
World Watch Research

Egypt: Persecution Dynamics

January 2025



OpenDoors

Serving persecuted **Christians** worldwide

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

Reporting period

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

Brief country details

Egypt: Population (UN estimate for 2024)

114,484,000

Egypt: Religious context	Number of adherents	%
Christians	10,084,000	8.8
Muslim	103,460,000	90.4
Hindu	1,800	0.0
Buddhist	1,200	0.0
Ethnic religionist	0	0.0
Jewish	110	0.0
Bahai	2,900	0.0
Atheist	120,000	0.1
Agnostic	812,000	0.7
Other	2,600	0.0
<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

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

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

Brief description of the persecution situation

Christians in Egypt report that freedom of religion violations occur mostly at the community level, with many Christians regularly facing discrimination. In addition, incidents take place such as Christian women being harassed in the street (especially in rural areas), Christian children being bullied at state schools or in rare incidents, Muslim mobs forcing Christians to leave their homes after an alleged blasphemy accusation. Community level incidents take place mostly in Upper Egypt, where Salafist movements are active in the rural communities. Their influence is considerable in rural societies where there is a high percentage of illiteracy and poverty.

Christians with a Muslim background have great difficulties in living out their faith since they face enormous pressure from their families to return to Islam. Additionally, government level violations take place: The security services also actively detain and intimidate converts in order to make them stay silent about their conversion, while the state makes it impossible for them to obtain any official recognition of their conversion. Meanwhile, President al-Sisi regularly speaks positively about Egypt's historical Christian community and continues in efforts to create one Egyptian identity, which includes both Muslims and Christians. However, the lack of serious law enforcement and the unwillingness of local authorities to protect Christians leave them vulnerable to attacks, especially in Upper Egypt. In addition, due to the authoritarian nature of government administration, it is futile for church leaders or other Christians to speak out against these practices.

Furthermore, in clear contrast to how mosques are dealt with, the building of new churches is restricted. Despite promises from the president that a church will be built in every new neighborhood and despite the fact that an increasing number of churches are being legalized through official registration, Christians of all backgrounds face difficulties when trying to find (new) places for holding worship. Communal hostility and mob violence, in particular, continue to cause difficulties.

Summary of international obligations and rights violations

Egypt 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 \(CRC\)](#)

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

- Perpetrators of violence against Christians are sometimes left unpunished (ICCPR Art. 2)
- Christians are arbitrarily accused and charged for blasphemy (ICCPR Arts. 18 and 19)
- Children of Christian converts are automatically registered as Muslim (ICCPR Art. 18 and CRC Art. 14)
- Christians face discrimination in public and private employment because of their faith (ICCPR Art. 26)

- Churches face several obstacles to obtain permits for the construction of new buildings and to receive licenses for legal recognition (ICCPR Arts. 21 and 26)
- Christian women, especially in rural areas, may be targeted, abducted and forced into marriage with Muslim men (ICCPR Art. 23; CEDAW Art. 16 and ICESCR Art. 10)

Specific examples of violations of rights in the reporting period

- **December 2023:** Several houses belonging to Coptic Christians in Al-Azeeb in the Upper Egypt governate of Minya, were set on fire by a village mob. The attack followed after the Christian villagers received a permit to build a church and started to lay the foundations for the building ([Christian Solidarity Worldwide, 20 December 2024](#)).
- **January 2024:** On 6 January 2024 (the Coptic Orthodox Christmas Eve), a temporary church building was set on fire in Misha'at Zaafaranah, Abou Qarqas, Minya governate ([Christian Solidarity Worldwide, 11 January 2024](#)). Five years before, early January 2019, the building was closed for security reasons by the police following mob violence and local Muslim villagers demanding that all church activities taking place in the building should cease.
- **April 2024:** On 13 April 2024, in the Imbaba district of Giza, Cairo, 34 year old father-of-two Walid Mamdouh was stabbed to death by a neighbor and his cousins in front of his wife and children. Walid objected to the dumping of waste in front of his shop by his attacker. The perpetrator is known to be an Islamic extremist and had previously caused trouble with Christians in the area ([Copts United, 16 April 2024](#)).
- **April 2024:** On 23 April 2024, Christians in the village of Al-Fawakher were beaten and several houses set on fire, following a rumor that a church building would be established in the village. A similar incident happened on 25 April 2024 in the village of Al-Kom Al-Ahmar, where Copts were attacked by an Islamic mob after the evangelical church reportedly received an official building permit ([Christian Daily, 26 April 2024](#)).
- **March/May 2024:** Other incidents of mob violence in Upper Egypt were reported by local sources in March and May 2024. In Assiut governate, a Christian family became the victim of mob violence after they complained about the harassment of their minor daughter. Both mother and daughter were stripped off their clothes, while the husband and father was severely mistreated. They decided to leave their village after the father received even more abuse from the police when he made an official complaint. Similarly, in Minya, a Christian woman was grabbed by a young Muslim man. A cousin that came to her defense was severely mistreated and needed hospital treatment. Later on, a mob returned and attacked the local Christian community in the village, resulting in injuries and damage to several Copts and their houses. These kind of incidents show a similar pattern in which women and girls are harassed and attacked to shame the Christian victims and underline their submissive status. Their second-class status becomes even clearer when considering the total imbalance in power between victims and attackers: If Copts try to defend themselves, be it verbally or by asking the police to intervene, they can easily become the victim of excessive mob violence. Police intervention is usually characterized by indifference or by restoration of public peace, with the arrest of both perpetrators and victims.

- **Church fires:** During the WWL 2025 reporting period, several church fires were reported. As well as the arson attacks reported above, churches were damaged by fire in October 2023 in Ibshaway, Fayoum governate ([Ahram, 7 October 2023](#)), in Akhmim, Sohag governate on 24 March 2024 and in July 2024 in Bakos district, Alexandria governate ([Masrawy, 12 July 2024](#)). On 1 September 2024, a fire broke out in a building adjacent to a church in Beni Suef, Beni Suef governate ([Egypt Independent, 1 September 2024](#)). In these other cases, no evidence was found to suggest foul play. However, each year a number of church buildings catch fire with the official explanation being that they caught fire because of an accident or technical malfunctioning. The number of church fires seems to be suspiciously high at times (most typically in August 2022, when 9 church fires erupted, including the deadly church fire on 14 August 2022 in Abu Sefein church in Gizeh, causing 41 deaths).
- **Converts to Christianity:** During the WWL 2025 reporting period, several converts from Islam to Christianity were arrested and mistreated by the security services.
- **Missing in mysterious circumstances:** During the WWL 2025 reporting period, a number of young Coptic women were reported missing, of whom some were later returned to their families. It often remains unclear whether the young woman in question escaped from an abusive home or a forced marriage, fell in love with a (Muslim) man and voluntarily ran away or if someone was groomed and converted to Islam by force. There are indications, though, that Salafi groups specifically target (young) Coptic women to convert them to Islam and that financial incentives are offered to (young) Muslim men to marry them. Although the number of cases is comparatively low compared to the overall number of Copts, there are numerous legal and cultural elements that make female Christians particularly vulnerable to such practices, including the (legal) difficulty to reconvert to Christianity and family honor preventing Christian women from returning to their families. In addition, there is a striking imbalance between the faiths: Whereas a Christian women can easily convert to Islam and marry a Muslim man, it is culturally and legally impossible for a Christian man to marry a Muslim woman. The latter is in the first place forbidden by law, but more importantly, women are considered the bearers of (family) honor and (Islamic) pride. The slightest rumor that a Christian man is in a relationship with a Muslim woman is often enough to cause mob violence against Christians. (For more information, see below: *Gender-specific religious persecution*.)
- **Impunity for attackers:** Perpetrators of violence against Christians are sometimes left unpunished.

