Open Doors

WORLD WATCH RESEARCH 2020 GENDER-SPECIFIC RELIGIOUS PERSECUTION

Analysis and Implications



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In collaboration with Open Doors Advocacy.

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Key findings

The 2020 top gender-specific Pressure Points[1] Christians experience because of their faith

- Men: physical violence, economic harassment, and incarceration by government
- Women: sexual violence, forced marriage, and physical violence

The top three Pressure Points for each gender highlight how men and women are targeted according to the socio-cultural roles they are expected to play in public and private spheres. The status and roles of men and women in society determine which "actors" can exert pressure on Christians to recant their faith or punish them for having chosen a non-standard belief.

Violence is prevalent and gender-specific

The top Pressure Point for Christian men is physical violence (82 percent of countries mentioned it) and for Christian women, sexual violence (84 percent of countries), with, overall, more mentions of different types and levels of violence against women. Violent coercion continues to underpin all other forms of religious persecution; all other threats are ultimately underpinned by the ability to exert physical harm.

Sexual violence is used against Christian women across every region

Across countries hostile to Christianity in Asia, the Middle East and North Africa (hereafter MENA) and sub-Saharan Africa, sexual violence is often a crime of "opportunity" that takes advantage of the overall marginalization of the community. In Asia, Christian women are trafficked as "brides" to China because of the existing socio-economic vulnerabilities of communities; in the Arabian Peninsula, households quietly exploit Christian maids; in sub-Saharan Africa, raiding militias regularly attack women in Christian villages or abduct them for a life of sexual slavery.

Sexual violence leaves persecuted Christian women and girls alive to suffer lifelong isolation

In the most difficult countries in which to live as a Christian, women and girls experience persecution – at its peak – as a kind of invisible "living death" (rape, forced marriage, house arrest). In these instances, sexual violence is used both as a form of control and punishment.

Conscription into militias or military targets Christian men and boys (against their conscience) to counteract Christian values in youth

In 66 percent of countries, targeted conscription by extreme militia or highly restrictive military practices places young men in duties and experiences that run deeply counter to their Christian beliefs and values. This leaves them guilt-ridden, compromises their relational capacity, and diminishes the church's ability to lead in peace building. In Latin America, cartels coerce young men into violent service to vengeful leaders; in sub-Saharan Africa, militias conscript young men into jihadist groups.

Gender-specific religious persecution falls along a spectrum, from a "slow boil" of pressure to a "tight noose" of violence

Physical violence for men and forced marriage for women remain consistently high across all three WWL categories of persecution. In the lower category, the wielding of economic pressures varies according to the means of revenue acquisition, whereas in the Extreme category, brutal violence equates to death for men and, in 100 percent of countries in the study, sexual violence for women and girls.

The church's awareness and response could preserve youth for the future

Church communities may not be able to stop every form of repression aimed at curtailing their freedom of religion, but they can take note of the strategies used against them – to create maximum damage – that depend on predictable, societally shaped responses to the violence. Armed with this knowledge, Christian leaders will be able to take steps to protect their youth, especially from the Pressure Points that seek to permanently estrange the youth from their communities.

[1] Gender-specific religious persecution Pressure Points include aspects of both pressure and violence, which are analyzed separately in standard WWL methodology and literature.

1. Introduction

The study of gender-specific religious persecution (GSRP) focuses on the overlay between a person's gender vulnerabilities in a given society and their vulnerabilities as a member of a religious minority. This report studies global patterns for Christian men and women across the 50 countries on the 2020 *World Watch List*, and again reinforces that persecution is gender specific. Even when the situation is difficult for all members of a given Christian community, the situation of women is often worse because of their additional gender-based vulnerabilities.

Humanity has a long history of creating fault lines of division according to philosophical or hierarchal identifiers. Despite the many successes of those who have fought to protect the rights of all people, religious persecution and gender inequality persist. For Christians under pressure for their faith, there is all too often an accumulation of these human-rights infringements leading to an exponential increase in repression of individual freedoms.

Open Doors' World Watch Research team (WWR) investigates religious persecution facing Christians worldwide, resulting in the *World Watch List* of the 50 most difficult countries for the year. Both men and women experience various forms of hostility aimed at either punishing them for their choice of Christian religion or at coercing them to abandon their choice.

2020 is the third year of GSRP reporting. The 2020 GSRP report builds on the findings of 2018 and 2019, which are foundational to understanding the gender-specific experience of religious persecution. When segregating WWR data by gender, the 2020 results continue to show that men and women are targeted by different means and to varying degrees in nearly all the countries studied.

This divergent experience of persecution between men and women is directly related to the gender-based expectations and/or inequities that are commonplace in a given country. The UN Special Rapporteur on Freedom of Religion or Belief noted in his August 2013 report, "Discrimination based on stereotypical roles of men and women is one of the most widespread human rights violations worldwide. It can assume cruel forms and deprives many women and girls of their rights to life, freedom and respect for human dignity."[2] Additionally, "Gender stereotypes and stereotypical pictures of believers often exist in tandem, a problem disproportionately affecting women from religious minorities."[3]

Gender-specific characteristics of persecution

In the 2018 WWR analysis of gender-specific religious persecution, religious persecution faced by Christian men globally was characterized as focused, severe, and visible. In contrast, religious persecution endured by Christian women globally can be characterized as being complex, violent, and hidden.

When cataloguing incidents and qualitative descriptions of gender-specific persecution, the greatest emphasis in the 2020 results was given to violence: physical violence targeting men and sexual violence against women. Researchers conducted a deeper investigation into different forms of violence affecting each gender, and looking specifically at sexual violence according to regional variations. Additionally, when looking at GSRP through the lens of persecution categories of severity, new insights into gender-specific experiences are noted. Together, these findings have implications for church and community stability. The exploitation of socio-cultural vulnerabilities disproportionately affects more Christian women than Christian men in their expression of faith. However, there are avenues potentially available to Christian communities who otherwise feel bereft of choices or agency in their situation. Finally, this report concludes with some suggested avenues of response for persons of influence in spiritual positions and recommendations for policymakers.



[2] *Elimination of all forms of religious intolerance*. United Nations General Assembly, August 7, 2013, pp.10-11, <https://www.ohchr.org/Documents/Issues/Religion/A.68.290.pdf> [Accessed January 31, 2020].

[3] *ibid*. p.5

2. Scope and methodology

Scope

This report seeks to direct the attention of influencers, from passionate individuals to powerful inter-governmental agencies, towards the abuses that are characteristic of the experience of men and women where their freedom to practice Christianity is harshly constrained. It is the position of this report that these gender-specific abuses are largely the result of exploiting existing gender inequities. The resulting use of gender injustice as a means of religious persecution is highly effective because gender injustice has been normalized by the surrounding society and, in some cases, assimilated by the religious community being targeted. Although this report focuses on the experience of Christian men and women, researchers do not believe that the dynamics herewith are unique to Christianity.

Methodology

Data was gathered for the 50 countries appearing in the *World Watch List* (WWL) 2020[4] for the reporting period November 1, 2018 to October 31, 2019. Data was also gathered for 23 additional World Watch countries. WWL data includes quantitative data of incidents occurring during this period, along with a wealth of qualitative data. Using data collected as a part of the WWL 2020 process, country-specific researchers provided qualitative data which captured spontaneously cited characteristics, tactics, and dynamics of religious persecution specific to either men or women. These were coded and analyzed through a refined framework of 30 Pressure Points[5] to allow for quantitative analysis by country. These Pressure Point categories provide a means to establish the frequency with which a particular form of pressure is associated with each gender. It also captures per tactic, via the qualitative descriptions, variations across countries in how this pressure is brought to bear in different contexts. The categories and the resulting statistics and charts are a preliminary means of describing the overall trends in patterns and dynamics. In 2020, researchers used a greater breadth of information from the WWL data than previous years. To make accurate comparison to the 2019 GSRP report, the same method and breadth of data was used retrospectively for WWL 2019; thus, augmented 2019 figures are used for comparison in this report. In future years, with more advanced elicitation methods, it will be possible to further refine our understanding of gender-specific religious persecution.

Sources

This report relies upon input to open-ended questions and the spontaneous responses of experts, caregivers, church leaders and focus groups, as well as some first-person testimony.

Limitations

Qualitative research is, by nature, limited, and the open-ended feedback from respondents allows for subjectivity that can limit the quality of the response and ease with which it can be coded. Further, an ever-present limitation of gender-specific information stems from stigma and feelings of shame surrounding gender-based violence. For many, it is unspeakably difficult or dangerous to report sexual violence. Not only is it often too risky for survivors to come forward, but such interviews can present grave dangers to mental health by re-traumatizing victims. This report relies mainly upon "first-responders" in the local caregiver community to provide scope of the phenomena being investigated, rather than on direct survivor testimony.

[4] The latest update of WWL Methodology together with various other background documents can be found on the World Watch List Documentation page of the Open Doors Analytical website: <http://opendoorsanalytical.org/world-watch-list-documentation/> [password: freedom].

[5] See Appendix A for Definitions and Appendix B for Changes to 2020 methodology.

3. Ranking of 2020 gender-specific Pressure Points

The top three Pressure Points of gender-specific religious persecution continue to display the distinctions – widespread in the top 50 WWL 2020 countries – between the socio-cultural roles that genders are expected to play, and their corresponding delineation between public and private spheres. The roles and status of men and women in society regularly determine which actors have agency over their lives. These are often those on whom they are dependent. This dependency allows those with greater agency to exert pressure on individuals to recant their Christian faith or punish them for having chosen a minority religious belief.

The Pressure Points for men reflect their responsibilities to family or community, as protector and provider. The Pressure Points that most frequently target women and girls reflect the strong association of sexual purity with the honor of their family or community. In a sense, this effectively identifies the areas of greatest "value" placed on men and women because of the typical roles each fulfills in their society.

One of the risks of such strongly demarcated roles, however, is that the loss of a role in a household cannot easily be filled by another individual. If such roles are viewed as hard to replace within a Christian family, then targeting a member according to their role devalues their own idea of self-worth and worth within their community. Furthermore, it creates survival and stability challenges in which family adaptations to accommodate the loss are viewed negatively.

This, in turn, compromises the growth and strength of the family's entire faith community.



In San Juan Ozolotepec, Mexico, Alonso was beaten, jailed, and his house and car was destroyed by a mob of locals, encouraged by community/tribal leaders.

a) 2020 top Pressure Points facing Christian men and boys

Using data from all 50 WWL countries, researchers used both incident reports and open-ended questions such as, "To which forms of persecution are men and boys particularly subject?" to capture the most common Pressure Points.

In the WWL 2020 year, physical violence eclipsed economic harassment as the primary means of characteristic persecution used against men. 2020 figures are eight percent higher, reflecting a slight increase in countries reporting physical violence against Christian men.

