
World Watch Research

Malaysia: Persecution Dynamics

January 2025



OpenDoors

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World Watch List 2025 – Top 50

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

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

World Watch List 2025 – Ranks 51-78

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

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

Copyright, sources and definitions

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

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

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

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

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

Reporting period

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

Brief country details

Malaysia: Population (UN estimate for 2024)	Christians	Chr%
34,672,000	3,449,000	9.9

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

Malaysia: Religious context	Number of adherents	%
Christians	3,449,000	9.9
Muslim	19,026,000	54.9
Hindu	2,334,000	6.7
Buddhist	1,824,000	5.3
Ethnic religionist	1,156,000	3.3
Jewish	110	0.0
Bahai	83,800	0.2
Atheist	41,500	0.1
Agnostic	142,000	0.4
Other	6,616,300	19.1
<i>OTHER includes Chinese folk, New religionist, Sikh, Spiritist, Taoist, Confucianist, Jain, Shintoist, Zoroastrian.</i>		

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

Map of country



Dominant persecution engines and drivers

Malaysia: Main Persecution engines	Main drivers
Islamic oppression	Government officials, Ethnic group leaders, Non-Christian religious leaders, One's own (extended) family, Political parties, Ideological pressure groups
Dictatorial paranoia	Government officials, Political parties
Ethno-religious hostility	Government officials, One's own (extended) family, Political parties, Ethnic group leaders, Non-Christian religious leaders, Ideological pressure groups

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

Brief description of the persecution situation

Converts from Islam to Christianity experience most pressure and hostility as every ethnic Malay is expected to be Muslim. This strong societal and family expectation is supported and enforced at a state level through Sharia law. Roman Catholics, Methodists and NGOs are watched by the authorities, but non-traditional Protestant groups often face greater interference as these tend to be more active in testifying about their faith. Additionally, Christian children may be socially ostracized, losing friends or being shunned due to their religious beliefs. Peer pressure from predominantly Muslim friends also influences how children socialize and develop their faith.

Malaysia's political landscape has been volatile since 2020, with political parties emphasizing Islam to bolster voter support. This trend benefited Islamist parties like the PAS (Pan-Malaysian Islamic Party) ahead of the general election on 19 November 2022, which ended with no party winning a clear majority. Malaysia's king, Sultan Ibrahim Iskandar, facilitated the formation of a unity government, resulting in the appointment of Anwar Ibrahim (UMNO) as Prime Minister on 24 November 2022. PAS declined to join the unity government due to ideological differences and a desire to maintain its distinct influence. Holding 49 seats in parliament and leading four state governments, PAS is Malaysia's largest single party. PAS's rhetoric frequently targets religious and ethnic minorities, including Christians. Notably, PAS voted in 2024 to allow non-Muslims to join the party as associate members although this likely reflects strategic political positioning rather than a genuine change in ideology. PAS's ongoing influence over state-level laws, particularly in Kelantan and Terengganu, where they advocate for stricter Islamic governance, continues to put pressure on Christian and other religious minority communities.

All political parties in Malaysia continue to support the dominance of Islam as the national religion, including apostasy-related Sharia laws throughout the country and the implementation of Sharia law at state level with states such as Kelantan and Terengganu known for their more conservative and stricter interpretation of Sharia law.

The US Commission on International Religious Freedom Annual Report ([USCIRF, May 2024](#)) states that the stability of the current coalition government may be in part the result of Prime Minister Ibrahim's attempts to entice Malay Muslim votes from Islamist parties through initiatives such as increased funding for Islamic schools and a commitment to increase the "criminal powers" of the Sharia courts—which the royal Conference of Rulers supported. For example, in November 2024 the Religious Affairs Minister announced that Islamic Educational Institutions (IPIs) would receive funds for maintenance and upgrading totaling between RM120,000 - RM150,000 (Approx: \$27,050,000 (USD) - \$33,824,000) ([ABNA News, 12 November 2024](#)).

Summary of international obligations and rights violations

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

1. [Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women](#) (CEDAW)
2. [Convention on the Rights of the Child](#) (CRC)

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

- Christian female converts run the risk of being forcibly married to Muslim men (CEDAW Art. 16)
- Christian parents cannot raise their children according to their religious values (CRC Art. 14)

Specific examples of violations of rights in the reporting period

For security reasons, no details can be provided.

Specific examples of positive developments

As mentioned above, in September 2024 PAS began allowing non-Muslims to join as associate members. Whilst this could simply reflect strategic political positioning it could also represent a potential avenue for greater inclusion of minority voices in Malaysia's political scene. It remains to be seen how this will play out in practice.

To better understand Christianity in Malaysia, an additional explanation is required at this point. For Malaysia, it can be helpful to make distinctions according to geographical distribution and origin. The majority of Christians come from a *Bumiputera* background, which literally means "sons of the soil", meaning that they belong to the country and come from the indigenous tribal population. From the government's perspective, they qualify for "affirmative action" benefits such as subsidized housing, scholarships etc., but in practice this only applies as long as the *Bumiputera* are not Christians. If they become Christians, their privileges are quickly withdrawn. Non-*Bumiputera* Christians come mainly from the Chinese and Indian ethnic minorities and are divided up into a plethora of different Christian denominations, ranging in size from small house-churches to mega-churches.

The geographical distribution is important as well. Most *Bumiputera* Christians reside in the states of Sabah and Sarawak; the latter still has a Christian majority. These states make up East Malaysia and are situated on the island of Borneo (which is shared with Brunei and Indonesia). To complicate the situation, many *Bumiputera* are migrating to West Malaysia for educational or economic reasons where it is especially hard for them to stay true to their Christian faith.

Converts from a Muslim-Malay background complete the picture of the Malaysian Church. These Christians face a high level of persecution as they have not only left their Islamic faith; their conversion is seen as acting against their very ethnicity and nation as well.

Christian communities and how they are affected

Communities of expatriate Christians: There are many nationalities who have their own Christian fellowships and are self-supporting (e.g. Korean and Japanese churches). At times, they struggle to obtain legal status, but are largely free to live their faith as long as they stay within their walls. Nepalese and Vietnamese Christians in most cases join the Historical Christian communities. Hence, communities of expatriate Christians are not involuntarily isolated and are not part of WWL analysis.

Historical Christian communities: Examples are churches belonging to Roman Catholics, Anglicans, Methodists, Lutherans and the Protestant Church in Sabah. These are less affected by persecution than Non-traditional Christian communities or converts, but do suffer from discrimination and *dakwah* (Islamic missionary work aiming to convert non-Muslims to Islam).

Converts to Christianity: Depending on where they are in the country, Christian converts from a Malay Muslim background are able to meet. But all face opposition from family, friends, neighbors and the authorities to varying degrees. In the states of Kelantan and Terengganu apostasy is theoretically punishable by death, however this punishment has never been enforced due to constitutional limitations. All other states in Malaysia have penalties with fines, imprisonment and rehabilitation for apostasy.

Non-traditional Christian communities: Examples are Evangelical, Baptist and Pentecostal congregations, Assemblies of God, Salvation Army, Sabah Injil Borneo and others. They often face monitoring, discrimination, intimidation and harassment.

Areas where Christians face most difficulties

There are no concentrated hotspots of persecution for Christians in Malaysia, but they do face varying levels of difficulty depending on their location. Islamic missionary work, or dakwah, particularly targets Christian Bumiputera (those belonging to the indigenous tribal population) in East Malaysia, though it is not limited to that region, as shown by [reports](#) from states like Pahang in West Malaysia (Cilisos, 10 May 2021). State-supported plans and incentives aimed at converting individuals to Islam have been documented, and these efforts are sometimes tied to [socio-economic and welfare benefits](#) (USCIRF Malaysia, 2021). While East Malaysia’s Sabah state transitioned from a Christian-majority status several years ago due to migration and conversion efforts, Sarawak remains predominantly Christian, although with mounting pressure.

Position on the World Watch List

Malaysia: World Watch List	Points	WWL Rank
WWL 2025	65	51
WWL 2024	64	49
WWL 2023	66	44
WWL 2022	63	50
WWL 2021	63	46

While the scores for pressure remained almost unchanged in the WWL 2025 reporting period, the violence score rose by 0.6 of a point, increasing the overall score. Christians continued to be marginalized and disadvantaged by a Malay-first policy and this does not seem likely to change in the foreseeable future.

Persecution engines

Malaysia: Persecution engines	Abbreviation	Level of influence
Islamic oppression	IO	Very strong
Religious nationalism	RN	Not at all
Ethno-religious hostility	ERH	Medium
Clan oppression	CO	Very weak
Christian denominational protectionism	CDP	Not at all
Communist and post-Communist oppression	CPCO	Not at all
Secular intolerance	SI	Not at all
Dictatorial paranoia	DPA	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 (Very Strong), blended with Ethno-religious hostility (Medium)

For a long time, Malaysia had the reputation of probably being the world’s best role model for a liberal and tolerant Islamic country. However, this image has been fading over the last years. One example of this can be seen in the government’s continued attempt to introduce Sharia penal law (hudud) in the state of Kelantan. The conservative Muslim PAS party in power in Kelantan immediately called for Sharia penal law after the elections in May 2018 and also took over power in Terengganu. It also emerged as the strongest single party from the November 2022 and August 2023 elections.

