

World
Watch
Research

Burkina Faso: Full Country Dossier

January 2023



OpenDoors

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Introduction

World Watch List 2023

Rank	Country	Private life	Family life	Community life	National life	Church life	Violence	Total Score WWL 2023	Total Score WWL 2022	Total Score WWL 2021	Total Score WWL 2020	Total Score WWL 2019
1	North Korea	16.7	16.7	16.7	16.7	16.7	14.4	98	96	94	94	94
2	Somalia	16.5	16.7	16.6	16.6	16.6	8.7	92	91	92	92	91
3	Yemen	16.7	16.7	16.7	16.7	16.7	5.9	89	88	87	85	86
4	Eritrea	14.6	14.9	15.5	15.9	15.7	12.2	89	88	88	87	86
5	Libya	15.6	15.5	15.9	16.1	16.3	9.1	88	91	92	90	87
6	Nigeria	13.8	13.8	14.6	14.8	14.4	16.7	88	87	85	80	80
7	Pakistan	13.4	13.8	14.8	14.8	12.9	16.7	86	87	88	88	87
8	Iran	14.5	14.6	13.8	15.8	16.5	10.7	86	85	86	85	85
9	Afghanistan	15.4	15.7	15.4	16.1	16.6	4.6	84	98	94	93	94
10	Sudan	14.1	14.2	14.9	14.9	15.5	9.4	83	79	79	85	87
11	India	12.3	13.1	13.0	14.8	13.3	15.7	82	82	83	83	83
12	Syria	13.2	14.1	13.6	14.1	14.1	11.3	80	78	81	82	82
13	Saudi Arabia	15.2	15.3	14.9	15.8	16.7	2.4	80	81	78	79	77
14	Myanmar	12.5	11.6	13.9	13.9	12.9	15.4	80	79	74	73	71
15	Maldives	15.4	15.3	13.8	16.0	16.4	0.2	77	77	77	78	78
16	China	12.9	10.0	12.7	14.5	15.6	11.1	77	76	74	70	65
17	Mali	11.1	10.1	14.7	10.3	15.1	15.0	76	70	67	66	68
18	Iraq	14.1	14.6	14.0	14.8	13.9	4.6	76	78	82	76	79
19	Algeria	14.1	14.1	11.5	13.7	15.1	4.8	73	71	70	73	70
20	Mauritania	14.5	14.2	13.3	14.1	14.2	1.3	72	70	71	68	67
21	Uzbekistan	14.9	12.7	13.9	12.7	15.6	1.5	71	71	71	73	74
22	Colombia	11.8	8.9	13.1	11.3	10.4	15.4	71	68	67	62	58
23	Burkina Faso	9.4	9.7	12.5	9.6	13.8	15.6	71	68	67	66	48
24	CAR	10.3	8.6	13.9	9.6	12.2	15.6	70	68	66	68	70
25	Vietnam	11.8	9.6	12.8	14.6	14.4	6.9	70	71	72	72	70
26	Turkmenistan	14.5	11.3	13.6	14.1	15.7	0.6	70	69	70	70	69
27	Cuba	13.1	8.3	13.1	13.2	14.9	7.0	70	66	62	52	49
28	Niger	9.4	9.5	14.5	7.7	13.1	15.4	70	68	62	60	52
29	Morocco	13.2	13.8	10.9	12.2	14.5	4.8	69	69	67	66	63
30	Bangladesh	12.6	10.7	12.8	11.3	10.6	10.7	69	68	67	63	58
31	Laos	11.7	10.2	13.3	14.2	14.0	5.0	68	69	71	72	71
32	Mozambique	9.3	8.5	13.9	8.4	12.5	15.6	68	65	63	43	43
33	Indonesia	11.3	12.0	11.6	11.1	9.2	12.8	68	68	63	60	65
34	Qatar	14.2	14.1	10.5	13.2	14.4	1.5	68	74	67	66	62
35	Egypt	12.7	13.5	11.6	12.1	10.8	7.0	68	71	75	76	76
36	Tunisia	12.0	12.8	10.4	12.0	13.5	6.5	67	66	67	64	63
37	DRC	8.0	7.9	12.6	9.7	13.0	15.6	67	66	64	56	55
38	Mexico	10.3	8.3	12.5	11.0	10.5	13.9	67	65	64	60	61
39	Ethiopia	9.9	10.3	13.1	10.4	12.1	10.6	66	66	65	63	65
40	Bhutan	13.2	12.3	11.6	13.9	14.2	1.1	66	67	64	61	64
41	Turkey	12.8	11.5	11.8	13.0	11.5	5.7	66	65	69	63	66
42	Comoros	12.7	14.0	11.2	12.4	14.2	1.5	66	63	62	57	56
43	Malaysia	12.8	14.3	11.4	12.2	11.1	3.9	66	63	63	62	60
44	Tajikistan	13.8	12.2	12.3	12.8	13.4	1.1	66	65	66	65	65
45	Cameroon	8.8	7.6	12.6	7.2	13.1	15.9	65	65	64	60	54
46	Brunei	14.8	14.6	10.1	10.9	14.4	0.4	65	64	64	63	63
47	Oman	14.0	14.1	10.3	13.3	12.9	0.6	65	66	63	62	59
48	Kazakhstan	13.2	11.6	11.9	12.7	14.2	1.1	65	64	64	64	63
49	Jordan	13.0	14.0	10.5	12.3	12.7	2.0	65	66	64	64	65
50	Nicaragua	10.8	5.9	11.9	12.8	13.6	9.4	65	56	51	41	41

Rank	Country	Private life	Family life	Community life	National life	Church life	Violence	Total Score WWL 2023	Total Score WWL 2022	Total Score WWL 2021	Total Score WWL 2020	Total Score WWL 2019
51	Kenya	10.3	9.2	11.4	8.0	11.5	13.3	64	63	62	61	61
52	Kuwait	13.5	13.7	9.8	12.3	13.1	1.1	64	64	63	62	60
53	Tanzania	9.3	10.8	10.3	8.6	8.7	15.6	63	61	58	55	52
54	UAE	13.4	13.4	9.9	11.2	12.8	1.1	62	62	62	60	58
55	Nepal	12.0	9.8	9.4	13.0	12.6	4.4	61	64	66	64	64
56	Djibouti	12.3	12.6	12.7	10.1	12.3	0.6	60	59	56	56	56
57	Palestinian Territories	13.0	13.3	9.7	10.3	12.0	2.0	60	59	58	60	57
58	Azerbaijan	13.2	10.0	9.5	12.0	13.6	0.6	59	60	56	57	57
59	Kyrgyzstan	12.9	10.2	11.0	10.4	12.0	2.0	59	58	58	57	56
60	Chad	11.6	8.2	10.2	10.2	10.3	7.6	58	55	53	56	48
61	Russian Federation	12.3	7.9	10.3	11.8	12.8	2.0	57	56	57	60	60
62	Sri Lanka	12.8	9.1	10.6	11.3	9.5	3.9	57	63	62	65	58
63	Rwanda	9.4	7.7	9.0	10.4	11.7	8.9	57	50	42	42	41
64	Venezuela	6.0	4.6	11.7	10.2	11.4	11.7	56	51	39	42	41
65	Burundi	7.6	7.8	9.4	9.8	9.7	11.1	55	52	48	48	43
66	Bahrain	12.7	13.3	8.7	10.7	8.8	0.9	55	57	56	55	55
67	Honduras	7.1	5.0	11.9	7.6	9.8	11.9	53	48	46	39	38
68	Angola	6.8	6.7	8.1	11.5	11.4	7.2	52	51	46	43	42
69	Uganda	8.1	5.0	7.4	6.7	9.2	14.8	51	48	47	48	47
70	Togo	9.2	6.7	9.3	7.1	11.0	5.4	49	44	43	41	42
71	Guinea	10.3	7.5	8.3	8.3	10.5	3.0	48	43	47	45	46
72	South Sudan	5.7	4.4	7.0	6.3	7.6	15.0	46	43	43	44	44
73	El Salvador	7.7	4.2	10.6	7.4	9.1	6.7	46	45	42	38	30
74	Ivory Coast	12.0	6.5	8.7	5.9	8.0	3.3	44	42	42	42	43
75	Gambia	8.3	8.2	8.9	8.8	8.9	1.1	44	44	43	43	43
76	Belarus	9.5	3.8	4.8	9.4	12.1	3.3	43	33	30	28	35

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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 2023 reporting period was 1 October 2021 - 30 September 2022.
- 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 2023 Situation in brief / Burkina Faso

Brief country details

Burkina Faso: Population (UN estimate for 2022)	Christians	Chr%
22,103,000	5,166,000	23.4

Data source: Johnson T M and Zurlo G A, eds, World Christian Database (Leiden/Boston: Brill, accessed April 2022)

Map of country



Burkina Faso: World Watch List	Points	WWL Rank
WWL 2023	71	23
WWL 2022	68	32
WWL 2021	67	32
WWL 2020	66	28
WWL 2019	48	61

Ranks are shown above whenever the country scored 41 points or more in the WWL 2019-2023 reporting periods

Dominant persecution engines and drivers

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

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

Brief description of the persecution situation

In the WWL 2023 reporting period, the impact of jihadists in the country has been expanding, making their influence felt even in cities that had previously been beyond their reach. This has particularly been the case for the “Group for the Support of Islam and Muslims” (JNIM). Christians have been targeted and killed and churches have been destroyed. Christians of Muslim background are the most persecuted Christian group in the country. Similar attacks in Niger, Mali and the greater Sahel region are making the situation in Burkina Faso very serious. Christians have been targeted in villages, churches and workplaces. Hundreds of churches have been closed due to jihadist activities. Family and community members reject converts and try to force them to renounce their Christian faith, making them afraid to express their faith in public because of such threats.

