

World
Watch
Research

WWL 2023

Compilation of main documents

(excluding detailed country reports)

January 2023



OpenDoors

Serving persecuted **Christians** worldwide

Open Doors International / World Watch Research

January 2023

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1. Brief note on methodology, sources, definitions and copyright

The WWL 2023 reporting period was 1 October 2021 - 30 September 2022.

The latest update of WWL Methodology together with various other background documents can be found on the [World Watch List Documentation](https://opendoorsanalytical.org/world-watch-list-documentation/)¹ page of the Open Doors Analytical website. WWL 2023 Full Country Dossiers giving in-depth information on the situation of Christians in the 76 countries listed are available on the Open Doors Analytical website page under the heading [Full country dossiers – Open Doors Analytical](https://opendoorsanalytical.org/country-dossiers/)².

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.

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2. WWL 2023: Audit Statement from IIRF



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www.iirf.global

Audit Statement

on the outcomes of the Open Doors World Watch List 2023

Thursday, 12 January 2023

Audit Coordinator: Dr Dennis P. Petri (International Director, IIRF)

The audit of the 2023 edition of the World Watch List (WWL) of Open Doors, which is conducted annually by the International Institute for Religious Freedom (IIRF), has confirmed that the World Watch Research team has upheld the quality standards of the previous years.

¹ <https://opendoorsanalytical.org/world-watch-list-documentation/> (password: freedom)

² <http://opendoorsanalytical.org/country-dossiers/> (password: freedom)

The audit consisted of two parts. In the first, the team of auditors assessed whether the WWL methodology was applied correctly. We found that the WWL 2023 complies with all its methodological requirements, is based on a broad range of sources, and its conclusions are duly substantiated. It should be noted that the degree of certainty of each country score always depends on the depth and quality of the information received in the reporting period; and that this may vary from country to country.

In the second part of the audit, a determination was made as to whether the scores and write-ups adequately reflected the situation in the country, based on the knowledge and experience of the auditors. We concluded that, overall, the WWL 2023 provides an accurate, balanced, and detailed account of the discrimination and persecution of Christians in the world.

The IIRF team of auditors comprised six high level academics from different disciplines and nationalities. They each have active expertise on religious freedom in the countries and regions they audited.

The six countries selected for the audit were carefully chosen from the Top 50 of the WWL. None of these countries had been subject to audits in previous years. We also made sure that the work of all members of the World Watch Research team was audited.

The materials included in the audit were the final questionnaires for the countries considered, the accompanying country dossiers, and any additional information provided by the researchers of World Watch Research. Additional statements, documents, or interpretations by Open Doors International or the Open Doors national affiliates based on or associated with the publication of the WWL 2023 remain outside the scope of this audit statement.

A detailed audit report has been submitted to World Watch Research with recommendations for potential future improvements and will be discussed with the members of the research team.



Dr. Dennis P. Petri

International Director of the IIRF

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3. WWL 2023: Country scores and ranks

The tables below includes all countries scoring 41 points or more in WWL 2023 analysis. These are the countries where Christians face high (41-60 points), very high (61-80 points) or extremely high (81-100 points) levels of persecution. The columns on the far right give a comparison to the scores and ranks in WWL 2022.

a) Countries scoring 81 – 100 points

WWL 2023 Rank	Country	1. Private Life Score	2. Family Life Score	3. Community Life Score	4. National Life Score	5. Church Life Score	6. Violence Score	Total WWL 2023 Score	WWL 2022 Rank	TOTAL WWL 2022 Score
1	North Korea	16.7	16.7	16.7	16.7	16.7	14.4	98	2	96
2	Somalia	16.5	16.7	16.6	16.6	16.6	8.7	92	3	91
3	Yemen	16.7	16.7	16.7	16.7	16.7	5.9	89	5	88
4	Eritrea	14.6	14.9	15.5	15.9	15.7	12.2	89	6	88
5	Libya	15.6	15.5	15.9	16.1	16.3	9.1	88	4	91
6	Nigeria	13.8	13.8	14.6	14.8	14.4	16.7	88	7	87
7	Pakistan	13.4	13.8	14.8	14.8	12.9	16.7	86	8	87
8	Iran	14.5	14.6	13.8	15.8	16.5	10.7	86	9	85
9	Afghanistan	15.4	15.7	15.4	16.1	16.6	4.6	84	1	98
10	Sudan	14.1	14.2	14.9	14.9	15.5	9.4	83	13	79
11	India	12.3	13.1	13.0	14.8	13.3	15.7	82	10	82

b) Countries scoring 61 – 80 points

WWL 2023 Rank	Country	1. Private Life Score	2. Family Life Score	3. Community Life Score	4. National Life Score	5. Church Life Score	6. Violence Score	Total WWL 2023 Score	WWL 2022 Rank	TOTAL WWL 2022 Score
12	Syria	13.2	14.1	13.6	14.1	14.1	11.3	80	15	78
13	Saudi Arabia	15.2	15.3	14.9	15.8	16.7	2.4	80	11	81
14	Myanmar	12.5	11.6	13.9	13.9	12.9	15.4	80	12	79
15	Maldives	15.4	15.3	13.8	16.0	16.4	0.2	77	16	77
16	China	12.9	10.0	12.7	14.5	15.6	11.1	77	17	76
17	Mali	11.1	10.1	14.7	10.3	15.1	15.0	76	24	70
18	Iraq	14.1	14.6	14.0	14.8	13.9	4.6	76	14	78
19	Algeria	14.1	14.1	11.5	13.7	15.1	4.8	73	22	71
20	Mauritania	14.5	14.2	13.3	14.1	14.2	1.3	72	23	70
21	Uzbekistan	14.9	12.7	13.9	12.7	15.6	1.5	71	21	71
22	Colombia	11.8	8.9	13.1	11.3	10.4	15.4	71	30	68
23	Burkina Faso	9.4	9.7	12.5	9.6	13.8	15.6	71	32	68
24	Central African Republic	10.3	8.6	13.9	9.6	12.2	15.6	70	31	68
25	Vietnam	11.8	9.6	12.8	14.6	14.4	6.9	70	19	71
26	Turkmenistan	14.5	11.3	13.6	14.1	15.7	0.6	70	25	69
27	Cuba	13.1	8.3	13.1	13.2	14.9	7.0	70	37	66
28	Niger	9.4	9.5	14.5	7.7	13.1	15.4	70	33	68
29	Morocco	13.2	13.8	10.9	12.2	14.5	4.8	69	27	69
30	Bangladesh	12.6	10.7	12.8	11.3	10.6	10.7	69	29	68
31	Laos	11.7	10.2	13.3	14.2	14.0	5.0	68	26	69
32	Mozambique	9.3	8.5	13.9	8.4	12.5	15.6	68	41	65
33	Indonesia	11.3	12.0	11.6	11.1	9.2	12.8	68	28	68
34	Qatar	14.2	14.1	10.5	13.2	14.4	1.5	68	18	74
35	Egypt	12.7	13.5	11.6	12.1	10.8	7.0	68	20	71
36	Tunisia	12.0	12.8	10.4	12.0	13.5	6.5	67	35	66
37	Congo DR (DRC)	8.0	7.9	12.6	9.7	13.0	15.6	67	40	66
38	Mexico	10.3	8.3	12.5	11.0	10.5	13.9	67	43	65
39	Ethiopia	9.9	10.3	13.1	10.4	12.1	10.6	66	38	66
40	Bhutan	13.2	12.3	11.6	13.9	14.2	1.1	66	34	67
41	Turkey	12.8	11.5	11.8	13.0	11.5	5.7	66	42	65
42	Comoros	12.7	14.0	11.2	12.4	14.2	1.5	66	53	63
43	Malaysia	12.8	14.3	11.4	12.2	11.1	3.9	66	50	63
44	Tajikistan	13.8	12.2	12.3	12.8	13.4	1.1	66	45	65
45	Cameroon	8.8	7.6	12.6	7.2	13.1	15.9	65	44	65
46	Brunei	14.8	14.6	10.1	10.9	14.4	0.4	65	46	64
47	Oman	14.0	14.1	10.3	13.3	12.9	0.6	65	36	66
48	Kazakhstan	13.2	11.6	11.9	12.7	14.2	1.1	65	47	64
49	Jordan	13.0	14.0	10.5	12.3	12.7	2.0	65	39	66
50	Nicaragua	10.8	5.9	11.9	12.8	13.6	9.4	65	61	56
51	Kenya	10.3	9.2	11.4	8.0	11.5	13.3	64	51	63
52	Kuwait	13.5	13.7	9.8	12.3	13.1	1.1	64	49	64
53	Tanzania	9.3	10.8	10.3	8.6	8.7	15.6	63	55	61
54	United Arab Emirates	13.4	13.4	9.9	11.2	12.8	1.1	62	54	62
55	Nepal	12.0	9.8	9.4	13.0	12.6	4.4	61	48	64

c) Countries scoring 41 – 60 points

WWL 2023 Rank	Country	1. Private Life Score	2. Family Life Score	3. Community Life Score	4. National Life Score	5. Church Life Score	6. Violence Score	Total WWL 2023 Score	WWL 2022 Rank	TOTAL WWL 2022 Score
56	Djibouti	12.3	12.6	12.7	10.1	12.3	0.6	60	58	59
57	Palestinian Territories	13.0	13.3	9.7	10.3	12.0	2.0	60	57	59
58	Azerbaijan	13.2	10.0	9.5	12.0	13.6	0.6	59	56	60
59	Kyrgyzstan	12.9	10.2	11.0	10.4	12.0	2.0	59	59	58
60	Chad	11.6	8.2	10.2	10.2	10.3	7.6	58	63	55
61	Russian Federation	12.3	7.9	10.3	11.8	12.8	2.0	57	62	56
62	Sri Lanka	12.8	9.1	10.6	11.3	9.5	3.9	57	52	63
63	Rwanda	9.4	7.7	9.0	10.4	11.7	8.9	57	67	50
64	Venezuela	6.0	4.6	11.7	10.2	11.4	11.7	56	65	51
65	Burundi	7.6	7.8	9.4	9.8	9.7	11.1	55	64	52
66	Bahrain	12.7	13.3	8.7	10.7	8.8	0.9	55	60	57
67	Honduras	7.1	5.0	11.9	7.6	9.8	11.9	53	68	48
68	Angola	6.8	6.7	8.1	11.5	11.4	7.2	52	66	51
69	Uganda	8.1	5.0	7.4	6.7	9.2	14.8	51	69	48
70	Togo	9.2	6.7	9.3	7.1	11.0	5.4	49	71	44
71	Guinea	10.3	7.5	8.3	8.3	10.5	3.0	48	73	43
72	South Sudan	5.7	4.4	7.0	6.3	7.6	15.0	46	74	43
73	El Salvador	7.7	4.2	10.6	7.4	9.1	6.7	46	70	45
74	Ivory Coast	12.0	6.5	8.7	5.9	8.0	3.3	44	75	42
75	Gambia	8.3	8.2	8.9	8.8	8.9	1.1	44	72	44
76	Belarus	9.5	3.8	4.8	9.4	12.1	3.3	43	Below 41 points	

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4. WWL 2023 Executive Summary

(WWL 2023 Press release, slightly adapted)

2023 World Watch List: Sub-Saharan Africa faces catastrophic collapse as Islamist violence sweeps across region.

Sub-Saharan Africa (SSA) faces a vast humanitarian catastrophe, as a wave of religiously motivated violence nurtured in Nigeria (7) has swept across the region, targeting Christian populations at an alarming rate in countries like Burkina Faso (23), Cameroon (45), Mali (17) and Niger (28). Signs of jihadist expansion are also clearly visible in Mozambique (32), Congo DR (37) and other countries.

This is the disturbing finding of Open Doors' 2023 World Watch List (WWL). The WWL ranks the nations where Christians face the most severe persecution and discrimination.

Other key findings (WWL position in brackets):

- China (17) is forging a network of nations seeking to redefine human rights – away from universal standards and religious freedoms. Dissenting voices such as Christians' face persecution as 'troublemakers' or even 'terrorists'.
- China has clamped down further on Christians, introducing sweeping new rules on churches' use of the internet.
- North Korea (1) returns to number one, with its highest levels of persecution ever. The rise follows a new wave of violence under its new 'Anti-reactionary thought law'.
- Over the 30 years of the Open Doors World Watch List reporting, the global phenomenon of Christian persecution has grown alarmingly.

Nigeria and SSA: A continent-wide catastrophe is unfolding

Violence against Christians in Sub-Saharan Africa (SSA) has reached alarming new levels, as violent Islamic militants destabilize the region using extreme violence.

It is most extreme in Nigeria where militants from the Fulani, Boko Haram, Islamic State West Africa Province (ISWAP) and others conduct raids on Christian communities, killing, maiming, raping and kidnapping for ransom or sexual slavery.

- Religiously motivated killings in Nigeria have risen from 4,650 last year to 5,014 – a staggering 89 per cent of the international total.
- Hundreds of thousands more have been forced into internal displacement or have become refugees.
- This year has also seen this violence spill over into the Christian-majority south of the nation.
- Violence is only part of the equation, with ever increasing Islamization putting extreme pressure on many Christians in their everyday lives.
- Nigeria's government continues to deny this is religious persecution, so violations of Christians' rights are carried out with impunity.

Jihadist violence is becoming commonplace across SSA, with 26 countries in the region scoring very significant levels of persecution. The Islamist campaign of terror is fueled by a lethal mix of trafficking, changes to the climate and an influx of mercenary soldiers from the shadowy Kremlin-backed Wagner Group.

Frans Veerman, Managing Director of World Watch Research, says:

The whole region is heading into catastrophe. The aim of the jihadis is to destabilize the entire region, establish an Islamic caliphate - ultimately across the entire continent – and, long-term, they are confident this is within their reach. They are helped by other Islamists focusing on non-violent, systemic Islamization. ... It isn't just governments in Africa that aren't facing up to the true nature of this religiously motivated purge, it's governments across the world. The price of this denial is incalculable, not just to Africa, but to the whole world.

China and beyond: The death of universal human rights

China is driving an international campaign to redefine human rights away from traditional universally recognized notions to more subjective 'rights' such as subsistence, development and security. (Illustrated in a speech given by China's foreign minister in 2021 to the [UN Human Rights Council](#)).

- Countries such as Russia (62) and India (10) are following suit, along with the likes of Sri Lanka (52), Myanmar (14) and Malaysia (43) and several Central Asian states.
- Christian minorities who are seen to oppose these new 'rights', by refusing to support the ruling party can be branded as 'disturbers of the peace' or even 'terrorists'. They face arrest, demolition of their church buildings and the de-registering of their churches.
- In China, sweeping new rules on church use of the internet have further stifled the freedom of the nation's almost 100 million Christians. Meanwhile Beijing has employed

further censorship, disinformation and extreme surveillance to ratchet up its control of Christians and other religious groups.

- Tracking apps introduced and data collected for COVID-19 have been re-utilized. China and Russia have shown themselves more than willing to export the necessary technology, as are a number of Western companies, who are prepared to turn a blind eye to the impact of their trade.

North Korea: Number one again as it enforces new “Anti-reactionary thought law”.

North Korea has returned to the top position, where – with the exception of the last reporting period – it has remained since WWL 2002. This year sees its highest ever persecution score. This reflects an increase in arrests of Christians and more underground house churches discovered and closed. Arrest means execution, or life in one of the nation’s horrifically inhumane camps for political prisoners, where prisoners face near-starvation, torture and sexual violence.

The new rise comes with the enforcement of the new “Anti-Reactionary Thought Law” which criminalized any published materials of foreign origin in North Korea, along with the Bible. It has led to the imprisonment or execution of teenage boys watching South Korean shows such as

Squid Game. However, it is also being used to track down Bibles or any other Christian materials, printed or electronic.

Timothy Cho, North Korean escapee, says:

Christians have always been in the front line of attack for the regime. Their aim is to wipe out every Christian in the country. There can only be one god in North Korea, and that is the Kim family.

Afghanistan – One year on

Afghanistan (9) has fallen from no.1 in 2022 to no.9 in this year’s list. However, the sharp drop offers little cheer.

After the brutal takeover in 2021, many Christians were executed, as the Taliban went door-to-door to root out believers. Many Christians went deep into hiding or fled overseas.

Over 2022, the Taliban’s focus has intensified for rooting out those with links to the old regime, more than uprooting the very small number of Christians remaining.

Life for many Christians who have fled to neighboring nations is very insecure. Zabi, Afghan Christian refugee, says:.

Our situation is desperate. My mother and I managed to cross the border into another country. I am praying that I can leave this country and go somewhere safe. I may have to go into hiding or I’ll be deported to Afghanistan. If that happens, I may be killed.

Meanwhile, the Taliban, desperate to keep the nation functioning are keen for expatriate workers such as doctors or engineers to operate in the country. Expatriate religious affiliation is not so strictly monitored – affecting the overall persecution score.

