

World
Watch
Research

Mozambique: Full Country Dossier

February 2024



OpenDoors

Serving persecuted **Christians** worldwide

Open Doors International / World Watch Research

February 2024

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Introduction

World Watch List 2024

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

| Rank | Country | Private life | Family life | Community life | National life | Church life | Violence | Total Score WWL 2024 | Total Score WWL 2023 | Total Score WWL 2022 | Total Score WWL 2021 | Total Score WWL 2020 |
|------|-------------------------|--------------|-------------|----------------|---------------|-------------|----------|----------------------|----------------------|----------------------|----------------------|----------------------|
| 51 | Kenya | 10.3 | 9.2 | 11.4 | 8.0 | 11.5 | 12.4 | 63 | 64 | 63 | 62 | 61 |
| 52 | Tanzania | 9.3 | 10.8 | 10.3 | 8.6 | 8.7 | 14.4 | 62 | 63 | 61 | 58 | 55 |
| 53 | Nepal | 12.1 | 10.4 | 9.5 | 13.2 | 12.3 | 4.4 | 62 | 61 | 64 | 66 | 64 |
| 54 | Kuwait | 13.1 | 13.6 | 9.4 | 12.0 | 12.2 | 0.9 | 61 | 64 | 64 | 63 | 62 |
| 55 | Djibouti | 12.3 | 12.6 | 12.7 | 10.1 | 12.3 | 1.1 | 61 | 60 | 59 | 56 | 56 |
| 56 | Chad | 11.6 | 8.2 | 10.2 | 10.2 | 10.3 | 10.6 | 61 | 58 | 55 | 53 | 56 |
| 57 | UAE | 13.3 | 13.4 | 9.5 | 11.3 | 12.8 | 0.7 | 61 | 62 | 62 | 62 | 60 |
| 58 | Sri Lanka | 12.9 | 9.2 | 10.8 | 11.5 | 9.7 | 5.9 | 60 | 57 | 63 | 62 | 65 |
| 59 | Azerbaijan | 13.2 | 9.9 | 9.6 | 11.9 | 13.6 | 1.7 | 60 | 59 | 60 | 56 | 57 |
| 60 | Palestinian Territories | 13.1 | 13.3 | 9.7 | 10.7 | 12.1 | 0.9 | 60 | 60 | 59 | 58 | 60 |
| 61 | Kyrgyzstan | 13.2 | 10.3 | 11.3 | 10.5 | 12.2 | 1.3 | 59 | 59 | 58 | 58 | 57 |
| 62 | Russian Federation | 12.7 | 7.7 | 10.6 | 12.8 | 12.9 | 1.7 | 58 | 57 | 56 | 57 | 60 |
| 63 | Rwanda | 9.4 | 7.7 | 9.0 | 10.4 | 11.7 | 9.4 | 58 | 57 | 50 | 42 | 42 |
| 64 | Burundi | 7.6 | 7.8 | 9.4 | 9.8 | 9.7 | 12.8 | 57 | 55 | 52 | 48 | 48 |
| 65 | Bahrain | 12.0 | 13.2 | 8.6 | 11.3 | 8.5 | 1.1 | 55 | 55 | 57 | 56 | 55 |
| 66 | Honduras | 7.9 | 4.7 | 12.2 | 7.3 | 9.9 | 12.6 | 55 | 53 | 48 | 46 | 39 |
| 67 | Venezuela | 6.0 | 4.4 | 11.1 | 10.0 | 10.8 | 10.7 | 53 | 56 | 51 | 39 | 42 |
| 68 | Togo | 9.2 | 6.7 | 9.3 | 7.1 | 11.0 | 8.9 | 52 | 49 | 44 | 43 | 41 |
| 69 | Guinea | 10.3 | 7.5 | 8.3 | 8.3 | 10.5 | 7.2 | 52 | 48 | 43 | 47 | 45 |
| 70 | Uganda | 8.1 | 5.0 | 7.4 | 6.7 | 8.8 | 15.9 | 52 | 51 | 48 | 47 | 48 |
| 71 | Angola | 6.8 | 6.7 | 8.1 | 11.5 | 11.4 | 7.2 | 52 | 52 | 51 | 46 | 43 |
| 72 | Lebanon | 11.0 | 10.2 | 7.0 | 6.1 | 6.6 | 7.2 | 48 | 40 | 11 | - | 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 / Mozambique

Brief country details

| Mozambique: Population (UN estimate for 2023) | Christians | Chr% |
|---|------------|------|
| 34,035,000 | 19,184,000 | 56.4 |

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

Map of country



| Mozambique: World Watch List | Points | WWL Rank |
|------------------------------|--------|----------|
| WWL 2024 | 68 | 39 |
| WWL 2023 | 68 | 32 |
| WWL 2022 | 65 | 41 |
| WWL 2021 | 63 | 45 |
| WWL 2020 | 43 | 66 |

Dominant persecution engines and drivers

| Mozambique: | |
|--------------------------------|--|
| Main persecution engines | Main drivers |
| Islamic oppression | Violent religious groups, Citizens (people from the broader society), including mobs, One's own (extended) family, Non-Christian religious leaders |
| Organized corruption and crime | Violent religious groups, Organized crime cartels or networks |
| 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 Mozambique are navigating a perilous landscape shaped by a variety of factors which can be divided into key categories:

- **Attacks by violent Islamic militants:** The rise of radical Islam in northern Mozambique, especially in regions like Cabo Delgado, has had a devastating impact on the Christian community. Churches have been burnt down, pastors abducted, and many lives lost. The objective of these groups is to establish a strict Islamic state, and Christians are often targeted as symbols of resistance to this extremist ideology. The result is a state of constant fear and vulnerability among Christian communities, impacting their freedom to worship and often endangering their lives.
- **Drug trafficking:** Mozambique has become a major hub for drug trafficking, particularly involving heroin and methamphetamines. The presence of these criminal cartels contributes to a climate of lawlessness and violence, which indirectly affects the Christian community. Church youth workers are particularly at risk, as they are often seen as a threat in their opposition to organized crime. By playing a significant role in community development and youth education, their work often exposes them to intimidation (including violence) perpetrated by drug lords eager to maintain control over local populations.
- **Government restrictions:** The Mozambican government has also contributed to the restriction of religious freedom for Christians. Legal frameworks, such as complicated church registration processes, impede the functioning of many Christian denominations. There are also limitations on Christian education and public expressions of the Christian faith, which can occur through various forms of surveillance and limitations on religious gatherings.
- **Christians caught up in conflict:** The ongoing conflict between government forces and jihadists has led to a deteriorating security situation, making already vulnerable Christian communities even more susceptible to violence. Homes and churches been targeted for attack, and many Christians have been forced to flee, becoming internally displaced persons with limited access to basic necessities. In addition, the radical Islamic group *al-Sunnah wa Jama'ah* (ASWJ) has called for the removal of Christian symbols in the north of the country.

- **Social discrimination:** This ranges for Christians from job discrimination to social ostracization, particularly affecting converts from Islam to Christianity, who may face severe opposition from their Muslim families.

Summary of international obligations and rights violations

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

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

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

- In the North, Christians are killed for their faith (ICCPR Art. 6)
- Christian women are raped and abducted (ICCPR Art. 7)
- Christian women are forcibly married (ICCPR Art. 23 and CEDAW Art. 16)
- Converts to Christianity suffer from discrimination and violence in the north (ICCPR Arts. 18 and 26)

Specific examples of violations of rights in the reporting period

Examples of violence affecting Christians which occurred at the beginning of February 2023 in the northern province of Cabo Delgado:

- **6 February 2023:** The Christian village of Namakiol came under attack when there was an exchange of fire between Islamic State group (IS) affiliates and local militia fighters loyal to the Mozambican government.
- **4 February 2023:** An attack was carried out against the Christian village of Moilo. The villagers fled and IS operatives set fire to about 20 homes.
- **4 February 2023:** Vehicles belonging to Christians were ambushed on the Macomia-Bimba road. One citizen was killed and two others were wounded. Two vehicles were set on fire.
- **4 February 2023:** Residents of the Christian village of Chaba were targeted by gunfire. Five citizens were abducted and executed.

Specific examples of positive developments

None.

