

World
Watch
Research

Rwanda: Full Country Dossier

February 2022



OpenDoors

Serving persecuted **Christians** worldwide

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Introduction

World Watch List 2022

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

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

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Sources and definitions

- This country report is a collation of data and analysis based around Open Doors World Watch List (WWL) and includes statistical information on world religions, Christian denominations and people groups prepared by the World Christian Database (WCD).
- Highlighted links in the text can be found written out in full at the conclusion of each main section under the heading “External links”. In order to reduce the length of these reference sections, a table containing links to regularly used sources can be found at the beginning of the “Keys to Understanding” chapter under the heading “Links for general background information”. Where one of these sources has been quoted in the dossier text, a quote reference is supplied as indicated in the second column of the table.
- The WWL 2022 reporting period was 1 October 2020 - 30 September 2021.
- The definition of persecution used in WWL analysis is: “Any hostility experienced as a result of one’s identification with Christ. This can include hostile attitudes, words and actions towards Christians”. This broad definition includes (but is not limited to) restrictions, pressure, discrimination, opposition, disinformation, injustice, intimidation, mistreatment, marginalization, oppression, intolerance, infringement, violation, ostracism, hostilities, harassment, abuse, violence, ethnic cleansing and genocide.
- The latest update of WWL Methodology including appendices can be found on the [World Watch List Documentation](#) page of the Open Doors Analytical website (password: freedom).

Effect on data-gathering during COVID-19 pandemic

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

External Links - Introduction

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

WWL 2022 Situation in brief / Rwanda

Brief country details

Rwanda: Population (UN estimate for 2021)	Christians	Chr%
13,379,000	12,227,000	91.4

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

Rwanda: World Watch List	Points	WWL Rank
WWL 2022	50	67
WWL 2021	42	72
WWL 2020	42	71
WWL 2019	41	72
WWL 2018	-	-

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

Dominant persecution engines and drivers

Rwanda: Main Persecution engines	Main drivers
Dictatorial paranoia	Government officials, Political parties
Christian denominational protectionism	Religious leaders of other churches, Citizens (people from the broader society), including mobs, One's own (extended) family

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

Brief description of the persecution situation

State legislation and the regulation of life in society is carried out with the aim of ensuring that there is no return to the catastrophe of the 1990s genocide. Using the genocide as a pretext, the incumbent president has used the heavy hand of the government to suppress freedom of association, assembly and religion. As a result - the government's word is law and no one can realistically challenge it. As stated by Human Rights Watch's (HRW 2021): "State interference and intimidation have forced many civil society actors and journalists to stop working on sensitive political or human rights issues. Most print and broadcast media continued to be heavily dominated by pro-government views. Independent civil society organizations are very weak, and few document and expose human rights violations by state agents."

Specific examples of violations of rights in the reporting period

- Thousands of churches that were closed in 2018, 2019 and 2020 have not been allowed to re-open despite government claims to the contrary.
- Intimidation is very common.
- Security agents have often searched the homes of Christian leaders for no plausible reason and without any search warrant.
- Those who leave the traditional church (Catholicism) to join non-traditional Christian groups face backlash and shunning from their families.

Specific examples of positive developments

In late 2020, the government eliminated a requirement in the law which required civil servants and teachers to swear an oath of allegiance to the country as a condition of employment. Jehovah's Witnesses had long sought this change on the grounds that this requirement violated their religious beliefs and constituted a major barrier to employment. (Source: US State Department, IRFR 2020).

WWL 2022: Keys to understanding / Rwanda

Links for general background information

Name	Quote Reference	Link	Last accessed on
Amnesty International country report	AI 2021	https://www.amnesty.org/en/location/africa/east-africa-the-horn-and-great-lakes/rwanda/	17 September 2021
BBC News country profile	BBC country profile	https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-africa-14093238	17 September 2021
Bertelsmann Transformation Index 2020	BTI 2020	https://bti-project.org/en/reports/country-dashboard/RWA	17 September 2021
CIA World Factbook	CIA Factbook	https://www.cia.gov/the-world-factbook/countries/rwanda/	17 September 2021
Economist Intelligence Unit Democracy Index 2020	EIU 2020	https://pages.eiu.com/rs/753-RIQ-438/images/democracy-index-2020.pdf	17 September 2021
FFP's Fragile States Index 2021	FSI 2021	https://fragilestatesindex.org/country-data/	17 September 2021
Freedom House's 2021 Democracy index (Not included)	Freedom House/Democracy 2021	https://freedomhouse.org/countries/nations-transit/scores	
Freedom House's 2021 Global Freedom index	Freedom House/Global Freedom 2021	https://freedomhouse.org/country/rwanda/freedom-world/2021	17 September 2021
Freedom House's Freedom on the Net 2020 report	Freedom House/Internet Freedom 2020	https://freedomhouse.org/country/rwanda/freedom-net/2020	17 September 2021
Garda World country report	Garda World	https://www.garda.com/crisis24/country-reports/rwanda	17 September 2021
Human Rights Watch World Report 2021	HRW 2021	https://www.hrw.org/world-report/2021/country-chapters/rwanda	17 September 2021
Internet World Stats 2021	IWS 2021	https://www.internetworldstats.com/africa.htm#rw	17 September 2021
RSF's 2020 World Press Freedom Index	World Press Freedom 2020	https://rsf.org/en/rwanda	17 September 2021
Transparency International's 2020 Corruption Perceptions Index	CPI 2020	https://www.transparency.org/en/cpi/2020/index/rwa	17 September 2021
UNDP's Global Human Development Indicators	HDI	http://hdr.undp.org/en/countries/profiles/RWA	17 September 2021
US State Department's 2020 International Religious Freedom country reports	IRFR 2020	https://www.state.gov/reports/2020-report-on-international-religious-freedom/rwanda/	17 September 2021
USCIRF 2021 country reports (Not included)	USCIRF 2021	https://www.uscifr.gov/countries	
World Bank country report	World Bank	https://www.worldbank.org/en/country/rwanda	17 September 2021

Recent history

Rwanda is a landlocked country in the Great Lakes region of Africa - one of the most volatile areas on the continent. Germany arrived in what is currently called Rwanda in 1894 and opted to rule the region via the Tutsi king. Germany lost its colonial territories following defeat in the First World War and Rwanda was subsequently placed under Belgian administration. The Belgians also ruled the country via the Tutsi king. The country declared independence on 1 July 1962 from the Belgian administered UN trusteeship.

