

World
Watch
Research

Israel: Full Country Dossier

March 2022



OpenDoors

Serving persecuted **Christians** worldwide

Open Doors International / World Watch Research

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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 1 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 / Israel

Brief country details

Israel: Population (UN estimate for 2021)	Christians	Chr%
8,842,000	175,000	2.0

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

Israel: World Watch List	Points	WWL Rank
WWL 2022	41	76
WWL 2021	40	-
WWL 2020	38	-
WWL 2019	39	-
WWL 2018	40	-

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

Dominant persecution engines and drivers

Israel: Main Persecution engines	Main drivers
Religious nationalism	Government officials
Clan oppression	One's own (extended) family
Islamic oppression	One's own (extended) family

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

Brief description of the persecution situation

The majority of Christians in Israel are Arab Christians. Many of them have stated that they feel like second-class citizens in Israel, partly because they are ethnically Arab, and partly because they are a religious minority in a Jewish state. They also form a religious minority within an ethnic minority: As Arab Christians they experience a sense of marginalization due to the perceived increasing religiosity among Arab Muslims. Notably, they are located in a few restricted, disconnected locations in Israel and the Palestinian Territories (Nazareth, Bethlehem, and Gaza). Since church dioceses do not line up with modern day borders and demarcation zones, they cannot provide free access to their churches, schools and institutions in Israel to Palestinian Christians living in the Palestinian Territories. In practice, access for Palestinian Christians to their diocese in Jerusalem or the Holy Sites in Jerusalem, the Sea of Galilee and Nazareth is generally limited to once a year.

Vandalism of traditional church buildings occurs from time to time. A small number of Arab Christians belong to non-traditional Christian communities, who experience limitations because their religious community is not officially recognized. While allowed to function, unlike recognized religious communities, they cannot administer religious courts, which prevents them from performing the marriages, divorces and funerals of their members. Members of some unrecognized groups therefore often have their personal status documents, such as marriage licenses, processed by the authorities of recognized religious communities.

Then there is the diverse group of Messianic believers, often with a Jewish background. In a majority Ultra-Orthodox Jewish area, demonstrations were held regularly in front of a building where they gather for worship, sometimes leading to damage. This seems to have stopped since the advent of COVID-19. Several Messianic Jews who want to immigrate to Israel have been refused residency permits, based on their faith. Messianic believers fall under non-traditional church groups and are not officially recognized by the government as “religious communities”, which gives them less basic rights in matters concerning marriage, burial and other religious issues.

Finally, there is the very small group of converts with an Islamic or Druze background. Of all the Christian groups in Israel, they generally face the most pressure, primarily from their families: in extreme cases, they may face violent reactions from family members.

Specific examples of violations of rights in the reporting period

- A Christian lady was killed by her son allegedly because she had converted from Islam to Orthodox Christianity.
- There were six reported cases of vandalism of churches or church property.
- An Armenian priest was injured when he was attacked by a group of Jewish young men in Jerusalem.

(Source: Open Doors Research)

Specific examples of positive developments

In June 2021, Israel's Supreme Court ruled that a Messianic congregation should be granted tax-deductible donation status. This status had previously been denied by the Knesset finance committee headed by an ultra-Orthodox Jew. The Tiferet Yeshua (the Glory of Jesus) congregation first applied for status in 2013.

WWL 2022: Keys to understanding / Israel

Links for general background information

Name	Quote Reference	Link	Last accessed on
Amnesty International country report	AI country report	https://www.amnesty.org/en/location/middle-east-and-north-africa/israel-and-occupied-palestinian-territories/	1 February 2022
BBC News country profile	BBC country profile	https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-middle-east-14628835	1 February 2022
Bertelsmann Transformation Index (Israel not listed)			1 February 2022
CIA World Factbook	CIA Factbook	https://www.cia.gov/the-world-factbook/countries/israel/	1 February 2022
Economist Intelligence Unit Democracy Index 2021	EIU 2021	https://pages.eiu.com/rs/753-RIQ-438/images/eiu-democracy-index-2021.pdf	1 February 2022
FFP's Fragile States Index 2021	FSI 2021	https://fragilestatesindex.org/country-data/	1 February 2022
Freedom House's 2022 Democracy index (Israel not listed)			1 February 2022
Freedom House's 2022 Global Freedom index	Freedom House/Global Freedom 2022	https://freedomhouse.org/country/israel/freedom-world/2022	1 February 2022
Freedom House's Freedom on the Net 2021 report (Israel not listed)			1 February 2022
Garda World country report	Garda World	https://crisis24.garda.com/insights-intelligence/intelligence/country-reports/israel	1 February 2022
Human Rights Watch World Report 2022	HRW 2022	https://www.hrw.org/world-report/2022/country-chapters/israel/palestine	1 February 2022
Internet World Stats 2021	IWS 2021	https://www.internetworldstats.com/middle.htm#il	1 February 2022
Middle East Concern country profile	MEC country profile	https://www.meconcern.org/countries/israel/	1 February 2022
RSF's 2021 World Press Freedom Index	World Press Freedom 2021	https://rsf.org/en/israel	1 February 2022
Transparency International's 2021 Corruption Perceptions Index	CPI 2021	https://www.transparency.org/en/cpi/2021/index/isr	1 February 2022
UNDP's Global Human Development Indicators	HDI 2020	https://hdr.undp.org/en/countries/profiles/ISR	1 February 2022
US State Department's 2020 International Religious Freedom country report	IRFR 2020	https://www.state.gov/reports/2020-report-on-international-religious-freedom/israel-west-bank-and-gaza/	1 February 2022
USCIRF 2021 country reports (Israel not listed)			1 February 2022
World Bank country report	World Bank data	https://data.worldbank.org/country/israel	1 February 2022

Recent history

The State of Israel was founded in 1948 to serve as a homeland for Jewish people, many of whom were survivors of the Holocaust (in Hebrew: Shoah, 'catastrophe'). The establishment of the world's only majority Jewish country was opposed by Palestinian inhabitants and neighboring Arab countries, leading to continued conflict and a series of regional wars. Tensions and conflicts continue to flare up between the Palestinian Authority and the Israeli government over land rights and managing the coexistence of Israel and the Palestinian Territories. The relocation of the US embassy from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem in May 2018 has added to these tensions and resulted in dozens of Palestinians being killed or injured in demonstrations opposing this move, especially in Gaza.

Among the political and military challenges for the industrially developed country are the threat of war from Iran and the constant danger of Islamist attacks from groups both within and outside the country. A potentially positive economic development is the discovery of large oil and gas fields under the Mediterranean Sea, although this has led to disputes over ownership with Lebanon. On the diplomatic front, a remarkable development occurred in August 2020: The United Arab Emirates became the first Gulf state to establish diplomatic relations with Israel; this move was followed by further Arab states.

After three series of parliamentary elections between April 2019 and March 2020 and failed attempts to form a majority government, Benjamin Netanyahu and Benny Gantz agreed to form a government of national unity in April 2020 to tackle the COVID-19 crisis. This attempt also failed and for the fourth time in two years, elections were held in March 2021. In June 2021, Naftali Bennet of the Jewish nationalist Yamina party formed a broad coalition that eventually ousted Benjamin Netanyahu. Unrest over forced evictions of Palestinians in East Jerusalem in May 2021 led to conflict with Hamas, including an 11-day war with Gaza's armed factions that left hundreds dead and communal violence in Israeli cities. Throughout 2021, tensions ran particularly high in East Jerusalem and the West Bank, as violence between Israeli settlers and Palestinians continued to escalate.

Political and legal landscape

Israel has no formal constitution, but a Basic Law which characterizes the country as a “Jewish and democratic state”. The Economic Intelligence Unit classifies Israel as a 'flawed democracy' in its 2021 democracy index, placing it 23rd out of 165 countries (EIU 2021).

The [2020 Freedom of Thought Report](#) reports:

- "Due in part to the lack of agreement between secular and religious Israelis, the country never adopted a constitution after the establishment of the State. Israel's Supreme Court has repeatedly held that the Basic Law on Human Dignity and Liberty protects freedom of religion or belief, and freedom of expression. The Basic Law describes the country as a 'Jewish and democratic state' and references the Declaration of the Establishment of the State of Israel, which promises religious freedom and full social and political equality, regardless of religious affiliation. However, a degree of legal discrimination among religious communities exists. ... Moreover, certain laws and policies (exemplified in this report) privilege Jews against non-Jews, and Orthodox Jews against non-Orthodox ones, including those identifying with secular or Humanistic Judaism."

