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How COVID-19 Restrictions Affected Religious Groups Around the World in 2020

Nearly a quarter of countries used force to prevent religious gatherings during the pandemic; other government restrictions and social hostilities related to religion remained fairly stable

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How we did this

This is the 13th in a series of annual reports by Pew Research Center analyzing the extent to which governments and societies around the world impinge on religious beliefs and practices. The studies are part of the Pew-Templeton Global Religious Futures project, which analyzes religious change and its impact on societies around the world.

To measure global restrictions on religion in 2020 – the most recent year for which data is available – the study rates 198 countries and territories by their levels of government restrictions on religion and social hostilities involving religion. The new study is based on the same 10-point indexes used in the previous studies.

- The **Government Restrictions Index (GRI)** measures government laws, policies and actions that restrict religious beliefs and practices. The GRI comprises 20 measures of restrictions, including efforts by government to ban particular faiths, prohibit conversion, limit preaching or give preferential treatment to one or more religious groups.
- The **Social Hostilities Index (SHI)** measures acts of religious hostility by private individuals, organizations or groups in society. This includes religion-related armed conflict or terrorism, mob or sectarian violence, harassment over attire for religious reasons and other forms of religion-related intimidation or abuse. The SHI includes 13 measures of social hostilities.

To track these indicators of government restrictions and social hostilities, researchers combed through more than a dozen publicly available, widely-cited sources of information, including the U.S. Department of State’s annual Reports on International Religious Freedom and annual reports from the U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom (USCIRF), as well as reports and databases from a variety of European and United Nations bodies and several independent, nongovernmental organizations. (See [Methodology](#) for more details on sources used in the study.)

For the section on the COVID-19 pandemic, which is new in this year’s report, researchers first reviewed dozens of news articles about coronavirus-related restrictions in 2020 and how they affected religious groups. That review identified several common patterns, helping researchers to create a uniform set of questions to code (i.e., categorize and count) in each country and territory.

To answer these pandemic-related questions, coders collected information from the same set of sources used for the annual tracking of restrictions on religion. To supplement these sources, coders electronically searched English-language newspaper websites for each country and territory

analyzed, using terms related to religious restrictions and COVID-19 to find relevant news articles. Coders also reviewed English-language global news sites and reports on COVID-19 produced by organizations including think tanks and university research centers. (For a list of the global news sites and organizations, see the [Methodology](#).)

To keep the data sources for the GRI and SHI consistent from year to year, incidents that appeared only in the newspaper websites used for the COVID-19 section are *not* included in either of those indexes. However, incidents related to COVID-19 *were* included in the GRI and SHI analyses when they appeared in the primary and secondary sources traditionally used for the indexes.

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How COVID-19 Restrictions Affected Religious Groups Around the World in 2020

Nearly a quarter of countries used force to prevent religious gatherings during the pandemic; other government restrictions and social hostilities related to religion remained fairly stable

In 2020, the year the [COVID-19 pandemic](#) took hold globally, many countries banned or limited public gatherings to slow its spread. This report – Pew Research Center’s 13th annual study of restrictions on religion around the world – focuses on how the lockdowns and other public health measures affected religious groups, and how they responded. Among the key findings:

- Authorities in nearly a quarter of all the countries and territories studied (46 out of 198, or 23%) used physical means, such as arrests and prison sentences, to enforce coronavirus-related restrictions on worship services and other religious gatherings.
- Religious groups filed lawsuits or spoke out against the public health measures in 54 of the 198 countries (27%). A common complaint was that some churches, mosques, synagogues and other houses of worship were treated unequally – either by comparison with secular gathering places, like shops and restaurants, or by comparison with other religious groups.
- In 69 countries and territories (35%), one or more religious groups *defied* public health rules related to the COVID-19 pandemic.
- In an even larger number of countries (94, or 47%), religious leaders or groups *promoted* public health measures to slow the spread of the coronavirus by encouraging followers to worship at home, observe social distancing or take other precautions, such as hand-washing and mask-wearing.
- News articles and other information sources identified 55 countries (28%) where government officials and religious groups *collaborated* on efforts to stem the pandemic. In some countries, different religious groups both defied and promoted lockdowns or other public health restrictions.

Meanwhile, other kinds of restrictions on religious belief and practice remained fairly stable at the global level in 2020. The median score on Pew Research Center’s 10-point Government Restrictions Index (GRI), which measures laws, policies and actions by government officials

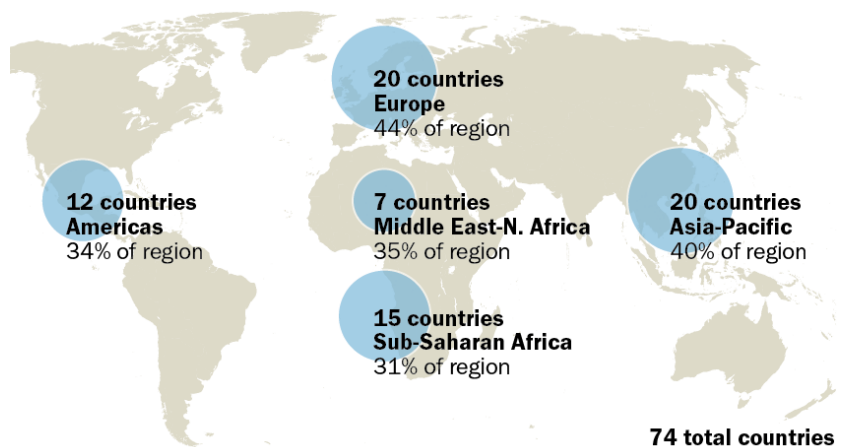
toward religious groups, fell slightly from 2.9 in 2019 to 2.8 in 2020. The median score on the 10-point Social Hostilities Index (SHI), which captures hostile acts against religious groups by private individuals and organizations, rose by a similar margin, from 1.7 in 2019 to 1.8 in 2020.

This report first summarizes the data on pandemic-related restrictions on religious activity, with specific examples from many countries. Then it describes the findings of the 13th annual study of overall restrictions on religion around the world, including changes in the index scores at the global and regional levels.

In more than a third of the 198 countries and territories analyzed, religious groups were subjected to various types of force or blame related to the coronavirus outbreak in 2020. In 74 countries (37% of all analyzed), the study identified at least one of the following: (1) **governments used force** to impose limits on religious gatherings; (2) governments, private groups or individuals publicly **blamed religious groups** for the spread of the coronavirus; or (3) **private actors engaged in violence or vandalism** against religious groups, linking them to the spread of COVID-19.

In 74 countries, religious groups faced force, blame related to COVID-19 pandemic in 2020

Number of countries and territories in 2020 where authorities or private actors used force against religious groups or blamed them for the pandemic



Source: Pew Research Center analysis of external data. See Methodology for details. "How COVID-19 Restrictions Affected Religious Groups Around the World in 2020"

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These incidents were spread fairly evenly around the world, including in 12 countries in the Americas (34% of countries in the region), 20 countries in the Asia-Pacific region (40%), 20 countries in Europe (44%), seven countries in the Middle East-North Africa region (35%) and 15 countries in sub-Saharan Africa (31%).

Nearly a quarter of governments used force against religious groups to enforce COVID-19 rules

In 46 countries and territories, or 23% of all those examined in the study, **government authorities used force** to impose coronavirus-related bans or limits on religious gatherings in 2020. That count includes only places where the bans or limits on religious gatherings were carried out with physical force, such as arrests and detentions; physical assaults; damage, confiscation or raiding of private property; displacements of people from their homes; or killings.

This study does not attempt to determine whether the use of physical force was justified in each case. And the numbers cited here do *not* include countries that enforced bans or limits on religious gatherings with less stringent methods, such as fines for violations.

Detentions were the most common type of force used against religious groups when they were deemed in violation of public health guidelines, according to the sources examined in the study.¹ In 40 of the 46 countries where force was reported to have been used, governments arrested and held worshippers or religious figures for gatherings that violated public health measures, or for other actions by religious groups relating to the pandemic.

In Azerbaijan, for example, [police detained Shiite worshippers](#) who had gathered in several cities to commemorate Ashura, an Islamic holiday, in violation of a ban on gatherings. In the United States, [police in New Jersey arrested 15 people](#) at a rabbi's funeral that violated the state's ban on public gatherings. The arrests were made after some mourners became unruly and argumentative when police tried to disperse the crowd, [according to media reports](#).

In [India](#), the Ministry of Home Affairs announced in April 2020 that more than 900 members of the Islamic group Tablighi Jamaat and other foreign nationals (most of whom were Muslim) had been placed "in quarantine" after participating in a conference in New Delhi allegedly linked to the spread of early cases of coronavirus. (Many of those detained were released or granted bail by July 2020.)

And in [Myanmar](#) (also called Burma), a Buddhist-majority country, leaders of religious minority groups complained that pandemic-related health measures were enforced much more harshly against Muslims and Christians than against Buddhists. For example, 12 Muslim men received prison sentences of three months for holding a religious gathering in a house in Chanmyathazi

¹ Sources for this examination of how public health measures in 2020 affected religious groups include English-language media websites. The 21 other sources used for the annual study on restrictions on religions around the world – including the U.S. Department of State's annual Reports on International Religious Freedom, reports by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, and Amnesty International Country Profiles – were also referenced. For a list of all the sources, see the [Methodology](#).

Township. In a separate case, a Christian pastor was sentenced to three months in prison for holding a prayer session. In contrast, none of the 200 attendees at a Buddhist monk's funeral were arrested; the organizers were fined instead.

In 11 countries, authorities' use of force against religious groups included **physical assaults**, according to the sources examined in the study. In [Comoros](#), [Gabon](#) and [Nepal](#), police used tear gas to disperse religious gatherings that violated COVID-19 lockdown rules. In China, more than 300 members of the Church of Almighty God (also known as Eastern Lightning) were arrested in February and March 2020 during pandemic-related identification checks and home inspections, and some were [subjected to beatings and electric shocks](#), according to the U.S. State Department's 2020 Report on International Religious Freedom. And in [Zambia](#), human rights organizations asserted that police sometimes used excessive force against religious groups when enforcing COVID-19 rules. In April 2020, for example, police assaulted a group of church leaders in a town called Mkushi where they had gathered in violation of public health guidelines.

Authorities in 10 countries confiscated property or **carried out raids** to shut down religious gatherings. In Israel, police targeted Jewish communities deemed to be at the epicenter of outbreaks, deploying security forces in ultra-Orthodox neighborhoods, [breaking up gatherings at synagogues](#) and sending helicopters to hover low over crowds. In Mexico, authorities [raided a church](#) in the state of Durango during a clandestine Mass and expelled the worshippers. And in South Korea, [police raided the Sarang Jeil Church](#), which was reportedly at the center of a coronavirus outbreak in Seoul and the surrounding Gyeonggi Province. The headquarters of [the Shincheonji Church of Jesus](#) also was raided, largely due to its violation of public gathering restrictions and the church leader's refusal to provide health authorities with membership lists for contact tracing.

In four countries, authorities **displaced** religious figures by expelling or repatriating them back to their country of origin. For example, in [Equatorial Guinea](#), authorities disbanded two religious groups – the Universal Church of the Kingdom of God, run by missionaries from Brazil, and the locally based Ministry of Liberation, Health and Prophecy – for violating pandemic-related restrictions. They also canceled the residence permits of the groups' foreign pastors and other leaders and ordered their deportation. And in [Singapore](#), authorities deported five South Koreans who were part of an unregistered local chapter of the Shincheonji Church, in part because of the group's links to COVID-19 clusters in South Korea.

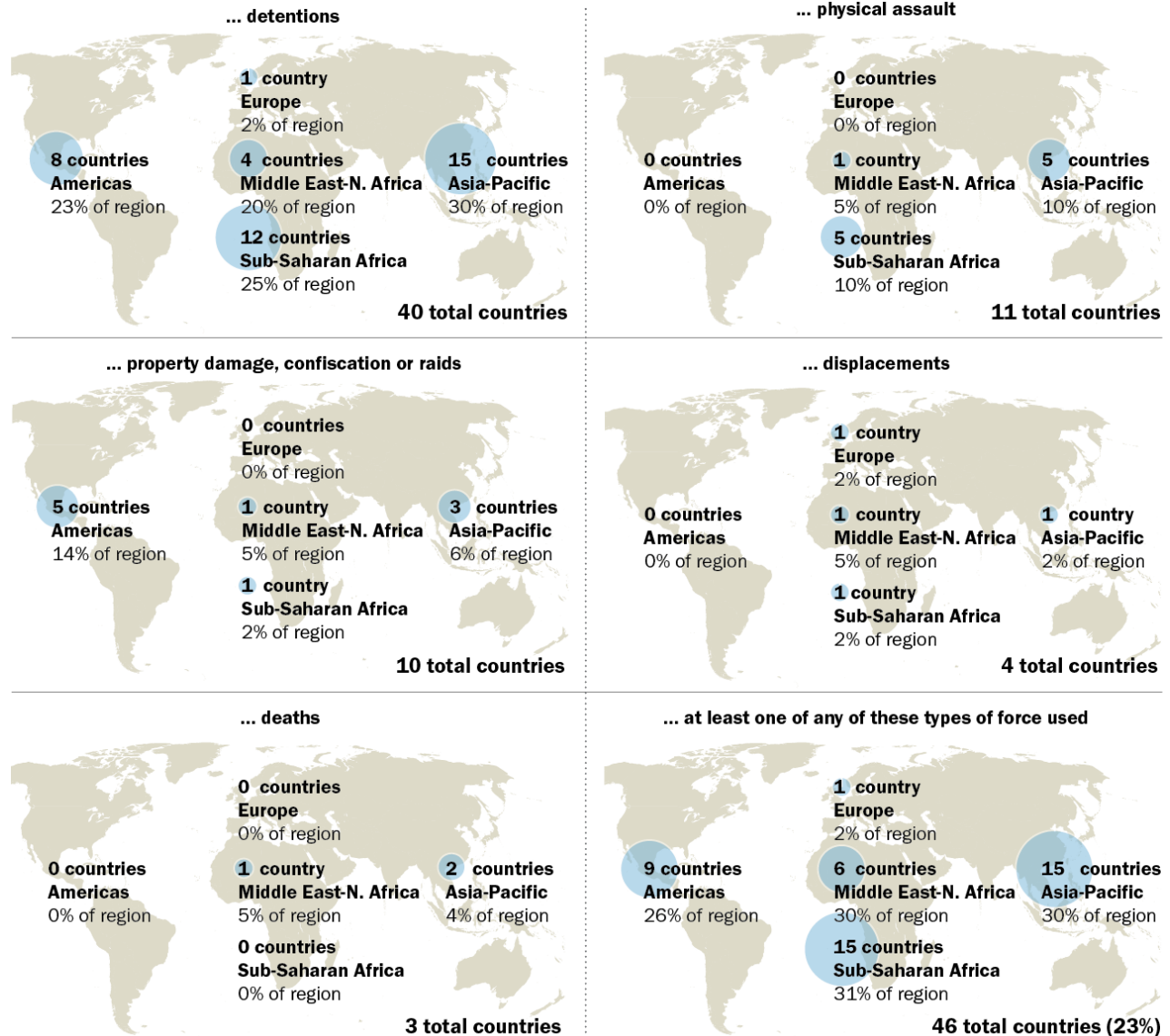
Pandemic-related **killings** of religious minorities were reported in three countries in 2020, according to the sources analyzed in the study. In [India](#), two Christians died after they were beaten in police custody for violating COVID-19 curfews in the state of Tamil Nadu. In [Indonesia](#), authorities killed six members of a banned organization called the Islamic Defenders Fund (FPI) – a group they were shadowing partly because its leader failed to appear for a summons on a charge that he had violated COVID-19 protocols. While FPI has long been accused of engaging in violence, an official inquiry after the incident found the [government had violated human rights](#) in four of the killings because the FPI members were in police custody when they died. And in [Yemen](#), Houthi rebels in control of territories encompassing most of the country’s population used the pandemic as an excuse to expel thousands of Ethiopian migrants, many of whom were Christians, according to the U.S. State Department. Dozens reportedly were killed during the expulsions.²

Roughly a quarter or more countries in each major geographic region – with the exception of Europe – had instances where governments used one or more of these types of force when religious groups did not follow public health measures related to the COVID-19 pandemic. This includes 15 countries in sub-Saharan Africa (31% of countries in the region), 15 countries in the Asia-Pacific region (30%), six in the Middle East-North Africa region (30%) and nine countries in the Americas (26%). In Europe, only one country, Montenegro, fell into this category. Police [arrested](#) numerous Serbian Orthodox clergy in several Montenegrin towns on charges that they violated restrictions on outdoor public gatherings and other public health measures.

² Yemen has been embroiled in a civil war since 2014, and Houthi forces control territory that is home to more than half of the country’s population. They operate there as de facto authorities, despite not being recognized as the legitimate national government by the United Nations or other international institutions. Therefore, since 2016, researchers have coded restrictions that take place in areas under Houthi control as government restrictions. Before 2016, actions by Houthi rebels had been coded as social hostilities. See [Methodology](#) for details.

In roughly a quarter of countries worldwide, authorities used at least one type of force against religious groups to enforce COVID-19 public health measures in 2020

Number of countries and territories in 2020 where authorities used force against religious groups for reasons related to COVID-19, resulting in ...



Source: Pew Research Center analysis of external data. See Methodology for details.
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Countries where authorities blamed religious groups for spread of virus

In addition to counting instances of governments using force against religious groups, this study looks at whether public officials in each country **attributed or linked the spread of COVID-19 to specific religious groups or gatherings** in ways that singled out those groups for blame.

Such incidents were reported in 18 countries (9% of the total analyzed). In some cases, religious groups were explicitly accused of having caused outbreaks, which the groups' leaders said resulted in stigmatization, scapegoating or profiling.

Pew Research Center did not determine whether there was truth to these accusations. But the figures cited in this report do *not* include cases in which public officials warned broadly that the virus could be spread at crowded, indoor gatherings, including religious services, without singling out particular groups.

In 18 countries, authorities linked pandemic to specific religious groups or gatherings in 2020

Number of countries and territories in 2020 where authorities attributed COVID-19 spread to certain religious groups/events



Source: Pew Research Center analysis of external data. See Methodology for details. "How COVID-19 Restrictions Affected Religious Groups Around the World in 2020"

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In Pakistan, Shiite Muslims of Hazara ethnicity who returned from a pilgrimage to Iran were targeted, "[scapegoated](#)" and blamed for the spread of the virus by officials in Balochistan province, [according to the U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom \(USCIRF\)](#). In [Cambodia](#), which has a Buddhist majority, the government in March 2020 began officially singling out Muslims by including a "Khmer Islam" category in statistics on infection rates, after reports emerged of Cambodian Muslims returning to the country with COVID-19 from a religious gathering in Malaysia. And in Canada, Hutterites (an [Anabaptist group](#) living in communes throughout North America) claimed they faced social discrimination after provincial governments

publicized COVID-19 outbreaks in their communities, which they said amounted to “[cultural and religious profiling](#).”

Social hostilities involving religion and COVID-19

In addition to analyzing cases in which governments reportedly used force against religious groups or blamed them for the pandemic, this study examines incidents in which private individuals or organizations targeted religious groups through **social hostilities** related to the outbreak.

The sources reported 39 countries (20% of the total number studied) in which **private individuals or organizations linked the spread of the coronavirus to religious groups in 2020**. This includes individuals or organizations that used hostile or inflammatory speech about particular religious groups.

In more than half of these countries (23 out of the 39), such comments were made against Jews. In France, social media users [shared antisemitic tropes](#) with caricatures of a former Jewish health minister that depicted her poisoning a well – an insinuation that Jews were responsible for the pandemic. (This trope dates back to the 14th century, when Jews were accused of spreading the Black Plague by poisoning food and wells, and they were the victims of [mass killings](#).) In the United Kingdom in 2020, antisemitic conspiracy theories spread online, claiming that Jews were [in control of the global lockdowns](#) and were using the pandemic to “steal everything.” In [Morocco](#), a man was arrested for social media posts in which he accused a Jewish citizen and a foreign national of infecting many people with COVID-19.

Private actors linked religious groups, events to COVID-19 in 17 European countries in 2020

Number of countries and territories in 2020 where private individuals or groups attributed COVID-19 spread to certain religious groups/events



Source: Pew Research Center analysis of external data. See Methodology for details. “How COVID-19 Restrictions Affected Religious Groups Around the World in 2020”

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The sources also indicate that Muslims were targeted by private individuals or organizations in connection with the coronavirus outbreak in 15 countries (including some Muslim-majority countries).

In [Cambodia](#), Muslims reported facing widespread suspicion and discrimination after the government created the previously mentioned “Khmer Islam” category in official statistics on infection rates. Some Cambodian merchants reportedly refused to sell goods to Muslims, and some non-Muslims wore masks only in the presence of Muslims. Meanwhile, in Pakistan, Shiite Hazara Muslims were targets of hate crimes and discrimination by Sunni extremists and other social media users who, [according to USCIRF](#), had been “egged on by government and media claims that the virus came from pilgrims returning from Iran.” Some social media users in Pakistan also labeled COVID-19 the “Shi’a virus.”³ And in India, Islamophobic [hashtags like #CoronaJihad](#) circulated widely on social media, seeking to blame Muslims for the virus.

Christian groups were targeted by private individuals and organizations in nine countries.

In [Turkey](#), an Armenian Orthodox church’s [door was set on fire](#), and news reports said the man told police that he acted because “they [Armenian Christians] brought the coronavirus” to Turkey. In [Egypt](#), conspiracy theories blamed the pandemic on the Coptic Orthodox Christian minority, which international Christian observers said exacerbated the discrimination the minority group already faced.

Pandemic-related social hostilities against religious

Private actors used force against religious groups or events in 2020 for coronavirus-related reasons in four countries

Number of countries and territories in 2020 where religious groups faced pandemic-related violence or vandalism by social groups/individuals



Source: Pew Research Center analysis of external data. See Methodology for details. “How COVID-19 Restrictions Affected Religious Groups Around the World in 2020”

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³ In this study, a single report can be coded (i.e., categorized and counted) in more than one category. For example, if government officials stigmatized or blamed a religious group for the spread of the coronavirus, spurring private individuals or organizations to commit hate crimes against members of that religious group, it could be captured in both the government restrictions and social hostilities indexes.

groups that involved **physical violence or vandalism by private individuals or organizations** were reported in just four countries – India, Argentina, Italy and the United States.

In India, there were multiple [reports of Muslims being attacked](#) after being accused of spreading the coronavirus. In [Argentina](#) and Italy, properties were vandalized with antisemitic posters and graffiti that linked Jews to COVID-19. In [Italy](#), for example, authorities found graffiti of a Star of David with the words “equal to virus.” And in the [U.S.](#), a Mississippi church burned down in an arson attack about a month after its pastor sued the city over public health restrictions on large gatherings. Investigators found graffiti in the church parking lot that said, “Bet you stay home now you hypokrits.”

Criticism and defiance of COVID-19 measures by religious groups

This study also looks at whether religious groups in each country publicly criticized or objected to COVID-19 regulations. During 2020, religious groups in 54 countries (27% of all analyzed) **criticized public health measures** related to COVID-19 – such as restrictions on public gatherings – and in many cases alleged that the measures violated their religious freedom, according to the study’s sources.

In [Argentina](#), for example, the president of the interfaith Argentine Council for Religious Freedom criticized the government for not declaring priests, ministers and other employees of religious organizations to be “essential” workers like doctors, nurses and home health care providers.

Religious groups criticized COVID-19 health measures in more than a third of countries in Americas in 2020

Number of countries and territories in 2020 where religious groups criticized public health measures related to COVID-19



Note: Countries were coded for this measure if there were reports of at least one religious group in a country making such statements.