30 Years of the World Watch List – a shocking trend

Over the 30 years of the Open Doors World Watch List reporting, the global phenomenon of Christian persecution has grown alarmingly.

- Globally, more than 360 million Christians suffer at least ‘high’ levels of persecution and discrimination for their faith.
- In 1993, Christians faced high to extreme levels of persecution in 40 countries. This number has nearly doubled to 76 countries in 2023.
- In the top 50 alone, 312m Christians now face very high or extreme levels of persecution.
- Worldwide, one in 7 Christians now experience at least ‘high’ levels of persecution or discrimination; with 1 in 5 in Africa, 2 out of 5 in Asia, and 1 in 15 in Latin America.

Other trends in brief:

- **The Christian church continues to dwindle in the Middle East.** It has been unable to recover after the upsurge of Islamic State, despite a reduction in the number of Christians killed in recent years (one exception is Syria (12), which has seen a wave of violent incidents in the WWL 2023 reporting period.) Rami Abed Al-Masih, Advocacy Regional Manager for the Middle East and North Africa, says:

This is the cradle of Christianity, and much of the church is losing hope – the diet of discrimination and poverty is too much to bear, especially for the young who see no future here as believers.

- **Yet another Latin American country enters the list (Nicaragua at 50).** Direct government oppression against Christians seen as voices of opposition is rife in Nicaragua, Venezuela (64), and Cuba (27), where Christian leaders were imprisoned without trial for their part in last year’s demonstrations. In many countries in Latin America, organized crime has taken hold, especially in rural areas for Christians who speak out against the cartels’ activities.

Glimmers of hope

The total number of Christians killed for their faith decreased slightly from 5,898 recorded cases (WWL 2022) to 5,621 (WWL 2023) - the clear exception being Sub-Saharan Africa, as outlined above. The total number of Christians abducted for faith-related reasons increased from 3,829 recorded cases (WWL 2022) to 5,259 (WWL 2023).

There has been promotion of greater tolerance in a number of Middle Eastern countries, including Bahrain (55 points) and the UAE (62 points), and also in Egypt (68 points). Unfortunately, state persecution of converts from Islam to Christianity continued unabated in Egypt. Qatar (68 points, down from 74) also has a lower persecution score this year. This was caused by the fact that no additional churches were forced to close in the WWL 2023 reporting period. However, many churches closed in the previous reporting period remained shut.

Further details:**How many Christians are persecuted?**

Persecution of Christians has continued to intensify globally, reaching the highest levels since the list began nearly 30 years ago.

- More than 360m Christians face high levels of persecution and discrimination for their faith.
- This number represents one in seven Christians worldwide.

The 2023 rankings (last year's ranking in brackets)

1. North Korea (2)	19. Algeria (22)	36. Tunisia (35)
2. Somalia (3)	20. Mauritania (23)	37. Congo DR (DRC) (40)
3. Yemen (5)	21. Uzbekistan (21)	38. Mexico (43)
4. Eritrea (6)	22. Colombia (30)	39. Ethiopia (38)
5. Libya (4)	23. Burkina Faso (32)	40. Bhutan (34)
6. Nigeria (7)	24. Central African Republic (31)	41. Turkey (42)
7. Pakistan (8)	25. Vietnam (19)	42. Comoros (53)
8. Iran (9)	26. Turkmenistan (25)	43. Malaysia (50)
9. Afghanistan (1)	27. Cuba (37)	44. Tajikistan (45)
10. Sudan (13)	28. Niger (33)	45. Cameroon (44)
11. India (10)	29. Morocco (27)	46. Brunei (46)
12. Syria (15)	30. Bangladesh (29)	47. Oman (36)
13. Saudi Arabia (11)	31. Laos (26)	48. Kazakhstan (47)
14. Myanmar (12)	32. Mozambique (41)	49. Jordan (39)
15. Maldives (16)	33. Indonesia (28)	50. Nicaragua (61)
16. China (17)	34. Qatar (18)	
17. Mali (24)	35. Egypt (20)	
18. Iraq (14)		

About the WWL and how the figures are collected

The first WWL was produced in January 1993. Countries' overall persecution scores are an amalgamation of six different scores: Pressure levels in private life, family life, community life and national life, and of church communities, along with violence levels. This year's list covers the period 1 Oct 2021 - 30 Sept 2022.

Released at the beginning of each year, the list uses extensive research, data from Open Doors field workers, their in-country networks, external experts and persecution analysts to quantify and analyze persecution worldwide. Each edition is certified by the International Institute for Religious Freedom.

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5. WWR Statement concerning Afghanistan

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Summary

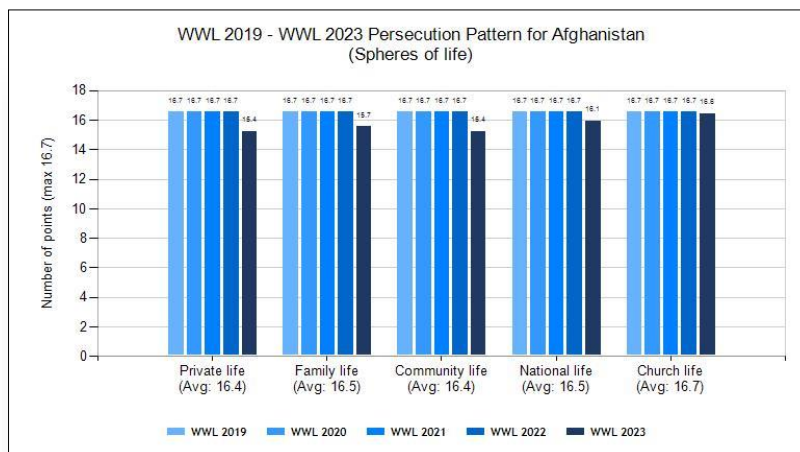
- 1) Very little has changed for converts
- 2) How to explain the large drop in violence score
- 3) Doesn't the drop in total score contradict what other organizations are saying?
- 4) So is life really better for Christians in Afghanistan than in Libya, for instance?
- 5) Surely the situation for Christians isn't better now than before the Taliban took control?

Summary

The WWL 2023 analysis for Afghanistan shows:

- Very little has changed for **converts**. Persecution has remained at an extreme level.
- The large drop in the violence score is due to three main factors:
 - Convert life has been deeper underground than before.
 - The Taliban have been concentrating on consolidating their power and made little attempt to specifically root out non-Muslim activity in the WWL 2023 reporting period.
 - With convert life deep underground, it has been a challenge to obtain verified violence data.
- Open Doors concentrates on the persecution of Christians and not purely on the political and economic difficulties of life under the Taliban. The scoring for Afghanistan shows that Open Doors did not get distracted by media headlines.

1) Very little has changed for converts

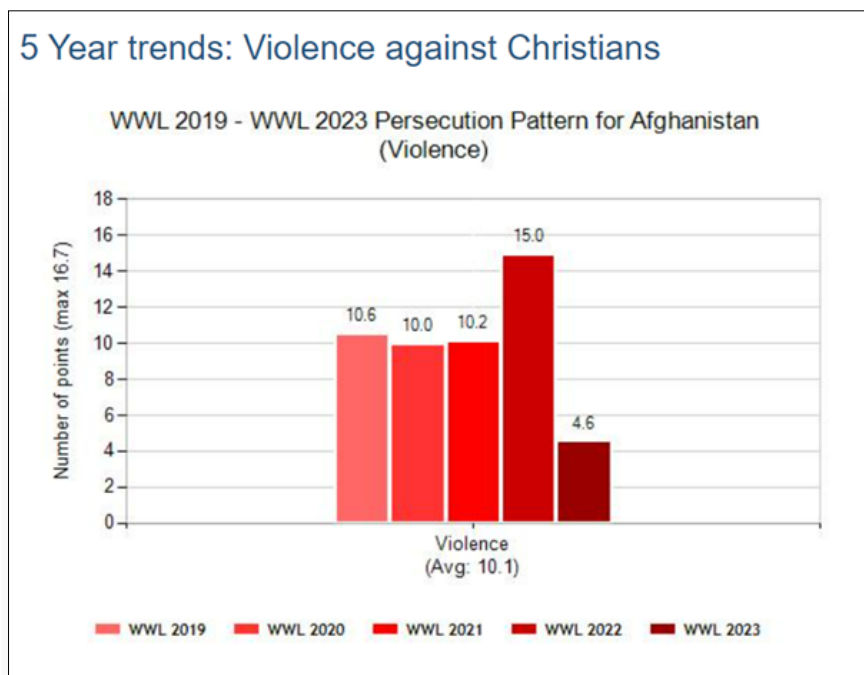


If very little has changed for converts, why did the WWL 2023 score for pressure go down (as shown in the WWL 2023 Full Country Dossier diagram above, taken from the section “5 Year Trends/Pressure in the Spheres of life”)?

The reason is that so many expatriate Christians have returned to Afghanistan, that they have to be considered as a separate scoring category in addition to the convert category. Expatriates working for NGOs etc. experience less severe difficulties in the 5 Spheres of life compared to Afghan converts from Islam. Consequently, taking into consideration the expatriate Christian situation, the scoring reflects a reduction of 0.9 points in average pressure in WWL 2023.

2) How to explain the large drop in violence score

The table below shows the scores for violence against Christians in the last 5 WWL reporting periods. The large drop from 15.0 to 4.6 points is clearly visible. Why did this occur? Doesn't a large drop in violence score mean that Christians are in less danger than before? Other notable organizations - e.g., [UN/HRW, 7 September 2022](#) - have reported on the increasing difficulties of life under the Taliban, so that must include Christians, right?



First, not all organizations are claiming that the situation in Afghanistan is worsening: A [UNAMA report](#) dated 20 July 2022 notes a “significant reduction in armed violence”.

Secondly, Open Doors has a reputation for careful reporting on Christians, and if there is **no concrete evidence** for Christians being attacked and killed for their faith, then WWR gives the specific Block 6 question the number zero. **The possible threat of attack has already been taken into consideration under the Pressure scoring.** Yes, the danger under the Taliban is extreme – especially for converts – but with the Church deeper underground than in the previous WWL reporting periods, they have been less visible for attack. Added to this is the fact, that the Taliban

has had other priorities to deal with and has not explicitly been targeting non-Muslim and Shia citizens. Where Christians experienced violence, it was normally the same as for other Afghans who had worked with the former government and armed forces and was not a faith-related issue. When the Church is deeper underground, incidents may, of course, occur which are not reported.

The reduction in the score for violence **in no way means it is safe** (or even just safer) for converts to live in Afghanistan. To claim that would be totally untrue. They still live under the terrible threat of severe hostility if their Christian faith is discovered, for instance, by family or friends.

3) Doesn't the drop in total score contradict what other organizations are saying?

The WWL 2023 reporting period is a limited 12 month time-frame, showing how Christians (especially converts) were reported to be suffering **for faith-related reasons**. This in no way contradicts what other organizations (e.g., [Gallup, 4 April 2022](#)) have been reporting about the levels of suffering experienced by Afghans in general. Indeed, converts will be suffering that on top of suffering from having to hide their Christian faith; this is termed "double vulnerability".

The Taliban have been investing time and effort in the WWL 2023 reporting period to consolidate their power. Since the [attitude](#) of Taliban authorities is reportedly that there are anyway no known or registered Christians in Afghanistan, they have not seen the need to search for them (VOA, 16 May 2022). In the WWL 2023 reporting period, as long as they kept a very low profile, most Christians escaped the severest of consequences for living their faith. At the same time, along with thousands of other Afghans, Christians have been increasingly suffering as citizens in general. This is particularly the case for women and girls, who have been losing much of their already limited freedom.

4) So is life really better for Christians in Afghanistan than in Libya, for instance?

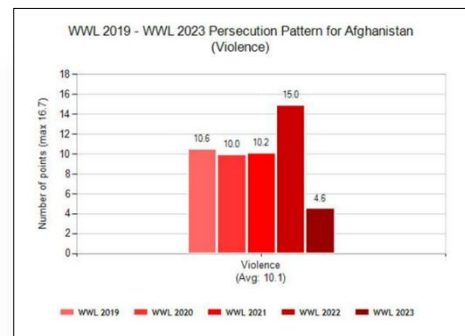
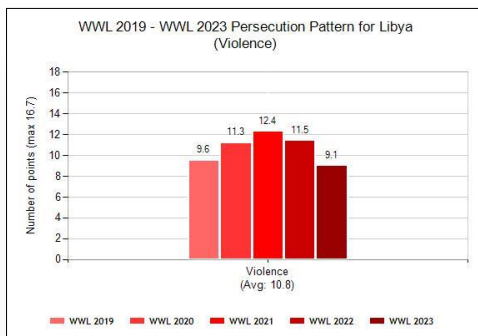
Not automatically. It would not be correct to conclude that Christians in Afghanistan are now 'more free' or 'more safe' than in Libya. In both countries there are extreme levels of persecution. What can be said is that in the WWL 2023 12-month overview, the total score for pressure on Christians and violence against Christians was higher in Libya than in Afghanistan. (In WWL 2022 that was not the case.) This is explained partially by the fact that the Christian expatriate community in Libya is very different, since it consists to a large extent of mainly poor, Sub-Saharan migrants. These Christian expatriates live under a higher level of pressure than those in Afghanistan.

In the tables below, a comparison can be made between Libya's and Afghanistan's average pressure and violence scores over the last five WWL reporting periods. These are taken from the not yet finalized WWL 2023 Full Country Dossiers. The comparison shows: The WWL 2023 level of pressure is very similar, but a marked difference can be seen in the higher violence score for Libya. (Getting verified violence data for Libya is also very difficult.)

(The [WWL 2022 Full Country Dossier for Libya](#) explains the persecution dynamics in the country. This explanation will be updated in the upcoming WWL 2023 version.)

5 Year trends: Average pressure	
Libya: WWL 2019 - WWL 2023 Persecution Pattern history	Average pressure over 5 Spheres of life
2023	15.9
2022	15.9
2021	15.9
2020	15.8
2019	15.5

5 Year trends: Average pressure	
Afghanistan: WWL 2019 - WWL 2023 Persecution Pattern history	Average pressure over 5 Spheres of life
2023	15.8
2022	16.7
2021	16.7
2020	16.7
2019	16.7



5) Surely the situation for Christians isn't better now than it was before the Taliban took control?

This question is based on the fact that Afghanistan's score in WWL 2023 was 84 points, whereas it had scored 88+ points from WWL 2016 onwards. Please see the table below showing the scores for pressure and violence directed at Christians in Afghanistan over the period WWL 2014 - 2023.

Afghanistan - WWL 2014 - WWL 2023								
WWL	1. Private Life Score	2. Family Life Score	3. Community Life Score	4. National Life Score	5. Church Life Score	Total Pressure Score	6. Violence Score	Total WWL Score
2023	15.4	15.7	15.4	16.1	16.6	79.2	4.6	84
2022	16.7	16.7	16.7	16.7	16.7	83.3	15.0	98
2021	16.7	16.7	16.7	16.7	16.7	83.3	10.2	94
2020	16.7	16.7	16.7	16.7	16.7	83.3	10.0	93
2019	16.7	16.7	16.7	16.7	16.7	83.3	10.6	94
2018	16.7	16.7	16.7	16.7	16.7	83.3	10.0	93
2017	16.7	16.4	15.1	15.6	14.8	78.7	10.6	89
2016	16.5	16.3	15.3	13.4	15.9	77.4	10.7	88
2015	15.9	15.9	15.0	13.7	15.8	76.3	5.2	81
2014	15.7	15.9	15.1	13.8	15.8	76.4	1.7	78

Only the convert category of Christian communities was considered from WWL 2016 onwards up to and including WWL 2022.

Expatriate Christians faced more persecution in WWL 2014-2015 reporting periods than in WWL 2023, to such a point that in WWL 2016 they were not even considered anymore for scoring (because there were so few). In WWL 2023, their situation was somewhat better (less persecution). Meanwhile, the persecution situation for converts has been at an extreme level throughout.

The violence score was fairly stable from WWL 2016 – 2021, spiking in WWL 2022 (Taliban take-over) and then dropped to WWL 2015 level in the WWL 2023 reporting period.

Does this necessarily mean that the converts were confronted with less violence? The answer is written above in the Summary on page 1:

1. Very little has changed for **converts**. Persecution has remained at an extreme level since 2015.
2. The large drop in the violence score is due to three main factors:
 - a. Convert life has been deeper underground than before.
 - b. The Taliban have been concentrating on consolidating their power and made little attempt to specifically root out non-Muslim activity in the WWL 2023 reporting period.
 - c. With convert life deep underground, it has been a challenge to obtain verified violence data.

So, it is very possible that Christians in Afghanistan (in particular the converts) are facing more violence than in the WWL 2016-2021, and possibly WWL 2022 when the score for violence was extremely high. But the desire of the Taliban to cleanse society from traces of the recent past (especially targeting those who served in the past government, armed forces and certain international NGOs) as well as the outspoken enmity of ISKP towards the Shiite minority has caused a general pool of violence, in which the local Afghan Christian minority has drowned too. But this has to be distinguished from faith-related violent persecution.

