

World
Watch
Research

Kenya: Country Dossier

January 2020



OpenDoors

Serving persecuted **Christians** worldwide

Open Doors International / World Watch Research

January 2020

research@od.org

Contents

Introduction	3
World Watch List 2020	3
Copyright notice	5
Brief note on sources and definitions	5
WWL 2020: Persecution summary / Kenya	6
Brief country details	6
Dominant persecution engines and drivers	6
Brief description of persecution situation	7
Specific examples of persecution in the reporting period	7
WWL 2020: Keys to understanding / Kenya	8
Link for general background information	8
Recent history	8
Political and legal landscape	9
Religious landscape	9
Economic landscape	10
Social and cultural landscape	11
Technological landscape	11
Security situation	11
Trends analysis	12
External Links - WWL 2020: Keys to understanding	12
WWL 2020: Church information / Kenya	14
Christian origins	14
Church spectrum today	14
External Links - WWL 2020: Church information	14
WWL 2020: Persecution Dynamics / Kenya	15
Reporting period	15
Position on World Watch List (WWL)	15
Persecution engines	15
Drivers of persecution	16
Geographical hotspots of persecution	18
Christian communities and how they are affected	18
The Persecution pattern	19
Pressure in the 5 spheres of life	19

Violence.....	24
5 Year trends	25
Gender profile of persecution.....	27
Persecution of other religious minorities.....	28
Future outlook for the church.....	28
External Links - WWL 2020: Persecution Dynamics	29
Additional reports and articles.....	30
WWR in-depth reports	30
World Watch Monitor news articles	30
Recent country developments	30

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	-	-	-

Copyright notice

No copyright - This report is the property of World Watch Research (WWR), the research department of Open Doors International. It may be used and distributed free of charge, but please always acknowledge WWR as the source.

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 / Kenya

Brief country details

Pop 2019	Christians	Chr%
Kenya		
52,215,000	42,820,000	82.0

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

World Watch List Kenya	Points	WWL Rank
WWL 2020	61	44
WWL 2019	61	40
WWL 2018	62	32
WWL 2017	68	18
WWL 2016	68	16

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

Kenya: Main Persecution engines	Main drivers
Islamic oppression	Citizens (people from the broader society), including mobs, One's own (extended) family, Violent religious groups, Non-Christian religious 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

In Kenya, all categories of Christian communities are affected by persecution. Particularly Christians with a Muslim background in the northeast and coastal regions live under constant threat of attack even from their closest relatives. In the WWL 2020 reporting period, Christians were attacked and forced to flee their villages. It was reported that al-Shabaab has infiltrated the local population to monitor the activities of Christians in those areas. However, organized corruption and crime is also a serious problem. Co-opted officials do not take measures against those who persecute Christians, and this, in turn, encourages further acts of persecution.

Specific examples of persecution in the reporting period

- In some parts of the north-eastern and coastal regions, Christians are often ostracized and denied access to community resources.
- On 19 January 2019, a Christian convert was beaten and subsequently arrested by Muslim policemen on the outskirts of Nairobi after refusing to renounce Christianity.
- On 17 May 2019, 4 churches were attacked in Kiamaiko, Nairobi, by a Muslim mob. A Muslim group was holding an outdoor debate on 16 May 2019 and some locals from the community complained about the noise and large crowd that had formed and called the police. The police came, confiscated the group's sound system and dispersed the crowd. The local Somali Muslim population then assembled into a mob and on the following day proceeded to destroy much of the property of four churches: The Kingdom Gospel for All Nations Ministry church, the Evangelical Victory Church International, the End Time Army church and the Kale Heywot church. Armed with stones, machetes and petrol they damaged everything, from chairs to sound equipment. Several Christians were also injured.

WWL 2020: Keys to understanding / Kenya

Link for general background information

BBC country profile: <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-africa-13682176>.

Recent history

Since the nation's founding in 1964, tribal-based politics continue to serve as the dominant political trend in the country. However, the new Constitution in 2010, the peaceful elections of March 2013 when Uhuru Kenyatta (the son of Kenya's first president) won the vote for the presidential office, and the devolution of power into a county system, have all helped mitigate some of the tension arising from the ethno-based politics. On a backdrop of serious socio-economic challenges (see below) the increasing incursions of al-Shabaab militants and the general instability in Somalia is a major security concern, particularly in the light of the attacks in 2013-2015 in Nairobi and the north-east, especially the attack on Garissa University in April 2015. It is expected that civil unrest and anti-corruption/anti-government sentiment will grow significantly as corruption remains endemic and highly visible. Against this backdrop, devolution of power from the center to localities could be a positive step forward in bringing a regionally more equal level of development and political stability with regards to the country's historic ethnic tensions.

A major event in 2017 were the general elections held in August. After the Kenyan Supreme Court annulled the result, repeat elections were held in October 2017, again with President Uhuru Kenyatta leading in the polls. The elections were carried out peacefully (in contrast to the 2007 elections which resulted in heated tensions escalating to violence and resulting in deaths of over 1,200 people). This election is therefore also a milestone in working towards a form of reconciliation of the different ethnic groups in Kenya. Also, in 2018, both president and main opposition leader eventually announced that they had [agreed to work together](#).

Before that announcement, however, veteran opposition leader Raila Odinga, who ran in the August 2017 presidential election as a candidate continued to contest incumbent President Uhuru Kenyatta's victory. On 30 January 2018, Odinga took the unprecedented step of organizing a [mock inauguration ceremony](#) as the 'people's president', despite [warnings](#) from international civil society organizations about the deeper crisis this move could cause in the country. On the same day, Kenyan authorities [designated](#) the National Resistance Movement (NRM), an activist wing of Odinga's political coalition, [a criminal group](#) in an attempt to crackdown on politicians and lawyers affiliated with Odinga. In early 2018, the authorities in Kenya [blocked](#) the transmission of at least three television stations for defying the government's order against covering Odinga's mock inauguration ceremony.

In early March 2018 President Kenyatta and opposition leader Odinga [vowed](#) to resolve their differences and agreed a peace deal, signaling an end to ongoing public feud between the two camps and easing political tensions in the country. However, this welcome development could not reverse the government's harsh treatment of opposition voices and [members of the media](#).

The government's measures - already seen as stifling freedom of expression and the media - took a new turn on 16 May 2018, when Kenyatta signed a [new law on cybercrime](#) that introduced new offenses and imposed harsh penalties in relation to news reporting. However, the harshest fines and provisions that criminalized "false or fictitious" news were later deleted after being judged unconstitutional by the High Court.

Political and legal landscape

Kenya is not currently considered to be a true electoral democracy and has seen a relative decline in political and civil liberties. This decline occurred as a parallel development to the ethnic and religious tensions and incidents of violence which occurred nationwide following the 2007-2008 elections and in advance of the elections held in 2013. In terms of its level of democracy, Kenya is ranked at the lower end of the "hybrid regimes", showing it to be more democratic than authoritarian regimes, but not as democratic as "flawed democracies". However, despite this, the country has been making progress following the 2010 constitutional referendum.

