

2.11. Christians in areas where they are a minority

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43.4 % of Nigeria's population identifies as Christian (while 56.1 % as Muslim). In general, Christians are primarily concentrated in the southern regions of the country, whereas Muslims predominantly reside in the northern regions⁶⁶³ (for more information see [Muslims in areas where they are a minority](#)). The USDOS International Religious Freedom (IRF) report covering 2023 indicated that Christianity is dominant in the South-South, South-West, (including Lagos), and the South-East region, with Catholics, Anglicans, and Methodists, constituting the majority.⁶⁶⁴ The same source indicated that Evangelical Christians are growing rapidly in the North-Central, South-East, South-South, and South-West.⁶⁶⁵ Christians are a minority in northern Nigeria where Islam is predominant and sharia law is applied.⁶⁶⁶ The states where sharia law has been adopted as both civil and criminal law⁶⁶⁷ are Bauchi, Borno, Gombe, Jigawa, Kaduna, Kano, Katsina, Kebbi, Niger, Sokoto, Yobe, and Zamfara.⁶⁶⁸ The USDOS IRF report indicated that even though Islam is the dominant religion in the North-West and North-East regions, 'significant Christian populations reside there as well', and that Christians and Muslims 'reside in approximately equal numbers in the North Central Region'.⁶⁶⁹

Without providing further details, some sources indicated that, in northern states under sharia law, Christians are discriminated against⁶⁷⁰ and reportedly treated as 'second-class citizens'.⁶⁷¹ In the North-East of the country, where Boko Haram predominantly operates, non-Muslims, including Christians, have been subjected to extreme violence by the group. See for more detailed information [Individuals targeted by Boko Haram](https://www.euaa.europa.eu/nigeria-country-focus/210-individuals-targeted-boko-haram).

Violent attacks against Christians as well as nonreligious individuals have been reported in recent years.⁶⁷² Violence against Christians included forced displacement, indiscriminate killings, and the destruction of homes, churches and livelihoods.⁶⁷³ Christians, particularly men, are killed in attacks, and women often kidnapped and targeted for sexual violence.⁶⁷⁴ According to a 2024 report by the Observatory for Religious Freedom in Africa (ORFA) on religious persecution in Nigeria,⁶⁷⁵ Christian captives are more likely to be executed by their captors than Muslim ones; while the latter are released if they cannot afford a ransom, Christian captives are murdered even after ransom is paid.⁶⁷⁶

Although Christians have been more vulnerable in northern states,⁶⁷⁷ violence against them is spreading into the Middle Belt and further south.⁶⁷⁸ Christians have faced attacks within the context of intercommunal violence⁶⁷⁹ between the mostly Muslim herders and largely Christian farming communities.⁶⁸⁰ While the conflict between farmers and herders was resurging over the first half of 2025, there was disagreement among sources over the nature and categorisation⁶⁸¹ of this complex and under-researched phenomenon.⁶⁸² While some sources attribute the reasons for this conflict to religious differences between the mostly Muslim herders and largely Christian farming communities, and to disputes between herders and farmers over land use,⁶⁸³ others observers linked the clashes to pressures on herders induced by climate change⁶⁸⁴ and competition over ever-dwindling resources,⁶⁸⁵ while others labelled the violence as manifestations of organised criminality led by armed groups.⁶⁸⁶ For more detailed information see [EUAA COI Report – Nigeria Security Situation, November 2025](#).

The main perpetrators of violence against Christians are jihadist armed groups,⁶⁸⁷ including Fulani (jihadist) armed groups,⁶⁸⁸ which some sources indicated as the main threat to Christians in Nigeria.⁶⁸⁹ Similarly, ORFA indicated that the main actors responsible for the killing of Christians are Armed Fulani Herdsmen, which are part of the Fulani Ethnic Militia (FEM), ‘Other Terrorist Groups’, an actor the source also refer to ‘Fulani bandits’ (and allegedly connected to the FEM); as well as Boko Haram,⁶⁹⁰ including its splinter faction ISWAP.⁶⁹¹ The Nigerian government has denied allegations that Christians are deliberately targeted in Nigeria and has deemed such claims as ‘misleading’.⁶⁹² According to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, “Nigeria is battling multiple threats—banditry, terrorism, and organized crime—which cut across religious and ethnic lines ... [and it] firmly rejects the portrayal of the situation as an Islamist extermination of Christians.”⁶⁹³

Based on its monitoring, ORFA indicated that, between October 2019 and September 2024, 2.4 Christians were killed in the country for every Muslim, and that in states where attacks against Christians occurred, the rate increases to 5.2.⁶⁹⁴ According to Nigerian human rights NGO Intersociety, at least 7 087 Christians were killed in Nigeria and 7 800 abducted between 1 January and 10 August 2025. The North-Central Benue State was identified as the hardest hit area (with at least 1 100 deaths), followed by North-Central Plateau State (806 deaths), and Kaduna State in North-West region (620 deaths).⁶⁹⁵ Such data could not be corroborated by other sources. For more detailed information on security incidents at national and state level (including those affecting Christians within the context of farmers and herders’ conflict and ‘banditry’ related violence, see [EUAA COI Report – Nigeria Security Situation, November 2025](#)).

Some sources stated that violence against Christians, particularly by Fulani armed groups, continue with impunity,⁶⁹⁶ with the government reportedly failing to effectively protect Christian communities and punish perpetrators.⁶⁹⁷ According to International Christian Concern (ICC), a US-based Christian organisation that provides advocacy and assistance to persecuted Christians worldwide, although Christian leaders have ‘repeatedly’ called for the government to provide greater protection and investigate attacks, poor road conditions, the difficulty of the terrain, and ‘the lack of rapid response mechanisms, hinder the ability of security agencies to prevent or contain violence against Christians’.⁶⁹⁸

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