The case of Afghanistan illustrates that it may be better not to make statements like “XX is the worst country to live in as a Christian, YY the second-worst” etc., because worst/worse does not necessarily relate to persecution. Saying that Afghanistan is the ninth-worst country for a Christian to live in, would simply be incorrect.

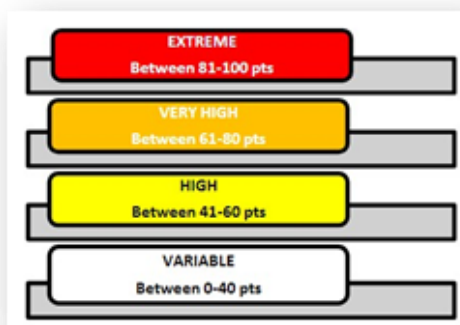
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6. WWL 2023 Summary of Trends

Contents

1. Violence in Sub-Saharan Africa has reached new heights
2. The China model and its growing number of emulators
3. China's digital control threatens the Church
4. Conditions for the Church in Latin America worsen
5. The Church in the Middle East is reduced and still under pressure
6. The good news: Greater tolerance in the Gulf

1. Violence in Sub-Saharan Africa has reached new heights



For the violence score	
VERY LOW	Zero - 1.387
LOW	1.388 - 2.775
FAIRLY HIGH	2.776 - 4.163
HIGH	4.164 - 5.550
VERY HIGH	5.551 - 11.150
EXTREMELY HIGH	11.151 - 16.667

The combined total score for violence for all 26 Sub-Saharan countries that scored at least 41 total points on the Open Doors World Watch List, increased by 8%. Half of those countries have violence scores in the “extremely high” range.

Conditions across Sub-Saharan Africa are ripe for violence. The general background is persistent, expanding political instability and economic hardship. Just as poorer African countries were trying to overcome the destruction of the Covid-19 pandemic, Russia's invasion of Ukraine pushed food, fertilizer and energy prices higher.

Christians in the region endure these conditions alongside everyone else, but the weak states, and the ineffective governments

within them, that span the region have intensified a number of violent trends that are especially threatening to the Church.

It is fertile ground for the **expansion of jihadism**, which has created a pretext for military juntas to overthrow governments, such as in Mali and Burkina Faso. The jihadist movement, which seeks to expand Sharia across the continent, has forced Christians into constant motion, from their homes to displacement camps, or even to other countries. Insecurity, stemming from this

experience of forced displacement, can then make Christians even more vulnerable to further violence. Christian women, in particular, can be easily targeted for sexual attack, while men are more likely to lose their lives.

Especially in Sharia states, the violence often goes hand in hand with serious pressure on Christians in their everyday life. At schools or universities, in employment, just at home or in family circles, Christians can be bullied or seriously mistreated. No Sharia state would provide equal space for the Church.

Organized crime uses Western Africa as a hub for drug trafficking from Latin America to Europe. There is also widespread trafficking of humans and protected wildlife. The experience of Christian leaders in Latin America, where their public witness against organized crime is repaid with bullets, is an ill portent for the African church if organized crime permeates all levels of society. This is especially worrisome if crime mixes with jihadism and **unscrupulous corporations** in the region, which will go over corpses to obtain natural resources and rare minerals. For such enterprises, with whom the Western world is sometimes involved, chaos is good for business. The Church is vulnerable in such violent, chaotic situations.

One particular enterprise, the **Wagner Group**, a supplier of mercenary soldiers with ties to the Kremlin, is causing tremendous suffering for civilians in countries like Libya, CAR, Mali and Mozambique. “The levels of violence committed by Russian mercenaries now exceed civilian targeting by state forces, rebel groups or Islamist insurgents,” The New York Times [reported](#) in August. Open Doors’ researchers in those countries are limited in what information they can obtain about Christians, who themselves are under pressure not to speak up against Wagner’s misdeeds.

Survival for many Africans already was a challenge before **changes to the climate** have become evident. Now they have had to leave their homes, and sometimes their country. In such situations, Christians are often doubly vulnerable, as documented in the World Watch Research report, [Church on the Run](#).

2. The China model and its growing number of emulators

China is forging an international alliance to redefine human rights. The apparent success of China, especially in (but not limited to) economic terms is appealing to many leaders around the world. The promise of growth and prosperity, while being able to control all groups and individuals perceived as deviant, has triggered the interest of leaders from all over the world, no matter their ideological background.

China is trying not just to dominate the international agenda, but also to **re-interpret existing (and coining new) human rights**. Some observers call this ‘[rights-free development](#)’. A glimpse of its ambition can be seen in the UN Human Rights Council [speech given by China’s foreign minister](#) on 22 February 2021, which stressed not classical notions of God-given rights but the “right” to development and happiness. China is trying to push this revisionism into the main-

stream of international diplomacy, partly by attempting to [re-define](#) the tasks of the United Nations — and, most importantly, by filtering who is *allowed to participate* in debates on how human rights should be shaped in the future.

Countries as diverse as Sri Lanka, Myanmar and Malaysia have headed down this same path, joining such Central Asian states as Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan and, of course, Russia.

The **authoritarian drift** can also be seen elsewhere around the globe:

- Middle East and North Africa: Algeria, Morocco, Tunisia and Egypt are just a few examples; Iran and the Gulf States are others. In Turkey, those loyal to President Recep Tayyip Erdogan control the government and most of the media, judiciary and academia.
- Sub-Saharan Africa: Rwanda, Burundi, Uganda and Cameroon. In Nigeria, the security apparatus is largely under federal control, has been saturated by Muslim northerners during President Muhammadu Buhari's presidency.
- Latin America: Cuba, Venezuela - and Nicaragua, which in 2023 appears for the first time in the top 50 countries of the Open Doors World Watch List, where President Ortega and his wife have tried to silence any dissenting voice.

The mere existence of Christian communities is a thorn in the flesh of the regimes in many of these countries. The more so, if Christian activists raise their voice frustrating the regime's attempts to control its citizens. Using the language of "stability" and "security", autocrats put **immense pressure on church leaders** in response to their persistent call for the respect of human rights, free participation of civil society, the rule of law, and election transparency. Those who refuse to support the ruling party can be branded as "troublemakers", "disturbers of the peace" or even "terrorists". They face arrest, demolition of church buildings, and the loss of church registration.

3. China's digital control threatens the Church

As digital tools became more sophisticated, so did the Chinese government. Armed in March 2022 with [sweeping new rules](#) on [church use of the internet](#) and the continuing Covid-19 pandemic as a pretext, Beijing employed censorship, disinformation and unblinking surveillance to ratchet up control of religious groups.

In response, there were reports of some pastors leaving 60-second voice messages on social media platforms such as WeChat, to avoid having to submit sermon details to the authorities. Christian content was still available on some online platforms 2022, but the risk of access continued to increase. The ongoing cat-and-mouse game is leaving less space for the latter.

The advance of technology has empowered Chinese Christians to advance evangelism. But even 3-year-old incidents, such as the raid of an online Christian bookstore that continued to have [repercussions for customers](#) years later, indicate that digital platforms come with **increasing risks** and can have far-reaching negative consequences for Christians.

The tracking apps that collected data to stay ahead of the coronavirus were not phased out in 2022 but redeployed. During the Open Doors World Watch List reporting period, authorities stepped up their efforts to control [social media](#), partly by holding tech companies responsible for all [comments](#). As tight as the internet space became for the average Chinese citizen, it arguably became tighter for Christians, as they are **perceived as being allied with Western influences**.

China's much publicized "[Social Credit System](#)" is becoming a **top government priority**, one that the pandemic only [intensified](#). Physical surveillance has become so [synonymous](#) with Communist Party doctrine that some observers think it is rewriting the terms of the party's contract with society, diminishing its promise of economic improvement and advancing a promise of security and well-being in a more general way.

The very infrastructure of digital communication, which is increasingly mobile, is potentially perilous. Neither the system security of Huawei, the largest and one of the few providers of the 5G mobile standard, nor its links with the People's Liberation Army and the Communist Party, are clear. Nor are the perils confined to China. WeChat warned its users abroad that their [interactions](#) — histories, comments, likes etc. — are sent to data centers in China.

4. Conditions for the Church in Latin America worsen

On the 2022 list, three Latin American countries were ranked in the top 50. On the 2023 list, there are now four: Nicaragua is ranked No. 50 in 2023, the first time the country has appeared within the top 50. It joins Colombia, Cuba and Mexico.

On average, the total score in each of the four countries increased by 4.2 points, led by the 8-point surge in Nicaragua. The roots of this increase trace back to April 2018, when government repression intensified after public protests. During the WWL 2023 reporting period, President Ortega and his wife have tried to silence any dissenting voice. The Church has been a particular target — buildings damaged, TV stations and colleges closed, religious leaders expelled — because of the reputation of authority and legitimacy it has in the country.

By comparison, in Sub-Saharan Africa, individual country scores in the top 50 rose, on average, by 1.5 points. In the top 50, scores went down, by 0.4 points on average, across Asia.

The higher scores in Latin America translated into higher rankings on the list. Colombia ranks No. 22 on the 2023 list, up from No. 30 a year earlier. Cuba rose 10 spots to No. 27, and Mexico rose 5 spots to No. 38.

What's driving the deteriorating conditions in these four countries? Especially in rural areas, **corrupt and ineffective government** has created space for criminal groups and ethnic leaders to emerge, strengthen and become drivers of persecution. Criminal networks are growing and dominating large territories.

The most frequent violent incidents documented by World Watch Research involve the **targeting of Christians**, and the attacks are increasingly showing signs of cruelty. Christians who stand athwart crime are especially at risk in regions where criminal groups are fighting each other for territorial control. Living out their faith has become a reason why Christians are being forced to flee their communities and sometimes the country, for safety.

The special, **semi-autonomous legal status** that indigenous populations enjoy in parts of Latin America is a double-edged sword. Free from some measures of central-government authority over local culture and customs, they also are without central-government assistance to resist criminal elements. Indigenous citizens who abandon community traditions to become Christian are doubly vulnerable, exposed not only to criminal activity but to harassment by indigenous leadership over their apostasy.

Government repression in Nicaragua, Cuba and Venezuela has intensified against those who are seen as opposition voices. In Nicaragua especially, communist repression of church leaders became increasingly visible during the WWL 2023 reporting period.

There is **growing antagonism** toward church presence in the public sphere, especially toward the church's advocacy for Biblical gender teaching. Marches and demonstrations in favor of gender self-determination regularly include attacks on church buildings. The pressure leads to Christian self-censorship.

5. The Church in the Middle East is reduced and still under pressure

The storm may be over, and there are isolated reasons for Christians to take encouragement (see the Good News item, below), but overall, the situation remains disheartening.

On the one hand, the visible and political influence of the **Muslim Brotherhood** has seriously reduced. On the other, dictatorship has returned to Tunisia, the origin of the 2011 "Arab Spring" that washed across much of the Middle East, toppling autocrats even in Egypt.

That moment has passed. Autocracy is back in form, increasing its grip on society. Monitoring of all movement has increased, with COVID-19 presenting the ideal reason to step up surveillance, especially via mobile devices in countries such as the United Arab Emirates.

Anti-terrorism laws are widely used as pretext to crush opposition. Saudi Arabia, for example, handed down a 34-year prison sentence to someone who retweeted a statement by a government dissident. This is typical of the atmosphere of oppression in which people in Saudi Arabia live and which makes them very careful about what they say in public. Christians will avoid anything that resembles criticism of the Saudi authorities.

Some of these Christians, especially those who converted from Islam to Christianity, are themselves considered to be potential troublemakers (i.e., **a threat to national stability**) simply because their beliefs have changed. In many countries, they are told by the security services not to engage with other Christians or in Christian activities or face consequences, including detention (in Tunisia and Morocco, for example) and even torture in, for example, Egypt. The

worst consequence is capital punishment for apostasy, but this is normally carried out not by state authorities but by families (i.e., “honor killings”), for example in [Iraq](#).

Algeria provides an example of particular hostility toward Christianity. During the WWL 2023 reporting period, the country increased its pressure on the church by prosecuting and sentencing Christians and Christian leaders alike. The government ordered several new churches to close, in addition to the churches closed down in previous years. The increased pressure has forced the remaining churches to be very careful, with many decreasing their activities, leading to a growing number of isolated Christians. Algeria is increasingly using laws meant to counter terrorism and money-laundering to target churches and individual Christians.

A look at the Levant region of the Middle East (Lebanon, Syria, Iraq, Israel/Palestinian Territories and Jordan) shows the Christian community shrinking due to deprivation, discrimination and persecution. Ever since the Islamic State group (IS) burst onto the scene, Christians in those areas of Iraq and Syria have been struggling to earn a living; young Christians in particular face high unemployment and continual hostility, thus encouraging their **desire to emigrate**. This hostile environment can be felt from birth, when children are sometimes denied legal identities as Christians (particularly if their parents converted from Islam), through to experiencing high levels of discrimination in education and faith-related harassment, such as bullying by teachers or peers.

In addition, Christians in north-eastern Syria are also facing Turkish attacks on their villages, with dozens of churches, Christian cemeteries, schools and other important buildings severely damaged. This causes many believers to leave the ancient Christian area. Where such emigration increases, church communities are weakened as a consequence, deprived of the next generation of leaders and families, and so become easier targets for further marginalization.

6. The good news: Greater tolerance in the Gulf

In several Gulf states, such as Bahrain and the United Arab Emirates, there has been promotion of greater tolerance; authorities are looking for ways to respond to the call for more religious freedom within a moderate Islamic framework. One manifestation of this can be seen in their endorsement of the [Abraham Accords](#) with Israel.

The increasing focus on narratives of “national unity” in, for example, Egypt, and of “tolerance” in Bahrain and UAE does counter radical Islamic currents and helps create an environment that is more friendly toward Christians. Hate speech against Christians belonging to historical or expatriate communities often is not tolerated in a number of countries, including Bahrain, the UAE and Egypt, although radical elements remain present within their societies.

How real, and permanent, are these encouraging signs? One should remember that one reason why these countries have strengthened ties with Israel is their desire to obtain Israeli security technology. If the regimes use it to monitor all levels of society, then Christians and churches will be able to operate only within the limits imposed by the specific state.

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7. WWL 2023 Country religious statistics

Open Doors estimates for the number of Christians have been used for 8 countries. In all other cases, WCD estimates have been used (Johnson T M and Zurlo G A, eds., World Christian Database, Leiden/Boston, Brill, accessed April 2022).

