

World  
Watch  
Research

## Uganda: 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 / Uganda

## Brief country details

Uganda: Population (UN estimate for 2022)	Christians	Chr%
48,433,000	40,885,000	84.4

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

## Map of country



Uganda: World Watch List	Points	WWL Rank
WWL 2023	51	69
WWL 2022	48	69
WWL 2021	47	65
WWL 2020	48	62
WWL 2019	47	62

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

## Dominant persecution engines and drivers

Uganda: Main Persecution engines	Main drivers
Dictatorial paranoia	Government officials
Islamic oppression	Citizens (people from the broader society), including mobs, One's own (extended) family, Non-Christian religious leaders, Violent religious groups

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

## Brief description of the persecution situation

Bullying and harassment of Christians by the Muslim community has become very common in eastern parts of the country. Particularly for converts from Islam, owning Christian materials or discussing Christian faith with family or community members has often led to expulsion, serious physical attacks and even killings. In addition, there have been reports of mob attacks targeting churches and non-convert Christians, as well as converts.

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

- In the eastern part of the country, Christians are heavily affected by radicalized Islamic youth who commit mob attacks on Christians on a regular basis.
- Converts were forced to leave their homes.

# WWL 2023: Keys to understanding / Uganda

## 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. 377-380)	<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>	6 September 2022
BBC News country profile	BBC country profile	<a href="https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-africa-14107906">https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-africa-14107906</a>	6 September 2022
Bertelsmann Transformation Index country report 2022 – covering 137 countries	BTI report 2022	<a href="https://bti-project.org/en/reports/country-dashboard/UGA">https://bti-project.org/en/reports/country-dashboard/UGA</a>	6 September 2022
CIA World Factbook	CIA Factbook	<a href="https://www.cia.gov/the-world-factbook/countries/uganda/">https://www.cia.gov/the-world-factbook/countries/uganda/</a>	6 September 2022
Crisis24 country report (Garda World) – covering 193 countries	Crisis24 country report	<a href="https://crisis24.garda.com/insights-intelligence/intelligence/country-reports/uganda">https://crisis24.garda.com/insights-intelligence/intelligence/country-reports/uganda</a>	6 September 2022
Economist Intelligence Unit Democracy Index 2021 – covering 167 countries	EIU 2021 (p.57)	<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>	6 September 2022
FFP's Fragile States Index 2022	FSI 2022	<a href="https://fragilestatesindex.org/country-data/">https://fragilestatesindex.org/country-data/</a>	6 September 2022
Freedom House's 2022 Democracy index – covering 29 countries (Uganda 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 2022 Global Freedom index – covering 210 countries	Global Freedom Index 2022	<a href="https://freedomhouse.org/country/uganda/freedom-world/2022">https://freedomhouse.org/country/uganda/freedom-world/2022</a>	6 September 2022
Freedom House's Freedom on the Net 2022 report – covering 70 countries	Freedom on the Net 2022	<a href="https://freedomhouse.org/country/uganda/freedom-net/2022">https://freedomhouse.org/country/uganda/freedom-net/2022</a>	24 February 2023
Human Rights Watch World Report 2022 (country chapter) – covering 100+ countries	HRW 2022 country chapter	<a href="https://www.hrw.org/world-report/2022/country-chapters/uganda">https://www.hrw.org/world-report/2022/country-chapters/uganda</a>	6 September 2022
Internet World Stats 2022	IWS 2022	<a href="https://www.internetworldstats.com/africa.htm#ug">https://www.internetworldstats.com/africa.htm#ug</a>	6 September 2022
RSF's 2022 World Press Freedom Index – covering 180 countries	World Press Freedom 2022	<a href="https://rsf.org/en/uganda">https://rsf.org/en/uganda</a>	6 September 2022
Transparency International's 2021 Corruption Perceptions Index – covering 180 countries	CPI 2021	<a href="https://www.transparency.org/en/cpi/2021/index/uga">https://www.transparency.org/en/cpi/2021/index/uga</a>	6 September 2022
UNDP's Global Human Development Indicators (country profile) – covering 189 countries	HDI profile	<a href="https://hdr.undp.org/data-center/specific-country-data/#/countries/UGA">https://hdr.undp.org/data-center/specific-country-data/#/countries/UGA</a>	6 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/uganda/">https://www.state.gov/reports/2021-report-on-international-religious-freedom/uganda/</a>	6 September 2022
USCIRF 2022 country reports – covering 15 CPC / 12 SWL (Uganda 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 country overview	<a href="https://www.worldbank.org/en/country/uganda/overview">https://www.worldbank.org/en/country/uganda/overview</a>	6 September 2022
World Bank country profile data – covering 222 countries	World Bank country profile	<a href="https://data.worldbank.org/country/uganda">https://data.worldbank.org/country/uganda</a>	6 September 2022
World Bank Macro Poverty Outlook 2022 – covering 147 countries (divided per region)	Macro Poverty Outlook 2022 - Sub-Saharan Africa, pp. 90-91	<a href="https://thedocs.worldbank.org/en/doc/bae48ff2f2efc5a869546775b3f010735-0500062021/related/mpo-ssa.pdf">https://thedocs.worldbank.org/en/doc/bae48ff2f2efc5a869546775b3f010735-0500062021/related/mpo-ssa.pdf</a>	6 September 2022

## Recent history

In October 1962, Uganda gained [independence](#) from Britain, and the traditional kingdoms of Ankole, Buganda, Bunyoro and Toro were accorded federal status and a certain amount of autonomy (South African History online, last accessed 24 February 2023). The struggle for independence did not take a bloody course like it did in Kenya or Algeria; however, it was not easy as Britain was unwilling to relinquish one of its most prosperous colonies. Milton Obote of the Uganda People's Congress (UPC) became the first prime minister. In 1967, Obote abolished the kingdoms and assumed both the office of president and prime minister.

In 1971, while President Obote was attending a Commonwealth meeting in Singapore, General Idi Amin Dada conducted a coup that effectively overthrew Obote's regime. Idi Amin expelled Asians from the country and conducted massacres especially against the Acholi and Lango civilians and soldiers. Under the leadership of Amin, Uganda became very repressive, with extrajudicial killings and mass executions becoming commonplace. In 1978, the Ugandan army invaded the Kagera strip of Tanzania. This was seen as an act of aggression by Tanzania which invaded the country in 1979. Idi Amin was defeated and fled the country (to Saudi Arabia via Libya).

Milton Obote took this opportunity and went back to his country, won the next presidential election and re-assumed power. During this time, Obote tried to revive the economy with the help of international aid, but was ousted by another coup in 1985. In 1986, a leader of the guerrilla National Resistance Army (NRA), Yoweri Museveni, took control of the country, formed a government of national unity, and has [remained in power](#) as president ever since (History World, last accessed 24 February 2023). The rule of Museveni has not gone unchallenged, especially in the north. The Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) fought against the Ugandan army and



isplaced millions of civilians whilst aiming to remove Museveni's regime. However, he is still president after 37 years in power, defeating Dr Besigye again in 2016 and Bobi Wine in January 2021. He is in firm control of the country and made use of COVID-19 restrictions to further restrict opposition forces.

## Political and legal landscape

Uganda (Jamhuri ya Uganda) is a multi-party republic (since 2005) with one legislative house that has 375 members. The Constitution has no presidential term limits. The president is both the head of the state and the government. The Supreme Court is the highest court in the land, it also gives final decisions on constitutional matters. In 2006, the first presidential and parliamentary elections were held after the introduction of a new multi-party system. Museveni won the presidency while his party, the National Resistance Movement (NRM), won the majority of seats in parliament. Museveni and his party won the next three consecutive elections in 2011, 2016 and January 2021.

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

- "President Yoweri Museveni was re-elected in January 2021 in a general election marred by widespread abuses. Security forces arbitrarily arrested and beat opposition supporters and journalists, killed protesters, and disrupted opposition rallies. Shortly before the elections, the government shut down the internet for five days, and restricted access to social media sites including Twitter and YouTube for a month. The authorities indefinitely blocked access to Facebook after the network announced it had taken down a network of accounts and pages linked to the government. The authorities in Uganda restricted right to freedom of movement and assembly, in particular for political opposition leaders, and violated rights to freedoms of association and expression, as security forces beat and at times arbitrarily detained journalists and opposition members."

