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## Jordan: Country Dossier

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**OpenDoors**

Serving persecuted **Christians** worldwide

Open Doors International / World Watch Research

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# Introduction

## World Watch List 2020

Rank	Country	Private life	Family life	Community life	National life	Church life	Violence	Total Score WWL 2020	Total Score WWL 2019	Total Score WWL 2018	Total Score WWL 2017	Total Score WWL 2016
1	North Korea	16.7	16.7	16.7	16.7	16.7	11.1	94	94	94	92	92
2	Afghanistan	16.7	16.7	16.7	16.7	16.7	10.0	93	94	93	89	88
3	Somalia	16.5	16.7	16.6	16.6	16.5	9.4	92	91	91	91	87
4	Libya	15.3	15.5	15.8	16.0	16.4	11.3	90	87	86	78	79
5	Pakistan	14.0	13.9	15.0	14.9	13.7	16.7	88	87	86	88	87
6	Eritrea	14.5	14.9	15.9	15.9	15.4	10.9	87	86	86	82	89
7	Sudan	14.2	14.6	14.5	15.7	16.1	10.4	85	87	87	87	84
8	Yemen	16.6	16.4	16.4	16.7	16.7	2.6	85	86	85	85	78
9	Iran	14.1	14.3	14.1	15.8	16.5	10.4	85	85	85	85	83
10	India	12.9	13.0	13.5	15.0	13.5	14.8	83	83	81	73	68
11	Syria	13.5	14.2	13.0	13.9	14.4	12.6	82	82	76	86	87
12	Nigeria	12.2	11.9	13.5	12.8	13.0	16.7	80	80	77	78	78
13	Saudi Arabia	15.1	14.9	14.1	15.5	16.5	2.4	79	77	79	76	76
14	Maldives	15.4	15.6	14.0	15.9	16.6	0.7	78	78	78	76	76
15	Iraq	14.0	14.6	13.9	14.5	13.6	5.6	76	79	86	86	90
16	Egypt	12.1	13.1	10.7	13.2	10.5	16.1	76	76	70	65	64
17	Algeria	13.5	14.3	10.4	12.8	13.2	9.3	73	70	58	58	56
18	Uzbekistan	15.1	12.9	14.1	12.2	15.7	3.0	73	74	73	71	70
19	Myanmar	11.8	11.9	13.5	12.5	12.2	10.7	73	71	65	62	62
20	Laos	12.8	9.9	14.1	14.4	14.9	5.6	72	71	67	64	58
21	Vietnam	12.3	8.5	12.9	13.6	14.5	9.8	72	70	69	71	66
22	Turkmenistan	14.5	11.2	13.8	13.3	15.7	1.9	70	69	68	67	66
23	China	11.6	8.4	11.6	12.8	15.1	10.2	70	65	57	57	57
24	Mauritania	13.9	14.0	13.0	13.7	13.4	0.2	68	67	57	55	50
25	Central African Republic	10.1	9.1	13.1	9.8	10.2	15.6	68	70	61	58	59
26	Morocco	12.4	13.3	10.8	11.7	14.1	4.1	66	63	51	49	47
27	Qatar	13.6	13.4	10.8	12.2	14.1	2.2	66	62	63	66	65
28	Burkina Faso	9.4	9.7	10.2	9.4	11.8	15.6	66	48	-	-	-
29	Mali	9.2	8.2	12.8	10.0	11.7	13.7	66	68	59	59	55
30	Sri Lanka	11.5	9.0	11.0	10.9	9.6	13.1	65	58	57	55	53
31	Tajikistan	13.9	12.3	11.9	12.4	13.1	1.1	65	65	65	58	58
32	Nepal	12.4	10.8	9.9	12.1	12.2	7.0	64	64	64	53	53
33	Jordan	13.1	14.1	10.7	11.7	12.5	1.7	64	65	66	63	59
34	Tunisia	12.0	12.8	10.3	10.8	12.3	5.4	64	63	62	61	58
35	Kazakhstan	13.2	11.5	10.7	12.4	14.0	1.7	64	63	63	56	55

