
World Watch Research

Angola: Persecution Dynamics

February 2025



OpenDoors

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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/February).

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

Angola: Population (UN estimate for 2024)
37,805,000

Angola: Religious context	Number of adherents	%
Christians	34,739,000	91.9
Muslim	421,000	1.1
Hindu	800	0.0
Buddhist	3,400	0.0
Ethnic religionist	2,175,000	5.8
Jewish	0	0.0
Bahai	5,000	0.0
Atheist	68,300	0.2
Agnostic	392,000	1.0
Other	340	0.0
<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

Angola: Main Persecution engines	Main drivers
Dictatorial paranoia	Government officials, Organized crime cartels or networks
Organized corruption and crime	Government officials, Organized crime cartels or networks
Christian denominational protectionism	Religious leaders of other churches

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

Brief description of the persecution situation

Since 2004, over 1,000 church registration applications have been submitted in Angola. However, since the registration process changed in 2019, progress has been limited. Out of the 97 applications received since the change, only 35 were given conditional approval, with just four fully approved by 2022. In 2023 and 2024 no new registrations or licenses were granted. This has left many churches operating without official recognition, forcing them into a precarious situation where they face constant intimidation and the threat of arrest or demolition of their buildings. The government's continued emphasis on labeling 'religious sects' as a cause for concern only deepens the challenges faced by these religious groups. The atmosphere of fear extends beyond the issue of registration. Many Christian leaders and congregations are intimidated by the government, being warned that their gatherings are illegal due to a lack of official licenses. This has led to the demolition of thousands of worship spaces in recent years. Furthermore, the fear of speaking out against injustices is pervasive, as doing so could be construed as a political act, risking severe repercussions. The threat of being targeted for simply practicing their faith or voicing concerns has silenced many within the Christian community, who now operate under the constant fear of government retribution.

Specific examples of violations of rights in the reporting period

- Christians who are not part of a registered church cannot freely engage in evangelism and collective worship.
- Church closures and demolitions are ongoing.
- Continual denial of recognition for new places of worship, due to unrealistic requirements.
- Christians are frequently intimidated and threatened with arrest.

Specific examples of positive developments

Christians are a majority in the country. There are major issues regarding the hostility shown by the main church denominations towards the smaller ones.

Christian communities and how they are affected

Communities of expatriate Christians: Although there are many expatriate Christians living in the country, they are not isolated and can worship freely with other Christians. For this reason they are not scored as a separate category in WWL analysis.

Historical Christian Communities: The largest denomination in this category is the Roman Catholic Church. These Christians often enjoy relative freedom but at times government officials also target them when church leaders have failed to endorse the government on certain issues.

Converts: In Angola, this category consists mainly of 'cross-denominational converts' who face persecution from the churches they left. There are also few converts from Islam and other non-Christian religions and these face discrimination and persecution from their families. Like other Christian groups, converts will also face persecution from the government if they publicly oppose the government's political policies.

Non-traditional Christian communities: Non-traditional church groups such as Pentecostals and Evangelicals face the highest levels of pressure and violence of all. They are targeted by the government through its registration laws, and (as emphasized above) the government has granted only

very few new church registrations. Christian groups from the Historical church denominations also discriminate against these groups because they consider them to be a threat to their dominance.

Areas where Christians face most difficulties

The Province of Cabinda, in particular, is where many churches and church leaders have faced arrest and intimidation by government security agents.

Position on the World Watch List

Angola: World Watch List	Points	WWL Rank
WWL 2025	53	70
WWL 2024	52	71
WWL 2023	52	68
WWL 2022	51	66
WWL 2021	46	68

The 1-point increase in Angola's overall persecution score from 52 to 53 in WWL 2025 can be attributed to a rise in violence against Christians: The violence score increased from 7.2 to 8.3 points. Meanwhile, the pressure on Christians, especially in the *National* and *Church spheres*, remained high, driven by government policies and the influence of corruption, organized crime, and denominational protectionism. This combination of factors resulted in a marginal increase in the overall score. Angola's overall score has been gradually rising in recent years, with a visible increase in persecution severity. The difference between WWL 2021 and WWL 2025 is notable, with a range of seven points (from 46 points in WWL 2021 to 53 points in WWL 2025).

