

World
Watch
Research

Nepal: Full Country Dossier

December 2021



OpenDoors

Serving persecuted **Christians** worldwide

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Woman in Nepal (c) IMB

Introduction

World Watch List 2022

Rank	Country	Private life	Family life	Community life	National life	Church life	Violence	Total Score WWL 2022	Total Score WWL 2021	Total Score WWL 2020	Total Score WWL 2019	Total Score WWL 2018
1	Afghanistan	16.7	16.7	16.7	16.7	16.7	15.0	98	94	93	94	93
2	North Korea	16.7	16.7	16.7	16.7	16.7	13.1	96	94	94	94	94
3	Somalia	16.5	16.7	16.6	16.6	16.6	8.5	91	92	92	91	91
4	Libya	15.6	15.5	15.9	16.2	16.3	11.5	91	92	90	87	86
5	Yemen	16.7	16.6	16.5	16.7	16.7	5.2	88	87	85	86	85
6	Eritrea	14.6	14.9	15.5	15.9	15.6	11.1	88	88	87	86	86
7	Nigeria	13.8	13.8	14.3	14.5	14.4	16.7	87	85	80	80	77
8	Pakistan	13.6	14.0	15.1	14.9	13.1	16.7	87	88	88	87	86
9	Iran	14.5	14.6	13.6	15.8	16.5	10.4	85	86	85	85	85
10	India	12.7	12.7	12.9	14.7	13.3	15.6	82	83	83	83	81
11	Saudi Arabia	15.1	15.1	15.0	15.9	16.7	3.1	81	78	79	77	79
12	Myanmar	12.4	11.5	13.8	13.4	13.1	14.8	79	74	73	71	65
13	Sudan	13.4	13.4	14.3	13.6	15.7	8.5	79	79	85	87	87
14	Iraq	14.0	14.6	14.0	14.8	13.9	6.9	78	82	76	79	86
15	Syria	12.9	13.8	13.5	14.3	13.9	9.3	78	81	82	82	76
16	Maldives	15.4	15.3	13.7	15.8	16.5	0.4	77	77	78	78	78
17	China	12.6	9.8	12.2	14.4	15.5	11.1	76	74	70	65	57
18	Qatar	14.2	14.1	11.1	13.0	14.3	7.2	74	67	66	62	63
19	Vietnam	11.3	9.7	12.7	14.1	14.5	8.7	71	72	72	70	69
20	Egypt	12.7	13.2	11.5	12.7	10.8	10.0	71	75	76	76	70
21	Uzbekistan	14.9	12.7	14.1	11.8	15.6	1.7	71	71	73	74	73
22	Algeria	14.0	14.0	11.1	13.4	14.1	4.1	71	70	73	70	58
23	Mauritania	14.3	13.9	13.1	14.0	14.1	0.9	70	71	68	67	57
24	Mali	9.4	8.2	13.9	10.3	12.8	15.0	70	67	66	68	59
25	Turkmenistan	14.5	11.3	13.6	13.3	15.7	0.6	69	70	70	69	68
26	Laos	12.0	10.3	13.2	13.3	14.1	5.9	69	71	72	71	67
27	Morocco	13.1	13.8	10.8	12.8	14.2	3.9	69	67	66	63	51
28	Indonesia	11.3	11.5	11.5	11.0	9.6	13.5	68	63	60	65	59
29	Bangladesh	11.8	10.7	12.9	11.3	10.2	11.3	68	67	63	58	58
30	Colombia	11.5	8.8	13.1	11.0	9.9	13.3	68	67	62	58	56
31	CAR	9.0	8.6	13.6	9.6	11.4	15.6	68	66	68	70	61
32	Burkina Faso	9.4	9.7	12.0	9.6	12.1	14.8	68	67	66	48	-
33	Niger	9.4	9.5	13.9	7.2	12.8	14.8	68	62	60	52	45
34	Bhutan	13.4	12.4	11.7	13.7	13.8	1.7	67	64	61	64	62
35	Tunisia	11.9	12.7	10.6	11.3	13.4	6.5	66	67	64	63	62
36	Oman	13.8	14.0	10.3	13.2	13.4	1.5	66	63	62	59	57
37	Cuba	12.3	8.1	12.6	13.2	14.0	5.9	66	62	52	49	49
38	Ethiopia	9.9	10.3	13.1	10.3	12.3	9.8	66	65	63	65	62
39	Jordan	12.9	14.0	11.0	12.3	12.5	3.0	66	64	64	65	66
40	DRC	8.0	7.9	12.6	9.7	12.0	15.6	66	64	56	55	33
41	Mozambique	9.3	8.5	11.3	7.9	12.5	15.6	65	63	43	43	-
42	Turkey	12.6	11.5	11.4	13.2	11.6	4.6	65	69	63	66	62
43	Mexico	10.3	8.3	12.5	10.8	10.3	12.6	65	64	60	61	59
44	Cameroon	8.8	7.6	12.6	7.2	13.1	15.4	65	64	60	54	38
45	Tajikistan	13.8	12.3	12.0	12.6	13.2	0.7	65	66	65	65	65
46	Brunei	14.8	14.5	10.3	11.0	13.2	0.6	64	64	63	63	64
47	Kazakhstan	13.4	11.6	11.1	12.6	13.5	1.7	64	64	64	63	63
48	Nepal	12.4	9.8	9.9	13.6	12.7	5.2	64	66	64	64	64
49	Kuwait	13.5	13.7	9.8	12.3	13.1	1.1	64	63	62	60	61
50	Malaysia	12.5	14.3	11.5	11.6	10.2	3.3	63	63	62	60	65

