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World Watch Research

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# Kyrgyzstan: Persecution Dynamics

December 2024



**OpenDoors**

Serving persecuted **Christians** worldwide

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[research@od.org](mailto:research@od.org)

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## World Watch List 2025 – Top 50

Rank	Country	Private life	Family life	Community life	National life	Church life	Violence	Total Score WWL 2025	Total Score WWL 2024	Total Score WWL 2023	Total Score WWL 2022	Total Score WWL 2021
1	North Korea	16.7	16.7	16.7	16.7	16.7	14.4	98	96	98	96	94
2	Somalia	16.5	16.7	16.6	16.6	16.7	11.1	94	93	92	91	92
3	Yemen	16.7	16.7	16.7	16.7	16.7	10.6	94	89	89	88	87
4	Libya	16.0	16.2	15.9	16.2	16.4	10.6	91	91	88	91	92
5	Sudan	14.1	14.2	15.5	14.9	15.3	16.1	90	87	83	79	79
6	Eritrea	14.6	14.9	15.5	15.9	15.9	12.2	89	89	89	88	88
7	Nigeria	13.5	13.9	14.6	14.9	14.5	16.7	88	88	88	87	85
8	Pakistan	13.6	13.9	15.0	15.0	12.9	16.7	87	87	86	87	88
9	Iran	15.0	14.6	13.5	15.9	16.5	10.9	86	86	86	85	86
10	Afghanistan	15.6	15.9	15.9	16.4	16.7	5.0	85	84	84	98	94
11	India	12.2	12.9	13.3	14.9	13.9	16.5	84	83	82	82	83
12	Saudi Arabia	15.2	15.3	14.8	15.8	16.6	3.3	81	81	80	81	78
13	Myanmar	12.6	11.1	13.5	14.1	12.9	16.5	81	79	80	79	74
14	Mali	11.1	10.1	14.7	13.0	15.2	15.6	80	79	76	70	67
15	China	13.2	10.1	12.8	14.6	16.1	11.1	78	78	77	76	74
16	Maldives	15.6	15.3	13.7	15.8	16.5	0.7	78	78	77	77	77
17	Iraq	14.2	14.4	14.3	14.8	13.9	6.1	78	79	76	78	82
18	Syria	13.5	14.4	13.9	14.4	14.3	7.0	78	81	80	78	81
19	Algeria	14.7	14.3	11.5	14.7	16.0	6.3	77	79	73	71	70
20	Burkina Faso	11.7	9.7	13.2	11.5	14.0	15.6	76	75	71	68	67
21	Morocco	13.2	13.8	11.6	12.9	14.3	8.3	74	71	69	69	67
22	Laos	11.8	10.7	13.5	14.1	13.9	9.8	74	75	68	69	71
23	Mauritania	14.6	14.2	13.8	14.2	14.2	2.8	74	72	72	70	71
24	Bangladesh	12.4	10.6	12.7	11.3	10.4	16.1	74	71	69	68	67
25	Uzbekistan	14.6	12.7	13.5	12.4	15.5	4.4	73	71	71	71	71
26	Cuba	13.2	8.5	13.9	13.3	15.1	9.1	73	73	70	66	62
27	CAR	10.3	8.6	13.9	9.6	14.0	15.6	72	70	70	68	66
28	Niger	9.4	9.6	14.5	7.7	14.6	15.7	72	71	70	68	62

Rank	Country	Private life	Family life	Community life	National life	Church life	Violence	Total Score WWL 2025	Total Score WWL 2024	Total Score WWL 2023	Total Score WWL 2022	Total Score WWL 2021
29	Turkmenistan	14.3	12.3	13.6	13.9	15.3	1.5	71	70	70	69	70
30	Nicaragua	12.4	7.6	13.7	13.3	14.1	9.6	71	70	65	56	51
31	Mexico	11.7	9.0	12.5	11.8	11.0	14.6	71	68	67	65	64
32	Oman	14.5	14.1	10.9	13.8	14.1	3.0	70	69	65	66	63
33	Ethiopia	9.9	9.7	12.6	10.4	12.1	15.6	70	69	66	66	65
34	Tunisia	12.4	13.2	10.1	12.6	13.8	8.1	70	69	67	66	67
35	DRC	8.0	7.9	12.6	10.8	14.5	16.1	70	67	67	66	64
36	Bhutan	13.2	13.2	12.3	14.1	14.2	2.2	69	68	66	67	64
37	Mozambique	9.3	8.5	13.9	8.4	12.5	15.9	68	68	68	65	63
38	Kazakhstan	13.3	11.6	12.2	12.8	14.2	4.3	68	65	65	64	64
39	Tajikistan	14.1	12.7	12.7	13.2	13.7	1.9	68	66	66	65	66
40	Egypt	12.7	13.7	12.1	12.4	10.9	6.3	68	68	68	71	75
41	Qatar	14.2	14.2	10.5	13.2	14.4	0.7	67	67	68	74	67
42	Comoros	12.7	14.0	11.2	12.4	14.2	2.6	67	66	66	63	62
43	Cameroon	8.8	7.6	12.6	8.4	13.1	16.1	67	66	65	65	64
44	Vietnam	10.8	9.5	12.2	14.1	14.1	5.9	67	68	70	71	72
45	Turkey	13.0	11.7	11.7	13.2	11.5	5.4	67	64	66	65	69
46	Colombia	11.0	7.9	12.7	11.5	10.5	12.6	66	68	71	68	67
47	Kyrgyzstan	13.5	10.3	11.7	11.4	12.4	6.9	66	59	59	58	58
48	Brunei	14.8	14.8	10.8	10.8	14.0	0.6	66	66	65	64	64
49	Chad	11.0	8.2	10.2	9.9	10.3	15.9	65	61	58	55	53
50	Jordan	12.9	14.3	10.4	12.2	12.8	2.4	65	65	65	66	64