Specific examples of positive developments

- **Church registrations:** The legalization of churches under the 2016 Church construction law has been continuing. By the end of October 2024, almost 3,500 churches out of more than 5,500 requests have now received official registration ([Egypt Today, 30 October 2024](#)). The official recognition of churches sometimes leads to sectarian tensions with the local Muslim population.
- **No major violent attack:** During the WWL 2025 reporting period, no major violent attack was carried out by Islamic militants targeting the Christian Coptic community.

Christian communities and how they are affected

Communities of expatriate Christians

Expatriate Christians in Egypt are not forced into isolation. This category is therefore not included in the WWL scoring and analysis.

Historical Christian communities

The largest church in this category is the Coptic Orthodox Church (with more than 90% of the Christian population). There are also established Protestant denominations throughout the country. The large Coptic minority, while facing important difficulties (including discrimination in education, health and government legislation that hinders essential aspects of church life), has been tolerated by the state and by the Muslim majority in the country because of its historical presence and its significant size of several million. However, historical Christian communities are regularly targeted by their surrounding neighborhoods, for instance when rumors are spread that a building is to be turned into a church. Also, an accusation of blasphemy (on social media) or a relationship between a Christian man and a Muslim woman are enough to lead to acts of violence, often perpetrated by mobs. Meanwhile radical Islamic groups remain a danger, particularly in the Sinai region.

Converts to Christianity

There is a small but growing number of Christian converts who bear the brunt of violations, most often at the hands of family members, but also by the security services. The former punish converts for abandoning the Islamic faith, often by means of beatings or expulsion from the family home.

Non-traditional Christian communities

There are several Evangelical and Pentecostal groups in the country, some of them being 2nd, 3rd or even further generations of converts from a Muslim background. Others come from an Orthodox background. They face pressure from both the Islamic society and to a lesser extent from the Coptic Orthodox Church.

Areas where Christians face most difficulties

Islamic society in Upper Egypt, the southern part of the country, is known to be more conservative and radical than the north. Most incidents and mob attacks take place in this region, with the Minya Governate being the most notorious and having the highest number of attacks on Christians per capita. However, Christians in the economically disadvantaged rural areas in the north experience a similar degree of oppression by radical Muslims, especially in the Nile Delta villages and towns.

Radical Islamic groups such as the Muslim Brotherhood have nationwide support, but in recent years violent Islamic militants have only been openly active in the north-eastern area of the Sinai peninsula. However, at the end of February 2023, President al-Sisi claimed that terrorism had been [defeated](#) in the Sinai region (Ahrum Online, 2 March 2023). Before that, in April 2021, a video appeared of the execution of Nabil Habashy Salama, a Christian from north-Sinai who had previously been abducted by the Islamic State group. In August 2022, a Coptic father and son were found murdered in the same area; it is assumed that they had been victims of IS-related militants.

Position on the World Watch List

Egypt: World Watch List	Points	WWL Rank
WWL 2025	68	40
WWL 2024	68	38
WWL 2023	68	35
WWL 2022	71	20
WWL 2021	75	16

The overall score remained the same in WWL 2025: 68 points. The drop in violence score from 7.8 points to 6.3 was offset by the rise in average pressure which increased slightly from 12.1 points to 12.4 points in WWL 2025. The increase in average pressure was mainly caused by the deteriorating economic situation in combination with increased government pressure to keep society under control, which exacerbated already existing power dynamics between Muslims and Christians. Although there was a drop in violence score, Egypt's Christians still face a very high level of violence: Two Christians were killed, while at least 46 were attacked, among other incidents. In addition, government pressure also increased on Christian converts from a Muslim background, several of whom were arrested and physically abused by the Egyptian security services.

Persecution engines

Egypt: 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	Weak
Christian denominational protectionism	CDP	Strong
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.

Islamic oppression (Strong)

In Egypt, *Islamic oppression* operates in different ways. Islamic culture sustains a view in Egyptian society whereby Christians are regarded as second-class citizens. This view causes the discrimination of Christians in the political realm and in their dealing with the state. It also creates an environment in which the state is reluctant to respect and enforce the fundamental rights of Christians. In families, converts to Christianity face great pressure to renounce their faith. Christians also face pressure from *Islamic oppression* in their daily lives in their local neighborhood or at work. There have also been several violent attacks perpetrated by militant Islamic groups targeting Christians in the past decade, although in recent years attacks were mainly carried out by individual radicalized Muslims targeting individual Christians. The activity of violent militant groups in north-eastern Sinai, their last stronghold within Egyptian territory, has been subdued since 2023 (Ahram Online, 2 March 2023).

Dictatorial paranoia (Strong)

The tradition of authoritarian rule is perhaps the only permanent feature in Egypt's political system, which experienced three regime changes in just three years (2011-2014). All of Egypt's rulers have had an authoritarian government style. In 2011, Mubarak's long dictatorship was ended through massive social protests, which eventually led to the controversial election of the Muslim Brotherhood. The government led by Mohamed Morsi did not behave democratically and was ousted by a national uprising supported by the army in 2013. Currently, Egypt is ruled by a civilian government led by former army chief Abdul Fatah al-Sisi, after a presidential election in May 2014 and re-elections in March 2018 and December 2023. This government seems to regard basic human rights and democratic pluralism as a low priority in view of the huge current economic, political, social and security challenges. In this context, therefore, religious freedom for Christians is not fully guaranteed.

Christian Denominational Protectionism (Strong)

Especially in Upper Egypt and the Delta region, the Coptic Orthodox Church acts strongly against other denominations. Members of Orthodox congregations have been warned by their clergy not to have contact with other denominations, especially Evangelical groups. There have been cases in which families depending on financial and social services from the Orthodox Church, have been deprived of those sources after attending a non-Orthodox church or allowing a pastor from a non-traditional Christian community to visit them in their homes.

