
World Watch Research

Democratic Republic of the Congo: Persecution Dynamics

January 2025



Open Doors

Serving persecuted **Christians** worldwide

Open Doors International / World Watch Research

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World Watch List 2025 – Top 50

Rank	Country	Private life	Family life	Community life	National life	Church life	Violence	Total Score WWL 2025	Total Score WWL 2024	Total Score WWL 2023	Total Score WWL 2022	Total Score WWL 2021
1	North Korea	16.7	16.7	16.7	16.7	16.7	14.4	98	96	98	96	94
2	Somalia	16.5	16.7	16.6	16.6	16.7	11.1	94	93	92	91	92
3	Yemen	16.7	16.7	16.7	16.7	16.7	10.6	94	89	89	88	87
4	Libya	16.0	16.2	15.9	16.2	16.4	10.6	91	91	88	91	92
5	Sudan	14.1	14.2	15.5	14.9	15.3	16.1	90	87	83	79	79
6	Eritrea	14.6	14.9	15.5	15.9	15.9	12.2	89	89	89	88	88
7	Nigeria	13.5	13.9	14.6	14.9	14.5	16.7	88	88	88	87	85
8	Pakistan	13.6	13.9	15.0	15.0	12.9	16.7	87	87	86	87	88
9	Iran	15.0	14.6	13.5	15.9	16.5	10.9	86	86	86	85	86
10	Afghanistan	15.6	15.9	15.9	16.4	16.7	5.0	85	84	84	98	94
11	India	12.2	12.9	13.3	14.9	13.9	16.5	84	83	82	82	83
12	Saudi Arabia	15.2	15.3	14.8	15.8	16.6	3.3	81	81	80	81	78
13	Myanmar	12.6	11.1	13.5	14.1	12.9	16.5	81	79	80	79	74
14	Mali	11.1	10.1	14.7	13.0	15.2	15.6	80	79	76	70	67
15	China	13.2	10.1	12.8	14.6	16.1	11.1	78	78	77	76	74
16	Maldives	15.6	15.3	13.7	15.8	16.5	0.7	78	78	77	77	77
17	Iraq	14.2	14.4	14.3	14.8	13.9	6.1	78	79	76	78	82
18	Syria	13.5	14.4	13.9	14.4	14.3	7.0	78	81	80	78	81
19	Algeria	14.7	14.3	11.5	14.7	16.0	6.3	77	79	73	71	70
20	Burkina Faso	11.7	9.7	13.2	11.5	14.0	15.6	76	75	71	68	67
21	Morocco	13.2	13.8	11.6	12.9	14.3	8.3	74	71	69	69	67
22	Laos	11.8	10.7	13.5	14.1	13.9	9.8	74	75	68	69	71
23	Mauritania	14.6	14.2	13.8	14.2	14.2	2.8	74	72	72	70	71
24	Bangladesh	12.4	10.6	12.7	11.3	10.4	16.1	74	71	69	68	67
25	Uzbekistan	14.6	12.7	13.5	12.4	15.5	4.4	73	71	71	71	71
26	Cuba	13.2	8.5	13.9	13.3	15.1	9.1	73	73	70	66	62
27	CAR	10.3	8.6	13.9	9.6	14.0	15.6	72	70	70	68	66
28	Niger	9.4	9.6	14.5	7.7	14.6	15.7	72	70	70	68	62

Rank	Country	Private life	Family life	Community life	National life	Church life	Violence	Total Score WWL 2025	Total Score WWL 2024	Total Score WWL 2023	Total Score WWL 2022	Total Score WWL 2021
29	Turkmenistan	14.3	12.3	13.6	13.9	15.3	1.5	71	70	70	69	70
30	Nicaragua	12.4	7.6	13.7	13.3	14.1	9.6	71	70	65	56	51
31	Mexico	11.7	9.0	12.5	11.8	11.0	14.6	71	68	67	65	64
32	Oman	14.5	14.1	10.9	13.8	14.1	3.0	70	69	65	66	63
33	Ethiopia	9.9	9.7	12.6	10.4	12.1	15.6	70	69	66	66	65
34	Tunisia	12.4	13.2	10.1	12.6	13.8	8.1	70	69	67	66	67
35	DRC	8.0	7.9	12.6	10.8	14.5	16.1	70	67	67	66	64
36	Bhutan	13.2	13.2	12.3	14.1	14.2	2.2	69	68	66	67	64
37	Mozambique	9.3	8.5	13.9	8.4	12.5	15.9	68	68	68	65	63
38	Kazakhstan	13.3	11.6	12.2	12.8	14.2	4.3	68	65	65	64	64
39	Tajikistan	14.1	12.7	12.7	13.2	13.7	1.9	68	66	66	65	66
40	Egypt	12.7	13.7	12.1	12.4	10.9	6.3	68	68	68	71	75
41	Qatar	14.2	14.2	10.5	13.2	14.4	0.7	67	67	68	74	67
42	Comoros	12.7	14.0	11.2	12.4	14.2	2.6	67	66	66	63	62
43	Cameroon	8.8	7.6	12.6	8.4	13.1	16.1	67	66	65	65	64
44	Vietnam	10.8	9.5	12.2	14.1	14.1	5.9	67	68	70	71	72
45	Turkey	13.0	11.7	11.7	13.2	11.5	5.4	67	64	66	65	69
46	Colombia	11.0	7.9	12.7	11.5	10.5	12.6	66	68	71	68	67
47	Kyrgyzstan	13.5	10.3	11.7	11.4	12.4	6.9	66	59	59	58	58
48	Brunei	14.8	14.8	10.8	10.8	14.0	0.6	66	66	65	64	64
49	Chad	11.0	8.2	10.2	9.9	10.3	15.9	65	61	58	55	53
50	Jordan	12.9	14.3	10.4	12.2	12.8	2.4	65	65	65	66	64

