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## Kenya: Country Dossier

December 2020



**OpenDoors**

Serving persecuted **Christians** worldwide

Open Doors International / World Watch Research

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[research@od.org](mailto:research@od.org)

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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	-	-

## Copyright notice

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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 / Kenya

## Brief country details

Kenya: Population (2020 UN estimate)	Christians	Chr%
53,492,000	43,991,000	82.2

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

Kenya: World Watch List	Points	WWL Rank
WWL 2021	62	49
WWL 2020	61	44
WWL 2019	61	40
WWL 2018	62	32
WWL 2017	68	18

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

Kenya: Main persecution engines	Main drivers
Islamic oppression	Violent religious groups, Non-Christian religious leaders, One's own (extended) family, Citizens (people from the broader society), including mobs, Organized crime cartels or networks
Ethno-religious hostility	Ethnic group leaders
Organized corruption and crime	Violent religious groups, Organized crime cartels or networks, 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

In Kenya, all categories of Christian communities are affected by violations of their rights. Particularly Christians with a Muslim background in the northeast and coastal regions live under constant threat of attack even from their closest relatives. In the WWL 2021 reporting period, Christians were attacked and forced to flee their villages. It was reported that al-Shabaab has infiltrated the local population to monitor the activities of Christians in those areas. However, organized corruption and crime is also a serious problem. Co-opted officials do not take measures against those who target Christians for their faith, and this, in turn, encourages further acts of persecution.

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

- [6 December 2019](#): Suspected al-Shabaab militants intercepted a bus in northern Kenya, separated out those who were not ethnic Somali Muslims. 9 Christians were executed and 2 have gone missing (Express, 18 December 2019).
- [7 January 2020](#): 4 schoolchildren were killed when al-Shabaab militants from Somalia attacked a telecommunications mast (Reuters, 7 January 2020).
- [13 January 2020](#): 3 Christian primary-school teachers in the village of Kamuthe (in Garissa County) were killed at night by al-Shabaab militants (Morning Star News, 14 January 2020).
- [19 February 2020](#): 2 Christians were among 3 people killed after suspected al-Shabaab militants attacked a bus traveling from Mandera to Nairobi. They were executed for failing to recite the Islamic statement of faith (Christian Post, 22 February 2020).
- [2 March 2020](#): In a 20-minute audio recording, al-Shabaab leaders "ordered" Christians to leave Garissa, Wajir, and Mandera Counties so that jobs would be made available for local Muslims (Christian Post, 2 March 2020).
- [11 March 2020](#): 2 Christians were killed and another was abducted when al-Shabaab militants attacked two vehicles on the road between Elwak and Mandera in north-eastern Kenya (S4C News, 13 March 2020).

## External Links - Short country profile

- Specific examples of violations of rights in the reporting period: 6 December 2019: - <https://www.express.co.uk/news/world/1218744/Christian-world-news-persecution-islamic-prayer-al-shabaab-jihadis-attack-kenya>
- Specific examples of violations of rights in the reporting period: 7 January 2020: - <https://af.reuters.com/article/topNews/idAFKBN1Z6OZ4-OZATP>
- Specific examples of violations of rights in the reporting period: 13 January 2020: - <https://morningstarnews.org/2020/01/three-christian-teachers-killed-in-northeast-kenya-sources-say/>
- Specific examples of violations of rights in the reporting period: 19 February 2020: - <https://www.christianpost.com/news/2-christians-executed-in-al-shabaab-bus-attack-for-not-reciting-islamic-declaration-of-faith.html>
- Specific examples of violations of rights in the reporting period: 2 March 2020 - <https://www.christianpost.com/world/al-shabaab-warns-all-christians-to-leave-northeastern-kenya.html>
- Specific examples of violations of rights in the reporting period: 11 March 2020: - <https://en.s4c.news/2020/03/13/two-christians-killed-in-al-shabaab-attack-in-kenya/>

# WWL 2021: Keys to understanding / Kenya

## Link for general background information

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

## Recent history

Since the nation's founding in 1964, tribal-based politics continue to serve as the dominant political trend in the country. However, the new Constitution in 2010, the peaceful elections of March 2013 when Uhuru Kenyatta (the son of Kenya's first president) won the vote for the presidential office, and the devolution of power into a county system, have all helped mitigate some of the tension arising from the ethno-based politics. On a backdrop of serious socio-economic challenges (see below) the increasing incursions of al-Shabaab militants and the general instability in Somalia is a major security concern, particularly in the light of the attacks in 2013-2015 in Nairobi and the north-east, especially the attack on Garissa University in April 2015. It is expected that civil unrest and anti-corruption/anti-government sentiment will grow significantly as corruption remains endemic and highly visible. Against this backdrop, devolution of power from the center to localities could be a positive step forward in bringing a regionally more equal level of development and political stability with regards to the country's ethnic tensions.

A major event in 2017 were the general elections held in August. After the Kenyan Supreme Court annulled the result, repeat elections were held in October 2017, again with President Uhuru Kenyatta leading in the polls. The elections were carried out peacefully (in contrast to the 2007 elections which resulted in violence causing the deaths of over 1,200 people). This election is therefore also a milestone in working towards reconciliation between the different ethnic groups in Kenya. Also, in 2018, both the president and main opposition leader eventually announced that they had [agreed to work together](#) (DW, 13 March 2018).

Before that announcement, however, veteran opposition leader Raila Odinga, who ran in the August 2017 presidential election as a candidate, continued to contest incumbent President Uhuru Kenyatta's victory. On 30 January 2018, Odinga took the unprecedented step of organizing a [mock inauguration ceremony](#) as the 'people's president' (The Guardian, 30 January 2018), despite [warnings](#) from international civil society organizations about the deeper crisis this move could cause in the country (International Crisis Group - ICG, 29 January 2018). On the same day, Kenyan authorities designated the National Resistance Movement (NRM), an activist wing of Odinga's political coalition, [a criminal group](#) in an attempt to crackdown on politicians and lawyers affiliated with Odinga (The Standard, 31 January 2018). In early 2018, the authorities in Kenya [blocked](#) the transmission of at least three television stations for defying the government's order against covering Odinga's mock inauguration ceremony (Human Rights Watch - HRW, World Report 2019).

In early March 2018, President Kenyatta and opposition leader Odinga [vowed](#) to resolve their differences and agreed on a peace deal, signaling an end to an ongoing public feud between the two camps and easing political tensions in the country (Al-Jazeera, 10 March 2018). However, this welcome development could not reverse the government's harsh treatment of opposition



voices and [members of the media](#) (HRW, World Report 2019). The government's measures – already seen as stifling freedom of expression and the media - took a new turn on 16 May 2018, when Kenyatta signed a [new law on cybercrime](#) that introduced new offenses and imposed harsh penalties in relation to news reporting (HRW, World Report 2019). However, the harshest fines and provisions that criminalized “false or fictitious” news were later deleted after being judged unconstitutional by the High Court.

In 2019 and 2020, Kenya continued its military operation in Somalia. Al-Shabaab also continues to launch attacks on Kenyan territory. For example, In January 2020, a Kenyan military base was [attacked](#) in coastal Lamu (The Defense Post, 5 January 2020). Christians are also known to be targets for the militant group and, as a result, many Christians (including civil servants, teachers, health workers etc.) have moved from the northeast leaving schools and healthcare institutions empty.

## Political and legal landscape

Kenya is not currently considered to be a true electoral democracy and has seen a relative decline in political and civil liberties. This decline occurred as a parallel development to the ethnic and religious tensions and incidents of violence which occurred nationwide following the 2007-2008 elections and in advance of the elections held in 2013. In terms of its level of democracy, Kenya is ranked at the lower end of the "hybrid regimes", showing it to be more democratic than authoritarian regimes, but not as democratic as "flawed democracies". However, despite this, the country has been making progress following the 2010 constitutional referendum.