External Links - Situation in brief

- 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: 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>

WWL 2024: Keys to understanding / Mozambique

Links for general background information

| Name | Quote Reference | Link | Last accessed on |
|---|---------------------------------------|---|------------------|
| Amnesty International 2022/23 Mozambique report | AI Mozambique 2022 | https://www.amnesty.org/en/location/africa/southern-africa/mozambique/report-mozambique/ | 30 June 2023 |
| BBC News Mozambique profile - updated 1 May 2023 | BBC Mozambique profile | https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-africa-13890416 | 30 June 2023 |
| Bertelsmann Transformation Index 2022 – covering 137 countries | BTI Mozambique Report 2022 | https://bti-project.org/en/reports/country-report/MOZ | 30 June 2023 |
| CIA World Factbook Mozambique - updated 15 June 2023 | World Factbook Mozambique | https://www.cia.gov/the-world-factbook/countries/mozambique/ | 30 June 2023 |
| Crisis24 Mozambique report (Garda World) | Crisis24 Mozambique report | https://crisis24.garda.com/insights-intelligence/intelligence/country-reports/mozambique | 30 June 2023 |
| Economist Intelligence Unit Mozambique profile 2023 | EIU Mozambique profile 2023 | http://country.eiu.com/mozambique | 30 June 2023 |
| FFP's Fragile States Index 2023 – covering 179 countries | FSI 2023 Mozambique | https://fragilestatesindex.org/country-data/ | 30 June 2023 |
| Freedom House's 2023 Democracy index – covering 29 countries, Mozambique not included | Democracy Index 2023 | https://freedomhouse.org/countries/nations-transit/scores | |
| Freedom House's 2023 Global Freedom index – covering 210 countries | Global Freedom Index 2023 Mozambique | https://freedomhouse.org/country/mozambique/freedom-world/2023 | 30 June 2023 |
| Freedom House's Freedom on the Net 2023 report – covering 70 countries, Mozambique not included | Freedom on the Net 2023 | https://freedomhouse.org/countries/freedom-net/scores | |
| Georgetown's Women, Peace and Security Index 2021/2022 – covering 170 countries | GIWPS 2021 Mozambique profile | https://giwps.georgetown.edu/country/mozambique/ | 30 June 2023 |
| Girls Not Brides Mozambique report | Girls Not Brides Mozambique | https://www.girlsnotbrides.org/learning-resources/child-marriage-atlas/regions-and-countries/mozambique/ | 30 June 2023 |
| Human Rights Watch World Report 2023 - Mozambique country chapter | HRW 2023 Mozambique country chapter | https://www.hrw.org/world-report/2023/country-chapters/mozambique | 30 June 2023 |
| Internet World Stats available in 2023 | IWS 2023 Mozambique | https://www.internetworldstats.com/africa.htm#mz | 30 June 2023 |
| RSF's 2023 World Press Freedom Index – covering 180 countries | World Press Freedom 2023 Mozambique | https://rsf.org/en/mozambique | 30 June 2023 |
| Transparency International's 2022 Corruption Perceptions Index – covering 180 countries | CPI 2022 Mozambique | https://www.transparency.org/en/cpi/2022/index/moz | 30 June 2023 |
| UNDP: Human Development Report Mozambique | UNDP HDR Mozambique | https://hdr.undp.org/data-center/specific-country-data/#countries/MOZ | 30 June 2023 |
| US State Department's 2022 International Religious Freedom Report Mozambique | IRFR 2022 Mozambique | https://www.state.gov/reports/2022-report-on-international-religious-freedom/mozambique/ | 30 June 2023 |
| USCIRF 2023 covering 17 CPC / 11 SWL, Mozambique not included | USCIRF 2023 | https://www.uscifr.gov/countries | |
| World Bank Macro Poverty Outlook Mozambique - April 2023 | Macro Poverty Outlook 2023 Mozambique | https://thedocs.worldbank.org/en/doc/bae48ff2f2efc5a869546775b3f010735-0500062021/related/mpo-moz.pdf | 30 June 2023 |
| World Bank Mozambique data - 2021 | World Bank Mozambique data | https://databank.worldbank.org/views/reports/reportwidget.aspx?Report_Name=CountryProfileId=b450fd57tbar=ydd=yinf=nzm=ncountry=MOZ | 30 June 2023 |
| World Bank Mozambique overview - updated 20 March 2023 | World Bank Mozambique overview | https://www.worldbank.org/en/country/mozambique/overview | 30 June 2023 |

Recent history

After almost five centuries as a Portuguese colony, Mozambique became independent in 1975. There followed large-scale emigration, economic dependence on South Africa, a severe drought and a prolonged civil war, which all served to hinder the country's development until the mid-1990s.

The ruling Front for the Liberation of Mozambique party (FRELIMO) formally abandoned Marxism in 1989, and a new constitution the following year provided for multi-party elections and a free market economy. A UN-negotiated peace agreement between FRELIMO and rebel Mozambique National Resistance (RENAMO) forces ended the fighting in 1992. In 2004, Mozambique underwent a delicate transition as Joaquim Chissano stepped down after 18 years in office as president. His elected successor, Armando Guebuza, served two terms and then passed executive power to Filipe Nyusi in 2015.

Long considered to be a post-conflict success story, Mozambique currently finds itself in a period of uncertainty, with past political progress and current economic opportunities threatened by

unresolved tensions. After a period of post-war reconstruction, the country enjoyed steady and solid economic progress. GDP growth averaged between 7 and 8 percent for the past decade, and the discovery of significant reserves of coal and gas has driven robust foreign investment. Yet beneath strong [economic growth](#) and political progress marked by five consecutive multi-party elections, problems such as poverty, inequality, corruption, and political violence persist (World Politics Review, 21 January 2016).

Economic prosperity has been undermined since the return of political instability and violence in 2012. That year, renewed tensions between RENAMO and the ruling Mozambique Liberation Front (FRELIMO) called into question the political progress made since 1992, worrying investors and tarnishing the country's image as a post-war success story. RENAMO's residual armed forces have intermittently engaged in a low-level insurgency since 2012, although a late December 2016 ceasefire held throughout 2017. [Fighting erupted again](#) in 2019 when FRELIMO remained in power after disputed election results (All Africa, 20 April 2020).

Meanwhile, violent Islamic militants have been attacking the civilian population in the northern part of the country. Christians are heavily affected and have been fleeing from their homes to avoid being targeted by jihadists. At the same time coalition forces from the Southern African Development Community (SADC) and Rwanda (together with advisors from other nations) have had success in pushing the jihadists back. On the other hand, the the impact of jihadists is expanding to the south despite the success achieved by the government and its allies.

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

- "The Islamist insurgency in Cabo Delgado Province remained ongoing during the year [2022], displacing hundreds of thousands of people. However, despite continued conflict, a relative improvement in security allowed an increasing number of internally displaced persons (IDPs) to return to their place of origin by year's end."

In its Mozambique profile (accessed 2 February 2024), [International Crisis Group](#) highlights the seriousness of the situation since violent Islamic militants took up arms in 2017:

- "The conflict threatens national stability, just as Mozambique is fulfilling a peace deal with the country's main opposition group in the center of Mozambique, and risks becoming a new frontier for global jihad to exploit."

The country is now gearing up for general elections in October 2024.

Political and legal landscape

Mozambique has gone through tumultuous times. After independence in 1975, the Mozambique National Resistance (Resistência Nacional Moçambicana; RENAMO) was created. "Internal conflict raged throughout Mozambique from the late 1970s until 1992. Throughout this period FRELIMO remained Mozambique's sole political party. Multi-party elections began in 1994 but FRELIMO and RENAMO continue to be the major parties, alongside a handful of others. Universal suffrage was guaranteed by the 1990 Constitution. By the early 21st century, [women](#) had begun to serve in significant numbers in the Assembly of the Republic and on the Council of Ministers, and in 2004 Luisa Diogo was named prime minister - the first woman to hold the post

in Mozambique" (Britannica, last accessed 20 January 2023).

In May 2018, parliament made steps towards greater decentralization by approving constitutional reforms allowing the indirect election of provincial governors, district administrators and mayors. In October 2019, presidential, legislative, and provincial elections were held across the country, which was the country's sixth successive general election since the introduction of multiparty elections in 1994. FRELIMO won the presidency and the national parliament. FRELIMO also secured a majority in all 10 provinces, thus electing governors for each province.

In the October 2019 presidential election, incumbent President Nyusi won with a [landslide](#) victory (France24, 27 October 2019) but opposition RENAMO rejected the result and called for [rerun](#) accusing the "government of using violence and intimidation on election day" (Al-Jazeera, 19 October 2019). However, the country's top court [dismissed](#) this (Reuters, 15 November 2019).

Freedom House, which rated Mozambique as 'partly free' (with a score of 45/100 points) in its 2023 Freedom Index, summarizes the country's state of affairs in the last three decades in its Global Freedom Index 2023 Mozambique report as follows:

- "The ruling party's unbroken incumbency before and since the first multiparty elections in 1994 has allowed it to establish significant control over state institutions. The opposition has disputed the results of recent elections, and its armed wing fought a low-level conflict against government forces that persisted until a truce was signed in 2016. Hundreds of thousands of people have since been internally displaced due to an ongoing Islamist insurgency. Mozambique also struggles with corruption, and journalists who report on it and other sensitive issues risk violent attacks."