Source: Pew Research Center analysis of external data. See Methodology for details. “How COVID-19 Restrictions Affected Religious Groups Around the World in 2020”

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In Sri Lanka, Muslims objected to [mandatory cremations](#) of those who died from COVID-19, saying the policy violated the religious rights of the deceased and their relatives to have a traditional Islamic burial, and noting that international public health guidelines allowed for burials of coronavirus victims. And in the [United States](#), lawsuits over state and municipal health restrictions were filed by numerous religious groups, including the Roman Catholic Diocese of Brooklyn and [several synagogues and rabbis in New York](#), contending that pandemic-related restrictions violated the guarantee of “free exercise” of religion contained in the First Amendment to the U.S. Constitution.

In many of the complaints and protests around the world, religious groups also claimed that pandemic-related **laws and regulations unfairly targeted them** either by comparison with nonreligious businesses and institutions, such as shops and restaurants, or relative to other religious groups. This type of complaint was recorded in 45 countries (23% of the total).

In 18 of these countries, religious groups claimed nonreligious businesses or institutions were treated more leniently. In the [Philippines](#), for instance, religious leaders said their institutions were unfairly targeted for closure when shopping malls and other stores were allowed to reopen for business before houses of worship could reopen for religious services. Similarly, in [Belgium](#), a group of Catholics asked the Council of State to overturn the suspension of church services, pointing out that large crowds were permitted to go to shops but not to Mass. They said they found the regulations against religious groups to be “disproportionate” and a violation of religious freedom guaranteed in the country’s constitution.

Religious groups said they were unfairly targeted by COVID-19 measures in 40% of countries in the Middle East-North Africa region in 2020

Number of countries and territories in 2020 where religious groups said they were unfairly targeted by COVID-19 public health measures



Note: Countries were coded for this measure if there were reports of at least one religious group in a country making such statements.

Source: Pew Research Center analysis of external data. See Methodology for details. “How COVID-19 Restrictions Affected Religious Groups Around the World in 2020”

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In other cases, there were reports that restrictions were unevenly applied to religious groups or denominations. In [Algeria](#), for example, mosques and Catholic churches were allowed to reopen in August 2020, while Protestant churches had to remain closed through the end of the year.

In all five major geographic regions of the study, at least a quarter of the countries had one or more religious groups that criticized public health measures as violations of religious freedom, alleged they were unfairly targeted by the measures, or made both kinds of objections. This includes 16 countries in the Americas (46% of the total for the region), eight in the Middle East-North Africa region (40%), 17 in Europe (38%), 17 in sub-Saharan Africa (35%) and 15 in the Asia-Pacific region (30%).

The sources used in this study also identified 69 countries (35% of the 198 studied) where one or more religious groups **defied public health restrictions** related to the pandemic. In [Bangladesh](#), for example, tens of thousands of people attended the funeral of a prominent Islamic preacher despite an agreement between police and the preacher's family to limit attendance to 50 people. And in the [United States](#), a pastor in Louisiana held services at his church in defiance of stay-at-home orders by the governor, telling hundreds of attendees they had "nothing to fear but fear itself."

Meanwhile, in [Australia](#), groups of ultra-Orthodox Jews met for prayer in a private courtyard in Melbourne in violation of a national ban on gatherings at places of worship (and against a similar directive by local Jewish leaders). In [Angola](#), at least dozens of religious leaders and worshippers in provinces across the country faced charges in March 2020 that they violated bans against large gatherings, including 22 Seventh-day Adventist pastors in Bie, Huambo, Benguela and Lunda Norte.

In three-in-ten or more countries in each region, religious groups defied COVID-19 health measures

Number of countries in each region where religious groups or individuals defied COVID-19 public health measures



Source: Pew Research Center analysis of external data. See Methodology for details. "How COVID-19 Restrictions Affected Religious Groups Around the World in 2020"

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In each of the regions studied, at least three-in-ten countries had such reports about religious groups.

Cooperation between religious groups and governments

Along with tensions between religious groups and authorities regarding COVID-19 regulations, there were many examples in 2020 of **governments collaborating with religious groups** to promote public health measures in faith communities. In some cases, governments met or consulted with religious groups before implementing lockdown measures or supported religious groups during the pandemic through additional funding. Media sources identified such collaborative efforts in 55 countries (28%), including half the countries in sub-Saharan Africa.

Religious groups and governments cooperated to promote pandemic health measures in half the countries in sub-Saharan Africa in 2020

Number of countries and territories in 2020 where authorities supported/collaborated with religious groups to promote COVID-19 public health measures



Source: Pew Research Center analysis of external data. See Methodology for details. "How COVID-19 Restrictions Affected Religious Groups Around the World in 2020"

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In [Benin](#), for example, the government consulted with religious leaders and an inter-ministerial committee before imposing lockdown measures and later reopening places of worship. In some parts of the country, local officials relied on religious leaders to share accurate information about the coronavirus, help stop the spread of misinformation and encourage public health measures such as social distancing, handwashing and mask-wearing.

In addition, religious leaders or groups in 94 countries (47% of all those analyzed in the study) **encouraged followers to worship at home, promoted online worship, or engaged in other efforts to stop the spread of the virus**, such as mask wearing and social distancing. Media sources reported such efforts in more than half the countries in sub-Saharan Africa (28 of 48) and the Middle East-North Africa region (11 out of 20), as well as 49% of countries in the Americas, 42% in Europe and 38% in the Asia-Pacific region. In Lesotho, for example, both [evangelical](#) Protestant and [Catholic](#) churches were active

in spreading awareness about the pandemic and encouraging safety measures. And in [Albania](#), religious leaders supported the government’s health measures and canceled religious gatherings.

Media sources in some countries identified examples of both cooperation between religious groups and governments, on the one hand, and defiance of public health rules by religious groups, on the other. For instance, in [Liberia](#), some Christian groups initially resisted lockdown measures, including a large group of worshippers from the Saint Assembly Church in Monrovia who gathered on a field in late March 2020 to pray for the nation. When the worshippers did not heed police instructions to disperse, some were arrested. Yet, in the same country, the government collaborated with an interreligious council on a “faith-based action plan” to train more than 500 field workers in Christian and Muslim communities to help stop the spread of the virus.

Religious leaders or groups promoted pandemic health measures in 94 countries in 2020

Number of countries and territories in 2020 where religious leaders or groups engaged in efforts to promote COVID-19 public health measures



Source: Pew Research Center analysis of external data. See Methodology for details. “How COVID-19 Restrictions Affected Religious Groups Around the World in 2020”

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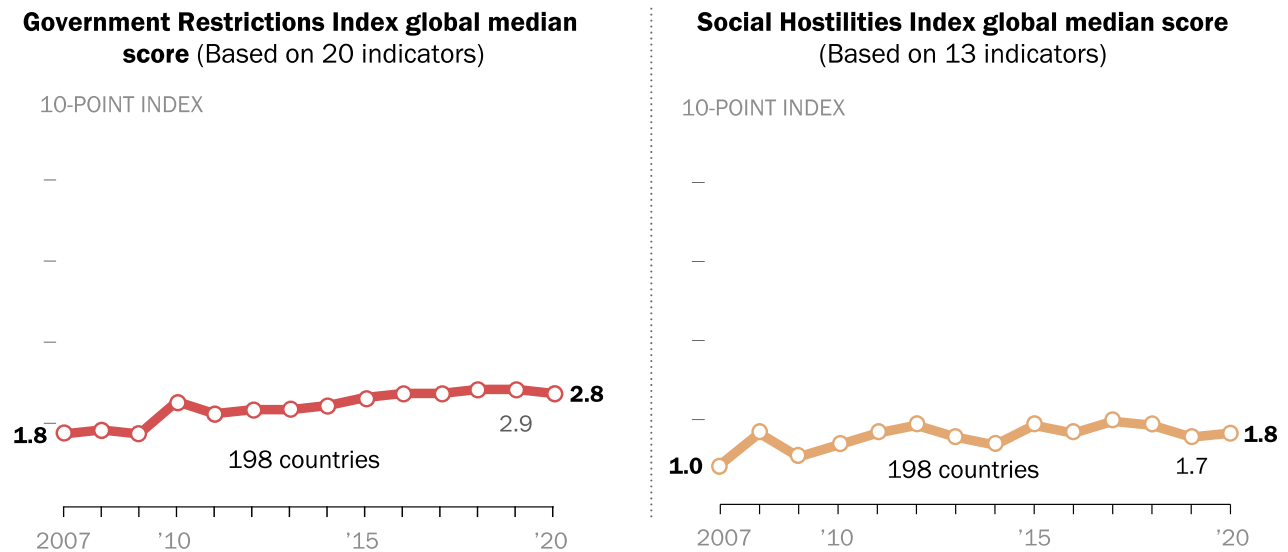
For information on all COVID-19 questions and countries that were coded, see Appendix E.

Overall restrictions in 2020

The new analysis of pandemic-related restrictions was, for obvious reasons, not conducted in previous years. But Pew Research Center’s reports on global restrictions on religion have used a consistent set of measures – separate from the coronavirus-related questions – to examine government limits and social pressures on religious beliefs and practices in nearly all countries and territories around the world since 2007.

The latest analysis finds that the global median level of **government restrictions** on religion – that is, laws, policies and actions by authorities that impinge on religious beliefs and practices – fell slightly, from 2.9 in 2019 to 2.8 in 2020 on the 10-point Government Restrictions Index (GRI). While the year-to-year change was relatively minor, scores on the GRI remain substantially higher than they were in the first year of the study, 2007, when the global median score stood at 1.8.

Global median levels of government restrictions and social hostilities involving religion changed slightly in 2020



Note: The number of countries and territories analyzed increased in 2011, from 197 to 198, with the addition of South Sudan.

Source: Pew Research Center analysis of external data. See Methodology for details.

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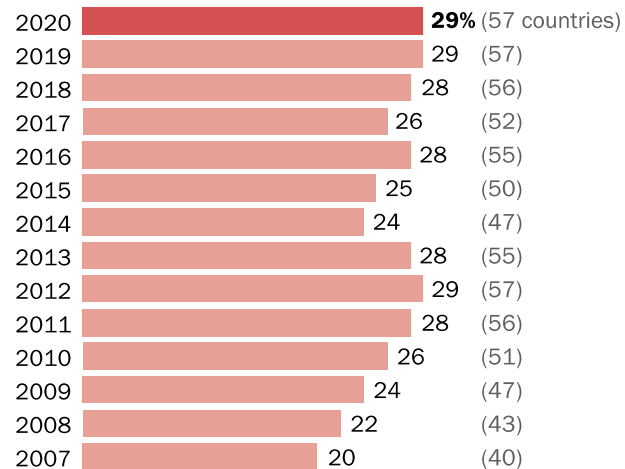
Meanwhile, the global median level of **social hostilities** – measuring religion-related violence and harassment by private individuals or groups – ticked up from 1.7 in 2019 to 1.8 in 2020 on the 10-point Social Hostilities Index (SHI), after two consecutive years of decline. The global median score on the SHI, which has fluctuated more than the median GRI score over the course of the study, also has increased since 2007, when it was 1.0.

Another way of examining these trends is to look at the number of countries that had either “high” or “very high” levels of government restrictions or social hostilities involving religion. In 2020, this combined figure remained unchanged for government restrictions: 57 countries (29%) had at least “high” levels of government restrictions in both 2019 and 2020 – a peak number for the study. But the number of countries with “high” or “very high” levels of social hostilities dropped from 43 countries (22%) in 2019 to 40 countries (20%) in 2020, staying well below the peak of 65 countries (33%) reached in 2012.

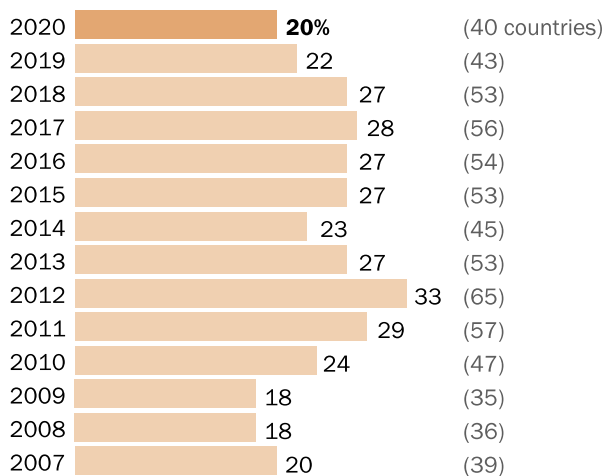
Countries with ‘high’ or ‘very high’ government restrictions remained at highest level since 2007

% of 198 countries and territories studied with “high” or “very high” levels of ...

... government restrictions on religion (Scores of 4.5 and higher)



... social hostilities involving religion (Scores of 3.6 and higher)



Note: The number of countries and territories analyzed increased in 2011, from 197 to 198, with the addition of South Sudan.

Source: Pew Research Center analysis of external data. See Methodology for details.

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When looking at **overall restrictions** in 2020, the study finds 77 countries (39%) with “high” or “very high” levels of *either* government restrictions *or* social hostilities (or both). This figure is up from 75 countries (38%) in 2020, but it remains below the peak of 85 countries (43%) from 2012.

For more information on how restrictions have changed since 2019, see the following chapter.

1. Number of countries with ‘very high’ government restrictions falls for third straight year in 2020

Countries with the most extensive government restrictions

All 198 countries and territories in the study had at least some government restrictions on religious activity in 2020, such as policies favoring certain groups over others or bans on particular religious practices. But the severity of the restrictions and the means used to enforce them varied from country to country, and some countries consequently had much higher scores than others on the Government Restrictions Index (GRI). Those with higher GRI scores imposed a greater number of restrictions, enforced such restrictions more harshly, or did both.

In 2020, the number of countries with “very high” government restrictions fell from 23 to 19. This was the third year in a row the number of countries in this category decreased, bringing it to its lowest point since 2014.

Meanwhile, the number of countries with “high” levels of government restrictions rose from 34 in 2019 to 38 in 2020. This was the third consecutive year that the number of countries with “high” levels of government restrictions increased. Taken together, the number of countries with “high” or “very high” levels of government restrictions was the same in 2020 as in 2019 (57 countries), which matches the study’s highest total, also reached in 2012. (See Methodology for details on how the “high” and “very high” categories are determined.)

In 2020, five countries moved from the “very high” to the “high” government restrictions category. Three of them (Turkmenistan, Iraq and Sudan) had decreases of more than 1 point in their GRI scores, while Kyrgyzstan and Turkey had decreases that were less than 1 point.

There were different drivers behind these declines in scores. For example, in [Sudan](#), where a constitutional declaration in 2019 (after the ouster of President Omar al-Bashir) included provisions protecting freedom of religious belief and worship, there were further expansions of religious freedom in 2020, including the repeal of a law making apostasy punishable by death and the revocation of laws allowing arrests for indecent dress or for offenses against “public morality.” In Turkmenistan,

Countries with very high government restrictions on religion

Scores of 6.6 or higher on the 10-point Government Restrictions Index

2019	2020
Algeria	Afghanistan
Azerbaijan	Algeria
Brunei	Azerbaijan
China	Brunei
Egypt	China
Eritrea	Egypt
Indonesia	Eritrea
Iran	Indonesia
Iraq	Iran
Kazakhstan	Kazakhstan
Kyrgyzstan	Malaysia
Malaysia	Maldives
Maldives	Myanmar
Myanmar	Russia
Russia	Saudi Arabia
Saudi Arabia	Singapore
Singapore	Syria
Sudan	Tajikistan
Syria	Uzbekistan
Tajikistan	
Turkey	
Turkmenistan	
Uzbekistan	

Note: Gray indicates a country that had very high government restrictions in 2019 but not in 2020. **Bold** indicates a country that had very high government restrictions in 2020 but not in 2019. Myanmar is also called Burma.

Source: Pew Research Center analysis of external data. See Methodology for details.

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there had been [reports in 2019 of campaigns](#) in Ashgabat and Leban provinces to force men to shave their beards and mustaches (which were viewed as being associated with extremist tendencies), but no such campaigns were reported in 2020.

One country, Afghanistan, moved from the “high” into the “very high” government restrictions category in 2020, with an increase of less than 1 point. For a full list of all countries in each category, see the Government Restrictions Index in Appendix A.

Countries with the most extensive social hostilities

The Social Hostilities Index (SHI) captures a broad range of activities by private individuals and social groups, including but not limited to harassment and assault on people of particular faiths, mob violence against religious minorities, and terrorism carried out in the name of religion.

As has been the case in most years of the study, in 2020 there were fewer countries scoring “very high” on the SHI than on the GRI. The number of countries with “very high” social hostilities involving religion increased from eight in 2019 to 11 in 2020, while the number of countries with “high” levels of social hostilities dropped from 35 countries to 29. Overall, the number of countries with “high” or “very high” levels of social hostilities fell from 43 in 2019 to 40 in 2020.

Four countries – Afghanistan, Egypt, Mali and Somalia – moved from “high” to “very high” social hostilities in 2020. Most of these countries have moved between the “high” and “very high” categories over the course of the 13-year study, but this is Mali’s first time with very high social hostilities involving religion. There were reports in 2020 that extremist groups in [Mali](#) required all women to wear veils in the Mopti region of the country, while in the country’s Timbuktu region women were intimidated and threatened for not wearing veils. Mali did not have

Countries with very high social hostilities involving religion

Scores of 7.2 or higher on the 10-point Social Hostilities Index

2019	2020
India	Afghanistan
Iraq	Egypt
Israel	India
Libya	Iraq
Nigeria	Israel
Pakistan	Libya
Sri Lanka	Mali
Syria	Nigeria
	Pakistan
	Somalia
	Syria

Note: Gray indicates a country that had very high social hostilities in 2019 but not in 2020. **Bold** indicates a country that had very high government restrictions in 2020 but not in 2019.

Source: Pew Research Center analysis of external data. See Methodology for details.

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any such incidents over veiling in 2019, according to the sources used for the study. [Egypt](#) also had a reported incident involving a woman not covering her hair: In January 2020, a man in Cairo attacked a Christian woman with a knife and said he did so because she did not have her hair covered. (The attacker was subsequently arrested and referred to a psychiatric evaluation by the prosecutor.) Sources used for the study had not reported any similar incidents in Egypt in 2019.

In [Somalia](#), the SHI score increased due in part to an attack by gunmen that killed five Quran teachers and injured others. The militant group al-Shabab also continued to regain territory and attacked government officials and their allies in the country.

One country, [Sri Lanka](#), moved from the “very high” to “high” social hostilities category in 2020, partially due to fewer reported deaths that resulted from violent mob attacks. In 2019, there had been multiple days of mob attacks directed toward mosques and Muslim-owned businesses after the deadly ISIS-linked Easter Sunday bombings of that year, as well as at least one death owing to the mob violence. But in 2020, although there was mob violence resulting in assaults, there were no reported deaths. In addition, there were no religion-related terrorism incidents in Sri Lanka in 2020, according to the sources used for this study.

For the full list of countries in each category, see the Social Hostilities Index in [Appendix B](#).

Changes in government restrictions on religion

In 2020, 79 countries had decreases of 0.1 points or more in their GRI scores, while 60 countries had increases.

In 2020, no country in the study had a large change (2 or more points) in its GRI score. There were 13 countries with modest changes (1.0 to 1.9 points), including 11 decreases and two increases. Most countries – 126 in total, or 64% – had small changes (0.1 to 0.9), with 68 small decreases and 58 small increases in GRI scores. And 59 countries had no change in their GRI score.

Changes on GRI in 2020

Changes on the Government Restrictions Index (GRI) from 2019 to 2020

POINT CHANGE	NUMBER OF COUNTRIES	% OF COUNTRIES	
2.0 or more increase	0	0%	
1.0 to 1.9 increase	2	1	30%
0.1 to 0.9 increase	58	29	
No change	59	30	30%
0.1 to 0.9 decrease	68	34	40%
1.0 to 1.9 decrease	11	6	
2.0 or more decrease	0	0	
Total	198	100	

Note: Point changes are calculated by comparing GRI scores from year to year. Figures may not add to 100% or to subtotals indicated due to rounding.

Source: Pew Research Center analysis of external data. See Methodology for details.

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Changes in social hostilities involving religion

When looking at social hostilities, six countries had large changes (2 or more points) in their SHI scores in 2020. Afghanistan had a large *increase*, while Benin, Central African Republic, Germany, New Zealand and Sierra Leone had large *decreases*. Thirty countries had modest changes (1.0 to 1.9 points), including 12 increases and 18 decreases, and 100 countries experienced small changes of 0.1 to 0.9 – 50 increases and 50 decreases.

In Afghanistan – where 2020 saw continued fighting involving the Taliban, other armed groups, and the Afghan government in power at the time – the number of civilians killed or wounded declined from previous years, but targeted killings and abductions of government officials and politicians rose, [according to Human Rights Watch](#). And throughout the year, religious minorities – particularly Sikhs – continued to be targets of deadly attacks that left their populations “[near extinction](#)” in Afghanistan, according to the U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom. In March, a series of [attacks targeting Sikhs](#) killed 25 people and led around 200 Sikhs to leave Afghanistan for India, according to the U.S. State Department. (Deadly attacks against Sikhs in Afghanistan were not reported in 2019 in the sources used for this study.)

[New Zealand’s](#) score on the SHI went down in 2020 because it did not experience any terror attacks related to religion (that is, where a religious group was either the target or religion was a motivating factor). In 2019, the country had experienced an attack on two mosques in the city of Christchurch – the [deadliest](#) mass shootings in its modern history – after which the government formed an investigatory commission and pledged reforms to protect minority religious and ethnic groups.

In total, 62 countries had no change in their SHI score in 2020.

Changes on SHI in 2020

Changes on the Social Hostilities Index (SHI) from 2019 to 2020

POINT CHANGE	NUMBER OF COUNTRIES	% OF COUNTRIES	
2.0 or more increase	1	1%	32%
1.0 to 1.9 increase	12	6	
0.1 to 0.9 increase	50	25	
No change	62	31	31%
0.1 to 0.9 decrease	50	25	37%
1.0 to 1.9 decrease	18	9	
2.0 or more decrease	5	3	
Total	198	100	

Note: Point changes are calculated by comparing SHI scores from year to year. Figures may not add to 100% or to subtotals indicated due to rounding.

Source: Pew Research Center analysis of external data. See Methodology for details.

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Changes in overall restrictions on religion

Combining government restrictions and social hostilities into a single measure, 67 countries had overall increases in their scores from 2019 to 2020, 94 had decreases, and 37 had no change. Of the countries with increases, there were 53 small upticks (between 0.1 and 0.9) and 13 with modest increases (1.0 to 1.9 change). One country, Afghanistan, had a large overall increase (2 or more points).

Among the decreases, 68 were small declines (0.1 to 0.9 change) and 23 were modest in scope (1.0 to 1.9). Three countries had large decreases in their overall scores (2 or more points): Central African Republic, New Zealand and Sierra Leone.

Overall changes in global restrictions on religion in 2020

Changes on the Government Restrictions Index (GRI) or Social Hostilities Index (SHI) from 2019 to 2020

POINT CHANGE	NUMBER OF COUNTRIES	% OF COUNTRIES	
2.0 or more increase	1	1%	35%
1.0 to 1.9 increase	13	7	
0.1 to 0.9 increase	53	27	
No change	37	19	19%
0.1 to 0.9 decrease	68	34	48%
1.0 to 1.9 decrease	23	12	
2.0 or more decrease	3	2	
Total	198	100	

Note: Categories of overall change in restrictions are calculated by comparing a country's unrounded scores on the GRI and SHI from year to year. When a country's score on both indexes changed in the same direction (both increased or both decreased), the greater amount of change determined the category. For instance, if the country's GRI score increased by 0.8 and its SHI score increased by 1.5, the country was put into the "1.0 to 1.9 increase" category. When a country's score increased on one index but decreased on the other, the difference between the amounts of change determined the grouping. For example, if the country's GRI score increased by 2.0 and its SHI score decreased by 1.5, the country went into the "0.1 to 0.9 increase" category. When a country's score on one index stayed the same, the amount of change on the other index was used to assign the category. Figures may not add to 100% or to subtotals indicated due to rounding.

