

FINAL WWL 2019 COUNTRY DOSSIER

JORDAN

LEVEL 3/EMBARGO

(Reporting period: 1 November 2017 – 31 October 2018)

Contents

Introduction.....	3
Copyright Notice	3
Introduction.....	3
WWL 2019: Keys to understanding Jordan	4
Link for general background information	4
Recent country history	4
The religious landscape	4
The political landscape	4
The socio-economic landscape	5
Concluding remarks.....	5
External Links - WWL 2019: Keys to understanding Jordan.....	6
WWL 2019: Church History and Facts.....	7
How many Christians?	7
How did Christians get there?.....	7
What church networks exist today?	7
Religious context	8
Notes on the current situation.....	8
External Links - WWL 2019: Church History and Facts	9
WWL 2019: Short & Simple Persecution Profile	10
Introduction.....	10
What type of persecution dominates?	10
Who is driving persecution?.....	10
What it results in	10
Violence	10
Examples of specific persecution in the reporting period	11
WWL 2019: Persecution Dynamics	12
Introduction.....	12

Position on World Watch List (WWL).....	12
Persecution engines	12
Drivers of persecution	13
Context	14
Christian communities and how they are affected.....	14
Pressure in the 5 spheres of life and violence	15
5 Year trends	17
Gender specific persecution.....	18
Persecution of other religious minorities	19
Future outlook.....	19
External Links - WWL 2019: Persecution Dynamics	20
Additional Reports and Articles	22
WWR in-depth reports	22
Open Doors article(s) from the region	22
World Watch Monitor news articles.....	22
Recent country developments.....	22

Introduction

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Introduction

World Watch List Jordan	Points	WWL Rank
WWL 2019	65	31
WWL 2018	66	21
WWL 2017	63	27
WWL 2016	59	27
WWL 2015	56	30

Scores and ranks are shown above whenever the country was among the fifty highest scoring countries (Top 50) in the WWL 2015-2019 reporting periods.

Please note: The highlighted links in the text can be found written out in full at the conclusion of each main section under the heading “External links”.

WWL 2019: Keys to understanding Jordan

Link for general background information

BBC country profile: <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-middle-east-14631981>

Recent country history

After the dissolution of the Ottoman Empire at the end of World War 1, the League of Nations mandated Britain to rule large parts of the Middle East. In the early 1920s, Britain separated a semi-autonomous region from Palestine, with the name Transjordan. The region became independent in 1946 and the Hashemite Kingdom was established. From 1953 King Hussein governed the kingdom for most of the 20th century. In 1967 Jordan lost the West Bank to Israel in the Six Day War. King Hussein permanently relinquished claims to the West Bank in 1988 and signed a peace treaty with Israel in 1994. After Hussein's death in 1999, his eldest son King Abdallah II succeeded him. Jordan was also affected by the so-called Arab Spring which began in 2011, despite the king's efforts to diminish its effects.

With the ongoing war in Syria, Jordan has found itself being used as a transit country for jihadist fighters, causing the threat of terrorism to increase in Jordan as well. Also, the large numbers of refugees hosted in Jordan are an additional pressure on its already strained economy and society. Though generally stable in terms of security, Jordan has faced three terrorist attacks in recent years: A cross border-car bombing launched from Syria in 2016; a shoot out at the crusaders castle in Karak in 2016; and a bomb attack at a police car guarding a music festival in the majority Christian town of Fuheis in August 2018. According to Jordan's Minister of Interior, the perpetrators of the latter were supporters of IS and had planned further attacks against the security forces and civilians. Human rights advocates have accused Jordan's rulers of using the threat of terrorism to restrict the rights of citizens and parliament.

The religious landscape

Tension has increased between moderate and radical Islamic elements in Jordanian society. Jordan has had a disproportionate high per capita share of Islamist thinkers and fighters. Large numbers of Jordanian Islamic fighters reportedly travelled to Syria and Iraq to fight together with other radical Muslims from all over the world. Many are wondering what will happen when they return. Meanwhile, King Abdullah II wants to reform society and is implementing measures that are beneficial to religious minorities including Christians, such as implementing changes in university curriculum literature at the beginning of the 2017 academic year. This involved deleting passages discriminating against non-Muslim religions which could encourage Salafi-Islamist views. However, such measures are causing unrest - especially among conservative Muslims - and are thus dividing society.

In September 2016 there was the extra-judicial killing of a prominent author (an atheist from an Orthodox Christian family) for posting a cartoon mocking "the god of Daesh" (i.e. Islamic State). This killing shows how freedom of expression is being suppressed by radical Islamic elements. This is leading to increasing pressure on Christians and others with views not in line with radical Islam.

The political landscape

There are two major political forces at play in Jordan: King Abdullah II and the royal family on the one hand, and the armed forces and secret police on the other. The king has a considerable amount of

influence since he appoints governments, approves legislation and has the power to dissolve parliament.

While the royals seem keen on promoting Jordan as a modern, multi-religious country (underlining the importance of Jordanian Christians in Jordanian society) the secret police seem to be more concerned with repressing minority Muslim factions as well as keeping Christians in line.

In the elections for Jordan's Lower House of Parliament in September 2016, the [Islamic Action Front \(IAF\) participated](#) after nearly a decade of boycotting elections and won 15 out of 130 seats. The IAF is the political wing of the Muslim Brotherhood. Nine Christians - the minimum quota guaranteed to the Christian community as a religious minority – were also elected to the Lower House. Though IAF's return is not likely to have any great effect in the short run, the country's well organized opposition should not be underestimated.

