

World
Watch
Research

Uzbekistan: Country Dossier

December 2019



OpenDoors

Serving persecuted **Christians** worldwide

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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 / Uzbekistan

Brief country details

Pop 2019	Christians	Chr%
Uzbekistan		
32,807,000	349,000	1.1

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

World Watch List Uzbekistan	Points	WWL Rank
WWL 2020	73	18
WWL 2019	74	17
WWL 2018	73	16
WWL 2017	71	16
WWL 2016	70	15

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

Uzbekistan: Main Persecution engines	Main drivers
Dictatorial paranoia	Government officials , Political parties, Citizens (people from the broader society), including mobs
Islamic oppression	One's own (extended) family, Ethnic group leaders, Non-Christian religious leaders, Citizens (people from the broader society), including mobs, Government officials

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

Brief description of persecution situation

All categories of Christian communities are experiencing some form of persecution. Russian Orthodox churches experience the least problems from the government as they do not usually attempt to make contact with the Uzbek population. It is the indigenous Christians with a Muslim background who are bearing the brunt of persecution both at the hands of the state and from family, friends and community. Where churches have not been registered, Christians suffer repeatedly from police raids, threats, arrests and fines.

Specific examples of persecution in the reporting period

- On 9 February 2019 an Uzbek woman was killed by her husband because she had recently become a Christian. "Umida", a Muslim-background Christian, was attempting to flee the country to seek refuge in Istanbul with Christian friends, when her husband confronted her at Tashkent Airport and slit her throat. (Source: [Barnabas Fund](#), 21 February 2019)

- On 25 November 2018, 20 plain clothes officials (rising later to 40 officials) raided Baptists meeting for Sunday morning worship in Yashnobod District in Uzbekistan's capital Tashkent. For the first known time in such raids, members of the army - the National Guard - took part in the raid. Other agencies participating in the raid included the State Security Service (SSS) secret police, the Justice Ministry, and Yashnobod District Police. Fourteen of those at the meeting were forcibly put into a bus and taken to Yashnobod police station. They were put under pressure to sign statements that they had participated in "an unauthorised meeting". When they refused to do this, their personal details were recorded, and they were interrogated for nine and a half hours until 9 pm that night. Officials also photographed and recorded the details of each individual who had attended the meeting for worship, including names, addresses, and workplaces. On 27 November police followed this up by visiting the home of one of those present for a "passport check" and also demanded to see ownership documents of the home. (Source: [Forum 18](#), 29 November 2018)
- On 19 November 2018 Police in Pap in Uzbekistan's eastern Namangan Region raided a group of Protestants meeting in a home for a meal and to read the Bible. Police searched the flat without a search warrant and confiscated legally-bought literature including Bibles. Officers arrested all eight Protestants and took them to Pap police station, where they were questioned until 3am the next morning. Police forced most of the Protestants to sign statements written by the police and said that they might be prosecuted for possession of the religious literature they had legally bought. (Source: [Forum 18](#), 23 November 2018)

External Links - WWL 2020: Persecution summary

- Specific examples of persecution in the reporting period: Barnabas Fund - <https://barnabasfund.org/en/news/uzbek-woman-killed-by-husband-because-of-her-christian-faith>
- Specific examples of persecution in the reporting period: Forum 18 - http://www.forum18.org/archive.php?article_id=2433
- Specific examples of persecution in the reporting period: Forum 18 - http://www.forum18.org/archive.php?article_id=2431

WWL 2020: Keys to understanding / Uzbekistan

Link for general background information

See BBC country profile: <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-asia-16218112>.

Recent history

On 20 June 1990, Uzbekistan declared its state sovereignty and on 31 August 1991 its independence. 1 September was proclaimed the National Independence Day. Presidential elections were held for the first time in Uzbekistan on 29 December 1991, and Islam Karimov was elected as the first president of Uzbekistan. He stayed in power until his death on 2 September 2016. Under Karimov religious freedom was increasingly restricted.

In the presidential elections on 4 December 2016, Uzbekistan's interim president, Shavkat Mirziyoyev, became the second president of Uzbekistan. While the new government opened up towards its neighbors and Russia, the restrictions on religious freedom have not changed as yet.

On 28 November 2018 the US Secretary of State placed Uzbekistan on a Special Watch List for having engaged in or tolerated severe violations of religious freedom. Uzbekistan had been designated as a Country of Particular Concern from 2006-2017 and was now moved to a Special Watch List after the Secretary determined the government had made substantial progress in improving respect for religious freedom. This is only partly true. Officially registered churches like the Russian Orthodox Church, the Roman Catholic Church and the registered Baptist Church indeed noted slight improvements. But for other Christians, especially for Christians with a Muslim background, the situation has not changed significantly and Christians have continued to be targets for raids, arrests and oppression.

Political and legal landscape

Uzbekistan has a constitution and parliament, but in fact all power lies in the hands of the president. All opposition movements and independent media are essentially banned.

In the decades of President Karimov's rule (1991-2016), Uzbekistan withdrew from a number of regional bodies, such as the Eurasian Economic Union, the Commonwealth of Independent States and the Economic Cooperation Organization. Uzbekistan was wary of too much influence from Russia, but the developments in Ukraine since 2014 have made the regime realize that it cannot act as independently as it would like. Russia wrote off a large debt of Uzbekistan in December 2014, but such measures of course have consequences.

The relationship with neighboring republics Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan used to be tense. There have been ethnic clashes between Uzbeks, Tajiks and Kyrgyz in the past few years, but the main reason for political tension is the water supply. Uzbekistan depends highly on water from the Syr-Darya and Amu-Darya rivers for its cotton harvest. These rivers enter Uzbekistan via Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan and both countries are considering making use of the rivers for energy by constructing dams. Uzbekistan fears this will severely damage its main crop and has threatened with war should water be diverted away from Uzbekistan. However, since Mirziyoyev took over as president, relations with neighboring states have improved.

