

World
Watch
Research

Nigeria: Full Country Dossier

January 2022



OpenDoors

Serving persecuted **Christians** worldwide

Open Doors International / World Watch Research

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Group in front of shop in Nigeria (c) Open Doors International

Introduction

World Watch List 2022

Rank	Country	Private life	Family life	Community life	National life	Church life	Violence	Total Score WWL 2022	Total Score WWL 2021	Total Score WWL 2020	Total Score WWL 2019	Total Score WWL 2018
1	Afghanistan	16.7	16.7	16.7	16.7	16.7	15.0	98	94	93	94	93
2	North Korea	16.7	16.7	16.7	16.7	16.7	13.1	96	94	94	94	94
3	Somalia	16.5	16.7	16.6	16.6	16.6	8.5	91	92	92	91	91
4	Libya	15.6	15.5	15.9	16.2	16.3	11.5	91	92	90	87	86
5	Yemen	16.7	16.6	16.5	16.7	16.7	5.2	88	87	85	86	85
6	Eritrea	14.6	14.9	15.5	15.9	15.6	11.1	88	88	87	86	86
7	Nigeria	13.8	13.8	14.3	14.5	14.4	16.7	87	85	80	80	77
8	Pakistan	13.6	14.0	15.1	14.9	13.1	16.7	87	88	88	87	86
9	Iran	14.5	14.6	13.6	15.8	16.5	10.4	85	86	85	85	85
10	India	12.7	12.7	12.9	14.7	13.3	15.6	82	83	83	83	81
11	Saudi Arabia	15.1	15.1	15.0	15.9	16.7	3.1	81	78	79	77	79
12	Myanmar	12.4	11.5	13.8	13.4	13.1	14.8	79	74	73	71	65
13	Sudan	13.4	13.4	14.3	13.6	15.7	8.5	79	79	85	87	87
14	Iraq	14.0	14.6	14.0	14.8	13.9	6.9	78	82	76	79	86
15	Syria	12.9	13.8	13.5	14.3	13.9	9.3	78	81	82	82	76
16	Maldives	15.4	15.3	13.7	15.8	16.5	0.4	77	77	78	78	78
17	China	12.6	9.8	12.2	14.4	15.5	11.1	76	74	70	65	57
18	Qatar	14.2	14.1	11.1	13.0	14.3	7.2	74	67	66	62	63
19	Vietnam	11.3	9.7	12.7	14.1	14.5	8.7	71	72	72	70	69
20	Egypt	12.7	13.2	11.5	12.7	10.8	10.0	71	75	76	76	70
21	Uzbekistan	14.9	12.7	14.1	11.8	15.6	1.7	71	71	73	74	73
22	Algeria	14.0	14.0	11.1	13.4	14.1	4.1	71	70	73	70	58
23	Mauritania	14.3	13.9	13.1	14.0	14.1	0.9	70	71	68	67	57
24	Mali	9.4	8.2	13.9	10.3	12.8	15.0	70	67	66	68	59
25	Turkmenistan	14.5	11.3	13.6	13.3	15.7	0.6	69	70	70	69	68
26	Laos	12.0	10.3	13.2	13.3	14.1	5.9	69	71	72	71	67
27	Morocco	13.1	13.8	10.8	12.8	14.2	3.9	69	67	66	63	51
28	Indonesia	11.3	11.5	11.5	11.0	9.6	13.5	68	63	60	65	59
29	Bangladesh	11.8	10.7	12.9	11.3	10.2	11.3	68	67	63	58	58
30	Colombia	11.5	8.8	13.1	11.0	9.9	13.3	68	67	62	58	56
31	CAR	9.0	8.6	13.6	9.6	11.4	15.6	68	66	68	70	61
32	Burkina Faso	9.4	9.7	12.0	9.6	12.1	14.8	68	67	66	48	-
33	Niger	9.4	9.5	13.9	7.2	12.8	14.8	68	62	60	52	45
34	Bhutan	13.4	12.4	11.7	13.7	13.8	1.7	67	64	61	64	62
35	Tunisia	11.9	12.7	10.6	11.3	13.4	6.5	66	67	64	63	62
36	Oman	13.8	14.0	10.3	13.2	13.4	1.5	66	63	62	59	57
37	Cuba	12.3	8.1	12.6	13.2	14.0	5.9	66	62	52	49	49
38	Ethiopia	9.9	10.3	13.1	10.3	12.3	9.8	66	65	63	65	62
39	Jordan	12.9	14.0	11.0	12.3	12.5	3.0	66	64	64	65	66
40	DRC	8.0	7.9	12.6	9.7	12.0	15.6	66	64	56	55	33
41	Mozambique	9.3	8.5	11.3	7.9	12.5	15.6	65	63	43	43	-
42	Turkey	12.6	11.5	11.4	13.2	11.6	4.6	65	69	63	66	62
43	Mexico	10.3	8.3	12.5	10.8	10.3	12.6	65	64	60	61	59
44	Cameroon	8.8	7.6	12.6	7.2	13.1	15.4	65	64	60	54	38
45	Tajikistan	13.8	12.3	12.0	12.6	13.2	0.7	65	66	65	65	65
46	Brunei	14.8	14.5	10.3	11.0	13.2	0.6	64	64	63	63	64
47	Kazakhstan	13.4	11.6	11.1	12.6	13.5	1.7	64	64	64	63	63
48	Nepal	12.4	9.8	9.9	13.6	12.7	5.2	64	66	64	64	64
49	Kuwait	13.5	13.7	9.8	12.3	13.1	1.1	64	63	62	60	61
50	Malaysia	12.5	14.3	11.5	11.6	10.2	3.3	63	63	62	60	65

Rank	Country	Private life	Family life	Community life	National life	Church life	Violence	Total Score WWL 2022	Total Score WWL 2021	Total Score WWL 2020	Total Score WWL 2019	Total Score WWL 2018
51	Kenya	11.7	9.2	11.4	8.0	11.5	11.1	63	62	61	61	62
52	Sri Lanka	12.9	9.9	11.4	11.3	9.4	7.8	63	62	65	58	57
53	Comoros	12.7	11.1	11.2	12.4	14.2	0.9	63	62	57	56	56
54	UAE	13.4	13.6	10.1	11.8	12.2	1.3	62	62	60	58	58
55	Tanzania	9.3	10.8	10.3	8.6	8.7	13.7	61	58	55	52	53
56	Azerbaijan	13.1	9.9	9.3	11.0	13.4	3.3	60	56	57	57	57
57	Palestinian Territories	13.0	13.4	9.8	10.2	12.0	0.9	59	58	60	57	60
58	Djibouti	12.3	12.3	11.1	10.0	12.2	0.7	59	56	56	56	56
59	Kyrgyzstan	12.9	10.1	11.1	10.4	12.0	1.5	58	58	57	56	54
60	Bahrain	12.5	13.2	9.1	11.1	10.2	0.9	57	56	55	55	57
61	Nicaragua	9.1	5.6	11.1	11.8	11.3	7.6	56	51	41	41	-
62	Russian Federation	12.3	8.0	10.2	10.6	12.3	2.2	56	57	60	60	51
63	Chad	11.5	8.2	10.2	9.6	10.3	5.6	55	53	56	48	40
64	Burundi	7.6	7.8	9.7	9.2	9.6	8.1	52	48	48	43	-
65	Venezuela	5.6	4.5	11.2	9.4	11.1	9.6	51	39	42	41	34
66	Angola	6.8	6.7	8.1	10.1	11.4	7.8	51	46	43	42	-
67	Rwanda	8.1	5.5	6.7	10.3	10.1	9.3	50	42	42	41	-
68	Honduras	7.2	5.1	10.5	7.7	9.2	8.7	48	46	39	38	-
69	Uganda	8.1	4.6	7.4	6.7	9.1	11.7	48	47	48	47	46
70	El Salvador	7.7	4.6	10.7	5.7	9.1	7.2	45	42	38	30	-
71	Togo	9.2	6.7	9.3	7.1	9.8	2.4	44	43	41	42	-
72	Gambia	8.3	8.2	8.7	8.3	8.8	1.7	44	43	43	43	-
73	Guinea	10.3	7.5	8.3	7.0	8.1	2.0	43	47	45	46	-
74	South Sudan	5.7	0.9	7.0	6.3	7.8	15.0	43	43	44	44	-
75	Ivory Coast	9.8	8.6	8.2	5.5	7.9	2.0	42	42	42	43	-
76	Israel	9.8	8.4	5.6	6.6	6.6	4.3	41	40	38	39	40

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Sources and definitions

- This country report is a collation of data and analysis based around Open Doors World Watch List (WWL) and includes statistical information on world religions, Christian denominations and people groups prepared by the World Christian Database (WCD).
- Highlighted links in the text can be found written out in full at the conclusion of each main section under the heading “External links”. In order to reduce the length of these reference sections, a table containing links to regularly used sources can be found at the beginning of the “Keys to Understanding” chapter under the heading “Links for general background information”. Where one of these sources has been quoted in the dossier text, a quote reference is supplied as indicated in the second column of the table.
- The WWL 2022 reporting period was 01 October 2020 - 30 September 2021.
- 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 2022 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 In-country networks, Open Doors country researchers, External experts, WWR analysts and an increased use of technological options, Open Doors is confident that – as in the previous reporting period – WWL 2022 scoring, analysis and documentation has maintained required levels of quality and reliability.

External Links - Introduction

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

WWL 2022 Situation in brief / Nigeria

Brief country details

Nigeria: Population (UN estimate for 2021)	Christians	Chr%
211,447,000	98,006,000	46.4

Data source: Johnson T M and Zurlo G A, eds, World Christian Database (Leiden/Boston: Brill, accessed April 2021)

Map of country



Nigeria: World Watch List	Points	WWL Rank
WWL 2022	87	7
WWL 2021	85	9
WWL 2020	80	12
WWL 2019	80	12
WWL 2018	77	14

Ranks are shown above whenever the country scored 41 points or more in the WWL 2018-2022 reporting periods

Dominant persecution engines and drivers

Nigeria: Main Persecution engines	Main drivers
Islamic oppression	Government officials, Ethnic group leaders, Non-Christian religious leaders, Violent religious groups, Ideological pressure groups, Citizens (people from the broader society), including mobs, One's own (extended) family, Political parties, Organized crime cartels or networks, Multilateral organizations (e.g. UN, OIC etc.) , Revolutionaries or paramilitary groups
Ethno-religious hostility	Ethnic group leaders, Violent religious groups, Ideological pressure groups, Non-Christian religious leaders, Government officials, Revolutionaries or paramilitary groups
Dictatorial paranoia	Government officials, Ethnic group leaders, Organized crime cartels or networks, Violent religious groups, Ideological pressure groups, Political parties, Revolutionaries or paramilitary groups, Multilateral organizations (e.g. UN, OIC etc.) , Non-Christian religious leaders
Organized corruption and crime	Violent religious groups, Government officials, Ethnic group leaders, Organized crime cartels or networks, Ideological pressure groups, Political parties, Revolutionaries or paramilitary groups, Non-Christian religious leaders

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

Brief description of the persecution situation

In terms of Persecution engines, Christians suffer from a suffocating combination of *Islamic oppression*, *Ethno-religious hostility*, *Dictatorial paranoia* and *Organized corruption and crime*.

Nigeria has a history of enforced Islamization. Before the arrival of the British colonial administration in Nigeria, Usman Dan Fodio, a Fulani radical Islamic scholar began an Islamic jihad in Gobir in 1804, and by 1808 had established the Sokoto Caliphate. He had vowed to enforce Islam through the power of the sword from the Sahara Desert in the north to the Atlantic Ocean in the south. This enforced Islamization gained momentum with the declaration of Sharia states in northern Nigeria (starting in 1999). Since then it has gradually developed all over the country, by violent and non-violent means.

During the presidency of Muhammadu Buhari (beginning in 2015), Islamic militant violence increased. In addition to what already was happening, the government has failed to prevent the increase of brutal acts of violence of which many Nigerians are victims, but most particularly Christians - with impunity. Most of this violence is in the North, in the form of attacks by Boko Haram, Boko Haram split-off Islamic State in West Africa Province - ISWAP, Fulani militants and armed 'bandits', but it has also spread to the South. Such violence often causes loss of life, physical injury, rape and other forms of sexual harassment, as well as loss of property and destruction of farmlands; abductions for ransom have increased considerably over recent years. As a result of the violence, Christians are being dispossessed of their land and means of livelihood. Many live as IDPs or refugees.

Christians in northern Nigeria, especially in the Sharia states, face discrimination and exclusion as second-class citizens. Christians with a Muslim background also face rejection from their own families, pressure to give up Christianity, and often physical violence.

Further, since 2015, President Buhari's federal government has appointed mostly northern Muslims to certain critical offices, including security agencies like the army, air force, police, immigration service, the Department of State Services (DSS), customs, Civil Defence Corps, prison service etc. The same applies increasingly for the judiciary in Nigeria, and for key economic sectors. A Nigerian analyst refers to this as "ethno-religious incursion of the establishment". The challenge in all this is the official policy of denial of religious freedom violations against Christians by the government.

This process of Islamization is occurring against the background of climate change, environmental degradation and population growth, pushing the mainly Muslim Fulani herdsmen with their cattle southwards to the North-Central and to the southern zones. The stress this is causing on herder-farmer relationships - a classical theme in the history of mankind - is manipulated by political and religious leadership to further the agenda of Islamization. Especially now that Christian youth have begun to defend themselves increasingly against the violent attacks of Boko Haram, ISWAP, Fulani militants and armed 'bandits', the narrative becomes confusing, and the risk of [persecution eclipse](#) arises (WWR, WWL - Discussion of key themes, October 2021, p.13). Persecution eclipse is further increased by classifying what is happening in the country as 'sectarian violence', 'communal clashes' or 'civil unrest', as well as by the increasing use of the term 'bandits' or 'criminals' for the jihad-inspired perpetrators.

Summary of international obligations and rights violations

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

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

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

- The state is manifestly failing to protect Nigerian Christians' fundamental rights (ICCPR Art. 2)
- Christians are murdered in indiscriminate attacks (ICCPR Art. 6)
- Christians women are raped, gangraped and sexually abused (ICCPR Art. 7)
- Christian children are forced to adhere to Islamic religious precepts especially in the Northern states (ICCPR Art. 18 and CRC Art. 14)
- Converts to Christianity suffer from discrimination and violence especially in the Northern states (ICCPR Arts. 18 and 26)
- Christians are accused and charged with blasphemy especially in the Northern states (ICCPR Art. 19)

Specific examples of violations of rights in the reporting period

20 April 2021: So-called 'bandits' abducted 22 students and a member of staff from Greenfields University (a private college which caters mainly for Christian students) in Kasarami village, Chikun Local Government Area of Kudana State. Within a week of the abduction, [5 of the kidnapped students were killed](#) (Al-Jazeera, 26 April 2021).

30 May 2021: Benue State Governor Ortom's Deputy, Benson Abounu, confirmed that [60 civilians in Ado Local Government Area \(LGA\) were killed](#) by suspected Fulani militia on 30 May 2021. Hundreds fled the area (Daily Post Nigeria on 2 June 2021).

8 August 2021: More than [70 Irigwe people were killed](#), 55 wounded and 30,000 displaced when their communities in Plateau State were attacked by gunmen suspected to be Fulani herdsmen (Vanguard, 15 August 2021). It was particularly shocking that [soldiers were not ordered to stop the perpetrators](#) (Punch, 8 August 2021). The lack of protection allegedly led to an [act of retaliation](#) in which 22 Muslim travelers were killed and 17 wounded (This Day, 22 August 2021). This time, governor and police were very quick to act, imposing a curfew and arresting youth, not necessarily after due investigation.

25 August 2021: Armed gunmen attacked Yelwa zangam community in Jos, Plateau State, killing over 35. According to a witness who lost 9 members of his immediate family, "the attack was well planned and clinically executed". His reason is that the major bridge linking the Community and the main city was destroyed to prevent access to security personnel or anyone that could have provided any form of help. Another witness "blamed the security operatives for failing to prevent it. He said the village is barely 2 kilometers away from the city center and wondered why the Police and the Military will only show up after the killings and burning of houses had taken place." (Sources: [SamSonOmale, 25 August 2021](#) and [29 August 2021](#))

August 2021 - state censorship: A large armed group made a daring raid on the [Nigeria Defence Academy campus](#) in Kaduna on 24 August 2021, killing two officers and abducting one (EONS intelligence, 24 August 2021). A former Navy Chief who was interviewed shortly afterwards described the situation in Nigeria as a strategy of '[Talibanization](#)' – a deliberate, religiously motivated degrading of security and order in which state actors and tribal groups are also complicit (YouTube, 25 August 2021). The Defence Intelligence Agency [tried](#) to have the former Navy Chief arrested for his remarks against President Buhari (Sahara Reporters, 31 August 2021). Meanwhile, after Benue State Governor Ortom also criticized the Buhari administration in a Channels TV interview, the two journalists who arranged the interview were subsequently [arrested](#) (Sahara Reporters, 26 August 2021).