Persecution engines

Angola: 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	Weak
Christian denominational protectionism	CDP	Medium
Communist and post-Communist oppression	CPCO	Not at all

(table continues below)

Secular intolerance	SI	Not at all
Dictatorial paranoia	DPA	Strong
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.

Dictatorial paranoia (Strong)

The Angolan government, led by the MPLA, operates with a limited commitment to democratic principles, severely curtailing space for civic organizations and opposition. The MPLA, which also won a further election in August 2022 amid allegations of rigging and questionable practices, has failed to deliver on its promises of democratization and human rights protection made since its 2017 parliamentary victory. Institutions that toe the government's line receive backing, while churches that are perceived as not sufficiently supportive are at risk of being shut down, along with any affiliated organizations. The government primarily uses church registration laws as a mechanism to control religious activities. Since very few new churches have been officially recognized since 2004 (just four in 2022), over a thousand are operating without proper registration, making them vulnerable targets for government action.

Christian denominational protectionism (Medium)

The Angolan government has been reported to favor religious denominations that align with its policies. As reported by the US State Department ([IRFR 2017 Angola](#)), leaders of legally recognized religious organizations are known to publicly criticize the emergence of smaller, unrecognized religious groups. Accusations of corruption and profiteering have been exchanged between newer and more established religious entities. Both governmental organizations and some religious associations have called for these new religious groups to either rejoin their 'mother churches' or cease operations altogether. The main denominations are wary of losing their congregations to these emerging churches. Reports suggest that established religious organizations often exert pressure on these newer entities, discouraging them from seeking independent registration. Instead, they are encouraged to affiliate with existing, recognized denominations. This dynamic adds another layer of complexity to the already fraught landscape of religious freedom and church registration in Angola.

Organized corruption and crime (Medium)

Angola ranks as one of the most corrupt nations in Africa, scoring a mere 32 points and landing at #121 out of 180 countries in Transparency International's [2024 Corruption Perceptions Index](#). This pervasive corruption has severely undermined the rule of law, making it virtually impossible for many Christian groups to obtain official operating permits. Coupled with dictatorial tendencies, this corruption has led to minimal protection for Christians and has rendered civil liberties largely unattainable in the country.

Drivers of persecution

Angola: Drivers of persecution	IO	RN	ERH	CO	CDP	CPCO	SI	DPA	OCC
				WEAK	MEDIUM			STRONG	MEDIUM
Government officials								Strong	Medium
Ethnic group leaders				Weak					
Religious leaders of other churches					Medium				
Citizens (people from the broader society), including mobs					Weak				
One's own (extended) family					Weak				
Political parties								Weak	
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. For more information see WWL Methodology.

Drivers of Dictatorial paranoia

- **Government officials (Strong):** The MPLA's favoritism towards certain religious denominations severely limits the freedom of religion. Christians who voice opposition to the government are not only at risk of arrest but also face restrictions on their religious practices. This creates a chilling effect, discouraging open religious expression and forcing many to practice their faith in secrecy.
- **Organized criminal networks (Medium):** The culture of impunity and corruption also restricts religious freedom by making it difficult for Christian groups to operate legally. This leaves them vulnerable to crackdowns, further limiting the public expression of their faith.

Drivers of Christian denominational protectionism

- **Leaders of other churches (Medium):** The Roman Catholic Church's alignment with the government in restricting other Christian denominations not only creates a hostile environment but also limits religious diversity. This form of protectionism stifles the freedom to choose and practice one's own faith, as those who wish to switch denominations face both social and institutional barriers.

