

World
Watch
Research

Cuba: Full Country Dossier

January 2022



OpenDoors

Serving persecuted **Christians** worldwide

Open Doors International / World Watch Research

January 2022

© Open Doors International

research@od.org

Contents

Introduction	3
World Watch List 2022	3
Copyright note.....	4
Sources and definitions.....	4
Effect on data-gathering during COVID-19 pandemic.....	5
External Links - Introduction	5
WWL 2022 Situation in brief / Cuba	5
Brief country details	5
Dominant persecution engines and drivers	6
Brief description of the persecution situation	6
Summary of international obligations and rights violations	6
Specific examples of violations of rights in the reporting period	7
Specific examples of positive developments	7
External Links - Situation in brief	8
WWL 2022: Keys to understanding / Cuba	8
Links for general background information	8
Recent history	9
Political and legal landscape	9
Religious landscape	11
Economic landscape.....	14
Social and cultural landscape.....	16
Technological landscape	17
Security situation	19
Trends analysis	20
External Links - Keys to understanding	21
WWL 2022: Church information / Cuba	24
Christian origins.....	24
Church spectrum today.....	24
External Links - Church information.....	25
WWL 2022: Persecution Dynamics / Cuba	25
Reporting period	25
Position on the World Watch List	25
Persecution engines	26

Drivers of persecution..... 27

Areas where Christians face most difficulties 29

Christian communities and how they are affected 29

The Persecution pattern..... 30

Pressure in the 5 spheres of life 31

Violence..... 38

5 Year trends 40

Gender-specific religious persecution / Female 41

Gender-specific religious persecution / Male 42

Persecution of other religious minorities..... 43

Future outlook..... 44

External Links - Persecution Dynamics..... 45

Further useful reports.....45



Cuban man (c) Alamy

Introduction

World Watch List 2022

Rank	Country	Private life	Family life	Community life	National life	Church life	Violence	Total Score WWL 2022	Total Score WWL 2021	Total Score WWL 2020	Total Score WWL 2019	Total Score WWL 2018
1	Afghanistan	16.7	16.7	16.7	16.7	16.7	15.0	98	94	93	94	93
2	North Korea	16.7	16.7	16.7	16.7	16.7	13.1	96	94	94	94	94
3	Somalia	16.5	16.7	16.6	16.6	16.6	8.5	91	92	92	91	91
4	Libya	15.6	15.5	15.9	16.2	16.3	11.5	91	92	90	87	86
5	Yemen	16.7	16.6	16.5	16.7	16.7	5.2	88	87	85	86	85
6	Eritrea	14.6	14.9	15.5	15.9	15.6	11.1	88	88	87	86	86
7	Nigeria	13.8	13.8	14.3	14.5	14.4	16.7	87	85	80	80	77
8	Pakistan	13.6	14.0	15.1	14.9	13.1	16.7	87	88	88	87	86
9	Iran	14.5	14.6	13.6	15.8	16.5	10.4	85	86	85	85	85
10	India	12.7	12.7	12.9	14.7	13.3	15.6	82	83	83	83	81
11	Saudi Arabia	15.1	15.1	15.0	15.9	16.7	3.1	81	78	79	77	79
12	Myanmar	12.4	11.5	13.8	13.4	13.1	14.8	79	74	73	71	65
13	Sudan	13.4	13.4	14.3	13.6	15.7	8.5	79	79	85	87	87
14	Iraq	14.0	14.6	14.0	14.8	13.9	6.9	78	82	76	79	86
15	Syria	12.9	13.8	13.5	14.3	13.9	9.3	78	81	82	82	76
16	Maldives	15.4	15.3	13.7	15.8	16.5	0.4	77	77	78	78	78
17	China	12.6	9.8	12.2	14.4	15.5	11.1	76	74	70	65	57
18	Qatar	14.2	14.1	11.1	13.0	14.3	7.2	74	67	66	62	63
19	Vietnam	11.3	9.7	12.7	14.1	14.5	8.7	71	72	72	70	69
20	Egypt	12.7	13.2	11.5	12.7	10.8	10.0	71	75	76	76	70
21	Uzbekistan	14.9	12.7	14.1	11.8	15.6	1.7	71	71	73	74	73
22	Algeria	14.0	14.0	11.1	13.4	14.1	4.1	71	70	73	70	58
23	Mauritania	14.3	13.9	13.1	14.0	14.1	0.9	70	71	68	67	57
24	Mali	9.4	8.2	13.9	10.3	12.8	15.0	70	67	66	68	59
25	Turkmenistan	14.5	11.3	13.6	13.3	15.7	0.6	69	70	70	69	68
26	Laos	12.0	10.3	13.2	13.3	14.1	5.9	69	71	72	71	67
27	Morocco	13.1	13.8	10.8	12.8	14.2	3.9	69	67	66	63	51
28	Indonesia	11.3	11.5	11.5	11.0	9.6	13.5	68	63	60	65	59
29	Bangladesh	11.8	10.7	12.9	11.3	10.2	11.3	68	67	63	58	58
30	Colombia	11.5	8.8	13.1	11.0	9.9	13.3	68	67	62	58	56
31	CAR	9.0	8.6	13.6	9.6	11.4	15.6	68	66	68	70	61
32	Burkina Faso	9.4	9.7	12.0	9.6	12.1	14.8	68	67	66	48	-
33	Niger	9.4	9.5	13.9	7.2	12.8	14.8	68	62	60	52	45
34	Bhutan	13.4	12.4	11.7	13.7	13.8	1.7	67	64	61	64	62
35	Tunisia	11.9	12.7	10.6	11.3	13.4	6.5	66	67	64	63	62
36	Oman	13.8	14.0	10.3	13.2	13.4	1.5	66	63	62	59	57
37	Cuba	12.3	8.1	12.6	13.2	14.0	5.9	66	62	52	49	49
38	Ethiopia	9.9	10.3	13.1	10.3	12.3	9.8	66	65	63	65	62
39	Jordan	12.9	14.0	11.0	12.3	12.5	3.0	66	64	64	65	66
40	DRC	8.0	7.9	12.6	9.7	12.0	15.6	66	64	56	55	33
41	Mozambique	9.3	8.5	11.3	7.9	12.5	15.6	65	63	43	43	-
42	Turkey	12.6	11.5	11.4	13.2	11.6	4.6	65	69	63	66	62
43	Mexico	10.3	8.3	12.5	10.8	10.3	12.6	65	64	60	61	59
44	Cameroon	8.8	7.6	12.6	7.2	13.1	15.4	65	64	60	54	38
45	Tajikistan	13.8	12.3	12.0	12.6	13.2	0.7	65	66	65	65	65
46	Brunei	14.8	14.5	10.3	11.0	13.2	0.6	64	64	63	63	64
47	Kazakhstan	13.4	11.6	11.1	12.6	13.5	1.7	64	64	64	63	63
48	Nepal	12.4	9.8	9.9	13.6	12.7	5.2	64	66	64	64	64
49	Kuwait	13.5	13.7	9.8	12.3	13.1	1.1	64	63	62	60	61
50	Malaysia	12.5	14.3	11.5	11.6	10.2	3.3	63	63	62	60	65

Rank	Country	Private life	Family life	Community life	National life	Church life	Violence	Total Score WWL 2022	Total Score WWL 2021	Total Score WWL 2020	Total Score WWL 2019	Total Score WWL 2018
51	Kenya	11.7	9.2	11.4	8.0	11.5	11.1	63	62	61	61	62
52	Sri Lanka	12.9	9.9	11.4	11.3	9.4	7.8	63	62	65	58	57
53	Comoros	12.7	11.1	11.2	12.4	14.2	0.9	63	62	57	56	56
54	UAE	13.4	13.6	10.1	11.8	12.2	1.3	62	62	60	58	58
55	Tanzania	9.3	10.8	10.3	8.6	8.7	13.7	61	58	55	52	53
56	Azerbaijan	13.1	9.9	9.3	11.0	13.4	3.3	60	56	57	57	57
57	Palestinian Territories	13.0	13.4	9.8	10.2	12.0	0.9	59	58	60	57	60
58	Djibouti	12.3	12.3	11.1	10.0	12.2	0.7	59	56	56	56	56
59	Kyrgyzstan	12.9	10.1	11.1	10.4	12.0	1.5	58	58	57	56	54
60	Bahrain	12.5	13.2	9.1	11.1	10.2	0.9	57	56	55	55	57
61	Nicaragua	9.1	5.6	11.1	11.8	11.3	7.6	56	51	41	41	-
62	Russian Federation	12.3	8.0	10.2	10.6	12.3	2.2	56	57	60	60	51
63	Chad	11.5	8.2	10.2	9.6	10.3	5.6	55	53	56	48	40
64	Burundi	7.6	7.8	9.7	9.2	9.6	8.1	52	48	48	43	-
65	Venezuela	5.6	4.5	11.2	9.4	11.1	9.6	51	39	42	41	34
66	Angola	6.8	6.7	8.1	10.1	11.4	7.8	51	46	43	42	-
67	Rwanda	8.1	5.5	6.7	10.3	10.1	9.3	50	42	42	41	-
68	Honduras	7.2	5.1	10.5	7.7	9.2	8.7	48	46	39	38	-
69	Uganda	8.1	4.6	7.4	6.7	9.1	11.7	48	47	48	47	46
70	El Salvador	7.7	4.6	10.7	5.7	9.1	7.2	45	42	38	30	-
71	Togo	9.2	6.7	9.3	7.1	9.8	2.4	44	43	41	42	-
72	Gambia	8.3	8.2	8.7	8.3	8.8	1.7	44	43	43	43	-
73	Guinea	10.3	7.5	8.3	7.0	8.1	2.0	43	47	45	46	-
74	South Sudan	5.7	0.9	7.0	6.3	7.8	15.0	43	43	44	44	-
75	Ivory Coast	9.8	8.6	8.2	5.5	7.9	2.0	42	42	42	43	-
76	Israel	9.8	8.4	5.6	6.6	6.6	4.3	41	40	38	39	40

Copyright note

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

Sources and definitions

- This country report is a collation of data and analysis based around Open Doors World Watch List (WWL) and includes statistical information on world religions, Christian denominations and people groups prepared by the World Christian Database (WCD).
- Highlighted links in the text can be found written out in full at the conclusion of each main section under the heading “External links”. In order to reduce the length of these reference sections, a table containing links to regularly used sources can be found at the beginning of the “Keys to Understanding” chapter under the heading “Links for general background information”. Where one of these sources has been quoted in the dossier text, a quote reference is supplied as indicated in the second column of the table.
- The WWL 2022 reporting period was 01 October 2020 - 30 September 2021.
- The definition of persecution used in WWL analysis is: “Any hostility experienced as a result of one’s identification with Christ. This can include hostile attitudes, words and actions towards Christians”. This broad definition includes (but is not limited to) restrictions, pressure, discrimination, opposition, disinformation, injustice, intimidation, mistreatment, marginalization, oppression, intolerance, infringement, violation, ostracism, hostilities, harassment, abuse, violence, ethnic cleansing and genocide.
- The latest update of WWL Methodology including appendices can be found on the [World Watch List Documentation](#) page of the Open Doors Analytical website (password: freedom).

Effect on data-gathering during COVID-19 pandemic

In the WWL 2022 reporting period, travel restrictions and other measures introduced by the governments of various countries to combat the spread of the COVID-19 pandemic did cause delays and create the need for restructuring grass-roots research in some cases. Through the agile cooperation of In-country networks, Open Doors country researchers, External experts, WWR analysts and an increased use of technological options, Open Doors is confident that – as in the previous reporting period – WWL 2022 scoring, analysis and documentation has maintained required levels of quality and reliability.

External Links - Introduction

- Sources and definitions: World Watch List Documentation - <https://opendoorsanalytical.org/world-watch-list-documentation/>

WWL 2022 Situation in brief / Cuba

Brief country details

Cuba: Population (UN estimate for 2021)	Christians	Chr%
11,500,000	7,127,000	62.0

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

Map of country



Cuba: World Watch List	Points	WWL Rank
WWL 2022	66	37
WWL 2021	62	51
WWL 2020	52	61

WWL 2019	49	59
WWL 2018	49	56

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

Dominant persecution engines and drivers

Cuba: Main Persecution engines	Main drivers
Dictatorial paranoia	Government officials, Political parties, Ideological pressure groups, Citizens (people from the broader society), including mobs
Communist and post - Communist oppression	Government officials, Political parties, Ideological pressure groups, Citizens (people from the broader society), including mobs
Secular intolerance	Ideological pressure groups, Government officials, Political parties

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

Brief description of the persecution situation

Since 1959, Cuba has been governed by a single party, the Communist Party of Cuba, which seeks to control the Church according to its Communist ideology. The government reacts harshly against opposition voices and demonstrators. When church leaders or Christian activists criticize the regime, they face arrest, prison sentences and/or harassment by the government and its sympathizers. Also, with the aim of controlling and reducing the Church's influence, it is usual that the registration of new churches is denied, thus forcing many churches to operate illegally. The authorities will then impose penalties such as the complete refusal to issue licenses, the imposition of fines, confiscation of property, demolition and closure of churches (including house-churches).

Summary of international obligations and rights violations

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

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

*Cuba has only signed the ICCPR but not ratified it.

