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## Brunei: Country Dossier

December 2019



**OpenDoors**

Serving persecuted **Christians** worldwide

Open Doors International / World Watch Research

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# Introduction

## World Watch List 2020

Rank	Country	Private life	Family life	Community life	National life	Church life	Violence	Total Score WWL 2020	Total Score WWL 2019	Total Score WWL 2018	Total Score WWL 2017	Total Score WWL 2016
1	North Korea	16.7	16.7	16.7	16.7	16.7	11.1	94	94	94	92	92
2	Afghanistan	16.7	16.7	16.7	16.7	16.7	10.0	93	94	93	89	88
3	Somalia	16.5	16.7	16.6	16.6	16.5	9.4	92	91	91	91	87
4	Libya	15.3	15.5	15.8	16.0	16.4	11.3	90	87	86	78	79
5	Pakistan	14.0	13.9	15.0	14.9	13.7	16.7	88	87	86	88	87
6	Eritrea	14.5	14.9	15.9	15.9	15.4	10.9	87	86	86	82	89
7	Sudan	14.2	14.6	14.5	15.7	16.1	10.4	85	87	87	87	84
8	Yemen	16.6	16.4	16.4	16.7	16.7	2.6	85	86	85	85	78
9	Iran	14.1	14.3	14.1	15.8	16.5	10.4	85	85	85	85	83
10	India	12.9	13.0	13.5	15.0	13.5	14.8	83	83	81	73	68
11	Syria	13.5	14.2	13.0	13.9	14.4	12.6	82	82	76	86	87
12	Nigeria	12.2	11.9	13.5	12.8	13.0	16.7	80	80	77	78	78
13	Saudi Arabia	15.1	14.9	14.1	15.5	16.5	2.4	79	77	79	76	76
14	Maldives	15.4	15.6	14.0	15.9	16.6	0.7	78	78	78	76	76
15	Iraq	14.0	14.6	13.9	14.5	13.6	5.6	76	79	86	86	90
16	Egypt	12.1	13.1	10.7	13.2	10.5	16.1	76	76	70	65	64
17	Algeria	13.5	14.3	10.4	12.8	13.2	9.3	73	70	58	58	56
18	Uzbekistan	15.1	12.9	14.1	12.2	15.7	3.0	73	74	73	71	70
19	Myanmar	11.8	11.9	13.5	12.5	12.2	10.7	73	71	65	62	62
20	Laos	12.8	9.9	14.1	14.4	14.9	5.6	72	71	67	64	58
21	Vietnam	12.3	8.5	12.9	13.6	14.5	9.8	72	70	69	71	66
22	Turkmenistan	14.5	11.2	13.8	13.3	15.7	1.9	70	69	68	67	66
23	China	11.6	8.4	11.6	12.8	15.1	10.2	70	65	57	57	57
24	Mauritania	13.9	14.0	13.0	13.7	13.4	0.2	68	67	57	55	50
25	Central African Republic	10.1	9.1	13.1	9.8	10.2	15.6	68	70	61	58	59
26	Morocco	12.4	13.3	10.8	11.7	14.1	4.1	66	63	51	49	47
27	Qatar	13.6	13.4	10.8	12.2	14.1	2.2	66	62	63	66	65
28	Burkina Faso	9.4	9.7	10.2	9.4	11.8	15.6	66	48	-	-	-
29	Mali	9.2	8.2	12.8	10.0	11.7	13.7	66	68	59	59	55
30	Sri Lanka	11.5	9.0	11.0	10.9	9.6	13.1	65	58	57	55	53
31	Tajikistan	13.9	12.3	11.9	12.4	13.1	1.1	65	65	65	58	58
32	Nepal	12.4	10.8	9.9	12.1	12.2	7.0	64	64	64	53	53
33	Jordan	13.1	14.1	10.7	11.7	12.5	1.7	64	65	66	63	59
34	Tunisia	12.0	12.8	10.3	10.8	12.3	5.4	64	63	62	61	58
35	Kazakhstan	13.2	11.5	10.7	12.4	14.0	1.7	64	63	63	56	55

36	Turkey	12.6	11.8	10.7	13.3	11.3	3.7	63	66	62	57	55
37	Brunei	13.8	14.3	10.7	10.3	13.5	0.6	63	63	64	64	61
38	Bangladesh	11.1	9.9	12.7	11.1	8.9	9.3	63	58	58	63	57
39	Ethiopia	10.0	9.2	10.6	10.8	10.4	11.9	63	65	62	64	67
40	Malaysia	12.1	14.6	12.7	12.0	9.6	1.5	62	60	65	60	58
41	Colombia	8.9	7.8	11.9	9.8	8.9	15.0	62	58	56	53	55
42	Oman	12.7	13.1	10.0	11.5	12.7	2.0	62	59	57	53	53
43	Kuwait	13.2	13.1	9.9	11.5	13.4	0.7	62	60	61	57	56
44	Kenya	11.7	10.5	10.9	8.3	10.9	9.1	61	61	62	68	68
45	Bhutan	12.8	10.9	11.8	11.6	13.9	0.0	61	64	62	61	56
46	Russian Federation	12.2	8.3	10.7	10.4	12.1	6.9	60	60	51	46	48
47	United Arab Emirates	12.9	13.0	9.5	11.1	12.6	1.1	60	58	58	55	55
48	Cameroon	8.8	7.2	11.6	7.0	10.4	15.0	60	54	38	-	45
49	Indonesia	10.9	11.1	11.6	10.2	9.5	6.5	60	65	59	55	55
50	Niger	9.4	9.5	13.3	7.2	11.1	9.3	60	52	45	47	53
51	Palestinian Territories	12.2	13.0	9.2	10.2	11.9	3.1	60	57	60	64	62
52	Mexico	8.4	6.8	12.2	10.6	10.0	11.5	60	61	59	57	56
53	Azerbaijan	13.0	10.0	9.3	11.1	12.4	1.5	57	57	57	52	57
54	Comoros	11.7	11.5	9.1	9.9	13.9	0.9	57	56	56	56	56
55	Kyrgyzstan	12.9	10.3	11.1	9.4	11.9	1.1	57	56	54	48	46
56	Djibouti	12.3	12.3	10.3	10.0	11.2	0.2	56	56	56	57	58
57	Democratic Republic of the Congo	5.6	6.7	10.6	7.4	10.4	15.6	56	55	33	-	53
58	Chad	11.5	8.2	10.2	9.6	10.3	5.9	56	48	40	-	51
59	Bahrain	12.1	12.3	9.1	10.1	10.5	0.9	55	55	57	54	54
60	Tanzania	9.3	10.8	10.3	8.6	8.7	7.0	55	52	53	59	57
61	Cuba	9.6	5.6	9.5	11.8	12.0	3.5	52	49	49	47	42
62	Uganda	8.1	4.6	6.7	6.7	9.1	13.0	48	47	46	53	45
63	Burundi	5.1	5.8	9.7	9.2	9.6	8.7	48	43	-	-	-
64	Guinea	10.3	7.5	8.3	7.0	8.1	3.7	45	46	-	-	-
65	South Sudan	5.7	1.5	7.0	6.3	7.8	15.6	44	44	-	-	-
66	Mozambique	6.9	4.6	7.1	5.2	8.0	11.7	43	43	-	-	-
67	Gambia	8.3	8.2	8.7	8.3	8.8	1.1	43	43	-	-	-
68	Angola	6.4	3.6	7.0	8.7	10.4	6.7	43	42	-	-	-
69	Venezuela	3.8	4.4	10.6	9.3	9.5	4.8	42	41	34	-	-
70	Ivory Coast	9.8	8.6	8.2	5.5	6.6	3.5	42	43	-	-	-
71	Rwanda	5.3	4.4	6.7	7.8	10.1	7.2	42	41	-	-	-
72	Nicaragua	5.8	4.2	8.5	9.8	9.0	4.1	41	41	-	-	-
73	Togo	8.6	6.7	8.5	7.1	8.4	1.1	41	42	-	-	-

