

World
Watch
Research

Uganda: Full Country Dossier

March 2024



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Introduction

World Watch List 2024

Rank	Country	Private life	Family life	Community life	National life	Church life	Violence	Total Score WWL 2024	Total Score WWL 2023	Total Score WWL 2022	Total Score WWL 2021	Total Score WWL 2020
1	North Korea	16.7	16.7	16.7	16.7	16.7	12.8	96	98	96	94	94
2	Somalia	16.5	16.7	16.6	16.6	16.6	10.6	93	92	91	92	92
3	Libya	15.9	16.0	15.9	16.1	16.4	10.2	91	88	91	92	90
4	Eritrea	14.6	14.9	15.5	15.9	15.7	12.8	89	89	88	88	87
5	Yemen	16.7	16.7	16.7	16.7	16.7	5.9	89	89	88	87	85
6	Nigeria	13.5	13.9	14.5	14.9	14.4	16.7	88	88	87	85	80
7	Pakistan	13.2	13.9	15.0	15.1	13.1	16.7	87	86	87	88	88
8	Sudan	14.1	14.2	14.9	14.9	15.5	13.3	87	83	79	79	85
9	Iran	15.0	14.6	13.5	15.8	16.5	10.9	86	86	85	86	85
10	Afghanistan	15.7	15.9	15.2	16.3	16.6	4.6	84	84	98	94	93
11	India	12.2	12.6	13.3	14.8	13.2	16.5	83	82	82	83	83
12	Syria	13.4	14.3	13.9	14.3	14.2	11.1	81	80	78	81	82
13	Saudi Arabia	15.2	15.3	14.8	15.7	16.6	3.3	81	80	81	78	79
14	Mali	11.1	10.1	14.7	12.8	15.1	15.6	79	76	70	67	66
15	Algeria	14.4	14.1	11.5	14.0	15.6	9.8	79	73	71	70	73
16	Iraq	14.2	14.4	14.0	14.8	13.9	7.8	79	76	78	82	76
17	Myanmar	12.2	10.6	13.4	13.7	13.0	16.1	79	80	79	74	73
18	Maldives	15.6	15.5	13.6	16.0	16.4	0.9	78	77	77	77	78
19	China	13.0	10.0	12.8	14.6	16.0	11.1	78	77	76	74	70
20	Burkina Faso	11.7	9.7	13.2	11.5	13.8	15.6	75	71	68	67	66
21	Laos	11.6	10.6	13.2	14.3	14.0	11.3	75	68	69	71	72
22	Cuba	13.2	8.7	13.8	13.3	15.1	8.7	73	70	66	62	52
23	Mauritania	14.6	14.2	13.8	14.2	14.2	1.3	72	72	70	71	68
24	Morocco	13.2	13.8	11.7	12.8	14.4	5.4	71	69	69	67	66
25	Uzbekistan	14.6	12.7	13.9	12.6	15.5	1.7	71	71	71	71	73
26	Bangladesh	12.4	10.6	12.5	10.8	10.4	14.1	71	69	68	67	63
27	Niger	9.4	9.6	14.5	7.7	13.1	15.9	70	70	68	62	60
28	CAR	10.3	8.6	13.9	9.6	12.2	15.6	70	70	68	66	68
29	Turkmenistan	14.2	12.3	13.6	13.9	15.5	0.6	70	70	69	70	70
30	Nicaragua	12.1	7.6	13.2	13.2	14.1	9.6	70	65	56	51	41
31	Oman	14.3	14.0	10.6	13.3	14.0	3.1	69	65	66	63	62
32	Ethiopia	9.9	9.7	12.6	10.4	12.1	14.4	69	66	66	65	63
33	Tunisia	12.3	13.2	10.2	12.4	13.8	6.9	69	67	66	67	64
34	Colombia	11.1	8.6	12.9	11.3	10.4	14.1	68	71	68	67	62
35	Vietnam	11.3	9.4	12.4	13.8	14.2	7.2	68	70	71	72	72
36	Bhutan	13.1	12.1	12.4	14.1	14.3	2.2	68	66	67	64	61
37	Mexico	11.5	8.5	12.5	11.1	10.6	14.1	68	67	65	64	60
38	Egypt	12.5	13.7	11.4	11.9	10.9	7.8	68	68	71	75	76
39	Mozambique	9.3	8.5	13.9	8.4	12.5	15.0	68	68	65	63	43
40	Qatar	14.2	14.2	10.5	13.2	14.4	0.6	67	68	74	67	66
41	DRC	8.0	7.9	12.6	9.7	13.0	15.9	67	67	66	64	56
42	Indonesia	10.9	12.3	11.5	10.2	9.7	11.5	66	68	68	63	60
43	Cameroon	8.8	7.6	12.6	8.0	13.1	15.9	66	65	65	64	60
44	Brunei	15.0	14.7	10.0	10.8	14.1	1.3	66	65	64	64	63
45	Comoros	12.7	14.0	11.2	12.4	14.2	1.1	66	66	63	62	57
46	Tajikistan	13.8	12.6	12.3	12.9	13.4	0.6	66	66	65	66	65
47	Kazakhstan	13.3	11.8	12.1	12.8	14.3	1.1	65	65	64	64	64
48	Jordan	12.9	14.2	10.5	12.4	12.8	2.2	65	65	66	64	64
49	Malaysia	13.0	14.1	11.5	12.2	11.1	2.4	64	66	63	63	62
50	Turkey	13.0	11.5	11.6	13.2	11.4	3.1	64	66	65	69	63

Rank	Country	Private life	Family life	Community life	National life	Church life	Violence	Total Score WWL 2024	Total Score WWL 2023	Total Score WWL 2022	Total Score WWL 2021	Total Score WWL 2020
51	Kenya	10.3	9.2	11.4	8.0	11.5	12.4	63	64	63	62	61
52	Tanzania	9.3	10.8	10.3	8.6	8.7	14.4	62	63	61	58	55
53	Nepal	12.1	10.4	9.5	13.2	12.3	4.4	62	61	64	66	64
54	Kuwait	13.1	13.6	9.4	12.0	12.2	0.9	61	64	64	63	62
55	Djibouti	12.3	12.6	12.7	10.1	12.3	1.1	61	60	59	56	56
56	Chad	11.6	8.2	10.2	10.2	10.3	10.6	61	58	55	53	56
57	UAE	13.3	13.4	9.5	11.3	12.8	0.7	61	62	62	62	60
58	Sri Lanka	12.9	9.2	10.8	11.5	9.7	5.9	60	57	63	62	65
59	Azerbaijan	13.2	9.9	9.6	11.9	13.6	1.7	60	59	60	56	57
60	Palestinian Territories	13.1	13.3	9.7	10.7	12.1	0.9	60	60	59	58	60
61	Kyrgyzstan	13.2	10.3	11.3	10.5	12.2	1.3	59	59	58	58	57
62	Russian Federation	12.7	7.7	10.6	12.8	12.9	1.7	58	57	56	57	60
63	Rwanda	9.4	7.7	9.0	10.4	11.7	9.4	58	57	50	42	42
64	Burundi	7.6	7.8	9.4	9.8	9.7	12.8	57	55	52	48	48
65	Bahrain	12.0	13.2	8.6	11.3	8.5	1.1	55	55	57	56	55
66	Honduras	7.9	4.7	12.2	7.3	9.9	12.6	55	53	48	46	39
67	Venezuela	6.0	4.4	11.1	10.0	10.8	10.7	53	56	51	39	42
68	Togo	9.2	6.7	9.3	7.1	11.0	8.9	52	49	44	43	41
69	Guinea	10.3	7.5	8.3	8.3	10.5	7.2	52	48	43	47	45
70	Uganda	8.1	5.0	7.4	6.7	8.8	15.9	52	51	48	47	48
71	Angola	6.8	6.7	8.1	11.5	11.4	7.2	52	52	51	46	43
72	Lebanon	11.0	10.2	7.0	6.1	6.6	7.2	48	40	35	34	35
73	Gambia	8.3	8.2	8.9	8.8	8.9	3.7	47	44	44	43	43
74	South Sudan	5.7	4.4	7.0	6.3	7.6	15.6	46	46	43	43	44
75	Belarus	9.6	3.8	5.8	9.7	13.3	3.3	46	43	33	30	28
76	Ivory Coast	12.0	6.5	8.7	5.9	8.0	3.3	44	44	42	42	42
77	Ukraine	5.5	4.8	8.0	11.6	11.6	2.8	44	37	37	34	33
78	Israel	9.8	8.6	5.8	6.3	6.9	6.7	44	38	41	40	38

