Cameroon: Country Dossier

December 2019

World Watch Research

Open Doors

Serving persecuted **Christians** worldwide

Contents

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 / Cameroon

Brief country details

Pop 2019	Christians	Chr%
Cameroon		
25,313,000	15,415,000	60.9

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

World Watch List Cameroon	Points	WWL Rank
WWL 2020	60	48
WWL 2019	54	56
WWL 2018	-	-
WWL 2017	-	-
WWL 2016	45	-

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

Cameroon: Main Persecution engines	Main drivers
Islamic oppression	Violent religious groups, Citizens (people from the broader society), including mobs, One's own (extended) family, Non-Christian religious leaders
Dictatorial paranoia	Government officials
Organized corruption and crime	Violent religious groups, Government officials
Christian denominational protectionism	Religious leaders of other churches
Clan and ethnic antagonism	Ethnic group leaders

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

Brief description of persecution situation

Muslims in Cameroon are severely hindered if they want to convert to Christianity, and in predominantly Muslim parts of the country there has been a process of radicalization. Converts from Islam are threatened when Bibles or other Christian literature is found in their possession. Converts are not free to express their faith or Christian opinions, be it to immediate family members or others, since doing so exposes them to grave risk. Christians with a Muslim background in the northern part of the country face difficulties; for instance there have been cases of Christian children in the north being forced by non-Christian relatives to attend Islamic classes. Many Christians with a Muslim background face problems with local communities in remote areas in the northern regions. Female converts are coerced into marriage with non-Christians and face the danger of abduction by Boko Haram. Church activities have been hindered or disturbed in areas where Boko Haram has been active. Due to the displacement of people, churches have not been able to function normally in those parts of the country. In other areas, security injunctions have set heavy restrictions on church activities.

Specific examples of persecution in the reporting period

- In October 2019, a Bible translator was murdered by suspected Islamic militants in his home in the Wum region. This was the second Bible translator to be attacked and killed within 2 months.
- On 29 July 2019, according to other sources and Christian charity Barnabas Fund, Boko Haram militants cut off the ears of at least three Christian women after snatching them from their homes during a night-time raid on a mainly Christian town in the far north of Cameroon.

External Links - WWL 2020: Persecution summary

- Specific examples of persecution in the reporting period: Bible translator - https://www.christiantoday.com/article/bible-translator-murdered-in-his-home/133511.htm
- Specific examples of persecution in the reporting period: Barnabas Fund - https://www.premierchristianity.com/News/World/Extremists-cut-off-women-s-ears-in-Cameroon-attack

WWL 2020: Keys to understanding / Cameroon

Link for general background information

BBC country profile: http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-africa-13146029.

Recent history

Cameroon is a West African country sharing borders with Gabon, Chad, the Central African Republic, the Republic of Congo, Equatorial Guinea and Nigeria. The country has more than 200 ethnic groups and it is referred to as "Africa in miniature" due to its diversity. French and English are the official languages. Europeans made contact with Cameroon when the Portuguese explorer, Fernando Po, led an expedition up the Wouri River in 1472. In 1520 the Portuguese established a sugar plantation which was later taken over by the French in the 1600s. In 1884, the agreement between Germany and local chiefs put the country under German domination. At the end of World War 1, the country was taken away from Germany and divided into two with France getting a mandate over 80% of the area, and Britain getting a mandate over the remaining 20%. The French colony became independent in 1960. In 1961 the northern part of British Cameroon voted to join with Nigeria and the southern part voted to join French Cameroon. Southern British Cameroon then joined French Cameroon forming the first Cameroon Republic, officially known as the Federal Republic of Cameroon.

Ahmadou Ahidjo ruled the country from 1961 until 1981 with an iron fist dictatorship. He abolished the federal government structure in 1972 followed by more repressive measures against his opponents. In 1982 he was replaced by his deputy Paul Biya. However, Ahidjo tried to run the country behind the scene. He was not successful, and Paul Biya became an effective successor and his dictatorial regime continues to rule the country.

In recent years northern Cameroon has come under a series of attacks orchestrated by the Islamic militant group, Boko Haram (See: Security situation). Besides attacks by Islamic militants, the country is currently also facing a crisis due to the insurgency by Anglophone Cameroonians who feel that they are being mistreated by the president and his administration. This growing tension will have an impact on Christians at least indirectly, since Boko Haram will get more opportunities to attack Christians if the government's focus shifts away from combatting them in order to deal with the issue of Anglophone Cameroonian insurgency. The Anglophone crisis in the country has caused at least 21,000 persons to seek refuge in Nigeria. According to the UN Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) in mid-2018, around 200,000 people have been displaced internally, some joining armed groups to fight the government.

The year 2018 saw Cameroon continue on the path of violent unrest. The background cause are the [decades-old grievances](#) held by the Anglophone communities in the North-West and South-West regions, which make up approximately 20% of the country's population. Violence began in 2016 when 'largely peaceful' initial protests and strikes, staged in opposition to the government's measures (viewed as further marginalization of the Anglophone minority) were met with [heavy-handed reactions](#) from the Cameroonian authorities and security forces. The unfolding violence, meted out by both government security forces and Anglophone separatist groups, engulfed the areas inhabited by Anglophone minority communities. Frequent violent attacks carried out by the militant separatists by May 2018 led to several killings of police and civilians, as well as arson attacks.

The heightened militarization of the Anglophone regions since the end of 2017, with the government's sustained repression and separatist groups' open-armed insurgency under the name of 'Ambazonia Liberation Forces', also saw Cameroonian security forces, already suspect with a history of heavy-handedness, carry out acts of violence that constituted grave human rights violations such as unlawful killings, extra-judicial executions, arbitrary arrest and detention, torture and destruction of private and public property. Similar acts of violence in September 2018 that involved both armed secessionists and security forces took a greater death toll on ordinary people and showed the escalation of the situation, which led the UN and African Union to issue a [joint communiqué](#) calling on the government to facilitate access to humanitarian and human rights organizations.