Uzbekistan’s Constitution provides for freedom of religion or belief and separation of government and religion. Constitutional rights may not encroach on lawful interests, rights and freedoms of other citizens, the state, or society. The law allows for restricting religious activities when necessary to maintain national security, the social order, or morality. The law requires religious groups to register with the government and declares religious activities of unregistered groups to be illegal. It bans a number of religious groups as “extremist.” The law restricts public speech or proselytism, censors religious literature, and limits home possession of religious materials of all types and format. Raids on meetings (of unregistered groups), legal and illegal searches, and the seizure from private residences of outlawed religious material (including cell phones and laptops claimed to contain religious material) resulted in a combination of fines, corrective labor, and prison sentences. (Source: [IRF 2017](#)) President Mirziyoyev has simply continued the harsh oppression of religious freedom that Christians experienced under Karimov. There have been minor changes occurred regarding religious freedom since President Mirziyoyev came to power in December 2016 (see above).

Religious landscape

Uzbekistan is the most populated country in Central Asia and the main religion in the country is Islam. According to the World Christian Database (WCD 2019) 95.8% of the population is Muslim – predominantly Sunni. However, it would be wrong to call Uzbekistan a Muslim country. 70 years of atheism during the Soviet era have left a deep influence. The government (the heirs of the atheist Soviets) is staunchly secular and keeps Islam under tight control, with citizens following Islamic culture rather than adhering strictly to Islamic teachings.

People in Uzbekistan still revere their glorious Islamic past when the universities and madrassas of Samarkand and Bukhara were famous for their scientific research and attracted people from all over the world. Their three Muslim kingdoms (khanates) once controlled huge tracts of Central Asia (a much greater geographical area than the present Uzbekistan).

The small Christian minority of just 1.1% of the population is weak due to much division and little cooperation between the various denominations. Unfortunately there are but few exceptions to this and it plays into the hands of the government.

Religious Context: Uzbekistan	Numbers	%
Christians	349,000	1.1
Muslim	31,417,000	95.8
Hindu	810	0.0
Buddhist	45,100	0.1

Ethnoreligionist	62,300	0.2
Jewish	4,200	0.0
Bahai	880	0.0
Atheist	214,000	0.7
Agnostic	713,000	2.2
Other	1,630	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.

Economic landscape

The Uzbek economy is characterized by high unemployment, poverty and inflation rates. As it is impossible to provide jobs for all people within Uzbekistan itself, there is massive labor migration - approximately 7-8 million male Uzbek citizens are working abroad, mainly in Russia and Kazakhstan. The money they send home (some US \$ 5.67 billion per year) make up 16.3% of Uzbekistan's annual income. Migrant workers are vulnerable but there are also positive effects, since Uzbeks working abroad are much more open to outreach by Christians.

The Uzbek economy is dependent on the growth of cotton. Everything is sacrificed to increase the yield of this crop. Teachers, students, civil servants, schoolchildren, prisoners and many others are forced to help bring in the harvest each year. The use of pesticides is enormous and has affected public health negatively. Water is being drained from the two major rivers (Amy Darya and Syr Darya) to irrigate the cotton fields in such quantities that there are regular water shortages which has led to a constant sinking of Aral Sea water levels.

Uzbekistan holds a strategic position in the East-West connection between China and the West. A new version of the Silk Road is under construction, which is being pushed by both China and Turkey. This means that there are huge construction activities in progress building highways for trucks and tracks for trains.

Social and cultural landscape

Uzbeks make up the majority (80%) of the total population. Other ethnic groups include Russians 2%, Tajiks 5% (official estimate and disputed), Kazakhs 3%, Karakalpaks 2.5% and Tatars 1.5% (1996 estimates from the [CIA World Factbook](#)). There is some controversy about the percentage of the Tajik population. While official figures from the government put the number at 5%, some Western experts estimate the number to be more in the region of 20%–30%.

Corruption is endemic at all levels of administration and government. The power groups within the regime have no interest in losing their opportunity of making money. The changes in government since December 2016 do not seem to have brought any action against this. Another social phenomenon is that more than one quarter of the Uzbek population is younger than fourteen. This so-called youth-bulge puts massive pressure on the government to create new job opportunities every year. It also means that Uzbekistan will be facing significant changes in the not too distant future as the majority of the population will no longer have any affinities with the Soviet past.

Thanks to the former Soviet educational system practically every citizen in Uzbekistan is literate. This means that people who are interested in the Christian message can receive materials in their own language. The restrictions imposed by the government (all materials must be approved and only registered groups may be active) mean that most distribution must be done unofficially.

Technological landscape

Nearly two-thirds of the population has a mobile phone and almost the whole country has network coverage. The Uzbek government expelled the Russian cell phone company MTS in July 2012, which left the people of Uzbekistan no alternative but to make use of one of the state companies. Only after Uzbekistan had sought Russian assistance in the fight against Islamic militants in 2015 was MTS allowed to return to Uzbekistan.

All media, including the Internet, are under strict state control and are censored. There are 14 state-owned broadcasters - 10 TV and 4 radio - that provide service to virtually the entire country. Furthermore, there are about 20 privately owned TV stations, which are checked by local officials and which broadcast to local markets. Privately owned TV stations are required to lease transmitters from the government-owned Republic TV and Radio Industry Corporation. In 2013, the government closed TV and radio broadcasters affiliated with the National Association of Electronic Mass Media of Uzbekistan, a government-sponsored NGO for private media broadcasting. (Source: [CIA World Factbook](#))

The only alternative to the state-run media are satellite dishes. These enable people to receive programs produced outside state control. Demand and prices for satellite dishes has skyrocketed since 2010.

