

World
Watch
Research

Democratic Republic of the Congo:
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 / DRC

Brief country details

DRC: Population (2020 UN estimate)	Christians	Chr%
89,505,000	85,120,000	95.1

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

DRC: World Watch List	Points	WWL Rank
WWL 2021	64	40
WWL 2020	56	57
WWL 2019	55	54
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

DRC:	
Main persecution engines	Main drivers
Islamic oppression	Violent religious groups
Organized corruption and crime	Violent religious groups, Organized crime cartels or networks, Revolutionaries or paramilitary groups, Government officials
Ethno-religious hostility	Ethnic group leaders
Dictatorial paranoia	Government officials

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

Brief description of the persecution situation

The Islamist group “Alliance for Democratic Forces” (ADF-NALU) is responsible for the persecution of Christians in North Kivu, in the eastern part of the country, attacking Christians and churches. In the family sphere, converts both from Islam and from indigenous religions face pressure to take part in non-Christian religious activities and ceremonies. Representatives of the Catholic Church, who publicly urged the government to abide by the constitutionally mandated electoral deadlines, reported that they had experienced verbal harassment and interference based on their advocacy.

Specific examples of violations of rights in the reporting period

- [20 November 2019](#): Islamic militants belonging to Allied Democratic Forces (ADF) killed at least 19 people, kidnapped several others and torched a Catholic church in two separate attacks in eastern DRC (Reuters, 20 November 2020).
- [10 December 2019](#): A resurgence of civilian killings by ADF has left at least 25 United Methodist Christians dead and more than 75 church families displaced in Beni district (United Methodist Insight, 12 December 2019).
- [29 January 2020](#): Suspected Islamist militants from the ADF group killed at least 36 people including an Anglican pastor in an overnight attack in Beni territory, Nord Kivu Province, in eastern DRC (Reuters, 29 January 2020).
- [July 2020](#): Regarding the impact of ADF, a UN report released in July stated: “In the majority of cases, the means and the modus operandi of the attacks indicate a clear intention to leave no survivors. Entire families have been hacked to death.” It added that such incidents “may amount to crimes against humanity and war crimes” (VOA, 6 July 2020).

External Links - Short country profile

- Specific examples of violations of rights in the reporting period: 20 November 2019: - <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-congo-security/suspected-islamist-militants-kill-19-burn-church-in-eastern-dr-congo-idUSKBN1XU2K6>
- Specific examples of violations of rights in the reporting period: 10 December 2019: - <https://um-insight.net/in-the-world/disasters-and-climate-change/united-methodists-killed-in-congo-violence/>
- Specific examples of violations of rights in the reporting period: 29 January 2020: - <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-congo-violence/suspected-islamist-militants-kill-at-least-30-in-congo-local-officials-idUSKBN1ZS200>
- Specific examples of violations of rights in the reporting period: July 2020: - <https://www.voanews.com/africa/islamic-militants-may-have-committed-war-crimes-drc-un-says>

WWL 2021: Keys to understanding / DRC

Link for general background information

- [DR Congo country profile - BBC News](#)

Recent history

The Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) was a Belgian colony, which, along with other African countries, declared independence in 1960. However, civil war followed and the secession of some provinces which led to a fragmentation of the country. The country was caught up in a [proxy war](#) between the West (headed by the USA) and the Soviet Union (Source: US State Department, Office of Historian, accessed 9 September 2020). The election of Joseph Kasavubu as president and Patrice Lumumba as prime minister did not bring peace and the latter was arrested and [killed](#) on 17 January 1961 (The Guardian, 17 January 2011).

On 24 November 1965, Mobutu seized power with the help of the CIA and created an environment where only one party could flourish, namely the Popular Revolutionary Movement. The Constitution gave him unlimited power, he accumulated great wealth and supported guerrilla fighters in neighboring countries such as Angola. The rule of Mobutu was not unchallenged. Riots, protests and guerrilla fighters supported by Angola put pressure on Mobutu.

In 1994, the World Bank declared the country bankrupt. The 1994 atrocities in Rwanda had a spillover effect. Finally, with mainly Tutsi soldiers trained by Rwanda and Uganda, Laurent Kabila overthrew Mobutu in 1997. Kabila was assassinated by his own bodyguard and was replaced by his son, Joseph Kabila, who was in power until January 2019.

The wars in DRC returned to the spotlight in 2003 when the president of the country requested the International Criminal Court (ICC) to investigate the [crimes](#) committed by various rebel groups (ICC Press Release, 19 April 2004). After an extensive investigation the Court indicted Thomas Lubanga Dyilo, Germain Katanga, Mathieu Ngudjolo Chui, Bosco Ntaganda, Callixte Mbarushimana, and Sylvestre Mudacumura.

The situation in DRC has been exacerbated by the continual interference of neighboring countries. According to a report by [The Guardian](#) on 18 October 2012, the United Nations officially stated that the Rwandan defense minister was the de facto leader of rebels in DRC. Later UN reports (in 2014) also implicated Uganda and Burundi.

After years of speculation, President Kabila decided to [step down](#) and not run for a third term in the presidential elections held in December 2018 (France 24, 8 August 2018). [Newly elected President](#) Felix Tshisekedi was sworn in as successor to Joseph Kabila in January 2019 in the country's first transfer of power via democratic election in 59 years of independence. The country's electoral commission declared him winner despite credible evidence of election fraud (The Guardian, 24 January 2019).

Political and legal landscape

DRC is a unitary multiparty republic with two legislative houses - the Senate with 108 members and the National Assembly with 500 members. The president is the head of state and the prime minister is head of the government. With 26 justices, the Supreme Court is the highest judicial organ in the country, while the country also has a Constitutional Court with nine judges.

Although President Kabila's term in office ended in 2016, the country failed to hold elections, which caused great tension. Presidential elections did not take place until December 2018 (without President Kabila running for a third term). Under Kabila, political corruption, weak rule of law and violence remained prevalent. According to Reporters Without Borders [2017 Freedom of the Press Index](#), threats, physical attacks, abductions, arrests, and cases of prolonged detention targeting journalists were almost never investigated. Under Kabila's presidency, at least 11 journalists were murdered without consequence for the perpetrators.

In its [2019 Human Rights Report](#), the US State Department summarized the abysmal human rights condition in the country as follows:

- “Unlawful or arbitrary killings, including extrajudicial killings by the government; forced disappearances by the government; torture by government; arbitrary detention by the government; harsh and life-threatening prison conditions; political prisoners; arbitrary or unlawful interference with privacy; serious problems with the independence of the judiciary; the worst forms of restrictions on free expression, the press, and the internet, including violence, threats of violence, or unjustified arrests of journalists, censorship, internet blackouts, and criminal libel; interference with the rights of peaceful assembly and freedom of association; some restrictions on citizens' right to change their government through democratic means; serious acts of corruption by the government; trafficking in persons; violence against women and children due in substantial part to government negligence.”