The examples given are taken from a joint research project with a Nigerian partner organization. The information is based on primary data from their networks or checked by their networks after publication by Nigerian or international media.

Specific examples of positive developments

1) ICC inquiry into Nigeria

Prosecutor Fatou Bensouda of the International Criminal Court has called for a [formal inquiry](#) to begin into war crimes and crimes against humanity in Nigeria, in which she not only implicated non-state actors but also members of the Nigerian Security Forces. According to the prosecutor, the conflict has killed over 30,000 and displaced more than two million people (BBC News, 11 December 2020). The ICC's preliminary examination, which began in 2010, has now concluded that the "criteria for opening an investigation into the situation in Nigeria have been met".

Although this is a positive development towards some accountability, there are serious flaws in the Prosecutor's approach. The religious aspect of the crimes committed against Nigerian Christians is being downplayed and the crimes against them are being minimized. Three examples stand out:

- The Prosecutor is not investigating the charge of genocide against Nigerian Christians by Boko Haram.
- The Prosecutor is treating religious persecution of Christians as a minor aspect of the crimes against humanity charge.
- The Prosecutor is not investigating the attacks on Christians by Fulani militants.

2) Nigeria, Country of Particular Concern (CPC)

Michael R. Pompeo, US Secretary of State, announced on 7 December 2020 that the USA designated [Nigeria](#) as Country of Particular Concern under the International Religious Freedom Act of 1998, as amended, for engaging in or tolerating “systematic, ongoing, egregious violations of religious freedom.”

Although this news was welcomed with enthusiasm by many Nigerians, as it held hope that it would push the regime of President Buhari to improve their record on religious freedom, less than 1 year later (17 November 2021) the designation of Nigeria as Country of Particular was [officially ended](#) (WWR, 24 November 2021).

External Links - Situation in brief

- Brief description of the persecution situation: persecution eclipse - <https://opendoorsanalytical.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/10/WWL-Discussion-of-key-themes-October-2021.pdf>
- Summary of international obligations and rights violations: International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights - <https://www.ohchr.org/en/professionalinterest/pages/ccpr.aspx>
- Summary of international obligations and rights violations: International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights - <https://www.ohchr.org/en/professionalinterest/pages/cescr.aspx>
- Summary of international obligations and rights violations: Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment - <https://www.ohchr.org/en/professionalinterest/pages/cat.aspx>
- Summary of international obligations and rights violations: Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women - <https://www.ohchr.org/EN/ProfessionalInterest/Pages/CEDAW.aspx>
- Summary of international obligations and rights violations: Convention on the Rights of the Child - <https://www.ohchr.org/en/professionalinterest/pages/crc.aspx>
- Specific examples of violations of rights in the reporting period: 5 of the kidnapped students were killed - <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2021/4/26/nigeria-kidnappers-execute-two-more-captive-students>
- Specific examples of violations of rights in the reporting period: 60 civilians in Ado Local Government Area (LGA) were killed - <https://dailypost.ng/2021/06/02/herdsmen-butcher-60-in-benue-community-deputy-gov-confirms/>
- Specific examples of violations of rights in the reporting period: 70 Irigwe people were killed - <https://www.vanguardngr.com/2021/08/plateau-attacks-shocking-details-of-how-70-persons-were-killed-55-injured-30000-displaced/>
- Specific examples of violations of rights in the reporting period: soldiers were not ordered to stop the perpetrators - <https://punchng.com/soldiers-said-they-werent-ordered-to-stop-invaders-from-attacking-plateau-communities-monarch/?amp>
- Specific examples of violations of rights in the reporting period: act of retaliation - <https://www.thisdaylive.com/index.php/2021/08/22/bloodier-plateau-dodgier-interventions/>
- Specific examples of violations of rights in the reporting period: SamSonOmale, 25 August 2021 - <https://www.samsonomale.com/post/breaking-bandits-attack-jos-community-kill-over-35>
- Specific examples of violations of rights in the reporting period: 29 August 2021 - <https://www.samsonomale.com/post/breaking-16-victims-from-jos-attacks-buried-amidst-tears-pain-and-anguish>
- Specific examples of violations of rights in the reporting period: Nigeria Defence Academy campus - <https://eonsintelligence.com/details/news-108923456/gunmen-attack-nda-campus-in-kaduna-kill-two-military-officers-and-abduct-one-1880763878>
- Specific examples of violations of rights in the reporting period: Talibanization - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KyHowYHyAp8>
- Specific examples of violations of rights in the reporting period: tried - <http://saharareporters.com/2021/08/31/breaking-retired-navy-commodore-kunle-olawunmi-arrives-defence-intelligence-agency-after>

- Specific examples of violations of rights in the reporting period: arrested - <http://saharareporters.com/2021/08/26/buhari-government-moves-shut-channels-tv-orders-arrest-journalists-over-governor-ortoms->
- Specific examples of positive developments: formal inquiry - <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-africa-55277712>
- Specific examples of positive developments: Nigeria - <https://www.state.gov/united-states-takes-action-against-violators-of-religious-freedom-2/>
- Specific examples of positive developments: officially ended - <https://opendoorsanalytical.org/nigeria-usa-new-cpc-listing-usa-is-playing-a-very-dangerous-game/>

WWL 2022: Keys to understanding / Nigeria

Links for general background information

Name	Quote Reference	Link	Last accessed on
Amnesty International country report	AI 2021	https://www.amnesty.org/en/countries/africa/nigeria/	6 July 2021
BBC News country profile	BBC country profile	https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-africa-13949550	6 July 2021
Bertelsmann Transformation Index 2020	BTI 2020	https://bti-project.org/en/reports/country-dashboard-NGA.html	6 July 2021
CIA World Factbook	CIA Factbook	https://www.cia.gov/the-world-factbook/countries/nigeria/	6 July 2021
Economist Intelligence Unit Democracy Index 2020	EIU 2020	https://pages.eiu.com/rs/753-RIQ-438/images/democracy-index-2020.pdf	6 July 2021
FFP's Fragile States Index 2021	FSI 2021	https://fragilestatesindex.org/country-data/	6 July 2021
Freedom House's 2021 Democracy index	Freedom House/Democracy 2021	https://freedomhouse.org/countries/nations-transit/scores	6 July 2021
Freedom House's 2021 Global Freedom index	Freedom House/Global Freedom 2021	https://freedomhouse.org/country/nigeria/freedom-world/2021	6 July 2021
Freedom House's Freedom on the Net 2020 report	Freedom House/Internet Freedom 2020	https://freedomhouse.org/country/nigeria/freedom-net/2020	6 July 2021
Garda World country report	Garda World	https://www.garda.com/crisis24/country-reports/nigeria	6 July 2021
Human Rights Watch World Report 2021	HRW 2021	https://www.hrw.org/world-report/2021/country-chapters/nigeria	6 July 2021
Internet World Stats 2021	IWS 2021	https://www.internetworldstats.com/africa.htm#ng	6 July 2021
RSF's 2020 World Press Freedom Index	World Press Freedom 2020	https://rsf.org/en/nigeria	6 July 2021
Transparency International's 2020 Corruption Perceptions Index	CPI 2020	https://www.transparency.org/en/countries/nigeria	6 July 2021
UNDP's Global Human Development Indicators	HDI 2020	http://hdr.undp.org/en/countries/profiles/NGA	6 July 2021
US State Department's 2020 International Religious Freedom country reports	IRFR 2020	https://www.state.gov/reports/2020-report-on-international-religious-freedom/nigeria/	6 July 2021
USCIRF 2021 country reports	USCIRF 2021	https://www.uscirf.gov/sites/default/files/2021-05/Nigeria%20Chapter%20AR2021.pdf	6 July 2021
World Bank country report	World Bank	https://www.worldbank.org/en/country/nigeria	6 July 2021

Recent history

Nigeria, a country with the largest population in Africa and a major political and economic force in West Africa and the continent at large, is a legacy of British colonial rule. The area which is now called Nigeria used to be controlled by various small African kingdoms before the British colonial period. The conquest of what is now Nigeria started with the annexation of Lagos as a colony by the British Crown in the 1850s which led to the establishment of further protectorates and colonies in the region. After the amalgamation of these various colonies and protectorates in 1914, the Colony and Protectorate of Nigeria came into existence.

Since gaining independence in 1960, Nigeria went through a series of civilian administrations which were overthrown by the army. After sixteen years of military rule by four different generals, in which transition to democracy and civilian rule were continually postponed, the Fourth Republic was inaugurated with a new constitution in 1999. The transition that had eluded Nigeria for more than a decade and half was made possible partly due to the sudden death of the military dictator General Sani Abacha. Upon his death, his successor, General Abdulsalami Alhaji Abubakar, oversaw a quick transition to civilian rule and promulgated a new Constitution.

It needs to be noted that in the 1999 Constitution of secular Nigeria, the word “Islam” as a religion is mentioned 28 times and the word “Muslim” 10 times. Yet, Christianity, Christian, Church or canonical courts are never mentioned once.

Since the resumption of constitutional rule in Nigeria in 1999, the People's Democratic Party (PDP) emerged as the dominant party winning all presidential elections except the 2015 and 2019 presidential elections. The country moved into a new chapter of history in May 2015 when Goodluck Jonathan conceded defeat in the presidential election and passed power to the opposition, the All Progressive Congress (APC) with Muhammadu Buhari as president. Over the past years, the country has been fighting an insurgency in parts of the Niger Delta region and Islamic militants in the northern parts of the country, which have spread to the South-West and South-East too. The administration of President Buhari claims that Boko Haram has been defeated in military terms. Nevertheless Boko Haram still continues to be a menace to Nigerians particularly in the north-eastern part of the country, together with split-off group ISWAP since 2016. On 20 May 2021, ISWAP fighters [killed](#) rival Boko Haram leader Abubakar Shekau in a fire-fight.

In the course of time the situation has become very complex in Nigeria's six political zones. In the past, violence in the North-East was mainly perpetrated by Boko Haram, and after the split-off also by ISWAP; in the North-West there were the armed 'bandits' and in the North-Central there were the Fulani militants. The circles of influence of these different groups have however increasingly overlapped, including their agendas. Boko Haram's Shekau, when still alive, was at least partly responsible for this. He had made a rigorous [shift in attitude](#) (HumAngle, 12 July 2020) and tried to forge alliances with various groups in northern Nigeria – such alliances included adherence to his radical Islamic agenda which was nothing less than to create chaos and have an 'Islamic state' in the North emerge from the ashes, presumably to be extended to the South too, and to parts of neighboring countries where Boko Haram and other groups are active. Although many Boko Haram fighters have recently given up fighting, come out of their hiding places with their families and laid down their weapons, the Islamist group is still alive and wreaking havoc in the country.

This has led to a devastating combination of violent incidents: Raids on predominantly Christian communities, abductions, sexual violence, road block killings etc. Abductions for ransom have increased considerably over recent years. This violence affects Christians in the country disproportionately. Apart from the outright violence, there are also many non-violent or 'squeeze' factors accompanying it, leading to intolerance and discrimination against Christians in their different spheres of life (such as education, employment, permission for building churches). At the same time, the failure of the federal government and several state governments to protect their citizens, is striking (notwithstanding the examples of certain courageous state governors who do their best to protect the citizens in their responsibility, sometimes in extremely difficult circumstances).

Violence is not limited to northern Nigeria alone but has spread to southern Nigeria too. In the three southern zones there is already violence being perpetrated by Fulani militants and 'bandits', including land grabbing. According to a Nigerian analyst: "Eye-witnesses attested of the heavy presence of the Fulani migrants in Cross Rivers, Delta, Edo, Rivers, Abia, Anambra,

Enugu, Imo, Ekiti, Ogun, Ondo, Osun, Oyo. The common criminal activities in the Southern States of Nigeria are killings, kidnapping, invasions and occupations of forests, massive migration and loitering with fire arms."

A culture of violence and of impunity has been allowed to develop in Nigeria, encouraging all sorts of other criminal groups to flourish too. Sometimes it is difficult to see what is plain criminality and what has jihadi connections. However, the lack of government intervention can easily appear to observers to be pro militant Fulanis and contra Christians (and other vulnerable groups).

Political and legal landscape

Ethnicity and religion play a significant role in Nigerian politics. Politicians try to mobilize support directly and indirectly by appealing to ethnic and religious sentiments. Historically, the Muslim Hausa-Fulani politicians have dominated the political field, especially due to their dominance in the army which has always been a significant player in Nigerian politics. The major bone of contention in Nigerian politics is the distribution of revenue derived from the country's considerable oil resources. Corruption is rampant, both at national and federal level.

Christians have repeatedly been the targets of attacks and victims of severe violations of their fundamental rights. However, since the current APC government came to power, the attacks have been more aggressive and daring. APC came into power in 2015 after defeating the PDP, a party considered more inclusive and sympathetic to Christian concerns. Although the APC has denied being a pro-Islamic party, the fact that the situation for Christians has been deteriorating radically, strengthens the notion of supporting the Islamic expansionist agenda. Since coming to power, Christians are not only contending with the attacks from Boko Haram, but also from ISWAP, Fulani militia and so-called armed 'bandits'. The government has taken no concrete action to contain the spread of attacks carried out by Fulani militants and armed 'bandits' which have been devastating Christian communities. There is no doubt that Muslims also suffer in the spreading violence, but what Christians are experiencing is an existential threat if this trend of attacks continues.

As stated above (in: *Brief description of persecution situation*), since 2015, President Buhari's federal government has appointed Muslims to a number of significant posts and to the judiciary in Nigeria. This is not only limited to positions within the federal government, but increasingly extends to federal-controlled agencies within state governments. This is also the case in southern, Christian majority states. A disproportionate number of the directors are Muslims. This makes it increasingly difficult for Christians to defend their rights in those states.

On 25 November 2019, the Chief Justice of Nigeria, a Muslim, made a public statement (published in Nigerian newspapers) to the effect that Muslims can now use their numerical strength in the judiciary and legislature to amend the Constitution and extend the remit of Sharia law. This has drawn intense criticism from secular and Christian commentators. In December 2019, the Chief Justice of Nigeria asked that [Sharia be taught in Arabic](#) in Nigeria's universities (Nairaland, 11 December 2019).

President Muhammadu Buhari signed the Companies and Allied Matters Act 2020 ([CAMA, 2020](#)) into law on the 7th of August 2020. The enactment of CAMA 2020 has generated a lot of controversy particularly with the provisions of Section 839 which allows the Corporate Affairs Commission to take over institutions registered under the Incorporated Trustee Provisions of the Act. Several Christian denominations have publicly expressed reservations since the provisions are being seen as a move to ensure government control of churches and a move to restrict Freedom of Worship as provided in Section 38 of the Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria 1999 (amended in 2011). The Christians Association of Nigeria (CAN) firmly [rejected the law](#) (AciAfrica, 21 August 2020). Their fight against it was initiated at the political level and the legal level. In the reporting period no clarity was yet obtained.

Nigeria's legal structure on marriage makes Christian girls vulnerable for abduction and forced marriage, especially in the context of Sharia law and violence by Islamic militants such as Boko Haram and ISWAP, as well as by Fulani militants and armed 'bandits' who seem to pursue a comparable agenda. This is even worse for female converts from Christianity to Islam. Sometimes even married women are the victims. Domestic violence within marriages is widespread; in the Islamic northern region, husbands are permitted to discipline their wives so long as no 'grievous' bodily harm is caused (CEDAW 2017) and in the south, the Criminal Code Act considers assault on a woman as a 'misdemeanor' as opposed to a 'felony' if the victim were a man ([2019 OECD report](#)). Added to this, divorce can easily be carried out when a man or women converts from Islam to Christianity, often entailing loss of custody over the children ([OECD, 2019](#)). Finally, with the emphasis on killing men and older boys, there are many Christian widows in the northern part of the country. A Christian widow may lose her children to Muslim relatives to be raised as Muslims, even when she has raised them previously as Christians.

There are multiple marital regimes (civil, customary and Islamic) operating concurrently and lacking uniformity ([OECD, 2019](#)). The federal government has no jurisdiction over Islamic or customary marriages and as such early marriage and polygamy are widespread. Laws are particularly confining for women and girls in the North, where Sharia has been implemented. Nigeria ratified the CEDAW Convention in 1985 and the Optional Protocol in 2004, but was criticized in a [2017 report](#) for tacitly permitting child marriage; the report called for an overhaul of national legislation to ensure CEDAW is adequately integrated throughout laws and policies (NGO Coalition Shadow Report, June 2017, "Report of Nigeria on Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination against Women"). In this environment, it is useful to note that just [3.38%](#) of seats in Parliament are held by women (Index Mundi, accessed 4 January 2021).