With regard to the Constitution, several provisions were [amended](#) in 2017 to ensure civil liberties. For example, freedom of speech and press has been strengthened. Under Article 8, the Constitution clearly lays out that the country has no official state religion. Article 32 of the Constitution provides for freedom of religion, the right to assemble with others to manifest their religion through worship, practice, teaching or observance, including observance of a day of worship and that a person shall not be compelled to act, or engage in any act, that is contrary to the person's belief or religion. It also provides under Article 27(4) for the equality of all persons and equal access to and benefits from the law with no adverse distinction based on religion. As a result of this, many things have started changing: Kenya's press environment remains one of the most vibrant in all of Africa and many privately-owned media outlets are known for routinely criticizing the government and officials. Also, the independence of the judiciary has been strengthened, which was previously subservient to the executive branch. Moreover, the Islamic (Kadhi) court system is subordinate to the superior courts of Kenya and is reserved for those who profess the Muslim religion and who voluntarily submit to the courts' jurisdiction. Kadhi courts only adjudicate cases related to personal status, marriage, divorce or inheritance.

Lastly, freedom of religion appears to be widely respected by the government, although some Muslim groups complain about unequal development opportunities and religion-based discrimination. However, civil liberties and the rule of law are being eroded by several factors, such as deeply entrenched official and societal corruption and an ineffective police force. This contributes to crime being seriously underreported, and domestic violence, trafficking and forced labor typically not being investigated. It has even enabled Islamic militants to transport weapons and ammunition in and out of the country undetected.

Religious landscape

Kenya is a majority Christian country with Christians making up 82% of the population. 8.4% of the population adheres to various African traditional religious beliefs, while the Muslim population is estimated by WCD to be 7.8%.

Religious Context: Kenya	Numbers	%
Christians	42,820,000	82.0
Muslim	4,093,000	7.8
Hindu	255,000	0.5
Buddhist	1,700	0.0
Ethnoreligionist	4,363,000	8.4
Jewish	2,400	0.0
Bahai	486,000	0.9
Atheist	2,100	0.0
Agnostic	44,300	0.1
Other	147,830	0.3

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.

Economic landscape

Kenya's economy is the largest and most diverse in East Africa and it serves as a regional financial and transportation hub. Nevertheless, Kenya is also one of the poorest countries in the world and is considered to have "low development", according to the United Nations' Human Development Index. Economic growth, hampered for decades by government mismanagement and corruption, was improving before the post-election instability in 2007. Then the economy was hit hard by the global economic downturn (2008-2013) and the 2011-2012 East African drought. Yet, Kenya is considered to be one of the fastest-growing economies in Sub-Saharan Africa and a hotbed of technological innovation. Kenya has been one of the only African countries to invent and produce models of computers and cars. Despite this, the economic growth remains inadequate to significantly address the nation's endemic poverty and high level of unemployment. Moreover, high levels of corruption, coupled with (and resulting in) inadequate infrastructure, are the primary impediments to job creation and poverty eradication. Due to a burgeoning youth population, growing urbanization will likewise place greater pressure on the government to address the needs of those in the impoverished city slums. Drought conditions and the development of oil resources also have an impact on the tensions among the rural population, national economy and the overall political environment.

In its 2019 report, the World Bank reported that the Kenyan economy is facing some challenges. The [report noted](#) that "recent threats of drought and continued subdued private sector investment could drag down growth in the near-term. The growth forecast for 2020 stands at 5.9%."

The report continues: "Growth in 2018 was driven by favorable harvests, a resilient services sector, positive investor confidence and a stable macroeconomic environment. Nonetheless, the demand side shows significant slack with growth driven primarily by private consumption while private sector investment remains subdued. So far in 2019, a strong pick-up in economic activity was underway for Q1 of 2019 as reflected by real growth in consumer spending and stronger investor sentiment."

Social and cultural landscape

The growth in the economy has a direct impact on the improvement of lives and access to education. In some areas, access to education has reduced the attraction of radical Islamic tendencies among the youth. The [life expectancy](#) rate is 67, with a fertility rate of 3.8. The literacy rate is 78.7%. HIV/AIDS prevalence is more than 5%.

Culturally, Kenya is diverse, with more than 40 ethnic groups, of which the Kikuyu are the majority. The working language is Swahili and English while all the ethnic groups have their own language. This is a country of Masai Mara and Serengeti (crown-Jewel of Safari).

Technological landscape

Kenya is one of the few countries with relatively advanced technology in Sub-Saharan Africa. It was in Kenya that M-Pesa, or mobile money was first invented in 2007, a system whereby subscribers send cash to other phone-users by a simple SMS message. The country's young talents are also becoming entrepreneurs. A 2016 [Newsweek](#) article states: "New innovations are destroying old ways of doing business, and smart young startup entrepreneurs are at the forefront of this quiet but historic transformation. Teams of skilled developers and programmers have sprung up in innovation hubs, incubators, and accelerators across the country to build information and telecom solutions that capitalize on the country's mix of challenges and opportunities." These inventions are also helping to transform the way the country was doing business. Kenya is one of the members of the East African Economic Community and it wants to see technology playing a [key role](#) in the economic development of the region.

Security situation

Kenya is a Christian majority country. Although the percentage of Muslims in Kenya is fairly small (just under 8% according to WCD estimates), the Church on the north-eastern border with Somalia faces significant persecution from the strong Muslim presence. The cross-border attacks by al-Shabaab have forced many Christians to close their churches and abandon the region. The Islamist group al-Shabaab is the biggest threat and a leading *Driver of persecution* in Kenya. The group, which has reportedly killed more people than any other militant group in Africa through its attacks in Somalia and Kenya, has shown great resilience despite an increase in government army pressure and economic setbacks. The fact that al-Shabaab is deeply embedded in communities in Somalia makes it very difficult to uproot; however, an increased military presence and foreign coordination to strengthen the gathering of intelligence in Kenya has resulted in a reduction in the level of attacks. Hotspots for al-Shabaab attacks include Mombasa, Mandera, Garissa, Wajir, Lamu and Tana River.

In the WWL 2020 reporting period, al-Shabaab carried out one of its deadliest attacks: [On 15 January 2019](#), al-Shabaab took responsibility for a 19 hours siege of a hotel in Nairobi which killed more than 10 people. Al-Shabaab said it took the action because the US president had declared Jerusalem as the capital city of Israel. Many such deadly attacks had been carried out in previous months and years. [The Economist](#) put it the following way: "Kenya has a reputation, often deserved, for being among Africa's most successful states. Yet its vulnerability to terrorism has long been a weakness. So there was universal dismay, but little surprise, when jihadist gunmen attacked a hotel and office complex in one of Nairobi's most affluent districts on January 15th."

