

World
Watch
Research

Angola: Full Country Dossier

February 2023



OpenDoors

Serving persecuted **Christians** worldwide

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Introduction

World Watch List 2023

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

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

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Sources and definitions

- This country report is a collation of data and analysis based around Open Doors World Watch List (WWL) and includes statistical information on world religions, Christian denominations and people groups prepared by the World Christian Database (WCD).
- Highlighted links in the text can be found written out in full at the conclusion of each main section under the heading “External links”. In order to reduce the length of these reference sections, a table containing links to regularly used sources can be found at the beginning of the “Keys to Understanding” chapter under the heading “Links for general background information”. Where one of these sources has been quoted in the dossier text, a quote reference is supplied as indicated in the second column of the table.
- The WWL 2023 reporting period was 1 October 2021 - 30 September 2022.
- The definition of persecution used in WWL analysis is: “Any hostility experienced as a result of one’s identification with Christ. This can include hostile attitudes, words and actions towards Christians”. This broad definition includes (but is not limited to) restrictions, pressure, discrimination, opposition, disinformation, injustice, intimidation, mistreatment, marginalization, oppression, intolerance, infringement, violation, ostracism, hostilities, harassment, abuse, violence, ethnic cleansing and genocide.
- The latest update of WWL Methodology including appendices can be found on the [World Watch List Documentation](#) page of the Open Doors Analytical website (password: freedom).

WWL 2023 Situation in brief / Angola

Brief country details

Angola: Population (UN estimate for 2022)	Christians	Chr%
35,027,000	32,675,000	93.3

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

Map of country



Angola: World Watch List	Points	WWL Rank
WWL 2023	52	68
WWL 2022	51	66
WWL 2021	46	68
WWL 2020	43	68
WWL 2019	42	69

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

Dominant persecution engines and drivers

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

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

Brief description of the persecution situation

Christians in Angola face difficulties in a variety of ways. First of all, the government has not given official recognition to any new churches since 2004. Secondly, as a result of this, many churches are operating illegally, causing Christians to fear possible arrest or demolition of their church buildings. Thirdly, the government is also creating an unfavorable environment by publicly stating that religious sects are a cause for concern.

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.
- Arrest by the government without due process.
- Church demolitions/closure.
- Continual denial of recognition for new places of worship, due to unrealistic requirements (see below: *Religious landscape*).

Specific examples of positive developments

None

WWL 2023: Keys to understanding / Angola

Links for general background information

Name	Quote Reference	Link	Last accessed on
Amnesty International 2021/22 country report – covering 154 countries	AI country report 2021/22 pp.72-75	https://www.amnesty.org/en/wp-content/uploads/2022/03/POL1048702022ENGLISH.pdf	5 September 2022
BBC News country profile	BBC country profile	https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-africa-13036732	5 September 2022
Bertelsmann Transformation Index country report 2022 – covering 137 countries	BTI report 2022	https://bti-project.org/en/reports/country-dashboard/AGO	5 September 2022
CIA World Factbook	CIA Factbook	https://www.cia.gov/the-world-factbook/countries/angola/	5 September 2022
Crisis24 country report (Garda World) – covering 193 countries	Crisis24 country report	https://crisis24.garda.com/insights-intelligence/intelligence/country-reports/angola	5 September 2022
Economist Intelligence Unit Democracy Index 2021 – covering 167 countries	EIU 2022	https://pages.eiu.com/rs/753-RIQ-438/images/eiu-democracy-index-2021.pdf	5 September 2022
FFP's Fragile States Index 2021 – covering 179 countries	FSI 2022	https://fragilestatesindex.org/country-data/	5 September 2022
Freedom House's 2022 Democracy index – covering 29 countries (Angola not included)	Democracy Index 2022	https://freedomhouse.org/countries/nations-transit/scores	
Freedom House's 2022 Global Freedom index – covering 210 countries	Global Freedom Index 2022	https://freedomhouse.org/country/angola/freedom-world/2022	5 September 2022
Freedom House's Freedom on the Net 2022 report – covering 70 countries	Freedom on the Net 2022	https://freedomhouse.org/country/angola/freedom-net/2022	13 February 2023
Human Rights Watch World Report 2023 (country chapter) – covering 100+ countries	HRW 2023 country chapter	https://www.hrw.org/world-report/2023/country-chapters/angola	13 February 2023
Internet World Stats 2022	IWS 2022	https://www.internetworldstats.com/africa.htm#ao	5 September 2022
RSF's 2022 World Press Freedom Index – covering 180 countries	World Press Freedom 2022	https://rsf.org/en/angola	5 September 2022
Transparency International's 2022 Corruption Perceptions Index – covering 180 countries	CPI 2022	https://www.transparency.org/en/cpi/2022/index/ago	13 February 2023
UNDP's Global Human Development Indicators (country profile) – covering 189 countries	HDI profile	https://hdr.undp.org/data-center/country-insights/#/ranks	5 September 2022
US State Department's 2021 International Religious Freedom (country profile)	IRFR 2021	https://www.state.gov/reports/2021-report-on-international-religious-freedom/angola/	5 September 2022
USCIRF 2022 country reports – covering 15 CPC / 12 SWL (Angola not included)	USCIRF 2022	https://www.uscifr.gov/countries	
World Bank country overview – covering 178 countries	World Bank overview 2022	https://www.worldbank.org/en/country/angola/overview	5 September 2022
World Bank country profile data – covering 222 countries	World Bank country profile	https://data.worldbank.org/country/angola	5 September 2022
World Bank Macro Poverty Outlook 2022 – covering 147 countries (divided per region)	Macro Poverty Outlook 2022 (Sub-Saharan Africa pp.2-3)	https://thedocs.worldbank.org/en/doc/bae48ff2f6c5a869546775b3f010735-0500062021/related/mpo-ago.pdf	5 September 2022

Recent history

Angola is in southern Africa bordered by Namibia in the south, the Democratic Republic of Congo to the north, Zambia to the east and by the Atlantic Ocean in the west. It declared independence from Portugal on 11 November 1975 after a struggle of more than thirty years. Angola is well-known for the 27 year long civil war (1975-2002) which followed independence. At the height of the Cold War, the battle for Angola became a proxy war between the West and the Communist bloc.

