

World
Watch
Research

Ethiopia: Country Dossier

December 2020



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Open Doors International / World Watch Research

December 2020

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Introduction

World Watch List 2021

Rank	Country	Private life	Family life	Community life	National life	Church life	Violence	Total Score WWL 2021	Total Score WWL 2020	Total Score WWL 2019	Total Score WWL 2018	Total Score WWL 2017
1	North Korea	16.7	16.7	16.7	16.7	16.7	11.1	94	94	94	94	92
2	Afghanistan	16.7	16.7	16.7	16.7	16.7	10.2	94	93	94	93	89
3	Somalia	16.5	16.7	16.6	16.6	16.3	9.8	92	92	91	91	91
4	Libya	15.6	15.4	15.9	16.3	16.3	12.4	92	90	87	86	78
5	Pakistan	13.9	14.2	15.1	14.9	13.5	16.7	88	88	87	86	88
6	Eritrea	14.6	14.9	15.9	15.9	15.4	11.1	88	87	86	86	82
7	Yemen	16.6	16.6	16.5	16.7	16.7	3.9	87	85	86	85	85
8	Iran	14.5	14.5	13.9	15.7	16.5	10.6	86	85	85	85	85
9	Nigeria	13.3	13.2	13.9	14.1	14.1	16.7	85	80	80	77	78
10	India	13.0	12.9	13.5	14.9	13.7	15.4	83	83	83	81	73
11	Iraq	13.6	14.6	14.2	14.8	13.8	11.5	82	76	79	86	86
12	Syria	13.3	13.9	13.5	14.5	14.0	12.0	81	82	82	76	86
13	Sudan	13.4	13.4	13.7	13.6	15.7	9.1	79	85	87	87	87
14	Saudi Arabia	15.1	13.9	14.4	15.8	16.6	2.2	78	79	77	79	76
15	Maldives	15.4	15.5	13.9	15.8	16.6	0.4	77	78	78	78	76
16	Egypt	12.5	13.2	11.5	12.7	11.0	14.1	75	76	76	70	65
17	China	12.6	9.7	12.0	13.2	15.4	11.1	74	70	65	57	57
18	Myanmar	11.9	12.0	13.1	12.9	12.3	11.9	74	73	71	65	62
19	Vietnam	12.1	8.8	12.7	14.0	14.5	10.0	72	72	70	69	71
20	Mauritania	14.3	14.0	13.5	14.1	13.6	1.9	71	68	67	57	55
21	Uzbekistan	15.1	12.9	14.1	12.2	15.7	1.3	71	73	74	73	71
22	Laos	12.1	10.2	13.6	13.5	14.3	6.9	71	72	71	67	64
23	Turkmenistan	14.5	11.3	13.8	13.3	15.7	1.5	70	70	69	68	67
24	Algeria	13.9	13.9	11.5	13.1	13.4	3.9	70	73	70	58	58
25	Turkey	12.5	11.5	10.8	13.3	11.6	9.3	69	63	66	62	57
26	Tunisia	12.0	13.1	10.4	11.5	13.2	7.4	67	64	63	62	61
27	Morocco	12.6	13.5	11.2	12.4	14.1	3.7	67	66	63	51	49
28	Mali	9.4	8.2	12.7	10.3	11.5	15.4	67	66	68	59	59
29	Qatar	14.0	13.9	10.8	13.1	14.1	1.5	67	66	62	63	66
30	Colombia	11.4	8.8	12.4	11.0	9.7	13.9	67	62	58	56	53
31	Bangladesh	11.5	10.3	13.0	11.3	10.1	10.6	67	63	58	58	63
32	Burkina Faso	9.4	9.7	12.0	9.4	11.8	14.3	67	66	48	-	-
33	Tajikistan	14.0	12.3	11.9	12.5	13.2	2.2	66	65	65	65	58
34	Nepal	12.4	9.7	9.9	13.0	12.3	8.5	66	64	64	64	53
35	CAR	9.0	8.6	13.1	9.6	9.9	15.6	66	68	70	61	58
36	Ethiopia	9.9	8.5	10.7	10.3	10.8	14.4	65	63	65	62	64
37	Mexico	10.3	8.1	12.4	10.7	10.3	12.6	64	60	61	59	57
38	Jordan	13.1	13.9	11.4	11.6	12.4	2.0	64	64	65	66	63
39	Brunei	13.9	14.6	10.7	10.9	13.5	0.7	64	63	63	64	64
40	DRC	8.0	7.9	11.2	9.4	11.6	16.1	64	56	55	33	-
41	Kazakhstan	13.2	11.5	11.0	12.5	13.4	2.4	64	64	63	63	56
42	Cameroon	8.8	7.6	12.6	7.0	12.3	15.7	64	60	54	38	-
43	Bhutan	13.1	12.1	11.9	12.7	13.8	0.0	64	61	64	62	61
44	Oman	13.2	13.5	10.3	12.5	13.0	0.9	63	62	59	57	53
45	Mozambique	9.3	7.6	11.3	7.9	11.1	16.1	63	43	43	-	-
46	Malaysia	12.1	14.3	12.9	11.5	10.0	2.4	63	62	60	65	60
47	Indonesia	11.5	11.4	12.4	10.7	9.3	7.8	63	60	65	59	55
48	Kuwait	13.2	13.5	9.9	12.2	13.2	1.1	63	62	60	61	57
49	Kenya	11.7	9.2	10.5	8.0	10.3	12.8	62	61	61	62	68
50	Comoros	12.5	11.1	11.4	11.3	14.2	1.9	62	57	56	56	56

Rank	Country	Private life	Family life	Community life	National life	Church life	Violence	Total Score WWL 2021	Total Score WWL 2020	Total Score WWL 2019	Total Score WWL 2018	Total Score WWL 2017
51	Cuba	10.9	7.7	11.8	12.9	13.4	5.4	62	52	49	49	47
52	Sri Lanka	12.2	9.1	11.7	12.2	9.7	7.0	62	65	58	57	55
53	UAE	13.4	13.3	9.7	12.0	12.4	1.1	62	60	58	58	55
54	Niger	9.4	9.5	13.3	7.2	11.6	10.6	62	60	52	45	47
55	Kyrgyzstan	12.9	10.3	11.2	10.4	12.0	1.3	58	57	56	54	48
56	Palestinian Territories	12.5	13.3	9.1	10.4	11.7	0.9	58	60	57	60	64
57	Tanzania	9.3	10.8	10.3	8.6	8.7	10.2	58	55	52	53	59
58	Russian Federation	12.3	8.0	10.2	10.5	12.1	3.9	57	60	60	51	46
59	Djibouti	12.3	12.3	10.3	10.0	11.2	0.0	56	56	56	56	57
60	Bahrain	12.1	12.5	9.1	10.7	10.5	0.9	56	55	55	57	54
61	Azerbaijan	12.8	9.8	9.4	11.1	12.6	0.0	56	57	57	57	52
62	Chad	11.5	8.2	10.2	9.6	10.3	3.7	53	56	48	40	-
63	Nicaragua	6.9	4.6	9.9	11.3	10.0	8.1	51	41	41	-	-
64	Burundi	5.1	5.8	9.7	9.2	9.6	8.9	48	48	43	-	-
65	Uganda	8.1	4.6	6.7	6.7	9.1	12.0	47	48	47	46	53
66	Guinea	10.3	7.5	8.3	7.0	8.1	5.9	47	45	46	-	-
67	Honduras	6.8	5.0	10.6	7.6	9.0	7.6	46	39	38	-	-
68	Angola	6.4	3.6	7.0	10.1	11.4	7.2	46	43	42	-	-
69	South Sudan	5.7	1.5	7.0	6.3	7.8	15.0	43	44	44	-	-
70	Gambia	8.3	8.2	8.7	8.3	8.8	0.6	43	43	43	-	-
71	Togo	9.2	6.7	9.3	7.1	9.8	0.7	43	41	42	-	-
72	Rwanda	5.3	4.4	6.7	7.8	10.1	8.1	42	42	41	-	-
73	Ivory Coast	9.8	8.6	8.2	5.5	6.6	3.3	42	42	43	-	-
74	El Salvador	6.6	4.9	9.8	4.2	8.7	7.8	42	38	30	-	-

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Sources and definitions

- This country report is a collation of data and analysis based around Open Doors World Watch List (WWL) and includes statistical information on world religions, Christian denominations and people groups prepared by the World Christian Database (WCD).
- 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 2021 reporting period was 01 October 2019 - 30 September 2020.
- 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).

Effect on data-gathering during COVID-19 pandemic

In the WWL 2021 reporting period, travel restrictions and other measures introduced by the governments of various countries to combat the spread of the COVID-19 pandemic did cause delays and create the need for restructuring grass-roots research in some cases. Through the agile cooperation of Open Doors field networks, research analysts, external experts and an increased use of technological options, Open Doors is confident that the WWL 2021 scoring, analysis and documentation has maintained required levels of quality and reliability.

External Links - Introduction

- Sources and definitions: World Watch List Documentation - <http://opendoorsanalytical.org/world-watch-list-documentation/>

WWL 2021 Short country profile / Ethiopia

Brief country details

Ethiopia: Population (2020 UN estimate)	Christians	Chr%
112,759,000	67,491,000	59.9

Data source: Johnson T M and Zurlo G A, eds., *World Christian Database* (Leiden/Boston: Brill, accessed February 2020)

Ethiopia: World Watch List	Points	WWL Rank
WWL 2021	65	36
WWL 2020	63	39
WWL 2019	65	28
WWL 2018	62	29
WWL 2017	64	22

Scores and ranks are shown above whenever the country scored 41 points or more in the WWL 2017-2021 reporting periods

Dominant persecution engines and drivers

Ethiopia: Main Persecution engines	Main drivers
Christian Denominational protectionism	Religious leaders of other churches, One's own (extended) family, Citizens (people from the broader society), including mobs
Islamic oppression	Non-Christian religious leaders, One's own (extended) family, Citizens (people from the broader society), including mobs
Dictatorial paranoia	Government officials
Ethno-religious hostility	Ethnic group leaders

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

Brief description of the persecution situation

In Ethiopia, all Christian communities face violations of religious freedom, although some denominations are more affected than others. Non-traditional Christians face the most severe violations both from the government and the Ethiopian Orthodox Church (EOC). Converts to Christianity from a Muslim background (particularly in eastern and south-eastern parts of the country) and cross-denominational converts from an Orthodox background face harsh mistreatment from their families and communities. In some areas, Christians are denied access to community resources and/or are ostracized from society. For example, In some places - such as Ogaden and some parts of Oromia - Islamic mobs attack churches. The political violence has also taken its tolls on Christian communities with many churches destroyed and Christians killed.