Trends analysis

1) Kenya can no longer be regarded as a regional model for stability

For many decades Kenya was seen as a stable country and regional model. However, things started to deteriorate in mid-2005. In 2007/8, the post-election violence made Kenya an example of how costly in human lives post-election violence can be.

2) Christians have regularly faced deadly attacks

The domestic situation is exacerbated by the rise of Islamic militancy in the region. This is also compounded by the emergence of radical groups in the country which have been serving al-Shabaab through recruiting fighters from Kenya. The activities of militant groups have turned Kenya into a country where Christians regularly face deadly attacks because of their faith. This has forced the Kenyan government to send troops into Somalia to combat al-Shabaab, but that has not stopped al-Shabaab from carrying out deadly attacks against Christians. The general political environment in the country is volatile, despite the fact that the 2017 elections proceeded peacefully.

3) Institutionalized corruption remains a serious challenge

In the WWL 2020 reporting period, al-Shabaab remained active and there is little hope that the Kenyan government can keep Kenyan Christians safe. This is mainly due to the fact that there is institutionalized corruption in the country and that the situation in Somalia is not improving. Investigations into violence targeting Christians have not been properly investigated by the police. However, Christians are likely to remain politically and economically dominant due to the overwhelming Christian majority in the population.

The fact that some cases of corruption at high levels has been exposed and that there is a readiness among leaders to be transparent shows an improvement in corruption levels to a small extent. This improvement might encourage foreign organizations to bring in aid to a large number of communities affected by poverty (since corruption has also affected the level of trust amongst donors).

External Links - WWL 2020: Keys to understanding

- Link for general background information: <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-africa-13682176>. - <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-africa-13682176>

- Recent history: agreed to work together - <https://www.dw.com/en/political-confusion-reigns-in-kenya-after-odinga-kenyatta-deal/a-42958386>
- Recent history: mock inauguration ceremony - <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2018/jan/30/kenyas-opposition-to-swear-in-raia-odinga-as-peoples-president>
- Recent history: warnings - <https://www.crisisgroup.org/africa/horn-africa/kenya/kenya-averting-avoidable-crisis>
- Recent history: designated - <https://www.hrw.org/world-report/2019/country-chapters/kenya>
- Recent history: a criminal group - <https://www.standardmedia.co.ke/article/2001267860/state-declares-national-resistance-movement-a-criminal-group>
- Recent history: blocked - <https://www.hrw.org/world-report/2019/country-chapters/kenya>
- Recent history: vowed - <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2018/03/kenyatta-odinga-amends-tillerson-visit-180309172042412.html>
- Recent history: members of the media - <https://www.hrw.org/world-report/2019/country-chapters/kenya>
- Recent history: new law on cybercrime - <https://www.hrw.org/world-report/2019/country-chapters/kenya>
- Political and legal landscape: amended - [http://www.cofek.co.ke/Constitution%20\(Draft%20Amendment\)%20Bill%202017.pdf](http://www.cofek.co.ke/Constitution%20(Draft%20Amendment)%20Bill%202017.pdf)
- Economic landscape: report noted - <https://www.worldbank.org/en/news/press-release/2019/04/08/kenyas-economic-outlook-remains-stable-amid-threats-of-drought-in-2019>
- Social and cultural landscape: life expectancy - <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SP.DYN.LE00.IN?end=2017&locations=KE&start=1960&view=chart>
- Technological landscape: Newsweek - <https://www.newsweek.com/how-kenya-became-cradle-africas-ict-innovation-534694>
- Technological landscape: key role - http://www.unesco.org/new/en/member-states/single-view/news/towards_an_east_african_regional_science_technology_and_inn/
- Security situation: On 15 January 2019 - <https://time.com/longform/kenya-hotel-terrorist-al-shabab/>
- Security situation: The Economist - <https://www.economist.com/middle-east-and-africa/2019/01/19/another-terrorist-outrage-in-nairobi>

WWL 2020: Church information / Kenya

Christian origins

Christianity was introduced into the region of present-day Kenya by the Portuguese during the 16th century. The Portuguese were driven out of the coastal region of Kenya in 1698 by the forces of Oman. As a result, Christianity could not establish itself in Kenya until 1844 when the Anglican Church Missionary Society (CMS) sent Johann Ludwig Krapf. In 1862, British Methodists came to Mombasa. White Fathers of the Roman Catholic Church came to Kenya in 1889. In 1910, Pentecostalism arrived with representatives of the Pentecostal Assemblies of Canada. The Salvation Army started work in Kenya in 1921.

The arrival of Christianity from abroad was followed by the [establishment of indigenous churches](#) in the country. The Momiya Luo Mission was established by former Anglicans in 1914. The African Church of the Holy Spirit was founded in 1927. The Kenya Foundation of the Prophets Church was also established in 1927, the National Independent Church of Africa in 1929, and the Gospel Furthering Bible Church in 1936.

Church spectrum today

Church networks: Kenya	Christians	%
Orthodox	367,000	0.9
Catholic	11,785,000	27.5
Protestant	25,398,000	59.3
Independent	8,852,000	20.7
Unaffiliated	848,000	2.0
Doubly-affiliated Christians	-4,430,000	-10.3
Total	42,820,000	100.0
<i>(Any deviation from the total number of Christians stated above is due to the rounding of decimals)</i>		
Evangelical movement	16,198,000	37.8
Renewalist movement	16,866,000	39.4

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.

External Links - WWL 2020: Church information

- Christian origins: establishment of indigenous churches - http://www.dacb.org/stories/kenya/chege_samuelj.html

WWL 2020: Persecution Dynamics / Kenya

Reporting period

1 November 2018 – 31 October 2019

Position on World Watch List (WWL)

With a score of 61 points, Kenya ranked 44 in WWL 2020.

Kenya also scored 61 points in WWL 2019, ranking 40. The persecution of Christians in Kenya is at a very high level and has remained more or less constant over the last three WWL reporting periods.

Persecution engines

Persecution engines: Kenya	Abbreviation	Level of influence
Islamic oppression	IO	Very strong
Religious nationalism	RN	Not at all
Clan and ethnic antagonism	CEA	Weak
Christian denominational protectionism	CDP	Weak
Communist and post - Communist oppression	CPCO	Not at all
Secular intolerance	SI	Weak
Dictatorial paranoia	DPA	Very weak
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):

Even though Kenya is a Christian majority country (with approximately 82% of the population being Christian), *Islamic oppression* is the main persecution engine. An estimated 7.9% of the Kenyan population is Muslim, according to WCD statistics, of which the majority is Sunni. The Muslim population is mainly located in the north-eastern and coastal areas of Kenya, but has also spread over other parts of the country, and has begun to respond to perceived disenfranchisement in Kenyan society. Inspired by radical Islamic influences spilling over from Somalia, Muslim politicians, representing Muslim dominated constituencies in Kenya, have an agenda to eliminate the Church from their constituencies.

