

2021 Children/Youth-specific Religious Persecution - Methodology

(Methodology for CSRP-YSRP Preliminary Findings report 2021)

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Sources

A mixed methods approach was applied, using a parallel methodology as for Open Doors’ gender-specific religious persecution (GSRP) research.¹ Data was gathered by Open Doors World Watch Research (WWR), who monitored religious persecution dynamics in more than 100 countries across the globe. As this research presented preliminary findings, children and youth specific religious persecution (CSRP-YSRP) analysts only looked at the top 50 countries in the World Watch List (WWL) 2021.²

Data was collected during the reporting period 1 October 2019 to 30 September 2020. 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 2021 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 2021 scoring, analysis and documentation has maintained required levels of quality and reliability.³ CSRP-YSRP analysts consolidated this research with desk research, drawing from publications by the UN and governmental institutions, media and NGOs.

¹ For the longer GSRP methodology, as well as all publications on gender-specific religious persecution, see Open Doors Analytical <http://opendoorsanalytical.org/gender-specific-persecution/> [password: freedom]

² WWL 2021 was published by Open Doors in January 2021. See: <http://opendoorsanalytical.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/01/WWL-2021-Compilation-of-main-documents-ODA-version.pdf>

³ Complete WWL methodology, <http://opendoorsanalytical.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/01/Complete-WWL-Methodology-October-2020-FINAL.pdf> [password: freedom]

Method – the 27 Pressure Points

The 2021 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.⁴ The CSRP-YSRP Pressure Points framework was adapted from the GSRP framework to reflect the children and youth lens of persecution. This included the creation of a CSRP-YSRP Pressure Point list, based on patterns observed in the data. 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.⁵ In CSRP-YSRP 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.”⁶ CSRP-YSRP Pressure Point categories provide a means to establish the presence of particular forms of pressure associated with being young.

To further the use of the Pressure Points framework in the future, the frequency and severity of the Pressure Points could also be recorded. Due to the preliminary nature of the CSRP-YSRP research, this was not possible for the 2021 report.

Limitations

This research focuses on children and youth’s experiences of religious persecution but relies on data provided by adults describing the experiences of the young, with no data directly from those under the age of 18. This limits the data, as the children and youth lens is adopted by adults without insightful perspectives from children and youth. This is an area that could potentially be improved in the future, although would demand caution due to the unique vulnerabilities and challenges of conducting research with children and youth.⁷

The setup of data collection for WWL 2021 focused primarily on the experiences of Christian adults, with a few questions tailored to the experiences of children and youth. For future research, there could be greater inclusion of children and youth focused inquiries.

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

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

⁵ Further explanation in WWL complete methodology, p. 20-29 <http://opendoorsanalytical.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/01/Complete-WWL-Methodology-October-2020-FINAL.pdf> [password: freedom]

⁶ Martial Arts Pressure Points: Medium Range, John Gahan, LCGI, 2017 <https://www.scribd.com/book/355164891/Martial-Arts-Pressure-Points-Medium-Range> [Accessed 7 April 2021].

⁷ See for example, <https://childethics.com/wp-content/uploads/2013/10/ERIC-compedium-approved-digital-web.pdf>

important to recognize but cannot be altered significantly without losing the valuable descriptive contributions.

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.⁸

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 to draw any conclusions from.

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. ⁹
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.
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.

⁸ Complete WWL Methodology, <[Complete-WWL-Methodology-October-2020-FINAL.pdf \(opendoorsanalytical.org\)](https://www.opendoors.org/complete-wwl-methodology-october-2020-final.pdf)>, p.7.

⁹ Adapted from Cambridge Dictionary. Retrieved from: <https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/abduction>

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. ¹⁰
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. ¹¹
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. ¹²
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.
Forced marriage	A marriage in which one party has not personally expressed their full, free and informed consent to the union. ¹³ 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. ¹⁴
Imprisonment by government	The act of detention in a prison, or place used as a prison, by a government body or agent. ¹⁵

¹⁰ Adapted from the Joint United Nations statement on ending discrimination in health care settings, 2017. Retrieved from: <https://www.who.int/news-room/detail/27-06-2017-joint-united-nations-statement-on-ending-discrimination-in-health-care-settings>

¹¹ Adapted from Article 1 of the Convention against Discrimination in Education, UNESCO, 1960

¹² 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.ohchr.org/en/professionalinterest/pages/crc.aspx>

¹³ Child, early and forced marriage, including in humanitarian settings. Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights. Retrieved from: <https://www.ohchr.org/EN/Issues/Women/WRGS/Pages/ChildMarriage.aspx>

¹⁴ Adapted from Duhaime's Legal Dictionary. Retrieved from: <http://www.duhaime.org/LegalDictionary/H/HouseArrest.aspx>

¹⁵ Adapted from the Cambridge dictionary. Retrieved from: <https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/imprisonment>

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 a) Sexual exploitation not explicitly mentioned 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. ¹⁶
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. ¹⁷ 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. ¹⁸
Violence – sexual a) Rape not explicitly mentioned b) Rape explicitly mentioned	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. ¹⁹
Violence – Verbal (including harassment and insults)	Harsh and insulting language directed at a person.

¹⁶ Article 3 of the Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons.

¹⁷ Adapted from the Law Dictionary. Retrieved from: <https://thelawdictionary.org/physical-violence/>.

¹⁸ European Institute for Gender Equality. Retrieved from: <https://eige.europa.eu/thesaurus/terms/1334>.

¹⁹ Adapted from the World Health Organization. Retrieved from: https://www.who.int/violence_injury_prevention/violence/global_campaign/en/chap6.pdf