Summary of international obligations and rights violations

Burkina Faso has committed to respect and protect fundamental rights in the following international treaties:

1. [International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights](#) (ICCPR)
2. [Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment](#) (CAT)
3. [Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women](#) (CEDAW)
4. [Convention on the Rights of the Child](#) (CRC)

Burkina Faso is not fulfilling its international obligations by regularly violating or failing to protect the following rights of Christians:

- Christians are killed for their faith (ICCPR Art. 6)
- Christian converts from a Muslim background are ostracized, faced with opposition by their families, and threatened with loss of inheritance (ICCPR Art. 18)
- Christians and their activities are monitored by militant groups (ICCPR Art. 17)
- Christian female converts run the risk of being forcibly married to Muslim men (ICCPR Art. 23; CEDAW Art. 16)

- Perpetrators of violence against Christians are sometimes left unpunished (ICCPR Art. 2)

Specific examples of violations of rights in the reporting period

- **21 July 2022:** JNIM militants entered three churches in the Burkinabe-Nigerien border village of Dabonti (Kantchari, Tapoa). The militants assaulted and whipped worshippers, pastors and co-pastors.
- **13 June 2022:** JNIM militants burned a Protestant church in the village of Pabouga (Partiaga, Tapoa).
- **23 May 2022:** JNIM militants entered the village of Kindi (Andemtenga, Kourittenga). The militants banned Western education, sale of alcohol, and church prayers.
- **29 April 2022:** JNIM militants entered and monitored the activities at a church training center for Catholic women in Bomborokui (Bomborokui, Kossi).
- **3 April 2022:** JNIM militants disrupted a Protestant church service in the village of Toessin (Ouahigouya, Yatenga). The militants ordered the worshippers not to return to the church.
- **20 March 2022:** JNIM militants burned a church in the village of Bourgou (Manni, Gnagna).
- **11 March 2022:** JNIM militants burned school equipment at a primary school and ordered the closure of a Catholic church in the village of Balga (Diapangou, Gourma).
- **5 March 2022:** Presumed JNIM militants looted property belonging to the Protestant church in the village of Tosson (Yaba, Nayala).
- **16 November 2021:** Presumed JNIM militants burned a school and a Protestant church in the village of Mangou (Diapaga, Tapoa).

Specific examples of positive developments

None.

External Links - Situation in brief

- Summary of international obligations and rights violations: International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights - <https://www.ohchr.org/en/professionalinterest/pages/ccpr.aspx>
- Summary of international obligations and rights violations: Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment - <https://www.ohchr.org/en/professionalinterest/pages/cat.aspx>
- Summary of international obligations and rights violations: Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women - <https://www.ohchr.org/EN/ProfessionalInterest/Pages/CEDAW.aspx>
- Summary of international obligations and rights violations: Convention on the Rights of the Child - <https://www.ohchr.org/en/professionalinterest/pages/crc.aspx>

WWL 2023: Keys to understanding / Burkina Faso

Links for general background information

Name	Quote Reference	Link	Last accessed on
Amnesty International 2021/22 country report – covering 154 countries	AI country report 2021/22 (pp.106-108)	https://www.amnesty.org/en/wp-content/uploads/2022/03/POL1048702022ENGLISH.pdf	10 June 2022
BBC News country profile	BBC country profile	https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-africa-13072774	10 June 2022
Bertelsmann Transformation Index country report 2022 – covering 137 countries	BTI report 2022	https://bti-project.org/en/reports/country-dashboard/BFA	10 June 2022
CIA World Factbook	CIA Factbook	https://www.cia.gov/the-world-factbook/countries/burkina-faso/	10 June 2022
Crisis24 country report (Garda World) – covering 193 countries	Crisis24 country report	https://crisis24.garda.com/insights-intelligence/intelligence/country-reports/burkina-faso	10 June 2022
Economist Intelligence Unit Democracy Index 2021 – covering 167 countries	EIU 2021 (p.58)	https://pages.eiu.com/rs/753-RIQ-438/images/eiu-democracy-index-2021.pdf	10 June 2022
FFP's Fragile States Index 2022 – covering 179 countries	FSI 2022	https://fragilestatesindex.org/country-data/	3 August 2022
Freedom House's 2022 Democracy index – covering 29 countries, Burkina Faso not included	Democracy Index 2022	https://freedomhouse.org/countries/nations-transit/scores	
Freedom House's 2022 Global Freedom index – covering 210 countries	Global Freedom Index 2022	https://freedomhouse.org/country/burkina-faso/freedom-world/2022	10 June 2022
Freedom House's Freedom on the Net 2022 report – covering 70 countries, Burkina Faso not included	Freedom on the Net 2022	https://freedomhouse.org/countries/freedom-net/scores	
Human Rights Watch World Report 2022 (country chapter) – covering 100+ countries	HRW 2022 country chapter	https://www.hrw.org/world-report/2022/country-chapters/burkina-faso	10 June 2022
Internet World Stats 2022	IWS 2022	https://www.internetworldstats.com/africa.htm#bf	10 June 2022
RSF's 2022 World Press Freedom Index – covering 180 countries	World Press Freedom 2022	https://rsf.org/en/burkina-faso	10 June 2022
Transparency International's 2021 Corruption Perceptions Index – covering 180 countries	CPI 2021	https://www.transparency.org/en/cpi/2021/index/bfa	10 June 2022
UNDP's Global Human Development Indicators (country profile) – covering 189 countries	HDI profile	https://hdr.undp.org/data-center/specific-country-data#/countries/BFA	10 June 2022
US State Department's 2021 International Religious Freedom (country profile)	IRFR 2021	https://www.state.gov/reports/2021-report-on-international-religious-freedom/burkina-faso/	10 June 2022
USCIRF 2022 country reports – covering 15 CPC / 12 SWL, Burkina Faso not included	USCIRF 2022	https://www.uscifr.gov/countries	
World Bank country overview – covering 178 countries	World Bank overview 2022	https://www.worldbank.org/en/country/burkinafaso/overview	10 June 2022
World Bank country profile data – covering 222 countries	World Bank profile (2020 data)	https://databank.worldbank.org/views/reports/reportwidget.aspx?Report_Name=CountryProfileId=b450fd57tbar=ydd=yinf=nzm=ncountry=BFA	10 June 2022
World Bank Macro Poverty Outlook 2022 – covering 147 countries (divided per region)	Macro Poverty Outlook 2022 (pp.8-9)	https://www.worldbank.org/en/publication/macro-poverty-outlook	10 June 2022

Recent history

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

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

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

The country then experienced a second military coup when the Lamizana regime was overthrown by Colonel Saye Zerbo in 1980. The Zerbo regime was unpopular, faced considerable opposition and lasted only two years. A military council called the Council of Popular Salvation (CSP), led by Jean-Baptiste Ouédraogo, [overthrew](#) the Zerbo regime in 1982 (Encyclopaedia Britannica, accessed 30 January 2023). Following political unrest and infighting, on 4 August

1983 the Ouedrago regime was overthrown by the CSP faction led by Thomas Sankara and Blaise Compaoré. Sankara was installed as the president of the republic.

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

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

General elections were held in Burkina Faso on 22 November 2020 to elect the president and National Assembly. The elections were held in the shadow of jihadist violence, which [claimed more than 2,000 lives in 2020 alone](#) (France24, 26 November 2020). In the presidential elections, incumbent President Kaboré of the People's Movement for Progress was re-elected in the first round with 57.7% of the vote.

On 24 January 2022 a [military coup](#) overthrew Burkina Faso's President Kaboré amid a deepening security crisis in the country. Both civilians and security forces had long been voicing their discontent (ISS, 3 February 2022). The coup was orchestrated by Lieutenant-Colonel Paul-Henri Sandaogo Damiba, who had just been promoted to head the country's third military region. That coup was followed by another coup in October 2022. Taking advantage of the political chaos, jihadist groups have been growing stronger and expanding beyond the peripheries they used to control.