Clan oppression (Weak)

The influence of tribalism for Christians from historical Christian communities is mostly limited to rural areas, yet it does play a significant role in persecution dynamics. Although few commentators see a clear ethnic distinction between (Christian) Copts and (Islamic) Arabs, Christians and Muslims act as two distinct groups in Egyptian society. As in many other Arab countries, tribal thinking strongly influences group thinking and this can easily lead to verbal and physical violence where one group feels threatened. In Upper Egypt for instance, many cases of mob violence happen when Christians try to implement the official recognition of a church building. There is a mixture of *Islamic oppression* and *Clan oppression* in such cases which necessitates that the Christian minority has to operate carefully.

In addition, converts from a Muslim background face pressure in particular from their (extended) family for shaming values like the honor of the family. Although *Islamic oppression* remains the main engine, this tribal mindset also instigates family pressure.

Drivers of persecution

Egypt: Drivers of Persecution	IO	RN	ERH	CO	CDP	CPCO	SI	DPA	OCC	
	STRONG		WEAK		STRONG		STRONG			
Government officials	Medium			Strong						
Non-Christian religious leaders	Medium									
Religious leaders of other churches					Strong					
Violent religious groups	Medium									
Citizens (people from the broader society), including mobs	Strong			Weak						
One's own (extended) family	Strong			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. For more information see WWL Methodology.

Drivers of Islamic oppression

- **One's own (extended) family (Strong):** Family members of converts regard their conversion from Islam to Christianity as betrayal of Islam, while Islam is seen as the all-encompassing pillar of society; something you cannot break away from. Those strongly held Islamic convictions are a significant reason for family members to target relations who convert to Christianity.
- **Citizens (people from the broader society), including mobs (Strong):** Ordinary people whose views are shaped by intolerant and radical imams are significant drivers of persecution and contribute the lion's share of the pressure that Christians face in their daily lives in their local neighborhoods and at work. Societal hostility and prejudice against Christians are more pronounced in the poorer and rural parts of the country.
- **Non-Christian religious leaders (Medium):** Radical Islamic preachers who propagate hatred play a crucial role in sustaining a climate of intolerance and in fueling hostility against Christians. Their influence is most keenly felt in the rural and poorer urban areas of the country. Their impact has been reduced somewhat by the strict government monitoring of preaching in mosques which aims at reducing sectarianism.
- **Violent religious groups (Medium):** In the past, militant Islamic groups (such as the Islamic State group) have been responsible for many of the most gruesome acts of violence targeting Christians. They were until 2023 openly active in the north-eastern area of the Sinai peninsula,

but have been repressed by the government. Nonetheless, violent Islamic individuals, especially those that have returned from abroad (e.g., Libya), are a threat in all of Egypt, with several Christians being attacked in recent years.

- **Government officials (Medium):** Government officials also act as drivers of intolerance, discrimination and persecution through their failure to vindicate the rights of Christians (e.g., by failure to protect Christians from mob attacks) and also through discriminatory acts which violate the fundamental rights of Christians (e.g., their refusal to acknowledge conversion from Islam to Christianity).

Drivers of Dictatorial paranoia

- **Government officials (Strong):** Government officials, including judicial officers, local administrative officials as well those belonging to various branches of the security apparatus in Egypt are the principal drivers here. The administration of President al-Sisi is attempting to shore up its support with the majority of the population and hold on to power. Thus, despite its promises to the contrary, the government has actually maintained existing restrictions on the freedom of religion of Egyptian Christians. Church leaders in Egypt are also constantly monitored and under surveillance by the state. In addition, the freedom of speech has been extremely restricted for all Egyptians by the al-Sisi government. Hence, Christians cannot speak out against injustices and violations.

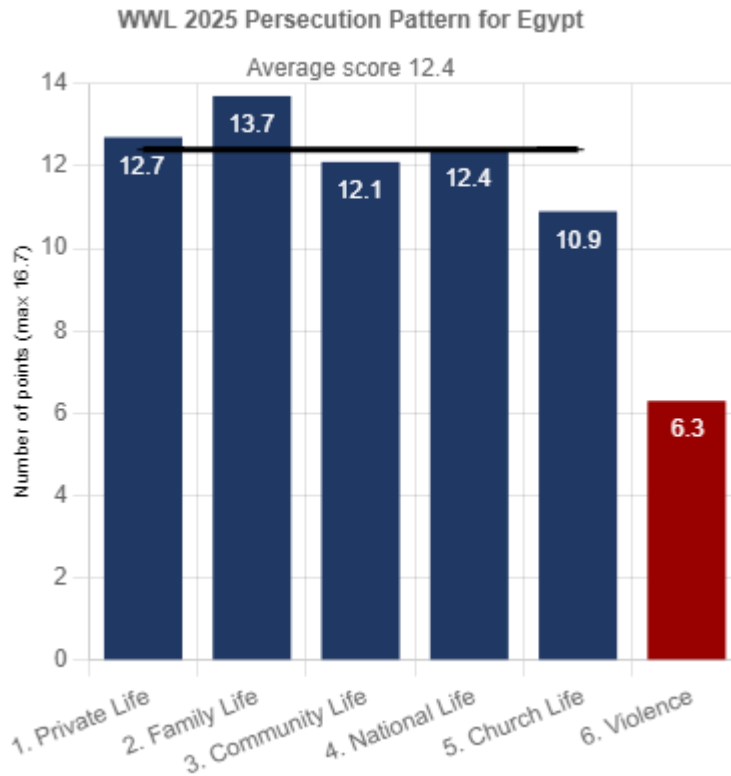
Drivers of Christian denominational protectionism (Strong)

- **Religious leaders of other churches (Strong):** Mainly clergy from the Coptic Orthodox Church are using their position to add pressure on other denominations.

Drivers of Clan oppression

- **One's own (extended) family (Weak):** In a context of tribal thinking based around Islamic faith, family members often regard conversion from Islam to Christianity as betrayal of the family and a shame to the family honor, which needs to be corrected.
- **Citizens (people from broader society), including mobs (Weak):** Wider society functions as a watchdog to make sure that the honor and power of the group is protected. This is especially the case in rural areas. Allegations that Christians are being given more space in society (e.g., by having their church legitimized) can ignite mob attacks.

The Persecution pattern



The WWL 2025 Persecution pattern for Egypt shows:

- The average pressure on Christians is at a very high level (12.4 points), slightly increasing from 12.1 in WWL 2024.
- All *spheres of life* show very high levels of pressure, which is highest in the *Family, Private* and *National spheres of life*. The very high score of 13.7 points for *Family life* reflects in particular the difficulties converts from Islam to Christianity face concerning Christian weddings, baptisms and funerals. The very high score for *National life* reflects the levels of discrimination all Christians face - and especially those with a Muslim background - when engaging with the authorities. The danger of being accused of blasphemy, followed by mob violence, is always present, while the police and other authorities will often side with the accusers and attackers in order to retain public order.
- The score for violence decreased, but remained at a very high level: It dropped from 7.8 points in WWL 2024 to 6.3 in WWL 2025. The decrease is mainly due to less reported killings and church attacks. However, not all violent incidents are being registered due to underreporting. Before WWL 2023, the violence score had always been above 10.0 points.

