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World Watch Research

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# Indonesia: Persecution Dynamics

February 2025



**OpenDoors**

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Open Doors International / World Watch Research

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## World Watch List 2025 – Top 50

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

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

## World Watch List 2025 – Ranks 51-78

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

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

## Copyright, sources and definitions

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

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

These documents are the property of World Watch Research (WWR), the research department of Open Doors International. They include data and analysis based around Open Doors World Watch List (WWL) and statistical information on world religions, Christian denominations and people groups prepared by the World Christian Database (WCD). Highlighted links in the text can be found written out in full at the end of each document under the heading “External links”. These documents may be used and distributed free of charge, but please always acknowledge the source as: © Open Doors International.

The definition of persecution used in WWL analysis is: “Any hostility experienced as a result of one’s identification with Christ. This can include hostile attitudes, words and actions towards Christians”. This broad definition includes (but is not limited to) restrictions, pressure, discrimination, opposition, disinformation, injustice, intimidation, mistreatment, marginalization, oppression, intolerance, infringement, violation, ostracism, hostilities, harassment, abuse, violence, ethnic cleansing and genocide.

The latest update of WWL Methodology can be found on the research pages of the Open Doors website: <https://www.opendoors.org/en-US/research-reports/wwl-documentation/>.

## Reporting period

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

## Brief country details

Indonesia: Population (UN estimate for 2024)	Christians	Chr%
279,798,000	36,608,000	13.1

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

Indonesia: Religious context	Number of adherents	%
Christians	36,608,000	13.1
Muslim	217,178,000	77.6
Hindu	4,525,000	1.6
Buddhist	2,356,000	0.8
Ethnic religionist	5,941,000	2.1
Jewish	210	0.0
Bahai	27,700	0.0
Atheist	325,000	0.1
Agnostic	4,123,000	1.5
Other	8,713,800	3.1
<i>OTHER includes Chinese folk, New religionist, Sikh, Spiritist, Taoist, Confucianist, Jain, Shintoist, Zoroastrian.</i>		

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

## Dominant persecution engines and drivers

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

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

## Brief description of the persecution situation

Many converts from Islam experience pressure from their families. However, the intensity of the pressure varies given the individual family and place and comes 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. If possible, they consider relocating within the vast archipelago, especially to the bigger cities, hiding in the general trend of growing urbanization. The level of persecution also depends on the region of Indonesia concerned. There are certain hot spots like West Java, Papua 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 or face opposition meeting in houses.

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. Often Christians have to wait for decades, until they are finally able to build a church and meet. The situation for Christians has been deteriorating in the course of recent years, with Indonesian society taking on an ever more conservative Islamic character. The overall trends described above have continued in the WWL 2025 reporting period and violence targeting Christians has remained at an extremely high level.

## 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

- **5 May 2024:** On a Sunday evening, a number of students, the majority of whom were from Pamulang University (Unpam), held a Christian prayer meeting. Several residents reported feeling disturbed by these activities. Local leaders such as the head of the neighborhood community reprimanded them and ordered them to disperse.
- **25 April 2024:** The Tangerang Regency Government sealed a building belonging to the POUK (Christian Ecumenical Fellowship) Thessalonika Tangerang foundation which was "suspected to be a place of worship for Christians" in Kampung Melayu Village, Teluknaga District. The building was sealed on 25 April 2024, after a demonstration by residents because it was suspected of violating applicable regulations.
- **17 March 2024:** Dozens of Muslim residents gathered outside a house church in Saga Bunar, Balaraja Sub-District, Tangerang Regency, Banten Province, after the Sunday service ended and [forced the pastor](#) to announce that services would be discontinued indefinitely (Morning Star News, 22 March 2024).



- **15 March 2024:** Thirty-five year old Christian mission worker, Karianus Mendrofa, who had been conducting outreach work amongst Muslim communities, was found dead on Bawean Island, Gresik Regency, East Java.

## Specific examples of positive developments

- **September 2024:** Pope Francis conducted a mass in Jakarta attended by over 80,000 people ([Reuters, 6 September 2024](#)). Despite a thwarted terror threat, the government's effective intervention demonstrated its commitment to safeguarding such large, high profile, religious events and protecting the Christian worshippers attending them ([UCA, 7 September 2024](#)).
- **January 2024:** Three government ministers, Minister of Manpower Ida Fauziyah, Minister of State Apparatus Empowerment and Bureaucratic Reform Abdullah Azwar Anas, and Minister of Religious Affairs Yaqut Cholil Quomas, issued a [joint decree](#) stating that Christians do not need to use the Arabic term Isa al Masih for Jesus Christ during major Christian holidays anymore, but can use the Bahasa Indonesia term, Yesus Kristus (HRW, 5 March 2024).
- **November 2023:** The Minister for Religion issued a notification saying that government offices can be [used as temporary houses of worship](#) for religious minorities (ICC, 27 November 2023). Although it has to be seen how this rule is implemented locally, it is a positive development.

## 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) or the Protestant GPIB church. They are monitored and experience opposition once it is noted that they are growing.

**Converts to Christianity:** Converts come 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.) A country expert points to another difference: "Interestingly, while non-traditional Christian churches do face some threats, they're often better resourced than the traditional churches and have stronger political connections, at least in the major cities, and so sometimes have some element of protection."

## 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. To understand the use of law in Aceh the USCIRF states ([USCIRF Annual report 2024, Indonesia, pp.56-57](#)):

- "The central government currently exempts Aceh Province from certain national laws and permits its own implementation of a Shari'a-based legal system enforced through a religious police force. Laws include mandating that women wear hijabs and banning them from straddling motorcycles, among other restrictions, regardless of an individual's faith or personal choice. In August, Aceh further implemented laws based on its state-sponsored interpretation of Islam by banning men and women from appearing together in public unless they are family members or married."

Churches in Aceh were closed 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: *Pressure in Block 5/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). Papua is a further area of particular concern with Christian groups appealing to the United Nations Human Rights Council to protect Christians in the region. The specific issues raised were "limited access to healthcare and education, appropriation of land by the Indonesian government for resource extraction projects, continuous military operations in the region, police violence against indigenous West Papuans and the lack of political representation in the local government." ([The Christian Post, 23 April 2024](#)).