The civil war had begun even before independence was gained in 1975 and was caused mainly by ideological differences among the factions who were fighting for independence. The factions were:

- The National Front for the Liberation of Angola (FNLA - right wing);
- The Popular Movement for the Liberation of Angola (MPLA - socialist);
- The National Union for the Total Independence of Angola (UNITA - anti-socialist).

With Cuban and Eastern bloc assistance, the MPLA was able to defeat the FNLA, but the members of UNITA (later supported by the USA) continued to wage a war against the socialist government. However, control by the government of areas outside the cities was slight. The devastating effect of the war left the country on the brink of complete disintegration. In 1990, UNITA recognized the legitimacy of the MPLA government as a transitional one, the MPLA formally renounced Marxist-Leninism in favor of Social Democracy, and in 1991 the two parties were able to arrive at a settlement and signed the Bicesse Accords in Portugal. A new constitution was agreed upon and multi-party elections were scheduled to take place under the supervision of the United Nations. Elections were held in 1992 and the MPLA won. UNITA rejected the result and went back to war. In 2002, the leader of UNITA, Jonas Savimbi, was killed

in an ambush, and the civil war ended with a victory for MPLA. (Source: [South African History Online](#), last accessed 13 February 2023)

President Dos Santos came to power in 1979 and ruled with an iron fist. In August 2017, after 40 years in power, Santos finally stepped down and his right-hand man won the presidential elections amid accusations of irregularities. João Lourenço assumed office in September 2017 but there was little hope of any major policy changes, although he did make some progress in reducing corruption. For instance: In August 2019, the government [arrested and sentenced](#) a former minister to 14 years imprisonment on corruption charges (Bloomberg, 15 August 2019). In 2019 and 2020, there was little progress in terms of human rights even though the current president is clearly more [open to reforms](#) than his predecessor (ISS, April 2020). Just like any other country, the COVID-19 crisis also shaped Angola's politics, economy and social life in 2020 and 2021.

In August 2022, incumbent President Lourenço was elected for a second term in highly disputed elections. The MPLA extended its five-decade long rule but lost its two-thirds majority in parliament. For the first time, the coalition led by UNITA received more votes in the capital, Luanda, than the ruling party. (Source: HRW 2023 country chapter)

Political and legal landscape

The country went through some devastating phases after gaining independence. It is a presidential republic, with the president acting both as head of state and head of government. Theoretically, the country moved to a multi-party system following the 1992 elections. However, as in many other Sub-Saharan countries, elections in Angola only bear a façade of institutional democracy. Angola is one of the prime examples where a national liberation movement has taken over as the dominant ruling party. While the first ever local elections scheduled for 2020 were [postponed indefinitely](#) due mainly to the COVID-19 crisis (21Votes, accessed 25 February 2021), [national and presidential elections](#) took place in August 2022, as stated above, with the MPLA ruling party and incumbent President Joao Lourenco winning (Al-Jazeera, 29 August 2022).

According to Freedom House's Global Freedom Index 2022:

- Angola is categorized as 'not free' both in civil liberties and political rights. Freedom of expression, freedom of association and other human rights are curtailed by the ruling party: "Fear of retribution for expressing criticism of the government or controversial opinions in private conversations persists in Angola. Self-censorship is common, fueled by concerns that a perceived intent to organize against the government could result in reprisals. Known surveillance of civil society groups, journalists, and academics can leave people reluctant to speak out. The government actively monitors online activity. The results of an Afrobarometer poll, released in August 2020, indicated that 32 percent of individuals surveyed considered themselves "not at all free" to express their political views, and another 16 percent said they felt "not completely free." Together, this was greater than the percentage of individuals who said they considered themselves totally or partially free to express such views."

- In 2020, the government privatized a number of outlets they said were owned by members of the political and military elite but funded by the state. Journalists’ groups expressed concern about a lack of transparency regarding the privatization.

Angola is a secular state with a Christian majority. Constitutionally speaking, freedom of religion is respected. Article 10 (section 2) of the [2010 Constitution](#) states: “The state shall recognize and respect the different religious faiths, which shall be free to organize and exercise their activities, provided that they abide by the constitution and the laws of The Republic of Angola” (Constitute Project, accessed 30 September 2020). Article 41 also provides for freedom of conscience, religion, and worship, and recognizes the right to conscientious objection. Article 41, section 4 states that “no authority shall question anyone with regard to their convictions or religious practices, except to gather statistical data that cannot be individually identified”.

However, these well-articulated constitutional guarantees are restricted by the actions of the government. Many church leaders have applied for registration for their churches and have been waiting for over ten years. Without registration, it is illegal to operate schools, clinics and other social services. Christians have thus found it difficult to congregate and many churches face demolition. In November 2018, thousands of churches were [facing forced closure](#) (World Watch Monitor, 14 November 2018).

In the current political environment in which the government opposes the free operation of civil society (including religious institutions), Christians face restricted freedom both collectively and individually. According to Human Rights Watch (HRW 2022 country chapter):

- "The enactment of a new penal code, which decriminalizes same-sex conduct, criminalizes female genital mutilation and sexual harassment, and protects the rights of children in conflict, marked a key improvement in Angola's human rights situation in 2021. Notwithstanding these advances, state security forces have been implicated in a spate of abuses in 2021 and in the build-up to the August 2022 national elections, including excessive use of force against protesters, arbitrary detentions, and summary executions".

Religious landscape

Angola: Religious context	Number of adherents	%
Christians	32,675,000	93.3
Muslim	394,000	1.1
Hindu	670	0.0
Buddhist	3,000	0.0
Ethno-religionist	1,645,000	4.7
Jewish	0	0.0

Bahai	3,700	0.0
Atheist	56,200	0.2
Agnostic	249,000	0.7
Other	290	0.0
<i>OTHER includes Chinese folk, New religionist, Sikh, Spiritist, Taoist, Confucianist, Jain, Shintoist, Zoroastrian.</i>		

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

According to the US State Department (IRFR 2021):