Middle East Concern describes the legal framework governing Israel as follows (MEC country profile):

- "The Nation State Law passed by the Knesset in 2018 specifies the State of Israel to be the national home of the Jewish people and Hebrew to be the official language. This has been criticized by civil rights groups for neglecting to recognise the equality of non-Jews. However, the 1992 Basic Law on Human Dignity and Liberty has consistently been interpreted as protecting freedom of religious practice. Recognised religious communities are authorised to operate courts covering personal status matters and may alternatively

seek adjudication on some matters within the civil courts. Although proselytising is not illegal, it is a legal offence to offer inducements to conversion and to seek to convert a minor to a religion not held by either of the minor's parents. Israel ratified the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) on 3 October 1991. The ICCPR upholds the right to freedom of religion, including the right to hold a religion of one's choice and the right to manifest that religion (Article 18). It also upholds the rights of minorities and the principle of non-discrimination. In ratifying the ICCPR, Israel reserved the right to apply religious laws for personal status matters. Messianic believers of Jewish ethnicity have at times faced social prejudice and harassment. Jewish people seeking to enter Israel under the Law of Return (Aliyah) often claim they have faced obstruction or discrimination if their Messianic beliefs have become known to the authorities."

According to [World Atlas](#), accessed 1 February 2022:

- Israel is a parliamentary democracy where "top executive power is exercised by the Cabinet of Ministers, legislative power by the Knesset, and law interpretation overseen by a judicial selection committee." The Israeli government is comprised of the president, the executive, the legislature and the judiciary. Its head is the president, who only fulfills a ceremonial role. The head of the executive branch is the prime minister who also leads a multi-party system. Israel has many political parties. These can be grouped together in five blocs: Three Zionist party blocs composed of right, left and centrist wings and two other blocs representing minority groups (i.e. the non-Zionist Ultra-Orthodox block and the anti-Zionist Arab bloc). After twelve years, the era of Israel's longest-serving Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu came to an end in June 2021 when the leader of the right-wing nationalist Yamina party, Naftali Bennett, was sworn in as Israel's 13th Prime Minister. He is the first to lead the government composed of a coalition of religious, secular, nationalist, left-wing, centrist and Arab parties and is to be replaced after two years by Yair Lapid, the leader of the center-left Yesh Atid party. It is the first Israeli government to include an Arab Muslim party, whose leader, Mansour Abbas, serves as deputy minister of Arab Society Affairs. Also, after years of presence the ultra-Orthodox Jewish parties have left the Ministry of the Interior. Because of their influence on this department, Messianic believers of Jewish ethnicity, their spouses and children encountered problems in obtaining residence permits.

According to a country expert, the new coalition's attitude remains unfavorable towards Messianic Jews and Christians; for instance, family reunification has been thwarted.

Religious landscape

Israel: Religious context	Number of adherents	%
Christians	175,000	2.0
Muslim	1,837,000	20.8
Hindu	450	0.0
Buddhist	40,400	0.5
Ethno-religionist	0	0.0
Jewish	6,252,000	70.7
Bahai	14,000	0.2
Atheist	46,000	0.5
Agnostic	463,000	5.2
Other	12,800	0.1
<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)

Over 71% of the Israeli population is Jewish, more than 20% Muslim and 2% is Christian, according to the April 2021 estimates by World Christian Database. In addition, there are 1.6% Druze, as listed in the CIA Factbook.

According to the annual [religion and state index](#) conducted by religious freedom NGO Hiddush (September 2021), 48% of Israelis identify as secular; 17% as traditional-not-religious, 11% as ultra-Orthodox; 11% as Zionist Orthodox; and 13% as traditional-religious. A tiny minority (less than 0.2%) identify as being part of the Israeli Messianic Movement as stated in the [Caspari Center survey](#), published on 7 February 2022. Many Druze, Arab Muslim and Christian communities are concentrated in the Galilee region in the north, while Muslim communities of Bedouin descent are mostly located in the Negev, in the south of the country.

In general there is a high level of freedom of religion in Israel, especially compared to other Middle Eastern countries. Most of the violations of religious freedom that do occur are caused by radical individuals or small groups of religious militants. A difficulty within the wider Church in Israel is the fact that it finds itself in a context of intractable conflict. The historical narratives surrounding the formation of the State 'collide', a source of tension between large parts of the Messianic community and the Arab Christian community.

Economic landscape

- **GDP (Purchasing Power Parity):** \$353.4 billion (2020 est. / CIA Factbook)
- **GDP per capita (Purchasing Power Parity):** \$38,300 (2020 est. / CIA Factbook)
- **National income per capita:** With its technologically advanced free market economy, Israel is a prosperous country with a high average national income per capita of the adult population (€43,100), which is higher than that of several Western European countries. Women's labor income share in Israel is 38%. This corresponds to the level in the USA; while it is somewhat lower than in many Western European countries, it is significantly higher than in neighboring Middle East countries (15%).
- **Income inequality:** According to the [World Inequality Report 2022](#), there is a high degree of income inequality. The lowest 50% of the population earn an average of \$11,200, while the top 10% earns 19 times more: \$211,900. These inequality levels are comparable to those in the USA. In 2021, income inequality in Israel increased despite falling the year before, according to Israel's National Insurance Institute ([Haaretz](#), 30 December 2021).
- **COVID-19:** In 2020, the government provided financial support in connection with the COVID-19 crisis. In the first half of 2021, however, this was discontinued, bringing income differentials back to pre-COVID levels. The COVID crisis led to a battered economy and massive unemployment. Despite this, Israel nevertheless made it onto the OECD list of one of the twenty richest countries in the world in 2021, thanks to its booming technology sector.
- **Employment rate:** The total employment rate is relatively low at 61.6%. A concern for many Israeli citizens are longer-term structural problems such as prices for houses and basic consumer goods, low employment rates of minorities (such as the fastest-growing social segments - the ultra-Orthodox Jewish and Arab-Israeli populations).

Economically, Christians belong to the middle class and are generally well educated. However the number of Arab Christians is declining, leaving them with less economic and political influence than before and increasingly vulnerable to unemployment. As a result, several Christians - especially young people - want to leave the country to find work elsewhere. That said, the Christian Arab community has an income which is above average for Israel and achieves a proportionally higher number of university degrees at all levels. However, this can also provide an extra incentive to leave the country and find work abroad. The economic situation of Messianic believers is often good, they are generally known for being motivated and have a strong work ethic. More and more are rising in the ranks of the armed forces, academia, business and health sectors. At the same time, several of them indicate that they fear for their jobs if their faith becomes publicly known.

Social and cultural landscape

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

- **Main ethnic groups:** Jewish 74.1% (of which Israel-born 78.1%, Europe/America/Oceania-born 15.2%, Africa-born 4.3%, Asia-born 2.4%), Arab 21%, other 4.9% (2019 est.)
- **Main languages:** Hebrew (official), Arabic (special status under Israeli law), English (most commonly used foreign language)
- **Urban population:** 92.7% of total population (2021)

- **Literacy rate:** 97.8% of the population age 15 and over can read and write.

According to UNDP's HDI 2020:

- **HDI score and ranking:** With a score of 0.919, Israel ranks 19th out of 189 countries and falls in the 'very high human development' category.
- **Life expectancy:** 83 at birth, a figure that has increased by 6.4 years since 1990 and is among the highest in the world.
- **Education:** Mean years of schooling is 13, an average that increased by 2.2 years since 1990.
- **Unemployment:** 4.4 % of Israel's labor force is without official employment (est. 2020).

Israeli society is pluriform with many different ethnicities, religious and cultural backgrounds. Whereas at least 74% of the population is of Jewish ethnicity, the second largest ethnic group are the Arabs, amounting to 21% of the population.

There is an identifiable growth of secularism and atheism within the Arab community, especially among the younger generation. There has also been an increase in crime within the Arab community in Israel, with a large majority of those killed in Israel in the past year being Arabs. According to a country expert, emigration remains a preferred option for at least some of the Arab-Christian population; the reasons for this are the growing unrest in Arab society coupled with the long-term political uncertainty.

The COVID-19 crisis, not only affected health, it also caused an economic decline and financial hardship in many families. The situation of vulnerable groups such as the elderly, the mentally ill and drug addicts has become even more precarious due to uncertainties about the future, rapid digitalization and greater social isolation. As far as is known, it has not affected religious freedom and has not led to an increase in persecution. Many Arab Christians work in the medical sector, a field that is highly respected.

Technological landscape

According to Internet World Stats (IWS 2021):

- **Internet usage:** 64.8% penetration (June 2021)
- **Facebook usage:** 61.9% penetration (June 2021)

According to World Bank (country profile):

- **Mobile phone:** 131.7 subscriptions per 100 people

Israel is recognized around the world as being a major technology center. According to the CIA Factbook:

- "Israel has a highly developed economy with focus on technology products; investment in cyber-security industry and hub for start-ups; near universal broadband delivery to households and mobile penetration; LTE coverage, expanded fiber network with plans for 5G; emergency law allows mobile tracking; importer of broadcast equipment, integrated circuits, and computers from China; submarine cable connectivity to Europe (2020)."

Since data are a core asset in many technological enterprises, data protection is especially relevant in Israel. It is precisely in the Privacy Protection Act of January 2022 that the Israeli government has made its largest and most comprehensive update in decades, probably making 2022 a turning point for Israel in this area, experts say. According to a leading authority in Cyber Law practice in Israel: "At the heart of the new amendment are new procedures and regulatory powers that portend a dramatic increase in risks associated with information security and purposeful processing violations" ([IAPP](#), 26/1/22).