According to the Human Rights Watch [2019 World Report](#):

- On 24 January 2019 Felix Tshisekedi was sworn in as president following a long-delayed and disputed national election, marred by widespread irregularities, voter suppression, violence, and interference from armed groups. More than a million Congolese were unable to vote because voting in three areas was postponed to March 2019, due to security concerns and an outbreak of Ebola in the eastern region. The president promised Guarantee to each citizen the respect of their fundamental rights and end all forms of discrimination, promising that his government will prioritize an effective and determined fight against corruption, impunity, bad governance, and tribalism. Hence, he released most political prisoners and activists detained during the country's protracted political crisis, and those living in exile were allowed to return home.

However, the election of the new president has not reduced tensions. According to the International Crisis Group's (ICG) [January 2020 Global Overview](#):

- "Fighting escalated in Ituri province in northeast between security forces and armed groups, militia attacks on civilians surged in Beni territory, North Kivu late Jan, and tensions persisted between President Tshisekedi and allies of former President Kabila. In Ituri, clashes between security forces and armed group Cooperative for Development of Congo (CODECO) in Djugu and Mahagi territories 1-22 January left at least 43 dead."

Religious landscape

DRC: Religious context	Number of adherents	%
Christians	85,120,000	95.1
Muslim	1,300,000	1.5
Hindu	125,000	0.1
Buddhist	4,700	0.0
Ethno-religionist	2,200,000	2.5
Jewish	400	0.0
Bahai	365,000	0.4
Atheist	18,000	0.0
Agnostic	365,000	0.4
Other	7,000	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 February 2020)

Geographically, there are no specific areas of concentration based of religious affiliation. It is also important to note that a significant number of people mix Christianity with a traditional belief system which often creates a problem for some evangelical groups when they reject that practice.

Economic landscape

According to the [World Bank's Country Overview](#) (updated 4 May 2020):

- **Economic growth:** Economic growth slowed to 4.4% in 2019 after reaching 5.8% in 2018 owing to the drop in commodity prices, particularly for cobalt and copper, which account for over 80% of the country's exports.

- **Fiscal deficit:** Higher revenue stagnation widened the fiscal deficit from close to balance in 2018 to deficit of 2% of the GDP in 2019.
- **Current account deficit:** Due to the deterioration in the terms of trade and lower export volumes, the current account deficit widened to 4.2% of GDP in 2019 (against 3.6% of GDP in 2018).
- **Inflation:** 4.6% in 2019, down from 7.2% in 2018.
- **Effect of COVID-19:** The coronavirus pandemic (COVID-19) is expected to trigger an economic recession (-2.2%) in 2020, stemming from weaker exports caused by the global economic downturn. However, the gradual recovery of global economic activity and the start of production at the Kamo-a-Kakula mine should pave the way for a rebound in economic growth to 4.5% in 2022.

DRC is one of the richest countries in Africa in terms of minerals and natural resources. It has vast deposits of industrial diamonds, cobalt and copper. The country also has one of the largest forest reserves in Africa. In the Congo River - the biggest river in Africa - it has half of the hydroelectric potential of the continent. The country has been struggling with inflation and decelerating economic growth. This was mainly due to declining prices and shrinking global demand for raw materials such as copper and cobalt which account for 80% of DRC's export revenue. The national currency is expected to continue its decline against the dollar as the rate of inflation increases.

According to World Bank's [2020 Macro Poverty Outlook](#) (for sub-Saharan Africa):

- **Economic output:** "Economic output is expected to contract by 2.2 percent in 2020 on the back of lower external demand due to the COVID-19 and a decline in output due to the closure of the major copper and cobalt mines in Mutanda. Real GDP growth is projected to rebound to 4.5 percent in 2022, with the launch of the mining production at the Kamo-a-Kakula mine and an anticipated global economic recovery."
- **Poverty:** According to the latest survey conducted in 2012, nearly 77% of the population lived with less than \$1.9 per day. The latest projections put poverty at around 72% of the total population in 2019. The country remains the country with the largest number of extreme poor in the sub-Saharan Africa. "Extreme poverty rate is projected to increase by 1.0 percentage point by 2022, the high population growth being expected to offset partially economic growth, which would be also adversely affected by the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic."

Heritage Foundation's [2020 Index of Economic Freedom](#) score and rank: 49.5 points, rank 162.

Social and cultural landscape

DRC is the biggest country in the Great Lakes region. It was part of the old Kongo Kingdom and has more than 200 ethnic groups. It shares borders with Congo Brazzaville, Angola, Zambia, Rwanda, Tanzania, Burundi, Uganda, South Sudan, and the Central African Republic (CAR). DRC is the fourth most populous country in Africa.

According to the UN [2019 Human Development Report](#) and [World Factbook](#) (April 2020):

- **Main ethnic groups:** Mongo, Luba, Kongo (all Bantu), and the Mangbetu-Azande (Hamitic) which make up about 45% of the total population
- **Main languages:** French (official), Lingala (a lingua franca trade language), Kingwana (a dialect of Kiswahili or Swahili), Kikongo, Tshiluba
- **Urban population:** 45.6% of the total population (2020)
- **Rate of urbanization:** 4.53%
- **Population growth rate:** 3.18 % (2020 est.)
- **Median age:** 17.0 years (2019)
- **Expected years of schooling:** 9.7 years
- **Literacy rate, adult (15 years and older):** 77.0%
- **Employment population ratio (15 years and older):** 61.0%
- **Unemployment, total (% of labor force):** 4.2%
- **Unemployment, youth (ages 15-24):** 7.8%

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

- **Refugees/IDPs:** Waves of unrest displaced an estimated 5 million people between 2017 and 2019 namely in the Kasai, Tanganyika, Ituri and Kivu regions. Hundreds of thousands have fled to Angola, Zambia, and other neighboring countries. Over 918,000 DRC refugees and asylum-seekers are being hosted in African countries (as of 20 February 2020). There were 5.01 million IDPs in DRC between October 2017 and September 2019. There were almost 524,000 refugees and 3,188 asylum-seekers in the DRC as of 31 January 2020.

According to World Bank's [2020 Macro Poverty Outlook](#) (for sub-Saharan Africa):

- **Social and human indicators:** Despite some improvements, social and human indicators are weak: in 2018, the infant mortality of 68.2 per 1000 live births is higher than the sub-Saharan average of 52.7, while the country is ranked 146th out of 157 countries in the Human Capital Index (HCI) with a score of 0.37%. About 43% of households have access to drinking water (69% in urban areas, 23% in rural areas) and only 20% have access to sanitation. DRC's fertility rate (6.1 children per woman) is higher than the sub-Saharan average which is 4.8.