- "There are 81 recognized religious groups and more than 1,100 unrecognized religious groups in the country. The government did not recognize any new religious groups during the year and has not done so since 2000. Ninety-seven registration applications remained pending at year's end, among them two from Muslim organizations. In January, following a year-long dispute, the government recognized new local leadership of the Universal Church of the Kingdom of God (IURD), which led to the expulsion of 55 Church leaders connected to its Brazilian parent church. In March, 11 IURD temples under the new leadership were permitted to open, but 340 temples remained closed pending the conclusion of investigations and court cases on charges of tax fraud and money laundering against IURD's Brazilian leadership. Some IURD Church members demonstrated against the government closure of their churches."
- "The government did not officially recognize any new religious organization during the year [2021] and had not done so since 2000. Unregistered religious groups continued to state that the notary and residential declaration requirements (60,000 total signatures, including 1,000 signatures from each of the country's 18 provinces), which they estimated to cost approximately 3,300 kwanza (\$6) per signature, were too expensive and burdensome for their congregations. In addition to the signature requirement, the large number of undocumented residents and an unreliable residential registry system continued to present obstacles to registration, according to religious group leaders".
- "A leader of one Muslim organization estimated there are 800,000 Muslims in the country, of whom approximately 95 percent are foreign migrants, mainly from North and West African countries." WCD 2022 estimates well under half that number.

Christians, who have been asking for better legal protection and recognition, will most likely continue to be ignored by the authorities.

Economic landscape

According to World Bank's Macro Poverty Outlook 2022:

- **Economic growth:** "Angola recorded marginally positive GDP growth in 2021 following five consecutive years of economic contraction." ... "With soaring oil prices, GDP growth is expected at 2.9 percent in 2022. The non-oil sector is expected to grow 2.3 percent, propelled by mining of diamonds and other minerals, the beverage and construction industry, agriculture and fisheries, and trade. With rising oil prices and a small but tempor-

ary recovery of oil production, oil sector growth is projected at 4.4 percent."

- **Currency depreciation/inflation:** "Largely because of higher oil prices, the exchange rate appreciated 13.4 percent YoY by December 2021, recovering almost a third of the 2020 depreciation. The stronger currency has not translated into lower inflation, which remains high at 27 percent, driven by high food prices and the lagged effect of monetary measures from 2020. Higher oil receipts combined with buoyant non-oil revenues (especially VAT) led fiscal revenues to grow about 47.5 percent in 2021. Public spending growth, estimated at 18.6 percent, was driven by current spending as public investment grew by 0.2 percent. Most additional oil revenue was saved, increasing the primary surplus. This, together with currency appreciation and GDP growth, drove debt levels from 130.5 to 88.1 percent of GDP from 2020 to 2021. Consequently, bond yields declined, and Angola's credit rating was upgraded."
- **COVID-19:** "Angola's economy suffered from COVID-19 indirectly through falling oil prices, but overall, the country has been relatively resilient against the pandemic. As of February 14, 2022, Angola had 55.9 COVID-19 deaths per million people (compared to 745.9 globally) and 10.9 million people (69.3 percent of the target population) had received at least one dose of a COVID-19 vaccine. Main challenges include a steeper and renewed decline in oil production, limited economic diversification, difficulty in attracting foreign direct investment in nonoil sectors, as well as Angola's vulnerability to climate change. Moreover, food inflation, already at high levels, will likely be exacerbated by the increase in global commodity prices and economic uncertainty triggered by the Russian invasion of Ukraine and associated sanctions and supply disruptions."

According to the [African Development Bank Group](#) (accessed 12 July 2022):

- "Angola's economy grew by 0.7% in 2021 after contracting by 5.4% in 2020. Per capita income contracted by 2.6% in 2021 due to slower GDP growth and high population growth, estimated at 3%. The modest GDP growth was spurred by a sharp increase in the oil price to an annual average of \$65.69/barrel, above the \$39/ barrel used in the national budget. Oil accounts for 95% of Angola's exports, but the sector experienced challenges during the COVID-19 pandemic as the price dropped to \$42.40/barrel. The recovery in its price and revenues returned the fiscal balance to a surplus of 2.7% of GDP in 2021 from a deficit of 3.8% in 2020. Higher oil exports took the current account surplus to 11.4% of GDP in 2021 from 1.5% in 2020, while the debt-to GDP ratio declined to 95.9% from 135% over the same period. Revenues also benefited from fiscal reforms, including implementation of value-added tax and excise tax. Inflation remained high at 25.7% in 2021, driven by supply-side factors. Higher oil exports helped to sustain international reserves at 8.1 months of imports in 2021".

Social and cultural landscape

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

- **Main ethnic groups:** Ovimbundu (37 %), Kimbundu (25%), Bakongo (13 %), Mestico i.e mixed European and native African (2%), European (1%), other (22%)
- **Main languages:** Portuguese 71.2% (official), Umbundu 23%, Kikongo 8.2% Kimbundu

7.8%, Chokwe 6.5 %, Nihaneca 3.4 %, Nganguela 3.1 %, Fiote 2.4 %, Kwanhama 2.3 %, Muhumbi 2.1%, Luvala 1%, other 3.6%

- **Population growth:** 3.38% (2021 est.)
- **Urban population:** 67.5% of the total population (2021)
- **Rate of urbanization:** 4.04% annual rate of change (2020-2025 est.)
- **Literacy rate, adult (ages 15 and older):** 66.0%
- **Expected years of schooling:** 11.8 years
- **Employment to population ratio (ages 15 and older):** 72.2%
- **Unemployment, total:** 6.9% of labor force
- **Unemployment, youth (ages 15-24):** 16.09%
- **Human Development Index score and rank:** Angola ranked 148th out of 189 countries with a score of 0.581
- **Life expectancy at birth:** 61.1 years
- **Gender Development Index (GDI):** 0.903
- **Gender Inequality Index (GII):** 0.536

According to [UNHCR](#) data (updated 31 July 2022):

- **Refugees:** As of 31 July 2022, there were officially 25,970 refugees in Angola from countries such as DRC, Guinea, Ivory Coast, Mauritania, Somalia, Sudan, Sierra Leone and Eritrea, among others.

According to FFP's Fragile State Index (FSI 2022):

- Angola ranked #34 out of 178 countries, scoring 89.0 points. It is a country where cronyism, clientelism and nepotism are rampant. As a result, the magnitude of corruption in the country is high and the lack of rule of law and lack of good governance are prevalent.

According to Transparency International's Corruption Perceptions Index (CPI 2022):

- Due to the high levels of corruption, Angola ranked #116 out of 180 countries, scoring 33 points.

