World
Watch
Research

Kenya: Full Country Dossier

February 2022

Open *Doors*
Serving persecuted **Christians** worldwide

Contents

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

Copyright note

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 / Kenya

Brief country details

Kenya: Population (UN estimate for 2021)	Christians	Chr%
54,781,000	45,083,000	82.3

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

Map of country

Kenya: World Watch List	Points	WWL Rank
WWL 2022	63	51
WWL 2021	62	49
WWL 2020	61	44
WWL 2019	61	40
WWL 2018	62	32

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

Dominant persecution engines and drivers

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

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 past decade or so, Kenya has seen numerous deadly attacks by one of the deadliest jihadist groups in Africa - al-Shabaab. Even though all Christian categories are targeted by these militants, Christians with a Muslim background in the northeastern and coastal regions live under constant threat of attack even from their closest relatives. Many Christians have relocated to either Nairobi or other safe places. Al-Shabaab has also a strong influence among the local population and its members often monitor the activities of Christians. *Organized corruption and crime* is also a serious problem. Co-opted officials do not take measures against those who target Christians for their faith, and this, in turn, encourages further acts of persecution. Al-Shabaab militants often ambush transport vehicles. Most Christian teachers, healthcare workers and other social service providers have left the northern region for their safety.

Summary of international obligations and rights violations

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

1. [International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights](#) (ICCPR)
2. [International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights](#) (ICESCR)
3. [Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment](#) (CAT)

4. [Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women](#) (CEDAW)
5. [Convention on the Rights of the Child](#) (CRC)

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

- Christian converts face opposition from their families and are threatened with loss of child custody (ICCPR Art. 18)
- Christian children are harassed because of their parents' faith (ICCPR Art. 18 and CRC Art. 14)
- Christians and their activities are monitored by the surrounding community (ICCPR Art. 17)
- Christian female converts are forced to marry non-Christian men (ICCPR Art. 23; CEDAW Art. 16 and ICESCR Art. 10)
- Perpetrators of violence against Christians are left unpunished (ICCPR Art. 2)

Specific examples of violations of rights in the reporting period

- *13 January 2021:* Gunmen believed to be al-Shabaab militants flagged down a passenger bus at Tarbaj, near the Somali border in Wajir county. They separated men and women and asked whether there were any non-locals (Christians) in the buses. The militants robbed passengers of valuables and the driver of 40,000 Kenyan shillings before warning him not to carry any non-locals (Christians) on his bus ([All Africa](#), 14 January 2021; [Barnabas Fund](#), 19 January 2021).
- *7 June 2021:* Two passenger buses driving along the Mandera-Nairobi route in Kenya were ambushed on 7 June 2021 by al-Shabaab militants between Olla and Sarman villages in northern Mandera, leaving three dead and several others injured. According to a pastor based in Mandera, it is suspected that the attackers were looking for non-local Christian travelers who resolved to use the long Nairobi-Moyale-Mandera route to avoid the highly insecure Nairobi-Wajir-Mandera route ([International Christian Concern](#) - ICC, 9 June 2021).
- In parts of north-eastern Kenya, Christians who have converted from Islam live under constant threat of attack, even from close relatives.
- There has been a moratorium on the registration of churches. The registration of churches was halted in 2014 for what the government said was increased radicalization among religious groups.

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: International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights - https://www.ohchr.org/en/professionalinterest/pages/cescr.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

- Specific examples of violations of rights in the reporting period: All Africa - https://allafrica.com/stories/202101140575.html
- Specific examples of violations of rights in the reporting period: Barnabas Fund - https://barnabasfund.org/news/al-shabaab-militants-hold-up-kenyan-commuter-bus-in-hunt-for-christians/
- Specific examples of violations of rights in the reporting period: International Christian Concern - https://www.persecution.org/2021/06/09/three-killed-kenya-ambush-two-buses/

WWL 2022: Keys to understanding / Kenya

Links for general background information

Name	Quote Reference	Link	Last accessed on
Amnesty International country report	AI 2021	https://www.amnesty.org/en/location/africa/east-africa-the-horn-and-great-lakes/kenya/	19 August 2021
BBC News country profile	BBC country profile	https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-africa-13681341	19 August 2021
Bertelsmann Transformation Index 2020	BTI 2020	https://bti-project.org/en/reports/country-dashboard-KEN.html	19 August 2021
CIA World Factbook	CIA Factbook	https://www.cia.gov/the-world-factbook/countries/kenya/	19 August 2021
Economist Intelligence Unit Democracy Index 2020	EIU 2020	https://pages.eiu.com/rs/753-RIQ-438/images/democracy-index-2020.pdf	19 August 2021
FFP's Fragile States Index 2021	FSI 2021	https://fragilestatesindex.org/country-data/	19 August 2021
Freedom House's 2021 Democracy index (Kenya is 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/kenya/freedom-world/2021	19 August 2021
Freedom House's Freedom on the Net 2020 report	Freedom House/Internet Freedom 2020	https://freedomhouse.org/country/kenya/freedom-net/2020	19 August 2021
Garda World country report	Garda World	https://www.garda.com/crisis24/country-reports/kenya	19 August 2021
Human Rights Watch World Report 2021	HRW 2021	https://www.hrw.org/world-report/2021/country-chapters/kenya	19 August 2021
Internet World Stats 2021	IWS 2021	https://www.internetworldstats.com/africa.htm#ke	19 August 2021
RSF's 2020 World Press Freedom Index	World Press Freedom 2020	https://rsf.org/en/kenya	19 August 2021
Transparency International's 2021 Corruption Perceptions Index	CPI 2021	https://www.transparency.org/en/cpi/2021/index/ken	9 February 2022
UNDP's Global Human Development Indicators	HDI 2020	http://hdr.undp.org/en/countries/profiles/KEN	19 August 2021
US State Department's 2020 International Religious Freedom country reports	IRFR 2020	https://www.state.gov/reports/2020-report-on-international-religious-freedom/kenya/	19 August 2021
USCIRF 2021 country reports (Kenya is not included)	USCIRF 2021	https://www.uscirf.gov/countries	
World Bank country report	World Bank	https://www.worldbank.org/en/country/kenya	19 August 2021

Recent history

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

A major event in 2017 were the general elections held in August. After the Kenyan Supreme Court annulled the result, repeat elections were held in October 2017, again with President Uhuru Kenyatta leading in the polls. The elections were carried out peacefully (in contrast to the 2007 elections which resulted in violence causing the deaths of over 1,200 people). This election is therefore also a milestone in working towards reconciliation between the different ethnic groups in Kenya. Also, in 2018, both the president and main opposition leader eventually announced that they had agreed to work together (DW, 13 March 2018).

Before that announcement, however, veteran opposition leader Raila Odinga, who ran in the August 2017 presidential election as a candidate, continued to contest incumbent President Uhuru Kenyatta's victory. On 30 January 2018, Odinga took the unprecedented step of organizing a mock inauguration ceremony as the 'people's president' (The Guardian, 30 January 2018), despite warnings from international civil society organizations about the deeper crisis this move could cause in the country (International Crisis Group - ICG, 29 January 2018). On the same day, Kenyan authorities designated the National Resistance Movement (NRM), an activist wing of Odinga's political coalition, a criminal group in an attempt to crackdown on politicians and lawyers affiliated with Odinga (The Standard, 31 January 2018). In early 2018, the authorities in Kenya blocked the transmission of at least three television stations for defying the government's order against covering Odinga's mock inauguration ceremony (Human Rights Watch - HRW, World Report 2019).

In early March 2018, President Kenyatta and opposition leader Odinga vowed to resolve their differences and agreed on a peace deal, signaling an end to an ongoing public feud between the two camps and easing political tensions in the country (Al-Jazeera, 10 March 2018). However, this welcome development could not reverse the government's harsh treatment of opposition voices and members of the media (HRW, World Report 2019). The government's measures – already seen as stifling freedom of expression and the media - took a new turn on 16 May 2018, when Kenyatta signed a new law on cybercrime that introduced new offenses and imposed harsh penalties in relation to news reporting (HRW, World Report 2019). However, the harshest fines and provisions that criminalized "false or fictitious" news were later deleted after being judged unconstitutional by the High Court.