Men Top 50			
Rank	**Pressure Point**	**2020**	**Augmented 2019**
1st	Violence - physical	82%	74%
Joint 2nd	Economic harassment via work/job/business	66%	72%
Joint 2nd	Incarceration by government	66%	52%
4th	Violence - psychological	56%	44%
Joint 5th	Military/milita conscription service/against conscription service	40%	36%
Joint 5th	Forced to flee town/country	40%	20%

Men primarily targeted outside of the home/formal structures		
	Men	**Women**
Economic harassment via work/job/business	66%	26%
Incarceration by government	66%	26%
Military/milita conscription	40%	-
False charges	18%	4%

The next most common Pressure Points in the WWL 2020 results for men are economic harassment (via work) and government incarceration, reflecting societal traditions that place much of male life within the public sphere. (The reported incidence for women of these two is dramatically

lower.) Economic harassment continues to be reported by approximately two-thirds of the WWL top 50 countries. As men are typically the breadwinners, removing or limiting a man's ability to support his family has a detrimental impact on an entire Christian household's ability to survive. Where present, this Pressure Point is widely used to pressure the Christian community. Government incarceration is reported as frequently as economic harassment as a characteristic of persecution facing men. However, data suggests that it probably does not result in the same number of incidents as economic harassment. Church leaders and those preaching in public are the most common targets of government incarceration. However, while it affects fewer individuals directly, making an example of the church leader has a broad dissuasive effect on the entire congregation.

b) 2020 top Pressure Points facing Christian women and girls

Inquiring of all 50 WWL countries as to the types of persecution that targeted women in WWL 2020, and "forms of persecution [to which] women and girls [are] particularly subject," the most common Pressure Points used against women were sexual violence and forced marriage. This combination reinforces the observation that sexual violence continues to be the most prevalent means of exerting power and control over women, whether inside or outside the formal structure of marriage. Closely linked to a society's concept of dishonor, sexual violence is used intentionally to dishonor the Christian woman and, consequently, her family and community. While forced marriage gives an appearance of respectability, when it is against the wishes of the Christian woman, it becomes merely a contract for sexual violence from which she cannot escape and in which other forms of violence and pressure are exerted. The second major goal and ensuing impact of the use of forced marriage is that it prevents the young woman from increasing the population of the Christian community and participating in healthy family life in the religion of her choice. This is seen across regions. For example, in some Latin American countries, in the context of Clan and Ethnic Antagonism or Organized Corruption and Crime as persecution engines, women are forced to marry in order to prevent the spreading of the Christian faith among the community. This is also a way of punishing the Christian family to which she belongs.

In comparison with 2019 WWL figures, in WWL 2020 the percentage of countries reporting sexual violence as a specific means of targeting Christian women appears to be significantly higher.[6] The 2020 data reveals that the combined Pressure Point of sexual violence and rape affected women in 84 percent of the top 50 countries, of which 60 percent explicitly reported rape as characteristic of a Christian woman/girl's experience of persecution.

The next most common Pressure Points are physical violence and forced divorce. The prevalence of both of these mirrors exactly the WWL 2019 data. Forced marriage remains one of the most regularly reported means of putting pressure on Christian women, yet it also remains largely invisible. While 84 percent of the top 50 WWL countries cite forced marriage as a characteristic means of persecuting Christian women and girls, only 40 percent of those same countries could trace verifiable incidents in 2020.

Women Top 50			
Rank	**Pressure Point**	**2020**	**Augmented 2019**
Joint 1st	Combined sexual violence	84%	88%
Joint 1st	Forced marriage	84%	76%
Joint 3rd	Violence - physical	64%	62%
Joint 3rd	Forced divorce	64%	60%
5th	Incarceration by family (house arrest)	60%	62%

Physical violence is a newcomer to the top three Pressure Points for women; instances have been reported in nearly two-thirds of the top 50 WWL countries. Similar augmented analysis of WWL 2019 data also revealed that physical violence against women was reported in 62 percent of the top 50 countries. 2020 figures corroborate this figure, indicating a minor rise to 64 percent.[7]

In research into gender-specific violence, effort is being made not to hide gender-based violence behind the cloak of marriage. Thus, instead of counting violence as domestic, we are counting it as physical violence. Further analysis of the use of sexual violence and forced marriage are included below in "Investigating violence against women and girls."



Charity was a participant of a trauma healing programme for survivors of sexual violence in 2018. She was held captive by Boko Haram for three years, as an 'infidel' and was forcibly married to a fighter. She became pregnant and gave birth to a baby girl.

[6] The preponderance of violence in the WWL 2020 findings reflects two factors: improved reporting and modifications to the categories for coding sexual violence. Instead of coding oblique mentions of sexual violence and specific mentions of rape as separate categories, the two now appear in a single category, reflecting more fully the universality of this tactic. Re-evaluation of the 2019 data using the aggregated category shows, from the 2019 to 2020 reporting periods, the effective increase in the use of sexual violence is just two percent.

[7] This small rise could be partially accounted for by the removal of the 2019 Pressure Point "Violence – domestic," which was previously used for various forms of assault within the home, which in this year were categorized under "Violence – physical."

4. Focus on violence: prevalent and gender-specific

When the religious persecution experience is viewed through a gender lens of Pressure Points, violence is often the pinnacle of pressure applied to a community for what are perceived as "aberrant" religious practices. The follow through on more subtle signals of discrimination (such as "shunning") with outright violence acts as a deterrent to those who might be inclined to ignore intimidation and threats.

a) Prevalence of violence

Across the 50 WWL countries, violence accounts for the top Pressure Point used to systematically persecute men and women for their faith. For men and boys, physical violence (mentioned by 82 percent of countries) is considered the most characteristic of their experience; for women and girls, sexual violence (mentioned by 84 percent of countries) is the most pervasive risk.

Men Top 50: Violence PPs Close Lens.		% of 50
1	Violence - Physical	82%
2	Violence - Psychological	56%
3	Violence - Verbal	38%
4	Violence - Death	38%
5	Violence - Sexual (combined)	4%

This 2020 gender-specific religious persecution analysis differentiates between five categories of violence: deadly violence, physical violence, psychological violence, sexual violence (including mentions of rape) and verbal violence. The 2018 and 2019 preliminary studies found overall mention of forms of violence significantly more prevalent for women than men. Again in 2020, there continue to be identified more mentions of violence against women when combining all categories of violence. However, with the broader access to data in 2020, research now better reveals the reality of the prevalence of violence also facing Christian men. When assessing the overall persecution experience of Christian women, women continue to face more violence across all categories, in part, because of the frequency of sexual violence in the descriptors for their experience of religious persecution.

Therefore, although violence is a pervasive threat (or part of the experience) of both persecuted men and women), it does not typically take the same form. Nonetheless, it must be recognized that sexual violence facing Christian men is suspiciously low, indicating a likely under-reporting of this form of violence, which researchers suspect is linked to the shame associated with it. However, given typical sociological factors, WWL researchers would still expect the real frequency of sexual violence against men to be significantly lower than for women.

Women Top 50: Violence PPs Close Lens.		% of 50
1	Violence - Sexual (combined)	84%
2	Violence - Physical	64%
3	Violence - Verbal	46%
4	Violence - Psychological	40%
5	Violence - Death	34%

b) Investigating violence against men and boys

An analysis of physical violence by region across all 73 countries reveals that men and boys are most likely to report physical persecution in Latin American and Asian countries. Fewer instances are reported in the Middle East, North Africa and sub-Saharan Africa. The average of 82 percent, however, indicates that this tactic of harming Christian men and boys is significant and occurs globally.

i) Physical violence has many perpetrators

Physical assaults of men and boys come from a variety of sources: militias, radicals within the local community, and state actors. They are commonly correlated with the Pressure Point "incarceration by government." (Of the 40 countries where physical violence was reported, 28 also mentioned government incarceration.) Sometimes it is state agents who are perpetrators of violence toward Christian men. Although Christian arrests are rare in Morocco, a report from that country on the beatings of three men captures other agents of physical persecution, "A young man was beaten by an Islamic group. The second was beaten and expelled by his family. The third was beaten by the authorities for possessing the Bible during interrogation."

As previous years corroborate, church leaders are particularly vulnerable to physical harm. Being a pastor in India has been described as "one of the riskiest vocations in the country today." An expert explains, "The reason behind this is that Hindu radicals will focus their attacks on church leaders to set an example for the other believers, and that they are seen as being the main actors in the conversion propaganda." In this sense, physical violence is used as punishment and

Profile of Christian men in India

Despite legal protection, Christian men and leaders in India found talking about Christianity, or choosing to adhere to the Christian faith, are subjected to violence in many forms. Men and boys are seen as physically strong, and so the persecution of Christian men targets their physical strength, as well as – for older men – their position as decision-maker in the family and head of the household. Persecution includes various forms of beating and emotional torture – such as being forced to watch torture carried out on family members.

Another prevalent and effective form of persecution in India is social exclusion, including social boycott, family boycott, opposition from the whole village against one person or a few people, expulsion from the village, exclusion from seats in councils/access to government schemes, and exclusion from government projects and benefits. Men are the main breadwinners, and, because of their Christian faith, some will face expulsion from their job, transfer to faraway places, increased workloads and/or client boycotts. Economic deprivation also takes the form of denial of legal inheritance.

False charges are often used as a form of persecution, such as accusations of attempting to convert Hindus, of molestation or rape of women, or denigration of Hindu gods and goddesses. These charges are usually brought against pastors and preachers (currently a highly risky vocation).

Imprisonment of Christians carries a stigma which falls on their family as well. Pastors' families too are targeted, because to set an example, Hindu radicals will focus their attacks on church leaders.

deterrence to other Christians from spreading Christianity.

Furthermore, in WWL 2020 data, nearly half of the countries that reported instances of physical harm paired it with mention of death as the ultimate violence that men and boys suffered for being a Christian. 63 percent of affected countries also reported instances of psychological violence, indicating how fear and threats of harm are also a significant tool in this dynamic.

ii) Forced participation in violence against conscience

In counting the types of violent Pressure Points facing Christian men and boys, there is an additional form of violence that can be called a type of forced violence: military/militia conscription against conscience. In some countries, this form of forced conscription could include, as for Latin America, enlistment in criminal or revolutionary groups.[8] Here cartels are known to coerce young men into violent service to vengeful leaders; religious objections are seen as disloyalty to the cartel leader and will not be tolerated.

As with other Pressure Points that might be broadly applied to a population but are used to the further detriment of a minority, so persecution-by-militia/military conscription may not seem obvious to all audiences. A recurring geopolitical phenomenon is to politicize minority communities for gain in conflict situations. However, it is in fact the regular practice of conscripting the youth for militia or military service that provides a normative background for the targeting of young Christian men.

