

World  
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Research

## Rwanda: Full Country Dossier

February 2023



**OpenDoors**

Serving persecuted **Christians** worldwide

Open Doors International / World Watch Research

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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 01 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 / Rwanda

## Brief country details

| Rwanda: Population (UN estimate for 2022) | Christians | Chr% |
|---|------------|------|
| 13,600,000                                | 12,464,000 | 91.6 |

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

## Map of country



| Rwanda: World Watch List | Points | WWL Rank |
|--------------------------|--------|----------|
| WWL 2023                 | 57     | 63       |
| WWL 2022                 | 50     | 67       |
| WWL 2021                 | 42     | 72       |
| WWL 2020                 | 42     | 71       |
| WWL 2019                 | 41     | 72       |

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

- Hundreds of churches that were closed in 2018, 2019, 2021 and 2022 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

None.

# WWL 2023: Keys to understanding / Rwanda

## 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. 314-316                   | <a href="https://www.amnesty.org/en/wp-content/uploads/2022/03/POL1048702022ENGLISH.pdf">https://www.amnesty.org/en/wp-content/uploads/2022/03/POL1048702022ENGLISH.pdf</a>   | 5 September 2022 |
| BBC News country profile  | BBC country profile                                       | <a href="https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-africa-14093238">https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-africa-14093238</a>   | 5 September 2022 |
| Bertelsmann Transformation Index country report 2022 – covering 137 countries           | BTI report 2022   | <a href="https://bti-project.org/en/reports/country-dashboard/RWA">https://bti-project.org/en/reports/country-dashboard/RWA</a>   | 5 September 2022 |
| CIA World Factbook  | CIA Factbook  | <a href="https://www.cia.gov/the-world-factbook/countries/rwanda/">https://www.cia.gov/the-world-factbook/countries/rwanda/</a>   | 5 September 2022 |
| Crisis24 country report (Garda World) – covering 193 countries                          | Crisis24 country report                                   | <a href="https://crisis24.garda.com/insights-intelligence/intelligence/country-reports/rwanda">https://crisis24.garda.com/insights-intelligence/intelligence/country-reports/rwanda</a>                                 | 5 September 2022 |
| Economist Intelligence Unit Democracy Index 2021 – covering 167 countries               | EIU 2021 (p.58)   | <a href="https://pages.eiu.com/rs/753-RIQ-438/images/eiu-democracy-index-2021.pdf">https://pages.eiu.com/rs/753-RIQ-438/images/eiu-democracy-index-2021.pdf</a>   | 5 September 2022 |
| FFP's Fragile States Index 2022   | FSI 2022  | <a href="https://fragilestatesindex.org/country-data/">https://fragilestatesindex.org/country-data/</a>   | 5 September 2022 |
| Freedom House's 2022 Democracy index – covering 29 countries (Rwanda not included)      | Democracy Index 2022                                      | <a href="https://freedomhouse.org/countries/nations-transit/scores">https://freedomhouse.org/countries/nations-transit/scores</a>   |                  |
| Freedom House's Freedom on the Net 2022 report  | Freedom on the net 2022                                   | <a href="https://freedomhouse.org/country/rwanda/freedom-net/2022">https://freedomhouse.org/country/rwanda/freedom-net/2022</a>   | 15 February 2023 |
| Freedom House's Global Freedom index 2022   | Global Freedom Index 2022                                 | <a href="https://freedomhouse.org/country/rwanda/freedom-world/2022">https://freedomhouse.org/country/rwanda/freedom-world/2022</a>   | 5 September 2022 |
| Human Rights Watch World Report 2022  | HRW 2022 country chapter                                  | <a href="https://www.hrw.org/world-report/2022/country-chapters/rwanda">https://www.hrw.org/world-report/2022/country-chapters/rwanda</a>   | 5 September 2022 |
| Internet World Stats 2022   | IWS 2022  | <a href="https://www.internetworldstats.com/africa.htm#rw">https://www.internetworldstats.com/africa.htm#rw</a>   | 5 September 2022 |
| RSF's 2022 World Press Freedom Index – covering 180 countries                           | World Press Freedom 2022                                  | <a href="https://rsf.org/en/rwanda">https://rsf.org/en/rwanda</a>   | 5 September 2022 |
| Transparency International's 2021 Corruption Perceptions Index – covering 180 countries | CPI 2021  | <a href="https://www.transparency.org/en/cpi/2021/index/rwa">https://www.transparency.org/en/cpi/2021/index/rwa</a>   | 5 September 2022 |
| UNDP's Global Human Development Indicators  | HDI profile   | <a href="https://hdr.undp.org/data-center/specific-country-data#/countries/RWA">https://hdr.undp.org/data-center/specific-country-data#/countries/RWA</a>   | 5 September 2022 |
| US State Department's 2021 International Religious Freedom (country profile)            | IRFR 2021   | <a href="https://www.state.gov/reports/2021-report-on-international-religious-freedom/rwanda/">https://www.state.gov/reports/2021-report-on-international-religious-freedom/rwanda/</a>                                 | 5 September 2022 |
| USCIRF 2022 country reports – covering 15 CPC / 12 SWL (Rwanda not included)            | USCIRF 2022   | <a href="https://www.uscifr.gov/countries">https://www.uscifr.gov/countries</a>   |                  |
| World Bank country overview – covering 178 countries                                    | World Bank overview 2022                                  | <a href="https://www.worldbank.org/en/country/rwanda/overview">https://www.worldbank.org/en/country/rwanda/overview</a>   | 5 September 2022 |
| World Bank country profile data – covering 222 countries                                | World Bank country profile (2020 data)                    | <a href="https://data.worldbank.org/country/rwanda?view=chart">https://data.worldbank.org/country/rwanda?view=chart</a>   | 5 September 2022 |
| World Bank Macro Poverty Outlook 2022 – covering 147 countries (divided per region)     | Macro Poverty Outlook 2022 (Sub-Saharan Africa pp. 70-71) | <a href="https://thedocs.worldbank.org/en/doc/bae48ff2f2fc5a869546775b3f010735-0500062021/related/mpo-ssa.pdf">https://thedocs.worldbank.org/en/doc/bae48ff2f2fc5a869546775b3f010735-0500062021/related/mpo-ssa.pdf</a> | 5 September 2022 |

