

World
Watch
Research

Egypt: Full Country Dossier

January 2023



OpenDoors

Serving persecuted **Christians** worldwide

Open Doors International / World Watch Research

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Introduction

World Watch List 2023

Rank	Country	Private life	Family life	Community life	National life	Church life	Violence	Total Score WWL 2023	Total Score WWL 2022	Total Score WWL 2021	Total Score WWL 2020	Total Score WWL 2019
1	North Korea	16.7	16.7	16.7	16.7	16.7	14.4	98	96	94	94	94
2	Somalia	16.5	16.7	16.6	16.6	16.6	8.7	92	91	92	92	91
3	Yemen	16.7	16.7	16.7	16.7	16.7	5.9	89	88	87	85	86
4	Eritrea	14.6	14.9	15.5	15.9	15.7	12.2	89	88	88	87	86
5	Libya	15.6	15.5	15.9	16.1	16.3	9.1	88	91	92	90	87
6	Nigeria	13.8	13.8	14.6	14.8	14.4	16.7	88	87	85	80	80
7	Pakistan	13.4	13.8	14.8	14.8	12.9	16.7	86	87	88	88	87
8	Iran	14.5	14.6	13.8	15.8	16.5	10.7	86	85	86	85	85
9	Afghanistan	15.4	15.7	15.4	16.1	16.6	4.6	84	98	94	93	94
10	Sudan	14.1	14.2	14.9	14.9	15.5	9.4	83	79	79	85	87
11	India	12.3	13.1	13.0	14.8	13.3	15.7	82	82	83	83	83
12	Syria	13.2	14.1	13.6	14.1	14.1	11.3	80	78	81	82	82
13	Saudi Arabia	15.2	15.3	14.9	15.8	16.7	2.4	80	81	78	79	77
14	Myanmar	12.5	11.6	13.9	13.9	12.9	15.4	80	79	74	73	71
15	Maldives	15.4	15.3	13.8	16.0	16.4	0.2	77	77	77	78	78
16	China	12.9	10.0	12.7	14.5	15.6	11.1	77	76	74	70	65
17	Mali	11.1	10.1	14.7	10.3	15.1	15.0	76	70	67	66	68
18	Iraq	14.1	14.6	14.0	14.8	13.9	4.6	76	78	82	76	79
19	Algeria	14.1	14.1	11.5	13.7	15.1	4.8	73	71	70	73	70
20	Mauritania	14.5	14.2	13.3	14.1	14.2	1.3	72	70	71	68	67
21	Uzbekistan	14.9	12.7	13.9	12.7	15.6	1.5	71	71	71	73	74
22	Colombia	11.8	8.9	13.1	11.3	10.4	15.4	71	68	67	62	58
23	Burkina Faso	9.4	9.7	12.5	9.6	13.8	15.6	71	68	67	66	48
24	CAR	10.3	8.6	13.9	9.6	12.2	15.6	70	68	66	68	70
25	Vietnam	11.8	9.6	12.8	14.6	14.4	6.9	70	71	72	72	70
26	Turkmenistan	14.5	11.3	13.6	14.1	15.7	0.6	70	69	70	70	69
27	Cuba	13.1	8.3	13.1	13.2	14.9	7.0	70	66	62	52	49
28	Niger	9.4	9.5	14.5	7.7	13.1	15.4	70	68	62	60	52
29	Morocco	13.2	13.8	10.9	12.2	14.5	4.8	69	69	67	66	63
30	Bangladesh	12.6	10.7	12.8	11.3	10.6	10.7	69	68	67	63	58
31	Laos	11.7	10.2	13.3	14.2	14.0	5.0	68	69	71	72	71
32	Mozambique	9.3	8.5	13.9	8.4	12.5	15.6	68	65	63	43	43
33	Indonesia	11.3	12.0	11.6	11.1	9.2	12.8	68	68	63	60	65
34	Qatar	14.2	14.1	10.5	13.2	14.4	1.5	68	74	67	66	62
35	Egypt	12.7	13.5	11.6	12.1	10.8	7.0	68	71	75	76	76
36	Tunisia	12.0	12.8	10.4	12.0	13.5	6.5	67	66	67	64	63
37	DRC	8.0	7.9	12.6	9.7	13.0	15.6	67	66	64	56	55
38	Mexico	10.3	8.3	12.5	11.0	10.5	13.9	67	65	64	60	61
39	Ethiopia	9.9	10.3	13.1	10.4	12.1	10.6	66	66	65	63	65
40	Bhutan	13.2	12.3	11.6	13.9	14.2	1.1	66	67	64	61	64
41	Turkey	12.8	11.5	11.8	13.0	11.5	5.7	66	65	69	63	66
42	Comoros	12.7	14.0	11.2	12.4	14.2	1.5	66	63	62	57	56
43	Malaysia	12.8	14.3	11.4	12.2	11.1	3.9	66	63	63	62	60
44	Tajikistan	13.8	12.2	12.3	12.8	13.4	1.1	66	65	66	65	65
45	Cameroon	8.8	7.6	12.6	7.2	13.1	15.9	65	65	64	60	54
46	Brunei	14.8	14.6	10.1	10.9	14.4	0.4	65	64	64	63	63
47	Oman	14.0	14.1	10.3	13.3	12.9	0.6	65	66	63	62	59
48	Kazakhstan	13.2	11.6	11.9	12.7	14.2	1.1	65	64	64	64	63
49	Jordan	13.0	14.0	10.5	12.3	12.7	2.0	65	66	64	64	65
50	Nicaragua	10.8	5.9	11.9	12.8	13.6	9.4	65	56	51	41	41

Rank	Country	Private life	Family life	Community life	National life	Church life	Violence	Total Score WWL 2023	Total Score WWL 2022	Total Score WWL 2021	Total Score WWL 2020	Total Score WWL 2019
51	Kenya	10.3	9.2	11.4	8.0	11.5	13.3	64	63	62	61	61
52	Kuwait	13.5	13.7	9.8	12.3	13.1	1.1	64	64	63	62	60
53	Tanzania	9.3	10.8	10.3	8.6	8.7	15.6	63	61	58	55	52
54	UAE	13.4	13.4	9.9	11.2	12.8	1.1	62	62	62	60	58
55	Nepal	12.0	9.8	9.4	13.0	12.6	4.4	61	64	66	64	64
56	Djibouti	12.3	12.6	12.7	10.1	12.3	0.6	60	59	56	56	56
57	Palestinian Territories	13.0	13.3	9.7	10.3	12.0	2.0	60	59	58	60	57
58	Azerbaijan	13.2	10.0	9.5	12.0	13.6	0.6	59	60	56	57	57
59	Kyrgyzstan	12.9	10.2	11.0	10.4	12.0	2.0	59	58	58	57	56
60	Chad	11.6	8.2	10.2	10.2	10.3	7.6	58	55	53	56	48
61	Russian Federation	12.3	7.9	10.3	11.8	12.8	2.0	57	56	57	60	60
62	Sri Lanka	12.8	9.1	10.6	11.3	9.5	3.9	57	63	62	65	58
63	Rwanda	9.4	7.7	9.0	10.4	11.7	8.9	57	50	42	42	41
64	Venezuela	6.0	4.6	11.7	10.2	11.4	11.7	56	51	39	42	41
65	Burundi	7.6	7.8	9.4	9.8	9.7	11.1	55	52	48	48	43
66	Bahrain	12.7	13.3	8.7	10.7	8.8	0.9	55	57	56	55	55
67	Honduras	7.1	5.0	11.9	7.6	9.8	11.9	53	48	46	39	38
68	Angola	6.8	6.7	8.1	11.5	11.4	7.2	52	51	46	43	42
69	Uganda	8.1	5.0	7.4	6.7	9.2	14.8	51	48	47	48	47
70	Togo	9.2	6.7	9.3	7.1	11.0	5.4	49	44	43	41	42
71	Guinea	10.3	7.5	8.3	8.3	10.5	3.0	48	43	47	45	46
72	South Sudan	5.7	4.4	7.0	6.3	7.6	15.0	46	43	43	44	44
73	El Salvador	7.7	4.2	10.6	7.4	9.1	6.7	46	45	42	38	30
74	Ivory Coast	12.0	6.5	8.7	5.9	8.0	3.3	44	42	42	42	43
75	Gambia	8.3	8.2	8.9	8.8	8.9	1.1	44	44	43	43	43
76	Belarus	9.5	3.8	4.8	9.4	12.1	3.3	43	33	30	28	35

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Sources and definitions

- This country report is a collation of data and analysis based around Open Doors World Watch List (WWL) and includes statistical information on world religions, Christian denominations and people groups prepared by the World Christian Database (WCD).
- Highlighted links in the text can be found written out in full at the conclusion of each main section under the heading “External links”. In order to reduce the length of these reference sections, a table containing links to regularly used sources can be found at the beginning of the “Keys to Understanding” chapter under the heading “Links for general background information”. Where one of these sources has been quoted in the dossier text, a quote reference is supplied as indicated in the second column of the table.
- The WWL 2023 reporting period was 01 October 2021 - 30 September 2022.
- The definition of persecution used in WWL analysis is: “Any hostility experienced as a result of one’s identification with Christ. This can include hostile attitudes, words and actions towards Christians”. This broad definition includes (but is not limited to) restrictions, pressure, discrimination, opposition, disinformation, injustice, intimidation, mistreatment, marginalization, oppression, intolerance, infringement, violation, ostracism, hostilities, harassment, abuse, violence, ethnic cleansing and genocide.
- The latest update of WWL Methodology including appendices can be found on the [World Watch List Documentation](#) page of the Open Doors Analytical website (password: freedom).

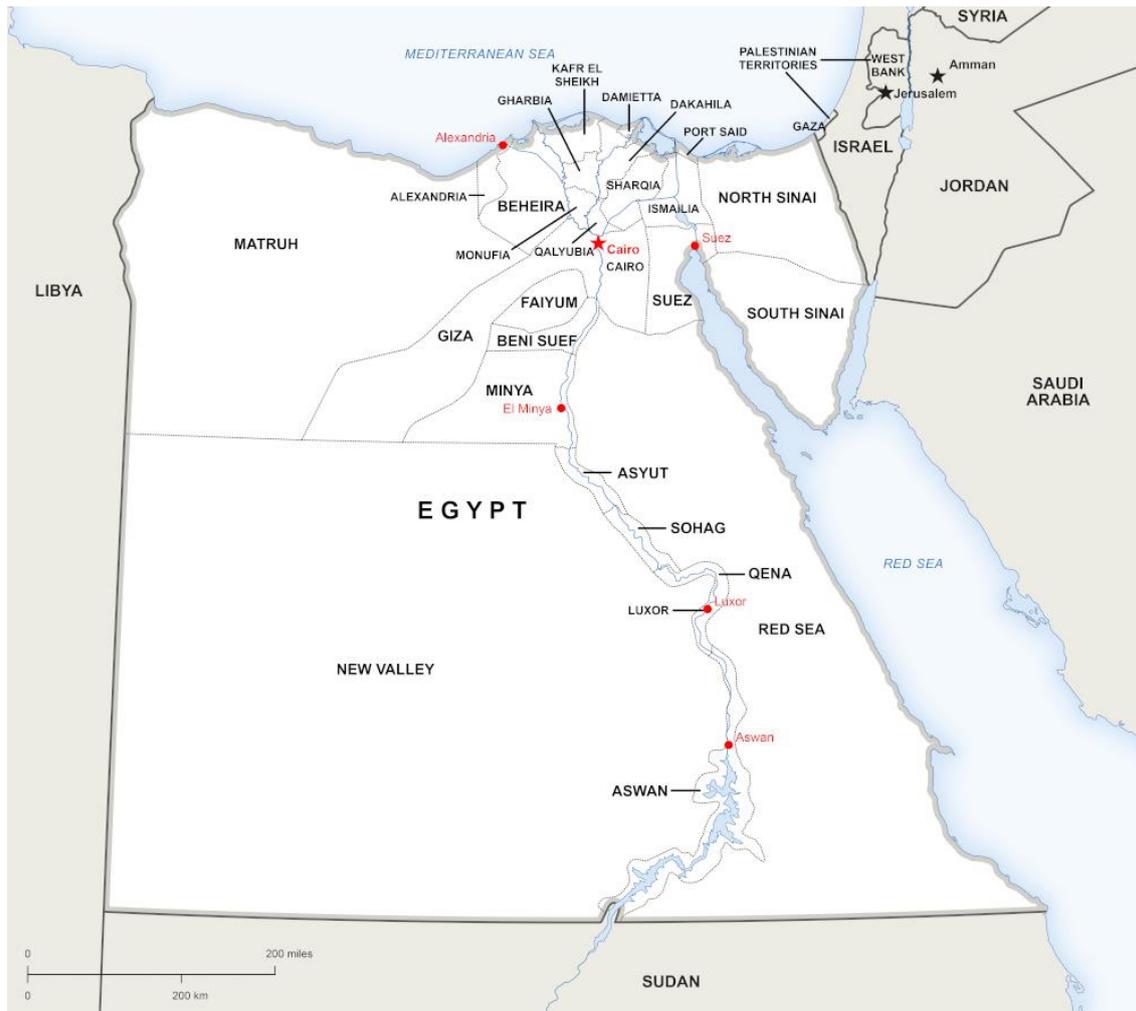
WWL 2023 Situation in brief / Egypt

Brief country details

Egypt: Population (UN estimate for 2022)	Christians	Chr%
106,157,000	9,695,000	9.1

Data source: Johnson T M and Zurlo G A, eds, World Christian Database (Leiden/Boston: Brill, accessed April 2022)

Map of country



Egypt: World Watch List	Points	WWL Rank
WWL 2023	68	35
WWL 2022	71	20
WWL 2021	75	16
WWL 2020	76	16
WWL 2019	76	16

Ranks are shown above whenever the country scored 41 points or more in the WWL 2019-2023 reporting periods

Dominant persecution engines and drivers

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

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

Brief description of the persecution situation

Christians in Egypt report that freedom of religion violations occur mostly at the community level, with many Christians regularly facing discrimination. In addition, incidents take place such as Christian women being harassed in the street (especially in rural areas), Christian children being bullied at state schools or in rare incidents, Muslim mobs forcing Christians to move out after an alleged blasphemy accusation.