Approximately 84% percent of the population is Hutu and 14% Tutsi. On 6 April 1994 a plane carrying Rwandan President Habyarimana and Burundian President Cyprien Ntaryamira - both Hutu - was shot down and the two presidents were killed. In what was called the '100 days of slaughter', the Rwandan Armed Forces (FAR) and Hutu militia (the Interahamwe) went from home to home killing Tutsi and moderate Hutu politicians. The slaughter continued and on 13 May 1994 the UN Security Council agreed to send in 5,500 troops, mainly from the Organization of African Unity. However, as there was a disagreement as to who should cover the cost, the deployment was delayed. Radical Hutus continued the massacre. On 4 July 1994, the Rwandan Patriotic Front (RPF) captured Kigali and the Hutu government fled to Zaire (now the Democratic Republic of Congo). The international community was ashamed of its inability to save thousands of lives. In 2013, US President Clinton said that "if the USA had intervened in Rwanda, roughly 300,000 lives could have been saved." The then UN Secretary-General Kofi Anan also joined President Clinton in extending an apology to the Rwandan parliament.

The 1994 Rwandan genocide is considered to be one of the darkest moments in the second half of the 20th century. It claimed the lives of more than 800,000 people. This dark history has created an environment of background fear and the government is using the memory of those atrocities to its advantage. Paul Kagame is still leading the country since the end of the genocide in 1994.

Some clergy from the Roman Catholic church were also implicated in the genocide. RefWorld [summarized](#) the complicated issue that divided the Catholic church in an article dated 6 March 2008:

- "Although there are reports of priests and nuns offering protection and standing up to Hutu 'death squads' (ibid.; IWPR 1 Dec. 2006; RNS 5 Jan. 2008), there are also accounts of certain members of the clergy being complicit in the genocide (ibid.; The New York Times 12 May 2002; ibid. 10 June 2001; IWPR 1 Dec. 2006; BBC 20 Sept. 2004). There are also allegations that some senior clergy members were closely connected to those who planned the genocide or remained silent during the killings (The New York Times 10 June 2001; ibid. 12 May 2002; see also RNS 5 Jan. 2008; IWPR 1 Dec. 2006). A 5 January 2008 news article by the Washington-based Religion News Service (RNS) states that in Rwanda, 'stories circulated ... of a hierarchy [in the Roman Catholic Church] that condoned ethnic hatred from the pulpit, and of top church leaders who held positions of prominence in the Hutu government that orchestrated the genocide' (RNS 5 Jan. 2008)."

Political and legal landscape

Rwanda is a unitary republic state. It has a bicameral national assembly consisting of a Senate with 26 seats and a Chamber of Deputies with 53 seats. The president is head of the state and is elected by universal suffrage. In 1991, Rwanda adopted a more democratic Constitution and in May 2003, the country presented a new draft Constitution for the referendum, which was accepted and came into effect on 4 June 2003. It was amended several times, most recently in 2013.

Rwanda is accused of poor governance, lack of rule of law, and the absence of democracy. Chatham House, writing in 2014, stated: "[Over the past two decades](#) the ruling party has presided over a period of stabilization, reconstruction, and development but has also been the subject of controversy and criticism regarding governance, human rights, and the reach of the state." On the positive side, the government has tried to eliminate corruption by introducing reforms in different sectors; however, the independence of the judiciary of the country is still questionable. Heritage Foundation in its [2019 Index of Economic Freedom](#) states that "progress toward greater economic freedom is hindered by continuing institutional weaknesses. The judicial system lacks independence and transparency, and foreign investment is deterred by ongoing political instability."

According to Human Rights Watch (HRW 2021):

- "The ruling Rwandan Patriotic Front (RPF) exerts total control over political space in Rwanda. President Paul Kagame and other government officials regularly threaten those who criticize the government of the RPF. Independent media and civil society are weak, and

political space is extremely limited. Suspicious deaths and disappearances of real or perceived government critics in recent years often are not investigated and perpetrators are rarely held accountable. The judiciary lacks independence, especially in political or other sensitive cases. Arbitrary detention, ill-treatment, and torture in official and unofficial detention facilities are common. Street children are routinely rounded up and detained in 'transit centers', where they are held in deplorable conditions and beaten.”

The country has also seen an increase in women's political participation. The country held elections in 2018 in which women filled 64% of the seats (World Bank/country overview). President Paul Kagame was re-elected to a seven-year term in August 2018. This was after an amendment had been made to the Constitution in December 2015 allowing him to serve a third term.

The 2020 COVID-19 crisis has been used by many dictators to curtail basic human rights and Paul Kagame has used the opportunity to effectively decimate opposition in the country. Some Christian groups, who had already been placed under heavy pressure by the government, have been told to completely shut down all their places of worship.

Religious landscape

Rwanda: Religious context	Number of adherents	%
Christians	12,227,000	91.4
Muslim	728,000	5.4
Hindu	750	0.0
Buddhist	0	0.0
Ethno-religionist	364,000	2.7
Jewish	0	0.0
Bahai	27,600	0.2
Atheist	42	0.0
Agnostic	31,100	0.2
Other	0	0.0
<i>OTHER includes Chinese folk, New religionist, Sikh, Spiritist, Taoist, Confucianist, Jain, Shintoist, Zoroastrian.</i>		

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

According to the US State Department (IRFR 2020):

- "The majority of Muslims are Sunni, with a small number of Shia (200-300), according to the RMC [Rwanda Muslim Community]. While generally there are no concentrations of religious groups in certain geographic areas, a significant number of Muslims live in the Nyamirambo neighborhood of Kigali."
- "The law stipulates that preachers with supervisory responsibilities must possess a degree in religious studies from an institution of higher learning or any other degree with a valid certificate in religious studies issued by a recognized institution."
- "The law regulates public meetings and states that any person who holds a meeting or demonstration in a public place without prior authorization is subject to eight days' to six months' imprisonment, a fine of 100,000 to 1,000,000 francs (\$110 to \$1,100), or both."

Economic landscape

In general, the small East African nation's economy relies largely on agriculture, tourism and mining.

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

- **GDP growth:** "GDP in real terms fell by 3.6% (y-o-y) in the third quarter of 2020 and is estimated to have dropped by 0.2% for 2020, compared to a projected expansion of 8% before the COVID-19 outbreak. However, GDP is projected to grow by 4.9% below the pre-crisis trajectory of around 8.0% per year, but also expected to remain below its 2019 level until 2022 due to the heightened uncertainty surrounding the second and third waves of the new variants of COVID-19. However, credit growth reached 21.8% in 2020, mainly driven by loans restructuring granted to borrowers whose activities were negatively affected by the pandemic."
- **Industrial growth:** "Construction slowed in 2020 by -4.0 percentage points, reducing overall industrial growth to 12.5%."
- **Imports/exports:** "The current account deficit (CAD) widened in 2020 and was mainly financed through external borrowing. The CAD is expected to remain elevated in 2021 due to lower trade and tourism activities. Imports of goods and services declined by -1.2 points in 2020 from 18.0% in 2019. Export performance also fell sharply by -6.5 points in 2020 from 19.9% in 2019, and was adversely affected for the second year in a row by low prices for Rwanda's traditional exports such as coffee, tea, and minerals."
- **Inflation:** "Inflation is expected to remain within the central bank's target range of 5±3% from 7.4% in 2020."
- **Poverty:** "Due to COVID-19, poverty was projected to increase in 2021 by almost 4 percentage points with respect to its 2019 value of 55.4%, adding close to 900,000 new poor in 2 years."
- **COVID-19:** "COVID-19 pushed Rwanda's booming economy into its first contraction since 1994 and onto a slower long term growth trajectory. The lockdown and social distancing measures, which were critical to limiting infections, sharply curtailed economic activities, especially with tourism. Containment measures also led to job losses, with the unemployment rate reaching 22% in May (from 13% before COVID-19). However, Rwanda's social protection system was well prepared to respond to the pandemic. Rwanda made sig-

