

Latest trends in RELIGIOUS RESTRICTIONS and HOSTILITIES



In February 2015, the *Pew Research Center* released the sixth in a series of annual reports, analysing 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 analyses religious change and its impact on societies around the world.

To measure **global restrictions on religion in 2013**, the most recent year for which data is available, the new study scores **198 countries and territories** on 10-point indexes.

Below are some key findings from the latest report. Looking at the overall level of restrictions – whether resulting from **government policies** or from **hostile acts by private individuals, organizations and social groups** – the study finds that:

1. Restrictions on religion were **high or very high** in **39%** of the 198 countries and territories monitored.
2. Nearly 5.5 billion people (**77%** of the world's population) live in nations where religious restrictions of some kind (related to either government or social groups) are either high or very high. This figure has increased from **76%** in 2012 and **68%** as of 2007.
3. Of the 59 countries where the government specifically targets religious minorities, **43** also have high or very high overall government restrictions on religion.
4. Among the world's 25 most populous countries, the highest overall levels of restrictions were found in **China, India, Burma** (Myanmar), **Egypt, Indonesia, Pakistan** and **Russia**, where both the government and society at large impose numerous limits on religious beliefs and practices.
5. Among these populous countries, **China** had the highest level of **government restrictions** in 2013.
6. **India** had the highest level of **social hostilities** involving religion.
7. **Christians** were harassed by government or social groups in **102** of the 198 countries included in the study (**52%**).
8. **Muslims** were harassed in **99** countries (**50%**).
9. **Jews**, who make up just 0.2% of the world's total population, were harassed either by governments or social groups in **77** countries in 2013, up from 71 in 2012 and 51 in 2007.
10. Jews are much more likely to be harassed by individuals or groups in society than by governments. In Europe, for example, Jews were harassed by individuals or social groups in 34 of the region's 45 countries (**76%**).
11. **10 countries** with moderate, high or very high levels of government restrictions on religion were from **Europe**, with **Germany** experiencing the highest levels of restrictions.
12. **11** of the 18 nations with very high levels of government restrictions on religion were **Islamic** nations.
13. The tumultuous **Middle East** – where Christianity, Judaism and Islam originated – still stands out as the area of the world with the highest levels of restrictions on religion.
14. In the Middle East and North Africa region, **Syria** (in the midst of a civil war) and **Egypt** (which saw its Muslim Brotherhood leader removed from power in 2013) both experienced very high levels of both government restrictions and social hostilities involving religion. **Israel, the Palestinian territories, Iraq** and **Saudi Arabia** all continued to have very high restrictions in one of the two categories.

GOVERNMENT RESTRICTIONS INDEX

The following table shows all **198 countries and territories** in **descending order of their scores** on the *Pew Research Center's* index of **government restrictions on religion** as of the end of 2013. Pew Research has not attached numerical rankings to the countries because there are numerous tie 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

China	Afghanistan	Turkey	Eritrea
Indonesia	Malaysia	Syria	Tajikistan
Uzbekistan	Saudi Arabia	Azerbaijan	Singapore
Iran	Burma (Myanmar)	Sudan	
Egypt	Russia	Brunei	

HIGH SCORES 4.5 TO 6.5

Maldives	Algeria	Sri Lanka	Rwanda
Bahrain	Vietnam	Bangladesh	Libya
Pakistan	Qatar	Armenia	UAE
Turkmenistan	Kazakhstan	Cuba	Ethiopia
Iraq	Mauritania	Oman	Romania
Belarus	Yemen	Djibouti	Germany
Morocco	Kyrgyzstan	India	
Jordan	Israel	Angola	
Western Sahara	Kuwait	Bhutan	
Laos	Bulgaria	Tunisia	

MODERATE SCORES 2.4 TO 4.4

Palestinian territories*	Belgium	Georgia	Zambia
Thailand	Kenya	Austria	Zimbabwe
Greece	Uganda	United States	Costa Rica
Moldova	Sweden	Chad	Mongolia
CAR	South Sudan	Slovakia	Switzerland
France	Madagascar	Spain	Norway
Ukraine	Serbia	Bahamas	Macedonia
Nigeria	Iceland	Hong Kong	Kosovo
Comoros	Mexico	Venezuela	Cyprus
Somalia*	Tanzania	Peru	Nicaragua
Lebanon	Tuvalu	Hungary	
Nepal	Denmark	Latvia	