Security situation

Although Islam in Uzbekistan is generally of a traditional and moderate character, the country has experienced attacks in the past from radical Islamic groups such as the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan (IMU) and the Islamic Jihad Union, both connected with the al-Qaeda network. So far, the government has been able to expel them from the country. The Fergana Valley in Uzbekistan's south-east is known for the presence of radical Muslims.

Many young Uzbeks are inspired by the activities of radical Islamic groups like the Islamic State group (IS). It is estimated that hundreds of Uzbeks were fighting with IS in Syria and Iraq. In September 2014 an IS flag was displayed from a bridge in Tashkent. Thousands of suspected members of these groups have been imprisoned and the Uzbek government has sought Russian assistance to combat the militant threat.

Electronic scanning at the borders and airports is making the importation of Christian materials more difficult than in previous years. In-country printing is strictly controlled by the regime. This means approval is needed (and not often granted), as well as registration of the body asking for it. Surveillance by (secret) police is strict.

Trends analysis

Despite the change in leadership since the death of President Islam Karimov on 2 September 2016, very little has changed for Christians in Uzbekistan. All existing restrictions in the country's legislation have remained intact - and so has the surveillance and interference of various state agents (secret services, police etc.). Meetings of Christians have continued to be raided, religious materials have continued to be confiscated and Christians have continued to be detained for periods of up to 10-15 days.

However, the policy of the previous president to follow an independent course seems to have been abandoned. Uzbekistan is trying to improve its relationship with its neighbors and President Mirziyoyev has paid visits to practically all other Central Asian countries and Russia. Despite this, Uzbekistan will most likely remain a very tightly governed country with many freedoms (political, religious, media etc.) continuing to be restricted.

External Links - WWL 2020: Keys to understanding

- Link for general background information: <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-asia-16218112>. - <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-asia-16218112>
- Political and legal landscape: IRF 2017 - <http://www.state.gov/j/drl/rls/irf/religiousfreedom/index.htm?year=2017&dclid=281040>
- Social and cultural landscape: CIA World Factbook - <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/uz.html>
- Technological landscape: CIA World Factbook - <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/uz.html>

WWL 2020: Church information / Uzbekistan

Christian origins

The first Christians to enter Central Asia (including Uzbekistan) were Nestorian missionaries in the 4th century. The Nestorian church experienced a period of decline starting in the 14th century, when the Mongol rulers of the region finally decided to convert to Islam. Thereafter, [Nestorian Christianity](#) was largely confined to Upper Mesopotamia and the Malabar Coast of India.

The current presence of Christians in Uzbekistan dates from the 19th century. In 1867 the Russian Empire expanded its territory into Central Asia through a number of military campaigns, bringing in ethnic Russians who mostly belonged to the Russian Orthodox Church. During the Second World War, Joseph Stalin ordered the deportation of large numbers of ethnic Germans, Ukrainians, Poles and Koreans from Russia to Central Asia, fearing they would otherwise present a security risk. With them, other Christian denominations found their way into Uzbekistan. After Uzbekistan became an independent country in 1991, non-traditional Christian communities became active among the Uzbek population.

Church spectrum today

Church networks: Uzbekistan	Christians	%
Orthodox	206,000	59.0
Catholic	3,500	1.0
Protestant	39,400	11.3
Independent	87,300	25.0
Unaffiliated	13,000	3.7
Doubly-affiliated Christians	0	0.0
Total	349,200	100.1
<i>(Any deviation from the total number of Christians stated above is due to the rounding of decimals)</i>		
Evangelical movement	13,800	4.0
Renewalist movement	84,500	24.2

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: Nestorian Christianity -
https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Church_of_the_East

WWL 2020: Persecution Dynamics / Uzbekistan

Reporting period

1 November 2018 – 31 October 2019

Position on World Watch List (WWL)

With a score of 73 points, Uzbekistan ranked 18 in WWL 2020. This is a 1 point decrease in comparison to WWL 2019, when Uzbekistan ranked 17.

Although the score is fractionally lower than in WWL 2019, the situation for Christians in Uzbekistan remains serious with extreme levels of pressure in the *Private, Community and Church spheres of life*. It is still too early to see whether there are any changes in policy under President Mirziyoyev which will affect Christians.

Persecution engines

Persecution engines: Uzbekistan	Abbreviation	Level of influence
Islamic oppression	IO	Strong
Religious nationalism	RN	Not at all
Clan and ethnic antagonism	CEA	Not at all
Christian denominational protectionism	CDP	Very weak
Communist and post - Communist oppression	CPCO	Not at all
Secular intolerance	SI	Not at all
Dictatorial paranoia	DPA	Strong
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.

Dictatorial paranoia (Strong):

No religious activities beyond state-run and state-controlled institutions are allowed. Protestants are frequently branded as "extremists" for their practice of religion outside state-sanctioned structures. It is very common that members of Protestant churches are regarded as followers of an alien sect that has only one goal, namely to spy on and destroy the current political system. From this perspective they need to be not only controlled, but if necessary, even eradicated. Security forces have stepped up monitoring measures in order to find "extremists". This has also affected Christians and churches.

Islamic oppression (Strong):

If indigenous citizens (who are Muslim) convert to Christianity, they are likely to experience pressure and occasionally physical violence from their families, friends and local community to force them to return to their former faith. Some converts are locked up by their families for long periods, beaten and may eventually be expelled from their communities. Local mullahs preach against them, so adding pressure. As a result, most converts will do their best to hide their faith – they become so-called secret believers.

