

World
Watch
Research

Angola: Full Country Dossier

March 2024



OpenDoors

Serving persecuted **Christians** worldwide

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Introduction

World Watch List 2024

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

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

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Sources and definitions

- This country report is a collation of data and analysis based around Open Doors World Watch List (WWL) and includes statistical information on world religions, Christian denominations and people groups prepared by the World Christian Database (WCD).
- Highlighted links in the text can be found written out in full at the conclusion of each main section under the heading “External links”. In order to reduce the length of these reference sections, a table containing links to regularly used sources can be found at the beginning of the “Keys to Understanding” chapter under the heading “Links for general background information”. Where one of these sources has been quoted in the dossier text, a quote reference is supplied as indicated in the second column of the table.
- The WWL 2024 reporting period was 1 October 2022 - 30 September 2023.
- The definition of persecution used in WWL analysis is: “Any hostility experienced as a result of one’s identification with Christ. This can include hostile attitudes, words and actions towards Christians”. This broad definition includes (but is not limited to) restrictions, pressure, discrimination, opposition, disinformation, injustice, intimidation, mistreatment, marginalization, oppression, intolerance, infringement, violation, ostracism, hostilities, harassment, abuse, violence, ethnic cleansing and genocide.
- The latest update of WWL Methodology can be found on the research pages of the Open Doors website: <https://www.opendoors.org/en-US/research-reports/wwl-documentation/> and on the Open Doors Analytical website (password: freedom): <https://opendoorsanalytical.org/world-watch-list-documentation/>.

WWL 2024 Situation in brief / Angola

Brief country details

Angola: Population (UN estimate for 2023)	Christians	Chr%
36,149,000	33,795,000	93.5

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

Map of country



Angola: World Watch List	Points	WWL Rank
WWL 2024	52	71
WWL 2023	52	68
WWL 2022	51	66
WWL 2021	46	68
WWL 2020	43	68

Dominant persecution engines and drivers

Angola: Main Persecution engines	Main drivers
Dictatorial paranoia	Government officials, Organized crime cartels or networks
Christian denominational protectionism	Religious leaders of other churches
Organized corruption and crime	Government officials, Organized crime cartels or networks

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 Angola face difficulties in a variety of ways. First of all, since 2004, the government had not given any official recognition to new churches until June 2022. Secondly, as a result of this, many churches have been operating illegally, causing Christians to fear possible arrest or demolition of their church buildings. Thirdly, the government is also creating an unfavorable environment by publicly stating that 'religious sects' are a cause for concern.

Specific examples of violations of rights in the reporting period

- Christians who are not part of a registered church cannot freely engage in evangelism and collective worship.
- Church demolitions/closure.
- Continual denial of recognition for new places of worship, due to unrealistic requirements (see below: *Religious landscape*).

Specific examples of positive developments

New church registrations: The government recognized four Christian groups in June 2022: Christian Missionary Assembly; Josafat Church; United Pentecostal Church in Angola; and Presbyterian Church of Angola (US State Department IRFR 2022 Angola).

WWL 2024: Keys to understanding / Angola

Links for general background information

Name	Quote Reference	Link	Last accessed on
Amnesty International 2022/23 Angola report	AI Angola 2022	https://www.amnesty.org/en/location/africa/southern-africa/angola/report-angola/	14 September 2023
BBC News Angola profile - updated 21 February 2023	BBC Angola profile	https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-africa-13036732	14 September 2023
Bertelsmann Transformation Index 2022 – Angola report	BTI Angola Report 2022	https://bti-project.org/en/reports/country-report/AGO	14 September 2023
Crisis24 Angola report (Garda World)	Crisis24 Angola report	https://crisis24.garda.com/insights-intelligence/intelligence/country-reports/angola	14 September 2023
Economist Intelligence Unit 2023 Angola summary	EIU 2023 Angola summary	https://country.eiu.com/angola	14 September 2023
FFP's Fragile States Index 2023 – Angola	FSI 2023 Angola	https://fragilestatesindex.org/country-data/	14 September 2023
Freedom House's 2023 Democracy index – covering 29 countries (Angola not included)	Democracy Index 2023	https://freedomhouse.org/countries/nations-transit/scores	
Freedom House's 2023 Global Freedom index – Angola	Global Freedom Index 2023 Angola	https://freedomhouse.org/country/angola/freedom-world/2023	14 September 2023
Freedom House's Freedom on the Net 2023 report – covering 70 countries	Freedom on the Net 2023 Angola	https://freedomhouse.org/country/angola/freedom-net/2023	11 March 2024
Georgetown's Women, Peace and Security Index 2021/2022 - Angola	GIWPS 2021 Angola	https://giwps.georgetown.edu/country/angola/	14 September 2023
Girls Not Brides Angola report	Girls Not Brides Angola	https://www.girlsnotbrides.org/learning-resources/child-marriage-atlas/regions-and-countries/angola/	14 September 2023
Human Rights Watch World Report 2023 - Angola country chapter	HRW 2023 Angola country chapter	https://www.hrw.org/world-report/2023/country-chapters/angola	14 September 2023
Internet World Stats 2023 Angola	IWS 2023 Angola	https://www.internetworldstats.com/africa.htm#ao	14 September 2023
RSF's 2023 World Press Freedom Index – Angola	World Press Freedom 2023 Angola	https://rsf.org/en/angola	14 September 2023
Transparency International's 2022 Corruption Perceptions Index – Angola	CPI 2022 Angola	https://www.transparency.org/en/cpi/2022/index/ago	14 September 2023
UNDP Human Development Report Angola - data updates as of 8 September 2022	UNDP HDR Angola	https://hdr.undp.org/data-center/specific-country-data/#countries/AGO	14 September 2023
US State Department's 2022 International Religious Freedom Report Angola	IRFR 2022 Angola	https://www.state.gov/reports/2022-report-on-international-religious-freedom/angola/	14 September 2023
USCIRF 2023 country reports – covering 17 CPC / 11 SWL (Angola not included)	USCIRF 2023	https://www.uscirf.gov/countries	
World Bank Angola data – 2021	World Bank Angola data	https://databank.worldbank.org/views/reports/reportwidget.aspx?Report_Name=CountryProfileId=b450fd57tbar=ydd=yinf=nzm=ncontry=AGO	14 September 2023
World Bank Angola overview - updated 4 April 2023	World Bank Angola overview	https://www.worldbank.org/en/country/angola/overview	14 September 2023
World Bank Macro Poverty Outlook Angola - April 2023	Macro Poverty Outlook 2023 Angola	https://thedocs.worldbank.org/en/doc/bae48ff2f5c5a869546775b3f010735-0500062021/related/mpo-ago.pdf	14 September 2023
World Factbook Angola - updated 8 September 2023	World Factbook Angola	https://www.cia.gov/the-world-factbook/countries/angola/	14 September 2023

Recent history

Angola is in southern Africa bordered by Namibia in the south, the Democratic Republic of Congo to the north, Zambia to the east and by the Atlantic Ocean in the west. It declared independence from Portugal on 11 November 1975 after a struggle of more than thirty years. Angola is well-known for the 27 year long civil war (1975-2002) which followed independence. At the height of the Cold War, the battle for Angola became a proxy war between the West and the Communist bloc.