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

- Christians are harassed in the workplace and face discrimination because of their faith (ICCPR Art. 26)
- Christians are arrested for speaking up for their rights (ICCPR Arts. 9 and 19)
- If arrested, Christians experience beatings and pressure to renounce their faith (ICCPR Arts. 18 and 10)
- Christian children are ostracized at school and pressured to abandon their faith (ICCPR Art. 18; CRC Arts. 14 and 24)

Specific examples of violations of rights in the reporting period

- **October 2020 / Santiago de Cuba:** Pastor Alaín Toledano was [arrested](#) by agents of the Ministry of the Interior (MININT) for criticizing the authorities on Facebook for the demolition of the Assemblies of God church led by Pastor Fausto Palomo (Cubanet, 30 October 2020).
- **February 2021 / East of the country:** Pastor David Álvarez from the "Source of Salvation Ministry" was [called to the police station](#) by State Security, after bringing cement and bricks to his house. A neighbor informed the municipal police. The authorities have harassed the pastor and his wife on previous occasions (Cubita Now, 7 February 2021).
- **March 2021/ Las Tunas:** Numerous stones [hit](#) the roof of the pastoral house and the Missionary Church in Cuba, headed by Yoel Demetrio, a well-known detractor of the Cuban socialist regime who belongs to the Apostolic Movement, a network of evangelical churches that the state refuses to legalize (Diario de Cuba, 27 March 2021).
- **July 2021:** Various church leaders were [arrested](#) for participating in peaceful demonstrations (Church Times, 16 July 2021). The priest Castor Álvarez Devesa was temporarily held in custody, in which he suffered a blow to the head with a baseball bat. He was held during the afternoon and early hours of Sunday at the Monte Carlo police station, accused of public disorder. Church leaders Yéremi Blanco Ramírez and Yarian Sierra were held in a women's prison. Pastor Yusniel Pérez Montejo, a member of the Eastern Baptist Convention of Cuba, was also detained (Church Times, 16 July 2021).

Specific examples of positive developments

- Christians have played an important role during the COVID-19 crisis. Caritas Cuba decided to suspend its annual fundraising campaign and replaced it with a campaign for social [awareness](#), encouraging small-scale activities of caring and support within communities (Vatican News, 21 May 2021).
- Faced with the deepening of the crisis in the country, the growing discontent of the population and the violations of human rights against critics of the government, fewer and fewer representatives of the Catholic and [Evangelical Church](#) are remaining silent (La Gaceta, 22 May 2021). The crisis has led to more unity between the churches in the WWL 2022 reporting period.
- Young Christians came up with creative ways to overcome the Internet restrictions by spreading Christian materials through USB sticks, CDs, etc. A website has also been developed which has become known as the "Cuban Christian online Netflix".

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: International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights - <https://www.ohchr.org/en/professionalinterest/pages/cescr.aspx>
- Summary of international obligations and rights violations: Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment - <https://www.ohchr.org/en/professionalinterest/pages/cat.aspx>
- Summary of international obligations and rights violations: Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women - <https://www.ohchr.org/EN/ProfessionalInterest/Pages/CEDAW.aspx>
- Summary of international obligations and rights violations: Convention on the Rights of the Child - <https://www.ohchr.org/en/professionalinterest/pages/crc.aspx>
- Specific examples of violations of rights in the reporting period: arrested - <https://www.cubanet.org/noticias/arrestado-y-en-paradero-desconocido-pastor-santiaguero-alain-toledano/>
- Specific examples of violations of rights in the reporting period: called to the police station - <https://noticias.cubitanow.com/category/blog/detienden-en-oriente-al-pastor-cubano-david-lvarez>
- Specific examples of violations of rights in the reporting period: hit - https://diariodecuba.com/cuba/1616851001_29914.html
- Specific examples of violations of rights in the reporting period: arrested - <https://www.churchtimes.co.uk/articles/2021/16-july/news/world/clergy-in-cuba-are-arrested-after-anti-government-protests>
- Specific examples of positive developments: awareness, - <https://www.vaticannews.va/es/iglesia/news/2021-05/caritas-cuba-lanza-campana-sensibilizacion-covid-19.html>
- Specific examples of positive developments: Evangelical Church - <https://gaceta.es/actualidad/pastores-cubanos-piden-libertad-para-los-presos-politicos-20210522-0605/?fbclid=IwAR1-7fRdrrALBDNqaej5G0s9NcKAO5Z5dOHxPUft6cj9yvQousFIR2Cak>

WWL 2022: Keys to understanding / Cuba

Links for general background information

Name	Quote Reference	Link	Last accessed on
Amnesty International country report	AI 2021	https://www.amnesty.org/en/location/americas/central-america-and-the-caribbean/cuba/report-cuba/	2 September 2021
BBC News country profile	BBC country profile	https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-latin-america-19583447	2 September 2021
Bertelsmann Transformation Index 2020	BTI 2020	https://bti-project.org/en/reports/country-dashboard-CUB.html	2 September 2021
CIA World Factbook	CIA Factbook	https://www.cia.gov/the-world-factbook/countries/cuba/	2 September 2021
Economist Intelligence Unit Democracy Index 2020	EIU 2020	https://pages.eiu.com/rs/753-RIQ-438/images/democracy-index-2020.pdf	2 September 2021
FFP's Fragile States Index 2021	FSI 2021	https://fragilestatesindex.org/country-data/	2 September 2021
Freedom House's 2021 Democracy index (Cuba is not included)	Freedom House/Democracy 2021	https://freedomhouse.org/countries/nations-transit/scores	
Freedom House's 2021 Global Freedom index	Freedom House/Global Freedom 2021	https://freedomhouse.org/country/cuba/freedom-world/2021	2 September 2021
Freedom House's Freedom on the Net 2020 report	Freedom House/Internet Freedom 2020	https://freedomhouse.org/country/cuba/freedom-net/2020	2 September 2021
Garda World country report	Garda World	https://www.garda.com/crisis24/country-reports/cuba	2 September 2021
Human Rights Watch World Report 2021	HRW 2021	https://www.hrw.org/world-report/2021/country-chapters/cuba	2 September 2021
Internet World Stats 2021	IWS 2021	https://www.internetworldstats.com/carib.htm#cu	2 September 2021
RSF's 2020 World Press Freedom Index	World Press Freedom 2020	https://rsf.org/en/cuba	2 September 2021
Transparency International's 2020 Corruption Perceptions Index	CPI 2020	https://www.transparency.org/en/cpi/2020/index/cub	2 September 2021
UNDP's Global Human Development Indicators	HDI 2020	http://hdr.undp.org/en/countries/profiles/CUB	2 September 2021

US State Department's 2020 International Religious Freedom country reports	IRFR 2020	https://www.state.gov/reports/2020-report-on-international-religious-freedom/cuba/	2 September 2021
USCIRF 2021 country reports	USCIRF 2021	https://www.uscifr.gov/sites/default/files/2021-05/Cuba%20Chapter%20AR2021.pdf	2 September 2021
World Bank country report	World Bank	https://data.worldbank.org/country/cuba	2 September 2021

Recent history

In 2018, the National Assembly unanimously chose Miguel Díaz Canel as President of the Council of State and the Council of Ministers, a position that made him the political leader of the island, thus [ending](#) six decades of rule by the Castro family (Latin American Post, 6 May 2019). In 2019, Cuba [introduced](#) a new Constitution (Miami Herald, 25 February 2019), which changed some important [features](#) (such as the form of government and reinstating the offices of President and Vice-President of the Republic) but retained the single-party Socialist system (France 24, 13 July 2019).

Regarding COVID-19, the government of Cuba did not react immediately as the virus spread. Eventually, due to the increase in infections, the government ordered the [gradual introduction](#) of numerous strict measures (Real Instituto del Cano, 10 June 2020). Such measures proved 'useful' in intensifying restrictions on citizens' fundamental rights, especially those of regime critics (Human Rights Watch, 7 December 2020).

The fluctuations in the [relationship](#) with the USA in recent years have also been significant (Council on foreign relations, 27 March 2020). After the attempts of former US-President Obama to restore diplomatic relations with Cuba, former US-President Donald Trump [imposed](#) new restrictive policies (US Department of State, 23 September 2020) and maintained commercial, economic and financial embargos (see below: *Political and legal landscape*). The current US president, Joe Biden, [tightened](#) sanctions against Cuba in July 2021, after the crackdown by Cuban officials against demonstrators in anti-government protests that erupted in the country in response to the COVID-19 emergency, the severe commodity shortages and widespread violations of human rights (Los Angeles Times, 18 October 2021).

Political and legal landscape

A new Constitution was approved in April 2019, affirming the Communist Party's leading role in Cuban society, and making Socialism, as the guiding philosophy, irreversible. Although the Constitution imposes term limits for the presidency (two consecutive five-year terms), it does not recognize the separation of powers and does little to broaden civil and political rights. However, it does include several major changes to Cuba's traditional economic and political modus operandi - particularly involving property rights and foreign investment - despite sticking to Socialist economic management as before.

One important change in the Constitution was the re-introduction of the office of President of the Republic, which had been discarded in 1976. In October 2019, Miguel Díaz-Canel was officially [elected](#) to the presidency by The National Assembly (ONU Cuba News, 11 October 2019), having already assumed that position when Raúl Castro handed over power to him in April 2018. As president, he [directs](#) the country's politics, foreign relations and the armed forces (France 24, 13 July 2020).

Also, in October 2019, the position of prime minister was re-introduced for the first time in 43 years. In December 2019, the president nominated Manuel Marrero Cruz as [prime minister](#), a choice which was ratified by the National Assembly (BBC News, 22 December 2020). The prime minister takes charge of the Council of Ministers and manages the day-to-day operations of the Cuban government.

Despite the constitutional modifications in the power structure, Communist leadership remains secure since the single party model has not been changed. Additionally, In April 2021, Raul Castro resigned from the position of Cuban Communist Party Secretary. Party leadership was [handed over](#) to Miguel Díaz-Canel who has stated that he will continue to consult with Raul Castro concerning any strategic planning for the future of the nation (Reuters, 19 April 2021). Thus no change in the country's direction is expected with this new appointment.

In July 2021, Cuban citizens, especially young people, gathered peacefully for the biggest anti-government demonstrations in decades. Protesters highlighted the government's responsibility in the shortages of basic goods, restrictions on civil liberties, and the poor handling of the COVID-19 crisis. In response, the authorities arbitrarily [detained](#) many of the protestors. Families went days without knowing where they were being held, or what their legal status was. Some leading protesters were convicted in quick trials that did not require the presence of a defense lawyer (The New York Time, 28 July 2021).

The Inter-American Commission on Human Rights ([IACHR](#)) drew attention to state abuses during the peaceful protests of July 2021 and called for the state authorities to respect international human rights standards in its use of force (OAS Press Release, 23 July 2021). Via Resolution 2021/2872 (RSP), the [European Parliament](#) also condemned the extreme violence used against protesters, human rights defenders, independent journalists, artists, dissidents and opposition political leaders by the Cuban government (European Parliament, 16 September 2021). The resolution regrets that, despite the entry into force of the Agreement on Political Dialogue and Cooperation almost four years ago, “the situation of democracy has not improved and the deterioration of the human rights situation in Cuba has only worsened”.

[Human Rights Watch](#) (HRW 2021) reports that the Island continues to suppress and punish dissent and public criticism; punishments include short-term arbitrary arrests, smear campaigns, travel restrictions, raids on homes and offices, confiscation of working materials and poor prison conditions. Additionally, the Cuban government still refuses to recognize the monitoring of human rights as a legitimate activity and denies legal status to local human rights groups.

Regarding the relationship between the USA and Cuba, despite the progress made between Barack Obama (USA) and Raul Castro (Cuba) in the past, the current situation has remained tense. Prior to elections in November 2020, US-President Trump continued the implementation of sanctions against Cuba. These sanctions included [travel](#) (France 24, 5 June 2020), trade and financial [restrictions](#) (FAS, 19 August 2020), as well as efforts to stop the export of Venezuelan oil to Cuba. The USA also added Cuba to a [blacklist](#) of countries that do not fully cooperate on counterterrorism (US State Department, 13 May 2020) and in January 2021 [designated](#) Cuba as a State Sponsor of Terrorism for repeatedly supporting acts of international terrorism by granting safe haven to terrorists (US State Department, 12 January 2021). As mentioned above (see: *Recent history*), the Biden-Harris administration has not lifted [any](#) of the US sanctions (For-

ign Policy, 18 July 2021); indeed, the [White House](#) imposed new sanctions against Cuban officials in response to the arrest of hundreds of protesters (The White House, July 2021).

Cuba's political constitutional changes would seem to be superficial: It is evident that the ruling Communists are determined to stay in power. Under the guise of introducing elements of democracy, the Socialist/Communist dictatorship remains firmly in place, but Cuban society is increasingly opposing this. The impact of the COVID-19 crisis has forced the government to evaluate structural reforms, especially to strengthen the country's economy (see below: *Economic landscape*).

Christians lack protection, as do all persons with ideological interests contrary to those of the Communist government. The COVID-19 crisis has made it possible for the violation of human rights to worsen and be justified by the authorities on grounds of public health. The authorities are taking advantage of the situation to further persecute Christians known for their opposition to the regime and accuse them of spreading the COVID virus, of not complying with confinement measures, of reselling products (when in fact they have been donating them) and of withholding donations from abroad. Likewise, it is worth mentioning that the support of Christian leaders for the youth and those who demonstrated in the streets during the anti-government protests was reason enough for their arbitrary detention and even physical attack (see below: *Religious landscape*).

Cuba's political and legal landscape continues to discriminate against women and girls. Although marriage and divorce laws give men and women broadly the same rights, marriage for girls as young as 14 and for boys as young as 16 is permitted with the consent of the parents, grandparents, legal guardian or the court (Family Code, Article 3) ([OECD, 2019](#)). According to Girls Not Brides, 26% of girls are married before the age of 18, and are thereby unlikely to finish their education, making them financial dependent on their husbands. According to the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights report "[Human rights situation in Cuba](#)", published on 3 February 2020, the Cuban legal framework has failed to incorporate into its legislation a definition of discrimination against women. Additionally, it highlights a legislative gap with regard to domestic and intra-family violence. Data gaps restrict comprehensive analysis, but reports indicate that domestic violence worsened in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic ([Havana Times, 5 August 2021](#)).

According to the CIA Factbook, national service is compulsory for men for 2 years. Evading military service on grounds of conscientious objection is not legally possible.

Religious landscape

Cuba: Religious context	Number of adherents	%
Christians	7,127,000	62.0
Muslim	9,500	0.1
Hindu	23,900	0.2

Buddhist	6,300	0.1
Ethno-religionist	0	0.0
Jewish	820	0.0
Bahai	1,300	0.0
Atheist	450,000	3.9
Agnostic	1,940,000	16.9
Other	1,940,640	16.9
<i>OTHER includes Chinese folk, New religionist, Sikh, Spiritist, Taoist, Confucianist, Jain, Shintoist, Zoroastrian.</i>		

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

The [2019 Constitution](#) has had a significant impact on the religious landscape (CNCTV, January 2019). While it confirms that the State recognizes, respects and guarantees religious freedom, with different faiths enjoying equal consideration, it also makes conscientious objection illegal and [fails](#) (Baptist Press, 18 February 2019) to use appropriate [language](#) (USCIRF, 11 December 2018) for protecting religious freedom as stated in Article 18 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, which Cuba signed in 2008. This is a serious limitation in a country in which the Constitution itself declares the Communist Party of Cuba to be the leading political force in society controlling all political, economic, and social order. Under this premise, every dimension of life in Cuba - including the religious dimension - must be structured according to that "superior ruling force".