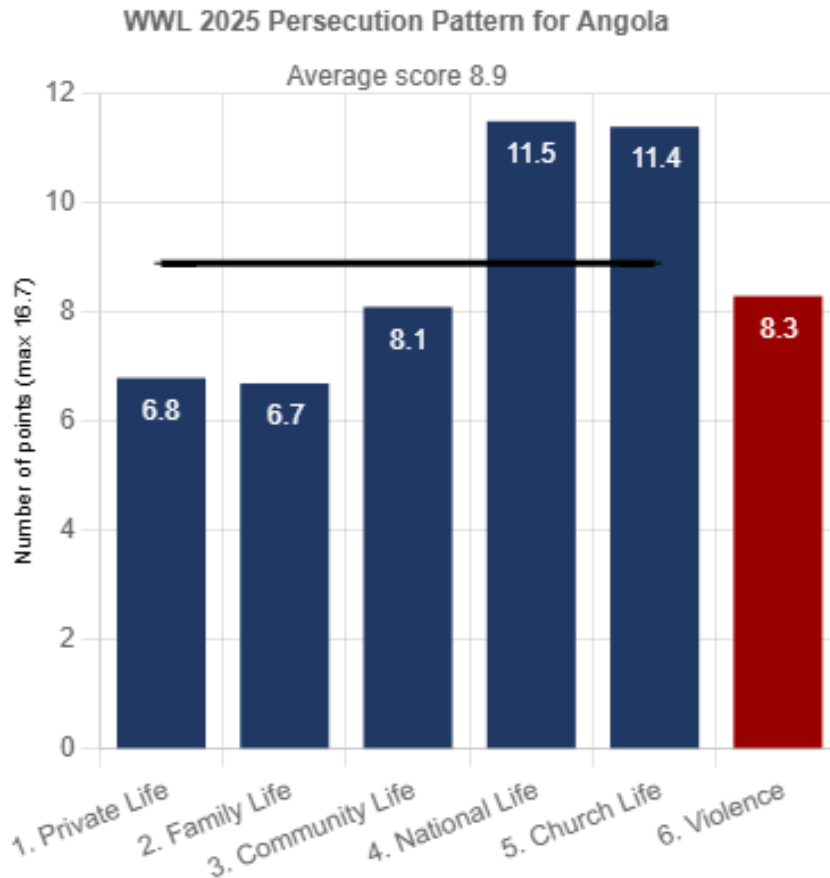
Drivers of Organized corruption and crime

- **Government officials (Medium):** The corruption among government officials has a direct impact on the freedom of religion. Christians find it almost impossible to get fair legal decisions, making it risky to challenge any restrictions on their religious practices. This undermines the very essence

of religious freedom, as the rule of law is compromised.

- **Organized criminal networks (Medium):** The widespread corruption in organized networks further restricts religious freedom by making it difficult for Christian communities to organize or even operate. The lack of rule of law means that these communities are often at the mercy of corrupt officials and networks, limiting their ability to practice their faith freely.

The Persecution pattern



The WWL 2025 Persecution pattern for Angola shows:

- The average pressure on Christians in Angola remains stable at 8.9 points, the same as in WWL 2024.
- Pressure scores for the *National* (11.5 points) and *Church* (11.4 points) *spheres of life* reflect challenges stemming from government policies, corruption, crime and denominational protectionism.
- The violence score increased to 8.3 points, up from 7.2 in WWL 2024.

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 1.9: It has been risky for Christians to meet with other Christians. (2.75 points)

Meeting with other Christians can pose significant risks, particularly for those whose churches are not registered, those transitioning between denominations, and Protestants. Security personnel frequently monitor their activities, and gatherings in homes often result in arrests. The challenge is further compounded by the prolonged delays in church registration processes, making it increasingly difficult for Christians to freely practice their faith and connect with fellow believers.

Block 1.10: Christians have been isolated from other family members or other like-minded Christians (e.g. house arrest). (2.50 points)

Christians, particularly those who have joined a different denomination, often experience isolation from their families and ex-fellow believers. Furthermore, gatherings for worship or fellowship frequently face restrictions and even house arrests due to both government and societal pressures.

Block 1.7: It has been risky for Christians to speak about their faith with immediate family members. (1.75 points)

Christians in Angola can face risks when discussing their faith with immediate family members, according to experts familiar with southern Africa's socio-religious dynamics. These experts note that such restrictions affect broader societal limitations that affect various groups. Additionally, government restrictions on certain Christian groups are believed by some to be influenced by their actions and behavior rather than being solely rooted in religious discrimination.