nificant pre-COVID investments in its flagships safety net, Vision 2020 Umurenge program (VUP), including an expansion in the number of beneficiaries through human capital-focused innovations. When the pandemic hit, Rwanda's social protection system responded immediately, by scaling up safety nets, including emergency transfers. Exports of goods and services are estimated to experience a severe decline of 30.6% in 2020 in US dollar terms, with services exports hit the hardest. Public and publicly guaranteed debt is expected to reach 65% of GDP in 2020, and rise to 69% in 2022."

According to World Bank (country overview):

- "Rwanda now aspires to reach Middle Income Country (MIC) status by 2035 and High-Income Country (HIC) status by 2050. This aspiration will be carried out through a series of seven-year National Strategies for Transformation (NST1)". However, this will only be possible if the country remains stable and peaceful, which could be something of a challenge in a region that has hundreds of rebel groups and unstable neighbors.
- "Rwanda's strong economic growth was accompanied by substantial improvements in living standards, with a two-thirds drop in child mortality and near-universal primary school enrollment."

Social and cultural landscape

According to UNDP's Human Development Indicators (HDI 2020) and CIA Factbook:

- **Main ethnic groups:** Hutu, Tutsi, Twa (Pygmy). According to the [World Atlas](#) (accessed 1 July 2021): Hutus make up 84%, Tutsis 15% and Twa (Batwa) 1% of the population. Originally the Tutsis were herdsmen and the Hutus farmers.
- **Main languages:** Kinyarwanda (official, universal Bantu vernacular) 93.2%, French (official), English (official), Swahili/Kiswahili (official, used in commercial centers), other 6.3%, unspecified 0.3% (2002 est.).
- **Average population growth:** 1.8% (2021 est.)
- **Urban population:** 17.6% of total population (2021)
- **Rate of urbanization:** 3.07% annual rate of change (2020- 2025 est.)
- **Expected years of schooling:** 11.2 years
- **Literacy rate, adult (ages 15 and older):** 73.2%
- **Employment to population ratio (ages 15 and older):** 82.8%
- **Unemployment, total:** 1.0% of labor force
- **Unemployment, youth (ages 15-24):** 1.7%
- **Human Development Index (HDI) score and ranking:** Rwanda ranked 160th with a score of 0.543
- **Average life expectancy at birth:** 69.0 years
- **Gender Development Index (GDI):** 0.945
- **Gender inequality index (GII):** 0.402

According to [UNHCR's 2021 Global Focus](#):

- **Refugees:** As of May 2021, Rwanda hosted a total of 127,557 refugees and asylum seekers, mainly from Burundi (38.7%) and the Democratic Republic of Congo (50.1%). Women and

children represented 75% of the population. In addition, around 8,000 Congolese refugees displaced in Rwanda after the eruption of the Nyiragongo volcano on 22 May 2021, received humanitarian support from the Government of Rwanda and UNHCR.

Technological landscape

According to Internet World Stats (IWS 2021):

- **Internet usage:** 45.1% of the population – survey date: December 2020
- **Facebook usage:** 6.1% penetration rate – survey date: December 2020

According to World Bank (country profile):

- **Mobile phone subscriptions:** 76.5 per 100 people

Rwanda has come a long way since the 1994 Genocide and there has been a general improvement in infrastructure. The education sector has also shown considerable improvement. The Internet penetration rate is also increasing although citizens are not able to use the available technology freely.

According to Freedom House/Internet Freedom 2020:

- "In May 2019, the Rwandan government announced its intention to start regulating social media content, arguing that regulation was necessary to protect citizens from misinformation and that social media platforms were being used to rally people to disrupt society. Critics have said that the move was only to target the government's opponents and independent journalists."
- "Internet freedom in Rwanda declined in 2020, with the government taking steps to detain and intimidate online journalists and critics. Censorship of online content remained common, with a number of independent online media outlets blocked in the country. Self-censorship also has become more pervasive among online journalists and ordinary users in recent years due to increasing government repression, social pressure to support the government, and fear of reprisals for those who criticize the authorities. The 2018 parliamentary elections and 2019 genocide commemoration were particularly sensitive subjects during the reporting period. Internet users typically avoid topics that can be construed as critical of the government or disruptive to national unity and reconciliation. President Kagame has threatened members of the diaspora who speak out against the government online. These threats are considered credible, given the regime's history of targeting dissidents."

Security situation

Dissent and criticism of the government commonly leads to arrest or at times disappearance. Apart from this, the country is considered stable and safe.

The role of the Catholic Church during the 1994 Genocide remains a problem in the country. Many reports and judicial papers show that Roman Catholic priests participated in the genocide in various ways. The International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda (ICTR) indicted and tried many Catholic priests. An example is Athanase Seromba, a Catholic priest at Nyange in the Kibuye

Province of western Rwanda, who was found guilty of aiding and abetting genocide and of crimes against humanity. There are still rebels in DRC that participated in the 1994 Genocide. The Paul Kagame administration makes sure that those rebel groups in DRC do not come back to attack Rwanda.

According to International Crisis Group ([ICG, March, May and September 2020](#)):

- **March 2020:** "Rwanda-Uganda tensions persisted after President Kagame and Ugandan President Museveni took steps to mend ties in Feb. Uganda in March expelled over 300 Rwandans for allegedly "spreading COVID-19" and Ugandan security forces 12 March arrested Ugandan presidential candidate and former security minister Henry Tumukunde on charges of treason for allegedly seeking to obtain support from Rwanda to remove current President Museveni from office".
- **May 2020:** "Military clashed with Burundian forces at maritime border on Lake Rweru and French authorities arrested Rwandan genocide suspect Félicien Kabuga. Rwandan Defence Forces (RDF) 8 May reportedly killed Burundian soldier during border clashes on Lake Rweru; defense ministry said RDF retaliated after they came under fire from Burundian soldiers while ordering Burundian fishermen who had crossed into Rwandan waters to return to Burundi. French police 16 May arrested Rwandan fugitive Félicien Kabuga, under international indictment since 1997 for alleged role in funding Hutu militias during 1994 genocide, near Paris."
- **September 2020:** "Relations with neighboring countries remained tense. President Kagame 6 September said "there is still more to do" to improve relations with neighboring Burundi and Uganda. The Burundian government in mid-September set steep conditions for normalizing relations with Kigali, including that the Rwandan government extradite suspected perpetrators of a 2015 coup attempt against former Burundian President Nkurunziza and facilitate refugees' returns."