The north-eastern part of the country is also highly affected by *Islamic oppression*. Radical Muslims living in Kenya, together with militants crossing the border from Somalia, are severely persecuting Christians and have been responsible in recent years for the killing of hundreds of Christians.

To emphasize the challenge facing Christians in the north-eastern and coastal areas, one country researcher reported: "The eastern or coastal counties have long been under heavy Islamic influence due to historical factors - this is where Muslims first arrived (long before the Christian missionaries in Kenya) and along the east coast of Africa in general. The counties where incidences of medium-to-very- strong strength of this engine [*Islamic oppression*] can be found include Mandera, Wajir, Garissa, Lamu, Kilifi, and Kwale."

Even though the issue of *Islamic oppression* and Islamic militancy are recent developments in Kenya, they have been growing since the 1990s. In 1992, the Islamic Party of Kenya (IPK) was established but was denied registration in 1994. As discussed in a [report](#) dated July 2019: "The banning of the IPK led to a period of protest and political turmoil, followed by a splintering of Islamist activism on the coast. New Islamist associations and organizations proliferated, some seeking to take advantage of new political space for activism, while others, in lieu of a formal political platform, turned to mosques, informal groupings, and self-published media to articulate more militant, populist messages."

Organized corruption and crime (Medium):

In Kenya, corruption is rampant, affecting both public and private life. According to Transparency International's [Corruption Index](#) of 2019, Kenya ranks 144th of 180 countries, that is 36th on the list of the most corrupt countries. The presence of corruption in Kenya results in an inadequate punishment of perpetrators of persecution. Many institutions, including parliament, the judiciary and especially the executive arm, have been affected. This, in turn, affects the Christian communities' access to justice and protection by the police force when required. Reports also suggest that al-Shabaab managed to carry out deadly attacks by paying bribes to security officials for importing weapons and ammunition. It is in this context that the persecution of Christians must be seen. Co-opted officials do not take measures against those who persecute Christians, and this, in turn, encourages further acts of persecution.

Drivers of persecution

Drivers of Persecution: Kenya	IO	RN	CEA	CDP	CPCO	SI	DPA	OCC
	VERY STRONG	-	WEAK	WEAK	-	WEAK	VERY WEAK	MEDIUM
Government officials	Weak	-	Weak	-	-	Weak	Weak	Medium
Ethnic group leaders	Weak	-	Weak	-	-	-	-	-
Non-Christian religious leaders	Strong	-	Weak	-	-	-	-	-
Religious leaders of other churches	-	-	-	Weak	-	-	-	-
Violent religious groups	Strong	-	-	-	-	-	-	Medium
Ideological pressure groups	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Citizens (people from the broader society), including mobs	Strong	-	Weak	Weak	-	-	-	-

One's own (extended) family	Strong	-	Weak	Weak	-	-	-	-
Political parties	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Revolutionaries or paramilitary groups	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Organized crime cartels or networks	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	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 (Very strong):** It is fair to say that the leading driver of persecution in Kenya is the Islamic militant group called al-Shabaab. The group originates from Somalia whose main aim is that of establishing an Islamic state in Somalia. Its presence in Kenya results from a retaliatory move against Kenya's armed intervention through its contribution of troops to the African Union to quell the insurrection in Somalia. The group carries out suicide bomb attacks and other brutal acts against all whom they perceive to be enemies of Islam. The group is said to have ties with militant groups in Algeria and Nigeria.
- **Non-Christian religious leaders (Strong):** Teachers at madrassas and mosques are known to convey a message of background hate towards Christians. A country expert stated: "Islamic leaders have been one of the main drivers of persecution. They have fueled the level of persecution, especially amidst Christian converts. This is evident in various cases where they have specifically forced converts to renounce their faith and then threatening death if this was not done. This has been prevalent in the coastal areas and in the north-eastern part of Kenya."
- **Citizens - people from the broader society (Strong):** In Muslim-dominated areas, the local population see Christians as foreigners and even invaders. A country expert stated: "Citizens from the broader society have been sources of persecution for Christians mainly through the engine of *Islamic oppression* and in areas with Muslim majority such as north-eastern Kenya and in coastal regions of the country. This is especially evident for converts to Christianity in these areas who face the extreme danger of death or injury as they are constantly threatened by persons in their own community. Other Christians in these areas are also vulnerable to these attacks as the rhetoric of Christian inferiority and elimination created by these violent religious groups such as al-Shabaab has spread to include the wider community in these areas."
- **Family members (Strong):** The idea of leaving Islam is seen as a threat to family, community and the larger clan/ethnic group. A country researcher stated: "Extended family has been a source of persecution for Christians in Kenya, this is especially true for Christian converts from a Muslim-majority family. The narrative has been so dire that even family members are willing to act out violence against their family members."

Drivers of Organized corruption and crime:

- **Organized crime networks (Medium):** The presence of organized corruption in the country has also made application of the rule of law difficult, hence in the process, Christians are victims of persecution and have limited course for redress.
- **Government officials (Medium):** Officials are bribed to act against the interests of Christians. This occurs especially in the area of law enforcement where trumped-up charges are brought against Christians just for being Christian. Officials also turn a blind eye to the activities of persecutors, which then encourages further acts of persecution.
- **Violent religious groups (Medium):** There are indications that al-Shabaab managed to carry out the deadly attacks at Garissa University in April 2014 by paying bribes to security officials for importing weapons and ammunition. Furthermore, in the north-eastern region, there are reports about al-Shabaab and its supporters are creating income for operations by paying large bribes to public officials to enable illegal trade to take place via the port of Kisumu.

Geographical hotspots of persecution

Christians living in and around the north-eastern part of the country have to live with the fear that they can be targeted at any time. Hotspots for attacks by al-Shabaab include Mombasa, Mandera, Garissa, Wajir, Lamu and Tana River. In these areas, there are many local informants to assist in organizing attacks on churches and Christians. As a result, many Christians have decided to relocate from these areas to the center of the country.

Christian communities and how they are affected

All categories of Christian communities in the country face persecution even though the level of persecution depends upon where they live and which Christian groups they belong to.

