

World
Watch
Research

Oman: Country Dossier

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OpenDoors

Serving persecuted **Christians** worldwide

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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	-	-	-

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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).

Revised: 6 January 2020

WWL 2020: Persecution summary / Oman

Brief country details

Pop 2019	Christians	Chr%
Oman		
5,002,000	180,000	3.6

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

World Watch List Oman	Points	WWL Rank
WWL 2020	62	42
WWL 2019	59	44
WWL 2018	57	46
WWL 2017	53	49
WWL 2016	53	50

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

Oman: Main Persecution engines	Main drivers
Clan and ethnic antagonism	One's own (extended) family, Citizens (people from the broader society), including mobs, Ethnic group leaders, Non-Christian religious leaders
Islamic oppression	One's own (extended) family, Government officials, Non-Christian religious leaders, Ethnic group leaders, Citizens (people from the broader society), including mobs
Dictatorial paranoia	Government officials

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 to Christianity are put under pressure from family and society to recant their faith. They can be expelled from the family home and from their jobs and face problems over child custody and inheritance. Expatriate Christian communities are tolerated, but their facilities are restricted and Christian meetings are monitored to record any political statements and if any Omani nationals are attending. All religious organizations must be registered with the authorities.

Specific examples of persecution in the reporting period

- Public proselytizing is forbidden; it can only be done privately. Reportedly, some converts and expatriate Christians involved in proselytization were called in for questioning in the WWL 2020 reporting period.
- Non-Muslim religious groups must register with the government which then approves and controls the leases of building to such groups.
- According to the US State Department's [International Religious Freedom Report 2018](#): "In April Hassan Al-Basham, who had been sentenced to three years' imprisonment in 2016 for blasphemy and disturbing religious values in his comments on social media, died in prison." This indicates the political climate in which Christians in Oman have to operate.
- Female Christian domestic workers are likely to be particularly vulnerable to (sexual) abuse because of their faith.

External Links - WWL 2020: Persecution summary

- Specific examples of persecution in the reporting period: International Religious Freedom Report 2018 - <https://www.state.gov/wp-content/uploads/2019/05/OMAN-2018-INTERNATIONAL-RELIGIOUS-FREEDOM-REPORT.pdf>

WWL 2020: Keys to understanding / Oman

Link for general background information

BBC country profile: <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-middle-east-14654150>.

Recent history

Located at the confluence of the Persian Gulf and the Arabian Sea, Oman was an influential sultanate during the medieval period. Arabic is the official language, and more than half of Oman's population is Arab. Having been occupied by the Portuguese, Ottomans and others in the 18th century, the sultanate became powerful and took control of the coastal region of present-day Iran and Pakistan, colonized Zanzibar and Kenyan seaports, brought back enslaved Africans and sent boats trading as far as the Malay Peninsula. The country was finally subdued by British forces; treaties of friendship and cooperation with Great Britain were signed in 1798 allowing the country to maintain its independence.

In 1971, Oman joined the League of Arab States and the United Nations. Oman generally has good relations with neighboring countries. According to Bertelsmann Transformation Index 2018 (p. 36): "Oman maintains close relations and strategic partnerships with the United Kingdom, the United States and their Arab allies (especially Egypt and Jordan). ... Oman works to establish security through cooperation rather than conflict and strives to maintain good relationships with all its neighbors, the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) and Iran, Pakistan and India."

(The [GCC](#) is a political and economic alliance of six Middle Eastern countries: Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, the United Arab Emirates, Qatar, Bahrain and Oman. The GCC was established in May 1981, but lost significant influence due to the ongoing [Qatari crisis](#).)

Political and legal landscape

The country is ruled by a monarchy with two advisory bodies (State Council and Consultative Council). Sultan Qaboos bin Said al-Said came to power in 1970 after deposing his own father. Although he is credited for abolishing slavery in the country and giving Oman a strong economy, his government is [classified by the EIU](#) as authoritarian. Nonetheless, the Sultan has additionally been credited with forging relations with the US, bringing stability to the economy and election reforms. In 1997 women were granted the right to be elected to the country's consultative body, the Shura Council (Majlis al-Shura) and in 2003, the Sultan extended voting rights to everyone over 21; previously, voters were selected from among the elite. The Sultan was born in 1940 and is now well advanced in years. He is [apparently suffering from colon cancer](#) but has not named a successor. This is a major cause of political uncertainty.

The [Freedom of Thought report](#) describes the constitution and government as severely discriminating: "Oman imposes substantial restrictions on freedom of religion or belief and the freedoms of expression, assembly and association. Islam is state religion and Sharia is the basis of legislation (Article 2), however legislation is largely based on civil code. In 1999 civil courts replaced Sharia courts. The Basic Law prohibits discrimination based on religion and protects the right to practice religious rites on condition that doing so does not disrupt public order. However, all religious groups are required to register and the law restricts collective worship by non-Muslims. The criteria for approval are not published."

Religious landscape

Islam is the state religion. According to Islamic tradition, Oman was one of the countries reached by Islam within Muhammed's lifetime. Omanis practice a unique brand of Islam called Ibadhism, which is a majority sect only in Oman. Ibadhism has been characterized as "moderate conservatism," with tenets that are a mixture of both austerity and tolerance. According to experts on the sect, the followers of the Ibadi sect are [not as violent](#) as Sunni or Shiites. They do not believe in the use of violence even towards those who leave Islam or who are not Muslims, but rather focus on "dissociation" which is usually an internal attitude of withholding "friendship" (*wilaya*). Thus, even though Islam dominates the lives of Omanis, there is also a tendency to tolerate Christians – a tolerance not found in some of the neighboring countries. This tolerance is strengthened by the Sultan, who is trying to present the country internationally as a model of tolerance and diplomacy, especially by attempting to mediate in international talks with some of the militant groups in the region.