The socio-economic landscape

Without any oil resources and few natural resources of its own, Jordan is dependent on foreign aid to a considerable degree. Major donor countries are Gulf States, among others Saudi Arabia, and to some extent the USA and Europe. As a result, Jordan is relatively vulnerable to being influenced by these countries. Jordan has been invited to become a member of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC), a political, economic and military cooperation between all Gulf States except Yemen.

Jordanian society is multi-ethnic - a phenomenon which is also reflected by the monarchy. Late King Hussein's roots are in Saudi Arabia, his second wife and mother of current King Abdullah II is British. King Abdullah himself is married to a Palestinian. The majority of the population consists of Palestinians, most of whom fled as a result of the Arab-Israeli wars of 1948 and 1967. The majority of them received citizenship in the early 1950s. Palestinian Jordanians ("Westbankers") are not treated equally compared to most other nationals who are from Bedouin descent ("Eastbankers") and have been living in the area for centuries. Discrimination of Westbankers is especially felt in the area of employment in the army, government and public sector (which is limited to East Bankers only), leaving just the private sector for Palestinians. Moreover Palestinian Jordanians are discriminated against in health and economic sectors and in state-provided education. Priority is given to East Bankers and, in general, these are loyal to the king. Due to the presence of many different nationalities in the kingdom, there is uncertainty about what shapes a Jordanian citizen's national identity. Also, the high number of refugees (mostly from Syria) has led to economic, political and religious pressure and is a potential destabilizing factor. [Other economic risks](#) facing the government are high rates of poverty, unemployment and underemployment, budget and current account deficits and government debt.

Christians play an important role in running well-respected humanitarian NGO's and schools serving all Jordanians. The relative financial prosperity of this 2% of the total population "generates [one-third](#) of all economic activity in the country", according to The Times, reporting on 23 May 2014.

Concluding remarks

Jordanian society is becoming increasingly polarized. This polarization is encouraging liberals and Christians to speak out against radical Islamic developments in the country, which has had serious consequences. The extra-judicial killing of a prominent author mentioned above shows how freedom of expression is being suppressed by radical Islamic elements. This is leading to increasing pressure on Christians and others with views not in line with radical Islam, a development which is not expected to diminish in the short term.

External Links - WWL 2019: Keys to understanding Jordan

- The political landscape: Islamic Action Front (IAF) participated
http://www.fides.org/en/news/60829-ASIA_JORDAN_Elections_Archbishop_Lahham_all_Christian_candidates_in_Islamist_lists_rejected
- The socio-economic landscape: Other economic risks
<https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/jo.html>
- The socio-economic landscape: one-third
<http://time.com/110595/pope-francis-holy-land-visit-spotlight-on-christians-in-jordan/>

WWL 2019: Church History and Facts

How many Christians?

Pop 2018	Christians	Chr%
9,904,000	130,000	1.3

Source: Johnson T M and Zurlo G A (eds.), *World Christian Database* (Leiden/Boston: Brill, accessed January 2018)

How did Christians get there?

Christians have been living in Jordan since the earliest days of Christianity. The country was a center of refuge for Christians who fled persecution in Jerusalem and Rome during the first century AD. Christianity became the accepted religion of the area in the 4th century and churches and chapels were built throughout the entire country. This changed with the coming of Islam, when Muslim armies overran the area in 636.

According to [JMECA](#) historical experts: “After the Arab Muslim conquest of the Middle East and North Africa in the seventh century, Christianity slowly declined in those regions. By the tenth century Christians constituted some ten percent of the population of the Islamic Empire. Into this situation at the end of the eleventh century came the Crusades, which brought with them the Roman Catholic Church. (...) During the crusader period, in the thirteenth century and afterwards, several groups of Eastern Christians, entered into communion with Rome. (...) In the early eighteenth century the Orthodox Patriarchate of Antioch split. (...) Western Churches of reformed tradition came into the Middle East in the nineteenth century. American Presbyterian missionaries worked in Egypt, Lebanon and other parts of the region. The Church of England and the Prussian Lutheran Church jointly set up a bishopric in Jerusalem in 1841. It came to an end in the early 1880s, and separate Anglican and Lutheran bishoprics were set up towards the end of the decade. The original purpose was to convert Jews to Christianity. In that aim it largely failed, but attracted a small number of existing Christians, mostly Orthodox or Greek Catholic, in what is now Israel, the Occupied Territories and Jordan.”

What church networks exist today?

Church networks: Jordan	Christians	%
Orthodox	80,300	61.8
Catholic	29,500	22.7
Protestant	11,600	8.9
Independent	9,300	7.2
Unaffiliated	1,800	1.4
Doubly-affiliated Christians	-2,200	-1.7
Total	130,300	100.2
<i>(Any deviation from the total number of Christians stated above is due to the rounding of decimals)</i>		
Evangelical movement	10,500	8.1
Renewalist movement	13,300	10.2

Orthodox: Eastern (Chalcedonian), Oriental (Pre-Chalcedonian, Non-Chalcedonian, Monophysite), Nestorian (Assyrian), and non-historical Orthodox. Roman Catholics: All Christians in communion with the Church of Rome. Protestants: Christians in churches originating in or in communion with the Western world's 16th-century Protestant Reformation. Includes Anglicans, Lutherans and Baptists (any of whom may be Charismatic) and denominational Pentecostals, but not Independent traditions such as Independent Baptists nor independent Charismatics. Independents: Believers who do not identify with the major Christian traditions (Orthodox, Roman Catholic, Protestant). Unaffiliated Christians: Persons professing publicly to be

Christians but who are not affiliated to churches. Doubly-affiliated Christians: Persons affiliated to or claimed by 2 denominations at once. Evangelical movement: Churches, denominations, and individuals who identify themselves as evangelicals by membership in denominations linked to evangelical alliances (e.g., World Evangelical Alliance) or by self-identification in polls. Renewalist movement: Church members involved in Pentecostal/Charismatic renewal.