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://www.opendoors.org/en-US/research-reports/wwl-documentation/>.

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)

Conversion from Islam to Christianity ('apostasy') is not officially forbidden by law. However, a key ruling by the Cairo Administrative Court in 2008 stated that the freedom to practice one's religion is subject to certain limitations, and affirmed that conversion from Islam to another faith is a violation of the principles of Islam and therefore not allowed. Despite promising statements by President al-Sisi that he even respects non-believers and that they are "free to choose" ([Al-Monitor, 20 September 2021](#)), converts from Islam to Christianity are regularly detained, mistreated and forced into silence by the security services.

In addition, conversion is punished via the blasphemy laws. Societal hostility towards converts is very high and mere rumors of conversion can lead to mob violence, especially in rural areas. Conversion is seen as a huge shame for the honor of the family. As a result, family members will try to get converts to recant their faith, and may expel them from the family home or even kill them.

Block 1.10: Christians have been isolated from other family members or other like-minded Christians (e.g. house arrest). (3.25 points)

Especially converts from Islam to Christianity often find themselves isolated from other Christians, both because they are in many cases still living within their Muslim families and because of social barriers which make it difficult to connect to Christians belonging to the historical or non-traditional church communities. In addition, especially in upper Egypt and rural areas, young Christian women are often isolated as an indirect effect of persecution: Their family members force them to stay at home, partly because of cultural norms but also - through experience of life as a religious minority - out of fear that they might otherwise fall victim to sexual abuse by Muslim men.

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)

Several converts from a Muslim background who openly declared their Christian faith on social media have been arrested. Most converts refrain from publishing anything indicating their new faith, mainly out of fear of repercussions from family or society. On another note, the blasphemy law is widely used to target those who are criticizing Islam. Several Christians have been arrested or have been the victim of mob violence after allegedly insulting Islam on social media. Nevertheless, many Christians continue to share large quantities of Bible verses, Christian images and other Christian content on social media.

Block 1.8: It has been risky for Christians to speak about their faith with those other than immediate family (extended family, others). (3.00 points)

Accusations of blasphemy are easily made, so most Christians refrain from discussing their faith with people they do not know or trust. Discussing their faith can easily be interpreted as an attempt to proselytize, which is heavily opposed by society. However, converts face the highest risk since discussing Christian faith can lead to discovery of their conversion.

Block 1 - Additional information

Pressure in the *Private sphere of life* has been very high for years, as converts from Islam to Christianity in particular are severely limited in their personal expression of faith. Conversion to Christianity is strongly opposed, making it often difficult to speak about faith with family members: "It takes wisdom in choosing the right time and right place to speak with your family members about faith", according to one convert. While owning a Bible carries clear risks for converts, the Internet has brought solutions here and makes it easier to worship privately. However, especially in the case of women, discovery of their new faith can lead to house arrest and domestic violence. Many converts are therefore also careful where and when to meet other Christians.

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)

In line with Islamic law, adoption is prohibited in Egypt. However, fostering a child is possible and becoming more common and there is an ongoing debate within society concerning the care for children in need. Nonetheless, Christians are most likely to be hindered if they want to foster a Muslim child. A telling example is the case of 'Baby Shenouda', who after four years was taken from his Christian foster parents into an orphanage because unidentified foundlings are by law considered to be Muslim and cannot be raised by non-Muslims. Despite such flagrant discrimination, his eventual [return to his parents](#) and the public outcry by both Christian and Muslim commentators following the incident offers a ray of hope for long-term change (The New Arab, 29 March 2023).

Block 2.1: Babies and children of Christians have automatically been registered under the state or majority religion. (3.50 points)

It is very difficult, if not impossible, for converts from Islam to Christianity to change the religious registration on their ID cards. The registered religion of the father is automatically applied to the child. Thus a convert's child is always registered as Muslim. If a Muslim man converts to Christianity and is married to a woman registered as Muslim, their marriage becomes invalid under Egyptian law and their children are considered to be illegitimate.

Block 2.2: Registering the birth, wedding, death, etc. of Christians has been hindered or made impossible. (3.50 points)

Converts from Islam to Christianity face the biggest challenges in this regard. As their conversion is not recognized in any way, neither by government nor society, it is very difficult for them to get married with a Christian ceremony (which is done in secret or in a foreign country). Under Sharia law, a Christian man cannot marry a Muslim woman. So the children of a Christian man married to a convert woman,

will be regarded as born out of wedlock. Converts will have to register their children as Muslim upon birth.

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

Children of converts from Islam to Christianity have to attend Islamic religious classes, as their conversion is not recognized. However, other Christian children also face difficulties, as the Egyptian curriculum is heavily influenced by Islamic teaching. Christians have their own Christian religion classes, but they still have to learn verses of Islamic literature and parts of the Quran at school. Some of the educational material also contains anti-Christian teaching. Children of privileged Christians can avoid this by attending private Christian-run schools, but this is only financially possible for some parents.

Block 2 - Additional information

It is difficult for converts from Islam to Christianity to live as a Christian family. They can only be baptized in secret. Giving their children Christian names would be socially questionable. In general, marriage and burial for converts can only be carried out according to Islamic rites. In addition, if their new faith becomes known, converts are likely to be forced to divorce, lose custody of their children and be disinherited.

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 occurs at different levels. Local communities and Islamist groups know where the Christians live in their neighborhood or villages. They watch and observe them, making sure the Christians do not disrespect Islamic principles by evangelizing or causing problems in others ways. This tension is less in urban places, but remains a problem in poor neighborhoods and rural areas, especially in Upper Egypt. In recent years, several Christians have been attacked after allegedly insulting Islam or allegedly having a relationship with a Muslim woman. Police presence and government control is less strict in poor and rural areas and mob attacks often go unpunished. At the state level, security and intelligence agencies spy on converts and try to force them to supply information on the activities of convert groups. They also regularly detain converts to force them to stay silent about their new faith and stop all involvement with other converts.

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

This discrimination occurs at different levels. Christians are not employed within the intelligence agencies, and cannot be promoted to senior positions within the army or police force. Christians are also underrepresented in senior government positions. Job discrimination in private employment depends on the level of tolerance of the employer, but happens regularly. Such discrimination has led to a high level of entrepreneurial activity among Copts and other Christians, since they cannot rely on the state or even private (non-Christian) employers for employment. Finally, although constituting a

sizable percentage of the population, there has not been a single Christian player in Egypt's national football team in a decade, and Christians are discriminated against and denied opportunities to play in the top professional football clubs in the country.

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.). (3.00 points)

Christians face discrimination and hostility at times. Civil servants are sometimes unwilling to accept Christians as peers with the same rights and guarantees of safety. Although all women in Egypt experience some forms of (sexual) harassment, Christian women are particularly vulnerable because they do not veil themselves. Levels of pressure and discrimination vary; there is often less pressure in urban areas compared to rural areas.