In summarizing the country's political context, the World Bank's Mozambique overview reports:

- The major political forces in Mozambique are the Front for the Liberation of Mozambique (Frelimo) and the Mozambican National Resistance (Renamo), with the Mozambique Democratic Movement (MDM) also playing a significant role. Frelimo secured a dominant victory in the 2019 presidential and legislative elections, obtaining a two-thirds majority in the national assembly. They also won the provincial elections, gaining control over all 10 provinces.
- The next presidential, legislative and provincial elections are to take place in October 2024.

[Africa Intelligence](#) reported in May 2023 that Frelimo "has no plans to share power".

Gender perspective

Women remain particularly vulnerable within Mozambique's political and legal system. The [2004 Family Law \(Article 7\)](#) is the overarching legal framework for marriage and provides for equal rights for both women and men to enter marriage and file for divorce. Many women in informal or de facto unions however, have uncertain legal rights. The practice of 'widow purification' (*pita-kufa*) continues, whereby widows are forced to have sex with a relative of her de-

ceased husband's family ([BMC International Health and Human Rights 18/1, September 2018](#)), as does the practice of land and property-grabbing from widows. The minimum legal age for marriage is set at 18, although marriages can occur from the age of 16 with the consent of the court, parent or guardian (Family Law, 2004, Art. 19). Mozambique has one of the highest child marriage rates in the world, with 48% of girls marrying by the age of 18 (Girls Not Brides Mozambique). The Law on Domestic Violence Perpetrated Against Women Act, introduced in 2009, was an important step in providing protection for victims, particularly as it specifically addressed marital rape. Effectively implementing legislation in practice, however, remains an ongoing issue ([Jetha et al, BMC Public Health 21/1, April 2021](#)).

Religious landscape

| Mozambique: Religious context | Number of adherents | % |
|---|---------------------|------|
| Christians | 19,184,000 | 56.4 |
| Muslim | 6,067,000 | 17.8 |
| Hindu | 50,200 | 0.1 |
| Buddhist | 3,400 | 0.0 |
| Ethno-religionist | 8,563,000 | 25.2 |
| Jewish | 200 | 0.0 |
| Bahai | 4,500 | 0.0 |
| Atheist | 27,300 | 0.1 |
| Agnostic | 128,000 | 0.4 |
| Other | 7,000 | 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)

The South Asian immigrant population and the northern provinces are predominantly Muslim, particularly along the coast, while some areas of the northern interior have a stronger concentration of Christian communities. Christians are more numerous in the southern and central regions, but Muslims also live in these areas.

Mozambique has a fast growing Evangelical population, but many small churches that have split off from mainstream denominations have fused African indigenous beliefs and practices within a Christian framework. (Some Muslim communities also continue to perform indigenous rituals.) Reports show that the government of Mozambique is [concerned about](#) the emergence of such smaller churches and has been planning for some time to put stricter regulations in place (Club of Mozambique, 30 May 2019).

The US State Department's comments in the [2010 International Religious Freedom Report](#) are still valid today:

- "Muslim journalists reported that the distinction between Sunni and Shi'a was not particularly important for many local Muslims, and Muslims were much more likely to identify themselves by the local religious leader they follow than as Sunni or Shi'a. There were significant differences between the practices of Muslims of African origin and those of South Asian background. In addition African Muslim clerics have increasingly sought training in Egypt, Kuwait, South Africa, and Saudi Arabia, returning with a more fundamental approach than the local traditional, Sufi-inspired Swahili Islam particularly common in the north."

As reported by the US State Department (IRFR 2022 Mozambique):

- "Prominent Muslim leaders continued to condemn the attacks in the northern part of the country, stating that the strict version of Islam preached by those allegedly responsible was not in line with the country's traditional Islamic culture and practice. Sheikh Nasrullahi Dula of the Islamic Congress in Pemba told the Washington Post in October that 'ultraconservative' clerics from Kenya and Tanzania brought radical ideology – 'the opposite of what we preached' – to Cabo Delgado, starting in 2010."
- "In May [2022], parliament passed an anti-money laundering and countering the financing of terrorism law that requires NGOs, including churches, to publish annual financial accounts of their income and expenditures and to keep eight years of financial records."

Economic landscape

As per Heritage Foundation's [2023 Index of Economic Freedom](#), Mozambique's economic freedom score for 2023 is 52.5, showing a 1.2-point improvement compared to the previous year, ranking it 134th in the Index. While it stands 28th among Sub-Saharan African countries, its overall score is still below the world and regional averages. The report by the Foundation adds that the country has made efforts to enact regulatory and investment reforms, leading to growth in private-sector economic activity. However, privatization of state-owned enterprises has faced delays. Mozambique still grapples with institutional shortcomings that hinder long-term economic development. Ineffectiveness in the legal framework and susceptibility to corruption and political interference continue to be challenges in the judicial system.

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

- **Economic growth:** Economic recovery in 2022 showed promising signs with growth reaching 4.1 percent, driven by strong export performance and resumed services. The positive trend is expected to continue as growth further accelerates in the medium term, supported by the production of liquefied natural gas (LNG) and favorable agricultural performance. As a result, poverty is projected to decrease from 64.3 percent in 2022 to 60.6 percent by 2025. However, the outlook is not without risks, as substantial downside factors such as Russia's invasion of Ukraine, natural disasters, and conflicts in the north could impact the medium-term prospects.

- **Poverty:** Despite being rich in natural resources, Mozambique faces significant development challenges, including widespread poverty, inequality, vulnerability to climate shocks, and fragility due to conflicts. The economy's heavy reliance on labor-intensive, low-productivity agriculture, and capital-intensive extractive industries, with weak sectoral links, hinders inclusive development. The country's poverty rate remains high, with about two-thirds of the population living below the poverty line, contributing to one of the highest inequality rates in Sub-Saharan Africa. With over half a million people entering the labor force each year but only 25,000 new formal jobs being created, the urgent need to generate more and better employment opportunities is a crucial concern for Mozambique.
- **Debt:** "Public debt has been declining, but domestic debt has continued to rise, with the government resorting to the expensive domestic debt market to cover financing needs."
- **Current Account Deficit (CAD):** "The current account deficit (CAD) increased from an average of 23.6 percent of GDP over 2017-21 to 36 percent in 2022. It is poised to increase, projected at 29.3 percent of GDP in the medium term."
- **Outlook:** Medium-term prospects remain positive, but substantial downside risks persist. Anticipated real GDP growth is expected to average 6.2 percent between 2023 and 2025, supported by the full capacity utilization of the offshore Coral South LNG terminal and the resumption of the Area 1 LNG project. Additionally, the continuation of favorable commodity prices will further boost export growth. As international oil prices decline, inflation is also projected to decrease, averaging 7.4 percent between 2023 and 2025. The expected reduction in poverty is projected to fall from 64.3 percent in 2022 to 63.5 percent in 2023. Nonetheless, the presence of significant downside risks, including ongoing conflict in Ukraine, fuel price escalation and natural disasters, could potentially lower the medium-term GDP growth to 4.5 percent.

Mozambique's development and economic strength are constrained by social considerations including pervasive poverty and limited access to basic services such as education, health care, access to roads and electricity etc.

Gender perspective

Women are typically more economically vulnerable than men in Mozambique. Whilst Articles 66 and 213 of the Civil Code allow for equal inheritance rights for both genders, customary practices commonly deny women and girls their due inheritance. The female labor force participation rate is high, with 77.3% of women in the workplace, compared to 79% of men (UNDP HDR Mozambique). However, women have more limited access to formal financial inclusion instruments than men and are more likely to be working in the informal sector ([LSE blog, 12 March 2018](#)).

Social and cultural landscape

According to UNDP HDR Mozambique and World Factbook Mozambique:

- **Main ethnic groups:** 99% of Mozambicans are descended from indigenous tribes (Makhuwa, Tsonga, Lomwe, Sena, Chokwe, Manyika, and Sau), Mestizo 0.8%, other 0.2% (includes European, Indian, Pakistani, Chinese) (CIA 2017 est.)
- **Main languages:** Makhuwa 26.1%, Portuguese (official) 16.6%, Tsonga 8.6%, Nyanja 8.1%,

Sena 7.1%, Lomwe 7.1%, Chuwabo 4.7%, Ndau 3.8%, Tswa 3.8%, other Mozambican languages 11.8%, other 0.5%, unspecified 1.8% (CIA 2017 est.). English is also spoken in major cities such as Maputo and Beira.

- **Median age:** 17 years
- **Urban population:** 38.2% of total population (CIA 2022 est.)
- **Expected years of schooling:** 10 years
- **Literacy rate, adult (def. 15 years and older can read and write):** 60.7%
- **Employment to population ratio (15 years and older):** 75.6%
- **Unemployment, total (% of labor force):** 3.2% (UNDP 2020 est.)
- **Unemployment, youth (15-24 years of age):** 6.9% (UNDP 2020 est.)