Source: Pew Research Center analysis of external data. See Methodology for details.

"How COVID-19 Restrictions Affected Religious Groups Around the World in 2020"

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2. Physical harassment related to religion occurred in more than two-thirds of countries in 2020

Religious groups faced harassment by governments, social groups or individuals in 189 countries and territories in 2020. This was nearly the same as in 2019, when harassment of religious groups was reported in 190 countries and territories – the highest number since this tracking began in 2007. (These counts include all countries in which the sources used for this study report *at least one incident of any type of harassment*. As such, the overall numbers provide a sense of how widespread harassment is around the world, but they do not speak to its severity.)

The types of harassment against religious groups analyzed in this chapter include acts of force resulting in property damage, assaults, detentions, displacements or killings (all five of which are categorized as “physical harassment”), as well as derogatory statements (categorized as “verbal harassment”).

Harassment against atheists, agnostics, humanists and others who do not identify with a religion is included if the sources indicate they were targeted because of their beliefs.

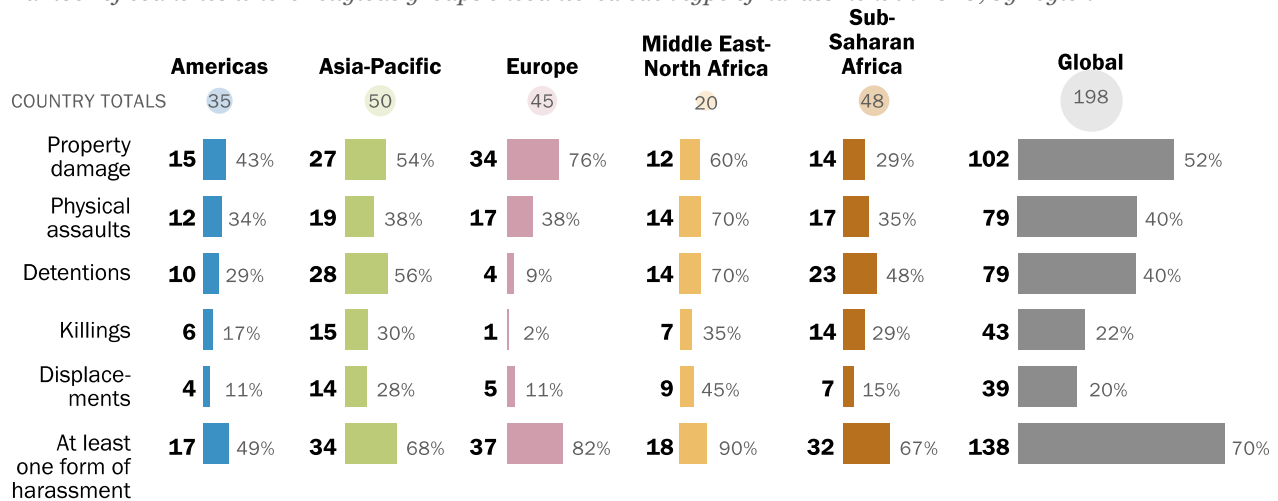
In 2020, **government authorities** harassed religious groups in 178 countries, down from 180 countries in 2019. **Social groups or private individuals** harassed religious groups in 164 countries, a decline from 169 countries the previous year.

To isolate some of the more severe instances of harassment, researchers analyzed cases where religious groups faced five types of physical harassment (i.e., force or violence) by either governments or private individuals and social groups. Overall, religious groups experienced at least one type of physical harassment in 138 countries (70% of the 198 studied) in 2020, according to the sources used in the study.

Social groups or private individuals used force against religious groups in 105 countries (53%), a decline from 117 countries (59%) the previous year, while governments used force against religious groups in 100 countries (51%), a slight uptick from 96 countries (48%) in 2019.

Physical harassment against religious groups reported in 70% of countries

Number of countries where religious groups encountered each type of harassment in 2020, by region



Source: Pew Research Center analysis of external data. See Methodology for details.
“How COVID-19 Restrictions Affected Religious Groups Around the World in 2020”

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Damage to **property** of religious groups (or property damage motivated by religious bias) took place in 102 countries (52%), more than any other type of physical harassment. Social groups or individuals were responsible for religion-related property damage in 81 countries, and governments were responsible in 56 countries.

Europe had the highest share of countries (76% of the 45 countries studied) with religion-related property damage in 2020, more than any other region in the study. In [Russia](#), for example, Jehovah’s Witnesses reported that more than 400 of their members’ homes were raided in 2020, continuing a pattern from previous years. According to Jehovah’s Witnesses in the country, authorities verbally and physically abused members, held individuals at gunpoint, and seized personal belongings and religious materials. In [Hungary](#), vandals damaged several gravestones in two different Jewish cemeteries; similar incidents occurred at Jewish cemeteries in other countries, including Finland, Germany, Moldova, the Netherlands and Russia.

In the Middle East-North Africa region, 12 of the region’s 20 countries reported religion-related property damage. In Syria, which has been [embroiled in a civil war since 2011](#), human rights groups and community representatives reported that Turkish-backed Syrian armed opposition groups [looted Yazidi-owned properties](#) and destroyed multiple Yazidi shrines and graves. Meanwhile, in [Saudi Arabia](#), where Sunni Muslims are the majority, authorities bulldozed Shiite graves and raided a Shiite neighborhood to prevent their call to prayer.

Religious groups faced **assaults** in 79 countries (40% of those in the study) in 2020. Private citizens or social groups carried out such attacks in 58 countries, while governments did so in 37 countries. The Middle East-North Africa region had the largest share of countries with such incidents (70%).

In [Lebanon](#), for example, clashes broke out multiple times between Sunnis and Shiites, and also among Shiite groups, over the hanging of banners for the Shiite commemoration of Ashura, in one instance resulting in several injuries and three deaths. And in [Israel](#), tensions rose during the year around the holy site known to Jews as the Temple Mount and to Muslims as Haram al-Sharif, where police arrested six Muslim worshippers in January for “shouting nationalist rhetoric” and were shown on video kicking one of those arrested, according to the U.S. State Department.

Meanwhile, 19 out of 50 countries studied in the Asia-Pacific region and 17 out of 45 countries in Europe (38% for both regions) had instances of religious groups being physically assaulted by government authorities.

Detentions related to religion – including arrests, abductions and other types of imprisonment that were reported as having been conducted arbitrarily or without due process – occurred in 79 countries and territories out of the 198 analyzed (40%). In 2020, authorities in many countries detained members of religious groups for violating COVID-19 public health protocols, which were included in this count. (See [Methodology](#) for more details.)

It was much more common for governments to detain members of religious groups (76 countries) than for social groups – including private militias and other organizations – to do so (19 countries). For example, of the countries studied in the Asia-Pacific region, there were 27 countries (54%) where governments detained members of religious groups, compared with six countries (12%) where nongovernmental actors were reported as responsible for detentions. Governments detained members of religious groups in almost half the 48 countries analyzed in sub-Saharan Africa (48%) and in a majority of countries studied in the Middle East-North Africa region (70%).

In some cases, governments detained individuals for insulting a religion. For example, in the [Maldives](#), authorities investigated a man for “criticizing Islam” and sentenced him to a year in prison for “obstructing justice.” And in [Bangladesh](#), a Hindu man who was imprisoned in October 2019 for posting anti-Islam messages on social media remained in detention in 2020.

Religion-related **killings** (which include capital punishment, extrajudicial killings and deaths resulting from torture or other physical injuries) took place in 43 countries (22%), with

governments reported as perpetrators in 16 of them and private individuals or groups carrying them out in 35 countries. The Middle East-North Africa region had seven countries (35% of those in the region) where religion was a motivating factor for killings, while the Asia-Pacific region had 15 such countries (30%) and sub-Saharan Africa had 14 (29%). For example, in Shiite-majority [Iran](#), international human rights organizations said the government charged and executed political dissidents – who were disproportionately Sunni Muslims – with “enmity against God.” Meanwhile, in [Ethiopia](#) – where an internet shutdown in 2020 prevented reliable information from getting out – a series of attacks were reported in the Christian holy city of Axum. In one case, [international media](#) and human rights organizations said Eritrean forces fighting alongside Ethiopian troops opened fire on worshippers celebrating Mass at Maryam Dengelat Church and killed dozens of worshippers.

Displacements of religious individuals or groups occurred in fewer countries than the other types of physical harassment analyzed in 2020 (39 countries, 20% of the total). This category includes people being deported, driven from their homes or forced to flee their country through coercive means. Governments caused displacement for religion-related reasons in 30 countries, while social groups and individuals were responsible in 16 countries. There were 14 countries in the Asia-Pacific region (28%) that had religion-related displacements, and the Middle East-North Africa region had nine countries where this happened (45%). In [Sri Lanka](#), for example, media reported that an archeological task force (made up of Sinhalese Buddhists and created by the country’s president to preserve its “religious heritage”) evicted about 400 Muslim residents from their land. And in [Laos](#), seven Christian villagers in Salavan province reportedly were forced out of their homes for refusing to give up their faith.

In some countries, minority religious groups may face all five of these forms of physical violence, either from governments or from private citizens. For instance, in [Myanmar](#), also called Burma, the military has been accused of attempting to “exterminate” the minority Rohingya Muslim population through “killings, mass rape, and other sexual violence; disappearances; forced starvation; arbitrary detentions and arrests; and looting, burning, and property confiscations,” according to the U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom (USCIRF). The United Nations reported that at least [500 civilians](#) were killed in clashes in 2020 between Myanmar’s military and an ethnic armed group called the Arakan Army. Most of those killed were Rohingya Muslims, and some were Christians, according to [USCIRF](#). The military’s operations against a Muslim-majority township in Rakhine state also displaced thousands of civilians during the year.

Which religious groups were harassed?

Christians and Muslims, the [largest religious groups in the world](#), were **harassed** in more countries than any other religious groups analyzed, which was also true in previous years of the study. In 2020, Christians were harassed in 155 countries, up from 153 in 2019, and Muslims were harassed in 145 countries, a decrease from 147.

As in previous years, Jews also faced harassment in more countries than any other religious group besides Christians and Muslims, even though Jews make up just [0.2% of the world's population](#). In 2020, Jews were harassed in 94 countries, up from 89 in 2019. The year 2020 also saw an increase in the number of countries where religiously unaffiliated people (including atheists and agnostics) faced harassment – 27, up from 22 in 2019.

Several religious groups, including Muslims and Buddhists, and other smaller groups not analyzed individually (an umbrella category that includes Baha'is, Scientologists, Sikhs, Rastafarians and Zoroastrians, among others) faced harassment in *fewer* countries in 2020 than in 2019. Meanwhile, Hindus faced harassment in the same number of countries (21) as in 2019, while adherents of folk religions faced harassment in 33 countries, a small uptick from 32 countries the previous year.

As in past years, most of the religious groups analyzed in the study were harassed in more countries by governments than by private individuals or groups. Jews were the only religious group that faced government and social harassment in the same number of countries (73) in 2020.

Religious groups harassed in 189 countries in 2020

Number of countries where religious groups were harassed, by year

	2007	'11	'12	'13	'14	'15	'16	'17	'18	'19	'20
Christians	107	105	110	102	108	128	144	143	145	153	155
Muslims	96	101	109	99	100	125	142	140	139	147	145
Jews	51	69	71	77	81	74	87	87	88	89	94
Others*	33	42	39	38	43	50	57	50	56	68	62
Folk religions**	24	23	26	34	21	32	41	38	37	32	33
Hindus	21	12	16	9	14	18	23	23	19	21	21
Buddhists	10	9	13	12	10	7	17	19	24	25	21
Unaffiliated	CODING NOT DONE	3	5	4	14	14	23	18	22	27	
Any of above	152	161	166	164	160	169	187	187	185	190	189

* Includes Sikhs, members of ancient faiths such as Zoroastrianism, members of newer faiths such as Baha'i and other religious groups.

** Includes, for example, followers of African traditional religions, Chinese folk religions, Native American religions and Australian aboriginal religions.

Note: This measure looks at the number of countries in which groups were harassed, either by the government or individuals/social groups. It does not assess the severity of the harassment. Numbers do not add to totals because multiple religious groups can be harassed in a country. The figure for other religious groups for the year ending in December 2012 and the "any of the above" figure for the year ending in December 2011 have been updated to correct minor errors in previous reports.

Source: Pew Research Center analysis of external data. See Methodology for details. "How COVID-19 Restrictions Affected Religious Groups Around the World in 2020"

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3. Small changes in median scores for government restrictions, social hostilities involving religion in 2020

Government restrictions on religion, by region

Globally, the median score on the Government Restrictions Index (GRI) fell from 2.9 in 2019, which was a peak level for the study, to 2.8 in 2020. Regionally, the median GRI score declined slightly in the Middle East-North Africa, remained constant in the Americas, Europe and sub-Saharan Africa, and increased in the Asia-Pacific region.

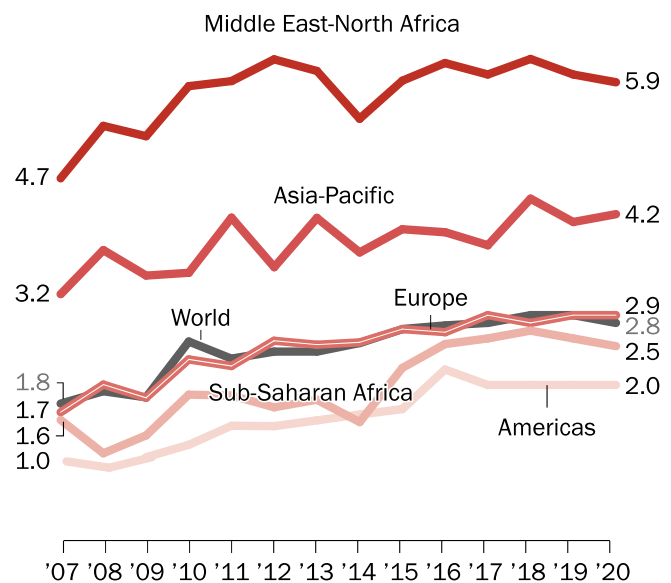
The median score in the Middle East and North Africa fell slightly from 6.0 to 5.9, the second straight year it has fallen. Still, this region has the highest levels of government restrictions of any of the five geographic regions in the study. In every country in the region, there were reports of governments harassing religious groups and interfering in worship in 2020. In [Bahrain](#), for instance, the government continued to target and detain Shiite clerics and individuals. In September, authorities detained several clerics for “spreading sectarianism” and defaming religious figures in their sermons and sentenced two of them to prison.

Activists in the country said the sermons were part of the Shiite ritual observance of Ashura.

The vast majority of countries in the Middle East-North Africa region also imposed limits on proselytizing, converting and public preaching. In [Algeria](#), for example, Islamic religious services were permitted only in state-sanctioned mosques led by government-authorized imams, and Friday prayers were limited to a smaller selection of mosques. It was also a criminal offense for non-Muslims to proselytize to Muslims in the country.

Asia-Pacific the only region with increased median level of government restrictions on religion in 2020

Median scores on the Government Restrictions Index



Source: Pew Research Center analysis of external data. See Methodology for details.
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In sub-Saharan Africa, where the median government restrictions score remained at 2.6 in 2020, harassment and intimidation – including derogatory statements, physical violence and prohibitions on religious practices and rituals – were reported in 44 of the 48 countries in the region (92%). In [Nigeria](#), some Muslim and Christian groups contended that state laws discriminated against them. For example, the Anglican Church said that new mandates for burial rituals in Anambra state [violated religious freedom provisions of the constitution](#) and were enacted without input from the church. And in [Tanzania](#), some religious leaders reported they were pressured to support the country’s president, or that they faced government penalties if their public statements were deemed overly political. The Tanzanian government threatened to deregister their religious organizations and in some cases questioned their citizenship and confiscated their passports, according to the U.S. State Department.

The GRI score in the Americas stayed steady at 2.0 (the lowest level of all five regions), and in Europe it remained at 2.9. In the Americas, the vast majority of countries had “low” or “moderate” levels of government restrictions, with the exception of Cuba, which fell into the “high” category. In [Cuba](#), the government denied registration to some Apostolic groups and did not respond to pending applications for Jehovah’s Witnesses or The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. Religious groups also reported that the government used threats and other methods of coercion to limit their activities and that a new constitution in effect since February 2019 weakened religious freedom protections in the country.

In Europe, 20 out of the 45 countries in the region imposed restrictions on wearing religious symbols or clothing. In several countries – including Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Denmark, France, Luxembourg, Malta, the Netherlands and Norway – there were bans on wearing face coverings in public, which affected Muslim women who wear veils for religious reasons.⁴ (Violators were threatened with fines.)

In the Asia-Pacific region, the median GRI score ticked up from 4.1 in 2019 to 4.2 in 2020. The region includes countries with some of the highest government restrictions scores, including China, Malaysia and Iran. In [China](#), the government continued to target Uyghur Muslims in Xinjiang province. International organizations such as Human Rights Watch contended that about [half a million](#) people had been imprisoned in the Chinese government’s operations on Xinjiang through the end of 2020 and that over 48,000 were prosecuted that year. The U.S. State Department, in its 2020 International Religious Freedom report on China, said that [thousands of adults](#) from the region had been transferred from Xinjiang to other parts of the country to work as laborers, and that children had been separated from their families and sent to boarding schools or

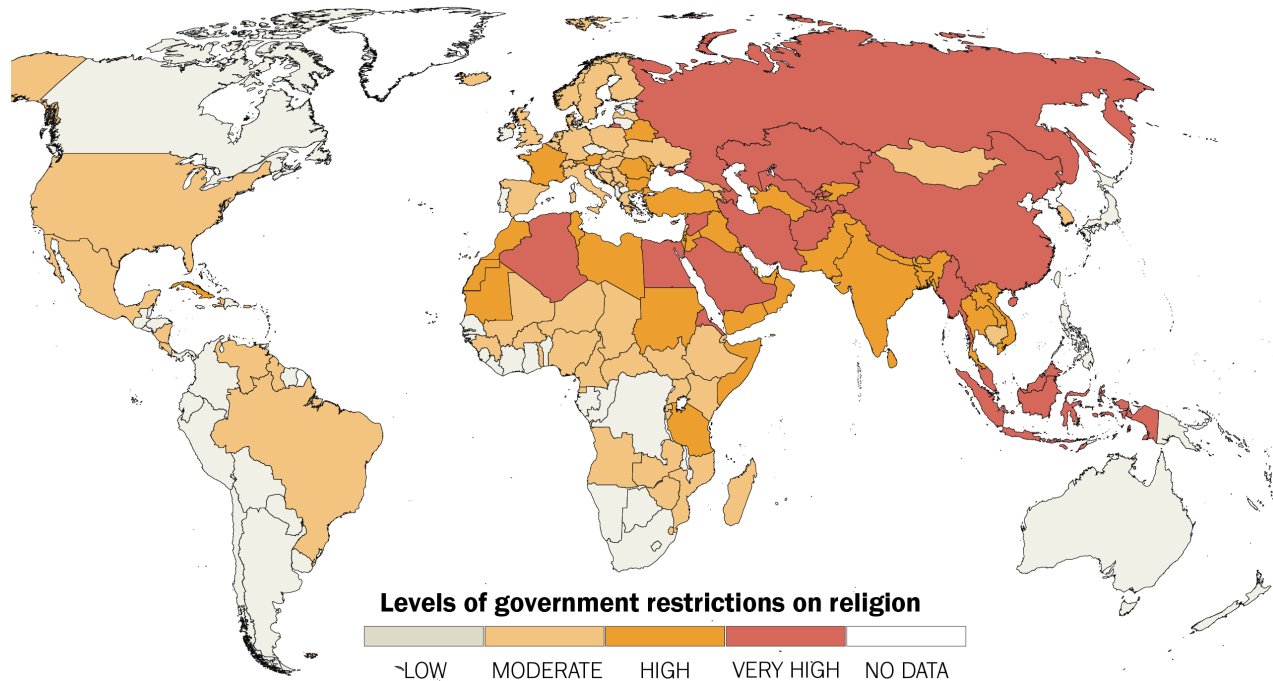
⁴ In some of these countries (Luxembourg, the Netherlands and Norway) the restrictions applied only in specific places such as government buildings, schools or hospitals. And in Malta, the legal ban on face coverings was not enforced, according to the U.S. State Department.

orphanages to study ethnic Han culture, Mandarin and Communist Party ideology. Also, there were reported sexual assaults resulting from a program in which authorities had Han Chinese live in the homes of Uyghur families to monitor their religious observances and look for signs of “extremism” such as praying and owning religious texts, according to the State Department.

In [Malaysia](#), which had “very high” government restrictions in 2020, minority non-Sunni groups such as Shiites and Ahmadis are considered “deviant” by the government and face various limitations on religious practices and assembly. For example, although Ahmadi Muslims reported being able to have their own worship centers, they could not hold Friday prayers because those prayers had to be conducted in officially registered mosques. Furthermore, a High Court case to determine whether Ahmadis could legally identify as Muslims remained unresolved at the end of 2020. The Malaysian government also banned books promoting Shiite beliefs, mysticism and other ideas that “deviated from the true teachings of Islam.” (In February, however, the country’s Court of Appeals overturned bans on three books.)

Government restrictions on religion around the world

Level of government restrictions on religion in each country as of 2020



Source: Pew Research Center analysis of external data. See Methodology for details.
 “How COVID-19 Restrictions Affected Religious Groups Around the World in 2020”

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Social hostilities involving religion, by region

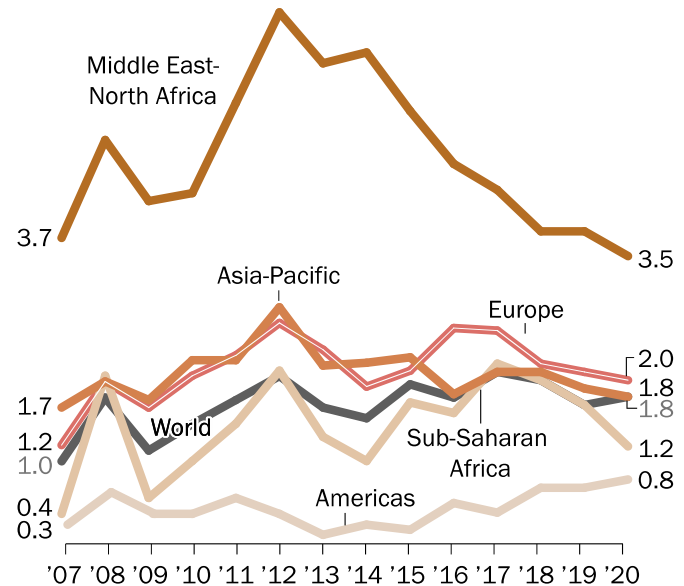
Globally, the median score on the Social Hostilities Index (SHI) increased very slightly from 1.7 in 2019 to 1.8 in 2020.⁵ But the median score decreased in every major region except the Americas, where it moved up slightly. (Declines can occur when a country has fewer reports of incidents of social hostilities involving religion than it did in the previous year.)

In the Middle East-North Africa region, the median score fell from 3.8 to 3.5, and in sub-Saharan Africa it fell from 1.7 to 1.2. Asia-Pacific and Europe registered smaller declines. At the same time, some countries that already had “very high” social hostilities saw small increases in their scores. For example, India’s SHI score rose due in part to increased violence around protests of the [Citizenship Amendment Act](#) (a 2019 law that excludes Muslims from expedited citizenship offered to non-Muslim migrants). And in [Israel](#), tensions between ultra-Orthodox Jews and secular Israelis reportedly increased because some ultra-Orthodox groups largely disregarded COVID-19 public safety restrictions and had [high rates of infection](#) in their communities. For more details on changes in SHI scores in 2020, see [Chapter 1](#).