Drivers of persecution

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

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

Drivers of Dictatorial paranoia:

- **Government officials (Very strong):** The law prohibits all unregistered religious activity and religious propagation in any form. Religious literature can only be used by registered religious associations within its registration area. Protestant groups are regarded as suspect and are forbidden from distributing Christian material. Many Christians have been arrested for trying to convert local Muslims. Non-Orthodox Christians are known to be detained, fined and beaten for simply possessing Christian materials or simply participating in illegal religious groups (which most non-Orthodox groups are deemed). The authorities frequently confiscate (or steal) Christian property and possessions. A clever way of prohibiting proselytization is that it is illegal to preach in Uzbek; one can only do it in Russian. However, Russian is only spoken by the older generation, making church growth more difficult.
- **Political parties (Strong):** Few parties are allowed in Uzbekistan but the ruling party which controls the government of President Mirziyoyev by definition participates in persecution insofar as much of the persecution is government-sanctioned.
- **Normal citizens (Medium) - especially at the local level:** Mobs with support from the government have been known to interrupt Christian religious festivals and celebrations.

Drivers of Islamic oppression:

- **Extended family (Very strong):** Pressure from family, friends and community are extremely high on converts, especially in the countryside. This can lead to threats, beatings, house arrest or ostracism.
- **Ethnic leaders (Strong):** With the support of the authorities, leaders of [Mahalla community groups](#) have been given government authorization to prohibit Christian missionary activity and carry out various forms of persecution.
- **Non-Christian religious leaders (Strong):** Most Muslim clerics are open in their hostility towards non-Orthodox Christians - particularly towards converts from Islam.
- **Normal citizens (Strong):** Converts to Christianity are treated severely by the local community.
- **Government officials (Medium):** At the community level there is a link between local officials and Muslim pressure. Often, active Muslims and local officials know each other. Therefore, the pressure on converts is stronger at the community level than at the state level (where officials claim to be secular).

Geographical hotspots of persecution

The level of persecution by government officials in Uzbekistan is the same all over the country. Pressure from family, friends and community on converts is stronger outside the urban areas, especially in the Fergana Valley.

Christian communities and how they are affected

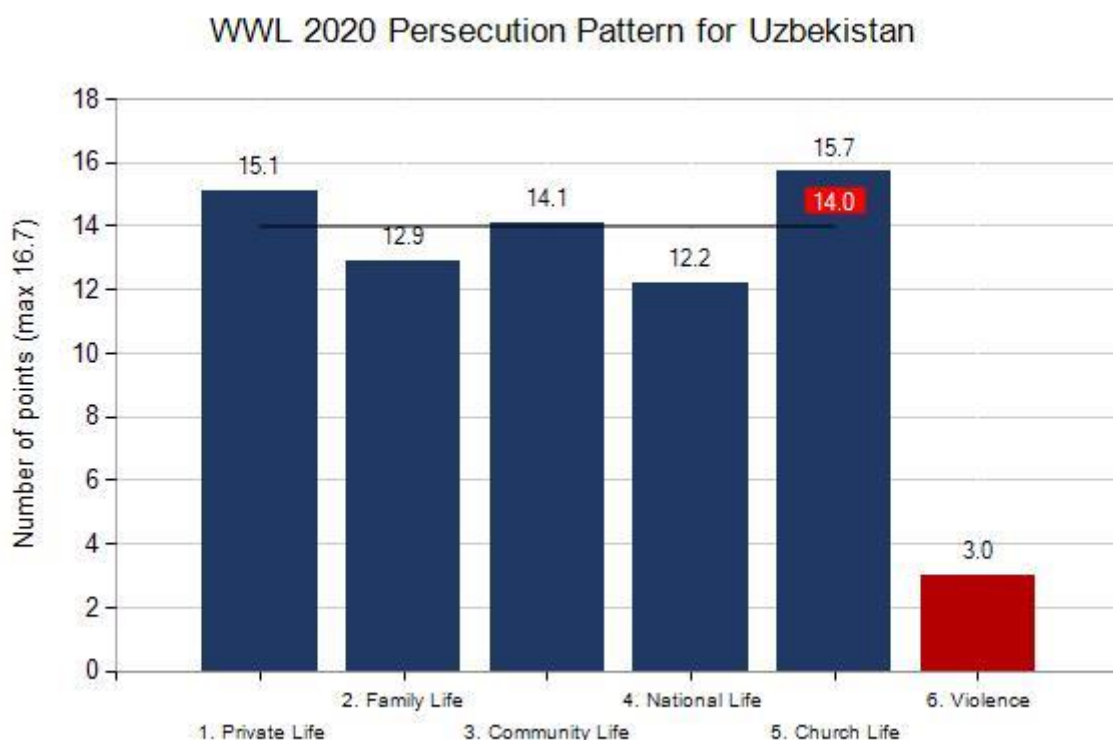
Communities of expatriate Christians: Expatriate Christians in Uzbekistan are not forced into isolation. This category is therefore not included for scoring in the WWL analysis.

Historical Christian communities: The Russian Orthodox Church has accustomed itself to the limitations provided by the government and is therefore more or less left undisturbed. Services may be monitored, but they are conducted unhindered and members can meet without fear of arrest. However, the printing or importing of Christian materials is restricted.

Converts to Christianity: Christian converts from a Muslim background bear the brunt of the persecution in Uzbekistan. Apart from suffering at the hands of the state, they are also under strong pressure from family, friends and community. For them, the latter are by far the more powerful.

Non-traditional Christian communities: After converts, this category of Christians is the second most persecuted group - and especially when the churches have not been registered. Baptist, Evangelical and Pentecostal groups suffer from raids, threats, arrests and fines.

The Persecution pattern



The WWL 2020 Persecution pattern for Uzbekistan shows:

- The average pressure on Christians is at an extremely high level (14.0 points), decreasing from 14.1 in WWL 2019. There was a very slight decrease in the scores for National and Church spheres of life, indicating a decreased impact of the Persecution engine Dictatorial paranoia.
- Two *spheres of life* show very high levels of pressure (*Family and National life*), and three have extremely high scores (*Community, Private and Church spheres* - in ascending order). The fact that the highest score is still in the *Church sphere* reflects the extreme pressure the state is continuing to impose through many restrictions.
- The score for violence decreased from 3.2 in WWL 2019 to 3.0 in WWL 2020, due mainly to fewer violent incidents being reported.

