

World
Watch
Research

Gambia: Full Country Dossier

February 2022



OpenDoors

Serving persecuted **Christians** worldwide

Open Doors International / World Watch Research

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Introduction

World Watch List 2022

Rank	Country	Private life	Family life	Community life	National life	Church life	Violence	Total Score WWL 2022	Total Score WWL 2021	Total Score WWL 2020	Total Score WWL 2019	Total Score WWL 2018
1	Afghanistan	16.7	16.7	16.7	16.7	16.7	15.0	98	94	93	94	93
2	North Korea	16.7	16.7	16.7	16.7	16.7	13.1	96	94	94	94	94
3	Somalia	16.5	16.7	16.6	16.6	16.6	8.5	91	92	92	91	91
4	Libya	15.6	15.5	15.9	16.2	16.3	11.5	91	92	90	87	86
5	Yemen	16.7	16.6	16.5	16.7	16.7	5.2	88	87	85	86	85
6	Eritrea	14.6	14.9	15.5	15.9	15.6	11.1	88	88	87	86	86
7	Nigeria	13.8	13.8	14.3	14.5	14.4	16.7	87	85	80	80	77
8	Pakistan	13.6	14.0	15.1	14.9	13.1	16.7	87	88	88	87	86
9	Iran	14.5	14.6	13.6	15.8	16.5	10.4	85	86	85	85	85
10	India	12.7	12.7	12.9	14.7	13.3	15.6	82	83	83	83	81
11	Saudi Arabia	15.1	15.1	15.0	15.9	16.7	3.1	81	78	79	77	79
12	Myanmar	12.4	11.5	13.8	13.4	13.1	14.8	79	74	73	71	65
13	Sudan	13.4	13.4	14.3	13.6	15.7	8.5	79	79	85	87	87
14	Iraq	14.0	14.6	14.0	14.8	13.9	6.9	78	82	76	79	86
15	Syria	12.9	13.8	13.5	14.3	13.9	9.3	78	81	82	82	76
16	Maldives	15.4	15.3	13.7	15.8	16.5	0.4	77	77	78	78	78
17	China	12.6	9.8	12.2	14.4	15.5	11.1	76	74	70	65	57
18	Qatar	14.2	14.1	11.1	13.0	14.3	7.2	74	67	66	62	63
19	Vietnam	11.3	9.7	12.7	14.1	14.5	8.7	71	72	72	70	69
20	Egypt	12.7	13.2	11.5	12.7	10.8	10.0	71	75	76	76	70
21	Uzbekistan	14.9	12.7	14.1	11.8	15.6	1.7	71	71	73	74	73
22	Algeria	14.0	14.0	11.1	13.4	14.1	4.1	71	70	73	70	58
23	Mauritania	14.3	13.9	13.1	14.0	14.1	0.9	70	71	68	67	57
24	Mali	9.4	8.2	13.9	10.3	12.8	15.0	70	67	66	68	59
25	Turkmenistan	14.5	11.3	13.6	13.3	15.7	0.6	69	70	70	69	68
26	Laos	12.0	10.3	13.2	13.3	14.1	5.9	69	71	72	71	67
27	Morocco	13.1	13.8	10.8	12.8	14.2	3.9	69	67	66	63	51
28	Indonesia	11.3	11.5	11.5	11.0	9.6	13.5	68	63	60	65	59
29	Bangladesh	11.8	10.7	12.9	11.3	10.2	11.3	68	67	63	58	58
30	Colombia	11.5	8.8	13.1	11.0	9.9	13.3	68	67	62	58	56
31	CAR	9.0	8.6	13.6	9.6	11.4	15.6	68	66	68	70	61
32	Burkina Faso	9.4	9.7	12.0	9.6	12.1	14.8	68	67	66	48	-
33	Niger	9.4	9.5	13.9	7.2	12.8	14.8	68	62	60	52	45
34	Bhutan	13.4	12.4	11.7	13.7	13.8	1.7	67	64	61	64	62
35	Tunisia	11.9	12.7	10.6	11.3	13.4	6.5	66	67	64	63	62
36	Oman	13.8	14.0	10.3	13.2	13.4	1.5	66	63	62	59	57
37	Cuba	12.3	8.1	12.6	13.2	14.0	5.9	66	62	52	49	49
38	Ethiopia	9.9	10.3	13.1	10.3	12.3	9.8	66	65	63	65	62
39	Jordan	12.9	14.0	11.0	12.3	12.5	3.0	66	64	64	65	66
40	DRC	8.0	7.9	12.6	9.7	12.0	15.6	66	64	56	55	33
41	Mozambique	9.3	8.5	11.3	7.9	12.5	15.6	65	63	43	43	-
42	Turkey	12.6	11.5	11.4	13.2	11.6	4.6	65	69	63	66	62
43	Mexico	10.3	8.3	12.5	10.8	10.3	12.6	65	64	60	61	59
44	Cameroon	8.8	7.6	12.6	7.2	13.1	15.4	65	64	60	54	38
45	Tajikistan	13.8	12.3	12.0	12.6	13.2	0.7	65	66	65	65	65
46	Brunei	14.8	14.5	10.3	11.0	13.2	0.6	64	64	63	63	64
47	Kazakhstan	13.4	11.6	11.1	12.6	13.5	1.7	64	64	64	63	63
48	Nepal	12.4	9.8	9.9	13.6	12.7	5.2	64	66	64	64	64
49	Kuwait	13.5	13.7	9.8	12.3	13.1	1.1	64	63	62	60	61
50	Malaysia	12.5	14.3	11.5	11.6	10.2	3.3	63	63	62	60	65

Rank	Country	Private life	Family life	Community life	National life	Church life	Violence	Total Score WWL 2022	Total Score WWL 2021	Total Score WWL 2020	Total Score WWL 2019	Total Score WWL 2018
51	Kenya	11.7	9.2	11.4	8.0	11.5	11.1	63	62	61	61	62
52	Sri Lanka	12.9	9.9	11.4	11.3	9.4	7.8	63	62	65	58	57
53	Comoros	12.7	11.1	11.2	12.4	14.2	0.9	63	62	57	56	56
54	UAE	13.4	13.6	10.1	11.8	12.2	1.3	62	62	60	58	58
55	Tanzania	9.3	10.8	10.3	8.6	8.7	13.7	61	58	55	52	53
56	Azerbaijan	13.1	9.9	9.3	11.0	13.4	3.3	60	56	57	57	57
57	Palestinian Territories	13.0	13.4	9.8	10.2	12.0	0.9	59	58	60	57	60
58	Djibouti	12.3	12.3	11.1	10.0	12.2	0.7	59	56	56	56	56
59	Kyrgyzstan	12.9	10.1	11.1	10.4	12.0	1.5	58	58	57	56	54
60	Bahrain	12.5	13.2	9.1	11.1	10.2	0.9	57	56	55	55	57
61	Nicaragua	9.1	5.6	11.1	11.8	11.3	7.6	56	51	41	41	-
62	Russian Federation	12.3	8.0	10.2	10.6	12.3	2.2	56	57	60	60	51
63	Chad	11.5	8.2	10.2	9.6	10.3	5.6	55	53	56	48	40
64	Burundi	7.6	7.8	9.7	9.2	9.6	8.1	52	48	48	43	-
65	Venezuela	5.6	4.5	11.2	9.4	11.1	9.6	51	39	42	41	34
66	Angola	6.8	6.7	8.1	10.1	11.4	7.8	51	46	43	42	-
67	Rwanda	8.1	5.5	6.7	10.3	10.1	9.3	50	42	42	41	-
68	Honduras	7.2	5.1	10.5	7.7	9.2	8.7	48	46	39	38	-
69	Uganda	8.1	4.6	7.4	6.7	9.1	11.7	48	47	48	47	46
70	El Salvador	7.7	4.6	10.7	5.7	9.1	7.2	45	42	38	30	-
71	Togo	9.2	6.7	9.3	7.1	9.8	2.4	44	43	41	42	-
72	Gambia	8.3	8.2	8.7	8.3	8.8	1.7	44	43	43	43	-
73	Guinea	10.3	7.5	8.3	7.0	8.1	2.0	43	47	45	46	-
74	South Sudan	5.7	0.9	7.0	6.3	7.8	15.0	43	43	44	44	-
75	Ivory Coast	9.8	8.6	8.2	5.5	7.9	2.0	42	42	42	43	-
76	Israel	9.8	8.4	5.6	6.6	6.6	4.3	41	40	38	39	40