Source: Johnson T M and Zurlo G A (eds.), World Christian Database (Leiden/Boston: Brill, accessed January 2018)

The majority of Christians belong to historical churches, e.g. the Greek Orthodox Church or Roman Catholic Church. Other denominations are the Armenian Orthodox Church, the Coptic Orthodox Church, the Syrian Orthodox Church, the Anglican Church and Presbyterian Church. Non-traditional Christians include Baptists, Evangelicals, Charismatics and Pentecostals. The relationship between those belonging to the historical Christian communities and non-traditional Christians have been strained from time to time. There are also Christians with a Muslim background among local residents and Iraqi and Syrian refugees.

Most historical Christian denominations are officially recognized, as are Seventh-day Adventists, Presbyterians and Anglicans. Several non-traditional Christian communities are not recognized but registered as 'societies'. The Baptist church is registered as a denomination but not officially recognized and does not have the same rights as other registered denominations.

Religious context

Religious Context: Jordan	Numbers	%
Christians	130,000	1.3
Muslim	9,490,000	95.8
Hindu	0	0.0
Buddhist	0	0.0
Ethnoreligionist	0	0.0
Jewish	0	0.0
Bahai	22,200	0.2
Atheist	41,200	0.4
Agnostic	216,000	2.2
Other	4,100	0.0

OTHER includes Chinese folk, New religionist, Sikh, Spiritist, Taoist, Confucianist, Jain, Shintoist, Zoroastrian.

Source: Johnson T M and Zurlo G A (eds.), World Christian Database (Leiden/Boston: Brill, accessed January 2018)

According to WCD 2018 statistics, around 95.8% of the population are Muslim. Jordan hosts large numbers of refugees, mostly from Iraq and Syria, of whom several thousand are Christians. The table above shows that, for a Middle Eastern country, there are relatively large groups of Agnostics and Atheists in Jordan.

Notes on the current situation

Several recognized denominations such as Roman Catholics, Greek Orthodox and Anglicans have religious courts (i.e. administrative offices regulating such issues as personal status, religion, marriage, divorce, child custody and inheritance). Other churches which are registered as societies and have founded their own synod (including a joint council) are also aiming to establish religious courts. They have been met with resistance, however, from the historical Christian communities and the government.

There are also Christians serving in the Jordanian government. In the elections for Jordan's Lower House of Parliament of September 2016, nine Christians were elected (the minimum guaranteed quota for the Christian community as a religious minority).

External Links - WWL 2019: Church History and Facts

- How did Christians get there?: JMECA
<https://jmeca.org.uk/christianity-middle-east/history-christianity-middle-east-north-africa>

WWL 2019: Short & Simple Persecution Profile

Introduction

Reporting period: 1 November 2017 - 31 October 2018

With a score of 65 points, Jordan ranked 31 in WWL 2019, one point less than in WWL 2018.

What type of persecution dominates?

Islamic oppression: Christians are given the illusion of freedom, but in reality the Islamic traditions embedded in society put restrictions on Christian life and government monitoring is common. Converts from Islam to Christianity may face ostracism and violence from their families. More and more Jordanians are being radicalized by the Islamic State group (IS) ideology, which puts Christians at greater risk.

Ethnic antagonism: Jordan's society is basically tribal - especially outside the major cities - and is linked with Jordanian nationalism. After the 1967 war with Israel, Jordan became divided into pure Jordanian 'East Bankers' and Palestinian/Jordanian 'West Bankers'. Christians coming from a Palestinian background are likely to be doubly disadvantaged.

Who is driving persecution?

Families and government officials put pressure on converts to return to Islam. Most pressure comes from the family, which can even include serious violence and killing. Tribalism is strong in Jordan and ethnic group leaders also try to force converts to renounce their new faith. The same is true for Islamic leaders, who consider converts to still be Muslims. Radical Islamic movements are a source of persecution for Christians and Jordanians of other religious faiths (including Muslims). Government officials monitor the churches and ministries of Christians active in evangelization and put them under pressure to stop these activities. Historical churches fear that any form of evangelization will result in a backlash affecting all Christians.

What it results in

Most Christians in Jordan belong to the Orthodox and Roman Catholic denominations. Overall, they enjoy a relatively high level of religious freedom but experience discrimination in employment and restrictions against public preaching. An open testimony of faith by a Christian with Muslim background can lead to beatings, arrest and killing. Christians active in evangelism and/or helping converts can face threats and obstruction in daily life.

Violence

The following table is based on reported cases. Since many incidents go unreported, the numbers below must be understood as being minimum figures.

Jordan	Reporting period	Christians killed	Christians attacked	Christians arrested	Churches attacked	Christian-owned houses and shops attacked
WWL 2019	01 Nov 2017 - 31 Oct 2018	0	4	0	3	0
WWL 2018	01 Nov 2016 - 31 Oct 2017	0	2	2	4	4

Christians killed refers to the number of Christians killed for faith-related reasons (including state-sanctioned executions). Christians attacked refers to the number of Christians abducted, raped or otherwise sexually harassed, forced into marriage to non-Christians or otherwise physically or mentally abused (including beatings and death-threats) for faith-related reasons. Christians arrested refers to the number of Christians detained without trial or sentenced to jail, labor camp, sent to psychiatric hospital as punishment or similar things for faith-related reasons. Churches attacked refers to the number of churches or Christian buildings (schools, hospitals, cemeteries, etc.) attacked, damaged, bombed, looted, destroyed, burned down, closed or confiscated for faith-related reasons. Christian-owned houses and shops attacked refers to the number of houses of Christians or other property (including shops and businesses of Christians) attacked, damaged, bombed, looted, destroyed, burned down, closed or confiscated for faith-related reasons.