According to the Constitution, Sharia law is not on an equal footing with civil law, but in practice this regulation is not so clear. For example, a judge recently opined that Sharia courts are not inferior and used this reasoning to refuse to let the civil courts hear a case concerning conversion that had already been through the Sharia courts ([MalayMail, 15 May 2024](#)). This is also frequently seen in cases of divorce and custody: Civil courts frequently decide in favor of the child’s non-Muslim mother, which is why fathers sometimes decide to convert to Islam. The claim for custody can then be brought before Sharia courts, and the conversion will give him leverage before this court. The police prefer to implement the latter’s decisions as this causes less trouble for them. In February 2022, the Federal Court decided that Sharia courts did not have the right to legal reviews; since then, Sharia lawyers have been pushing for a [change](#) in the Constitution (Malay Mail, 21 February 2022).

There are also very strong *dakwah* movements; a country expert stated: "The Islamic missionary *dakwah* movement has been offering poverty-stricken native communities in East Malaysia lucrative incentives and benefits if they convert to Islam. The same happens in West Malaysia among the indigenous groups."

An example of *Islamic oppression* has been the attempted interference in Christian publications, including Bible translations:

- In 2015, there was a High Court ban on using the standard vocabulary "Allah" for God in Bahasa Malay, implemented against a Catholic newspaper. More court cases followed, e.g. in the state of Sabah. This is all [highly sensitive](#) and political (Ecumenical News, 16 June 2020). The use of the word "Allah" for God had been used for hundreds of years in Bibles and other Christian publications and is used in the Bahasa Indonesia Bible without any problem. A proposal made during the Jill Ireland case in November 2017 requested that the country's (Islamic) language institute issue a new Bible translation without the word "Allah" (Malay Mail, 20 November 2017). It also revealed the Islamic authorities mindset when they proposed getting the state authorities to do the translation of the Bible - instead of Christians. The High Court made headlines by issuing a detailed decision on the Ireland case in March 2021, explaining why Christians are allowed to use the word "Allah" (Malay Mail, 24 March 2021). Not surprisingly, the government and several State Islamic authorities declared they would appeal the decision. [Explainer: High Court's 96-page judgment on why Malaysia's 1986 'Allah' ban was quashed in Jill Ireland's case | Malay Mail](#)
- The 16-year legal contest by a Sabah-based church against Putrajaya on its right to use the word "Allah" in religious publications and education has come to an end. On 15 May 2023, the government [withdrew an appeal](#) against the decision of the lower court in the [Ireland case](#) (Benar News, 15 May 2023). A few days later, it was reported that the Evangelical Church of Borneo (SIB) had [ended its legal fight](#) against the 'Allah' ban after 16 years (UCA News, 18 May 2023). However, the "Allah" issue is far from over as it continues on the political level. The Malay rulers feel it is important for the National Council for Islamic Religious Affairs (MKI) to review and issue the final decision on the use of the word. Using the ruling power he has, the Sultan of Selangor, chairman of MKI, called upon all parties to respect the provisions in the Federal Constitution that guaranteed the rights and powers of the Malay Rulers in matters related to Islam. The home ministry said more sessions will be held with other stakeholders, including state Islamic religious councils, in its effort to prepare a proposal to improve the administrative directive on the use of the word "Allah".

Politics and society are driven by one particular ethnic impulse, namely the preservation and superiority of the Malay ethnic group. While the Persecution engine *Ethno-religious hostility* is clearly blended with and dominated by religious motives, as every Malay has to be a Muslim, it has to be mentioned since it clearly plays out in the missionary *dakwah* movement which has been offering poverty-stricken native communities in East Malaysia lucrative incentives and benefits if they convert to Islam.

One country expert explained it this way: "Ethno-religious hostility is promoted/fanned by narratives of Islamic religious superiority and ethnic Malay supremacy. This is used at all levels of government and in the social media. Christians and other non-Muslims are told that their presence and continued practice of their religion is "tolerated" by the Muslim community, and warned not to do anything which would upset Muslims. Inter-racial peace and harmony is often skin-deep/superficial, and can easily be overturned by overly-sensitive Muslims who take offence too easily."

Dictatorial paranoia (Strong)

Although *Dictatorial paranoia* is certainly only a subsidiary Persecution engine in Malaysia, it is relevant for understanding the country’s situation. All parties claiming to defend the Malay people and their privileges choose to re-emphasize policies of preferential treatment for Malay people (instead of following a policy of equality) and play religious and racial cards. While UMNO managed to translate its defeat in the November 2022 elections into being part of a coalition government, the corruption scandal of former Prime Minister Najib Razak and the acquittal of UMNO president and Vice-Prime Minister Zahid Hamidi of 47 graft accusations on 4 September 2023 seem to have estranged more and more Malay voters from UMNO. Although the party had been predicted a demise before, it seems more voters, also among the young electorate, prefer to vote for PAS. Therefore, *Dictatorial paranoia* will remain a constant companion of Malaysian politics.

Drivers of persecution

Malaysia: Drivers of Persecution	IO	RN	ERH	CO	CDP	CPCO	SI	DPA	OCC
	VERY STRONG		MEDIUM					STRONG	
Government officials	Strong		Strong					Strong	
Ethnic group leaders	Strong		Medium					Weak	
Non-Christian religious leaders	Strong		Medium						
Ideological pressure groups	Medium		Medium					Weak	
One's own (extended) family	Strong		Strong						
Political parties	Strong		Strong					Strong	

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

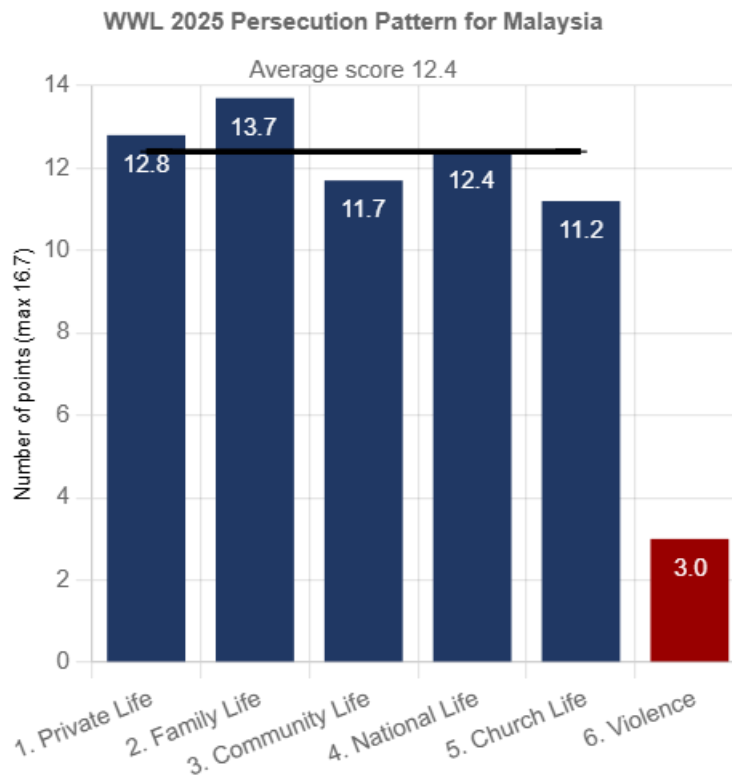
Drivers of Islamic oppression blended with Ethno-religious hostility

- **Non-Christian religious leaders (Strong) and ethnic group leaders (Strong):** Various Muslim NGOs see themselves as 'champions of Islam' and have enjoyed government support. At times they stir up racial disharmony and religious discrimination with their statements and actions. They keep reminding citizens that being a Malay means being a Muslim and sometimes warn against alleged Christian mission and conversion efforts. At the same time, leaders of ethnic minority groups (such as the Iban, among others) can compromise their rights for the sake of getting material benefits, and ethnic majority group leaders will emphasize and strengthen their group's domination as much as possible. A country expert added: "Former Prime Minister Dr Mahathir has been perpetuating ethnic divisions and promoting inequality by rallying Malays to join his 'Malay Proclamation' movement. Throughout his career, he actively used the Bumiputera policy to uplift the Malays in the country, in education, government and business. According to him, now the Malays are being overrun by other ethnic minorities and will soon lose their power. His policies reflected Islamic beliefs and values, which he believed should guide governance. Once a critic of PAS, he now welcomes the so-called 'green wave'.
- **Extended family (Strong):** For converts, family members continue to be the strongest drivers of persecution, as leaving their original faith is seen as a disgrace, putting them outside the ethnic and religious community. Social pressure on the family to bring the convert back into the fold is also high. This can also mean handing the converts over to the authorities for ideological treatment.
- **Government officials (Strong):** The Constitution prohibits Malays from converting to other religions and limits the propagation of non-Muslim religions. Government officials hence strive to maintain and increase Islamic standards, to the detriment of non-Muslim minorities. The coalition government announced it would keep up the preferential treatment of the Malay and Bumiputera population. The economic challenges Malaysia is facing will serve as another incentive to benefit Malays first.
- **Political parties (Strong):** One of the main points on the agenda of political parties like UMNO and PAS is to uphold and protect Islam and the dominance of the ethnic Malay group. It was PAS, for example, who proposed the introduction of Hudud Law in Kelantan. They also announced efforts to harmonize Sharia law with civil law under the Act 355. UMNO and PAS are sowing discord and hatred towards Christians and are using religion to rally support from the Malays.
- **Ideological pressure groups (Medium):** Most pressure groups focus on preserving the ethnic dominance of the Malay people. But Islamic groups like ISMA are very active in calling for the protection of Islam as well (e.g., protecting a once [converted child](#) from an inter-religious marriage, 2 August 2022). However, pressure on Christians has also been reported as coming from a Hindu minority group in Malaysia.