With regard to the Constitution, several provisions were [amended](#) in 2017 to ensure civil liberties (Constitution of Kenya Amendment Bill, 2017). For example, freedom of speech and press has been strengthened. Under Article 8, the Constitution clearly lays out that the country has no official state religion. Article 32 of the Constitution provides for freedom of religion, the right to assemble with others to manifest their religion through worship, practice, teaching or observance, including observance of a day of worship and that a person shall not be compelled to act or engage in any act, that is contrary to the person's belief or religion. It also provides under Article 27(4) for the equality of all persons and equal access to and benefits from the law with no adverse distinction based on religion.

As a result of these amendments, many things have started changing: Kenya's press environment remains one of the most vibrant in all of Africa and many privately-owned media outlets are known for routinely criticizing the government and officials. Also, the independence of the judiciary has been strengthened, which was previously subservient to the executive branch. Moreover, the Islamic (Kadhi) court system is subordinate to the superior courts of Kenya and is reserved for those who profess the Muslim religion and who voluntarily submit to the courts' jurisdiction. Kadhi courts only adjudicate cases related to personal status, marriage, divorce or inheritance.

Lastly, freedom of religion appears to be widely respected by the government, although some Muslim groups complain about unequal development opportunities and religion-based discrimination. However, civil liberties and the rule of law are being eroded by several factors,

such as deeply entrenched official and societal corruption and an ineffective police force. This contributes to crimes being seriously underreported, and domestic violence, trafficking, and forced labor typically not being investigated. It has even enabled Islamic militants to transport weapons and ammunition in and out of the country undetected.

With the devolution of the power to local counties, Christians have faced extreme pressure in those counties dominated by a Muslim population. This is particularly the case in counties bordering Somalia and the Coast.

## Religious landscape

Kenya: Religious context	Number of adherents	%
Christians	43,991,000	82.2
Muslim	4,190,000	7.8
Hindu	260,000	0.5
Buddhist	1,700	0.0
Ethno-religionist	4,350,000	8.1
Jewish	300	0.0
Bahai	500,000	0.9
Atheist	2,100	0.0
Agnostic	46,000	0.1
Other	150,300	0.3
<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)

The Kenyan Constitution guarantees freedom of religion.

Christians have had the lion's share in shaping modern Kenya. It is a Christian majority nation with Christians making up an estimated 82.2% (WCD 2020 estimate) of the population. Christians tend to be concentrated in the west and central sections of the country while the Muslim population is particularly concentrated in the eastern coastal regions. Many Kenyans include native beliefs in their religious practices.

## Economic landscape

Kenya's economy is the largest and most diverse in East Africa and it serves as a regional financial and transportation hub. Nevertheless, Kenya is also one of the poorest countries in the world and is considered to have "low development", according to the United Nations' [2019 Human Development Index](#). Economic growth was hampered for decades by government mismanagement and corruption, but the country is now considered to have one of the fastest-growing economies in sub-Saharan Africa and has become a hotbed of technological innovation. Kenya has been one of the only African countries to invent and produce models of computers and cars. Despite this, the economic growth remains inadequate to significantly address the nation's endemic poverty and high level of unemployment. Moreover, high levels of corruption remain, coupled with (and resulting in) inadequate infrastructure, which are the primary impediments to job creation and poverty eradication. Due to a burgeoning youth population, growing urbanization will likewise place greater pressure on the government to address the needs of those in the impoverished city slums. Drought conditions and the development of oil resources also have an impact on the tensions among the rural population, national economy and the overall political environment.

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

- "Kenya is facing a significant economic slowdown owing to the COVID-19 global pandemic. Even before being affected by the COVID-19 shock, Kenya's economy had decelerated. In the first three quarters of 2019, the economy grew by 5.4 percent, a drop from 6.0 percent over the same period in 2018. The slowdown in growth was associated with underperformance in agriculture and weak private sector investment. As a result, the World Bank's GDP growth estimate for 2019 is about 5.6 percent. The COVID-19 shock is expected to further reduce growth in 2020 with large impacts on services (travel, tourism, events), agricultural exports, and slowdown in remittances."
- "The average headline inflation stood at 5.3 percent in 2019, up from 4.7 percent in 2018, as food prices increased slightly. In February 2020, inflationary pressures picked up to 6.4 percent (from 4.1 percent in February 2019) as a result of increased prices for foods. Nonetheless, core inflation that excludes food and energy to capture underlying inflation trends, decreased to 1.9 percent in February 2020, from 3.1 percent in February 2019. Low core inflation is consistent with an economy where demand pressures are benign, and where the output gap remains negative."
- "Remittances inflows and tourism receipts have been sizeable ( at 2.9 percent of GDP and 1.8 percent of GDP, respectively in 2019), but with the outbreak of COVID-19, tourism arrivals have crashed while remittances will be affected by rising job losses in advanced economies."
- "The national poverty rate has decreased to 36.1 percent in 2015/16 from 46.8 percent in 2005/06. Most of this is due to progress observed in rural areas, where poverty declined to 38.8 percent from around 50 percent in 2005/06. Meanwhile, poverty reduction stagnated in urban areas and north-northeastern counties. The international poverty rate is expected

to have decreased further to 33.4 percent in 2019 from 34.4 percent in 2018".

According to the [World Factbook \(August 2020 update\)](#):

- Agriculture remains the backbone of the Kenyan economy, contributing one-third of the GDP. About 75% of Kenya's population work at least part-time in the agricultural sector, including livestock and pastoral activities. Over 75% of agricultural output is from small-scale, rain-fed farming or livestock production. Tourism also holds a significant place in Kenya's economy.

According to the [2020 Index of Economic Freedom](#):

- Kenya has an economic freedom score of 55.3 points at rank 132. The overall score increased by 0.2 points in comparison to the 2019 Index. Kenya ranked 23rd among 47 countries in sub-Saharan Africa.

## Social and cultural landscape

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

- **Main ethnic groups:** Kenya has more than 40 ethnic groups. Kikuyu 17.1%, Luhya 14.3%, Kalenjin 13.4%, Luo 10.7%, Kamba 9.8%, Somali 5.8%, Kisii 5.7%, Mijikenda 5.2%, Meru 4.2%, Maasai 2.5%, Turkana 2.1%, non-Kenyan 1%, other 8.2% (2019 est.)
- **Main languages:** English (official), Kiswahili (official), numerous indigenous languages
- **Average rate of population growth:** 2.2% (2020 est.)
- **Overall urban population:** 27.0%
- **Median age:** 20.1 years
- **Average expected years of schooling:** 11.1 years
- **Average literacy rate, adult (15 years and older):** is 78.7%
- **Overall employment to population ratio (15 years and older):** 60.1%
- **Unemployment, total (% of labour force):** 9.3%
- **Unemployment, youth (15-24 years):** 18.5%

According to [UNHCR](#) (2020):

- **Refugees:** There are 494,649 registered refugees and asylum seekers in Kenya as of 30 April 2020. The majority of refugees originate from Somalia (53.7%) other major nationalities include South Sudanese (24.7%), Congolese (9%), Ethiopians (5.8%), Burundi (3.2%), Sudan (2%), Uganda (0.5%), Rwanda (0.4%), Eritrea (0.4%), and others (0.2%).
- **IDPs:** As of 3 July 2020, about 95,000 people displaced by floods, landslides, and localized conflicts have received temporary shelter and non-food items.