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

- **Human Development Index (HDI):** With a score of 0.459, DRC ranks 179th out of 189 countries
- **The life expectancy at birth:** 60.4 years
- **Gender Development index (GDI):** 0.844
- **Gender Inequality index (GII):** 0.655

Technological landscape

According to [World Internet Stats](#) (accessed 2 July 2020):

- **Internet usage:** 8.3% of the population – accessed 31 December 2019
- **Facebook usage:** 3.5% of the population – accessed 31 December 2019

According to [World Bank's Country profile](#) (2018):

- **Mobile subscription** (per 100 people): 43.4

Although DRC is one of the wealthiest countries in Africa in terms of its natural resources, internal conflicts (since independence) have made progress illusive. Corporations and neighboring countries have been fueling the conflict (mineral-related) and, at one point, Uganda and Rwanda sent in troops. As a result, the country has failed to live up to its potential: Infrastructure is poor, educational facilities are not well-equipped; hospitals and clinics lack professional staff and medical equipment.

Security situation

The crisis in DRC started more than 50 years ago and has continued in the WWL 2021 reporting period. The wars being fought in the eastern part of the country continue to derail the peace process. Foreign countries like Rwanda have also been interfering in the country and making the situation worse.

Much of the violence in North Kivu, Kisangani and in Kasai has an ethnic dimension. DRC has great ethnic diversity, some estimating the total number of ethnic groups as being as high as 450. In 2017 the Bana Mura militia carried out well-planned attacks aimed at “eliminating the entire Luba and Luba populations in the villages they attacked”, with officials from the national army sometimes seen leading the groups. This militia was responsible for 150 of the 251 murders carried out between 12 March and 19 June 2017. Some of the attacks targeted churches and [Christians](#). (Source: Africa News, 4 August 2017). The continuing clashes between [Lendu and Hema](#), which led to death of over 150 people in June 2019, have also led to further insecurity in the country (Reuters, 17 June 2019).

However, the most serious threat of all is that the eastern part of the country has become a safe haven for the Islamist group “Allied Democratic Forces” (ADF-NALU), which is seeking to create an Islamic State in Uganda and has been targeting churches and Christians in north-eastern DRC for several years, ever since their attempt to overthrow the Ugandan government failed. According to the [UK Foreign Office](#) (accessed 9 September 2020): “There are continued reports of attacks and kidnappings, including against staff from NGOs” and “Protests in November 2019 in Beni and Butembo, Eastern DRC, targeted UN and Government vehicles and premises due to a rise in anti-government and anti-UN sentiment”.

[The UN Secretary-General’s](#) report on the UN Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO), released on 18 March 2020, describes the political situation in the DRC as stable, despite ADF's continued attacks against civilians. According to the report, the ADF was responsible for the death of 300 civilians during the

reporting period covering 27 November 2019 to 16 March 2020. The report also notes that “the rise in attacks against civilians resulted in strong sentiment among some members of the local population against MONUSCO and the Congolese authorities”. DRC continues to have one of the largest populations of internally displaced people in the world; the report put the number at over five million at the end of 2019.

What is also a problem is that anti-government militias are targeting churches. According to the US State Department's [2019 IRF report](#): "Anti-government militia members targeted churches and church property in the North Kivu and Ituri Provinces, where armed groups remain active." Church leaders who speak to their congregations about politics and the armed struggle are most likely to provoke attack.

Trends analysis

1) The new government has brought little change

In the past, the Kabila government denied citizens' basic rights of freedom of expression, freedom of the press, freedom of association and other fundamental human rights. The change of president and new government (since December 2018) has not brought significant changes - there is still a lack of rule of law and lack of security and corruption is still rampant. The overall situation in DRC remains very precarious.

2) The fact that the country is very rich in minerals vital for international electronic companies is negatively impacting the country's stability

Rebel groups are financing their war campaigns by selling minerals vital for international electronic companies on the black market.

3) The fragility of the security situation could seriously affect Christians

The fragility of the security and political situation could expose Christians to increasing levels of violent persecution and provide the ADF-NALU with an opportunity to expand. The infighting between different armed groups is likely to continue and increase.

4) ADF growing in influence and impact on Christians

ADF has been growing while the international community is paying attention to other groups. The Islamic militant group has been involved in many atrocities that have been documented by human rights groups. A report by the UN indicates that some of the crimes committed by the group could amount to crimes against humanity. This problem will likely continue and Christians in the region will be seriously affected. In July 2020, a [UN report](#) suggested that crimes committed by ADF might amount to war crimes (Reuters, 6 July 2020).

External Links - Keys to understanding

- Link for general background information: DR Congo country profile - BBC News - <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-africa-13283212>
- Recent history: proxy war - <https://history.state.gov/milestones/1961-1968/congo-decolonization>
- Recent history: killed - <http://www.theguardian.com/global-development/poverty-matters/2011/jan/17/patrice-lumumba-50th-anniversary-assassination>

- Recent history: crimes - https://www.icc-cpi.int/en_menus/icc/press%20and%20media/press%20releases/2004/Pages/prosecutor%20receives%20referral%20of%20the%20situation%20in%20the%20democratic%20republic%20of%20congo.aspx
- Recent history: The Guardian - <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2012/oct/17/rwanda-minister-leader-congo-rebels-kabarebe>
- Recent history: step down - <https://www.france24.com/en/eye-africa/20180808-2018-08-08-2146-eye-africa>
- Recent history: Newly elected President - <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2019/jan/24/tshisekedi-calls-for-a-congo-for-all-after-disputed-election>
- Political and legal landscape: 2017 Freedom of the Press Index - <https://rsf.org/en/democratic-republic-congo>
- Political and legal landscape: 2019 Human Rights Report, - <https://www.state.gov/reports/2019-country-reports-on-human-rights-practices/democratic-republic-of-the-congo/>
- Political and legal landscape: 2019 World Report - <https://www.hrw.org/world-report/2020/country-chapters/democratic-republic-congo>
- Political and legal landscape: January 2020 Global Overview - <https://www.crisisgroup.org/crisiswatch/february-alerts-and-january-trends-2020#democratic-republic-of-congo>
- Economic landscape: World Bank's Country Overview - <https://www.worldbank.org/en/country/drc/overview>
- Economic landscape: 2020 Macro Poverty Outlook - <http://pubdocs.worldbank.org/en/720441492455091991/mpo-ssa.pdf>
- Economic landscape: 2020 Index of Economic Freedom - <https://www.heritage.org/index/country/democraticrepubliccongo>
- Social and cultural landscape: 2019 Human Development Report - <http://hdr.undp.org/en/countries/profiles/COD>
- Social and cultural landscape: World Factbook - <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/attachments/summaries/CG-summary.pdf>
- Social and cultural landscape: UNHCR 2020 March 2020 update - <https://www.unhcr.org/en-us/dr-congo-emergency.html>
- Social and cultural landscape: 2020 Macro Poverty Outlook - <http://pubdocs.worldbank.org/en/720441492455091991/mpo-ssa.pdf>
- Social and cultural landscape: the UN Human Development Indicators - <http://hdr.undp.org/en/countries/profiles/COD>
- 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=COD
- Security situation: Christians - <http://www.africanews.com/2017/08/04/militia-group-blamed-for-atrocities-in-drc-largely-composed-of-children/>
- Security situation: Lendu and Hema, - <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-congo-violence/at-least-161-dead-in-northeast-congo-in-apparent-ethnic-clashes-idUSKCN1T11FT>
- Security situation: UK Foreign Office - <https://www.gov.uk/foreign-travel-advice/democratic-republic-of-the-congo/safety-and-security>
- Security situation: The UN Secretary-General's - <https://www.whatsinblue.org/2020/03/un-organization-stabilization-mission-in-the-democratic-republic-of-the-congo-monusco-informal-videoconferencing-meeting.php>
- Security situation: 2019 IRF report - <https://www.state.gov/reports/2019-report-on-international-religious-freedom/democratic-republic-of-the-congo/>
- Trends analysis: UN report - <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-congo-security-rights/u-n-says-attacks-by-islamist-militia-in-congo-may-be-war-crimes-idUSKBN2471TE>