As reported by International Crisis Group's (ICG) [March 2020 Global overview](#):

- Security forces arrested former Intelligence Chief and Security Minister Henry Tumukunde on 12 March 2020, who was planning to run for president in 2021. He was accused of allegedly seeking Rwanda's support to unseat Museveni and was charged with treason on 18 March 2020.
- On 4 March 2020, journalist and filmmaker Moses Bwayo was placed in custody after being arrested in February 2020 on charges of unlawful assembly while filming a documentary on opposition leader Bobi Wine, who was able to run for the presidential election in January 2021. (The police also detained a church leader on charges of unlawful assembly for hosting Wine at his home in March 2019).

As reported by The Guardian on 16 January 2021:

- "Museveni won a [sixth term in office](#) at the election on 14 January 2021. The electoral commission said Museveni had taken 59% of the vote and Wine 35%. His main rival, Bobi Wine, alleged widespread fraud and rejected the result. "The results followed one of the most violent election campaigns in Uganda, which included killings, the arrest of campaigners and civil society groups and intimidation by the security forces. Ugandan authorities

also shut down internet networks across most of the country. Turnout was 57%, the lowest since Museveni took office."

The US State Department qualified the electoral process as "[fundamentally flawed](#)" and The Africa Elections Watch coalition said they observed irregularities. The official voter turnout was 57% but is questioned since 409 polling stations were announced to have had 100% voter turnout (Reuters, 17 January 2021). On 13 January 2021, a day before the elections and a day after Facebook closed 'fake' accounts which it said were linked to the government, the communications regulator in Uganda ordered all telecoms firms to block access to social media and messaging apps in retaliation. An [Amnesty International](#) press release (AI, 13 January 2021) also condemned this action, stating that it was "clearly intended to silence the few accredited election observers, opposition politicians, human rights defenders, activists, journalists, and bloggers who are monitoring the election".

In a country where freedom and democracy are seen as luxury items, it is impossible to enjoy freedom of religion either individually or collectively. One moment, the president wants to gain support and embraces Christians, and the next moment he sees them as a threat and makes sure that their rights are severely restricted.

## Religious landscape

Uganda: Religious context	Number of adherents	%
Christians	40,885,000	84.4
Muslim	5,792,000	12.0
Hindu	389,000	0.8
Buddhist	2,800	0.0
Ethno-religionist	989,000	2.0
Jewish	2,000	0.0
Bahai	145,000	0.3
Atheist	18,800	0.0
Agnostic	195,000	0.4
Other	13,200	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)

Uganda is a Christian majority country. The reliability of religious statistics is disputed and Muslim leaders argue that their presence is much higher than the WCD 2022 estimate of 12%.

According to the US State Department (IRFR 2021) which cites the 2014 Ugandan government census:

- "The census reports Muslims constitute 14 percent of the population. The UMSC [Uganda Muslim Supreme Council] states that Muslims (primarily Sunni) are closer to 35 percent of the population. There is also a small number of Shia Muslims, mostly in Kampala and the eastern part of the country, particularly in the Mayuge and Bugiri Districts."

## Economic landscape

According to World Bank's 2022 Macro Poverty Outlook (for Sub-Saharan Africa):

- **GDP growth:** "Real GDP growth is expected to rise from 3.4 percent in FY21 to 3.7 percent in FY22, as the economy reopens. Compared to the strong performance in the 2000s, recent economic growth has slowed considerably. With reduced reform momentum, a less supportive external environment, and other exogenous shocks like droughts, growth since 2011 has barely surpassed the high population growth rate. As a result, in the five years prior to the COVID-19 crisis, per capita real GDP growth halved to 1.1 percent on average per year."
- **Current account deficit:** "In line with government's consolidation agenda, the fiscal deficit has narrowed to an estimated 5 percent of GDP in the first half of FY22, driven by cuts to lower priority recurrent spending (e.g. travel and workshops) and delaying investments that are not critical or ready."
- **Poverty:** "COVID-19 may reverse the declining poverty trend from the past decade, with widespread closures of firms, permanent layoffs in industry and services, and a rapid slowdown of economic activity, especially in the urban informal sector. The economic scarring is likely to persist over the long run as real per capita income will struggle to catch up with levels expected before the crisis. The lack of social safety nets has resulted in the displacement of labor from urban employment back to low-productivity farming."
- **Inflation:** "Inflationary pressures have abated, despite expansionary monetary policy and financial policies aimed at easing liquidity for banks and businesses."
- **Economic outlook:** "The displacement of labor and an uncertain post-election period will slow the recovery from the ongoing COVID-19 crisis, with real GDP growth expected to pick up in FY22–23. This rebound, averaging 5.6 percent in FY22–23, is predicated on a pick-up in private consumption and investment, supported by higher growth in exports as the global economy recovers. The latter is assumed to benefit from the global rollout of COVID-19 vaccines in 2021. A more prolonged downturn in tourism revenues, further subdued inflows of remittances, and delays in the final investment decision by companies in the oil sector could result in growth dropping to 4.5 percent over FY22–23. Despite an expected correction in the primary deficit to 2 percent of GDP by 2023, public debt is likely to exceed 51 percent of GDP by 2023."
- **Effect of regional instability:** "Regional instability and a continued influx of refugees could undermine exports and disrupt growth in refugee-hosting parts of Uganda."

## Social and cultural landscape

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

- **Main ethnic groups:** Baganda 16.5%, Banyankole 9.6%, Basoga 8.8%, Bakiga 7.1%, Iteso 7%, Langi 6.3%, Bagisu 4.9%, Acholi 4.4%, Lugbara 3.3%, other 32.1% (2014 est.)
- **Main languages:** English (official), Ganda or Luganda, Niger-Congo and Nilo-Saharan languages, Swahili (official), Arabic
- **Median age:** 16.7 years
- **Urban population:** 24.4%
- **Expected years of schooling:** 11.4 years
- **Literacy rate, adult (ages 15 and older):** 76.5%
- **Average employment to population ratio (ages 15 and older):** 69.0%
- **Unemployment, total:** 1.8% of the labor force
- **Unemployment, youth (ages 15-24):** 2.7%
- **HDI score and rank:** Uganda is ranked #159 out of 189 countries with a value of 0.544 points
- **Life expectancy at birth:** 63.4 years
- **Gender inequality index (GII):** 0.535

According to the [UNHCR's Operational Update](#) published on 22 August 2022:

- **Refugees:** As of June 2022, Uganda officially hosted 1,529,272 refugees and asylum-seekers mainly from South Sudan, the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) and Burundi. Most were hosted in the North and South-Western regions and in the capital Kampala.

According to the [IDMC overview](#) (last updated 19 May 2022):

- **IDPs due to conflict:** As of December 2021 - The number of internal displacements triggered by conflict and violence was the lowest since data became available for Uganda. "Intercommunal violence over land led to 1,300 new movements in the Amuru and Adjumani districts of Northern region in 2021. Land disputes are among the most main causes of violence in the region, because many of those displaced by the conflict with LRA have returned, increasing competition for resources and fueling tensions land ownership. Around 1,700 people were living in displacement as a result of intercommunal violence at the end of the year, but these figures are likely to be conservative."
- **IDPs due to natural disasters:** As of December 2021: "Around 26,000 people were living in internal displacement as a result of disasters at the end of the 2021".