A [presidential election](#) took place on 7 October 2018. The six-term octogenarian President Paul Biya was declared the winner on October 22 following the dismissal of a petition filed by multiple opposition candidates at the constitutional court alleging fraud and irregularities. On 6 November 2018, 85-year-old Biya was sworn-in for a seventh term as president.

In the aftermath of an election and electoral result that was immediately contested by one of Biya's rivals, Maurice Kamto, the government began a crackdown on opposition leaders and supporters. In January 2019, opposition party leader Kamto, president of Movement for the Renaissance of Cameroon (MRC), was arrested in the capital Duala. In February 2019, Kamto and his supporters were charged in a military court with [crimes that carry the death penalty](#). Protest marches in the capital Yaoundé were banned.

Political and legal landscape

Cameroon is a [unitary republic](#) with a president as head of state. Since the country has had experience with German, French and British occupation, the country's legal system is based on a mixture of English common law and the Napoleonic Code. The parliament is bicameral: The National Assembly (the lower house) has 180 members and the Senate (the upper house) has 100 members. The country was rated "not free" by [Freedom House in 2017](#). The report states that the country's long-serving president has failed to create a state where rule of law is respected, pluralism flourishes, and freedom of expression and assembly are observed. [Bertelsmann Index (BTI)](#) also states: "The legislative and judicial branches have little control over the executive. The judiciary is plagued by corruption, lacks independence and adequate resources". [Reporters Without Borders](#) also stated in 2015 that Biya's regime has curtailed freedom of expression, the press and other fundamental rights that the citizens of the country should enjoy.

Paul Biya, one of the longest-serving presidents in Africa, came to power in 1982 after the country's first president, Ahmadou Ahidjo, resigned from his post. After 36 years in power, Paul Biya is still in a strong position and was declared the winner of the [election on 7 October 2018](#). Turnout was 54%, far lower than in previous elections and was just 10% in English-speaking regions. Maurice Kamto, the opposition leader who had declared himself the winner a few hours after the polls closed, was said to have taken just 14% of the vote. He has since been [charged](#) with sedition, insurrection and inciting violence.

Religious landscape

Cameroon is a majority Christian nation. According to the World Christian Database (2019), 60.9% of the population is Christian, 20.4% Muslim and 17.5% Ethno-religionist. The largest Christian denomination is the Roman Catholic Church.

Religious Context: Cameroon	Numbers	%
Christians	15,415,000	60.9
Muslim	5,173,000	20.4
Hindu	0	0.0
Buddhist	560	0.0
Ethnoreligionist	4,442,000	17.5
Jewish	64	0.0
Bahai	64,000	0.3
Atheist	48,900	0.2
Agnostic	155,000	0.6
Other	15,300	0.1

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

The discovery and exploitation of oil in the Gulf of Guinea since the 1970s has affected society which had previously been mainly agrarian. Heritage Foundation considers the country's economy to be "mostly unfree" and states: "Cameroon's economic freedom score is 52.4, making its economy the 145th freest in the 2019 Index. Its overall score has increased by 0.5 point, with higher scores for investment freedom and labor freedom offsetting a sharp decline in fiscal health. Cameroon is ranked 29th among 47 countries in the Sub-Saharan Africa region, and its overall score is below the regional and world averages." The report goes on to state: "The combined value of exports and imports is equal to 36.9 percent of GDP."

The socio-economic situation in the country does not have unique impact on Christians, but the Christian community is affected nonetheless. Cameroon's economy continues to suffer from an inefficient and top-heavy civil service, poor infrastructure and endemic corruption. The weak rule of law fails to stem the corruption that erodes incentives for long-term economic expansion. The instability and lack of security in the country - particularly due to Boko Haram - have a negative impact on Christians.

Social and cultural landscape

According to a report by the World Bank (3 December 2018 update): "Because its poverty reduction rate is lagging behind its population growth rate, the overall number of poor in Cameroon increased by 12% to 8.1 million between 2007 and 2014, and poverty is increasingly concentrated, with 56% of poor living in the North and Far North." The violence in the Anglophone religion has also disrupted the life of the people. Thousands have fled to Nigeria and more than half a million people live in IDP camps.

Technological landscape

Of a population of over 25 million, Cameroon had less than 6.2 million Internet users in Dec/2018 (24.2% of the population), and 2,700,000 Facebook subscribers in Dec/2017, a 10.7% penetration rate.

In his end of year address in 2017, the president put the "creation or construction of new basic infrastructure like roads, ports, bridges as well as telecommunications and Information and Communication Technology (ICT) infrastructure" at the top of his agenda.

Security situation

The far northern territory of Cameroon is one of the remaining strongholds of Boko Haram. A report released by Amnesty International in September 2015 stated: "Boko Haram has slaughtered nearly 400 civilians in northern Cameroon … As Boko Haram has brought its violence to Cameroon, civilians have come increasingly under fire. By killing indiscriminately, destroying civilian property, abducting people and using children as suicide bombers, they have committed war crimes and caused untold fear and suffering to the civilian population."

The [African Union](#) voted to send more than 7000 troops to combat Boko Haram in Cameroon and Northern Nigeria in 2015, but if the governments in the region do not design policies to help neutralize some of the recruiting tools used by Boko Haram, it will be difficult to expect prosperity and peace to return to the region.

The violence in the Anglophone region has also made the country more unsafe. Fighting between government security forces and separatist militants from Cameroon's English-speaking minority has continued unabated since October 2017. According to Human Rights Watch reporting on 28 March 2019: From October 2018 - March 2019 alone, at least 170 civilians were [killed](#) in over 220 incidents in the North-West and South-West regions.

State resources are being invested in combatting the Anglophone insurgency instead of being used against Boko Haram. This gives the Islamic militant group more freedom to recruit, organize and mount attacks against Christians.