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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).
- Highlighted links in the text can be found written out in full at the conclusion of each main section under the heading “External links”. In order to reduce the length of these reference sections, a table containing links to regularly used sources can be found at the beginning of the “Keys to Understanding” chapter under the heading “Links for general background information”. Where one of these sources has been quoted in the dossier text, a quote reference is supplied as indicated in the second column of the table.
- The WWL 2022 reporting period was 1 October 2020 - 30 September 2021.
- 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).

Effect on data-gathering during COVID-19 pandemic

In the WWL 2022 reporting period, travel restrictions and other measures introduced by the governments of various countries to combat the spread of the COVID-19 pandemic did cause delays and create the need for restructuring grass-roots research in some cases. Through the agile cooperation of In-country networks, Open Doors country researchers, External experts, WWR analysts and an increased use of technological options, Open Doors is confident that – as in the previous reporting period – WWL 2022 scoring, analysis and documentation has maintained required levels of quality and reliability.

External Links - Introduction

- Sources and definitions: World Watch List Documentation - <https://opendoorsanalytical.org/world-watch-list-documentation/>

WWL 2022 Situation in brief / Gambia

Brief country details

Gambia: Population (UN estimate for 2021)	Christians	Chr%
2,360,000	111,000	4.7

Data source: Johnson T M and Zurlo G A, eds, World Christian Database (Leiden/Boston: Brill, accessed April 2021)

Gambia: World Watch List	Points	WWL Rank
WWL 2022	44	72
WWL 2021	43	70
WWL 2020	43	67
WWL 2019	43	66
WWL 2018	-	-

Ranks are shown above whenever the country scored 41 points or more in the WWL 2018-2022 reporting periods

Dominant persecution engines and drivers

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

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

Brief description of the persecution situation

Christian converts from Muslim or Animist families cannot speak safely about their faith with immediate family members. Some families in rural areas will beat and ostracize converts, especially in the eastern part of the country. Therefore, converts are careful not to reveal their conversion through private acts of worship. In some schools where the senior staff or founders are Muslim, children of Christians are often forced to receive non-Christian religious instruction. Muslim and Animist parents also try to force family members to separate if married to Christians. Converts to Christianity of whatever religious background experience harassment in their daily lives and are often forced to take part in annual traditional rituals to continue being regarded as part of the family and community. The pressure to renounce their new faith is strong. Sometimes they are under threat of abduction and forced marriage. Because of their minority status, Christian communities have been hindered in building or renovating church buildings and it has sometimes been difficult to get registration or legal status for churches.

Specific examples of violations of rights in the reporting period

- Expulsion from home and denying of property
- Forced marriage
- Discrimination at workplaces
- Harassment while buying on the streets and at school

WWL 2022: Keys to understanding / Gambia

Links for general background information

Name	Quote Reference	Link	Last accessed on
Amnesty International country report (Not included)	AI 2021	https://www.amnesty.org/en/countries/	
BBC News country profile	BBC country profile	https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-africa-13376517	17 September 2021
Bertelsmann Transformation Index 2020	BTI 2020	https://bti-project.org/en/reports/country-dashboard/GMB	17 September 2021
CIA World Factbook	CIA Factbook	https://www.cia.gov/the-world-factbook/countries/gambia-the/	17 September 2021
Economist Intelligence Unit Democracy Index 2020	EIU 2020	https://pages.eiu.com/rs/753-RIQ-438/images/democracy-index-2020.pdf	17 September 2021
FFP's Fragile States Index 2021	FSI 2021	https://fragilestatesindex.org/country-data/	17 September 2021
Freedom House's 2021 Democracy index (Not included)	Freedom House/Democracy 2021	https://freedomhouse.org/countries/nations-transit/scores	
Freedom House's 2021 Global Freedom index	Freedom House/Global Freedom 2021	https://freedomhouse.org/country/gambia/freedom-world/2021	17 September 2021
Freedom House's Freedom on the Net 2020 report	Freedom House/Internet Freedom 2020	https://freedomhouse.org/country/gambia/freedom-net/2020	17 September 2021
Garda World country report	Garda World	https://www.garda.com/crisis24/country-reports/gambia	17 September 2021
Human Rights Watch World Report 2021 (Not included)	HRW 2021	https://www.hrw.org/world-report/2021	
Internet World Stats 2021	IWS 2021	https://www.internetworldstats.com/africa.htm#gm	17 September 2021
RSF's 2020 World Press Freedom Index	World Press Freedom 2020	https://rsf.org/en/gambia	17 September 2021
Transparency International's 2020 Corruption Perceptions Index	CPI 2020	https://www.transparency.org/en/countries/gambia	17 September 2021
UNDP's Global Human Development Indicators	HDI 2020	http://hdr.undp.org/en/countries/profiles/GMB	17 September 2021
US State Department's 2020 International Religious Freedom country reports	IRFR 2020	https://www.state.gov/reports/2020-report-on-international-religious-freedom/	17 September 2021
USCIRF 2021 country reports (Not included)	USCIRF 2021	https://www.uscifr.gov/countries	
World Bank country report	World Bank	https://www.worldbank.org/en/country/gambia	17 September 2021

Recent history

Gambia is a small West African state fully surrounded by Senegal except for its Atlantic coastline to the west. The Portuguese arrived at the Gambian coast in 1455 and established a trading post, but in 1618 the Portuguese sold Gambia to the British, effectively making Gambia Great Britain's initial foothold in West Africa. Its present boundary was set up through an agreement between Great Britain and France in 1889. The country became a British protectorate in 1894. (Source: [History World](#), accessed 30 September 2020). English remains the official language, despite statements to the contrary made by the previous president. Banjul is the capital city.

Great Britain accorded Gambia autonomous status in 1963. In 1965 the country became an independent nation. Under the leadership of the People's Progressive Party, Gambia successfully established a democratic parliamentary form of government, and the People's Progressive Party won elections held in 1966, 1972, 1977, 1982, 1987 and 1992. A year after a 1981 coup-attempt, Gambia and Senegal formed a loose confederation and named it Senegambia. The intention was to "integrate their military and security forces; form an economic and monetary union; coordinate their foreign policies and communications; and establish confederal institutions. The larger partner, Senegal, would dominate these institutions, controlling the confederal presidency and two-thirds of the seats in a confederal parliament" ([Britannica](#), accessed 30 September 2020). However, Gambia's increasing concern over its future autonomy and fear of being swallowed up by Senegal led to a dissolution of the confederation in 1989.

On 22 July 1994, Lieutenant Yahya Jammeh conducted a bloodless coup that ousted President Dawda Jawara, who had been democratically elected and had been in power since 1970. Jawara had survived a previous coup-attempt in 1981 with the help of the Senegalese army. Since 1996 the dominant party has been the Alliance for Patriotic Reorientation and Construction under Yahya Jammeh. Other parties are also active in the country, for instance, the People's Progressive Party.