In the Americas, the median score ticked up from 0.7 to 0.8 but remained the lowest of any region. While most countries in the Americas had “low” or “moderate” levels of social hostilities, Mexico and Brazil fell into the “high” category. In [Mexico](#), two evangelical Protestant pastors were killed in 2020, and there were reports that others were attacked or abducted. Nongovernmental

Americas the only region to see increase in median levels of social hostilities involving religion in 2020

Median scores on the Social Hostilities Index



Source: Pew Research Center analysis of external data. See Methodology for details.

“How COVID-19 Restrictions Affected Religious Groups Around the World in 2020”

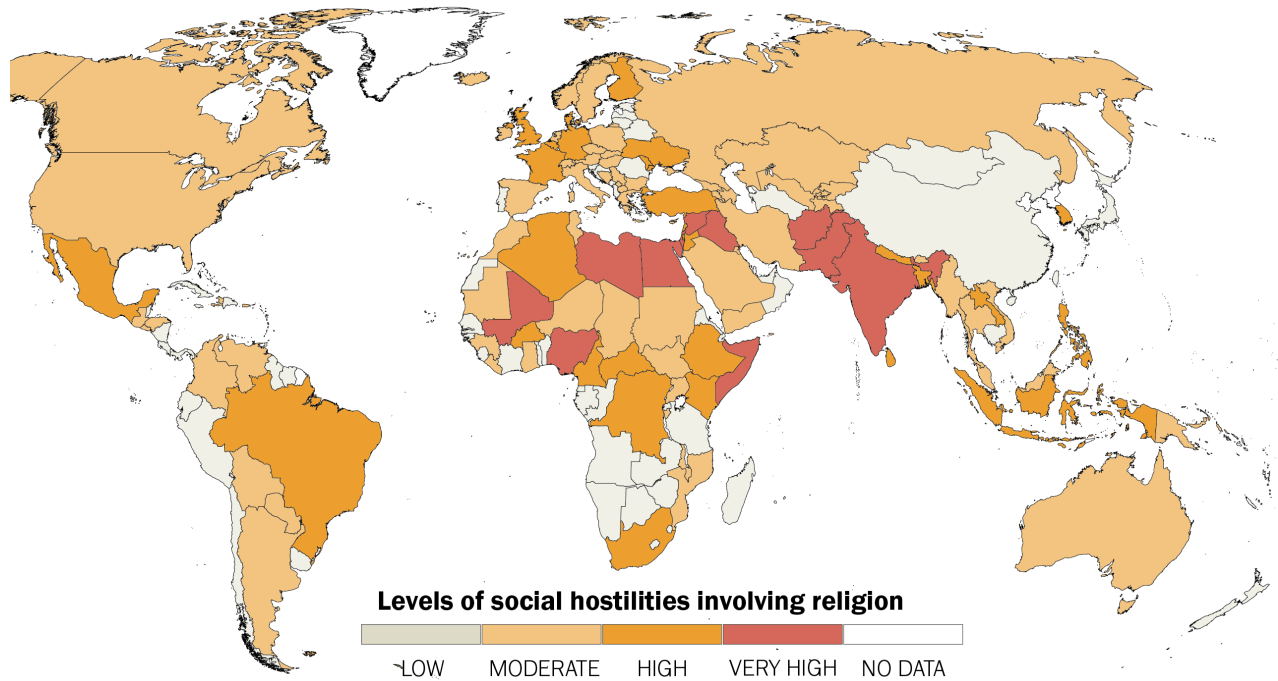
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⁵ The 2020 rise in the global median score was actually only 0.03 points (from 1.73 in 2019 to 1.76 in 2020), but rises by 0.1 points when rounding.

organizations said that religious leaders were “singled out” by criminal groups for denouncing illegal activities and to instill fear so these activities could continue.

Social hostilities involving religion around the world

Level of social hostilities involving religion in each country as of 2020



Source: Pew Research Center analysis of external data. See Methodology for details.
 “How COVID-19 Restrictions Affected Religious Groups Around the World in 2020”

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4. Restrictions in the 25 most populous countries

More than 5 billion people – almost three-quarters of the global population – live in the world’s 25 most populous countries. Looking at the levels of restrictions on religion in just these countries can help illuminate how a very sizable segment of the world’s population may be affected by government policies or social hostilities involving religion. At the same time, it is important to note that restrictions on religion analyzed in this study do not affect everyone in a given country the same way, and that in some cases minority religious groups may be impacted more.

In 2020, the countries in this group that had the highest levels of **overall** restrictions (both government restrictions and social hostilities) were India, Egypt, Pakistan, Indonesia and Nigeria. The countries with the lowest levels of overall restrictions among the 25 most populous countries were Japan, the United States, Italy, the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Tanzania.

Looking at just **government restrictions** on religion, the countries with the highest levels from this group of 25 were China, Russia, Iran, Indonesia and Egypt. All had “very high” scores on the Government Restrictions Index (GRI). Meanwhile, the lowest levels of government restrictions in this group were recorded in Japan, South Africa, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, the Philippines and Brazil. (Brazil had “moderate” levels of government restrictions while the other four had “low” levels.)

Among the most populous countries, the highest levels of **social hostilities** involving religion were in India, Nigeria, Pakistan, Egypt and Bangladesh. All these countries with the exception of Bangladesh had “very high” social hostilities in 2020, while Bangladesh fell into the “high” category on the Social Hostilities Index (SHI). Japan, China, Tanzania, the U.S. and Iran had the lowest levels of social hostilities in this group. The U.S. and Iran had “moderate” levels of social hostilities, while the other three countries had “low” levels.

In several of the most populous countries, levels of government restrictions mirrored social hostilities. For example, Japan ranked “low” on both the GRI and SHI, Italy and the U.S. had “moderate” scores on both indexes, and Egypt had “very high” government restrictions and social hostilities. In other countries, the GRI and SHI levels were sharply different. In China, for example, government restrictions continued to fall into the “very high” category, while social hostilities stayed at a “low” level. Iran had “very high” government restrictions and “moderate” social hostilities. Conversely, Nigeria had a “moderate” score on the GRI and a “very high” SHI score in 2020.

Within the government restrictions category, no country among the 25 most populous experienced a large change (2 points or more) in its score. Most countries had small changes in their GRI scores (less than 1 point), while Egypt had a modest decrease of 1.0 point.

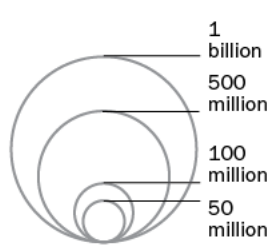
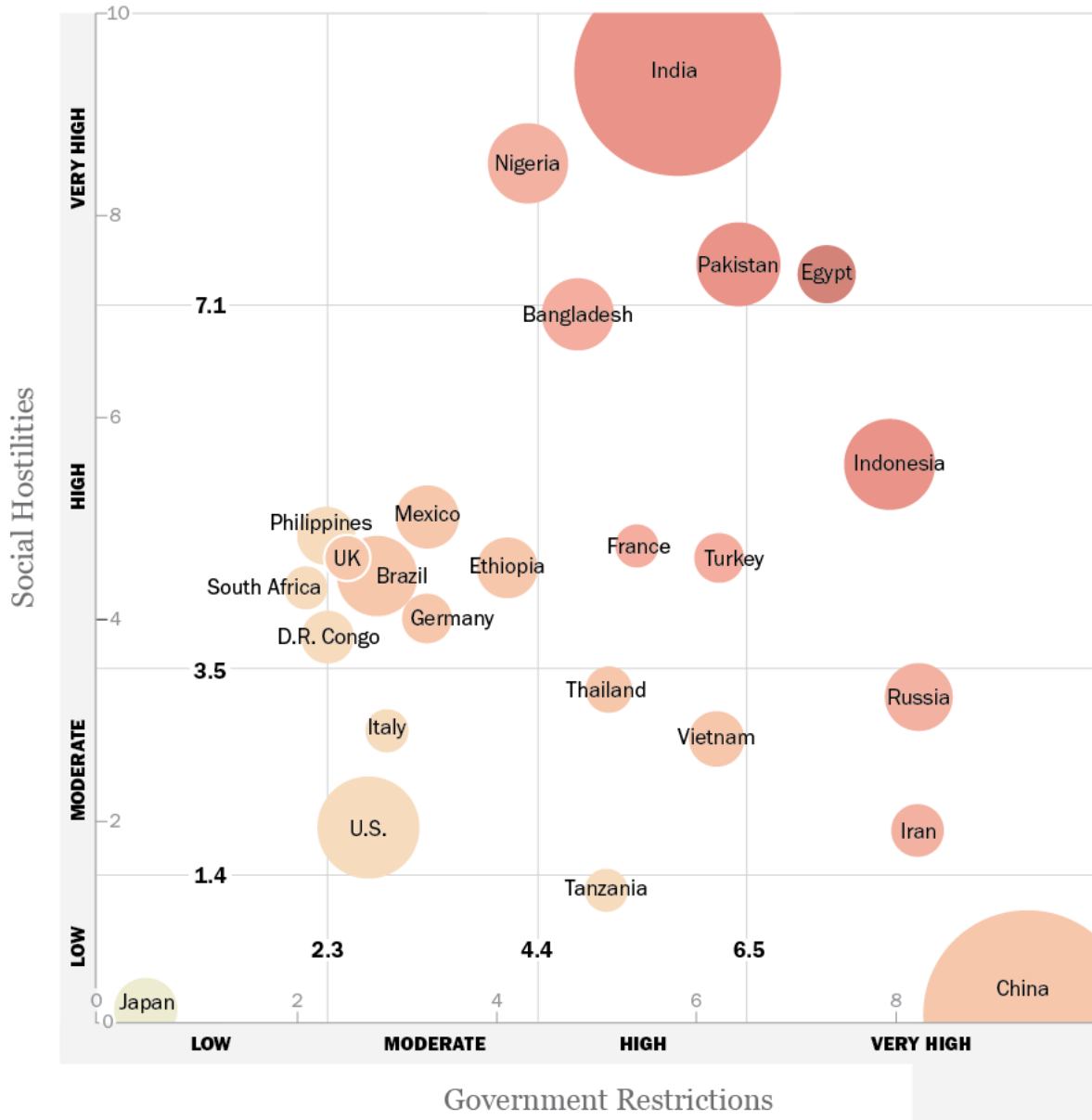
There were more substantial fluctuations from 2019 to 2020 on the Social Hostilities Index. Germany had a large decline in its SHI score (2.0 points), while Tanzania, Ethiopia and Russia had modest decreases, and France, South Africa and Italy experienced modest *increases*.⁶

Several countries among the 25 most populous fell into different categories on the SHI in 2020 than they did in 2019. For example, Thailand's and Russia's social hostilities fell from "high" to "moderate," while Tanzania's declined from "moderate" to "low." South Africa, France and the Democratic Republic of the Congo rose from "moderate" to "high" levels of social hostilities, while Egypt moved from "high" to "very high." In [France](#), there were physical assaults against members of several religious groups, including Jehovah's Witnesses, Jews and Muslims. In addition, in October 2020, a Muslim teenager killed a teacher in a Paris suburb in retaliation for showing cartoons of the Prophet Muhammad as part of a lesson on freedom of expression. (Police later killed the attacker and charged 10 other people, including an imam, with assisting him.)

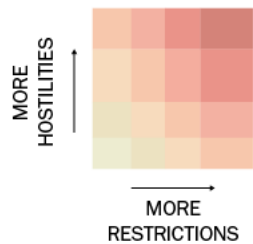
⁶ Final calculations of score-change *categories* are determined using rounded figures, but the score changes themselves are calculated using unrounded figures. For example, Germany's unrounded SHI scores were 5.93 in 2019 and 3.98 in 2020, and while this was a change of 1.95, for the purpose of determining a score-change category it was rounded to 2.0, thereby putting Germany in the category of countries with a "large" rather than "modest" decline.

Restrictions on religion among the world's 25 most populous countries

Among the world's most populous 25 countries, India, Egypt, Pakistan, Indonesia and Nigeria stand out as having the most restrictions on religion (as of 2020) when both government restrictions and social hostilities are taken into account. (Countries in the upper right of the chart have the most restrictions and hostilities.) Japan, the United States, Italy, the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Tanzania have the least restrictions and hostilities. (Countries in the lower left of the chart have the least restrictions and hostilities.) Scores are for calendar year 2020.



Circles are sized proportionally to each country's population (2020).



Colors are based on each country's position on the chart.

Source: Pew Research Center analysis of external data. See Methodology for details. "How COVID-19 Restrictions Affected Religious Groups Around the World in 2020"

Methodology

This is the 13th time Pew Research Center has measured restrictions on religion around the globe.⁷ This report, which includes data for the year ending Dec. 31, 2020, generally follows the same methodology as previous reports.

The Center uses two 10-point indexes – the Government Restrictions Index (GRI) and the Social Hostilities Index (SHI) – to rate 198 countries and self-governing territories on their levels of restrictions.⁸ This report analyzes changes in restrictions on an annual basis, focusing on the 2020 calendar year.

The study categorizes the direction and degree of change in each country’s scores in two ways: numerically and by percentile. First, countries are grouped into categories depending on the size of the numeric change in their scores from year to year on the two indexes: changes of 2 points or more in either direction, changes of at least 1 point but less than 2 points, changes of less than 1 point, or no change at all (see chart at right).

Changes in overall levels of restrictions are calculated for each country by comparing its scores on both indexes (the GRI and the SHI) from year to year. When a country’s scores on the GRI and the SHI changed in the same direction (both increased or both decreased), the greater amount of change determines the category. For instance, if the country’s GRI score increased by 0.8 and its SHI score increased by 1.5, the country was put into the overall “1.0-1.9 increase” category. When a country’s score increased on one index but decreased on the other, the difference between the amounts of change determines the grouping. For example, if the country’s GRI score increased by 2.0 and its SHI score decreased by 1.5, the country went into the overall “0.1-0.9 increase” category. When a country’s score on one index stayed the same, the amount of change on the other index was used to assign the category.

Index point change

Categories for assessing index score changes between years

2.0 or more increase

1.0 to 1.9 increase

0.1 to 0.9 increase

No change

0.1 to 0.9 decrease

1.0 to 1.9 decrease

2.0 or more decrease

“How COVID-19 Restrictions Affected Religious Groups Around the World in 2020”

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⁷ See Methodology of Pew Research Center’s 2009 report “[Global Restrictions on Religion](#)” for a discussion of the conceptual basis for measuring restrictions on religion.

⁸ Some earlier reports provided scores for 197 countries and territories. This report includes South Sudan (which separated from Sudan in July 2011), bringing the total to 198 countries and territories.

Second, this report categorizes the levels of government restrictions and social hostilities in each country by percentiles. As the benchmark, it uses the results from the baseline year of the study (the year ending in mid-2007). Scores in the top 5% on each index in mid-2007 were categorized as “very high.” The next highest 15% of scores were categorized as “high,” and the following 20% were categorized as “moderate.” The bottom 60% of scores were categorized as “low.” See the table to the right for the index score thresholds as determined from the mid-2007 data. These thresholds are applied to all subsequent years of data.

Level of restrictions on religion

	GOVERNMENT RESTRICTIONS INDEX	SOCIAL HOSTILITIES INDEX
Very High	6.6 to 10.0	7.2 to 10.0
High	4.5 to 6.5	3.6 to 7.1
Moderate	2.4 to 4.4	1.5 to 3.5
Low	0.0 to 2.3	0.0 to 1.4

Note: Based on distribution of index scores in the baseline year, ending mid-2007.
“How COVID-19 Restrictions Affected Religious Groups Around the World in 2020”

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Overview of procedures

The methodology used by Pew Research Center to assess and compare restrictions on religion was developed by Brian J. Grim, former Pew Research Center senior researcher and director of cross-national data, in consultation with other Center staff members, building on a methodology that Grim and Professor Roger Finke developed while at Penn State University’s Association of Religion Data Archives.⁹ The goal was to devise quantifiable, objective and transparent measures of the extent to which governments and societal groups impinge on the practice of religion. The findings were used to rate countries and self-governing territories on two indexes that are reproducible and can be periodically updated.

This research goes beyond previous efforts to assess restrictions on religion in several ways. First, the Center coded (categorized and counted) data from more than a dozen published cross-national sources, providing a high degree of confidence in the findings. Pew Research Center coders looked to the sources for only specific, well-documented facts, not opinions or commentary.

Second, Center staff used extensive data-verification checks that reflect generally accepted best practices for such studies, such as double-blind coding (coders do not see each other’s ratings), inter-rater reliability assessments (checking for consistency among coders) and carefully monitored protocols to reconcile discrepancies among coders.

⁹ See Grim, Brian J., and Roger Finke. 2006. “[International Religion Indexes: Government Regulation, Government Favoritism, and Social Regulation of Religion.](#)” *Interdisciplinary Journal of Research on Religion*.

Third, the coding took into account whether the perpetrators of religion-related violence were government or private actors. The coding also identified how widespread and intensive the restrictions were in each country.

Fourth, one of the most valuable contributions of the indexes and the questions used to construct them (see the section on the coding instrument later in the Methodology) is their ability to chart change over time.

Countries and territories

The 198 countries and territories covered by the study contain more than 99.5% of the world's population. They include 192 of the 193 member states of the United Nations as of 2020, plus six territories – Kosovo, Hong Kong, Macao, the Palestinian territories, Taiwan and Western Sahara.¹⁰ Reporting on these territories does not imply any position on what their international political status should be, only recognition that the de facto situations in these territories require separate analysis.

Although the 198 countries and territories vary widely in size, population, wealth, ethnic diversity, religious makeup and form of government, the study does not attempt to adjust for such differences. Poor countries are not scored differently on the indexes than wealthy ones. Countries with diverse ethnic and religious populations are not “expected” to have more social hostilities than countries with more homogeneous populations. And democracies are not assessed more leniently or harshly than authoritarian regimes.

Western Sahara coding

Western Sahara is considered a non-self-governing territory by the United Nations. Morocco administers part of the territory using the Moroccan Constitution and its laws, including laws affecting religious freedom.¹¹ As a consequence, this report considers the policies and actions of the Moroccan government when assessing government restrictions on religion in Western Sahara. The government restrictions coding reflects Morocco's de facto control over parts of Western

¹⁰ The one United Nations member state not included in the study is North Korea. The sources clearly indicate that North Korea's government is among the most repressive in the world with respect to religion as well as other civil and political liberties. The U.S. Department of State's 2015 Report on International Religious Freedom, for example, says that “Religious freedom does not exist in North Korea despite the constitutional guarantee for the freedom of religion,” and there are no indications that this changed in 2020. But because North Korean society is effectively closed to outsiders and independent observers lack regular access to the country, the sources were unable to provide the kind of specific, timely information that Pew Research Center categorized and counted (“coded,” in social science parlance) for this quantitative study. Therefore, the report does not include scores for North Korea. See also U.S. Department of State. August 2016. “[Democratic People's Republic of Korea](#).” International Religious Freedom Report for 2015.

¹¹ U.S. Department of State. June 2020. “[Western Sahara](#).” International Religious Freedom Report for 2019. See also United Nations. “[Non-Self-Governing Territories](#).” The United Nations and Decolonization.

Sahara and is not intended as a Pew Research Center position on the status of the territory. When researchers evaluate social hostilities involving religion, Western Sahara and Morocco are coded separately. Unlike in previous years, in 2020 there was no State Department International Religious Freedom report for Western Sahara. Researchers applied Morocco's laws and policies to the territory for government restrictions coding. For social hostilities, researchers only coded information from sources when they specifically referred to Western Sahara.

Information sources

In the latest year of the study, Pew Research Center identified 19 widely available, frequently cited sources of information on government restrictions and social hostilities involving religion around the world. This study includes four sources that were not used in the baseline report on religious restrictions. (See section below for more details on the new information sources.)

The primary and secondary sources, which are listed below, include reports from U.S. government agencies, several independent, nongovernmental organizations, and a variety of European and United Nations bodies. Although most of these organizations are based in Western countries, many of them depend on local staff to collect information across the globe. As previously noted, Pew Research Center did not use the commentaries, opinions or normative judgments of the sources; the sources were combed only for factual information on specific policies and actions.

Primary and secondary sources for 2020

1. Country constitutions
2. U.S. Department of State annual reports on International Religious Freedom
3. U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom annual reports
4. UN Special Rapporteur on Freedom of Religion or Belief reports
5. Human Rights First reports in first and second years of coding; Freedom House reports in subsequent years of coding
6. Human Rights Watch topical reports
7. International Crisis Group country reports
8. United Kingdom Foreign & Commonwealth Office annual report on human rights

9. Council of the European Union annual report on human rights
10. National Consortium for the Study of Terrorism and Responses to Terrorism (START) [Global Terrorism Database](#), University of Maryland
11. United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees reports
12. U.S. Department of State annual Country Reports on Terrorism
13. Anti-Defamation League reports
14. U.S. Department of State Country Reports on Human Rights Practices
15. Uppsala University’s Uppsala Conflict Data Program, Armed Conflict Database
16. Human Rights Without Frontiers “Freedom of Religion or Belief” newsletters
17. Amnesty International Country Profiles
18. United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees Population Statistics Database
19. Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre Global Internal Displacement Database

U.S. government reports with information on the situation in the United States:

- U.S. Department of Justice “Religious Freedom in Focus” newsletters and reports
- FBI Hate Crime Reports

The “Religious Freedom in Focus” materials and the FBI Hate Crime Reports contain information only on the United States and were included because there are no annual publications from the U.S. State Department that report on government restrictions and social hostilities involving religion in the United States.

As noted, this study includes four sources that were not included in Pew Research Center’s first report on global restrictions on religion: Freedom House reports, Uppsala University’s Armed Conflict Database, the “Freedom of Religion or Belief” newsletters of Human Rights Without Frontiers, and the Global Terrorism Database.

The Freedom House reports have replaced Human Rights First reports, which have not been updated since mid-2008. The Uppsala Armed Conflict Database provides information on the number of people affected by religion-related armed conflicts, supplementing other sources. The Human Rights Without Frontiers “Freedom of Religion or Belief” newsletters have replaced the Hudson Institute publication “Religious Freedom in the World” (by Paul Marshall), which has not been updated since its release in 2008. Human Rights Without Frontiers is a nongovernmental organization based in Brussels that has affiliated offices throughout the world.

Since 2013, Pew Research Center has used data from the Global Terrorism Database, maintained by the University of Maryland’s National Consortium for the Study of Terrorism and Responses to Terrorism (START), along with the International Crisis Group’s country reports, Uppsala University’s Armed Conflict Database and the U.S. State Department annual Country Reports on Terrorism, for information on religion-related terrorism. (One source used in earlier reports, the U.S. government’s Worldwide Incident Tracking System, or WITS, is no longer available online.) Prior to 2013, the report relied only on the International Crisis Group reports, the Uppsala database and the State Department reports for information on religion-related terrorism. The Global Terrorism Database is one of the most comprehensive sources on terrorism around the world and is the source for the State Department Country Reports on Terrorism. The addition of this source thus provides greater context and information on terrorism without biasing the reporting through the addition of information that was not previously available.

While some of the increases in religious restrictions noted in this study could reflect the use of more up-to-date and/or better informational sources, Pew Research Center staff monitor the impact of source information variability each year and have found no evidence of overall informational bias. (For additional discussion, see the “Potential Biases” section in the 2014 report, “[Religious Hostilities Reach Six-Year High](#).”)

In most years, Pew Research Center has included Amnesty International’s country profiles as one of the sources used for this study. These profiles were not updated for the year 2018, so they are absent as a source for the report covering 2018 events. Amnesty International reports were used for this report covering 2020 events, however.

The coding instrument

As explained in more detail below, Pew Research Center staff developed a battery of questions similar to a survey questionnaire. Coders consulted the primary and secondary sources to answer the questions separately for each country. While the U.S. State Department's annual reports on International Religious Freedom generally contained the most comprehensive information, the other sources provided additional factual detail that was used to settle ambiguities, resolve contradictions and help in the proper scoring of each question.