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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 2024 reporting period was 1 October 2022 - 30 September 2023.
- 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 can be found on the research pages of the Open Doors website: <https://www.opendoors.org/en-US/research-reports/wwl-documentation/> and on the Open Doors Analytical website (password: freedom): <https://opendoorsanalytical.org/world-watch-list-documentation/>.

WWL 2024 Situation in brief / Uganda

Brief country details

Uganda: Population (UN estimate for 2023)	Christians	Chr%
49,701,000	41,944,000	84.4

Data source: Todd M. Johnson and Gina A. Zurlo, eds., *World Christian Database* (Leiden/Boston: Brill, accessed March 2023)

Map of country



Uganda: World Watch List	Points	WWL Rank
WWL 2024	52	70
WWL 2023	51	69
WWL 2022	48	69
WWL 2021	47	65
WWL 2020	48	62

Dominant persecution engines and drivers

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

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

Brief description of the persecution situation

In parts of Uganda, especially in the eastern region where the Muslim community makes up the majority, the hostility faced by Christians, particularly by converts from Islam, is severe. Christians in these areas are frequently targeted for bullying and harassment that can escalate to severe consequences like community expulsion, physical assaults, and in extreme cases, even killings. The Allied Democratic Forces (ADF), a radical Islamic group, further exacerbate this volatile environment. Their brutal attacks, such as the one on a Christian boarding school in June 2023, have instilled widespread fear and trauma, undermining the security of Christians and other religious minorities. The ADF's activities, coupled with a worrying trend of radicalization among Ugandan Muslim youth, heighten the religious divide and intensify the intimidation and threats faced by Christians, particularly those who have converted from Islam.

Specific examples of violations of rights in the reporting period

- In Eastern Uganda, Christians face frequent attacks by Muslim mobs.
- Converts from Islam to Christianity face ostracism, expulsion, or house arrest from their families and local community.
- [16 June 2023](#): Over 40 Christians were killed at a Christian boarding school on the border to DRC (BBC News, 18 June 2023).

External Links - Situation in brief

- Specific examples of violations of rights in the reporting period: 16 June 2023 - <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-africa-65945814>

WWL 2024: Keys to understanding / Uganda

Links for general background information

Name	Quote Reference	Link	Last accessed on
Amnesty International 2022/23 Uganda report	AI Uganda 2022	https://www.amnesty.org/en/location/africa/east-africa-the-horn-and-great-lakes/uganda/report-uganda/	15 September 2023
BBC News Uganda profile - updated 26 April 2023	BBC Uganda profile	https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-africa-14107906	15 September 2023
Bertelsmann Transformation Index Uganda report 2022	BTI Uganda Report 2022	https://bti-project.org/en/reports/country-report/UGA	15 September 2023
Crisis24 Uganda report (Garda World)	Crisis24 Uganda report	https://crisis24.garda.com/insights-intelligence/intelligence/country-reports/uganda	15 September 2023
Economist Intelligence Unit 2023 Uganda summary	EIU 2023 Uganda summary	https://country.eiu.com/uganda	15 September 2023
FFP's Fragile States Index 2023 Uganda	FSI 2023 Uganda	https://fragilestatesindex.org/country-data/	15 September 2023
Freedom House's 2023 Democracy index – covering 29 countries (Uganda not included)	Democracy Index 2023	https://freedomhouse.org/countries/nations-transit/scores	
Freedom House's 2023 Global Freedom index – Uganda	Global Freedom Index 2023 Uganda	https://freedomhouse.org/country/uganda/freedom-world/2023	15 September 2023
Freedom House's Freedom on the Net 2022 report – Uganda	Freedom on the Net 2022 Uganda	https://freedomhouse.org/country/uganda/freedom-net/2022	15 September 2023
Georgetown's Women, Peace and Security Index 2021/2022 – Uganda	GIWPS 2021 Uganda	https://giwps.georgetown.edu/country/uganda/	15 September 2023
Girls Not Brides Uganda report	Girls Not Brides Uganda	https://www.girlsnotbrides.org/learning-resources/child-marriage-atlas/regions-and-countries/uganda/	15 September 2023
Human Rights Watch World Report 2023 Uganda country chapter	HRW 2023 Uganda country chapter	https://www.hrw.org/world-report/2023/country-chapters/uganda	15 September 2023
Internet World Stats 2023 Uganda	IWS 2023 Uganda	https://www.internetworldstats.com/africa.htm#ug	15 September 2023
RSF's 2023 World Press Freedom Index – Uganda	World Press Freedom 2023 Uganda	https://rsf.org/en/uganda	15 September 2023
Transparency International's 2022 Corruption Perceptions Index – Uganda	CPI 2022 Uganda	https://www.transparency.org/en/cpi/2022/index/uga	15 September 2023
UNDP Human Development Report Uganda - data updates as of 8 September 2022	UNDP HDR Uganda	https://hdr.undp.org/data-center/specific-country-data/#/countries/UGA	15 September 2023
US State Department's 2022 International Religious Freedom Report Uganda	IRFR 2022 Uganda	https://www.state.gov/reports/2022-report-on-international-religious-freedom/uganda/	15 September 2023
USCIRF 2023 country reports – covering 17 CPC / 11 SWL (Uganda not included)	USCIRF 2023	https://www.uscirf.gov/countries	
World Bank Macro Poverty Outlook Uganda - April 2023	Macro Poverty Outlook 2023 Uganda	https://thedocs.worldbank.org/en/doc/bae48ff2fec5a869546775b3f010735-0500062021/related/mpo-uga.pdf	15 September 2023
World Bank Uganda data - 2021	World Bank Uganda profile	https://databank.worldbank.org/views/reports/reportwidget.aspx?Report_Name=CountryProfileId=b450fd57tbar=ydd=yinf=nzm=ncountry=UGA	15 September 2023
World Bank Uganda overview – updated 27 September 2023	World Bank country overview	https://www.worldbank.org/en/country/uganda/overview	27 March 2024
World Factbook Uganda - updated 12 September 2023	World Factbook Uganda	https://www.cia.gov/the-world-factbook/countries/uganda/	15 September 2023

Recent history

Uganda's path since its independence in October 1962 has been marked by a series of political upheavals, from the abolition of traditional kingdoms by Milton Obote in 1967 to the notorious regime of General Idi Amin in the 1970s. Amin's era was marked by severe human rights abuses, including mass killings, particularly targeting the Acholi and Lango ethnic groups. The Tanzanian invasion in 1979 ousted Amin, paving the way for Obote's return to power. However, Obote was again overthrown in 1985.

In 1986, Yoweri Museveni, the leader of the National Resistance Army (NRA), took control and has remained in power for over three decades. While Museveni has brought some semblance of stability, his tenure has not been without opposition, notably from the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) in the north, which caused massive civilian displacement in its fight against the government. Museveni has managed to remain president through successive elections, most recently defeating Bobi Wine in January 2021. His administration has also leveraged COVID-19 restrictions to suppress opposition activities, further consolidating his grip on power.