Summary of international obligations and rights violations

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

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

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

- Christian converts are ostracized and denied their right to freedom of religion or belief (ICCPR Art. 18)
- Christians are denied their right to freedom of expression (ICCPR Art. 19)
- Christian peaceful religious gatherings are restricted, in violation of the right to peaceful assembly (ICCPR Art. 21)
- Christian women are forcibly married and forced to recant their beliefs (ICCPR Art. 23.3; CEDAW Art. 16 and ICESCR Art. 10)
- Christian women are denied their equality of rights and responsibilities during marriage and at its dissolution (ICCPR Art. 23.4 and CEDAW Art.16)

Specific examples of violations of rights in the reporting period

- [26 October 2019](#): Ethiopia has experienced an eruption of violence along ethnic and religious lines. Reuters reported: "Priest Firesebhat Getachew, head of an Orthodox church in Dodola, said eight people killed this week had been buried at his church and 3,000 more were sheltering inside its compound. 'The attackers targeted Orthodox Christians,' he said by phone, adding that the victims were from the Oromo, Amhara, and Sidama ethnic groups. 'The area is dominated by Muslims, and they don't want us and the church there.'"
- [28 October 2019](#): According to BBC News, a senior official from the Ethiopian Orthodox Church (EOC) stated that more than 60 Orthodox Christians had been killed during the recent unrest in the Oromia region.

- [21 December 2019](#): The Addis Standard reported that unidentified people set fire to the Saint George Orthodox church in Motta town of east Gojam. Orthodox Christians retaliated by setting fire to mosques and Muslim properties in the area.
- [10 March 2020](#): The Full Gospel Church was set on fire and Christian medics were attacked by an angry mob in Enewai town of Amhara State. The Christian medics were providing free service to the community when the accusation was circulating about their involvement in evangelism (Voice of the Martyrs, 9 July 2020).

Specific examples of positive developments

- A legal proclamation that had been used to restrict the registration of some church groups was repealed by the government and replaced with a more permissive registration policy.
- The Council of Gospel Believer's church was recognized by parliament.

External Links - Short country profile

- Summary of international obligations and rights violations: International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights - <https://www.ohchr.org/en/professionalinterest/pages/ccpr.aspx>
- Summary of international obligations and rights violations: International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights - <https://www.ohchr.org/en/professionalinterest/pages/cescr.aspx>
- Summary of international obligations and rights violations: Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women - <https://www.ohchr.org/EN/ProfessionalInterest/Pages/CEDAW.aspx>
- Summary of international obligations and rights violations: Convention against Torture - <https://www.ohchr.org/en/professionalinterest/pages/cat.aspx>
- Summary of international obligations and rights violations: Convention on the Rights of the Child - <https://www.ohchr.org/en/professionalinterest/pages/crc.aspx>
- Specific examples of violations of rights in the reporting period: 26 October 2019 - <https://uk.reuters.com/article/worldNews/idUKKBN1X50BQ>
- Specific examples of violations of rights in the reporting period: 28 October 2019: - https://www.bbc.com/news/live/world-africa-47639452?ns_mchannel=social&ns_source=twitter&ns_campaign=bbc_live&ns_linkname=5db6ca4f9b8394066d942733%26Ethiopian%20church%20says%20dozens%20of%20followers%20died%20in%20violence%262019-10-28T12%3A22%3A36.922Z&ns_fee=0&pinned_post_locator=urn:asset:e8ec2feb-c3d6-46d7-9f3b-9e3b410d7dcf&pinned_post_asset_id=5db6ca4f9b8394066d942733&pinned_post_type=share
- Specific examples of violations of rights in the reporting period: 21 December 2019: - <http://addisstandard.com/news-attacks-on-multiple-mosques-muslim-owned-business-center-in-amhara-region-draws-criticism/>
- Specific examples of violations of rights in the reporting period: 10 March 2020: - <https://www.icommittoprav.com/request/2052/members-of-full-gospel-church/>

WWL 2021: Keys to understanding / Ethiopia

Link for general background information

- [Ethiopia country profile - BBC News](#)

Recent history

For many centuries Ethiopia was part of the Aksumite Empire, which included present-day Yemen, Sudan, Eritrea, and Ethiopia but this came to an end around 940 AD. Thereafter different dynasties ruled the country. In 1974 the army deposed the last king of the Solomonic dynasty and took control of the state. The military junta led by Colonel Mengistu Hailemariam followed Socialist ideology. After the ousting of the army by rebel forces in 1991, the current ruling party, the Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic Front (EPRDF), came to power and a constitution was finally drafted in 1995. The Eritrean–Ethiopian War took place from May 1998 to June 2000. In June 2018, the new Ethiopian prime minister, Dr Abiy Ahmed, signed a peace treaty with Eritrea formally ending that war. Both countries removed some of their armed forces from the front.

Before that, however, developments in Ethiopia had been changing thick and fast. In 2015, the ruling party claimed to have won 100% of the contested parliamentary seats, a claim that sent a shock among human rights groups and those who work on issues of democracy and rule of law. Although the country is said to have been developing at a very good rate in terms of economic development, in November 2015 the country faced a series of violent protests. Human rights groups reported that hundreds of people had been killed by security forces and thousands put in jail. The demonstrations started peacefully in the Oromia region and expanded to the Amhara region with demands for the respect of political, civil, social, and economic rights. In response, the government imposed martial law in October 2016.

The top leadership, beleaguered by more than two years of relentless protests and political unrest, held a closed-door meeting and came out announcing in January 2018 that it acknowledged its failures and the resulting public grievances, would [release political prisoners](#) and would close the infamous torture center Maekelawi (Human Rights Watch - HRW, 3 January 2018). After releasing political prisoners in early February 2018, including prominent opposition figures and journalists, Prime Minister Hailemariam Desalegn [tendered resignation](#) unexpectedly, saying he would continue in office in a caretaker role until the ruling coalition EPRDF elected a new leader and the country's parliament appointed that person as prime minister (CNN, 15 February 2018). After intensive behind-the-scene deliberations, Dr Abiy Ahmed was elected as chairman of the ruling party and eventually became prime minister. Since he assumed office in April 2018, he has introduced a series of reforms including the release of thousands of political prisoners and proposing the privatization of some of the companies owned by the state. Other very important diplomatic and economic reforms were also introduced.

However, during the period between the resignation of the former prime minister and swearing-in of the new prime minister, the country saw a new state of emergency declared, and its army [kill civilians](#) in a southern town, causing many to flee across the border to Kenya (Association for Human Rights in Ethiopia, 12 March 2018). Then, on 10 April 2018, the US House of Representatives passed a non-binding [resolution](#) on Ethiopia, calling on the Ethiopian government led by the new prime minister to demonstrate a commitment to human rights, democracy, and rule of law and indicating future cooperation to be tied to it (HRW, 10 April 2018). In May and early June 2018, the Liyu police unit of the Somali regional state carried out [new rounds of killings](#) and the burning of houses in a neighboring regional state (Amnesty International - AI, 11 June 2018). In late June 2018, a deadly bomb blast considered an [assassination attempt](#) on the new Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed hit a huge rally in Addis Ababa's Meskel square that was called in support of the prime minister (CNN, 24 June 2018).

June 2018 was also a month during which significant positive events were registered under the leadership of the new prime minister. The state of emergency imposed in February was lifted two months earlier than its official date of expiry; the country's state-controlled telecoms and state-owned airline businesses were made open to private and international investors for the first time; parliament lifted proscription on three opposition groups and their members exiled abroad; the government also publicly admitted security forces relied on [torture](#) and it committed to legal reforms of repressive laws (HRW, World Report 2019). The government announced it was fully accepting the Algiers agreement and the decision of the boundary commission to end hostilities with Eritrea and in July 2018 agreed on the [historic deal](#) with Eritrea (HRW, 18 July 2018). In October 2018, there was a cabinet reshuffle and the appointment of the [first female head of state](#) in the country's history (Al-Jazeera, 25 October 2018). In the same month, history was made as women held 50% of cabinet positions.

In 2019, however, the country has seen a rise in communal violence which resulted in the displacement of [millions](#) of people (HRW, World Report 2019). In addition, there was allegedly an attempted coup at the regional level which led to the killing of the president of the Amhara regional state and top leadership. The army's chief of staff was also killed. Some activists are accusing the government of imprisoning hundreds of people using the coup attempt as a pretext. But the government is claiming that the arrested individuals have been engaged in criminal activities that warrant their arrest.

In 2020, the country has seen more protests and violence - and also further human rights violations by security forces have been [reported](#) (AI, 29 May 2020). In some places, Christians were targeted and attacked as well. In November 2020, the Federal Government ordered its troops to conduct an operation in the northern part of the country - Tigray region.

Political and legal landscape

The [1995 Constitution](#) established a federal form of government based on ethnicity. The ideology was supported by the Tigrayan People's Liberation Front (TPLF), and other ethnic-based political parties. The TPLF is the main body ruling with the Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic Front (EPRDF). During the armed struggle in the 1970s and 80s, they articulated a very specific role for ethnicity in Ethiopia, which they established after coming to power. Hence,

ethnicity served as the primary identity marker, not religion. However, for certain ethnic groups, religion still plays an important role in their identity. For example, the Amhara and Tigray historically have close ties with the Ethiopian Orthodox Church (EOC), while the Ogaden are ethnic Somali Muslims. Nonetheless, it is important to note that political mobilization still takes place primarily along ethnic lines. While religious-based conflicts still do erupt, insecurity in Ethiopia mainly involves ethnic-based armed groups. These groups are motivated primarily through feeling marginalized by the Tigray-dominated society, rather than on the basis of religion.

Now that the TPLF has lost control of the federal government (after the series of protests starting in 2015 forced the prime minister to resign) many Ethiopians strongly believe that the new prime minister, Dr Abiy Ahmed, is the man who can solve the problems the country has been facing. However, things are getting complicated as the coalition of forces that brought the change of prime minister are engaged in fierce political debate that might not have an end in the near future.

According to [International Crisis Group](#) reporting on 15 April 2020, “the prime minister has struggled to maintain order as a divided and discredited ruling coalition increasingly lost its grip on the systems it had used for decades to maintain control over a diverse and sometimes restive population. Rival regional, ethnic, and political factions clashed over ideology, power, and resources, killing thousands of people, and displacing more than three million.” To revitalize the transition, in late 2019 the prime minister and his allies created a new ruling party called the Prosperity Party. The Tigray People’s Liberation Front (TPLF) refused to join. Tensions continue to escalate between the different ethnic groups (between Tigray and Amhara, and between Amhara and Oromo).

