

World  
Watch  
Research

## Burundi: Full Country Dossier

February 2022



**OpenDoors**

Serving persecuted **Christians** worldwide

Open Doors International / World Watch Research

February 2022

© Open Doors International

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

# Contents

<b>Introduction .....</b>	<b>3</b>
World Watch List 2022 .....	3
Copyright note.....	4
Sources and definitions.....	4
Effect on data-gathering during COVID-19 pandemic.....	5
External Links - Introduction .....	5
<b>WWL 2022 Situation in brief / Burundi .....</b>	<b>5</b>
Brief country details .....	5
Dominant persecution engines and drivers .....	5
Brief description of the persecution situation .....	6
Specific examples of violations of rights in the reporting period .....	6
Specific examples of positive developments .....	6
External Links - Situation in brief .....	6
<b>WWL 2022: Keys to understanding / Burundi .....</b>	<b>6</b>
Links for general background information.....	6
Recent history .....	7
Political and legal landscape .....	8
Religious landscape .....	9
Economic landscape.....	10
Social and cultural landscape .....	11
Technological landscape .....	12
Security situation .....	12
Trends analysis .....	13
External Links - Keys to understanding .....	13
<b>WWL 2022: Church information / Burundi.....</b>	<b>14</b>
Christian origins.....	14
Church spectrum today.....	14
Church spectrum today - additional information .....	15
<b>WWL 2022: Persecution Dynamics / Burundi .....</b>	<b>15</b>
Reporting period .....	15
Position on the World Watch List .....	15
Persecution engines .....	15
Drivers of persecution.....	16

Areas where Christians face most difficulties .....	17
Christian communities and how they are affected .....	17
The Persecution pattern.....	18
Pressure in the 5 spheres of life .....	18
Violence.....	22
5 Year trends .....	24
Gender-specific religious persecution / Female .....	26
Gender-specific religious persecution / Male .....	27
Persecution of other religious minorities.....	27
Future outlook.....	27
External Links - Persecution Dynamics.....	28
<b>Further useful reports.....</b>	<b>28</b>

# 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

## Copyright note

This document is the property of World Watch Research (WWR), the research department of Open Doors International. It may be used and distributed free of charge, but please always acknowledge the source as: © 2021 Open Doors International.

## 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 / Burundi

### Brief country details

Burundi: Population (UN estimate for 2021)	Christians	Chr%
12,305,000	11,580,000	94.1

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

Burundi: World Watch List	Points	WWL Rank
WWL 2022	52	64
WWL 2021	48	64
WWL 2020	48	63
WWL 2019	43	68
WWL 2018	-	-

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

## Dominant persecution engines and drivers

Burundi: Main Persecution engines	Main drivers
Dictatorial paranoia	Government officials
Christian denominational protectionism	Religious leaders of other churches, Citizens (people from the broader society), including mobs, One's own (extended) family

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

## Brief description of the persecution situation

Christians have to make sure that they do not say things that criticize the government. Minority Christian groups face hinderances in preaching, teaching and publishing materials. In the last years, some Christians have been forced to leave the country due to pressure from the government.

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

- Christians who spoke out against holding the elections during the COVID-19 crisis in May 2020 faced government harassment.
- Churches were put under surveillance.
- Christians found it difficult to get permission for building new churches.

In October 2020, the government closed two Free Methodist churches in Cibitoke Province following clashes between the churches' leadership and congregations (US State Department IRFR 2020).

## Specific examples of positive developments

- According to the US State Department (IRFR 2020): Members of the interfaith council organized a workshop with religious leaders to discuss the causes and consequences of conflicts in the country and to develop strategies that contributed toward sustainable peace and reconciliation.
- A Seventh-Day Adventist pastor was [released from prison](#) on 10 February 2021, having been arrested in October 2019 (Adventist News, 12 February 2021).

## External Links - Situation in brief

- Specific examples of positive developments: released from prison - <https://adventist.news/es/news/pastor-lameck-barashinga-is-released-from-prison-in-burundi>

# WWL 2022: Keys to understanding / Burundi

## Links for general background information

Name	Quote Reference	Link	Last accessed on
Amnesty International country report	AI 2021	<a href="https://www.amnesty.org/en/location/africa/east-africa-the-horn-and-great-lakes/burundi/">https://www.amnesty.org/en/location/africa/east-africa-the-horn-and-great-lakes/burundi/</a>	14 September 2021
BBC News country profile	BBC country profile	<a href="https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-africa-13085064">https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-africa-13085064</a>	14 September 2021
Bertelsmann Transformation Index 2020	BTI 2020	<a href="https://bti-project.org/en/reports/country-dashboard/BDI">https://bti-project.org/en/reports/country-dashboard/BDI</a>	14 September 2021
CIA World Factbook	CIA Factbook	<a href="https://www.cia.gov/the-world-factbook/countries/burundi/">https://www.cia.gov/the-world-factbook/countries/burundi/</a>	14 September 2021
Economist Intelligence Unit Democracy Index 2020	EIU 2020	<a href="https://pages.eiu.com/rs/753-RIQ-438/images/democracy-index-2020.pdf">https://pages.eiu.com/rs/753-RIQ-438/images/democracy-index-2020.pdf</a>	14 September 2021
FFP's Fragile States Index 2021	FSI 2021	<a href="https://fragilestatesindex.org/country-data/">https://fragilestatesindex.org/country-data/</a>	14 September 2021
Freedom House's 2021 Democracy index (Not included)	Freedom House/Democracy 2021	<a href="https://freedomhouse.org/countries/nations-transit/scores">https://freedomhouse.org/countries/nations-transit/scores</a>	
Freedom House's 2021 Global Freedom index	Freedom House/Global Freedom 2021	<a href="https://freedomhouse.org/country/burundi/freedom-world/2021">https://freedomhouse.org/country/burundi/freedom-world/2021</a>	14 September 2021
Freedom House's Freedom on the Net 2020 report (Not included)	Freedom House/Internet Freedom 2020	<a href="https://freedomhouse.org/countries/freedom-net/scores">https://freedomhouse.org/countries/freedom-net/scores</a>	
Garda World country report	Garda World	<a href="https://www.garda.com/crisis24/country-reports/burundi">https://www.garda.com/crisis24/country-reports/burundi</a>	14 September 2021
Human Rights Watch World Report 2021	HRW 2021	<a href="https://www.hrw.org/world-report/2021/country-chapters/burundi">https://www.hrw.org/world-report/2021/country-chapters/burundi</a>	14 September 2021

