
World Watch Research

Lebanon: Persecution Dynamics

March 2025



OpenDoors

Serving persecuted **Christians** worldwide

Open Doors International / World Watch Research

March 2025

© Open Doors International

research@od.org

Contents

World Watch List 2025 – Top 50.....	2
World Watch List 2025 – Ranks 51-78	4
Copyright, sources and definitions	5
Reporting period	6
Brief country details.....	6
Map of country	7
Dominant persecution engines and drivers.....	7
Brief description of the persecution situation.....	8
Specific examples of violations of rights in the reporting period	8
Specific examples of positive developments	8
Christian communities and how they are affected.....	9
Areas where Christians face most difficulties.....	10
Position on the World Watch List	10
Persecution engines.....	11
Drivers of persecution.....	12
The Persecution pattern	14
Pressure in the 5 spheres of life.....	15
Violence	20
5 Year trends.....	22
Gender-specific religious persecution / Female	24
Gender-specific religious persecution / Male.....	25
Persecution of other religious minorities	26
Trends Summary	26
Further useful reports.....	27
External Links	27

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/February).

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

Lebanon: Population (UN estimate for 2024)

5,219,000

Lebanon: Religious context	Number of adherents	%
Christians	1,888,000	36.2
Muslim	3,018,000	57.8
Hindu	7,600	0.1
Buddhist	105,000	2.0
Ethnic religionist	0	0.0
Jewish	81	0.0
Bahai	4,200	0.1
Atheist	39,300	0.8
Agnostic	154,000	3.0
Other	3,500	0.1
<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

Map of country



Dominant persecution engines and drivers

Lebanon: Main Persecution engines	Main drivers
Islamic oppression	Citizens (people from the broader society), including mobs, One's own (extended) family
Clan oppression	One's own (extended) family

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

Brief description of the persecution situation

Lebanon has traditionally served as a safe haven for diverse religious and ethnic groups, with Christians generally enjoying a relatively high level of religious freedom. However, the Christian population has declined and there is fear that their political influence is decreasing since the country's demographics have changed so much over the last five years. Although historical Christian communities remain firmly entrenched in Lebanese society, opposition is often based on territorial or political factors rather than religion. In recent years, however, Christian communities bordering Muslim-majority areas have become targets of aggression, and Christian charities providing aid to Syrian refugees have faced opposition. More recently, tensions against Christian communities have intensified, as many Christians oppose Hezbollah's policies and its role in initiating the conflict with Israel since Hamas' attack on 7 October 2023. The influx of displaced (primarily Shia) Lebanese Muslims as a result of this conflict from southern Lebanon into predominantly Christian areas also heightened sectarian tensions.

Furthermore, since 2023 a notable increase in attacks on Christian holy sites was observed - a trend that continued in 2024. In addition, Christians from non-traditional denominations in Lebanon sometimes face criticism from the historical Christian communities and pressure from non-Christian groups, especially if they are seen as proselytizers. Converts to Christianity from Muslim or Druze backgrounds often encounter the most resistance, including potential violence, especially from their own families and local communities.

(Just outside the WWL 2025 reporting period: On 1 October 2024, Israel invaded southern Lebanon in an escalation of the ongoing Israel–Hezbollah conflict, a spillover of the Israel–Hamas war, which led to a weakening of the Shia militant group).

Specific examples of violations of rights in the reporting period

- Several churches and Christian properties in Lebanon were damaged due to burglaries and vandalism. There were a series of incidents in January 2024 where a gang damaged at least 10 churches in Mount Lebanon, and attacks on Christian stores and properties occurred in attacks by Shiite Muslim mobs.
- Several dozen Christians were reportedly injured during clashes while defending their villages against attacks by Shiite Muslim mobs.
- Some converts to Christianity were reportedly subjected to physical harm due to their change of faith.

Specific examples of positive developments

April 2024: The Adyan Foundation, based in Beirut, hosted the International Religious Freedom or Belief Alliance (IRFBA) summit on 26-27 April in Lebanon, with the aim of advancing freedom of religion or belief and broader human rights as key drivers for reform in the country. Additionally, Adyan continued its initiative that emphasizes the role of religion in fostering social cohesion and promoting peaceful coexistence within local communities.

Christian communities and how they are affected

Communities of expatriate Christians

Expatriate Christians are not involuntarily isolated in Lebanon and are therefore not included as a separate category for WWL analysis.

Historical Christian communities

The majority of Christians in Lebanon belong either to the Maronite or the Greek Orthodox communities. The largest Christian group is the Maronite community which, while maintaining affiliation with the Roman Catholic Church for centuries, has its own patriarch, liturgy and ecclesiastical traditions. The Greek Orthodox community is the second largest Christian group. Other historical Christian communities with official recognition include Catholic (Chaldean, Greek, Latin, Armenian and Syriac), Oriental Orthodox (Armenian Apostolic, Syriac and Coptic), Syriac Church of the East. These communities generally enjoy very considerable freedom and good standing within society, including a level of political representation and power that exceeds what would apply based on demographics (a formula which reflects greater numbers historically, and also traditionally greater economic influence). There are occasional security vulnerabilities - though these would typically be more political than religious.

The main fears reflect the demographic shrinking of these communities with an accompanying fear that it may become increasingly difficult to maintain long-standing levels of influence - especially in light of the growing strength of Shia communities and, in particular, the influence of Hezbollah. Also, in recent years, Christian communities living in areas bordering the predominantly Muslim population have increasingly become targets of aggression, such as mob attacks, robbery, theft and rape. In addition, Christian charities affiliated with historic churches that provide assistance to Muslim Syrian refugees have also faced opposition. Furthermore, the year 2023 witnessed a notable increase in attacks on Christian holy sites, including shrines and churches, and this trend continued throughout 2024.

Converts to Christianity

Converts to Christianity from Muslim or Druze backgrounds typically face the most opposition, which can include violence, especially from their families or local communities. However, in addition to Islamic groups, opposition to converts can also come from Christian sources. Also there are complications for converts wanting to marry Christians from the historical Christian community since only religious marriages can be performed in Lebanon, not civil ones. This means that the bride and groom must both belong to the same religion or one of them needs to convert to the other's religion. From about 2013 onwards, Lebanese churches have experienced an influx of Syrian refugee converts, who are likely to face hostility if their faith is known. If their conversion were to become public knowledge, it could mean that their families abroad would stop sending them money; it could mean husbands leaving their wives; or it might just be that they would have to face social scorn.