Examples of specific persecution in the reporting period

- Some converts were allegedly physically abused or suffered death threats from family members.
- Some Christians had to leave the country, either after allegations of proselytism or for safety reasons.
- A number of churches or ministry centers were closed due to outreach activities.

Details cannot be provided for security reasons.

WWL 2019: Persecution Dynamics

Introduction

Reporting period: 1 November 2017 - 31 October 2018

Position on World Watch List (WWL)

With a score of 65 points, Jordan ranked 31 in WWL 2019, one point less than in WWL 2018. A lower number of reported violent incidents was the main reason. Violent incidents occurred mostly against Christians with a Muslim background, but other Christians active in evangelism were also affected.

Persecution engines

Persecution engines: Jordan	Abbreviation	Level of influence
Islamic oppression	IO	Strong
Religious nationalism	RN	Not at all
Ethnic antagonism	EA	Strong
Denominational protectionism	DPR	Weak
Communist and post - Communist oppression	CPCO	Not at all
Secular intolerance	SI	Not at all
Dictatorial paranoia	DPA	Weak
Organized corruption and crime	OCC	Not at all

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

Islamic oppression (Strong):

Islamic oppression is one of the main Persecution engines in Jordan, but works mostly in non-violent ways. The government has imposed more Islamic values and laws on society although they still promote tolerance and the peaceful coexistence of other religions. In terms of personal life, converts from Islam to Christianity face the highest persecution. Their families and community may ostracism them, or even commit acts of violence against them. All types of Christians in Jordan can be subject to government monitoring, or even Sharia law if he or she is married to a Muslim or is in a court dispute with a Muslim. Islamic oppression also works through violent actions carried out by Islamic militants. Oppression by radical Muslims is much more severe than any government oppression. More and more Jordanians are being radicalized by the Islamic State group (IS) ideology, which puts Christians at greater risk.

Ethnic antagonism (Strong):

This Persecution engine describes how the continuing influence of age-old norms and values shaped in a tribal context are enforced. *Ethnic antagonism* can come in the form of traditional religion and in the case of Jordan this is Islam and especially affects Christians with a Muslim background. Jordan's society is basically tribal - especially outside the major cities - and is embedded in Jordanian nationalism. After the mass influx of Palestinians into Jordan after the 1967 war with Israel, Jordan became divided into pure Jordanian 'East Bankers' (originating from the region east of the Jordan river) and Palestinian/Jordanian 'West Bankers' (who have their roots west of the Jordan river). Tribalism has made this ethnic division more apparent and acts as a socio-economic safety net. Family, clan and tribal connections continue to allow Easterners to successfully navigate government, economic and social spheres, naturally including employment but also including political and social standing. Because

of this social advantage for pure' Jordanians, tribalism has become even more integrated into the Jordanian concept of nationalism. Thus, Christians coming from a Palestinian background may not have as many advantages as a pure Jordanian Christian. This issue requires more detailed research.

Drivers of persecution

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

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

Drivers of Islamic oppression are Government officials, ethnic group leaders, non-Christian religious leaders, violent religious groups, citizens and (extended) family.

The government is genuine in its affirmation of Jordan's traditional churches and in seeking to ensure the security of all churches. Nevertheless, government policies and staff are the cause of much pressure on all Christians and in particular on converts from Islam. This pressure is exerted through families, and more formally, through the personal status court system. In addition, ethnic leaders can put pressure on converts from Islam to preserve the honor of the tribe. Converts also fear hostile pronouncements or actions by Islamic leaders. This fear contributes to the sense of oppression and marginalization felt by indigenous Christians and also to the high degree of caution converts from Islam feel compelled to exercise. In the WWL 2019 reporting period, indigenous Christian communities were particularly alarmed at the unchecked hate-speech propagated on social media by an influential Islamic leader. Generally, the government is reasonably effective in keeping terrorist and violent religious groups in check. The threat from violent religious groups is not constant, but there is potential for simmering societal tensions to induce expressions of religious radicalism. Christians from a Muslim background are especially vulnerable to radical Islamic groups if their conversion becomes known.

Drivers of Ethnic antagonism are (extended) family, ethnic group or Islamic leaders and government officials.

Ethnic antagonism involves the imposition of age-old norms and values shaped in 'tribal' context and is often blended with Islamic oppression. In this case, the drivers are particularly families of converts and tribal, ethnic or Islamic leaders. Government officials were reported to have put pressure on converts to return to Islam and, in some cases, they had been initially informed by the convert's family. Most pressure comes from the family, which can even lead to serious violence and killing. Tribalism is strong in Jordan and ethnic group leaders are also likely to influence converts to renounce their new faith, in order to protect the honor of the tribe. The same is true for Islamic leaders, who consider converts to still be Muslims.

Context

Jordanian society is multi-ethnic; the majority of the population consists of Palestinians, most of whom fled after the Arab-Israeli wars of 1948 and 1967. Palestinian Jordanians ("Westbankers") are not treated equally compared to most other nationals who are from Bedouin descent ("Eastbankers") and have been living in the area for centuries. Jordan hosts large groups of refugees, mostly from Iraq and Syria. In June 2018, the [UNHCR](#) estimated there were more than 666,500 registered refugees from Syria and almost 67,000 from Iraq in the country. Jordan thus hosted the [second highest number of refugees per 1,000 inhabitants](#) in the world. Due to the presence of many different nationalities in the kingdom, there is confusion about what a Jordanian citizen's national identity actually is. Also, the high number of refugees leads to economic, political and religious pressure and is a potential destabilizing factor.