## Copyright notice

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## Brief note on sources and definitions

This country report is a collation of data and analysis based around Open Doors World Watch List (WWL) and includes statistical information on world religions, Christian denominations and people groups prepared by the World Christian Database (WCD). The highlighted links in the text can be found written out in full at the conclusion of each main section under the heading “External links”. The WWL 2020 reporting period was 1 November 2018 - 31 October 2019.

The definition of persecution used in WWL analysis is: “Any hostility experienced as a result of one’s identification with Christ. This can include hostile attitudes, words and actions towards Christians”.

This broad definition includes (but is not limited to) restrictions, pressure, discrimination, opposition, disinformation, injustice, intimidation, mistreatment, marginalization, oppression, intolerance, infringement, violation, ostracism, hostilities, harassment, abuse, violence, ethnic cleansing and genocide.

The latest update of WWL Methodology including appendices can be found on the [World Watch List Documentation](#) page of the Open Doors Analytical website (password: freedom).

# WWL 2020: Persecution summary / Brunei

## Brief country details

Pop 2019	Christians	Chr%
Brunei		
439,000	55,300	12.6

Data source: Johnson T M and Zurlo G A, eds., *World Christian Database* (Leiden/Boston: Brill, accessed April 2019).

World Watch List Brunei	Points	WWL Rank
WWL 2020	63	37
WWL 2019	63	36
WWL 2018	64	26
WWL 2017	64	25
WWL 2016	61	25

Scores and ranks are shown above whenever the country scored 41 points or more in the WWL 2016-2020 reporting periods.

## Dominant persecution engines and drivers

Brunei: Main Persecution engines	Main drivers
Dictatorial paranoia	Government officials , Non-Christian religious leaders, Ethnic group leaders
Islamic oppression	Government officials , One's own (extended) family, Non-Christian religious leaders, Ethnic group leaders

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

## Brief description of persecution situation

Converts from Islam suffer persecution as conversion is considered illegal and punishable by penal law and everything will be done to bring them back to their original faith. Non-traditional Christian communities cannot be registered as churches, but have to be registered as companies, societies or family centers. As such, they are treated as secular organizations and are required to submit their financial and operational reports to the government every year. The whole of society (Christians included) is affected by the continuing introduction of Sharia laws as well as by the tightening economic situation, which limits the authorities from being so generous with payouts to quell dissatisfaction.

## Specific examples of persecution in the reporting period

- As conversion from Islam is strictly opposed by Bruneian laws, known converts to Christianity will be separated from their spouse and children, and their spouse will be forced to divorce their partner. If converts are identified as such by the security department, they are threatened to make them recant their faith.
- Some Christians and members of other minority groups are not allowed official citizenship. This leads to a large group of stateless residents who are disadvantaged in many respects.
- Especially young people are leaving the country as they lack perspectives for the future. This affects churches as well and potential next generation leadership is becoming scarce.

# WWL 2020: Keys to understanding / Brunei

## Link for general background information

BBC country profile: <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-pacific-12990058>.

## Recent history

Brunei was a British protectorate from 1888 to 1984 and is now the only politically independent sultanate in the world. The ruling sultan is the 29th, the royal line reaching back as far as 1363. On 1 January 1984, the day of independence, the ruling sultan officially proclaimed Melayu Islam Beraja (MIB) as Brunei's national philosophy. MIB is a blend of Malay and Islamic cultural values guarded by the monarchy system. It opposes the concept of secularism. May 2014 saw the introduction of Sharia Penal Code (SPC); however, implementation was not announced until [2018](#) with the introduction of its Criminal Procedures Code (CPC) - see Political and legal landscape below.

## Political and legal landscape

The sultan is ruling as [absolute monarch](#), being chief of state, but also concurrently prime minister, finance minister, minister of the interior as well as of defence and head of religion. Hence, all power is concentrated in his hands. Brunei people deeply respect the sultan and there is no demand for more political participation.

The sultan introduced obligatory Islamic religious studies for all schools. But more importantly, he announced the [successive introduction](#) of Sharia in criminal law, the so called “Hudud” law, in October 2013. In 2014, Brunei enacted the new Sharia Penal Code, which is to apply also to non-Muslims, and which includes offences carrying the death penalty. The 2nd phase was supposed to be implemented in 2015 but was delayed. In March 2018, the implementation of the second phase of was finally announced. In a surprising move only made public on 25 March 2019, Brunei’s Minister of Religion declared 3 April 2019 as the commencement date for the [implementation of Sharia Penal Code](#). The Government Gazette was dated 29 December 2018, but the announcement was only made public ten days before implementation. After a five year period of leaving this law pending, the sudden publication of an imminent date for implementation seemed to be an attempt by the sultan and his government to avoid as much international outcry and pressure as possible. Judging by the public outcry afterwards, these efforts did not succeed. International media was quick to highlight the immediate [serious consequences](#) for the LGBTI community in the country, but it would have consequences for converts as well. In reaction, there were calls to boycott all luxury hotels belonging to a fund owned by the sultan.

Although it is unlikely that such a boycott would be effective, since he is seen as being one of the richest men worldwide, the sultan did react publicly to criticism by announcing that his country did not intend to [implement the death penalty](#) as foreseen in Brunei’s Sharia Penal Code (SPC). It is anyway exceptional that the sultan responded to criticism at all and it is also highly unusual that an official English translation of his speech was published. This goes to show what strong international advocacy can achieve.



## Religious landscape

According to the World Christian Database 2019, Muslims (mostly Sunni) make up 57.9% of the population. The ruling sultan is head of religion: What he wants, becomes law and if he decides that Islam will continue on a more conservative path, everyone (including the churches) have to accept that. Christians are free to worship, but they have been warned not to do so "excessively and openly". The Sharia Penal Code includes several provisions which limit the freedom of religion, not just for converts, but for the Christian minority as well. Time will tell how the provisions are implemented. Some of them are mentioned in more detail in the section entitled "5 Spheres of life" below.