Religious landscape

Nigeria: Religious context	Number of adherents	%
Christians	98,006,000	46.4
Muslim	97,999,000	46.3
Hindu	36,700	0.0
Buddhist	10,900	0.0
Ethno-religionist	14,728,000	7.0
Jewish	1,200	0.0
Bahai	49,500	0.0
Atheist	54,300	0.0
Agnostic	535,000	0.3
Other	26,500	0.0
<i>OTHER includes Chinese folk, New religionist, Sikh, Spiritist, Taoist, Confucianist, Jain, Shintoist, Zoroastrian.</i>		

Data source: Johnson T M and Zurlo G A, eds, *World Christian Database* (Leiden/Boston: Brill, accessed April 2021)

Nigeria is a religious and ethnically diverse nation with a religious fault-line: The southern part of Nigeria is predominantly Christian, while northern Nigeria is predominantly Muslim. This harks back to the restrictions placed on missionary activity in northern Nigeria during colonial times and the dominance of Muslim traders operating in the northern parts of the country before and during the colonial period. This regional religious divide also partly coincides with the ethnic divide in Nigeria. Among the three major ethnic groups in Nigeria, the Hausa-Fulani of northern Nigeria are predominantly Muslim, the Igbo of south-eastern Nigeria are mainly Christian, while the Yoruba of south-western Nigeria have both a significant Muslim and Christian population.

Religion plays a pivotal role in Nigerian society. According to WCD 2021 estimates, 46.3% of the population is Muslim, while 46.4% is Christian. Even though Nigeria is constitutionally a secular state with freedom of religion enshrined in the Constitution, for nearly 40 years the northern ruling elite have been giving preferential treatment to Muslims and discriminating against Christians. Since 1999, Sharia law has been imposed in 12 northern states much to the detriment of Christians, causing a very high level of concern. Also, in many parts of northern Nigeria, and increasingly in southern Nigeria too, jihad-inspired militants are killing and displacing Christians and taking over their farmland. Abductions for ransom have increased considerably over recent years. A particular focus for attacks in the reporting period have been Benue State and southern Kaduna State. Little has been done to stop the violations against Christians in these (and other) areas.

Looking at the number of Christians [killed for their faith](#) in the different geopolitical zones in the WWL 2022 reporting period (1 October 2020 - 30 September 2021), most were killed in North-Central, followed by North-West, South-East, North-East, South-West and South-South.

Although there is a religious fault-line between northern and southern Nigeria, the situation is not as clear-cut as it first appears. There are many Christians in the North and many Muslims are living in the South. The combined total of Christians and Muslims is 92.7% of the population. The 7.0% Ethno-religionists are spread over 32 of the 37 political entities of the country. The approximate Muslim population percentage can thus be more or less directly derived from the Christian population percentage, as detailed below:

- **NORTH-WEST:** These 7 states (Jigawa, Kaduna, Kano, Katsina, Kebbi, Sokoto, Zamfara) have 6,780,000 Christians (13%) out of a population of 54,076,000.
- **NORTH-CENTRAL:** These 6 states (Benue, Kogi, Kwara, Nasarawa, Niger, Plateau) and FCT (Abuja) have 15,272,000 Christians (50%) out of a population of 30,671,000.
- **NORTH-EAST:** These 6 states (Adamawa, Bauchi, Borno, Gombe, Taraba, Yobe) have 6,197,000 Christians (22%) out of a population of 28,584,000.
- **SOUTH-WEST:** These 6 states (Ekiti, Lagos, Ogun, Ondo, Osun, Oyo) have 27,469,000 Christians (66%) out of a population of 41,741,000.
- **SOUTH-SOUTH:** These 6 states (Akwa Ibom, Bayelsa, Cross River, Delta, Edo, Rivers) have 22,716,000 Christians (72%) out of a population of 31,685,000.
- **SOUTH-EAST:** These 5 states (Abia, Anambra, Ebonyi, Enugu, Imo) have 19,077,000 Christians (77%) out of a population of 24,687,000.

The data listed above (based on WCD research) implies that religious and ethno-religious tensions can easily become a nationwide issue, as is currently happening.

Economic landscape

Nigeria is Sub-Saharan Africa's largest economy. At present, it relies heavily on oil as its main source of revenue and has the largest natural gas reserves on the continent. Efforts to diversify are limited by poverty and corruption.

According to World Bank:

- **Economic growth:** "Before COVID-19 struck, the economy was growing at 2.2%".
- **Main export:** "Oil accounts for over 80 percent of exports, a third of banking sector credit, and half of government revenues. Oil prices also affect growth in non-oil industries and services". In the oil-rich Niger Delta, there have been several attacks by armed groups on oil companies and state-owned pipelines.
- **Inflation:** "Inflation was in single digits in 2014, compared to about 12% in 2019."
- **Poverty:** "40 percent of Nigerians (83 million people) live below the poverty line, while another 25 percent (53 million) are vulnerable. ... With COVID-19, the recession is likely to push an additional 5 million Nigerians into poverty in 2020".
- **Unemployment:** 8.1% of total labor force (HDI 2020).

- **COVID-19:** Although as of June 2021, there were only 2,118 COVID-related fatalities (Worldometer, accessed 25 June 2021), "Nigeria is highly vulnerable to the global economic disruption caused by COVID-19, particularly due to the pronounced decline in oil prices and spikes in risk aversion in global capital markets."

In the field of business and human rights: Shell's Nigerian subsidiary was declared liable for the consequences of two oil spills in Nigeria, according to a ruling of the Court of Appeal of The Hague on 29 January 2021 (Rechtspraak, 29 January 2021).

Due to the serious security situation, the violent attacks on or intimidation of farmers in many parts of Nigeria, the fear of abduction (not only in the villages but also along the roads), the impunity for violence against Christians, and the absolute lack of compensation by the government for damage suffered, have handicapped farming activities and caused serious economic damage. Many Nigerians have been affected by this, but Christians in particular.

Islamic banking started in Nigeria in 2012. Many Christians look at Islamic banking with suspicion. Whether the suspicion is founded, remains to be seen. A Christian lawyer in a predominantly Islamic commercial city explained that he is worried about Islamic banking not because it is Islamic but because of background packages such as the *Mudarabah*. This allows a client to transfer money for subsequent project or investment and is a recipe for all kinds of funding, including whatever form of *jihad* is acceptable to the customer. That constitutes a serious setback in any fight against the funding of terrorist activities.

Women are - in general - more economically vulnerable than men, due to modest gender gaps in regards to education and labor force participation rates (HDI 2020). Patrilineal inheritance practices and harmful practices against widows make it additionally challenging for women to gain economic independence ([OECD, 2019](#)).

Social and cultural landscape

According to the [UNDP's Full report for 2020](#) (page 343 onwards) and CIA Factbook:

- **Main ethnic groups:** Hausa 30%, Yoruba 15.5%, Igbo (Ibo) 15.2%, Fulani 6%, Tiv 2.4%, Kanuri/Berberi 2.4%, Ibibio 1.8%, Ijaw/Izon 1.8%, other 24.7% (2018 est.)
- **Main languages:** English (official), Hausa, Yoruba, Igbo (Ibo), Fulani, over 500 additional indigenous languages
- **Urban population:** 51.2% of total population
- **Rate of urbanization:** 4.23%
- **Literacy rate (adult, ages 15 and older):** 62.0% (female: 52.7%; male: 71.3%)
- **Expected years of schooling:** 10 years (female: 9.4 years; male: 10.6 years)
- **Mean years of schooling:** 6.7 years (female: 5.7 years; male: 7.7 years)
- **Youth not in school or employment (% ages 15-24):** 22.0
- **Population:** Nigeria accounts for about half of West Africa's population and one of the largest populations of youth in the world. According to [World Population Review](#), accessed 25 June 2021: "Nigeria has the largest population in Africa. The United Nations project that the overall population of Nigeria will reach about 401.31 million by the end of the year

2050. By 2100, if current figures continue, the population of Nigeria will be over 728 million."

- **Population growth:** 2.6% (2018 estimate)
- **Median age:** 18.1 years
- **Life expectancy at birth:** 54.7 years
- **Inequality:** "Inequality in terms of income and opportunities has been growing rapidly and has adversely affected poverty reduction. The North-South divide has widened in recent years due to the Boko Haram insurgency and a lack of economic development in the northern part of the country."

According to the [UNHCR Global Report 2020](#):

- **IDPs/Refugees:** As of 3 August 2021, there were some 2.9 million IDPs. Most of them in the North-East: 2.2 million (last updated 3 August 2021); in North-West and North-Central there were 0.7 million (last updated 28 February 2021).

According to UNDP's HDI 2020:

- **HDI score and ranking (2020):** Nigeria ranked 161 out of 189 countries with a score of 0.539. Nigeria is thus in the low human development category.
- **Gender inequality (2020):** The Gender Development Index (GDI) score was 0.881 (female - 0.504, male - 0.572). There was no data for the Gender Inequality Index (GII).
- **Total unemployment rate (female to male ratio):** 1.20

Whilst education rates are low across the board, girls in particular are discouraged from attending school, both due to economic and socio-cultural factors. According to a 2017 [UNICEF](#) report, girls are 6% less likely to attend school than boys (UNICEF, 2017, "Impact Evaluation of UNICEF Nigeria", p.4). This is in part due to high rates of early marriage and teenage pregnancy; 44% of girls are married before their eighteenth birthday, and 18% before their 15th birthday. Some parents, fearful that their Christian daughter might be attacked - particularly in Sharia states - choose to keep them at home or have them marry early in order to protect them. This results in girls growing up uneducated, ignorant of their rights and economically dependent on men.

Demographic developments might shift the precarious balance in Nigeria between Muslims and Christians. The fact that the Muslim population could already use its numerical strength in the judiciary and legislature to amend the Constitution to extend the remit of Sharia law (see above: *Political and legal landscape*), suggests that for some, democracy has become more a 'game of numbers' than a means of protection for minorities.

The combination of high numbers of children and youth, a lack of education and employment opportunities and high levels of poverty is potentially dangerous for the future of Nigeria. It will make recruitment for violent Islamic militancy easier, and given the atmosphere of high levels of impunity, turn the country into a 'powder keg', ready to explode. The resulting chaos and conflict will be the perfect breeding ground for making Nigeria a Sharia nation.

Patriarchal norms are particularly prevalent in northern Nigeria, where women are widely considered to be second class citizens. According to a [2017 CEDAW](#) report (NGO Coalition Shadow Report, 2017, p.12), persisting discriminatory stereotypes about the roles of men and women in the family unit contributes to the high rates of early and forced marriages. Victims of sexual assault and rape, already deeply traumatized, often face stigma from their families and communities. Christian women and girls abducted and impregnated by Boko Haram for example, are viewed as being tarnished and they struggle to integrate upon return – their babies are viewed as ‘Boko’ babies and their husbands struggle to accept what has happened. This can lead to the breakdown of Christian families and communities.

In this socio-cultural setting, the situation of converts from Islam to Christianity is harshest. While in the Sharia states all Christians can be confronted with education and employment difficulties, converts often have to flee for fear of their lives, and leave everything behind.

Technological landscape

According to Internet World Stats (IWS 2021)

- **Internet usage:** 73.0% penetration — survey date: December 2020
- **Facebook usage:** 16.1% penetration – survey date: December 2020
According to [Napoleon Cat \(December 2020\)](#), 59.6% of Facebook users are male, compared to 40.4% female users).

According to UNDP's HDI 2020:

- **Mobile phone subscriptions:** 88.2 per 100 people

According to Freedom House/Internet Freedom 2020:

- Nigeria is categorized as 'partly free' with a score of 60 points out of 100.
- "Internet penetration rates are high, but sporadic access to electricity continues to pose a barrier to consistent connectivity."
- "Many media houses are owned by government officials".
- "The persistent arrests of users for their online activities under the 2015 Cybercrime Act has resulted in growing self-censorship, particularly among professional journalists who publish content online. This self-censorship worsened after recent reports that revealed the extent of the Nigerian security services' surveillance and interception powers. Security forces had access to journalists' private communications, and sometimes used that information to facilitate arrests."

As reported by Sahara Reporters on 28 August 2021, the Nigerian government is taking action to [shut down Channels TV](#) and arrest journalists due to interviews aired by the platform considered to be too critical of the government and army.

According to RFI, reporting on 6 June 2021, the Nigerian government is working with [China's central Internet regulator](#) to build an Internet firewall for [controlling social networking platforms](#) such as Twitter and Facebook (RFI, 6 June 2021).

Social media has made it possible for Christians in Nigeria to be heard. Had there been no social media, the attacks on Christian communities would have largely gone unreported and the killing of Christians would be ignored. There is however the other side of the coin: Social media is also a platform for hate-speech against Christians, for instance as carried out by leaders of aggressive Islamic groups in Nigeria and in posts of sermons preached by Islamic clerics. Besides social media, there seems to be an increase in hatred even among teenagers in schools, at markets and in other public places. Christians are often portrayed as infidels and second-class citizens. The Internet and social media have increased this type of attack.

However, there is yet another side to consider, which shows how complex the situation in Nigeria has become: The Roman Catholic Bishop of Sokoto [warned](#) in July 2019: "The continued hate-speech against the Fulani herdsmen as being currently done on social media, constitutes a threat to the unity and peace of Nigeria". He said this in a speech held at a seminar on "Fake News and hate speech", organized by the Olusegun Obasanjo Centre for African Studies, a unit of the National Open University of Nigeria.

Security situation

In every society there are strengths and weaknesses, good and bad things. The degree of (in)security can be big or small but never is perfect. Political leaders want to cling to power; the wealthy want to protect and increase their resources; the marginalized feel sidelined and sometimes resort to the use of illegal means to increase their wealth and power. It is the same for Nigeria: Over the years, violence from many different non-state actors has grown, leading to a very high degree of insecurity. Nigeria has developed a culture of violence. The failure of the federal and state governments to turn the tide has certainly contributed to it. There are many reasons behind this but WWL sees as a guiding principle the push towards Islamization of Nigeria that has been going on for many years and seems to be reaching a climax at the end of President Buhari's second term. Not only Christians but many Muslims and other Nigerians are victims too. In our WWL terminology we call it Islamic oppression. It is however combined with Ethno-religious hostility because the Fulani ethnic group seem to be at the core of the Islamization process. The summary of violent groups and factors listed below, is not exhaustive but reflects this analysis.

Christians in Nigeria have faced some of the deadliest attacks ever perpetrated by Islamic militants. The [Global Terrorism Index 2020](#) ranked Nigeria 3rd on the list of countries most affected by terrorism. This has been the case since 2015. The responses by the government are clearly not enough, since perpetrators of such violence are able to continue attacking Christians, and other Nigerians, with impunity. There are indications that during the months of the COVID-19 lockdown in 2020, the people were confined to their villages while the attackers could move around more or less freely. Anecdotal evidence suggested this trend continued in 2021, at least partly, but the picture is not clear.

There are various factors and violent groups in Nigeria to consider. (As the *Trends Analysis* below shows, Christian vigilantes can also be a problem.) The main groups and factors are:

Boko Haram

In line with the violent traditions of the Maitatsine riots of the 1980s and the Sharia implementation of 1999, Christians in northern Nigeria have increasingly become targets for jihadist attacks. Building on this, Boko Haram has, for the past few years, carried out a systematic campaign against the Nigerian state, specifically targeting Christians in its ideology, rhetoric and actions with the intention of establishing an Islamic state. Using the rhetoric of radical Islam, it declared an Islamic caliphate in Gwoza, Borno State, in August 2014. The expansion of this caliphate was stopped by government forces, but the violence caused by Boko Haram continues to affect thousands of people (amongst them many Christians) and fosters a mutual distrust between Christians and Muslims in the entire region.

What is making the issue transnational is the fact that Boko Haram is also operating in neighboring countries. This group can recruit members in Nigeria, Niger, Chad, Cameroon and other states. This means that even if the situation in Nigeria gets more difficult for them, they can easily regroup in those other countries. Although the Nigerian army's campaigns have been partially effective, the situation for Christians (and other Nigerians) is also contingent upon whether or not the government of Nigeria and other countries in the region will come up with more effective joint-measures to combat the militant threat.

ISWAP

In August 2016 it became apparent that there was a split-off from Boko Haram, called Islamic State in West Africa Province (ISWAP). Their activities are very similar but they differ in terms of their religious-ideological expression. Whereas Boko Haram has mainly operated in southern Borno and northern Adamawa State (which borders Cameroon), ISWAP has mainly been active in northern Borno, close to the border with Chad. Both have pledged allegiance to the Islamic States (IS).