Drivers of Dictatorial paranoia

- **Government officials (Strong):** The Islamist party PAS has strengthened its political position: As well as being back in the federal government after more than four decades, in the August 2023 elections, it successfully defended its leading position in the three states of Kedah, Kelantan and Terengganu. Additionally, civil servants in the administration do not change their thinking quickly. This is especially true for the administration of religious affairs.
- **Political parties (Strong):** What has been stated above for drivers of *Islamic oppression* is applicable here as well.

The Persecution pattern



The WWL 2025 Persecution pattern for Malaysia shows:

- The average pressure on Christians in Malaysia remained at 12.4 points. Pressure is extremely high and strongest in the *Family sphere of life*. Next highest pressure occurs in the *Private and National spheres of life*. The pressure in the *Family, Community and Private spheres* largely relate to the country's Islamization policies and the challenges faced by Christian converts from Islam and other religions. Pressure resulting from the persecution engine *Islamic oppression* is present in all spheres. Conservative Islamic groups and parties have increased in strength and influence in Malaysia.
- The score for violence against Christians was 3 points, a rise from the 2.4 points recorded in WWL 2024. Despite this rise in score, persecution has rarely been visibly violent in Malaysia.

Pressure in the 5 spheres of life

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

Pressure in Block 1 / Private sphere

Block 1.1: Conversion has been opposed, forbidden, or punishable, including conversion from one type of Christianity to another. (3.50 points)

Whilst the Malaysian constitution provides for freedom of religion, Islam is the official religion of Malaysia and is strongly protected by those in charge. The law generally prohibits Muslims from converting to another faith. As written in the ruling of the well known, and often cited, case of Lina Joy in 2007: "A person who want[s] to renounce their religion must do so according to existing laws or practices of the particular religion. Only after the person has complied with the requirements and the authorities are satisfied that the person has apostatised can they embrace Christianity with violators facing punishment under Sharia law." There is a long and arduous legal process for Muslims attempting to convert. Furthermore, Muslims who wish to convert to Christianity often face opposition from family members, societal ostracism, and threats. Non-Muslims generally have more freedom to convert however family and social pressures remain.

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.). (3.25 points)

Revealing one's faith on social media can be particularly risky. One country expert reported: "Sharing of faith, quotes from the Bible or religious activities on media platforms social can be seen as a sensitive 'propagation of religion' effort. There are cases where Christian individuals have been disciplined or confronted social pressure due to their religious sharing in social media. Although not officially prohibited, it is possible to share faith in the media social can be considered challenging or disturbing the harmony between religions."

Another expert also noted the increasing challenges caused since the beginning of the Israel-Hamas conflict in October 2023: "Fear of being scorned because posting Christian-related materials might be related with showing support for Israel."

The risks for converts are greater, with the family being the first to act by cutting all family ties. Sometimes religious officials take the convert away for relocation and re-education. Therefore converts exert a high level of self-restriction and if they dare to share about their new faith, they use another account with a different name in social media.

Block 1.7: It has been risky for Christians to speak about their faith with immediate family members. (3.25 points)

While Article 11 of the Federal Constitution of Malaysia states that every individual has the right to profess, practice and preach his religion or belief, Article 11(4) of the Federal Constitution also states that the propagation of non-Islamic religions among Muslims is forbidden. Therefore sharing faith with a Muslim is considered illegal and punishable by law. As no Malay is allowed to leave Islam, every discussion about faith is fraught with the risk of being perceived as proselytizing or 'insulting Islam'. A country expert stated that "speaking about one's faith with family, friends, or colleagues is treading on thin ice. For the simple fact that, depending on who hears it, it might be treated as an attempt to convert a Muslim and that is punishable." For converts, discussions about faith come naturally with a much higher risk, as they can lead to one's conversion being discovered.

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

Christians who have been isolated from other family members include those forced to leave their home, those who are denied access to their children after their conversion and those taken to

detention camps for religious counselling by the Islam authorities. Christian converts report being placed under house arrest, often for periods of up to three years and spending around three months in rehabilitation centers run by Islamic ideological groups with the intention of 're-conversion'.

For other converts, particularly those not of a Muslim background, the families appear to focus on restricting time with other like-minded Christians, for example, forbidding them to leave the house on a Sunday to attend church.

Block 1 - Additional information

Christians from a Muslim background cannot attend any public church activities (except in East Malaysia, although even there it is not without risk. A rule of thumb is: The more rural the village, the higher the risk). If they do, they risk being caught by the authorities and the church attended will face serious consequences for welcoming them. Therefore, converts gather secretly in homes for all their Christian activities, away from the prying eyes of government, community and the registered churches. Even attending online meetings is not without risk.

Pressure in Block 2 / Family sphere

Block 2.7: Parents have been hindered in raising their children according to their Christian beliefs. (3.75 points)

The Malaysian education system emphasizes Islamic teachings. While non-Muslim students are not officially required to take part in Islamic education, they are instead enrolled in ethics or moral classes that often reflect Islamic values. Exposure to religious content through textbooks, assemblies, and school events, which may include Islamic prayers, has raised concerns among Christian parents about the potential influence on their children's beliefs. Field reports also indicate that, contrary to policy, some schools teach Islamic Education and *Tasawwur* (Islamic world view) to non-Muslim students.

In rural areas, traditional customs and community pressure to adhere to ancestral practices can further challenge Christian families' efforts to raise their children in their faith.

Additionally, in cases of divorce, when one parent converts to Islam (a common practice to secure custody rights), the Christian parent may face significant obstacles in maintaining a Christian upbringing for their children, often resulting in restricted access or exclusion from their lives. In some mixed marriages, one spouse officially converts to Islam to marry their Muslim partner but continues to practice Christianity and wishes to raise their children in the Christian faith. However, this is often met with opposition from the Muslim spouse, who may insist on raising the children according to Islamic teachings. By default, children of mixed marriages (i.e., with Muslim/non-Muslim parents) are registered as Muslim.

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

According to the current law, children born to couples where one parent is a Muslim (either by birth or conversion) are automatically registered as Muslims. Since converts cannot officially change their religion to Christianity, their children will be registered as Muslims. The problem surrounding registering children is an ongoing problem for Bumiputeras (Malays and indigenous people). As for the

law concerning the unilateral conversion of children, the Federal Court has now ruled that it is unlawful, and therefore both parents' consent are needed for the conversion of children.

Christian children have sometimes been automatically registered under the majority religion due to various administrative practices and errors. The official practice is that the religion of the child is registered in the birth certificate, MyKID (identity card below 12 years old), and MyKAD (identity card 12 years old and above). However, there are cases of malpractice where the registrar has put the child's religion as Islam - especially for Orang Asli (indigenous population). This issue can arise from errors in the registration process, or the automatic assumption of religion based on names or other factors. Natives in Sabah and Sarawak have the affixes 'bin' (son of) or 'binti' (daughter of) in their names even though they are not Muslims, which leads officers to believe they are Muslims and put Islam as their religion in the MyKADs (Identity Card). The National Human Rights Commission SUHAKAM has officially complained about this practice of 'forced conversion' in Sarawak (MalayMail, 21 January 2021), but so far their complaints have been ignored.

This has also been one of the problems faced by Bumiputera Christians. However, some of them do not bother to 'fight' over it as the process is long and arduous with very few successful results. With a growing number being converted to Islam, either willfully or through deceit, the parents' children will automatically follow the 'new' religious identity, which is Islam. As the 'religion' is not shown in the physical identity card but in the digital information accessed only via card reader, it is easy for the government to register children of indigenous people groups and native/tribal groups under Islam without the parents knowing it or checking it.