[MEC](#) reports: "Expatriate Christians enjoy considerable freedom in Oman, provided their activities are restricted to designated compounds and that they avoid interaction with Muslims that could be construed as proselytism. Church compounds are typically overcrowded on days of worship as they seek to accommodate multiple congregations of various nationalities and languages. Omani nationals or other Muslims who choose to leave Islam are likely to face strong family and societal pressure. In extreme cases, those who leave Islam can face violent responses from family members. Those considered apostates could also face sanctions such as forcible divorce and removal of child custody under Ibadhi personal status laws overseen by Shari'a courts."

Religious Context: Oman	Numbers	%
Christians	180,000	3.6
Muslim	4,507,000	90.1
Hindu	245,000	4.9
Buddhist	27,500	0.5
Ethnoreligionist	600	0.0

Jewish	0	0.0
Bahai	12,300	0.2
Atheist	220	0.0
Agnostic	7,100	0.1
Other	22,530	0.5

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.

According to WCD 2019 estimates, over 90% of Oman’s inhabitants are Muslim, with most Omanis (around 75%) following the conservative Ibadi sect of Islam. The next largest religion in the country is Hinduism with 4.9% of the total population.

Economic landscape

Oman is classified by the [World Bank](#) as a high income country. Oil and gas wealth has eliminated much poverty. According to the [Bertelsmann Transformation Index 2018](#) (p. 20): "The foundations of a free and competitive market economy are assured. The currency is freely convertible, and the government has incrementally introduced laws to ensure a free market." However, "rules that regulate the employment of expatriate labor (such as the kafala sponsorship system) and policies for the Omanization of the private sector workforce are still in force."

[HDI](#) shows that employment rate is reasonably high at 56% and [literacy is also high](#) at 95.6%. GNI remains stable at around 40,000 USD ([per capita PPP](#)).

Social and cultural landscape

Oman is conservative, Muslim and tribal in nature. Education levels have improved considerably in the last decades. The younger generation is interested in new ideas - visible also in the clothing of younger people. Moreover, a cultural shift is taking place from agrarian nomadic to urban lifestyle. To tackle future unemployment - more than half the population is under 21 - Oman is gradually replacing expatriates with nationals. Due to this, the percentage of educated and skilled Omanis is growing. Female education has dramatically reduced illiteracy. Highly educated teachers and technicians from abroad are currently still in demand but ultimately “Omanization” will lead to a decrease in the level of non-Muslim residents.

Life expectancy is high at 77.3 years and children can expect 13.9 years of education.

Under the official *kafala* sponsorship system, domestic workers are tied to their employers, who confiscate their passport and often force them to work excessive hours. This leaves them vulnerable to abuse. (Source: Amnesty International, Amnesty International Report 2017/18, p. 288.)

[FSI](#) social indicators show improvements in social and cohesion indicators, but a high rating for factionalized elites does mean social tensions remain high.

According to experts, being Christian is an extra vulnerability in Oman and can lead to higher levels of discrimination or abuse. However, skin colour and ethnical background often play a more significant role. Hence, Western (white) Christian expatriates are far less likely to experience harassment than African or Asian Christian expatriates. In addition, high-skilled expatriates will face less difficulties than low-skilled migrants. Hence, a low-skilled Christian migrant from an African background will be most vulnerable in Oman.

Technological landscape

According to the [Human Development Index](#), 69.9% of the population uses the Internet. This percentage is probably significantly higher in reality as mobile phone use is widespread and this area is rapidly developing. However, the advancement of communication technology and the increased use of social media has not led to an increased level of freedom of speech.

[RSF](#) reports: "Censorship is ubiquitous in this country of 4 million inhabitants ruled by Sultan Qaboos bin Said al-Said for the past 49 years. The Internet is the main alternative space where the public can express its views and as a result, citizen-journalists are frequently targeted by the authorities. They are often arrested and sometimes held incommunicado, given long jail sentences on charges of insulting the head of state or the country's culture and customs, or inciting illegal demonstrations and disruption of public order."

Security situation

If the civil war in Yemen is not halted soon, it could have an impact on Oman, with Islamic militants and refugees crossing the border from Yemen. Nevertheless, Oman has remained a stable and safe place in the region, despite the ongoing war in Yemen since 2015.

Nonetheless, the Sultan is old, ill and his death could potentially lead to political and domestic unrest, as he has not appointed a successor. His death could even start a civil war as many Omani tribes have sworn allegiance to him, rather than the Omani state. There are clear differences between the northern and southern part of Oman, with the southern tribes often being more independent.

Trends analysis

Government and society complement each other. The government restrains Christianity from above, meeting the wishes of their citizens to have an Islamic country. On the other hand, society puts pressure on both indigenous and expatriate Christians to comply with the Islamic rules, giving the government no need to act forcefully against Christians and to maintain a friendly face towards the world, especially the West.

The future of Christians in Oman is shaped by social, political and regional factors. Looking at the situation of many countries in the Middle East and the Gulf, it is difficult to envision positive developments - and Oman is no exception. If social unrest happens in the future, the regime might weaken, which could well lead to further Islamization of the country's political institutions and a stricter application of Sharia legislation. The ageing Sultan is believed to be the main force behind the security and stability of the country and if his influence was to cease, the country might end up in a civil war and ultimately into the hands of radical Muslims.

Yemen remains unstable and both refugees and Islamic militants could try to enter Oman if the situation does not improve. This would harm Oman's reputation of being a neutral safe haven. In addition, although Oman did not take sides in the Qatari crisis yet, it might be forced to do so by Saudi Arabia, which could also have an effect on government policies and the economy.

On the other hand, there is also the positive trend of the government trying to develop a culture of religious harmony as can be seen in its support of the [al-Amana Center](#) which works to promote dialogue and understanding between Muslims and Christians.

