

World
Watch
Research

Indonesia: Full Country Dossier

December 2021



OpenDoors

Serving persecuted **Christians** worldwide

Open Doors International / World Watch Research

December 2021

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Minang man at market in Medan, Indonesia (c) IMB

Introduction

World Watch List 2022

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

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

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Sources and definitions

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

Effect on data-gathering during COVID-19 pandemic

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

External Links - Introduction

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

WWL 2022 Situation in brief / Indonesia

Brief country details

Indonesia: Population (UN estimate for 2021)	Christians	Chr%
274,854,000	33,620,000	12.2

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

Map of country



Indonesia: World Watch List	Points	WWL Rank
WWL 2022	68	28
WWL 2021	63	47
WWL 2020	60	49

WWL 2019	65	30
WWL 2018	59	38

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

Dominant persecution engines and drivers

Indonesia: Main Persecution engines	Main drivers
Islamic oppression	Citizens (people from the broader society), including mobs, Violent religious groups, Government officials, Non-Christian religious leaders, One's own (extended) family, Political parties, Ideological pressure groups

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

Brief description of the persecution situation

While the overall trends described in the paragraphs below did continue, the WWL 2022 reporting period was overshadowed by two violent and deadly attacks against Christians in the province of Central Sulawesi, killing eight Christians (for more details, see below: *Violence*).

Many converts from Islam experience pressure from their families. However, the intensity of the pressure varies given the individual family and place and is mostly in the form of isolation, verbal abuse and similar treatment. Only a small percentage of converts have to face physical violence for their Christian faith. The level of persecution also depends on the region of Indonesia concerned. There are certain hot spots like West Java or Aceh, where radical Islamic groups exert a heavy influence on society and politics.

Once a church is seen to be proselytizing (as carried out mainly by Evangelical and Pentecostal churches), they soon run into problems with radical Islamic groups. Depending again on the region, non-traditional church groups also face difficulties getting permission for building churches. Even if they manage to fulfill all legal requirements (including winning court cases), the local authorities still often ignore them. There have been reports of Catholic churches having difficulties obtaining building permission as well. The situation for Christians has been deteriorating in the course of recent years, with Indonesian society taking on a more conservative Islamic character and during the COVID-19 crisis, there have been several incidents which displayed an increasingly intolerant attitude towards freedom of religion and belief for minorities, especially Christians.

Summary of international obligations and rights violations

Indonesia 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)

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

- Christian converts experience pressure and violence from their family and community to renounce their faith (ICCPR Art. 18)
- Christian children are harassed because of their parents' faith (ICCPR Art. 18 and CRC Art. 14)
- Christians face employment discrimination because of their faith (ICCPR Art. 26)
- Churches face obstacles to obtain permits for the construction of new buildings (ICCPR Arts. 21 and 26)

Specific examples of violations of rights in the reporting period

[11 May 2021](#): In an attack by the *Mujahideen Indonesia Timur* (MIT), four Christian farmers were killed in Kalemago village, Poso Regency, Central Sulawesi. One of the victims was beheaded (Benar News, 11 May 2021).

[28 March 2021](#): A suicide attack targeted the Catholic cathedral of Makassar, the capital of South Sulawesi, on the Sunday before Easter. It caused injuries to at least twenty people, killed the assailants and damaged the church building (Jakarta Post, 28 March 2021).

[28 November 2020](#): In an attack against a Salvation Army settlement by violent Islamic group MIT, four residents were killed in Lembantongoa village in Sigi Regency, Central Sulawesi. One of the four was reportedly beheaded. The houses were set on fire (Jakarta Post, 29 November 2020).

Specific examples of positive developments

The Archbishop of Papua, Petrus Canisius Mandagi, [survived](#) two assassination attempts because he happened to be travelling when the assassins tried to target him at his residence (UCA News, 3 June 2021).

In January 2021, Listyo Sigit Prabowo became the second Christian [police chief](#) ever in the country's history (Jakarta Post, 13 January 2021).

Thousands of Islamic militia members, especially from youth organizations such as the one run by the largest Islamic Organization Nahdlatul Ulama (NU), [protected Christian churches](#) in the Christmas period (Religion Unplugged, 21 December 2020). Although it is worrying that this is necessary, in the prevailing atmosphere of growing Islamic conservatism, it is good news.

External Links - Situation in brief

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

- Summary of international obligations and rights violations: Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women - <https://www.ohchr.org/EN/ProfessionalInterest/Pages/CEDAW.aspx>
- Summary of international obligations and rights violations: Convention on the Rights of the Child - <https://www.ohchr.org/en/professionalinterest/pages/crc.aspx>
- Specific examples of violations of rights in the reporting period: 11 May 2021: - <https://www.benarnews.org/english/news/indonesian/sulawesi-farmers-slain-05112021152548.html>
- Specific examples of violations of rights in the reporting period: 28 March 2021: - <https://www.thejakartapost.com/news/2021/03/28/20-injured-in-palm-sunday-suicide-bombing-at-makassar-cathedral.html>
- Specific examples of violations of rights in the reporting period: 28 November 2020: - <https://www.thejakartapost.com/news/2020/11/29/four-killed-in-alleged-mit-attack-in-sigi-reigniting-concerns-over-sectarian-conflict.html>
- Specific examples of positive developments: survived - <https://www.ucanews.com/news/indonesian-archbishop-survives-two-assassination-bids/92721>
- Specific examples of positive developments: police chief - <https://www.thejakartapost.com/news/2021/01/13/jokowi-taps-christian-former-adjutant-as-police-chief.html>
- Specific examples of positive developments: protected Christian churches - <https://religionunplugged.com/news/2020/12/21/islamic-militias-are-protecting-churches-in-indonesia>

WWL 2022: Keys to understanding / Indonesia

Links for general background information

Name	Quote Reference	Link	Last accessed on
Amnesty International country report	AI 2021	https://www.amnesty.org/en/location/asia-and-the-pacific/south-east-asia-and-the-pacific/indonesia/	18 August 2021
BBC News country profile	BBC country profile	https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-asia-pacific-14921238	18 August 2021
Bertelsmann Transformation Index 2020	BTI 2020	https://bti-project.org/en/reports/country-dashboard-IDN.html	18 August 2021
CIA World Factbook	CIA Factbook	https://www.cia.gov/the-world-factbook/countries/indonesia/	18 August 2021
Economist Intelligence Unit Democracy Index 2020	EIU 2020	https://pages.eiu.com/rs/753-RIQ-438/images/democracy-index-2020.pdf	18 August 2021
FFP's Fragile States Index 2021	FSI 2021	https://fragilestatesindex.org/country-data/	18 August 2021
Freedom House's 2021 Democracy index (Indonesia is not included)	Freedom House/Democracy 2021	https://freedomhouse.org/countries/nations-transit/scores	
Freedom House's 2021 Global Freedom index	Freedom House/Global Freedom 2021	https://freedomhouse.org/country/indonesia/freedom-world/2021	18 August 2021
Freedom House's Freedom on the Net 2020 report	Freedom House/Internet Freedom 2020	https://freedomhouse.org/country/indonesia/freedom-net/2020	18 August 2021
Garda World country report	Garda World	https://www.garda.com/crisis24/country-reports/indonesia	18 August 2021
Human Rights Watch World Report 2021	HRW 2021	https://www.hrw.org/world-report/2021/country-chapters/indonesia	18 August 2021
Internet World Stats 2021	IWS 2021	https://www.internetworldstats.com/asia.htm#id	18 August 2021
RSF's 2020 World Press Freedom Index	World Press Freedom 2020	https://rsf.org/en/indonesia	18 August 2021
Transparency International's 2020 Corruption Perceptions Index	CPI 2020	https://www.transparency.org/en/cpi/2020/index/idn	18 August 2021
UNDP's Global Human Development Indicators	HDI 2020	http://hdr.undp.org/en/countries/profiles/IDN	18 August 2021
US State Department's 2020 International Religious Freedom country reports	IRFR 2020	https://www.state.gov/reports/2020-report-on-international-religious-freedom/indonesia/	18 August 2021
USCIRF 2021 country reports	USCIRF 2021	https://www.uscifr.gov/sites/default/files/2021-05/Indonesia%20Chapter%20AR2021.pdf	18 August 2021
World Bank country report	World Bank	https://www.worldbank.org/en/country/indonesia	18 August 2021

Recent history

Indonesia, which is spread across more than seventeen thousand islands and more than 5000 kilometers east-west and 1700 km north-south, fought for its independence from the Netherlands in a four year war ending in 1949, having been occupied by Japan in World War II. After years of violence and corruption, the country made a transition to democracy, starting in 1998. The first direct presidential elections were held in 2004.

In the run up to the elections in early 2017 for the office of governor of Jakarta (the capital and largest city of Indonesia) mass protests erupted, bringing upwards of 200,000 people to the streets. These demonstrations were against the ethnic Chinese and Christian Basuki Tjahaja Purnama (then known as “Ahok”) on grounds of alleged blasphemy. Having won the first round of elections in February 2017, Purnama lost the second round and was sentenced to two years in prison. He decided not to appeal against the verdict and thus keep the political situation in Indonesia calm. He has been released and is now the president commissioner of state-owned oil and gas firm Pertamina.

The simultaneous presidential and parliamentary elections on 17 April 2019, touted as the largest one-day-elections worldwide, were largely peaceful and - despite being contested by the challenger before the Constitutional Court - had a clear outcome, seeing incumbent Joko Widodo winning with a margin of 11%. Whereas religion did play a role in campaigning, it was not as central as many observers had feared. The president is striving to leave a legacy (as this is his last term in office) and pushed through with the [relocation of the capital](#) to a geographically more central (but in almost every other aspect more remote) place in the province of East Kalimantan (The Guardian, 26 August 2019). The arrival of the COVID-19 outbreak derailed these efforts and protests against a so-called "Omnibus Law", turning at times violent, deregulating labor and many other laws have been a major challenge for the government, especially as Islamist groups tried to capitalize on them as well.

The disbanding of the radical Islamic Defenders Front (FPI) and the sentencing of its leader Rizieq Shihab (see below: *Political and legal landscape*) shook the country less than could have been expected. However, Indonesia was badly affected by the COVID-19 crisis, which meant that mass gatherings and protests were out of the question.

Christians have been affected by the recent events in Indonesia just like all other citizens. However, the suicide attack against the cathedral in Makassar opened still fresh wounds and memories of the attacks against three Christian churches in 2018 (see analysis below). The killing and beheading of Christians in Sulawesi added to a feeling of insecurity, although the authorities did investigate the matter and take action. Security forces in Indonesia confirmed the [killing of Ali Kalora](#) (AP News, 19 September 2021). He was the leader of the East Indonesia Mujahideen group (MIT), which had been responsible for the attacks. Christians remain vulnerable to violent attack and radical Islamic thinking is widespread. Some groups and individuals also put it into practice. The attacks' shockwaves are still felt by Christians and other religious minorities.

Political and legal landscape

While Islamic political parties never gained many votes in elections, a conventional wisdom was once again confirmed in the 2019 elections: Moderate Islam is increasingly being challenged by radical influences, and society continues to become more conservative in religious aspects. Even incumbent President Joko Widodo felt obliged to choose conservative Islamic cleric Maa'ruf Amin as his vice-president in order to counter allegations slandering his religious credentials. Islam is thus being used as an effective political tool and has a [prominent place](#) in the political agenda (Reuters, 18 April 2019). Islamists are increasingly [shaping politics](#) in Indonesia (IPAC, 15 March 2019). The fact that Jokowi's opponent in the presidential candidacy, Prabowo Subianto, has been made [Minister of Defence](#), disappointed radical Islamic groups, but illustrates the style of Indonesian and Javanese politics very well (Benar News, 23 October 2019). The elections also showed how divided the country has become: While religious minorities expectedly almost exclusively voted for Joko Widodo and the majority of the island of Java also voted for him, in most other provinces opposition candidate Prabowo Subianto gained the majority.

The second and last term of President Widodo has so far been overshadowed by the arrival of COVID-19. The need to impose lockdowns went directly against the main government priority of strengthening the economy and bringing more of the many young people in Indonesia into steady employment, besides improving their education. Consequently, lockdowns were never strictly implemented, which was most pronounced in the tradition of [mudik](#) (going to one's hometown after Ramadan) and in the fact that the nation had one of the lowest COVID-19-test rates in the world (RSIS, 29 June 2020). But as infections rose, the government decided to issue a stricter lockdown for Java and Bali in July 2021.

Given that Jokowi's first term was rather a disappointment as far as human rights are concerned, it was not to be expected that he would make this a priority in his second, but hope did grow when he finally [raised his voice](#) in February 2020 in support of freedom of religion and against denying building and renovation of places of worship (Jakarta Post, 14 February 2020). However, in the WWL 2022 reporting period no change of policy could be observed. Places of worship have been closed due to the COVID measures anyway. A good illustration of the practice surrounding the issuing of building permits can be seen in the case of Yasmin Church in Bogor, West Java – a church belonging to the Indonesian Christian Church denomination. Despite a judgment passed by the Supreme Court in December 2010, ruling that the church authorities had passed all requirements set up by law to obtain a building permit, the town's mayor refused to abide by this ruling and the government did not take action against him, fearing social unrest. The church started to worship in front of the Indonesian president's palace in Jakarta instead, but this did not change the situation at all. In December 2021, the Bogor City authorities, still not abiding by the Supreme Court ruling, held a [groundbreaking ceremony](#) for a new building at another place, an option part of the church declined (UCA News, 7 December 2021).

At the same time, it should not be forgotten that democracy only became established in the country in 1998; the 2019 presidential elections were only the fourth in the country's history. Despite all the problems of divisiveness and post-election violence, Indonesians managed to cast their votes and the country remains one of the largest democracies in the world - and one of the very few genuine democracies in a Muslim-majority country.