According to the [legislative schedule](#) (accessed 2 September 2021) the proposed Associations Law is to be discussed in April 2022; this regulates the requirements for creating and operating associations and sets out the requirements for the registration of NGOs and faith entities, whether they are churches or other institutions. It remains to be seen if it will be to the benefit or to the detriment of the religious communities in the country.

Government attitudes towards churches depend upon whether they submit to government orders and ideology. The Council of Churches of Cuba (CCC), for example, is composed mostly of Protestant denominations with close ties to the government. It should be noted that there are churches affiliated to the CCC that were registered before 1969, which do not necessarily agree with the government, although they are the exception. Authorizations, permits, registration, etc. are more easily and promptly provided for member churches, if they continue to be allied with the government. In the WWL 2022 reporting period, the Pentecostal Christian Church [officially left](#) the CCC, judging that its objectives were in contradiction to the Bible and claiming that the CCC was not representing the churches, but rather the state authorities (Radio Television Marti, 23 June 2021).

Previously, in June 2019, seven evangelical denominations which did not feel represented by the CCC united to [form](#) the Evangelical Alliance of Cuba (Evangelical Focus, 14 June 2019). So far, the state has not granted official recognition to this body and their members, especially the church leaders, have been facing continued harassment from government officials.

The core principles of Christian faith (especially those related to freedom) contradict the totalitarian and repressive methods used by the regime to stay in power. Hence, religious freedom is limited, especially when Christians challenge the ruling party by speaking up and questioning the government's ideology. In the WWL 2022 reporting period, it has become increasingly common for Catholic priests and other Catholics to [do this](#), although the bishops have remained silent (Miami Herald, 25 May 2021). Leaders from the Evangelical churches have also spoken out. By denouncing government measures, corruption and human rights violations (including violations of religious freedom), church leaders and their families have faced threats of dismissal, slander, [defamation](#) (Cuba Trendings, 31 March 2021), travel restrictions, death threats and arbitrary arrests. The Cuban police have used the method of attacking the livelihoods of the pastors and their families to make them resign. Church leaders have had to [stop publishing](#) anything criticizing the government (Cuba Trendings, 6 April 2021) and Christian groups have been [prevented](#) from visiting or providing humanitarian aid to those on hunger-strike in protest against the regime (La Hora de Cuba, 24 November 2020).

In some cases, church buildings have continued to be targeted by the authorities and regime sympathizers, including threats of forced closure, vandalism and demolition, especially in the case of non-registered churches. Applications for registration sent in by many religious communities have been rejected by the authorities which has led to those groups being regarded as criminals in their neighborhoods. State action has also [targeted](#) some legally registered churches as well (Cuba Trendings, 6 May 2021). With the outburst of protests in July 2021, repressive actions against Christian leaders escalated, especially targeting those who chose to accompany the people and have raised their voices demanding the release of political prisoners or the guarantee of the right to peaceful protest, as well as targeting those who denounced the violations of civil rights occurring.

During the crisis surrounding the COVID-19 pandemic, Christians involved in providing spiritual and humanitarian assistance were often fined for inciting people to meet and for ignoring the social distancing rules. In many cases, such fines did not just affect those Christians personally, but also entire communities. Since church services were banned, the government communicated to all the churches that they could broadcast their preaching on television. The Catholic and some Evangelical churches were able to do this on national radio and television in the week before Easter in April 2020. However, those churches not belonging to the Council of Churches of Cuba (CCC) were [banned from taking part](#) (Diario de Cuba, 13 April 2020). Religious groups were unable to gather in public spaces and house-churches. Some of those who did meet in compliance with the rules set out by the government were [detained](#) and accused of holding religious services with more people than legally allowed. A Catholic priest vocal against the regime was [fined](#) for allegedly endangering the health of those present at worship (Cuba Trendings, 6 May, 2021). These events led to many Christians not attending or participating in religious services for extended periods of time; for many, it was not possible to join online religious services due to poor Internet access and other technological difficulties. The authorities also targeted churches offering help to citizens in difficulties (FoRB in Full, 18 January 2021).

Enrollment in public schools is mandatory. The rights of Christian parents to educate their children according to their religious convictions is seriously limited since the indoctrination of children and youth and the idolization of Fidel Castro occurs mainly in schools. The case of Pastor

Rigal, sentenced for [homeschooling](#) (Assist News Service, 24 April 2019) served as a warning to any parents trying to avoid such teachings for their children.

In June 2021, the Ministry of Education [approved](#) a comprehensive sexual education program for schools with a focus on gender and sexual and reproductive rights (Centro UC, Derecho y Religión, June 2021). Christian communities and churches have expressed their [concern](#), among other things, for the way biblical views have been referred to as being homophobic and transphobic (ACBOCOO, 22 May 2021). The [Cuban bishops](#) also pointed out that the program does not take sufficient account of the fundamental rights of parents in the sexual education of their children (Vatican News, 22 June 2021). However, due to the COVID-19 crisis, in September 2021, the head of the School Health Department of the [Ministry of Education](#) postponed the implementation of the program until further notice (Mined, 14 September 2021).

The [preliminary draft](#) of the Family Code is also currently under evaluation (Preliminary draft Family Code, 11 November 2021). The adapted text will be submitted to referendum and among the [issues](#) of concern to the Christian communities is the opening of marriage and adoption to persons of the same sex (Diario de Cuba, 5 October 2021).

Christian women and girls often experience pressures in Cuban society for their more conservative sexual values, particularly those who speak out against abortion, or other issues related to their religious convictions. Christian activists, such as the 'Ladies in White,' have also come under pressure and reportedly been beaten, arrested and detained (HRW 2021). Christian men are more likely to be arrested since they more often hold leadership positions from which they can speak out against the government.

Economic landscape

According to [UNDP's full 2020 report](#) (page 343 onwards):

- **Gross national income (GNI) per capita (2019):** 8,621
- **GNI per capita for women:** 5,714
- **GNI per capita for men:** 11,567
- **Inequality in income:** Data is not available
- **Poverty:** Data is not available

The island's precarious economy has been impacted in recent months by various [factors](#) (Royal Institute Elcano, 10 June 2020). The Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean reported that in 2020, the Cuban economy showed a decline of 10.9% (while GDP per capita showed an annual decrease of 10.8%). The economic contraction [worsened](#) in the context of COVID-19, the intensification of the economic and commercial blockade, and the worsening of internal imbalances (ECLAC, 2021). According to the [Circle of Latin American Studies](#), the Cuban economy continued to contract during the first half of 2021, when GDP experienced a 16.2% drop. In the second quarter it began to exhibit a recovery of 7.9%, although the value added in the second quarter is still more than 15% below 2019 values (CESLA, June-November 2021). The sectors exhibiting the most positive performance were construction, communications, mining, and business and rental services. However, other key activities fared poorly, including agriculture, industry, transportation, commerce, hotels and restaurants. Foreign trade maintain-

ed its contraction in 2021, which represents one of the biggest challenges for economic recovery.

Added to this, in the middle of the COVID-19 crisis, Cuba does not have the option of resorting to international financial aid since it is not a member of the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund or the Inter-American Development Bank. Few economic details are therefore available from World Bank; however, according to the Circle of Latin American Studies ([CESLA](#), May 2021), the reduction of GDP in Cuba was approximately -11%, which was [confirmed](#) by the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Economy of Cuba, Alejandro Gil (France24, 17 December 2020). A primary factor was the fact that foreign exchange earnings plummeted. The US [sanctions](#) paralyzed foreign investment and also reduced tourism (US Department of the Treasury, accessed 3 September 2021). Additionally, since mid-January 2021, Cuban authorities tightened restrictions to contain the worst outbreak of infections since the beginning of the pandemic.

The economic crisis has pushed the Communist Party to restructure its national economic plan. This strategy was called "[the ordering task](#)" and aimed to "make the economy more productive and efficient" (BBC News, 29 January 2021). Usually, two currencies have been in circulation in Cuba - the peso and the convertible peso (CUC). The CUC has now been eliminated in order to achieve monetary and exchange unification. Another modification has to do with the gradual elimination of subsidies and gratuities, which have been causing variations in the prices of products and services, as well as in aid to the most vulnerable groups of the population. Part of this planned reform includes allowing more than 2000 private marketing activities to become legal. The current number of [limited activities](#) is only 124 (MTSS, 10 February 2021). Another measure has to do with the opening of state stores for buying basic supplies. Unlike other stores on the island, purchases at these stores are carried out via a card linked to a Cuban bank with deposits in foreign currency or with a debit or international credit card (excluding US ones). The Cuban government then announced in June 2021 that it will [stop accepting](#) cash bank deposits in dollars due to the US blockade (France24, 17 June 2021). This decision is likely to affect those receiving remittances from family abroad, as they will now have to use an alternative currency, which may well be the euro.

Women do not experience discrimination in relation to inheritance (Civil Code, Article 514) and girls typically have equal access to education as boys. Women and girls remain financially disadvantaged however, due to the high child marriage rate for Cuban girls, and fewer employment opportunities. The female labor force participation rate is 40.7%, compared to 66.8% for men, in part due to societal norms which place women in the domestic sphere (HDI 2020).

In general, Christians have faced the same economic hardships as all other citizens. However, the small amounts of support they receive via foreign donations are constantly monitored and can be a reason for being fined. Reports from in-country sources have revealed that donations made to churches have been resold by the government. Also, as a way of reprisal against Christian owners (mostly pastors), their businesses are arbitrarily fined or closed down allegedly for not being one of the 124 activities legally permitted. In addition, it has been reported that some Protestant churches in Santiago de Cuba have [not been able to acquire](#) the funds they

need for their staff and church activities due to their accounts being frozen by the Central Bank of Cuba (Cuba en Miami, 25 October 2020). A Lutheran church representative told media that the authorities are thus making it very difficult for churches to offer humanitarian aid to the most vulnerable.

Social and cultural landscape

According to the [UNDPs full 2020](#) report (page 343 onwards) and the CIA Factbook:

- **Main ethnic groups:** White 64.1%, Mulatto or mixed 26.6%, Black 9.3% (2012 est.) Note: This data is based on racial self-identification from Cuba's 2012 national census.
- **Main language:** Spanish
- **Urban population:** 77.3% of total population (2021)
- **Literacy rate:** 99.8% (% ages 15 and older)

According to World Bank (data):

- **Education:** The school enrollment for pre-primary (2020) is 97.224%; for primary (2020) is 103.173% and for secondary (2020) 99.949%. The duration of compulsory education is 9 years.
- **Unemployment (modeled ILO estimate):** 3.87% (2020)
- **Gender Parity Index:** 0.989 (2020). This refers to the ratio of girls to boys enrolled at primary and secondary levels in public and private schools.

According to the UN Global Human Development Indicators (HDI 2020):

- **Human Development Index (HDI) score and ranking:** Cuba's HDI value for 2019 is 0.783, which put the country in the high human development category, positioning it at 70 out of 189 countries and territories. Between 1990 and 2019, Cuba's HDI value increased by 15.1%.
- **Life expectancy:** Between 1990 and 2019, Cuba's life expectancy at birth increased by 4.2 years (78.8 at 2019).
- **Gender inequality:** (I.e. the loss in human development due to inequality between female and male achievements in the three GII dimensions.) Cuba has a GII value of 0.304, ranking it 67 out of 162 countries in the 2019 index.
- **IDPs/Refugees:** The refugee population in Cuba was 8,980 in 2020. According to [UNHCR's Global Trends 2020 \(page 40\)](#), Cuba ranked tenth in the listing of "major source countries of new asylum application countries 2020" with 24,400 applications.

At the social level, the vulnerability of the Cuban population has [worsened](#) (Aciprensa, 3 May 2021). Before the pandemic, there was already a crisis, but the introduction of lockdown measures, the closing of borders and the latest economic reforms has impacted the economy, caused more poverty and created shortages in basic goods, medicines and services. To this must be added the continual power-cuts, [food shortages](#) (Connectas, June 2021) and poor management of the COVID-19 pandemic. Parallel to this, there is an ongoing [housing crisis](#) that has forced several families to share a single house (Archdaily, 2 July 2021). Many Cubans have no running water available and have to stand in long [queues](#) for water, food and medicines (DW, 13 April 2021).

During the COVID-19 crisis, many church leaders organized the distribution of basic supplies and emergency [aid](#) to the poorest communities (Lutheran World Federation, 26 February 2021). Those not belonging to the Council of Churches of Cuba were often [hindered by the authorities](#) and threatened with arrest for such activities (Periodico Cubano, 19 August 2020). Some Christians were accused of deliberately spreading the COVID-19 virus through this ministry. Due to such intimidation, some churches decided not to be involved in aid distribution. [Humanitarian aid](#) sent to churches from abroad was banned unless channeled through the Council of Churches of Cuba (Periódico Cubano, 19 August 2020) and could even then be arbitrarily [withheld](#) (PR newswire, 24 August 2020).

The scale of the crisis caused anger among the general public. In July 2021, for the first time in decades, Cubans [staged protests](#) against the government (BBC News, 12 July 2021). During the peaceful demonstrations, citizens denounced acts of repression by the police and cuts to the Internet service. Some of the pastors and priests involved in the demonstrations were beaten and arbitrarily arrested (see above: *Specific examples of violations of rights in the reporting period*). A Catholic church group managed to keep a helpline open for relatives of those arrested. As a way to alleviate the discontent of the population, the Cuban government announced in July 2021 the [authorization](#) for travelers to import food, cleaning products and medicines without limits or tariff payments until December 2021 (Forbes, 15 July 2021).