Christians in the country have made enormous contributions, for instance, in leading the country to independence and in all other efforts to stabilize the country. At the same time, especially in recent years, Christians have been targeted by jihadists (particularly JNIM) who are growing in influence in the Sahel (see above: *Specific examples of violations of rights*).

Political and legal landscape

According to the [Constitution of 2012](#), Burkina Faso is a secular state and guarantees the right of individuals to choose, practice and change their religion at will. The laws allow all organizations, religious or otherwise to register with the Ministry of Territorial Administration, Decentralization and Internal Security. The current Constitution was first approved in 1991 and has been amended multiple times since then. The last amendment in 2012 established a semi-presidential system. The president is elected every fifth year and selects the prime minister with the approval of the parliament. The country's legislature is a bicameral body with the National Assembly as the lower house and the Senate as the upper house. The national assembly consists of 111 elected members.

The country made significant progress towards democracy after the transfer of power in 2015. Political freedom and the situation of human rights also greatly improved. A general election was held in Burkina Faso in November 2015, the first national elections since the uprising and [departure](#) of President Blaise Compaoré who had ruled Burkina Faso for 27 years (The Guardian, 1 November 2014). Fourteen different political parties held National Assembly seats in the 2015 election. The country's constitutional court approved a law preventing anyone associated with the previous regime to run for office. President Kaboré won the [presidential election in November 2020](#) with an outright majority (Vanguard, 26 November 2020). Despite increased Islamic militant activity, nationwide elections proved possible.

Large parts of the country remain contested between jihadist groups, ethnic militias and security forces. [In July 2021](#), due to Islamic militants creating enormous challenges to the country, the president reshuffled his cabinet and assumed the role of defense minister in addition to the presidency (Reuters, 1 July 2021). On 23 February 2022, Reuters reported that the ruling junta that came to power in a coup on 24 January 2022 was considering a 30-month transitional period until new elections could take place. However, the October 2022 coup brought a new military leader, Captain Ibrahim Traore, to the fore and it is unclear whether this 30-month transitional period will be respected.

Gender perspective

In relation to gender, by law both men and women have equal rights to enter marriage and must freely consent to the union (Constitution, Article 23). The legal framework does not cover customary or religious marriages however. This contributes to Burkina Faso having one of the highest child marriage rates in the world, with 52% of girls marrying before 18 ([Girls Not Brides, 2020](#)). By law, the minimum age for marriage is 17 for girls, although they can marry at 15 if authorized by civil courts. This legislative loophole and widespread societal acceptance for child marriage can be exploited for the purpose of religious persecution, particularly against female converts. [New legislation](#) introduced in 2015 was viewed as a positive step towards securing support and access to justice for victims of gender-based violence (Refworld, 6 September 2015), but effective implementation has been slow and few care centers have been established ([OECD, 2019](#)).

Religious landscape

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

The 2012 Constitution [guarantees](#) freedom of religion and the principle of separation of church and state. The pre-coup government required all religious groups to register with the Ministry of Territorial Administration and Decentralization to operate in the country. There has been no state-funding of religious schools, which thus operate independently. However, in past years, there have been anti-Christian campaigns and sentiment propagated by Islamic militants.

Burkina Faso: Religious context	Number of adherents	%
Christians	5,166,000	23.4
Muslim	12,295,000	55.6
Hindu	0	0.0
Buddhist	0	0.0
Ethno-religionist	4,513,000	20.4
Jewish	0	0.0
Bahai	4,100	0.0
Atheist	790	0.0
Agnostic	122,000	0.6
Other	830	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 2022)

According to WCD 2022 estimates, 20.4% of the population follow traditional African religions. Many Christians and Muslims in the country also mix their faiths with various forms of traditional beliefs and practices. For instance, some Christians continue to embrace polygamy.

Economic landscape

According to the World Bank country overview:

- GDP growth:** "The economy rebounded strongly in 2021, with growth estimated at 8.5%. This solid performance is attributable to factors such as the recovery in services (+11.7%) and the steady increase in gold exports. However, agricultural production stagnated because of low rainfall. While exports grew by 6.5% in 2021, imports of hydrocarbons and mining equipment increased by 15.5% and were largely responsible for widening the current account deficit, estimated at 3.0% of GDP. Measures to combat the pandemic and security-related spending helped maintain the fiscal deficit at 5.5% of GDP. This deficit, which could widen further this year to 6.6%, increased public debt to 47.4% in 2021."
- Inflation:** "As a result of the pandemic, inflation turned positive again in 2020 (3.2% compared to -3.2% in 2019). Solid growth in 2021, coupled with severe pressure on global supply chains, increased inflationary pressures (3.9% in 2021, a 10-year high). The hike in food prices was particularly notable (14.7%) and revealed food insecurity."
- Fiscal deficit:** "The fiscal deficit remained high at 5.5% of GDP in 2021 (compared to 5.7% in 2020), chiefly as a result of expenses related to COVID-19 and ever-increasing security costs."

The World Bank country overview makes the following projections for 2022:

- “The return to pre-COVID growth levels is expected to continue in 2022, as the economy is forecast to grow at a rate of 4.8%. Against the backdrop of insecurity, the January 2022 coup, and the war in Ukraine, growth is expected to be driven by the agricultural sector, services—including public administration—and gold exports, and reach its potential of about 5.3% in the medium term.”
- “Driven by an even greater increase in food prices, inflation could worsen in the first half of 2022, before stabilizing at an annual average of around 4% toward the end of the year.”
- “In light of the security, humanitarian, food, and social challenges and the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, the fiscal deficit could reach 6.6% of GDP in 2022. Its gradual return to the WAEMU ceiling of 3% is not expected before 2025”.

Overall, Burkina Faso is one of the least developed countries in the world. Nearly 80% of the people practice subsistence farming for their survival. Cotton remains the leading export followed by gold. Rises in gold prices have increased the country’s export income. Despite the progress made in the past two decades, the country still faces many development challenges, particularly in terms of health and education. It ranks 144th among 157 countries in World Bank's Human Capital Index and about 40.1% of the population still lives below the national poverty line. Burkina Faso remains vulnerable to climatic shocks related to changes in rainfall patterns and to fluctuations in the prices of its export commodities on world markets. Its economic and social development will depend on political stability in the country and the sub-region, its openness to international trade and export diversification.

Gender perspective

Within this fragile context, women are particularly economically vulnerable due to low education rates and limited employment opportunities (AI 2020). The female labor force participation rate stands at 58.3%, compared to 74.8% for men (UNDP's HDI 2020). Making it additionally challenging for women to attain financial independence, customary and religious practices deny women their due inheritance, despite equal rights being enshrined in law ([OECD, 2019](#)).

Social and cultural landscape

According to UNDP's HDI profile and CIA Factbook:

- **Main ethnic groups:** Mossi 52%, Fulani 8.4%, Gurma 7%, Bobo 4.9%, Gurunsi 4.6 %, Senufo 4.5 %, Bissa 3.7%, Lobi 2.4 %, Dagara 2.4%, Tuareg/Bella 1.9%, other 7.2% (2010 est.)
- **Main languages:** French is the official language and other native African languages belonging to Sudanic family spoken by 90% of the population
- **Urbanization:** About 31.2% of the total population make up the Urban population. (2021 est) The rate of urbanization is 4.75% annual rate of change (2020-2025 est.)
- **Population growth rate:** 2.58% (2021 est.)
- **Median age:** 17.6 years
- **Life expectancy:** 61.6 years
- **Literacy rate, adult (15 years and older):** 41.2%

- **Expected years of schooling:** 9.3 years. (9.4 for female; 9.1 for male)
- **Employment to population ratio (15 years and older):** 62.3%
- **Employment in agriculture:** 25.2% of total employment
- **Employment in services sector:** 41.1% of total employment
- **Unemployment:** 6.3% of labor force
- **Youth unemployment (15-24 years):** 8.3%

According to the [UNHCR](#) Operational Update 1-31 May 2022:

- **Refugees/IDPs:** "According to the National Council for Emergency Relief and Rehabilitation (CONASUR), 1,902,293 persons have fled their homes seeking safety as of 30 April 2022. This represents almost 3% increase compared to March 2022. As of 31 May 2022, Burkina Faso also continued to generously host 27,617 refugees and asylum seekers whose majority is located in the Sahel region. In Burkina Faso, the human rights and security situation remains precarious, with armed groups carrying out violent attacks against civilians, most notably in the Sahel and East regions. According to the Governor of the East region, more than 50 civilians were killed near the Singou bridge close to Madjoari (East region) by non-state armed groups (GANE) on 25 May 2022."

According to UNDP's HDI profile:

- **Human Development Index:** Burkina Faso is ranked 182 out of 189 countries with the value of 0.452. Overall, Burkina Faso has shown improvements in HDI compared to previous years.
- **Gender Development Index (GDI):** 0.867
- **Gender Inequality Index (GII):** 0.594. This score is a composite measure reflecting inequality in relation to reproductive health, empowerment and the labor market. Providing an indication of how it performs, Burkina Faso ranks 147th out of 177 countries.

