

---

World Watch Research

---

# Cuba: Persecution Dynamics

December 2024



**OpenDoors**

Serving persecuted **Christians** worldwide

Open Doors International / World Watch Research

December 2024

© Open Doors International

[research@od.org](mailto:research@od.org)

# Contents

World Watch List 2025 – Top 50.....	2
World Watch List 2025 – Ranks 51-78 .....	4
Copyright, sources and definitions .....	5
Reporting period .....	5
Brief country details.....	5
Map of country .....	6
Dominant persecution engines and drivers.....	7
Brief description of the persecution situation.....	7
Summary of international obligations and rights violations.....	7
Specific examples of violations of rights in the reporting period .....	8
Specific examples of positive developments .....	8
Christian communities and how they are affected.....	8
Areas where Christians face most difficulties.....	9
Position on the World Watch List .....	9
Persecution engines.....	10
Drivers of persecution.....	12
The Persecution pattern .....	14
Pressure in the 5 spheres of life.....	15
Violence .....	24
5 Year trends.....	26
Gender-specific religious persecution / Female .....	28
Gender-specific religious persecution / Male .....	28
Persecution of other religious minorities .....	29
Trends Summary .....	29
Further useful reports.....	30
External Links .....	30

## World Watch List 2025 – Top 50

Rank	Country	Private life	Family life	Community life	National life	Church life	Violence	Total Score WWL 2025	Total Score WWL 2024	Total Score WWL 2023	Total Score WWL 2022	Total Score WWL 2021
1	North Korea	16.7	16.7	16.7	16.7	16.7	14.4	98	96	98	96	94
2	Somalia	16.5	16.7	16.6	16.6	16.7	11.1	94	93	92	91	92
3	Yemen	16.7	16.7	16.7	16.7	16.7	10.6	94	89	89	88	87
4	Libya	16.0	16.2	15.9	16.2	16.4	10.6	91	91	88	91	92
5	Sudan	14.1	14.2	15.5	14.9	15.3	16.1	90	87	83	79	79
6	Eritrea	14.6	14.9	15.5	15.9	15.9	12.2	89	89	89	88	88
7	Nigeria	13.5	13.9	14.6	14.9	14.5	16.7	88	88	88	87	85
8	Pakistan	13.6	13.9	15.0	15.0	12.9	16.7	87	87	86	87	88
9	Iran	15.0	14.6	13.5	15.9	16.5	10.9	86	86	86	85	86
10	Afghanistan	15.6	15.9	15.9	16.4	16.7	5.0	85	84	84	98	94
11	India	12.2	12.9	13.3	14.9	13.9	16.5	84	83	82	82	83
12	Saudi Arabia	15.2	15.3	14.8	15.8	16.6	3.3	81	81	80	81	78
13	Myanmar	12.6	11.1	13.5	14.1	12.9	16.5	81	79	80	79	74
14	Mali	11.1	10.1	14.7	13.0	15.2	15.6	80	79	76	70	67
15	China	13.2	10.1	12.8	14.6	16.1	11.1	78	78	77	76	74
16	Maldives	15.6	15.3	13.7	15.8	16.5	0.7	78	78	77	77	77
17	Iraq	14.2	14.4	14.3	14.8	13.9	6.1	78	79	76	78	82
18	Syria	13.5	14.4	13.9	14.4	14.3	7.0	78	81	80	78	81
19	Algeria	14.7	14.3	11.5	14.7	16.0	6.3	77	79	73	71	70
20	Burkina Faso	11.7	9.7	13.2	11.5	14.0	15.6	76	75	71	68	67
21	Morocco	13.2	13.8	11.6	12.9	14.3	8.3	74	71	69	69	67
22	Laos	11.8	10.7	13.5	14.1	13.9	9.8	74	75	68	69	71
23	Mauritania	14.6	14.2	13.8	14.2	14.2	2.8	74	72	72	70	71
24	Bangladesh	12.4	10.6	12.7	11.3	10.4	16.1	74	71	69	68	67
25	Uzbekistan	14.6	12.7	13.5	12.4	15.5	4.4	73	71	71	71	71
26	Cuba	13.2	8.5	13.9	13.3	15.1	9.1	73	73	70	66	62
27	CAR	10.3	8.6	13.9	9.6	14.0	15.6	72	70	70	68	66
28	Niger	9.4	9.6	14.5	7.7	14.6	15.7	72	70	70	68	62

Rank	Country	Private life	Family life	Community life	National life	Church life	Violence	Total Score WWL 2025	Total Score WWL 2024	Total Score WWL 2023	Total Score WWL 2022	Total Score WWL 2021
29	Turkmenistan	14.3	12.3	13.6	13.9	15.3	1.5	71	70	70	69	70
30	Nicaragua	12.4	7.6	13.7	13.3	14.1	9.6	71	70	65	56	51
31	Mexico	11.7	9.0	12.5	11.8	11.0	14.6	71	68	67	65	64
32	Oman	14.5	14.1	10.9	13.8	14.1	3.0	70	69	65	66	63
33	Ethiopia	9.9	9.7	12.6	10.4	12.1	15.6	70	69	66	66	65
34	Tunisia	12.4	13.2	10.1	12.6	13.8	8.1	70	69	67	66	67
35	DRC	8.0	7.9	12.6	10.8	14.5	16.1	70	67	67	66	64
36	Bhutan	13.2	13.2	12.3	14.1	14.2	2.2	69	68	66	67	64
37	Mozambique	9.3	8.5	13.9	8.4	12.5	15.9	68	68	68	65	63
38	Kazakhstan	13.3	11.6	12.2	12.8	14.2	4.3	68	65	65	64	64
39	Tajikistan	14.1	12.7	12.7	13.2	13.7	1.9	68	66	66	65	66
40	Egypt	12.7	13.7	12.1	12.4	10.9	6.3	68	68	68	71	75
41	Qatar	14.2	14.2	10.5	13.2	14.4	0.7	67	67	68	74	67
42	Comoros	12.7	14.0	11.2	12.4	14.2	2.6	67	66	66	63	62
43	Cameroon	8.8	7.6	12.6	8.4	13.1	16.1	67	66	65	65	64
44	Vietnam	10.8	9.5	12.2	14.1	14.1	5.9	67	68	70	71	72
45	Turkey	13.0	11.7	11.7	13.2	11.5	5.4	67	64	66	65	69
46	Colombia	11.0	7.9	12.7	11.5	10.5	12.6	66	68	71	68	67
47	Kyrgyzstan	13.5	10.3	11.7	11.4	12.4	6.9	66	59	59	58	58
48	Brunei	14.8	14.8	10.8	10.8	14.0	0.6	66	66	65	64	64
49	Chad	11.0	8.2	10.2	9.9	10.3	15.9	65	61	58	55	53
50	Jordan	12.9	14.3	10.4	12.2	12.8	2.4	65	65	65	66	64

## World Watch List 2025 – Ranks 51-78

Rank	Country	Private life	Family life	Community life	National life	Church life	Violence	Total Score WWL 2025	Total Score WWL 2024	Total Score WWL 2023	Total Score WWL 2022	Total Score WWL 2021
51	Malaysia	12.8	13.7	11.7	12.4	11.2	3.0	65	64	66	63	63
52	Azerbaijan	13.3	10.2	9.6	12.2	13.7	5.6	65	60	59	60	56
53	Kenya	10.3	9.2	11.4	8.0	11.5	13.9	64	63	64	63	62
54	Nepal	12.2	10.6	9.5	12.6	12.3	5.9	63	62	61	64	66
55	Tanzania	9.3	10.8	10.3	8.6	8.7	15.4	63	62	63	61	58
56	Russian Federation	12.7	7.9	10.7	13.1	14.1	4.4	63	58	57	56	57
57	Djibouti	12.3	12.6	12.7	10.1	12.1	1.7	61	61	60	59	56
58	Kuwait	13.1	13.6	9.4	12.0	12.2	0.9	61	61	64	64	63
59	Indonesia	10.9	11.9	10.9	11.6	10.2	5.7	61	66	68	68	63
60	UAE	13.3	13.4	9.5	11.3	12.8	0.6	61	61	62	62	62
61	Sri Lanka	12.7	8.7	11.5	11.5	8.5	7.6	60	60	57	63	62
62	Palestinian Territories	13.1	13.3	10.3	10.7	12.1	0.2	60	60	60	59	58
63	Burundi	7.6	7.8	9.4	9.8	9.7	14.6	59	57	55	52	48
64	Rwanda	9.4	7.7	9.0	10.4	12.1	9.4	58	58	57	50	42
65	Honduras	7.9	4.7	11.7	7.3	9.9	13.1	55	55	53	48	46
66	Togo	9.2	6.7	10.4	7.1	11.5	9.3	54	52	49	44	43
67	Bahrain	12.0	13.2	8.6	11.3	8.5	0.6	54	55	55	57	56
68	Guinea	10.3	7.5	8.3	8.3	10.5	8.9	54	52	48	43	47
69	Ukraine	6.8	5.0	7.8	12.5	13.5	7.2	53	44	37	37	34
70	Angola	6.8	6.7	8.1	11.5	11.4	8.3	53	52	52	51	46
71	Venezuela	6.3	4.4	11.1	10.0	10.8	9.6	52	53	56	51	39
72	Uganda	8.1	5.0	7.4	6.7	8.8	16.1	52	52	51	48	47
73	Ivory Coast	12.0	6.5	8.7	5.9	8.0	9.6	51	44	44	42	42
74	Lebanon	11.5	10.1	7.0	6.2	6.7	7.2	49	48	40	35	34
75	Gambia	8.3	8.2	8.9	8.8	8.9	4.4	48	47	44	44	43
76	South Sudan	5.7	4.4	7.0	6.3	8.1	15.6	47	46	46	43	43

Rank	Country	Private life	Family life	Community life	National life	Church life	Violence	Total Score WWL 2025	Total Score WWL 2024	Total Score WWL 2023	Total Score WWL 2022	Total Score WWL 2021
77	Belarus	9.9	3.7	5.0	10.8	14.1	3.1	47	46	43	33	30
78	Philippines	9.2	6.6	6.6	6.1	5.7	8.5	43	40	32	34	26

## Copyright, sources and definitions

World Watch Research has divided up the previously named Full Country Dossier into two separate documents:

- [Background country information](#) (published annually in summer)
- Persecution dynamics (published annually in January).