These sort of incidents take place mostly in Upper Egypt, where Salafist movements are active in the rural communities. The Islamic Salafi al-Nour party continues to exist and operate legally, although the Constitution prohibits religious parties (Art. 74). Their influence is considerable in rural societies where there is a high percentage of illiteracy and poverty.

Al-Azhar University, one of the most influential Islamic universities in the world, has a prominent place within Egyptian society and even the Constitution. The university's Grand Imam, Ahmed el-Tayyeb, has [clearly stated](#) that there is no place in Islam for Muslims to convert to Christianity (World Watch Monitor / WWM, 22 June 2016).

President al-Sisi regularly speaks positively about Egypt's Christian community and continues efforts to create one Egyptian identity, which includes both Muslims and Christians. However, the lack of serious law enforcement and the unwillingness of local authorities to protect Christians leave them vulnerable to attacks, especially in Upper Egypt. In addition, due to the dictatorial nature of the regime, it is futile for church leaders or other Christians to speak out against these practices.

Furthermore, in clear contrast to how mosques are dealt with, the building of new churches is restricted. Despite promises from the president that a church will be built in every new neighborhood and despite the fact that an increasing number of churches are being legalized through official registration, Christians of all backgrounds face difficulties when trying to find (new) places for holding worship. Communal hostility and mob violence, in particular, continue to cause difficulties.

Christians with a Muslim background have great difficulties in living out their faith since they face enormous pressure from their families to return to Islam. The security services also actively detain and intimidate converts in order to make them stay silent about their conversion, while the state makes it impossible for them to obtain any official recognition of their conversion.

Summary of international obligations and rights violations

Egypt has committed to respect and protect fundamental rights in the following international treaties:

1. [International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights](#) (ICCPR)
2. [International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights](#) (ICESCR)
3. [Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment](#) (CAT)
4. [Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women](#) (CEDAW)
5. [Convention on the Rights of the Child](#) (CRC)

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

- Perpetrators of violence against Christians are sometimes left unpunished (ICCPR Art. 2)
- Christians are arbitrarily accused and charged for blasphemy (ICCPR Arts. 18 and 19)
- Children of Christian converts are automatically registered as Muslim (ICCPR Art. 18 and CRC Art. 14)
- Christians face discrimination in public and private employment because of their faith (ICCPR Art. 26)
- Churches face several obstacles to obtain permits for the construction of new buildings and to receive licenses for legal recognition (ICCPR Arts. 21 and 26)
- Christian women, especially in rural areas, may be targeted, abducted and forced into marriage with Muslim men (ICCPR Art. 23; CEDAW Art. 16 and ICESCR Art. 10)

Specific examples of violations of rights in the reporting period

- **April 2022:** Coptic Orthodox priest Arsanious Wadid (56) was killed on 7 April 2022 by an Islamist at Alexandria's seaside promenade during an outing with his church youth group ([AP News, 8 April 2022](#)). In June 2022, the attacker was sentenced to death ([AP News, 12 June 2022](#)).
- **April 2022:** Several incidents were reported during Ramadan 2022, including a Christian woman being insulted and attacked for not being dressed according to Islamic norms ([International Christian Concern/ICC, 3 May 2022](#)). In addition, a newspaper published a fatwa referring to Christians as "infidels". The publication led to a public outcry, after which the article was retracted and the newspaper issued an apology ([The New Arab, 13 April 2022](#)).
- **April 2022:** 28 year old Rani Rafaat was shot dead. Islamic militants had accused him of connecting with Muslim women on social media ([Open Doors UK, 15 June 2022](#)).
- **June 2022:** A Christian man was attacked and killed in the Sohag governate, Upper Egypt. The perpetrator was declared mentally unstable (by his family), an excuse often used to excuse a radical Muslim attacker ([Watani, 8 June 2022](#), viewer discretion advised).
- **August 2022:** A Christian father and his son were killed in the Sinai Peninsula, most probably by militants linked to the Islamic State group ([WWM, 7 September 2022](#)).

- **August 2022:** A series of fires in nine different churches broke out in August 2022, including in the Abu Sefein church in Giza which killed 41 Christians. In one case, accusations of an arson attack were made, while in other cases electrical malfunction was suggested as the cause of fire ([Watani, 22 August 2022](#)).
- **Forced conversions and marriage etc.:** During the WWL 2023 reporting period, at least 60 young Coptic women were reported missing. It often remains unclear whether the young woman in question escaped from an abusive home or a forced marriage, fell in love with a (Muslim) man and voluntarily ran away or if someone was groomed and converted to Islam by force. There are indications, though, that Salafi groups specifically target (young) Coptic women to convert them to Islam and that financial incentives are offered to (young) Muslim men to marry them. Although this number is comparatively low compared to the overall number of Copts, there are numerous legal and cultural elements that make them particularly vulnerable to such practices, including (legal) difficulty to reconvert to Christianity and family honor preventing Christian women from returning to their families. In addition, there is a striking imbalance between the faiths: Whereas a Christian women can easily convert to Islam and marry a Muslim man, it is culturally and legally impossible for a Christian man to marry a Muslim woman. The latter is in the first place forbidden by law, but more importantly, women are considered the bearers of the (family) honor and (Islamic) pride. The slightest rumor that a Christian man is in a relationship with a Muslim woman is often enough to cause mob violence against Christians. (For more information, see below: *Gender-specific religious persecution.*)

Specific examples of positive developments

- **Church registrations:** The legalization of churches under the 2016 Church construction law has been continuing. Over 2500 churches out of more than 5500 requests have received official registration, but many churches are still waiting ([Christian Solidarity Worldwide, 29 November 2022](#)). The official recognition of churches sometimes leads to sectarian tensions with the local Muslim population.
- **No major violent attack:** During the WWL 2023 reporting period, no major violent attack has been carried out by Islamic militants targeting the Christian Coptic community.
- **Release of prisoners:**
 - **December 2021:** Coptic Christian human rights defender Patrick George Zaki was released on 7 December 2021, after more than 20 months of pre-trial detention during which he was beaten and mistreated. He will still need to appear in court on charges of "publishing false news inside and outside Egypt" and has a travel ban, while the trial of his case has been several times postponed ([HRW, 6 July 2022](#); [SAR, accessed 29 December 2022](#)).
 - **January 2022:** Coptic Christian journalist and activist Ramy Kamel was released on 8 January 2022, after more than two years of pre-trial detention ([USCIRF, accessed 29 December 2022](#)). Kamel was arrested in November 2019 for his continued reporting on violence and discrimination against Christians in Egypt as well as his activism and leadership of the Maspero Youth Union and was charged with "joining a terrorist organization" and "spreading false news". He was reportedly beaten and mistreated while in detention which included solitary confinement.

External Links - Situation in brief

- Brief description of the persecution situation: clearly stated - <https://www.worldwatchmonitor.org/2016/06/al-azhar-to-leave-islam-is-treason/>
- Summary of international obligations and rights violations: International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights - <https://www.ohchr.org/en/professionalinterest/pages/ccpr.aspx>
- Summary of international obligations and rights violations: International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights - <https://www.ohchr.org/en/professionalinterest/pages/cescr.aspx>
- Summary of international obligations and rights violations: Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment - <https://www.ohchr.org/en/professionalinterest/pages/cat.aspx>
- Summary of international obligations and rights violations: Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women - <https://www.ohchr.org/EN/ProfessionalInterest/Pages/CEDAW.aspx>
- Summary of international obligations and rights violations: Convention on the Rights of the Child - <https://www.ohchr.org/en/professionalinterest/pages/crc.aspx>
- Specific examples of violations of rights in the reporting period: AP News, 8 April 2022 - <https://apnews.com/article/middle-east-africa-religion-egypt-alexandria-b572ba40979205cebc3d20db87749640>
- Specific examples of violations of rights in the reporting period: AP News, 12 June 2022 - <https://apnews.com/article/middle-east-egypt-africa-alexandria-cairo-99ae5a40e19a94955b8ad3b5afcaabdf>
- Specific examples of violations of rights in the reporting period: International Christian Concern/ICC, 3 May 2022 - <https://www.persecution.org/2022/05/03/coptic-woman-slapped-verbally-assaulted-muslim-man/>
- Specific examples of violations of rights in the reporting period: The New Arab, 13 April 2022 - <https://www.newarab.com/news/outcry-after-egypt-fatwa-calls-non-muslims-infidel>
- Specific examples of violations of rights in the reporting period: Open Doors UK, 15 June 2022 - <https://www.opendoorsuk.org/news/latest-news/egypt-murder-facebook/>
- Specific examples of violations of rights in the reporting period: Watani, 8 June 2022 - <https://en.wataninet.com/news-2/crime/copt-from-akhmim-hacked-to-death-by-muslim-extremist/38881/>
- Specific examples of violations of rights in the reporting period: WWM, 7 September 2022 - <https://www.worldwatchmonitor.org/2022/09/egypt-copt-and-son-killed-in-is-attack>
- Specific examples of violations of rights in the reporting period: Watani, 22 August 2022 - <https://en.wataninet.com/coptic-affairs-coptic-affairs/coptic-affairs/possible-arson-behind-fire-in-alexandria-church/39506/>
- Specific examples of positive developments: Christian Solidarity Worldwide, 29 November 2022 - <https://www.csw.org.uk/2022/11/29/press/5860/article.htm>
- Specific examples of positive developments: HRW, 6 July 2022; - <https://www.hrw.org/news/2022/07/06/egypt-arbitrary-travel-bans-throttle-civil-society>
- Specific examples of positive developments: SAR, accessed 29 December 2022 - <https://www.scholarsatrisk.org/actions/patrick-george-zaki-egypt/>
- Specific examples of positive developments: USCIRF, accessed 29 December 2022 - <https://www.uscirf.gov/religious-prisoners-conscience/forb-victims-database/ramy-kamel>

WWL 2023: Keys to understanding / Egypt

Links for general background information

Name	Quote Reference	Link	Last accessed on
Amnesty International 2021/22 country report – covering 154 countries	AI country report 2021/22 (pp.152-157)	https://www.amnesty.org/en/wp-content/uploads/2022/03/POL1048702022ENGLISH.pdf	8 June 2022
BBC News country profile	BBC country profile	https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-africa-13313370	8 June 2022
Bertelsmann Transformation Index country report 2022 – covering 137 countries	BTI report 2022	https://bti-project.org/en/reports/country-dashboard/EGY	8 June 2022
CIA World Factbook	CIA Factbook	https://www.cia.gov/the-world-factbook/countries/egypt/	8 June 2022
Crisis24 country report (Garda World) – covering 193 countries	Crisis24 country report	https://crisis24.garda.com/insights-intelligence/intelligence/country-reports/egypt	8 June 2022
Economist Intelligence Unit Democracy Index 2020	EIU 2021 (p.52)	https://pages.eiu.com/rs/753-RIQ-438/images/eiu-democracy-index-2021.pdf	8 June 2022
FFP's Fragile States Index 2022 – covering 179 countries	FSI 2022	https://fragilestatesindex.org/country-data/	21 July 2022
Freedom House's 2022 Democracy index – covering 29 countries, Egypt not included	Democracy Index 2022	https://freedomhouse.org/countries/nations-transit/scores	
Freedom House's 2022 Global Freedom index – covering 210 countries	Global Freedom Index 2022	https://freedomhouse.org/country/egypt/freedom-world/2022	8 June 2022
Freedom House's Freedom on the Net 2022 report – covering 70 countries	Freedom on the Net 2022	https://freedomhouse.org/country/egypt/freedom-net/2022	13 January 2023
Human Rights Watch World Report 2022 (country chapter) – covering 100+ countries	HRW 2022 country chapter	https://www.hrw.org/world-report/2022/country-chapters/egypt	8 June 2022
Internet World Stats 2022	IWS 2022	https://www.internetworldstats.com/africa.htm#eg	8 June 2022
Middle East Concern – covering 24 countries	MEC Egypt 2022	https://meconcern.org/countries/egypt/	21 July 2022
RSF's 2022 World Press Freedom Index – covering 180 countries	World Press Freedom 2022	https://rsf.org/en/country/egypt	8 June 2022
Transparency International's 2021 Corruption Perceptions Index – covering 180 countries	CPI 2021	https://www.transparency.org/en/cpi/2021/index/egy	8 June 2022
UNDP's Global Human Development Indicators (country profile) – covering 187 countries	HDI profile	https://hdr.undp.org/data-center/specific-country-data#/countries/EGY	8 June 2022
US State Department's 2021 International Religious Freedom (country profile)	IRFR 2021	https://www.state.gov/reports/2021-report-on-international-religious-freedom/egypt/	8 June 2022
USCIRF 2022 country reports – covering 15 CPC / 12 SWL	USCIRF 2022	https://www.uscifr.gov/sites/default/files/2022-05/2022%20Egypt.pdf	8 June 2022
World Bank country overview – covering 178 countries	World Bank overview 2022	https://www.worldbank.org/en/country/egypt/overview#1	8 June 2022
World Bank country profile data – covering 222 countries	World Bank profile (2020 data)	https://datbank.worldbank.org/en/views/reports/reportwidget.aspx?Report_Name=CountryProfileId=b450fd57tbar=ydd=ylnf=nzm=ncountry=EGY	8 June 2022
World Bank Macro Poverty Outlook 2022 – covering 147 countries (divided per region)	Macro Poverty Outlook 2022 (pp.8-9)	https://thedocs.worldbank.org/en/doc/65cf93926fdb3ea23b72f277fc249a72-0500042021/related/mpo-mena.pdf	8 June 2022