Similar to other countries in the region, the COVID-19 crisis was the key change faced by the country in 2021/2022. Burkina Faso was one of the first African countries to report numerous cases of infection. What exacerbated the problem was that while the government focused on combatting the spread of the virus, Islamic militants took advantage of the situation to launch attacks.

Gender perspective

Domestic violence, child marriage and the practice of Female Genital Mutation remains prevalent. Several government policies have been introduced to combat child marriage, but the widespread societal acceptance of this practice makes it challenging to combat. According to a survey in 2020, around half of women aged 15–24 thought that it was normal for a man to beat his wife in certain circumstances ([Equipop, July 2020, p.5](#)). Domestic violence reportedly rose due to the additional pressures and stress caused by the COVID-19 pandemic ([Equipop, July 2020, p.8](#)). Urban settings are recognized as more favorable environments for women's empowerment compared to rural settings, although political and economic opportunities remain limited countrywide ([OECD, 2018](#)).

Technological landscape

According to the Internet World Stats (IWS 2022):

- **Internet usage:** 21% of the population – survey date: December 2021 (most recent survey available at time of writing)
- **Facebook usage:** 10.3% penetration rate – survey date: January 2022

Burkina Faso has a marked gender gap in Internet usage, particularly in relation to social media usage. According to [Napoleon Cat](#) (December 2022), 69.8% of the country's Facebook users were male and 30.2% female.

According to World Bank's data profile:

- **Mobile phone subscriptions:** 100.2 per 100 people

According to [Datareportal's Digital 2021 report](#) (accessed 21 July 2021):

- The number of mobile connections in Burkina Faso increased by 1.2 million (+5.7%) between January 2020 and January 2021.

According to [BuddeComm research](#) (publication date: January 2023):

- "Burkina Faso's telecom sector in recent years has made some gains in providing the necessary infrastructure and bandwidth to support telecom services. An IXP completed in September 2020 increased international bandwidth capacity by a third, while in mid-2021 the government was able to start the second phase of a national fibre backbone project. This will link the capital city to an addition 145 municipalities, and provide additional connectivity to terrestrial cables in neighboring countries."
- "The activities of the militants in side areas of the country jeopardize overall security, and render it difficult for the telcos to safeguard their networks and equipment."
- Burkina Faso has begun developing its first satellite.

Christians are among the most educated in the country and tend to have better access to the latest advances in technology in government use.

Security situation

In the context of the ongoing war against jihadists, Christians in the country find themselves a primary target for attack. Although there had been significant progress in democracy and human rights after Kaboré came to office, his presidency was overshadowed by the numerous attacks carried out by Islamic militants operating in the region. Militant Islamic groups operating in the country include: *Jamaat Nusrat al-Islam wal Muslimeen* (JNIM), Islamic State West Africa (ISWA), Islamic State Greater Sahara (ISGS), al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM), al-Murabitoun, Ansar Dine and Boko Haram. These groups have been responsible for waves of attacks and are gaining ground, especially following the political instability in neighboring Mali. Frustration over the continuing insecurity was one of the main factors behind the military coups of January and October 2022. In January 2023, France agreed to [end its deployment](#) of around 400 troops, which is likely to considerably weaken counterterrorism operations (DW, 25 January 2023).

According to [International Crisis Group](#) (24 February 2020), in 2019 Burkina Faso suffered more jihadist attacks than any other Sahelian country. In April 2019, Protestant worshippers and a pastor were killed as Islamic militants launched what is regarded as the country's [first attack on a church](#) since the sectarian violence erupted (Al-Jazeera, 29 April 2019). This was followed by deadly attacks on two consecutive days in May 2019 targeting Catholic Christians in two different parts of the country. These attacks forced more than half a million people to flee their homes. Since then, there have been numerous attacks on churches and Christians - see above: *Specific examples of violations of rights.*

OCHA reported in February 2021 that in just over two years, the violence had [led to the displacement](#) of almost two million people, left 3.5 million people in need of humanitarian assistance – a 60 per cent increase from January 2020 to January 2021 (Reliefweb, OCHA, 1 February 2021). According to UNICEF Burkina Faso [Humanitarian Situation Report](#) No.1 (June 2022):

- "Burkina Faso registered 488 security incidents and 144 people were killed (including eight children) between January and March 2022."
- "The Sahel, Est, Centre Nord, Nord and Boucle du Mouhoun regions were the most affected."

"As of 28 March 2022, the number of internally displaced persons (IDPs) reached 1,850,293 (CONASUR) out of which 61.3 percent are children."

According to [Refugees international](#) reporting on 11 February 2020:

- "Unfortunately, in its efforts to stop armed incursions, the army has increasingly begun to violate human rights, often with impunity. There are numerous accounts of Burkinabé forces indiscriminately killing civilians. In some cases, the government has initiated investigations of these abuses. However, aid workers report that violations continue and that there have been no consequences for the perpetrators."
- Further, the government also changed the national penal code to prohibit criticism of the military and block any contact with armed groups: "The new law, whose provisions on contact are too broad, has prevented human rights organizations from verifying the numerous claims of abuses committed by Burkinabé forces and forbids humanitarian organizations from negotiating with armed groups to secure access to populations in need."

In an attempt to bolster the army, the National Assembly in Burkina Faso adopted a bill on 21 January 2020 establishing Volunteers for Homeland Defence (VDP) with the aim of dealing with the multiple acts of terrorism that have been blighting the country since 2016. Volunteer groups receive 14 days of training and are then sent out on patrols and surveillance missions, equipped with light arms. These volunteers have proved to be a particular target for jihadist attack, with more than 100 being [killed in combat](#) within the year 2020 (The Defense Post, 26 November 2020). Allegations of human rights abuses by volunteers have also been "rampant - from stealing cattle to attacking those accused of collaborating with the jihadist militants". This law was supposed to bring security and stability; however, the volunteers are [both perpetrators and victims](#) of violence, and civilians are trapped between attacks from all sides (The New Humanitarian, 12 October 2020).

Gender perspective

Christians in the country suffer from the lack of security. Many have been targeted and killed in 2021 and 2022. Christian women and girls risk being abducted, raped and forcibly married. Instances of sexual assault have reportedly increased as extremist groups exploited the insecurity caused by the COVID-19 pandemic to expand control. Christian boys on the other hand are often recruited into militant forces, which also serves to weaken the Christian church. In light of such pressure, many Christians are forced to flee their homes altogether.

Trends analysis

1) Islamic militancy is gaining ground

Burkina Faso is losing the religious tolerance it had previously practiced in its earlier history. A radicalization of the Islamic population is now taking place. The recent expansion of Islamic militancy in the Sahel region threatened the pre-coup developing democracy. Radical Islamic groups like JNIM, AQIM and Boko Haram are clearly gaining ground and were quick to take advantage of the government's preoccupation with the COVID-19 crisis. Although the government has been taking measures to prevent the expansion of such groups, it will also need to look for grassroots solutions to combat the growing Islamist influence which is often aimed against Christians. There have also been inter-communal clashes that have at times resulted in civilian deaths and displacement.

2) Instability continues

Burkina Faso has seen tumultuous times in recent years. The country has seen two coups in eight months. Those conducting the coups have always claimed that the government has not done enough to fight the jihadist threat. Yet, when the coup-leaders assume power themselves, they have had no greater success against the militants. This has become a trend in West Africa. The current junta in power seems to stay in power despite pressure from the regional and international community. The instability in the government can only embolden the jihadists and the traffickers. The areas under full government control are shrinking.

External Links - Keys to understanding

- Recent history: overthrew - <https://www.britannica.com/place/Burkina-Faso>
- Recent history: claimed more than 2,000 lives in 2020 alone - <https://www.france24.com/en/africa/20201126-burkina-s-kabor%C3%A9-wins-re-election-according-to-full-preliminary-results>
- Recent history: military coup - <https://issafrica.org/iss-today/what-caused-the-coup-in-burkina-faso>
- Political and legal landscape: Constitution of 2012, - https://www.constituteproject.org/constitution/Burkina_Faso_2012?lang=en
- Political and legal landscape: departure - <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2014/oct/31/burkina-faso-president-blaise-compaore-ousted-says-army>
- Political and legal landscape: presidential election in November 2020 - <https://www.vanguardngr.com/2020/11/burkina-faso-incumbent-kabore-wins-presidential-election/>
- Political and legal landscape: In July 2021 - <https://www.reuters.com/business/aerospace-defense/burkina-faso-president-takes-defence-role-amid-security-crisis-2021-06-30/>
- Political and legal landscape: Girls Not Brides, 2020 - <https://atlas.girlsnotbrides.org/map/burkina-faso>
- Political and legal landscape: New legislation - <https://www.refworld.org/docid/5d42bfd4.html>