Additionally, there are also converts from Iraq and Lebanon itself, including those from elsewhere in the region taking refuge from persecution. Converts from Islam are primarily from Shiite families and there are also growing numbers of Druze background believers. In general, Lebanon is a diverse country with many Christian-dominated areas and converts to Christianity rarely face death or extreme

persecution. An exception is the Bekaa Valley where converts from Islam (and those who minister among them) can face violent opposition. In addition, cases of young converts facing violent hostility at the hands of their families are also increasing in other areas of Lebanon, according to local youth ministries.

Non-traditional Christian communities

This category includes Evangelicals, Baptists, Pentecostals and Seventh-day Adventists. Most of them belong to the Supreme Council of Evangelicals, which serves as an umbrella for many Evangelical churches and through which they have equivalent status to other traditions/denominations. Evangelicals have one seat in Parliament and they have their own ecclesiastical court. Some small groups choose not to register with the Supreme Council or may have been refused recognition on doctrinal grounds. In practice, there are very few real issues apart from some restrictions for unrecognized groups, preventing them from acquiring authority to conduct marriages. In spite of having a significant degree of freedom, they are sometimes viewed with disdain by those belonging to historical Christian communities, since they often do not have large church buildings, their church services are not liturgical and they do not pray to (or appear to respect) Church saints or the Virgin Mary. They face greater pressure in society because they are more likely to be perceived as proselytizing.

Outside Beirut, particularly in the Christian area between Beirut and Byblos, it is very hard for a non-traditional Christian community to get a license for church building projects. A number of non-traditional Christian communities are active in ministering to converts from Islam in the Bekaa Valley, which can lead to violent persecution.

Areas where Christians face most difficulties

Christians face the most faith-related opposition in predominantly conservative or radical Islamic areas, such as Tripoli, Bekaa Valley (particularly where Syrian refugee camps are located), South Beirut (such as the Shia suburb of El Dahye), Palestinian refugee camps (close to Tripoli and Beirut), and Hezbollah controlled areas south and east of the Bekaa Valley.

Position on the World Watch List

Lebanon: World Watch List	Points	WWL Rank
WWL 2025	49	74
WWL 2024	48	72
WWL 2023	40	-
WWL 2022	35	-
WWL 2021	34	-

For the second year in a row, Lebanon joined the category of countries scoring 41 points and over: Pressure was highest in the *Private and Family spheres of life*, a typical pattern where *Islamic*

oppression and *Clan oppression* are the main Persecution engines. The overall pressure has slightly increased, primarily driven by heightened opposition toward Christian converts from Islam. This rise is reportedly linked to growing radicalization, as well as an increase in incidents of hate speech, discrimination and communal violence, including acts of vandalism targeting Christian properties and churches. As in WWL 2024, a large part of the violence score consisted of attacks on church property.

Persecution engines

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

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

Islamic oppression (Strong):

Islamic oppression mainly affects converts from Islam to Christianity, especially in predominantly Muslim areas. If a Muslim decides to become a Christian, that person (depending on whether his/her family is progressive or conservative) will face persecution and pressure to return to Islam. As an engine of persecution, Islamic oppression is most intense among Syrian refugees who have converted from Islam to Christianity, especially in the Beqaa Valley. Although radical Islamic ideology is less strong in urban areas, various Islamist factions are perceived as trying to dominate Lebanon, especially in the Shia regions, where Hezbollah exercises its power through violence and intimidation. Hezbollah has a strong hold on Lebanon, both through its Shia supporters and through the government and parliament. As a result, indigenous Christian communities in traditionally Christian areas feel increasingly under pressure at a political level. In addition to Hezbollah, there is a mostly moderate Sunni community, although some elements may be extremist, especially in areas where Islamic State (IS) ideology has been embraced. Despite the reduction in IS strongholds in Syria, their proximity along the Syria-Lebanon border potentially contributes to the persistence of extremism in Lebanon, making it difficult to fully combat.

Lebanon's democratic system and power-sharing formula are intended to prevent one religion from dominating the other. In practice, it proves to be a challenge to balance the different religious actors:

In WWL 2024 and WWL 2025, there were a serious number of attacks on churches and other public Christian buildings, but also on Christian villages, - perpetrated in particular by young Syrian refugees. The strength of this persecution engine has thus grown from 'medium' to 'strong'.

Clan oppression (Medium):

Islamic communities in Lebanon - especially Shia - are characterized by strong clan and tribal ties, where the traditions and norms of the clan can be more important than national law. As a persecution engine, *Clan oppression* is therefore mixed with *Islamic oppression*; Christians with a Muslim or Druze background are most affected. Within these clans, converting to Christianity is seen as a betrayal of group identity, often resulting in converts being excluded from basic amenities and social services, and sometimes even facing harassment, abuse or forced displacement. This clan-based persecution is especially strong in the cities outside Beirut where tribal identities are dominant, such as in Tripoli, the Beqaa Valley and the southern regions. For Syrian Muslim refugees who became Christians, the clan mentality is even stronger, meaning they can experience severe oppression from their wider family or clan.

Drivers of persecution

Lebanon: Drivers of persecution	IO	RN	ERH	CO	CDP	CPCO	SI	DPA	OCC
	STRONG	-	-	MEDIUM	WEAK	-	-	VERY WEAK	WEAK
Government officials	Weak	-	-	-	Very weak	-	-	Weak	Weak
Ethnic group leaders	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Non-Christian religious leaders	Very weak	-	-	Very weak	-	-	-	Very weak	-
Religious leaders of other churches	-	-	-	-	Weak	-	-	-	-
Violent religious groups	Weak	-	-	-	-	-	-	Weak	Very weak
Ideological pressure groups	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Citizens (people from the broader society), including mobs	Medium	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	Medium

(table continues below)