[Protests](#), joined by workers, students and Islamic groups, some of them radical, took place against the already mentioned "Omnibus Law" in October 2020 (Reuters, 13 October 2020). However, President Joko Widodo [signed it](#) into effect on 2 November 2020 (PwC, November 2020) and the government hopes it will reduce red tape and encourage economic growth. At the end of 2021, it was still [challenged](#) in the Constitutional Court (Channel News Asia, 17 June 2021). It certainly acted as a catalyst in the formation of new political and civil society groups, like the one using the acronym 'KAMI' (Indonesian for 'us' - a short form of "Save Indonesia Action Coalition"). Its goal is to prevent any erosion of the country's founding principle of 'Pancasila'. Together with some former (and disgruntled) political figures and a former chairman of the Muslim organization, Muhammadiyah, the current chairman of the Islamic Defender's Front (FPI) is also a member.

Hardline Islamic leader Muhammad Rizieq Shihab, leader of the FPI, decided to [return to Indonesia](#) after three years of self-imposed exile in Saudi Arabia. He was greeted by thousands of his supporters at the airport (Benar News, 11 November 2020). He and his supporters had been instrumental in campaigning against the Christian governor of Jakarta, who was then sentenced for blasphemy. The FPI was soon after [banned](#) by the government (Jakarta Post, 30 December 2020). While there were fears that this move might back-fire and act as a [rallying call to unify](#) the various radical Islamic groups (New Mandala, 7 January 2021), the WWL 2022 reporting period did not see much development in this direction, which may also be related to the COVID crisis. A court in Jakarta [sentenced](#) Rizieq Shihab to four years further imprisonment for concealing evidence about his health status (Associated Press, 24 June 2021). The sentence was [reduced](#) after an appeal to the Supreme Court to two years (UCA News, 16 November 2021). The [crackdown](#) on Islamist radicals in Indonesia comes with challenges of its own and it is far from clear if simply arresting and sentencing them will even help in solving the problem (IPAC, 25 May 2021).

The COVID-19 crisis not only stretched Indonesia's public health system and its economy, but also challenged the nation's politicians. The federal government's response was widely seen as being too slow, too indecisive and lacking coherence. The growing dependence on the [army](#) (in helping contain the spread of the virus and in organizing relief aid) was another point of criticism (RSIS, 11 May 2020). On the other hand, the parties supporting Jokowi seem to be in a constant campaign-mode well ahead of the next elections, scheduled for 2024. Candidates are already being considered and a decisive pandemic response could serve to boost the election chances of provincial governors and others.

From a gender perspective, women remained disadvantaged within Indonesia's political and legal context. There is a lack of legal protection for women having undertaken an interreligious marriage and Muslim women cannot marry or divorce under civil law, as these are governed only by Sharia law ([OECD, Social Indications and Gender Index 2019](#)). As noted by the CEDAW, women are most subject to discriminatory family laws in the province of Aceh (granted special autonomy status), since the local government has implemented a strict form of Sharia law ([CEDAW, 2012, p.15](#)). Although child marriage is prohibited (Law No. 1 of 1974 on Marriage, Articles 16, 20 and 22) and the practice is on the decline, it remains a live issue, especially in rural areas; 16% of girls marry before the age of 18 ([Girls Not Brides, 2021](#)).

Women’s rights groups have highlighted the negative impact of the COVID-19 crisis on women’s rights, noting that several long-awaited pieces of legislation were put on the backburner ([The Jakarta Post, 3 August 2020](#)). The Sexual Violence Prevention bill, first proposed in 2016, is finally moving towards becoming law, but has been criticized for its watered down language and provisions; articles relating to “forced marriage, forced prostitution, forced abortion, sexual torture and sexual slavery” have all been removed, along with provisions protecting the rights of those with disabilities ([Jakarta Post, 8 September 2021](#)). The Domestic Worker Protection Bill, under deliberation for 16 years, also remains stuck in parliament (HRW 2021).

Religious landscape

Indonesia: Religious context	Number of adherents	%
Christians	33,620,000	12.2
Muslim	218,640,000	79.5
Hindu	4,382,000	1.6
Buddhist	2,137,000	0.8
Ethno-religionist	5,784,000	2.1
Jewish	200	0.0
Bahai	28,000	0.0
Atheist	318,000	0.1
Agnostic	3,642,000	1.3
Other	6,303,100	2.3
<i>OTHER includes Chinese folk, New religionist, Sikh, Spiritist, Taoist, Confucianist, Jain, Shintoist, Zoroastrian.</i>		

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

According to WCD 2021 estimates, 79.5% of the population is Muslim. There are also millions of atheists/agnostics and followers of ethnic religions, Hinduism (mainly on Bali), Chinese folk religion and Buddhism.

While Christianity became a major religion in eastern Indonesia, Islam became strong in the western and central parts, especially on the most populous island, Java. The very special brand of Islam in Indonesia, named “Islam Nusantara” by its largest organization *Nahdlatul Ulama*, has been relatively moderate and tolerant towards other religions. However, it received a strong blow with the successful blasphemy campaign during the election of Jakarta’s governor early in 2017. Governor “Ahok” had been the first Christian governor in Jakarta for more than five decades, so his prison sentence for blasphemy and the emotionally charged (and religiously motivated) election campaign, might prove a game-changer for Christians in the country.

Another shock were the bomb attacks against three churches in Surabaya in May 2018 and - in the WWL 2022 reporting period - another suicide attack against the cathedral in Makassar and two mass killings by radical Islamic group MIT. Polls reveal that an increasing number of Muslims hold negative views concerning religious minorities such as Christians.

The influence of radical Islamic organizations is growing. Neither national nor local governments dare to ignore their demands, fearing public unrest. One of the most radical and vocal of such organizations had been "Front Pembela Islam" (FPI - which translates as "Islamic Defence Front") and played a prominent role in the presidential elections and supported Jokowi's rival, Prabowo Subianto, a former army general. It was banned by the government and reacted by simply copying what other radical groups have done elsewhere; it heeded Rizieq's advice to 'Relax and just create a new vehicle' by now calling into life the Islamic Unity Front, which bears the same acronym in Indonesian as the old organization, FPI (Jakarta Post, 4 January 2021). The Indonesian government had taken action to close a radical Islamic group called *Hizb-ut-Tahrir Indonesia* in 2017, but this is just one of the smaller groups active in Indonesia.

Indonesia has been and remains - together with the Philippines - the 'most religious' country in the world, that is, according to a survey published in July 2020: 98% of the respondents said that religion is [very important](#) in their lives (Pew Forum, 20 July 2020). By far the bigger challenge is that society as a whole holds increasingly conservative religious views. A study, published in May 2018, found that a growing number of students hold [Islamist views](#) and 39% of those surveyed had been exposed to radical Islamic ideology (Benar News, 3 May 2018). The local NGO Setara Institute published a study on ten public universities in Indonesia in June 2019, showing how Islamic radicals are [using university structures](#) to win followers (UCA News, 3 June 2019). Thus, the next generation is being educated to hold very conservative or even radical Islamic views. This is likely to lead to an increase in societal discrimination and even to violence towards Christians in the future – and not just in Aceh and other hot-spots. According to Indonesia's State Intelligence Agency, [85% of all millennials](#) in the country have been exposed to radicalism - mainly via social media (SCMP, 23 June 2021).

One of the great unknowns at the moment is how the largest Muslim organizations in the country – the Nahdlatul Ulama (NU) and the Muhammadiyah – will counter the growing radicalization in the country. Traditionally, they were seen as moderate and tolerant towards other religious groups, but especially the youth organization of NU has been vocal in calling for a more conservative understanding of Islam. Whereas Vice-president Amin is a senior figure in NU, Yahya Staquf, General-secretary of NU continues to take a strong stand against [radicalism in Islam](#), a battle he admits he is not optimistic about winning (International-LaCroix, 18 February 2019). After a recent cabinet reshuffle, Yaqut Cholil Qoumas, who also chairs the NU youth wing, was made the new minister of religion. This was the continuation of a long tradition (although his direct predecessor had been a former general not related with NU). The new minister announced in one of his first statements that he would work to uphold the [rights of religious minorities](#), naming Shia and Ahmadiyah (Jakarta Post, 26 December 2020), but also meaning Christians and others. Of course it needs to be seen how words translate into deeds.

Religious minorities such as the Ahmadis (a Muslim minority) and Christians are frequent targets for discrimination and acts of violence, but Indonesia is still a very diverse nation: One province, Aceh, at the western tip of Sumatra, is ruled by Sharia law and is even tightening its rules; several other provinces have also introduced Sharia by-laws, leaving Christians in particular in a difficult situation; but at the same time, there are Christian-majority and Hindu-majority provinces as well.

Economic landscape

According to [UNDP's full 2020 report](#) (page 343 onwards):

- **Gross National Income per capita (2017 USD PPP):** 11,459
- **Rate of multidimensional poverty:** 3.6% of the population are living in multidimensional poverty, a further 4.7% are vulnerable to it. 9.8% of the population are living below the national poverty line
- **Remittances:** 1.04% of the national GDP

According to the World Bank:

- Indonesia decreased to a lower middle income status, according to the World Bank's most recent classification.
- **GDP per capita (PPP, constant 2017 international USD):** 11,445.
- **GDP per capita growth rate:** -3.1%
- **Poverty gap at 5.50 USD a day (2011 PPP):** 18.2% (2019)

As the World Bank aptly summarizes in its overview: "Today, Indonesia is the world's fourth most populous nation, the world's 10th largest economy in terms of purchasing power parity, and a member of the G-20. Furthermore, Indonesia has made enormous gains in poverty reduction, cutting the poverty rate by more than half since 1999, to 9.78% in 2020. Prior to the COVID-19 crisis, Indonesia was able to maintain consistent economic growth, qualifying the country recently to reach upper middle income status." However, the economic downturn coming with COVID-19 wiped out this success, as Indonesia achieved a GNO of 3,870 USD in the first quarter of 2021, bringing it [back to the lower middle income level](#) (Bloomberg, 8 July 2021).

Indonesia remains the largest economy in Southeast Asia (SEA) and is developing fast, considering its unique geographical challenge of being made up of seventeen thousand islands. The government puts a strong emphasis on the development of infrastructure such as airports, ports, railroad connections and (toll) roads. For this, Indonesia relies on Chinese help and loans (for example for the highspeed rail between Jakarta and Bandung), but China is just one of a whole group of partners and Indonesia has taken care not to make itself as dependent on China as other SEA countries have done. Japan has been another important partner in infrastructure.

The growth of the middle class, predominantly in urban areas, has led to increasing prosperity and consumption which has strengthened society as a whole. However, at the same time, Indonesia is one of the most unequal societies in SEA, the GINI ratio (measuring inequality in a society by income) [hovering around 0.4](#), this growing wealth has been distributed unequally and in clusters (University of Melbourne, 27 November 2018). Already before a big COVID infection

wave struck in June 2021 onwards, the World Bank [estimated](#) in a report that 1.8 million additional people were unemployed and 2.8 million fell into poverty (World Bank, Indonesia Economic Prospects, 17 June 2021). But numbers can be misleading: While the unemployment rate was below the 5% mark, a stunning three quarters of all employees (in the non-agricultural sectors) work in [the informal sector](#) and thus face socially insecure conditions (UCA News, 14 June 2019), especially in a pandemic situation. This at least partly explains why the government was hesitant to enforce a strict lockdown.

Indonesia is the 16th largest economy worldwide in absolute terms and grew annually at a rate of more than 5%. The COVID-19 crisis made the country enter its first recession since 1998 and witnessed a negative growth rate of 3.1%. Indonesia may become one of the countries to benefit from the US-China trade war and has the potential to become the [seventh](#) (some say even [fifth](#)) largest economy in the world within 20 years (McKinsey, 1 September 2012; The Independent, 2 September 2017). Indonesia depends strongly on its export of commodities, including oil and gas. It is also a large exporter of palm oil and thus tries to diversify its export markets due to expected import restrictions on palm oil to Europe. It also strives not just to export its raw materials, but to process them in-country, as can be seen with the much sought-after [nickel](#) for battery production (East Asia Forum, 30 March 2021).

President Jokowi has announced his intention to put a strong emphasis on the "Islamic economy" (i.e. the export of Halal products and the expansion of Sharia-conform financial products and tourism etc.). The [Islamic Banking sector](#) already had a head start and sharia bank branches are sprouting across the country (Reuters, 21 June 2021). But for now, all effort is focused on getting the pandemic under control and then in getting the economy back on track. The "Omnibus bill", fast-tracked before COVID-19 arrived and already referred to above (under *Political and legal landscape*), was planned to help in speeding up economic development, but has also created [far-reaching fears and protests](#) on the streets (The Diplomat, 6 October 2020). The fact that it was published in several versions, differing by several dozen pages, did not bolster confidence.

One of the challenges haunting Indonesian development is the deeply-rooted corruption. The country sits at rank 102 in Transparency International's Corruption Perception Index (CPI 2020) and on an almost weekly basis, new cases of corruption are uncovered, affecting local and national politicians from all parties and state-owned and private companies. The office investigating these cases, the Corruption Eradication Commission (KPK), is known to have teeth and courts tend to issue harsh sentences, which has been one of the reasons for politicians to limit its impact by the new laws referred to above.