## Technological landscape

According to Internet World Stats (IWS 2022):

- **Internet usage:** 38.4% of the population – survey date 31 December 2021
- **Facebook usage:** 6% of the population – survey date 31 Jan 2022

According to the World Bank country profile:

- **Mobile phone subscriptions per 100 people:** 57.3

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

- (Overview) "Internet freedom in Uganda improved slightly during the coverage period, as the government lifted sweeping digital restrictions that had been imposed during the disputed January 2021 general elections. Self-censorship is increasingly common online, with journalists and activists who criticize the president and his family continuing to face arrest and physical violence in retaliation for their online activities. Recent evidence further implicated Ugandan authorities in the use of commercial surveillance tools against journalists and opposition leaders."
- (A2) "While internet access has become more affordable, particularly on mobile phones, costs are still high for large numbers of Ugandans. ... Only 25 percent of Ugandans live in urban areas, and access to electricity is limited in rural areas, resulting in a significant urban-rural divide in internet access. There is also a notable disparity in access between men and women: The 2021 edition of the Inclusive Internet Index reported a 13 percent gender gap for Uganda."
- (C2) "Several laws criminalize legitimate online expression and activities, including the penal code, the Computer Misuse Act 2011, and the Anti-Terrorism Act."
- (C5) "According to an August 2022 report by the Israeli newspaper *Haaretz*, the Ugandan police has purchased UFED, a technology developed by the Israeli firm Cellebrite that enables authorities to hack into password-protected smartphones."

As reported by Deutsche Welle on 12 September 2019, the government has been in [close collaboration](#) with the Chinese technology firm Huawei for surveillance purposes. As reported by The Times on 16 August 2019, Huawei allegedly helped the government [monitor](#) the online activity of Museveni's political rival, Bobi Wine. This shows that the government is investing in technology to suppress freedom.

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

- "Two days before the January 14, 2021, elections, the Uganda Communications Commission ordered internet service providers to block social media access. The next day, the government shut down internet access across the country for five days. The authorities restored partial access to social media websites, excluding Facebook, in February. During election campaigns, the authorities restricted media coverage of opposition party candidates, in some instances beating and shooting at journalists with rubber bullets."
- The government in June [2021] cancelled a social media tax requiring users of WhatsApp, Twitter, and Facebook, among other sites, to pay a daily fee of 200 Ugandan Shillings (US\$0.05) that had been in force since 2018, and replaced it with a general 12 per cent tax on the purchase of internet data, further restricting access to many Ugandans.

## Security situation

The main violent militant groups in Uganda's recent history are:

### 1. The Lord's Resistance Army (LRA)

The influence of this group in northern Uganda is diminishing and it is believed that only a few remnants are now in existence in the forests of the Central African Republic. In 2017, the Ugandan Army that had been conducting an operation in the Central African Republic, [ended](#) its operation stating that LAR is no longer a threat to Uganda (BBC News, 19 April 2017).

The LRA was originally set up by former members of the Holy Spirit Mobile Forces (HSMF), which was founded by the self-proclaimed priestess Alice Auma Lakwena, who fought against the Ugandan army in 1986-1987. The group first formed the United Holy Salvation Army and then changed its name to the Uganda Christian Army/Movement. In 1992, it became the [Lord's Resistance Army](#) (Al-Jazeera, 6 May 2014). Ever since it was created, the LRA waged a brutal war in an attempt to remove the government of Museveni. Even though the LRA claimed to be establishing a country ruled by the Bible's Ten Commandments, the acts they committed were clearly evil and by no means Christian. The LRA has committed atrocities in northern Uganda and South Sudan: Forced marriages, child soldiering, sexual and other forms of enslavement are just some examples. In December 2003, the government of Uganda referred the matter to the International Criminal Court (ICC). Five LRA leaders, namely Kony, Lukwiya, Odhiambo, Ongwen, and Otti were charged under different counts. Except for [Dominic Ongwen](#), who was arrested in 2015, the rest are still at large (BBC News, 6 December 2016).

According to HRW 2022 country chapter:

- "On February 4, 2021, International Criminal Court (ICC) judges [convicted Dominic Ongwen](#), a former leader of the Lord's Resistance Army, on 61 counts of war crimes and crimes against humanity. The crimes include attacks on the civilian population, murder, torture, persecution, forced marriage, forced pregnancy, sexual slavery, enslavement, rape, pillage, destruction of property, and recruitment and use of children under the age of 15 to participate in the hostilities. On May 6, ICC judges [imposed a 25-year-sentence](#) on Ongwen, the first conviction and sentencing of an LRA leader. Joseph Kony, the LRA's founding leader and the only living remaining ICC suspect of LRA crimes, remains a fugitive."
- "Some former LRA fighters, including senior commanders, were integrated into the Ugandan military without investigation into crimes they may have committed in the LRA."

### 2. The Allied Democratic Forces - National Army for the Liberation of Uganda (ADF-NALU)

This Islamist group was formed in 1995 to violently oppose President Museveni and to establish an Islamic state in Uganda. ADF-NALU has also sometimes been referred to as 'Muslim Defense International' (MDI). The founder of the group, Jamil Mukulu was sanctioned by the United Nations. According to official [UN records](#), Mukulu was arrested in April 2015 in Tanzania and extradited to Uganda in July 2015 (UN Security Council, accessed 28 September 2020). "In September [2019], the International Crimes Division (ICD) of Uganda's High Court confirmed charges of terrorism, murder, attempted murder, aggravated robbery against Jamil Mukulu, the

alleged leader of the rebel Allied Democratic Forces (ADF), and 37 others" ([HRW 2020 country chapter](#)).

The country's security apparatus has been on high alert. ADF fighters trained in North Kivu (DRC) infiltrate the country to conduct operations, for instance in [2021](#) (Africa Press, 18 November 2021) and [2022](#) (KFM, 13 December 2022).

### **3. Islamic State group (IS)**

There were a series of attacks in Kampala in 2021 for which IS claimed responsibility, e.g. in a [bar](#) (Reuters, 25 October 2021) and a more serious suicide attack on a police station on 16 November 2021. Three minutes after that first blast, a further two suicide attacks were made along a road leading to the parliament. Seven people, including the three bombers, were killed. 27 of the 37 wounded were police officers. ([Al-Jazeera, 21 November 2021](#)).

## **Trends analysis**

The future for the Christian community in Uganda would seem to depend on two major factors: 1. How the government addresses the rise of Islamic militancy and the growing pressure on Christians in eastern Uganda; 2. How the government itself respects freedom of religion and its components.

### **1) Uganda has been ruled by one man for well over 35 years**

The president is still in a strong position to continue in office since the Constitution has been amended to allow him to do so. It is likely that he will continue ruling the country through the means he has employed in the past (arresting his opponents, harassing them, restricting freedom of expression and assembly). In this context, it is inevitable that Christians also face serious challenges.

### **2) There is little or no protection for Christians in eastern Uganda**

Considering the fact that the region is far from stable, the international community seems unwilling at present to push Uganda into making reforms aiming to respect human rights in general and freedom of Christians in particular. There is no indication that the government is likely to intervene with any serious intention of protecting Christians facing Islamic violence - particularly in eastern Uganda.

### **3) ADF is becoming increasingly visible**

ADF has become increasingly active in Uganda after sending trained fighters into the country to terrorize the population. This issue will become more troubling in the future as ADF is getting stronger in the DRC forest regions. During the WWL 2023 reporting period, it has used explosive devices in Uganda on more than one occasion, leading to deaths and destruction.

### **4) Uganda is facing a problem from neighboring DRC**

Uganda has been facing challenges due to the insecurity in DRC. It has been widely reported that [Uganda sides with the government of DRC](#) (BBC News 4 December 2021) while [Rwanda supports M23 rebel groups](#) (France24, 4 August 2022). ADF is also operating from DRC. If the security



situation in DRC continues in this form, the fighting could expand into a regional conflict. This would have serious ramifications for Christian communities in Uganda and throughout the region.

