

World
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Cameroon: Country Dossier

December 2020



OpenDoors

Serving persecuted **Christians** worldwide

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Introduction

World Watch List 2021

Rank	Country	Private life	Family life	Community life	National life	Church life	Violence	Total Score WWL 2021	Total Score WWL 2020	Total Score WWL 2019	Total Score WWL 2018	Total Score WWL 2017
1	North Korea	16.7	16.7	16.7	16.7	16.7	11.1	94	94	94	94	92
2	Afghanistan	16.7	16.7	16.7	16.7	16.7	10.2	94	93	94	93	89
3	Somalia	16.5	16.7	16.6	16.6	16.3	9.8	92	92	91	91	91
4	Libya	15.6	15.4	15.9	16.3	16.3	12.4	92	90	87	86	78
5	Pakistan	13.9	14.2	15.1	14.9	13.5	16.7	88	88	87	86	88
6	Eritrea	14.6	14.9	15.9	15.9	15.4	11.1	88	87	86	86	82
7	Yemen	16.6	16.6	16.5	16.7	16.7	3.9	87	85	86	85	85
8	Iran	14.5	14.5	13.9	15.7	16.5	10.6	86	85	85	85	85
9	Nigeria	13.3	13.2	13.9	14.1	14.1	16.7	85	80	80	77	78
10	India	13.0	12.9	13.5	14.9	13.7	15.4	83	83	83	81	73
11	Iraq	13.6	14.6	14.2	14.8	13.8	11.5	82	76	79	86	86
12	Syria	13.3	13.9	13.5	14.5	14.0	12.0	81	82	82	76	86
13	Sudan	13.4	13.4	13.7	13.6	15.7	9.1	79	85	87	87	87
14	Saudi Arabia	15.1	13.9	14.4	15.8	16.6	2.2	78	79	77	79	76
15	Maldives	15.4	15.5	13.9	15.8	16.6	0.4	77	78	78	78	76
16	Egypt	12.5	13.2	11.5	12.7	11.0	14.1	75	76	76	70	65
17	China	12.6	9.7	12.0	13.2	15.4	11.1	74	70	65	57	57
18	Myanmar	11.9	12.0	13.1	12.9	12.3	11.9	74	73	71	65	62
19	Vietnam	12.1	8.8	12.7	14.0	14.5	10.0	72	72	70	69	71
20	Mauritania	14.3	14.0	13.5	14.1	13.6	1.9	71	68	67	57	55
21	Uzbekistan	15.1	12.9	14.1	12.2	15.7	1.3	71	73	74	73	71
22	Laos	12.1	10.2	13.6	13.5	14.3	6.9	71	72	71	67	64
23	Turkmenistan	14.5	11.3	13.8	13.3	15.7	1.5	70	70	69	68	67
24	Algeria	13.9	13.9	11.5	13.1	13.4	3.9	70	73	70	58	58
25	Turkey	12.5	11.5	10.8	13.3	11.6	9.3	69	63	66	62	57
26	Tunisia	12.0	13.1	10.4	11.5	13.2	7.4	67	64	63	62	61
27	Morocco	12.6	13.5	11.2	12.4	14.1	3.7	67	66	63	51	49
28	Mali	9.4	8.2	12.7	10.3	11.5	15.4	67	66	68	59	59
29	Qatar	14.0	13.9	10.8	13.1	14.1	1.5	67	66	62	63	66
30	Colombia	11.4	8.8	12.4	11.0	9.7	13.9	67	62	58	56	53
31	Bangladesh	11.5	10.3	13.0	11.3	10.1	10.6	67	63	58	58	63
32	Burkina Faso	9.4	9.7	12.0	9.4	11.8	14.3	67	66	48	-	-
33	Tajikistan	14.0	12.3	11.9	12.5	13.2	2.2	66	65	65	65	58
34	Nepal	12.4	9.7	9.9	13.0	12.3	8.5	66	64	64	64	53
35	CAR	9.0	8.6	13.1	9.6	9.9	15.6	66	68	70	61	58
36	Ethiopia	9.9	8.5	10.7	10.3	10.8	14.4	65	63	65	62	64
37	Mexico	10.3	8.1	12.4	10.7	10.3	12.6	64	60	61	59	57
38	Jordan	13.1	13.9	11.4	11.6	12.4	2.0	64	64	65	66	63
39	Brunei	13.9	14.6	10.7	10.9	13.5	0.7	64	63	63	64	64
40	DRC	8.0	7.9	11.2	9.4	11.6	16.1	64	56	55	33	-
41	Kazakhstan	13.2	11.5	11.0	12.5	13.4	2.4	64	64	63	63	56
42	Cameroon	8.8	7.6	12.6	7.0	12.3	15.7	64	60	54	38	-
43	Bhutan	13.1	12.1	11.9	12.7	13.8	0.0	64	61	64	62	61
44	Oman	13.2	13.5	10.3	12.5	13.0	0.9	63	62	59	57	53
45	Mozambique	9.3	7.6	11.3	7.9	11.1	16.1	63	43	43	-	-
46	Malaysia	12.1	14.3	12.9	11.5	10.0	2.4	63	62	60	65	60
47	Indonesia	11.5	11.4	12.4	10.7	9.3	7.8	63	60	65	59	55
48	Kuwait	13.2	13.5	9.9	12.2	13.2	1.1	63	62	60	61	57
49	Kenya	11.7	9.2	10.5	8.0	10.3	12.8	62	61	61	62	68
50	Comoros	12.5	11.1	11.4	11.3	14.2	1.9	62	57	56	56	56

Rank	Country	Private life	Family life	Community life	National life	Church life	Violence	Total Score WWL 2021	Total Score WWL 2020	Total Score WWL 2019	Total Score WWL 2018	Total Score WWL 2017
51	Cuba	10.9	7.7	11.8	12.9	13.4	5.4	62	52	49	49	47
52	Sri Lanka	12.2	9.1	11.7	12.2	9.7	7.0	62	65	58	57	55
53	UAE	13.4	13.3	9.7	12.0	12.4	1.1	62	60	58	58	55
54	Niger	9.4	9.5	13.3	7.2	11.6	10.6	62	60	52	45	47
55	Kyrgyzstan	12.9	10.3	11.2	10.4	12.0	1.3	58	57	56	54	48
56	Palestinian Territories	12.5	13.3	9.1	10.4	11.7	0.9	58	60	57	60	64
57	Tanzania	9.3	10.8	10.3	8.6	8.7	10.2	58	55	52	53	59
58	Russian Federation	12.3	8.0	10.2	10.5	12.1	3.9	57	60	60	51	46
59	Djibouti	12.3	12.3	10.3	10.0	11.2	0.0	56	56	56	56	57
60	Bahrain	12.1	12.5	9.1	10.7	10.5	0.9	56	55	55	57	54
61	Azerbaijan	12.8	9.8	9.4	11.1	12.6	0.0	56	57	57	57	52
62	Chad	11.5	8.2	10.2	9.6	10.3	3.7	53	56	48	40	-
63	Nicaragua	6.9	4.6	9.9	11.3	10.0	8.1	51	41	41	-	-
64	Burundi	5.1	5.8	9.7	9.2	9.6	8.9	48	48	43	-	-
65	Uganda	8.1	4.6	6.7	6.7	9.1	12.0	47	48	47	46	53
66	Guinea	10.3	7.5	8.3	7.0	8.1	5.9	47	45	46	-	-
67	Honduras	6.8	5.0	10.6	7.6	9.0	7.6	46	39	38	-	-
68	Angola	6.4	3.6	7.0	10.1	11.4	7.2	46	43	42	-	-
69	South Sudan	5.7	1.5	7.0	6.3	7.8	15.0	43	44	44	-	-
70	Gambia	8.3	8.2	8.7	8.3	8.8	0.6	43	43	43	-	-
71	Togo	9.2	6.7	9.3	7.1	9.8	0.7	43	41	42	-	-
72	Rwanda	5.3	4.4	6.7	7.8	10.1	8.1	42	42	41	-	-
73	Ivory Coast	9.8	8.6	8.2	5.5	6.6	3.3	42	42	43	-	-
74	El Salvador	6.6	4.9	9.8	4.2	8.7	7.8	42	38	30	-	-

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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).
- The highlighted links in the text can be found written out in full at the conclusion of each main section under the heading “External links”.
- The WWL 2021 reporting period was 01 October 2019 - 30 September 2020.
- The definition of persecution used in WWL analysis is: “Any hostility experienced as a result of one’s identification with Christ. This can include hostile attitudes, words and actions towards Christians”. This broad definition includes (but is not limited to) restrictions, pressure, discrimination, opposition, disinformation, injustice, intimidation, mistreatment, marginalization, oppression, intolerance, infringement, violation, ostracism, hostilities, harassment, abuse, violence, ethnic cleansing and genocide.
- The latest update of WWL Methodology including appendices can be found on the [World Watch List Documentation](#) page of the Open Doors Analytical website (password: freedom).

