

World
Watch
Research

Pakistan: Full Country Dossier

January 2022



OpenDoors

Serving persecuted **Christians** worldwide

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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 / Pakistan	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	7
Specific examples of violations of rights in the reporting period	7
Specific examples of positive developments	8
External Links - Situation in brief	8
WWL 2022: Keys to understanding / Pakistan.....	9
Links for general background information.....	9
Recent history	10
Political and legal landscape	11
Religious landscape	13
Economic landscape.....	14
Social and cultural landscape.....	17
Technological landscape	19
Security situation	20
Trends analysis	22
External Links - Keys to understanding	23
WWL 2022: Church information / Pakistan	27
Christian origins.....	27
Church spectrum today.....	27
External Links - Church information.....	28
WWL 2022: Persecution Dynamics / Pakistan	28
Reporting period	28
Position on the World Watch List	28
Persecution engines	29

Drivers of persecution.....	31
Areas where Christians face most difficulties.....	34
Christian communities and how they are affected.....	34
The Persecution pattern.....	35
Pressure in the 5 spheres of life.....	36
Violence.....	45
5 Year trends.....	48
Gender-specific religious persecution / Female.....	50
Gender-specific religious persecution / Male.....	51
Persecution of other religious minorities.....	52
Future outlook.....	53
External Links - Persecution Dynamics.....	54
Further useful reports.....	56



Men in Pakistan (c) Pexels

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

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Sources and definitions

- This country report is a collation of data and analysis based around Open Doors World Watch List (WWL) and includes statistical information on world religions, Christian denominations and people groups prepared by the World Christian Database (WCD).
- Highlighted links in the text can be found written out in full at the conclusion of each main section under the heading “External links”. In order to reduce the length of these reference sections, a table containing links to regularly used sources can be found at the beginning of the “Keys to Understanding” chapter under the heading “Links for general background information”. Where one of these sources has been quoted in the dossier text, a quote reference is supplied as indicated in the second column of the table.
- The WWL 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 / Pakistan

Brief country details

Pakistan: Population (UN estimate for 2021)	Christians	Chr%
212,107,000	4,080,000	1.9

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

Map of country



Pakistan: World Watch List	Points	WWL Rank
WWL 2022	87	8
WWL 2021	88	5
WWL 2020	88	5
WWL 2019	87	5
WWL 2018	86	5

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

Dominant persecution engines and drivers

Pakistan: Main Persecution engines	Main drivers
Islamic oppression	Government officials, Non-Christian religious leaders, Violent religious groups, Revolutionaries or paramilitary groups, Ideological pressure groups, Political parties, One's own (extended) family, Citizens (people from the broader society), including mobs, Ethnic group leaders
Dictatorial paranoia	Government officials, Political parties, Non-Christian religious leaders, Violent religious groups, Revolutionaries or paramilitary groups
Ethno-religious hostility	Government officials, Non-Christian religious leaders, Violent religious groups, Revolutionaries or paramilitary groups, Ideological pressure groups, Political parties, Citizens (people from the broader society), including mobs, Ethnic group leaders, One's own (extended) family
Organized corruption and crime	Revolutionaries or paramilitary groups, Government officials, Organized crime cartels or networks, Political parties, Citizens (people from the broader society), including mobs, Non-Christian religious leaders, Multilateral organizations (e.g. UN, OIC etc.)

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

Brief description of the persecution situation

In 1947, the year of the country's independence, the situation for the Christian minority became more complicated as Pakistan officially became a Muslim state. Historical churches have relative freedom for worship and other activities, however, they are heavily monitored and have regularly been [targeted](#) for bomb attacks (the last large bomb attack happened on 17 December 2017 in Quetta) (World Watch Monitor, 18 April 2017). Christian churches more active in outreach and youthwork face severer rights violations in society. All Christians suffer from institutionalized discrimination, illustrated by the fact that occupations seen as low, dirty and denigrating are reserved for Christians by the authorities, as can be seen, for example, in job

announcements. On the other hand, there are Christians belonging to the middle class as well, but this does not save them from being marginalized or persecuted. The country's notorious blasphemy laws target religious minorities (including Muslim minorities), but affect the Christian minority in particular given their overall percentage of population, not just the poor. The number of blasphemy cases is increasing as is the number of Christian (and other minority religion) girls being abducted, abused and forcefully converted to Islam. A draft bill on forced conversion was [rejected](#) by parliament, after religious scholars had deemed it as "anti-Islamic" (Dawn, 14 October 2021).

Summary of international obligations and rights violations

Pakistan 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)

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

- Christians are pressured by their community to renounce their faith (ICCPR Art. 18)
- Christian women and girls are abducted, raped and gangraped (ICCPR Art. 7)
- Christian girls are forced to marry their abductor and converted by force (ICCPR Art. 23; CEDAW Art. 16 and ICESCR Art. 10)
- Christian girls are trafficked into slave labor and sex trade (CRC Art. 34 and ICCPR Art. 8)
- Christians are falsely accused, charged of blasphemy and sentenced to death (ICCPR Art. 19)
- Christians are assumed to take jobs that are considered "dishonorable" and "low" because of their faith (ICCPR Art. 26 and ICESCR Art 11)

Specific examples of violations of rights in the reporting period

Christians are considered second-class citizens and are discriminated against in every aspect of life. To give just one example that this can even cost a Christian's life, Arif Masih was [kidnapped and poisoned](#) on 23 May 2021 in Tariqabad, after he had tried to report a harassment case against his sister (UCA News, 25 May 2021). Church leaders can get arrested if they do not abide by the authorities' wishes. This acts as a warning to the Christian minority and intimidates them further. The COVID-19 crisis led to an increase of aid being provided to Christian day laborers under the condition that they cite the Islamic creed and thus convert. The widely reported cases of 13 year-old [Arzoo Masih](#) from October 2020, [Neha Pervaiz](#) in November 2020, [Farah Shaheen](#) in December 2020, [Shakaina Masih](#) in March 2021, [Nayab Gill](#) in June 2021 and [Chashman Masih](#) from July 2021 show that kidnapping and forced conversion is a continuing pattern. The [pattern](#) is also beginning to be recognized by media (Vice News, 30 November 2020).

Specific examples of positive developments

- There have been several reports of Christians accused of blasphemy being freed from [death row](#) (UCA News, 6 October 2020), declared [innocent](#) (UCA News, 4 December 2020) or [freed](#) (Fides, 15 December 2020) after spending [more than a decade](#) in prison (Morning Star News, 18 December 2020). In another high profile case, a [Christian couple](#) accused of blasphemy were acquitted in June 2021 after more than seven years in prison (Morning Star News, 7 June 2021).
- Pakistan announced the establishment of a [center](#) for investigating the forced conversion and underage marriage of minority girls (UCA News, 17 December 2020). The police of Sindh State announced the setting up of special [minority desks](#) (UCA News, 14 January 2021) and Pakistan created an [Office for Interfaith harmony](#) (Aleteia, 17 February 2021). However, it remains to be seen if they will have more effect than earlier initiatives and commissions.
- In elections (which took place within the WWL 2021 reporting period), the Sikh minority gained its [first senator](#), representing a minority seat (UCA News, 8 March 2021).
- In August 2021, after protests, St Joseph's Church in Karachi was [spared demolition](#) in an anti-encroachment drive by authorities displacing hundreds of mainly Catholic Christians (UCA News, 24 August 2021).

External Links - Situation in brief

- Brief description of the persecution situation: targeted - <https://www.worldwatchmonitor.org/2017/04/pakistan-prevents-another-easter-attack-christians/>
- Brief description of the persecution situation: rejected - <https://www.dawn.com/news/1651919>
- 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: kidnapped and poisoned - <https://www.ucanews.com/news/pakistani-christians-protest-over-poisoning-case/92600>
- Specific examples of violations of rights in the reporting period: Arzoo Masih - <https://www.ucanews.com/news/pakistan-court-orders-age-test-for-catholic-child-bride/90175>
- Specific examples of violations of rights in the reporting period: Neha Pervaiz - <https://apnews.com/article/karachi-pakistan-coronavirus-pandemic-christianity-marriage-2d335f305278348540db41b593a9a2a9>
- Specific examples of violations of rights in the reporting period: Farah Shaheen - <https://mailchi.mp/morningstarnews.org/police-in-pakistan-find-christian-girl-chained-in-kidnappers-home>
- Specific examples of violations of rights in the reporting period: , Shakaina Masih - <https://mailchi.mp/morningstarnews.org/another-christian-girl-in-pakistan-kidnapped-forcibly-convertedmarried>
- Specific examples of violations of rights in the reporting period: Nayab Gill - <https://mailchi.mp/morningstarnews.org/another-13-year-old-girl-forced-to-marryconvert-to-islam>

- Specific examples of violations of rights in the reporting period: Chashman Masih - <https://mailchi.mp/morningstarnews.org/missing-catholic-girl-in-pakistan-depicted-as-married-muslim>
- Specific examples of violations of rights in the reporting period: pattern - <https://www.vice.com/en/article/qjpvz5/he-bought-me-how-forced-conversion-turned-this-christian-girls-life-upside-down>
- Specific examples of positive developments: death row - <https://www.ucanews.com/news/pakistan-acquits-christian-on-death-row/89781>
- Specific examples of positive developments: innocent - <https://www.ucanews.com/news/pakistani-clerics-save-alleged-blasphemers/90562>
- Specific examples of positive developments: freed - http://www.fides.org/en/news/69236-ASIA_PAKISTAN_After_12_years_in_prison_A_Christian_sentenced_to_life_imprisonment_for_blasphemy_acquitted_on_appeal
- Specific examples of positive developments: more than a decade - <https://mailchi.mp/morningstarnews.org/christian-in-pakistan-acquitted-of-blasphemy-after-11-years-in-prison>
- Specific examples of positive developments: Christian couple - <https://mailchi.mp/morningstarnews.org/christian-couple-on-death-row-in-pakistan-acquitted>
- Specific examples of positive developments: center - <https://www.ucanews.com/news/pakistan-acts-over-forced-conversion-underage-marriage/90729>
- Specific examples of positive developments: minority desks - <https://www.ucanews.com/news/pakistan-province-sets-up-special-police-desks-for-minorities/90993>
- Specific examples of positive developments: Office for Interfaith harmony - <https://aleteia.org/2021/02/17/the-pakistani-government-takes-step-to-end-anti-christian-discrimination/>
- Specific examples of positive developments: first senator - <https://www.ucanews.com/news/pakistan-gets-its-first-sikh-senator/91681>
- Specific examples of positive developments: spared demolition - <https://www.ucanews.com/news/catholic-church-saved-from-demolition-in-pakistan/93831>

WWL 2022: Keys to understanding / Pakistan

Links for general background information

Name	Quote Reference	Link	Last accessed on
Amnesty International country report	AI 2021	https://www.amnesty.org/en/countries/	
BBC News country profile	BBC country profile	http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/country_profiles/default.stm	
Bertelsmann Transformation Index 2020	BTI 2020	https://bti-project.org/en/home.html?cb=00000	
CIA World Factbook	CIA Factbook	https://www.cia.gov/the-world-factbook/countries/	
Economist Intelligence Unit Democracy Index 2020	EIU 2020	https://pages.eiu.com/rs/753-RIQ-438/images/democracy-index-2020.pdf	
FFP's Fragile States Index 2021	FSI 2021	https://fragilestatesindex.org/country-data/	
Freedom House's 2021 Democracy index	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/countries/freedom-world/scores	
Freedom House's Freedom on the Net 2020 report	Freedom House/Internet Freedom 2020	https://freedomhouse.org/countries/freedom-net/scores	
Garda World country report	Garda World	https://www.garda.com/crisis24/country-reports	
Human Rights Watch World Report 2021	HRW 2021	https://www.hrw.org/world-report/2021	
Internet World Stats 2021	IWS 2021	https://www.internetworldstats.com/stats5.htm	
RSF's 2020 World Press Freedom Index	World Press Freedom 2020	https://rsf.org/en/ranking	
Transparency International's 2020 Corruption Perceptions Index	CPI 2020	https://www.transparency.org/en/cpi/2020/index/afg	
UNDP's Global Human Development Indicators	HDI	http://hdr.undp.org/en/countries	
US State Department's 2020 International Religious Freedom country reports	IRFR 2020	https://www.state.gov/reports/2020-report-on-international-religious-freedom/	
USCIRF 2021 country reports	USCIRF 2021	https://www.uscirf.gov/countries	
World Bank country report	World Bank	https://www.worldbank.org/en/where-we-work	

Recent history

Pakistan became an independent nation separate from India at the end of British colonial rule in 1947. In 1971 East Pakistan became the independent nation Bangladesh. The territory of Kashmir remains disputed with India to this day and in February 2019 both countries were involved in a violent skirmish across the unofficial (but in practice accepted) "Line of Control". The conflict flared up, when Pakistani militants from the group *Jaish-e-Mohammed*, which claimed immediate responsibility, attacked an Indian military convoy on 14 February 2019 and killed 40 people (Pulwama incident). India retaliated, but both sides avoided letting the conflict escalate further. However, in August 2019, the Indian government revoked the special status of Jammu and Kashmir, stripping them off their status as Indian states and making them Union territories under the direct rule of Delhi instead. This step angered and provoked Pakistan, but so far, no action has been taken.

Pakistan has suffered from an unstable government system with three prolonged phases of military rule, with the last phase ending in 2008. The attacks in December 2014 on an army school in Peshawar, leaving 141 dead, led to a hasty amendment to the Constitution, re-introducing the death penalty and setting up special military courts for terrorism-linked cases, fulfilling the army's long-standing demands. Army and government are still executing a plan allegedly targeting Islamic militants.

The army has been accused of being behind the downfall and sentencing of Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif due to corruption back in the 1990s as well as of meddling in the country's most recent elections on 25 July 2018. These saw former cricket star Imran Khan become winner, who faces the enormous challenge to keep Pakistan on track as far as economic development is concerned, especially as the fallout from the COVID-19 crisis is devastating. Due to the increasingly strained relationship with the USA, the latter refused to bail the country out of debt as it has done before. As a result, Khan had to accept an offer from the IMF, which comes with very strong controls and expected hardships, especially for the middle class. Another strain on relations with the USA has been caused by the Taliban government take-over in neighboring Afghanistan, which was [supported](#) by groups based in Pakistan (Gandhara, 21 June 2021).

Prime Minister Khan's second year was overshadowed by the arrival of COVID-19, which not only brought havoc to an already struggling economy, but once again clearly showed that the government is unable and unwilling to keep radical religious groups at bay, even when gatherings are supposed to be limited or stopped for public health reasons. On the political front, Prime Minister Khan's government has faced some challenges, but after some surprising by-election wins, the [opposition coalition crumbled](#) in March 2021 (Gandhara, 24 March 2021).

While Christians were encouraged by the final decision to acquit Asia Bibi and allow her to finally leave the country in May 2019, this ruling has not made their everyday life any easier. Christians face ubiquitous discrimination. They - like other religious minorities (and even Muslim minorities) - continue to be accused, arrested and tried for blasphemy. Young girls from the Christian and other minorities continue to be abducted, forcefully converted and married off. The government has by-and-large managed to keep violent Islamic groups in check as no major attacks against Christians took place in the WWL 2022 reporting period. However, the government continued its appeasement policy towards radical Islamic groups. Since many

Christians rely on earning a daily wage, they are particularly vulnerable to the havoc caused by the measures introduced to combat the COVID-19 pandemic. Christian nurses have also been targeted with blasphemy allegations (see below: *Pressure in Spheres of life, Block 4, 4.8*).