The anti-terror police unit, Densus 88, is effective against potentially violent Islamic militant activity in the whole country as evidenced by the thwarted terror attack during Pope Francis' visit in September 2024.

## Position on the World Watch List

Indonesia: World Watch List	Points	WWL Rank
WWL 2025	61	59
WWL 2024	66	42
WWL 2023	68	33
WWL 2022	68	28
WWL 2021	63	47

The drop in overall score from 66 to 61 points was caused by a significant fall in the violence score from 11.5 points in WWL 2024 to 5.7 points in WWL 2025. There were less reports of killings, arrests

and attacks on churches. In contrast, average pressure rose very slightly (to 11.1 points) with notable increases in pressure in the *National* and *Church spheres of life*.

## Persecution engines

Indonesia: Persecution engines	Abbreviation	Level of influence
Islamic oppression	IO	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	Weak
Organized corruption and crime	OCC	Not at all

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

### Islamic oppression (Strong)

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. A more recent example is the province of West Sumatra which passed a new law, recognizing that the customs of the province are based on [Islamic law](#) (South China Morning Post, 21 July 2022) as well as rules on churches in the city of Cilegon, Banten province (see below: *Pressure in Block 5/Church sphere*) and the mayor of the city signing a petition against churches in his city. This illustrates that locally, *Islamic oppression* and majoritarianism is strong. Indonesia is in the process of revising important criminal codes that could seriously damage the rights of minorities in Indonesia. The current draft in the parliament is focused on the recognition of "any living law" in Indonesia. These "living laws" can be interpreted locally, meaning that local governing bodies can choose to follow Sharia regulations. This government recognition is due to take effect in 2026 as part of the new Criminal Code. Since there are no uniform "living laws" in Indonesia this could open the door to widespread (localized) rights abuses, including the all-powerful blasphemy law that strikes fear in

minority groups. Monitoring the enforcement of these "living laws" presents significant challenges due to Indonesia's vast cultural diversity and decentralized governance. This is all a part of the more conservative drive in Indonesian politics and society.

Despite some radical and even violent Islamic groups being officially banned, they continue to wield a significant influence and threaten the safety of Indonesian citizens and high profile visitors such as Pope Francis. 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.

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.

More recent [survey results](#) published by the Lembaga Survei Institute provide a somewhat more mixed picture. Using a 'feeling thermometer' method for measuring polarization, Christians recorded the highest 'temperature' of all religious minorities with 49.8 degrees. Only 18% of respondents objected to having Christians as neighbors, but 75% objected to their child marrying a Christian and 44% objected to a Christian being a local leader (New Mandala, 1 July 2022).

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 few years. Indeed, more recent studies have also noted high levels of intolerance amongst staff and students. For example, a [study on religious intolerance](#) in Indonesian educational settings notes (Suryani A and Muslim A B, The Setting - Religious Intolerance in Indonesia, in: Embracing Diversity: Preparing Future Teachers to Foster Religious Tolerance, Springer Briefs in Education, April 2024): "The teachers' influence on students' understanding and attitudes towards religious tolerance is crucial, especially given the prevalence of intolerance in educational settings."

**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 of the diversity of Indonesia. On the predominantly Hindu island of Bali, if a Hindu becomes a Christian, he/she is very likely to be put under significant 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
	STRONG	WEAK							
Government officials	Strong	Weak							
Non-Christian religious leaders	Strong	Medium							
Violent religious groups	Weak	-							
Ideological pressure groups	Medium								
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. For more information see WWL Methodology.*

**Drivers of Islamic oppression**

- **Ordinary citizens (Very strong):** Local communities are becoming increasingly active in hindering church congregations from meeting and in complaining about their presence, sometimes simply by declaring that they do not want any Christian church in their community. 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.

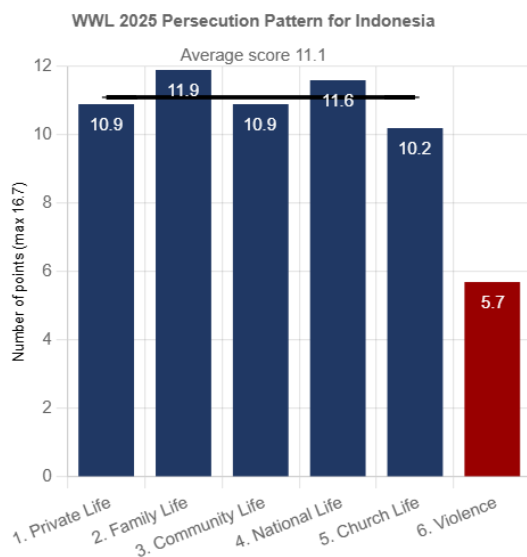
- **Government officials (Strong):** The government per se is less of a driver of persecution at the national level, even though it shows little concern for the situation of religious minorities. All government officials are sworn to follow and defend the country's national ideology, Pancasila. However, 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 at the national level about the actions of local officials is often deafening. Harmony is generally 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. The ignorance of government officials regarding minorities was highlighted in the case of religious textbooks which the ministry of religion had to withdraw; no Christian experts had been consulted on the content (see below: *Pressure in Block 2/Family sphere*).
- **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.
- **(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 general migration of workers.
- **Political parties (Medium):** Some political parties have an 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. At the national level, PKS is the only opposition party at the moment, which may make it easier to stand up for their views. On the other hand, there is a nationalist Islamic party, the PKB, which strongly counters such efforts. All of these parties are comparatively small. It remains to be seen whether the newly founded Islamic parties (Ummah Party, New Masyumi, etc.) gain political traction.

- Ideological pressure groups (Medium) / Violent religious groups (Weak):** Ideological pressure groups wield a growing influence on society and politics. 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 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 distinction between these and ideological pressure groups is not great, but it is important to be aware that not all Islamic radical groups resort to violence. 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 cathedral bombing in 2021, *Mujahideen Indonesia Timur (MIT)* was responsible for killings in Sulawesi (the latest taking place in 2020 and 2021), but seems to be practically defunct since 2023.