The total number of Christians has been declining since the country's independence in 1946. This decline was mainly due to lower birth rates and high emigration rates. The arrival of large number of Muslim refugees from Syria and Iraq, combined with the rising fears of radical Islam and the current dire economic conditions, put increasing pressure on Christians, especially on Evangelicals and converts from Islam. As a result, many Christian communities keep to themselves and do not engage in outreach.

For a long time, Jordan was one of the most liberal countries in the region in terms of freedom of religion. However, the tide seems to be turning now to the detriment of the Christian community. Although Christians belonging to historical churches still enjoy a relatively high degree of religious freedom, Christians with a Muslim background are experiencing the repercussions of an increased radical Islamic influence on society. Also Christians active in evangelism or in ministry involving converts from Islam are suffering increasing pressure and monitoring.

Christian communities and how they are affected

Communities of expatriate Christians: Expatriate Christians are present in Jordan, but not as a group involuntarily isolated from other categories of Christian communities. This category is therefore not included in WWL scoring and analysis.

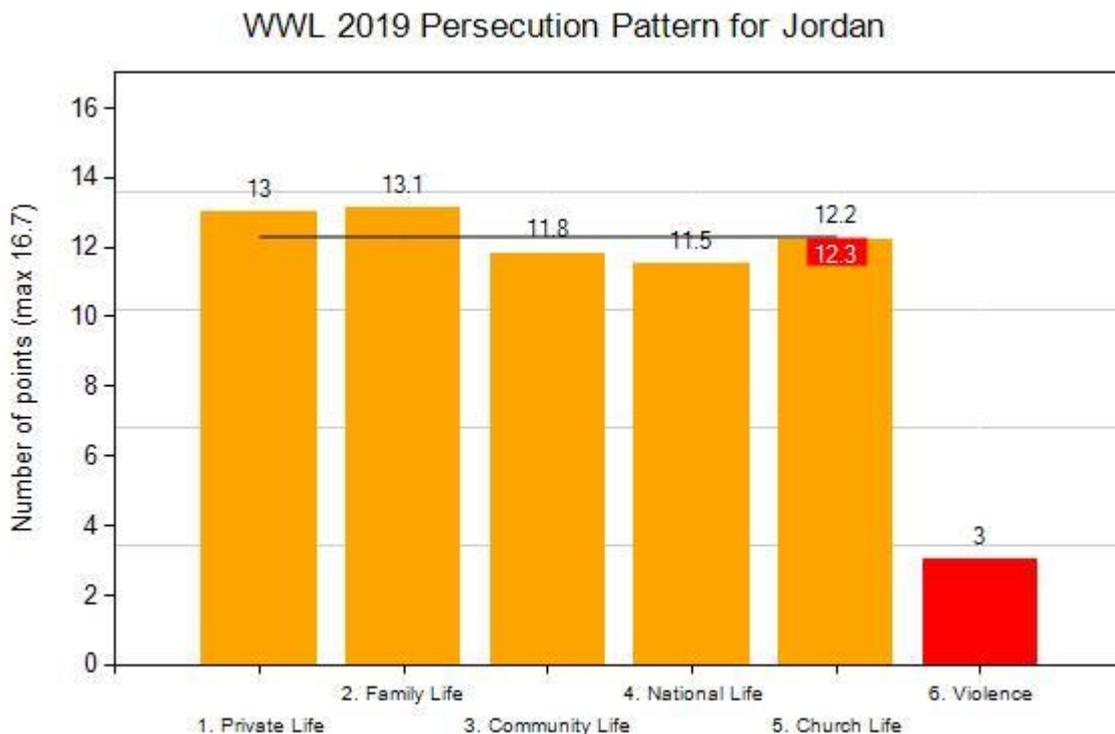
Historical Christian communities: This category makes up the largest group of Christians in Jordan, most of whom belong to the Orthodox and Roman Catholic denominations. Overall, they enjoy a relatively high level of religious freedom but can experience discrimination, e.g. in the area of employment.

Converts to Christianity: Of all Christians in Jordan, those with a Muslim background are persecuted the most for their faith. If their new faith is known, they can face oppression from a whole variety of

sources, namely government officials, ethnic group leaders, non-Christian religious leaders, violent religious groups, ordinary people and (extended) family. The situation for converts – whose small numbers have been growing - has worsened during the past few years, mostly due to pressure from their families and to the increasing activity of radical Islamic groups.

Non-traditional Christian communities: After converts, Christians from Evangelical, Baptist and Pentecostal congregations face most opposition, especially from the side of government officials. Evangelical churches are not recognized by the Jordanian government. In some cases, the government can be regarded as a driver of persecution, since violence against these Christians is mostly met with impunity.

Pressure in the 5 spheres of life and violence



The WWL 2019 persecution pattern for Jordan shows:

- Overall, the pressure on Christians in Jordan – mainly on converts from Islam - is at a very high level and the average score (12.3) decreased very slightly from the WWL 2018 level of 12.4.
- Pressure is at very high levels in all *spheres of life*. It is highest in the *Family, Private* and *Church spheres of life*. This is typical for a situation in which *Islamic oppression* is the main persecution engine combined with *Ethnic antagonism*.
- The score for violence decreased from 4.3 in WWL 2018 to 3.0 in WWL 2019.