## Recent history

Rwanda is a landlocked country in the Great Lakes region of Africa - one of the most volatile areas on the continent. Approximately 84% percent of the population is Hutu and 14% Tutsi.

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.

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.

The country has 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 third 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 was used by many dictators to curtail basic human rights and Paul Kagame 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.

According to Human Rights Watch (HRW 2022 country chapter):

- "The ruling Rwandan Patriotic Front (RPF) continued to stifle dissenting and critical voices and to target those perceived as a threat to the government and their family members. The space for political opposition, civil society, and media remained closed. Several high-profile critics, including opposition members and commentators using social media or YouTube to express themselves, went missing, were arrested or threatened. Arbitrary detention, ill-treatment, and torture in official and unofficial detention facilities was commonplace, and fair trial standards were routinely flouted in cases deemed sensitive."

## Religious landscape

| Rwanda: Religious context   | Number of adherents | %    |
|---|---------------------|------|
| Christians  | 12,464,000          | 91.6 |
| Muslim  | 688,000             | 5.1  |
| Hindu   | 700                 | 0.0  |
| Buddhist  | 0                   | 0.0  |
| Ethno-religionist   | 392,000             | 2.9  |
| Jewish  | 0                   | 0.0  |
| Bahai   | 26,200              | 0.2  |
| Atheist   | 40                  | 0.0  |
| Agnostic  | 29,700              | 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 2022)

According to the US State Department (IRFR 2021):

- "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 states religious sermons must be delivered in designated facilities that meet the requirements of the law".
- "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."

- During [2021], approximately 6,500 churches, mosques, and other places of worship remained closed for being unable to meet health and safety standards or noise pollution ordinances introduced in 2018. Of the 8,760 places of worship closed in 2018, the government reported 2,231 were allowed to open as of the end of 2020, but there were no new openings reported in 2021. The government did not publish statistics on the total number of places of worship. Many organizations reported the infrastructure improvements required to meet the standards were prohibitively expensive for groups of modest means".

## Economic landscape

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

According to World Bank's Macro Poverty Outlook 2022 (Sub-Saharan Africa, pp. 70-71):

