuareg/ 'Arab' and Fulani group leaders are also drivers of persecution. Arabs and Fulani oppose any advance of Christianity in Mali. A country expert states: "Indigenous ethnic communities with minority Christian numbers have complained of persecution by Fulani and Tuareg herders who they accuse of destroying their farms and means of subsistence, including the looting of food stores, as well as maiming and killing them and burning their houses."
- **citizens (people from the broader society) (Medium):** The society does not see Christianity positively. This is particularly true in the case of converts.
- **Family (Medium):** This varies from family to family. However, it is common for extended family members to persecute other family members who decide to join Christianity (or leave Islam).

Drivers of Organized corruption and crime:

- **Organized crime networks (Strong):** There are several criminal organizations operating in Mali. The country's geographical situation with its vast desert and arid areas had helped the expansion of these organizations. These criminal networks are involved with radical Islamic groups such as al-Qaeda in the Maghreb (AQIM) and persecute Christians. Corrupt government officials who turn a blind eye to incidents targeting Christians are also a factor behind the persecution.
- **Violent religious groups (Strong):** Militant Islamic groups such as al-Qaeda in the Maghreb (AQIM) are active mainly in the northern part of the country. These jihadists have established or joined already established crime syndicates. Through these syndicates, they are able to buy weapons, carry out kidnappings and act with impunity.

Drivers of Clan and ethnic antagonism:

- **Ethnic leaders (Strong):** Most ethnic tribal leaders (such as Tuareg tribal leaders) are involved in the persecution of Christians. Traditional animist tribal leaders in the south are also hostile toward Christians and attempt to prevent the advancement of Christianity. They especially target Christian groups that try to remove elements of African traditional beliefs from Christian expressions of faith.

Geographical hotspots of persecution

The country's hotspots of persecution are located in the areas where jihadists and Fulani herdsman are active in [the north and the northeastern](#) part of the country. To some extent, there are small pockets of intense persecution in the southern part of the country as well.

Christian communities and how they are affected

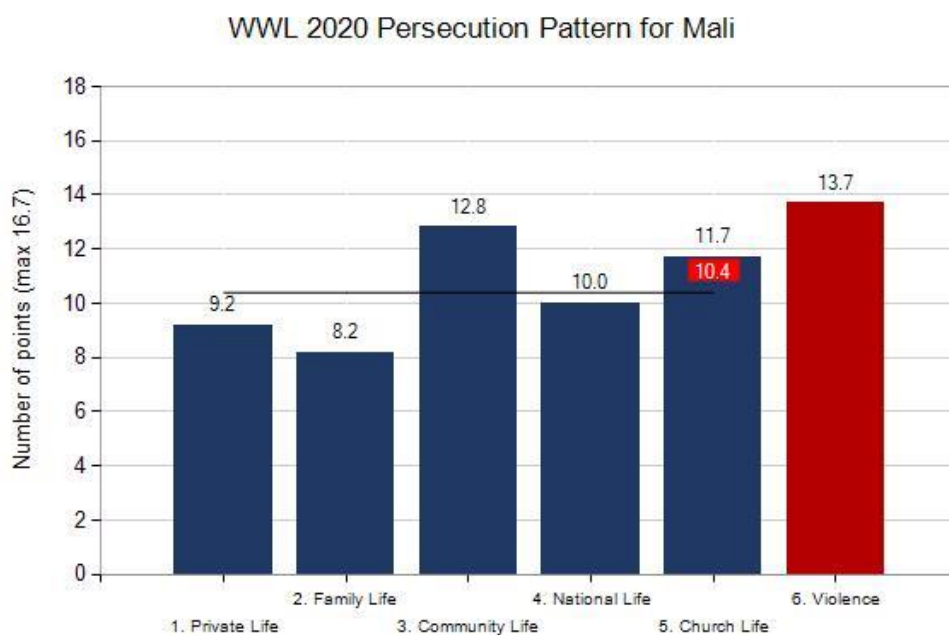
Communities of expatriate Christians: Expatriate Christians are not forced into isolation in Mali and so this category is therefore not included in WWL scoring and analysis.