Trends analysis

1) The government regards any form of assembly and association as a threat

Rwanda is a country with a Christian majority and the future for Christians in the country will be shaped by how the Church interacts with government policies. The government is paranoid about all forms of gathering and does not allow any form of meaningful peaceful assembly and association. This was also emphasized by Freedom House/Global Freedom 2021: "Although the constitution guarantees freedom of assembly, this right is limited in practice. Fear of arrest serves as a deterrent to protests, and gatherings are sometimes disrupted even when organizers obtain official authorization."

2) The government remains authoritarian

Rwanda has made progress and has frequently been cited as now being one of the most stable nations in Africa. At the same time, the Rwandan government is considered to be one of the most ruthless regimes on the continent. President Kagame is still in firm control despite accusations by human rights groups. If the situations in Burundi and DRC do not get worse, there

is no reason to think there will be any major political changes in the country. Even [Paul Rusesabagina](#), whose heroism during the Rwandan genocide inspired the “Hotel Rwanda” movie, was tricked into boarding a flight to Rwanda, where he was sentenced to 25 years in prisons in September 2021 on charges of terrorism (CNN, 21 September 2021). This heavy-handedness will likely continue. Freedom House rates the country 'Not Free', with a low score of 21/100.

3) Government animosity towards non-traditional Christian groups is likely to continue

In recent years, the government has turned its attention to the non-traditional churches that are operating in the country. President Paul Kagame was re-elected in the August 2018 elections (following an amendment to the Constitution) allowing him to serve a third term and be in power at least until 2025. That means this animosity towards non-traditional Christian groups will likely continue in the months to come. This animosity towards house churches and smaller churches was further exacerbated during the COVID-19 crisis.

External Links - Keys to understanding

- Recent history: summarized - <https://www.refworld.org/docid/49b92b279.html>
- Political and legal landscape: Over the past two decades - <http://www.chathamhouse.org/event/rwanda-under-rpf-assessing-twenty-years-post-conflict-governance%20>
- Political and legal landscape: 2019 Index of Economic Freedom - <https://www.heritage.org/index/country/rwanda>
- Economic landscape: 2021 Macro Poverty Outlook (for Sub-Saharan Africa) - <http://pubdocs.worldbank.org/en/720441492455091991/mpo-ssa.pdf>
- Social and cultural landscape: World Atlas - <https://www.worldatlas.com/articles/ethnic-groups-of-rwanda.html>
- Social and cultural landscape: UNHCR's 2021 Global Focus - <https://reporting.unhcr.org/rwanda>
- Security situation: ICG, March, May and September 2020 - https://www.crisisgroup.org/crisiswatch/database?location%5B%5D=8&date_range=last_12_months&from_month=01&from_year=2020&to_month=01&to_year=2020
- Trends analysis: Paul Rusesabagina - <https://edition.cnn.com/2021/09/20/africa/paul-rusesabagina-verdict-rwanda-intl/index.html>

WWL 2022: Church information / Rwanda

Christian origins

As in many other African countries, the first Christian missionaries to arrive in Rwanda were the Roman Catholic White Fathers. According to Storica Mente (accessed 17 July 2020): “Between 1900 and 1910, the [White Fathers](#) had acquired a decisive advantage in the Rwandan territory with respect to the German army by constructing seven missionary stations.” By the time the Germans were forced to leave the country during the First World War (1916), ten mission stations had been opened.

Other Christian denominations followed the White Fathers. As described by BU School of Theology (accessed 17 July 2020), 1907 saw the arrival of the first Protestant missionaries, German Lutherans from the [Bethel Mission](#) (also known as the Evangelische Missionsgesellschaft für Deutsch-Ostafrika). These German Lutherans founded eight mission stations,

along with two commercial sites to compete with Muslim traders. Before they too were forced to leave the country, the Lutherans had managed to edit a translation of the four Gospels and a textbook in Kinyarwanda (the Rwandan language).

After the Belgians took over control of the country from Germany, they allowed other missionaries to enter. As a result, the Seventh-Day Adventist Church from the USA (1916), Anglicans of the Church Missionary Society (1921), Danish Baptists (1938), Swedish Pentecostals (1940), and the Free Methodist Church (1942) from the USA came to the country to work among the local population, building schools and hospitals. In particular the Roman Catholics invested in education and founded the majority of schools operating in the country.

Church spectrum today

Rwanda: Church networks	Christians	%
Orthodox	1,500	0.0
Catholic	5,530,000	45.2
Protestant	4,342,000	35.5
Independent	1,500,000	12.3
Unaffiliated	922,000	7.5
Doubly-affiliated Christians	-67,700	-0.6
Total	12,227,800	100.0
<i>(Any deviation from the total number of Christians stated above is due to the rounding of decimals)</i>		
Evangelical movement	2,836,000	23.2
Renewalist movement	2,485,000	20.3

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

Orthodox: Eastern (Chalcedonian), Oriental (Pre-Chalcedonian, Non-Chalcedonian, Monophysite), Nestorian (Assyrian), and non-historical Orthodox. **Roman Catholics:** All Christians in communion with the Church of Rome. **Protestants:** Christians in churches originating in or in communion with the Western world's 16th-century Protestant Reformation. Includes Anglicans, Lutherans and Baptists (any of whom may be Charismatic) and denominational Pentecostals, but not Independent traditions such as Independent Baptists nor independent Charismatics. **Independents:** Christians who do not identify with the major Christian traditions (Orthodox, Roman Catholic, Protestant). **Unaffiliated Christians:** Persons professing publicly to be Christians but who are not affiliated to churches. **Doubly-affiliated Christians:** Persons affiliated to or claimed by 2 denominations at once. **Evangelical movement:** Churches, denominations, and individuals who identify themselves as evangelicals by membership in denominations linked to evangelical alliances (e.g., World Evangelical Alliance) or by self-identification in polls. **Renewalist movement:** Church members involved in Pentecostal/Charismatic renewal.

Rwanda has been a Catholic majority country since the colonial days under Belgium. Some Catholic leaders openly oppose the growth of non-traditional church groups.