- **GDP growth:** "While the economic consequences of the Russian invasion [in Ukraine], war, and associated sanctions are still unfolding, Rwanda's GDP growth is likely to be lower than expected in 2022. Commodity prices and fiscal subsidies are expected to be the main channels of the crisis. Public debt is forecast to peak in 2023 (Table 2), but Rwanda remains susceptible to external shocks to growth and/or exports, and worse-than expected external financing conditions, which can be aggravated by a prolonged pandemic and uneven recovery."
- **Imports/exports:** "The fiscal deficit is expected to remain elevated at around 7.4 percent of GDP in 2022 before gradually declining as revenues recover and emergency spending subsides. The deficit is projected to narrow to about 4 percent of GDP in 2024 in line with government commitments. Public debt is forecast to peak in 2023, but Rwanda remains susceptible to external shocks to growth and/or exports, and worse-than expected external financing conditions, which can be aggravated by a prolonged pandemic and uneven recovery."
- **Inflation:** "Driven mainly by rising prices of fresh food and energy products, annual urban inflation rose to 5.8 percent in February and is expected to remain high in 2022. In expectation of higher inflationary pressures from higher international commodities, the National Bank of Rwanda raised the policy interest rate by 50 basis points (to 5 percent) in mid-February 2022, while continuing to support the recovery. Outlook Short- to medium-term growth prospects of Rwanda's economy are positive but conditional on continued national vaccination, recovery of the domestic economy, as well as the economic consequences of the Russian invasion in Ukraine."
- **Poverty:** "Despite an unprecedented assistance program, poverty likely increased due to the adverse effects of the pandemic on output and employment, but is expected to return to pre-crisis levels in 2022. Poverty rates (measured as US\$1.90 a day) fell from 69.1 percent in 2005 to 56.5 percent in 2017 and was projected to fall even further to 52.9 percent in 2019 behind strong growth in GDP and private consumption. With the emergence of COVID-19, poverty is expected to have increased to 56.0 percent for 2020. Rwanda has relatively

higher poverty rates than African peers with similar income per capita, and poverty reduction has become less responsive to growth in recent years."

- **COVID-19:** "The overall fiscal deficit eased to 8.2 percent of GDP in 2021, compared to 10.3 percent of GDP in 2020, as Rwanda continued to benefit from large external COVID-related support. By end-February, about 68 percent of the total population had received at least one dose of COVID vaccine, while 60 percent had received two doses. These vaccination rates place Rwanda among the top ten countries in Africa. Rwanda started administering a booster shot dose in December 2021. With eased COVID-19 restrictions, domestic demand and trade are expected to gradually improve, raising GDP growth to around 7 percent over 2022–2024, a lower growth trajectory than before the pandemic. Rwanda is likely to reach its pre-pandemic trend on its real per capita US\$ GDP by 2023."

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

- "Rwanda's economic freedom score is 57.1, making its economy the 105th freest in the 2022 Index. Rwanda is ranked 16th among 47 countries in the Sub-Saharan Africa region, and its overall score is above the regional average but below the world average. In the past half-decade, the Rwandan economy accelerated from 2017 through 2019, contracted in 2020, and resumed growth in 2021. Economic freedom has fluctuated over the same five years. With significant decreases in scores for judicial effectiveness, fiscal health, and business freedom, Rwanda has recorded a steep 10.5-point overall loss of economic freedom since 2017 and has fallen from the "Moderately Free" category to the "Mostly Unfree" category. Monetary freedom is somewhat promising, but judicial effectiveness and financial freedom are seriously deficient."

According to the World Bank country overview:

- "Rwanda now aspires to Middle Income Country status by 2035 and High-Income Country status by 2050. This will be achieved through a series of seven-year National Strategies for Transformation (NST1), underpinned by sectoral strategies focused on achieving the Sustainable Development Goals. The NST1 came after two, five-year Economic Development and Poverty Reduction Strategies — EDPRS (2008-12) and EDPRS-2 (2013-18), under which Rwanda experienced robust economic and social performance. Growth averaged 7.2% over the decade to 2019, while per capita gross domestic product (GDP) grew at 5% annually. The lockdown and social distancing measures, critical to control the COVID-19 pandemic, sharply curtailed economic activities in 2020. GDP fell by 3.4% in 2020, the first recession since 1994."

## Social and cultural landscape

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

- **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%, un-

specified 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 Operational update \(December 2022\)](#):

- **Refugees:** As of 31 December 2022, Rwanda hosted a total of 126,967 refugees and asylum seekers, mainly people from the Democratic Republic of the Congo (59.86%) and Burundi (39.58%).

## Technological landscape

According to Internet World Stats (IWS 2022):

- **Internet usage:** 44.3% of the population – survey date: December 2021 (Latest survey available at time of writing.)
- **Facebook usage:** 7.1% penetration rate – survey date: January 2022

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

- "Access to information and communication technologies (ICTs) in Rwanda has improved notably in recent years. The government has invested in building its internet and other ICT infrastructure to develop a robust information economy" (A1) However: "Internet access is primarily concentrated in Kigali and remains beyond the reach of many citizens" (A2) and: "Currently, over 70 percent of the population speaks only Kinyarwanda, making internet content in English inaccessible to most Rwandans" (A2).
- "Internet freedoms in Rwanda continued to decline during the coverage period, with the government taking steps to detain, intimidate, and imprison online journalists and critics, as well as subject those detained to violence and harassment. Self-censorship online remains common, as the government increasingly tightens its control of the online media

environment. Over the past several years, evidence implicates Rwandan authorities in the widespread use of commercial surveillance tools against journalists, activists, and opposition leaders." (Overview)

