

## 2022 Children and youth specific religious persecution methodology

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### Sources

*A Generation at Risk: The Children and Youth Report 2022* is based upon a mixed methods approach, using a methodology consistent with Open Doors’ other specific religious persecution (SRP) reports.<sup>1</sup> Data was gathered by Open Doors World Watch Research (WWR), who monitored religious persecution dynamics in more than 100 countries across the globe. The report primarily presents analysis of the top 50 countries in the World Watch List (WWL) 2022.<sup>2</sup> However, some findings additionally draw from countries that rank 51-76 in the pool of countries monitored by Open Doors, particularly for describing regional trends and spotlight sections focused on individual Pressure Points (*Targeted seduction* and *Denied access to a Christian parent*).

Data was collected during the reporting period 1 October 2020 to 30 September 2021. Data was gathered from Open Doors field staff and field contributors, external experts and WWR persecution analysts. As a part of the data collection process, regionally based experts collected qualitative data from trauma specialists, church leaders, focus groups and local persecution experts.

In the WWL 2022 reporting period, travel restrictions and other measures introduced by the governments of various countries to combat the spread of the COVID-19 pandemic did cause delays and create the need for restructuring grass-roots research in some cases. Through the agile cooperation of Open Doors field networks, research analysts, external experts and an increased use of technological options, Open Doors is confident that the WWL 2022 scoring, analysis and documentation has maintained required levels of quality and reliability.<sup>3</sup> SRP analysts consolidated this research with desk research, drawing from publications by the UN and governmental institutions, media and NGOs.

<sup>1</sup> 2022 Gender-specific religious persecution (GSRP) Methodology: <https://opendoorsanalytical.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/02/2022-Gender-SRP-Methodology-Final.pdf>; 2022 IDP & Refugee-specific Religious Persecution (SRP) Methodology: <https://opendoorsanalytical.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/06/IDP-Refugee-SRP-Methodology-June-2022.pdf>.

<sup>2</sup> WWL 2022 Compilation of all main documents: <https://opendoorsanalytical.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/02/WWL-2022-Compilation-of-main-documents-February-revision.pdf>.

<sup>3</sup> Complete WWL methodology – the latest update is available at the Open Doors Analytical website (under the heading World Watch List Methodology): <https://opendoorsanalytical.org/world-watch-list-documentation/> (password: freedom).

This report has been supplemented by further research carried out by Open Doors partners in the Middle East with youth in seven countries in the MENA region. The purpose of the research was to capture the experiences of young Christians across MENA and explore what Hope meant to them. Focus groups were held with between six and fifteen participants in each group, with two held in Syria and one group in each of the other countries (Algeria, Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon and Palestinian Territories). At the time of interview (February-April 2022) the majority of interviewees were between the ages of eighteen and thirty (except two participants aged sixteen), but they shared about their past experiences in childhood and adolescence and the impact of these experiences on their faith/resilience/hope today.

SRP specialists consolidated this with desk research, drawing from publications by the media, UN and governmental institutions and NGOs.

## Method – the 28 Pressure Points

The 2022 data was analyzed to reveal how often children and youth who are Christian (or who are associated with Christian communities or families) experience various Pressure Points. This analysis included qualitative descriptions of incidents in specific contexts, which were then coded through a framework of twenty-seven Pressure Points.<sup>4</sup> The children and youth SRP Pressure Points framework has been adapted over five years of SRP research and two years of research on children and youth. The analysis revealed the frequency at which Pressure Points were experienced, enabling an understanding of emerging overall trends in global religious persecution as well as retaining qualitative contextual descriptions.

“Pressure Point” is the term used to refer to both the pressure and violence faced in the course of religious persecution. In standard WWL methodology, “pressure” denotes non-violent persecution experienced in all areas of a Christian’s life and “violence” is defined as “the deprivation of physical freedom or as serious bodily or mental harm to Christians or serious damage to their property” (and related incidents), which can potentially occur in all areas of life.<sup>5</sup> In children and youth SRP methodology, these are combined and indicate areas of particular sensitivity for children and youth within a religious community. Researchers borrowed the term from the martial arts context, where a Pressure Point is a “point that, when pressure is applied, produces crippling pain.” They are “used to exploit a weakness or vulnerability in the human body to gain an advantage over an opponent.”<sup>6</sup> Children and youth SRP Pressure Point categories provide a means to establish the presence of particular forms of pressure associated with being young.