Effect on data-gathering during COVID-19 pandemic

In the WWL 2021 reporting period, travel restrictions and other measures introduced by the governments of various countries to combat the spread of the COVID-19 pandemic did cause delays and create the need for restructuring grass-roots research in some cases. Through the agile cooperation of Open Doors field networks, research analysts, external experts and an increased use of technological options, Open Doors is confident that the WWL 2021 scoring, analysis and documentation has maintained required levels of quality and reliability.

External Links - Introduction

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

WWL 2021 Short country profile / Cameroon

Brief country details

Cameroon: Population (2020 UN estimate)	Christians	Chr%
25,958,000	15,922,000	61.3

Data source: Johnson T M and Zurlo G A, eds., World Christian Database (Leiden/Boston: Brill, accessed February 2020)

Cameroon: World Watch List	Points	WWL Rank
WWL 2021	64	42
WWL 2020	60	48
WWL 2019	54	56
WWL 2018	-	-
WWL 2017	-	-

Scores and ranks are shown above whenever the country scored 41 points or more in the WWL 2017-2021 reporting periods

Dominant persecution engines and drivers

Cameroon: Main persecution engines	Main drivers
Islamic oppression	Violent religious groups, Non-Christian religious leaders, Organized crime cartels or networks, One's own (extended) family, Citizens (people from the broader society), including mobs
Dictatorial paranoia	Organized crime cartels or networks, Government officials
Organized corruption and crime	Organized crime cartels or networks, Government officials
Ethno-religious hostility	Ethnic group leaders
Christian Denominational protectionism	Religious leaders of other churches

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

Brief description of the persecution situation

Muslims in Cameroon are severely hindered if they want to convert to Christianity, and in predominantly Muslim parts of the country, there has been a process of radicalization. Converts from Islam are threatened when Bibles or other Christian literature is found in their possession. Converts are not free to express their faith or Christian opinions, be it to immediate family members or others since doing so exposes them to grave risk. Many Christians with a Muslim background face problems with local communities in remote areas in the northern regions, and there have also been cases of children of Christians in the north being forced by non-Christian relatives to attend Islamic classes. Female converts are often coerced into marriage with non-Christians. Christian women also face the danger of abduction by Boko Haram. Church activities have been hindered or disrupted in areas where Boko Haram has been active. Due to the displacement of people, churches have not been able to function normally in those parts of the country. In other areas, security injunctions have set heavy restrictions on church activities.

Summary of international obligations and rights violations

Cameroon has committed to respect and protect fundamental rights in the following international treaties:

1. [International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights](#) (ICCPR)
2. [International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights](#) (ICESCR)
3. [Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women](#) (CEDAW)
4. [Convention against Torture](#) (CAT)
5. [Convention on the Rights of the Child](#) (CRC)

Cameroon is not fulfilling its international obligations by regularly violating or failing to protect the following rights of Christians:

- Christians are killed for their faith (ICCPR Art. 6)
- Christian converts face coercion, violence, and harassment, including the loss of a job or opportunities for further education unless they renounce their faith (ICCPR Art. 18, ICESCR Art. 2)
- Christian peaceful religious gatherings are restricted by Boko Haram, security restrictions, and denial of registrations or meeting permits (ICCPR Arts. 18 and 21)
- Christians face discrimination in the public and private work force (ICCPR Art. 18, ICESCR Art. 2)
- For a fear of reprisals due to a lack of security, Christians are denied their right to freedom of expression (ICCPR Art. 19)
- Christian women are forcibly married and forced to recant their beliefs (ICCPR Art. 23 and CEDAW Art. 16)

Specific examples of violations of rights in the reporting period

According to US State Department's [2019 Report on International Religious Freedom](#):

- **20 October 2019:** Security forces arrested Roman Catholic priest Paul Njokikang, the local coordinator of Caritas (a relief and development agency) shortly after holding a church service in Bamenda, Northwest Region. He was released next day. A local priest said soldiers arrested Njokikang because of his address to the UN Security Council condemning human rights abuses by security forces and separatists earlier in the year.
- **6 November 2019:** Suspected Boko Haram fighters killed retired Pastor David Makoni during an attack on Mayo-Moskota village.

According to International Christian Concern ([17 December 2019](#)):

- **1-5 December 2019:** Boko Haram militants carried out a series of attacks on Cameroonian Christians that left 7 dead and 21 abducted (mainly children and youth of 12 - 21 years of age). The attacks initially began when a gunman opened fire at a funeral in Mayo Sava district, in the far north of Cameroon.

Specific examples of positive developments

In mid-2020, government and Anglophone separatists began ceasefire talks for the first time since the conflict began in 2017 ([Al-Jazeera, 4 July 2020](#)).

External Links - Short country profile

- Summary of international obligations and rights violations: International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights - <https://www.ohchr.org/en/professionalinterest/pages/ccpr.aspx>
- Summary of international obligations and rights violations: International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights - <https://www.ohchr.org/en/professionalinterest/pages/cescr.aspx>
- Summary of international obligations and rights violations: Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women - <https://www.ohchr.org/EN/ProfessionalInterest/Pages/CEDAW.aspx>
- Summary of international obligations and rights violations: Convention against Torture - <https://www.ohchr.org/en/professionalinterest/pages/cat.aspx>
- Summary of international obligations and rights violations: Convention on the Rights of the Child - <https://www.ohchr.org/en/professionalinterest/pages/crc.aspx>
- Specific examples of violations of rights in the reporting period: 2019 Report on International Religious Freedom - <https://www.state.gov/reports/2019-report-on-international-religious-freedom/cameroon/>
- Specific examples of violations of rights in the reporting period: 17 December 2019 - <https://www.persecution.org/2019/12/17/boko-haram-targets-cameroonian-christians/>
- Specific examples of positive developments: Al-Jazeera, 4 July 2020 - <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2020/07/cameroon-holds-peace-talks-main-separatist-group-200704054953504.html>

WWL 2021: Keys to understanding / Cameroon

Link for general background information

- [Cameroon country profile - BBC News](#)

Recent history

Cameroon is a West African country sharing borders with Gabon, Chad, the Central African Republic, the Republic of Congo, Equatorial Guinea and Nigeria. Europeans first came into contact when the Portuguese explorer, Fernando Po, led an expedition up the Wouri River in 1472. In 1520, the Portuguese established a sugar plantation which was later taken over by the French in the 1600s. In 1884, the agreement between Germany and local chiefs put the country under German domination. After the end of WWI, the country was taken away from Germany and divided into two with France getting a mandate over 80% of the area, and Britain getting a mandate over the remaining 20%. In 1960, the French colony became independent. The following year, the northern part of British Cameroon voted to join with Nigeria while the southern part voted to join French Cameroon leading to the formation of the first Cameroon Republic, officially known as the Federal Republic of Cameroon. (Source: [History World](#), accessed 20 August 2020)

From 1960 until 1982, Ahmadou Ahidjo ruled the country as president with an iron fist. He abolished the federal government structure in 1972, followed by more repressive measures against his opponents. In 1982, he was replaced by his deputy Paul Biya (Source: [Cameroun Web](#), accessed 20 August 2020). Today, more than three decades have passed but Paul Biya's dictatorial regime continues to rule the country.