Recent history

After serving as president for three decades (from 1981 to 2011), Hosni Mubarak was forced to step down during the Arab Spring uprisings. The demonstrators put forward demands for more political freedom and expressed the discontent of the population with the country's social and economic situation. In June 2012, after a brief transition, Mohamed Morsi, a politician who was a senior member of the Muslim Brotherhood, won the presidential election (gaining 52% of the votes). "Victory for Islam" was a widely used slogan in his election campaign, which raised levels of fear among the Coptic minority. Once in power, Morsi assumed dictatorial executive powers that alienated many Egyptians. Popular demonstrations were organized by a group called the Tamarrod which enjoyed the [support](#) of the police, the army, businessmen and also prominent Islamic and Christian Coptic religious figures (International Crisis Group/ICG, 7 August 2013). Ultimately, the army [intervened](#) and ousted President Morsi alleging that he had failed to respond satisfactorily to the demands of the Egyptian people (BBC News, 4 July 2013). The army adopted its own transition road map which culminated in the adoption of a new constitution and the holding of new parliamentary and presidential elections.

At the end of the process, Field-Marshal Abdul Fattah al-Sisi emerged as the new Egyptian strong man. Al-Sisi was minister of defense when Morsi was in power and he was the principal figure behind the ousting of Morsi. He was hailed by some as a hero who saved Egypt from the clutches of the Muslim Brotherhood, while others contend that his leadership is a sure sign of Egypt's return to the old days of autocracy backed by the army. Once the new constitution was adopted,

al-Sisi ran for president as a civilian and - given the personality cult that had been built around him prior to the election - it was not surprising that he [won](#) with an overwhelming majority (ICG, 7 August 2013). Since al-Sisi's ascent to power there has been a large-scale crackdown on the Muslim Brotherhood. In March 2018, al-Sisi was [re-elected](#) with 97% of the votes (The Guardian, 2 April 2018). This huge win is a clear indication of how effectively all opposition had been removed during his first term.

In February 2019, parliament members voted (later passed by a referendum) on extending the presidency term to allow President al-Sisi to stay in office for another 12 years after finishing his current term. New amendments also boosted the power of the army, already the dominant force in Egyptian politics. The political situation is generating some tension in the country as even some of al-Sisi's supporters are quite frustrated by the army's strong influence concerning the country's political decisions and economy. President al-Sisi's popularity is waning and hopes are currently low that he will be able to secure the basic needs for Egyptians in the low income bracket.

The COVID-19 pandemic hit the country hard in 2020. The whole COVID-19 crisis in Egypt was accompanied by fake news and conspiracy theories, with some Muslim and Christians clerics claiming that Muslims or Christians could not catch the virus ([Al-Monitor, 31 March 2020](#)). However, it did not help that the Egyptian government arrested health workers who dared to criticize the government's approach under anti-terrorism laws ([Amnesty International/AI, 18 June 2020](#)). Despite the release of some political prisoners because of the pandemic, the Egyptian government did not at that point free Coptic activists Ramy Kamel and Patrick George Zaki ([The Tablet, 28 April 2020](#)) - their only 'wrongdoing' being the highlighting of the plight of Egypt's Copts (Kamel, who was later released in January 2022) and the LGBT+ community (Zaki, who was released in December 2021). Meanwhile, Coptic lawyer Peter Ragheb remains in pre-trial detention. He was arrested in April 2021 on charges of "joining a terrorist group" and "spreading false news" after sharing articles relating to the political and human rights situation in Egypt on his social media accounts ([Egyptian Front for Human Rights, 6 April 2021](#)). This is an indication that President al-Sisi may not have been entirely sincere in his 2014 public declaration to be a "[protector](#)" of the Christian community; or only as long as Christians actively show support for him (Egyptian Independent, 28 November 2014).

First the COVID-19 crisis and then the worldwide economic deterioration following the Russian invasion of Ukraine in February 2022 caused an exceptional rise in costs for food and energy, with the Central Bank devaluing the Egyptian pound by 15% in March 2022 to halt inflation ([Al Araby, 21 March 2022](#)). Egypt is the world largest wheat importer, with 80% of the supply coming from both Russia and Ukraine. With supply chains being severely strained, poverty will likely significantly increase while already a third of the population lives below the poverty level ([AP News, 25 September 2022](#)). A new major loan in return for reforms has been approved by the IMF, but the majority of past loans seemed to end up in the hands of the military and security establishment instead of being invested in the economy ([Forbes, 6 November 2022](#)). In the meantime, any dissent remains severely oppressed by the regime, with arbitrary travel bans and the freezing of financial assets being used to stifle any criticism ([HRW, 6 July 2022](#)).

On the geopolitical level, Egypt participated in several historical summits which included Israel, in line with the Abraham Accords ([Al-Jazeera, 22 March 2022](#), [Carnegie Endowment, 6 April 2022](#)). While strategically and politically aligning itself with the United Arab Emirates and Saudi Arabia, it also received major investment from both countries ([The Africa report, 4 July 2022](#)).

Political and legal landscape

The Arab Republic of Egypt has a semi-presidential system. On paper, Egypt is a democracy. In practice, ever since King Farouk was overthrown in 1952, the powers of the parliament have always been weak and - de facto - the president rules alone. The independence of the judiciary is limited and it is not unusual for the government to simply ignore court rulings ([Fanack, 7 July 2020](#)).

With President al-Sisi sworn into power in 2014 the situation in Egypt stabilized, but according to Human Rights Watch ([HRW 2021 country chapter](#)): "Under President Abdel Fattah al-Sisi's government, Egypt has been experiencing its worst human rights crisis in many decades. Tens of thousands of government critics, including journalists and human rights defenders, remain imprisoned on politically motivated charges, many in lengthy pretrial detention. Authorities frequently use terrorism charges against peaceful activists and harassed and detained relatives of dissidents abroad."

Since al-Sisi's rise to power, many of the Muslim Brotherhood's members have been detained, prosecuted and sentenced to death or life imprisonment and the movement has been forced to go underground ([Wilson Center, 17 March 2021](#)). The government continues to ban most forms of independent organization and peaceful assembly and has cracked down on various dissident and opposition groups.

One cannot help but feel a sense of déjà vu now that a military strongman is once again cracking down on the Muslim Brotherhood and all opposition in general. President al-Sisi's regime wants to project an image of being a guarantor of stability, order and security for Christians. The administration seems determined to tackle the increasing Islamization of the state that accelerated under the leadership of President Morsi and the Muslim Brotherhood. At the same time, there is a risk that segments of the Muslim Brotherhood and their supporters, who feel aggrieved by their loss of power and the repression they are facing, might become more radicalized and join underground militant Islamic groups in great numbers. Such developments could lead to a further polarization of society in Egypt and could pose a serious risk to the nation's stability and the security of Christian Egyptians in the long run.

The current high level of support for President al-Sisi's regime by a large number of the churches and Christians, might also be used against them. Followers of the Muslim Brotherhood and other Islamist groups are likely to [view church buildings](#) and Christians as easy targets to show that the Egyptian government is not able to protect its supporters (WWM, 11 November 2019).

According to the Economist Intelligence Unit (EIU 2021): Egypt is classified as an 'authoritarian' regime.

According to Middle East Concern (MEC Egypt 2022):

- "Egypt's 2014 constitution establishes Islam as the State religion and the principles of Islamic law as the main source of legislation. It also provides that Christians and Jews may govern personal status and religious affairs according to their own codes. The constitution affirms the principle of non-discrimination, including on the basis of religion. It states that freedom of religion is absolute and guarantees freedom of religious practice in accordance with regulations, though this right is limited to adherents of the Abrahamic religions (i.e. Judaism, Christianity and Islam). Although religious conversion is not prohibited in codified legislation, conversion away from Islam is not allowed in practice."
- "In late August 2016 Egypt's House of Representatives passed Law 80/2016 on the construction of churches. The law aims to make obtaining a permit for the construction of churches easier. The president has since then given permission for several new church buildings Critics complain that under the new law the National Security Agency maintains a de facto veto on church building permits. Prime Ministerial Decree 199/2017 formed a committee that deals with existing unlicensed church buildings. Church denominations had until September 2017 to file a list of unlicensed building with the committee. Of the more than 3,700 applications for a license the committee had issued 1,109 licenses by the end of August, 2019." *[By November 2022, the number had risen to over 2500. See above: Specific examples of positive developments].*

Gender perspective

The Egyptian legal landscape has long been restrictive towards women and girls. Whilst it ratified the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) in 1981, it maintained a [reservation to Article 16](#) (UNDP, 2018, "Egypt: Gender Justice and the Law"), which provides for the elimination of discrimination against women as they enter or exit a marriage. Egypt has made positive steps in recent decades, introducing several laws that improve gender equality such as the [2008 Child law](#), which raised the minimum age of marriage from 16 to 18. The President of the Republic even declared 2017 as 'the year of the Egyptian woman' and female representation in Parliament has [steadily risen since 2012](#) (Index Mundi, accessed 12 August 2022). Despite this, accomplishments lie behind aspirations and many laws are inadequate. Child marriage continues, particularly in rural areas; [17%](#) of girls are reportedly married by the age of 18 (Girls Not Brides, 2022). Under the Muslim Personal Status Law, men have the right to divorce their wives by *talaq*. Women can apply for fault-based divorces, although judges have discretion regarding the threshold of harm and whether divorce is granted. Upon divorce, guardianship of children belongs to the father ([UNDP, 2018](#)).

Men face conscription into the army from the age of 18, where they serve 18-36 months. Within this context, Christians face discrimination. They are reportedly denied promotion and positions within certain areas of the armed forces and security services ([The Century Foundation, 2019](#)).

Religious landscape

Egypt: Religious context	Number of adherents	%
Christians	9,695,000	9.1
Muslim	95,762,000	90.2
Hindu	1,700	0.0
Buddhist	1,000	0.0
Ethno-religionist	0	0.0
Jewish	100	0.0
Bahai	2,500	0.0
Atheist	97,800	0.1
Agnostic	594,000	0.6
Other	2,100	0.0
<i>OTHER includes Chinese folk, New religionist, Sikh, Spiritist, Taoist, Confucianist, Jain, Shintoist, Zoroastrian.</i>		

Data source: Johnson T M and Zurlo G A, eds, *World Christian Database* (Leiden/Boston: Brill, accessed April 2022)

Islam is by far the most dominant religion in Egypt. Estimating the total number of Christians in the country remains a matter of some debate, with estimates varying between 7 million and 16 million. Egyptian church leaders, for instance, believe the total number is over 15% of the country's 106 million population. Open Doors follows the WCD estimate of 9,695,000 Christians.

Although Christianity has deep roots in Egypt going back centuries before the advent of Islam in North Africa, Christians are often marginalized and treated as second class citizens in modern Egypt. Christians can be found all over the country, but "they are particularly concentrated in Upper Egypt (the southern part of Egypt) and in major cities such as Cairo and Alexandria. Suburbs in Cairo, other cities and some villages are sometimes regarded or described as 'Christian areas', but few are exclusively Christian (or Muslim)." ([Australian Department of Foreign affairs and Trade, May 2017](#))

Humanist International writes in its [Freedom of Thought Report](#) (accessed 29 December 2022): "One of the most visible signs of discrimination against atheists, apostates from Islam and members of minority religions is the policy concerning the Egyptian State ID cards, which include a section on religion where only one of the three "divine religions" can be recognized. ... Muslim-born individuals who leave Islam are not allowed to change the religion field on their identity card. Only in a few cases in which Christians converted to Islam and subsequently returned to Christianity have the Egyptian courts, albeit inconsistently, allowed the change in the documents."