## World Watch List 2025 – Ranks 51-78

Rank	Country	Private life	Family life	Community life	National life	Church life	Violence	Total Score WWL 2025	Total Score WWL 2024	Total Score WWL 2023	Total Score WWL 2022	Total Score WWL 2021
51	Malaysia	12.8	13.7	11.7	12.4	11.2	3.0	65	64	66	63	63
52	Azerbaijan	13.3	10.2	9.6	12.2	13.7	5.6	65	60	59	60	56
53	Kenya	10.3	9.2	11.4	8.0	11.5	13.9	64	63	64	63	62
54	Nepal	12.2	10.6	9.5	12.6	12.3	5.9	63	62	61	64	66
55	Tanzania	9.3	10.8	10.3	8.6	8.7	15.4	63	62	63	61	58
56	Russian Federation	12.7	7.9	10.7	13.1	14.1	4.4	63	58	57	56	57
57	Djibouti	12.3	12.6	12.7	10.1	12.1	1.7	61	61	60	59	56
58	Kuwait	13.1	13.6	9.4	12.0	12.2	0.9	61	61	64	64	63
59	Indonesia	10.9	11.9	10.9	11.6	10.2	5.7	61	66	68	68	63
60	UAE	13.3	13.4	9.5	11.3	12.8	0.6	61	61	62	62	62
61	Sri Lanka	12.7	8.7	11.5	11.5	8.5	7.6	60	60	57	63	62
62	Palestinian Territories	13.1	13.3	10.3	10.7	12.1	0.2	60	60	60	59	58
63	Burundi	7.6	7.8	9.4	9.8	9.7	14.6	59	57	55	52	48
64	Rwanda	9.4	7.7	9.0	10.4	12.1	9.4	58	58	57	50	42
65	Honduras	7.9	4.7	11.7	7.3	9.9	13.1	55	55	53	48	46
66	Togo	9.2	6.7	10.4	7.1	11.5	9.3	54	52	49	44	43
67	Bahrain	12.0	13.2	8.6	11.3	8.5	0.6	54	55	55	57	56
68	Guinea	10.3	7.5	8.3	8.3	10.5	8.9	54	52	48	43	47
69	Ukraine	6.8	5.0	7.8	12.5	13.5	7.2	53	44	37	37	34
70	Angola	6.8	6.7	8.1	11.5	11.4	8.3	53	52	52	51	46
71	Venezuela	6.3	4.4	11.1	10.0	10.8	9.6	52	53	56	51	39
72	Uganda	8.1	5.0	7.4	6.7	8.8	16.1	52	52	51	48	47
73	Ivory Coast	12.0	6.5	8.7	5.9	8.0	9.6	51	44	44	42	42
74	Lebanon	11.5	10.1	7.0	6.2	6.7	7.2	49	48	40	35	34
75	Gambia	8.3	8.2	8.9	8.8	8.9	4.4	48	47	44	44	43
76	South Sudan	5.7	4.4	7.0	6.3	8.1	15.6	47	46	46	43	43

Rank	Country	Private life	Family life	Community life	National life	Church life	Violence	Total Score WWL 2025	Total Score WWL 2024	Total Score WWL 2023	Total Score WWL 2022	Total Score WWL 2021
77	Belarus	9.9	3.7	5.0	10.8	14.1	3.1	47	46	43	33	30
78	Philippines	9.2	6.6	6.6	6.1	5.7	8.5	43	40	32	34	26

## Copyright, sources and definitions

World Watch Research has divided up the previously named Full Country Dossier into two separate documents:

- [Background country information](#) (published annually in summer)
- Persecution dynamics (published annually in January).

These documents are the property of World Watch Research (WWR), the research department of Open Doors International. They include data and analysis based around Open Doors World Watch List (WWL) and 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 end of each document under the heading “External links”. These documents may be used and distributed free of charge, but please always acknowledge the source as: © Open Doors International.

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 can be found on the research pages of the Open Doors website and on the Open Doors Analytical website:

- <https://www.opendoors.org/en-US/research-reports/wwl-documentation/>
- <https://opendoorsanalytical.org/world-watch-list-documentation/> (password: freedom).

## Reporting period

The WWL 2025 reporting period was 1 October 2023 - 30 September 2024.

## Brief country details

Kyrgyzstan: Population (UN estimate for 2024)	Christians	Chr%
6,840,000	263,000	3.8

*Zurlo G A and Johnson T M, eds., World Christian Database, Leiden/Boston: Brill, accessed May 2024*

Kyrgyzstan: Religious context	Number of adherents	%
Christians	263,000	3.8
Muslim	6,061,000	88.6
Hindu	0	0.0
Buddhist	34,400	0.5
Ethnic religionist	28,800	0.4
Jewish	390	0.0
Bahai	2,200	0.0
Atheist	85,100	1.2
Agnostic	361,000	5.3
Other	4,150	0.1
<i>OTHER includes Chinese folk, New religionist, Sikh, Spiritist, Taoist, Confucianist, Jain, Shintoist, Zoroastrian.</i>		

Zurlo G A and Johnson T M, eds., World Christian Database, Leiden/Boston: Brill, accessed May 2024

## Map of country



## Dominant persecution engines and drivers

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

The local authorities have considerable power and tend to be under the influence of the local Muslim community. This has strong repercussions for converts to Christianity. It is the indigenous Christians with a Muslim background who are bearing the brunt of persecution. Some converts are locked up for long periods by their families and beaten. Local Islamic teachers preach against them and may cause them to be expelled from their communities. Russian Orthodox churches experience the least problems from the government as they do not usually attempt to make contact with the Kyrgyz population.

### Specific examples of violations of rights in the reporting period

Many violent incidents go unreported in Kyrgyzstan. The following incidents were selected from Open Doors research. For security reasons, no further details can be provided.

- **December 2023:** Several registered churches (possibly 10, but the actual number is unknown) and a seminary in the capital city Bishkek were closed down on spurious grounds, e.g., for not meeting sanitary or fire safety regulations. Churches were also closed down in the Osh region.
- **July 2024:** Three foreigners were detained in Issyk-Kul region.
- **August 2024:** Two female Christians were expelled from their homes by their families.

### Specific examples of positive developments

On 13 September 2023, Protestant Aytbek Tynaliyev was freed from prison. He had been sentenced on 4 July 2023. (Source: [Forum 18, 26 October 2023](#))

### Christian communities and how they are affected

**Communities of expatriate Christians:** Expatriate Christians are not involuntarily isolated and are hence not treated as a separate category for WWL analysis.