Rank	Country	Private life	Family life	Community life	National life	Church life	Violence	Total Score WWL 2022	Total Score WWL 2021	Total Score WWL 2020	Total Score WWL 2019	Total Score WWL 2018
51	Kenya	11.7	9.2	11.4	8.0	11.5	11.1	63	62	61	61	62
52	Sri Lanka	12.9	9.9	11.4	11.3	9.4	7.8	63	62	65	58	57
53	Comoros	12.7	11.1	11.2	12.4	14.2	0.9	63	62	57	56	56
54	UAE	13.4	13.6	10.1	11.8	12.2	1.3	62	62	60	58	58
55	Tanzania	9.3	10.8	10.3	8.6	8.7	13.7	61	58	55	52	53
56	Azerbaijan	13.1	9.9	9.3	11.0	13.4	3.3	60	56	57	57	57
57	Palestinian Territories	13.0	13.4	9.8	10.2	12.0	0.9	59	58	60	57	60
58	Djibouti	12.3	12.3	11.1	10.0	12.2	0.7	59	56	56	56	56
59	Kyrgyzstan	12.9	10.1	11.1	10.4	12.0	1.5	58	58	57	56	54
60	Bahrain	12.5	13.2	9.1	11.1	10.2	0.9	57	56	55	55	57
61	Nicaragua	9.1	5.6	11.1	11.8	11.3	7.6	56	51	41	41	-
62	Russian Federation	12.3	8.0	10.2	10.6	12.3	2.2	56	57	60	60	51
63	Chad	11.5	8.2	10.2	9.6	10.3	5.6	55	53	56	48	40
64	Burundi	7.6	7.8	9.7	9.2	9.6	8.1	52	48	48	43	-
65	Venezuela	5.6	4.5	11.2	9.4	11.1	9.6	51	39	42	41	34
66	Angola	6.8	6.7	8.1	10.1	11.4	7.8	51	46	43	42	-
67	Rwanda	8.1	5.5	6.7	10.3	10.1	9.3	50	42	42	41	-
68	Honduras	7.2	5.1	10.5	7.7	9.2	8.7	48	46	39	38	-
69	Uganda	8.1	4.6	7.4	6.7	9.1	11.7	48	47	48	47	46
70	El Salvador	7.7	4.6	10.7	5.7	9.1	7.2	45	42	38	30	-
71	Togo	9.2	6.7	9.3	7.1	9.8	2.4	44	43	41	42	-
72	Gambia	8.3	8.2	8.7	8.3	8.8	1.7	44	43	43	43	-
73	Guinea	10.3	7.5	8.3	7.0	8.1	2.0	43	47	45	46	-
74	South Sudan	5.7	0.9	7.0	6.3	7.8	15.0	43	43	44	44	-
75	Ivory Coast	9.8	8.6	8.2	5.5	7.9	2.0	42	42	42	43	-
76	Israel	9.8	8.4	5.6	6.6	6.6	4.3	41	40	38	39	40

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Sources and definitions

- This country report is a collation of data and analysis based around Open Doors World Watch List (WWL) and includes statistical information on world religions, Christian denominations and people groups prepared by the World Christian Database (WCD).
- Highlighted links in the text can be found written out in full at the conclusion of each main section under the heading “External links”. In order to reduce the length of these reference sections, a table containing links to regularly used sources can be found at the beginning of the “Keys to Understanding” chapter under the heading “Links for general background information”. Where one of these sources has been quoted in the dossier text, a quote reference is supplied as indicated in the second column of the table.
- The WWL 2022 reporting period was 01 October 2020 - 30 September 2021.
- The definition of persecution used in WWL analysis is: “Any hostility experienced as a result of one’s identification with Christ. This can include hostile attitudes, words and actions towards Christians”. This broad definition includes (but is not limited to) restrictions, pressure, discrimination, opposition, disinformation, injustice, intimidation, mistreatment, marginalization, oppression, intolerance, infringement, violation, ostracism, hostilities, harassment, abuse, violence, ethnic cleansing and genocide.
- The latest update of WWL Methodology including appendices can be found on the [World Watch List Documentation](#) page of the Open Doors Analytical website (password: freedom).