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

- **Human Development Index:** Kenya is ranked 147th out of 189 countries with a human development value of 0.579 points
- **Life expectancy at birth:** 66.3 years

- **Gender Development Index (GDI):** 0.933
- **Gender Inequality Index (GII):** 0.545

## Technological landscape

According to [World Internet Stats](#) (Accessed 6 July 2020):

- **Internet usage:** 87.2% of the population – survey date: 31 December 2019
- **Facebook usage:** 16.4% of the population – survey date: 31 December 2019

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

- **Mobile cellular subscriptions (per 100 people):** 96.3

According to [BuddeComm Research](#) (updated 2 June 2020):

- “Numerous competitors are rolling out national and metropolitan fiber backbone networks and wireless access networks to deliver services to population centers across the country. Several fibre infrastructure sharing agreements have been forged, and as a result, the number of fiber broadband connections increased 53% in 2019, year-on-year. Much of the progress in the broadband segment is due to the government’s revised national broadband strategy, which has been updated with goals through to 2030, and which are largely dependent on mobile broadband platforms based on LTE and 5G.”

Kenya is one of the few countries in sub-Saharan Africa with relatively advanced technology. It was in Kenya that M-Pesa (mobile money) was first invented in 2007, a system whereby subscribers send cash to other phone-users by a simple SMS message. The country's young talents are also becoming entrepreneurs. A [Newsweek](#) article from 27 December 2016 stated: "New innovations are destroying old ways of doing business, and smart young startup entrepreneurs are at the forefront of this quiet but historic transformation. Teams of skilled developers and programmers have sprung up in innovation hubs, incubators, and accelerators across the country to build information and telecom solutions that capitalize on the country's mix of challenges and opportunities."

Kenya is one of the members of the East African Economic Community and it wants to see technology playing a [key role](#) in the economic development of the region (UNESCO, 4 July 2018). The country is listed as having the highest number of "[tech hubs](#)" in sub-Saharan Africa after South Africa (Kenyan Wall Street, 24 February 2020).

## Security situation

Kenya is a Christian majority country. Although the percentage of Muslims in Kenya is fairly small (under 8% according to WCD 2020 estimates), Christians living close to the north-eastern border with Somalia face significant persecution from the strong Muslim presence. The cross-border attacks by al-Shabaab have forced many Christians to close their churches and abandon the region.

Al-Shabaab is the biggest threat and a main driver of persecution in Kenya. It has reportedly killed more people than any other militant group in Africa through its attacks in Somalia and Kenya and has shown great resilience despite facing an increase in government army pressure and economic setbacks. The fact that al-Shabaab is deeply embedded in communities in Somalia makes it very difficult to uproot; however, an increased military presence and foreign coordination to strengthen the gathering of intelligence in Kenya has resulted in a reduction in the level of attacks. Hotspots for al-Shabaab attacks include Mombasa, Mandera, Garissa, Wajir, Lamu and Tana River. Kenya also sent its troops to Somalia to fight the jihadist group. Furthermore, some reports suggest that Kenya could [annex](#) some chunks of land from Somalia to build a buffer zone (DW, 13 March 2020) .

Serious human rights violations have been committed by the government. According to [Human Rights Watch's World Report 2020](#): "Lack of accountability for serious human rights violations by security forces, including extrajudicial killings and enforced disappearances, remain a major concern in Kenya, despite promises by President Uhuru Kenyatta to address key issues, including those that have in the past undermined Kenya's ability to hold peaceful elections. Kenyan authorities failed to investigate security forces abuses, including extrajudicial killings and enforced disappearances, and hold those responsible to account."

The lack of security in the country has cost many Christians their lives (see *Specific examples of persecution in the reporting period* above). After one major attack on a Nairobi hotel, [The Economist](#) wrote on 19 January 2019: "Kenya has a reputation, often deserved, for being among Africa's most successful states. Yet its vulnerability to terrorism has long been a weakness. So there was universal dismay, but little surprise, when jihadist gunmen attacked a hotel and office complex in one of Nairobi's most affluent districts on January 15th."

According to The Guardian, reporting on 5 January 2020, Al-Shabaab carried out its [first ever attack against US forces](#) in Kenya. The militants overran the Manda Bay airfield base where US forces train and give counterterror support. Three US personnel were killed and several US aircraft and vehicles were destroyed.

## Trends analysis

### 1) Kenya can no longer be regarded as a regional model for stability

For many decades Kenya was seen as a stable country and regional model. However, things started to deteriorate from mid-2005 onwards. In 2007/8, the post-election violence made Kenya an example of how costly in human lives post-election violence can be. The general political environment in the country remains volatile, despite the fact that the 2017 elections proceeded peacefully.

### 2) Christians have regularly faced deadly attacks

The domestic situation is exacerbated by the rise of Islamic militancy in the region. This is also compounded by the emergence of radical groups in the country which have been serving al-Shabaab through recruiting fighters from Kenya. The activities of militant groups have turned Kenya into a country where Christians regularly face deadly attacks because of their faith. This

has forced the Kenyan government to send troops into Somalia to combat al-Shabaab, but that has not stopped al-Shabaab from carrying out further attacks on a regular basis.

### 3) Institutionalized corruption remains a serious challenge

In the WWL 2021 reporting period, al-Shabaab remained active and there is little hope that the Kenyan government can keep Kenyan Christians safe. This is mainly due to the fact that there is institutionalized corruption in the country and that the situation in Somalia is not improving. Investigations into violence targeting Christians have not been properly investigated by the police. However, Christians are likely to remain politically and economically dominant due to the overwhelming Christian majority in the population.

The fact that some cases of corruption at high levels has been exposed and that there is a readiness among leaders to be transparent shows an improvement in corruption levels to a small extent. This improvement might encourage foreign organizations to bring in aid to a large number of communities affected by poverty (since corruption has also affected the level of trust amongst donors).

### 4) The attacks on Christians are leading to a humanitarian crisis in the Northeast

Over the years, Christians in the counties of Garissa, Mandera, and Wajir have faced continual threats and attacks from al-Shabaab and its supporters. This has caused many Christian teachers, nurses and other humanitarian workers to leave the counties. For example, according to a report by the [International Crisis Group](#) on 4 April 2019: "Primary and secondary education is worst affected. In February 2018, following Al-Shabaab's murder of two teachers, authorities reportedly closed 250 schools in the region. Some have since reopened, but close to one hundred across the three north-eastern counties on the Somalia border are operating with a headmaster and no other teaching staff. Under pressure from worried teachers, the state has transferred about 2,000 of them out of the area." This trend has continued in WWL 2021 and will likely continue until security is guaranteed.

## External Links - Keys to understanding

- Link for general background information: Kenya country profile - BBC News - <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-africa-13681341>
- Recent history: agreed to work together - <https://www.dw.com/en/political-confusion-reigns-in-kenya-after-odinga-kenyatta-deal/a-42958386>
- Recent history: mock inauguration ceremony - <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2018/jan/30/kenyas-opposition-to-swear-in-raila-odinga-as-peoples-president>
- Recent history: warnings - <https://www.crisisgroup.org/africa/horn-africa/kenya/kenya-averting-avoidable-crisis>
- Recent history: a criminal group - <https://www.standardmedia.co.ke/article/2001267860/state-declares-national-resistance-movement-a-criminal-group>
- Recent history: blocked - <https://www.hrw.org/world-report/2019/country-chapters/kenya>
- Recent history: vowed - <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2018/03/kenyatta-odinga-amends-tillerson-visit-180309172042412.html>
- Recent history: members of the media - <https://www.hrw.org/world-report/2019/country-chapters/kenya>
- Recent history: new law on cybercrime - <https://www.hrw.org/world-report/2019/country-chapters/kenya>
- Recent history: attacked - <https://www.thedefensepost.com/2020/01/05/us-kenya-repel-al-shabaab-attack-lamu-base/>