World Watch List 2025 – Ranks 51-78

Rank	Country	Private life	Family life	Community life	National life	Church life	Violence	Total Score WWL 2025	Total Score WWL 2024	Total Score WWL 2023	Total Score WWL 2022	Total Score WWL 2021
51	Malaysia	12.8	13.7	11.7	12.4	11.2	3.0	65	64	66	63	63
52	Azerbaijan	13.3	10.2	9.6	12.2	13.7	5.6	65	60	59	60	56
53	Kenya	10.3	9.2	11.4	8.0	11.5	13.9	64	63	64	63	62
54	Nepal	12.2	10.6	9.5	12.6	12.3	5.9	63	62	61	64	66
55	Tanzania	9.3	10.8	10.3	8.6	8.7	15.4	63	62	63	61	58
56	Russian Federation	12.7	7.9	10.7	13.1	14.1	4.4	63	58	57	56	57
57	Djibouti	12.3	12.6	12.7	10.1	12.1	1.7	61	61	60	59	56
58	Kuwait	13.1	13.6	9.4	12.0	12.2	0.9	61	61	64	64	63
59	Indonesia	10.9	11.9	10.9	11.6	10.2	5.7	61	66	68	68	63
60	UAE	13.3	13.4	9.5	11.3	12.8	0.6	61	61	62	62	62
61	Sri Lanka	12.7	8.7	11.5	11.5	8.5	7.6	60	60	57	63	62
62	Palestinian Territories	13.1	13.3	10.3	10.7	12.1	0.2	60	60	60	59	58
63	Burundi	7.6	7.8	9.4	9.8	9.7	14.6	59	57	55	52	48
64	Rwanda	9.4	7.7	9.0	10.4	12.1	9.4	58	58	57	50	42
65	Honduras	7.9	4.7	11.7	7.3	9.9	13.1	55	55	53	48	46
66	Togo	9.2	6.7	10.4	7.1	11.5	9.3	54	52	49	44	43
67	Bahrain	12.0	13.2	8.6	11.3	8.5	0.6	54	55	55	57	56
68	Guinea	10.3	7.5	8.3	8.3	10.5	8.9	54	52	48	43	47
69	Ukraine	6.8	5.0	7.8	12.5	13.5	7.2	53	44	37	37	34
70	Angola	6.8	6.7	8.1	11.5	11.4	8.3	53	52	52	51	46
71	Venezuela	6.3	4.4	11.1	10.0	10.8	9.6	52	53	56	51	39
72	Uganda	8.1	5.0	7.4	6.7	8.8	16.1	52	52	51	48	47
73	Ivory Coast	12.0	6.5	8.7	5.9	8.0	9.6	51	44	44	42	42
74	Lebanon	11.5	10.1	7.0	6.2	6.7	7.2	49	48	40	35	34
75	Gambia	8.3	8.2	8.9	8.8	8.9	4.4	48	47	44	44	43
76	South Sudan	5.7	4.4	7.0	6.3	8.1	15.6	47	46	46	43	43

Rank	Country	Private life	Family life	Community life	National life	Church life	Violence	Total Score WWL 2025	Total Score WWL 2024	Total Score WWL 2023	Total Score WWL 2022	Total Score WWL 2021
77	Belarus	9.9	3.7	5.0	10.8	14.1	3.1	47	46	43	33	30
78	Philippines	9.2	6.6	6.6	6.1	5.7	8.5	43	40	32	34	26

Copyright, sources and definitions

World Watch Research has divided up the previously named Full Country Dossier into two separate documents:

- [Background country information](#) (published annually in summer)
- Persecution dynamics (published annually in January).

These documents are the property of World Watch Research (WWR), the research department of Open Doors International. They include data and analysis based around Open Doors World Watch List (WWL) and 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 end of each document under the heading “External links”. These documents may be used and distributed free of charge, but please always acknowledge the source as: © Open Doors International.

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/>.

Reporting period

The WWL 2025 reporting period was 1 October 2023 - 30 September 2024.

Brief country details

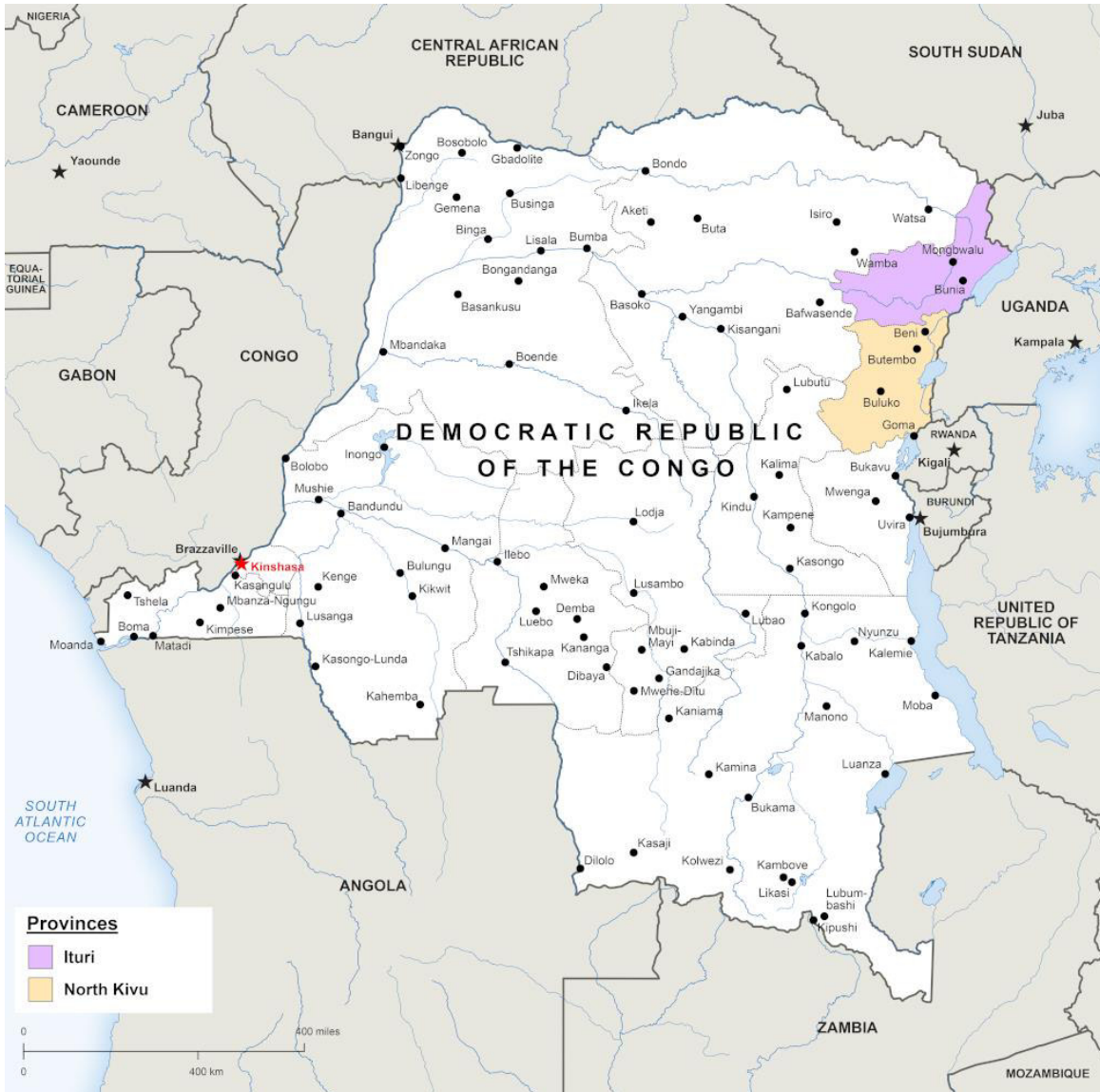
DRC: Population (UN estimate for 2024)

105,625,000

DRC: Religious context	Number of adherents	%
Christians	100,566,000	95.2
Muslim	1,531,000	1.4
Hindu	161,000	0.2
Buddhist	6,100	0.0
Ethnic religionist	2,512,000	2.4
Jewish	420	0.0
Bahai	442,000	0.4
Atheist	22,600	0.0
Agnostic	374,000	0.4
Other	9,200	0.0
<i>OTHER includes Chinese folk, New religionist, Sikh, Spiritist, Taoist, Confucianist, Jain, Shintoist, Zoroastrian.</i>		

Zurlo G A and Johnson T M, eds., *World Christian Database*, Leiden/Boston: Brill, accessed May 2024

Map of country



Dominant persecution engines and drivers

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

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

Brief description of the persecution situation

Christians in Eastern Congo face significant persecution and violence, particularly from the violent Islamic group Alliance of Democratic Forces (ADF-NALU), known for its brutal attacks on Christians and churches in North Kivu and Uganda. The ADF, linked to the Islamic State group (IS), has claimed responsibility for several attacks, creating an environment of fear and insecurity for Christians in the region. These deliberate attacks have not only targeted church buildings but also involved abductions and killings of Christians, leading to widespread displacement and terror. However, this affects only a small portion of the DRC and in most parts of the country *Islamic oppression* does not have any significant influence.