## 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 ([Monthly Conflict Tracker](#)):

- **August 2022:** "UN experts found 'solid evidence' of Rwandan military intervention in DR Congo. In confidential report leaked to the media on 4 Aug, UN experts said there was 'solid evidence' that Rwandan troops have conducted military operations in eastern DR Congo in support of M23 rebels since Nov 2021. Kigali immediately denied accusations, while Kinshasa 5 Aug demanded Kigali take 'responsibility for the instability' in eastern DR Congo. During visit to region, U.S. Sec State Antony Blinken 11 Aug met with President Kagame in capital Kigali and discussed 'credible reports' indicating that Rwanda continues to support M23 rebels; Blinken same day said Kagame and Congolese President Tshisekedi had agreed to hold direct talks over fighting in eastern DR Congo."
- **July 2022:** "Govt signed de-escalation agreement with DR Congo after two countries traded accusations of supporting rebels in Great Lakes region. President Kagame 6 July met with Congolese counterpart, President Tshisekedi, in Angola's capital Luanda to discuss tensions amid M23 rebels' offensive in DR Congo's North Kivu province; both leaders agreed on de-escalation process, including 'immediate cessation of hostilities' and 'immediate and unconditional withdrawal' of M23 rebels from eastern DRC. Rebels next day rejected move, claiming that only they can sign ceasefire agreement, and clashed with Congolese military in North Kivu's Rutshuru territory. Congolese and Rwandan officials 20-22 July met again in Angola, called for quick deployment of East African Community regional force (agreed upon in June) in eastern DRC to combat M23 rebels; Kigali agreed to be excluded from regional force at Kinshasa's request. Renewed clashes late July broke out between M23 and Congolese forces in Rutshuru (see Democratic Republic of Congo)."
- **June 2022:** "Rwanda and DRC continued to trade accusations of supporting rebels in Great Lakes region amid M23 armed group offensive in eastern DR Congo. Congolese President Tshisekedi said there was 'no doubt' that Rwanda supported M23 rebellion active in eastern DR Congo. Rwandan and Congolese governments accused each other of firing rockets across shared border".

- **May 2022:** "African Union (AU) chair, Senegalese President Macky Sall, called for dialogue between Rwanda and DR Congo. Meanwhile, Rwanda and Uganda signed agreement on military cooperation in bid to mend relations."

## 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's Global Freedom Index 2022 (E1): "Although the constitution guarantees freedom of assembly, this right is strictly 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. Those who would like to speak against the injustice of the government will face serious repercussions. They face arrest or killings by the government. Even those who are far away from the country would be tracked by the country's security agents.

### 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, many of which are operating without official registration 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.

### 4) The DRC crisis and Rwanda

Rwanda has shown its military muscle in the Great Lakes Region. As it has become well-known globally, the Great Lakes Region has developed into a hotbed for conflict and instability; various countries in the region have gone through or are going through internal conflicts and foreign intervention. This is particularly true for DRC and its ongoing crisis in its eastern areas, which many international observers think could affect the whole region. In putting the latest development in DRC in regional perspective, the [International Crisis Group \(ICG\)](#) stated in May 2022: "President Félix Tshisekedi has allowed Uganda to deploy troops to fight rebels based in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) and is tacitly permitting Burundi do to the same. Rwanda appears to be considering its own incursion in the area. Meanwhile, a Congolese armed group, the M23, is re-grouping." This can create a conflict among the other countries who are



planning to engage in proxy war inside the DRC. Rwanda has been accused by the international community of supporting the M23 rebel groups in DRC. If the situation in DRC is not handled carefully, and Rwanda and other neighboring countries keep interfering in the affairs of DRC, things could escalate, ultimately having a profound effect upon Christians.

## 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>
- Economic landscape: 2022 Index of Economic Freedom - <https://www.heritage.org/index/country/rwanda>
- Social and cultural landscape: World Atlas - <https://www.worldatlas.com/articles/ethnic-groups-of-rwanda.html>
- Social and cultural landscape: UNHCR's Operational update (December 2022) - <https://reliefweb.int/report/rwanda/unhcr-operational-update-rwanda-december-2022>
- Security situation: Monthly Conflict Tracker - [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](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: International Crisis Group (ICG) - <https://www.crisisgroup.org/africa/great-lakes/democratic-republic-congo-uganda-burundi-rwanda/easing-turmoil-eastern-dr-congo>

## WWL 2023: 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* (last accessed 15 February 2023): “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 (last accessed 15 February 2023), 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   | 5,653,000         | 45.4         |
| Protestant   | 4,447,000         | 35.7         |
| Independent  | 1,552,000         | 12.5         |
| Unaffiliated   | 810,000           | 6.5          |
| Doubly-affiliated Christians   | 0                 | 0.0          |
| <b>Total</b>   | <b>12,463,500</b> | <b>100.0</b> |
| <i>(Any deviation from the total number of Christians stated above is due to the rounding of decimals)</i> |                   |              |
| Evangelical movement   | 2,907,000         | 23.3         |
| Renewalist movement  | 2,547,000         | 20.4         |

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.