WWL 2021: Church information / DRC

Christian origins

Christianity has a long history in DRC and can be traced back to 1491 when Roman Catholic priests arrived after Portuguese merchants had discovered the Congo River in 1482. However, as the main focus was the slave trade, Christian mission did not go deep inside the country. Not until the 19th century could Christianity become properly established.

- Catholic missionaries arrived in 1865. King Leopold II of Belgium was keen on establishing Belgium as a colonial power and helped missionaries by giving them land grants.
- Protestants entered the country in 1878 when British Baptists built their own mission stations along the Congo River.
- In 1891, Presbyterians came from the USA.
- In 1915 Pentecostals arrived from the UK. These were followed by Mennonites, Seventh-day Adventists and other denominations.

Church spectrum today

DRC: Church networks	Christians	%
Orthodox	31,500	0.0
Catholic	49,200,000	57.8
Protestant	16,660,000	19.6
Independent	23,930,000	28.1
Unaffiliated	500,000	0.6
Doubly-affiliated Christians	-5,201,000	-6.1
Total	85,120,500	100.0
<i>(Any deviation from the total number of Christians stated above is due to the rounding of decimals)</i>		
Evangelical movement	6,023,000	7.1
Renewalist movement	28,000,000	32.9

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.

WWL 2021: Persecution Dynamics / DRC

Reporting period

1 October 2019 - 30 September 2020

Position on the World Watch List

DRC: World Watch List	Points	WWL Rank
WWL 2021	64	40
WWL 2020	56	57
WWL 2019	55	54
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 of 8 points in score in WWL 2021 was due to the fact that pressure on the Church has been building up due to the seriousness of the violence in the eastern part of the country. There is extreme lawlessness and failure of institutions in many parts of the country. Even though the violence was extremely high in WWL 2020 as well, there has been a rippling effect causing a rise in pressure. In the WWL 2021 reporting period, jihadist and other armed groups (such as ADF) have caused much suffering for the community and the Christian population in particular. Armed groups also influence the content of church leaders' sermons. On one occasion a church leader was kidnapped and warned about what he could and could not say in his church. In general terms, Christians also face restrictions from the government in many ways - including free expression, license and operating in the country freely. It is a combination of these factors that has led to the increase in the score.

Persecution engines

DRC: 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	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	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 present in North Kivu and it is seen mainly in the activities of militant Islamic groups, especially ADF-NALU. The ideological influence of this group is affecting society and ordinary people in those parts of the country which are predominantly Muslim, thus further increasing the likelihood of Christians being persecuted, especially converts.

Organized corruption and crime (Very strong)

The Corruption Perception Index 2019 published by [Transparency International](#) puts the country at rank 168 (out of 198 countries) with a score of 18 out of 100. Corruption (and impunity for corrupt activities) is rampant in both the public and private sectors. It particularly affects the Christian community which opposes it since it is a form of injustice and contradicts Christian principles of faith.

Dictatorial paranoia (Medium)

DRC has suffered enormously under different regimes. Joseph Kabila postponed elections for two years without legal grounds. His supporters and security apparatus targeted Christians who voiced their discontent with his rule. The incumbent president, Felix Tshisekedi, came to power in December 2018 with a promise of cleaning up the mess and taking the country forward, However, so far there are no tangible reforms taking place that can save the population from

the savage attack of rebel groups in the country and reduce the level of persecution targeting Christians. Corruption remains rampant and the security apparatus remains unaccountable for their actions.

Ethno-religious hostility (Medium)

Much of the violence in North Kivu, Kisangani and in Kasai also bears an ethnic dimension. This is still the case, but was particularly evident in the WWL 2018 reporting period when the Bana Mura militia carried out well-planned attacks (at times led by national army officers) aimed at eliminating the Luba and Luala populations. Some of the attacks targeted churches and [Christians](#) (Reuters, 4 August 2017). This has continued in all following WWL reporting periods, including WWL 2021.

Drivers of persecution

DRC: Drivers of persecution per engine	IO	RN	ERH	CO	CDP	CPCO	SI	DPA	OCC
	VERY STRONG	-	MEDIUM	-	WEAK	-	-	MEDIUM	STRONG
Government officials	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	Medium	Medium
Ethnic group leaders	-	-	Medium	-	-	-	-	-	-
Non-Christian religious leaders	Very weak	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Religious leaders of other churches	-	-	-	-	Weak	-	-	-	-
Violent religious groups	Very strong	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	Strong
Ideological pressure groups	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Citizens (people from the broader society), including mobs	Weak	-	-	-	Weak	-	-	-	-
One's own (extended) family	Very weak	-	-	-	Weak	-	-	-	-
Political parties	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	Weak	-
Revolutionaries or paramilitary groups	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	Strong
Organized crime cartels or networks	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	Strong
Multilateral organizations (e.g. UN, OIC etc.)	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	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

- **Violent religious groups (Very strong):** The main drivers of *Islamic oppression* in the DRC are violent religious groups as well as ordinary people who are influenced by radical Islamic ideology. The ADF-NALU is responsible for the persecution of Christians in North Kivu, in the eastern part of the country. This group has violently attacked Christians and churches. Ordinary people influenced by militant brands of Islam especially persecute Christians with a Muslim background (i.e. converts). However, it is important to note that this is the reality only in a small portion of the DRC and in most parts of the country *Islamic oppression* is not a Persecution engine that has any significant presence.

Drivers of Dictatorial paranoia

- **Government officials (Medium):** There are several drivers of *Dictatorial paranoia* in the DRC. Chief among these drivers is (now ex-)President Kabila and his allies who were determined to stay in power at all costs, but also includes supporters, political parties and militant groups affiliated with Kabila directly or indirectly. Due to the role that the Roman Catholic Church has tried to play in resolving the political and constitutional crises (caused by the ex-president delaying presidential elections), some have perceived Christians as being allied with the opposition. As a result, churches have faced pressure from the supporters and allies of the (ex-)president.