The civil war had begun even before independence was gained in 1975 and was caused mainly by ideological differences among the factions who were fighting for independence. The factions were:

- The National Front for the Liberation of Angola (FNLA - right wing);
- The Popular Movement for the Liberation of Angola (MPLA - socialist);
- The National Union for the Total Independence of Angola (UNITA - anti-socialist).

With Cuban and Eastern bloc assistance, the MPLA was able to defeat the FNLA, but the members of UNITA (later supported by the USA) continued to wage a war against the socialist government. However, control by the government of areas outside the cities was slight. The de-

vastating effect of the war left the country on the brink of complete disintegration. In 1990, UNITA recognized the legitimacy of the MPLA government as a transitional one, the MPLA formally renounced Marxist-Leninism in favor of Social Democracy, and in 1991 the two parties were able to arrive at a settlement and signed the Bicesse Accords in Portugal. A new constitution was agreed upon and multi-party elections were scheduled to take place under the supervision of the United Nations. Elections were held in 1992 and the MPLA won. UNITA rejected the result and went back to war. In 2002, the leader of UNITA, Jonas Savimbi, was killed in an ambush, and the civil war ended with a victory for MPLA. (Source: [South African History Online](#), last accessed 13 February 2023)

President Dos Santos came to power in 1979 and ruled with an iron fist. In August 2017, after 40 years in power, Santos finally stepped down and his right-hand man won the presidential elections amid accusations of irregularities. João Lourenço assumed office in September 2017 but there was little hope of any major policy changes, although he did make some progress in reducing corruption. For instance: In August 2019, the government [arrested and sentenced](#) a former minister to 14 years imprisonment on corruption charges (Bloomberg, 15 August 2019). In 2019 and 2020, there was little progress in terms of human rights even though the current president is clearly more [open to reforms](#) than his predecessor (ISS, April 2020). Just like any other country, the COVID-19 crisis also shaped Angola's politics, economy and social life in 2020 and 2021.

In August 2022, "incumbent President Lourenço was elected for a second term in highly disputed elections. The MPLA extended its five-decade long rule but lost its two-thirds majority in parliament. For the first time, the coalition led by UNITA received more votes in the capital, Luanda, than the ruling party." (Source: HRW 2023 Angola country chapter)

Political and legal landscape

The country went through some devastating phases after gaining independence. It is a presidential republic, with the president acting both as head of state and head of government. Theoretically, the country moved to a multi-party system following the 1992 elections. However, as in many other Sub-Saharan countries, elections in Angola only bear a façade of institutional democracy. Angola is one of the prime examples where a national liberation movement has taken over as the dominant ruling party. While the first ever local elections scheduled for 2020 were [postponed indefinitely](#) due mainly to the COVID-19 crisis (21Votes, accessed 25 February 2021), [national and presidential elections](#) took place in August 2022, as stated above, with the MPLA ruling party and incumbent President Joao Lourenco winning (Al-Jazeera, 29 August 2022).

Angola is a secular state with a Christian majority. Constitutionally speaking, freedom of religion is respected. Article 10 (section 2) of the [2010 Constitution](#) states: "The state shall recognize and respect the different religious faiths, which shall be free to organize and exercise their activities, provided that they abide by the constitution and the laws of The Republic of Angola" (Constitute Project, accessed 30 September 2020). Article 41 also provides for freedom of conscience, religion, and worship, and recognizes the right to conscientious objection. Article 41, section 4 states that "no authority shall question anyone with regard to their convictions or religious practices, except to gather statistical data that cannot be individually identified". However, these well-articulated constitutional guarantees are restricted by the actions of the government.

According to Freedom House's Global Freedom Index 2023 Angola:

- **Angola is rated 'not free' both in civil liberties and political rights:** Freedom of expression, freedom of association and other human rights are curtailed by the ruling party: "Angola has been ruled by the same party since independence, and authorities have systematically repressed political dissent. Corruption, due process violations, and abuses by security forces remain common. Some restrictions on the press and civil society were eased after President João Lourenço took office in 2017, but that partial opening has since been reversed."
- **The electoral process is not free and fair:** "Angola has been ruled by the same party since independence, and authorities have systematically repressed political dissent. Corruption, due process violations, and abuses by security forces remain common. Some restrictions on the press and civil society were eased after President João Lourenço took office in 2017, but that partial opening has since been reversed." Furthermore, "While there is a multiparty system in place, competition is limited. The process for creating new political parties is fraught with bureaucratic obstacles and attempts at co-optation, factors that severely hinder public confidence in new parties."
- **Corruption is rampant:** "After decades of MPLA rule, corruption and patronage have become entrenched in nearly all segments of public and private life. A few high-profile associates of former president José Eduardo dos Santos have been convicted of corruption in recent years, including his son, José Filomeno dos Santos, whose 2020 guilty verdict was upheld by the Supreme Court in 2021. The former president's daughter, Isabel dos Santos, has been accused of siphoning public funds from the state oil firm, Sonangol; she was ordered to return \$500 million in shares to the company by an international arbitration court in 2021. However, senior officials who are not directly connected to the family of former president dos Santos have rarely been brought to trial."
- **Media and press freedom is restricted:** In 2020, the government privatized a number of outlets they said were owned by members of the political and military elite but funded by the state. Journalists' groups expressed concern about a lack of transparency regarding the privatization. "The state owns most media in the country, and such outlets report favorably on the government, rarely carrying critical coverage. Most ostensibly private outlets also act as mouthpieces of the regime. However, content produced by foreign news agencies is widely consumed."
- **Insult and defamation are considered criminal offences:** "Journalists accused of engaging in incitement, hate speech, defense of fascist or racist ideologies, or dissemination of 'fake news' can be charged with 'abuse of press freedom'. Government officials regularly file criminal complaints as well as civil lawsuits against members of the press in practice. Journalists also face physical violence in the course of their work."

The same report shows how freedom of assembly and association, academic freedom, individual freedom of expression and religious freedom are still restricted in Angola:

- "The constitution guarantees religious freedom, but the government imposes onerous criteria on religious groups for official recognition, which is required for the legal construction of houses of worship. Many Pentecostal churches remain unregistered. There are no registered Muslim groups, though Muslim communities have been vocal in their de-

mands for recognition and the right to worship freely."

- "Academics must maintain a façade of agreement with the MPLA’s preferred narratives and refrain from open criticism of the party, or risk losing their positions. Those who voice dissent are often monitored by security services."
- "Fear of retribution for expressing criticism of the government or controversial opinions in private conversations persists in Angola, and self-censorship is common. Known surveillance of civil society groups, journalists, and academics can leave ordinary citizens reluctant to speak out. The government actively monitors online activity. Opposition parties’ youth organizations claim that repression of political dissent has increased in recent years, citing several instances of arbitrary arrests and intimidation of government critics by state security forces."
- "While the Lourenço administration initially showed more tolerance for public demonstrations than its predecessor, peaceful marches are still frequently met with arrests and violence by the security forces, at times resulting in the deaths of protesters."