Trends analysis

A significant part of West Africa has become a battleground between government forces and Islamic militants, with Boko Haram actively attacking Nigeria, Chad, Cameroon and Niger. Coupled with the fact that the Cameroon government is not respecting or protecting the rights of its citizens, the future of the country does not look bright.

In the northern part of the country where radicalization and militancy is taking pace, the life of Christians is even harder. As it stands, even if Boko Haram is defeated, social harmony is unlikely to result since Islamist ideology has already made deep inroads among Muslim youth in the region. If things continue as they are, there might be sectarian violence on a scale as occurred in Central African Republic (CAR) in the last years. What is happing in the country as a result of initial protests by Anglophone Cameroonians could lead to a full-blown civil war. The government is likely to become increasingly repressive and has been accused of serious violations of human rights. As it focuses more and more on suppressing political dissent and opposition, it will be distracted from its fight against Boko Haram. Thus, the Anglophone crisis seems likely to provide Boko Haram greater operational leeway for staging attacks with impunity, leading to a deteriorating situation for Christians in the country.

External Links - WWL 2020: Keys to understanding

- Link for general background information: http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-africa-13146029. - http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-africa-13146029
- Recent history: Africa in miniature - http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-africa-13146029
- Recent history: Republic of Cameroon. - http://www.historyworld.net/wrldhis/PlainTextHistories.asp?ParagraphID=pau
- Recent history: Ahmadou Ahidjo - https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ahmadou_Ahidjo
- Recent history: Anglophone - https://www.crisisgroup.org/africa/central-africa/cameroon/250-cameroons-anglophone-crisis-crossroads
- Recent history: 200,000 - https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2018/07/cameroonians-fleeing-unrest-hide-forest-180717195220778.html

- Recent history: decades-old grievances - http://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2018/06/cameroon-anglophone-regions-gripped-by-deadly-violence/
- Recent history: heavy-handed reactions - http://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/afr17/8481/2018/en/
- Recent history: joint communiqué - http://www.hrw.org/world-report/2019/country-chapters/cameroon%20
- Recent history: presidential election - https://freedomhouse.org/blog/cameroon-s-aging-leader-seizes-another-seven-year-term%20
- Recent history: crimes that carry the death penalty - http://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2019/02/cameroon-opposition-leader-and-more-than-a-hundred-supporters-face-the-death-penalty/
- Political and legal landscape: unitary republic - http://thecommonwealth.org/our-member-countries/cameroon/constitution-politics
- Political and legal landscape: Freedom House in 2017 - https://freedomhouse.org/country/cameroon
- Political and legal landscape: Bertelsmann Index (BTI) - http://www.bti-project.org/reports/country-reports/wca/cmr/index.nc
- Political and legal landscape: Reporters Without Borders - http://en.rsf.org/cameroon-journalist-to-be-tried-for-27-10-2015,48486.html
- Political and legal landscape: election on 7 October 2018 - https://www.theguardian.com/world/2018/oct/22/paul-biya-cameroon-85-year-old-president-wins-re-election-landslide
- Political and legal landscape: charged - https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2019/02/cameroon-opposition-leader-maurice-kamto-charged-sedition-190201061120366.html
- Economic landscape: oil in the Gulf of Guinea - http://www.bti-project.org/reports/country-reports/wca/cmr/index.nc
- Economic landscape: mostly unfree - https://www.heritage.org/index/country/cameroon
- Social and cultural landscape: World Bank (3 December 2018 update) - http://www.worldbank.org/en/country/cameroon/overview
- Social and cultural landscape: The violence - https://globalriskinsights.com/2019/06/cameroon-escalating-crisis-anglophone/
- Technological landscape: penetration rate. - https://www.internetworldstats.com/africa.htm#cm
- Technological landscape: end-year address - https://www.minpostel.gov.cm/index.php/en/les-grands-chantiers/292-broadband-infrastructure-for-a-digital-cameroon-by-2020
- Security situation: report - https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2015/09/cameroon-hundreds-slaughtered-by-boko-haram-and-abused-by-security-forces/
- Security situation: African Union - https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-africa-31057147
- Security situation: killed - https://www.hrw.org/news/2019/03/28/cameroon-new-attacks-civilians-troops-separatists

WWL 2020: Church information / Cameroon

Christian origins

The Portuguese brought Christianity to the country in 1429. However, the Roman Catholic Church only officially started establishing congregations in the country towards the end of the 19th century. The London Baptist Missionary Society (LBMS) sent missionaries in 1845 who were part of a wider influx of European merchants and explorers looking for business opportunities and raw materials. The first LBMS missionaries were led by Alfred Saker along with a group of West Indian Baptist preachers mainly from Jamaica. US Presbyterians came in 1879.

When Germany began colonizing the region in 1880, Protestant work was taken over by German Baptists and Basel missionaries. German Catholic missionaries opened the first successful Catholic mission in 1890. (For further details, see: Sundkler B. and Steed C., A History of the Church in Africa, Cambridge University Press, 2000, pp.750-756.)

Church spectrum today

Church networks: Cameroon	Christians	%
Orthodox	1,200	0.0
Catholic	6,823,000	44.3
Protestant	5,828,000	37.8
Independent	1,580,000	10.2
Unaffiliated	1,261,000	8.2
Doubly-affiliated Christians	-78,400	-0.5
Total	**15,414,800**	**100.0**
(Any deviation from the total number of Christians stated above is due to the rounding of decimals)		
Evangelical movement	2,049,000	13.3
Renewalist movement	2,324,000	15.1

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 / Cameroon

Reporting period

1 November 2018 – 31 October 2019

Position on World Watch List (WWL)

With a score of 60 points, Cameroon ranked 48 in WWL 2020.