The COVID-19 crisis also brought with it threats to the data privacy of citizens. For tracing contacts for the purpose of fighting COVID-19 infection, Israel chose to rely on its domestic security agency, something the head of Democracy in the Information Age Program at the Israel Democracy Institute described as "an extreme approach that is at odds with other democracies" and which "presents an unprecedented breach of privacy and lays the foundation for invasive surveillance tools that can be used in applications beyond public health" ([Brookings Institute](#), 6 July 2020).

Christians have also experienced the far-reaching control of the Israeli government - despite freedom of expression, belief and conscience being protected in the country. For example, the foreign Christian wife of an Israeli Jewish citizen did not initially receive Israeli citizenship because she had liked and shared Facebook posts relating to a Jewish-Messianic community. On this basis, the Ministry of Interior suspected her of being a missionary. After much delay and a pending appeal, the Ministry of Interior finally granted the Christian citizenship.

Security situation

The security situation in Israel is one of the most complex in the world. As an isolated state in a hostile environment with no neighboring allies, Israel has to deal with a great variety of security issues, with serious threats both from within and from outside the country. Internally, Israel is dealing with the problems surrounding the Palestinian claim for setting up their own state. As long as there is no prospect of lasting peace, it is inevitable that confrontations with Palestinians living either in the West Bank or Gaza will continue. Provocations from both sides will lead to more hostilities and thus to more casualties.

Global risk management firm Crisis24 evaluates Israel's security situation (including the West Bank) as follows:

- "There is a high risk of uncoordinated, low-capability attacks in East Jerusalem and the West Bank, mostly involving vehicle ramming or firearm and knife attacks targeting IDF personnel and Jewish civilians, especially settlers (in the West Bank). The uncoordinated nature of the attacks makes them difficult for security forces to prevent. There is a high risk of Islamist cells in the West Bank plotting sophisticated attacks on civilian targets in Israel, but the risk of higher-capability suicide and IED attacks is mitigated by the IDF's tight control over access to the West Bank and Gaza and extensive network of informants."

However, the risk of a full-scale war is relatively low, according to [24Crisis](#) (last accessed 11 February 2022):

- "Since the 10–21 May war (Operation Guardian of the Walls), Israel-Hamas border incidents have largely declined, although Hamas-backed stabbing attacks in East Jerusalem have become more frequent in late 2021."

The ceasefire between Hamas and Israel remains fragile as only two of its four main components have been finalized. Also in terms of external threats, Israel faces several challenges, relating to territorial issues (Golan Heights), as well as indirect threats such as Iranian officials claiming that Israel should be eliminated. It is doubtful whether there will be a direct confrontation, apart from precision strikes from Israel targeting Iran/Hezbollah affiliated sites and/or units in Syria and apart from missile strikes against Israel carried out from the Palestinian territories. 24Crisis considers a regional war between Israel and Iran unlikely as long as nuclear talks between Iran and the P5+1 continue. Furthermore, the most recent major incident involving Hezbollah in August 2021 did not escalate, although the Lebanese Shiite political party and militant group was considering retaliation against Israel.

Trends analysis

1) Sharp increase in crime rates among Arab-Israelis

There has been a sharp increase in crime rates among the Arab community in Israel. According to the New York Times ([NYT](#), 2 October 2021), the criminal motivated murders "account for about 70 percent of all Israeli homicides, though Arabs represent just over 20 percent of the population. The surging violence has shocked the country and put a spotlight on what the government acknowledges to have been decades of neglect of crime in Arab communities." This development is a strong motivation for young Christian adults to consider emigrating to Western countries.

2) As their numbers dwindle, the economic influence of Christians diminishes

The percentage of Christians in Israel's Arab community is declining, causing more and more Muslim-run businesses to gain influence. As a result, more Christians lose their jobs. Although the percentage of academics among Christians is higher than among Muslims, this can also make it easier for Christians to leave the country and find work in the West. In addition, the COVID-19 restrictions resulted in many young people losing their jobs and others having to close their businesses. Christians were also affected by this situation.

3) Growth of secularization and atheism

There is a growth of secularism and atheism, especially among the young generation. Particularly in universities, the influence of atheism and secularism can be considerable. Both pose a challenge to religions in general, although they are generally more critical of Islam than of Christianity. While Christians generally support 'secularism' - in the sense of separation between state and religion - atheism can also pull young Christians away from their faith. The tendency among young Muslims to turn to atheism because of the violence caused by radical Islam, on the other hand, could create an atmosphere less hostile to Christians.

External Links - Keys to understanding

- Political and legal landscape: 2020 Freedom of Thought Report - <https://fot.humanists.international/countries/asia-western-asia/israel/>
- Political and legal landscape: World Atlas - <https://www.worldatlas.com/articles/what-type-of-government-does-israel-have.html>
- Religious landscape description: religion and state index - https://hiddush.org/article-23506-0-2021_Israel_Religion_State_Index.aspx
- Religious landscape description: Caspari Center survey - <https://www.caspari.com/2022/02/07/the-caspari-center-survey-released-the-israeli-messianic-movement-has-more-than-tripled-in-the-last-20-years/>
- Economic landscape: World Inequality Report 2022 - <https://wid.world/document/world-inequality-report-2022/>
- Economic landscape: Haaretz - <https://www.haaretz.com/israel-news/.premium-income-inequality-widened-in-2021-despite-economic-rebound-1.10502510>
- Social and cultural landscape: UNDP's Full report for 2020 - <http://www.hdr.undp.org/sites/default/files/hdr2020.pdf>
- Technological landscape: IAPP - <https://iapp.org/news/a/a-turning-point-for-privacy-laws-in-israel/>
- Technological landscape: Brookings Institute - <https://www.brookings.edu/techstream/how-israels-covid-19-mass-surveillance-operation-works/>
- Security situation: 24Crisis - <https://crisis24.garda.com/insights-intelligence/intelligence/country-reports/israel>
- Trends analysis: NYT - <https://www.nytimes.com/2021/10/02/world/middleeast/israel-arab-crime-killings-police.html>

WWL 2022: Church information / Israel

Christian origins

Jesus Christ's ministry, death and resurrection all occurred in the context of the first century Roman occupation of Israel/Palestine and Christians have been living in Israel ever since. According to the website '[Israel and You](#)' (5 September 2017):

- “Christianity grew from a 1st century Jewish sect to a religion across the entire Greco-Roman world. ... There was intense periodic persecution of Christians. The persecution of Christians by the Roman Empire ended in 324 CE when Constantine the Great decreed tolerance for Christianity.” Israel was transformed into a Christian holy land and Christianity would dominate the region until the 7th century, when Arab armies invaded.

In the 11th century, Latin crusader armies landed and the ensuing crusades brought with them the Roman Catholic Church. Several groups of Eastern Christians entered into communion with Rome during and after the crusader period. Crusader rule lasted until the end of the 13th century when Muslim forces recaptured large parts of the land. For the next centuries Israel/Palestine would be under a variety of Islamic rulers. The Islamic Ottoman Turks ruled from the sixteenth century to World War I, when they were defeated by the French/British allied powers.

According to historical [experts \(JMECA\)](#), the Orthodox Patriarchate of Antioch split in the early eighteenth century:

- “Western Churches of reformed tradition came into the Middle East in the nineteenth century. American Presbyterian missionaries worked in Egypt, Lebanon and other parts of the region. The Church of England and the Prussian Lutheran Church jointly set up a bishopric in Jerusalem in 1841. It came to an end in the early 1880s, and separate Anglican and Lutheran bishoprics were set up towards the end of the decade. The original purpose was to convert Jews to Christianity. In that aim it largely failed, but attracted a small number of existing Christians, mostly Orthodox or Greek Catholic, in what is now Israel, the Occupied Territories and Jordan.”

When the State of Israel was established in 1948, a small group of 'Jewish Christians' was still present in the land. Those who evangelized were treated with hostility, especially as the Holocaust was generally perceived as being committed by Christians. The number of Messianic believers grew particularly after two waves of revivals, in the 1970s and the 1990s. The Christian population in Israel further increased over the years through the immigration of foreign workers and accompanying non-Jewish spouses in mixed marriages.

Church spectrum today

Israel: Church networks	Christians	%
Orthodox	39,800	22.7
Catholic	110,000	62.9
Protestant	12,500	7.1
Independent	32,500	18.6
Unaffiliated	6,300	3.6
Doubly-affiliated Christians	-26,200	-15.0
Total <small>(Any deviation from the total number of Christians stated above is due to the rounding of decimals)</small>	174,900	99.9
Evangelical movement	29,600	16.9
Renewalist movement	36,400	20.8

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.