Religious landscape

Angola: Religious context	Number of adherents	%
Christians	33,795,000	93.5
Muslim	409,000	1.1
Hindu	680	0.0
Buddhist	3,000	0.0
Ethno-religionist	1,630,000	4.5
Jewish	0	0.0
Bahai	3,800	0.0
Atheist	57,500	0.2
Agnostic	249,000	0.7
Other	290	0.0
<i>OTHER includes Chinese folk, New religionist, Sikh, Spiritist, Taoist, Confucianist, Jain, Shintoist, Zoroastrian.</i>		

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

In May 2019 a new law was introduced which reduced the 100,000 member registration requirement to 60,000, but added several other requirements, including a mandate that 1,000 members reside in each of the country’s 18 provinces. This change has actually made it more difficult for churches to submit an application. In 2022, four churches were registered. Many church leaders have applied for registration for their churches and have been waiting for over ten years. Without registration, it is illegal to operate schools, clinics and other social services. Christians have thus found it difficult to congregate and many churches face demolition. In No-

vember 2018, thousands of churches were [facing forced closure](#) (World Watch Monitor, 14 November 2018). Some of the churches that were closed have been demolished, and additional closures continued in subsequent years. In the WWL 2023 and WWL 2024 reporting periods, over a hundred smaller churches were forced by the authorities to close down.

According to the US State Department (IRFR 2022 Angola):

- "There are 81 recognized religious groups and more than 1,100 unrecognized religious groups in the country."
- "'Representatives of the Roman Catholic church were among the official election observers, who were led by Gabriel Mbilingi, Archbishop of Lubango and former head of the Conference of Bishops of Angola and São Tomé (CEAST)."
- While the government says there are only 122,000 Muslims, "Muslim groups estimate that the number has grown considerably since that time. A leader of one Muslim organization estimated there are 800,000 Muslims in the country, of whom approximately 95 percent are foreign migrants, mainly from North and West African countries. There are approximately 350 Jews, primarily resident foreign nationals."

Christians, who have been asking for better legal protection and recognition, will most likely continue to be ignored by the authorities.

Economic landscape

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

- **Economic growth:** Growth surged in 2022, fueled by a boost in oil production and a rise in oil prices, which enabled the government to adopt an expansive fiscal policy during an election year. The currency strengthened, and a decrease in food prices contributed to a rapid decline in inflation, reducing the poverty rate to 32.7 percent. However, the economic outlook for the near term is tempered by challenges in the oil sector. The economy faces heightened risks due to its heavy reliance on oil revenue, making it imperative to implement policies that eliminate market distortions and bolster economic resilience. Due to a decline in oil production and a less expansive fiscal approach, economic growth is projected to slow to 2.6 percent in 2023, falling below the rate of population growth at 3.1 percent. However, sectors outside of oil, such as agriculture, construction, and services, are anticipated to maintain robust growth, with non-oil GDP expected to exceed four percent annually. Although the poverty rate is likely to continue its marginal decline, the rapid pace of population growth means that the total number of people living in poverty is expected to exceed 11.7 million.
- **Currency depreciation/inflation:** In 2022, buoyed by rising oil prices, the currency saw a significant appreciation of 26.2 percent. However, the pressure for currency appreciation has eased since late 2022. Inflation experienced a rapid decline, enabling the Central Bank to ease monetary policy. The year-over-year rate plummeted from 27 percent in December 2021 to 13.9 percent in December 2022, marking the lowest level since 2015. As inflationary pressures waned, the Central Bank adjusted the reference rate downward, moving from 20 percent up until September 2022 to 18 percent by January 2023. Inflation is anticipated to continue its moderating trajectory, although potential adjustments in regulated prices, par-

ticularly for fuel, could lead to temporary price increases.

- **Current account:** The current account surplus, which stood at about 11 percent of GDP at the end of 2022, is expected to gradually narrow. This is due to the anticipated decline in oil production and expected reduction in oil prices, which non-oil export growth is unlikely to offset. Meanwhile, import growth remains strong. International reserves were at \$14.5 billion at the end of 2022, covering approximately six months of imports. The flexible exchange rate is poised to alleviate pressures on external reserves and act as a first line of defense against external shocks. To meet the large external debt service requirements, the country relies on a mix of bilateral and multilateral loans, bond issuances, and increasingly, foreign direct investment.

According to the [African Development Bank Group](#) (accessed 28 August 2023):

Real GDP growth climbed to 3.0% in 2022, a significant increase from the 1.1% seen in 2021. Despite this, per capita income growth was negative at -0.2% in 2022, largely due to a high population growth rate of 3%. The surge in GDP was primarily driven by elevated oil prices in 2022, a consequence of Russia's invasion of Ukraine. The average price per barrel of Angola's crude oil reached \$100.65, far exceeding the conservative \$59.00 estimate in the 2022 national budget, and generating an additional estimated revenue of \$17.18 billion. This influx of oil revenue expanded the fiscal surplus from 1.9% of GDP in 2021 to 3.0% in 2022.

However, a moderation in oil exports led to a reduction in the current account surplus, which fell from 11.2% of GDP in 2021 to 8.9% in 2022. Concurrently, the debt-to-GDP ratio improved, dropping to 56.1% from 82.9% over the same timeframe.

Global inflationary pressures stemming from Russia's invasion of Ukraine were mitigated by favorable terms of trade. Enhanced export revenue and increased agricultural output contributed to a decline in food inflation and overall inflation, which fell from 25.8% in 2021 to an estimated 21.3% in 2022. The banking sector showed signs of improvement, buoyed by a more robust economic performance and reduced private sector debt in 2022. Despite these positive trends, the country still grapples with a high unemployment rate of 30% and ongoing challenges in reducing the poverty rate, which stood at 40.6% in 2019.

According to [Heritage Foundation](#) 2023 Angola report:

Angola's economic freedom score stands at 53, positioning its economy as the 130th freest according to the 2023 Index, with a marginal improvement of 0.4 points from the previous year. In the Sub-Saharan Africa region, Angola ranks 26th out of 46 countries, and its overall score lags significantly behind both global and regional averages.

Endemic corruption and political meddling in the judicial system continue to erode the pillars of economic freedom in the country. The government's heavy reliance on revenue from oil and diamonds stifles economic efficiency. Additionally, the regulatory landscape is hindered by a lack of dedication to policies that encourage open markets.

Social and cultural landscape

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

- **Main ethnic groups:** Ovimbundu (37 %), Kimbundu (25%), Bakongo (13 %), Mestico i.e mixed European and native African (2%), European (1%), other (22%)
- **Main languages:** Portuguese 71.2% (official), Umbundu 23%, Kikongo 8.2% Kimbundu 7.8%, Chokwe 6.5 %, Nihaneca 3.4 %, Nganguela 3.1 %, Fiote 2.4 %, Kwanhama 2.3 %, Muhumbi 2.1%, Luvale 1%, other 3.6%
- **Population growth:** 3.38% (2021 est.)
- **Urban population:** 67.5% of the total population (2021)
- **Rate of urbanization:** 4.04% annual rate of change (2020-2025 est.)
- **Literacy rate, adult (ages 15 and older):** 66.0%
- **Expected years of schooling:** 11.8 years
- **Employment to population ratio (ages 15 and older):** 72.2%
- **Unemployment, total:** 6.9% of labor force
- **Unemployment, youth (ages 15-24):** 16.09%
- **Human Development Index score and rank:** Angola ranked 148th out of 189 countries with a score of 0.581
- **Life expectancy at birth:** 61.1 years
- **Gender Development Index (GDI):** 0.903
- **Gender Inequality Index (GII):** 0.536

According to [UNHCR](#) data (updated May 2023):

- **Refugees:** "There are around 56,000 refugees and asylum seekers in Angola spread over provinces such as Luanda and Lunda Norte. These refugees represent a multitude of countries such as the DRC, Rwanda, Mauritania and others. They are located in several provinces across Angola, including Luanda and Lunda Norte."