With a score of 54 points, Cameroon ranked 56 in WWL 2019. The increase in 6 points is mainly due to the impact of various Persecution engines on Christians in the country. Boko Haram has intensified its attacks, infiltration and its recruitment of jihadists in the country. The crisis in the Anglophone region has also made Christians vulnerable to a variety of groups. Christians face intimidation and attacks if they speak against the atrocities going on in the country (perpetrated both by government and separatist forces). The government has also refused to allow some Christians to operate in the country. Established church denominations also persecute other Christian groups where the increase in the number of non-traditional Christian communities is seen as a threat. The existence of rampant corruption in the country has also made security and the rule of law virtually inexistent in many areas. It is the combination of all these issues that has pushed Cameroon into the WWL 2020 Top 50.

Persecution engines

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

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):

This persecution engine is particularly evident in the north, in Adamawa, and also in some eastern regions. Islamic oppression affects primarily Christians with a Muslim background who are persecuted by their family. The Boko Haram Islamic insurgency also poses a constant threat to the life and security of Christians and has caused the displacement of many Christians from Adamawa, the north and the extreme northern regions. In remote areas in these regions, some Muslim leaders believe that Islam should be the only religion present. Although Cameroon is generally a country where there is religious tolerance, the memories and legacies of Fulani-led *jihad* in previous centuries in the northern regions lingers on: It was through jihad that the indigenous population was forcibly converted to Islam. The violence and activity of Boko Haram have brought these memories alive and is undermining the history of peaceful relations between Christians and Muslims in modern-day Cameroon.

Dictatorial paranoia (Strong):

During the past three decades of Paul Biya's rule, the regime has been responsible for a whole series of political arrests, killings and persecution of Christians The Anglophone region of the country was especially affected by this due to the independence movement active in the area.

Organized corruption and crime (Strong):

Cameroon is one of the most corrupt nations in the world. The dictatorial regime of Paul Biya is responsible for the rampant corruption that weakens the country's political structure. Although the country has oil resources, it still lags behind most African countries in economic development. Corrupt officials in the northern part of the country were responsible for the persecution of Christians by not taking appropriate action to protect Christians under attack by radical Islamic groups. Corrupt officials have also been responsible for persecuting Christians who have views opposing the government.

Clan and ethnic antagonism (Medium):

A significant number of the population adhere to traditional belief systems - and there are also Christians who mix traditional beliefs with Christianity. In areas where Christians oppose such practices, they will face persecution.

Christian denominational protectionism (Medium):

Well-established denominations do not welcome the activities of new church groups in the country. For example, in 2018, Cameroon's Protestant, Baptist, and Catholic churches called on the government to shut down a further number of Pentecostal churches.

Drivers of persecution

Drivers of Persecution: Cameroon	IO	RN	CEA	CDP	CPCO	SI	DPA	OCC
	VERY STRONG	-	MEDIUM	MEDIUM	-	-	STRONG	STRONG
Government officials	Very weak	-	-	Weak	-	-	Very strong	Strong
Ethnic group leaders	Weak	-	Medium	-	-	-	-	-
Non-Christian religious leaders	Strong	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Religious leaders of other churches	-	-	-	Medium	-	-	-	-
Violent religious groups	Very strong	-	Weak	-	-	-	-	Very strong
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	Weak	-	Weak	-	-	-	-	-
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 are militant groups like Boko Haram who engage in violent attacks targeting both Christians and Muslims who do not adhere to the same interpretation of Islam as them. In addition to these groups, government officials at the local level who sympathize with such groups also contribute to the persecution of Christians.

- *Family members (Strong):* Family members and neighbors will put pressure on converts to return to Islam.

- *Non-Christian religious leaders (Strong):* Some Islamic preachers encourage the persecution of converts in their teaching. Such teaching supports the activities of Boko Haram.

- **Citizens (Strong)**: People from wider society also put pressure on converts in the northern part of the country.

Drivers of Dictatorial paranoia*:*

- *Government officials (Strong):* Paul Biya's dictatorial regime has been ruling the country since 1982. Recently there has been a growing opposition movement throughout the country against his regime. Most opponents are Christians since Cameroon is a Christian majority country. Several Christian leaders have been arrested, tortured and killed by the government officials because they opposed the government's inhuman treatment of political opponents.

Drivers of Organized corruption and crime:

- *Government officials (Strong):* Paul Biya's regime supports corrupt officials in order to maintain its grip on power. Corrupt officials have taken part in the persecution of Christians in the Muslim-dominated parts of the country. There are also numerous cases where corrupt officials have arrested and killed Christian political opponents of the government.

- *Violent religious groups (Very strong):* Boko Haram engages with criminal networks to bribe officials and to traffic people and arms.

Drivers of Clan and ethnic antagonism:

- *Ethnic leaders (Medium):* Belonging to this category of drivers are ethnic leaders, adherents of traditional belief systems, family members and even some Christians who are mixing traditional beliefs with Christianity.

Drivers of Christian denominational protectionism:

- *Christian religious leaders (Medium):* The leaders of well-established church denominations sometimes influence the authorities to crack down on smaller church groups in the country.