Historical Christian communities: Of the less than 5% of Malians who are Christian, the majority belong to historical Christian communities. These include Roman Catholic churches and a significant number of Protestant denominations. Those living in the southern part of the country enjoy freedom of religion in relative terms in comparison to their counterparts in the north. Nevertheless, although the degree and intensity of the threat of attacks by Islamic militants is greater in the north than in the south, those in the south also have to face threats of attack and kidnapping.

Converts to Christianity: Christians with a Muslim background are mainly to be found among the Bozo and the Dogon, but there are also converts living elsewhere in the country. In addition to the threat from Islamic militants that most Malian Christians face, converts to Christianity particularly face varying degrees of pressure from their family members, relatives and neighbors to renounce Christianity.

Non-traditional Christian communities: Mali has a small number of Charismatic and Pentecostal churches mainly found in the southern part of the country. Due to their style of worship and their likelihood to be more engaged in evangelism, such communities are likely to draw the ire and hostility of society at large.

The Persecution pattern



The WWL 2020 persecution pattern for Mali shows:

- The average pressure on Christians in Mali is high at 10.4 points, the same as in WWL 2019.
- All *spheres of life* show high or very high levels of pressure. Pressure is strongest in the *Community sphere* (12.8 points) followed by the *Church* and *National spheres*.
- The level of violence against Christians is extreme but dropped from 15.4 in WWL 2019 to 13.7 in WWL 2020.

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:

- ***Conversion has been opposed, forbidden, or punishable, including conversion from one type of Christianity to another (Block 1:1 / Score 2.50):*** Converts with a Muslim background experience most difficulties in this *sphere of life* compared to other Christians. Pressure to recant is exerted by family and community members.
- ***It has been risky for Christians to conduct acts of Christian worship by themselves (e.g. prayer, Bible reading, etc.) (Block 1:2 / Score 2.50):*** Christians in the northern part of the country face massive problems in conducting any act of worship. They cannot express their Christian beliefs openly or practice their faith in private since, due to the customary living arrangements, any deviance from Islamic rites is easily detected and will lead to persecution.
- ***It has been risky for Christians to reveal their faith in written forms of personal expression (including expressions in blogs and Facebook etc.) (Block 1:4 / Score 2.50):*** Non-convert Christians living in the northern parts of the country face several forms of hindrances in their daily lives and have become increasingly in danger of attack even when they express their Christian faith privately. One country researcher reported that hatred towards Christians is especially on the increase in Dohara and Bodwall where Catholic churches were attacked in September 2018.
- ***It has been risky for Christians to display Christian images or symbols (Block 1:5 / Score 2.50):*** It has been very risky in northern Mali for Christians to display images and symbols of Christianity. In the south, Christians have been denied land for building new churches and denied permission to rent places for worship. This is more prevalent in areas where Christians openly display images and symbols such as the cross or religious statues.

Family sphere:

- ***Christians have been hindered in celebrating a Christian wedding for faith-related reasons (Block 2:3 / Score 3.00):*** This is more a security issue than formal prohibition. In the northern part of the country, expression in such a manner would mean exposing oneself to jihadists in the region.
- ***Children of Christians have harassed or discriminated against because of their parents' faith (Block 2:9 / Score 3.00):*** In the context of the ongoing crisis in the country, Christians are being targeted at schools, public places and other social gatherings. Children of Christians often bear the brunt of harassment and bullying: In northern Mali in particular, Christian children are made to feel like second class citizens and they are often referred to as 'infidels'.
- ***Christian children have been pressured into attending anti-Christian or majority religion teaching at any level of education (Block 2:8 / Score 2.75):*** Teachers have been intimidated and children forced to attend Quranic teachings. A country expert states: "In many parts of Mali, Islamic militants have tried to stop the use of French as instructional language and replace it with Arabic and demands that these schools, many of which are operated by Christian organizations, be converted to Islamic schools."
- ***Spouses of converts have been put under pressure (successfully or unsuccessfully) by others to divorce (Block 2:10 / Score 2.75):*** Muslim families will not tolerate any conversion of a family member, including the conversion of a spouse. For reasons of family honor, having a convert within the family could make the whole family vulnerable to ostracism by the community. Particularly in the northern region, the extended family of any Christian with a Muslim background is likely to exert pressure with the aim of making them renounce Christianity.