Within this religious context, men and women face significant pressure, particularly converts from Islam to Christianity. Egyptian law permits Christians to convert to Islam, but despite several [campaigns](#) against the disparity, not vice versa (European Centre for Law and Justice, 25 January 2010). As such, a Christian woman can be married to a Muslim man, but a Christian man cannot marry a Muslim woman. There also have been multiple debates over the veiling of women ([Al-Monitor, July 2022](#)).

Economic landscape

World Bank puts the Egyptian economy in the lower middle income category (World Bank, [World by Income report 2021](#)).

According to the CIA Factbook and [World Bank's Economic Update](#) (April 2022):

- **GPD per capita (PPP):** \$12,000 (2019 est.)
- **Unemployment:** 7.86%, with youth unemployment being two times as high at 19.2%. The unemployment rate has dropped slightly in recent years, but structural problems of illiteracy and poverty continue to be devastating, with the most recent devaluation of the Egyptian pound further increasing poverty rates and deteriorating the living standard for the majority of the Egyptian population.
- **Percentage of population below national poverty line:** 32.5% (2017 est.)
- "Egypt undertook exchange rate, monetary and fiscal measures in response to adverse global developments (including soaring prices and tightening financial conditions), aggravated by the war in Ukraine. Yet, these policy actions also reflect underlying structural challenges. The surge in growth to 9% ... is expected to slow down gradually through 2022/23.
- "Reforms to enhance private investment, exports and FDI remain crucial for the economy's resilience and competitiveness."

The Fragile State Index (FSI 2022) shows that there have been small but steady improvements in the economic indicators, but the indicators probably do not yet reflect the impact of the Russia/Ukraine conflict on the economy.

President al-Sisi's administration began early on to attempt to revitalize the Egyptian economy and create much needed economic growth and jobs. However, many Egyptians suffered from the effects of the 2016 devaluation of the Egyptian pound which was carried out to secure a loan from the International Monetary Fund ([The Guardian, 3 November 2016](#)). In October 2022, a second devaluation of the Egyptian pound took place as the government wanted to secure another loan from the IMF, which led to inflation increasing to 18.75% in November 2022 ([Reuters, 6 December 2022](#)). This move comes on top of a 14% depreciation against the dollar which the Central Bank had allowed in March 2022 ([Al-Jazeera, 27 October 2022](#)).

Increased taxes and higher prices for gas, electricity and water have led to sharp price increases in general. While the middle class is struggling to make ends meet, the high poverty rate especially affects many Christians living in rural areas. The increased economic pressure on already marginalized families fuels migration. In addition, poverty is easily used to manipulate poor people for religious and political purposes. Unemployed Muslim youth can be influenced

by radical Islamic groups to initiate attacks on churches and individual Christians. Additionally, there are indications that radical Islamic groups target poor Christians to convert them to Islam. Especially women and girls are vulnerable, as they become easy targets for forced marriages.

Discrimination against Christians in the job market remains evident, especially in governmental institutions. This applies in general to all Christians in Egypt, but converts from a Muslim background are particularly vulnerable.

Gender perspective

A 2017 Inheritance law has gone some way to protecting the economic rights of women, preventing persons from denying women their inheritance rights ([Al-Monitor, 12 December 2017](#)). Nonetheless, according to Inheritance Law No. 77 of 1943, all citizens – including Christians - are subject to Islamic Inheritance Law, which typically stipulates that men should inherit double that of what a woman receives. There have been positive developments in this regard, however; in one case an Egyptian court [ruled](#) that a Coptic Christian woman should receive equal inheritance to her brothers. She was encouraged by her brothers to fight for this right (The Times, 27 November 2019).

Social and cultural landscape

According to the CIA Factbook:

- **Main ethnic groups:** The majority of the Egyptian population (99.7%) are ethnically Egyptian.
- **Main languages:** The official language is Arabic, with French and English "being widely understood by the educated classes".
- **Urban population:** In 2022, 43% of the population lived in urban areas, while the annual urbanization rate stands at 1.9%
- **Literacy rate:** 71.2% of the population can read and write; with a significant difference between men (76.5%) and women (65.5%) (2017).
- **Youth population:** The younger generation - up to 24 years of age - makes up almost 52% of the population, making it another African country with a young population in need of (economic) opportunities
- **IDPs/Refugees:** In 2022, Egypt hosted 140,000 Syrian refugees. In addition, there are 70,000 refugees from the Palestinian West Bank and Gaza Strip residing in the country (2021); as well as roughly 70,000 refugees from Sudan and South Sudan. Other refugees are from Eritrea (21,000), Ethiopia (15,000), Yemen (10,000) Iraq (6,800) and Somalia (6,800).
- **Life expectancy:** 74.5 years on average; women (75.7 years), men (73.3 years).
- **Education:** Egyptians enjoy 14 years of schooling on average (2018). This figure is the same for both boys and girls.

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

- **HDI score and ranking:** Egypt ranks #116 out 189 countries in the Human Development Index (HDI). Despite ongoing difficulties, the combined ratio of life expectancy, educa-

tion and per capita income gives a high score of 0.707.

- **Gender inequality:** With a Gender Development Index (GDI) score of 0.882, women are still clearly disadvantaged in comparison to men, although the score improved slightly compared to 2018 (0.880). The GDI measures the differences in life expectancy, years of education and GNI per capita per gender.

Egypt has a high illiteracy rate, but with significant differences between urban areas (17.7%) and rural areas (32.2%) and between men (21.2%) and women (30.8%), according to the Bertelsmann Transformation Index (BTI 2022, p.22). It is expected that the gender gap will gradually decline as there is equal participation in education between men and women. In addition, poverty, a low level of health awareness and education and high and widespread domestic violence are common for many Egyptians, including Christians. It is not unusual for children in villages to leave school at an early age to help earn family income. Reportedly, many Christian children face discrimination within the educational system from both teachers and peers. Although there are private Christians schools, most Christians cannot afford them. Power dynamics are at play at all levels of society: Muslims oppress Christians, men oppress women, and occasionally church leaders may use their authority to oppress the most vulnerable Christians of other denominations.

Culturally, Egypt is conservative and despite its large urban centers (Cairo and Alexandria) is dominated by tribal attitudes. The population is not as ethnically diverse as other countries in North Africa and the Middle East and has a strong national identity. Within Egypt's patriarchal context, men and women are expected to assume traditional gender roles. Women are legally required to obey their husbands (Law No. 100 of 1985: Article 11b) and should she fail to do so, her husband can file an obedience complaint against her ([OECD, 2019](#)). Domestic violence is common in Egypt, and reportedly worsened during the COVID-19 crisis ([UN Women, April 2020](#); [Egypt Today, July 2021](#)).

Especially with the rise of more radical interpretations of Islam, the pressure on Christians has been increasing over the past few decades. Egypt seeks to be a social and cultural center for Sunni Islam and continues to be influential through its Islamic Al-Azhar University and its media production houses. President al-Sisi called upon scholars at the prestigious Al-Azhar University to fight radicalism and introduce reforms in Islamic teaching. This has, for example, led to the Grand Imam of Al-Azhar stating that "the terms *dhimmi* (the protected but second-class Christian or Jewish community in a Muslim state) and *jizya* (the tax paid to achieve such status in lieu of converting to Islam) no longer have any relevance in Egypt" ([Christianity Today, 22 February 2021](#)). However, in rural and impoverished areas in particular, radical imams and less tolerant brands of Islam are clearly present. The government is making efforts to reverse this trend, for example through more moderate media content, but has not been very successful so far.

Christians in Egypt report that, although Muslims and Christians have much contact in everyday life, it cannot be called a peaceful co-existence. Although all speak the same language, there is nevertheless considerable division caused by their contrasting belief systems. Radical Muslims in rural areas, where many Christians live, promote attitudes of rejection towards Christians, which is fertile ground for aggression, especially targeting women and children. Christian

women, in rural areas in particular, find themselves targeted by radical Islamic groups and as a result kidnapping for either conversion, ransom or forced marriage is not uncommon. In addition, when sectarian violence emerges, conflicts are often solved using so-called 'customary reconciliation councils'. However, because of their minority position, "reconciliation sessions often seem to punish Christians, leaving Muslim perpetrators with few consequences" ([Eshhad, March 2016](#)).

Technological landscape

According to Internet World Stats (IWS 2022):

- **Internet usage:** 51.9% penetration (December 2021)
- **Facebook usage:** 51.7% penetration (January 2022)

Internet usage saw a slight decrease, with the previous survey showing 52.5% penetration in June 2021, but up from 48.1% in December 2019. According to [Statista \(March 2022\)](#), 38.9% of Facebook users are women and 61.1% men.

According to the World Bank profile:

- **Mobile phone subscriptions:** 93.2 per 100 people, increasing from 85.4 in 2010.

According to [Statista](#), the Internet is more accessible to men (Statista, 7 July 2022): In 2018, 52.4% of men had access to the Internet, compared to 41.3% of women. The gender gap in relation to mobile phone ownership stands at 8%, with men ahead of women ([GSMA, 2022](#)). It is therefore harder for women to access digital Christian resources or online Christian communities.

According to Freedom House, Freedom on the Net 2022:

- "Internet freedom and the rights of internet users are severely constrained in Egypt. The Supreme Council for Media Regulation (SCMR) continued to manipulate the media landscape by blocking independent news sites and forcing publishers to remove online content deemed critical of the government. Criminal penalties, harassment, and surveillance have contributed to high levels of self-censorship among Egyptian internet users, particularly independent media outlets and government critics."

Other sources report:

- Reporters Without Borders' World Press Freedom 2022: "Censorship, police raids, office shutdowns, arrests, sham trials, forced disappearances and arbitrary detentions are a daily reality for Egyptian journalists. Defamation campaigns against them are common, and they live under omnipresent surveillance. ... Virtually all media are under direct control of the state, of the secret services or of a handful of millionaire businessmen with influence in ruling circles. By contrast, outlets who refuse to submit to censorship are blocked, as in the case of independent news site *Mada Masr*, inaccessible in Egypt since 2017."

- Data from the Committee to Protect Journalists shows that at least 21 journalists are currently imprisoned in Egypt, with one missing ([CPJ, accessed 3 January 2023](#)).

Under al-Sisi, media censorship in Egypt has [increased](#) at a drastic pace (Atlantic Council, 28 August 2018). In 2018, the president ratified the Anti-Cyber and Information Technology Crimes Law, which ostensibly aims to combat "extremism" and "terrorism". However, these laws allow Egyptian authorities to arbitrarily block websites that are considered a threat to national security or to the national economy. Individuals who visit these websites can face steep fines and penalties. Despite the anti-cyber laws restricting the press and all other media channels, thus limiting freedom of speech, Christians in Egypt report that modern communications technology is nevertheless widely used in Egypt. Social media (especially Facebook) is used to mobilize public opinion. However, all social media is monitored by the government and criticism of the government or Islam is not tolerated. Most churches are currently using little modern technology in youth-work or for evangelistic purposes.

Security situation

The domestic security situation in Egypt is currently stable except in the northeast of the Sinai region, near the border with Gaza, where the struggle between the Egyptian army and violent Islamic militants continues. The Egyptian security forces conduct operations against these militant groups on a regular basis, often at no small cost to the local population ([TIMEP, 6 April 2021](#)). These targeted groups include Islamic State group-affiliated *Wilayat Sinai*, which probably also conducted the terror attack against a Sufi mosque in the north of the Sinai in 2017, killing 305 people. Since then, the Egyptian army has increased its military operations in the region ([Al-Monitor, 7 September 2020](#)). However, it is very difficult to control the entire area and the security forces cannot prevent militant groups from attacking undermanned checkpoints and sometimes civilian targets. The threat of bomb attacks remains, especially for minority groups (including Christians). It is likely that this situation will continue in the short term.

There is also the threat of protests becoming violent. Minor demonstrations, initiated mostly by the Muslim Brotherhood, occurred on 20 September 2019 in protest against government policies but they were quickly contained by arresting the demonstrators. Fear increased after the security services started checking the mobile phones of ordinary pedestrians who had shared messages about the protest ([Washington Post, 30 October 2019](#)). In March 2020, four activists were arrested after demonstrating for the release of prisoners threatened by the COVID-19 virus in overcrowded prisons ([The Guardian, 18 March 2020](#)). In September 2020, "small but widespread" protests occurred in remembrance of the 2019 protests ([HRW, 13 October 2020](#)). However, due to the very oppressive nature of the regime, protests are scarce and often quickly quelled. Even around international summits like the COP27 Climate Change Conference there is no room for demonstrations to take place, while former protest leaders languish in jail ([The Guardian, 29 June 2022](#)).

Internationally, Egypt supports Libyan strongman Field Marshall Khalifa Haftar, who controls the east of Libya. Like al-Sisi, Haftar is strongly opposed to Islamists and the Muslim Brotherhood (which Egypt has declared to be a terrorist organization). During 2020, Haftar's forces suffered considerable losses after Turkey brought military support to the UN-backed government which

controls the west of Libya. Thus, in June 2020, al-Sisi announced that Egypt's army would intervene if Haftar were to lose more territory ([BBC News, 17 August 2020](#)). However, this has not yet happened since a ceasefire was reached in October 2020. Following the ceasefire and Haftar's defeat, it seems that Egypt has started betting on different horses, as al-Sisi opened up towards the western government and left Haftar out of diplomatic meetings ([The Arab Weekly, 6 July 2021](#)). Above all, Egypt wants stability in its border region and hence is actively trying to find a political solution for the volatile situation in Libya ([Al Monitor, 12 April 2022](#)).