These documents are the property of World Watch Research (WWR), the research department of Open Doors International. They include data and analysis based around Open Doors World Watch List (WWL) and 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 end of each document under the heading “External links”. These documents may be used and distributed free of charge, but please always acknowledge the source as: © Open Doors International.

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 can be found on the research pages of the Open Doors website: <https://www.opendoors.org/en-US/research-reports/wwl-documentation/>.

## Reporting period

The WWL 2025 reporting period was 1 October 2023 - 30 September 2024.

## Brief country details

Cuba: Population (UN estimate for 2024)	Christians	Chr%
11,175,000	6,843,000	61.2

*Zurlo G A and Johnson T M, eds., World Christian Database, Leiden/Boston: Brill, accessed May 2024*

Cuba: Religious context	Number of adherents	%
Christians	6,843,000	61.2
Muslim	9,200	0.1
Hindu	23,500	0.2
Buddhist	6,200	0.1
Ethnic religionist	0	0.0
Jewish	810	0.0
Bahai	1,200	0.0
Atheist	475,000	4.3
Agnostic	1,879,000	16.8
Other	1,937,510	17.3
<i>OTHER includes Chinese folk, New religionist, Sikh, Spiritist, Taoist, Confucianist, Jain, Shintoist, Zoroastrian.</i>		

Zurlo G A and Johnson T M, eds., World Christian Database, Leiden/Boston: Brill, accessed May 2024

## Map of country



## Dominant persecution engines and drivers

Cuba: Main Persecution engines	Main drivers
Dictatorial paranoia	Government officials, Political parties, Ideological pressure groups, Citizens (people from the broader society), including mobs
Communist and post-Communist oppression	Government officials, Political parties, Ideological pressure groups, Citizens (people from the broader society), including mobs
Secular intolerance	Government officials, Ideological pressure groups, Political parties

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

### Brief description of the persecution situation

Since 1959 Cuba has been governed by a single party, the Communist Party of Cuba, which seeks to control the Church according to its Communist ideology. The government reacts harshly against opposition voices and demonstrators. When church leaders or Christian activists criticize the regime, they face several forms of systematic hostility such as summons for interrogation, arrest, smear campaigns, mobility restrictions, prison sentences and/or harassment by the government and its sympathizers (usually called "repudiation acts" and might include damage to Christian-owned buildings and physical violence towards individuals). These repressive measures can also include hostility towards family members and the threat of their losing custody of their children. Also, with the aim of controlling and reducing the Church's influence, the authorities refuse applications for the registration of new churches or do not respond to long-pending applications of certain religious groups, thus forcing many churches to operate illegally and increasing their vulnerability to state action targeting them. The authorities are then likely to impose penalties such as the complete refusal to issue any licenses, the imposition of fines, the confiscation of property, closure of churches (including house-churches), even demolition.

### Summary of international obligations and rights violations

Cuba 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 \(CRC\)](#)

\*Cuba has only signed the ICCPR but not ratified it.



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

- Christians are harassed in the workplace and face discrimination because of their faith (ICCPR Art. 26)
- Christians are arrested for speaking up for their rights (ICCPR Arts. 9 and 19)
- If arrested, Christians experience beatings and pressure to renounce their faith (ICCPR Arts. 18 and 10)
- Christian children are ostracized at school and pressured to abandon their faith (ICCPR Art. 18; CRC Arts. 14 and 24)

## Specific examples of violations of rights in the reporting period

- **June 2024:** Pastor Lorenzo Rosales Fajardo has endured severe mistreatment while being held in Palma Soriano prison. Since 2012, he faced ongoing harassment due to his involvement in local protests and was sentenced to eight years in prison following a trial in December 2021. On 4 June 2024, it was reported that Rosales Fajardo was severely beaten and abused while in detention (USCIRF, accessed 16 December 2024).
- **March 2024, Havana:** Roman Catholic priest Jorge Luis Pérez Soto reported on Facebook that he was denied entry to the Manuel Fajardo Hospital to visit a Christian patient in a serious condition (Facebook post, 7 March 2024).
- **November 2023, Mayabeque:** Roman Catholic priest Kenny Fernandez reported on social media that the Madruga church had been targeted for robbery for the second time in 43 days. According to the priest, the thief entered his room in the parish house and stole 2,500 pesos at around 3:00 pm. The first robbery in the same church occurred on 26 September 2023 (Facebook post, 8 November 2023).

## Specific examples of positive developments

The situation of Christians in the country has become a worldwide cause for concern. Various international organizations have highlighted and condemned the continual violations of religious freedom and other rights in Cuba (Infobae, 15 January 2024).

## Christian communities and how they are affected

**Communities of expatriate Christians:** Expatriate Christians are not isolated from interaction with other Christians in Cuba and so are not treated as a separate category in WWL analysis.

**Historical Christian communities:** Examples are the Roman Catholic Church, the Orthodox Church and Episcopal, Presbyterian, Lutheran and Methodist churches. These churches are monitored and face state action if material or preaching opposing Communist ideology is discovered and when they support demonstrators, especially youth. They may also be criticized by leaders of politicized churches, ideological pressure groups and harassed by regime sympathizers. Some churches belonging to this category are not officially recognized by the State and are not affiliated with the Council of Churches of Cuba, which is part of the regime's structure. In such cases, they may suffer the same consequences as unregistered, non-traditional church groups.

**Converts:** This category includes converts from the Santeria cult or the Communist Party. Converts are often rejected by government officials and subjected to reprisals when they belong to a church considered a regime opponent or when the church's leaders are regarded as counter-revolutionaries. Thus, through intimidation and hostility, attempts are made to discourage conversion. Preventing the growth of the Church in this way is a means of preventing the number of potential regime opponents increasing.

**Non-traditional Christian communities:** This category is made up mainly of Pentecostal and Evangelical groups and also includes Baptist churches. As well as facing the same challenges as Historical Christian communities, when they are considered enemies of the government or counter-revolutionaries, it is almost impossible (in practice) for these church groups to obtain registration and have the same civil rights as churches with state recognition. Due to this impediment, these congregations and their leaders face higher levels of repression and harassment, since they are forced to act outside the law. Most of the time they gather in house-churches in members' homes and have to live with the fear of being prosecuted by the regime or Communist Party militants. As a consequence, when government agents raid house-churches, they are also endangering family homes.

## Areas where Christians face most difficulties

Incidents of persecution against Christians occur throughout the country. Particular hotspots are the capital, La Havana, and provinces in the eastern part of the island.

## Position on the World Watch List

Cuba: World Watch List	Points	WWL Rank
WWL 2025	73	26
WWL 2024	73	22
WWL 2023	70	27
WWL 2022	66	37
WWL 2021	62	51

Average pressure remained stable at a very high level (12.8 points). Although the violence score increased from 8.7 points in WWL 2024 to 9.1 points, this did not affect the rounded WWL 2025 score, which remained at 73 points, as in WWL 2024. This very high score reflects the systematic repression of Christians considered enemies of the regime, especially of those affiliated with unregistered churches, which are under constant government surveillance. Because of church ministry among the most vulnerable in society, churches often face obstacles and reprisals, especially when church leaders are outspoken critics of the living conditions imposed by the Communist government model.

## Persecution engines

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

*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.*

### **Communist and post-Communist oppression (Strong) - blended with Secular intolerance (Medium)**

After the Cuban revolution (1953-1958), the country was structured as a Communist state. Even though there have been adjustments to the original Communist postulates, the country is still ruled according to that political and economic model, and the new Constitution (which came into force in April 2019) has strengthened the Communist Party of Cuba which is referred to as the leading force for both society and state. This means it is a constitutional requirement - also for religious bodies - to submit to Communist party ideology. The legal framework has been adapted so that religious communities are now subject to the government's Office of Religious Affairs, which is linked to the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Cuba.

Apart from the virtual idolization of Fidel Castro and the Communist Party, religion does not play a central role in society. The activities of churches considered regime-friendly are accepted, insofar as they do not interfere with the interests of the regime with respect to citizen control. However, neither official registration nor church membership in the Cuban Council of Churches prevents regime reprisals taking place where churches do not adhere to the core values of the ruling Communist Party. Churches that are denied registration (mostly Protestant/Evangelical) are frequent victims of abuses by the government and are particularly harshly treated if they try to publicize the violations made against them.