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):*** The severity depends upon where one lives: The north is most severe, but harassment in central Mali is increasing: Although the government is forbidding religious propaganda, radio and sermons in mosques are becoming radical in their opposition towards Christian faith and practice. Pressure is being put on local communities in central Mali to adopt Sharia law, although this is against the state law. Although Christians in places like Bamako are much more free in general, they also report discrimination.
- ***Christians have been monitored by their local communities or by private groups (this includes reporting to police, being shadowed, telephone lines listened to, emails read/censored, etc.) (Block 3:2 / Score 3.25):*** In some areas (particularly in the north), Islamic groups have been monitoring churches and Christians. Local citizens and community leaders like to know where Christian groups might be planning to establish new churches or build schools and hospitals. They also seek information about conversions.

- **Christians have been under threat of abduction and/or forced marriage (Block 3:3 / Score 3.25):** In the last years, several Christians have been abducted for ransom and some are still believed to be in captivity. Due to the growth in radical Islam and lack of security, the number of forced marriages of Christian girls to Muslim men is high in many areas.
- **Christians have been pressured by their community to renounce their faith (Block 3:7 / Score 3.25):** A country researcher reports: "Christians in Mali are under constant threat to renounce their faith. Such threats come in the context of national narrative - where Christians are considered as following the wrong religion. Life is made difficult for Christians considering the lack of tolerance, respect, and regard for Christian beliefs in Mali. Again, as a matter of policy, the government is more sympathetic towards Islam".

National sphere:

- **Christians have been forced by law or in practice to act against their conscience, e.g. regarding military service or in certain professions (Block 4:3 / Score 3.25):** Quite frequently, Christians have been pressured into converting to Islam and to act against their consciences in certain professional positions. Such pressure is particularly prevalent in the Malian army and other security agencies and in the public health sector, banking sector and some other ministries.
- **Christians have been hindered in traveling for a faith-related reason (Block 4:4 / Score 3.25):** This is one of the toughest issues that face Christians in the country; it is not the law hindering travel but the danger. Missionaries, in particular, require an enormous amount of security to travel to the north. For example, in [May 2018](#), militants linked to the Islamic State group killed at least 17 Christians preparing to travel, including elderly persons, who were burned alive in their homes, in Tindinbawen and Taylalene in the Ménaka region of Mali.
- **Christians have been hindered in expressing their views or opinions in public (Block 4:8 / Score 3.25):** In the context of the ongoing conflict, Christians face serious reprisals if they speak out about Islamist activities and the atrocities militants are committing.
- **Christian civil society organizations or political parties have been hindered in their functioning or forbidden because of their Christian convictions (Block 4:9 / Score 3.25):** There is no existing political party in Mali founded on the basis of the Christian faith. The few Christian civil society organizations in existence are closely monitored under the suspicion that they are actively promoting conversion from Islam. One of the Christian groups under constant scrutiny is the Christian Evangelical Church in Niamakoro, which operates in a suburb of Bamako, where Muslims have benefited from medicines and treatment provided by a team of medical personnel from various US churches.

Christians in the north have felt threatened by the lingering influence of Islamist groups and are afraid of openly displaying Christian symbols. Government officials in the north sometimes sympathize with radical Islam and do not take measures against instigators of violence targeting Christians. Converts from Islam are the most severely affected Christian groups of all; the Muslim authorities treat them unfairly although it is not officially illegal for Muslims to convert to another religion.

Church sphere:

- **Activities of churches have been monitored, hindered, disturbed, or obstructed (Block 5:1 / Score 3.5):** In the north, Christians and churches are being monitored by Islamist groups and Western NGOs and even UN peacekeepers are being accused of 'evangelizing', where contact with Western culture is equated with Christianity. In the rest of the country, churches need permission from the government to do outdoor activities such as evangelism campaigns. In many areas, this is no problem and the Jesus Film, for instance, can be shown openly.
- **Christian communities have been hindered in building or renovating church buildings or in claiming historical religious premises and places of worship which had been taken from them earlier (Block 5:3 / Score 3.5):** Christians in the north have been experiencing great problems in repairing or building places of Christian worship. In May 2018, for example, a group of Christian refugees came under attack after they tried to have a makeshift church in one of the refugee camps close to the border with Niger.
- **Churches have been hindered from organizing Christian activities outside church buildings (Block 5:5 / Score 3.5):** In parts of the country where it is dangerous to identify as a Christian or carry out evangelism, it is the lack of security which is hindering outside activities.
- **Christian preaching, teaching and/or published materials have been monitored (Block 5:8 / Score 3.5):** Islamist groups often monitor Christian teaching and published materials. This is also happening in schools where militants go round schools and intimidate teachers into not teaching anything to do with Christianity or secularism. The government is also keen on detecting any 'hate speech' occurring in schools and churches.