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:

- ***It has been risky for Christians to speak about their faith with others than immediate family (Block 1.8 / Score: 4 points):*** It is already very risky for a convert to talk about his new faith with members of the family and the latter will make it virtually impossible for the convert to do this with non-family members. The shame and honor culture will make sure that the family will try to prevent this at all costs. Also, the state views such behavior as an attempt at evangelism and will oppose it by arresting these Christians.
- ***It has been dangerous to privately own or keep Christian materials (Block 1.3 / Score: 3.75 points):*** In the case of converts, persecution comes most of all from their family or community if they find Christian materials. Christian materials are considered as hard evidence for conversion. Discovery can lead to fierce reactions. Pressure from the government is also high since it is illegal to possess religious materials. Even a Bible must bear a stamp indicating that it was published in Uzbekistan. It is illegal to have more than one Bible per person. It is illegal to carry a Bible outside your home. It is illegal to read the Bible or any religious literature in public. A family was fined for a Christian poem found on a piece of paper in the bed of a boy who was memorizing it for Sunday school.
- ***It has been risky for Christians to reveal their faith (Block 1.4 / Score: 3.75 points):*** From the Muslim perspective, this has two sides to it: First, converts who reveal their new faith will instantly draw the ire of their family, friends and community; and secondly, other Christians will immediately be suspected of having carried out evangelism. As the state opposes evangelism, Christians must be very careful in this respect. Any Christian who reveals his/her faith will immediately draw the attention of the state and its agents.
- ***It has been risky for Christians to meet with other Christians (Block 1.9 / Score: 3.75 points):*** Converts run the risk of drawing unwanted attention from their social environment when they meet with other Christians. Many Uzbek Christians only meet one to one as it is less dangerous and often change places where they meet. Worship must be silent or very quiet. Due to the very high level of surveillance in Uzbekistan all non-Orthodox Christians are very careful in this respect. Religious activities can officially only occur in buildings of registered churches. No such activities are allowed to happen in (underground) house-churches, for instance.

All answers to questions in the Private sphere scored 3 points or more. Christians in Uzbekistan have also experienced difficulties in conducting acts of worship, converting to Christianity, speaking about their faith with their family, and in being isolated. This indicates that life in the Private sphere in Uzbekistan, especially for converts, is difficult.

Family sphere:

- ***Christian children have been pressured into attending anti-Christian teaching (Block 2.8 / Score: 4 points):*** The Muslim environment (family, friends, community) will pressurize children of converts in particular to receive Islamic teaching - sometimes even against the wishes of their parents. Anti-religious propaganda at schools and universities happens on a regular basis / for instance, in the form of lectures. Attendance at such lectures is compulsory.

- **Christian baptisms have been hindered (Block 2.4 / Score: 3.75 points):** The pressure on converts not to go through with baptism is immense, as it is often regarded as the ultimate sign that one has left Islam. The Muslim environment will go to extremes to prevent baptisms of converts. The state will oppose baptisms of converts as they fear this could lead to tensions and problems in the community. Also, the state will oppose unregistered groups in all their activities, including baptisms. Baptisms are not, however, legally forbidden.
- **Christian couples have been hindered in adopting children (Block 2.6 / Score: 3.75 points):** Muslim families and communities will block the adoption of an ethnic Central Asian child if it is known that the adopting person is a convert or other Christian. The government imposes no restrictions regarding adoption. However, a case was recorded of a boy being taken back to the orphanage after reporting to a social worker that his adopted parents had been teaching him about the Christian faith.
- **Christian parents have been hindered in raising their children according to their Christian faith (Block 2.7 / Score 3.75 points):** The extended family of converts will try to bring the children of converts back to Islam and raise them accordingly. The school system also contributes to this since - as Uzbekistan is officially a secular state - no religious teaching is provided in schools. The only place for parents to provide Christian teaching is at home, since all youthwork for churches has been made illegal. Parents must be careful that they do not draw too much attention from both family and the local authorities by doing this.

Community sphere:

- **Christians have been monitored by their local communities or by private groups (Block 3.2 / Score: 3.75 points):** Converts are constantly monitored by family and the surrounding community. At the community level, Muslims also monitor the activities of Protestant groups closely and report on their activities to the local police. Government agents at all levels are constantly monitoring Christian activities - all but the Russian Orthodox Church are on their radar.
- **Christians have been fined for faith-related reasons (Block 3.12 / Score: 3.75 points):** Fines are issued by state agents for an endless list of possible offences, e.g. for meeting illegally, for the possession of religious literature, for having Christian songs on their smartphones, etc. Even technically legal groups (such as Baptists) face this kind of persecution.
- **Christians have been interrogated by local police or vigilantes (Block 3.13 / Score: 3.75 points):** Known converts will be harassed and interrogated (sometimes harshly) by their family and community. When meetings or houses are raided (which is a common thing), all those present face interrogation. Known converts will be required to go to the local police station from time to time, to keep them intimidated. They can also be stopped in the street, searched and interrogated.
- **Christians have been harassed, threatened or obstructed in their daily lives (Block 3.1 / Score: 3.5 points):** Converts are threatened by family, friends and community (including the local imam). Local Muslim communities will also harass Protestants who they accuse of evangelism. Evangelicals face harassment, threats, discrimination etc. from the authorities.