## External Links - Keys to understanding

- Recent history: independence - <http://www.sahistory.org.za/dated-event/uganda-gains-independence>
- Recent history: remained in power - <http://www.historyworld.net/wrldhis/PlainTextHistories.asp?historyid=ad22>
- Political and legal landscape: March 2020 Global overview - <https://www.crisisgroup.org/crisiswatch/april-alerts-and-march-trends-2020#uganda>
- Political and legal landscape: sixth term in office - <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2021/jan/16/uganda-president-wins-decisive-election-as-bobi-wine-alleges>
- Political and legal landscape: fundamentally flawed - <https://www.reuters.com/article/uk-uganda-election-idUSKBN29M04E>
- Political and legal landscape: Amnesty International - <https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/press-release/2021/01/uganda-authorities-must-lift-social-media-block-amid-crackdown-ahead-of-election/>
- Social and cultural landscape: UNHCR's Operational Update - <https://data.unhcr.org/en/documents/details/94972>
- Social and cultural landscape: IDMC overview - <https://www.internal-displacement.org/countries/uganda#overview>
- Technological landscape: close collaboration - <https://www.dw.com/en/huawei-africa-and-the-global-reach-of-surveillance-technology/a-50398869>
- Technological landscape: monitor - <https://www.thetimes.co.uk/article/huawei-helped-african-regimes-to-monitor-rivals-2bfmxm9v9>
- Security situation: ended - <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-39643914>
- Security situation: Lord's Resistance Army - <http://www.aljazeera.com/news/africa/2011/10/2011101418364196576.html>
- Security situation: Dominic Ongwen - <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-africa-38219007>
- Security situation: convicted Dominic Ongwen - <https://www.hrw.org/news/2021/02/04/uganda-first-icc-conviction-lra-leader>
- Security situation: imposed a 25-year-sentence - <https://www.hrw.org/news/2021/05/06/icc-sentences-lra-leader-25-years>
- Security situation: UN records - <https://www.un.org/securitycouncil/sanctions/1533/materials/summaries/individual/jamil-mukulu>
- Security situation: HRW 2020 country chapter - <https://www.hrw.org/world-report/2020/country-chapters/uganda>
- Security situation: 2021 - <https://www.africa-press.net/uganda/all-news/why-adf-is-targeting-uganda>
- Security situation: 2022 - <https://www.kfm.co.ug/news/adf-rebels-attack-uganda11-killed.html>
- Security situation: bar - <https://www.reuters.com/world/africa/is-claims-responsibility-bomb-attack-uganda-2021-10-24/>
- Security situation: Al-Jazeera, 21 November 2021 - <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2021/11/22/at-least-seven-suspects-killed-in-uganda-after-suicide-bombings>
- Trends analysis: Uganda sides with the government of DRC - <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-africa-59507543>
- Trends analysis: Rwanda supports M23 rebel groups - <https://www.france24.com/en/africa/20220804-un-experts-say-rwanda-provided-military-support-to-m23-rebels-in-eastern-congo>



## WWL 2023: Church information / Uganda

### Christian origins

Uganda is a landlocked country deep within the African continent. For this reason, Christianity entered the region relatively late compared to other parts of Africa (especially the coastal regions). Protestant missionaries first arrived at the court of Kabaka Muteesa (who reigned 1856-1884) in 1877. The Roman Catholic Church became established in the country in 1879. Other Christian denominations arrived in the 1930s (and following decades), including the Pentecostal Assemblies of Canada, an Orthodox community under the Greek Orthodox Patriarchate of Alexandria, the All Africa Church, the New Apostolic Church, the Seventh-day Adventists and the Church of God. (Source: [Dictionary of African Christian Biography](#), accessed 24 February 2023)

There was a wave of persecution of Christians in 1885-86 (including brutal murders) and later in the 1970s under Idi Amin. As Christianity Today wrote in 1990 ([Issue 27](#)):

- "In Uganda, under Idi Amin, some 400,000 Christians died, disappeared, or fled the country between 1971 and 1976. The most notable martyr was Anglican Archbishop Janani Luwum, apparently shot by Amin himself."

### Church spectrum today

Uganda: Church networks	Christians	%
Orthodox	33,800	0.1
Catholic	20,481,000	50.1
Protestant	20,417,000	49.9
Independent	1,215,000	3.0
Unaffiliated	636,000	1.6
Doubly-affiliated Christians	-1,898,000	-4.6
<b>Total</b>	<b>40,884,800</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	9,272,000	22.7
Renewalist movement	10,648,000	26.0

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.

Uganda is a majority Christian nation, the largest Christian group being the Roman Catholic church.

## Areas where Christians face most difficulties

Persecution is strongest in eastern Uganda, especially for converts with a Muslim background.

## Christian communities and how they are affected

**Communities of expatriate Christians:** This category does not exist as a separate WWL category in the country as expatriate Christians are not involuntarily isolated.

**Historical Christian communities:** This category has a strong presence in the country and includes the Roman Catholic Church, Anglican Church (Church of Uganda), Orthodox Church and Seventh Day Adventists, among others. According to country researchers, those that are based in Muslim-dominated areas are the ones that report persecution while those in predominantly Christian regions are free to conduct their church activities undisturbed.

**Converts:** This category includes converts from Islam but also “cross-denominational” converts. A country researcher writes: “Some converts are open about their new faith and face much persecution and pressure to revert to Islam or their former 'traditional' Christianity, while others, especially from Islam, remain underground and only meet with brethren and pastors in secret. Overall, this category of Christians reports the highest number of persecution cases, as well as the most intense.”

**Non-traditional Christian communities:** This category is becoming increasingly visible in the country. A country researcher states: “The growth of this category of Christians, particularly the evangelicals/Pentecostals/charismatics, has been rapid and their numbers continue to increase. There are thousands of churches that adhere to the various Pentecostal faith systems. The churches are also widespread as they plant churches in all areas of the country. Those in predominantly Christian regions enjoy relative peace and acceptance while those in Muslim dominated areas such as Jinja District, Arua, Yumbe, Mbale etc. report high numbers of persecution cases as they are aggressive in evangelism.”

## External Links - Church information

- Christian origins: Dictionary of African Christian Biography - <https://dacb.org/sort/stories/uganda/>
- Christian origins: Issue 27 - <https://www.christianitytoday.com/history/issues/issue-27/persecuted-christians-today.html>

# WWL 2023: Persecution Dynamics / Uganda

## Reporting period

1 October 2021 - 30 September 2022

## Position on the World Watch List

Uganda: World Watch List	Points	WWL Rank
WWL 2023	51	69
WWL 2022	48	69
WWL 2021	47	65
WWL 2020	48	62
WWL 2019	47	62

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

Uganda's overall score rose due to an increase in violence from 11.7 to 14.8 points, which is extremely high especially considering the fact that Uganda is a Christian majority country.

**Islamic oppression (Strong):** The influence of the radical Islamic group, ADF, is affecting the attitude of the Muslim minority of 12%, especially Muslim religious leaders. In WWL 2023, ADF carried out attacks that resulted in deaths, injuries and destruction of property. Christians particularly face difficulties in the eastern part of the country where radical Muslims are known to attack churches and Christians. Most converts have to endure many forms of persecution orchestrated by family members and community elders/leaders. **Dictatorial paranoia (Medium)** and **Organized corruption and crime (Weak)** also play a role in making persecution a reality in the country: Government officials are at times complicit in acts of persecution or are the main perpetrators. Sometimes, they do not investigate and bring perpetrators to justice. Christians who speak out against injustice are often targeted by government officials.

## Persecution engines

Uganda: Persecution engines	Abbreviation	Level of influence
Islamic oppression	IO	Strong
Religious nationalism	RN	Not at all
Ethno-religious hostility	ERH	Not at all
Clan oppression	CO	Weak
Christian denominational protectionism	CDP	Weak
Communist and post-Communist oppression	CPCO	Not at all

Secular intolerance	SI	Not at all
Dictatorial paranoia	DPA	Medium
Organized corruption and crime	OCC	Weak

*The scale for the level of influence of Persecution engines in society is: Not at all / Very weak / Weak / Medium / Strong / Very strong. For more information see WWL Methodology.*

### **Islamic oppression (Very strong)**

Radical Islam is the primary source of persecution in Uganda as Muslims strive to increase in number, influence and visibility. Although Uganda is a secular country, it joined the OIC in the 1970's when Idi Amin was president. The Muslim population is found predominantly in eastern Uganda, with Iganga District/Busoga having the highest concentration. Towns with large Muslim communities are Mbale town and surroundings; Kasese/Bwera in western Uganda; Arua/Yumbe in northern Uganda; and Kampala/Jinja in central Uganda.