Additionally, the M23 rebel group, reportedly supported by the Rwandan government according to UN findings, has also targeted Christian civilians, further exacerbating the security situation. Converts from Islam and indigenous religions face immense familial pressure to renounce their faith and engage in traditional rites. Catholic Church representatives, who have been vocal in advocating for constitutional electoral adherence, have faced verbal harassment and interference, compounding the challenges for the Christian community in Eastern Congo. This volatile mix of militant threats, familial pressures, and political interference has caused a significant deterioration in the security environment for Christians, fostering a climate of continuous fear and persecution.

Summary of international obligations and rights violations

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

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

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

- Christian converts are ostracized and threatened with divorce and loss of inheritance (ICCPR Art. 18)
- Christian female converts run the risk of being abducted and forcibly married to Muslim men (ICCPR Art. 23; CEDAW Art. 16 and ICESCR Art. 10)
- Perpetrators of violence against Christians are sometimes left unpunished (ICCPR Art. 2)
- Christian children can be forced to learn Islamic scriptures (ICCPR Art. 18 and CRC Art. 14)

Specific examples of violations of rights in the reporting period

- **30 January 2024:** An attack on a Pentecostal church in Beni led to the death of eight Christians and the kidnapping of thirty others. The Allied Democratic Forces (ADF), linked to IS, were responsible for the assault ([Vatican News, 1 February 2024](#)).
- **4-8 June 2024:** Over 80 Christians were killed in multiple attacks across North Kivu, with several churches forced to close as a result. The ADF was identified as the perpetrator of these atrocities

([CBN, 17 June 2024](#)). One coordinated attack on 7 June 2024 resulted in the beheading of 60 Christians in the Masala villages of North Kivu province ([Christian Daily, 9 July 2024](#)).

- **12 June 2024:** Another IS-claimed attack in the village of Mayikengo resulted in the deaths of 42 Christians. The militants used firearms and machetes to carry out the massacre ([Decision Magazine, 17 June 2024](#)).
- **January - June 2024:** Islamic militants killed 639 Christians in various incidents, including beheadings and shootings, primarily in North Kivu and Ituri provinces ([Christian Daily, 9 July 2024](#)).

Christian communities and how they are affected

Communities of expatriate Christians: Expatriate Christians in DRC are not forced into isolation from other Christians. This category is therefore not included in the WWL analysis for scoring.

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

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

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

Areas where Christians face most difficulties

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

Position on the World Watch List

DRC: World Watch List	Points	WWL Rank
WWL 2025	70	35
WWL 2024	67	41
WWL 2023	67	37
WWL 2022	66	40
WWL 2021	64	40

The situation for Christians in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), especially in the eastern region, continues to deteriorate, with persecution intensifying year after year. Over the past five years, the country’s score has risen steadily, from 64 points in WWL 2021 to 70 points in WWL 2025, ranking 35. The average pressure score also increased to 10.8 in WWL 2025, up from 10.2 in WWL 2024, while a slight rise in the already extremely high violence score—from 15.9 in WWL 2024 to 16.1 in WWL 2025—reflects the ongoing severity of conditions for Christians. In the eastern region, Christians face significant challenges, particularly due to attacks by Islamic militant groups targeting churches and religious gatherings. The presence of organized crime compounds these hardships, disrupting community life and deepening the isolation of Christian communities.

Persecution engines

DRC: Persecution engines	Abbreviation	Level of influence
Islamic oppression	IO	Very strong
Religious nationalism	RN	Not at all
Ethno-religious hostility	ERH	Not at all
Clan oppression	CO	Medium
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	Very strong

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

Islamic oppression (Very strong)

This Persecution engine is particularly present in North Kivu and it is seen mainly in the activities of militant Islamic groups, especially ADF-NALU. The ideological influence of this group is affecting society and ordinary people not only in DRC, but also in neighboring Uganda. This further increases the likelihood of Christians being persecuted, especially converts from Islam to Christianity. It is important to note that this affects only a small portion of the DRC and in most parts of the country *Islamic oppression* is not a Persecution engine that has any significant presence.

Organized corruption and crime (Very strong)

Transparency International's Corruption Perception Index ([CPI 2023](#)) puts the country at rank 162 (out of 180 countries) with a score of 20 out of 100 (same score since 2022). Corruption (and impunity for corrupt activities) is rampant in both the public and private sectors. It particularly affects the Christian community which opposes it since it is a form of injustice and contradicts Christian principles of faith. This engine is strengthened by unscrupulous businesses.

Dictatorial paranoia (Medium)

DRC has suffered enormously under different regimes. Joseph Kabila postponed elections for two years without legal grounds. His supporters and security apparatus targeted Christians who voiced their discontent with his rule. The incumbent president, Felix Tshisekedi, came to power in December 2018 with a promise of cleaning up the mess and taking the country forward. Despite being re-elected in December 2023, there have been no tangible reforms taking place that can significantly protect the population from rebel group attacks in the country and reduce the level of persecution targeting Christians. Corruption remains rampant and the security apparatus remains unaccountable for their actions.

Clan oppression (Medium)

Converts from Islam and indigenous religions face immense pressure to renounce their faith and engage in traditional rites. In addition, much of the violence in North Kivu, Kisangani and in Kasai also bears an ethnic dimension.

Drivers of persecution

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

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

- Violent religious groups (Very strong):** The main drivers of *Islamic oppression* in the DRC are violent religious groups as well as ordinary people who are influenced by radical Islamic ideology. The ADF-NALU is responsible for the persecution of Christians in North Kivu, in the eastern part of the country. This group has violently attacked Christians and churches. Ordinary people influenced by militant brands of Islam especially persecute Christians with a Muslim background (i.e. converts).

Drivers of organized corruption and crime

- **Organized crime networks (Very strong):** DRC is one of the most wealthy and corrupt nations in Africa and has plentiful natural resources. Organized crime networks have become adept at smuggling minerals out of the country via a variety of routes. The crime and corruption related to the [mining industry](#), for instance, are profound (Raconteur, 4 June 2019). See also the report by [NPR, 1 February 2023](#).
- **Paramilitary groups (Strong):** DRC has numerous paramilitary and rebel groups that show disregard for civilian lives. These include M27, Mai-Mai, National Forces of Liberation, RUD-Urunana, Nyatura, FDLR, Mai Mai Sheka, Mai Mai Yakutumba, Raia Mutomboki, FNI, FRPI, FPJC, Mai-Mai Simba, UPC, Forces for Renewal, Mai Mai Kata Katanga, Mai Mai Gédéon, CORAK and CPK. These and other groups are creating an environment of lawlessness; they are illegally smuggling mining produce and they are merciless to those who oppose them. Christians in DRC who speak out against this practice experience severe reprisals.
- **Government officials (Medium):** Government representatives often embezzle public money and do not protect civilians from persecution. Those who attack Christians often enjoy impunity due to corruption.