36	Turkey	12.6	11.8	10.7	13.3	11.3	3.7	63	66	62	57	55
37	Brunei	13.8	14.3	10.7	10.3	13.5	0.6	63	63	64	64	61
38	Bangladesh	11.1	9.9	12.7	11.1	8.9	9.3	63	58	58	63	57
39	Ethiopia	10.0	9.2	10.6	10.8	10.4	11.9	63	65	62	64	67
40	Malaysia	12.1	14.6	12.7	12.0	9.6	1.5	62	60	65	60	58
41	Colombia	8.9	7.8	11.9	9.8	8.9	15.0	62	58	56	53	55
42	Oman	12.7	13.1	10.0	11.5	12.7	2.0	62	59	57	53	53
43	Kuwait	13.2	13.1	9.9	11.5	13.4	0.7	62	60	61	57	56
44	Kenya	11.7	10.5	10.9	8.3	10.9	9.1	61	61	62	68	68
45	Bhutan	12.8	10.9	11.8	11.6	13.9	0.0	61	64	62	61	56
46	Russian Federation	12.2	8.3	10.7	10.4	12.1	6.9	60	60	51	46	48
47	United Arab Emirates	12.9	13.0	9.5	11.1	12.6	1.1	60	58	58	55	55
48	Cameroon	8.8	7.2	11.6	7.0	10.4	15.0	60	54	38	-	45
49	Indonesia	10.9	11.1	11.6	10.2	9.5	6.5	60	65	59	55	55
50	Niger	9.4	9.5	13.3	7.2	11.1	9.3	60	52	45	47	53
51	Palestinian Territories	12.2	13.0	9.2	10.2	11.9	3.1	60	57	60	64	62
52	Mexico	8.4	6.8	12.2	10.6	10.0	11.5	60	61	59	57	56
53	Azerbaijan	13.0	10.0	9.3	11.1	12.4	1.5	57	57	57	52	57
54	Comoros	11.7	11.5	9.1	9.9	13.9	0.9	57	56	56	56	56
55	Kyrgyzstan	12.9	10.3	11.1	9.4	11.9	1.1	57	56	54	48	46
56	Djibouti	12.3	12.3	10.3	10.0	11.2	0.2	56	56	56	57	58
57	Democratic Republic of the Congo	5.6	6.7	10.6	7.4	10.4	15.6	56	55	33	-	53
58	Chad	11.5	8.2	10.2	9.6	10.3	5.9	56	48	40	-	51
59	Bahrain	12.1	12.3	9.1	10.1	10.5	0.9	55	55	57	54	54
60	Tanzania	9.3	10.8	10.3	8.6	8.7	7.0	55	52	53	59	57
61	Cuba	9.6	5.6	9.5	11.8	12.0	3.5	52	49	49	47	42
62	Uganda	8.1	4.6	6.7	6.7	9.1	13.0	48	47	46	53	45
63	Burundi	5.1	5.8	9.7	9.2	9.6	8.7	48	43	-	-	-
64	Guinea	10.3	7.5	8.3	7.0	8.1	3.7	45	46	-	-	-
65	South Sudan	5.7	1.5	7.0	6.3	7.8	15.6	44	44	-	-	-
66	Mozambique	6.9	4.6	7.1	5.2	8.0	11.7	43	43	-	-	-
67	Gambia	8.3	8.2	8.7	8.3	8.8	1.1	43	43	-	-	-
68	Angola	6.4	3.6	7.0	8.7	10.4	6.7	43	42	-	-	-
69	Venezuela	3.8	4.4	10.6	9.3	9.5	4.8	42	41	34	-	-
70	Ivory Coast	9.8	8.6	8.2	5.5	6.6	3.5	42	43	-	-	-
71	Rwanda	5.3	4.4	6.7	7.8	10.1	7.2	42	41	-	-	-
72	Nicaragua	5.8	4.2	8.5	9.8	9.0	4.1	41	41	-	-	-
73	Togo	8.6	6.7	8.5	7.1	8.4	1.1	41	42	-	-	-

## Copyright notice

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## Brief note on sources and definitions

This country report is a collation of data and analysis based around Open Doors World Watch List (WWL) and includes statistical information on world religions, Christian denominations and people groups prepared by the World Christian Database (WCD). 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”. The WWL 2020 reporting period was 1 November 2018 - 31 October 2019.

The definition of persecution used in WWL analysis is: “Any hostility experienced as a result of one’s identification with Christ. This can include hostile attitudes, words and actions towards Christians”.

This broad definition includes (but is not limited to) restrictions, pressure, discrimination, opposition, disinformation, injustice, intimidation, mistreatment, marginalization, oppression, intolerance, infringement, violation, ostracism, hostilities, harassment, abuse, violence, ethnic cleansing and genocide.

The latest update of WWL Methodology including appendices can be found on the [World Watch List Documentation](#) page of the Open Doors Analytical website (password: freedom).

# WWL 2020: Persecution summary / Jordan

## Brief country details

The number of Christians listed below is an Open Doors (OD) estimate:

Pop 2019	Christians	Chr%
Jordan		
10,070,000	180,000	OD estimate

Data source: Johnson T M and Zurlo G A, eds., *World Christian Database* (Leiden/Boston: Brill, accessed April 2019).

World Watch List Jordan	Points	WWL Rank
WWL 2020	64	33
WWL 2019	65	31
WWL 2018	66	21
WWL 2017	63	27
WWL 2016	59	27

Scores and ranks are shown above whenever the country scored 41 points or more in the WWL 2016-2020 reporting periods.

## Dominant persecution engines and drivers

Jordan: Main Persecution engines	Main drivers
Clan and ethnic antagonism	Ethnic group leaders, One's own (extended) family
Islamic oppression	Ethnic group leaders, Non-Christian religious leaders, One's own (extended) family, Government officials , Citizens (people from the broader society), including mobs

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

## Brief description of persecution situation

Most Christians in Jordan belong to Orthodox or Roman Catholic churches. 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.

Compared to Christians living in other Middle Eastern countries, most Christians in Jordan live a safe and stable life. King Abdallah and his state apparatus appear to tolerate and to a certain degree support recognized churches. Unrecognized churches can face harassment by public authorities, particularly those that actively evangelize. Although Jordan likes to present itself as a beacon of tolerance and interfaith dialogue, radicalized Sunnis and returning jihadists from Syria and Iraq continue to pose a threat to the Christian community.

Jordan has a disproportionately high number of Salafi Muslims who are potentially a danger to Christians and other non-conforming groups living in the country. The state continues to control mosque sermons and requires preachers to abstain from talking about politics to avoid social and political unrest in an attempt to rein in radicalism.

### Specific examples of persecution in the reporting period

Most violent incidents targeted converts, although Christians active in evangelism were also affected. Details cannot be provided for security reasons.

- Several Christians had to leave their homes and find another location either inside or outside the country for faith-related reasons.
- A Christian graveyard was vandalized and desecrated. The incident was understood to be meant to intimidate Christians, who are also concerned that the authorities have shown little effort to find and bring to justice those behind this criminal act.



# WWL 2020: Keys to understanding / Jordan

## Link for general background information

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

## Recent 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. According to the [CIA World Factbook](#) King Abdallah II "has implemented modest political reforms, including the passage of a new electoral law in early 2016 and an effort to devolve some authority to governorate- and municipal-level councils following subnational elections in 2017."

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 violent Islamic militants, causing the threat of Islamist attacks to increase in Jordan as well. Also, the large numbers of refugees hosted in Jordan are an additional pressure on the country's already strained economy and society.

Though generally stable in terms of security, Jordan has faced three Islamic militant attacks in 2016 and 2018 (see "Security situation" below). Human rights advocates have accused Jordan's rulers of using the threat of terrorism to restrict the rights of citizens and parliament. Jordanian authorities were also accused of violating rights to free expression and assembly when anti-corruption protests led them to increasingly target political and anti-corruption activists. Particularly in March 2019, the authorities detained more than a dozen people belonging to the "hirak shabaabi" (youth movement) coalition, as well as journalists, for public criticism of Jordanian leaders and policies.