### Drivers of Religious nationalism - Hindu

- (Extended) family (Medium):** The strongest pressure on converts to Christianity comes from their own family, who 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.
- Ordinary 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.

### The Persecution pattern





The WWL 2025 Persecution pattern for Indonesia shows:

- The average pressure on Christians in Indonesia rose slightly from 10.9 points in WWL 2024 to 11.1 points in WWL 2025.
- Pressure is strongest in the *Family* and *National spheres* closely followed by the *Private* and *Community spheres of life*. This pattern is typical in situations where Christian converts from a Muslim background draw the most persecution.
- In WWL 2025, the score for violence against Christians decreased by 5.8 points (down from 11.5 points in WWL 2024 to 5.7 points in WWL 2025). This was largely due to a reduction in the number of killings.

## Pressure in the 5 spheres of life

*In each of the five spheres of life discussed below, four questions have been selected from the WWL 2025 questionnaire for brief commentary and explanation. The selection usually (but not always) reflects the highest scoring elements. In some cases, an additional paragraph per sphere is included to give further information deemed important. To see how individual questions are scored on a scale of 0-4 points, please see the “WWL Scoring example” in the WWL Methodology, available at: <https://www.opendoors.org/en-US/research-reports/wwl-documentation/>.*

### Pressure in Block 1 / Private sphere

***Block 1.8: 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 with converts facing risks of ostracism, harassment, or even violence. Extended family members often feel obligated to intervene to bring a convert back to Islam, as leaving Islam is viewed as affecting family honor. Even non-convert Christians need to be wise in what they say and to whom, as speaking about one's faith can quickly be perceived as being an attempt at proselytism. This is especially true in hotspot areas like Aceh, East Java, Banten, West Java, Papua and West Sumatra, but also in places like South Sumatra, Lampung, South Kalimantan and East Kalimantan.

***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 and larger parts of society, especially in rural areas. There are cases where converts were thrown out of their family home or children were taken away. Additional pressure comes frequently from friends and neighbors. 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 or take the opportunity of the work migration trend and move to one of the cities.

***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 rarely express their faith in written form, most definitely not under their real name. High profile cases feed into this fear, the most famous of which was the case of Basuki Tjahaja Purnama, known as Ahok, a Christian and Jakarta's first non-Muslim governor in 50 years who was arrested in 2017 on blasphemy charges and was released in 2019 ([BBC News, 24 January 2019](#)). Christians are increasingly limiting themselves not to say or post anything to provoke the public's anger and weigh their words so as not to be perceived as slandering another faith or as proselytizing. As one country expert put it: "Words can often times be taken out of context and, unfortunately, in Indonesia, if words are misconstrued as divisive those words can be held against that person. Those who choose to write on social media must also be careful not to say anything against Islam as that can be taken as blasphemy and could result in government intervention and possibly jail time." "Consequently", he concludes, "many Christians are hesitant to post things about their faith for this reason."

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

Converts to Christianity across the Indonesian archipelago face risks if they display Christian images, including wearing a Christian symbol at home. Whilst those living in Christian families have more freedom in this matter, in conservative areas 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 particularly to the provinces of Aceh, Banten and Padang. There are even places where Christians - even if they are not converts - are advised not to carry their Bible openly when they come to worship at church, in order to avoid provoking any bullying or acts of violence from the local Muslim community.

***Block 1 - Additional information***

Converts are not just limited in the ways described above. They also 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 provoking conflict. Fellowship with other Christians can become challenging in these circumstances, since it can bring themselves and others into danger. All of this is less difficult in urban areas. There is also a growing interest generally to monitor people's religious habits.

## **Pressure in Block 2 / Family sphere**

***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 an external church 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. In some cases, Christian children have been forced into Islamic reciting and praying in class. To avoid such pressure, Christian parents who can afford to, send their children to a private school. Highlighting the general mindset towards Christians (and other minorities), in a previous

reporting period (WWL 2023), the ministry of education had to withdraw a new religious curriculum because it taught incorrect doctrines about Christianity. This is what happens when materials that teach about Christianity are published without first having them reviewed by Christians (whether Catholic or Protestant). Meanwhile, the errors seem to have been amended without any serious problem, but the fact that Christians had not even been consulted is in itself striking ([Agenzia Fides, 29 July 2022](#)).

***Block 2.9: Children of Christians have been harassed or discriminated against because of their parents' faith. (3.50 points)***

Many Christian children face being bullied in school because of their faith; they are sometimes called "kafir" (unbeliever) because they eat pork and are 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 the children of Christians. Christian children have also been bullied into wearing Muslim clothing and received warnings from the teacher for failing to do so.

***Block 2.3: Christians have been hindered in celebrating a Christian wedding for faith-related reasons. (3.25 points)***

Most Christian background believers can celebrate a Christian wedding as long as it is held in a private venue however, this is too risky for Christians with a Muslim background. Things are also complicated for those in interfaith relationships where one partner is Christian. Whilst the law requires marriages to align with religious beliefs, couples can seek court approval to register interfaith unions. However, a 2023 Supreme Court circular discouraged judges from approving such registrations, emphasizing religious conformity over civil registration rights. This shift has sparked debate, with critics arguing it restricts judicial independence and citizens' rights and risks pressure on Christian individuals to renounce their faith in order to enter into marriage ([The Diplomat, 2024](#)).

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

Baptism has always been what one country expert called "a very sensitive subject". Whilst, in general, Christians can baptize people from Hindu or Buddhist backgrounds, with baptisms taking place in the church or a special private pool, there are greater difficulties if the person is from a Muslim background. In this case, converts 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 who go out of their neighborhood in order to be baptized, often face pressure when their baptism is discovered. Some converts become afraid when their mentors or leaders encourage them to be baptized. Furthermore, baptisms for Christians who change denominations, such as from an historical church to a non-traditional community, can bring challenges, particularly from within one's own family.

## **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. 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. Respondents during the WWL 2025 period shared that "Christian students with the highest test scores do not get 1st place in their class." 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 at 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 at home and abroad, but they are granted mostly to Muslim students.

### ***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 frequent, 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 for promotion. 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, is also done in order to keep them from meeting the minimum requirements for becoming civil servants. Consequently, relatively few Christians make it into the civil service.