The questionnaire, or coding instrument, generated a set of numerical measures on restrictions in each country. It also made it possible to see how government restrictions intersect with broader social tensions and incidents of violence or intimidation by private actors. The coding instrument with the list of questions used for this report is shown in the [summary of results](#).

The coding process required the coders to check all the sources for each country. Coders determined whether each source provided information critical to assigning a score; had supporting information but did not result in new facts; or had no available information on that particular country. Multiple sources of information were available for all countries and territories with populations greater than 1 million. Most of the countries and territories analyzed by Pew Research Center had multiple sources; only small (predominantly island) countries had a single source, namely the State Department reports.

Coding the United States presented a special problem since it is not included in the State Department's annual reports on International Religious Freedom. Accordingly, Pew Research Center coders also looked at reports from the U.S. Department of Justice and the FBI on violations of religious freedom in the United States, in addition to consulting all the primary and secondary sources, including reports by the United Nations, Human Rights Watch, Freedom House, the International Crisis Group and the UK Foreign & Commonwealth Office, many of which contain data on the U.S.

The coding process

Pew Research Center employed strict training and rigorous coding protocols to make its coding as objective and reproducible as possible. Coders worked directly under an experienced researcher's supervision, with additional direction and support provided by other Center researchers. The coders underwent an intensive training period that included a thorough overview of the research objectives, information sources and methodology.

Countries were double-blind coded by two coders (coders did not see each other's ratings), and the initial ratings were entered into an electronic document (coding instrument) including details on each incident. The coders began by filling out the coding instrument for each country using the information source that had the most comprehensive information. The protocol for each coder was to answer every question on which information was available in the initial source. Once a coder had completed that process, they then turned to the other sources. As new information was found, this was also coded and the source duly noted. Whenever ambiguities or contradictions arose, the source providing the most detailed, clearly documented evidence was used.

After two coders had separately completed the coding instrument for a particular country, their scores were compared by a research analyst. Areas of discrepancy were discussed at length with the coders and were reconciled in order to arrive at a single score on each question for each country. The data for each country was then combined into a master file, and the answers and substantiating evidence were entered into a database.

After data collection for all countries was completed, Pew Research Center coders and researchers compared the scores from calendar year 2020 with those from the previous year, ending Dec. 31, 2019. They identified scores that had changed and analyzed the substantiating evidence for each year to make sure the change was substantive and not the result of coder error. Throughout this process, the coding instrument itself was continually monitored for possible defects. The questions were designed to be precise, comprehensive and objective so that, based on the same data and definitions, the coding could be reliably reproduced by others with the same results. At the same time, the Center has attempted to minimize changes to the coding instrument as much as is possible to ensure all changes between years are the result of actual changes in restrictions and hostilities, not changes in methodology.

Pew Research Center staff generally found few cases in which one source contradicted another. When contradictions did arise – such as when sources provided differing estimates of the number of people displaced due to religion-related violence – the source that cited the most specific documentation was used. The coders were instructed to disregard broad, unsubstantiated generalizations regarding abuses and to focus on reports that contained clear, precise documentation and factual details, such as names, dates and places where incidents occurred.

Center staff compared coders' scores for all questions for each of the 198 countries and territories included in the study, computing the degree to which the scores matched. The inter-rater reliability score across all variables was 0.67. Scores near or above 0.7 are generally considered good.

The data verification procedures went beyond the inter-rater reliability statistics. They also involved comparing the answers on the main measures for each country with other closely related questions in the dataset. This provided a practical way to test the internal reliability of the data.

In previous years, Center staff also checked the reliability of the coded data by comparing it with similar, though more limited, religious restrictions datasets. In particular, published government and social regulation of religion index scores are available from the Association of Religion Data Archives (for three years of data) and the Hudson Institute (for one year of data), which makes them ideal measures for cross-validation. The review process found very few significant discrepancies in the coded data; changes were made only if warranted by a further review of the primary and secondary sources.

Restriction of religion indexes

The Government Restrictions Index (GRI) is based on 20 indicators of ways that national and local governments restrict religion, including through coercion and force. The Social Hostilities Index (SHI) is based on 13 indicators of ways in which private individuals and social groups infringe upon religious beliefs and practices, including religiously biased crimes, mob violence and efforts to stop particular religious groups from growing or operating. The study also counted the number and types of documented incidents of religion-related violence, including terrorism and armed conflict.

Government Restrictions Index

Coding multiple indicators makes it possible to construct a Government Restrictions Index of sufficient gradation to allow for meaningful cross-national comparisons. An additional advantage of using multiple indicators is that it helps mitigate the effects of measurement error in any one variable, providing greater confidence in the overall measure.

Pew Research Center coded 20 indicators of government restrictions on religion (see the [summary of results](#)). These 20 items were added together to create the GRI. In two cases, these items represent an aggregation of several closely related questions: Measures of five types of physical abuses are combined into a single variable (GRI Q.19), and seven questions measuring aspects of government favoritism are combined into an overall favoritism scale (GRI Q.20 is a summary variable showing whether a country received the maximum score on one or more of the seven questions).

The GRI is a fine-grained measure created by adding the 20 items on a zero-to-10 metric, with zero indicating very low levels of government restrictions on religion and 10 indicating very high levels of restrictions. The 20 questions that form the GRI are coded in a standard scale from zero to 1 point, while gradations among the answers allowed for partial points to be given for lesser degrees of the particular government restriction being measured. The overall value of the index was calculated and proportionally adjusted – so that it had a maximum value of 10 and a possible range of zero to 10 – by dividing the sum of the variables by two.

A test of whether the 20 items were statistically reliable as a single index produced a scale reliability coefficient of 0.90 for calendar year 2020. Since coefficients of 0.7 or higher are generally considered acceptable, it was statistically appropriate to combine these 20 items into a single index.

Social Hostilities Index

In addition to government restrictions, violence and intimidation in societies also can limit religious beliefs and practices. Accordingly, Pew Research Center staff tracked more than a dozen indicators of social impediments on religion. Once again, coding multiple indicators made it possible to construct an index that shows gradations of severity or intensity and allows for comparisons among countries. The summary of results contains the 13 items used by Center staff to create the Social Hostilities Index.

The SHI was constructed by adding together the 13 indicators based on a zero-to-10 metric, with zero indicating very low impediments to religious beliefs and practices, and 10 indicating very high impediments. The various questions that form the index are coded in a standard scale from zero to 1 point, while gradations among the answers allow for partial points to be given for lesser degrees of the particular hostilities being measured. The indicators were added together and set to have a possible range of zero to 10 by dividing the sum of the variables by 1.3.

As with the Government Restrictions Index, various types of violence and intimidation were combined. A test of whether these 13 items were statistically reliable as a single index produced a scale reliability coefficient of 0.86. Since coefficients of 0.7 or higher are generally considered acceptable, it was statistically appropriate to combine these items into a single index.

How examples are coded

Examples of each type of government restriction or social hostility are generally counted in a single measure on the GRI or SHI. For instance, a restriction on proselytizing (sharing one's faith with the intent of persuading another to join the faith) is not also counted as a restriction on conversion (an individual changing their religion). In some situations, however, an individual restriction or hostility may be part of a broader set of restrictions or hostilities. For instance, a mob attack by members of one religious group on an individual of another religion may be an isolated event, counted only under question SHI Q.2: "Was there mob violence related to religion?" However, if such an attack triggers repeated attacks between religious groups, it also might be an indication of sectarian or communal violence, which by definition involves two or more religious groups facing off in repeated clashes. In such a case, the mob attack also would be counted under question SHI Q.3: "Were there acts of sectarian or communal violence between religious groups?" (See the [summary of results](#).)

For a number of questions on the Social Hostilities Index (SHI. Q.6, Q.7, Q.8, Q.9, Q.10, Q.11, Q.12 and Q.13), coders look at incidents in the State Department International Religious Freedom Reports from the previous two calendar years to capture ongoing social hostilities in a country.

Social harassment and intimidation coding

Beginning with data for 2017, researchers updated the way social harassment and intimidation of religion is calculated. There are six components that encompass question SHI Q.1.a: "Were there crimes, malicious acts or violence motivated by religious hatred or bias?" The six components include harassment/intimidation, property damage, detentions/abductions, displacement from homes, physical assaults and deaths (see [Appendix D](#)). For the "harassment/intimidation" measure, researchers made an update to count "limited" harassment as 0.5 points and "widespread" harassment as 1.0 point for data covering 2017 onward. "Limited" means infrequent or isolated and indicates that the harassment seems unlikely to continue. "Widespread" does not necessarily mean the whole country, but it could be present in certain regions, have potential of spreading to other regions, affect several groups, indicate a substantial uptick in the number of cases of abuse, or indicate a possible campaign against a certain religion(s) or practices.

The other five components of SHI.Q.1.a are coded as yes (1.0 point) or no (0.0 points) based on whether incidents in each subcategory occurred. Compared with the previous method, this update to coding "limited" and "widespread" intimidation and harassment resulted in a change of no more than 0.1 points to the SHI score of 53 countries in 2017.

Effects of consolidating to a new database

For the first few years of this study, information on the number, types and locations of incidents of government force and social violence toward religious groups, as well as deference to religious authorities in matters of law, were coded at the province level. (See [example of data coding](#) in the December 2009 baseline report.) Each year, the province numbers were summed and put into separate country-level files. Following the publication of the August 2011 report, Pew Research Center staff created a database that integrated all province- and country-level data on religious restrictions. During this process, Center staff reviewed any discrepancies between province files and the sums that had been transferred to the country files and made appropriate corrections. The adjustments made were relatively minor and had small effects on index scores for countries, on average less than 0.005 on the 10-point indexes. Consolidating the data into a database also entailed a review of the data on harassment of religious groups. In particular, instances of harassment from the year ending in mid-2007 were stored as open-ended questions, and in a few cases, they were recoded to match the categories used in subsequent years.

Beginning with data covering 2012, Pew Research Center stopped collecting data at the province level; all data was coded at the country level.

Changing time period of analysis

This is the 10th time Pew Research Center has analyzed restrictions on religion in a calendar year. Previous reports analyzed 12-month periods from July 1-June 30 (e.g., July 1, 2009-June 30, 2010). The shift to calendar years was made in part because most of the primary and secondary sources used in this study are based on calendar years.

Because of the shift in time frame, previous studies did not report directly on incidents that occurred during the period from July 1-Dec. 31, 2010. While this misses some incidents that occurred during the second half of 2010, events that had an ongoing impact – such as a change to a country’s constitution or the outbreak of a religion-related war – were captured by the coding. Researchers for the study carefully reviewed the situation in each country and territory during this six-month period and ensured that restrictions with an ongoing impact were not overlooked.

Religion-related terrorism and armed conflict

Terrorism and war can have huge direct and indirect effects on religious groups, including destroying religious sites, displacing whole communities and inflaming sectarian passions. Accordingly, Pew Research Center tallied the number, location and consequences of religion-related terrorism and armed conflict around the world, as reported in the same primary and secondary sources used to document other forms of intimidation and violence. However, war and

terrorism are sufficiently complex that it is not always possible to determine the degree to which they are religiously motivated or state sponsored. Out of an abundance of caution, this study does not include them in the Government Restrictions Index. They are factored instead into the index of social hostilities involving religion, which includes one question specifically about religion-related terrorism and one question specifically about religion-related war or armed conflict. In addition, other measures in both indexes are likely to pick up spillover effects of war and terrorism on the level of religious tensions in society. For example, hate crimes, mob violence and sectarian fighting that occur in the aftermath of a terrorist attack or in the context of a religion-related war would be counted in the Social Hostilities Index, and laws or policies that clearly discriminate against a particular religious group would be registered on the Government Restrictions Index.

For the purposes of this study, the term “religion-related terrorism” is defined as premeditated, politically motivated violence perpetrated against noncombatants by subnational groups or clandestine agents that have some identifiable religious ideology or religious motivation. It also includes acts carried out by groups that have a nonreligious identity but affect religious personnel, such as clergy. Readers should note that it is the political character and motivation of the groups, not the type of violence, that is at issue here. For instance, a bombing would not be classified as religion-related terrorism if there was no clearly discernible religious ideology or bias behind it, unless it was directed at religious personnel. Religion-related war or armed conflict is defined as armed conflict (a conflict that involves sustained casualties over time or more than 1,000 battle deaths) in which religious rhetoric is commonly used to justify the use of force, or in which one or more of the combatants primarily identifies itself or the opposing side by religion.

Changes to Somalia’s coding

Starting with data covering 2013, researchers changed the way they coded government restrictions in Somalia. In previous years of the study, researchers had coded actions by the al-Shabab rebel group as government restrictions, largely because the group effectively controlled large swathes of Somali territory. The extent of al-Shabab control over Somali territory decreased in calendar year 2013, so researchers did not code their actions as government restrictions but rather as social hostilities. Researchers continued to follow this policy when coding data for 2020.

Crimea coding

Starting with data covering 2015, researchers coded incidents occurring in Crimea as part of Russia's GRI and SHI score. This is to reflect Russia's de facto control over Crimea and is not intended as a Pew Research Center position on the de jure status of the territory, which the United Nations recognizes as part of Ukraine.¹²

Changes to Yemen's coding

Starting with data covering 2016, researchers changed the way they coded social hostilities in Yemen. In previous years of the study, researchers had coded actions by Houthi rebels as social hostilities. In 2016, however, Houthis formed their own government and had control of territory that is home to more than half of Yemen's population.¹³ For this reason, researchers coded actions by the Houthi in 2016 as government restrictions rather than social hostilities and continued to do so in 2020.

Displacement coding

Starting with data covering 2016, researchers changed the way they coded displacement caused by religion-related conflict or terrorism. Previously, researchers would record displacement figures that were reported in any sources. During the coding period covering 2015, researchers continued to code displacement figures in this way but also recorded displacement figures from the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), as well as the Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre (IDMC), in order to compare the results. Researchers found that the figures from the UNHCR and IDMC more closely matched United Nations estimates for new displacements in the calendar year than did the previous method of capturing displacements, which tended to overestimate the number of new displacements in a coding year because the figures often included the *total* number of displaced people from a country and not necessarily the *newly* displaced. Therefore, beginning with the data covering 2016, researchers exclusively used UNHCR and IDMC figures to more conservatively estimate the number of new displacements in the coding year. Displacement was only coded in countries with active religion-related conflict or terrorism in order to avoid including displacements from other types of conflicts or terrorism.

¹² United Nations. March 2014. "[Territorial integrity of Ukraine](#)." Resolution adopted by the General Assembly on March 27, 2014.

¹³ Nov. 28, 2016. "[Yemen: Houthi rebels form new government](#)." Al Jazeera.

Country constitution audit

Researchers conducted an audit of country constitutions for coding covering the years 2007-2014. While the vast majority of country constitutions were correctly coded as to whether they included religious freedom provisions, there were a few countries where the coding was amended. These included Mexico, Costa Rica, Fiji, Iran, Jamaica, the Dominican Republic, Uruguay, Cameroon, Kenya and Mozambique. These amendments resulted in minimal changes in these countries' overall GRI scores and did not alter overall trends represented in previous reports. Two countries – Mexico and Costa Rica – had score changes that pushed them from one category to another in 2014. Mexico's 2014 GRI score decreased from "high" to "moderate," while Costa Rica's 2014 GRI score increased from "low" to "moderate."

Potential biases

As noted earlier, the primary and secondary sources indicate that the North Korean government is among the most repressive in the world, including toward religion. But because independent observers lack regular access to North Korea, the sources are unable to provide the kind of specific, timely information that forms the basis of this report. Therefore, North Korea is not included on either index.

This raises two important issues concerning potential information bias in the sources. The first is whether other countries that limit outsiders' access and that may seek to obscure or distort their record on religious restrictions were adequately covered by the sources. Countries with relatively limited access have multiple primary and secondary sources of information that Pew Research Center used for its coding. Each is also covered by other secondary quantitative data sets on religious restrictions that have used a similar coding scheme, including earlier years of coded State Department report data produced by Brian J. Grim at Penn State University's Association of Religion Data Archives (ARDA) project (four datasets); independent coding by experts at the Hudson Institute's Center for Religious Liberty using indexes also available from ARDA (one dataset); and content analysis of country constitutions conducted by the Becket Fund for Religious Liberty (one dataset). Pew Research Center staff used these for cross-validation. Thus, contrary to what one might expect, even most countries that limit access to information tend to receive fairly extensive coverage by groups that monitor religious restrictions.

The second key question – the flipside of the first – is whether countries that provide freer access to information receive worse scores simply because more information is available on them. As described more fully in the [Methodology in the baseline report](#), Pew Research Center staff compared the length of State Department reports on freer-access countries with those of less-free-access countries. The comparison found that the median number of words was approximately

three times as large for the limited-access countries as for the open-access countries. This suggests that problems in freer-access countries are generally not overreported in the State Department reports.

Only when it comes to religion-related violence and intimidation in society do the sources report more problems in the freer-access countries than in the limited-access ones. However, the Social Hostilities Index includes several measures – such as SHI Q.8 (“Did religious groups themselves attempt to prevent other religious groups from being able to operate?”) and SHI Q.11 (“Were women harassed for violating religious dress codes?”) – that are less susceptible to such reporting bias because they capture general social trends or attitudes as well as specific incidents. With these limitations in mind, it appears that the coded information on social hostilities is a fair gauge of the situation in the vast majority of countries and a valuable complement to the information on government restrictions.

Data on social impediments to religious practice can more confidently be used to make comparisons among countries with sufficient openness, which includes more than nine-in-ten countries covered in the coding. An analysis by Grim and Richard Wike, Pew Research Center’s director of global attitudes research, tested the reliability of the State Department reports on social impediments to religious practice by comparing public opinion data with data coded from the reports in previous years by Grim and experts at Penn State University. They concluded that “the understanding of social religious intolerance embodied in the State Department reports is comparable with the results of population surveys and individual expert opinion.”¹⁴

Coding harassment of specific religious groups

As in previous reports, this study provides a summary of the number of countries where specific religious groups faced government or social harassment. This is essentially a cross-tabulation of GRI.Q.11 (“Was there harassment or intimidation of religious groups by any level of government?”) and the first type of religious hatred or bias measured in SHI.Q.1.a. (“Did individuals face harassment or intimidation motivated by religious hatred or bias?”). For the purposes of this study, the definition of harassment includes any mention in the primary and secondary sources of an offense against an individual or group based on religious identity. Such offenses may range from physical attacks and direct coercion to more subtle forms of discrimination. But prejudicial opinions or attitudes, in and of themselves, do not constitute harassment unless they are acted upon in a palpable way.

¹⁴ See Grim, Brian J., and Richard Wike. 2010. “[Cross-Validating Measures of Global Religious Intolerance: Comparing Coded State Department Reports with Survey Data and Expert Opinion.](#)” Politics and Religion.

As noted above, this study provides data on the number of countries in which different religious groups are harassed or intimidated. But the study does not assess either the severity or the frequency of the harassment in each country. Therefore, the results should not be interpreted as gauging which religious group faces the most harassment or persecution around the world.

Coding COVID-19-related restrictions on religion

For the section on the pandemic – new in this year’s report – researchers reviewed dozens of news articles about coronavirus-related restrictions in 2020 and how they affected religious groups around the world. That initial review identified several patterns or themes that appeared to be relatively common, such as religious groups objecting to bans on public worship services as a violation of religious freedom. Researchers then used these patterns and themes to develop a set of pandemic-related questions that could be coded (i.e., categorized and counted) uniformly across all 198 countries and territories in the study. These COVID-19 questions are *not* included in the overall GRI and SHI indexes, though incidents related to COVID-19 *were* included in the GRI and SHI analysis when they appeared in the primary and secondary sources traditionally used for the study. (See [Appendix E](#) for the full list of questions.)

To answer the questions specifically related to the pandemic, a team of coders first collected information from the same sources used for the annual religious restrictions dataset. Then, the coders electronically searched the leading English-language newspaper websites covering each country, using search terms related to religious restrictions and COVID-19 to look for relevant news articles from 2020. For each country, coders also combed through a set of English-language global news sites and reports on COVID-19 produced by organizations including think tanks and university research centers (such as the Berkley Center for Religion, Peace and World Affairs at Georgetown University and the Institute of Development Studies located at the University of Sussex).¹⁵ As a last step, if no information had been found for a particular country, coders conducted a Google search for relevant news articles using search terms related to religious restrictions and COVID-19 for that country.

During this process, coders sometimes compared multiple accounts of an incident from different sources, but they did not attempt to verify the accuracy of news articles. Blog posts, social media

¹⁵ Coders began the process by searching global news sites such as: Al Jazeera English, The Associated Press, Asia Times, BBC News, CBS News, DW News, The Guardian, Middle East Eye, The New York Times, Religion News Service, Reuters, TRT World and The Washington Post. Coders also used regional news sources when coding countries in specific regions, including All Africa, Agence de Presse Africaine (English version), Balkan Insight, Channel News Asia, France24, La Croix and Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty, among others.

accounts and other informal sources were not used. For coding purposes, individual incidents could be counted under more than one type of COVID-19 question.

To keep the GRI and SHI consistent from year to year, the pandemic-related questions were not included, as a whole, in either index. However, the GRI and SHI did pick up some coronavirus-related government restrictions and social hostilities, such as arrests and imprisonments of religious leaders, that were reported in the sources traditionally used for the annual study.

Appendix A: Government Restrictions Index

The following table shows all 198 countries and territories in descending order of their scores on Pew Research Center's index of government restrictions on religion as of the end of 2020. The Center has not attached numerical rankings to the countries because there are numerous tied scores and the differences between the scores of countries that are close to each other on this table are not necessarily meaningful.

Very High SCORES 6.6 AND HIGHER		Moderate SCORES 2.4 TO 4.4
China	Turkey	Denmark
Malaysia	Vietnam	Nigeria
Algeria	Turkmenistan ▼	Djibouti
Iran	Iraq ▼	Ukraine
Russia	Laos	Equatorial Guinea
Indonesia	Qatar	Ethiopia
Myanmar	Kuwait	Lebanon
Syria	Belarus	Niger
Tajikistan	India	Chad
Egypt ▼	Libya	Georgia
Brunei	Sudan ▼	Greece
Uzbekistan	Western Sahara	Spain
Azerbaijan	Yemen	Armenia
Kazakhstan	Kyrgyzstan	Rwanda
Singapore	United Arab Emirates	Iceland
Afghanistan	Cuba	Montenegro
Eritrea	France	Cambodia
Maldives ▼	Sri Lanka	Bahamas
Saudi Arabia	Oman	Belgium
	Romania	Finland
	Tanzania	Germany
	Thailand	Guinea
	Bangladesh	Mexico
	Bhutan	Poland
	Jordan	Kenya
	Nepal	South Sudan
	Palestinian territories	Zambia
	Somalia ▲	Hungary
	Comoros	Norway
	Moldova	Serbia
	Austria	Sweden
	Bulgaria ▼	

▲ Denotes an increase of one point or more from 2019 to 2020.

▼ Denotes a decrease of one point or more from 2019 to 2020.

* See page 64 for notes on North Korea and Somalia.

Government Restrictions Index (cont.)