## Political and legal 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 royal family seem keen on promoting Jordan as a modern, multi-religious country (also 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.

## Religious landscape

Tension has increased between moderate and radical Islamic elements in Jordanian society. 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. (NB: This killing was not included in the WWL 2017 analysis as this was not a specific anti-Christian attack.)

The table below is based solely on WCD 2019 statistics and has not been recalculated to take into consideration the higher OD estimate for the number of Christians in the country.

Religious Context: Jordan	Numbers	%
Christians	180,000 (OD estimate)	--
Muslim	9,663,000	96.0
Hindu	0	0.0
Buddhist	0	0.0
Ethnoreligionist	0	0.0
Jewish	0	0.0
Bahai	21,600	0.2
Atheist	39,600	0.4

Agnostic	211,000	2.1
Other	3,900	0.0

*Data source: Johnson T M and Zurlo G A, eds., World Christian Database (Leiden/Boston: Brill, accessed April 2019). OTHER includes Chinese folk, New religionist, Sikh, Spiritist, Taoist, Confucianist, Jain, Shintoist, Zoroastrian.*

According to WCD 2019 statistics, around 96% of the population are Muslim of which the majority is Sunni. 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 numbers of Agnostics and Atheists in Jordan.

## 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 the Gulf states (e.g. Saudi Arabia among others) 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 (excluding Yemen).

[Other economic risks](#) facing the government are high rates of poverty, unemployment and under-employment, budget and current account deficits and government debt.

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

## Social and cultural landscape

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 some uncertainty about how Jordanian citizens' national identity should be defined. Also, the high number of refugees (mostly from Syria) has led to economic, political and religious pressure and is a potential destabilizing factor.

## Technological landscape

According to the [Jordanian ICT Ministry](#), around 90% of Jordanian households use a smartphone, 89% have an Internet subscription and in 33% possess a PC or laptop. The Internet is mostly accessed through smartphones or tablets (98.5%). The rate of active social media usage and penetration in 2019 was 58% according to the [Arab Youth Survey](#).

In their 2018 report on Internet freedom, Human Rights Watch assessed the situation as follows: "Internet freedom improved in Jordan due to improved access, the effective use of digital activism, and a slight reduction in the number of blocked news sites in comparison to last year. During the coverage period, several activists were arrested for criticizing public officials or calling for reform. ... Legal restrictions on internet and digital media freedom are principally based on the Cybercrime Law and the Press and Publication Law (PPL). Under article 11 of the Cybercrime Law, online defamation may result in a fine and prison sentence of at least three months. The Law Interpretation Bureau ruled that the law could also be applied to journalists for articles that appeared on their outlets' websites, thereby contravening journalistic protections outlined in the PPL. In September 2017, the government proposed a series of new amendments to the Cybercrime Law to explicitly cover hate speech. The changes could further impede free expression online given the term's vague definition and its propensity to be misused to prosecute reporters and social media users for nonviolent political, social, or religious speech and satire. ... Authorities have increasingly used extralegal means to censor critical coverage in recent years. Licensed news sites have been blocked in murky circumstances and without transparent legal authorization. Self-censorship remains pervasive, particularly regarding the royal family and Islam, although digital activism continued to expand over the past year."

## Security situation

Although 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 targeting 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 the Islamic State group (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

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 with other Islamic militants from all over the world. Many are wondering what will happen when they return. With the ongoing war in Syria, Jordan has found itself being used as a transit country for Islamic militants, causing the threat of Islamist attack to increase in Jordan as well.

## Trends analysis

### 1) 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.

### 2) Jordan's economic difficulties could lead to serious social and political unrest

According to the [Economist Intelligence Unit \(EIU\)](#), King Abdullah II is expected to remain in power for the next few years and "will crack down on any dissent, supported by his loyal armed forces. The prime minister, Omar al-Razzaz, will pursue some fiscal reforms, but will be wary of stoking public unrest. The presence of Syrian refugees will put pressure on the public finances. Jordan will remain dependent on foreign support, and the fiscal position will remain deep in deficit. Real GDP growth will be weak in 2020 and then pick up in 2021-24, but unemployment 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 in 2018 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.

### 3) The king is trying to introduce measures that are beneficial to religious minorities

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 2020: Keys to understanding

- Link for general background information: <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-middle-east-14631981>. - <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-middle-east-14631981>
- Recent history: CIA World Factbook - <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/jo.html>
- Political and legal 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](http://www.fides.org/en/news/60829-ASIA_JORDAN_Elections_Archbishop_Lahham_all_Christian_candidates_in_Islamist_lists_rejected)
- Economic landscape: Other economic risks - <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/jo.html>

- Economic landscape: one-third - <http://time.com/110595/pope-francis-holy-land-visit-spotlight-on-christians-in-jordan/>
- Technological landscape: Jordanian ICT Ministry - <http://jordantimes.com/news/local/ict-internet-usage-among-jordanian-households-increases-%E2%80%94-ministry>
- Technological landscape: Arab Youth Survey - [https://www.arbyouthsurvey.com/about\\_the\\_survey.html](https://www.arbyouthsurvey.com/about_the_survey.html)
- Trends analysis: Economist Intelligence Unit (EIU) - <http://country.eiu.com/jordan>

## WWL 2020: Church information / Jordan

### Christian origins

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 - according to Islamic tradition - Muslim armies overran the area in 636 AD.

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.”

### Church spectrum today

Officially recognized churches include the Greek Orthodox church, the Syriac Orthodox, Armenian Apostolic and Coptic Orthodox Churches, the Greek, Maronite, and Roman Catholic Churches, the Syriac Church of the East, and the Anglican, Presbyterian, Lutheran and Seventh Day Adventist Churches. Other denominations have lesser legal status (mostly as ‘societies’), including the Baptist, Free Evangelical, Nazarene, Assemblies of God and Alliance churches.