**Historical Christian communities:** These groups (of which the Russian Orthodox Church - ROC - is by far the largest) are not involved in evangelistic programs among the Kyrgyz population and are not considered to be a threat by the authorities. The government has no interest in provoking Russia by



attacking the ROC – the events in [eastern Ukraine](#) have set an example (BBC News, Ukraine conflict, last accessed 12 December 2024).

**Converts to Christianity:** Because Kyrgyzstan’s society is culturally Islamic, Christians with a Muslim background bear the brunt of persecution. They are under strong pressure from family, friends and community (including local authorities).

**Non-traditional Christian communities:** These groups are persecuted mostly because of their evangelistic activities and youth work. They suffer occasionally from raids, threats, arrests and fines by the authorities.

## Areas where Christians face most difficulties

Pressure from the Muslim environment on converts is greater outside the major cities.

## Position on the World Watch List

Kyrgyzstan: World Watch List	Points	WWL Rank
WWL 2025	66	47
WWL 2024	59	61
WWL 2023	59	59
WWL 2022	58	59
WWL 2021	58	55

The score for Kyrgyzstan (66 points) is higher than that of the past years (58/59 points). Pressure in all 5 spheres of life increased in WWL 2025 – be it not immensely. It is the much higher number of violent incidents that created the jump in Kyrgyzstan’s overall score. As in most other countries in Central Asia, the pressure on Christians is highest in the *Private and Church spheres of life*. *Islamic oppression (blended with Clan oppression)* dominates in the *Private and Family spheres of life*, while *Dictatorial paranoia* dominates in the *National and Church spheres of life*. Both engines 'meet' each other in the *Community sphere of life*. Muslim families, friends and villagers exert pressure on converts, while the government imposes many restrictions on church activities. No religious activities beyond state-run and state-controlled institutions are allowed.

## Persecution engines

Kyrgyzstan: 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	Very weak
Communist and post-Communist oppression	CPCO	Not at all
Secular intolerance	SI	Not at all
Dictatorial paranoia	DPA	Strong
Organized corruption and crime	OCC	Not at all

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

### **Dictatorial paranoia (Strong)**

No religious activities beyond state-run and state-controlled institutions are allowed. In 2009, a new Religion law was introduced which imposed many restrictions. Pressure from the authorities was stepped up in 2015 and a new draft law on religion is still under discussion. This new law (not yet implemented) would make the registration of church congregations almost impossible, as it would require each to have at least 500 church members. Meanwhile, on 2 April 2024 Kyrgyz President Sadyr Japarov signed into law a [controversial bill](#) that allows authorities to register organizations as "foreign representatives".

### **Islamic oppression (Strong), blended with Clan oppression (Strong)**

Society in Kyrgyzstan is more traditional than in many other countries in Central Asia. Pressure on Christians is particularly aimed at converts from a Muslim background. If indigenous Muslims convert to Christianity, they will experience pressure and occasionally physical violence from their families, friends and local community to force them to return to their former faith. Some converts are locked up for long periods by their families and beaten. Local Islamic teachers preach against them and may cause them to be expelled from their communities. The Christian burial of converts is problematic and frequently provokes opposition from Muslim villagers.

## Drivers of persecution

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

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

### Drivers of Dictatorial paranoia

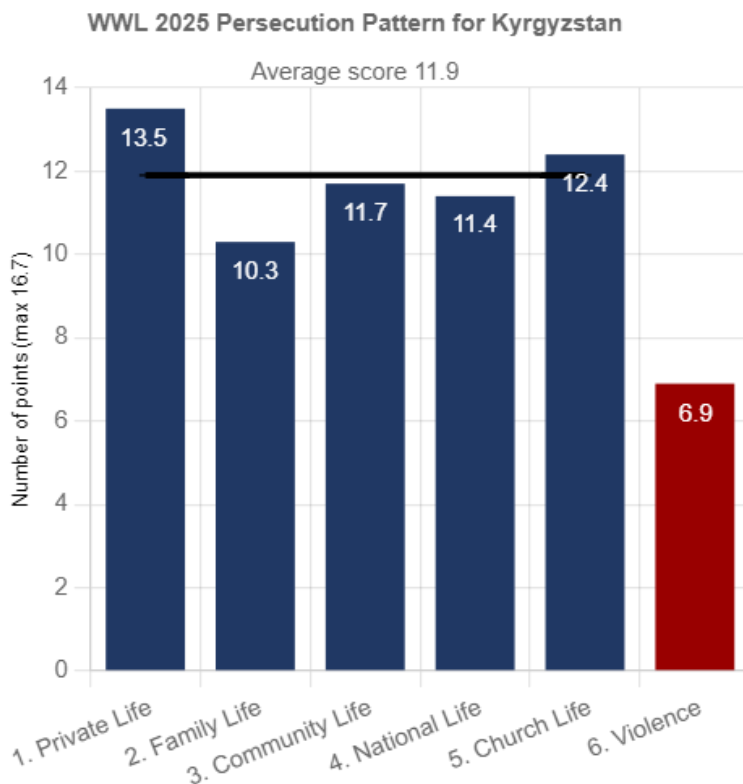
- **Government officials (Strong):** The authorities apply very strict laws (e.g., concerning the registration of churches) which it enforces against non-sanctioned religious groups. It emanates from the federal level but most persecution is carried out by the local authorities at the communal level.

- **Normal citizens (Medium):** Hand in hand with *Islamic oppression*, the influence of Muslim citizens at the local level is significant since they will oppose any perceived attempts at conversion and have a negative attitude towards all Christian activities.
- **Political parties (Medium):** With growing authoritarianism, the party of President Japarov is getting more and more repressive. In the last few years, politicians have been considering tightening the Religion Law.

**Drivers of Islamic oppression (blended with Clan oppression)**

- **Extended family (Strong):** Muslim family members will exert high pressure on converts to Christianity to make them recant. This includes threats, verbal and physical abuse.
- **Non-Christian religious leaders (Strong):** Muslim clerics are open in their hostility towards non-Orthodox Christians and particularly towards converts from Islam.
- **Normal citizens (Strong):** As part of the community, normal citizens may pressurize converts to recant their new faith.
- **Ethnic or Clan group leaders (Strong):** Especially in rural communities, the majority of ethnic community leaders strongly support Islam and have been sources of persecution, igniting religious hatred in the community towards Christians, primarily targeting converts from Islam and also Protestants whom they suspect of converting Muslims to Christianity.
- **Government officials (Medium):** Especially at the local level, authorities are strongly influenced by the Islamic community in many areas. As a result, government officials often join community leaders in persecuting Christians - especially converts.