Effect on data-gathering during COVID-19 pandemic

In the WWL 2022 reporting period, travel restrictions and other measures introduced by the governments of various countries to combat the spread of the COVID-19 pandemic did cause delays and create the need for restructuring grass-roots research in some cases. Through the agile cooperation of In-country networks, Open Doors country researchers, External experts, WWR analysts and an increased use of technological options, Open Doors is confident that – as in the previous reporting period – WWL 2022 scoring, analysis and documentation has maintained required levels of quality and reliability.

External Links - Introduction

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

WWL 2022 Situation in brief / Nepal

Brief country details

Nepal: Population (UN estimate for 2021)	Christians	Chr%
30,578,000	1,341,000	4.4

Data source: Johnson T M and Zurlo G A, eds, World Christian Database (Leiden/Boston: Brill, accessed April 2021)

Map of country



Nepal: World Watch List	Points	WWL Rank
WWL 2022	64	48
WWL 2021	66	34
WWL 2020	64	32
WWL 2019	64	32
WWL 2018	64	25

Ranks are shown above whenever the country scored 41 points or more in the WWL 2018-2022 reporting periods

Dominant persecution engines and drivers

Nepal: Main Persecution engines	Main drivers
Religious nationalism	Government officials, Non-Christian religious leaders, Violent religious groups, One's own (extended) family, Political parties, Citizens (people from the broader society), including mobs, Ethnic group leaders
Clan oppression	Violent religious groups, One's own (extended) family, Citizens (people from the broader society), including mobs, Government officials, Ethnic group leaders

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

Brief description of the persecution situation

Converts from Hinduism are put under most pressure as they are viewed as deviating from the faith of the ancestors. Converts (and members of Protestant churches) experience pressure from family, friends, community and local authorities. Roman Catholic churches and churches where foreigners gather experience the least problems. From time to time Hindu radicals take advantage of the ongoing political instability by attacking Christians - mostly with impunity. There have been reports of churches being attacked, of Christians being beaten, arrested and sentenced to prison. There were also Christians who had to flee their homes and villages because of threats. There are also some legal restrictions at the national level.

Summary of international obligations and rights violations

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

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

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

- Christian converts experience pressure and violence from their family and community to renounce their faith (ICCPR Art. 18)
- Christian children are harassed because of their parents' faith (ICCPR Art. 18 and CRC Art. 14)
- Christians face discrimination in the workplace because of their faith (ICCPR Art. 26)
- Christians and their activities are monitored by the authorities and surrounding community (ICCPR Art. 17)

Specific examples of violations of rights in the reporting period

- **20 January 2021:** Nepalese authorities appeared at the doorsteps of the Rupantaran Khristiya Church, which had served Christian families in the Naya Basti slum area since 2013, and began demolition. (Source: [International Christian Concern, 29 January 2021](#))
- **July 2021:** The Hindu father of a Christian convert died on 20 July 2021. When the villagers pressurized him to perform the funeral according to Hindu rituals, he refused. As a result, he was told to leave the village and was forced to find refuge at a pastor's house. (Source: Open Doors Research)
- **27 September 2021:** Four Korean Christians were jailed on charges of proselytizing by the Kaski district court. They were accused of teaching Bible verses to children under the pretext of providing free tuition to orphans and other children from poor families at the Anna Paul Guest House in Prithvi Chowk. (Source: [Nepal Church, 28 September 2021](#))

Specific examples of positive developments

- **July - September 2021:** The Catholic Church's social agency Caritas paired up with US-based Catholic Relief Services (CRS) to launch an emergency COVID-19 relief scheme to provide much-needed medical supplies to the country's hospitals. The scheme ran from July to September 2021 and provided 20 hospitals in 14 districts of Nepal with medical supplies, such as oxygen concentrators, pulse oximeters and personal protective equipment. (Source: [UCAN, 9 July 2021](#))
- **7-8 September 2021:** Inauguration of churches and community buildings in Dang and Rupandehi. The construction was carried out in collaboration with the National Church of the Fellows of Nepal (NCF). According to NCF Nepal, the building dedications were attended by many pastors and guests. (Source: [Nepal Church, 9 September 2021](#))
- **13 September 2021:** Christian Media Society Nepal (CMSN), a non-profit company, was officially registered in the office of the Registrar of Companies in Kathmandu. The CMSN is a non-profit company empowering Christian media and organizing Christian communicators across the country. (Source: [Nepal Church, 16 September 2021](#))

External Links - Situation in brief

- Summary of international obligations and rights violations: International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights - <https://www.ohchr.org/en/professionalinterest/pages/ccpr.aspx>
- Summary of international obligations and rights violations: International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights - <https://www.ohchr.org/en/professionalinterest/pages/cescr.aspx>