Although the following table does not take into consideration the OD estimate for the total number of Christians in the country, the percentages at least give an indication of the denominational spread.

Church networks: Jordan	Christians	%
Orthodox	80,300	61.8
Catholic	29,300	22.5
Protestant	11,700	9.0
Independent	9,400	7.2
Unaffiliated	1,800	1.4

Doubly-affiliated Christians	-2,100	-1.6
<b>Total</b>	See OD estimate	100.3
<i>(Any deviation from the total number of Christians stated above is due to the rounding of decimals)</i>		
Evangelical movement	8,900	6.8
Renewalist movement	11,000	8.5

Data source: Johnson T M and Zurlo G A, eds., *World Christian Database* (Leiden/Boston: Brill, accessed April 2019).

*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.*

## External Links - WWL 2020: Church information

- Christian origins: JMECA - <https://jmeca.org.uk/christianity-middle-east/history-christianity-middle-east-north-africa>



# WWL 2020: Persecution Dynamics / Jordan

## Reporting period

1 November 2018 – 31 October 2019

## Position on World Watch List (WWL)

With a score of 64 points, Jordan ranked 33 in WWL 2020. This was one point less and two positions lower than in WWL 2019. The average pressure for Christians in Jordan did not change much (increasing from 12.3 in WWL 2019 to 12.4 points) but there was a more visible fall in the score for violence (1.7 in WWL 2020 compared to 3.0 in WWL 2019). 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
Clan and ethnic antagonism	CEA	Strong
Christian denominational protectionism	CDP	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	Very weak

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

### 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 ostracize them or even commit acts of violence against them.

Christians from all categories of Christian community can be subject to government monitoring - or even to Sharia law if a Christian 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 IS ideology, which puts Christians at greater risk.

**Clan and ethnic antagonism (Strong):**

This Persecution engine describes how the continuing influence of age-old norms and values shaped in a tribal context are enforced and can come in the form of traditional religion. In the case of Jordan this is Islam and it 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**

<b>Drivers of Persecution: Jordan</b>	<b>IO</b>	<b>RN</b>	<b>CEA</b>	<b>CDP</b>	<b>CPCO</b>	<b>SI</b>	<b>DPA</b>	<b>OCC</b>
	STRONG	-	STRONG	WEAK	-	-	WEAK	VERY 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	Weak	-	-	-	-	-	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.

#### Drivers of Islamic oppression:

- **Ethnic group leaders (Strong):** Ethnic leaders put pressure on converts from Islam to preserve the honor of the tribe.
- **Non-Christian religious leaders (Strong):** 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. Indigenous Christian communities were particularly alarmed at the unchecked hate-speech propagated on social media by an influential Islamic leader.
- **Extended family (Strong):** Family hostility is commonly understood to be the major pressure faced by Christians from a Muslim background. A significant aspect of this pressure is the fear of provoking violent reactions from immediate or extended family. Muslim converts to Christianity are likely to face ostracism and discrimination from their families - and perhaps even violence, including killing. In some cases, converts' families informed government officials who then put pressure on converts to return to Islam.
- **Government officials (Medium):** The government seems to be genuine in its affirmation of Jordan's traditional churches and in seeking to ensure the security of all churches to avoid social unrest. Nevertheless, government policies and staff are the cause of much pressure on Christians from all categories of Christian community, but in particular on converts from Islam. This pressure is exerted formally through the personal status court system.
- **Citizens (Medium):** Ordinary citizens can act to suppress Christian witness to non-Christians (affecting converts from Islam in particular), especially in more Islamically conservative areas such as in the south. Social media offers an additional platform for targeting Christians with hate-speech.

#### Drivers of Clan and ethnic antagonism:

- **Extended family and ethnic group leaders (Very strong):** *Clan and 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 leaders. 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 attempt to influence converts into renouncing 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.

## Geographical hotspots of persecution

Not applicable to Jordan.

## Christian communities and how they are affected

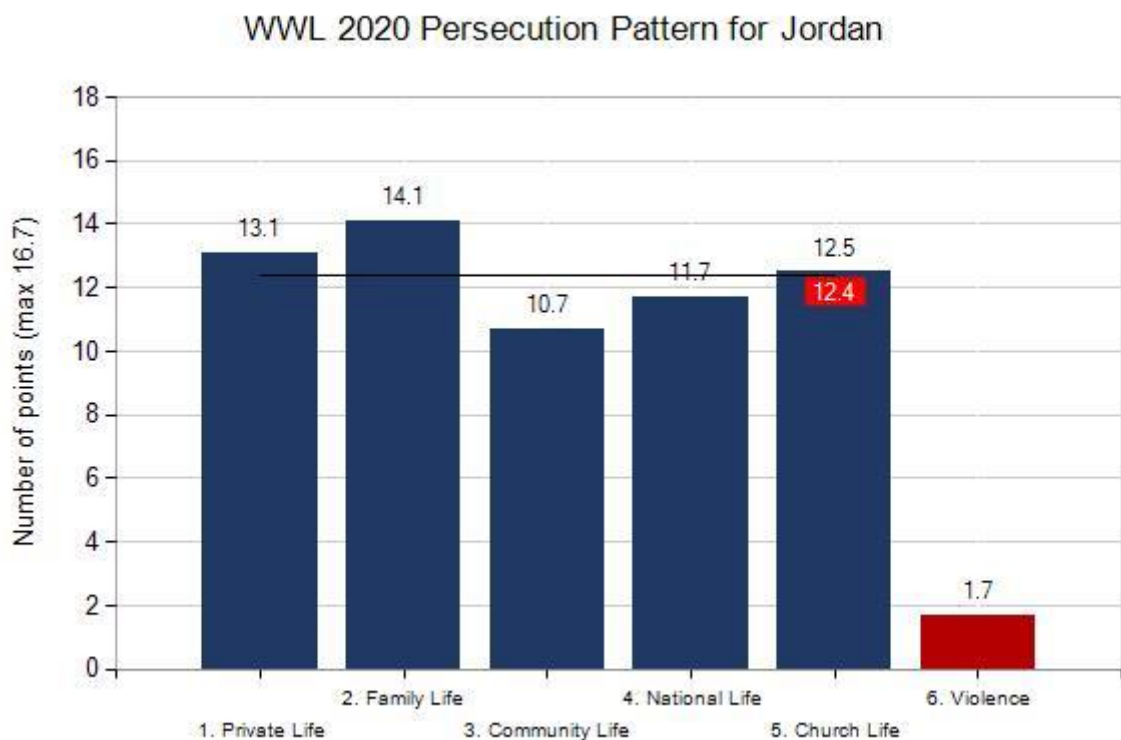
**Communities of expatriate Christians:** Expatriate Christians are present in Jordan, but not as a group involuntarily isolated from other categories of Christian communities. This category is therefore not included in WWL scoring and analysis.