In recent years, Uganda has faced a growing threat from radical Islamic groups, notably the Allied Democratic Forces (ADF), which have targeted Christians and other minority groups. The ADF is a potent example of rising radicalism, evidenced by attacks such as the one on the Mpondwe-Lhubiriha secondary school in June 2023 where over 40 Christians were killed. Additionally, Islamic radicalism is seeping into social fabric, particularly in eastern Uganda where Christian communities regularly face mob attacks and converts from Islam face being ostracized, expelled,

or put under house arrest by their families.

Political and legal landscape

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

According to Human Rights Watch (HRW 2023 Uganda country chapter):

- **Suppression of human rights:** In Uganda, authorities continue to suppress human rights, targeting opposition leaders, journalists, and civil society organizations. Security forces, particularly the Uganda People's Defence Force (UPDF) and police, have been involved in various rights violations, including killing civilians in disarmament operations and suppressing freedom of expression and assembly. The government has particularly cracked down on journalists and critics, using legal instruments such as the amended 2011 Computer Misuse Act to further limit online freedom of speech. Actions against civil society groups and opposition figures like Kizza Besigye have been persistent, including arbitrary arrests and excessive bail demands.
- **Military actions:** International activities of the UPDF have also raised concerns, notably their joint operations with the Congolese army against the Allied Democratic Forces (ADF) rebel group. These military actions come in the wake of ADF-perpetrated bombings in Uganda. Meanwhile, land disputes have led to violent clashes, resulting in fatalities and forced evictions, most notably in the northern village of Apaa. This pattern of human rights abuses and lack of accountability reveals a concerning trajectory for the nation as it grapples with domestic and regional challenges.

As stated by [International Crisis Group](#) (ICG, Uganda summary 2023):

- "President Yoweri Museveni's growing authoritarianism and the country's weak institutions are multiplying Uganda's challenges. Conflict risks at the local level are rising due to uncertain political succession, economic stagnation, a youth bulge and an influx of refugees from South Sudan. The state's repression of political opposition and its increasing reliance on security responses to political problems is fostering discontent in politically and economically marginalized communities."

Rating the country as 'not free' with a score of 35/100, Freedom House reported (Freedom in the World 2023 Uganda):

- **The 2021 elections:** These were fraught with allegations of unfairness, including ballot stuffing and selective enforcement of COVID-19 restrictions to disadvantage the opposition. Opposition parties and their leaders face harassment, arrests, and limitations that hinder their ability to compete effectively. The Electoral Commission is widely perceived as favor-

ing the ruling party, thereby undermining public trust in elections. The military has a noticeable presence in political matters, further skewing the balance of power. While there are quotas for women and some special interest groups, these often serve more as token gestures than genuine efforts to empower marginalized communities.

- **Freedom of expression:** This is compromised as journalists face harassment for criticizing the government, although recent years have shown slight improvement. Religious freedom is generally respected, but clerics critical of the government face intimidation. Academic freedom is hampered by government surveillance and restrictions. Individuals feel they cannot express their political views freely for fear of repercussions, including surveillance. Civic freedoms are also under duress, as NGOs face legal hurdles and intimidation, particularly those dealing with human rights and governance. The right to assemble is curtailed, especially for political opposition, and trade unions experience government interference.

Religious landscape

Uganda: Religious context	Number of adherents	%
Christians	41,944,000	84.4
Muslim	6,004,000	12.1
Hindu	399,000	0.8
Buddhist	2,900	0.0
Ethno-religionist	959,000	1.9
Jewish	2,000	0.0
Bahai	153,000	0.3
Atheist	19,200	0.0
Agnostic	203,000	0.4
Other	13,700	0.0
<i>OTHER includes Chinese folk, New religionist, Sikh, Spiritist, Taoist, Confucianist, Jain, Shintoist, Zoroastrian.</i>		

Data source: Todd M. Johnson and Gina A. Zurlo, eds., *World Christian Database* (Leiden/Boston: Brill, accessed March 2023)

Uganda is a Christian majority country. The reliability of religious statistics is disputed and Muslim leaders argue that their presence is much higher than the WCD 2023 estimate of 12.1%. According to the US State Department (IRFR 2022 Uganda) which cites the 2014 Ugandan government census:

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

Economic landscape

According to World Bank's 2023 Macro Poverty Outlook Uganda:

- GDP growth:** Uganda's economy is expected to rebound with a projected GDP growth of 5.7% for the fiscal year running from July 2022 to June 2023, largely due to a post-COVID-19 recovery in the services and industrial sectors, which has offset declines in agriculture caused by adverse weather conditions. An increase in investments and employment has further buoyed domestic demand, although this uptick preceded a rise in lending rates resulting from a tighter monetary policy initiated in June 2022. While the economy has shown resilience despite multiple shocks in the past year, challenges such as a lagging agricultural sector and the implications of a stricter monetary policy remain. In the span of 2011 to 2022, Uganda experienced modest real GDP per capita growth of just 1.0% per year, which has been insufficient to significantly elevate living standards in the context of rapid population growth. Several factors have contributed to this subdued economic performance, including recurring droughts and other external shocks like global economic downturns. Additionally, a less supportive external environment, marked by disruptions in global trade and financial flows, coupled with a weakening domestic policy and institutional framework, have further impeded robust economic growth.
- Food security:** More than half of the population in Uganda remains moderately food insecure, and an alarming 15% are severely food insecure. Inflation has particularly hit the poorest households in rural areas, making it difficult for them to access or purchase food in the quantities they need. This widespread food insecurity presents a significant challenge for the country, further exacerbating inequalities and vulnerabilities among the populace.
- Inflation:** Beginning in November 2022, inflation in Uganda started to subside due to a combination of lower international commodity prices and the Bank of Uganda's (BoU) tight monetary policy. As of February 2023, BoU has maintained its policy rate at 10%, which is 350 basis points higher than it was a year ago, marking the fourth consecutive month of this stance. As a result, both annual headline and core inflation rates have decreased to 9.2% and 7.8%, respectively. This decline was further aided by a reduction in energy and utilities prices.
- Economic outlook:** "The displacement of labor and an uncertain post-election period will slow the recovery from the ongoing COVID-19 crisis, with real GDP growth expected to pick up in FY22–23. This rebound, averaging 5.6 percent in FY22–23, is predicated on a pick-up in private consumption and investment, supported by higher growth in exports as the global economy recovers. ... [P]ublic debt is likely to exceed 51 percent of GDP by 2023."

Future expectations

- Economic growth:** Uganda's economic growth is poised to accelerate above 6% annually in the medium term. This is driven by eased monetary policies and an emphasis on revenue collection to cut the deficit. The country's oil exports, alongside promotion of tourism and diversification in agriculture, will support this growth. However, global economic slowdown, financial disruptions, and volatile weather conditions pose significant risks.
- Poverty reduction:** Accelerated growth is expected to reduce poverty levels from 41.4% in 2023 to around 39% by 2025. However, the rate of poverty reduction will be closely tied to

food accessibility and the impact of environmental shocks, as households have limited adaptive capacities.

- **Inflation and monetary policy:** Inflation expectations are generally low, with core inflation projected to return to the 5% target by December 2023. Various factors like stabilized energy prices and improved global supply chains contribute to this. Despite this, the threat of drought could keep food prices high and headline inflation above 6%. The Bank of Uganda (BoU) is likely to cautiously ease monetary policy to support economic recovery.
- **Risks and uncertainties:** Global economic conditions, disruptions in financial markets, and environmental factors like volatile weather remain as downside risks. These could potentially offset gains in economic growth, poverty reduction and inflation stabilization.