Drivers of Dictatorial paranoia

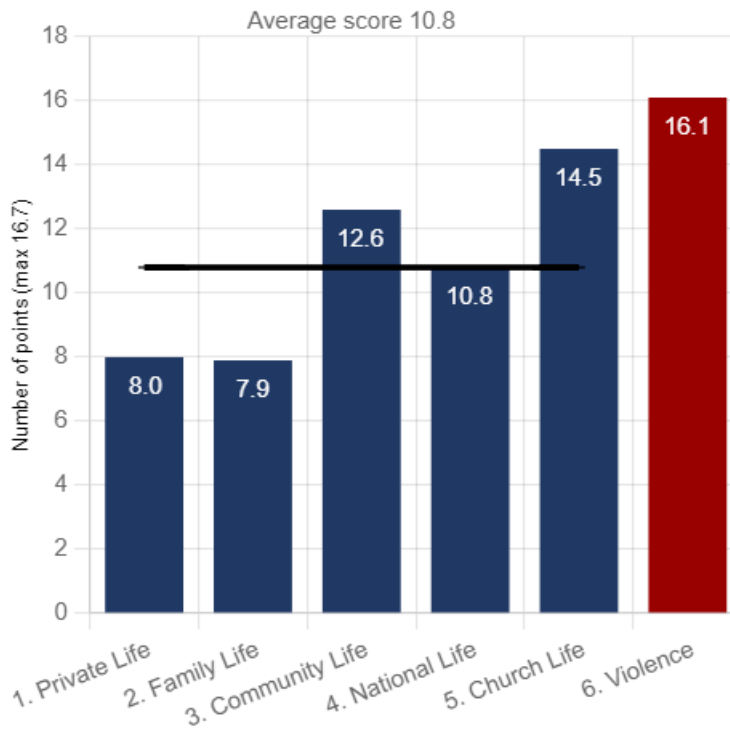
- **Government officials (Medium):** Now ex-President Kabila and his allies were determined to stay in power at all costs. Due to the role that the Roman Catholic Church tried to play in resolving the political and constitutional crises, some perceive Christians as being allied with government opposition. As a result, churches faced pressure from officials.

Drivers of Clan oppression

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

The Persecution pattern

WWL 2025 Persecution Pattern for Democratic Republic of the Congo



The WWL 2025 Persecution Pattern for DRC shows:

- The average pressure on Christians was high at 10.8 points, an increase from 10.2 points in WWL 2024.
- Pressure is highest in the *Church sphere*, scoring 14.5 points, an increase from 13.0 points in WWL 2024, followed by the *Community sphere* with 12.6 points. This rise reflects the challenges Christians face, particularly from Islamic militants in the eastern part of the country, where churches have faced repeated attacks. The influence of criminal groups and corruption further complicates church and community life for Christians.
- The score for violence is extremely high at 16.1 points, a slight increase from 15.9 points in WWL 2024. This increase is primarily due to killings and attacks on churches by various Islamic and other militant groups.

Pressure in the 5 spheres of life

In each of the five spheres of life discussed below, four questions have been selected from the WWL 2025 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://www.opendoors.org/en-US/research-reports/wwl-documentation/>.

Pressure in Block 1 / Private sphere

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

Christians face significant risks when expressing their faith on social media etc. due to threats from multiple fronts. Armed groups like the Allied Democratic Forces (ADF), driven by Islamist ideology, often target Christians who profess their faith or reject recruitment attempts. In areas where changing Christian denominations is sensitive, even established churches may restrict expressions of faith to maintain control. Additionally, Christians linking their faith to themes of justice and fairness often face censorship and punishment from government authorities, further suppressing religious expression.

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

Displaying Christian images or symbols in areas controlled by the Allied Democratic Forces (ADF) is an extremely risky act. The ADF, driven by its Islamist ideology, targets Christians who openly display their faith, often subjecting them to abductions, severe beatings or even killings. In regions where conversion from Islam or African Traditional Religions (ATR) to Christianity is particularly sensitive, using Christian symbols in public is seen as defiance, provoking hostility from both extremist groups and local communities.

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

Discussing one’s Christian faith with immediate family members is fraught with risks, particularly in areas controlled by the Allied Democratic Forces (ADF) or among families with Muslim or African Traditional Religions (ATR) backgrounds. Converts from Islam, ATR (or even other Christian denominations) face intense hostility, as such discussions can spark deep cultural and religious tensions. These tensions often result in verbal abuse, social rejection, and even physical violence. In ADF-controlled regions, the consequences are even graver, as expressing Christian beliefs can lead to severe punishment or retaliation.

Block 1.8: It has been risky for Christians to speak about their faith with those other than immediate family (extended family, others). (2.25 points)

Discussing one’s Christian faith with individuals outside the immediate family—such as extended relatives, neighbors, or acquaintances—poses significant risks, especially in areas where conversion is controversial. In regions influenced by the Allied Democratic Forces (ADF) or where communities adhere strongly to Islam or African Traditional Religions (ATR), such conversations can provoke hostility. Converts or Christians sharing their faith may face verbal attacks, social exclusion, or even physical violence. These risks extend beyond family tensions, reflecting deep-seated intolerance within the

broader community. In areas with strict denominational or religious divides, such discussions about faith can further isolate Christians and heighten vulnerabilities.

Pressure in Block 2 / Family sphere

Block 2.9: Children of Christians have been harassed or discriminated against because of their parents' faith. (2.75 points)

Children of Christians often face difficulties due to their parents' faith, particularly in areas with religious or inter-denominational tensions. In educational settings and social interactions, children from Christian families may encounter bias, especially when their beliefs differ from the dominant faiths or Christian denominations in their communities. This is particularly pronounced in regions where Catholicism is dominant, and non-Catholic Christian children may experience exclusion or prejudice. Areas where Christianity intersects with other religions, such as Islam or African Traditional Religions (ATR), further exacerbate the challenges, as religious diversity can heighten tensions.

Block 2.11: Spouses of converts have been put under pressure (successfully or unsuccessfully) by others to divorce. (2.75 points)

In the Democratic Republic of Congo, converts to Christianity or those who change Christian denominations often face intense marital pressure, with some spouses resorting to divorce. This is particularly pronounced in families practicing African Traditional Religions (ATR), Islam, or other non-Christian faiths, where conversion is seen as a rejection of deeply rooted cultural and spiritual traditions. A decision to convert is frequently perceived as a betrayal of family unity and community values, leading to severe tension within marriages. For converts from ATR or non-Christian religions, the pressure is often compounded by societal norms that prioritize collective identity over individual religious freedom. Spouses may initiate divorce to uphold their own religious affiliations and preserve their social standing within the community. In many cases, this intense marital and societal pressure can force converts to renounce their new faith to avoid isolation or to maintain their family life.