Mongolia
 Croatia
 Cyprus
 Italy
 Luxembourg
 Venezuela
 Angola ▼
 Bosnia-Herzegovina
 Burundi ▼
 Fiji ▲
 Kosovo
 Madagascar
 Netherlands ▼
 Slovakia
 United Kingdom
 Burkina Faso
 Cameroon
 Central African Republic
 Costa Rica
 Nicaragua
 United States
 Eswatini
 Mozambique ▼
 Seychelles
 Brazil
 Guyana
 Liechtenstein
 Mali
 Monaco
 Togo
 Uganda
 Zimbabwe ▼
 Andorra
 Haiti
 Latvia
 South Korea
 St. Lucia
 Switzerland

Low

SCORES 0.0 TO 2.3

Czech Republic
 Dem. Rep. of the Congo
 El Salvador
 Lithuania
 Philippines
 Sierra Leone
 Argentina
 Dominica
 Malawi
 Malta
 North Macedonia
 South Africa
 Barbados
 Botswana
 Canada
 Ecuador
 Grenada
 Honduras
 Jamaica
 Tuvalu
 Albania
 Australia
 Guatemala
 Hong Kong
 Slovenia
 Chile
 Ghana
 Nauru
 Paraguay
 Peru
 Tonga
 Belize
 Gambia
 Liberia
 Mauritius
 Panama
 Papua New Guinea
 Republic of the Congo
 Taiwan

Colombia
 Dominican Republic
 Estonia
 Benin
 Ivory Coast
 Lesotho
 Namibia
 Vanuatu
 Gabon
 Kiribati
 Samoa
 Solomon Islands
 Timor-Leste
 Uruguay
 Ireland
 St. Kitts and Nevis
 Trinidad and Tobago
 Bolivia
 Cape Verde
 Sao Tome and Principe
 Senegal
 St. Vincent and the Grenadines
 Suriname
 Antigua and Barbuda
 Macao
 Portugal
 San Marino
 Japan
 Palau
 Federated States of Micronesia
 Guinea-Bissau
 Marshall Islands
 New Zealand

NORTH KOREA: The sources used for this study clearly indicate that the government of North Korea is among the most repressive in the world with respect to religion as well as other civil liberties. But because North Korean society is effectively closed to outsiders, the sources are unable to provide the kind of specific and timely information that Pew Research Center coded in this quantitative study. Therefore, the report does not include a score for North Korea on either index.

SOMALIA: Starting with data covering 2013, researchers changed the way they coded government restrictions in Somalia. See the Methodology for more details.

Note: Myanmar is also called Burma. Eswatini was formerly known as Swaziland.

Appendix B: Social Hostilities Index

The following table shows all 198 countries and territories in descending order of their scores on Pew Research Center's index of social hostilities involving religion as of the end of 2020. The Center has not attached numerical rankings to the countries because there are numerous tied scores and the differences between the scores of countries that are close to each other on this table are not necessarily meaningful.

Very High					
SCORES 7.2 AND HIGHER					
India		Belgium		Sweden	▲
Nigeria		Ethiopia	▼	Maldives	
Afghanistan	▲	Denmark		Mozambique	
Israel		United Kingdom		Uzbekistan	
Mali	▲	South Africa	▲	Vietnam	
Somalia		Central African Republic	▼	Norway	▲
Pakistan		Moldova		Cyprus	
Egypt		Germany	▼	Ghana	
Libya		Laos	▲	Kazakhstan	
Syria		Dem. Rep. of the Congo		Kosovo	
Iraq		Finland		Niger	▼
		Jordan		Honduras	
		Nepal		Ireland	
		South Korea	▼	Saudi Arabia	
				Sudan	
				Australia	
				Morocco	
				Austria	
				Bulgaria	▼
				Colombia	
				El Salvador	
				Greece	▼
				Guatemala	▲
				North Macedonia	
				Armenia	
				Netherlands	
				Uganda	▼
				Bosnia-Herzegovina	
				Chad	
				Hungary	▼
				Liberia	
				Malawi	
				Papua New Guinea	

High		Moderate	
SCORES 3.6 TO 7.1		SCORES 1.5 TO 3.5	
Bangladesh		Guinea	
Burkina Faso	▲	Malaysia	
Sri Lanka	▼	Tunisia	▼
Palestinian territories	▲	Yemen	▼
Kenya		Switzerland	
Algeria		Thailand	
Cameroon		Russia	▼
Indonesia		Haiti	
Mexico		Myanmar	
Ukraine		Tajikistan	
Philippines		Spain	▼
France	▲	Bolivia	
Lebanon		Georgia	
Brazil		Italy	▲
Turkey			

▲ Denotes an increase of one point or more from 2019 to 2020.
▼ Denotes a decrease of one point or more from 2019 to 2020.

* See page 67 for a note on North Korea and Yemen.

Social Hostilities Index (cont.)

Iran		
Kuwait	▲	
Paraguay		
Singapore		
South Sudan		
United States		
Argentina		
Czech Republic		
Mauritania		
Poland		
Serbia		
Slovakia	▼	
Azerbaijan		
Burundi		
Iceland		
Bahrain		
Kyrgyzstan		
Bhutan	▲	
Canada		
Venezuela		
Guinea-Bissau		
Mongolia		
Solomon Islands		
Zambia		
Zimbabwe		
Croatia		
Fiji		
Luxembourg		
Madagascar		
New Zealand	▼	
Slovenia		
Cambodia		
Bahamas		
Barbados		
Belize		
Gabon		
Liechtenstein		
Malta		
Portugal		
Sierra Leone	▼	
Togo		
Trinidad and Tobago		
United Arab Emirates		
Marshall Islands		
Uruguay		
Comoros		
Djibouti		
Dominica		
Estonia		
Lithuania		
Oman		
St. Lucia		
Timor-Leste		
Western Sahara		
Gambia	▼	
Latvia		
Mauritius		
Republic of the Congo		
Rwanda	▼	
Taiwan		
Tonga		
Cuba		
Hong Kong		
China		
Costa Rica		
Ecuador		
Eswatini		
Jamaica		
Japan		
Panama		
Peru		
Samoa	▼	
St. Kitts and Nevis		
St. Vincent and the Grenadines		
Vanuatu		
Albania		
Andorra		
Antigua and Barbuda		
Benin	▼	
Botswana		
Cape Verde		
Dominican Republic		
Equatorial Guinea		
Eritrea		
Grenada		
Guyana		
Lesotho		
Macao		
Monaco		
Namibia		
Nauru		
Palau		
San Marino		
Sao Tome and Principe	▼	
Seychelles		
Suriname		
Low		
SCORES 0.0 TO 1.4		
Chile		
Ivory Coast		
Nicaragua		
Brunei		
Montenegro		
Romania		
Tanzania	▼	
Kiribati		
Qatar		
Senegal		
Turkmenistan		
Tuvalu		
Angola		
Belarus		
Federated States of Micronesia		

NORTH KOREA: The sources used for this study clearly indicate that the government of North Korea is among the most repressive in the world with respect to religion as well as other civil liberties. But because North Korean society is effectively closed to outsiders, the sources are unable to provide the kind of specific and timely information that Pew Research Center coded in this quantitative study. Therefore, the report does not include a score for North Korea on either index.

YEMEN: Starting with data covering 2016, researchers changed the way they coded social hostilities in Yemen. See the Methodology for more details.

Note: Myanmar is also called Burma. Eswatini was formerly known as Swaziland.

Appendix C: Religious restrictions index scores by region

Scores in the table below express the levels of religious restrictions according to Pew Research Center's Government Restrictions Index (GRI) and Social Hostilities Index (SHI).

Americas 35 countries	baseline year, ending JUN 2007		previous year, ending DEC 2019		latest year, ending DEC 2020	
	GRI	SHI	GRI	SHI	GRI	SHI
Antigua and Barbuda	1.1	0.3	0.8	0.0	0.8	0.0
Argentina	1.7	0.6	2.1	1.7	2.2	1.8
Bahamas	1.4	0.5	3.4	0.0	3.4	0.8
Barbados	0.8	0.3	2.3	0.1	2.0	0.8
Belize	1.3	0.0	1.1	1.0	1.5	0.8
Bolivia	1.0	0.0	1.0	2.9	0.9	2.9
Brazil	0.4	0.8	2.4	4.7	2.5	4.6
Canada	1.0	1.2	2.0	1.9	2.0	1.5
Chile	1.2	0.4	1.5	0.7	1.7	1.4
Colombia	1.8	3.3	1.4	2.6	1.4	2.2
Costa Rica	1.0	0.0	2.7	0.2	2.7	0.1
Cuba	4.5	0.0	5.3	0.2	5.6	0.2
Dominica	0.8	0.3	2.4	0.0	2.2	0.4
Dominican Republic	0.6	0.0	1.5	0.0	1.4	0.0
Ecuador	1.1	0.6	2.5	0.3	2.0	0.1
El Salvador	0.6	0.4	2.3	2.7	2.3	2.2
Grenada	0.5	0.0	2.0	0.0	2.0	0.0
Guatemala	1.2	1.0	1.9	1.0	1.9	2.2
Guyana	0.7	0.0	2.5	0.0	2.5	0.0
Haiti	1.8	0.6	2.2	3.1	2.4	3.1
Honduras	1.3	0.3	2.0	2.5	2.0	2.4
Jamaica	1.0	0.0	2.1	0.1	2.0	0.1
Mexico	4.7	5.5	4.1	4.5	3.3	5.0
Nicaragua	2.1	0.5	2.8	1.7	2.7	1.4
Panama	0.7	0.0	1.5	0.0	1.5	0.1
Paraguay	0.6	0.7	1.7	2.2	1.6	1.9
Peru	1.8	0.0	1.6	0.2	1.6	0.1
St. Kitts and Nevis	0.6	0.3	1.6	0.1	1.0	0.1
St. Lucia	0.6	0.3	1.9	0.1	2.4	0.4
St. Vincent and the Grenadines	0.6	0.3	1.4	0.1	0.9	0.1
Suriname	0.0	0.0	0.9	0.0	0.9	0.0
Trinidad and Tobago	0.3	0.6	1.0	0.8	1.0	0.8

Religious restrictions index scores by region (cont.)

Americas 35 countries (cont.)	baseline year, ending JUN 2007		previous year, ending DEC 2019		latest year, ending DEC 2020	
	GRI	SHI	GRI	SHI	GRI	SHI
United States	1.6	1.9	3.2	1.6	2.7	1.9
Uruguay	0.3	0.6	1.6	0.8	1.1	0.6
Venezuela	3.6	0.8	3.8	1.6	2.9	1.5

Asia-Pacific 50 countries	baseline year, ending JUN 2007		previous year, ending DEC 2019		latest year, ending DEC 2020	
	GRI	SHI	GRI	SHI	GRI	SHI
Afghanistan	5.3	8.5	6.3	5.6	6.8	8.0
Armenia	3.4	2.7	3.5	1.9	3.7	2.1
Australia	1.3	1.8	1.1	2.4	1.9	2.3
Azerbaijan	5.0	2.9	7.0	1.6	7.0	1.7
Bangladesh	4.0	8.3	4.8	6.7	4.8	7.0
Bhutan	4.4	1.9	4.6	0.4	4.8	1.5
Brunei	7.2	4.2	6.6	1.3	7.2	1.3
Cambodia	2.9	0.8	3.5	0.7	3.5	0.9
China	7.8	0.9	9.3	0.6	9.3	0.1
Cyprus	1.2	0.9	3.2	3.3	2.9	2.6
Federated States of Micronesia	0.2	0.0	0.3	0.5	0.4	1.1
Fiji	0.9	2.6	1.5	1.0	2.8	1.0
Hong Kong	1.0	0.8	1.8	0.4	1.9	0.2
India	4.8	8.8	5.6	9.1	5.8	9.4
Indonesia	6.2	8.3	7.9	4.8	7.9	5.5
Iran	7.9	6.0	8.1	1.5	8.2	1.9
Japan	0.2	0.4	0.8	0.1	0.5	0.1
Kazakhstan	5.6	3.1	7.0	2.0	7.0	2.6
Kiribati	0.3	0.8	0.9	1.2	1.1	1.2
Kyrgyzstan	3.9	5.5	6.6	2.2	5.7	1.6

Religious restrictions index scores by region (cont.)

Asia-Pacific 50 countries (cont.)	<i>baseline</i> <i>year, ending</i> JUN 2007		<i>previous</i> <i>year, ending</i> DEC 2019		<i>latest</i> <i>year, ending</i> DEC 2020	
	COUNTRY	GRI	SHI	GRI	SHI	GRI
Laos	6.3	1.0	6.1	2.2	6.0	4.0
Macao	1.3	0.3	1.1	0.0	0.8	0.0
Malaysia	6.4	1.0	8.5	3.9	8.5	3.5
Maldives	6.5	2.6	7.7	2.9	6.7	2.8
Marshall Islands	0.2	0.0	0.6	0.7	0.4	0.7
Mongolia	1.9	0.6	3.1	1.2	3.0	1.1
Myanmar	7.9	4.9	7.6	2.7	7.8	3.1
Nauru	2.0	0.3	1.8	0.0	1.6	0.0
Nepal	3.4	4.2	5.2	3.0	4.7	3.6
New Zealand	0.3	0.4	0.5	3.4	0.2	1.0
Pakistan	5.8	8.9	6.3	8.1	6.4	7.5
Palau	0.6	0.3	0.5	0.0	0.5	0.0
Papua New Guinea	0.8	0.0	1.6	2.7	1.5	2.0
Philippines	1.6	3.7	1.4	4.9	2.3	4.8
Samoa	0.8	0.4	1.4	1.8	1.1	0.1
Singapore	4.6	0.2	6.9	1.2	6.9	1.9
Solomon Islands	0.6	0.4	1.0	0.9	1.1	1.1
South Korea	1.6	0.0	2.6	5.0	2.4	3.6
Sri Lanka	4.0	7.8	6.0	8.0	5.4	6.5
Taiwan	0.5	0.0	1.7	0.3	1.5	0.3
Tajikistan	4.5	2.2	6.9	3.9	7.5	3.1
Thailand	2.6	2.6	5.3	4.2	5.1	3.3
Timor-Leste	0.9	4.2	1.0	0.9	1.1	0.4
Tonga	2.0	0.0	1.6	0.3	1.6	0.3
Turkey	6.6	4.7	7.0	4.2	6.2	4.6
Turkmenistan	5.6	1.5	7.6	1.2	6.1	1.2
Tuvalu	1.8	2.1	2.0	1.2	2.0	1.2
Uzbekistan	7.7	3.3	7.2	2.9	7.2	2.8
Vanuatu	1.0	1.0	1.3	0.0	1.3	0.1
Vietnam	6.6	1.2	6.4	3.0	6.2	2.8

Religious restrictions index scores by region (cont.)

Europe <i>45 countries</i>	<i>baseline year, ending JUN 2007</i>		<i>previous year, ending DEC 2019</i>		<i>latest year, ending DEC 2020</i>	
	GRI	SHI	GRI	SHI	GRI	SHI
Albania	0.8	0.2	1.9	0.0	1.9	0.0
Andorra	0.9	0.0	2.4	0.0	2.4	0.0
Austria	2.6	1.1	4.4	2.1	4.5	2.2
Belarus	5.9	1.4	5.7	1.4	5.8	1.1
Belgium	4.0	0.9	3.9	3.9	3.3	4.5
Bosnia-Herzegovina	1.5	2.4	2.8	2.5	2.8	2.0
Bulgaria	4.0	2.2	5.6	4.0	4.5	2.2
Croatia	0.7	2.0	2.2	0.5	2.9	1.0
Czech Republic	1.0	1.2	2.4	1.1	2.3	1.8
Denmark	2.5	1.2	4.1	3.7	4.4	4.4
Estonia	1.1	0.8	1.4	0.4	1.4	0.4
Finland	0.6	0.8	2.5	3.0	3.3	3.7
France	3.3	3.4	4.6	3.5	5.4	4.7
Georgia	2.2	4.7	3.6	3.3	3.9	2.9
Germany	3.1	2.1	3.2	5.9	3.3	4.0
Greece	5.2	4.4	4.4	3.2	3.9	2.2
Hungary	0.3	1.0	2.8	3.0	3.1	2.0
Iceland	2.6	0.4	3.7	1.0	3.6	1.7
Ireland	0.6	0.4	1.5	3.0	1.0	2.4
Italy	2.0	1.9	2.9	1.7	2.9	2.9
Kosovo	1.9	2.4	2.9	3.1	2.8	2.6
Latvia	2.3	1.4	2.6	0.2	2.4	0.3
Liechtenstein	1.3	0.1	2.0	0.8	2.5	0.8
Lithuania	1.7	0.8	2.8	0.6	2.3	0.4
Luxembourg	0.8	0.0	2.9	1.0	2.9	1.0
Malta	1.2	0.4	2.2	0.8	2.2	0.8
Moldova	4.2	3.8	4.6	4.3	4.6	4.1
Monaco	2.5	0.0	2.6	0.0	2.5	0.0
Montenegro	0.9	2.4	2.9	0.5	3.6	1.3

Religious restrictions index scores by region (cont.)

Europe 45 countries (cont.)	<i>baseline</i> <i>year, ending</i> JUN 2007		<i>previous</i> <i>year, ending</i> DEC 2019		<i>latest</i> <i>year, ending</i> DEC 2020	
	COUNTRY		GRI	SHI	GRI	SHI
	Netherlands	0.4	1.0	3.8	2.6	2.8
North Macedonia	2.2	1.5	2.8	3.0	2.2	2.2
Norway	1.5	1.0	3.2	1.5	3.1	2.7
Poland	1.0	0.9	3.5	2.6	3.3	1.8
Portugal	0.3	0.0	1.0	0.1	0.6	0.8
Romania	4.8	5.5	4.8	1.7	5.3	1.3
Russia	5.8	3.7	8.2	4.5	8.2	3.2
San Marino	0.1	0.0	0.6	0.0	0.6	0.0
Serbia	3.1	1.5	3.4	2.1	3.1	1.8
Slovakia	2.8	1.9	3.0	2.9	2.8	1.8
Slovenia	0.6	1.0	1.8	0.9	1.8	1.0
Spain	2.0	1.6	4.3	4.2	3.8	3.0
Sweden	1.2	0.7	2.6	1.5	3.1	2.9
Switzerland	1.2	1.7	2.6	3.5	2.4	3.4
Ukraine	2.6	1.9	4.7	4.8	4.2	4.9
United Kingdom	1.6	1.6	3.2	5.2	2.8	4.4

Middle East-North Africa 20 countries	<i>baseline</i> <i>year, ending</i> JUN 2007		<i>previous</i> <i>year, ending</i> DEC 2019		<i>latest</i> <i>year, ending</i> DEC 2020	
	COUNTRY		GRI	SHI	GRI	SHI
	Algeria	5.6	3.6	8.0	4.9	8.4
Bahrain	4.3	3.0	6.4	1.6	6.3	1.6
Egypt	7.2	6.1	8.4	6.5	7.3	7.4
Iraq	5.1	10.0	7.1	7.7	6.0	7.3
Israel	3.9	7.8	6.0	7.4	6.5	8.0
Jordan	4.6	3.5	4.9	3.7	4.8	3.6
Kuwait	4.8	1.9	6.2	0.8	5.9	1.9
Lebanon	1.4	5.1	4.6	3.9	4.1	4.7
Libya	5.1	1.4	5.8	7.7	5.8	7.4

Religious restrictions index scores by region (cont.)

Middle East-North Africa <i>20 countries (cont.)</i>	<i>baseline</i> <i>year, ending</i> JUN 2007		<i>previous</i> <i>year, ending</i> DEC 2019		<i>latest</i> <i>year, ending</i> DEC 2020	
	GRI	SHI	GRI	SHI	GRI	SHI
Morocco	4.9	3.7	6.2	2.3	6.2	2.3
Oman	3.9	0.3	5.4	0.4	5.3	0.4
Palestinian territories	3.3	6.4	4.3	5.1	4.7	6.2
Qatar	3.3	0.3	5.4	0.9	6.0	1.2
Saudi Arabia	8.0	7.2	7.2	2.5	6.6	2.4
Sudan	5.7	6.5	6.8	2.0	5.8	2.4
Syria	4.5	5.3	8.3	7.8	7.5	7.4
Tunisia	4.8	3.8	5.6	4.6	6.2	3.5
United Arab Emirates	3.9	0.1	5.8	1.2	5.7	0.8
Western Sahara	4.8	3.3	5.5	0.4	5.8	0.4
Yemen	4.3	6.2	6.0	5.1	5.8	3.5

Sub-Saharan Africa <i>48 countries</i>	<i>baseline</i> <i>year, ending</i> JUN 2007		<i>previous</i> <i>year, ending</i> DEC 2019		<i>latest</i> <i>year, ending</i> DEC 2020	
	GRI	SHI	GRI	SHI	GRI	SHI
Angola	3.3	3.7	4.3	0.6	2.8	1.1
Benin	0.3	0.0	0.7	2.6	1.3	0.0
Botswana	0.9	0.1	1.3	0.0	2.0	0.0
Burkina Faso	0.3	1.5	2.7	5.5	2.7	6.9
Burundi	0.4	0.9	3.8	1.6	2.8	1.7
Cameroon	1.1	1.4	3.2	4.8	2.7	5.5
Cape Verde	0.3	0.1	1.5	0.0	0.9	0.0
Central African Republic	3.7	3.3	2.9	6.2	2.7	4.1
Chad	4.2	3.3	3.7	2.1	3.9	2.0
Comoros	5.4	6.2	5.4	0.5	4.6	0.5
Democratic Republic of the Congo	1.3	2.6	1.4	3.0	2.3	3.8
Djibouti	2.4	1.8	3.6	0.4	4.2	0.4
Equatorial Guinea	2.6	0.0	3.3	0.0	4.1	0.0
Eritrea	7.0	0.4	6.7	0.1	6.7	0.0
Eswatini	1.5	0.0	2.6	0.4	2.6	0.1
Ethiopia	2.6	5.3	3.4	5.9	4.1	4.5

Religious restrictions index scores by region (cont.)

Sub-Saharan Africa <i>48 countries (cont.)</i>	<i>baseline</i> <i>year, ending</i> JUN 2007		<i>previous</i> <i>year, ending</i> DEC 2019		<i>latest</i> <i>year, ending</i> DEC 2020	
	COUNTRY	GRI	SHI	GRI	SHI	GRI
Gabon	1.7	0.1	1.1	1.0	1.2	0.8
Gambia	0.5	0.8	1.1	1.8	1.5	0.3
Ghana	1.2	4.9	1.6	1.8	1.6	2.6
Guinea	1.5	1.7	2.6	2.7	3.3	3.5
Guinea-Bissau	1.6	0.0	0.7	1.1	0.4	1.1
Ivory Coast	1.9	3.1	1.4	0.9	1.3	1.4
Kenya	2.9	2.4	3.1	6.4	3.2	6.0
Lesotho	0.4	0.0	0.6	0.0	1.3	0.0
Liberia	1.7	3.8	1.4	1.8	1.5	2.0
Madagascar	1.8	0.0	2.8	0.9	2.8	1.0
Malawi	0.4	0.3	2.2	1.8	2.2	2.0
Mali	0.9	0.3	1.7	6.9	2.5	7.9
Mauritania	6.5	0.9	6.1	2.0	6.2	1.8
Mauritius	1.4	0.3	1.5	0.4	1.5	0.3
Mozambique	1.0	0.3	3.6	2.2	2.6	2.8
Namibia	0.3	0.0	1.3	0.0	1.3	0.0
Niger	1.7	1.5	4.5	3.7	4.0	2.6
Nigeria	3.7	4.4	4.4	8.4	4.3	8.5
Republic of the Congo	0.7	0.4	2.0	0.3	1.5	0.3
Rwanda	2.0	0.0	3.8	1.8	3.7	0.3
Sao Tome and Principe	0.2	0.0	0.9	1.3	0.9	0.0
Senegal	0.5	0.0	0.7	0.8	0.9	1.2
Seychelles	1.3	0.0	2.6	0.0	2.6	0.0
Sierra Leone	0.0	0.0	3.1	2.8	2.3	0.8
Somalia	4.4	7.4	3.3	7.0	4.7	7.6
South Africa	0.6	2.2	1.6	2.9	2.1	4.3
South Sudan*	*	*	2.4	1.2	3.2	1.9
Tanzania	2.1	3.5	5.5	2.8	5.1	1.3
Togo	2.8	0.0	2.6	0.8	2.5	0.8
Uganda	2.4	0.4	3.0	3.2	2.5	2.1
Zambia	2.0	0.0	3.1	0.8	3.2	1.1
Zimbabwe	2.9	1.2	3.6	1.2	2.5	1.1

* South Sudan was coded for the first time in 2011.