- Summary of international obligations and rights violations: Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment - <https://www.ohchr.org/en/professionalinterest/pages/cat.aspx>
- Summary of international obligations and rights violations: Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women - <https://www.ohchr.org/EN/ProfessionalInterest/Pages/CEDAW.aspx>
- Summary of international obligations and rights violations: Convention on the Rights of the Child - <https://www.ohchr.org/en/professionalinterest/pages/crc.aspx>
- Specific examples of violations of rights in the reporting period: International Christian Concern, 29 January 2021 - <https://www.persecution.org/2021/01/29/authorities-demolish-rupantaran-khristiya-church-nepal/>
- Specific examples of violations of rights in the reporting period: Nepal Church, 28 September 2021 - <https://nepalchurch.com/25155/%E0%A4%A7%E0%A4%B0%E0%A5%8D%E0%A4%AE%E0%A4%AA%E0%A4%B0%E0%A4%BF%E0%A4%B5%E0%A4%B0%E0%A5%8D%E0%A4%A4%E0%A4%A8%E0%A4%95%E0%A5%8B-%E0%A4%9D%E0%A5%81%E0%A4%A0%E0%A4%BE-%E0%A4%86%E0%A4%B0%E0%A5%8B%E0%A4%AA/>
- Specific examples of positive developments: UCAN, 9 July 2021 - <https://www.ucanews.com/news/caritas-helps-nepals-hospitals-in-battling-pandemic/93219>
- Specific examples of positive developments: Nepal Church, 9 September 2021 - <https://nepalchurch.com/24823/%E0%A4%A6%E0%A4%BE%E0%A4%99-%E0%A4%B0-%E0%A4%B0%E0%A5%81%E0%A4%AA%E0%A4%A8%E0%A5%8D%E0%A4%A6%E0%A5%87%E0%A4%B9%E0%A5%80%E0%A4%AE%E0%A4%BE-%E0%A4%9A%E0%A4%B0%E0%A5%8D%E0%A4%9A-%E0%A4%B0-%E0%A4%B8/>
- Specific examples of positive developments: Nepal Church, 16 September 2021 - <https://nepalchurch.com/24783/%E0%A4%96%E0%A5%8D%E0%A4%B0%E0%A5%80%E0%A4%B7%E0%A5%8D-%E0%A4%9F%E0%A4%BF%E0%A4%AF%E0%A4%BE%E0%A4%A8-%E0%A4%AE%E0%A4%BF%E0%A4%A1%E0%A4%BF%E0%A4%AF%E0%A4%BE-%E0%A4%B8%E0%A5%8B%E0%A4%B8%E0%A4%BE-2/>

WWL 2022: Keys to understanding / Nepal

Links for general background information

Name	Quote Reference	Link	Last accessed on
Amnesty International country report	AI 2021	https://www.amnesty.org/en/countries/asia-and-the-pacific/nepal/	16 July 2021
BBC News country profile	BBC country profile	https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-south-asia-12511455	16 July 2021
Bertelsmann Transformation Index 2020	BTI 2020	https://bti-project.org/en/reports/country-dashboard-NPL.html	16 July 2021
CIA World Factbook	CIA Factbook	https://www.cia.gov/the-world-factbook/countries/nepal/	16 July 2021
Economist Intelligence Unit Democracy Index 2020	EIU 2020	https://pages.eiu.com/rs/753-RIQ-438/images/democracy-index-2020.pdf	16 July 2021
FFP's Fragile States Index 2021	FSI 2021	https://fragilestatesindex.org/country-data/	16 July 2021
Freedom House's 2021 Democracy index (Nepal is not included)	Freedom House/Democracy 2021	https://freedomhouse.org/countries/nations-transit/scores	
Freedom House's 2021 Global Freedom index	Freedom House/Global Freedom 2021	https://freedomhouse.org/country/nepal/freedom-world/2021	16 July 2021
Freedom House's Freedom on the Net 2020 report (Nepal is not included)	Freedom House/Internet Freedom 2020	https://freedomhouse.org/countries/freedom-net/scores	
Garda World country report	Garda World	https://www.garda.com/crisis24/country-reports/nepal	16 July 2021
Human Rights Watch World Report 2021	HRW 2021	https://www.hrw.org/world-report/2021/country-chapters/nepal	16 July 2021
Internet World Stats 2021	IWS 2021	https://www.internetworldstats.com/asia.htm#np	16 July 2021
RSF's 2020 World Press Freedom Index	World Press Freedom 2020	https://rsf.org/en/nepal	16 July 2021
Transparency International's 2020 Corruption Perceptions Index	CPI 2020	https://www.transparency.org/en/countries/nepal	16 July 2021
UNDP's Global Human Development Indicators	HDI	http://hdr.undp.org/en/countries/profiles/NPL	16 July 2021
US State Department's 2020 International Religious Freedom country reports	IRFR 2020	https://www.state.gov/reports/2020-report-on-international-religious-freedom/nepal/	16 July 2021
USCIRF 2021 country reports (Nepal is not included)	USCIRF 2021	https://www.uscifr.gov/countries	
World Bank country report	World Bank	https://www.worldbank.org/en/country/nepal	16 July 2021