The US State Department's IRF 2018 Report explains the ethno-religious affiliations as follows: "There is significant variation in religious identification among ethnic groups. According to 2016 official statistics, ethnically Malay Bruneians comprise 66 percent of the population and are presumed to be Muslim as an inherited status. The Chinese population, which is approximately 10 percent of the total population and includes both citizens and permanent residents, is 65 percent Buddhist and 20 percent Christian. Indigenous tribes such as Dusun, Bisaya, and Murut make up approximately 4 percent of the population and are estimated to be 50 percent Muslim, 15 percent Christian, and the remainder followers of other religious groups, including adherents of traditional practices. The remaining fifth of the population includes foreign-born workers, primarily from Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines, and South Asia or are stateless residents. According to official statistics, approximately half of these temporary and permanent residents are Muslim, more than one-quarter Christian, and 15 percent Buddhist."

Religious Context: Brunei	Numbers	%
Christians	55,300	12.6
Muslim	254,000	57.9
Hindu	3,900	0.9
Buddhist	41,700	9.5
Ethnoreligionist	44,400	10.1
Jewish	0	0.0
Bahai	200	0.0
Atheist	150	0.0
Agnostic	5,500	1.3
Other	34,110	7.8

*Data source: Johnson T M and Zurlo G A, eds., World Christian Database (Leiden/Boston: Brill, accessed April 2019). OTHER includes Chinese folk, New religionist, Sikh, Spiritist, Taoist, Confucianist, Jain, Shintoist, Zoroastrian.*

## Economic landscape

Brunei saw a growth in GDP around 2.5% in the first quarter of 2019. Nonetheless, the country tries to diversify its economy in order to give more of its citizens a good future perspective, especially the younger generation. Although the development plan "Vision Brunei 2035" aiming to expand various economic sectors has been published, there is little to show for it so far. Rather than focus on efforts to strengthen sectors outside the oil and gas industry, Brunei has chosen to produce even more oil, although oil and gas production peaked and seems to have seen a [decline](#) in recent years.

With an estimated 70-80% of the country's citizens employed by the government or government-linked institutions (as reported by FT Confidential Research), there is limited hope for an internally-driven economic expansion. This is the main reason for the younger generation to increasingly look for employment opportunities abroad.

The government of Brunei needs to make some difficult choices. The comfortable days with the ruling sultan caring for all his subjects will soon be over, even if the oil price recovers. Until now, his government provides free medical services and subsidizes goods such as rice and housing. There are no school fees for state schools, and citizens of Brunei do not have to pay income tax. But since the oil and gas reserves may only last for just one more generation or less, the government needs to start thinking about alternatives. Until now, it has [not been particularly successful](#) as it seems that the world does not need an "Islamic Singapore" (or already has one in United Arab Emirates' Dubai or Qatar's Doha). The comparably high oil price in the WWL 2020 reporting period helped deal with the strongest economic pressure temporarily.

## Social and cultural landscape

The population of Brunei is ethnically homogenous but, like neighboring Malaysia, it also has a sizeable Chinese and a smaller Indian community. Restrictions are gradually being imposed on the whole population. For instance, during Ramadan all restaurants (including non-Muslim establishments) must close. Also, all restaurants (including inside hotels) must close every Friday from 12 noon to 2pm during Friday prayers. Additionally, every day at 5pm the whole country comes to a standstill. Muslims and non-Muslims alike must stop whatever they are doing to allow time for the Islamic prayer ritual.

Citizens of Brunei are used to a high level of social benefits provided by the government, meaning the Sultan. It may prove difficult to remove many of these benefits. At the same time, the government is trying to reduce the unhealthily large number of citizens employed in government departments.

According to the [UNDP](#), the overall unemployment rate stands at 7.1%, which sounds manageable. However, the youth unemployment is four times higher and stood at [28.4% in 2017](#), explaining at least partly why many of the younger generation are planning to leave the country or have already left.

## Technological landscape

Brunei's Internet Penetration Rate is high at 90%, according to UNDP, reflecting a modern and highly developed country. Accordingly, the mobile phone subscription rate is also high with 123.7 per 100 people. Media is limited and it is unthinkable to openly criticize the government or the sultan. Nonetheless, the younger generation in particular is very active on social media sites like Reddit, which has been one of the first places where Bruneians have started to ask questions about the deliberately low-key introduction of the SPC. The country is not listed in Freedom House's Freedom on the Net 2019 report.

## Security situation

There are no militant groups active in Brunei and unlike in neighboring South East Asian states, no Bruneian Muslims appear to have joined the Islamic State group to fight in countries like Syria and Iraq. However, Islam is becoming increasingly conservative, limiting the space for non-Muslim Bruneian citizens. Therefore, the lack of militant groups does not mean Christians are not under pressure. Social cohesion is high and the potential for unrest is very limited. In South East Asia, Brunei may be one of the safest countries to live in.

## Trends analysis

Out of fear that Muslims could be led astray, Christmas celebrations were banned from 2015 onwards in the whole of Brunei, with the exception of church buildings. The ban includes the use of religious symbols such as crosses, lighting candles, putting up Christmas trees, singing religious songs in public and sending Christmas greetings. Punishment for violation is potentially a five-year prison sentence. The growing limitations make it clear to churches that especially the young generation needs to grow up with a strong Christian faith. A particular challenge for churches is that young people are increasingly leaving the country to find opportunities abroad.

The fact that the ruling sultan decided to [close down](#) the popular English-language Brunei Times in November 2016 shows that he is trying (and succeeding) to control media and public reporting more tightly. These efforts may become stronger as the Sultan begins to rely more heavily on Chinese investment in improving infrastructure and diversifying the economy. Of course, this comes at a price. Brunei has become the first ASEAN member in 2018 to [relinquish its claims](#) in the South China Sea, so as not to block Chinese investment.

In the future, Christians will also face a changing church situation: Young Christians are leaving the country in large numbers, and there is an increasing feeling of insecurity over the implementation of Sharia Penal Code (SPC). Uncertainty about the SPC affects the whole country, but religious minorities in particular.

## External Links - WWL 2020: Keys to understanding

- Link for general background information: <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-pacific-12990058>. - <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-pacific-12990058>
- Recent history: 2018 - <https://borneobulletin.com.bn/next-phase-of-syariah-penal-code-underway/>
- Political and legal landscape: absolute monarch - <https://www.eastasiaforum.org/2019/10/23/the-state-of-islam-in-brunei/>
- Political and legal landscape: successive introduction - <http://www.asianewsnet.net/news-58906.html>
- Political and legal landscape: implementation of Sharia Penal Code - [http://www.agc.gov.bn/AGC%20Images/LAWS/Gazette\\_PDF/2018/S068.pdf](http://www.agc.gov.bn/AGC%20Images/LAWS/Gazette_PDF/2018/S068.pdf)
- Political and legal landscape: serious consequences - <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-brunei-lgbt-laws/brunei-urged-to-halt-introduction-of-strict-new-anti-lgbt-laws-idUSKCN1R61M9>

- Political and legal landscape: implement the death penalty - <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-brunei-lgbt-sultan/brunei-says-it-wont-enforce-gay-death-penalty-after-backlash-idUSKCN1SB0FS?feedType=RSS&feedName=worldNews>
- Economic landscape: decline - <https://knoema.com/atlas/Brunei-Darussalam/topics/Energy/Oil/Crude-oil-reserves>
- Economic landscape: not been particularly successful - <http://www.atimes.com/article/wells-run-dry-brunei/>
- Social and cultural landscape: UNDP - <http://hdr.undp.org/en/countries/profiles/BRN>
- Social and cultural landscape: 28.4% in 2017 - <https://thescoop.co/2019/01/02/unemployment-in-brunei-rises-to-9-3-higher-among-men/>
- Trends analysis: close down - <http://www.reuters.com/article/us-brunei-media-idUSKBN1320YF>
- Trends analysis: relinquish its claims - <https://www.geopoliticalmonitor.com/brunei-abandons-south-china-sea-claim-for-chinese-finance/>

## WWL 2020: Church information / Brunei

### Christian origins

Random missionary activities by Portuguese traders in the 16th century largely failed and it was as late as 1846 that the "Borneo Church Mission" was founded and an Anglican church congregation established. The Roman Catholic Church has been present in the country for more than a century; independent Protestant churches came later, when migrant workers entered the country. Most of these churches are linked to organizations and churches in their countries of origin.