This Persecution engine is apparent in two forms:

(i) in the rise of radical Islamic influence in the eastern part of the country, where the Tabliqs (a sect of puritanical Muslims whose members portray themselves as Muslim evangelists) have continued to advance their version of Islam in areas like Mbale, Kasese, Arua/Yumbe. A country expert reports that there are "tangible efforts by Islamic groups to convert groups of the population in the eastern region where Islam is championed the most".

(ii) in the morale boost to radical Muslims in the country generated by the activities of ADF-NALU - at times referred to as Muslim Defense International (MDI).

### **Dictatorial paranoia (Medium)**

President Yoweri Museveni has been in power since 1986. In 2005, he forced Parliament to remove the term limits in the 1995 Constitution allowing him to run for further terms in office. In 2018 he manipulated parliament to [remove the presidential age limit](#) (set at 75), thus clearing him to run for a sixth term in the January 2021 presidential election (Library of Congress, 27 December 2017), which he then won. Throughout these years, President Museveni has often silenced Christians and Christian leaders who have dared to oppose him.

## Drivers of persecution

Uganda: Drivers of Persecution	IO	RN	ERH	CO	CDP	CPCO	SI	DPA	OCC
	STRONG			WEAK	WEAK			MEDIUM	WEAK
Government officials								Medium	
Ethnic group leaders				Weak	Weak				
Non-Christian religious leaders	Medium								
Religious leaders of other churches					Weak				
Violent religious groups	Medium								
Citizens (people from the broader society), including mobs	Strong								
One's own (extended) family	Strong								
Organized crime cartels or networks									Weak

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

### Drivers of Islamic oppression

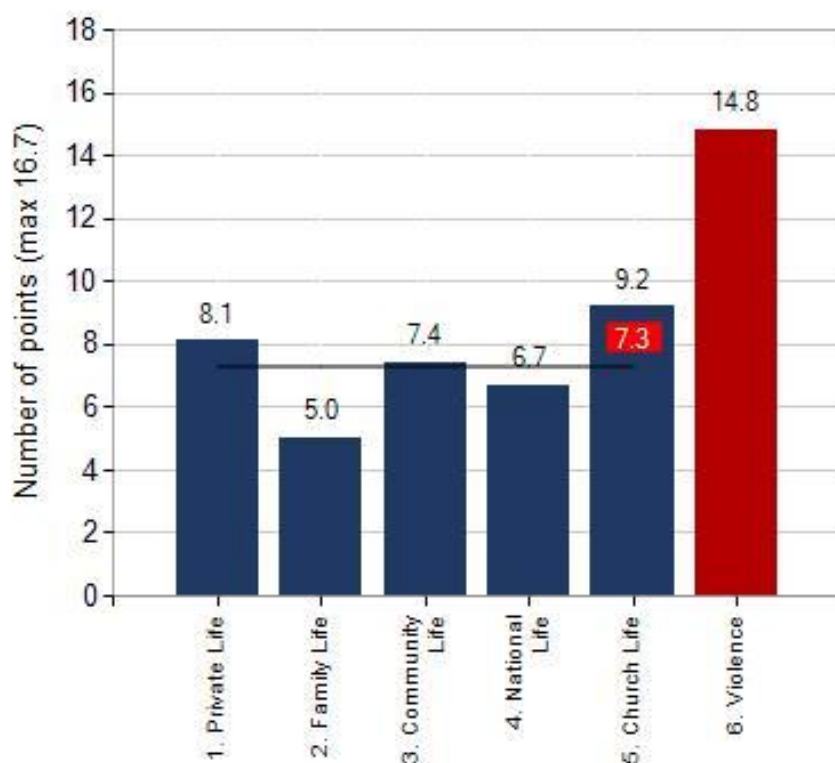
- **Family (Strong):** Family and the local community, especially in Muslim-dominated areas, are the main drivers in this context. Converts from Islam have found it particularly difficult and sometimes brutal attacks have been carried out by a convert's family.
- **Citizens (Strong):** Citizens in the eastern part of the country target Christians, especially converts. For example, owning Christian materials or discussing their faith with family members or community members was often matched by expulsion, serious physical attacks (sometimes by mobs) and even death. Harassment - targeting Christians with a Muslim background in particular - is very common in eastern parts of the country.
- **Non-Christians religious leaders (Medium):** Imams and sheiks, especially in the eastern part of the country, are either encouraging attacks against Christians, especially converts, or preaching hateful messages during Friday sermons.
- **Violent religious groups (Medium):** Even though there are jihadists in DRC planning to establish a caliphate in Uganda, this has so far had no great impact. Nevertheless, their attacks in 2021 and 2022 and general influence cause fear and radical clerics are rumored to be helping recruit young members.

### Drivers of Dictatorial paranoia:

- **Government officials (Medium):** The drivers of this engine are mainly government officials who are either complicit in acts of persecution or are the main perpetrators. Sometimes, they do not investigate and bring perpetrators to justice. Christians who speak out against injustice are often targeted by government officials.

## The Persecution pattern

WWL 2023 Persecution Pattern for Uganda



The WWL 2023 Persecution pattern for Uganda shows:

- The average pressure on Christians in Uganda is at a level of 7.3 points, a very slight increase from 7.2 points in WWL 2022.
- The *Church sphere* scored highest with 9.2 points, followed by the *Private sphere* scoring 8.1 points. Converts in the eastern part of the country have been struggling to live their lives according to their Christian faith due to family and community harassment and shunning.
- The score for violence targeting Christians is 14.8 points, an increase by over three points (11.7 points in WWL 2022). This is extremely high, especially considering the fact that Uganda is a Christian majority country.

## Pressure in the 5 spheres of life

*In each of the five spheres of life discussed below, four questions have been selected from the WWL 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 1.1: Conversion has been opposed, forbidden, or punishable, including conversion from one type of Christianity to another. (2.50 points)**

Conversion is not prohibited by law. However, religious intolerance is becoming an increasing problem. This is particularly the case in eastern Uganda and in some areas where Muslims are a majority. Conversion has become a cause for many deaths and physical attacks in the eastern part of the country. Losing jobs, harassment by relatives and local community, as well as being disowned by one's family, are some of the challenges that converts face in Uganda.

### **Block 1.2: It has been risky for Christians to conduct acts of Christian worship by themselves (e.g. prayer, Bible reading, etc.). (2.25 points)**

In the eastern part of the country, where there has been little or no protection for Christians with a Muslim background, it is very dangerous to conduct acts of worship. This is particularly true for young converts or if a spouse has become a convert. There were reports of some being expelled from their homes and denied access to property or their children. Women who have been discovered worshipping have been dragged out of their houses, forced to divorce and expelled from the community.

### **Block 1.3: It has been dangerous to privately own or keep Christian materials. (2.25 points)**

Generally, Christians are free to own Christian materials and freely move around with a Bible etc.. Even some non-Christian businessmen deal in distributing Christian materials. Most Christians can reveal their faith without fear by giving testimonies in fellowships, church services, burial places, community meetings and even on social media. However, some converts from Islam are forced to remain silent because open revelation of their conversion can easily provoke an attack, threats and other forms of persecution from their immediate and extended families. Those who were discovered with Christian materials in their houses were beaten and expelled from their homes and community.

### **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.). (2.25 points)**

Revealing one's faith can bring harm. Convert Christians do not use their Christian names where they fear being mocked, rejected or denied job opportunities. In some circumstances after mentioning their new faith, they may be beaten, have property confiscated, and be divorced by their spouse. Children of parents who have written about their conversion are likely to be bullied and attacked at school.