**The Persecution pattern**



The WWL 2025 Persecution pattern for Kyrgyzstan shows:

- The average pressure on Christians was at a very high level (11.9 points), slightly above the score in WWL 2024 (11.5 points). There were increases in all five spheres of life (mostly very slight).
- Pressure was very high in the *Private, Church and Community spheres of life* and at high levels in all other spheres of life. The highest scores in the *Private* and *Church spheres of life* are an indication that pressure on Christians in Kyrgyzstan comes from two main sources: *Islamic oppression (blended with Clan oppression)* in the *Private sphere of life* and *Dictatorial paranoia* in the *Church sphere of life*. These two elements meet in *Community sphere of life*, where local authorities often line up with the local Muslim community.
- The score for violence is high, increasing from 1.3 points in WWL 2024 to 6.9 points in WWL 2025. Although more violent incidents were recorded than in WWL 2024, it needs to be remembered that many incidents remain unreported.

## 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 2025 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 1.4: It has been risky for Christians to reveal their faith in written forms of personal expression. (3.50 points)***

It can be dangerous for converts and it can be problematic for other Christians as well as writing about one's Christian faith might be seen as a form of evangelism. Converts will anyway try to hide their faith for fear of being discovered. Christians from unregistered church groups will be cautious as online blogs etc. would draw attention to them.

***Block 1.5: It has been risky for Christians to display Christian images or symbols. (3.50 points)***

Converts know that this will immediately draw attention to themselves. Many will therefore refrain from displaying Christian symbols. Christians belonging to unregistered churches will also avoid wearing crosses etc. so as not to draw the attention of the state and its agents.

***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)***

The Muslim environment reacts negatively when converts talk about their Christian faith. This can also be seen as an attempt at evangelism and invoke persecution from the authorities as opposed to simply the family or close community. Non-traditional Protestants also need to be careful of being accused of evangelism - particularly in areas where the local authorities are strongly influenced by the Islamic community.

**Block 1.9: It has been risky for Christians to meet with other Christians. (3.25 points)**

Known converts will be monitored by their family and local community. If they want to meet up with other Christians, they need to be exceptionally careful. There are usually no problems if 2 - 3 Christians meet up for non-church-related activities.

**Pressure in Block 2 / Family sphere****Block 2.5: Burials of Christians have been hindered. (3.25 points)**

Families of converts may experience difficulties in burying their dead because the community will refuse this. Burials of Christians are frequently being denied by the local community and their leaders. Sometimes, relatives have to search a long time to find a final resting place to bury a deceased Christian.

**Block 2.7: Parents have been hindered in raising their children according to their Christian beliefs. (3.25 points)**

As the state is secular, parents have no option to select a school which will provide Christian teaching. Furthermore, the law forbids youthwork by churches. Therefore, parents can only do this at home. For converts the situation is very different: The wider family will oppose the children of converts being raised in the Christian faith. They will try to remove the children from them and raise them according to Islamic principles.

**Block 2.8: Christian children have been pressured into attending anti-Christian or majority religion teaching at any level of education. (3.25 points)**

Sometimes, the administration in schools and institutes arrange state-funded meetings to combat 'sects', which is basically a propaganda drive against religious minorities, including Evangelical churches. These meetings are supposedly voluntary, but everyone is strongly urged to attend. Also, the Muslim environment (family, friends, community) will put pressure on children of converts in particular to receive Islamic teaching - sometimes even against the wishes of their parents.

**Block 2.9: Children of Christians have been harassed or discriminated against because of their parents' faith. (3.25 points)**

Children of converts are usually isolated from having close contact with other children. They often face humiliation and insults at school from teachers and fellow pupils when it is discovered that they are Christians.

**Pressure in Block 3 / Community sphere****Block 3.1: Christians have been harassed, threatened, or obstructed in their daily lives for faith-related reasons (e.g., for not meeting majority religion or traditional dress codes, beard codes etc.). (3.25 points)**

Christians are regularly threatened and their lives are made difficult in Kyrgyzstan. The state opposes Christians belonging to unregistered church groups and converts face hostility from Muslim family, friends and local community.

***Block 3.5: Christians have been put under pressure to take part in non-Christian ceremonies. (3.25 points)***

Converts are under pressure from their community to continue Islamic customs and to attend Islamic festivities in their villages. Participation in religious ceremonies is a part of Community life and even ROC members are pushed to "honor" the local tradition. (Schools, official organizations, etc). Local councils will support this.

***Block 3.6: Christians have been hindered in participating in communal institutions, forums, etc., for faith-related reasons. (3.25 points)***

Converts and Protestants are frequently not invited to participate in communal institutions. The local authorities may cooperate with local Muslims to block access.

***Block 3.7: Christians have been pressured by their community to renounce their faith. (3.25 points)***

This is often the first reaction of family, friends and community when a conversion becomes known. Christians from historical churches who have joined non-traditional church groups also face pressure to revert back to their original faith. In this case, such pressure is exerted by the social environment, not the authorities.

**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 guarantees freedom of conscience and religion and bans religious groups from undertaking actions inciting religious hatred. It establishes the separation of religion and state and prohibits pursuit of political goals by religious groups. The law requires all religious groups to register with the government and prohibits activity by unregistered religious groups. Authorities maintained bans on 21 "religiously oriented" groups they considered extremist and detained nine members of one group for distributing banned religious material.

***Block 4.9: Christian civil society organizations or political parties have been hindered in their functioning or forbidden because of their Christian convictions. (3.50 points)***

The Constitution guarantees freedom of conscience and religion and bans religious groups from undertaking actions inciting religious hatred. It establishes the separation of religion and state and prohibits pursuit of political goals by religious groups. (Source: [US State Department IRFR 2023 Kyrgyzstan](#))

***Block 4.12: Christians, churches or Christian organizations have been hindered in publicly displaying religious symbols. (3.25 points)***

Many churches will not display Christian symbols because they do not wish to provoke a negative reaction from the local Islamic community. Christianity is hardly present in the countryside except for converts, who will avoid drawing attention to themselves and certainly not want to use visible Christian symbols.