Geographical hotspots of persecution

Governance and security in Cameroon are major problems, with the country facing violence in three regions: 1) the Far North, where Boko Haram continues to mount attacks; 2) the North West and 3) the South West, which are both areas where the Anglophone insurgency is growing.
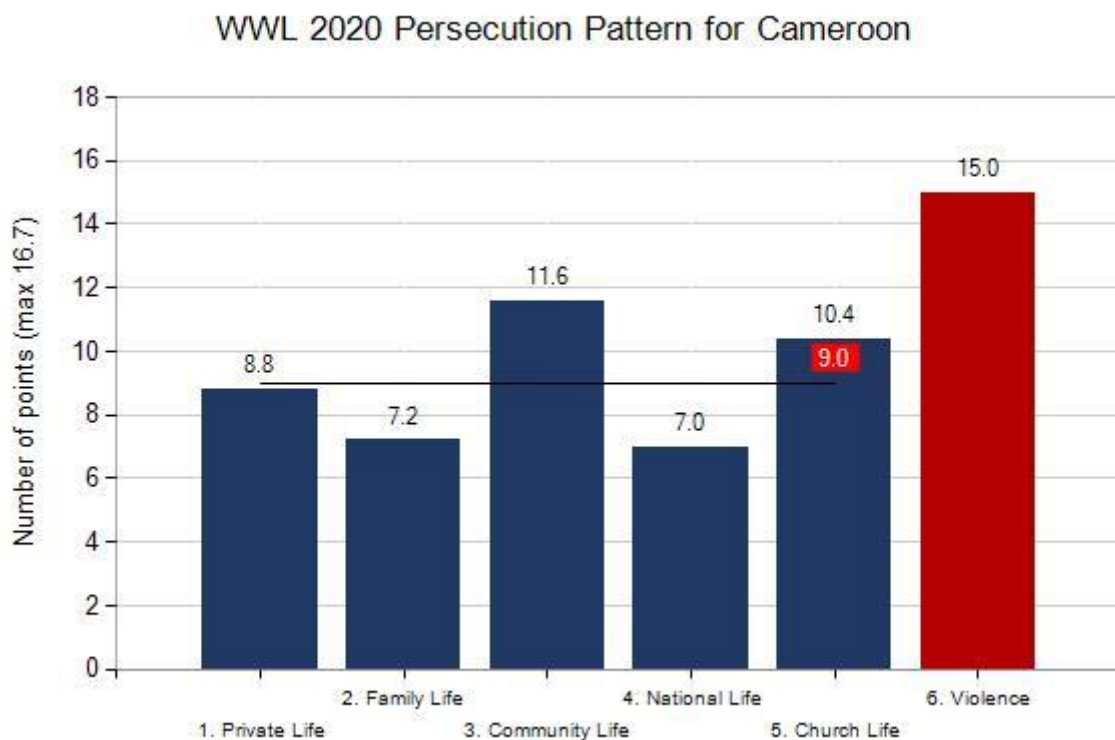
Christian communities and how they are affected

Communities of expatriate Christians: Communities of expatriate Christians do not exist as a separate category for WWL analysis, since expatriates are free to interact with other Christian groups.

Historical Christian communities: According to World Christian Database statistics, Roman Catholics make up 42.2% of the Christians population. However, there are also several Protestant denominations (e.g. Presbyterians) who can also be considered as belonging to this category. They do not suffer as much persecution as convert communities, but nevertheless, some congregations have been affected by Boko Haram violence; also, the Dictatorial paranoia of the government undermines the autonomy of Historical Christian communities.

Converts to Christianity: Converts from Islam to Christianity are the most persecuted Christian group in the country, whether they meet in secret or riskily share fellowship with other Christians. Convert Christians in Protestant churches, are often persecuted by family and community in the northern regions, Adamawa and in the Eastern and Western regions. Some converts were reportedly threatened during Boko Haram attacks to reconvert to Islam. Therefore, this community of Christians faces the risk of pressure, ostracism and violence. This often leads to forced displacement to safer parts of the country. Those who convert from ethnic religious beliefs to Christianity also face pressure from their community and families to renounce Christianity, but the pressure is less intensive.

Non-traditional Christian communities: This is a growing category in Cameroon; Baptist and Pentecostal groups are examples. While some Pentecostal churches have criticized the government and have faced threats of closure, others have tried to align themselves with the government, campaigning and mobilizing funds for the ruling party during elections. Pressure exerted by the government undermines the freedom of such churches. These churches also face threats and violence from groups like Boko Haram in the north. Islamic oppression in the north has also made the evangelistic efforts of such groups (as well as integration of Christians with a Muslim background) risky.

The Persecution pattern

WWL 2020 Persecution Pattern for Cameroon

The WWL 2020 Persecution pattern for Cameroon shows:

- The average pressure on Christians in Cameroon is high at 9.0 points, rising from 8.5 points in WWL 2019.

- The *Community sphere* score is the highest with 11.6 points, followed by the C*hurch sphere* score with 10.4 points.

- The score for violence is extremely high. The increase from 11.3 points in WWL 2019 to 15.0 points is WWL 2020 was mainly due to attacks orchestrated by radical Islamic groups.

Pressure in the 5 spheres of life

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

Private sphere:

- ***It has been risky for Christians to discuss their faith with those other than immediate family members (extended family, others) (Block 1: 8 / Score: 2.75 points)***. Christians often face opposition from the wider family and from the direct family members should they discuss about their faith.

They are often insulted and rejected. This is especially the case in North Cameroon where extended family members are Muslims. Thus, it is very common for Christians converts to hide their conversion.

- ***It has been risky for Christians to meet with other Christians (Block 1: 9 / Score: 2.75 points).*** For Christians in general, but especially converts from Islam in the North, it is very risky to meet other Christians. If they do try to meet up, the local community is likely to think that these Christian groups are trying to convert others. The presence of Boko Haram has made it further difficult.

- ***It has been dangerous to privately own or keep Christian materials (Block 1:3 / Score: 2.25 points):*** Converts are threatened if Bibles or other Christian literature are found in their possession. This is true for almost all Christians in the areas that are affected by Boko Haram. There are some Christians who do not go home with their Bibles but choose to leave their copies in the church building. The risk is far more acute for converts.

- ***It has been risky for Christians to speak about their faith with immediate family members. (Block 1:7 / Score: 2.25 points).*** Converts are not free to express their faith be it to immediate family members or others. In some cases, especially in North Cameroon where these extended family members are Muslim, Christians have faced harassment when they discuss their faith with them. This is further complicated by the activities of Boko Haram in the region/country.