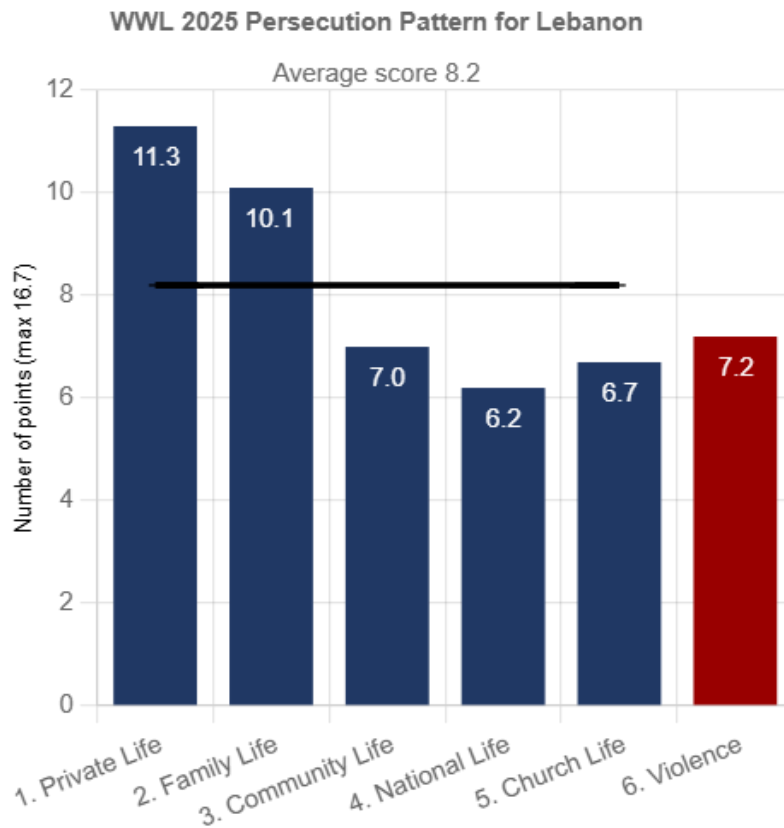
Lebanon: Drivers of persecution	IO	RN	ERH	CO	CDP	CPCO	SI	DPA	OCC
	STRONG	-	-	MEDIUM	WEAK	-	-	VERY WEAK	WEAK
One's own (extended) family	Medium	-	-	Medium	-	-	-	-	-
Political parties	Weak	-	-	-	-	-	-	Weak	Weak
Revolutionaries or paramilitary groups	Weak	-	-	-	-	-	-	Weak	Weak
Organized crime cartels or networks	Very weak	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	Very weak
Multilateral organizations (e.g. UN, OIC etc.) and embassies	Very weak	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-

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

Drivers of Islamic oppression (blended with Clan oppression):

- **Extended family (Medium):** This mainly concerns Christians coming from a different religious background, such as people from a Muslim or Druze family. Once their conversion is known, Muslim families will attempt to get their members to return to Islam in a variety of ways, including via threats, physical and verbal abuse, divorce, and via withdrawal of inheritance or guardianship. In particular, Syrian refugees who have converted to Christianity have faced hostility from their families and stigmatization as well as exclusion from the local community. There have been incidents where the families of Syrian converts have informed militant Islamic groups (e.g. Hezbollah) to put pressure on converts to recant their faith using violent methods. In religious groups such as Druze, converts are usually no longer considered to be Druze and are declared outsiders, which brings social disgrace to the person.
- **Citizens (Medium):** Converts from Islam or the Druze faith can experience pressure not only from their family when their new faith is known, but also from the community and they can become victims of physical harm, intimidation and community ostracization. Cases of sectarian violence have been reported, with Shia groups invading neighboring predominantly Christian localities, exposing residents to acts of aggression. These acts include the desecration of religious symbols, such as damaging religious statues. In addition, intimidation tactics are used, such as firing guns into the air or using sound bombs. Furthermore, Syrian mobs residing in nearby refugee camps have reportedly entered predominantly Christian areas, possibly with the intention of carrying out robbery. However, it is important to note that the motives behind such raids are not always clearcut. According to a local source, Shia groups appear to be taking such action strategically, with the aim of spreading fear among Christians and perpetuating a state of intimidation.

The Persecution pattern



The WWL 2025 Persecution pattern for Lebanon shows:

- The average pressure on Christians is fairly high at a level of 8.2 points.
- Pressure is highest in the *Private and Family spheres of life*, mostly affecting converts to Christianity.
- The score for *Private Life* increased by 0.5 of a point. Reports suggest that pressure on Christian converts has increased due to rising radicalization, with conversion now being associated with higher risks, including death threats, as well as physical and verbal abuse, primarily at the hands of family members.
- The score for *National Life* in Lebanon remains relatively low, indicating that Christians continue to enjoy a considerable degree of legal freedom and in participating in public life. However, this score has increased slightly in the most recent reporting period from 5.9 to 6.2 points, largely due to increased information available on hate-speech targeting Christians and the discrimination they face in public office.
- Violence against Christians is very high at a level of 7.2 points. This mainly concerns vandalism of Christian buildings and church property as well as community violence against predominantly Christian villages.

Pressure in the 5 spheres of life

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

Pressure in Block 1 / Private sphere

Block 1.1: Conversion has been opposed, forbidden, or punishable, including conversion from one type of Christianity to another. (3.00 points)

Although conversion is legally possible in Lebanon, converts to Christianity from groups that forbid conversion (Sunni Muslims, Shia Muslims, Druze, Alawites) face persecution from immediate relatives or their extended family/community. They are at risk of being ostracized or kidnapped and in some parts of the country, especially in the Bekaa Valley, female converts can be subjected to honor killings. The intensity of persecution varies depending on the area and family in question.

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)

Revealing one's Christian faith through social media can be risky, especially for converts from non-Christian backgrounds. For these people, expressing their faith online can lead to verbal threats, emotional abuse or even death threats, because apostasy from Islam is considered a serious offense. Muslims who convert to Christianity may face particularly serious dangers since parts of Islamic law allow violence against apostates. While not all threats are carried out, the risk of harm remains real and in extreme cases can be life-threatening. However, the severity of the situation varies depending on each family and community. Despite the challenges, some converts still choose to share their faith online, although they remain aware of the potential dangers.