SRP researchers also captured per tactic, via qualitative descriptions, variations across countries in how this pressure is brought to bear in different contexts. Where the information was available, the researcher captured the frequency at which the Pressure Point was occurring, which age group was primarily affected, the religious background of victims, wider contextual information and severity level.

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<sup>4</sup> For a list of these 27 Pressure Points, see the table below in paragraph ‘c’ of ‘Definitions’.

<sup>5</sup> Further explanation in Complete World Watch List Methodology, Sections 1.3-1.4 – latest update available at: <https://opendoorsanalytical.org/world-watch-list-documentation/> (password: freedom).

<sup>6</sup> Martial Arts Pressure Points: Medium Range, John Gahan, LCGI, 2017 <https://www.scribd.com/book/355164891/Martial-Arts-Pressure-Points-Medium-Range> [last accessed 1 September 2022].

The scale used to measure frequency is indicated in the table below:

| Frequency level       | Description   |
|-----------------------|---|
| Isolated incident     | A single case                                       |
| Several incidents     | 2-10 cases  |
| Moderately widespread | 11-50 cases   |
| Widespread            | 50+ cases (and in several areas across the country) |

The scale used to measure severity was:

| Severity level | Description   | Example of Pressure Point in this severity level |
|----------------|---|--|
| Low            | Low impact to daily life                                  | Enforced religious dress code                    |
| Moderate       | Medium impact on daily life, causing moderate mental harm | Discrimination/harassment via education          |
| Severe         | Non-fatal, but significant physical or mental harm        | Violence – physical                              |
| Very severe    | Fatal to life, or extremely traumatic                     | Violence – death                                 |

## Limitations

This research focuses on how children and youth experience religious persecution but relies primarily on data provided by adults describing the experiences of the young. This limits the data, as the children and youth lens is adopted by adults without direct perspectives from children and youth. However, the inclusion of focus-group data from Open Doors partners in MENA helped counteract this by including the perspectives of young people who were going through and had just gone through experiences of children and youth SRP.

For future research, there could be greater inclusion of children and youth focused inquiries within the primary data set as well as the supplemental data. Including and prioritizing the direct voice of children and youth is an area of development for the SRP research team. However, SRP analysts also recognize the unique vulnerabilities and ethical challenges of conducting research with children and youth.<sup>7</sup>

The findings are also limited by the subjective nature of the qualitative research. Respondents' open-ended feedback can limit the quality of the response and ease with which it can be analyzed. This is important to recognize but cannot be altered significantly without losing the valuable descriptive contributions.

In particular, the use of the frequency and severity scale involved subjective interpretation. While questionnaire correspondents often gave a numerical estimate for forms of persecution, these were not given for every answer (and notably, not for the questions that specifically related to gender). Questionnaire contributors employed various terms to describe frequency, however it is recognized

<sup>7</sup> See for example, 'Ethical Research Involving Children', UNICEF, 2013: <https://childethics.com/wp-content/uploads/2013/10/ERIC-compendium-approved-digital-web.pdf>.

that their interpretation of these terms may have varied from the scale above. As such, the resulting data is not presented in detail and includes instead the general trends. The scale will be refined for future use.

## Definitions

### a. Persecution

There is no international, legal definition of persecution. Situations can be defined as persecution where persons experience the denial of rights listed in Article 18 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. However, WWL methodology has opted for a theological rather than a sociological definition: “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.”<sup>8</sup>

### b. Children and youth

For the purposes of this research, “children and youth” should be understood to refer to individuals under the age of 18. Open Doors recognizes that understandings of who is classified as “children and youth” vary according to context. However, the need for research consistency has led to using the classification of under-18s, as this is used by the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC).

The specific experiences of children and youth may also vary according to their particular backgrounds, such as being born into a Christian family or a family of another belief. There is also a distinction to be made between the experiences of pre-adolescents and adolescents. However, the preliminary nature of this research means that background and age distinctions do not occur frequently enough in the data for drawing any conclusions.