The Constitution of the Republic (Article 36) and the Family Code (Article 2) provide equal rights to men and women in relation to marriage and family relations. In practice however, the country continues to operate according to patriarchal norms; women are expected to assume more responsibilities in the domestic sphere with traditional gender stereotypes persisting ([OECD, 2019](#)). Domestic violence has reportedly soared during the COVID-19 pandemic ([IWPR, 25 August 2020](#)).

Technological landscape

According to Internet World Stats:

- **Internet usage:** 58.0% penetration rate - survey date: December 2020
- **Facebook usage:** no data available

According to the [Inclusive Internet Index 2021](#):

- Cuba ranks 95th; network coverage, quality and availability are among the poorest in the index and the country ranks lowest of all Latin American countries. Competition is relatively weak and data prices expensive when taken as a share of per-capita national income, in addition to providing limited content (The Inclusive Internet Index, 2020).

According to World Bank (country profile):

- **Mobile phone (cellular) subscriptions:** 53.317 per 100 people.

According to [Freedom House/Internet Freedom 2021](#):

- Cuba is a not free country (Score 21): The key internet controls studied in Cuba were the blocking of social media or communications platforms; the blocking of political, social, or

religious content; the disruption of ICT networks; the manipulation of online discussions by pro-government commentators; arrests; imprisonment; prolonged detention of bloggers; physical attacks or killing (including in custody) of bloggers or ICT users; technical attacks against government critics or human right organizations.

According to Reporters Without Borders (World Press Freedom 2021):

- Cuba is Latin America's worst media freedom violator. The regime maintains an almost total media monopoly and the Constitution prohibits privately-owned media. The regime maintains an almost total monopoly of news and information and uses every means possible to obstruct independent media. Journalists who do not toe the official line are subjected to arbitrary arrest, the threat of imprisonment, persecution and harassment, illegal home searches, and confiscation and destruction of journalistic material. The gradual improvement in Internet access nonetheless constitutes one of the few grounds for hope for the future of press freedom in Cuba.

Norms such as [Decree Law 389](#) (Havana Times, 25 November 2020) legalize electronic surveillance without court authorization. [Decree Law 370](#) (Civil Rights Defenders, 18 June 2020) penalizes the dissemination of information contrary to “social interest,” “morals,” and “good customs” on social media, restricting freedom of expression. [Decree Law 35](#) (Official Gazette, 92, August 17, 2021) deals with cybersecurity. Several human rights organizations and independent media denounce the violation of fundamental human rights caused by the application of this law since is used to interrogate, threaten, confiscate equipment (especially that of journalists) and to impose exorbitant fines on those who “spread information contrary to the common good, morals, decency, and integrity through public data transmission networks”. According to [CSW](#): “Legal Decree 35 makes it clear that as far as the Cuban Communist Party is concerned, there is no space for any kind of dissent on the island. Cubans will be unable to comment honestly on the reality of their lives without fear of being charged with cyberterrorism; this includes religious associations and leaders who speak out on issues that affect freedom of religion or belief as well as wider issues facing Cuban society” (CSW, 18 August 2021).

The Inter-American Commission on Human Rights (IACHR) and its Special Rapporteur for Freedom of Expression have expressed [concern](#) about how the new telecommunications and cybersecurity regulations in Cuba will impact the exercise of freedom of expression on the Internet and on users' right to privacy. The new regulations might restrict critical and dissident views, among other forms of discourse of public interest, while allegedly protecting security, law and order, national defense, and other government interests (IACHR, September 2021).

Due to the restrictions and control measures, Christians (and any other citizens who express views on the Internet or through social media contrary to those of the regime) risk being targeted and punished. During the COVID-19 pandemic most Christian denominations were unable to broadcast their church services online due to connectivity limits. In the case of unregistered Christian churches, this would anyway have been illegal.

In the WWL 2022 reporting period, social media users, activists and citizens in general denounced both the [blocking](#) of Facebook and Instagram on the island for no apparent reason (CPJ, 15 July 2021) and the tension between the regime's security forces and peaceful protesters in July 2021. In general, the Internet is restricted for all government opponents. Some pastors [accused the authorities](#) of blocking their Internet access, making them unable to upload videos to social networks (Cubanos por el mundo, 10 November 2020).

Security situation

The country's repressive climate is due mainly to government officials imposing Communist ideology. The government has continued to threaten and impose fines on opponents and activists using [Decree Law 370](#) (effective as of 4 July 2019) which limits freedom of expression (Freedom House, 6 May 2020) and Decree Law 35 (mentioned in the previous section). Hence, dissidents, including Christians, face arrest, interrogation and surveillance by various state agents, often assisted by non-state agents. These are sympathizers, militants and neighborhood committees aligned with the Party who act as the right arm of the regime in making sure that state ideology is adhered to in communities throughout the island. For instance, the neighborhood-level "Committees for the Defense of the Revolution" (CDRs) act as the eyes and ears of the regime at the most personal level; they are designed as a "neighborhood watch system" in which neighbors are both watching and being watched. The police tap into this network for information concerning the friends, visitors, family background, work history and volunteer activities of any suspects.

The Cuban regime has an internal counter-intelligence apparatus and an external intelligence agency; e.g. the Department of State Security (DSE), the General Directorate of Intelligence (DGI), the Directorate of Military Intelligence (DIM), the Directorate of Military Counterintelligence (DGCIM) and the National Revolutionary Police (PNR). These agencies work together to ensure that the ruling party remains in power. Both pressure and violence are used with impunity against those who do not align with the Communist Party's guidelines.

In addition to abuses carried out by the security forces, there are also [anonymous complaints](#) used by the "State Security Organs" (OSE) to intimidate those who criticize or oppose regime policies (Cuba Trendings, 6 May 2021). Such intimidation includes the practice of holding potential regime opponents for an hour or more in hermetically sealed vehicles, often in the sun. This method is known as "[patrulla-horno](#)" (Connectas, June 2021).

In the midst of the July demonstrations, the [Cuban Observatory](#) for Human Rights documented at least 1745 repressive actions in Cuba, of which 1103 were some form of detention and 642 were other abuses (OCDH, 3 August 2021). The Observatory also noted that in September 2021 alone there were 414 repressive actions, of which 79 were arbitrary detentions. Other abuses committed against human rights activists, journalists or independent artists included house raids, harassment, police summonses, threats, fines and attacks by the police. As for police raids on the homes of activists, the OCDH [documented](#) 208 (OCDH, 5 October 2021).

The Inter-American Commission on Human Rights (IACHR) and its Special Rapporteur for Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (REDESCA), and Freedom of Expression (RELE) [condemned](#)

Cuban state repression and the use of force against citizens involved in the July protests (OAS, 15 July 2021).

Cuba is a country of origin and transit of human trafficking, the victims of whom are mostly women and adolescents. According to the [US State Department's 2021 Trafficking in Persons report](#), within Cuba, the government did not report investigating, prosecuting, or convicting trafficking crimes. Authorities did not report identifying victims and lacked a comprehensive package of housing and other services for victims and did not protect potential trafficking victims from being detained or charged for unlawful acts their traffickers coerced them to commit. According to the [World Bank](#), for the year 2019, the suicide mortality rate in Cuba (per 100,000 inhabitants) was 14.5. In the case of women, it was 6 per 100,000 inhabitants and for men it was 23 per 100,000 inhabitants (World Bank, December 2021).

As already stated above, Christians are among those suffering from government repression. Especially in July 2021, several priests and pastors faced arbitrary detention and [injury](#) (Cope, 14 July 2021). While under arrest, police officers [took away](#) the crosses belonging to some of the Christians detained (Vida Cristiana, 14 July 2021). Also, a protester carrying a poster with the words “Long live Christ the King” was held in custody. There were many similar cases. There has thus been an escalation in the level of government oppression: Where church leaders advocate for more freedom for the people and the improvement of their social conditions, they will be treated as opposition voices.

Trends analysis

1) The Communist dictatorial model has generated a climate of chaos

The limited openness to the international community has - in combination with the economic downturn of the world economy due to the COVID-19 pandemic - worsened the economic, social, health and humanitarian crisis in the country. The government and the Cuban Communist Party allow no room for other social actors to help overcome the situation and this is generating a climate of major chaos within the country.

2) Social discontent has caused government repression to increase

The failure of the regime and the worsening living conditions in the country have generated waves of criticism from society in general. Despite the intimidating actions of the regime, Cubans have remained firm in calling - more and more loudly - for the respect of their basic liberties and for a radical change in the current government model. Where citizens refuse to align themselves with the interests of the government, greater repression from the authorities and their supporters are the result.

3) The Church has become a constant target for government hostility

The worsening of the situation in Cuba has made church leaders voice their criticism of the government more openly. On the one hand, the defense of the most vulnerable and other joint activities between various church denominations have strengthened unity and also respect within the communities; on the other hand, it has made the Church a constant target for hostilities and control by the Cuban government.

External Links - Keys to understanding

- Recent history: ending - <https://latinamericanpost.com/27912-cuba-balance-of-diaz-canel-first-year-in-the-presidency>
- Recent history: introduced - <https://www.miamiherald.com/news/nation-world/world/americas/cuba/article226540775.html>
- Recent history: features - <https://www.france24.com/en/20190713-key-things-know-about-cubas-government-reforms>
- Recent history: gradual introduction - http://www.realinstitutoelcano.org/wps/portal/riecano_es/contenido?WCM_GLOBAL_CONTEXT=/elcano/elcano_es/zonas_es/ari83-2020-mesa-cuba-crisis-economica-causas-covid-19-y-politicas-de-rescate
- Recent history: relationship - <https://www.cfr.org/background/usa-cuba-relations>
- Recent history: imposed - <https://www.state.gov/cuba-sanctions/>
- Recent history: tightened - <https://www.latimes.com/politics/story/2021-10-18/biden-leaves-cuba-in-the-deep-freeze>
- Political and legal landscape: elected - <https://oncubanews.com/en/cuba/diaz-canel-confirmed-as-president-of-cuba/>
- Political and legal landscape: directs - <https://www.france24.com/en/20190713-key-things-know-about-cubas-government-reforms>
- Political and legal landscape: prime minister - <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-latin-america-50881820>
- Political and legal landscape: handed over - <https://www.reuters.com/world/americas/cuban-president-diaz-canel-made-communist-party-leader-ending-castro-era-2021-04-19/>
- Political and legal landscape: detained - <https://www.nytimes.com/2021/07/28/world/americas/cuba-protests-crackdown-arrests.html>
- Political and legal landscape: IACHR - <https://www.oas.org/en/iachr/expression/showarticle.asp?IID=1&artID=1205>
- Political and legal landscape: European Parliament - https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/TA-9-2021-0389_EN.html
- Political and legal landscape: Human Rights Watch - <https://www.hrw.org/world-report/2021/country-chapters/cuba>
- Political and legal landscape: travel - <https://www.france24.com/en/20190605-usa-trump-bans-cruises-group-travel-cuba>
- Political and legal landscape: restrictions - <https://fas.org/sgp/crs/row/IF10045.pdf>
- Political and legal landscape: blacklist - <https://www.state.gov/countries-certified-as-not-cooperating-fully-with-u-s-counterterrorism-efforts/>
- Political and legal landscape: designated - <https://www.state.gov/state-sponsors-of-terrorism/>
- Political and legal landscape: any - <https://foreignpolicy.com/2021/07/18/biden-cuba-missed-opportunity-humanitarian-crisis-embargo/>
- Political and legal landscape: White House - <https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefing-room/statements-releases/2021/07/22/statement-by-president-joseph-r-biden-jr-on-continuing-crackdown-in-cuba/>
- Political and legal landscape: OECD, 2019 - <https://www.genderindex.org/wp-content/uploads/files/datasheets/2019/CU.pdf>
- Political and legal landscape: “Human rights situation in Cuba” - <http://www.oas.org/es/cidh/informes/pdfs/Cuba2020-es.pdf>
- Political and legal landscape: Havana Times, 5 August 2021 - <https://havanatimes.org/features/women-and-covid-in-cuba-building-resilience/>
- Religious landscape description: 2019 Constitution - <http://www.cnctv.icrt.cu/wp-content/uploads/2019/01/Nueva-Constitucion-240-KB.pdf>
- Religious landscape description: fails - <http://www.bpnews.net/52436/cubas-proposed-constitution-cuts-religious-freedom>
- Religious landscape description: language - <https://www.uscirf.gov/news-room/press-releases-statements/uscirf-calls-cuba-cease-harassment-religious-leaders-strengthen>
- Religious landscape description: legislative schedule - https://tbinternet.ohchr.org/Treaties/CRC/Shared%20Documents/CUB/INT_CRC_ARL_CUB_43289_S.pdf