- Political and legal landscape: OECD, 2019 - <https://www.genderindex.org/wp-content/uploads/files/datasheets/2019/BF.pdf>
- Religious landscape description: guarantees - https://www.constituteproject.org/constitution/Burkina_Faso_2012.pdf
- Economic landscape: OECD, 2019 - <https://www.genderindex.org/wp-content/uploads/files/datasheets/2019/BF.pdf>
- Social and cultural landscape: UNHCR - <https://reporting.unhcr.org/document/2661>
- Social and cultural landscape: Equipop, July 2020, p.5 - <https://equipop.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/07/Rapport-Enquete-Covid19-ANGLAIS.pdf>
- Social and cultural landscape: Equipop, July 2020, p.8 - <https://equipop.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/07/Rapport-Enquete-Covid19-ANGLAIS.pdf>
- Social and cultural landscape: OECD, 2018 - <https://www.oecd.org/swac/maps/63-Burkina%20Faso-gender-inequality.pdf>
- Technological landscape: Napoleon Cat - https://napoleoncat.com/stats/facebook-users-in-burkina_faso/2022/12/
- Technological landscape: Datareportal's Digital 2021 report - <https://datareportal.com/reports/digital-2021-burkina-faso>
- Technological landscape: BuddeComm research - <https://www.budde.com.au/Research/Burkina-Faso-Telecoms-Mobile-and-Broadband-Statistics-and-Analyses?r=51>
- Security situation: end its deployment - <https://www.dw.com/en/france-agrees-to-pull-troops-from-burkina-faso/a-64513392>
- Security situation: International Crisis Group - <https://www.crisisgroup.org/africa/sahel/burkina-faso/287-burkina-faso-sortir-de-la-spirale-des-violences>
- Security situation: first attack on a church - <http://www.aljazeera.com/news/2019/04/killed-burkina-faso-church-attack-190429103434033.html>
- Security situation: led to the displacement - <https://reliefweb.int/report/burkina-faso/burkina-faso-situation-report-1-feb-2021#:~:text=In%202020%2C%20ICRC%20classified%20the,non-international%20armed%20conflict%E2%80%9D.&text=In%202020%2C%20Burkina%20Faso%20saw,%E2%80%9Ccatastrophic%2Ffamine%E2%80%9D%20conditions.>
- Security situation: Humanitarian Situation Report - <https://reliefweb.int/report/burkina-faso/unicf-burkina-faso-humanitarian-situation-report-no-1-01-january-31-march-2022>
- Security situation: Refugees international - https://www.refugeesinternational.org/reports/2020/2/11/burkina-faso-and-the-sahels-new-frontline?gclid=CjwKCAjwp-X0BRAFEiwAheRui6jatVvqnweKRqXtNwM_SCW-tUJM-dAoTtB0FfYfiK3R8hUIL7aYtRoCp7sQAvD_BwE
- Security situation: killed in combat - <https://www.thedefensepost.com/2020/11/26/volunteer-militia-killed-burkina-faso/>
- Security situation: both perpetrators and victims - <https://www.thenewhumanitarian.org/2020/10/12/victims-or-villains-volunteer-fighters-burkina-faso-s-front-line>

WWL 2023: Church information / Burkina Faso

Christian origins

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

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

Protestants first came to the country in the early 1920s. Missionaries from the Assemblies of God became active in Ouagadougou in 1921 and opened a Bible school in 1933. In 1923 the Christian and Missionary Alliance started working in Dioulasso. (For further details, see: *Melton J G and Baumann M, Religions of The World - 2nd edition: A Comprehensive Encyclopedia Of Beliefs And Practices, 2010, pp. 444-445.*)

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

Church spectrum today

Burkina Faso: Church networks	Christians	%
Orthodox	0	0.0
Catholic	3,446,000	66.7
Protestant	1,792,000	34.7
Independent	100,000	1.9
Unaffiliated	7,700	0.1
Doubly-affiliated Christians	-180,000	-3.5
Total	5,165,700	100.0
<i>(Any deviation from the total number of Christians stated above is due to the rounding of decimals)</i>		

Evangelical movement	1,982,000	38.4
Renewalist movement	2,182,000	42.2

Data source: Johnson T M and Zurlo G A, eds, *World Christian Database* (Leiden/Boston: Brill, accessed April 2022)

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.

Areas where Christians face most difficulties

The northern and eastern parts of the country are the main areas where Christians experience most pressure and violence, particularly outside the main cities. In the western part of the country, ethno-religious groups also put pressure on Christians.

Christian communities and how they are affected

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

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

Converts: This category includes Christians of Muslim or traditional African religious background. Converts from a Muslim background experience the most serious persecution from their families and communities.

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

WWL 2023: Persecution Dynamics / Burkina Faso

Reporting period

1 October 2021 - 30 September 2022

Position on the World Watch List

Burkina Faso: World Watch List	Points	WWL Rank
WWL 2023	71	23
WWL 2022	68	32
WWL 2021	67	32
WWL 2020	66	28
WWL 2019	48	61

Ranks are shown above whenever the country scored 41 points or more in the WWL 2019-2023 reporting periods

Rising to a score of 71 points, Burkina Faso ranks 23rd in WWL 2023. The increase is due to the fact that pressure and the violence in the whole country is increasing on Christians. Jihadist activity is expanding and many churches and Christian schools are being forced to close. The *Church* and *Community spheres of life* are under particularly high pressure. The targeting and killing of Christians has created an environment of fear, with many Christians being too scared to attend church services or send their children to school. Jihadist groups are also replacing the government in areas under their control and have taken over providing social services. This is exacerbated by the political uncertainties in the country. In January and October 2022, military coups took place amid a deepening security crisis in the country. Both civilians and security forces had long been voicing their discontent. Meanwhile jihadist groups are growing stronger and expanding their territorial control.

Furthermore, the situation in the neighboring countries like Niger and Mali is also contributing to the insecurity in Burkina Faso. A society that was very tolerant in the past has become very intolerant towards non-Muslims. This is also aided by the fact that there are ethnic conflicts with religious dimensions. As a result, converts and other Christian groups are facing high levels of pressure and, if the current situation is not addressed as soon as possible, it is very likely that Burkina Faso will become a more dangerous and extremely fragile state.

Persecution engines

Burkina Faso: Persecution engines	Abbreviation	Level of influence
Islamic oppression	IO	Very 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	Not at all
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) - blended with Clan oppression (Medium)

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

A country researcher writes: "Generally speaking, the ethnic groups are tolerant but with the increasing influence of Islamic expansion, Muslim leaders from various tribes have become sources of persecution." Converts from a Muslim background experience the most serious persecution from their families and communities.

Organized corruption and crime (Strong)

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

Drivers of persecution

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

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

Drivers of Islamic oppression, blended with Clan oppression

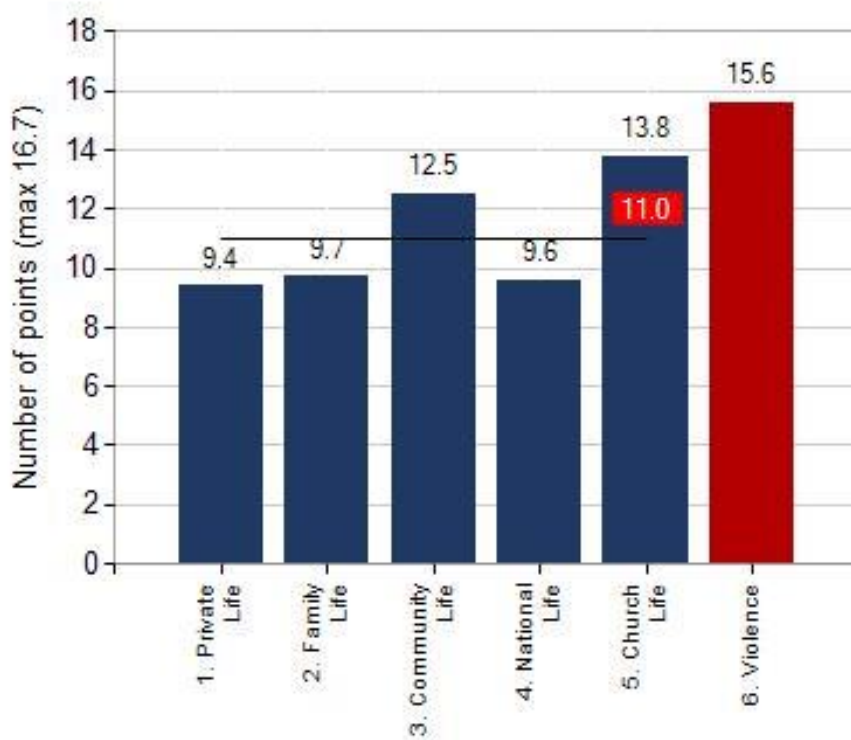
- **Violent religious groups (Very strong):** There are several radical Islamic groups operating in the country (e.g. those affiliated with IS, al-Qaeda or Boko Haram). These groups have been responsible for numerous attacks.
- **Citizens (Strong):** Ordinary citizens in local communities and mob violence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

Drivers of Organized corruption and crime

- **Violent religious groups (Strong):** Militant groups have committed atrocities against foreign Christians in the past and are likely to continue to do so when the opportunities arise. Attacks by these groups have caused a high number of killings and displacement.
- **Organized crime networks (Strong):** It seems that a parallel state structure has been established outside the normal state machinery. The types of crimes committed range from kidnapping and theft and are conducted by a variety of groups in various parts of the country. This is increasingly becoming a cause of concern, especially since foreign aid workers are a favorite target. The abductors, often Islamic militants, think that abducting NGO workers will mean higher sums can be demanded for ransom. It also happens to be the case that there are many Christians working for foreign NGOs.