### ***Block 3.1: Christians have been harassed, threatened or obstructed in their daily lives for faith-related reasons (e.g. for not meeting majority religion or traditional dress codes, beard codes etc.). (3.00 points)***

One visible example of this is the dress code 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 Christian women and girls to comply as well (Human Rights Watch Report, "I wanted to run away!", 18 March 2021). Whilst the Indonesian government [banned](#)

obligatory religious attire in schools in 2021 (BBC News, 5 February 2021) many regions have their own bylaws mandating Islamic dress codes, which clash with national policies. Even where laws don't explicitly enforce dress codes, conservative cultural norms have become deeply ingrained. Social pressure from school staff, peers, and communities often leads to compliance out of fear of ostracization or bullying, making the hijab less a legal requirement and more a social expectation in these areas.

There is also 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 (Jannah, Gabe, Adiarto and Barus, Universitas Indonesia, 2022). 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. (3.00 points)***

Pressure to renounce their faith 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 (which the majority do).

***Block 3 - Additional information***

Several 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, i.e., no service at all or they are made to wait for hours. Concerning monitoring, a country expert stated: "Vigilante groups keep an eye on Christian gatherings, particularly in predominantly Muslim areas, leading to situations where Christians feel compelled to report their activities or seek permission for their religious practices."

## **Pressure in Block 4 / National sphere**

***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 at universities. In many talks in mosques and other places, Christians are often the object of slander and used as scapegoats. This often happens in social media, as in a much-debated YouTube sermon, uploaded in June 2022, where the preacher said that Christians are "statue-worshippers". But smear campaigns also happen in written form, for instance as posters and banners making accusations against Christians or rejecting the presence of churches. Another example is where a politician referred to Kalimantan - a place where many Christians live - as "a place of evil spirits" (UCA News, 1 February 2022). Smear campaigns are also used to further a wider agenda. For example, one country expert shared: "Smear campaigns and hate speech have been used to justify the closure or obstruction of churches. In areas where Christian churches have sought to expand or build new facilities, local Muslim

communities, sometimes with the backing of hardline groups, have mounted campaigns accusing Christians of illegal proselytism or disrespecting local customs. These protests are often accompanied by derogatory statements or calls for Christians to be expelled from the area."

***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)***

Freedom of religion is guaranteed in Article 29 (paragraph 2) of the 1945 Constitution: "The State guarantees the independence of every citizen to embrace their own religion and to worship according to their religion and beliefs". However, the Constitution only recognizes six 'faiths': Islam, Catholicism, Protestantism, Hinduism, Buddhism and Confucianism. The Constitutional Court stated clearly in 2017 that all religions have to be treated equally, including indigenous religions. 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 countrywide in the short-term. Legislation at the 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 4.8: Christians have been hindered in expressing their views or opinions in public. (3.50 points)***

Over the last few years, Christians have become much more cautious about sharing their views in public, particularly when it comes to religion (especially since the high-profile Ahok [blasphemy case](#) in 2016/2017- BBC News, 9 May 2017). This is particularly true in more conservative regions where Christians who express their religious views can face strong social backlash and public expressions of Christian beliefs or discussions of faith-related issues may be met with hostility. Even many moderate Muslims are becoming more cautious, as conservative Islam is increasingly dominating society. Statements perceived as opposing Islam quickly end with a charge of blasphemy. In more conservative Muslim regions, this self-censorship is even stronger.

***Block 4.13: Christians have been accused of blasphemy or insulting the majority religion, either by state authorities or by pressure groups. (3.25 points)***

Blasphemy cases are brought against members from all religions and even against ministers, but they have a particularly strong and chilling effect on minorities, especially Christians. With the planned expansion of the blasphemy laws within the remodeled Criminal Code, this chilling effect may broaden and there are also fears that these laws could be used for political purposes, restricting freedom of expression as well. According to [USCIRF Annual report 2024, Indonesia, pp.56-57](#):

- Indonesia's new criminal code could expand human rights violations when implemented in 2026. Chapter VII consists of six articles on "Crimes against Religion, Belief, and Religious/Belief Life." Article 300 criminalizes any person who publicly "commits an act of hostility, makes a statement of hate or hostility, or incites hostility, violence, or discrimination against a religion, belief, classes of people or groups on the basis of religion or belief." When implemented, this article could further criminalize blasphemy. Article 301 effectively expands and further codifies the ITE Law Article 28(2) to permit blasphemy allegations made on the basis of a person's social media and

online presence. Article 302 criminalizes incitement toward apostasy. Articles 303–305 criminalize disturbances or attacks on religious services, houses of worship, and hate speech directed at religious leaders.

Currently, blasphemy committed by Muslims seems to get a [comparably lighter punishment](#) than blasphemy committed by individuals belonging to other religions (UCA News, 13 January 2022). One observer summed up the fear surrounding blasphemy accusations like this: "There is a number one reason why many Christians don't share their faith in the first place. They are willing to and want to, but society tells them it comes with too much risk. It is better to protect the 'rukun' (Arabic for "pillar") of the people rather than to have to worry about what could happen to them if they speak up."

#### ***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: Surah 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. There are also reports of Christian organizations which struggle to obtain or maintain visa for their co-workers.

### **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 on "Religious Harmony, Empowering Religious Harmony Forums, and Constructing Houses of Worship", 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.

Church congregations often have their applications pending for many years. In some cases where registration has been approved, radical groups simply block the entrance of the 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. For example, prior to building a church, the government of Aceh requires the congregation to collect 150 signatures from neighbors of a different religious background stating their acceptance. 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. In the WWL 2025 period alone congregations in Central Java ([TribunSolo, 16 September 2024](#)), East Jakarta, East Java ([Times Indonesia, 25 August 2024](#)), and West Java ([TribunNews, 18 March 2024](#)) all faced difficulties. It remains to be seen if the amendment of the procedure (see above: *Specific examples of positive*



developments) will see any tangible improvements in the local contexts, but none have been reported to date (February 2025).

***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. 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 violated.