- Religious landscape description: officially left - <https://www.radiotelevisionmarti.com/a/renuncia-al-consejo-de-iglesias-de-cuba-la-iglesia-cristiana-pentecostal/297992.html>
- Religious landscape description: form - http://evangelicalfocus.com/world/4528/Evangelical_churches_of_Cuba_establish_their_own_Alliance
- Religious landscape description: do this - <https://www.miamiherald.com/opinion/oped/article251671038.html>
- Religious landscape description: defamation - <https://cubatrendings.com/2021/03/31/carta-difamatoria-contra-clerigos-y-laicos-cubanos/>
- Religious landscape description: stop publishing - <https://cubatrendings.com/2021/04/06/sacerdote-alberto-reyes-dejara-de-publicar-sus-cronicas-del-noroeste/?fbclid=IwAR3y92kTKsgEtH89Qvp7leV-lfn0l-UbhHduZalHmSNF3F6NT3YG98d6-l>
- Religious landscape description: prevented - <http://lahoradecuba.com/2020/11/24/prohiben-a-encargado-de-negocios-de-eeuu-en-cuba-y-monjas-acceder-a-la-sede-sitiada-de-san-isidro/>
- Religious landscape description: targeted - https://cubatrendings.com/2021/05/06/multa-a-sacerdote-catolico-cubano/?fbclid=IwAR3RXPgmEJhIWS-ELydkSPk35_clF6BnkX54S3kiHDMx_VogrcuDtxF5Pk
- Religious landscape description: banned from taking part - https://diariodecuba.com/cuba/1586804751_16288.html
- Religious landscape description: detained - <https://forbinfull.org/2021/01/18/even-covid-19-couldnt-halt-cubas-severe-violations-of-freedom-of-religion-or-belief/>
- Religious landscape description: fined - https://cubatrendings.com/2021/05/06/multa-a-sacerdote-catolico-cubano/?fbclid=IwAR3RXPgmEJhIWS-ELydkSPk35_clF6BnkX54S3kiHDMx_VogrcuDtxF5Pk
- Religious landscape description: homeschooling - <https://www.assistnews.net/cuban-pastor-ramon-rigal-and-wife-face-summary-trial/>
- Religious landscape description: approved - <http://ojs.uc.cl/index.php/bjur/article/view/38343/29921>
- Religious landscape description: concern - https://acbcocc.org/2021/05/22/declaracion-de-la-asociacion-convencion-bautista-de-cuba-occidental/?fbclid=IwAR2uynhRYnRdVTibeVWwhSkwlm5jWsgKhybJVYYQP2gF5XGx_aQyDm3ln20
- Religious landscape description: Cuban bishops - <https://www.vaticannews.va/en/church/news/2021-06/cuba-bishops-resolution-reproductive-gender-education-schools.html>
- Religious landscape description: Ministry of Education - <https://www.mined.gob.cu/el-ministerio-de-educacion-aplaza-la-aplicacion-de-la-resolucion-16-del-26-de-febrero-de-2021/>
- Religious landscape description: preliminary draft - <http://media.cubadebate.cu/wp-content/uploads/2021/11/Proyecto-C%C3%B3digo-de-las-Familias-Versi%C3%B3n-23.pdf>
- Religious landscape description: issues - https://diariodecuba.com/cuba/1633467299_34589.html
- Economic landscape: UNDP's full 2020 report - <http://hdr.undp.org/sites/default/files/hdr2020.pdf>
- Economic landscape: factors - <http://www.realinstitutoelcano.org/wps/wcm/connect/5b70f402-9cfb-44ee-876d-c0cecd0f083/ARI83-2020-Mesa-Cuba-crisis-economica-causas-COVID-19-y-politicas-de-rescate.pdf?MOD=AJPERES&CACHID=5b70f402-9cfb-44ee-876d-c0cecd0f083>
- Economic landscape: worsened - https://repositorio.cepal.org/bitstream/handle/11362/47192/67/EE2021_Cuba_es.pdf
- Economic landscape: Circle of Latin American Studies - https://www.cesla.com/archivos/Informe_economia_Cuba_noviembre_2021.pdf
- Economic landscape: CESLA - https://www.cesla.com/archivos/Informe_economia_Cuba_mayo_2021.pdf
- Economic landscape: confirmed - <https://www.france24.com/es/minuto-a-minuto/20201217-econom%C3%ADa-cubana-se-desplomar%C3%A1-11-en-2020-la-peor-ca%C3%ADa-en-27-a%C3%B1o-ministro>
- Economic landscape: sanctions - <https://home.treasury.gov/policy-issues/financial-sanctions/sanctions-programs-and-country-information/cuba-sanctions>
- Economic landscape: "the ordering task" - <https://www.bbc.com/mundo/noticias-america-latina-55743650>
- Economic landscape: limited activities - <https://www.mtss.gob.cu/noticias/actividades-donde-no-se-permite-el-ejercicio-del-trabajo-por-cuenta-propia>
- Economic landscape: stop accepting - <https://www.france24.com/en/live-news/20210617-suspension-of-dollar-deposits-a-new-blow-for-hard-up-cubans>

- Economic landscape: not been able to acquire - <https://www.cubaenmiami.com/el-regimen-congela-las-cuentas-en-divisa-de-las-iglesias-protestantes-en-cuba/>
- Social and cultural landscape: UNDPs full 2020 - <http://hdr.undp.org/sites/default/files/hdr2020.pdf>
- Social and cultural landscape: UNHCR's Global Trends 2020 (page 40), - <https://www.unhcr.org/60b638e37/unhcr-global-trends-2020>
- Social and cultural landscape: worsened - <https://www.aciprensa.com/noticias/religiosos-entregan-carta-a-gobierno-de-cuba-el-pueblo-no-aguanta-mas-esta-crisis-78871>
- Social and cultural landscape: food shortages - <https://www.connectas.org/especiales/el-drama-de-la-comida-en-cuba/>
- Social and cultural landscape: housing crisis - <https://www.archdaily.com/964394/as-cuban-homes-collapse-is-there-hope-to-rebuild>
- Social and cultural landscape: queues - <https://www.dw.com/en/how-cubans-earn-a-living-from-standing-in-line/a-57175668>
- Social and cultural landscape: aid - <https://www.lutheranworld.org/news/covid-19-cuban-lutheran-church-extends-food-and-psychosocial-aid>
- Social and cultural landscape: hindered by the authorities - <https://www.periodicocubano.com/ayuda-humanitaria-esta-retenida-porque-no-va-dirigida-al-consejo-de-iglesias-de-cuba/>
- Social and cultural landscape: Humanitarian aid - <https://www.periodicocubano.com/ayuda-humanitaria-esta-retenida-porque-no-va-dirigida-al-consejo-de-iglesias-de-cuba/>
- Social and cultural landscape: withheld - <https://www.prnewswire.com/news-releases/humanitarian-aid-arrives-in-cuba-only-to-be-blocked-from-its-rightful-owners-825267364.html>
- Social and cultural landscape: staged protests - <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-latin-america-57799852>
- Social and cultural landscape: authorization - <https://www.forbes.com/sites/siladityaray/2021/07/15/cuban-government-lifts-restrictions-on-import-of-food-medicine-in-concession-to-protestors/>
- Social and cultural landscape: OECD, 2019 - <https://www.genderindex.org/wp-content/uploads/files/datasheets/2019/CU.pdf>
- Social and cultural landscape: IWPR, 25 August 2020 - <https://iwpr.net/global-voices/cuba-slow-act-over-domestic-abuse>
- Technological landscape: Inclusive Internet Index 2021: - <https://theinclusiveinternet.eiu.com/explore/countries/CU/>
- Technological landscape: Freedom House/Internet Freedom 2021 - https://freedomhouse.org/sites/default/files/2021-09/FOTN_2021_Complete_Booklet_09162021_FINAL_UPDATED.pdf
- Technological landscape: Decree Law 389 - <https://havanatimes.org/features/cuba-approves-electronic-surveillance-without-court-authorization/>
- Technological landscape: Decree Law 370 - <https://crd.org/2020/06/18/cuba-declare-decree-law-370-unconstitutional/>
- Technological landscape: Decree Law 35 - <https://www.gacetaoficial.gob.cu/sites/default/files/goc-2021-092.pdf>
- Technological landscape: CSW - <https://www.csw.org.uk/2021/08/18/press/5373/article.htm>
- Technological landscape: concern - https://www.oas.org/en/iachr/jsForm/?File=/en/iachr/media_center/preleases/2021/249.asp
- Technological landscape: blocking - <https://cpj.org/es/2021/07/autoridades-detienen-y-hostigan-a-periodistas-y-bloquean-el-servicio-de-internet-durante-protestas-en-cuba/>
- Technological landscape: accused the authorities - <https://cubanosporel mundo.com/2020/11/10/alain-toledano-etecsa-bloqueando-celular/>
- Security situation: Decree Law 370 - <https://freedomhouse.org/article/cuba-statement-against-application-decree-law-370>
- Security situation: anonymous complaints - https://cubatrendings.com/2021/05/06/multa-a-sacerdote-catolico-cubano/?fbclid=IwAR3RXPgmEJhIWS-ELydkSPk35_cIF6BnkX54S3kiHDMx_VogrcuDtxF5Pk
- Security situation: patrulla-horno - <https://www.connectas.org/torturas-en-cuba-la-patrulla-horno/>
- Security situation: Cuban Observatory - <https://observacuba.org/ocdh-protestas-de-julio-dejaron-al-menos-1-745-acciones-represivas-en-cuba-de-las-cuales-1-103-fueron-detenciones-arbitrarias/>

- Security situation: documented - <https://observacuba.org/ocdh-las-peticiones-fiscales-contr-manifestantes-en-cuba-equiparan-las-protetas-con-los-delitos-de-homicidio/>
- Security situation: condemned - <http://www.oas.org/es/CIDH/jsForm/?File=/es/cidh/prensa/comunicados/2021/177.asp>
- Security situation: US State Department's 2021 Trafficking in Persons report - <https://www.state.gov/reports/2021-trafficking-in-persons-report/cuba/>
- Security situation: World Bank - <https://datos.bancomundial.org/indicador/SH.STA.SUIC.P5?locations=CU>
- Security situation: injury - https://www.cope.es/religion/hoy-en-dia/noticias/mensaje-del-sacerdote-cubano-liberado-tras-las-protetas-que-haya-excesos-contr-los-detenedos-20210714_1400190
- Security situation: took away - <https://www.facebook.com/VidaCristianaCuba/posts/807339786808989>

WWL 2022: Church information / Cuba

Christian origins

Christianity became established in Cuba in 1512 through Roman Catholic priests of the Dominican order; this was a consequence of Spanish colonization. The earliest Protestant activity dates back to 1741 when Cuba was under British occupation. Through the massive influx of slaves from Africa, a syncretistic cult called [Santería](#) developed around 1800, mixing elements of Roman Catholic faith with Yoruba customs (*Source: Learn Religions, 13 February 2019*).

After gaining independence from Spain in 1898, Cuba's dependency on the USA [facilitated](#) the establishment of many Protestant churches and movements including Methodists, Adventists, Presbyterians, Quakers, Baptists and Lutherans. Spiritism was also introduced at that time (*Source: Catholic Church and State in Cuba: Past and present relationships, April/August 2012*).

Church spectrum today

Cuba: Church networks	Christians	%
Orthodox	46,000	0.6
Catholic	6,176,000	86.7
Protestant	309,000	4.3
Independent	414,000	5.8
Unaffiliated	182,000	2.6
Doubly-affiliated Christians	0	0.0
Total	7,127,000	100.0
<i>(Any deviation from the total number of Christians stated above is due to the rounding of decimals)</i>		
Evangelical movement	188,000	2.6
Renewalist movement	968,000	13.6

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

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

The largest denomination in Cuba is by far the Roman Catholic Church. According to WCD 2021 estimates, 86.7% of Cuban Christians are Catholics. However, Evangelical and Protestant churches are growing fastest in the country.

External Links - Church information

- Christian origins: Santeria - <https://www.learnreligions.com/about-santeria-traditions-2562543>
- Christian origins: facilitated - <http://revistas.usal.es/index.php/1130-2887/article/viewFile/9941/10309>

WWL 2022: Persecution Dynamics / Cuba

Reporting period

1 October 2020 - 30 September 2021

Position on the World Watch List

Cuba: World Watch List	Points	WWL Rank
WWL 2022	66	37
WWL 2021	62	51
WWL 2020	52	61
WWL 2019	49	59
WWL 2018	49	56

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

An increase in both pressure in all *spheres of life* and violence caused the overall score to rise by 4 points. The dictatorial regime intensified its action against all Christian leaders and activists opposing Communist principles, especially after the widespread demonstrations which occurred in July 2021. Government measures included arbitrary fines, close surveillance, denials of licenses and religious visas, arrest and physical/mental abuse.

Persecution engines

Cuba: 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	Not at all
Christian denominational protectionism	CDP	Very weak
Communist and post - Communist oppression	CPCO	Strong
Secular intolerance	SI	Medium
Dictatorial paranoia	DPA	Strong
Organized corruption and crime	OCC	Weak

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

Communist and post-Communist oppression (Strong) - blended with Secular intolerance (Medium)

After the Cuban revolution (1953-1958), the country was structured as a Communist state. Even though there have been adjustments to the original Communist postulates, the country is still ruled according to that political and economic model and the new Constitution has strengthened the Communist Party of Cuba which is referred to as the leading force for both society and State. This means it is a constitutional requirement - also for religious bodies - to submit to Communist party ideology. In this scenario, anyone not adhering to the core values of the ruling party is targeted and repressed. Christians wishing to act in accordance to their beliefs or to raise their children according their Christian faith - rejecting the Cuban school indoctrination - are seen as enemies of the revolution or rebels.

As this Persecution engine is blended not just with *Dictatorial paranoia* (see below), but also with *Secular intolerance*, apart from the virtual idolization of Fidel Castro and the Communist Party, religion is not seen as playing a key role in society. The activities of churches considered regime-friendly are accepted, insofar as they do not interfere with the interests of the regime with respect to citizen control. Any churches that do not accept the Communist postulates governing the life of the country are harshly repressed, and they are particularly targeted if they try to denounce the violations made against them. On the other hand, the government, through public policies and legislative proposals, has shown signs of support for ideologies that counter Christian values; actions which have been welcomed and promoted among the population by some radical secularist and LGBT+ groups.

Dictatorial paranoia (Strong)

This Persecution engine is blended with *Communist and post-Communist oppression*.

Given that the Communist Party is the only constitutionally recognized political party, anyone questioning the authority of its leaders - whether for reasons of faith or otherwise - is labeled an enemy of the regime. The new Constitution perpetuates the Cuban revolution as a political project and safeguards the need to maintain a system of total monitoring. Such totalitarian control has resulted in years of excessive repression and infringement of citizens' rights. Due to the restrictions on the religious freedom of Christians and church activities, Christians are at times forced to act against their beliefs not only to avoid being targeted by the regime but also simply to gain access to basic services. In this respect, the crisis caused by COVID-19 was a convenient opportunity for the regime to increase the levels of repression against those Christians who, based on the faith they profess, do not align with the interests of the government, and contradict it openly.

Corruption and impunity are used as ways to maintain Communist party power. The government controls the state apparatus at all levels and there is no independent authority to ensure respect for the rule of law. Unregistered churches and their leaders run a greater risk, since they must conduct their church ministry illegally, with the constant fear of being discovered and punished with closure, demolition, arrests, etc. Christians from any denomination (including the Catholic Church) have no legitimate space to express themselves freely without fear of reprisals. When they have tried to do so, by being vocal against the government or when they have provided support to those who demonstrated against the government in the last protests that took place in the country, they were the target of arbitrary arrests and attacks.