According to Heritage Foundation's [2022 Index of Economic Freedom](#):

- Angola's economic freedom score is 52.6, making its economy the 139th freest in the 2022 Index. Angola is ranked #29 among 47 countries in the Sub-Saharan Africa region, and its overall score is below the regional and world averages.
- "Over the past five years, Angola's economy has been shrinking with the largest contraction coming in 2020. Its five-year trend of expanding economic freedom is positive but beginning to stall. Led by increases in property rights and judicial freedom, Angola has recorded a 4.1-point overall gain of economic freedom since 2017 but nevertheless remains in the lower half of the 'Mostly Unfree' category. Scores for tax burden and government spending are high, but business freedom, labor freedom, and judicial effectiveness exhibit weaknesses."

Technological landscape

Angola is advanced in mining industry technology as it is one of the richest countries in minerals, especially diamonds. However, the country is not as well-advanced as it could be in other areas, considering the available funds for investment. High costs remain a big hindrance for many Angolans in the field of communication technology. Access to the Internet is low but has been growing steadily.

According to Internet World Stats (IWS 2022):

- **Internet usage:** 26% of the population – survey date: December 2021 (Most recent survey at time of writing.)
- **Facebook usage:** 8.5% of the population – survey date: January 2022

According to the World Bank country profile:

- **Mobile phone subscriptions:** 46.6 per 100 people

According to [BuddeComm Research](#) (Publication date: February 2023):

- “The government has continued to develop telecom infrastructure to help diversify the country’s economy and lessen its dependence on offshore crude oil production, which accounts for almost all exports and up to 80% of tax revenue. By extending and upgrading telecom networks the government expects businesses to become more efficient and for e-commerce to become a more prominent feature of economic growth. In addition, networks will facilitate rural access to education and health care. However, there is much progress to be made if the country is to improve the business climate and attract investors.”

According to Freedom House's Freedom on the Net 2022 report:

- "Poor infrastructure particularly affects rural residents, for whom voice and data services are of much lower quality and are subject to frequent cuts and extremely slow connection speeds. Due to the country’s fractured electricity system, urban areas are more likely to have connectivity. The government and some private companies have made some efforts to establish free wireless hotspots in rural areas."
- "Despite a history of censorship in print and broadcast media, there have been no known incidents of the government blocking or filtering online content in Angola, and there are no restrictions on the type of information that can be exchanged through digital media technologies. A set of media laws that took effect in 2017 has been criticized as restrictive, but no websites have been censored under their provisions".
- "Members of the ruling MPLA own and tightly control a majority of the country’s media outlets, including those that are the most widely disseminated and accessed."
- "Recent investigations have revealed increased engagement with the Chinese government on surveillance methods."

Security situation

The country was embroiled in civil war for almost three decades until 2002. Human security remains a major problem due to the lack of rule of law in the country. In the Province of Cabinda, there has been fighting between government security forces and the Front for the Liberation of the Enclave of Cabinda (FLEC). In [January 2019](#) this also affected Christians and some were arrested (France24, 18 May 2019).

According to AI 2021/2022 country report (pp. 72-75):

- "Economic and social crises and human rights violations fueled an increase in protests throughout the country."
- "Security forces used excessive force to crack down on peaceful protests, killing dozens of protesters. In January [2021], they shot and killed dozens of activists who were peacefully protesting against the high cost of living in the mining town of Cafunfo in Lunda Norte province. In addition to shooting at peaceful protesters on the streets, the security forces hunted them down in surrounding neighborhoods and forests."

Trends analysis

1) Since President João Lourenço took office in September 2017 there have been no improvements for churches

Since João Lourenço took over the presidency in September 2017, the human rights record remains poor and corruption is still rampant. This looks set to continue since the government in Angola is not ready to create space for civil society, genuine political parties and overall political reform. The laws put in place to restrict freedom of religion and assembly have made church registration difficult. The harassment of political opponents and journalists is common. In this environment, it is very difficult to see freedom of religion - especially for non-traditional Christian groups - being upheld in the near future. What has changed is that in May 2019 the new law reduced the 100,000 member registration requirement to 60,000, but added several other requirements, including a mandate that 1,000 members reside in each of the country's 18 provinces. This change has actually made it more difficult for churches to submit an application.

2) The government has intensified action against church groups

Christians, who have been asking for better legal protection and recognition for years, will most likely continue to be ignored. The government has also intensified its negative policies against church groups, particularly concerning registration. For example, in September 2020, the government issued a decree stating that only legally recognized religious groups could hold services on a limited basis under continued COVID restrictions. The government has shown its intention to close the space for Christian communities by giving notice of closure for more than a thousand churches. Any attempt to get a license to operate in the country has been impossible since 2004 and these difficulties are more than likely to continue in the foreseeable future. Some even suggest that the COVID-19 pandemic has been used by the government as another route for targeting churches.

External Links - Keys to understanding

- Recent history: South African History Online - <https://www.sahistory.org.za/article/angolan-civil-war-1975-2002-brief-history>
- Recent history: arrested and sentenced - <https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2019-08-15/angola-jails-most-senior-official-yet-after-corruption-trial>
- Recent history: open to reforms - <https://issafrica.s3.amazonaws.com/site/uploads/sar38.pdf>
- Political and legal landscape: postponed indefinitely - <https://21votes.com/angola-elections/>
- Political and legal landscape: national and presidential elections - <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2022/8/29/angola-ruling-party-wins-vote-and-president-a-second-term>
- Political and legal landscape: 2010 Constitution - https://www.constituteproject.org/constitution/Angola_2010.pdf
- Political and legal landscape: facing forced closure - <https://www.worldwatchmonitor.org/coe/angola-2000-unregistered-churches-forced-to-close/>
- Economic landscape: African Development Bank Group - <https://www.afdb.org/en/countries/southern-africa/angola/angola-economic-outlook>
- Social and cultural landscape: UNHCR - <https://data.unhcr.org/en/country/ago>
- Social and cultural landscape: 2022 Index of Economic Freedom - <https://www.heritage.org/index/country/angola>
- Technological landscape: BuddeComm Research - <https://www.budde.com.au/Research/Angola-Telecoms-Mobile-and-Broadband-Statistics-and-Analyses>
- Security situation: January 2019 - <https://www.france24.com/en/20190518-angolas-oil-region-separatists-accuse-president-crackdown>

WWL 2023: Church information / Angola

Christian origins

Christianity was introduced into Angola before colonization. In 1491, Roman Catholic priests from Portugal paved the way to establish mission stations in the country. In the 16th century, Henrique, the son of Manikongo Nzinga Alfonsa, became the first Sub-Saharan African to be consecrated as bishop. (King Alfonsa had ruled over the Kongo Empire from 1509-1543.) However, the fact that the Portuguese turned their main focus to the slave trade hindered the expansion of the Christian faith for a considerable time. In 1865, the Vatican decided to send the White Fathers to the country with a new assignment so that Christianity could regain the momentum that it had lost earlier

(Source: Encyclopedia of African History, 3-Volume set, pp.83-84.)