Social and cultural landscape

According to the World Factbook Uganda and UNDP Human Development Report Uganda:

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

According to the [UNHCR Refugee Statistics December 2023](#) published on 9 January 2024:

- **Refugees:** As of 31 December 2023, the total number of refugees and asylum seekers was:
Individuals: 1,615,162
Households: 401,934
The majority come from South Sudan (923,658) and DR Congo (505,738).

Technological landscape

According to Internet World Stats (IWS 2023 Uganda):

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

Digital adoption and use in Uganda in January 2024, as presented by [DataReportal](#) (Digital 2024: Uganda, 23 February 2024):

- "There were 13.30 million internet users in Uganda at the start of 2024, when internet

penetration stood at 27.0 percent."

- "Uganda was home to 2.60 million social media users in January 2024, equating to 5.3 percent of the total population."
- "A total of 33.34 million cellular mobile connections were active in Uganda in early 2024, with this figure equivalent to 67.7 percent of the total population."

According to Freedom House's Freedom on the Net 2023 report:

- (Overview): "Internet freedom in Uganda improved slightly during the coverage period. The judiciary was responsible for several positive developments, as the Constitutional Court overturned a law penalizing 'offensive communication', and another court dismissed charges against digital journalists who were being prosecuted for allegedly cyberstalking the president. Against this backdrop, however, the government passed amendments to the Computer Misuse Act punishing the sharing of information deemed to be malicious or 'unsolicited'. The amendment's unclear definitions have led to fears among rights groups that the provisions will be abused by the government to curb online dissent. Self-censorship is increasingly common online Activists who criticize the president and his family continue to face arrest in retaliation for their online activities. Recent evidence further implicated Ugandan authorities in the use of commercial surveillance tools against journalists and opposition leaders."
- (A2): "Only 26 percent of Ugandans lived in urban areas as of 2021. Access to electricity is limited in rural areas, resulting in a significant urban-rural divide in internet access. There is also a notable disparity in access between men and women: the 2022 edition of the Inclusive Internet Index reported a 23.5 percent gender gap, representing a 10 percentage point increase from the 2021 report."

Government action in the recent past

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

According to Human Rights Watch ([HRW 2022 Uganda country chapter](#)):

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

Security situation

Decline of the LRA

The Lord's Resistance Army (LRA), once notorious for its brutal tactics, has diminished in influence, especially in northern Uganda. A few remnants are now confined to the Central African Republic's forests, and the Ugandan Army terminated its operations against the group in 2017, claiming they no longer pose a significant threat. Originating as the Holy Spirit Mobile Forces led by Alice Auma Lakwena in the 1980s, the group transformed into the LRA in 1992. Since then, it sought to overthrow President Museveni's government. Although its claimed objective has been to set up Biblical rule, a list of crimes including forced marriages, child soldiering and sexual enslavement led to the charging of five of its leaders by the International Criminal Court (ICC). Only Dominic Ongwen has been captured and convicted as of 2021, receiving a 25-year sentence for war crimes and crimes against humanity. Some ex-LRA commanders have controversially been integrated into the Ugandan armed forces without investigation into past crimes.

The rise of Islamist forces such as ADF (Islamic State group regional affiliate)

In contrast to the LRA, violent Islamic militants like the 'Allied Democratic Forces - National Army for the Liberation of Uganda' (ADF-NALU) and the Islamic State group (IS) have escalated security concerns. ADF-NALU, formed in 1995, aims to establish an Islamic state in Uganda and has been a recurrent source of violence. Its founder, Jamil Mukulu, was arrested in 2015 and faces multiple charges, including for terrorism. ADF-NALU operatives, trained in North Kivu (DRC), continue to infiltrate Uganda. ADF-NALU has pledged allegiance to the Islamic State. Meanwhile, IS has also claimed responsibility for various attacks.

A recent major attack occurred on 17 June 2023. As reported by [BBC News](#), an assault on the Lhubiriha secondary school in Mpondwe (western Uganda) was carried out by five militants around 23:30 local time and killed nearly 40 pupils. They set fire to dormitories and used machetes in the attack. Responsibility was attributed to IS affiliate ADF, operating from the DRC for two decades. The attack included throwing a bomb into a dormitory, resulting in numerous casualties. Survivors and the local community expressed criticism of the authorities for their lack of preparedness, despite prior intelligence of militant activity.

Trends analysis

1) Presidential rule and religious freedom

Uganda has been under the rule of the same President for over 35 years, and given the amended Constitution, it appears he will remain in power using similar tactics as before. This includes the suppression of political dissent through arrests and the curtailment of freedoms such as expression and assembly. In such a political climate, Christian communities in Uganda could face heightened challenges in practicing their faith without governmental interference.

2) Vulnerability of Christians in Eastern Uganda

The international community has shown limited will to press Uganda into making human rights reforms, particularly concerning the freedom and safety of Christians. The Ugandan government similarly lacks initiative to protect Christian communities, especially in eastern Uganda where Islamic militancy is rising. As a result, the Christian community in this region remains exposed to violence and discrimination, and there are no signs that government protection is forthcoming.

3) The rise of ADF

The Allied Democratic Forces (ADF) have ramped up activities within Uganda, deploying trained fighters to incite terror among the populace. With their operational base strengthening in DRC's forested regions, the ADF is likely to pose an even greater threat and has already been using explosives in Uganda, causing loss of life and property. This directly endangers Christian communities, who are among their targets.

4) Regional instability spilling over from DRC

The unstable situation in neighboring DRC is adding another layer of complication to Uganda's internal security dynamics. While Uganda supports the DRC government, Rwanda is reportedly backing the M23 rebel groups. With ADF also operating out of DRC, if the current security conditions persist, it could escalate into a larger regional conflict. This would have severe consequences not just for Uganda but also for Christian communities across the region, who could become inadvertent victims in this complex geopolitical landscape. The problem is even more pronounced as issues in South Sudan and Sudan affect Uganda too.

External Links - Keys to understanding

- Political and legal landscape: International Crisis Group - <https://www.crisisgroup.org/africa/great-lakes/uganda>
- Social and cultural landscape: UNHCR Refugee Statistics December 2023 - <https://data.unhcr.org/en/documents/details/105937>
- Technological landscape: DataReportal - <https://datareportal.com/reports/digital-2024-uganda>
- Technological landscape: close collaboration - <https://www.dw.com/en/huawei-africa-and-the-global-reach-of-surveillance-technology/a-50398869>
- Technological landscape: monitor - <https://www.thetimes.co.uk/article/huawei-helped-african-regimes-to-monitor-rivals-2bfmxm9v9>
- Technological landscape: HRW 2022 Uganda country chapter - <https://www.hrw.org/world-report/2022/country-chapters/uganda>
- Security situation: BBC News - <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-65937484>

WWL 2024: Church information / Uganda

Christian origins

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

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

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

Church spectrum today

Uganda: Church networks	Christians	%
Orthodox	34,200	0.1
Catholic	20,983,000	50.0
Protestant	20,940,000	49.9
Independent	1,274,000	3.0
Unaffiliated	645,000	1.5
Doubly-affiliated Christians	-1,932,000	-4.6
Total	41,944,200	100.0
<i>(Any deviation from the total number of Christians stated above is due to the rounding of decimals)</i>		
Evangelical movement	9,571,000	22.8
Renewalist movement	10,988,000	26.2

Data source: Todd M. Johnson and Gina A. Zurlo, eds., *World Christian Database* (Leiden/Boston: Brill, accessed March 2023)

Orthodox: Eastern (Chalcedonian), Oriental (Pre-Chalcedonian, Non-Chalcedonian, Monophysite), Nestorian (Assyrian), and non-historical Orthodox. **Roman Catholics:** All Christians in communion with the Church of Rome. **Protestants:** Christians in churches originating in or in communion with the Western world's 16th-century Protestant Reformation. Includes Anglicans, Lutherans and Baptists (any of whom may be Charismatic) and denominational Pentecostals, but not Independent traditions such as Independent Baptists nor independent Charismatics. **Independents:** Christians who do not identify with the major Christian traditions (Orthodox, Roman Catholic, Protestant). **Unaffiliated Christians:** Persons professing publicly to be Christians but who are not affiliated to churches. **Doubly-affiliated Christians:** Persons affiliated to or claimed by 2 denominations at once. **Evangelical movement:** Churches, denominations, and individuals who identify themselves as evangelicals by membership in denominations linked to evangelical alliances (e.g., World Evangelical Alliance) or by self-identification in polls. **Renewalist movement:** Church members involved in Pentecostal/Charismatic renewal.