*Communist and post-Communist oppression* is also blended with *Secular intolerance*: Through public policies and legislative proposals (such as the Family Code), the ruling Communist Party has shown support for demands promoted by pressure groups that counter traditional Christian values. It has also increased levels of repression against any Christian community opposing the new legal regulations which promote intolerance of the Church's teaching on the biblical model of family. These regulations

can justify the criminalization of Christian parents if they do not conform to the ideological postulates promoted by the government (Evangelical Focus, 3 May 2022). Thus, parents who wish to avoid regime indoctrination at school and raise their children according to their Christian faith are regarded by the authorities as enemies of the revolution.

### **Dictatorial paranoia (Strong)**

This Persecution engine is also blended with *Communist and post-Communist oppression*.

Given that the Communist Party is the only constitutionally recognized political party, anyone questioning the authority of its leaders - whether for reasons of faith or otherwise - is labeled an enemy of the regime. The 2019 Constitution keeps politics in line with the Cuban revolution and safeguards the need to maintain a system of total monitoring. Such totalitarian control has resulted in years of excessive restrictions and infringement of citizens' rights. Corruption and impunity have been used as ways to maintain Communist party power.

Due to the restrictions on the religious freedom of Christians and church activities, Christians have at times been forced to act against their beliefs not only to avoid being targeted by the regime but also simply to gain access to basic services. In this respect, the COVID-19 crisis and the wave of protests in 2021 and 2022 (especially those in July 2021) all served as a convenient opportunity for the regime to increase the levels of repression against any Christians not willing to align with the interests of the government.

The government controls the state apparatus at all levels and there is no independent authority to ensure respect for the rule of law or to guarantee the human rights of citizens. Unregistered churches and their leaders are particularly vulnerable, since they conduct their church activities illegally, with the constant fear of being discovered and punished with closure, demolition and arrests. Christians from any denomination (including the Catholic Church) have no legitimate space to express themselves freely without fear of reprisals. When they have tried to do so - e.g., by criticizing government actions or by providing support to protestors - they have been the target of arbitrary arrests, abductions and attacks that sometimes continue for over a year.

## Drivers of persecution

Cuba: Drivers of Persecution	IO	RN	ERH	CO	CDP	CPCO	SI	DPA	OCC
	-	-	-	-	VERY WEAK	STRONG	MEDIUM	STRONG	WEAK
Government officials	-	-	-	-	Very weak	Strong	Medium	Strong	Weak
Ethnic group leaders	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Non-Christian religious leaders	-	-	-	-	-	Very weak	Very weak	Very weak	-
Religious leaders of other churches	-	-	-	-	Very weak	Weak	-	Weak	-
Violent religious groups	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Ideological pressure groups	-	-	-	-	-	Medium	Medium	Medium	-
Citizens (people from the broader society), including mobs	-	-	-	-	-	Medium	Weak	Medium	Very weak
One's own (extended) family	-	-	-	-	-	Very weak	Very weak	Very weak	-
Political parties	-	-	-	-	-	Strong	Medium	Strong	Weak
Revolutionaries or paramilitary groups	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Organized crime cartels or networks	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Multilateral organizations (e.g. UN, OIC etc.) and embassies	-	-	-	-	-	Very weak	Very weak	Very weak	-

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 Communist and post-Communist oppression (blended with Secular intolerance):***

- **Government officials (Strong):** Even though the 2019 Constitution has brought superficial changes to leadership and governmental structure, in practice, government officials at all levels are loyal to the Communist Party as before and all their activities aim to fulfill the regime interests. The authorities encourage the virtual deification of Fidel Castro and openly promote Santeria practices as well as the demands of some ideological pressure groups. Also, the Cuban Council of Churches (CCC) and related offices act as a government-controlled group in the way it opposes and represses any Christian individuals and churches that fail to follow the guidelines of the government.
- **Political parties (Strong):** The country has a single political party, the Communist Party, which aims to uphold Communist values throughout the country. There is no true democracy and no space for the Church to speak out in public and operate freely. On the contrary, where churches and Christians are discovered acting against Communist values and Party demands, they become a frequent target for oppressive measures.
- **Ideological pressure groups (Medium):** Examples of such groups are: “Union of Young Communists”, “Cuba Central Worker”, “Federation of Cuban Women”, “National Association of Small Farmers”, “José Martí Pioneers Organization”, “Student Federation of Secondary Education”, “University Student Federation”, among others. Members of these groups encourage action to be taken against churches not aligned with regime interests. They defend the regime’s Communist principles and some actively support issues related to sexual education in schools.
- **Citizens (Medium):** They are mainly represented by the Committees for the Defense of the Revolution (CDR) who are an important arm of the regime, since they act as 'agents' to monitor and control Christian (and social) activities throughout the island.

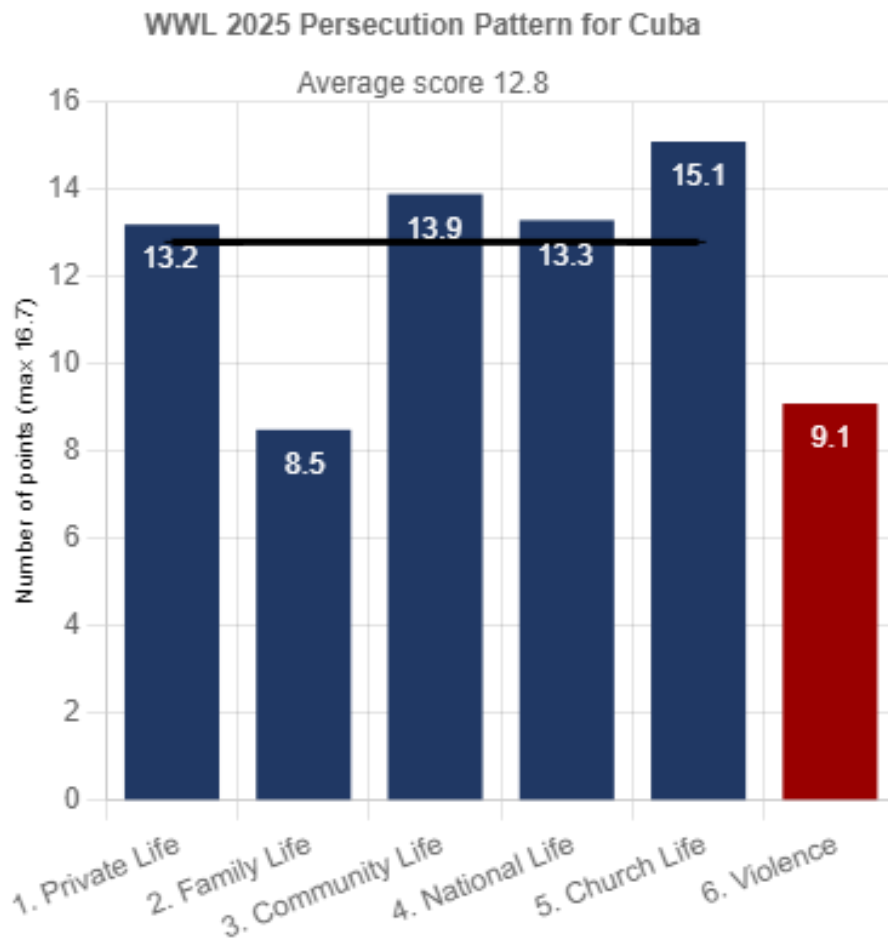
***Drivers of Dictatorial paranoia (blended with Communist and post-Communist oppression)***

- **Government officials (Strong):** All members of the state apparatus seek to keep the Communist Party in power and impose policies, laws and measures necessary for the regime to exert totalitarian control over everyone living on the island. Hence, officials censor Christian leaders and groups that can influence society and destabilize the regime. All social activity is interpreted from a political perspective: The Office of Religious Affairs (ORA), an organ of the Cuban Communist Party, exists purely to monitor and restrict the activities of religious groups. The authorities allow citizens to express their religious faith as long as this does not contradict or criticize government positions and policies, which in practice are the same as those of the Communist Party.
- **Political parties (Strong):** The Cuban Communist Party as part of the government, has enough power to permanently censor Christians, especially when they are critical of the government or when they speak out to denounce corruption and violations of human rights. Members of the Communist Party treat Christians as "traitors" or “counter-revolutionaries” as a way of preventing their influence from spreading and decreasing their influence as social actors. The Party acts against Christians to remove voices of dissent.
- **Ideological pressure groups (Medium):** The pressure groups listed above for the *Communist and post-Communist oppression* collaborate with the attempts to suppress any voice in society that

contradicts Communist Party interests, including churches and Christian activists who advocate for those in poverty and call for a return to democracy or who promote Christian values in the public sphere, contradicting government interests.

- **Citizens (Medium):** Motivated by fear or in order to show their loyalty to the Communist Party, many citizens participate in mob activity (such as throwing stones) targeting Christian leaders or their churches when they criticize or openly oppose Communist principles.