Drivers of organized corruption and crime

Since DRC is one of the most corrupt nations in Africa, this Persecution engine has a lot of strong drivers:

- **Violent religious groups (Strong):** Militant Islamic groups also participate in illegal mining. Research carried out by the [Institute for Security Studies](#) (ISS) in 2016 states: "The smuggling of DRC's natural resources is linked to the conflict in the region, warning that al-Shabaab remains sufficiently resourced to fund its activities despite efforts by African Union Mission in Somalia and the United Nations to cut off its channels of funding" (The East African, 25 March 2016).
- **Organized crime networks (Strong):** The crime and corruption related to the [mining industry](#) in DRC are profound (Raconteur, 4 June 2019). One of the wealthiest nations in Africa with massive natural resources, DRC has seen numerous violent clashes and violations of human rights. Organized crime networks have become adept at smuggling minerals out of the country via a variety of routes.
- **Paramilitary groups (Strong):** DRC has numerous paramilitary and rebel groups that show disregard for civilian lives. These include M27, Mai-Mai, National Forces of Liberation, RUD-Urunana, Nyatura, FDLR, Mai Mai Sheka, Mai Mai Yakutumba, Raia Mutomboki, FNI, FRPI, FPJC, Mai-Mai Simba, UPC, Forces for Renewal, Mai Mai Kata Katanga, Mai Mai Gédéon, CORAK and CPK. These and other groups are creating an environment of lawlessness; they are illegally smuggling mining produce and they are merciless to those who oppose them. Christians in DRC who speak out against this practice experience severe reprisals.

- **Government officials (Medium):** Government representatives often embezzle public money and do not protect civilians from persecution. Those who attack Christians often enjoy impunity due to corruption.

Drivers of Ethno-religious hostility

- **Ethnic leaders (Medium):** In conflicts that pit ethnic groups against one another and in which ethnically and regionally based armed groups are active, Christians are targeted for various reasons. For instance, some ethnic and militant leaders belong to cults or adhere to indigenous traditional belief systems that generate hostility towards Christians.

Areas where Christians face most difficulties

Christians face difficulties from Islamic militants who are particularly active in North Kivu, in the eastern part of the country.

Christian communities and how they are affected

Communities of expatriate Christians:

Expatriate Christians in DRC are not forced into isolation. This category is therefore not included in the WWL analysis for scoring.

Historical Christian communities:

This category includes Roman Catholic churches and various Protestant denominations. They are present throughout the country and are exposed to persecution from armed groups. During times of political unrest, attacks on church properties and intimidation of church leaders is common. From Kinshasa, the capital, to the central Kasai Province and, more recently, the eastern North-Kivu province, churches, convents, and Catholic schools have been vandalized and looted by armed groups of youths or militiamen. The Islamist ADF-NALU have targeted Christians in the north-eastern region for several years, ever since their attempt to overthrow the Ugandan government failed.

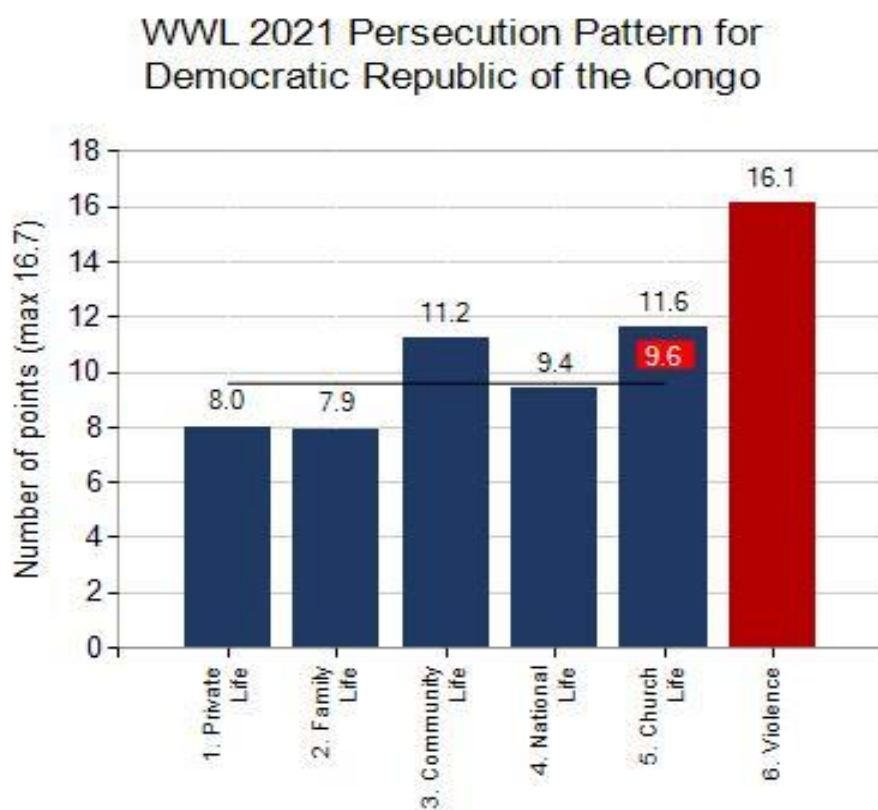
Converts:

Converts to Christianity (especially from Islam) can be found throughout the North Kivu Province in particular. Although there are Christians with a Muslim background in other parts of the country too, the latter are relatively less exposed to persecution and pressure from family and community in comparison. To a lesser extent, cross-denominational converts from Catholicism to Protestantism or converts from African traditional religions to Christianity also face pressure.

Non-traditional Christian communities:

Baptists, Pentecostal churches and similar groups have faced persecution principally from the Islamist ADF-NALU. Although these non-traditional Christian groups are in the minority they are growing rapidly compared to other Christian denominations. They face discrimination and persecution from members of the dominant historical Christian groups and Islamist groups in the Muslim dominated part of the country. The ongoing conflict also affects this group of Christians as it does for all citizens in the country.

The Persecution pattern



The WWL 2021 Persecution pattern for DRC shows:

- The average pressure on Christians in DRC is high at 9.6 an increase of 1.5 points compared to WWL 2020.
- As far as pressure is concerned, the *Church sphere* scores highest with 11.6 points, followed by the *Community sphere* (11.2 points). This reflects the fact that the main challenges faced by Christians are the problems that Islamic militants pose especially in the eastern part of the country where churches have been under repeated attack.
- The score for violence is at an extreme level (16.1 points), an increase of 0.5 points from WWL 2020. This is largely due to the killings by Islamic militants and other militant groups.

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 1.4: It has been risky for Christians to reveal their faith in written forms of personal expression (including expressions in blogs and Facebook etc.). (3.00 points)

In the areas controlled by the ADF, it is virtually impossible to express one's faith as the jihadist groups are known to go from home to home in villages to find out who said what, especially if an expression of faith is done in the context of condemning the actions of Islamic militants. In addition, inter-denominational converts also face pressure from their family or community. In this case those who would leave a Catholic church and join an evangelical congregation would be discriminated and put under pressure. In the context of lack of freedom of expression in the country, any Christian who expresses his Christian faith in a way which could be seen as opposing the action of the government, would be put under pressure from the government.