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

Christians face significant challenges in celebrating weddings due to a combination of religious intolerance, extremist threats, and societal pressures. In regions affected by jihadist groups like the Allied Democratic Forces (ADF), public Christian ceremonies, including weddings, are often targeted as part of a broader hostility towards open expressions of faith. Security risks force many Christians to hold private or clandestine ceremonies to avoid harassment, violence, or even deadly attacks. In communities dominated by African Traditional Religions (ATR) or other non-Christian beliefs, societal disapproval often leads to disruptions or outright resistance to Christian weddings, with families and local leaders opposing such events as a rejection of traditional practices. Compounding these difficulties, older and more established churches within Christianity itself often create barriers for newer Christian groups or denominations, refusing to recognize their ceremonies or actively obstructing their efforts to celebrate weddings.

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

Christian children often face pressure to attend teaching that conflicts with their faith, driven by a combination of religious dominance, societal norms and extremist ideologies. In regions where certain religious groups, such as the Catholic Church, exert significant influence over education, non-Catholic Christian children may be compelled to participate in class-work and practices that do not align with their denominational principles. Similarly, in areas controlled by armed groups like the Allied Democratic Forces (ADF), Christian children are exposed to teaching rooted in extremist ideologies that directly contradict their faith. In communities adhering strongly to African Traditional Religions (ATR) or other non-Christian beliefs, children may face cultural and familial pressure to participate in teaching or rituals at odds with Christian values.

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.). (3.50 points)

Particularly in the eastern regions, Christians encounter threats and significant obstacles in their daily lives. Armed groups, including those driven by Islamic radical ideologies like the Allied Democratic Forces (ADF), frequently target Christians to impose their beliefs or establish dominance within communities. Such groups often obstruct Christians from freely practicing their religion, using intimidation, violence and restrictions to suppress expressions of faith. Denominational protectionism within Christianity itself creates further challenges, as competition between major Christian denominations pressures individuals to conform to specific practices, beliefs or norms. This can include expectations around participation in rituals, adherence to certain dress codes, or compliance with denominational doctrines.

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

In the eastern Democratic Republic of Congo, Christians face persistent threats of abduction, particularly from armed groups like the Allied Democratic Forces (ADF) and other factions that regard Christian faith as a challenge to their values and operations. These groups often abduct Christians to suppress their influence, disrupt their communities, and use them as tools for labor, ransom or propaganda. Women and girls are particularly vulnerable, frequently subjected to forced marriages or exploitation as a means of control and subjugation. Additionally, these armed groups exploit the instability of the region, using abductions as a tactic to enforce compliance and spread fear among Christian communities.

Block 3.10: Christians have been discriminated against in public or private employment for faith-related reasons. (3.25 points)

Christians face significant discrimination in both public and private employment, driven by a combination of government targeting and denominational protectionism. In public sector jobs, Christians who are outspoken about justice, fairness, or their faith are often marginalized, dismissed, or denied promotions, as their principles are seen as threats to entrenched corruption and systemic injustice. In the private sector, denominational competition further exacerbates the issue, as hiring

practices and workplace dynamics are influenced by favoritism toward dominant Christian denominations. Employees from minority or less-established denominations frequently encounter bias, exclusion, or pressure to conform to the prevailing denomination's beliefs and practices.

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

Christians, particularly in the eastern parts of the Democratic Republic of Congo, face significant educational disadvantages due to their faith. While external threats, such as the presence of armed groups and extremist ideologies, contribute to these challenges, internal dynamics within the Christian community also exacerbate the issue. Denominational protectionism and competition often result in conflicts between different Christian denominations, creating barriers for students from minority or less-established groups. These students may face difficulties in accessing educational resources or opportunities, as favoritism toward dominant denominations shapes school policies and practices. Such disparities hinder the future prospects of Christian individuals, particularly in regions where security concerns, religious conflicts, and societal pressures converge.

Pressure in Block 4 / National sphere

Block 4.9: Christian civil society organizations or political parties have been hindered in their functioning or forbidden because of their Christian convictions. (3.75 points)

Christian civil society organizations in the Democratic Republic of Congo face significant challenges, often targeted by extremist groups and restricted by the government. Armed groups frequently attack or intimidate Christian organizations to suppress their influence or to further their own agendas. Meanwhile, the government imposes restrictions on Christian organizations that do not align with its ideology or criticize its policies. These groups may face heightened surveillance, bureaucratic delays, or outright bans, particularly if they advocate for justice or social accountability. The intersection of government loyalty demands, restrictive registration requirements, and political dynamics severely hinders these organizations' ability to operate effectively.

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

In the Democratic Republic of Congo, individuals or groups who harm Christians often go unpunished due to a combination of systemic corruption, weak state institutions and a lack of political will. Organized crime networks and extremist groups operate with relative impunity, exploiting the fragile justice system and, at times, the complicity of local officials. Corruption within law enforcement and judiciary systems further exacerbates the issue, as cases involving attacks on Christians are frequently ignored, delayed or dismissed. Moreover, some government officials are directly involved in or tacitly support actions that drive persecution, particularly when the targeting of Christians aligns with political or personal agendas. These officials shield perpetrators from accountability, ensuring that justice is neither pursued nor served. This pervasive culture of impunity not only emboldens those who harm Christians but also fosters a broader environment where religious persecution thrives unchecked, leaving Christian communities vulnerable and marginalized.

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. (3.50 points)

The political environment, characterized by significant government loyalty and registration processes, can influence individuals' decisions about their careers and obligations. While this issue is not unique to Christians, the broader dynamics of government loyalty and surveillance practices may impact their capacity to uphold their conscience. In contexts where government loyalty is emphasized, individuals can face challenges in adhering to their personal beliefs, especially involving military service.

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

The restrictive political environment and instability in the eastern regions have created significant barriers to freedom of expression, particularly for Christians. A government that prioritizes loyalty and control over openness imposes surveillance, censorship and bureaucratic constraints that stifle dissenting voices. Christians seeking to express opinions or advocate for justice and accountability often find themselves targeted, especially if their views challenge government policies or expose corruption. Their words are frequently construed as violating laws related to national security or public order, making them vulnerable to legal repercussions, harassment and even imprisonment. In the eastern part of the country, the presence of armed groups such as the Allied Democratic Forces (ADF) and other militias exacerbates these challenges. These groups operate with impunity, creating an atmosphere of fear and intimidation that silences Christians and other communities. Calling out injustices, advocating for peace or defending human dignity becomes virtually impossible under these conditions. The awareness that speaking out against issues like systemic corruption, exploitation, or social injustices can result in being labeled as anti-government or inciting unrest further discourages Christians from voicing their concerns.

Pressure in Block 5 / Church sphere

Block 5.1: Church activities have been monitored, hindered, disturbed, or obstructed. (3.75 points)

The activities of churches in the eastern part of the country have faced significant challenges, largely due to the complex environment shaped by numerous armed groups. Churches have been targeted, with incidents of monitoring, disturbances, and even destruction impacting Christians' ability to practice their faith freely. Additionally, internal rivalries and denominational protectionism have exacerbated these challenges, leading to further disruption and suffering for Christian communities.

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

Obtaining registration or legal status for churches has become increasingly challenging, particularly in the eastern regions, where security threats and political dynamics complicate the process. The Ministry of Justice has not issued any final registration permits for religious groups since 2014, despite legal provisions stating that applications should be automatically approved if no decision is made within six months. This lack of action has left many churches in a state of legal uncertainty, unable to obtain formal recognition. While the government has allowed domestic religious groups with pending registration applications to operate without interference, this temporary tolerance does not resolve the underlying challenges. Denominational protectionism and rivalries among major Christian denominations further complicate the situation, as competition between groups can delay or obstruct

the process. Combined with bureaucratic inefficiencies and a restrictive political environment, these obstacles hinder churches from gaining official status, limiting their ability to operate openly and engage in broader societal initiatives.