Further suspected al-Shabaab attacks were reported in June 2021 as Kenya continued its military operation in Somalia. In June 2021, the USA approved sending special operations troops to collaborate with Kenyan government forces combating al-Shabaab (The Citizen, 13 June 2021). Christians are often targeted by al-Shabaab and, as a result, many Christians (including civil servants, teachers, health workers etc.) have moved from the northeast leaving schools and healthcare institutions empty.

Political and legal landscape

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

However, despite this, the country has been making progress following the 2010 constitutional referendum.

With regard to the Constitution, several provisions were [amended](#) in 2017 to ensure civil liberties (Constitution of Kenya Amendment Bill, 2017). For example, freedom of speech and press has been strengthened. Under Article 8, the Constitution clearly lays out that the country has no official state religion. Article 32 of the Constitution provides for freedom of religion, the right to assemble with others to manifest their religion through worship, practice, teaching or observance, including observance of a day of worship and that a person shall not be compelled to act or engage in any act, that is contrary to the person's belief or religion. It also provides under Article 27(4) for the equality of all persons and equal access to and benefits from the law with no adverse distinction based on religion.

As a result of these amendments, many things have started changing: Kenya's press environment remains one of the most vibrant in all of Africa and many privately-owned media outlets are known for routinely criticizing the government and officials. Also, the independence of the judiciary has been strengthened, which was previously subservient to the executive branch. Moreover, the Islamic (Kadhi) court system is subordinate to the superior courts of Kenya and is reserved for those adhering to Islam and who voluntarily submit to the courts' jurisdiction. Kadhi courts only adjudicate cases related to personal status, marriage, divorce or inheritance.

In 2021, a Building Bridges Initiative-driven (BBI) constitutional referendum which was to be held in June or July 2021, was ruled as unconstitutional by Kenya's High Court on 13 May 2021. The suspended bill was to promote the sharing of power among competing ethnic groups in order to reduce cyclical election violence in the upcoming 2022 general elections (Al-Jazeera, 14 May 2021). Scheduled for August 2022, the Kenyan election is going to pit the president's party against his deputy's party after it was reported that the two had decided to go their separate ways after disagreement over who is going to be the flagbearer of the party in power.

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

With the devolution of power to local counties, Christians have faced extreme pressure in those counties dominated by a Muslim population. This is particularly the case in counties bordering Somalia and the Coast.

According to [Georgetown's Women, Peace and Security Index (2019/20, p.39)](#), Kenya was in the top ten countries that showed the greatest improvements since 2017 in relation to formal legal discrimination. Men and women have broadly equal rights in relation to marriage, divorce, inheritance and child custody ([OECD, 2019](#)). An ongoing issue of concern however is the high rate of child marriage, despite the minimum age of marriage being set at 18, with no

exceptions (BBC News, 15 July 2020). According to Girls Not Brides (2021), 23% of girls – predominately those in the northeastern and coastal regions - marry before the age of 18. A 2017 CEDAW report further highlighted areas of concern, such as: limited access to justice, the negative impact of polygamous marriages on women, and the underrepresentation of women in parliament. Whilst Kenya's legislation addresses domestic violence and rape (Protection Against Domestic Violence Act 2015; Sexual Offences Act), victims are slow to come forward due to a lack of awareness of their legal rights, high social tolerance for violence against women and the belief that domestic violence is a private, rather than state matter (OECD, 2019).

Religious landscape

Kenya: Religious context	Number of adherents	%
Christians	45,083,000	82.3
Muslim	4,301,000	7.9
Hindu	268,000	0.5
Buddhist	1,800	0.0
Ethno-religionist	4,402,000	8.0
Jewish	300	0.0
Bahai	522,000	1.0
Atheist	2,200	0.0
Agnostic	46,400	0.1
Other	154,400	0.3
OTHER includes Chinese folk, New religionist, Sikh, Spiritist, Taoist, Confucianist, Jain, Shintoist, Zoroastrian.		

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

The Kenyan Constitution guarantees freedom of religion.

Christians have had the lion's share in shaping modern Kenya. It is a Christian majority nation with Christians making up an estimated 82.3% (WCD 2021 estimate) of the population. Christians tend to be concentrated in the west and central sections of the country while the Muslim population is particularly concentrated in the eastern coastal regions. Many Kenyans include native beliefs in their religious practices.

Economic landscape

Kenya's economy is the largest and most diverse in East Africa and it serves as a regional financial and transportation hub. Nevertheless, Kenya is also one of the poorest countries in the world and is considered to have "medium development", according to the United Nations 2020 Human Development Report. Economic growth was hampered for decades by government mismanagement and corruption, but the country is now considered to have one of the fastest-

growing economies in Sub-Saharan Africa and has become a center for technological innovation. Kenya has been one of the only African countries to invent and produce models of computers and cars. Despite this, the economic growth remains inadequate to significantly address the nation's endemic poverty and high level of unemployment. Moreover, high levels of corruption remain, coupled with (and resulting in) inadequate infrastructure, which are the primary impediments to job creation and poverty eradication. Due to a burgeoning youth population, growing urbanization will likewise place greater pressure on the government to address the needs of those in the impoverished city slums. Drought conditions and the development of oil resources also have an impact on the tensions among the rural population, national economy and the overall political environment.

According to [World Bank's April 2021 country report]:

- "The COVID-19 pandemic reversed some of the earlier gains in poverty reduction through a decline in job opportunities, lower earnings and closure of household-run businesses. The unemployment rate increased to a four-year high of 10.4 percent in June 2020."
- "Kenya's real GDP contracted by an estimated 0.3 percent in 2020. The pandemic disrupted international trade and travel, sharply cutting exports of cut flowers and tourism. Meanwhile, domestic containment measures curtailed services activities – notably education (institutions were closed between March and December 2020), but also transport, trade, and hospitality services – and businesses slashed investment spending. Strong growth in agriculture cushioned the economic impact of the pandemic."

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

- "Kenya's economy is expected to rebound in 2021, although uncertainty remains elevated. Aided by a projected recovery in private consumption and the reopening of education institutions, growth will recover to 4.5 percent in 2021 and remain at 5.3 percent on average over 2022-23. Merchandise exports are expected to accelerate in 2021, supported by global economic upturn, but a full recovery in services exports (mainly tourism) is unlikely until 2022. The current account deficit is projected to widen over the medium-term as imports strengthen on the back of domestic economic recovery."
- "With the recovery from COVID-19, poverty is expected to continue its pre-COVID-19 downward trend with a likely decline of slightly under one percentage point per year. However, this will require implementation of recovery programs to ensure Kenya resumes the pace of poverty reduction prior to COVID-19. Besides, investments into inclusive policy interventions like raising agricultural productivity, creating private sector jobs, and maintaining and enhancing safety net programs is needed to sustainably reduce poverty in the future."

According to the CIA Factbook:

- Agriculture remains the backbone of the Kenyan economy, contributing one-third of the GDP. About 75% of Kenya's population work at least part-time in the agricultural sector, including livestock and pastoral activities. Over 75% of agricultural output is from small-scale, rain-fed farming or livestock production. Tourism also holds a significant place in Kenya's economy.

- The year 2020 saw an exceptional shortfall in aggregate food production primarily due to desert locust infestations and floods. About 850,000 people were estimated to be severely food insecure in the October – December 2020 period.

According to the 2021 Index of Economic Freedom (accessed June 2021):

- Kenya currently has an economic freedom score of 54.9 points at rank 138, a significant drop from its previous score of 132. The overall score decreased by 0.4 points in comparison to the 2020 Index. Kenya ranked 28th among 47 countries in Sub-Saharan Africa.

Gender gaps in relation to education access and labor force participation are small. However, women and girls continue to remain more economically vulnerable within Kenya's patriarchal society. Cultural and societal norms related to family obligations often impede women's career advancement (Open Capital, 2020) and customary practices often deny women and girls of their due inheritance (OECD, 2019).