According to a report published by the [World Bank in July 2020](#), COVID-19 disrupted economic growth and sent millions of people into unemployment, particularly affecting residents in Metro Jakarta. A quick recovery is hampered by the fact that according to the same study, only an estimated 21% of all jobs can be carried out from home (World Bank, p.21). Even before the pandemic struck, the government was on its way to adopt an Omnibus Bill for job creation, amending 79 different laws; such a law may be needed even more now (p.43). At the same time, the Bill was hotly debated as it limits workers' rights, among other things. Depending on the

region, due to discrimination, Christians may face more problems in finding jobs in a struggling economy. Apart from that, they are facing the same difficulties as everyone else.

Social and cultural landscape

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

- **Main ethnic groups:** Javanese 40.1%, Sundanese 15.5%, Malay 3.7%, Batak 3.6%, Madurese 3%, Betawi 2.9%, Minangkabau 2.7%, Buginese 2.7%, Bantenese 2%, other 23.8% (2010 est.)
- **Main languages:** Bahasa Indonesia (official, modified form of Malay), English, local dialects (of which the most widely spoken is Javanese)
- **Urbanization rate:** 56.6%
- **Literacy rate:** 95.7%
- **Mean years of schooling:** 8.2 years
- **Health and education indicators:** Per 10,000 people, Indonesia has 4.3 physicians and 10 hospital beds, the pupil teacher ratio in primary school is 17:1

According to [World Bank's April 2020 update](#) (accessed July 2020):

- **Population/Age:** 25.9% of the population is below the age of 14, 6.3% is above the age of 65
- **Education:** The primary school enrollment is 106.4%, the completion rate is 102.3% (2018)
- **Unemployment:** 4.1%, 48.3% are in vulnerable employment (modeled ILO estimate) and the rate of people in the non-agricultural sector in informal employment is 72.5% (2016, [ILO](#)).
- **IDPs/Refugees:** Indonesia is neither a specific target nor source country, refugees - e.g. from the Middle East, Africa or Afghanistan - are present, especially in the cities, but their numbers are small. The World Bank estimated in a report published in 2017 that almost [4.8 million Indonesian](#) citizens were working legally abroad, but there are estimates almost doubling this number (before COVID-19 struck).
- **Malnourishment:** 30.8% of children under the age of five suffer from malnutrition or stunting

According to the UN Global Human Development Indicators (HDI 2020):

- **HDI score and ranking:** With a score of 0.718, Indonesia ranks 107th out of 189 countries. Its development has been slow and steady
- **Life expectancy:** 71.7 years
- **Median age:** 29.7 years
- **Gini coefficient:** 39.0
- **Gender inequality:** With a score of 0.48, Indonesia ranks 121st of 162 countries in the Gender Inequality Index
- **Unemployment:** The unemployment rate is 4.7% and 47.9% are in vulnerable employment. The rate of unemployed youth is 17%, the rate of youth neither in school nor employment is 22% (between 15 and 24 years of age).

Indonesia is the fourth most populated country in the world, with more than 40% of the population under the age of 25. It has therefore a surplus in workforce and an estimated 4.8 million people working abroad, 70% of whom are women, who mainly work as domestic maids and nannies, while male workers are often construction or plantation workers, many of them working in neighboring Malaysia. Most of these migrant workers are without their families which leads to emotional distress and many other challenges shared by migrant workers all over the world (weak legal position, abuse etc.). The government is striving to increase the production and service sector and education is widely seen as a key to progress.

Apart from fighting poverty in general, the government (supported by the World Bank under the heading "promoting human capital") is making better education and training a priority in order to improve the livelihood of young people in particular. Before COVID-19 struck and forced the government to re-focus all its resources, this was the main goal in the second term of the Jokowi government. Indonesia opened the tertiary education sector for international partners; Australian [Monash University](#) was the first foreign university to announce the opening of a physical campus just outside Jakarta (Monash University, 10 February 2020). From 2014 onwards, the government implemented a public health insurance system with the goal of covering all citizens. [Challenges](#) remain, however, as the fees are necessarily low and infrastructure is difficult (Asia Pacific Observatory, Vol. 7, No.1, 2017). According to the already mentioned July 2020 [World Bank study](#), between 2001 and 2018 expenditure for public health increased by 22% annually and the health insurance covers 83% of the population now (page 48). Compared to similar countries, however, Indonesia is still lagging behind.

Indonesia enjoys a democracy, despite challenges, and strong independent media. Debates in parliament are lively and open, with room for discussion and the questioning of government action. However, the most recent government has co-opted almost all parties into the government, so there is no strong opposition. The media have grown in influence too, becoming a fourth source of power alongside the legislative, executive and judiciary powers. Whether the issue is attacks on religious minorities (mostly labelled as "sectarian strife") or rampant corruption, the media (newspapers, TV, radio and social media) do not shy away from reporting details. A growing number of non-governmental organizations complete this picture. However, in reality such reporting does not change much. The radical Islamic groups taking to the streets are far more effective at influencing both society's point of view and government action. Another factor is the strong influence that social media has, especially among young people (see below: *Technological landscape*).

One particularly strong social factor is the country's continued trend towards urbanization. Citizens from across the islands come to the bigger cities in search of work and a better life. This trend can be felt in many cities, but has become so evident in Metro Jakarta (with an estimated 30 million inhabitants) that the government decided to relocate the capital. More than 55% of the population live in an urbanized environment; however, this still means that around 120 million people are living in rural areas - and the difference is extreme: The growing openness in criticizing the powerful does not reach all citizens, since local strongmen in rural areas have more means for staying in power.

Finally, it should be kept in mind that an estimated 60% of the whole population live on the Island of Java, which comprises just 6.7% of Indonesia's territory. This means that people from the other islands sometimes feel overlooked as a lot of development focuses on Java. This is also a reminder that Indonesia is a patchwork of hundreds of different ethnicities, languages and cultures.

No matter which island is considered, the COVID-19 crisis has had devastating consequences for all of them. Indonesia is the country with the [most confirmed cases](#) of infection in East Asia, more than two million as of June 2021 (Benar News, 21 June 2021). And this was before the next wave with the Delta-variant struck, filling hospitals across the islands of Java and Bali (particularly Metro Jakarta) and depleting the country's oxygen supplies. Vaccination is only taking up speed slowly, which is due to challenges of logistics and [reluctance](#) on religious grounds (New Mandala, 25 May 2021). Another challenge is that workers from the younger generation, who had flocked to the cities and could send remittances home, now may be [forced to return home](#), making life in the rural areas even more difficult (New Mandala, 23 September 2020). It should be kept in mind that 72.5% of the workforce outside agriculture are working in informal occupations, which means they do not have any social protection, can be easily laid off and a hard lockdown means losing one's livelihood for many. Finally, another consequence of COVID-19 is that reported cases of [child abuse](#) strongly increased by 49% in 2020 according to the Indonesian Child Protection Commission (UCA News, 10 February 2021). At the same time, the number of [child marriages](#) tripled in 2020, according to the Ministry of Women's Empowerment and Child Protection (PPPA) (Antara News, 9 July 2021).

Christians participate in social and cultural life like everyone else, but while in urban areas they tend to belong to the middle class, in rural areas they are often facing poverty and related challenges. It is noteworthy that, according to official [government statistics](#), the provinces with the highest levels of poverty in Indonesia (Papua, West Papua, NTT and Maluku) have a Christian majority population or a large Christian minority (Maluku with 46%). There are geographical and infrastructural reasons for this as well; other majority Christian provinces do better in these terms.

With the exception of some matrilineal communities, Indonesia operates according to patriarchal norms. Indonesia's Marriage Law (Article 31) explicitly states that men are the head of the household and that women should manage the household. As highlighted by Human Rights Watch (HRW 2021), reports of domestic violence cases associated with COVID-19 lockdown measures were twice the 2019 number. Although recognized as a serious issue, domestic violence is considered a private matter and incidents are rarely reported; victims reportedly face significant social pressure not to speak out ([OECD, 2019](#)). Advocates have also warned that the pandemic could be linked to a spike in child marriages ([Jakarta Post, 7 September 2020](#)).

Technological landscape

According to Internet World Stats (IWS 2021):

- **Internet usage:** 76.8% penetration – survey date: March 2021
- **Facebook usage:** 63.4% penetration – survey date: March 2021

According to World Bank:

- **Mobile phone subscriptions:** 126.1 per 100 people

According to Freedom House/Internet Freedom 2020:

- "Internet freedom in Indonesia declined due to an increase in disinformation and pro-government propaganda, as well as technical attacks targeting activists, journalists, and civil society. The government again restricted internet access during the coverage period; in August and September 2019, connectivity was limited amid protests in Papua and West Papua provinces. However, a court later ruled in support of civil society groups, declaring the restrictions unlawful. Meanwhile, critics of the government, journalists, and ordinary users continued to face criminal charges and harassment in retaliation for their online activity."
- Due to Indonesia censoring the Internet and social media, it was only labelled "partly free" and noted a deterioration in scores. On the other hand, blocking channels due to terrorism-related content has to be seen in relation to the fact that terror and insurgents' attacks are a reality in the country. The government tries to respect rights and freedom, as was illustrated in the post-election violence in Jakarta in May 2019, when all kinds of fake news (including doctored photos) were shared on social media. Instead of shutting everything down completely, the government reacted by slowing down Internet speed for several days and blocked the possibility of uploading and sharing photos and videos. Despite the existing censorship and all other inherent dangers, social media remains for millions of people (especially the younger generation) the source of choice for staying informed.
- Freedom House quotes sources giving the range of people using the Internet at around 175 million people. Internet coverage is strongest on Java, which is the most populated island. According to Freedom House, there are 338 million mobile phone subscriptions, each Indonesian uses 1.24 mobile phones, making it one of the highest rates in the world and consequently social media is greatly in use.

The Internet penetration rate is much higher in urban areas. It should be kept in mind that the comparably small island of Java alone hosts close to 60% of the whole Indonesian population. In a country with 17,000 islands, there are infrastructural challenges for making Internet access possible for everyone. In October 2019, the government announced the finalization of the "Palapa Ring", a massive broadband [infrastructure project](#) spanning more than 12,000 kilometers (Submarine Telecoms Forum, 16 October 2019).

The restriction in Internet access imposed by the state referred to in Freedom House's report is not the only way the state can interfere with media communication. Indonesia's Electronic Information and Transaction Law (ITE Law in its 2016 revision) can already be used to [curb and restrict](#) free online speech (East Asia Forum, 2 April 2021). The law is in the process of being [revised](#) as of June 2021 (VOI, 8 June 2021).

Security situation

Indonesia decided to [ban the return](#) of battle-hardened Islamic State group (IS) militants and their family members from Syria and Iraq. Although this may initially help the authorities in coping with the danger of Islamic extremism, it will not stop the militants from quietly seeping in via the thousands of islands (Reuters, 11 February 2020). It is still hotly debated if and how [Indonesian children](#) of IS radicals should be extricated from camps mainly located in Syria (IPAC, 30 June 2021). How dangerous such an unmonitored return can be, was clearly illustrated in the capture of the town of Marawi in neighboring Mindanao/Philippines in 2017, which was supported by Indonesian Islamic fighters.

The triple suicide-bomb attack against churches in May 2018 are still in the backs of the minds of many people, and the suicide bombing of the Roman Catholic Cathedral in neighboring Jolo/Philippines on 27 January 2019, claiming 20 lives, was carried out by an [Indonesian couple](#) (Benar News, 25 July 2019). In the WWL 2022 reporting period there was now a fresh example of an IS inspired attack: On Palm Sunday, 28 March 2021, a newly wed couple detonated [two bombs](#) at a church service in the cathedral of Makassar, wounding twenty and killing themselves (ASEAN Today, 7 April 2021). Just three days later, a young woman walked into the [national police headquarters](#) in Jakarta and detonated her suicide belt (Jamestown Foundation, 9 April 2021). Such attacks add to a general climate of insecurity, which is more pronounced among religious minorities, although the authorities do carry out investigations and in general try their best to foil such attacks.

[Radical Islamic groups](#) in Indonesia are using the COVID-19 crisis as a time for [regrouping](#) and strengthening their ranks (The Diplomat, 23 June 2020; UCA News, 26 May 2020). While there have been suicide and bomb attacks against the [security forces](#), they have remained on a relatively [small scale](#) so far (RSIS, 23 January 2020; Benar News, 1 June 2020). However, while IS is on the decline in the country, the [danger](#) of splinter groups, 'lone wolves' and new cells is still very present (IPAC, 21 January 2021). The police also warned that the *Jemaah Islamiyah* movement is regrouping and according to observers, they are still posing a threat (Benar News, 17 November 2020). Its founder, Abubakar Baasyir, has been quietly [released from prison](#) and while he may not personally pose a fighting threat anymore (he is in his 80s and in poor health), his ideological influence should not be underestimated (Jamestown Foundation, 12 February 2021). The swift victory of the Taliban in Afghanistan in August 2021 has increased the likelihood of attacks by splinter groups, but has so far done little more than strengthen the [ideological resolve](#) of *Jemaah Islamiyah*, which does not make it necessarily less dangerous (IPAC, 7 September 2021). In December 2019, *Jamaah Ansharut Daulah* challenged the authorities with an [attack](#) against then-Security Minister Wiranto (Jamestown, 17 December 2019).

The *Mujahideen Indonesia Timur* (MIT) was thought to be on the decline with possibly less than 10 active fighters. It nevertheless managed to carry out two attacks against villages in Central Sulawesi in November 2020 and May 2021, killing eight Christians. Despite efforts to eradicate the group for more than a decade, they are still fighting and sowing harm, disruption and distrust within the population. The killing of its leader, Ali Kalora, in September 2021 by security forces (see above: *Recent history*) dealt MIT a serious blow. However, it remains to be seen if this is the end of MIT or if it will mutate into various radical Islamic splinter groups. Thus, the country is

starting to lose its model character of being a successfully democratic country housing a tolerant form of Islam, although it is fighting with some success against violent forms of radical Islam.