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.

## 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 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.

**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.

## External Links - Church information

- Christian origins: White Fathers - [https://storicamente.org/cristofori\\_1](https://storicamente.org/cristofori_1)
- Christian origins: Bethel Mission - <http://www.bu.edu/missiology/missionary-biography/c-d/church-john-edward-1899-1989/>

# WWL 2023: Persecution Dynamics / Rwanda

## Reporting period

1 October 2021 - 30 September 2022

## Position on the World Watch List

| Rwanda: World Watch List | Points | WWL Rank |
|--------------------------|--------|----------|
| WWL 2023                 | 57     | 63       |
| WWL 2022                 | 50     | 67       |
| WWL 2021                 | 42     | 72       |
| WWL 2020                 | 42     | 71       |
| WWL 2019                 | 41     | 72       |

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

After an increase of 8 points in WWL 2022, Rwanda has increased seven points in WWL 2023. This was due to marked rises in the level of pressure mostly orchestrated by the government. Although the violence score fell from 9.3 to 8.9 points, there were still well over 100 church attacks and arrests, not to mention at least 1,000 Christians suffering some sort of attack for their faith. The reason for the sharp rise in total score was the fact that average pressure rose from 8.1 to 9.6 points. **Dictatorial paranoia (Strong):** The government remains authoritarian and regards virtually any form of assembly and association as a potential threat. Government hostility against non-traditional Christian groups is particularly severe. 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). Traditional churches 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’. **Christian denominational protectionism (Medium)**: Traditional denominations like the Catholic Church support the government in putting pressure on new and smaller churches.

## 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 suppressing the growth of smaller church groups.

## 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

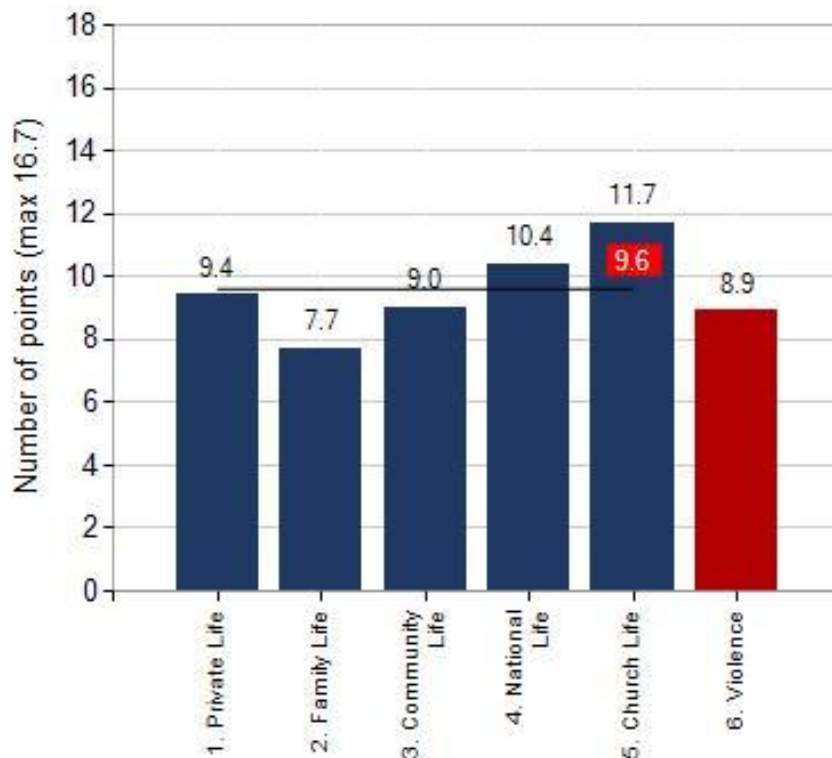
- **Government officials (Very strong):** Government authorities harass church leaders by issuing warnings and even demolishing the churches where they serve. Under the guise of implementing policy, especially as regards safety and noise pollution, the government has continued to make the life of Christians 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.