Country	Region	Subregion	Total population (UN 2022 estimate as compiled by WCD; accessed April 2022)	Number of Christians (WCD, accessed April 2022)	Number of Christians (OD estimate)
Afghanistan	Asia	South Asia	40,754,000		thousands
Algeria	Africa	Northern Africa	45,350,000	139,000	
Angola	Africa	Middle Africa	35,027,000	32,675,000	
Azerbaijan	Asia	Western Asia	10,300,000	247,000	
Bahrain	Asia	Western Asia	1,784,000	208,000	
Bangladesh	Asia	South Asia	167,886,000	938,000	
Belarus	Europe	Eastern Europe	9,433,000	7,452,000	
Bhutan	Asia	South Asia	788,000	18,800	
Brunei	Asia	South-eastern Asia	445,000	53,500	
Burkina Faso	Africa	Western Africa	22,103,000	5,166,000	
Burundi	Africa	Eastern Africa	12,625,000	11,854,000	
Cameroon	Africa	Middle Africa	27,912,000	17,032,000	
Central African Republic	Africa	Middle Africa	5,017,000	3,712,000	
Chad	Africa	Middle Africa	17,414,000	6,120,000	
China	Asia	Eastern Asia	1,448,471,000		96,700,000
Colombia	Latin America	South America	51,513,000	49,002,000	
Comoros	Africa	Eastern Africa	907,000	4,600	
Congo DR (DRC)	Africa	Middle Africa	95,241,000	90,570,000	
Cuba	Latin America	Caribbean	11,306,000	6,936,000	
Djibouti	Africa	Eastern Africa	1,016,000	10,900	
Egypt	Africa	Northern Africa	106,157,000	9,695,000	
El Salvador	Latin America	Central America	6,550,000	6,317,000	
Eritrea	Africa	Eastern Africa	3,662,000	1,709,000	
Ethiopia	Africa	Eastern Africa	120,813,000	72,396,000	
Gambia	Africa	Western Africa	2,558,000	116,000	
Guinea	Africa	Western Africa	13,866,000	478,000	
Honduras	Latin America	Central America	10,221,000	9,780,000	
India	Asia	South Asia	1,406,632,000	69,494,000	
Indonesia	Asia	South-eastern Asia	279,135,000	34,185,000	
Iran	Asia	South Asia	86,023,000		1,245,000
Iraq	Asia	Western Asia	42,165,000	164,000	
Ivory Coast	Africa	Western Africa	27,742,000	9,741,000	
Jordan	Asia	Western Asia	10,301,000		170,000
Kazakhstan	Asia	Central Asia	19,205,000	4,876,000	
Kenya	Africa	Eastern Africa	56,215,000	45,891,000	
Kuwait	Asia	Western Asia	4,380,000	529,000	
Kyrgyzstan	Asia	Central Asia	6,728,000	277,000	
Laos	Asia	South-eastern Asia	7,481,000	207,000	
Libya	Africa	Northern Africa	7,041,000	35,400	
Malaysia	Asia	South-eastern Asia	33,181,000	3,054,000	
Maldives	Asia	South Asia	541,000		hundreds
Mali	Africa	Western Africa	21,474,000	490,000	
Mauritania	Africa	Western Africa	4,902,000	11,000	
Mexico	Latin America	Central America	131,563,000	125,738,000	
Morocco	Africa	Northern Africa	37,773,000	31,300	
Mozambique	Africa	Eastern Africa	33,089,000	18,589,000	
Myanmar	Asia	South-eastern Asia	55,227,000	4,421,000	
Nepal	Asia	South Asia	30,226,000	1,380,000	
Nicaragua	Latin America	Central America	6,779,000	6,437,000	
Niger	Africa	Western Africa	26,084,000	65,300	
Nigeria	Africa	Western Africa	216,747,000	100,420,000	
North Korea	Asia	Eastern Asia	25,991,000		400,000
Oman	Asia	Western Asia	5,324,000	193,000	
Pakistan	Asia	South Asia	229,489,000	4,194,000	
Palestinian Territories	Asia	Western Asia	5,346,000	43,200	
Qatar	Asia	Western Asia	2,980,000	409,000	
Russian Federation	Europe	Eastern Europe	145,806,000	120,131,000	
Rwanda	Africa	Eastern Africa	13,600,000	12,464,000	
Saudi Arabia	Asia	Western Asia	35,845,000	2,165,000	
Somalia	Africa	Eastern Africa	16,842,000		hundreds
South Sudan	Africa	Eastern Africa	11,619,000	7,082,000	
Sri Lanka	Asia	South Asia	21,576,000	2,010,000	
Sudan	Africa	Northern Africa	45,992,000	2,000,000	
Syria	Asia	Western Asia	19,365,000	603,000	
Tajikistan	Asia	Central Asia	9,957,000	64,100	
Tanzania	Africa	Eastern Africa	63,299,000	35,230,000	
Togo	Africa	Western Africa	8,681,000	4,163,000	
Tunisia	Africa	Northern Africa	12,047,000	22,500	
Turkey	Asia	Western Asia	85,562,000	171,000	
Turkmenistan	Asia	Central Asia	6,202,000	66,700	
Uganda	Africa	Eastern Africa	48,433,000	40,885,000	
United Arab Emirates	Asia	Western Asia	10,082,000	1,122,000	
Uzbekistan	Asia	Central Asia	34,382,000	351,000	
Venezuela	Latin America	South America	29,267,000	26,884,000	
Vietnam	Asia	South-eastern Asia	98,954,000	9,401,000	
Yemen	Asia	Western Asia	31,155,000		a few thousand

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8. WWL 2023 Total number of persecuted Christians and derived statements

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1. Advice for communication
2. Explanation for the use of the qualifier “high”
3. The basis for statements derived from the 360 million number
4. Statements derived from the 360 million number
5. The problem with publishing a breakdown of persecuted Christians per country

1) Advice for communication

When the number of Christians living in situations of persecution or discrimination is estimated for all countries that have scored 41 points or more, it comes to 359 million. For the WWL 2023 Top 50 countries, it comes to 312 million. For communication purposes and to take account of the margin of uncertainty, the total number is set for 360 million and 312 million.

WWL 2023		
All countries scoring 41 points or more	359,431,300	360 M
Top 50	311,931,800	312 M

Please use the following statement for WWL 2023 communication to the general public:

More than 360m Christians suffer high levels of persecution and discrimination for their faith.

In Open Doors’ World Watch List top 50 alone, 312m Christians face very high or extreme levels.

Worldwide: That is one in 7; 1 in 5 in Africa, 2 out of 5 in Asia, and 1 in 15 in Latin America.

See sections 3 and 4 below for more information concerning the “one in ...” statements.

Either figure may be used on its own:

More than 360m Christians suffer high levels of persecution and discrimination for their faith.

In Open Doors World Watch List top 50 countries alone, 312m Christians suffer very high or extreme levels of persecution and discrimination for their faith.

The qualifier “more than” is necessary, because the estimates were limited to countries that scored 41 points or more in WWL 2023. There are other countries that did not score 41 points but where there are groups of Christians that live in comparably difficult situations.

2) Explanation for the use of the qualifier “high”

In WWL-Methodology, “high” levels of persecution or discrimination occur when the score-range is 41 to 60 points. Above this there are two other categories: “very high” (61-80 points) and “extreme” (81-100 points). All countries that scored at least 41 points were taken into account for estimating the number of persecuted Christians in the world. To define the number of persecuted Christians in each of those countries, the level of persecution or discrimination was estimated for regions within that country, based on the overall country questionnaire. It would have been better if a questionnaire were completed for each region separately, but that was simply too much work. If the estimate of the level of persecution or discrimination for a specific region within the country came within the range of “high” and above, the Christian population in that region was counted as persecuted Christians. The total of such regions made up the number of persecuted Christians in that country. Alternatively, if in a country there were serious differences in persecution or discrimination of different Categories of Christianity or even Christian denominations, the number of most affected category or denomination would be chosen, and sometimes reduced by a certain percentage.

In [WWL-Methodology](#) (Complete World Watch List Methodology, updated October 2022, page 57), “high” is generally defined as “where living as a Christian means that although there may be a tolerated church which enjoys some freedom, in practice prominent Christians are targeted, churches themselves are subject to significant restrictions, and the culture remains largely hostile to a Christian presence in such areas as education and employment.” It can also be that there is a lot of violence targeting Christians and churches, while the overall pressure is still limited.

Thus, it does not mean that all Christians in those situations are directly facing high levels of persecution or discrimination. It means they are living in regions within their countries (or are part of Christian denominations) where the seriousness of the persecution situation is estimated to be ‘high’ (or higher).

Again, please do not take out the qualifier “high”. This is crucial, since there are other definitions of persecution that would give a considerably higher figure.

3) The basis for statements derived from the 360 million number

This document now further elaborates upon the meaning of the “360 million in the world” number. The basis for the statements to follow can be found in the table below:

Region	WWL 2023	WWL 2023	WWL 2023	WWL 2022	WWL 2022
	Total no. of Christians	No. of persecuted Christians	1 in x Christians persecuted	No. of persecuted Christians	1 in x Christians persecuted
AFRICA	692,094,000	135,638,400	5.1	137,982,700	5.0
ASIA	388,777,000	178,707,900	2.2	176,483,400	2.2
EUROPE	568,559,000	4,829,000	117.7	3,990,000	141.3
LATIN AMERICA	612,381,000	40,256,000	15.2	40,616,000	15.2
NORTHERN AMERICA	269,250,000	-	N/A	-	N/A
OCEANIA	28,814,000	-	N/A	-	N/A
TOTAL	2,559,875,000	359,431,300	7.1	359,072,100	7.1

4) Statements derived from the 360 million number

The following statements include the number of persecuted Christians in all countries scoring at least 41 points:

“One in every 7 Christians live in situations of at least ‘high’ levels of persecution or discrimination for their faith.”

(In WWL 2022 this was 1/7; WWL 2021 this was 1/8; WWL 2020 this was 1/8; WWL 2019: 1/9)

And:

“In Africa one in every 5 Christians live in situations of at least ‘high’ levels of persecution or discrimination for their faith.”

(In WWL 2022 this was 1/5; WWL 2021 this was 1/6; WWL 2020 this was 1/5; WWL 2019: 1/6)

“In Asia two in every 5 Christians live in situations of at least ‘high’ levels of persecution or discrimination for their faith.”

(In WWL 2022 this was 2/5; WWL 2021 this was 2/5; WWL 2020 this was 2/5;
WWL 2019: 1/3)

“In Latin America one in every 15 Christians live in situations of at least ‘high’ levels of persecution or discrimination for their faith.”

(In WWL 2022 this was 1/15; WWL 2021 this was 1/12; WWL 2020 this was 1/21;
WWL 2019: 1/21)

5) The problem with publishing a breakdown of persecuted Christians per country

It is not possible to provide a public version of the breakdown of the numbers of persecuted Christians per country, as this is sensitive information.

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9. WWL 2023 Article on Violence

Data on violence perpetrated against Christians in all countries scoring 41+ points in the reporting period 1 October 2021 – 30 September 2022

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1. Summary data of Questionnaire Block 6 questions 1-5 and WWL comparisons

Please note: As in all WWL reporting periods, the violence data reported and included below is an absolute minimum figure. In reality, it is very likely that the numbers listed here were higher.

Questions Block 6 Violence	WWL 2023	WWL 2022	WWL 2021	WWL 2020	WWL 2019	WWL 2018	WWL 2017	WWL 2016
6.1 Christians killed for faith-related reasons	5,621	5,898	4,761	2,983	4,305	3,066	1,207	7,106
6.2 Churches and other Christian buildings attacked	2,110	5,110	4,488	9,488	1,847	793	1,329	2,425
6.3 and 6.4 Christians detained without trial, arrested, sentenced and imprisoned	4,542	6,175	4,277	4,811	3,150	1,905	-	-
6.5 Christians abducted	5,259	3,829	1,710	1,052	-	-	-	-

2. Summary statements focusing on all WWL 2023 violence data

The statements below are based on the tables giving detailed violence data per country and region in Section 4 of this document. It is important to note that nearly all totals include the use of several 'symbolic numbers' (e.g., 10*, 100*, 1000* or 10,000*), and that the numbers presented are much lower than in reality.

- The total number of **Christians killed for their faith decreased slightly from 5,898 recorded cases (WWL 2022) to 5,621 (WWL 2023).**
- The total number of **churches attacked in differing forms of severity, decreased from 5,110 recorded cases (WWL 2022) to 2,110 (WWL 2023).** Reports showed a decrease in the number of churches attacked compared to WWL 2023. Influential in this drop was the number recorded for China, Nigeria and Bangladesh, among others. The reduction in China was due in large part i) to the fact that the authorities had already closed a large number of churches in the previous two WWL reporting periods (3,000 had already been closed in WWL 2022 and 3,800 in WWL 2021) and ii) the top priority of the authorities was to contain the spread of COVID, and as long as the churches kept a low profile and were conforming to the COVID measures, they were less likely to be targeted. For Nigeria, the problem was that there were many jihadist-related attacks on Christian communities, leaving churches abandoned for shorter or longer periods, but it was

difficult to give that a precise number. Therefore, the symbolic 100 is to be regarded as a very conservative estimate.

- The total number of **Christians detained for their faith decreased from 4,765 recorded cases (WWL 2022) to 3,154 (WWL 2023).**
- The total number of **Christians sentenced for their faith decreased slightly from 1,410 recorded cases (WWL 2022) to 1,388 (WWL 2023).**
- The total number of **Christians abducted for faith-related reasons increased from 3,829 recorded cases (WWL 2022) to 5,259 (WWL 2023).**
- The number of **recorded cases of Christians raped or otherwise sexually harassed for faith-related reasons: 2,126 (WWL 2023).** Reporting was particularly difficult because of issues of trauma, and cultural tabus.
- The same applies for **recorded cases of forced marriages of Christians to non-Christians: 717 (WWL 2023).**
- The number of **recorded cases of Christians who have been otherwise physically or mentally abused for faith-related reasons (including beatings and death threats) was 29,411 (WWL 2023).**
- There were **4,547 recorded cases of houses of Christians or other property (excluding shops) attacked (WWL 2023).**
- There were also **recorded cases of shops or businesses of Christians that were attacked: 2,210 (WWL 2023).**
- Because of violence – and also pressure (especially converts having to leave their homes and communities) – the **recorded cases of Christians forced to leave their homes or go into hiding in-country for faith-related reasons was 124,310 (WWL 2023).**
- Sometimes there was no choice for Christians but to leave their country because of persecution. The number of **recorded cases of Christians forced to leave the country for faith-related reasons was 14,997 (WWL 2023).**

3. Introductory notes concerning detailed violence data per country and region

The WWL 2023 data presented in this document is based wherever possible on direct counting. In several cases, where it is very hard to know exact numbers and it is clear from indirect sources that there have been violent incidents occurring against Christians, numbers have been estimated. In such cases, the World Watch Research team has always estimated conservatively. (In connection with this, please see Section 2 of the WWR document “[WWL – Discussion of key themes](#)”, published in October 2022, and the discussion below.)

The tables presented below do not pretend to give a complete picture. The exact details of what is happening to Christians in a country are difficult to obtain: For instance, especially in countries where there is conflict or a high level of secrecy, the media are often seriously curtailed by the regime or influenced by social actors. Please see the individual WWL 2023 Full Country Dossiers for more details. These are made publicly available at <https://opendoorsanalytical.org/country-dossiers/> (password: freedom).

The data on violence presented is limited to all countries scoring 41 or more points in the WWL 2023 reporting period. There may be cases of violence in countries scoring 40 points or less, but these are not included here. For each question in Block 6, country data is shown.

For security reasons: There are 5 countries where the data on violence is presented but the names of those countries are not individually revealed. These countries are Afghanistan, Maldives, North Korea, Somalia and Yemen. The data for these 5 countries are indicated with “NN” .

In the tables below, where there is an asterisk (“*”) beside the name of the country, this indicates that the number given is understood to be symbolic, meaning that the real number of incidents is certainly (much) higher. In cases where it has been impossible to count exactly, a symbolic round figure (10, 100, 1000, 10,000) is given. A symbolic number of 10 could in reality be much more than 10, but the real number is uncertain; the same applies for the other symbolic numbers.

A further disclaimer: Even where it was possible to count exact numbers, it has to be understood that what has been counted is very often the absolute minimum. Much violence against Christians goes unnoticed and/or unreported.

4. Detailed Block 6 violence data per country and region



Please note: In the tables below, the coloring (red, orange and yellow) corresponds to the coloring used in the WWL 2023 Table of scores and ranks denoting 'Extreme', 'Very high' and 'High levels' of overall persecution.

6.1 How many Christians have been killed for faith-related reasons (including state sanctioned executions)?

TOTAL: 5,621

From high to low:

Question 6.1 Rank	Country	Region	Sub-Region	Number	Symbolic Round Number	Block 6 Score in total	WWL 2023 Rank	Total WWL 2023 Score
1	Nigeria	Africa	Western Africa	5014		16.7	6	88
2	NN			100	TRUE			
3	Mozambique	Africa	Eastern Africa	100	TRUE	15.6	32	68
4	Congo DR (DRC)	Africa	Middle Africa	100	TRUE	15.6	37	67
5	Central African Republic	Africa	Middle Africa	61		15.6	24	70
6	Myanmar	Asia	South-eastern Asia	42		15.4	14	80
7	Colombia	Latin America	South America	21		15.4	22	71
8	India	Asia	South Asia	17		15.7	11	82
9	Mexico	Latin America	Central America	14		13.9	38	67
10	Honduras	Latin America	Central America	14		11.9	67	53
11	Pakistan	Asia	South Asia	12		16.7	7	86
12	Mali	Africa	Western Africa	10	TRUE	15.0	17	76
13	Burkina Faso	Africa	Western Africa	10	TRUE	15.6	23	71
14	Niger	Africa	Western Africa	10	TRUE	15.4	28	70
15	Indonesia	Asia	South-eastern Asia	10		12.8	33	68
16	Cameroon	Africa	Middle Africa	10	TRUE	15.9	45	65
17	Tanzania	Africa	Eastern Africa	10	TRUE	15.6	53	63
18	Uganda	Africa	Eastern Africa	10	TRUE	14.8	69	51
19	South Sudan	Africa	Eastern Africa	10	TRUE	15.0	72	46
20	Kenya	Africa	Eastern Africa	7		13.3	51	64
21	Venezuela	Latin America	South America	7		11.7	64	56
22	Egypt	Africa	Northern Africa	5		7.0	35	68
23	Chad	Africa	Middle Africa	5		7.6	60	58
24	NN			3				
25	Syria	Asia	Western Asia	3		11.3	12	80
26	Bangladesh	Asia	South Asia	3		10.7	30	69
27	El Salvador	Latin America	Central America	3		6.7	73	46
28	Eritrea	Africa	Eastern Africa	2		12.2	4	89
29	NN			2				
30	Ethiopia	Africa	Eastern Africa	2		10.6	39	66
31	Iraq	Asia	Western Asia	1		4.6	18	76
32	Vietnam	Asia	South-eastern Asia	1		6.9	25	70
33	Kyrgyzstan	Asia	Central Asia	1		2.0	59	59
34	Burundi	Africa	Eastern Africa	1		11.1	65	55