## The Persecution pattern



The WWL 2025 Persecution pattern for Cuba shows:

- The average pressure on Christians in Cuba remained at the very high level of 12.8 points, as in WWL 2024.
- Pressure is strongest in the *Church sphere* (15.1 points), *Community sphere* (13.9 points) and *National Sphere* (13.3) reflecting the high level of monitoring and oppression exerted by the dictatorial government and its supporters targeting church activities and Christians aiming to suffocate them in their daily lives.
- The score for violence in WWL 2024 is 9.1 points, a rise from 8.7 points in WWL 2023. There were a greater number of reports of attacks on Christian buildings, Christians detained, internally displaced, and forced to flee the country.

## 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 2025 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://www.opendoors.org/en-US/research-reports/wwl-documentation/>.*

### Pressure in Block 1 / Private sphere

#### ***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.). (3.75 points)***

Expressions of faith in blogs and Facebook posts are possible, but social media is closely monitored by the state authorities. Christians can be expected to be treated as 'traitors' if:

- they use digital media to defend their faith;
- make it known that they are members of a church considered illegal or an enemy of the regime;
- criticize any government action;
- denounce corruption and violations of human rights;
- demand greater religious liberty;
- encourage or publicly recognize their participation in anti-government demonstrations;
- defend traditional Christian values regarding family and marriage.

Reprisals against people making such posts (and their families) are frequent and Christians are particularly affected. Censure increased after the July 2021 protests - when public discontent with the Communist system of government became more evident, resulting in more restrictions on Internet access. As a result, Christians have sometimes had to remain in their home without contacting anyone and under close police surveillance. In practice, citizens assume that all social media use and phone conversations are being monitored by the authorities under the application of Decree 370 and Decree 35. The main goal of this kind of harassment is to encourage self-censorship among citizens and suppress any opinions distracting from the state narrative.

#### ***Block 1.6: It has been risky for Christians to access Christian radio or TV, or Christian material on the Internet. (3.50 points)***

Access to media in general is very limited due to infrastructure deficiencies and due to the economic crisis affecting the country. However, attempts to access Christian material - especially via the Internet - are restricted by the government through its absolute monopoly over the telecommunication media. Downloaded information and Christian access to non-approved contents are monitored and the user is punished if the contents are linked to Christian doctrine that is openly contradictory to the regime or if the websites consulted are financed by foreign Christian entities or NGOs (especially if they are from the USA). Since WWL 2023 reporting period, there has been an increased number of reports of Christians experiencing deliberate telephone, cable and Internet downtime as a show of hostility from the regime ([OCDH, June 2023](#)) to keep them isolated and without the possibility of learning/sharing more about their faith on digital platforms.



**Block 1.9: It has been risky for Christians to meet with other Christians. (3.50 points)**

Gatherings of people organized by church members are difficult as freedom of assembly is generally restricted, especially with the tightened restrictions in the New Criminal Code. However, there is a particular bias against those considered as “opponents” or “traitors”, as is the case with many Church members. Meeting with other Christians is especially difficult for the members of unregistered churches/house-churches. Whenever they hold a meeting, even if it is not of a religious nature, they run the risk of being accused by neighbors of conspiring against the government, being raided by the Cuban police, summoned, excessively fined, and arbitrarily prosecuted. According to the US State Department ([IRFR 2023](#)), meetings between Christians inside prisons (for worship, prayer and study) have also been restricted and many of them have been prohibited from possessing religious materials.

There have been numerous public protests occurring throughout the most recent WWL reporting periods (including WWL 2025 - e.g., [BBC News, 18 March 2024](#)). Frequently, the authorities aim to impede the gathering of citizens by (amongst other measures) preventing many from leaving their homes. Many Christians have also been affected by these measures and, additionally, were prevented from attending church services. Church leaders were reportedly blocked from visiting protesters or being in contact with those participating in protests or any event considered counter-revolutionary by the authorities ([CSW, Cuba - Annual Report 2023, 14 March 2024](#)).

**Block 1.10: Christians have been isolated from other family members or other like-minded Christians (e.g. house arrest). (3.50 points)**

Christian human rights activists, church leaders and those who constantly question and challenge the regime (especially as part of civic protests), face arbitrary arrest and house-arrest, which causes separation from Christian fellowship and families. If it became known to the authorities that specific persons were intending to participate in any protest action or show their support, they were sometimes forced by state officers to remain in their homes without contacting anyone and under close police surveillance. This type of report increased after the 2021 protests and Christians have been a frequent victim of this repressive measure.

**Pressure in Block 2 / Family sphere****Block 2.8: Christian children have been pressured into attending anti-Christian or majority religion teaching at any level of education. (4.00 points)**

State education is based on Marxist ideals and is mandatory for all Cuban schoolchildren and students. The promoted ideology practically deifies Marx, Lenin, Fidel Castro and Che Guevara, worships the Communist revolution and rejects traditional Christian faith in many areas. Such indoctrination is regularly supported by national events where children are obliged to participate, as happened in 2023 with the so-called “Plan Tún-Tún” in which children were taken from schools and sent to campaign in the surrounding neighborhoods to encourage citizens to participate in the National Assembly elections ([Diario de Cuba, 18 March 2023](#)). Pupils of Christian parents who oppose Communist indoctrination face particular pressure from teachers and their peers ([Constitutional Reform and Religious Freedom in Cuba, USCIRF, 2022](#)). Fearing consequences for themselves and their parents, many children avoid expressing their religious convictions at school.

***Block 2.7: Parents have been hindered in raising their children according to their Christian beliefs. (3.75 points)***

The state is considered the main educator of all children in the country and its Revolution ideology influences children from an early age. Communist education is mandatory in schools and parents cannot prevent the indoctrination of their children. Every morning before the start of classes, all pupils must swear with hand raised: "We will be like Che!" or "Pioneers for Communism, forever with Che!" (Che Guevara is a Communist icon). The repressive legal framework, especially with the New Criminal Code and the New Family Code, allows parents who distance their children from the state's Communist values not only to face intense harassment and threats, but even prison sentences and loss of custody of their children. According to some church leaders, the new legal provisions can be interpreted so arbitrarily that Christian parents who risk teaching their children religious beliefs may be perceived as spreading opposition to the government. As reported by CSW ([Cuba - Annual Report 2023, 14 March 2024](#)), implementation of the legislation has pressured entire families into emigrating, to protect their children and not lose parental custody.

State education thus endangers the right of parents to raise their children according to their own convictions and beliefs and they have no legal means to oppose it. Pressure groups have also advocated in favor of prohibiting homeschooling.

***Block 2.9: Children of Christians have been harassed or discriminated against because of their parents' faith. (3.50 points)***

Children of Christians known to promote human rights, traditional faith-based views on family and marriage (in the context of the Family Code referendum) or who are considered to be regime opponents, face intimidation and other difficulties by being regarded as children of "enemies of the revolution" or "traitors". Especially children of Christian members of non-registered churches face rejection, bullying and other hostilities at school by both teachers, Communist Party officials and fellow pupils when defending their Christian beliefs; this sometimes involves violence. They can also become a target for criticism because of their parents' church affiliation or activities.

As reported by [CSW \(Annual Report 2023 Cuba\)](#), children of Christians have been victims of interrogation, arrest, increased pressure to participate in events/organizations endorsed by the regime, among other hostile actions because of the faith in which they were raised by their parents and/or in retaliation for their parents' actions perceived as being critical of the government. It is well-known that the government grants subsidies and other benefits (especially for university studies) to those who support the regime, and cuts all aid to those opposing the ruling party (including family members and children).

***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. (3.50 points)***

Christians who are stigmatized as being regime opponents because of their political and/or church affiliation face various forms of intimidation and oppression that also affects their families. As a result, some family members relocate to stay with relatives in other parts of the country to avoid state harassment. In the WWL 2025 reporting period, Christians in detention or in prison were arbitrarily separated from their families and their location was not immediately communicated to relatives, which

meant they were kept 'incomunicado' for a number of weeks. There were also reports of Christians being threatened with loss of custody, being separated from their children and relatives, or being pressured to leave the country if they continued contradicting the regime's interests through their church ministry. The regime deliberately causes such separation to discourage other members of the family (especially the younger ones) from following the example of relatives considered government enemies.

### **Pressure in Block 3 / Community sphere**

***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.). (3.75 points)***

Militants and sympathizers of the regime (including family members) closely monitor activities of citizens. This can include, for instance, conversations and gatherings, attempts to travel, house-visits, contact with targeted church leaders, and any contact with international media and international human rights organizations. Christians who have expressed faith-based opinions against the regime (including those who participated in protests or supported the protests) are considered dissidents and are targeted for surveillance, as are those known to belong to churches who oppose the ruling party. According to USCIRF ([Cuba 2024 - Country Update](#)), the Cuban government intimidates worshipers through surveillance, harassment and threats.

The Committees for the Defense of the Revolution (CDRs) are the main government informers; their aim is to eliminate the spread of anti-Communist ideas ([OCDH, Libertad Religiosa en Cuba, 2023](#)) with the help of other citizens, militants of the Communist Party, government officials and sometimes other family members. Telephone lines, emails, letters, social media and Internet usage are all monitored through electronic platforms and church infiltrators in order to find evidence for use against Christians and church leaders considered regime opponents. Due to the escalation in reprisals following the 2021 mass protests, even Christians who have not necessarily been critical of the government but who have some influence in society have also been monitored, to prevent them from undermining state actions. The frequent surveillance within churches generates a climate of mistrust.