The Persecution pattern

WWL 2023 Persecution Pattern for Burkina Faso



The WWL 2023 Persecution pattern for Burkina Faso shows:

- The average pressure in WWL 2023 is 11.0 points, rising from 10.6 points in WWL 2022.
- Pressure is highest in the *Church sphere* 13.8 points, rising from 12.1 points in WWL 2022, followed by the *Community sphere* with 12.5 points, rising from 12.0 points in WWL 2022 - a reflection of what has happened to churches and the pressure Christians have faced in their communities due to the activities of Islamic militants.
- The score for violence is at the extreme level of 15.6 points. (The score was 14.8 points in WWL 2022).

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 2023 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 1.8: It has been risky for Christians to speak about their faith with those other than immediate family (extended family, others). (3.00 points)

Burkina Faso has seen one of the worst trends in terms of religious intolerance compared to its previous historical records. One's religion has become a defining factor in human interactions in the country. Radical Muslims have inculcated the concept of 'us' versus 'them' in society. Christians, particularly converts from Islam, face hostile reactions if they discuss their faith with others. For example, in some remote areas, Christians have to make sure that they do not possess Christian materials at home because militants can easily show up at their door and search. Conversion is not forbidden by law, however, most Muslims oppose conversion and it has been risky for converts to speak about their faith with family members for fear of stigmatization and of being treated as an outcast.

Block 1.5: It has been risky for Christians to display Christian images or symbols. (2.75 points)

Burkina Faso's security situation has become untenable for the civilians, especially for Christians who want to show their faith using images and symbols. The majority of the rural areas of the country (especially in the northeast) are effectively under jihadist control. In these areas, for fear of being attacked, mocked or rejected, some Christians from Muslim and ATR backgrounds avoid displaying Christian images or symbols. Since there is also (ethnic-based) communal violence, showing Christians images might invite attack from other ethnic groups.

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

The issue of speaking to immediate family members is more than a taboo for Christians whose family members are not Christians. In Muslim families, both male and female young adults tend to hide the fact that they might want to convert to Christianity for fear of disappointing their parents and of maybe being disowned by them. If one decides to convert, he or she avoids discussing this with any family members.

Block 1.9: It has been risky for Christians to meet with other Christians. (2.50 points)

Burkina Faso used to be stable country where the persecution of Christians was not a major issue in the country. The main fear is that any meeting between Christians can easily be tracked and targeted by jihadists. This is particularly the case for converts. Converts from ATR or Islam are very often in danger if meeting with other Christians because their families may react violently to see them engaging with people of another religion.

Block 1- Additional information

In the context of Islamic oppression (the main Persecution engine in the country), converts face high levels of pressure and as a result:

- *they cannot possess Christian materials without risk to their family and themselves;*
- *they find it difficult to worship;*
- *they risk more pressure if they post about their faith on social media.*

It is also not uncommon for non-convert Christians to be impacted in areas outside the capital city. At times, Islamic militants go house-to-house to check who is there.

Pressure in Block 2 / Family sphere

Block 2.3: Christians have been hindered in celebrating a Christian wedding for faith-related reasons. (3.00 points)

Over the past years there has been a major increase in the number of jihadists and in their influence in Burkina Faso and the surrounding region. This has created an environment where others are not welcome except those who subscribe to the most extreme Islamic teachings. All Christian groups have to make sure that they do not celebrate Christian weddings or Christian holidays in areas that are prone to attacks by jihadists. Christians have to be very careful not to attract any attention from local leaders or Islamic militants in the area and thus make sure that they hide Christian wedding celebrations, for instance. Muslim parents with children who have converted to Christianity oppose any plans they might have to marry another Christian, since that would bring shame upon the family.

Block 2.7: Parents have been hindered in raising their children according to their Christian beliefs. (3.00 points)

Most of the persecution incidents in Burkina Faso are directly or indirectly related to jihadism, organized crime or clan life. As widely reported in 2021 and 2022, beyond the major cities, living a Christian life and raising children according to Christian values has become increasingly difficult. This issue is particularly serious for converts. Parents who are converts are hindered from raising their children according to their Christian faith. Converts lose their inheritance rights. Christians have to be very careful not to attract any attention from local leaders or jihadists who are operating in many areas of the country (or even outside the country). One way of being careful is to try to tell their children about the Christian faith in a way that does not expose them.

Block 2.8: Christian children have been pressured into attending anti-Christian or majority religion teaching at any level of education. (3.00 points)

Outside the major cities, Christians are frequently forced to do things that are contrary to their Christian beliefs. In some schools where leaders (and sometimes the school founders) are predominantly Muslim, students of all kinds - including Christians - face pressure to receive Islamic teaching. Christian families belonging to non-traditional church groups also find it difficult to raise their children according to their religious convictions. It has been reported that

Islamic militants have killed teachers who did not teach Islam and that they have threatened to kill more unless the Islamic religion is taught to all students, including Christian students.

Block 2.9: Children of Christians have been harassed or discriminated against because of their parents' faith. (3.00 points)

The general trend is that the Muslim population in the country is becoming increasingly radicalized. In the northern, eastern and western border regions of the country, Christians often face discrimination in many aspects of their lives. This includes children being targeted.

Block 2 - Additional information

This is a country where Islamist groups are fighting to establish a Sharia state. In addition, the influence of radical forms of Islam is sweeping across the country. As a result, society has become intolerant towards people of non-Islamic faiths. Converts face most persecution and cannot risk celebrating Christian holidays or a Christian wedding. Other Christian groups also have to be careful about how loud Christian music is played during Christian celebrations.

Pressure in Block 3 / Community sphere

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.). (3.50 points)

Burkina Faso is struggling with both rising communal violence and violence caused by Islamic militants. The country has been relying on foreign assistance (from France in particular) to combat the jihadist threat, but despite this, violent Islamic militants keep expanding their influence. As a result, in many parts of the country (except in the capital city where Christians are significant in number), Christian life is being disrupted, especially in the northern region which shares a border with Mali. In this region, especially in Soum Province which seems to be the epicenter of Islamic militant activity, militant groups have intimidated and kidnapped Christians, and carried out attacks against security forces, causing levels of fear to rise. Malam Ibrahim Dicko's *Ansar al-Islam* movement operates from its bases along the border in the Foularé Forest and has launched attacks and intimidated school teachers into replacing French with Arabic as the language of instruction in schools. Schools not offering classes on Islam have been burned down. Many Christians have fled their homes.

Block 3.3: Christians have been under threat of abduction and/or forced marriage. (3.25 points)

Abduction has been the main source of income for jihadists in the Sahel region. This has created a climate of fear and intimidation with Christian missionaries, NGO employees, social workers and school teachers under extreme threat of abduction, particularly in the northern region. Due to high poverty rates, girls are often victims of child marriage and forced marriage too. Forced marriages have also been used as a weapon to force female converts to return to Islam.

Block 3.4: Christians been hindered in sharing community resources because of their faith (e.g. clean drinking water). (3.25 points)

The worsening security situation, with assaults on social services and social service providers and attacks on civic institutions and religious leaders, have created widespread instability in Burkina Faso and hinderances in the delivery of social and educational services. But persecution is not restricted to jihadist activity: It also happens at the community level where the prevailing 'us-versus-them' thinking is making communal life for Christians difficult. Where Christians are a minority, they are often hindered from accessing community resources.

Block 3.11: Christians have been hindered in the operation of their businesses for faith-related reasons (e.g. access to loans, subsidies, government contracts, client boycotts). (3.00 points)

Religion is linked to many aspects of life. In areas where jihadists have influence (and where Muslim religious leaders propagate radical Islamic teaching), Christians find themselves sidelined. Their businesses are frequently boycotted, attacked and forced to close down.

Block 3 - Additional information

The Community sphere is often highly impacted in countries where Islamic oppression is a main persecution engine. In some areas, Christians are hindered from sharing community resources and are obstructed from participating in communal institutions etc..

Pressure in Block 4 / National sphere

Block 4.12: Christians, churches or Christian organizations have been hindered in publicly displaying religious symbols. (3.50 points)

In the context of the country's fragility, insecurity, and government weakness, (compounded by coups), the situation is extremely dangerous for Christian organization outside the capital city, especially if they publicly display Christian symbols in remote areas dominated by a Muslim population. These areas are expanding at an alarming rate.