Political and legal landscape

In Pakistan, Islam plays a dominant role in every aspect of life. For example, according to the Constitution, every citizen has the right of free speech, which is, however, subject to the restrictions necessary in the interest of "the glory of Islam". The government has a long history of trying to distinguish between "good" and "bad" jihadists. It fights the latter and courts the former. In several speeches, Prime Minister Khan has acknowledged that Pakistan does have official [links with Islamic militant groups](#) (The Diplomat, 28 September 2019). This is the first time that Pakistan's leaders have officially mentioned such links, which include the training of jihadist groups.

Since the introduction of the blasphemy laws in 1986, Christians have come under increasing pressure and are victims of roughly a quarter of all blasphemy accusations. In the protests against the acquittal of Asia Bibi in November 2018, the radical Islamic groups (headed by the *Tehreek-e-Labaik Pakistan* party -TLP) made a mistake (although it turned out not to be a fatal mistake, since such groups have the ability to hibernate, re-structure and re-emerge after a while): They would have been forgiven for just calling for the downfall of the government and the killing of the judges. However, they also called for an uprising against the army and its chief as well. The army is regarded as one of the main pillars of power in Pakistan and is arguably the strongest one.

The government put two leaders of the TLP in protective custody and with them some 5,000 of their supporters, who had obstructed infrastructure and damaged thousands of items of private property. Such a ["crackdown"](#) was new and sent a clear warning to other Islamist groups as well (The Diplomat, 3 December 2018). In May 2019, Khadim Hussein Rizvi, the leader of the TLP and his deputy were [released from protective custody](#) (Reuters, 15 May 2019). He [died](#) on 19 November 2020, but his radical movement continued to thrive in the WWL 2022 reporting period (The Diplomat, 30 November 2020).

Prime Minister Khan has a history of appeasing Islamic radical groups and parties, especially those from the TLP. Immediately after he took over government, he gave in to some of their demands, but the WWL 2022 reporting period saw even more of it. The background was when the Charlie Hebdo cartoons were republished in France in September 2020. There were violent demonstrations in Pakistan over this and the TLP only called off protests after the government "promised to [expel](#) the French ambassador" (Reuters, 17 November 2020). It turned out that the government had not promised the actual expulsion, but rather a debate in parliament about the matter. After increasing pressure from radical Islamic groups and parties, this debate took place in April 2021 and because of the violent atmosphere, France urged its citizens [to leave Pakistan](#) (BBC News, 15 April 2021). At the same time, the government [banned the TLP](#) as a "terrorist group" (Dawn, 15 April 2021). In a show of its strength, the TLP called for another march towards the capital and the government gave in to its demands once again and [freed more than 800](#) TLP members in October 2021 (Al-Jazeera, 25 October 2021). As long as the army (and with it, the government) tries to use certain radical Islamic groups for their own purposes

and labels some as "good", such groups will continue to gain influence and rule more than just the streets.

The army has been challenged on a very different front as well. Supreme Court judge, Justice Qazi Faez Isa, presented his findings of an investigation concerning an earlier blockade by the TLP in 2017 and [openly accused](#) not just the army of supporting and even orchestrating the event, but also Pakistan's untouchable Inter-Services Intelligence (The Diplomat, 4 June 2019). He called upon the military chiefs and minister of defense to take action against all servicemen involved in political activities. Such a direct challenge was unheard of and, not surprisingly, the findings were sent back for review. However, according to the law, this review will be heard by the same judges. The fact that an accusation of corruption has been filed against Justice Isa in the meantime, is seen by many in Pakistan as an attempt to get rid of him. The case was pending for two years, but in April 2021, he was [cleared](#) of all wrong-doing and the case rested (Dawn, 29 April 2021).

Meanwhile, Prime Minister Khan faces enormous challenges in keeping the economy afloat, even more so with the fall-out from the COVID-19 crisis. Khan's party, *Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf* (Pakistan Movement for Justice, PTI), holds 46% of seats in parliament, and partners in his coalition have either stopped working with him or have publicly announced their dissatisfaction with him. The ruling majority in parliament is thin and the situation looks unpredictable. The fact that, during the October 2020 protests, the opposition dared to directly name the army leadership as being responsible for the country's situation (instead of blaming the government) is an [historic first](#) and may be an indication for a changing atmosphere in the country (Washington Post, 22 October 2020). It has added to the influence of the persecution engine *Dictatorial paranoia*, as driven both by the army and government. However, as already stated above in "Recent Developments", the opposition coalition fell apart before it could make any impact, despite having ousted a close ally of PM Khan, Finance Minister Abdul Hafiz Sheikh. He suffered a surprising defeat in the Senate's elections in March 2021, potentially jeopardizing the [stability](#) of the government (Gandhara, 3 March 2021). A few days later, the government won a vote of confidence, so the government looks stable, although challenges abound.

All the aforementioned illustrates that Pakistan's politics are volatile and involve many players and spoilers. Such volatility is bad for minorities, especially religious minorities. Christians continue to be pushed to the margins of society; they still lack proper representation in politics and although there have been no major attacks against churches in the WWL 2022 reporting period, there are almost constant attacks against individuals, making it hard for Christians to feel safe and worship freely.

In the Global Gender Gap Report 2020, Pakistan ranked 153rd out of 156 surveyed countries ([World Economic Forum, 2021](#)). Whilst it ratified the CEDAW convention in 1996, a [2020 CEDAW periodic report](#) (p.7) highlighted concerns about ongoing harmful practices, such as child marriage, forced marriage and so-called 'honor' crimes. Some Pakistani states continue to permit child marriage; in 2020, the Sindh High Court in Karachi ruled that Pakistani men may marry underage girls as long as they have had their first period ([Forbes, 1 March 2020](#)). Whilst rates are slowly declining, an estimated 18% of girls are married by the age of 18 ([Girls Not Brides](#)).

Although there is a law against domestic violence, implementation of the legislation is weak and marital rape is not criminalized. Similarly, whilst laws against honor killings were tightened in 2016 following the murder of Qandeel Baloch ([The Guardian, 17 May 2019](#)), an estimated 1,000 honor killings take place each year ([Human Rights Watch, Pakistan: Events of 2018](#)). Divorce laws prevent women and girls from escaping an abusive situation. Under Sharia law, a man has the right to divorce his wife by *talaq*, whereas a woman may file for divorce through the courts. Following a divorce, women are usually granted custody of the children until they reach the age of 7, whilst guardianship remains with the father, and with it decision-making power over the child ([OECD, p.3](#)). If the case is made that the child should be raised a Muslim however, it is likely that custody of the children will be given to the Muslim parent regardless of the child's age.

Religious landscape

Pakistan: Religious context	Number of adherents	%
Christians	4,080,000	1.9
Muslim	204,554,000	96.4
Hindu	2,759,000	1.3
Buddhist	133,000	0.1
Ethno-religionist	228,000	0.1
Jewish	900	0.0
Bahai	106,000	0.0
Atheist	10,100	0.0
Agnostic	176,000	0.1
Other	59,200	0.0
<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)

While Muslims make up more than 96% of the total population, by far the majority of them follow the Sunni tradition; Shiites make up less than 10% and the Ahmadi around 0.2%. (The exact percentages between Sunni and Shia are hotly debated).

A new nationwide census was conducted in 2017, the first for 19 years. It included religious affiliation, and in June 2021, the government finally released the [religious statistics](#) (Pakistan Daily Times, 7 June 2021). The census shows a drop in the population's percentage of Christians compared to 1998. According to the 2017 census, 1.27% of all Pakistani citizens are Christian, down from 1.59% in the 1998 census. (In comparison, the census shows that the Hindu minority grew in the same time from 1.6% to 1.73%.) These results come as a disappointment to the Christian minority and have caused several questions to be raised. The most obvious question is: Why did it take the Bureau of Statistics more than three years to publish results for a census that was held in 2017? It has also been questioned how well the census enumerators were

trained in explaining the census and the religious affiliation section to the respondents. It should be noted that many Christians are poor and illiterate and many may well have been completely left out of the census. Many of these Christians do not see a reason for obtaining a National Identity Card or for registering their children. Finally, it is also possible that the percentage has been kept low for political reasons as has been seen happening by Christians in other Asian countries like Myanmar. On the other hand, there is a wave of emigration by better educated Christians, thus reducing the number of Christians in Pakistan. The [World Christian Database](#) (WCD), which uses government censuses as one source among others, gives the percentage of Christians in Pakistan as 1.9% for 2021 (WCD: Brill, accessed April 2021).

The question of religion is a highly sensitive one and is very political. One decision connected to the census concerns whether (and how far) political representation of religious minorities will be increased at the national and state level; the most recent elections in July 2018 were still conducted according to the old system with poor representation. Radical Islamic groups will oppose every change of the status quo, just as they have already violently opposed all efforts to open discussions about reviewing the country's notorious blasphemy laws.

Economic landscape

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

- **Gross National Income (2017 PPP \$):** 5.005
- **Rate of multidimensional poverty:** The rate of people living in multidimensional poverty is 38.3%, 21.5% of the population lives in severe multidimensional poverty, a further 12.9% are vulnerable to it, 24.3% of the population lives below the national poverty line (2018).
- **Remittances:** Remittances from citizens working abroad make up 8.02% of the national GDP.

According to World Bank:

- **Classification:** Pakistan is classified as a lower middle income country.
- **GDP:** Pakistan's GDP in 2020 shrank by a further 0.38%
- **Poverty gap at 5.50\$ a day (2011 PPP):** 29.4% (2018). Even before the COVID-19 outbreak, Pakistan was already struggling to keep its economy afloat, not least because the long-term political friendship with the USA had cooled off. As this process was already tangible for some time, Pakistan looked for new sources of revenue and turned like many other countries eastwards. The country had seemingly begun to rely increasingly on China and the latter's willingness to invest in Pakistan in its "New Silk Road" framework ("One Belt, One Road"). China is investing 57 billion USD in the so called "China-Pakistan Economic Corridor" (CPEC) and the port city of Gwadar is one of the hubs the Chinese are building; in 2017 it was leased from the Pakistan government for 40 years. However, Pakistan's [cancellation](#) of a planned oil refinery in Gwadar, an investment of an estimated 10 billion USD and sometimes called the "crown jewel", may indicate second thoughts and a re-orientation of Pakistan politics, not just in the economy (Eurasia Review, 20 June 2021). Additionally, the [killing of two Chinese Christians](#) in Pakistan in May 2017 (close to the CPEC construction site) illustrates how challenging the situation is, as well as highlighting some of the opportunities and risks Christians face (China Aid, 29 June 2017). The same is true for

the Taliban suicide-bombing of the [Serena Hotel](#) in Quetta in April 2021, which was allegedly targeting the Chinese ambassador (BBC News, 22 April 2021). After another attack killing nine Chinese nationals in July 2021, China pushed Pakistan and the Taliban-led Afghanistan for a better [counter-terrorism coordination](#) (Jamestown Foundation, 7 September 2021).

Although these hiccups in the relationship with China will most likely just mean a re-balancing of economic dependency, not a complete cutting of ties with China or the USA, it is clear that Pakistan cannot go it alone economically. The country had sought economic assistance (i.e. credit) from various countries after the USA refused to step in and once again support its long-term ally. In the end, the government turned back to the IMF, seeking a bail-out of 6.6 billion USD on harsh terms of domestic reform. This has led observers to question whether Pakistan will ever [be able to end the cycle](#) of repeated bail-outs (media reported widely that this is the [13th bail-out](#) from the IMF) and accept the demands for genuine reform (Tribune, 3 June 2019 and Reuters, 13 May 2019). COVID-19 derailed almost all economic activities, whichever road to recovery Pakistan may have hoped to be on. The most recent economic statistics are starting to look [more positive](#) again, although the country still plans with a deficit of 6.3% for the next fiscal year 2021-22 and benefits from the international debt service suspension until December 2021 (Reuters, 11 June 2021). Even if these figures can be trusted, they do not mean that the economic situation for the [average Pakistani](#) will improve - and that is even less likely for the country's minorities (Gandhara, 25 May 2021).

In the WWL 2021 Full Country Dossier, the statement had been made: "...in the long-term, Pakistan will not be able to afford angering its largest sponsors. It is unlikely that this episode is more than a bump in the road and that Saudi money and ideology will continue to enter the country, much to the disadvantage of its minorities, including Christians." This turned out to be true faster than might be expected. Prime Minister Khan [travelled to Saudi Arabia](#) in May 2021 to repair relations (Reuters, 7 May 2021). While any concrete outcome remains to materialize, Pakistan does not just depend on economic assistance from Jeddah, but also from the equivalent of more than six billion USD in the form of remittances annually sent home from migrant workers. In a rare connection of human rights and economy, the European Parliament [publicly questioned](#) the justification for Pakistan's preferential status with the bloc (so-called "GSP plus"), given its dismal treatment of blasphemy accusations, explicitly naming the Christian couple which was then released in June 2021 (AP News, 1 May 2021). Although Pakistani officials were quick to stress that no international pressure had influenced this decision, this is hardly credible.

Pakistan has a strong population growth, most recently reflected by the nation's census in 2017, which put the annual growth at 2.4% (the CIA World Factbook's estimate is 2.07% for 2020). This is especially true for the urban areas, illustrated by Lahore, the country's second biggest city, which grew in population by 53% within 20 years. If these rates of growth continue, the country's population could double again over the next decades. This comes with big challenges as especially the youth lack any real economic perspectives. While the youth unemployment rate, as given by the UNDP, is not particularly high at 4.7%, the percentage of youth aged 15-24 neither being in school or in employment stands at 31%. This especially affects ethnic and religious minorities. Child labor is rampant, bonded labor is particularly common in the province of Sindh, although numbers are hard to establish. The NGO, Borgen Project, gives an estimated

total number of [12.5 million](#), but this cannot be verified (Borgen Project, 15 May 2017). More recent in-country estimations talk about [four million](#) bonded laborers (Dawn, 8 February 2021), but to this number children would have to be added. The whole population suffers greatly from these poor conditions, but minority groups (such as Christians) even more so. Many of them are day-laborers (for example in brick kilns) with treatment from employers often being arbitrary and violent. Women and children are especially vulnerable groups.

Pakistan's response to the COVID-19 pandemic was [slow and patchy](#) and when the government finally decided to institute lockdowns, this was immediately met by strong resistance from radical religious groups who strictly opposed all restrictions on religious gatherings (Hudson Institute, May 2020). It should be noted that gatherings (carried out by all religious groups) were among the main factors for spreading infections. An example were *Tablighi Jamaat's* conferences and mass gatherings in Pakistan, India, Malaysia and Indonesia. The economic consequences of the handling of the pandemic are not to be underestimated, but the ideological consequences are likewise dangerous. In June 2021, Pakistan suffered a [third wave](#) of COVID-19 infections in mid-2021 and quickly approached the threshold of one million citizens testing positive (The Diplomat, 21 June 2021). However, as of January 2022, there have been only 28,962 COVID-related deaths in total recorded ([Worldometer](#), accessed 8 January 2022).