***Block 3.9: Christians have faced disadvantages in their education at any level for faith-related reasons (e.g. restrictions of access to education). (3.50 points)***

All students, including Christians, are forced to learn Marxist ideology as part of the compulsory state curriculum. If they try to oppose such forced indoctrination, they are threatened with being banned from continuing their education or are expelled from their school or university. University authorities are known to impede Christian students (especially if they are involved with non-registered churches or targeted church leaders) from continuing their studies to prevent them spreading their 'subversive ideas' to other students. Some professions and university degree courses (mainly the higher ones) are only accessible for members of the Communist Party, which means that Christians may be blocked from taking certain courses, from participating in research programs and from receiving scholarships. Christian university students faced severe educational restrictions as part of the reprisals for their (or their parents') participation in or support of the wave of marches demonstrating against regime abuses. This hostility aims to discourage youth involvement in civil society activity and - as reported by [CSW](#) on 9 May 2023 - to pressure them into defending Socialism and Marxist-Leninist teaching.

***Block 3.12: Christians have been fined for faith-related reasons (e.g. jizya tax, community tax, protection money). (3.50 points)***

This commonly affects Christians in non-registered churches where the imposition of fines by the authorities is a common strategy to harass opposition voices. On many occasions, public officials ask for “contributions” from church leaders as payment for being allowed to perform church activities and programs. This request for money is a 'private arrangement' and has no legal backing. On other occasions, Christians are fined for belonging to a non-registered or 'revolutionary' church, for lending their property to house-church communities ([IRFR 2023 Cuba](#)), for carrying out humanitarian pastoral work, for posting an opinion on social media, or for attempting to gather to pray for political prisoners. The fines and fees imposed are often exorbitant, especially given that the average Cuban salary is insufficient to cover basic living expenses. These penalties are arbitrarily determined by the authority in charge at the time and are a deliberate method of economically suffocating Christians. The ongoing economic crisis further exacerbates this hardship, making it even more challenging to pay such fines. With the introduction of the New Penal Code and the creation of the crime of "abuse of religious freedom", the imposition of fines and sanctions has become legal wherever those exercising religious freedom contradict the interests of the government. Therefore, Christians are always at risk of being fined and prosecuted under such ambiguous parameters. If they do not pay such fines, they may find themselves later summoned to the police station or threatened with arrest.

Police frequently use fines as a tool to discourage pastors and Christian activists from traveling abroad, effectively limiting their contact with the global Church and international human rights organizations. Grounds for these fines can be arbitrarily chosen, such as the possession of a book with a "suspicious" title or a gift, and may also result in confiscations. Following the 2021 protests, the use of fines as a form of intimidation has significantly increased. During the WWL 2025 reporting period, in-country sources confirmed that fines have become a common tactic to suppress church activities. Where the authorities know that certain churches receive foreign assistance, the fines demanded are correspondingly higher in value.

***Block 3.13: Christians have been interrogated or compelled to report to the local vigilante/police for faith-related reasons. (3.50 points)***

Throughout the country, this has especially affected Christians who i) left the Communist Party or are not willing to participate in political activities of the ruling Party; ii) belong to non-registered churches known for their opposition to the government; iii) have participated in protests against the government; iv) are involved with targeted church leaders; v) are active in church pastoral work; vi) advocate for the release and humanitarian treatment of political prisoners, or vii) manifest any kind of opposition to Communism in general as promoted by the government.

Interrogation, warning visits and summons are commonly used to threaten and intimidate Christians as listed above for being perceived as regime opponents. When interrogated, Christians are required to provide contact information of others considered regime opponents (including their family members or church leaders) and details about Christian activities and funding from sources abroad. If they refuse to share such private details, they are threatened as traitors and become victims of government reprisals. Sometimes they are even pressured into acting as informers within their own churches.

## Pressure in Block 4 / National sphere

### ***Block 4.8: Christians have been hindered in expressing their views or opinions in public. (4.00 points)***

The government does not guarantee freedom of expression for anyone in the country, especially lately due to the increased surveillance of "rebels" and the application of the reformed legal framework to "legalize" repressive practices (Decree 370, Decree 35, New Family Code, New Criminal Code, Citizenship Law, among others). As a result, numerous restrictions apply. Christians, Christian organizations, religious freedom advocates and Christian human rights activists belonging to a variety of church denominations face threats, subpoenas, arrest, arbitrary detentions, fines, criminal prosecution, travel limitations, censorship, harassment and more, when they speak out about the state's violation of human and civil rights, the humanitarian crisis in the country, the importance of the biblical model of marriage and family, or about the scandals surrounding the Castro family, for instance. Many Christians and their families facing such restrictions belong to non-registered churches which are part of the Evangelical Alliance in Cuba (which is openly critical of government injustices) or have contact with international organizations advocating human rights. They are thus more vulnerable to intimidation by the state authorities.

If a Christian voice is gaining influence and contradicts regime interests, it is automatically stopped by the so-called "opinion agents". The task of these agents is to spread rumors to damage the popularity of the religious leader, as happened when false allegations were publicized about the Church being the instigator of the protests against the regime. By threatening prosecution, the authorities create a culture of self-censorship, giving no space to any dissenting voice. Additionally, Christians expressing faith-based opinions in public on issues relating to life, family and marriage, have faced fierce opposition from pressure groups enjoying state support, particularly in the context of the 2022 referendum on the Family Code.

### ***Block 4.15: Christians accused in court have been deprived of equal treatment. (4.00 points)***

The regime has total control over the judicial system and any ruling will always be in the state's favor. Thus, neither the right to procedural guarantees for Christians will be properly safeguarded (including the right to due process) nor even the right to be treated with dignity. If Christians are brought to court, it is because they are considered rebels, subversives, counter revolutionaries, traitors or opponents and are not treated with dignity, equality, impartiality or in accordance with human rights recognized by international bodies and signed by the Cuban state. Frequently, government officials re-interpret legislation in order to deliberately formulate charges and accusations against Christians, when their faith-based activity is considered a challenge to the stability of the regime. Additionally, it is common government practice for detainees to be held in prison for many months before a formal accusation and trial is initiated against them. Additionally, there are frequent complaints about political prisoners, including Christians, facing mistreatment and some forms of torture ([USCIRF Cuba 2024 - Country Update](#)).

### ***Block 4.16: International monitoring has been hindered when Christians had to stand trial. (4.00 points)***

Cuba remains one of the few countries in the world where international human rights organizations do not have full facilities to visit or monitor (as reported by [IACHR Press Release, 12 May 2023](#)), despite

the continuous calls for a return to respect for democratic rules and the rule of law and the request of the international community for the cessation of religious repression. If, for reasons of political convenience, an exception is made and an international organization is allowed to enter the country, the government will prevent its representatives from meeting the victims of abuses and from learning about the reality of life for the Cuban people. While there have been opportunities for dialogue, any international organization that has any relationship with anything linked to anti-Communism or 'colonialism' is rejected. Any foreign organization trying to advocate in favor of Christians prosecuted on grounds of faith are not welcome and are hindered from making contact with them or their relatives.

In addition, the recommendations made by multilateral organizations on the treatment of human rights activists and of those considered 'opponents' in prison, are constantly ignored by the regime and they are used as a pretext for reinforcing the repression against them (seeing this as necessary to safeguard the nation from foreign interference). Since the mass protests of 2021, many reports of relatives of the imprisoned (or other church leaders) being threatened abound. They have been told that they will face serious reprisals if they continue to share information with foreign organizations about prison conditions, since passing on such information is considered a "subversive activity". Furthermore, the Cuban state has categorically [rejected](#) the country's inclusion in the list of Countries of Particular Concern published by USCIRF (DDC, 4 December 2022).

***Block 4.9: Christian civil society organizations or political parties have been hindered in their functioning or forbidden because of their Christian convictions. (3.75 points)***

There is currently no possibility that the state will recognize the existence of any other political party than the Communist Party. For example, in the last elections to elect representatives to the National Assembly, only the regime's candidates participated. Hence, any Christian political party is legally forbidden. Where civil society faith-based organizations are perceived as promoters of a vision conflicting with Communist ideals or state interests, they can swiftly become targets for censorship, confiscation and arrest, especially if they are related in any way with non-registered churches, churches viewed as being regime opponents or church leaders considered as counter-revolutionaries. In such cases, the authorities hinder the activities of these organizations (as reported by [OCDH, Libertad Religiosa en Cuba, 2023](#)) and react by arresting and prosecuting Christians in charge of these organizations, expropriating their properties, imposing excessive fines, and confiscating donations and materials, among other reprisals. This has been the case for organizations such as "Coexistence Center", "The Christian Liberation Movement", "The Lawton Foundation" and the "Cuban Evangelical Churches Alliance". In addition, if Christian NGOs initiate activities related to education (especially in aspects of democracy and rule of law), humanitarian assistance or health, they automatically face more impediments since those areas are considered to be state-responsibility only.