Drivers of persecution

Cuba: Drivers of Persecution	IO	RN	ERH	CO	CDP	CPCO	SI	DPA	OCC
	-	-	-	-	VERY WEAK	STRONG	MEDIUM	STRONG	WEAK
Government officials	-	-	-	-	Very weak	Strong	Medium	Strong	Weak
Ethnic group leaders	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Non-Christian religious leaders	-	-	-	-	-	Very weak	Very weak	Very weak	-
Religious leaders of other churches	-	-	-	-	Very weak	Weak	-	Weak	-
Violent religious groups	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Ideological pressure groups	-	-	-	-	-	Medium	Medium	Medium	-
Citizens (people from the broader society), including mobs	-	-	-	-	-	Medium	Weak	Medium	Very weak

Cuba:									
Drivers of Persecution	IO	RN	ERH	CO	CDP	CPCO	SI	DPA	OCC
	-	-	-	-	VERY WEAK	STRONG	MEDIUM	STRONG	WEAK
One's own (extended) family	-	-	-	-	-	Very weak	Very weak	Very weak	-
Political parties	-	-	-	-	-	Strong	Medium	Strong	Weak
Revolutionaries or paramilitary groups	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Organized crime cartels or networks	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Multilateral organizations (e.g. UN, OIC etc.) and embassies	-	-	-	-	-	-	Very weak	-	-

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

Drivers of Communist and post-Communist oppression (blended with Secular intolerance)

- **Government officials (Strong):** Even though the new Constitution has brought superficial changes to leadership and governmental structure, in practice, government officials at all levels are loyal to the Communist Party as before and all their activities aim to fulfill the regime interests. The authorities encourage the virtual deification of Fidel Castro and openly promote Santeria practices as well as the agenda of some ideological pressure groups (related to LGBT+ issues). Also, the Cuban Council of Churches (CCC) acts as a government-controlled group in the way it opposes and represses any Christian individuals and churches that fail to follow the guidelines of the government.
- **Political parties (Strong):** As mentioned above, the country has a single political party, the Communist Party, which aims to uphold Communist values in the country. There is no true democracy and no space for the Church to speak out in public and operate freely. On the contrary, where churches and Christians are discovered acting against Communist values and Party demands, they become a frequent target for oppressive measures.
- **Ideological pressure groups (Medium):** Examples of such groups are: "Union of Young Communists", "Cuba Central Worker", "Federation of Cuban Women", "National Association of Small Farmers", "José Martí Pioneers Organization", "Student Federation of Secondary Education", "University Student Federation", among others. Members of these groups support and encourage action against churches not aligned with regime interests. They defend the regime's Communist principles and sometimes also actively support LGBT+ postulates (in the case of "CENESEX", for instance), especially regarding issues related to sexual education.
- **Citizens (Medium):** They are mainly represented by the Committees for the Defense of the Revolution (CDR) who are an important arm of the regime, since they act as "agents" to monitor and control Christian (and social) activities throughout the island.

Drivers of Dictatorial paranoia (blended with Communist and post-Communist oppression)

- **Government officials (Strong):** All members of the state apparatus seek to keep the party in power and impose policies, laws and measures necessary for the regime to exert totalitarian control over everyone living on the island. Hence, officials censor Christian leaders and groups that can influence society and destabilize the regime. One of the main entities hindering church activities is the Office of Religious Affairs (ORA), an organ of the Cuban Communist party existing purely to monitor and restrict the activities of religious groups, since all social activity is interpreted from a political perspective. The authorities allow citizens to express their religious faith as long as this does not contradict or criticize government positions and policies, which in practice are the same as those of the Communist Party.
- **Political parties (Strong):** The Cuban Communist Party as part of the government, has enough power to permanently censor Christians, especially when they are critical of the government or when they speak up denouncing corruption and violations of human rights. Members of the Party treat Christians as "traitors" or "counterrevolutionaries" as a way of preventing their influence from spreading and decreasing their influence as social actors. The Party acts against Christians to remove voices of dissent.
- **Ideological pressure groups (Medium):** The pressure groups listed above for the CPCO engine collaborate with the attempts to suppress any voice in society that contradicts Communist Party interests, including churches and Christian activists who advocate for those in poverty and call for a return to democracy.
- **Citizens (Medium):** Motivated by fear or in order to show their loyalty to the Communist Party, many citizens participate in actions (e.g. throwing stones at churches) targeting Christian leaders or their churches when they criticize or openly oppose Communist principles.

Areas where Christians face most difficulties

In the WWL 2022 reporting period, incidents of persecution against Christians have been registered throughout the country due to the government's totalitarian control throughout the nation. Particular hotspots are the capital, La Havana, and provinces in the eastern part of the island.

Christian communities and how they are affected

Communities of expatriate Christians: Expatriate Christians are not isolated from interaction with other Christians in Cuba and so are not treated as a separate category in WWL analysis.

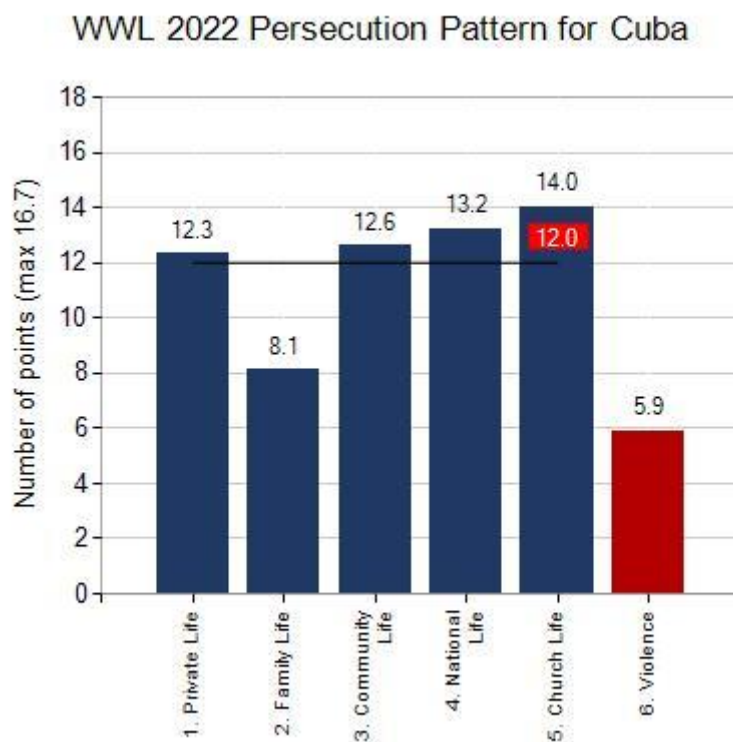
Historical Christian communities: Examples are the Roman Catholic Church, the Orthodox Church and a growing Protestant community made up of Episcopal, Presbyterian, Lutheran and Methodist churches. These churches are monitored and face state action if anything opposing Communist ideology is discovered. They may also be criticized by leaders of politicized churches, ideological pressure groups and harassed by regime sympathizers. Some churches belonging to this category are not officially recognized by the State or cannot count on the support of the Council of Churches of Cuba if some of their members or leaders are known to be critical of the

regime. In such cases, they may suffer the same consequences as unregistered, non-traditional church groups.

Converts: This category includes converts from Santeria or the Communist Party. Converts are often rejected by government officials and subjected to reprisals when they belong to a church considered a regime opponent or when the church's leaders are regarded as counter-revolutionaries. Thus, through intimidation and hostility, attempts are made to discourage conversion and prevent the growth of the Church.

Non-traditional Christian communities: This category is made up mainly of Pentecostal and Evangelical groups and includes Baptist churches. As well as facing the same challenges as Historical Christian communities, it is almost impossible for these church groups to obtain registration and have the same civil rights as churches with state recognition, neither can they display any religious symbol particularly related to them. Because of this, these congregations and their leaders face higher levels of repression and harassment, since they are acting outside the law. Most of the time they are forced to gather in house-churches and live in constant fear of being discovered by the regime and Party militants. In consequence, when government agents raid house-churches, they are also endangering family homes.

The Persecution pattern



The WWL 2022 Persecution pattern for Cuba shows:

- The average pressure on Christians in Cuba has increased from 11.3 points in WWL 2021 to 12.0 points in WWL 2022. This is mainly due to the government using the COVID-19 crisis to justify greater repression, abuses and monitoring targeting Christian and church regime opponents, especially after the July 2021 demonstrations.

- Pressure is strongest in the *Church sphere* (14.0 points), *National sphere* (13.2 points) and *Community sphere* (12.6 points) reflecting the high control and oppression exerted by the Cuban government and its supporters targeting church activities and Christians.
- The score for violence in WWL 2022 is 5.9 points, rising from 5.4 points in WWL 2021. There were a greater number of reports of church buildings being attacked/closed, Christians being detained and sentenced, and of Christians being physically or mentally abused for faith-related reasons.

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 2021 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 1.4: It has been risky for Christians to reveal their faith in written forms of personal expression (including expressions in blogs and Facebook etc.). (3.50 points)

Expressions of faith in blogs and Facebook posts are possible despite serious restrictions on the Internet service but are closely monitored by the state authorities. However, Christians can be expected to be treated as 'traitors' if:

- they use digital media to defend their faith;
- make it known that they are members of a church considered illegal or an enemy of the regime;
- criticize the government;
- denounce corruption and violations of human rights;
- demand greater religious liberty;
- encourage or publicly recognize their participation in demonstrations against the Communist government.

Reprisals against people making such posts and their families are frequent. Censure has increased during the COVID-19 crisis, resulting in Internet access and travel bans. In practice, citizens assume that all social media use and phone conversations are being monitored by the authorities under the application of Decree 370 and Decree 35. The main goal of this kind of harassment is to encourage self-censorship among citizens and suppress any opinions distracting from the state narrative.

Block 1.3: It has been dangerous to privately own or keep Christian materials. (3.25 points)

When government security forces raid the homes of Christian human rights activists, Christians with political views opposing the regime or members of non-registered churches, they confiscate religious materials considered 'subversive'. This can be Biblical and preaching material considered counter-revolutionary, theological documents on human rights and social transformation, and even the Evangelical magazine “Nota del Cielo” or the Catholic magazine

“Convivencia”. In many cases, the mere possession of such material has been used as proof for accusations of treason or church illegality. Also, imprisoned activists possessing such materials are punished. During the WWL 2022 reporting period, in which the authorities were able to take advantage of the COVID -19 crisis, house raids and confiscations occurred more frequently, especially in the context of the July 2021 protests, when all those considered opponents were mistreated.

Block 1.9: It has been risky for Christians to meet with other Christians. (3.25 points)

Gatherings of people organized by members of 'defiant churches' are difficult as freedom of assembly is largely restricted. This is particularly difficult for the members of unregistered churches/house-churches. Whenever they hold a meeting, even if it is not of a religious nature, they run the risk of being accused by the neighbors (CDR), raided by the Cuban police and then prosecuted. During the WWL 2022s reporting period, even meetings organized in line with COVID-19 protocols were accused of spreading the virus. The consequences are most serious Christians at such meetings are considered to be regime opponents. The fines vary between 2,000 and 3,000 CUC (1,740 – 2,610 USD).

Block 1.10: Christians have been isolated from other family members or other like-minded Christians (e.g. house arrest). (3.25 points)

Especially Christian human rights activists and those who constantly question and challenge the regime face arbitrary arrest and house-arrest, which causes separation from Christian fellowship and families. If it became known they intended to participate in protest action, they were sometimes forced to remain in their homes without contacting anyone and under close police surveillance. According to USCIRF's September 2021 update, the Cuban authorities responded to the July 2021 protests by detaining, often violently, an estimated 700 demonstrators and activists. Since July, many are still being held incommunicado, without access to family or legal support.

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. (4.00 points)

Public education following Communist ideals is mandatory for all Cuban schoolchildren and students. The ideology promoted practically deifies Fidel Castro and Che Guevara, worships the Communist revolution and rejects Christian faith. Pupils of Christian parents who oppose Marxist ideals face particular pressure from teachers and their peers. Fearing consequences for themselves and their parents, many such children avoid expressing their religious convictions at school. This propaganda is regularly supported by national events where children are 'subtly' forced to participate and be indoctrinated.

Block 2.7: Parents have been hindered in raising their children according to their Christian beliefs. (3.75 points)

The state is considered the main educator of all children in the country and its Revolution ideology influences children from an early age. Communist education is mandatory in schools

and parents cannot prevent the indoctrination of their children. Every morning before the start of classes, all pupils must swear with hand raised: "We will be like Che!" (Che Guevara is a Communist icon). Parents who distance their children from the state's Communist values face prison sentences and loss of custody of their children. In addition, the state's promotion of LGBT+ values in schools puts the right of parents to raise their children according to their own convictions and beliefs at risk, because they have no legal means to oppose it. In addition, LGBT+ groups have advocated in favor of the prohibition of homeschooling due to their interest in promoting their ideology through mandatory state education.

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

Children of Christians known to be involved in the defense of human rights or considered as regime opponents face intimidation and other difficulties by being regarded as children of "enemies of the revolution" or "traitors". Especially children of Christian members of non-registered churches face rejection and other hostilities at school by both teachers and fellow pupils when defending their Christian beliefs in public; this sometimes involves violence. They can also become a target for criticism because of their parents' church affiliation. It is well known that the government grants subsidies and other benefits (especially, regarding university studies) to those who support the regime and cut all aid to those opposing the ruling party (including family members and children). The US State Department reports in IRFR 2020: "According to media, religious discrimination against students was a common practice in state schools, with multiple reports of teachers and Communist Party officials encouraging and participating in bullying."

Block 2.10: Christian spouses and/or children of Christians have been subject to separation for prolonged periods of time by circumstances relating to persecution. (3.25 points)

Christians who are stigmatized as being regime opponents because of their political and/or church affiliation face various forms of intimidation and oppression that also affects their families. As a result some family members relocate to stay with relatives in other parts of the country to avoid state harassment. In the WWL 2022 reporting period, all Christians in detention or in prison were arbitrarily separated from their families and their location was not immediately communicated to relatives, which meant they were kept "incomunicado" for a number of weeks. An example mentioned in USCIRF 2021 was the case of Pastor Lorenzo Rosales Fajardo. The regime deliberately causes such separation to discourage other members of the family (especially the younger ones) from following the example of relatives considered government enemies.