Since late 2016, Cameroon's Anglophone regions (i.e. North West and South West) have been engulfed in a crisis which started when English-speaking lawyers, students and teachers began protesting against what they saw as their under-representation in, and cultural marginalization by, the central government. This was met with a heavy-handed government response and over the years many [innocent civilians](#) have been killed, arbitrarily detained and tortured by the government security forces (Human Rights Watch - HRW, World Report 2020).

The [heavy-handed response by the government](#) resulted in the formation of several non-state armed groups and fueled existing separatist sentiment; the subsequent violent confrontations also forced more than half a million people to flee their homes (Refugees International, 29 May 2019). Similar acts of violence in September 2018 that involved both armed secessionists and security forces took a greater death toll on ordinary people and showed the escalation of the situation, which led the UN and African Union to issue a [joint communiqué](#) calling on the government to facilitate access to humanitarian and human rights organizations (HRW, World Report 2019).

Today, the civil war continues unabated in the Anglophone regions of the country. On 14 February 2020 [government soldiers](#) (and at least 30 armed ethnic Fulani) massacred 21 people (including 13 children) in Ngarbuh village in the North West province. This massacre is one of the most gruesome killings in the conflict, which has lasted for more than three years and displaced 700,000 people (HRW, 25 February 2020).

In this ongoing civil war, Christians are impacted both directly and indirectly. There are direct attacks coming from both sides of the conflict if they do not support their cause. The indirect impact comes from the government focusing its attention on combatting separatists, which has given Boko Haram the opportunity to take advantage of security loopholes left by the security forces.

Political and legal landscape

Cameroon is a [unitary republic](#) with a president as head of state. Since the country has had experience with German, French and British occupation, the country's legal system is based on a mixture of English common law and the Napoleonic Code. The parliament is bicameral: The National Assembly (the lower house) has 180 members and the Senate (the upper house) has 100 members (The Commonwealth, accessed 20 August 2020).

On 7 October 2018, the country held a [presidential election](#). Turnout was said to be 54%, far lower than in previous elections, and was just 10% in English-speaking regions. The six-term octogenarian President Paul Biya was declared the winner on 22 October following the dismissal of a petition filed by multiple opposition candidates at the constitutional court alleging fraud and irregularities (The Guardian, 22 October 2018). On 6 November 2018, 85-year-old Biya was sworn-in for a seventh term as president.

According to Freedom House's [Freedom in the World 2020](#) report:

- “Parliament shows little independence and largely acts as a rubber stamp for the president’s policy initiatives. President Biya has extensive executive authority, including wide-ranging appointment powers and strong control over state institutions.” In principle, laws and policies are created and approved by Parliament and the president, but in practice, many policies are adopted simply by presidential decree with little or no public consultation.
- “Several former high-level government officials have been successfully prosecuted and imprisoned for corruption, and this activity continued in 2019. In March, the government accused former defense minister Edgar Alain Mebe Ngo’o of corruption and the diversion of public funds. However, analysts suspect that many such cases are politically motivated; Mebe Ngo’o was considered a future presidential contender.” Although the government’s initiatives to fight corruption have included the creation of the National Anticorruption Commission (CONAC), corruption and bribery continues to be widespread in all sectors.
- The ability to organize in political groups, and their freedom to operate, is also subject to the whims of the central government, and opposition leaders risk arrest and imprisonment.

- “Independent and critical journalists also face pressure and the risk of detention or arrest in connection with their work, with the Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ) reporting that seven journalists were imprisoned at the end of 2019. Defamation remains a criminal offense, and the National Communications Council (CNC), a media regulatory body, has a history of harassing journalists and outlets. State-run CRTV has been criticized for favoring the ruling CPDM in its coverage.”
- In late January 2019, Maurice Kamto and several CRM officials were arrested by security forces after the party held nationwide rallies calling for a recount of the 2018 presidential vote. The government used force to disrupt the CRM’s rallies and relied on the same tactics when the party held rallies to call for Kamto’s release in June. Kamto was tried on charges of insurrection and rebellion in September 2019, but President Biya ordered his release in October. The government also banned CRM rallies scheduled for April and sought to do the same when the party scheduled events in three cities in November 2019; 33 people who defied the ban in Yaoundé were arrested.

Christians are very active in the political sphere but suffer from the corruption and lack of democracy. Many Christians have complained that government officials are not giving them the protection accorded to them by the law, if they do not openly support the government.

Religious landscape

Cameroon: Religious context	Number of adherents	%
Christians	15,922,000	61.3
Muslim	5,320,000	20.5
Hindu	0	0.0
Buddhist	500	0.0
Ethno-religionist	4,425,000	17.0
Jewish	65	0.0
Bahai	65,000	0.3
Atheist	50,000	0.2
Agnostic	160,000	0.6
Other - includes Chinese folk, New religionist, Sikh, Spiritist, Taoist, Confucianist, Jain, Shintoist, Zoroastrian	15,610	0.1

Data source: Johnson T M and Zurlo G A, eds., *World Christian Database* (Leiden/Boston: Brill, accessed February 2020)

The Islamic community is concentrated in the north of Cameroon. Christian communities are most dense in the southern and western regions of the country.

Economic landscape

According to [World Bank's Macro Poverty Outlook \(April 2020\)](#):

- Economic activity slowed down in 2019, with GDP growth estimated at 3.9% compared to 4.1% in 2018.
- Fiscal policy remains set on fiscal consolidation, mostly driven by improved tax administration, despite security spending pressures.
- The poverty rate is estimated to have fallen to 22.4% in 2019 and is expected to decline marginally to 21.9% by 2022.
- The economic outlook is mostly influenced by the COVID-19 outbreak and the pace of implementation of structural reforms.
- Domestically, the violent conflict in the south-west and north-west regions remains the major source of social and economic risk. On the external side, delay in the recovery or further deterioration of the economic activity in the Euro area and China economies (first and second trading partners, representing 49.1% and 13.1% of total exports, respectively in 2014-2018) would further affect Cameroon's external position.

According to Heritage Foundation's [2020 Index of Economic Freedom](#):

- Cameroon's economy is categorized as 'mostly unfree'.
- "Cameroon's economic freedom score is 52.4, making its economy the 145th freest in the 2019 Index. Its overall score has increased by 0.5 point, with higher scores for investment freedom and labor freedom offsetting a sharp decline in fiscal health. Cameroon is ranked 29th among 47 countries in the Sub-Saharan Africa region, and its overall score is below the regional and world averages."
- The combined value of exports and imports is equal to 36.9% of GDP.

Social and cultural landscape

According to [the UNDP 2019 report](#) and [World Factbook](#) (April 2020):

- **Main ethnic groups:** The country has more than 200 ethnic groups. Bamileke-Bamu 24.3%, Beti/Bassa, Mbam 21.6 %, Biu-Mandara 14.6%, Arab-Choa/Hausa/Kanuri 11%, Adamawa-Ubangi 9.8%, Grassfields 7.7%, Kako,Meka/Pygmy 3.3%, Cotier/Ngoe/Oroko 2.7 %, Southwestern Bantu 0.7%, foreign/other ethnic group 4.5 % (2018 est.)
- **Main languages:** 24 major African language groups, English (official), French (official).
- **Urban population:** 57.6% of the total population (2020)
- **Rate of urbanization:** 3.63% annual rate change (2015-2020 est.)
- **Population growth rate:** 2.78% (2020 est.)
- **Median age:** 18.7 years
- **Literacy rate, adult (15 years of age and older):** 71.3%
- **Expected years of schooling:** 12.7 years; (11.9 years for females and 13.6 years for males)
- **Employment population ratio (15 years of age and older):** 73.7%
- **Unemployment, total (% of labour force):** 3.4%

- **Unemployment, youth (15-24 years of age):** 5.8%

According to [the UNHCR fact sheet](#) (March 2020):

- **Refugees/IDPs etc.:** Cameroon currently has 1,751,875 people of concern, including 272,173 Central African Republic refugees, 112,228 Nigerian refugees, 36,373 urban refugees and asylum-seekers, 976,773 IDPs (297,380 in the far north and 679,393 in the north west and south west regions) and 354, 328 returnees in the far north region.