A further example during the WWL 2025 reporting period saw village residents erecting two banners in March 2024 in order to obstruct the construction of a church in Mekar Wangi Village, Bojongloa Kidul - Bandung, West Java ([IDN Times, 12 March 2024](#)).

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

Church gatherings outside is not a problem in the majority Christian regions, but for churches located in strictly Muslim areas, such as Aceh, Padang, Banteng and NTB, outside activities come at a high risk. Outdoor meetings are often not permitted due to the fear that the meeting might provoke suspicions of attempted proselytism. A regional expert shared: "In May 2024 a number of students, the majority of whom were from Pamulang University (Unpam), held a joint prayer according to the Catholic religion. Several residents then reported feeling disturbed by the activities of the Rosary congregation. Local figures such as RT then reprimanded and reminded them to disperse. However, this actually creates misunderstandings. The event never ended, until verbal and physical fighting broke out between local residents and the congregation. During the commotion, several other residents reportedly tried to intervene. But unfortunately, one student actually got hit. Some of the congregation at the Rosary prayer service also suffered wounds from being hit by sharp weapons. The victim was an Unpam student."

***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, which make up the majority of Indonesia, 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 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.

Christians also face continuing problems in celebrating major events such as Christmas. This caused Vice President Gibran Rakabuming Raka to ask in 2024 that Christian communities immediately report any challenges they face in celebrating Christmas, confirming that the public are entitled to carry out Christmas celebrations 'safely, comfortably, and with joy' ([VOI, 17 December 2024](#)). Nevertheless, Catholics in Aceh were forced to celebrate a quiet Christmas amidst strict Sharia law ([UCA, 26 December 2024](#)) and Pentecostals faced protests against Christmas worship in Bogor Regency, West Java ([Kompas, 11 December 2024](#)).

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 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 rea-*



sons (e.g. for the protection of local church leaders).

- In situations where Christians have been discriminated against for many years, armed conflict can make them additionally vulnerable. Christians killed in areas where fighting regularly takes place are unlikely to be reported separately. Examples in recent years have been Sudan, Syria and Myanmar.
- Christians who die through the deprivation of basic necessities such as clean water and medical care (due to long-term discrimination) are unlikely to be reported separately. Christians are not always killed directly; they can be so squeezed by regulations and other oppressive factors that they die – not at once, but in the course of years. This often includes the deprivation of basic necessities such as clean water and medical care, or exclusion from government assisted socio-economic development projects. These numbers could be immense.

**3. The use of symbolic numbers:**

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

Indonesia: Violence scores per Block 6 question in questionnaire	WWL 2025	WWL 2024
6.1 How many Christians have been killed for faith-related reasons (including state sanctioned executions)?	1	7
6.2 How many churches or public Christian properties (schools, hospitals, cemeteries, etc.) have been attacked, damaged, bombed, looted, destroyed, burned down, closed or confiscated for faith-related reasons?	6	12
6.3 How many Christians have been detained for faith-related reasons?	2	12
6.4 How many Christians have been sentenced to jail, labor camp, sent to psychiatric hospital as punishment, or similar things for faith-related reasons?	0	1
6.5 How many Christians have been abducted for faith-related reasons (including Christians missing in a persecution context)?	0	0
6.6 How many Christians have been raped or otherwise sexually harassed for faith-related reasons?	0	0
6.7 How many cases have there been of forced marriages of Christians to non-Christians?	0	0
6.8 How many Christians have been otherwise physically or mentally abused for faith-related reasons (including beatings and death threats)?	50	100 *

(table continues below)

Indonesia: Violence scores per Block 6 question in questionnaire	WWL 2025	WWL 2024
6.9 How many houses of Christians or other property (excluding shops) have been attacked, damaged, bombed, looted, destroyed, burned down or confiscated for faith-related reasons?	0	0
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?	2	1
6.11 How many Christians have been forced to leave their homes or go into hiding in-country for faith-related reasons?	10 *	10 *
6.12 How many Christians have been forced to leave the country for faith-related reasons?	0	0

In the WWL 2025 reporting period:

- **Christians killed (1):** In March 2024, one Christian mission worker was killed in East Java (see above: Specific examples of violations of rights).
- **Christians arrested (2):** Two Christians were arrested for faith-related reasons. For security reasons, no details can be provided.
- **Churches attacked (6):** Church buildings in North Sumatra, East Jakarta, Banten and West Sumatra suffered attacks or were forcibly closed.

## 5 Year trends

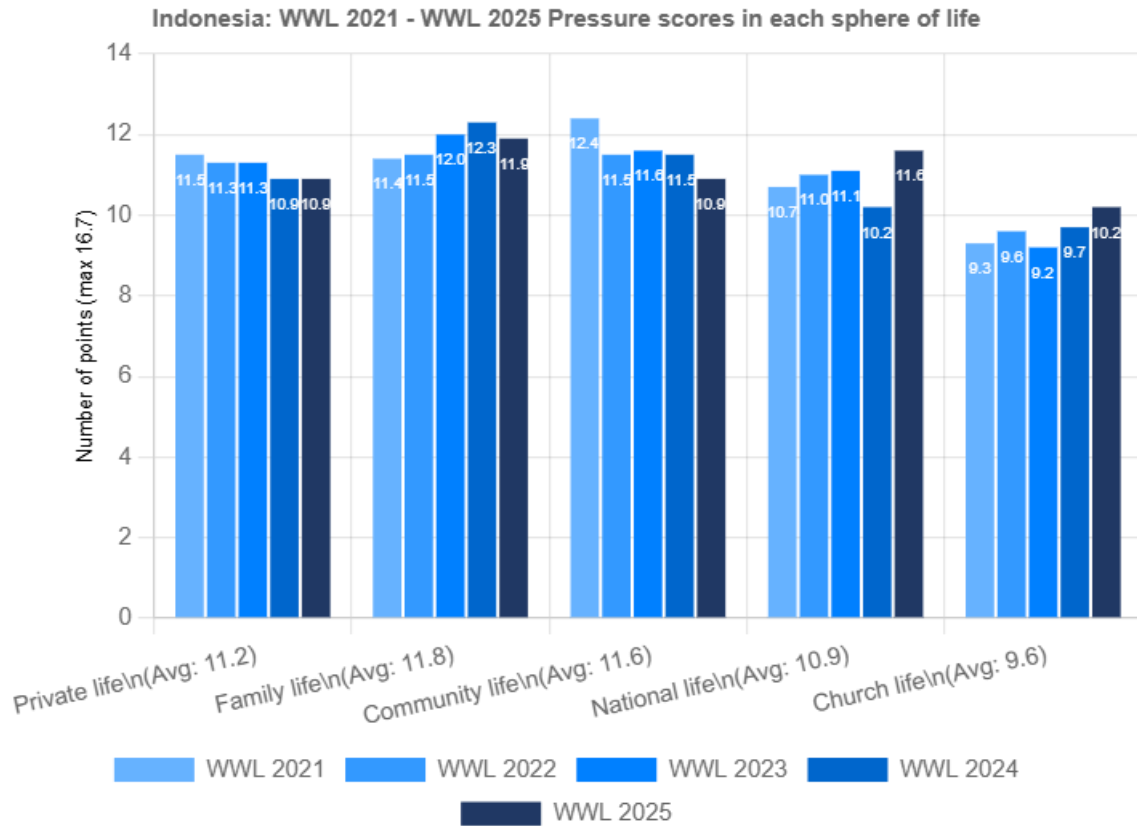
The following three charts show the levels of pressure and violence faced by Christians in the country over the last five WWL reporting periods.