The International Crisis Group article also explains how the government has come under fire from opposition parties for failing to create conditions for fair elections, which it had promised would be in place before polls took place on the constitutionally prescribed schedule. They complained that the government is resorting to tactics belonging to past authoritarian days, including the arrest and harassment of activists, and denial of permission for meetings and rallies. They also accuse the new Prosperity Party of using government resources for its own advantage.

After five years of political turmoil, the country was scheduled to hold elections in August 2020. However, due to the public health risks caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, the electoral board [suspended](#) preparations for the elections on 31 March 2020 (Reuters, 1 April 2020). Consequently, on 10 April 2020, parliament approved a five-month state of emergency, giving the authorities sweeping powers to battle the disease.

Religious landscape

Ethiopia: Religious context	Number of adherents	%
Christians	67,491,000	59.9
Muslim	38,807,000	34.4
Hindu	7,600	0.0
Buddhist	1,700	0.0
Ethno-religionist	6,314,000	5.6
Jewish	16,500	0.0
Bahai	26,000	0.0
Atheist	12,500	0.0
Agnostic	82,500	0.1
Other	0	0.0
<i>OTHER includes Chinese folk, New religionist, Sikh, Spiritist, Taoist, Confucianist, Jain, Shintoist, Zoroastrian.</i>		

Data source: Johnson T M and Zurlo G A, eds., *World Christian Database* (Leiden/Boston: Brill, accessed February 2020)

Historically, Ethiopia has always had deep Christian roots. The main Christian groups in Ethiopia are the Ethiopian Orthodox Church and the various Protestant denominations. The latter entered the country from the 19th century onwards. According to Islamic tradition, Islam has a long history in Ethiopia dating back to the *hijrah* (flight of Muslims to Axum in northern Ethiopia in 615 AD). However, the Roman Catholic Church (introduced in the 16th century) shaped the identity of Ethiopia to a large extent. In fact, Ethiopia presents itself as a bulwark of Christianity surrounded by Islamic neighbors. Within the context of the “global war against terror”, this narrative is often employed by Ethiopians.

Nonetheless, Ethiopia has a very substantial Muslim minority. Sufism has a long tradition, and the more conservative Salafist streams have been present since the 1930s, expanding from the 1960s onwards. These Islamic streams were originally concentrated along Ethiopia’s eastern fringes, but have been growing in influence among the Ethiopian population in all areas and causing deep concern for the present government. The Muslim community, especially the

leadership, has become very assertive. There have been claims that the marginalization policy that left the Muslim community devoid of any political or economic impact in the country under previous regimes is continuing under the current administration. The government, however, refutes such allegations. The new prime minister has released all Muslim leaders who were arrested under the previous prime minister. The new prime minister also mediated between the two factions of the Ethiopian Orthodox Church and as a result, the former Patriarch who was in exile has now returned to Ethiopia.

Past and present governments have attempted to mobilize support by controlling religious groups and influencing religious life in the country. For example, after coming to power in 1991, the EPRDF party replaced the patriarch of the Orthodox Church - a position that is typically held for life. This implies that the role of the government in religion is stronger than the influence of religious groups on the government. Moreover, the interference of the Ethiopian government often generates resentment among the population since religious institutions are perceived as being co-opted. In addition, a formal political organization on a religious basis is technically outlawed in Ethiopia. Within this context, Protestant churches are considered to be largely (apolitical) agents of Western ideology and interests. Various informal, politically organized religious groups do exist, especially within Ethiopia's diaspora, but the dominant narrative within Ethiopia's political system remains tied to ethnicity. Against this backdrop Muslim groups have become more active, which has led to the development of specific religious-based publications, such as *YeMuslimoch Guday* (Muslim Affairs) and *Sewtul Islam*.

The apolitical character of the Protestant movement, including converts from Islam or the Ethiopian Orthodox Church (EOC), has brought these Christians into increasing conflict with the Ethiopian government and the two main religious bodies in the country. Experts believe that the current political dynamics might improve relations between Orthodox and Protestant Christians. There are still others who believe that the main problem that emanates from the EOC is from ultra-conservative groups not from the leadership. It is unlikely that the change in the leadership of the Ethiopian government will alter the view of these ultra-conservative groups. Indeed, ultra-conservative groups in the ranks of the EOC are becoming very vocal in many ways.

Economic landscape

According to [World Bank's Macro Poverty Outlook](#) report (2020):

- "Ethiopia's economy experienced strong, broad-based growth averaging 9.9% a year from 2007/08 to 2017/18, compared to a regional average of 5.4%. Ethiopia's real gross domestic product (GDP) growth decelerated to 7.7% in 2017/18. Industry, mainly construction, and services accounted for most of the growth. Agriculture and manufacturing made a lower contribution to growth in 2017/18 compared to the previous year. Private consumption and public investment explain demand-side growth, the latter assuming an increasingly important role."
- "In the first half of FY20, exports revenue increased by 10 percent compared to the same period last fiscal year, largely owing to a strong increase in the volume of coffee exports. The performance of the other major export commodities including oilseeds and pulses remained weak, while textile exports grew by more than 45 percent. Imports of goods

continued to contract declining by about 7 percent during the first half of FY20 as foreign exchange shortages persist and public investment remains restrained. Gross international reserves went down to about US\$ 3 billion in December 2019, compared to US\$ 3.4 billion in June."

- "International linkages showed already a drop-in economic activity in March due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Amid the unfolding global pandemic, which is likely to bring the world economy into recession, the CEO of Ethiopian Airlines estimated revenue losses in February and March amount about USD 190 million; on March 20 the airline suspended flights to 30 countries. Hotel occupancy has reportedly declined by 80 percent. Meanwhile, Ethiopia's cut flower industry, the second-largest exporter to Europe (about 10 percent of Ethiopia's merchandise export), incurred in losses amounting USD 11 million during the first weeks of March. Increased unemployment and inflation presumably translate into slower poverty reduction in urban areas. Urban unemployment increased in 2018 to 19 percent from 17 percent in 2016. Food price inflation in excess of 20 percent has also put pressure on lower-income urban dwellers. In rural areas, which have experienced slow poverty reduction between 2011 and 2016, agricultural production levels have rebounded from the lows of the 2015/16 drought. Rural producers have likely benefited from high food prices."
- "Growth is expected to slow down significantly in FY20 due to the impacts of COVID-19. ... Inflation is projected to remain in double digits in FY20, prior to easing in the medium term. Poverty is expected to continue its steady decline in the medium run on the back of reforms. The increasing industrial park development and economic reforms being undertaken are expected to generate more employment opportunities, especially for the youth."

According to the [2020 Index of Economic Freedom](#): Ethiopia has an overall score of 53.6 points and a world rank of 146. It is ranked 30th among 47 sub-Saharan countries.

According to a [USAID 2020 update](#) (accessed 25 August 2020): "On June 9, humanitarian agencies, in consultation with the Government of Ethiopia, released a revised 2020 Humanitarian Response Plan (HRP), requesting a total of \$1.7 billion to respond to the acute needs of 16.5 million people due to the impact of coronavirus disease (COVID-19) restrictions, desert locust infestations, and conflict- and flood-related displacement, among other factors. The figure represents an increase from the 8.4 million people identified for assistance by the initial HRP released in January."

Social and cultural landscape

According to [the UNDP 2019](#) report and [the World Factbook](#) (update July 2020):

- **Main ethnic groups:** Oromo 34.9%, Amhara (Amara) 27.9%, Tigray (Tigrinya) 7.3%, Sidama 4.1%, Welaita 3%, Gurage 2.8 %, Somali (Somalie) 2.7%, Afar (Affar) 6%, other 12.6% (2016 est.)
- **Main languages:** Oromo (official working language in the state of Oromiya) 33.3%, Amharic (official language) 29.3%, Somali (official working language of the state of Sumale) 6.2%, Tigrigna (Tigrinya) (official working language of the state of Tigray) 5.9%, Sidamo 4%, Wolaytta 2.2.%, Gurage 2%, Afar (official working language of the state of Afar) 1.7%, Hadiyya 1.7%, Gamo 1.5%, Gedeo 1.3%, Opuuo 1.2%, Kafa 1.1%. other 8.1%, English (major foreign language taught in schools), Arabic (2007 est.)

- **Urban population:** 21.7% of the total population (2020)
- **Rate of urbanization:** 4.63% annual rate of change (2015-2020)
- **Median age:** 19.5 years
- **Expected years of schooling:** 8.7 years
- **Literacy rate, adult (15 years and older):** 51.8% (2017)
- **Employment to population ratio (15 years and older):** 78.9%
- **Unemployment, total (% of labor force):** 1.8%

According to [UNHCR](#) (2020):

- **Refugees:** Ethiopia is currently hosting more than 735,000 people from 26 nationalities, the majority from South Sudan (329,123), Somalia (191,575), Eritrea (139,281) and Sudan (42,285). The number of refugees is expected to grow substantially during 2020 as the country continues to receive refugees. There were nearly 100,000 new arrivals in 2019.
- **IDPs:** There are also over 1.5 million Ethiopians displaced due to conflicts and climate shocks. Following the government's large-scale IDP return operation last year, UNHCR has been supporting reintegration and recovery effort for displacement-affected Ethiopians, including returnees and vulnerable host communities.

According to [the UN Global Human Development Indicators](#) (2019):

- **Human Development index:** Ethiopia ranked 173 out of 189 countries in the world with a value of 0.470
- **Average life expectancy at birth:** 66.2 years
- **Gender development index (GDI):** 0.844
- **Gender inequality index (GII):** 0.508

In general, Ethiopia is a country with more than 80 different ethnic groups each with its own language, culture, custom and tradition. Despite its lauded economic growth, Ethiopia still remains one of the poorest countries in the world. According to [UNESCO](#) (accessed 24 August 2020), population aged 14 years and younger represents 41% of the total population. The average fertility rate is 2.5.

Technological landscape

According to [World Internet Stats](#) (accessed 7 July 2020):

- **Internet usage:** 17.8% of the total population – survey date: 31 December 2019
- **Facebook usage:** 5.2% of the total population – survey date 31 December 2019

According to [World Bank's country profile](#) (2018):

- **Mobile phone subscriptions:** 37.2 (per 100 people)

Ethiopia has poor technological infrastructure caused by communal violence, civil war repression and other man-made or natural disasters. Ethiopia has been building infrastructure in many forms (buildings, roads, technology institutes etc.) to make the lives of more than 100m people easier as well as to match the growing economy. However, its communication techno-

logy is still far behind. The country has only one telecommunication provider owned by the government. This company provides cellphone, Internet and landline services.

According to Freedom [House's 2019 Freedom on the Net Report](#): Between June 2018 and May 2019 Ethiopia had a low score of 28 points due to the following factors listed:

- Social media or communications platforms were blocked
- Political, social or religious content were blocked
- ICT networks were deliberately disrupted
- Pro-government commentators manipulated online discussion
- Technical attacks were made against government critics or human rights organizations

The country has embarked on building the largest dam in Africa (Renaissance Dam) on the Blue Nile.