Protestants arrived in 1878, when British Baptists started working among the Bakongo people near São Salvador. In 1880, missionaries with the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions arrived to work among the Ovimbundu and were joined by Canadian Presbyterians (now an integral part of the United Church of Canada) in 1886. In 1885 forty-five missionaries from the Methodist Episcopal Church arrived in Angola as one of the first efforts organized by the newly elected bishop, William Taylor. The Christian Brethren established their mission station in 1889. Anglicans established work in Angola early in the 20th century. The Pentecostal movement entered Angola in 1938, with initial efforts being made by the Church of God International.

(Source: Melton J.G. and Baumann M., eds.: Religions of the World - A Comprehensive Encyclopedia of Beliefs and Practices - 2nd edition, p.133.)

Church spectrum today

Angola: Church networks	Christians	%
Orthodox	0	0.0
Catholic	18,967,000	58.0
Protestant	9,616,000	29.4
Independent	2,224,000	6.8
Unaffiliated	2,172,000	6.6
Doubly-affiliated Christians	-304,000	-0.9
Total	32,675,000	100.0
<i>(Any deviation from the total number of Christians stated above is due to the rounding of decimals)</i>		
Evangelical movement	5,907,000	18.1
Renewalist movement	8,697,000	26.6

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

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

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

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.

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 not granted any new church registration since 2004. Christian groups from the Historical church denominations also discriminate against these groups because they consider them to be a threat to their dominance.

WWL 2023: Persecution Dynamics / Angola

Reporting period

1 October 2021 - 30 September 2022

Position on the World Watch List

Angola: World Watch List	Points	WWL Rank
WWL 2023	52	68
WWL 2022	51	66
WWL 2021	46	68
WWL 2020	43	68
WWL 2019	42	69

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

Angola rose 2 points in WWL 2023, which was mainly due to the fact that *Dictatorial paranoia* and *Christian denominational protectionism* work in tandem, putting more pressure on Christians who are denied licenses and registration. The irony is that *Dictatorial paranoia* also affects those churches working with the government to put pressure on other Christians groups. The main challenges faced by Christians are the laws and policies set out by the government, thus persecution is government-driven. Church leaders who speak out against government practices face severe pressure and, indeed, any Christians voicing opposition to the dictatorial regime face serious problems (such as arrests). The country also faces organized corruption that hinders access to justice.

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
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)

Angola is run by a government that is not democratic. Space for civic organizations and opposition is very limited. The MPLA has not shown any change in terms of democratization and protecting human rights since it won parliamentary elections in August 2017. The government backs all institutions which support its policies and when it perceives that certain churches are not doing this sufficiently, it will close them down along with any church-related institutions. The government principally uses church registration laws to control church activities. The country has not officially recognized any church since 2004, which means that there are hundreds of churches operating without proper registration. They are thereby vulnerable as targets for government crackdowns.

Christian denominational protectionism (Medium)

There have been several reported cases where the government favors denominations which support its policies. According to the [US State Department \(IRFR 2017\)](#): "Some leaders of legally recognized religious organizations continued to criticize publicly the proliferation of smaller, unrecognized religious groups. Newer and more established religious groups traded accusations of corruption and profiting from their members' personal assets. Governmental organizations, as well as some religious associations, called for all new religious groups to rejoin their 'mother churches' or cease operations."

Organized corruption and crime (Medium)

Angola is one of the most corrupt countries in Africa, scoring only 33 points and ranking #116 in Transparency International's CPI 2022.6th out of 180 countries with a score of 29 points. The way this engine affects Christians is how it has influenced the application of the rule of law. In con-

junction with *Dictatorial paranoia*, this engine has made it impossible for many Christian groups, for example, to get official permits for operating legally 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				Very weak	Weak				
One's own (extended) family				Very weak	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 ruling party, MPLA, has been favoring church denominations that support its political policies. Government officials arrest Christians who voice opposition to the dictatorial regime.
- **Organized criminal networks (Medium):** Impunity in the country makes government accountability impossible. This is partly due to the existence of corruption and bribery and affects Christians in many ways.

Drivers of Christian denominational protectionism

- **Leaders of other churches (Medium):** The well-established Roman Catholic Church often sides with the government when it comes to restricting other churches. Church leaders, family, and extended family members also create a hostile environment for Christians from one denomination to another.

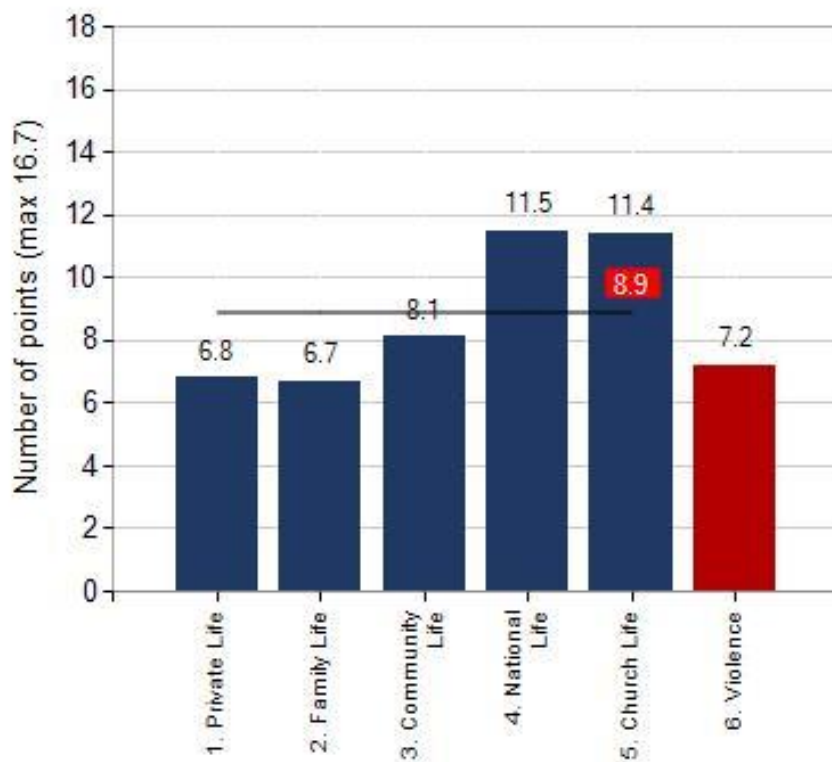
Drivers of Organized corruption and crime