Most Egyptian Christians support President al-Sisi for the very reason that he has vowed to keep Egypt safe and to [protect](#) the Christian community against terrorist attacks (Egyptian Independent, 28 November 2014). Nevertheless, Christians remain vulnerable, especially in the face of mob attacks. Rumors of alleged blasphemy or the opening of a new church can lead to mob violence against Christians. In upper Egypt, the local authorities use so-called 'reconciliation sessions' to resolve a conflict, which - de facto - often means that Muslim attackers go free. This has resulted in a culture of impunity for violence against Christians in that area.

Further reflecting the fragility of the Egyptian justice system, the perpetrators of a 2016 attack on elderly Coptic Christian woman Soad Thabet (who was stripped naked and paraded through the streets) were acquitted after their appeal in December 2020, with another legal case being repeatedly delayed ([Providence, 26 January 2021](#)).

Gender perspective

Coptic women and girls can be particularly vulnerable for exploitation across Egypt, with reports of forced marriages, disappearances and occasionally abductions. While some are kidnapped directly off the street, this tends to be a rare occurrence. More commonly, they are approached by Muslim men who groom them into romantic relationships and into eloping with them, promising they would convert to Christianity; in those cases girls can be then forcibly married and forcibly converted to Islam. Captors have reportedly filmed the girls being sexually abused and used the footage as blackmail material to deter them from returning to their families, utilizing the strong [shame culture](#) in Egypt to their advantage (J Zakarriya, 2019, Journal of International Women's Studies). The response by Egyptian police has been [dismissive and ineffective](#), particularly in instances where Christian girls displayed initial willingness to elope (WWM, 14 September 2017). Additionally, conversion to Islam is always accepted and encouraged.

Trends analysis

1) Egypt continues to be susceptible to the influence of radical Islam

Egypt is an important country in the region due to its strategic location, its territorial and population size and because of its historical and diplomatic influence. The Church is also of critical importance since the Christian presence in Egypt is the largest Christian population in the region. Throughout the 20th century and beyond, it seems that competing views of the Egyptian state have been vying for dominance in the country. One view (advanced by the army and political establishment) puts more emphasis on nationalism as opposed to religion, while another view (that of Islamists and the Muslim Brotherhood) wants to make religion the foundation and central element of Egyptian identity. Both viewpoints have offered Egyptian

Christians little by way of rights and security and as the competition between these two camps unfolds, Egyptian Christians are often caught in the political crossfire and forced to make difficult choices. The high level of illiteracy, economic stagnation and demographic pressure also means that - regardless of the political dispensation in the country - Egyptian society continues to be susceptible to the influence of the most radical and intolerant versions of Islam that are particularly appealing to the youth and the poor.

2) Christians remain vulnerable

General security has improved under President al-Sisi. No large-scale terror attacks have taken place since 2018. Nonetheless, (sexual) harassment of women remains common. Despite the president's inclusive rhetoric, sectarian violence and religious discrimination remain problematic, especially in upper Egypt, in rural areas and in economically disadvantaged urban areas. It is likely that traditional reconciliation councils, which are prone to injustice, will continue to be used. In addition, al-Sisi's ongoing crackdown on any dissent or criticism, including human rights activism by human rights defenders like Coptic activists Ramy Kamel (released January 2022) and Patrick George Zaki (released December 2021, but with trial pending), will continue to make it difficult for churches and Christians to speak up for themselves and address injustices. Hence, the non-violent forms of rights violations that are prevalent in various spheres of life are likely to continue without much change for the better.

External Links - Keys to understanding

- Recent history: support - <https://www.crisisgroup.org/middle-east-north-africa/north-africa/egypt/marching-circles-egypt-s-dangerous-second-transition>
- Recent history: intervened - <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-middle-east-23173794>
- Recent history: won - <https://d2071andvip0wj.cloudfront.net/marching-in-circles-egypt-s-dangerous-second-transition.pdf>
- Recent history: re-elected - <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2018/apr/02/sisi-poised-to-declare-landslide-victory-in-egypt-election>
- Recent history: Al-Monitor, 31 March 2020 - <https://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/originals/2020/03/egyptian-superstitions-jokes-on-coronavirus.html>
- Recent history: Amnesty International/AI, 18 June 2020 - <https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2020/06/egypt-health-care-workers-forced-to-make-impossible-choice-between-death-or-jail/>
- Recent history: The Tablet, 28 April 2020 - <https://thetablet.org/despite-coronavirus-fears-egypt-refuses-to-release-coptic-activists/>
- Recent history: Egyptian Front for Human Rights, 6 April 2021 - <https://egyptianfront.org/ar/2021/04/peter-65-2021/>
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WWL 2023: Church information / Egypt

Christian origins

The Coptic* Orthodox Church prides itself in the tradition which names the Bible's New Testament apostle Mark as founder of Christianity in Egypt. In Alexandria, a vibrant church developed with its own 'school' of theology in the 2nd century. This was home to the Church Father, Athanasius of Alexandria (+ 373 AD), who was one of the foremost theologians of the worldwide church, especially for his defence of the view of God as a Trinity. Initially, the church was mainly a Greek phenomenon in the cities, but the original Egyptian population was soon won over for the new faith as well. Egypt became the cradle of monasticism; the Monastery of St Anthony became an important model for monasticism throughout Europe. *The term [Coptic](#) is derived from the ancient Greek word for Egyptian (ABC News, 9 April 2017).

Persecution under Roman occupation was often severe in Egypt. This is why the Coptic calendar begins with 284 AD as its first year: In that year Diocletian became Emperor of Rome. His reign was marked by the torture and mass executions of Christians, especially in Egypt. After Christianity became the religion of the Roman Empire, the Coptic Christians were soon in trouble with the Empire since their theology was branded as heretical at the Council of Chalcedon (451 AD). Arab armies then conquered Egypt (639-646 AD) and this led to more periods of severe persecution under Islam. The Church became focused on survival, instead of playing a public role in society. In the 10th century, the Coptic Christian community had decreased in number, making up about half the population.

The British colonial role in Egypt (1882-1952) gave much freedom to Christians. Since the Revolution of 1952 this freedom has been steadily eroded and there have been short periods in which Christians have faced severe violations of religious freedom, but this has always been a localized phenomenon and not driven by the state.

Currently, the vast majority of Christians in Egypt (well over 90%) belong to the Coptic Orthodox Church. The Roman Catholic Church entered Egypt in the 17th century through the missionary activity of the Capuchins and Jesuits. In 1847 the Anglicans began working in the country, followed by the Associate Reformed Presbyterian Church in 1854. Many other independent church groups and missionaries have followed since, adding to the rich variety of Egyptian church life.

Church spectrum today

Egypt: Church networks	Christians	%
Orthodox	8,952,000	92.3
Catholic	288,000	3.0
Protestant	524,000	5.4

Independent	131,000	1.4
Unaffiliated	9,400	0.1
Doubly-affiliated Christians	-210,000	-2.2
Total	9,694,400	100.0
<i>(Any deviation from the total number of Christians stated above is due to the rounding of decimals)</i>		
Evangelical movement	428,000	4.4
Renewalist movement	696,000	7.2

Data source: Johnson T M and Zurlo G A, eds, *World Christian Database* (Leiden/Boston: Brill, accessed April 2022)

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

The Coptic Orthodox Church remains the largest Christian denomination in Egypt with more than 90% of the Christian population. The Coptic Evangelical Presbyterian Church and the Coptic Roman Catholic Church are the two other main denominations in Egypt.

Areas where Christians face most difficulties

Upper Egypt, the southern part of the country, is known to be more Islamically conservative and radical than the north. Most incidents and mob attacks take place in this region, with the Minya Governate being the most notorious and having the highest number of attacks on Christians per capita. However, Christians in the economically disadvantaged rural areas in the north experience a similar degree of oppression by radical Muslims, especially in the Nile Delta villages and towns.

Radical Islamic groups such as the Muslim Brotherhood have nationwide support, but violent Islamic militants are only openly active in the north-eastern area of the Sinai peninsula. In April 2021, a video appeared of the execution of Nabil Habashy Salama, a Christian from north-Sinai who had previously been abducted by the Islamic State group. In August 2022, a Coptic father and son were found murdered in the same area; it is assumed that they were also victims of IS-related militants.

Christian communities and how they are affected

Communities of expatriate Christians: Expatriate Christians in Egypt are not forced into isolation. This category is therefore not included in the WWL scoring and analysis.

Historical Christian communities: The largest church in this category is the Coptic Orthodox Church. There are also established Protestant denominations throughout the country. The large Coptic minority, while facing important difficulties (including discrimination in education, health

and government legislation that hinders essential aspects of church life), has been tolerated by the state and by the Muslim majority in the country because of its historical presence and its significant size of several million. However, historical Christian communities are regularly targeted by their surrounding neighborhoods, for instance when rumors are spread that a building is to be turned into a church. Also, an accusation of blasphemy (on social media) or a relationship between a Christian man and a Muslim woman are enough to lead to acts of violence, often perpetrated by mobs. Meanwhile radical Islamic groups remain a danger, particularly in the Sinai region.

Converts to Christianity: There is a small but growing number of Christian converts who bear the brunt of violations, most often at the hands of family members, but also by the security services. The former punish converts for abandoning the Islamic faith, often by means of beatings or expulsion from the family home.

Non-traditional Christian communities: There are several Evangelical and Pentecostal groups in the country, some of them being 2nd, 3rd or even further generations of converts from a Muslim background. Others come from an Orthodox background. They face pressure from both the Islamic society and to a lesser extent from the Coptic Orthodox Church.

External Links - Church information

- Christian origins: Coptic - <https://www.abc.net.au/news/2017-04-10/who-are-egypts-copts/8429634>

WWL 2023: Persecution Dynamics / Egypt

Reporting period

1 October 2021 - 30 September 2022

Position on the World Watch List

Egypt: World Watch List	Points	WWL Rank
WWL 2023	68	35
WWL 2022	71	20
WWL 2021	75	16
WWL 2020	76	16
WWL 2019	76	16

Ranks are shown above whenever the country scored 41 points or more in the WWL 2019-2023 reporting periods

With average pressure remaining at 12.2 points, the three-point drop in score in WWL 2023 was caused by the violence score decreasing from 10.0 points in WWL 2022 to 7.0 points. However, at least 5 Christians were killed and more than 20 attacked, among other incidents. In addition, a significant number of Christian converts from a Muslim background were arrested and physically abused by the Egyptian security services.

Persecution engines

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

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

Islamic oppression (Strong)

In Egypt, *Islamic oppression* operates in different ways. Islamic culture sustains a view in Egyptian society whereby Christians are regarded as second-class citizens. This view causes the discrimination of Christians in the political realm and their dealing with the state. It also creates an environment in which the state is reluctant to respect and enforce the fundamental rights of Christians. In families, converts to Christianity face great pressure to renounce their faith. Christians also face pressure from *Islamic oppression* in their daily lives in their local neighborhood or at work. There have also been several violent attacks perpetrated by militant Islamic groups targeting Christians in the recent past. However, the activity of such militant groups is largely concentrated in north-eastern Sinai.

Dictatorial paranoia (Strong)

The tradition of authoritarian rule is perhaps the only permanent feature in Egypt's political system, which experienced three regime changes in just three years (2011-2014). All of Egypt's rulers have had an authoritarian government style. In 2011, Mubarak's long dictatorship was ended through massive social protests, which eventually led to the controversial election of the Muslim Brotherhood. The government led by Mohamed Morsi did not behave democratically and was ousted by a national uprising supported by the army in 2013. Currently, Egypt is ruled by a civilian government led by former army chief Abdul Fatah al-Sisi, after a presidential election in May 2014 and re-election in March 2018. This government seems to regard basic human rights and democratic pluralism as a low priority in view of the huge current economic, political, social and security challenges. In this context, therefore, religious freedom for Christians is not fully guaranteed.

Clan oppression (Weak)

The influence of tribalism for Christians from historical Christian communities is mostly limited to rural areas, yet it does play a significant role in persecution dynamics. Although few commentators see a clear ethnic distinction between (Christian) Copts and (Islamic) Arabs, Christians and Muslims act as two distinct groups in Egyptian society. As in many other Arab countries, tribal thinking strongly influences group thinking and this can easily lead to verbal and physical violence where one group feels threatened. In Upper Egypt for instance, many cases of mob violence happen when Christians try to implement the official recognition of a church building. There is a mixture of Islamic oppression and Clan oppression in such cases which necessitates that the Christian minority has to operate carefully.

In addition, converts from a Muslim background face pressure in particular from their (extended) family for shaming values like the honor of the family. Although *Islamic oppression* remains the main engine, this tribal mindset also instigates family pressure.