Recent history

In 1994 a short-lived Communist government ruled in Nepal. From 1995 to 2006 a violent Maoist insurgency dragged on seeking to abolish the monarchy. On 1 June 2001, there was a massacre in the royal palace in which King Birendra, Queen Aishwarya and seven other members of the royal family were killed. The alleged perpetrator was Crown Prince Dipendra, who committed suicide. This outburst was alleged to have been Dipendra's response to his parents' refusal to accept his choice of wife. Nevertheless, there is speculation and doubts among Nepali citizens about who was truly responsible.

Following the carnage, King Birendra's brother Gyanendra inherited the throne. On 1 February 2005, King Gyanendra dismissed the entire government and assumed full executive powers to quash the Maoist insurgency, but this initiative was unsuccessful. In September 2005, the Maoists declared a three-month unilateral ceasefire to negotiate.

In response to the 2006 democracy movement, King Gyanendra agreed to relinquish sovereign power to the people. On 24 April 2006 the dissolved House of Representatives was re-instated. Using its newly acquired sovereign authority, the House of Representatives unanimously voted to curtail the power of the king and declared Nepal a secular state on 18 May 2006, ending its time-honored official status as a Hindu kingdom. On 28 December 2007, a bill was passed in parliament to amend Article 159 of the Constitution – replacing "Provisions regarding the King" by "Provisions of the Head of the State" – declaring Nepal a federal republic, and thereby abolishing the monarchy. The bill came into force on 28 May 2008. Since then, Nepal is a federal secular parliamentary republic.

Nepal made international headlines when it was struck by two major earthquakes in April and May 2015 ([Fides, 5 May 2015](#)), leaving an estimated 9,200 people killed and causing a damage of around ten billion USD, which was 50% of the country's annual GDP. What has been less reported, though, is the fact that the government promised to fund the reconstruction of temples destroyed, but not of church buildings which were destroyed as well. Until WWL 2018, Nepal had been hovering at the threshold of the World Watch List Top 50 for several years.

In May 2020 India inaugurated a new 80 km-long road in the Himalayas, connecting to the border with China, at the Lipulekh pass. The Nepali government protested, contending that the road crosses territory that it claims and accusing India of changing the status quo without diplomatic consultations. Prime Minister Oli stated that these areas were Nepali (Source: [Kathmandu Post, 29 May 2020](#)).

Political and legal landscape

Since 2008, when Nepal changed from being a monarchy to a federal republic (dividing the country into provinces), there has been much argument between the various political parties. Instead of the planned 2 years, it took more than 7 years to write a new constitution which came into effect on 20 September 2015. In the Preamble of the [2015 Constitution of Nepal](#), Nepal is defined as having "multi-ethnic, multi-lingual, multi-religious, multi-cultural characteristics". Despite being officially secular, the 2015 Constitution curbs the freedom to proselytize and convert, regarding it as a punishable offence. Article 26 of the Constitution states: "No person shall, in the exercise of the right conferred by this Article convert another person from one re-

ligion to another or any act or conduct that may jeopardize other's religion and such act shall be punishable by law." This means conversion is forbidden and this affects Christian evangelism greatly. On 8 August 2017 the Nepalese parliament also passed anti-conversion legislation which was signed into law by the president on [16 October 2017](#). (Source: CSW, 20 October 2017).

The new criminal code of Nepal, which came into effect in August 2018, also prohibits religious behavior that disrupts public order or goes contrary to public morality. Hence, while the law generally remains positive, there is always the possibility that these new provisions can be used to target and punish members from minority groups.

The most recent parliamentary elections in Nepal were held on 26 November and 7 December 2017. At stake were 275 seats in the House of Representatives. The elections resulted in a political deadlock between the governing Nepali Congress party and the winning left-wing coalition. Hindu radical parties form only a small section of parliament. However, the major political parties such as the Congress party are also deeply rooted in the ethics and values of Hinduism. Many political parties recognize the great potential of the rapidly growing Christian community in Nepal. In May 2017 Christians were chosen as representatives of some local units in the first phase of local elections held for the first time in Nepal's history.

Democracy in Nepal denotes to the absence of monarchy but not the establishment of secular political system. As far as real democracy is concerned, it is still a long journey. Nepal is lacking a strong government and political alliances tend not to last. An internal conflict in the Communist Party continues to lame the government (Source: [Kathmandu Post, 10 July 2020](#)).