External Links - WWL 2020: Keys to understanding

- Link for general background information: <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-middle-east-14654150>. - <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-middle-east-14654150>
- Recent history: GCC - <http://www.britannica.com/topic/Gulf-Cooperation-Council>
- Recent history: Qatari crisis - <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-40173757>
- Political and legal landscape: classified by the EIU - http://www.eiu.com/Handlers/WhitepaperHandler.ashx?fi=Democracy_Index_2018.pdf&mod=e=wp&campaignid=Democracy2018
- Political and legal landscape: apparently suffering from colon cancer - <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2019/12/oman-sultan-qaboos-heads-belgium-medical-checkup-191207101946658.html>
- Political and legal landscape: Freedom of Thought report - <https://fot.humanists.international/countries/asia-western-asia/oman/>
- Religious landscape: not as violent - <http://islam.uga.edu/ibadis.html>
- Religious landscape: MEC - <https://www.meconcern.org/countries/oman/>
- Economic landscape: World Bank - <https://datahelpdesk.worldbank.org/knowledgebase/articles/906519>
- Economic landscape: Bertelsmann Transformation Index 2018 - <https://www.bti-project.org/en/reports/country-reports/detail/itc/OMN/>
- Economic landscape: HDI - <http://hdr.undp.org/en/countries/profiles/OMN>
- Economic landscape: literacy is also high - <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SE.ADT.LITR.ZS?locations=OM>
- Economic landscape: per capita PPP - <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/NY.GNP.PCAP.PP.CD?locations=OM>
- Social and cultural landscape: FSI - <https://fragilestatesindex.org/country-data/>
- Technological landscape: Human Development Index - <http://hdr.undp.org/en/countries/profiles/OMN>
- Technological landscape: RSF - <https://rsf.org/en/oman>
- Trends analysis: al-Amana Center - <http://www.alamanacentre.org/index.php?pageid=3a>

WWL 2020: Church information / Oman

Christian origins

Oman's earliest Christianity was the result of mission work carried out by Theophilus Indus from Karachi. He became a Christian in Rome and Emperor Constantine II (316-340 AD) sent him to Yemen. He erected two churches in Yemen and one in Sohar, Oman. In 424 AD, Bishop Yohannan from Sohar attended a Nestorian synod. The Azd tribe that migrated to Oman because of persecution by the Jewish rulers in Yemen (ca 380-522 AD), were probably Christians.

According to Islamic tradition, Islam reached Oman in 632 AD. However, Sohar's Bishop Stephanus attended a Church Council in 676 AD and so it is clear that Christianity had not at that point disappeared.

Oman has always been an important hub on the trading route between Iraq and India, and this must have created regularly contact between Omani's and Christians. This became more intense when the Portuguese ruled over Muscat (1515-1650). In 1798, Oman and Great Britain signed a Treaty of Friendship. Under this treaty, Britain guaranteed the Sultan's rule. In 1891, Oman and Muscat became a British Protectorate. This guaranteed much freedom for foreigners to live and work in Oman.

In 1893, Peter Zwemer and James Cantine of the Arabian Mission of the Reformed Church in America (RCA) started the Muscat Station for their mission. Because of endemic leprosy in Oman, a medical ministry was soon set up. The RCA opened a hospital in Muscat, which became the center of the nation's Christian presence for many years. This foundational work by the RCA has led to the formation of the Protestant Church of Oman, which includes Protestants of many denominational backgrounds and continues to be served by RCA staff. Its work is concentrated in Muscat and in the nearby communities of Ruwi and Ghala. The Sultan of Oman also granted parcels of land to the Protestant church in Salalah and Sohar.

The Roman Catholic Church re-established itself in the region in 1841 with an assignment of personnel to Aden (Yemen). That work grew successively into a prefecture (1854) and a vicariate (1888), and in 1889 it became the Vicariate of Arabia, now administered from Abu Dhabi (United Arab Emirates) and responsible for Catholics in Oman. The first Roman Catholic church in Oman was erected in 1977 in Muscat. (Source: Melton J. & Baumann M., eds., Religions of the World, 2nd edition, 2010, p.2147.)

Currently, the vast majority of Christians in Oman are expatriates. Most of them are from the Philippines, India and from Western countries. They are concentrated in the country's urban areas in and around Muscat, Sohar and Salalah.

Church spectrum today

Church networks: Oman	Christians	%
Orthodox	24,200	13.4
Catholic	116,000	64.4
Protestant	11,700	6.5
Independent	19,500	10.8
Unaffiliated	8,500	4.7
Doubly-affiliated Christians	0	0.0
Total	179,900	99.9
<i>(Any deviation from the total number of Christians stated above is due to the rounding of decimals)</i>		
Evangelical movement	5,800	3.2
Renewalist movement	34,500	19.2

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 / Oman

Reporting period

1 November 2018 – 31 October 2019. During the WWL 2020 reporting period, several experts were consulted to compare the levels of pressure in Oman with those in neighbouring Gulf countries. This has resulted in a slightly higher score for some *spheres of life*.

Position on World Watch List (WWL)

With a score of 62 points, Oman ranked 42 in WWL 2020.

Oman scored 59 points and ranked 44 in WWL 2019. The rise of 3 points compared to WWL 2019 was partly due to a rise in the number of reports of violence targeting Christians. In addition, Christians came under higher pressure after the Omani government intensified its monitoring of Christians and their activities. A reassessment of the situation in the country compared to neighboring countries also contributed to a rise in score.

Persecution engines

Persecution engines: Oman	Abbreviation	Level of influence
Islamic oppression	IO	Strong
Religious nationalism	RN	Not at all
Clan and ethnic antagonism	CEA	Strong
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	Medium
Organized corruption and crime	OCC	Not at all

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

Islamic oppression (Strong):

Islam is the state religion and legislation is based mainly on Islamic law. All state school curricula include instruction in Islam. Apostasy is not a criminal offense, but it is not respected by the legal system either, which assumes that all citizens are Muslims. A convert from Islam to Christianity faces problems under the Personal Status and Family Code, which for example prohibits a father from having custody over his children if he leaves Islam.