Block 5.8: Christian preaching, teaching and/or published materials have been monitored. (3.75 points)

The content of Christian preaching and materials are closely monitored in the Democratic Republic of Congo, particularly in the eastern regions where security threats and political dynamics heighten scrutiny. A law prohibiting insults against the president or other authorities is often applied in a sweeping manner, creating a broad framework that can be used to suppress religious teaching deemed critical of the government. This vague legal provision allows for selective enforcement, discouraging Christian leaders from addressing issues like corruption, injustice, or abuse of power, as their words can be construed as violations of the law.

Armed groups, including the Allied Democratic Forces (ADF), also monitor Christian activities closely. These groups view Christian teaching on justice, peace and human dignity as a direct threat to their authority and operations. Preachers and teachers who challenge the ideologies or actions of such groups often become targets for harassment, abduction or other forms of violence. The ADF and similar factions actively suppress religious content that undermines their control, further silencing Christian voices in the region. Denominational protectionism and internal rivalries among Christian groups add another layer of complexity, as competing factions may monitor and report each other to authorities or armed groups to gain an advantage.

This intricate network of surveillance and control—by the government, armed groups, and even within the Christian community—creates a climate of fear and self-censorship, severely limiting the ability of Christians to preach, teach, or share materials openly and without fear of reprisal.

Block 5.11: Pastors or other Christian leaders (or their family members) have been special targets of harassment for faith-related reasons. (3.75 points)

Particularly Christian leaders in the volatile eastern regions face targeted harassment due to their faith, caught between armed group hostility, government repression and denominational protectionism. Armed groups like the Allied Democratic Forces (ADF) often see these leaders as threats to their authority and agendas. Simultaneously, the government often views outspoken pastors as adversaries, subjecting them to surveillance, intimidation and bureaucratic barriers under the guise of maintaining control. Denominational protectionism further complicates their efforts, as established churches resist the presence or growth of newer Christian voices.

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.*

DRC: Violence scores per Block 6 question in questionnaire	WWL 2025	WWL 2024
6.1 How many Christians have been killed for faith-related reasons (including state sanctioned executions)?	355	261
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?	100 *	45
6.3 How many Christians have been detained for faith-related reasons?	10 *	6
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)?	100 *	100 *
6.6 How many Christians have been raped or otherwise sexually harassed for faith-related reasons?	100 *	100 *
6.7 How many cases have there been of forced marriages of Christians to non-Christians?	100 *	100 *
6.8 How many Christians have been otherwise physically or mentally abused for faith-related reasons (including beatings and death threats)?	1000 *	1000 *
6.9 How many houses of Christians or other property (excluding shops) have been attacked, damaged, bombed, looted, destroyed, burned down or confiscated for faith-related reasons?	1000 *	1000 *
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?	1000 *	100 *
6.11 How many Christians have been forced to leave their homes or go into hiding in-country for faith-related reasons?	10000 *	1000 *
6.12 How many Christians have been forced to leave the country for faith-related reasons?	1000 *	1000 *

In the WWL 2025 reporting period:

- Attacks on Christians:** ADF intensified its attacks on Christian communities. For instance, in June 2024, over 80 Christians were killed in a series of brutal assaults on villages in the eastern provinces ([CBN, 17 June 2024](#)). Some brutal attacks included burning victims alive and slaughtering them with machetes, illustrating the extreme violence Christians face in DRC's eastern region ([International Christian Concern - ICC, 24 April 2024](#)).

- **Attacks on churches:** IS-affiliates continued to target Christians, resulting in church closures and widespread fear. They carried out coordinated attacks, killing dozens and displacing many more. IS activities have added to the already complex and violent landscape of eastern DRC ([Christian Post, 16 June 2024](#)).
- **Weak government response to violent incidents:** Despite joint-military operations by Ugandan and Congolese forces, the government has struggled to protect its citizens effectively. The failure to curb rebel activities has drawn criticism from local leaders and international observers, who call for increased global intervention to ensure safety and support for displaced populations ([ICC, 24 April 2024](#)).

5 Year trends

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

5 Year trends: Average pressure

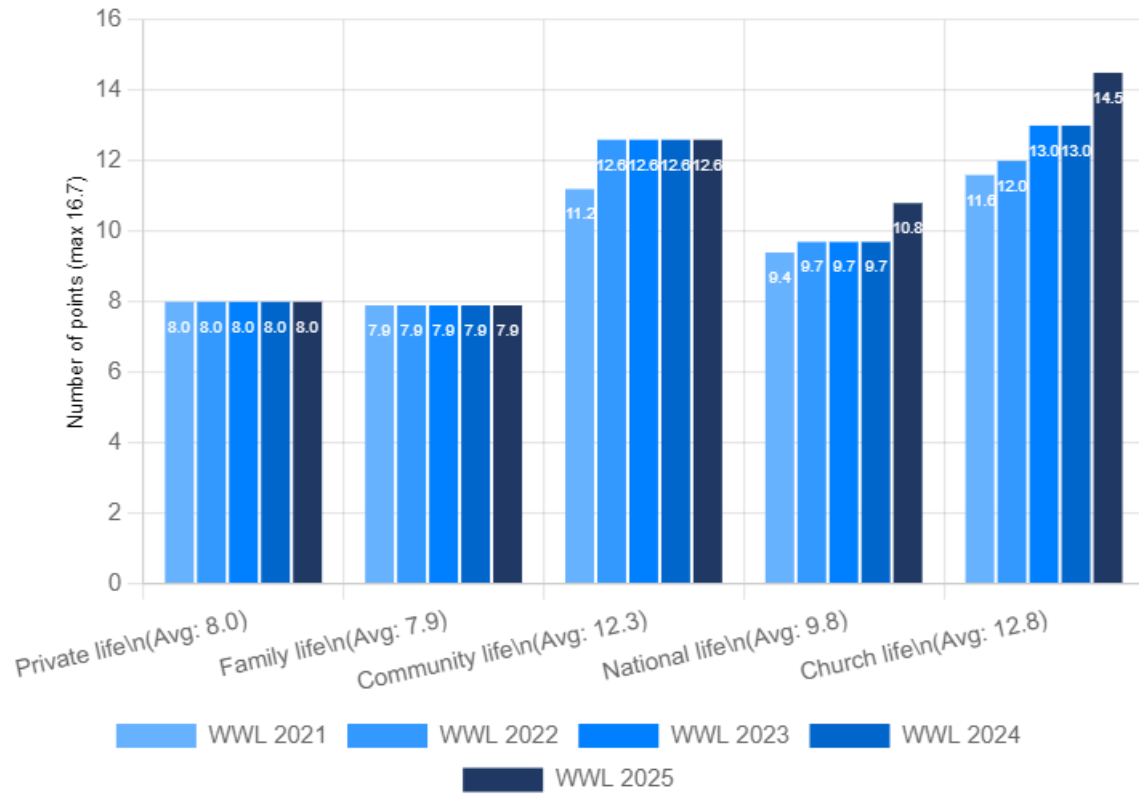
DRC: WWL 2021 - WWL 2025	Average pressure over 5 Spheres of life
2025	10.8
2024	10.2
2023	10.2
2022	10.0
2021	9.6

The table above shows that over the last five WWL reporting periods, the average pressure level has risen from 9.6 points in WWL 2021 to 10.8 in WWL 2025.