Those familiar with the dynamics surrounding the (often forcible) recruitment and training of child soldiers will recognize, however, that the highly controlled environment of any military/militia includes deep indoctrination of thought, trained behaviors and mandatory participation in specific



Sumit became a Christian after his son was healed when a believer prayed for him. However, after the villagers heard that Sumit had been baptised, they came and beat him, and Sumit and his family were forced to flee their home. They are now living in a small hut in the jungle. Open Doors local partners are supporting them with practical support including food and warm clothes. *Name changed for security reasons.*

[8] In the Latin American context, this is reported as including ELN, FARC, paramilitaries, cartel, etc.

forms of armed or violent conflict. When the militia/military in question, which has enrolled a teenager or young man under duress, is opposed to that individual's Christian faith, then any initiative of that young person to remain faithful to their values or beliefs will be harshly quashed. To compel the young man to participate in activities that run deeply counter to his beliefs is to destroy his soul, the most extreme form is to force him to fight against another Christian population. It is no wonder, therefore, that 33 of the 50 WWL countries – when naming persecution particularly facing Christian men and boys – list military or militia conscription (Persecution categories – top GSRP characteristics). This deliberate form of control favored for co-opting the youth of a minority population during a large period of a young man's life, should he survive it, is akin to a living death, albeit for potentially a limited time.

In sub-Saharan Africa, militias regularly conscript young men (of various religious backgrounds) into jihadist groups. It would be naïve when studying this to ignore the extent to which these youthful bodies are viewed as resources to fuel the militia/military needs. These youths are still at an age when their strength and malleability can be turned to serve the aims of their captors and deprive their home populations of those same resources of strength and character.

Finally, indoctrination of thought or control of loyalty is not always the form of persecution being used against Christians in military contexts; in other cases, Christians are allowed to identify as such, but they face discrimination within their years of mandatory military service because of their chosen religion.

iii) Deadly violence decreasing across regions

In 2018 and 2019, WWL researchers were struck by the severity of violence facing Christian men and boys – to the point of death. Examples of deadly violence continue to have a slightly greater impact upon Christian men and boys in WWL 2020.[9]

c) Investigating violence against women and girls

Not all attacks on Christian women are well publicized like the kidnappings and sexual slavery of women such as Leah Sharibu and other victims of Boko Haram.[10] Across the top 50 WWL countries, the greatest pervasive threat or experience of violence facing Christian women and girls is sexual violence, and it is hidden from view whenever possible. Hidden gender-based violence is a dynamic common to the vulnerability of many women and girls in the countries of study. However, this vulnerability is used to persecute a woman or girl because of her identification with the Christian faith. This section investigates the reasons for such hiddenness first, and then further investigates the use of sexual violence across global regions. Although there is not a large enough number of countries in the Latin America region to comment statistically on this region separately in the same way, it should be noted that similar gender-specific trends occur as in the general findings.

i) Hidden from view

Hidden within patriarchal society

In most patriarchal societies, women are either restricted from the public sphere or there is greater legal impunity for crimes against them. In societies where women of the higher classes stay within the home, it is much more dangerous for a woman to walk down the street than a man. It is often women of low status, due to poverty, class, or religious affiliation, who take public transportation or walk between home and work. Women are usually expected to operate invisibly within the public sphere. Their public presence could be regarded as a provocation. Christian women are more vulnerable as a result of being both a part of a minority religious community and female. The result of such compounded vulnerability is captured by figures for sexual violence (84 percent of WWL 2020 top 50 countries) and physical violence (64 percent of WWL 2020 top 50 countries). This also reflects attacks on girls walking to school and women getting water, or working in fields or even using toilets outside the home. Robust research of such violence is often inhibited by several patriarchal barriers, not the least of which stems from strong beliefs that it is the responsibility of men[11] to provide for the physical safety of women. Women are likely to hide details of such violence from their patriarch so as not dishonor the family. If she shares with the patriarch, he will often advise keeping quiet about such attacks, as revealing this information can bring further hardship upon the family standing within the community, (such as economic difficulty or the ability to access community resources). Men are also reticent to expose such violence to avoid blame of the community that they failed in their duty to protect.



Sashita from Nepal's husband left her and their two children when she embraced Christianity. With no one to support their livelihood, Sashita lived a difficult life taking care of two children and meeting the family needs all by herself. Open Doors partners helped support her livelihood by providing her a buffalo and calf.

[9] Reported in WWL 2020: *Compilation of all Main Documents*, World Watch Research, Revised January 15, 2020, <http://opendoorsanalytical.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/01/WWL-2020-Compilation-of-main-documents.pdf> [Accessed Jan 31, 2020].

[10] *Leah Sharibu's mother pleads with Nigerian president as kidnappers threaten to kill daughter*, World Watch Monitor, October 14, 2018, <https://www.worldwatchmonitor.org/2018/10/leah-sharibus-mother-pleads-to-nigerian-president-as-kidnappers-threaten-to-kill-leah/> [Accessed 3rd Feb 2020].

[11] "In patriarchal societies, the activities of girls and women are closely monitored. The maintenance of a woman's virginity and 'sexual purity' are considered to be the responsibility of male relatives – first her father and brothers and then her husband." Dailey, J. and Singh R. Honor killing, Encyclopedia Britannica, https://www.britannica.com/topic/honor-killing accessed January 27, 2020.

Hidden within their homes

For Christian women or girls who are the only converts within their household, the domestic sphere is not a place of refuge from persecution, but the hidden location for the family to apply pressure and violence to "correct" their choice of religion. The stark difference between the reported experiences of Christian women and men relating to family status, custody of their children and the ability of the family to incarcerate a woman or girl within her own home shows the precarious domestic situation for women and girls who are the lone Christians within their household.

This hiddenness within the home correlates with the fact that psychological violence is normally a pre-cursor to physical violence for women who convert to Christianity. As one expert from Nepal described, "Women and girls are also subjected to physical violence, but it comes gradually after emotional and mental torture. In an initial phase, they are emotionally tortured by the immediate family members i.e. husband, in-laws, parents, etc. Gradually, the mental and physical torture starts to take place."

Domestic situation not a secure place for women – especially converts

Pressure Point	Women	Men
Denied custody of children	34%	8%
Denied legal ability to marry Christian	12%	2%
Forced divorce	64%	8%
Forced marriage	84%	-
Incarceration by family (house arrest)	60%	14%
Targeted seduction	8%	-

Hidden within data collection

When collecting data, most countries' respondents mentioned the use of sexual violence as a form of persecution to which women and girls are particularly subject. However, in counting known incidents of sexual violence in 2020, sexual violence was not officially recorded with the same frequency as sources indicated it was happening.

This is consistent with Open Doors' internal research findings when studying Christian women's experience between 2016-2018. This research concluded that the persecution of Christian women is often hidden behind the more visible persecution experienced by men, which is more easily monitored and recorded. On the other hand, persecution which is hidden within families and the wider community is less easily monitored and reported. Furthermore, persecuted women often do not report such persecution for fear of public announcement bringing dishonor to their families and/or reprisal.

Hidden within Conflict Zone

Ten of the 50 countries studied for the WWL 2020 fall on the Conflict Tracker list of mapped countries.[12] It is worth noting that ten countries reported the use of sexual violence against women as a characteristic Pressure Point of religious persecution. A correlation between war and sexual violence is well acknowledged, and according to a report by the UN, victims of conflict-related sexual violence are frequently, "an actual or perceived member of a persecuted political, ethnic or religious minority."[13] Detailing persecution for women in Syria, one expert shared that, "in a conflict in which sexual violence against women has become normalized through Islamists' re-introduction of female slavery, women were much more affected by such violent acts." This very situation of ambient violence, however, is a perfect camouflage for targeted violence against a religious minority. Rape as a weapon of war can be wielded against the unwanted minority population against whom a micro war is effectively being waged in the midst of the greater conflict.

ii) Sexual violence across regions

Pictures of sexual violence in Asia

Asia is the region that sees the strongest correlation between the Pressure Points of sexual violence[14] and abduction. These are often crimes of "opportunity" – responding to country-specific policies or practices that influence how brides are acquired – that take advantage of the overall marginalization and existing values of the Christian religious community.

In countries neighboring China, Christians are caught in webs of human trafficking.[15] China's one-child policy is notorious for leaving a gender imbalance. This is making it difficult to find a bride to provide a family for the next generation to continue the family name. The ramification of this policy now interacts with the vulnerability of Christian communities in places such as Myanmar. There, vulnerable Christian communities are preyed upon by honorable-sounding offers of marriage for their young women. These women are being trafficked as "brides" into China.[16] In a country in Asia, experts reported that a major prostitution ring smuggling Christian girls to China for fake marriages has been busted.[17] Illegal matchmaking centers have lured poor Asian girls, especially Christian girls, to marry Chinese men who were visiting or working in Asia. As one WWR expert shared, "They presented fake documents of Chinese

[12] *Global Conflict Tracker*, Council on Foreign Relations, <https://www.cfr.org/interactive/global-conflict-tracker?category=us> [Accessed February 8, 2020].

[13] *Report of the Secretary-General on Conflict-Related Sexual Violence*, United Nations, 15th April 2017, S/2017/249, p13, <https://www.un.org/en/events/elimination-of-sexual-violence-in-conflict/pdf/1494280398.pdf> [Accessed 12th Feb 2020].

[14] Countries in Asia reporting the characteristic use of sexual violence include: Afghanistan; Bangladesh; Bhutan; China; India; Kyrgyzstan; Laos; Malaysia; Maldives; Myanmar; Nepal; North Korea; Pakistan; Russian Federation; Turkmenistan; Sri Lanka; Uzbekistan and Vietnam. [Not mentioned: Azerbaijan; Brunei; Indonesia, Tajikistan and Kazakhstan].

[15] *Bride Trafficking to China Spreads Across Asia*, Human Rights Watch, November 3, 2019, <https://www.hrw.org/news/2019/11/03/bride-trafficking-china-spreads-across-asia> [Accessed January 31, 2020].

[16] *629 Pakistani Girls Trafficked to China as Brides*, Christianity Today, December 4, 2019, <https://www.christianitytoday.com/news/2019/december/pakistan-christian-girls-trafficked-brides-china.html> [Accessed January 31, 2020].

[17] *Pakistan busts prostitution ring that sent young women to China*, Reuters, May 6, 2019, <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-pakistan-china/pakistan-busts-prostitution-ring-that-sent-young-women-to-china-idUSKCN1SC1HQ> [Accessed January 31, 2020].

men showing them either as Christians or Muslims. They then find poor girls mainly from the Christian community to marry them by offering money and promises of a 'good life'. However, many girls reportedly became victims of human trafficking and were forced into prostitution."

Profile of Christian women in Myanmar

Christians feel they are viewed as "second-class citizens" across Myanmar, without the same legal protection and rights as the Buddhist majority. According to the Buddhist Women Special Marriage Law introduced in 2015, a non-Buddhist husband must respect his wife's practice of Buddhism. No such protection apples for Christians, however. Consequently, Christian women married to non-Christian men are pressured into following the husband's religion.

The law, which was mainly aimed at the Muslim minority, also acts as a hindrance to women converts from a Buddhist background (especially secret converts) as they are still counted as Buddhists and treated as such. Within mixed-religion marriages, if the daughter decides to be a Christian, the non-Christian father can arrange for her to be married to a Buddhist. The mother has no power to prevent this, nor does her daughter. Youth and female converts are also vulnerable to house arrest, as they are seen to be the least powerful within the family context. This restricts their access to social community, including Christian fellowship.