### Church spectrum today

Church networks: Brunei	Christians	%
Orthodox	0	0.0
Catholic	23,800	43.0
Protestant	12,900	23.3
Independent	17,300	31.3
Unaffiliated	1,400	2.5
Doubly-affiliated Christians	0	0.0
<b>Total</b>	<b>55,400</b>	<b>100.2</b>
<i>(Any deviation from the total number of Christians stated above is due to the rounding of decimals)</i>		
Evangelical movement	10,000	18.1
Renewalist movement	15,800	28.6

Data source: Johnson T M and Zurlo G A, eds., *World Christian Database* (Leiden/Boston: Brill, accessed April 2019).

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

# WWL 2020: Persecution Dynamics / Brunei

## Reporting period

1 November 2018 – 31 October 2019

## Position on World Watch List (WWL)

With a score of 63 points, Brunei ranked 37 in WWL 2020.

The score is the same as in WWL 2019 and reflects a stable but difficult situation for Christians in the country. The implementation of Sharia Penal Law has not affected the score yet and it remains to be seen what it will mean for them, apart from increased insecurity and fear. The average pressure is very high but the score for violence is lower than in the WWL 2019 reporting period. Controlling, watching and spying upon Christians is deemed more important by the authorities than exerting force.

## Persecution engines

Persecution engines: Brunei	Abbreviation	Level of influence
Islamic oppression	IO	Very strong
Religious nationalism	RN	Not at all
Clan and ethnic antagonism	CEA	Not at all
Christian denominational protectionism	CDP	Not at all
Communist and post - Communist oppression	CPCO	Not at all
Secular intolerance	SI	Not at all
Dictatorial paranoia	DPA	Very 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):

Brunei is an Islamic nation, based on an ideology called “Malay Islamic Monarchy” or MIB (Melayu Islam Beraja). This form of government is claimed to be the fairest for all people in the country, whether they are Muslims or not. The sultan has favored Brunei government democratization (although Brunei is still far from becoming a real democracy) and declared himself prime minister and president.

Brunei wants to be a center of Islamic excellence: Sharia law was fully implemented in civil and religious affairs for all Muslims even before the country’s independence in 1984 and the government follows a plan of Islamization among the partly Christian, partly animist tribal people in supporting the so-called *dawah* movement (Islamic evangelism). As the US State Department’s Country Report for 2018 states on page 11: “The government offered incentives to prospective converts to Islam and the Shafi’i school, especially those from indigenous communities in rural areas, including help with housing, welfare assistance, or help to perform the Hajj. During the year, Hajj participants received designer luggage from the government.”

The report continues: "The government gave presentations on the benefits of converting to Islam that received extensive press coverage in state-influenced media. According to government statistics, approximately 500 individuals converted to Islam during the year, similar to previous years. Converts to Islam included citizens and permanent residents, as well as foreigners."

Official government policy supported Islam through the national MIB philosophy as well as through government pledges to make the country a *zikir* nation (a nation that remembers and obeys Allah)." By decree, the import of Bibles and the public celebration of Christmas have been banned. Christian pastors and workers are facing a multitude of limitations due to Islamization and the prevailing MIB ideology and both native and foreign Christians have been targets of aggressive Islamization.

#### **Dictatorial paranoia (Very strong):**

The sultans have held absolute power in the country for over 600 years. All important governmental positions are held by the ruling sultan; since citizens value him so highly, he is not blamed for the current tough economic situation. His rule has not implied any danger to Christians so far, but his Islamic conservatism was shown in 2016 when he criticized authorities for their failure to implement the second phase of Sharia law (i.e. the criminal rules - CPC) which was delayed until its implementation in 2019. Therefore, conservative Islam serves both as state ideology backed by the ruler and as a means to control the population, leaving Christians as second-class citizens at best and insecure about their future. This persecution engine is blended with Islamic oppression.

### Drivers of persecution

Drivers of Persecution: Brunei	IO	RN	CEA	CDP	CPCO	SI	DPA	OCC
	VERY STRONG	-	-	-	-	-	VERY STRONG	-
Government officials	Very strong	-	-	-	-	-	Very strong	-
Ethnic group leaders	Medium	-	-	-	-	-	Medium	-
Non-Christian religious leaders	Strong	-	-	-	-	-	Strong	-
Religious leaders of other churches	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Violent religious groups	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Ideological pressure groups	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Citizens (people from the broader society), including mobs	Weak	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
One's own (extended) family	Very strong	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Political parties	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Revolutionaries or paramilitary groups	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-

Organized crime cartels or networks	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Multilateral organizations (e.g. UN, OIC etc.) and embassies	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-

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:

- **Extended family (Very strong):** Conversion is dishonoring to the family. As the family is usually the first to discover a convert, there will be great pressure on him or her to return to the family faith, also to avoid punishment from the government. Family members and neighbors can easily bring converts to Christianity and churches into trouble by simply reporting them to the security department KDN, which is frequently happening.
- **Government officials (Very strong):** Since all MIB policies (which favor Muslims over other religions) are legally enforced by the government authorities in all sectors of the country, government officials are major drivers of persecution. MIB is a compulsory subject for students in both public and private schools, and at university level.
- **Non-Christian religious leaders (Strong):** Islamic religious leaders have been sources of indirect pressure for Christians through the process of Islamization. There is much 'dawah' (Islamic mission) being carried out by these leaders and their efforts have been partly successful, which causes rifts in Christian families. When doing *dawah*, Islamic authorities organize a range of proselytizing activities and offer financial incentives to propagate Islam. Both non-Muslims and Muslims alike face social pressure to conform to Islamic guidelines regarding behavior.
- **Ethnic group leaders (Medium):** The "M" in MIB stands for "Malay", so ethnic group leaders continue to emphasize the privileged position Malays hold in Brunei. Mission efforts are targeted at the ethnic minority groups living in Brunei.