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

It is very common for state high schools to teach compulsory subjects such as 'Tamadun Islam' (Islamic civilization), 'Sejarah Islam' (History of Islam) and 'Sastera Melayu' (Malay literature). For example, the history lessons in Year 11 (Secondary school form 4) are mainly about Islamic history and take up 80% of the syllabus. Non-Muslim children must take these subjects since attendance is compulsory and necessary for obtaining a SPM (High School Examination) certificate. It is also common for children of the indigenous tribes in Malaysia (Orang Asli) to be pressured into attending religious/Arabic classes. In August 2023, the government took a step further in expanding Islamic influence through the education system by introducing the '40 Hadith appreciation module' in national schools starting in 2024, in the name of fostering unity and religious understanding (Malay Mail, 19 August 2023). The initiative has been criticized as being 'unconstitutional' by the Malaysian interfaith body which argued that the module promotes the complete Islamic way of life, which they believe goes against the principles of religious freedom enshrined in Article 3(1) of the Federal Constitution. In its defense, the Education Department said that the module is only for Muslim students and its development was undertaken based on a recommendation from Prime Minister Anwar Ibrahim, who has promised [a more influential role](#) in governance for The Department of Islamic Development Malaysia (ICC, 12 August 2024). However, pressure on Christians continues at all levels of education. Even at the university level, students are often forced to participate in ceremonies and programs tied to the majority religion to earn merit whilst certain compulsory university courses, such as "Philosophy and Current Issues," have been reported to contain heavy Islamic influences. Furthermore, Christian

university students have been required to attend activities at mosques, such as mutual aid events and talks, further exposing Christian students to teachings and practices not aligned with their beliefs.

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

Children of Christians are frequently harassed and discriminated against because of their parents' faith. Children of converts have to attend Islamic education in schools and there are reports that Christian children are put under pressure to convert to Islam in an effort to bolster *dakwah*. Sometimes, parents who have converted to Christianity have to take their children out of school as they may unintentionally talk about their parents' faith. Derogatory comments by peers are common and even teachers have shamed Christian students for what is often a mix of religious and ethnic reasons. One country expert stated: "There are reports of Christian children and families facing bullying simply because they are not part of the majority religion. This can manifest in various ways, including social ostracism, harassment, and even oppression due to their beliefs." This is not only true for converts, it has been reported that this kind of pressure is put on indigenous children of Christian faith and on Iban Christians as well.

Block 2 - Additional information

Malaysia seems to be the only country in the world where religious conversion can change ethnicity as well. There are reported cases where children of converted natives suddenly 'professed' to be Muslim Malays when their real ethnicity was Iban. When asked why they answered that way, they said: "Because our (Muslim) teachers told us so!" Some Christians from indigenous tribes, especially in Sabah, are converted to Islam by trickery. To accept financial help from the government, some of them handed in their identity card and signed a form not knowing that this was a declaration to convert to Islam. When they got their card back, they realized that their religion has been changed to Islam. When they tried to reverse this, they were told by the Federal Registration Department that their religious status can only be changed if approval is given by the Sharia courts, which is impossible to obtain.

The challenge of registration reaches into the next generation. Often, converts do not want to register their children's births as they will automatically be entered as Muslim. So, most children of converts are unregistered and grow up without enjoying privileges (such as access to public education) which depend on registration. However, if converts decide to have their children registered, they have to be registered as Muslims.

Christians with a Muslim background can also be forced to divorce (if married) and lose their inheritance rights, once discovered. Organizing a baptism, Christian wedding or funeral can become difficult or even impossible. Converts can be kept isolated by their families, or expelled from the family home, or even sent to Islamic purification (i.e. re-education) camps, although this rarely happens. There has been a report that such camps have been re-named and double as Islamic schools.

According to the Religious Affairs minister, marriages registered overseas between a Malaysian Muslim and a non-Muslim foreigner are neither allowed nor recognized under Malaysian law, should the couple choose to later reside in Malaysia. He reiterated that for Muslims, the Islamic Family Law (Federal Territory) Act 1984 states that no man can marry a non-Muslim woman and vice versa. "If a

Muslim was to marry someone of a different faith, their partner has to convert to Islam" ([Free Malaysia Today, 9 June 2023](#)). Because of this, converts from Islam to Christianity cannot register for marriage.

Pressure in Block 3 / Community sphere

Block 3.7: Christians have been pressured by their community to renounce their faith. (4.00 points)

This pressure is acute for the indigenous people in East Malaysia, but also affects the Orang Asli in West Malaysia ([Cilisos, 10 May 2021](#)). The state-driven and financed Muslim missionary activity (*dakwah*) often uses the economic and social difficulties experienced by Christian and animist natives to entice them to convert to Islam with financial benefit. Friends often persuade them to speak the Islamic meal prayers and invite them to celebrate Muslim festivals. Such and even stronger pressure is exerted against Christian converts from a Muslim background, as they face stints in re-education camps. (for details, see below: *Persecution of other religious minorities*, US State Department [IRFR 2022 Malaysia](#), pp.14-15). Converts from other religious backgrounds can face physical abuse, depending on the family. A country expert opined that interfaith relationships was the leading factor in Christians renouncing their faith, especially in the context of interfaith marriage, stating: "Many Christians are pressured to convert to Islam if they want to marry a Muslim. This is often presented as a requirement for the marriage to be legal, with no option to maintain their Christian faith. Christian individuals in relationships with people from the majority religion often face ultimatums—either convert to Islam or the relationship will end. ... Christian women who become pregnant by Muslim partners are sometimes forced to marry and convert to Islam to avoid bringing shame to their families. The social and familial pressures leave them with little choice but to renounce their Christian beliefs."

A country expert summed up the pressure faced by Christians to renounce their faith as follows: "Believers continue to be pressured by their communities to renounce their faith specifically through these four means: 1) interfaith relations, 2) receiving of benefits, rewards or promotion, 3) false promises or threats, and lastly 4) parental conversion."

Block 3.9: Christians have faced disadvantages in their education at any level for faith-related reasons (e.g. restrictions of access to education). (3.75 points)

What one country expert called the "racial micro-aggression in the Malaysian School System" has continued and is inextricably linked with religious motives. For non-Malay students, access to several universities is limited. Public universities are still adopting the quota system whereby Bumiputera students (Malays and indigenous people) have a higher quota while non-Bumiputera students have less access to courses at state universities. This applies to state universities' intake and government scholarships. In order to qualify for higher education and scholarships, Christians - as non-Malay in general - need to overcome far higher hurdles than Muslims due to the "affirmative action policy" in favor of Malays. There were also reports that non-Malays and non-Muslims converted to Islam, just to get their student loans, which were then approved without further background checks.

Block 3.10: Christians have been discriminated against in public or private employment for faith-related reasons. (3.75 points)

There has always been discrimination against non-Malays and preference for Malays in public employment, even though on paper the preferential policy applies to Bumiputera as well. **One country expert shared: "Christians have minimal opportunities to secure employment in the public sector, with**

job applications often met with bias. Many Christians find it challenging to get promotions or salary increases, as these opportunities are typically reserved for Muslims. In some cases, individuals have stated that to advance in rank, they are pressured to convert to Islam. At many workplaces, including government sectors, Muslims are prioritized for promotion courses and salary increases."

As for private businesses (for example owned by Chinese Christians, but also in general to all non-Malay business owners), to get government contracts it is required by law that the owners must have Bumiputera partners. To get round this, some companies are known to have such partners on paper only. On the other hand, there are private businesses with a "Muslim only" hiring policy. Although many Christians from Sabah and Sarawak qualify as Bumiputera, the religious factor hinders their employment, especially in higher positions.

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)

Both Christians and Christian activities are regularly being monitored. For example, during the WWL 2025 reporting period, a country expert reported: "A church had to change its service format by removing music because Malay individuals were seen waiting near the church. The congregation felt threatened and adjusted their worship to avoid drawing attention, implying a sense of being watched or monitored." Converts have to be particularly cautious in their activities and are "always on the lookout", as one convert said - especially concerning the people they visit or receive into their homes. They are watched by neighbors and can be easily reported to the village authorities who will question them. Churches, like other religious entities, are monitored by the Special Branch of the police. Even online meetings are monitored, which is done less noticeably. Aside from the state authorities and local Muslim communities, Malay Islamic rights groups (e.g., Perkasa and ISMA) are also known to monitor Christian activities.

Block 3 - Additional information

In remote areas in Sabah and Sarawak, Malay communities have access to water and electricity, but some native communities known to be Christian are denied such access. Although in general, indigenous and Orang Asli communities are deliberately neglected (for example, they have less access to infrastructure), being a Christian among such communities makes them even more prone to discrimination. Converts face strong pressure from family, friends and neighbors to recant their Christian faith. Christians in Malaysia are often harassed and threatened for faith-related reasons. The discrimination often takes places because of dress codes: For instance, in states like Kelantan, ruled by the PAS, there have been raids focusing on the proper Islamic dress for women. This puts pressure on Christians, particularly converts, as well. One country expert explained the background: "Although wearing a headscarf is not mandatory, the hijab issue has always been around. There is tremendous pressure on Malay and Muslim women to wear the hijab for fear of being deemed less devout, un-Islamic or showing apostasy tendencies. Muslim men and media have been reported to scorn and ridicule Muslim women who do not wear the hijab."