### 5 Year trends: Average pressure

Indonesia: WWL 2021 - WWL 2025	Average pressure over 5 Spheres of life
2025	11.1
2024	10.9
2023	11.0
2022	11.0
2021	11.1

The average pressure on Christians has plateaued at around the 10.9 - 1.1 point mark.

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



The chart above shows a significant increase in the score for pressure in the *National sphere*. This reflects a growing conservatism and increasing use of Sharia law in some areas. That the score for the *Community sphere* has continued to decrease over the past five years is evidence of the limited freedoms experienced by some Christians in urban areas. However, the score still remained high at 10.9 points in WWL 2025.

### 5 Year trends: Violence against Christians



The chart above shows a peak of violence in WWL 2022, when the score reached an extreme level of 13.5 points with the violence score decreasing in each reporting period since then.

## Gender-specific religious persecution / Female

Indonesia	Female Pressure Points (PPs) Most frequently recorded PPs: WWL 2019 - WWL 2024
	Enforced religious dress code Forced divorce

Gender inequality in Indonesia is an ongoing issue acknowledged by the government. Despite the attention, male-biased gender norms, child marriage and educational disparities [remain](#) (World Bank Blogs, 14 December 2020), and sexual harassment is considered an “epidemic” on university campuses ([HRW](#), 12 April 2022). 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 caused a rise in gender-based and domestic violence (Jakarta Post, 10 March 2021).

Women who convert to Christianity can 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.

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. Christian women also risk being forced to marry or groomed into marrying for the purpose of conversion.

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 may be labelled as immoral women. A father who protested a mandatory school hijab ruling for his 17-year old Christian daughter encouraged the school to create an exception for Christian students, but then faced wide community backlash to the point of the family being forced out of their home ([HRW, 17 March 2023](#)).

## Gender-specific religious persecution / Male

**Indonesia**      **Male Pressure Points (PPs)**  
**Most frequently recorded PPs: WWL 2019 - WWL 2024**

Imprisonment by government

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 pastors and Christian activists are the primary targets for public religious discrimination. They can face accusations, interrogations and may 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, particularly in schools. They can face economic harassment; a country expert commented that “generally men who work earn money for their family’s living needs. If Christians are in prison, kidnapped, it will have a significant impact on the family’s economy. Their children will find it difficult to go to school because there is no money.”

The presence of radical Islamic groups in the region, who have links with the Islamic State group, has also been a threat to their physical safety.

### Persecution of other religious minorities

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

- “Although the government generally allowed citizens to leave the religion column blank on their identity card (KTP) applications and a 2017 Constitutional Court ruling allowed citizens to select Indigenous faiths on their KTP applications, individuals continued to report difficulties accessing government services if they chose either option. Faced with this problem, many religious minority members, including those following Indigenous beliefs and atheists, reportedly chose to identify as a member of an officially recognized religion close to their beliefs or of the locally dominant religion. According to researchers, this practice obscured the real numbers of adherents to religious groups in government statistics. NGOs and religious advocacy groups continued to urge the government to remove the religion field from KTPs.”
- “Given the inconsistent legal status regarding approval of interfaith marriage, some couples of differing religions selected the same religion on their KTPs in order to marry legally. Strict enforcement of marriage laws and implementation rules reportedly varied by region. Minority Muslim groups, including Ahmadis, Shia, and Gafatar, reported occasional resistance when their members applied for KTPs as Muslims, effectively denying them access to public services if they could not secure KTPs. If provided the option of identifying as ‘Ahmadi’, most Ahmadis did not select this option as they would no longer be considered Muslim by the government, complicating such choices as to where they could attend school and whom they could marry.”

As already indicated above, other religious groups suffering persecution are Muslim minority groups such as the Ahmadi. For instance: In December 2024, the government in West Java province banned a *jalsah salanah* (annual gathering) in Kuningan Regency leaving 6,000 Ahmadiyya followers, including 1,000 children, stranded at Cirebon railway station. Whilst the government claim that this was for humanitarian reasons, UCA reports that this was due to "pressure from hardliners who consider the Ahmadiyya branch of Islam blasphemous for believing its founder Mirza Ghulam Ahmad was a prophet ..." ([UCA News, 9 December 2024](#)). Together with the Muslim minority Shiites, the Ahmadiyya have faced continual 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, however that changed with the ruling of the Constitutional Court in November 2017. However, there has been significant [push-back](#) from Islamic groups like the Indonesian Ulama Council who do not want to see traditional religions being placed on a par with Islam, including when it comes one's religion 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 difficulties still to overcome (and adherents of native religions – just like those of other minority religions - still face considerable discrimination) – this was a significant step forward. The blasphemy laws are also used to actively prosecute and limit Islamic groups and sects considered as [heretic](#) by the majority (The Jakarta Post, 29 June 2023).