A rather surprising consequence and unexpected boost for the economy came from the doubling of [remittances](#) (Reuters, 17 August 2020). While millions of migrant workers from around the world lost their jobs, were sent home or isolated under 'lockdown' measures (often in dire circumstances), many Pakistani migrant workers apparently managed to stay abroad, one important place being Saudi Arabia. Because they could not spend their money earned for the *haj* or *umrah*, they sent more home to their families than expected, giving the economy a much needed shot in the arm. This shows that the pandemic can have positive consequences, too. However, few Christian families benefit from such remittances.

Women are typically more economically vulnerable than men in Pakistan. Due to low [education rates](#) for girls (exacerbated by girls entering early marriages, impoverished communities and pressure from the Taliban against girls receiving education beyond a certain level) many women do not work (Borgen Project, 6 April 2019). According to the [Women, Peace and Security Index 2019/20](#), 75% of Pakistani men think it is unacceptable for women to have a paid job (Georgetown Institute for Women, Peace and Security, p.8). Making it additionally challenging for women to gain economic independence, various inheritance laws discriminate against women. Women and girls are further hindered by [various inheritance laws](#) that discriminate against women ([OECD, 2019](#)). Considering these economic vulnerabilities, Christian women depend heavily on their husbands and families. Should this support be lost, they will likely fall into destitution, and converts may be forcibly married to a Muslim man.

Christians have been particularly affected by the COVID-19 crisis since the marginalization they face from society and government extends to health and emergency relief as well. Apart from being marginalized in economic life, they are also [discriminated](#) against when it comes to receiving medical treatment or emergency relief, as the Catholic "National Commission for Justice and Peace" reported in June 2020.

Social and cultural landscape

According to the [UNDP's full 2020 report](#) (page 343) and CIA Factbook:

- **Main ethnic groups:** Punjabi (44.7%), Pashtun (15.4%), Sindhi (14.1%), Saraiki (8.4%), Muhajirs (7.6%), Balochi (3.6%), other (6.3%)
- **Main languages:** Punjabi 48%, Sindhi 12%, Saraiki (a Punjabi variant) 10%, Pashto (alternate name, Pashtu) 8%, Urdu (official) 8%, Balochi 3%, Hindko 2%, Brahui 1%, English (as the second official language)
- **Urbanization:** 36.9%, rate of urbanization 2.53%
- **Literacy rate:** 59.1% (age 15 and above)
- **Mean years of schooling:** 5.2 (3.8 for girls and 6.3 for boys).
- **Employment:** 55.5% of all working people are in vulnerable employment
- **Health and education indicators:** Per 10,000 people, Pakistan has 9.8 physicians and 6 hospital beds. The pupil teacher ratio in elementary school is 44:1.

According to the World Bank:

- **Population/age:** 35.1% of the population are below 14 years of age, 4.3% are above 65 (2019).
- **Education:** The completion rate for primary education is 73.3% (2019), as of 2018, an estimated 6 million children dropped out of school.
- **Unemployment:** 4.65%, the rate of vulnerable employment is 54.9% (modeled ILO estimate).
- **IDPs/Refugees:** In 2015, an estimated 4 million migrants were living in Pakistan, the [IOM](#) reports.

According to the UN's HDI statistics:

- **HDI score:** With a score of 0.557, Pakistan ranks 154 of 189 listed countries in the UNDP's HDI (medium human development). While the score continues to improve, progress has slowed down since 2015 and the country was overtaken by the development in other countries.
- **Life expectancy:** 67.3 years
- **Median age:** 22.8
- **Gini coefficient:** 33.5
- **Gender inequality:** A score of 0.538 gives Pakistan the rank 135 of in the Gender Inequality Index
- **Unemployment:** The unemployment rate is 4.5% and 55.5% of the population are in vulnerable employment. The rate of unemployed youth is 8.9%, the rate of youth neither in school nor employment is 31.3% (between 15 and 24 years of age). The rate of children between 5 and 17 working is 12.8%.

Although the issue of ethnicity is not as dominant in Pakistan as in many other countries in the region, it should not be ignored. This becomes immediately clear when Pakistan is seen together with Afghanistan: The Pashtun minority in particular covers large areas on both sides of the border. The decision by Pakistani authorities to [fence off](#) the more than 2,500 kilometer long

border with Afghanistan has strongly affected Pashtuns on both sides of the border, as family ties and trading patterns from both sides have been cut off (Gandhara, 17 May 2021). The Pashtuns are one of the largest minorities worldwide without a nation state of their own. (It is frequently stated that the Kurdish people - numbering under 40 million - are the largest people without a nation. Pashtuns however number around 45 million.) Their strong reaction to the Indian decision to strip the Indian state Jammu and Kashmir of its statehood indicates that ethnic and religious motives are always part of such political decisions.

According to a report by [UNICEF](#), Pakistan still has the second-highest out-of-school rate in the world, with 22.8 million aged 5-16 not attending school, representing a staggering 44% of all children in this age group (UNICEF, undated, accessed 6 June 2021). At primary level, five million children are out of school, 60% of whom are girls. Disparities are based on gender, socio-economic status and geography, as can be seen for example in Balochistan, where 78% of all girls do not attend school.

The nation's low investment in education over recent decades has led to a growth in the number of Islamic madrassas. An estimated 11,000 of these (out of a total of roughly 35,000) follow the strict teachings of Deobandi Islam. Exact student numbers are unknown. While some madrassas may make pupils literate and teach them mathematics, many others simply offer Quran reading, Islamic Studies and nothing else. As these madrassas are not registered and supervised, the authorities have no real idea what is going on in them. Various governments have tried to at least register them in the past but encountered fierce opposition. While the current government had planned to [register](#) madrassas soon after it took over (Reuters, 19 July 2019), there are no reports on the success of these efforts. It rather seems that the Khan government is [Islamizing state schools](#) by introducing changes in the curriculum according to which all students have to read the entire Quran with translation, learn Islamic prayers and hadith. It further stipulates that every school has to employ a Hafiz (a person who has memorized the Quran) and a Qari (a Quran reciter) to teach these subjects (DW, 24 May 2021). This is also a way to open a career path for graduates from madrassas and pour their ideology into mainstream schooling. At the same time, authorities struggle to take some madrassa leaders to account for [sexual abuse cases](#) which have become very public for some years now (The Diplomat, 7 July 2021).

As experienced across the world, the measures introduced to combat the COVID-19 pandemic in Pakistan most strongly affected the poor and most vulnerable parts of society. For day laborers, the main risk has not been the virus, but the fact that they could not earn money and feed their families. Many Christians belong to the poorer levels of society and are frequently excluded from aid programs or benevolence funds which religious organizations (Islamic) or the state may provide. Life will continue to be a struggle for them, even to the point of [starvation](#), especially when they do not have any family to support them (BosNewsLife, 9 May 2021).

Pakistan is a deeply patriarchal society and heavily influenced by the Islamic religious landscape. Within marriages, women reportedly experience high rates of domestic violence (exacerbated by the economic strain caused by the COVID-19 crisis) ([DW, 7 July 2020](#)). Few women choose to file for divorce due to the high levels of social [stigma](#) attached ([OECD, 2019, p.4](#)).

Technological landscape

According to Internet World Stats (IWS 2021):

- **Internet usage:** 33.9% penetration – survey date: December 2020
- **Facebook usage:** 20.1% penetration – survey date: December 2020
According to [Napoleon Cat \(2019\)](#), 78.8% of Facebook users are male and just 21.2% are female. 19% of women are Internet users, compared to 37% of men. This reflects women's restricted access to both information and community networks.

According to the World Bank (2019):

- **Mobile phone subscriptions:** 76.4 per 100 people
According to a [2020 report](#), 50% of Pakistani women are mobile phone owners compared to 81% of men (GSMA, 2020, "The Mobile Gender Gap Report 2020" p.11).

According to Freedom House/Internet Freedom 2021:

- Pakistan is marked as "Not free".
- "Internet penetration registered only marginal increases during the reporting period. At the end of 2019, there were 78 million broadband connections in Pakistan, an increase of 9 million since the last report and one comparable to the rate the previous year. While access to mobile internet is growing, out of 165 million cellular subscribers, only 76 million—less than half—have third- or fourth-generation (3G or 4G) technology for mobile networks."
- "In 2020, the social media management platform Hootsuite report put internet penetration at 35 percent, amounting to 76.38 million users."
- "The digital divide between men and women in Pakistan is among the highest in the world as a result of religious, social, and cultural restrictions on women owning devices."

The World Internet Stats' estimate of 33.9% means that around 140 million people do not have Internet access. Also, Pakistan has one of the highest [gender gaps](#) in terms of mobile phone usage in the world (Tribune, 23 November 2016). In July 2020, the Supreme Court issued regulations for [social media](#) and video portals to prevent them from slandering the courts, the army and the government, and instigated a nationwide advertising campaign requiring portals to alert the Telecommunications authority of illegal content (UCA News, 26 July 2020). Pakistan announced the implementation of a very [strict Internet law](#), according to which the ruling authority PTA would have the power to shutdown an entire online system, leading observers to call the plan "draconian" (Reuters, 19 November 2020). Google, Facebook and Twitter [threatened to leave](#) Pakistan if this law is strictly implemented (Associated Press, 20 November 2020).

In a strong reminder that pressure and censorship are daily challenges in the offline world as well, one of the most prominent TV presenters, Hamid Mir, was [banned from TV](#) after he gave a speech criticizing the army (Gandhara, 31 May 2021). After he and his family received death threats he apologized, but he was not allowed to return on screen at the time of writing (November 2021).

Security situation

Security in Pakistan has always been volatile and this is especially true for the WWL 2022 reporting period. As already mentioned above, although the army and the government have declared war against some Islamic radicals, they continue to follow a policy of trying to distinguish between 'good' and 'bad' jihadists. While it fights the latter, it works with the former (eg. *Lashkar-e-Toiba*, now *Jamaat-ud-Dawah*, and the Haqqani network, which is prominently represented with several members in the new Afghan Taliban government) and uses them as a proxy to reach its goals in neighboring countries such as Afghanistan and India. The episode of banning the *Tehreek-e-Labaik Pakistan* party (TLP,) arresting its leader and then having to give in to street pressure shows how challenging such a policy is. After five days of protests, the government released him and agreed to discuss his demands about expelling the French ambassador in parliament, leading observers to speak of an [appeasement policy](#) (UCA News, 20 April 2021). Another episode in October 2021 has been mentioned above (see: *Political landscape*).

Despite all claims to the contrary, the Taliban continue to receive [decisive support](#) from Pakistani volunteers with officials doing very little to restrict this (Gandhara, 21 June 2021). It remains to be seen how strong Pakistan's influence on the Afghan government really is and if the Afghan Taliban really will be willing and able to help in stopping the *Tehreek-i-Taliban Pakistan* (TTP). One way of influencing Afghanistan is to send back hundreds of thousands of Afghan refugees, who have lived in Pakistan for more than two decades, knowingly causing immense social and economic challenges for an already struggling country. On the other hand, tens and maybe hundreds of thousands are currently trying to leave Afghanistan and are looking for neighboring Pakistan as a possibility for doing so.

Afghanistan holds other major challenges for Pakistan as well: While Pakistan has [killed several leaders](#) of the TTP in the WWL 2022 reporting period, e.g. in February 2021 (Jamestown Foundation, 26 March 2021), other groups can continue undisturbed. The fact that the TTP was able to stage a [major attack](#) against a heavily secured luxury hotel in Quetta in April 2021 shows that the TTP is far from conquered (Long War Journal, 22 April 2021), regardless of whether the Chinese ambassador was the actual target or not. The same is true for an attack killing nine Chinese nationals in July 2021, which first had been declared a [bus accident](#) (Dawn, 15 July 2021), but then accepted as a terror attack committed by the TTP and the "East Turkestan Islamic Movement" (ETIM), although observers seriously doubt that the latter is able to stage such large-scale attacks abroad. If recent negotiations with the TTP are able to bring any change is highly doubtful; as one observer counted, these talks are the [tenth attempt in a long series](#) of failures (James town Foundation, 21 October 2021).

Given that several radical Islamic groups fielded candidates for the 2021 elections and that this led observers to claim that mainstream politics have radicalized as a result, it seems fair to say that the army is interested in extending its policy of distinguishing 'good' and 'bad' jihadists into national politics as well (Kaura/Pande, Pakistan's [Mainstreaming Jihadis](#), Central European Journal of International and Security Studies, 20 December 2020). The Islamic State group (IS), although weakened, is still alive and may refresh its forces with disgruntled members of the Taliban or benefit from the dire security situation in neighboring Afghanistan. IS made its pres-

ence felt by claiming the [killing of the Taliban shadow governor](#) of Nangarhar Province (Afghanistan), who resided in Peshawar (Jamestown Foundation, 3 May 2021). The increasing presence of militant groups specifically naming Christians as their targets has worsened the situation for Christians in the region, examples are internationally known groups like al-Qaeda and the Islamic State Khorasan Province (ISKP), but also Pakistan's own groups like *Lashkar-e-Taiba*, *Jaish-e-Mohammed* and others.

The simmering conflict between Pakistan and India over Punjab came briefly to the boil in February 2019, as already mentioned above under *Recent History*. India's decision to put Jammu and Kashmir under direct rule of Delhi in August 2019 caused a lot of [\(diplomatic\) protest](#), but so far no military or violent reaction (The Diplomat, 9 July 2020). Also, jurisdiction over the federally administered tribal areas (FATA) is still limited. This volatile region bordering Afghanistan is still ruled according to a colonial law called "Frontiers Crime Regulation" dating back to 1901, which effectively bans intervention from police and courts and adds to the local peoples' alienation. In this region, Pakistan's Constitution seems to be effectively abrogated. The decision to merge the federally administered tribal areas (FATA) with neighboring Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Province in 2018 was taken due to public pressure and comes [fraught with challenges](#) (ICG, 20 August 2018). Another hotspot is [Balochistan](#) where separatist groups carry out attacks, aimed not least at the Chinese presence in the China Pakistan Economic Corridor, all the way down to Gwadar. One high-profile attack was aimed at the Pakistan Stock Exchange in Karachi on 29 June 2020 (Jamestown, 30 July 2020), another was the attack on Serena hotel, mentioned above.

Christians in Pakistan suffer from the volatile security situation and the high level of violence as does society in general. However, as a religious minority, they do not have the necessary channels for seeking protection: They have no connections to politicians, strongmen or other influential people with the power to give protection and relief. Additionally, Christians and other religious minorities not only face social hostility, but also a security apparatus, especially the police force, which is more interested in appeasing local strongmen and keeping things calm than in implementing the law and protecting minorities. Courts, however, - at least the higher ones - have a slightly better track record in this respect. However, when they are finally in a position to judge a case, Christians have often languished in prison for years before any ruling is made and it is then often too late to bring change to a situation.

Against this backdrop of violence towards Christians, daily life is a challenge for both men and women. If identified, a male Christian convert from Islam might be accused of blasphemy, beaten or killed. For women and girls on the other hand, the greatest threat is forced marriage. Girls from religious minorities are commonly targeted for abduction, forced conversion and forced marriage ([CEDAW, 2020, p.10](#)). As noted in a report by [CREID \(2020, p.55\)](#) ideologically targeted sexual abuse is directed specifically at religious minorities, both for sexual predation but also as a 'conquest' to win the girl over to the majority religion. There have been several reports of cases where the court ruled that the victim should live with her abductor, on the basis that she had 'willingly' converted to Islam ([The Tablet, Nov 2020](#); [CLAAS, June 2021](#)). These cases exemplify the impunity granted perpetrators and why many families consider it pointless to take legal action. Pakistan's Commission on Implementation of Minority Rights has set out a plan to deal with the concerning rate of forced marriages and conversions ([David Alton, March 2021](#)).