Block 1.8: It has been risky for Christians to speak about their faith with those other than immediate family (extended family, others). (1.75 points)

Christians encounter significant challenges when discussing their faith with individuals outside their immediate family, according to experts familiar with the southern African context. While opinions differ over the severity of these challenges, there is general agreement among experts that sharing faith beyond one's immediate family often leads to social tensions.

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. (3.25 points)

Christian children, particularly in some Catholic schools, face pressure to attend lessons associated with the majority religion. Although this pressure may not be explicitly anti-Christian, it poses challenges to the teachings of non-Catholic Christian denominations. This nuanced issue has led to the

classification of the problem as present, indicating that Christian children in certain educational settings might be expected to participate in school activities that do not align with their specific Christian beliefs.

Block 2.9: Children of Christians have been harassed or discriminated against because of their parents' faith. (2.75 points)

Children of Christians, particularly those from non-Catholic and non-traditional Protestant denominations, face significant harassment and discrimination due to their parents' faith. This harassment occurs in various settings, including schools, playgrounds, and agricultural or farming areas where children often represent their families. These challenges primarily affect children whose parents follow non-traditional Christian denominations or those who have transitioned from Catholicism to non-Catholic church groups.

Block 2.3: Christians have been hindered in celebrating a Christian wedding for faith-related reasons. (2.50 points)

Certain Christians in the country face significant challenges in celebrating Christian weddings, particularly those who have left the Catholic Church or belong to non-traditional Christian denominations. Obtaining the necessary approval and recognition for their weddings is often complicated by their departure from the Catholic faith or affiliation with less mainstream Christian groups. Differences in wedding rituals and procedures further contribute to these challenges, making it difficult for such Christians to have their ceremonies acknowledged or conducted in accordance with their faith practices.

Block 2.4: Christian baptisms have been hindered. (2.00 points)

Christian baptisms in the country can face significant obstacles, as confirmed by experts familiar with the southern African context. Baptism, a key milestone in the Christian faith, is particularly significant for those transitioning between denominations or converting from other religions. For these individuals, baptism represents a profound spiritual commitment and a public declaration of faith; any hindrances in the carrying out of baptism are therefore not without serious impact.

Pressure in Block 3 / Community sphere

Block 3.1: Christians have been harassed, threatened or obstructed in their daily lives for faith-related reasons (e.g. for not meeting majority religion or traditional dress codes, beard codes etc.). (3.50 points)

Christians face significant harassment, threats, and obstacles in their daily lives, particularly within communities where there is tension. Vibrant evangelical churches are often demonized by established denominations, creating divisions and hostility. These challenges are further intensified for those who change denominational affiliation, as they frequently encounter social ostracization, harassment and barriers to practicing their new faith. Government monitoring and scrutiny of unregistered churches compound these difficulties, leading to restrictions on worship and gatherings. This combination of community discrimination and government intervention creates an environment of persistent obstruction and isolation, making it increasingly challenging for Christians belonging to non-traditional denominations in particular to freely exercise their beliefs

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

Christians face significant challenges in accessing and sharing community resources such as grazing lands, water, and other essential services. In many areas, discriminatory practices arise from deep-seated tensions, where Christians, particularly those from non-traditional denominations, are excluded from communal resources or prioritized last in allocation decisions.

Block 3.6: Christians have been hindered in participating in communal institutions, forums, etc., for faith-related reasons. (3.25 points)

Christians often face significant challenges in participating in communal institutions and activities, particularly those tied to resource management, decision-making, or cultural practices. In some cases, they are deliberately excluded from key roles in local governance or community associations, limiting their ability to influence decisions that impact their lives. Converts or those belonging to non-traditional denominations often encounter heightened barriers, as they are regularly viewed with suspicion or distrust by other community members.

Block 3.10: Christians have been discriminated against in public or private employment for faith-related reasons. (3.00 points)

Christians have faced discrimination in both public and private employment, often causing career exclusion. They are frequently overlooked for promotion, denied job opportunities, or excluded from leadership roles within organizations. In areas with strong religious or cultural biases, employers may prioritize individuals who adhere to dominant beliefs, placing Christians from non-traditional denominations in particular at a disadvantage. Faith-related practices, such as worship schedules or dress codes, are sometimes used as justification for exclusion or penalization.