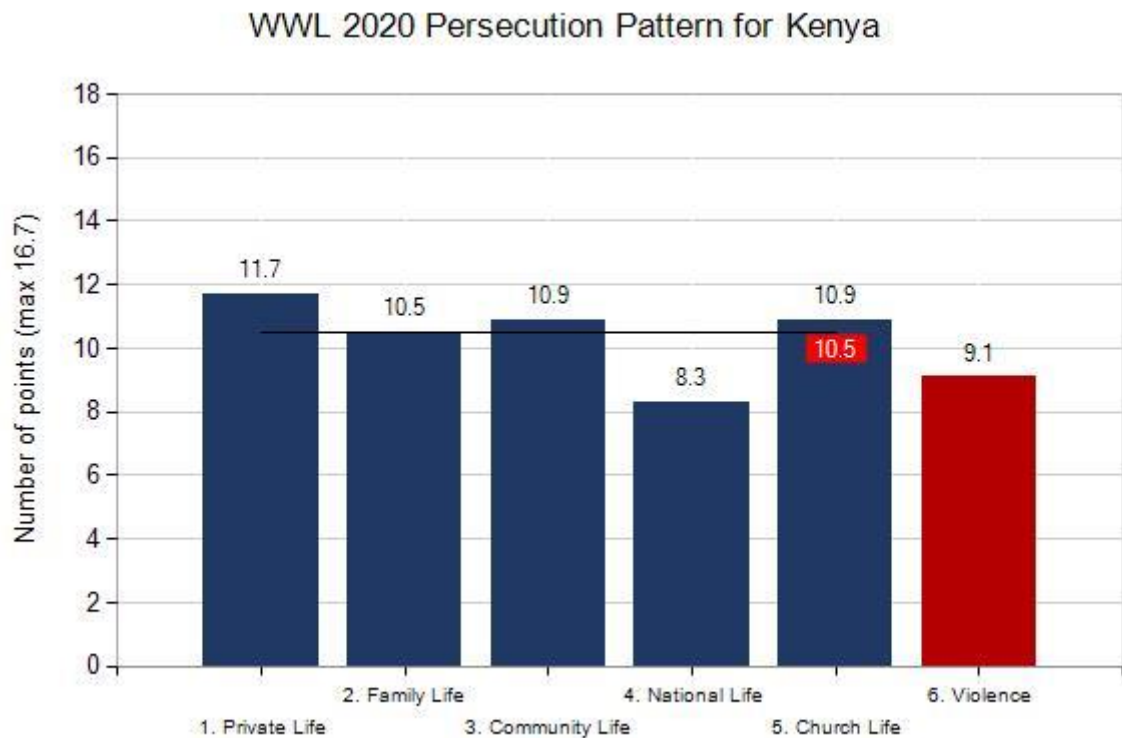
Communities of expatriate Christians: Expatriate Christians in Kenya are not involuntarily isolated and are hence not treated as a separate WWL category for scoring and WWL analysis.

Historical Christian communities: Churches in this category can be found in many parts of the country. The persecution they face and the intensity of the persecution depend on the regions in which they live. In areas where Islam is dominant, the persecution is from *Islamic oppression* and the intensity is very high.

Converts to Christianity: Christians with a Muslim background are mainly found in Muslim-dominated areas in the north-eastern region and along the coast (including Mombasa). In general, these converts face different persecution dynamics to those Christians from a non-Muslim background. They face intense pressure at the hands of family and friends and, if discovered by groups like al-Shabaab, they can be killed as well. Christian converts are also targeted by mobs or smaller groups from the local Islamic communities.

Non-traditional Christian communities: This category includes groups such as Baptist, Evangelical, Pentecostal and Charismatic congregations. They can be found throughout the country. This group is the most active type of Christianity in the country and as a result, it faces severe forms of persecution.

The Persecution pattern



The WWL 2020 Persecution pattern for Kenya shows:

- The average pressure on Christians in Kenya remains at a high level of 10.5 points, rising from 10.4 in WWL 2019.
- Except for the *national sphere*, there is no *sphere of life* where the pressure on Christians scores less than 10 points and is highest in the *private sphere* (11.7), reflecting the very high pressure on converts in the north-eastern region. The next highest pressure is found in the church and *community spheres* (10.9), an indication that church and community life is very difficult in the northeast as a result of threats from al-Shabaab and its supporters.
- The score for violence is very high, rising from 8.3 in WWL 2019 to 9.1 points.

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://openodoorsanalytical.org/world-watch-list-documentation/>, password: freedom).

Private sphere:

In the context of Islamic oppression, Christians with a Muslim background face pressure mainly, but not exclusively, in their private life.

- ***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 / 3.00 points):*** In Muslim-dominated areas, Christian converts face serious backlash if they discuss matters of faith. A country expert compared the situation of other Christian groups with that of the converts saying: "It has not been risky in general for Christians to reveal their faith in written forms of personal expression as the majority of the Christian population expresses themselves freely on public forums. However, for those converts from Islam in Muslim majority areas it has been risky for them to reveal their faith for fear of backlash from their former leaders and members of their community."
- ***It has been risky for Christians to speak about their faith with immediate family members (Block 1:7 / 3.00 points):*** As stated by a country expert: "It is generally not risky for Christians to speak about their faith with immediate family members, however, the risk comes in areas with radical Muslim influence and this is especially true for Christian converts. Christian converts face very real danger in speaking about their faith to their Muslim family members."
- ***Conversion has been opposed, forbidden, or punishable, (including conversion from one denomination to another) (Block 1:1 / 3.00 points):*** In the predominantly Muslim north-eastern and coastal regions of Kenya, converts face the risk of deadly attack if they reveal their conversion. These attacks could be orchestrated by family members or by members of the local community. A country expert stated: "Conversion has been opposed greatly by Muslim leaders and the Muslim community at large based in the north-eastern part of Kenya and in the coastal areas. Muslims who have converted to Christianity have been at great risk of either death or being beaten up. There are reports of former Muslims who have converted to Christianity being beaten up or receiving death threats and being forced to flee from their homes where they are in danger. This is highly fueled by al-Shabaab's presence in these areas where the group has been trying to gain support amongst the Muslim population through the propaganda they spread against Christians."
- ***It has been dangerous to privately own or keep Christian materials (Block 1:3 / 2.75 points):*** For converts, possessing Christian materials is very risky. For other Christian categories, possessing Christian materials in some areas is risky because at times al-Shabaab militants make home-to-home searches to find Christians.

Family sphere:

This is another area of life where Christian converts in particular face serious problems.

- ***Children of Christians have been harassed or discriminated against because of their parents' faith (Block 2:9 / 3.00 points):*** In Muslim dominated areas Christian children have been facing harassment, bullying and other forms of persecution. In schools they are often pressured into dressing like Muslim students. This issue has caused anxiety among Christian families.

- ***Christian spouses and/or children of Christians have been subject to separation for prolonged periods of time by circumstances relating to persecution (Block 2:10 / 2.75 points):*** Converts are often denied access to their children as a way of pressurizing them into returning to Islam. A country expert stated: "Christian families, more so those of converts to Christianity are being forced to separate from their families for their safety. One such family is that of Abu-Bakr, a former Muslim family of four - a wife and two children (aged 4 and 5), who converted to Christianity in November 2018. After their conversion and once the local mosque found out, their lives were threatened and they were forced to flee moving from one Christian home to another, leaving behind their rented house and two-acre land where they had planted crops. En route, they were forced to leave their children with 'Good Samaritans' for their safety".
- ***Christians lost their inheritance rights because of their conversion to Christianity (Block 2:11 / 2.75 points):*** This is another area (related to child custody under 2:9) where Christians face difficulties. Converts face expulsion from the community and lose what is legally theirs as a part of an inheritance. A country expert noted: "Christians, especially those who reside in north-eastern Kenya and in coastal Kenya where Islam is prevalent, have lost their inheritance rights because of their conversion to Christianity. Some have even had to flee from their lands because of threats to their safety, this too has been a loss of inheritance. Family members have also disinherited converts to Christianity."
- ***Christians have lost their inheritance rights because of their conversion to Christianity or to another church denomination (Block 2:13 / 2.75 points):*** Christians who have converted from Islam are often denied their inheritance rights in their family. As most of the inheritance issue is solved by elders in the community, there is no negotiation for those who leave Islam. This is seen as a warning for others who may be contemplating leaving Islam and joining another religion, for instance Christianity.