Linked to this issue, the trafficking of Christian girls (usually into China) also remains an ongoing concern ([Christianity Today, 4 December, 2019](#)).

Trends analysis

1) The government is trying to co-opt radical Islamic groups

While the PTI government actively opposes some radical and violent groups, there are countless others and even a ban will only make them re-organize, re-brand and re-emerge. The COVID-19 crisis and the fury with France over the Charlie Hebdo caricatures have once again made it clear that the issuing of a ban was a highly exceptional action and that the default option for dealing with radical religious groups (who are able to mobilize millions for street demonstrations) is appeasement and even accommodation, as can be seen by the introduction of the new "Singular National Curriculum". Observers in and outside the country continue to warn that a greater reliance on Islamist groups in Pakistan will lead to more violence and [militancy](#) (AP, 27 February 2021). It is far from clear whether the army or the country's infamous Inter-Services Intelligence Agency will be able to control what one observer has called the "[Taliban monster](#)" (Project Syndicate, 8 June 2021). The fact that the infamous "Red Mosque" in Islamabad is flying a [Taliban flag](#) since the take-over of power in Kabul (Pakistan Daily, 20 August 2021), may be a harbinger of things to come. This is becoming increasingly relevant since the Taliban will gain new strength in Pakistan from its expansion in neighboring Afghanistan.

If the Taliban in Afghanistan tacitly support (or at least do not hinder) TTP growth, Pakistan's long-standing policy of trying to distinguish between 'good' and 'bad' Taliban groups may have run its course. With Prime Minister Khan also continuing to receive radical Islamic clerics in his private residence, [religious minorities](#) see a continual gap between rhetoric and reality (AP, 16 July 2020). Another statement by him concerning domestic violence and forced conversions points to the direction his government and the country are headed. In a [discussion with Islamic scholars](#), he promised that under his government no laws "in direct conflict with the teachings of Islam" would be enacted (The News PK, 29 September 2021). Under Khan, the advice of Islamic scholars has been sought for virtually all government policy-making. Although in Pakistan, several groups may be [cheering](#) the Taliban take-over (The Diplomat, 30 September 2021), in due course this may turn out to be a "[pyrrhic win](#)", as radical Islamic forces in the country will be inspired, energized and rejuvenated (Foreign Affairs, 22 July 2021).

After the end of the WWL 2022 reporting period, the government was forced to [strike a deal](#) with the TLP leaders (Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty – RFE/RL, 31 October 2021) and held talks behind closed doors with the radical Islamic movement [Tehrik-e-Pakistan](#) (TTP) (Gandhara, 3 November 2021). It is significant that these talks took place in Afghanistan with the support of the new Afghan government. Earlier peace talks failed to stop attacks and violence occurring in Pakistan.

2) Political alliances are not clear-cut

While the political opposition is in shambles and people in Pakistan wonder what political parties are still needed for, the government faces internal challenges, not least from a difficult economic and social environment, made even worse by the COVID-19 crisis. However, another big challenge will be to decide to which big power Pakistan will seek most alignment. In the WWL

2022 reporting period, signals have been mixed in this respect. While the government went to great lengths to get back into Saudi Arabia's good books, it has been more ambiguous towards China and the USA. As already stated above in *Political landscape*, Pakistan is one of the main targets for Chinese foreign investment, but the cancellation of a planned oil refinery in Gwadar port may indicate a more cautious approach towards its big lender. One particular problem would possibly be a request to have Chinese investments and citizens protected by Chinese forces. This is the background of Pakistan's pledge of an [all-out effort](#) to protect Chinese citizens, a promise already given in 2018 (MSN News, 18 September 2021). On the other hand, Prime Minister Khan strictly denies any comment on the situation of the Muslim Uighur minority in China. As for the USA, he made it very clear that US forces would "[absolutely not](#)" receive any rights to set up a military base for monitoring the security situation in Afghanistan and to start operations (Dawn, 19 June 2021). At the same time, it is not so clear if this is his decision to make. One thing, however, is abundantly clear: Such a request is highly unpopular in Pakistan, no matter how urgently the USA are in need of such a base and what they would be willing to grant. As the Christian minority is often connected with the West in general and the USA in particular, it is possible that they will face more hostility and even attacks due to this.

3) The Christian minority will be even more marginalized

The protection and participation of the Christian minority in society has been a big question for years. There have been some efforts, like the installation of a Senate's Parliamentary Committee to Protect Minorities from Forced Conversions (set up in November 2019), but so far, there has been no decisive improvement. The fact that the chairman of the Senate-appointed fact-finding team on forced conversions claimed in October 2020 that he could find no evidence for forced conversions on the part of Hindu and Christian girls, is a reflection of the prevailing mindset, not just in politics, but also in wider society too (UCA News, 23 October 2020). This mindset could be seen again when a Senate panel rejected a [minority protection bill](#), claiming that minorities enjoy unprecedented religious freedom already (UCA News, 3 February 2021). The latest evidence of this attitude was the draft bill on forced conversion being [rejected](#) by parliament, after religious scholars deemed it "anti-Islamic" (Dawn, 14 October 2021).

The sheer number of cases approved by lower courts in which Christian girls have been abducted and forcefully married and converted, shows that the marginalizing of minorities, especially Christians, continues unabated. According to a [study](#), from January - October 2021, there were 36 cases of abduction and forced conversion cases of non-Muslims reported, 21 of Christians and 15 of Hindus (UCA News, 18 October 2021). This represents a 177% increase compared to 2020 and does not take into account the high dark figure. The results of the latest census, no matter whether they reflect the situation on the ground or not, will most likely speed up this process and allow the voice of the Christian minority to be heard even less.

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WWL 2022: Church information / Pakistan

Christian origins

According to the Church historian, Eusebius, writing in the 4th century AD, the apostles Thomas and Bartholomew were assigned to Parthia (modern Iran) and India. By the time of the establishment of the Second Persian Empire (AD 226), there were bishops of the Church of the East in northwest India, Afghanistan and Baluchistan (which includes parts of Iran, Afghanistan, and Pakistan), with laymen and clergy alike engaging in missionary activity. Roman Catholic missionary work took off on the Indian continent with the arrival of the Portuguese in the 16th century and became [established in Lahore](#) from about 1579 onwards (Catholic Online, accessed 26 November 2020). In more modern times, Christianity became firmly established through Protestant missionary work in the late 18th and 19th centuries and has continued to grow ever since. However, due to the strongly increasing pressure in recent years, many Pakistani Christians have emigrated to countries like Sri Lanka or Thailand.

Church spectrum today

Pakistan: Church networks	Christians	%
Orthodox	0	0.0
Catholic	1,117,000	27.4
Protestant	2,528,000	62.0
Independent	572,000	14.0
Unaffiliated	20,800	0.5
Doubly-affiliated Christians	-158,000	-3.9
Total	4,079,800	100.0
<i>(Any deviation from the total number of Christians stated above is due to the rounding of decimals)</i>		

Evangelical movement	1,020,000	25.0
Renewalist movement	911,000	22.3

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.

Whereas the Catholic Church in Pakistan is homogenous, the Protestant Church is divided into many different denominations, the oldest of which are the Church of Pakistan (part of the Anglican Communion), the World Communion of Reformed Churches, the World Methodist Council and the Presbyterian Church. There are many smaller Protestant denominations present, among them Baptist, Brethren and a variety of Pentecostal churches.

External Links - Church information

- Christian origins: established in Lahore - <https://www.catholic.org/encyclopedia/view.php?id=6781>

WWL 2022: Persecution Dynamics / Pakistan

Reporting period

1 October 2020 - 30 September 2021

Position on the World Watch List

Pakistan: World Watch List	Points	WWL Rank
WWL 2022	87	8
WWL 2021	88	5
WWL 2020	88	5
WWL 2019	87	5
WWL 2018	86	5

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

The basically unchanged very high and extremely high scores for pressure in the individual spheres of life only decreased by a mere 0.8 points (but resulted in a decrease of three ranks). This confirms the fact that Pakistan continues to be one of the countries where it is most difficult to live as a Christian. The violence score has stayed at the maximum level for many years now. (Very few WWL countries ever achieve maximum score in this category, in the WWL 2022 period only two other countries shared this sad situation.) Although since the Quetta attacks in December 2017, there have been no major attacks against churches or gatherings of Christians,

Pakistan continues to score the maximum for killings and attacks against church buildings. A severe mob attack against Christians occurred in Okara in Punjab in May 2021. The country's notorious blasphemy laws continue to claim their victims as well; whoever plays even with the thought of changing those laws, plays with their life.

Persecution engines

Pakistan: Persecution engines	Abbreviation	Level of influence
Islamic oppression	IO	Very strong
Religious nationalism	RN	Not at all
Ethno-religious hostility	ERH	Strong
Clan oppression	CO	Not at all
Christian denominational protectionism	CDP	Not at all
Communist and post - Communist oppression	CPCO	Not at all
Secular intolerance	SI	Not at all
Dictatorial paranoia	DPA	Very strong
Organized corruption and crime	OCC	Strong

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

Islamic oppression (Very strong), blended with Ethno-religious hostility (Strong)

Pakistan is experiencing an increasingly Islamizing culture and is home to a plethora of radical Islamic groups. It is difficult to keep track of the different Islamist groups of varying size, names and influence, as they split, merge and re-appear as needed. The most recent one entering the public sphere and claiming the headlines is *Tehreek-e-Labaik (TLP)*. The Christian community feels increasingly trapped between these radical groups, the Islamic culture of Pakistani society and a government appeasing these groups, the last example being Prime Minister Khan promising never to agree to a law against the teachings of Islam (with religious scholars having the last word in this). There are politicians, judges and religious leaders who are considering (or even advocating for) an amendment to the country's notorious blasphemy laws. However, all such well-meaning attempts are openly threatened and silenced by those who hold a radical perspective based on Wahhabi ideology and who continue to buy into the caliphate theology and treatment of 'infidels', firmly identifying themselves with supporters of the Islamic State group (IS) and the Taliban.

Radical Islamic groups are flourishing - despite a continued crackdown on some of them by the army - and are used by various political groups as allies. Their power to mobilize hundreds of thousands of predominantly young people and take them to the streets remains a political tool and offers strong leverage for enforcing political goals. Even efforts to protect underage girls from minority religions from being abducted, forcefully converted and married are hindered and

often especially lower courts simply follow the claims made by the perpetrators about the victim's age and free will.

While life expectancy is not very high at 67.1 years, the total fertility rate stands at 2.62. Although these figures are changing very slowly, they illustrate huge social challenges. If the fertility rate remains at this level, Pakistan will become the largest Muslim country in the world, overtaking Indonesia, in approximately 2030. This social structure means that there are huge numbers of young people leaving school, dreaming of a better future. But as the country struggles to give even well-educated youth any hope for good employment, social unrest is likely to build up which in turn paves the way for Islamic militants to lure young people into their groups, where they are given a feeling of worth that they have never had before. Radical Islamic groups and parties woo the general populace with social services and the youth with the offer of good future perspectives (which are otherwise badly lacking in the country). The majority of the population are below 25 years old (and almost one third even below 14 years of age) and so there is a great need for the state to be able to offer this younger generation good future prospects, especially at the time of crisis surrounding the COVID-19 pandemic, which has dealt the economy a strong blow.

Pakistan suffers from ethnic fragmentation, not only in society but also in the country's administration. Baluchistan Province and the central Sindh regions are traditionally perceived as being beyond the reach of the state authorities. Feudal landowners maintain their own private militias, courts and prisons in parts of rural Sindh and Punjab. Corruption is rampant across the country. All this affects the generally unprotected Christian minority in Pakistan. Throughout the country, Christians and other religious minorities are seen as impure, mainly for religious reasons, but also because they do not belong to the ruling ethnic groups. Therefore, *Ethno-religious hostility* and *Islamic oppression* are blended.

Dictatorial paranoia (Very strong)

Pakistani politics have always shown a mixture of *Islamic oppression* and *Dictatorial paranoia*. Every government has had to struggle with opposition, radical groups, a strong independent army pulling strings behind the scenes and corruption charges; as a result all governments try everything possible to hold on to power, especially as Pakistan politics has often meant family politics: the PML-N is run by family Sharif (the N in the party's name stands for Nawaz), PPP is run by family Bhutto. When Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif was sentenced to 10 years in prison on corruption charges in July 2018, his brother had already stepped in as candidate to take over his role. Imran Khan (Chairman of the PTI party and not linked to any of the big families) had filed a case against Prime Minister Sharif because of the leaked Panama Papers pointing to irregularities in the prime minister's personal financial affairs. Imran Khan then became prime minister in July 2018; he has a track record of neglecting and ignoring the plight of (religious) minorities and of wooing certain radical groups. Challenges to his government by the political opposition have so far been unsuccessful. Another important driver behind this engine is the army, which will go to great lengths to protect its steering power over politics as well as their economic influence. They, too, have become more Islamic over the years, although it is not clear how much of this is a calculated strategy. In any case, Christians as a minority in Pakistan cannot expect any protection; on the contrary, if it matches political goals, neglecting and even attack-

ing them will be justified and occur with impunity.

Organized corruption and crime (Strong)

Corruption is rampant in Pakistan at all levels of administration and in the army. The army is deeply entrenched in the country's economy and is a strong competitor in many economic fields. It enjoys unfair advantages which a popular joke about the army illustrates well: "All countries have armies, but here, an army has a country". Although it is difficult to access details, estimations say that the army holds assets valued at around 10 billion USD, including around 5 million hectares of farmland. The fact that President Nawaz Sharif was ousted and finally [sentenced to 10 years imprisonment](#) by the Supreme Court due to corruption (revealed through the Panama Papers), shows that corruption is by no means limited to the army (BBC News, 6 July 2017).

Organized crime affects Christians in particular since many of them are poor and without defense, especially in blasphemy cases. Bonded labor is an old form of slavery and is still widespread in certain parts of Pakistan, especially in rural areas. These laborers depend completely on the mercy of their employers and have no way out since they will never be able to pay their loans back due to the high interest rates. They have no legal way of registering complaints and are left without any defense or hope for change in the future. Another way *Organized corruption and crime* plays out is in land-grabbing cases, where either churches or (mainly poor) Christians are simply expropriated and chased away from their land.