The country also launched its first satellite into space on 20 December 2019 with the help of China.

Security situation

According to the [Fragile States Index](#) published in April 2019, Ethiopia was the most improved country in the world over the past one and a half years. However, the country has seen a series of communal and inter-ethnic conflicts and a deterioration of the security situation became very clear in June 2019 when the leader of The Amhara Federal Regional State was killed and the army's Chief of Staff was also assassinated. International Crisis Group (25 June 2019) [stated](#): "The killings highlight the volatility at the heart of the country's political system despite the enormous promise of the 2018 transition."

In July 2019, the US government's Overseas Security Advisory Council [issued](#) warnings of potential armed conflict and civil unrest in such places as Somali Regional State, Ethiopia's Southern Nations, Nationalities and People's Region (SNNPR), the East Hararge region and the Guji zone of Oromia State, Benishangul Gumuz and the western part of Oromia State and the border areas with Kenya, Sudan, South Sudan, and Eritrea. The country remains unstable and there have been ethnic-based conflicts in many places. These conflicts sometimes also have religious dimensions.

Although outside the WWL 2021 reporting period: Violent conflict erupted between the government of Ethiopia and military forces in the northern Tigray region in November 2020 ([Al-Jazeera, 10 November 2020](#)).

Trends analysis

1) The Ethiopian Orthodox Church is losing its exclusive position

Ethiopia is one of the oldest states in Africa and was one of the first countries to adopt Christianity as its state religion. In the past few decades, various Christian denominations have emerged, causing the Ethiopian Orthodox Church to lose its exclusive position as the sole

Christian denomination in the country (and hence also its privileges in relations with government and society). The new administration under the leadership of Dr Abiy Ahmed looks set to help defuse some problems that Protestant Christians face, especially at the hands of the EOC.

2) Ethiopia continues to face serious communal violence

The pace at which the country has undertaken political reform has attracted global attention. However, that reform has been met by other challenges which have resulted in killings and the destruction of properties. Communal violence has caused the displacement of millions. Government security forces have been involved in gross violations of human rights. It will always be difficult to navigate the complex realities of the country - the political actors have very divergent views and there are also neighboring countries that might interfere. These varying political views have already shown the tension they can create in the violence of October/November 2019 and June/July 2020, following the assassination of an Oromo activist and singer.

3) Islamist influence from abroad is increasing

Many Middle Eastern countries are seeking to invest in Ethiopia: Some are financing the construction of big shopping malls and villages; some are sponsoring the renovation of historical buildings in the country; some are serving as an alternative diplomatic and aid support to the country. What is also happening in the country (and the region as a whole) is that Islamic militants are trying to achieve greater influence - at the very least by releasing propaganda videos. As reported by VOA News on 19 August 2019, the Islamic State group (IS) has even vowed to [open a branch in Ethiopia](#). In the context of the fragile nature of Ethiopia and the volatile nature of the region, the Islamist challenge is likely to grow in magnitude in the future.

4) Christians are likely to face continuing violations of religious freedom

Violations of religious freedom against Christians in general (and in particular of converts and Protestants) are expected to continue, especially at the hands of ultra-conservative Islamic groups and EOC circles.

External Links - Keys to understanding

- Link for general background information: Ethiopia country profile - BBC News - <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-africa-13349398>
- Recent history: release political prisoners - <http://www.hrw.org/news/2018/01/03/ethiopia-free-political-prisoners-close-prison>
- Recent history: tendered resignation - <https://edition-m.cnn.com/2018/02/15/africa/ethiopian-prime-minister-resigns-intl/index.html>
- Recent history: kill civilians - <https://ahrethio.org/2018/03/12/ethiopia-killings-arrests-under-new-state-of-emergency/>
- Recent history: resolution - <http://www.hrw.org/news/2018/04/10/us-house-resolution-ethiopia-passes>
- Recent history: new rounds of killings - <https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2018/06/ethiopia-abusive-police-unit-must-be-stopped/>
- Recent history: assassination attempt - <https://edition-m.cnn.com/2018/06/24/africa/ethiopia-blast-ahmed/index.html>
- Recent history: torture - <http://www.hrw.org/world-report/2019/country-chapters/ethiopia>
- Recent history: historic deal - <https://www.hrw.org/news/2018/07/18/eritrea-ethiopia-peace-deal-offers-hope-reform>

- Recent history: first female head of state - <http://www.aljazeera.com/news/2018/10/sahle-work-zewde-named-ethiopia-woman-president-181025084046138.html>
- Recent history: millions - <http://www.hrw.org/world-report/2019/country-chapters/ethiopia>
- Recent history: reported - <https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/afr25/2358/2020/en/>
- Political and legal landscape: 1995 Constitution - <https://www.refworld.org/docid/3ae6b5a84.html>
- Political and legal landscape: International Crisis Group - <https://www.crisisgroup.org/africa/horn-africa/ethiopia/managing-politics-ethiopias-covid-19-crisis>
- Political and legal landscape: suspended - <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-ethiopia-election-idUSKBN21I2QU>
- Economic landscape: World Bank's Macro Poverty Outlook - <http://pubdocs.worldbank.org/en/720441492455091991/mpo-ssa.pdf>
- Economic landscape: 2020 Index of Economic Freedom - <https://www.heritage.org/index/country/ethiopia?version=28>
- Economic landscape: USAID 2020 update - <https://www.usaid.gov/crisis/ethiopia>
- Social and cultural landscape: the UNDP 2019 - <http://hdr.undp.org/en/countries/profiles/ETH>
- Social and cultural landscape: the World Factbook - <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/et.html>
- Social and cultural landscape: UNHCR - <https://www.unhcr.org/en-us/news/briefing/2020/1/5e2ab8ec4/unhcr-seeks-support-refugees-hosts-ethiopia.html>
- Social and cultural landscape: the UN Global Human Development Indicators - <http://hdr.undp.org/en/countries/profiles/ETH>
- Social and cultural landscape: UNESCO - <http://uis.unesco.org/en/country/et>
- Technological landscape: World Internet Stats - <file:///C:/Users/mimi/Downloads/internetworldstats.com/africa.htm#bf>
- Technological landscape: World Bank's country profile - https://databank.worldbank.org/views/reports/reportwidget.aspx?Report_Name=CountryProfile&id=b450fd57&tbar=y&dd=y&inf=n&zm=n&country=ETH
- Technological landscape: House's 2019 Freedom on the Net Report - https://www.freedomonthenet.org/sites/default/files/2019-11/11042019_Report_FH_FOTN_2019_final_Public_Download.pdf
- Security situation: Fragile States Index - <http://fundforpeace.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/04/9511904-fragilestatesindex.pdf>
- Security situation: stated - <https://www.crisisgroup.org/africa/horn-africa/ethiopia/restoring-calm-ethiopia-after-high-profile-assassinations>
- Security situation: issued - <https://www.osac.gov/Content/Report/7af6c452-7888-41b2-89d5-16601da87a98>
- Security situation: Al-Jazeera, 10 November 2020 - <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2020/11/10/ethiopias-tigray-conflict-explained-in-500-words>
- Trends analysis: open a branch in Ethiopia - <https://www.voanews.com/africa/under-pressure-militants-somalia-look-ethiopia>

WWL 2021: Church information / Ethiopia

Christian origins

Ethiopia is one of the oldest nations in Africa to accept Christianity. Christianity entered the country in the [fourth century](#) - during the Axumite period - when the royal family became Christians - and the Christian faith gradually came to dominate the land (Smithsonian Magazine, 10 December 2019). Following the acceptance of Christianity by the ruling elite, the Ethiopian church created a strong relationship with the Coptic Orthodox Church of Egypt. As a result, the Ethiopian Orthodox Church received its Patriarch from Alexandria, Egypt, right up until 1959. Orthodox Christianity remained the state religion until 1974. (Source: Melton J.G. & Baumann M., eds., *Religions of the world*, 2010, p.1004.)

The second form of Christianity to enter Ethiopia was the Roman Catholic Church. This was the result of the relationship between Ethiopia and the Portuguese during the 16th century. The Portuguese tried to change the Ethiopian state religion to Catholic. This attempt caused bloodshed as the peasants reacted angrily. As a result, Catholic missionaries were expelled from the country and were not allowed to return until the 19th century. Ethiopia followed a 'closed door policy' for 150 years from 1632 onwards. Today a community of several hundred thousand Roman Catholics exists in Ethiopia and is led by the Archbishop of Addis Ababa.

The third type of Christianity to enter Ethiopia was Protestant. It managed to enter the country "through the efforts of a spectrum of Lutheran missionaries, beginning in 1866 with some from the Swedish Lutheran Mission". In the second decade of the 20th century, Swedish missionaries representing the Independent True Friends of the Bible arrived in the country. These united with the Swedish Lutheran Mission to coordinate work. Missionaries from different parts of the world continued to arrive: "German missionaries from the Hermannsburg Mission arrived in 1927. Missionaries from Norway, Denmark, Iceland, and the United States arrived through the 1940s and 1950s. Much of the Lutheran work was brought together in the Ethiopian Evangelical Church Mekane Yesus. American Presbyterians arrived in 1920 and began work among the [Oromo] people. When the Italians arrived, the Presbyterian missionaries were expelled, and before leaving they organized their mission as the Bethel Evangelical Church. In the mid-1970s, it merged into the Mekane Jesus Church." (Source: *Religions of the world*, p.1006.)

The Ethiopian Orthodox Church tried to restrict the influence of the missionaries among the populace. However, attempts to remain the sole Christian Church in the country were also rendered futile by the arrival of the Sudan Interior Mission (SIM). SIM launched its [expansive work](#) in Ethiopia in 1927 under the direction of Dr Thomas A. Lambie (Dictionary of African Christian biography, accessed 24 August 2020).

The expulsion of Italy and the conclusion of World War II brought more Christian groups into the country. The Baptist General Conference of America entered the country in 1950 with its first organized mission in Ambo - West of Addis Ababa. (Source: *Brackney W.H., Historical Dictionary of the Baptists*, p.201.) "Pentecostalism came into the country in the post-war years, and two large indigenous churches have resulted, the Full Gospel Believers Church and Gods All Times Association. Both of these churches have been encouraged by assistance and personnel from Scandinavian Pentecostal bodies." (Source: *Religions of the world*, p.1006.)