Women, especially when belonging to ethnic or religious minorities, are at the mercy of military personnel, and are vulnerable to assault. Unconfirmed reports indicate that military men are encouraged to marry Christian women and convert them to Buddhism, incentivized by the promise of money or a promotion in rank. Some women report feeling resigned to this fate and see entering such marriages as a way to escape dire poverty and insecurity.

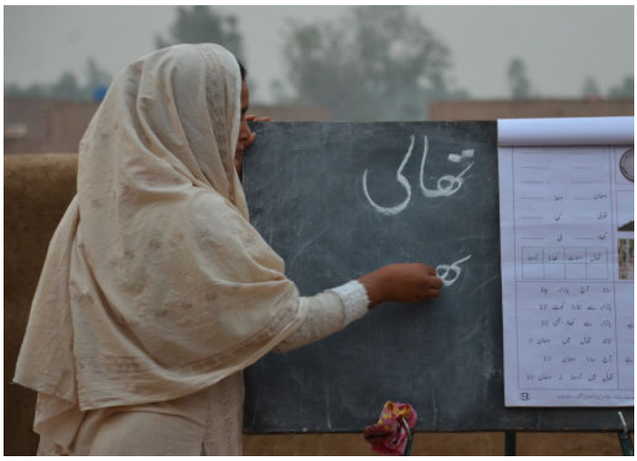
Reports also indicate that Christian women in Kachin State are being trafficked to China to become 'brides', where they are raped with the aim of impregnating them. "Some 130,000 Kachin, more than 90 percent of whom are Christian have been displaced within their state" in the latter half of 2018, according to the Wall Street Journal reporting in December 2018.

Central Asian countries are heavily represented among the list of countries reporting abduction. It is often female converts to Christianity from more rural, conservative areas who are abducted and forcibly married to Muslim men.[18] A WWR expert shared that in Kyrgyzstan, a country infamous for this issue, there is a, "long tradition of bride-stealing – female converts in conservative regions run the risk of being kidnapped and married off to Muslims. This happens most frequently in the countryside. This kind of pressure does not come from the state, but having said that, local councils will allow this to happen. So, in a sense they cooperate.

In Bhutan, the infamous Pchiru Shelni festival (more commonly known as "night hunting") continues to take place, a traditional "courtship" custom that is still practiced in some regions, in which men enter a girl's bedroom at night to engage in sexual activities.[19] While not directly faith-specific, it serves as an example of customs that might normalize sexual violence against Christian women who have fewer support systems than women of the majority religion in that region.

Within Asia, there are other country-specific contexts that account for sexual violence against women. In Afghanistan, for example, it commonly occurs within the context of war. In North Korea, instances of rape are reported to occur "daily" within concentration camps. In China, prison officers have allegedly raped women. The country that had the greatest number of references to sexual violence was India, reflecting a rise in the persecution of Christians observed in a recent report. [20]

Pressure Points in Asia	Women	Men
Violence - Sexual (including rape)	78%	9%
Forced marriage	78%	0%
Violence - Physical	61%	96%
Abduction	57%	30%
Economic harassment via business, job or work access	26%	65%
Incarceration by government	35%	65%



Aroona from Asia did not go to traditional school until she was 16. She dropped out of school when she was 6 and her mother needed her to help take care of the baby while she cleaned homes to bring in an income. *Name changed for security reasons.*

[18] "Bride Kidnapping" has been reported across Central Asia, particularly Kyrgyzstan. See: *Call to Action: Stop Bride Kidnapping.* https://www.eurasia.undp.org/content/rbec/en/home/blog/2015/2/26/A-Call-to-Action-Stop-Bride-Kidnapping-.html> [Accessed January 31, 2020].

[19] Yangden, T., Pchiru Shelni: A Sexual Practice in Bhutan, University of Wollongong, 2015. < https://ro.uow.edu.au/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=5631&context=theses> [Accessed February 3, 2020].

[20] *"We're Indians too,"* Open Doors UK, 2019, https://www.opendoorsuk.org/news/press/pr-190628/ [Accessed February 3, 2020].

Pictures of sexual violence in MENA

In the region encompassing the Middle East and North Africa (MENA), sexual violence and incarceration by family (house arrest) were both mentioned in 83 percent of countries.[21] The restriction of movement for women was also widely reported. Within a society defined by an honor/shame culture, these Pressure Points demonstrate a predominantly private form of persecution behind closed doors. According to a Georgetown study on women's physical safety,[22] many of these same countries naming sexual violence also ranked in the worst quintile for legal discrimination against women and discriminatory norms. In many of these countries, Sharia (Islamic law) functions as a source of law, either underlying the state law or as a parallel legal system. Some MENA countries who have ratified the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) are not bound to enforce provisions on issues such as early marriage or domestic violence because they made reservations on specific articles of the Convention. Exemplifying this, 11 of the countries in the MENA region have made reservations to Article 16 of the Convention, which provides for the elimination of discrimination against women as they enter or exit a marriage, and their rights within a marriage. Many cite Sharia law as the reason for the reservation being made.[23]

Pressure Points in MENA	Women	Men
Violence - Sexual (including rape)	84%	0%
Incarceration by family (house arrest)	84%	5%
Forced marriage	79%	0%
Violence - physical	68%	96%
Abduction	26%	16%
Economic harassment via business, job or work access	37%	89%
Incarceration by government	21%	68%

Although there is not a large number of Christian nationals in countries of the Arabian Peninsula, many Christian maids from other countries are being quietly exploited within their household of service. Further research is needed and is difficult to obtain. In many ways, this appears to be a crime of "opportunity" that can be linked to regional beliefs about patriarchal rights to the sexuality of women in their employ. Describing those dynamics, an expert shared, "House maids working in Qatar are often also seen by Muslim men as slaves, as 'what your right hand possesses.'" Given the lack of legal protection for Qatari women, foreign Christian women working in such situations with no male advocate have little or no hope of legal remedy. Similar dynamics were described as an area of concern for all the WWL countries in the Arabian Peninsula, with the exception of Yemen, where it is not common in Yemen to have house maids.

This vulnerability is reportedly driven by the economic needs of families in the maids' countries of origin (often from Asia or Africa). One expert on Oman gave the opinion that, "The home countries (of the maids) need the money coming in from the thousands of migrants working in the Gulf States and do not want to put their economic interests at stake. In addition, the maids themselves are often ashamed because of the abuse and do not want to be seen as 'dirty' within their society in Oman, or by their family back home." Within their countries of employment, these maids are vulnerable because of their gender, nationality, religion and poverty.

Profile of Christian women in UAE

In general, women are vulnerable in the UAE, as domestic violence and marital rape are permitted without legal consequence. As "inferior" members of society in need of male guardianship, tribal society also affects the level of persecution experienced by female converts from Islam to Christianity. A female convert to Christianity will face immense pressure from her family who will try to force her to convert back to Islam. If she does not, an imam may be called in to convince her of her sin, or she could be placed under house arrest, or sent to a psychiatric hospital. Even if a Christian man were willing to marry her, a woman from a Muslim background would be legally prevented from marrying a non-Muslim. Furthermore, a Christian man and convert woman cannot simply seek a Christian wedding ceremony outside the law. Because Islam does not consider marriage between a non-Muslim man and a Muslim woman valid, both parties to such a union are subject to arrest, trial, and imprisonment on grounds such as fornication outside of marriage, which carries a minimum of one year in jail.

Furthermore, for Christian women who are married to Muslim men, the law grants custody of children of non-Muslim women to the Muslim father in the event of a divorce. By law, a non-Muslim woman who fails to convert is also ineligible for naturalization as a citizen and cannot inherit her husband's property unless named as a beneficiary in his will.

Amnesty International has also reported that some laws improving the rights of foreign workers explicitly excluded domestic staff, many of whom are Christian women (Amnesty International, Annual Report 2016/17, p. 381). The ill-treatment of migrant workers, including sexual abuse, has become a major issue.

However, sexual violence is not only limited to vulnerable Christian maids, but is a real threat facing minority Christian women in other parts of MENA. Sexual violence across MENA could in part be reasonably accounted for by the high number of prolonged conflicts across the region.

[21] Countries in the MENA region reporting the characteristic use of sexual violence: Algeria; Egypt; Iraq; Iran; Kuwait; Mauritania; Oman; Palestinian Territories; Qatar; United Arab Emirates; Saudi Arabia; Syria; Tunisia and Yemen (Not mentioned by Jordan, Morocco and Turkey).

[22] Women, Peace and Security Index, Georgetown Institute for Women, Peace and Security. https://giwps.georgetown.edu/the-index/ [Accessed February, 12, 2020].

[23] Countries that make reservations to elements of Article 16 include: Egypt, Iraq, Israel, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Libya, Oman and Qatar, Syria, and UAE. *Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination of Violence Against Women*. United Nations, New York, December 18, 1979. <https://treaties.un.org/Pages/ViewDetails.aspx?src=TREATY&mtdsg_no=IV-8&chapter=4&clang=_en> [Accessed January 31, 2020].

Pictures of sexual violence in sub-Saharan Africa

Sexual violence was reported in 81 percent of all WWL countries[24] across sub-Saharan African; it is the region that bears the strongest correlation with forced marriage. 100 percent of countries that reported sexual violence also cited forced marriage. Pressure Points that are particularly high in the Africa region for women include being denied access to social community/networks, physical harm, being forced out of the home, and being denied custody of children. Within African society, which places strong value on community and the family unit, these represent a very public form of persecution and a visible cutting off from all key social and familial relationships. Combined, these forms of persecution are very effective at destabilizing communities and claiming the identity of the next generation.

PPs across sub-Saharan Africa	Women	Men
Violence - sexual combined (including rape)	81%	4%
Forced marriage	96%	4%
Violence - physical	69%	73%
Denied access to social networks	65%	35%
Denied inheritance or possessions	69%	38%
Violence - psychological	58%	58%
Denied custody of children	58%	12%

In sub-Saharan Africa, this tactic of destabilizing communities through gender-based violence is an intentional part of the use of sexual violence by jihadist groups. On a wider level, World Watch research noted that, "a large part of the number of Christians killed and churches attacked is occurring in countries in sub-Saharan Africa. The same applies for abductions, physical or mental abuse, houses or other property attacked, and shops or businesses attacked. This is because the violence in sub-Saharan Africa is often linked to a myriad of jihadist groups aiming to create instability. This is also made possible by the many 'weak' or failed states in sub-Saharan Africa."[25] These same raiding militant bands regularly attack or abduct the women in Christian villages for a life of sexual slavery. Whether perpetrators rape and leave a woman to the fate of the community, or return her after several years, Christian communities often feel that she, and any resulting children, are now identified with the enemy. In CAR, the social ostracism has historically extended to calling her a "Seleka woman;" in Nigeria, babies born of rape might be called "Boko babies" by the remaining community.