Drivers of persecution

Pakistan: Drivers of persecution	IO	RN	ERH	CO	CDP	CPCO	SI	DPA	OCC
	VERY STRONG		STRONG					VERY STRONG	STRONG
Government officials	Very strong		Strong					Strong	Very strong
Ethnic group leaders	Medium		Medium					-	-
Non-Christian religious leaders	Very strong		Strong					Medium	Medium
Violent religious groups	Very strong		Strong					Medium	Very weak
Ideological pressure groups	Very strong		Strong					-	-
Citizens (people from the broader society), including mobs	Very strong		Strong					-	Medium
One's own (extended) family	Very strong		Medium					-	-

Pakistan:									
Drivers of persecution	IO	RN	ERH	CO	CDP	CPCO	SI	DPA	OCC
	VERY STRONG		STRONG					VERY STRONG	STRONG
Political parties	Very strong		Strong					Strong	Medium
Revolutionaries or paramilitary groups	Very strong		Strong					Medium	Very strong
Organized crime cartels or networks	Weak		Very weak					Very weak	Strong
Multilateral organizations (e.g. UN, OIC etc.) and embassies	-		-					-	Medium

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

Drivers of Islamic oppression (blended with Ethno-religious hostility)

- Government officials (Very strong):** In Pakistan the situation of law and order from local to national level is poor, especially where Christians are concerned. Empty and false promises are often made and Christians feel particularly vulnerable. The Supreme Court's acquittal of Asia Bibi despite pressure from radical Islamic groups had been seen as a ray of hope. Unfortunately, the number of blasphemy cases has not decreased. (Lower) courts also frequently allow forced conversions and marriages of minor girls. All parliamentary efforts to protect religious minorities from forced conversions have failed.
- Non-Christian religious leaders, violent religious groups and revolutionaries or paramilitary groups (Very strong):** In Pakistan, several radical Islamic groups under various and at times changing names are gaining in influence and are expanding due to being courted by political parties, the army and the government. Some are even forming their own political parties, although with limited success thus far. The army continues to follow a policy of distinguishing between 'good' Taliban and 'bad' Taliban, which is copied by the government. All those groups received a boost of confidence by the Taliban take-over of government in Afghanistan. As long as the policy of distinguishing does not change, radical Islamic groups will increase their influence, not least by running thousands of madrassas (with no state authority knowing exactly how many there are, what they are teaching or how they are financed). The new curriculum is expanding the influence of religious leaders and pressure groups (see above: *Social and cultural landscape*). Increasingly, new quasi-government 'advisory bodies' to the state are completely made up of religious (Islamic) scholars who can direct and influence the government and laws.
- Political parties and ideological pressure groups (Very strong):** Ideological pressure groups, frequently connected with political parties and Islamic religious groups, exercise enormous pressure and continue to gain influence. There are many pressure groups organized and developed to support and protect the honor of Islam. They see themselves as 'defenders of the faith' (which is also claimed by many political parties) and in doing so are willing to unleash all their energy to silence any group that they see as a threat. This in-

cludes the Church, secular forces and any person or organization seeking to change society or bring better protection for minorities.

- **Extended family (Very strong):** Christians with a Muslim background are facing all these hostile forces mentioned above, but for them, their own families are the greatest danger, since leaving Islam brings great shame to both family and community. Sometimes, even fleeing abroad does not keep the converts safe.
- **Normal citizens (Very strong):** Radical Islamic groups are able to mobilize citizens all across the country, especially the youth, encouraging them to demonstrate against government decisions and stirring them up to act in hate and anger against religious minorities, including Christians. Moderate voices are increasingly drowned out.
- **Ethnic leaders (Medium):** Persecution, discrimination and intolerance is normally related to religious identity but ethnicity can play a role as well. Even though most Christians and Muslims in Pakistan come from the same ethnicities, many Islamic ethnic leaders and their supporters regard Christians as being 'impure' and 'alien'. This can be seen as a heritage of colonial times with its underlying caste system.

Drivers of Organized corruption and crime

- **Government officials (Very strong):** As a small and weak group in society, Christians face double vulnerability when it comes to *Organized corruption and crime*. Thousands of Christians are still living in conditions of bonded labor without having any perspective that this could ever end. Many Christians are prone to exploitation as they are poor and bonded labor is a fate that is a reality for many of them, bringing their masters great profit. Rich landlords collude with politicians and local dignitaries (both from religious and political circles), benefitting greatly from this system. A second way government officials can be a driver of this engine is by assisting and rubber-stamping land-grabbing.
- **Revolutionaries or paramilitary groups (Very strong):** Organized crime is frequently connected to violent Islamic militancy and impacts the electoral and political process in Pakistan and affects the life of Christians. The Haqqani Network, ISKP, *Tehrik-i-Taliban Pakistan*, *Jamaatul Ahrar* (TTP-JA), *Lashkar E Jhangvi*, *Lashkar-e-Taiba* (LeT), *Jaish-e-Mohammed* (JeM), al-Qaeda (among others) can be named in this context. All of these groups received a boost of morale by the swift take-over of government by the Taliban in Afghanistan and at least some may be strengthened and receive (tacit) support from groups in the neighboring country. Local organized crime is a big problem in urban parts of Pakistan and in the tribal areas. In Karachi, gangs, extortionists and mafia groups are all part of the landscape. These organizations also have political connections and therefore political patronage. Massive corruption, especially in terms of patron-client relationship, is also rampant in Pakistan and permeates almost every segment of society including the police, courts and politicians.
- **Organized crime cartels or networks (Strong):** Pakistan has a long history of corruption; it is partly driven by the army but has multiple other drivers. Churches are not only attacked and squeezed for political gain, but also out of financial motives. Especially the historical churches often own property in strategic areas like city centers, making them prone to attacks from developers using criminal gangs. Additionally, the continued destruction of church property means that churches are forced to sell property to cover damage expenses.

Another way crime cartels act as drivers is in human trafficking, e.g. Christian girls and young women being taken to China.

- **Non-Christian religious leaders, political parties, normal citizens (Medium):** As described above, Pakistan suffers from a closely-knit web of corruption, in which its benefactors help one another, while the weakest pay the price. The weakest are normal citizens, including Christians in particular due to their double vulnerability.
- **Multilateral organizations and embassies (Medium):** The increased use of humanitarian aid as a way to force Christians to convert has been on the rise since the COVID-19 pandemic took root. Many families, especially young people, have been forced to recant their faith so that they can receive urgent medical or food aid. Such aid is often supplied by international organizations and governments. Embassies employ local people to run their visa programs, so Christians are often discriminated against.

Drivers of Dictatorial paranoia

- **Government officials and political parties (Strong):** As already stated above, for many years politics in Pakistan has been family business, a trend which was only recently broken. However, whoever is in power in Pakistan tends to cling to it and will do whatever is needed to gain enough support. One strong driver in this is a political player which seldom operates openly: The army. The way the army courts some radical Islamic groups to use them as a tool leads to Christians being targeted by such groups as well. Although the targeting of Christians is not army policy, it is considered as necessary collateral damage.
- **Non-Christian religious leaders, violent religious groups and revolutionaries or paramilitary groups (Medium):** Insofar as religious leaders and groups are courted by the government, political parties and the army, they will support them in their struggle to stay in power. If they consider it necessary to act against the Christian minority - or simply continue to discriminate against them - they will do so. Christians quickly become scapegoats or are simply used as a bargaining chip in the political system.

Areas where Christians face most difficulties

While there are many political hotspots in Pakistan, particular hotspots of rights violations against Christians are not so obvious. Since by far the most Christians are living in Punjab Province, many incidents of persecution, discrimination and intolerance occur there. However, next to Punjab, the province of Sindh is also notorious for being a hotspot for bonded labor, affecting many Christians as well.

Christian communities and how they are affected

Communities of expatriate Christians: Expatriate Christians are not forced into isolation, but they cannot attend churches all over the country; their church attendance is mostly limited to the cities. They are facing high pressure, but there is only a small number of them.

Historical Christian communities: The Roman Catholic Church and the Church of Pakistan (Anglican Church) are examples of this category. As the most visible churches, they increasingly face hostilities and experience difficulties in getting permits for certain meetings. They have to put up with strong control and monitoring. As one country expert put it: "They are known for

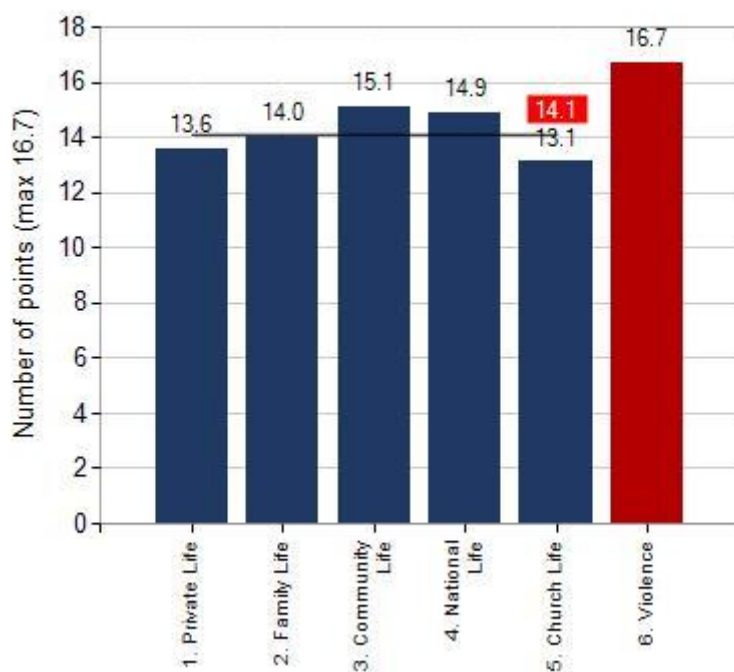
their involvement in social welfare, especially through schools and medical facilities. As they are perceived as being less likely to proselytize than other Christian groups, they are less likely to face adverse reaction among Islamist groups."

Converts to Christianity: Christians with a Muslim background suffer the brunt of religious freedom violations both from radical Islamic groups (who see them as apostates) and from families, friends and neighbors who see conversion as a shameful act of betrayal to family and community. There is also a small community of converts from a Hindu background.

Non-traditional Christian communities: Evangelical, Baptist and Pentecostal groups have come under closer scrutiny and are frequently harassed and attacked, especially when they are active in outreach among Muslims, although most of their growth comes from Christians transferring from the historical churches.

The Persecution pattern

WWL 2022 Persecution Pattern for Pakistan



The WWL 2022 Persecution pattern for Pakistan shows:

- Overall, the pressure on Christians in Pakistan is at an extreme level with the average pressure reaching 14.1 points in WWL 2022 (0.2 points less than in WWL 2021).
- Pressure stayed the same in the *National sphere* (extreme level) and decreased slightly in the *Church sphere* (very high level), reflecting among other things how Christians continue to suffer from the country's blasphemy laws and from the increasing control of churches and meetings. Pressure remains at an extreme level in the *Community* and *Family spheres*. Converts are facing the strongest pressure but Christians in general are regarded as second-class citizens and as 'impure'. They face attacks and have their rights ignored on a regular basis. The blasphemy laws and the Islamist groups 'defending' them remain a major threat

to all Christians, even more so with a government struggling to keep in control, not least due to the COVID-19 crisis.

- Violence against Christians continues to be at the maximum level of 16.7 points as has been the case consistently since WWL 2016. Although there have been no major attacks in the headlines, the WWL 2022 reporting period has seen killings of Christians, a large-scale attack against a Christian community in [Punjab](#), (Asia News, 18 May 2021), nationalization of property and the continuing abduction of women and girls, rape, forced marriages, evictions from homes and displacements in-country and abroad.

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 1.8: It has been risky for Christians to speak about their faith with those other than immediate family (extended family, others). (4.00 points)

Many Christians avoid talking about their faith with Muslims because it can have dangerous consequences. While this is particularly the case for converts, it is true for other Christians as well, especially in the light of the blasphemy laws. Any such discussion could attract a religiously motivated attack against them, their community and their church. One example in the reporting period of WWL 2022 has been the arrest of two students in Lahore reading a Christian book publicly in a park in Lahore and [being arrested](#) for promoting Christianity (UCA News, 22 February 2021).

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.). (3.75 points)

It is dangerous when the written content is seen as opposing or challenging the established teachings and values of Islam. All personal statements - for instance on Facebook - can also be used (and tampered with) in cases concerning the blasphemy law. The Internet and social media are watched by both governmental and non-governmental watchdogs and [new rules](#) have given authorities blanket powers of censorship (Reuters, 19 November 2021). Therefore, many Christians avoid expressing their faith by exercising self-censorship.

Block 1.5: It has been risky for Christians to display Christian images or symbols. (3.50 points)

Displaying a Christian symbol is a visible trigger and can be a starting-point for the everyday discrimination Christians experience, which in turn can lead to violence. Even just having a Christian name is enough for this to start, as it may hinder moving to a predominantly Muslim neighborhood or starting a business. A country expert explained: "Even how you say 'goodbye' can now identify you as a non-Muslim as most Christians say 'Khuda Hafiz - God protect you', whereas Muslims insist on saying 'Allah Hafiz'. Therefore converts are forced to say 'Allah Hafiz

- Allah protect you' to avoid being targeted." Additionally, Christians often face damage to their personal property where they display Christian symbols, e.g. on cars etc. Reports of Christians wearing a cross being spat at and targeted aggressively in the streets, in traffic or at the workplace, are indicators that the situation is becoming more difficult.

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

While expatriate Christians can basically possess any material they want, it is dangerous for Pakistani Christians to keep materials beyond their immediate personal use, as this could be viewed as a tool for advertising and reaching out to Muslims, even if it is only for discussion. Books, especially with an apologetic content, can be declared anti-State and anti-Muslim and owning them punished. For converts, it is very risky to openly possess any Christian materials. One country expert highlighted the dangers of developments in neighboring Afghanistan spilling over: "At the end of the WWL 2022 reporting period, the situation looks set to get worse. In neighboring Afghanistan, the Taliban regime which retook power in August 2021 was reported to be threatening to kill people immediately if they were found to have Christian material (e.g. a download of the Bible) on their phone. With the Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) understood to be more intolerant than its associated organization in Afghanistan, the concern is that such incidents of Christians targeted for possession of Christian material are likely to grow as the TTP gains confidence following the Taliban's return to power."

Block 1 - further information

A country expert wrote: "It is acceptable to be a Punjabi or Sindhi Christian. But it is far less acceptable to be a Balouchi or Pakthun believer." Whatever their ethnicity, converts from Islam always have to be very careful in the way they worship, especially if they are the only Christians in their family. Bibles and other Christian materials may be taken away by family, friends or neighbors, even when it is stored on a mobile phone. While house-arrest by families is another form of punishment for privately conducting worship, a milder form is for Christian converts to be put under surveillance. Christian girls who have been abducted and forcefully converted and married are often kept in a form of house arrest as well and taught what to say. Converts sometimes have to go into hiding as well. In an illustration of the depth of isolation, one country expert said: "The biggest retailer in real estate in Pakistan (Bahria) refuses to allow its Christian residents (who number in the thousands) a space for public worship. The isolation is systemic."

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)

One country expert sums up the problems in a comprehensive way: "Schools in Pakistan stand accused of being biased against Christians and stirring up hatred against them and their faith. This then presents problems for parents wishing to raise their children in their faith. The problems fall loosely into the following categories:

- Text books both in the Sindh and Punjab Provinces have been found to contain passages and references discriminatory to Christians. Although steps have been taken to remove

the offending sections, criticisms persist.

- Especially in Hindu-language schools, school culture is perceived as anti-Christian, with reports of bullying and segregation of Christians away from Muslims.
- Students learning Islam are given extra marks.”

The "Uniform Education System" which will be implemented step by step will [islamize](#) schools further (DW, 24 May 2021). This will put additional pressure on the students and their parents.