The police are not generally biased against religious minorities, but appear to be more concerned with keeping the peace in a given community rather than with enforcing the law or constitutional rights. Indonesia's intelligence and counter-terrorism forces are renowned and much more effective than most of its ASEAN peers. Militant Islamic cells are frequently unearthed, so that the largest danger does not seem to come from radical Islamic networks or organizations, but from so-called 'lone wolves'. However, Islamist ideology has clearly made inroads into the country - the preferred avenue for young people being the Internet and social media, which radicals know how to use for their purposes very well. And there are groups like Jamaah Ansharul Khilafah, which focus on [Islamic mission](#) ("dawah") and act according to the motto "continue to teach and bide your time" (The Diplomat, 13 August 2020). Correspondingly, there are reports that IS stepped up their [recruiting efforts](#) in Indonesia, Malaysia and the Philippines, taking advantage of governments being distracted by the COVID-19 crisis (Benar News, 23 September 2020).

Another challenge which needs to be highlighted here and which concerns the Christian minority (and Indonesia as a whole) is the situation in Papua. The status of "special autonomy (otsus)" for Papua is going to [expire](#) after twenty years in 2021 and negotiations about a renewal or replacement pose the opportunity for discussing security as well as minority and human rights issues (IPAC, 30 July 2020). There is a violent insurgency seeking independence (or full autonomy) and the conflict escalated when the head of intelligence for the Papua region was killed on 25 April 2021. The National Liberation Army of West Papua (TPNPB), the armed wing of the separatist Free Papua Movement (OPM) claimed responsibility. A few days later, the government classified these Papuan separatist groups as [terrorists](#) (Benar News, 29 April 2021). While observers doubt this will do anything to solve the conflict, it has allowed the government to bring special forces into the region and it also allows for the anti-terrorist force Densus 88 to become active, a move which has not been taken as far as is known. The authorities announced in May 2021 that they had [foiled bomb attacks](#) by Islamic radicals against 10 Papuan churches as well as assassination plots against the Archbishop of Papua (UCA News, 31 May 2021). This illustrates the highly inflammable situation in Papua which may have broader consequences for the whole country.

Trends analysis

1) Conservatism and radicalization are on the rise

Indonesia faces difficult times ahead. The fact that ethnic and religious affiliation have been used for political gain without concern for the consequences, has shocked many Indonesians and significantly harmed the country's international image of sponsoring a tolerant brand of Islam. Radicalization continues and is increasingly carried out online; schools, universities and the authorities are struggling to find an antidote against this. Concerning Islamism in Indonesia, there are a number of developments which need to be watched in the coming months and years:

a) Indonesia's largest Islamic organization, Nahdlatul Ulama (NU) and the second largest organization, Muhammadiyah, are both struggling to keep their vision of moderate [Islam in a pluralist society](#) central and young people engaged (New Mandala, 24 August 2020). They are the cultural and ideological backbone of Islam in Indonesia and while the new Minister of Religion, Yaqut Cholil Quomas from NU, [confirmed](#) that freedom of religion includes the freedom for minorities not to be forced to wear religious clothing in a hotly debated case in West Sumatra and even issued a ministerial decree together with his colleague for education in February 2021, this was [struck down](#) by the Supreme Court in May 2021 (HRW, 1 July 2021), which may also indicate that the Court is becoming more conservative. The problems surrounding mandatory religious clothing in Indonesia are discussed in detail in a HRW report entitled "[I wanted to run away](#)" (HRW, 19 March 2021).

b) Although the proportion of religious minorities among civil servants is [higher](#) than in society in general, this is not true for leadership positions - the so-called Tier 1 positions (ADB, January 2021). According to Indonesia's State Intelligence Agency, [85% of all millennials](#) in the country have been exposed to radicalism - mainly via social media (SCMP, 23 June 2021). Meanwhile, the government is trying to reduce Islamist sentiment among civil servants. According to official estimates, of the 4.3 million civil servants in Indonesia, at least 800,000 have been influenced by radical Islam. To combat this, the government has now introduced an [anti-extremism test](#) as part of the selection procedure (UCA News, 17 June 2021). While there is always the risk that such a measure could be misused for political reasons (e.g. to target political rivals), the numbers show that something needs to be done about the growing radicalism, and not just for protecting Indonesia's religious minorities.

c) Given the increasing threat from radical and violent Islamic group resurgence, it remains to be seen how successful the authorities are in curbing this threat and whether attacks will be limited to the security organs or will target religious minorities again. At the same time, the government needs to find ways to reduce the community support for such groups in certain regions of the country, what seems especially true for MIT with its miniscule official numbers. The fact that more and more radicalization happens online does not make this task easier. A growing number of Indonesian supporters of IS ideology are resorting to home-schooling to raise a generation of [IS militant "cubs"](#) (RSIS, 28 August 2020). On the other hand, a recent poll showed that the government's December 2020 policy of banning the Islamic Defenders' Front (FPI) is enjoying surprisingly broad [support](#) (New Mandala, 18 June 2021). When asked about liking or disliking having an FPI member as a neighbor, the result was that 24% of respondents answered that they would not want to live next-door to FPI members. In comparison, the figure for not wanting to live next-door to Christians or people from the Chinese community was 18% in both cases.

d) Apart from other priorities, the Indonesian government promised to add an [Islamic perspective](#) to its upcoming presidency of the Group of 20, an intergovernmental forum comprising 19 countries and the European Union, which meets to address major global issues (Eurasia Review, 20 September 2021). The question being raised is: Who defines Islam and which Muslim-majority country or countries will be recognized as leaders of the Islamic world? According to the minister of religious affairs, Yaqut Cholil Quomas, setting the agenda for his country's G20 presidency in 2022: "[O]ne major task that lies before us is to identify, and

conscientiously observe, those universal values that a majority of the world's inhabitants already acknowledge, such as the virtues of honesty, truth-seeking, compassion and justice. Another parallel task is to develop a global consensus regarding shared values that the world's diverse cultures will need to embrace if we are to co-exist peacefully." This is a good example of the struggle Indonesia has been going through for some time now. It will be interesting to see how much the Indonesian model can influence or even set standards in the global debate about how Islam should develop.

e) The fact that Islamic radical groups planned to attack churches and church representatives in Papua indicates a growing danger. If such attacks succeed, they have the potential to polarize the population along ethnic and religious lines, deepen existing rifts and widen the conflict to other parts of the country. The ongoing migration makes such developments much easier.

2) Growing authoritarianism and polarization

a) The fact that Indonesia is in danger of losing its reputation for following a tolerant brand of Islam, also means that the government feels obliged to more overtly defend the country's motto "Unity in Diversity" (and remain loyal to the nation's foundational ideology, Pancasila). However, it will be an enormous challenge to take all citizens into consideration, including all ethnic and religious minorities. Efforts were made to draft a [Pancasila guidance law](#) but this would risk monopolizing its interpretation and could be misused as a political weapon, damaging both Pancasila's inclusive approach and the standing of religious minorities (RSIS, 8 July 2020).

b) President Jokowi's second cabinet [includes](#) six ministers with a military background (including the minister for religion) and one with a police background, reflecting how much Indonesia still counts on the armed forces and how important security issues are (RSIS, 25 October 2019). However, it would be an over-statement to speak of a "re-militarization" of Indonesian politics (The Diplomat, 1 August 2020). [Authoritarianism](#) and majoritarianism are also being used in an effort to keep the country together and in balancing out difficulties and tensions (Brookings, August 2020).

c) Finally, Indonesia's widely recognized democratic decline played out in its response towards the COVID-19 crisis. While growing religious conservatism and populism played a strong role, the increasing political polarization of the country between Islamists and so-called pluralists was seen as decisive (Mietzner, "Populist Anti-Scientism, Religious Polarisation, and Institutionalised Corruption: How Indonesia's Democratic Decline Shaped Its COVID-19 Response", [Journal of Current Southeast Asian Affairs](#), 2020, Vol. 39/2, pp.227-249). This polarization will continue to define Indonesian politics. Additionally, parties supporting the incumbent government may soon switch to campaign-mode well ahead of the next elections, scheduled for 2024, for which the first candidates are already being considered; indeed, how well the different provinces are coping with the COVID-19 crisis may have an influence on the selection process. The government has tried to hold firmly to its banner of tolerance, but this came only after a spate of cases in which church building or renovation permits had been denied (see below: Persecution dynamics/Church sphere). [Recent research](#) has shown that voting for radical parties at the local level does not necessarily increase the level of violence, but encourages the majority of the population to take on board more radical and intolerant views (British Journal of Political Science, 2019, pp.1-8).

3) COVID, China and other challenges

COVID-19 overshadowed every other problem in Indonesia and wiped out several years of progress the country had made economically and socially. By the end of October 2021, it had 4.240 million confirmed cases and 143,235 COVID-related deaths (and a low testing rate). 8 July 2021 was the first day with a report of more than 1000 COVID-related deaths. To curb the pandemic, the authorities are [supported](#) by 97,000 military staff and 255,000 members of the police force (Jakarta Post, 8 July 2021). The inconsistent and weak response will have longer lasting consequences far beyond the social and economic landscape and may haunt society and politics for years to come. In trying to position itself i) as an emerging political and economic force, ii) as the largest Muslim country in the world and iii) as a member of the G20 (the intergovernmental economic forum comprising 19 countries and the European Union), whose rotating presidency it will take over in 2022, the last two years have considerably weakened it.

Naturally, one of the biggest challenges is to find a working relationship with China. Although Indonesia has claimed not to have any territorial disputes with China, including Chinese claims in the South China Sea, this is only half true as a [stand-off](#) between a Chinese flotilla and Indonesian forces in December 2019/January 2020 in the Indonesian Natuna Sea showed (RSIS, 20 January 2020). The installation of a military command center already sent a clear signal, but sending a [diplomatic note](#) to the UN Secretary General opposing China's claims was a rare public positioning of Indonesia's politics, backing ASEAN's position on this issue (RFA, 28 May 2020). China seems intent on seeing how far it can go; it sent a large [survey vessel](#) to the Natuna Sea on 31 August 2021, a move Indonesia responded to with caution, but which may strain an otherwise improving relationship (Benar News, 19 October 2021).

The continued [funding](#) by Saudi Arabia has transformed Indonesia over the last three decades (The Guardian, 16 April 2020). As a result, the tolerant and inclusive brand of Islam in Indonesia has become a much more conservative one, as the country became a prime recipient of the full spectrum of Saudi proselytization. It remains to be seen how Indonesia positions itself in this respect as well and in how far society and Muslim organizations defending Pancasila (like NU and Muhammadiyah) prove resilient or even counter-effective to these efforts. The level of freedom which religious minorities like Christians enjoy depends in part on these factors.

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WWL 2022: Church information / Indonesia

Christian origins

Searching for the New World and exotic spices, Portuguese merchants came to Indonesia in 1511, firstly to Maluku, in the eastern part of the country. The Portuguese brought with them Roman Catholicism as the first seeds of Christianity in Indonesia.

According to a report compiled by Frederick W H and Worden R L (editors, Washington, 1993) entitled “[Indonesia – A Country Study](#)”:

- “Christianity had a long history in the islands, with Portuguese Jesuits and Dominicans operating in the Malukus, southern Sulawesi, and Timor in the sixteenth century. When the Dutch defeated Portugal in 1605, however, Catholic missionaries were expelled and the Calvinist Dutch Reformed Church was virtually the only Christian influence in the region for 300 years. Whereas the United East Indies Company (VOC) was primarily a secular and not a religious enterprise, and because Calvinism was a strict, austere, and intellectually uncompromising variety of Christianity that demanded a thorough understanding of what, for Indonesians, were foreign scriptures, Christianity advanced little in Indonesia until the nineteenth century. Only a few small communities endured in Java, Maluku, northern Sulawesi, and Nusa Tenggara (primarily Roti and Timor). After the dissolution of the VOC in 1799, and the adoption of a more comprehensive view of their mission in the archipelago, the Dutch permitted proselytizing in the territory. This evangelical freedom was put to use by the more tolerant German Lutherans, who began work among the Batak of Sumatra in 1861.”

- “The twentieth century witnessed the influx of many new Protestant missionary groups, as well as the continued growth of Catholicism and of large regional and reformed Lutheran churches. Following the 1965 coup attempt, all nonreligious persons were labelled atheists and hence were vulnerable to accusations of harboring communist sympathies. At that time, Christian churches of all varieties experienced explosive growth in membership, particularly among those people who felt uncomfortable with the political aspirations of Islamic parties.”
- “In the 1990s, the majority of Christians in Indonesia were Protestants of one affiliation or another, with particularly large concentrations found in North Sumatra, Irian Jaya, Maluku, Central Kalimantan, Central Sulawesi, and North Sulawesi. Catholic congregations grew less rapidly in the 1980s, in part because of the church's heavy reliance on European personnel. These Europeans experienced increasing restrictions on their missionary activities imposed by the Muslim-dominated Department of Religious Affairs.”