## The Persecution pattern

WWL 2023 Persecution Pattern for Rwanda



The WWL 2023 Persecution pattern for Rwanda shows:

- The average level of pressure on Christians is 9.6 points an increase of 1.5 points in comparison to WWL 2022 (8.1 points).
- Pressure is greatest in the church sphere (11.7 points) followed by *National sphere* (10.4 points) .
- Violence is very high scoring 8.8 points, though showing a reduction from the WWL 2022 score of 9.3 points. Hostility towards Christians expressing views opposing the government has intensified. Numerous churches were closed down in the WWL 2021 - WWL 2023 reporting periods and most of them 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 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://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)**

Individual Christians struggle to meet up since the government has imposed restrictions. Government security agents and spies are a constant threat and any meetings between individuals has been risky. 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 1.8: It has been risky for Christians to speak about their faith with those other than immediate family (extended family, others). (2.25 points)**

This is not a major problem when the people are those with the same faith. However, if it involves people from different faiths, it can be difficult. Furthermore, there can be serious consequences - within the context of *Christian denominational protectionism* - if Christians from non-traditional church groups talk to other people about faith matters.

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

This is part of freedom of expression and opinion. There are some Christian radio outlets outside the 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.

## Pressure in Block 2 / Family sphere

**Block 2.7: Parents have been hindered in raising their children according to their Christian beliefs. (3.50 points)**

In both schools and local communities, 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, non-Catholic parents sometimes struggle to raise their children according to their understanding of Christian faith.

**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)**

Punishment is common for those who decide to leave the religion of their families and local community. One such form of punishment is denial of child custody. See also the issue of inheritance in 2.13 below.

**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)**

Losing one's Inheritance can really hurt and this issue often appears where people have changed their church/family 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 2.11: Spouses of converts have been put under pressure (successfully or unsuccessfully) by others to divorce. (1.50 points)**

Converts from within Muslim or ATR families particularly face this issue of divorce. In addition, those leaving the Catholic church to join a non-traditional Christian group are reported to face the same sort of 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)**

Monitoring is one of the key tools that the government utilizes at the local, community level. 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 2023 reporting period, this issue has remained a constant problem for Christians. As reported by the US State Department (IRFR 2021), the majority of the churches that were closed in 2018 remained closed in 2021. Country researchers report that the issue has remained the same for the WWL 2023 reporting period.

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

Both in public and private settings, there have been attempts to saturate the employment area with government supporters. Thus, those Christians who do not support what the government does, will face 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)**

Communal institutions are dominated by government cadres all the way down to village level. Whether someone can participate or not 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 other Christian groups from participating.)

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

The country is known for abducting people who speak against the government, so In Rwanda, abduction is carried out by government agents. This includes abducting Christians who highlight unjust practices and corruption. No one is reporting these abductions in public media as that would lead to serious repercussions. Less commonly, family members may abduct and keep 'cross-denominational converts' under house-arrest.

## 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 reported in Global Freedom Index 2021: "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.

Global Freedom Index 2022 reported: "[The] government has recently taken steps to assert greater control over religious institutions. Over the past several years, 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, and required that donations to faith-based groups be deposited in Rwandan banks."

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

Civil society organizations have to tread very carefully in Rwanda. This is because any civil or humanitarian organization operating in the country faces serious problems (such as arrest, dissolution or expulsion) if they do not support the government. 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)**

Engaging with local or national authorities is often difficult for those churches who have not clearly shown their support to the ruling party. It is always particularly difficult for those who do not support the government. Especially Christians belonging to non-traditional church groups face serious problems. The authorities in the country not only discriminate against those Christians who refuse to support the government and its policies, 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)**

Rwanda is a very closed country when it comes to fact finding or monitoring human rights situation. Attending and monitoring trials is made extremely difficult as human rights groups are often expelled or rejected entry. 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 5.1: Church activities have been monitored, hindered, disturbed, or obstructed. (4.00 points)**

Church monitoring is one of the key components of pressure on churches and its leaders in Rwanda. The constant presence of security agents in close proximity and following those who attend the churches and what they talk about in the church has been reported for years. This monitoring mechanism has led to widespread closure of churches, especially smaller churches in the past five years, some of which are still closed. Monitoring and closure have become one of the most important and most utilized tools where *Dictatorial paranoia* is the main engine. As reported by the US State Department (IRFR 2021): Still over 6,500 places of worship remain closed. According to local researchers, the vast majority of these are Christian places of worship.

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

Rwanda is taking extreme measures to infiltrate the church leadership. Country researchers mentioned that only those leaders endorsed (in discreet) by the government can become the leader of a given church or church organization. This shows that 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. Those leaders who, at least ostensibly, align themselves with the policy of the ruling party are often given the green light to head a given church or denomination.