As reported by HumAngle on 21 May 2021, in what could almost be termed an internal coup, ISWAP fighters [killed](#) rival Boko Haram leader Abubakar Shekau in a fire-fight on 20 May 2021. The article by HumAngle gives an insight into the similarities and differences between ISWAP and Boko Haram and states:

- "Shekau's death may also mark the end of indiscriminate killings, which we have seen with Boko Haram when the late leader had the resources to attack communities. ISWAP on their part may spare 'Muslim communities,' but are as ruthless as Boko Haram when dealing with Christians, students, teachers, civil servants, and NGO workers who can also be found in large numbers in Gwoza, Askira, Madagali, Michika, Gombi, Damboa, and Hawul. These communities are in Adamawa and Borno, both states that fall within the Sambisa general area."

Seen from this angle, it could be said that ISWAP's activity more resembles al-Qaeda, while Boko Haram's modus operandi is closer to IS.

The death of Boko Haram's leader Shekau

What does the death of Shekau mean for the future of Boko Haram? According to a Nigerian analyst, "Boko Haram activities have continued to thrive even after the death of its leader, Shekau. The death of its leader for now doesn't seem to have had any tangible effect on the group and its activities."

However, if ISWAP can use the new opportunity created by the [death of Boko Haram leader Shekau](#) on 20 May 2021 to strengthen their foothold in north-eastern Nigeria, then the jihadist threat to Christians in that area and beyond could well intensify (WWR, 8 June 2021). While Boko Haram has been creating alliances within Nigeria (for instance with Fulani militia and 'bandits'), ISWAP – as the 'true' IS-affiliate – appears to have closer links to jihadist networks outside the country. If ISWAP can use the new opportunity created by the death of Shekau to strengthen their foothold in north-eastern Nigeria, then the jihadist threat to Christians in that area and beyond could well intensify even more.

Fulani militants

Violence is also being perpetrated by Islamic assailants commonly identified as Fulani militants, who descend on predominantly Christian villages in northern Nigeria attacking innocent people, including women and children. In the reporting period these attacks were very pronounced in Benue State and southern Kaduna State. The attackers leave a trail of killing, rape and destruction. This violence against Christian-majority ethnic communities across northern Nigeria is expanding into communities that had been thought to be safe, such as those in Plateau State and even further south. There are reports about violence and land grabbing by Fulani militants in many southern Nigerian States. For a better understanding of the background to the violence in the northern states, see the series of [detailed Focus Nigeria reports](#) prepared by World Watch Research and partners (WWR, 2013-2018, password: freedom).

Nigeria's Fulani herdsmen presently operate under the three major umbrellas of 'the Miyatti Allah Cattle Breeders Association of Nigeria-MACBAN', 'the Miyatti Allah Koutal Hore Association of Nigeria' and 'the Fulani Nationality Movement-FUNAM'; all federally registered organizations in Nigeria. It seems reasonable to believe that among these three, MACBAN could be considered to be the operational center of the armed Fulani herdsmen or Fulani militants, even Fulani 'bandits'.

Armed bandits

Apart from Boko Haram, ISWAP and the Fulani militants, a third category of violent aggressors has become increasingly active. In many parts of the country armed bandits are responsible for killing, raping, plundering, burning and kidnapping for ransom (including the abduction of girls as young as 10 years of age). Some analysts see these groups as purely criminal groups, with the sole objective of getting money. Others suggest that at least part of them have bought into the jihadist agenda. Victims say that they are frequently told: "Convert or be killed!". This would seem to confirm the impression held by some that at least part of those gangs are made up of Fulani militants. However, as stated by a country analyst, not all Fulani are kidnapers and not all kidnapers in Nigeria are Fulani. The kidnapping business had been going on in the southern

part of Nigeria before the Fulani joined in and extended such activity to the north, where Boko Haram is also increasingly engaging in this macabre 'business model'.

It is important to note that the term '(armed) bandits' is being increasingly widely used by national and international media when reporting attacks on Christians (and on Muslims who do not actively buy into the Islamist agenda). The widespread use of this term is causing the religious-ideological agenda behind many of the attacks to be ignored - a typical example of ['persecution eclipse'](#).

Alliances between violent groups

There is evidence that alliances are being created between these different groups. On 12 July 2020, HumAngle reported that Abubakar Shekau, leader of Boko Haram, was working on a ["bewildering expansionist agenda"](#), trying to connect violent Islamic militant groups in the north-eastern, north-western and north-central areas of Nigeria. Shekau's influence was also stretching into surrounding Cameroon, Chad and Niger, where fighters pledged allegiance to him. Before Shekau's death in May 2021, it is likely that his vision went well beyond the three strategic geo-political enclaves highlighted in the July 2020 article. If effective government intervention does not curb their advance, the South-West, South-East and South-South are within reach. This is especially evident where Boko Haram fighters mix with Fulani militants and 'Shuwa Arabs' (or 'Cowmen' from Chad, Sudan etc.), thus forming a multi-faceted force that is difficult to distinguish clearly (especially for state governors attempting to control the levels of violence) and is allegedly linked to powerful individuals and politicians.

This is even more troubling when gangsters or bandits are added to the mix. According to Defence Web reporting on 3 March 2021, Boko Haram teams up with bandits in Nigeria. "The violent extremist group is actively [building alliances with gangsters](#) as part of its expansionist agenda."

Cults

Another category of violent groups are the so-called cults. The cults in question were initially established in tertiary institutions as student societies to provide a sense of belonging, power and solidarity; however, over the years they have become a major menace to Nigerian society, contributing to the levels of violence across the country. Although their leaders deny it, they are responsible for "attacking and killing fellow students, armed robbery and general gangsterism tendencies", according to a Nigerian analyst. Cult members are mostly students in tertiary institutions but recently community-based groups have emerged without any affiliation to an institution. Normally cults are not related to or allied with jihadist groups. However, apart from the direct threat they pose to society, their activities have the potential to trigger extra tension in conflict zones, acting like a spark in a powder keg.

The government security apparatus

There is a strong suspicion about the role of the security apparatus in the country. In many cases the government's security forces fail in protecting the population against attacks from Fulani militants or armed bandits. They either do not act or arrive too late at the scene of violence.

Sometimes they are even suspected of having a more active role in the violence. A governor in the North-East has suggested that efforts to defeat Boko Haram are actually being undermined by elements of the [security apparatus](#) (BBC News, 2 August 2020). The Borno State governor also questioned why the Nigerian army was stopping thousands of displaced people from returning home to their fields whilst soldiers were instead cultivating the land. The prosecutor of the International Criminal Court has called for a [formal inquiry](#) to begin into war crimes and crimes against humanity in Nigeria, in which she not only implicated non-state actors but also members of the Nigerian Security Forces (BBC News, 11 December 2020) - see *ICC inquiry into Nigeria* below.

One element would seem to be a deliberate policy of commanding officers ignoring attacks. A typical example is an incident in Bassa LGA, Plateau State – see above: *Specific examples of violations of rights in the reporting period*, 8 August 2021 – when government troops in the area were seriously distressed when they were not allowed to fight armed groups attacking mainly Christian villages close-by.

Another element is the seemingly deliberate policy of government forces only appearing after an attack has taken place. A typical example was an attack in Jos, Plateau State – see above: *Specific examples of violations of rights in the reporting period*, 25 August 2021 – when government troops barely 2km away seemingly allowed 35 Christians in the Yelwa zangam community to be killed and houses be burned down before approaching the scene.

A solution proposed by some State Governors could be to decentralize greater part of the control over the security forces to State level. However, Buhari's administration is not inclined to do so.

However, not all security apparatus is suspect. Data from the joint research project with a Nigerian partner organization show that part of the security apparatus has fought the insurgents and incurred serious losses.

Eastern Security Network

The [Eastern Security network](#) (ESN) is a militia formed by the Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB) in December 2020 after becoming disillusioned with the lack of government protection for their communities (Guardian NG, 16 December 2020). Another example is [Amotekun](#), a militia launched in January 2020 by the states in the South-West (Lagos, Ogun, Oyo, Ondo, Osun and Ekiti) to tackle insecurity in the region (Premium Times, 9 January 2020). However, although the ESN was focusing their operations successfully on driving Fulani militants away from their farming communities, it was soon alleged that gunmen belonging to them were attacking government infrastructure. As a result the Nigerian armed forces have now begun to openly [fight against ESN militants](#) (Amnesty International, 5 August 2021).

A Nigerian analyst pointed out that no such heavy government attacks had ever been used to target Fulani militants. It is unclear whether Buhari's government believes - or is simply pretending to believe - that the movement for Biafran independence is behind the violence in the South-East. However, a regional analyst is adamant: "Agitation for Biafran independence is not the root cause of the violence in the South-East. The root cause is the ongoing insurgency in

the South-East by Fulani militia. The Buhari regime prepares the world for (and justify) a full scale military occupation of the South-East.”

Federal government: Carrot and stick approach

While the government crackdown on the ESN has been hard ('stick'), the violence in the North is being dealt with in a much softer way ('carrot'), for instance via the [Sulhu programme](#) (Arise News, 23 August 2021). This is a re-integration program for ex-Boko Haram and ISWAP fighters, running parallel to the government army's initiative (Operation Safe Corridor) aimed at lower-risk ex-combatants.

A Nigerian analyst who basically sympathizes with the Nigerian federal government's approach towards ex-terrorists, still hesitated: "Based on the above assumption, the Nigerian federal government's strategy of negotiating with refractory bandits, and rehabilitating surrendered Boko Haram and ISWAP members is prohibitively costly owing to the policy's ambiguities. These are persons who have previously been exposed to the use of firearms and can revert to their old habits at any time, particularly in a nation where residents' private lives are rarely scrutinized. It will not be an error to infer that the federal government of Nigeria's carrot approach to bandits and surrendered terrorists is a luxury the country can not afford in the long term. When viewed objectively, a kinetic response against banditry and terrorism may be a realistic option."

Special Anti-Robbery Squad (SARS)

The fragile security situation in Nigeria is also illustrated by events concerning the Special Anti-Robbery Squad (SARS). In October 2020, just at the beginning of the WWL 2022 reporting period, protests erupted against the brutal activities of SARS. President Buhari disbanded SARS but unveiled the Special Weapons and Tactics Team (SWAT). When protests continued, soldiers killed at least 48 demonstrators in Lagos. Nigeria's government has begun [punishing](#) the young organizers of the #EndSARS movement by freezing their bank accounts and revoking their passports (The Conversation, 8 December 2020).

Corruption and impunity

Corruption is a major concern in Nigeria. The violent attacks on Christians and Christian communities are partly 'fall-out' from this systemic corruption and are kept on-going through the emergence of a 'conflict industry', which in turn is sustained by a culture of impunity. A conflict industry is where some people benefit economically from conflict. Such beneficiaries could be Muslim or Christian. For example, some people import and/or sell weapons to belligerent groups, or even army uniforms to Boko Haram or ISWAP insurgents, and Fulani militants and armed bandits. The lucrative economic benefits from unaccounted security expenditure induces those who benefit from them to keep quiet and look the other way rather than challenge corrupt practices that compromise the security of citizens. Hence, conflict has become a money-making enterprise.

It would seem that the main actor responsible for corruption is the government, fostered by the ruling party. Massive amounts of oil revenue are disappearing and unaccounted for. This happens whichever government is in power, it seems. Under Jonathan Goodluck corruption was also rife. Under the current regime, the war against corruption is skewed towards fighting oppo-

sition leaders and using Christians and southerners as scapegoats. Members of the ruling party and Muslim public office holders are generally left untouched. This climate of impunity, anarchy and corruption is ultimately furthering the Islamization of Nigeria.

The gender component

The security situation has gender components. Christian men and boys are specifically targeted for killing, in order to guarantee that the birthrate of Christians falls and to claim land. The mission to depopulate Christian-dominated territories in the north has also caused a spike in the abduction, forced conversion and forced marriage of Christian girls and women, including married women. Islamic militants also rape and sexually abuse women, forcing them into sexual slavery, or killing them. CREID highlights the fact that violence against women is on the rise in northern Nigeria, in part due to COVID-19 ([CREID podcast, 15 Oct 2020](#)).

A [public poll](#) conducted in 2019 revealed that 85% of Nigerians recognized rape as prevalent in the country (NOIPOLLS, 25 July 2019). Whilst there are statutory laws that criminalize rape, in the rare incidents that rape crimes are reported (due to feelings of shame and fear of stigmatization), convictions are seldom reached due to outdated and inconsistent penal laws and court proceedings ([OECD, 2019](#)) and reports that some police officers themselves are [rapists](#) (BBC News, 4 June 2020).

Trends analysis

1) Nigeria has been weakened by a complex combination of deep-rooted issues

One of the most complex and corrupt nations in West Africa, Nigeria has long been struggling with deep-rooted issues. Due to the country's size (in terms of geography, population and levels of natural resources), it has the potential to be a strong force on the continent. However, the political instability, insecurity and rampant corruption that have characterized the country for decades and still persist, have weakened it considerably. Regional, ethnic and religious tensions and competition among politicians exacerbate the problem. The extent to which these issues are addressed will determine whether or not Nigeria will be able to realize its potential and become a prosperous and stable country. However, the current trends in the country seem to indicate that Nigeria will continue to be a country struggling to stay afloat.

2) The government has not produced working solutions to the security crisis

The rise of Boko Haram in the last decade has made the situation even more complex. Since President Buhari came to power, military offensives led to the decimation of Boko Haram in numbers. But Boko Haram militants have shown their resilience by moving to weak neighboring countries, and rebuilding their strength in Nigeria too. ISWAP added to the spectrum of violent Islamic groups. There are also numerous attacks by Fulani militants and armed bandits in the north, even in the south, and the government has not produced any working plan to solve the crisis.

Recent statements by Catholic church leaders indicate how severely the Christian community is being affected by the security crisis. Indeed, as reported by Nigeria Update on 6 October 2021,

Catholic leaders go so far as to claim that Nigerian Christians have become victims of a [gradual process of ethnic cleansing](#) at the hands of Fulani Muslims, with the complicity of the state. At a recent online conference, one leader from the diocese of Maiduguri “expressed frustration when he hears people refer to ‘clashes’ or ‘conflicts’ between opposing groups. ‘It is not a clash, it is a slow genocide. To displace people from their ancestral homeland, deprive them of their livelihood and butcher them is a form of genocide.’”

As a result of the increasing levels of insecurity, several states in northern Nigeria have huge numbers of IDPs, many of whom are Christians. Many of them are not taken care of by national or international aid agencies. They are a visible witness to the supremacy of the perpetrators and to the high vulnerability of the victims of violations in these regions. And this, in turn, encourages further violence with impunity and culminates in constant fear among the Christian population where attacks are common.

This vicious circle can only be broken if the international community intervenes with humanitarian (and other forms of) aid, and puts pressure on the Nigerian government to come up with a comprehensive policy to address this complex and deadly situation. As long as this is not the case, official visits and trade delegations to Nigeria should be postponed or clearly positioned within this framework.

3) Christians have allegedly begun to organize their own defense

Christians are allegedly increasingly organizing their own defense, although they can hardly match the types and amounts of weapons their adversaries are using. Having said that, much of Christianity in Nigeria is still not willing to respond with violence. However, certain Christian young men who see their mothers and sisters raped and their fathers and brothers killed, will likely increasingly try to arm themselves and defend their families and villages. This is a very risky situation, because notwithstanding the concept of ‘just war’ (self-defense), it can easily lead to disproportional retaliation on Fulani villagers and other Muslims, as well as lead to outright banditry when ‘just war’ and ‘lust for personal gain’ get confused. Boko Haram, ISWAP, the Fulani militants and armed bandits possess types and quantities of weapons that raise questions about their origin. One of the sources might be [Turkey](#) (CBN News, 14 November 2019). The chaos created by such a situation, under the passively watching eye of an inactive government, reinforces the suspicion that a climate of impunity, anarchy and corruption is being condoned to further the Islamization agenda.

4) Nigeria could become a destabilizing power for the entire region and beyond

Nigeria has become a destabilizing power for the countries surrounding it, particularly because of the actions of Boko Haram and ISWAP. If in the near or distant future Nigeria emerges out of the current chaos as an Islamized nation, built upon the influence wielded by violent Islamic militancy, Nigeria will become an even more strongly destabilizing power for the [entire region](#), if not the whole African continent, and maybe even beyond (WWR, Africa: Mapping Islamic militancy – past, present and future, July 2019). A similar situation confronted the international community when the Islamic State group conquered parts of Syria and Iraq; however, the Nigerian situation is being neglected.