External Links - Church information

- Christian origins: White Fathers - https://storicamente.org/cristofori_1
- Christian origins: Bethel Mission - <http://www.bu.edu/missiology/missionary-biography/c-d/church-john-edward-1899-1989/>

WWL 2022: Persecution Dynamics / Rwanda

Reporting period

1 October 2020 - 30 September 2021

Position on the World Watch List

Rwanda: World Watch List	Points	WWL Rank
WWL 2022	50	67
WWL 2021	42	72
WWL 2020	42	71
WWL 2019	41	72
WWL 2018	-	-

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

Rwanda had consistently scored 41/42 points in the period WWL 2019 - 2021. Now in WWL 2022, it has increased by 8 points. This was due to marked rises in the level of pressure in the *Private* and *National spheres of life*, and in a rise in the violence score from 8.1 points in WWL 2021 to 9.3 points.

State legislation and the regulation of society all aim to make sure that the government is in tight control of the country. Accordingly, the government suppresses freedom of association, assembly and religion, and wants to make sure that it is in a position to control the running and activities of all religious associations. As a result, the application process for licenses and the registration of new churches has been made very complicated. The government has placed stringent requirements on Christians (for instance, the need for pastors to have a university degree) which are not only difficult, but also unrealistic to fulfill within a short period of time. In addition, traditional denominations like the Catholic Church support the government in putting more pressure on new and smaller churches. The traditional churches, however, also face high levels of interference, for instance when it comes to choosing leaders and the content of religious teaching. The government wants all churches in the country to agree and support the government. If they are found not to be acting in accordance with government policy, they can easily be labeled 'revisionist'.

Persecution engines

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

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)

Rwanda has had one president, Paul Kagame, for over two decades. Kagame has been held in high esteem for his role as the military leader who brought an end to the 1990s genocide. To his credit, his rule has seen the country experience stability, economic growth and the participation of more women in parliament. However, his rule is becoming increasingly autocratic. A [referendum in 2015](#) accepted constitutional amendments allowing President Kagame to run for a third term in 2017 and two additional five-year terms thereafter. Life in society is heavily monitored to ensure there is no return to the catastrophe of the 1990s genocide. The result is that the government's word is law and no one can realistically challenge it. This holds true in religious affairs as well, as can be seen in the closure of thousands of churches.

Christian denominational protectionism (Medium)

Rwanda has a Roman Catholic majority, but in recent decades other denominations have begun to grow fast, causing some Catholic leaders and followers to strongly oppose the emerging non-traditional Christian groups. In this regard, it has been reported that some Catholic leaders side with the government in persecuting other denominations.

Drivers of persecution

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

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

Drivers of Dictatorial paranoia

- **Government officials (Very strong):** Government authorities harass church leaders by issuing warnings and even demolishing the churches where they serve. Under the guise of implementing policy, especially as regards safety and noise pollution, the government has continued to make the life of Christians difficult.
- **Political parties (Medium):** The ruling Rwandan Patriotic Front (RPF) is involved in persecuting Christians, since any distinction between the government and the party is blurred. Party members and cadres spy on those churches that do not support the government and report them to the state security apparatus.

Drivers of Christian denominational protectionism

- **Religious leaders of other churches (Medium):** Church leaders report to government officials giving information on the activities of the smaller non-traditional Christian groups.
- **Citizens (Medium):** Followers of other churches report to government officials giving information on the activities of the smaller non-traditional Christian groups.
- **Extended family (Medium):** Catholic families of 'cross-denominational converts' report to government officials giving information on the activities of the smaller non-traditional Christian groups.

Areas where Christians face most difficulties

In recent years, the capital city, Kigali, has seen most persecution, particularly of Evangelicals and Pentecostal Christian groups.

Christian communities and how they are affected

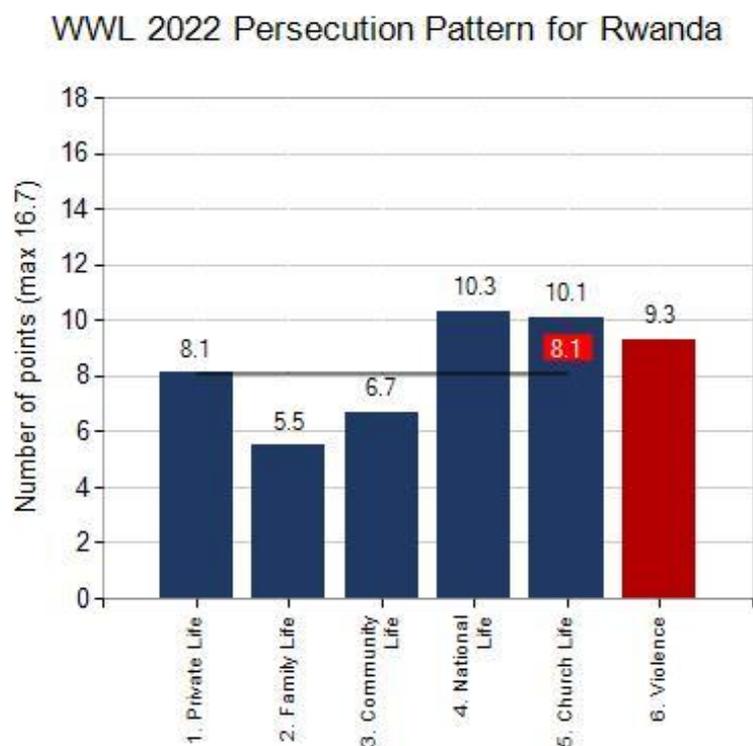
Communities of expatriate Christians: Foreign Christians in the country are not involuntary isolated and are therefore not treated as a separate category in WWL analysis.

Historical Christian communities: The Roman Catholic Church (just over 45%) is the largest denomination and faces difficulties with the government at times. On 20 November 2016, it released a statement officially apologizing for its role in the 1994 Genocide, which was signed by the country's nine bishops. Several Catholic priests have been indicted by international tribunals for crimes committed during the genocide, but the Church never officially acknowledged its role until this statement was issued. The government often uses this as a pretext for interfering in church affairs.

Converts: There are some converts are from Islam and ATR. However, most are so-called 'cross-denominational converts', many of whom become victims of *Christian denominational protectionism*.

Non-traditional Christian communities: In recent years the Pentecostal branch of Protestantism has grown quickly in the country. These church groups have faced the brunt of persecution in the country, with churches being closed down and leaders arrested.

The Persecution pattern



The WWL 2022 Persecution pattern for Rwanda shows:

- The average level of pressure on Christians is 8.1 points, an increase of more than 1 point from the level in WWL 2021 (6.9 points).
- Pressure is greatest in the *National sphere* (10.3 points) followed by *Church sphere of life* (10.1 points).
- Violence is very high, reaching 9.3 points, rising from 8.1 points in WWL 2021. The persecution of Christians expressing views opposing the government has intensified with the rapid development of *Dictatorial paranoia*. Numerous churches were closed down in the WWL 2021 and WWL 2022 reporting periods and most of those that were closed were not allowed to re-open.