Profile of Christian men and women in Nigeria

In north-east Nigeria and in the Nigerian Middle Belt, the gender component of the attacks and suffering of Christian women and girls is almost in a class of its own. Raids by Boko Haram, and its splinter group ISWAP in north-east Nigeria, along with Fulani herdsmen in the Middle Belt (and even some southern states), have terrorized Christian communities, captured their women and sexually abused them, forced some to be sex slaves, killed some and still collected ransom money for them. The desire to depopulate Christian-dominated territory has brought about an increase in abduction and forced marriage of Christian girls. Married Christian women are victims of this, too. In extreme circumstances, teenage girls are being recruited by force to be used as suicide bombers.

The fact that there are laws which permit under-age marriage in some states (as well the existence of cultural and religious norms that discourage girls from going to school) only contributes to this problem. Additionally, the fear that something will happen to a Christian daughter can also prompt Christian parents to get their daughters married early as a kind of "protection."

Christians students in schools in the northern states are forced to wear Islamic code uniforms. In Kano state, all schoolgirls must wear trousers and hijab. The fact that it is dangerous for girls to travel to school, or be there, also encourages parents to keep them at home; this results in uneducated girls being generally ignorant of their rights. Furthermore, the abduction of Christian girls has led to parents seeking to send their daughters to schools outside the Sharia states.

When women are raped, their husbands find it difficult to move past the trauma; many homes have broken up because of this. When girls are abducted, a deep sadness falls upon the family. Men often see it as their fault for not protecting their children adequately. Families are often left in deep trauma and stigmatized in the local community; this can lead to greater challenges where there is a need for medical attention, but resources are lacking. There is also a general practice of treating women as inferior to men, in rural regions especially, which makes it easier for them to be maltreated.

In addition to the great emotional toll and social cost of such persecution, in some communities where widows are the main breadwinners of the family, such persecution of women also affects the economic well-being of the community.

Christian men and boys are often specifically targeted for killing. In north-east Nigeria this is due to Boko Haram and ISWAP. In the Nigerian Middle Belt and some southern states it is due to Fulani herdsmen.

[24] Countries that mentioned the characteristic use of sexual violence within Africa: Burkina Faso; Burundi; Cameroon; CAR; Chad; Djibouti; DRC; Eritrea; Ethiopia; Gambia; Kenya; Mali; Mozambique; Nigeria; Niger; Rwanda; Somalia; South Sudan, Sudan, Tanzania, Uganda (not mentioned: Angola; Guinea; Ivory Coast; Togo; Comoros).

[25] Further details on this can be found in: *Africa – Mapping Islamic militancy*, World Watch Research, July 2019 < http://opendoorsanalytical.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/01/WWL-2020-Compilation-of-main-documents.pdf> [Accessed February 3, 2020].

This situation is aggravated by the activities of unidentified gunmen, for instance at roadblocks. Among those who survive such attacks, many face abduction and forced inclusion in militant ranks. Violent attacks leading to death not only eliminates the current generation of men and boys, but killing males is seen as a guarantee that the birthrate in Christian families will drop considerably. In addition, young boys are at risk of being recruited as child soldiers, and there are reports of church leaders and church members being regularly abducted for ransom.

Such attacks have a devastating effect on the church and Christian families. Men are usually the main breadwinners. The absence of men (or their incapacity to work) leaves women exposed to forced conversion, rape and sheer hopelessness. Even for those who are not physically threatened, many Christian men are frustrated as they cannot get admission into universities and cannot get jobs. Therefore, they feel forced to leave the country in search of better opportunities.

There is another dimension to the killing of men and older boys and leaving the mothers and younger siblings alive: the family members who remain are vulnerable living testimonies of the overwhelming power of the perpetrators, who are seldom, if ever, brought to justice.

iii) Forced marriage hides a "living death" of ongoing sexual violence for women and girls

A "living death"

The modern-day practice of co-opting women of a minority faith group in the crudest ways possible has been covered extensively in the media over the past five years. Reports abound of the sexual enslavement of Yezidi and Christian women by the Islamic State group (IS) and Christian women by Boko Haram. This has brought some transparency to the manner in which women are still used as war trophies – to both signify victory and increase oppression through violent sexual domination and forced breeding.

Throughout history, women's lives are preserved in times of conflict, not as a mercy, but so that they and their life-giving bodies can serve as a resource for the conquerors.
In the same way that adolescent boys have historically been captured and trained to serve as slaves, often on the front lines of the military, women are also used as a disposable commodity.

A potent blend of other Pressure Points hides within "Forced marriage", including explicit mentions of rape, house arrest, and every other form of violence. As noted earlier, converts are often, but not exclusively, the targets of forced marriage. While converts are typically subject to forcible and unfavorable marriages arranged by their family with an (often) older man of the dominant belief system, women who are Christian by tradition or ethnicity can be kidnapped before being subject to the same fate. This dynamic is reflected in the data with a strong association between Pressure Points of Forced marriage and Abduction (64 percent).

However, the high and consistent use of forced marriage for women speaks of a societal normalized – and even apparently sanitized – method for binding women to a system of belief and behavior that they would not choose, so that they continue to serve the needs of their captors in a legally acceptable manner.

In more formal terms, Aid to the Church in Need has identified five human rights violations that are masked by the term "forced marriage."[26] These are:

- freedom of thought, conscience, and religion (UDHR, art. 18; ICCPR, art. 18);
- freedom to marry and found a family (UDHR, art. 16; ICCPR, art. 23; ICESCR, art. 10);
- right to liberty and security of the person (UDHR, art. 3; ICCPR, art. 9);
- right to educate her children in accordance to her beliefs (UDHR, art. 26.3; ICCPR, art. 18.4).
- freedom from slavery or servitude (UDHR, art. 4; ICCPR, art. 8); Supplementary Convention on the Abolition of Slavery, the Slave Trade, and Institutions and Practices Similar to Slavery; ECOSOC resolution 30 April 1956, art. 1.c);
- equal protection of the law, and against any discrimination, including on the basis of sex (UDHR, arts. 2 and 7; ICCPR, art. 26; ICESCR, art. 2.2. and art. 3). [27]



When Boko Haram attacked, Mariayamu from Nigeria's husband told her to take the kids and escape to the bush while he stayed behind. Due to a physical condition, he wasn't able to run with them. "We passed the night in the bush and returned the following morning, only to find out that he was killed," Mariayamu says.

[26] Aid to the Church in need is considering the accuracy of the term "marriage", noting that "we want to highlight the fact that, first and foremost, these young women are victims of horrible and mortifying crimes for the rest of their lives, where the semblance of marriage is abandoned. Because they are also condemned to live as slaves in terror, and they are robbed of their most fundamental human rights and freedoms, we think we should switch to calling this **"sexual enslavement through religious coercion".** These terms describe more accurately the links in the criminal chain that will turn these women into living death, with the support of another community." Szymanski, Marcela, Misleading use of the terms *"forced marriage"* and *"forced conversion"*, Research Note by Editor in Chief of "Religious Freedom in the World" by ACN International, February 2020.

[27] Szymanski, Marcela, Misleading use of the terms "*forced marriage*" and "*forced conversion*", Research Note by Editor in Chief of "Religious Freedom in the World"

5. Persecution categories – top GRSP characteristics

There are three persecution categories defined by WWR[28] based on scoring intervals: High, Very High, and Extreme. Each year all countries scoring 41 points or higher are assigned to one of these categories. This year, the WWL top 50 all score 41+, plus 23 additional countries on the Watch List. In 2020, for the first time, WWR is able to offer gender characteristics for each WWL persecution category. The 2020 data for all 73 countries will be considered for this section.

a) Consistent at every level – physical violence and forced marriage

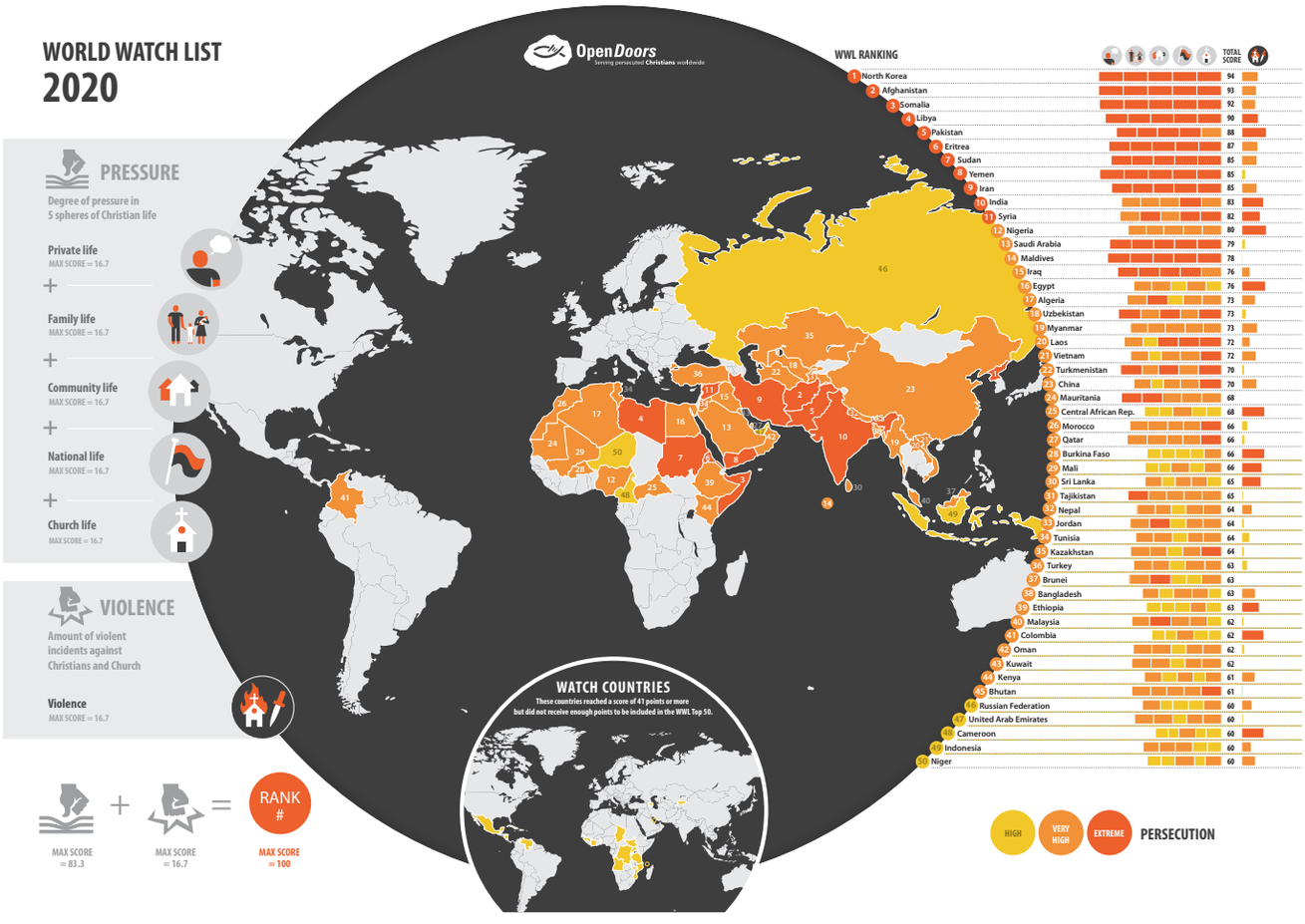
It is worth emphasizing that two Pressure Points remain consistently high through all persecution categories: Physical violence for men and Forced marriage for women. This statistical stability goes some way to underscoring why significant attention has already been devoted in this report to these Pressure Points for each gender. While many Pressure Points reflect what is a credible threat, to the extent to which a cowed population experiences the violence, the consistency of these two Pressure Points suggests an innate human understanding of the "effectiveness" of each form of control.

b) High levels of persecution – psychological and economic

Of the WWL's 28 countries in this category, the majority are in sub-Saharan Africa, so findings partially reflect this region. Most importantly, however, this persecution category represents a bellwether for signaling how threatening religious intolerance starts to manifest itself.

i) Psychological violence – early warning for both genders

In countries with high levels of persecution, psychological violence is repeatedly and explicitly cited for both men and women, with notably high recurrence: 79 percent of countries for women and 71 percent for men. There is an unsurprising and correspondingly high concentration of mentions of verbal abuse, at 64 percent for both women and men.



by ACN International, February 2020.