Block 4.5: Christians have been discriminated against when engaging with the authorities (local administration, government, army, etc.) for faith-related reasons. (3.00 points)

Now that a substantial part of the country's territory is under the influence and control of armed jihadist groups who are claiming to establish a caliphate, it has become extremely difficult for Christians to be treated fairly when engaging with local authorities. For instance, churches experience difficulties in obtaining permits from the administrative authorities for such matters as purchasing land.

Block 4.8: Christians have been hindered in expressing their views or opinions in public. (3.00 points)

Things have changed in Burkina Faso in the last five years. In addition to the threat posed by the Islamic militants and criminal networks, Burkina Faso has seen two coups in less than one year. This has created fear and anxiety among Christians. The space for freedom of expression is becoming narrower, not as a result of restrictive measures imposed by the state, but because of the highly hostile environment created by non-state actors.

Block 4.11: Christians have been subjected to smear campaigns or hate speech. (2.75 points)

Hate speech and smear campaigns have become very common in Burkina Faso. Jihadists often demonize Christians as a tool for recruiting new members. The government has been fighting against this for years. The spreading of anti-Christian sentiment has helped create the jihadist mindset which regards Christians as enemies. This is especially true in northern, eastern and western parts of the country, where Islam is strongly represented.

Block 4 - Additional information

Burkina Faso is a secular state on paper, but less so in practice. Officials at both a local and national level are intimidated by those who follow radical forms of Islam. There is also concern that radical Islamic influence is making inroads among civil servants. This plays out when it comes to the treatment of Christians.

Pressure in Block 5 / Church sphere

Block 5.1: Church activities have been monitored, hindered, disturbed, or obstructed. (3.75 points)

Jihadists are seeking to create a caliphate where only Islam is practiced. Despite the fact that the country is officially secular and Christians make up a large minority (of well over 20% of the population), churches in Burkina Faso live in fear of unpredictable attacks in many parts of the country. They are closely monitored by militant groups and community leaders in the northern, eastern and western parts of the country.

Block 5.5: Churches have been hindered from organizing Christian activities outside church buildings. (3.75 points)

Some evangelistic campaigns in public places have been prohibited. Local authorities hostile to the Christian faith do their best to stop such church programs in public. Christian leaders are targets of harassment, particularly where non-traditional Christian groups try to operate without authorization from the Protestant federation and have opposed the federation's stance on religious tolerance.

Block 5.7: Churches have been hindered from openly integrating converts. (3.75 points)

The rise of jihadism have made Islamic society more conservative. The Sahel region is becoming one of the most hostile regions for Christians to exist. Let alone integrating converts, Christian communities have found their own existence at risk in this very hostile environment.

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

One of the rallying cries for jihadists is: "The West/Christians are corrupting our youth. They are teaching them a lifestyle that is not compatible with our Islamic values." Based on this premise, Christian organizations often find it difficult to help the country's youth, even where it is simply a case of offering basic vocational training.

Block 5 - Additional information

The Church sphere is the sphere of life in Burkina Faso most affected by pressure. Church life has become virtually impossible in many part of the country. Jihadists have specifically targeted their places of worship and killed Christians. This has led to the closure of many churches and social services provided by Christian organizations.

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.

Burkina Faso: Violence Block question		WWL 2023	WWL 2022
6.1	How many Christians have been killed for faith-related reasons (including state sanctioned executions)?	10 *	100 *
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?	10 *	100 *
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)?	10 *	8
6.6	How many Christians have been raped or otherwise sexually harassed for faith-related reasons?	100 *	100
6.7	How many cases have there been of forced marriages of Christians to non-Christians?	10	10 *
6.8	How many Christians have been otherwise physically or mentally abused for faith-related reasons (including beatings and death threats)?	100	100 *
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?	100	100
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?	100 *	100 *
6.11	How many Christians have been forced to leave their homes or go into hiding in-country for faith-related reasons?	5000	100 *
6.12	How many Christians have been forced to leave the country for faith-related reasons?	100 *	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

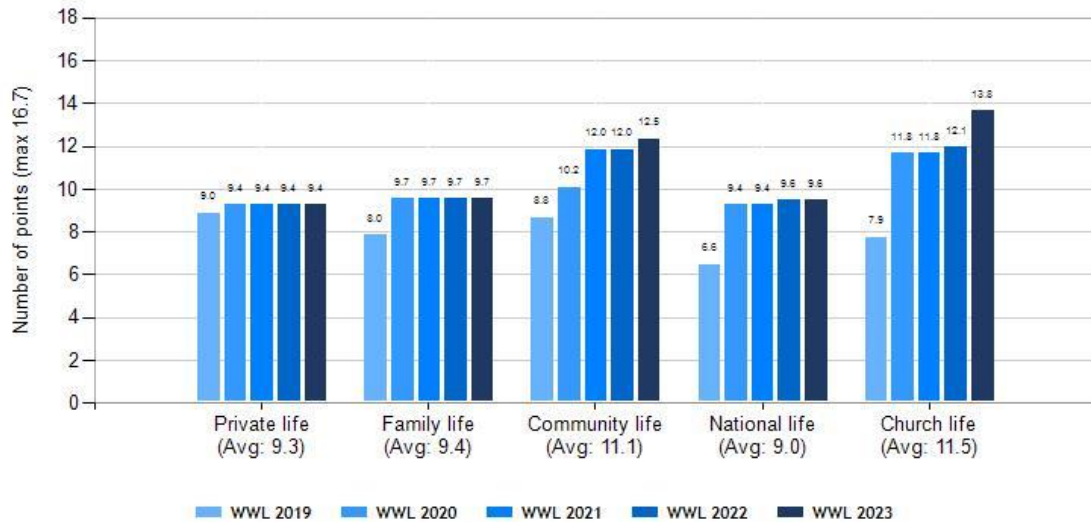
The past five years has seen the increase of violent jihadist movement in Burkina Faso. At the same time, the average pressure on Christians has risen from 8.1 points in the WWL 2019 reporting period to 11.0 points in WWL 2023. The extremely high violence score has had a huge impact on the pressure Christians face in *spheres of life* such as *Church* and *Community life*. The

instability in the government is also making the things easier for the jihadists to increase their influence.

Burkina Faso: WWL 2019 - WWL 2023	
Persecution Pattern history	Average pressure over 5 Spheres of life
2023	11.0
2022	10.6
2021	10.5
2020	10.1
2019	8.1

5 Year trends: Pressure in each sphere of life

WWL 2019 - WWL 2023 Persecution Pattern for Burkina Faso (Spheres of life)

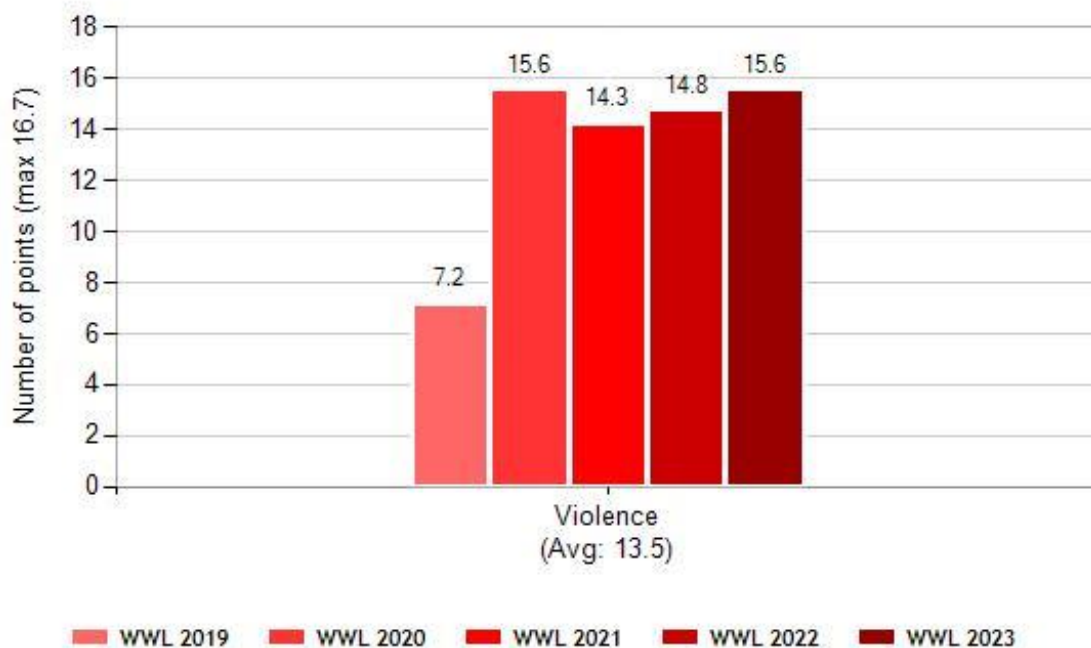


The chart above shows how pressure has increased in each sphere of life. Christians currently face extremely high pressure in the *Church sphere* (13.8) and very high pressure in the *Community sphere* (11.1), due mainly to the presence, influence and activities of Islamic militants. On average, all other spheres scored 9.0 points or above over the 5 year period.