- **Government officials (Medium):** The main drivers are government officials who have created an environment of impunity that undermines the rule of law. This means that Christians, whose churches face closure, for instance, cannot get a fair decision if they go to court.

- **Organized networks (Medium):** The country is known for organized and widespread corruption and the upholding of the rule of law is not common. Many Christians have been struggling to organize themselves freely, as a result.

The Persecution pattern

WWL 2023 Persecution Pattern for Angola



The WWL 2023 Persecution pattern for Angola shows:

- The average pressure on Christians in Angola was 8.9 points, rising from 8.6 points in WWL 2022.
- The *National sphere* score is the highest (11.5 points), followed by the *Church sphere* score with 11.4 points. This reflects the fact that the main challenges faced by Christians are the laws and policies set out by the government, indirectly also facilitated by drivers of *Organized corruption and crime* and *Christian denominational protectionism*.
- The score for violence remains 'very high' with 7.2 points a slight decrease from WWL 2022 (7.8 points).

Pressure in the 5 spheres of life

In each of the five spheres of life discussed below, four questions have been selected from the WWL 2023 questionnaire for brief commentary and explanation. The selection usually (but not always) reflects the highest scoring elements. In some cases, an additional paragraph per sphere is included to give further information deemed important. (To see how individual questions are scored on a scale of 0-4 points, please see the "WWL Scoring example" in the WWL Methodology, available at: <https://open Doorsanalytical.org/world-watch-list-documentation/>, password: freedom).

Pressure in Block 1 / Private sphere

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

This is closely related to the prevalence of restriction of freedom of association. Thus, in the general context, Christians from non-traditional groups are watched carefully when they meet with other Christians. This is particularly true in Cabinda province, where the authorities think Evangelical Christians and pastors could be supporting the political independence movement.

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)

Speaking with extended family can, in certain contexts, have ramifications. Of course, this is a Christian majority country and so in a general sense, it should not be a problem. However, this issue particularly concerns 'interdenominational converts'. If they mention their new church loyalty outside their family it could lead to ostracization. This is also the case for those leaving the traditional African belief system (ATR) or those who mix Christianity and traditional beliefs.

Block 1.3: It has been dangerous to privately own or keep Christian materials. (1.25 points)

Christian materials can cause problems for those who decide to switch churches from a well-established one to a new non-traditional group. As stated in 1.8, Angola is a Christian majority country and so in a general sense, it should not be an issue. However, it is for 'interdenominational converts and for converts from ATR or Islam. The challenge comes from families adhering to the traditional belief system, or major Christian denominations who see converts as a threat to their dominance.

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.). (1.25 points)

This has to be seen in connection to the problems of freedom of expression. Converts from the traditional belief system or Christians who change their church-affiliation will conceal their new faith due to the lack of tolerance in society. If the expression of faith is in the public domain and it involves criticizing government behavior, it can bring another dimension of persecution from the authorities.

Pressure in Block 2 / Family sphere

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

This issue exists for those who are converts from the traditional belief system or those who left the traditional churches. Although in a majority Christian population, this should not be an issue, baptism cannot always be easily carried out for some Christians in Angola. The new churches and converts face difficulties carrying out activities - including baptism - as most of them are denied the legal right to assembly. Thus, it is often the case they they are forced to carry out baptisms outside a church setting.

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. (1.75 points)

This happens in the context of converts from traditional belief system or those who left the traditional churches. In some places those who left Catholicism or the traditional belief system lose any chance of claiming custody of children. This is often used as a punishment for those who dishonor their family members by converting to Christianity (or another form of Christianity).

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. (1.75 points)

This is done in ultra-conservative Catholic households to scare others who might contemplate switching denominations. This is particularly true where most family-related matters are done by custom and not before the court of law.

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

This has to be seen in the context of those who left the traditional belief system or those who left the traditional churches. In general terms, Christians often marry Christians, thus there is no issue. However, there are exceptions where pressure is exerted by family or community members. Blaming and shaming is likely to force a convert's marriage partner to seek separation and divorce.

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)

Some Christians face hostility from community members who disapprove of their conversion or change of church-loyalty, or from government agents in the locality. In general terms, Angola has seen major religious freedom issues in the past decade. The government set the tone for new denominations by denying them licenses to operate, build churches and so forth. This government stance has given added reason for the major denominations to make the unregistered Christian groups unwelcome.

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

Monitoring at the local level is also another dimension of pressure faced by Christians. In Angola, the government works with locals and sometimes with church officials belonging to the dominant denominations. The government is keen to know whether church leaders are criticizing its actions. The police collect reports from informers which can then lead to the closure of unregistered churches, some of which have been waiting since 2004 for their applications for registration to be processed.

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

This is done in a bid to silence those Christians that do not confirm to the demands of the government or the majority (Catholic) views. There are two major sources of persecution in this context. Some Christians are critical of the government because their faith encourages them to speak out against injustice and corruption. Those people face discrimination at the workplace. In addition, those belonging to the dominant churches do not often treat members of the new Christian groups with fairness and equality.

Block 3.11: Christians have been hindered in the operation of their businesses for faith-related reasons (e.g. access to loans, subsidies, government contracts, client boycotts). (2.75 points)

There are many factors in the country that affect Christians. First, Christian business-owners who refuse to pay bribes always face difficulties. Secondly, loyalty to the government is required for a business to receive benefits from the local authorities. But many Christians who speak out for justice refuse such loyalty on grounds of justice and conscience. Many Christian organizations or associations are unable to receive state benefits because their applications for legal recognition have not been processed.