Block 2.9: Children of Christians have been harassed or discriminated against because of their parents' faith. (4.00 points)

Discrimination at school (and elsewhere) is a daily experience for Christian schoolchildren. At school, children of Christian parents are often not allowed to use the same water fountain as their Muslim classmates to avoid 'defiling' the drinking-water, and they are often bullied. Many Christian children are asked to clean the latrines or sweep the floor as Christians are commonly perceived as being sweepers. Some schoolbooks incite hatred against Christians. Even in some Christian institutions, some non-Christian students would choose not to socialize or even eat with Christians. This attitude is not always purely religious but also has its background in caste considerations since a majority of Christians come from low caste and even previously 'untouchable' backgrounds. As the US State Department noted on page 24 of IRFR 2020: "Religious minority community members stated public schools gave Muslim students bonus grade points for memorizing the Quran, but there were no analogous opportunities for extra academic credit available for religious minority students." A *hafiz quran* is given 20 extra points for admission to the next academic level.

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

Not least due to the prevailing pressure from society and the situation Christian children find themselves in when attending school, it is hard to raise children according to the Christian faith and withstand the pressure exerted. Due to fearing blasphemy accusations, parents even teach their children to be completely silent about their faith. Despite this pressure, many Christian parents find ways to raise their children in their beliefs, within certain limits and with the assistance of the church. A country expert points to increasing challenges: "The new curriculum being rolled out by the PTI government tries to allow and accredit madrassas as competent and complete educational institutions."

Block 2.6: Christian couples have been hindered in adopting children or serving as foster parents because of their faith. (3.25 points)

Generally speaking, in Pakistan there is no formal adoption. There is no law regulating adoption; the only legal form is becoming someone's 'ward' which is not exactly adoption. If a couple informally adopts a child, the expectation is that the child should follow the religion of the real parents, and if that is unknown, the default is Islam. As a country expert stated: "Christian parents would be very unlikely to apply to adopt a child for fear of being accused of wanting to convert the individual." Christians can only adopt or become wards by using a Christian adoption institution which are monitored to ensure they are not giving away children of non-Christian

background. The adoption of Christian children by non-Christians is still the exception, but it does occur.

Block 2 - further information

Registering one's conversion to the Christian faith is not possible. A child will be automatically registered as "Muslim" if his or her father was registered as "Muslim", no matter if in reality the religious affiliation has changed. Once converts are discovered, they face the threat of divorce (if married) and are likely to lose their inheritance rights. The US State Department explains on page 9 of IRFR 2020: "Some court judgments have considered the marriage of a non-Muslim woman to a non-Muslim man dissolved if she converts to Islam, although the marriage of a non-Muslim man who converts remains recognized."

Organizing a Christian wedding or funeral can be difficult or even impossible in some communities. Christians with a Muslim background face either being physically attacked and discriminated against by the surrounding Islamic community and their own family, or they may be placed under a curse through black magic, potions, amulets and other occult practices. From the moment a convert from Islam decides to be baptized, he or she is put under particular pressure since baptism is seen as the ultimate form of rejecting Islam and thus committing apostasy. Even if it is a Pakistani of Christian background getting baptized, there will often be guns firing from roofs and aggressive shouting against Christians, even though it is not a crime for a Pakistani of Christian background to be baptized. Baptism is simply hated as it is a visible sign of the Christian presence growing.

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.). (4.00 points)

As a country expert stated: " Being watched is a way of life for all people. Christians in particular are more vulnerable to the continuous monitoring of activity. Due to the Chinese provision of anti-terrorist facial and vehicle recognition software - most urban centers have cameras constantly recording your movements. The mobile phone numbers are all linked to your ID card which registers the IMEI number of the phone with the government databases. All calls, even by Whatsapp, are monitored, and tracked. Your phone can also have malware installed to switch on cameras and audio remotely. This has all meant greater surveillance of the Christian community." Apart from that, neighbors and radical Islamic groups are monitoring Christians as well. For converts, the family is the strongest source of control.

Block 3.7: Christians have been pressured by their community to renounce their faith. (4.00 points)

During the COVID-19 crisis, there was a campaign by Islamists to force conversions using food rations, which would be given to Christians who recited the Islamic creed. (Many young people did do this, while others are known to have starved to death or committed suicide.) A country expert states: "Christians are under constant pressure to renounce their faith from the age of 4

or when they go to nursery school. Those who are older face more serious challenges when asked to renounce the Christian faith. If the Christian refuses for the third time, according to Sharia, the execution of that person may follow, so people are wary of being asked; it is therefore used as an intimidation tactic." The call by Prime Minister Khan [to look into](#) the issue of forced conversions (UCA News, 2 December 2020) predictably led to nothing.

Block 3.3: Christians have been under threat of abduction and/or forced marriage. (3.75 points)

As the long list of cases provided above under *Specific examples of violations* shows, abduction and forced marriage are not just a threat, but a very sad reality across Pakistan. Christian (and Hindu) parents are getting increasingly fearful to let their daughter walk outside alone. One country expert explained: "Abduction and sexual violence of religious minorities is endemic in Pakistan. The Movement for Solidarity and Peace calculates that every year up to 1,000 young Christian and Hindu girls and young women aged between 12 and 25 are abducted by Muslim men. Christian girls make up 70 percent of these cases. Other research suggests that the same number applies to one province alone, namely Sindh. These figures are seen as a low estimate as fear of retaliation and risk of social shame means that Christian families are reluctant to report incidents of this kind. Nor is the problem related only to women and girls."

Block 3.10: Christians have been discriminated against in public or private employment for faith-related reasons. (3.75 points)

In work places, the pressure against the Christian minority is often so great that Christians are forced to change their jobs multiple times to avoid being made to convert to Islam. Christians are frequently forced to do menial work like sweeping or carrying water. And even access to these jobs gets more and more restricted as reports show that new cleaning companies in the country are increasingly hiring only Muslims. Many Christians work as 'day laborers', often earning less than a dollar a day. In a (post-)pandemic economy they face almost insurmountable hurdles to make ends meet. A very good illustration is the five percent quota which had been introduced to guarantee minorities jobs in the government sector. Out of the total [vacant posts](#), 43% were reserved for minorities; that means there were more than 30,000 positions for minorities vacant at the end of September 2021 (UCA News, 6 October 2021).

Block 3.1: Christians have been harassed, threatened or obstructed in their daily lives for faith-related reasons (e.g. for not meeting majority religion or traditional dress codes, beard codes etc.). (3.50 points)

Christians are associated with being unclean or 'impure' and so their use of shared facilities is thought to defile Muslims, a [heritage of the caste system](#) haunting many Christians in Pakistan (WWM, 1 November 2018). Christians are discriminated against daily in many other ways too. Threats are a very common occurrence; one example in the WWL 2022 reporting period were anti-Christian and anti-minority stickers on rickshaws. A report by UCA News called this "[venom on wheels](#)" (UCA News, 12 February 2021).

Block 3 - further information

Many hospitals, pharmacies and other facilities have welfare schemes, which are being increasingly denied to Christians. Christians are also often told to pay exorbitant fees for health care or take out loans. Such costs are unpayable and hence block access to medical treatment. In government hospitals, Christians are not allowed to have access to the free medicines which have been supplied through Zakat funding (Islamic donations). Often people in wards in hospitals do not like to share with Christians, so Christians must often wait in hallways and corridors. Hospitals run by Christian associations do not benefit from Zakat and accept patients without asking their whereabouts, so they are slowly squeezed out of funds.

Bonded laborers are tied to their employers by contracts which burden them with unpayable and ever increasing debts. It is now compulsory for Christian organizations to provide written reports of movements, get approvals for travel, and complete financial statements especially when they have international contacts so that they are tracked by governmental institutions.

Additionally, one country expert stated: "As Christians have little status in society and are often victimized or neglected, their presence in communal institutions is not encouraged. Where Christians have been involved in civil society associations, they have frequently found themselves marginalized. There have been cases where, for example, a residents' association is reviewing rental policies and members conclude they do not want to let out accommodation to Christians and other minorities. This has come to light when adverts have been published in newspapers and other media indicating that in effect 'Christians need not apply' to become residents."

Pressure in Block 4 / National sphere

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

The Islamic Republic of Pakistan adopted an Islamic Constitution in 1973 and Sharia law in its civil code, although Article 20 grants freedom of religion and belief. The current prime minister, Imran Khan, stated that the government system in place in the days of Mohammed should be seen as the perfect governing system for Pakistan. Another example of how human rights are restricted can be seen in Article 19 on freedom of expression. This right can be limited "in the interest of the glory of Islam", which is open to subjective interpretation. A comprehensive [briefing paper](#) by the International Commission of Jurists dated 29 July 2021 details the limitations clearly.

Block 4.5: Christians have been discriminated against when engaging with the authorities (local administration, government, army, etc.) for faith-related reasons. (3.75 points)

Discrimination and challenges for Christians are prevalent at every level of government and even in secular environments. This is true for the army, the judicial and the administrative services as well (especially at the local level), although Christians continue to serve in these areas. One example in the political context was the blunt [denial](#) by a senator that any forced conversions of minorities took place in Pakistan (UCA News, 23 October 2020).

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

Along with high levels of self-censoring among Christians (and withdrawal from the public sphere), Christian views are commonly ignored since they are seen as opposing or even just questioning Islamic teachings and values and are hence unacceptable. There are still entities speaking out, but the example of the National Commission on Minorities and the under-representation of religious minorities in the political arena are clear signs of how little their opinion is valued.

The US State Department stated on page 20 of IRFR 2020: "In May, the Cabinet approved a Religious Affairs Ministry proposal establishing a National Commission for Minorities housed within the ministry. The proposal named a prominent Hindu business owner and ruling PTI party leader as the commission's chair, along with other Hindu, Christian, Sikh, Parsi, and Kalash members. The commission also included two Sunni Muslim clerics and senior civil servants from the Ministries of Interior, Law and Justice, Human Rights, Federal Education and Professional Training, Religious Affairs, and the Council of Islamic Ideology." In what could have been a positive item of news, its tasks and influence remain unclear and one of its arguably most important fields of work - helping to keep girls from religious minorities safe from abduction and forced conversion/marriage - is seen by many politicians as being unnecessary, as the quote of the Pakistani senator referred to above shows.

One country expert added that speaking out remains possible, but comes at a very high personal risk: "However, increasingly, doing so has come at a cost to their own safety. In May 2021, three Christian nurses at the Punjab Institute of Mental Health in Lahore were accused of blasphemy in relation to a video uploaded onto a nurses' WhatsApp group. The video reportedly criticized the reaction of Prime Minister Imran Khan's government to an EU motion highlighting human rights violations in Pakistan and requested the European Commission withdraw trade privileges granted to the country. The Christian nurses were allegedly threatened and went into hiding for fear of their lives. The nursing superintendent demanded that the institute's Christian chapel be turned into a mosque. They marched into the chapel, recited Islamic verse and confiscated the chapel key."

Block 4.13: Christians have been accused of blasphemy or insulting the majority religion, either by state authorities or by pressure groups. (3.75 points)

The recent process of Islamization started in the 1980s, when General Zia introduced the infamous laws on blasphemy in 1986. Blasphemy soon became one of the main issues the Christian minority had to face. According to a press report from 2010 (more recent data is not available), 801 of the 1,031 people imprisoned under blasphemy laws were Muslims (the vast majority of cases most likely affecting Islamic minorities). Of the remaining 230 prisoners, 162 were Christians (70.4%), 15 were Sikh (6.5%), 28 were Buddhist (12.2%), while 25 adhered to other religions. The blasphemy laws are well known for being used for settling personal scores, making personal gains or for satisfying grudges one neighbor may have against another. The cases in 2020 of Asif Pervaiz and [David Masih](#) show that accusations and sentences for alleged blasphemy continue (USCIRF, David Masih, accessed 26 November 2020). According to a more recent statistic quoted by a country expert, out of the 1,550 people accused of blasphemy since

1986, 238 involved Christians (15%), even though Christians are less than 2% of the population. Occasionally, there have been acquittals as well, as in the case of Sawan Masih, cited above.

Block 4 - further information

Travelling within the country is often limited for Christians and there are grave security risks connected with it. As one country expert explained: "Even with the option of government security and support from the local bishop, it has been judged unwise to travel to certain parts of the country, such as Peshawar, with religious hatred cited as one of the causes for concern. For Christian women, especially those travelling on their own, the risks are especially acute, particularly in areas with strong Islamist influence where the notion of travel by unaccompanied females is anathema."

Concerning biased media reporting against Christians, the same researcher observed the following: "English-language media are more even-handed in their reportage of minority affairs than their Urdu-language counterparts, which have been accused of running adverts for sewage workers effectively aimed exclusively at Christians. More generally, the media are perceived as routinely biased against Christians. For example, when a Muslim man is accused of abducting an under-age Christian girl and forcing her to marry him, the standard editorial approach is to declare it a 'love match' in which the girl is fully implicated. Such coverage will routinely fail to give consideration to the question of her being under-age and the undue pressure (potentially if not actually) applied by the so-called husband who is often decades older and has often acted without the consent of the individual's parents and who in the West would be accused of paedophilia."

Pressure in Block 5 / Church sphere

Block 5.7: Churches have been hindered from openly integrating converts. (4.00 points)

Since conversion from Islam to Christianity is so strongly opposed and fought against by family, society, government and radical groups, it would be highly dangerous if a church would dare to accept converts onto their premises. If a convert does attend a church service, this needs to happen without anyone, including the church, knowing that he or she is a convert. Another illustration for the strictness of this view is the fact that the "National database registration authority" (NADRA) has no option for changing the religious affiliation from Muslim to another religion (or no religion).

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

Government and radical Islamic groups alike monitor church teaching for any content perceived as anti-government or anti-Islam. One means of monitoring is through providing guards for church buildings. While they may indeed be offering protection, they also listen, monitor and report. It is suspected that such intelligence is being passed on to radical Islamic organizations and militants. Church buildings frequently resemble fortresses with high walls and narrow gates. Such monitoring has been made easier by the pandemic lockdown measures, which forced worship services and the bulk of preaching and teaching to go online. Churches check that their

materials contain no content which could be perceived as blasphemous; to be on the safe side, many churches decide only to share books and literature internally. Bibles are not provided by churches to the general public.

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

Church leaders are the very first targets for harassment, as they are the most visible representatives of the despised Christian minority. This does not mean that all are attacked, but it means that the drivers of discrimination, intolerance and persecution realize very well that harming a church leader means harming the church as well. Many pastors and Christian workers have received warnings that their activities are being watched by the authorities and pressure groups in the neighborhood. They also become targets because they represent the hope for change and are often involved in resolving conflicts with non-Christian leaders, financial disputes, emergency support and health care. In the WWL 2022 reporting period, even pastors of expatriate churches (e.g. the Orthodox church) were attacked, but also churches from China and South Korea. The latter have been targeted specifically due to their overt evangelism. Pastors and Christian leaders are also more vulnerable to action by criminal gangs.

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

As a country researcher states: "All NGOs have to report to the government on all activities - any money coming from outside the country will now be approved prior to the the arrival of the money from a governmental intelligence department. There is no direct funding of NGOs; any donations or support from international organizations are especially scrutinized. And NGOs working with the Christian community are being closed down. Reports on compliance, staff, data gathering or any reports produced by the organization must be first approved by the government; and can never be shared internationally. These rules are new and they are being enforced by freezing bank accounts, forcing NGOs and churches into a narrow and repetitive process of compliance involving over 16 different security agencies."