Church spectrum today

Ethiopia: Church networks	Christians	%
Orthodox	45,600,000	67.6
Catholic	900,000	1.3
Protestant	18,900,000	28.0

Independent	2,630,000	3.9
Unaffiliated	215,000	0.3
Doubly-affiliated Christians	-754,000	-1.1
Total	67,491,000	100.0
<i>(Any deviation from the total number of Christians stated above is due to the rounding of decimals)</i>		
Evangelical movement	21,500,000	31.9
Renewalist movement	14,000,000	20.7

Data source: Johnson T M and Zurlo G A, eds., *World Christian Database* (Leiden/Boston: Brill, accessed February 2020)

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

Religion in Ethiopia is complex due to competition, historical claims and accusations of heresy. The US State Department's [2019 IRF Report](#) states that "some Protestants and Orthodox Christians accused one another of heresy and of actively working to convert adherents from one faith to the other, increasing tension between the two groups."

In terms of geographical location, the Ethiopian Orthodox Church is dominant in Amhara, Tigray and Central Oromia, while the Protestant church followers dominate in Western Oromia, SNNP and some pockets of south-western Ethiopia.

External Links - Church information

- Christian origins: fourth century - <https://www.smithsonianmag.com/history/church-uneearthed-ethiopia-rewrites-history-christianity-africa-180973740/>
- Christian origins: expansive work - <https://dacb.org/stories/ethiopia/lambie-thomas3/>
- Church spectrum today - additional information: 2019 IRF Report - <https://www.state.gov/reports/2019-report-on-international-religious-freedom/ethiopia/>

WWL 2021: Persecution Dynamics / Ethiopia

Reporting period

01 October 2019 - 30 September 2020

Position on the World Watch List

Ethiopia: World Watch List	Points	WWL Rank
WWL 2021	65	36
WWL 2020	63	39
WWL 2019	65	28
WWL 2018	62	29
WWL 2017	64	22

Scores and ranks are shown above whenever the country scored 41 points or more in the WWL 2017-2021 reporting periods

The 2 point increase in score in WWL 2021 was due mainly to an increase in the violence score from by more than two points. There was also a very slight reduction in pressure (0.2 points) which has to do with a variety of factors, including the fact that the government is not as restrictive as it used to be (at least in respect to churches). The political violence that has become rampant in the country has cost the Church and Christians in the country lives and property.

Persecution engines

Ethiopia: Persecution engines	Abbreviation	Level of influence
Islamic oppression	IO	Strong
Religious nationalism	RN	Not at all
Ethno-religious hostility	ERH	Medium
Clan oppression	CO	Not at all
Christian Denominational protectionism	CDP	Strong
Communist and post-Communist oppression	CPCO	Not at all

Secular intolerance	SI	Very weak
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):

This Persecution engine poses a real threat to Christians, especially in areas dominated by Muslim communities. One country researcher reports that radical Islam "continues to be a problem in Ethiopia. As Islamic countries have been competing to get the upper hand in Africa, they continue to pour in considerable funds that is used in spreading Islam through the establishment of schools of religious learning as well as direct aid to the needy attaching conversion to Islam as a condition." With the rise of radicalism in the region and beyond, radical (or political) Islam is growing at the local, regional and national levels. In the process, various types of Christianity have become increasingly vulnerable to pressure in almost all spheres of life. Particularly in rural areas where they are in the majority, Muslims harass Christians and often deny them access to communal resources.

Furthermore, Christians are victims of violence. Converts from Islam to Christianity will be ostracized and often denied family rights such as inheritance rights and child custody. It is also important to note that the growth in radical Islam in neighboring Somalia and Sudan is spilling over into Ethiopia. A country expert stated: "The [Persecution] engine's presence varies from one geographical area to another mainly depending on the number of Muslims in a particular region. The north-eastern part of the country [made up] of mainly Afar region, the eastern regions including Somali, Dire Dawa and Harar and certain parts of the Oromia region are mostly dominated by Muslims and the central-urban part of the country (including but not limited to) Addis Ababa are parts of the country where the level of this Persecution engine is more strong compared to other parts of the country. Because of conflicts that resulted because of actions of [radical] Islamic groups in certain parts of the country, Christians were killed, sustained bodily injury and were forced to flee from their homes, among other injustices suffered. In the past few years, there is a growing trend in the spread of [radical] Islamic views in the country and the arrest of some leaders of the Muslim community by the government makes things even worse."

Christian denominational protectionism (Strong):

This Persecution engine is mainly driven by the Ethiopian Orthodox Church (EOC). One country researcher reports: "The EOC considers itself as the only 'true' Christian denomination. It is particularly opposed to Evangelical Christians, viewing them as followers of a Western religion that poses a threat to Ethiopian nationalism and culture that has long been preserved by the EOC. It is common to hear sermons and songs that strongly criticize Evangelical Christians. Priests and other teachers in the EOC openly condemn socializing with Evangelicals sometimes going as far as to ban their members from speaking to 'the heathens'. There is also growing antagonism on the part of some Evangelical churches against the EOC going into a series of

hateful to-and-fro between the two sides." The EOC has been seriously violating the rights of Christians who leave their ranks to join (mostly) Protestant churches, or who join the renewal movements within the EOC.

Violations manifest themselves in various ways. For example, EOC members will sometimes attack them physically. The EOC members also use their connections in government to curtail the development of non-Orthodox churches. They also lobby the government to bring in laws that restrict the expansion of Protestant Christianity. For example, the law that governs the registration of churches exempts the Orthodox Church from this requirement. EOC also uses its powerful media to demonize Protestants and those who are supporters of the renewal movement. A country expert adds: "Again this comes from followers of the majority Christian denomination in the country, the Orthodox Christian Church. However, it is worth noting that not all followers of the Orthodox church are of this opinion. The victims of these violations are mainly followers of Christian denominations who are relatively new to the country and are mainly Protestant. These violations are prevalent mostly in the northern and central parts of the country where the Orthodox church has the majority of the population as its followers. It is also relevant to mention here that violations against those who belong to the so-called new forms of Christianity get extremer as one goes out of the city towards the rural areas of the country."

Dictatorial paranoia (Medium):

In former years, the Ethiopian government had become more authoritarian and restricted rights for civil society and religious institutions. The previous Ethiopian government had shown itself to be suspicious about religion in general and Christians in particular.

- First, religious groups seem able to organize and assemble people very efficiently and effectively. This causes concern about their perceived ability to organize activities that hypothetically could bring about a regime change.
- Secondly, the previous government was suspicious that Protestants (especially non-traditional church groups) could be foreign agents seeking to bring about a regime change, although there is no evidence to support this notion.
- Thirdly, the previous government believed that a significant number of EOC leaders were supporters of opposition groups. The government brought in laws limiting the areas of activity in which religious institutions can engage: The ban on setting up broadcasting services for religious purposes as well as the ban on religious instruction and other activities in schools restrict the Christians' freedom to worship, teach and preach. The Freedom House [2018 report](#) also rated the country "not free".

Under the new leadership since April 2018, there seems to be a genuine willingness, at least so far, to reform the country in a bid to move toward democracy. Most of the laws that were used to curtail freedom of religion have been revised or put forward for revision. The actions taken by the country have even induced the US government to select Ethiopia for the [Millennium Challenge Corporation's \(MCC\) threshold program](#). Thus, the rating for this Persecution engine went down from 'Strong' to 'Medium' in WWL 2020 analysis and has continued on that level for WWL 2021.

Ethno-religious hostility (Medium):

For the past quarter of a century, ethnic politics has dominated all areas of public life in the country. This political discourse has led to the search for "roots and identity" which has caused some individuals and groups to become hostile to Christianity. Until 1974, the EOC represented the state religion. The country was under Communist rule from 1974 to 1991, when it was overthrown (after 17 years of civil war) by a coalition of various rebel groups formed from different ethnic groups. The ethnic groups were promised respect and acknowledgment of their culture and identity during the 1991 Ethiopian Transitional Charter - a charter that was set up after the fall of the Communist regime in 1991. This was initially seen as being a politically sound move, but the government stirred up resentment towards Christianity among some ethnic groups. In regions like Afar and Somali (Ogaden), Islam is interconnected with ethnicity. Other tribes also demand that Christians participate in tribal clashes and they retaliate if Christians fail to do so. A country researcher also adds: "Although the majority of the population practices either of the two major religions (Christianity and Islam), in some parts of the country, traditional religions are still practiced. Individuals living in those communities are expected to comply with all the religious and cultural rites of the community, failure of which would likely result in banishment. But even among Christians and Muslims occult practices are quite widespread; practices such as dedicating a new-born child to the local magician are commonplace."

Drivers of persecution

Ethiopia: Drivers of persecution per engine	IO	RN	ERH	CO	CDP	CPCO	SI	DPA	OCC
	STRONG	-	MEDIUM	-	STRONG	-	VERY WEAK	MEDIUM	-
Government officials	-	-	-	-	Very weak	-	Very weak	Medium	-
Ethnic group leaders	-	-	Medium	-	-	-	-	-	-
Non-Christian religious leaders	Very strong	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Religious leaders of other churches	-	-	-	-	Strong	-	-	-	-
Violent religious groups	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Ideological pressure groups	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Citizens (people from the broader society), including mobs	Strong	-	-	-	Strong	-	-	-	-
One's own (extended) family	Strong	-	-	-	Strong	-	-	-	-
Political parties	-	-	-	-	-	-	Weak	Very weak	-

Ethiopia: Drivers of persecution per engine	IO	RN	ERH	CO	CDP	CPCO	SI	DPA	OCC
	STRONG	-	MEDIUM	-	STRONG	-	VERY WEAK	MEDIUM	-
Revolutionaries or paramilitary groups	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Organized crime cartels or networks	Very weak	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Multilateral organizations (e.g. UN, OIC etc.)	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-

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:

- **Non-Christian religious leaders (Very strong):** Muslim religious leaders have engaged in inciting violence against Christians through their sermons and tacit approval of Christian discrimination.
- **Extended family (Strong):** The families of converts do not accept the idea of a family member leaving Islam and joining Christianity. They, therefore, shun converts and harass and disown them.
- **Citizens (Strong):** In some parts of the country where Muslims are dominant, ordinary citizens oppose Christianity and evangelization. They especially oppose conversion.

Drivers of Christian denominational protectionism:

- **Leaders of other churches (Strong):** The main drivers are priests and ultra-conservative groups within the Ethiopian Orthodox Church (who also influence family and ordinary citizens). Regarding the role of EOC leaders and members, one researcher states: "There is a clear religious demographic change in the country mainly due to the rapid expansion of new forms of Christianity, especially the Protestant Church. Such rapid expansion is not welcomed by the leaders and followers of the Orthodox Church. Resentment against the new forms of Christianity manifests itself at various levels by acts of both EOC leaders and followers. The association called Mahibere Kidusan has been publishing inflammatory as well as derogatory articles about Protestant Christians for years. Things are getting better in the capital city and in other major cities and areas like the southern and southwestern part of the country where the new forms of Christianity are getting strong."
- **Ordinary citizens (Strong):** Ordinary citizens have also been perpetrating violations against other church groups, especially the Protestant church. A country expert summarized: "Despite a claim of peaceful co-existence among different religions in the country, the facts on the ground show a different story. For a number of reasons including but not limited to teachings by religious leaders and lack of exposure to religious diversity, it is very common for private citizens to engage in acts of violence against Christians. Attacks by teenagers on

Protestant churches, refusing to lease buildings for use as a church, abusing Christians who tried to preach the gospel in public places (both verbal and physical abuse) and many other violations are perpetrated by individuals and mobs."