Pressure in Block 3 / Community sphere

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.). (3.75 points)

Militants and sympathizers of the regime (including family members) closely monitor activities of citizens. Christians who have expressed faith-based opinions against the regime are consider-

ed dissidents and are targeted for surveillance, as are those known to belong to churches who oppose the ruling party. The Committees for the Defense of the Revolution (CDR) are the main government informants and their aim is to eliminate the spread of subversive, anti-Communist ideas with the help of other citizens, militants of the Communist party, government officials and sometimes other family members. Telephone lines, emails, letters, social networks and Internet usage are all monitored through electronic platforms and church infiltrators in order to find evidence for use against Christians considered regime opponents. During the WWL 2022 reporting period, due especially to the July 2021 protests, the intensity of monitoring increased, especially against Christians belonging to the Cuba Evangelical Alliance.

Block 3.12: Christians have been fined for faith-related reasons (e.g. jizya tax, community tax, protection money). (3.50 points)

This mainly affects Christians in non-registered churches where the imposition of fines is a common strategy to harass opposition voices. On many occasions, public officials ask for money from pastors in order to allow them to perform their church activities. This request for money is a 'private arrangement' and has no legal backing. On other occasions, Christians are fined for belonging to a non-registered or 'revolutionary' church, or for lending their properties to house-church groups. During the COVID-19 crisis, Christians trying to provide humanitarian assistance were also fined, since such activities were regarded as being 'subversive' and against government orders. The fines and fees imposed are almost always excessive (especially considering that what a Cuban receives as a salary is often less than the minimum necessary to live) and depend on the arbitrary decision of the 'authority' on duty at the time. In addition, the Immigration Police use fines to discourage pastors and Christian activists from travelling abroad. Virtually anything can be chosen as grounds for a fine and confiscated, for instance a book with a suspicious title or a gift. In the wake of the July 2021 protests, the imposition of fines has become a very frequent form of intimidation.

Block 3.13: Christians have been interrogated or compelled to report to the local vigilante/police for faith-related reasons. (3.50 points)

Throughout the country, this has especially affected Christians who i) left the Communist Party; ii) belong to non-registered churches known for their opposition to the government; or iii) in general, manifest any kind of opposition to regime activities. Interrogation is commonly used to intimidate Christian leaders and groups, who have been refused registration, or who are simply considered a threat to the Communist system.

Under the pretext of preventing the spreading of the COVID-19 virus, Christian activists were required to provide contact information of regime opponents, details about Christian activities and funding from sources abroad. This was particularly the case when their churches were involved in supporting protesters.

Block 3.9: Christians have faced disadvantages in their education at any level for faith-related reasons (e.g. restrictions of access to education). (3.25 points)

All students, including Christians, are forced to learn Marxist ideology as part of the compulsory state curriculum. If they try to oppose such forced indoctrination, they are threatened with be-

ing banned from continuing their education or are expelled from schools/universities. University authorities are known to prevent Christian students (especially if they involved with non-registered churches or targeted church leaders) from continuing their studies to prevent them spreading their 'subversive ideas' to other students. Some professions and university degree courses are only accessible for members of the Communist Party, which means that Christians may be blocked from taking certain courses, from participating in research programs and from receiving scholarships. The educational restrictions against Christian university students were more severe during the WWL 2022 reporting period because many of the protesters in the anti-government demonstrations were young adults.

Pressure in Block 4 / National sphere

Block 4.8: Christians have been hindered in expressing their views or opinions in public. (4.00 points)

The government does not guarantee freedom of expression for anyone in the country, especially lately due to the increased surveillance of 'rebels' and the application of Decree 370 and Decree 35. Numerous restrictions apply, especially to those who are not considered to be supporters of the regime. Christians, Christian organizations, religious freedom advocates or Christian human rights activists speaking out about the state's violation of human and civil rights or scandals regarding the Castro family, for instance, face arrest, arbitrary detentions, fines, prosecution, travel limitations, censorship, harassment and more. Many Christians and their families facing such restrictions belong to non-registered churches which are related to the Evangelical Alliance in Cuba (which is openly critical of government injustices) or have contact with international organizations advocating human rights. By threatening prosecution, the authorities are trying to promote a culture of self-censorship, giving no space to any dissident voice. Additionally, Christians expressing faith-based opinions in public on issues related to life, family and marriage, have faced fierce opposition from LGBT+ adherents enjoying state support.

Block 4.16: International monitoring has been hindered when Christians had to stand trial. (4.00 points)

Cuba remains one of the few countries in the world where international human rights organizations are not allowed to visit. While there have been opportunities for dialogue, any international organization that has any relationship with anti-Communist concepts or 'colonialism' is rejected. Any foreign organization trying to advocate in favor of Christians prosecuted on grounds of faith are not welcome and are hindered from making contact with them or their relatives. In addition, the recommendations made by multilateral organizations on the treatment of human rights activists and of those considered 'opponents' in prison, are constantly ignored by the regime. Even in the last election (February 2019), the Cuban government hindered electoral observers whose function was to ensure the transparency of the process.

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)

There is currently no possibility that the state will recognize the existence of any other political party than the Communist Party. Hence, any Christian political party is legally forbidden. Where faith-based organizations promote a vision conflicting with Communist ideals, they can swiftly become targets for censorship, confiscation and arrest, especially if they are related in any way with non-registered churches or churches viewed as being regime opponents. Those religious organizations are the most vulnerable since any activities they conduct face the risk of being considered illegal (especially where they carry out activities to help citizens claim their rights or when they try to educate them in aspects of democracy and rule of law. In such cases, the authorities react by arresting leaders, expropriating property and confiscating materials. This has been the case for organizations such as “Coexistence Center”, “The Christian Liberation Movement”, “The Lawton Foundation” and the “Cuban Evangelical Churches Alliance”.

Block 4.15: Christians accused in court have been deprived of equal treatment. (3.75 points)

The regime has total control over the judicial system and any ruling will always be in the state's favor. Thus, the rights to procedural guarantees for Christians will not be properly safeguarded, including the right to due process. If Christians are brought to court, it is because they are considered rebels, traitors or opponents and are not treated with equality. Frequently, government officials misinterpret legislation in order to deliberately formulate charges and accusations against Christians, when their faith is considered a challenge to the stability of the regime.

Pressure in Block 5 / Church sphere

Block 5.3: Christian communities have been hindered in building or renovating church buildings or in claiming historical religious premises and places of worship which had been taken from them earlier. (4.00 points)

Christians belonging to non-registered churches do not have any chance of building or repairing churches. For registered churches, there are very exceptional cases where church buildings have been allowed to be renovated and even constructed, mainly by foreign work-teams who secretly purchase the materials themselves and do the labor voluntarily. In general, licenses and authorizations to build are very difficult to obtain - although not fully restricted as in past years. However, even when permission is granted, it can be later arbitrarily canceled without proper justification. If members of the church in question are known to be anti-Communists, permits are often denied for the most absurd reasons. Over the years, the “Assemblies of God” denomination has seen many of its churches shut down and demolished. Some Catholic buildings that were confiscated at the time of the Revolution have been returned but many have remained in the hands of the state. Expropriation or church demolition is a frequent method of punishment for churches and their leaders considered to be disobedient to the state. As stated in the USCIRF 2021 report: “The Cuban government imposes complicated and repressive requirements on private residences used as places of worship, limiting the ability of Cubans to worship in community”.

Block 5.8: Christian preaching, teaching and/or published materials have been monitored. (4.00 points)

Christian preaching is closely monitored, especially where church leaders are known for their opposition to the regime or have given any kind of support during the anti-regime demonstrations in July 2021. Their messages are seen as being subversive and 'imperialist' if there is any mention of issues of democracy and human rights. The use of state informers is widespread and causes self-censorship, especially when family members have been recruited as informers. During the WWL 2022 reporting period, many church services were broadcast via the Internet and easily monitored. Especially in the case of unregistered churches, monitoring activities are more frequent and intense. Government officials or sympathizers of the regime positively seek political connotations in the preaching to be able to make accusations. Church leaders received visits from members of the Cuban Council of Churches (CCC) and the Cuban Communist Party (CCP) intended to harass them with their constant surveillance.

Block 5.20: It has been risky for churches or Christian organizations to speak out against instigators of persecution. (4.00 points)

The main instigator of persecution is the government itself and dissidents are routinely punished by arrest, prosecution, and other kinds of suppression. Christians who complain about such persecution suffer many forms of retaliation without being able to defend themselves. Christians who make known the human rights situation inside Cuba, either nationally or internationally, automatically become targets. Common practices used against them are:

- prevention from traveling abroad
- denial of basic services
- prevention from meeting with foreigners
- denial of permits or licenses
- death threats (also against family members)
- arbitrary arrests
- irregular trials
- closure of churches and private businesses
- forced exile.

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

The Ministry of Justice (MOJ) is in charge of church registration and can give a church the legal status of associations, on a basis similar to how it officially registers civil society organizations. Further, the government and the Communist Party monitor religious groups through the Office of Religious Affairs (ORA) and seek to control most aspects of religious life. Almost all churches with legal recognition were registered before the Communist revolution of 1959. Since then, in most cases, registration has been denied on the grounds that another local group has identical or similar objectives, or that the applicant's activities could in any way harm the common good (i.e. goes against Communist Party ideology). In consequence, many churches are considered illegal because their registration has been denied, which is one of the main obstacles to the full exercise of religious liberty. As most of the non-registered churches are considered 'rebels' op-

erating outside the law, they face penalties ranging from fines, confiscation of property, and permanent closure. Registered churches also face difficulties when their activities are not deemed to be in line with regime interests. Thus, IRFR 2020 states: “According to religious groups, the ORA and MOJ continued to deny official registration to certain groups, including to several Apostolic churches, or did not respond to long-pending applications.”

Violence

Violence is defined in WWL Methodology as the deprivation of physical freedom or as bodily harm to Christians or damage to their property. It includes severe threats (mental abuse). The table is based on reported cases as much as possible, but since many incidents go unreported, the numbers must be understood as being minimum figures. The following 5 points should be considered when using the data provided in the Block 6 table:

1. Some incidents go unreported because the Christians involved choose not to speak about the hostility being faced. Possible reasons for this may be:

- *Doing so would expose them to more attacks. For example, if a family member is killed because of his/her faith, the survivors might decide to keep silent about the circumstances of the killing to avoid provoking any further attacks.*
- *In some circumstances, the reticence to pass on information may be due to the danger of exposure caused by converts returning to their previous faith.*
- *If persecution is related to sexual violence - due to stigma, survivors often do not tell even their closest relatives.*
- *In some cultural settings, if your loved one is killed, you might be under the obligation to take revenge. Christians not wishing to do that, may decide to keep quiet about it.*

2. Other incidents go unreported for the following possible reasons:

- *Some incidents never reach the public consciousness, because no one really knows about it; or the incident is simply not considered worth reporting; or media coverage is deliberately blocked or distorted; or media coverage is not deliberately blocked, but the information somehow gets lost; or the incidents are deliberately not reported widely for security reasons (e.g. for the protection of local church leaders).*
- *In situations where Christians have been discriminated against for many years, armed conflict can make them additionally vulnerable. Christians killed in areas where fighting regularly takes place are unlikely to be reported separately. Examples in recent years have been Sudan, Syria and Myanmar.*
- *Christians who die through the deprivation of basic necessities such as clean water and medical care (due to long-term discrimination) are unlikely to be reported separately. Christians are not always killed directly; they can be so squeezed by regulations and other oppressive factors that they die – not at once, but in the course of years. This often includes the deprivation of basic necessities such as clean water and medical care, or exclusion from government assisted socio-economic development projects. These numbers could be immense.*

3. For further discussion (with a focus on the complexity of assessing the numbers of Christians killed for their faith) please see World Watch Monitor’s article dated 13 November 2013 available at:

<https://www.worldwatchmonitor.org/2013/11/number-of-christian-martyrs-continues-to-cause-debate/>.

4. The use of symbolic numbers: *In cases where it has been impossible to count exactly, a symbolic round figure (10*, 100* etc.) is given and indicated with an asterisk. A symbolic number of 10* could in reality even be 100 or more but the real number is uncertain. A symbolic number of 100* could go well over 1000 but the real number is uncertain. A symbolic number of 1,000* could go well over 10,000 but, again, the real number is uncertain. The same applies for symbolic numbers 10,000*, 100,000* and 1,000,000*: Each could indicate much higher numbers, but WWR chooses to be cautious because the real number is uncertain.*

5. The symbol “x” in the table: *This denotes a known number which cannot be published due to security concerns.*

Cuba: Violence Block question	WWL 2022	WWL 2021
6.1 How many Christians have been killed for faith-related reasons (including state sanctioned executions)?	0	0
6.2 How many churches or Christian buildings (schools, hospitals, cemeteries, etc.) have been attacked, damaged, bombed, looted, destroyed, burned down, closed or confiscated for faith-related reasons?	7	5
6.3 How many Christians have been detained for faith-related reasons?	44	13
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?	4	4
6.5 How many Christians have been abducted for faith-related reasons (including Christians missing in a persecution context)?	0	1
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)?	18	12
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?	2	3
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	1
6.11 How many Christians have been forced to leave their homes or go into hiding in-country for faith-related reasons?	0	0
6.12 How many Christians have been forced to leave the country for faith-related reasons?	1	4

In the WWL 2022 reporting period:

- **Christians arrested (44):** Most arrests involved Christians being arbitrarily detained during the July 2021 demonstrations, and for not allowing officers to enter their houses and/or churches when they tried to use COVID-19 restrictions as a pretext to punish all considered opponents.
- **Christians attacked (18):** The attacks include incidents in which Christians were beaten before or during arbitrary detention for demonstrating against the regime, as well as intimidating them with death threats.
- **Churches attacked (7):** One church was demolished and the other 6 cases were structural damage caused by government officers and Communist sympathizers.

- **Christian homes attacked (2):** Police agents raided pastors’ houses looking for evidence to accuse them of crimes or for being 'enemies of the revolution'. During such raids, doors, windows and furniture were damaged.