6.2	How many churches or public Christian properties (schools, hospitals, cemeteries, etc.) have been attacked, damaged, bombed, looted, destroyed, burned down, closed or confiscated for faith-related reasons? TOTAL: 2,110
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From high to low:

Question 6.2 Rank	Country	Region	Sub-Region	Number	Symbolic Round Number	Block 6 Score in total	WWL 2023 Rank	Total WWL 2023 Score
1	China	Asia	Eastern Asia	1000	TRUE	11.1	16	77
2	Nigeria	Africa	Western Africa	100	TRUE	16.7	6	88
3	Myanmar	Asia	South-eastern Asia	100	TRUE	15.4	14	80
4	Mozambique	Africa	Eastern Africa	100	TRUE	15.6	32	68
5	Congo DR (DRC)	Africa	Middle Africa	100	TRUE	15.6	37	67
6	Rwanda	Africa	Eastern Africa	100	TRUE	8.9	63	57
7	Angola	Africa	Middle Africa	100	TRUE	7.2	68	52
8	India	Asia	South Asia	67		15.7	11	82
9	Mexico	Latin America	Central America	42		13.9	38	67
10	Colombia	Latin America	South America	37		15.4	22	71
11	Nicaragua	Latin America	Central America	31		9.4	50	65
12	Niger	Africa	Western Africa	30		15.4	28	70
13	Ethiopia	Africa	Eastern Africa	22		10.6	39	66
14	Iran	Asia	South Asia	15		10.7	8	86
15	Kenya	Africa	Eastern Africa	15		13.3	51	64
16	Venezuela	Latin America	South America	14		11.7	64	56
17	Central African Republic	Africa	Middle Africa	11		15.6	24	70
18	NN			10	TRUE			
19	Eritrea	Africa	Eastern Africa	10	TRUE	12.2	4	89
20	Pakistan	Asia	South Asia	10	TRUE	16.7	7	86
21	Sudan	Africa	Northern Africa	10	TRUE	9.4	10	83
22	Syria	Asia	Western Asia	10	TRUE	11.3	12	80
23	Mali	Africa	Western Africa	10	TRUE	15.0	17	76
24	Burkina Faso	Africa	Western Africa	10	TRUE	15.6	23	71
25	Bangladesh	Asia	South Asia	10		10.7	30	69
26	Cameroon	Africa	Middle Africa	10	TRUE	15.9	45	65
27	Tanzania	Africa	Eastern Africa	10	TRUE	15.6	53	63
28	Burundi	Africa	Eastern Africa	10	TRUE	11.1	65	55
29	Uganda	Africa	Eastern Africa	10	TRUE	14.8	69	51
30	South Sudan	Africa	Eastern Africa	10	TRUE	15.0	72	46
31	Libya	Africa	Northern Africa	8		9.1	5	88
32	Indonesia	Asia	South-eastern Asia	8		12.8	33	68
33	Honduras	Latin America	Central America	8		11.9	67	53
34	NN			7				
35	Cuba	Latin America	Caribbean	7		7.0	27	70
36	Turkey	Asia	Western Asia	7		5.7	41	66
37	Vietnam	Asia	South-eastern Asia	5		6.9	25	70
38	Togo	Africa	Western Africa	5		5.4	70	49
39	Algeria	Africa	Northern Africa	4		4.8	19	73
40	Laos	Asia	South-eastern Asia	4		5.0	31	68
41	Tunisia	Africa	Northern Africa	4		6.5	36	67
42	Nepal	Asia	South Asia	4		4.4	55	61
43	Sri Lanka	Asia	South Asia	4		3.9	62	57
44	El Salvador	Latin America	Central America	4		6.7	73	46
45	NN			2				
46	Morocco	Africa	Northern Africa	2		4.8	29	69
47	Malaysia	Asia	South-eastern Asia	2		3.9	43	66
48	Chad	Africa	Middle Africa	2		7.6	60	58
49	Ivory Coast	Africa	Western Africa	2		3.3	74	44
50	Belarus	Europe	Eastern Europe	2		3.3	76	43
51	Egypt	Africa	Northern Africa	1		7.0	35	68
52	Bhutan	Asia	South Asia	1		1.1	40	66
53	Tajikistan	Asia	Central Asia	1		1.1	44	66
54	Russian Federation	Europe	Eastern Europe	1		2.0	61	57
55	Guinea	Africa	Western Africa	1		3.0	71	48

6.3	How many Christians have been detained without trial for faith-related reasons? TOTAL: 3,154
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From high to low:

Question 6.3 Rank	Country	Region	Sub-Region	Number	Symbolic Round Number	Block 6 Score in total	WWL 2023 Rank	Total WWL 2023 Score
1	India	Asia	South Asia	1711		15.7	11	82
2	Eritrea	Africa	Eastern Africa	244		12.2	4	89
3	Russian Federation	Europe	Eastern Europe	200		2.0	61	57
4	NN			100	TRUE			
5	Myanmar	Asia	South-eastern Asia	100	TRUE	15.4	14	80
6	China	Asia	Eastern Asia	100	TRUE	11.1	16	77
7	Rwanda	Africa	Eastern Africa	100	TRUE	8.9	63	57
8	Cuba	Latin America	Caribbean	80		7.0	27	70
9	El Salvador	Latin America	Central America	63		6.7	73	46
10	Nigeria	Africa	Western Africa	54		16.7	6	88
11	Iran	Asia	South Asia	48		10.7	8	86
12	Egypt	Africa	Northern Africa	40		7.0	35	68
13	Mexico	Latin America	Central America	27		13.9	38	67
14	Pakistan	Asia	South Asia	26		16.7	7	86
15	Nicaragua	Latin America	Central America	23		9.4	50	65
16	Morocco	Africa	Northern Africa	21		4.8	29	69
17	Ethiopia	Africa	Eastern Africa	20		10.6	39	66
18	Laos	Asia	South-eastern Asia	18		5.0	31	68
19	Venezuela	Latin America	South America	17		11.7	64	56
20	Libya	Africa	Northern Africa	15		9.1	5	88
21	NN			10	TRUE			
22	NN			10	TRUE			
23	Vietnam	Asia	South-eastern Asia	10	TRUE	6.9	25	70
24	Jordan	Asia	Western Asia	10	TRUE	2.0	49	65
25	Tanzania	Africa	Eastern Africa	10	TRUE	15.6	53	63
26	Burundi	Africa	Eastern Africa	10	TRUE	11.1	65	55
27	Angola	Africa	Middle Africa	10	TRUE	7.2	68	52
28	Belarus	Europe	Eastern Europe	10	TRUE	3.3	76	43
29	Nepal	Asia	South Asia	9		4.4	55	61
30	Uganda	Africa	Eastern Africa	8		14.8	69	51
31	Syria	Asia	Western Asia	7		11.3	12	80
32	Bangladesh	Asia	South Asia	7		10.7	30	69
33	Colombia	Latin America	South America	6		15.4	22	71
34	Tunisia	Africa	Northern Africa	5		6.5	36	67
35	Sudan	Africa	Northern Africa	4		9.4	10	83
36	Sri Lanka	Asia	South Asia	4		3.9	62	57
37	NN			2				
38	Mauritania	Africa	Western Africa	2		1.3	20	72
39	Comoros	Africa	Eastern Africa	2		1.5	42	66
40	Cameroon	Africa	Middle Africa	2		15.9	45	65
41	Kazakhstan	Asia	Central Asia	2		1.1	48	65
42	Palestinian Territories	Asia	Western Asia	2		2.0	57	60
43	Iraq	Asia	Western Asia	1		4.6	18	76
44	Indonesia	Asia	South-eastern Asia	1		12.8	33	68
45	Bhutan	Asia	South Asia	1		1.1	40	66
46	Kenya	Africa	Eastern Africa	1		13.3	51	64
47	Kyrgyzstan	Asia	Central Asia	1		2.0	59	59

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? TOTAL: 1,388
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From high to low:

Question 6.4 Rank	Country	Region	Sub-Region	Number	Symbolic Round Number	Block 6 Score in total	WWL 2023 Rank	Total WWL 2023 Score
1	NN			1000	TRUE			
2	Eritrea	Africa	Eastern Africa	100	TRUE	12.2	4	89
3	China	Asia	Eastern Asia	100	TRUE	11.1	16	77
4	India	Asia	South Asia	39		15.7	11	82
5	Iran	Asia	South Asia	32		10.7	8	86
6	Pakistan	Asia	South Asia	25		16.7	7	86
7	Algeria	Africa	Northern Africa	19		4.8	19	73
8	Cuba	Latin America	Caribbean	12		7.0	27	70
9	Nigeria	Africa	Western Africa	10	TRUE	16.7	6	88
10	Vietnam	Asia	South-eastern Asia	10	TRUE	6.9	25	70
11	Belarus	Europe	Eastern Europe	10		3.3	76	43
12	NN			5				
13	Libya	Africa	Northern Africa	4		9.1	5	88
14	Myanmar	Asia	South-eastern Asia	4		15.4	14	80
15	Nicaragua	Latin America	Central America	3		9.4	50	65
16	Bangladesh	Asia	South Asia	2		10.7	30	69
17	Laos	Asia	South-eastern Asia	2		5.0	31	68
18	Indonesia	Asia	South-eastern Asia	2		12.8	33	68
19	NN			1				
20	Sudan	Africa	Northern Africa	1		9.4	10	83
21	Colombia	Latin America	South America	1		15.4	22	71
22	Morocco	Africa	Northern Africa	1		4.8	29	69
23	Egypt	Africa	Northern Africa	1		7.0	35	68
24	Tunisia	Africa	Northern Africa	1		6.5	36	67
25	Turkey	Asia	Western Asia	1		5.7	41	66
26	Jordan	Asia	Western Asia	1		2.0	49	65
27	Nepal	Asia	South Asia	1		4.4	55	61

6.5	How many Christians have been abducted for faith-related reasons (including Christians missing in a persecution context)? TOTAL: 5,259
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From high to low:

Question 6.5 Rank	Country	Region	Sub-Region	Number	Symbolic Round Number	Block 6 Score in total	WWL 2023 Rank	Total WWL 2023 Score
1	Nigeria	Africa	Western Africa	4726		16.7	6	88
2	Mozambique	Africa	Eastern Africa	100	TRUE	15.6	32	68
3	Congo DR (DRC)	Africa	Middle Africa	100	TRUE	15.6	37	67
4	Iraq	Asia	Western Asia	63		4.6	18	76
5	Central African Republic	Africa	Middle Africa	35		15.6	24	70
6	Cameroon	Africa	Middle Africa	25		15.9	45	65
7	Libya	Africa	Northern Africa	19		9.1	5	88
8	Nicaragua	Latin America	Central America	17		9.4	50	65
9	China	Asia	Eastern Asia	11		11.1	16	77
10	Colombia	Latin America	South America	11		15.4	22	71
11	Morocco	Africa	Northern Africa	11		4.8	29	69
12	NN			10	TRUE			
13	Eritrea	Africa	Eastern Africa	10	TRUE	12.2	4	89
14	Pakistan	Asia	South Asia	10	TRUE	16.7	7	86
15	Mali	Africa	Western Africa	10	TRUE	15.0	17	76
16	Burkina Faso	Africa	Western Africa	10	TRUE	15.6	23	71
17	Cuba	Latin America	Caribbean	10		7.0	27	70
18	Tanzania	Africa	Eastern Africa	10	TRUE	15.6	53	63
19	Burundi	Africa	Eastern Africa	10	TRUE	11.1	65	55
20	South Sudan	Africa	Eastern Africa	10	TRUE	15.0	72	46
21	India	Asia	South Asia	9		15.7	11	82
22	Syria	Asia	Western Asia	5		11.3	12	80
23	Niger	Africa	Western Africa	5		15.4	28	70
24	Tunisia	Africa	Northern Africa	5		6.5	36	67
25	Chad	Africa	Middle Africa	5		7.6	60	58
26	Mexico	Latin America	Central America	4		13.9	38	67
27	Egypt	Africa	Northern Africa	3		7.0	35	68
28	Kenya	Africa	Eastern Africa	3		13.3	51	64
29	El Salvador	Latin America	Central America	3		6.7	73	46
30	Bangladesh	Asia	South Asia	2		10.7	30	69
31	NN			1				
32	Iran	Asia	South Asia	1		10.7	8	86
33	NN			1				
34	Saudi Arabia	Asia	Western Asia	1		2.4	13	80
35	Algeria	Africa	Northern Africa	1		4.8	19	73
36	Russian Federation	Europe	Eastern Europe	1		2.0	61	57
37	Ivory Coast	Africa	Western Africa	1		3.3	74	44

6.6	How many Christians have been raped or otherwise sexually harassed for faith-related reasons? TOTAL: 2,126
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From high to low:

Question 6.6 Rank	Country	Region	Sub-Region	Number	Symbolic Round Number	Block 6 Score in total	WWL 2023 Rank	Total WWL 2023 Score
1	Nigeria	Africa	Western Africa	1000	TRUE	16.7	6	88
2	NN			100	TRUE			
3	Saudi Arabia	Asia	Western Asia	100	TRUE	2.4	13	80
4	Myanmar	Asia	South-eastern Asia	100	TRUE	15.4	14	80
5	Burkina Faso	Africa	Western Africa	100	TRUE	15.6	23	71
6	Congo DR (DRC)	Africa	Middle Africa	100	TRUE	15.6	37	67
7	Cameroon	Africa	Middle Africa	100	TRUE	15.9	45	65
8	Mozambique	Africa	Eastern Africa	75		15.6	32	68
9	Central African Republic	Africa	Middle Africa	66		15.6	24	70
10	Colombia	Latin America	South America	57		15.4	22	71
11	Libya	Africa	Northern Africa	14		9.1	5	88
12	NN			10	TRUE			
13	NN			10	TRUE			
14	Eritrea	Africa	Eastern Africa	10	TRUE	12.2	4	89
15	Pakistan	Asia	South Asia	10	TRUE	16.7	7	86
16	Iran	Asia	South Asia	10	TRUE	10.7	8	86
17	Sudan	Africa	Northern Africa	10	TRUE	9.4	10	83
18	Syria	Asia	Western Asia	10	TRUE	11.3	12	80
19	China	Asia	Eastern Asia	10	TRUE	11.1	16	77
20	Mali	Africa	Western Africa	10	TRUE	15.0	17	76
21	Iraq	Asia	Western Asia	10	TRUE	4.6	18	76
22	Algeria	Africa	Northern Africa	10	TRUE	4.8	19	73
23	Niger	Africa	Western Africa	10	TRUE	15.4	28	70
24	Morocco	Africa	Northern Africa	10		4.8	29	69
25	Qatar	Asia	Western Asia	10	TRUE	1.5	34	68
26	Egypt	Africa	Northern Africa	10	TRUE	7.0	35	68
27	Tunisia	Africa	Northern Africa	10	TRUE	6.5	36	67
28	Ethiopia	Africa	Eastern Africa	10	TRUE	10.6	39	66
29	Oman	Asia	Western Asia	10	TRUE	0.6	47	65
30	Jordan	Asia	Western Asia	10	TRUE	2.0	49	65
31	Kenya	Africa	Eastern Africa	10	TRUE	13.3	51	64
32	Kuwait	Asia	Western Asia	10	TRUE	1.1	52	64
33	Tanzania	Africa	Eastern Africa	10	TRUE	15.6	53	63
34	United Arab Emirates	Asia	Western Asia	10	TRUE	1.1	54	62
35	Chad	Africa	Middle Africa	10	TRUE	7.6	60	58
36	Rwanda	Africa	Eastern Africa	10	TRUE	8.9	63	57
37	Burundi	Africa	Eastern Africa	10	TRUE	11.1	65	55
38	Bahrain	Asia	Western Asia	10	TRUE	0.9	66	55
39	Uganda	Africa	Eastern Africa	10		14.8	69	51
40	South Sudan	Africa	Eastern Africa	10	TRUE	15.0	72	46
41	India	Asia	South Asia	9		15.7	11	82
42	Honduras	Latin America	Central America	5		11.9	67	53
43	Bangladesh	Asia	South Asia	4		10.7	30	69
44	Mexico	Latin America	Central America	2		13.9	38	67
45	El Salvador	Latin America	Central America	2		6.7	73	46
46	Kazakhstan	Asia	Central Asia	1		1.1	48	65
47	Nepal	Asia	South Asia	1		4.4	55	61

6.7	How many cases have there been of forced marriages of Christians to non-Christians? TOTAL: 717
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From high to low:

Question 6.7 Rank	Country	Region	Sub-Region	Number	Symbolic Round Number	Block 6 Score in total	WWL 2023 Rank	Total WWL 2023 Score
1	Nigeria	Africa	Western Africa	100	TRUE	16.7	6	88
2	Mozambique	Africa	Eastern Africa	100	TRUE	15.6	32	68
3	Congo DR (DRC)	Africa	Middle Africa	100	TRUE	15.6	37	67
4	Malaysia	Asia	South-eastern Asia	100	TRUE	3.9	43	66
5	India	Asia	South Asia	34		15.7	11	82
6	Iran	Asia	South Asia	30		10.7	8	86
7	Central African Republic	Africa	Middle Africa	20		15.6	24	70
8	Niger	Africa	Western Africa	20		15.4	28	70
9	Togo	Africa	Western Africa	12		5.4	70	49
10	NN			10	TRUE			
11	NN			10	TRUE			
12	Eritrea	Africa	Eastern Africa	10	TRUE	12.2	4	89
13	Pakistan	Asia	South Asia	10	TRUE	16.7	7	86
14	Sudan	Africa	Northern Africa	10	TRUE	9.4	10	83
15	China	Asia	Eastern Asia	10	TRUE	11.1	16	77
16	Mali	Africa	Western Africa	10	TRUE	15.0	17	76
17	Burkina Faso	Africa	Western Africa	10	TRUE	15.6	23	71
18	Ethiopia	Africa	Eastern Africa	10	TRUE	10.6	39	66
19	Cameroon	Africa	Middle Africa	10	TRUE	15.9	45	65
20	Kenya	Africa	Eastern Africa	10	TRUE	13.3	51	64
21	Tanzania	Africa	Eastern Africa	10	TRUE	15.6	53	63
22	Chad	Africa	Middle Africa	10	TRUE	7.6	60	58
23	Rwanda	Africa	Eastern Africa	10	TRUE	8.9	63	57
24	Burundi	Africa	Eastern Africa	10	TRUE	11.1	65	55
25	Uganda	Africa	Eastern Africa	10	TRUE	14.8	69	51
26	South Sudan	Africa	Eastern Africa	10	TRUE	15.0	72	46
27	Gambia	Africa	Western Africa	10	TRUE	1.1	75	44
28	Morocco	Africa	Northern Africa	5		4.8	29	69
29	Libya	Africa	Northern Africa	4		9.1	5	88
30	Ivory Coast	Africa	Western Africa	4		3.3	74	44
31	Tunisia	Africa	Northern Africa	3		6.5	36	67
32	Egypt	Africa	Northern Africa	2		7.0	35	68
33	Nepal	Asia	South Asia	2		4.4	55	61
34	Guinea	Africa	Western Africa	1		3.0	71	48

6.8	How many Christians have been otherwise physically or mentally abused for faith-related reasons (including beatings and death threats)? (Under mental abuse we only include death threats.) TOTAL: 29,411
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From high to low:

Question 6.8 Rank	Country	Region	Sub-Region	Number	Symbolic Round Number	Block 6 Score in total	WWL 2023 Rank	Total WWL 2023 Score
1	Nigeria	Africa	Western Africa	10000	TRUE	16.7	6	88
2	India	Asia	South Asia	10000	TRUE	15.7	11	82
3	NN			1000	TRUE			
4	Myanmar	Asia	South-eastern Asia	1000	TRUE	15.4	14	80
5	Mozambique	Africa	Eastern Africa	1000	TRUE	15.6	32	68
6	Indonesia	Asia	South-eastern Asia	1000	TRUE	12.8	33	68
7	Congo DR (DRC)	Africa	Middle Africa	1000	TRUE	15.6	37	67
8	Rwanda	Africa	Eastern Africa	1000	TRUE	8.9	63	57
9	Colombia	Latin America	South America	377		15.4	22	71
10	Iran	Asia	South Asia	212		10.7	8	86
11	Libya	Africa	Northern Africa	200		9.1	5	88
12	Eritrea	Africa	Eastern Africa	100	TRUE	12.2	4	89
13	Sudan	Africa	Northern Africa	100	TRUE	9.4	10	83
14	Saudi Arabia	Asia	Western Asia	100	TRUE	2.4	13	80
15	China	Asia	Eastern Asia	100	TRUE	11.1	16	77
16	Mali	Africa	Western Africa	100	TRUE	15.0	17	76
17	Burkina Faso	Africa	Western Africa	100	TRUE	15.6	23	71
18	Central African Republic	Africa	Middle Africa	100	TRUE	15.6	24	70
19	Niger	Africa	Western Africa	100	TRUE	15.4	28	70
20	Ethiopia	Africa	Eastern Africa	100	TRUE	10.6	39	66
21	Cameroon	Africa	Middle Africa	100	TRUE	15.9	45	65
22	Kenya	Africa	Eastern Africa	100	TRUE	13.3	51	64
23	Burundi	Africa	Eastern Africa	100	TRUE	11.1	65	55
24	Honduras	Latin America	Central America	100	TRUE	11.9	67	53
25	Angola	Africa	Middle Africa	100	TRUE	7.2	68	52
26	Uganda	Africa	Eastern Africa	100	TRUE	14.8	69	51
27	Togo	Africa	Western Africa	100	TRUE	5.4	70	49
28	South Sudan	Africa	Eastern Africa	100	TRUE	15.0	72	46
29	El Salvador	Latin America	Central America	100	TRUE	6.7	73	46
30	Nepal	Asia	South Asia	82		4.4	55	61
31	Uzbekistan	Asia	Central Asia	48		1.5	21	71
32	Morocco	Africa	Northern Africa	46		4.8	29	69
33	Mexico	Latin America	Central America	44		13.9	38	67
34	Azerbaijan	Asia	Western Asia	41		0.6	58	59
35	Tajikistan	Asia	Central Asia	37		1.1	44	66
36	Tunisia	Africa	Northern Africa	34		6.5	36	67
37	Malaysia	Asia	South-eastern Asia	32		3.9	43	66
38	Nicaragua	Latin America	Central America	32		9.4	50	65
39	Russian Federation	Europe	Eastern Europe	32		2.0	61	57
40	Kazakhstan	Asia	Central Asia	25		1.1	48	65
41	Tanzania	Africa	Eastern Africa	23		15.6	53	63
42	Turkmenistan	Asia	Central Asia	22		0.6	26	70
43	Sri Lanka	Asia	South Asia	21		3.9	62	57
44	Bangladesh	Asia	South Asia	20		10.7	30	69
45	Egypt	Africa	Northern Africa	19		7.0	35	68
46	Cuba	Latin America	Caribbean	18		7.0	27	70
47	Venezuela	Latin America	South America	15		11.7	64	56
48	Pakistan	Asia	South Asia	14		16.7	7	86
49	NN			10	TRUE			
50	NN			10	TRUE			
51	Syria	Asia	Western Asia	10	TRUE	11.3	12	80
52	Iraq	Asia	Western Asia	10	TRUE	4.6	18	76
53	Algeria	Africa	Northern Africa	10	TRUE	4.8	19	73
54	Mauritania	Africa	Western Africa	10	TRUE	1.3	20	72
55	Vietnam	Asia	South-eastern Asia	10	TRUE	6.9	25	70
56	Laos	Asia	South-eastern Asia	10	TRUE	5.0	31	68
57	Qatar	Asia	Western Asia	10	TRUE	1.5	34	68
58	Turkey	Asia	Western Asia	10	TRUE	5.7	41	66

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59	Comoros	Africa	Eastern Africa	10	TRUE	1.5	42	66
60	Jordan	Asia	Western Asia	10	TRUE	2.0	49	65
61	Kuwait	Asia	Western Asia	10	TRUE	1.1	52	64
62	United Arab Emirates	Asia	Western Asia	10	TRUE	1.1	54	62
63	Kyrgyzstan	Asia	Central Asia	10		2.0	59	59
64	Chad	Africa	Middle Africa	10	TRUE	7.6	60	58
65	Guinea	Africa	Western Africa	10	TRUE	3.0	71	48
66	Ivory Coast	Africa	Western Africa	10	TRUE	3.3	74	44
67	Gambia	Africa	Western Africa	10	TRUE	1.1	75	44
68	Belarus	Europe	Eastern Europe	10	TRUE	3.3	76	43
69	NN			8				
70	Palestinian Territories	Asia	Western Asia	5		2.0	57	60
71	Djibouti	Africa	Eastern Africa	2		0.6	56	60
72	Bahrain	Asia	Western Asia	2		0.9	66	55

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? TOTAL: 4,547
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From high to low:

Question 6.9 Rank	Country	Region	Sub-Region	Number	Symbolic Round Number	Block 6 Score in total	WWL 2023 Rank	Total WWL 2023 Score
1	Nigeria	Africa	Western Africa	1000	TRUE	16.7	6	88
2	Myanmar	Asia	South-eastern Asia	1000	TRUE	15.4	14	80
3	Central African Republic	Africa	Middle Africa	1000	TRUE	15.6	24	70
4	Indonesia	Asia	South-eastern Asia	211		12.8	33	68
5	India	Asia	South Asia	180		15.7	11	82
6	Eritrea	Africa	Eastern Africa	100	TRUE	12.2	4	89
7	Syria	Asia	Western Asia	100	TRUE	11.3	12	80
8	Iraq	Asia	Western Asia	100	TRUE	4.6	18	76
9	Burkina Faso	Africa	Western Africa	100	TRUE	15.6	23	71
10	Niger	Africa	Western Africa	100	TRUE	15.4	28	70
11	Mozambique	Africa	Eastern Africa	100	TRUE	15.6	32	68
12	Congo DR (DRC)	Africa	Middle Africa	100	TRUE	15.6	37	67
13	Cameroon	Africa	Middle Africa	100	TRUE	15.9	45	65
14	Iran	Asia	South Asia	35		10.7	8	86
15	Colombia	Latin America	South America	33		15.4	22	71
16	Bangladesh	Asia	South Asia	30		10.7	30	69
17	Malaysia	Asia	South-eastern Asia	18		3.9	43	66
18	Tanzania	Africa	Eastern Africa	16		15.6	53	63
19	Pakistan	Asia	South Asia	12		16.7	7	86
20	NN			10	TRUE			
21	NN			10	TRUE			
22	Sudan	Africa	Northern Africa	10	TRUE	9.4	10	83
23	China	Asia	Eastern Asia	10	TRUE	11.1	16	77
24	Mali	Africa	Western Africa	10	TRUE	15.0	17	76
25	Vietnam	Asia	South-eastern Asia	10	TRUE	6.9	25	70
26	Ethiopia	Africa	Eastern Africa	10	TRUE	10.6	39	66
27	Kenya	Africa	Eastern Africa	10	TRUE	13.3	51	64
28	Chad	Africa	Middle Africa	10	TRUE	7.6	60	58
29	Burundi	Africa	Eastern Africa	10	TRUE	11.1	65	55
30	Uganda	Africa	Eastern Africa	10	TRUE	14.8	69	51
31	Togo	Africa	Western Africa	10	TRUE	5.4	70	49
32	Guinea	Africa	Western Africa	10	TRUE	3.0	71	48
33	South Sudan	Africa	Eastern Africa	10	TRUE	15.0	72	46
34	Belarus	Europe	Eastern Europe	10	TRUE	3.3	76	43
35	Laos	Asia	South-eastern Asia	9		5.0	31	68
36	Egypt	Africa	Northern Africa	7		7.0	35	68
37	Tunisia	Africa	Northern Africa	7		6.5	36	67
38	Libya	Africa	Northern Africa	6		9.1	5	88
39	Honduras	Latin America	Central America	5		11.9	67	53
40	Morocco	Africa	Northern Africa	4		4.8	29	69
41	Cuba	Latin America	Caribbean	3		7.0	27	70
42	Mexico	Latin America	Central America	3		13.9	38	67
43	Nicaragua	Latin America	Central America	3		9.4	50	65
44	Sri Lanka	Asia	South Asia	3		3.9	62	57
45	NN			2				
46	Palestinian Territories	Asia	Western Asia	2		2.0	57	60
47	Kyrgyzstan	Asia	Central Asia	2		2.0	59	59
48	El Salvador	Latin America	Central America	2		6.7	73	46
49	NN			1				
50	Uzbekistan	Asia	Central Asia	1		1.5	21	71
51	Turkey	Asia	Western Asia	1		5.7	41	66
52	Jordan	Asia	Western Asia	1		2.0	49	65

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? TOTAL: 2,210
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From high to low:

Question 6.10 Rank	Country	Region	Sub-Region	Number	Symbolic Round Number	Block 6 Score in total	WWL 2023 Rank	Total WWL 2023 Score
1	Nigeria	Africa	Western Africa	1000	TRUE	16.7	6	88
2	Syria	Asia	Western Asia	100	TRUE	11.3	12	80
3	Myanmar	Asia	South-eastern Asia	100	TRUE	15.4	14	80
4	Iraq	Asia	Western Asia	100	TRUE	4.6	18	76
5	Burkina Faso	Africa	Western Africa	100	TRUE	15.6	23	71
6	Central African Republic	Africa	Middle Africa	100	TRUE	15.6	24	70
7	Niger	Africa	Western Africa	100	TRUE	15.4	28	70
8	Mozambique	Africa	Eastern Africa	100	TRUE	15.6	32	68
9	Congo DR (DRC)	Africa	Middle Africa	100	TRUE	15.6	37	67
10	Cameroon	Africa	Middle Africa	100	TRUE	15.9	45	65
11	India	Asia	South Asia	37		15.7	11	82
12	Colombia	Latin America	South America	25		15.4	22	71
13	Iran	Asia	South Asia	21		10.7	8	86
14	Tanzania	Africa	Eastern Africa	16		15.6	53	63
15	Nicaragua	Latin America	Central America	12		9.4	50	65
16	NN			10	TRUE			
17	Eritrea	Africa	Eastern Africa	10	TRUE	12.2	4	89
18	Pakistan	Asia	South Asia	10	TRUE	16.7	7	86
19	NN			10	TRUE			
20	Sudan	Africa	Northern Africa	10	TRUE	9.4	10	83
21	China	Asia	Eastern Asia	10	TRUE	11.1	16	77
22	Mali	Africa	Western Africa	10	TRUE	15.0	17	76
23	Indonesia	Asia	South-eastern Asia	10	TRUE	12.8	33	68
24	Ethiopia	Africa	Eastern Africa	10	TRUE	10.6	39	66
25	Kenya	Africa	Eastern Africa	10	TRUE	13.3	51	64
26	Chad	Africa	Middle Africa	10	TRUE	7.6	60	58
27	Rwanda	Africa	Eastern Africa	10	TRUE	8.9	63	57
28	Burundi	Africa	Eastern Africa	10	TRUE	11.1	65	55
29	Uganda	Africa	Eastern Africa	10	TRUE	14.8	69	51
30	Guinea	Africa	Western Africa	10	TRUE	3.0	71	48
31	South Sudan	Africa	Eastern Africa	10	TRUE	15.0	72	46
32	Ivory Coast	Africa	Western Africa	10	TRUE	3.3	74	44
33	Laos	Asia	South-eastern Asia	9		5.0	31	68
34	Vietnam	Asia	South-eastern Asia	7		6.9	25	70
35	Bangladesh	Asia	South Asia	3		10.7	30	69
36	Libya	Africa	Northern Africa	2		9.1	5	88
37	Tunisia	Africa	Northern Africa	2		6.5	36	67
38	Venezuela	Latin America	South America	2		11.7	64	56
39	NN			1				
40	NN			1				
41	Turkey	Asia	Western Asia	1		5.7	41	66
42	Palestinian Territories	Asia	Western Asia	1		2.0	57	60

6.11	How many Christians have been forced to leave their homes or go into hiding in-country for faith-related reasons? TOTAL: 124,310
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From high to low:

Question 6.11 Rank	Country	Region	Sub-Region	Number	Symbolic Round Number	Block 6 Score in total	WWL 2023 Rank	Total WWL 2023 Score
1	Myanmar	Asia	South-eastern Asia	100000	TRUE	15.4	14	80
2	Nigeria	Africa	Western Africa	10000	TRUE	16.7	6	88
3	Burkina Faso	Africa	Western Africa	5000		15.6	23	71
4	NN			1000	TRUE			
5	Central African Republic	Africa	Middle Africa	1000	TRUE	15.6	24	70
6	Niger	Africa	Western Africa	1000	TRUE	15.4	28	70
7	Mozambique	Africa	Eastern Africa	1000	TRUE	15.6	32	68
8	Congo DR (DRC)	Africa	Middle Africa	1000	TRUE	15.6	37	67
9	Cameroon	Africa	Middle Africa	1000	TRUE	15.9	45	65
10	India	Asia	South Asia	834		15.7	11	82
11	Indonesia	Asia	South-eastern Asia	600		12.8	33	68
12	Ethiopia	Africa	Eastern Africa	350		10.6	39	66
13	Bangladesh	Asia	South Asia	230		10.7	30	69
14	Colombia	Latin America	South America	124		15.4	22	71
15	Iran	Asia	South Asia	100	TRUE	10.7	8	86
16	Sudan	Africa	Northern Africa	100	TRUE	9.4	10	83
17	Syria	Asia	Western Asia	100	TRUE	11.3	12	80
18	Mali	Africa	Western Africa	100	TRUE	15.0	17	76
19	Iraq	Asia	Western Asia	100	TRUE	4.6	18	76
20	South Sudan	Africa	Eastern Africa	100	TRUE	15.0	72	46
21	Mexico	Latin America	Central America	71		13.9	38	67
22	Pakistan	Asia	South Asia	50		16.7	7	86
23	Kenya	Africa	Eastern Africa	40		13.3	51	64
24	Laos	Asia	South-eastern Asia	35		5.0	31	68
25	Malaysia	Asia	South-eastern Asia	33		3.9	43	66
26	Vietnam	Asia	South-eastern Asia	32		6.9	25	70
27	Morocco	Africa	Northern Africa	27		4.8	29	69
28	Uganda	Africa	Eastern Africa	22		14.8	69	51
29	Tunisia	Africa	Northern Africa	21		6.5	36	67
30	Ivory Coast	Africa	Western Africa	20		3.3	74	44
31	Nepal	Asia	South Asia	16		4.4	55	61
32	Tanzania	Africa	Eastern Africa	15		15.6	53	63
33	Venezuela	Latin America	South America	12		11.7	64	56
34	Libya	Africa	Northern Africa	11		9.1	5	88
35	NN			10	TRUE			
36	Eritrea	Africa	Eastern Africa	10	TRUE	12.2	4	89
37	Saudi Arabia	Asia	Western Asia	10	TRUE	2.4	13	80
38	China	Asia	Eastern Asia	10	TRUE	11.1	16	77
39	Comoros	Africa	Eastern Africa	10	TRUE	1.5	42	66
40	Chad	Africa	Middle Africa	10	TRUE	7.6	60	58
41	Rwanda	Africa	Eastern Africa	10	TRUE	8.9	63	57
42	Burundi	Africa	Eastern Africa	10	TRUE	11.1	65	55
43	Angola	Africa	Middle Africa	10	TRUE	7.2	68	52
44	Togo	Africa	Western Africa	10	TRUE	5.4	70	49
45	Guinea	Africa	Western Africa	10	TRUE	3.0	71	48
46	Sri Lanka	Asia	South Asia	9		3.9	62	57
47	Honduras	Latin America	Central America	8		11.9	67	53

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48	NN			6				
49	Turkey	Asia	Western Asia	5		5.7	41	66
50	Palestinian Territories	Asia	Western Asia	5		2.0	57	60
51	El Salvador	Latin America	Central America	5		6.7	73	46
52	Kyrgyzstan	Asia	Central Asia	4		2.0	59	59
53	Algeria	Africa	Northern Africa	3		4.8	19	73
54	Uzbekistan	Asia	Central Asia	3		1.5	21	71
55	Bhutan	Asia	South Asia	3		1.1	40	66
56	Nicaragua	Latin America	Central America	3		9.4	50	65
57	Egypt	Africa	Northern Africa	2		7.0	35	68
58	Djibouti	Africa	Eastern Africa	1		0.6	56	60

6.12	How many Christians have been forced to leave the country for faith-related reasons? TOTAL: 14,997
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From high to low:

Question 6.12 Rank	Country	Region	Sub-Region	Number	Symbolic Round Number	Block 6 Score in total	WWL 2023 Rank	Total WWL 2023 Score
1	Myanmar	Asia	South-eastern Asia	10000	TRUE	15.4	14	80
2	Iran	Asia	South Asia	1000	TRUE	10.7	8	86
3	NN			1000	TRUE			
4	Central African Republic	Africa	Middle Africa	1000	TRUE	15.6	24	70
5	Congo DR (DRC)	Africa	Middle Africa	1000	TRUE	15.6	37	67
6	Pakistan	Asia	South Asia	250		16.7	7	86
7	Eritrea	Africa	Eastern Africa	100	TRUE	12.2	4	89
8	Nigeria	Africa	Western Africa	100	TRUE	16.7	6	88
9	Iraq	Asia	Western Asia	100	TRUE	4.6	18	76
10	Burkina Faso	Africa	Western Africa	100	TRUE	15.6	23	71
11	Cameroon	Africa	Middle Africa	100	TRUE	15.9	45	65
12	Cuba	Latin America	Caribbean	55		7.0	27	70
13	Nicaragua	Latin America	Central America	41		9.4	50	65
14	NN			10	TRUE			
15	Syria	Asia	Western Asia	10	TRUE	11.3	12	80
16	Saudi Arabia	Asia	Western Asia	10	TRUE	2.4	13	80
17	China	Asia	Eastern Asia	10	TRUE	11.1	16	77
18	Niger	Africa	Western Africa	10	TRUE	15.4	28	70
19	Mozambique	Africa	Eastern Africa	10	TRUE	15.6	32	68
20	Tunisia	Africa	Northern Africa	10	TRUE	6.5	36	67
21	Malaysia	Asia	South-eastern Asia	10	TRUE	3.9	43	66
22	Burundi	Africa	Eastern Africa	10	TRUE	11.1	65	55
23	Libya	Africa	Northern Africa	8		9.1	5	88
24	Mauritania	Africa	Western Africa	7		1.3	20	72
25	Egypt	Africa	Northern Africa	7		7.0	35	68
26	Uzbekistan	Asia	Central Asia	6		1.5	21	71
27	Vietnam	Asia	South-eastern Asia	5		6.9	25	70
28	Brunei	Asia	South-eastern Asia	5		0.4	46	65
29	Algeria	Africa	Northern Africa	4		4.8	19	73
30	Colombia	Latin America	South America	4		15.4	22	71
31	Turkey	Asia	Western Asia	3		5.7	41	66
32	NN			2				
33	Qatar	Asia	Western Asia	2		1.5	34	68
34	Palestinian Territories	Asia	Western Asia	2		2.0	57	60
35	Togo	Africa	Western Africa	2		5.4	70	49
36	Russian Federation	Europe	Eastern Europe	1		2.0	61	57
37	Venezuela	Latin America	South America	1		11.7	64	56
38	Honduras	Latin America	Central America	1		11.9	67	53
39	El Salvador	Latin America	Central America	1		6.7	73	46

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10. WWL 2023 Ranking according to pressure score

WWL 2023 Rank	Country	Region	Sub-Region	1. Private Life score	2. Family Life score	3. Community Life score	4. National Life score	5. Church Life score	WWL 2023 Total Pressure		WWL 2022 Total Pressure
1	North Korea	Asia	Eastern Asia	16.7	16.7	16.7	16.7	16.7	83.3		83.3
3	Yemen	Asia	Western Asia	16.7	16.7	16.7	16.7	16.7	83.3		83.1
2	Somalia	Africa	Eastern Africa	16.5	16.7	16.6	16.6	16.6	82.9		82.9
5	Libya	Africa	Northern Africa	15.6	15.5	15.9	16.1	16.3	79.4		79.5
9	Afghanistan	Asia	South Asia	15.4	15.7	15.4	16.1	16.6	79.2		83.3
13	Saudi Arabia	Asia	Western Asia	15.2	15.3	14.9	15.8	16.7	77.9		77.7
15	Maldives	Asia	South Asia	15.4	15.3	13.8	16.0	16.4	76.9		76.7
4	Eritrea	Africa	Eastern Africa	14.6	14.9	15.5	15.9	15.7	76.6		76.4
8	Iran	Asia	South Asia	14.5	14.6	13.8	15.8	16.5	75.2		74.9
10	Sudan	Africa	Northern Africa	14.1	14.2	14.9	14.9	15.5	73.6		70.5
18	Iraq	Asia	Western Asia	14.1	14.6	14.0	14.8	13.9	71.4		71.3
6	Nigeria	Africa	Western Africa	13.8	13.8	14.6	14.8	14.4	71.3		70.8
20	Mauritania	Africa	Western Africa	14.5	14.2	13.3	14.1	14.2	70.2		69.5
21	Uzbekistan	Asia	Central Asia	14.9	12.7	13.9	12.7	15.6	69.2		69.2
7	Pakistan	Asia	South Asia	13.4	13.8	14.8	14.8	12.9	69.8		70.7
12	Syria	Asia	Western Asia	13.2	14.1	13.6	14.1	14.1	69.2		68.3
26	Turkmenistan	Asia	Central Asia	14.5	11.3	13.6	14.1	15.7	69.2		68.4
19	Algeria	Africa	Northern Africa	14.1	14.1	11.5	13.7	15.1	68.4		66.5
34	Qatar	Asia	Western Asia	14.2	14.1	10.5	13.2	14.4	66.4		66.6
11	India	Asia	South Asia	12.3	13.1	13.0	14.8	13.3	66.4		66.3
16	China	Asia	Eastern Asia	12.9	10.0	12.7	14.5	15.6	65.7		64.6
40	Bhutan	Asia	South Asia	13.2	12.3	11.6	13.9	14.2	65.2		65.0
14	Myanmar	Asia	South-eastern Asia	12.5	11.6	13.9	13.9	12.9	64.8		64.2
46	Brunei	Asia	South-eastern Asia	14.8	14.6	10.1	10.9	14.4	64.8		63.7
29	Morocco	Africa	Northern Africa	13.2	13.8	10.9	12.2	14.5	64.6		64.7
47	Oman	Asia	Western Asia	14.0	14.1	10.3	13.3	12.9	64.5		64.6
42	Comoros	Africa	Eastern Africa	12.7	14.0	11.2	12.4	14.2	64.5		61.6
44	Tajikistan	Asia	Central Asia	13.8	12.2	12.3	12.8	14.4	64.4		63.9
48	Kazakhstan	Asia	Central Asia	13.2	11.6	11.9	12.7	14.2	63.6		62.2
31	Laos	Asia	South-eastern Asia	11.7	10.2	13.3	14.2	14.0	63.3		62.9
25	Vietnam	Asia	South-eastern Asia	11.8	9.6	12.8	14.6	14.4	63.2		62.2
27	Cuba	Latin America	Caribbean	13.1	8.3	13.1	13.2	14.9	62.6		60.1
49	Jordan	Asia	Western Asia	13.0	14.0	10.5	12.3	12.7	62.6		62.7
52	Kuwait	Asia	Western Asia	13.5	13.7	9.8	12.3	13.1	62.5		62.5
43	Malaysia	Asia	South-eastern Asia	12.8	14.3	11.4	12.2	11.1	61.9		60.1
17	Mali	Africa	Western Africa	11.1	10.1	14.7	10.3	15.1	61.3		54.5
35	Egypt	Africa	Northern Africa	12.7	13.5	11.6	12.1	10.8	60.8		60.9
54	United Arab Emirates	Asia	Western Asia	13.4	13.4	9.9	11.2	12.8	60.7		61.2
36	Tunisia	Africa	Northern Africa	12.0	12.8	10.4	12.0	13.5	60.7		59.8
41	Turkey	Asia	Western Asia	12.8	11.5	11.8	13.0	11.5	60.5		60.2
56	Djibouti	Africa	Eastern Africa	12.3	12.6	12.7	10.1	12.3	59.9		57.9
58	Azerbaijan	Asia	Western Asia	13.2	10.0	9.5	12.0	13.6	58.4		56.7
57	Palestinian Territories	Asia	Western Asia	13.0	13.3	9.7	10.3	12.0	58.3		58.4
30	Bangladesh	Asia	South Asia	12.6	10.7	12.8	11.3	10.6	58.1		56.7
55	Nepal	Asia	South Asia	12.0	9.8	9.4	13.0	12.6	56.6		58.4
59	Kyrgyzstan	Asia	Central Asia	12.9	10.2	11.0	10.4	12.0	56.5		56.5
39	Ethiopia	Africa	Eastern Africa	9.9	10.3	13.1	10.4	12.1	55.9		56.0
22	Colombia	Latin America	South America	11.8	8.9	13.1	11.3	10.4	55.6		54.4
33	Indonesia	Asia	South-eastern Asia	11.3	12.0	11.6	11.1	9.2	55.2		54.8
61	Russian Federation	Europe	Eastern Europe	12.3	7.9	10.3	11.8	12.8	55.2		53.4
50	Nicaragua	Latin America	Central America	10.8	5.9	11.9	12.8	13.6	55.1		48.8
23	Burkina Faso	Africa	Western Africa	9.4	9.7	12.5	9.6	13.8	55.1		52.8
24	Central African Republic	Africa	Middle Africa	10.3	8.6	13.9	9.6	12.2	54.6		52.1
66	Bahrain	Asia	Western Asia	12.7	13.3	8.7	10.7	8.8	54.2		56.0
28	Niger	Africa	Western Africa	9.4	9.5	14.5	7.7	13.1	54.2		52.7
62	Sri Lanka	Asia	South Asia	12.8	9.1	10.6	11.3	9.5	53.3		54.9
38	Mexico	Latin America	Central America	10.3	8.3	12.5	11.0	10.5	52.6		52.2
32	Mozambique	Africa	Eastern Africa	9.3	8.5	13.9	8.4	12.5	52.6		49.4
37	Congo DR (DRC)	Africa	Middle Africa	8.0	7.9	12.6	9.7	13.0	51.1		50.1
60	Chad	Africa	Middle Africa	11.6	8.2	10.2	10.2	10.3	50.4		49.6
51	Kenya	Africa	Eastern Africa	10.3	9.2	11.4	8.0	11.5	50.3		51.7
45	Cameroon	Africa	Middle Africa	8.8	7.6	12.6	7.2	13.1	49.3		49.3
63	Rwanda	Africa	Eastern Africa	9.4	7.7	9.0	10.4	11.7	48.2		40.6
53	Tanzania	Africa	Eastern Africa	9.3	10.8	10.3	8.6	8.7	47.6		47.6
71	Guinea	Africa	Western Africa	10.3	7.5	8.3	8.3	10.5	44.9		41.2
68	Angola	Africa	Middle Africa	6.8	6.7	8.1	11.5	11.4	44.5		43.1
65	Burundi	Africa	Eastern Africa	7.6	7.8	9.4	9.8	9.7	44.3		43.9
64	Venezuela	Latin America	South America	6.0	4.6	11.7	10.2	11.4	43.9		41.9
70	Togo	Africa	Western Africa	9.2	6.7	9.3	7.1	11.0	43.3		42.1
75	Gambia	Africa	Western Africa	8.3	8.2	8.9	8.8	8.9	43.1		42.3
67	Honduras	Latin America	Central America	7.1	5.0	11.9	7.6	9.8	41.5		39.8
74	Ivory Coast	Africa	Western Africa	12.0	6.5	8.7	5.9	8.0	41.1		39.9
73	El Salvador	Latin America	Central America	7.7	4.2	10.6	7.4	9.1	39.0		37.7
69	Uganda	Africa	Eastern Africa	8.1	5.0	7.4	6.7	9.2	36.3		37.0
72	South Sudan	Africa	Eastern Africa	5.7	4.4	7.0	6.3	7.6	30.9		35.9
76	Belarus	Europe	Eastern Europe	9.5	3.8	4.8	9.4	12.1	39.6		27.7

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11. WWL 2023 Ranking according to violence score