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

Areas where Christians face most difficulties

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

Christian communities and how they are affected

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

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

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

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

External Links - Church information

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

WWL 2024: Persecution Dynamics / Uganda

Reporting period

1 October 2022 - 30 September 2023

Position on the World Watch List

Uganda: World Watch List	Points	WWL Rank
WWL 2024	52	70
WWL 2023	51	69
WWL 2022	48	69
WWL 2021	47	65
WWL 2020	48	62

Uganda's overall score rose due to an increase in violence from 11.7 to 14.8 points, which is extremely high especially considering the fact that Uganda is a Christian majority country. The influence of the radical Islamic group, ADF, is affecting the attitude of the Muslim minority of 12%, especially Muslim religious leaders. Christians particularly face difficulties in the eastern part of the country where radical Muslims are known to attack churches and Christians. Most converts have to endure many forms of persecution orchestrated by family members and community elders/leaders. Government officials are at times complicit in acts of persecution or are the main perpetrators. Sometimes, they do not investigate and bring perpetrators to justice. Christians who speak out against injustice are often targeted by government officials.

Persecution engines

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

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

Islamic oppression (Strong)

Radical Islam remains the foremost driver of religious persecution in Uganda, especially as Islamic communities are aggressively working to expand their influence and reach. Even though Uganda identifies as a secular state, its membership in the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) since the 1970s has bolstered the Muslim presence, primarily in eastern Uganda. Areas like Iganga District and Busoga have the highest concentration of Muslims, and other significant communities exist in towns such as Mbale, Kasese, Arua, Yumbe, Kampala, and Jinja.

This form of oppression manifests in two main ways:

(i) Escalation of radical Islamic ideologies is primarily observed in the eastern parts of the country. Groups like the Tabliqs, who consider themselves as purveyors of a more rigorous version of Islam, are notably active in regions like Mbale, Kasese, and Arua/Yumbe. Experts note that these groups are making concerted efforts to convert the eastern population to their form of Islam.

(ii) ADF-NALU's activities, occasionally referred to as Muslim Defense International (MDI), have had the effect of emboldening radical Muslim elements within Uganda.

Dictatorial paranoia (Medium)

President Yoweri Museveni, in office since 1986, has manipulated Uganda's constitutional norms to extend his rule. Initially, in 2005, he influenced Parliament to eradicate term limits from the 1995 Constitution, allowing him to run for additional terms. In a similar maneuver in 2018, he succeeded in abolishing the presidential age limit, previously set at 75, thereby clearing the path for his sixth-term candidacy in the January 2021 elections. Museveni's long-standing rule has been marked by the suppression of dissent, including the stifling of church leaders Christians and who dare to challenge him.

Drivers of persecution

Uganda: Drivers of persecution	IO	RN	ERH	CO	CDP	CPCO	SI	DPA	OCC
	STRONG			WEAK				MEDIUM	WEAK
Government officials								Medium	Weak
Non-Christian religious leaders	Medium			Weak					
Violent religious groups	Strong								
Citizens (people from the broader society), including mobs	Strong								
One's own (extended) family	Strong								
Political parties								Weak	
Revolutionaries or paramilitary groups									Weak

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

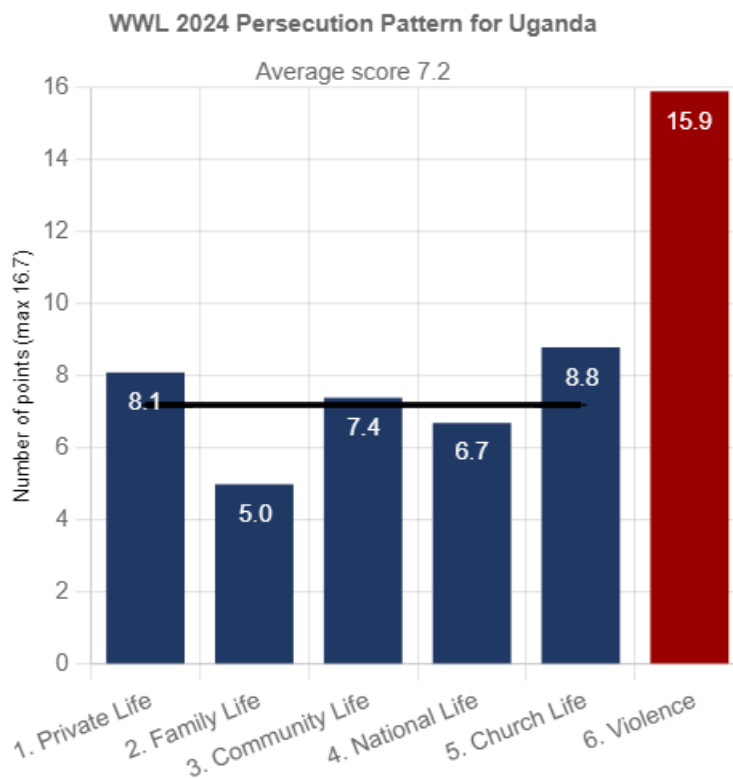
Drivers of Islamic oppression

- **Family (Strong):** In regions with a strong Muslim presence, familial and community pressures act as significant catalysts for Islamic oppression. Those who convert away from Islam often face violent repercussions from their own families.
- **Citizens (Strong):** In the eastern parts of Uganda, local residents are often the perpetrators targeting Christian converts. Possession of Christian materials or openly discussing one's Christian faith can lead to extreme responses, ranging from social ostracization to physical assaults and, in some instances, death. Harassment is particularly rife against Christians with a Muslim background.
- **Violent Religious Groups (Strong):** Jihadist organizations based in the DRC have ambitions of creating a caliphate in Uganda and have launched attacks every year. There are also indications that local Islamic clerics are aiding in recruitment efforts.
- **Non-Christian Religious Leaders (Medium):** Spiritual leaders like Imams and Sheiks in the eastern regions of Uganda often contribute to the animosity against Christians. Many either incite violence against converts during their sermons or spread messages that foster religious hate.

Drivers of Dictatorial paranoia

- **Government officials (Medium):** This form of oppression is chiefly fueled by government actors who either participate in or condone acts of persecution. These officials frequently neglect to carry out thorough investigations or bring the culprits to justice. Christians who are vocal about the government's injustices often find themselves in the crosshairs of such officials.

The Persecution pattern



The WWL 2024 Persecution pattern for Uganda shows:

- The average pressure on Christians in Uganda is at a level of 7.2 points, a very slight decrease from 7.3 points in WWL 2023.
- The *Church sphere* scored highest with 8.8 points, followed by the *Private sphere* scoring 8.1 points. Converts in the eastern part of the country have been struggling to live their lives according to their Christian faith particularly due to harassment and shunning from their families.
- The score for violence targeting Christians is 15.9 points, an increase of over one point (14.8 points in WWL 2023). This is extremely high, especially considering the fact that Uganda is a Christian majority country.