## Pressure in Block 2 / Family sphere

### **Block 2.8: Christian children have been pressured into attending anti-Christian or majority religion teaching at any level of education. (2.50 points)**

Geography and demography play a significant role in this context. In Muslim-dominated institutions such as the Islamic University in Uganda, it is compulsory for students to take 'Introduction to Islam' classes as well Arabic. Female students are forced to adhere to the Islamic dress code and have their names changed. In Kyarumba, Muhokya, Kisinga and Rukoki, Christian children can expect to receive a scholarship on condition that they give up following the 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. (2.25 points)**

Those who oppose conversions or Christianity in general use different methods to discourage or punish conversions. If a new convert has children, the wider family is likely to deny him/her access to them. In the WWL 2023 reporting period, there were several reports where converts lost their share of inheriting property from deceased relatives due to their leaving Islam.

### **Block 2.3: Christians have been hindered in celebrating a Christian wedding for faith-related reasons. (1.50 points)**

This becomes an issue where converts are involved. In the Muslim-majority eastern part of the country (and even in pockets of Kampala itself), converts from Islam are scared to celebrate Christian weddings, out of fear of being attacked by mobs. Such attacks have happened on numerous occasions, causing levels of fear to rise in many Christian families.

### **Block 2.10: Christian spouses and/or children of Christians have been subject to separation for prolonged periods of time by circumstances relating to persecution. (1.50 points)**

Denial of child custody is one of the ways used to force someone to renounce their faith. In the context of conversion from Islam to Christianity, this has been the case especially in eastern Uganda. Christians who convert have been denied access to their children for months or even years. This is used as a tactic to force converts to return to Islamic faith, and has been successful in some cases.

## Pressure in Block 3 / Community sphere

### **Block 3.1: Christians have been harassed, threatened or obstructed in their daily lives for faith-related reasons (e.g. for not meeting majority religion or traditional dress codes, beard codes etc.). (2.75 points)**

In Muslim institutions, a strict Islamic dress code has been introduced which both Muslims and Christians have to adhere to. In Muslim-dominated areas, Christian business owners are often harassed and put under pressure to close their shops during Friday prayers and to stop selling items considered *haram* by the Muslim community. Christians always struggle to appease these groups.



**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.). (2.75 points)**

There are some private groups organized by radical imams who shadow Christians. There are also cases of government surveillance.

- Local communities monitor Christian activities and are known to report them to the police claiming noise pollution.
- The Ugandan government monitors the Internet activities of certain Christians.
- It is common for Christians married to Muslims or ex-Muslims to be watched closely.
- Christians who are known to actively care for converts are watched on a regular basis.
- Muslims in some local communities actively monitor Christian activities within community charity projects, church programs and open-air evangelistic events.

**Block 3.4: Christians been hindered in sharing community resources because of their faith (e.g. clean drinking water). (2.50 points)**

In areas where Muslims are a majority, it is always difficult for Christians to gain access to communal resources. In places where there is scarcity of water and Muslims dominate local community affairs, Christians are only allowed to fetch water after the Muslims have fetched their supplies. It has to be understood that communal resources play a very critical role in Uganda. Thus, denying someone access because of their faith will have a major impact on the family.

**Block 3.5: Christians have been put under pressure to take part in non-Christian religious ceremonies or community events. (2.50 points)**

This happens in communities dominated by Islam or by African Traditional Religion (ATR). In Kasese, for example, it is not uncommon to see Christians being forced to participate in cultural festivals such as the "cleansing of the mountains"; in Karamoja, Christian young men are forced to participate in *asapan*, traditional rites initiating them into manhood. Refusal leads to ostracization, bullying and harassment. They will be shamed in public and denied access to some community resources and services.

## Pressure in Block 4 / National sphere

**Block 4.8: Christians have been hindered in expressing their views or opinions in public. (3.25 points)**

The major driver in this context is the government: Any Christian view that is not in line with that of the government is banned. This has been happening in many ways, for example, if Christians speak out about injustice in the country, they will be spied on and may even be killed. Especially during the 2021 election, church leaders were receiving phone calls from anonymous people threatening to harm them if they openly criticized the government.

**Block 4.5: Christians have been discriminated against when engaging with the authorities (local administration, government, army, etc.) for faith-related reasons. (3.00 points)**

Two aspects play a role here:

- First, Christians in Uganda face discrimination in areas where Muslims are in a position to make decisions. For example, in Yumbe, the Christian minority is frequently marginalized, intimidated and threatened, especially when government programs are carried out in the district. This is because most of the government officials and local leaders are Muslim.
- Secondly, in general, the authorities treat those who speak out against corruption and lack of rule of law less favorably than government supporters.

**Block 4.9: Christian civil society organizations or political parties have been hindered in their functioning or forbidden because of their Christian convictions. (3.00 points)**

The rights of civil organizations in Uganda is contingent upon how the government sees them. The government tends to monitor Christian NGOs which receive funding from abroad, suspecting them of financing the opposition to take over the government. As reported by Freedom House's Global Freedom Index 2022: The operation of NGOs "are vulnerable to various legal restrictions, burdensome registration requirements, and occasional threats. NGOs that work on human rights issues have reported break-ins at their offices and burglaries in recent years, with police failing to adequately investigate the incidents." Freedom House added: "In 2019, the government required NGOs to submit information to the National Bureau for NGOs on their staffing, finances, and activities. That November, the interior minister ordered some 12,000 NGOs to close for failing to renew their registration, though the bureau said the groups would still have an opportunity to reregister. In August 2021, the government ordered the closure of 54 NGOs, including the CCEDU and Chapter Four, ostensibly for failing to comply with legal requirements." This is applicable to Christian NGOs as well.

**Block 4.15: Christians accused in court have been deprived of equal treatment. (3.00 points)**

It is often difficult to get fair treatment from the government and the courts. In general, there has been considerable interference in the operation of Ugandan courts by the government. Thus, for Christians who are arrested for speaking publicly against injustice etc., equal treatment is not expected.

## Pressure in Block 5 / Church sphere

**Block 5.20: It has been risky for churches or Christian organizations to speak out against instigators of persecution. (3.50 points)**

There are two major sources of this pressure:

- This is the case in Muslim-dominated areas and has affected all Christians, not only converts.
- This is also the case elsewhere, since the government will not allow any criticism against it. Those Christian NGOs or churches who speak against the actions of the government will

constantly be harassed and their offices burgled with the police refusing to investigate. It is therefore not uncommon to see Christian leaders not speaking out against apparent injustices in the country due to the repercussions that might follow.

**Block 5.1: Church activities have been monitored, hindered, disturbed, or obstructed. (3.00 points)**

Again, there are two sources for this pressure:

- First, those churches that are seen as taking an antigovernment stance are often targeted by government security forces and informers. As a result programs and leaders of those churches are often monitored.
- Secondly, in the eastern region, Islamic groups monitor churches that are suspected of encouraging Muslims to convert to Christianity.

**Block 5.5: Churches have been hindered from organizing Christian activities outside church buildings. (3.00 points)**

This pressure also emanates from two sources:

- First, Uganda is known for restricting freedom of assembly. Churches that want to have activities outside their compounds often fail to get permission from the government.
- Secondly, in Muslim-dominated areas, open air evangelism is often blocked. This has happened, for instance, in Yumbe.

**Block 5.9: Christians have experienced interference when choosing their own religious leaders. (3.00 points)**

The government of Museveni does not want any institution to be outside his domain of control. Under his leadership, the government of Uganda seeks to influence each and every organization (both big and small) by controlling their leadership. The choosing of bishops has always involved a lot of state interference based around the political leanings of the candidates. The government will prefer candidates who are not vocal about political and social problems in the country.