Internet World Stats 2021	IWS 2021	<a href="https://www.internetworldstats.com/africa.htm#bi">https://www.internetworldstats.com/africa.htm#bi</a>	14 September 2021
RSF's 2020 World Press Freedom Index	World Press Freedom 2020	<a href="https://rsf.org/en/burundi">https://rsf.org/en/burundi</a>	14 September 2021
Transparency International's 2020 Corruption Perceptions Index	CPI 2020	<a href="https://www.transparency.org/en/cpi/2020/index/bdi">https://www.transparency.org/en/cpi/2020/index/bdi</a>	14 September 2021
UNDP's Global Human Development Indicators	HDI 2020	<a href="http://hdr.undp.org/en/countries/profiles/BDI">http://hdr.undp.org/en/countries/profiles/BDI</a>	14 September 2021
US State Department's 2020 International Religious Freedom country reports	IRFR 2020	<a href="https://www.state.gov/reports/2020-report-on-international-religious-freedom/burundi/">https://www.state.gov/reports/2020-report-on-international-religious-freedom/burundi/</a>	14 September 2021
USCIRF 2021 country reports (Not included)	USCIRF 2021	<a href="https://www.uscifr.gov/countries">https://www.uscifr.gov/countries</a>	
World Bank country report	World Bank	<a href="https://www.worldbank.org/en/country/burundi">https://www.worldbank.org/en/country/burundi</a>	14 September 2021

## Recent history

The current geographical area covered by Burundi and Rwanda used to be ruled by the kingdoms of Rwanda and Urundi in which the Tutsi upper class dominated the Hutu-majority lower classes. Germany colonized Burundi and Rwanda as part of German East Africa in the period 1890-1916. Germany lost the colony to Belgium following the 1st World War. Belgium favored the Tutsis, thus intensifying the societal differences between the two groups. Hutus were prevented from holding public office and faced disadvantages in education. The Belgians also introduced the race-based identity card in 1933. This divided the population along ethnic lines and had serious consequences.

In 1962 Burundi became independent from Belgium and established itself as a constitutional monarchy. Since independence, the country has been facing an intractable conflict between the two main tribes, Hutu and Tutsi. In 1966 a coup instigated by Tutsi officials overthrew the monarchy and Michel Micombero became the country's first president. Micombero's military dictatorship was responsible for the death of 100,000 people during the 1972 Hutu massacre.

In 1993, there was a glimmer of hope that the country was entering a new era when the first democratically elected Hutu president, Melchior Ndadaye, took office. However, hopes were dashed when the president was assassinated within months of his election. In 1994, the parliament elected Cyprien Ntaryamira (also Hutu) as president of the country. He was also killed along with the Rwandan president in Kigali in the same year. As the situation in neighboring Rwanda was spinning out of control, parliament again elected another Hutu president, Sylvestre Ntibantunganya. The mainly Tutsi party, Union for National Progress (Uprona), decided to withdraw from the government and this withdrawal marked the start of a period of ethnic conflict which led to the deaths of more than 300,000 people, mainly civilians and severe damage of the country's economy.

The international community tried to help Burundi during the crisis, with the UN taking over from the African Union forces in 2004. This mission ended in 2007 and the country was stabilized through dialogue and various legal and political changes. Following the 2005 constitutional vote, which favored the power-sharing constitution, Pierre Nkurunziza, president until 2020 (he died in June 2020), was elected by both houses of the parliament and belonged to the Hutu rebel 'Forces for Defense of Democracy' (FDD). He was accused by many human rights groups of being responsible for serious human rights violations. However, he claimed that neighboring countries (like Rwanda) were interfering in Burundi's domestic affairs.

In 2010, the country held presidential elections with the hope of leaving behind the previous conflicts that led to the killings of thousands of civilians and left the economy in tatters.



However, these elections only showed up the true authoritarian attitude of the ruling party. The ruling party won the election without any contest due to a boycott by the opposition parties. That was quickly followed by the widespread and unlawful arrest of opposition party members. Death-sentences were quickly issued. Restrictions were imposed on the freedom of press and media. The assassination of some senior government officials and the killings of protestors put the country on the edge of crisis which then erupted when the president decided to run for another term in 2015. In May 2015, the Constitutional Court ruled in favor of President Nkurunziza's decision to stand for a third term. There were reports that the judges were intimidated. That was followed by protests in the country, especially in the capital city, Bujumbura. A [failed coup-attempt in 2015](#) further showed how divided the country had become, but at the same time showed that the country's president had enough staunch supporters in both the army and the security apparatus to put down the coup attempt (BBC News, 13 May 2015). The general human rights record of the country also deteriorated especially after the 2015 general and presidential elections held during the crisis.

There is a danger that the Church might be either caught in the crossfire or forced to be part of the conflict in various ways. This could already be seen when the Catholic Church denounced the election process of 2015. In February 2018, the [UN special envoy](#) to the country said that the country was not yet ready to hold fresh elections (UN Security Council Meeting, 26 February 2018). In September 2018, the country's security council suspended the activities of NGOs. As per [Human Rights Watch \(HRW\) 2019 World Report](#): "On September 27, 2018, Burundi's National Security Council announced a three-month suspension of international non-governmental organizations. As a result, the operations of around 130 international NGOs, some of them providing lifesaving assistance, were seriously hampered."

In 2020, the country remained volatile and oppressive. Former Hutu rebel leader Évariste Ndayishimiye of the ruling CNDD–FDD party (National Council for the Defense of Democracy – Forces for the Defense of Democracy) was elected president with 71% of the vote in May 2020, with the CNDD–FDD also winning 72 of the 100 elected national Assembly seats. In June 2020, President Nkurunziza, who was due to stand down as president in August 2020, unexpectedly [died](#) at the age of 55. His death was reportedly due to a heart-attack, but some suggest that this could have been a COVID-19-related death (The Guardian, 6 June 2020). Ndayishimiye took office as president, a week after Nkurunziza's death.

## Political and legal landscape

Burundi is a small landlocked country located in the Great Lakes Region, one of the most volatile regions on the African continent. Some of the opposition parties in the country were among the factions that earlier fought in Eastern Congo. As a country that has been through a series of devastating conflicts, Burundi has struggled to maintain rule of law. Even though the Constitution guarantees the independence of the judiciary, the judges are not free in practice - state interference and intimidation have been common. Corruption has been one of the main problems.