- Political and legal landscape: amended - [http://www.cofek.co.ke/Constitution%20\(Draft%20Amendment\)%20Bill%202017.pdf](http://www.cofek.co.ke/Constitution%20(Draft%20Amendment)%20Bill%202017.pdf)
- Economic landscape: 2019 Human Development Index - <http://hdr.undp.org/en/countries/profiles/KEN>
- Economic landscape: World Bank's 2020 Macro Poverty Outlook (for sub-Saharan Africa) - <http://pubdocs.worldbank.org/en/720441492455091991/mpo-ssa.pdf>
- Economic landscape: World Factbook (August 2020 update) - <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/ke.html>
- Economic landscape: 2020 Index of Economic Freedom - <https://www.heritage.org/index/country/kenya?version=1347>
- Social and cultural landscape: the UNDP 2019 - <http://hdr.undp.org/en/countries/profiles/KEN>
- Social and cultural landscape: World Factbook - <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/ke.html>
- Social and cultural landscape: UNHCR - <https://www.unhcr.org/ke/figures-at-a-glance>
- Social and cultural landscape: the UN Global Human Development Indicators - <http://hdr.undp.org/en/countries/profiles/KEN>
- Technological landscape: World Internet Stats - <https://www.internetworldstats.com/africa.htm#bf>
- Technological landscape: World Bank's Country Profile (2018) - [https://databank.worldbank.org/views/reports/reportwidget.aspx?Report\\_Name=CountryProfile&id=b450fd57&tbar=y&dd=y&inf=n&zm=n&country=KEN](https://databank.worldbank.org/views/reports/reportwidget.aspx?Report_Name=CountryProfile&id=b450fd57&tbar=y&dd=y&inf=n&zm=n&country=KEN)
- Technological landscape: BuddeComm Research - <https://www.budde.com.au/Research/Kenya-Telecoms-Mobile-and-Broadband-Statistics-and-Analyses>
- Technological landscape: Newsweek - <https://www.newsweek.com/how-kenya-became-cradle-africas-ict-innovation-534694>
- Technological landscape: key role - [http://www.unesco.org/new/en/member-states/single-view/news/towards\\_an\\_east\\_african\\_regional\\_science\\_technology\\_and\\_inn/](http://www.unesco.org/new/en/member-states/single-view/news/towards_an_east_african_regional_science_technology_and_inn/)
- Technological landscape: tech hubs - <https://kenyanwallstreet.com/kenya-tails-south-africa-as-top-tech-hub-in-africa/>
- Security situation: annex - <https://www.dw.com/en/could-kenya-annex-chunks-of-somalia/a-52725856>
- Security situation: Human Rights Watch's World Report 2020: - <https://www.hrw.org/world-report/2020/country-chapters/kenya>
- Security situation: The Economist - <https://www.economist.com/middle-east-and-africa/2019/01/19/another-terrorist-outrage-in-nairobi>
- Security situation: first ever attack against US forces - <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2020/jan/05/al-shabaab-attack-us-military-base-kenya>
- Trends analysis: International Crisis Group - <https://www.crisisgroup.org/africa/horn-africa/kenya/hidden-cost-al-shabaabs-campaign-north-eastern-kenya>

## WWL 2021: Church information / Kenya

### Christian origins

Christianity was introduced into the region of present-day Kenya by the Portuguese during the 16th century. The Portuguese were driven out of the coastal region of Kenya in 1698 by the forces of Oman. As a result, Christianity could not establish itself in Kenya until 1844 when the Anglican Church Missionary Society (CMS) sent Johann Ludwig Krapf. In 1862, British Methodists came to Mombasa. White Fathers of the Roman Catholic Church came to Kenya in 1889. In 1910, Pentecostalism arrived with representatives of the Pentecostal Assemblies of Canada. The Salvation Army started work in Kenya in 1921.

The arrival of Christianity from abroad was followed by the establishment of indigenous churches in the country: The Momiya Luo Mission was established by former Anglicans in 1914. The African Church of the Holy Spirit was founded in 1927. The Kenya Foundation of the



Prophets Church was also established in 1927, the National Independent Church of Africa in 1929, and the Gospel Furthering Bible Church in 1936.

## Church spectrum today

Kenya: Church networks	Christians	%
Orthodox	370,000	0.8
Catholic	12,100,000	27.5
Protestant	26,000,000	59.1
Independent	9,000,000	20.5
Unaffiliated	850,000	1.9
Doubly-affiliated Christians	-4,329,000	-9.8
<b>Total</b>	<b>43,991,000</b>	<b>100.0</b>
<i>(Any deviation from the total number of Christians stated above is due to the rounding of decimals)</i>		
Evangelical movement	16,500,000	37.5
Renewalist movement	17,300,000	39.3

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.

Christians dominate the central, Western, and the majority of the major cities in the country. Muslims dominate the Northeast, East and the Coastal areas of the country, where life for Christians is very much more difficult.

# WWL 2021: Persecution Dynamics / Kenya

## Reporting period

1 October 2019 - 30 September 2020

## Position on the World Watch List

Kenya: World Watch List	Points	WWL Rank
WWL 2021	62	49
WWL 2020	61	44
WWL 2019	61	40
WWL 2018	62	32
WWL 2017	68	18

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

The rise in one point was due to a rise in the violence score from 9.1 points in WWL 2020 to the very high level of 12.8 points in WWL 2021. Average pressure on the other hand decreased from 10.5 to 9.9 points. The very high level of persecution has remained more or less constant over the last four WWL reporting periods.

## Persecution engines

Kenya: 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	Weak
Dictatorial paranoia	DPA	Very weak

Organized corruption and crime	OCC	Medium
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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)

Even though Kenya is a Christian majority country (with approximately 82% of the population being Christian), *Islamic oppression* is the main persecution engine. An estimated 7.9% of the Kenyan population is Muslim, according to WCD statistics, of which the majority is Sunni. The Muslim population is mainly located in the north-eastern and coastal areas of Kenya, but has also spread over other parts of the country, and has begun to respond to perceived disenfranchisement in Kenyan society. Inspired by radical Islamic influences spilling over from Somalia, Muslim politicians, representing Muslim dominated constituencies in Kenya, have an agenda to eliminate the Church from their constituencies. The north-eastern part of the country is also highly affected by *Islamic oppression*. Radical Muslims living in Kenya, together with militants crossing the border from Somalia, are severely persecuting Christians and have been responsible in recent years for the killing of hundreds of Christians. To emphasize the challenge facing Christians in the north-eastern and coastal areas, one country researcher reported: "The eastern or coastal counties have long been under heavy Islamic influence due to historical factors - this is where Muslims first arrived (long before the Christian missionaries in Kenya) and along the east coast of Africa in general. The counties where incidences of medium-to-very-strong strength of this engine [*Islamic oppression*] can be found include Mandera, Wajir, Garissa, Lamu, Kilifi, and Kwale."

Even though the issue of *Islamic oppression* and Islamic militancy are recent developments in Kenya, they have been growing since the 1990s. In 1992, the Islamic Party of Kenya (IPK) was established but was denied registration in 1994. As discussed in a [report](#) dated July 2019: "The banning of the IPK led to a period of protest and political turmoil, followed by a splintering of Islamist activism on the coast. New Islamist associations and organizations proliferated, some seeking to take advantage of new political space for activism, while others, in lieu of a formal political platform, turned to mosques, informal groupings, and self-published media to articulate more militant, populist messages." (Combating Terrorism Center, July 2019)

### Organized corruption and crime (Medium)

In Kenya, corruption is rampant, affecting both public and private life. According to Transparency International's [Corruption Index](#) of 2019, Kenya ranks 144th of 180 countries, that is 36th on the list of the most corrupt countries. The presence of corruption in Kenya results in an inadequate punishment of perpetrators of persecution. Many institutions, including parliament, the judiciary and especially the executive arm, have been affected. This, in turn, affects the Christian communities' access to justice and protection by the police force when required. Reports also suggest that al-Shabaab managed to carry out deadly attacks by paying bribes to security officials for importing weapons and ammunition. It is in this context that the persecution of Christians must be seen. Co-opted officials do not take measures against those who persecute Christians, and this, in turn, encourages further acts of persecution.