**Historical Christian communities:** This category makes up the largest group of Christians in Jordan, most of whom belong to 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 a convert's new faith is discovered, he/she 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 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.

## The Persecution pattern



The WWL 2020 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 (12.4 points) increased very slightly from the WWL 2019 level of 12.3 points.

- Pressure is at very high levels in all *spheres of life* with the exception of *Family Life*, where it reached an extreme level and especially affects converts to Christianity. Apart from *Family Life*, scores are highest in the *Private* and *Church spheres of life*. This is typical for a situation in which *Islamic oppression* is the main persecution engine combined with *Clan and ethnic antagonism*.
- The score for violence decreased from 3.0 in WWL 2019 to 1.7 in WWL 2020.

## Pressure in the 5 spheres of life

In each of the five spheres of life discussed below, details are shown from four of the highest scoring block questions, with those items scoring highest listed first. In some cases, an additional paragraph per sphere is included to give further information deemed important. (To see how individual questions are scored on a scale 0 – 4 points, please see the “WWL Scoring example” in the WWL Methodology, available at: <http://opendoorsanalytical.org/world-watch-list-documentation/>, password: freedom).

### Private sphere:

- ***Conversion has been opposed, forbidden, or punishable, including conversion from one type of Christianity to another (Block 1.1 / Score: 3.5 points):*** Though not criminalized, leaving Islam is not allowed. Anyone who converts and is vocal about this can be referred to the Islamic Sharia Court where he/she would be found "without religion" and considered incapacitated. All his/her contracts would then be broken (including marriage) and he/she would be worse off than someone who is cognitively incapacitated. Converts are frequently targeted for monitoring and may face harassment from the secret police and be blacklisted. They are then prevented from taking up employment in the armed forces or posts in the government or in building companies, for instance. On a societal level, converts are likely to be ostracized and face hostility from family or tribe members; they might also face violence and police interrogation. Particularly women are prone to house arrest, forced marriages and other measures intended to restore "family honor". Also, Christians who change from attending a historical church to join a non-traditional Evangelical church are also likely to face significant pressure from family and community.
- ***It has been risky for Christians to discuss their faith with those other than immediate family members (extended family, others) (Block 1.8 / Score: 3.5 points):*** This would particularly represent a risk for Christians from a Muslim background. Since their main source of pressure is from family and community, most converts exercise extreme caution when discussing issues of faith with family and community members as this can lead to violent reactions. Also, if non-convert Christians speak about Christian faith to Muslims or adherents of other religions, this can easily be understood as an attempt at evangelizing (which is forbidden in Jordan) and a threat to national security. They may be reported to the intelligence service and blacklisted.

- ***It has been risky for Christians to reveal their faith in written forms of personal expression (including expressions in blogs and Facebook etc.) (Block 1.4 / Score: 3.25 points):*** If a Christian from a Muslim background was caught e.g. accessing Christian online content by a disapproving member of the family or community, this could lead to negative repercussions. Negative repercussions are especially likely if a convert writes about or otherwise confirms her/his decision to become a Christian. This would effectively be self-incrimination, providing evidence of their own apostasy. Their conversion could also be used as evidence against them by family, society and officials.
- ***It has been risky for Christians to meet with other Christians (Block 1.9 / Score: 3.25 points):*** This primarily applies to Christians from a Muslim background where they belong to families who limit their interaction with others due to suspicion or disapproval. Such interaction would be seen as betrayal of their ancestral faith, a betrayal of the family, and a betrayal of the tribe.

#### Family sphere:

- ***Christian couples have been hindered in adopting children or serving as foster parents because of their faith (Block 2.6 / Score: 3.75 points):*** Adoption remains illegal as per Islamic doctrine. Foster care is complicated and it is close to impossible for Christians to foster a Muslim child. Several years ago, a Christian ministry tried to open a Christian orphanage and they were denied a license on similar grounds.
- ***Christian spouses of non-Christians have been excluded from the right or opportunity to claim custody of the children in divorce cases (Block 2.12 / Score: 3.75 points):*** This pressure is not uncommon among Christians from a Muslim background who have a non-Christian spouse and/or whose wider family members exercise significant control. Since those who leave Islam lose custody of any children according to Islamic law, some have had their right of custody forcibly removed by the Sharia personal status courts.
- ***Babies and children of Christians have automatically been registered under the state or majority religion (Block 2.1/ Score: 3.5 points):*** Children of converts from Islam are automatically registered as Muslim. Also, children born to a Christian mother and a Muslim father are considered Muslim by birth. Since the parents cannot change their faith on public documents, their children will be registered as Muslim with a range of difficulties for the child in daily life (including participation in Islamic classes at school etc.).
- ***Christians have lost their inheritance rights because of their conversion to Christianity or to another church denomination (if the person was already a Christian) (Block 2.13/ Score: 3.5 points):*** Based on Shariah law, Christians with a Muslim background will lose their inheritance rights upon conversion, especially if their wider family members exercise significant control.

