

World
Watch
Research

Jordan: Full Country Dossier

December 2021



OpenDoors

Serving persecuted **Christians** worldwide

Open Doors International / World Watch Research

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Contents

| | |
|---|-----------|
| Introduction | 3 |
| World Watch List 2022 | 3 |
| Copyright note..... | 4 |
| Sources and definitions..... | 4 |
| Effect on data-gathering during COVID-19 pandemic..... | 5 |
| External Links - Introduction | 5 |
| WWL 2022 Situation in brief / Jordan | 5 |
| Brief country details | 5 |
| Dominant persecution engines and drivers | 6 |
| Brief description of the persecution situation | 6 |
| Summary of international obligations and rights violations | 7 |
| Specific examples of violations of rights in the reporting period | 7 |
| Specific examples of positive developments | 7 |
| External Links - Situation in brief | 7 |
| WWL 2022: Keys to understanding / Jordan | 8 |
| Links for general background information | 8 |
| Recent history | 8 |
| Political and legal landscape | 9 |
| Religious landscape | 11 |
| Economic landscape..... | 12 |
| Social and cultural landscape..... | 13 |
| Technological landscape | 14 |
| Security situation | 15 |
| Trends analysis | 16 |
| External Links - Keys to understanding | 17 |
| WWL 2022: Church information / Jordan..... | 18 |
| Christian origins..... | 18 |
| Church spectrum today..... | 18 |
| External Links - Church information..... | 19 |
| WWL 2022: Persecution Dynamics / Jordan..... | 19 |
| Reporting period | 19 |
| Position on the World Watch List | 19 |
| Persecution engines | 20 |

| | |
|--|-----------|
| Drivers of persecution..... | 22 |
| Areas where Christians face most difficulties..... | 24 |
| Christian communities and how they are affected..... | 24 |
| The Persecution pattern..... | 25 |
| Pressure in the 5 spheres of life..... | 26 |
| Violence..... | 30 |
| 5 Year trends..... | 32 |
| Gender-specific religious persecution / Female..... | 34 |
| Gender-specific religious persecution / Male..... | 35 |
| Persecution of other religious minorities..... | 36 |
| Future outlook..... | 36 |
| External Links - Persecution Dynamics..... | 38 |
| Further useful reports..... | 38 |



Young man in Amman, Jordan (c) Open Doors International

Introduction

World Watch List 2022

| Rank | Country | Private life | Family life | Community life | National life | Church life | Violence | Total Score WWL 2022 | Total Score WWL 2021 | Total Score WWL 2020 | Total Score WWL 2019 | Total Score WWL 2018 |
|------|--------------|--------------|-------------|----------------|---------------|-------------|----------|----------------------|----------------------|----------------------|----------------------|----------------------|
| 1 | Afghanistan | 16.7 | 16.7 | 16.7 | 16.7 | 16.7 | 15.0 | 98 | 94 | 93 | 94 | 93 |
| 2 | North Korea | 16.7 | 16.7 | 16.7 | 16.7 | 16.7 | 13.1 | 96 | 94 | 94 | 94 | 94 |
| 3 | Somalia | 16.5 | 16.7 | 16.6 | 16.6 | 16.6 | 8.5 | 91 | 92 | 92 | 91 | 91 |
| 4 | Libya | 15.6 | 15.5 | 15.9 | 16.2 | 16.3 | 11.5 | 91 | 92 | 90 | 87 | 86 |
| 5 | Yemen | 16.7 | 16.6 | 16.5 | 16.7 | 16.7 | 5.2 | 88 | 87 | 85 | 86 | 85 |
| 6 | Eritrea | 14.6 | 14.9 | 15.5 | 15.9 | 15.6 | 11.1 | 88 | 88 | 87 | 86 | 86 |
| 7 | Nigeria | 13.8 | 13.8 | 14.3 | 14.5 | 14.4 | 16.7 | 87 | 85 | 80 | 80 | 77 |
| 8 | Pakistan | 13.6 | 14.0 | 15.1 | 14.9 | 13.1 | 16.7 | 87 | 88 | 88 | 87 | 86 |
| 9 | Iran | 14.5 | 14.6 | 13.6 | 15.8 | 16.5 | 10.4 | 85 | 86 | 85 | 85 | 85 |
| 10 | India | 12.7 | 12.7 | 12.9 | 14.7 | 13.3 | 15.6 | 82 | 83 | 83 | 83 | 81 |
| 11 | Saudi Arabia | 15.1 | 15.1 | 15.0 | 15.9 | 16.7 | 3.1 | 81 | 78 | 79 | 77 | 79 |
| 12 | Myanmar | 12.4 | 11.5 | 13.8 | 13.4 | 13.1 | 14.8 | 79 | 74 | 73 | 71 | 65 |
| 13 | Sudan | 13.4 | 13.4 | 14.3 | 13.6 | 15.7 | 8.5 | 79 | 79 | 85 | 87 | 87 |
| 14 | Iraq | 14.0 | 14.6 | 14.0 | 14.8 | 13.9 | 6.9 | 78 | 82 | 76 | 79 | 86 |
| 15 | Syria | 12.9 | 13.8 | 13.5 | 14.3 | 13.9 | 9.3 | 78 | 81 | 82 | 82 | 76 |
| 16 | Maldives | 15.4 | 15.3 | 13.7 | 15.8 | 16.5 | 0.4 | 77 | 77 | 78 | 78 | 78 |
| 17 | China | 12.6 | 9.8 | 12.2 | 14.4 | 15.5 | 11.1 | 76 | 74 | 70 | 65 | 57 |
| 18 | Qatar | 14.2 | 14.1 | 11.1 | 13.0 | 14.3 | 7.2 | 74 | 67 | 66 | 62 | 63 |
| 19 | Vietnam | 11.3 | 9.7 | 12.7 | 14.1 | 14.5 | 8.7 | 71 | 72 | 72 | 70 | 69 |
| 20 | Egypt | 12.7 | 13.2 | 11.5 | 12.7 | 10.8 | 10.0 | 71 | 75 | 76 | 76 | 70 |
| 21 | Uzbekistan | 14.9 | 12.7 | 14.1 | 11.8 | 15.6 | 1.7 | 71 | 71 | 73 | 74 | 73 |
| 22 | Algeria | 14.0 | 14.0 | 11.1 | 13.4 | 14.1 | 4.1 | 71 | 70 | 73 | 70 | 58 |
| 23 | Mauritania | 14.3 | 13.9 | 13.1 | 14.0 | 14.1 | 0.9 | 70 | 71 | 68 | 67 | 57 |
| 24 | Mali | 9.4 | 8.2 | 13.9 | 10.3 | 12.8 | 15.0 | 70 | 67 | 66 | 68 | 59 |
| 25 | Turkmenistan | 14.5 | 11.3 | 13.6 | 13.3 | 15.7 | 0.6 | 69 | 70 | 70 | 69 | 68 |
| 26 | Laos | 12.0 | 10.3 | 13.2 | 13.3 | 14.1 | 5.9 | 69 | 71 | 72 | 71 | 67 |
| 27 | Morocco | 13.1 | 13.8 | 10.8 | 12.8 | 14.2 | 3.9 | 69 | 67 | 66 | 63 | 51 |
| 28 | Indonesia | 11.3 | 11.5 | 11.5 | 11.0 | 9.6 | 13.5 | 68 | 63 | 60 | 65 | 59 |
| 29 | Bangladesh | 11.8 | 10.7 | 12.9 | 11.3 | 10.2 | 11.3 | 68 | 67 | 63 | 58 | 58 |
| 30 | Colombia | 11.5 | 8.8 | 13.1 | 11.0 | 9.9 | 13.3 | 68 | 67 | 62 | 58 | 56 |
| 31 | CAR | 9.0 | 8.6 | 13.6 | 9.6 | 11.4 | 15.6 | 68 | 66 | 68 | 70 | 61 |
| 32 | Burkina Faso | 9.4 | 9.7 | 12.0 | 9.6 | 12.1 | 14.8 | 68 | 67 | 66 | 48 | - |
| 33 | Niger | 9.4 | 9.5 | 13.9 | 7.2 | 12.8 | 14.8 | 68 | 62 | 60 | 52 | 45 |
| 34 | Bhutan | 13.4 | 12.4 | 11.7 | 13.7 | 13.8 | 1.7 | 67 | 64 | 61 | 64 | 62 |
| 35 | Tunisia | 11.9 | 12.7 | 10.6 | 11.3 | 13.4 | 6.5 | 66 | 67 | 64 | 63 | 62 |
| 36 | Oman | 13.8 | 14.0 | 10.3 | 13.2 | 13.4 | 1.5 | 66 | 63 | 62 | 59 | 57 |
| 37 | Cuba | 12.3 | 8.1 | 12.6 | 13.2 | 14.0 | 5.9 | 66 | 62 | 52 | 49 | 49 |
| 38 | Ethiopia | 9.9 | 10.3 | 13.1 | 10.3 | 12.3 | 9.8 | 66 | 65 | 63 | 65 | 62 |
| 39 | Jordan | 12.9 | 14.0 | 11.0 | 12.3 | 12.5 | 3.0 | 66 | 64 | 64 | 65 | 66 |
| 40 | DRC | 8.0 | 7.9 | 12.6 | 9.7 | 12.0 | 15.6 | 66 | 64 | 56 | 55 | 33 |
| 41 | Mozambique | 9.3 | 8.5 | 11.3 | 7.9 | 12.5 | 15.6 | 65 | 63 | 43 | 43 | - |
| 42 | Turkey | 12.6 | 11.5 | 11.4 | 13.2 | 11.6 | 4.6 | 65 | 69 | 63 | 66 | 62 |
| 43 | Mexico | 10.3 | 8.3 | 12.5 | 10.8 | 10.3 | 12.6 | 65 | 64 | 60 | 61 | 59 |
| 44 | Cameroon | 8.8 | 7.6 | 12.6 | 7.2 | 13.1 | 15.4 | 65 | 64 | 60 | 54 | 38 |
| 45 | Tajikistan | 13.8 | 12.3 | 12.0 | 12.6 | 13.2 | 0.7 | 65 | 66 | 65 | 65 | 65 |
| 46 | Brunei | 14.8 | 14.5 | 10.3 | 11.0 | 13.2 | 0.6 | 64 | 64 | 63 | 63 | 64 |
| 47 | Kazakhstan | 13.4 | 11.6 | 11.1 | 12.6 | 13.5 | 1.7 | 64 | 64 | 64 | 63 | 63 |
| 48 | Nepal | 12.4 | 9.8 | 9.9 | 13.6 | 12.7 | 5.2 | 64 | 66 | 64 | 64 | 64 |
| 49 | Kuwait | 13.5 | 13.7 | 9.8 | 12.3 | 13.1 | 1.1 | 64 | 63 | 62 | 60 | 61 |
| 50 | Malaysia | 12.5 | 14.3 | 11.5 | 11.6 | 10.2 | 3.3 | 63 | 63 | 62 | 60 | 65 |