Jammeh did not return to the barracks with his fellow soldiers as he had promised. Instead, he remained in power until his defeat in the December 2016 elections. He often resorted to the idea of pan-Africanism to maintain the support of the citizens. In 2014, the year of a failed coup while he was abroad, he vowed to drop English as an official language and also [withdrew from British Commonwealth membership](#) saying the country would "never be a member of any neo-colonial institution" (The Telegraph, 9 March 2014). In 2015, Jammeh [declared](#) that the country should be referred to as the Islamic Republic of Gambia: "In line with the country's religious identity and values I proclaim the Gambia as an Islamic state. As Muslims are the majority in the country, Gambia cannot afford to continue the colonial legacy" (The Guardian, 12 December 2015).

After ruling the country for 22 years, Yahya Jammeh lost the presidential election in December 2016. Even though he initially resisted handing over power, pressure from the international community forced him out. In December 2017, he was [officially accused](#) of human rights violations (US Treasury Press Release, 21 December 2017).

Adama Barrow took office in January 2017 and has improved the human rights situation to a certain extent. He vowed to reverse some of the decisions taken by Yahya Jammeh. For example, the country [rejoined](#) the British Commonwealth and also changed the name of the country back from the 'Islamic Republic of The Gambia' to 'Republic of The Gambia' (The Commonwealth, 8 February 2018). Local government elections were held in April and May in 2018 without major incident. In October 2018 the "Truth, Reconciliation and Reparations Commission" was set up to investigate human rights abuses committed during the Jammeh era. These and many other improvements have lifted the country from Freedom House classification of 'not free' to 'partly free' (Freedom House/Global Freedom 2021).

In December 2021, Barrow was [re-elected as president](#) with 53% of the vote (BBC News, 6 December 2021).

Political and legal landscape

Gambia is a multi-party republic. The president is the head of both the government and the state. It has a unicameral legislative body with 53 members. The Supreme Court is the highest judicial organ in the country. The Constitution also allows Sharia courts to assume jurisdiction over family matters.

Gambia is on the brink of a new political crisis, just three years after the dramatic fall of long-time strongman Yahya Jammeh. Analysts believe that the new president made some unrealistic promises: For example, the new president came to power with a promise of only serving for three years and then stepping down on 19 January 2020. However, in late December 2019, Barrow formed a new political party, the National Peoples Party, which would allow him to contest in the 2020 presidential election. That move led to protests and harsh crackdowns.

According to [Amnesty International \(AI\)](#) reporting on 27 January 2020, the police arrested over a hundred protesters:

- This "crackdown on protesters had alarming echoes of Gambia's brutal past. There have been some significant improvements in the country's human rights record since President Adama Barrow came to power, but the use of excessive force by security forces to disperse protesters risks fueling tensions and steering the Gambia back to dark days of repression."

Issues such as corruption and economic stagnation persist. Barrow had promised to create jobs and repeal Jammeh-era laws during the 2016 campaign, but very little progress has been made to that end.

On 15 November 2019, the country released a proposed draft for a new constitution. Christians were worried that it placed noticeable restrictions on them and did not explicitly define the majority-Muslim Gambia as a secular state. They feared that the draft constitution reflected a drift toward a religiously discriminatory state and church leaders therefore demanded the declaration of their country as a secular state ([World Watch Monitor, 7 December 2019](#)). In September 2020, legislators rejected the draft constitution (Freedom House/Global Freedom 2021).

According to Garda World:

- "Opposition alliances are likely to coalesce in the run-up to the presidential election on 4 December 2021, particularly after the National Assembly failed to provide the 75% majority needed to submit a new constitution to a referendum. Former allies of President Barrow, upset that he has already breached an agreement to step down after three years, are further riled that he can now stand in the election under the old constitution, which was criticized for removing the requirement to gain an absolute majority. Increasing levels of political protest are likely in Banjul and Serrekunda. The re-election prospects of President Barrow likely have been boosted by the signing in June 2021 of a lucrative USD250-million five-year framework agreement with the Islamic Trade Finance Corporation."

Religious landscape

Gambia: Religious context	Number of adherents	%
Christians	111,000	4.7
Muslim	2,105,000	89.2
Hindu	370	0.0
Buddhist	0	0.0
Ethno-religionist	110,000	4.7
Jewish	0	0.0
Bahai	19,600	0.8
Atheist	100	0.0
Agnostic	14,100	0.6
Other	0	0.0
<i>OTHER includes Chinese folk, New religionist, Sikh, Spiritist, Taoist, Confucianist, Jain, Shintoist, Zoroastrian.</i>		

Data source: Johnson T M and Zurlo G A, eds, *World Christian Database* (Leiden/Boston: Brill, accessed April 2021)

Gambia is a Muslim majority country, mostly Sunni, but other Muslim communities also exist. Some citizens mix indigenous beliefs with Islam and Christianity.

Economic landscape

According to World Bank's [Macro Poverty Outlook](#) 2021 (for Sub-Saharan Africa):

- **GDP:** "Gross Domestic Product (GDP) fell to 0 % (-2.9 % in per capita terms) in 2020, against 6% in 2019 and 6.5% in 2018. Services fell by 62.4% due to COVID-19 containment measures. Nevertheless, ample rains spurred a rebound in agriculture, while strong private foreign inflows, especially remittances, supported construction and commerce."

- **Inflation:** "Inflation decreased from 7.1% in 2019 to 5.9% in 2020, driven by a demand drop, low fuel prices, a stable exchange rate, temporary administrative price controls on essential goods and the dissipation of the postal rate increase of April 2019."
- **Poverty:** "Poverty incidence measured at the international poverty line (US\$1.9/day PPP) has increased from 8.4 percent in 2019 to 9.2 percent in 2020, equivalent to over 25 thousand additional poor. The COVID-19 pandemic adversely affected households' labor and market activities, access to markets and health care. Despite government support, stable prices, and improved labor market conditions following the relaxation of containment measures in the third quarter of 2020, households experienced a rapid income decline."
- **COVID-19:** "Growth stagnated in 2020, driven by a pandemic-induced fall in tourism and private consumption. Despite the crisis, the external and fiscal deficits were kept in check due to increased donor support. Growth and poverty reduction are expected to gradually recover over the medium term, as the pandemic recedes. The Gambia has limited fiscal policy buffers to respond to a downturn. The outlook is subject to downside risks stemming from the speed of global recovery, the magnitude of the domestic COVID-19 outbreak, the vaccine roll-out, and the pace of fiscal and structural reforms. Upside risks are limited, originating from a faster pandemic recovery and tourism rebound."

According to [Theodora Countries of the World](#) (accessed 30 September 2020):

- About three-quarters of the population depends on agriculture for its livelihood and provides for about one-third of GDP, making The Gambia largely reliant on sufficient rainfall. The agricultural sector has untapped potential - less than half of arable land is cultivated and agricultural productivity is low. Small-scale manufacturing activity features the processing of cashews, groundnuts, fish, and hides. Gambia's re-export trade accounts for almost 80% of goods exports and China has been its largest trade partner for both exports and imports for several years.

According to Heritage Foundation's [2021 Economic Freedom Index](#):

- The country's economic freedom status is classified as 'mostly unfree'. "Its overall score has increased by 2.5 points, primarily due to government policies that seek to restrain spending and borrowing and to manage state-owned enterprises more efficiently. However, to expand economic freedom significantly, the government will need to focus intensively on measures to strengthen rule of law."

Social and cultural landscape

According to the UNDP Human Development Indicators (HDI 2020) and the CIA Factbook (accessed 11 June 2021):

- **Main ethnic groups:** Mandinka/Jahanka 34%, Fulani/Tukulur/Lorobo 22.4%, Wolof 12.6%, Jola/Karoninka 10.7%, Serahuleh 6.6%, Serer 3.2%, other 9.9%. The Wolof live mainly in the capital, Banjul. There are also Mauritians, Moroccans and Lebanese resident in the country who are mainly traders and shopkeepers.
- **Main languages:** English (official), Mandinka, Wolof, Fula, other indigenous vernaculars.