External Links - Church information

- Christian origins: Israel and You - <http://www.israelandyou.com/christianity/>
- Christian origins: experts (JMECA) - <https://jmecca.org.uk/christianity-middle-east/history-christianity-middle-east-north-africa>

WWL 2022: Persecution Dynamics / Israel

Reporting period

1 October 2020 - 30 September 2021

Position on the World Watch List

Israel: World Watch List	Points	WWL Rank
WWL 2022	41	76
WWL 2021	40	-
WWL 2020	38	-
WWL 2019	39	-
WWL 2018	40	-

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

With 41 points, Israel has entered the list of Persecution Watch Countries for the first time. The difference of one point compared to Israel's score in the WWL 2021 reporting period is due to a higher score of just over 2 points for violent incidents. In contrast, the average pressure on Christians in Israel decreased from 7.6 points in WWL 2021 to 7.4 points. The increase in score for violence was mainly due to cases of vandalism of churches or Christian symbols on church grounds. The perpetrators often had a radical Jewish or Islamic background.

Persecution engines

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

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

Religious nationalism - Jewish (Medium):

Religious nationalism can prevail in all predominantly Jewish areas of the country, especially in areas where ultra-Orthodox Jews live. Messianic believers and Christians active in evangelism can be subject to mob attacks and social harassment of all degrees. Messianic Jews are typically banned from the Orthodox community and it is this group that feels the resistance of the religious establishment most acutely. Also Arab Christians have indicated that, under the influence of this persecution engine, they feel treated as second-class citizens especially since they constitute a religious minority within an ethnic minority. This is reinforced by the government's efforts in recent years to emphasize the Jewish character of the State of Israel. A clear example was the July 2018 amendment to the Jewish nation-state law, which enshrines Israel as "the national home of the Jewish people." Israel's minority groups are concerned, as this law is solely aimed at protecting primarily Jewish interests, values and customs and was passed as part of a 'de facto constitution'.

Orthodox Judaism has had considerable political influence because it usually balances power between the competing larger secular parties and for many years occupied a prominent place within the Ministry of Interior, allowing them to control much of the population's daily lives. Partly because of this, Messianic believers encountered problems in obtaining residence permits. Despite the departure of the Ultra-Orthodox parties from the Ministry of Interior in June 2021, there has reportedly been no substantial improvement in this area and attempts at family reunification of Christians are still being thwarted.

Clan oppression (Medium):

This Persecution engine describes how the continuing influence of age-old norms and values shaped in a family, tribal or clan context are enforced and can come in the form of traditional religion. In most Arab, Bedouin, Druze and Orthodox Jewish areas of the country, strong cultural or tribal norms can be found which affect the way people live and dress and what they eat or drink. This can have an influence on Christians living in the same area and mostly affects converts to Christianity. In the Middle East, a person's identity is strongly linked to the family and their faith. A family member's choice to renounce their original faith and convert to Christianity often leads to embarrassment and can be seen as a threat to the family's reputation. Converts to Christianity are especially vulnerable in communities that are conservative and do not permit conversion; this is particularly the case in Arab Bedouin, Druze and hardline Orthodox Jewish communities.

Islamic oppression (Medium):

About 20% of the Israeli population is Muslim and Arab towns and cities in Israel - mainly in the north - often link their ethnic identity to Islam, especially where there is no traditional Christian presence. Christian converts are not easily tolerated in such places and non-local Christians need to be careful not to provoke hostile action. It is especially the Christians with a Muslim background who experience the greatest pressure from this Persecution engine, because they have turned their backs on Islam. In some cases this can mean that they are threatened with death. For converts from Islam, the power of this Persecution engine is strong, especially at the family level.

Tensions sometimes exist between local Arab Muslims and Christians and the latter have reported feeling a sense of marginalization due to the increasing religiosity among Arab Muslims. Arab Christians indicate that attempts are made in many Muslim villages to impose an Islamic culture which makes Christian residents feel threatened from time to time. In practice, this can cause local Christians to send their children to church-run schools, which as private schools are more expensive than state-run schools, or send them to schools outside their city. In general, relations between the different religious communities are relatively peaceful.

Drivers of persecution

Israel:									
Drivers of persecution	IO	RN	ERH	CO	CDP	CPCO	SI	DPA	OCC
	MEDIUM	MEDIUM	WEAK	MEDIUM	WEAK	-	VERY WEAK	-	VERY WEAK
Government officials	-	Medium	-	-	-	-	Very weak	-	-
Ethnic group leaders	-	Very weak	Very weak	Weak	-	-	-	-	-
Non-Christian religious leaders	Very weak	Weak	-	Weak	-	-	-	-	-
Religious leaders of other churches	-	-	-	-	Medium	-	-	-	-
Violent religious groups	-	Weak	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Ideological pressure groups	Very weak	Weak	-	-	-	-	Very weak	-	-
Citizens (people from the broader society), including mobs	Weak	Weak	Weak	Weak	Very weak	-	Very weak	-	-
One's own (extended) family	Medium	Weak	-	Medium	Weak	-	-	-	-
Political parties	-	Weak	Very weak	-	-	-	-	-	-
Revolutionaries or paramilitary groups	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Organized crime cartels or networks	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	Very weak
Multilateral organizations (e.g. UN, OIC etc.) and embassies	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-

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 Religious nationalism

- **Government officials (Medium):** Messianic Jews may encounter difficulties from government officials or institutions if:
 1. they want to immigrate and settle in Israel;
 2. they set up as a non-profit organization or need building permits;
 3. they intend to preach on television.

While government officials and agencies at all levels (from local to national) are known to have contributed to an environment that allows for harassment, especially of Messianic Jews, they rarely become directly involved. This environment provides space for non-governmental organizations to operate, including ultra-Orthodox Jewish organizations. Also, when there is a conflict between Messianic Jews and Orthodox Jews, the authorities will generally try to remove the Messianic group from the scene and appease the Orthodox. Several Messianic Jews seeking to make Aliyah — a term referring to Jews coming to live in Israel — have been denied residency permits because of their faith. Many lawsuits have been fought (and won) to overturn these illegal measures. In some cases, their citizenship was revoked after immigration.

In addition, many denominations, mostly non-traditional (Protestant) churches - Messianic Jewish or Evangelical - are not officially recognized by the government as 'religious communities', leaving them with fewer basic rights in marriage, funeral and other religious matters. Also, Messianic and Evangelical Christian organizations indicate that it is very difficult for them to buy land, and if they do, to get permits to build on it. Most planning committees and land tenants are made up of elected representatives, Orthodox Jews and those influenced by them can more often than not block applications. Court intervention is often required to proceed. About 80% of the land is owned by the state, which rents it out to the general public for more than 50 years. There are only a few instances where Messianic or Evangelical Christians have been granted leases.

Finally, civil servants are known to have blocked Evangelical and Jewish Messianic public activities. For example, the chairman of the Council for Cable and Satellite Broadcasting revoked the license of the Messianic Jewish Shelanu TV as the broadcasting company would target Jews and not Christians in Israel. Shelanu's CEO denied this but decided not to appeal the decision and to continue broadcasting on the Internet. This case in 2020 made it clear that a civil servant could stop Christians preaching through Israeli TV giant HOT, which serves 700,000 households.

Drivers of Clan oppression

- **Extended family (Medium):** Jews, Muslims and Druze, who came to faith in Jesus, have been banned by relatives for their faith and in rarer cases this has also turned violent. In general, this opposition is usually expressed verbally though especially Muslims who became Christians were confronted with violence. Although Christians from a Muslim background still live in fear, there are fewer and fewer cases of Jews being exiled by their families if they come to faith. The intensity of the pressure from - in the Arab context 'clans'

and for Bedouin 'tribes' - depends on the closeness of the families in question as well as their religious loyalty. The frequency as well as the intensity of the persecution is higher in rural communities. Women who convert from Islam can lose their children through kidnapping, especially among the Arab Muslim Bedouin tribes.

Drivers of Islamic oppression

- **Extended family (Medium):** Family is the biggest source of pressure for converts from Islam. Social norms dictate that one adheres to the faith of the family, i.e. that one should not become a Christian. There is also psychological pressure that comes from the perceived shame of repentance. The family will do much - in some cases all that is necessary - to bring the convert back to Islam. Depending on the family, this may also include violence or eviction. Christians with an Islamic background therefore usually do not tell their family about their change of faith. Obviously, the intensity of the pressure depends on the closeness of the family and their religious loyalty. It is also more common and more intense in rural communities as they tend to be more religiously conservative.

Areas where Christians face most difficulties

Christians with an Islamic background experience most pressure in remote rural villages, such as the Bedouin communities in the south and in the also predominantly Muslim north (Galilee). The opposition that they face in these areas tends to be more moderate than in the rest of the Middle East. Furthermore, hostility is generally at a lower level in more cosmopolitan/mixed cities like Haifa and Tel Aviv, and higher in isolated, rural areas and the Negev desert. Converts from a Jewish background usually experience most opposition in ultra-Orthodox majority Jewish areas such as parts of Jerusalem, especially in the form of harassment and vandalism. Even for Christians without any other religious background, religious tensions can easily arise in politically and religiously sensitive Jerusalem. Some pressure and intermittent violence may also come from neighboring mosques - e.g. in Nazareth.