Levels of persecution vary for converts from Islam to Christianity. Those from an Omani background face highest levels of pressure. For converts from Islam with other backgrounds, such as those originating from Pakistan or the Levant (e.g. Jordan, Lebanon, the Palestinian Territories and Syria, among other countries), much depends on the response within their surrounding community in Oman. As long as they do not create unrest, they have less to fear from the Omani government, although their Omani employers can fire them, which would result in deportation if they could not find another job. Within those expatriate communities, the consequences for converts depend more on the cultural norms from their home countries, than on the cultural practices of Oman. For expatriates, conversion to Christianity is sometimes easier than in their home country, because family and relatives are often far away and social pressure is less stringent.

Clan and ethnic antagonism (Strong):

Tribal values, in which family honor plays a very important role, are blended with Islamic values. To be Omani is to be Muslim. There is great pride in being Omani, and often the celebration of tradition is held in higher regard than the meaning behind the tradition. To break with tradition or to question the reasons behind it are unimaginable for the general population. Society shuns those who leave Islam, even though violence is not encouraged.

Dictatorial paranoia (Medium):

Oman has been ruled by a dynasty that does not respect the will of the people. There is discontent among Omanis who generally believe that the government is authoritarian, even though they accept that recent economic reforms have been beneficial. In its 2019 report, Freedom House rated the country as "[not free](#)". According to the report: "The regime restricts virtually all political rights and civil liberties, imposing criminal penalties for criticism and dissent." The media also faces harassment and intimidation.

Drivers of persecution

Drivers of Persecution: Oman	IO	RN	CEA	CDP	CPCO	SI	DPA	OCC
	STRONG		STRONG				MEDIUM	
Government officials	Strong						Medium	
Ethnic group leaders	Strong		Medium					
Non-Christian religious leaders	Strong		Medium					
Citizens (people from the broader society), including mobs	Strong		Strong					
One's own (extended) family	Very 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

- **Extended family (Very strong):** Although clearly mixed with issues of family honor, strongly held Islamic convictions are a significant reason for families to target family members who convert to Christianity. Conversion from Islam to Christianity is socially unacceptable in Oman. Families will most certainly expel converts from their home, as they see conversion not merely as being an attack on Islam, but also on the family honor.
- **Government officials (Strong):** Although there is no criminal penalty for conversion, it is socially unacceptable and a change of faith (away from Islam) is not officially recognized. Omani Christians (mostly converts from Islam to Christianity) have been interrogated by government officials, commanded to stop meeting, and have faced threats of losing their jobs and homes. Conversion is likely to lead to legal problems in personal status matters. For example, fathers who leave Islam are likely to lose custody of their children. Foreign Christians have to practice their faith carefully as the government will act against any Christian who makes an attempt to speak about the Christian faith publicly; proselytizing is illegal and punishable under the law. Christian expatriate workers have been interrogated and instructed not to share their faith, or risk losing their visas. No Christians have been officially prosecuted for proselytizing, but some have been expelled from the country without due process in recent years.
- **Non-Christian religious leaders (Strong):** The fear of hostile pronouncements or actions by Islamic leaders contributes to the high degree of caution converts feel compelled to exercise.
- **Citizens (people from the broader society) (Strong):** Omani society is conservative and proud to be Islamic. Society will put pressure on both the government and family members to uphold Islamic religious norms.
- **Ethnic group leaders (Strong):** Family and tribal heads will make sure that Islam is respected within their tribe or extended family. They will influence family members to pressurize converts into recanting their faith.

Drivers of Clan and ethnic antagonism:

- **Extended family (Strong):** Although it is clear that the Islamic punishment for apostasy - capital punishment - is a key element in the reasons for persecuting a convert family member, this cannot be viewed separately from the concept of 'family honor'. Age old norms (such as protecting family honor) are still intact. Conversion from Islam to Christianity is the betrayal of everything a conservative Muslim family stands for and a shame to the name of the family. Converts face the risk of being ostracized by their families for shaming them.
- **Ethnic group leaders (Medium):** Tribal and family heads will make sure that the honor of their group is not defiled by a member converting to Christianity, which is regarded as a great insult. For Omanis, being Omani is their nationality, but their tribe is their real identity.

As a communal society, a convert to Christianity brings great shame on the entire tribe. The leaders of the tribe and of the family then bear the burden of restoring honor to the tribe. This can only be done if the person returns to Islam, leaves the community or dies. The persecution most often seen is the unwavering pressure on a convert to return to Islam, or the complete abandonment of the individual by their community.

- **Citizens (people from the broader society) (Strong):** Tribalism still has a widespread influence within Omani society and the social standing of tribe and family is very important to Omanis. Thus, there is social pressure to keep up societal norms in order not to shame the good name of the tribe and family.
- **Non-Christian religious leaders (Medium):** Local imams will encourage the upholding of the cultural norms, which are intertwined with Islamic principles.

Drivers of Dictatorial paranoia:

- **Government officials (Medium):** While the Sultan is popular due to the progress and prosperity the country has seen under his rule, he is also a dictator. The Omani government does not allow any criticism of state affairs, including their managing of religious affairs. Expatriates speaking out against the government will most probably be deported. While many Christians fear the monitoring of their phones and social media, most often this technology is focused on Omanis and is used to suppress any hint of dissension or criticism of the government.

Geographical hotspots of persecution

Omani society is still very tribal, however differences in pressure exist between urban areas like Muscat and rural areas. Social and family control, and thus pressure, is generally higher in rural areas, while urban areas offer the possibility for converts to live a more anonymous life.