- **Average rate of population growth:** 1.82% (2021 est.)
- **Urban population:** 63.2% of the total population (2021)
- **Rate of urbanization:** 3.75% annual rate of change (2015-2020 est.)
- **Median age:** 21.8 years
- **Expected years of schooling:** 9.9 years
- **Literacy rate, adult (% ages 15 and older):** 50.8
- **Employment to population ratio (% ages 15 and older):** 54.0
- **Unemployment, total (% of labor force):** 9.1
- **Unemployment, youth (% ages 15-24):** 12.5.
- **Human Development Index (HDI) score and ranking:** Gambia ranked 172nd out of 189 countries with a value of 0.496
- **Life expectancy at birth:** 62.0 years
- **Gender Development Index (GDI):** 0.846
- **Gender Inequality Index (GII):** 0.612

According to [UNHCR](#) data (last updated 31 May 2021):

- **Refugees:** As of June 2021, there were a total of 4,302 refugees (mainly from Senegal) in Gambia.

Technological landscape

The Republic of Gambia is not an advanced country in terms of technology and infrastructure.

According to Internet World Stats (IWS 2021):

- **Internet usage:** 19.0% of the total population – survey date: June 2021
- **Facebook usage:** 18.8% penetration rate – survey date: June 2021

According to World Bank (country profile):

- **Mobile phone subscriptions:** 139.5 per 100 people

According to [Business Wire](#) (19 August 2019):

- "Gambia's telecom market is dominated by the incumbent telco Gamtel, which retains a monopoly on fixed-line telephony services. There are four mobile networks providing effective competition. The market's leader is Africell, with about 65% market share, while Comium and QCell compete closely for second and third place. Gamtel's mobile unit Gamcel is by far the smallest operator, with about 10% share. Mobile penetration is well above the African average, itself a testament to the poor condition of the fixed-line infrastructure and the lack of availability of fixed services in many rural areas of the country. Although the incumbent has a relatively well-developed national fiber backbone network, low fixed-line penetration has hindered internet usage. There are only three licensed ISPs, which are small operators serving local areas, and so competition is minimal. The government has embarked on a National Broadband Network program aimed at closing the digital divide affecting many parts of the country, though in mid-2018 the terms of a loan required to continue work on the network were rejected by Parliament."

Security situation

There is currently no external or internal threat to national security, mainly due to the fact that the influence of Islamic militant groups has not been felt in the country so far. However, there are issues related to human security in terms of human rights. The US State Department's [2019 Country Report on Human Rights Practices](#) lists "harsh and potentially life-threatening prison conditions; lack of accountability in cases involving violence against girls and women, including rape and widespread female genital mutilation/cutting (FGM/C) and trafficking in persons".

There are no other significant security risks for Christians except forced marriage or female genital mutilation in the context of culture/religion.

Trends analysis

1) The much anticipated reform has not materialized

After suffering under Yahya Jammeh's rule for more than two decades, Gambia now has a president who has vowed to bring prosperity and stability to the country. However, the much anticipated reform has hit the roadblocks as the country has not made any significant progress. This situation looks set to continue. At the same time, as the region is highly influenced by the ever expanding jihadists, any gained reform might even be regressed. The president formed a new party to run for a second term in the December 2021 presidential election, which he won. The more or less peaceful election was deemed fair by observers and showed how much the country has moved on since the one man rule of Yahya Jammeh (Reuters 7 December 2021).

2) Prospects for the Christian minority have improved, but there is still some fear

Since President Barrow first took office after winning the election in December 2016, prospects for the Christian minority in the Gambia have improved. Examples were the immediately dropping the name 'Islamic Republic of Gambia', re-joining the Commonwealth and improving civic spaces. He faces resistance from radical Muslims who were favored in the administration of the previous president's administration and pressure from the countries that financed and supported the previous president's clear agenda for Islamizing the state. The future of the country very much depends on the resolve and the ability of the current president to effectively implement the reformist causes he has promised to champion. In a short period of time, the country moved from one of the most repressive regimes to a 'partly free' state (as per Freedom House/Global Freedom 2021 classification). But the fragile nature of the country means, this improvement can easily be lost due to the regional as well as the country's political dynamics.

External Links - Keys to understanding

- Recent history: History World - <http://www.historyworld.net/wrldhis/PlainTextHistories.asp?historyid=ad47>
- Recent history: Britannica - <https://www.britannica.com/topic/Senegambia-confederation-Africa>
- Recent history: withdrew from British Commonwealth membership - <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/africaandindianocean/gambia/10686147/Gambia-president-rejects-English-language.html>
- Recent history: declared - <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2015/dec/12/gambia-now-an-islamic-republic-says-president-yahya-jammeh>
- Recent history: officially accused - <https://home.treasury.gov/news/press-releases/sm0243>
- Recent history: rejoined - <http://thecommonwealth.org/media/news/gambia-rejoins-commonwealth>

- Recent history: re-elected as president - <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-africa-59542813>
- Political and legal landscape: Amnesty International (AI) - <https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2020/01/gambia-mass-arrests-risk-fuelling-tensions/>
- Political and legal landscape: World Watch Monitor, 7 December 2019 - <https://www.worldwatchmonitor.org/2019/12/for-gambian-christians-theres-a-lot-to-like-and-one-big-worry-in-the-proposed-constitution/>
- Economic landscape: Macro Poverty Outlook - <https://thedocs.worldbank.org/en/doc/bcbb8499f7037137142af9a4af52326c-0350082021/original/mpo-ssa.pdf>
- Economic landscape: Theodora Countries of the World - https://theodora.com/wfbcurren/gambia_the/gambia_the_economy.html
- Economic landscape: 2021 Economic Freedom Index - <https://www.heritage.org/index/pdf/2019/countries/gambia.pdf>
- Social and cultural landscape: UNHCR - <https://data2.unhcr.org/en/country/gmb>
- Technological landscape: Business Wire - <https://www.businesswire.com/news/home/20190819005438/en/Gambia-Telecoms-Mobile-Broadband-Statistics-Analyses-2019>
- Security situation: 2019 Country Report on Human Rights Practices - <https://www.state.gov/reports/2019-country-reports-on-human-rights-practices/gambia/>

WWL 2022: Church information / Gambia

Christian origins

Christianity arrived in Gambia with Portuguese sailors in 1456 when they sailed upriver and landed on James Island. However, the Roman Catholic Church did not begin putting down roots until the mid-19th century. In the early 19th century freed slaves who were Christian converts came to settle in Gambia after the founding of the city of Bathurst on St. Mary's Island. In 1849 a Catholic mission was established in the settlement. (*Source: Anthology of African Christianity, Oxford, 2016*)

Methodists first arrived in the country as early as 1821. The first Anglican mission church was established in 1855. Early church missions around this time were established by the United Society Partners in the Gospel (USPG) and the Church Mission Society (CMS). The World Evangelical Crusade (WEC) entered the country in 1957. The Association of Baptist's for Evangelism came to the country in 1978, followed by the Southern Baptist Convention in 1982.

Church spectrum today

Gambia: Church networks	Christians	%
Orthodox	1,700	1.5
Catholic	72,000	64.9
Protestant	18,500	16.7
Independent	18,000	16.2
Unaffiliated	750	0.7

Doubly-affiliated Christians	0	0.0
Total	110,950	100.0
<i>(Any deviation from the total number of Christians stated above is due to the rounding of decimals)</i>		
Evangelical movement	7,300	6.6
Renewalist movement	22,800	20.5

Data source: Johnson T M and Zurlo G A, eds, *World Christian Database* (Leiden/Boston: Brill, accessed April 2021)

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:** Christians 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.