Family sphere:

- **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 / Score: 2.5 points).* For most categories of Christianity in the country, there is little persecution in this regard. However, Christians with a Muslim background in the northern part of the country face difficulties. Some converts will hide their faith so as not to be forced to leave their families. If the news of conversion is heard by the community/family, separation would surely follow.

- ***Spouses of converts been put under pressure (successfully or unsuccessfully) by others to divorce (Block 2: 11 / Score: 2.5 points).*** Christians with a Muslim background in the northern part of the country face this kind of difficulty. There are several instances where female converts have to choose between either their husband or their Christian faith (which would lead to divorce). The pressure to renounce faith is also a part of the tactics employed by the community and radical groups to teach potential converts what awaits them should they convert.

- *Christian spouses of non-Christians have been excluded from the right or opportunity to claim custody of the children in divorce cases (Block 2: 12 / Score: 2.5 points).* For most categories of Christianity in the country, there is little or no persecution in this regard. However, Christians with a Muslim background in the northern part of the country do face difficulties. A country researcher states: "In some parts of the country - especially in northern Cameroon (e.g. Touboro) - Christian spouses have been refused custody of children by non-Christian spouses. Official divorce is rare, but people do separately. Especially in the North Christian spouses will be refused to continue raising their child, let alone have custody over it. This situation mostly affects women. There is also a cultural element to this."

- *Christians lost their inheritance rights because of their conversion to Christianity or to another church denomination (if the person was already a Christian) (Block 2: 13 / Score: 2.5 points).* This issue affects converts mostly. A country researcher states: "In some parts of the country especially the northern part, there have been some instances where a convert lost his farmland including his house. According to Islamic law, when someone becomes a Christian, he loses his/her right to inherit from their parents. They believe that the Quran does not permit the inheritance of a Muslim to be given to a Christian, so if a man is a Muslim, and his child converts, that child is entitled to nothing."

Community sphere:

- *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 points).* Certain pastors, churches and missionary groups are sometimes watched by government intelligence agents since they are perceived to be critical of the government. Many Christians with a Muslim background face problems with local communities in remote areas of the northern regions. For fear of retaliation, Christians also practice self-censorship, especially when gathering together or using social media. This is the case mostly in the northern part of the country.

- *Christians have been harassed, threatened or obstructed in their daily lives for faith-related reasons (e.g. for not meeting majority religion or traditional dress codes, beard codes etc.) (Block 3: 1 / Score: 3.25 points).* Many Christians with a Muslim background face problems in local communities in remote areas of the northern region. If they are recognized as Christians, they are despised and discriminated against simply for their faith. Educational opportunities for Christians are also restricted. Many Christian headteachers have been compelled to close their schools in the Bamenda region, fearing attacks by Boko Haram."

- *Christians have been pressured by their community to renounce their faith (Block 3: 7 / Score: 3. 00 points).* This is the case mostly in the northern part of the country and it affects all Christian groups, both men and women. However, converts are affected the most. Where a Muslim's conversion to Christian faith has become known, he faces losing his job or opportunities for further education, unless he renounces his faith.

- *Christians have been discriminated against in public or private employment for faith-related reasons (Block 3: 10 / Score: 3.00 points).* This often happens in government institutions, and in companies where Muslims are the majority. However, it can also happen in public and private institutions where denominational favoritism or discrimination takes place.

National sphere:

- *Christians have been hindered in expressing their views or opinions in public (Block 4: 8 / Score: 3.50 points).* The dictatorial nature of the government makes it very sensitive and hostile to actual or perceived criticism. Therefore, churches and Christians are forced to act carefully when expressing their opinion about public matters from the perspective of their faith. According to a country researcher: "Especially in the Anglophone regions, the freedom of expression and belief was threatened even more, with Internet shut-downs and people being arrested. In the far northern part of the country, people were met by restrictions due to Boko Haram's presence."

- *Those who caused harm to Christians deliberately have been left unpunished (Block 4: 14 / Score: 2.75 points).* This is a common occurrence especially in the northern part of the country. A country researcher states: "Security or armed forces have gone unpunished when they arrested arbitrarily, abused, tortured or killed civilians (e.g. supposed Boko Haram supporters in the North, or supposed separatists in the Anglophone regions …)". Since Muslims dominate the governmental structure in most of the northern provinces, cases that come before the lower courts are likely to end up in favor of the Muslim party.

- *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: 2.50 points):* There is no law which specifically requires only Christians, or compels only Christians to act against their conscience. However, there are difficulties for some Christians where the law requires people to swear an oath. Also, corruption affects all citizens, including Christians where they are compelled to participate in unethical practices in government or civil institutions and businesses.

- *Christians have been hindered in traveling for faith-related reasons* (Block 4: 4 / Score: 2.50 points). There are no laws that prevent Christian from traveling freely within the country. However, Christians face systematic discrimination that hinders them when traveling. The situation with Boko Haram in the northern part of the country has anyway created a volatile environment and made traveling risky.

Church sphere:

- **It has been difficult to get registration or legal status for churches at any level of government** *(Block 5: 2 / Score: 3.75 points)* This has become one of the main areas where Christians experience difficulties. The government has approved no new religious groups since 2010.

Although many churches operate without registration and are rarely punished for this, the lack of registration can always be used to threaten a church with closure whenever the government feels the churches in question have not sided with it politically.

- *Churches have been hindered from organizing Christian activities outside church buildings (Block 5: 5 / Score: 3.5 points):* Permission for 'outdoor' activities is often not given in Muslim areas. Such activities would risk provoking an attack by Boko Haram.

- *Activities of churches have been monitored, hindered, disturbed, or obstructed* (Block 5: 1 / Score: 3.50 points) Church activities have been hindered and sometimes attacked in areas where Boko Haram is active. Also, due to the displacement of thousands of people, many churches are unable to function normally. Clashes between government armed forces and separatists have disrupted Christian activities in the Anglophone provinces.