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 Ahmadiyya and 324 against the "Aliran Keagamaan" (local traditional religions).

## Trends Summary

### 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, the authorities and civil society actors 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) In 2021, Indonesia's largest Islamic organization, Nahdlatul Ulama (NU), elected Yahya Cholil Staquf as its new [leader](#) (UCA News, 24 December 2021), who is a distinguished Sunni scholar known for being the co-founder of "[Humanitarian Islam](#)", a movement seeking to reform on a global basis "obsolete tenets of Islamic orthodoxy that enjoin religious hatred, supremacy and violence" (Bayt Ar-Rahmah, 7 February 2022). One highly visible change in the ranks of NU is that, for the first time since the organization's inauguration in 1926, [several women have](#) been [appointed](#) to its leadership board (Benar News, 14 January (Jakarta Post, 11 February 2022)). Thus, they risk being disconnected from an increasingly urbanized audience – typified, for instance, by ever expanding Metro Jakarta with its more than 30 million inhabitants – which has very different interests and needs. An area where this

divergence is particularly evident is the vast number of followers enjoyed by online preachers. These preachers are not connected to either the NU or Muhammadiyah and often propagate radical Islamic opinions. Apart from the difficulties this causes NU, it also poses potential danger for religious minorities in Indonesia.

While the 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 (WWR, 21 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). This is affecting Muslim and non-Muslim students alike and easily leads to [bullying](#) (UCA News, 5 August 2022). The fact that Indonesia's Minister of Religion has been [accused](#) of blasphemy after making a statement in which he allegedly compared the muezzin's summons to prayer over loudspeakers to dogs barking (Benar News, 18 March 2022) ("If our neighbors have dogs and they all bark at the same time, don't we think it's a disturbance? Therefore, we have to regulate all noises so they don't become a nuisance.") shows the growing conservative mindset. Regular incidents where local residents protest against and block worship services of religious minorities, especially Christians in private homes, is particularly worrying, as private worship is guaranteed by the Indonesian Constitution.

**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), these findings are comparable to the 85% of millennials saying that Pancasila is not a permanent ideology found by the Setara/INFID survey (see above: *Political and legal landscape*). 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 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)** Security organs seem to have had some success in curbing the activities of violent Islamic organizations, however, the fact that more and more radicalization happens online does not make this task easier. When the group Jemaah Islamiyah (JI) declared itself to be dissolved, this did not mean that it would cease to be a threat. One reason for this move is that JI is trying to protect its considerable network of educational institutions, which in turn means a conservative and exclusivist Islam will continue to be taught to thousands of students. And anyway, such declarations by violent Islamic groups always carry the risk of producing splinter groups who are not happy with such public statements and who will over time resort once more to violence against the state and potentially also against religious minorities. It would not be the first time this has happened.

Early in 2022, the government's counter-terrorism agency revealed that it had identified 68 Islamic boarding schools which had close ties with the radical group, Islamic Jemaah Islamiyah. However, it is



not enough for the government agency simply to check whether an Islamic school follows the national curriculum, since many ‘operate ambiguously’, so the [radicalization](#) of pupils at Muslim schools may be a much broader challenge (RSIS, 20 April 2022). The problem may also be bigger than that: According to Indonesia's National Counterterrorism Agency, at least [198 boarding schools](#) have ties to terrorist networks (UCA News, 26 January 2022). On the other hand, a poll showed that the government's December 2020 policy of banning the Islamic Defenders' Front (FPI) is enjoying surprisingly broad support: While 63% of survey respondents who were aware of the ban supported it (and only 29% were opposed), social media showed a [different story](#) with 50% of postings opposing the ban and only 34% being in favor. This may point to a growing urban and generational division in Indonesia, since a greater number of urban and young people have access to the Internet (New Mandala, 1 July 2022). A research on Muslim consumers in Indonesia and Malaysia has found that one third of young people consider themselves [more religious than their parents](#), while 45% call themselves simply ‘devout’ (Al-Jazeera, 21 September 2022). The research also revealed that 91% of respondents said that a strong relationship with Allah was the most important thing in life, on par with family and health.

## 2) Growing authoritarianism and polarization

a) Indonesia is in danger of losing its reputation for following a tolerant brand of Islam, which 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 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). It may also be an uphill task, given that the younger generation seems to have looser ties with Pancasila, according to the aforementioned Setara/INFID study.

b) [Authoritarianism](#) and majoritarianism are being used in an effort to keep the country together and in balancing out difficulties and tensions (Brookings, August 2020). President Prabowo Subianto served as Minister of Defense and has a checkered military career, which illustrates that neither authoritarianism nor polarization is likely to cease in Indonesian politics anytime soon. The armed forces may even gain [more independence and influence](#) on politics after the elections (IPAC, 17 August 2023). It seems that President Prabowo benefitted from two trends: One is that outgoing President Jokowi is still wildly popular and his eldest son will become vice-President. The other is what one observer called ["historical amnesia"](#) (Benar News, 15 February 2024): Most voters are under 40 and thus do not have any memory of the time under dictator Soeharto and the poor human rights record of the Indonesian Special Forces under General Subianto in the 1990s. The seemingly self-contradictory poll results from the Pew 2023 survey (see "Political landscape") could nevertheless explain the result of the latest presidential election: Prabowo Subianto groomed his image as a strongman for decades before switching to ‘cuddly grandfather’ with dance videos on TikTok in the recent campaign. Political changes are not to be expected and there are even rumors that Prabowo might step down halfway through his presidency, paving the way for Jokowi's son to take over.

c) Finally, the polarization between Islamists and so-called pluralists will continue to define Indonesian politics, as this is often seen as a method for winning over voters. The unanimous agreement by almost all parties in parliament on a [new criminal code](#) made headlines around the



world for criminalizing sex outside marriage (although these would only be complaint offences), but the chilling effect on freedom of religion and religious minorities was less in focus (The Conversation, 8 December 2022). The government has tried to hold firmly to its banner of tolerance, but this came only after a spate of cases in which permits for church construction or renovation had been denied. [Majoritarianism](#) continues to be deeply ingrained in society, and religion continues to play an important role in Indonesian community life (LSE, Religion and Global Society Blog, 8 February 2024).