Social and cultural landscape

According to the UN Global Human Development Indicators (HDI 2020) and CIA Factbook:

- *Main ethnic groups:* Kenya has more than 40 ethnic groups. Kikuyu 17.1%, Luhya 14.3%, Kalenjin 13.4%, Luo 10.7%, Kamba 9.8%, Somali 5.8%, Kisii 5.7%, Mijikenda 5.2%, Meru 4.2%, Maasai 2.5%, Turkana 2.1%, non-Kenyan 1%, other 8.2% (2019 est.)
- *Main languages:* English (official), Kiswahili (official), numerous indigenous languages
- *Average rate of population growth:* 2.15% (2021 est.)
- *Overall urban population:* 28.5% (2021 est.)
- *Median age:* 20 years
- *Average expected years of schooling:* 11.3 years (11.0 for girls, 11.7 for boys)
- *Average literacy rate, adult (15 years and older):* 81.5%
- *Overall employment to population ratio (15 years and older):* 72.7%
- *Unemployment, total (% of labor force):* 2.6%
- *Unemployment, youth (15-24 years):* 7.2%
- *Labor force participation rate:* 74.7% (Gender gap is minimal, with 72.1% of women in the workforce compared to 77.3% of men)
- *Human Development Index:* Kenya is ranked 143rd out of 189 countries with a human development value of 0.601 points
- *Life expectancy at birth:* 66.7 years
- *Gender Development Index (GDI):* 0.937
- *Gender Inequality Index (GII):* 0.518 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, Kenya ranked 126th out of 162 countries in 2019.

According to UNHCR (2021):

- *Refugees:* There are 518,029 registered refugees and asylum seekers in Kenya as of 30 April 2021. The majority of refugees originate from Somalia (54%) other major nationalities include South Sudanese (24.6%), Congolese (9%), Ethiopians (5.8%), Burundi (3.3%), Sudan (2%), Uganda (0.5%), Rwanda (0.4%), Eritrea (0.4%), and others (0.2%).

- **IDPs:** As of 3 July 2020, about 95,000 people displaced by floods, landslides, and localized conflicts have received temporary shelter and non-food items.

Whilst women are not legally obliged to obey their husbands, social norms place men at the head of the household in both rural and urban settings (OECD, 2019). Domestic violence is widely tolerated, and reportedly increased as a result of COVID-19 restrictions (HRW, 8 April 2020). Widespread protests against gender-based violence occurred in 2019 (HRW, 17 April 2019).

Technological landscape

According to Internet World Stats (IWS 2021):

- **Internet usage:** 85.2% of the population – survey date: December 2020
- **Facebook usage**: 19.7% of the population – survey date: March 2021 According to Napoleon Cat (2020), 57.7% of Facebook users are men, compared to 42.3% women.

According to World Bank:

- **Mobile cellular subscriptions (per 100 people):** 104

Kenyan women are 39% less likely than men to have access to mobile internet as reported in the 2019 release of the GSMA Connected Women, Mobile Gender Gap Report. They are also 23% less likely to own a smartphone. It is therefore harder for women to access digital Christian resources or online Christian communities.

According to BuddeComm Research (updated 24 August 2020):

- "Numerous competitors are rolling out national and metropolitan fiber backbone networks and wireless access networks to deliver services to population centers across the country. Several fibre infrastructure sharing agreements have been forged, and as a result, the number of fiber broadband connections increased 53% in 2019, year-on-year. Much of the progress in the broadband segment is due to the government's revised national broadband strategy, which has been updated with goals through to 2030, and which are largely dependent on mobile broadband platforms based on LTE and 5G."

Kenya is one of the few countries in Sub-Saharan Africa with relatively advanced technology. It was in Kenya that M-Pesa (mobile money) was first invented in 2007, a system whereby subscribers send cash to other phone-users by a simple SMS message. The country's young talents are also becoming entrepreneurs. A Newsweek article from 27 December 2016 stated:

- "New innovations are destroying old ways of doing business, and smart young startup entrepreneurs are at the forefront of this quiet but historic transformation. Teams of skilled developers and programmers have sprung up in innovation hubs, incubators, and accelerators across the country to build information and telecom solutions that capitalize on the country's mix of challenges and opportunities."

A Harvard Business Review article from 18 February 2021 stated:

- "Kenya is an example in becoming a global hub of Fintech Innovations, having seen skyrocketing mobile penetration rates, with subscriptions surpassing the total population amount by 12%. In recent times, Kenya's Equity Bank have collaborated with international telco Airtel to give users an innovative product – Equitel, a mobile virtual network operator competing with Safaricom's M-Pesa, which is pushing for financial inclusion even further by offering a full suite of banking services on mobile devices".

Kenya is a member of the East African Economic Community and it wants to see technology playing a [key role](#) in the economic development of the region (UNESCO, 4 July 2018). The country is listed as having the highest number of "[tech hubs](#)" in Sub-Saharan Africa after South Africa (Kenyan Wall Street, 24 February 2020).

Security situation

Kenya is a Christian majority country. Although the percentage of Muslims in Kenya is fairly small (under 8% according to WCD 2021 estimates), Christians living close to the north-eastern border with Somalia face significant persecution from the strong Muslim presence. The cross-border attacks by al-Shabaab have forced many Christians to close their churches and abandon the region.

Al-Shabaab is the biggest threat and a main driver of persecution in Kenya. It has reportedly killed more people than any other militant group in Africa through its attacks in Somalia and Kenya and has shown great resilience despite facing an increase in government army pressure and economic setbacks. The fact that al-Shabaab is deeply embedded in communities in Somalia makes it very difficult to uproot; however, an increased military presence and foreign coordination to strengthen the gathering of intelligence in Kenya has resulted in a reduction in the level of attacks. Hotspots for al-Shabaab attacks include Mombasa, Mandera, Garissa, Wajir, Lamu and Tana River. Kenya also sent troops into Somalia to fight the jihadist group. Some reports suggest that Kenya could [annex](#) strips of land from Somalia to build a buffer zone (DW, 13 March 2020).

Serious human rights violations have been committed by the government. According to [Human Rights Watch's World Report 2020:](#)

- "Lack of accountability for serious human rights violations by security forces, including extrajudicial killings and enforced disappearances, remain a major concern in Kenya, despite promises by President Uhuru Kenyatta to address key issues, including those that have in the past undermined Kenya's ability to hold peaceful elections. Kenyan authorities failed to investigate security forces abuses, including extrajudicial killings and enforced disappearances, and hold those responsible to account."

According to HRW 2021:

- "Despite widely known and documented police abuses, Kenyan authorities have done little to end police brutality, rarely investigating these killings. In February 2020, Human Rights Watch found that Kenyan police had, between December and February, shot dead at least

eight people in Nairobi's Mathare, Kasarani, and Majengo settlements. In April 2020, Human Rights Watch found that police had killed at least six people within the first 10 days of Kenya's dusk-to-dawn curfew, imposed on March 27, to contain the spread of Covid-19".

The lack of security in the country has cost many Christians their lives (see above: *Specific examples of violations of rights in the reporting period*). After one major attack on a Nairobi hotel, The Economist wrote on 19 January 2019: "Kenya has a reputation, often deserved, for being among Africa's most successful states. Yet its vulnerability to terrorism has long been a weakness. So there was universal dismay, but little surprise, when jihadist gunmen attacked a hotel and office complex in one of Nairobi's most affluent districts on January 15th."

According to The Guardian, reporting on 5 January 2020, al-Shabaab carried out its first ever attack against US forces in Kenya. The militants overran the Manda Bay airfield base where US forces train and give counterterror support. Three US personnel were killed and several US aircraft and vehicles were destroyed.

Within this context of Islamist attacks, women and girls are particularly vulnerable to sexual assault and rape. In extreme cases they may face abduction by al-Shabaab and be subjected to sexual slavery, as well as intense pressure to convert to Islam (The Standard, 23 December 2017).

Christian boys and men risk physical assault and death at the hands of radical Muslims, particularly in the north-eastern region.