In May 2018, the voters backed the amendment of the Constitution to extend [presidential term limits](#) with a reported 73% of votes (Al-Jazeera, 22 May 2018). In June 2018, the president vowed

not to [seek re-election in 2020](#) (Al-Jazeera, 7 June 2018). However, in 2020 tensions continue to rise as the election-date approached. A report submitted by [the UN Commission of Inquiry](#) on Burundi said, there is a climate of fear and intimidation against anyone who did not show support for the ruling party (Reuters, 4 September 2019). Many Burundians [suspected of supporting](#) the opposition disappeared, were arrested, beaten or killed (HRW, World Report 2020). The government particularly targeted members of the opposition National Congress for Freedom (CNL).

According to the UN: “[Freedom of the press](#) had become a fiction, while Nkurunziza had exceeded his powers, making appointments that [were] not within his constitutional authority and relying on shadowy informal structures such as a committee of generals.” (Reuters, 4 September 2019). According to Reporters without Borders (World Press Freedom 2020), Burundi was one of the top 40 countries where freedom of the press is restricted, ranking 160th. However, the press freedom situation of Burundi has somewhat improved under President Evariste Ndayishimiye, ranking 147th in the [World Press Freedom 2021 Index](#) (The East African, 3 May 2021).

## Religious landscape

Burundi: Religious context	Number of adherents	%
Christians	11,580,000	94.1
Muslim	268,000	2.2
Hindu	9,300	0.1
Buddhist	0	0.0
Ethno-religionist	433,000	3.5
Jewish	0	0.0
Bahai	9,000	0.1
Atheist	180	0.0
Agnostic	6,700	0.1
Other	0	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)

According to Freedom House/Global Freedom 2021:

- “While freedom of religion has generally been observed in Burundi, relations between the government and the Roman Catholic Church, of which a majority of Burundians are members, have worsened in recent years. In 2017, the government set up a commission to monitor religious groups and guard against political subversion within them. In September

2019, the Commission of Inquiry reported that the government was exerting more control over churches to curb political dissent. The same month, senior government officials called for the defrocking of a group of Catholic bishops who accused the ruling party of instigating political violence.”

## Economic landscape

According to World Bank (country overview):

- **Economic growth:** "Growth decelerated to 0.3% in 2020 against 1.8% in 2019, with poor performance in services and agriculture, partially offset by COVID-19 induced import-substitution in industry."
- **Inflation:** "After two years of deflation, inflation reached 7.5% in 2020, driven by rising food prices and limited availability of imported consumer products."
- **Poverty:** "The weakness of economic growth in relation to population growth results in low per capita income estimated at about \$276 in 2020. Poverty rate in 2020 reached 86.2% and has been estimated at 87% in 2021 (based on international poverty line of \$1.90/capita/ day, in 2011 PPP). Poverty is further expected to reach 87.5% in 2023 due to rapid population growth and contraction in per capita GDP. In general, poverty is widespread in Burundi especially among those who live in rural areas. Food insecurity remains alarming, with 56% of children under 5 stunted and malnutrition rates even higher outside of the capital city. In fact, the level of food insecurity is almost twice as high as the average for sub-Saharan African countries, with about 1.77 million people in need of humanitarian assistance in 2019 according to the humanitarian response plan (HRP), which is estimated at \$106 million. The Agriculture sector is the main contributor to the GDP. It employs about 80% of the population and contributes about 40% of the GDP. Access to water and sanitation remains incredibly low and less than 5% of the population has access to electricity (i.e. 52.1% of urban households and 2% of rural households)."

According to [World Bank's Macro Poverty Outlook \(2021\)](#) (Sub-Saharan Africa):

- **COVID-19 impact:** "COVID-19 presents additional challenges to households across the income distribution, through both direct and indirect effects. The pandemic may entail long-lasting repercussions on human capital, as households are forced to adopt harmful coping strategies such as selling productive assets or reducing expenditures on education and food. Limited fiscal space and scanty monetary and financial buffers undermine the government's ability to stimulate the economy and mitigate economic costs of the pandemic. Although COVID-19 cases remain relatively low, the pandemic has impacted Burundi's fragile economy through border closures and lower commodity exports, as significant trade in agricultural products takes place between Burundi and neighboring countries. In addition, uncertainty around the second wave of COVID-19 persists. Burundi's increases in cases since December 2020 and closure of land and sea borders are likely to slow the pace of recovery depending on the duration of these measures. Under the base case that the COVID-19 is brought under control during 2021, economic growth is projected at 2-3 percent during 2021-23, supported by gains in all sectors. The outlook remains vulnerable to the continuing economic fallout from the COVID-19 and the availability and distribution of vaccines, fiscal slippages, forex pressures and climatic shocks. Under a low-

case scenario that COVID is not controlled and border closures and other restrictive measures recur throughout 2021, economic growth could be reduced by 1 percentage point with attendant impacts on poverty.”

## Social and cultural landscape

According to UN Human Development Indicators (HDI 2020) and the CIA Factbook:

- **Main ethnic groups:** Hutu (Bantu) 85%, Tutsi (Hamitic) 14%, Twa (Pygmy) 1%
- **Main languages:** Kirundi 29.7% (official), French 3% (official), Swahili 2%, English 1% (official), Kirundi and French 8.4%, Kirundi, French, and English 2.4%, other language combinations 2%, unspecified 56.9% (2008 est.)
- **Urban population:** 14.1% of the total population (2021)
- **Rate of urbanization:** 5.48% annual rate of change (2020-25 est.)
- **Median age:** 17.7 years
- **Expected years of schooling:** 11.1 years (11.0 for females and 11.1 for males)
- **Adult literacy rate (ages 15 and older):** 68.4%
- **Employment to population ratio (ages 15 and older):** 78.0%
- **Unemployment, total:** 1.4% of the labor force
- **Youth unemployment (ages 15-24):** 2.7%
- **HDI score and ranking:** Burundi ranked 185th of 189 countries, with a value of 0.433 points
- **Life expectancy at birth:** 61.6 years
- **Gender Development Index (GDI):** 0.999
- **Gender inequality index (GII):** 0.504

According to the [UNHCR](#) 2021 Interagency Regional Response Plan for the Burundi situation (published on 15 February 2021) and [IOM Burundi – Internal Displacement Trends \(April 2021\)](#):

- **Refugees:** 312,615 Burundian refugees reside in the United Republic of Tanzania, Rwanda, the DRC, and Uganda. Of these, 39,411 of them were assisted to voluntarily return to their country since July 2020. Preparations are underway to further scale up voluntary return operations, based on planning figures for some 143,000 Burundian refugees to return to their country of origin in 2021.
- **IDPs:** As of January 2021, 113,841 Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) live in Burundi with about 25,475 displaced households. For 81% the factors of displacement are linked to natural disasters, while for 19% they are linked to the socio-political situation.