Church spectrum today

Indonesia: Church networks	Christians	%
Orthodox	3,100	0.0
Catholic	8,184,000	24.3
Protestant	20,375,000	60.6
Independent	6,578,000	19.6
Unaffiliated	400,000	1.2
Doubly-affiliated Christians	-1,920,000	-5.7
Total	33,620,100	100.0
<i>(Any deviation from the total number of Christians stated above is due to the rounding of decimals)</i>		
Evangelical movement	9,537,000	28.4
Renewalist movement	11,200,000	33.3

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

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

Around a quarter of all Indonesian Christians are Roman Catholic and they are recognized by the country's Constitution as a separate religion (while Protestants are recognized as "Christian"). Geographically, Catholics can be found throughout the archipelago, but they are a majority in the province of East Nusa Tenggara (NTT) with its island Flores and the Komodo islands (well-known for its large lizards). Protestants come in a great variety of denominations, some along ethnic lines (like Batak, Manadonese etc.), others crossing ethnic and other boundaries to form Evangelical and - in particular - Pentecostal churches. These are found throughout the country but are more concentrated in eastern areas (such as in Papua and North Sulawesi). At the same time, there are pockets of Christianity in the western part of Indonesia, too, e.g. in North Sumatra. Due to missionary work by Dutch, Scandinavian and German missionaries in the 19th century, many ethnic church denominations are Reformed or Lutheran (like the Batak, Toraja and others). The ethnic church denominations traditionally used to be limited to their region of origin but nowadays, due to work migration, their churches can be found in the larger cities throughout Indonesia, especially in Metro Jakarta.

External Links - Church information

- Christian origins: Indonesia – A Country Study - <http://countrystudies.us/indonesia/>

WWL 2022: Persecution Dynamics / Indonesia

Reporting period

01 October 2020 - 30 September 2021

Position on the World Watch List

Indonesia: World Watch List	Points	WWL Rank
WWL 2022	68	28
WWL 2021	63	47
WWL 2020	60	49
WWL 2019	65	30
WWL 2018	59	38

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

The sharp rise of five points in total score is fully explained by the increase in the violence score by 5.7 points, mainly driven by two deadly attacks against Christians in Sulawesi in November 2020 and May 2021. While the scores for pressure in all spheres of life hardly changed at all (with the exception of the *Community sphere*), the killings instigated by the Islamist MIT group and the bomb attack against the cathedral in Makassar caused the score for violence to rise. Dozens of radical Muslims have been arrested by the authorities, attacks foiled and the leader of the MIT was killed by security forces in September 2021.

Persecution engines

Indonesia: Persecution engines	Abbreviation	Level of influence
Islamic oppression	IO	Very strong
Religious nationalism	RN	Weak
Ethno-religious hostility	ERH	Weak
Clan oppression	CO	Not at all
Christian denominational protectionism	CDP	Not at all
Communist and post - Communist oppression	CPCO	Not at all
Secular intolerance	SI	Not at all
Dictatorial paranoia	DPA	Not at all
Organized corruption and crime	OCC	Very weak

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

Islamic oppression (Very strong)

Indonesia is a country both blessed and challenged by its diversity. It hosts the largest Muslim population in the world, whose predominant brand of Islam is traditionally fairly tolerant, granting minorities some space. This brand of Islam is often called *Islam Nusantara* or Island Islam, referring to the archipelago's unique topography of more than 17,000 islands and to its diversity. It is a term which was coined by the country's largest Muslim organization, *Nahdlatul Ulama*.

In regard to geography as well as religion, Indonesia is one of the most de-centralized and diverse countries in the world. Although the Constitution of Indonesia guarantees religious freedom, various regions and territories of Indonesia are governed by a host of Islamic by-laws, including Sharia law in the Province of Aceh. Despite some radical and even violent Islamic groups being officially banned, they continue to wield a significant influence. The authorities are learning a lesson that governments are learning all round the world: Simply banning radical Islamic groups does not make them go away. They will often simply re-emerge under a different name. The return of firebrand preacher Rizieq, leader of the Islam Defenders' Front (FPI) on 10 November 2020 so far did not change a lot in terms of encouraging radical Islamic groups or making them more outspoken. However, this may have to do with the meeting restrictions that have been in place in Indonesia because of the pandemic as well. His sentencing to four years imprisonment may add credentials as a martyr to his followers, but it remains to be seen if it will fan Islamic oppression.

Indonesia's universities are known to be hotbeds of Islamic radicalization and so it is not surprising that a study published by the Indonesian government in May 2018 revealed that a growing number of students hold [Islamist views](#) (Benar News, 3 May 2018). Money from Saudi Arabia is pouring into Indonesia for educational purposes and has the effect of bringing Wahhabi ideology into the country. The uphill task of countering intolerant and [at times totally anti-Christian attitudes](#) was highlighted in a research paper presented in New Mandala on 1 June 2018, where differences in Indonesia's 34 provinces were discussed (New Mandala, 1 June 2018). In the survey, responses to the following five statements were requested:

1. *Christians are often dishonest and self-interested.*
2. *Indonesia would be a better place if there were no Christians in this country.*
3. *Christians have the right to be elected as regent, mayor, or governor, even in regions where Muslims are the majority.*
4. *I would be opposed to any church being built in my neighborhood.*
5. *Christians must be allowed to stage demonstrations to protest discrimination against their religion.*

Despite some concerns about the methodology employed, the results are clear enough: Broadly speaking, Aceh is the least tolerant and Kalimantan Utara the most tolerant. Among the provinces in Java, Banten is the least tolerant, followed by Jakarta, Jawa Barat, Jawa Timur, and Yogyakarta. Radical ideology is spreading its roots and not only Christians are affected by this; Muslim minority groups such as Ahmadis suffer as well.

The large rallies protesting against Ahok have led to a [more intolerant attitude in society](#) in general, as one research paper showed (Coconuts, 25 September 2018). While in 2016, 48% of respondents to a survey by the Indonesian Survey Institute said that they would oppose a non-Muslim president, this figure rose to 59% in 2018. A similar rise is noticeable when this question is asked in reference to the vice-president, governors and mayors. On the other hand, the survey shows that the number of people opposing non-Muslims building houses of worship in their neighborhood dropped from 64% to 52% - although it should be noted that this figure is still more than half.

A study published in October 2018 found that 57% of all teachers are [intolerant of other religions](#) (Coconuts, 17 October 2018). The Center for the Study of Islam and Society (PPIM) at State Islamic University Syarif Hidayatullah discovered in its survey that more than 37% of all teachers said that they had or wanted to 'undertake intolerant actions'. 56% of respondents disagreed with non-Muslims establishing places of worship in their neighborhood, and 21% disagreed with neighbors of other religions holding religious events. Keeping in mind that this group has the task of teaching and educating Indonesia's next generation, this does not look promising for the country's future and the Persecution engine *Islamic oppression* will almost certainly gain more strength as a result. These attitudes are unlikely to have changed much in the last two years.

Religious nationalism - Hindu (Weak):

Although the level of strength of this persecution engine is rated as 'weak', it is mentioned here, not least as a reminder for the diversity of Indonesia. As already stated above, Indonesia is one of the most diverse countries in the world as far as language, ethnicity or religion is concerned.

One example of this is the predominantly Hindu island of Bali. If a Hindu becomes a Christian, he/she experiences strong pressure from family, friends and neighbors to return to the belief of the fathers.

Drivers of persecution

Indonesia: Drivers of Persecution	IO	RN	ERH	CO	CDP	CPCO	SI	DPA	OCC
	VERY STRONG	WEAK							
Government officials	Strong	Weak							
Non-Christian religious leaders	Strong	Medium							
Violent religious groups	Very strong	-							
Ideological pressure groups	Medium	Weak							
Citizens (people from the broader society), including mobs	Very strong	Medium							
One's own (extended) family	Medium	Medium							
Political parties	Medium	-							

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

Drivers of Islamic oppression

- Violent religious groups (Very strong) and Ideological pressure groups (Medium):** There is a plethora of violent and partly terrorist-related groups, two of which have been banned by the government: *Hizb-ut Tahrir Indonesia* (HTI) in May 2017 and *Jemaah Anshorut Daulah* (JAD) in July 2018. In everyday life, groups like *Islamic Defender Front* (FPI), the *Islamic Community Forum* (FUI), *Islamic Jihad Front* (FJI) and the Indonesian Mujahideen Council (MMI) affect Christian communities much more and have been behind opposition to churches, for instance. While JAD organized the Makassar bombing, *Mujahideen Indonesia Timur* (MIT) was responsible for the killings in Sulawesi. Ideological pressure groups wield an increasing influence on society and politics alike. They publicly use strict religious interpretations to justify the implementation of Sharia law and the infringement of the rights of religious minorities. They are able to mobilize hundreds of thousands for street demonstrations (although not in pandemic times) and are also used by some politicians and parties to gain electoral leverage. Recently, some of them have started to build Islamic political parties themselves. The line towards ideological pressure groups is very fine and hard to draw. But not all Islamic radical groups resort to violence.
- Normal citizens (Very strong):** Local communities are becoming increasingly active in hindering church congregations from meeting and in complaining about their presence, sometimes by simply saying they do not want the presence of a Christian church. The rising popularity of very conservative Islamic preachers online contributes towards this attitude as well. At times, this can lead to mob violence and the forced closure of places of worship,

often facilitated by the violent religious groups mentioned. At the same time, it can intimidate local officials, e.g. neighborhood leaders, in giving in to this pressure.

- **Government officials (Strong):** The government per se is less of a driver of persecution at the national level, even though it shows little concern for the situation of religious minorities. All government officials are sworn to follow and defend the country's national ideology, Pancasila. However, in practice, government officials (especially at the local level) make it hard for Christians to obtain church permits and deliberately fail to bring perpetrators of crime against Christians to justice. While it is true that there is no nationwide coordinated policy against Christians, the silence of superiors on the national level about the actions of local officials is often deafening. Harmony is always sought at the expense of the weakest and the local level is most prone to it. This varies from region to region, but in general, the list of provinces named in the Persecution engines section above applies here as well.
- **Non-Christian religious leaders (Strong):** Persecution comes from radical Islamic religious leaders, who instigate hatred against Christians and other religious minorities via their teaching in mosques and in the mass media, especially the Internet and social media, one example being Abdul Somad. They have also at times masterminded attacks. When normal citizens are stirred up to act against a minority, they are often led by (their) religious leaders. These may be leaders from the local mosque, but they can also be leaders from outside the community. The government struggles to act against such popular preachers. In November 2021, a member of the fatwa council of the National Ulama Council (MUI) was [arrested](#) on terrorist charges (DW, 17 November 2021). This shows that radical thoughts are reaching into the leadership circles of Muslim organizations.
- **(Extended) family (Medium):** In many cases, converts are challenged by their own families to return to their original faith. Sometimes the family simply cuts all ties. Generally, social ostracism and verbal abuse is an every-day experience for converts. Although physical violence is rare, many converts prefer, if possible, to relocate to bigger cities, a move which is sometimes facilitated by the strong work migration on the one side, on the other side by a risk of being kicked out of the house.
- **Political parties (Medium):** Some political parties have a political Islamic agenda. Several conservative Muslim political parties, e.g. the PKS, PPP and PBB are known for pushing their goal of setting up a purely Islamic nation. Their representatives in the local legislations are often behind the drafting and passing of Sharia-inspired policies (including in the field of education), despite having relatively few voters supporting them at national level. They are suspected of having ties with some of the violent vigilante groups, but carefully avoid any visible connections. On the national level, PKS is the only opposition party at the moment, which may make it easier to stand up for their positions. On the other hand, there is a nationalistic Islamic party, the PKB, which strongly counters such efforts. All of these parties are comparably small. It remains to be seen whether the newly founded Islamic parties (Ummah Party, New Masyumi, etc.) gain political traction.

Drivers of Religious nationalism - Hindu

- **(Extended) family (Medium):** The strongest pressure on converts to Christianity comes from their own family. They will constantly try to convince the convert to return to his or her original faith. The level of pressure varies from family to family.
- **Non-Christian religious leaders (Medium):** Hindu converts are under pressure from their religious leaders, who see leaving Hinduism as seriously weakening their community which is already in a minority position. They will use their influence in the community to oppose conversions and, if possible, to bring converts back to Hindu faith.
- **Normal citizens (Medium):** Adding to the pressure already mentioned above, friends, neighbors and community members often show converts that they have placed themselves outside the whole of society. This is especially true in rural areas.

Areas where Christians face most difficulties

The primary hotbed of persecution in Indonesia is the Province of Aceh at the north-western tip of Sumatra, the only province which is governed by Sharia law. Churches were closed there on a large scale in October 2015 and the building of new churches is much more difficult there than in other provinces - indeed it is virtually impossible (for the latest developments. see below: *Church sphere*). Converts from Islam run the risk of facing severe opposition in many parts of Indonesia, but converts in Aceh probably face the strongest pressure.

Other hotspots are regions within the provinces of West Sumatra (Sumatera Barat), Banten, West Java (Jawa Barat), but also East and Central Java (Jawa Timur and Jawa Tengah). With the emergence of the MIT, Central Sulawesi has become another hotspot, but it remains to be seen how things develop after the leader has been killed. The anti-terror police unit, Densus 88, is effective against potentially violent Islamic militant activity in the whole country.

Christian communities and how they are affected

Communities of expatriate Christians: Expatriate Christians are not forced into isolation. This category is therefore not scored separately in WWL analysis.

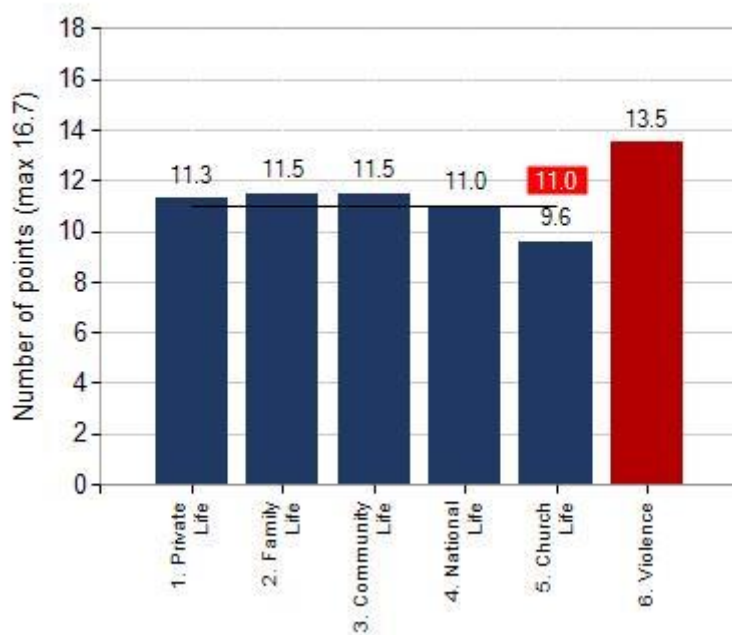
Historical Christian communities: These are groups such as the Roman Catholic Church, but also churches related to various ethnicities (such as the Batak Christian Protestant Church). They are monitored and experience opposition once it is noted that they are growing. The historical churches in poorer regions like Papua, East Nusa Tenggara and Mentawai are subject to aggressive [Islamization attempts](#), especially among children (La Croix International, 14 August 2018).