- **Family (Strong):** In the context of conversion or changing denomination from Orthodox to Protestant, families are known to put family members under house-arrest, shun them, disown them and exclude them from inheritance.

Drivers of Dictatorial paranoia:

Government officials (Medium): The degree of complicity in violations of religious freedom varies from region to region; mid-level and lower-level officials have especially been actively opposing the so-called new forms of Christianity. Officials at the local level have more control over the day-to-day activities and thereby perpetrate most violations including (but not limited to) the refusal to grant permits for meetings and worship.

Drivers of Ethno-religious hostility:

- **Ethnic leaders (Medium):** The drivers here are community leaders. This engine is active in some remote regions, and in some areas it is blended with *Islamic oppression*. Thus, these two Persecution engines share drivers. For example, in Afar and Somali regions, religion (i.e. being Muslim) is a part of belonging to the community. A country expert stated: "This is the case mostly in relatively remote parts of the country where ethnic group leaders will have a huge influence. In some areas wherein the majority of the population is Muslim, there are cases where the leaders of ethnic groups actively advocate hostility towards Christians in the area. This resulted in the death, injury, and displacement of Christians in such areas. The tension among different ethnic groups in various parts of the country is having - and will continue to have - an adverse impact on the lives of Christians who could be subjected to attacks just because of their ethnic and religious background."

Areas where Christians face most difficulties

The geographical distribution of violations against Christians in Ethiopia depends upon which Persecution engines are dominant. For example, the hotspot of violations as a result of *Christian denominational protectionism* is in the Amhara region, Tigray and some parts of Oromia. Hotspots for *Islamic oppression* are in some parts of eastern and western Oromia, Afar and the Somali region. Gurage, Silte and Alaba are also some of the areas where violations are most severe.

Christian communities and how they are affected

All Christian communities in the country face violations of their basic rights but the sources and level of severity of violations vary.

Communities of expatriate Christians:

These are not involuntarily isolated and so have not been scored as a separate category in WWL analysis.

Historical Christian communities:

The EOC is a typical example of this category and has a massive presence in the country. It is one of the factors contributing to the complexity of the dynamics of religious freedom violations in Ethiopia; as well as being victim of violations itself, the EOC also plays a pivotal role as a perpetrator of violations. Historical Christian communities face violations mostly from the government and Islamic radicalism. Also in areas where tribalism is dominant, there is pressure on the EOC. Orthodox Christians are mostly concentrated in northern and central Ethiopia. Also, those Christians living in Muslim-dominated regional states (Harrari, Somalia, Afar), as well as local communities (e.g. among the Silte), face difficulties in living out their Christian faith.

Converts:

This category includes i) Christians with a Muslim background, ii) cross-denominational converts – i.e. from one Christian denomination to another, and iii) converts from ethnic traditional beliefs to Christianity. Converts in the country face violations via different Persecution engines. In Muslim-dominated areas, converts from Islam face pressure and violence mainly from family, extended family, community leaders, and non-Christian religious leaders. In areas dominated by the EOC, the engine behind the violations is mainly driven by EOC followers. Converts also face violations from the government in all parts of the country. In areas with a prevalence of *Ethno-religious hostility*, converts may face violations from adherents of ethnic traditional belief systems and Muslims seeking to force their participation in various religious activities.

Non-traditional Christian communities:

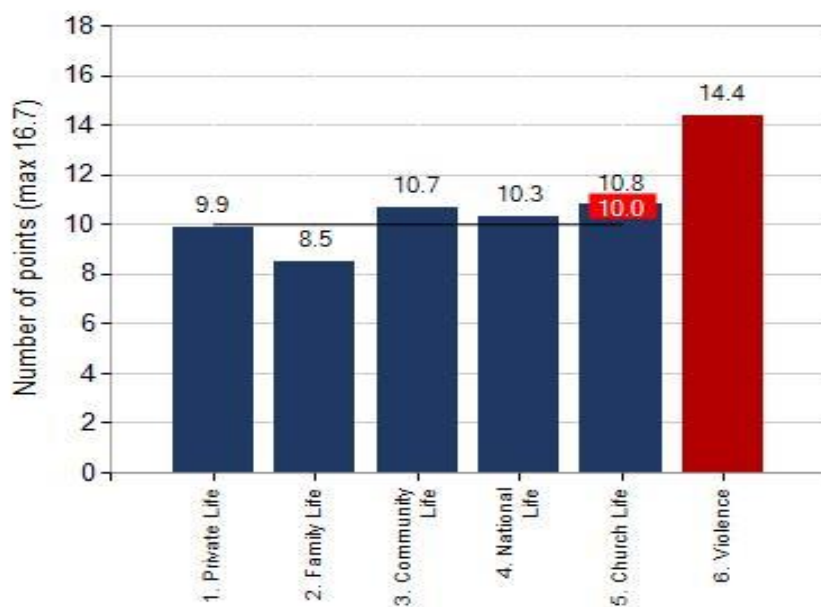
This category includes Baptist, Evangelical and Pentecostal congregations which have a large presence in the country. It also attracts serious violations mainly from the government, EOC and Islamic groups. It is growing very fast compared to other types of Christianity. A country researcher states: "Many parts of southern Ethiopia, as well as parts of Oromia, are dominated by Evangelicals/Protestants. As the majority in these communities, they do not face [serious] violations. But Protestants who live in parts dominated by Muslims and Orthodox Christians face various forms of rights violations." This category of Christianity is seen as a threat by many as it keeps growing in number and influence. As a result, they face pressure and violence from many sides.

The Persecution pattern

The WWL 2021 Persecution pattern for Ethiopia shows:

- The average pressure on Christians in Ethiopia is at a high level of 10.0 points (slightly lower than WWL 2020 when it was 10.2).
- Except for the *Family* and *Private spheres of life*, there is no sphere of life where the pressure on Christians scores less than 10; which shows that - despite Ethiopia being a Christian majority country - Ethiopian Christians face severe freedom of religion violations.
- The score for violence increased to the extreme level of 14.4 points due to faith-related killings and destruction of churches.

WWL 2021 Persecution Pattern for Ethiopia



Pressure in the 5 spheres of life

In each of the five spheres of life discussed below, four questions have been selected from the WWL 2021 questionnaire for brief commentary and explanation. The selection usually (but not always) reflects the highest scoring elements. In some cases, an additional paragraph per sphere is included to give further information deemed important. (To see how individual questions are scored on a scale of 0-4 points, please see the “WWL Scoring example” in the WWL Methodology, available at: <http://openodoorsanalytical.org/world-watch-list-documentation/>, password: freedom).

Pressure in Block 1 / Private sphere

Block 1.1: Conversion has been opposed, forbidden, or punishable, including conversion from one type of Christianity to another. (3.00 points)

Converts are at the forefront of facing pressure, starting in the family home. Family members and communities often see conversion as a betrayal of the faith or forefathers. The traditional and family-ordinated nature of the country plays an important role to understand why conversion is highly discouraged. When it comes to followers of the oldest religions in the nation, as a result of thousands of years of practice, religion and culture are very intermingled. In some cases, it is very difficult to distinguish which is which. As a result, whenever an individual renounces his religion and converts to another he/she will face immense pressure starting from his immediate family. Conversion is treated as renouncing your identity and your connection to your ancestors. Family members also want to protect their reputation within the community and do not want to be referred to as a family of a convert.

The above only describes the common reaction from family members. Things become more ugly for converts outside their extended family when they face the backlash from followers of the religion they renounce. There are many factors that determine the seriousness of rights violations against converts: The first factor is whether it is an urban or rural area. In the few (relatively) big cities, converting to another type of Christianity will result in less serious consequences (perhaps only opposition from some family members). But in the rural areas where the social bonds are still strong, conversion is likely to cause outrage and will be followed by outright hostility. The situation also varies from one region to the other. For example, in much of northern Ethiopia (which is the heartland of the EOC) if someone converts from Orthodox Christianity to Protestantism, it often results in that person being forced to live a secluded life cut off from social interaction or being forced to leave the community altogether. Whereas in some areas of southern Ethiopia and parts of Oromia where Protestantism is the norm, converts will not face such violations for their conversion.

Block 1.3: It has been dangerous to privately own or keep Christian materials. (2.75 points)

For people who have left the EOC or Islam, the possession of Christian materials is particularly challenging as they often live with their families or within their community. In some instances, if such materials are discovered they are likely to be attacked and people would refuse to rent them a house. A country expert adds: "There is no legal restriction on Christians from privately owning Christian materials. However, we have incidents wherein Christians were attacked for owning 'versions' of the Bible contrary to the teaching of the majority Christian church and for being found with copies of gospel songs.

Block 1.4: It has been risky for Christians to reveal their faith in written forms of personal expression (including expressions in blogs and Facebook etc.). (2.75 points)

Revealing one's faith in a written form invites problems and in the modern social media context, it is even worse. A country expert states: "Online abuse against Christians for expressing their religious belief is increasing. The increase in the number of Internet users has helped in spreading Christian teaching. However, it has also increased the abuse directed against Christians who posted religious content by those who hide behind the screen.

Block 1.5: It has been risky for Christians to display Christian images or symbols. (2.50 points)

Displaying Christian images (such as a cross) could be seen as an act of defiance by some. Things are unproblematic in areas of majority Christian population. However, things can get dangerous in certain remote regions dominated by Muslims. In certain parts of the country, it is very difficult to expect the government to provide protection for minority Christians and showing any Christian religious material could be very dangerous. There are reports of cars being burned, windshields smashed, houses' windows being broken and doors damaged, along with other forms of abuse against Christians, for the mere fact of displaying Christian images.

Pressure in Block 2 / Family sphere

Block 2.9: Children of Christians have been harassed or discriminated against because of their parents' faith. (3.00 points)

In Muslim dominated areas, children are obliged to attend Islamic schools and children from Christian families are likely to face discrimination. In some areas, Christian children are often singled out and harassed, bullied and sometimes attacked.