Pressure in the 5 spheres of life

In each of the five spheres of life discussed below, four questions have been selected from the WWL 2024 questionnaire for brief commentary and explanation. The selection usually (but not always) reflects the highest scoring elements. In some cases, an additional paragraph per sphere is included to give further information deemed important. (To see how individual questions are scored on a scale of 0-4 points, please see the “WWL Scoring example” in the WWL Methodology, available at: <https://opendoorsanalytical.org/world-watch-list-documentation/>, password: freedom).

Pressure in Block 1 / Private sphere

Block 1.1: Conversion has been opposed, forbidden, or punishable, including conversion from one type of Christianity to another. (2.50 points)

Conversion in Uganda, particularly in the eastern regions and areas with a Muslim majority, is a highly contentious and dangerous matter, including physical attacks and fatalities. The intensity of these challenges varies across regions, underlining the importance of a nuanced understanding of the risks associated with conversion.

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

In Uganda, Christians, especially converts, face risks when engaging in individual acts of worship such as prayer and Bible reading. These activities can be particularly dangerous within family settings and communities where their faith is not the majority or is actively opposed.

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

The private ownership of Christian materials is barely possible for converts. Within their families, converts frequently face targeted opposition and risk ostracization if found possessing a Bible or other Christian materials.

Block 1.4: It has been risky for Christians to reveal their faith in written forms of personal expression (including expressions in blogs and Facebook etc.). (2.25 points)

In Uganda, revealing one's Christian faith on social media is risky, especially for converts. This concern leads many to use pseudonyms and to self-censor, in order to minimize the personal risks associated with displaying overt Christian content, which could have serious repercussions.

Pressure in Block 2 / Family sphere

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

Particularly in regions where Christians are a minority, Christian schoolchildren often face pressure to attend classes within the educational system which reject Christian faith. This situation poses challenges for Christian families trying to raise their children according to their faith.

Block 2.12: Christian spouses of non-Christians have been excluded from the right or opportunity to claim custody of the children in divorce cases. (2.25 points)

In Uganda, Christian spouses, especially when involved in divorce cases with non-Christian partners, often face exclusion from the right or opportunity to claim custody of their children. This issue highlights the complex dynamics at play in legal and societal contexts, particularly in regions where Christians are in the minority.

Block 2.11: Spouses of converts have been put under pressure (successfully or unsuccessfully) by others to divorce. (2.00 points)

In Uganda, spouses of individuals who have converted to Christianity often experience pressure from others, including family and community members, to divorce their partner. This pressure, stemming from the convert's change in religious belief, can lead to complex marital challenges.

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

In Uganda, Christians, especially converts, face difficulties in gathering for wedding celebrations. Such gatherings can create problems within their community and aspects of the celebrations - like singing loudly - can exacerbate these issues, drawing unwanted attention and potentially leading to conflict.

Pressure in Block 3 / Community sphere

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

In Uganda, particularly in areas with a Muslim majority, Christians experience harassment and threats for not following Islamic dress codes. Converts are at risk of being ostracized from their homes and have difficulties raising their children with Christian beliefs. In schools, Christian children often face bullying due to their faith. Near the DRC border, the threat to Christians, including potential abductions and violence, is more acute.

Block 3.2: Christians have been monitored by their local communities or by private groups (this includes reporting to police, being shadowed, telephone lines listened to, emails read/censored, etc.). (2.75 points)

In Uganda, Christians, particularly in the eastern parts and other Muslim-dominated areas, are closely watched by their local communities. This surveillance can involve reports being made to the police. Such intense scrutiny significantly affects Christians' daily lives, emphasizing the challenges they face within their communities.

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

Particularly in Muslim-dominated areas and places where Christians are a minority, it is common for them to be hindered in accessing essential community resources and, in some instances, Christians have even been chased away from their own farms.

Block 3.6: Christians have been hindered in participating in communal institutions, forums, etc., for faith-related reasons. (2.50 points)

Christians in regions dominated by Muslims or indigenous beliefs face significant challenges in communal participation. Especially in eastern areas, outspoken Christians often encounter difficulties. Some government officials also participate in excluding Christians from communal

institutions. This exclusion from community institutions is particularly impactful where many social services are delivered through these local structures.

Pressure in Block 4 / National sphere

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

Christians face obstacles in publicly expressing their views, particularly in criticism of government actions. The government's repressive stance means that even when Christian groups speak out on issues that are evident and demanded by their convictions, they encounter significant resistance.

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

Christians in Uganda often face discrimination when dealing with authorities. This discrimination is intertwined with complex dynamics, such as governmental favoritism and Islamic oppression. Additionally, Christians frequently encounter issues related to bribery, and when they refuse to participate in such practices, they are not treated fairly by the authorities. Outspoken Christians who openly discuss these challenges or criticize the government can face retribution, further emphasizing the obstacles they encounter in interactions with various levels of authority.

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

Christian civil society organizations face the risk of having their registrations and licenses suspended and their leaders arrested if they engage in activities that, while legally permissible, are perceived as not aligning with the government's interests. This adds an additional layer of complexity and risk for these organizations, as they have to navigate an environment where legally permissible activity can still lead to serious consequences if deemed unfavorable by the government. This situation significantly impacts their ability to operate freely and effectively within the country.

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

The equal treatment of Christians in legal proceedings often varies based on their perceived support for the government. Those considered government supporters tend to receive more favorable treatment compared to those who are not. Additionally, in Muslim-dominated areas, it has become apparent that Christians often do not receive fair treatment in the judicial system. This disparity is influenced by regional religious dynamics, where Christians in these areas face systemic biases that affect the fairness of their legal proceedings.

Pressure in Block 5 / Church sphere

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

In Uganda, speaking out against instigators of persecution is highly risky for churches and Christian organizations. They can face significant dangers, including potential repercussions from government officials or influential community leaders.

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

Government officials often infiltrate church gatherings by sending in their groups or even directly monitoring those who attend church services. These actions are part of a broader pattern of interference with church operations, impacting their ability to conduct activities freely.

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

Churches face considerable challenges in organizing Christian activities outside their buildings. Obtaining government permission for such events is often time-consuming and difficult, as authorities are reluctant to grant approval. This issue is particularly acute in the eastern part of the country and in areas bordering the DRC, where conducting outdoor Christian activities can attract potential attacks.

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

In Uganda, there is significant government interference in the activities of Christian churches, particularly concerning the selection and training of church leaders. The government imposes various criteria, such as age and academic qualifications, on the appointment of religious leaders, which has raised concerns about discrimination and violations of religious freedom. This intervention extends to many important church affairs, indicating a substantial level of control and influence by the state over Christian 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 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. 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 WWL chooses to be cautious because the real number is uncertain.