According to [UNHCR Mozambique Fact Sheet, December 2023](#):

- **Refugees (and asylum seekers): Approximately 25,000**
- **IDPs:** 850,599

According to the UNDP HDR Mozambique:

- **Human Development Index:** Mozambique ranked 181st out of 189 countries with a value of 0.456.
- **Average life expectancy at birth:** 60.9 years
- **Gender Development Index (GDI):** 0.912 (world: 0.943)
- **Gender inequality index (GII):** 0.523 (world: 0.436). Mozambique ranks 127th out of 162 countries.

According to [Moody's Analytics](#), People & Society, Demographic profile (accessed 2 February 2024):

- "Mozambique is a poor, sparsely populated country with high fertility and mortality rates. About 45% of the population is younger than 15. Mozambique's high poverty rate is caused by natural disasters, disease, high population growth, low agricultural productivity, and unequal distribution of wealth. The country's birth rate is among the world's highest, averaging more than 5 children per woman (and higher in rural areas) for at least the last three decades. The sustained high level of fertility reflects gender inequality, low contraceptive use, early marriages and childbearing, and a lack of education, particularly among women."

Gender perspective

As noted in a [2019 CEDAW report](#), discriminatory gender stereotypes and harmful practices persist in Mozambique, including polygamy, child marriage, female genital mutilation and accusations of witchcraft against women. The report further highlights the widespread impunity for such practices and the lack of convictions in cases of child marriage. Stark regional differences in the rates of child marriage across Mozambique suggest that sociocultural factors play a significant role; rates are highest in Northern and Central regions. Within the context of the COVID-19 crisis, the rate of child marriages reportedly increased, driven partly by the closure of schools ([UNICEF, Child marriage in COVID-19 contexts, 2021, p.1](#)). Lockdowns also served to

exacerbate gender-based violence and domestic violence ([Club of Mozambique, 2 September 2020](#)). To try and combat child marriage, traditional leaders – widely understood to be the guardians of social practices and norms – have been invited to work alongside government and social organizations through a joint forum ([Club of Mozambique, 29 March 2021](#)).

Technological landscape

According to Digita Report 2023, [Data Reportal](#):

- **Internet usage:** There were 6.92 million internet users in Mozambique at the start of 2023, when internet penetration stood at 20.7%.
- **Social media usage:** Mozambique was home to 2.50 million social media users in January 2023, equating to 7.5% of the total population.
- **Mobile phone usage:** A total of 16.72 million cellular mobile connections were active in Mozambique in early 2023, with this figure equivalent to 50.0% of the total population. The number of mobile connections in Mozambique increased by 1.4 million (+9.0%) between 2022 and 2023.

The [GSMA Mobile Gender Gap Report \(2020\)](#) shows that Mozambique has a gender gap of 17% in relation to mobile phone ownership, and a gender gap of 39% in relation to mobile Internet users. Mozambique was (along with six other Sub-Saharan African countries) in the ten countries that reported the largest gains in women’s cell phone use on [Georgetown’s Women, Peace and Security Index \(2019/20, p.35\)](#).

Due to the fact that Mozambique experienced both a war for independence and civil war in the not too distant past, it is not surprising to see the country not having advanced technology and infrastructure. The communication infrastructure is however developing significantly.

Security situation

From October 2017 onwards, there have been recurrent attacks in the north by Islamic militants who have killed many Christians and burned down Christian homes. In addition, the radical Islamic group *al-Sunnah wa Jama’ah* (ASWJ) has called for the removal of Christian symbols and has attacked houses belonging to Christians in some parts of Cabo Delgado province.

According to the World Factbook Mozambique:

- “Mozambique is facing an insurgency driven by militants with ties to the Islamic State terrorist group (ISIS-Mozambique, which was declared a Foreign Terrorist Organization by the US State Department in March 2021) in the northern province of Cabo Delgado, an area known for rich liquid natural gas deposits; insurgent attacks in the province began in 2017 and as of 2022, the fighting had left an estimated 3,000 dead and over 700,000 displaced; the Armed Defense Forces of Mozambique (FADM) is widely assessed as lacking the training, equipment, and overall capabilities to address the insurgency; as of early 2022, several countries from the Southern Africa Development Community and the European Union, as well as Rwanda and the US were providing various forms of military assistance; African countries have provided approximately 3,000 troops.”

According to [International Crisis Group's June 2023 update](#):

- "Islamic State militants remained active mostly in coastal Macomia district: Graves containing bodies of three individuals who went missing in early May in Chitoio village, Macomia district, discovered 5 June. Suspected Islamic State Mozambique Province (ISMP) militants sighted 7 June around coastal village of Pequeue in Macomia. Meanwhile, security forces mid-June reportedly reduced escorts on N380 road between Macomia district headquarters and Mucojo town. ISMP militants continued to engage communities peacefully in certain coastal areas, while also warning civilians against cooperation with security forces. Notably, militants 5 June searched bus near Ilala village along Macomia coast but let the passengers go unharmed, and 21 June reportedly entered Kalugo village in Mocímboa da Praia district, bought food and clothing before leaving."

"Authorities appeared set to step up counter-insurgency operations in Macomia: Military 19 June reportedly ordered residents of several villages along Macomia coast to evacuate to make way for govt, Rwandan and Southern African forces operations, and 21 June blocked all travel to Mucojo town from Macomia town. Soldiers' indiscipline continued to fuel distrust. Notably, security forces 9 June killed schoolteacher in Pamunda neighbourhood of Mocímboa da Praia district."

Monthly reports on insecurity in Mozambique are available from [Cabo Ligado](#).

Gender perspective

According to a report by World Vision in 2020, sexual violence against children has become a serious problem in Mozambique, with 99% of rape cases affecting girls ([Club of Mozambique, 25 November 2020](#)). This rise has been linked to increasing unemployment of parents and guardians, displacement, and attacks by militias. As reported by Amnesty international, the jihadists abduct both boys and girls, to become soldiers and wives respectively, or for the purpose of sexual assault ([AI News, 2 March 2021](#)). Gender-based violence has also increased within Mozambique's fragile context; women and girls are broadly understood to be the demographic most disproportionately affected by conflict ([Georgetown, 2019/20, p.52](#); [Africa Renewal, 24 February 2021](#)). In 2019, reports indicated that community leaders of displaced populations coerced women into exchanging sex for aid ([HRW, 25 April 2019](#)).

Amnesty International's Report 2021/22 (pp. 261-262) stated:

- "Violence against women and girls remained rampant, with few measures taken to hold perpetrators accountable: revelations emerged in June that the wardens of the Ndlavela Women's Prison in Maputo province had created an elaborate scheme for sexual abuse and exploitation of prisoners for years; in March, a man brutally killed his wife with an iron bar, alleging she had been drinking beer with a male neighbor; in April, a man beat his wife to death because he suspected she had had an affair; in July, a man tied up his wife, poured petrol on her and set fire to her because he suspected her of infidelity; in September, a school janitor sexually assaulted a 16-year-old girl on her way to school, after threatening her with physical violence; in August, a human resources manager at a primary school was found sexually assaulting a 14-year-old schoolgirl with autism. The police dismissed the

case, but appeal by the girl's family to the district Public Prosecutor ended up in getting the case assigned to the investigative police unit."

No such reports were made in AI Mozambique 2022.

Trends analysis

1) The government remains stable

As Mozambique prepares for the next election in October 2024, it poses a critical test for the ruling party, FRELIMO, despite its consolidation of power in recent years. The country has been grappling with various challenges, including the fight against corruption and drug cartels, maintaining peace with the opposition party, RENAMO, and upholding its international human rights commitments.

In the 2019 general election, FRELIMO secured a resounding victory, winning the presidency, 71% of parliamentary seats, and ten governorships. The successive elections with opposition participation signify a positive shift away from the history of civil war, demonstrating a growing seriousness towards the voting public. However, there is still considerable room for improvement.

Mozambique's substantial armed forces have struggled to contain the jihadist movement, necessitating support from the Southern African Development Community (SADC) and Rwanda's armies. Additionally, the involvement of Russian Wagner group mercenaries adds complexity to the security situation. As the country moves forward, addressing these challenges and ensuring transparent and accountable governance will be crucial for sustaining progress and stability in Mozambique.

2) There is danger that the Islamic insurgency will spread

The Mozambican and other nation's armies drove back the jihadists during the reporting period of WWL 2024. Yet, the level of fear among Christians remains high due to the increasing influence of radical Islamic group *al-Sunnah wa Jama'ah* (ASWJ), particularly in the northern regions of Mozambique. This group has been designated as a Foreign Terrorist Organization by the US government under Section 219 of the Immigration and Nationality Act. To address the situation, the US embassy has sent Special Forces trainers to support Mozambique's army, while leaders of the regional bloc, SADC forces, are also involved in efforts to restore stability in the area. However, it is crucial to recognize that if comprehensive tools beyond military operations are not implemented, the jihadists may adapt and extend their influence to other parts of the country, leading to further insecurity, especially for Christians. Already, there have been reported attacks in provinces outside Cabo Delgado, indicating the potential for the conflict to spread.