| Rank | Country | Private life | Family life | Community life | National life | Church life | Violence | Total Score WWL 2022 | Total Score WWL 2021 | Total Score WWL 2020 | Total Score WWL 2019 | Total Score WWL 2018 |
|------|-------------------------|--------------|-------------|----------------|---------------|-------------|----------|----------------------|----------------------|----------------------|----------------------|----------------------|
| 51 | Kenya | 11.7 | 9.2 | 11.4 | 8.0 | 11.5 | 11.1 | 63 | 62 | 61 | 61 | 62 |
| 52 | Sri Lanka | 12.9 | 9.9 | 11.4 | 11.3 | 9.4 | 7.8 | 63 | 62 | 65 | 58 | 57 |
| 53 | Comoros | 12.7 | 11.1 | 11.2 | 12.4 | 14.2 | 0.9 | 63 | 62 | 57 | 56 | 56 |
| 54 | UAE | 13.4 | 13.6 | 10.1 | 11.8 | 12.2 | 1.3 | 62 | 62 | 60 | 58 | 58 |
| 55 | Tanzania | 9.3 | 10.8 | 10.3 | 8.6 | 8.7 | 13.7 | 61 | 58 | 55 | 52 | 53 |
| 56 | Azerbaijan | 13.1 | 9.9 | 9.3 | 11.0 | 13.4 | 3.3 | 60 | 56 | 57 | 57 | 57 |
| 57 | Palestinian Territories | 13.0 | 13.4 | 9.8 | 10.2 | 12.0 | 0.9 | 59 | 58 | 60 | 57 | 60 |
| 58 | Djibouti | 12.3 | 12.3 | 11.1 | 10.0 | 12.2 | 0.7 | 59 | 56 | 56 | 56 | 56 |
| 59 | Kyrgyzstan | 12.9 | 10.1 | 11.1 | 10.4 | 12.0 | 1.5 | 58 | 58 | 57 | 56 | 54 |
| 60 | Bahrain | 12.5 | 13.2 | 9.1 | 11.1 | 10.2 | 0.9 | 57 | 56 | 55 | 55 | 57 |
| 61 | Nicaragua | 9.1 | 5.6 | 11.1 | 11.8 | 11.3 | 7.6 | 56 | 51 | 41 | 41 | - |
| 62 | Russian Federation | 12.3 | 8.0 | 10.2 | 10.6 | 12.3 | 2.2 | 56 | 57 | 60 | 60 | 51 |
| 63 | Chad | 11.5 | 8.2 | 10.2 | 9.6 | 10.3 | 5.6 | 55 | 53 | 56 | 48 | 40 |
| 64 | Burundi | 7.6 | 7.8 | 9.7 | 9.2 | 9.6 | 8.1 | 52 | 48 | 48 | 43 | - |
| 65 | Venezuela | 5.6 | 4.5 | 11.2 | 9.4 | 11.1 | 9.6 | 51 | 39 | 42 | 41 | 34 |
| 66 | Angola | 6.8 | 6.7 | 8.1 | 10.1 | 11.4 | 7.8 | 51 | 46 | 43 | 42 | - |
| 67 | Rwanda | 8.1 | 5.5 | 6.7 | 10.3 | 10.1 | 9.3 | 50 | 42 | 42 | 41 | - |
| 68 | Honduras | 7.2 | 5.1 | 10.5 | 7.7 | 9.2 | 8.7 | 48 | 46 | 39 | 38 | - |
| 69 | Uganda | 8.1 | 4.6 | 7.4 | 6.7 | 9.1 | 11.7 | 48 | 47 | 48 | 47 | 46 |
| 70 | El Salvador | 7.7 | 4.6 | 10.7 | 5.7 | 9.1 | 7.2 | 45 | 42 | 38 | 30 | - |
| 71 | Togo | 9.2 | 6.7 | 9.3 | 7.1 | 9.8 | 2.4 | 44 | 43 | 41 | 42 | - |
| 72 | Gambia | 8.3 | 8.2 | 8.7 | 8.3 | 8.8 | 1.7 | 44 | 43 | 43 | 43 | - |
| 73 | Guinea | 10.3 | 7.5 | 8.3 | 7.0 | 8.1 | 2.0 | 43 | 47 | 45 | 46 | - |
| 74 | South Sudan | 5.7 | 0.9 | 7.0 | 6.3 | 7.8 | 15.0 | 43 | 43 | 44 | 44 | - |
| 75 | Ivory Coast | 9.8 | 8.6 | 8.2 | 5.5 | 7.9 | 2.0 | 42 | 42 | 42 | 43 | - |
| 76 | Israel | 9.8 | 8.4 | 5.6 | 6.6 | 6.6 | 4.3 | 41 | 40 | 38 | 39 | 40 |

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Sources and definitions

- This country report is a collation of data and analysis based around Open Doors World Watch List (WWL) and includes statistical information on world religions, Christian denominations and people groups prepared by the World Christian Database (WCD).
- Highlighted links in the text can be found written out in full at the conclusion of each main section under the heading “External links”. In order to reduce the length of these reference sections, a table containing links to regularly used sources can be found at the beginning of the “Keys to Understanding” chapter under the heading “Links for general background information”. Where one of these sources has been quoted in the dossier text, a quote reference is supplied as indicated in the second column of the table.
- The WWL 2022 reporting period was 01 October 2020 - 30 September 2021.
- The definition of persecution used in WWL analysis is: “Any hostility experienced as a result of one’s identification with Christ. This can include hostile attitudes, words and actions towards Christians”. This broad definition includes (but is not limited to) restrictions, pressure, discrimination, opposition, disinformation, injustice, intimidation, mistreatment, marginalization, oppression, intolerance, infringement, violation, ostracism, hostilities, harassment, abuse, violence, ethnic cleansing and genocide.
- The latest update of WWL Methodology including appendices can be found on the [World Watch List Documentation](#) page of the Open Doors Analytical website (password: freedom).

Effect on data-gathering during COVID-19 pandemic

In the WWL 2022 reporting period, travel restrictions and other measures introduced by the governments of various countries to combat the spread of the COVID-19 pandemic did cause delays and create the need for restructuring grass-roots research in some cases. Through the agile cooperation of In-country networks, Open Doors country researchers, External experts, WWR analysts and an increased use of technological options, Open Doors is confident that – as in the previous reporting period – WWL 2022 scoring, analysis and documentation has maintained required levels of quality and reliability.

External Links - Introduction

- Sources and definitions: World Watch List Documentation - <https://opendoorsanalytical.org/world-watch-list-documentation/>

WWL 2022 Situation in brief / Jordan

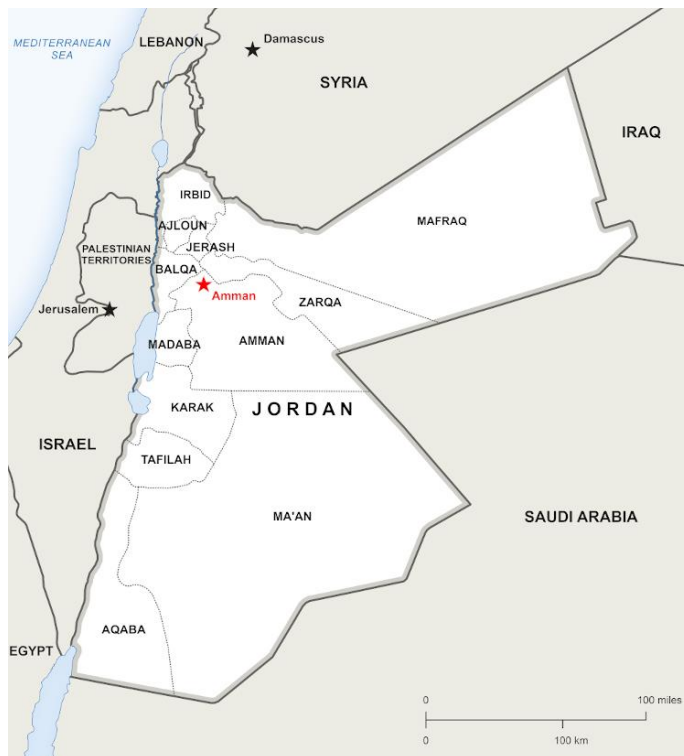
Brief country details

In the table below, the number of Christians shown is an Open Doors (OD) estimate.

| Jordan: Population (UN estimate for 2021) | Christians | Chr% |
|---|------------|-------------|
| 10,320,000 | 180,000 | OD estimate |

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

Map of country



| Jordan: World Watch List | Points | WWL Rank |
|--------------------------|--------|----------|
| WWL 2022 | 66 | 39 |
| WWL 2021 | 64 | 38 |
| WWL 2020 | 64 | 33 |
| WWL 2019 | 65 | 31 |
| WWL 2018 | 66 | 21 |

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

Dominant persecution engines and drivers

| Jordan: Main Persecution engines | Main drivers |
|--|--|
| Islamic oppression | Ethnic group leaders, Non-Christian religious leaders, One's own (extended) family, Government officials, Citizens (people from the broader society), including mobs |
| Clan oppression | Ethnic group leaders, One's own (extended) family |
| Dictatorial paranoia | Government officials |
| Christian denominational protectionism | Religious leaders of other churches, Government officials |

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

Brief description of the 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. However, 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's leadership and government appear to tolerate and - to a certain degree - support recognized churches. However, the state does exert pressure on all Christian communities, especially through monitoring. Unrecognized churches, particularly those that actively evangelize, can face harassment from public authorities. 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 the preaching in mosques and - in an attempt to rein in radicalism - requires preachers to abstain from talking about politics to avoid social and political unrest.