Christian communities and how they are affected

Communities of expatriate Christians

Expatriate Christians have not been counted as a separate category in WWL analysis as they do not function as an involuntarily isolated group in Israel.

Historical Christian communities

Most Christians in Israel are Arabs and belong to the Roman Catholic and Orthodox traditions that have existed in the country for centuries. There are also small Syrian, Coptic and Anglican communities. The majority of Historical Christian communities are found in the north of the country (Galilee and Haifa district), the rest live near Tel Aviv and Jerusalem. A large number of these denominations are officially registered, such as the Roman Catholic, Eastern Orthodox, Oriental Orthodox and Protestant traditions. Their members are generally not heavily persecuted, but they do face politically and ethnically motivated restrictions and societal pressures, including from the government and ultra-Orthodox groups or radical Israeli settlers. The latter have carried out campaigns of vandalism against church buildings in what are known

as 'price tag' attacks, particularly in Jerusalem and the Galilee. Also, leaders of traditional churches have experienced difficulties in their relations with the Israeli government, sometimes due to the alleged pro-Palestinian stance of some churches. Property conflicts regularly cause tensions between the authorities and historical churches. In Jerusalem, church staff have occasionally been cursed or spat at by Orthodox Jews, often youths. In addition, Christians from the historical communities (as well as non-traditional Christians) experience social and economic pressure in predominantly Muslim villages, for example in the form of an unofficial economic boycott by local Muslims of Christian businesses.

Converts

Christian converts may be of Muslim, Druze, Historical Christian, or Jewish background. Converts may be frowned upon by society as a whole, but most of the pressure usually comes from the family and varies in intensity depending on how religious or conservative their families are. Typically, as members of a minority group they are all exposed to "resentment, fear, suspicion, bitterness, and a downward spiral of indignity" (Kai Kjer-Hansen quoted by Peter Lawrence in [Fellow Travellers](#), World Evangelical Alliance, p. 32, 2020). Most of the known incidents of persecution are experienced by Messianic Jews and especially those engaged in outreach. In rare cases, radical Jewish religious groups may attack them or their meetings.

Converts with a Jewish background usually do not think that they have left the Jewish faith, several of them indicate that they consider themselves [more Jewish than before](#) since they found their Messiah. After 2000 years of surviving Christian persecution, Jewish antipathy has been reinforced by the fact that Jews now have their own country and Messianic Jews, in their view, betray the history of their people by 'conversion' to that hated Christianity. The degree of opposition they experience from their family depends, among other things, on how religious this family is. Messianic Jews from secular families usually experience little or no resistance, contrary to those who come from religious families. Apart from hostility from Orthodox Jews, which can range from harassment to vandalism, Messianic Jews may face resistance from Israeli society in general, although this has become less over time. Finally, Messianic Jewish congregations are not officially recognized as a religious community by the government and Messianic believers have experienced difficulties in obtaining Israeli citizenship due to no longer being seen as Jewish.

The change of faith of believers with a Muslim background is often experienced as a break with their native community from which they can become isolated. Several Christians from non-religious but traditionally Muslim families indicate that their families have accepted their choice of faith, even if not wholeheartedly or openly. Christians from conservative Islamic families face the most resistance, which in extreme cases can also be violent. However, Israeli law provides legal means to prosecute violators of religious freedom and this greatly affects the way people interact with one another. There will be legal consequences for religiously motivated violence or discrimination (for example, honor killings resulting from conversion to other religions). Some of them join an Evangelical or Messianic congregation while most are not affiliated. This is partly because several of the churches do not welcome converts, which makes their position even more difficult; others keep their faith secret out of fear. Christians who have changed churches are mainly Arab believers who first belonged to a historic Christian community and who have

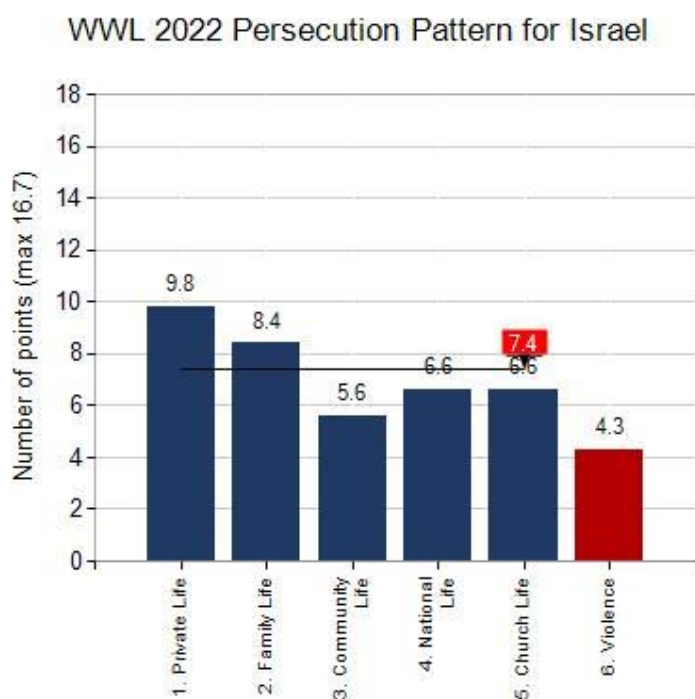
switched to a non-traditional Christian community. For them, too, most of the pressure comes from their family. In general this pressure is verbal and not physical. The family and community around them will do their best to convince them to return to their 'mother church' and some can be shunned by family members. In some cases, parents prevent their children from attending Evangelical meetings. Others, in addition to attending evangelical services, will also participate in traditional church activities so as not to arouse suspicion from their families.

Non-traditional Christian communities

Most non-traditional Christians are Arab Evangelicals or Pentecostals (henceforth referred to as Evangelicals) and therefore form a minority (Evangelicals) of a minority (Christians) within a minority group (Arabs) in Israel. Over twenty percent of Israelis are Arab and only ten percent of them are Christian (less than two percent of the Israeli population). There are about 5,000 Arab Evangelical Christians who are mainly divided between the Baptists, the Brethren, the Nazarene Church and the Assemblies of God. Evangelicals experience pressure from the Jewish government, the Muslim community and traditional churches. Evangelical churches are not officially recognized by the government as 'religious communities', which makes it hard if not impossible for them to carry out marriages, burials and other religious rites. The state of Israel has meanwhile made some concessions, for example allowing marriage to be conducted by evangelical congregations, but has not wanted to recognize Evangelicals as a distinct church group.

Non-traditional Christian groups are often known for their evangelistic activities. Although not illegal, missionary work needs to be done in a discrete way in Israel. It is legally prohibited for adults to evangelize youth younger than 18 years old. Also, in majority Jewish or Islamic areas, evangelism will not be accepted by its inhabitants. Foreign non-traditional Protestants have been refused entry into Israel because of involvement in missionary activities in the country. In addition, several traditional churches may take offence of evangelicals for their conviction that traditional Christians must also be 'born again' and as a result accuse them of stealing their members. Another reason is the perceived link between Evangelical Christians and Western Christian Zionism.

The Persecution pattern



The WWL 2022 Persecution pattern for Israel shows:

- The average pressure on Christians in Israel is 7.4 points, which is fairly high and only slightly lower than in WWL 2021 when this was 7.6 points.
- Pressure is currently strongest in the *Private* and *Family spheres of life*, which is characteristic for the persecution of converts (both from a Jewish or Muslim background).
- The score for violence went up from low (2.2 points) in WWL 2021 to high (4.3 points) in WWL 2022.

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 2022 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 1.1: Conversion has been opposed, forbidden, or punishable, including conversion from one type of Christianity to another. (2.75 points)

On the one hand, official registration of conversion from one faith to another is possible in Israel. On the other hand, the government has rejected immigration applications from Messianic Jews based on their faith. Messianic Jews from secular families usually do not experience much pressure from their families, while the resistance is usually greater with those from religious Jewish families and mostly consists of social pressure. This also applies to Christians from

Muslim, Druze or historic Christian families. In exceptional cases, opposition from Islamic families can turn violent.

Block 1.2: It has been risky for Christians to conduct acts of Christian worship by themselves (e.g. prayer, Bible reading, etc.). (2.50 points)

Several Christians with a Muslim, Druze or Ultra-Orthodox background keep their faith hidden from their family and friends and hide their Bibles. However, the law guarantees religious freedom and this is legally respected also concerning conversion.

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

Most Christians are free to publicly reveal, share and write about their faith, including on social media. However, this is not the case for Christians of Muslim or Druze background, for whom it can be risky to reveal their faith publicly. While it is not usually risky for Messianic Jews today, quite a few prefer to remain covert for a wide variety of trust/fear related reasons. In the past, Messianic believers who engaged in social media evangelism had been threatened and harassed. However, there have been no actual violent incidents recently. This is especially risky in remote/very rural locations and rarely in major cities.