In December 2020, Prime Minister Oli issued a decree to dissolve the Lower House of parliament. (Source: [International Crisis Group, 25 January 2021](#)) Instead of ending the political instability, however, the move led to political rifts in various political parties, to inaction in the Upper House and to a judiciary that failed to take its responsibility. (Source: [Kathmandu Post, 8 June 2021](#))

In June 2021 Prime Minister Oli suffered another setback: The Supreme Court annulled the appointment of 20 of his ministers. (Source: [Kathmandu Post, 23 June 2021](#))

On 12 July 2021 Nepal's Supreme Court's restored Nepal's Parliament for the second time after it was dissolved by Prime Minister K P Oli. Unexpectedly, the Supreme Court also ordered Sher Bahadur Deuba of the Nepali Congress to succeed Oli as prime minister. (Source: [Nepali Times, 12 July 2021](#))

The government of Nepal also has to constantly bear in mind the opinions of its two powerful neighbors: India and China. As both want Nepal in their sphere of influence, Kathmandu has to walk a tightrope in order to follow an independent course. In May 2020 a conflict with India erupted about border regions that were claimed by India.

According to the US State Department (IRFR 2020):

- "The constitution establishes the country as a 'secular state' but defines secularism as 'protection of the age-old religion and culture and religious and cultural freedom'. It provides for the right to profess and practice one's own religion. The constitution prohibits converting persons from one religion to another and prohibits religious behavior disturbing

public order or contrary to public health, decency, and morality. The law prohibits both proselytism and 'harming the religious sentiment' of any caste, ethnic community, or class. The law does not provide for registration or official recognition of religious organizations as religious institutions, except for Buddhist monasteries. All other religious groups must register as nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) or non-profit organizations to own property or operate legally."

- "Officials arrested several pastors for violating the COVID-19 lockdown, including one who was arrested while sending parishioners home from their church. Another pastor was arrested, first for providing what the government said was misinformation about COVID-19, released on bail, and then arrested twice more for seeking to convert Hindus to Christianity."
- "During the year, police surveillance of Tibetans remained high. Authorities cited the pandemic in restricting public ceremonies and gatherings while maintaining, and in some cases increasing, pre-pandemic levels of security personnel and scrutiny of Tibetan cultural and religious celebrations, particularly those involving the Dalai Lama."
- "Christian religious leaders expressed concern about the anti-Christian sentiment of the Hindu nationalist Rastriya Prajatantra Party (RPP), which seeks to re-establish the country as a Hindu state. Christian groups continued to report difficulties registering or operating as NGOs. The government again did not recognize Christmas or Eid al-Adha as public holidays, but allowed Christians and Muslims time off from work to celebrate and continued to recognize Buddha's birthday as a public holiday. Christian and Muslim groups said they continued to face difficulties in buying or using land for burials."

Nepal's legislation contains provisions that discriminate against women, including not being able to transmit citizenship through marriage and to their children (HRW 2021). In 2021, a proposed new law to limit women's freedom of travel was met with widespread criticism ([The Guardian, 17 February 2021](#); [HRW, 11 February 2021](#)). Despite laws and policies aimed at eradicating child marriage, the practice remains prevalent, with 40% of girls and 10% of boys marrying by the age of 18 ([Girls Not Brides, 2021](#)). Rape and domestic violence are illegal, but there is no specific law addressing violence against women. According to Human Rights Watch (HRW 2021), "legal gaps and lack of political will continued to mar accountability for sexual violence, especially for victims from minority communities".

Religious landscape

Nepal: Religious context	Number of adherents	%
Christians	1,341,000	4.4
Muslim	1,320,000	4.3
Hindu	20,095,000	65.7
Buddhist	3,719,000	12.2
Ethno-religionist	3,941,000	12.9

Jewish	0	0.0
Bahai	5,100	0.0
Atheist	16,200	0.1
Agnostic	92,000	0.3
Other	48,100	0.2
<i>OTHER includes Chinese folk, New religionist, Sikh, Spiritist, Taoist, Confucianist, Jain, Shintoist, Zoroastrian.</i>		

Data source: Johnson T M and Zurlo G A, eds, *World Christian Database* (Leiden/Boston: Brill, accessed April 2021)

Hinduism is the dominant religion in Nepal and there are also predominately Buddhist ethnic groups. One remnant of the fact that Hinduism used to be the state religion is the caste system – a hierarchical stratification of society dating back many centuries. According to tradition called *Varna*, there are four castes (Brahmins, Kshatriyas, Vaishyas and Shudras), plus a list of groups, now known as Dalits, who were historically excluded from the Varna system altogether, and are still ostracized as "Untouchables". Many Christians in Nepal are from Dalit background. Most Christians in Nepal belong to the lower social strata and have low incomes.

For centuries, Dalits have been exploited socially and economically, and many have been attracted to Christian faith in recent years. Re-conversion campaigns (like the *Ghar Wapsi* movement in India) have not been particularly successful, and so Hindu extremists - who aim to make Nepal a Hindu nation - find other ways to put pressure on Christians.