Summary of international obligations and rights violations

Jordan has committed to respect and protect fundamental rights in the following international treaties:

1. [International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights](#) (ICCPR)
2. [International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights](#) (ICESCR)
3. [Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment](#) (CAT)
4. [Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women](#) (CEDAW)
5. [Convention on the Rights of the Child](#) (CRC)

Jordan is not fulfilling its international obligations by regularly violating or failing to protect the following rights of Christians:

- Christian converts are ostracized and faced with opposition by their families, and threatened with loss of child custody in the case of divorce (ICCPR Art. 18)
- Children of Christian converts are automatically registered as Muslim (ICCPR Art. 18 and CRC Art. 14)
- Christians face workplace discrimination because of their faith (ICCPR Art. 26)
- Christian female converts are forced to marry non-Christian men and pressured to renounce their faith (ICCPR Art. 23; CEDAW Art. 16 and ICESCR Art. 10)

Specific examples of violations of rights in the reporting period

Details of places and dates cannot be provided for security reasons. For the WWL 2022 reporting period:

- At least 10 Christians were detained. Christian laymen and leaders involved in outreach can be called in regularly for questioning. It is unknown beforehand how long this will take, it can vary from 20 minutes to 12 days.
- Women who do not dress as a Muslim - i.e. who do not wear a hijab - risk harassment. At least 100 Christian women were sexually harassed for this reason.
- Several converts were reported to have been physically or mentally abused, especially during police interrogation.

Specific examples of positive developments

Unlike other religious minorities, Christians obtain nine out of 130 seats in parliament. According to the US State Department (IRFR 2020): "Religious minorities, including Christians and Druze, continued to serve in parliament and as cabinet ministers. Christians served as deputy prime minister, cabinet ministers, senators, and ambassadors."

External Links - Situation in brief

- Summary of international obligations and rights violations: International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights - <https://www.ohchr.org/en/professionalinterest/pages/ccpr.aspx>
- Summary of international obligations and rights violations: International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights - <https://www.ohchr.org/en/professionalinterest/pages/cescr.aspx>
- Summary of international obligations and rights violations: Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment - <https://www.ohchr.org/en/professionalinterest/pages/cat.aspx>
- Summary of international obligations and rights violations: Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women - <https://www.ohchr.org/EN/ProfessionalInterest/Pages/CEDAW.aspx>

- Summary of international obligations and rights violations: Convention on the Rights of the Child - <https://www.ohchr.org/en/professionalinterest/pages/crc.aspx>

WWL 2022: Keys to understanding / Jordan

Links for general background information

| Name | Quote Reference | Link | Last accessed on |
|--|-------------------------------------|---|------------------|
| Amnesty International country report | AI 2021 | https://www.amnesty.org/en/countries/middle-east-and-north-africa/jordan/ | 20 July 2021 |
| BBC News country profile | BBC country profile | https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-middle-east-14631981 | 20 July 2021 |
| Bertelsmann Transformation Index 2020 | BTI 2020 | https://bti-project.org/en/reports/country-dashboard-JOR.html | 20 July 2021 |
| CIA World Factbook | CIA Factbook | https://www.cia.gov/the-world-factbook/countries/jordan/ | 20 July 2021 |
| Economist Intelligence Unit Democracy Index 2020 | EIU 2020 | https://pages.eiu.com/rs/753-RIQ-438/images/democracy-index-2020.pdf | 20 July 2021 |
| FFP's Fragile States Index 2021 | FSI 2021 | https://fragilestatesindex.org/country-data/ | 20 July 2021 |
| Freedom House's 2021 Democracy index (Jordan is not included) | Freedom House/Democracy 2021 | https://freedomhouse.org/countries/nations-transit/scores | |
| Freedom House's 2021 Global Freedom index | Freedom House/Global Freedom 2021 | https://freedomhouse.org/country/jordan/freedom-world/2021 | 20 July 2021 |
| Freedom House's Freedom on the Net 2020 report | Freedom House/Internet Freedom 2020 | https://freedomhouse.org/country/jordan/freedom-net/2020 | 20 July 2021 |
| Garda World country report | Garda World | https://www.garda.com/crisis24/country-reports/jordan | 20 July 2021 |
| Human Rights Watch World Report 2021 | HRW 2021 | https://www.hrw.org/world-report/2021/country-chapters/jordan | 20 July 2021 |
| Internet World Stats 2021 | IWS 2021 | https://www.internetworldstats.com/middle.htm#jo | 20 July 2021 |
| Middle East Concern | MEC country profile | https://meconcern.org/countries/jordan/ | 20 July 2021 |
| RSF's 2020 World Press Freedom Index | World Press Freedom 2020 | https://rsf.org/en/jordan | 20 July 2021 |
| Transparency International's 2020 Corruption Perceptions Index | CPI 2020 | https://www.transparency.org/en/countries/jordan | 20 July 2021 |
| UNDP's Global Human Development Indicators | HDI 2020 | http://hdr.undp.org/en/countries/profiles/JOR | 20 July 2021 |
| US State Department's 2020 International Religious Freedom country reports | IRFR 2020 | https://www.state.gov/reports/2020-report-on-international-religious-freedom/jordan/ | 20 July 2021 |
| USCIRF 2021 country reports (Jordan is not included) | USCIRF 2021 | https://www.uscirf.gov/countries | |
| World Bank country report | World Bank | https://www.worldbank.org/en/country/jordan | 20 July 2021 |

Recent history

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

Jordan was also affected by the so-called Arab Spring which began in 2011. According to the CIA Factbook, King Abdallah II "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 has been a relatively stable safe haven for refugees in the region and has hosted refugees from wars in Lebanon, Iraq and Syria. This has added significant strain on the economy and society. In addition, this has led to Jordan being used as a transit country for violent Islamic militants, causing the threat of Islamist attacks to increase in Jordan as well.

Though generally stable in terms of security, Jordan faced four attacks by Islamists in the period 2016 - 2019 (see below: *Security situation*). 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.

Compared to other countries in the region, Jordan is one of the last islands of relative calm for Christians. The government narrative is inclusive of Christians, the king himself promotes interfaith dialogue and tolerance, and for their small number Christians are well-represented in politics, the army and the economy. State-recognized Christian communities can live relatively freely if they abstain from proselytization. However, the state will put pressure on non-recognized groups and monitor their activities, especially if they actively evangelize.

The COVID-19 crisis has had an adverse impact on the country as a whole and hence also on the Church. In March 2020, Jordan declared a state of emergency as part of a series of measures to limit the spread of the COVID-19 virus. On 25 July 2020 the country's largest labor union, "the Teachers' Syndicate", was [closed down](#) for two years and its leadership arrested due to criticism of the government and alleged "financial and administrative wrongdoing" (Reuters, 25 July 2020). Demonstrations resulted, which led to the further [arrest of 1000 protesting teachers](#) (The Guardian, 19 August 2020). According to insiders, the union was closed for continually criticizing the government and the government is using the COVID-19 crisis to silence dissent which is a serious violation of the rights to freedom of association and expression.

Despite the COVID-19 crisis, [parliamentary elections](#) were held in November 2020 and, according to observers, the historically low turnout indicated voter apathy (Al-Monitor, 12 November 2020). The election result was not surprising: Independent and pro-government candidates are expected to make up the majority of the House of Representatives, making it even more conciliatory towards the government.

In March 2021 there were several [protests](#) against the economic impact of lockdowns and pandemic emergency measures as well as on the occasion of the 10th anniversary of the Arab Spring (International Crisis Group, March 2021). Several protesters were detained. In April 2021, former Crown Prince Hamza bin al-Hussein was placed under house arrest on [charges of plotting to destabilize the country](#) (Al-Monitor, 22 April 2021). In a video recorded after his arrest, Hamza accused the government of "incompetence and corruption". Peace was restored when Hamza signed a pledge of support to King Abdullah a few days later. According to Al-Monitor, the royal feud "threatened to undermine the Arab monarchy's standing as one of the most stable Middle East countries."

Political and legal landscape

The Economist Intelligence Unit's Democracy Index (EIU 2020) classifies Jordan as an authoritarian regime. FFP's Fragile States Index (FSI 2021) shows political indicators have slightly deteriorated, with the exception of human rights.

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 for the first time since nearly a decade of boycotting elections; they won 15 out of 130 seats (Agenzia Fides, 24 September 2016). 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. Although 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. In July 2020, the original association of the Muslim Brotherhood was disbanded after it had not succeeded in rectifying its legal status. Now only the IAF remains, which is currently the largest opposition party and is allegedly controlled by moderate elements close to the Crown and the so-called [Zamzam initiative](#) (Wilson Center, 13 September 2017). This has been welcomed by some Christians considering it to be a positive step in the development of a civil state in Jordan.

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

- "The constitution of Jordan establishes Islam as the State religion. It affirms the principle of non-discrimination, including on the basis of religion, and states that the free exercise of worship and religious rites are to be safeguarded, provided these are consistent with public order and morality. Recognised non-Muslim communities are given freedom to govern most personal status issues according to their own rites through a religious court system (though some communities, including many Evangelical denominations, do not currently have the level of legal status required to operate their own courts). Under applicable Islamic law, Muslims are effectively prohibited from changing their religion, and women registered as Muslim are not permitted to marry non-Muslims."

A new proposal for [reforming inheritance law](#) in the personal status of Christians is under discussion (Zenith, 25 October 2019). No formal decisions have been made yet but this could be a very positive change for Christians. It would allow Christian women to get equal treatment in inheritance matters and would remove the influence of Islamic law in this field when Christians are involved.

The Jordanian legal landscape has long been restrictive towards women and girls. Whilst it ratified the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) in 1992, it maintained a reservation to Article 16, which provides for the elimination of discrimination against women as they enter or exit a marriage. 10% of girls are married before the age of 18 ([Girls Not Brides](#), 2021), with Syrian and Palestinian refugee girls at heightened risk ([GAGE](#), October 2017). The legal minimum age for marriage is 18, although exemptions can be made with judicial consent ([Girls Not Brides](#), 2021). A woman must obtain consent from her male guardian before marrying and must file for divorce through the courts, unlike her husband who has the right to divorce her unilaterally (under Articles 80 and 97 of the Personal Status Law). Representing a positive development, Article 308 of the Penal Code was removed in 2017,

which previously exonerated a man in cases of rape or sexual assault upon marriage to the victim.

Religious landscape

| Jordan: Religious context | Number of adherents | % |
|---|---------------------|------|
| Christians | 180,000 | 1.7 |
| Muslim | 9,816,568 | 95.1 |
| Hindu | 0 | 0.0 |
| Buddhist | 0 | 0.0 |
| Ethno-religionist | 0 | 0.0 |
| Jewish | 0 | 0.0 |
| Bahai | 23,984 | 0.2 |
| Atheist | 48,864 | 0.5 |
| Agnostic | 246,807 | 2.4 |
| Other | 4,777 | 0.0 |
| <i>OTHER includes Chinese folk, New religionist, Sikh, Spiritist, Taoist, Confucianist, Jain, Shintoist, Zoroastrian.</i> | | |

Data source: Johnson T M and Zurlo G A, eds, *World Christian Database* (Leiden/Boston: Brill, accessed April 2021)
(Adapted according to OD-estimate)

Around 95% of the population are Muslim of which the majority are Sunni, and Open Doors estimates that 1.7% are Christian. 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.