***Block 4.14: Those who caused harm to Christians have deliberately been left unpunished. (3.25 points)***

Local officials and community leaders who use violence to put converts under pressure, usually enjoy the support of the local Muslim community and impunity. State agents at any level can act without ever being prosecuted.

**Pressure in Block 5 / Church sphere**

***Block 5.2: It has been difficult to get registration or legal status for churches at any level of government. (3.75 points)***

Church registration is obligatory, but the registration process with the authorities is cumbersome and includes many restrictions. The biggest problem is that a church needs 200 signatures to obtain a registration permit, a demand that practically no church can meet. A draft law has been pending for years which would raise the number of signatures needed for registration to 500.

***Block 5.6: Work among youth in particular has been restricted. (3.75 points)***

Article 4 of the 2009 Religion Law prohibits the involvement of children in religious organizations without their parents' consent. Muslims oppose Christian activities aimed at youth and they will block youth events and summer camps.

***Block 5.1: Activities of churches have been monitored, hindered, disturbed or obstructed. (3.50 points)***

According to the law, registration is obligatory. The demands for official registration are considerable (200 signatures per congregation) which in principle means that it is made impossible (read: obstructed). Few churches have passed the registration hurdle and are functioning outside the law. Most Christian meetings in Kyrgyzstan are therefore vulnerable (e.g., for raids by state agents). But such raids occur relatively rarely and physical violence is used on a very limited scale. This impacts non-ROC Christians, but mostly evangelical groups. Muslims will obstruct meetings of home groups in which converts are present in the countryside. They will also notify local authorities if such meetings occur.

***Block 5.5: Churches have been hindered from organizing Christian activities outside church buildings. (3.50 points)***

Any religious activity outside of an official place of worship requires the advance approval by the local authorities which may take a long time in coming. Unauthorized religious activity - especially in public - is illegal; Muslims who encounter such activity will regard it as a form of evangelism, obstruct it and report it to the authorities.



## 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 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. 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 WWL chooses to be cautious because the real number is uncertain.*

Kyrgyzstan: Violence scores per Block 6 question in questionnaire	WWL 2025	WWL 2024
6.1 How many Christians have been killed for faith-related reasons (including state sanctioned executions)?	0	0
6.2 How many churches or public Christian properties (schools, hospitals, cemeteries, etc.) have been attacked, damaged, bombed, looted, destroyed, burned down, closed or confiscated for faith-related reasons?	10 *	0
6.3 How many Christians have been detained for faith-related reasons?	3	0
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	1
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?	0	0
6.7 How many cases have there been of forced marriages of Christians to non-Christians?	3	0
6.8 How many Christians have been otherwise physically or mentally abused for faith-related reasons (including beatings and death threats)?	0	10 *
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?	0	1
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?	10 *	8
6.12 How many Christians have been forced to leave the country for faith-related reasons?	0	0

In the WWL 2025 reporting period:

- **Churches attacked/damaged:** Sources reported that several registered churches and a seminary were closed on spurious grounds such as for not meeting sanitary or fire safety standards in the capital city, Bishkek; more churches were closed in Osh region.
- **Christians arrested:** Sources reported that in July 2024, three foreigners were detained in Issyk-Kul - adherents of the religious movement "Word of God".
- **Christians forced to marry:** Sources reported that three girls were forcibly married.

- **Christians forced to leave their homes:** Sources reported that at least 10 Christians were forced to leave their parental home because of extreme domestic violence.

## 5 Year trends

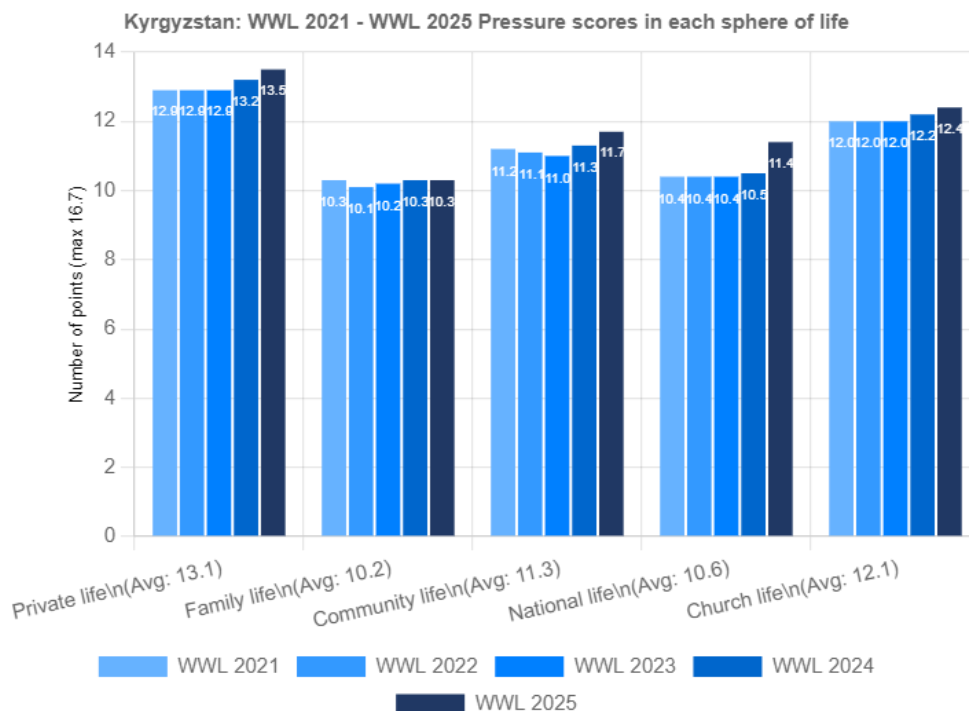
The following three charts show the levels of pressure and violence faced by Christians in the country over the last five WWL reporting periods.

### 5 Year trends: Average pressure

Kyrgyzstan: WWL 2021 - WWL 2025	Average pressure over 5 Spheres of life
2025	11.9
2024	11.5
2023	11.3
2022	11.3
2021	11.4

As can be seen from the table above, the average pressure on Christians in Kyrgyzstan has crept up very gradually over the last five WWL reporting periods, reaching a new high in WWL 2025 of 11.9 points. Life in Kyrgyzstan under President Japarov is becoming less tolerant. Christians in the country (especially converts) are living under increasing levels of very high pressure.