## Ethno-religious hostility (Medium)

In northeast Kenya, leaving Islam is seen as leaving the clan/Somali ethnicity. In addition, some of the ethnic and community leaders in the north-eastern region also share anti-Christian sentiment with the jihadists.

## Drivers of persecution

Kenya:									
Drivers of Persecution per engine	IO	RN	ERH	CO	CDP	CPCO	SI	DPA	OCC
	VERY STRONG	-	MEDIUM	-	WEAK	-	WEAK	VERY WEAK	MEDIUM
Government officials	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	Weak	Medium
Ethnic group leaders	-	-	Medium	-	-	-	-	-	-
Non-Christian religious leaders	Strong	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Religious leaders of other churches	-	-	-	-	Weak	-	-	-	-
Violent religious groups	Very strong	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	Medium
Ideological pressure groups	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Citizens (people from the broader society), including mobs	Strong	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
One's own (extended) family	Strong	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Political parties	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Revolutionaries or paramilitary groups	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Organized crime cartels or networks	Medium	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	Medium
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):** It is fair to say that the leading driver of persecution in Kenya is the Islamic militant group called al-Shabaab. The group originates from Somalia whose main aim is that of establishing an Islamic state in Somalia. Its presence in Kenya results from a retaliatory move against Kenya's armed intervention through its contribution of troops to the African Union to quell the insurrection in Somalia. The group carries out

suicide bomb attacks and other brutal acts against all whom they perceive to be enemies of Islam. The group is said to have ties with militant groups in Algeria and Nigeria.

- **Non-Christian religious leaders (Strong):** Teachers at madrassas and mosques are known to convey a message of background hate towards Christians. A country expert stated: "Islamic leaders have been one of the main drivers of persecution. They have fueled the level of persecution, especially against Christian converts. This is evident in various cases where they have specifically forced converts to renounce their faith and then threatening death if this was not done. This has been prevalent in the coastal areas and in the north-eastern part of Kenya."
- **Citizens - people from the broader society (Strong):** In Muslim-dominated areas, the local population see Christians as foreigners and even invaders. A country expert stated: "Citizens from the broader society have been sources of persecution for Christians mainly through the engine of *Islamic oppression* and in areas with Muslim majority such as north-eastern Kenya and in coastal regions of the country. This is especially evident for converts to Christianity in these areas who face the extreme danger of death or injury as they are constantly threatened by persons in their own community. Other Christians in these areas are also vulnerable to these attacks as the rhetoric of Christian inferiority and elimination created by these violent religious groups such as al-Shabaab has spread to include the wider community in these areas."
- **Family members (Strong):** The idea of leaving Islam is seen as a threat to family, community and the larger clan/ethnic group. A country researcher stated: "Extended family has been a source of persecution for Christians in Kenya, this is especially true for Christian converts from a Muslim-majority family. The narrative has been so dire that even family members are willing to act out violence against their family members."
- **Organized corruption (Medium):** The violent religious group is also using organized criminal networks to finance its operation. It is also through this that the groups manage to evade law enforcement.

#### Drivers of Organized corruption and crime

- **Organized crime networks (Medium):** The presence of organized corruption in the country has also made application of the rule of law difficult, hence in the process, Christians are victims of persecution and have limited course for redress.
- **Government officials (Medium):** Officials are bribed to act against the interests of Christians. This occurs especially in the area of law enforcement where trumped-up charges are brought against Christians just for being Christian. Officials also turn a blind eye to the activities of persecutors, which then encourages further acts of persecution.

- **Violent religious groups (Medium):** There are indications that al-Shabaab managed to carry out the deadly attacks at Garissa University in April 2015 by paying bribes to security officials for importing weapons and ammunition. Furthermore, in the north-eastern region, there are reports about al-Shabaab and its supporters are creating income for operations by paying large bribes to public officials to enable illegal trade to take place via the port of Kismayo.

#### **Drivers of Ethno-religious hostility (Medium)**

- **Ethnic group leaders:** This driver operates in 'collaboration' with drivers of *islamic oppression*. Thus, in north-eastern Kenya, leaving Islam is seen as leaving the clan and Somali ethnicity. Also, some ethnic group leaders in those areas share anti-Christian sentiment with al-Shabaab.

### Areas where Christians face most difficulties

Christians living in and around the north-eastern part of the country have to live with the fear that they can be targeted at any time. Hotspots for attacks by al-Shabaab include Mombasa, Mandera, Garissa, Wajir, Lamu and Tana River. In these areas, there are many local informants to assist in organizing attacks on churches and Christians. As a result, many Christians have decided to leave these areas and move to the center of the country.

### Christian communities and how they are affected

Three categories of Christian communities in the country face persecution, but the level of persecution varies depending upon where they live and which Christian groups they belong to.

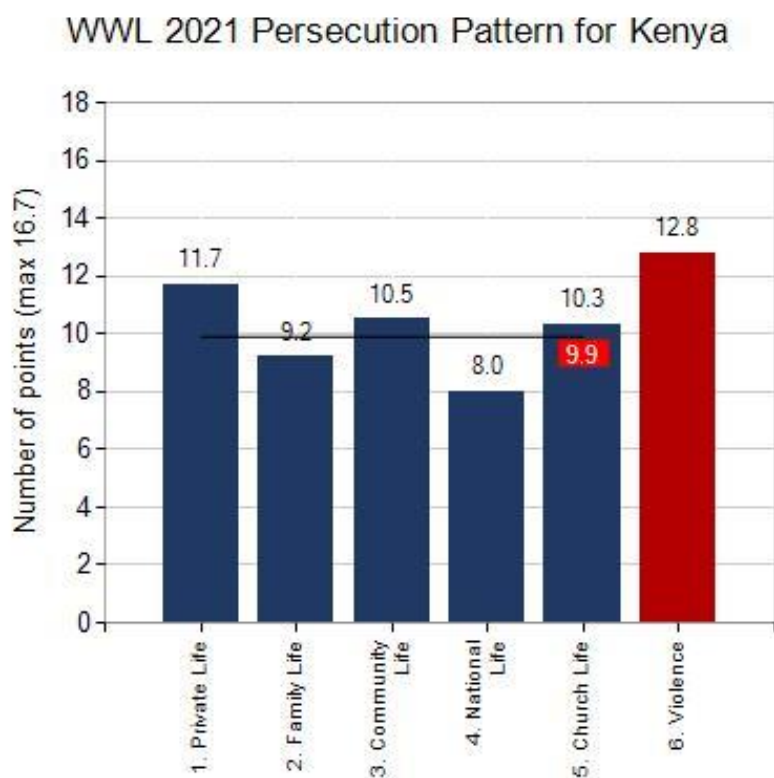
**Communities of expatriate Christians:** Expatriate Christians in Kenya are not involuntarily isolated and are hence not treated as a separate WWL category for scoring and WWL analysis.

**Historical Christian communities:** Churches in this category can be found in many parts of the country. The persecution they face and the intensity of the persecution depend on the regions in which they live. In areas where Islam is dominant, the persecution is from *Islamic oppression* and the intensity is very high.

**Converts to Christianity:** Christians with a Muslim background are mainly found in Muslim-dominated areas in the north-eastern region and along the coast (including Mombasa). In general, these converts face different persecution dynamics to those Christians from a non-Muslim background. They face intense pressure at the hands of family and friends and, if discovered by groups like al-Shabaab, they can be killed as well. Christian converts are also targeted by mobs or smaller groups from the local Islamic communities.

**Non-traditional Christian communities:** This category includes groups such as Baptist, Evangelical, Pentecostal and Charismatic congregations. They can be found throughout the country. This group is the most active type of Christianity in the country and as a result, it faces severe forms of persecution.