Private sphere:

In the area of private worship, it is especially converts from Islam who are affected, since they cannot openly practice their faith. Giving any indication to those around them that they may be Christians can have serious consequences. All other categories of Christianity have more freedom to practice their faith privately, as long as they do not evangelize Muslims.

Family sphere:

Especially Christians with a Muslim background experience pressure from the side of their families which can even result in serious violence and death. To put pressure on converts, families are known to inform the authorities which is likely to result in arrest. Converts are also likely to lose custody of their children as a result of their conversion. The state, however, does not play an active role in this.

Community sphere:

Also in this *sphere of life*, it is especially Christians with a Muslim background who are under pressure, if their new faith is known. However other categories of Christianity can experience pressure in this area as well, for instance through discrimination in public and private employment where they can meet glass ceilings and be disadvantaged in promotion possibilities. Especially Christians active in the support of converts (which includes giving practical guidance, counselling and biblical education) can face threats and obstruction in daily life and also monitoring by their local community.

National sphere:

Here all types of Christianity can face pressure, though converts are especially targeted. Islam is the religion of the state and the Jordanian constitution gives primacy to Sharia law. Issues concerning personal or family status are under religious courts. Muslims are under Sharia courts and there are also religious courts for historical Christian communities such as the Orthodox, Catholics and Anglicans. In cases where one party is Muslim and the other non-Muslim, the case is handled under the Sharia court. Sharia courts do not recognize the conversion of a Muslim to Christianity and still consider them as (apostate) Muslims. The state also regards children (under 18 years old), whose father has converted to Islam, as Muslim. On issues of inheritance, Islamic law applies to all citizens irrespective of their faith and Christians cannot inherit from a Muslim family. Conversion from Islam is not officially recognized and the public evangelization of Muslims is against government policy. Muslims who become Christians still fall under the jurisdiction of Sharia courts, which means their marriages can be annulled; they can lose custody of their children, will lose inheritance rights and can be deprived of other civil rights as well. Security service personnel have reportedly questioned converts on their beliefs, threatened court action and promised rewards for returning to Islam, such as job opportunities. The authorities have also reportedly withheld certificates of good behavior needed for job applications or for opening a business and have told employers to dismiss converts. Those harming a Christian from a Muslim background have de-facto impunity.

Church sphere:

In this *sphere of life* it is again converts who are facing most pressure, while all other categories of Christianity (especially non-traditional groups) experience certain limitations. Any open or legal form of church life for converts is impossible. Compared to other countries in the region however, church life in general is less restricted - especially for Christians belonging to historical churches - because of the existence of a number of recognized churches. Evangelical churches face problems in obtaining registration. Building permits for church buildings are hard to obtain and other subtle forms of discrimination occur. The activities of Evangelical churches and underground churches (where converts gather) are reportedly being monitored by the secret police. Christian materials cannot be openly distributed and are only allowed to be sold at recognized locations.

Violence:

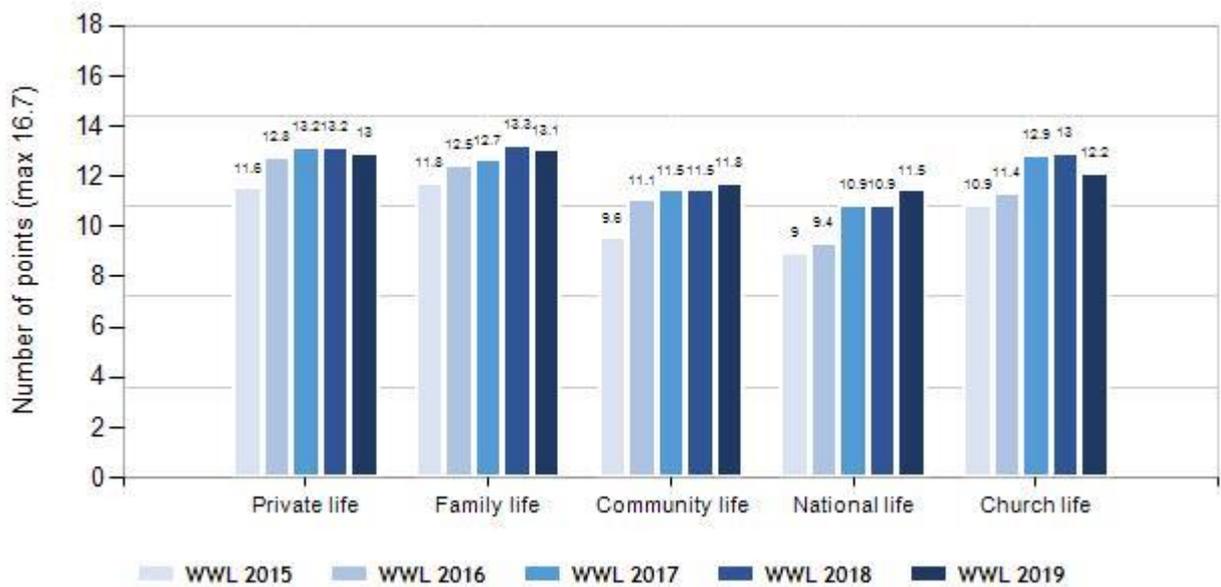
Violent incidents occurred mostly against converts, although Christians active in evangelism were also affected. A lower number of reported violent incidents is the main reason for Jordan's overall drop in

one point in the WWL 2019 score. For a summary of the statistics on violence and examples, please see the Short and Simple Persecution Profile section above.