So far, the government does not appear to be taking meaningful policy actions beyond military operations to address the root causes of the conflict and tackle the growing influence of the jihadist group. There is a pressing need for comprehensive strategies that encompass social, economic and political dimensions to counter the insurgency and protect vulnerable communi-

ties, including Christians, from further insecurity. Without such holistic approaches, the threat posed by Islamic militants is likely to persist and even escalate.

External Links - Keys to understanding

- Recent history: economic growth - <https://www.worldpoliticsreview.com/articles/17725/political-tensions-threaten-mozambique-s-tenuous-peace>
- Recent history: Fighting - <https://allafrica.com/stories/201405170059.html>
- Recent history: erupted again - <https://allafrica.com/stories/201405170059.html>
- Recent history: International Crisis Group - <https://www.crisisgroup.org/africa/east-and-southern-africa/mozambique>
- Political and legal landscape: women - <https://www.britannica.com/place/Mozambique/Political-process>
- Political and legal landscape: landslide - <https://www.france24.com/en/20191027-mozambique-s-president-nyusi-wins-second-term-opposition-rejects-results>
- Political and legal landscape: rerun - <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2019/10/mozambique-opposition-rejects-election-results-191019135525946.html>
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- Religious landscape description: 2010 International Religious Freedom Report - <https://2009-2017.state.gov/j/drl/rls/irf/2010/148708.htm>
- Economic landscape: 2023 Index of Economic Freedom - <https://www.heritage.org/index/country/mozambique>
- Economic landscape: LSE blog, 12 March 2018 - <https://blogs.lse.ac.uk/africaatlse/2018/03/12/womens-financial-inclusion-5-reasons-why-it-matters-for-mozambique/>
- Social and cultural landscape: UNHCR Mozambique Fact Sheet, December 2023 - <https://reliefweb.int/report/mozambique/unhcr-mozambique-operational-update-december-2023>
- Social and cultural landscape: Moody's Analytics - <https://www.economy.com/mozambique/>
- Social and cultural landscape: 2019 CEDAW report, - https://tbinternet.ohchr.org/_layouts/15/treatybodyexternal/Download.aspx?symbolNo=CEDAW/C/MOZ/CO/3-5&Lang=En
- Social and cultural landscape: UNICEF, Child marriage in COVID-19 contexts, 2021, p.1 - <https://www.unicef.org/esa/media/7651/file/Child-Marriage-in-COVID-19-contexts.pdf>
- Social and cultural landscape: Club of Mozambique, 2 September 2020 - <https://clubofmozambique.com/news/mozambique-responds-to-gender-based-violence-in-the-context-of-covid-19-170471/>
- Social and cultural landscape: Club of Mozambique, 29 March 2021 - <https://clubofmozambique.com/news/mozambique-traditional-leaders-urged-to-take-the-lead-on-ending-child-marriage-188069/>
- Technological landscape: Data Reportal: - <https://datareportal.com/reports/digital-2023-mozambique>
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- Technological landscape: Georgetown's Women, Peace and Security Index (2019/20, p.35 - <https://giwps.georgetown.edu/wp-content/uploads/2019/12/WPS-Index-2019-20-Report.pdf>

- Security situation: International Crisis Group's June 2023 update - <https://www.crisisgroup.org/crisiswatch/july-alerts-and-june-trends-2023#mozambique>
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- Security situation: Africa Renewal, 24 February 2021 - <https://www.un.org/africarenewal/magazine/march-2021/turning-tide-women-and-girls-caught-mozambique%E2%80%99s-cabo-delgado-crisis>
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WWL 2024: Church information / Mozambique

Christian origins

Christianity was introduced to Mozambique by Roman Catholic Dominicans in 1506. Jesuit and Augustinian monks later helped the Dominicans in establishing the Roman Catholic Church in Mozambique. In 1881 Protestant Christianity came to the country through missionaries of the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions. As a result of the Berlin Treaty of 1885, the authorities became more open to admitting non-Catholic missionary personnel. In 1889, Bishop William Taylor of the Methodist Episcopal Church moved to the country.

Church spectrum today

| Mozambique: Church networks | Christians | % |
|--|-------------------|--------------|
| Orthodox | 5,000 | 0.0 |
| Catholic | 7,948,000 | 41.4 |
| Protestant | 5,130,000 | 26.7 |
| Independent | 5,024,000 | 26.2 |
| Unaffiliated | 1,317,000 | 6.9 |
| Doubly-affiliated Christians | -240,000 | -1.3 |
| Total | 19,184,000 | 100.0 |
| <i>(Any deviation from the total number of Christians stated above is due to the rounding of decimals)</i> | | |
| Evangelical movement | 4,378,000 | 22.8 |
| Renewalist movement | 6,468,000 | 33.7 |

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.

According to the US State Department (IRFR 2022 Mozambique), there are Roman Catholic, Evangelical/Pentecostal and Anglican congregations (in descending order of denominational size) in the country.

Areas where Christians face most difficulties

The persecution of Christians is severest in the northern Cabo Delgado province due to violent attacks by IS-affiliated militants.

Christian communities and how they are affected

Communities of expatriate Christians: Expatriate Christians are not isolated from other Christian communities in Mozambique and are thus are not treated as a separate category in WWL analysis.

Historical Christian communities: This category includes Roman Catholic, Anglican and Orthodox churches. They are frequently targeted by ASWJ militants.

Converts to Christianity: This category includes converts from Islam or traditional African religions to Christianity. Persecution is particularly severe if the convert is from a Muslim background in the Muslim-dominated northern part of the country; such converts are likely to be targets for attack by radicalized Muslims.

Non-traditional Christian communities: This category includes Baptist, Pentecostal and various independent Christian groups. Due to their focus on outreach and evangelism, Christians in these churches are regularly threatened and attacked.

WWL 2024: Persecution Dynamics / Mozambique

Reporting period

1 October 2022 - 30 September 2023

Position on the World Watch List

| Mozambique: World Watch List | Points | WWL Rank |
|------------------------------|--------|----------|
| WWL 2024 | 68 | 39 |
| WWL 2023 | 68 | 32 |
| WWL 2022 | 65 | 41 |
| WWL 2021 | 63 | 45 |
| WWL 2020 | 43 | 66 |

In WWL 2024, the country's score plateaued at 68 points, indicating a persistent level of pressure and violence, particularly prevalent in the northern region, where jihadist activities persist. Despite efforts by Rwandan and Southern African forces that led to the recapture of several towns and cities from Islamic militants over the last two years or so, their influence remained notably strong. Additionally, the presence of drug cartels in certain areas further complicated the lives of Christians, particularly hindering church initiatives focused on youth engagement. Although there was a marginal decrease from 15.6 points in WWL 2023 to 15.0 points in WWL 2024, violence against Christians continued at an extreme level.

Persecution engines

| Mozambique: 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 | 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.

Islamic oppression (Very strong)

Islam is a minority-religion in Mozambique with main [centers](#) in the north (Pew Forum, accessed 1 December 2020). From October 2017 onwards, there have been recurrent attacks against Christians by Islamic militants, causing thousands of residents to flee their homes. It is not unlikely that this jihadist violence could expand southwards and also into neighboring Tanzania and Malawi.

Organized corruption and crime (Medium)

Mozambique faces a very significant problem with organized crime. Drugs, illegal wildlife products such as ivory and illegal arms are widely traded at ports. Radical Islamic ASWJ has been involved in this illegal trade to fund the group's activities. The thriving drug-trafficking business affects Christian communities where threats are issued and acts of violence take place, especially where Christian workers evangelize among the youth and among groups involved in the supply or use of drugs.

Dictatorial paranoia (Medium)

The Constitution declares the nation to be secular and also protects the right to practice or not practice religion. Political parties are prohibited from using names containing references to any religious denominations or churches, and from using emblems that may be confused with national or religious symbols. Moreover, the Constitution bans all religious influence in public educational institutions. The state bureaucratic system and institutions that have been in place for decades also impose cumbersome registration requirements for religious groups.

Clan oppression (Medium)

In some remote areas, adherents to the indigenous belief system see the rise in Christian evangelistic activities as a threat. As a result, community leaders will often oppose such church action.

Drivers of persecution

| Mozambique: Drivers of persecution | IO | RN | ERH | CO | CDP | CPCO | SI | DPA | OCC |
|--|-------------|----|-----|--------|------|------|----|--------|--------|
| | VERY STRONG | | | MEDIUM | WEAK | | | MEDIUM | MEDIUM |
| Government officials | | | | | | | | Medium | |
| Ethnic group leaders | | | | Medium | | | | | |
| Non-Christian religious leaders | Medium | | | | | | | | |
| Religious leaders of other churches | | | | | Weak | | | | |
| Violent religious groups | Very strong | | | | | | | | Medium |
| Citizens (people from the broader society), including mobs | Medium | | | | Weak | | | | |
| One's own (extended) family | Medium | | | | Weak | | | | |
| Organized crime cartels or networks | | | | | | | | | 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 Islamic oppression

- **Violent religious groups (Very strong):** Violent Islamic militants are the major drivers of persecution. They are believed to have strong ties with al-Shabaab in Somalia and to be followers of a strict Wahhabi interpretation of Islam.
- **Organized crime cartels/networks (Medium):** Islamic militants are supported financially by working with drug cartels and through corruption involving some officials in the country.