According to FFP's Fragile State Index (FSI 2023 Angola):

- Angola ranked #39 out of 179 countries with a score of 86.9 points and was categorized as 'high warning'. It is a country where cronyism, clientelism and nepotism are rampant. As a result, the magnitude of corruption in the country is high and the lack of rule of law and lack of good governance are prevalent. The positive thing about Angola is that the FFP shows that it has been improving in this regard since it reached the climax in 2017 (91.1).

As calculated by Transparency International (CPI 2022 Angola): Due to the high levels of corruption, Angola ranked #116 out of 180 countries, scoring 33 points.

Technological landscape

Angola is advanced in mining industry technology and is one of the richest countries in minerals, especially diamonds. However, the country is not as well-advanced as it could be in other areas, considering the available funds for investment. High costs remain a big hindrance for many Angolans in the field of communication technology. Access to the Internet is low but has been growing steadily.

According to Internet World Stats (IWS 2023 Angola):

- **Internet users:** 26.0% of the population (survey date: December 2021)
- **Facebook users:** 8.5% penetration rate (survey date: January 2022)

As per [Napoleoncat.com](https://www.napoleoncat.com) (August 2023): 42.2% Facebook users were female and 57.8% male. The most significant gender disparity was found in the 18-24 age bracket, where men outnumbered women by 1,400,000.

According to [BuddeComm Research](https://www.buddecomm.com) (Publication date: March 2024):

- “The government has continued to develop telecom infrastructure to help diversify the country’s economy and lessen its dependence on offshore crude oil production, which accounts for almost all exports and up to 80% of tax revenue. By extending and upgrading telecom networks the government expects businesses to become more efficient and for e-commerce to become a more prominent feature of economic growth. In addition, networks will facilitate rural access to education and health care. However, there is much progress to be made if the country is to improve the business climate and attract investors.”

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

- Angola's Freedom on the Net score was 59/100 points which puts the country in the 'partly free' category.
- "Although internet service from the country’s largest telecommunications provider stabilized, the country’s poor infrastructure continues to hinder users’ ability to access the internet consistently and without disruption. The government does not use technical methods to censor content, but the recent issuance of lengthy prison terms for critical online expression and the intimidation of independent media have reinstated an environment of fear which limits public discussion of governance issues. Mis- and disinformation from political parties proliferated on social media".

According to [Data Reportal](https://www.datareportal.com) (13 February 2023):

- In early 2023, Angola had 11.78 million people connected to the internet, comprising 32.6% of its total population.
- As of January 2023, the country also had 3.70 million social media users, which accounted for 10.2% of the entire population.
- Additionally, Angola boasted 20.11 million active mobile cellular connections at the start of the year, representing 55.7% of the population.

Security situation

The country was embroiled in a 26 year civil war from 1975 to 2002. Human security remains a major problem due to the lack of rule of law in the country.

In the Province of Cabinda, a region in Angola with a history of pro-independence struggles, conflict has been ongoing between government security forces and the Front for the Liberation of the Enclave of Cabinda (FLEC). The Catholic Church has been working to bring the separatists

and the government together for dialogue. However, the government has arrested activists involved in the region, exacerbating tensions.

Adding to the situation, on 25 March 2023, [seven activists](#) were detained during a meeting organized by Conacce Chaplains, a Christian non-governmental organization (Crux, 2 May 2023). The meeting was part of an educational program on human rights. Angolan police interrupted the event and arrested 45 attendees. While five of the activists were released on 28 April, two were retained in custody. This series of arrests has sparked outrage among human rights advocates in the region.

In a [statement](#) released on 17 May 2023, Amnesty International expressed concern over the lack of security for individuals who speak out on issues such as corruption and poverty: "Authorities in Angola must immediately and unconditionally release Tanaice Neutro for protesting against high levels of poverty, corruption and repression, and guarantee the right to peaceful protest across the country, Amnesty International said today as it marked seven months since the activist was arbitrarily detained." The statement adds: "Over the last few years, Angolan authorities have demonstrated a ruthless determination to crush dissent and unduly limit the people's rights to freedom of expression, association and peaceful assembly,"

Trends analysis

1) Since President João Lourenço took office in September 2017 there have been no improvements for churches

Since João Lourenço took over the presidency in September 2017, the human rights record remains poor and corruption is still rampant. This looks set to continue since the government in Angola is not ready to create space for civil society, genuine political parties and overall political reform. The laws put in place to restrict freedom of religion and assembly have made church registration difficult. The harassment of political opponents and journalists is common. In this environment, it is very difficult to see freedom of religion - especially for non-traditional Christian groups - being upheld in the near future.

2) The government has intensified action against church groups

Christians in the country have long been advocating for better legal protection and recognition, but their pleas are likely to continue falling on deaf ears. The government has been hostile towards church groups, particularly when it comes to registration requirements. A decree issued in September 2020 stipulated that only legally recognized religious groups could hold limited services under ongoing COVID-19 restrictions. This move signaled the government's intent to further restrict Christian communities, as evidenced by the closure notices issued to over a thousand churches.

In 2022, only four churches were granted licenses, leaving thousands still without the necessary permits. Those who continue to worship without official registration are at the mercy of the government, putting many Christian leaders at risk of imprisonment. This trend has persisted for more than two decades and some analysts believe it is a strategy by the government to exert control over churches. Unregistered congregations are especially cautious not to discuss topics

that could be construed as 'political' as they could be arrested under the pretext of operating without a proper license.