5 Year trends: Violence against Christians

The score for violence has been extreme since WWL 2020. As in WWL 2020-2022, in the WWL 2023 reporting period, Christians have been specifically attacked, killed and wounded. Churches were targeted and Christian businesses were demolished and looted, and closed for good. The five year average score is 13.5 points.

WWL 2019 - WWL 2023 Persecution Pattern for Burkina Faso (Violence)



Gender-specific religious persecution / Female

Group	Female Pressure Points
Economic	Denied inheritance or possessions; Discrimination/harassment via education
Political and Legal	Denied custody of children; Forced divorce; Forced marriage
Security	Abduction; Incarceration by family (house arrest); Violence – physical; Violence – sexual
Social and Cultural	Denied access to social community/networks; Enforced religious dress code; Violence – psychological
Technological	-

Burkina Faso is located in a region where Islamist groups have a huge influence, and the rule of law is very weak, particularly in the Sahel and the eastern regions of the country where Islamic law is applied. Jihadists exploited this weakness during the COVID-19 crisis to gain increased control of the country’s infrastructure, especially in [the north](#) (Royal United Services Institute, 9 November 2022). Within this context, there is a high potential for women and girls to be abducted by militants during raids. Female converts, according to many reports, are especially vulnerable to abduction and forced marriage. The militants may force them to marry one of their members or subjugate them to sexual slavery. Christian girls will also be put under intense pressure to convert to Islam.

Raping Christian women and girls is a common method of attacking Christian communities. In many areas, there is very little understanding of women’s rights, so many people consider it “normal” to sexually assault a woman. However, girls and women who are abused think that they have brought shame and stigma to the family, and the feeling of worthlessness can weaken the family spiritually if not addressed. In particular the daughters of Christian leaders are often targeted through sexual violence “to aggravate the Christian community”.

Converts from an Islamic or traditional religious background face additional pressures. Families beat them, give them in forced marriage, withdraw them from school and in some instances, chase them out of the family. Some young women are also threatened with death. Although Burkina Faso is a CEDAW signatory and has committed to ending [child, early and forced marriage](#) by 2030, 52% of girls are married before their 18th birthday (Girls Not Brides, accessed 25 November 2022).

Another common form of putting pressure on converts is to keep them under house arrest. As conversion to another religion is considered a betrayal by some families, they may also be repudiated and denied their inheritance.

Gender-specific religious persecution / Male

Group	Male Pressure Points
Economic	Economic harassment via business/job/work access
Political and Legal	-
Security	Abduction; Forced out of home – expulsion; Forced to flee town/country; Military/militia conscription/service against conscience; Violence – death; Violence – physical
Social and Cultural	Enforced religious dress code; Violence – psychological
Technological	-

Islamic militant groups operating in the Sahel region often recruit their members from countries like Niger and Burkina Faso. Christian men and boys are targeted for recruitment, physical attacks and for ransom. The abduction and killing of Christian men causes fear and trauma in Christian communities, as well as economic fragility as the men are normally the family providers.

Further fracturing the stability of the Church, many men and boys flee the country due to the pressures they face. A country expert comments: “Christian men and boys are targeted and recruited by militant groups. In conflict areas, they are often victims of physical attacks by violent Islamic militants. When Christian men and boys are forcibly displaced from their homes and towns because of their faith, the families are seriously affected by the persecution as well.”

Church leaders, the majority of whom are males, have also been targeted by militant groups. There have been reports of pastors and their families being abducted and held in captivity. Others have been “executed in front of their families”.

Persecution of other religious minorities

As reported by the US State Department (IRFR 2021):

- Local residents reported that 'terrorist groups' were responsible for killing imams whom the groups accused of collaborating with government security forces.
- "On October 25 [2021], unknown individuals destroyed an animist religious idol in the city of Orodara, which was meant to bless local families."

Burkina Faso is a country where Islamic radicalization is growing. The peripheries of the country are under the influence of Islamic militants and the mosques and madrassas teach radical versions of Sunni Islam, thus causing even Sufi Muslims to be under threat. In these areas, there is no place for religious minorities. It was even reported that teachers in schools were threatened to hold Quran classes or face repercussions. This is also making life difficult for more moderate Muslims. Furthermore, anti-Islamic sentiment appears to be rising in Burkina Faso among some vigilante armed groups. In November 2020, an unknown assailant threw a Molotov cocktail into a mosque in Ouagadougou, [wounding six people](#). A note left on the ground nearby said: “Close the mosque or we’ll launch grenades at you” (AP News, 8 November 2020).

Future outlook

The outlook for Christians as viewed through the lens of:

Islamic oppression, blended with Clan oppression

The country is losing the religious tolerance it has otherwise practiced throughout its earlier history. The constant rhetoric and influence by radical Islamic groups have created a situation where Muslim families react with increasing hostility towards family members who convert to Christianity and where certain ethnic groups have started to specifically target Christians. As a result, Christians are afraid of being abducted or attacked in some parts of the country and their fear can be seen in the increased security measures at churches. The United Nations has also expressed its concern [reporting](#) that "terrorist groups" are "making large swaths of territory unstable and stoking ethnic violence, especially in Burkina Faso and Mali" (AP News, 14 November 2019). The global pandemic has also created a fertile environment for the jihadists due to the government shifting its focus from fighting the spread of Islamic militancy to fighting the spread of COVID-19.

For the first time, in February 2021, Burkina Faso’s government floated the idea of entering into [negotiations](#) with jihadist groups, an idea previously rejected (The Defense Post, 5 February 2021). Such negotiations are increasingly being touted as a possible route towards finding a political resolution to the Sahel crisis. Perhaps, if the negotiations occur, they may yield positive results. On the other hand, the fact that the government is in disarray means there is no coordinated effort from the government to contain the expansion of these jihadist groups.

Since 2015, thousands have died and about 2 million have been displaced by the fight against jihadists: Christians have been forced to flee their homes and many churches and schools have closed down after facing attacks. With the current political environment, it is likely that the influence of the Islamic militants will further increase, making levels of persecution rise even more.

Organized corruption and crime

In the absence of law and order, organized crime is growing. This is also the main means for Islamic militants to transfer weapons (and traffic people and drugs) across borders and remain active in the country. The fact that the government is weak, organized cartels and the jihadists are coordinating their actions so that they can maximize profit from human trafficking, trafficking of minerals and wildlife as well. If the general situation is not addressed, this Persecution engine will be here to stay, not only in Burkina Faso but also in the entire region.

Instability in the government

The government in Burkina Faso has seen instability in the last few years after the ousting of Blaise Compaoré who led the country from 1987-2014. In 2022 alone, two coups were conducted. This instability is making the country a safe haven for jihadists. While the latest military junta is trying to consolidate power (despite pressure from the international community), it appears unlikely that there will be a return to stability. That means that a significant security vacuum will remain for the jihadists to exploit and fill.

External Links - Persecution Dynamics

- Gender-specific religious persecution Female description: the north - <https://rusi.org/explore-our-research/publications/commentary/fragile-future-sahel-wake-covid-19-and-ukraine-war>
- Gender-specific religious persecution Female description: child, early and forced marriage - <https://www.girlsnotbrides.org/child-marriage/burkina-faso/>
- Persecution of other religious minorities: wounding six people - [https://apnews.com/article/africa-burkina-faso-ouagadougou-3ae5e4ca4317352cc797f73152ff8899#:~:text=OUAGADOUGOU%2C%20Burkina%20Faso%20\(AP\),the%20government%20spokesman%20said%20Sunday.&text=Burkina%20Faso%20has%20been%20reeling,State%20group%20for%20five%20years](https://apnews.com/article/africa-burkina-faso-ouagadougou-3ae5e4ca4317352cc797f73152ff8899#:~:text=OUAGADOUGOU%2C%20Burkina%20Faso%20(AP),the%20government%20spokesman%20said%20Sunday.&text=Burkina%20Faso%20has%20been%20reeling,State%20group%20for%20five%20years)
- Future outlook: reporting - <https://apnews.com/79b56cd182864be29cf3326f8bbd634f>
- Future outlook: negotiations - <https://www.thedefensepost.com/2021/02/05/burkina-faso-premier-talks-jihadists/>

Further useful reports

A selection of in-depth reports and smaller articles are available on the new Research & Reports page of the website od.org. As in earlier years, they are also available on the Open Doors Analytical website (password: freedom) using the following links:

- <https://opendoorsanalytical.org/reports/>
- <https://opendoorsanalytical.org/?s=Burkina Faso>