Economic landscape

According to the World Bank:

- **GDP (current US\$):** 29.17 billion
- **GDP growth (annual %):** 6.7. Nepal's GDP had been increasing since 2010, but the COVID-19 crisis in early 2020 caused many businesses to close. It also meant that many guest workers returned to Nepal. The service sector growth deteriorated to an 18-year low of 0.7 percent, as tourism and trade were disrupted. Industrial growth contracted, and capacity utilization fell from 80% to 46% due to shortages in production inputs and labor.

Nepal is still one of the least developed countries in the world and relies extensively on foreign aid. In 2020, Nepal's economy came to a standstill due to the COVID-19 lockdown measures. According to the World Bank ([Press Release, 8 October 2020](#)): "Nepal's economy is projected to grow by only 0.6 percent in 2021, inching up from an estimated 0.2 percent in 2020 as lockdowns caused by COVID-19 disrupt economic activity, especially tourism". The economic consequences of the COVID-19 crisis and the impact on livelihoods across Nepal is expected to be the most acute for informal workers. Informal businesses make up around 50% of enterprises in Nepal and are the main source of income for most of the labor force ([Kathmandu Post, 9 October 2020](#)).

Economic development in Nepal has been complicated by the constant change in political scenarios which has ranged from absolute monarchy to being ruled by Communists. An isolated, agrarian society until the mid-20th century, Nepal entered the modern era in 1951 without schools, hospitals, roads, telecommunications, electrical power, industry or civil services. The country has, however, made progress toward sustainable economic growth since the 1950s with great improvement in living standards. Agriculture remains Nepal's principal economic activity, employing about 65% of the population and providing 31.7% of GDP. Only about 20% of the total area is cultivable. Nepal's GDP is heavily dependent on remittances (29.1%) of guest workers abroad who have been sending remittances to their country to the value of billions of dollars over the years. There was steep decline of this as COVID-19 significantly interrupted the world economy.

The female labor force participation rate is 82.8%, just shy of 85.1% for men. This soars above the global female employment rate which sits at 49% ([Georgetown, 2019/20, p.19](#)). However, many women are restricted to the 'informal' sector and due to inequality at home, women may be far from experiencing economic independence ([Nepali Times, 8 March 2021](#)).

Social and cultural landscape

According to the [UNDP's full 2020 report](#) (page 343) and the CIA Factbook:

- **Main ethnic groups:** 16.6% of the Nepalese population is Chhetri, 12.2% Bahun, 7.1% Magar, 6.5% Tharu. Other ethnic groups (e.g. the Tamang, Newar, Kami, Madheshi Muslims, Yadav, and Rai peoples) together make up around 25% of the Nepalese population (2011 census data).
- **Main languages:** Nepali (official) 44.6%, Maithali 11.7%, Bhojpuri 6%, Tharu 5.8%, Tamang 5.1%, Newar 3.2%, Bajjika 3%, Magar 3%, Doteli 3%, Urdu 2.6%, Avadhi 1.9%, Limbu 1.3%, Gurung 1.2%, Baitadeli 1%, other 6.4%, unspecified 0.2% (2011 est.). 123 languages were reported as mother tongue in the 2011 national census; many in government and business also speak English
- **Urban population:** 21% of total population (2021)
- **Literacy rate:** 67.9%

According to the UNDP's Human Development Indicators (HDI):

- **HDI score and ranking:** 0.602, ranking 142
- **Total population:** 33.4 million
- **Life expectancy at birth:** 70.8 years
- **Expected years of schooling:** 12.8 years
- **Mean years of schooling:** There is a gender gap in regards to access to education. The mean years of schooling for girls is 4.3 years, compared to 5.8 for boys ([The Borgen Project, 2019](#)).
- **Employment to population ratio (% ages 15 years and older):** 62.7
- **Population in multidimensional poverty, headcount (thousands – for the year of the survey):** 9,267
- **Gender inequality index:** 0.933

- **Poverty:** According to an article by Asian Pacific, 28.6% of the population Nepalese are living in poverty and inequality ([Asian Pacific Center, 22 September 2020](#)). Most Christians in Nepal belong to the lower social strata and have low incomes. The COVID-19 crisis has increased poverty among large sections of the population as many jobs were cut.

In Nepal, harmful stereotypes and cultural practices serve to disempower women ([CEDAW, 2018](#)). This is particularly evident upon inspection of the sex ratio at birth (1.12 as of 2020) which points to a strong preference for sons ([Statista, 2020](#)). Forced marriages – primarily of women and girls – reportedly occur "to protect family honor, prevent 'unsuitable' relationships and control female behavior" ([OECD, 2019](#)). Domestic violence levels also threaten the safety of women and girls, a threat which reportedly increased during the COVID-19 pandemic lockdowns ([VOA News, 10 July 2020](#)).