Block 3.12: Christians have been fined for faith-related reasons (e.g. jizya tax, community tax, protection money). (2.50 points)

The practice of so-called 'customary reconciliation councils' is relevant here. After Christians or churches have been attacked, the local authorities often force Christians to accept a meeting before such a council instead of requesting the prosecutor to prosecute the attackers. Christians often have to accept the terms imposed by these councils, which in most cases benefit the perpetrators at the cost of the Christian victims. In some cases, the Christians are even forced to sell their houses and leave the village. Despite intentions for peaceful reconciliation, in reality these councils perpetrate a climate of impunity and encourage further attacks.

Block 3 - Additional information

Egypt's society is generally Islamic and conservative, although changing attitudes are visible in urbanized areas. Converts have to keep their faith hidden when participating in society and, especially during religious festivals like Ramadan, have to adhere to Islamic religious norms. At times, Christians belonging to Historical church communities experience discrimination in both communal life and education, depending on the area where they are living. Examples of incidents are: Receiving lower grades, exclusion from university forums in Upper Egypt, being forced to memorize Quran verses, insulting songs being sung and Christian children being bullied. This can make them feel they are 'second-class citizens'.

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)

Sharia law is “the principle source of legislation”, according to the Constitution. Article 7 designates the Al-Azhar University, the most prominent educational institution within the Sunni Islamic world, to have “main authority for religious sciences, and Islamic affairs”. It has considerable influence in society, and although attempting to curb Islamic extremism, its head has repeatedly stated that the death sentence is the only possible punishment for anyone leaving Islam. Hence, converts from Islam to Christianity are not protected by the Constitution, although Article 64 states that "Freedom of belief is absolute". Moreover, freedom of belief is limited to "practicing religious rituals" and "establishing

places of worship" and does not allow for missionary activity. It is clear that Freedom of Religion or Belief as formulated in Article 18 of ICCPR, to which Egypt is a signatory, is not being fully upheld.

Block 4.2: Officials have refused to recognize an individual's conversion as recorded in government administration systems, identify cards (etc.). (3.50 points)

Although conversion is not forbidden by law, it is strongly opposed in practice. If converts try to officially change their religious registration, it is highly likely that the authorities will put them under surveillance and prosecute them under the blasphemy laws.

Block 4.13: Christians have been accused of blasphemy or insulting the majority religion, either by state authorities or by pressure groups. (3.50 points)

The threat of being accused of blasphemy always hangs like a sword of Damocles over Christian heads. Even alleged blasphemy can lead to mob violence or prosecution. In practice, Christians are generally very careful not to make critical comments about Islam and usually avoid saying anything at all about the prophet Muhammed. In 2023, a student was physically mistreated, arrested by the police and dismissed from his university after privately making a remark about the prophet Muhammed in response to mockery of Christianity. He and his family were subsequently forced to relocate inside the country following continuing death threats. In sharp contrast, Christian faith and Christians are publicly mocked (on social media) on a daily basis.

Block 4.14: Those who caused harm to Christians have deliberately been left unpunished. (3.00 points)

This is common in many areas of the country where perpetrators of mobbing and looting go unpunished, either through deliberate 'turning a blind eye' or through the use of customary reconciliation councils (see above: Block 3.12). In addition, mistreatment of converts by family members is considered to be a family issue. Converts do not receive any protection from the government and can even be killed by their family members with virtual impunity.

Block 4 - Additional information

Although the Egyptian government actively propagates a perspective of national unity (which includes the Christian community and discourages sectarianism), it is very clear that Islam is the dominant religion. Sectarian incidents with Christian victims are largely ignored by state media. Christians who have allegedly insulted Islam are actively prosecuted, while incidents of hate-speech against Christianity (for instance, on social media) are overlooked. Although President al-Sisi has appointed some Christians to high-level positions, Christians are generally barred from high public offices, especially in the army and the very influential intelligence agencies. Despite this, it would appear that discrimination when engaging with the local authorities has become less over recent years, although this still depends to a large extent on individual officials.

Pressure in Block 5 / Church sphere

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

Depending on the part of the country, Christian outside activities (such as activities for children) can be organized in a discreet manner. However, churches often refrain from holding processions in the street out of fear of attack by radical groups or mobs, since such processions might be interpreted as displaying a threat to Islam.

Block 5.7: Churches have been hindered from openly integrating converts. (3.75 points)

There is strong opposition against conversion and proselytizing. Churches rarely accept converts into their meetings, in order to avoid troubles with both the government and society. Accusations of proselytizing are easily made and can lead to attacks on churches, followed by the closure of the church for 'security reasons'.

Block 5.1: Church activities have been monitored, hindered, disturbed, or obstructed. (3.50 points)

It is common practice for the police and intelligence agencies to request a schedule of all church events planned. Moreover, they have the authority to cancel any of the events under the rationale of protecting national security. It is also commonly required that priests and pastors hand over to the police their travel schedules related to their church activities. In addition, police in plain clothes sometimes attend church services to monitor what is said during sermons. Furthermore, many churches face opposition or even violence from local communities, especially when they are trying to legitimize their church building under the 2016 Church Construction Law.

Block 5.3: Christian communities have been hindered in building or renovating church buildings or in claiming historical religious premises and places of worship which had been taken from them earlier. (3.25 points)

Following the enactment of the the 2016 Church Construction Law, over three thousand churches have been formally legalized. However, in many villages with a Christian population, Christians do not even have a church. There are still many administrative obstacles (such as security clearances and building regulations) when Christians want to build a church and opposition from society is in many cases strong. In sharp contrast, mosques can usually be built without hindrance.

Block 5 - Additional information

Egypt has a rich and longstanding church presence with thousands of church buildings. However, it is clear that the building of new churches is much more difficult than building new mosques. Churches can print and import Christian material including Bibles, as long as the material is not deemed offensive to Islam. Christian books and other items can be sold in public places in some parts of Egypt, but such material is in general only sold to Christians to avoid accusations of proselytizing. There are Christian TV channels and Christian (social) media is widely accessible, but churches have to be careful not to openly proselytize or criticize Islam. The major church denominations run independent schools and hospitals. Converts from Islam to Christianity lack recognition and can only gather discreetly without attracting attention. Their activities are monitored by the intelligence agencies, which especially target

those who proselytize or speak publicly about their faith. Numerous converts have been detained and mistreated by the security services in recent years.