Block 1.8: It has been risky for Christians to speak about their faith with those other than immediate family (extended family, others). (2.50 points)

In general, Christians enjoy the freedom to talk about their faith with others including non-Christians. There may be verbal resistance and new Christians may be intimidated by it, but in principle it is not risky. When Messianic Jews speak to Orthodox Jews and give the impression that they want to convert them - rather than talk about their personal faith - violent reactions can follow. For Christians of Muslim or Druze background, it can be risky to share their faith with others, especially their wider family or community. In such a case, wider family members may react more fanatically than immediate relatives.

Block 1.9: It has been risky for Christians to meet with other Christians. (2.50 points)

In general, Christians can safely meet up with other Christians. However, Christians with a Muslim or Druze background prefer to be careful when meeting other believers. They need to be sure that they can trust those they meet and that their new-found faith will not become known to their family or community. This is one of the reasons why several Christians from a Muslim background are isolated and do not even want to meet other converts. However, most other Christians, including Messianic believers, will have no problems in this regard.

Pressure in Block 2 / Family sphere

Block 2.5: Burials of Christians have been hindered or coercively performed with non-Christian rites. (3.00 points)

Usually this is not a problem for traditional Christians. Families of converts from Islam will most likely have their funerals performed with Islamic rites. If they are aware of their choice of faith, Orthodox Jews are likely to oppose the burial of Messianic Jews in Jewish cemeteries. There is also a lack of non-traditional Christian and public cemeteries. Some villages offer public cemeteries, but burials are expensive in those locations. Another problem is that some places offer cemeteries only for their own citizens. The few congregations where Christians are allowed to bury their dead are often far away.

Block 2.6: Christian couples have been hindered in adopting children or serving as foster parents because of their faith. (3.00 points)

Under Israeli law (as in other countries), the default position is to associate a child with an adoptive or foster family of the same religion as the child's biological parents (if the parents' religion is known to the agency). As Messianic Jews are not recognized as part of any religion, the authorities will not usually allow them to adopt a Jewish or a Muslim child. They would usually only allow them to adopt children from families registered under 'no religion', and sometimes those registered as 'Christian', but that would be an exception. In Israel, however, it is illegal to restrict adoption for such reasons, so if a couple decided to take their case to the Supreme Court, they would have a fighting chance. As far as is known, this has not happened yet.

Block 2.2: Registering the birth, wedding, death, etc. of Christians has been hindered or made impossible. (2.75 points)

Israel inherited its marriage registration system from the Ottoman Empire through the British. Under this system, only recognized religious authorities - the Orthodox-controlled Chief Rabbinate, mosques and historic churches - have the power to perform marriages. Israel therefore has no civil but only religious marriages. Since evangelical churches are not recognized, registering a marriage can be difficult for evangelical Christians. On the one hand, the government allows their marriages, but in fact, this marriage is not officially recognized by the authorities. So anyone who is not Jewish and not registered with any recognized religion or denomination must marry outside of Israel. This also affects the marriages of Jewish believers with non-Jewish husbands as Jews are only allowed to marry Jews. Moreover, if their faith is known, Messianic Jews will not always be able to find a rabbi who is willing to perform their marriage.

Block 2.4: Christian baptisms have been hindered. (2.75 points)

Christians of Jewish, Islamic or historical church backgrounds may experience resistance when they are baptized. Particularly Jews and Muslims generally consider baptism as the defining act of conversion. The resistance does not usually come from the authorities, but mainly from the family or community, who in some cases would exert a lot of pressure to prevent baptism.

Baptizing people under the age of 17 without their parents' consent is illegal and parents can stop the baptism. Historic churches are known to preach and teach against evangelical adult baptism. Baptism can even be risky for a Muslim convert. For the authorities, the baptism of a Messianic Jew may be a decisive factor for whether or not they will be allowed to immigrate (because it means that they are no longer Jews as such and thus have no automatic right to live in Israel). Despite the fact that during public baptisms there has been outrage and threats from members of the Orthodox Jewish community, baptisms regularly take place in Israel, often in public places without any hindrance.

Pressure in Block 3 / Community sphere

Block 3.10: Christians have been discriminated against in public or private employment for faith-related reasons. (2.50 points)

The public sector is likely to employ people who match the dominant ethno-religious group in the area; and likewise private sector employers will have a tendency to hire people from the same ethno-religious group. Against this background, in particular people who are known to have changed their faith will be disadvantaged by those who have not, especially in conservative religious areas. A strengthening factor in this are the 'anti-missionary organizations' (e.g. Yad L'Achim) that seek to convince employers not to hire Jewish Messianic workers. Other issues, such as political, social and ethnic factors, also play a role for Arab Christians. Local experts say that in Muslim-majority villages, job opportunities for Christians are limited or that Muslims are the first priority. For example, the percentage of Christian employees in public jobs in such places is much lower than their percentage in that village. In the past, there have been regular reports of this happening, but since the adoption of various anti-discrimination laws, this is not done overtly but covertly, as it would be considered illegal. On the other hand, both Messianic Jews and Evangelical Arabs are rapidly rising up the socio-economic ladder as they tend to be motivated and have a strong work ethic.

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.). (2.25 points)

Christian clergy who can be identified by their dress (clergy, monks, and nuns) are sometimes harassed in public by Orthodox Jews. The harassment usually involves swearing and spitting but can also be violent on rare occasions. Also, some Christian women with a Muslim background will choose to continue wearing the veil to avoid harassment and hide their new faith. Christian women of historic and non-traditional churches living in Muslim-majority villages can be subject to pressure, especially in response to the way they dress. As a result, they don't always feel free to wear whatever they want. Messianic Jews in some predominantly Orthodox Jewish areas may be subjected to harassment from time to time. Usually this concerns mocking or threats but not actual violence. Messianic congregations can also experience problems when they want to rent a building for their gatherings, as the landlord can be put under pressure by Ultra-Orthodox Jews to stop renting.

Block 3.8: Christians have had less access to health care because of their faith. (2.25 points)

Generally, Christians like other citizens have free access to health care in Israel since every resident is part of the public health system. This is different for some Messianic Jewish immigrants and/or their spouses who can be denied residence or citizenship for a long time, which excludes them from social security (incl. health insurance). Depending on their financial situation, this can affect their access to healthcare as they will have to pay for all medical treatment themselves.

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.). (2.00 points)

Christians from Orthodox Jewish and Muslim backgrounds have sometimes faced monitoring, especially in predominantly Orthodox Jewish and Muslim environments. The anti-missionary orthodox organization Yad L'Achim uses cameras, among other things, but also monitors Messianic believers and others active in evangelism via the Internet. According to press reports in Israel, Yad L'Achim and similar groups have connections with the Ministry of Interior where their information is used for assessing immigration applications. Converts from Islam can experience monitoring especially from their family.

Pressure in Block 4 / National sphere

Block 4.5: Christians have been discriminated against when engaging with the authorities (local administration, government, army, etc.) for faith-related reasons. (3.00 points)

Officially, Christians are treated in the same way as for any other religion. In practice, all categories of Christians can experience discrimination in contact with the authorities. Members of historic churches are mostly Israeli Arab and claim to be discriminated against mainly for ethnic and political reasons. In particular, property disputes regularly cause tensions between the State of Israel and traditional churches, especially in religiously sensitive areas such as Jerusalem and Nazareth. Christian associations (including Messianic Jewish congregations) and charities, among others, may experience difficulties in obtaining permits and tax exemptions. In addition, evangelical churches are not recognized by the state and may face extensive bureaucratic obstacles. Messianic Jews and/or their spouses may also experience discrimination when applying for immigration or citizenship and attempts are sometimes made to revoke an existing citizenship. There have been court cases against these decisions and in most cases they have turned out beneficially for the Messianic Jews involved. Finally, foreign Christians have been denied entry or forced to leave Israel because of their alleged involvement in missionary or political activities.

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. (2.75 points)

Israel has no constitution, but constitutional law is framed in basic laws. The Declaration of Independence guarantees religious freedom and the Basic Law further strengthens it. The state guarantees freedom of religion and by law every citizen can convert to any religion they wish.

Christians have the freedom to express their faith and gather for meetings. The only restrictions are that minors (under the age of 18) are not allowed to be evangelized without parental consent and known Messianic Jews are not allowed to immigrate to Israel under the Law of Return. However, this is against Jewish law, which assumes that a Jew born as a Jew will always remain a Jew and there have been successful lawsuits against immigration applications (by Messianic Jews) being rejected. Finally, the nation state law that defines Israel primarily as a nation of the Jewish people could have an effect on Arabs in general, as well as on non-Jewish ethnicities and on Christian and other non-Jewish religions.

Block 4.10: Media reporting has been incorrect or biased against Christians. (2.50 points)

This strongly depends on which media is involved. Whereas most Israeli media's reporting is, in principle, not hostile to Christians, journalists can from time to time give a distorted picture of the Christian faith, especially when it comes to Evangelical Christians or Messianic Jews and partly as a result of a lack of knowledge of the Christian faith. This allows prejudice against Messianic Jews, with authors of articles appearing to support the idea that Jews who profess Jesus as Messiah cannot call themselves Jews. In particular, local press managed by Orthodox Jews, for example in the Negev region, tend to arouse antipathy towards Messianic Jews and their congregations. In recent years, however, with a growing number of Messianic Jews, the coverage of quality newspapers seems to be shifting from hostile or biased to a more understanding and positive portrayal of who Messianic Jews are and what they stand for.