Trends analysis

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

For many decades Kenya was seen as a stable country and regional model. However, things started to deteriorate from mid-2005 onwards. In 2007/8, the post-election violence made Kenya an example of how costly in human lives post-election violence can be. The general political environment in the country remains volatile, despite the fact that the 2017 elections proceeded peacefully. Now that another cycle of election is scheduled for August 2022, the focus on politics might give another opportunity for al-Shabaab to strike.

2) Institutionalized corruption remains a serious challenge

In the WWL 2022 reporting period, al-Shabaab remained active and there is little hope that the government can keep Kenyan Christians safe. This is mainly due to the fact that there is institutionalized corruption in the country and that the situation in Somalia is not improving. Investigations into violence targeting Christians have not been properly investigated by the police. However, Christians are likely to remain politically and economically dominant due to the overwhelming Christian majority in the population. The fact that some cases of corruption at high levels has been exposed and that there is a readiness among leaders to be transparent shows an improvement in corruption levels to a small extent. This improvement might encourage foreign organizations to bring in aid to a large number of communities affected by poverty (since corruption has also affected the level of trust amongst donors).

3) The attacks on Christians are leading to a humanitarian crisis in the north-eastern region

Over the years, Christians in the counties of Garissa, Mandera and Wajir have faced continual threats and attacks from al-Shabaab and its supporters. This has caused many Christian teachers, nurses and other humanitarian workers to leave the counties. Primary and secondary education is worst affected. In February 2018, following al-Shabaab's murder of two teachers, the authorities reportedly closed 250 schools in the region. Some have since re-opened, but close to one hundred across the three north-eastern counties on the Somalia border are operating with a headmaster and no other teaching staff. Under pressure from worried teachers, the state has transferred about 2,000 of them out of the area. This trend has continued and will likely continue until security is guaranteed beyond WWL 2022.

External Links - Keys to understanding

- Recent history: agreed to work together - https://www.dw.com/en/political-confusion-reigns-in-kenya-after-odinga-kenyatta-deal/a-42958386
- Recent history: mock inauguration ceremony - https://www.theguardian.com/world/2018/jan/30/kenyas-opposition-to-swear-in-raila-odinga-as-peoples-president
- Recent history: warnings - https://www.crisisgroup.org/africa/horn-africa/kenya/kenya-averting-avoidable-crisis
- Recent history: a criminal group - https://www.standardmedia.co.ke/article/2001267860/state-declares-national-resistance-movement-a-criminal-group
- Recent history: blocked - https://www.hrw.org/world-report/2019/country-chapters/kenya
- Recent history: vowed - https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2018/03/kenyatta-odinga-amends-tillerson-visit-180309172042412.html
- Recent history: members of the media - https://www.hrw.org/world-report/2019/country-chapters/kenya
- Recent history: new law on cybercrime - https://www.hrw.org/world-report/2019/country-chapters/kenya
- Recent history: special operations troops   - https://www.thecitizen.co.tz/tanzania/news/africa/biden-to-send-troops-to-kenya-as-us-boosts-war-on-al-shabaab-3435596
- Political and legal landscape: amended - http://www.cofek.co.ke/Constitution%20(Draft%20Amendment)%20Bill%202017.pdf
- Political and legal landscape: Georgetown's Women, Peace and Security Index (2019/20, p.39) - https://giwps.georgetown.edu/wp-content/uploads/2019/12/WPS-Index-2019-20-Report.pdf
- Political and legal landscape: OECD, 2019 - https://www.genderindex.org/wp-content/uploads/files/datasheets/2019/KE.pdf
- Political and legal landscape: BBC News, 15 July 2020 - https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-africa-53420353
- Political and legal landscape: Girls Not Brides (2021), - https://www.girlsnotbrides.org/child-marriage/kenya/
- Political and legal landscape: 2017 CEDAW report - https://www.refworld.org/publisher,CEDAW,,KEN,596f24614,0.html
- Political and legal landscape: OECD, 2019 - https://www.genderindex.org/wp-content/uploads/files/datasheets/2019/KE.pdf
- Economic landscape: 2020 Human Development Report - http://hdr.undp.org/sites/default/files/Country-Profiles/KEN.pdf
- Economic landscape: World Bank's April 2021 country report - https://pubdocs.worldbank.org/en/171341492188161402/mpo-ken.pdf
- Economic landscape: World Bank's 2021 Macro Poverty Outlook (for Sub-Saharan Africa) - http://pubdocs.worldbank.org/en/720441492455091991/mpo-ssa.pdf
- Economic landscape: 2021 Index of Economic Freedom - https://www.heritage.org/index/country/kenya?version=1347
- Economic landscape: Open Capital, 2020 - https://opencapital.com/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/EnablingCareerAdvancement.pdf
- Economic landscape: OECD, 2019 - https://www.genderindex.org/wp-content/uploads/files/datasheets/2019/KE.pdf

- Social and cultural landscape: UNHCR - https://www.unhcr.org/ke/figures-at-a-glance
- Social and cultural landscape: OECD, 2019 - https://www.genderindex.org/wp-content/uploads/files/datasheets/2019/KE.pdf
- Social and cultural landscape: HRW, 8 April 2020 - https://www.hrw.org/news/2020/04/08/tackling-kenyas-domestic-violence-amid-covid-19-crisis
- Social and cultural landscape: HRW, 17 April 2019 - https://www.hrw.org/news/2019/04/17/who-cares-about-kenyan-women
- Technological landscape: Napoleon Cat (2020), - https://napoleoncat.com/stats/facebook-users-in-kenya/2020/01
- Technological landscape: Mobile Gender Gap Report - https://www.gsma.com/mobilefordevelopment/resources/mobile-gender-gap-report-2019/?utm_source=twitter&utm_medium=team_social&utm_campaign=gender_gap_report
- Technological landscape: BuddeComm Research - https://www.budde.com.au/Research/Kenya-Telecoms-Mobile-and-Broadband-Statistics-and-Analyses
- Technological landscape: Newsweek - https://www.newsweek.com/how-kenya-became-cradle-africas-ict-innovation-534694
- Technological landscape: key role - http://www.unesco.org/new/en/member-states/single-view/news/towards_an_east_african_regional_science_technology_and_inn/
- Technological landscape: tech hubs - https://kenyanwallstreet.com/kenya-tails-south-africa-as-top-tech-hub-in-africa/
- Security situation: annex - https://www.dw.com/en/could-kenya-annex-chunks-of-somalia/a-52725856
- Security situation: Human Rights Watch's World Report 2020: - https://www.hrw.org/world-report/2020/country-chapters/kenya
- Security situation: The Economist - https://www.economist.com/middle-east-and-africa/2019/01/19/another-terrorist-outrage-in-nairobi
- Security situation: first ever attack against US forces - https://www.theguardian.com/world/2020/jan/05/al-shabaab-attack-us-military-base-kenya
- Security situation: The Standard, 23 December 2017 - https://www.standardmedia.co.ke/counties/article/2001263935/al-shabaab-commander-made-me-his-seventh-wife-says-kenyan-woman

WWL 2022: Church information / Kenya

Christian origins

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

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

Church spectrum today

Kenya: Church networks	Christians	%
Orthodox	376,000	0.8
Catholic	12,397,000	27.5
Protestant	26,590,000	59.0
Independent	9,197,000	20.4
Unaffiliated	840,000	1.9
Doubly-affiliated Christians	-4,318,000	-9.6
Total	**45,082,000**	**100.0**
(Any deviation from the total number of Christians stated above is due to the rounding of decimals)		
Evangelical movement	16,800,000	37.3
Renewalist movement	17,766,000	39.4

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.*

Church spectrum today - additional information

Christians dominate the central and western regions, and the majority of the major cities in the country. Muslim communities dominate the northeastern, eastern and coastal areas of the country, where life for Christians is very much more difficult.