Christians in the Gambia make up less than 5% of the population. The majority are Roman Catholic but there are also small vibrant evangelical groups in the country, most of which are concentrated in the major cities.

WWL 2022: Persecution Dynamics / Gambia

Reporting period

1 October 2020 - 30 September 2021

Position on the World Watch List

Gambia: World Watch List	Points	WWL Rank
WWL 2022	44	72
WWL 2021	43	70
WWL 2020	43	67
WWL 2019	43	66
WWL 2018	-	-

Ranks are shown above whenever the country scored 41 points or more in the WWL 2018-2022 reporting periods

Gambia's score increased by one point in WWL 2022, with Christians continuing to face many restrictions in this country with an 89.2% Muslim population. Registration for new churches is a lengthy and complicated procedure. Converts face persecution from their families and local communities. There is also fear that jihadist groups in the region could easily expand their areas of control and take advantage of the existing anti-government sentiment among the youth who are disillusioned by the pace of the reform in the country.

Persecution engines

Gambia: Persecution engines	Abbreviation	Level of influence
Islamic oppression	IO	Strong
Religious nationalism	RN	Not at all
Ethno-religious hostility	ERH	Not at all
Clan oppression	CO	Medium
Christian denominational protectionism	CDP	Very weak
Communist and post - Communist oppression	CPCO	Not at all
Secular intolerance	SI	Not at all
Dictatorial paranoia	DPA	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 (Strong)

The influence of radical Islam has become increasingly visible in educational institutions, media and other sectors. The government was promoting Islam aggressively during Jammeh's rule, when Gambia had been strengthening its relationship with Saudi Arabia with a view to promoting the brand of conservative Islam that exists there. Although the new government has made attempts to reduce the radical Islamic influence in society since coming to power in 2017, the situation remains hard for converts from Islam and for Christians in general, especially in remote areas. The growing dominance of Islam is occurring in various ways. For example, a mosque is built in every government institution and Islam is taught in every school.

Clan oppression (Medium)

Converts from Islam or ATR will experience hostility and possible expulsion from their homes by their families. Some of the population in Gambia still mix religious beliefs. Adherents oppose Christianity, especially where churches are involved in evangelization.

Organized corruption and crime (Medium)

Gambia is used as a location for drug-smuggling networks for channeling drugs from Latin America to Europe via West Africa.

Drivers of persecution

Gambia:									
Drivers of persecution	IO	RN	ERH	CO	CDP	CPCO	SI	DPA	OCC
	STRONG		-	MEDIUM				WEAK	MEDIUM
Government officials								Weak	
Ethnic group leaders			-	Medium					
Non-Christian religious leaders	Strong								
Violent religious groups	Very weak								
Citizens (people from the broader society), including mobs	Medium								
One's own (extended) family	Medium		-	Medium					
Organized crime cartels or networks									Medium

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

- **Non-Christian religious leaders (Strong):** The former president had tried to promote radical Islam and as a result, government officials became drivers of *Islamic oppression*. Despite the changes made by the new president since 2017, they have yet to make their way down the administrative hierarchy. In particular radical Muslims who were encouraged by government policies over the past few years are unwilling to embrace President Barrow's more moderate direction. Imams and sheiks still often make inflammatory comments against Christians during their Friday sermons.
- **Citizens (Medium):** Like many other neighboring countries, ordinary citizens are at the center of persecution, particularly where converts from Islam are involved. In a Muslim community, all categories of Christians face regular discrimination and harassment.
- **Family (Medium):** Persecution from extended family members also occurs where Muslims convert to Christianity. Families do not believe it possible that anyone would want to leave Islam. The Wahhabi brand of Islam has influenced both religious leaders and ordinary people as well. Despite the changes made by President Barrow, converts living with their Muslim families will continue to face strong objection to Christian prayer, possession of a Bible, baptism and possibly marriage.

Drivers of Clan oppression

- **Ethnic leaders (Medium):** In some rural areas, ethnic group leaders act as drivers by exerting pressure on converts to make them renounce Christianity. They will also make concerted efforts to curtail evangelization carried out by other Christian groups.

- **One's own (extended) family (Medium):** Muslim or ATR families will strongly object to a convert's Christian activities and will put pressure on him/her to recant.

Drivers of Organized corruption and crime (Medium)

- **Organized crime and cartel or networks (Medium):** Corruption cartels and networks (including some religious leaders) are becoming a serious threat to many countries in West Africa, especially since cartels from Latin America are targeting smaller countries in West Africa for transit routes to Europe. This is affecting freedom of religion in the sense that it undermines rule of law. Christians who would dare to speak against this are quickly targeted and silenced through intimidation.

Areas where Christians face most difficulties

Hotspots for *Clan oppression* in particular are rural and remote areas.

Christian communities and how they are affected

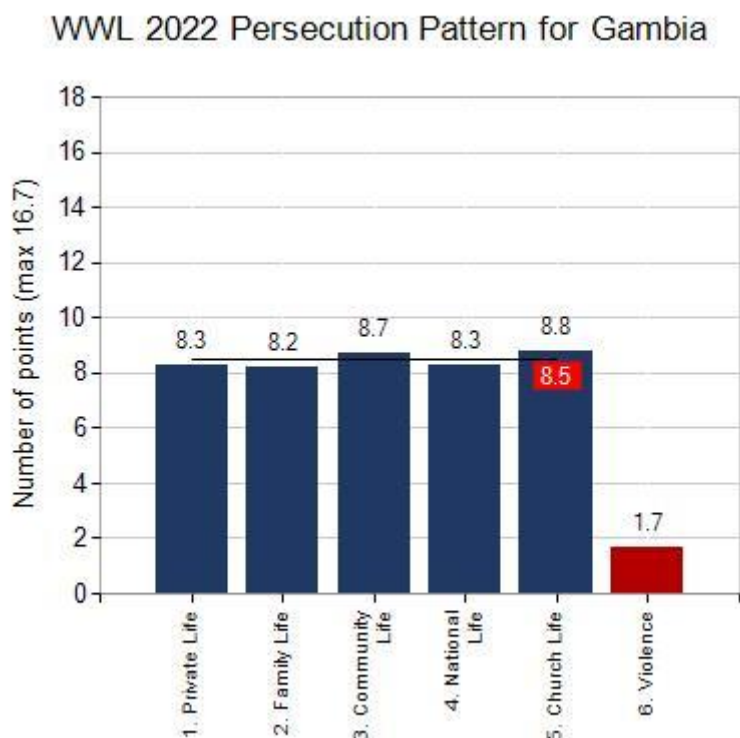
Communities of expatriate Christians: Expatriate Christians in Gambia are not forced into isolation. This category is therefore not included in WWL scoring and analysis.

Historical Christian communities: These are found mostly in the west and south of the country and are predominantly Roman Catholic. There are also several Protestant groups including Anglicans and Methodists. In most ethnic groups, Christians are seen as aliens and are not viewed as belonging in the country. Such views affect how Christians belonging to historical churches are perceived and treated.

Converts to Christianity: These are mainly converts from Islam or traditional African religions. Converts suffer most from societal pressure and from persecution from family and extended family. In rural settings where life is more communal, they are more vulnerable to pressure since every individual relies to a great extent on cooperation within the community for survival.

Non-traditional Christian communities: These communities suffer more persecution than the historical Christian communities because they are stigmatized and less respected. They are often regarded as newcomers and not given formal recognition. Their lack of organization and strong external support (often through international networks) also makes them more vulnerable. They are more likely to try to integrate converts or work with communities of converts and this exposes them to greater risk and danger. Christians in this category tend to come from an economically disadvantaged background.