Block 4.7: Christians have been hindered in running their own businesses without interference for faith-related reasons (e.g. personnel policy, client admission policy). (2.25 points)

This particularly affects the Messianic Jewish community, for example in the Jerusalem district (but also beyond) where the Orthodox Jewish community directly influences the political, economic and social sectors. If their Messianic faith becomes known, their company could experience all kinds of problems, from pressure on the landlord to cancel leases to obstacles in obtaining building, security and registration permits etc.. In the event of unofficial opposition from the authorities, the public generally follows suit and the company suffers. An example from a few years ago is a bakery owned by Messianic believers that was denied a kosher license. This was rectified after legal action. In addition, Christians can also experience pressure from secular Jews. For instance, Messianic Jewish owners of a wedding hall were fined after refusing (on grounds of faith) to hire out their premises to a lesbian couple.

Block 4.11: Christians have been subjected to smear campaigns or hate speech. (2.25 points)

Local press controlled by Orthodox Jews has sparked antipathy towards Messianic Jews and their congregations, especially in the Negev region. Also, radical anti-missionary groups such as Yad L'Achim have waged hate campaigns against Messianic Jews and Evangelical Christians, accusing them of evangelism and thereby undermining or even destroying the Jewish people. Also non-Jewish Christians face opposition and pressure, for example when monasteries and churches have suffered from vandalism, especially in areas dominated by Ultra-Orthodox Jews. This vandalism includes the spraying of hate speech and anti-Christian and blasphemous slogans.

Pressure in Block 5 / Church sphere

Block 5.2: It has been difficult to get registration or legal status for churches at any level of government. (3.00 points)

After years of requests, Evangelical and Messianic congregations are still not officially recognized by the government, meaning they officially have fewer basic rights in marriage, funeral and other religious matters. They are registered as not-for-profit entities and operate as such like any other charitable organization. In October 2016, it was reported that the marriage problem had been largely resolved by allowing individual church groups to issue valid certificates. There are reportedly still problems with the validity of marriage certificates requiring members of non-traditional churches seeking to get a divorce to first join an historic church.

Block 5.7: Churches have been hindered from openly integrating converts. (3.00 points)

Although conversion is legal in Israel, some churches are hesitant to openly welcome converts for fear of the reaction from the Muslim or Jewish community. In the event that a person from an important Muslim family becomes a Christian and wishes to attend a church service, it may cause problems for the pastor of the involved church as he is considered responsible for the converts' change of faith and because of the 'disgrace' done to the family. Officially it is legal, but in practice it is risky so they do it secretly or send them to other churches. Furthermore, Muslim converts find it difficult to integrate into Arab churches because of strong prejudice against Muslims, even converts. There have also been attempts - sometimes fierce - from the Jewish community to prevent believers with a Jewish background from integrating into churches or congregations. However, for the most part, Messianic believers seem to be able to join a church if they want to.

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. (3.00 points)

There are many Christian institutions in Israel that function without experiencing problems. However, they can face hinderances if there are suspicions of involvement in evangelizing Jews. For this reason, the charitable status of several Christian organizations has been questioned and in some cases denied. A foreign organization usually has to sign a contract stating that it is not active in missionary work. In recent years, the Israeli Ministry of Education has significantly reduced financial support to schools owned by Christian churches. Church-run schools perceive this as pressure to become state schools which would mean losing their Christian identity. Furthermore, the first Messianic school was registered only recently. Messianic schools were previously unrecognized, but the courts ordered them to be recognized if they met all necessary criteria.

Block 5.3: Christian communities have been hindered in building or renovating church buildings or in claiming historical religious premises and places of worship which had been taken from them earlier. (2.75 points)

Renovation of churches usually proceeds without problems from the authorities. Messianic congregations have been prevented from using buildings for their services, both due to mass protests from the Orthodox Jewish community and the refusal of state officials to grant permission. For this reason, many of them congregate in buildings in industrial areas.

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.

Israel: Violence Block question	WWL 2022	WWL 2021
6.1 How many Christians have been killed for faith-related reasons (including state sanctioned executions)?	1	1
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?	6	2
6.3 How many Christians have been detained for faith-related reasons?	0	0
6.4 How many Christians have been sentenced to jail, labor camp, sent to psychiatric hospital as punishment, or similar things for faith-related reasons?	0	0
6.5 How many Christians have been abducted for faith-related reasons (including Christians missing in a persecution context)?	0	0
6.6 How many Christians have been raped or otherwise sexually harassed for faith-related reasons?	0	0
6.7 How many cases have there been of forced marriages of Christians to non-Christians?	0	0
6.8 How many Christians have been otherwise physically or mentally abused for faith-related reasons (including beatings and death threats)?	1	1
6.9 How many houses of Christians or other property (excluding shops) have been attacked, damaged, bombed, looted, destroyed, burned down or confiscated for faith-related reasons?	0	1
6.10 How many shops or businesses of Christians have been attacked, damaged, bombed, looted, destroyed, burned down, closed or confiscated for faith-related reasons?	0	0
6.11 How many Christians have been forced to leave their homes or go into hiding in-country for faith-related reasons?	1	0
6.12 How many Christians have been forced to leave the country for faith-related reasons?	0	1

For examples of violent incidents, see above: *Specific examples of violations of rights in the reporting period.*

5 Year trends

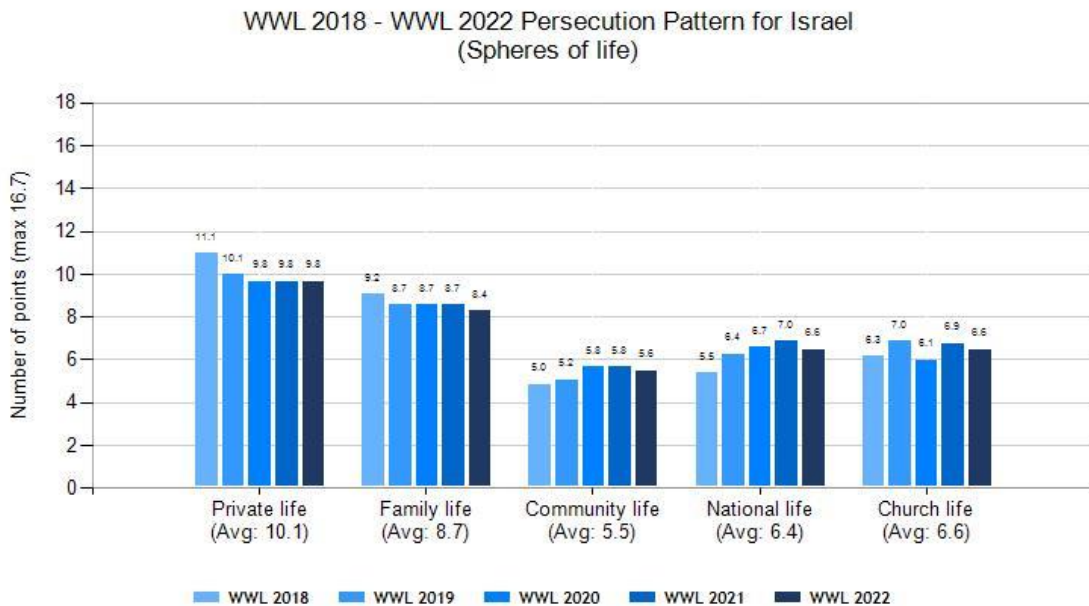
The following three charts show the levels of pressure and violence faced by Christians in the country over the last five WWL reporting periods.