Christian communities and how they are affected

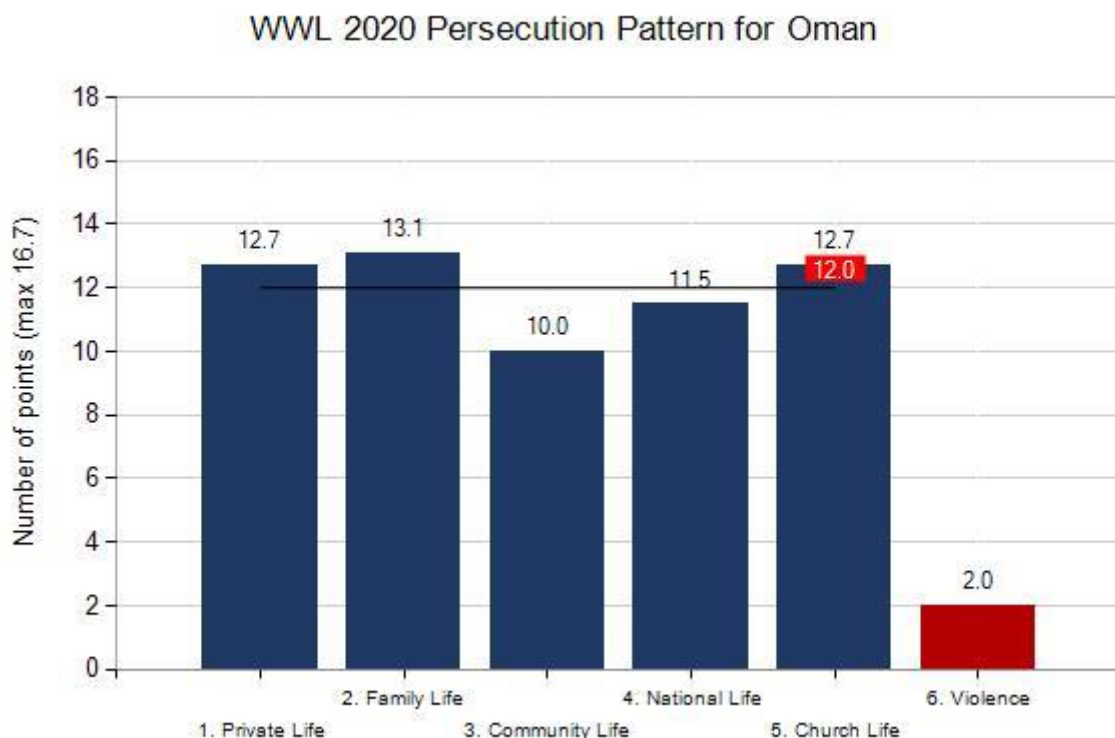
Communities of expatriate Christians: There are a number of expatriate communities in Oman, centered mainly in the major urban areas of Muscat and Sohar in the north and Salalah in the south. These include Roman Catholic, Eastern Orthodox and Protestant congregations. There are more than sixty different Christian groups, fellowships and assemblies active in the capital city, Muscat. All religious organizations must register and Christian meetings are monitored. Foreign Christians are allowed to worship discreetly in private homes or work compounds. Their facilities are restricted in order not to offend nationals.

Historical Christian communities: There are no historical Christian communities (other than expatriate ones covered in the first category above).

Converts to Christianity: Converts from Islam to Christianity risk persecution from family and society, mostly in the form of pressure to renounce their faith and isolation. Converts can lose their family, as the law prohibits a father who leaves Islam from retaining paternal rights over his children.

Non-traditional Christian communities: There are no non-traditional Christian communities in the country (other than expatriate ones covered in the first category above).

The Persecution pattern



The WWL 2020 Persecution pattern for Oman shows:

- The average pressure on Christians is at a very high level (12.0 points), rising from 11.5 in WWL 2019.
- Although all *spheres of life* show high or very high levels of pressure, pressure is clearly highest in the *Private, Family and Church spheres of life*. This reflects, on the one hand, the difficult situation for convert Christians who face very high pressure from their (extended) family; on the other hand, church life is difficult for both convert and expatriate Christians, as proselytizing and integrating converts from a Muslim background are socially unacceptable.
- The score for violence remained low despite increasing from 1.7 in WWL 2019 to 2.0 in WWL 2020. This increase is mainly due to a higher number of violent incidents being recorded.

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:

- **Conversion has been opposed, forbidden, or punishable, including conversion from one type of Christianity to another (Block 1.1 / Score: 3.25 points):** Oman is one of the few countries where Islam is state religion, but where conversion is not a crime as long as it is not done publicly. Yet there are consequences, especially on issues related to family matters and converts in particular face persecution in their private life. According to the US State Department's [International Religious Freedom report for 2018](#): "Members of religious minorities reported conversion from Islam was viewed extremely negatively within the Muslim community", which explains why a convert will be ostracized by his family. Given the tribal culture, ostracization means that a convert will lose all social securities normally provided by the family.
- **It has been risky for Christians to display Christian images or symbols (Block 1.5 / Score: 3.25 points):** Converts cannot wear any Christian symbols as they could lead to discovery of their conversion. Expatriate Christians are sometimes careful too, as publicly displaying a cross can lead to negative remarks or other types of harassment, especially when working in an Omani home (as a domestic worker for example).
- **It has been risky for Christians to speak about their faith with immediate family members (Block 1.7 / Score: 3.25 points):** This mainly applies to Omani converts, as the families of expatriate converts often stay in the home country. Omani's are strongly opposed to conversion, hence, Omani converts take high risks when speaking about their new faith with family members.
- **It has been risky for Christians to discuss their faith with those other than immediate family members (extended family, others) (Block 1.8 / Score: 3.25 points):** Risks are highest for Omani converts; for non-Omani converts, the level of risk depends on the norms of their own community. Expatriate Christians who publicly talk about Christian faith, can be accused of proselytism and lead to deportation.

Family sphere:

- **Babies and children of Christians have automatically been registered under the state or majority religion (Block 2.1 / Score: 3.5 points):** All children born to Omani's are considered to be Muslim. This principle also applies to the children of Omani converts.
- **Registering the birth, wedding, death, etc. of Christians has been hindered or made impossible (Block 2.2 / Score: 3.5 points):** There is no recognition of conversion, hence it is impossible for converts to register a Christian marriage (having celebrated a church marriage), nor can their children be registered as Christians.
- **Christian children have been pressured into attending anti-Christian or majority religion teaching at any level of education (Block 2.8 / 3.5 points):** This is especially true for converts from Islam to Christianity. As there is zero recognition of their new faith, their children cannot be exempted from Islamic education, like the children of non-Muslim expatriates. Islamic instruction is compulsory within state schools. Private schools can offer alternative religious courses.