## 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.

Uganda: Violence Block question		WWL 2023	WWL 2022
6.1	How many Christians have been killed for faith-related reasons (including state sanctioned executions)?	10 *	4
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?	10 *	10
6.3	How many Christians have been detained for faith-related reasons?	8	6
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 *	10 *
6.8	How many Christians have been otherwise physically or mentally abused for faith-related reasons (including beatings and death threats)?	100 *	194
6.9	How many houses of Christians or other property (excluding shops) have been attacked, damaged, bombed, looted, destroyed, burned down or confiscated for faith-related reasons?	10 *	7
6.10	How many shops or businesses of Christians have been attacked, damaged, bombed, looted, destroyed, burned down, closed or confiscated for faith-related reasons?	10 *	10 *
6.11	How many Christians have been forced to leave their homes or go into hiding in-country for faith-related reasons?	22	30
6.12	How many Christians have been forced to leave the country for faith-related reasons?	0	9

## 5 Year trends

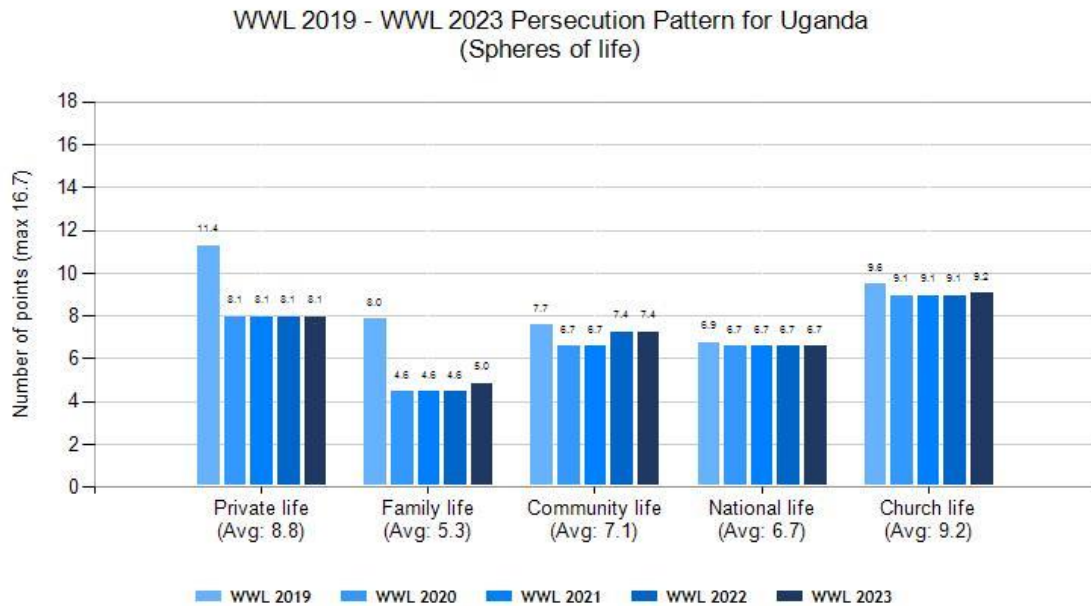
The following three charts show the levels of pressure and violence faced by Christians in the country over the last five WWL reporting periods.

### 5 Year trends: Average pressure

Uganda: WWL 2019 - WWL 2023	
Persecution Pattern history	Average pressure over 5 Spheres of life
2023	7.3
2022	7.2
2021	7.0
2020	7.0
2019	8.7

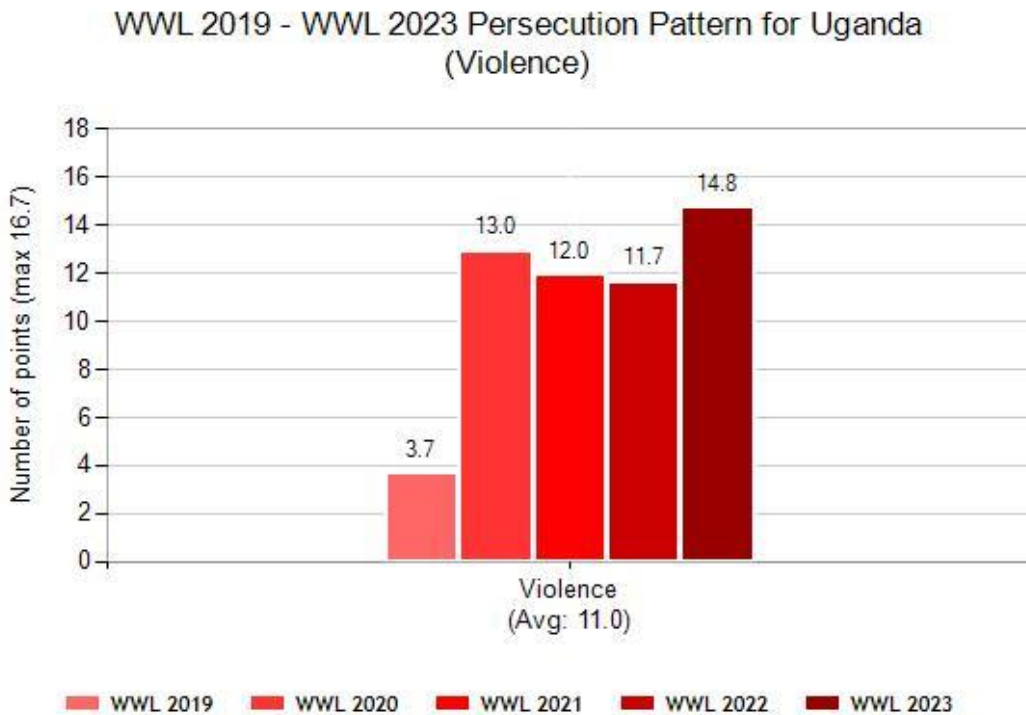
The table above shows that the average pressure on Christians has been between the range of 7.0 - 8.7 points over the last 5 WWL reporting periods. Even though the current level is not so high as in WWL 2019, Christians are still facing high levels of pressure. The trend shows that, following the significant drop after WWL 2019, average pressure has been slowly increasing again in the last few reporting periods.

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



The chart above shows that the average pressure per sphere of life has been most pronounced in *Church* (9.2) and *Private life* (8.8). Of all the 5 year averages, pressure in *Family life* has been lowest (5.3 points).

## 5 Year trends: Violence against Christians



Since WWL 2020, violence against Christians has been in the category 'extremely high' reaching 14.8 in WWL 2023. Despite this, mainstream media in Uganda bring few reports about violence against Christians, except in situations where the ADF has carried out a bombing. The five year average is 11.0 points.

## Gender-specific religious persecution / Female

Group	Female Pressure Points
Economic	Economic harassment via business/job/work access
Political and Legal	Denied access to Christian religious materials, teachings and rites; Denied custody of children; Forced divorce; Forced marriage; Travel bans/restrictions on movement
Security	Forced out of home – expulsion; Incarceration by family (house arrest); Trafficking; Violence – physical; Violence – sexual
Social and Cultural	Denied access to social community/networks; Denied food or water; Enforced religious dress code; Violence – psychological; Violence – Verbal
Technological	-

According to local sources, women in Uganda are generally viewed as inferior to men. In some tribes, women are not allowed to eat certain foods, such as chicken or eggs, which can lead to disproportionate malnutrition among women and girls. According to UN [statistics](#), about 30% of 15- to 49-year-old girls experienced physical or sexual violence in 2022 (UN Women, 2022). [Very few rape](#) cases result in convictions, fostering a culture of impunity, as demonstrated by the 2019 [International Justice Mission](#) study (Save the Children, 1 March 2019; IJM, 2019, pp. 21-27). Within this context, Ugandan Christian women face pressure and violence both on account of their gender, as well as due to their faith.

Christian women and girls are particularly vulnerable to sexual abuse, including rape. There were several reports of sexual violence over the past few years. In the 2022 reporting period, one example was given of four women being raped on their way home from evening prayers. In secondary schools, a number of [gangs](#) have been emerging: One particular group calls itself the "Virgin Hunters" and target virgin girls or those who are assumed to be innocent Christian girls (URNM, 23 October 2019). Sexual attacks leave victims feeling ashamed and unwilling to re-tell their ordeals.

In the northern regions, forced marriages and widow inheritance practices are also widespread. Female converts separated from their husbands, or women previously married to converts who lose their husbands are often deposed from the family business. In extreme cases, Christian women married to Muslims are closely monitored and not allowed to leave their homes. Women who reject harmful customs like female genital mutilation (FGM) prevalent among [the Sebei people](#) face similar limitations (UNFPA, 27 October 2022). "Christians who refuse to be circumcised face discrimination by the community. You're not supposed to go with your husband to any function. He, instead, is allowed to go with any circumcised woman to represent you," a country expert remarked.