WWL 2022: Persecution Dynamics / Kenya

Reporting period

1 October 2020 - 30 September 2021

Position on the World Watch List

Kenya: World Watch List	Points	WWL Rank
WWL 2022	63	51
WWL 2021	62	49
WWL 2020	61	44
WWL 2019	61	40
WWL 2018	62	32

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

The rise in one point in WWL 2022 was due to an increase in average pressure from 9.9 points to 10.3 points. The very high level of persecution has remained more or less constant over the last five WWL reporting periods, which is very worrying for a country that has a Christian population of over 85%. The country only dropped out of the WWL Top 50 due to the fact that the levels of persecution in other countries increased.

Persecution engines

Kenya: 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	Weak
Communist and post - Communist oppression	CPCO	Not at all
Secular intolerance	SI	Weak
Dictatorial paranoia	DPA	Very weak
Organized corruption and crime	OCC	Medium

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

Islamic oppression (Very strong)

Even though Kenya is a Christian majority country (with approximately 82% of the population being Christian), *Islamic oppression* is the main persecution engine. An estimated 7.9% of the Kenyan population is Muslim, according to WCD statistics, of which the majority is Sunni. The Muslim population is mainly located in the north-eastern and coastal areas of Kenya, but has also spread to other parts of the country, and has begun to respond to perceived disenfranchisement in Kenyan society. Inspired by radical Islamic influences spilling over from Somalia, Muslim politicians, representing Muslim dominated constituencies in Kenya, have an agenda to eliminate any Christian influence in their constituencies. The north-eastern part of the country is also highly affected by *Islamic oppression*. Radical Muslims living in Kenya, together with militants crossing the border from Somalia, are severely persecuting Christians and have been responsible in recent years for the killing of hundreds of Christians. To emphasize the challenge facing Christians in the north-eastern and coastal areas, one country researcher reported: "The eastern or coastal counties have long been under heavy Islamic influence due to historical factors - this is where Muslims first arrived (long before the Christian missionaries in Kenya) and along the east coast of Africa in general. The counties where incidences of medium-to-very-strong strength of this engine [*Islamic oppression*] can be found include Mandera, Wajir, Garissa, Lamu, Kilifi, and Kwale."

Even though the issue of *Islamic oppression* and Islamic militancy are recent developments in Kenya, both have been growing since the 1990s. In 1992, the Islamic Party of Kenya (IPK) was established but was denied registration in 1994. As discussed in a [report](#) dated July 2019: "The banning of the IPK led to a period of protest and political turmoil, followed by a splintering of Islamist activism on the coast. New Islamist associations and organizations proliferated, some seeking to take advantage of new political space for activism, while others, in lieu of a formal political platform, turned to mosques, informal groupings, and self-published media to articulate more militant, populist messages." (Combating Terrorism Center, July 2019) This engine is getting a boost in Kenya by the fact that Taliban took over control of Afghanistan in 2021 after the 20-year presence of US armed forces. Al-Shabaab in Somalia and its supporters in Kenya are now thinking that it is only a matter of time before foreign forces in Somalia would leave. The hope is that al-Shabaab will take control of Somalia and then be able to expand its breadth of attacks into Kenya and beyond.

Organized corruption and crime (Medium)

In Kenya, corruption is rampant, affecting both public and private life. According to Transparency International's CPI 2021, Kenya ranks 128th out of 180 countries. The presence of corruption in Kenya results in an inadequate punishment of perpetrators of persecution. Many institutions, including parliament, the judiciary and especially the executive arm, have been affected. This, in turn, affects the Christian communities' access to justice and protection by the police force when required. Reports also suggest that al-Shabaab managed to carry out deadly attacks by paying bribes to security officials for importing weapons and ammunition. It is in this context that the persecution of Christians must be seen. Co-opted officials do not take measures against those who persecute Christians, and this, in turn, encourages further acts of persecution.

Clan oppression (Medium)

In north-eastern Kenya, leaving Islam is seen as deserting the clan/Somali ethnicity. In addition, some of the ethnic and community leaders in the north-eastern region also share anti-Christian sentiment with the jihadists.

Drivers of persecution

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

- *Violent religious groups (Very strong):* The leading driver of persecution in Kenya is the Islamic militant group called al-Shabaab. The group originates from Somalia whose main aim is to establish an Islamic state in Somalia. Its presence in Kenya results from a retaliatory move against Kenya's armed intervention through its contribution of troops to the African Union to quell the insurrection in Somalia. The group carries out suicide bomb attacks and other brutal acts against all whom they perceive to be enemies of Islam. The group is said to have ties with militant groups in Algeria and Nigeria.

- *Non-Christian religious leaders (Strong):* Teachers at madrassas and mosques are known to be channels of background hate towards Christians. A country expert stated: "Islamic leaders have been one of the main drivers of persecution. They have fueled the level of persecution, especially against Christian converts. This is evident in various cases where they have specifically forced converts to renounce their faith and then threatening death if this was not done. This has been prevalent in the coastal areas and in the north-eastern part of Kenya."

- *Citizens - people from broader society (Strong):* In Muslim-dominated areas, the local population see Christians as foreigners and even invaders. A country expert stated: "Citizens from broader society have been sources of persecution for Christians mainly through the engine of *Islamic oppression* and in areas with Muslim majority such as north-eastern Kenya and in coastal regions of the country. This is especially evident for converts to Christianity in these areas who face the extreme danger of death or injury as they are constantly threatened by persons in their own community. Other Christians in these areas are also vulnerable to these attacks as the rhetoric of Christian inferiority and elimination created by these violent religious groups such as al-Shabaab has spread to include the wider community in these areas."
- *Family members (Strong):* The idea of leaving Islam is seen as a threat to family, community and the larger clan/ethnic group. A country researcher stated: "Extended family has been a source of persecution for Christians in Kenya, this is especially true for Christian converts from a Muslim-majority family. The narrative has been so dire that even family members are willing to act out violence against their family members."
- *Organized corruption (Medium):* The violent religious group is also using organized criminal networks to finance its operation. It is also through this that the groups manage to evade law enforcement.

Drivers of Organized corruption and crime

- *Organized crime networks (Medium):* The presence of organized corruption in the country has also made application of the rule of law difficult, hence in the process, Christians are victims of persecution and have limited course for redress.
- *Government officials (Medium):* Officials are bribed to act against the interests of Christians. This occurs especially in the area of law enforcement were trumped-up charges are brought against Christians just for being Christian. Officials also turn a blind eye to the activities of persecutors, which then encourages further acts of persecution.
- *Violent religious groups* **(Medium):** There are indications that al-Shabaab managed to carry out the deadly attacks at Garissa University in April 2015 by paying bribes to security officials for importing weapons and ammunition. Furthermore, in the north-eastern region, there are reports about al-Shabaab and its supporters creating income for operations by paying large bribes to public officials to enable illegal trade to take place via the port of Kismayo.

Drivers of Clan oppression (Medium)

- *Ethnic group leaders:* This driver operates in 'collaboration' with drivers of *Islamic oppression*. Thus, in north-eastern Kenya, leaving Islam is seen as leaving the clan and Somali ethnicity and ethnic group leaders often share anti-Christian sentiment with al-Shabaab.

Areas where Christians face most difficulties

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

Christian communities and how they are affected

Three categories of Christian communities in the country face persecution, but the level of persecution varies depending upon where they live and which Christian groups they belong to.