Drivers of persecution

Egypt: Drivers of Persecution	IO	RN	ERH	CO	CDP	CPCO	SI	DPA	OCC
	STRONG			WEAK	WEAK			STRONG	
Government officials	Medium							Strong	
Non-Christian religious leaders	Strong								
Religious leaders of other churches					Weak				
Violent religious groups	Medium								
Citizens (people from the broader society), including mobs	Strong			Weak					
One's own (extended) family	Strong			Weak					

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

Drivers of Islamic oppression

- **One's own (extended) family (Strong):** Family members of converts regard their conversion from Islam to Christianity as betrayal of Islam, while Islam is seen as the all-encompassing pillar of society; something you cannot break away from. Those strongly held Islamic convictions are a significant reason for family members to target relations who convert to Christianity.
- **Non-Christian religious leaders (Strong):** Radical Islamic preachers who propagate hatred play a crucial role in sustaining a climate of intolerance and in fueling hostility against Christians. Their influence is most keenly felt in the rural and poorer urban areas of the country.

- **Citizens (people from the broader society), including mobs (Strong):** Ordinary people whose views are shaped by intolerant and radical imams are significant drivers of persecution and contribute the lion's share of the pressure that Christians face in their daily lives in their local neighborhoods and at work. Societal hostility and prejudice against Christians are more pronounced in the poorer and rural parts of the country.
- **Violent religious groups (Medium):** Militant Islamic groups (such as the Islamic State group) are responsible for many of the most gruesome acts of violence targeting Christians. However, they are currently only openly active in the north-eastern area of the Sinai peninsula.
- **Government officials (Medium):** Government officials also act as drivers of intolerance, discrimination and persecution through their failure to vindicate the rights of Christians (e.g. protecting Christians from mob attacks) and also through discriminatory acts which violate the fundamental rights of Christians (e.g. their refusal to acknowledge conversion from Islam to Christianity).

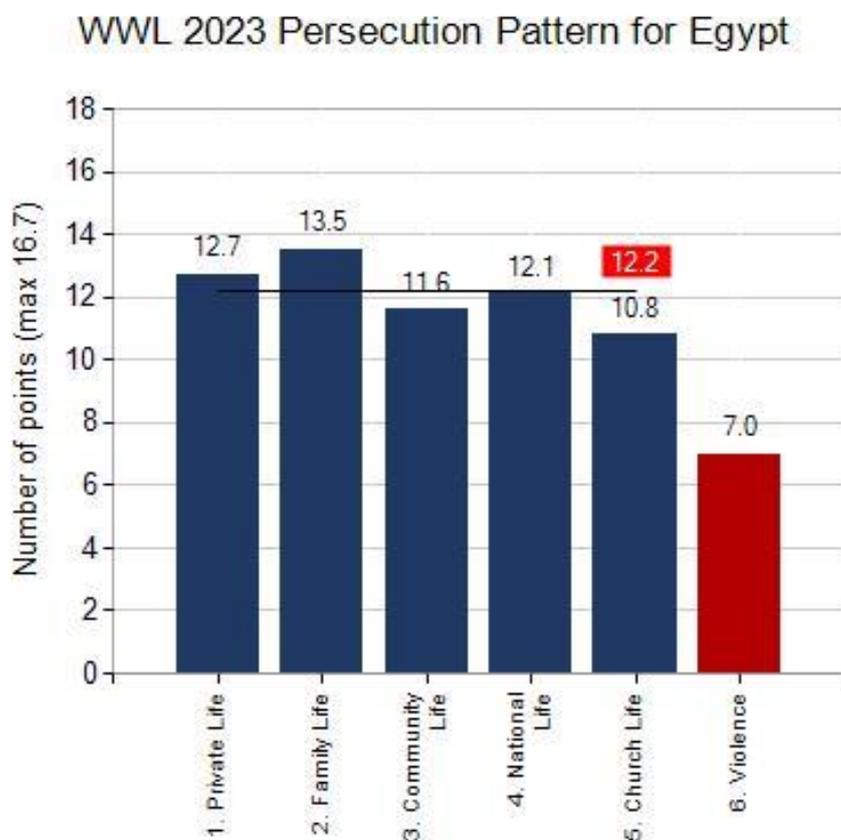
Drivers of Dictatorial paranoia

- **Government officials (Strong):** Government officials, including judicial officers, local administrative officials as well those belonging to various branches of the security apparatus in Egypt are the principal drivers here. The administration of President al-Sisi is attempting to shore up its support with the majority of the population and hold on to power. Thus, despite its promises to the contrary, the government has actually maintained existing restrictions on the freedom of religion of Egyptian Christians. Church leaders in Egypt are also constantly monitored and under surveillance by the state. In addition, the freedom of speech has been extremely restricted for all Egyptians by the al-Sisi government. Hence, Christians cannot speak out against injustices and violations.

Drivers of Clan oppression

- **One's own (extended) family (Weak):** In a context of tribal thinking based around Islamic faith, family members often regard conversion from Islam to Christianity as betrayal of the family and a shame to the family honor, which needs to be corrected.
- **Citizens (people from broader society), including mobs (Weak):** Wider society functions as a watchdog to make sure that the honor and power of the group is protected. This is especially the case in rural areas. Allegations that Christians are being given more space in society (e.g. by having their church legitimized) can ignite mob attacks.

The Persecution pattern



The WWL 2023 Persecution pattern for Egypt shows:

- The average pressure on Christians is at a very high level (12.2 points), remaining at the same level as in WWL 2022.
- All *spheres of life* show very high levels of pressure, which is highest in the *Family, Private and National spheres of life*. The very high score of 13.5 points for *Family life* reflects in particular the difficulties converts from Islam to Christianity face concerning Christian weddings, baptisms and funerals. The very high score for *National life* reflects the levels of discrimination all Christians face - and especially those with a Muslim background - when engaging with the authorities. The danger of being accused of blasphemy, followed by mob violence, is always present, while the police and other authorities will often side with the accusers and attackers in order to retain public order.
- The score for violence decreased but remained a high level, falling from 10.0 points in WWL 2022 to 7.0 in WWL 2023.

Pressure in the 5 spheres of life

In each of the five spheres of life discussed below, four questions have been selected from the WWL 2023 questionnaire for brief commentary and explanation. The selection usually (but not always) reflects the highest scoring elements. In some cases, an additional paragraph per sphere is included to give further information deemed important. (To see how individual questions are scored on a scale of 0-4 points, please see the “WWL Scoring example” in the WWL Methodology, available at: <https://opendoorsanalytical.org/world-watch-list-documentation/>, password: freedom).

Pressure in Block 1 / Private sphere

Especially converts from Islam to Christianity often find themselves isolated from other Christians, both because they are in many cases still living within their Muslim families and because of social barriers which make it difficult to connect to Christians belonging to historical or non-traditional church communities. In addition, especially in upper Egypt and rural areas, young Christian women often suffer from forced isolation (as an indirect effect of persecution): Their family members force them to stay at home, partly because of cultural norms, but also because of experience as a religious minority, that they could fall victim to sexual abuse by Muslim men.

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

Conversion from Islam to Christianity ('apostasy') is not officially forbidden by law. However, a key ruling by the Cairo Administrative Court in 2008 stated that the freedom to practice one's religion is subject to certain limitations, and affirmed that conversion from Islam to another faith is a violation of the principles of Islam and therefore not allowed. Despite promising statements by President al-Sisi that he even respects non-believers and that they are "free to choose" ([Al-Monitor, 20 September 2021](#)), converts from Islam to Christianity are regularly detained, mistreated and forced into silence by the security services.

In addition, conversion is punished via the blasphemy laws. Societal hostility to converts is very high and mere rumors of conversion can lead to mob violence, especially in rural areas. Conversion is seen as a huge shame for the honor of the family. As a result, family members will try to get converts to recant their faith, and may expel them from the family home or even kill them.

Block 1.8: It has been risky for Christians to speak about their faith with those other than immediate family (extended family, others). (3.25 points)

Accusations of blasphemy are easily made, so most Christians refrain from discussing their faith with people they do not know or trust. Discussing their faith can easily be interpreted as an attempt to proselytize, which is heavily opposed by society. However, converts face the highest risk since discussing Christian faith can lead to discovery of their conversion.

Block 1.10: Christians have been isolated from other family members or other like-minded Christians (e.g. house arrest). (3.25 points)

Especially converts from Islam to Christianity often find themselves isolated from other Christians, both because they are in many cases still living within their Muslim families and because of social barriers which make it difficult to connect to Christians belonging to the historical or non-traditional church communities. In addition, especially in upper Egypt and rural areas, young Christian women are often isolated as an indirect effect of persecution: Their family members force them to stay at home, partly because of cultural norms but also - through experience of life as a religious minority - out of fear that they might otherwise fall victim to sexual abuse by Muslim men

Block 1.4: It has been risky for Christians to reveal their faith in written forms of personal expression (including expressions in blogs and Facebook etc.). (3.00 points)

Several converts from a Muslim background who openly declared their Christian faith on social media have been arrested. Most converts refrain from publishing anything indicating their new faith, mainly out of fear of repercussions from family or society. On another note, the blasphemy law is widely used to target those who are criticizing Islam. Several Christians have been arrested or have been the victim of mob violence after allegedly insulting Islam on social media. Nevertheless, many Christians continue to share large quantities of Bible verses, Christian images and other Christian content on social media.

Block 1 - Additional information

Pressure in the private sphere of life has been very high for years, as especially converts from Islam to Christianity are severely limited in their personal expression of faith. Conversion to Christianity is strongly opposed, making it often difficult to speak about faith with family members: "It takes wisdom in choosing the right time and right place to speak with your family members about faith", according to one convert. While owning a Bible carries clear risks for converts, the internet has brought solutions here and makes it easier to privately worship. However, especially in the case of women, discovery of their new faith can lead to house arrest and domestic violence. Many converts are therefore also careful where and when to meet other Christians.

Pressure in Block 2 / Family sphere

Block 2.6: Christian couples have been hindered in adopting children or serving as foster parents because of their faith. (3.75 points)

In line with Islamic law, adoption is prohibited in Egypt. However, fostering a child is possible and becoming more common and there is an ongoing debate within society concerning the care for children in need. Nonetheless, Christians are most likely to be hindered if they want to foster a Muslim child. A telling example is the case of 'Baby Shenouda', who after four years was taken from his Christian foster parents into an orphanage because unidentified foundlings are by law considered to be Muslim and cannot be raised by non-Muslims ([Watani, 4 September 2022](#)). Despite such flagrant discrimination, the public outcry by both Christian and Muslim commentators following the incident offers a ray of hope for long-term change.

Block 2.1: Babies and children of Christians have automatically been registered under the state or majority religion. (3.50 points)

It is very difficult, if not impossible, for converts from Islam to Christianity to change the religious registration on their ID cards. The registered religion of the father is automatically applied to the child. Thus a convert's child is always registered as Muslim. If a Muslim man converts to Christianity and is married to a woman registered as Muslim, their marriage becomes invalid under Egyptian law and their children are considered to be illegitimate.

Block 2.2: Registering the birth, wedding, death, etc. of Christians has been hindered or made impossible. (3.50 points)

Converts from Islam to Christianity face the biggest challenges in this regard. As their conversion is not recognized in any way, neither by government nor society, it is very difficult for them to get married with a Christian ceremony (which is done in secret or in a foreign country). Under Sharia law, a Christian man cannot marry a Muslim woman. So the children of a Christian man married to a convert woman, will be regarded as born out of wedlock. Converts will have to register their children as Muslim upon birth.

Block 2.8: Christian children have been pressured into attending anti-Christian or majority religion teaching at any level of education. (3.25 points)

Children of converts from Islam to Christianity have to attend Islamic religious classes, as their conversion is not recognized. However, other Christian children also face difficulties, as the Egyptian curriculum is heavily influenced by Islamic teaching. Christians have their own Christian religion classes, but they still have to learn verses of Islamic literature and parts of the Quran at school. Some of the educational material also contains anti-Christian teachings. Children of privileged Christians can avoid this by attending private Christian-run schools, but this is only financially possible for some parents.

Block 2 - Additional Information

It is difficult for converts from Islam to Christianity to live as a Christian family. They can only be baptized in secret. Giving their children Christian names would be socially questionable. In general, marriage and burial can only happen according to Islamic rites. In addition, if their new faith becomes known, converts are likely to be forced into divorce, lose custody of their children and be disinherited.

Pressure in Block 3 / Community sphere

Block 3.10: Christians have been discriminated against in public or private employment for faith-related reasons. (3.50 points)

This discrimination occurs at different levels. Christians are not employed within the intelligence agencies, and cannot be promoted to senior positions within the army or police force. Christians are also underrepresented in senior government positions. Job discrimination in private employment depends on the level of tolerance of the employer, but happens regularly. Such discrimination has led to a high level of entrepreneurial activity among Copts and other Christians, since they cannot rely on the state or even private (non-Christian) employers for employment. Finally, although constituting a sizable percentage of the population, there has not been a single Christian player in Egypt's national team in a decade, and Christians are discriminated against and denied opportunities to play in the top professional football clubs in the country.

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

Christians face discrimination and hostility at times. Civil servants are sometimes unwilling to accept Christians as peers with the same rights and guarantees of safety. Although all women in Egypt experience some forms of (sexual) harassment, Christian women are particularly vulnerable because they do not veil themselves. Levels of pressure and discrimination vary; there is often less pressure in urban areas compared to rural areas.