5 Year trends

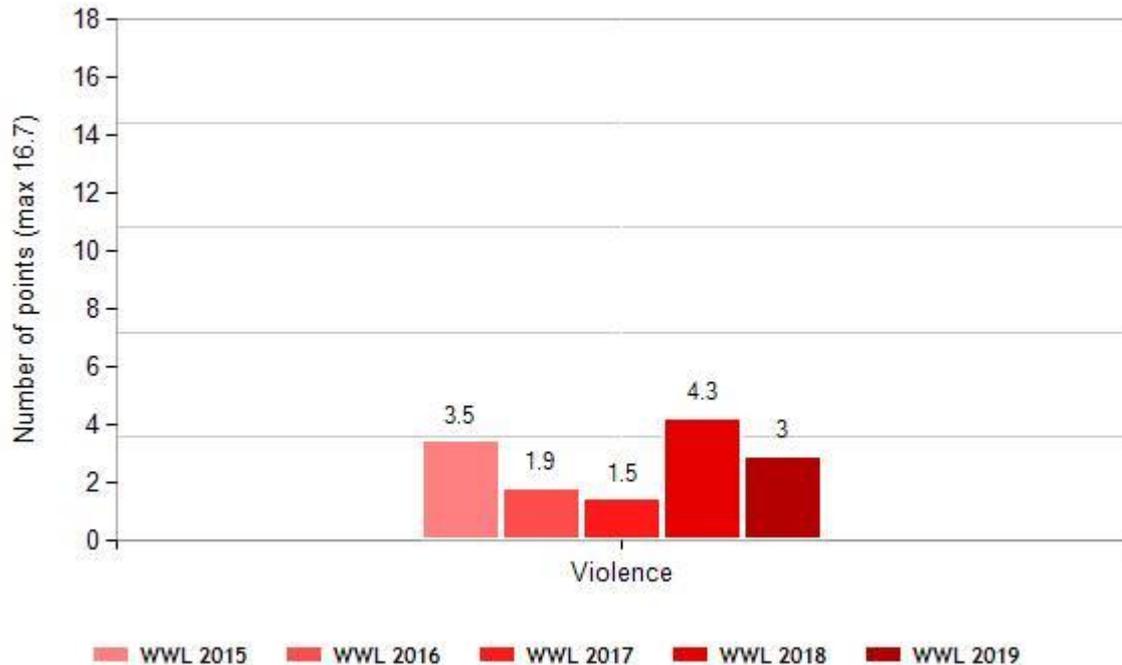
The trend for pressure in the *Private, Family and Church spheres of life* rose gradually until WWL 2018 (chart 1) and is now slightly declining. Nevertheless the moderate increase in pressure in the *Community and National spheres of life* has continued to grow since WWL 2015. Chart 2 underlines the steady growth in pressure from WWL 2015 to 2017, only to become stable at a very high level in the following years varying between of 12.3 and 12.4. The violence scores (chart 3) have varied over the years and only reached a high level once (in WWL 2018) after a steady decreasing from WWL 2015- WWL 2017. The score fell again in WWL 2019 but continues to be higher than in WWL 2016 and 2017.

WWL 2015 - WWL 2019 Persecution Profile for Jordan (Spheres of life)



WWL 2015 - WWL 2019 Persecution Pattern history: Jordan	Average pressure over 5 Spheres of life
2019	12.3
2018	12.4
2017	12.3
2016	11.4
2015	10.6

WWL 2015 - WWL 2019 Persecution Profile for Jordan (Violence)



Gender specific persecution

Female:

In Jordan, of all categories of Christianity it is above all female converts from Islam who are particularly vulnerable to persecution for their faith. However, other Christian females also face inequality, e.g. if their husbands convert to Islam. In the case of female converts, pressure comes most often from the side of the family. When she still lives with her family, a convert risks house arrest and even sexual harassment or rape if her faith is revealed. Although arranged marriages are not uncommon in Jordan, female converts are under additional threat to be married off involuntarily in an effort to retain family honor and bring the daughter back on 'the right path'.

Female converts cannot officially marry male Christians. Even if they marry abroad, the state does not recognize the marriage. Christian women in general can only marry Muslim men if they convert to Islam, as determined by the religious registration system. This is particularly complicated for Christian women who are not converts desiring to marry converts, as their husbands-to-be are still considered Muslims. When married to non-Christian husbands, female converts risk abuse and death threats which cause some to flee. They are also faced with travel restrictions. Travel bans can be imposed by the authorities but also by family members, for instance to prevent the female convert from leaving the country. If this ban is violated, a court case can be started for "travelling without permission". Female converts are also under the threat of forced divorce. The attitude of the spouse's family is crucial in this issue.

According to the US State Department's [International Religious Freedom Report for 2017](#): "Any member of society may file an apostasy complaint against such individuals before the newly established Sharia Public Prosecution." In cases decided by a Sharia court, judges can annul converts' marriages, transfer child custody to a non-parent Muslim family member or declare the children 'wards

of the state', and convey an individual's property rights to Muslim family members. If a Muslim husband and non-Muslim wife are divorced, the wife automatically [loses custody](#) of the children when they reach seven years of age, unlike Muslim women (as reported by Al-Jazeera in December 2015). If a divorced Christian woman becomes a Muslim, she can gain custody rights over the children and receive an inheritance from her husband. This puts a lot of pressure on divorced Christian women to convert.

Male:

Job discrimination affects all Christians, especially those working in the public sector. In the mostly traditional and tribal Jordanian society where men are regarded as "the [primary breadwinners](#) for their families" (Research Gate, January 2015), this can have a considerable effect on Christian families.