5 Year trends

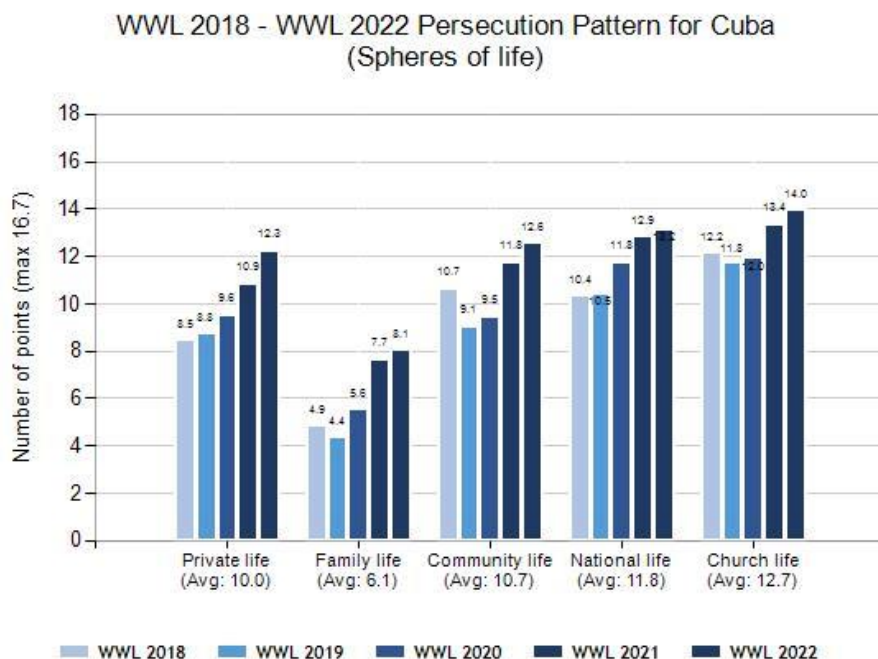
The following three charts show the levels of pressure and violence faced by Christians in the country over the last five WWL reporting periods.

5 Year trends: Average pressure

Cuba: WWL 2018 - WWL 2022 Persecution Pattern history	Average pressure over 5 Spheres of life
2022	12.0
2021	11.3
2020	9.7
2019	8.9
2018	9.3

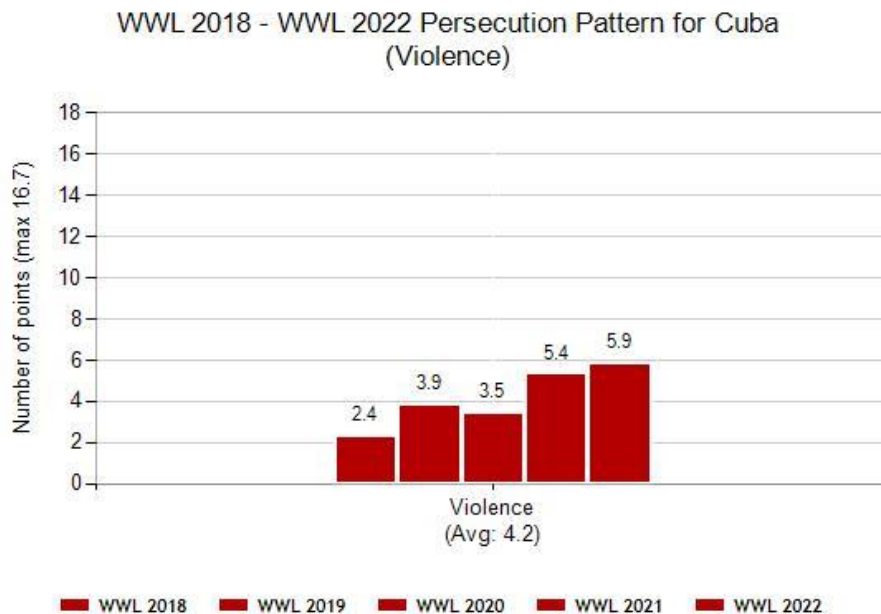
The table above shows that the average pressure on Christians has consistently been above 8.9 points over the last five reporting periods, rising to its highest peak in WWL 2022 due to increased hostilities and retaliation against any action deemed destabilizing by the government.

5 Year trends: Pressure in each sphere of life



The last five reporting periods show a general trend of increasing pressure in all *spheres of life*. The most significant levels of pressure can be seen in *Church* and *National life*. This reflects the way the government is trying to systematically silence those within the churches who oppose Communist values or the dictatorial measures of the regime.

5 Year trends: Violence against Christians



The chart above shows that the score for violence was more or less stable during the first 3 reporting periods but shows a sharp rise since WWL 2021. Given the socio-political context of the country and the rejection of the Communist regime by churches and other civil society actors, the use of violence by the government has increased in an attempt to silence them and intimidate Christians and other groups considered to be opponents/traitors.

Gender-specific religious persecution / Female

Group	Female Pressure Points
Economic	-
Political and Legal	-
Security	Violence – physical
Social and Cultural	Denied/restricted healthcare; Violence – psychological; Violence – Verbal
Technological	-

Domestic violence remains one of the impactful forms of pressure on Christian women and girls. This pressure is, in part, facilitated by legislative gaps concerning domestic and intrafamily violence (Inter-American Commission on Human Rights, February 2020, "[Human rights situation in Cuba](#)", p.123).

In addition, women involved in activism are typically fired from their job, threatened and monitored. For example, police [continue to mistreat](#) and beat the ‘Ladies in White’ – a group of women founded by the relatives of political prisoners – on their way to and from Sunday church services (HRW 2021). In addition to beatings, members have also been arrested and detained for short periods of time.

Due to the historical repression of religion in Cuba, especially Christianity, it is challenging for women to form stable families. Christian women and girls are often insulted because of their more conservative sexual values. In Cuba, abortion has been legal and free for a long time and is presented as being a normal contraceptive method. This situation has also influenced the decline in birth rates in the country (World Bank data). There is harsh pressure to perform abortions in the case of genetic malformation, in line with the Cuban government's ideal of maintaining a 0% rate of births with deformities. This is a major challenge for Christian women wishing to remain loyal to their Christian beliefs. Refusal may be regarded as an act of opposition towards the government.

While a greater issue for men, women were also affected by the mass detentions following the 11 July 2021 protests.

Gender-specific religious persecution / Male

Group	Male Pressure Points
Economic	Denied inheritance or possessions; Economic harassment via business/job/work access
Political and Legal	Denied access to Christian religious materials, teachings and rites; Economic harassment via fines; Imprisonment by government
Security	Forced to flee town/country; Military/militia conscription/service against conscience; Violence – physical
Social and Cultural	Violence – psychological; Violence – Verbal
Technological	-

Christian men are generally more likely to be arrested or harassed since they are more likely to hold leadership positions from which they criticize government behavior based on their Christian beliefs. They additionally face fines, confiscation of Christian literature, destruction of property and death threats. A country expert comments: “As they are heads of families and churches, when they are victims, this has an intimidating message against their families and communities”. Members of the Christian Liberation Movement are also continuously besieged and threatened.

The number of detentions rose significantly in the WWL 2022 reporting period, following on from the 11th July protests, where many Christians – particularly young men – were arbitrarily arrested ([Cope, July 2021](#)). Several demonstrators remained missing months later ([Aleteia, September 2021](#)). Within prison, Christian detainees have also reported having to face phys-

ical and mental abuse ([Amazonaws, 28 July 2021](#)).

National service is compulsory for men. If it is discovered that they are active Christians or have Christian parents, the level of discrimination and persecution depends on the attitude of the commanding officer. Although alternative forms of social service are theoretically possible, in practice permission is rarely granted. Also, given the economic difficulties resulting from state policies and US sanctions, many men must work abroad in order to meet family needs.

Persecution of other religious minorities

According to USCIRF 2021 (pages 62-64):

- “Several Santería religious leaders and practitioners, particularly members of the unregistered Free Yoruba Association of Cuba, were also frequent targets of government harassment. State security reportedly detained, threatened, and surveilled Free Yoruba leaders, including detaining two high-ranking Free Yorubas in March and declaring that 'there is only one god, Fidel Castro'. In May, state security reportedly broke up a religious meeting of an unregistered Islamic group studying the Qur’an, summoned participants to the police station the next day, and threatened them with criminal charges.”

According to the US State Department (IRFR 2020):

- “On September 30, police detained two Free Yorubas of Cuba leaders who were protesting Diaz Paseiro’s mistreatment, holding them overnight, beating them, and breaking the arm of one of them, Jennifer Castaneda. In August, the U.S.-based Patmos Institute blogged a statement calling on the Cuban government to recognize religious minority groups, including the Free Yorubas of Cuba. According to the U.S.-based Global Liberty Alliance, authorities continued to subject Free Yorubas of Cuba leaders to arbitrary detentions, threats, and verbal harassment, in addition to the September detentions and beatings of the two Yoruba leaders protesting the mistreatment of Paseiro. In February, police detained a Free Yorubas couple, telling the couple, 'There is only one god, Fidel Castro'. According to observers, although Yoruba and other African syncretic religious groups were given latitude to practice their beliefs as individuals, the government selectively recognized groups and leaders based on their favorable view of the government.”

According to the [USCIRF Factsheet on Cuba](#):

- “The Asociación de Yorubas Libres de Cuba (Free Yorubas) is an independent, unregistered Santeria community in Cuba that is frequently targeted by the Cuban state. USCIRF received reports that several members of this community, including Donaida Pérez Paseiro, president of Free Yorubas, and Loreto Hernández García, vice-president of the community, were arrested and charged for peacefully protesting after the 11J protests. Twin sisters Lisdiani and Lisdani Rodríguez Isak, also Free Yorubas, were arrested on July 19 and remain in prison”.

Further information:

- **March 2021:** The young activist Dairon Hernández Pérez, organizer of the Free Yoruba Association of Cuba, was [detained](#) by members of the State Security. He was beaten and assaulted when he was returning from a religious event. They took his religious articles and the money he was carrying. The apparent reason is that he refused military service because of his religious beliefs (ADNCUBA, 8 March 2021).
- **June 2021:** The Association of Free Yorubas of Cuba filed a complaint with the People's Court and the Municipal Prosecutor's Office of Placetas, Villa Clara, for [violations of religious freedom](#) committed by government officials. "We devotees have no freedom of assembly, we have no freedom to carry out our activities and our ceremonies. We have been forbidden to meet to replicate that knowledge we possess and to feed back on the experience acquired over time," said the president of the independent organization, Donaida Pérez Paseiro (Marti, 30 June 2021).
- **September 2021:** Esteban Rodriguez, a Santero belonging to the Yoruba religion was [arrested](#) by the forces of the regime for wanting to visit his friend Luis Manuel Otero Alcantara, who was on hunger strike at that time. At this point, Rodriguez had been detained for almost five months with no trial date in sight (El Nuevo Herald, 21 September 2021).

Future outlook

The outlook for Christians as viewed through the lens of:

Communist and post-Communist oppression (blended with Secular intolerance)

Despite desperate attempts to maintain Communist government power, opposition has been growing on the island, as was seen in the July 2021 protests. In this context, Christians are likely to continue to face hostility and legal prosecution when they try to stand against the regime in defense of their beliefs or when they support opposition voices demanding the restoration of democracy. There is increasing cooperation within the Church and with other sectors of civil society in helping those who suffer most at the hands of the government. This cooperation will continue to be a key element in the search for radical change in the political management of the country. Until that change is achieved, the persecution of Christians in Cuba is not likely to diminish.

Dictatorial paranoia (blended with Communist and post-Communist oppression)

In the face of increased protests against Communist dictatorial measures and with the constant national and international pressure for the respect and guarantee of human rights for all citizens in the country, the Cuban government has responded with increasing repression. Indeed, the government looks set to continue introducing harsh measures against those not aligning themselves with the regime, disguising its intentions in legal trappings. Although it is likely that the Church will continue to suffer significant levels of pressure and violence at the hands of the government and its supporters, there is a glimmer of hope that the media pressure and the notoriety of the abuses committed will eventually prompt changes that will improve the situation for Cuba's citizens, including the Christian community.

External Links - Persecution Dynamics

- Gender-specific religious persecution Female description: Inter-American Commission on Human Rights, Feb 2020, “Human rights situation in Cuba”, p.123 - <http://www.oas.org/en/iachr/reports/pdfs/Cuba2020-en.pdf>
- Gender-specific religious persecution Female description: continue to mistreat - <https://www.hrw.org/world-report/2021/country-chapters/cuba>
- Gender-specific religious persecution Male description: Cope, July 2021 - https://www.cope.es/religion/noticias/policia-cubana-libera-seminarista-rafael-cruz-devora-despues-tres-dias-arresto-20210716_1404329
- Gender-specific religious persecution Male description: Aleteia, September 2021 - <https://aleteia.org/2021/09/21/religious-freedom-commission-issues-detailed-report-on-cuban-protests/>
- Gender-specific religious persecution Male description: Amazonaws, 28 July 2021 - <https://s3.eu-central-1.amazonaws.com/curium/cubanet.org/noticias-condenan-a-cinco-anos-de-prision-a-un-miembro-del-movimiento-cristiano-que-protesto-en-una-cola.html>
- Persecution of other religious minorities: USCIRF Factsheet on Cuba - <https://www.uscirf.gov/sites/default/files/2021-09/2021%20Cuba%20Factsheet.pdf>
- Persecution of other religious minorities: detained - <https://adncuba.com/noticias-de-cuba/actualidad/recibe-golpiza-por-ser-fiel-sus-creencias>
- Persecution of other religious minorities: violations of religious freedom - <https://www.radiotelevisionmarti.com/a/presentan-queja-en-instituciones-estatales-por-violaciones-a-libertad-religiosa/298475.html>
- Persecution of other religious minorities: arrested - <https://www.elnuevoherald.com/noticias/mundo/america-latina/cuba-es/article254410469.html>

Further useful reports

A selection of in-depth reports and smaller articles are available on World Watch Research’s Open Doors Analytical website (password: freedom) and on the World Watch Monitor website:

- <https://opendoorsanalytical.org/reports/>
- <https://opendoorsanalytical.org/?s=Cuba>
- <https://www.worldwatchmonitor.org/countries/Cuba>