- **Family (Medium):** In Muslim-dominated areas and in Muslim families, those who convert to Christianity face ostracization and discrimination.
Ordinary citizens (Medium): All Christian groups in Muslim majority areas can face persecution from ordinary citizens and mobs. This is particularly true in the northern part of the country.

Drivers of Organized corruption and crime

- **Organized crime cartels and networks (Medium):** These groups threaten churches where these are involved in work among youth and criminal gangs. The country is also struggling to deal with the drug networks in the country.
- **Violent religious groups (Medium):** Islamic militants are supported financially by working with drug cartels. The stronger the militants become, the more likely Christians will be persecuted in Mozambique - as can be seen in the cases of Boko Haram and al-Shabaab elsewhere.

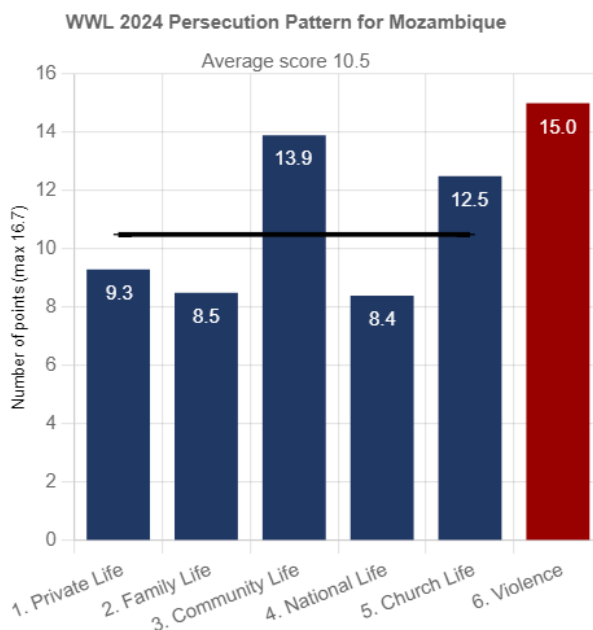
Drivers of Dictatorial paranoia

- **Government officials (Medium):** The government of Mozambique is not a true democracy. It is still repressive in many respects. It puts pressure on some church leaders and congregations to support government policies. It restricts freedom of association and freedom of expression.

Drivers of Clan oppression

- **Ethnic leaders (Medium):** In Mozambique, there are certain groups who follow the traditional belief system and/or mix it with Christianity and Islam. The drivers are clan leaders (sometimes overlapping with non-Christian religious leaders).

The Persecution pattern



The WWL 2024 Persecution Pattern for Mozambique shows:

- In both WWL 2024 and WWL 2023, Mozambique maintained a consistent average pressure score of 10.5 points, reflecting the high level of challenges faced by Christians.
- Registering the highest pressure at an extreme level of 13.9 points, the *Community sphere* reflects the severe impact of jihadist hostility towards church and community life, particularly in the northern regions. Following closely with a score of 12.5 points, pressure in the *Church sphere* is also very high, illustrating the adverse effect on church institutions and congregations caused by the presence of jihadist groups.
- The violence score in WWL 2024 reached the extreme level of 15.0 points (a decrease from 15.6 points in WWL 2023), mirroring the continued threat posed by jihadist attacks and indicating a sustained atmosphere of severe violence in the country.

Pressure in the 5 spheres of life

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

Pressure in Block 1 / Private sphere

Block 1.2: It has been risky for Christians to conduct acts of Christian worship by themselves (e.g. prayer, Bible reading, etc.). (2.75 points)

Christian converts (particularly those from a Muslim background) face significant opposition from their families if discovered engaging in private prayer or Bible reading. Particularly the Cabo Delgado area is under the influence of Islamic militants, creating a highly hostile environment towards all Christian activity.

Block 1.5: It has been risky for Christians to display Christian images or symbols. (2.75 points)

In Cabo Delgado, society has become hostile to all forms of Christian expression through the radical Islamic influence. Even the simple act of displaying a cross could be considered a provocation, potentially drawing violent repercussions from militants.

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

The presence of Islamic militants in the northern part of the country means that if conversions from Islam to Christian faith are discovered, they are likely to be met with violent consequences. In addition, the decision to leave the Catholic Church and join non-traditional or other Protestant churches can often result in social ostracization from both family and the broader community.

Block 1.4: It has been risky for Christians to reveal their faith in written forms of personal expression (including expressions in blogs and Facebook etc.). (2.50 points)

Publicly declaring one's Christian faith on online platforms, for instance, can make Christians tar-

gets for violence and other forms of persecution, especially if they are converts from Islam.

Pressure in Block 2 / Family sphere

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

The ongoing crisis in Cabo Delgado, characterized by the presence of violent Islamic militants and those influenced by them, has created an environment where any Christian activity, including the celebration of Christian weddings, is fraught with risk and limitations. These challenges extend to 'cross-denominational converts' within Christianity as well.

Block 2.4: Christian baptisms have been hindered. (3.25 points)

The celebration of Christian baptisms has been hindered in regions like Cabo Delgado, where the ongoing crisis has severely constrained religious freedom. Public or even private observances of Christian rituals can provoke attack due to the atmosphere of religious intolerance fostered by the presence of violent Islamic militants.

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

Despite constitutional protections for religious freedom, tensions between different faith communities do exist. Particularly in areas where the local Islamic community is strong, children of Christian parents are known to encounter bullying and discrimination, especially if they are children of converts.

Block 2.7: Parents have been hindered in raising their children according to their Christian beliefs. (2.50 points)

Christian parents in regions like Cabo Delgado face hostility from Islamic militants. Difficulties have especially arisen where families have been forcibly displaced from their homes and church communities.

Pressure in Block 3 / Community sphere

Block 3.3: Christians have been under threat of abduction and/or forced marriage. (3.50 points)

Christians face the threat of abduction where Islamic extremism is a major influence. In these areas, Christians who actively speak out against organized crime (e.g., drug trafficking) can be specifically targeted.

Block 3.6: Christians have been hindered in participating in communal institutions, forums, etc., for faith-related reasons. (3.50 points)

In specific regions, particularly those influenced by Islamic extremism in the north and in conservative Catholic communities, Christians - particularly converts and 'cross-denominational converts' - have at times been excluded from community involvement.

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.). (3.25 points)

Particularly through the influence of radical Islam in the northern regions (and also in conservative Catholic communities), Christians have faced faith-related harassment and threats. Also, Christians publicly warning against drugs and criminal activities are liable to face intimidation from criminal groups.

Block 3.2: Christians have been monitored by their local communities or by private groups (this includes reporting to police, being shadowed, telephone lines listened to, emails read/censored, etc.). (3.25 points)

Christians face monitoring from different sectors, with conservative Catholic members keeping a watchful eye on those who have abandoned Catholicism and joined non-Catholic churches. Jihadists maintain a continuous monitoring of Christian activities and churches in the northern part of the country.

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. (3.50 points)

Christian civil society organizations find themselves compelled to self-censor due to the pressures exerted by the government. Moreover, in the northern part of the country, the presence of jihadists further complicates matters, making such activities exceedingly difficult.

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

Travel-related restrictions in the country are primarily experienced in the northern and northeastern regions, due to the presence of jihadists. Christians in these areas risk being targeted for attack or abduction.

Block 4.8: Christians have been hindered in expressing their views or opinions in public. (3.00 points)

Christian leaders often refrain from voicing their concerns about organized crime due to fear of reprisals from these groups. Speaking to their congregations about the dangers of recruitment into drug cartels is dangerous. Additionally, Christians find it challenging to openly express their opinions about the government.

Pressure in Block 5 / Church sphere

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

Church activities face monitoring and obstruction from various groups. The government seeks to control the narrative within the country, particularly ensuring that church leaders refrain from expressing dissent against the government. Similarly, drug cartels adopt similar tactics to sup-

press any unfavorable discussions. In the northern part of the country, jihadists actively monitor church activities, adding an additional layer of scrutiny and hindrance to religious practices.

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

All groups involved in the persecution of Christians aim to create an environment where church leaders feel unsafe teaching faith-based values. This is achieved partly by ensuring that Christians do not feel secure even within the confines of their church compounds.