Converts to Christianity: Converts are mainly from a Muslim background and face the most severe persecution, especially in the hot-spot areas. There, they are closely monitored and try to blend in with the surrounding society. If their conversion is discovered, they are put under pressure to give up their new faith. Similarly, on the predominantly Hindu island of Bali, if a Hindu becomes a Christian, he/she experiences strong pressure. Pressure on converts comes mainly from family, friends, community and the local authorities. In general, the pressure on converts in cities is less than in rural areas.

Non-traditional Christian communities: The main congregations in this category are Baptist, Evangelical and Pentecostal. Some groups tend to make themselves conspicuous by their often fervent propagation of the Christian message, which leads them to be targeted by communities and radical Islamic groups alike. Building or renovating a church can be fraught with difficulties – the authorities must issue a permit and Islamic groups and neighbors will often attempt to hinder the actual building process. This can affect all denominations. It should be noted that Catholic churches can also face the very same problems when it comes to building and renovating.

The Persecution pattern

WWL 2022 Persecution Pattern for Indonesia



The WWL 2022 Persecution pattern for Indonesia shows:

- The average pressure on Christians in Indonesia remained almost unchanged from last year (11.1 in WWL 2021, 11.0 in WWL 2022).
- Pressure is strongest in the *Community* and *Family spheres* closely followed by the *Private* and *National spheres of life*. This pattern is typical in situations where Christian converts from a Muslim background draw the most persecution. The drop in the score for pressure in the *Community sphere* by almost one point was due to the fact that fewer reports on discrimination were obtained. However, this may have also been due to the limitations COVID-19 meant for data gathering.
- In WWL 2022, the score for violence against Christians increased by 5.7 points to 13.5 points. The score had been 12.0 points in WWL 2019 due to the triple suicide attack against churches in Surabaya in May 2018. For three years, there had been no major attacks against churches, but in this reporting period the Cathedral in Makassar was attacked by suicide bombers, eight Christians were killed in two attacks in Central Sulawesi and more Christian have been killed in Papua.

Pressure in the 5 spheres of life

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

Pressure in Block 1 / Private sphere

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

As conversion is not seen as a private matter, family and society will not normally stay quiet and listen when converts speak about their faith, so converts face a comparably higher risk. But even other Christians need to be wise in what to say and to whom, as speaking about one's faith can quickly be perceived as being an attempt at proselytism, so many Christians limit themselves to witnessing by being a good person. This is especially true in hotspot areas like Aceh, East Java, Banten, West Java and West Sumatra, but also increasingly in other places as well.

Block 1.1: Conversion has been opposed, forbidden, or punishable, including conversion from one type of Christianity to another. (3.25 points)

While it is legal to convert from one religion to another, at least as far as the six officially recognized religions are concerned, conversion is despised and even strictly opposed by many families. There are cases where converts were thrown out of their families or children were taken away. Additional pressure comes frequently from friends and neighborhood. Converts can expect to face further problems, e.g. when trying to change the religion recorded on their ID cards. Knowing this, most converts prefer to keep a low-profile and hide their new-won faith.

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)

While many Christians in Indonesia are very active in social media and also share about their faith openly, for Christians coming from a Muslim or Hindu background it is dangerous to reveal their identity in such a way and they therefore seldomly express their faith in written form, most definitely not under their real name. Especially since the case of ex-Governor Ahok, Christians are being increasingly careful not to provoke the public's anger and weigh their words so as not to be perceived as slandering another faith or as proselytizing.

Block 1.5: It has been risky for Christians to display Christian images or symbols. (3.00 points)

While it is normally no problem to wear or show Christian symbols at home, this is different for converts as it points to their new faith and therefore draws unwanted attention. In regions where Islam is getting stricter, even Christians from both historical and non-traditional Protestant churches often prefer not to wear a visible Christian symbol, in order not to provoke any trouble or harassment in communities. This applies for the provinces Aceh and Banten as well as places like Padang.

Block 1 - additional information:

Converts are not just limited in the ways described above. They always need to be careful in the way they worship, especially if they are the only Christians in their family. Bibles and other Christian literature have to be hidden carefully, and can only be read secretly to avoid conflict. Fellowship with other Christians can become challenging in these circumstances, since it can bring themselves and others into danger. All this is less difficult in urban areas.

There is also a growing interest in monitoring people's religion, although this experienced a backlash, at least as far as the technical side of monitoring is concerned. The US State Department (IRFR 2020, p.14) noted: "The Smart Pakem smartphone app, launched by the Jakarta Prosecutor's Office in 2018 to allow citizens to report heresy and blasphemy cases, was removed from both the Google Play Store and the Apple Store. Following its launch, human rights organizations had criticized the app and requested Google and Apple to remove it. It was unclear what caused its removal." Although this app seems to have been shelved, it shows the mindset against minorities.

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)

Based on Republic of Indonesia Law Number 23 of 2002 concerning Child Protection and supported by Government Regulation Number 54 of 2007, spouses who adopt a child must be of the same faith or religion as the child's biological parents. If the religion of the child's biological parents is not known, the religion of the majority of the population in the region is used as basis.

Block 2.9: Children of Christians have been harassed or discriminated against because of their parents' faith. (3.75 points)

Many Christian children face being bullied in school because of their faith; they are sometimes called "kafir" (unbeliever), told that God only recognizes Islam and that Christians will go to hell. Sometimes, teachers add to this by telling the class, for instance, that Christians have three gods. There are reports that bullying for faith reasons can also happen at higher education levels, such as at university, where even some lecturers may openly mock students who are Christians. In some regions, the bullying can develop into intimidation or pressure to deny their Christian faith. Many Muslim families forbid their children to play with Christian children.

Block 2.8: Christian children have been pressured into attending anti-Christian or majority religion teaching at any level of education. (3.50 points)

The government has issued a regulation according to which schools have to provide Christian teachers for religious studies. However, many schools at the regency/provincial levels such as in Aceh, Madura, Nusa Tenggara Barat and West Sumatra find it hard to provide Christian teachers. This means that many Christian children have to attend Islamic classes without being able to opt out, or they are sent to a church outside school in order to get Christian teaching. Although the Christians who take Islamic classes generally pass the exams, it is very hard for them to get high

marks. To avoid such pressure, Christian parents who can afford to, send their children to a private school.

Block 2.4: Christian baptisms have been hindered. (3.25 points)

Baptism has always been difficult for converts and they often need to be baptized far away from the places they are living. If a baptism service is possible, it will be low-key, kept as a secret and not many people will be able to attend. Although this is a challenge throughout Indonesia, Aceh, West Java, East Java, South Kalimantan and North Kalimantan are especially prone to this. Christians had to go out of their neighborhood in order to be baptized and still faced pressure when their baptism was discovered. Some converts become afraid when their mentors or leaders encourage them to be baptized.

Block 2 - additional information:

In the Family sphere, converts face a broader variety of problems than other Christians. When converts are discovered, they do not just lose their inheritance rights, but are often divorced as well and lose custody of their children. Organizing a wedding or funeral can become difficult or even impossible in the hotspot areas, especially for converts. According to traditional Islamic law, a convert to Christianity loses all inheritance rights. Often, this does not happen through a formal decision, but occurs simply because all ties with the family are cut. Hindu converts will also frequently lose their inheritance rights, as families do not want to have anything to do with them. Because of the social stigma on conversions, it is also very difficult to get a new ID card with the religion changed on it or a family card which is needed for a plethora of reasons when dealing with authorities.

Pressure in Block 3 / Community sphere

Block 3.9: Christians have faced disadvantages in their education at any level for faith-related reasons (e.g. restrictions of access to education). (3.50 points)

Education is the primary area where discrimination of Christians take places in Indonesia. There are reports from many provinces such as Aceh, West Sumatra, West Java, East Java, Nusa Tenggara Barat and Gorontalo indicating that discrimination is frequent and the number of Christians who are accepted to study at prestigious public universities is very limited. Many Christian students who are promising intellectuals choose to study abroad, if their parents are wealthy enough, or study in Christian universities, which are also expensive and whose quality is often poorer compared to public universities. There are some scholarships provided by the government for Indonesian students to study in prestigious universities home and abroad, but they are granted mostly to Muslim students. At school, it has happened that Christians are not ranked first in their class, despite having earned top marks. There has been a case reported where a [teacher warned](#) students in a group chat to vote for non-Christian candidates in an upcoming vote for a students organization (Jakarta Post, 27 October 2020).

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

One visible example for this are the dress codes enforced in Aceh. But the pressure to dress according to what is perceived as Islamic standards has been rising across the islands of Indonesia. It is more and more common to see Islamic veils and even complete coverings for women. Where this pressure is exerted by the authorities, it easily forces also Christian women and girls to comply (Human Rights Watch Report, "[I wanted to run away!](#)", 18 March 2021). As already stated above in *Trends*, an effort to de-regulate these rules per ministerial decree was struck down by the Constitutional Court. There is a growing trend of setting up Muslim-only neighborhoods ("Sharia housing complexes") throughout Indonesia, where some developers build housing complexes for Muslim residents only and non-Muslim are forbidden to rent/buy a house there. [Muslim-only residential areas](#) in and around Jakarta are mushrooming, 81 such areas have opened in recent years and more are planned to satisfy the increasing demand (Jakarta Post, 20 June 2019). This trend will make it more difficult for government politicians seeking to keep Indonesia a multi-cultural, multi-language and multi-religious society, which also upholds the rights of minorities.

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

This pressure is strongly exerted on new Christians from a Muslim background and can even lead to situations where converts cannot stand the pressure any longer and return to Islam, e.g. when they are threatened with being divorced. However, this pressure can also affect non-convert Christians, particularly in places such as: Aceh, West Sumatra, Bima (NTB), Madura (East Java) Padang, Banten and West Java. This pressure is usually non-violent and comes in subtle forms such as 'jokes' or helpful advice for making progress in the professional or academic world, for example. In other places such as Mentawai (West Sumatra), Papua, Nusa Tenggara Timur or Jambi (among the Anak Dalam tribe) the pressure to convert to Islam comes with an obligation to learn about Islam, if they want to receive financial and educational support and health care.

Block 3.10: Christians have been discriminated against in public or private employment for faith-related reasons. (3.25 points)

Discrimination against Christians at work is the rule, especially in public offices at the local and regional level (It is less strong at the national level). Of course, it is hard to prove that discrimination has religious motives, but there have been many reports about this. For instance: employees in village or sub-district offices, but also those employed in state-owned enterprises face discrimination and will be overlooked in promotions. Converts also face discriminative behavior from their employers and colleagues, if these find out about their Christian faith. Giving students poorer grades in religious education (see above: 2.8), is also done in order to keep them from meeting the minimum requirements for becoming civil servants. Consequently, few Christians make it into the civil service. One prominent exception is the new national police chief, who is a Catholic; however, when the position became vacant in 2020, there was a [heated debate](#) about whether a non-Muslim could fill this position (UCA News, 30 November 2020).

Block 3 - additional information:

Some churches in Central and West Java continue to report that they are forced to pay "uang keamanan" (security money) to radical groups in exchange for being able to conduct Sunday services, a practice the US State Department also noted (IRFR 2020, p.17). The general bias against Christians in society was highlighted in a research paper published in May 2018, which showed how intolerant (and at times, how totally [anti-Christian](#)) attitudes across all 34 provinces of Indonesia can be (New Mandala, 1 June 2018). Cases have been reported of Christians wanting to get access to public services (such as health and education) but only receiving an inferior standard of service or no service at all.

Pressure in Block 4 / National sphere

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

In the last years, one trigger being the Ahok case, Christians have become very cautious about sharing their views in public, especially when it comes to religion. Even many moderate Muslims are becoming more and more cautious, as society is getting more and more religiously conservative. Statements perceived as opposing Islam quickly end with a charge of blasphemy.

Block 4.11: Christians have been subjected to smear campaigns or hate speech. (3.75 points)

Hate speech against Christians and Christian leaders can be found almost everywhere in Indonesia, including in universities. In many sermons and talks in mosques and other places, Christians are often the object of slander and made out to be scapegoats. But smear campaigns also happen in written form, for instance as posters and banners making accusations against Christians or rejecting the presence of churches. It is also telling that when reporting about the May 2021 attack in Central Sulawesi, media avoided mentioning that the victims had been Christians.

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. (3.50 points)

The Constitution does not directly limit the freedom of Christians, but it does only recognize six 'faiths': Islam, Catholicism, Protestantism, Hinduism, Buddhism and Confucianism. The Constitutional Court stated clearly in a verdict on 7 November 2017 that all religions have to be [treated equally](#), including indigenous religions (World Watch Monitor, 9 November 2017). The implementation, however, is still patchy and only a few communities actually apply it. Given the opposition it faces, it is unlikely that this decision will be implemented country-wide within the near future. Legislation on a local level often restricts religious freedom further. Also, the freedom for Christians to manifest their religion is hindered by a 2006 "presidential decree on Religious Harmony, Empowering Religious Harmony Forums, and Constructing Houses of Worship", making it challenging to obtain building permits for church buildings (see below: 5.2 and *Persecution of other religious minorities*). Several provinces have implemented Sharia by-laws, which affect Christians as well.