- *Christians 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: 3.25 points): In the far north where Boko Haram is active, Christians would provoke attack if they were to build a church. Also, the government will anyway not allow some church groups to get a license to operate in the country and hence building new churches is hindered for them too.

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.

Cameroon	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	1111	2	15	316
WWL 2019	01 Nov 2017 - 31 Oct 2018	18	50	4	3	297
WWL 2018	01 Nov 2016 - 31 Oct 2017	100	35	10	1	12

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

For the WWL 2020 reporting period:

Christians killed: At least ten Christians were killed by Boko Haram insurgents. As this happens in the remote area of the country, it is often underreported or not reported at all.

Christians attacked: Well over a thousand Christians were attacked by Boko Haram insurgents as well as in the context of the Anglophone crisis. Once example from July 2019, according to media outlets, Boko Haram militants cut off the ears of at least three Christian women after snatching them from their homes during a night-time raid on a mainly Christian town in the far north of Cameroon.

Christians arrested: At least two Christians were detained by government security forces. On one occasion it was a Catholic priest that was arrested by the security forces, according to a report by Crux.

Churches attacked: At least fifteen Christian churches were attacked, including 1 church in Guitsena, 4 churches in Gossi and a Catholic school and hospital in Toufou. A report by Barnabas Fund mentions the burning down of two further churches on 11 May 2019 in the mainly Christian village of Grossi in the far north of Cameroon. According to reports, the army has also been taking over church buildings to use as barracks.

Christian homes/shops attacked: Well over three hundred Christian homes and shops were attacked and damaged. These were often targeted attacks orchestrated by Boko Haram. For instance, in May 2019, it was reported: "In a spree of destruction, armed Boko Haram militants ransacked the village, damaging 67 houses and two shops, killing livestock, looting motorbikes and damaging grain stores." Also, in January 2019, Boko Haram attacked two Christian villages damaging churches and razing 190 homes.

5 Year trends
Chart 1:

The chart below shows that, over the last three WWL reporting periods, the average pressure on Christians in Cameroon has been increasing and has now reached a high level.

WWL 2016 - WWL 2020 Persecution Pattern history: Cameroon	Average pressure over 5 Spheres of life
2020	9.0
2019	8.5
2018	5.6
2017	-
2016	-

Chart 2:

The sphere averages in the chart below show that the Community, Private and Church spheres of life are the areas of greatest pressure on Christians. Pressure in the Church sphere of life is caused by the operation of the Persecution engines *Dictatorial paranoia* and *Islamic oppression*. The pressure in the Private and Community spheres particularly affects converts.

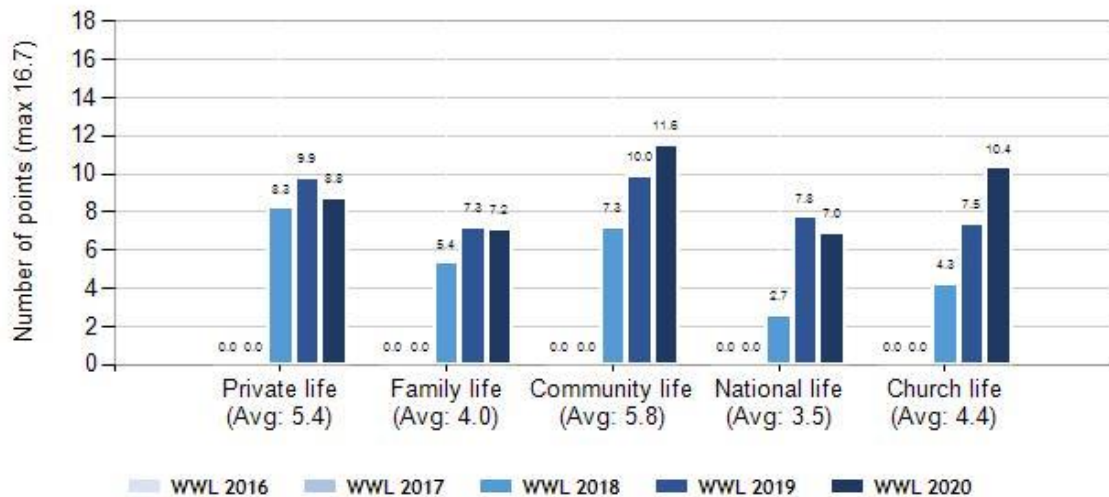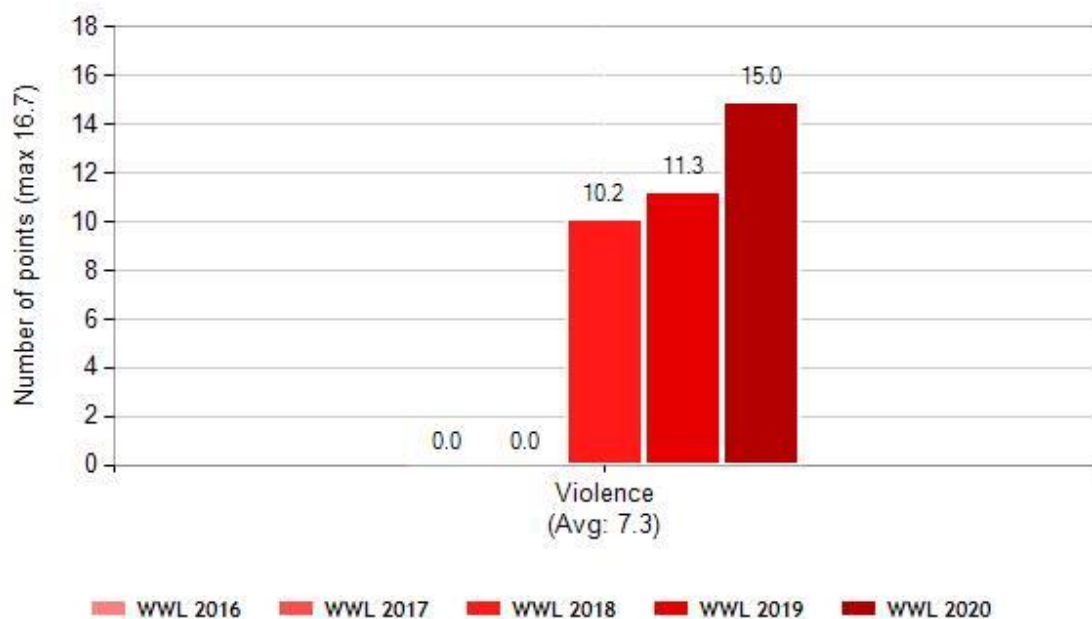WWL 2016 - WWL 2020 Persecution Pattern for Cameroon (Spheres of life)