Under Sharia law, marriages between Muslim women and a non-Muslim men are not allowed. For the marriage to be legal, the man must convert to Islam. This makes legal marriage impossible between a Christian man who is not a convert and a Christian woman with a Muslim background. Sharia law also determines that if a Christian wife converts to Islam, her husband must convert as well for their marriage to remain legal.

Finally, if the pressure on Christian families leads to emigration, this has a potentially negative effect on future church leadership, since the Orthodox and Catholic churches will then have less men available for training and taking on leadership roles.

Persecution of other religious minorities

Other religions facing limitations in Jordan, are Shiites, Druze, Bahai and Iraqi Mandaeans. It is reportedly harder for a Sunni to convert to Shiite Islam than to convert to Christianity. The Bahai religion is not officially recognized and therefore their activities may be banned, although most Bahai adherents are allowed to practice their religion. Marriage certificates of Bahais are also not recognized by the Department of Civil Status and Passports. Druze experience social exclusion and live in specific areas. Like the Bahai religion, the Druze faith is also not officially recognized by the Jordanian government and as they do not have their own religious buildings they continue to worship in Sunni Muslim mosques. Finally, among Iraqi refugees who entered the country there have been some [Mandaeans](#). These are also not recognized and their rituals take place without official permission and are sometimes prohibited.

Example: As described in the US State Department's [International Religious Freedom Report for 2017](#), the Governor of Amman cancelled a Bahai-hosted event in October 2017 due to concerns that the event honoring "Harmony Among Religions" could incite a radical Islamic attack.

Future outlook

The political outlook: According to the [Economist Intelligence Unit \(EIU\)](#), King Abdullah II is expected to remain in power for the next few years and "will manage to crack down on any dissent, supported by his loyal armed forces and the government. The government will cautiously implement fiscal reforms owing to fears of social unrest as a result of which the fiscal and external deficits will remain large. Presence of Syrian refugees will add pressure on public finances. Jordan will remain dependent on foreign support. Real GDP growth will pick up gradually, but employment will remain high". The economy is facing difficulties and Jordan was granted an IMF loan on condition the government introduces austerity measures and raises taxes. These measures led to massive protests and the king dismissed Prime Minister Mulki as a result. This move calmed the Jordanian public, but ways still need

to be found to boost the economy. Jordan's economic difficulties could lead to more social and political unrest that could negatively affect Christians and other minorities.

The outlook for Christians - viewed through the lens of:

- **Islamic oppression:** Salafism is known to be steadily increasing in Jordan and in the mid-term this could produce an important change in religious attitudes in society. A stricter interpretation of Islam could seriously affect Christian public life. In addition, employment is anticipated to remain high. A high employment rate, especially for youth is fertile soil for recruitment by radical Islamic groups. This was confirmed by the bomb attack on a police car guarding a music festival in the majority Christian town of Fuheis in August 2018. The perpetrators were allegedly IS supporters who were found to be planning more attacks. Also, with the war in Syria apparently nearing its end, battle-hardened Jordanian militants could soon be returning home. Their presence could pose massive dangers to the population and particularly to vulnerable minorities such as Christians. These developments indicate that the persecution engine "*Islamic oppression*" is likely to increase in influence in the future.
- **Ethnic antagonism:** The persecution engine *Ethnic antagonism* does not currently seem to be facing any big change. According to the 2018 [Arab Youth Survey](#) however, Jordanian youth are becoming more influenced by their peers and the media than by their families or religious authorities. As a result, the government is trying to deter and pre-empt the influence of radical Islamic groups. If this loosening of contact between youth and family or religious leaders continues, it could weaken *Ethnic antagonism* in the long run.

Conclusion: In general, many Christians in Jordan strongly believe that their security depends on the Hashemite king who has reiterated that he desires to "protect the existence and identity of Arab Christians" in the kingdom. He wants to modernize society step by step and is trying to implement measures that are beneficial to religious minorities including the monitoring of Islamic preaching and the general activities of Salafists, who are a significant threat to future stability.

External Links - WWL 2019: Persecution Dynamics

- Context: UNHCR
<https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/64568.pdf>
- Context: second highest number of refugees per 1,000 inhabitants
<https://reliefweb.int/report/jordan/unhcr-jordan-factsheet-february-2018>
- Gender specific persecution: International Religious Freedom Report for 2017
<https://www.state.gov/j/drl/rls/irf/religiousfreedom/index.htm#wrapper>
- Gender specific persecution: loses custody
<http://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/originals/2015/12/jordan-law-christians-convert-muslims-women-%20divorce.html#ixzz4sLuorUwD>
- Gender specific persecution: primary breadwinners
https://www.researchgate.net/publication/302581523_Attitudes_towards_Gender_Roles_in_Jordan%20
- Persecution of other religious minorities: Mandaean
<http://www.mandaeunion.org/>

- Persecution of other religious minorities: International Religious Freedom Report for 2017
<https://www.state.gov/j/drl/rls/irf/religiousfreedom/index.htm#wrapper>
- Future outlook: Economist Intelligence Unit (EIU)
<http://country.eiu.com/jordan>
- Future outlook: Arab Youth Survey
<http://www.arabyouthsurvey.com/findings.html>

Additional Reports and Articles

WWR in-depth reports

A selection of in-depth reports is available at: <http://opendoorsanalytical.org/reports/> (password: freedom).

Open Doors article(s) from the region

A selection of articles is available at: <http://opendoorsanalytical.org/articles/> (password freedom).

World Watch Monitor news articles

Use the country search function at: <https://www.worldwatchmonitor.org/>

Recent country developments

Use the country search function at: <http://opendoorsanalytical.org/> (password: freedom).