Block 2.3: Christians have been hindered in celebrating a Christian wedding for faith-related reasons. (2.50 points)

When an Orthodox background Christian leaves the EOC and joins a Protestant group (locally called *Pentay*), family members, priests and fanatical groups within the EOC put pressure on the individual to return to their former faith. Sometimes those who leave the Orthodox Church to join a Protestant congregation are forced to drink what is called “holy water” on the assumption that the convert is possessed by a devil.

Block 2.5: Burials of Christians have been hindered or coercively performed with non-Christian rites. (2.50 points)

Obtaining places for burial in both Muslim and EOC dominated areas is very difficult for non-EOC Christians. There are instances when followers of what they call 'new forms of Christianity' were denied burial of their loved ones in Christian Orthodox cemeteries for the mere reason of belonging to a different Christian group.

Block 2.11: Spouses of converts have been put under pressure (successfully or unsuccessfully) by others to divorce. (2.25 points)

When a Christian is getting married to someone who is from a Muslim family or another type of Christianity, the family of the other person may oppose holding the wedding being held in a certain church. A particular issue is the singing of secular music at a wedding (since most Evangelicals/Protestants in Ethiopia consider secular music a sin, this may cause trouble with members of the family).

Pressure in Block 3 / Community sphere

Block 3.1: Christians have been harassed, threatened or obstructed in their daily lives for faith-related reasons (e.g. for not meeting majority religion or traditional dress codes, beard codes etc.). (3.50 points)

This is perhaps one of the *spheres of life* where Christians face particularly serious difficulties because of *Christian denominational protectionism* and *Islamic oppression*. In a very communal society like Ethiopia, religious differences play a pivotal role in many aspects. In EOC majority areas, Protestants (and those who have left the EOC) face serious challenges from their own family, community members and EOC leaders. Harassment is one of the very common challenges many Christians face. It is not new in remote parts of the country where Muslims are

a majority (including but not limited to Somali, Afar and Oromia regions) for minority Christians to be subjected to acts of discrimination and harassment.

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

In some areas, Christians are being monitored by community members, who sometimes even send children to monitor churches and homes of some Christians. This is particularly challenging for Protestants. A country expert states: "Mistrust towards [what they see as new forms of Christianity] is still prevalent. Such mistrust has often led local communities to monitor the activities of churches and their followers. This includes sending undercover monitors to spy on churches' activities especially during prayers and gathering of Christians. While the means of monitoring are not sophisticated, Christian communities, especially those considered as newcomers, are still being subjected to monitoring from local community members and local leaders."

Block 3.6: Christians have been hindered in participating in communal institutions, forums, etc., for faith-related reasons. (3.25 points)

Participation in communal institutions at times has informal requirements. There are a number of challenges faced by Evangelicals and Pentecostals in areas where the majority is Orthodox. They are not allowed to participate in social events and associations; they have trouble finding schools where their children would be safe from discrimination and bullying; there may be obstructions to daily life such as going to the market etc. Especially during the major Lent season [a time of fasting in the weeks leading up to Easter] of the EOC in some areas, it may be nearly impossible to find non-fasting items of food. In extreme cases, non-EOC Christians may be forced to leave the area.

Block 3.3: Christians have been under threat of abduction and/or forced marriage. (2.50 points)

Ethiopia is a country where bridal abduction and forced marriage are common. This is even more problematic where religion is an added dimension. A country expert reports: "Abduction and forced marriage is a major issue at a national level. Forced marriage of children as young as eleven was common and still takes place in rural parts of the country." This particularly affects converts both from an Orthodox Christian background and a Muslim background.

Pressure in Block 4 / National sphere

Block 4.5: Christians have been discriminated against when engaging with the authorities (local administration, government, army, etc.) for faith-related reasons. (3.00 points)

Discrimination while dealing with the authorities is evident, especially at the local level. In EOC dominated areas, there is evidence of denominational discrimination since non-Orthodox Christians are often pushed aside. In regions where Muslims are the majority, this is also common. A country expert adds: "This is the case mostly at local government level especially in regions with a Muslim majority population. There is a tendency in such regions to favor Muslim

residents at the expense of Christians. The ethnic tension engulfing the country in recent times is making things difficult for Christians residing in Muslim dominated parts of the country, such as the Somali region."

Block 4.9: Christian civil society organizations or political parties have been hindered in their functioning or forbidden because of their Christian convictions. (3.00 points)

Despite Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed announcing the creation of the 'Prosperity Party' in November 2019, new political parties have not been formed from scratch in Ethiopia for many years. The danger is that a Christian party would inevitably be very contentious and divisive. Christian civil society organizations face tough challenges if they want to operate in some areas due to the very restrictive laws which have forced many organizations to close. However, a draft law is now in the pipeline which will eliminate most of the restrictions under the current law.

Block 4.8: Christians have been hindered in expressing their views or opinions in public. (2.75 points)

National laws restricted the establishment of broadcasting services for religious purposes. A ban on religious activities (including worshipping in groups) within educational institutions was also implemented. Even though there have now been improvements since the new government's reforms, expressing one's opinion can still be challenging. A country expert adds: "Things are more difficult when it comes to expressing opinion publicly for converts and followers of minority Christian groups both in Christian and Muslim dominated parts of the country. The abuse against Christians for such public expression of opinion comes from private citizens, other religious groups and law enforcement personnel." In the new political environment, many believe that all Christian denominations (and other faiths) will be encouraged to live together with more tolerance.

Block 4.11: Christians have been subjected to smear campaigns or hate speech. (2.75 points)

This issue is very common in Ethiopia. A country researcher reports: "This is common practice, especially by religious leaders. There have been teachings and videos circulating of some Muslim preachers who engage in hate-speech against Christians. Among Christians too, it is common to hear priests of the EOC running smear campaigns against Pentecostals/Evangelicals using derogatory terms to refer to them and depicting them as people who feign religion in order to get foreign aid. Some Pentecostal preachers also make statements against the Orthodox, painting them as backward."

Pressure in Block 5 / Church sphere

Block 5.11: Pastors or other Christian leaders (or their family members) have been special targets of harassment for faith-related reasons. (3.75 points)

This is very common in the country, especially in areas dominated by *Islamic oppression* and *Christian denominational protectionism*. Others can hide their faith, but pastors cannot do that due to the nature of their work. Pastors and other religious leaders are regularly being subjected to online and physical abuse at the hands of extremist groups. Things are comparatively better for those from the Ethiopian Orthodox Church.

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

In the past, the government was the main actor in monitoring the activities of churches. Since the change in leadership at the federal level, state governments are mainly the ones engaged in such practices. The monitoring and hindrance come from other non-state actors, also including radical Islamic groups, other churches, and mobs. In some places, churches were attacked during worship services and property was destroyed.

Block 5.20: It has been risky for churches or Christian organizations to speak out against instigators of persecution. (3.50 points)

When the instigator is the government or someone that has a strong connection to the government, it is very risky to speak out against that person. Similarly, in Muslim majority areas, speaking against perpetrators can provoke reprisals and many church leaders refrain from doing this.

Block 5.5: Churches have been hindered from organizing Christian activities outside church buildings. (3.25 points)

For some denominations of Pentecostals and Evangelicals, outside activities are restricted. Furthermore, in Muslim-dominated areas converts are most likely to hide their faith and avoid doing activities outside a church for fear of attack. One researcher adds: "In areas where Christians (or Pentecostals) are the minority, the respective leaders will be seen as being primarily responsible for the 'corruption' of societal values and often become victims of severe violations even more than the new converts themselves. Community members would resort to various means to make such leaders leave the area before more damage is done; they often have to live in hiding." The new administration under the leadership of Dr Abiy Ahmed is trying to solve some of the constraints that were imposed by the previous government.

Violence

Violence is defined in WWL Methodology as the deprivation of physical freedom or as bodily harm to Christians or damage to their property. It includes severe threats (mental abuse). The table is based on reported cases as much as possible. 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. The symbol "x" denotes a known number which cannot be published due to security considerations.

Ethiopia: Violence Block question	WWL 2021	WWL 2020
6.1 How many Christians have been killed for faith-related reasons (including state sanctioned executions)?	10	6
6.2 How many churches or Christian buildings (schools, hospitals, cemeteries, etc.) have been attacked, damaged, bombed, looted, destroyed, burned down, closed or confiscated for faith-related reasons?	100	124
6.3 How many Christians have been detained for faith-related reasons?	10	9
6.4 How many Christians have been sentenced to jail, labor camp, sent to psychiatric hospital as punishment, or similar things for faith-related reasons?	0	7
6.5 How many Christians have been abducted for faith-related reasons (including Christians missing in a persecution context)?	0	0
6.6 How many Christians have been raped or otherwise sexually harassed for faith-related reasons?	10	0
6.7 How many cases have there been of forced marriages of Christians to non-Christians?	0	1
6.8 How many Christians have been otherwise physically or mentally abused for faith-related reasons (including beatings and death threats)?	100	637
6.9 How many houses of Christians or other property (excluding shops) have been attacked, damaged, bombed, looted, destroyed, burned down or confiscated for faith-related reasons?	100	28
6.10 How many shops or businesses of Christians have been attacked, damaged, bombed, looted, destroyed, burned down, closed or confiscated for faith-related reasons?	100	5
6.11 How many Christians have been forced to leave their homes or go into hiding in-country for faith-related reasons?	255	38
6.12 How many Christians have been forced to leave the country for faith-related reasons?	0	0

5 Year trends

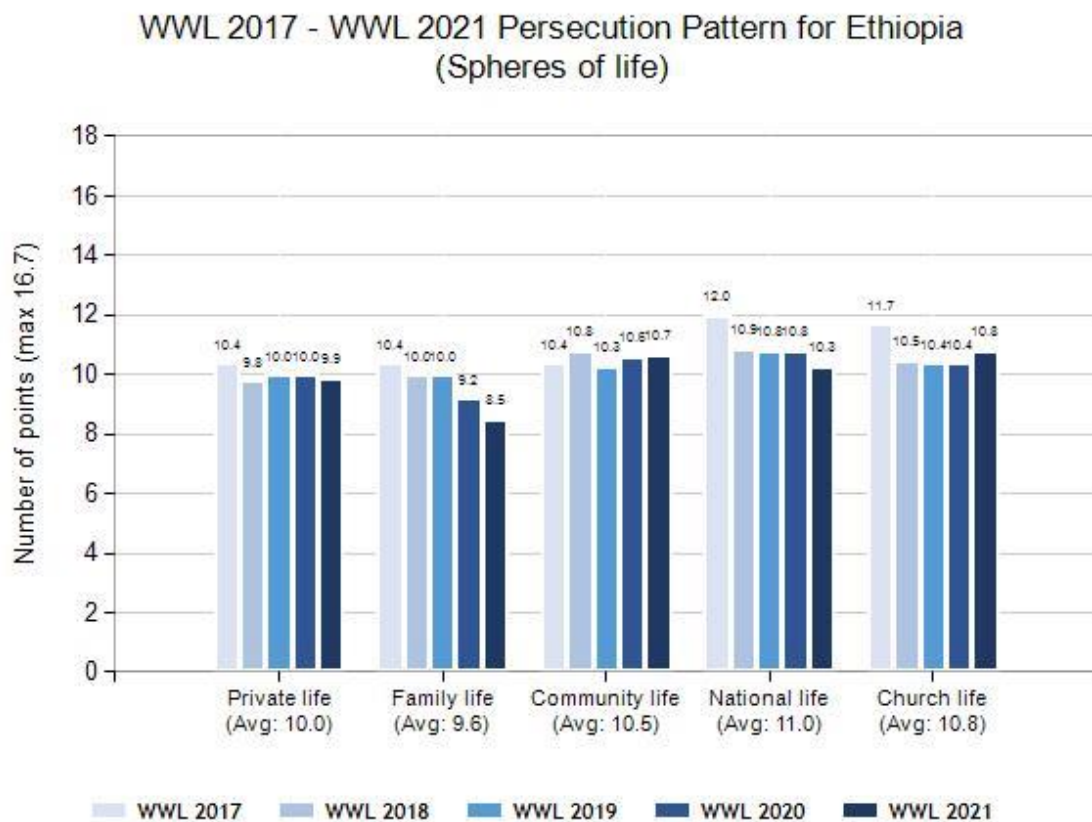
The following three charts show the levels of pressure and violence faced by Christians in the country over the last five WWL reporting periods.