Church life is more stable in the southern part of the country where the Muslim community is more tolerant of Christians. However, the recent phenomena of Wahhabi teaching influencing Muslim groups in the south are causing a move away from tolerance. Church life is more dangerous in the northern part of the country where various radical Islamic groups control day-to-day activities in society. Most Christians living in the northern part of the country do not worship in public.

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.

Mali	Reporting period	Christians killed	Christians attacked	Christians arrested	Churches attacked	Christian-owned houses and shops attacked
WWL 2020	01 Nov 2018 - 31 Oct 2019	10	110	0	100	14
WWL 2019	01 Nov 2017 - 31 Oct 2018	14	26	10	13	750
WWL 2018	01 Nov 2016 - 31 Oct 2017	1	144	0	13	20

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.

The level of violence against Christians remained extremely high in the WWL 2020 reporting period.

- **Christians killed / Christians attacked:** Islamic militants in Mali have been busy attacking the country's security forces and Christians. Christian villages were targeted and destroyed, with the attacks sometimes having both ethnic and religious elements.
- **Churches attacked:** According to a field researcher, "With the increasing attacks in Mopti region and other areas, church schools and churches have been burnt down, hundreds of schools (including- Christian schools) have been closed down in 2019."
- **Christian homes/shops attacked:** At least 10 houses and 4 shops were destroyed. Unverified reports put the number much higher.

5 Year trends

The following three charts show the pressure and violence experienced by Christians over the last five reporting periods.

Chart 1:

Although there have been variations, the level of average pressure would seem to be stabilizing at just over the 10.0 point mark.

WWL 2016 - WWL 2020 Persecution Pattern history: Mali	Average pressure over 5 Spheres of life
2020	10.4
2019	10.4
2018	9.9
2017	11.0
2016	9.4

Chart 2:

Looking at the averages per sphere of life, over the last 5 reporting periods pressure has been greatest in *Community life*, *Private life* and *Church life*. However, in WWL 2020 pressure in *Private* and *Family life* dropped noticeably, whereas there were rises in pressure in all other *spheres of life* - an indication that the space for Christians in *Community*, *National* and *Church life* is shrinking.