#### Drivers of Dictatorial paranoia:

- **Government officials and non-Christian religious leaders (Very strong/Strong):** The government describes its official national philosophy as Melayu Islam Beraja (MIB), or Malay Islamic Monarchy, which the government defines as "a system that encompasses strong Malay cultural influences, stressing the importance of Islam in daily life and governance, and respect for the monarchy as represented by His Majesty the Sultan." A government body, the MIB Supreme Council, seeks to spread and strengthen the MIB philosophy and ensure MIB is enshrined in the nation's laws and policies. Religious (i.e. Islamic) and Malay leaders exercise great influence on the sultan (who is considered the protector and defender of the Malay race and Islam) and thereby put pressure on the Christian minority too.
- **Ethnic group leaders (Medium):** As ethnic group leaders have a high interest to keep the government in power and secure the dominant position of the Malay people, they will go to great lengths to support the ruler and put pressure on minorities, including Christians, if necessary.



## Geographical hotspots of persecution

The country is geographically small and has no particular hotspots of persecution.

## Christian communities and how they are affected

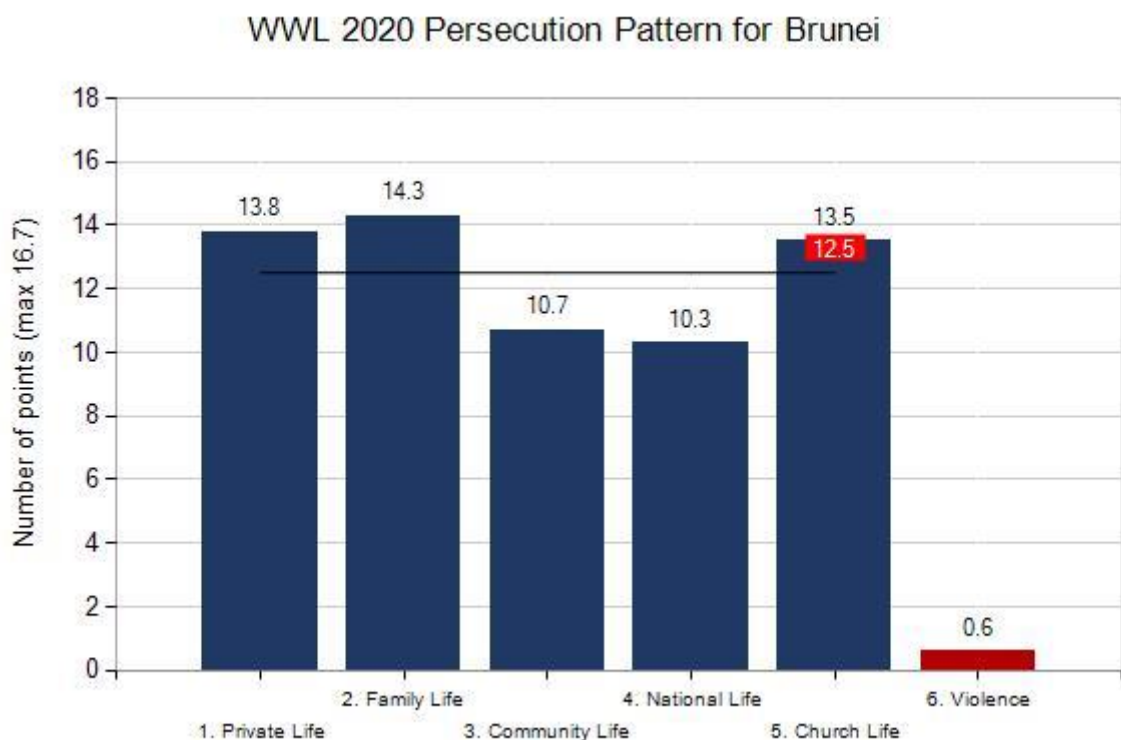
**Communities of expatriate Christians:** Expatriate Christians are not forced into isolation. This category is therefore not scored in WWL analysis.

**Historical Christian communities:** These communities, such as the Roman Catholic Church and the Anglican Church, are increasingly facing hostility and have to exercise more and more caution as they are strictly monitored, though they are still less affected by persecution than the newer Protestant groups and convert communities.

**Converts to Christianity:** Converts from a Muslim background suffer strong pressure from family and friends as conversion is considered illegal.

**Non-traditional Christian communities:** Evangelical and Pentecostal churches know that they and their meetings (both in their private and church life) are being closely watched by the authorities and surrounding community and are forced to live their Christian life accordingly.

## The Persecution pattern



The WWL 2020 Persecution pattern for Brunei shows:

- The average pressure on Christians in Brunei remains at a very high level, reaching 12.5 points in WWL 2020. In WWL 2019 this was 12.4 points.

- Pressure is extreme and strongest in the *Family sphere of life*, and very high in the *Private and Church spheres of life*. Pressure on converts is especially acute in the *Private and Family spheres*, while all Christians experience pressure in the *National and Church spheres*. This pressure is fueled by the implementation of Sharia law and the situation is getting more acute as the legal prerequisites for full implementation are now given.
- The score for violence against Christians decreased from a score of 0.7 in WWL 2019 to 0.6 in WWL 2020; the persecution of Christians never has been very violent in Brunei.

## Pressure in the 5 spheres of life

In each of the five spheres of life discussed below, details are shown from four of the highest scoring block questions, with those items scoring highest listed first. 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 0 – 4 points, please see the “WWL Scoring example” in the WWL Methodology, available at: <http://opendoorsanalytical.org/world-watch-list-documentation/>, password: freedom).

### Private sphere:

- ***It has been dangerous to privately own or keep Christian materials (Block 1.3 / Score: 4 points):*** It is very risky for a convert from Islam to own any Christian materials as it could expose their Christian identity. The SPC includes a list of words and expressions, including the word “Allah,” reserved for use by Muslims only or in relation to Islam, excluding for example the use of the Bahasa Indonesia translation of the Bible, which is very common in the region for all Christians.
- ***It has been risky for Christians to display Christian images or symbols (Block 1.5 / Score: 4 points):*** Any private statement about Christianity can be construed as proselytizing for the Christian faith, so even wearing a cross is done with much more caution than in previous years. Reportedly, it is even quite common for Chevrolet cars' logos (which resemble a cross) to be painted black and not to show any Christian affiliation by stickers, crucifixes etc. in a car. Christians are trying "not to rock the boat". Anything related to Christmas (whether Christian or not) is also banned in public places in Brunei.
- ***It has been risky for Christians to discuss their faith with those other than immediate family members (Block 1.8 / Score: 4 points):*** It is dangerous and risky for Christian converts to discuss their faith with immediate and extended family or anyone else. As Bruneian laws do not allow Malay Muslims to leave Islam and strict punishments are imposed on those who do so, every conversation about Christian faith can be construed as being against Sharia law. Section 112(1) of the Sharia Penal Code of Brunei stipulates that a Muslim who turns away from Islam is punishable with death, or with imprisonment for a term not exceeding thirty years and corporal punishment, depending on the type of evidence. If a Sharia court is satisfied that the accused has repented, the court must order an acquittal.

It remains to be seen how the new Sharia Penal Code and the Criminal Procedure Code (CPC) will be implemented and change the practice. Nevertheless, Christians need to be very cautious about whom they talk with and what about. Spreading Christian "propaganda" to followers of other faiths or to members of the tribal groups, who are often adherents of ethnic religions, is prohibited and carries a penalty of up to five years in prison, a fine of up to 20,000 Brunei dollars, or both. Christians, especially church leaders, are under permanent surveillance by the authorities.