#### Community sphere:

- ***Christians have been discriminated against in public or private employment for faith-related reasons (Block 3.10 / Score: 3.5 points):*** This primarily applies to converts from Islam whose Christian faith has become known. Cases have been reported in which Christians have repeatedly lost or been denied the opportunity of employment because of their conversion.

In some sectors this pressure can also apply to non-convert Christians, especially in relation to obtaining promotion to senior positions. Security clearance can also be problematic. There were accounts of Christians getting denied internships, employment, and even medical school placements in military hospitals. Promotion in the government and armed forces has a pro-Muslim bias, although nine parliamentary seats are reserved for Christians and Christians have been selected to work as ministers on a regular basis.

- ***Christians have been pressured by their community to renounce their faith (Block 3.7/ Score: 3.25 points):*** Pressure can be expected on converts from Islam whose Christian faith has become known, especially where the local community is made up of conservative Muslim families. This is in keeping with provisions in Islamic law relating to apostasy which hold that an apostate must be offered the opportunity to recant. For other Christians, there is also a "well intended" call to come to Islam.
- ***Christians have been monitored by their local communities or by private groups (this includes reporting to police, being shadowed, telephone lines listened to, emails read/censored, etc.) (Block 3.2/ Score: 3.25 points):*** Monitoring is especially intense for known converts from Islam. For non-convert Christians, informal monitoring is routinely undertaken (often using community informers), particularly affecting those active in evangelism. However, Jordan's General Intelligence Department carries out surveillance operations with a broad range of objectives which means that monitoring is by no means exclusively applied to Christian communities. Monitoring includes phone-calls and social media usage.
- ***Christians have been harassed, threatened or obstructed in their daily lives for faith-related reasons (e.g. for not meeting majority religion or traditional dress codes, beard codes etc.) (Block 3.1/ Score: 3.25 points):*** This applies primarily and with greatest impact to converts from Islam whose Christian faith has become known. Although non-convert Christian communities generally enjoy respect and good standing, low levels of harassment are encountered from time to time from more conservative elements within Jordanian society, especially in rural areas. Since most Jordanian women wear the *hijab*, Christian women are more obvious in public settings and are often viewed as dressing inappropriately and can thus become subjected to harassment. In society there is generally less tolerance for Christians and, in the business world, suppliers might choose to stop selling to someone known to be a Christian. Also, Muslim customers prefer to buy from Muslim shopkeepers.

#### National sphere:

- ***The Constitution or comparable national or state law limits freedom of religion as formulated in Article 18 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (Block 4.1 / Score: 3.75 points):*** The Constitution of Jordan establishes Islam as the state religion and Sharia as the principal source of legislation. In that context, officially leaving Islam to convert to another religion is illegal (as is non-Islamic evangelism). This goes against Article 18 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. While the Constitution affirms the principle of non-discrimination (including discrimination on the basis of religion) and states that the free exercise of worship and religious rites are to be safeguarded, these must be consistent with 'public order and morality'.



Recognized non-Muslim communities are given freedom to govern most personal status issues according to their own rites through a religious tribunal system, although some communities, many of them non-traditional church groups, do not currently have the level of legal status required to operate their own tribunals.

- **Officials at any level have refused to recognize an individual's conversion as recorded in government administration systems, identity cards, etc. (Block 4.2 / Score: 3.5 points):** There is no legal mechanism for changing official religious affiliation from Islam to another (or no) religion, based on the apostasy provisions of Islamic law. Although apostasy is not criminalized, personal status courts can impose severe sanctions. It should be noted that, although religious affiliation no longer appears on National ID cards, this remains on official files as personal status court jurisdiction is determined by religious affiliation. No Christian from a Muslim background is known to have applied to change official religious affiliation from Islam in the WWL 2020 reporting period. To make such an application would expose them to the authorities and so be potentially dangerous. Some have pursued this in the legal systems and failed.
- **Christians have been barred from public office, or has promotion been hindered for faith-related reasons (Block 4.6 / Score: 3.5 points):** Non-convert Christian communities (especially the historical church denominations) generally enjoy good standing in Jordanian society and in some aspects of public life. The nine quota seats reserved for Christians in the Parliament is disproportionately high given current demographics, so technically Christians are over-represented. However, while there are occasional exceptions, it is unusual for Christians to rise to very high positions, particularly in public life and especially for Christians from a Palestinian background. Christians cannot be prime minister or senior staff of the armed forces. Christians with a Muslim background are likely to face obstruction in employment, including in public roles, if their faith becomes known.
- **Those who caused harm to Christians have deliberately been left unpunished (Block 4.14 / Score: 3.5 points):** For converts from Islam who are victims of crimes on account of their faith, it is very likely that the perpetrators of the crimes (including so-called 'honor crimes') are likely to enjoy a high degree of impunity. Within non-convert Christian communities, frustration has also been expressed about the degree of impunity given to perpetrators of violence or hate-speech.

#### Church sphere:

- **Churches have been hindered from openly integrating converts (Block 5.7 / Score: 3.75 points):** The incorporation of converts into recognized church congregations is an extremely sensitive subject. Routine surveillance by state intelligence officers means that most church leaders would be wary of openly welcoming and accepting Muslim enquirers or converts, fearing negative repercussions, including possible closure of the church. Also, they would be suspicious of people openly claiming to be converts, since this could be a trap.