Another country expert highlighted the following: "The Catholic Church in Pakistan has long-established high profile schools and colleges (such as St Patrick's in Karachi), which have been providing the education of choice for the elite in society and hence many leaders in Pakistan have turned to Christian institutes as the best route into top-flight universities. However, bishops and other clergy are still seeking restitution of schools and other educational institutes confiscated and nationalized decades ago." One example of nationalization in the WWL 2022 reporting period was [Edwardes College](#) in Peshawar, which was officially nationalized with effect from 3 June 2021 (UCA News, 4 June 2021).

Block 5 - further information

Advocacy for the oppressed minorities is highly dangerous as it challenges the government's narrative of providing safety and justice for everyone. It also challenges openly the overt injustice, corruption and attacks on vulnerable Christians which are carried out with impunity.

Such advocacy not only irritates the government, it also angers many drivers of persecution, discrimination and intolerance in society as mentioned above. Many Christian human rights organizations and activists have been silenced, others had to flee the country and some simply disappeared.

Churches require registration and permission to proceed with new building projects. This is a long process as churches often have to wait for more than ten years to receive registration and get discouraged from proceeding with their building plans. There is high demand for bribes, and letters from influential members of parliament and governing bodies are needed. While there is no law against the building of churches as such, the process is made hard in order to discourage Christians.

While the pressure against churches reaching out to youth increases, there have been no reported cases of outright obstruction; 'safe spaces' still do exist. Apart from the Bible Society of Pakistan, all other Christian organizations are strongly discouraged from owning printing presses. Also, the work of the Bible Society is closely monitored and each Bible has a serial number that can be tracked. Since October 2016, only two (of originally 13) Christian TV channels have retained their registration permits. Christians also continue to worry about Internet restrictions set out in the Prevention of Electronic Crimes Act of [August 2016](#), which has the potential to limit one of the last available ways of spreading the Christian message in Pakistan (UCA News, 24 November 2016). The debate on Christian family law has also continued and is in the process of being [drafted](#) (International-LaCroix, 12 March 2021). Christians are being encouraged (and often compelled) to allow divorce in more cases than purely on grounds of adultery, and the law will be amended without any significant contribution by Christian leaders in Pakistan.

In August 2021 video footage emerged online, purporting to show how the authorities were beginning the demolition of St Joseph's Catholic Church in Karachi, in the teeth of opposition from civil society which called the move illegal. The authorities claimed the planned demolition was necessary as part of a government plan to re-order the layout of the district because of encroachment and overcrowding. St Joseph's Church was only [spared demolition](#) after huge protests (UCA News, 24 August 2021).

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.*

Pakistan: Violence Block question	WWL 2022	WWL 2021
6.1 How many Christians have been killed for faith-related reasons (including state sanctioned executions)?	620	307
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?	183	68
6.3 How many Christians have been detained for faith-related reasons?	1000 *	100*
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?	50	62
6.5 How many Christians have been abducted for faith-related reasons (including Christians missing in a persecution context)?	1000 *	100*
6.6 How many Christians have been raped or otherwise sexually harassed for faith-related reasons?	1000*	100*

6.7	How many cases have there been of forced marriages of Christians to non-Christians?	1000 *	1000*
6.8	How many Christians have been otherwise physically or mentally abused for faith-related reasons (including beatings and death threats)?	1000 *	1000*
6.9	How many houses of Christians or other property (excluding shops) have been attacked, damaged, bombed, looted, destroyed, burned down or confiscated for faith-related reasons?	1000 *	1000*
6.10	How many shops or businesses of Christians have been attacked, damaged, bombed, looted, destroyed, burned down, closed or confiscated for faith-related reasons?	100 *	100*
6.11	How many Christians have been forced to leave their homes or go into hiding in-country for faith-related reasons?	1000*	100*
6.12	How many Christians have been forced to leave the country for faith-related reasons?	100 *	20

The score for violence against Christians in Pakistan has been the maximum possible since WWL 2016. This may be surprising as there were no high-profile attacks against churches since 2017, but every reporting period since then, more than the number of incidents necessary to reach the maximum score of a question has been reported.

Christians killed: From a killing over a drainage dispute in [Hasan Kathore](#) on 9 November 2020 at the beginning of the reporting period (UCA News, 11 November 2020) to the poisoning of a Christian worker in [Gujjar community](#) near Gojra on 24 May 2021 (UCA News, 25 May 2021), there have been many reports of killings of Christians. The COVID-19 crisis continued to reveal a much broader pattern. What one country expert stated last year is still true: The numbers listed in the dossier "do not include the 8 families reported to have committed suicide when they were refused rations in the height of the COVID-19 supply-chain breakdown in which people across the country faced starvation. These families made it known that their suicide would be because they were ignored in food ration distributions. They also do not include the (approximately) 120 incidents reported in which Christians died on their way to the quarantine centers as the centers were under-resourced and Christians were considered 'dispensable' and a 'burden.'" The country expert also mentioned other incidents involving the deaths of 'dispensable' Christian nurses.

- **Christians attacked:** Overt violence tends to conceal the daily violence behind the scenes against Christian girls and women who are often abducted, raped and forcefully married and converted. Examples for this abound - see above: *Specific examples of violations of rights in the reporting period.*
- **Christians arrested:** Christians are more frequently arrested and charged than acquitted and although not all situations are linked with blasphemy accusations, those are the most prominent examples. To name but two cases, [Sajjad Masih Gill](#), who has been jailed for life faces an additional petition seeking the death sentence (UCA News, 12 March 2021). [Zafar Bhatti](#) had his life sentence upheld (Morning Star News, 28 June 2021).

- **Churches attacked:** Attacks on churches take place frequently, although the buildings are not always destroyed or have to be closed. In one widely reported incident, authorities nationalized [Edwardes College](#) in Peshawar (UCA News, 4 June 2021).
- **Christian homes/shops attacked:** In blasphemy cases, the homes of Christians are frequently attacked, forcing them and their families to go into hiding. In another "planning and re-structuring" case, a Christian neighborhood in Karachi was completely demolished by the authorities, leaving [600 Christian families](#) with nowhere to go (UCA News, 1 March 2021). This came with the forced closure and the threatened demolition of St Joseph's Church (only halted after huge protests) and the demolition of another church before it, despite the mosques in the area remained untouched. A mob attacked [80 Christian families](#) in Okara, Punjab Province because Christian boys cleaning the church were accused of sweeping dust in the direction of Muslim landlords who were passing by (UCA News, 17 May 2021).

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

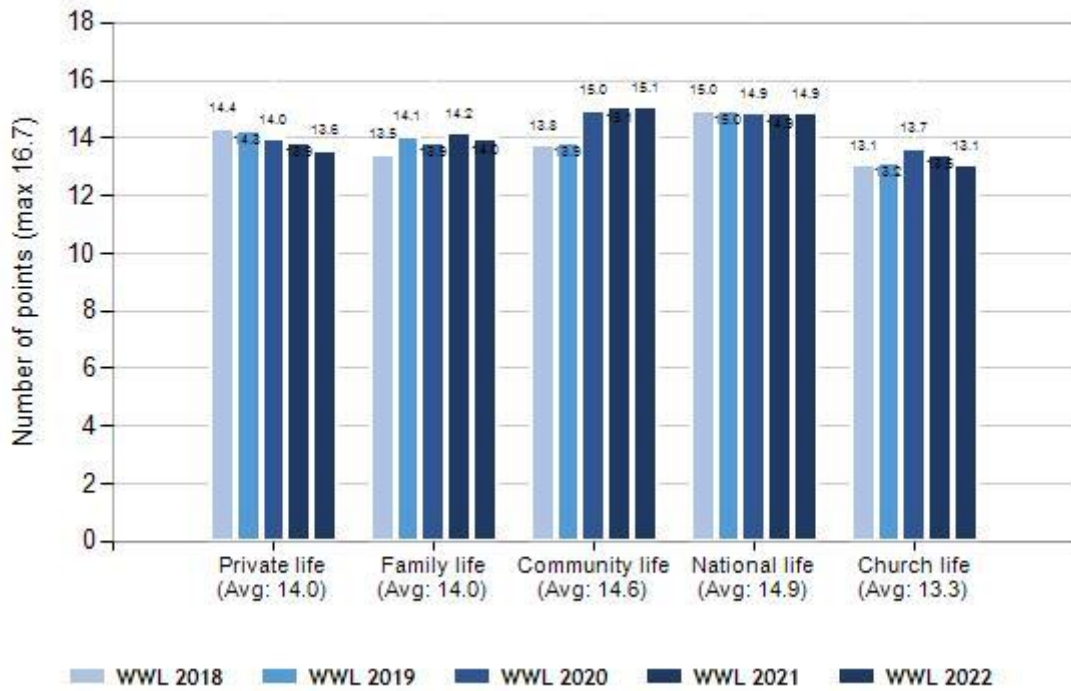
Pakistan: WWL 2018 - WWL 2022 Persecution Pattern history	Average pressure over 5 Spheres of life
2022	14.1
2021	14.3
2020	14.3
2019	14.1
2018	14.0

The average pressure on Christians in Pakistan is extreme and has reached a point-level of 14.0 and above for five years in a row.

5 Year trends: Pressure in each sphere of life

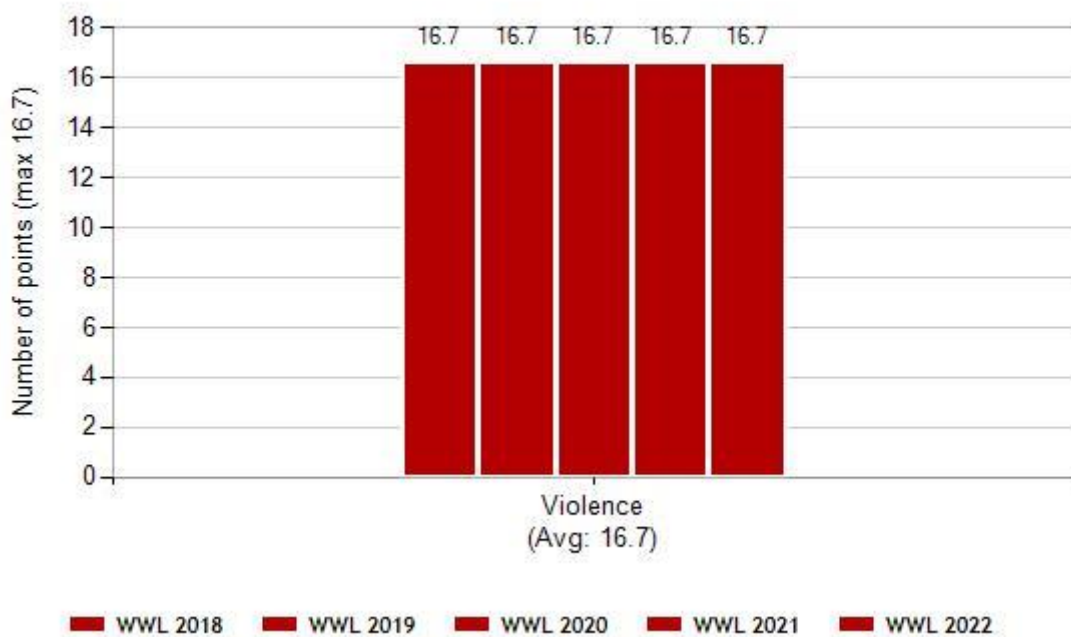
See chart below: Although there have been fluctuations, the level of pressure in all *spheres of life* has remained at very high and extreme levels, reflecting the operation of a relatively high number of (blended) persecution engines and their various drivers. The slight decrease in the *Church sphere* may very well be related with the changes that COVID-19 brought to this sphere.

WWL 2018 - WWL 2022 Persecution Pattern for Pakistan
(Spheres of life)



5 Year trends: Violence against Christians

WWL 2018 - WWL 2022 Persecution Pattern for Pakistan
(Violence)



See chart above: Pakistan is one of the few countries in the WWL reaching the maximum score for violence and the only one reaching it every single year since WWL 2016. Although there has not been a suicide attack against a church since the WWL 2018 reporting period, each year witnessed so much violence against Christians that Pakistan has still reached the maximum score. In the reporting period of WWL 2022, Pakistan witnessed another serious mob attack against a Christian community in Punjab (see above: *Violence, Christian homes/shops attacked*).

Gender-specific religious persecution / Female

Group	Female Pressure Points
Economic	Economic harassment via business/job/work access
Political and Legal	Forced marriage; Travel bans/restrictions on movement
Security	Abduction; Incarceration by family (house arrest); Targeted Seduction; Trafficking; Violence – death; Violence – physical; Violence – sexual
Social and Cultural	Enforced religious dress code; Violence – psychological
Technological	-

While all women are vulnerable to gender-based violence in Pakistan, women from religious minorities face overt and violent forms of gender-specific religious persecution. In December 2019, the trafficking of women from Pakistan sold as ‘brides’ in China made headlines ([AP News, 7 December 2019](#)). These dangers, alongside more insidious forms of human trafficking that center around forced conversion, remain live risks for women from religious minorities ([CREID, 30 July 2021](#)).

Reports of the abduction of Christian women and girls have increased throughout the WWL 2022 reporting period, particularly in Punjab. Christian girls as young as 12 - primarily from poor families - are kidnapped, forcibly married, sexually assaulted and forced to convert to Islam on pain of death ([CLAAS, 18 August 2021](#); [CREID, November 2020](#)). A country expert explains the religiously-motivated ideology behind this trend: “By forcibly converting and marrying a ‘former’ Christian you receive a reward in heaven. This ideology goes hand in glove with the idea of conquering another faith group ... To ensure your victory the conqueror must take the women so that they cannot live as Christian or breed more Christians. These are socially sanctioned acts of violence.” In addition to abduction, reports indicate that Christian girls have been seduced as a means of converting them to Islam.

Many families never see their girls again, in part as the authorities rarely take meaningful action to bring perpetrators to justice. Should the case come to court, girls may be forced to testify that they converted voluntarily. The challenges involved represent a huge emotional strain for the families who constantly fear retribution from the perpetrators and their supporters. For victims who are recovered, the shame of abduction and rape places a huge shadow over their lives within Pakistan’s honor-based culture.

Christian women and girls are at risk of sexual violence in the public sphere, including in the workplace and in schools. Many of them are maids, or cleaners, and are targeted for sexual exploitation. According to a country expert, it is becoming the norm to rape Christian children, with reports revealing recent assaults against a three-year old girl and an eight-year old girl, the latter at the hands of her school principal ([International Christian Concern, 31 July 2021](#)).

Christian women and girls are also trapped in cycles of debt and bonded labor, such as in brick-kiln factories. This affects Christians of both genders, although is a context in which female Christians may be additionally exposed to sexual violence. As a country expert explains, “the circular debt ensures enslavement of generations. The landlords enjoy charging extortionate rents to Christian families and violate Christian women at will (because Christians have no honor). Christians don't pay religious taxes but they are forced to pay in other ways.”

Christian women and girls are also at risk of honor killings and blasphemy allegations. They additionally risk being killed, such as in the case of 24-year old Sonia, from Rawalpindi, who was fatally shot by a Muslim man for [refusing to marry](#) him (International Christian Concern, 12 June 2020).