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

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

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

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

The Persecution pattern

WWL 2022 Persecution Pattern for Kenya
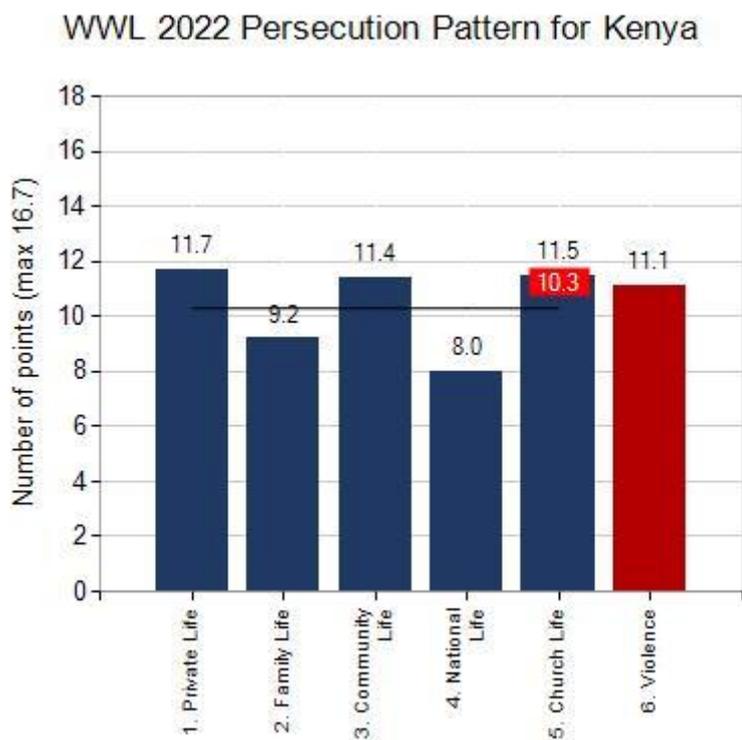
The WWL 2022 Persecution pattern for Kenya shows:

- The average pressure on Christians in Kenya has risen and is at the high level of 10.3 points.
- Except in the *National* and *Family spheres of life*, the pressure on Christians reached a level over 11 points and was highest in the *Private sphere* (11.7 points), reflecting the very high pressure on converts in the north-eastern region. The next highest pressure was found in the *Church* and *Community spheres* (11.5 and 11.4 points respectively), an indication that church activities and daily life in society are very difficult in the northeast as a result of threats from community, family, al-Shabaab and its supporters.
- The score for violence is very high at 11.1 points but decreased from 12.8 points in WWL 2021.

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)

Persecution of Christians in Kenya depends upon which locations are being considered. In the predominantly Muslim north-eastern and coastal regions of Kenya, converts face the risk of deadly attack if they reveal their conversion. These attacks could be orchestrated by family members or by members of the local community. A country expert stated: "Conversion has been opposed greatly by Muslim leaders and the Muslim community at large based in the north-eastern part of Kenya and in the coastal areas. Muslims who have converted to Christianity have been at great risk of either death or being severely beaten. There are reports of former Muslims who have converted to Christianity being forced to flee from their homes where they are in immediate danger. Such aggression is highly fueled by al-Shabaab's presence in these areas where the group has been trying to gain support among the Muslim population through the propaganda they spread against Christians."

Block 1.4: It has been risky for Christians to reveal their faith in written forms of personal expression (including expressions in blogs and Facebook etc.). (3.00 points)

In Muslim-dominated areas, Christian converts face serious backlash if they discuss matters of faith. A country expert compared the situation of other Christian groups with that of converts saying: "It has not been risky in general for Christians to reveal their faith in written forms of personal expression as the majority of the Christian population expresses themselves freely on public forums. However, for those converts from Islam in Muslim majority areas it has been risky for them to reveal their faith for fear of backlash from their former leaders and members of their community."

Block 1.7: It has been risky for Christians to speak about their faith with immediate family members. (3.00 points)

As stated by a country expert: "It is generally not risky for Christians to speak about their faith with immediate family members, however, the risk comes in areas with radical Muslim influence and this is especially true for Christian converts. Christian converts face very real danger in speaking about their faith to their Muslim family members." For Muslim community/family members in Kenya, it is unthinkable to convert to Christianity by leaving Islam.

Block 1.3: It has been dangerous to privately own or keep Christian materials. (2.75 points)

For converts, possessing Christian materials is very risky. For other Christian categories, possessing Christian materials in some areas is risky because at times al-Shabaab militants make home-to-home searches to find Christians. To avoid any detection by family, community members or al-Shabaab informants, Christians either hide their Christian materials or they do not keep them at their homes.

Pressure in Block 2 / Family sphere

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

This is a serious matter in the education system. From elementary school right up to university level, students with Christian names have been harassed, bullied and threatened on many occasions. They are often pressured into dressing like Muslim students. This issue has caused anxiety for Christian families.

Block 2.12: Christian spouses of non-Christians have been excluded from the right or opportunity to claim custody of the children in divorce cases. (2.75 points)

This is another area (related to 2.10 above) where Christians face difficulties. In addition to facing expulsion from the community, converts would also lose child custody in cases of divorce. Community and family use this as a deterrent for those considering conversion and think they can force converts to renounce their Christian faith.

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. (2.50 points)

This is similar to 20.12 and 2.10. Christians who have converted from Islam are often denied their inheritance rights in their family. As most of the inheritance issues are dealt with by elders in the community, there is no negotiation for those who leave Islam. This is seen as a warning for others who may be contemplating leaving Islam and joining another religion, for instance, Christianity.

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)

Converts are often denied access to their children as a way of pressurizing them into returning to Islam. A country expert stated: "Christian families, more so those of converts to Christianity, are being forced to separate from their families for their safety. One such family is that of Abu-Bakr, a former Muslim family of four - a wife and two children (aged 4 and 5), who converted to Christianity in November 2018. After their conversion and once the local mosque found out, their lives were threatened and they were forced to flee moving from one Christian home to another, leaving behind their rented house and two-acre land where they had planted crops. En route, they were forced to leave their children with 'Good Samaritans' for their safety".

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.). (3.25 points)

In areas where Muslims are the majority, Christians face many challenges: For instance, it is very common for grazing land or drinking water to be shared in a communal way, but this sharing is made particularly difficult for Christians in areas where the Muslim population is a majority. The

main drivers behind this persecution are primarily direct family members or members of the extended family (for converts), but also non-Christian religious leaders and ethnic group leaders.

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

Al-Shabaab is known for abducting Christians, particularly in the north-eastern and coastal areas. For instance, an Italian aid worker was abducted in November 2018 and only [released](#) in May 2020 (BBC News, 10 May 2020). According to some in-country contacts there are unreported kidnapping (for instance, when it involves suspected Somali converts).

Block 3.7: Christians have been pressured by their community to renounce their faith. (3.25 points)

For Muslim background converts, this issue is very serious. Any known convert is placed under pressure to renounce the Christian faith or face the consequences, which can include mob attack and death. For some, the only alternative is to recant their faith. In order to avoid such a scenario, most converts leave their homes and relocate to the places where they cannot be easily recognized.

Block 3.2: Christians have been monitored by their local communities or by private groups (this includes reporting to police, being shadowed, telephone lines listened to, emails read/censored, etc.). (3.00 points)

Some observers believe that there are al-Shabaab informers in local communities monitoring each and every Christian movement, particularly in the north-eastern and coastal regions. This paves the way for al-Shabaab members to identify Christian homes.

A country expert stated: "Christians with a Muslim background are being monitored either by close family relatives or by their community. This stems from the influence of al-Shabaab, whose one of many aims is to eradicate Christianity. They have indoctrinated the population to believe that Christianity is evil and must be eradicated so as to be able to gain wide support from the population. These Christians' daily movements are observed through shadowing, causing fear among the convert population in the north-eastern areas of Kenya."

Now that elections are due in August 2022, more monitoring is taking place, sometimes carried out by local officials. This is done to make sure that Christians leave certain areas so that they do not 'change the pattern of voting' in those areas.

Pressure in Block 4 / National sphere

Block 4.4: Christians have been hindered in travelling for faith-related reasons. (3.25 points)

There have been well-documented cases in the past where Christian passengers were taken off buses, separated from the other passengers and killed. In this context, Christians traveling in the North East, Tana River, and Lamu Counties have continued to face the constant threat of attack. This has greatly limited travel for Christians, particularly for those engaging in evangelism. Traveling has cost Christians their life and property.