For the supplemental data from Open Doors partners, a wider definition of youth was applied, between the ages of 16 and 30. This is due to the context of the Middle East and North Africa where this research was conducted; a wider and older definition of youth was more suitable.

### c. Pressure Point definitions

The following table provides descriptions and simplified definitions for the twenty-seven Pressure Points (two with sub-categories) that are identified and analyzed in Open Doors’ children and youth specific persecution report.

| Pressure Point  | Definition   |
|---|--|
| Abduction   | The act of making a person go somewhere with you, especially using threats of violence. <sup>9</sup>   |
| Denied access to Christian religious materials, teaching and rites. | The denial of access to Christian religious material, such as Bibles, study notes and Christian symbols, teachings, such as from churches, youth groups, Sunday schools and Christian parents, and rites, such as baptism. |

<sup>8</sup> Complete WWL Methodology, Section 1.1 - latest update available at: <https://opendoorsanalytical.org/world-watch-list-documentation/> (password: freedom).

<sup>9</sup> Abduction, Cambridge Dictionary, available at <https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/abduction> [last accessed 10 June 2022].

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|--|--|
| Denied access to social community/networks       | The denial of access to social community or networks.  |
| Denied legal identity as a Christian             | The intentional registration of a child as a religion other than Christian.  |
| Denied communal resources                        | The intentional act of denying or removing access to communal resources, such as communal organizations, buildings or other public goods, services or programs.  |
| Denied access to a Christian parent              | The act of denying a child access to a Christian parent on a permanent or semi-permanent basis.  |
| Denied food or water                             | The act of deliberately denying another person of food or water.   |
| Denied inheritance or possessions                | Denying a person of their inheritance rights or their possessions.   |
| Denied/restricted healthcare                     | Discrimination affecting users of health care services. It serves as a barrier to accessing health services, affects the quality of health services provided, and reinforces exclusion from society for both individuals and groups. <sup>10</sup>   |
| Discrimination/harassment via education          | Distinguishing, excluding or limiting access to education. Specifically, by: a) depriving any person or group of persons of access to education of any type or at any level; (b) limiting any person or group of persons to education of an inferior standard; (c) establishing or maintaining separate educational systems or institutions for persons or groups of persons; or (d) by inflicting on any person or group of persons conditions which are incompatible with human dignity. <sup>11</sup>   |
| Economic harassment via business/job/work access | Distinguishing, excluding or limiting a person's access to work or jobs due to their Christian faith. Specifically, with regards to children and youth, by: (a) enforcing work that interferes with the child's education; (b) preventing Christians from obtaining or retaining gainful employment within protective measures for the child; (c) limiting any person or group of persons to working conditions of an inferior standard; (d) by inflicting on any person or group of persons conditions which are incompatible with human dignity; or (e) forced labor, including subtle means such as accumulated debt, retention of identity papers or threats of denunciation to immigration authorities, but not extending to slavery. <sup>12</sup> |
| Enforced religious dress code                    | The act of forcing, or applying significant pressure on someone, to wear religious clothing.   |
| False charges                                    | Legal charges against a person that are unproven and untrue, made in the spirit of deliberateness or deceit.   |
| Forced divorce                                   | The act of terminating a marriage or marital union without the consent of the spouse.  |

<sup>10</sup> Adapted from the Joint United Nations statement on ending discrimination in health care settings, 2017, available at: <https://www.who.int/news-room/detail/27-06-2017-joint-united-nations-statement-on-ending-discrimination-in-health-care-settings> [last accessed 16 May 2022].

<sup>11</sup> Adapted from Article 1 of the Convention against Discrimination in Education, UNESCO, 1960, available at <https://en.unesco.org/about-us/legal-affairs/convention-against-discrimination-education> [last accessed 10 June 2022].

<sup>12</sup> Adapted from the International Labor Organization and Article 32 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child. Retrieved from: [https://www.ilo.org/global/topics/forced-labour/news/WCMS\\_237569/lang-en/index.html](https://www.ilo.org/global/topics/forced-labour/news/WCMS_237569/lang-en/index.html); <https://www.ohchr.org/en/professionalinterest/pages/crc.aspx> [last accessed 16 August 2022].