External Links - Keys to understanding

- Recent history: South African History Online - <https://www.sahistory.org.za/article/angolan-civil-war-1975-2002-brief-history>
- Recent history: arrested and sentenced - <https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2019-08-15/angola-jails-most-senior-official-yet-after-corruption-trial>
- Recent history: open to reforms - <https://issafrica.s3.amazonaws.com/site/uploads/sar38.pdf>
- Political and legal landscape: postponed indefinitely - <https://21votes.com/angola-elections/>
- Political and legal landscape: national and presidential elections - <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2022/8/29/angola-ruling-party-wins-vote-and-president-a-second-term>
- Political and legal landscape: 2010 Constitution - https://www.constituteproject.org/constitution/Angola_2010.pdf
- Religious landscape description: facing forced closure - <https://www.worldwatchmonitor.org/coe/angola-2000-unregistered-churches-forced-to-close/>
- Economic landscape: African Development Bank Group - <https://www.afdb.org/en/countries/southern-africa/angola/angola-economic-outlook>
- Economic landscape: Heritage Foundation - <https://www.heritage.org/index/country/angola>
- Social and cultural landscape: UNHCR - <https://data.unhcr.org/en/country/ago>
- Technological landscape: Napoleoncat.com - <https://napoleoncat.com/stats/facebook-users-in-angola/2023/08/>
- Technological landscape: BuddeComm Research - <https://www.budde.com.au/Research/Angola-Telecoms-Mobile-and-Broadband-Statistics-and-Analyses>
- Technological landscape: Data Reportal - <https://datareportal.com/reports/digital-2023-angola>
- Security situation: seven activists - <https://cruxnow.com/church-in-africa/2023/05/catholics-call-for-dialogue-in-angolas-separatist-cabinda-region>
- Security situation: statement - <https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2023/05/angola-authorities-must-release-activist-languishing-in-detention/>

WWL 2024: Church information / Angola

Christian origins

Christianity was introduced into Angola before colonization. In 1491, Roman Catholic priests from Portugal paved the way to establish mission stations in the country. In the 16th century, Henrique, the son of Manikongo Nzinga Alfonsa, became the first Sub-Saharan African to be consecrated as bishop. (King Alfonsa had ruled over the Kongo Empire from 1509-1543.) However, the fact that the Portuguese turned their main focus to the slave trade hindered the expansion of the Christian faith for a considerable time. In 1865, the Vatican decided to send the White Fathers to the country with a new assignment so that Christianity could regain the momentum that it had lost earlier

(Source: Encyclopedia of African History, 3-Volume set, pp.83-84)

Protestants arrived in 1878, when British Baptists started working among the Bakongo people near São Salvador. In 1880, missionaries with the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions arrived to work among the Ovimbundu and were joined by Canadian Presbyterians (now an integral part of the United Church of Canada) in 1886. In 1885 forty-five missionaries from the Methodist Episcopal Church arrived in Angola as one of the first efforts organized by

the newly elected bishop, William Taylor. The Christian Brethren established their mission station in 1889. Anglicans established work in Angola early in the 20th century. The Pentecostal movement entered Angola in 1938, with initial efforts being made by the Church of God International.

(Source: Melton J.G. and Baumann M., eds.: Religions of the World - A Comprehensive Encyclopedia of Beliefs and Practices - 2nd edition, p.133)

Church spectrum today

Angola: Church networks	Christians	%
Orthodox	0	0.0
Catholic	19,627,000	58.1
Protestant	9,936,000	29.4
Independent	2,313,000	6.8
Unaffiliated	2,208,000	6.5
Doubly-affiliated Christians	-289,000	-0.9
Total	33,795,000	100.0
<i>(Any deviation from the total number of Christians stated above is due to the rounding of decimals)</i>		
Evangelical movement	6,067,000	18.0
Renewalist movement	8,957,000	26.5

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

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

Christians are the majority in the country. There are major issues regarding the hostility shown by the main church denominations towards the smaller ones.

Areas where Christians face most difficulties

The Province of Cabinda, in particular, is where many churches and church leaders have faced arrest and intimidation by government security agents.

Christian communities and how they are affected

Communities of expatriate Christians: Although there are many expatriate Christians living in the country, they are not isolated and can worship freely with other Christians. For this reason they are not scored as a separate category in WWL analysis.

Historical Christian Communities: The largest denomination in this category is the Roman Catholic Church. These Christians often enjoy relative freedom but at times government officials also target them when church leaders have failed to endorse the government on certain issues.

Converts: In Angola, this category consists mainly of 'cross-denominational converts' who face persecution from the churches they left. There are also few converts from Islam and other non-Christian religions and these face discrimination and persecution from their families. Like other Christian groups, converts will also face persecution from the government if they publicly oppose the government's political policies.

Non-traditional Christian communities: Non-traditional church groups such as Pentecostals and Evangelicals face the highest levels of pressure and violence of all. They are targeted by the government through its registration laws, and (as emphasized above) the government has granted only very few new church registrations. Christian groups from the Historical church denominations also discriminate against these groups because they consider them to be a threat to their dominance.

WWL 2024: Persecution Dynamics / Angola

Reporting period

1 October 2022 - 30 September 2023

Position on the World Watch List

Angola: World Watch List	Points	WWL Rank
WWL 2024	52	71
WWL 2023	52	68
WWL 2022	51	66
WWL 2021	46	68
WWL 2020	43	68

Angola scored 52 points in WWL 2024, the same as in WWL 2023. The persecution of Christians in the country is caused by *Dictatorial paranoia* and *Christian denominational protectionism* working in tandem, putting pressure on Christians who are denied licenses and registration. The irony is that *Dictatorial paranoia* also affects those churches working with the government to put pressure on other Christians groups. The main challenges faced by Christians are the laws and policies set out by the government, thus persecution is government-driven. Church leaders who speak out against government practices face severe pressure and, indeed, any Christians voicing opposition to the dictatorial regime face serious problems (such as arrests). The country also faces organized corruption that hinders access to justice.

Persecution engines

Angola: 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	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	Medium

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 Angolan government, led by the MPLA, operates with a limited commitment to democratic principles, severely curtailing space for civic organizations and opposition. The MPLA, which also won another election in August 2022 amid allegations of rigging and questionable practices, has failed to deliver on its promises of democratization and human rights protection made since its 2017 parliamentary victory. Institutions that toe the government's line receive backing, while churches that are perceived as not sufficiently supportive are at risk of being shut down, along with any affiliated organizations. The government primarily uses church registration laws as a mechanism to control religious activities. Since very few new churches have been officially recognized since 2004, (just four in 2022) over a thousand are operating without proper registration, making them vulnerable targets for government action.

Christian denominational protectionism (Medium)

The Angolan government has been reported to favor religious denominations that align with its policies. According to the US State Department ([IRFR 2017 Angola](#)), leaders of legally recognized religious organizations have publicly criticized the emergence of smaller, unrecognized religious groups. Accusations of corruption and profiteering have been exchanged between newer and more established religious entities. Both governmental organizations and some religious associations have called for these new religious groups to either rejoin their 'mother churches' or cease operations altogether.

The main denominations are wary of losing their congregations to these emerging churches. Reports suggest that established religious organizations often exert pressure on these newer entities, discouraging them from seeking independent registration. Instead, they are encouraged to affiliate with existing, recognized denominations. This dynamic adds another

layer of complexity to the already fraught landscape of religious freedom and church registration in Angola.

Organized corruption and crime (Medium)

Angola ranks as one of the most corrupt nations in Africa, scoring a mere 33 points and landing at #116 out of 180 countries in Transparency International's 2022 Corruption Perceptions Index. This pervasive corruption has severely undermined the rule of law, making it virtually impossible for many Christian groups to obtain official operating permits. Coupled with dictatorial tendencies, this corruption has led to minimal protection for Christians and has rendered civil liberties largely unattainable in the country..