Community sphere:

Christians living in the north-eastern and coastal regions have been suffering high pressure and recently there is serious concern about al-Shabaab infiltrating the local population, making it easy for al-Shabaab members to identify Christian homes.

- ***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 / 3.25 points).*** In areas where Muslims are the majority, Christians face many challenges: For instance, it is very common for grazing land or drinking water to be shared in a communal way, but this sharing is made particularly difficult for Christians in areas where the Muslim population is a majority. The main drivers behind this persecution are primarily direct family members or members of the extended family (for converts), but also non-Christian religious leaders and ethnic group leaders.

- **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 / 3.25 points):** Some observers believe that al-Shabaab informants in local communities monitor each and every Christian movement. As a country expert stated: "Christians with a Muslim background are being monitored either by close family relatives or by their community. This stems from the influence of al-Shabaab, whose one of many aims is to eradicate Christianity. They have indoctrinated the population to believe that Christianity is evil and must be eradicated so as to be able to gain wide support from the population. These Christians' daily movements are observed through shadowing, causing fear among the convert population in the north-eastern areas of Kenya."
- **Christians have been under threat of abduction and/or forced marriage (Block 3:3 / 3.25 points):** In the northeast and coastal area, Christians are under threat of abduction from al-Shabaab. An Italian aid worker was also [abducted](#) in November 2018.
- **Christians have been pressured by their community to renounce their faith (Block 3:7 / 3.25 points):** For Muslim background converts, this issue is very serious. Any known convert is placed under pressure to renounce the Christian faith or face the consequences, which can include mob attack and death.

National sphere:

Pressure in the National sphere of life is common to all categories of Christianity. The drivers are government officials, political parties with a Muslim affiliation and the nexus of religious leaders and their followers (i.e. radical Islamic movements involving ordinary people). The role of Organized corruption and crime in this sphere of life is also visible. The steps towards decentralization (which the country has taken in the past seven years) are also having an impact on Christians; many Muslim politicians consider Christians unimportant for their political purposes.

- **Christians have been discriminated against when engaging with the authorities (local administration, government, army, etc.) for faith-related reasons (Block 4:5 / 3.00 points).** Corruption, ethnicity and faith-affiliation all play a vital role when dealing with the authorities. In the north-eastern and coastal areas, religion plays a key role and Christians in those areas are discriminated against at many levels.
- **Christians have been hindered in expressing their views or opinions in public (Block 4:8 / 3.00 points):** Even though freedom of religion and expression are respected at the national level, this issue is problematic at the county level. A country expert reported: "One interviewee said: 'It's just common sense. You do not speak about religion, or about the Church around Muslims if you want to be safe. You learn this very quickly after getting to the Coast. It's one of the first things people tell you. But, they are allowed to speak about Mohammed and so on. You live with it.' This was the NGO worker speaking of her experience in Mombasa, Kwale, Tana-River and Lamu Counties."
- **Christians have been hindered in traveling for faith-related reasons (Block 4:4 / 3.00 points):** Christians traveling in the North East, Tana River, and Lamu Counties have continued to face the constant threat of attack. In previous attacks, Christians have been separated from Muslims and executed. This has greatly limited travel for Christians, particularly for those engaging in evangelism.

- **Christians have been barred from public office, or has promotion been hindered for faith-related reasons (Block 4:6 / 2.75 points):** Promotion, election and other privileges and benefits in Kenya go hand in hand with ethnic and religious affiliation. In areas dominated by a Muslim population, it is harder for Christians to get employment, promotion or elected to a public office. A country researcher stated: "Christians or those not considered local/Muslim cannot get elected in those regions; anyone that tries is automatically disqualified, vilified and persecuted for not being the 'right' religion and tribe. The Muslims in those areas do not agree to be led by any they consider a 'kafir'."

Church sphere:

The pressure experienced in this sphere is linked to the impact of violence being orchestrated by Islamic militants in the region. The targeted violence has created a climate of fear among Christians. As a result, building a church or gathering for activities in a church has become dangerous in some places. The combined influence of Islamic oppression and Organized corruption and crime has made church life more complicated than in previous years. Corruption has handicapped the authorities in their duty to protect all citizens; in most cases where violent action against Christians has occurred, no proper investigation was carried out by the police.

- **Activities of churches have been monitored, hindered, disturbed, or obstructed (Block 5:1 / 3.25):** In the north-eastern and coastal areas, this problem has been apparent for years, but it has now been exacerbated by the infiltration of al-Shabaab. Many Christians avoid going to church for fear of attack and there is little confidence in the government to protect them. As a result, it is common that congregations in the region that used to have hundreds of worshipers on Sundays now only have a few gatherings. A country researcher stated: "To the degree that almost all churches in Kenya now have to have armed security due to the continuing terror attack threats - this is an obstruction of their activities. In some areas, particularly the Muslim-dominated Wajir, Marsabit, Mandera, Garissa, and Lamu, churches cannot hold night services and in many instances are denied permits for open-air evangelism meetings. Muslims suffer no similar limitations and freely go on with their religious activities."
- **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 / 3.25):** In the north-eastern and coastal areas, Christians are not renovating or building new churches, primarily because of the threat they face from attacks by local radicals and al-Shabaab.
- **Churches have been hindered from organizing Christian activities outside church buildings (Block 5:5 / 3.25):** Any form of gathering outside churches is likely to invite attacks in the north-eastern and coastal region, particularly in Wajir, Mandera, and Lamu.
- **Openly selling or distributing Bibles and other Christian materials has been hindered (Block 5:14 / 3.25):** In areas dominated by a Muslim population, such activities are likely to provoke attack by a local mob, or the names of the Christians involved could be passed on to al-Shabaab and its supporters. A country expert noted: "Openly selling or distributing Bibles and other Christian materials in Garissa, Wajir and Lamu counties will attract the wrong kind of attention. It has not been officially banned or hindered but the violence of al-Shabaab has scared Christians from doing this."

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.

Kenya	Reporting period	Christians killed	Christians attacked	Christians arrested	Churches attacked	Christian-owned houses and shops attacked
WWL 2020	01 Nov 2018 - 31 Oct 2019	11	31	0	3	2
WWL 2019	01 Nov 2017 - 31 Oct 2018	20	42	1	2	2
WWL 2018	01 Nov 2016 - 31 Oct 2017	39	310	0	0	150

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.