Pressure in Block 4 / National sphere

Block 4.2: Officials have refused to recognize an individual's conversion as recorded in government administration systems, identify cards (etc.). (4.00 points)

Officials refuse to recognize an individual's right to convert, especially when it is stated in the documents that they are Muslim, be they Malay or non-Malay. One country expert shared that, in Sabah, a region where religious freedom was supposed to be guaranteed under the Malaysia Agreement, the national registry department (JPN) does not process requests for conversion due to interference from the Sabah Islamic Religious Council (MUIS). This shows how government religious bodies play a direct role in blocking conversions. Some individuals have reported that changing their religious status on identity cards requires payment, and the process is time-consuming, often taking years. This is particularly difficult for those converting from Islam, as a decision from the Sharia court is required.

Muslims desiring to renounce Islam have to go through a long and painful legal process, and are often charged with apostasy. It is virtually impossible for ethnic Malays to legally convert to Christian faith, since even the Constitution stands against it. In general, the religion entered on the identity card is taken as authoritative and it is an uphill battle to have it removed should someone wish to leave Islam. As a result, many Bumiputera are wrongly categorized as Muslims on their ID cards. The authorities provide financial aid to those who want to convert to Islam.

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)

Religious freedom is enshrined in the Malaysian Constitution; Article 11 provides the right to profess and to practice religion for every person, and (subject to applicable laws restricting the propagation of other religions to Muslims) to propagate it. The Constitution defines ethnic Malays as Muslims. That is why Malays do not have the religious liberty to leave Islam and embrace another religion. As already stated above, the Federal Court ruled that jurisdiction on the validity of a conversion lies with the Sharia courts, not the civil courts, leaving converts effectively without legal representation for the time-being. This does not only affect Christians as can be seen in the recent case of a Hindu woman whose faith was not accepted by the Sharia courts. During her attempt to challenge the judgement the woman was told that her case could not be re-tried in civil courts. Judge Abu Bakar justified this position by stating: "It would indeed be inappropriate, unjust to the system of judicial administration and power of the Sharia Court and wholly unjustified for the same to be supplanted of its jurisdiction and for the jurisdiction instead to be conferred on the civil court." ([MalayMail, 15 May 2024](#)).

The Constitution also prohibits adherents of other religions from propagating their religion among Malay Muslims. Yet it allows Muslims to propagate Islam all over the country. Furthermore, Sharia law is in place in conjunction with civil law. As one country expert explained: "Malaysia's Islamists and conservatives, led by PAS, are challenging the country's legal system, calling for the 'de-secularization' of Malaysian law in cases involving religious conversions."

Block 4.5: Christians have been discriminated against when engaging with the authorities (local administration, government, army, etc.) for faith-related reasons. (3.75 points)

Religion is part of every sphere of life in Malaysia. Discrimination against Christians (and all non-Malay and non-Muslims) takes place at all levels of society, including local administration and government.

The authorities give special treatment to Malays and, for example, non-Malay owned companies are required to have at least one Malay as board member. In a previous reporting period (WWL 2023), Orang Asli groups officially complained that the Department of Orang Asli Development (JAKOA) did not provide any support to those who had converted to Christianity. JAKOA also refused to entertain their request for a proper road, water pipeline and sewage system, while Muslim Orang Asli groups in the same settlement were provided with a proper tar road and water system. Discrimination also exists in the organization of activities. Christians are often required to undertake lengthy bureaucratic processes and apply for permits from multiple agencies, such as the police, which adds significant barriers to organizing faith-related events. Furthermore, there are, often insurmountable, difficulties in obtaining the approvals needed to construct a church building. Finally, the abduction and disappearance of Pastor Raymond Koh, along with the lack of thorough investigation and justice for his family, highlights a severe case of discrimination and negligence by the authorities.

Block 4.11: Christians have been subjected to smear campaigns or hate speech. (3.50 points)

On websites run by Malay Islamic rights groups and in government-owned media, Christians are frequently slandered, for example by spreading rumors that Christians and Jews want to take over Malaysia. One prominent case concerned PAS President Abdul Hadi Awang who claimed publicly that non-Muslims and non-Bumiputera are the root of corruption in Malaysia. Hadi boldly claimed that he would answer all questions and justify his remarks, should he summoned by the court. Hadi has not been detained despite the reports lodged against him ([The Star, 3 September 2022](#)).

Christians have also been victimized in smear campaigns, often driven by political motivation. These campaigns tend to exploit religious differences to further political agendas. Smear campaigns and tensions around the use of the word "Allah" in Christian contexts, such as the "Allah socks" controversy, have further highlighted how Christians can be targeted. Although government measures like the 3R (Race, Religion, Royalty) guidelines aim to reduce such incidents, the issue has contributed to ongoing tensions. There is also an ongoing smear campaign against Malaysian Youth and Sports Minister Hannah Yeoh. Yeoh previously faced false accusations that she was attempting to convert Muslims and establish Malaysia as a Christian nation in July 2024. Despite a complete lack of evidence, her opponents are now using the release of her book "Becoming Hannah: A Personal Journey," to renew these allegations, citing national security concerns ([International Christian Concern, 2 January 2025](#)).

In addition, since the beginning of the Israel-Hamas conflict in October 2023, Christians have been victims of hate speech due to their perceived association with Israel. This has been particularly evident in political and social contexts where anti-Israel sentiments are prevalent, sometimes spilling over into hostility towards Christians. Anti-Israel campaigns in schools and other public forums can occasionally extend to hate-speech against Christians, though these campaigns are not widespread.

Block 4 - Additional information

The country's harsh sedition laws have drawn much condemnation from international observers. Although the law bans any action, speech or publication that brings contempt against the government or Malaysia's nine royal sultans and prohibits people from inciting hatred between different races and religions, it is used one-sidedly: Those who instigate hatred and stoke racial and religious sentiments against Christians are rarely charged for sedition. Questioning the special position of the ethnic Malay majority and the natives of Sabah and Sarawak falls under sedition as well. Those who have spoken

out against the government have mostly had to face sedition charges too. Indigenous people face aggressive, deliberate attempts to convert them to Islam, especially those who migrate to West Malaysia as it is easy to take advantage of their social uprooting and their economic vulnerability. In the long term, the Christian population may shrink because of this, especially in East Malaysia. A Muslim mother-daughter duo challenged the strengthened Sharia laws of Kelantan state in court ([UCA News, 17 November 2023](#)); if they succeed, it may generate a renewed impetus to incorporate the status of Sharia laws at the federal level, but as of January 2025 there have been no further developments in this matter.

Pressure in Block 5 / Church sphere

Block 5.7: Churches have been hindered from openly integrating converts. (4.00 points)

Most churches - even the large and well-established ones - are very cautious when it comes to welcoming converts as it is very risky for them to integrate Muslim background Christians. There are indications that the Department of Islamic Development Malaysia (JAKIM) regularly monitors churches, with reports of individuals being paid up to RM500 to spy on church activities and in some cases, pastors have faced legal consequences for involving converts from other religious backgrounds in church activities. As a result, converts usually meet in secret groups, separate from other Christians, because churches will otherwise run into trouble with the authorities. At times, churches have even turned away converts and even reported them to the authorities, as they did not want to get into trouble. The risk of converts being caught going to church is much higher in West Malaysia, but even in East Malaysia converts require great caution.

Block 5.2: It has been difficult to get registration or legal status for churches at any level of government. (3.50 points)

Article 11(3) of the Constitution states: "Every religious group has the right to: manage its own religious affairs; establish and maintain institutions for religious or charitable purposes; and acquire and own property and hold and administer it in accordance with the law." However, a country expert states: "Generally, it is difficult for a newly established church to register or obtain legal status for operating as a church. Churches often register as societies or clubs to make it easier (or even possible) to open a bank account, as well as to acquire and manage assets." Difficulties include delays and unexplained rejections when seeking approval to renovate or obtain land permits, all of which are complicated by zoning laws. Non-traditional churches face more challenges compared to historical churches. Whilst the situation is generally extremely difficult there are signs of hope in certain states where there is some support from the government and even allocations of funds for church renovations. Christians with a Muslim background continue to meet in homes for security reasons.

Block 5.11: Pastors or other Christian leaders (or their family members) have been special targets of harassment for faith-related reasons. (3.50 points)

Pastors and church leaders have been natural targets for hostility from religious or ethnic groups, especially when they or their church have been perceived as engaging in acts of evangelism, and even more so, when this happens among Muslims. There are also, for instance, reports of unknown men attending church services taking photos.