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. the Islamic State group). This killing shows how freedom of expression is being suppressed by radical Islamic elements and has resulted in increased 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 it was not a specifically anti-Christian attack.).

On the occasion of Jordan's National Day in 2021, the local Bible Society had placed verses from a Psalm on banners in several places in Amman. Some Jordanians recognized these verses as being taken from the Jewish holy book and (unaware that these are also part of the Christian Bible) they put pressure on the governor of Amman to have them removed. As a result, the banners were removed, tensions rose, and there were attacks on Christians on social media.

Economic landscape

According to World Bank:

- "Jordan's economy has been hit hard by the COVID-19 pandemic amid already low growth, high unemployment and growing debt. The World Bank estimated the Jordanian economy to have contracted by 1.6% in 2020, with unemployment rising to 24.7% in the fourth quarter of 2020 and youth unemployment rates reaching an unprecedented 50%. The economic shock of COVID-19 has exacerbated both existing structural weaknesses in the economy and unresolved social challenges, putting pressure on the country's fragile macroeconomic stance."

The World Bank classifies Jordan as an upper-middle-income economy. However, the kingdom is faced with economic problems such as high poverty, unemployment and underemployment, budget deficits and current account deficits and government debt. Without any oil supplies and few natural resources of its own, Jordan is highly dependent on foreign aid. The main donor countries are the Gulf States (e.g. Saudi Arabia) as well as the USA and Europe. This makes Jordan relatively vulnerable to influence from these countries. Jordan has been invited to join the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC), a political, economic and military partnership between all Gulf states (except Yemen). The International Monetary Fund (IMF) has renewed its support for the kingdom, but the Jordanian economy has suffered greatly from measures imposed to contain the spread of COVID-19 which have particularly hit the service sector and tourism, which are important growth sectors for the Jordanian economy. It remains to be seen if and how the country will be able to recover from the economic downturn. The country's political stability depends on its economic prosperity and its success in involving the population in economic progress. The COVID-19 crisis thus poses a huge threat to the economy and therefore to the stability of the country.

Women are among the most economically vulnerable in Jordan, primarily due to restricted employment opportunities as well as patrilineal inheritance laws ([OECD, 2019](#)). Despite having achieved gender parity in relation to access to education, less than one-fifth of the workforce is made up of women ([US Aid, Feb 2021](#)). This is not reflective of women's aspirations. According to a [Georgetown 2019/20 study](#), 60% of women agreed with the statement "Having a job is the best way for a woman to be an independent person. In addition, female unemployment rose sharply in the fourth quarter of 2020 to 32.8% from 27% in 2019 (World Bank). Another worrisome development is the strong increase in youth unemployment which rose in the same quarter to an all-time high of 50% from 40.6% in 2019.

Depending on the duration of government's COVID-19 measures and their overall impact on the economy, instability could potentially have negative consequences for the country's Christians. While economics is not generally a factor leading to the persecution of Christians, it is a very im-

portant factor for those considering the possibility of emigration.

Social and cultural landscape

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

- **Main ethnic groups:** Jordanian 69.3%, Syrian 13.3%, Palestinian 6.7%, Egyptian 6.7%, Iraqi 1.4%, other 2.6% (includes Armenian, Circassian) (2015 est.)
- **Main languages:** Arabic (official), English (widely understood among upper and middle classes)
- **Urban population:** 91.6% of total population (2021)
- **Literacy rate:** 98.2% of the population age 15 and over can read and write.

According to UNDP's HDI 2020:

- **HDI score and ranking:** With a score of 0.729 Jordan ranks 102nd out of 189 countries and falls in the 'High Human Development' category. From 1990 to 2019, Jordan's HDI value has risen 16.6% since 1990.
- **Life expectancy:** 74.5 at birth, a figure that has increased by 4.7 years since 1990.
- **Education:** Mean years of schooling is 10.5, an average that increased by 5.4 years since 1990.
- **Unemployment:** 14.7% of Jordan's labor force is without official employment. The youth unemployment rate is very high at 35% (ages 15 - 24).

Jordanian culture is largely shaped by tension between Jordanian natives and a variety of refugees, who are estimated to be at over 6% of the total population. The majority of the population consists of Palestinians, most of whom fled as a result of the Arab-Israeli wars of 1948 and 1967. Most of these received citizenship in the early 1950s. Palestinian Jordanians ("West Bankers") are not treated equally compared to most other nationals who are from Bedouin descent ("East Bankers") and have been living in the area for centuries. Discrimination of West Bankers 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.

As a result of widespread discrimination and disempowerment of non-nationals, social cohesion in Jordan is under pressure. FFP's Fragile State Index (FSI 2021) shows that group grievance is dangerously high, scoring 8.6 points. The social and cultural pressure from refugees and IDPs coming into the country has decreased in recent years, but is still high and rose slowly in 2021. Christians play an important role in running well-respected humanitarian NGOs and schools serving all Jordanians.

The COVID-19 outbreak has had an adverse impact on the country as a whole and hence also on the Church. After a cluster-outbreak of infections at a church in Amman at the end of August 2020, the community was asked to keep its doors shut to prevent a further spread of the virus. However, these are not measures targeting Christians in particular, but affect the whole of the country.

In Jordan's patriarchal, predominately Islamic context, men and women are expected to assume traditional roles; women remain typically restricted to roles that are subordinate to men ([IREX, 2021](#)). Domestic violence reportedly increased during COVID-19 lockdown restrictions ([EuroMed Rights](#), July 2020). Many victims remain fearful of reporting crimes due to high impunity for perpetrators and the widespread societal tolerance for violence against women.

Technological landscape

According to Internet World Stats (IWS 2021):

- **Internet usage:** 79.7% penetration - survey date: March 2021
- **Facebook usage:** 63.7% penetration – survey date: June 2021

According to the World Bank's Country profile:

- **Mobile phone subscriptions:** 77.0 per 100 people

Freedom House made the following assessment (Freedom House/Internet Freedom 2021):

- "Internet freedom in Jordan improved slightly during the reporting period. However, internet freedoms are still undermined by the arrests and prosecutions of online journalists, activists, and social media users for criticism of the government; the blocking of news sites; and a number of laws that penalize legitimate expression online. Access to the internet has improved significantly in recent years, although concerns about state surveillance of online activity persist. During the COVID-19 pandemic, the government issued an executive order that criminalized spreading misinformation about the virus but that has larger implications for freedom of expression. Jordan is a monarchy in which the king plays a dominant role in politics and governance. The parliament's lower house is elected, but the electoral system continues to put the opposition at a disadvantage despite recent reforms, and the chamber wields little power in practice. The media and civil society groups are hampered by restrictive laws and government pressure."
- In the report's reporting period of 1 June 2019 to 31 May 2020, the following internet freedom violations took place: "A number of individuals were arrested, prosecuted, and imprisoned for their online activities during the reporting period. Since September 2019, at least seven activists have been detained, most of whom faced charges related to social media posts that were critical of Jordanian leadership."

Examples of restrictive laws are the Cybercrime Law and the Press and Publication Law (PPL) which determine that online defamation can lead to a fine and prison sentence of at least three months. In the [Freedom on the Net 2018 Report](#), Freedom House explained these laws as follows:

- "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 extra-legal 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."

Jordanian Christians are increasingly anxious about expressing themselves on social media (even concerning posts about food during Ramadan) and have reported a high level of self-censorship to avoid any possibility of insulting the Islamic majority. Social media mobbing is the main reason for such fear. If relatives observe a Christian from an Islamic background or a Muslim accessing Christian media, it is likely they will put pressure on them to give up their interest in Christianity. Also, the authorities are known to have monitored the mobile phones of Christians involved in ministry to converts from Islam to Christianity.

According to the US State Department (IRFR 2020):

- There were reports of hate speech and threats against Christians via the Internet and social media "in direct response to radio and internet broadcasts of Christian [church] services. Religious broadcasts were an alternative to regular in-person services, which were not allowed under comprehensive lockdowns due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The same NGO reported some negative responses to the presence of an Orthodox bishop during televised, and widely viewed, COVID-19 updates from the government. NGO sources said the negative responses were the reactions of Muslims to their first real exposure to Christianity. Criticism online and in social media continued to target converts from Islam to other religions. Religious minorities expressed concerns some Muslim leaders preached intolerance. Christians reported they self-segregated into Christian enclaves to escape social pressure and threats."

Security situation

Though generally stable in terms of security, Jordan has faced four Islamist 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; a bomb attack targeting a police car guarding a music festival in the majority Christian town of Fuheis in August 2018 and a stabbing attack in November 2019 on Western tourists in Jerash, which is famous for its Roman ruins.

Jordan's intelligence service claim to have [prevented an Islamist attack on a church](#) and a shop in Amman, which was licensed to sell alcohol. The attack was supposedly planned for early in 2020. Four militants involved were reportedly affiliated to the Islamic State group (Albawaba News, 26 June 2020).

Human rights advocates have accused Jordan's rulers of using the threat of terrorism to restrict the rights of citizens and parliament. Jordan has a disproportionately 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.

According to Garda World's Jordan Country Report, Jordan's terrorist security risk is categorized as 'high' and the following explanation is given:

- "Jordan remains a high-value aspirational target for Sunni jihadists. Returning jihadists and radicalisation among low-level members of the security forces pose the biggest threats to security forces, tourist sites, and Christian areas. The small number of incidents during the past five years underscores the high capabilities of the security services. The risk of terrorist attacks would increase in the unlikely event that the king reneges on a two-state solution. Islamic State cells would exploit likely excessive force by the state against protesters to increase recruitment and attacks against state targets, notably security services."

Christian refugees who fled to Jordan - e.g. from Syria - are vulnerable in the context of their displacement. Studies have shown that women are disproportionately affected by conflict and protracted crises ([UN Chronicle](#), 18 September 2020; [Action Aid](#), March 2020). The rate of early marriages among the Syrian refugee community in Jordan is high, and the threat of sexual and gender-based violence remains an ongoing issue. This largely affects women and girls, but instances of sexual assaults against men and boys are believed to be underreported ([SGBV sub-working group](#), UNHCR, 2015; [DRC et al](#), 22 February 2021).