According to [the UN Global Development Indicators](#) (2019):

- **Human Development Index:** Cameroon is ranked 150th out of 189 countries with a value of 0.563
- **Life expectancy at birth:** 58.9 years
- **Gender Development index (GDI):** 0.869
- **Gender inequality index (GII):** 0.566

Cameroonians often have large, extended families with both [polygamous](#) and monogamous marriages in practice (DW, 26 July 2016). Due to the traditional encouragement to have large families, more than 60% of the current Cameroonian population is under 25 years of age.

Technological landscape

According to [World Internet Stats](#) (accessed 29 June 2020):

- **Internet usage:** 23.1% of the population – survey date 31 December 2019
- **Facebook usage:** 10.2% of the population – survey date 31 December 2019

According to [World Bank's Country Profile](#) (accessed 24 August 2020):

- **Mobile cellular subscriptions (per 100 people - 2018):** 73.2

According to [BuddeComm research](#) (updated 20 April 2020):

- About 95% of all electronic transactions are carried through the m-money services operated by MTN Cameroon and Orange Cameroon.
- Nextell Cameroon (majority-owned by Viettel) launched a third network in 2014, including the country's first 3G mobile service. There were about 4.89 million subscribers by late 2018.
- Due to the 2020 COVID-19 crisis, the telecoms sector to various degrees is likely to experience a downturn in mobile device production, while it may also be difficult for network operators to manage workflows when maintaining and upgrading existing infrastructure. Overall progress towards 5G may be postponed.
- The information and communications technology sector (ICT) sector in Cameroon has made steady progress. The government has also been supportive, having launched its 'Cameroon Digital 2020' program, aimed at improving connectivity. By September 2018, the SAIL submarine cable had been laid, providing a direct link to Brazil and with onward connectivity to other countries in the Americas. The cable substantially improves international bandwidth and should lead to further reductions in access prices for consumers.

Security situation

In recent years, northern Cameroon has come under a series of attacks orchestrated by the Islamic militant group, Boko Haram. According to Human Rights Watch's (HRW) [World Report 2020](#): Since January 2019, the Islamist group carried out over 100 attacks in the Far North region killing more than 100 civilians. Altogether, the conflict between government forces and Boko Haram has killed thousands of Cameroonians and displaced over 270,000 since 2014, leading to the rise of self-defense vigilante groups.

The violence in the Anglophone region has also made the country more unsafe. Fighting between government security forces and separatist militants from Cameroon's English-speaking minority has continued unabated since October 2017. From October 2018 to March 2019 alone, at least 170 civilians were [killed](#) in over 220 incidents in the North West and South West regions (HRW. 8 March 2019).

State resources are being invested in combatting the Anglophone insurgency instead of being used against Boko Haram. This has given the Islamic militant group more freedom to recruit, organize and mount attacks against Christians.

According to the US State Department's [2019 Country Report on Human Rights Practices](#), the government repeatedly promised to investigate abuses committed by the security forces, but it has not done so transparently or systematically and has not provided details.

Trends analysis

1) The battle against Boko Haram affects the whole region

A significant part of West Africa has become a battleground between government forces and Islamic militants, with Boko Haram actively attacking Nigeria, Chad, Cameroon and Niger. Coupled with the fact that the Cameroon government is not respecting or protecting the rights of its citizens, the future of the country does not look bright.

2) Radical Islamic ideology has made deep inroads

In the northern part of the country where radicalization and militancy is taking place, the life of Christians is particularly hard. Even if Boko Haram would be defeated, social harmony is unlikely to result since Islamist ideology has already made deep inroads among Muslim youth in the region. If things continue as they are, there might be sectarian violence on a scale as occurred in the Central African Republic (CAR) in the last years. The fact that the COVID-19 crisis has affected the region means the jihadists have had more opportunities for organization and action. They could become even more dangerous post pandemic.

3) The government has become increasingly repressive

What started off as a protest movement by Anglophone Cameroonians has led to civil war. In response, the government has become increasingly repressive and has been accused of serious human rights violations. As it is focusing more and more on suppressing political dissent and opposition, the government has become distracted from its fight against Boko Haram. As of July

2020, it has been reported that government and separatists have started to hold peace talks. If these negotiations fail, the country will be in a deep crisis for years to come.

In the context of the above-mentioned crises in the country, Christians are becoming increasingly vulnerable to attack.

External Links - Keys to understanding

- Link for general background information: Cameroon country profile - BBC News - <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-africa-13146029>
- Recent history: History World - <http://www.historyworld.net/wrldhis/PlainTextHistories.asp?ParagraphID=pau>
- Recent history: Cameroun Web - <https://www.camerounweb.com/CameroonHomePage/people/person.php?ID=1253>
- Recent history: innocent civilians - <https://www.hrw.org/world-report/2020/country-chapters/cameroon>
- Recent history: heavy-handed response by the government - https://www.refugeesinternational.org/reports/2019/5/28/crisis-denied-in-cameroon-government-refusal-to-recognize-suffering-in-nwsw-deters-donors?gclid=Cj0KCQjws_r0BRCwARIsAMxfDRiNNM5F4-9K6toVx60UBgM9ohd6yEkzahVvLIHxS01nTgW6yqAXkbAaAnuJEAJLw_wcB
- Recent history: joint communiqué - <https://www.hrw.org/world-report/2019/country-chapters/cameroon>
- Recent history: government soldiers - <https://www.hrw.org/news/2020/02/25/cameroon-civilians-massacred-separatist-area>
- Political and legal landscape: unitary republic - <http://thecommonwealth.org/our-member-countries/cameroon/constitution-politics>
- Political and legal landscape: presidential election - <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2018/oct/22/paul-biya-cameroon-85-year-old-president-wins-re-election-landslide>
- Political and legal landscape: Freedom in the World 2020 - <https://freedomhouse.org/country/cameroon/freedom-world/2020>
- Economic landscape: World Bank's Macro Poverty Outlook (April 2020): - <http://pubdocs.worldbank.org/en/819481492188154977/mpo-cmr.pdf>
- Economic landscape: 2020 Index of Economic Freedom - <https://www.heritage.org/index/country/cameroon>
- Social and cultural landscape: the UNDP 2019 report - <http://hdr.undp.org/en/countries/profiles/CMR>
- Social and cultural landscape: World Factbook - <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/attachments/summaries/CM-summary.pdf>
- Social and cultural landscape: the UNHCR fact sheet - <https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/75888.pdf>
- Social and cultural landscape: the UN Global Development Indicators - <http://hdr.undp.org/en/countries/profiles/CMR>
- Social and cultural landscape: polygamous - <https://www.dw.com/en/polygamy-continues-among-camerouns-traditional-rulers/a-19420852>
- Technological landscape: World Internet Stats - <https://www.internetworldstats.com/africa.htm#bf>
- Technological landscape: World Bank's Country Profile - https://databank.worldbank.org/views/reports/reportwidget.aspx?Report_Name=CountryProfile&id=b450fd57&tbar=y&dd=y&inf=n&zm=n&country=CMR
- Technological landscape: BuddeComm research - <https://www.budde.com.au/Research/Cameroon-Telecoms-Mobile-and-Broadband-Statistics-and-Analyses>
- Security situation: World Report 2020 - <https://www.hrw.org/world-report/2020/country-chapters/cameroon>
- Security situation: killed - <https://www.hrw.org/news/2019/03/28/cameroon-new-attacks-civilians-troops-separatists>
- Security situation: 2019 Country Report on Human Rights Practices - <https://www.state.gov/reports/2019-country-reports-on-human-rights-practices/cameroon/>

WWL 2021: Church information / Cameroon

Christian origins

The Portuguese brought Christianity to the country in 1429. However, the Roman Catholic Church only officially started establishing congregations in the country towards the end of the 19th century. The London Baptist Missionary Society (LBMS) sent missionaries in 1845 who were part of a wider influx of European merchants and explorers looking for business opportunities and raw materials. The first LBMS missionaries were led by Alfred Saker along with a group of West Indian Baptist preachers mainly from Jamaica. US Presbyterians came in 1879.