- **Christian spouses of non-Christians have been excluded from the right or opportunity to claim custody of the children in divorce cases? (Block 2.12 / Score: 3.25 points):** Under Omani law, a convert husband will lose his right to custody upon divorce (this would not be different for a convert wife, but women in general do not have custody rights).

Converts are legally still considered to be Muslim. They can only marry under Islamic rites. Having a Christian wedding or funeral is difficult. In addition, spouses will be pressurized into divorcing a convert.

Community sphere:

- **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.) (Block 3.2 / Score: 3.75 points):** Christians are in general monitored not only by the government but also by society, who will inform the security services if they are aware of 'suspicious circumstances'. Especially local Omanis and expatriates suspected of evangelism will be under surveillance by the security services.
- **Christians have been interrogated or compelled to report to the local vigilante/police for faith-related reasons (Block 3.13 / Score: 3.5 points):** In addition to the monitoring, Christians who are suspected of evangelism (both expatriates and nationals), are regularly interrogated by the police. Interrogation usually takes place without the use of physical violence but it keeps the pressure on the Church high.
- **Christians have been put under pressure to take part in non-Christian religious ceremonies or community events (Block 3.5 / Score: 3.25 points):** Omani converts often have to take part in Islamic ceremonies to avoid discovery of their new faith or to make sure they do not shame their family by their absence.
- **Christians have been discriminated against in public or private employment for faith-related reasons (Block 3.10 / Score: 3.25 points):** In a tribal society like Oman, employment is often obtained via (family) relationships. Known Omani converts will be ostracized and hence not be able anymore to find a job. It is an accepted fact that Christian expatriate workers can experience discrimination on the work-floor. Their Christian faith is an extra vulnerability in this regard, although racism also often plays a negative role.

In their local communities - and particularly in schools - it is especially converts who have to take precautions to avoid discrimination, harassment and bullying. A country researcher notes: "Public school curricula include Islamic teaching. It is a must for Muslim students to take Islamic teaching. Christians or other non-Muslims are not obliged to take the Islamic teaching courses. However, converts who do not want to reveal their new Christian faith for safety reasons will still be required to take Islamic teaching. In addition, there is no similar Christian teaching included in school curricula for Christian students."

Displaying Christian symbols, like a cross, can lead to questions. Most pressure in this case is experienced by converts, who will in general be excluded by society if their faith is known. A convert can easily lose his job, for example.

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):*** In Oman, Islam is the state religion and Sharia law is the basis for legislation (article 2). The [Constitution](#) (article 28) only guarantees the "freedom to practice religious rites" under the condition that they "do not ... contradict morals". Hence, there is no freedom to convert from Islam to Christianity.
- ***Christians have been hindered in expressing their views or opinions in public (Block 4.8 / Score: 3.5 points):*** All Christians will try to keep a low profile in order to avoid persecution. Criticizing both the Omani government or Islam would probably lead to deportation for expatriate migrants. Hence, speaking about social justice in Oman from a Christian perspective, needs to be done sensitively.
- ***Christian civil society organizations or political parties have been hindered in their functioning or forbidden because of their Christian convictions (Block 4.9 / Score: 3.5 points):*** Only Christian organizations with a clear benefit for Omani society, like a hospital, will be welcomed. It is impossible to establish a Christian organization with the intention of proselytizing; organizations with a clear Christian profile will be suspected of proselytizing and opposed.
- ***Christians, churches or Christian organizations have been hindered in publicly displaying religious symbols (Block 4.12 / Score: 3.75 points):*** Churches on the religious compounds do not display crosses or other Christian symbols that might be visible to the public outside the compounds. Those meeting outside compounds, and especially Christians from a Muslim background, recognize the even greater need for restraint to avoid provocation. *Christians have to live under policies and laws that are enacted in accordance with Islam. However, one country researcher writes: "In recent years the Omani authorities have advised local believers that it is permissible for them to believe whatever they like, provided they do not meet together in unauthorised places or publicize their Christian beliefs in any way." This indicates that the government will not act against converts as long as they do not cause any public disturbance.*

Church sphere:

- ***Churches have been hindered from organizing Christian activities outside church buildings (Block 5.5 / Score: 3.75 points):*** Since public Christian activities will often be interpreted as proselytism, churches will not be allowed to organize them. Most churches apply self-censorship in this regard in order to avoid any problems with the government or society.
- ***Churches have been hindered from openly integrating converts (Block 5.7 / Score: 3.75 points):*** Due to societal pressure, churches will be very careful about integrating converts. In addition, the government would most likely act against any church actively integrating converts within their community.
- ***Openly selling or distributing Bibles and other Christian materials has been hindered (Block 5.14 / Score: 3.75 points):*** The publication, import and distribution of religious materials are heavily regulated. Churches are no longer allowed to use their own channels for importing Bibles and are forced to use a secular bookshop.

- **Churches or Christian organizations have been hindered in printing Christian materials or owning printing presses (Block 5.12 / Score: 3.75 points):** Churches can print materials for their own use, but printing large quantities of Christian materials would be seen as an act of proselytism. Establishing a Christian publishing house would not be possible in Oman.

It is true that there are many recognized congregations in Oman. Yet constructing and registering a church-building is difficult. The government must also approve any buildings rented by religious groups. The law prohibits public proselytizing by any non-Islamic religious group, although the government tolerates private proselytizing within legally registered houses. Tolerating private proselytizing is something that characterizes the country, as this is impossible and even dangerous in neighboring countries. In this way, the government wants to present the country as Islamic to its neighbors, while being tolerant towards minorities at the same time.

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.

Oman	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	100	No details can be published	0	No details can be published
WWL 2019	01 Nov 2017 - 31 Oct 2018	0	16	2	0	0
WWL 2018	01 Nov 2016 - 31 Oct 2017	0	0	10	1	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.