Block 1.7: It has been risky for Christians to speak about their faith with immediate family members. (3.00 points)

While Christians from Christian families can usually talk about their faith with immediate family members without difficulty, this is risky for Christian converts from Islam, especially for converts from conservative or rural communities. In these communities, religious beliefs are often deeply rooted and passed down within families. Revealing a change of faith is likely to be seen as a betrayal. In such environments, the immediate reaction can often be hostile, including verbal abuse, rejection or even physical (including death) threats. In extreme cases, some have even been forcibly taken by their families, pressured to renounce their new faith or subjected to violence. However, there are also cases where, over time, families accept the conversion of their loved ones, although this is not always the case. The level of risk depends on the individual family and community. Most converts choose to keep their faith secret to avoid these risks.

Block 1.5: It has been risky for Christians to display Christian images or symbols. (2.50 points)

For converts from Islam it is risky to display Christian images or symbols, so most will not do this. To avoid trouble, non-convert Christians also avoid wearing or displaying Christian symbols when in an

area where radical Muslims live. For example, a few years ago in Tripoli a car window was smashed because of a picture of the Virgin Mary in the car. Religious symbols are an essential part of sectarianism that is deeply rooted in society. However, many young people reportedly choose not to wear such symbols because they do not want to alienate their Muslim friends.

Pressure in Block 2 / Family sphere

Block 2.13: Christians have lost their inheritance rights because of their conversion to Christianity or (if a person already was a Christian) other types of Christianity. (3.25 points)

Muslims who leave Islam may lose their inheritance rights under Islamic law, as applied in Lebanon, since Sharia law allocates inheritance to Muslims only. This means that Muslims who become Christians risk losing their inheritance if their faith has become known. However, it varies per family whether this actually happens.

Block 2.4: Christian baptisms have been hindered. (3.00 points)

Baptism is often perceived as the final sign that a person has changed their religion; for this reason the convert's previous faith community will strongly oppose it. Some converts reported being threatened, others were locked up in their homes, and still others' spouses threatened to divorce them if they were baptized. For this reason, converts generally do not let their families know that they are going to be baptized. In general, churches have no problem to baptize believers with a non-Christian background and legally it is also possible.

Block 2.6: Christian couples have been hindered in adopting children or serving as foster parents because of their faith. (3.00 points)

In Lebanon, adoption is strictly controlled by religious institutions and potential adoptive parents must usually adopt a child from the same religious community. This means that Christian couples can only adopt Christian children and in some cases even only within specific denominations, such as Catholic parents who can only adopt Catholic children. In some cases, even if adoption is to some extent possible within Christian communities, it can be a lengthy and complicated process because of legal and religious requirements. For Christian converts, the situation is even more complicated, especially if they have not legalized their conversion or if their religious status is not recognized by the religious authorities. This is because they are still considered Muslims, and Muslims cannot adopt children because of Sharia law's ban on adoption.

Block 2.12: Christian spouses of non-Christians have been excluded from the right or opportunity to claim custody of the children in divorce cases. (3.00 points)

Once a spouse leaves Islam, he or she loses the right to custody of any children under Islamic law, regardless of whether or not a divorce occurs. Female converts seem particularly vulnerable in this regard as these issues are settled by an Islamic court, where - as in most other religious courts - men have the upper hand. However, these incidents are uncommon, possibly since women delay divorce for fear of losing custody of their children. This is confirmed in research carried out by [Human Rights Watch](#). In such cases, children will be assigned to their father rather than to the mother who has converted (HRW, 19 January 2015).

Pressure in Block 3 / Community sphere

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.). (2.75 points)

In recent years, Christian communities have increasingly become targets of acts of aggression such as robbery, theft and rape. According to a country expert, this mainly takes place in majority Christian areas bordering predominantly Sunni and Shiite areas. The perpetrators are usually Shiite gangs or Syrians living and working in Lebanon. There is also alleged involvement of some Palestinians from nearby refugee camps. Christian women in these areas may be harassed by conservative Muslim men because of their non-Islamic clothing. Christians from a Muslim background do not usually reveal their faith and often continue to adhere to Islamic dress codes etc.. If they do make their faith known, they risk verbal and physical abuse, especially from family.

Block 3.7: Christians have been pressured by their community to renounce their faith. (2.75 points)

If their new faith has become known, converts from non-Christian backgrounds (especially those who have a conservative religious background) may face pressure to recant. This is in accordance with provisions of Islamic law regarding apostasy, which state that an apostate must be given the opportunity to recant. The conversion of a family member to Christianity can be seen as a stain on the honor of the entire family. Many have faced physical, emotional and psychological violence and threats of violence from family members and religious leaders. For this reason, most of them do not tell their community about their conversion.

Block 3.10: Christians have been discriminated against in public or private employment for faith-related reasons. (2.75 points)

Christians may face discrimination in finding jobs in both government services and private companies, for example in sectors favored by certain political parties, such as Hezbollah, or religious groups. Lebanon has a system whereby political parties allocate jobs based on religion, which makes it more likely for adherents of large religious groups to be hired than those belonging to smaller groups, such as some Christian denominations. In addition, both government and private institutions in Lebanon have been criticized for favoring relatives and friends in job allocation, which may mean that certain groups, such as Christians, are less likely to find work. Although discrimination against Christians in the labor market is not solely related to their faith, it can still occur due to political, religious and social factors that intersect with their religious identity. It is important to note that this kind of discrimination also happens to Muslims and other religious minorities in the country. Finally, Christians with a Muslim or Druze background are at risk of losing their jobs if their faith is known, especially if they live in predominantly Muslim or Druze areas.

Block 3.2: Christians have been monitored by their local communities or by private groups (this includes reporting to police, being shadowed, telephone lines listened to, emails read/censored, etc.). (2.25 points)

In some individual cases, the family or community will monitor a convert if they suspect he or she is trying to spread Christianity. Sometimes this is accompanied by violent threats. Scrutiny can be especially intense for Christians from a Muslim (or Druze) background and who live in rural,

conservative, non-Christian areas. Government security forces also carry out broad surveillance operations covering all communities, mainly focused on counter-insurgency and counter-terrorism. According to a country expert, the government perceives evangelicals as pro-Israel and monitors them for this reason. There are also anecdotal examples of Hezbollah security services monitoring foreign and Christian groups in areas they control.