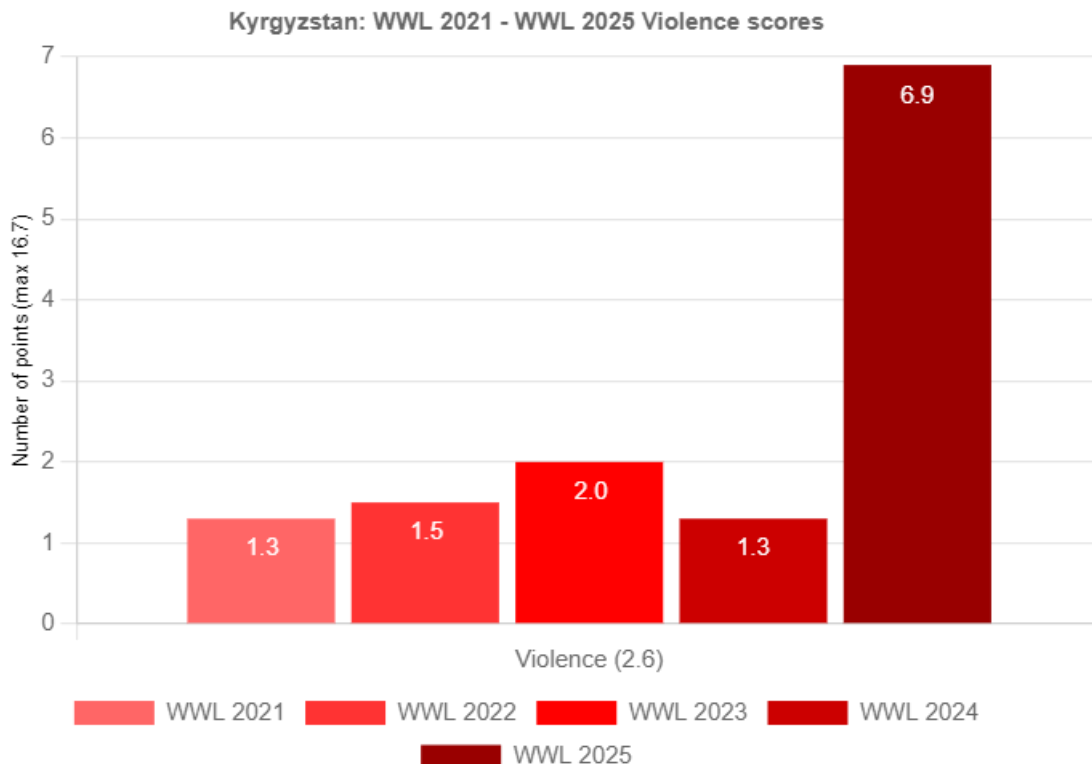
### 5 Year trends: Pressure in each sphere of life



In each sphere of life, the pressure on Christians rose (very) slightly in WWL 2025. The details are as follows:

- Pressure in *Private sphere of life* had been stable at 12.9 points for years and has been the highest scoring sphere of life, indicating very high pressure on converts in particular. In WWL 2025 it reached a new record score for Kyrgyzstan with 13.5 points.
- Pressure in *Family sphere of life* in Kyrgyzstan went very slightly up but retained the score of 10.3 points.
- Pressure in the *Community sphere of life* also rose slightly from 11.3 points in WWL 2024 to 11.7 points in WWL 2025. This means that pressure on the life of converts exerted by local community members has continued and their situation has deteriorated.
- Pressure in *National sphere of life* had been stable at 10.4 points but rose to 10.5 points in WWL 2024. In WWL 2025 the score jumped to 11.4 points. This is another indication that the current regime in Kyrgyzstan is tightening the screws on the Christian minority.
- The same can be deduced from the increased score in *Church sphere of life*. Pressure went up from 12.2 points in WWL 2024 to 12.4 points in WWL 2025.

### 5 Year trends: Violence against Christians



From WWL 2021 - WWL 2024, the number of reported violent incidents in Kyrgyzstan were low or very low, mainly due to incidents being underreported. The score in WWL 2025 jumped to 6.9 points, which is by far the highest in the past five years.

## Gender-specific religious persecution / Female

Group	Female Pressure Points (WWL 2025)
Economic	-
Political and Legal	Denied access to social community/networks; Denied custody of children; Forced marriage
Security	Abduction; Forced out of home – expulsion; Incarceration by family (house arrest); Violence – physical; Violence – sexual
Social and Cultural	Enforced religious dress code
Technological	-

While laws in Kyrgyzstan give equal rights to men and women, traditional Islamic culture places women at a level subservient to men within the family context. Women and girls are excluded from decision-making processes and exposed to violence in a breadth of forms, including domestic violence, bride kidnapping, child marriages and physical abuse ([Girls Not Brides Kyrgyzstan, accessed 13 December 2024](#)). Within the Kyrgyzstan context, women are not free to choose their own faith and will face persecution upon conversion to Christianity.

Over the years, Christian women and girls have been known to suffer from verbal and physical abuse, home detention, forced marriage, family violence and rape. There is a strong belief in Kyrgyzstan that it is acceptable for men to use violence against women and girls, within this context female converts are likely to suffer beatings and physical abuse within their own home ([HRW 2024 country chapter Kyrgyzstan](#)). Activists and parliamentarians called for stronger measures on domestic violence this year, after a women’s ex-husband brutally attacked her with a knife, cutting off her nose and ears, despite her having reported him to the police multiple times for rape, physical violence and threats ([HRW 2024 country chapter Kyrgyzstan; Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty, 26 January 2024](#)).

Common trends in this reporting period include Christian women and girls being expelled from home by their husband or family when their faith is revealed. Reports suggest that one Muslim-background Christian was forced to leave with her two children, without any clothing or means of subsistence. Christian women may also be forcibly separated from their children, in order to pressure them to return to Islam.