Drivers of persecution

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

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

Drivers of Dictatorial paranoia

- **Government officials (Strong):** The MPLA's favoritism towards certain religious denominations severely limits the freedom of religion. Christians who voice opposition to the government are not only at risk of arrest but also face restrictions on their religious practices. This creates a chilling effect, discouraging open religious expression and forcing many to practice their faith in secrecy.
- **Organized criminal networks (Medium):** The culture of impunity and corruption also restricts religious freedom by making it difficult for Christian groups to operate legally. This leaves them vulnerable to crackdowns, further limiting the public expression of their faith.

Drivers of Christian denominational protectionism

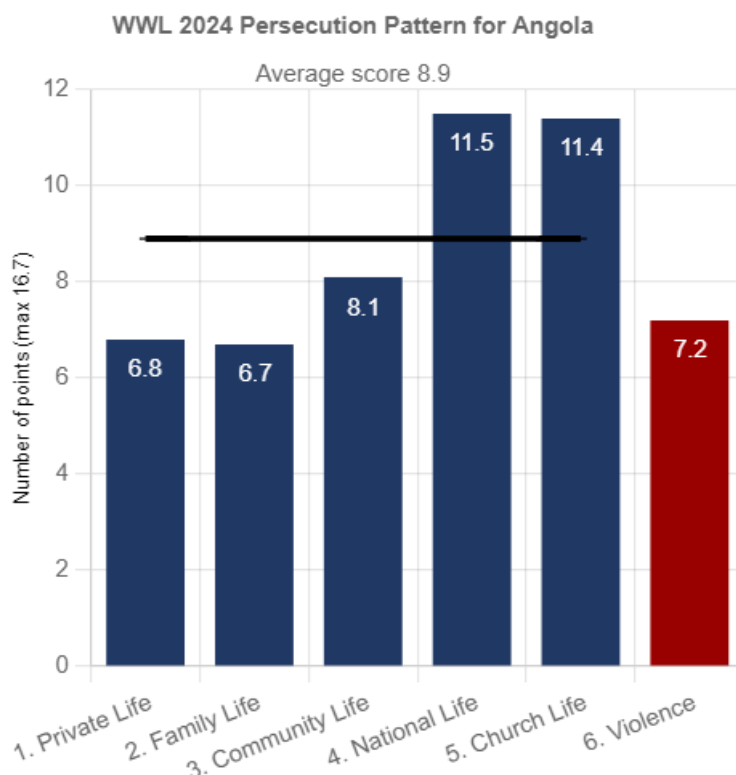
- **Leaders of other churches (Medium):** The Roman Catholic Church's alignment with the government in restricting other Christian denominations not only creates a hostile environ-

ment but also limits religious diversity. This form of protectionism stifles the freedom to choose and practice one's own faith, as those who wish to switch denominations face both social and institutional barriers.

Drivers of Organized corruption and crime

- **Government officials (Medium):** The corruption among government officials has a direct impact on the freedom of religion. Christians find it almost impossible to get fair legal decisions, making it risky to challenge any restrictions on their religious practices. This undermines the very essence of religious freedom, as the rule of law is compromised.
- **Organized criminal networks (Medium):** The widespread corruption in organized networks further restricts religious freedom by making it difficult for Christian communities to organize or even operate. The lack of rule of law means that these communities are often at the mercy of corrupt officials and networks, limiting their ability to practice their faith freely.

The Persecution pattern



The WWL 2024 Persecution pattern for Angola shows:

- The average pressure on Christians in Angola was 8.9 points, the same as in WWL 2023.
- The *National sphere* score is the highest (11.5 points), followed by the *Church sphere* score with 11.4 points. This reflects the fact that the main challenges faced by Christians are the laws and policies set out by the government, indirectly also facilitated by drivers of *Organized corruption and crime* and *Christian denominational protectionism*.

- The score for violence remains 'very high' with 7.2 points.

Pressure in the 5 spheres of life

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

Pressure in Block 1 / Private sphere

Block 1.9: It has been risky for Christians to meet with other Christians. (2.75 points)

Christians in Angola, especially new converts and Protestants, face challenges in gathering, both in churches and homes, due to restrictions and potential searches by local groups.

Block 1.10: Christians have been isolated from other family members or other like-minded Christians (e.g. house arrest). (2.50 points)

Angolans converting from African Traditional Religions, (ATR) to Christianity, and those transitioning from Catholicism to evangelical denominations, often experience significant social challenges. This shift can lead to estrangement from family and established communities. They could face house arrest as well.

Block 1.7: It has been risky for Christians to speak about their faith with immediate family members. (1.75 points)

Individuals in Angola who convert from African Traditional Religions (ATR) or switch denominations within Christianity may face severe persecution, including expulsion from their homes if they openly communicate with their immediate family members.

Block 1.8: It has been risky for Christians to speak about their faith with those other than immediate family (extended family, others). (1.75 points)

For Christians in Angola, discussing their faith with extended family or others outside their immediate household poses significant risks. Converts from African Traditional Religions (ATR) or those changing denominations within Christianity often encounter severe consequences, including the threat of expulsion. Additionally, they may face ostracism from larger family networks and can be denied access to community resources due to their religious choices.

Pressure in Block 2 / Family sphere

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

Non-Catholic students in Angola often face the challenge of being compelled to attend school systems where teachings are predominantly aligned with the Catholic majority. This situation, while not overtly anti-Christian, creates a conflict for those belonging to other Christian denomi-

nations whose values are not reflected in the curriculum.

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

Children of active pastors, especially from denominations outside the mainstream Catholic and traditional Protestant circles, frequently experience harassment and discrimination due to the religious activities of their parents

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

Those who have left the Catholic Church or belong to non-traditional denominations, face obstacles in celebrating Christian weddings. Challenges arise in obtaining approvals and recognition for their weddings, emphasizing the complexities faced by converts and individuals embracing non-traditional Christian beliefs within Angola's religious landscape. These difficulties highlight the intricate nature of faith-related matters in the country.

Block 2.4: Christian baptisms have been hindered. (2.00 points)

Non-traditional Christian groups in Angola often face restrictions on conducting baptisms, predominantly due to community or family pressure. Additionally, as many of these groups do not have registered church buildings, they are compelled to hold baptisms in homes.

Block 2.5: Burials of Christians have been hindered or coercively performed with non-Christian rites. (2.00 points)

Christians in Angola, particularly those from unlicensed churches and converts in regions dominated by African Traditional Religions (ATR), face significant challenges in burial practices. These difficulties often arise in areas where cemeteries are controlled by the majority faith, leading to conflicts over burial rites.

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)

Christians particularly from evangelical and unregistered churches, experience harassment, including character assassination by established churches and government monitoring. These actions contribute to an environment where daily life and faith expression are challenged.

Block 3.4: Christians been hindered in sharing community resources because of their faith (e.g. clean drinking water). (3.25 points)

Christians, especially those from evangelizing and unregistered churches, encounter difficulties accessing vital community resources like clean drinking water, often due to their faith. These challenges are exacerbated by negative portrayals and character defamation carried out by established churches.

Block 3.6: Christians have been hindered in participating in communal institutions, forums, etc., for faith-related reasons. (3.25 points)

Christians often face difficulties in engaging with communal institutions and forums, experiencing pressure to partake in non-Christian religious ceremonies and community events. This issue stems from a clash between certain community rituals and the beliefs of some Christian denominations.