According to [OCHA's 4 June 2021 Situation Report](#):

- “[S]ince the beginning of the rainy season in March 2021, the waters of Lake Tanganyika have been rising steadily, flooding many neighbourhoods in the coastal provinces and causing significant property damage and population displacement. The most affected provinces include Bujumbura, Mairie, Makamba, and Rumonge, located on the shores of Lake Tanganyika, and the hardest hit is Rumonge province.”

## Technological landscape

According to Internet World Stats (IWS 2021):

- **Internet usage:** 13.1% of the population – survey date: June 2021
- **Facebook usage:** 5.8% of the population – survey date: June 2021

According to World Bank (country profile):

- **Mobile phone subscriptions:** 57.0 per 100 people.

According to [BuddeComm](#) research (update 17 July 2020):

- Mobile penetration remains low by regional standards, suggesting considerable room for growth: "To overcome difficulties associated with the poor telecom infrastructure the government, supported by the World Bank, has backed a joint venture with a number of prominent telcos to build a national fiber backbone network, offering onward connectivity to submarine cable infrastructure landings in Kenya and Tanzania. The first sections of this network were switched on in early 2014, and additional provinces have since been connected. In addition, the government in early 2018 kick-started the Burundi Broadband project, which aims to deliver national connectivity by 2025. Based on this improved infrastructure the government and ITU have developed an ICT strategy to make use of telecoms to promote the country's socio-economic development through to 2028."

According to the [Nations Encyclopedia](#) (accessed 4 July 2021):

- There are many institutions in the country that directly or indirectly engage in technological matters: "The National Center of Hydrometeorology, the Ministry of Geology and Mines, the Institute of Agronomical Sciences of Burundi (founded in 1960), and a medical laboratory devoted to nutritional studies are located in Bujumbura. The University of Burundi, in Bujumbura, has faculties of sciences, medicine, psychology and education, agriculture, and applied sciences."

## Security situation

The country's security situation remains [dire](#) (Reuters, 15 February 2020). It has been very difficult for citizens and humanitarian workers to operate safely.

According to the [Security Council Report](#) (30 April 2019):

- "The security and political situation in Burundi - which deteriorated sharply after April 2015 when Burundian President Pierre Nkurunziza announced that he would run for a controversial third term later that year - remains unsettled. While the Burundian government maintains that the security situation is good throughout the country, serious human rights abuses continue to be committed daily with impunity, mainly by the government and the Imbonerakure, the youth wing of Nkurunziza's party. Arbitrary killing, enforced disappearances, torture, and arbitrary detentions continue as the overall level of oppression and state control over Burundian society persists. Furthermore, these actions are taking place in an environment where freedom of expression, association and assembly

are suppressed."

## Trends analysis

### 1) The country is still reeling from the consequences of the 2015 political crisis

The country has been facing daunting challenges in the past few years due to the political environment created by the ruling party and its supporters. The crisis has forced thousands of citizens to flee their country. People speaking out against brutality and injustice in the country, including religious leaders, have been intimidated. This is likely to continue, at least in the short-term.

### 2) The government is not shy of using church leaders for political purposes

The past few years have shown that the government is not shy of using the Church in steering the politics of the country. It has on numerous occasions put pressure on church leaders to side with the president. The government has even gone to the extent of killing those who oppose it. This pressure and violence is likely to continue. The death of the president and the election of the new president (although from the same ruling party) might reduce this concern. The new administration has, however, kept up massive pressure on the Church.

## External Links - Keys to understanding

- Recent history: failed coup-attempt in 2015 - <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-africa-32724083>
- Recent history: UN special envoy - <http://static.un.org/press/en/2018/sc13224.doc.htm>
- Recent history: Human Rights Watch (HRW) 2019 World Report - <https://www.hrw.org/world-report/2019/country-chapters/burundi>
- Recent history: died - <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2020/jun/09/burundi-president-dies-illness-suspected-coronavirus-pierre-nkurunziz>
- Political and legal landscape: presidential term limits - <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/africa/2018/05/burundi-backs-constitution-extending-presidential-term-limits-180521134736408.html>
- Political and legal landscape: seek re-election in 2020 - <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2018/06/burundi-pierre-nkurunziza-step-2020-180607160413061.html>
- Political and legal landscape: the UN Commission of Inquiry - <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-burundi-rights/u-n-warns-of-burundi-atrocities-as-divine-ruler-eyes-2020-election-idUSKCN1VP1T8>
- Political and legal landscape: suspected of supporting - <https://www.hrw.org/world-report/2020/country-chapters/burundi>
- Political and legal landscape: Freedom of the press - <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-burundi-rights/u-n-warns-of-burundi-atrocities-as-divine-ruler-eyes-2020-election-idUSKCN1VP1T8>
- Political and legal landscape: World Press Freedom 2021 Index - <https://www.theeastafrican.co.ke/tea/news/east-africa/burundi-media-freedom-3386764>
- Economic landscape: World Bank's Macro Poverty Outlook (2021) - <https://pubdocs.worldbank.org/en/708231492188151479/mpo-bdi.pdf>
- Social and cultural landscape: UNHCR - <https://data.unhcr.org/en/documents/details/84923>
- Social and cultural landscape: IOM Burundi – Internal Displacement Trends (April 2021) - [https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/IOM%20Burundi%20-%20Internal%20Displacement%20Trends%20%28January%202021%29\\_0.pdf](https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/IOM%20Burundi%20-%20Internal%20Displacement%20Trends%20%28January%202021%29_0.pdf)
- Social and cultural landscape: OCHA's 4 June 2021 Situation Report - <https://reliefweb.int/report/burundi/burundi-situation-report-4-jun-2021-enrn>
- Technological landscape: BuddeComm - <https://www.budde.com.au/Research/Burundi-Telecoms-Mobile-and-Broadband-Statistics-and-Analyses?r=51>

- Technological landscape: Nations Encyclopedia - <https://www.nationsencyclopedia.com/Africa/Burundi-SCIENCE-AND-TECHNOLOGY.html>
- Security situation: dire - <https://uk.reuters.com/article/uk-burundi-graves/over-6000-bodies-found-in-burundis-mass-graves-idUKKBN2090GR>
- Security situation: Security Council Report - <https://www.securitycouncilreport.org/monthly-forecast/2019-05/burundi-3.php>

## WWL 2022: Church information / Burundi

### Christian origins

The Great Lakes Region of Africa is an area where Christian mission arrived very late on the scene. During the second half of the 19th century, the Roman Catholic Church made many attempts to introduce Christianity into the deep mainland of Africa.