Block 1.5: It has been risky for Christians to display Christian images or symbols. (2.50 points)

There have been reports that the ADF-NALU have been singling out those wearing Christian symbols for killing. The [killing of Anglican priests](#) would be an illustration (ICC, 9 April 2020).

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

Especially converts from Islam to Christianity and Interdenominational converts face this issue. They can be expelled from their homes.

Block 1.9: It has been risky for Christians to meet with other Christians. (2.25 points)

Meeting in areas controlled by the armed groups, it is extremely risky and can lead to abduction or killing.

Pressure in Block 2 / Family sphere

Block 2.3: Christians have been hindered in celebrating a Christian wedding for faith-related reasons. (2.50 points)

Due to the presence of jihadists in the eastern part of the country, celebrating anything Christian can be dangerous. Christian couples also face the challenge of performing certain cultural rituals and customs. Interdenominational marriages may be hindered by family members of a couple planning to get married, where they refuse to regard each other as being true Christians.

Block 2.8: Christian children have been pressured into attending anti-Christian or majority religion teaching at any level of education. (2.25 points)

In ADF controlled areas, Christians are under pressure to abandon going to school because ADF militants can show up and abduct or at times force them to learn Islamic scriptures.

In addition, the Catholic Church plays a key role in the education sector in DRC and runs many elementary schools and high schools. Non-Catholics who attend Catholic schools are forced to

take part in Catholic services and receive Catholic teaching. A country expert states that "in some places, those who decline to participate face the prospect of expulsion". This issue might improve as the government introduced state-provided [free education](#) in September 2019 (FSSPX News, 17 October 2019). However, this reform brings its own set of problems, creating financial difficulties for the Catholic school system that has helped so many families in poverty.

Block 2.11: Spouses of converts have been put under pressure (successfully or unsuccessfully) by others to divorce. (2.25 points)

The pressure to divorce comes in the following context:

i) In Catholic families, if one person of a married couple becomes an evangelical Christian and joins a Protestant church, this would lead to pressure from the family to divorce that person. This is done in a bid to suppress inter-denominational conversions. It is a form of punishment for the convert family as well as a lesson for others.

ii) In the northern part of the country where the Muslim population is concentrated, the pressure to divorce a convert to Christianity is also an issue. This occurs particularly due to the resentment among Muslims leaders who say that 'Christian leaders are intentionally excluding them from national religious dialogue.' In the ADF areas, the pressure to divorce a convert comes because the community fears that ADF jihadists might learn of the convert's new faith and can come and attack the community.

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. (2.00 points)

Christians in the context of cross-denominational conversion and converts from a Muslim background often face the prospect of losing inheritance. Leaving the religion of their families is tantamount to forfeiting the right to inherit.

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.). (3.25 points)

There are places where Christians meet regular and concerted obstruction to their way of life. For instance, Christian businesses have been deliberately ruined by revolutionary groups and by ADF. In some areas, education is becoming difficult to access for Christians and there is also monitoring of what teachers teach. Travelling can also be very difficult for Christians.

Block 3.3: Christians have been under threat of abduction and/or forced marriage. (3.25 points)

In the eastern part of the country, the abduction of girls by armed groups is quite frequent. This is particularly true for Christians girls. Many are forced into marriage with group members.

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

In areas under the influence of militants (including ADF), Christians have to make sure that they do not speak against injustice, violence or Islamic militants. If they do, they will face serious problems. For example, urging your congregation to reject involvement with armed groups would invite attack. In June 2019, armed militia members kidnapped a Catholic priest in Ituri Province. The militants allegedly reproached him for his role in [denouncing violence](#) (US State Department IRF 2019 Report).

Block 3.9: Christians have faced disadvantages in their education at any level for faith-related reasons (e.g. restrictions of access to education). (3.00 points)

In the eastern parts of the country Christians would be at a disadvantage because of the violence that often targets Christians. Displacement and insecurity makes it difficult for pupils and students to pursue their education properly.

Pressure in Block 4 / National sphere

Block 4.14: Those who caused harm to Christians have deliberately been left unpunished. (3.75 points)

In many circumstances there are no attempts to bring the perpetrators of violence against Christians to justice. This may be due to corruption or complicity, or lack of willingness on the part of the authorities.

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

The law provides for freedom of speech and of the press; however, the transitional government restricted these rights in practice and continued to violate press freedom. In addition, when Christians speak out against corruption, greed and injustice, they risk being abducted or some other form of attack.

Block 4.9: Christian civil society organizations or political parties have been hindered in their functioning or forbidden because of their Christian convictions. (3.50 points)

Due to the levels of violence and insecurity in certain regions, Christian civil society organizations have been hindered in their activities. Also, the government has monitored organizations that are known for being critical of the government and hindered their activities.

Block 4.12: Christians, churches or Christian organizations have been hindered in publicly displaying religious symbols. (3.00 points)

In some of the areas where jihadists and militias operate, it is risky to display Christian symbols, such as a cross, since that can provoke attack. This particularly affects church leaders, who are a particular target for attack, especially where they are known to reject violence and the activities of armed groups.

Pressure in Block 5 / Church sphere

Block 5.1: Church activities have been monitored, hindered, disturbed, or obstructed. (3.50 points)

Activities of churches have been disturbed and obstructed by continuous violence from armed groups in conflict regions. Their attacks have left many villages and churches empty. The government also monitors churches, especially those that are seen as being 'unfriendly' to the president. It is well documented issue that the churches are targeted. As reported by [the US State Department](#), "Antigovernment militia members targeted churches and church property in the North Kivu and Ituri Provinces, where armed groups remain active."

Block 5.2: It has been difficult to get registration or legal status for churches at any level of government. (3.50 points)

The Ministry of Justice (MOJ) failed once again to issue registration permits for church groups in the WWL 2021 reporting period. The US State Department 2019 [report](#) states: "The MOJ again did not issue any final registration permits for religious groups, and had not done so since 2014."

Block 5.5: Churches have been hindered from organizing Christian activities outside church buildings. (3.50 points)

In some parts of country, the government has been hostile to church activities, alleging that those activities might lead to public disorder. The reality is that the government is not open to freedom of association and freedom of the press and religion. The government also wants to make sure that those activities do not turn into a form of anti-government protest.

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

In areas where religious armed groups are active, churches are being monitored. The government also monitors what churches are teaching. This is a part of a wider issue regarding freedom of association and assembly.

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.