WWL 2023 Rank	Country	Region	Sub-Region	WWL 2023 Violence score			WWL 2022 Violence score
6	Nigeria	Africa	Western Africa	16.7		Nigeria	16.7
7	Pakistan	Asia	South Asia	16.7		Pakistan	16.7
45	Cameroon	Africa	Middle Africa	15.9		Cameroon	15.4
11	India	Asia	South Asia	15.7		India	15.6
23	Burkina Faso	Africa	Western Africa	15.6		Burkina Faso	14.8
24	Central African Republic	Africa	Middle Africa	15.6		Central African Republic	15.6
32	Mozambique	Africa	Eastern Africa	15.6		Mozambique	15.6
37	Congo DR (DRC)	Africa	Middle Africa	15.6		Congo DR (DRC)	15.6
53	Tanzania	Africa	Eastern Africa	15.6		Tanzania	13.7
14	Myanmar	Asia	South-eastern Asia	15.4		Myanmar	14.8
22	Colombia	Latin America	South America	15.4		Colombia	13.3
28	Niger	Africa	Western Africa	15.4		Niger	14.8
17	Mali	Africa	Western Africa	15.0		Mali	15.0
72	South Sudan	Africa	Eastern Africa	15.0		South Sudan	15.0
69	Uganda	Africa	Eastern Africa	14.8		Uganda	11.7
1	North Korea	Asia	Eastern Asia	14.4		North Korea	13.1
38	Mexico	Latin America	Central America	13.9		Mexico	12.6
51	Kenya	Africa	Eastern Africa	13.3		Kenya	11.1
33	Indonesia	Asia	South-eastern Asia	12.8		Indonesia	13.5
4	Eritrea	Africa	Eastern Africa	12.2		Eritrea	11.1
67	Honduras	Latin America	Central America	11.9		Honduras	8.7
64	Venezuela	Latin America	South America	11.7		Venezuela	9.6
12	Syria	Asia	Western Asia	11.3		Syria	9.3
16	China	Asia	Eastern Asia	11.1		China	11.1
65	Burundi	Africa	Eastern Africa	11.1		Burundi	8.1
8	Iran	Asia	South Asia	10.7		Iran	10.4
30	Bangladesh	Asia	South Asia	10.7		Bangladesh	11.3
39	Ethiopia	Africa	Eastern Africa	10.6		Ethiopia	9.8
10	Sudan	Africa	Northern Africa	9.4		Sudan	8.5
50	Nicaragua	Latin America	Central America	9.4		Nicaragua	7.6
5	Libya	Africa	Northern Africa	9.1		Libya	11.5
63	Rwanda	Africa	Eastern Africa	8.9		Rwanda	9.3
2	Somalia	Africa	Eastern Africa	8.7		Somalia	8.5
60	Chad	Africa	Middle Africa	7.6		Chad	5.6
68	Angola	Africa	Middle Africa	7.2		Angola	7.8
27	Cuba	Latin America	Caribbean	7.0		Cuba	5.9
35	Egypt	Africa	Northern Africa	7.0		Egypt	10.0
25	Vietnam	Asia	South-eastern Asia	6.9		Vietnam	8.7
73	El Salvador	Latin America	Central America	6.7		El Salvador	7.2
36	Tunisia	Africa	Northern Africa	6.5		Tunisia	6.5
3	Yemen	Asia	Western Asia	5.9		Yemen	5.2
41	Turkey	Asia	Western Asia	5.7		Turkey	4.6
70	Togo	Africa	Western Africa	5.4		Togo	2.4
31	Laos	Asia	South-eastern Asia	5.0		Laos	5.9
19	Algeria	Africa	Northern Africa	4.8		Algeria	4.1
29	Morocco	Africa	Northern Africa	4.8		Morocco	3.9
9	Afghanistan	Asia	South Asia	4.6		Afghanistan	15.0
18	Iraq	Asia	Western Asia	4.6		Iraq	6.9
55	Nepal	Asia	South Asia	4.4		Nepal	5.2
43	Malaysia	Asia	South-eastern Asia	3.9		Malaysia	3.3
62	Sri Lanka	Asia	South Asia	3.9		Sri Lanka	7.8
74	Ivory Coast	Africa	Western Africa	3.3		Ivory Coast	2.0
76	Belarus	Europe	Eastern Europe	3.3		Belarus	
71	Guinea	Africa	Western Africa	3.0		Guinea	2.0
13	Saudi Arabia	Asia	Western Asia	2.4		Saudi Arabia	3.1
49	Jordan	Asia	Western Asia	2.0		Jordan	3.0
57	Palestinian Territories	Asia	Western Asia	2.0		Palestinian Territories	0.9
59	Kyrgyzstan	Asia	Central Asia	2.0		Kyrgyzstan	1.5
61	Russian Federation	Europe	Eastern Europe	2.0		Russian Federation	2.2
21	Uzbekistan	Asia	Central Asia	1.5		Uzbekistan	1.7
34	Qatar	Asia	Western Asia	1.5		Qatar	7.2
42	Comoros	Africa	Eastern Africa	1.5		Comoros	0.9
20	Mauritania	Africa	Western Africa	1.3		Mauritania	0.9
40	Bhutan	Asia	South Asia	1.1		Bhutan	1.7
44	Tajikistan	Asia	Central Asia	1.1		Tajikistan	0.7
48	Kazakhstan	Asia	Central Asia	1.1		Kazakhstan	1.7
52	Kuwait	Asia	Western Asia	1.1		Kuwait	1.1
54	United Arab Emirates	Asia	Western Asia	1.1		United Arab Emirates	1.3
75	Gambia	Africa	Western Africa	1.1		Gambia	1.7
66	Bahrain	Asia	Western Asia	0.9		Bahrain	0.9
26	Turkmenistan	Asia	Central Asia	0.6		Turkmenistan	0.6
47	Oman	Asia	Western Asia	0.6		Oman	1.5
56	Djibouti	Africa	Eastern Africa	0.6		Djibouti	0.7
58	Azerbaijan	Asia	Western Asia	0.6		Azerbaijan	3.3
46	Brunei	Asia	South-eastern Asia	0.4		Brunei	0.6
15	Maldives	Asia	South Asia	0.2		Maldives	0.4
						Israel	4.3

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12. SIDEBAR 1 - Children/Youth-specific religious persecution

“Predatory religious persecution and targeted seduction”³

From the mud-bricked walls of Central Africa to the cinder block cities of South-East Asia, Christian boys and girls are growing up with serious challenges like poverty and conflict. They are also facing all kinds of religious persecution. Whether the walls of their church are roughened or clean and bright, it is deeply troubling that the children of God’s persecuted church are not spared the most sinister and offensive tactics to keep them from growing up in the Christian faith.

We all know that children and youth are a unique demographic because they are in a formative time of life, during which any experience can shape and alter the pathways of their future. What we may be less aware of is how this most fragile time of life is manipulated by religious persecutors. This becomes painfully apparent when studying religious persecution dynamics for [the youngest generation](#) of the church.⁴ And “the girl child,” as she is often called, is perhaps one of the most vulnerable and hardest hit of all.

Targeted seduction

While both boys and girls experience harsh tactics, the girl child is especially vulnerable to targeted seduction. In religious persecution, targeted seduction uses romantic attentions, promises of relationship or sexual attraction with the intentional purpose of leading someone away from their chosen faith. This relational pursuit taps into the human need for love and belonging. And it harnesses the church’s emphasis on marriage and family, especially for adolescent girls maturing into adulthood.

Many young women in the countries under study have grown up hearing that her greatest joys in life will be found as a wife and mother – and certainly her greatest gift to protect until she is married is her virginity. While we may mean well as a church in emphasizing family status, what we don’t realize is the extent to which a younger girl internalizes this celebration as the only way to find status in her community. This makes her vulnerable to a savvy persecutor.

She feels pressure to get married, and then a non-Christian starts to make her feel special and valued. Once her young heart begins to lean towards her non-Christian admirer, then she is susceptible to additional pressures. He might, in the sweetest of words, ask if they shouldn’t be of one heart and mind when it comes to religion as well. Or, he may downplay their different religions, seeming to be very tolerant of her differing beliefs while they are courting. When her

³ This WWL 2023 Sidebar article is a slightly adapted version of an article written by Helene Fisher and Elizabeth Lane Miller which was published on 11 October 2022 in Missio Nexus as: *International Day of the Girl Child: Predatory religious persecution and targeted seduction* at: <https://missionexus.org/international-day-of-the-girl-child/>.

⁴ The Open Doors World Watch Research report “A Generation at Risk” (September 2022) is available both at: https://www.opendoors.org/Childrens_Report and <https://opendoorsanalytical.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/09/Report-CYSRP-DIGITAL-ODI-2022.pdf>.

guard is down, sexual assault and social pressure often force her family to consider marriage, in order to preserve an unbiblical notion of 'honor'. Some girls are married without their family being present.

It is after the marriage happens – and here we shouldn't imagine a bright and joyous family celebration but a hurried and perhaps even hidden event – that the truth of the relationship is discovered. It was all a trick; it was targeted seduction. Sexual violence, sometimes house arrest, ensues, and ultimately forced conversion. After a year of marriage, and perhaps a pregnancy, he often divorces her and claims custody of the child.

Whether she remains with the 'husband' as a lifetime sex slave and housekeeper because she doesn't dare to be a divorced woman or is returned to her family in 'disgrace', the result is the same: another young Christian woman has effectively been removed from the church's future. She is unlikely to be entrusted with any form of ministry or training to grow in her spiritual gifting. She is unlikely to be remarried to a Christian man because she is viewed as spoiled goods. Worst of all, her mother and grandmother's dreams for her have been used as a weapon of religious persecution.

Dividing generations

Fundamentally, this single tactic used against children (among 30 tactics identified in the study) isn't about girls or boys, but about how religious persecution of children and youth can be a catalyst for inter-generational harm within the church. If the ultimate goal for persecutors is to completely eradicate Christianity in communities, then it is strategic to sever ties between older and younger generations. If they can turn one generation against another, then the family will continue the work of the persecutors.

On the other hand, there is an even more devious potential for generational strife. It is the subtle turning on its head the entire notion of Freedom of Religion or Belief. If and when, in the case of targeted seduction, the Christian family protests that their daughter has left her Christian roots, this family can be accused of being the ones violating their child's freedom of religion.⁵

The church can stand strong in the face of these tactics

As followers of Jesus, we have an alternative. The gospel of Jesus is a powerful antidote, able to cover and redeem those terrible moments of their lives. A safe, supportive church plays a powerful role in intergenerational relationships. In hostile environments, a church can recognize the inherent worth of children and youth, be a place of encouragement, and foster intergenerational understanding. Leaders and parents have a responsibility to strengthen their young people's sense of belonging and attachment.

However, some leaders may not feel well-equipped to understand fully the experiences that young people in their congregations are facing, in order to meet their needs. Young adults, in particular 18–30-year-olds, can often serve as a bridge of understanding between generations.

⁵ According to Articles 14 and 30 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC), children have the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion; *they can neither be forced to adopt a religion or belief, nor be forced to stop following one.* (See: *A Generation at Risk*, p. 5)

They can help break the false peace of silently ignoring the pressures facing the youth and suggest ways of equipping teenagers to face the silent pressures they face, such as targeted seduction. One practical way to protect against targeted seduction is for youth to see church as a place where the unique strengths of the younger generation are valued and given space to flourish.

No matter where we are in the world, leaders and parents need to enter the reality of what our younger generations are facing. Without entering their reality – we might miss the actual dynamics playing out in our homes and places of worship.

Find out more by reading the September 2022 Children/Youth-specific religious persecution report: A Generation at Risk. (See footnote 2 for links.)

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13. SIDEBAR 2 - Gender-specific religious persecution (GSRP)

Five years, five observations of GSRP

The first gender-specific religious persecution report was published in 2018, and five years of research confirm that persecution is not gender blind. As we await the findings of our 2023 Gender Report due to be released in March⁶, let's look back at five take-aways that have shaped our understanding of specific religious persecution.

1. Women and girls are not spared the violence that also befalls men and boys, it's just hidden.

Back in 2018 this finding was a tough reality to face; five years have confirmed women and girls experience a range of violent persecution: sexual, physical, psychological and verbal. In fact, it has become clear that women face a greater threat of non-deadly violence than men due to the variety of forms that violence takes such as rape, other sexual assault, non-sexual violence and domestic violence. Additionally, this violence often goes unreported to authorities because the expectation of assistance or justice is often quite low for Christians in hostile countries, compounded by judicial gender discrimination and prejudicial socio-cultural norms.

⁶ The 2023 Gender Report will be available in March 2023 at: <https://opendoorsanalytical.org/gender-specific-persecution/> (password: freedom) and at the www.od.org website. The March 2022 Report "Invisible" can be accessed directly with the link: <https://opendoorsanalytical.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/03/The-Gender-Report-2022-DIGITAL-PDF.pdf> or <https://www.opendoors.org/thegenderreport>.

2. Persecution of Christian men and boys aims to remove them from the picture

Men and boys risk being abducted, forced to join militias or gangs, imprisoned, and are more likely to be killed for their faith than women and girls. All of these tactics actively remove them from their families, away from their expected roles as providers and protectors. These methods of persecution are also more out in the open, better documented and easier to find reports of in comparison to the ‘invisible’ tactics that women and girls face.

3. Christian women face a web of persecution factors

In nature, webs are spun and set with the sole purpose to capture prey. Intricate and cleverly constructed fine threads are interconnected, creating a complex network that traps. The harder the victim tries to escape, the further entangled they become. Persecution exploits all available vulnerabilities that women have – Christian women and girls face pressure and violence in nearly all areas of their life: home, government, culture and society. Together, these spheres form an inextricable web of forces that coerce and punish them. In fact, the variety of pressure and violence faced by women are consistently higher than those faced by Christian men.

The interrelatedness of pressure from home to society is a trend clearly seen in the Middle East. The 2023 Gender Report will explore this dynamic in greater depth.

4. The most visibly vulnerable are Christian leaders

Christian leaders, predominantly men, are often directly targeted in order “kill the leader and win the battle.” Targeting men who are church leaders or influential in their communities inflicts pain on those who are benefitting from their protection and guidance. The death or imprisonment of a leader can also leave a congregation or family traumatized, and sometimes economically or physically defenseless, with consequences for the next generation’s future. Kidnapping for ransom of Christian leaders impoverishes not only their families but also their congregations as a whole.

5. Men and women are both targeted according to their vulnerabilities in order to create the biggest impact

While men are targeted for their roles as breadwinners or church leaders, women are targeted as sexual objects and vehicles of shame. Persecutors cunningly use gender vulnerabilities to provoke the worst outcome possible, to force the disbanding of families and communities, and to pressurize men and women to the point of breaking their faith – meaning future generations grow up with zero influence of the Christian religion. The end goal of persecutors is simple: Eradicate Christianity in their communities and countries.

Ultimately, with each report we gain greater clarity and understanding of the ways in which our brothers and sisters around the world suffer for their faith. The stories that we share in the reports give an insight into the lives of those who have experienced extreme difficulties, alongside the data which give us a window into the prevalence of violence and complexity of persecution.

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14. SIDEBAR 3 - Q&A on IDPs, refugees and the displacement of Christians

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How does displacement affect Christian women in particular?

What country is an example where the Church has been particularly impacted by the IDP/refugee situation?

What are the global numbers for displacement?

The [United Nations High Commission for Refugees](#) (UNHCR) estimates there were 103 million people living in forced displacement in the world as of mid-2022. The figure used when Open Doors published the report *"The Church on the Run"* in June 2022, was 100 million; this figure could well increase further in the coming months and years.

What has Open Doors to do with IDPs and refugees?

Open Doors is concerned about all IDPs/Refugees but its mandate is to focus on the situation of Christians. In some countries, Christians have been forced to flee their communities to another place of relative safety within that hostile country or a neighboring one, only to face new or mutated forms of persecution because of their faith. These places of safety are likely to be either official or informal camps, safe houses, family living elsewhere or new settlements within the same country. Sometimes they simply have to flee to the jungle and stay there for months, as in Laos.

How does displacement affect Christians?

The scale of forced displacement continues to rise globally. As numbers of IDPs and refugees increase, the vast majority lack access to durable solutions, and many face living in 'temporary' situations for prolonged periods of time. The fact is that *displacement can change the face of a country for generations to come*. In contexts of acute persecution, displaced Christians can be more at risk of psychological violence and physical insecurity; their vulnerability to such persecution exacerbated by being on the move or living in settings such as refugee camps or informal displacement settings (as referenced in *The Church on the Run* report).

What is the scale of the displacement of Christians?

Open Doors' reporting in 2022 found that Christians were forcibly displaced from their homes in 58 of the top 76 World Watch List 2022 countries because of their religious identity or because of conflicts that have religion as an underlying cause. The majority of these Christians were IDPs, while the minority found relative safety in another country as refugees. From 1 October 2020 to 30 September 2021, 27 WWL countries had an estimated 100 or more people leaving due to religious reasons. In at least eight countries (Congo DR, Eritrea, Iran, Mozambique, Myanmar, Niger, Nigeria and Pakistan) the numbers go into the thousands. In total, according to approximations, between 200,000-300,000 Christians were displaced in the year due to religious reasons. This does not account for Christians who were displaced for other reasons, or who had been displaced before October 2020 and are still living in displacement settings.

To what extent can the post-COVID global economic crisis and climate change be considered drivers of displacement?

The agents driving religious displacement are family and community pressure against converts, state pressure, and violent religious groups. In *The Church on the Run* report, neither of the global economic crisis nor 'climate change' was identified as being a primary driver of religiously-motivated displacement. They can however be identified as contributing towards driving broader (non-religious) displacement. A non-religious driver of displacement can be either a) unrelated to religious persecution, or b) can combine with multiple drivers, including religious persecution. Either of these scenarios can push Christians to flee.

The mixture of 'climate change', economic crises, and the actions of government actors and violent groups all combine to increase levels of persecution on Christian IDPs and refugees.

How does displacement affect Christian women in particular?

Single female Christians are made much more vulnerable when displaced. One country researcher reported that the displacement due to a natural disaster in an Asian country, caused especially displaced women living without male protection to become victims of sexual assault when they went outdoors to urinate.

What country is an example where the Church has been particularly impacted by the IDP/refugee situation?

One example is Iraq and the now fragmented church to be found there. Before Saddam Hussein came to power, there were over a million Christians living in the country. When the self-proclaimed Islamic State (IS) emerged on the scene, thousands of Christians fled and became refugees in neighboring countries or IDPs staying in camps in safer regions. Now there are estimated to be just 164,000 Christians remaining in Iraq. The Iraqi church is deeply fragmented and has suffered collective trauma, with only a minority returning to their original towns or villages, while others search for a sense of home and identity elsewhere.

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The Church on the Run report covered the period 1 October 2020 to 30 September 2021 and is available at: <https://opendoorsanalytical.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/06/IDP-Refugee-specific-religious-persecution-report-Church-on-the-run-June-2022.pdf> and <https://www.opendoors.org/therefugeereport>. An update on IDPs/refugee-specific religious persecution using WWL 2023 data will be published later in 2023.

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