**Pressure in Block 5 / Church sphere**

***Block 5.2: It has been difficult to get registration or legal status for churches at any level of government. (4.00 points)***

The Ministry of Justice (MOJ) is in charge of church registration and can give a church the legal status of associations, on a basis similar to how it officially registers civil society organizations. Further, the government and the Communist Party monitor religious groups through the Office of Religious Affairs

(ORA) and seek to control most aspects of religious life. Almost all churches with legal recognition were registered before the Communist revolution of 1959. Since then, only in very rare cases has registration been granted under the apparent justification that another local group has identical or similar objectives, or that the applicant's activities could in any way harm the common good (i.e., conflict with Communist Party ideology). In consequence, several churches are considered illegal because authorities constantly refuse their applications for registration, which is one of the main obstacles to the full exercise of religious liberty. As they cannot get legal status, they cannot hold "official religious services" or have a proper place to worship. Also this situation increases the difficulties in providing any official training of church leaders, and in obtaining permission to carry out activities outside the place of worship, etc.

Thus the authorities make the registration process almost impossible. Most of the non-registered churches are considered 'rebels' operating outside the law, they face penalties ranging from fines and confiscation of property to permanent closure. However, registered churches also face difficulties when their activities are not deemed to be in line with regime interests. Thus, [USCIRF Cuba 2024 - Country Update](#) reported:

- "Their registration decisions are often arbitrary and discriminatory, and membership or association with an unregistered religious group is a crime. Even if a religious organization is legally registered, the Office of Religious Affairs exercises arbitrary control over them and requires permission for virtually any activity other than regular worship services. Members of religious groups that are unregistered or conduct unsanctioned religious activities are subject to interrogation, detention, threats of prison sentences on false charges, and confiscation of property."

***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. (4.00 points)***

Christians belonging to non-registered churches do not have any chance of obtaining permission for building or repairing churches. For registered churches, there are very exceptional cases where church buildings have been allowed to be renovated and even constructed, mainly by foreign work-teams who secretly purchase the materials themselves and carry out work on a voluntary basis. In general, licenses and building permits are very difficult to obtain. However, even when permission is granted, it can be later arbitrarily canceled without proper justification.

If members of the church in question are known to be anti-Communists, permits are often denied for the most absurd reasons. Over the years, the "Assemblies of God" denomination has seen many of its churches shut down and demolished. Some Catholic buildings that were confiscated at the time of the Revolution have been returned but many have remained in the hands of the state. Expropriation or church demolition is a frequent method of punishment for churches and their leaders considered to be disobedient to the state. Since the mass protests of 2021, the slim chances of obtaining church construction or renovation permits have further diminished, due to the government's continued false narrative, that it was church leaders who motivated the population to speak out against the government. As stated in the [IRFR 2023 Cuba](#) report:

- “According to OAA, the ORA applied rules in an arbitrary manner, showing favoritism to religious groups seen as cooperative or supportive of the government, while harassing those who were critical and insisted on maintaining organizational independence. These latter groups were again subject to routine harassment and property expropriation, their building or construction permits were denied or delayed, and their leaders were barred from leaving the country.”

***Block 5.8: Christian preaching, teaching and/or published materials have been monitored. (4.00 points)***

Christian preaching is closely monitored, especially where church leaders are perceived as “counterrevolutionaries” due to their opposition to the regime or have given any kind of support to anti-government demonstrations. Their teaching is seen as being subversive and 'imperialist' if there is any mention of issues of democracy and human rights. The use of state informers and infiltrators is widespread and causes self-censorship, especially when family members have been recruited as informers. Similarly, [CSW](#) stated in its Annual Report 2022 Cuba):

- “The government has a long-term policy of recruiting and planting informants in all religious groups. Informants are tasked with monitoring and reporting content of sermons, homilies, and prayers, for example. By their presence, they also act as a way to pressure religious leaders to practice self-censorship. In many cases, the government targets men and women who are already members of a given religious organization and pressures them, often through threats and blackmail, to become an informant.”

During the WWL 2025 reporting period, both registered and unregistered churches not aligned with the regime faced constant surveillance and direct reprisals for criticism aired by church leaders. Government officials or sympathizers of the regime deliberately look for political connotations in the sermons preached (even extending to calls for peace in Israel, Ukraine, Nicaragua or Venezuela), in order to justify intimidation of whole church congregations through the prosecution of church members and leaders. Again, in an attempt to intimidate them further, some church leaders received official visits from members of the Cuban Council of Churches and the Cuban Communist Party.

***Block 5.20: It has been risky for churches or Christian organizations to speak out against instigators of persecution. (4.00 points)***

The main instigator of persecution is the government, and dissidents are routinely punished by arrest, prosecution, and other kinds of suppression. Christians who report such matters suffer many forms of retaliation without being able to defend themselves. Christians who make known the human rights situation inside Cuba, either nationally or internationally, automatically become targets for persecution. Common practices used against them are:

- prevention from traveling abroad;
- smear campaigns;
- denial of basic services;
- cutting communication lines;
- prevention from meeting with foreigners;
- document retention;
- frequent police summons (including children);



- constant surveillance, even outside their homes;
- threats to take custody of their children;
- denial of permits or licenses;
- excessive fines;
- death threats (also against family members);
- confiscation of property;
- arbitrary arrests;
- irregular trials;
- closure of churches and private businesses;
- general discrimination;
- impediments to leaving their own homes;
- forced exile.

## 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 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. 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.*

Cuba: Violence scores per Block 6 question in questionnaire	WWL 2025	WWL 2024
6.1 How many Christians have been killed for faith-related reasons (including state sanctioned executions)?	0	0
6.2 How many churches or public Christian properties (schools, hospitals, cemeteries, etc.) have been attacked, damaged, bombed, looted, destroyed, burned down, closed or confiscated for faith-related reasons?	13	12
6.3 How many Christians have been detained for faith-related reasons?	69	45
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?	28	30
6.5 How many Christians have been abducted for faith-related reasons (including Christians missing in a persecution context)?	1	0
6.6 How many Christians have been raped or otherwise sexually harassed for faith-related reasons?	4	0
6.7 How many cases have there been of forced marriages of Christians to non-Christians?	0	0
6.8 How many Christians have been otherwise physically or mentally abused for faith-related reasons (including beatings and death threats)?	19	24
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?	5	7
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?	1	5
6.11 How many Christians have been forced to leave their homes or go into hiding in-country for faith-related reasons?	5	2
6.12 How many Christians have been forced to leave the country for faith-related reasons?	6	6

In the WWL 2025 reporting period:

- **Christians buildings attacked or closed (13):** Most of the churches were closed down, but some were vandalized by government officers and Communist sympathizers.
- **Christians detained (69):** Most arrests involved Christians from various denominations being arbitrarily detained as a (seemingly never ending) reprisal for their participation in or support for the mass demonstrations in 2021 (or other protests organized to highlight the abuses of regime), or for requesting the release of Christian political prisoners, or for advocating for human rights and performing educational and humanitarian assistance. Also, there were cases when Christians were detained to prevent their attendance at church services.
- **Christians imprisoned or punished by the government (28):** As a result of the manipulation of the legal framework, Christians were criminally prosecuted where they refused to follow Communist postulates and/or were involved in movements highlighting human rights abuses and demanding more freedom. Many Christian prisoners remain incarcerated without being officially sentenced
- **Christians attacked (19):** The attacks include incidents in which Christians were physically abused in jails, as well as incidents related to death-threats for expressing their opposition to the regime.