External Links - Keys to understanding

- Recent history: killed - <https://humangle.ng/what-shekaus-death-means-for-security-in-nigeria-lake-chad/>
- Recent history: shift in attitude - <https://humangle.ng/nigerias-terror-king-shekau-connects-east-west-and-centre-in-a-puzzling-agenda/>
- Political and legal landscape: Sharia be taught in Arabic - <https://www.nairaland.com/5577190/sharia-law-should-taught-nigerian>
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- Political and legal landscape: 2019 OECD report - <https://www.genderindex.org/wp-content/uploads/files/datasheets/2019/NG.pdf>
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- Political and legal landscape: 2017 report - https://tbinternet.ohchr.org/Treaties/CEDAW/Shared%20Documents/NGA/INT_CEDAW_NGO_NGA_27702_E.pdf
- Political and legal landscape: 3.38% - <https://www.indexmundi.com/facts/indicators/SG.GEN.PARL.ZS/rankings>
- Religious landscape description: killed for their faith - <https://platformforsocialtransformation.org/download/religiousfreedom/Fact-Sheet-Summary-data-Observatory-of-Religious-Freedom-in-Africa-corr.-23122021.pdf>
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- Social and cultural landscape: UNDP's Full report for 2020 - <http://www.hdr.undp.org/sites/default/files/hdr2020.pdf>
- Social and cultural landscape: World Population Review - <https://worldpopulationreview.com/countries/nigeria-population>
- Social and cultural landscape: UNHCR Global Report 2020 - <https://data2.unhcr.org/en/country/nga>
- Social and cultural landscape: UNICEF - <https://www.unicef.org/nigeria/media/1446/file/%20Nigeria-impact-evaluation-UNICEF-Nigeria-girls-education-project-phase-3.pdf.pdf>
- Social and cultural landscape: 2017 CEDAW - https://tbinternet.ohchr.org/Treaties/CEDAW/Shared%20Documents/NGA/INT_CEDAW_NGO_NGA_27702_E.pdf
- Technological landscape: Napoleon Cat (December 2020) - <https://napoleoncat.com/stats/facebook-users-in-nigeria/2020/12/>
- Technological landscape: shut down Channels TV - <http://saharareporters.com/2021/08/26/buhari-government-moves-shut-channels-tv-orders-arrest-journalists-over-governor-ortoms->
- Technological landscape: China's central Internet regulator - <https://rifnote.com/2021/06/06/fg-meets-with-chinas-cyber-regulator-to-build-nigerian-internet-firewall/>
- Technological landscape: controlling social networking platforms - <https://www.rfi.fr/cn/%E9%9D%9E%E6%B4%B2/20210607-%E4%B8%AD%E5%9B%BD%E9%98%B2%E7%81%AB%E5%A2%99%E5%87%BA%E5%8F%A3%E9%9D%9E%E6%B4%B2-%E5%B0%BC%E6%97%A5%E5%88%A9%E4%BA%9A%E5%90%91%E5%8C%97%E4%BA%AC%E5%8F%96%E7%B%8F?ref=tw>

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- Security situation: detailed Focus Nigeria reports - <https://opendoorsanalytical.org/reports>
- Security situation: 'persecution eclipse' - <https://opendoorsanalytical.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/10/WWL-Discussion-of-key-themes-October-2021.pdf>
- Security situation: bewildering expansionist agenda - <https://humangle.ng/nigerias-terror-king-shekau-connects-east-west-and-centre-in-a-puzzling-agenda/>
- Security situation: building alliances with gangsters - <https://www.defencenweb.co.za/security/national-security/boko-haram-teams-up-with-bandits-in-nigeria/>
- Security situation: security apparatus - <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-africa-53632643>
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- Security situation: punishing - <https://theconversation.com/nigerians-got-their-abusive-sars-police-force-abolished-but-elation-soon-turned-to-frustration-150355>
- Security situation: CREID podcast, 15 Oct 2020 - <https://www.ids.ac.uk/news/creid-podcast-fatima-suleiman-talks-about-increased-violence-against-women-in-northern-nigeria/>
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- Trends analysis: gradual process of ethnic cleansing - <https://dhpi.org.za/nigeria-update-6-october-2021/>
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WWL 2022: Church information / Nigeria

Christian origins

African traditional religions were dominant in the southern part of the country before European missionaries introduced Christianity. The first Christian mission that reached Nigeria was during the Portuguese dominance of the Atlantic Coast in the 15th and 16th centuries. However, during that period, the [Portuguese Catholics](#) gave priority to economic and political activities, as a result of which Christian mission made no headway and most parts of the country continued to follow traditional African religions (Urhobo Historical Society, 1979). Following the British Empire's abolition of the transatlantic slave trade in 1807, another serious attempt was made to reintroduce Christianity to Nigeria. The liberated slaves who had already converted became instrumental in evangelizing the indigenous population. The case of [Samuel Adjai Crowther](#), who

was the first Nigerian Anglican priest, can be taken as an example (Dictionary of African Christian Biography, accessed 4 January 2021). He played a key role in evangelizing in Yorubaland. After witnessing the success of Crowther, Anglicans of the Church Missionary Society, Methodists, Baptists and Roman Catholics all increased efforts to have a strong Christian presence in Nigeria.

As Christianity started to flourish in Nigeria, issues of discrimination, marginalization of African elites and disputes over resources etc. started pitting Christians against Christians and many church divisions resulted. The United Native African Church and the African Church (Bethel) broke away from the Anglican Church in 1891 and 1901 respectively. In 1917 the United African Methodist Church seceded from the Methodist Church. Since 1950, Pentecostal churches have become very visible, some of the major ones being the Redeemed Christian Church of God, the Deeper Life Bible Church and the Mountain of Fire and Miracles Church. There are also many other Pentecostal groups such as the International Church of the Foursquare Gospel, the Full Gospel Businessmen Fellowship International, Youth with a Mission and Christ for all Nations.

Christian missionaries were less successful in the northern part of the country where the Hausa-Fulani tribal kingdoms were already Muslim. There were very few conversions of Muslims to Christianity during the colonial period. Part of this might be attributed to the fact that northern Nigeria was placed under indirect rule which meant that Christian missionary activity was not allowed to operate freely.

Church spectrum today

Nigeria: Church networks	Christians	%
Orthodox	3,000	0.0
Catholic	26,083,000	26.6
Protestant	62,395,000	63.7
Independent	28,704,000	29.3
Unaffiliated	146,000	0.1
Doubly-affiliated Christians	-19,325,000	-19.7
Total	98,006,000	100.0
<i>(Any deviation from the total number of Christians stated above is due to the rounding of decimals)</i>		
Evangelical movement	46,696,000	47.6
Renewalist movement	61,831,000	63.1

Data source: Johnson T M and Zurlo G A, eds, *World Christian Database* (Leiden/Boston: Brill, accessed April 2021)

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.

In the regions where there is violence, all Christians are potential targets, no matter which denomination they belong to. However, converts from Islam to Christianity suffer most, especially in the North, if discovered. The idea that to be a Northerner is to be a Muslim, and to be a Southerner is to be a Christian, is a gross simplification of the situation (See above: *Religious landscape*). Christians are making great efforts to convert Muslims to Christianity in the North, although Christian evangelism in the North has become difficult because of security issues. At the same time, Muslims are making great efforts to convert Christians to Islam in the South. However, the current combination of Islamic missionary activity mixed with violence from various Islamist groups is a significant threat to the life of the Church, also in the South.



External Links - Church information

- Christian origins: Portuguese Catholics - <http://www.waado.org/UrhoboCulture/Religion/Erivwo/HistoryOfChristianity/ChapterOne.html>
- Christian origins: Samuel Adjai Crowther - <https://dacb.org/stories/nigeria/legacy-crowther/>

WWL 2022: Persecution Dynamics / Nigeria

Reporting period

1 October 2020 - 30 September 2021

Position on the World Watch List

Nigeria: World Watch List	Points	WWL Rank
WWL 2022	87	7
WWL 2021	85	9
WWL 2020	80	12
WWL 2019	80	12
WWL 2018	77	14

Ranks are shown above whenever the country scored 41 points or more in the WWL 2018-2022 reporting periods

The rise of two points is due to pressure rising in all *spheres of life*, while the violence score remains at the maximum level. Christians continue to be attacked indiscriminately and brutally in northern Nigeria and the violence and insecurity has also spread to southern Nigeria. Fulani militants and 'bandits' have settled in southern forests, making access to farmlands increasingly difficult for Christians farmers. They also form a threat to Christian women and girls. In the WWL 2022 reporting period it has also become increasingly clear that Christians (and other minority groups) cannot count on the security apparatus for their protection which is under the command of the federal government.

Persecution engines

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

The persecution situation in Nigeria is a blend of 4 very strong Persecution engines:

- **Islamic oppression**
- **Ethno-religious hostility**
- **Dictatorial paranoia**
- **Organized corruption and crime**

"In 2001 at an Islamic seminar in Kaduna, Buhari was given an opportunity to choose between Nigeria's secularism and fundamentalist Islam, this is what he said; 'I will continue to show openly and inside me the total commitment to the Sharia movement that is sweeping all over Nigeria'. He then added that 'God willing, we will not stop the agitation for the total implementation of the Sharia in the country'."

(Source: Dr. Funom Makama, 2020. A compilation of Online Publications and Press Releases as Proofs of the Killings of Christians in Nigeria, p. 5.)

The guiding principle behind this potentially explosive blend of Persecution engines seems to be Islamization at all costs. It is difficult to know if there is such a thing as a policy (or set of policies) designed for it, or that it is more how things are going. The above quote from the now President Buhari suggests it is not so much about policies but more about agitation, in other words, about creating or allowing for chaos or impunity to prevail.

In the northern states, Sharia law keeps Christians increasingly in a position of being second-class citizens. If Sharia becomes the norm for the whole country, this might be the future for all Christians in Nigeria, as well as for Ethno-religionists.

In Nigeria the Islamization process is strongly pushed by three main ethnic groups acting together: Fulani, Hausa and Kanuri. Although some of their group members have converted to Christianity, they are strongly attached to a political Islamic agenda. Those effectively in political control of Nigeria today are from these three ethnic groups. This creates the risk of ethnic conflict. A Nigerian analyst thinks that other ethnic groups (outside this coalition) are watching carefully. If the Fulani, Hausa and Kanuri go too far, it might just lead to war. He has expressed his fear that the country might move in this direction if things continue as they are, since many are feeling excluded.

In the WWL 2022 reporting period anecdotal evidence suggests that there has been some fallout between the Fulani and the Hausa, because the Fulani also directed hostilities against Hausa.

In northern Nigeria violence committed in the name of Islam by Boko Haram and ISWAP against civilians, and especially against Christians, is rampant. The same applies for violence committed by Fulani militants and so-called armed bandits. As explained above (see: *Security situation*), the circles of influence of these different groups are now increasingly overlapping, including their agendas, and this is threatening not only for the northern states but also the southern states. Clear examples of land grabbing and related violence by Fulani militants, can already be seen in many southern states. (See above: *Recent history*)

Until recently, the process of Islamization was mainly taking place at state level; however, under the presidency of Muhammadu Buhari, it is being increasingly felt that this process is being facilitated at national level (at the level of the federal government). This is particularly evident in the government’s policy of key nominations (see above: *Political and legal landscape*) and in the way a climate of impunity is allowed which mainly benefits the activities of the various violent Islamic groups, as well as other criminal groups. For further details, see above: *Security situation*, which also indicates how systemic corruption contributes to the increasing Islamization of Nigeria.

As suggested in the section above entitled *Trends analysis*, if the current developments in Nigeria are extrapolated into the future, there will be so much agitation and chaos, that it will no longer be possible to distinguish good actors from bad. Ultimately, such chaos could give rise to a new Nigeria that is governed by Sharia, born out of violence, discrimination and intolerance against Christians and other minorities that are not following the same Islamist agenda.

Drivers of persecution

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

Nigeria:									
Drivers of Persecution	IO	RN	ERH	CO	CDP	CPCO	SI	DPA	OCC
	VERY STRONG		VERY STRONG	WEAK				VERY STRONG	VERY STRONG
Organized crime cartels or networks	Strong		-	-				Strong	Strong
Multilateral organizations (e.g. UN, OIC etc.) and embassies	Medium		-	-				Medium	-

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

Drivers of the blend of Islamic oppression, Ethno-religious hostility, Dictatorial paranoia, Organized corruption and crime

- **Government officials (Very strong to Strong):** Islamization in Nigeria has increased under the presidency of Muhammadu Buhari. It seems that the president is using his position to appoint Muslims to key positions in the country, and to allow a culture of impunity that makes it possible for violations against Christians to go largely unnoticed ('persecution eclipse'). The governments (and non-state actors) of the 12 Sharia states were already on the same track, but with the president now as their example, they may feel encouraged to further Islamize their states instead of guaranteeing the elementary rights of their Christian citizens (freedom of religion, freedom of association, freedom of expression). Governments (and non-state actors) in other states might also feel encouraged, or sometimes forced, to (further) Islamize their states, even in the South. Some state governments are trying to remain strong and protect their whole citizenry.
- **Ethnic group leaders (Very strong to Weak):** Ethnic group leaders as drivers of persecution and discrimination have two dimensions: One is whether (and how) they persecute group members who convert to Christianity from the generally held religion (i.e. from African Traditional Religion/ATR or Islam). The other is whether (and how) they commit acts of persecution and discrimination between ethnic groups with different religions. In the past, when ATR was dominant, rights violations of Christian converts by adherents of ATR was common, but violations in this context have gradually reduced and come now primarily from the Muslim Hausa-Fulani group (together with the Kanuris). Unlike the south of Nigeria which has ethnic tribal chiefs, most northern tribes have religious rulers or emirs instead. Many of them subscribe to the agenda of furthering the Islamization of their ethnic groups and beyond.
- **Non-Christian religious leaders (Very Strong to Medium):** Many Muslim religious leaders have been sources of basic rights violations against Christians at the level of religious ideology, intolerant messaging and incitement.
- **Violent religious groups (Very strong to Strong):** There are various violent groups but in the context of WWL analysis the most prominent ones are Boko Haram, ISWAP, Fulani militants and armed bandits. (See above: *Security situation*.)

- **Ideological pressure groups (Very strong to Strong):** The Miyetti Allah Cattle Breeders Association of Nigeria (MACBAN) deserves a special mention here: Not all Fulani herdsmen are violent militants and some even feel victimized because they are Fulani although they are not involved in violent attacks. However, the activities of MACBAN have become highly politicized in recent times because of links to powerful patrons, including the President of Nigeria and the Sultan of Sokoto. MACBAN gives protection to Fulani militants and justification for their aggression. The President of Nigeria and the Sultan of Sokoto have continued to lend tacit support for the expansionist agenda of the Fulani militants. MACBAN claims to be a socio-cultural group, representing the interest of cattle rearers all over Nigeria, but essentially, they are very focused on ethnicity in their composition and outlook. It is important to note that many of the Fulani herdsmen are mere fronts for influential people who actually own the cattle. There are also many Fulani Christians and non-Fulanis who own plenty of cows in Nigeria today. MACBAN does not treat them as bona fide members. MACBAN seeks to defend the course Fulani Muslims are taking, including justifying their violence against farmers. Fulani settlers are diverse. They are not all linked to Fulani herdsmen beyond sharing ethnic and religious identity. The herdsmen are more likely to be syncretistic in their practice of Islam. Many Fulani settlers who are Muslim normally work with their Hausa Muslim counterparts to suppress Christians politically, socially and economically within their domains.
- **Citizens (people from broader society), including mobs (Strong to Weak):** Apart from the hostility from state and organized non-state actors, another source of persecution and intolerance is the "street violence" where Muslims in the local community riot and attack Christians for flimsy reasons or false accusations of blasphemy in northern Nigeria. This occurs mostly in the context of the Persecution engine *Islamic oppression*. A Muslim southerner who grew up in the North recently said that northern Muslims would borrow money from her and promise to repay her during the next riot. This anecdotal evidence shows that these attacks are not always spontaneous but sometimes premeditated as a means of looting the 'infidels'. Christians have been losing property, churches and lives in the recurring violence for decades.
- **One's own (extended) family (Strong to Weak):** In the context of conversion from Islam to Christianity, one's own family (or extended family) is the primary threat. They are often the first to know, and depending on their standing in the community, may be the first to want to protect their family honor. This is especially the case in the northern states (including the Muslim majority part of the north-central zone) where Islam has become an all-embracing attribute of identity, or where the Islamic religious identity has become politicized (not only because of what is happening in those states themselves but also increasingly fueled by developments at national level under President Buhari.)
- **Political parties (Strong):** The two main political parties in Nigeria are divided along religious lines. These religious divisions are based not so much on ideology as on religious sentiment. The Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) is perceived to be sympathetic towards Christians. The All Progressive Congress (APC) on the other hand is seen by the Nigerian public to be pro-Islam. Nigeria's current ruling party (APC) is actually an alliance between Muslims in the North and the South. This is reflected in its approach towards governance and policies that are inherently pro-Islam and anti-Christian.

- **Organized crime cartels or networks (Strong):** Drivers of the Persecution engine *Organized corruption and crime* can be government officials at different levels, together with other leading people from different sectors of society. This is explained in more detail in the section above: *Security situation*. Another category are criminal groups, which, in the context of Nigeria, often partly overlap with religious-ideological groups such as Boko Haram, ISWAP, Fulani militants and some armed bandit groups. They are often not directly responsible for committing violations against Christians because of their faith. However there are times when their responsibility is indirect – i.e. by contributing to a potential escalation of agitation into chaos that leads to 'persecution eclipse', thus adding to the push for the further Islamization of Nigeria.