Pressure in Block 4 / National sphere

Block 4.6: Christians have been barred from public office, or has promotion been hindered for faith-related reasons. (2.75 points)

In Lebanon, Christians have sometimes been hindered in public office due to political factors, with religious undertones. While the quota-based system assigns offices based on sectarian lines, political affiliations often play a larger role in promotions or job assignments. Christians can be overlooked for promotion if their political allegiance fails to align with those in power, even if they share the same religious background. For example, a Christian from one party might be passed over by another party member despite both being Maronite. In some cases, Christians face discrimination based on their faith, as seen in personal experiences where promotion was delayed or withheld for Christians working in ministries controlled by political factions with strong ties to the Shiite community. Christians of Muslim background who are still officially registered as Muslim and whose conversion is known may in practice be excluded from certain government positions, particularly in non-Christian areas. Public positions in Lebanon are often allocated on the basis of religious and political networks, which are likely to limit access to certain positions for this group.

Block 4.8: Christians have been hindered in expressing their views or opinions in public. (2.75 points)

In Lebanon, freedom of expression is legally respected, but there are sometimes arrests of journalists or activists for political reasons when there are perceived national security concerns. Furthermore, there are reports that demonstrations by Christian groups against the Syrian influence in Lebanon have been suppressed or obstructed in some cases. The demonstrations are driven by the perceived erosion of their security caused by attacks on Christians and churches (including burglaries and violent robberies) and the fear that Syrian refugees are disrupting the demographic and cultural balance. There is no legal ban on these demonstrations, but their suppression is the result of political dynamics and sectarian interests, including political pressure from pro-Syrian parties and their allies. Finally, Christian converts from Islam are often unable to express their true opinions if this reveals their change of faith, in particular in non-Christian areas. They therefore tend to keep their faith and related opinions to themselves.

Block 4.11: Christians have been subjected to smear campaigns or hate speech. (2.75 points)

On social media there are regular attacks and use of hate-speech against Christians for political reasons or for their alleged decadent life style, but sometimes Christian doctrines and beliefs are also attacked. Some sheikhs are also reported to have said hateful things in their speeches in the mosque, which were heard through the minaret loudspeakers by the various communities, but this does not usually find its way into public media. There are also radical Islamic organizations in Lebanon that openly refer to Christians as 'apostates', especially in some of the more conservative areas in and around the city

of Tripoli, in the Bekaa Valley and in some Palestinian refugee camps. Lebanese authorities, including a significant number of Christians, monitor these groups for signs of violent activity.

Block 4.12: Christians, churches or Christian organizations have been hindered in publicly displaying religious symbols. (2.50 points)

Churches in conservative, non-Christian areas often choose not to display religious symbols and iconography to avoid provoking hostility from the community in which they are located. In 2021, clashes between Shia and Christian villages in Hezbollah-controlled territory in southern Lebanon, mainly related to fuel shortages, left six people injured and Christian religious symbols were attacked by Shia armed elements. In December 2019 and 2020, Christmas trees were burned in Dinniyeh, a Muslim town in northern Lebanon. Also in Tripoli, Christmas trees were burned in December 2019 and 2023. Also at other times in 2023, various Christian symbols or shrines in public spaces were also destroyed. The statue of the Virgin Mary in front of the old church of Our Lady of Help in Zouk Mikael was daubed with a black marker on 1 April 2024. Finally in November 2024 (outside of the WWL 2025 reporting period), a nativity scene in Faraya, Lebanon, was vandalized when the figure of the baby Jesus was removed and a handgun was placed nearby. The incident sparked outrage among locals, leading to protests and calls for unity.

Pressure in Block 5 / Church sphere

Block 5.14: Openly selling or distributing Bibles (or other Christian materials) has been hindered. (3.00 points)

In strictly Muslim areas and outside the major cities, distributing Bibles or other Christian material would be hindered but this is not forbidden by law. It would be frowned upon as a deliberate act to raise the level of religious tensions in the country. Church teams have sometimes been prevented from distributing Christian material during outreach visits to more conservative religious areas.

Block 5.20: It has been risky for churches or Christian organizations to speak out against instigators of persecution. (3.00 points)

It can be risky for churches and Christian organizations in Lebanon to speak out against discrimination and oppression, especially because of the complex sectarian and political situation. Criticism of certain groups, such as Hezbollah, can lead to threats, libel campaigns or other serious consequences. For Christians from a Muslim background, it is especially dangerous because their persecutors are often family members. Although Lebanon has more freedom of expression than most neighboring countries, caution remains necessary. Therefore, many Christian organizations choose diplomacy and interfaith dialogue to raise issues.

Block 5.5: Churches have been hindered from organizing Christian activities outside church buildings. (2.50 points)

In big cities, churches are generally free to organize Christian activities outside church buildings. However, non-traditional Christian activity outside the big cities and Christian activities in Muslim areas are not likely to be accepted, especially if they might be considered denigratory to other religions. While evangelism is permitted, certain evangelistic approaches may fall foul of the penal code provisions. In practice, this is not perceived to be a significant area of restriction by most churches.

Block 5.7: Churches have been hindered from openly integrating converts. (2.50 points)

While conversion from one religion to another is legally permitted and there is no ban on integrating converts with an Islamic or Druze background into churches, some members of the church have come under attack by the convert's family or by the wider community if they have been involved in the conversion. Conversions are especially complicated because of the history of the civil war: Many Druze live in areas that once belonged to Christians and some Druze do not trust Christians because of the massacres committed against the Druze community during the civil war by right-wing armed Christian militias. There are similar stories between Muslims and Christians. Although the integration of converts is generally not problematic, most churches exercise some caution to avoid provoking a hostile public reaction and accusations. In mainly conservative, non-Christian areas, religious fanatics have tried to prevent converts from attending churches and in some places, such as Tripoli, they have occasionally succeeded.