Pressure in Block 4 / National sphere

Block 4.1: The Constitution (or comparable national or state law) limits freedom of religion as formulated in Article 18 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. (4.00 points)

The legal framework and practices in the country impose significant restrictions on the freedom of religion, as guaranteed under Article 18 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR). These limitations are evident in the stringent regulations governing the construction of places of worship, which hinder religious communities from establishing spaces necessary for congregational activities. Furthermore, barriers to freely practicing the right to worship, including state-imposed restrictions and societal pressures, further constrain the exercise of religious freedom. These restrictions undermine the principles enshrined in international human rights instruments, emphasizing the need for a legal and social environment that fully respects and protects freedom of religion. As Freedom House puts it, "government imposes onerous criteria on religious groups for official recognition, which is required for the legal construction of houses of worship" ([Freedom in the World 2024 Angola D2](#)).

Block 4.5: Christians have been discriminated against when engaging with the authorities (local administration, government, army, etc.) for faith-related reasons. (3.75 points)

Christians have faced chronic discrimination when interacting with various authorities, including local administrations, government entities, and the armed forces, particularly in matters concerning their faith. This issue is deeply rooted in how the government perceives certain institutions, including churches, as potential threats to its hegemony. Churches that do not publicly support the government or align with its policies are more likely to face discriminatory treatment, including delayed services, restrictions on their activities, or overt pressure to comply.

Block 4.8: Christians have been hindered in expressing their views or opinions in public. (3.75 points)

Christians in the country face significant challenges in expressing their views or opinions in public, reflecting the broader repressive environment. According to Freedom House, the country is rated "Not Free" ([Freedom in the World 2024 Angola](#)) in both freedom of expression and freedom of religion. This indicates a complete absence of protection for these fundamental rights. In such a restrictive setting, it becomes exceedingly difficult for Christians to share their perspectives openly without fear of reprisal, making the public expression of their faith-based views a particularly daunting proposition.

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)

Civil society organizations, including those led by Christians and those working on human rights and development, face significant limitations in the country. These organizations are subject to close monitoring, which stifles their ability to operate freely and effectively. This is well-documented by international organizations like Freedom House, which highlights that "Human rights- and governance-related NGOs are closely monitored. The MPLA has historically made vocal attempts to discredit their work and sometimes threatened such groups with lawsuits and closure, prompting many to curtail their activities" ([Freedom in the World 2024 Angola](#) E2). Such restrictive measures create an environment of fear and suppression, severely undermining the contributions of civil society in advancing human rights and sustainable development.

Pressure in Block 5 / Church sphere

Block 5.1: Church activities have been monitored, hindered, disturbed, or obstructed. (4.00 points)

Church activities in the country are heavily monitored and frequently obstructed by the government, often through the involvement of civilian police. Religious gatherings and events are frequently subjected to surveillance, creating an atmosphere of fear and intimidation for congregants and leaders. Authorities have disrupted worship services, imposed arbitrary restrictions, and hindered church operations under the guise of enforcing regulations or maintaining public order. This interference disproportionately targets churches perceived as independent or critical of government policies, significantly restricting their ability to practice faith freely.

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

Registration remains one of the most challenging problems faced by thousands of Christian church groups in the country. While the Constitution guarantees religious freedom, the government imposes burdensome criteria for official recognition, making it exceedingly difficult for many religious groups to register. This recognition is essential for legal activities, including the construction of houses of worship. The stringent requirements have left numerous Pentecostal churches and other non-traditional Christian denominations unregistered, forcing them to operate in a precarious legal and social environment. Without official status, these churches are unable to secure land, build worship spaces and conduct activities freely.

Block 5.12: Churches or Christian organizations have been hindered in printing Christian materials or owning printing presses. (3.75 points)

Churches and Christian organizations face significant challenges in printing and distributing Christian materials due to stringent government regulations and censorship. Operating printing presses or disseminating religious literature requires prior government approval, a process marked by delays, scrutiny, and arbitrary restrictions. Even organizations with printing equipment must navigate stringent content reviews, where materials are often censored if deemed politically sensitive or misaligned with government policies. These restrictions severely limit the ability of churches, particularly smaller or non-traditional denominations, to propagate their faith and communicate effectively with their communities.