[28] For more information, see http://opendoorsanalytical.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/10/Complete-WWL-methodology-October-2019-FINAL.pdf (page 54).

These findings demonstrate the early warning pressures for each gender (not so much that they are distinctive but that, in these countries, survey respondents find psychological and verbal violence worth mentioning). These two "intangible violence" Pressure Points notably decline in the perceptions of respondents from countries which are at the stage of persecution where threats have become actions and the report of intangible affronts is eclipsed by description of physical violations of personhood and human rights.

ii) Men – economic harassment

For Christian men, economic harassment (64 percent mention), typical of the persecution of men across all countries, is comparatively high. The overall prevalence of economic harassment tapers off in the more severe persecution categories (Very High – 66 percent and Extreme – 55 percent) where more direct means of control of Christians' lives and bodies becomes the modus operandi. In this "High" persecution category, however, these discrete and indirect pressures through work begin to build on Christian men as they find their ability to support their families and maintain status in society increasingly difficult. All of the identity issues, let alone survival pressures associated with unemployment or low-status employment, start to force men to question whether their faith is worth the financial and status cost.

iii) Women – denied inheritance or possessions

As ever, the Pressure Points reflect the socio-economic structures of the countries investigated and the highest concentration of denied inheritance or possessions is found in the "High" category for women at 63 percent (compared with 39 percent for men). In countries where women's wealth comes to them through inheritance or familial rights, that is to say, not via their opportunity to directly earn a living, it is clear that their financial interests are under attack through such denials. Christians might note that these laws are being used to weaken Christian populations.



Komal and her family were socially boycott because of their Christian faith, and they were denied the rights to their inheritance. Following this, Komal's husband died because of an illness. Komal and her four children faced extreme financial difficulties. Since she was not properly educated, Komal had to work as a daily wage laborers and earned very little. Job opportunities were very limited since she was discriminated against because of her faith. Open Doors partners connected with her and provide her a livelihood option through a petty shop.

c) Very High levels of persecution – physical and sexual violence

The majority of countries on the WWL fall into this second category of severity. The 35 countries represented here include a majority from Asia, but by no means a predominance.

In comparison with countries with a high level of persecution, there is a sharp increase in violence against individuals. Again, this reflects the characteristic means of persecution and the extent to which threats of these forms of persecution are credible to those threatened. Mentions of Physical violence for men reaches 83 percent and mentions of sexual violence against women jumps to 80 percent of the countries.

i) Men and boys – physical violence and government

The sharp increase of "government as an actor" is seen in the Incarceration figure moving from 39 percent (High) to 66 percent (Very High), and this will reach a suffocating 73 percent in Extreme. There is also an increase of military/militia conscription from 14 percent (High) to 31 percent here at Very High. This is a far cry from the 73 percent of Extreme, but notable because of the 11 countries it represents in this persecution category of 35 countries.

Physical violence will reach its highest percentage of countries in this persecution category, by a small margin, at 83 percent. It is interesting to note that actual violence is higher in regions where regimes or militia are establishing control, whereas once control is established, it does not need to manifest itself as frequently.

ii) Women and girls – abduction, dress code and sexual violence

For women, the mention of the Pressure Point "Abduction" has risen above 50 percent of countries, having only been characteristic of 26 percent in the High persecution category. It will peak at 64 percent in the Extreme persecution category, but it is worth remarking on here as a sign of what most societies would consider lawless behavior. Abduction is associated with the greater sexual violence and an already very high frequency of forced marriage.

At the same time, women and girls are being required to visually conform in markedly greater numbers. Nearly a third of countries in this category (29 percent) flag enforced dress code for women and girls, while none of these countries mentions this as a Pressure Point for men.

The requirement to visibly conform to the requirements of the dominant religion is a first step towards other more sinister forms of harassment by identifying Christian women who remain independent in their dress code. The mention of "Sexual violence" has increased 17 percent to reach 80 percent.

d) Extreme levels of persecution – pervasive sexual violence and militia/military conscription

The group of 11 countries[29] with Extreme levels of persecution from WWL 2020 most starkly displays the characteristics of gender-specific religious persecution first identified in the 2018 GSRP report. That report found that the experience of persecution for Christian men and boys is focused, severe, and visible, while the experience of persecution for Christian women and girls is hidden, violent and complex. Both the descriptions of severe and violent were meant to capture the overall violence facing both men and women; however, at the time, the fact that women were facing high levels of violence was unknown. When examining the Pressure Points reported for the countries with the most Extreme levels of persecution, these gender-specific characteristics continue to apply.

i) Men – death and conscription

The intensity and brutality of men's experience is seen in the four highest recurrences of Pressure Points: incarceration by government, military/militia conscription and violence-death and violence-physical. This is *focused*, *severe*, and also *visible*.

Government is not just an actor but has become a key agent of religious persecution in the Extreme category, and it is here that the systematic hardship of military/militia conscription for Christian men becomes most apparent. As noted in previous years, this form of control and coercion is particularly directed towards youth and younger men, stealing from churches the men of the future, either through indoctrination or decimation.

ii) Women – pervasive sexual violence and domestic control

Although they are not put to death as routinely as men (although this still happens in 45 percent of countries), for women and girls, sexual violence has become an all-pervasive means of punishment, abuse and control, listed in 100 percent of countries.

For women, especially converts, the systematic use of forced marriage is in a staggering 91 percent of countries and exemplifies hidden control and abuse, compounded by the use of "Forced divorce and Incarceration" by family in 73 percent of countries and "Abduction" and "Violence – physical" in 64 percent.

The complex nature of persecution for women in the Extreme category is seen most clearly in the appearance of 16 Pressure Points for women and nine Pressure Points for men – which are characteristically used in over a third of the Extreme countries. This ratio of one-third more pressure points being frequently used mirrors previous years' findings on the multitude of pressures that Christian women can face because of their faith.

[29] These countries are (in order of severity): North Korea; Afghanistan; Somalia; Libya; Pakistan; Eritrea; Sudan; Yemen; Iran; India; Syria.

6. Implications for society

a) Church health and stability

Recognizing that churches under severe persecution regularly face ongoing discrimination and hostility, it is difficult to define a position of stability in such insecurity. As the above discussion of dynamics surrounding Pressure Points has repeatedly revealed, however, the Christian community's response to persecution can be as determining a factor of damage as the initial persecutory event. The following exploration of the implications of gender-specific religious persecution and their interactions with communities of faith is meant to further the goal of preparedness and resilient responses, in both acute situations and for those able to prepare ahead.

> For women and girls, persecutors simply take advantage of their limitations and vulnerabilities as women in their culture, in conjunction with their vulnerability as members of a minority faith. **No great strategy needs to be devised to identify and exploit the opportunities available in the overlap of dual vulnerabilities.**
>
> *2019 GSRP Analysis*



In Egypt, Muslim boys from an extremist group tell young Christian girls they love them, and want to convert to Christianity for them, starting a romantic relationship until one day they decide to 'escape' together. The girls are unaware they're being kidnapped. Due to the large shame associated with these kidnappings, it's hard to know how many take place as the majority of families prefer not to speak about it publicly.

i) Awareness or stigma

This section aims also to explore the implications of gender-specific discrimination experienced by a minority religious population. As in previous years' reports, these researchers contend that the persecution faced by an individual man or woman is intended to impact the health and stability of his or her broader family and community. Furthermore, although such individuals are part of a minority that may already be marginalized, when these individuals are discriminated against, the injury often represents an overlooked loss to the wider society as well.

> GSRP research reveals more than the factors of gender-specific persecution; it also reveals many of the means and reasons behind discrimination, **which takes advantage of pre-existing parameters** within socially accepted gender roles. The basic reason **is that it is the easiest means of religious persecution.**
>
> *2019 GSRP Analysis*

This report found a difference between the characteristic use of sexual violence and forced marriage against Christian females and the counted incidents of those events, confirming a now-known hiddenness (Investigating violence against women and girls).

Awareness of the hidden can change the way churches see persecution dynamics targeting the men and boys, and the women and girls of their community. Simply knowing what to listen and look for is a first step in hearing and seeing the hidden. Doing so may take inordinate courage by those facing persecution, however, to face the unpleasant realities about the lives of those with whom they share their daily living space.

Without an awareness of gender-specific forms of religious persecution, these methods of undermining the church are often overlooked. If house arrest or sexual violence is not known to be a common means of targeting Christian women and girls because of their faith, then it is unlikely to be recognized as persecution. This lack of awareness is often directly related to inaction and effective solutions. When not recognized as persecution, these incidents are processed as "normal" within their relevant cultural context.

This automatic (and researchers would suppose, sub-conscious) processing of gender-specific incidents means that individuals who experience them might face cultural norms of stigma and shame from their own faith community, rather than receive the support needed. Without realizing it, faith communities have made a decision to interpret persecution events and respond to them according to culturally determined filters.

Individual men and women are remembered as martyrs for the faith if they are physically killed. Paradoxically, if those same men or women return from a kind of "living death" discussed previously in the report, they are additionally burdened with the complex trauma of isolation, suspicion,

stigmatization and rejection from the same religious community that might have supported them. Further, if they return from their trials with a child who has been born of this strife, then that fragile new being grows up with a stigma for which they would not remember the source, were it not for daily reminders from their community.

ii) Support whole health and resilience

The research can speak clearly on the forceful and predictable role that stigma plays in making effective many of the top Pressure Points. The sensitivities of the church have the potential to compound persecution. When those sensitivities are known and shared by the persecutor, they are easy to exploit because the response is predictable. The ease with which gender-specific religious persecution is used in any demographic has profound implications for the whole of the Christian community.