5 Year trends: Pressure in each sphere of life

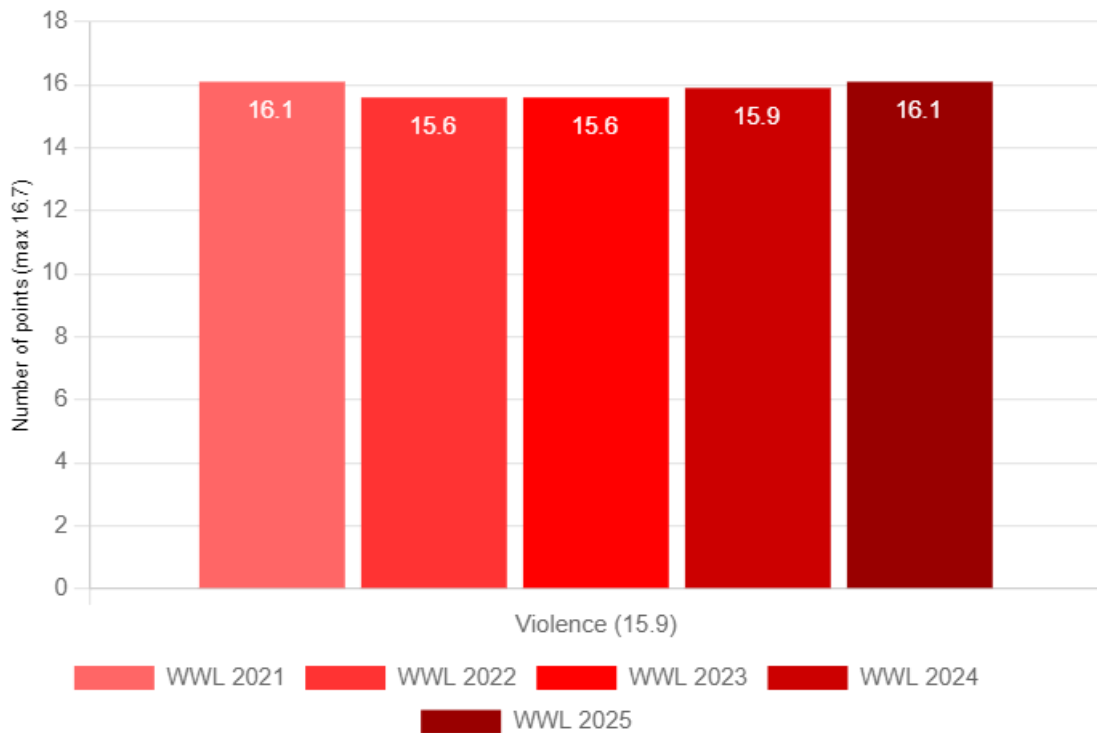
The blue chart below shows that the highest levels of pressure are to be found in the *Church* and *Community spheres*, indicating the intense strain experienced by Christians and religious institutions. This heightened pressure primarily arises from confrontations faced by churches and Christians, often driven by armed groups and Islamic militants concentrated in the eastern region. Additionally, government actions have contributed to the escalating pressure within the *Church sphere*.

Democratic Republic of the Congo: WWL 2021 - WWL 2025 Pressure scores in each sphere of life



5 Year trends: Violence against Christians

Democratic Republic of the Congo: WWL 2021 - WWL 2025 Violence scores



The above graph reveals a consistent and alarming trend in violence scores, which have remained at an extreme level of 15.6 points or higher across all five most recent World Watch List reporting periods. This sustained high level underscores the severe and ongoing violence targeting Christians, particularly in the eastern region of the country. Killings, kidnappings, the destruction of churches and Christian property, and other forms of violence have plagued Christians over the last five years. If the pressure score were as high as in some other top 50 WWL countries, the DRC would hold a much higher total score and ranking.

Gender-specific religious persecution / Female

Group	Female Pressure Points for WWL 2025
Economic	Denied inheritance or possessions
Political and Legal	Denied access to Christian religious materials, teachings and rites; Denied custody of children; Forced divorce; Forced marriage
Security	Abduction; Trafficking; Violence – death; Violence – physical; Violence – sexual
Social and Cultural	-
Technological	-

The Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) has a complex socio-political landscape where women, particularly in areas dominated by Islamist groups, face widespread discrimination. Christian women often experience persecution through denial of inheritance, access to their children, and vulnerability to forced marriage. Girls as young as 12 are forcibly married, often subjected to early pregnancies, and face domestic violence due to entrenched cultural practices. While no specific laws target Christian women, societal norms render them vulnerable to abuse, with 29% of girls in the DRC marrying before the age of 18 ([Girls Not Brides](#), accessed December 2024).

Congolese Christian women and girls are particularly susceptible to abduction, rape, trafficking, and sexual slavery, often by the Islamist Allied Democratic Forces (ADF). Sexual violence in displacement camps within the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) has worsened significantly, with documented cases more than doubling in early 2024 ([PHR](#) Press Release, 22 October 2024). An Epicentre survey conducted in April 2024 in four displacement camps around Goma revealed that more than 10% of young women reported being raped between November 2023 and April 2024 ([Epicentre](#), 6 August 2024) and approximately 55,500 survivors of sexual violence have received medical care across 12 provinces, indicating a substantial rise in reported cases ([MSF, 2024](#)). The ongoing conflict and displacement have created conditions that increase vulnerabilities to gender-based violence. Underreporting and restricted access to certain regions mean the actual scale of the crisis is likely much greater.

Many women are forcibly married to militia leaders or used as human shields during conflicts. “The persecutors sometimes put women (sometimes pregnant) and small girls in front, knowing that they cannot be easily shot,” a country expert revealed. Kidnappings and assaults, especially in the north-

east, leave survivors with severe psychological trauma, and victims of sexual violence often face stigma and rejection by their families and communities. Female orphans, particularly those in regions like Kasindi Lubiriha, suffer from the brutality of the ADF, facing daily struggles related to menstrual health management and limited access to sanitary products ([ICC, 22 August 2024](#)).

Women and girls have been kidnapped and forced into marriages with ADF militants, subjected to sexual violence, and, in some cases, killed ([JNS, 21 October 2024](#)). A country expert states that many Christian women who are spared are reportedly kept as a kind of “trophy”.

Reports also implicate government soldiers in widespread sexual violence in conflict zones where Congolese security forces have been responsible for civilian casualties, including women and children ([HRW 2024, country chapter DRC](#)). Experts highlight the devastating impact of these abuses on survivors, who frequently suffer from trauma, low self-esteem, and exclusion from society. Such persecution not only harms individuals but also destabilizes entire communities, creating a multiplier effect of trauma and marginalization.