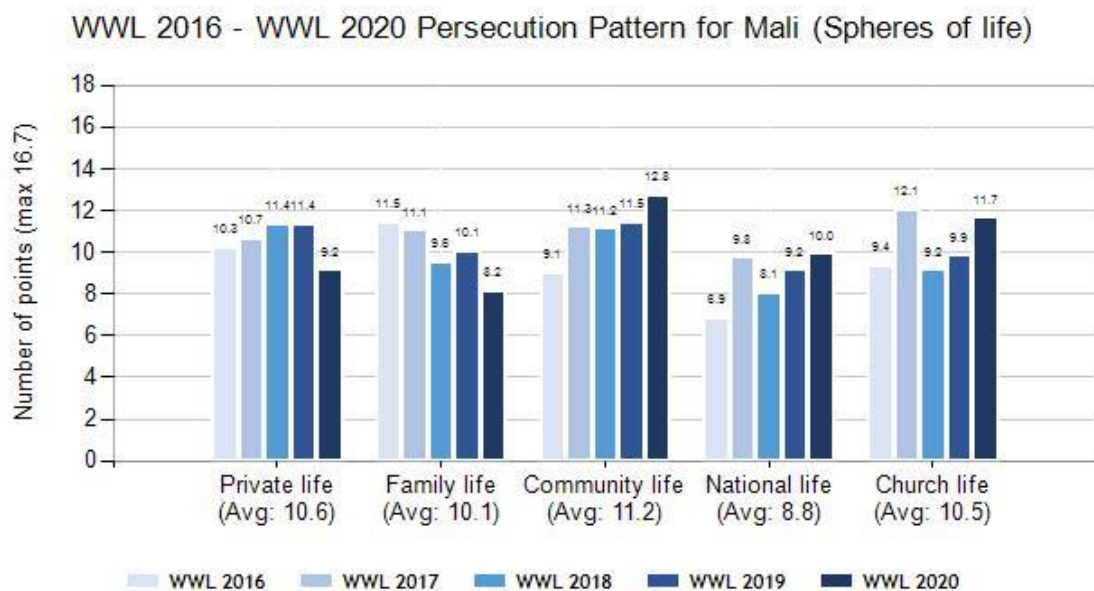
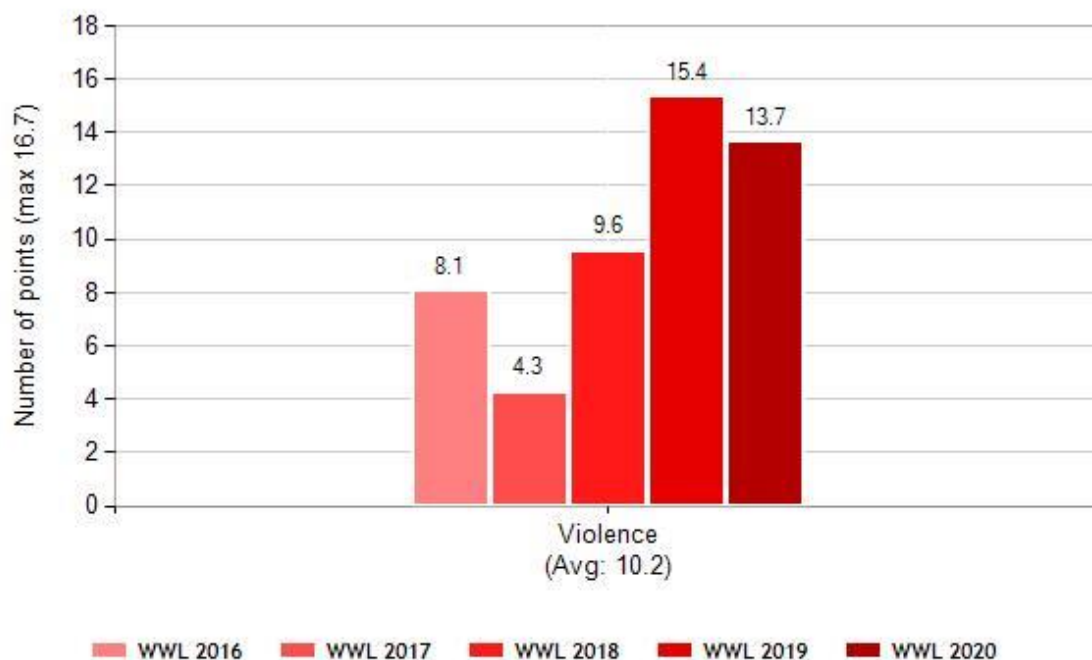


Chart 3:

After a fall in the violence score in WWL 2017, the scores rose sharply, peaking at the extreme level of 15.4 points in WWL 2019. In WWL 2020 the score decreased but remains borderline extreme.

WWL 2016 - WWL 2020 Persecution Pattern for Mali (Violence)



Gender profile of persecution

Female Pressure Points:

- **Abduction**
- **Denied access to social community/networks**
- **Forced divorce**
- **Forced marriage**
- **Enforced dress code**
- **Violence – physical**
- **Violence – sexual**

In Mali, converts to Christianity are the most vulnerable group; among that vulnerable group, many female converts are especially vulnerable to sexual abuse, forced divorce and, almost systematically, forced marriage. This is particularly common in northern Mali. Although there are national laws that protect women and girls in general, traditional and cultural practices and gender norms make women more vulnerable for such treatment.