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

The main persecutor of the Church and Christians in Rwanda is the government and its supporters. Rwanda is a country where the executive branch rules with an iron fist, thus 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. They therefore censor themselves during church ceremonies.

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

Non-traditional churches are facing tremendous problems in this respect, since there is always the presence of government security agents to be feared. Even within their places of worship, Christians fear to speak about justice, morality, corruption and other things that affect the society. 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 Index 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."

## 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.

| Rwanda: 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?   | 100 *    | 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?   | 10 *     | 10       |
| 6.7 How many cases have there been of forced marriages of Christians to non-Christians?   | 10 *     | 5        |
| 6.8 How many Christians have been otherwise physically or mentally abused for faith-related reasons (including beatings and death threats)?   | 1000     | 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?                       | 0        | 10       |

|   |    |      |
|---|----|------|
| 6.10 How many shops or businesses of Christians have been attacked, damaged, bombed, looted, destroyed, burned down, closed or confiscated for faith-related reasons? | 10 | 0    |
| 6.11 How many Christians have been forced to leave their homes or go into hiding in-country for faith-related reasons?  | 10 | 50   |
| 6.12 How many Christians have been forced to leave the country for faith-related reasons?   | 0  | 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

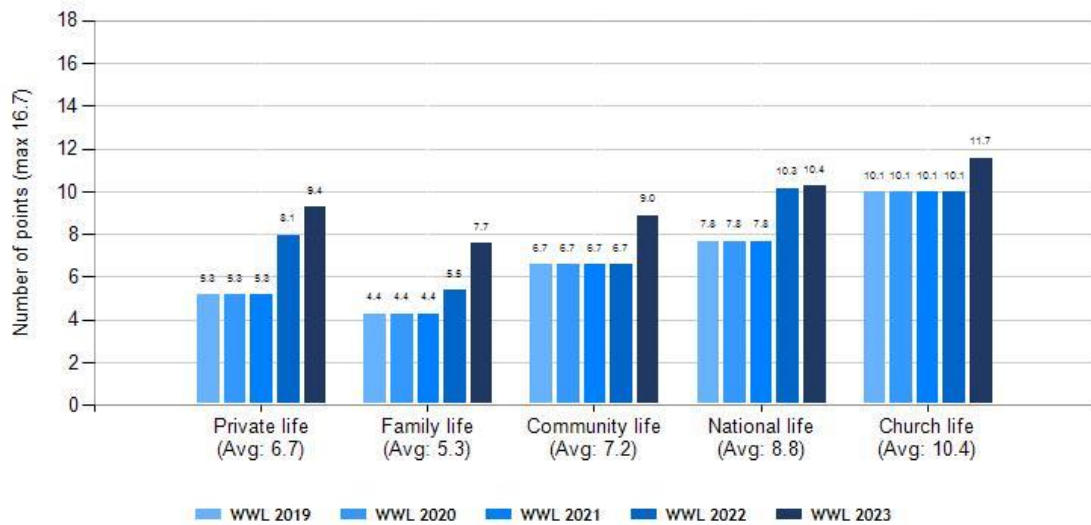
| Rwanda: WWL 2019 - WWL 2023 |   |
|-----------------------------|---|
| Persecution Pattern history | Average pressure over 5 Spheres of life |
| 2023                        | 9.6                                     |
| 2022                        | 8.1                                     |
| 2021                        | 6.9                                     |
| 2020                        | 6.9                                     |
| 2019                        | 6.9                                     |

The table above shows that the average pressure on Christians has increased after a period of stability at the 6.9 point mark, reaching 9.6 in WWL 2023. 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