Pressure in the 5 spheres of life

In each of the five spheres of life discussed below, four questions have been selected from the WWL 2022 questionnaire for brief commentary and explanation. The selection usually (but not always) reflects the highest scoring elements. In some cases, an additional paragraph per sphere is included to give further information deemed important. (To see how individual questions are scored on a scale of 0-4 points, please see the “WWL Scoring example” in the WWL Methodology, available at: <https://opendoorsanalytical.org/world-watch-list-documentation/>, password: freedom).

Pressure in Block 1 / Private sphere

Block 1.4: It has been risky for Christians to reveal their faith in written forms of personal expression (including expressions in blogs and Facebook etc.). (3.50 points)

It is difficult for Christians to openly talk and write about their faith, especially since the government sees anything expressed by adherents of some church groups as a threat to the ruling party. What is very important here is that personal expression should be seen within the context of the overall all freedom of expression in the country- it is very restrictive both in the public and personal spheres.

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

Meetings between individuals has been risky. Individual Christians struggle to meet up since the government has put restrictions on meetings. This problem is an off-shoot of the problem that churches face in gathering, especially if they are suspected of not supporting the government.

Block 1.6: It has been risky for Christians to access Christian radio or TV, or Christian material on the Internet. (1.50 points)

There are some Christian radio outlets outside that country that are critical of the government. Christians listening to such programs, do it at the risk of detention. This is also related to the overall restrictions of access to information: People are always being watched, and community monitoring also covers what Christians are listening to on the radio.

Block 1.8: It has been risky for Christians to speak about their faith with those other than immediate family (extended family, others). (1.50 points)

The government interferes in many ways as it wants to know which denomination is growing and who is saying what. It is widely believed that the government has many informers in place in the community. Furthermore, there is the issue with *Christian denominational protectionism*. Thus, it is considered to be very risky to talk to other people about faith matters.

Pressure in Block 2 / Family sphere

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

This is an issue where people have changed their church loyalties. In many cases, those who decide to join new churches literally forfeit their family right to inherit. There is also a cultural element to this: A true Rwandan is traditionally seen as being a Roman Catholic.

Block 2.12: Christian spouses of non-Christians have been excluded from the right or opportunity to claim custody of the children in divorce cases. (2.00 points)

Similar to the issue of inheritance in 2.13, child custody is also problematic for someone who has decided to leave his or her original faith and join a new Christian denomination. Those who do make such a move, risk losing child custody as a punitive measure imposed by their family.

Block 2.7: Parents have been hindered in raising their children according to their Christian beliefs. (1.75 points)

There are many issues in this area. The major one is the fact that the government is trying to inculcate its own doctrine into Christian children. Furthermore, there is an element of *Christian denominational protectionism* at work in Catholic-run schools. In this context, parents struggle to raise their children according to their understanding of Christian faith.

Block 2.11: Spouses of converts have been put under pressure (successfully or unsuccessfully) by others to divorce. (1.50 points)

Those leaving the Catholic church to join a non-traditional Christian group are reported to face these challenges. This is done with the tacit support of some government officials who see some of the new churches as a threat to the status quo.

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.). (4.00 points)

As highlighted in previous WWL reporting, the Rwandan government introduced a [law in 2018](#) aimed at monitoring churches and their leaders (Xinhuanet, 27 July 2018). This monitoring has resulted in the detention of Christians and closure of many churches. The government also recruits members of other church groups to take part in the monitoring, especially targeting

smaller Christian groups. In the WWL 2022 reporting period, this issue has remained a constant problem for Christians.

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

Christians who do not support what the government does, will face this sort of discrimination. As a result, many Christians lag behind in terms of career and economic development. In fact, this discrimination is encouraged directly or indirectly by some government officials in an attempt to make people support the government through their churches as well.

Block 3.6: Christians have been hindered in participating in communal institutions, forums, etc., for faith-related reasons. (2.75 points)

It all depends whether the Christian in question supports the government, or not. If not, the Christian's participation will be blocked. Some Christian denominations are part of the problem in the way they seek to block participation from other Christian groups. The COVID-19 restrictions only exacerbated this problem.

Block 3.3: Christians have been under threat of abduction and/or forced marriage. (1.75 points)

Government officers are known to abduct Christians who speak out on grounds of faith against the government. This includes Christians who highlight unjust practices and corruption. No one is reporting these abductions as anyone who reports would face serious repercussions. Less commonly, family members may abduct and keep 'cross-denominational converts' under house-arrest. The country is known for abducting people who speak against the government.

Pressure in Block 4 / National sphere

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

The government stifles freedom of expression. Freedom House/Global Freedom 2021 reports: "The government imposes legal restrictions and informal controls on freedom of the press, and most media outlets practice self-censorship. The few journalists in the country who engage in independent reporting are subject to criminal charges and intimidation." Christians fear the consequences if they voice any criticism against President Paul Kagame. Views that are not in support of the government will be suppressed and those who hold such opinions are likely to be prosecuted. Some church closures have this element in the background.

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)

Any civil or humanitarian organization operating in the country faces serious problems (arrest, dissolution, expulsion) if they do not support the government. Civil society in the country is extremely controlled. NGO activities are highly monitored and their bank accounts tightly controlled.

Block 4.5: Christians have been discriminated against when engaging with the authorities (local administration, government, army, etc.) for faith-related reasons. (3.50 points)

It is always tricky for those who do not support the government. Especially Christians belonging to non-traditional church groups face serious problems. Authorities in the country not only discriminate those Christians who refuse to support the government and its policy, they even encourage private entities to discriminate against those individuals.

Block 4.16: International monitoring has been hindered when Christians had to stand trial. (3.50 points)

There are many cases of this. For instance, the government does not allow any presence of the international community when churches are closed or demolished. The country accuses anyone who speaks against the injustices in Rwanda as 'neo-colonialists.'

Pressure in Block 5 / Church sphere

Block 5.9: Christians have experienced interference when choosing their own religious leaders. (4.00 points)

The government has massive interests in the church. One of the government's main interests is to control churches and their activities. Even though concerns about public safety and sanitation are the reasons given for introducing the 2018 law, interviews and speeches by government officials indicate that there is an ulterior motive. The ruling party is keen to make sure that negative influential voices are silenced; creating fear would seem to be the main tool of governance. If a church leader has not graduated from an accredited institution, then the church he serves will be closed.

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

Rwanda is a country where the executive branch rules with an iron fist. Anyone who speaks out against government actions can only expect to be dealt with severely. Rwandese church leaders and ordinary Christians are very afraid that they will be targeted if anything they say can be interpreted as criticism of the government. It is a very serious matter that is making the life of some church leaders difficult. They have to censure themselves during church ceremonies.