Violence

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

1. Some incidents go unreported because the Christians involved choose not to speak about the hostility being faced.

Possible reasons for this may be:

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

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

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

3. The use of symbolic numbers:

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

Lebanon: 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)?	0	1
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?	10 *	8
6.3 How many Christians have been detained for faith-related reasons?	0	0
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	0
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)?	10 *	300
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?	10 *	10 *
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?	10 *	10 *
6.11 How many Christians have been forced to leave their homes or go into hiding in-country for faith-related reasons?	0	3
6.12 How many Christians have been forced to leave the country for faith-related reasons?	0	1

In the WWL 2025 reporting period:

- **Churches and public Christian property attacked:** Several churches suffered considerable damage during burglaries, which seems to be an increasing trend. The Lebanese Internal Security Forces (ISF) reported that in January 2024, a professional gang robbed and damaged 10 churches

in less than two weeks. The incidents occurred throughout the country but especially in Mount Lebanon. Some social media platforms have published articles suggesting that these crimes were attempts to incite sectarianism, as certain churches were damaged and religious symbols desecrated. Also, after January 2024, several reports emerged of churches being vandalized or broken into, with at least one case where anti-Christian and offensive messages were left behind.

In 2023 and 2024, several churches in Lebanon were damaged or destroyed in Israeli attacks. These were not included in the scoring because, apart from the fact that most attacks took place outside the WWL 2025 reporting period, no anti-Christian motives were reported. These attacks included:

- a) St. George Melkite Catholic Church in Derdghaya on 9 October 2024 (outside of the WWL 2025 reporting period), which killed eight people;
- b) the Church of the Annunciation in Alma al-Shaab and St. George's Church in Yaroun (respectively in January and November 2024);
- c) Israeli airstrikes and artillery shelling also hit areas in close proximity to other churches, such as St. George's Church in Jdeida, which caught fire from a nearby attack on 17 November 2024 (also outside the reporting period).

- **Christians attacked:** This mainly concerns physical violence and death threats against Christian converts from Islam, as well as Christians being injured during clashes between Christians and Muslims.
- **Christian properties attacked:** During clashes between Islamic mobs and Christian men, shops are often attacked. Reportedly, attackers often destroy shop-fronts as they leave the area. Also, as a result of the Hamas-Israel war in Gaza, Muslim youth moved into Christian-majority areas, protesting in front of the US Embassy in Beirut's predominantly Christian neighborhood and causing damage to at least 20 shops, houses and cars, among other properties.

5 Year trends

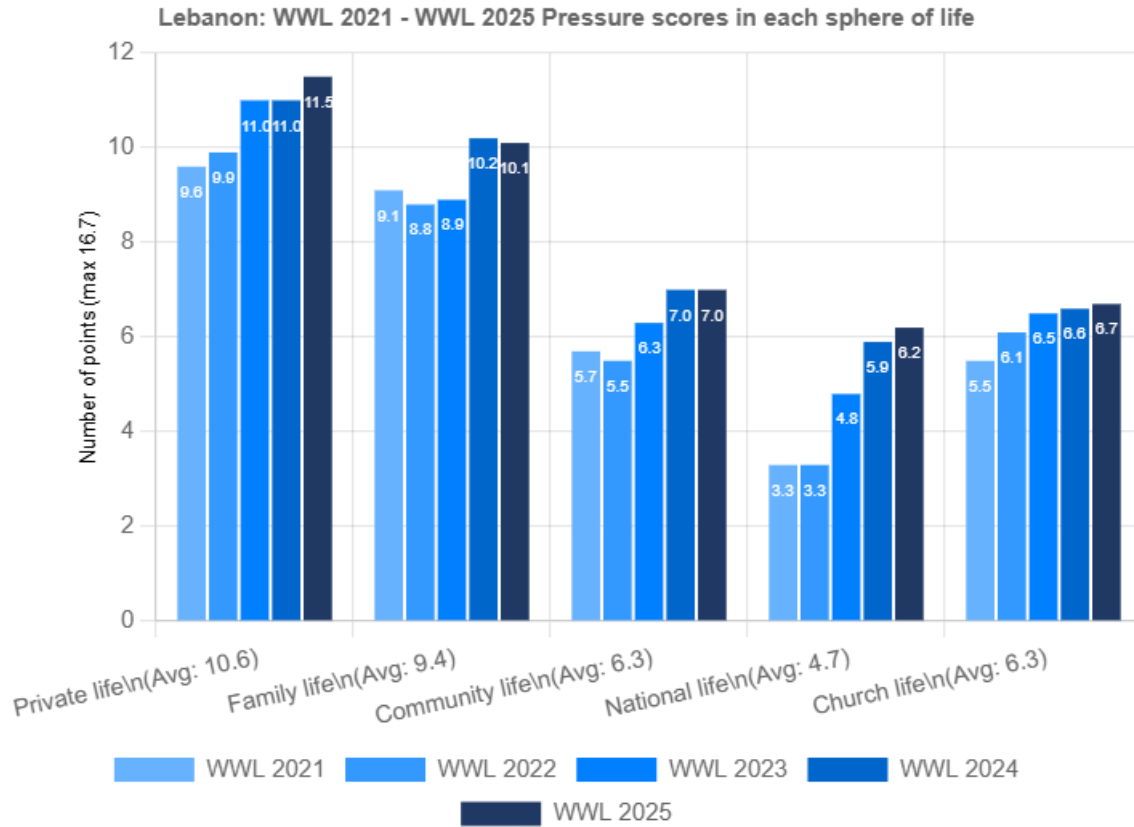
The following three charts show the levels of pressure and violence faced by Christians in the country over the last five WWL reporting periods.

5 Year trends: Average pressure

Lebanon: WWL 2021 - WWL 2025	Average pressure over 5 Spheres of life
2025	8.3
2024	8.1
2023	7.5
2022	6.7
2021	6.6

The average pressure on Christians has increased in each reporting period, partly due to the increased influence of Hezbollah and Islamic radicalism, especially in majority Islamic areas, impacting Christian converts from Islam. The increased availability of information also played a significant role, providing a clearer picture of the situation in regions under heightened oppression.