## The Persecution pattern



The WWL 2021 Persecution pattern for Kenya shows:

- The average pressure on Christians in Kenya remains at a high level of 9.9 points, decreasing from 10.5 points in WWL 2020.
- Except for the *National sphere*, there is no *sphere of life* where the pressure on Christians scores less than 10 points and is highest in the *Private sphere* (11.7 points), reflecting the very high pressure on converts in the north-eastern region. The next highest pressure is found in the *Community* and *Church spheres*, an indication that church and community life is very difficult in the northeast as a result of threats from al-Shabaab and its supporters.
- The score for violence is very high, rising from 9.1 points in WWL 2020 to 12.8 points in WWL 2021.

### 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 1.1: Conversion has been opposed, forbidden, or punishable, including conversion from one type of Christianity to another. (3.00 points)**

In the predominantly Muslim north-eastern and coastal regions of Kenya, converts face the risk of deadly attack if they reveal their conversion. These attacks could be orchestrated by family members or by members of the local community. A country expert stated: "Conversion has been opposed greatly by Muslim leaders and the Muslim community at large based in the north-eastern part of Kenya and in the coastal areas. Muslims who have converted to Christianity have been at great risk of either death or being beaten up. There are reports of former Muslims who have converted to Christianity being beaten up or receiving death threats and being forced to flee from their homes where they are in danger. This is highly fueled by al-Shabaab's presence in these areas where the group has been trying to gain support amongst the Muslim population through the propaganda they spread against Christians."

### **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 Muslim-dominated areas, Christian converts face serious backlash if they discuss matters of faith. A country expert compared the situation of other Christian groups with that of converts saying: "It has not been risky in general for Christians to reveal their faith in written forms of personal expression as the majority of the Christian population expresses themselves freely on public forums. However, for those converts from Islam in Muslim majority areas it has been risky for them to reveal their faith for fear of backlash from their former leaders and members of their community."

### **Block 1.7: It has been risky for Christians to speak about their faith with immediate family members. (3.00 points)**

As stated by a country expert: "It is generally not risky for Christians to speak about their faith with immediate family members, however, the risk comes in areas with radical Muslim influence and this is especially true for Christian converts. Christian converts face very real danger in speaking about their faith to their Muslim family members."

### **Block 1.3: It has been dangerous to privately own or keep Christian materials. (2.75 points)**

For converts, possessing Christian materials is very risky. For other Christian categories, possessing Christian materials in some areas is risky because at times al-Shabaab militants make home-to-home searches to find Christians.



## Pressure in Block 2 / Family sphere

### **Block 2.9: Children of Christians have been harassed or discriminated against because of their parents' faith. (3.00 points)**

In Muslim dominated areas Christian children have been facing harassment, bullying and other forms of persecution. In schools, they are often pressured into dressing like Muslim students. This issue has caused anxiety among Christian families.

### **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)**

This is another area (related to 2.10 above) where Christians face difficulties. In addition to facing expulsion from the community, converts would also lose child custody in cases of divorce.

### **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. (2.50 points)**

Christians who have converted from Islam are often denied their inheritance rights in their family. As most of the inheritance issues are dealt with by elders in the community, there is no negotiation for those who leave Islam. This is seen as a warning for others who may be contemplating leaving Islam and joining another religion, for instance, Christianity.

### **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)**

Converts are often denied access to their children as a way of pressurizing them into returning to Islam. A country expert stated: "Christian families, more so those of converts to Christianity, are being forced to separate from their families for their safety. One such family is that of Abu-Bakr, a former Muslim family of four - a wife and two children (aged 4 and 5), who converted to Christianity in November 2018. After their conversion and once the local mosque found out, their lives were threatened and they were forced to flee moving from one Christian home to another, leaving behind their rented house and two-acre land where they had planted crops. En route, they were forced to leave their children with 'Good Samaritans' for their safety".

## Pressure in Block 3 / Community sphere

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

In the northeast and coastal area, Christians are under threat of abduction from al-Shabaab. For instance, an Italian aid worker was abducted in November 2018 and only [released](#) in May 2020 (BBC News, 10 May 2020).

**Block 3.7: Christians have been pressured by their community to renounce their faith. (3.25 points)**

For Muslim background converts, this issue is very serious. Any known convert is placed under pressure to renounce the Christian faith or face the consequences, which can include mob attack and death.

**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.). (3.00 points)**

In areas where Muslims are the majority, Christians face many challenges: For instance, it is very common for grazing land or drinking water to be shared in a communal way, but this sharing is made particularly difficult for Christians in areas where the Muslim population is a majority. The main drivers behind this persecution are primarily direct family members or members of the extended family (for converts), but also non-Christian religious leaders and ethnic group leaders.

**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)**

Some observers believe that al-Shabaab informants in local communities monitor each and every Christian movement. As a country expert stated: "Christians with a Muslim background are being monitored either by close family relatives or by their community. This stems from the influence of al-Shabaab, whose one of many aims is to eradicate Christianity. They have indoctrinated the population to believe that Christianity is evil and must be eradicated so as to be able to gain wide support from the population. These Christians' daily movements are observed through shadowing, causing fear among the convert population in the north-eastern areas of Kenya."

## Pressure in Block 4 / National sphere

**Block 4.4: Christians have been hindered in travelling for faith-related reasons. (3.25 points)**

Christians traveling in the North East, Tana River, and Lamu Counties have continued to face the constant threat of attack. In previous attacks, Christians have been separated from Muslims and executed. This has greatly limited travel for Christians, particularly for those engaging in evangelism.

**Block 4.5: Christians have been discriminated against when engaging with the authorities (local administration, government, army, etc.) for faith-related reasons. (2.75 points)**

Corruption, ethnicity and faith-affiliation all play a vital role when dealing with the authorities. In the north-eastern and coastal areas, religion plays a key role and Christians in those areas are discriminated against at many levels.

**Block 4.8: Christians have been hindered in expressing their views or opinions in public. (2.75 points)**

Even though freedom of religion and expression are respected at the national level, this issue is problematic at the county level. A country expert reported: "One interviewee said: 'It's just common sense. You do not speak about religion, or about the Church around Muslims if you want to be safe. You learn this very quickly after getting to the Coast. It's one of the first things people tell you. But, they are allowed to speak about Mohammed and so on. You live with it.' This was the NGO worker speaking of her experience in Mombasa, Kwale, Tana-River and Lamu Counties."

**Block 4.6: Christians have been barred from public office, or has promotion been hindered for faith-related reasons. (2.25 points)**

Promotion, election and other privileges and benefits in Kenya go hand in hand with ethnic and religious affiliation. In areas dominated by a Muslim population, it is harder for Christians to get employment, promotion or elected to a public office. A country researcher stated: "Christians or those not considered local/Muslim cannot get elected in those regions; anyone that tries is automatically disqualified, vilified and persecuted for not being the 'right' religion and tribe. The Muslims in those areas do not agree to be led by any they consider a 'kafir'."

## Pressure in Block 5 / Church sphere

**Block 5.14: Openly selling or distributing Bibles (or other Christian materials) has been hindered. (3.25 points)**

In areas dominated by a Muslim population, such activities are likely to provoke attack by a local mob, or the names of the Christians involved could be passed on to al-Shabaab and its supporters. A country expert noted: "Openly selling or distributing Bibles and other Christian materials in Garris, Wajir and Lamu counties will attract the wrong kind of attention. It has not been officially banned or hindered but the violence of al-Shabaab has scared Christians from doing this."

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

In the north-eastern and coastal areas, this problem has been apparent for years, but it has now been exacerbated by the infiltration of al-Shabaab. Many Christians avoid going to church for fear of attack and there is little confidence in the government to protect them. As a result, it is common that congregations in the region that used to have hundreds of worshipers on Sundays now only have a few gatherings. A country researcher stated: "To the degree that almost all churches in Kenya now have to have armed security due to the continuing terror attack threats - this is an obstruction of their activities. In some areas, particularly the Muslim-dominated Wajir, Marsabit, Mandera, Garissa, and Lamu, churches cannot hold night services and in many instances are denied permits for open-air evangelism meetings. Muslims suffer no similar limitations and freely go on with their religious activities."