LOW SCORES 0.0 TO 2.3

Seychelles	Cambodia	South Korea	Netherlands
Antigua and Barbuda	Poland	Argentina	Montenegro
Burundi	Guinea	Honduras	Gambia
Finland	Equatorial Guinea	Italy	Tonga
Lithuania	Swaziland	Mozambique	Cameroon
Bosnia-Herzegovina	Monaco	Guatemala	Mali
Albania	St. Kitts and Nevis	Liechtenstein	St. Lucia

Fiji	Liberia	Czech	Ecuador
Niger	Australia	Republic Trinidad and Tobago	Republic of the Congo
United Kingdom	Sierra Leone	Malta	Slovenia
St. Vincent and the Grenadines	Estonia	Solomon Islands	Gabon
Chile	Ghana	Papua New Guinea	Lesotho
Colombia	Panama	Philippines	Namibia
Bolivia	Burkina Faso	Taiwan	Benin
Croatia	Dominica	Kiribati	Sao Tome and Principe
Jamaica	Nauru	Guinea Bissau	San Marino
Togo	Guyana	Malawi	Cape Verde
Luxembourg	Senegal	Grenada	Brazil
Barbados	Vanuatu	New Zealand	Palau
Haiti	Canada	Samoa	Marshall Islands
El Salvador	Andorra	Macau	Micronesia
Ireland	Portugal	Uruguay	Suriname
Dominican Republic	DRC	Botswana	
Mauritius	Belize	South Africa	
Timor-Leste	Japan	Ivory Coast	
	Paraguay		

* **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 coded in this quantitative study. Therefore, the report does not include a score for North Korea on either index.*

* **SOMALIA:** *In the latest year of the study, researchers changed the way they coded government restrictions in Somalia. This contributed to the drop in Somalia's GRI score.*

* **PALESTINIAN TERRITORIES:** *The Palestinian territories' score on government restrictions reflects the policies of the Palestinian Authority government (headed by Mahmoud Abbas and headquartered in the West Bank) rather than the actions of Hamas in Gaza (which is not recognised by most of the sources for this report as a legitimate government).*

Number of Countries Where Religious Group Were Harassed, by Type of Harassment														
	Government harassment in the year ending ...							Social harassment in the year ending ...						
	JUN 2007	JUN 2008	JUN 2009	JUN 2010	DEC 2011	DEC 2012	DEC 2013	JUN 2007	JUN 2008	JUN 2009	JUN 2010	DEC 2011	DEC 2012	DEC 2013
Muslims	77	74	58	74	78	83	73	64	53	58	64	82	88	84
Christians	79	80	71	95	78	81	85	74	72	70	77	81	83	71
Jews	11	16	14	21	28	28	39	46	48	60	64	63	66	72
Others*	25	28	29	40	39	35	33	15	13	19	28	18	21	17
Folk religions**	13	10	9	10	5	11	12	16	13	19	20	21	18	26
Hindus	12	11	9	13	9	13	8	12	9	8	10	6	9	4
Buddhists	7	7	6	11	5	9	7	4	4	4	7	5	7	7
Any of the above	118	112	103	124	125	131	133	127	110	124	135	147	147	145

SOURCE:

For the full report, go to: <http://www.pewforum.org/2015/02/26/religious-hostilities/>

For further useful articles on persecution, read the following:

- **TURNING HORROR INTO HONOUR:** <http://incontextministries.org/images/1204Martyrdom.pdf>
- **THE REDEMPTIVE PURPOSE OF PERSECUTION:** <http://incontextministries.org/images/1119Persecution.pdf>
- **7 SNARES IN RELATING TO THE PERSECUTED CHURCH:** <http://incontextministries.org/images/1408Persecution.pdf>