Gender-specific religious persecution / Male

Group	Male Pressure Points
Economic	Economic harassment via business/job/work access
Political and Legal	False charges
Security	Trafficking; Violence – death; Violence – physical; Violence – sexual
Social and Cultural	Violence – psychological
Technological	-

Blasphemy laws continue to provide the structure for much of the rights violations of Christian men in Pakistan. “Men and boys are especially likely to be accused of blasphemy as they form the majority of employed Christians,” a country expert explains, “this then means they are more likely to encounter intolerant Muslims who have a tendency to react in a highly defensive and accusatory way in response to perceived disrespect to Islam and the Prophet of Islam.” Christian men live in constant fear of blasphemy allegations, false charges, destruction of their property, arrest, imprisonment, beatings, torture and execution. Exemplifying the dangers, in late 2020 a Christian man was sentenced to death for having sent ‘blasphemous’ text messages to his former supervisor, having been in custody since 2013 ([Al-Jazeera, 8 September 2020](#)). As a country expert observed: “Men pay the price simply for being Christian in an Islamic world.”

Christian men and boys are often compelled to take lower status and dangerous jobs. They are often referred to as "Chura," a derogatory word meaning "filthy", which is used for road sweepers or sewage cleaners. Whereas there is also a Christian middle class and not all hold lower status jobs, discrimination and social inferiority are ubiquitous. Islamic law and practices promote an attitude of Muslim superiority in society; thus, Muslims are encouraged not to ac-

cept Christian men being in more senior positions to them in workplaces. This can translate into a lack of employment opportunities and discrimination after a job is found.

There are also reports of Christian boys being subject to sexual abuse. Experts indicate that instances of rape and murder of young boys are on the rise in Pakistan, including young Christians. Christian men and boys are also trapped in cycles of bonded labor, such as in brick-kiln factories.

Persecution of other religious minorities

According to the US State Department (IRFR 2020):

- "The constitution establishes Islam as the state religion and requires all provisions of the law to be consistent with Islam. The constitution states, 'Subject to law, public order, and morality, every citizen shall have the right to profess, practice, and propagate his religion.' It also states, 'A person of the Qadiani group or the Lahori group (who call themselves Ahmadis), is a non-Muslim.'" (page 1)
- "According to civil society and media, armed sectarian groups connected to organizations banned by the government, including the LeJ, TTP, and the once-banned anti-Shia group SSP, continued to be responsible for violence and other abuses against religious minorities. Groups designated as terrorist organizations by the United States and other governments, such as ISIS, also committed violent acts. Among the targets of these attacks were Shia Muslims, particularly the predominantly Shia Hazara community. According to the SATP, the number of sectarian attacks by armed groups continued to decrease, corresponding with an overall decline in terrorist attacks. Data on sectarian attacks varied because no standardized definition existed of what constituted a sectarian attack among reporting organizations. According to the SATP, at least 10 persons were killed and three injured in 10 incidents of sectarian violence by extremist groups during the year. These attacks targeted gatherings of Shia individuals." (page 27)
- NGOs expressed concern about what they stated was the increasing frequency of attempts to kidnap, forcibly convert, and forcibly marry young women from religious minority communities, especially young Hindu and Christian women. There continued to be reports of attacks on holy places, cemeteries, and religious symbols of Hindu, Christian, and Ahmadiyya minorities. According to Ahmadi Muslim civil society organizations, the government failed to restrict advertisements or speeches inciting anti-Ahmadi violence, as provided for in the National Action Plan. Civil society groups continued to express concerns about the safety of religious minorities." (page 3)

Further information:

The situation of other religious minorities did not improve since Imran Khan took over as Prime Minister in 2018, as attacks, killings and blasphemy cases continued unabated. In October and November 2020, three [Hindu temples](#) were attacked (UCA News, 4 November 2020) and reports show how [Shia Muslims](#) are affected by the country's blasphemy laws as well (UCA News, 1 December 2020). They were even the [main group](#) targeted, with Ahmadi being a distant second, according to a report published in September 2021 (UCA News, 10 September 2021). From Sindh province, a report emerged that [Hindu girls](#) are forcefully converted on a large scale (Gandhara,

20 April 2021). Another incident took place in the village of Rahim Yar Khan in Punjab Province, when a [Hindu temple was vandalized](#), after a court ordered the release of an 8 year old Hindu boy who had been accused of blasphemy (DW, 5 August 2021).

The Ahmadi are targets of persecution, discrimination and intolerance by a plethora of radical Islamic groups, just as the Christian and the Hindu minorities are. However, the challenge for the Ahmadi is that they are not allowed to call themselves 'Muslims', which is what they are according to their own understanding. In most dealings with the government, from attending school to being employed by the state, Ahmadis have to sign documents which declare the finality of the Prophet Mohammed, which goes against their faith. Attacks against these minorities occur with a sickening frequency. One prominent example of discrimination against the Ahmadi minority took place in the government sphere.

As stated by the US State Department (IRFR 2020, page 9):

- "The constitution prohibits discriminatory admission based on religious affiliation to any governmental educational institution. According to regulations, the only factors affecting admission to government schools are students' grades and home provinces; however, students must declare their religious affiliation on application forms. This declaration is also required for private educational institutions, including universities. Students who identify themselves as Muslims must declare in writing they believe the Prophet Muhammad is the final prophet. Non-Muslims are required to have the head of their local religious communities verify their religious affiliation. There is no provision in the law for atheists."

On a more positive note, Pakistan had opened the corridor of Kartarpur, paving the way for pilgrimages from India to one of the most important holy sites of the Sikh minority (MSN News, 29 June 2020). And when construction workers deliberately destroyed an ancient Buddhist statue discovered in construction work in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa in July 2020, this led to criminal charges brought against them (RFE/RL, 18 July 2020).

Future outlook

The outlook for Christians as viewed through the lens of:

Islamic oppression, blended with Ethno-religious hostility

Competition between the Taliban and IS increases the pressure on both groups to recruit followers. Their recruitment strategy requires each group to appear closer to the heart of Islam than the other. In their efforts to appear more Islamic, one strategy has been to attack the 'dhimmi' as they are most vulnerable to the ideology of 'pure Islam'. This competition is beginning to affect politics too, especially as some radical Islamic groups are being wooed by politicians. The Taliban governing Afghanistan will most likely give their connections in Pakistan additional weight, credibility and funds, adding to their level of influence in Pakistan's politics as well. Striving for a purer Islamic identity (as carried out by the radical Islamic groups) seems to focus on Islamizing the school curriculum, thus bringing radical Islamic madrassa ideology into public schools. This is likely to go hand in hand with more violations against Christians and the removal of as many of the rights of Christians as possible at a time when the government is not particularly interested in granting rights to minorities. This can be seen in the rather limited pow-

ers of the new National Minorities Council and the findings of the Commission on Forced Conversions, even the denial that such conversions happen in the first place. This in turn fits well into wider society's negative attitude towards Christians. *Islamic oppression* will thus most likely remain strong in Pakistan.

Organized corruption and crime

Christians will continue to be discriminated against and often exploited, not least in cases involving bonded labor and land-grabbing. The increasing media coverage about the dire working conditions for such Christians and the basis for discrimination in the caste system, is hardly likely to bring any change.

Dictatorial paranoia

Whereas the old political parties are no longer in power and the influential political families find themselves in the opposition role, this Persecution engine will not become weaker, although the opposition has been largely marginalized and paralyzed. Pakistan's politicians have a track record for clinging to power and causing religious minorities to suffer and be used as scapegoats. Prime Minister Imran Khan does not seem to be an exception, as his main challenge may prove to be the economic difficulties Pakistan is facing. But the army is a driver of this engine as well and may see itself facing emboldened, strengthened and growing radical Islamic groups in the future. Additionally, there are external challenges: The fact that Gilgit-Baltistan will be granted [provincial status](#) seems to be aimed against arch-nemesis India and its Kashmir policy (Geo TV, 1 November 2020). All this is fertile ground for continued *Dictatorial paranoia*.

External Links - Persecution Dynamics

- Persecution engines description: sentenced to 10 years imprisonment - <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-asia-44737793>
- The Persecution pattern description: Punjab - [http://www.asianews.it/news-en/Muslim-mob-attacks-a-Christian-village.-Houses-looted,-men-and-women-beaten-and-injured-\(VIDEO\)-53169.html](http://www.asianews.it/news-en/Muslim-mob-attacks-a-Christian-village.-Houses-looted,-men-and-women-beaten-and-injured-(VIDEO)-53169.html)
- Block 1.8: It has been risky for Christians to speak about their faith with those other than immediate family (extended family, others). (4.00 points): being arrested - <https://www.ucanews.com/news/pakistani-christians-arrested-for-promoting-christianity/91506>
- 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.). (3.75 points): new rules - <https://www.reuters.com/article/pakistan-socialmedia-censorship/new-internet-rules-to-give-pakistan-blanket-powers-of-censorship-idUSL8N2I530W>
- Block 2.8: Christian children have been pressured into attending anti-Christian or majority religion teaching at any level of education. (4.00 points): islamize - <https://www.dw.com/en/pakistan-schools-islamization/a-57640587>
- Block 3.7: Christians have been pressured by their community to renounce their faith. (4.00 points): to look into - <https://www.ucanews.com/news/pakistani-pm-orders-probe-into-forced-conversions/90522>
- Block 3.10: Christians have been discriminated against in public or private employment for faith-related reasons. (3.75 points): vacant posts - <https://www.ucanews.com/news/elite-civil-service-jobs-a-step-too-far-for-pakistani-catholics/94410>
- Block 3.1: Christians have been harassed, threatened or obstructed in their daily lives for faith-related reasons (e.g. for not meeting majority religion or traditional dress codes, beard codes etc.). (3.50 points): heritage of the caste system - <https://www.worldwatchmonitor.org/2018/11/untouchable-caste-identity-haunts-pakistani-christians-like-asia-bibi/>

- Block 3.1: Christians have been harassed, threatened or obstructed in their daily lives for faith-related reasons (e.g. for not meeting majority religion or traditional dress codes, beard codes etc.). (3.50 points): venom on wheels - <https://www.ucanews.com/news/venom-on-wheels-pakistans-hate-mongering-rickshaws/91393>
- Block 4.1: The Constitution (or comparable national or state law) limits freedom of religion as formulated in Article 18 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. (4.00 points): briefing paper - <https://www.icj.org/pakistan-right-to-freedom-of-religion-or-belief-under-sustained-attack/>
- Block 4.5: Christians have been discriminated against when engaging with the authorities (local administration, government, army, etc.) for faith-related reasons. (3.75 points): denial - <https://www.ucanews.com/news/rights-groups-slam-pakistan-senators-forced-conversion-denial/90002>
- Block 4.13: Christians have been accused of blasphemy or insulting the majority religion, either by state authorities or by pressure groups. (3.75 points): David Masih - <https://www.uscirf.gov/david-masih>
- Block 5.18: Churches have been hindered in establishing, managing, maintaining and conducting schools, or charitable, humanitarian, medical, social or cultural organizations, institutions and associations. (3.50 points): Edwardes College - <https://www.ucanews.com/news/pakistani-court-nationalizes-christian-college/92744>
- Pressure in Block 5 / Church sphere: August 2016 - <http://www.ucanews.com/news/internet-restrictions-a-further-blow-to-church-mission-in-pakistan/77686>
- Pressure in Block 5 / Church sphere: drafted - <https://international.la-croix.com/news/world/debate-on-christian-divorce-heats-up-in-pakistan/13956>
- Pressure in Block 5 / Church sphere: spared demolition - <https://www.ucanews.com/news/catholic-church-saved-from-demolition-in-pakistan/93831>
- Violence / Block 6 - commentary: Hasan Kathore - <https://www.ucanews.com/news/catholic-mother-son-murdered-over-pakistan-drain-dispute/90258>
- Violence / Block 6 - commentary: Gujjar community - <https://www.ucanews.com/news/pakistani-christians-protest-over-poisoning-case/92600>
- Violence / Block 6 - commentary: Sajjad Masih Gill - <https://www.ucanews.com/news/pakistani-christian-serving-life-for-blasphemy-gets-death-sentence/91732>
- Violence / Block 6 - commentary: Zafar Bhatti - <https://mailchi.mp/morningstarnews.org/life-sentence-upheld-for-christian-in-blasphemy-case>
- Violence / Block 6 - commentary: Edwardes College - <https://www.ucanews.com/news/pakistani-court-nationalizes-christian-college/92744>
- Violence / Block 6 - commentary: 600 Christian families - <https://www.ucanews.com/news/desperate-christians-face-homelessness-in-pakistan/91577>
- Violence / Block 6 - commentary: 80 Christian families - <https://www.ucanews.com/news/muslim-mob-attacks-christian-villagers-in-pakistan/92480>
- Gender-specific religious persecution Female description: AP News, 7 December 2019 - <https://apnews.com/article/ap-top-news-pakistan-international-news-weekend-reads-lahore-c586d0f73fe249718ec06f6867b0244e>
- Gender-specific religious persecution Female description: CREID, 30 July 2021 - <https://creid.ac/religious-inequalities-trafficking-and-forced-labour/>
- Gender-specific religious persecution Female description: CLAAS, 18 August 2021; - <https://www.claas.org.uk/2021/08/18/two-christian-girls-kidnapped-at-gunpoint-outside-their-house/>
- Gender-specific religious persecution Female description: CREID, November 2020 - https://opendocs.ids.ac.uk/opendocs/bitstream/handle/20.500.12413/15800/CREID_Intersections_Series_Violence_and_Discrimination_against_Women_of_Religious_Minority_Backgrounds_in_Pakistan.pdf?sequence=6&isAllowed=y
- Gender-specific religious persecution Female description: International Christian Concern, 31 July 2021 - <https://www.persecution.org/2021/07/31/another-christian-girl-raped-school-pakistan/>
- Gender-specific religious persecution Female description: refusing to marry - <https://www.persecution.org/2020/12/06/christian-woman-pakistan-killed-refusing-marriage-proposal/>
- Gender-specific religious persecution Male description: Al-Jazeera, 8 September 2020 - <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2020/9/8/pakistani-christian-sentenced-to-death-for-blasphemous-texts>
- Persecution of other religious minorities: Hindu temples - <https://www.ucanews.com/news/third-hindu-temple-vandalized-in-pakistan-in-three-weeks/90142>

- Persecution of other religious minorities: Shia Muslims - <https://www.ucanews.com/news/shia-muslims-feel-the-heat-of-pakistans-blasphemy-laws/90509>
- Persecution of other religious minorities: main group - <https://www.ucanews.com/news/pakistan-reports-spike-in-blasphemy-cases-in-2020/94083>
- Persecution of other religious minorities: Hindu girls - <https://gandhara.rferl.org/a/pakistan-hindu-brides-conversion-sindh/31205637.html>
- Persecution of other religious minorities: Hindu temple was vandalized - <https://www.dw.com/en/pakistan-orders-probe-into-hindu-temple-vandalism/a-58764292>
- Future outlook: provincial status - <https://www.geo.tv/latest/316272-pm-imran-khan-announces-granting-gilgit-baltistan-interim-provincial-status>

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=Pakistan>
- <https://www.worldwatchmonitor.org/countries/Pakistan>