In 1879, the White Fathers were sent to Burundi to launch a mission but were unsuccessful when two priests were killed within the first few years. In 1899 further attempts were made following the reorganization of the country as a German colony. In 1907, German Lutherans started working in the country, but following the conclusion of the First World War, in which Germany was defeated, Burundi was made part of the Belgian protectorate by the League of Nations. All the German mission stations were closed and French missionaries took over. Danish Baptists came in 1928 and Anglicans in 1934.

### Church spectrum today

Burundi: Church networks	Christians	%
Orthodox	2,100	0.0
Catholic	7,821,000	67.5
Protestant	3,233,000	27.9
Independent	410,000	3.5
Unaffiliated	300,000	2.6
Doubly-affiliated Christians	-187,000	-1.6
<b>Total</b>	<b>11,579,100</b>	<b>100.0</b>
<i>(Any deviation from the total number of Christians stated above is due to the rounding of decimals)</i>		
Evangelical movement	2,193,000	18.9
Renewalist movement	2,059,000	17.8

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.

## Church spectrum today - additional information

Christians can be found all over the country, the majority of whom belong to the Roman Catholic Church.

# WWL 2022: Persecution Dynamics / Burundi

## Reporting period

01 October 2020 - 30 September 2021

## Position on the World Watch List

Burundi: World Watch List	Points	WWL Rank
WWL 2022	52	64
WWL 2021	48	64
WWL 2020	48	63
WWL 2019	43	68
WWL 2018	-	-

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

The increase in 4 points in score is mainly due to the increase in pressure on smaller churches. Church leaders face intimidation and churches face closure if they do not side with President Ndayishimiye who took office in June 2020. COVID-19 restrictions have increased difficulties for Christian groups, which had already been under pressure not to gather due to being denied licenses to build churches.

## Persecution engines

Burundi: Persecution engines	Abbreviation	Level of influence
Islamic oppression	IO	Not at all
Religious nationalism	RN	Not at all
Ethno-religious hostility	ERH	Not at all
Clan oppression	CO	Very weak
Christian denominational protectionism	CDP	Medium
Communist and post - Communist oppression	CPCO	Not at all
Secular intolerance	SI	Not at all



Dictatorial paranoia	DPA	Strong
Organized corruption and crime	OCC	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.

### Dictatorial paranoia (Strong):

The government restricts citizens' freedom in many ways and Christians are being pressured into supporting the government. As a country that has been through various devastating conflicts, Burundi has struggled to maintain the rule of law. Even though the Constitution guarantees the independence of the judiciary, the judges are not free in practice and state interference and intimidation have been common. Corruption has also been a major problem. Rights that are constitutionally guaranteed are often restricted by subordinate laws. Opposition political parties have been facing serious abuses of their rights as has the press. There is no optimism that things will change under the new president who took office in June 2020 after the former president - of whom he was a strong ally - suddenly died.

**Christian denominational protectionism (Medium):** This Persecution engine is growing in influence. Burundi is a majority Catholic country and the fact that non-traditional evangelical Christianity is growing very fast has led to traditional churches reacting in a negative way. Family and community members also put pressure on those who join the new church groups. They often accuse the newly established churches of making noise pollution etc..

## Drivers of persecution

Burundi: Drivers of Persecution	IO	RN	ERH	CO	CDP	CPCO	SI	DPA	OCC
					MEDIUM			STRONG	
Government officials								Strong	
Religious leaders of other churches					Medium				
Citizens (people from the broader society), including mobs					Medium				
One's own (extended) family					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 Dictatorial paranoia

- **Government officials (Strong) / Political parties (Medium):** The main drivers are government officials who are targeting and pressurizing some Christians in the country. Speaking against the ruling party (i.e. criticizing the president) is seen as a crime against the state.

### Drivers of Christian denominational protectionism

- **Other churches religious leaders (Medium):** Church leaders of established churches, especially Catholics, put pressure on their congregations to make sure that their family members, friends and local community stay Roman Catholic. This has far-reaching consequences as it can be interpreted as 'go and persecute those who already left.'
- **Citizens (Medium):** In strong Catholic neighborhoods, it is often the case that non-Catholic groups face pressure not to gather or preach in public. Sometimes they are even told what kind of theology they can and cannot preach.
- **Family members (Medium):** In a Catholic family, it is difficult for a family member to leave Catholicism and join non-traditional churches. This has both theological as well as cultural reasons. If one decides to leave the family's church affiliation, they can be shunned and lose family connections and privileges.

### Areas where Christians face most difficulties

No specific areas.

### Christian communities and how they are affected

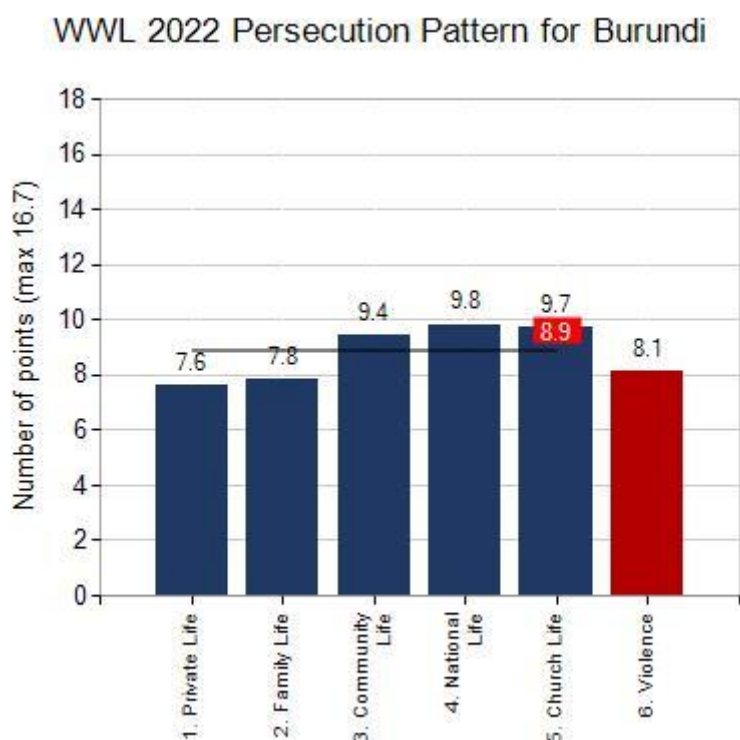
**Communities of expatriate Christians:** Expatriate Christians are not involuntarily isolated and are therefore not counted as a separate category for WWL-analysis.

**Historical Christian Communities:** This group, which includes the Roman Catholic Church, faces persecution where its leaders publicly oppose the actions of the government.