- ***It has been risky for Christians to meet with other Christians (Block 1.9 / Score: 3.75 points):*** Meeting with other Christians is particularly difficult for Christians with a Muslim background, (but also lacks freedom for other Christians as they are monitored), since it is dangerous for the converts themselves and could endanger all those attending the meeting. It is also important to note that there is a law in Brunei that prohibits the unauthorized gathering of more than 5 people (although this is hardly ever used for targeting religious meetings).

#### Family sphere:

- ***Christian couples have been hindered in adopting children or serving as foster parents because of their faith (Block 2.6 / Score: 4 points):*** The law bans any Muslim from surrendering custody of a minor or dependent in his or her guardianship to a non-Muslim. Therefore non-Muslims cannot adopt Muslim children, though they can adopt non-Muslim children. (They also cannot adopt children whose parents are unknown.) According to a [government website](#) in Brunei, non-Muslims are not allowed to become foster parents.
- ***Christian children have been pressed to attend anti-Christian or majority religion teaching at any level of education (Block 2.8 / Score: 3.75 points):*** No school, whether private or public, is allowed to teach Christian subjects and all students in primary and secondary schools are required by law to study Islam (or, more accurately, the national MIB philosophy). One pastor commented that some Christian students can recite the MIB principles better than the 10 commandments. Apart from MIB subjects and other religious subjects, the sultan stated in a speech in July 2018, that Islamic History should be made a compulsory subject in schools and learning centers. He further stated that "the education system must not leave out religion and religion must be its axis. Understand our religion well so as to grow love towards it. The way to understand it is of course by studying, especially studying its history." In schools and vocational schools, girls are supposed to wear a headscarf.
- ***Children of Christians have been harassed or discriminated against because of their parents' faith (Block 2.9 / Score: 3.75 points):*** Pressure is especially high for children of converts, once it is discovered that their parents are 'apostates'. Christian girls are forced to wear a hijab at work and in schools. Teachers also pressure children to convert and become Muslims.
- ***Christian baptisms have been hindered (Block 2.4 / Score: 3.5 points):*** Converts cannot be baptized openly and so baptisms rarely take place or have to be done abroad.

*Convert parents find themselves in a dilemma as they do not dare to raise their children according to their faith as their children could accidentally expose the family's Christian faith. If Christians with a Muslim background are discovered, they will be isolated and put under pressure to recant their faith. If married, a convert will be separated from his or her spouse, who in turn will be forced to divorce.*

**Community sphere:**

- ***Christians have been pressured by their community to renounce their faith (Block 3.7 / Score: 4 points):*** Christians with a Muslim background are always under strong pressure from their family, friends and neighbors to give up their Christian faith. But the pressure is equally strongly felt by the intense Islamization efforts from the government. Churches are experiencing a gradual reduction in membership; one by one members succumb to Islam, primarily to avoid the great social pressure but also for monetary benefits like receiving 1,000 BN\$ per year for 10 years. As in Brunei many churches are very small and even if it is "only" 2 or 3 in the church who leave, it can have a serious effect on the remaining congregation.
- ***Christians have been put under pressure to take part in non-Christian religious ceremonies or community events (Block 3.5 / Score: 4 points):*** With the MIB national philosophy, Islam has permeated into every aspect of society. MIB is a system that encompasses strong Malay cultural influences, stressing the importance of Islam in daily life and governance, and respect for the sultan's monarchy. Thus, Christians are under pressure to take part in Islamic rites and ceremonies. There are also strict regulations and penalties during Ramadan concerning the observance of Muslim prayer-times both for Muslims and non-Muslims.
- ***Christians have been monitored by their local communities or by private groups (Block 3.2 / Score: 3.75 points):*** Especially the Malay-speaking churches are under serious threat and are always monitored, resulting in a high level of fear among church members and leaders. Everyone is aware of the monitoring and surveillance that is being done. Sometimes even in the churches there will be informers (sometimes other Christians) sent by the authorities. The authorities extract information from local citizens about church activities.
- ***Christians faced disadvantages in their education at any level for faith-related reasons (e.g. restrictions of access to education) (Block 3.9 / Score: 3.75 points):*** Courses on Islam and MIB are mandatory in all schools and while non-Muslims were exempted from some religious requirements, the government reported that many non-Muslim children chose to take courses on Islam. Reportedly, those applying for government-funded scholarships believed that attendance at such courses could be advantageous (according to the US State Department's 2018 IRF report). Due to economic restraints, the number of university scholarships has gone down. With numbers decreasing, many Christians feel they have even less chance of getting a place at university in Brunei.

Christians are discriminated against in their business lives. With Sharia law in place, the government is gradually implementing more rules and restrictions. Since 2014, public Christmas celebrations are banned. Non-Muslims and Muslims face social pressure to conform to Islamic guidelines regarding behavior, for example in dressing in an Islamic way. Women are singled out and expected to wear a hijab at work and in schools. The Sharia Penal Code is not just applicable to Muslims but includes rules for non-Muslims and foreigners as well. During Ramadan, raids are conducted against non-halal restaurants, disrupting the businesses and every day life of non-Muslims as well as creating fear. Ordered by the Ministry of Education, a foodstall in the canteen of a Chinese school had to [close](#) during Ramadan.

Around 50% of conversions to Islam happen among expatriates and are celebrated in newspapers nationwide; whereas often the reason for conversion is to obtain material benefits, in many cases pressure is exerted as well, e.g. Catholic Filipinos convert to Islam in exchange for work permits; Indian blue collar workers are asked to embrace Islam in exchange for work permits and other fringe benefits. Due to the difficult economic situation, there are now more restrictions for non-Bruneian company owners. (In the WWL 2019 reporting period, 80 foreign nationals holding immigration passes had their passes cancelled, while 54 more people were under investigation. There has been no data on this in the WWL 2020 reporting period).

#### National sphere:

- **The Constitution (or comparable national or state law) limits freedom of religion as formulated in Article 18 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (Block 4.1 / Score: 4 points):** As mentioned above, the Sharia Penal Code (SPC) was introduced in May 2014. This legal code not only regulates crimes like murder and theft but also affects the public display of Christian symbols, the questions of proselytism, apostasy and many other matters. The implementation of the CPC was almost clandestinely announced in April 2019, leading to an international outcry and to a very rare public reaction by the sultan (see details under Political and Religious landscape above). No matter how Sharia will be implemented in the end, freedom of religion is strongly limited in Brunei.
- **Christians have been hindered in expressing their views or opinions in public (Block 4.8 / Score: 4 points):** With a sedition law in place, there are limits to how Christians can express their views and faith in public. Bruneian Christians are very careful and law-abiding and self-censor to avoid trouble, especially as it is not totally clear what faith-induced statements could be considered seditious.
- **Christian civil society organizations or political parties have been hindered or forbidden (Block 4.9 / Score: 4 points):** Although there are some political parties in Brunei, they all abide by the sultan's will, as he holds all power. There are neither Christian political parties nor Christian civil societies as they are not allowed in the country. Civil societies owned by Christians do not work as Christian societies, but as businesses fulfilling all the requirements set out for standard businesses, e.g. on reporting and taxes.
- **Christians have been barred from public office, or promotion has been hindered for faith-related reasons (Block 4.6 / Score: 3.75 points):** Christians are not completely barred from public office, but there is a ceiling as to how far they can go. Benefits and promotion are limited to the Malays and converts to Islam. This adds pressure for Christians to convert because if they do, they can be rewarded with benefits and career advancement.