5 Year trends: Average pressure

Ethiopia: WWL 2017 - WWL 2021 Persecution Pattern history	Average pressure over 5 Spheres of life
2021	10.0
2020	10.2
2019	10.3
2018	10.4
2017	11.0

In the table above it can be seen that there has been a gradual reduction in the average pressure on Christians, although it has consistently at 10 points or above in each of the last five reporting periods. This reduction is mainly due to the decrease in pressure from the government.

5 Year trends: Pressure in each sphere of life



The chart above shows that the pressure on Christians in all *spheres of life* has been more or less stable at a high level in the last five reporting periods. All *spheres of life* have scored 10 or more points on average, except *Family life* with an average of 9.6 points. The *National sphere* scored the highest average (11.0 points) followed by the *Church sphere* (10.8). This very high score has been mainly the result of preferential treatment being given to some religious groups in the country.

5 Year trends: Violence against Christians



The chart above shows how violence against Christians steadily rose in the period WWL 2016- WWL 2019 to an extreme level. In WWL 2020 violence was still extreme but showed a distinct drop in score compared to WWL 2019. However, in WWL 2021, violence increased tremendously to 14.4 points (the highest of the past five reporting periods). The average score of 11.9 for the last five years shows that the level of violence against Christians over the last five reporting periods has been very high.

Gender-specific religious persecution Female

Female Pressure Points

Abduction

Denied access to social community/networks

Denied custody of children
Denied inheritance or possessions
Forced divorce
Forced marriage
Incarceration by family (house arrest)
Violence – death
Violence – physical
Violence – sexual

Violations of basic rights against Christian women in Ethiopia often occur in the form of abduction and forced marriage to a non-Christian. This is facilitated by a general situation in which abduction and forced marriage remain present at a national level despite having been [illegal since 2016](#) (Equality Now, accessed 4 December 2020). The forced marriage of [children as young as](#) eleven remains relatively common and sources reveal that it continues to occur in rural parts of the country (Pacific Standard, 25 Sep 2018). Female Christian teens (and converts in particular) are forced to marry a follower of a different religion after abduction or family arranged marriage. Following her “marriage,” the Christian wife is expected to take on the religion of her new husband.

Rape is also an effective means of punishing a Christian woman or girl. The result is that the community will isolate her, her family will be shamed, and she may no longer be able to marry. As a country expert explains “her future will be destroyed” and “her family will be disgraced”.

Female converts from Islam face the most severe violations, particularly at the hands of family members. They may be deliberately isolated from other family members and from their church community, put under house arrest in order to protect the family’s honor, physically abused and forcibly married to a Muslim.

When a Muslim wife converts to Christianity, divorce is the most likely outcome. Even if her spouse does not seek a divorce, his family will pressure the spouse to divorce and claim custody of the children, to protect the family name and ensure their grandchildren are given an Islamic upbringing. In areas where Christianity is a minority religion, a (de facto) divorce is most likely to take place outside courtrooms; the elders presiding over a tribal court see Christian faith as a dangerous deviation and will likely grant custody to the other spouse in order to prevent the spread of Christianity in the community.

Christians often face difficulties in procuring their inheritance after their decision to convert; it is reported that this affects mainly women. Since [79% of the population](#) live in rural areas, inheritance is viewed as one of the main means to survive (World Bank data, accessed 4 December 2020). Inheritance rights are in principle handled through official state institutions where religious discrimination is minimal. However, in areas where traditional systems are still dominant, or in the many cases that do not go through the official state process, part of the exclusion for new converts includes disinheritance. As a country expert explains, it is intentionally used to “frustrate converts from their decision”.

Gender-specific religious persecution Male

Male Pressure Points
Denied inheritance or possessions
Discrimination/harassment via education
Forced to flee town/country
Imprisonment by government
Violence – death
Violence – physical

Christian men in Ethiopia are more likely to suffer physical attack and displacement than women and girls. They may also be robbed of their possessions, or even killed. It is deemed more strategic to attack men and boys, as they are usually the providers for their families. Attacking them weakens their whole family. Converts have reportedly been forced to flee their towns and settle elsewhere to avoid attacks and harassment.

The government also plays a role in violating men's religious freedom. In the WWL 2021 reporting period, several Christian men were jailed after attending religious training in Asela and Kombolcha. Men are particularly at risk of imprisonment in Muslim-dominated areas.

In addition, there are numerous instances and allegations of government interference in church elections and appointments. Since the majority of church leaders are men, these violations mainly affect Christian men. The allegations target almost all leaders of major churches in the country, accusing them of being pro-government and of receiving appointments through government influence. New reforms continue to be discussed, however, and there is some hope that in future years this will become less common.

Persecution of other religious minorities

There are a few religious minorities in the country and these are also affected by the broadcasting legislation, the role of faith in education, and the civil society law. Generally, the civil society law requires an application for registration for any religious group except for Orthodox and Catholic Christians, Muslims and Jews. In addition, the registration law requires a minimum membership of 50 persons for registration as a religious community and a minimum of 15 persons for a ministry or association to be registered and granted permission. This has had serious impact for newer religious minorities: In some areas, Mormons and Jehovah's Witnesses (where their numbers are less than 50) struggle to have an official place of worship. This is particularly true where majority groups are known to be hostile towards religious minorities. That is why [Pew Forum's](#) research published in August 2011 categorized Ethiopia among countries with a high social hostilities index score: Ethiopia scored 4.2 and 4.1 for the periods ending mid-2008 and mid-2009, respectively.

Future outlook

The Ethiopian federal government announced in early November 2020 that it is undertaking a law enforcement operation against the Tigray peoples Liberation Front (TPLF) a party that governs Tigray, one of the federating units. If this operation drags on, it can complicate the lives of Christians and the rest of the population in the country. It can also destabilize the region considering the fact that Ethiopia is an anchor state in the Horn of Africa.

The outlook for Christians as viewed through the lens of:

Islamic oppression:

The challenge posed by radical elements in the Muslim community (for example, causing the destruction of churches and the killing of Christians in the Ogaden region) is likely to remain a danger for Christians in the future. It is also important to note that there is a great amount of interest in Ethiopia coming from Saudi Arabia and Turkey. Saudi Arabia played an [important role](#) in bringing peace to Ethiopia and Eritrea (DW, 23 September 2018) which ultimately led to the Ethiopian PM winning the Nobel Peace Prize. It has been widely reported that most of the illegal trafficking of arms and weapons in Ethiopia are originating from Turkey. In the context of the influence of the Middle East countries in Ethiopia, such incidents should be closely examined.

Christian denominational protectionism:

Ethiopia has seen continuous struggles between the different church denominations and this weakens the possibility of a unified Christian response to the religious freedom violations occurring in the country. In this regard, the EOC has been ruthlessly accusing and oppressing Protestants. According to some EOC hardliners, Protestantism is working to dismantle the EOC. Some ultra-conservative Orthodox Christians are also opposing the new prime minister because he is a Protestant. As it stands, *Christian denominational protectionism* is becoming a stronger influence as some of the members of the EOC are also politicizing religion in the country.

Dictatorial paranoia:

This Persecution engine is weakening fast. The new prime minister has lifted some of the restrictions imposed on civil society and churches. At least at the national level, this engine is less evident as a result. However, at regional levels, things are not going as well as many had hoped. In some regional states, there have been no meaningful reforms. Furthermore, as ethnic conflict is threatening the reform that is ongoing, it is likely that the new prime minister will react heavy-handedly. If that happens, it might have a chilling effect on the freedom of religion in general.

Ethno-religious hostility:

In areas where the majority of the population belongs to one ethnic group (e.g. Somali and Afar) leaving Islam also means leaving the ethnic group, its culture, and values. These groups are politically powerful, so if the government does not devise a mechanism whereby it can enforce the protection of religious freedom (especially the right to preach, worship and convert), this engine will remain evident as a source for violations in the future.

External Links - Persecution Dynamics

- Persecution engines description: 2018 report - <https://freedomhouse.org/report/freedom-world/2018/ethiopia>
- Persecution engines description: Millennium Challenge Corporation's (MCC) threshold program - <https://freedomhouse.org/article/ethiopia-mcc-recognizes-opportunity-democratic-reform>
- Gender-specific religious persecution Female description: illegal since 2016 - <https://www.equalitynow.org/makeda>
- Gender-specific religious persecution Female description: children as young as eleven - <https://psmag.com/magazine/letter-from-addis-ababa-ethiopia-inside-a-safe-house-for-ethiopian-women>
- Gender-specific religious persecution Female description: 79% of the population - <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SP.RUR.TOTL.ZS?locations=ET>
- Persecution of other religious minorities: Pew Forum's - <https://www.pewresearch.org/wp-content/uploads/sites/7/2011/08/RisingRestrictions-web.pdf>
- Future outlook: important role - <https://www.dw.com/en/arab-gulf-states-in-the-horn-of-africa-what-role-do-they-play/a-45602930>

Further useful reports

A selection of in-depth reports and smaller articles are available on World Watch Research's Open Doors Analytical website (password: freedom) and on the World Watch Monitor website:

- <http://opendoorsanalytical.org/reports/>
- <http://opendoorsanalytical.org/?s=Ethiopia>
- <https://www.worldwatchmonitor.org/countries/Ethiopia>