The Persecution pattern



the WWL 2022 Persecution pattern for Gambia shows:

- The average pressure on Christians in Gambia is at 8.5 points.
- All *spheres of life* have scores within the range of 8.2 - 8.8 points. The *Church sphere* (with 8.8 points) and *Community sphere of life* (with 8.7 points) score highest.
- The score for violence is 1.7 points, an rise from 0.6 points in WWL 2021. Violent persecution in Gambia is relatively rare.

Pressure in the 5 spheres of life

In each of the five spheres of life discussed below, four questions have been selected from the WWL 2022 questionnaire for brief commentary and explanation. The selection usually (but not always) reflects the highest scoring elements. 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 of 0-4 points, please see the “WWL Scoring example” in the WWL Methodology, available at: <https://opendoorsanalytical.org/world-watch-list-documentation/>, password: freedom).

Pressure in Block 1 / Private sphere

Block 1.1: Conversion has been opposed, forbidden, or punishable, including conversion from one type of Christianity to another. (3.00 points)

Gambia is a Muslim majority country. Conversion from Islam to Christianity is forbidden within Muslim homes and converts in such instances are regarded as an outcast and are persecuted by their own families. Some families in rural areas will beat and ostracize converts, especially in the eastern part of the country. Both converts from Islam and from African traditional religions are therefore careful not to reveal their conversion in their private acts of worship.

Block 1.8: It has been risky for Christians to speak about their faith with those other than immediate family (extended family, others). (2.75 points)

Discussion about faith with non-Christians is always challenging in Gambia. Christians from Muslim or Animist families cannot speak about their faith with immediate family members. Some families in rural areas will beat and ostracize converts, especially in the eastern part of the country. It is very dangerous for converts from Islam, but also for other categories of Christians, to talk to (extended) family members, neighbor's or colleagues about their faith, especially in areas where a more fanatical type of Islam is being preached, and in Animist areas as well. Family members who talk about Christian faith face being cursed by their own parents.

Block 1.2: It has been risky for Christians to conduct acts of Christian worship by themselves (e.g. prayer, Bible reading, etc.). (2.50 points)

In areas of high concentrations of mosques and Muslims, Christian worship, prayers, and Bible readings are restricted. Christians who disobey the Muslim norm will be met with strong opposition. This is especially the case for converts, who as a result take care not to reveal their conversion through private acts of worship. Families think that conversion means abandoning family values and betraying one's ancestors.

Block 1.7: It has been risky for Christians to speak about their faith with immediate family members. (2.50 points)

Persecution starts at home. Christians from Muslim or Animist families cannot speak about their faith with immediate family members. If they speak and reveal their conversion, they would be thrown out of the houses; they would lose their belongings; they would lose access to various basic goods and services. In order to avoid this, converts usually try to keep their Christian faith secret.

Pressure in Block 2 / Family sphere

Block 2.2: Registering the birth, wedding, death, etc. of Christians has been hindered or made impossible. (2.50 points)

The problem lies not in law but in society in general. The understanding in society is that every citizen is considered a member of the Islamic *umma* from birth and is thus expected to practice that religion. When the parents of a young Christian couple are Muslim or Animist, they are likely to hinder their Christian wedding ceremony. The latter does not recognize the conversion of their children to Christianity and will want non-Christian ceremonies carried out. This country is more than 90% Muslim and it is always a tricky situation for a Christian family to live their lives according to Christian values. This is particularly challenging for converts.

Block 2.9: Children of Christians have been harassed or discriminated against because of their parents' faith. (2.50 points)

This can happen to children of convert Christians from a Muslim background. This is especially true in Muslim dominated areas where Christians are already facing several forms of harassment and discrimination. This affects all types of Christianity, however, the frequency has become

less. Most of the time, the children of pastors, church leaders and other Christians are discriminated against because of their parents' faith; either in schools, in administrative or socio-cultural affairs. Muslim and Animist parents will usually want their children, even Christian children, to be buried traditionally with non-Christian rites. In some schools where the senior staff or founders are Muslim, children of Christians are often forced to receive non-Christian religious instruction.

Block 2.10: Christian spouses and/or children of Christians have been subject to separation for prolonged periods of time by circumstances relating to persecution. (2.25 points)

Christian spouses who are converts from Islam are usually separated from their children or partners because of their faith. Muslim or Animist families often separate converts from their children in an attempt to force them to recant their alien faith. There is a cultural element as well. Community members and family members all play roles in separating families so that they can be made to recant their faith more easily.

Block 2.13: Christians have lost their inheritance rights because of their conversion to Christianity or (if a person already was a Christian) other types of Christianity. (2.25 points)

It is usual for Muslim or Animist parents to cease all contact with children who become Christians and cause them to lose inheritance rights. They are not entitled to the family inheritance since they are no longer considered children. Denying inheritance is seen as a punitive measure that would force a convert to recant their faith.

Pressure in Block 3 / Community sphere

Block 3.9: Christians have faced disadvantages in their education at any level for faith-related reasons (e.g. restrictions of access to education). (3.75 points)

Education is one of the areas where Christians face systemic challenges. During the era of President Jammeh, the Gambian authorities closed down Christian schools which refused to teach Islamic courses, forcing them to hire Islamic scholars in order to remain open. In certain rural areas this is still the case. Christian schools are sometimes under pressure to employ Muslim teachers and teach Islamic courses. Access to scholarships, school fees, and other educational benefits are managed by Muslim administrators. There is clear discrimination against Christians when it comes to administering competitions.

Block 3.5: Christians have been put under pressure to take part in non-Christian religious ceremonies or community events. (3.25 points)

Converts to Christianity of whatever religious background sometimes experience harassment in their daily lives and are often forced to take part in annual traditional rituals in order to continue being regarded as part of the family and community. Converted girls and boys are challenged by their Muslim or Animist parents to participate in initiatory ceremonies, rites and generation celebrations. They require them to promote their integration into society, which is regarded as a sign of maturity.

Block 3.10: Christians have been discriminated against in public or private employment for faith-related reasons. (3.25 points)

Some Muslim or Animist employers do not want to work with Christians in their enterprises, preferring those who are of the same faith. Recruitment in the private sector, as well as the public, is done by Muslims on behalf of employers, business owners and Muslim organizations and priority is being given to young Muslims.

Block 3.1: 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.). (3.00 points)

Cases of threats, harassment and obstructions are numerous and come in many forms. Muslim parents use insults and sometimes death-threats to discourage converted family members from advertising Christian faith in any way.

Pressure in Block 4 / National sphere

Block 4.9: Christian civil society organizations or political parties have been hindered in their functioning or forbidden because of their Christian convictions. (3.50 points)

To start with, there are no Christian political parties in the country. Secondly, Christian organizations operate with caution and limitations. The government is not putting pressure on the Muslims communities to respect Christians because that might offend them.

Block 4.3: Christians have been forced by law or in practice to act against their conscience, e.g. regarding military service or in certain professions. (3.25 points)

Christians in the country are a minority. In addition to Islam there are also communities who mix traditional belief system with their Islam. These groups are often forcing Christians to act against their conscience.

Block 4.5: Christians have been discriminated against when engaging with the authorities (local administration, government, army, etc.) for faith-related reasons. (3.25 points)

This is said to happen quite often when Christians have to deal with Animist or Muslim officials in remote areas. In most administrative and governmental affairs, Christians are very often victims of discrimination or are simply ignored. Obtaining land as well as authorizations and attestations are regularly refused or given only after long periods of waiting. In at least one instance, a Christian man in the army was dismissed without any warning because of his faith.