5 Year trends: Pressure in each sphere of life



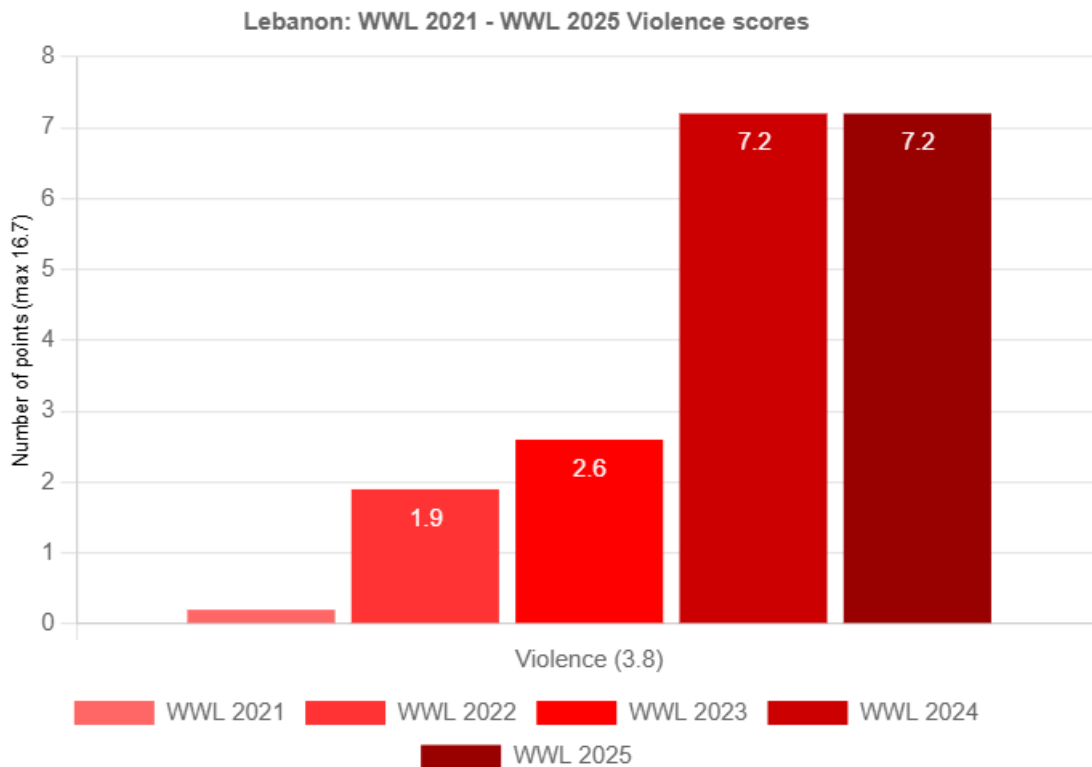
Pressure has been highest in the *Private* and *Family spheres of life*, a typical pattern where *Islamic oppression* and *Clan oppression* are the main Persecution engines. Across most spheres of Life, an overall increase in pressure is evident. It is striking that the overall increase is particularly high in the *Private, Family and National spheres of life*.

The pressure in *Private life* increased significantly in WWL 2023, mainly because more information became available about the situation in radical Islamic areas. In WWL 2025 the main reason for the rise in pressure in this sphere were increased levels of Islamic radicalism, especially in majority Islamic areas and mostly affecting Christian converts from Islam.

For the *Family sphere*, the increase in WWL 2023 was mainly due to technical (methodological) reasons: For instance, church-changers were no longer included in the calculation of the score for converts to align the scoring with the approach used for the rest of the region.

As for the increase in score for the *National sphere*, this was due both to more information becoming available and also to a real growth in pressure from the rise in the influence of Hezbollah, especially in the areas under their control.

5 Year trends: Violence against Christians



While scores for violence against Christians in WWL 2020-2023 ranged from very low to low on a largely upward trend, WWL 2024's score nearly tripled compared to the previous year's score. The main reason for this very high score of 7.2 points were the (at least) eight reported attacks on church property, which was unprecedented in post-civil war Lebanon. This trend continued in WWL 2025 with even a higher number of churches reportedly being attacked or broken into.

Gender-specific religious persecution / Female

Although some parts of Lebanese society are ostensibly very progressive, in more traditional sections of society women are more vulnerable than men due to persisting discriminatory attitudes, enduring patriarchal systems, and economic challenges - though there is little evidence that Christian women suffer disproportionately compared to other women. The country's economic crisis, worsening poverty and corruption, and political uncertainty has exacerbated inequality and reinforced potential routes of persecution for the most vulnerable in society.

For those who face pressure on account of their faith within family and community, women are likely to have fewer options for challenge or escape because of the greater degree of societal control they typically face. It should be noted that discriminatory attitudes can also be prevalent within Christian communities. The combination of instability and inequality has perpetuated a low-level hostility towards women that causes discrimination, violence, and in extreme cases, femicide. Domestic violence, including killings, in Lebanese households has increased ([The Guardian, 27 February 2023](#)).

Female converts who come from conservative Muslim backgrounds are sometimes forced into marrying non-Christians in the hopes that this would help them go back to their religious roots. This is

especially a risk among refugee communities. Lebanese women and girls who convert to Christianity may additionally face beatings to force them to renounce their faith. Sometimes, they are locked up in their homes until they renounce or run away. A country expert states: “I think the predicament of female believers from a Muslim background in Lebanon is worse than that of the males, as males generally have more freedom.” Christian women and girls with a Muslim background are particularly vulnerable to persecution for their faith from their Muslim family and local community. Female Syrian refugees also run the risk of sexual harassment and domestic violence.

While only a tiny minority, female converts in Lebanon face complex legal and personal restrictions that limit their freedom and decision-making. Various religion-based personal status laws are discriminatory against women and allow religious courts to control matters related to marriage, divorce and children. For example: Shia, Sunni and Druze religious laws generally state that, in the event of divorce, the child’s age should determine with whom they reside, rather than by what is best for the child ([HRW, 19 January 2015](#)). This means that custody over younger children is more likely to be given to their mothers, but Christian converts who have been divorced due to their faith are likely to lose custody of older children. For women legally able to obtain a divorce, concerns about having their children reside with them often make female converts unable or unwilling to pursue a divorce.

Furthermore, under all personal status laws, a woman can be found legally recalcitrant (disobedient) if she leaves the marital home or does not cohabit with her husband. This means that a court can restrict women’s access to divorce and deny them financial rights or custody of their children ([HRW, 18 July 2023](#)). This can trap Christian converts and prevent women who may wish to file for divorce from leaving the home. If a mother is Christian and her husband is Muslim, then their children will be registered as Muslim. In some instances, where the Muslim mother converts to Christianity and the father does not, the father might take the children away from the mother to raise them separately. Also, the involved families may press for a divorce on account of the wife's faith and it is very likely that custody of any children will be granted to the husband or to other Muslim family-members (regardless of the ages of the children). For this reason, some convert mothers have had to flee from their Muslim husbands with the children.