### 3) China and other challenges

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 fact that his [first foreign visit](#) led Prabowo to China and that he also had a meeting with President Xi may point to a tilt in Indonesian politics (The Diplomat, 12 April 2024). On the other hand, Prabowo's military background and general sense of nationalism should not be underestimated; all territorial moves by China will be closely watched.

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. The war in Gaza since October 2023 has also been a rallying cry for Palestinian support and has the potential to radicalize people, especially youth.

The consequences of the Russian/Ukraine war have been vividly felt in Indonesia as well. While the country balanced the challenges of chairing and hosting the G20 [presidency and summit](#) very well (El País, 19 November 2022), it has been noted that many Indonesians stay neutral or even [back Russia's invasion](#) of Ukraine (University of Melbourne, 9 March 2022). As the war continues, the pressure on the Indonesian government to take sides may grow. The same is true for its relationship with China. It will be interesting to see how these challenges will be navigated.

## Further useful reports

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

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

## External Links

- Copyright, sources and definitions: Background country information - <https://www.opendoors.org/en-US/research-reports/wwl-background/>
- Copyright, sources and definitions: Persecution dynamics - <https://www.opendoors.org/en-US/research-reports/country-dossiers/>
- 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: forced the pastor - <https://mailchi.mp/morningstarnews.org/muslims-in-indonesia-end-churchs-meetings-in-home>
- Specific examples of positive developments: Reuters, 6 September 2024 - <https://www.reuters.com/world/asia-pacific/like-jesus-presence-over-80000-attend-popes-mass-indonesia-2024-09-05/>
- Specific examples of positive developments: UCA, 7 September 2024 - <https://www.ucanews.com/news/indonesia-arrests-7-over-online-terror-threats-against-pope/106301>
- Specific examples of positive developments: joint decree - <https://www.hrw.org/news/2024/03/06/indonesia-officially-adopts-indonesian-term-jesus-christ>
- Specific examples of positive developments: used as temporary houses of worship - <https://www.persecution.org/2023/11/27/government-offices-in-indonesia-can-now-be-used-as-temporary-places-of-worship/>
- Areas where Christians face most difficulties: USCIRF Annual report 2024, Indonesia, pp.56-57 - <https://www.uscirf.gov/sites/default/files/2024-05/USCIRF%202024%20Annual%20Report.pdf>
- Areas where Christians face most difficulties: The Christian Post, 23 April 2024 - <https://www.christianpost.com/news/human-rights-group-urges-protection-for-christians-in-west-papua.html>
- Persecution engines description: Islamic law - <https://www.scmp.com/week-asia/politics/article/3185970/will-west-sumatras-new-law-lead-more-islamic-conservatism>
- 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: survey results - <https://www.newmandala.org/counter-polarisation-and-political-expediency/>
- Persecution engines description: intolerant of other religions - <https://coconuts.co/jakarta/news/57-indonesian-teachers-intolerant-religions-islamic-research-center/>
- Persecution engines description: study on religious intolerance - [https://link.springer.com/chapter/10.1007/978-981-97-1616-6\\_1](https://link.springer.com/chapter/10.1007/978-981-97-1616-6_1)
- 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): BBC News, 24 January 2019 - <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-asia-46982779>
- Block 2.8: Christian children have been pressured into attending anti-Christian or majority religion teaching at any level of education. (3.50 points): Agenzia Fides, 29 July 2022 - [https://www.fides.org/en/news/72600-ASIA\\_INDONESIA\\_Wrong\\_teaching\\_on\\_the\\_Christian\\_faith\\_after\\_the\\_intervention\\_of\\_the\\_Bishops\\_the\\_government\\_announces\\_the\\_correction](https://www.fides.org/en/news/72600-ASIA_INDONESIA_Wrong_teaching_on_the_Christian_faith_after_the_intervention_of_the_Bishops_the_government_announces_the_correction)
- Block 2.3: Christians have been hindered in celebrating a Christian wedding for faith-related reasons. (3.25 points): The Diplomat, 2024 - <https://thediplomat.com/2024/04/challenges-ahead-for-indonesias-interfaith-couples/>

- Block 3.1: Christians have been harassed, threatened or obstructed in their daily lives for faith-related reasons (e.g. for not meeting majority religion or traditional dress codes, beard codes etc.). (3.00 points): pressure - <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.). (3.00 points): banned - <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-asia-55945202>
- Block 3.1: Christians have been harassed, threatened or obstructed in their daily lives for faith-related reasons (e.g. for not meeting majority religion or traditional dress codes, beard codes etc.). (3.00 points): Sharia housing complexes - <https://scholar.ui.ac.id/en/publications/the-norms-that-shape-residents-preference-for-muslim-housing-comm>
- Block 4.8: Christians have been hindered in expressing their views or opinions in public. (3.50 points): blasphemy case - <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-asia-39853280>
- Block 4.13: Christians have been accused of blasphemy or insulting the majority religion, either by state authorities or by pressure groups. (3.25 points): USCIRF Annual report 2024, Indonesia, pp.56-57 - <https://www.uscifr.gov/sites/default/files/2024-05/USCIRF%202024%20Annual%20Report.pdf>
- Block 4.13: Christians have been accused of blasphemy or insulting the majority religion, either by state authorities or by pressure groups. (3.25 points): comparably lighter punishment - <https://www.ucanews.com/news/indonesian-muslim-cleric-gets-5-months-for-bible-bashing/95704>
- Block 5.2: It has been difficult to get registration or legal status for churches at any level of government. (3.75 points): TribunSolo, 16 September 2024 - [https://solo.tribunnews.com/2024/09/16/3-fakta-ratusan-jemaat-gjki-md-beribadah-di-lahan-kosong-pindah-pindah-lokasi-11-tahun-terakhir?lgn\\_method=google&google\\_btn=gsi](https://solo.tribunnews.com/2024/09/16/3-fakta-ratusan-jemaat-gjki-md-beribadah-di-lahan-kosong-pindah-pindah-lokasi-11-tahun-terakhir?lgn_method=google&google_btn=gsi)
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