Block 5.20: It has been risky for churches or Christian organizations to speak out against instigators of persecution. (3.75 points)

It is very risky for churches or Christian organizations to speak out against instigators of persecution, as doing so often leads to severe consequences such as arrests, church closures, and other forms of state-sponsored persecution. Publicly condemning discrimination or violence exposes these groups to retaliation from powerful societal and governmental actors. The state's involvement in suppressing dissent through intimidation, legal actions, and direct interference creates a climate of fear, silencing many churches and Christian organizations. This oppressive environment enables persecution to continue unchecked.

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 WWL chooses to be cautious because the real number is uncertain.*

Angola: 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?	100 *	100 *
6.3 How many Christians have been detained for faith-related reasons?	10 *	10 *
6.4 How many Christians have been sentenced to jail, labor camp, sent to psychiatric hospital as punishment, or similar things for faith-related reasons?	0	0
6.5 How many Christians have been abducted for faith-related reasons (including Christians missing in a persecution context)?	0	0
6.6 How many Christians have been raped or otherwise sexually harassed for faith-related reasons?	0	0
6.7 How many cases have there been of forced marriages of Christians to non-Christians?	0	0

(table continues below)

Angola: Violence scores per Block 6 question in questionnaire	WWL 2025	WWL 2024
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?	10 *	0
6.10 How many shops or businesses of Christians have been attacked, damaged, bombed, looted, destroyed, burned down, closed or confiscated for faith-related reasons?	100 *	0
6.11 How many Christians have been forced to leave their homes or go into hiding in-country for faith-related reasons?	10	10 *
6.12 How many Christians have been forced to leave the country for faith-related reasons?	0	0

- Churches closed/demolished:** As explained above (for instance, in: *Brief description of the persecution situation*), many churches are forced to operate without official recognition, which has led to the demolition of thousands of places of Christian worship in recent years. The government closures and demolitions continued in WWL 2025. See also below: *Trends Summary #2*.

5 Year trends

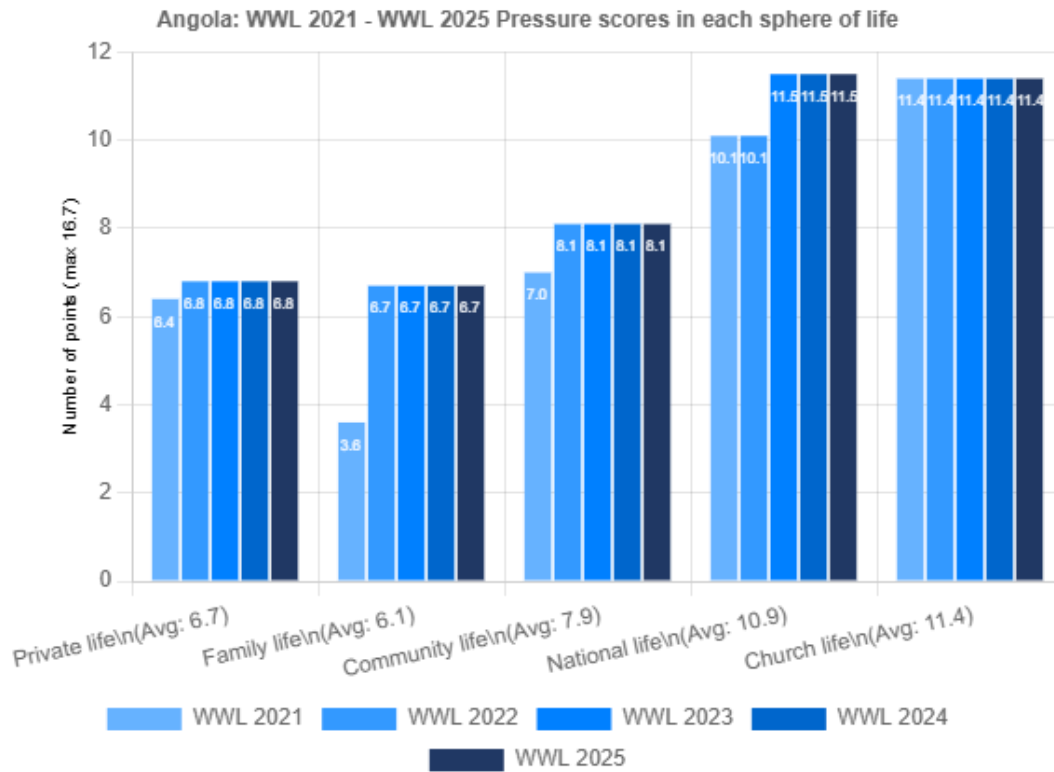
The following three charts show the levels of pressure and violence faced by Christians in the country over the last five WWL reporting periods.