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: 4 points):*** The law requires religious groups to register with the government and declares religious activities of unregistered groups to be illegal. The law restricts public speech or proselytism, censors religious literature, and limits home possession of religious materials of all types and formats. Raids on private residences of Christians have resulted in a combination of fines, corrective labor and prison sentences. (Source: [International Religious Freedom Report for 2017 Uzbekistan](#)).
- ***Christian civil society organizations or political parties have been hindered (Block 4.9 / Score: 4 points):*** There are no Christian political parties or Christian civil society organizations in Uzbekistan. The fact of applying for registration could be sufficient to be arrested by the police on the grounds of trying to establish an extremist organization. Any Christian organization will be regarded as an attempt to convert people to Christianity and will be blocked.
- ***Christians have been hindered in expressing their views and opinions in public (Block 4.8 / Score 3.75 points):*** This is very dangerous for non-Orthodox Christians and will cause threats of reprisals from both the government and the local Uzbek community. The level of persecution is so intense that converts and non-Orthodox Christians must keep their religion effectively secret, with any public expressions of their religion to be perceived by the government as proselytization. Russian Orthodox Christians normally do not practice speaking about their religious beliefs in public. Muslims consider Christian preaching/evangelism undesirable and will obstruct this with all means available.
- ***Those who have caused harm to Christians have deliberately been left unpunished (Block 4.14 / Score: 3.75 points):*** Authorities who persecute Christians do so with the backing of the law and generally interpret their enforcement of the law as they deem acceptable. The authorities can generally expect to act with utter impunity. Harm caused to converts and Christians accused of evangelism by the Muslim community (mostly at the local and provincial level) will also happen with impunity.

Christians in Uzbekistan have also experienced restrictions in travelling. Media reporting on Christians has been biased or incorrect. International monitoring when Christians has to stand trial was hindered.

Church sphere:

- ***Churches have been hindered from organizing Christian activities outside church buildings (Block 5.5 / Score: 4 points):*** Any Christian activities are prohibited outside the buildings of registered churches. The Muslim community would anyway immediately oppose any such action and report it to the authorities.
- ***Work among youth has been restricted (Block 5.6 / Score: 4 points):*** Religious work among youth and minors - including Sunday schools and youth summer camps - are prohibited. The Muslim community will report any sign of youth events and summer camps taking place to the authorities.

- **Churches have been hindered in openly integrating converts (Block 5.7 / Score: 4 points):** The criminal code punishes proselytism - the attempt to convert persons belonging to a certain religion to another religion - with up to three years in prison (Source: [International Religious Freedom Report for 2017 Uzbekistan](#)). It is therefore dangerous for churches to openly accept converts. Conversion is vehemently opposed - especially by Muslims in rural areas.
- **Churches have been hindered in importing Christian materials from abroad (Block 5.13 / Score: 4 points):** All religious materials must be approved by the government. Very few items were able to pass this hurdle. Even the Bible Society is having problems doing this. Muslims will report to the authorities if they discover Christians are importing religious materials illegally.

Christians in Uzbekistan have also experienced problems in printing, distributing and/or selling religious materials. There have been incidents where religious materials were confiscated.

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.

Uzbekistan	Reporting period	Christians killed	Christians attacked	Christians arrested	Churches attacked	Christian-owned houses and shops attacked
WWL 2020	01 Nov 2018 - 31 Oct 2019	1	11	15	0	2
WWL 2019	01 Nov 2017 - 31 Oct 2018	0	40	40	0	13
WWL 2018	01 Nov 2016 - 31 Oct 2017	0	21	25	0	10

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.

For the WWL 2020 reporting period:

- **Christians killed:** An Uzbek woman was killed by her husband on 9 February 2019 because she had recently left Islam and become a Christian. She was attempting to flee the country. (Source: [Barnabas Fund](#), 21 February 2019).
- **Christians attacked:** 11 definite cases were reported from Uzbekistan. This mostly occurs when police raid illegal Christian meetings (i.e. meetings of groups that have not been registered with the authorities). A 70-year-old female convert from Islam was abducted by her two sons and daughter.
- **Christians arrested:** At least 15 Christians were held under arrest. Forum 18 reported two incidents in November 2018 ([19 November](#) and [25 November](#)).
- **Churches attacked:** There have been no reports about any churches being attacked in Uzbekistan, but there have been raids of illegal meetings in homes (see Forum 18 articles above).
- **Christian homes/shops attacked:** In September 2019, a convert from Islam in the countryside was beaten by Muslim relatives who came to his house in the evening. The relatives killed all the livestock at the home - sheep, chickens, ducks, rabbits and dogs - and burned down his barn.

5 Year trends

The following three charts illustrate how the situation for Christians in Uzbekistan has deteriorated gradually since WWL 2016.

Chart 1:

The overall level of pressure on Christians has gradually crept up from a very high level to an extreme level. This reflects the fact that the situation for converts in Uzbekistan has become worse.

WWL 2016 - WWL 2020 Persecution Pattern history: Uzbekistan	Average pressure over 5 Spheres of life
2020	14.0
2019	14.1
2018	13.9
2017	13.3
2016	13.4

Chart 2:

While the levels of pressure in the *Private* and *Church spheres of life* have been more or less stable over the last five years (averaging 15.2 and 15.9 points respectively), there have been notable increases in the pressure in the *Family* and *Community spheres of life*.