Note: Myanmar is also called Burma. Eswatini was formerly known as Swaziland.

Appendix D: Summary of results

Government restrictions on religion

To assess the level of restrictions on religion by governments around the world, Pew Research Center selected the following 20 questions for the Government Restrictions Index (GRI). Center staff then combed through 19 published sources of information, including reports by the U.S. State Department, the United Nations, and various nongovernmental organizations, to answer the questions on a country-by-country basis. (For more details, see the Methodology.)

This summary shows the questions, followed by various possible answers, and the number and percentage of countries that fell into each category, according to the multiple sources analyzed by the Center. For example, on Question No. 5 – “Is public preaching by religious groups limited by any level of government?” – the study found that for the latest year, ending on Dec. 31, 2020, 116 countries (59%) had no reported limits on preaching; 40 countries (20%) had limits on preaching for some religious groups; and 42 countries (21%) had limits on preaching for all religious groups.

Additionally, the summary shows whether particular religious restrictions occurred during the previous year, ending Dec. 31, 2019, or in the study’s baseline year, ending in mid-2007. A total of 197 countries and territories are shown for the baseline year; South Sudan was coded for the first time in 2011, bringing the previous and latest years’ totals to 198 countries and territories. To see how each country scored on each question, see the Results by Country online.

When comparing these results with Pew Research Center’s previous reports, readers should keep in mind that reports published before 2011 showed the number of countries in which particular religious restrictions occurred at any time during two overlapping periods: July 1, 2006-June 30, 2008, and July 1, 2007-June 30, 2009. Because this report presents data on an annual basis, the incidents for a single year may be less than when two years were taken into account.

Some differences from year to year might not be as significant as they appear due to minor changes in coding procedures and changes in the amount of information available between years. For example, sources for the most recent period studied sometimes had less information on incidents in a country than sources previously had reported. Such additional information may reflect either an actual decrease in restrictions in a country, streamlined reporting for that country, or both. (For more details, see the Methodology.)

Percentages may not add to 100 due to rounding.

GRI.Q.1

Does the constitution, or law that functions in the place of a constitution (basic law), specifically provide for “freedom of religion” or include language used in Article 18 of the United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights?¹

	<i>baseline year, ending JUN 2007</i>		<i>previous year, ending DEC 2019</i>		<i>latest year, ending DEC 2020</i>	
	NUMBER OF COUNTRIES	% OF COUNTRIES	NUMBER OF COUNTRIES	% OF COUNTRIES	NUMBER OF COUNTRIES	% OF COUNTRIES
Yes	143	73%	146	74%	145	73%
The constitution or basic law does not specifically provide for freedom of religion but does protect some religious practices	47	24	46	23	48	24
No	7	4	6	3	5	3
	197	100	198	100	198	100

GRI.Q.2

Does the constitution or basic law include stipulations that appear to qualify or substantially contradict the concept of “religious freedom”?

	<i>baseline year, ending JUN 2007</i>		<i>previous year, ending DEC 2019</i>		<i>latest year, ending DEC 2020</i>	
	NUMBER OF COUNTRIES	% OF COUNTRIES	NUMBER OF COUNTRIES	% OF COUNTRIES	NUMBER OF COUNTRIES	% OF COUNTRIES
No	42	21%	27	14%	24	12%
Yes, there is a qualification	38	19	42	21	41	21
Yes, there is a substantial contradiction and only some religious practices are protected	110	56	123	62	127	64
Religious freedom is not provided in the first place	7	4	6	3	6	3
	197	100	198	100	198	100

Note: This report corrects the way constitutions were coded for 10 countries: Cameroon, Costa Rica, the Dominican Republic, Fiji, Iran, Jamaica, Kenya, Mexico, Mozambique and Uruguay. The corrections were applied to all applicable previous years to ensure consistency, and the updates resulted in changes to distribution of the GRI.Q.1 and GRI.Q.2 variables in various years. Users of the data should note this update when comparing these results with those printed in previous reports.

¹ Article 18 states: “Everyone has the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion; this right includes freedom to change his religion or belief, and freedom, either alone or in community with others and in public or private, to manifest his religion or belief in teaching, practice, worship and observance.”

GRI.Q.3

Taken together, how do the constitution/basic law and other national laws and policies affect religious freedom?

	<i>baseline year, ending JUN 2007</i>		<i>previous year, ending DEC 2019</i>		<i>latest year, ending DEC 2020</i>	
	NUMBER OF COUNTRIES	% OF COUNTRIES	NUMBER OF COUNTRIES	% OF COUNTRIES	NUMBER OF COUNTRIES	% OF COUNTRIES
National laws and policies provide for religious freedom, and the national government respects religious freedom in practice	63	32%	65	33%	70	35%
National laws and policies provide for religious freedom, and the national government generally respects religious freedom in practice; but there are some instances (e.g., in certain localities) where religious freedom is not respected in practice	94	48	93	47	88	44
There are limited national legal protections for religious freedom, but the national government does not generally respect religious freedom in practice	38	19	32	16	33	17
National laws and policies do not provide for religious freedom and the national government does not respect religious freedom in practice	2	1	8	4	7	4
	197	100	198	100	198	100

GRI.Q.4*Does any level of government interfere with worship or other religious practices?*

	<i>baseline year, ending JUN 2007</i>		<i>previous year, ending DEC 2019</i>		<i>latest year, ending DEC 2020</i>	
	NUMBER OF COUNTRIES	% OF COUNTRIES	NUMBER OF COUNTRIES	% OF COUNTRIES	NUMBER OF COUNTRIES	% OF COUNTRIES
No	85	43%	35	18%	34	17%
Yes, in a few cases	44	22	42	21	46	23
Yes, in many cases	32	16	63	32	67	34
Government prohibits worship or religious practices of one or more religious groups as a general policy	36	18	58	29	51	26
	197	100	198	100	198	100

GRI.Q.5*Is public preaching by religious groups limited by any level of government?*

	<i>baseline year, ending JUN 2007</i>		<i>previous year, ending DEC 2019</i>		<i>latest year, ending DEC 2020</i>	
	NUMBER OF COUNTRIES	% OF COUNTRIES	NUMBER OF COUNTRIES	% OF COUNTRIES	NUMBER OF COUNTRIES	% OF COUNTRIES
No	141	72%	116	59%	116	59%
Yes, for some religious groups	32	16	38	19	40	20
Yes, for all religious groups	24	12	44	22	42	21
	197	100	198	100	198	100

GRI.Q.6*Is proselytizing limited by any level of government?*

	<i>baseline year, ending JUN 2007</i>		<i>previous year, ending DEC 2019</i>		<i>latest year, ending DEC 2020</i>	
	NUMBER OF COUNTRIES	% OF COUNTRIES	NUMBER OF COUNTRIES	% OF COUNTRIES	NUMBER OF COUNTRIES	% OF COUNTRIES
No	132	67%	121	61%	123	62%
Yes, for some religious groups	39	20	40	20	36	18
Yes, for all religious groups	26	13	37	19	39	20
	197	100	198	100	198	100

GRI.Q.7

Is converting from one religion to another limited by any level of government?

	<i>baseline year, ending JUN 2007</i>		<i>previous year, ending DEC 2019</i>		<i>latest year, ending DEC 2020</i>	
	NUMBER OF COUNTRIES	% OF COUNTRIES	NUMBER OF COUNTRIES	% OF COUNTRIES	NUMBER OF COUNTRIES	% OF COUNTRIES
No	166	84%	153	77%	156	79%
Yes	31	16	45	23	42	21
	197	100	198	100	198	100

GRI.Q.8

Is religious literature or broadcasting limited by any level of government?

	<i>baseline year, ending JUN 2007</i>		<i>previous year, ending DEC 2019</i>		<i>latest year, ending DEC 2020</i>	
	NUMBER OF COUNTRIES	% OF COUNTRIES	NUMBER OF COUNTRIES	% OF COUNTRIES	NUMBER OF COUNTRIES	% OF COUNTRIES
No	130	66%	117	59%	116	59%
Yes	67	34	81	41	82	41
	197	100	198	100	198	100

GRI.Q.9

Are foreign missionaries allowed to operate?

	<i>baseline year, ending JUN 2007</i>		<i>previous year, ending DEC 2019</i>		<i>latest year, ending DEC 2020</i>	
	NUMBER OF COUNTRIES	% OF COUNTRIES	NUMBER OF COUNTRIES	% OF COUNTRIES	NUMBER OF COUNTRIES	% OF COUNTRIES
Yes	117	59%	121	61%	116	59%
Yes, but with restrictions	72	37	69	35	74	37
No	8	4	8	4	8	4
	197	100	198	100	198	100

GRI.Q.10

Is the wearing of religious symbols, such as head coverings for women and facial hair for men, regulated by law or by any level of government?

	<i>baseline year, ending JUN 2007</i>		<i>previous year, ending DEC 2019</i>		<i>latest year, ending DEC 2020</i>	
	NUMBER OF COUNTRIES	% OF COUNTRIES	NUMBER OF COUNTRIES	% OF COUNTRIES	NUMBER OF COUNTRIES	% OF COUNTRIES
No	176	89%	133	67%	137	69%
Yes	21	11	65	33	61	31
	197	100	198	100	198	100

GRI.Q.11

Was there harassment or intimidation of religious groups by any level of government?

	<i>baseline year, ending JUN 2007</i>		<i>previous year, ending DEC 2019</i>		<i>latest year, ending DEC 2020</i>	
	NUMBER OF COUNTRIES	% OF COUNTRIES	NUMBER OF COUNTRIES	% OF COUNTRIES	NUMBER OF COUNTRIES	% OF COUNTRIES
No	79	40%	18	9%	20	10%
Yes, there was limited intimidation	82	42	56	28	63	32
Yes, there was widespread intimidation	36	18	124	63	115	58
	197	100	198	100	198	100

GRI.Q.12

Did the national government display hostility involving physical violence toward minority or nonapproved religious groups?

	<i>baseline year, ending JUN 2007</i>		<i>previous year, ending DEC 2019</i>		<i>latest year, ending DEC 2020</i>	
	NUMBER OF COUNTRIES	% OF COUNTRIES	NUMBER OF COUNTRIES	% OF COUNTRIES	NUMBER OF COUNTRIES	% OF COUNTRIES
No	152	77%	144	73%	134	68%
Yes	45	23	54	27	64	32
	197	100	198	100	198	100

GRI.Q.13

Were there instances when the national government did not intervene in cases of discrimination or abuses against religious groups?

	<i>baseline year, ending JUN 2007</i>		<i>previous year, ending DEC 2019</i>		<i>latest year, ending DEC 2020</i>	
	NUMBER OF COUNTRIES	% OF COUNTRIES	NUMBER OF COUNTRIES	% OF COUNTRIES	NUMBER OF COUNTRIES	% OF COUNTRIES
No	157	80%	138	70%	153	77%
Yes	40	20	60	30	45	23
	197	100	198	100	198	100

GRI.Q.14

Does the national government have an established organization to regulate or manage religious affairs?

	<i>baseline year, ending JUN 2007</i>		<i>previous year, ending DEC 2019</i>		<i>latest year, ending DEC 2020</i>	
	NUMBER OF COUNTRIES	% OF COUNTRIES	NUMBER OF COUNTRIES	% OF COUNTRIES	NUMBER OF COUNTRIES	% OF COUNTRIES
No	106	54%	74	37%	75	38%
No, but the government consults a nongovernmental advisory board	12	6	11	6	11	6
Yes, but the organization is non-coercive toward religious groups	54	27	61	31	58	29
Yes, and the organization is coercive toward religious groups	25	13	52	26	54	27
	197	100	198	100	198	100

GRI.Q.15

Did the national government denounce one or more religious groups by characterizing them as dangerous “cults” or “sects”?

	<i>baseline year, ending JUN 2007</i>		<i>previous year, ending DEC 2019</i>		<i>latest year, ending DEC 2020</i>	
	NUMBER OF COUNTRIES	% OF COUNTRIES	NUMBER OF COUNTRIES	% OF COUNTRIES	NUMBER OF COUNTRIES	% OF COUNTRIES
No	180	91%	172	87%	173	87%
Yes	17	9	26	13	25	13
	197	100	198	100	198	100

GRI.Q.16

Does any level of government formally ban any religious group?

	<i>baseline year, ending JUN 2007</i>		<i>previous year, ending DEC 2019</i>		<i>latest year, ending DEC 2020</i>	
	NUMBER OF COUNTRIES	% OF COUNTRIES	NUMBER OF COUNTRIES	% OF COUNTRIES	NUMBER OF COUNTRIES	% OF COUNTRIES
No	162	82%	157	79%	157	79%
Yes	35	18	41	21	41	21
Security reasons stated as rationale	11	6	8	4	9	5
Non-security reasons stated as rationale	18	9	19	10	17	9
Both security and non-security reasons stated as rationale	6	3	14	7	15	8
	197	100	198	100	198	100

GRI.Q.17

Were there instances when the national government attempted to eliminate an entire religious group's presence in the country?

	<i>baseline year, ending JUN 2007</i>		<i>previous year, ending DEC 2019</i>		<i>latest year, ending DEC 2020</i>	
	NUMBER OF COUNTRIES	% OF COUNTRIES	NUMBER OF COUNTRIES	% OF COUNTRIES	NUMBER OF COUNTRIES	% OF COUNTRIES
No	181	92%	181	91%	182	92%
Yes	16	8	17	9	16	8
	197	100	198	100	198	100

GRI.Q.18

Does any level of government ask religious groups to register for any reason, including to be eligible for benefits such as tax exemption?

	<i>baseline year, ending JUN 2007</i>		<i>previous year, ending DEC 2019</i>		<i>latest year, ending DEC 2020</i>	
	NUMBER OF COUNTRIES	% OF COUNTRIES	NUMBER OF COUNTRIES	% OF COUNTRIES	NUMBER OF COUNTRIES	% OF COUNTRIES
No	38	19%	9	5%	9	5%
Yes, but in a nondiscriminatory way	71	36	65	33	67	34
Yes, and the process adversely affects the ability of some religious groups to operate	34	17	25	13	24	12
Yes, and the process clearly discriminates against some religious groups	54	27	99	50	98	49
	197	100	198	100	198	100

GRI.Q.19

Did any level of government use force toward religious groups that resulted in individuals being killed, physically abused, imprisoned, detained or displaced from their homes, or having their personal or religious properties damaged or destroyed?

	<i>baseline year, ending JUN 2007</i>		<i>previous year, ending DEC 2019</i>		<i>latest year, ending DEC 2020</i>	
	NUMBER OF COUNTRIES	% OF COUNTRIES	NUMBER OF COUNTRIES	% OF COUNTRIES	NUMBER OF COUNTRIES	% OF COUNTRIES
No	136	69%	102	52%	98	49%
Yes	61	31	96	48	100	51
1-9 case(s) of government force	18	9	39	20	42	21
10-200 cases of government force	35	18	37	19	43	22
201-1,000 cases of government force	4	2	8	4	6	3
1,001-9,999 cases of government force	2	1	8	4	7	4
10,000+ cases of government force	2	1	4	2	2	1
	197	100	198	100	198	100

GRI.Q.19b

Did any level of government use force toward religious groups that resulted in individuals being killed, physically abused, imprisoned, detained or displaced from their homes, or having their personal or religious properties damaged or destroyed?

	<i>baseline year, ending JUN 2007</i>		<i>previous year, ending DEC 2019</i>		<i>latest year, ending DEC 2020</i>	
	NUMBER OF COUNTRIES	% OF COUNTRIES	NUMBER OF COUNTRIES	% OF COUNTRIES	NUMBER OF COUNTRIES	% OF COUNTRIES
No	136	69%	102	52%	98	49%
Yes *	61	31	96	48	100	51
Property damage	7	4	67	34	56	28
Detentions/abductions	47	24	68	34	76	38
Displacement from homes	20	10	21	11	30	15
Physical assaults	25	13	36	18	37	19
Deaths	15	8	22	11	16	8
	197	100	198	100	198	100

Nested categories add to more than total because countries can have multiple types of cases of government force.

* This line represents the number or percentage of countries in which at least one of the following types of government force occurred.

GRI.Q.20

Do some religious groups receive government support or favors, such as funding, official recognition or special access?

	<i>baseline year, ending JUN 2007</i>		<i>previous year, ending DEC 2019</i>		<i>latest year, ending DEC 2020</i>	
	NUMBER OF COUNTRIES	% OF COUNTRIES	NUMBER OF COUNTRIES	% OF COUNTRIES	NUMBER OF COUNTRIES	% OF COUNTRIES
No	17	9%	1	1%	1	1%
Yes, the government provides support to religious groups, but it does so on a more-or-less fair and equal basis	37	19	41	21	46	23
Yes, the government gives preferential support or favors to some religious group(s) and clearly discriminates against others	143	73	156	79	151	76
	197	100	198	100	198	100

Note: This is a summary table that puts the restrictions identified in Questions 20.1, 20.2, 20.3.a-c, 20.4 and 20.5 into a single measure indicating the level to which a government supports religious groups in the country. Government support of a religion or religions is considered restrictive only when preferential treatment of one or more religious groups puts other religious groups at a disadvantage.

GRI.Q.20.1

Does the country's constitution or basic law recognize a favored religion or religions?

	<i>baseline year, ending JUN 2007</i>		<i>previous year, ending DEC 2019</i>		<i>latest year, ending DEC 2020</i>	
	NUMBER OF COUNTRIES	% OF COUNTRIES	NUMBER OF COUNTRIES	% OF COUNTRIES	NUMBER OF COUNTRIES	% OF COUNTRIES
No	141	72%	109	55%	108	55%
Yes	56	28	89	45	90	45
	197	100	198	100	198	100

Note: This question is a component of GRI.Q.20.
For GRI.Q.20.1, the differences between the coding periods may not be as significant as they appear due to minor changes in coding procedures.

GRI.Q.20.2

Do all religious groups receive the same level of government access and privileges?

	<i>baseline year, ending JUN 2007</i>		<i>previous year, ending DEC 2019</i>		<i>latest year, ending DEC 2020</i>	
	NUMBER OF COUNTRIES	% OF COUNTRIES	NUMBER OF COUNTRIES	% OF COUNTRIES	NUMBER OF COUNTRIES	% OF COUNTRIES
All religious groups are generally treated the same	39	20%	23	12%	25	13%
Some religious groups have minimal privileges unavailable to other religious groups, limited to things such as inheriting buildings or properties	7	4	29	15	27	14
Some religious groups have general privileges or government access unavailable to other religious groups	62	31	49	25	50	25
One religious group has privileges or government access unavailable to other religious groups, but it is not recognized as the country's official religion	48	24	53	27	50	25
One religious group has privileges or government access unavailable to other religious groups, and it is recognized by the national government as the official religion	41	21	44	22	46	23
	197	100	198	100	198	100

Note: This question is a component of GRI.Q.20.

GRI.Q.20.3

Does any level of government provide funds or other resources to religious groups?

	<i>baseline year, ending JUN 2007</i>		<i>previous year, ending DEC 2019</i>		<i>latest year, ending DEC 2020</i>	
	NUMBER OF COUNTRIES	% OF COUNTRIES	NUMBER OF COUNTRIES	% OF COUNTRIES	NUMBER OF COUNTRIES	% OF COUNTRIES
No	45	23%	15	8%	12	6%
Yes, but with no obvious favoritism to a particular group or groups	23	12	43	22	47	24
Yes, and with obvious favoritism to a particular group or groups	129	65	140	71	139	70
	197	100	198	100	198	100

Note: This question is a component of GRI.Q.20. This is a summary table that puts the restrictions identified in Questions 20.3.a-c into a single measure indicating the level to which a government supports religious groups in the country. Government support of a religion or religions is considered restrictive only when preferential treatment of one or more religious groups puts other religious groups at a disadvantage.

GRI.Q.20.3.a

Does any level of government provide funds or other resources for religious education programs and/or religious schools?

	<i>baseline year, ending JUN 2007</i>		<i>previous year, ending DEC 2019</i>		<i>latest year, ending DEC 2020</i>	
	NUMBER OF COUNTRIES	% OF COUNTRIES	NUMBER OF COUNTRIES	% OF COUNTRIES	NUMBER OF COUNTRIES	% OF COUNTRIES
No	71	36%	61	31%	69	35%
Yes, but with no obvious favoritism to a particular group or groups	24	12	36	18	40	20
Yes, and with obvious favoritism to a particular group or groups	102	52	101	51	89	45
	197	100	198	100	198	100

Note: This question is a component of GRI.Q.20.3.

GRI.Q.20.3.b

Does any level of government provide funds or other resources for religious property (e.g., buildings, upkeep, repair or land)?

	<i>baseline year, ending JUN 2007</i>		<i>previous year, ending DEC 2019</i>		<i>latest year, ending DEC 2020</i>	
	NUMBER OF COUNTRIES	% OF COUNTRIES	NUMBER OF COUNTRIES	% OF COUNTRIES	NUMBER OF COUNTRIES	% OF COUNTRIES
No	128	65%	94	47%	93	47%
Yes, but with no obvious favoritism to a particular group or groups	10	5	25	13	25	13
Yes, and with obvious favoritism to a particular group or groups	59	30	79	40	80	40
	197	100	198	100	198	100

Note: This question is a component of GRI.Q.20.3.

GRI.Q.20.3.c

Does any level of government provide funds or other resources for religious activities other than education or property?

	<i>baseline year, ending JUN 2007</i>		<i>previous year, ending DEC 2019</i>		<i>latest year, ending DEC 2020</i>	
	NUMBER OF COUNTRIES	% OF COUNTRIES	NUMBER OF COUNTRIES	% OF COUNTRIES	NUMBER OF COUNTRIES	% OF COUNTRIES
No	106	54%	32	16%	28	14%
Yes, but with no obvious favoritism to a particular group or groups	7	4	58	29	64	32
Yes, and with obvious favoritism to a particular group or groups	84	43	108	55	106	54
	197	100	198	100	198	100

Note: This question is a component of GRI.Q.20.3.

GRI.Q.20.4*Is religious education required in public schools?*

	<i>baseline year, ending JUN 2007</i>		<i>previous year, ending DEC 2019</i>		<i>latest year, ending DEC 2020</i>	
	NUMBER OF COUNTRIES	% OF COUNTRIES	NUMBER OF COUNTRIES	% OF COUNTRIES	NUMBER OF COUNTRIES	% OF COUNTRIES
No	134	68%	112	57%	114	58%
Yes, by at least some local governments	6	3	8	4	11	6
Yes, by the national government	57	29	78	39	73	37
	197	100	198	100	198	100

Note: This question is a component of GRI.Q.20.

GRI.Q.20.5*Does the national government defer in some way to religious authorities, texts or doctrines on legal issues?*

	<i>baseline year, ending JUN 2007</i>		<i>previous year, ending DEC 2019</i>		<i>latest year, ending DEC 2020</i>	
	NUMBER OF COUNTRIES	% OF COUNTRIES	NUMBER OF COUNTRIES	% OF COUNTRIES	NUMBER OF COUNTRIES	% OF COUNTRIES
No	150	76%	132	67%	132	67%
Yes	47	24	66	33	66	33
	197	100	198	100	198	100

Note: This question is a component of GRI.Q.20.

Note: Figures throughout may not add to 100% or to subtotals indicated due to rounding.

Social hostilities involving religion

To assess the level of social hostilities involving religion around the world, Pew Research Center used the following 13 questions for the Social Hostilities Index (SHI). Center staff then combed through 19 published sources of information, including reports by the U.S. State Department, the United Nations, and various nongovernmental organizations, to answer the questions on a country-by-country basis. (For more details, see the Methodology.)