The abduction of Pastor Raymond Koh in broad daylight in February 2017 sent shockwaves through the Christian community and leadership which are still felt today. It is particularly unnerving for churches, pastors and particularly his family, that - so many years after the incident - his whereabouts are still unknown, the perpetrators have not been found (let alone punished), and that findings point to the involvement of the Special Branch of the police. For example, in January 2025 a court heard the police investigator in charge of Koh's abduction describe it as "professional" with a "similar modus operandi like that of the police" ([The Star, 7 January 2025](#)).

Block 5 - Additional information

Religious materials, such as Bibles, have been restricted, with instances of government authorities monitoring and limiting their entry into the country. Apologetic teachings are also under scrutiny, with concerns that they may attract attention from authorities, potentially posing risks for churches. Online sermons, especially those streamed on platforms like YouTube, are believed to be monitored as well, leading pastors to be cautious about what they say in public sermons. In some cases, sermons need to be submitted for approval before being preached. Even in less restricted areas like rural regions, pastors are careful with their messaging during public evangelism to avoid provoking hostility.

Violence

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

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

Possible reasons for this may be:

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

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

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

3. The use of symbolic numbers:

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

4. The symbol “x” in the table:

- This denotes a known number which cannot be published due to security concerns.

Malaysia: Violence scores per Block 6 question in questionnaire	WWL 2025	WWL 2024
6.1 How many Christians have been killed for faith-related reasons (including state sanctioned executions)?	0	0
6.2 How many churches or public Christian properties (schools, hospitals, cemeteries, etc.) have been attacked, damaged, bombed, looted, destroyed, burned down, closed or confiscated for faith-related reasons?	1	0
6.3 How many Christians have been detained for faith-related reasons?	10 *	0
6.4 How many Christians have been sentenced to jail, labor camp, sent to psychiatric hospital as punishment, or similar things for faith-related reasons?	0	5
6.5 How many Christians have been abducted for faith-related reasons (including Christians missing in a persecution context)?	0	0
6.6 How many Christians have been raped or otherwise sexually harassed for faith-related reasons?	0	0
6.7 How many cases have there been of forced marriages of Christians to non-Christians?	50 *	100 *
6.8 How many Christians have been otherwise physically or mentally abused for faith-related reasons (including beatings and death threats)?	25	15
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?	1	0
6.10 How many shops or businesses of Christians have been attacked, damaged, bombed, looted, destroyed, burned down, closed or confiscated for faith-related reasons?	0	0
6.11 How many Christians have been forced to leave their homes or go into hiding in-country for faith-related reasons?	0	3
6.12 How many Christians have been forced to leave the country for faith-related reasons?	10 *	10 *

For security reasons, no details can be provided.

5 Year trends

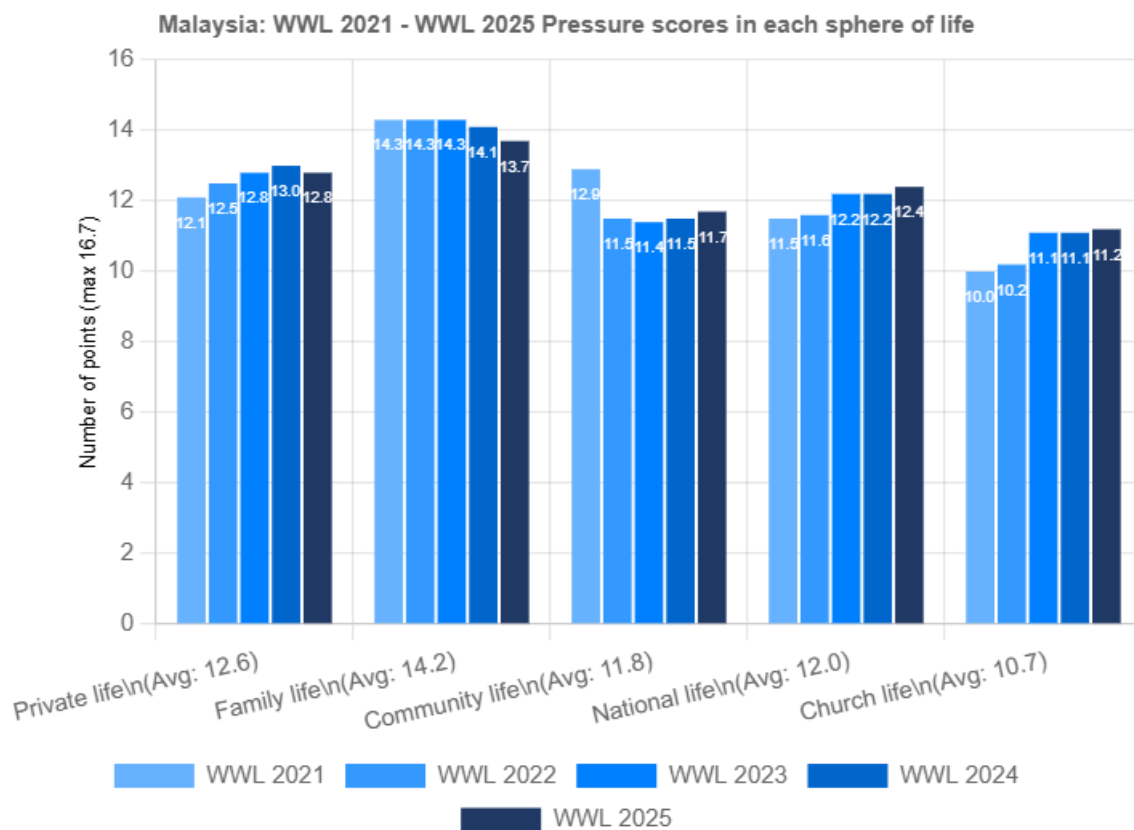
The following three charts show the levels of pressure and violence faced by Christians in the country over the last five WWL reporting periods.

5 Year trends: Average pressure

Malaysia: WWL 2021 - WWL 2025	Average pressure over 5 Spheres of life
2025	12.4
2024	12.4
2023	12.4
2022	12.0
2021	12.2

The score for average pressure on Christians is fairly stable at a very high level, having remained at 12.4 for three consecutive WWL reporting periods. The political turmoil and the changes of government did not yet result in immediate changes in the situation for Christians and other religious minorities. The growing influence of the PAS will likely become apparent in the coming years and limit the space for the Christian minority, especially converts, with a notable push for the implementation of Sharia law in states governed by PAS.

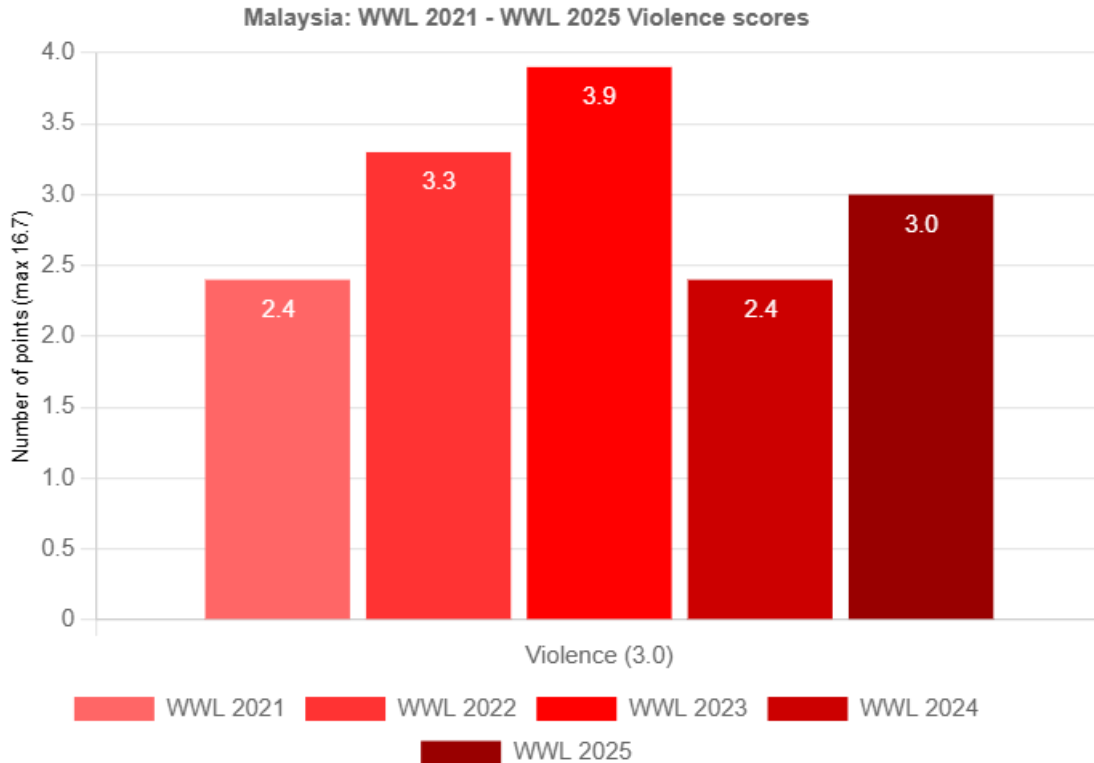
5 Year trends: Pressure in each sphere of life



Pressure has always been highest (at an extreme level) in the *Family sphere of life*. The level of pressure in *Church life* has always been the lowest compared to the rest of the *spheres of life*, but displayed a

significant increase in the WWL 2020-2025 reporting periods. Within the same period, increases of pressure also occurred in the *Community* and *National spheres of life*.