When Germany began colonizing the region in 1880, Protestant work was taken over by German Baptists and Basel missionaries. German Catholic missionaries opened the first successful Catholic mission in 1890.

(Source: Sundkler B. and Steed C., *A History of the Church in Africa*, Cambridge University Press, 2000, pp.750-756.)

Church spectrum today

Cameroon: Church networks	Christians	%
Orthodox	1,400	0.0
Catholic	7,055,000	44.3
Protestant	6,002,000	37.7
Independent	1,630,000	10.2
Unaffiliated	1,304,000	8.2
Doubly-affiliated Christians	-70,900	-0.4
Total	15,921,500	100.0
<i>(Any deviation from the total number of Christians stated above is due to the rounding of decimals)</i>		
Evangelical movement	2,100,000	13.2
Renewalist movement	2,400,000	15.1

Data source: Johnson T M and Zurlo G A, eds., *World Christian Database* (Leiden/Boston: Brill, accessed February 2020)

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.

Most Christians belong to the Roman Catholic Church. As per the US State Department's [2019 IRF report](#): "Christians are concentrated primarily in the southern and western parts of the country. The two Anglophone regions are largely Protestant, and the five southern Francophone regions are mostly Catholic."

External Links - Church information

- Church spectrum today - additional information: 2019 IRF report - <https://www.state.gov/reports/2019-report-on-international-religious-freedom/cameroon/>

WWL 2021: Persecution Dynamics / Cameroon

Reporting period

1 October 2019 - 30 September 2020

Position on the World Watch List

Cameroon: World Watch List	Points	WWL Rank
WWL 2021	64	42
WWL 2020	60	48
WWL 2019	54	56
WWL 2018	-	-
WWL 2017	-	-

Scores and ranks are shown above whenever the country scored 41 points or more in the WWL 2017-2021 reporting periods

The increase in score of 4 points in WWL 2021 is due to the increase in pressure (0.7 point average) and a slight rise in violence (0.7 point). This was caused by the interaction of a wide range of Persecution engines. Boko Haram has intensified its attacks, infiltration and its recruitment of jihadists in the country. The crisis in the Anglophone region has also made Christians vulnerable to a variety of groups. Christians face intimidation and attacks if they speak against the atrocities going on in the country (perpetrated both by government and separatist forces). The government has also refused to allow some Christians to operate in the country. Established church denominations also persecute other Christian groups where the increase in the number of non-traditional Christian communities is seen as a threat. The existence of rampant corruption in the country has also made security and the rule of law virtually non-existent in many areas. The COVID-19 crisis has served to strengthen the forces of persecution and weaken the position of those targeted.

Persecution engines

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

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)

This persecution engine is particularly evident in the north, in Adamawa, and also in some eastern regions. *Islamic oppression* affects primarily Christians with a Muslim background who are persecuted by their family. The Boko Haram Islamic insurgency also poses a constant threat to the life and security of Christians and has caused the displacement of many Christians from Adamawa, the north and the extreme northern regions. In remote areas in these regions, some Muslim leaders believe that Islam should be the only religion present. Although Cameroon is generally a country where there is religious tolerance, the memories and legacies of Fulani-led *jihad* in previous centuries in the northern regions lingers on: It was through *jihad* that the indigenous population was forcibly converted to Islam. The violence and activity of Boko Haram have brought these memories alive and is undermining the history of peaceful relations between Christians and Muslims in modern-day Cameroon.

Dictatorial paranoia (Strong)

During the past three decades of Paul Biya's rule, the regime has been responsible for a whole series of political arrests, killings and persecution of Christians. The Anglophone region of the country was especially affected by this due to the independence movement active in the area.

Organized corruption and crime (Strong)

Cameroon is one of the most corrupt nations in the world. The dictatorial regime of Paul Biya is responsible for the rampant corruption that weakens the country's political structure. Although the country has oil resources, it still lags behind most African countries in economic development. Corrupt officials in the northern part of the country were responsible for the persecution of Christians by not taking appropriate action to protect Christians under attack by radical Islamic groups. Corrupt officials have also been responsible for persecuting Christians who have views opposing the government.

Ethno-religious hostility (Medium)

A significant number of the population adhere to traditional belief systems - and there are also Christians who mix traditional beliefs with Christianity. In areas where Christians oppose such practices, they will face persecution.

Christian denominational protectionism (Medium)

Well-established denominations do not welcome the activities of new church groups in the country. For example, [in 2018](#), Cameroon's Protestant, Baptist, and Catholic churches called on the government to shut down a further number of Pentecostal churches (DW, 21 March 2018).

Drivers of persecution

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

Cameroon:									
Drivers of persecution per engine	IO	RN	ERH	CO	CDP	CPCO	SI	DPA	OCC
	VERY STRONG	-	MEDIUM	-	MEDIUM	-	-	STRONG	STRONG
Revolutionaries or paramilitary groups	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Organized crime cartels or networks	Medium	-	-	-	-	-	-	Strong	Strong
Multilateral organizations (e.g. UN, OIC etc.)	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-

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

- **Violent religious groups (Very strong):** The main drivers are militant groups like Boko Haram who engage in violent attacks targeting both Christians and Muslims who do not adhere to the same interpretation of Islam as them. In addition to these groups, government officials at the local level who sympathize with such groups also contribute to the persecution of Christians.
- **Non-Christian religious leaders (Strong):** Some Islamic preachers encourage the persecution of converts in their teaching. Such teaching supports the activities of Boko Haram.
- **Family members (Medium):** Family members and neighbors will put pressure on converts to return to Islam.
- **Citizens (people from the broader society) (Medium):** People from wider society also put pressure on converts in the northern part of the country.
- **Organized crime cartels/networks (Medium):** Organized crime cartels or networks have also played a major role in making Boko Haram more potent in the country. These networks are not limited to Cameroon itself, it is a regional issue.

Drivers of Dictatorial paranoia

- **Government officials (Strong):** Paul Biya's dictatorial regime has been ruling the country since 1982. Recently there has been a growing opposition movement throughout the country against his regime. Most opponents are Christians since Cameroon is a Christian majority country. Several Christian leaders have been arrested, tortured, and killed by government officials because they oppose the government's inhuman treatment of political opponents.
- **Organized corruption (Strong):** Government officials also participate in organized crime networks. This has made rule of law a luxury. Even violent religious groups and other groups have benefited from this role of government officials.

Drivers of Organized corruption and crime

- **Violent religious groups (Very strong):** Boko Haram engages with criminal networks to bribe officials and to traffic people and arms.
- **Government officials (Medium):** Paul Biya's regime supports corrupt officials in order to maintain its grip on power. Corrupt officials have taken part in the persecution of Christians in the Muslim-dominated parts of the country. There are also numerous cases where corrupt officials have arrested and killed Christian political opponents of the government.

Drivers of ethno-religious hostility

- **Ethnic leaders (Medium):** In this category of drivers are ethnic leaders, adherents of traditional belief systems, family members, and even some Christians who are mixing traditional beliefs with Christianity.

Drivers of Christian denominational protectionism

- **Christian religious leaders (Medium):** The leaders of well-established church denominations sometimes influence the authorities to crack down on smaller church groups in the country.