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.*

Egypt: 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)?	2	3
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?	2	3
6.3 How many Christians have been detained for faith-related reasons?	34	25
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?	3	4
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?	10 *	10 *
6.7 How many cases have there been of forced marriages of Christians to non-Christians?	2	2
6.8 How many Christians have been otherwise physically or mentally abused for faith-related reasons (including beatings and death threats)?	46	44
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?	51	23
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?	4	16
6.11 How many Christians have been forced to leave their homes or go into hiding in-country for faith-related reasons?	5	11
6.12 How many Christians have been forced to leave the country for faith-related reasons?	2	7

In the WWL 2025 reporting period:

- **Christians killed:** No major terrorist attack happened during WWL 2025, although at least two Christians were killed (see *Specific examples of violations of rights* above for more information).
- **Christians attacked:** At least 46 Christians were attacked and sometimes severely injured because of their faith. Several Christians were injured during mob attacks targeting them and their properties or the local church. Several converts from Islam to Christianity were also beaten and

mistreated because of their conversion, while some female converts from Islam to Christianity were forced to marry Muslims. In addition, it is estimated that at least several young women faced sexual abuse, while hundreds experienced sexual harassment. According to certain reports, some Christian girls were targeted in a systematic way, with their attackers at times being paid per victim.

- **Christians arrested/imprisoned:** At least several converts to Christianity were arrested and detained by the security services during the WWL 2025 reporting period. At least one Christian remained imprisoned after being accused of blasphemy, while another received a three year prison sentence on the same charges. Others were detained after a mob violently prevented the extension of their church building. It is not uncommon for the victims of a mob attack to be taken into police custody to satisfy their attackers' demands and to de-escalate the situation.
- **Churches attacked:** Two church buildings were attacked during sectarian violence targeting Christians (see above: *Specific examples of violations of rights in the reporting period*). **Christian homes/properties attacked:** During WWL 2025, several instances of mob violence happened in which numerous houses belonging to Christians were attacked and damaged. Sometimes these attacks occurred after local Christians obtained permission to build a church. In another case, only a rumor about the building of a church led to sectarian violence. Other incidents of mob violence occurred following verbal altercations.
- **Christians forced to move:** Both converts from Islam to Christianity and several Christians belonging to the Historical Christian community were forced to relocate inside or outside the country.

5 Year trends

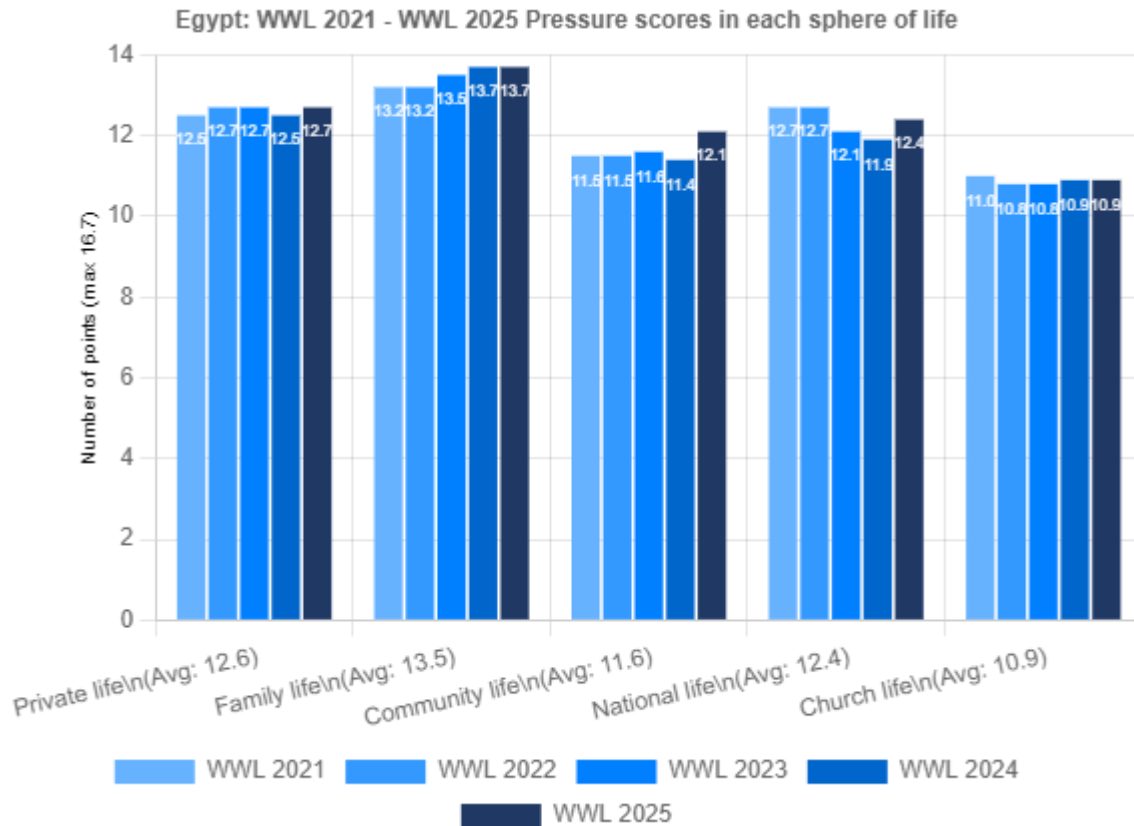
The following three charts show the levels of pressure and violence faced by Christians in the country over the last five WWL reporting periods.

5 Year trends: Average pressure

Egypt: WWL 2021 - WWL 2025	Average pressure over 5 Spheres of life
2025	12.4
2024	12.1
2023	12.2
2022	12.2
2021	12.2

The table above shows that the average pressure on Christians in Egypt has been fairly stable at a very high level, ranging between 12.1 and 12.4 points.

5 Year trends: Pressure in each sphere of life



The chart above shows that, in the five most recent WWL reporting periods, pressure on Christians has been very high in the *Private* and *Family spheres of life*, mainly reflecting the difficulties converts from Islam to Christianity have to face. The level of pressure in the *National sphere* has consistently been higher than in the *Community* and *Church spheres of life*, which is partly showing that the political situation for Christians has not significantly improved under the rule of President al-Sisi. Christians are discriminated against in public life and speaking out against such violations can have serious consequences.

Pressure rose specifically in the *Community* and *National spheres of life* during WWL 2025. This reflects how regional strife in neighboring countries (Gaza, Sudan and Libya) and a deteriorating economy have significantly increased tensions within society. To remain in control, the authorities have in response further strengthened their grip on society, including on Christian communities. Both developments specifically affected the levels of pressure in the *Community* and *National spheres of life*.

5 Year trends: Violence against Christians

The table below shows that the score for violence in the WWL 2021 reporting period was at an extreme level. Violence against Christians has shown a decreasing tendency since then, but is still categorized as being at a very high level. Although WWL 2024 saw a small increase in the violence score, there was no real change in overall pattern.



Gender-specific religious persecution / Female

Egypt	Female Pressure Points Most frequently recorded PPs: WWL 2019 - WWL 2024
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Abduction Denied custody of children Enforced religious dress code Forced marriage Incarceration by family (house arrest) Targeted Seduction Violence – death Violence – physical Violence – psychological Violence – sexual Violence – Verbal

Young Christian women living in Egypt's rural areas can be targets for grooming and sexual harassment by men influenced by radical Islamic teaching. Many women are reported to be missing under unclear circumstances, including affairs with Muslim men in an environment with a strong honor/shame culture and a power imbalance between the Muslim majority and Christian minority.