5 Year trends: Violence against Christians



The violence score rose again (to 3.0 points) from a score that had decreased significantly in WWL 2024. Although the violence against Christians did not rise to the levels seen in WWL 2022 and 2023, there were a greater number of reports of violence in WWL 2025 than in the previous year.

Gender-specific religious persecution / Female

Malaysia **Female Pressure Points**
Most frequently recorded PPs: WWL 2019 - WWL 2024

- Enforced religious dress code
- Forced marriage
- Targeted Seduction
- Violence – sexual

With four prime ministers since 2018, political instability has been an ongoing challenge for Malaysia ([Independent](#), 24 November 2022). Rights have long been restricted for Muslim women and girls who are governed by Sharia law, which restricts their rights in relation to marriage, divorce and child guardianship. In light of this, female converts from Islam to Christianity are vulnerable to a wide

spectrum of pressure and violence, the most prevalent being the threat of sexual violence and/or forced marriage to a Muslim. Whilst the minimum age for marriage is 18, Muslim girls can still be married before this age with the permission of the Sharia courts. According the USCIRF Annual Report 2024: "In November 2023, the Kelantan state government reported that 533 underage married couples were recorded in Kelantan over the last four years" ([USCIRF Malaysia, May 2024](#)). Such practices can make girls who convert to Christianity much more vulnerable as they risk being married early to a Muslim man to encourage them to retain their original faith. Such cases are rarely reported, however, as they are seen as shameful for the family (in the sense that it is deemed shameful for marriage to be necessitated to pressure a convert daughter into rejecting her new-found faith).

Sexual grooming for the purposes of conversion is also a risk for Christian women and girls; a country expert explained: "Women are targeted and seduced by Muslim men into having relationships and urged to convert to Islam before they get married. Sometimes the relationship is broken off by the men before they even got married, after the women have converted to Islam." This is in line with tactics associated with 'Project Cinta', an alleged government operation to convert non-Muslims in Sabah and Sarawak ([FMT, 14 June 2023](#)). Peer pressure within schools has reportedly increased for girls, particularly in relation to dress code. While schools in Malaysia have been prohibited from compelling students to wear the *tudong* (a traditional headscarf) for nearly three decades, social pressure leads to them wearing it anyway ([Free Malaysia Today, 9 February 2021](#)).

On rare occasions, Christian women are also vulnerable to being detained and interrogated by the authorities about Christian networks and leaders, although this remains a greater source of pressure for men.

Gender-specific religious persecution / Male

Malaysia	Male Pressure Points Most frequently recorded PPs: WWL 2019 - WWL 2024
Violence - verbal	

Following a period of political instability, the government is a point of concern for male Christians in Malaysia. While there had been previous pledges to sign the UN Declaration on the Elimination of All Forms of Intolerance and Discrimination Based on Religion or Belief, ultra-conservative Muslim groups strongly oppose this as they fear it will encourage apostasy and proselytism of Muslims. Men and boys are often the targets of these ultra-conservative Muslim groups. The persecution typically impacting Christian men can come in the form of bullying by vigilante groups and monitoring by the religious authorities.

Persecution of other religious minorities

According to the US Commission on International Religious Freedom annual report 2024 ([USCIRF Malaysia, May 2024](#)):

- "Federal and state governments continued to compel Muslim citizens to obey government-approved interpretations of Sunni Islam according to Shafi'i jurisprudence. ... Policing religion through MyKad, federal and state governments enforce the official interpretation of Islam and its dual legal system for all Muslim citizens."
- "The Shari'a legal system (known domestically as Syariah) prevents Malays and other registered Muslims from exercising their rights to pursue their own religious interpretation and identity."
- "In August [2023], a representative of the government described being queer as "a perverted lifestyle" that went against the teachings of Islam to justify the detention of eight Ahmadiyya Muslim protesters who were campaigning for LGBTQI+ rights."

According to the US Department of State International Freedom report 2023 ([IRFR 2023 Malaysia](#))

- "The government continued to arrest individuals during the year for blasphemy. The Royal Malaysia Police (RMP) said its 3R (race, religion, and royalty) task force, which was formed in March, opened 61 investigations, and that police had arrested at least 12 individuals as of July. The government continued to take action against some individuals who diverged from the official interpretation of Islam, including subjecting some to "rehabilitation" in centers that taught and enforced government-approved Islamic practice."
- "Those differing from the official interpretation of Islam continued to face adverse government action, including assignment to "rehabilitation" in centers that taught and enforced government-approved Islamic practices. The government forbade individuals to leave such centers until they completed the program, which varied in length but often lasted approximately six months. These counseling programs continued to be designed to ensure detainees adopted the government's official interpretation of Islam."
- "Federal and state governments continued to forbid religious assembly and worship for groups considered to be "deviant" Muslim groups, including Shia, Ahmadiyya, and al-Arqam. While Ahmadi Muslims in the country reported being able to maintain a worship center, government religious authorities did not allow them to hold Friday prayers, as these could only be performed in an officially registered mosque."
- "In response to an event staged by the Ministry of Youth and Sports for citizens to learn more about other religions, Selangor state executive counselor for religious affairs Zawawi Ahmad Mughni said in a March 14 [2023] media statement that the state's Islamic law prohibits Muslims from entering churches and other non-Muslim places of worship."

Trends Summary

1) Muslim Malay-centric politics are here to stay

According to a report by East Asia Forum, a survey carried out a number of years ago showed that 84.3% of Malaysians feel that the relationship between the government and people is similar to that between a parent and a child. It is therefore by no means certain that Malay citizens want to vote for a growing openness instead of paternalism. However, a more recent survey in February 2021 has

shown that 51% of respondents were undecided about who to vote for in a future federal election (East Asia Forum, 3 June 2021), which reflects feelings of insecurity and disenfranchisement. At the same time, the desire to be protected and safe is still strong. Prime Minister Anwar Ibrahim reassured the public that he would be upholding Islam as the religion of the federation and protect Malay and Bumiputera rights as enshrined in the Federal Constitution. He also pledged to safeguard the rights of Malaysians, regardless of race or religion (Free Malaysia Today, 24 November 2022). If the prime minister can follow this 'middle of the road' approach, not fully Islamic, but not quite secular, remains to be seen. The Malay Madani policy is not very encouraging in this respect. With Zahid becoming the deputy PM, Malay-centric politics is here to stay as he champions for Malays under UMNO's wings. The 2023 by-elections only strengthened the government's need and resolve for such a policy. A further point to mention is that activists have raised their concern about "Project Cinta" (translated "project love"), a program within the *dakwah* movement originating in the 1980s that aims to convert non-Muslims in Sabah and Sarawak. Activists say that it still encouraging such conversion (Malaysiakini, 11 February 2023). However, the government has denied its existence.

2) The Islamic influence is growing

One outcome of the November 2022 elections and the subsequent state elections in August 2023 is particularly clear: The influence of political Islam is here to stay and it is growing. At the same time, there are conflicts within the Islamist movement which show that it is far from united. While PAS can be said to be influenced by the Muslim Brotherhood, there are other groups and persons (including muftis) at state level, who are influenced by the Wahhabi-Salafi ideology (Murray Hunter Blog, 4 September 2022). The likelihood of conflict between Malaysia's royal houses and the Islamic political party, PAS, has been growing and may indicate where Islam in the country is heading (Channel News Asia, 7 April 2023). Especially in states in which they are ruling, PAS has defied royal decrees by declaring that Muslims are not allowed to participate in non-Islamic festivals, not permitted to even enter a church, but may spread political messages in Friday sermons at mosques. It remains to be seen if and for how long the royal houses will stay silent on these matters, and whether PAS will dare to challenge their position if they do speak up. The Federal Court's declaration of 16 provisions in Kelantan's Syariah Penal Code provisions as "void and invalid" in an 8-1 decision strictly limited its ruling on competing competencies in a federal system and did not aim at limiting or even ending Sharia. Predictably, politicians belonging to Islamist PAS party warned their constituencies and followers precisely about this and no amount of legal technicalities will sway such simplified messaging.