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| Forced marriage  | A marriage in which one party has not personally expressed their full, free and informed consent to the union. <sup>13</sup> As children and youth are under the age of 18, forced marriages are also child marriages.   |
| Forced out of home – expulsion   | The act of suddenly and forcibly expelling a person from the residence they have been living in or applying such pressure that they feel they have no freedom to stay.   |
| Displacement   | The act of suddenly and forcibly expelling a person from the town/country they have been living in or applying such pressure that they feel that they have no choice to stay.  |
| Incarceration by family (house arrest)   | The obligation upon an individual that she/he be forbidden to leave his or her place of residence except for limited, specified circumstances. <sup>14</sup>   |
| Imprisonment by government   | The act of detention in a prison, or place used as a prison, by a government body or agent. <sup>15</sup>  |
| Military/militia conscription/service against conscience   | Serving in the military forces of a country against a person’s conscience, being ill-treated (denied Freedom of Religious Belief) in the service of the military or being forced to carry out specific acts in military service that are against a person’s conscience.  |
| Targeted Seduction   | The act of seducing someone (here with a sexual connotation) with the intent purpose of leading them away from their Christian faith.  |
| Trafficking<br>a) Sexual exploitation not explicitly mentioned<br>b) Sexual exploitation explicitly mentioned. | Trafficking: The recruitment, transportation, transfer, harboring or receipt of persons, by means of the threat or use of force or other forms of coercion, of abduction, of fraud, of deception, of the abuse of power or of a position of vulnerability or of the giving or receiving of payments or benefits to achieve the consent of a person having control over another person, for the purpose of exploiting a person. <sup>16</sup> |
| Travel bans/restrictions on movement   | Preventing a person from travelling somewhere or restricting their movement against their will.  |
| Violence – death   | The cause of loss of life.   |
| Violence – physical (including torture)  | Bodily harm inflicted by one person on another person. <sup>17</sup> Researchers limit the designation of this Pressure Point to instances which clearly indicate instances of physical harm (such as beatings/acts of torture) but which do not result in death.  |
| Violence – psychological   | Any intentional conduct that seriously impairs another person’s psychological integrity through coercion or threats. <sup>18</sup>   |

<sup>13</sup> Child, early and forced marriage, including in humanitarian settings, Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, available at <https://www.ohchr.org/EN/Issues/Women/WRGS/Pages/ChildMarriage.aspx> [last accessed 10 June 2022].

<sup>14</sup> Adapted from Duhaime’s Legal Dictionary, available at: <http://www.duhaime.org/LegalDictionary/H/HouseArrest.aspx> [last accessed 27 November 2019].

<sup>15</sup> Adapted from the Cambridge Dictionary, available at: <https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/imprisonment> [last accessed 10 June 2022].

<sup>16</sup> Article 3 of the Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons. Available at <https://www.ohchr.org/en/instruments-mechanisms/instruments/protocol-prevent-suppress-and-punish-trafficking-persons> [last accessed 10 June 2022].

<sup>17</sup> Adapted from the Law Dictionary, available at <https://thelawdictionary.org/physical-violence/> [last accessed 1 September 2022].

<sup>18</sup> European Institute for Gender Equality, available at <https://eige.europa.eu/thesaurus/terms/1334> [last accessed 1 September 2022].

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| <p>Violence – sexual<br/> a) Rape not explicitly mentioned<br/> b) Rape explicitly mentioned</p> | <p>Any sexual act, unwanted sexual comments or advances, or otherwise directed, against a person’s sexuality using coercion, by any person regardless of their relationships to the victim, in any setting, including but not limited to home and work.<sup>19</sup></p> |
| <p>Violence – Verbal<br/> (including harassment and insults)</p>                                 | <p>Harsh and insulting language directed at a person.<sup>20</sup></p>   |

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<sup>19</sup> Adapted from the World Health Organization, Sexual violence/Definition, available at <https://apps.who.int/violence-info/sexual-violence/#:~:text=Sexual%20violence%20is%20any%20sexual,the%20victim%2C%20in%20any%20setting> [last accessed 1 September 2022].

<sup>20</sup> Adapted from the Merriam-Webster Dictionary, available at <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/verbal%20abuse> [last accessed 10 June 2022].