## 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.

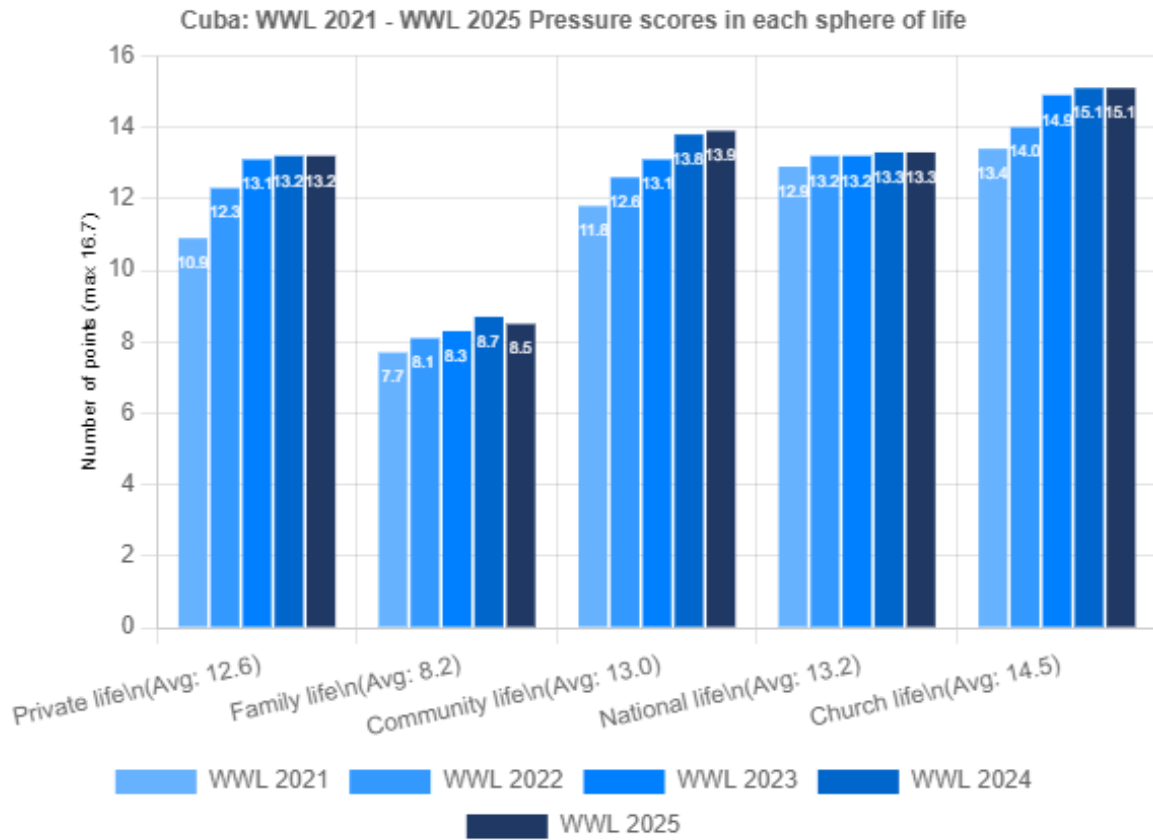
### 5 Year trends: Average pressure

Cuba: WWL 2021 - WWL 2025	Average pressure over 5 Spheres of life
2025	12.8
2024	12.8
2023	12.5
2022	12.0
2021	11.3

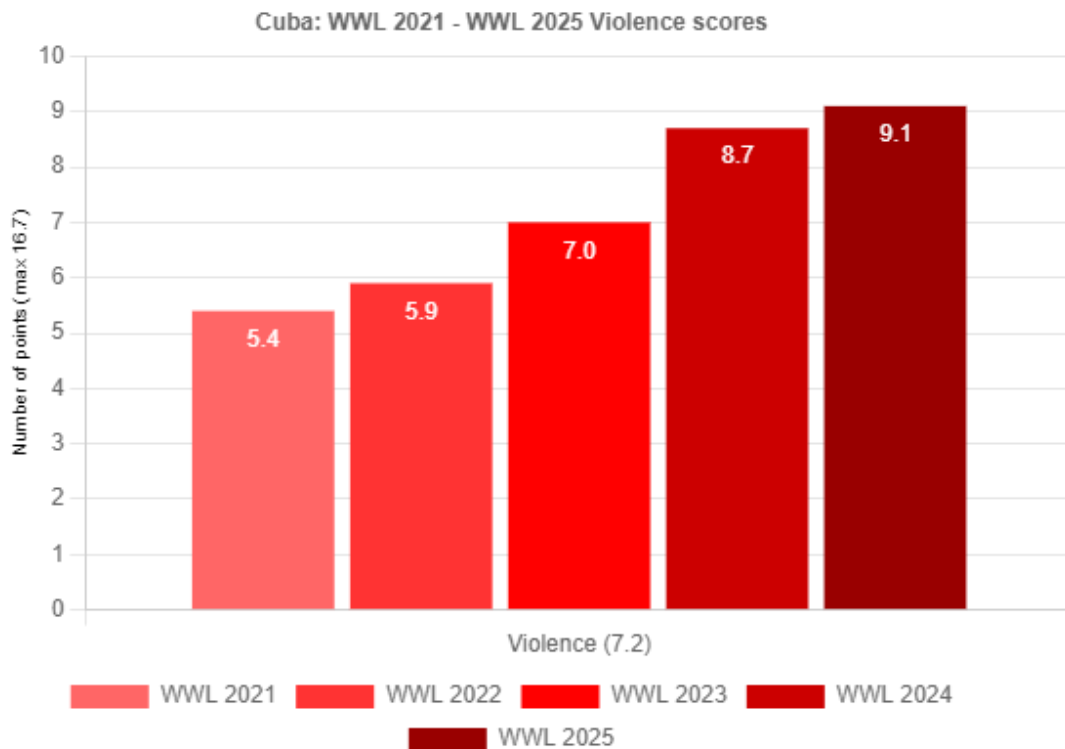
The table above shows that the average pressure on Christians has consistently been above 11.3 points and has steadily risen before stabilizing in the WWL 2024 and WWL 2025 reporting periods at the very high level of 12.8 points.

### 5 Year trends: Pressure in each sphere of life

As shown in the chart below, the last five reporting periods show a general trend of increasing pressure in almost all *Spheres of life* (except for the minor decrease in pressure in the *Family sphere* recorded in WWL 2025). Looking at the average score per *sphere of life*, it can be seen that the most significant levels of pressure are found in the *Church, National, Community and Private spheres of life*. This reflects the way the government is trying to systematically oppress and silence those within the churches who oppose Communist values and the dictatorial measures of the regime.



**5 Year trends: Violence against Christians**



The chart above shows that the score for violence has been increasing year-on-year since WWL 2021. The use of violence by the government has increased in an attempt to intimidate and silence Christians and other groups considered to be opponents and traitors. For WWL 2025 the level of violence has reached the highest level of all 5 reporting periods due to government action against churches, church leaders and Christian activists not aligned with government interests, which has led to an increase in recorded displacements.

## Gender-specific religious persecution / Female

Cuba	Female Pressure Points Most frequently recorded PPs: WWL 2019 - WWL 2024
	Imprisonment by government Violence – physical Violence – psychological Violence – Verbal

Pressure on Christian women and girls in Cuba is, in part, facilitated by legislative gaps concerning domestic and intrafamily violence, although the controversial Family Code (ratified in 2022) does include additional protection for women and girls ([The Guardian, 26 September 2022](#)). Data gaps restrict comprehensive analysis, but reports indicate that domestic violence worsened in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic ([OHCHR, 31 January 2022](#)). Similarly, the increasing rate of femicide in Cuba poses a viable threat to Christian women and girls ([UPR info, August 2023](#)).

## Gender-specific religious persecution / Male

Cuba	Male Pressure Points Most frequently recorded PPs: WWL 2019 - WWL 2024
	Denied access to Christian religious materials, teachings and rite Economic harassment via business/job/work access Forced to flee town/country Imprisonment by government Military/militia conscription/service against conscience Violence – physical Violence – psychological Violence – Verbal

Christian men are generally more susceptible to arrests and harassment since they are more likely to hold leadership positions from which they criticize government actions based on their Christian beliefs. They additionally face fines, confiscation of Christian literature, destruction of property, and death threats. A country expert commented: “Many house church leaders continued to report frequent visits from state security agents or CCP officials. Some reported warnings from the agents and officials that the education of their children, or their own employment, could be threatened if the house church leaders continued their activities.” Members of the [Christian Liberation Movement](#) are also

continuously besieged, threatened, and incarcerated in [inhumane prison conditions](#), evidenced by the treatment of Yandier García Labrada (CubaNet, 28 July 2021; CubaNet, 13 December 2021).

Following the rise in detentions in 2022 since the protests of 11 July 2021 ([The Guardian, 15 February 2022](#)), several demonstrators remained missing months later and hundreds waited months for their verdicts. A pastor and human rights defender was sentenced to 7 years in prison for his involvement and has been subjected to severe mistreatment and isolation, lack of food, and constant psychological abuse ([Evangelical Focus, 6 May 2022](#)).

National service is compulsory for men. If it is discovered that they are active Christians or have Christian parents, the level of discrimination and persecution depends on the attitude of the commanding officer. There have also been reports that Christian conscripts have been forced to engage in military operations that contravene their beliefs. Although alternative forms of social service are theoretically possible, the right to conscientious objection is very rarely upheld.

Given the economic difficulties resulting from state policies and US sanctions, many men must work abroad in order to meet family needs. The Cuban government, however, has made it increasingly difficult for regulated persons – active critics of the government – to travel, including church leaders. A country expert adds: “One of the most common measures of the regime to repress opposition voices is to prohibit or prevent them from leaving ... especially if the trip takes place in the context of a summit, forum, congress or event in which it is discussed the violation of human rights on the island.”

## Persecution of other religious minorities

According to the US State Department ([IRFR 2023 Cuba](#)):

- Leaders of the Free Yorubas, an unregistered religious association, continued to serve their terms in prison for participating in the July 2021 protests. In 2022, Free Yorubas President Donaida Perez Paseiro was sentenced to eight years in prison; Vice President Loreto Hernandez Garcia to seven years; and twin sisters Lisdani and Lisdiani Rodriguez Isaac to eight years each. Independent media reported the Department of State Security (DSE) denied the transfer of the sisters to a less severe prison facility in retaliation for a letter written to commemorate the second anniversary of their imprisonment and for their refusal to stand at attention when prison officials passed by.

## Trends Summary

### 1) Deep flaws in the Communist system have led to dissatisfaction in society

After 65 years under the Communist system, the population's discontent cannot be hidden. The constant protests are calling for radical and immediate change to allow citizens access to basic needs and a dignified life. While the humanitarian crisis in the country worsens, the Communist dictatorship continues to reject policies of change and attacks any expression of opposition to its interests, even if it comes from church leaders sympathizing with the needs of the general populace and not necessarily out of political motivation.