Chart 3:

The chart below shows how violence against Christians has risen drastically over the last three reporting periods and is now at an extremely high level. This is an indication that in a Christians majority Cameroon, Christians are subject to violence at an alarming level.

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

Gender profile of persecution

Female Pressure Points:

- *Abduction*
- *Denied access to social community/networks*
- *Denied custody of children*
- *Denied inheritance or possessions*
- *Discrimination/Harassment via education*
- *Forced Divorce*
- *Forced Marriage*
- *Forced out of home/expulsion*
- *Incarceration by family*
- *Trafficking*
- *Violence – physical*
- *Violence – verbal*

Christian women in northern Cameroon are subject to a number of forms of persecution related to their status in society to the regional attacks. Boko Haram often abducts women and girls and uses them for forced labor and forces them into marriages with other militants. Where schools are still running, some Christian parents keep their girls at home out of fear for their safety.

When a Christian marries a Muslim and they later separate, the family often refuses to hand over the children, because they insist the children must be brought up the Muslim way.

Poverty and financial dependence makes Christian girls vulnerable. In part due to the lack of education, women in Cameroon are dependent on their husbands or fathers and when they make the decision to convert to Christianity, it is sometimes considered as an act of defiance. Girls in this situation are sometimes coerced into marriage with non-Christians.

Many converts to Christianity will be isolated from their families or are forced to relocate as a means of forcing them to change their minds. In one case, a young convert mother was separated from her husband and obliged to leave behind her oldest child. Because of the persecution situation, she had to leave her second child with her Muslim brother, who ended up entrusting the child to another Muslim neighbor.

Male Pressure Points:

- *Abduction*
- *Denied access to social community/networks*
- *Denied custody of children*
- *Denied inheritance or possessions*
- *Economic harassment via work/job/business*
- *False charges*
- *Incarceration by government*
- *Military/militia conscription/service against conscience*
- *Violence – physical*
- *Violence – psychological*
- *Violence – verbal*

In general, discrimination affects Christian men in the areas of job opportunities and promotion. They also experience pressure from government officials where they oppose corruption. When a man refuses to get involved in unethical practices because of his Christian beliefs, he is taunted and called a coward. When jobs are refused due to discrimination, the family cannot thrive. There is a lack of educational opportunities for Christian boys. Boycotts also affect Christian families economically, financially and psychologically. Also, several times Christians have been falsely accused and received unfair trials in conflicts with Muslims.

In cases of kidnappings, most often a man or boy is taken, leaving Christian families without a family head and breadwinner. Also, communities have become reduced in size due to such attacks and many leave the locality for safer areas.

For young men, there is pressure to participate in traditional rites of passage and other non-Christian religious rituals. Also, violence and pressure from outside often affects the generations within the church differently; Young Christians may begin to lack confidence in the authority of parents and church leaders and ignore their emphasis on non-violence. They are then tempted to retaliate (if living in the North or in Anglophone regions) or join violent protesters in the streets.

Persecution of other religious minorities

According to the 2016 annual International Religious Freedom Report, issued by the US State Department, Muslim Cameroonians have occasionally faced discrimination and some have been stigmatized by society for allegedly supporting Boko Haram.

Future outlook for the church

The outlook for Christians as viewed through the lens of:

- *Dictatorial paranoia:* The incumbent president has been in power for decades. He has been accused of violating the rights of the citizens. His government has restricted freedom of association, religion and expression. Some Christian groups are being denied licenses to operate in the country. As it stands there are no signs that the nature of the government will change.

- *Islamic oppression:* The northern part of the country has seen devastating attacks by Boko Haram. This militant group has regrouped while the Cameroon government has been occupied with the Anglophone conflict. Attacks by Boko Haram are a regional issue and will likely remain a challenge for Christians in the country in 2020 and beyond.

- *Organized corruption and crime:* The existing rampant corruption has made the life of most of the Cameroonians difficult and is also helping Boko Haram to operate. This issue will likely remain a challenge for the country in general and Christians in particular where they oppose it.

- *Clan and ethnic antagonism:* This Persecution engine is likely to decrease in importance as ethnic leaders are increasingly exposed to education and other religious views.

- **Christian denominational protectionism:** This Persecution engine might grow in importance in the country. The differences between the churches is not so often about theology, but rather about who has the most members and best church buildings. If in the future the government chooses to allow non-traditional Christian groups (often Pentecostals) to operate without restriction, *Christian denominational protectionism* is likely to rise sharply.

External Links - WWL 2020: Persecution Dynamics

- Persecution engines: n 2018 - https://www.dw.com/en/cameroons-pentecostal-churches-under-fire/a-43070272
- Violence: outlets, - https://www.premierchristianity.com/News/World/Extremists-cut-off-women-s-ears-in-Cameroon-attack
- Violence: Crux. - https://cruxnow.com/church-in-africa/2019/10/cameroon-church-leaders-want-answers-after-arrest-of-caritas-head/
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- Persecution of other religious minorities: Report - https://www.state.gov/documents/organization/268872.pdf

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 available at: https://www.worldwatchmonitor.org/countries/cameroon/.

Recent country developments

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