Block 4.5: Christians have been discriminated against when engaging with the authorities (local administration, government, army, etc.) for faith-related reasons. (2.75 points)

Corruption, ethnicity and faith-affiliation all play a vital role when dealing with the authorities. In the north-eastern and coastal areas, religion plays a key role and Christians in those areas are discriminated against at many levels. Furthermore, Christians face serious discrimination through the country's administration where Muslims are the overwhelming majority,

Block 4.8: Christians have been hindered in expressing their views or opinions in public. (2.75 points)

Even though freedom of religion and expression are respected at the national level, this issue is problematic at the county level. A country expert reported: "One interviewee said: 'It's just common sense. You do not speak about religion, or about the Church around Muslims if you want to be safe. You learn this very quickly after getting to the coast. It's one of the first things people tell you. But, they are allowed to speak about Mohammed and so on. You live with it.' This was the NGO worker speaking of her experience in Mombasa, Kwale, Tana-River and Lamu Counties." At times, speaking about persecution and/or Christian faith can be costly.

Block 4.6: Christians have been barred from public office, or has promotion been hindered for faith-related reasons. (2.25 points)

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

Block 4 - further information

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

Pressure in Block 5 / Church sphere

Block 5.1: Church activities have been monitored, hindered, disturbed, or obstructed. (3.25 points)

This depends on where the churches are located. In the north-eastern and coastal areas, this problem has been apparent for years, but it has now been exacerbated by the infiltration of al-Shabaab. Many Christians avoid going to church for fear of attack and there is little confidence in the government to protect them. As a result, it is common that congregations in the region

that used to have hundreds of worshipers on Sundays now only have a few gathering for worship. A country researcher stated: "To the degree that almost all churches in Kenya now have to have armed security due to the continuing terror attack threats - this is an obstruction of their activities. In some areas, particularly the Muslim-dominated communities of Wajir, Marsabit, Mandera, Garissa, and Lamu, churches cannot hold night services and in many instances are denied permits for open-air meetings and evangelism. Muslims suffer no similar limitations and can freely carry out their religious activities."

Block 5.14: Openly selling or distributing Bibles (or other Christian materials) has been hindered. (3.25 points)

The situation here is similar to 5.1 described above. In areas dominated by a Muslim population, such activities are likely to provoke attack by a local mob, or the names of the Christians involved could be passed on to al-Shabaab and its supporters. A country expert noted: "Openly selling or distributing Bibles and other Christian materials in the counties of Garrisa, Wajir and Lamu will attract the wrong kind of attention. It has not been officially banned or hindered but the violence of al-Shabaab has scared Christians from doing this."

Block 5.5: Churches have been hindered from organizing Christian activities outside church buildings. (3.00 points)

Any form of gathering outside churches is likely to invite attacks in the north-eastern and coastal region, particularly in Wajir, Mandera, and Lamu, since Christians are a primary target of al-Shabaab, whose supporters have infiltrated the surrounding society. Christians therefore often avoid carrying out outside activities in some of the risky areas in the country.

Block 5.3: Christian communities have been hindered in building or renovating church buildings or in claiming historical religious premises and places of worship which had been taken from them earlier. (2.75 points)

In the north-eastern and coastal areas, Christians are not renovating or building new churches, primarily because of the threat they face from attacks by local radical Muslims and al-Shabaab. This has resulted in churches being closed down or abandoned. It is also important to note that many Christians have been forced to relocate from some places in the north-eastern region as they have become under constant threat.

Block 5 - further information

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

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.*

| Kenya: Violence Block question	WWL 2022	WWL 2021
6.1 How many Christians have been killed for faith-related reasons (including state sanctioned executions)?	3	17
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	7
6.3 How many Christians have been detained for faith-related reasons?	0	2
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)?	3	4
6.6 How many Christians have been raped or otherwise sexually harassed for faith-related reasons?	10 *	2
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)?	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?	16	10 *
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?	10 *	100 *
6.11 How many Christians have been forced to leave their homes or go into hiding in-country for faith-related reasons?	100 *	100
6.12 How many Christians have been forced to leave the country for faith-related reasons?	1	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

| Kenya: WWL 2018 - WWL 2022 Persecution Pattern history	Average pressure over 5 Spheres of life
2022	10.3
2021	9.9
2020	10.5
2019	10.4
2018	10.5

Except for a drop in WWL 2021, the average pressure on Christians has consistently been at a level within the range 10.3 - 10.5 points.

5 Year trends: Pressure in each sphere of life
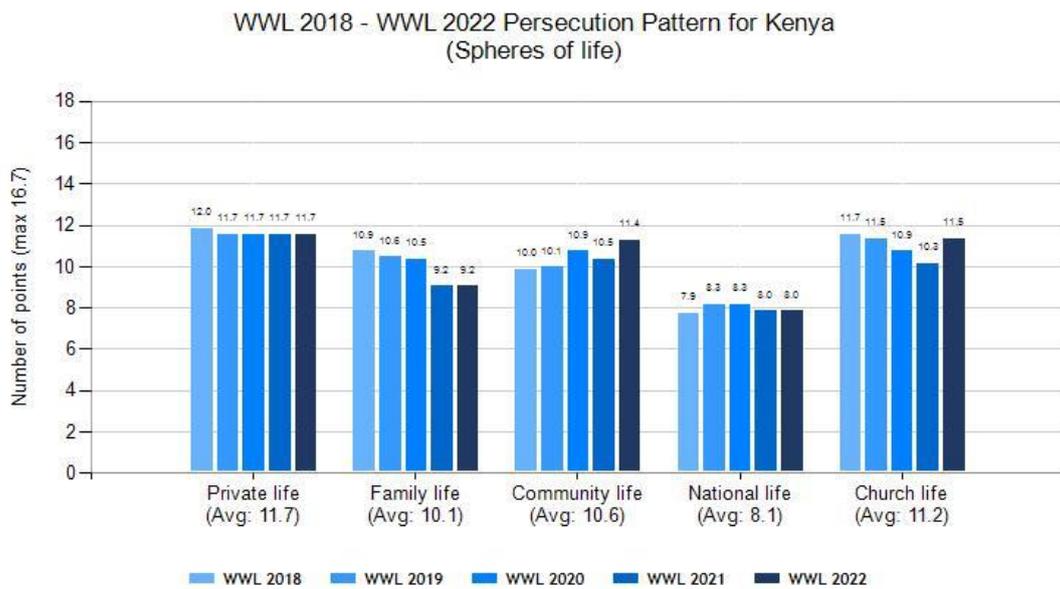
The chart above shows that the level of pressure on Christians in all *spheres of life* has been high or very high. Except for the *National sphere of life*, all other spheres have an average score of over ten points. Pressure has been consistently highest (and most stable) in the *Private sphere*.

5 Year trends: Violence against Christians
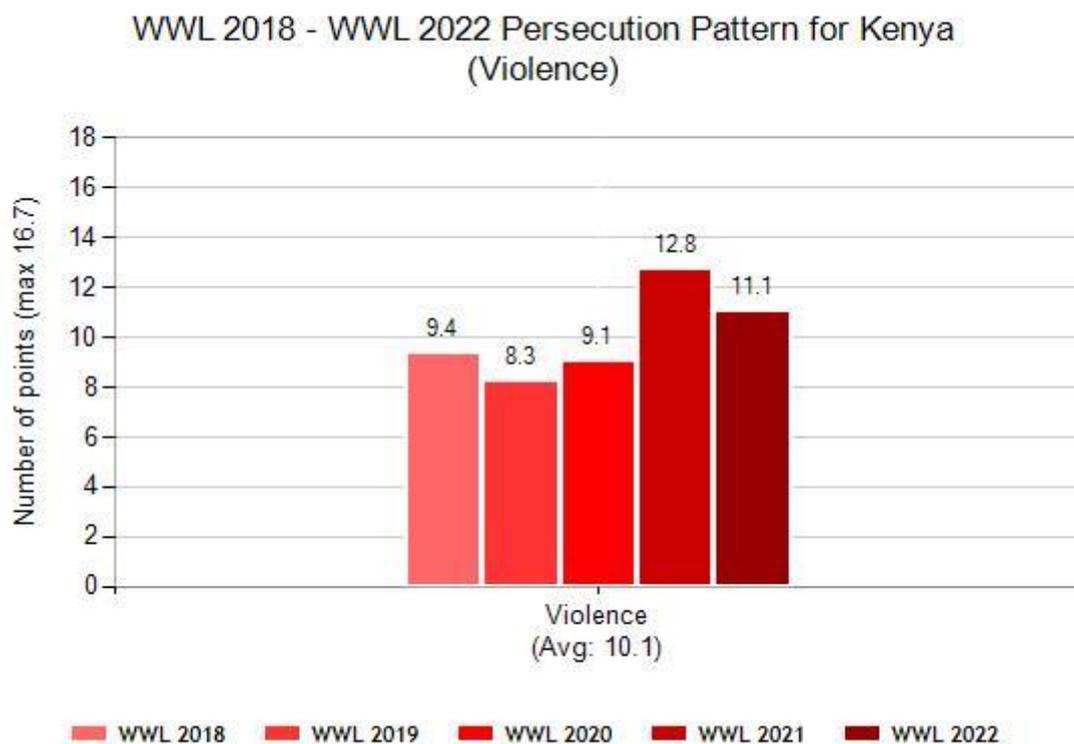
The violence scores over the last five reporting periods have varied according to the number of attacks perpetrated by al-Shabaab and their supporters. The average score is 10.1 points, which is very high.