Block 3.10: Christians have been discriminated against in public or private employment for faith-related reasons. (3.00 points)

Christians, especially from specific denominations, encounter discrimination in employment due to their religious beliefs. This affects both public and private sector opportunities, where faith, actions, or affiliations can lead to unequal treatment. The discrimination is often subtle and linked to political affiliations, marking a significant challenge for Christians seeking fair employment opportunities.

Pressure in Block 4 / National sphere

Block 4.1: The Constitution (or comparable national or state law) limits freedom of religion as formulated in Article 18 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. (4.00 points)

The legal framework restricts religious freedom as defined in Article 18 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. This includes constraints on constructing worship places and limitations on establishing spaces for religious gatherings, posing challenges in practicing the right to worship freely.

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)

Christians interacting with local administration, government, and the armed forces in various capacities have experienced discrimination due to their faith. They face pressure to support government initiatives, often under threats and ultimatums, particularly impacting those critical of the government.

Block 4.8: Christians have been hindered in expressing their views or opinions in public. (3.75 points)

Christians in Angola face significant hindrances in expressing their views publicly, with the MPLA's repressive regime imposing strict measures to curtail freedom of speech, particularly after UNITA's defeat. The government's discriminatory practices, restrictive registration laws, and covert tactics through its cadres have silenced many Christians, making it challenging for them to operate freely and openly express their views. This environment of restricted freedom of speech has led to a climate of fear, compelling Christians to remain silent in the face of injustice and persecution, overshadowing their ability to exercise their right to express beliefs and concerns in the public 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 Angola have faced significant hindrances in their functioning, including being forbidden due to their Christian convictions. The government's imposition of restrictive registration laws and covert institutionalized discrimination has constrained the operation of churches and religious institutions, limiting their ability to function freely.

Pressure in Block 5 / Church sphere

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

Church activities, especially those of unregistered churches, face monitoring, hindrance, disturbance, and obstruction by the government, leading to an atmosphere of fear. Security agents often scrutinize these institutions, arresting pastors or priests and disrupting worship.

Block 5.2: It has been difficult to get registration or legal status for churches at any level of government. (4.00 points)

Securing registration or legal status for churches at any level of government in Angola is a significant challenge, with no successful church registrations for decades. This has led to church closures and increased government monitoring, highlighting concerns about religious freedom.

Block 5.5: Churches have been hindered from organizing Christian activities outside church buildings. (3.75 points)

Churches, especially unregistered ones, face limitations in organizing Christian activities outside their buildings. This is due to control by authorities over the messages of church leaders and preachers.

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

Christian preaching, teaching, and published materials undergo government monitoring, indicating a broader pattern of surveillance and censorship. This includes scrutiny of sermon content in churches and alternative worship locations, especially those facing government restrictions.

Block 5.9: Christians have experienced interference when choosing their own religious leaders. (3.75 points)

Christians in Angola face interference from the government when choosing their religious leaders, affecting various denominations. Government tactics include infiltration and reported attempts to sway church members, even through methods like bribery.

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.*

Angola: Violence scores per Block 6 question in questionnaire	WWL 2024	WWL 2023
6.1 How many Christians have been killed for faith-related reasons (including state sanctioned executions)?	0	0
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 *	100 *
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?	0	0
6.7 How many cases have there been of forced marriages of Christians to non-Christians?	0	0
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?	0	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	0

5 Year trends

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

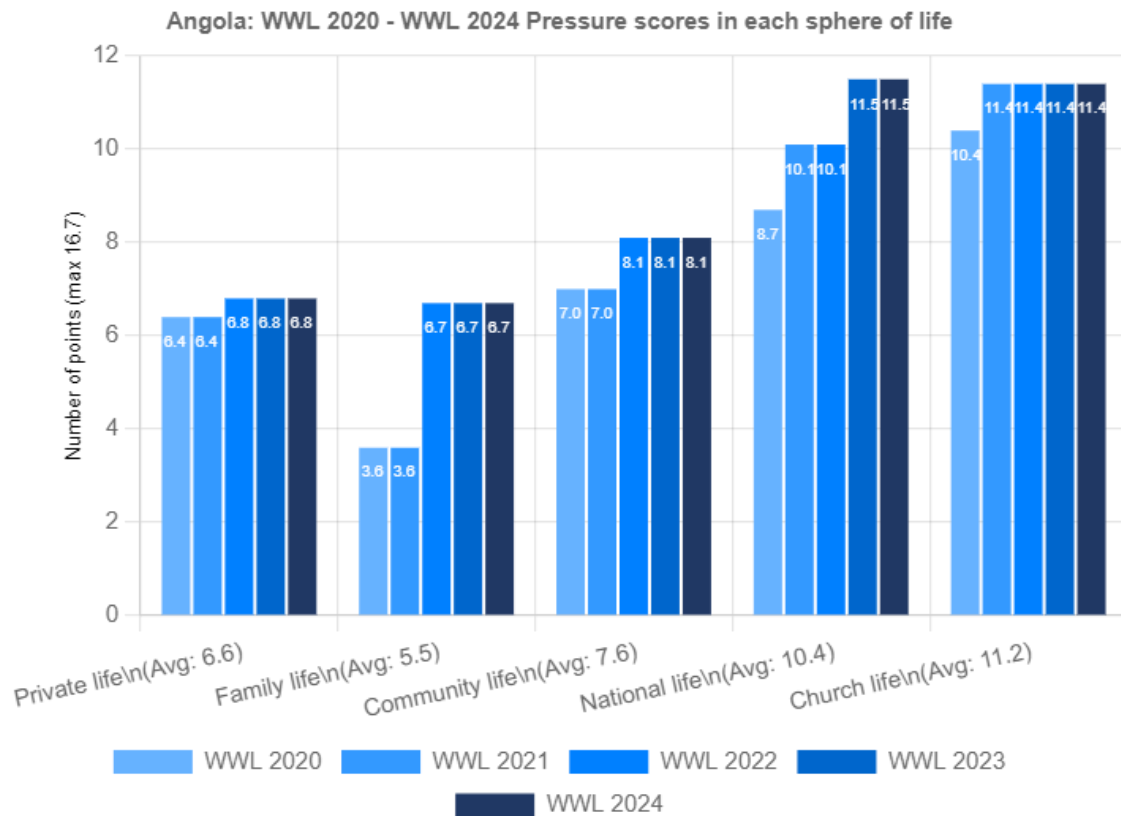
5 Year trends: Average pressure

As can be seen in the table below, the average pressure on Christians has gradually risen from 7.2 points in WWL 2020 and has now levelled off in the range 8.6-8.9 points in WWL 2022-2024. This is what happens when a Christian majority country (of over 90%) suffers from a government that places significant restrictions on freedom of religion. The rising average pressure shows that the situation for Christians is not getting better despite the hopes that the end of 40 years of

one-man-rule in 2017 would start bringing positive change.