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)

Angola has one of the most restrictive freedom of religion laws, particularly in terms of freedom of association and assembly. Decree 74/15 required NGOs to go through onerous registration processes, including registering with multiple authorities, such as the Foreign Ministry, and obtaining a “declaration of suitability”. It also allowed authorities to determine the nature of the programs and projects to be implemented by the organizations. Enforcement of the law in March 2015 led to several human rights groups facing difficulties accessing their bank accounts, as some banks demanded to see the required approval documents, even though the government was not issuing such certification. This issue is still prevalent despite the government trying to hide it. The requirement that a denomination should have 60,000 members (and churches in the majority of the provinces) has been impossible to fulfil for many Christian groups.

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)

Whether on a national or local government level, discrimination especially affects those who are not regarded as mainstream. Thus, Christians from unregistered groups in particular are under serious pressure. This can be seen in the way the authorities refuse to deal with applications for registration. Also, there is constant pressure on church leaders (especially of registered churches) to show their support to the ruling party.

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

For over 30 years, Angola has been known for its restrictions on freedom of expression and opinion. One country expert commented: "Freedom of expression is deemed an expensive commodity for those who want it and as a surplus item for the government." In this context, the ruling party has not allowed church life to flourish by putting restrictive registration laws in place. It has also created institutionalized discrimination that has been implemented through its cadres covertly. As a result, Christians are being forced to remain silent even when they see injustice happening.

Block 4.6: Christians have been barred from public office, or has promotion been hindered for faith-related reasons. (3.50 points)

In some cases, employment or promotion has a direct link to one's faith. It is also at times guided by corruption. Angola is one of the most corrupt nations in southern Africa (as indicated by Transparency International's scores and ranking over the last years). This has an impact on Christians when it comes to the issue of justice, rule of law and accountability. If Christians want to adhere to their Christian principles and share their concerns about justice in the country, the ruling party will not tolerate them taking up positions in public offices.

Pressure in Block 5 / Church sphere

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

Monitoring church activities has been a practice in Angola for decades. The government always monitors unregistered churches. Government security agents show up regularly and at times arrest the church leaders. Concerned by the ongoing monitoring and threat against civil society (including churches), in May 2020 the [International Federation For Human Rights](#) sent an open letter to the president of the republic listing the "continuing harassment, intimidations and arbitrary detention of human rights defenders" and of "members of civil society who act for the defense and promotion of the rights of ethnic minorities". This harassment and intimidation extends to churches and its leaders and has continued in the WWL 2023 reporting period.

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

This is a country known for refusing recognition/registration of churches for two decades. This is probably the most known restriction on freedom of religion. The law requires that denominations must have more than 60,000 members before they can be officially registered. This has made it impossible for the new non-traditional churches to register. Hence, since 2000 reports show that no new church has been legally recognized. This has led to many churches being built without official licenses. As a result, the government has closed down and demolished thousands of them. This has also been noted by the US State Department (IRFR 2021): "There are 81 recognized religious groups and more than 1,100 unrecognized religious groups in the country. The government did not recognize any new religious groups during the

year and has not done so since 2000."

Block 5.3: Christian communities have been hindered in building or renovating church buildings or in claiming historical religious premises and places of worship which had been taken from them earlier. (3.50 points)

In the context of not being able to obtain an official licence to operate, the demolition of churches has become a regular practice in Angola. The government sees any form of meeting and association as a threat to its power. As described in 5.2, the refusal by the authorities to process registration applications means that most non-traditional church groups are unable to legally meet or build places of worship. A recommendation in August 2022 by the human rights nongovernmental organization (NGO) Friends of Angola (FOA) to change the 2004 laws was not accepted by the government.

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

This is intrinsically related to freedom of association and assembly. Most of the unregistered churches risk arrest and other penalties when they meet for worship. So many illegal churches have now been demolished that many non-traditional Christian groups meet in homes (house churches) which invites further legal risks to the families involved.

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.

Angola: Violence Block question	WWL 2023	WWL 2022
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 *	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
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?	0	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?	0	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	100

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

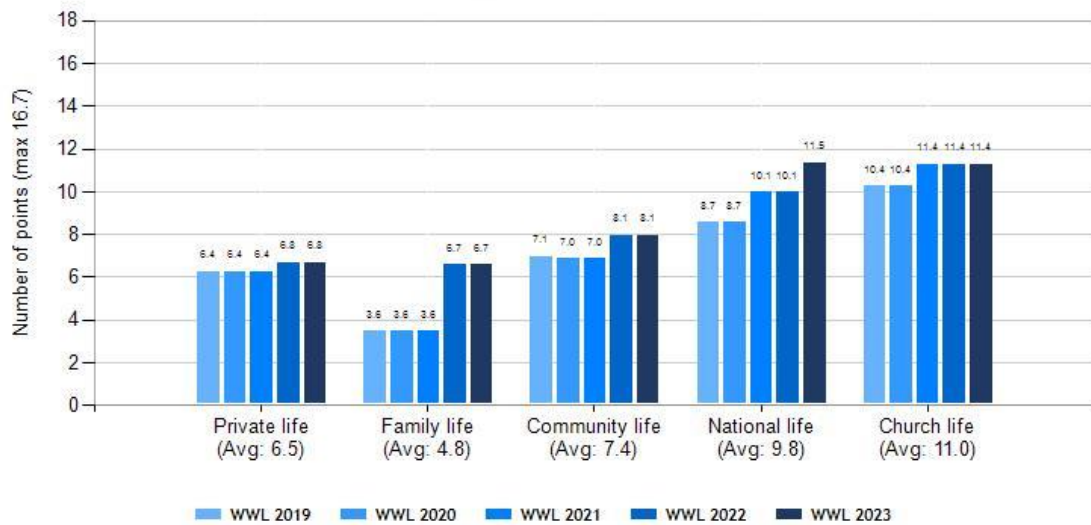
Angola: WWL 2019 - WWL 2023	
Persecution Pattern history	Average pressure over 5 Spheres of life
2023	8.9
2022	8.6
2021	7.7
2020	7.2
2019	7.2

The average pressure on Christians has gradually risen from 7.2 points in WWL 2019 to 8.9 in WWL 2023. This is what happens when a Christian majority country (of over 90%) suffers from a government that places significant restrictions on freedom of religion. The rising average pressure shows that the situation for Christians is not getting better despite the hopes that the end of 40 years of one-man-rule in 2017 would start bringing positive change.