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

Any form of gathering outside churches is likely to invite attacks in the north-eastern and coastal region, particularly in Wajir, Mandera, and Lamu.

**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. (2.00 points)**

In the north-eastern and coastal areas, Christians are not renovating or building new churches, primarily because of the threat they face from attacks by local radical Muslims and al-Shabaab.

## 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.*

Kenya: Violence Block question	WWL 2021	WWL 2020
6.1 How many Christians have been killed for faith-related reasons (including state sanctioned executions)?	17	11
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?	7	3
6.3 How many Christians have been detained for faith-related reasons?	2	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?	0	0
6.5 How many Christians have been abducted for faith-related reasons (including Christians missing in a persecution context)?	4	0
6.6 How many Christians have been raped or otherwise sexually harassed for faith-related reasons?	2	1

Kenya: Violence Block question	WWL 2021	WWL 2020
6.7 How many cases have there been of forced marriages of Christians to non-Christians?	0	2
6.8 How many Christians have been otherwise physically or mentally abused for faith-related reasons (including beatings and death threats)?	100	28
6.9 How many houses of Christians or other property (excluding shops) have been attacked, damaged, bombed, looted, destroyed, burned down or confiscated for faith-related reasons?	10	0
6.10 How many shops or businesses of Christians have been attacked, damaged, bombed, looted, destroyed, burned down, closed or confiscated for faith-related reasons?	100	2
6.11 How many Christians have been forced to leave their homes or go into hiding in-country for faith-related reasons?	100	4
6.12 How many Christians have been forced to leave the country for faith-related reasons?	0	0

In the WWL 2021 reporting period:

- **Christians killed:** Christians in Kenya, especially in the Northeast have suffered gravely at the hands of jihadist group al-Shabaab: At least 17 Christians were killed. For example:
  - **December 2019:** Suspected al-Shabaab militants intercepted a bus in northern Kenya, separated out those who were not ethnic Somali Muslims. 9 Christians were executed and 2 have gone missing ([Express, 18 December 2019](#));
  - **January 2020:** 4 schoolchildren were killed when al-Shabaab militants from Somalia attacked a telecommunications mast ([Reuters, 7 January 2020](#)); 3 Christian primary-school teachers in the village of Kamuthe (in Garissa County) were killed at night by al-Shabaab militants ([Morning Star News, 14 January 2020](#)).
  - **February 2020:** 2 Christians were among 3 people killed after suspected al-Shabaab militants attacked a bus traveling from Mandera to Nairobi. They were executed for failing to recite the Islamic statement of faith ([The Christian Post, 22 February 2020](#)).
- **Christians arrested:** Two Christian were detained but released. One was falsely accused of stepping on the Quran.
- **Churches attacked:** At least seven churches were attacked, some by al-Shabaab and others by vigilante groups.
- **Christian homes/shops attacked:** At least 110 homes/shops were either attacked or destroyed, forcing many Christians are forced to relocate from Northeast to Nairobi and other safer places.

## 5 Year trends

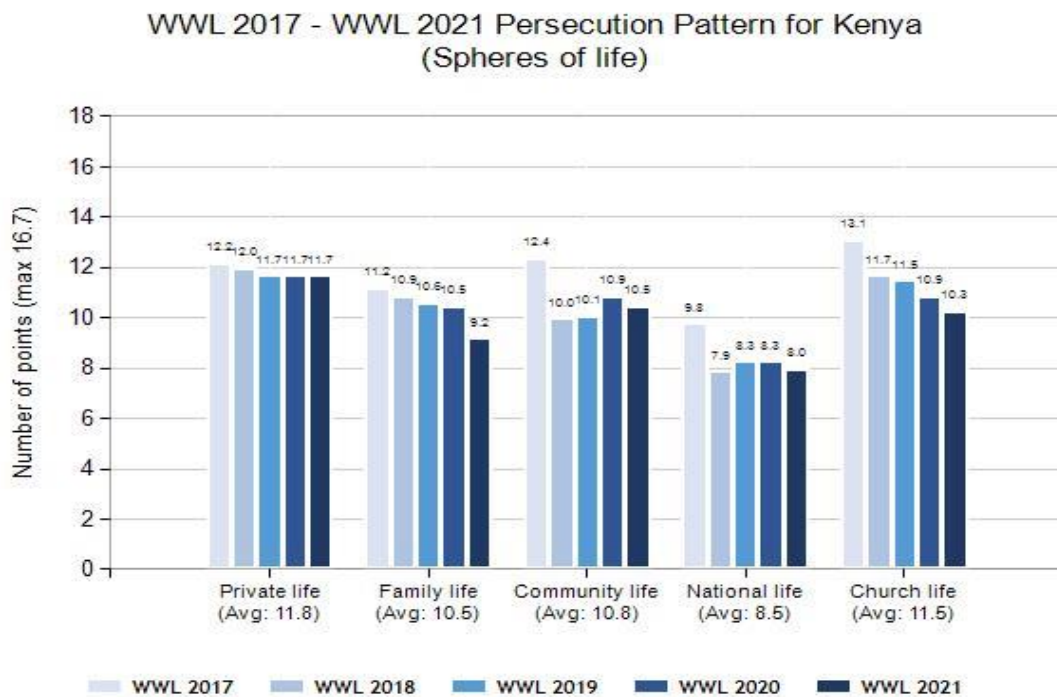
The following three charts show the levels of pressure and violence faced by Christians in the country over the last five WWL reporting periods.

### 5 Year trends: Average pressure

Kenya: WWL 2017 - WWL 2021 Persecution Pattern history	Average pressure over 5 Spheres of life
2021	9.9
2020	10.5
2019	10.4
2018	10.5
2017	11.7

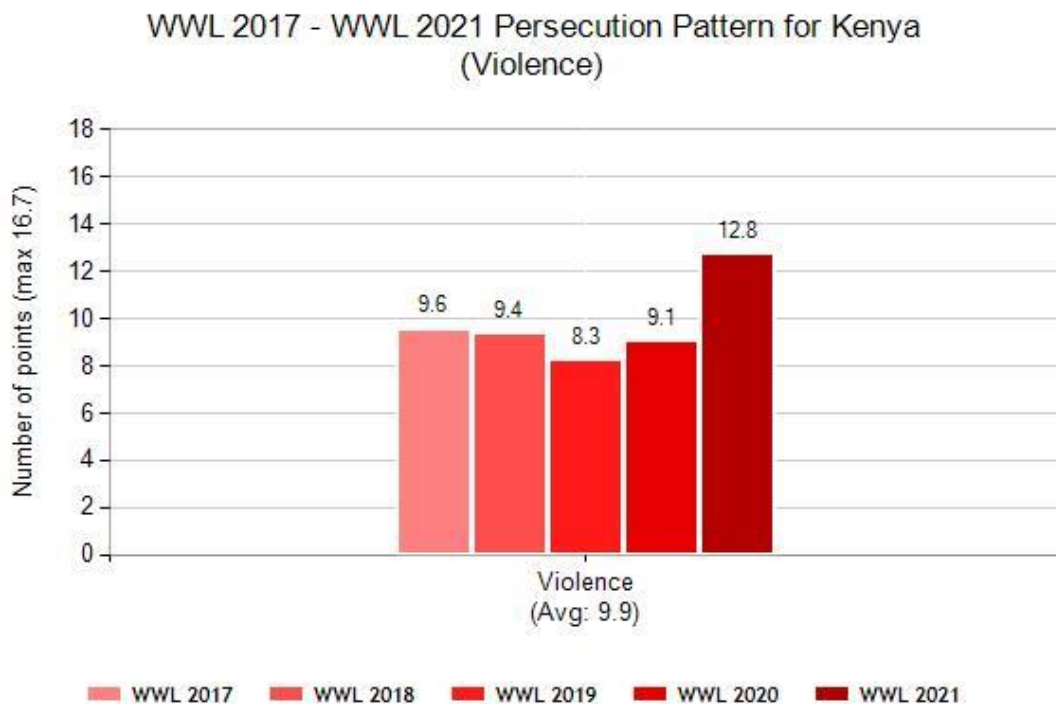
The average pressure on Christians had consistently been at a level above ten points for four reporting periods (WWL 2017 - WWL 2020). However, pressure has been gradually decreasing and went below ten points in WWL 2021 (9.9 points).