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

Whereas in some high profile cases, those causing harm will be arrested, in practice, things are more often resolved by harmony meetings and reconciliation, where the minority party (e.g. the Christians) are urged into keeping the harmony of society. Court decisions are rare and even if there is a court case, there is a high possibility that it will be simply ignored (see below: 5.3).

Block 4 - additional information:

Christians face a high, often impenetrable, threshold for being promoted in public service - much higher than for Muslim officials. One particular campaign is an example of the growing mindset: Sure 51 of the Quran ("al Maidah") is highlighted to encourage Muslims to only select and vote for Muslim candidates. This thinking is found for political leadership, but also in administrative positions. The attitude towards Christians is often negative and, even in more tolerant cities like Jakarta, non-Muslim public servants find themselves being regularly discriminated against because of their faith.

Pressure in Block 5 / Church sphere

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

Churches face considerable problems in the registration of congregations and in the construction of church-buildings. Based on the revised Joint Ministerial Decree of 2006, a church can only operate if: i) its congregation has at least 90 members, ii) it has the consent of 60 neighbors from another faith, and iii) it has the approval of both the regency chief (administrative subdivision of a province) and the inter-faith harmony forum. Many churches find the permit extremely hard to obtain, even if they have met all the necessary requirements. And if they do manage to receive the permit, there is no guarantee of protection from the government and local police.

In one case, a congregation filed its application five years ago and has never received any response from the authorities since. In other cases, radical groups simply block the entrance of church buildings and hinder access: The authorities then fail to enforce the law, even though courts have decided in favor of the churches. Because of all the difficulties that have to be expected, many churches decide not to try obtaining a permit in the first place. Based on a survey by the National Commission on Human Rights (Komnas HAM), 85% of worship buildings in Indonesia have no proper permit, especially in rural areas. This includes mosques, churches and buildings used by other religions. Prior to building a church, the government of Aceh requires the congregation to collect 150 signatures from neighbors of a different religious background.

The rules of the Decree from 2006 have now been [brought before the Supreme Court](#) and it remains to be seen if they will remain unchanged (Jakarta Post, 25 March 2020). For the first time since taking office in 2014, President Jokowi has cautiously [spoken out against](#) the difficulties believers of minority religions are facing when they want to set up a place of worship

(Jakarta Post, 14 February 2020). However, in the WWL 2022 reporting period, there has been no progress and the plight of the Yasmin Church, referred to above in *Political and legal landscape*, is a good illustration of the difficulties churches can encounter (and of the time the process takes - the Supreme Court ruling was given 11 years ago).

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. (3.75 points)

A good example of the challenges involved in building or renovating church buildings has been the current situation in Aceh. Leaders and members of nine churches which were demolished by one local authority in the province of Aceh in 2015 have now [appealed](#) to the President and the Minister of Religious Affairs (UCA News, 6 August 2021). Since 2015, thousands of Christians in Aceh's Singkil district have been forced to worship under makeshift shelters. The local authority demolished the eight Protestant churches and one Catholic church and has since refused to allow them to build replacements, claiming Sharia law cannot allow that. The Christians have now moved the dispute to the national level, pointing out that their rights guaranteed by the Indonesian constitution are being infringed. Another example has been the struggle of a Catholic parish in Tangerang City, Banten Province, which obtained its church building permit after a [thirty year](#) saga (UCA News, 13 August 2021).

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

Due to the COVID-19 restrictions, outdoor meetings were not possible and even indoor meetings had to be held mostly online. But apart from this exceptional situation, outdoor meetings were often not permitted due to the fear that the meeting might evoke the suspicion of attempted proselytism. (However, this has not been a problem in the majority Christian regions.)

Block 5.7: Churches have been hindered from openly integrating converts. (3.50 points)

As already stated above, the Constitution does not prohibit changes in religious affiliation, provided that they take place within the six recognized religions. Consequently, there is no written regulation in Indonesia to prohibit churches from welcoming converts. Therefore many churches in the largest cities are confident enough to welcome new Christians from a Muslim or other background. Sometimes, these are even (social media) celebrities and their conversion causes a lot of attention. This, however, blurs the fact that it is completely different in villages and rural areas, as churches can be quickly accused of proselytism and 'Christianization'. Therefore many churches are cautious and will refrain from welcoming and integrating converts.

Block 5 - additional information:

What has been stated above about the integration of converts is true for many other questions in this Sphere of life as well. According to the laws, producing or distributing religious materials and Bibles is no problem, but the distribution in the hot-spot areas is nonetheless risky as it will be seen as proselytism. Similarly, Christians have the same right of access to media and the right to form charities by law, but due to the growing influence of conservative Islam, in strongly Islamic areas such ministries face strong opposition where openly motivated by the Christian faith.

The Indonesian government has enacted and in recent years strengthened legislation and regulations that have subjected minority religions to discrimination and made them extremely vulnerable to the members of the majority community who take the law into their own hands.

Indonesian government institutions have also played a role in the violation of the rights and freedoms of the country's religious minorities. Those institutions, which include the Ministry of Religious Affairs, the Coordinating Board for Monitoring Mystical Beliefs in Society (Badan Koordinasi Pengawas Aliran Kepercayaan Masyarakat, Bakor Pakem) under the Attorney General's Office, and the semi-official Indonesian Ulama Council, have eroded religious freedom by issuing decrees and fatwas (religious rulings) against members of religious minorities and using their position of authority to press for the prosecution of "blasphemers".

Violence

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

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

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

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

- *Some incidents never reach the public consciousness, because no one really knows about it; or the incident is simply not considered worth reporting; or media coverage is deliberately blocked or distorted; or media coverage is not deliberately blocked, but the information somehow gets lost; or the incidents are deliberately not reported widely for security reasons (e.g. for the protection of local church leaders).*
- *In situations where Christians have been discriminated against for many years, armed conflict can make them additionally vulnerable. Christians killed in areas where fighting regularly takes place are unlikely to be reported separately. Examples in recent years have been Sudan, Syria and Myanmar.*
- *Christians who die through the deprivation of basic necessities such as clean water and medical care (due to long-term discrimination) are unlikely to be reported separately. Christians are not always killed directly; they can be so squeezed by regulations and other oppressive factors that they die – not at once, but in the course of years. This often includes the deprivation of basic necessities such as clean water and medical care, or exclusion from government assisted socio-economic development projects. These numbers could be immense.*

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

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

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

Indonesia: Violence Block question	WWL 2022	WWL 2021
6.1 How many Christians have been killed for faith-related reasons (including state sanctioned executions)?	15	1
6.2 How many churches or Christian buildings (schools, hospitals, cemeteries, etc.) have been attacked, damaged, bombed, looted, destroyed, burned down, closed or confiscated for faith-related reasons?	16	16
6.3 How many Christians have been detained for faith-related reasons?	25	2
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?	1	2
6.5 How many Christians have been abducted for faith-related reasons (including Christians missing in a persecution context)?	0	0
6.6 How many Christians have been raped or otherwise sexually harassed for faith-related reasons?	0	0
6.7 How many cases have there been of forced marriages of Christians to non-Christians?	0	0
6.8 How many Christians have been otherwise physically or mentally abused for faith-related reasons (including beatings and death threats)?	24	1
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?	27	1
6.10 How many shops or businesses of Christians have been attacked, damaged, bombed, looted, destroyed, burned down, closed or confiscated for faith-related reasons?	0	0
6.11 How many Christians have been forced to leave their homes or go into hiding in-country for faith-related reasons?	55	15
6.12 How many Christians have been forced to leave the country for faith-related reasons?	0	0

For the WWL 2022 reporting period:

- **Christians killed / attacked:** In an [attack](#) against a Salvation Army settlement by violent Islamic group *Mujahideen Indonesia Timur* (MIT), four residents were killed in Lembantonga village in Sigi Regency, Central Sulawesi. One of the four was reportedly be-

headed. The houses were burnt down (Jakarta Post, 29 November 2020). In an [attack](#) by the MIT, four Christian farmers were killed in Kalemago village, Poso Regency, Central Sulawesi. One of the victims was beheaded (Benar News, 11 May 2021). Additionally, there have been several killings of priests, Christian teachers and catechists in Papua.

- **Christians arrested:** Several Christians have been detained or arrested for faith-related reasons. For security reasons, no details can be provided. In one case, the [detention](#) of 21 Catholic farmers in East Nusa Tenggara followed a land dispute (UCA News, 30 September 2021).
- **Churches attacked / Christian-owned houses/shops attacked:** A [suicide attack](#) targeted the Catholic cathedral of Makassar, the capital of South Sulawesi, on the Sunday before Easter. It caused injuries to at least twenty people, killed the assailants and damaged the church building (Jakarta Post, 28 March 2021). Also, church buildings in North Sumatra, Central Java, East Java, East Kalimantan, Riau and West Nusa Tenggara suffered attacks.
- **Christians forced to leave their homes:** In August 2020, at least 50 Catholic Christians were evicted from a plot of land in East Nusa Tenggara. They have [not been able to return](#) in the WWL 2022 reporting period (International-LaCroix, 4 March 2021).

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

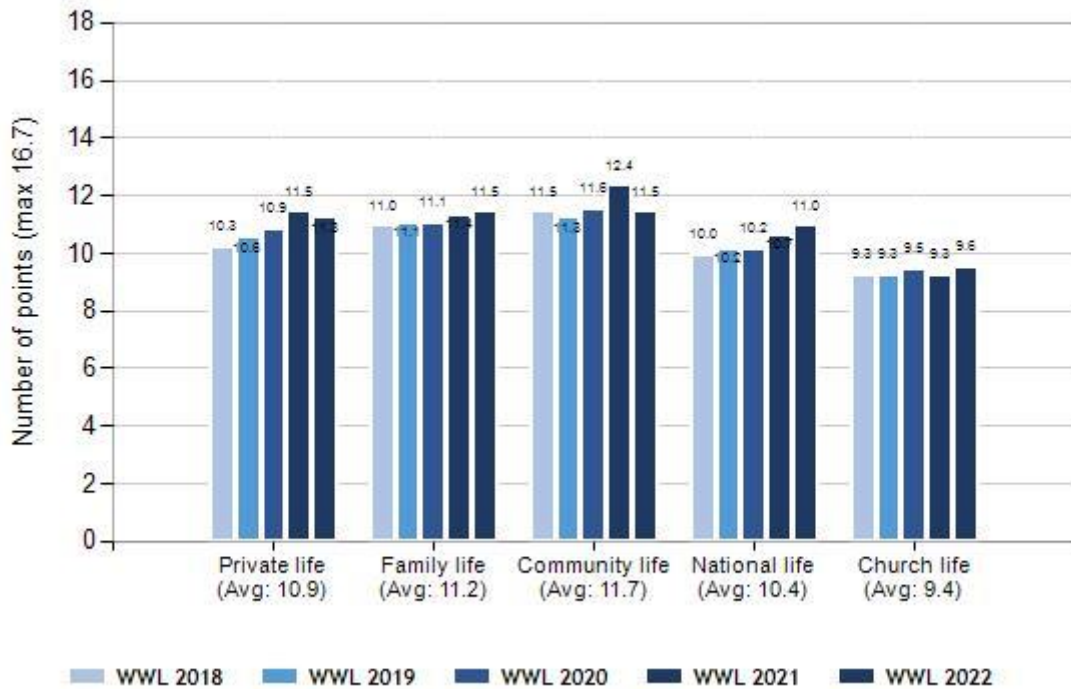
Indonesia: WWL 2018 - WWL 2022 Persecution Pattern history	Average pressure over 5 Spheres of life
2022	11.0
2021	11.1
2020	10.7
2019	10.5
2018	10.4

The average pressure on Christians has crept up from 10.4 points in WWL 2018 and now appears to have plateaued at the 11.1/11.0 level.

5 Year trends: Pressure in each sphere of life

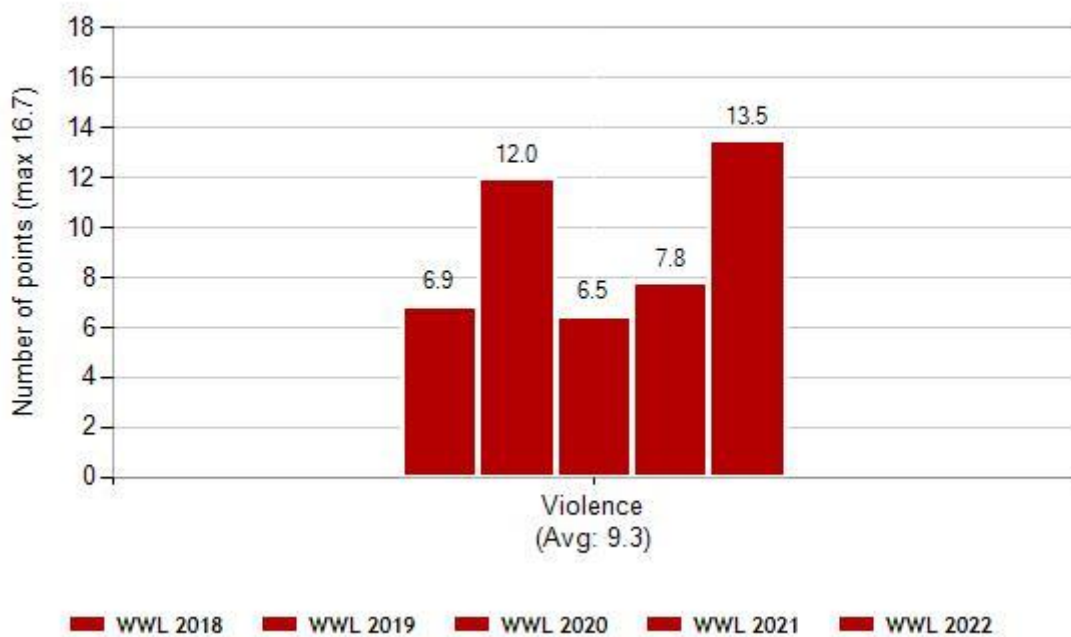
The chart below shows that, over the last five WWL reporting periods, pressure on Christians in Indonesia has increased over all *spheres of life*, despite minor fluctuations. The overall increase is most notable in *Private, Family and National life*. The increase in points in the *National sphere* over the years reflects how radical Islamic groups are growing in influence and how blasphemy laws are being strictly implemented against, among others, the Christian minority.