Block 5.18: Churches have been hindered in establishing, managing, maintaining and conducting schools, or charitable, humanitarian, medical, social or cultural organizations, institutions and associations. (3.50 points)

Government restrictions are imposed on church organizations if they diverge from the government's plan. Thanks to the jihadist threat, church-run schools, for instance, have also faced serious intimidation from jihadists in the northern part of the country, Christian organizations aiming to assist displaced Christians also face hindrances.

Block 5.5: Churches have been hindered from organizing Christian activities outside church buildings. (3.25 points)

Organizing church events outside church compounds can involve lengthy bureaucratic procedures with local authorities in many areas of the country. In the northern part of the country, such church activities are less likely to be attempted, since they are likely to attract unnecessary attention from jihadists.

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 WWR chooses to be cautious because the real number is uncertain.

| Mozambique: 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)? | 10 * | 100 * |
| 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? | 10 * | 100 * |
| 6.3 How many Christians have been detained for faith-related reasons? | 0 | 0 |
| 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 * | 100 * |
| 6.6 How many Christians have been raped or otherwise sexually harassed for faith-related reasons? | 10 * | 75 * |
| 6.7 How many cases have there been of forced marriages of Christians to non-Christians? | 10 * | 100 * |
| 6.8 How many Christians have been otherwise physically or mentally abused for faith-related reasons (including beatings and death threats)? | 100 * | 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? | 100 * | 100 * |
| 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? | 100 * | 100 |
| 6.11 How many Christians have been forced to leave their homes or go into hiding in-country for faith-related reasons? | 100 * | 1000 * |
| 6.12 How many Christians have been forced to leave the country for faith-related reasons? | 10 * | 10 |

5 Year trends

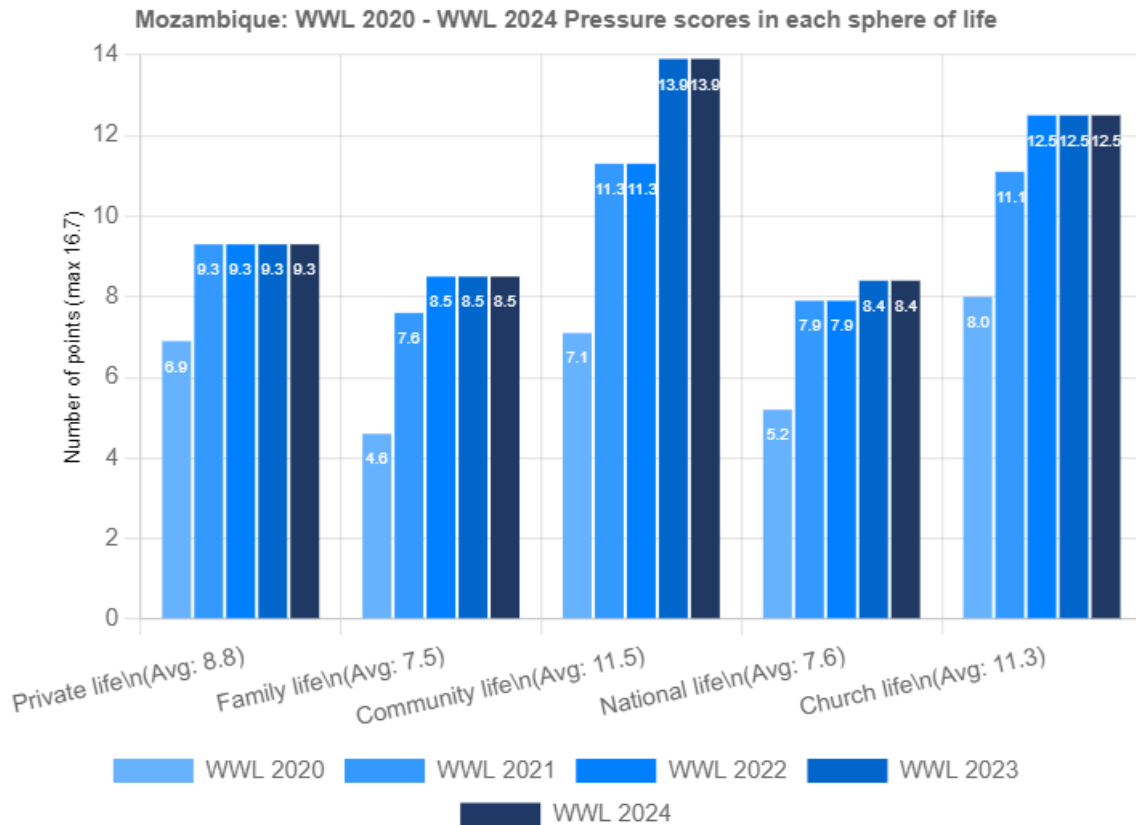
The following three charts show the levels of pressure and violence faced by Christians in the country over the last five WWL reporting periods.

5 Year trends: Average pressure

| Mozambique: WWL 2020 - WWL 2024 | Average pressure over 5 Spheres of life |
|---------------------------------|---|
| 2024 | 10.5 |
| 2023 | 10.5 |
| 2022 | 9.9 |
| 2021 | 9.4 |
| 2020 | 6.4 |

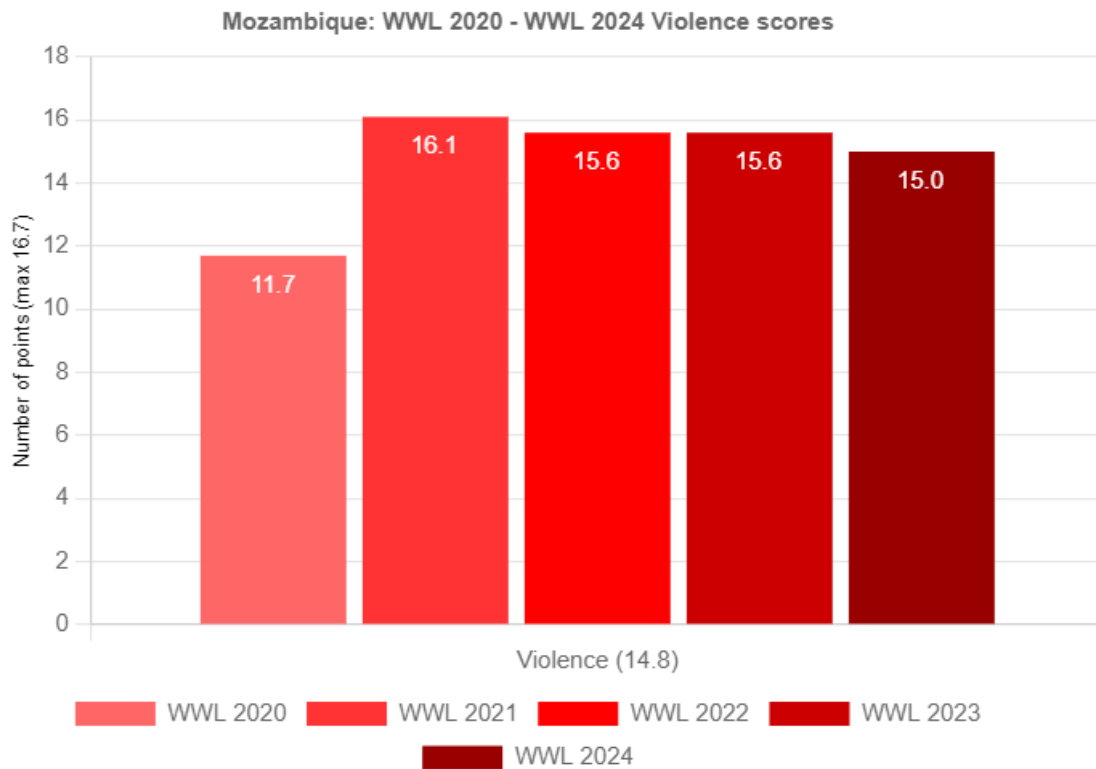
Over the course of the reporting periods WWL 2020-2023, the average pressure on Christians rose each year from 6.4 points to 10.5 points. However, the average pressure plateaued in WWL 2024.

5 Year trends: Pressure in each sphere of life



The *Community sphere* (registering pressure at 11.5 points on average) and the *Church sphere* (averaging 11.3 points) are the highest scorers for pressure on Christians. Churches and communities have become specific targets for attack by jihadist groups.

5 Year trends: Violence against Christians



Over the span of five years, the average violence score is 14.8 points. Apart from WWL 2020, the violence score has consistently been at or above the 15.0-point mark, but has been declining since WWL 2021.