Areas where Christians face most difficulties

Governance and security in Cameroon are major problems, with the country facing violence in three regions: 1) Far North - where Boko Haram continues to mount attacks; 2) North West and 3) South West, which are both areas where the Anglophone insurgency is growing.

Christian communities and how they are affected

Communities of expatriate Christians: Communities of expatriate Christians do not exist as a separate category for WWL analysis, since expatriates are free to interact with other Christian groups.

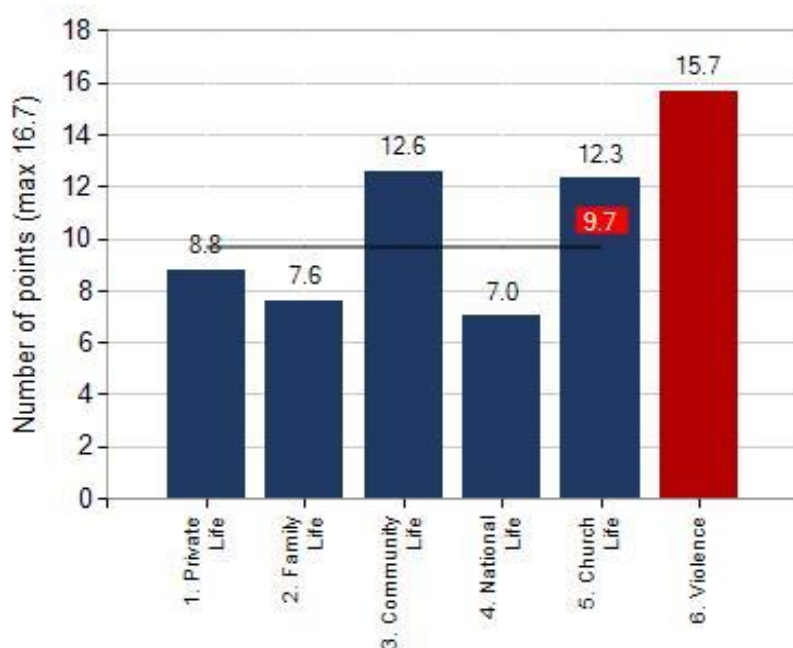
Historical Christian communities: According to World Christian Database statistics, Roman Catholics make up 42.2% of the Christians population. However, there are also several Protestant denominations (e.g. Presbyterians) who can also be considered as belonging to this category. They do not suffer as much persecution as convert communities, but nevertheless, some congregations have been affected by Boko Haram violence; also, the *Dictatorial paranoia* of the government undermines the autonomy of Historical Christian communities.

Converts to Christianity: Converts from Islam to Christianity are the most persecuted Christian group in the country, whether they meet in secret or riskily share fellowship with other Christians. Convert Christians in Protestant churches, are often persecuted by family and community in the northern regions, Adamawa and in the Eastern and Western regions. Some converts were reportedly threatened during Boko Haram attacks to reconvert to Islam. Therefore, this community of Christians faces the risk of pressure, ostracism and violence. This often leads to forced displacement to safer parts of the country. Those who convert from ethnic religious beliefs to Christianity also face pressure from their community and families to renounce Christianity, but the pressure is less intensive.

Non-traditional Christian communities: This is a growing category in Cameroon; Baptist and Pentecostal groups are examples. While some Pentecostal churches have criticized the government and have faced threats of closure, others have tried to align themselves with the government, campaigning and mobilizing funds for the ruling party during elections. Pressure exerted by the government undermines the freedom of such churches. These churches also face threats and violence from groups like Boko Haram in the north. Islamic oppression in the north has also made the evangelistic efforts of such groups risky (as well as integration of Christians with a Muslim background).

The Persecution pattern

WWL 2021 Persecution Pattern for Cameroon



The WWL 2021 Persecution pattern for Cameroon shows:

- The average pressure on Christians in Cameroon is high at 9.7 points, rising from 9.0 points in WWL 2020.
- The *Community sphere* score is the highest with 12.6 points, followed by the *Church sphere* score with 12.3 points.
- The score for violence is extremely high at 15.7 points, an increase of 0.7 points from WWL 2020.

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 2021 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: <http://opendoorsanalytical.org/world-watch-list-documentation/>, password: freedom).

Pressure in Block 1 / Private sphere

Block 1.8: It has been risky for Christians to speak about their faith with those other than immediate family (extended family, others). (2.75 points)

Christians often face opposition from the wider family should they discuss about their faith. They are often insulted and rejected. This is especially the case in North Cameroon where extended family members are Muslims. Thus, it is very common for Christian converts to hide their conversion.

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

For Christians in general, but especially for converts from Islam in the North, it is very risky to meet with other Christians. If they do try to meet up, the local community is likely to think that these Christian groups are trying to convert others. The presence of Boko Haram has made it further difficult.

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

Converts are threatened if Bibles or other Christian literature are found in their possession. This is true for almost all Christians in the areas that are affected by Boko Haram. There are some Christians who do not take their Bibles home but choose to leave their copies in the church building. The risk is far more acute for converts.

Block 1.7: It has been risky for Christians to speak about their faith with immediate family members. (2.25 points)

Converts are not free to express their faith be it to immediate family members or others. In some cases, especially in North Cameroon where family members are Muslim, Christians have faced harassment when they discuss their faith with them.

Pressure in Block 2 / Family sphere

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. (2.75 points)

For most categories of Christianity in the country, there is little or no persecution in this regard. However, Christians with a Muslim background in the northern part of the country do face difficulties. A country researcher states: "In some parts of the country - especially in northern Cameroon (e.g. Touboro) - Christian spouses have been refused custody of children by non-Christian spouses. Official divorce is rare, but couples do separate. Especially in the North Christian spouses will be refused to continue raising their child, let alone have custody over it. This situation mostly affects women. There is also a cultural element to this."

Block 2.13: Christians have lost their inheritance rights because of their conversion to Christianity or (if a person already was a Christian) other types of Christianity. (2.75 points)

This issue affects converts mostly. A country researcher states: "In some parts of the country especially the northern part, there have been some instances where a convert lost his farmland including his house. According to Islamic law, when someone becomes a Christian, he loses his/her right to inherit from their parents. They believe that the Quran does not permit the inheritance of a Muslim to be given to a Christian, so if a man is a Muslim, and his child converts, that child is entitled to nothing."

Block 2.11: Spouses of converts have been put under pressure (successfully or unsuccessfully) by others to divorce. (2.50 points)

Christians with a Muslim background in the northern part of the country face this kind of difficulty. There are several instances where female converts have to choose between either their husband or their Christian faith (which would lead to divorce). The pressure to renounce faith is also a part of the tactics employed by the community and radical groups to teach potential converts what awaits them should they convert.

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. (2.25 points)

For most categories of Christianity in the country, there is little persecution in this regard. However, Christians with a Muslim background in the northern part of the country face difficulties. Some converts will hide their faith so as not to be forced to leave their families. If the news of conversion is heard by the community/family, separation would surely follow.

Pressure in Block 3 / Community sphere

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

Many Christians with a Muslim background face problems in local communities in remote areas of the northern region. If they are recognized as Christians, they are despised and discriminated against simply for their faith. Educational opportunities for Christians are also restricted. Many Christian headteachers have been compelled to close their schools in the far North, fearing attacks by Boko Haram.

Block 3.10: Christians have been discriminated against in public or private employment for faith-related reasons. (3.50 points)

This often happens in government institutions, and in companies where Muslims are the majority. However, it can also happen in public and private institutions where denominational favoritism or discrimination takes place.

Block 3.2: Christians have been monitored by their local communities or by private groups (this includes reporting to police, being shadowed, telephone lines listened to, emails read/censored, etc.). (3.25 points)

Certain pastors, churches and missionary groups are sometimes closely watched by government intelligence agents since they are perceived to be critical of the government. Many Christians with a Muslim background face problems with local communities in remote areas of the northern regions. For fear of retaliation, Christians also practice self-censorship, especially when gathering together or using social media. This is the case mostly in the northern part of the country.