- ***It has been difficult to get registration or legal status for churches at any level of government (Block 5.2 / Score: 3.5 points):*** For a list of the officially recognized churches in Jordan see the section entitled "Church spectrum today" above. Besides the official churches, there are other denominations which have a lower legal status and are mostly classed as 'societies'; these include the Baptist, Free Evangelical, Nazarene, Assemblies of God and Alliance churches. Longstanding applications by the Evangelical Synod (on behalf of five Evangelical denominations) and by the Nazarene Church (as a single entity) to be granted full official status (through being added to the list in the appendix to the ecclesiastical courts legislation which specifies the churches that can operate personal status courts) have consistently been resisted and remain outstanding.
- ***Churches have been hindered from organizing Christian activities outside church buildings (Block 5.5 / Score: 3.5 points):*** Any form of worship or Christian ministry activity outside designated church property must be undertaken with discretion to avoid provoking hostile reactions and accusations of proselytism.
- ***Openly selling or distributing Bibles and other Christian materials have been hindered (Block 5.14 / Score: 3.5 points):*** The sale of Bibles and the distribution of Christian materials is only permitted in designated places, such as within recognized churches and adjacent church book stores but not in ordinary markets or bookshops. The distribution of Christian materials must not be perceived to constitute proselytism and most Christians exercise self-censorship in this regard. Many historical churches tend to refrain from distributing Bibles publicly for fear of stirring up social unrest and facing hostility.

## Violence

*The following table is based on reported cases as much as possible. Since many incidents go unreported, the numbers below must be understood as being minimum figures. In cases where it has been impossible to count exactly, a symbolic round figure (10, 100 or 1000) is given. (A symbolic number of 10 could in reality even be 100 or more but the real number is uncertain. A symbolic number of 100 could go well over 1000 but the real number is uncertain. A symbolic number of 1000 could go well over 10,000 but, again, the real number is uncertain.) In cases where it is clear that (many) more Christians are affected, but a concrete number could be given according to the number of incidents reported, the number given has to be understood as being an absolutely minimum figure.*

Jordan	Reporting period	Christians killed	Christians attacked	Christians arrested	Churches attacked	Christian-owned houses and shops attacked
WWL 2020	01 Nov 2018 - 31 Oct 2019	0	5	0	1	0
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.*

Details of places and dates cannot be provided for security reasons.

- **Christians attacked:** At least five Christians were allegedly physically abused or suffered death threats, mostly from family members.
- **Churches or Christian buildings attacked:** A Christian graveyard was vandalized and desecrated. Local Christians understood this as an act of intimidation.

## 5 Year trends

The following three charts show the levels of pressure and violence targeting Christians in Jordan over the last five reporting periods.

### Chart 1:

The table below shows how the overall score for pressure on Christians has become stable in the last four reporting periods at a very high level of 12.3/12.4 points.

WWL 2016 - WWL 2020 Persecution Pattern history: Jordan	Average pressure over 5 Spheres of life
2020	12.4
2019	12.3
2018	12.4
2017	12.3
2016	11.4

### Chart 2:

Pressure in the *Private* and *Church spheres of life* rose gradually until WWL 2018 and is now slightly declining. In contrast, pressure in the *Family sphere of life* increased greatly during WWL 2020. The moderate increase in pressure in the *National sphere of life* has continued to grow since WWL 2016. The score for pressure in the *Community sphere of life* started to decline considerably in WWL 2020 after some years of slow growth.

WWL 2016 - WWL 2020 Persecution Pattern for Jordan (Spheres of life)

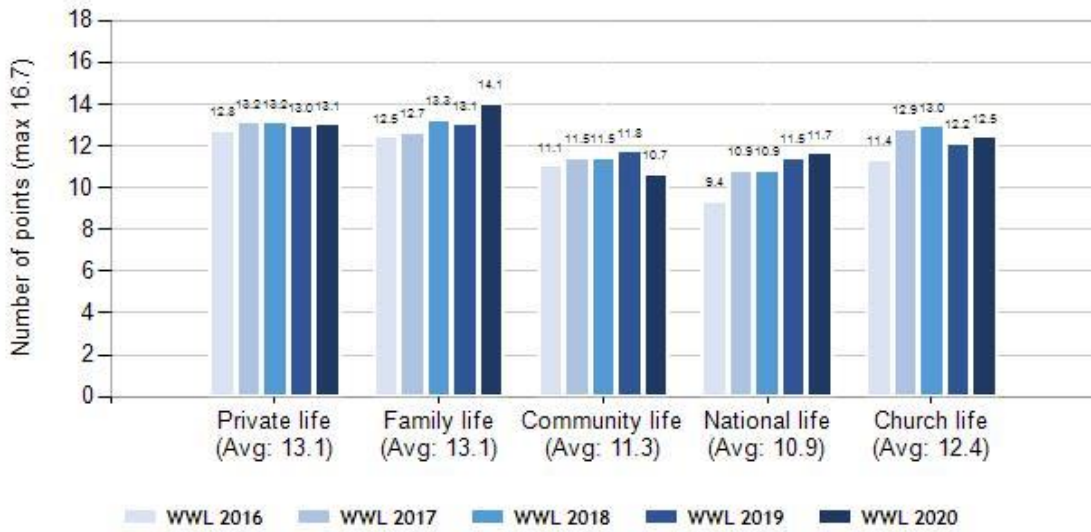
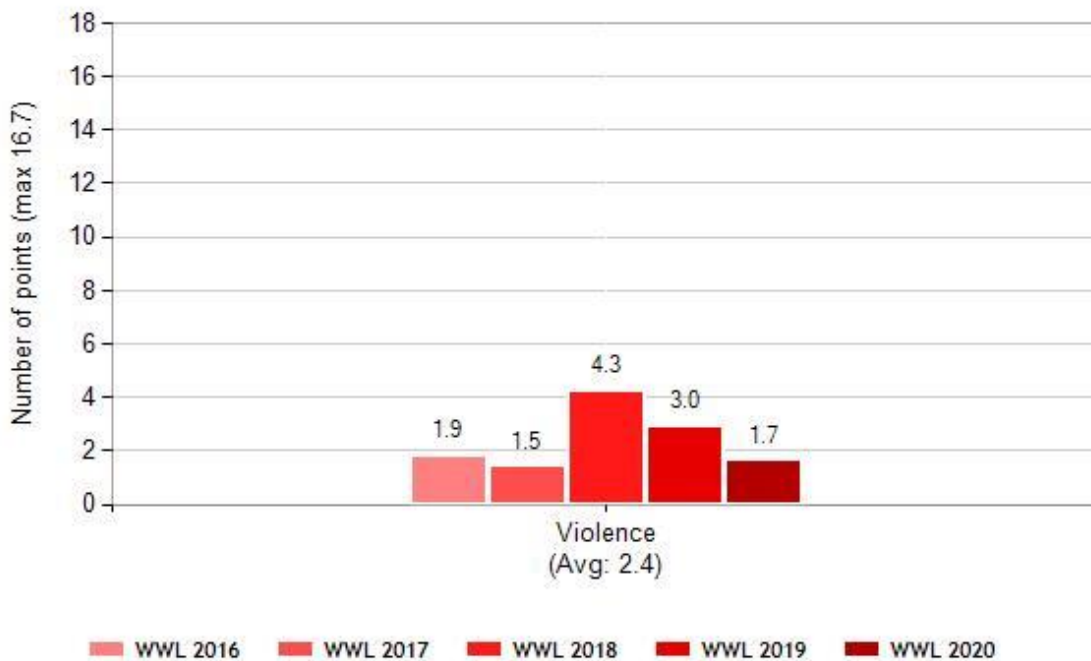