### 2) Government hostility towards critical voices grows

Although the most violent repressive measures were experienced at the beginning of the Castro revolution, today's reprisals against dissident voices still aim to silence critics and prevent the

government from losing legitimacy among the citizenship. Even the mere suspicion of criticism receives harsh treatment: Church activities bringing humanitarian and spiritual aid to the population are often interpreted as being political activities attempting to destabilize the state.

### 3) State tactics have diversified

The abuse of public force and state power seem to have always been the main ways of imposing Communist policies and fostering fear of retaliation among the population. In recent years in particular, this state repression attacks not only the social and public life of the 'opponents' but also areas of their private and family lives. It also seeks to restrict the content of Church teaching, especially where relating to issues of defense of the common good, human rights, peace and family matters.

## Further useful reports

Further background information per country and a selection of in-depth reports and smaller articles are available on the Research & Reports pages of the Open Doors website:

- <https://www.opendoors.org/en-US/research-reports/wwl-background/>
- <https://www.opendoors.org/en-US/research-reports/>.

## External Links

- Copyright, sources and definitions: Background country information - <https://www.opendoors.org/en-US/research-reports/wwl-background/>
- 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: severe mistreatment - <https://www.uscirf.gov/religious-prisoners-conscience/forb-victims-database/lorenzo-rosales-fajardo>
- Specific examples of violations of rights in the reporting period: denied entry - [https://www.facebook.com/photo/?fbid=7569623506463243&set=a.2450620868363558&\\_rdc=2&\\_rd\\_r](https://www.facebook.com/photo/?fbid=7569623506463243&set=a.2450620868363558&_rdc=2&_rd_r)
- Specific examples of violations of rights in the reporting period: robbery - [https://www.facebook.com/story.php?story\\_fbid=pfbid0FdVAD1EttAxvZn8z7fTZGHnJduLYYfQTu4Ac1Qqgyah1ZPVj5HcDW4aaBatY9jtRI&id=100009995862820&paipv=0&eav=AfZd\\_jmk0ng2n1LgcJPxcgyjVHYWao4JSsSy448tlt3\\_4uk5eewqmWA2ZCUNyrY2h64&\\_rd\\_r](https://www.facebook.com/story.php?story_fbid=pfbid0FdVAD1EttAxvZn8z7fTZGHnJduLYYfQTu4Ac1Qqgyah1ZPVj5HcDW4aaBatY9jtRI&id=100009995862820&paipv=0&eav=AfZd_jmk0ng2n1LgcJPxcgyjVHYWao4JSsSy448tlt3_4uk5eewqmWA2ZCUNyrY2h64&_rd_r)
- Specific examples of positive developments: highlighted - <https://www.infobae.com/america/america-latina/2024/01/15/la-onu-acuso-a-la-dictadura-de-cuba-de-un-patron-de-represion-religiosa-institucional/>
- Persecution engines description: criminalization - <https://evangelicalfocus.com/world/16636/the-new-cuban-legislation-on-the-family-is-harmful-for-families-and-the-nation>
- Block 1.6: It has been risky for Christians to access Christian radio or TV, or Christian material on the Internet. (3.50 points): (OCDH, June 2023) - [https://derechossocialescuba.com/wp-content/uploads/2023/06/LRCuba2\\_compressed.pdf](https://derechossocialescuba.com/wp-content/uploads/2023/06/LRCuba2_compressed.pdf)
- Block 1.9: It has been risky for Christians to meet with other Christians. (3.50 points): IRFR 2023 - <https://www.state.gov/reports/2023-report-on-international-religious-freedom/cuba/>

- Block 1.9: It has been risky for Christians to meet with other Christians. (3.50 points): BBC News, 18 March 2024 - <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-latin-america-68595885>
- Block 1.9: It has been risky for Christians to meet with other Christians. (3.50 points): CSW, Cuba - Annual Report 2023, 14 March 2024 - <https://www.csw.org.uk/2024/03/14/report/6186/article.htm>
- Block 2.8: Christian children have been pressured into attending anti-Christian or majority religion teaching at any level of education. (4.00 points): Diario de Cuba, 18 March 2023 - [https://diariodecuba.com/cuba/1679138318\\_45903.html](https://diariodecuba.com/cuba/1679138318_45903.html)
- Block 2.8: Christian children have been pressured into attending anti-Christian or majority religion teaching at any level of education. (4.00 points): (Constitutional Reform and Religious Freedom in Cuba, USCIRF, 2022) - <https://www.uscirf.gov/sites/default/files/2022-07/2022%20Constitutional%20Reform%20and%20Religious%20Freedom%20in%20Cuba.pdf>
- Block 2.7: Parents have been hindered in raising their children according to their Christian beliefs. (3.75 points): Cuba - Annual Report 2023, 14 March 2024 - <https://www.csw.org.uk/2024/03/14/report/6186/article.htm>
- Block 2.9: Children of Christians have been harassed or discriminated against because of their parents' faith. (3.50 points): CSW (Annual Report 2023 Cuba) - <https://www.csw.org.uk/2024/03/14/report/6186/article.htm>
- 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.). (3.75 points): Cuba 2024 - Country Update - <https://www.uscirf.gov/sites/default/files/2024-09/2024%20Cuba%20Country%20Update.pdf>
- 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.). (3.75 points): OCDH, Libertad Religiosa en Cuba, 2023 - [https://derechossocialescuba.com/wp-content/uploads/2023/06/LRCuba2\\_compressed.pdf](https://derechossocialescuba.com/wp-content/uploads/2023/06/LRCuba2_compressed.pdf)
- Block 3.9: Christians have faced disadvantages in their education at any level for faith-related reasons (e.g. restrictions of access to education). (3.50 points): CSW - <https://www.csw.org.uk/2023/05/09/press/5995/article.htm>
- Block 3.12: Christians have been fined for faith-related reasons (e.g. jizya tax, community tax, protection money). (3.50 points): IRFR 2023 Cuba - <https://www.state.gov/reports/2023-report-on-international-religious-freedom/cuba/>
- Block 4.15: Christians accused in court have been deprived of equal treatment. (4.00 points): USCIRF Cuba 2024 - Country Update - <https://www.uscirf.gov/sites/default/files/2024-09/2024%20Cuba%20Country%20Update.pdf>
- Block 4.16: International monitoring has been hindered when Christians had to stand trial. (4.00 points): IACHR Press Release, 12 May 2023 - <https://www.oas.org/es/CIDH/jsForm/?File=/es/cidh/prensa/comunicados/2023/086.asp>
- Block 4.16: International monitoring has been hindered when Christians had to stand trial. (4.00 points): rejected - [https://diariodecuba.com/derechos-humanos/1670178847\\_43847.html](https://diariodecuba.com/derechos-humanos/1670178847_43847.html)
- Block 4.9: Christian civil society organizations or political parties have been hindered in their functioning or forbidden because of their Christian convictions. (3.75 points): OCDH, Libertad Religiosa en Cuba, 2023 - [https://derechossocialescuba.com/wp-content/uploads/2023/06/LRCuba2\\_compressed.pdf](https://derechossocialescuba.com/wp-content/uploads/2023/06/LRCuba2_compressed.pdf)
- Block 5.2: It has been difficult to get registration or legal status for churches at any level of government. (4.00 points): USCIRF Cuba 2024 - Country Update - <https://www.uscirf.gov/sites/default/files/2024-09/2024%20Cuba%20Country%20Update.pdf>
- 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. (4.00 points): RFR 2023 Cuba - <https://www.state.gov/reports/2023-report-on-international-religious-freedom/cuba/>
- Block 5.8: Christian preaching, teaching and/or published materials have been monitored. (4.00 points): CSW - <https://www.csw.org.uk/2023/02/06/report/5929/article.htm>
- Gender-specific religious persecution Female description: The Guardian, 26 September 2022 - <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/sep/26/cubans-vote-in-favour-of-family-law-reform-that-will-allow-same-sex-marriage>
- Gender-specific religious persecution Female description: OHCHR, 31 January 2022 - <https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/2022-01/chile-derechos-digitales.pdf>
- Gender-specific religious persecution Female description: UPR info, August 2023- [https://upr-info.org/sites/default/files/country-document/2023-08/Presentation\\_Ogat.pdf](https://upr-info.org/sites/default/files/country-document/2023-08/Presentation_Ogat.pdf)
- Gender-specific religious persecution Male description: Christian Liberation Movement - <https://s3.eu-central-1.amazonaws.com/curium/cubanet.org/noticias-condenan-a-cinco-anos-de-prision-a-un-miembro-del-movimiento-cristiano-que-protesto-en-una-cola.html>



- Gender-specific religious persecution Male description: inhumane prison conditions - <https://www.cubanet.org/noticias/yandier-garcia-labrada-cumple-14-meses-en-prision-incomunicado/>
- Gender-specific religious persecution Male description: The Guardian, 15 February 2022 - <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/feb/15/cuba-protesters-sentenced-20-years-anti-government-july>
- Gender-specific religious persecution Male description: Evangelical Focus, 6 May 2022 - <https://evangelicalfocus.com/world/16694/cuba-confirms-lengthy-seven-year-prison-sentence-for-evangelical-pastor-lorenzo-rosales>
- Persecution of other religious minorities: IRFR 2023 Cuba - <https://www.state.gov/reports/2023-report-on-international-religious-freedom/cuba/>