Gender-specific religious persecution / Male

Group	Male Pressure Points for WWL 2025
Economic	-
Political and Legal	Imprisonment by government
Security	Abduction; Military/militia conscription/service against conscience; Trafficking; Violence – death; Violence – physical; Violence – sexual
Social and Cultural	Violence – psychological
Technological	-

In a context of the endemic violence and impunity, Christian men in DRC face violent and extreme forms of persecution, including maiming, abduction, forced recruitment into militia groups, forced labor, sexual mutilation, disemboweling and brutal killings. While women and girls face the highest rates of rape, a country expert highlights that “men and boys also face conflict-related sexual violence.”

As of August 2024, there were nearly 6.9 million internally displaced persons (IDPs) nationwide, with approximately 5.5 million located in the provinces of Ituri, North Kivu, South Kivu, and Tanganyika. Notably, 96% of these displacements are attributed to armed conflicts, while the remaining 4% result from natural disasters ([OIM DRC, 15 November 2024](#)). The surge in the number of displaced individuals has been primarily due to intensified attacks by armed groups, compelling civilians to flee their homes.

In 2024, armed groups in DRC, including the ADF, continue to forcibly recruit civilians, particularly Christian men and boys. Other militias, such as the Nduma Defense of Congo-Renovated (NDC-R), have also engaged in forced recruitment, child soldier conscription, and widespread human rights abuses, including sexual violence and forced labor. The M23 rebels, operating with alleged external support,

have been implicated in similar activities, conducting summary executions and forcibly recruiting men in eastern DRC ([HRW](#), 6 February 2023). The ADF has intensified attacks on Christian communities, involving abductions, forced conversions, and recruitment into their ranks. Those who manage to escape often face crippling ransoms, further impoverishing their families. Even without these ransoms, Christian men frequently encounter workplace discrimination and are often denied employment opportunities. While the DRC's Constitution prohibits religious discrimination and provides for freedom of religion, enforcement is inconsistent, especially in conflict-affected areas (US State Department [IRFR 2023 DRC](#)).

Pastors and Christian leaders, particularly in eastern DRC, are frequently targeted due to their faith. Armed groups harass leaders who denounce violence or criticize the government, leading to arrests, church closures, and violent reprisals. Militia groups have been responsible for attacks on churches and the killing of Christians ([Christian Post](#), 16 June 2024). This persecution destabilizes families and weakens Christian communities, as men are traditionally the primary protectors and providers.

Persecution of other religious minorities

According to the US State Department 2023 ([IRFR 2023 DRC](#)):

- "Jehovah's Witnesses reported attacks against their members in the interior provinces. They also said that public schools run by other religious groups continued to expel students and teachers who were Jehovah's Witnesses for refusing to participate in religious activities or convert to other faiths."
- "[T]he government did not afford [Muslims] some of the same privileges as larger religious groups and that the Muslim community suffered from a lack of representation in government institutions. For example, the government continued to deny Muslims the opportunity to provide chaplains in the military, police force and hospitals, despite a complaint filed in 2015 with the then President and his cabinet."

Trends Summary

1) Post-Kabila government challenges

The transition to a post-Kabila government has been long and challenging due to significant political fragmentation and deep-rooted economic and social issues. President Felix Tshisekedi's attempts to dismantle Kabila's extensive network of loyalists in the government and armed forces have faced resistance. Despite forming a new coalition, the Sacred Union of the Nation, Tshisekedi has had to co-opt rather than antagonize Kabila loyalists, securing their support through strategic alliances. This complicated situation has made it harder to implement important reforms, such as anti-corruption measures and changes to the electoral law. This has caused the climate of instability and bad government to continue.

2) Mineral wealth and instability

The DRC's abundant natural resources, especially minerals such as cobalt and copper, continue to exacerbate instability and conflict. Armed groups, including those with international connections, exploit these resources to fund their activities, leading to sustained violence and insecurity. As reported by [Africa Center for Strategic Studies](#) (29 June 2022), this illicit trade undermines peace-

building efforts and fuels corruption. International corporations involved in the DRC's mineral sector often indirectly contribute to these conflicts through complex supply chains. Illegal exploitation has not been stopped by efforts to implement responsible sourcing programs. To fully address these problems, stronger governance and international cooperation are needed.

3) Rwandan forces and regional tensions

The involvement of Rwandan forces in the DRC continues to be a contentious issue, adding layers of complexity to the regional security landscape. In January 2023, tensions escalated when Rwandan forces fired a missile at a DRC fighter jet, intensifying the conflict in the eastern provinces. Reports from [Al-Jazeera](#) (e.g., 15 July 2024) and other sources highlight allegations of Rwanda's support for the M23 rebel group, which has been active in the region. This support includes providing weapons and strategic assistance, further complicating peace efforts and contributing to the displacement of thousands of civilians. The ongoing military activities and political maneuvers underscore the fragile and volatile nature of the DRC's security situation, with significant implications for regional stability. The Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) continues to face significant challenges marked by persistent instability and violence, particularly in its mineral-rich eastern regions.

Despite President Félix Tshisekedi's efforts to implement reforms and his re-election in December 2023, the lingering influence of former President Joseph Kabila and his network within the military and government has hindered substantial progress in governance, human rights and anti-corruption measures. The exploitation of minerals by armed groups fuels ongoing conflicts and attracts international corporations, complicating peacebuilding efforts. Additionally, regional tensions, notably involving Rwandan support for the M23 rebel group, further exacerbate the security situation, leading to increased violence and civilian displacement.

4) The persecution of Christians and ADF-NALU expansion

The fragile security situation in eastern DRC poses significant risks for the Christian population and provides opportunities for radical groups like the Allied Democratic Forces (ADF) to expand their influence. The ADF has intensified its brutal attacks, including kidnappings and massacres, targeting civilians and recruiting child soldiers. The presence of numerous armed factions, each vying for control over resources and territory, has created a chaotic environment where human rights abuses are rampant. The government's inability to maintain control over these regions and protect its citizens exacerbates the vulnerability of religious minorities and fuels ongoing cycles of violence and displacement.

Further useful reports

Further background information per country and 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/wwl-background/>
- <https://www.opendoors.org/en-US/research-reports/>.
- [DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF CONGO – Mapping the conflict – 2018](#)

External Links

- Copyright, sources and definitions: Background country information - <https://www.opendoors.org/en-US/research-reports/wwl-background/>
- Summary of international obligations and rights violations: International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights - <https://www.ohchr.org/en/professionalinterest/pages/ccpr.aspx>
- Summary of international obligations and rights violations: International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights - <https://www.ohchr.org/en/professionalinterest/pages/cescr.aspx>
- Summary of international obligations and rights violations: Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment - <https://www.ohchr.org/en/professionalinterest/pages/cat.aspx>
- Summary of international obligations and rights violations: Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women - <https://www.ohchr.org/EN/ProfessionalInterest/Pages/CEDAW.aspx>
- Summary of international obligations and rights violations: Convention on the Rights of the Child - <https://www.ohchr.org/en/professionalinterest/pages/crc.aspx>
- Specific examples of violations of rights in the reporting period: Vatican News, 1 February 2024 - <https://www.vaticannews.va/en/world/news/2024-02/pentecostal-church-attack-beni-democratic-republic-congo.html>
- Specific examples of violations of rights in the reporting period: CBN, 17 June 2024 - <https://www2.cbn.com/news/world/horrifying-isis-kills-80-christians-decapitating-victims-democratic-republic-congo>
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