Police response to incidents of violence against Christians has been often complicit or apathetic and in cases of abduction, many women remain missing. In January 2023, three men were acquitted of attacking, beating and stripping an elderly Christian woman in an appeal verdict. Initial reports also

indicated that five houses were completely burned down and destroyed in the attack. The consequential message following such gender-based and discriminatory practices against the Christian community indicate that religion-related impunity remains entrenched, even in the Egypt’s highest court ([CSW, 17 January 2023](#)). The psychological toll of such violence and associated impunity is high, and many women live in fear, especially in rural areas. They feel as though they cannot leave the house by themselves and at times they will ask for male company for protection. There are also reports that Christian girls are lured into marriage; these girls are often under-age and come from vulnerable families, often from situations of domestic abuse.

Traditional practices do not help in this regard: Early marriage is part of the norm in more rural and traditional areas ([Girls Not Brides Egypt](#), accessed 6 January 2025). Girls can also struggle to access education ([International Christian Concern, 1 August 2021](#)). Egyptian girls and women have very few rights in marriage and limited protection within the legal system. Marriage in Egypt is governed by various mainly religious-based laws, with the Muslim majority subject to Egyptian Personal Law, based on Sharia. Women cannot freely marry without the permission of a male guardian and are often excluded from marriage negotiations, A country expert states that “there is a threat of abduction and forced marriage to pressure girls to convert to Islam and marry Muslim men”.

Female converts from Islam are most vulnerable to freedom of religion violations. They may be isolated and locked in the home, physically abused or even killed to defend the family honor. If married, they will very likely be divorced by their Muslim husbands, leaving them without any financial support. The custody of their children may be taken from them, as well as inheritance rights. For women and girls in upper Egypt, families may hinder them from going out of the house in order to protect them. There is a fear that she will be at risk on the street.

Egypt has had a reputation for having relatively high rates of sexual harassment and violence within the Middle East. Due to international pressure and internal activists, there have been some improvements in protection for those reporting sexual abuse. Official and reliable statistics for past years are lacking, in part because women and girls refrain from reporting incidents out of fear of retaliation and the stigma attached to sexual abuse. Although no official statistics on sexual violence exist it is estimated that approximately 20,000 rapes cases are reported annually in Egypt; 90% of women in Egypt report experiencing some form of sexual harassment; and 3 in 10 married women report experiencing spousal violence, including sexual violence. In addition, the country has one of the highest rates of FGM in the world ([RAINN](#), accessed 12 January 2024).

Gender-specific religious persecution / Male

Egypt	Male Pressure Points Most frequently recorded PPs: WWL 2019 - WWL 2024
	Economic harassment via business/job/work access Imprisonment by government Violence - death Violence - psychological

Christians in Egypt often feel they are being treated as second class citizens in a Muslim-majority country. Exemplifying this, the number of Christian in senior military or government positions is minimal. Unemployment is a great pressure on men throughout the country, especially in Upper Egypt. Particularly in rural areas, it is hard for Christian young men to find a job, which can be exploited to coerce young men away from Christianity with financial incentives. Further exemplifying economic discrimination, there have been instances of Christian men experiencing discrimination simply due to their Christian names. According to independent media platform [Daraj](#) (14 March 2021), only 12 Christian players have been part of Egypt’s Premier Football League over the past 30 years.

As the main financial provider, such discrimination hinders a Christian man’s ability to provide and impacts his self-confidence, which in turn affects his family. The strain of these dynamics has reportedly caused higher rates of domestic violence and divorce.

Church leaders – most of whom are male – are particularly vulnerable to rights violations, in part as they are often easily identifiable as Christians. Whilst uncommon, the killing of clergy does occur; for instance, in April 2022 when an [Orthodox priest in Alexandria](#) was stabbed to death (La Croix International, 11 April 2022). But even the more common harassment of church leaders and their families has evoked feelings of fear and helplessness in the Christian community and has been a factor in emigration spikes. Those who speak out against injustices are also targeted. There are several cases in the past few years where Christian men have been attacked and murdered by men influenced by radical Islamic teaching.

Converts can be particularly targeted, and some male converts are eventually forced to flee the country. A country expert states that “this has happened in many instances where, for example, a father has had to leave his hometown for fear of persecution. There are many cases of many men who have left their countries and their children in order to escape fear and persecution”.

Persecution of other religious minorities

Other religious groups facing intolerance, discrimination and persecution in Egypt include Shia and Sufi Muslims, Bahai, Jehovah’s Witnesses and Jews. Shia Muslims are particularly targeted by Sunni extremists, making it dangerous for them to worship and practice their faith openly. A clear example happened in November 2017 when Sunni militants attacked a crowded Sufi mosque in the Sinai peninsula, killing over 300 (Source: [New York Times](#), 24 November 2017).

Mormons, Bahai and Jehovah’s Witnesses are denied recognition by the authorities, thus making it difficult for them to have places of worship. The missionary zeal and corresponding activities of such groups are considered illegal and thus adherents face hostility both from state officials and society, including Christian Egyptians.

Jewish New Year was celebrated for the first time in seventy years in Egypt in September 2023 and an ancient synagogue was recently renovated and reopened ([CSW, 19 September 2023](#)). However, following the outbreak of the Israel-Hamas war, two Jewish-Israeli tourists were killed by a police officer in Alexandria ([BBC News, 8 October 2023](#)).

In its [Freedom of Thought Report](#) (last updated 4 March 2024) Humanist International writes:

- "One of the most visible signs of discrimination against atheists, apostates from Islam and members of minority religions is the policy concerning the Egyptian State ID cards, which include a section on religion where only one of the three “divine religions” can be recognized. Many elderly members of Baha’i or other minority communities further lack birth and marriage certificates. In 2008 the situation slightly improved, when two Bahā’īs were given permission to use a dash ('-') in the religion section. However, Baha’is still do not enjoy the right to have their religion recognized, nor to profess it in public. Muslim-born individuals who leave Islam are not allowed to change the religion field on their identity card."

In addition, atheists are very prone to violations of their rights, especially those active on social media networks. For example, blogger and atheist Sherif Gaber was arrested and mistreated several times by the Egyptian authorities ([Inside Arabia, 2 November 2019](#)). Another telling example is the case of Mohamed Hisham: During a televised interview he publicly admitted to being an atheist. He was removed from the show, but not before being told to visit a psychiatrist ([Humanists International, 27 September 2019](#)). It is common in Egypt to consider atheists (and other people with deviating views, including converts to Christianity) to be 'mentally ill' and in need of treatment; even universities actively try to 'sanitize' students by providing them with psychotherapy sessions ([TIMEP, 29 December 2021](#)).