- **Christians attacked:** It is widely known that house-maids working in the domestic sphere are vulnerable to incidents of (sexual) abuse. However, statistics are scarce as almost all persons, organizations and states involved have no interest in revealing the true situation: Oman needs the domestic staff to work in households, but has a shame culture and does not want a bad reputation. Also, the home countries of the house-maids need the money coming in from the thousands of migrants working in the Gulf states and do not want to put their economic interests at stake (although Philippine President Duterte imposed a temporary travel ban to Kuwait, after the body of a Philippine maid was found in the [freezer](#) of a Kuwaiti home in February 2018).

The employers of abused house-maids are either the perpetrators of the abuse themselves or have no real interest in their well-being. The house-maids themselves are often ashamed because of the abuse and do not want to be seen as "dirty", whether in Oman itself or by their family at home. In addition, many provide a very much needed source of income for their families in their home countries. The home families are proud of the work being done in Oman, and the house-maid does not want to disappoint her family. Therefore, statistics and evidence of sexual abuse are very difficult to provide. It is also difficult to prove that any sexual abuse is due to the house-maid being a non-Muslim. Nevertheless, given the high number of Christian expatriates in the country, conservative estimates agree that at least 100 Christian house-maids were (sexually) abused because of their faith in the WWL 2020 reporting period.

5 Year trends

The following three charts show the situation for Christians in Oman over the last five reporting periods.

Chart 1:

The average pressure on Christians has gradually increased to a very high level (from 10.6 points in WWL 2017 to 12.0 points in WWL 2020).

WWL 2016 - WWL 2020 Persecution Pattern history: Oman	Average pressure over 5 Spheres of life
2020	12.0
2019	11.5
2018	11.2
2017	10.6
2016	10.7

Chart 2:

Over the last five reporting periods, the levels of pressure in the *Private, Family and Church spheres of life* have normally been higher than those in the *Community and National spheres of life*. Whereas, most *spheres of life* have seen rises in pressure in at least the last three reporting period, the level of pressure in *Private life* and *Church life* would seem to be levelling off around the 12.7 point mark.

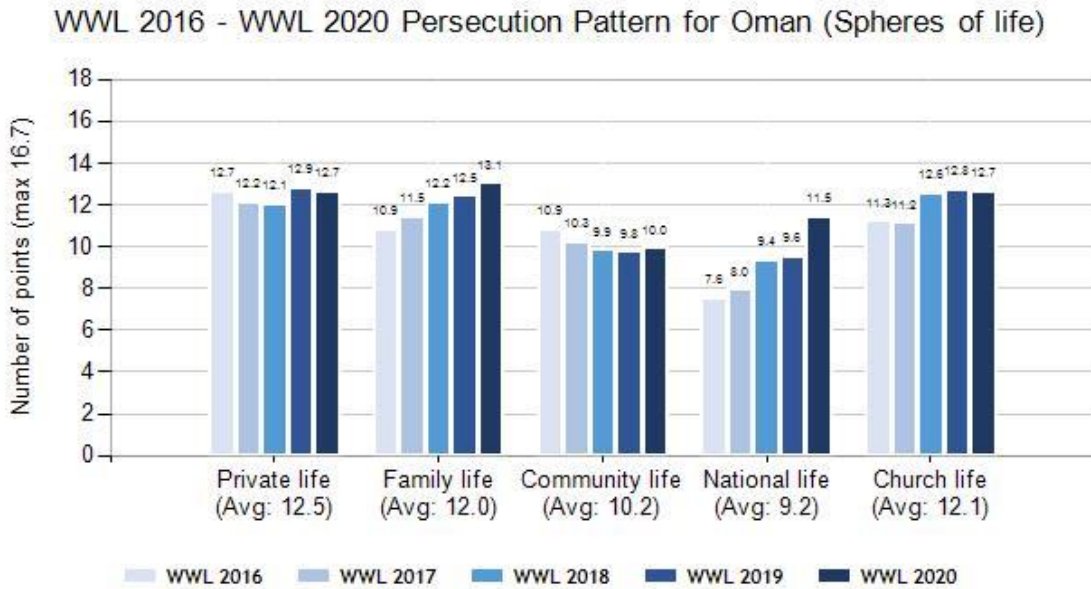
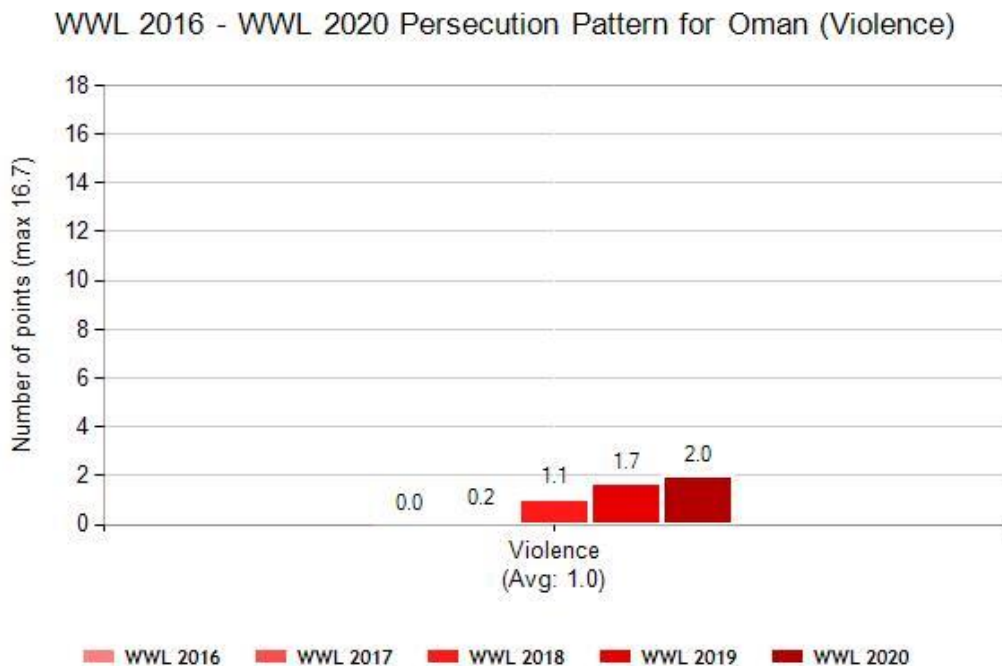


Chart 3:

Although negligible in WWL 2016 - 2017, the scores for violence show an upward trend in the last three reporting periods.