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

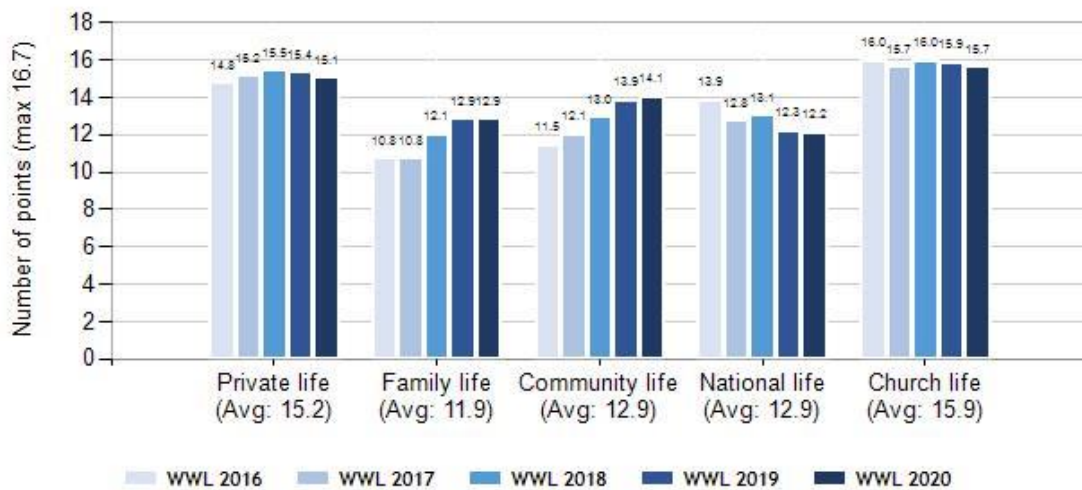
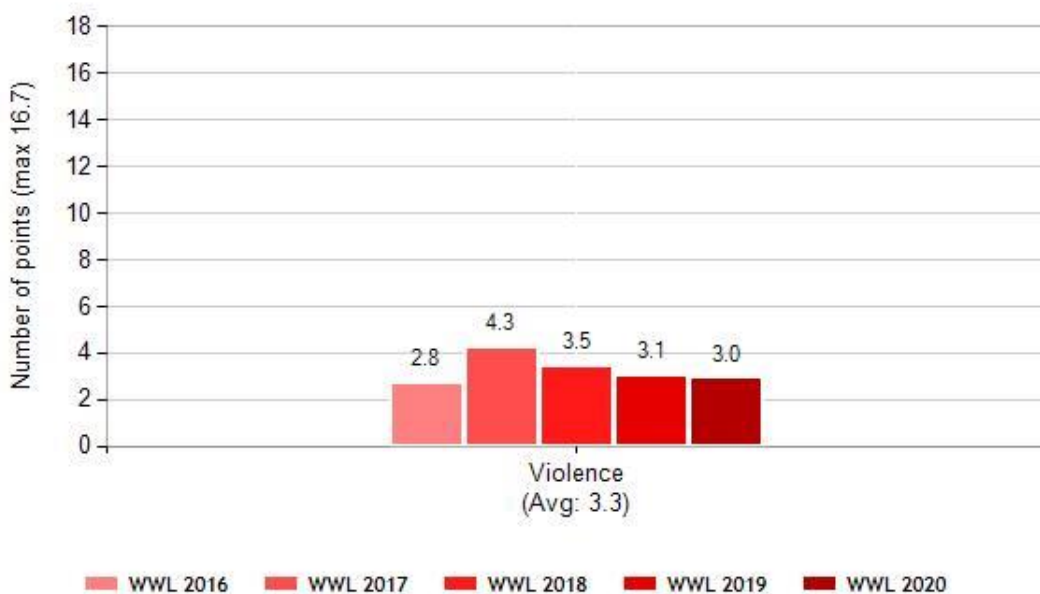


Chart 3:

The number of violent incidents recorded in Uzbekistan has not changed dramatically from year to year. The scores for violence have thus remained more or less stable at a fairly high level (averaging 3.3 points) over the last five reporting periods.

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



Gender profile of persecution

Female Pressure Points:

- ***Abduction***
- ***Denied access to social community/networks***
- ***Denied inheritance or possessions***
- ***Economic harassment via fines***
- ***Economic harassment via work/job/business***
- ***Forced divorce***
- ***Forced marriage***
- ***Forced to flee town/country***
- ***Incarceration by family/house arrest***
- ***Incarceration by government***
- ***Violence – death***
- ***Violence – physical***
- ***Violence – psychological***
- ***Violence – sexual***
- ***Violence - verbal***

While laws in Uzbekistan give equal rights to men and women, traditional Islamic culture places women lower than men and subservient to them within the family context. Total submission is expected from women to their parents, or if married, to their husbands. As highlighted in a [UN report](#) published in November 2015, the “persistence of deep-rooted patriarchal attitudes and stereotypes concerning the roles and responsibilities of women and men in the family and in society, discriminate against women and perpetuate their subordination within the family and society.” Within this context, women are not free to choose their own religion and will face persecution upon conversion to Christianity. The tight structure of society means that conversely, women are also targeted for persecution as a means of inflicting psychological harm on their husbands or other family members.

Incarceration by family/house arrest is a common and socially accepted form of putting female converts under pressure. Access to social networks, specifically Christian networks, is restricted in the hope that the convert will return to Islam. With the same aim to force women back to Islam, female converts in conservative regions run the risk of being abducted and forcibly married to Muslim men. If already married at the point of conversion, Muslim husbands commonly divorce their wives and deny them their possessions. In more extreme cases, the wife is forced to flee, as was the case for an Uzbek mother in February 2019. She attempted to seek refuge from her aggressive husband with Christian friends in Turkey but was confronted by her husband at the airport where he slit her throat and killed her (see "Specific examples of persecution in the reporting period" above).

Christian women and girls suffer from numerous daily pressures within the family unit, including verbal, physical, psychological and sexual violence. Additionally, they face economic harassment via fines as well as through the workplace. For women in rural settings, the lack of social and municipal infrastructure renders them entirely reliant on their families, with [few prospects](#) for non-home-based jobs.