Abducting Christian girls and forcing them to marry Muslims is a common tactic used by Islamic militants to spread Islam. Christian women live in an ambiance of Islamic culture with its associated and imposed dress code. They experience social rejection and when facing persecution, the children suffer repercussions of whatever befalls their parents. When parents are separated, or fathers are killed or some other loss of subsistence income occurs, some Christian girls feel they have no option to survive but prostitution. Widows are also particularly vulnerable to this.

As a result of such practices, some Christians are traumatized and lose confidence in the authorities. Their faith can sometimes also be affected.

Male Pressure Points:

- ***Abduction***
- ***Denied access to social community/networks***
- ***Denied inheritance or possessions***
- ***Discrimination/harassment via education***
- ***Economic harassment via business, job, or work access***
- ***Forced divorce***
- ***Forced to flee town/country***
- ***Military/militia conscription/service against conscience***
- ***Violence – death***
- ***Violence – physical***

Christian men and boys in Mali are particularly subject to violent, physical attack because of their faith. Targeted attacks on Christian homes and businesses is effectively being used to impoverish families putting them at risk of hunger etc.. This dire situation for Christians can be exacerbated by the targeted loss of inheritance rights, social rejection or the blocking of access to positions of responsibility and scholarships.

The widespread and prevalent poverty in one of Africa's poorest countries can make many, particularly men and boys, vulnerable and can expose them to effective coercion to enroll in radical Islamic groups. Those living in rural and remote areas are especially vulnerable to forced recruitment into violent groups.

Young Christian men are subjected to abduction, forced conversion and conscription in militia in the northern parts of the country. This has a devastating effect on their families and fellow Christians who are traumatized by such persecution. In an attempt to protect Christian boys, they may be separated from their parents and moved to safer areas, but this creates other challenges.

Persecution of other religious minorities

Apart from Christians, those adhering to indigenous traditional belief systems are also religious minorities in Mali. Although historically such beliefs have co-existed with Islam, with the rise of more militant and intolerant versions of Islam in Mali, Animists have also been [targeted](#) for violent attacks in the northern part of the country. In the context of the rise of violent Islamic militancy in the Sahel, no religious groups outside their understanding of Islam are safe from persecution.

Future outlook for the church

The outlook for Christians as viewed through the lens of:

- **Islamic oppression:** Christians in Mali have suffered from the chaos and instability in the country caused by violent Islamic groups. Islamic militants have worked hard to destroy evidence of any Christian presence in the northern part of the country. The restoration of law and order and of government authority in the northern part of the country are a prerequisite for any improvement in the situation for Christians. In the WWL 2020 reporting period, jihadists stepped up their attacks, making the country unsafe for Christians, even in [the capital city, Bamako](#). Communal violence also increased. International peacekeepers are struggling to contain the level of violence but there are no signs that they can swiftly get the situation under control. The presence of international troops is being used by the Islamic militants as a recruiting tool. As it stands, *Islamic oppression* will continue to affect Christians in the country and in the region for many years to come.
- **Clan and ethnic antagonism:** Ethnicity, religion and politics overlap at times. Jihadists and religious leaders both use ethnicity and religion (Islam) to influence and control their supporters. There is also communal violence as a result of ethnic conflict, which can result in Christians being targeted. This situation will likely continue.
- **Organized corruption and crime:** Islamic militants in the country survive through the existence of crime cartels and use kidnapping for ransom as a means for generating income. There are also reports that Islamic fighters are participating in drug-trafficking by linking up with criminal cartels in Latin America. Due to the current absence of law and order this will likely continue unabated.

External Links - WWL 2020: Persecution Dynamics

- Geographical hotspots of persecution: the north and the northeastern - <http://newirin.irinnews.org/dataviz/2015/11/20/map-of-conflict-in-mali-2015>
- Pressure in the 5 spheres of life : May 2018 - <https://thedefensepost.com/2018/05/02/mali-attack-tindinbawen-taylalene/>
- Persecution of other religious minorities: targeted - <https://www.state.gov/j/drl/rls/irf/religiousfreedom/index.htm#wrapper>
- Future outlook for the church: the capital city, Bamako - <https://www.worldwatchmonitor.org/coe/mali-the-epicentre-of-jihadist-groups-in-the-sahel/>

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/mali>.

Recent country developments

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