*Registering a conversion to Christianity is out of the question. Christians are often subjected to discriminatory treatment when dealing with the authorities. In many cases, when permanent residents with a Chinese, Christian or Buddhist background apply for citizenship, they face rejection or delay, but no official reason is given by the officials. The country's Islamization activities, especially among Christians, are strongly publicized and the conversion of Christians to Islam is highly praised in the media. Every Thursday from 8:00-9:30am, all government offices have time reserved for Islamic prayer and reading the Quran and everyone is required to participate.*

#### **Church sphere:**

- ***It has been difficult to get registration or legal status (Block 5.2 / Score: 4 points):*** Those churches having a registration permit, obtained it in the colonial era and still enjoy its legal status today. Six churches have this status countrywide. However, the government does not allow any further churches to be registered. Even registered churches face problems: In the capital city, Bandar Seri Begawan, the government implements zoning restrictions on Sundays and all roads leading to the Catholic and Anglican churches are closed for "recreational" purposes from 6am to 1pm. Only those with valid permits are allowed to enter the area near the two main churches.
- ***Christian preaching, teaching and/or published materials have been monitored (Block 5.8 / Score: 4 points):*** All church activities and especially the sermons are monitored, with registered churches being particularly affected by government informers. These informers are sometimes Christians themselves, who are offered bribes. Because Sunday services are monitored closely, pastors (especially those preaching in Bahasa Malay) are very careful not to criticize or offend the government or the royal family in their weekly sermon. Published materials are also subject to scrutiny.
- ***Churches have been hindered in importing Christian materials (Block 5.13 / Score: 4 points):*** There is a permanent ban on importing printed religious material. Electronic copies of the Bible and other religious material are easily available; converts need to be extra cautious when accessing these.
- ***Churches, Christian organizations, institutions or groups have been prevented from using mass media to present their faith (Block 5.16 / Score: 4 points):*** Using mass media to present one's faith is forbidden in Brunei as this is an offence under "Propagating a religion other than Islam" and is punishable by imprisonment of maximum five years and a fine up to \$20,000 BND.

*There is a fatwa that bans non-Muslim worship buildings from being renovated or built, tacitly endorsed by the sultan. Consequently, church buildings deteriorate further and further, but some churches have renovated their buildings without permission. Despite these challenges, church communities stand firm in their Christian faith, although one challenge is that many young Christians are leaving the country, thus causing worry about how future church leadership roles will be filled.*

*Convert fellowships and non-traditional churches cannot register and their meetings have sometimes been disturbed by the police. The distribution of Bibles and other Christian materials is punishable under Sharia law; anyone sending or delivering publications relating to religion other than Islam to Muslims (or persons having no religion) that was not requested by the person is liable to be sentenced to up to 6 months imprisonment and/or receive a fine of up to \$2,000 BND. Churches are allowed to sell Christian materials to members of their congregations privately. No Christian activities are allowed in public. In December 2014, the government warned all Christian communities not to hold public Christmas celebrations and this ban is still in force.*

## Violence

*The following table is based on reported cases as much as possible. Since many incidents go unreported, the numbers below must be understood as being minimum figures. In cases where it has been impossible to count exactly, a symbolic round figure (10, 100 or 1000) is given. (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 1000 could go well over 10,000 but, again, the real number is uncertain.) In cases where it is clear that (many) more Christians are affected, but a concrete number could be given according to the number of incidents reported, the number given has to be understood as being an absolutely minimum figure.*

Brunei	Reporting period	Christians killed	Christians attacked	Christians arrested	Churches attacked	Christian-owned houses and shops attacked
WWL 2020	01 Nov 2018 - 31 Oct 2019	0	0	0	0	0
WWL 2019	01 Nov 2017 - 31 Oct 2018	0	2	0	0	0
WWL 2018	01 Nov 2016 - 31 Oct 2017	0	0	0	0	0

*Christians killed refers to the number of Christians killed for faith-related reasons (including state-sanctioned executions). Christians attacked refers to the number of Christians abducted, raped or otherwise sexually harassed, forced into marriage to non-Christians or otherwise physically or mentally abused (including beatings and death-threats) for faith-related reasons. Christians arrested refers to the number of Christians detained without trial or sentenced to jail, labor camp, sent to psychiatric hospital as punishment or similar things for faith-related reasons. Churches attacked refers to the number of churches or Christian buildings (schools, hospitals, cemeteries, etc.) attacked, damaged, bombed, looted, destroyed, burned down, closed or confiscated for faith-related reasons. Christian-owned houses and shops attacked refers to the number of houses of Christians or other property (including shops and businesses of Christians) attacked, damaged, bombed, looted, destroyed, burned down, closed or confiscated for faith-related reasons.*

Persecution has never been very violent in Brunei and no Christians or churches have been attacked in the WWL 2020 reporting period. However, it is enough to cause some Christians to leave the country and for converts to go into hiding.

## 5 Year trends

The following three charts depict the levels of pressure and violence targeting Christians over the last five reporting periods.

### Chart 1:

The score for average pressure has continually been at a very high level and seems to have levelled off (at the 12.4-12.6 points mark) for the last four reporting periods. It remains to be seen if and how the implementation of Shariah Criminal Law will change the level of pressure.

WWL 2016 - WWL 2020 Persecution Pattern history: Brunei	Average pressure over 5 Spheres of life
2020	12.5
2019	12.4
2018	12.6
2017	12.5
2016	11.9

### Chart 2:

The chart below shows that the WWL 2017 reporting period saw increases in pressure in the *Private* and *Family life spheres* and also in the *National* and *Church life spheres*. These rises (which have since stabilized in *Family* and *Church life*) reflect the period of preparation for the implementation of the second phase of Sharia Law in Brunei. The actual implementation started in the WWL 2020 reporting period and so far there are no reports of Christians being affected by it.