Trends analysis

1) Jordanian society is becoming increasingly polarized

The increasing polarization of Jordanian society is encouraging liberals and Christians to speak out against radical Islamic developments in the country. This has had serious consequences as can be seen in the extra-judicial killing of a prominent author in 2016 (see above: *Religious landscape*) and 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. Contrary to efforts made by the king, the government is reportedly pursuing an agenda to promote the growth of Islamic influence at the expense of other religions, such as Christianity. The police sometimes arrest people when their activities are perceived as going against Islamic values, such as a swimming pool party, to please the masses. The social environment has also become less tolerant over time, and there are reportedly negative feelings in public opinion about the existence of Christians in the country.

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

According to the Economist Intelligence Unit (EIU 2020), King Abdullah II is expected to remain in power for the next few years "supported by his loyal armed forces. However, rising global food prices, coupled with lingering high unemployment, will increase the risk of more widespread social protest, especially given fiscal resources, and the government will probably crack down on dissent to contain the unrest." The country's political stability depends on its economic prosperity and its success in involving the population in economic progress. The COVID-19 crisis thus poses a huge threat to the economy and therefore to the stability of the country. Jordan's economic difficulties could lead to more social and political unrest that could

negatively affect Christians and other minorities. In the short-term, mass demonstrations are less likely to occur due to the ongoing COVID-19 state of emergency and due to the arrest of leading activists.

3) Jordan's king wants the country portrayed as one that protects religious minorities

In general, many Christians in Jordan strongly believe that their security depends on the Hashemite king who has reiterated his desire to "protect the existence and identity of Arab Christians" in the kingdom. It is important for Jordan to portray the country as one that 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 - Keys to understanding

- Recent history: closed down - <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-jordan-opposition-teachers-idUSKCN24Q0N4>
- Recent history: arrest of 1000 protesting teachers - <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2020/aug/19/jordan-arrests-1000-teachers-in-crackdown-on-union?ref=hvper.com>
- Recent history: parliamentary elections - <https://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/originals/2020/11/jordan-low-voter-turnout-parliament-elections-apathy.html>
- Recent history: protests - https://www.crisisgroup.org/crisiswatch/database?location%5B%5D=90&date_range=last_12_months&from_month=01&from_year=2021&to_month=01&to_year=2021
- Recent history: charges of plotting to destabilize the country - <https://www.al-monitor.com/originals/2021/04/jordan-releases-16-detained-over-royal-family-feud>
- Political and legal landscape: Islamic Action Front (IAF) - http://www.fides.org/en/news/60829-ASIA_JORDAN_Elections_Archbishop_Lahham_all_Christian_candidates_in_Islamist_lists_rejected
- Political and legal landscape: Zamzam initiative - <https://www.wilsoncenter.org/article/the-islamist-spectrum-jordans-mosaic>
- Political and legal landscape: reforming inheritance law - <https://magazine.zenith.me/en/society/christians-jordan-church-and-legal-reform>
- Political and legal landscape: Girls Not Brides - <https://atlas.girlsnotbrides.org/map/jordan/>
- Political and legal landscape: GAGE - <https://www.gage.odi.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/01/GAGE-Jordan-SA-WEB.pdf>
- Economic landscape: (OECD, 2019 - <https://www.genderindex.org/wp-content/uploads/files/datasheets/2019/JO.pdf>
- Economic landscape: US Aid, Feb 2021 - <https://www.usaid.gov/jordan/gender-equality-womens-empowerment>
- Economic landscape: Georgetown 2019/20 study - <https://giwps.georgetown.edu/wp-content/uploads/2019/12/WPS-Index-2019-20-Report.pdf>
- Social and cultural landscape: UNDP's Full report for 2020 - <http://www.hdr.undp.org/sites/default/files/hdr2020.pdf>
- Social and cultural landscape: IREX, 2021 - <https://www.irex.org/insight/localizing-gender-discussions-jordan-lessons-learned-usaid-takamols-gender-resource-manual>
- Social and cultural landscape: EuroMed Rights - <https://euromedrights.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/07/Domestic-violence-amid-COVID19-EuroMed-Rights.pdf>
- Technological landscape: Freedom on the Net 2018 Report - <https://www.justice.gov/eoir/page/file/1180611/download>
- Security situation: prevented an Islamist attack on a church - <https://www.albawaba.com/news/jordan-intelligence-foils-terrorist-plot-church-liquor-store-amman-1365426>

- Security situation: UN Chronicle - <https://www.un.org/en/un-chronicle/peace-synonymous-women%E2%80%99s-rights>
- Security situation: Action Aid - <https://actionaid.org/stories/2020/how-safe-spaces-women-and-girls-are-strengthening-resilience-communities-jordan>
- Security situation: SGBV sub-working group - https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/BriefingNoteSGBV_2015_FinalJune30.pdf
- Security situation: DRC et al - <https://reliefweb.int/report/jordan/gender-based-violence-risk-assessment-azraq-camp>

WWL 2022: 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 (accessed 29 September 2020):

“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

| Jordan: Church networks | % Christians |
|-------------------------|--------------|
| Orthodox | 62.0 |
| Catholic | 22.2 |
| Protestant | 8.6 |
| Independent | 7.4 |

| | |
|--|-------------|
| Unaffiliated | 1.3 |
| Doubly-affiliated Christians | -1.6 |
| Total | 99.9 |
| <i>(Any deviation from the total number of Christians stated above is due to the rounding of decimals)</i> | |
| Evangelical movement | 6.8 |
| Renewalist movement | 8.5 |

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

Orthodox: Eastern (Chalcedonian), Oriental (Pre-Chalcedonian, Non-Chalcedonian, Monophysite), Nestorian (Assyrian), and non-historical Orthodox. **Roman Catholics:** All Christians in communion with the Church of Rome. **Protestants:** Christians in churches originating in or in communion with the Western world's 16th-century Protestant Reformation. Includes Anglicans, Lutherans and Baptists (any of whom may be Charismatic) and denominational Pentecostals, but not Independent traditions such as Independent Baptists nor independent Charismatics. **Independents:** Christians who do not identify with the major Christian traditions (Orthodox, Roman Catholic, Protestant). **Unaffiliated Christians:** Persons professing publicly to be Christians but who are not affiliated to churches. **Doubly-affiliated Christians:** Persons affiliated to or claimed by 2 denominations at once. **Evangelical movement:** Churches, denominations, and individuals who identify themselves as evangelicals by membership in denominations linked to evangelical alliances (e.g., World Evangelical Alliance) or by self-identification in polls. **Renewalist movement:** Church members involved in Pentecostal/Charismatic renewal.

According to Middle East Concern (MEC country profile):

- 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, Pentecostal, 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.

External Links - Church information

- Christian origins: JMECA - <https://www.jmecca.org.uk/christianity-middle-east/history>

WWL 2022: Persecution Dynamics / Jordan

Reporting period

01 October 2020 - 30 September 2021

Position on the World Watch List

| Jordan: World Watch List | Points | WWL Rank |
|--------------------------|--------|----------|
| WWL 2022 | 66 | 39 |
| WWL 2021 | 64 | 38 |
| WWL 2020 | 64 | 33 |

| | | |
|----------|----|----|
| WWL 2019 | 65 | 31 |
| WWL 2018 | 66 | 21 |

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

The rise in two points was due to a proportional increase in both pressure and violence in the WWL 2022 reporting period. There was less acceptance of public expressions of the Christian faith, such as the display of Bible verses. Violent incidents occurred mostly against Christians with a Muslim background, but other Christians active in evangelism were also affected. For security reasons, no details can be published.

Persecution engines

| Jordan: Persecution engines | Abbreviation | Level of influence |
|---|--------------|--------------------|
| Islamic oppression | IO | Strong |
| Religious nationalism | RN | Not at all |
| Ethno-religious hostility | ERH | Not at all |
| Clan oppression | CO | Strong |
| Christian denominational protectionism | CDP | Medium |
| Communist and post - Communist oppression | CPCO | Not at all |
| Secular intolerance | SI | Not at all |
| Dictatorial paranoia | DPA | Medium |
| 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. Despite promoting tolerance and peaceful coexistence with non-Muslim religions, the government has increasingly imposed Islamic values and laws on society. In terms of personal life, converts from Islam to Christianity face the highest levels of pressure. 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 - and even subject 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.

Islamic oppression is also blended with *Dictatorial paranoia*. In several countries in the Middle East, the king or president plays the 'Islam card' in political crises to stay in power. Thus, to gain the approval or acceptance of the community, they turn to the religious authority to gain power

and popularity. This also applies to Jordan. However, this allows Islamic political movements to gain more influence in the communities, which usually leads to the spread of extremist ideologies and the persecution of Christian minorities.

Clan oppression (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. As explained above (see: Social and cultural landscape), Jordan is basically divided between native Jordanians ('East Bankers') and Palestinian Jordanians ('West Bankers'). 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 native 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 Christian of native Jordanian stock. This issue requires more detailed research.

Dictatorial paranoia (Medium)

Jordan is increasingly described as a hybrid system that combines procedural democracy with some forms of authoritarianism. The country is still not a full constitutional democracy and the king, together with the general intelligence service, are the main sources of decision-making. Apart from the royal family, the biggest political actors are the government and the tribal chiefs who maintain their (perceived) power, position and privileges. Jordan's stability faces numerous threats; this creates the impression that the king is one of the few factors holding the country together. As head of government, the Jordanian king exercises considerable executive power. While he has been outspoken in his support for the Christian communities of Jordan and the Middle East and the need to maintain this Christian presence, and while he maintains a moderate and pro-Western stance, it is recognized that the king must strike a balance between competing interests, including Islamist currents that tend to swell in times of economic hardship or in response to regional events. In previous years, there were times when the king found it necessary to maintain his Islamic credentials by imposing stricter restrictions on Christians (e.g. expelling foreign Christians). Internally, therefore, maintaining peace and meeting the interests of the Muslim majority appears to be the top priority.

Christian denominational protectionism (Medium)

The fragmentation of the Church is a typical feature of Jordanian Christianity. Tension exists between established (traditional) churches and newer churches (often including charismatic and evangelical movements). This is because evangelicals generally accept converts from Islam as well as Christians from traditional churches into their congregations. According to evangelical leaders, it is primarily Greek Orthodox (but sometimes Catholic) leaders who are exerting pressure on newer denominations. They use their channels of political influence to assert their historical traditions as the only true expression of Jordanian Christianity, while labeling Evangelical-

icals or other 'newcomers' as inappropriate due to their western influence. Applications made by church groups for official recognition are discussed by the prime minister with the Department of the Interior (MOI) and the CCL (Council of Church Leaders), which mainly includes representatives of recognized historic churches. Thus the latter have a major influence on the official recognition or - more often - rejection of newer denominations.