Female converts from Islam face intense familial and societal hardships and are at risk of being subjected to forced marriage, forced divorce, house arrest, imprisonment, domestic violence and abandonment by their families. Forced marriages to Muslims often occur as an attempt to force the return of a convert to Islam. Others are enticed more subtly into marriage by financial incentives or the promise of scholarships. In Bufumbo, Mbale, a Muslim-dominated area, Muslim boys reportedly elope with Christian girls, impregnate them and eventually force them into marriage. Once in these marriages, women have little power to access fellowship as a Christian.

The impact of the trauma of persecution on women has a long-term impact on them, their family and their community. A country expert summarized the situation: “When [women and girls are] displaced by persecution, there is a generational effect upon the children and community. Children are likely to suffer secondary stress, malnutrition, and other infant diseases.”

### Gender-specific religious persecution / Male

Group	Male Pressure Points
Economic	Denied inheritance or possessions; Economic harassment via business/job/work access
Political and Legal	Denied access to Christian religious materials, teachings and rites; False charges; Imprisonment by government
Security	Abduction; Forced to flee town/country; Military/militia conscription/service against conscience; Violence – physical
Social and Cultural	Violence – psychological; Violence – Verbal
Technological	-

Ugandan Christian men face both violent and non-violent forms of pressure on account of their faith. This typically ranges from disinheritance, verbal abuse, threats from family members and discrimination in the workplace – employees are marginalized and denied promotions unless they convert to Islam. More overtly violent challenges include physical assault, abduction, imprisonment, forced conscription into armed militia groups, and the confiscation of property. Pressure and violence are particularly high in the east of the country. A country expert explains: “Boys and men are primary targets for recruitment as fighters in ADF and other radical groups, especially the Tabliqs.”

Church leaders are at times targeted by the authorities. They have been falsely accused of crimes, physically beaten and threatened. One pastor was abducted by officials and interrogated about his supposed involvement in terrorism. “The use of smear campaigns against Christian leaders, the alienation and side-lining of Christians in politics ... has become a source of persecution to the Church”, a source remarked. Converts to Christianity, too, face considerable pressure from their families and surrounding communities. They may be forced out of their family home and be completely rejected by their parents.



Whilst women are usually the victims of trafficking, men and boys are also susceptible due to an increased [unemployment rate](#) (World Bank, 2 January 2022). Fraudulent job opportunities are used to lure vulnerable men and boys into forced labor ([USDS, 2022 Trafficking in Persons Report](#)). Finally, Christian men are commonly affected by enforced participation in traditional (ATR) ceremonies. Among the Gishu, for example, Christian boys are forced to perform certain rituals during the circumcision rites even when it is against their Christian faith.

## Persecution of other religious minorities

Any religious group seeking to act according to their conscience is likely to be on a collision course with the government of Museveni. There have also been reports that the government unjustifiably targets Muslims. As reported by the US State Department (IRFR 2021):

- "The Muslim community accused security officials of extrajudicial killings of some Muslims and Muslim clerics suspected of involvement in radicalism and terrorism. On November 26, Muslim advocacy groups petitioned the Uganda Human Rights Commission "to open and conduct investigations, hear, make orders, and issue a report about the alleged extrajudicial killings by security agencies" of 12 Muslim terror suspects, including one cleric. In a televised address on November 20 following two suicide bombings in Kampala on November 16, President Museveni announced that officers from the military intelligence and crime intelligence units had killed 12 terror suspects as they tried to resist arrest. Muslim advocacy groups, however, reported that security agencies had already subdued the suspects before shooting them. On November 28, the patron of the Kibuli Muslim community, Prince Kassim Nakibinge, called upon the security agencies to avoid profiling Muslims when investigating terrorism cases and called upon them to prosecute all suspects in courts of law. The UMSC and Muslim civil society organizations also called upon authorities to lawfully provide fair and speedy trials for Muslims, stating the government's failure to successfully prosecute Muslims it arrested for murder or terror-related charges and held for long periods of pretrial detention created the impression that it was biased and discriminated against the Muslim community."
- "Some Muslims complained that security agencies unfairly singled out Muslims while enforcing security and antiterrorism measures. On November 30, a police officer at Kyambogo University in Kampala stripped a female Muslim student of her veil before she could enter a room to take her exams. Police and the university issued apologies and promised to reprimand the officer in question."
- The UMYDF [Uganda Muslim Youth Development Forum] reported that some Muslims experienced discrimination in employment. According to the UMYDF, a telecom company dismissed a Muslim staffer who defied an instruction not to wear her veil at work."

## Future outlook

The outlook for Christians as viewed through the lens of:

### Islamic oppression

It might seem like an unrealistic goal for Islamic militants based in DRC to aim at establishing an Islamic State in Uganda; however, the impression it makes among Islamic Tabliqs is immense. As the UNHCR described in July 2000, there are [historical connections](#) between today's ADF and the Tabliq sect as the latter often serves the former through recruiting youth:

- The Tabliqs are a "sect of puritanical Muslims whose members portray themselves as 'Moslem evangelists'. In Uganda, the Tabliqs claimed Moslems were being marginalized by the government. Together with the obscure and largely defunct National Army for the Liberation of Uganda (NALU), the Tabliqs moved to western Uganda to start the rebellion under the ADF umbrella. They set up rear bases in neighboring Congo where they began recruiting and training fighters with the promise of money and education. It was easier to recruit in the Congo where people were not hostile to the ADF".

ADF has committed suicide bombings in Uganda, some of which were probably coordinated from eastern DRC - the stronghold of ADF. In terms of actual presence today, even though ADF has no strong presence in Uganda, it can be said that the Tabliqs have successfully created an environment that is hostile to Christians, especially in areas where Muslims are the majority. In the future, as long as the central government remains strong and there are no other emerging conflicts, the impact of the ADF on Ugandan Christians is likely to remain low. However, the pressure that ordinary Muslims and Tabliq clerics are putting on Christians will most likely remain high, especially in the eastern part of the country and around the DRC border.

### Dictatorial paranoia

Uganda is not a democracy and the government is known for suppressing human rights. President Museveni - who in January 2021 won another term as president in an election which was marred by irregularities and the intimidation of opposition candidates - has been ruling the country for 37 years by silencing his opponents. Christians who do not support the government often face restrictions. Many churches are under constant monitoring and surveillance. This pattern is likely to continue.

## External Links - Persecution Dynamics

- Persecution engines description: remove the presidential age limit - <http://www.loc.gov/law/foreign-news/article/uganda-bill-eliminating-presidential-age-limit-and-extending-parliamentary-term-passed/>
- Gender-specific religious persecution Female description: statistics - <https://evaw-global-database.unwomen.org/fr/countries/africa/uganda#1>
- Gender-specific religious persecution Female description: Very few rape - <https://uganda.savethechildren.net/news/ending-impunity-getting-children-justice-sexual-violence>
- Gender-specific religious persecution Female description: International Justice Mission - <https://ijmstoragelive.blob.core.windows.net/ijmna/documents/IJM-JusticeReview2019-compressed.pdf>

- Gender-specific religious persecution Female description: gangs - <https://ugandaradionetwork.net/story/gangs-dominate-secondary-schools-in-mbale-town-survey-?districtId=565>
- Gender-specific religious persecution Female description: the Sebei people - <https://esaro.unfpa.org/en/news/girls-uganda-lured-across-border-undergo-female-genital-mutilation>
- Gender-specific religious persecution Male description: unemployment rate - <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SL.UEM.TOTL.MA.ZS?locations=UG>
- Gender-specific religious persecution Male description: USDS, 2022 Trafficking in Persons Report - <https://www.state.gov/reports/2022-trafficking-in-persons-report/uganda/>
- Future outlook: historical connections - <https://www.refworld.org/docid/3ae6ad7c7c.html>

## 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=Uganda>