WWL 2016 - WWL 2020 Persecution Pattern for Brunei (Spheres of life)

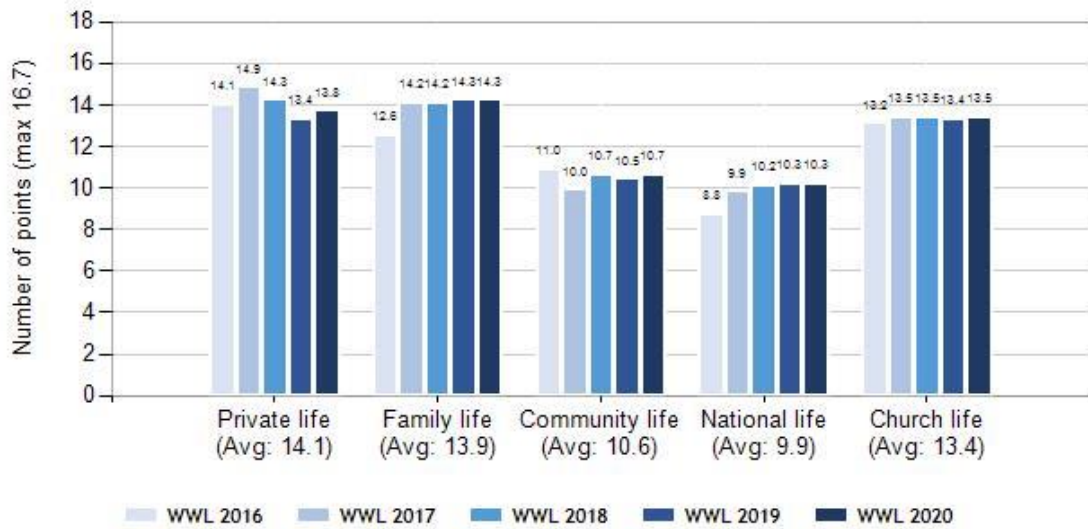
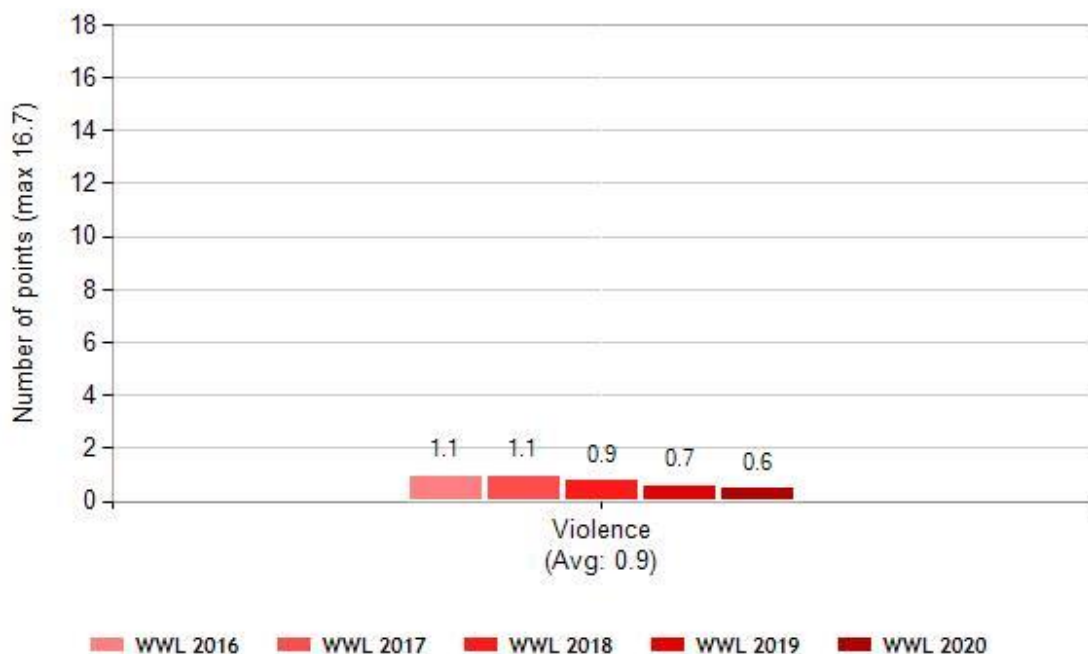


Chart 3:

The chart below shows that the violence score decreased in the last three reporting periods. This can partly be explained by the difficulty of obtaining reports (especially concerning the treatment of converts), but in general reflects the fact that persecution has never been particularly violent in Brunei.

WWL 2016 - WWL 2020 Persecution Pattern for Brunei (Violence)



## Gender profile of persecution

### Female Pressure Points:

- ***Denied custody of children***
- ***Enforced dress code***
- ***Forced marriage***
- ***Forced out of home/expulsion***
- ***Violence – verbal***

Although Brunei is a CEDAW signatory, Human Rights Watch reported in May 2019 about the [threat](#) the new Syariah Penal Code poses to minority groups such as women and religious minorities.

Male and female converts to Christianity face the most persecution. Due to the ever-stricter implementation of Islamic laws, women are forced to wear a hijab and are punished by the religious authorities when they refuse to wear one. This does not apply to known Christian families, but to converts. Women and girls are usually disowned by the family when their conversion becomes known. The family often isolates them, Imams are called to make them recant, and sometimes their families threaten them with forced marriage to Muslim men they know. Married converts to Christianity are likely to have their children taken away from them.

### Male Pressure Points:

- ***Forced divorce***
- ***Forced out of home/expulsion***
- ***Violence – physical***

As stated above, male and female converts to Christianity face the strongest persecution in Brunei. Men and boys are usually disowned by the family when they convert and are forced to divorce if married and forced to leave the family home.

## Persecution of other religious minorities

Non-Sunni Muslim groups seen as deviant - such as Shiite and Ahmadis - are banned and persecuted. Atheism is also not allowed. The activities of Hindus have been restricted. The only Hindu temple in the country is located in the British military barracks of the Gurkha regiment. Sikh and Buddhist communities also visit the temple to pray. Chinese residents have been banned from celebrating their new year with the dragon dance.

In what was said to be a first, on 15 October 2019, a non-Muslim was [charged under Sharia law](#) for theft. Social media in Brunei was abuzz with surprise, shocked that Sharia law is evidently applicable to non-Muslims, too.

## Future outlook for the church

The outlook for Christians as viewed through the lens of:

- ***Islamic oppression and Dictatorial paranoia:*** The growing economic pressure may lead to increased insecurity and even unrest in the country, especially as the government is not employing more staff. By pushing for the introduction of Sharia law (and by issuing a ban on public Christian celebrations), the sultan is evidently relying on a conservative brand of Islam - certainly out of conviction - but also as a means of keeping his people in check. The influence of *Islamic oppression* and *Dictatorial paranoia* thus looks set to increase in the future.

## External Links - WWL 2020: Persecution Dynamics

- Pressure in the 5 spheres of life : government website - <http://bit.ly/2ynYlxR>
- Pressure in the 5 spheres of life : close - [https://www.reddit.com/r/Brunei/comments/bqumen/canteen\\_stalls\\_in\\_chms\\_to\\_cease\\_operation\\_during/](https://www.reddit.com/r/Brunei/comments/bqumen/canteen_stalls_in_chms_to_cease_operation_during/)
- Gender profile of persecution: threat - <https://www.hrw.org/news/2019/05/22/bruneis-pernicious-new-penal-code>
- Persecution of other religious minorities: charged under Sharia law - <https://borneobulletin.com.bn/man-stole-mothers-gas-cylinder-behind-bars/%20>

## Additional reports and articles

### WWR in-depth reports

A selection of in-depth reports is available at: <http://opendoorsanalytical.org/reports/>  
(password: freedom).

At the time of publication there were no items specifically for Brunei.

### World Watch Monitor news articles

Articles are available at: <https://www.worldwatchmonitor.org/countries/brunei>.

### Recent country developments

Up-to-date articles are available at: <http://opendoorsanalytical.org/?s=Brunei>  
(password: freedom).