Drivers of persecution

| Jordan: Drivers of Persecution | IO | RN | ERH | CO | CDP | CPCO | SI | DPA | OCC |
|--|--------|----|-----|-------------|--------|------|----|--------|-----------|
| | STRONG | | | STRONG | MEDIUM | | | MEDIUM | 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 | |
| Citizens (people from the broader society), including mobs | Medium | | | Weak | | | | | Weak |
| One's own (extended) family | Strong | | | Very strong | Weak | | | | |
| Political parties | Weak | | | | | | | Weak | |
| 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):** Tribal leaders are likely to put pressure on members of their tribe who are known to have converted and can act as a judge to save the tribe's honor.
- **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. Attacks on targets deemed un-Islamic such as churches and stores where alcohol is sold are reportedly encouraged by local and regional radical Islamic teachers. In this respect, independent Salafi and Wahhabi individuals pose a threat to Christians within Jordan: These are not necessarily leaders, but are influential either in person or on social media. Mainstream Islamic leaders contribute to alienation between Muslims and Christians in practice and dress code (e.g. hijab clothing, no co-educational gatherings or swimming etc.).

- **Extended family (Strong):** Family hostility is commonly understood to be the major form of 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 and those involved in ministry among them. This pressure is exerted formally through the personal status court system. In the government's monitoring of Christians and their activities the intelligence service plays an important role as well as local governors, airport police (denied exit for known converts).
- **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 oppression

- **Extended family and ethnic group leaders (Very strong):** Clan Oppression 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 still to be Muslims.

Dictatorial paranoia

- **Government officials (Medium):** While genuine in its affirmation of Jordan's traditional churches and in seeking to ensure the security of all established churches, government policies and personnel nevertheless underpin much pressure against Christians - including against those churches that have secondary status, and - in particular - against believers from Muslim backgrounds through actions of General Intelligence in exposing or pressuring believer, often in collaboration with families, and more formally through the personal status court system.

Christian denominational protectionism

- **Religious leaders of other churches (Strong):** As explained above, Evangelicals cite this as a significant source of pressure - primarily Greek Orthodox (but also at times Catholic) leaders using their political influence to assert their church tradition as the only genuine expression of Jordanian Christianity. In January 2021, the Greek Orthodox Archbishop Christoforos Atallah wrote a formal letter to Jordan's Judicial Council denouncing Evangelical Christians as a "danger" to Jordanian society with "strange ideas that depart from our Christian faith

and the national identity of our local church." This pressure campaign succeeded in preventing Evangelical Christians being recognized as an approved denomination by the Jordanian state. This action put at risk the Jordanian government's recognition of marriage, birth, and other personal status issues for 10,000 Evangelical Christians, the vast majority of whom are Jordanian citizens.

- **Government officials (Medium):** The government is used in Christian Denominational Protectionism as a tool by traditional churches to prevent the recognition of non-traditional churches. Also, Eastern Rite churches have strong ties to the Jordanian security services, and according to an expert there were anecdotal reports of "intelligence sharing" on Evangelical Christians from Eastern Rite clergy to the Jordanian security services.

Areas where Christians face most difficulties

The level of persecution in Jordan is generally the same all over the country, although social control is likely to be higher in rural areas. The south of the country is also known to be more conservatively Islamic.

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.

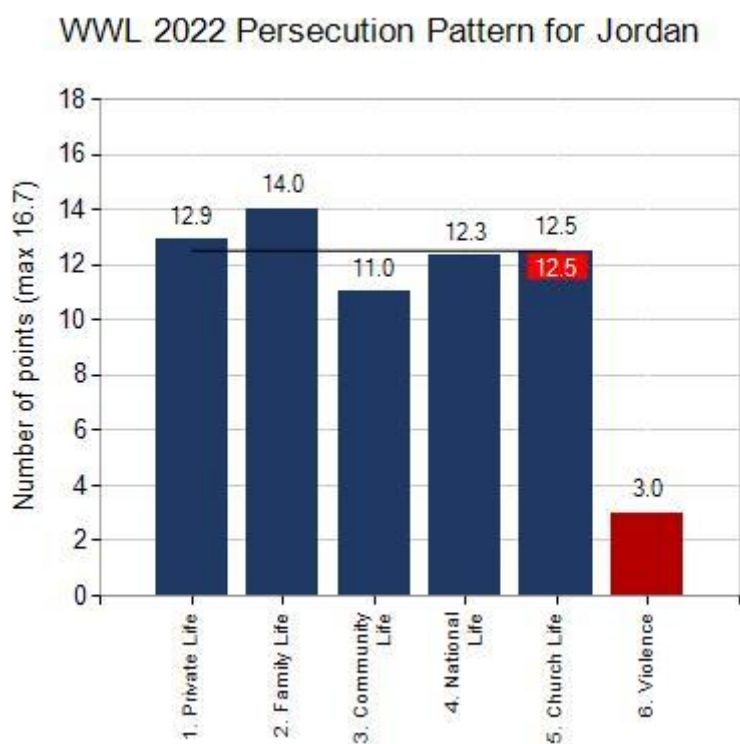
Historical Christian communities: This category makes up the largest group of Christians in Jordan, most of whom belong to Orthodox and Roman Catholic denominations. Overall, they enjoy a relatively high level of religious freedom but can experience discrimination, e.g. in the area of employment. Some pressures persist, especially from radical Islamic elements though these are kept reasonably well in check by intelligence and security forces. Long-standing marginalization provides a sense within these communities of being 'second class citizens', and emigration is a continuing issue.

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. Converts are vulnerable primarily to pressure from family or community for whom restoration of family/tribal/community honor is an imperative that often drives ostracism and sometimes leads to violent responses or initiation of effective legal incapacitation through personal status courts. State authorities are sometimes complicit, either actively through legal processes or through intelligence agents alerting families, or passively through enabling the perpetration of violence with effective impunity.

Children of parents who are converts are additionally vulnerable: Registered as Muslims they are supposed to live Muslim lives outside of their homes, including attending Islamic classes - and Christian lives at home, which can lead to identity conflicts and emotional stress. In general, 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, in particular those active in outreach. They are especially scrutinized by the intelligence service and have reportedly suffered from government pressure and hindrances to gaining employment. Violence against these Christians is mostly met with impunity. Most non-traditional Christian communities are not recognized as churches but as societies and as such have legal status, but are not listed in the appendix to the ecclesiastical courts legislation which specifies the churches that can operate personal status courts. Attempts to obtain equivalent status as other church denominations have consistently been resisted, particularly by traditional churches who have accused these churches of "sheep stealing" and disrupting interreligious stability.

The Persecution pattern



The WWL 2022 persecution pattern for Jordan shows:

- Overall, the pressure on Christians in Jordan – mainly on converts from Islam - is at a very high level; the average score of 12.5 points remained the same as in WWL 2021.
- 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 oppression*.
- The score for violence increased from 2.0 points in WWL 2021 to 3.0 points in WWL 2022.

Pressure in the 5 spheres of life

In each of the five spheres of life discussed below, four questions have been selected from the WWL 2021 questionnaire for brief commentary and explanation. The selection usually (but not always) reflects the highest scoring elements. In some cases, an additional paragraph per sphere is included to give further information deemed important. (To see how individual questions are scored on a scale of 0-4 points, please see the “WWL Scoring example” in the WWL Methodology, available at: <https://opendoorsanalytical.org/world-watch-list-documentation/>, password: freedom).

Pressure in Block 1 / Private sphere

Block 1.1: Conversion has been opposed, forbidden, or punishable, including conversion from one type of Christianity to another. (3.50 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 likely to face 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.

Block 1.8: It has been risky for Christians to speak about their faith with those other than immediate family (extended family, others). (3.50 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.

Block 1.9: It has been risky for Christians to meet with other Christians. (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 is seen as betrayal of their ancestral faith, and betrayal of family and tribe.

Block 1.4: It has been risky for Christians to reveal their faith in written forms of personal expression (including expressions in blogs and Facebook etc.). (3.00 points)

If, for instance, a Christian from a Muslim background was caught accessing Christian online content by a disapproving member of the family or community, this could lead to negative repercussions. Such a reaction is especially likely if converts mention their 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.

Pressure in Block 2 / Family sphere

Block 2.6: Christian couples have been hindered in adopting children or serving as foster parents because of their faith. (3.75 points)

Adoption remains illegal for all Jordanians 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.

Block 2.1: Babies and children of Christians have automatically been registered under the state or majority religion. (3.50 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 recorded faith on official documents, their children will be registered as Muslim. This brings with it a whole range of difficulties for the child in daily life (including participation in Islamic classes at school etc.). This forces these children to live a double life - an Islamic one in the public sphere and a Christian one at home. This can lead to identity conflicts and emotional stress, which is detrimental to their development. It also puts a lot of pressure on their parents.

Block 2.4: Christian baptisms have been hindered. (3.50 points)

For a Christian believer from a Muslim background, baptism would usually be conducted in secret to avoid exposure and potential backlash.

Block 2.12: Christian spouses of non-Christians have been excluded from the right or opportunity to claim custody of the children in divorce cases. (3.50 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.

Pressure in Block 3 / Community sphere

Block 3.2: Christians have been monitored by their local communities or by private groups (this includes reporting to police, being shadowed, telephone lines listened to, emails read/censored, etc.). (3.75 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.

Block 3.6: Christians have been hindered in participating in communal institutions, forums, etc., for faith-related reasons. (3.50 points)

Despite the fact that nine out of 130 seats in the Chamber of Deputies are reserved for Christians and they also routinely serve as ministers and are well represented in the higher ranks of the military, Christians are a minority with less visible presence in daily life than they used to have. Tribal culture is very strong in Jordan and there are unwritten rules about what Christians can and cannot do or say, which severely limit their freedom of expression. This is even more true for Jordanians of Palestinian descent. Converts to Christianity cannot participate at all in community institutions and forums if their faith is known. It is highly unlikely that a convert would want to be actively involved, and Christian viewpoints have no place in these forums anyway.

Block 3.7: Christians have been pressured by their community to renounce their faith. (3.50 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" invitation to become a Muslim.

Block 3.10: Christians have been discriminated against in public or private employment for faith-related reasons. (3.50 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.

Pressure in Block 4 / National sphere

Block 4.1: The Constitution (or comparable national or state law) limits freedom of religion as formulated in Article 18 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. (3.75 points)

The Constitution of Jordan establishes Islam as the state religion and Sharia as the principal source of legislation. In that context, it is not officially possible to leave Islam to convert to another religion (or carry out 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.