5 Year trends: Pressure in each sphere of life

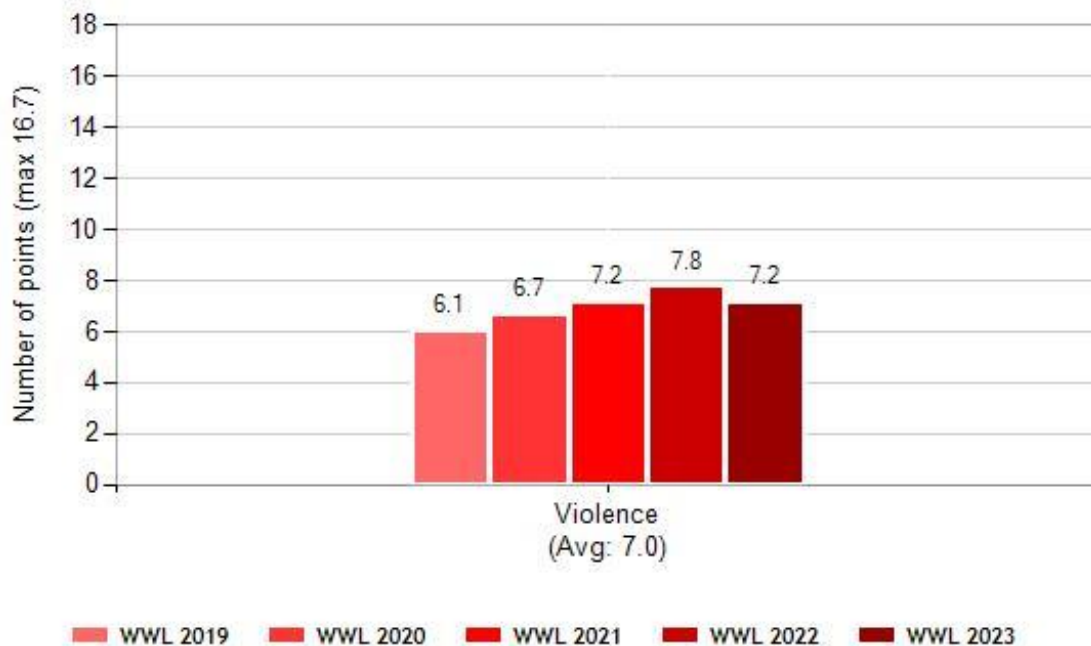
The five year chart below shows that pressure in the *Church* and *National spheres of life* has consistently been highest. This is an indication that the pressure on Christians in Angola comes from the government at both national and local levels, and has resulted in making church activities extremely difficult.

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



5 Year trends: Violence against Christians

WWL 2019 - WWL 2023 Persecution Pattern for Angola
(Violence)



The graph above shows that the score for violence has been constantly scoring above 6.0 points in each WWL reporting period, reaching five year average of 7.0 points. This has been due in part to the high number of church closures.

Gender-specific religious persecution / Female

Group	Female Pressure Points
Economic	Denied inheritance or possessions
Political and Legal	Denied custody of children
Security	-
Social and Cultural	-
Technological	-

Although women are generally expected to be subservient to men in Angola, faith-specific, gender-specific persecution is not widely reported. According to one source, girls in Angola are vulnerable to sexual crimes like rape and early marriage, including the “negative societal perceptions which discriminate against women and girls.” However, there were no reported cases of sexual violence against Christian women and girls in the WWL 2023 reporting period.

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

Group	Male Pressure Points
Economic	-
Political and Legal	Denied access to Christian religious materials, teachings and rites; Imprisonment by government
Security	Forced to flee town/country
Social and Cultural	Violence – psychological; Violence – Verbal
Technological	-

Gender-specific religious persecution against Christian men and boys in Angola is not widely reported. Church leaders are most vulnerable in such cases and 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. Operating a church without a license and open criticism of government policies are often the main factors behind the government targeting church leaders. A country expert commented: “The activities of unrecognized churches like Pentecostal churches are occasionally monitored and spied on under 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.” People from the local community - including church officials from the dominant denominations - are known to act as government informers.

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 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. According to the US State Department (IRFR 2021), the Muslim community was particularly affected:

- "The government continued not to recognize any Muslim groups or issue any licenses to Muslim groups to practice their religion legally. Requests for official recognition submitted in 2019 by two Muslim organizations, CISA (Islamic Community of Angola) and COIA (also translated as the Islamic Community of Angola), remained among the 97 pending applications."
- "In the past, government officials stated that some practices allowed by Islam, such as polygamy, contradicted the constitution."

Future outlook

The outlook for Christians as viewed through the lens of:

Dictatorial paranoia

The government has intensified its negative policies against church groups, particularly concerning registration, and this will probably lead to many more church closures. There was hope that the election of the new president (since August 2022 in his second term) would be followed by reforms, but, as far as democracy and freedom is concerned, a continuation of the former president's policies is taking place. As a result, this will likely continue in the church having to face high levels of pressure and violence.

Christian denominational protectionism

Established churches have been working with the government to put pressure on unregistered churches. This was made clear when they supported the idea of bringing different churches under one umbrella. This pressure is likely to continue in the country. The fact that the major denominations have uttered no word of protest over the government closing over 2000 unregistered churches since 2018, many of which have since been demolished, indicates some measure of complicity in this process.

Organized corruption and crime

There was hope that the administration (when first elected in 2017) would fight corruption. Although there have been some attempts, they have not succeeded in minimizing the impact of corruption in the country. This Persecution engine will hence continue to affect Christians in the country.

External Links - Persecution Dynamics

- Persecution engines description: US State Department (IRFR 2017) - <https://www.state.gov/documents/organization/268860.pdf>
- Block 5.1: Church activities have been monitored, hindered, disturbed, or obstructed. (4.00 points): International Federation For Human Rights - <https://www.fidh.org/en/issues/human-rights-defenders/angola-open-letter-of-concern-on-members-of-civil-society-and>

Further useful reports

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

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