5 Year trends: Average pressure

Angola: WWL 2021 - WWL 2025	Average pressure over 5 Spheres of life
2025	8.9
2024	8.9
2023	8.9
2022	8.6
2021	7.7

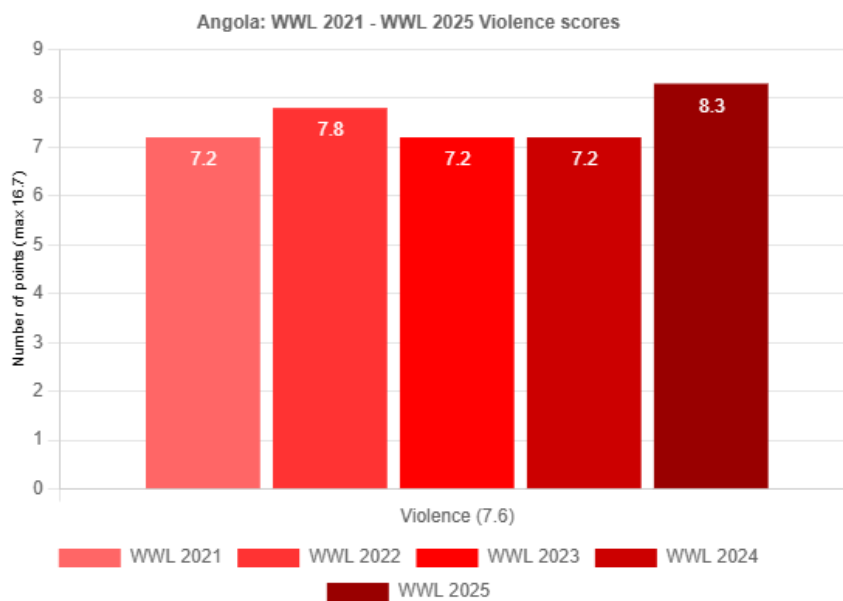
The average pressure on Christians has gradually risen from 7.7 points in WWL 2021 and has now levelled off at the 8.9 point mark. This is what happens when a Christian majority country (of over 90%) suffers from a government that places significant restrictions on freedom of religion.

5 Year trends: Pressure in each sphere of life



The chart above indicates that over a five-year period, *Church life* has the highest average pressure score at 11.4 points, followed by the *National sphere* with an average score of 10.9 points. This is an indication that the pressure on Christians in Angola comes from the government at both national and local levels, and has resulted in making church activities extremely difficult.

5 Year trends: Violence against Christians



The graph demonstrates that in each WWL reporting period, the violence score has consistently exceeded 7.0 points, leading to a five-year average of 7.6 points. This trend is due in part to the high number of church closures.

Gender-specific religious persecution / Female

Although women are generally expected to be subservient to men in Angola, faith-specific gender-specific persecution is not widely reported. According to Open Doors research, women and girls in Angola are vulnerable to sexual violence like rape and early marriage, including the “negative societal perceptions which discriminate against women and girls”. However, the oppression against women and girls is often rooted in traditional motives rather than religious grounds. Further, there have been no recent reports of sexual violence against Christian women and girls.

In some remote parts of the country, female Christians who have left Catholicism or African Traditional Religions (ATR) may be disinherited or lose custody of their children.