DRC: Violence Block question	WWL 2021	WWL 2020
6.1 How many Christians have been killed for faith-related reasons (including state sanctioned executions)?	460	152
6.2 How many churches or Christian buildings (schools, hospitals, cemeteries, etc.) have been attacked, damaged, bombed, looted, destroyed, burned down, closed or confiscated for faith-related reasons?	100	10
6.3 How many Christians have been detained for faith-related reasons?	0	0
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?	10	0
6.5 How many Christians have been abducted for faith-related reasons (including Christians missing in a persecution context)?	250	189
6.6 How many Christians have been raped or otherwise sexually harassed for faith-related reasons?	100	355
6.7 How many cases have there been of forced marriages of Christians to non-Christians?	100	10
6.8 How many Christians have been otherwise physically or mentally abused for faith-related reasons (including beatings and death threats)?	1000	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?	1000	100
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	264
6.11 How many Christians have been forced to leave their homes or go into hiding in-country for faith-related reasons?	1000	1000
6.12 How many Christians have been forced to leave the country for faith-related reasons?	1000	3600

In the WWL 2021 reporting period:

- **Christians killed:** There were reports that indicate at least 460 Christians were killed by the ADF. For example, an Anglican priest was killed in Eringeti village by members of the Allied Democratic Forces (ADF), The Rev. Ven. Batsemire Ngulongo Yesse was also killed alongside 35 other Christians living in four villages in the West district of Beni. The father of eight was

also killed when he refused to convert to Islam. As the UN report indicated, ADF might have committed war crimes in the region.

- **Churches attacked:** At least hundred churches were destroyed by the ADF forces. For example, Reuters also quoted a government official who said ADF [torched a](#) catholic church in November 2019.
- **Christian homes/shops attacked:** In the context of wanton destruction by ADF forces, over 1000 Christian property, shops and homes were targeted. This led to displacement of thousands of Christians. AS [France 24](#) reported, this has been an ongoing issue for the last six years and the “authorities are powerless to stop the deadly violence.”

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

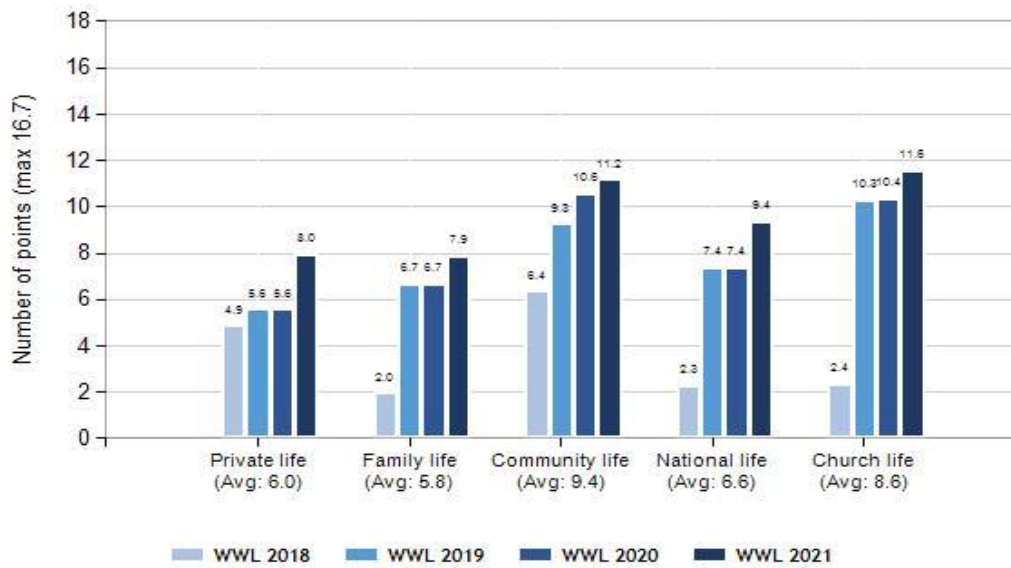
DRC: WWL 2017 - WWL 2021 Persecution Pattern history	Average pressure over 5 Spheres of life
2021	9.6
2020	8.1
2019	7.8
2018	3.6
2017	-

Since WWR started tracking Christian persecution in DRC in detail (WWL 2018), the level of average pressure has been increasing steadily and is now at its highest level.

5 Year trends: Pressure in each sphere of life

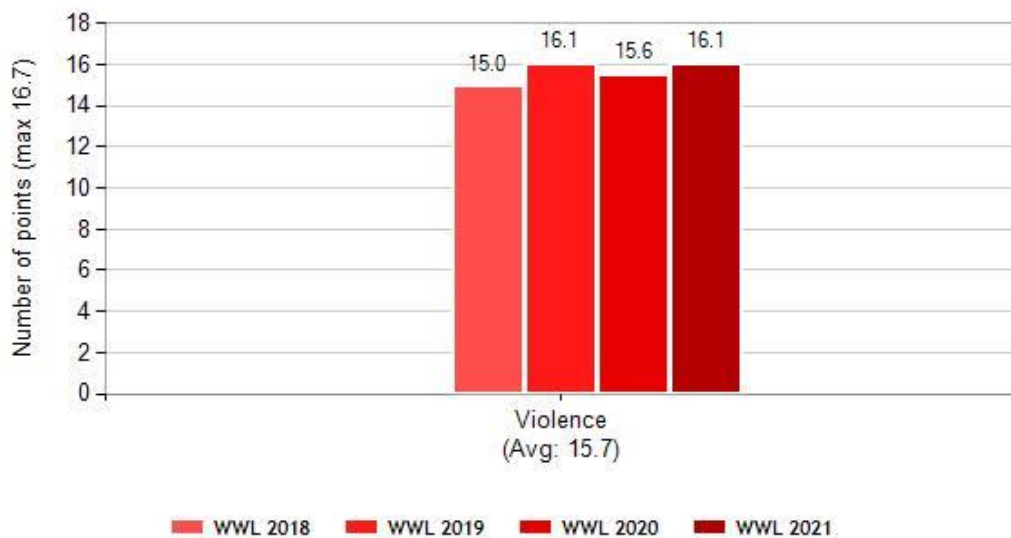
The chart below shows that the highest levels of pressure are to be found in the *Community* and *Church spheres of life*. This is a reflection of how Christians and churches are being targeted by armed groups and Islamic militants in the eastern part of the country.

WWL 2018 - WWL 2021 Persecution Pattern for Democratic Republic of the Congo (Spheres of life)



5 Year trends: Violence against Christians

WWL 2018 - WWL 2021 Persecution Pattern for Democratic Republic of the Congo (Violence)



The chart above shows that the level of violence in DRC has been very extreme in all the recorded reporting periods. This reflects the severity of violence in the eastern part of the country.

Gender-specific religious persecution Female

Female Pressure Points
Abduction
Denied custody of children
Denied inheritance or possessions
Forced divorce
Forced marriage
Forced out of home – expulsion
Targeted Seduction
Trafficking
Violence – death
Violence – sexual

DRC is a complicated country, politically, socially and economically. Women across several areas of DRC, particularly those dominated by Islam, are commonly treated as inferior. This has an impact on their experience of much of life - exemplified by the denial of education for girls. A country expert noted that “displacement and insecurity make it difficult to pursue one’s education properly”. In addition to this background discrimination, Congolese Christian women are vulnerable to abduction, rape, sexual torture and forced labor, especially as perpetrated by the Islamist ADF group. Many Christian women are reportedly abducted, forcibly married, and kept as a kind of “trophy”. Christian women - particularly converts - may be forcibly married, forcibly impregnated or forcibly divorced. These forced marriages are often early marriages, as sources report that elderly Muslim men often prefer young Christian girls. Child marriage rates are high in the DRC, with some [37% of girls](#) marrying before they turn 18 (Girls Not Brides).