Block 4.6: Christians have been barred from public office, or has promotion been hindered for faith-related reasons. (3.25 points)

Christians who refuse to compromise their faith, cannot be selected for early promotion and are sometimes not promoted at all. This is still happening in some areas despite the positive step of having three Christians appointed to serve in President Barrow's cabinet.

Pressure in Block 5 / Church sphere

Block 5.6: Work among youth in particular has been restricted. (3.50 points)

The youth is seen as the most vulnerable group in the society, particularly when it comes to protecting them from exposure to Christianity. Especially in areas where churches organize activities to which Muslim youth are invited, parents and community are likely to fiercely oppose this. This would not stop with opposing one area of church-work; the church might be forced to limit its activities in general.

Block 5.7: Churches have been hindered from openly integrating converts. (3.50 points)

Churches cannot openly integrate Christians with Muslim or Animist backgrounds because of death-threats and other forms of family hostility. For their safety, church leaders prefer to keep them away from their parents, away from home. Openly converting people is dangerous since conservative Muslims monitor, hinder, disturb and obstruct activities of churches in rural areas of the country where radical forms of Islam are becoming more visible.

Block 5.11: Pastors or other Christian leaders (or their family members) have been special targets of harassment for faith-related reasons. (3.25 points)

In conservative Muslim communities, pastors and other Christian leaders, including their family members, face harassment, mockery, death-threats or kidnapping for reasons related to their faith. This is done under the assumption that 'if we focus on the leaders and their family, we can curtail all Christian activities'.

Block 5.1: Church activities have been monitored, hindered, disturbed, or obstructed. (3.00 points)

Church activities are monitored in many different ways. The sale or distribution of Bibles is carried out quietly because of threats from Muslims. During the period of Ramadan, the police prohibit churches from using drums, singing and dancing in services. Not only that, in general churches are monitored by the youth and community leaders. Sometimes, the churches are under serious pressure to not even have singing.

Violence

Violence is defined in WWL Methodology as the deprivation of physical freedom or as bodily harm to Christians or damage to their property. It includes severe threats (mental abuse). The table is based on reported cases as much as possible, but since many incidents go unreported, the numbers must be understood as being minimum figures. The following 5 points should be considered when using the data provided in the Block 6 table:

1. Some incidents go unreported because the Christians involved choose not to speak about the hostility being faced. Possible reasons for this may be:

- *Doing so would expose them to more attacks. For example, if a family member is killed because of his/her faith, the survivors might decide to keep silent about the circumstances of the killing to avoid provoking any further attacks.*
- *In some circumstances, the reticence to pass on information may be due to the danger of exposure caused by converts returning to their previous faith.*

- *If persecution is related to sexual violence - due to stigma, survivors often do not tell even their closest relatives.*
- *In some cultural settings, if your loved one is killed, you might be under the obligation to take revenge. Christians not wishing to do that, may decide to keep quiet about it.*

2. Other incidents go unreported for the following possible reasons:

- *Some incidents never reach the public consciousness, because no one really knows about it; or the incident is simply not considered worth reporting; or media coverage is deliberately blocked or distorted; or media coverage is not deliberately blocked, but the information somehow gets lost; or the incidents are deliberately not reported widely for security reasons (e.g. for the protection of local church leaders).*
- *In situations where Christians have been discriminated against for many years, armed conflict can make them additionally vulnerable. Christians killed in areas where fighting regularly takes place are unlikely to be reported separately. Examples in recent years have been Sudan, Syria and Myanmar.*
- *Christians who die through the deprivation of basic necessities such as clean water and medical care (due to long-term discrimination) are unlikely to be reported separately. Christians are not always killed directly; they can be so squeezed by regulations and other oppressive factors that they die – not at once, but in the course of years. This often includes the deprivation of basic necessities such as clean water and medical care, or exclusion from government assisted socio-economic development projects. These numbers could be immense.*

3. For further discussion (with a focus on the complexity of assessing the numbers of Christians killed for their faith) please see World Watch Monitor’s article dated 13 November 2013 available at: <https://www.worldwatchmonitor.org/2013/11/number-of-christian-martyrs-continues-to-cause-debate/>.

4. The use of symbolic numbers: In cases where it has been impossible to count exactly, a symbolic round figure (10*, 100* etc.) is given and indicated with an asterisk. 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 1,000* could go well over 10,000 but, again, the real number is uncertain. The same applies for symbolic numbers 10,000*, 100,000* and 1,000,000*: Each could indicate much higher numbers, but WWR chooses to be cautious because the real number is uncertain.

5. The symbol “x” in the table: This denotes a known number which cannot be published due to security concerns.

Gambia: Violence Block question		WWL 2022	WWL 2021
6.1	How many Christians have been killed for faith-related reasons (including state sanctioned executions)?	0	0
6.2	How many churches or Christian buildings (schools, hospitals, cemeteries, etc.) have been attacked, damaged, bombed, looted, destroyed, burned down, closed or confiscated for faith-related reasons?	0	1
6.3	How many Christians have been detained for faith-related reasons?	0	0
6.4	How many Christians have been sentenced to jail, labor camp, sent to psychiatric hospital as punishment, or similar things for faith-related reasons?	0	0
6.5	How many Christians have been abducted for faith-related reasons (including Christians missing in a persecution context)?	0	0
6.6	How many Christians have been raped or otherwise sexually harassed for faith-related reasons?	0	0

6.7	How many cases have there been of forced marriages of Christians to non-Christians?	10 *	0
6.8	How many Christians have been otherwise physically or mentally abused for faith-related reasons (including beatings and death threats)?	10 *	0
6.9	How many houses of Christians or other property (excluding shops) have been attacked, damaged, bombed, looted, destroyed, burned down or confiscated for faith-related reasons?	0	0
6.10	How many shops or businesses of Christians have been attacked, damaged, bombed, looted, destroyed, burned down, closed or confiscated for faith-related reasons?	0	0
6.11	How many Christians have been forced to leave their homes or go into hiding in-country for faith-related reasons?	10 *	0
6.12	How many Christians have been forced to leave the country for faith-related reasons?	0	0

5 Year trends

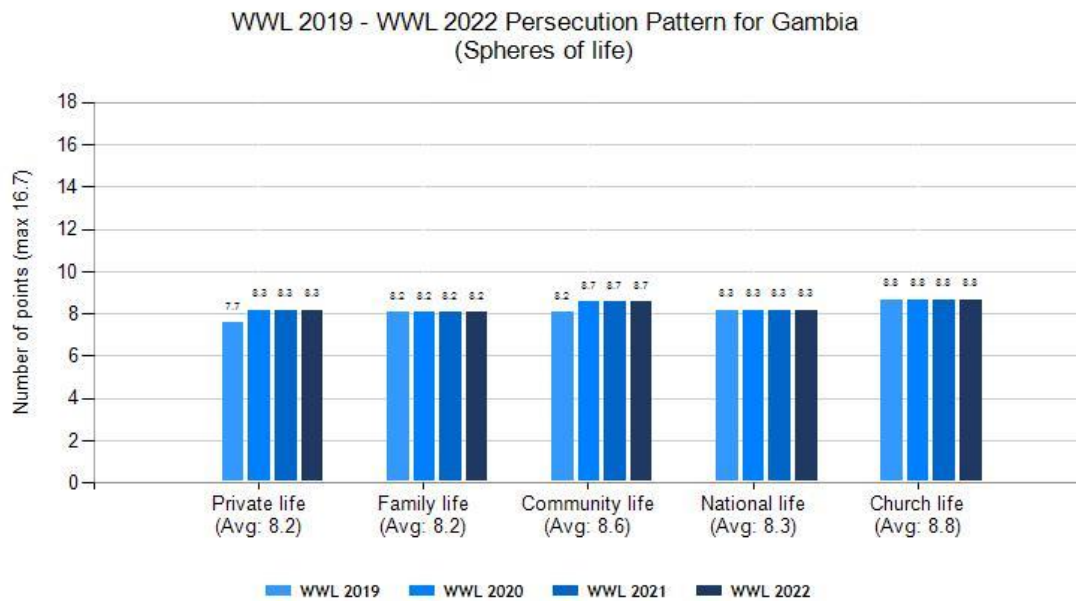
The following three charts show the levels of pressure and violence faced by Christians in the country over the last five WWL reporting periods.