Areas where Christians face most difficulties

Nigeria has six geo-political zones: North-Central (loosely known as the Middle Belt); North-East; North-West; South-East; South-West; South-South (also known as the Niger Delta region). Persecution and discrimination are strongest in the three northern geo-political zones.

Previously, Each zone had its own profile of hostilities against Christians (and others). Violence in the North-East was mainly perpetrated by Boko Haram and ISWAP. In the North-West zone there were the armed bandits and in the North-Central (including Kaduna State), there were the Fulani militants. The circles of influence of these different groups are now increasingly overlapping, including their agendas. It has become increasingly difficult to even distinguish which violent group did what, more so, what is the specific identity of a certain group. Much of this has to do with Boko Haram's leadership which tried to create alliances with different groups in the North, also reaching into the South. (See above: *Recent history* and *Security situation*.)

The situation of basic rights violations in the 12 Sharia states can be characterized by 'submission into dhimmitude' (classical Islamic concept of second-class citizenship) and violence. Although there are differences among the states. The 12 northern Sharia states are: Bauchi, Borno, Gombe, Jigawa, Kaduna, Kano, Katsina, Kebbi, Niger, Sokoto, Yobe and Zamfara. Their Christian population totals 15% (11,993,000 Christians out of a population of 80,373,000). Apart from direct violence, Christians face all sorts of pressure in their different spheres of life. The various forms of pressure are indicated below in the section *Pressure in the 5 spheres of life*.

The situation of basic rights violations in the 7 remaining states (Adamawa, Benue, Kogi, Kwara, Nassarawa, Plateau, and Taraba) is more or less comparable with the 12 Sharia states. [Please note that FCT (Abuja) is not classified as a state and is thus not included.] Their Christian population totals 50% (15,409,000 Christians out of a population of 30,841,000). The Christians in these states are also confronted with a mixture of violence and 'dhimmitude' in the Muslim-majority areas within these states. However, the emphasis is on violence, committed mainly by Fulani militants and armed bandits, although Boko Haram and ISWAP increasingly have their part in it too. It is also important to realize that both Boko Haram, ISWAP and the Fulani militants are frequently joined by fighters from neighboring countries.

A very specific form of violence against Christians are the raids on (often) small Christian communities (or villages) in the rural areas of various states. When a (mainly) Christian community is attacked, some of the residents are killed, others are (seriously) wounded and others are abducted. Often men and boys are killed, with women and girls being abducted. Many flee from their houses and fields. There is constant fear: When night falls, there is always the danger of possible attack, and anxiety about what might happen to oneself and one's family. If a husband or older sons are killed, the wife/mother and younger children are left behind in a state of great vulnerability. When a wife or daughter is abducted, a man is left tormented by the thoughts of what might be happening to them. (For more information, see below: *Violence section*.)

The raids on Christian communities, and other forms of violence, lead to large numbers of Christians (and also other Nigerians) being forced to live in formal or informal IDP camps and cause loss of family farmland and property and hence loss of future well-being. Women and children are particularly vulnerable in such circumstances: Children being vulnerable to health issues, and women and girls to abuse and human trafficking. This situation is aggravated by the fact that the Nigerian government does little to assist these IDPs, and allows the situation that has created the crisis to simply continue.

Violence and land grabbing are not limited to the North alone. On 15 September 2019, the Afenifere Renewal Group (a pan-Yoruba socio-political organization) asked all governors in the South-West to put an end to the rising spate of attacks by Fulani militants in the region, noting that their undue silence would not promote peace and security. On 3 March 2020, five South-West houses of assembly passed bills for the establishment of 'Amotekun', a security unit set up to address the security challenges in the region covering the states of Lagos, Osun, Ondo, Oyo and Ogun (as mentioned above briefly in: *Security situation/Eastern Security Network*).

Until recently the south-eastern part of the country was relatively peaceful. That has changed. According to a [Global Sentinel report on 28 May 2020](#), the Nigerian rights group Intersociety claimed (in a special report on issues affecting Igbo people of South-East and South-S zones) that "not less than 350 Igbo communities, villages and other locations are now invaded and permanently occupied by the Jihadist Fulani Herdsmen and 'imported' Shuwa Arabs, also called 'Cowmen' in Arabic." The number was 139 communities in August 2019, and rose to 350 in May 2020. Intersociety states that the alleged occupation "is vicariously, if not directly aided by the Government of Nigeria and its security agencies especially the Army and the Police." Further research revealed that the invasion and permanent occupation of communities, villages and locations must be understood here differently than in the northern context. It seems the population was not directly driven away from their villages but in many cases found that their distant forests and farmlands had been taken over by Fulani militants (and Shuwa Arabs). During the WWL 2022 reporting period the situation has not improved. The establishment of the Eastern Security Network (ESN), a self-defense organization established by the Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB), was confronted heavy-handedly by the Nigerian army (see *Security situation*).

In a way, the whole country is increasingly becoming a hotspot for violations, as explained in various sections of this dossier. Islamization under President Buhari is getting such a boost, that one wonders how long it will be before the conditions prevalent in the northern Sharia states will reproduce themselves in the southern states of Nigeria.

Christian communities and how they are affected

Communities of expatriate Christians: Expatriate Christians in Nigeria are not forced into isolation. This category is therefore not scored separately in WWL analysis.

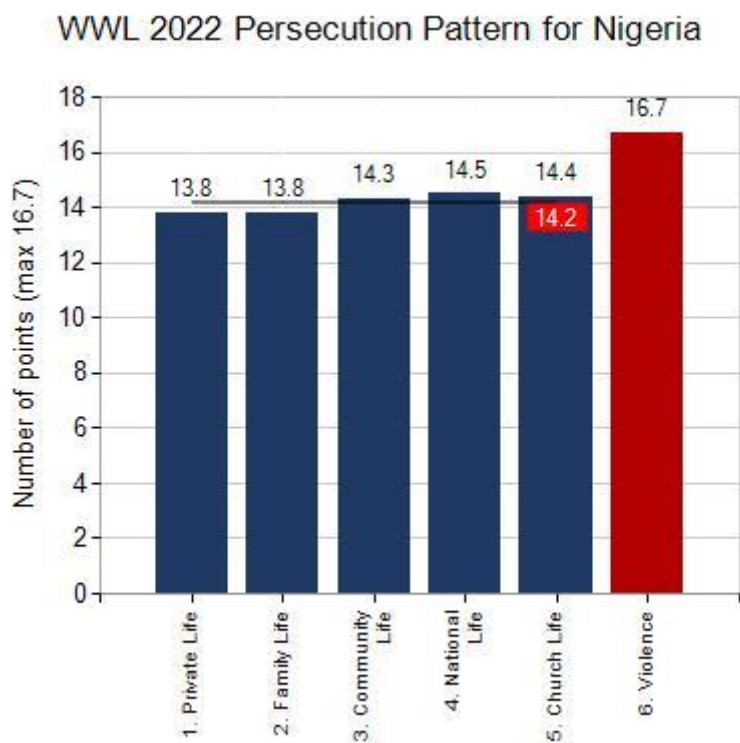
Historical Christian communities: In Nigeria these include the Roman Catholic Church and Protestant denominations such as Anglicans, Methodists and Lutherans. These churches face violent attacks against their life and property perpetrated by militant groups and discrimination from the local authorities, especially in the three northern zones. Unfortunately the insecurity has extended into the three southern zones too, be it less severe.

Converts to Christianity: These are mostly converts from Islam to Christianity. They are often forced to find refuge in 'safe houses' due to the danger of severe persecution and potential killing. Muslim converts to Christianity from northern Nigeria often have to flee their homes and states to escape being killed or harassed. This is less likely to occur in the South, although it happens to a limited degree in south-western areas. There is sometimes pressure on converts from Islam to Christianity in other parts of the country too but this is less frequent and with (much) less intensity than elsewhere.

Non-traditional Christian communities: The Evangelical and Pentecostal communities now make up a considerable proportion of the Nigerian Church. As is the case for the Historical Christian communities, in the three northern zones the Evangelical and Pentecostal communities face discrimination by the local authorities, as well as violent attacks against their life and property by militant groups. Though less severe the insecurity has extended into the three southern zones too. Their fate and that of the Historical Christian communities are comparable. Some of them are very active in evangelism, and go where it is really dangerous to go, which can increase the chance of being attacked.

How does the persecution situation affect the growth of the Church in Nigeria? According to a Nigerian analyst: "Ironically, rather than the Church shrinking rapidly, many more people are converting to Christian faith. Many of our participants during this year's focus group discussions alluded to the fact that they are receiving a constant flow of new believers, they say now the problem is where to keep them and how to care for them; the Church is getting stronger despite persecution."

The Persecution pattern



The WWL 2022 persecution pattern for Nigeria shows:

- The average pressure on Christians in Nigeria is very high at a level of 14.2 points, 0.5 point more than in WWL 2021.
- All *spheres of life* scored 13.750 points or more out of the maximum of 16.7, thus all recording extreme levels of pressure.
- The score for violence is the maximum possible (16.7 points). Within the last 8 years (WWL 2015 - WWL 2022), Nigeria's violence score reached the maximum level six times. In WWL 2017 and WWL 2018 it was not much better, with scores of 16.1 and 16.5 points respectively.

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 2022 questionnaire for brief commentary and explanation. The selection usually (but not always) reflects the highest scoring elements. In some cases, an additional paragraph per sphere is included to give further information deemed important. (To see how individual questions are scored on a scale of 0-4 points, please see the "WWL Scoring example" in the WWL Methodology, available at: <https://opendoorsanalytical.org/world-watch-list-documentation/>, password: freedom).

Pressure in Block 1 / Private sphere

Block 1.5: It has been risky for Christians to display Christian images or symbols. (3.50 points)

In the three northern zones any open identification of being a Christian is dangerous for Muslim converts. For other Christians, it is also dangerous during attacks and sometimes in IDP situations. Christians are easily detected by their Christian names. One's ID is regularly the passport to life or death at road blocks set up by violent Islamic groups (including armed bandits). This is not limited to the North but could even happen in some parts in the South.

Block 1.8: It has been risky for Christians to speak about their faith with those other than immediate family (extended family, others). (3.50 points)

In the three northern zones it is a serious risk for Christians from an Islamic background to share their faith with their Muslim family, because it reveals their new religious status. This is less likely to occur in the South, although it can happen there too. In addition, public exposure can be a risk for other Christians during attacks and sometimes in IDP situations.

Block 1.1: Conversion has been opposed, forbidden, or punishable, including conversion from one type of Christianity to another. (3.25 points)

Converts to Christianity from Islam in the three northern zones often have to flee their homes and states to escape being killed or harassed. They usually find refuge in 'safe houses'. This is less likely to occur in the South, although it can happen in some areas in the South-West. There is also sometimes pressure on converts from Islam to Christianity in other parts of the country, but this is less frequent and with (much) less intensity.

Block 1.7: It has been risky for Christians to speak about their faith with immediate family members. (3.25 points)

This is comparable to question 1.8. The score is however a bit lower. For converts, discussing their faith with family might even be more precarious if the immediate family is Muslim. However, for other Christians it is most often easier.

Block 1 - further information

Private life is under serious pressure for converts from Islam to Christianity. They often have to hide their conversion for fear of discovery, or flee to prevent their new faith being discovered. The increasing Islamization in the country has not improved this situation in the WWL 2022 reporting period. But there is more to consider: Even other Christians can be in danger for the simple fact of being recognized as Christians, for instance at roadblocks, at school or in their villages. Many Christians in the North live in IDP situations where they sometimes also have to keep a low profile. This is especially true for Christian girls and women. Even in the South-East, in one of the Local Government Areas of Anambra State, a highly placed personality of international repute told Intersociety that Fulani herdsmen came into the area and settled at the top of a hill from where they monitored local girls and young married women working on the

farms for possible abduction and sexual violence including rape and forced pregnancies (Source: [Global Sentinel, 28 May 2020](#)). That situation continued in the WWL 2022 reporting period. All this makes it very difficult to simply be a Christian.

Pressure in Block 2 / Family sphere

Block 2.9: Children of Christians have been harassed or discriminated against because of their parents' faith. (3.50 points)

Most of this happens in the North, although increasingly also in the South (see above: *Areas where Christians face most difficulties*). In public schools, offices, hospitals etc. there is pervasive discrimination of Christians even just from having biblical or English names. The children of Christians are often more susceptible to such discrimination than adults. That also applies for various forms of violence: There are times where children are killed or maimed, abducted or sexually assaulted because of the Christian faith of their parents (see below: *Gender-specific religious persecution*).

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. (3.50 points)

Most of this happens in the North, although increasingly also in the South. The violence committed by violent Islamic militants has caused many Christians to be separated from their loved ones. Many have been forced to leave their families either in an IDP camp or other safe location, and then to go to other places to find jobs to support their families. Or they remain in the more dangerous regions for the same reason. Parents and children are also separated from each other through abduction: [Leah Sharibu](#) is an example, representing many others (Christianity Today, 20 December 2020). This also happens in a non-militant Islamic context in the North, particularly the abduction, forced conversion and forced marriage of Christian girls. There are even cases of Christian girls who have been abducted from the South and married off in the North.

Block 2.7: Parents have been hindered in raising their children according to their Christian beliefs. (3.25 points)

Most of this happens in the North, although increasingly also in the South. For converts it is very difficult due to the fear of discovery in their families and beyond. Added to that, if the conversion of a parent from Islam to Christianity is discovered, often their children are taken away from them, or they have to flee and lose contact with their children. Also, when Christian women are widowed, Muslim relatives sometimes take the children to make sure they grow up as Muslims. This might happen even after widowed mothers had raised them as Christians for years. Sometimes parents have to hide the Christian identity of their children to avoid persecution. Many parents have to raise their children in IDP situations, which also makes it difficult for Christian parents to train their children in Christian faith and values.

Block 2.8: Christian children have been pressured into attending anti-Christian or majority religion teaching at any level of education. (3.00 points)

In almost all Sharia states, the school subject "Christian Religious Knowledge" has been banned from public schools, and children of Christians are forced to attend Islamic Education classes. Children of Christians are sometimes even forced to participate in Muslim prayers during school hours. In most Northern universities, those who study law are forced to study Sharia law as a compulsory subject. Christian students are compelled to learn how to recite Muslims prayers. For children of converts from Islam to Christianity the situation is even harder, because they do not want to draw unnecessary attention to their parents' conversion.

Pressure in Block 3 / Community sphere

Block 3.3: Christians have been under threat of abduction and/or forced marriage. (3.75 points)

Abduction and/or forced marriage mostly occurs in the North, although increasingly also in the South. Christian girls and women are the most affected (see below - *Violence section* - for understanding the enormous fear and uncertainty this brings.) Female converts are especially vulnerable to abduction and forced marriage. Christian men are often abducted for ransom. Church leaders are increasingly specifically targeted. The children of pastors are also targeted to spite their fathers and aggravate the Christian community. An additional motivation for the abduction of Christians girls and forced marriage could be the desire to depopulate Christianity and populate Islam. Even married Christian women are sometimes targets. Cases of abduction for forced marriages are sometimes carried out with the active connivance of ruling emirs.

Block 3.7: Christians have been pressured by their community to renounce their faith. (3.75 points)

According to a Nigerian analyst, "Islam within northern Nigeria uses everything possible to pressure Christians into leaving the Christian faith, be it money, land grabbing, forceful abduction or denial of rights. Many minority Christian groups have been denied access to basic social amenities in an attempt to force them to accept Islam. Because of high levels of poverty, money is also being used to entice Christian youth to leave the Christian faith. Many young girls and women have been put under immense pressure to denounce Christianity to join Islam because of false promises of comfort and luxury. It's a constant battle for Christians. They make you suffer, then offer solutions with the condition of accepting Islam for you to get the help." Apart from what is happening in northern Nigeria, there also is pressure in southern Nigeria. Another Nigerian analyst added that pressure on Christians to renounce their faith "is very common in the government ministries, companies and other social places".

Block 3.4: Christians been hindered in sharing community resources because of their faith (e.g. clean drinking water). (3.50 points)

Most of this happens in the North, although increasingly also in the South. It has two dimensions: One is about Christians living in the same locality as Muslims and not being allowed access to the water well or local dispensary, because the Christians are deemed 'impure'. Another is about

the local or state authorities. Social amenities from the government do not reach Christian communities as they ought to. Often they just receive a token amount. With respect to the provision of infrastructural development, more is invested in Muslim-dominated areas than in Christian-dominated ones in states where Christians and Muslims are almost an equal 50-50 percentage. Some Christian communities in rural areas have been completely denied water and have to trek for hours to fetch water. Even in cities, the Christian quarters are sometimes denied amenities such as sanitation services. Furthermore, there are many Christian IDPs in the northern zones. However, the Nigerian relief agency is biased when it comes to the distribution of relief items and Christians are often left out and the agency is also known not to respond swiftly when emergencies involve Christians. Even when they do respond, the items they bring are most often [grossly inadequate](#) (WWR, Nigeria: Assessment of Christian situation in 4 north-eastern states, May 2018).