Gender-specific religious persecution / Male

Gender-specific religious persecution against Christian men and boys in Angola is also not widely reported. The oppression that is occasionally reported is mainly rooted in politics rather than religion. Church leaders are most vulnerable when such persecution does occur; they may be mentally abused for faith-related reasons and targeted by security forces. Some have reportedly had to go into hiding to escape arrest by the police as they are often accused of operating illegal gatherings. Operating a church without a license and open criticism of government policies are often the main factors behind the government’s persecution of church leaders. A country expert commented: “The activities of unrecognized churches like Pentecostal churches are occasionally monitored and spied on, on the suspicion of being opposed to government policies. The government always monitors unregistered churches. Government security agents show up regularly and at times arrest the pastor or priest.” Locals, including church officials from the dominant denominations, are known to act as informants for the government.

The government’s strict registration policies and protracted registration processes often leave religious leaders hard-pressed, especially leaders of Christian minority groups. “This is particularly true for the church groups who have been disfranchised by the action of the government. Churches are left without any option than meeting in places that are then technically places of worship. Even in those circumstances, the government monitors what these priests and pastors are saying,” a source disclosed.

Persecution of other religious minorities

All religious minorities face serious discrimination in the country. Quoting Freedom House, the US State Department ([IRFR 2023 Angola](#)) stated:

- “There are no registered Muslim groups, though Muslim communities have been vocal in their demands for recognition and the right to worship freely.¹ In speeches and interviews throughout the year [2023], Muslim leaders called attention to the lack of registration of Muslim groups.”

- Although the government did not register any Muslim groups in 2023, "[t]wo separate groups both known as the Islamic Community of Angola (each group has a slightly different acronym), which submitted their applications in 2019, were among those granted conditional approval and allowed to operate while their applications were under review."

Trends Summary

1) Ongoing challenges for churches under President Lourenço

Since President João Lourenço assumed office in September 2017, and despite being re-elected in the 2022 general election, hopes for significant improvements in religious freedom and governance have not materialized. The human rights situation remains dire, and corruption is rampant. The government's unwillingness to create space for civil society, genuine political parties, and comprehensive political reform suggests that these issues will persist. Laws restricting freedom of religion and assembly have made church registration increasingly difficult. Harassment of political opponents and journalists remains commonplace, casting doubt on the likelihood of improved religious freedom, particularly for non-traditional Christian groups, in the foreseeable future.

2) Intensified government actions against church groups

The government has escalated its actions against church groups, particularly concerning registration requirements. Despite long-standing appeals from Christians for better legal protection and recognition, the government's hostility has only intensified. A decree issued in September 2020 allowed only legally recognized religious groups to hold limited services under COVID-19 restrictions, signaling a further crackdown on Christian communities. In 2022, only four churches were granted licenses, leaving thousands of others without the necessary permits. Those which continue to worship without official registration risk significant government action, including church demolition and the imprisonment of church leaders. This ongoing trend, persisting for over two decades, appears to be a government strategy to maintain control over religious institutions. Unregistered congregations are especially wary of discussing any topics that might be perceived as political, fearing arrest under the pretext of operating without a proper license.

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/>
- Copyright, sources and definitions: Persecution dynamics - <https://www.opendoors.org/en-US/research-reports/country-dossiers/>
- Persecution engines description: IRFR 2017 Angola - <https://www.state.gov/reports/2017-report-on-international-religious-freedom/angola/>
- Persecution engines description: 2024 Corruption Perceptions Index - <https://www.transparency.org/en/countries/angola>

- Block 4.1: The Constitution (or comparable national or state law) limits freedom of religion as formulated in Article 18 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. (4.00 points): Freedom in the World 2024 Angola D2 - <https://freedomhouse.org/country/angola/freedom-world/2024>
- Block 4.8: Christians have been hindered in expressing their views or opinions in public. (3.75 points): Freedom in the World 2024 Angola - <https://freedomhouse.org/country/angola/freedom-world/2024>
- 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): Freedom in the World 2024 Angola - <https://freedomhouse.org/country/angola/freedom-world/2024>
- Persecution of other religious minorities: IRFR 2023 Angola - <https://www.state.gov/reports/2023-report-on-international-religious-freedom/bangladesh/>