Gender-specific religious persecution / Male

Lebanon has continued to grapple with an acute economic and financial crisis that has impoverished most of the population since 2019. Lebanon is currently experiencing alarming levels of poverty and food insecurity caused by a decline in economic activity, political instability, and rising costs of living. This has created an environment of fragility and uncertainty for Christians living in the country, especially for family breadwinners ([IMF Press Release, 21 September 2022](#)); [International Crisis Group, 27 January 2022](#); [TRF News, 1 August 2022](#)).

Christians make up a rapidly declining proportion of the religious groups in the country. Over the years, Christians in Lebanon have faced multiple attacks as the country has increasingly become controlled by Hezbollah militants. In the past, there have also been suicide attacks by radicalized Muslims against Christians ([BBC News, 27 June 2016](#)).

Male converts (and Christian men in general) face high levels of physical violence from Muslim mobs. Many Muslim converts are subject to beating, humiliation or confinement by their parents.

Persecution of other religious minorities

Members of other religious groups are usually expatriates and may face severe violations of human rights based primarily on nationality and social status rather than on religion. There have been several documented cases of physical, sexual, legal and psychological abuse against domestic and some other migrant workers.

Although no religious minorities have been specifically targeted for severe persecution in Lebanon, groups such as Jehovah Witnesses, Jews and Bahai are not legally recognized as a religious community. To ensure that their marriage and other personal status documents remain legally valid, many choose to register as one of the recognized religious movements. For example, many adherents of Bahai register as Shiites for personal status purposes.

On 23 August 2023, the Bahai cemetery in the southern Lebanese town of Mashghara was vandalized.

The numerically very small Jewish community faces significant pressure, including continued government refusal to change the name of their officially recognized council from the Israelite Communal Council to Jewish Community Council. According to the [World Jewish Congress](#) (WJC, accessed 2 February 2025), Jews in Lebanon are to be found mostly in Beirut and are unable to openly practice their faith due to the current political situation.

In 2011, a parking lot, a petrol station and shops were built on the grounds of the Jewish cemetery in Tripoli without consultation. The US Department of State ([IRFR 2023 Lebanon](#)) provides the following update: "The Jewish Community Council's 2011 lawsuit against individuals who constructed buildings in the Jewish cemetery in Tripoli continued, pending additional analysis of the site initially ordered by a court in 2017. The lawsuit remained unresolved at year's end [2023]."

Trends Summary

1) Demographic changes; declining Christian influence

Due to the economic crisis, many Christians are leaving Lebanon, reducing their population and influence. This demographic shift risks eroding their privileges in national life and raises the likelihood of civil conflict, especially between Muslims and Christians. Tensions against Christians are currently increasing, especially because of their opposition to Hezbollah's policies, such as the conflict with Israel, while the displacement of predominantly Shiite populations from southern Lebanon to predominantly Christian areas is perceived to threaten the latter. Hezbollah families, with financial backing from Iran, already started purchasing properties in Christian areas reportedly under the threat of arms, gaining control as many Christians opt to leave the country. Finally, the number of churches and public Christian properties damaged by burglaries and vandalism increased.

2) Hezbollah's rise, followed by heavy losses

Hezbollah expanded its power through 2023-2024, while the Christian political scene stagnated. Since October 2023, the group's conflict with Israel has displaced thousands of Christians from southern Lebanon, threatening their historic presence. In September 2024, Israel's offensive [weakened Hezbollah](#), causing heavy losses including key leaders such as Hassan Nasrallah and forcing a retreat from key areas, significantly diminishing the group's military and political power (The Guardian, 3

March 2025). It is as yet unknown to what extent this shift has had an impact on the situation for Christians.

3) Collapse of basic services and growing poverty

The social dynamics in Lebanon are affected by increasing unemployment, social dislocation and a sense of insecurity among the population. The collapse of basic services and growing poverty have led to vulnerability and deprivation within society. The 14 month-long Israel-Hezbollah conflict exacerbated the humanitarian crisis, with severe shortages of aid and housing for many displaced Christian families.

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/>
- Block 2.12: Christian spouses of non-Christians have been excluded from the right or opportunity to claim custody of the children in divorce cases. (3.00 points): Human Rights Watch. - <https://www.hrw.org/report/2015/01/19/unequal-and-unprotected/womens-rights-under-lebanese-personal-status-laws>
- Gender-specific religious persecution Female description: (The Guardian, 27 February 2023). - <https://www.theguardian.com/global-development/2023/feb/27/lebanon-women-dying-partners-domestic-abuse>
- Gender-specific religious persecution Female description: (HRW, 19 January 2015) - <https://www.hrw.org/report/2015/01/19/unequal-and-unprotected/womens-rights-under-lebanese-personal-status-laws>
- Gender-specific religious persecution Female description: (HRW, 18 July 2023) - https://www.hrw.org/report/2023/07/18/trapped/how-male-guardianship-policies-restrict-womens-travel-and-mobility-middle#_ftn236
- Gender-specific religious persecution Male description: (IMF Press Release, 21 September 2022); - <https://www.imf.org/en/News/Articles/2022/09/21/pr22314-lebanon-imf-staff-concludes-visit-to-lebanon>
- Gender-specific religious persecution Male description: International Crisis Group, 27 January 2022 - <https://www.crisisgroup.org/middle-east-north-africa/east-mediterranean-mena/lebanon/lebanon-fending-threats-within-and-without>
- Gender-specific religious persecution Male description: TRF News, 1 August 2022). - <https://news.trust.org/item/20220729103557-qbwyl>
- Gender-specific religious persecution Male description: (BBC News, 27 June 2016) - <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-middle-east-36637378>
- Persecution of other religious minorities: World Jewish Congress - <http://www.worldjewishcongress.org/en/about/communities/LB>
- Persecution of other religious minorities: IRFR 2023 Lebanon - <https://www.state.gov/reports/2023-report-on-international-religious-freedom/lebanon/>
- Trends Summary: weakened Hezbollah - <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2025/mar/03/the-price-of-this-war-was-huge-hezbollah-left-reeling-after-conflict-with-israel>