Kidnappings and instances of rape most commonly occur at the hands of armed groups in the north-eastern regions, causing extreme psychological distress and trauma for the victims. According to experts, women are sometimes raped next to male hostages, who are bound. Certain terrorist groups seek Islamization through violent means, forcibly marrying abducted women to militia leaders and subjecting others to a life of sexual slavery. Young girls are also recruited through non-violent means, including through targeted seduction by young Muslim men.

Due to the shame of sexual violence, Christian women and girls may face isolation and rejection from their families and communities following an attack. In the local culture, it is believed that rape causes ‘[contamination](#)’ both physically as well as psychologically, a belief that causes some husbands to reject their wives altogether. In more extreme cases, an attack may cost a girl her life. In February 2020, one girl died after being brutally gang raped by the Mai-Mai rebel group.

Gender-specific religious persecution Male

Male Pressure Points
Abduction
Economic harassment via business/job/work access
Military/militia conscription/service against conscience
Trafficking
Violence – death
Violence – physical
Violence – sexual

In the complicated country of the Democratic Republic of Congo, political, social and economic tensions make life difficult for much of the population. In a context of violence and impunity, Congolese Christian men face extreme forms of persecution, including maiming, abduction, forced recruitment into militia groups, forced labor, sexual mutilation, disemboweling and brutal killings. To escape their kidnappers, men may be forced to pay large ransoms; these fines paralyze already impoverished families, sentencing them to live out the next few years in even more desperate poverty. Even without punitive ransoms, Christian men reportedly face discrimination in the workplace and in some cases, are denied the opportunity to work.

The targeting of Christian men in these ways also serves to weaken their families as well as the wider Church. Church leaders are also targeted, especially if they have publicly denounced violence.

Persecution of other religious minorities

According to the US State Department's [2019 IRF report](#):

- "Leaders of the Jehovah’s Witnesses reported generally positive relations with individuals from other religious groups but noted that 27 cases of assault on or suspected killings of Jehovah’s Witnesses dating from as early as 2015 continued to languish in the court system or were never sent to court for criminal prosecution after the arrests of suspects. They also

reported five assaults during the year that they stated were due to their religious beliefs in rural areas of Kwilu, South Kivu, and Sankuru Provinces."

- "Muslim leaders said that Christian groups sometimes failed to include them in intercommunal dialogues."

The government also used excessive force against the [Bundu dia Kongo](#) religious group which resulted in the death of over 55 people in April 2020 in western Kongo Central Province (HRW, 19 May 2020).

Future outlook

The outlook for Christians as viewed through the lens of:

Islamic oppression

The country has struggled to deal with ADF for many years and there is no plan of action to put a stop to the violent attacks. Thus, it is expected that ADF will remain a potent driver of persecution in the country for some years to come. A [UN report](#) released in July 2020 has suggested that ADF might have committed crimes against humanity (Reliefweb, 6 July 2020).

Dictatorial paranoia

Many hoped that the change of president would bring about positive reform measures. However, so far there is nothing visible to report. Impunity, corruption and the abuse of human rights defenders continue as before. Thus, although this Persecution engine has become less strong through the departure of President Kabila, the situation is still problematic for Christians and churches.

Organized corruption and crime

This is probably the toughest Persecution engine to eliminate. It is very complex due to multiple actors being involved at domestic, regional and international levels. Even neighboring countries are believed to be involved in smuggling minerals out of DRC. Thus, this engine will remain potent and destructive in the country and Christians and churches will remain vulnerable to its effects.

Ethno-religious hostility

It is likely that this Persecution engine will eventually recede in the long term, but in the short term it may rise since Christians are evangelizing frequently and the reaction to this may increase in magnitude.

External Links - Persecution Dynamics

- Persecution engines description: Transparency International - <https://www.transparency.org/en/cpi/2019/results/cod#details>
- Persecution engines description: Christians - <http://www.africanews.com/2017/08/04/militia-group-blamed-for-atrocities-in-drc-largely-composed-of-children/>
- Drivers of persecution description: Institute for Security Studies - <https://www.theeastafrican.co.ke/business/Illegal-minerals-from-DR-Congo-fund-terrorist-groups/2560-3134040-rpdwnpz/index.html>

- Drivers of persecution description: mining industry - <https://www.raconteur.net/business-innovation/cobalt-mining-human-rights>
- Pressure in Block 1 / Private sphere: killing of Anglican priests - <https://www.persecution.org/2020/04/09/god-knows-drc-priest-martyred-christ/>
- Pressure in Block 2 / Family sphere: free education - <https://fsspx.news/en/news-events/news/catholic-schools-bear-brunt-early-reform-drc-51700>
- Pressure in Block 3 / Community sphere: denouncing violence - <https://www.state.gov/wp-content/uploads/2020/06/CONGO-DEM-REP-2019-INTERNATIONAL-RELIGIOUS-FREEDOM-REPORT.pdf>
- Pressure in Block 5 / Church sphere: the US State Department - <https://www.state.gov/reports/2019-report-on-international-religious-freedom/democratic-republic-of-the-congo/>
- Pressure in Block 5 / Church sphere: report - <https://www.state.gov/reports/2019-report-on-international-religious-freedom/democratic-republic-of-the-congo/>
- Violence / Block 6 - commentary: torched a - <https://cn.reuters.com/article/instant-article/idUSKBN1XU2K6>
- Violence / Block 6 - commentary: France 24 - <https://www.france24.com/en/tv-shows/focus/20201214-dr-congo-s-authorities-powerless-to-stop-deadly-violence-in-north-kivu>
- Gender-specific religious persecution Female description: 37% of girls - <https://www.girlsnotbrides.org/child-marriage/democratic-republic-of-the-congo/>
- Gender-specific religious persecution Female description: 'contamination' - <http://https/www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC3271036/>
- Persecution of other religious minorities: 2019 IRF report - <https://www.state.gov/reports/2019-report-on-international-religious-freedom/democratic-republic-of-the-congo/>
- Persecution of other religious minorities: Bundu dia Kongo - <https://www.hrw.org/news/2020/05/19/dr-congo-bloody-crackdown-political-religious-group>
- Persecution of other religious minorities: - <https://www.hrw.org/news/2020/05/19/dr-congo-bloody-crackdown-political-religious-group>
- Future outlook: UN report - <https://reliefweb.int/report/democratic-republic-congo/report-violations-human-rights-and-international-humanitarian-law>

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/>
E.g. [DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF CONGO – Mapping the conflict – 2018](#)
- <http://opendoorsanalytical.org/?s=Democratic Republic of the Congo>
- <https://www.worldwatchmonitor.org/countries/Democratic Republic of the Congo>