Gender profile of persecution

Female Pressure Points:

- ***Denied legal ability to marry Christian spouse***
- ***Forced marriage***
- ***Incarceration by family***
- ***Violence – verbal***
- ***Violence – sexual***

Despite the legal declaration that all citizens are equal, Oman's Personal Status Law perpetuates [multiple inequalities](#), including divorce, inheritance, and child custody, according to Human Rights Watch, reporting in 2017. In general, women are in a vulnerable position in the ultra-conservative society of Oman, where their lives are [controlled](#) by their father, husband or guardian. Within Omani Islamic culture, women are regarded as being less worth than men, even during court proceedings. Most commonly, women stay in the family home with their children. This encourages a mindset in which women are seen as being less capable in many ways, which also has an impact on their faith, since women are not expected to have their own (religious) opinions. Thus, this environment makes it especially difficult for women to convert from Islam to Christianity.

Together with the social control within this system, it can be seen how many barriers exist preventing women from converting and meeting up with Christians. When women do convert, they are likely to face house-arrest by their family and forced marriage (if unmarried). Converts to Christianity do not have the option of marrying a Christian spouse, as women registered as Muslims are legally restricted from marrying a non-Muslim.

The ill-treatment of foreign workers, including sexual abuse, remains a major issue. Although not primarily faith-related, there are indications that non-Muslim domestic workers, almost all of whom are female, are more vulnerable to such abuse than Muslims.

Male Pressure Points:

- ***Denied access to social community/networks***
- ***Denied inheritance or possessions***
- ***Discrimination/harassment via education***
- ***Economic harassment via work/job/business***
- ***Incarceration by family***
- ***Incarceration by government***
- ***Violence – verbal***

It is very difficult for Muslim men to convert to Christianity in Oman. Christian converts are likely to suffer from the ramifications of social ostracism, both by immediate and extended families, as well as the greater community. Men who convert to Christianity are likely to lose the financial support of their families as well as the necessary connections to find or maintain a job in Oman's network-based society. Furthermore, no Omani family will allow their daughter to marry a man who disrespects his own family by rejecting them and all they have taught him.

If a convert has family and employment at the time of his conversion, he risks losing it all. When a man leaves Islam, by law he automatically loses custody of any children; his wife might divorce him and he can easily lose his job, which has major implications for all his family members since men are traditionally the breadwinners for their families.

As to expatriate male Christians, any pressure they experience because of their faith is most likely encountered in the workplace.

Persecution of other religious minorities

Hindus, Buddhists and non-Ibadi Muslims are relatively free to practice their own beliefs. The US State Department's [International Religious Freedom report for 2018](#) stated that other non-Muslim groups are relatively free to gather in designated areas, but that overcrowding remains a problem. In addition, they also struggle to register themselves with the government, as procedures are not clear.

According to the report, all imams have to be licensed by the government and mosques are not allowed to let unlicensed imams preach. In addition, all licensed imams have to follow the government-approved sermons. The government introduced these measures to avoid political discontent being expressed in the mosques.

Future outlook for the church

The outlook for Christians as viewed through the lens of:

- **Islamic oppression:** Although there does exist the threat of future Islamization, there is also the positive trend of the government trying to develop a culture of religious harmony. The al-Amana Center, a Protestant [initiative](#) supported by the government, works to promote dialogue and understanding between Muslims and Christians on the premise: "No peace among the nations without peace among the religions" and "No peace among the religions without dialogue between the religions". Nevertheless, conversion will remain a very sensitive and controversial issue and churches will remain limited in their activities, especially when it comes to evangelization.
- **Clan and ethnic antagonism:** Although urbanization and modernization are influencing every new generation, family and tribalism will most likely remain significant factors in society. As long as religious identity and tribal identity remain interwoven, converting to Christianity will be seen as a betrayal of family and tribe, making it difficult to make such a choice.
- **Dictatorial paranoia:** As long as the Sultan remains in power, expatriate Christians will most likely retain their relative freedom to worship. The government will keep monitoring Christians for forbidden activities (proselytizing) which can cause public unrest, but is not likely to persecute Christians aggressively. However, this can easily change if the Sultan dies or retires.

External Links - WWL 2020: Persecution Dynamics

- Persecution engines: not free - <https://freedomhouse.org/report/freedom-world/2019/oman>

- Pressure in the 5 spheres of life : International Religious Freedom report for 2018: - <https://www.state.gov/wp-content/uploads/2019/05/OMAN-2018-INTERNATIONAL-RELIGIOUS-FREEDOM-REPORT.pdf>
- Pressure in the 5 spheres of life : Constitution - https://www.constituteproject.org/constitution/Oman_2011.pdf?lang=en
- Violence: freezer - <https://gulfnews.com/world/asia/philippines/family-grieves-philippine-maid-found-dead-in-kuwait-freezer-1.2174514>
- Gender profile of persecution: multiple inequalities - <http://https://www.hrw.org/world-report/2017/country-chapters/oman>
- Gender profile of persecution: controlled - <http://https://www.refworld.org/docid/47387b6ec.html>
- Persecution of other religious minorities: International Religious Freedom report for 2018 - <https://www.state.gov/wp-content/uploads/2019/05/OMAN-2018-INTERNATIONAL-RELIGIOUS-FREEDOM-REPORT.pdf>
- Future outlook for the church: initiative - <https://alamanacentre.org/>

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 Oman.

World Watch Monitor news articles

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

Recent country developments

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