One of the most difficult aspects for victims whose lives are burdened with stigma for an action that they did not choose is the very fact that they might face rejection or re-traumatization from their faith community. Sexual violence is effective largely because of how the family or community responds to the victim. Militia conscription is likewise effective in the long term because of the habits, guilt and questions of loyalty that haunt recruits long after they have been released.

Long-term trauma care for victims can be the key element to help survivors deal with their paralyzing sense of helplessness. In addition, faith communities have the opportunity to reexamine the non-verbal message they send to their survivors of persecution. There are many responses to persecution events that inadvertently reinforce the value judgments of perpetrators and ensure the impunity with which they can act. This may be through reinforcing societal stigma for events over which a victim had no agency, or choosing to respond differently to men and women who have suffered.



In the middle of violence and persecution the pastors of Buenaventura, Colombia, persist in preaching the gospel.

iii) Value and theological countermeasures

This report began by remarking that underlying each of the Pressure Points is an attack on the aspect of a man or woman, boy or girl, which gives them social value. Such social value is, by definition, a construct of the society. In the situations researched, this social value is closely associated with strongly demarcated gender roles that have, in many cases, been overlaid with theological meaning. This makes them especially difficult for faith communities to re-examine.

In the light of the extremely high cost to family and community of socially predictable behaviors that perpetuate the damage of Pressure Points, re-examining these socially constructed, predictable responses is perhaps one of the more readily accessible avenues of agency available to Christian communities suffering from a barrage of attacks on their most vulnerable members, at their most vulnerable points.

If it were to be discovered by a faith community that they had a choice as to how to respond to their trafficked daughters or conscripted sons, without violating any tenets of their faith, then this could deter their persecutors from using those Pressure Points, because it would limit the damage they could achieve.

iv) A caution on youth and long-term resilience

This report calls attention to the use of military and militia conscription against conscience and forced marriage in order to highlight the realities of these two phenomena particularly affecting youth – and, therefore, the future – of the minority faith community. This is because the reality behind forced marriage and military/militia conscription is that it removes from the individual their agency over the minutiae of their daily lives and, ultimately, thoughts and beliefs. When considering these two Pressure Points, it is deeply disturbing to note that they primarily target young Christian adults, posing a threat to the future of the church. In considering that both male and female youth of a minority community can be almost “stolen” from the community by these Pressure Points, this means that there is a risk at hand of losing those who represent the future of the church.

There are two forms of destruction taking place in each of these Pressure Points: firstly, removal of young bodies from one community to act as a resource for the other and, secondly, the reformatting of hearts and minds. Given opportunity to return to their community, their ability to reintegrate and flourish in a healthy manner would be severely compromised. Therefore, faith leaders will look carefully to the task of appreciating and strengthening their youth while they have them, preparing them with spiritual, emotional and psychological tools to withstand trials that cannot be avoided, and, finally, demonstrating to them that nothing that happens (the abductions, recruitments, violence and domestic imprisonments) can ever compromise their dignity, or reduce the love and welcome they will be offered in their own community.

v) Defend gender equality for all

Even when the dynamics of persecution begin to seem clearer, and the dangers of deeply entrenched gender bias no long appear incidental to the church’s experience

of persecution, it may seem that taking on a culture of normalized sexual violence, forced marriage and house arrest is an overwhelming challenge, when the very day-to-day survival of one's community is in question.

Church leaders may take some encouragement from global efforts to address these societal ills. Advocates who may not wear the same religious label may become allies in eradicating the impunity with which these three infringements on human rights are harming all faith communities in a country. It may be that there are those who advocate a domestication of international treaties that protect women from domestic abuse or teenagers from childhood marriage. Joining forces with these advocates could prove a critical boost in protecting the Christian community.. While this may seem idealistic, an example of how such multi-faith action may be possible was published concerning the eradication of violence against children in July 2019.[30]

"In the case where he is the breadwinner, his arrest causes economic distress to his family. If he is a professional (eg. doctor,) the wider society may be affected by his absence."

Eritrea



Paul from Eritrea was arrested for worshipping outside of the four government approved groups. He stayed in prison for a decade. It was ten years of insufficient food, insufficient hygiene, insufficient medical care. All he had to do to get freedom was sign a form he regarded as a betrayal of his faith. He couldn't do it. Released unexpectedly a while ago, Paul is now coming to terms with the cost of his imprisonment. His parents died, his family moved on and his peers advanced in life. In it all Paul chooses to focus on the spiritual matters of life and knows He can trust God to care for him now as He cared for him in prison. *Name changed for security reasons.*

The Christian population, regardless of size, has the ability to be an actor for peace building, and the involvement of women in this practice, which benefits both the faith community and wider society, is significantly more likely to succeed if women are involved. Research by UN Women, shows that when women participate in peace processes, the resulting agreement is 35 percent more likely to last at least 15 years.[31] Faith communities intentionally promoting the involvement of women in the peace-building process will benefit not only the faith community, but their entire society.

b) Societal health and stability

The notion that Christians could, in fact, become a force for a more stable and peaceful society in their home countries has long been both a strong point of the church and a cause of disagreement for the church's detractors who paint Christians in a less favorable light.

On a most basic level, persecution of Christians – or indeed, any minority faith group – deprives the society of all those who contribute their professional, intellectual, fiduciary or physical support to building the country in question. As an example, the loss of a single qualified and diligent Christian doctor would not merely impact that person's family and faith community: every single patient who depended upon the doctor's expertise and availability would be denied a much-needed medical resource for themselves and their family.

Gender-Specific Religious Persecution is widely used because it:

- Blends in
- Is low risk to perpetrators
- Is highly effective

2019 GSRP Analysis

[30] Palm, S, and Eyber, C., *Why Faith? Engaging the Mechanisms of Faith to End Violence Against Children*, Joint Learning Initiative on Faith & Local Communities, July 2019. < https://jliflc.com/resources/why-faith-engaging-faith-mechanisms-to-end-violence-against-children/> [Accessed February 3, 2020].

[31] *UN Women Peace and Security Facts and Figures*, UN Women (Online), 2020, <http://www.unwomen.org/en/what-we-do/peace-and-security/facts-and-figures> [Accessed February 3, 2020].

7. Recommendations

To address the double vulnerability of women and girls from religious minorities, Open Doors recommends:

1. Given the prevalence of sexual violence, and forced marriage as forms of violence against women from religious minorities, governments should:

- Ensure women have equality before the law so that perpetrators of sexual violence are not treated with impunity;
- In line with joint general recommendation no. 31 of CEDAW/general comment no. 18 of the Committee on the Rights of the Child (CRC),[32] repeal all legislation that condones, allows, or leads to harmful practices,[33] including traditional, customary, or religious laws, and any legislation that accepts the defense of honor as a defense or mitigating factor in the commission of crimes in the name of so-called honor;
- Enact legislation to counter child, early, and forced marriage, and ensure such laws are enforced.

2. Given the way sexual violence in conflict is being used against women from religious minorities, the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict[34] should carry out a study, with input from the Special Rapporteur on Freedom of Religion or Belief (FoRB), to enhance understanding of the double vulnerability faced by women and girls from religious minorities and to propose how the protection of women, who are doubly vulnerable due to their adherence to a minority faith, can be enhanced.

3. Given the synergies between FoRB and women's rights, the CEDAW Committee should issue a general recommendation that:

- Recognizes that women's rights and religious freedom are mutually reinforcing, not contradictory;
- Recognizes the existence of a double vulnerability faced by women and girls from religious minorities;
- Identifies the synergies between FoRB and women's rights to equality, drawing on the groundwork the Special Rapporteur on FoRB in addressing this theme;
- Encourages state parties to consider this interrelatedness;
- Proposes measures to address the double vulnerability of women and girls from religious minorities, such as encouraging mechanisms for cooperation between institutions and actors working for women's rights and FoRB; and encouraging governments to enact and enforce the legislation highlighted in recommendation 1 above.

4. Donor governments and institutions should:

- Include targeted programing and aid for women who face double vulnerabilities as members of minority faiths, recognizing the important role of such programing in countering violent extremism;
- Ensure a gender perspective is integrated into programs designed for protecting and promoting FoRB, and that sensitivity for issues of FoRB is integrated into gender-related anti-discrimination programs (as recommended by the Special Rapporteur on FoRB);[35]
- Include religion as a factor of vulnerability in any assessment made in planning and programming.

5. The Global Church should:

- Openly acknowledge the extent and severity of violence against Christian women, especially in communities under pressure for their faith
- Pray for women who are doubly vulnerable due to their gender and faith
- Advocate on behalf of women facing this double vulnerability
- Seek justice for women facing any form of discrimination, persecution or violence, by:
- Propagating a biblical understanding of God's heart for justice, and the dignity of all humans
- Empowering women and men to access justice, in order to hold perpetrators to account.

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[32] CEDAW/C/GC/31/CRC/C/GC/18, Joint general recommendation/comment on harmful practices, https://documents-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/N14/627/78/PDF/N1462778.pdf?OpenElement

[33] Harmful practices in the include sexual violence and forced marriage.

[34] https://www.un.org/sexualviolenceinconflict/

[35] A/68/290, Report of the Special Rapporteur Heiner Bielefeldt on freedom of religion or belief, 2013, *Elimination of all forms of religious intolerance*, para. 73. https://www.ohchr.org/Documents/Issues/Religion/A.68.290.pdf

8. Conclusion

The religious persecution of Christian communities always takes place within a specific legal, social and cultural context, which, far from being peripheral to the persecution dynamics, is the basis for determining the avenues by which the most effective persecution will take place.

Upon taking a bird's eye view of persecuting behaviors, global patterns emerge that reveal the systematic use of gender-specific vulnerabilities. These patterns reveal that not only is persecution gender-specific, to the extent that a society limits the value of its members to factors that are beyond their control, but that it is always designed to produce the greatest damage to the faith community at the least risk to the perpetrator. While there are regional variations of interest, and persecution preparedness can benefit from studying the specific characteristics of each persecution category of severity, the fundamental conclusion of this research remains that persecution against Christians is not gender blind. Gender-specific persecution affects men, women, boys and girls alike – no demographic is spared. Across these Christian communities, however, it is women and girls who typically face the hardest circumstances of all.