Block 5.4: Churches have been hindered from organizing Christian activities inside their place of worship. (3.50 points)

The non-traditional churches are facing tremendous problems in this respect. Also, government informers often infiltrate the hierarchy of historical and other church communities to make sure they follow all government policies closely. As noted by Freedom House/Global Freedom 2021: "Authorities have shut down Pentecostal churches and some mosques, banned mosques in Kigali from broadcasting the call to prayer, passed a law requiring religious leaders to obtain a theology degree before establishing churches, mandated that religious organizations report grants to the RGB [Rwanda Governance Board], and required that donations to faith-based groups be deposited in Rwandan banks."

Block 5.8: Christian preaching, teaching and/or published materials have been monitored. (3.50 points)

The Rwandan government monitors all statements and messages originating from religious institutions. The government does not allow criticism even when it is carried out as a prophetic voice in preaching. Church leaders often self-censor as they are unsure who might be reporting to security agents what they say. This has to be seen in line with how freedom of expression, opinion and right to freedom of religion are being treated in the country. As mentioned above under 5.4 and 4.8, there is a tight control exerted by the government.

Violence

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

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

- *Doing so would expose them to more attacks. For example, if a family member is killed because of his/her faith, the survivors might decide to keep silent about the circumstances of the killing to avoid provoking any further attacks.*
- *In some circumstances, the reticence to pass on information may be due to the danger of exposure caused by converts returning to their previous faith.*
- *If persecution is related to sexual violence - due to stigma, survivors often do not tell even their closest relatives.*
- *In some cultural settings, if your loved one is killed, you might be under the obligation to take revenge. Christians not wishing to do that, may decide to keep quiet about it.*

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

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

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

4. The use of symbolic numbers: In cases where it has been impossible to count exactly, a symbolic round figure (10*, 100* etc.) is given and indicated with an asterisk. A symbolic number of 10* could in reality even be 100 or more but the real number is uncertain. A symbolic number of 100* could go well over 1000 but the real number is uncertain. A symbolic number of 1,000* could go well over 10,000 but, again, the real number is uncertain. The same applies for

symbolic numbers 10,000*, 100,000* and 1,000,000*: Each could indicate much higher numbers, but WWR chooses to be cautious because the real number is uncertain.

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

Rwanda: Violence Block question	WWL 2022	WWL 2021
6.1 How many Christians have been killed for faith-related reasons (including state sanctioned executions)?	0	0
6.2 How many churches or Christian buildings (schools, hospitals, cemeteries, etc.) have been attacked, damaged, bombed, looted, destroyed, burned down, closed or confiscated for faith-related reasons?	100 *	100 *
6.3 How many Christians have been detained for faith-related reasons?	10	16
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?	10	0
6.7 How many cases have there been of forced marriages of Christians to non-Christians?	5	0
6.8 How many Christians have been otherwise physically or mentally abused for faith-related reasons (including beatings and death threats)?	10 *	10 *
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 *	10 *
6.10 How many shops or businesses of Christians have been attacked, damaged, bombed, looted, destroyed, burned down, closed or confiscated for faith-related reasons?	0	0
6.11 How many Christians have been forced to leave their homes or go into hiding in-country for faith-related reasons?	50	5
6.12 How many Christians have been forced to leave the country for faith-related reasons?	10 *	10 *

5 Year trends

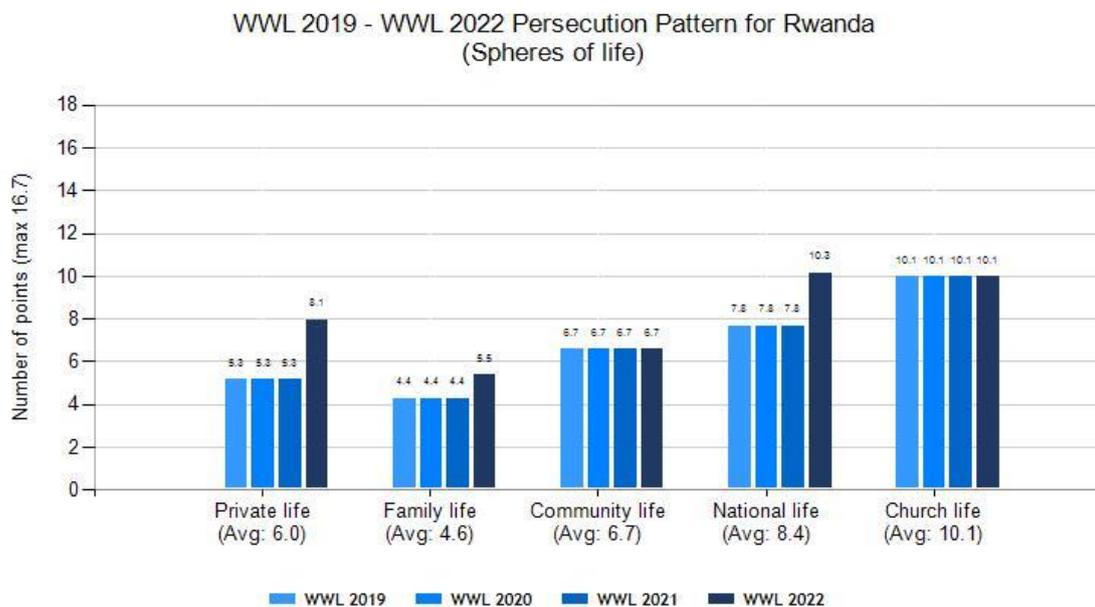
The following three charts show the levels of pressure and violence faced by Christians in the country over the last five WWL reporting periods.

5 Year trends: Average pressure

Rwanda: WWL 2018 - WWL 2022 Persecution Pattern history	Average pressure over 5 Spheres of life
2022	8.1
2021	6.9
2020	6.9
2019	6.9
2018	-