Block 3.9: Christians have faced disadvantages in their education at any level for faith-related reasons (e.g. restrictions of access to education). (3.50 points)

Most of this happens in the North. Christians are often discriminated against in their educational pursuits. Particularly Christian or tribal names can make it increasingly difficult to access education. Christian or ethnic minorities in predominantly Muslim areas are often denied admission to schools and where they are admitted, they are often not given their chosen courses. At university and college, those with Christian names are frequently automatically excluded from getting admission to study courses in medicine, for example. Christians have had to change their names to Muslim names to be admitted. Results and certificates can be withheld for years to frustrate Christians. Some young Christians who cannot get admission into universities and who cannot get jobs, feel forced to leave the country in search of better opportunities.

Pressure in Block 4 / National sphere

Block 4.14: Those who caused harm to Christians have deliberately been left unpunished. (4.00 points)

The issue of impunity is of paramount importance in Nigeria. The perpetrators of attacks against Christians are usually never arrested. A Nigerian analyst affirmed that this is one of the reasons why attacks on Christians and their property keep increasing. When attackers are arrested, they are often quickly released; this is common where violence has been carried out by Fulani militants or armed bandits in the context of Islamic militancy.

Block 4.13: Christians have been accused of blasphemy or insulting the majority religion, either by state authorities or by pressure groups. (3.75 points)

As explained by a Nigerian analyst: “Christians have to be very careful in discussions with Muslims as their words can easily be used against them. Christians have been killed when they were accused of speaking ill of Muhammad or Islam. Many opinions spoken by Christians are deliberately misconstrued and regarded as blasphemous. In many instances mobs have killed Christians for simply preaching in public or expressing opinions on issues.” Another Nigerian analyst stated: “A young man from Kebbi State has been on the run since January, accused of

insulting the prophet. When he went to the local police station for protection, he was told that the state cannot protect him." For converts from Islam to Christianity the threat is even bigger.

Block 4.1: The Constitution (or comparable national or state law) limits freedom of religion as formulated in Article 18 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. (3.50 points)

The Nigerian Constitution provides for freedom of religion. Section 10 of the 1999 Constitution prohibits the adoption of a state religion. Section 15 provides that discrimination on the grounds of place of origin, sex, religion, status, ethnic or linguistic association ties shall be prohibited. However, the adoption of the Sharia legal system by the northern states places Sharia law above of the Constitution and its operation negatively impacts Christians. This question is scored for the Sharia states only, although the mere existence of the issue has meaning for the way the whole nation is governed.

Block 4.15: Christians accused in court have been deprived of equal treatment. (3.50 points)

Most of this happens in the North, where the local courts are often channels for oppressing Christians. There is gross inequality in the administration of justice, since the majority of judges are Muslims in a radicalizing Islamic environment. Should there be an issue between a Christian and a Muslim, the Muslim knows he will most often be favored. Christians have served prison sentences for crimes which a Muslim is easily discharged for or is not even charged for in the first place. At times Christians are even charged in Sharia courts which have no jurisdiction over them. Their evidence is worth half of that of a Muslim.

Pressure in Block 5 / Church sphere

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

In an atmosphere of agitation, chaos, impunity and increasing Islamization, speaking out against the persecution of Christians is not a safe thing to do - particularly in the areas where outright violence is rife. The space to advocate for justice naturally depends on the advocates' standing in the community. People with a high public profile have more opportunity than those who are less well-known in the most affected areas. But even for them, such advocacy is not without danger. Several well-known Christians were called for interrogation by the security services after having negatively commented on the situation of insecurity in the country and the weak performance of the federal government.

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

Most of this happens in the North, although increasingly also in the South (see above: *Areas where Christians face most difficulties*). The activities of churches have been disrupted by constant attacks on Christian communities and by the destruction of church-buildings and executions or abductions of pastors and Christians in general. The activities of churches are also monitored, obstructed or hindered from time to time. Church activities are often not carried out due to the high level of insecurity. Sometimes the security men deployed by the authorities to protect Christian worshippers cannot be trusted and may act as informers or not give any protec-

tion. In several of the northern states, Christians are denied access to land for building churches.

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

According to Nigerian analysts, building and renovations of churches are greatly hindered in all the Sharia states in Nigeria. Even when permissions are given for churches to be built, the physical design and structure of the building is under control. The goal is to keep churches hidden. Communities in Jigawa recently demolished some churches in their locality, vowing not to allow the presence of any church building in the area. This is the situation of many other minority Christian communities in northern Nigeria. Another example is from Kebbi State where the Local Government Authorities stopped the priests from building a parish rectory. The same happened in Kaura Namoda of Zamfara State. In Faskari, the Local Government Authorities stopped the community from building a church. In Bakori town, they stopped the Christians from building a church and priest's residence. In Maiduguri, an EYN church was demolished by the state government which, according to Christian Association of Nigeria (CAN), was the fourth church destroyed there. The violence and insecurity mostly by non-state actors adds to the already precarious situation for churches and Christian buildings, not only in northern Nigeria but increasingly in southern Nigeria too.

Block 5.11: Pastors or other Christian leaders (or their family members) have been special targets of harassment for faith-related reasons. (3.50 points)

Most of this happens in the North, although increasingly also in the South. Pastors, and their family members are regularly targeted for attacks (e.g. for abduction or killing). In 2019, the leadership of the Christian Association of Nigeria (CAN) released statistics of church leaders who were either abducted, killed or attacked (especially those speaking out about the persecution situation). This trend has continued into the WWL 2022 reporting period: Often harassment took on lighter forms than death or abduction but was still very disturbing for the pastors and their families, as well as for their church communities.

Violence

Violence is defined in WWL Methodology as the deprivation of physical freedom or as bodily harm to Christians or damage to their property. It includes severe threats (mental abuse). The table is based on reported cases as much as possible, but since many incidents go unreported, the numbers must be understood as being minimum figures. The following 5 points should be considered when using the data provided in the Block 6 table:

1. Some incidents go unreported because the Christians involved choose not to speak about the hostility being faced. Possible reasons for this may be:

- Doing so would expose them to more attacks. For example, if a family member is killed because of his/her faith, the survivors might decide to keep silent about the circumstances of the killing to avoid provoking any further attacks.
- In some circumstances, the reticence to pass on information may be due to the danger of exposure caused by converts returning to their previous faith.
- If persecution is related to sexual violence - due to stigma, survivors often do not tell even their closest relatives.
- In some cultural settings, if your loved one is killed, you might be under the obligation to take revenge. Christians not wishing to do that, may decide to keep quiet about it.

2. Other incidents go unreported for the following possible reasons:

- Some incidents never reach the public consciousness, because no one really knows about it; or the incident is simply not considered worth reporting; or media coverage is deliberately blocked or distorted; or media coverage is not deliberately blocked, but the information somehow gets lost; or the incidents are deliberately not reported widely for security reasons (e.g. for the protection of local church leaders).
- In situations where Christians have been discriminated against for many years, armed conflict can make them additionally vulnerable. Christians killed in areas where fighting regularly takes place are unlikely to be reported separately. Examples in recent years have been Sudan, Syria and Myanmar.
- Christians who die through the deprivation of basic necessities such as clean water and medical care (due to long-term discrimination) are unlikely to be reported separately. Christians are not always killed directly; they can be so squeezed by regulations and other oppressive factors that they die – not at once, but in the course of years. This often includes the deprivation of basic necessities such as clean water and medical care, or exclusion from government assisted socio-economic development projects. These numbers could be immense.

3. For further discussion (with a focus on the complexity of assessing the numbers of Christians killed for their faith) please see World Watch Monitor's article dated 13 November 2013 available at: <https://www.worldwatchmonitor.org/2013/11/number-of-christian-martyrs-continues-to-cause-debate/>.

4. The use of symbolic numbers: In cases where it has been impossible to count exactly, a symbolic round figure (10*, 100* etc.) is given and indicated with an asterisk. A symbolic number of 10* could in reality even be 100 or more but the real number is uncertain. A symbolic number of 100* could go well over 1000 but the real number is uncertain. A symbolic number of 1,000* could go well over 10,000 but, again, the real number is uncertain. The same applies for symbolic numbers 10,000*, 100,000* and 1,000,000*: Each could indicate much higher numbers, but WWR chooses to be cautious because the real number is uncertain.

5. The symbol "x" in the table: This denotes a known number which cannot be published due to security concerns.

Nigeria: Violence Block question		WWL 2022	WWL 2021
6.1	How many Christians have been killed for faith-related reasons (including state sanctioned executions)?	4,650	3,530
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?	470	270
6.3	How many Christians have been detained for faith-related reasons?	17	25
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 *	25
6.5	How many Christians have been abducted for faith-related reasons (including Christians missing in a persecution context)?	2510	990
6.6	How many Christians have been raped or otherwise sexually harassed for faith-related reasons?	1,000 *	1,000
6.7	How many cases have there been of forced marriages of Christians to non-Christians?	100 *	100*
6.8	How many Christians have been otherwise physically or mentally abused for faith-related reasons (including beatings and death threats)?	10,000 *	10,000
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?	1,000 *	1,000*
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?	1,000 *	1,000*
6.11	How many Christians have been forced to leave their homes or go into hiding in-country for faith-related reasons?	10,000 *	1,000*
6.12	How many Christians have been forced to leave the country for faith-related reasons?	1,000 *	1,000*

The calculation of the number of Christians killed and/or abducted is the result of an in-depth data gathering project by WWR in collaboration with a Nigerian partner organization. For two consecutive years (1 October 2019 - 30 September 2020 and 1 October 2020 - 30 September 2021) the project recorded killings and abductions - not only for Christians but also for Muslims and others in the context of jihadism and outside that context. In the first year of the project, the majority of attacks on Christians and Christian communities were carried out during the COVID-19 lockdown period. In the second year this effect was less pronounced because the COVID restrictions were less severe. Nevertheless, the total number of Christians killed increased.

More details on the results will be shared in a separate report from the Observatory on Religious Freedom in Africa (ORFA) later in 2022. A [summary fact sheet](#) has been published in 2021.

The number of Christians killed has risen from 1,350 (in WWL 2020) to 3,530 (in WWL 2021) to 4,650 in the WWL 2022 reporting period. After the publication of the WWL 2021 data, extra data came in that brought the total number of Christians killed in the WWL 2021 reporting period to 3,910. So the actual increase of Christians killed between WWL 2021 and WWL 2022 is from 3,910 to 4,650 (19%).

Behind the bare numbers for the different categories of violence, much lies hidden from view. A husband or older sons killed leaves the wife/mother and younger children behind in a state of great vulnerability. A wife or daughter abducted leaves a man only being able to imagine what might be happening to them – such thoughts torment the mind incessantly. When a (mainly) Christian community is attacked, some are killed, some are (seriously) wounded and others are abducted. Often men and boys are killed; women and girls are abducted. Many flee from their homes and fields. Their properties are robbed; their harvests destroyed or possession of their farmland is taken over. When the Christians dare to come back, there is always the fear that it will happen again. Some communities have been permanently abandoned by their Christian inhabitants and occupied by Fulani militants. The overlap between Fulani militants and so-called ‘armed bandits’ is considerable. Boko Haram and ISWAP operate slightly differently but the consequences are comparable.

Fear reigns: When night falls, there is always the anxiety that another attack could come, and thoughts of what might happen to oneself and one’s family.

Violence is acted out in different ways. It is not always that (mainly) Christian villages are attacked. But when that is the case, it is not that the assailants want to kill as many members of the villages as possible; if so, they would operate differently. It seems that the creation of an atmosphere of terror is the main goal, along with the opportunity to rob other people’s possessions. Or the goal might be simply to take over everything those people have for a specific period of time, if not indefinitely.

Abduction is also increasing. Some are abducted for sexual slavery or forced marriage. Then it is mainly about women and girls. Others are abducted for ransom - often men. Church leaders are a common target, probably because they are expected to be able to raise large sums of money quickly from their congregations or institutions. Abduction has become a successful ‘revenue model’.

Many Christians live as IDPs. Some find they can survive and carry on, while others suffer a long time lacking everything. Women and children are particularly vulnerable in such circumstances: Children are vulnerable to health problems and women and girls to abuse and human trafficking.

In the table above, the numbers cited for questions 6.4 and 6.6 to 6.12 are symbolic numbers.

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.

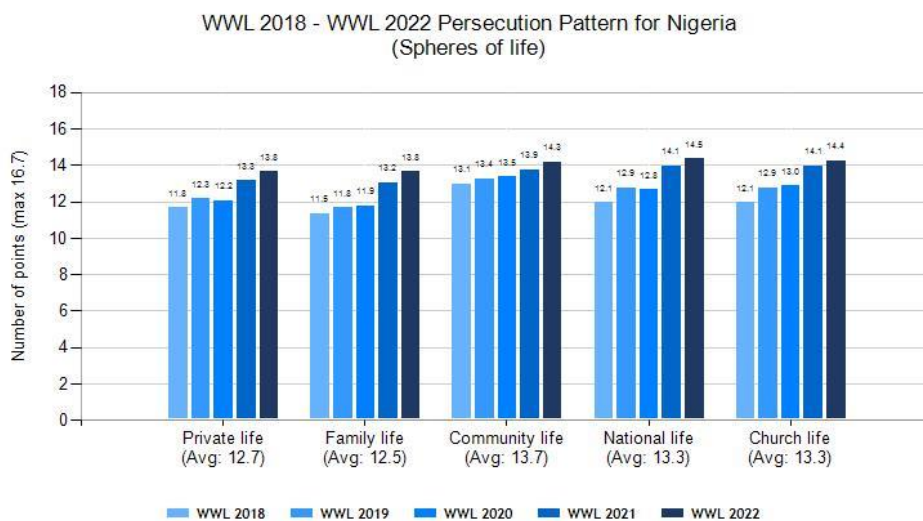
5 Year trends: Average pressure

Nigeria: WWL 2018 - WWL 2022 Persecution Pattern history	Average pressure over 5 Spheres of life
2022	14.2
2021	13.7
2020	12.7
2019	12.7
2018	12.1

The average pressure in Nigeria has been increasing over the last few years. In addition to the reporting periods listed above, the average pressure for WWL 2014 was 11.0 points; for WWL 2015: 12.2 points; for WWL 2016: 12.3 points; for WWL 2017: 12.3 points.

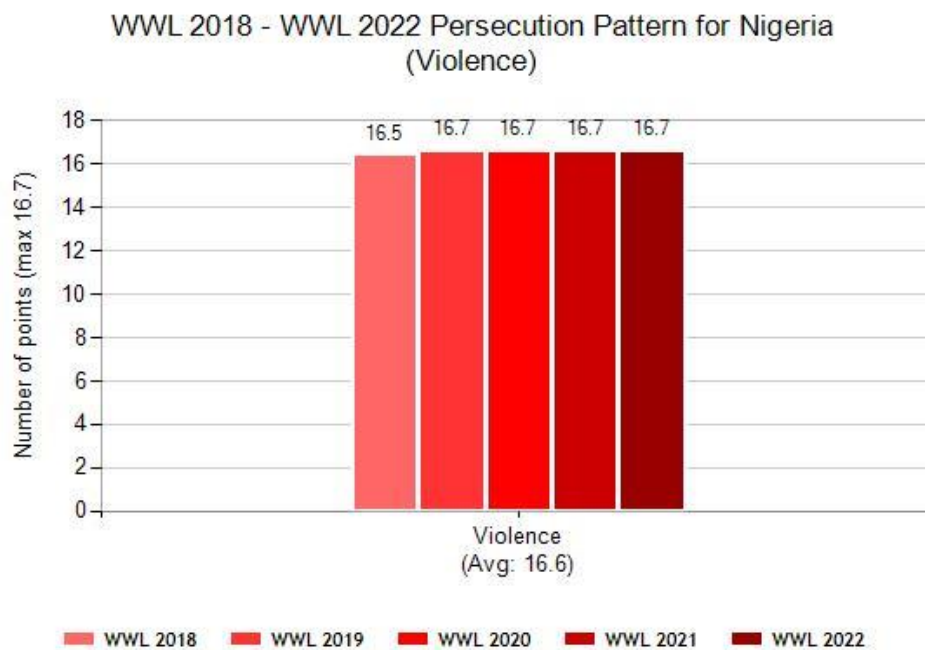
The WWL 2015 reporting period covered the year before the elections that removed President Goodluck Jonathan from office. President Muhammadu Buhari came to power in 2015 and was re-elected in 2019. Before he came to power, Nigeria had already been heading towards chaos for quite some time. Yet the agitation President Buhari has allowed has caused further deterioration in the country's situation for all Nigerians and especially for Christians. At the current time, near the end of the president's second term, the situation seems to be getting very precarious.