Uganda: Violence scores per Block 6 question in questionnaire	WWL 2024	WWL 2023
6.1 How many Christians have been killed for faith-related reasons (including state sanctioned executions)?	55	10 *
6.2 How many churches or public Christian properties (schools, hospitals, cemeteries, etc.) have been attacked, damaged, bombed, looted, destroyed, burned down, closed or confiscated for faith-related reasons?	12	10 *
6.3 How many Christians have been detained for faith-related reasons?	7	8
6.4 How many Christians have been sentenced to jail, labor camp, sent to psychiatric hospital as punishment, or similar things for faith-related reasons?	0	0
6.5 How many Christians have been abducted for faith-related reasons (including Christians missing in a persecution context)?	32	0
6.6 How many Christians have been raped or otherwise sexually harassed for faith-related reasons?	10 *	10
6.7 How many cases have there been of forced marriages of Christians to non-Christians?	10 *	10 *
6.8 How many Christians have been otherwise physically or mentally abused for faith-related reasons (including beatings and death threats)?	1000 *	100 *
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?	27	10 *
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?	15	10 *
6.11 How many Christians have been forced to leave their homes or go into hiding in-country for faith-related reasons?	100 *	22
6.12 How many Christians have been forced to leave the country for faith-related reasons?	10 *	0

5 Year trends

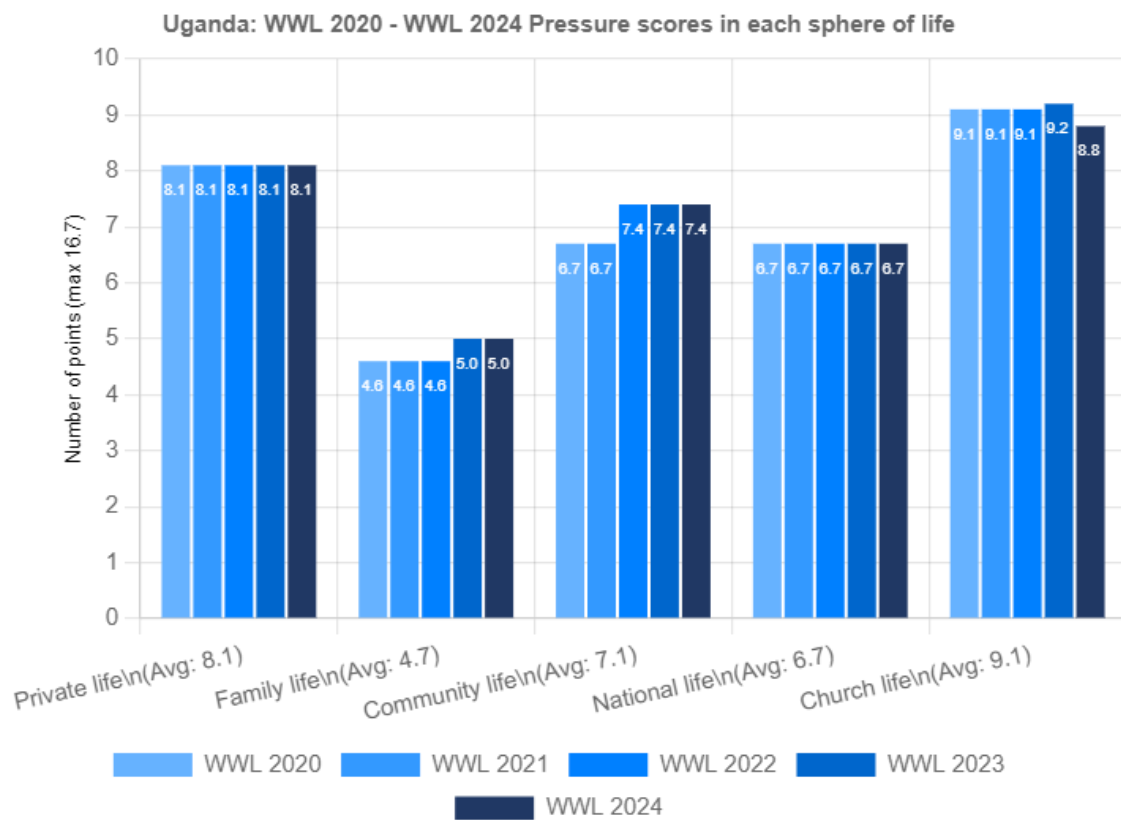
The following three charts show the levels of pressure and violence faced by Christians in the country over the last five WWL reporting periods.

5 Year trends: Average pressure

The table below shows that the average pressure on Christians has been stable between the range of 7.0 - 7.3 points over the last 5 WWL reporting periods.

Uganda: WWL 2020 - WWL 2024	Average pressure over 5 Spheres of life
2024	7.2
2023	7.3
2022	7.2
2021	7.0
2020	7.0

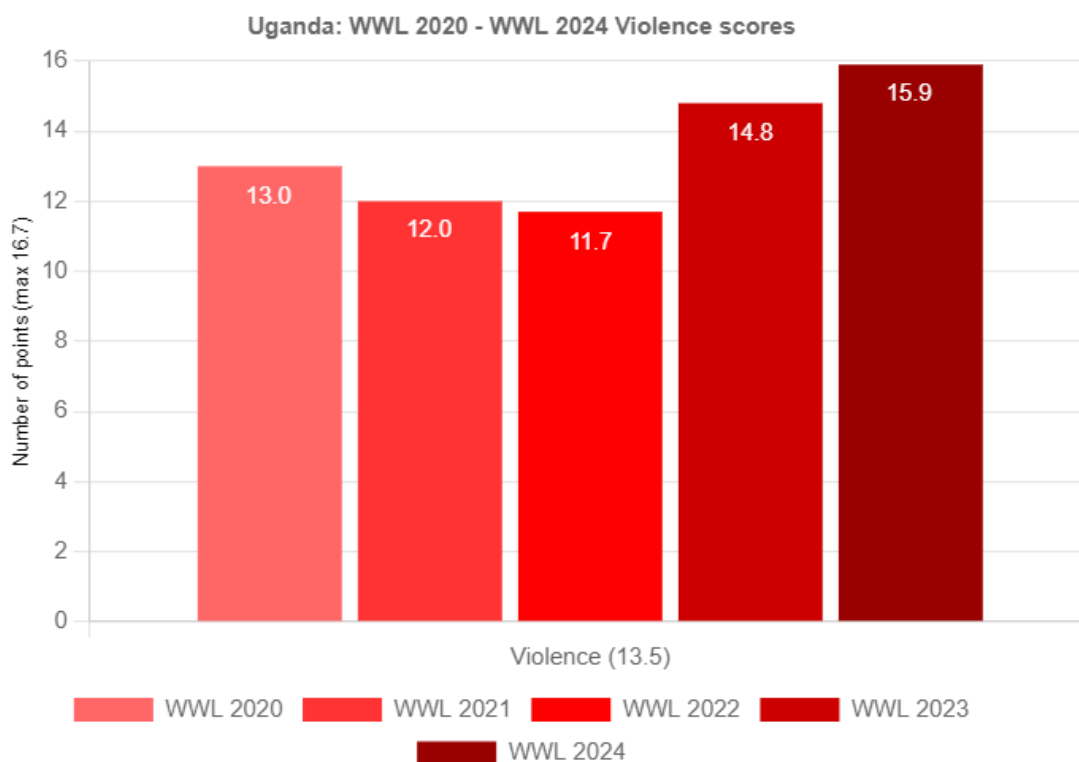
5 Year trends: Pressure in each sphere of life



The chart above shows that the average pressure per sphere of life has been most pronounced in *Church* (9.1 points) and *Private life* (8.1 points). Of all the 5 year averages, pressure in *Family life* has been lowest (4.7 points).

5 Year trends: Violence against Christians

As can be seen in the chart below, since WWL 2020, violence against Christians has been in the category 'extremely high' and reached its highest level in WWL 2024 with 15.9 points. Despite this, mainstream media in Uganda bring few reports about violence against Christians, except in situations where the ADF has carried out a bombing. The five year average is 13.5 points.