The practice of bride-stealing persists in Kyrgyzstan; female converts in conservative regions are at risk of being kidnapped and forced into marriage. While this kind of pressure does not explicitly come from the state, local councils will allow this to happen. In rural Kyrgyzstan, where over 60% of the country’s population lives, a survey suggests that 1 in 3 marriages begin with a bridal-kidnapping. Here, bridal kidnapping is known as “*ala kachuu*” which translates as “to take and run away”. Although the practice became illegal in 1994, it is still widely tolerated, with local NGOs estimating that almost 12,000 women and girls are abducted annually ([UN Women, 6 February 2013](#)). A country expert comments that “Christian women and girls can be abducted to be forcibly married to soldiers and other non-Christians, frequently to Muslim men”.

Female converts from a Muslim background may also experience house-arrest by their families as a common and socially accepted form of putting female converts under pressure. Access to social networks, specifically Christian networks, is restricted in the hope that the convert will return to Islam. A Kyrgyz pastor shared that Christian women and girls in particular are vulnerable to incarceration by their family: "They may be violently abused by husbands and other male relatives and not allowed out of the house or just cannot leave it because of injuries". Exemplifying the risks, a woman who became a Christian was reportedly locked in the basement by her Muslim family, and not allowed to eat or go to the toilet until she renounced.

## Gender-specific religious persecution / Male

Group	Male Pressure Points (WWL 2025)
Economic	Economic harassment via fines
Political and Legal	Imprisonment by government
Security	-
Social and Cultural	-
Technological	-

Male converts to Christianity face various forms of pressure and violence from family members and their local community. Over the years, Christian men and boys have been known to suffer from verbal and physical abuse, arrest, interrogation, fines, imprisonment, job loss, home detention, disinheritance and exclusion from participation in communal institutions.

When a businessman is known to be a Christian, the community may boycott or hinder his business. Men are usually the heads of their families and the main breadwinners, so when a Christian man loses his job or business because of his faith, his whole family will suffer. Known converts will be harassed and interrogated harshly by their family and local community. In some cases, the local imam will also take part in these interrogations, causing psychological weariness and threat to male converts. When churches are raided, it is mostly church leaders who are detained, interrogated and fined. Muslims will hold church leaders primarily responsible for the conversion of their people. There were indications in the WWL 2025 reporting period that pastors continued to be targeted for economic harassment via fines, including a report of a Christian leader being fined around \$270 USD. There have been instances where Kyrgyz Christian leaders could no longer continue with their ministry because their (non-church) business was attacked. The persecution of a church leader (contextually, usually male) impacts the wider congregation, instilling fear and anxiety.

Christian men face daily discrimination, be it in the workplace, army or local community. Pressure is highest in rural areas, away from large cities. There are reportedly two Christians in government bodies, an expert explains, "to give the impression that all is well."

## Persecution of other religious minorities

As reported by [Forum 18 on 26 October 2023](#):

- "The National Security Committee (NSC) secret police informed the public in early August it closed 39 mosques and 21 religious schools in Osh Region for not having official registration. It gave no details."
- "The State Commission for Religious Affairs (SCRA) in Bishkek continues to refuse state registration to Jehovah's Witness communities, especially in southern Kyrgyzstan. It 'currently refrains from registering the local organisations of Jehovah's Witnesses in Osh, Batken and Jalal-Abad regions, because of the conflicts between the local people in those areas and Jehovah's Witness communities', the SCRA claimed in a 10 August response to Forum 18."

As reported by [Forum 18 on 27 March 2024](#):

- On 26 February 2024, Kara-Suu District Court jailed prisoners of conscience Asadullo Madraimov and Mamirzhan Tashmatov for three years and two years respectively for protesting against the regime's July 2023 closure of their mosque, Kara-Suu District's Al-Sarakhsi Mosque in the southern Osh Region.

According to the US State Department ([IRFR 2023 Kyrgyzstan](#)):

- "The government maintained bans on 21 'religiously oriented' groups it considered to be extremist, including Muslim groups such as Hizb ut-Tahrir and Yakyn Inkar. Under the law, banned groups may not conduct any activities within the country, including publishing material online. According to local press, the government arrested at least 43 individuals it said were members of Hizb ut-Tahrir during the year, compared with nine the previous year. The 39 were detained under suspicion of distributing banned religious materials, either through in-person meetings or via social media networks, or for holding leadership positions in the organization."
- "From March through June [2023], local media reported that a total of 25 Yakyn Inkar members were arrested in the capital of Bishkek and in Chui and Jalalabad regions. According to the security services, four Yakyn Inkar members were charged with financing the organization's activities."
- In August [2023], the government raided houses of worship in the southern Osh region and shut down 39 mosques and 21 madrassahs. According to government statements following the raid, the mosques that were closed did not have official documents or registration and were built in violation of established architectural and construction standards."
- "Minority religious groups continued to report the SCRA registration process was cumbersome, in particular the requirement to collect 200 signatures from citizens who identify as adherents. Some groups, including Jehovah's Witnesses and Tengrists (traditional religion adherents), had applications pending for years without official action. While the law does not require examination by authorities of all religious literature and materials, religious groups, including Jehovah's Witnesses, again stated the SCRA required they submit all of their imported religious material for review."

- “Jehovah's Witnesses reported that the SCRA continued to refuse to register their local houses of worship in the south of the country, although the organization is registered in Bishkek. In June, the Supreme Court ruled to uphold previous decisions by the Constitutional Court in November 2022. The SCRA denied the registration of Jehovah's Witnesses' congregations in the Osh, Naryn, and Jalalabad regions, based on the SCRA continuing to interpret the law as requiring religious groups to register with local councils to establish new places of worship. The SCRA continued to impose the requirement despite a finding by the UN Human Rights Council (UNHRC) in 2019 that it was in violation of Article 18 of the ICCPR, which covers religious freedom, as well as in violation of both the Kyrgyz Constitution and a 2016 Supreme Court ruling stipulating that the requirement was unconstitutional. According to Jehovah's Witnesses, the SCRA stated that the UNHRC was not an international tribunal and that its views must only be considered, not implemented.”