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



The chart above shows that the level of pressure on Christians in all *spheres of life* has been high and very high. Except for the *National sphere of life*, other *spheres* have consistently scored over ten points. All spheres show a reduction in the levels of pressure since WWL 2017.

## 5 Year trends: Violence against Christians



The violence scores over the last five reporting periods have varied according to the number of attacks perpetrated by al-Shabaab and their supporters. Judging by the scores in WWL 2017, 2018 and 2020, the level would seem to have stabilized at the very high level of over 9 points (but less than 10.0). However, the situation changed in the WWL 2021 reporting period when the violence score jumped by 3.7 points.

## Gender-specific religious persecution Female

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

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

In the Muslim-majority regions of Kenya, Christian women and girls face multiple forms of persecution. Though the Constitution fully establishes gender equality, cultural practices in some tribes (such as funeral rites, FGM, early marriage and polygamy) leave Christian women at greater risk of persecution if they oppose these practices. In addition, a lack of effective implementation of the Constitution has caused growing dissatisfaction among the Kenyan population. David Marage, Kenya’s Chief Justice, recently [stated](#): “In my view the constitution of Kenya is one of the best constitutions in the world, if only we could implement it.” (BBC News, 30 August 2020).

In the northern regions, Christian women and girls continue to face harassment and social rejection. Women and girls are forced to comply with an Islamic dress code. If they fail to do so they could be asked to leave their school, harassed and threatened. Women even encounter discrimination in hospitals. Pregnant women in maternity wards have reportedly been neglected by Muslim medical practitioners in the country of Wajir, endangering the life of both the mother and baby. In addition, female Christians report that they are more vulnerable to sexual harassment and rape. In the most extreme instances, they may be killed for their faith.

Female converts to Christianity from Islam face a great variety of forms of pressure. The first measures taken are to isolate them from Christian community and put them under house arrest. If married, they risk being denied custody of their children and divorced. If single, they face the likelihood of a forced marriage – usually to a much older Muslim man.

In extreme circumstances, northern Kenyan women have been kidnapped by al-Shabaab fighters and forced to be sex slaves or wives. These women are reportedly given contraceptives so that they can be gang raped repeatedly without becoming pregnant, and only those who convert to Islam and marry commanders are [allowed to have children](#) (The Standard, 23 December 2017).



## Gender-specific religious persecution Male

Male Pressure Points
Denied access to social community/networks
Denied inheritance or possessions
Imprisonment by government
Violence – death
Violence – physical
Violence – psychological

Christian boys and men in the north-eastern region in particular face the greatest danger of physical assault and execution at the hands of radical Muslims and al-Shabaab. Whilst instances are rare, men are also more likely than women to be imprisoned for their faith. Men and boys also face the threat of isolation and societal condemnation when they go against the cultural norms. Those who oppose negative cultural practices in some tribes (such as funeral rites, FGM, early marriages and polygamy) suffer varying levels of persecution. Their families are not accepted in the community as they are considered 'cursed' or 'not real men' (if they opt for hospital circumcision). Converts from a Muslim background may be denied their inheritance rights, putting them in a weak financial position. As men are the main providers in Kenya, this also affects the wider family.

### Persecution of other religious minorities

Concerning other religious groups in the country, there are no reports that suggest their persecution. Some analysts say that even though al-Shabaab's primary target is Christians, they will target all groups except Sunni Muslims.

In some parts of Kenya, Muslims - especially those with Somali background - face discrimination in Christian dominated areas.

### Future outlook

Kenya has seen significant political, structural and economic reforms that have largely driven sustained economic growth, social development and political gains over the past decade. However, its key development challenges still include poverty, inequality, and the vulnerability of the economy to internal and external shocks. The country is still open to security threats as long as Kenyan armed forces remain involved in the conflict in Somalia since al-Shabaab mainly attacks Kenya in retaliation for its involvement in Somalia.

The outlook for Christians as viewed through the lens of:

## Islamic oppression

This has been the main Persecution engine in Kenya for many years. The threat from al-Shabaab has been constantly causing serious problems for the country in general and Christians in particular. Killings, abduction and attacks on churches have taken place on a regular basis, particularly in the coastal and north-eastern areas. Unless al-Shabaab is defeated, this militant group is likely to continue recruiting young Kenyan Muslims into its ranks. Furthermore, persecution that results from family and community members will remain regardless of what would happen to al-Shabaab. This is because, in Muslim-dominated areas, religion and ethnic identity are intertwined.

## Organized corruption and crime

As one of the most corrupt nations globally, (ranking 137 out of 180 countries with a score of 28 in Transparency International's [2019 Corruption Index](#)) Kenya's political culture tolerates corruption at all levels. This tolerance has even led some analysts to believe it has helped al-Shabaab to carry out some of the deadly attacks in the country. There was even a report (which was rejected by the Kenyan army) that accused the [Kenya army](#) of "taking a cut of the illegal sugar and charcoal trade in Somalia that provides the bulk of funding for terror group al-Shabaab which it is meant to be fighting" (The Telegraph, 12 November 2015). The corruption at local authority level will particularly remain a challenge to churches.

## Potential regional issue

Ethiopia is [withdrawing thousands of troops](#) from Somalia. If it continues to withdraw troops, al-Shabaab is likely to get even stronger and become more challenging for Kenya (particularly for Christians in north-eastern Kenya) and the entire region (All Africa, 22 December 2020).

## External Links - Persecution Dynamics

- Persecution engines description: report - <https://ctc.usma.edu/east-africas-terrorist-triple-helix-dusit-hotel-attack-historical-evolution-jihadi-threat/>
- Persecution engines description: Corruption Index - <https://www.transparency.org/country/KEN>
- Pressure in Block 3 / Community sphere: released - <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-africa-52608614>
- Violence / Block 6 - commentary: Express, 18 December 2019 - <https://www.express.co.uk/news/world/1218744/Christian-world-news-persecution-islamic-prayer-al-shabaab-jihadis-attack-kenya>
- Violence / Block 6 - commentary: Reuters, 7 January 2020 - <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-kenya-security-idUSKBN1Z60LH>
- Violence / Block 6 - commentary: Morning Star News, 14 January 2020 - <https://morningstarnews.org/2020/01/three-christian-teachers-killed-in-northeast-kenya-sources-say/>
- Violence / Block 6 - commentary: The Christian Post, 22 February 2020 - <https://www.christianpost.com/news/2-christians-executed-in-al-shabaab-bus-attack-for-not-reciting-islamic-declaration-of-faith.html>
- Gender-specific religious persecution Female description: stated - <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-africa-53935125>
- Gender-specific religious persecution Female description: allowed to have children - <https://www.standardmedia.co.ke/article/2001263935/women-turned-into-sex-slaves-by-militants-in-alshabaab-camps>
- Future outlook: 2019 Corruption Index - <https://www.transparency.org/en/countries/kenya>

- Future outlook: Kenya army - <https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/africaandindianocean/kenya/11991497/Kenyan-army-profiting-from-illicit-trade-that-props-up-al-Shabaab.html>
- Future outlook: withdrawing thousands of troops - <https://allafrica.com/stories/202012220086.html>

## 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. [KENYA – Ethnic cleansing – 2016](#)
- <http://opendoorsanalytical.org/?s=Kenya>
- <https://www.worldwatchmonitor.org/countries/Kenya>