5 Year trends: Average pressure

Israel: WWL 2018 - WWL 2022 Persecution Pattern history	Average pressure over 5 Spheres of life
2022	7.4
2021	7.6
2020	7.5
2019	7.5
2018	7.4

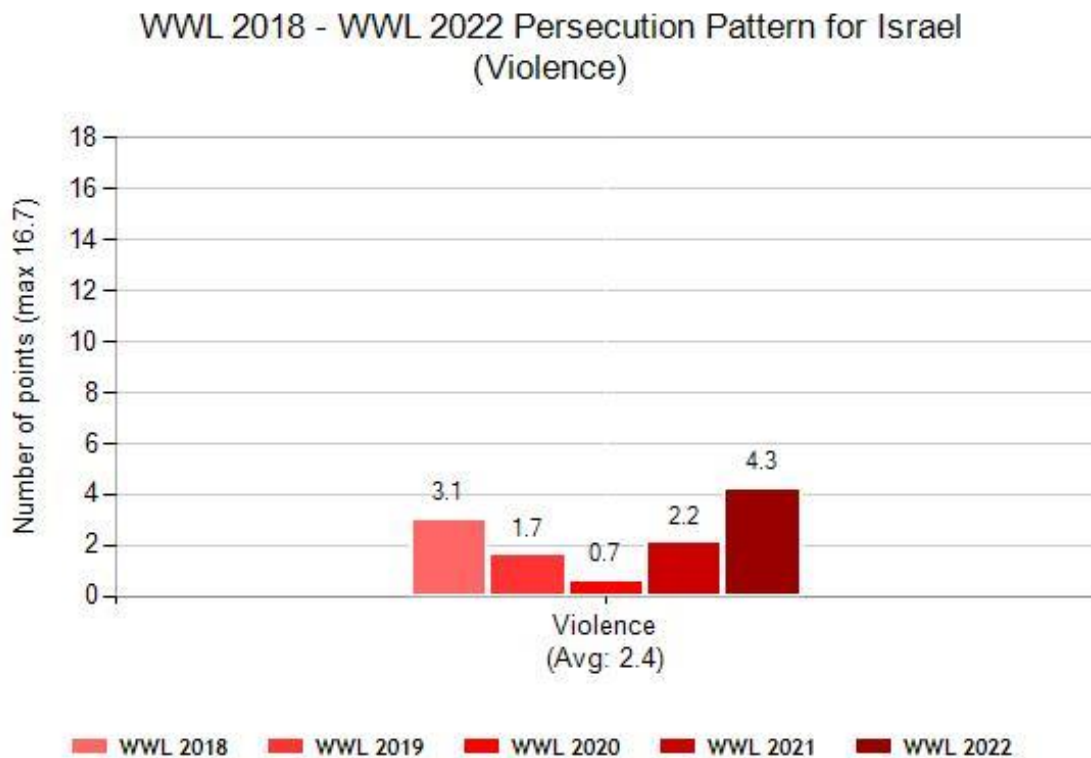
The table above shows how the overall score for pressure on Christians has remained stable in the last five reporting periods at a fairly high level of 7.4 - 7.6 points.

5 Year trends: Pressure in each sphere of life



In the past five WWL reporting periods, pressure in the *Private* and *Family spheres of life* continues to score the highest of all five spheres, which is typical of a situation where opposition mainly affects converts. Pressure scores in the *Community* and *National spheres of life* ranged from low to quite high, while pressure in the *Church sphere of life* continues to score quite high, indicating a situation where the Church is restricted in some respects but relatively free in others.

5 Year trends: Violence against Christians



Violence scores have fluctuated in recent years. WWL 2018 started with a fairly high score (3.1 points), after which the violence score varied from very low to low (0.7 - 2.2 points) and eventually rose to a high score (4.3 points) in WWL 2022, which was mainly due to the high number of cases of vandalism affecting church buildings and property.

Gender-specific religious persecution / Female

Group	Female Pressure Points
Economic	-
Political and Legal	Forced divorce
Security	Incarceration by family (house arrest)
Social and Cultural	Denied access to social community/networks; Enforced religious dress code; Violence – Verbal
Technological	-

Female converts from an Arab background typically face the greatest pressure for their faith, but conversions from one Christian denomination to another is also met with hostility. In some instances families resign themselves to a convert's choice of religion, but often converts are made to understand that they are not allowed to talk openly about their new faith. While relatively rare, others have been placed under house arrest and denied contact with other Christians. Women are more vulnerable to this pressure due to having less freedom of movement than men. Traditional cultural norms in conservative religious families also place them in a subservient role within the family structure, under the authority of men.

Christian converts have also been forcibly divorced and denied custody of their children, in an effort to pressure them into returning to their previous religion.

Gender-specific religious persecution / Male

Group	Male Pressure Points
Economic	-
Political and Legal	-
Security	Violence – physical
Social and Cultural	Denied access to social community/networks
Technological	-

Christian men and boys experience relatively little gender-specific religious persecution. As they are generally more exposed to the public sphere than women and girls, they are more likely to be affected by physical persecution or social pressure. Religious leaders may be particularly vulnerable to pressure in conservative religious areas such as Jerusalem, in part as they are easily identifiable by their religious clothing. Attacks are however very rare.

Persecution of other religious minorities

In general, forms of inequality and discrimination exist among non-Jews in society. Muslims are the largest religious minority in Israel and report being discriminated against as Arabs and Muslims by the wider Jewish community and government. Many Arab Sunni Muslim communities in Israel are marginalized and have high crime rates, gun violence and are underdeveloped. There were several 'price tag' attacks directed at Arab (mostly Muslim) goals or communities. 'Price tag' attacks are a mixture of politically and religiously-motivated vandalism carried out by Ultra-Orthodox Jews in protest against Islamic terrorist attacks or the destruction of Jewish settlers' homes in the West Bank. Some Druze, especially those living in the Golan area, also report experiencing discrimination.

Progressive streams within Judaism (such as Reform Judaism) can face marginalization for reasons of faith as well. Chief Rabbis, for example, speak out against this movement, which they refer to as "falsified Judaism". The US State Department (IRFR 2020) reported on this topic as follows:

- “The Chief Rabbinate continued not to recognize as Jewish some citizens who self-identified as Jewish, including Reform and Conservative converts to Judaism and others who could not prove Jewish matrilineage to the satisfaction of the Chief Rabbinate. As a result, the government prohibited those individuals from accessing official Jewish marriage, divorce, and burial services in the country. Some Orthodox and non-Orthodox rabbis, however, officiated at a growing number of these ceremonies outside of the authority of the Chief Rabbinate.”

However, in a landmark ruling in March 2021, Israel's Supreme Court unexpectedly ordered the state to recognize Jewish conversions carried out by the reformist and conservative movements for the purposes of the Law of Return.

Examples of violent incidents:

- 24 January 2020: A mosque in Jerusalem was a target of arson and graffiti attack, in what is believed to be a hate crime. An exterior wall of the building was graffitied in Hebrew with a reference to Kumi Ori, a settler's outpost where Israeli forces had demolished buildings earlier that month ([Times of Israel](#), 24 January 2020).
- 11 February 2020: "170 cars were vandalized and graffiti was sprayed on a mosque and on walls in Gush Halav, also known as Jish, that said, 'Jews wake up' and 'Stop intermarrying'." (IRFR 2020)
- 13 October 2021: Vandals sprayed nationalist slogans and damaged cars in the Palestinian village of Marda in the West Bank. On the walls in the community were texts such as 'price tag' and 'demolish enemy [property], not Jewish'. Car tyres were punctured and David stars painted on vehicles ([Times of Israel](#), 13 October 2021).

Future outlook

The outlook for Christians as viewed through the lens of:

Religious nationalism

After almost eleven years, the governing coalition with the Orthodox Jews ended. Also, the Central Ministry of Interior changed from the ultra-religious Shas party to Yamina (religious-secular and far right). The [new government coalition](#) formed in June 2021 does not contain Orthodox Jews, but does contain an Islamic party (Al-Jazeera, 14 June 2021). However, it is too early to say whether this will benefit the lives of Arabs in general and Christians in particular, but laws are being made to curb the power of the Orthodox in everyday life. However, in its country forecast, the Economist Intelligence Unit (EIU 2021) warns that the disparate nature of the broad coalition is likely to limit its sustainability.

Clan oppression

Secularism and atheism are growing among young people, challenging all religions. This could lead to conservative religious families becoming even more strict which could cause more pressure on converts (from Muslim, Jewish and inner-Christian backgrounds). However, for converts belonging to more moderate religious families this could lead to more acceptance. Crises and external threats - for instance, COVID-19 - generally tend to increase solidarity for

one's own group and increase prejudice against other groups. This may mean that the pressure on converts - who consciously choose to leave their own identity group - increases further from within their own group.

Islamic oppression

Although most Muslim Israelis generally hold moderate or even secular convictions, local Christians observe a radicalization among smaller sections of society. Christians feel vulnerable and threatened by this, which is why many consider leaving the country if they can. As a result of migration, the percentage of Christians within the Arab community in Israel is declining. This means that more and more businesses are run by Muslims, who are becoming more and more influential. As a result, many Christians are losing their jobs. This trend is expected to develop further as the emigration of Arab Christians continues.

External Links - Persecution Dynamics

- Christian communities and how they are affected: Fellow Travellers, - https://www.bucer.de/fileadmin/dateien/Dokumente/Buecher/WoT_15_Lawrence-Fellow_Travellers.pdf
- Christian communities and how they are affected: more Jewish than before - https://www.bucer.de/fileadmin/dateien/Dokumente/Buecher/WoT_15_Lawrence-Fellow_Travellers.pdf
- Persecution of other religious minorities: Times of Israel - <https://www.timesofisrael.com/mosque-found-torched-graffitied-in-jerusalem-in-suspected-hate-crime/>
- Persecution of other religious minorities: Times of Israel - <https://www.timesofisrael.com/vandals-attack-palestinian-village-daubing-walls-and-puncturing-car-tires/>
- Future outlook: new government coalition - <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2021/6/14/whos-who-in-israels-new-patchwork-coalition-government#:~:text=Israel%E2%80%99s%20new%20government%20is%20a%20hodgepodge%20of%20political,government%20led%20by%20right-wing%20nationalist%20leader%20Naftali%20Bennett.>

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