Block 3.2: Christians have been monitored by their local communities or by private groups (this includes reporting to police, being shadowed, telephone lines listened to, emails read/censored, etc.). (3.25 points)

Monitoring occurs at different levels. Local communities and Islamist groups know where the Christians live in their neighborhood or villages. They watch and observe them, making sure the Christians do not disrespect Islamic principles by evangelizing or causing problems in others ways. This tension is less in urban places, but remains a problem in poor neighborhoods and rural areas, especially in upper Egypt. In recent years, several Christians have been attacked after allegedly insulting Islam or allegedly having a relationship with a Muslim woman. Police presence and government control is less strict in poor and/or rural areas and mob attacks often go unpunished. At the state level, security and intelligence agencies spy on converts and try to force them to supply information on the activities of convert groups.

Block 3.12: Christians have been fined for faith-related reasons (e.g. jizya tax, community tax, protection money). (2.75 points)

The practice of so-called 'customary reconciliation councils' is relevant here. After Christians or churches have been attacked, the local authorities often force Christians to accept a meeting before such a council instead of requesting the prosecutor to prosecute the attackers. Christians often have to accept the terms imposed by these councils, which in most cases benefit the perpetrators at the cost of the Christian victims. In some cases, the Christians are even forced to sell their houses and leave the village. Despite intentions for peaceful reconciliation, in reality these councils perpetrate a climate of impunity and encourage further attacks.

Block 3 - Additional information

Egypt's society is generally Islamic and conservative, although changing attitudes are visible in urbanized areas. Converts have to keep their faith hidden when participating in society and, especially during religious festivals like Ramadan, have to adhere to Islamic religious norms. Christians belonging to the Historical communities at times experience discrimination in both communal life and education, depending on the area where they are living. Examples of incidents are: Receiving lower grades, exclusion from university forums in upper Egypt, being forced to memorize Quran verses, insulting songs being sung and Christian children being bullied. This can make them feel they are 'second-class citizens'.

Pressure in Block 4 / National sphere

Block 4.8: Christians have been hindered in expressing their views or opinions in public. (4.00 points)

There are two major concerns for Christians when expressing their views in public: First, they have to be careful not to insult or criticize Islam in any way. Even alleged blasphemy can lead to mob violence or prosecution. Secondly, President al-Sisi's government has adopted a harsh authoritarianism. Speaking out against the government can lead to arrest, physical abuse and imprisonment.

Block 4.1: The Constitution (or comparable national or state law) limits freedom of religion as formulated in Article 18 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. (3.75 points)

Sharia law is “the principle source of legislation”, according to the Constitution. Article 7 designates the Al-Azhar University, the most prominent educational institution within the Sunni Islamic world, to have “main authority for religious sciences, and Islamic affairs”. It has considerable influence in society, and although attempting to curb extremism, its head has repeatedly stated that the death sentence is the only possible punishment for anyone leaving Islam. Hence, converts from Islam to Christianity are not protected by the Constitution, although Article 64 states that “Freedom of belief is absolute”. Moreover, freedom of belief is limited to 'practicing religious rituals' and 'establishing places of worship' and does not allow for missionary activity. It is clear that Freedom of Religion or Belief as formulated in Article 18 of ICCPR, to which Egypt is a signatory, is not being fully upheld.

Block 4.2: Officials have refused to recognize an individual’s conversion as recorded in government administration systems, identify cards (etc.). (3.50 points)

Although conversion is not forbidden by law, it is strongly opposed in practice. If converts try to officially change their religious registration, it is highly likely that the authorities will put them under surveillance and prosecute them under the blasphemy laws.

Block 4.14: Those who caused harm to Christians have deliberately been left unpunished. (3.00 points)

This is common in many areas of the country where perpetrators of mobbing and looting go unpunished, either through deliberate 'turning a blind eye' or through the use of customary reconciliation councils (see above: Block 3.12). In addition, mistreatment of converts by family members is considered to be a family issue. Converts do not receive any protection from the government and can even be killed by their family members with virtual impunity.

Block 4 - Additional information

Although the Egyptian government actively propagates a nationalist unity perspective, including the Christian community and discouraging sectarianism, it is very clear that Islam is the dominant religion. Sectarian incidents with Christian victims are largely ignored by state media. Christians who have allegedly insulted Islam are actively prosecuted, while incidents of hate-speech against Christianity (for instance, on social media) are overlooked. Except for a few exceptions, Christians

are barred from high public offices, especially in the army and very influential intelligence agencies. Despite this, it would appear that discrimination when engaging with the local authorities has become less, although this still depends to a large extent on individual officials.

Pressure in Block 5 / Church sphere

Block 5.7: Churches have been hindered from openly integrating converts. (3.75 points)

There is strong opposition against conversion and proselytizing. Churches rarely accept converts into their meetings, in order to avoid troubles with both the government and society. Accusations of proselytizing are easily made and can lead to attacks on churches, followed by the closure of the church for 'security reasons'.

Block 5.1: Church activities have been monitored, hindered, disturbed, or obstructed. (3.50 points)

It is common practice for the police and intelligence agencies to request a schedule of all church events planned. Moreover, they have the authority to cancel any of the events under the rationale of protecting national security. It is also commonly required that priests and pastors hand over to the police their travel schedules related to their church activities. In addition, police in plain clothes sometimes attend church services to monitor what is said during sermons. Furthermore, many churches face opposition or even violence from local communities, especially when they are trying to legitimize their church building under the 2016 Church Construction Law.

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

Depending on the part of the country, Christian outside activities (such as activities for children) can be organized in a discreet manner. However, churches often refrain from holding processions in the street out of fear of attack by radical groups or mobs, since such processions might be interpreted as displaying a threat to Islam.

Block 5.3: Christian communities have been hindered in building or renovating church buildings or in claiming historical religious premises and places of worship which had been taken from them earlier. (3.25 points)

Despite the legitimization of over two thousand churches under the 2016 Church Construction Law, many churches are still awaiting recognition. In many villages with a Christian population, Christians do not even have a church. There are still many administrative obstacles (such as security clearances) when Christians want to build a church and opposition from society is in many cases strong.

Block 5 - Additional Information

There are thousands of churches and Egypt has a rich and longstanding church presence. However, it is clear that the building of new churches is much more difficult than building new mosques. Churches can print and import Christian material including Bibles, as long as the mater-

ial is not deemed offensive to Islam. Christian books and other items can be sold in public places in some parts of Egypt, but is in general only sold to Christians to avoid accusations of proselytizing. There are Christian TV channels and Christian (social) media is widely accessible, but churches have to be careful not to openly proselytize or criticize Islam. The major church denominations run independent schools and hospitals. Converts from Islam to Christianity lack recognition and can only gather discreetly without attracting attention. Their activities are monitored by the intelligence agencies, which especially target those who proselytize or speak publicly about their faith.

Violence

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

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

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

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

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

3. For further discussion (with a focus on the complexity of assessing the numbers of Christians killed for their faith) please see World Watch Monitor's article dated 13 November 2013 available at:

<https://www.worldwatchmonitor.org/2013/11/number-of-christian-martyrs-continues-to-cause-debate/>.

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

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

Egypt: Violence Block question		WWL 2023	WWL 2022
6.1	How many Christians have been killed for faith-related reasons (including state sanctioned executions)?	5	8
6.2	How many churches or Christian buildings (schools, hospitals, cemeteries, etc.) have been attacked, damaged, bombed, looted, destroyed, burned down, closed or confiscated for faith-related reasons?	1	2
6.3	How many Christians have been detained for faith-related reasons?	40	11
6.4	How many Christians have been sentenced to jail, labor camp, sent to psychiatric hospital as punishment, or similar things for faith-related reasons?	1	1
6.5	How many Christians have been abducted for faith-related reasons (including Christians missing in a persecution context)?	3	5
6.6	How many Christians have been raped or otherwise sexually harassed for faith-related reasons?	10 *	10 *
6.7	How many cases have there been of forced marriages of Christians to non-Christians?	2	10 *
6.8	How many Christians have been otherwise physically or mentally abused for faith-related reasons (including beatings and death threats)?	19	51
6.9	How many houses of Christians or other property (excluding shops) have been attacked, damaged, bombed, looted, destroyed, burned down or confiscated for faith-related reasons?	7	31
6.10	How many shops or businesses of Christians have been attacked, damaged, bombed, looted, destroyed, burned down, closed or confiscated for faith-related reasons?	0	15
6.11	How many Christians have been forced to leave their homes or go into hiding in-country for faith-related reasons?	2	117
6.12	How many Christians have been forced to leave the country for faith-related reasons?	7	0

In the WWL 2023 reporting period:

- **Christians killed:** No major terrorist attack happened during WWL 2023, although two Christians, a father and son, were killed by Islamic militants in the Sinai region. They are

- two of the at least five Christians reported to have been killed. (For more information, see above: *Specific examples of violations of rights.*)
- **Christians attacked:** At least 19 Christians have been attacked and sometimes severely injured because of their faith. Several Christians have been attacked by Islamic radicals who tried to kill them. Several converts from Islam to Christianity have also been beaten and mistreated because of their conversion. In addition, at least several young women were groomed and sexually abused, while others were forced to marry Muslims. In addition, hundreds have experienced sexual harassment. According to some reports, some Christian girls were targeted in a systematic way, with their attackers at times being paid per victim.
- **Christians arrested/imprisoned:** At least ten converts to Christianity were arrested and detained by the security services during the WWL 2023 reporting period. At least one Christian has been sentenced and imprisoned after being accused of blasphemy. Others were detained after peacefully demonstrating for permission to rebuild their burnt down church. In addition, it is not unlikely for the victims of a mob attack to be taken into police custody to satisfy their attackers' demands and to de-escalate the situation.
- **Churches attacked:** In August 2022, a series of church fires struck at least nine churches. Allegedly, in most cases electric malfunction was said to be the cause of fire, but in one case it was reported that burning objects were thrown at the church (see above: *Specific examples of violations of rights in the reporting period.*)
- **Christian homes/properties attacked:** During mob violence following the legalization of a church, several houses and cars belonging to Christians were attacked and damaged. In other cases, individual houses and properties were targeted for attack.
- **Christians forced to move:** Especially converts from Islam to Christianity were forced to relocate inside or outside the country.

5 Year trends

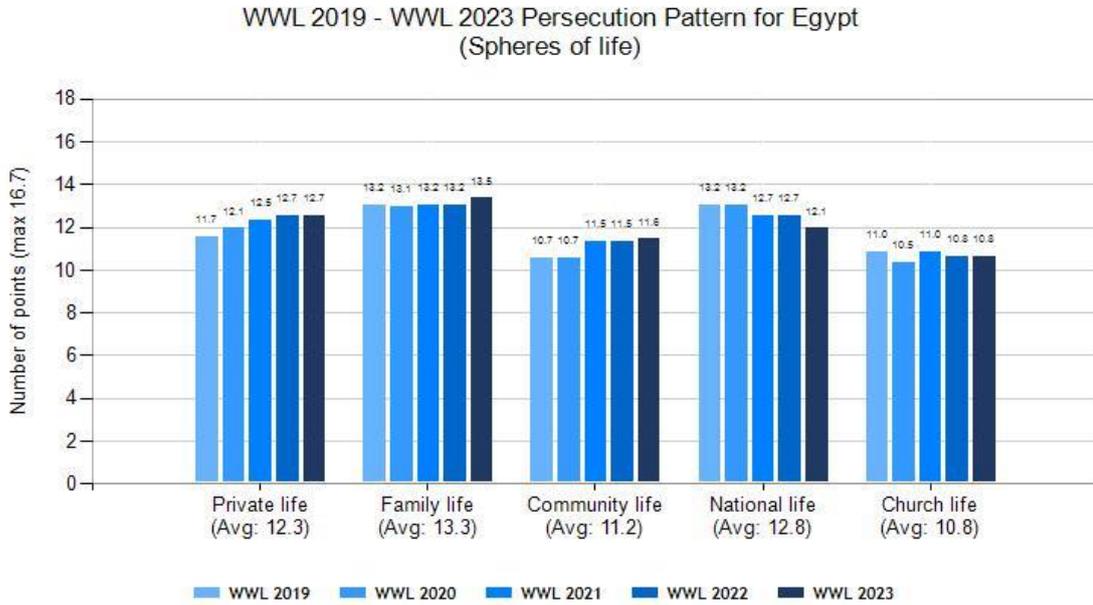
The following three charts show the levels of pressure and violence faced by Christians in the country over the last five WWL reporting periods.