According to [USCIRF 2024 Kyrgyzstan chapter](#):

- USCIRF classified Kyrgyzstan as 'recommended for Special Watch List'.
- “Authorities have particularly targeted Muslims who practice a form of Islam that deviates from the state's preferred interpretation. The government often penalized such individuals for their peaceful religious activities and labeled them and their beliefs as 'extremist', foreign, or nontraditional. During the year [2023], the government maintained a list of 'extremist' groups, which included peaceful religious organizations, and detained alleged members under the guise of combating 'extremism', a concept vaguely defined in Kyrgyz law. Authorities also conducted a mass inspection of religious institutions and ultimately fined, suspended the activities of, and closed hundreds of mosques and madrasas across the country. In one case, three men who criticized these government actions were placed in pretrial detention on charges of 'inciting religious enmity', accused of belonging to the banned religious group Hizb ut-Tahrir.”
- “Throughout the year [2023], government officials also targeted and penalized non-Muslims, including Catholics, Protestants, Jehovah's Witnesses, and devotees of the International Society for Krishna Consciousness (ISKCON), for their religious activity. Authorities fined individuals for participation in prayer services, closed churches, prevented the import of religious materials, and denied certain religious groups registration or intimidated others from even attempting to apply. Sources continued to report that members of certain religious groups were reluctant to report religiously based hate crimes for fear of government retaliation or non-response.”

## Trends Summary

### 1) Kyrgyz democracy was stable until mid-2018, but deterioration has set in since then

Kyrgyz politics have passed through a chaotic phase. Kyrgyzstan is untypical for Central Asia in that it has a democratically elected parliament and president, but since mid-2018 the political scene in Kyrgyzstan witnessed a rift and the parliamentary elections that were held in October 2020 resulted in a further destabilization as many people challenged the results. President Jeenbekov decided to step down. Nationalist Sadyr Japarov was released from prison and took over as interim president and was then elected into office in January 2021. According to The Diplomat (1 October 2022), he "is providing [much of the same old authoritarianism](#) in new populist clothes".



According to [Amnesty International](#) (on 8 February 2024) the space for freedom of expression, peaceful assembly and association in Kyrgyzstan shrunk significantly in recent years. Over the past 18 months in particular the authorities have intensified their campaign to stifle all forms of legitimate public criticism and peaceful dissent in defiance of significant and substantiated objections from civil society and international governmental and non-governmental organizations. On 2 April 2024, President Japarov signed into law a [controversial bill](#) that allows authorities to register organizations as "foreign representatives".

## 2) There is concern about proposals for future restrictions on religious minorities

Although Kyrgyzstan is still one of the least oppressive countries in Central Asia for Christians to live in and the pressure from the authorities is far less than in neighboring countries, nevertheless the Church in Kyrgyzstan is in a vulnerable position. Both the recent chaotic political situation and the proposals for future restrictions (dating back to 2014) make life for Christians uncertain.

## 3) Christians continue to face pressure from the Islamic environment

Pressure from Islamic society is particularly strong outside the capital city, Bishkek. Most of this hostility and pressure is aimed at converts to Christianity, but also at churches that are active in evangelism among Muslims.

## 4) Emigration is weakening the Church

The constant emigration of Russians, Ukrainians and Germans poses serious problems for the churches in Kyrgyzstan. At present, they are not being replaced by Kyrgyz converts at the same rate that the others are leaving.

## Further useful reports

Further background information per country and a selection of in-depth reports and smaller articles are available on the Research & Reports pages of the Open Doors website:

- <https://www.opendoors.org/en-US/research-reports/wwl-background/>
- <https://www.opendoors.org/en-US/research-reports/>.

## External Links

- Specific examples of positive developments: Forum 18, 26 October 2023 - [https://www.forum18.org/archive.php?article\\_id=2870](https://www.forum18.org/archive.php?article_id=2870)
- Christian communities and how they are affected: eastern Ukraine - <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/topics/crr7mlg0d21t/ukraine-crisis>
- Persecution engines description: controversial bill - <https://www.rferl.org/a/kyrgyzstan-foreign-representatives-agents-law-signed-japarov-president/32887665.html>
- Pressure in Block 4 / National sphere: US State Department IRFR 2023 Kyrgyzstan - <https://www.state.gov/reports/2023-report-on-international-religious-freedom/kyrgyzstan/>
- Gender-specific religious persecution Female description: Girls Not Brides Kyrgyzstan, accessed 13 December 2024 - <https://www.girlsnotbrides.org/learning-resources/child-marriage-atlas/atlas/kyrgyzstan/>
- Gender-specific religious persecution Female description: HRW 2024 country chapter Kyrgyzstan - <https://www.hrw.org/world-report/2024/country-chapters/kyrgyzstan#ce2d83>
- Gender-specific religious persecution Female description: HRW 2024 country chapter Kyrgyzstan; - <https://www.hrw.org/world-report/2024/country-chapters/kyrgyzstan#ce2d83>

- Gender-specific religious persecution Female description: Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty, 26 January 2024 - <https://www.rferl.org/a/kyrgyzstan-man-ex-wife-nose-cut-off-20-years-prison/32793377.html>
- Gender-specific religious persecution Female description: UN Women, 6 February 2013 - <https://www.unwomen.org/en/news/stories/2013/2/new-law-in-kyrgyzstan-toughens-penalties-for-bride-kidnapping>
- Persecution of other religious minorities: Forum 18 on 26 October 2023 - [https://www.forum18.org/archive.php?article\\_id=2870](https://www.forum18.org/archive.php?article_id=2870)
- Persecution of other religious minorities: Forum 18 on 27 March 2024: - [https://www.forum18.org/archive.php?article\\_id=2899](https://www.forum18.org/archive.php?article_id=2899)
- Persecution of other religious minorities: IRFR 2023 Kyrgyzstan - <https://www.state.gov/reports/2023-report-on-international-religious-freedom/kyrgyzstan/>
- Persecution of other religious minorities: USCIRF 2024 Kyrgyzstan chapter - <https://www.uscirf.gov/annual-reports?country=9214>
- Trends Summary: much of the same old authoritarianism - <https://thediplomat.com/2022/10/kyrgyzstans-revolutionary-president-japarov-2-years-on/>
- Trends Summary: Amnesty International - <https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/eur58/7684/2024/en/>
- Trends Summary: controversial bill - <https://www.rferl.org/a/kyrgyzstan-foreign-representatives-agents-law-signed-japarov-president/32887665.html>