- **Christians killed:** Christians in Kenya have suffered enormous persecution at the hands of al-Shabaab and its supporters. Many Christians were killed when al-Shabaab targeted a hotel in Nairobi. In north-eastern and coastal region, Christians have at times been pelted with stones or stabbed. For example, a field researcher noted: "A 48-year-old married man with 5 children was stabbed to death by a group of Muslims who were coming from a burial".

- **Christians attacked:** Attacks on Christians have become commonplace in Kenya. This has been the case for the past eight years. According to the International Crisis Group (ICG) reporting in April 2019, from 2011-2018, al-Shabaab has conducted over 247 attacks in Kenya, mostly in the north-eastern and coastal parts of the country. The ICG report also adds that the [attacks have affected the community at large](#): "Since 2015, al-Shabaab has conducted over one hundred small-scale assaults in the northeast, killing dozens of soldiers and police, mostly with roadside bombs. This campaign has been devastating for civilians as well, particularly for non-Muslim professionals posted to the north east from elsewhere in Kenya. A series of al-Shabaab assaults targeting these professionals, who constitute a significant proportion of the workforce, has driven hundreds of teachers, nurses, public administrators and construction workers to flee the region. The departure of so many trained professionals from an impoverished part of Kenya has deepened its socio-economic woes, reversing gains of the last two decades."

In the WWL 2020 reporting period, over 30 Christians were attacked out of who more than ten were killed. It is also worth mentioning that the attack on Dustin2 Hotel was an attack on Christians as al-Shabaab itself explained. In May 2019, many Christians [were injured](#) when they were attacked by Muslim youth.

- **Churches attacked:** Churches are often attacked in Kenya. especially churches in the north-eastern and coastal regions. Stones are thrown at churches, windows were often broken, fences often destroyed. Even in Nairobi, Christians and their churches can be targeted. As mentioned above in "Specific examples of persecution", the Kingdom Gospel for All Nations Ministry church, the Evangelical Victory Church International, the End Time Army church and the Kale Heywot church are all examples of churches attacked and severely damaged by a mob.
- **Christian homes/shops attacked:** Over the years, Christian properties have been targeted time and again in Nairobi, Mombassa, and the Northeast. In the WWL 2020 reporting period: In the counties that border Somalia, more than two Christians shops were attacked by a mob. (Furthermore, the attack on the DustinD2 Hotel should also be seen from a persecution perspective, due to [al-Shabaab's own explanation](#) about why it carried out the attack.)

5 Year trends

The following three charts show the situation for Christians in Kenya over the last five reporting periods.

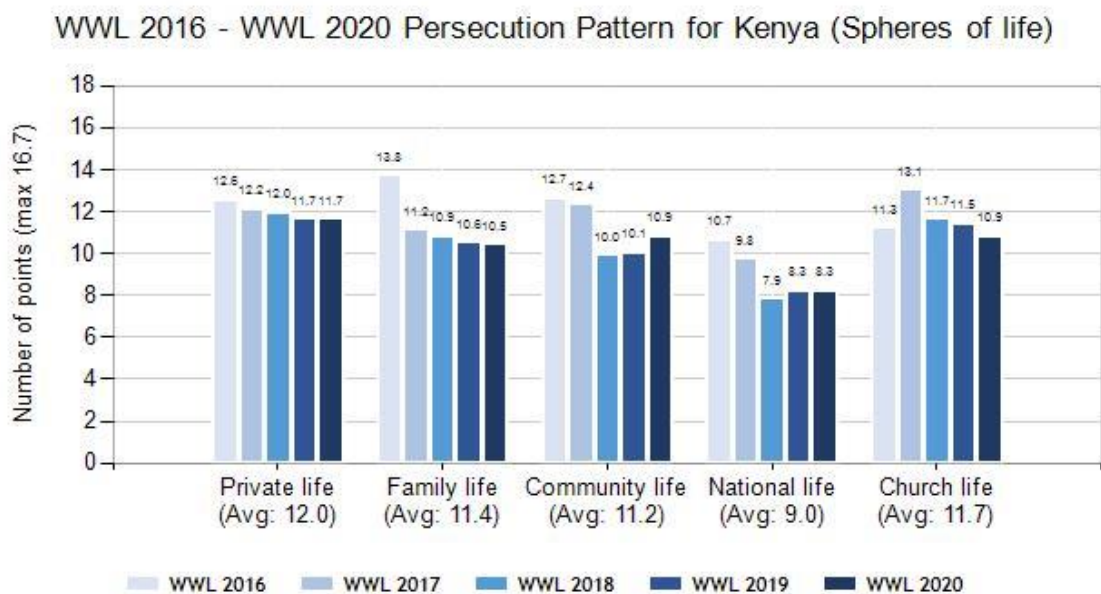
Chart 1:

The average pressure has consistently been at above ten points. However, it has been gradually decreasing since WWL 2016 and would appear to be levelling out at around the 10.5 point mark.

WWL 2016 - WWL 2020 Persecution Pattern history: Kenya	Average pressure over 5 Spheres of life
2020	10.5
2019	10.4
2018	10.5
2017	11.7
2016	12.2

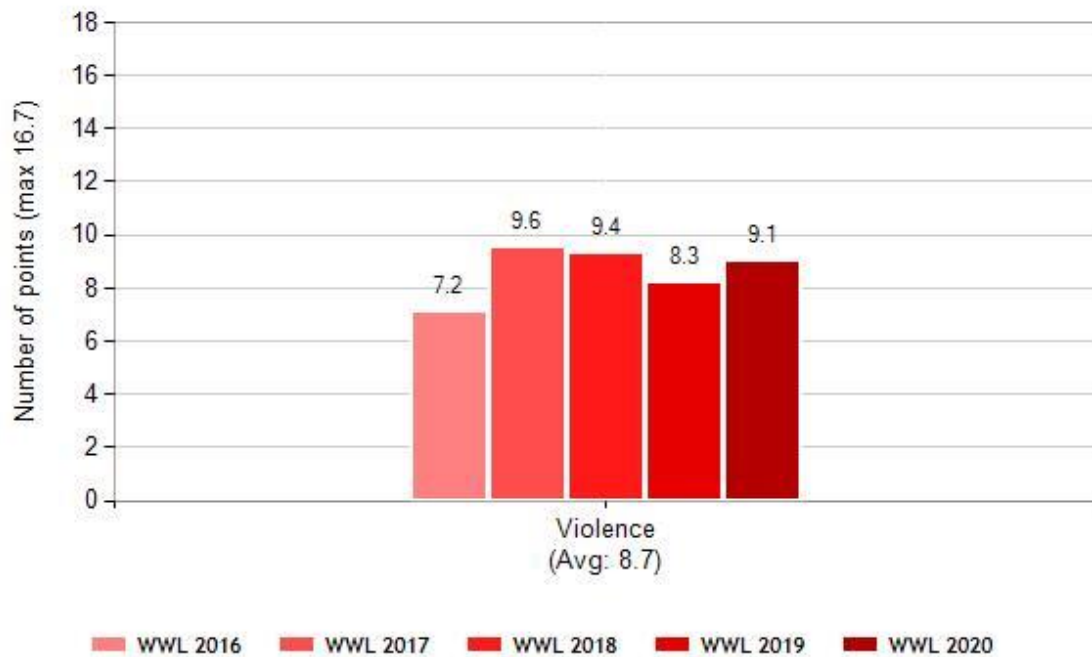
Chart 2:

The chart below shows that the level of pressure on Christians in all *spheres of life* has been high and very high. Except for the *National sphere of life*, other *spheres* have consistently scored ten points or more. All spheres show a reduction in the levels of pressure since WWL 2016/2017.