From the perspective of the ethnic and religious minorities, including Christians, this is a critical time. The window of opportunity for real change for the benefit of all is closing fast and several chances have already been squandered. Whether within the limits of a coalition or outside, PAS influence can be seen to be growing, as it is the largest single party and also governs several states. Just before the November 2022 elections, ex-PM and PN chairman Muhyiddin warned that Jews and Christians in Malaysia were working together with Pakatan Harapan (PH) to "Christianize" Malaysia. Many parties slammed him for this claim and demanded action to be taken against him (The Star, 19 November 2022). Nevertheless, his claims reflect a widespread popular mindset. While such 'demonization' of Christians is a decades-old political strategy followed by more than one party in Malaysia, the intensity and frequency with which Christians are being portrayed as aiming at "destroying the Malay race, their

religion and the country” is certainly to be noted. It is tempting to dismiss this as purely political demagoguery, but that would ignore the fact that it is effectively shaping perceptions and polarizing society.

3) Making sense of the election results and competing with the opposition

If the elections and the hung parliament resulting from it shows one thing, it is that voters were fed up with the status quo, but seem not to have realized yet that they need to be united when they aim to achieve real change. If they remain divided along racial and religious lines (as taught by political parties, leaders and society in general), they will not. With PAS being the largest party in parliament, this may be [the most likely path](#) for Malaysian politics (The Interpreter, 1 December 2022). It seems that the government is trying to stem what observers have called "the [Green wave](#)" (Benar News, 28 November 2022). If this will work by competing with PAS in an attempt to become more Islamic than the opposition, however, is doubtful. The government announced plans to have the [controversial Sharia harmonization law draft](#) voted on in Parliament, once the Cabinet has approved (Malay Mail, 25 May 2023). The draft, originally proposed by the Islamic PAS party and better known by its number, RUU 355, plans to harmonize Sharia law with civil law, mostly at the expense of the latter. This would be detrimental to the rights of minorities. A different question is whether this initiative was driven more by pure ideology or rather to woo Muslim-Malay voters away from PAS in the six state elections held in August 2023. If so, with PAS making inroads in these elections, it seems to have failed to convince the electorate. Neither possibility is encouraging for a country wishing to present itself as 'tolerant'.

In February 2023, the home minister slammed a military-like parade by Terengganu PAS Youth, saying it was not only inappropriate but could create uneasiness among the public. The [two-day parade](#) featured members from the Islamic party's youth wing in Setiu, Terengganu, and saw the group marching with replicas of swords, spears and shields (Free Malaysia Today, 23 February 2023). In response, PAS president Hadi accused those who condemned the parade as [Islamophobic](#) (Free Malaysia Today, 23 February 2023). It is still unclear what message PAS wants to send through the war-like parade, but it has given the impression of forthcoming hostility against non-Muslims. In June 2023, PAS president Hadi once again hit the headlines where he said that non-Muslims must be [grateful](#) for 'being given a place' here (meaning Malaysia), they should just let Malays continue leading the country (Malay Mail, 7 June 2023). This came after his claim in 2022 that non-Muslims are the "root of corruption" in the country. Another important part of answering the question if there is indeed a "Green wave" in Malaysia and if it will alter the country's political landscape for good is the question who will [succeed](#) the ageing and increasingly frail PAS president Hadi Awang and whether his successor will command the same amount of respect and unity (Channel News Asia, 28 March 2024).

Further useful reports

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

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

External Links

- Copyright, sources and definitions: Background country information - <https://www.opendoors.org/en-US/research-reports/wwl-background/>
- Copyright, sources and definitions: Persecution dynamics - <https://www.opendoors.org/en-US/research-reports/country-dossiers/>
- Brief description of the persecution situation: USCIRF, May 2024 - <https://www.uscirf.gov/sites/default/files/2024-05/USCIRF%202024%20Annual%20Report.pdf>
- Brief description of the persecution situation: ABNA News, 12 November 2024 - <https://en.abna24.com/story/1503657>
- 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>
- Areas where Christians face most difficulties: reports - <https://cilisos.my/are-malaysias-orang-asli-being-pressured-to-convert-to-islam-we-investigate/>
- Areas where Christians face most difficulties: socio-economic and welfare benefits - <https://www.uscirf.gov/sites/default/files/2021-05/Malaysia%20Chapter%20AR2021.pdf>
- Persecution engines description: MalayMail, 15 May 2024 - <https://www.malaymail.com/news/malaysia/2024/05/15/conversion-case-shariah-court-not-inferior-to-civil-court-says-apex-court-judge/134506>
- Persecution engines description: change - <https://www.malaymail.com/news/malaysia/2022/02/21/after-federal-courts-decision-shariah-lawyers-want-federal-constitution-cha/2042958>
- Persecution engines description: highly sensitive - <https://www.ecumenicalnews.com/article/ban-on-churches-in-malaysia-using-allah-for-god-arises-again/60738.htm>
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- Persecution engines description: withdrew an appeal - <https://www.benarnews.org/english/news/malaysian/malaysia-govt-drops-appeal-against-word-allah-05152023123652.html>
- Persecution engines description: Ireland case - <https://opendoorsanalytical.org/malaysia-high-court-rules-christians-can-use-allah-for-god/>
- Persecution engines description: ended its legal fight - <https://www.ucanews.com/news/malaysian-church-drops-legal-bid-against-allah-use-ban/101358>
- Drivers of persecution description: converted child - <https://isma.org.my/kenyataan-media-tetap-pertahan-keislaman-anak-anak-loh/>
- Block 2.8: Christian children have been pressured into attending anti-Christian or majority religion teaching at any level of education. (3.50 points): a more influential role - <https://www.persecution.org/2024/08/13/prime-minister-plans-to-expand-islamic-development-department/>
- Pressure in Block 2 / Family sphere: Free Malaysia Today, 9 June 2023 - <https://www.freemalaysiatoday.com/category/nation/2023/06/09/when-a-malaysian-muslim-enters-interfaith-marriage-overseas/>
- Block 3.7: Christians have been pressured by their community to renounce their faith. (4.00 points): Cilisos, 10 May 2021 - <https://cilisos.my/are-malaysias-orang-asli-being-pressured-to-convert-to-islam-we-investigate/>
- Block 3.7: Christians have been pressured by their community to renounce their faith. (4.00 points): IRFR 2022 Malaysia - <https://www.state.gov/reports/2022-report-on-international-religious-freedom/malaysia/>
- 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): MalayMail, 15 May 2024 - https://www.malaymail.com/news/malaysia/2024/05/15/conversion-case-shariah-court-not-inferior-to-civil-court-says-apex-court-judge/134506#google_vignette

- Block 4.11: Christians have been subjected to smear campaigns or hate speech. (3.50 points): (The Star, 3 September 2022). - <https://www.thestar.com.my/news/nation/2022/09/03/non-muslims-the-root-of-corruption-i039ll-explain-in-court-says-hadi>
- Block 4.11: Christians have been subjected to smear campaigns or hate speech. (3.50 points): International Christian Concern, 2 January 2025 - <https://www.persecution.org/2025/01/02/official-faces-new-allegations-of-attempted-religious-conversions/>
- Pressure in Block 4 / National sphere: UCA News, 17 November 2023 - <https://www.ucanews.com/news/mother-daughter-duo-challenge-stronger-sharia-law-in-malaysia/103294>
- Block 5.11: Pastors or other Christian leaders (or their family members) have been special targets of harassment for faith-related reasons. (3.50 points): The Star, 7 January 2025 - <https://www.thestar.com.my/news/nation/2025/01/07/abduction-of-pastor-koh-had-hallmarks-of-a-police-operation-court-hears>
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- Trends Summary: undecided - <https://www.eastasiaforum.org/2021/06/03/the-splintering-of-malaysias-political-spectrum/>
- Trends Summary: reassured - <https://www.freemalaysiatoday.com/category/nation/2022/11/24/anwar-gives-assurance-malay-rights-position-of-islam-will-be-protected/>
- Trends Summary: Project Cinta - <https://www.malaysiakini.com/columns/654693>
- Trends Summary: influenced - <https://murrayhunter.substack.com/p/wahhabi-salafism-and-the-muslim-brotherhood>
- Trends Summary: conflict - <https://www.channelnewsasia.com/commentary/malaysia-pas-test-wills-mosques-political-messages-islam-3395771>
- Trends Summary: Christianize" Malaysia - <https://www.thestar.com.my/news/nation/2022/11/19/muhyiddin-in-hot-water>
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- Trends Summary: Green wave - <https://www.benarnews.org/english/commentaries/asean-security-watch/abuza-malaysian-election-11282022155826.html>
- Trends Summary: controversial Sharia harmonization law draft - <https://www.malaymail.com/news/malaysia/2023/05/25/religious-affairs-minister-says-anwar-administration-will-table-controversial-ruu-355-once-cabinet-approves/70975>
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- Trends Summary: grateful - <https://www.malaymail.com/news/malaysia/2023/06/07/hadi-non-muslims-must-be-grateful-for-being-given-a-place-here-should-just-let-malays-continue-leading-country/73042>
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