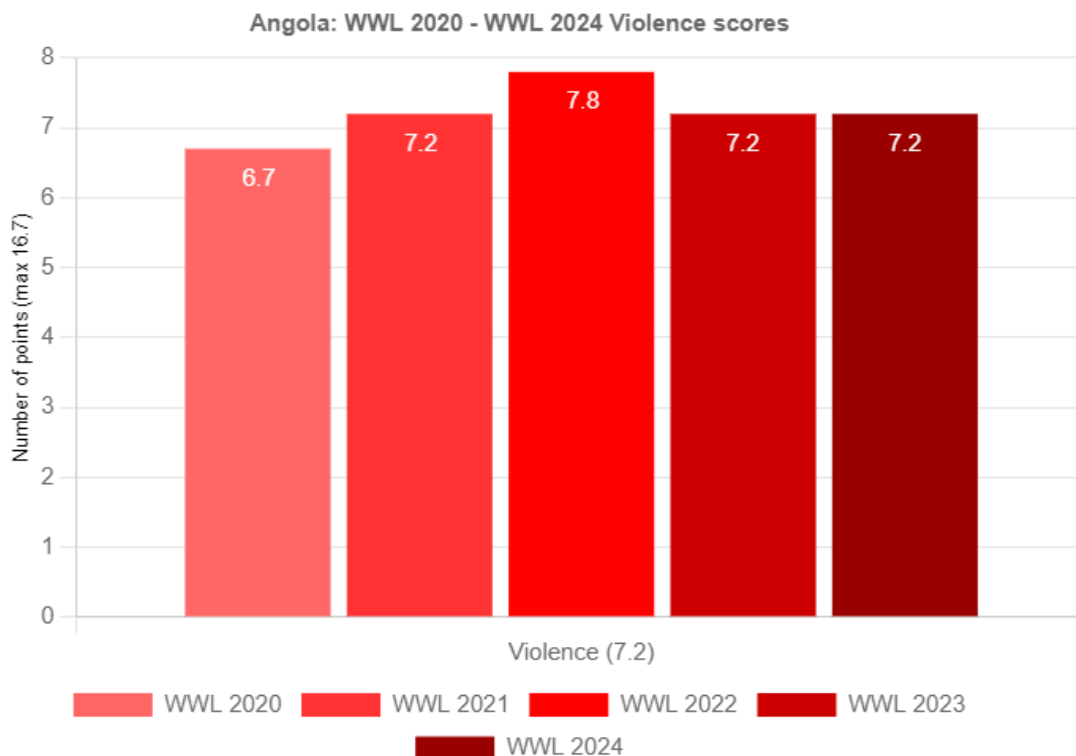
Angola: WWL 2020 - WWL 2024	Average pressure over 5 Spheres of life
2024	8.9
2023	8.9
2022	8.6
2021	7.7
2020	7.2

5 Year trends: Pressure in each sphere of life



The chart above indicates that over a five-year period, Church life has the highest average pressure score at 11.2 points, followed by the *National sphere* with a score of 10.4 points. This is an indication that the pressure on Christians in Angola comes from the government at both national and local levels, and has resulted in making church activities extremely difficult.

5 Year trends: Violence against Christians



The graph demonstrates that in each World Watch List (WWL) reporting period, the violence score has consistently exceeded 6.0 points, culminating in a five-year average of 7.2 points. This trend is partly attributed to the significant number of church closures.

Gender-specific religious persecution / Female

Group	Female Pressure Points
Economic	Denied inheritance or possessions
Political and Legal	Denied custody of children
Security	-
Social and Cultural	-
Technological	-

Although women are generally expected to be subservient to men in Angola, faith-specific gender-specific persecution is not widely reported. According to Open Doors research, women and girls in Angola are vulnerable to sexual violence like rape and early marriage, including the “negative societal perceptions which discriminate against women and girls.” However, the oppression against women and girls is often rooted in traditional motives rather than religious grounds. Further, there were no reported cases of sexual violence against Christian women and girls in the WWL 2024 reporting period.

In some remote parts of the country, female Christians who have left Catholicism or African Traditional Religions (ATR) may be disinherited or lose custody of their children.

Gender-specific religious persecution / Male

Group	Male Pressure Points
Economic	-
Political and Legal	Imprisonment by government
Security	Forced to flee town/country
Social and Cultural	Violence – psychological; Violence – Verbal
Technological	-

Gender-specific religious persecution against Christian men and boys in Angola is also not widely reported. The oppression that is occasionally reported is mainly rooted in politics rather than religion. Church leaders are most vulnerable when such persecution does occur; they may be mentally abused for faith-related reasons and targeted by security forces. Some have reportedly had to go into hiding to escape arrest by the police as they are often accused of operating illegal gatherings. Operating a church without a license and open criticism of government policies are often the main factors behind the government’s persecution of Church leaders. A country expert comments: “The activities of unrecognized churches like Pentecostal churches are occasionally monitored and spied on, on the suspicion of being opposed to government policies. The government always monitors unregistered churches. Government security agents show up regularly and at times arrest the pastor or priest.” Locals, including church officials from the dominant denominations, are known to act as informants for the government.

The government’s strict registration policies and protracted registration processes often leave religious leaders hard-pressed, especially leaders of Christian minority groups. “This is particularly true for the church groups who have been disfranchised by the action of the government. Churches are left without any option than meeting in places that are technically places of worship. Even in those circumstances, the government monitors what these priests and pastors are saying,” a source disclosed.

Persecution of other religious minorities

All religious minorities face serious discrimination in the country. According to the US State Department (IRFR 2022 Angola), the Muslim community was particularly affected:

- As of 31 December 2022, "the government had not recognized any Muslim groups or issued any licenses to Muslim groups to practice their religion legally. The requests for official registration submitted in 2019 by two separate groups known as the Islamic Community of Angola (each has a slightly different acronym) remained among the pending applications. INAR officials [i.e. officers working at the National Institute for Religious Affairs] continued to say the primary reason the government had not yet recognized Islamic groups was their lack of a single governing body. In the past, government officials also stated that some prac-

tices allowed by Islam, such as polygamy, contradicted the constitution."

Future outlook

The outlook for Christians as viewed through the lens of:

Dictatorial paranoia

The persistent restrictive policies of the government suggest that its stance towards democracy and religious freedom is unlikely to change. Churches are anticipated to continue experiencing high levels of pressure, including risks of closure and violence. The limited church registrations observed indicate a sustained governmental approach towards Christians, pointing towards a future of ongoing authoritarian control.

Christian denominational protectionism

The established churches' collaboration with the government to pressure unregistered churches is a trend that shows no signs of abating. The silence of major denominations in the wake of widespread church closures since 2018 suggests a level of complicity that is likely to persist. This protectionism serves the government's interests in controlling religious activities and is expected to continue, further limiting the freedom of Christians to practice their faith as they choose.

Organized corruption and crime

Despite initial hopes for the administration to address corruption, the issue remains deeply entrenched and is likely to continue impacting the country, including Christian communities. The general environment of organized corruption and crime poses significant challenges, adversely affecting Christians by undermining the rule of law and their ability to seek legal protection, perpetuating their cycle of vulnerability.

External Links - Persecution Dynamics

- Persecution engines description: IRFR 2017 Angola - <https://www.state.gov/reports/2017-report-on-international-religious-freedom/angola/>

Further useful reports

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

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

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

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