**Converts:** In the case of Burundi, this concerns mainly “cross-denominational” converts. They face challenges from the churches to which they originally belonged and from their families.

**Non-traditional Christian communities:** The Christian groups in this category are known for outspoken preaching which often puts them on a collision course with the government.

## The Persecution pattern



The WWL 2022 Persecution pattern for Burundi shows:

- The average pressure on Christians in Burundi was 8.9 points, up by one point from WWL 2021 (7.9 points).
- Pressure is highest in the *National* and *Church spheres* (9.8 and 9.7 points respectively). There is constant pressure on church leaders to side with ruling politicians.
- The score for violence is 8.1 points, a decrease from the score of 8.9 points in WWL 2021.

## Pressure in the 5 spheres of life

*In each of the five spheres of life discussed below, four questions have been selected from the WWL 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 1.1: Conversion has been opposed, forbidden, or punishable, including conversion from one type of Christianity to another. (2.75 points)**

As a majority Christian nation, for most policymakers or experts, this question seems odd for Burundi. However, conversion does not necessarily mean converting from non-Christian faith only. In Burundi Catholics are the dominant force, yet the ex-president is believed to have been (and some of his staunch allies are believed to be) evangelical Christians. The problem is that

Christians openly leaving Catholicism face many forms of opposition, like not getting access to certain schools or to shared community resources.

**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.). (2.50 points)**

There are two ways in which this issue happens. First, interdenominational conversion (usually away from the Roman Catholic Church) is not infrequent. The risk here is that if 'converts' are open about their new affiliation, they will face persecution. Secondly, any religious expression that can be construed as political or criticism of the government can be dangerous. In these two dynamics, Christians face restriction when it comes to expressing their faith or views related to their faith.

**Block 1.9: It has been risky for Christians to meet with other Christians. (2.50 points)**

Movements, meetings and any unsanctioned gatherings are extremely controlled in the country. The government of Burundi controls all aspects of life of the people. Many Christians groups have struggled to obtain land and licenses to build their own church. If a Christian belonging to an unregistered church meets for discussion or worship with others, they can easily be detained.

**Block 1.7: It has been risky for Christians to speak about their faith with immediate family members. (2.00 points)**

Discussions about faith are risky for converts. This is particularly true for converts from the small Muslim minority to Christianity; however, ex-Catholics who attend another Christian denomination are also likely to face severe rebuke from their families. In the context of Burundi, a very poor country, this can have devastating consequences for Christians. It can lead to expulsion or denied access to basic goods.

## Pressure in Block 2 / Family sphere

**Block 2.3: Christians have been hindered in celebrating a Christian wedding for faith-related reasons. (3.25 points)**

Just like in many other African countries, a Christian wedding in Burundi involves gathering with fellow Christians and singing. If the couple take their marriage vow without the national flag, the government might see this as an act of defiance and can lead to a prison sentence. Secondly, if the wedding involves Evangelicals, it might even be restricted by the dominant Christian denomination in the country.

**Block 2.8: Christian children have been pressured into attending anti-Christian or majority religion teaching at any level of education. (3.25 points)**

The country's school curriculum contains Catholic, Protestant and Muslim values and principles. This sounds positive but works against Christians where the government seeks to prioritize content which glorifies the regime. Also, most of the schools in the country are Catholic schools and many non-Catholic Christians have no choice but to accept the rules and practices put in place by Roman Catholics. In most cases, children of Protestant/Evangelical parents have to

abide by the customs and values taught by the Catholic teachers.

**Block 2.9: Children of Christians have been harassed or discriminated against because of their parents' faith. (3.25 points)**

There are two sources of persecution in this case: The first one is at the community level where children of Protestant/Evangelical parents face harassment from the dominant Christian group. Secondly, government agents employ the tactic of shaming or bullying the children of Protestant/Evangelical parents to force the latter to become loyal to the president.

**Block 2.2: Registering the birth, wedding, death, etc. of Christians has been hindered or made impossible. (2.50 points)**

As discussed above, the country's government wants couples to make marriage vows holding the national flag. Because of the pressure from the government which requires loyalty, converts and Christians belonging to small denominations are known to struggle with such registration.

## Pressure in Block 3 / Community sphere

**Block 3.1: Christians have been harassed, threatened or obstructed in their daily lives for faith-related reasons (e.g. for not meeting majority religion or traditional dress codes, beard codes etc.). (3.00 points)**

This is one of the areas that Christians face serious impediments. Christians' are required to conform to what the government demands. Some community members also make the life of Christians in the community difficult by harassing them. In this context, government supporters and agents have infiltrated society at village level and make life difficult for those Christians deemed to be un-loyal to the president. Also important is the fact that the dominant Catholic Church sees the expansion of non-Catholic Christian groups as a threat to the status quo.

**Block 3.4: Christians been hindered in sharing community resources because of their faith (e.g. clean drinking water). (3.00 points)**

This is partly related to what Christians face under 3.1. Thus, this hindrance goes hand in hand with other aspects of persecution at the community level. Some Christians groups in some areas are directly or indirectly excluded from sharing community resources, either because of their interdenominational conversion or their lack of support for the government. This pressure (coupled with other forms of pressure) often force Christians to relocate.

**Block 3.6: Christians have been hindered in participating in communal institutions, forums, etc., for faith-related reasons. (3.00 points)**

There are different layers to this form of pressure. First, this affects all Christian groups who are deemed not supportive of the government. The government cadres and security agents make sure that priority is given to those who support the president. Secondly, conservative Catholics also put pressure on non-Catholic Christians not to participate by putting unnecessary impediments in their way.

**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.). (2.50 points)**

The government has established a monitoring body which even operates at village level, making the lives of Christians difficult. Government supporters also do this in the churches where they spy on the church leaders/pastors/priests. Church leaders are followed and constantly asked to support the government and tell their congregations to support the government.

## Pressure in Block 4 / National sphere

**Block 4.5: Christians have been discriminated against when engaging with the authorities (local administration, government, army, etc.) for faith-related reasons. (3.75 points)**

Although Burundi is a Catholic dominated nation, government officials are said to have been discriminatory in their handling of cases for Christians. The government uses loyalty tests and those who are deemed disloyal will be treated unfairly. This is particularly harsh on some of the Christians who are outspoken about their faith.

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

There are many obstacles that the government puts in place to restrict freedom of movement. Security concerns and silencing dissent is the main rationale behind all travel restrictions. The government fears that church leaders who travel around the country might be spreading political views and challenging the regime's authority and power.