5 Year trends: Average pressure

Egypt: WWL 2019 - WWL 2023	
Persecution Pattern history	Average pressure over 5 Spheres of life
2023	12.2
2022	12.2
2021	12.2
2020	11.9
2019	12.0

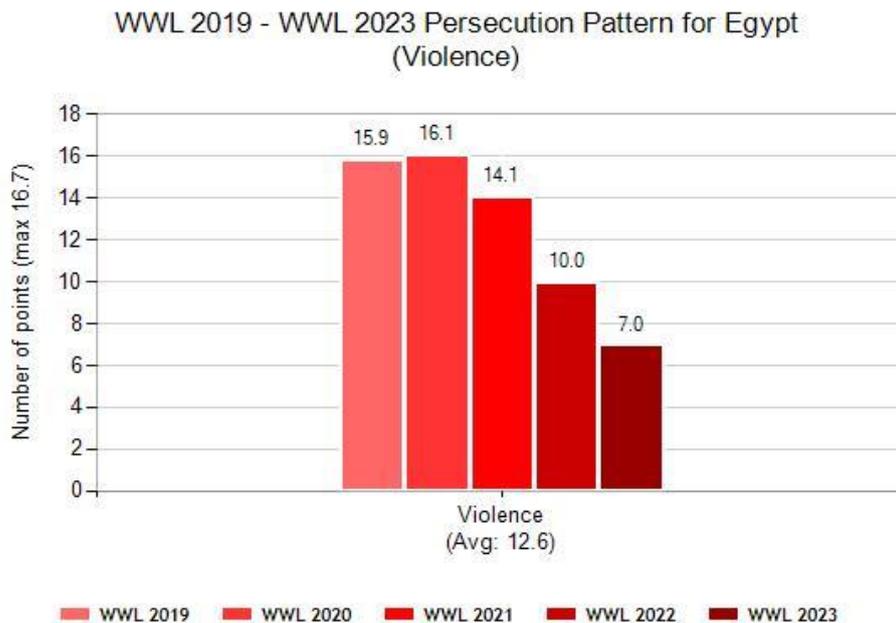
The table above shows that the average pressure on Christians in Egypt has been fairly stable at a very high level, ranging between 11.9 and 12.2 points.

5 Year trends: Pressure in each sphere of life



The chart above shows that, in the last five WWL reporting periods, pressure on Christians has been very high in the *Private* and *Family spheres of life*, mainly reflecting the difficulties converts from Islam to Christianity have to face. The level of pressure in the *National sphere* has consistently been higher than in the *Community* and *Church spheres of life*, which is partly showing that the political situation for Christians has not significantly improved under the rule of President al-Sisi. Christians are discriminated against in public life and speaking out against such violations can have serious consequences.

5 Year trends: Violence against Christians



The table above shows that the scores for violence in the reporting periods WWL 2019 - 2021 were all at an extreme level. Violence against Christians decreased in WWL 2022 and even further in WWL 2023, but is still categorized as being at a very high level.

Gender-specific religious persecution / Female

Group	Female Pressure Points
Economic	-
Political and Legal	Denied access to Christian religious materials, teachings and rites; Denied legal ability to marry Christian spouse; Forced divorce; Forced marriage
Security	Abduction; Incarceration by family (house arrest); Targeted Seduction; Violence – death; Violence – physical; Violence – sexual
Social and Cultural	Enforced religious dress code; Violence – Verbal
Technological	-

There have been [reports](#) that Christian women are targeted for marriage by grooming, rape and forced conversion by Islamist networks, mainly in rural areas, villages and southern towns (WWM, 14 September 2017). Police response has been often complicit or apathetic and many women remain missing. The psychological toll is high, and many women live in fear, especially in rural areas. They feel as though they cannot leave the house by themselves and at times they will ask for male company for protection. There are also reports that Christian girls are lured into marriage; these girls are often under-age and come from vulnerable families, often from situations of domestic abuse.

Traditional practices do not help in this regard: Early marriage is part of the [norm](#) in more rural and traditional areas (Girls Not Brides, 2022). Girls can also struggle to access education ([ICC, 1 August 2021](#)). A country expert commented: “Girls carry the burden of honor of the whole family. If she makes a mistake she brings shame to the whole community (the church included).” Older married Christian women whose husbands regularly work for periods away from home have also been targeted. This can also devastate their husbands.

Female converts from Islam are most vulnerable to freedom of religion violations. They may be isolated and locked in the home, physically abused or even killed to defend the family honor. If married, they will very likely be divorced by their Muslim husbands, leaving them without any financial support. The custody of their children may be taken from them, as well as inheritance rights, although an important [legal case](#) in 2019 has been seen as a protest to conventional approaches to inheritance (The Times, 27 November 2019).

Egypt has had a reputation for having relatively high rates of sexual harassment and violence within the wider region. Due to international pressure and in-country activists, there have been some [improvements](#) in protection for those reporting sexual abuse (Reuters, 16 August 2020). Official statistics for past years are lacking, in part because women and girls refrain from reporting incidents [out of fear](#) of retaliation and the stigma attached to sexual abuse (New Lines,

4 October 2020). Giving some indication of a baseline from which these improvements have come, a UN report based on a 2013 survey states that over 99% of women in Egypt have experienced sexual harassment, regardless of what they wear or what their religion is ([UN Women](#), Study on Ways and Methods to Eliminate Sexual Harassment in Egypt, 22 December 2015, p.6). This is reinforced by a study that shows Cairo as being the most dangerous megacity for women in the world ([Thomas Reuters, 16 October 2017](#)).

Gender-specific religious persecution / Male

Group	Male Pressure Points
Economic	Denied inheritance or possessions; Economic harassment via business/job/work access
Political and Legal	Denied custody of children; Imprisonment by government
Security	Forced out of home – expulsion; Forced to flee town/country; Violence – death
Social and Cultural	Violence – psychological; Violence – Verbal
Technological	-

Christians in Egypt often feel they are being treated as second class citizens in a Muslim-majority country. Exemplifying this, the number of Christian in senior military or government positions is minimal. Unemployment is a great pressure on men throughout the country, especially in upper Egypt. Particularly in rural areas, it is hard for Christian young men to find a job, which can be exploited to coerce young men away from Christianity with financial incentives. Further exemplifying economic discrimination, there have been instances of Christian men experiencing discrimination simply due to their Christian names. According to [Daraj Media](#) (14 March 2021), over the last 30 years, only 12 Christian players have been part of Egypt's Premier League. As the main financial provider, this hinders a Christian man's ability to provide and impacts his self-confidence, which in turn affects his family. The strain of these dynamics has reportedly caused higher rates of domestic violence and divorce.

Church leaders – most of whom are male – are particularly vulnerable to rights violations, in part as they are easily identifiable as Christians. The harassment and killing of clergy has evoked feelings of fear and helplessness in the Christian community and has been a factor in emigration spikes. Those who speak out against injustices are also targeted.

Converts can be particularly targeted and some male converts are eventually forced to flee the country.

Persecution of other religious minorities

Other religious groups facing intolerance, discrimination and persecution in Egypt include Shia and Sufi Muslims, Bahai, Mormons and Jehovah's Witnesses. Shia Muslims are particularly targeted by Sunni extremists, making it dangerous for them to worship and practice their faith openly. Mormons, Bahai and Jehovah's Witnesses are denied recognition by the authorities, thus making it difficult for them to have places of worship. The missionary zeal and correspond-

ing activities of such groups are considered illegal and thus adherents face hostility both from state officials and society, including Christian Egyptians.

In its [Freedom of Thought Report](#) (last updated 10 September 2021) Humanist International writes:

- "One of the most visible signs of discrimination against atheists, apostates from Islam and members of minority religions is the policy concerning the Egyptian State ID cards, which include a section on religion where only one of the three "divine religions" can be recognized. Many elderly members of Baha'i or other minority communities further lack birth and marriage certificates. In 2008 the situation slightly improved, when two Bahā'īs were given permission to use a dash ('-') in the religion section. However, Baha'is still do not enjoy the right to have their religion recognized, nor to profess it in public. Muslim-born individuals who leave Islam are not allowed to change the religion field on their identity card."

A clear example of violence against other religious minorities happened in November 2017, when Sunni militants attacked a crowded Sufi mosque in the Sinai peninsula, killing over 300. (Source: [New York Times](#), 24 November 2017)

In addition, atheists are very prone to violations, especially those active on social media networks. For example, blogger and atheist Sherif Gaber has been arrested and mistreated several times by the Egyptian authorities ([Inside Arabia, 2 November 2019](#)). Another telling example is the case of Mohamed Hisham. During a televised interview he publicly admitted to being an atheist. He was removed from the show, but not before being told to visit a psychiatrist ([Humanists International, 27 September 2019](#)). It is common in Egypt to consider atheists (and other deviant persons, including converts to Christianity) to be 'mentally ill' and in need of treatment.

According to the US State Department (IRFR 2021, p. 5, 7, 13, 17):

- "The law does not recognize the Baha'i Faith or its religious laws and bans Baha'i institutions and community activities."
- "Although the government designates Jehovah's Witnesses as "Christian" on identity cards, a presidential decree bans their religious activities."
- "Efforts to combat atheism received official support. In 2019, al-Azhar founded a Bayan (Declaration) Unit in its Center for Electronic Fatwa to "counter atheism" and prevent youth from "falling into disbelief." As of the end of the year, the unit remained active."
- "Shia community sources and religious freedom observers stated that information contained in a 2019 report by Minority Rights Group International (MRGI) ... on challenges facing the country's Shia community remained valid in 2021. The MRGI report stated that there continued to be no Shia congregational halls (huseiniyas) in the country and Shia Muslims remained unable to establish public places of worship. Members of the Shia community risked accusations of blasphemy for publicly voicing their religious opinions, praying in public, or owning books promoting Shia thought."

Future outlook

The outlook for Christians - as viewed through the lens of:

Islamic oppression

There have been no major attacks against Christians since the November 2018 bus attack. Nonetheless, marginalization and legal obstacles continue to put pressure on the Church and the Egyptian Christians. Discrimination is likely to continue, especially in upper Egypt. Converts from Islam to Christianity will continue facing the most severe violations from their own families, as well as from society and the government.

Dictatorial paranoia

Most Christians are happy that Muslim Brotherhood President Mohamed Morsi was ousted. However, incumbent President al-Sisi does not seem to have the political will or power to improve the situation and security of the Christian community significantly, while he keeps oppressing any dissent, including from Christians. This can also be seen in the detention without trial of Coptic activist Ramy Kamel from November 2019 until January 2022 for his continued reporting on violence and discrimination against Christians in Egypt ([USCIRE](#), accessed 1 January 2023).

External Links - Persecution Dynamics

- Block 1.1: Conversion has been opposed, forbidden, or punishable, including conversion from one type of Christianity to another. (3.25 points): Al-Monitor, 20 September 2021 - <https://www.al-monitor.com/originals/2021/09/sisi-statements-spark-debate-about-status-egyptian-atheists>
- Block 2.6: Christian couples have been hindered in adopting children or serving as foster parents because of their faith. (3.75 points): Watani, 4 September 2022 - [https://en.wataninet.com/coptic-affairs-coptic-affairs/story-of-four-year-old-shenouda-raises-disturbing-questions-on-adoption-and-foster-care-in-egypt/39636/](https://en.wataninet.com/coptic-affairs-coptic-affairs/coptic-affairs/story-of-four-year-old-shenouda-raises-disturbing-questions-on-adoption-and-foster-care-in-egypt/39636/)
- Gender-specific religious persecution Female description: reports - <https://www.worldwatchmonitor.org/2017/09/egypt-ex-kidnapper-admits-get-paid-every-copt-christian-girl-bring/>
- Gender-specific religious persecution Female description: norm - <https://atlas.girlsnotbrides.org/map/egypt>
- Gender-specific religious persecution Female description: ICC, 1 August 2021 - <https://www.persecution.org/2021/08/01/egyptian-girls-perspective-hope-brighter-future/>
- Gender-specific religious persecution Female description: legal case - <https://www.thetimes.co.uk/article/woman-overturms-arab-inheritance-rules-jcv3g2qr9>
- Gender-specific religious persecution Female description: improvements - <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-egypt-women-metoo/egypt-approves-law-to-protect-identities-of-women-reporting-sex-abuse-idUSKCN25C0SC>
- Gender-specific religious persecution Female description: out of fear - <https://newlinesmag.com/reportage/egypts-botched-metoo-moment/>
- Gender-specific religious persecution Female description: UN Women - <https://gisf.ngo/resource/study-on-ways-and-methods-to-eliminate-sexual-harassment-in-egypt/>
- Gender-specific religious persecution Female description: Thomas Reuters, 16 October 2017 - <https://news.trust.org/item/20171013165501-7u32f>
- Gender-specific religious persecution Male description: Daraj - <https://daraj.com/en/69821/>
- Persecution of other religious minorities: Freedom of Thought Report - <https://fot.humanists.international/countries/africa-northern-africa/egypt/>
- Persecution of other religious minorities: New York Times - <https://www.nytimes.com/2017/11/24/world/middleeast/mosque-attack-egypt.html>

- Persecution of other religious minorities: Inside Arabia, 2 November 2019 - <https://insidearabia.com/atheist-egyptian-blogger-jailed-for-expressing-his-views/>
- Persecution of other religious minorities: Humanists International, 27 September 2019 - <https://humanists.international/blog/do-you-remember-mohamed-the-egyptian-atheist-kicked-off-a-tv-interview/>
- Future outlook: USCIRF - <https://www.uscirf.gov/religious-prisoners-conscience/forb-victims-database/ramy-kamel>

Further useful reports

A selection of in-depth reports and smaller articles are available on the new Research & Reports page of the website od.org. As in earlier years, they are also available on the Open Doors Analytical website (password: freedom) using the following links:

- <https://opendoorsanalytical.org/reports/>
- <https://opendoorsanalytical.org/?s=Egypt>