This summary shows the questions, followed by various possible answers, and the number and percentage of countries that fell into each category, according to the multiple sources analyzed by Pew Research Center. For example, on Question No. 12 – “Were there incidents of hostility over proselytizing?” – the study found that for the latest year, ending on Dec. 31, 2020, 173 countries (87%) had no reported incidents of hostility over proselytizing; 14 countries (7%) had incidents that fell short of physical violence; and 11 countries (6%) had incidents involving violence.

Additionally, the summary shows whether particular religious hostilities occurred during the previous year, ending Dec. 31, 2019, or in the study’s baseline year, ending in mid-2007. A total of 197 countries and territories are shown for the baseline year; South Sudan was coded for the first time in 2011, bringing the previous and last years’ totals to 198 countries and territories. To see how each country scored on each question, see the Results by Country online.

When comparing these results with Pew Research Center’s previous reports, readers should keep in mind that previous reports showed the number of countries in which particular religious hostilities occurred at any time during two overlapping periods: July 1, 2006-June 30, 2008, and July 1, 2007-June 30, 2009. Because this report presents data on an annual basis, the incidents for a single year may be less than when two years were taken into account.

Some differences from year to year might not be as significant as they appear due to minor changes in coding procedures and changes in the amount of information available between years. For example, sources for the most recent period studied sometimes had more information on incidents in a country than sources previously had reported. Such additional information may reflect either an actual increase in hostilities in a country, improved reporting for that country, or both. (For more details, see the Methodology.)

Percentages may not add to 100 due to rounding.

SHI.Q.1.a

Were there crimes, malicious acts or violence motivated by religious hatred or bias?

	<i>baseline year, ending JUN 2007</i>		<i>previous year, ending DEC 2019</i>		<i>latest year, ending DEC 2020</i>	
	NUMBER OF COUNTRIES	% OF COUNTRIES	NUMBER OF COUNTRIES	% OF COUNTRIES	NUMBER OF COUNTRIES	% OF COUNTRIES
No	67	34%	29	15%	34	17%
Yes *	130	66	169	85	164	83
Harassment/intimidation	127	64	169	85	164	83
Property damage	40	20	91	46	81	41
Detentions/abductions	12	6	16	8	19	10
Displacement from homes	19	10	21	11	16	8
Physical assaults	55	28	60	30	58	29
Deaths	25	13	39	20	35	18
	197	100	198	100	198	100

Note: This is a summary table that captures the types of religious hatred or bias. Nested categories add to more than total because countries can have multiple types of hostilities.

* This line represents the number or percentage of countries in which at least one of the following hostilities occurred. Each country's score for each type of religious hatred or bias is available in SHI.Q.1a-f in the Results by Country (online).

SHI.Q.1.b

How many different types of crimes, malicious acts or violence motivated by religious hatred or bias occurred? The six different types considered include: harassment/intimidation, property damage, detentions/abductions, displacement from homes, physical assaults and killings.

	<i>baseline year, ending JUN 2007</i>		<i>previous year, ending DEC 2019</i>		<i>latest year, ending DEC 2020</i>	
	NUMBER OF COUNTRIES	% OF COUNTRIES	NUMBER OF COUNTRIES	% OF COUNTRIES	NUMBER OF COUNTRIES	% OF COUNTRIES
No	67	34%	29	15%	34	17%
Yes: One type	56	28	52	26	59	30
Yes: Two types	30	15	53	27	47	24
Yes: Three types	25	13	33	17	30	15
Yes: Four types	11	6	18	9	13	7
Yes: Five types	5	3	11	6	12	6
Yes: Six types	3	2	2	1	3	2
	197	100	198	100	198	100

Note: This is a summary table that captures the severity of religious hatred or bias. Each country's score based on how many of the six types of religious hatred or bias were documented is available in SHI.Q.1 in the Results by Country (online).

SHI.Q.2

Was there mob violence related to religion?

	<i>baseline year, ending JUN 2007</i>		<i>previous year, ending DEC 2019</i>		<i>latest year, ending DEC 2020</i>	
	NUMBER OF COUNTRIES	% OF COUNTRIES	NUMBER OF COUNTRIES	% OF COUNTRIES	NUMBER OF COUNTRIES	% OF COUNTRIES
No	174	88%	164	83%	170	86%
Yes, but there were no deaths reported	14	7	23	12	15	8
Yes, and there were deaths reported	9	5	11	6	13	7
	197	100	198	100	198	100

SHI.Q.3

Were there acts of sectarian or communal violence between religious groups?

	<i>baseline year, ending JUN 2007</i>		<i>previous year, ending DEC 2019</i>		<i>latest year, ending DEC 2020</i>	
	NUMBER OF COUNTRIES	% OF COUNTRIES	NUMBER OF COUNTRIES	% OF COUNTRIES	NUMBER OF COUNTRIES	% OF COUNTRIES
No	181	92%	185	93%	185	93%
Yes	16	8	13	7	13	7
	197	100	198	100	198	100

Note: Sectarian or communal violence involves two or more religious groups facing off in repeated clashes.

SHI.Q.4*Were religion-related terrorist groups active in the country?*

	<i>baseline year, ending JUN 2007</i>		<i>previous year, ending DEC 2019</i>		<i>latest year, ending DEC 2020</i>	
	NUMBER OF COUNTRIES	% OF COUNTRIES	NUMBER OF COUNTRIES	% OF COUNTRIES	NUMBER OF COUNTRIES	% OF COUNTRIES
No	137	70%	149	75%	146	74%
Yes	60	30	49	25	52	26
Yes, but their activity was limited to recruitment and fundraising	43	22	2	1	3	2
Yes, with violence that resulted in some casualties (1-9 injuries or deaths)	7	4	15	8	21	11
Yes, with violence that resulted in multiple casualties (10-50 injuries or deaths)	2	1	4	2	6	3
Yes, with violence that resulted in many casualties (more than 50 injuries or deaths)	8	4	28	14	22	11
	197	100	198	100	198	100

Note: Religion-related terrorism is defined as politically motivated violence against noncombatants by subnational groups or clandestine agents with a religious justification or intent.

SHI.Q.5

Was there a religion-related war or armed conflict in the country?

	<i>baseline year, ending JUN 2007</i>		<i>previous year, ending DEC 2019</i>		<i>latest year, ending DEC 2020</i>	
	NUMBER OF COUNTRIES	% OF COUNTRIES	NUMBER OF COUNTRIES	% OF COUNTRIES	NUMBER OF COUNTRIES	% OF COUNTRIES
No	176	89%	184	93%	183	92%
Yes	21	11	14	7	15	8
Yes, with fewer than 10,000 casualties or people displaced	9	5	2	1	5	3
Yes, with tens of thousands of casualties or people displaced	6	3	6	3	5	3
Yes, with hundreds of thousands of casualties or people displaced	3	2	6	3	5	3
Yes, with millions of casualties or people displaced	3	2	0	0	0	0
	197	100	198	100	198	100

Note: Religion-related war is defined as armed conflict (involving sustained casualties over time or more than 1,000 battle deaths) in which religious rhetoric is commonly employed to justify the use of force, or in which one or more of the combatants primarily identifies itself or the opposing side by religion.

SHI.Q.6

Did violence result from tensions between religious groups?

	<i>baseline year, ending JUN 2007</i>		<i>previous year, ending DEC 2019</i>		<i>latest year, ending DEC 2020</i>	
	NUMBER OF COUNTRIES	% OF COUNTRIES	NUMBER OF COUNTRIES	% OF COUNTRIES	NUMBER OF COUNTRIES	% OF COUNTRIES
No	50	25%	92	46%	97	49%
There were public tensions between religious groups, but they fell short of hostilities involving physical violence	56	28	62	31	52	26
Yes, with physical violence in a few cases	69	35	20	10	22	11
Yes, with physical violence in numerous cases	22	11	24	12	27	14
	197	100	198	100	198	100

Note: The data for each year also takes into account information from the two previous years.

SHI.Q.7

Did organized groups use force or coercion in an attempt to dominate public life with their perspective on religion, including preventing some religious groups from operating in the country?

	<i>baseline year, ending JUN 2007</i>		<i>previous year, ending DEC 2019</i>		<i>latest year, ending DEC 2020</i>	
	NUMBER OF COUNTRIES	% OF COUNTRIES	NUMBER OF COUNTRIES	% OF COUNTRIES	NUMBER OF COUNTRIES	% OF COUNTRIES
No	113	57%	104	53%	108	55%
Yes	84	43	94	47	90	45
At the local level	22	11	20	10	21	11
At the regional level	31	16	10	5	10	5
At the national level	31	16	64	32	59	30
	197	100	198	100	198	100

Note: The data for each year also takes into account information from the two previous years.

SHI.Q.8

Did religious groups themselves attempt to prevent other religious groups from being able to operate?

	<i>baseline year, ending JUN 2007</i>		<i>previous year, ending DEC 2019</i>		<i>latest year, ending DEC 2020</i>	
	NUMBER OF COUNTRIES	% OF COUNTRIES	NUMBER OF COUNTRIES	% OF COUNTRIES	NUMBER OF COUNTRIES	% OF COUNTRIES
No	130	66%	145	73%	143	72%
Yes	67	34	53	27	55	28
	197	100	198	100	198	100

Note: The data for each year also takes into account information from the two previous years.

SHI.Q.9

Did individuals or groups use violence or the threat of violence, including so-called honor killings, to try to enforce religious norms?

	<i>baseline year, ending JUN 2007</i>		<i>previous year, ending DEC 2019</i>		<i>latest year, ending DEC 2020</i>	
	NUMBER OF COUNTRIES	% OF COUNTRIES	NUMBER OF COUNTRIES	% OF COUNTRIES	NUMBER OF COUNTRIES	% OF COUNTRIES
No	162	82%	124	63%	127	64%
Yes	35	18	74	37	71	36
	197	100	198	100	198	100

Note: The data for each year also takes into account information from the two previous years.

SHI.Q.10

Were individuals assaulted or displaced from their homes in retaliation for religious activities, including preaching and other forms of religious expression, considered offensive or threatening to the majority faith?

	<i>baseline year, ending JUN 2007</i>		<i>previous year, ending DEC 2019</i>		<i>latest year, ending DEC 2020</i>	
	NUMBER OF COUNTRIES	% OF COUNTRIES	NUMBER OF COUNTRIES	% OF COUNTRIES	NUMBER OF COUNTRIES	% OF COUNTRIES
No	149	76%	146	74%	147	74%
Yes	48	24	52	26	51	26
	197	100	198	100	198	100

Note: The data for each year also takes into account information from the two previous years.

SHI.Q.11

Were women harassed for violating religious dress codes?

	<i>baseline year, ending JUN 2007</i>		<i>previous year, ending DEC 2019</i>		<i>latest year, ending DEC 2020</i>	
	NUMBER OF COUNTRIES	% OF COUNTRIES	NUMBER OF COUNTRIES	% OF COUNTRIES	NUMBER OF COUNTRIES	% OF COUNTRIES
No	183	93%	139	70%	138	70%
Yes	14	7	59	30	60	30
	197	100	198	100	198	100

Note: The data for each year also takes into account information from the two previous years.

SHI.Q.12

Were there incidents of hostility over proselytizing?

	<i>baseline year, ending JUN 2007</i>		<i>previous year, ending DEC 2019</i>		<i>latest year, ending DEC 2020</i>	
	NUMBER OF COUNTRIES	% OF COUNTRIES	NUMBER OF COUNTRIES	% OF COUNTRIES	NUMBER OF COUNTRIES	% OF COUNTRIES
No	148	75%	170	86%	173	87%
Yes, but they fell short of physical violence	30	15	18	9	14	7
Yes, and they included physical violence	19	10	10	5	11	6
	197	100	198	100	198	100

Note: The data for each year also takes into account information from the two previous years.

SHI.Q.13

Were there incidents of hostility over conversions from one religion to another?

	<i>baseline year, ending JUN 2007</i>		<i>previous year, ending DEC 2019</i>		<i>latest year, ending DEC 2020</i>	
	NUMBER OF COUNTRIES	% OF COUNTRIES	NUMBER OF COUNTRIES	% OF COUNTRIES	NUMBER OF COUNTRIES	% OF COUNTRIES
No	153	78%	143	72%	142	72%
Yes, but they fell short of physical violence	23	12	31	16	31	16
Yes, and they included physical violence	21	11	24	12	25	13
	197	100	198	100	198	100

Note: The data for each year also takes into account information from the two previous years.

Note: Figures throughout may not add to 100% or to subtotals indicated due to rounding.

Appendix E: COVID-19 restrictions and religious groups

Q: Did any level of government use physical violence toward religious groups for reasons related to COVID-19?

AMERICAS	ASIA-PACIFIC	EUROPE	MIDDLE EAST-N. AFRICA	SUB-SAHARAN AFRICA
Antigua and Barbuda	Australia	Montenegro	Egypt	Angola
Belize	Azerbaijan		Israel	Comoros
Chile	China		Jordan	Equatorial Guinea
Cuba	Cyprus		Morocco	Gabon
Dominican Republic	India		Saudi Arabia	Gambia
Haiti	Indonesia		Yemen	Guinea
Mexico	Kazakhstan			Liberia
United States	Malaysia			Mauritania
Venezuela	Myanmar			Mozambique
	Nepal			Niger
	Pakistan			Nigeria
	Singapore			South Africa
	South Korea			South Sudan
	Sri Lanka			Uganda
	Uzbekistan			Zambia

Q: Did any level of government use force toward religious groups that resulted in **property damage**?

AMERICAS	ASIA-PACIFIC	EUROPE	MIDDLE EAST-N. AFRICA	SUB-SAHARAN AFRICA
Antigua and Barbuda	China	NONE	Israel	Liberia
Belize	Kazakhstan			
Cuba	South Korea			
Dominican Republic				
Mexico				

Appendix E: COVID-19 restrictions and religious groups

Q: Did any level of government use force toward religious groups that resulted in **detentions?**

AMERICAS	ASIA-PACIFIC	EUROPE	MIDDLE EAST-N. AFRICA	SUB-SAHARAN AFRICA
Antigua and Barbuda	Australia	Montenegro	Egypt	Angola
Belize	Azerbaijan		Jordan	Gabon
Chile	China		Morocco	Gambia
Cuba	Cyprus		Saudi Arabia	Guinea
Dominican Republic	India			Liberia
Haiti	Indonesia			Mauritania
United States	Kazakhstan			Mozambique
Venezuela	Malaysia			Niger
	Myanmar			Nigeria
	Nepal			South Africa
	Pakistan			South Sudan
	Singapore			Uganda
	South Korea			
	Sri Lanka			
	Uzbekistan			

Q: Did any level of government use force toward religious groups that resulted in **displacement?**

AMERICAS	ASIA-PACIFIC	EUROPE	MIDDLE EAST-N. AFRICA	SUB-SAHARAN AFRICA
None	Singapore	Montenegro	Yemen	Equatorial Guinea

Appendix E: COVID-19 restrictions and religious groups

Q: Did any level of government use force toward religious groups that resulted in **physical abuse**?

AMERICAS	ASIA-PACIFIC	EUROPE	MIDDLE EAST-N. AFRICA	SUB-SAHARAN AFRICA
None	Australia	None	Israel	Comoros
	China			Gabon
	India			Niger
	Indonesia			South Sudan
	Nepal			Zambia

Q: Did any level of government use force toward religious groups that resulted in **deaths**?

AMERICAS	ASIA-PACIFIC	EUROPE	MIDDLE EAST-N. AFRICA	SUB-SAHARAN AFRICA
None	India	None	Yemen	None
	Indonesia			

Q: Did any level of government (including public officials) attribute or link the spread of COVID-19 to certain religious groups or events?

AMERICAS	ASIA-PACIFIC	EUROPE	MIDDLE EAST-N. AFRICA	SUB-SAHARAN AFRICA
Canada	Cambodia	Denmark	Israel	Nigeria
Cuba	India	Montenegro	Saudi Arabia	
United States	Iran	Spain	Yemen	
Venezuela	Myanmar			
	Pakistan			
	Singapore			
	South Korea			

Appendix E: COVID-19 restrictions and religious groups

Q: Did private individuals or groups attribute or link the spread of COVID-19 to certain religious groups or events?

AMERICAS	ASIA-PACIFIC	EUROPE	MIDDLE EAST-N. AFRICA	SUB-SAHARAN AFRICA
Argentina	Australia	Belgium	Bahrain	None
Canada	Bangladesh	Bulgaria	Egypt	
Ecuador	Cambodia	Estonia	Israel	
United States	India	France	Morocco	
Venezuela	Iran	Georgia		
	Malaysia	Germany		
	Mongolia	Greece		
	Myanmar	Hungary		
	Nepal	Italy		
	Pakistan	Luxembourg		
	South Korea	Netherlands		
	Sri Lanka	Norway		
	Turkey	Romania		
		Russia		
		Serbia		
		Switzerland		
		United Kingdom		

Appendix E: COVID-19 restrictions and religious groups

Q: Did private individuals or groups use physical violence toward religious groups for reasons related to COVID-19?

AMERICAS	ASIA-PACIFIC	EUROPE	MIDDLE EAST-N. AFRICA	SUB-SAHARAN AFRICA
Argentina	India	Italy	None	None
United States				

Q: Did any private individuals or groups use force toward religious groups that resulted in property damage?

AMERICAS	ASIA-PACIFIC	EUROPE	MIDDLE EAST-N. AFRICA	SUB-SAHARAN AFRICA
Argentina	None	Italy	None	None
United States				

Q: Did any private individuals or groups use force toward religious groups that resulted in physical abuse?

AMERICAS	ASIA-PACIFIC	EUROPE	MIDDLE EAST-N. AFRICA	SUB-SAHARAN AFRICA
None	India	None	None	None

Q: Did any private individuals or groups use force toward religious groups that resulted in deaths?

AMERICAS	ASIA-PACIFIC	EUROPE	MIDDLE EAST-N. AFRICA	SUB-SAHARAN AFRICA
None	India	None	None	None

Note: Researchers also looked at whether private individuals or groups detained or displaced members of religious groups, but the analysis did not find examples of these occurring in any of the countries studied.

Appendix E: COVID-19 restrictions and religious groups

Q: Did religious groups criticize public health measures mandated as a response to COVID-19 (such as public gathering restrictions)?

AMERICAS	ASIA-PACIFIC	EUROPE	MIDDLE EAST-N. AFRICA	SUB-SAHARAN AFRICA
Antigua and Barbuda	Australia	Belgium	Algeria	Angola
Argentina	Cambodia	Bulgaria	Bahrain	Gabon
Bahamas	Iran	Croatia	Israel	Ghana
Barbados	Kazakhstan	France	Jordan	Kenya
Belize	Malaysia	Germany	Morocco	Madagascar
Canada	Nepal	Ireland	Saudi Arabia	Malawi
Chile	Pakistan	Italy		Namibia
Costa Rica	South Korea	Luxembourg		Niger
Ecuador	Sri Lanka	Moldova		Senegal
Jamaica		Montenegro		South Africa
Paraguay		Romania		Uganda
United States		Spain		Zambia
Uruguay		Switzerland		
		United Kingdom		

Appendix E: COVID-19 restrictions and religious groups

Q: Did religious groups claim COVID-19 measures unequally restricted or targeted them?

AMERICAS	ASIA-PACIFIC	EUROPE	MIDDLE EAST-N. AFRICA	SUB-SAHARAN AFRICA
Argentina	Australia	Belgium	Algeria	Angola
Canada	Cambodia	Bulgaria	Bahrain	Benin
Cuba	China	France	Israel	Gabon
Haiti	India	Georgia	Jordan	Guinea
Honduras	Japan	Germany	Morocco	Kenya
United States	Malaysia	North Macedonia	Qatar	Lesotho
	Myanmar	Poland	Saudi Arabia	Nigeria
	Pakistan	Romania	United Arab Emirates	Rwanda
	Philippines	Spain		Uganda
	Sri Lanka	Switzerland		Zambia
	Vietnam			

Q: Did religious groups or individuals defy COVID-19 public health measures in religious activities, such as large gatherings without social distancing?

AMERICAS	ASIA-PACIFIC	EUROPE	MIDDLE EAST-N. AFRICA	SUB-SAHARAN AFRICA
Antigua and Barbuda	Afghanistan	Albania	Bahrain	Angola
Belize	Australia	Belgium	Egypt	Cameroon
Brazil	Azerbaijan	Bosnia-Herzegovina	Iraq	Chad
Canada	Bangladesh	Bulgaria	Israel	Comoros
Chile	Cyprus	Croatia	Jordan	Ethiopia
Cuba	India	Denmark	Yemen	Gabon
Dominican Republic	Indonesia	France		Gambia
Haiti	Iran	Ireland		Ghana
Mexico	Kazakhstan	Moldova		Guinea
Paraguay	Kyrgyzstan	Montenegro		Kenya
Trinidad and Tobago	Malaysia	Netherlands		Liberia
United States	Myanmar	North Macedonia		Mozambique
Uruguay	Nepal	Romania		Niger
	Pakistan	Ukraine		Nigeria
	Singapore			Rwanda
	South Korea			Senegal
				Somalia
				South Africa
				South Sudan
				Zambia

Appendix E: COVID-19 restrictions and religious groups

Q: Did the government support or collaborate with religious groups to promote COVID-19 public health measures among faith communities?

AMERICAS	ASIA-PACIFIC	EUROPE	MIDDLE EAST-N. AFRICA	SUB-SAHARAN AFRICA
Canada	Australia	Albania	Palestinian Territories	Benin
Dominican Republic	Bangladesh	Finland	Saudi Arabia	Djibouti
Ecuador	Cyprus	Germany	Tunisia	Gabon
Grenada	Fiji	Greece	United Arab Emirates	Gambia
Guyana	Indonesia	Italy		Ghana
Panama	Malaysia	Norway		Ivory Coast
Paraguay	Pakistan	Sweden		Kenya
St. Kitts and Nevis	Philippines			Liberia
Uruguay	Singapore			Mauritania
	Solomon Islands			Mauritius
	Taiwan			Mozambique
				Niger
				Nigeria
				Rwanda
				Sao Tome and Principe
				Seychelles
				Sierra Leone
				Somalia
				South Africa
				Tanzania
				Togo
				Uganda
				Zambia
				Zimbabwe

Appendix E: COVID-19 restrictions and religious groups

Q: Did religious leaders or groups engage in efforts to promote COVID-19 public health measures?

AMERICAS	ASIA-PACIFIC	EUROPE	MIDDLE EAST-N. AFRICA	SUB-SAHARAN AFRICA
Antigua and Barbuda	Afghanistan	Albania	Algeria	Angola
Argentina	Bangladesh	Bosnia-Herzegovina	Bahrain	Cameroon
Bahamas	China	Estonia	Egypt	Chad
Barbados	Cyprus	Finland	Iraq	Democratic Republic of
Belize	Federated States of	France	Jordan	the Congo
Bolivia	Micronesia	Georgia	Kuwait	Ethiopia
Canada	Fiji	Germany	Lebanon	Gabon
El Salvador	Hong Kong	Greece	Palestinian Territories	Ghana
Guyana	India	Liechtenstein	Saudi Arabia	Ivory Coast
Haiti	Indonesia	Malta	Western Sahara	Kenya
Nicaragua	Japan	Montenegro	Yemen	Lesotho
Panama	Kyrgyzstan	Norway		Liberia
Peru	Malaysia	Poland		Malawi
St. Kitts and Nevis	Maldives	Romania		Mali
St. Vincent and the	Nepal	Russia		Mauritius
Grenadines	New Zealand	Sweden		Namibia
United States	Philippines	Switzerland		Niger
Uruguay	Singapore	Ukraine		Nigeria
	Taiwan	United Kingdom		Republic of the Congo
	Tuvalu			Rwanda
				Sao Tome and Principe
				Seychelles
				Sierra Leone
				Somalia
				South Africa
				Tanzania
				Uganda
				Zambia
				Zimbabwe