**Block 4.6: Christians have been barred from public office, or has promotion been hindered for faith-related reasons. (3.25 points)**

The test is always how loyal one is to the ruling party. Christians often speak out against injustice and they will be ignored and even at times detained, harassed or bullied. Those who speak about the existing injustice, human rights violations and corruption will be targeted and they will never get the chance to serve in a government department.

**Block 4.3: Christians have been forced by law or in practice to act against their conscience, e.g. regarding military service or in certain professions. (2.75 points)**

This should be seen from the context of the 'loyalty pledge'. Government security agents are demanding couples to use the national flag when making their marriage vow. That is technically forcing them to act against their conscience.

## Pressure in Block 5 / Church sphere

**Block 5.1: Church activities have been monitored, hindered, disturbed, or obstructed. (4.00 points)**

Church monitoring is one of the serious challenges that the church in the country faces. The setting up of a body under the Ministry of Interior and Civil education in 2017 to "monitor, regulate and settle" inter and intra denominational disputes (US State Department IRFR 2020)

has been highly controversial even to this day. It was set up to control biased political messages in the name of religion. However, judging by the government's previous practices, many church leaders think this body has also been set up to control all church activities more closely and not just silence criticism from churches.

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

Some reports indicate that church registration applications have been denied without any explanation. There is also evidence to suggest that officials intentionally deny registration to prevent Christians from getting tax exemption. As stated in IRFR 2020, the criteria for registering a new church is another concern for church leaders: "Any new, independent religious group based in the country must have a minimum of 300 members. Foreign-based religious groups seeking to establish a presence in the country must have 500 members. The law prohibits membership in more than one religious group at the same time. The law prohibits foreigners from being part of executive and decision-making committees of religious groups at the national level."

**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)**

Minority Christian groups have found it difficult to build and renovate their churches, which goes hand in hand with the difficulties experienced in the registration application process. The government, on many occasions, vowed to control the 'proliferation' of new churches. This control is meant to target the new Protestant/Evangelical church movements.

**Block 5.4: Churches have been hindered from organizing Christian activities inside their place of worship. (3.50 points)**

There is a tight control in the country, also targeting churches. Through its monitoring system, the government has been harassing and arresting people who attend prayer meetings without prior approval. That has created an intimidating environment in the country. Government security agents are known, for instance, to have arrested Christians who were praying together through the night. The assumption is that religious meetings are being held as a cover for illegal political activities. In addition, there are many government informers who have infiltrated the churches which is causing many church leaders to self-censor. In some occasions those who lead the church have been arrested.

## 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.



<b>Burundi: Violence Block question</b>		<b>WWL 2022</b>	<b>WWL 2021</b>
6.1	How many Christians have been killed for faith-related reasons (including state sanctioned executions)?	0	0
6.2	How many churches or Christian buildings (schools, hospitals, cemeteries, etc.) have been attacked, damaged, bombed, looted, destroyed, burned down, closed or confiscated for faith-related reasons?	100 *	10 *
6.3	How many Christians have been detained for faith-related reasons?	10 *	10 *
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)?	0	0
6.6	How many Christians have been raped or otherwise sexually harassed for faith-related reasons?	1	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)?	100 *	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?	0	0
6.10	How many shops or businesses of Christians have been attacked, damaged, bombed, looted, destroyed, burned down, closed or confiscated for faith-related reasons?	1	0
6.11	How many Christians have been forced to leave their homes or go into hiding in-country for faith-related reasons?	10 *	10 *
6.12	How many Christians have been forced to leave the country for faith-related reasons?	0	10

## 5 Year trends

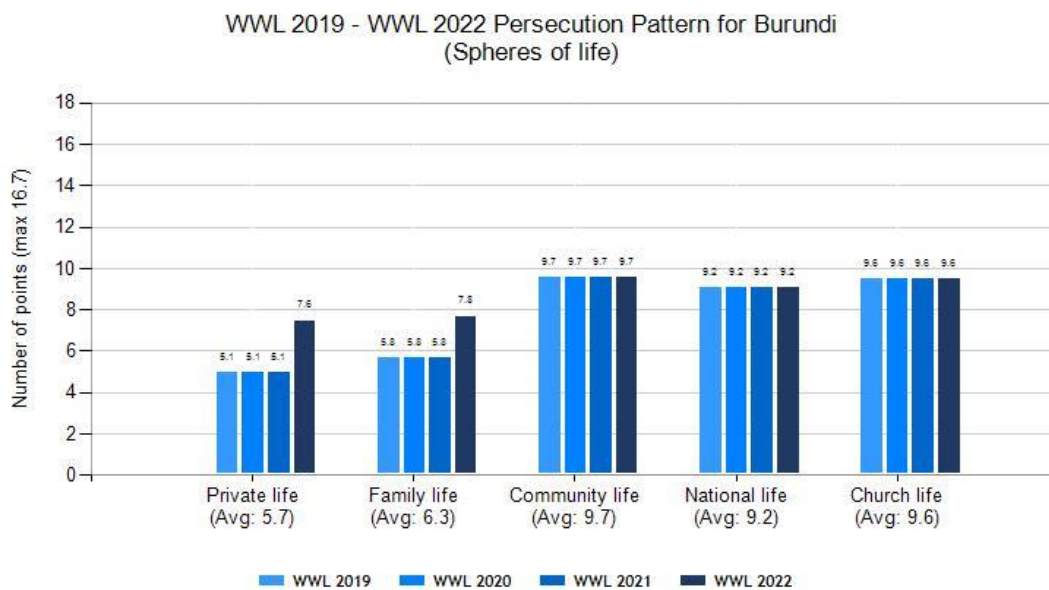
The following three charts show the levels of pressure and violence faced by Christians in the country over the last five WWL reporting periods.