**Chart 3:**

The violence scores over the last five reporting periods have varied according to the number of attacks perpetrated by al-Shabaab and their supporters. Judging by the scores in WWL 2017, 2018 and 2020, the level would seem to be stabilizing at the very high level of over 9 points (but less than 10.0).

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



Gender profile of persecution

Female Pressure Points:

- ***Abduction***
- ***Denied access to social community/networks***
- ***Denied communal resources***
- ***Denied custody of children***
- ***Denied food/water***
- ***Denied inheritance or possessions***
- ***Denied/restricted healthcare***
- ***Discrimination/Harassment via education***
- ***Forced divorce***
- ***Forced marriage***
- ***Forced out of home/expulsion***
- ***Forced to flee town/country***
- ***Incarceration by family/house arrest***
- ***Violence – death***
- ***Violence – sexual***
- ***Violence – verbal***

In the Muslim-majority regions of Kenya, Christian women and girls face multiple forms of persecution. Though gender equality is entrenched in the Constitution, cultural practices in some tribes (such funeral rites, FGM, early marriage and polygamy) leave Christian women at greater risk of persecution if they oppose these practices.

In the northern regions, Christian women and girls face more instances of verbal abuse and social rejection. In addition, female Christians report that they must be careful not to be waylaid and raped by members of the Muslim community. Female Christian teachers in Muslim-dominated areas complained of constant sexual harassment from male Muslim students and other Muslim men in society. However, they also face the risk of death if found by the al-Shabaab.

Women and girls who convert to Christianity from a Muslim background risk being denied custody of their children and of being forced into marriage or divorce. However, the negative effects of this are less if the woman's level of income and education is high enough.

In extreme circumstances, northern Kenyan women have been kidnapped by al-Shabaab fighters and forced to be sex slaves or wives. These women are reportedly given contraceptives so that they can be gang raped repeatedly without becoming pregnant, and only those who convert to Islam and marry commanders are [allowed to have children](#).

Male Pressure Points:

- ***Denied communal resources***
- ***Denied inheritance or possessions***
- ***Violence – death***
- ***Violence – physical***

Christian boys and men in the north-eastern region in particular face the greatest danger of physical assault and execution at the hands of radical Muslims and al-Shabaab. This was seen in the past during attacks on Christians in villages where only men were killed. In addition, men and boys who oppose negative cultural practices in some tribes (such as funeral rites, FGM, early marriages and polygamy) also suffer varying levels of persecution. Their families are not accepted in the community as they are considered 'cursed' or 'not real men' (if they opt for hospital circumcision).

Persecution of other religious minorities

Concerning other religious groups in the country, there are no reports that suggest their persecution. Some analysts say that even though al-Shabaab's primary target is Christians, they will target all groups except Sunni Muslims.

According to the US State Department [IRF report for 2017](#): "Muslim minority groups, particularly those of Somali descent, reportedly continued to be harassed by non-Muslims. ... According to religious leaders, some Muslim youths responded to alleged abuses by non-Muslim members of the police (who came from other regions) by vandalizing properties of local Christians." In the WWL 2020 reporting period, there is no evidence that those practices have changed.

Future outlook for the church

Kenya has seen significant political, structural and economic reforms that have largely driven sustained economic growth, social development and political gains over the past decade. However, its key development challenges still include poverty, inequality, and the vulnerability of the economy to internal and external shocks.

The country is still open to security threats as long as Kenyan forces remain involved in the conflict in Somalia since al-Shabaab mainly attacks Kenya in retaliation for their involvement in Somalia.

The outlook for Christians as viewed through the lens of:

- **Islamic oppression:** This has been the main Persecution engine in Kenya for many years. The threat from al-Shabaab has been constantly causing serious problems for the country in general and Christians in particular. Killings, abduction and attacks on churches have taken place on a regular basis, particularly in the coastal and north-eastern areas. Unless al-Shabaab is defeated, this militant group is likely to continue recruiting young Kenyan Muslims into its ranks. Furthermore, persecution that results from family and community members will remain regardless of what would happen to al-Shabaab. This is because, in Muslim-dominated areas, religion and ethnic identity are intertwined.
- **Organized corruption and crime:** As one of the most corrupt nations globally, (ranking 44 out of 180 countries) Kenya's political culture tolerates corruption at all levels. This tolerance has even led some analysts to believe it has helped al-Shabaab to carry out some of the deadly attacks in the country. There was even a report (which was rejected by the Kenyan army) that accused the [Kenya army](#) of "taking a cut of the illegal sugar and charcoal trade in Somalia that provides the bulk of funding for terror group al-Shabaab which it is meant to be fighting." The corruption at local authority level will particularly remain a challenge to churches.

External Links - WWL 2020: Persecution Dynamics

- Persecution engines: report - <https://ctc.usma.edu/east-africas-terrorist-triple-helix-dusit-hotel-attack-historical-evolution-jihadi-threat/>
- Persecution engines: Corruption Index - <https://www.transparency.org/country/KEN>
- Pressure in the 5 spheres of life : abducted - <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-africa-46286185>
- Violence: attacks have affected the community at large - <https://www.crisisgroup.org/africa/horn-africa/kenya/hidden-cost-al-shabaabs-campaign-north-eastern-kenya>
- Violence: were injured - <https://www.persecution.org/2019/05/28/muslim-mob-kenya-destroys-churches-christian-shops/>
- Violence: al-Shabaab's own explanation - <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-46902564>
- Gender profile of persecution: allowed to have children - <https://www.standardmedia.co.ke/article/2001263935/women-turned-into-sex-slaves-by-militants-in-alshabaab-camps>
- Persecution of other religious minorities: IRF report for 2017 - <https://www.state.gov/documents/organization/280996.pdf>
- Future outlook for the church: Kenya army - <https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/africaandindianocean/kenya/11991497/Kenyan-army-profiting-from-illicit-trade-that-props-up-al-Shabaab.html>

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/kenya>.

Recent country developments

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