Gender-specific religious persecution / Female

Group	Female Pressure Points
Economic	-
Political and Legal	Denied access to social community/networks; Denied custody of children; Forced divorce; Forced marriage
Security	Abduction; Forced out of home – expulsion; Incarceration by family (house arrest); Trafficking; Violence – physical; Violence – sexual
Social and Cultural	Denied food or water; Enforced religious dress code; Violence – psychological; Violence – Verbal
Technological	-

According to local sources, women in Uganda are generally viewed as inferior to men. In some tribes, women are not allowed to eat certain foods, such as chicken or eggs, which can lead to disproportionate malnutrition among women and girls. The prevalence of sexual violence in Uganda is startling: One in every four women reports that her first sexual experience was rape ([RAINN, accessed March 2024](#)). According to UN [statistics](#), about 26.1% of 15-to-49-year-old women experienced physical or sexual violence in 2018 (UN Women Data Hub, Uganda Country Fact Sheet, accessed 27 March 2023). Even more troubling, [very few rape](#) cases result in convictions, fostering a culture of impunity, as demonstrated by the 2019 [International Justice Mission](#) study (Save the Children, 1 March 2019; IJM, 2019, pp 21-27). Within this context, Ugandan Christian women face pressures both on account of their gender, as well as due to their faith.

Christian women and girls are particularly vulnerable to sexual abuse, including rape. There were several reports of sexual violence over the past few years. In the 2022 reporting period, one example was given of four women being raped on their way home from evening prayers. In secondary schools, a number of [gang groups](#) are reported to be fast rising. Notable groups include the "Virgin Hunters", who particularly target virgin girls or those who are presupposed to be innocent Christian girls (URNM, 23 October 2019, see also: [Monitor, 18 February 2023](#)). Sexual attacks leave victims feeling ashamed, embarrassed and unwilling to re-tell their ordeals.

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

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

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

Gender-specific religious persecution / Male

Group	Male Pressure Points
Economic	Denied inheritance or possessions; Economic harassment via business/job/work access
Political and Legal	False charges; Imprisonment by government
Security	Abduction; Trafficking; Violence – physical
Social and Cultural	Violence – psychological; Violence – Verbal
Technological	-

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

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

Whilst women are usually the victims of trafficking, men and boys are also susceptible due to an increased [unemployment rate](#) (World Bank, 2 January 2022). Fraudulent job opportunities are used to lure vulnerable men and boys into forced labour ([USDS, 2022 Trafficking in Persons Report](#)). Men may be forced to work in construction, agriculture, or other dangerous industries. They are often paid very little and are denied their basic human rights ([NilePost](#), 24 July 2023). Finally, Christian men are commonly affected by enforced participation in traditional ceremonies. Among the Gishu, for example, Christian boys are forced to perform certain rituals during the circumcision rites even when it is against their Christian faith.

Persecution of other religious minorities

Any religious group seeking to act according to their conscience is likely to be on a collision course with the government of Museveni. There have also been reports that Muslims face discrimination in many areas. As reported by the US State Department (IRFR 2022 Uganda):

- "The Muslim community reported that security agencies unfairly singled out Muslims for arrest and detention while enforcing antiterrorism operations. In March, local media reported that plainclothes security officers arrested Muslim cleric Umar Kabonge Ajobe and two others in Luweero District on accusations that they were assembling explosives on behalf of the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria – Democratic Republic of the Congo (ISIS-DRC) terrorist organization. Security agencies continued to hold Ajobe without trial at year’s end. On August 25, Muslim leaders met Minister for Internal Affairs Kahinda Otafiire and stated that police and military officers had arrested several Muslim clerics after accusing them of promoting radicalization but failed to arraign them in court or present any evidence to substantiate the allegations."
- "The Muslim community reported that the government discriminated against Muslims in its education policies. The UMSC [Uganda Muslim Supreme Council] stated that the government failed to pay salaries to some public school teachers of Islamic Religious Education. The UMSC also reported that the ministry of education appointed Christian teachers as headteachers in

Muslim public schools, overlooking qualified Muslim teachers, and it demanded government action to select eligible Muslim candidates for these positions."

- "The UMSC and Allied Muslim Youth Uganda reported on discrimination against Muslims in admission processes at some elite Christian schools and universities. They stated that these schools often admitted Christian students who lacked the requisite admission qualifications at the expense of Muslim students who met the qualifications."

Future outlook

The outlook for Christians as viewed through the lens of:

Islamic oppression

The aspiration of Islamic extremists in the DRC to establish a caliphate in Uganda may appear far-fetched, yet the reverberations it sends through the Tabliq community are substantial. Historically, the Tabliq sect has acted as a recruiting ground for the ADF, a relationship well-documented by organizations like UNHCR. The ADF, although primarily operating out of the DRC, has executed devastating attacks in Uganda, notably in areas bordering the DRC.

Although the ADF's footprint within Uganda is not immense, the Tabliq's ideological impact on the majority-Muslim regions is palpable. These areas have become increasingly unwelcoming to Christians. Add to this the horrific event where over 30 people were killed at a boarding high school near the DRC border, and the precariousness of the situation becomes clear. As long as the central government remains intact and unchallenged by other conflicts, the ADF's influence may be contained. However, the localized pressures exerted by ordinary Muslims and Tabliq clerics on Christians are likely to remain intense, particularly in eastern Uganda and areas close to the DRC border.

Dictatorial paranoia

Uganda operates more as an autocracy than a democracy, with human rights often trampled upon. President Museveni, now in his 37th year of rule after a questionable election in January 2021, has mastered the art of quelling dissent. Christian communities that show any form of opposition to the regime often find themselves under surveillance and various forms of restriction. Churches, in particular, face constant monitoring, and any critique of the government is swiftly silenced.

Considering the dual pressures of *Islamic oppression* and *Dictatorial paranoia*, the situation for Christians in Uganda is unlikely to improve in the short term. Between the mounting Islamic extremism near the DRC border and the oppressive state machinery, Christians will continue to navigate a hostile environment.

External Links - Persecution Dynamics

- Gender-specific religious persecution Female description: (RAINN, accessed March 2024). - <https://www.rainn.org/africa/uganda#>
- Gender-specific religious persecution Female description: statistics - <https://data.unwomen.org/country/uganda>
- Gender-specific religious persecution Female description: ery few rape - <https://uganda.savethechildren.net/news/ending-impunity-getting-children-justice-sexual-violence>

- Gender-specific religious persecution Female description: International Justice Mission - <https://ijmstoragelive.blob.core.windows.net/ijmna/documents/IJM-JusticeReview2019-compressed.pdf>
- Gender-specific religious persecution Female description: gang groups - <https://ugandaradionetwork.net/story/gangs-dominate-secondary-schools-in-mbale-town-survey-?districtId=565>
- Gender-specific religious persecution Female description: Monitor, 18 February 2023 - <https://www.monitor.co.ug/uganda/news/national/mbale-police-bust-criminal-gangs-arrest-25-4128506>
- Gender-specific religious persecution Female description: the Sebei people - <https://esaro.unfpa.org/en/news/girls-uganda-lured-across-border-undergo-female-genital-mutilation>
- Gender-specific religious persecution Male description: unemployment rate - <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SL.UEM.TOTL.MA.ZS?locations=UG>
- Gender-specific religious persecution Male description: USDS, 2022 Trafficking in Persons Report - <https://www.state.gov/reports/2022-trafficking-in-persons-report/uganda/>
- Gender-specific religious persecution Male description: NilePost, 24 July 2023 - <https://nilepost.co.ug/index.php/human%20trafficking/165871/men-among-the-most-trafficked-in-uganda>

Further useful reports

A selection of in-depth reports and smaller articles are available on the Research & Reports pages of the Open Doors website:

- <https://www.opendoors.org/en-US/research-reports/>.

As in earlier years, these are also available on the Open Doors Analytical website (password: freedom):

- <https://opendoorsanalytical.org/?s=Uganda>
- <https://opendoorsanalytical.org/reports/>.