Block 3.7: Christians have been pressured by their community to renounce their faith. (3.00 points)

This is the case mostly in the northern part of the country and it affects all Christian groups, both men and women. However, converts are affected the most. Where a Muslim's conversion to Christian faith has become known, he faces losing his job or opportunities for further education, unless he renounces his faith.

Pressure in Block 4 / National sphere

Block 4.8: Christians have been hindered in expressing their views or opinions in public. (3.50 points)

The dictatorial nature of the government makes it very sensitive and hostile to actual or perceived criticism. Therefore, churches and Christians are forced to act carefully when expressing their opinion about public matters from the perspective of their faith. According to a country researcher: "Especially in the Anglophone regions, the freedom of expression and belief was threatened even more, with Internet shut-downs and people being arrested. In the far northern part of the country, people were met by restrictions due to Boko Haram's presence."

Block 4.14: Those who caused harm to Christians have deliberately been left unpunished. (2.75 points)

This is a common occurrence especially in the northern part of the country. A country researcher states: "Security or armed forces have gone unpunished when they arrested arbitrarily, abused, tortured or killed civilians (e.g. supposed Boko Haram supporters in the North, or supposed separatists in the Anglophone regions ...)". Since Muslims dominate the governmental structure in most of the northern provinces, cases that come before the lower courts are likely to end up in favor of the Muslim party.

Block 4.3: Christians have been forced by law or in practice to act against their conscience, e.g. regarding military service or in certain professions. (2.50 points)

There is no law which specifically requires only Christians, or compels only Christians to act against their conscience. However, there are difficulties for some Christians where the law requires people to swear an oath. Also, corruption affects all citizens, including Christians where they are compelled to participate in unethical practices in government or civil institutions and businesses.

Block 4.4: Christians have been hindered in travelling for faith-related reasons. (2.50 points)

There are no laws that prevent Christians from traveling freely within the country. However, Christians face systematic discrimination that hinders them when traveling. The situation with Boko Haram in the northern part of the country has anyway created a volatile environment and made traveling risky.

Pressure in Block 5 / Church sphere

Block 5.1: Church activities have been monitored, hindered, disturbed, or obstructed. (3.75 points)

Church activities have been hindered and sometimes attacked in areas where Boko Haram is active. Also, due to the displacement of thousands of people, many churches are unable to function normally. Clashes between government armed forces and separatists have disrupted Christian activities in the Anglophone provinces.

Block 5.2: It has been difficult to get registration or legal status for churches at any level of government. (3.75 points)

This has become one of the main areas where Christians experience difficulties. The government has approved no new religious groups since 2010. Although many churches operate without registration and are rarely punished for doing this, the lack of registration can always be used to threaten a church with closure whenever the government feels the churches in question have not sided with it politically.

Block 5.5: Churches have been hindered from organizing Christian activities outside church buildings. (3.75 points)

Permission for outdoor activities is often not given in Muslim areas. Such activities would risk provoking an attack by Boko Haram.

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

In Cameroon's Far North region, where Boko Haram is active, Christians would provoke attack if they were to build a church. Also, the government will anyway not allow some church groups to get a license to operate in the country and hence building new churches is hindered for them too.

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. Since many incidents go unreported, the numbers below must be understood as being minimum figures. In cases where it has been impossible to count exactly, a symbolic round figure (10, 100 or 1000) is given. (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 1000 could go well over 10,000 but, again, the real number is uncertain.) In cases where it is clear that (many) more Christians are affected, but a concrete number

could be given according to the number of incidents reported, the number given has to be understood as being an absolutely minimum figure. The symbol “x” denotes a known number which cannot be published due to security considerations.

Cameroon: Violence Block question	WWL 2021	WWL 2020
6.1 How many Christians have been killed for faith-related reasons (including state sanctioned executions)?	53	10
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?	12	15
6.3 How many Christians have been detained for faith-related reasons?	32	2
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)?	10	100
6.6 How many Christians have been raped or otherwise sexually harassed for faith-related reasons?	100	10
6.7 How many cases have there been of forced marriages of Christians to non-Christians?	10	1
6.8 How many Christians have been otherwise physically or mentally abused for faith-related reasons (including beatings and death threats)?	100	1000
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?	100	216
6.10 How many shops or businesses of Christians have been attacked, damaged, bombed, looted, destroyed, burned down, closed or confiscated for faith-related reasons?	100	100
6.11 How many Christians have been forced to leave their homes or go into hiding in-country for faith-related reasons?	1000	3000
6.12 How many Christians have been forced to leave the country for faith-related reasons?	1	0

5 Year trends

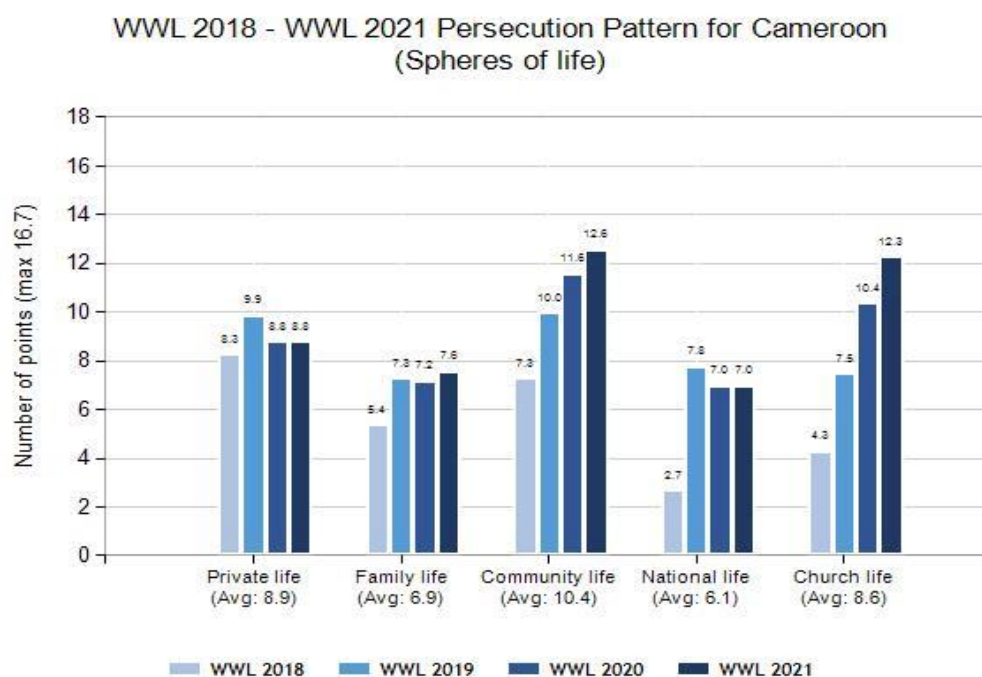
The following three charts show the levels of pressure and violence faced by Christians in the country over the last five WWL reporting periods.