Other sources report:

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

- "The law does not recognize the Baha’i Faith or its religious laws and bans Baha’i institutions and community activities."
- "Although the government designates Jehovah’s Witnesses as “Christian” on identity cards, a presidential decree bans their religious activities."
- "During the Cairo International Book Fair January 24 through February 6, the pavilion of the Muslim Council of Elders hosted a symposium entitled “The Call to Atheism and its Threat to Humanity.”"
- "Shia community sources and religious freedom observers again said information contained in a 2019 report by Minority Rights Group International, an international NGO, on challenges facing the country’s Shia community remained valid. The NGO’s report stated that there continued to be no Shia congregational halls (husseiniyas) in the country and Shia Muslims remained unable to establish public places of worship."

Trends Summary

1) Egypt continues to be susceptible to the influence of radical Islam

Egypt is an important country in the region due to its strategic location, its territorial and population size and because of its historical and diplomatic influence. The Church is also of critical importance since the Christian presence in Egypt is the largest Christian population in the region. Throughout the 20th century and beyond, it seems that competing views of the Egyptian state have been vying for dominance in the country. One view (advanced by the army and political establishment) puts more

emphasis on nationalism as opposed to religion, while another view (that of Islamists and the Muslim Brotherhood) wants to make religion the foundation and central element of Egyptian identity. Both viewpoints have offered Egyptian Christians little by way of rights and security and as the competition between these two camps unfolds, Egyptian Christians are often caught in the political crossfire and forced to make difficult choices.

The high level of illiteracy, economic stagnation and demographic pressure also means that - regardless of the political dispensation in the country - Egyptian society continues to be susceptible to the influence of the most radical and intolerant versions of Islam that are particularly appealing to the youth and the poor. Regional strife in neighboring countries (Gaza, Sudan and Libya) and a deteriorating economy have significantly increased these tensions within society. Most Egyptians have lost faith in the government's efforts to revive the economy and implement positive changes that could improve the quality of life for the country's large population. To remain in control, the authorities have in response further strengthened their grip on society. Both developments are likely to continue to add to pressure on the Christian communities.

2) Christians remain vulnerable

General security has improved under President al-Sisi. No large-scale terror attacks have taken place since 2018. However, (sexual) harassment of women remains common and, despite the president's inclusive rhetoric, sectarian violence and religious discrimination remain problematic, especially in upper Egypt, in rural areas and in economically disadvantaged urban areas. It is likely that traditional reconciliation councils, which are prone to injustice, will continue to be used. In addition, al-Sisi's ongoing crackdown on any dissent or criticism, including human rights activism by human rights defenders such as (now released) Coptic activists Ramy Kamel and Patrick George Zaki, will continue to make it difficult for churches and Christians to speak up for themselves and address injustices. Hence, the non-violent forms of rights violations that are prevalent in various spheres of life are likely to continue without much change for the better.

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

- Copyright, sources and definitions: Background country information - <https://www.opendoors.org/en-US/research-reports/wwl-background/>
- 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>
- Specific examples of violations of rights in the reporting period: Christian Solidarity Worldwide, 20 December 2024 - <https://www.csw.org.uk/2023/12/20/press/6135/article.htm>
- Specific examples of violations of rights in the reporting period: Christian Solidarity Worldwide, 11 January 2024 - <https://www.csw.org.uk/2024/01/11/press/6144/article.htm>
- Specific examples of violations of rights in the reporting period: Copts United, 16 April 2024 - <https://www.copts-united.com/Article.php?I=5520&A=786804>
- Specific examples of violations of rights in the reporting period: Christian Daily, 26 April 2024 - <https://www.christiandaily.com/news/coptic-christians-are-attacked-in-two-villages-in-egypt.html>
- Specific examples of violations of rights in the reporting period: Ahram, 7 October 2023 - <https://gate.ahram.org.eg/News/4582063.aspx>
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- Specific examples of violations of rights in the reporting period: Egypt Independent, 1 September 2024 - <https://www.egyptindependent.com/diocese-of-the-virgin-mary-in-beni-suef-suffers-huge-material-losses-from-fire>
- Specific examples of positive developments: Egypt Today, 30 October 2024 - <https://www.egypttoday.com/Article/1/135758/Egypt-approves-legalization-of-293-churches-religious-buildings>
- Areas where Christians face most difficulties: defeated - <https://english.ahram.org.eg/NewsContent/50/1201/489931/AIahram-Weekly/Egypt/A-new-start-for-Sinai.aspx>
- Persecution engines description: subdued - <https://english.ahram.org.eg/NewsContent/50/1201/489931/AIahram-Weekly/Egypt/A-new-start-for-Sinai.aspx>
- Block 1.1: Conversion has been opposed, forbidden, or punishable, including conversion from one type of Christianity to another. (3.50 points): Al-Monitor, 20 September 2021 - <https://www.al-monitor.com/originals/2021/09/sisi-statements-spark-debate-about-status-egyptian-atheists>
- Block 2.6: Christian couples have been hindered in adopting children or serving as foster parents because of their faith. (3.75 points): return to his parents - <https://www.newarab.com/news/5-year-old-shenouda-returns-egyptian-coptic-foster-family>
- Gender-specific religious persecution Female description: (CSW, 17 January 2023). - <https://www.csw.org.uk/2023/01/17/press/5915/article.htm>
- Gender-specific religious persecution Female description: Girls Not Brides Egypt - <https://www.girlsnotbrides.org/learning-resources/child-marriage-atlas/regions-and-countries/egypt/>
- Gender-specific religious persecution Female description: (International Christian Concern, 1 August 2021 - <https://www.persecution.org/2021/08/01/egyptian-girls-perspective-hope-brighter-future/>
- Gender-specific religious persecution Female description: (RAINN, - <https://www.rainn.org/africa/egypt#:~:text=Although%20no%20official%20statistics%20on,spousal%20violence%2C%20including%20sexual%20violence.>
- Gender-specific religious persecution Male description: Daraj - <https://daraj.com/en/69821/>
- Gender-specific religious persecution Male description: Orthodox priest in Alexandria - <https://international.la-croix.com/news/religion/murder-of-coptic-priest-in-egypt-sparks-emotion-and-concern/15929>
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- Persecution of other religious minorities: Freedom of Thought Report - <https://fot.humanists.international/countries/africa-northern-africa/egypt/>

- Persecution of other religious minorities: Inside Arabia, 2 November 2019 - <https://insidearabia.com/atheist-egyptian-blogger-jailed-for-expressing-his-views/>
- Persecution of other religious minorities: Humanists International, 27 September 2019 - <https://humanists.international/blog/do-you-remember-mohamed-the-egyptian-atheist-kicked-off-a-tv-interview/>
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- Persecution of other religious minorities: IRFR 2023 Egypt - <https://www.state.gov/reports/2023-report-on-international-religious-freedom/egypt/>