Male Pressure Points:

- ***Denied Inheritance or possessions***
- ***Discrimination/Harassment via education***
- ***Economic harassment via work/job/business***
- ***Economic harassment via fines***
- ***Incarceration by family/house arrest***
- ***Incarceration by government***
- ***Travel bans/restriction of movement***
- ***Violence – physical***
- ***Violence – psychological***
- ***Violence – verbal***

Church leaders, most of whom are men, are common targets for persecution. Typically, they will be fined, detained, denied exit visas to leave the country, or even put under house arrest. They can be fined for an endless list of offences, such as for meeting illegally, possession of religious literature, having Christian songs on their smartphones, etc.. The persecution of church leaders is a deliberate tactic, as targeting them causes a ripple effect, spreading fear and anxiety throughout their congregations.

Christian men face inequalities in every area of their lives. Some men will be denied a promotion, while others may lose their job altogether. Christian businessmen face constant state monitoring to see if they are involved in any illegal activities, as well as pressure from the local Muslim community who obstruct their business activities. As the man is normally the bread winner, this form of economic harassment has a crippling effect on the whole family. Family members feel fear, anger and anxiety. To avoid this, many Christian businessmen choose to keep their Christian faith a secret.

Converts to Christianity also suffer from verbal, physical and psychological abuse, regularly being mocked in their places of work and study. In addition, the obligation to fulfil military service also exposes Christian men to hostile situations and harassment.

Persecution of other religious minorities

All exercise of freedom of religion and belief without state permission is illegal, including sharing any beliefs with anyone, and meeting with others for worship or the study of sacred texts in homes. Law enforcement officials raid with impunity people of any faith meeting together in this way. The victims of such raids are very often threatened, detained, fined and subjected to violent physical assault. Any religious literature discovered - including Islamic texts and the Bible - will be confiscated. Even Muslims meeting to study the Quran and learn how to pray at home are likely, if found, to be jailed for long periods. Strict restrictions are imposed both on observing Ramadan and on going on the *haj* pilgrimage to Mecca. (Source: [Forum 18, Religious freedom survey, September 2017](#)).

There is no focus on any specific religious group - Muslims, Christians, Jehovah's Witnesses, Jews and Bahai all suffer under a very high level of state surveillance and oppression.

Examples of persecution of other religious groups:

- In December 2018 a 33-year-old Tashkent Imam, Fazliddin Parpiyev, had to flee Uzbekistan, two months after he appealed to President Shavkat Mirziyoyev over violations of freedom of religion or belief for the country's Muslims. Religious Affairs Committee, State Security Service (SSS) secret police, ordinary police, Prosecutor's Office and Muftiate officials immediately pressured and threatened him and his father after he issued his video appeal. (Source: [Forum 18](#), 11 February 2019)
- On 17 April 2019 officials from the southern Kashkadarya Region - possibly from the SSS secret police - arrived at the Labour Camp in Bukhara Region where Muslim prisoner of conscience Khayrullo Tursunov is being held. They tortured him over a period of six hours and threatened to extend his 16-year jail term. They were trying to extract false testimony against a distant relative who has lived outside Uzbekistan since 2006. Tursunov refused to sign the pre-formulated statement. (Source: [Forum 18](#), 21 May 2019)
- On 23 August 2019 Uzbek security officials detained dozens of Muslim men at a local market in Tashkent and shaved their beards before releasing them. A vendor at the Malika market in the Uzbek capital, who asked not to be named, told RFE/RL that he was among dozens of men detained by police and brought to a police station, where they were forced to shave their beards off. (Source: [Radio Free Europe](#), 26 August 2019)

Future outlook for the church

The outlook for Christians as viewed through the lens of:

- **Dictatorial paranoia:** The current government exerts a very high level of control over the country. Government officials at all levels are the strongest persecutors of Christians in Uzbekistan. They have imposed all kinds of legal restrictions, monitor all religious activities, raid meetings and block the availability of religious materials. The chances that this situation will change are very slim indeed.
- **Islamic oppression:** Islam is not the state religion. It is the traditional religion of most of the population. Muslim pressure on Christians in Uzbekistan does not come from radical Islamic movements but from the far-reaching influence of family, friends and community on converts. The chances that this will change are as good as non-existent.

External Links - WWL 2020: Persecution Dynamics

- Drivers of persecution: Mahalla community groups - [http://informality.com/wiki/index.php?title=Mahallah_\(Uzbekistan\)](http://informality.com/wiki/index.php?title=Mahallah_(Uzbekistan))
- Pressure in the 5 spheres of life : International Religious Freedom Report for 2017 Uzbekistan). - <https://www.state.gov/reports/2017-report-on-international-religious-freedom/uzbekistan/>
- Pressure in the 5 spheres of life : International Religious Freedom Report for 2017 Uzbekistan - <https://www.state.gov/reports/2018-report-on-international-religious-freedom/uzbekistan/>
- Violence: Barnabas Fund - <https://barnabasfund.org/en/news/uzbek-woman-killed-by-husband-because-of-her-christian-faith>
- Violence: 19 November - http://www.forum18.org/archive.php?article_id=2431

- Violence: 25 November - http://www.forum18.org/archive.php?article_id=2433
- Gender profile of persecution: UN report - <http://https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/1479541>
- Gender profile of persecution: few prospects - <https://www.adb.org/sites/default/files/institutional-document/479841/uzbekistan-country-gender-assessment-update.pdf>
- Persecution of other religious minorities: Forum 18, Religious freedom survey, September 2017 - http://www.forum18.org/archive.php?article_id=2314
- Persecution of other religious minorities: Forum 18 - http://www.forum18.org/archive.php?article_id=2451
- Persecution of other religious minorities: Forum 18 - http://www.forum18.org/archive.php?article_id=2477
- Persecution of other religious minorities: Radio Free Europe - <https://www.rferl.org/a/uzbek-men-reportedly-detained-forced-to-shave-beards/30129899.html>

Additional reports and articles

WWR in-depth reports

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

World Watch Monitor news articles

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

Recent country developments

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