Gender-specific religious persecution / Female

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

In the Muslim-majority regions of Kenya, Christian women and girls face multiple forms of persecution. Although the Constitution fully establishes gender equality, cultural practices in some tribes (such as funeral rites, FGM, early marriage and polygamy) leave Christian women at

greater risk of persecution if they oppose these practices. In addition, a lack of effective implementation of the Constitution has caused growing dissatisfaction among the Kenyan population. David Marage, Kenya's Chief Justice, stated in 2020: "In my view the constitution of Kenya is one of the best constitutions in the world, if only we could implement it." (BBC News, 30 August 2020).

In the northern regions, Christian women and girls continue to face harassment and social rejection. Women and girls are forced to comply with an Islamic dress code. If they fail to do so they could be asked to leave their school, harassed and threatened. Women even encounter discrimination in hospitals. Pregnant women in maternity wards have reportedly been neglected by Muslim medical practitioners in the country of Wajir, endangering the life of both the mother and baby. In addition, female Christians report that they are more vulnerable to sexual harassment and rape.

Female converts to Christianity from Islam face a great variety of forms of pressure. The first measures taken are to isolate them from Christian community and put them under house arrest. If married, they risk being denied custody of their children and divorced. If single, and especially if young, they face the likelihood of a forced marriage – usually to a much older Muslim man.

In extreme circumstances, northern Kenyan women have reportedly been kidnapped or deceived by al-Shabaab fighters and forced to be sex slaves or wives (UNODC 'Trafficking in Persons in the Context of Armed Conflict', 2018).

Gender-specific religious persecution / Male

Group	Male Pressure Points
Economic	Denied inheritance or possessions; Economic harassment via business/job/work access
Political and Legal	False charges; Imprisonment by government
Security	Forced to flee town/country; Military/militia conscription/service against conscience; Violence – death; Violence – physical
Social and Cultural	Denied access to social community/networks; Violence – psychological; Violence – Verbal
Technological	-

Christian boys and men in the north-eastern region in particular face the greatest danger of physical assault and execution at the hands of radical Muslims and al-Shabaab. Whilst instances are rare, men are also more likely than women to be imprisoned for their faith. Men and boys also face the threat of isolation and societal condemnation when they go against the cultural norms. Those who oppose negative cultural practices in some tribes (such as funeral rites, FGM, early marriages and polygamy) suffer varying levels of persecution. Their families are not accepted in the community as they are considered 'cursed' or 'not real men' (if they opt for hospital circumcision). Converts from a Muslim background may be denied their inheritance

rights, putting them in a weak financial position. As men are the main providers in Kenya, this also affects the wider family.

Persecution of other religious minorities

In some parts of Kenya, Muslims - especially those with Somali background - face discrimination in Christian dominated areas. According to the US State Department (IRFR 2020):

- "Muslim leaders continued to state that police often linked the whole Muslim community to al-Shabaab. In a survey conducted in six counties in late 2019, Muslim respondents said they believed authorities unfairly targeted them for security checks, making it difficult for them to move freely and conduct business. IPOA and human rights organizations reported numerous complaints from predominantly Muslim communities, particularly in the Eastleigh neighborhood of Nairobi and coastal regions, regarding intimidation, arbitrary arrest, and extortion by police. Some complainants stated police accused them of being members of al-Shabaab."

Concerning other religious groups in the country, there are no reports that suggest their persecution.

Future outlook

Kenya has seen significant political, structural and economic reforms that have largely driven sustained economic growth, social development and political gains over the past decade. However, its key development challenges still include poverty, inequality and the vulnerability of the economy to internal and external shocks. The country is still open to security threats as long as Kenyan armed forces remain involved in the conflict in Somalia since al-Shabaab mainly attacks Kenya in retaliation for its involvement in Somalia.

The outlook for Christians as viewed through the lens of:

Islamic oppression (blended at times with Clan oppression)

This has been the main Persecution engine in Kenya for many years. The threat from al-Shabaab has been constantly causing serious problems for the country in general and Christians in particular. Killings, abduction and attacks on churches have taken place on a regular basis, particularly in the coastal and north-eastern areas. Unless al-Shabaab is defeated, this militant group is likely to continue recruiting young Kenyan Muslims into its ranks. Furthermore, persecution that results from family and community members will remain regardless of what would happen to al-Shabaab. This is because, in Muslim-dominated areas, religion and ethnic identity are intertwined.

Organized corruption and crime

As one of the most corrupt nations globally (ranking 128 out of 180 countries in Transparency International's CPI 2021), Kenya's political culture tolerates corruption at all levels. This tolerance has even led some analysts to believe it has helped al-Shabaab to carry out some of the deadly attacks in the country. In the past there was even a report (which was rejected by the Kenyan army) that accused the Kenya army of "taking a cut of the illegal sugar and charcoal

trade in Somalia that provides the bulk of funding for terror group al-Shabaab which it is meant to be fighting" (The Telegraph, 12 November 2015). The corruption at local authority level will particularly remain a challenge to churches. The upcoming 2022 elections can only exacerbate what has already been a corrupt system.

Regional issues

Ethiopia has withdrawn thousands of troops from Somalia (All Africa, 22 December 2020). If it continues to withdraw troops, al-Shabaab is likely to get even stronger and become more challenging for Kenya (particularly for Christians in north-eastern areas) and the entire region In addition, the problems in neighboring Somalia between the president, prime minister and other powerful people have created a toxic environment which can also serve as an encouragement for the al-Shabaab camp.

2022 Election

Kenya is set to hold crucial presidential and parliamentary elections in August 2022. It is a very divided nation and politics follow ethnic lines. Any post-election violence would give al-Shabaab further opportunities in the country.

External Links - Persecution Dynamics

- Persecution engines description: report - https://ctc.usma.edu/east-africas-terrorist-triple-helix-dusit-hotel-attack-historical-evolution-jihadi-threat/
- Block 3.3: Christians have been under threat of abduction and/or forced marriage. (3.25 points): released - https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-africa-52608614
- Gender-specific religious persecution Female description: stated - https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-africa-53935125
- Gender-specific religious persecution Female description: UNODC 'Trafficking in Persons in the Context of Armed Conflict', 2018 - https://www.unodc.org/documents/data-and-analysis/glotip/2018/GloTIP2018_BOOKLET_2_Conflict.pdf
- Future outlook: Kenya army - https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/africaandindianocean/kenya/11991497/Kenyan-army-profiting-from-illicit-trade-that-props-up-al-Shabaab.html
- Future outlook: thousands of troops - https://allafrica.com/stories/202012220086.html

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=Kenya
- https://www.worldwatchmonitor.org/countries/Kenya
- KENYA – Ethnic cleansing – 2016

External Links - Further useful reports

- Further useful reports: KENYA – Ethnic cleansing – 2016 - https://opendoorsanalytical.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/10/Kenya-Ethnic-cleansing.pdf