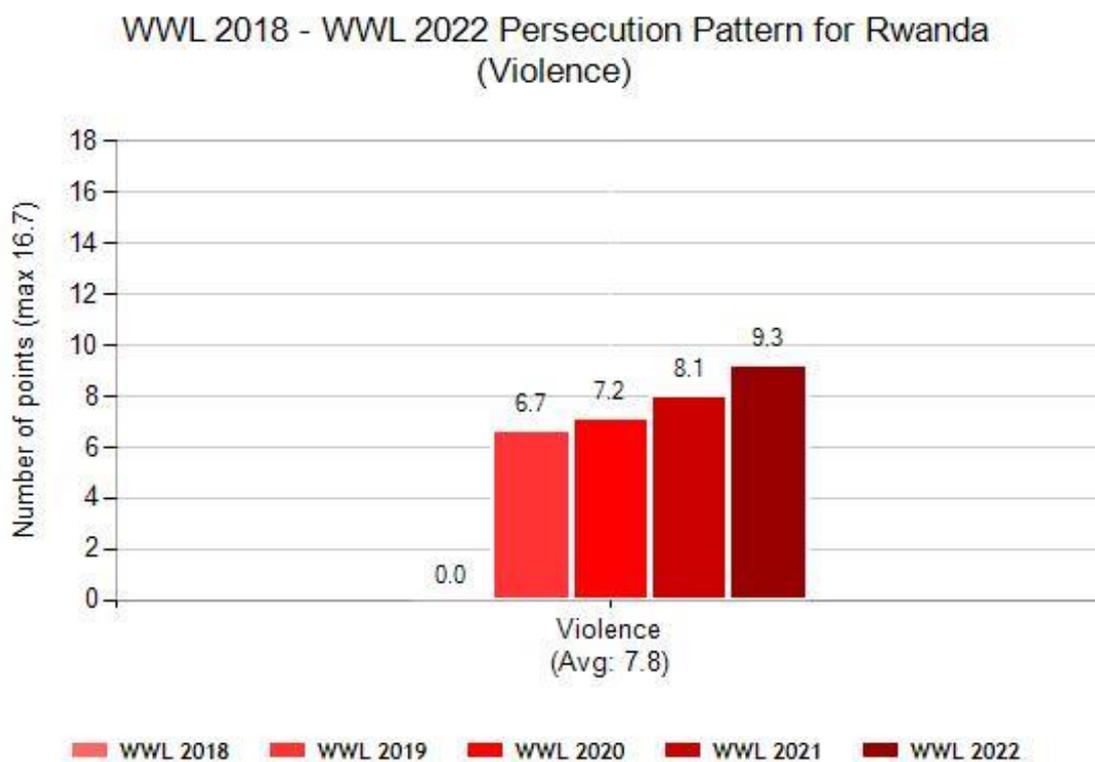
The table above shows that the average pressure on Christians has increased after a period of stability at the 6.9 point mark. The government has increased its pressure directly and indirectly on Christians, especially on those belonging to the non-traditional Protestant churches.

5 Year trends: Pressure in each sphere of life



The average pressure on Christians is highest in the *Church sphere*, scoring 10.1 points average followed by *National sphere* (8.4 points average). This shows that the pressure is indeed caused by *Dictatorial paranoia* that use laws and policies to restrict freedom of religion. In WWL 2022 there were notable rises in pressure in *National, Private and Family spheres of life*.

5 Year trends: Violence against Christians



Violence is very high in Rwanda considering that it is a Christian majority country and there have been no killings. There has been an upward trend in the scores each WWL reporting period since WWL 2019.

Gender-specific religious persecution / Female

Group	Female Pressure Points
Economic	Denied inheritance or possessions
Political and Legal	Denied custody of children; Forced divorce; Forced marriage
Security	Abduction; Forced out of home – expulsion; Violence – sexual
Social and Cultural	Violence – Verbal
Technological	-

Despite Rwanda boasting the [largest female](#) parliamentary representation in the world (Statista, 14 July 2021), patriarchal attitudes continue to dominate culture. As noted in a [2017 CEDAW periodic review](#), “there is a general lack of acceptance of women in decision-making positions and reluctance to implement decisions made by them.” These cultural norms can be exploited for the purpose of religious persecution against women.

In a country where forced marriage, abduction and female genital mutilation are [common in most regions](#), some forced marriages are fueled by religious motivation (OECD, 2019, “Social Institutions and Gender Index: Rwanda”). Parents of female converts from Islam are known to marry them off to Muslims to try and restore them to the Islamic faith. A country expert explained: “Muslim background believers are always living under this threat of being given to marriage without their will.” Converts are also vulnerable to physical, sexual and verbal attacks. Sexual abuse has been widely cited by regional experts as the primary challenge facing female converts.

If they are already married when they become a Christian, women from a Muslim or Animist background will most likely be divorced and subsequently refused custody of their children. Additionally, converts are often denied their inheritance rights, which can be hard for them to endure.

Gender-specific religious persecution / Male

Group	Male Pressure Points
Economic	Economic harassment via business/job/work access
Political and Legal	Imprisonment by government
Security	Forced to flee town/country; Violence – physical
Social and Cultural	-
Technological	-

Gender-specific persecution against Rwandan men and boys on faith-related grounds is not widely reported. When it does occur, it usually takes the form of physical violence or imprisonment. Pastors in particular are vulnerable to being detained. The pressure on church leaders in Rwanda and the difficulties in registering churches has led to many leaders migrating to Uganda and Tanzania.

Converts from a Muslim background are also exposed to persecution; they may encounter discrimination from family, in the workplace, or even lose their job. If men are persecuted, their role as family provider may be compromised and his dependents will also suffer. Likewise, if converts are forced out of their family home because of their faith, they will be vulnerable economically.

Persecution of other religious minorities

According to the US State Department (IRFR 2020):

- “Jehovah’s Witnesses students were reportedly punished and dismissed from school for not attending religious services at school or not participating in military and patriotic activities at school. Although the law protects student’s rights not to participate in these activities, Jehovah’s Witnesses stated that some school administrators of both public and religious schools were not aware of or did not enforce those protections.”

According to Freedom House/Global Freedom 2021:

- "Authorities have shut down ... some mosques, [and] banned mosques in Kigali from broadcasting the call to prayer".

Future outlook

The outlook for Christians as viewed through the lens of:

Dictatorial paranoia

Paul Kagame's heavy-handed rule is still going strong. His regime has targeted any individuals or institutions that oppose the government or are viewed as being even remotely non-supportive. The government is likely to continue pushing the church out of public life by implementing very restrictive measures for the sake of its own power. It does not tolerate any perceived threat. Moreover, concerns are growing regarding greater government restrictions imposed on religious groups. These include, among others, the tightening of control over religious buildings and places of worship, especially Pentecostal churches. The COVID-19 crisis has been used as a pretext for conducting night raids on some house churches. This stifling trend will likely continue.

Christian denominational protectionism

According to reports, some Catholic Church leaders are not happy with the growth of the non-traditional churches in the country. (There is concern over the flow of Catholics joining Protestant church groups.) This fear will likely lead to increased pressure on non-traditional church groups. As many schools are run by the Catholic Church, non-Catholics are likely to face discrimination and other difficulties in and outside the classroom.

External Links - Persecution Dynamics

- Persecution engines description: referendum in 2015 - <https://www.hrw.org/world-report/2017/country-chapters/rwanda>
- 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.). (4.00 points): law in 2018 - <http://www.xinhuanet.com/webSkipping.htm>
- Gender-specific religious persecution Female description: largest female - <https://www.statista.com/statistics/1248551/proportion-of-seats-held-by-women-in-rwanda-national-parliament/>
- Gender-specific religious persecution Female description: 2017 CEDAW periodic review, - <https://www.refworld.org/publisher,CEDAW,,RWA,596f4b0a4,0.html>
- Gender-specific religious persecution Female description: common in most regions, - <https://www.genderindex.org/wp-content/uploads/files/datasheets/2019/RW.pdf>

Further useful reports

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

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