## 5 Year trends: Average pressure

Burundi: WWL 2018 - WWL 2022 Persecution Pattern history	Average pressure over 5 Spheres of life
2022	8.8
2021	7.9
2020	7.9
2019	7.9
2018	0.0

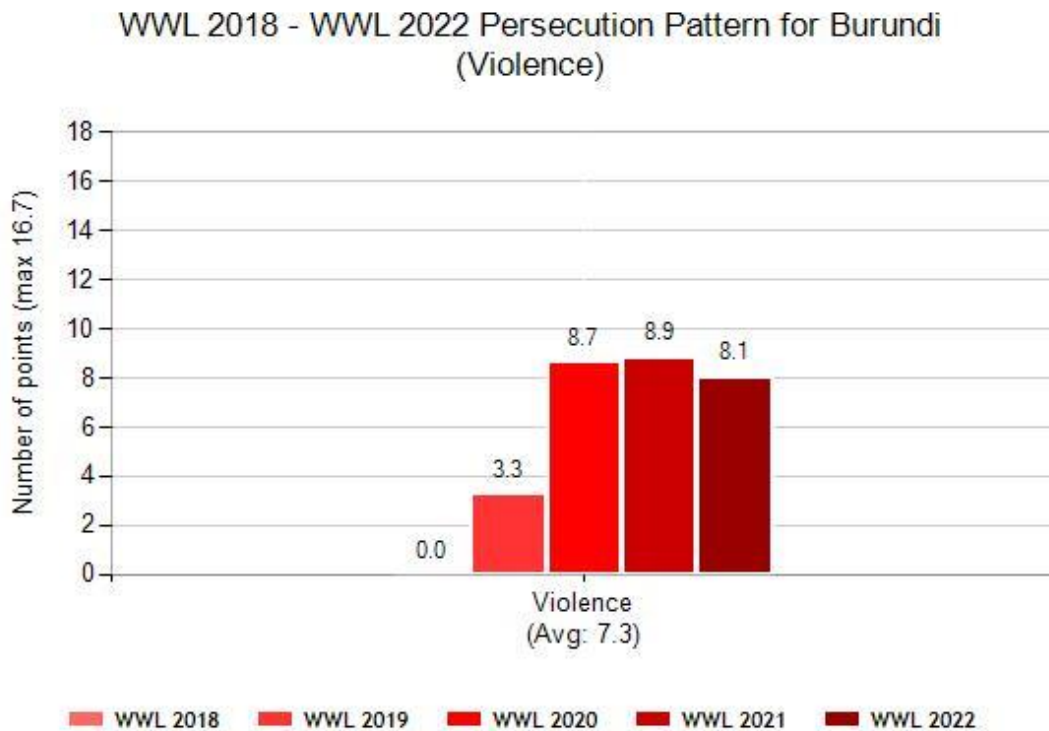
After stabilizing at 7.9 points, the average pressure on Christians has increased. For a Christian majority country (with leaders who claim to be Christians), this level of pressure is significant. The election of the new president after the sudden death of the long term president has not alleviated the situation for Christians.

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



As the chart above shows, the average pressure on Christians is clearly highest in the *Community, Church and National spheres of life*. Although the levels of pressure have now stabilized in these three spheres, there were marked increases in pressure in the *Private and Family spheres of life*.

## 5 Year trends: Violence against Christians



The chart above shows that the violence score has stabilized within the range of 8.1 - 8.9 points.

## Gender-specific religious persecution / Female

Group	Female Pressure Points
Economic	Denied inheritance or possessions
Political and Legal	Denied custody of children; Forced divorce; Forced marriage
Security	Incarceration by family (house arrest); Violence – sexual
Social and Cultural	Denied access to social community/networks; Violence – Verbal
Technological	-

Faith-based persecution compounds and exploits the existing societal pressures on women and girls in Burundi, especially those that arise from ongoing political instability and from women’s low status in society ([BBC News, 24 June 2020, Burundi Country Profile](#); [World Bank, October 2021](#)).

Female converts to Christianity face severe pressure for their faith. They may be rejected by their families and husbands, denied their inheritance and possessions, evicted from the home, forced into an arranged marriage with a Muslim, forcibly divorced, denied custody of their children and in rare instances, put under house arrest. Arranged marriages affect women who have converted to Christianity from Islam as well as converts from the traditional majority

Christian denominations such as Catholicism. Women are also vulnerable to sexual harassment by their relatives and local community. Recently a young believer from a Muslim background experienced abuse at the hands of her landlord, who had discovered her faith. This young girl had already experienced persecution by her parents in 2019 and had been expelled from her home, hence why she was in rented accommodation supported by her church. Now living with her pastor's family, she is reportedly living in fear of future harassment.

## Gender-specific religious persecution / Male

Group	Male Pressure Points
Economic	Economic harassment via business/job/work access
Political and Legal	Imprisonment by government
Security	Abduction; Violence – physical
Social and Cultural	-
Technological	-

Christian men in Burundi commonly face challenges in the workplace on the basis of their faith. An elderly man recently lost his job after deciding to join an evangelical church, and now struggles to provide for his five children. Given Burundi's high unemployment rates - exacerbated by the COVID-19 crisis - it is challenging for men to survive economically without the support of the family unit ([World Bank, October 2021](#)).

Converts to Christianity may also become victims of physical attacks. Upon discovery of their faith, converts risk being expelled from their homes by families and threatened harshly.

Christian men also risk being detained by state security forces. During the COVID-19 crisis, the rate of arrests increased. A country expert commented: "The arrests were made not for the sake of COVID restrictions, but they used COVID to suppress freedom of religion." Pastors are particularly vulnerable to being detained, as detailed by the US State Department (IRFR 2020).

## Persecution of other religious minorities

Religious minorities often face discrimination, although there were no incidents listed by the US State Department (IRFR 2020). However, in [IRFR 2019](#), it was noted: "Some Muslim leaders reported that public schools and those run by other religions sometimes excluded girls who opted to wear the hijab."

## Future outlook

The outlook for Christians as viewed through the lens of:

### Dictatorial paranoia

The government has shown that it is not shy of attempting to use the Church for political purposes and has on numerous occasions put pressure on church leaders to side with the president. The president died in June 2020 (potentially from COVID-19), but his successor is

unlikely to be lenient towards civil society since he is from the same ruling party and a staunch supporter of his predecessor's policies. The country has not significantly improved even though the political crisis that began in 2015 has now more or less stabilized. *Dictatorial paranoia* will continue to be a threat to the church for the time-being.

### **Christian denominational protectionism**

Non-traditional church groups are growing very fast in the country. This is being met by some resistance from the established Catholic Church. Such intolerance will likely continue. And it can even get worse if the government keeps ignoring the plea of these smaller churches for protection, registration and licenses. If the pressure from the Catholic Church remains intense, it might push the situation into some form of confrontation.

## **External Links - Persecution Dynamics**

- Gender-specific religious persecution Female description: BBC News, 24 June 2020, Burundi Country Profile - <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-africa-13085064>
- Gender-specific religious persecution Female description: World Bank, October 2021 - <https://www.worldbank.org/en/country/burundi/overview%22%20/1%20%221>
- Gender-specific religious persecution Male description: World Bank, October 2021) - <https://www.worldbank.org/en/country/burundi/overview#1>
- Persecution of other religious minorities: IRFR 2019 - <https://www.state.gov/reports/2019-report-on-international-religious-freedom/burundi/>

## **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=Burundi>
- <https://www.worldwatchmonitor.org/countries/Burundi>