5 Year trends: Average pressure

Cameroon: WWL 2017 - WWL 2021 Persecution Pattern history	Average pressure over 5 Spheres of life
2021	9.7
2020	9.0
2019	8.5
2018	5.6
2017	0.0

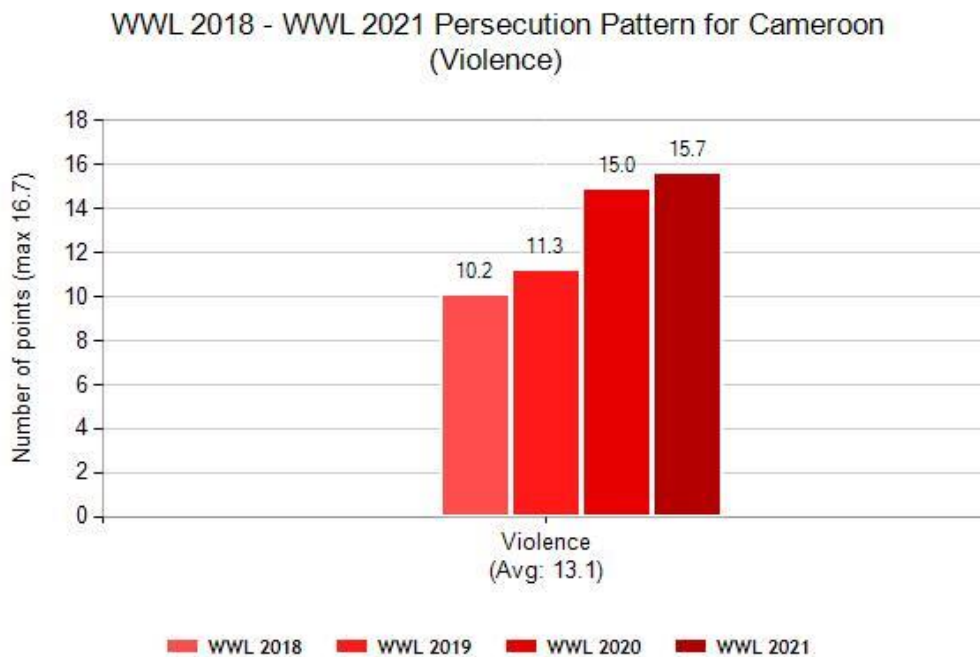
The chart above shows that, over the last four WWL reporting periods, the average pressure on Christians in Cameroon has been increasing and has now reached a high level (9.7 points). As it can be seen from the table the it has been constantly increasing.

5 Year trends: Pressure in each sphere of life



The sphere averages in the chart above show that the *Community, Private and Church spheres of life* are the areas of greatest pressure on Christians. Rises in pressure over the last reporting periods were particularly noticeable in the *Community and Church spheres of life*. Pressure in the *Church sphere of life* is caused by the operation of the Persecution engines *Dictatorial paranoia* and *Islamic oppression*. The pressure in the *Private and Community spheres* particularly affects converts.

5 Year trends: Violence against Christians



The chart above shows how violence against Christians has risen drastically over the last three reporting periods and is now at an extremely high level reaching 15.7 points in WWL 2021. This is an indication that, in a Christian majority Cameroon, Christians are subject to violence at an alarming level.

Gender-specific religious persecution Female

Female Pressure Points
Abduction
Denied access to social community/networks
Denied custody of children
Denied inheritance or possessions

Discrimination/harassment via education
Enforced religious dress code
Forced divorce
Forced marriage
Incarceration by family (house arrest)
Trafficking
Violence – death
Violence – sexual

Cameroon is a secular country, yet the Far North region suffers from the violent presence of Boko Haram. Christian women in northern Cameroon are subject to several forms of persecution related to their status in society. Boko Haram continues to regularly abduct women and girls, forcing them into marriage with one of their members or subjecting them to forced labor and rape. They are further put under extreme pressure to renounce their faith and [embrace Islam](#) (USDS: “2019 Report on international Religious Freedom: Cameroon”). Where schools are still running, some Christian parents keep their girls at home out of fear for their safety. Exemplifying just how dangerous these militants are, country experts indicate that several girls have been forced to act as suicide bombers to further decimate Christian populations.

Female converts to Christianity from a Muslim or Animist background face further pressure within family and community. Linked partly to a lack of education, women in Cameroon are dependent on their husbands or fathers and when they make the decision to convert to Christianity, it is sometimes considered as an act of defiance. They can be denied the opportunity to socialize with other Christians and imprisoned within the family home, if necessary. Unmarried converts risk being forcibly married to a non-Christian, particularly in the north of the country. Married converts conversely face the prospect of divorce, the loss of custody of their children and disinheritance. When a Christian marries a Muslim and they later separate, the family often refuses to hand over the children, because they insist the children must be brought up as Muslims. Poverty and [financial dependency](#) make Christian women and girls more vulnerable to these various pressures (Relief Web, 23 October 2019).

Compounding these pressures, strong governance is lacking in Cameroon and [arbitrary arrests](#) have demonstrated the injustice of the legal system (rfi, 26 June 2020).

Gender-specific religious persecution Male

Male Pressure Points
Abduction
Denied access to social community/networks
Denied inheritance or possessions
Economic harassment via business/job/work access
Forced to flee town/country
Military/militia conscription/service against conscience
Violence – death
Violence – physical

Boko Haram also poses a major threat to Christian men and boys living in the northern regions of Cameroon, particularly church leaders. Men have been abducted by militant groups, tortured and used for forced labor. Others have been forcibly recruited into the ranks of militias. This leaves Christian families without a family head and provider, making them vulnerable to attacks themselves. Communities have become reduced in size due to such attacks, compounded by many men leaving the locality for safer areas. Conflict in the Anglophone region, also known as the Southern Cameroons region, has also fueled instability in the country and caused many people to flee, including Christians.

Christian men also face discrimination in the areas of job opportunities and promotion. Furthermore, they also experience hindrances from government officials where they oppose corruption. When a man refuses to get involved in unethical practices because of his Christian beliefs, he is taunted and called a coward. When jobs are refused due to discrimination, the family cannot thrive. Boycotts also affect Christian families economically, financially and psychologically.

Male converts to Christianity also face pressure from family and community members. They may be rejected by their nuclear families and be denied their due inheritance.

Persecution of other religious minorities

Any religious groups that have not openly supported the government face danger. In areas where Christians are the majority, Muslims are ostracized because the community sees them as likely Boko Haram supporters/sympathizers.

Future outlook

The outlook for Christians as viewed through the lens of:

Dictatorial paranoia

The incumbent president has been in power for decades. He has been accused of violating the rights of the citizens. His government has restricted freedom of association, religion and expression. Some Christian groups are being denied licenses to operate in the country. As it stands there are no signs that the nature of the government will change.

Islamic oppression

The northern part of the country has seen devastating attacks by Boko Haram. This militant group has regrouped while the Cameroon government has been occupied with the Anglophone conflict. Attacks by Boko Haram are a regional issue and will likely remain a challenge for Christians in the country in 2021 and beyond.

Organized corruption and crime

The existing rampant corruption has made the life of most Cameroonians difficult and is also helping Boko Haram to operate. This issue will likely remain a challenge for the country in general and Christians in particular where they oppose it.

Ethno-religious hostility

This Persecution engine is likely to decrease in importance as ethnic leaders are increasingly exposed to education and other religious views.

Christian denominational protectionism

This Persecution engine might grow in importance in the country. The differences between the churches is not so often about theology, but rather about who has the most members and best church buildings. If in the future the government chooses to allow non-traditional Christian groups (often Pentecostals) to operate without restriction, *Christian denominational protectionism* is likely to rise sharply.

The Anglophone crisis

In October 2020, rights groups called for a [cease-fire](#) in the Anglophone conflict (DW, 27 October 2020). This crisis has forced the Cameroonian army to shift its attention from fighting Boko Haram to fighting the 'separatists'. If a sustainable peace is not achieved, that would mean Boko Haram can make further inroads.

External Links - Persecution Dynamics

- Persecution engines description: n 2018 - <https://www.dw.com/en/cameroons-pentecostal-churches-under-fire/a-43070272>
- Gender-specific religious persecution Female description: embrace Islam - <https://www.state.gov/reports/2019-report-on-international-religious-freedom/cameroon/>
- Gender-specific religious persecution Female description: financial dependency - <https://reliefweb.int/report/cameroon/data-gender-equality-cameroon>

- Gender-specific religious persecution Female description: arbitrary arrests - <https://www.rfi.fr/en/africa/20200626-these-girls-escaped-boko-haram-face-lengthy-jail-terms-cameroon>
- Future outlook: cease-fire - <https://www.dw.com/en/rights-groups-call-for-cess-fire-in-cameroon/a-55408173>

Further useful reports

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

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