Gender-specific religious persecution / Female

| Group | Female Pressure Points |
|---------------------|---|
| Economic | - |
| Political and Legal | Forced marriage |
| Security | Abduction; Forced to flee town/country; Trafficking; Violence – death; Violence – physical; Violence – sexual |
| Social and Cultural | Enforced religious dress code; Violence – psychological; Violence – Verbal |
| Technological | - |

The most common violations affecting Christian women and girls in the country are sexual harassment and rape – attributed to the incursion of Islamic militants – and forced marriage to militants, according to local sources. A country expert explains: “Young Christian women are forced to get married with insurgents' leaders and other women are forced to work as slaves.” Mozambique also has one of the highest rates of child marriage in the world, with 53% of girls being married before they reach 18, often fueled by low education and employment opportunities for women and girls (Girls Not Brides Mozambique). Despite the continued prevalence of child marriage in the country, things are changing for the better. Since 2019, a global initiative of the United Nations has been supporting the approval and implementation of Mozambican laws that protect women and girls from gender-based violence and harmful practices, such as early marriages ([UN News, 16 October 2022](#)).

Cultural pressure to conform to community norms is so high that some Christian girls have reported being forced by their parents into unions with Muslims, primarily, for the prestige of having a married daughter “even when it was known that this would have implications on their faith.” Victims of forced marriage and rape have been psychologically and emotionally traumatized by these events. Young women and girls have seen their vulnerability to specific Pressure points compounded by the ongoing conflict in northern Mozambique, with many being forced to abandon school and even their homes, leaving them at risk of further harm and abuse. Indeed, the rate of child marriage among displaced children in northern Mozambique was seen to increase to 65% between 2021 and 2022 ([Club of Mozambique, 2022](#)).

This rise in violence in the north of the country has exacerbated other forms of violence against women and girls and is reported as one of the main drivers of [human trafficking](#) in Mozambique (USDS, Trafficking in Persons Report: Mozambique, 2022). A country expert states: “Women and girls face various forms of persecution that include severe discrimination, abuse, and exploitation. Young Christian women are particularly vulnerable, being forced into marriages with insurgent leaders or compelled to work as slaves. Girls may be subjected to rape, child marriages, and forced unions with non-Christians as modes of persecution. The challenges extend to instances where women and girls are sent away from home, stripped of their rights, and face the threat of divorce, especially if they are married.” Additionally, women are prone to domestic abuse, emotional and mental mistreatment, forced marriages, sexual assaults, abductions, and even killings. The situation highlights the multifaceted nature of persecution faced by women and girls, encompassing various forms of violence, discrimination, and exploitation.

During the WWL 2024 reporting period there have been numerous reports of abductions across areas of the country where jihadists and their cells exert influence. One country expert noted: “Christian girls were taken as war trophies.” In addition to marriage, girls are also used for forced labor. The practice of viewing women as domestic slaves and tools of sexuality has fueled the abduction of women by insurgents to use for sex as well as domestic chores. “Over 800 women are said to have been sent to jihadist camps for forced labor or sex”, a country expert disclosed. In Muslim-dominated areas like coastal and Cabo Delgado, Christian women and girls are required to comply with the Islamic dress code in all Muslim schools and in communal areas. Converts from a Muslim or African Traditional Religion background are particularly vulnerable to persecution from within the family sphere. Many Muslim families living in Mozambique force

suspected female converts to marry a Muslim man to ensure that they cannot get involved in Christian activities. Objection to these marriages can prove fatal for young women especially. If already married, converts face the threats of divorce and the loss of custody of their children. They may also be denied their due inheritance.

Gender-specific religious persecution / Male

| Group | Male Pressure Points |
|---------------------|---|
| Economic | - |
| Political and Legal | Travel bans/restrictions on movement |
| Security | Abduction; Military/militia conscription/service against conscience; Violence – death |
| Social and Cultural | Violence – psychological |
| Technological | - |

According to country experts, *Islamic oppression* continues to be the most common form of persecution for Christians in Mozambique, which has evidently been exacerbated by the ongoing rise in violence, particularly in the north of the country.

It is reported that Christian men and boys have been targeted by insurgents and killed or chased out of their homes. A country expert describes the situation as follows: “Christian women who are abducted are married off as brides to jihadist’s to bear children whilst the men are usually killed off if they do not renounce their faith”. Conversion to Christianity is opposed and punishable. The country expert goes on to say that “young men are recruited to join the insurgents, older men are killed because they are regarded as weak and cannot join the insurgent’s army”. Young boys are thus vulnerable to abduction and forcibly recruited into militias. This practice has been [confirmed by multiple reports](#) by Human Rights Watch (HRW, 24 November 2022).

Church leaders who have been critical of the government and denounced the instigators of persecution have been harassed by government officials. Pastors have also reported being denied exit visas and incarcerated for up to three years in re-education camps. “In 2021, 5 pastors from Cabo Delgado who were invited to attend a consultation meeting in Malawi were detained in Mocuba”, a source revealed.

Persecution of other religious minorities

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

- "An Islamic State-affiliated terrorist group, ISIS-Mozambique (ISIS-M), continued to attack rural communities, kill civilians, and burn religious and government structures in Cabo Delgado Province in addition to conducting scattered attacks in neighboring Nampula Province. Media reports indicated that ISIS-M targeted both Muslim and Christian communities."

Other religious minorities (such as Hindus, Buddhists and Jews) are very few in number in the country and most are expatriates. There is no specific form of persecution affecting these groups. However, as stated in [IRFR 2020](#):

- "Religious leaders continued to express concern that a draft law on religious practices, proposed in 2019 that was still pending in parliament at year's end, could prevent religious groups that have fewer than 500 followers from registering with the Ministry of Justice. Leaders of small religious communities expressed concern that the registration requirement would prevent them from registering their organizations. According to a religious leader, the draft law would also require followers to have their identities attested by a notary, which would create an administrative barrier to religious practice." This draft law is still under consideration.

A significant number of the population still follow traditional African religions. Most adherents live in remote parts of the country and there are no reports of persecution. Many are converting to Christianity.

Future outlook

The outlook for Christians as viewed through the lens of:

Islamic oppression

The emergence of ASWJ in 2017 marked a troubling addition to Africa's jihadist groups, drawing attention through brutal acts against Christians and government forces. The government's forceful measures, while attempting to counter insurgency, inadvertently aid jihadist recruitment. Despite intervention from SADC and Rwanda, the lack of a comprehensive strategy may fortify this persecution engine, enabling the jihadist threat to spread to neighboring nations. Relying solely on a military approach might prove ineffective in the long term.

As Mozambique faces elections in October 2024, the customary tension surrounding elections in the country creates another potential opportunity for jihadists. Furthermore, the military successes against jihadists, backed by SADC and Rwanda, lack a corresponding political framework to address the roots of the insurgency. Consequently, jihadists could endure in the northern regions, potentially expanding their reach into neighboring countries.

Organized corruption and crime

The government is currently having little success in tackling the problem of organized crime. With the lack of good governance and the existence of drug cartels and increasing Islamic militant involvement, this Persecution engine looks set to become stronger in the future.

Dictatorial paranoia

Mozambique's history post-independence has been fraught with numerous conflicts and humanitarian crises. Any inclination towards authoritarianism by the ruling party risks sparking yet another conflict. The potential establishment of democracy could mitigate this persecution engine, possibly to be replaced by *Secular intolerance* at some point in the future. However, despite periodic elections, significant strides toward stable democracy remain elusive. Compli-

cating matters, the historical enmity between the ruling and opposition parties from 1977 to 1992 raises concerns.

Adding to this, the forthcoming general election scheduled for October 2024 has instigated reports of a crackdown by the Mozambican police which could either trigger another cycle of violence or present an opportunity for jihadist groups, diverting the government's focus from pressing issues. Christian leaders are likely to face increased government pressure against discussing injustices or any topics related to the elections within their congregations.

Clan oppression

This Persecution engine is likely to continue in the short-term. However, there could be change in the long-term. Through the influence of education, political inclusion and more democracy, ethnic groups are likely to become more open to outside ideas and more tolerant of Christians in their areas.

External Links - Persecution Dynamics

- Persecution engines description: centers - http://www.globalreligiousfutures.org/countries/mozambique#/?affiliations_religion_id=0&affiliations_year=2010®ion_name=All%20Countries&restrictions_year=2016%20
- Gender-specific religious persecution Female description: UN News, 16 October 2022 - <https://news.un.org/en/story/2022/10/1129542>
- Gender-specific religious persecution Female description: Club of Mozambique, 2022). - <https://clubofmozambique.com/news/op-ed-16-days-of-activism-against-gender-based-violence-mozambique-cant-afford-to-lose-the-battle-against-child-early-and-forced-marriage-cefm-230306/>
- Gender-specific religious persecution Female description: human trafficking - <https://www.state.gov/reports/2022-trafficking-in-persons-report/mozambique/>
- Gender-specific religious persecution Male description: confirmed by multiple reports - <https://www.hrw.org/news/2022/11/24/five-years-justice-still-dream-cabo-delgado-victims>
- Persecution of other religious minorities: IRFR 2020 - <https://www.state.gov/reports/2020-report-on-international-religious-freedom/mozambique/>

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=Mozambique>
- <https://opendoorsanalytical.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/09/Mozambique-Islamic-militancy-WWR-July-2020.pdf>.