5 Year trends: Average pressure

Gambia: WWL 2018 - WWL 2022 Persecution Pattern history	Average pressure over 5 Spheres of life
2022	8.5
2021	8.5
2020	8.5
2019	8.2
2018	0.0

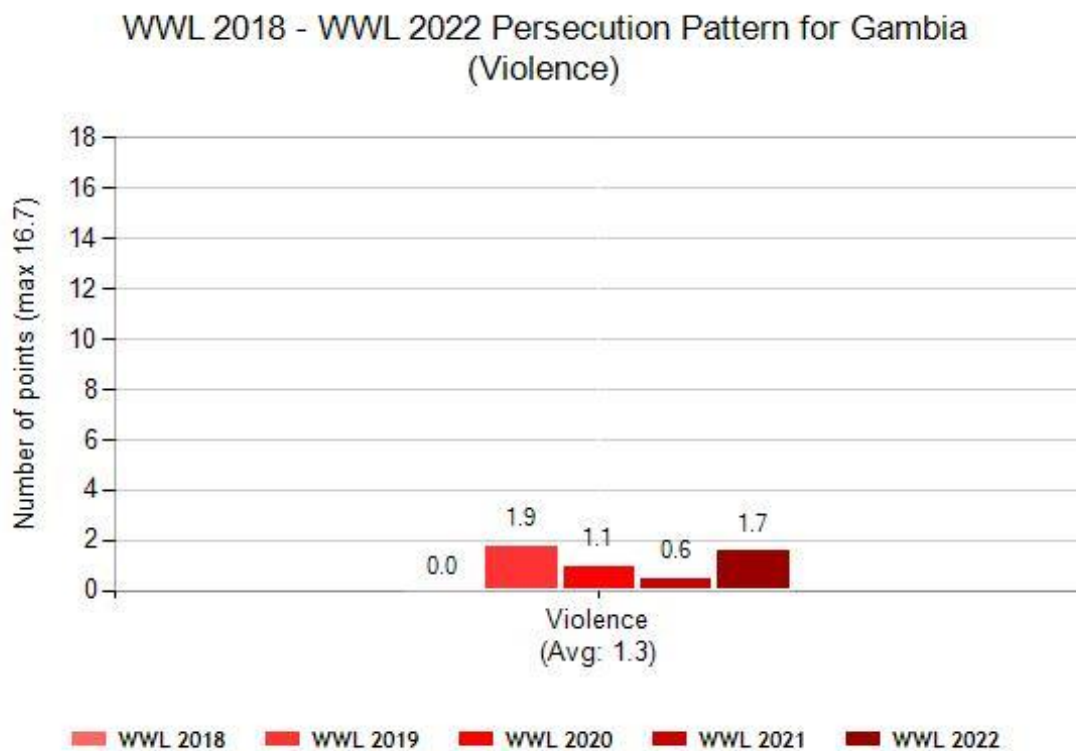
The table above shows that the average pressure on Christians has remained fairly stable within the range of 8.2 - 8.5 points.

5 Year trends: Pressure in each sphere of life



The chart above shows that the average score for every *sphere of life* are stable within the range 8.2 - 8.8 points. *Church life* and *Community life* scored highest.

5 Year trends: Violence against Christians



The average violence for the past four years is just 1.3 points. This shows that violence in Gambia is very low compared to some other countries in West Africa.

Gender-specific religious persecution / Female

Group	Female Pressure Points
Economic	Denied inheritance or possessions
Political and Legal	Denied custody of children; Forced divorce; Forced marriage
Security	Incarceration by family (house arrest); Trafficking; Violence – sexual
Social and Cultural	Denied access to social community/networks; Violence – psychological
Technological	-

While the Gambian Constitution ensures that women are of equal legal standing to men and grants equal rights, [in practice](#) Gambia is a patriarchal society where men are the head of the household and women and girls are socialized into assuming a subordinate status (OECD, 2019, “Social Institutions and Gender Index, Gambia”). In a country where almost 90% of the population are Muslims, it is challenging for Christian families to live according to Christian values. In a context of widespread child marriage and poor education for women and girls, female converts face additional vulnerabilities on the basis of their faith and gender ([Girls Not Brides, Accessed December 2021](#)).

Female converts to Christianity face the greatest pressure for their faith, both those from a Muslim and Animist background. When converts share their new-found faith with their families, they may face physical and verbal abuse, disinheritance, abandonment and threats for betraying their parent’s religion. Forced marriage is also used as a weapon to apply pressure on converts, to encourage them to reject Christianity. Families may incentivize girls to enter these marriages freely by finding wealthy Muslim men who can provide for their material needs, or alternatively threaten them with the prospect of kidnapping and forced marriage. If already married, converts may also be divorced and have their children removed from them, in order to ensure the children do not grow up to be Christians. While no such instances have been recorded in the WWL 2022 reporting year, these remain live threats. Any family or church community that receives rejected women and girls will automatically become an enemy of those who evicted and disowned them.

Gender-specific religious persecution / Male

Group	Male Pressure Points
Economic	Economic harassment via business/job/work access
Political and Legal	-
Security	-
Social and Cultural	Violence – psychological
Technological	-

Christian men and boys in Gambia experience physical, psychological and verbal abuse for their faith. This mostly affects converts who are punished for betraying the religion of their Muslim or Animist families. Pastors and church leaders in particular are subject to harassment, mockery and death threats for their faith. Christian men may also face discrimination in the workplace, or be denied promotion. These forms of persecution serve to harm his wider family, as the man is usually the financial provider.

Persecution of other religious minorities

The US State Department (IRFR 2020) reported:

- "There continued to be tension between the majority Sunni Muslim and the minority Ahmadiyya Muslim communities. The Supreme Islamic Council (SIC), a religious body tasked with providing Islamic religious guidance, continued to state the Ahmadiyya community did not belong to Islam, and the council did not include members of the community in its events and activities."

Future outlook

The outlook for Christians as viewed through the lens of:

Islamic oppression

The change in the government prevented the attempt by the former president to make the country an Islamic republic. However, Gambian society is still conservative enough to curtail the freedom of Christians. This problem will likely continue for years to come.

Clan oppression

In the long run, as education and the Christian faith become more known in remote areas, the exposure is likely to positively change attitudes among adherents of African traditional religions towards converts. However, the engine will remain influential due to the difficulties all converts from a Muslim background face.

Organized corruption and crime

This Persecution engine could become stronger in the future since the activities of organized corruption and drug cartels are tied to the rise of jihadism in West African countries.

External Links - Persecution Dynamics

- Gender-specific religious persecution Female description: in practice - <https://www.genderindex.org/wp-content/uploads/files/datasheets/2019/GM.pdf>
- Gender-specific religious persecution Female description: Girls Not Brides, Accessed December 2021 - <https://atlas.girlsnotbrides.org/map/gambia>

Further useful reports

A selection of in-depth reports and smaller articles are available on World Watch Research's Open Doors Analytical website (password: freedom) and on the World Watch Monitor website:

- <https://opendoorsanalytical.org/reports/>
- <https://opendoorsanalytical.org/?s=Gambia>
- <https://www.worldwatchmonitor.org/countries/Gambia>