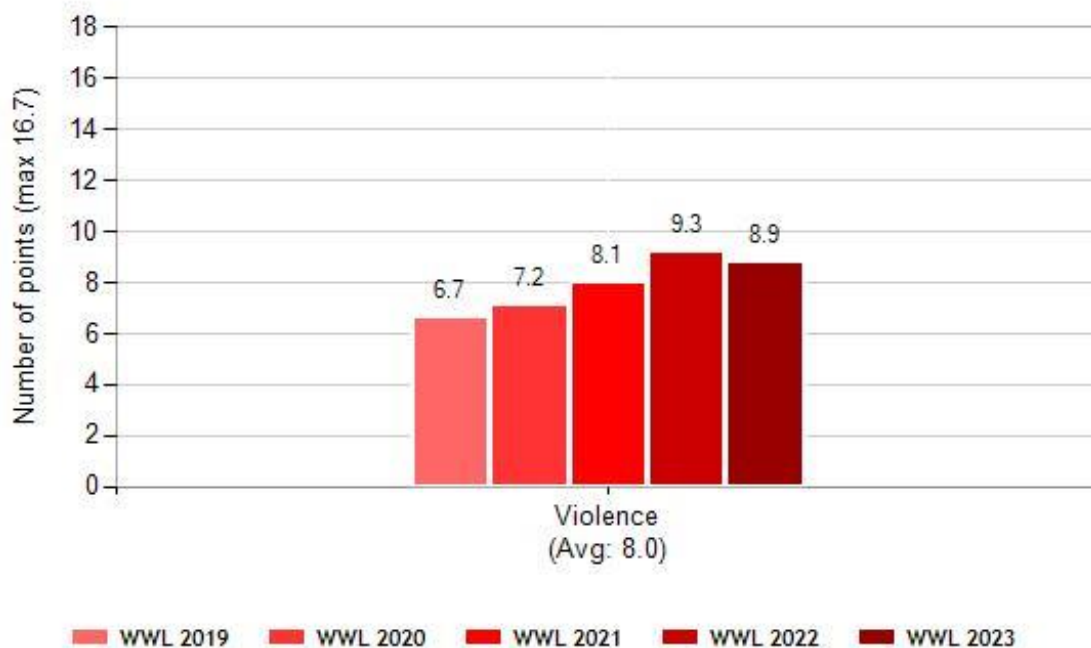
As can be seen in the chart below, the five years average pressure on Christians is highest in the *Church sphere* (scoring 10.4 points) followed by the *National sphere* (8.4 points). This shows that the pressure is indeed caused by *Dictatorial paranoia* with laws and policies being implemented to restrict freedom of religion. In WWL 2023 there were notable rises in pressure in all spheres of life.

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



### 5 Year trends: Violence against Christians

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



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 previous four years reporting periods (WWL 2019-WWL 2022) but showed a slight decrease in WWL 2023 (from 9.3 in WWL 2022 to 8.9 points in WWL 2023).

## 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            | Forced out of home – expulsion; Violence – physical; Violence – sexual |
| Social and Cultural | Violence – Verbal  |
| Technological       | -  |

Despite Rwanda boasting the [largest female](#) parliamentary representation in the world (Statista, 5 August 2022), 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 marriages are common mostly in rural areas and [refugee camps](#), some forced marriages are fueled by religious motivation (OECD, 2019, “Social Institutions and Gender Index: Rwanda”). Parents of female converts are known to marry them off to Muslims to try and restore them to the Islamic faith. A country expert also contends that the economic position of both Christian and Muslim parents is a contributing factor, especially in the case of minors: “Forced marriage is a crime and is punishable under the law. However, it does occur, and when it does it is in respect of minor children and often than not, poverty is the motivation for same as opposed to religion beliefs.”

Converts from a Muslim background 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 expelled from their homes, 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 | Denied access to Christian religious materials, teachings and rites; Imprisonment by government; Travel bans/restrictions on movement |
| Security            | 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. Arbitrary detentions reportedly increased during the COVID-19 pandemic. However, “this has been the tactic for years,” a country expert added. The pressure on church leaders in Rwanda and difficulties in registering churches has led to many 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 Freedom House's Global Freedom Index 2022 (D2):

- "Religious freedom has historically been respected, but the government has recently taken steps to assert greater control over religious institutions. Over the past several years, 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, and required that donations to faith-based groups be deposited in Rwandan banks. Jehovah's Witnesses face arrest for refusing to participate in security duties or oath-taking involving the national flag."

According to the US State Department (IRFR 2021):

- "Jehovah's Witnesses reported it was difficult to obtain civil marriages without taking an oath on the Rwandan flag and said they were unable to receive some professional licenses requiring the same oath. For example, as of October [2021], no Jehovah's Witnesses were members of the Rwanda Bar Association for this reason. Jehovah's Witnesses faced sporadic issues with respect to being asked to participate in military and patriotic activities and certain religious services at school in contravention of their beliefs. Jehovah's Witnesses reported 44 students remained unable to attend school since 2019 due to their refusal to participate in such activities. Government officials said they would investigate the matter, stating this inability of students to attend school contravened government policy. Aside from these problems, Jehovah's Witnesses otherwise reported the government worked with them to provide reasonable accommodations as required, and they cited as an improvement the fact that civil servants no longer had to swear an oath in order to obtain employment."

## 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 immense pressure on Christians is part of the policy of suffocating any voice that can be critical of the government. 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 stream of Catholics joining these 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 continued 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/267028/women-in-selected-national-parliaments/>
- 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: refugee camps - <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 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=Rwanda>