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



5 Year trends: Violence against Christians

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



The chart above shows a peak of violence in WWL 2022, when the score reached an extreme level with 13.5 points. In the WWL 2020 and WWL 2021 reporting periods immediately before this peak, the score has been more or less stable at the still very high level of 6.5/7.8 points. The killings observed in the WWL 2022 reporting period and the bomb attack against the cathedral in Makassar changed that.

Gender-specific religious persecution / Female

Group	Female Pressure Points
Economic	-
Political and Legal	Denied custody of children
Security	Violence – physical
Social and Cultural	Enforced religious dress code; Violence – Verbal
Technological	-

Gender inequality in Indonesia is an ongoing issue acknowledged by the government. Despite the attention, patriarchal gender norms, child marriage and education disparities remain [ongoing issues](#) (World Bank Blogs, 14 December 2020), and it is reported that 60% of Indonesian women have faced [verbal sexual harassment](#) (The Guardian, 18 July 2019). Recent media reports have highlighted a lack of effective implementation of legislation, noting that it is often challenging for victims to report incidents and [access justice](#), particularly in the context of COVID-19 which has caused a rise in gender-based and domestic violence (Jakarta Post, 10 March 2021).

In this context, Christian women and girls can face the threat of divorce, which means losing their physical and economic security, more so in the rural areas. Christian women who are the first in their household to convert to Christianity are most vulnerable to this threat, although it is rarely implemented. In a patriarchal system, it is harder for the wife to influence the husband than it is for the husband to influence the wife.

Women who convert to Christianity face violence, psychological abuse, and death threats if their faith is discovered by their families. Many women within marriages may choose to keep it a secret for this reason, also risking separation from their children if their husbands find out about their faith. A country expert also raises the issue of verbal violence: “Christian women [are targeted] through harsh insults, threats to be killed and so on.”

In addition, Christian women are marginalized through enforced religious dress codes. In provinces like Aceh, women are required to wear a hijab, especially within the government office. Women who are caught not wearing the hijab may face bullying, interrogation and labelling as immoral women. However, there has been some progress in 2021, with the government [banning](#) compulsory religious clothing in schools, although this progress has been reversed by the courts (BBC News, 5 February 2021).

Gender-specific religious persecution / Male

Group	Male Pressure Points
Economic	-
Political and Legal	-
Security	-
Social and Cultural	Violence – Verbal
Technological	-

In Indonesia, both female and male Christians face violations of their rights. However, for men this occurs less in private areas of life. Instead, reports indicate that prominent male figures like Christian pastors and activists are the primary targets for public religious discrimination. They can face accusations, interrogations and have to stand trial for charges such as “inciting religious hatred”. Blasphemy laws in the country are reportedly [misused](#) to incite religious intolerance and silence critics, although pastors rarely stand trial (CSW, 8 April 2021).

Christian men and boys can be bullied for not being circumcised; a country expert shares that some Muslims in Indonesia “consider uncircumcised men to be infidels so bullying often occurs in schools against Christian men.” The presence of radical Islamist groups in the region, who have links with the Islamic State group, has also been a threat.

Persecution of other religious minorities

According to the US State Department (IRFR 2020):

- "Although the government generally allowed citizens to leave the religion column blank on their identity cards (KTP), individuals continued to report difficulties accessing government services if they did so. Faced with this problem, many religious minority members, including those following indigenous beliefs, reportedly chose to identify as a member of an officially recognized religion close to their beliefs or reflecting the locally dominant religion. According to researchers, this practice obscured the real numbers of adherents to religious groups in government statistics. A 2017 Constitutional Court ruling allowed citizens to select indigenous faiths on their KTPs. According to media reports, in January, 450 adherents of Sapta Darma, an indigenous religious group, were able to change their KTPs to reflect their religion. NGOs and religious advocacy groups continued to urge the government to remove the religion field from KTPs. Religious minorities reported they sometimes faced discrimination after others saw their religious affiliation on their KTPs." (pp.20-21)
- "The Smart Pakem smartphone app, launched by the Jakarta Prosecutor's Office in 2018 to allow citizens to report heresy and blasphemy cases, was removed from both the Google Play Store and the Apple Store. Following its launch, human rights organizations had criticized the app and requested Google and Apple to remove it. It was unclear what caused its removal." (p.14)

Other religious groups suffering persecution are Muslim minority groups such as the Ahmadi and Shia. They have come under scrutiny by both the authorities and radical Sunni groups, the latter often resorting to [violent means](#) (Berkley Center, 19 April 2021). For example, on 3 September 2021, a mob of 200 people attacked an [Ahmadi mosque](#) in West Kalimantan, which had to be protected by police (UCA News, 7 September 2021). Adherents to traditional indigenous religions used not to be recognized by the authorities; the ruling of the Constitutional Court from November 2017 has still not been [implemented](#), as groups like the Indonesian Ulama Council do not want to see traditional religions being placed on a par with Islam, e.g. when it comes to being registered on the ID card (New York Times, 14 April 2018). The city of Bandung was the sixth community nationwide which decided to issue [new ID and family cards](#) for followers of native religions (Jakarta Post, 22 February 2019). Although there are certain difficulties still to overcome (and adherents of native religions – just like those of other minority religions - still face considerable discrimination) – this is a significant step forward.

According to a study by the Setara Institute, published on 11 November 2019, in the last 12 years, there were 554 incidents counted against the Ahmadiyah and 324 against the "Aliran Keagamaan" (local traditional religions). Christians were affected in 379 incidents (Protestants in 328 and Catholics in 51). However, of all religious buildings affected in this time period, half of them (199) were Christian churches.

Future outlook

The outlook for Christians as viewed through the lens of:

Islamic oppression

Deeper analysis of the April 2019 election results has found that they reflect [longstanding rifts within Muslim society](#) (RSIS, 28 May 2019), between [more radical Muslims and minorities](#), and also between Javanese and non-Javanese citizens (New Mandala, 28 May 2019). Bridging these gaps and doing justice to all groups in society is challenging and, even though social media probably paints a too extreme picture of these rifts between different factions, the rifts torn by COVID-19 may prove to be fertile for harping on ethnic and religious differences.

Choosing a new minister of religion, who is apparently mindful of the situation of religious minorities can be seen as an encouraging sign, but as the parties are already preparing for the next presidential and parliamentary elections in 2024, with contenders jockeying for the prime positions, it is very possible that some of them will play the religious card. If first polls can be trusted, it is even possible that Prabowo Subianto, who had partnered with radical Islamic groups, stands a good chance to become next president.

In any case, society in general is becoming more conservative and therefore, *Islamic oppression* is bound to stay and most likely, even to increase, especially if the younger generation continues to follow firebrand preachers in social media and traditional Islam does not find an answer for this.

Religious nationalism - Hindu

Concerning the situation for Hindu converts to Christianity, nothing substantial is likely to change. They will continue to face pressure from their family, peers and local community to return to Hinduism.

External Links - Persecution Dynamics

- Persecution engines description: Islamist views - <https://www.benarnews.org/english/news/indonesian/radicalism-survey-05032018162921.html>
- Persecution engines description: at times totally anti-Christian attitudes - <http://www.newmandala.org/measuring-religious-intolerance-across-indonesian-provinces/>
- Persecution engines description: more intolerant attitude in society - <https://coconuts.co/jakarta/news/212-anti-ahok-protests-led-increasing-political-intolerance-indonesia-survey-group/>
- Persecution engines description: intolerant of other religions - <https://coconuts.co/jakarta/news/57-indonesian-teachers-intolerant-religions-islamic-research-center/>
- Drivers of persecution description: arrested - <https://www.dw.com/en/indonesian-police-arrest-top-cleric-over-terror-connections/a-59844666>
- Christian communities and how they are affected: Islamization attempts - <https://international.la-croix.com/news/christians-in-papua-fear-growing-islamization/7429>
- Block 3.9: Christians have faced disadvantages in their education at any level for faith-related reasons (e.g. restrictions of access to education). (3.50 points): teacher warned - <https://www.thejakartapost.com/news/2020/10/27/jakarta-teacher-draws-ire-for-discrimination-against-non-muslim-students.html>
- Block 3.1: Christians have been harassed, threatened or obstructed in their daily lives for faith-related reasons (e.g. for not meeting majority religion or traditional dress codes, beard codes etc.). (3.25 points): "I wanted to run away! - <https://www.hrw.org/report/2021/03/18/i-wanted-run-away/abusive-dress-codes-women-and-girls-indonesia>
- Block 3.1: Christians have been harassed, threatened or obstructed in their daily lives for faith-related reasons (e.g. for not meeting majority religion or traditional dress codes, beard codes etc.). (3.25 points): Muslim-only residential areas - <https://www.thejakartapost.com/news/2019/06/20/exclusive-islamic-housing-residence-comes-with-loss-tolerance.html>
- Block 3.10: Christians have been discriminated against in public or private employment for faith-related reasons. (3.25 points): heated debate - <https://www.ucanews.com/news/indonesia-police-chief-vacancy-whips-up-religious-storm/90501>
- Pressure in Block 3 / Community sphere: anti-Christian - <https://www.newmandala.org/measuring-religious-intolerance-across-indonesian-provinces/>
- 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. (3.50 points): treated equally - <https://www.worldwatchmonitor.org/coe/indonesia-high-court-milestone-ruling-religious-freedom/>
- Block 5.2: It has been difficult to get registration or legal status for churches at any level of government. (3.75 points): brought before the Supreme Court - <https://www.thejakartapost.com/news/2020/03/25/supreme-court-asked-to-review-provision-on-places-of-worship.html>
- Block 5.2: It has been difficult to get registration or legal status for churches at any level of government. (3.75 points): spoken out against - <https://www.thejakartapost.com/academia/2020/02/14/better-late-than-never.html>
- 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. (3.75 points): appealed - <https://www.ucanews.com/news/aceh-christians-take-church-dispute-to-jakarta/93609>
- 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. (3.75 points): thirty year - <https://www.ucanews.com/news/indonesian-parish-gets-church-permit-after-30-year-wait/93695>

- Violence / Block 6 - commentary: attack - <https://www.thejakartapost.com/news/2020/11/29/four-killed-in-alleged-mit-attack-in-sigi-reigniting-concerns-over-sectarian-conflict.html>
- Violence / Block 6 - commentary: attack - <https://www.benarnews.org/english/news/indonesian/sulawesi-farmers-slain-05112021152548.html>
- Violence / Block 6 - commentary: detention - <https://www.ucanews.com/news/indonesian-farmers-wives-fight-for-detained-husbands/94348>
- Violence / Block 6 - commentary: suicide attack - <https://www.thejakartapost.com/news/2021/03/28/20-injured-in-palm-sunday-suicide-bombing-at-makassar-cathedral.html>
- Violence / Block 6 - commentary: not been able to return - <https://international.la-croix.com/news/world/catholics-welcome-move-against-indonesian-land-mafia/13892>
- Gender-specific religious persecution Female description: ongoing issues - <https://blogs.worldbank.org/eastasiapacific/gender-and-education-indonesia-progress-more-work-be-done>
- Gender-specific religious persecution Female description: verbal sexual harassment - <https://www.theguardian.com/global-development/2019/jul/18/indonesian-women-suffering-epidemic-of-domestic-violence-activists-warn>
- Gender-specific religious persecution Female description: access justice - <https://www.thejakartapost.com/paper/2021/03/09/pandemic-shrouds-domestic-violence.html>
- Gender-specific religious persecution Female description: banning - <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-asia-55945202>
- Gender-specific religious persecution Male description: misused - <https://www.csw.org.uk/2021/04/08/report/5219/article.htm>
- Persecution of other religious minorities: violent means - <https://berkeleycenter.georgetown.edu/posts/violence-and-micro-sized-religious-minorities-a-conversation-with-jessica-soedirgo>
- Persecution of other religious minorities: Ahmadi mosque - <https://www.ucanews.com/news/indonesian-police-arrest-10-over-ahmadi-mosque-attack/94031>
- Persecution of other religious minorities: implemented - <https://www.nytimes.com/2018/04/14/world/asia/indonesia-religious-freedom-.html>
- Persecution of other religious minorities: new ID and family cards - <https://www.thejakartapost.com/news/2019/02/21/keep-the-faith-bandung-issues-first-id-cards-with-native-religion-column.html>
- Future outlook: longstanding rifts within Muslim society - <https://www.rsis.edu.sg/rsis-publication/rsis/indonesias-presidential-election-2019-sarungan-vs-cingkrangan-elections-and-contestations-within-indonesian-islam/#.XPj4HEI7nIU>
- Future outlook: more radical Muslims and minorities - <https://www.newmandala.org/religion-ethnicity-and-indonesias-2019-presidential-election/>

Further useful reports

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

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