5 Year trends: Pressure in each sphere of life



There has been a distinct increase in the scores for pressure in the different spheres of life over the last five WWL reporting periods. The differences between the lowest and highest values is 2.0 points for *Private life*, 2.3 for *Family life*, 1.2 for *Community life*, 2.4 for *National life* and 2.3 for *Church life*. This pattern reflects the gradual process of Islamization taking place under Buhari's presidency. In situations of high levels of jihadist activity, combined with almost total impunity, non-violent forms of hostility against Christians (and others) rise too.

5 Year trends: Violence against Christians



The score for violence has remained at (near) maximum level over the past five years. In addition to the scores in the reporting periods listed above, the score for violence in WWL 2014 was 15.6 points; in WWL 2015: 16.7 points; in WWL 2016: 16.7 points; in WWL 2017: 16.1 points.

Over the last 9 years, the score for violence in Nigeria has 6 times been the maximum score (16.7 points). Behind these scores, a world of suffering is hidden. Indeed, the number of Christians killed in Nigeria has been the bulk of the global totals for Christians killed for many years. This is not only linked to the size of the Church (as the number of Christians even in the north of Nigeria is quite large), but also to the dynamics of unceasing jihadist violence in the country.

Gender-specific religious persecution / Female

Group	Female Pressure Points
Economic	Discrimination/harassment via education; Economic harassment via business/job/work access
Political and Legal	Denied custody of children; Forced marriage
Security	Abduction; Forced to flee town/country; Incarceration by family (house arrest); Targeted Seduction; Trafficking; Violence – death; Violence – physical; Violence – sexual
Social and Cultural	Denied access to social community/networks; Enforced religious dress code; Violence – psychological; Violence – Verbal
Technological	-

In the North of Nigeria, and increasingly in the South, the situation of Christian women and girls continues to be dire. Raids by Boko Haram and the splinter group ISWAP, Fulani militants and armed ‘bandits’ have terrorized Christian communities. Women and girls have been raped, forced into sexual slavery, kidnapped for ransom and killed. There is a general practice of treating women as inferior to men, in rural regions especially, which makes their maltreatment easier. Women and girls are especially vulnerable to sexual violence in IDP camps. A Nigerian analyst comments: “The banditry, Fulani militia activity and herdsman attacks have subjected a lot of Christian young women and girls to rape. In our interviews during our numerous visits to internally displaced persons camps, as high as fifty to sixty percent of the women and girls in camp have been either raped by bandits or kidnappers. About 80% percent of kidnapped victims that are women have been raped by their captors.”

Abduction is used regularly to depopulate Christian-dominated territory. Most commonly, Christian girls are abducted for the purpose of forced marriage and forced conversion – even women who are already married. A country expert comments: “Usually, the moment a Christian girl is abducted, her abductors ensure that they marry her off within one or two weeks. Even before marriage, she will be sexually abused to try to make her parents give up on her when she becomes pregnant” (in the case that she is rescued and returned to her parents). The label of “marriage” is used to mask and defend the actual slavery occurring. When parents try to rescue their child, they commonly face resistance from the community, police and judiciary, who argue the marriage is legitimate under Islamic law and the girl has accepted Islam. In addition to being ‘married’, girls abducted by militants have reportedly been used as suicide bombers or as fighters.

The fear that something will happen with their Christian daughters causes many Christian parents to push for early marriage as a kind of ‘protection’. This, alongside laws permitting under-age marriage in some states, contributes to the high early marriage rate for girls ([Girls Not Brides: Nigeria](#)). Some Christian parents also choose to keep their girls at home, due to the dangers girls face travelling to and at school; this compounds the dependency of women and girls on men and fosters illiteracy about their rights. School abductions have also led to par-

ents sending their daughters to safer states for education. Those remaining in schools in northern states are forced to wear Islamic code uniforms.

When women are raped, their husbands can sometimes struggle to move past the trauma – they may even view their wife as dirty or impure, particularly if pregnant. Many homes have broken up because of this. When girls are abducted, a deep sadness falls upon the family. Men often see it as their fault for not protecting their children adequately. The victims themselves, too, carry scars and trauma for a very long time, and can be stigmatized by communities. Christian communities therefore end up deeply fractured and there have been [calls for a greater response](#) to the gender-based violence (Amnesty International, 24 March 2021). The high rate of killings of Christian men also causes many dependent wives and children to fall into poverty or flee for safety.

Particularly in the Hausa ethnic group, the general perception is that women are not supposed to work outside the home or fend for themselves. Generally, poverty can also make women and girls more vulnerable to pressure from perpetrators and they can encounter challenges in meeting basic needs in an effort to survive. In addition to the great emotional toll and social cost of violations, in some communities where widows are the main financial providers (possibly widowed due to persecution targeting their husbands), such violations also affect the community’s economic well-being.

Gender-specific religious persecution / Male

Group	Male Pressure Points
Economic	Denied inheritance or possessions; Discrimination/harassment via education; Economic harassment via business/job/work access; Economic harassment via fines
Political and Legal	Imprisonment by government
Security	Abduction; Military/militia conscription/service against conscience; Violence – death; Violence – physical
Social and Cultural	Violence – psychological
Technological	-

In the North of Nigeria, and increasingly in the South, Christian men and boys are often specifically targeted and killed by actors including Boko Haram, ISWAP, Fulani militants and armed ‘bandits’. Much of this violence happens through attacks on Christian communities in rural areas and at roadblocks. These killings not only serve to eliminate the current generation of men and boys, but also guarantees a considerable fall in the birthrate of Christian families. A country expert comments: “A lot of [men and boys] are paying the supreme price for their faith on a daily basis.”

For those who survive such attacks, abduction and forced inclusion in militant ranks remain a threat. There are reports of church leaders being regularly abducted for ransom. Discrimination against Christians has also been reported within the government armed forces, with Christian soldiers being deliberately posted to the most dangerous areas, where many are killed by Boko Haram or other jihadist groups.

Christian men and boys have also been strategically marginalized in terms of education and employment. They are increasingly excluded from gaining admission to schools or universities, and are unlikely to gain employment within the Civil Service in Sharia states and at federal level, even if highly qualified. They can also be fined or detained unlawfully. The ensuing combination of frustration and multiple dangers causes many young men to leave the country in search of safety and better opportunities.

The combination of violence and pressure has a devastating effect on the Church and Christian families. If a man is killed, loses his ability to work or has his property seized, his family can become impoverished. The vulnerability of the family is a living testimony of the overwhelming power of the perpetrators. This is particularly evident in how perpetrators are almost never brought to justice.

Violence against women is also used as a weapon to harm Christian men. Men and boys have been forced to watch their wives, mothers, daughters and sisters be raped in front of them, or abducted, causing deep trauma and feelings of helplessness, as they feel they should have been able to protect them.

Persecution of other religious minorities

In the WWL 2022 reporting period there were several reports about adherents of African Traditional Religion (ATR) facing hostility. The number of adherents of ATR killed in the context of jihadist violence was 27, according to the [summary fact sheet](#) published by the Observatory on Religious Freedom in Africa (ORFA) in 2021.

Muslims who are not part of a militant group attacking communities, are also vulnerable to attack. Especially in the north-western states, many Muslims have been killed by the same groups that killed Christians, and also had to flee their villages. Data for people killed in Nigeria shows that while 4,650 Christians were reportedly killed by Boko Haram, ISWAP, Fulani Militants and armed bandits, there were also 1,330 Muslims killed - most of them by the same groups. Some were also killed by Christian vigilantes: Many Fulani, especially those that have settled and lived with Christians neighbors for many years, simply want to live their daily lives; but some of them are facing violence in the form of retaliation attacks carried out by Christian youths.

Not counted as persecution but important to mention: People were also killed outside the context of jihadist violence. For that category no distinction was made between Christians, Muslims or ATRs. In the WWL 2022 reporting period the total number was 913 (compared with the WWL 2021 reporting period: 243; nearly 4 times as much).

According to the US State Department (IRFR 2020):

- The Nigerian government continued its detention of Sheikh Ibrahim El-Zakzaky, head of the Islamic Movement of Nigeria (IMN), a Shia organization, and his wife, despite a December 2016 court ruling that they be released by January 2017. All the other members of IMN arrested during the 2015 clash with the army were released by February. On September 29, the Kaduna State High Court rejected a motion filed by El-Zakzaky and his wife to dismiss the case. The court adjourned the case to November and later to January 2021.
- During 2020, authorities arrested and detained two individuals under blasphemy laws: Yahaya Sharif-Aminu, sentenced to death for blasphemy on August 10, and 16-year-old Umar Farouq, sentenced to 10 years of imprisonment. Authorities detained Mubarak Bala, head of the Humanist Association of Nigeria, in April without filing any charges, although his attorneys stated they believed he was being held on charges related to allegations of insulting Islam on Facebook.

Future outlook

The outlook for Christians as viewed through the lens of the blend of 4 Persecution engines ('Very strong'):

Islamic oppression, Ethno-religious hostility, Dictatorial paranoia and Organized corruption and crime

The overall threat for the Church in Nigeria - and for most of its population - is the increasing Islamization in the country. This is not new but has grown during the presidency of Muhammadu Buhari, who claimed in 2001 during a seminar in Kaduna that he "will continue to show openly and inside me the total commitment to the Sharia movement that is sweeping all over Nigeria". He then added that, 'God willing, we will not stop the agitation for the total implementation of the Sharia in the country'." (See above: *Persecution engines*.)

This country dossier shows that the level of "agitation" has become very high. Others have seen this too. The International Committee On Nigeria (ICON), together with the International Organization on Peace-building & Social Justice (PSJ), published a report in 2020 entitled "[Nigeria's Silent Slaughter](#)", claiming that genocide is taking place in Nigeria; they keep track of killings since then on a weekly basis. Some agree with this terminology, others are slightly more cautious in how they frame the situation in the country. However, all are convinced that Nigeria is the grip of an inhumane dynamic, that victimizes many civilians and Christians in particular.

Also, climate change will continue to impact Nigeria through the desert encroachment. While climate change and environmental degradation have been used as excuses for violations of freedoms in Nigeria ('persecution eclipse'), its continuous effects will further complicate the turbulent situation in the country.

If the current situation continues its cascading spiral effect, an all-out chaos may be inevitable. Out of this chaos a new Nigeria might emerge, but one built on the foundation of violent jihadism. That would not only be disastrous for the Church in Nigeria and for the country itself, but also for the entire African continent and possibly beyond.

Some suggest something big might happen before (or around) the end of President Buhari's second term. One of them is the former Head of Naval Intelligence, Professor of Global Security Studies, Commodore Kunle Olawunmi. In a revealing interview with Channels Television he described the situation in Nigeria as a strategy of 'Talibanization', in which state actors and tribal groups are also complicit (YouTube, 25 August 2021). (See above: *Specific examples of violations of rights in the reporting period.*)

External Links - Persecution Dynamics

- Areas where Christians face most difficulties: Global Sentinel report on 28 May 2020 - <https://globalsentinelng.com/2020/05/28/special-report-intersociety-lists-350-igbo-communities-invaded-and-permanently-occupied-by-fulani-herdsmen-shuwa-arabs/>
- Pressure in Block 1 / Private sphere: Global Sentinel, 28 May 2020 - <https://globalsentinelng.com/2020/05/28/special-report-intersociety-lists-350-igbo-communities-invaded-and-permanently-occupied-by-fulani-herdsmen-shuwa-arabs/>
- 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. (3.50 points): Leah Sharibu - <https://www.christianitytoday.com/news/2020/december/nigeria-katsina-boys-freed-boko-haram-chibok-leah-sharibu.html>
- Block 3.4: Christians been hindered in sharing community resources because of their faith (e.g. clean drinking water). (3.50 points): grossly inadequate - <http://opendoorsanalytical.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/05/Nigeria-Assessment-of-Christian-situation-in-4-north-eastern-states-June-2017.pdf>
- Violence / Block 6 - commentary: summary fact sheet - <https://platformforsocialtransformation.org/download/religiousfreedom/Fact-Sheet-Summary-data-Observatory-of-Religious-Freedom-in-Africa-corr.-23122021.pdf>
- Gender-specific religious persecution Female description: Girls Not Brides: Nigeria - <https://atlas.girlsnotbrides.org/map/nigeria>
- Gender-specific religious persecution Female description: calls for a greater response - <https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2021/03/nigeria-boko-haram-brutality-against-women-and-girls-needs-urgent-response-new-research-2/>
- Persecution of other religious minorities: summary fact sheet - <https://platformforsocialtransformation.org/download/religiousfreedom/Fact-Sheet-Summary-data-Observatory-of-Religious-Freedom-in-Africa-corr.-23122021.pdf>
- Future outlook: Nigeria's Silent Slaughter - <https://iconhelp.org/silent-slaughter/>
- Future outlook: Talibanization - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KyHowYHyAp8>

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:

- <https://opendoorsanalytical.org/reports/>
- <https://opendoorsanalytical.org/?s=Nigeria>
- <https://www.worldwatchmonitor.org/countries/Nigeria>
- [Nigeria – Assessment of Christian situation in 4 north-eastern states – 2018](#)
- [Nigeria – Southern Kaduna – Short version 2018](#)
- [Nigeria – Southern Kaduna – Volume 1 – 2018](#)
- [Nigeria – Southern Kaduna – Volume 2 \(appendices\) – 2018](#)
- [Nigeria – Benue State – Short version – 2017](#)
- [Nigeria – Benue State under the shadow of “herdsmen terrorism” \(2014-2016\) with update: January-August 2017 – 2017](#)

- [Nigeria – Investigating common narratives of violent conflict in Nasarawa State – 2016](#)
- [Nigeria – Appraising the Buhari administration – 2016](#)
- [Nigeria – Violent Conflict in Taraba State \(2013 – 2015\) – 2015](#)
- [Nigeria – Ethnic cleansing in the Middle Belt Region – 2015](#)
- [Nigeria – Migration and Violent Conflict in Divided Societies – 2015](#)
- [Nigeria – Persecution or civil unrest? – 2013](#)

External Links - Further useful reports

- Further useful reports: Nigeria – Assessment of Christian situation in 4 north-eastern states – 2018 - <https://opendoorsanalytical.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/05/Nigeria-Assessment-of-Christian-situation-in-4-north-eastern-states-June-2017.pdf>
- Further useful reports: Nigeria – Southern Kaduna – Short version 2018 - <https://opendoorsanalytical.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/01/Nigeria-Southern-Kaduna-Short-version-2018.pdf>
- Further useful reports: Nigeria – Southern Kaduna – Volume 1 – 2018 - <https://opendoorsanalytical.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/01/Nigeria-Southern-Kaduna-Volume-1-FINAL.pdf>
- Further useful reports: Nigeria – Southern Kaduna – Volume 2 (appendices) – 2018 - <https://opendoorsanalytical.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/01/Nigeria-Southern-Kaduna-Volume-2.pdf>
- Further useful reports: Nigeria – Benue State – Short version – 2017 - <https://opendoorsanalytical.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/10/Nigeria-Benue-State-Short-version-WWR-2017.pdf>
- Further useful reports: Nigeria – Benue State under the shadow of “herdsmen terrorism” (2014-2016) with update: January-August 2017 – 2017 - <https://opendoorsanalytical.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/11/Nigeria-Benue-State-2017-WWR.pdf>
- Further useful reports: Nigeria – Investigating common narratives of violent conflict in Nasarawa State – 2016 - <https://opendoorsanalytical.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/10/Nigeria-Investigating-common-narratives-of-violent-conflict-in-Nasarawa-State-2016.pdf>
- Further useful reports: Nigeria – Appraising the Buhari administration – 2016 - <https://opendoorsanalytical.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/10/Nigeria-Appraising-the-Buhari-administration-WWR.pdf>
- Further useful reports: Nigeria – Violent Conflict in Taraba State (2013 – 2015) – 2015 - <https://opendoorsanalytical.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/10/Violent-Conflict-in-Taraba-State-2013-2015.pdf>
- Further useful reports: Nigeria – Ethnic cleansing in the Middle Belt Region – 2015 - <https://opendoorsanalytical.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/10/Ethnic-cleansing-in-the-Middle-Belt-Region-of-Nigeria-2015.pdf>
- Further useful reports: Nigeria – Migration and Violent Conflict in Divided Societies – 2015 - <https://opendoorsanalytical.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/04/Migration-and-Violent-Conflict-in-Divided-Societies-March-2015.pdf>
- Further useful reports: Nigeria – Persecution or civil unrest? – 2013 - <https://opendoorsanalytical.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/04/Nigeria-Persecution-or-civil-unrest-2013.pdf>