Chart 3:

The violence scores have varied over the years and only reached a high level once (in WWL 2018) after a steady decrease in the period WWL 2016 - WWL 2017. The score fell again in WWL 2019 and further declined to the low score of 1.7 points, which is comparable to the scores for WWL 2016 and WWL 2017.

WWL 2016 - WWL 2020 Persecution Pattern for Jordan (Violence)



## Gender profile of persecution

### Female Pressure Points:

- ***Denied custody of children***
- ***Denied legal ability to marry Christian spouse***
- ***Forced marriage***
- ***Forced divorce***
- ***Incarceration by family***
- ***Travel bans/restrictions on movement***
- ***Violence – death***
- ***Violence – physical***

Of all the categories of Christian community in Jordan, 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 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'. This can extend to honor killings, which are a risk for converts in rural areas.

Female converts from Islam cannot officially marry male Christians. Even if they marry abroad, the state does not recognize such marriages. 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.

The recognized churches in Jordan are currently working on the [revision of personal status laws](#), to improve the position of women when it comes to divorce and inheritance rights. Jordanian culture is highly conservative; political debates about the personal status law and failed attempts to raise the minimum marriage age (of 15 years for girls) have highlighted this. These laws also facilitate the house arrest and forced marriage to which young female converts are particularly vulnerable.

According to the US State Department's [International Religious Freedom Report for 2018](#): "Any member of society may file an apostasy complaint against such individuals before the 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 Pressure Points:**

- ***Denied legal ability to marry Christian spouse***
- ***Economic harassment via work/job/business***
- ***Forced out of home/expulsion***
- ***Forced to flee town/country***

Job discrimination affects all Christians, especially those working in the public sector. General unemployment rates for all men in Jordan [rose to 17.1%](#) in the 3rd quarter of 2019, increasing the pressure on any men who have lost their jobs because of their Christian faith. 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, marriages between Muslim women and 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.

Christian men who are converts to Christianity face further difficulties in a honor-shame culture when their families reject them and expel them from their homes because of their choice of religion.

The result is that such difficulties all too often prompt them to emigrate in what could appear to be an economic migration but is actually rooted in the situation caused by their Christian faith. 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 Mandaean. 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 can be banned, although most Bahai adherents are unofficially allowed to practice their religion. Marriage certificates of Bahais are also not recognized by the Department of Civil Status and Passports. An example of the difficulties facing Bahai was 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.

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.

## Future outlook for the church

The outlook for Christians as 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, unemployment is anticipated to remain high during the next few years, according to the [Economist Intelligence Unit's](#) forecast for Jordan. A high unemployment rate, especially for youth, is fertile soil for recruitment by radical Islamic groups. Also, with the war in Syria apparently nearing its end, battle-hardened Jordanian Islamic 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 not likely to decrease in influence in the future.

**Clan and ethnic antagonism:** This Persecution engine is not currently facing any major changes. However, according to the 2018 [Arab Youth Survey](#), 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 youth and religious leaders continues, it could weaken *Clan and ethnic antagonism* in the long run. On the other hand, this persecution engine especially affects converts from Islam. If the number of converts and those Muslims interested in the Christian faith is growing, this could lead to an increased number of incidents of persecution against converts in the future.

## External Links - WWL 2020: Persecution Dynamics

- Gender profile of persecution: revision of personal status laws - <http://http://www.fides.org/en/news/65839>

- Gender profile of persecution: International Religious Freedom Report for 2018 - <https://www.state.gov/reports/2018-report-on-international-religious-freedom/jordan/>
- Gender profile of persecution: loses custody - <http://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/originals/2015/12/jordan-law-christians-convert-muslims-women-%20divorce.html#ixzz4sLuorUwD>
- Gender profile of persecution: rose to 17.1% - <http://https://tradingeconomics.com/jordan/unemployment-rate>
- Gender profile of persecution: primary breadwinners - [https://www.researchgate.net/publication/302581523\\_Attitudes\\_towards\\_Gender\\_Roles\\_in\\_Jordan%20](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/302581523_Attitudes_towards_Gender_Roles_in_Jordan%20)
- Persecution of other religious minorities: International Religious Freedom Report for 2017 - <https://www.state.gov/j/drl/rls/irf/religiousfreedom/index.htm#wrapper>
- Persecution of other religious minorities: Mandaean - <http://www.mandaeanunion.org/>
- Future outlook for the church: Economist Intelligence Unit's - <https://country.eiu.com/jordan>
- Future outlook for the church: 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).

At the time of publication there were no items specifically for Jordan.

### World Watch Monitor news articles

Articles are available at: <https://www.worldwatchmonitor.org/countries/jordan>.

### Recent country developments

Up-to-date articles are available at: <http://opendoorsanalytical.org/?s=Jordan>  
(password: freedom).