Block 4.8: Christians have been hindered in expressing their views or opinions in public. (3.75 points)

In light of the current cyber crime laws and government history of arrests, freedom of speech is very limited. Christians understand the need to avoid deliberately provocative statements, especially statements that are critical of Islam, the Crown, the military or could be construed as proselytizing. It is a criminal offense in Jordan to insult Islam. Additionally, converts from Islam to Christianity must be careful about openly expressing their opinions due to potential backlash from the community and possibly becoming ostracized. As such, self-censorship is quite frequent which limits the expression of Christian viewpoints.

Block 4.2: Officials have refused to recognize an individual's conversion as recorded in government administration systems, identify cards (etc.). (3.50 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. Few Christians from a Muslim background dare to attempt to change the officially recorded religious affiliation from Islam, since making such an application exposes their conversion to the authorities and is potentially dangerous. Some have pursued this via the legal system and failed.

Block 4.14: Those who caused harm to Christians have deliberately been left unpunished. (3.50 points)

For converts from Islam who are victims of crime on account of their faith, the perpetrators (including those of 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.

Pressure in Block 5 / Church sphere

Block 5.7: Churches have been hindered from openly integrating converts. (4.00 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.

Block 5.1: Church activities have been monitored, hindered, disturbed, or obstructed. (3.75 points)

There is a level of routine monitoring of church activities, ostensibly for the protection of churches - though such monitoring could be used against churches if provocative messages or activities were detected, or if Muslims were observed to be attending. Known meetings of Christians with an Islamic background are very likely to be closely monitored and obstructed.

Block 5.5: Churches have been hindered from organizing Christian activities outside church buildings. (3.75 points)

Any form of worship or Christian activity outside designated church property must be undertaken with discretion to avoid provoking hostile reactions and accusations of proselytism.

Block 5.8: Christian preaching, teaching and/or published materials have been monitored. (3.75 points)

Most church leaders accept the fact that there is some routine surveillance of activities on church premises, including the content of what is preached and taught. They effectively exercise self-censorship by avoiding provocative or inflammatory messaging, such as mentioning the evangelism of Muslims or anything that could be perceived as derogatory towards Islam, or any political commentary which could instigate social or political unrest. Especially in Muslim-majority areas, openly preaching, teaching and/or publishing Christian materials could bring strong social pressure on the person doing those activities. This especially affects Christians belonging to non-traditional and convert communities. Books can only be published after getting approval from the Ministry of Culture. Anything that will aggravate Islam - for instance, apologetics - will not be allowed.

Violence

Violence is defined in WWL Methodology as the deprivation of physical freedom or as bodily harm to Christians or damage to their property. It includes severe threats (mental abuse). The table is based on reported cases as much as possible, but since many incidents go unreported, the numbers must be understood as being minimum figures. The following 5 points should be considered when using the data provided in the Block 6 table:

1. Some incidents go unreported because the Christians involved choose not to speak about the hostility being faced. Possible reasons for this may be:

- *Doing so would expose them to more attacks. For example, if a family member is killed because of his/her faith, the survivors might decide to keep silent about the circumstances of the killing to avoid provoking any further attacks.*
- *In some circumstances, the reticence to pass on information may be due to the danger of exposure caused by converts returning to their previous faith.*
- *If persecution is related to sexual violence - due to stigma, survivors often do not tell even their closest relatives.*
- *In some cultural settings, if your loved one is killed, you might be under the obligation to take revenge. Christians not wishing to do that, may decide to keep quiet about it.*

2. Other incidents go unreported for the following possible reasons:

- *Some incidents never reach the public consciousness, because no one really knows about it; or the incident is simply not considered worth reporting; or media coverage is deliberately blocked or distorted; or media coverage*

is not deliberately blocked, but the information somehow gets lost; or the incidents are deliberately not reported widely for security reasons (e.g. for the protection of local church leaders).

- *In situations where Christians have been discriminated against for many years, armed conflict can make them additionally vulnerable. Christians killed in areas where fighting regularly takes place are unlikely to be reported separately. Examples in recent years have been Sudan, Syria and Myanmar.*
- *Christians who die through the deprivation of basic necessities such as clean water and medical care (due to long-term discrimination) are unlikely to be reported separately. Christians are not always killed directly; they can be so squeezed by regulations and other oppressive factors that they die – not at once, but in the course of years. This often includes the deprivation of basic necessities such as clean water and medical care, or exclusion from government assisted socio-economic development projects. These numbers could be immense.*

3. For further discussion (with a focus on the complexity of assessing the numbers of Christians killed for their faith) please see World Watch Monitor’s article dated 13 November 2013 available at: <https://www.worldwatchmonitor.org/2013/11/number-of-christian-martyrs-continues-to-cause-debate/>.

4. The use of symbolic numbers: *In cases where it has been impossible to count exactly, a symbolic round figure (10*, 100* etc.) is given and indicated with an asterisk. A symbolic number of 10* could in reality even be 100 or more but the real number is uncertain. A symbolic number of 100* could go well over 1000 but the real number is uncertain. A symbolic number of 1,000* could go well over 10,000 but, again, the real number is uncertain. The same applies for symbolic numbers 10,000*, 100,000* and 1,000,000*: Each could indicate much higher numbers, but WWR chooses to be cautious because the real number is uncertain.*

5. The symbol “x” in the table: *This denotes a known number which cannot be published due to security concerns.*

| Jordan: Violence Block question | | WWL 2022 | WWL 2021 |
|--|---|---------------------|---------------------|
| 6.1 | How many Christians have been killed for faith-related reasons (including state sanctioned executions)? | 0 | 0 |
| 6.2 | How many churches or Christian buildings (schools, hospitals, cemeteries, etc.) have been attacked, damaged, bombed, looted, destroyed, burned down, closed or confiscated for faith-related reasons? | 1 | 0 |
| 6.3 | How many Christians have been detained for faith-related reasons? | 10 * | 5 |
| 6.4 | How many Christians have been sentenced to jail, labor camp, sent to psychiatric hospital as punishment, or similar things for faith-related reasons? | 0 | 0 |
| 6.5 | How many Christians have been abducted for faith-related reasons (including Christians missing in a persecution context)? | 0 | 0 |
| 6.6 | How many Christians have been raped or otherwise sexually harassed for faith-related reasons? | 100 * | 100* |
| 6.7 | How many cases have there been of forced marriages of Christians to non-Christians? | 0 | 0 |
| 6.8 | How many Christians have been otherwise physically or mentally abused for faith-related reasons (including beatings and death threats)? | 10 * | 10 |

| Jordan: Violence Block question | WWL 2022 | WWL 2021 |
|---|----------|----------|
| 6.9 How many houses of Christians or other property (excluding shops) have been attacked, damaged, bombed, looted, destroyed, burned down or confiscated for faith-related reasons? | 1 | 0 |
| 6.10 How many shops or businesses of Christians have been attacked, damaged, bombed, looted, destroyed, burned down, closed or confiscated for faith-related reasons? | 0 | 0 |
| 6.11 How many Christians have been forced to leave their homes or go into hiding in-country for faith-related reasons? | 4 | 6 |
| 6.12 How many Christians have been forced to leave the country for faith-related reasons? | 1 | 1 |

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

5 Year trends

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

5 Year trends: Average pressure

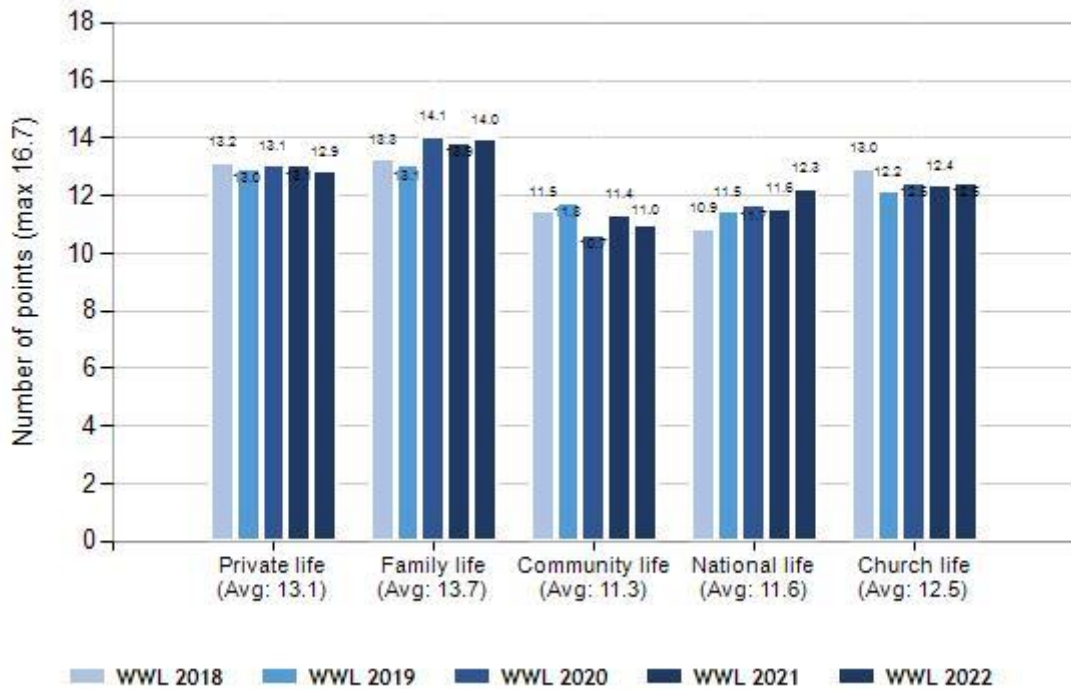
| Jordan: WWL 2018 - WWL 2022 Persecution Pattern history | Average pressure over 5 Spheres of life |
|--|---|
| 2022 | 12.5 |
| 2021 | 12.5 |
| 2020 | 12.4 |
| 2019 | 12.3 |
| 2018 | 12.4 |

The table above shows how the overall score for pressure on Christians has remained stable in the last five reporting periods at a very high level of 12.3 - 12.5 points.