Appendix A: Definitions

Persecution
There is no international, legal definition of persecution. Situations can be defined as persecution where persons experience the denial of the rights listed in Article 18 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. However, WWL methodology has opted for a theological rather than a sociological definition, "Any hostility experienced as a result of one's identification with Christ. This can include hostile attitudes, words and actions towards Christians." This broad definition includes (but is not limited to) restrictions, pressure, discrimination, opposition, disinformation, injustice, intimidation, mistreatment, marginalization, oppression, intolerance, infringement, violation, ostracism, hostilities, harassment, abuse, violence, ethnic cleansing and genocide.[36]

Gender equality
This term is used according to the definition provided by UN Women, namely, "Equality between women and men (gender equality): refers to the equal rights, responsibilities and opportunities of women and men and girls and boys. Equality does not mean that women and men will become the same, but that women's and men's rights, responsibilities and opportunities will not depend on whether they are born male or female. Gender equality implies that the interests, needs and priorities of both women and men are taken into consideration, recognizing the diversity of different groups of women and men. Gender equality is not a women's issue but should concern and fully engage men as well as women. Equality between women and men is seen both as a human rights issue and as a precondition for, and indicator of, sustainable people-centered development."[37]

Pressure Points
This annual report studies Pressure Points that are typical to a Christian man or woman's experience of religious persecution. Based upon these socio-cultural constructs of stereotypical gender roles,[38] Christian women and men both face various social, legal, physical, or economic pressures for their faith. Pressure Points provide a way to describe and categorize these vulnerable points. In fact, research has identified 30 such areas of vulnerability, or Pressure Points. Merriam Webster defines a Pressure Point as, "a discrete point on the body that when pressed causes pain." Pressure Points are strategically used in martial arts to subdue an opponent with the least force and greatest effect. Just as in the martial arts context, Pressure Points of religious persecution are exploited to subdue an entire community more easily, especially when used in combination. Use of these Pressure Points is integral to the strategies of persecutors seeking to coerce or punish someone for their chosen faith. The more vulnerabilities an individual has, the easier it is to "disable" them.

2020 Pressure Points

Abduction
The act of making a person go somewhere with you, especially using threats of violence.[39]

Denied access to Christian religious materials
The denial of access to Christian religious material, such as Bibles, study notes and Christian symbols.

Denied access to social community/networks
The shaming or shunning of an individual, leading to ostracism and denial of access to the wider social community or networks.

Denied citizenship
The intentional act of denying or removing citizenship from nationals.

Denied communal resources
The intentional act of denying or removing access to communal resources, such as communal organizations, buildings or other public goods, services or programs.

Denied custody of children
The act of denying a person of the legal and/or physical custody of their child, or the right to have a relationship or direct contact with them.

Denied food or water
The act of deliberately denying another person of food of water.

Denied inheritance or possessions
Denying a person of their inheritance rights or their possessions.

Denied legal ability to marry Christian spouse
The act of denying a person the legal right to marry a Christian spouse when two persons who express the wish to marry are denied the legal right to do so, due to the Christian faith that one or both holds.

Denied/restricted healthcare
Discrimination affecting users of health care services. It serves as a barrier to accessing health services, affects the quality of health services provided, and reinforces exclusion from society for both individuals and groups.[40]

Discrimination/harassment via education
Distinguishing, excluding or limiting access to education. Specifically, by: a) depriving any person or group of persons of access to education of any type or at any level; (b) limiting

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[36] WWL 2020: *Compilation of all main documents*. World Watch Research, January 15, 2020. <http://opendoorsanalytical.org/world-watch-list-documentation/> [Password: freedom].

[37] *Concepts and Definitions*, UN Women, https://www.un.org/womenwatch/osagi/conceptsandefinitions.htm, accessed February 7, 2020.

[38] We understand the stereotypical roles referred to by the U.N. Special Rapporteur on freedom of religion or belief not as theological concepts but as functional places in society with associated power or limitations.

[39] "Abduction", Cambridge Dictionary, https://dictionary.cambridge.org/us/dictionary/english/abduction

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

any person or group of persons to education of an inferior standard; (c) establishing or maintaining separate educational systems or institutions for persons or groups of persons; or (d) by inflicting on any person or group of persons conditions which are incompatible with human dignity.[41]

Economic harassment via business/job/work access
Targeting or boycotting a business to its economic disadvantage, or distinguishing, excluding or limiting a person's access to work or jobs due to their Christian faith. Specifically, by: a) preventing Christians from obtaining or retaining gainful employment; (b) limiting any person or group of persons to working conditions of an inferior standard; (c) by inflicting on any person or group of persons conditions which are incompatible with human dignity; or d) forced labor, including subtle means such as accumulated debt, retention of identity papers or threats of denunciation to immigration authorities.[42]

Economic harassment via fines
The act of disadvantaging another person through inappropriately applied fines.

Enforced religious dress code
The act of forcing, or applying significant pressure on someone to wear religious clothing.

False charges
Unproven legal charges against a person that are deceptive and untrue.

Forced abortion
Intentional termination of pregnancy without the prior and/or informed consent of the woman.[43]

Forced divorce
The act of terminating a marriage or marital union without the consent of the spouse.

Forced marriage
A marriage in which one party has not personally expressed their full, free and informed consent to the union.[44] This includes child marriage, or early marriage, where at least one of the parties is under 18 years of age. It also includes unannounced and disadvantageous polygamous marriage with the intent to subjugate for religious reasons.

Forced out of home – expulsion
The act of suddenly and forcibly expelling a person from the residence they have been living in, or applying such pressure that they feel they have no freedom to stay.

Forced to flee town/country
The act of suddenly and forcibly expelling a person from the town/country they have been living in, or applying such pressure that they feel that they have no choice to stay.

Incarceration by family (house arrest)
The obligation upon an individual that they be forbidden to leave their place of residence except for limited, specified circumstances.[45]

Imprisonment by government
The act of being imprisoned in a place used as a prison, by a government body or agent.

Incarceration in mental asylum
The act of being imprisoned in a mental asylum.

Military/militia conscription/service against conscience
Serving in the military forces of a country against a person's conscience, being ill-treated in the service of the military, or being forced to carry out specific acts that are against a person's conscience.

Targeted Seduction
The act of seducing someone (here with a sexual connotation) with the intent purpose of leading them away from their Christian faith.

Trafficking
A) Sexual exploitation not explicitly mentioned
B) Sexual exploitation explicitly mentioned.
The recruitment, transportation, transfer, harboring or receipt of persons, by means of the threat or use of force or other forms of coercion, of abduction, of fraud, of deception, of the abuse of power or of a position of vulnerability or of the giving or receiving of payments or benefits to achieve the consent of a person having control over another person, for the purpose of exploiting a person.[46]

Travel bans/restrictions on movement
Preventing a person from traveling somewhere or restricting their movement against their will.

Violence – death
The cause of loss of life.

Violence – physical (including torture)
Bodily harm inflicted by one person on another. Researchers limit the designation of this Pressure Point to instances which clearly indicate instances of physical harm (such as beatings/acts of torture) but which do not result in death. Instances of sexual violence are excluded.[47]

Violence – psychological
Any intentional conduct that seriously impairs another person's psychological integrity through coercion or threats.[48]

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[41] Adapted from Article 1 of the Convention against Discrimination in Education, UNESCO, 1960

[42] Adapted from International Labor Organization. Retrieved from: https://www.ilo.org/global/topics/forced-labour/news/WCMS_237569/lang--en/index.html

[43] European Institute for Gender Equality. Retrieved from: https://eige.europa.eu/thesaurus/terms/1334.

[44] Adapted from OCHCR. https://www.ohchr.org/EN/Issues/Women/WRGS/Pages/ChildMarriage.aspx

[45] Adapted from Duhaime. Retrieved from: http://www.duhaime.org/LegalDictionary/H/HouseArrest.aspx

[46] Adapted from Article 3 of the Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons.

[47] Adapted from the Law Dictionary. Retrieved from https://thelawdictionary.org/physical-violence/.

[48] "Psychological violence", European Institute for Gender Equality, https://eige.europa.eu/thesaurus/terms/1334

Violence – sexual
A) Rape not explicitly mentioned
B) Rape explicitly mentioned

Any sexual act, unwanted sexual comments or advances, or otherwise directed, against a person's sexuality using coercion, by any person regardless of their relationships to the victim, in any setting, including but not limited to home and work.[49]

Violence – verbal (including harassment and insults)
Harsh and insulting language directed at a person.

Broader scope of data analysis

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

Appendix B: Changes in 2020 regarding the methodology

Given the keen interest in and usefulness of this new area of gender-specific study, additional research resources were committed in 2020 to broaden the scope of WWL data for gender-specific descriptions, resulting in a more extensive data analysis for 2020. It should be noted, however, that in the summer of 2019, a later stage of analysis was conducted on the 2019 data, to draw out Pressure Points from additional layers of data that had previously been beyond the scope and capacity of the research team. Thus, when comparing changes from 2019 to 2020, this report will present both original 2019 preliminary data results and revised 2019 data results.

Pressure Point category changes

Following analysis of the Pressure Points used in previous years, it was deemed appropriate to make select changes to the initial names and definitions of the Pressure Points used.[50] For example, whereas analysts previously counted instances of rape separately from other instances of sexual violence, these were counted together for the 2020 report within a combined category of aggregate sexual violence. The decision to merge them was made on the understanding that rape is also sexual violence and can occur alongside other forms of sexual assault. Additionally, it was noted that due to linguistic and cultural differences in the use of these terms across 50 countries the term "sexual assault" was by no means clear, signifying rape in some cultures and "inappropriate" touching in others. By re-defining this Pressure Point, a direct comparison between the 2020 results with the two preceding reports is not possible regarding the figures on sexual violence. To ensure a nuanced understanding of these dynamics remained however, analysts recorded the new combined Pressure Point as either "Violence – sexual (a)" (no explicit mention of rape) or "Violence – sexual (b)" (explicit mention of rape) to ensure information on the nature of the form of sexual violence was not lost.

Additionally, "Forced conversion" has been removed as a Pressure Point and mentions of forced conversion are recorded under the means of coercion used to force an ostensible conversion; "Forced labor or slavery" is now "Trafficking"; "Shaming and shunning" is now mostly counted under "Denied access to social networks;" the new definitions saw the removal of "Violence - Domestic" and the addition of "Denied Access to Christian Religious Material," "Targeted Seduction" and a merging of "Forced Marriage – Targeted Seduction" and "Forced Marriage – Polygamy" into a combined category of "Forced Marriage."

Sample of countries: In the study of gender-specific religious persecution, the sample of 50 countries where it is most difficult to be a Christian is adjusted yearly based upon the results of study of 73 countries of interest. In 2020, it includes Cameroon, Niger and Burkina Faso, whereas the 2019 WWL and correlated GSRP Report included Azerbaijan, Palestinian Territories and Mexico.

Pressure Point (PP) changes	
2019 PP removed	**2020 PP added/replaced**
Sexual violence and rape as a separate category	Combined category of "Violence – sexual"
Forced labor or slavery	Counted among "Trafficking"
Violence – domestic	No longer a separate PP, domestic violence is recorded under other types of violence
Shaming and shunning	Denied access to social networks
Forced conversion	No longer categorized as a PP, but as a goal of persecution
Forced marriage – targeted seduction	"Targeted Seduction" and "Forced Marriage" (separate)
Forced marriage – polygamy	Counted among "Forced marriage"

[50] A complete list of Pressure Points and their definitions can be found in Appendix A.