5 Year trends: Pressure in each sphere of life

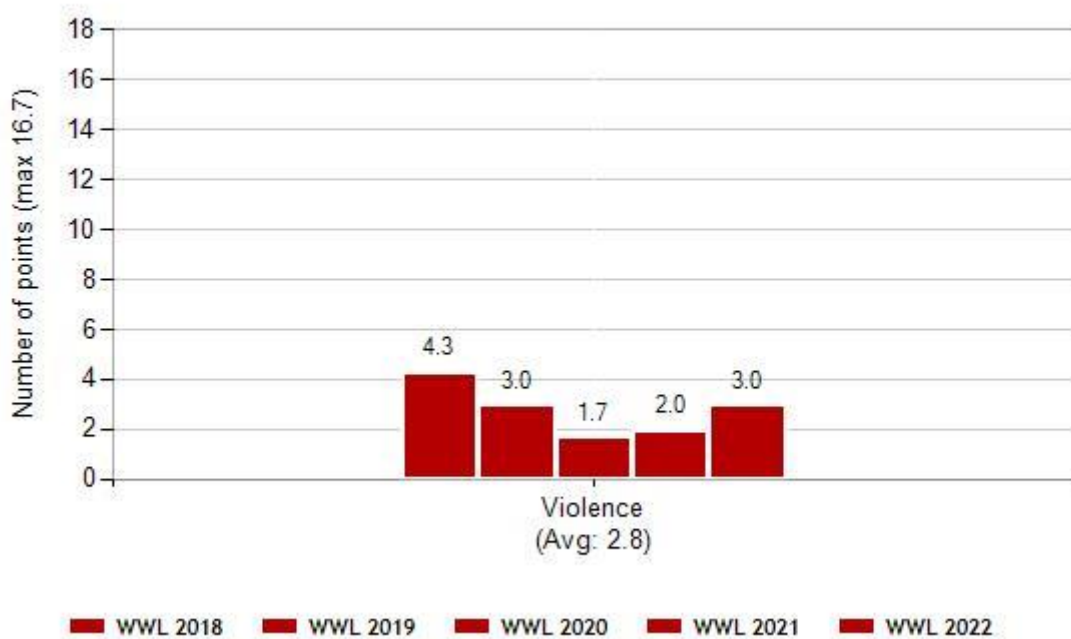
As can be seen in the chart below: Pressure in the *Private, Family and Church spheres of life* has been more or less stable in the last three reporting periods (WWL 2020-2022). Pressure in the *National sphere of life* has risen most, from 10.9 points in WWL 2018 to 12.4 points in WWL 2022, but has never reached the levels of pressure recorded in *Private and Family life*. *Family life* is the only sphere to have reached extreme levels of pressure.

WWL 2018 - WWL 2022 Persecution Pattern for Jordan
(Spheres of life)



5 Year trends: Violence against Christians

WWL 2018 - WWL 2022 Persecution Pattern for Jordan
(Violence)



The violence scores have varied over the years and only reached a high level once (in WWL 2018). The score fell in WWL 2019 and WWL 2020, but has been increasing again since then.

Gender-specific religious persecution / Female

| Group | Female Pressure Points |
|---------------------|---|
| Economic | - |
| Political and Legal | Denied custody of children; Denied legal ability to marry Christian spouse; Forced marriage; Travel bans/restrictions on movement |
| Security | Incarceration by family (house arrest); Targeted Seduction; Violence – death; Violence – physical; Violence – sexual |
| Social and Cultural | Enforced religious dress code; Violence – Verbal |
| Technological | - |

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. Pressure comes most often from family members. If she still lives with her family, she risks house arrest, isolation, beatings and sexual harassment. Female converts can also be prevented from meeting with other like-minded Christians as a punishment for conversion and to prevent the individual from bringing more shame upon the family. Although arranged marriages are not uncommon in Jordan, female converts are under additional threat to be married off involuntarily in a further 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. While no such instances have been reported in the WWL 2022 reporting period, it remains a risk.

Female converts from Islam cannot officially marry male Christians. Even if they marry abroad, the state does not recognize such marriages. When married to non-Christian husbands, female converts risk physical and verbal abuse (women might also face similar challenges if their formerly Christian husband converts to Islam). 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 vulnerable under Islamic Family Law (which is used for personal status matters in Jordan among Muslims) and are likely to be forced to divorce, lose the guardianship of their children, and lose claims to inheritance.

The attitude of the non-Christian spouse's family is crucial in this issue. The recognized churches in Jordan have been working on the [revision of personal status laws](#), to improve the position of women regarding divorce and inheritance rights (Zenith, 25 October 2019) but to date no major improvements have been achieved. In particular, apostasy laws continue to pose challenges to Christian women ([St Charles Institute](#), last accessed 28 December 2021).

On a wider level, all Christian women face pressure to follow a specified dress code, and are at risk of sexual harassment within the public sphere. One local Christian shared: "We get harassed or bullied - there is name calling also for example during Islamic holidays, at the university or in

the street.” Christian women have also been reportedly enticed into marriage with a Muslim; this seems to be a strategic means to prevent the establishment of Christian families.

Gender-specific religious persecution / Male

| Group | Male Pressure Points |
|---------------------|--|
| Economic | Economic harassment via business/job/work access |
| Political and Legal | Denied legal ability to marry Christian spouse; Imprisonment by government |
| Security | Forced out of home – expulsion; Forced to flee town/country; Violence – physical |
| Social and Cultural | Violence – psychological |
| Technological | - |

Within Jordan’s heavily Islamic context, Christian men – particularly converts – face a wide range of pressure for their faith. While some Christian men do occupy senior positions in the workplace, government and military, job discrimination continues to affect all Christians, especially those from a Muslim background. General unemployment rates for all men in Jordan

have risen in recent years and have been made even worse by the COVID-19 crisis, with a reported [25% of people](#) out of work and a 48% youth unemployment rate (World Bank). This has increased the pressure on any men who have lost their jobs because of their Christian faith. If their faith becomes known, Christian men with a Muslim background can be denied security clearances and jobs. In the mostly traditional and tribal Jordanian society where men are regarded as the financial providers for their families, this can cause economic troubles for the wider family, as well as feelings of worthlessness for men.

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 an honor-shame culture when their families reject them and expel them from their homes because of their choice of religion. Christian men also face pressure from the state authorities. Men are reported to be interviewed by intelligence services and placed under pressure to provide information on other Christians, especially if they are part of a ministry helping converts. Pastors and denominational leaders are also targeted for interviews. In recent months, several men from a Muslim background went through hours of interrogation for several days. “One brother was made to confess his faith to his family,” a country expert explained, “he was beaten with a metal chair, ribs broken etc, skull hit with stones. His liver is still damaged.”

In light of economic difficulties, often exacerbated by faith-related pressures, some men are prompted to emigrate. If the pressure on Christian families leads to emigration, this has a potentially negative effect on future church leadership.

Persecution of other religious minorities

In general, Jordan's systems tends to be "repressive" for groups and communities belonging to non-Sunni dimensions, for instance Shiites, Bahai, Druze, Iraqi Mandaeans and Jehovah's Witnesses. These groups are not recognized and therefore they suffer various forms of discrimination.

Shia Islam is especially prevalent among Syrian and Iraqi refugees. It is reportedly harder for a Sunni to convert to Shiite Islam than to convert to Christianity. As an unrecognized religion, activities by Bahai 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.

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. According to the US State Department (IRFR 2020,): The "government continued to record Druze as Muslims on civil documents identifying the bearer's religious affiliation, without public objection from the Druze." There was continued discrimination of Druze which prevented them from holding high positions in government civil service and official departments.

Non-Muslims and non-Christian migrants, mostly Buddhist and Hindus, are also not recognized as a religion, just like Mandaeans who are found among Iraqi refugees who entered the country. Their rituals take place without official permission and are sometimes prohibited. Finally, Muslims who decide to leave Islam to become atheists, or who have adopted other beliefs, face similar pressure from family and community as Christian believers from a Muslim background.

Further details are available in the US State Department's IRFR 2020.

Future outlook

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, with the war in Syria nearing its end, battle-hardened Jordanian Islamic militants could soon return home. Their presence could pose serious dangers to the population and in particular to vulnerable minorities such as Christians. Furthermore, Jordan's economy has suffered massively from the government's measures to restrict the spread of COVID-19 and it remains to be seen whether or how the country will be able to recover from the economic slump. Unemployment is anticipated to remain high. A high unemployment rate, especially for youth, is fertile soil for political unrest and recruitment by radical Islamic groups.

Jordan remains a high-value aspirational target for Sunni jihadists. Returning jihadists and radicalization among low-level members of the security forces pose the biggest threat to security (especially in tourist sites and Christian areas). The small number of incidents during the past five years underscores the high capabilities of the security services, primarily in securing the border with Iraq. The risk of terrorist attacks would increase in the unlikely event that the king reneges on a two-state solution. Islamic State cells would exploit likely excessive force by the state against protesters to increase recruitment and attacks against state targets, notably security services. These projections indicate that the persecution engine *Islamic oppression* is not likely to decrease in influence in the near future.

Clan oppression

The influence of this Persecution engine remains currently unchanged. 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. If this loosening of contact between youth and family or youth and religious leaders continues, it could weaken *Clan oppression* 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.

Dictatorial paranoia

Jordan's image as a beacon of stability suffered a considerable blow in April 2021, when a palace intrigue surfaced and led to the arrest of several royal family members including a half-brother of King Abdulla. International news sources and commentators were all equally surprised by the developments, leading many to believe that Jordan could fall into turmoil with the cracks that this revolt has shown among the royal family. [Economist Intelligence Unit](#) (last accessed on 21 December 2021) however expects "King Abdullah to remain in power in the 2022-26 forecast period, supported by his loyal armed forces." Nevertheless, the think-tank notes that a more widespread social outcry could break out due to rising world food prices and persistently high unemployment. To stem the unrest, the government is likely to crack down on dissidents. A politically stable situation is also of benefit to the Christian community: Any changes to the political status quo could have negative consequences, since any new leadership might be less determined to keep radical Islamic influences under control and uphold religious freedom.

Christian denominational protectionism

This Persecution engine has recently increased in strength after it became known that historic church leaders have been meeting with the Jordanian intelligence service to exchange information, especially concerning non-traditional church groups. It is expected that as Dictatorial paranoia grows stronger, it will also have an effect on Christian denominational protectionism.

External Links - Persecution Dynamics

- Gender-specific religious persecution Female description: revision of personal status laws - <https://magazine.zenith.me/en/society/christians-jordan-church-and-legal-reform>
- Gender-specific religious persecution Female description: St Charles Institute - <https://www.stcharlesinstitute.org/voices/the-apostasy-law-first-hand-accounts-of-suffering>
- Gender-specific religious persecution Male description: 25% of people - <https://www.worldbank.org/en/country/jordan/overview>
- Future outlook: Arab Youth Survey - <http://www.arabyouthsurvey.com/findings.html>
- Future outlook: Economist Intelligence Unit - <http://country.eiu.com/jordan>

Further useful reports

A selection of in-depth reports and smaller articles are available on World Watch Research's Open Doors Analytical website (password: freedom) and on the World Watch Monitor website:

- <https://opendoorsanalytical.org/reports/>
- <https://opendoorsanalytical.org/?s=Jordan>
- <https://www.worldwatchmonitor.org/countries/Jordan>