Technological landscape

According to Internet World Stats (IWS 2021):

- **Internet usage:** 73.8% penetration (survey date: December 2020)
- **Facebook usage:** 41.4% penetration (survey date: December 2020)
According to a January 2020 report, 60.4% of Facebook users in Nepal are men and 39.6% are women ([NapoleonCat, January 2020](#)).

According to World Bank:

- **Mobile phone subscriptions:** 139.4 per 100 people (2018)
According to a [2020 article in the British Medical Journal](#), the gender gap in mobile phone ownership is high, at 24%. This suggests that it may be harder for female converts to access digital Christian resources and community.

According to [BuddeComm Research](#) (updated 14 September 2020):

- Fixed broadband penetration in Nepal remains very low mainly due to a limited number of fixed lines and the subsequent dominance of the mobile platform. Also, the declining number of fixed lines is restricting more widespread development of fixed broadband. However, the market has grown strongly over the past five years from a very small base with penetration increasing from 0.9% in 2014 to 3.9% in 2019.
- Fiber-optic networks are developing all over the country under private and public funding. The growing demand for high speed internet will strongly push the development of fixed broadband. Over the next five years to 2024 strong growth is expected to continue. Between 2018 and 2019 numerous ISP announced contracts with Nokia to deploy fibre-to-the-home (FTTH) in the country. This is in line with the government's vision of a digital society, whereby 90% of the population will have access to broadband services by 2020.
- The NTA announced the launch of the first Nepalese satellite in 2022. Thales Alenia Space will build the national satellite telecom system.

- Nepal has seen a very rapid increase in mobile broadband penetration over the past seven years driven by increasing numbers of 3G and 4G mobile subscribers. However, the mobile broadband market is still at an early stage of development with penetration well below most other Asian countries. Strong growth is predicted up to 2024.

Christians in Nepal can freely access the Internet and foreign Christian websites. The Nepalese Christian website [Nepal Church](#) (last accessed on 22 July 2020) operates without hinderance and many of its pages are in the local language.

Security situation

The political situation in Nepal is far from stable. According to [UK Government travel advice](#) (accessed 7 June 2021):

- Small-scale politically motivated protests, demonstrations or strikes are not uncommon, leading to clashes between protesters and law enforcement agencies.
- On 26 May 2019 a series of bomb blasts took place in Kathmandu, causing 4 fatalities. Two improvised explosive devices also detonated in Kathmandu in February and March 2019, causing injuries and one fatality.
- Terrorist attacks are likely.

In 2020, political tensions developed between India and Nepal as both countries claimed border territory as their own. The border between both countries was temporarily closed ([Current Shurrent, 20 August 2020](#)).

Trends analysis

1) Christianity has been growing rapidly

Nepal is a poor, land-locked country, wedged between India and China, and its politics are deeply divided. Despite all the problems, however, Nepal is slowly making progress; the economy is improving and the high levels of poverty is being reduced little by little. Christianity is growing rapidly, which is a cause of concern for radical Hindus since most converts to Christianity come from a Hindu background.

2) Hindu radicals have been able to attack non-Hindus with impunity

Compared to its neighbor India, the number of reported violent incidents against Christians in Nepal is relatively low, but it is increasing. In the past months and years there have been threats, arrests, physical harassment, churches and homes of Christians damaged and foreign Christians expelled. Under the current circumstances, Hindu radicals have been able to continue and increase their attacks against non-Hindus with impunity. So far, the government of Nepal has undertaken no measures to counter this. It is therefore very likely that Christians in Nepal will face growing oppression in the future.

3) The political situation remains unstable

The level of political instability is expected to continue. The current government has been in power since 15 February 2018. This government has been responsible for recent anti-conversion

legislation. During 2020, a split within the Communist party became apparent. This did not change even after Prime Minister Oli was removed from office by the Supreme Court in July 2021 and was replaced by Congress party leader Deuba.

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- Political and legal landscape: 2015 Constitution of Nepal - <http://www.lawcommission.gov.np/en/archives/category/documents/prevaling-law/constitution/constitution-of-nepal>
- Political and legal landscape: 16 October 2017 - <http://www.csw.org.uk/2017/10/20/press/3763/article.htm>
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- Economic landscape: Georgetown, 2019/20, p.19 - <https://giwps.georgetown.edu/wp-content/uploads/2019/12/WPS-Index-2019-20-Report.pdf>
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WWL 2022: Church information / Nepal

Christian origins

The first record of a visit of a Christian missionary to Nepal dates back to 1628, when King Lakshminarasimha Malla received the Portuguese Jesuit Father Juan Cabral. He was awarded with a Tamra Patra, a copper plate, allowing him to preach Christianity. In 1661, Albert d'Orville, a Belgian, and Johann Grueber, an Austrian, visited Nepal as missionaries but did not stay long. The first attempt at a more permanent presence in Nepal was when Capuchin Fathers from Rome set up a mission station in Kathmandu in 1715 and lived amongst the people of Bhaktapur and Patan in the Kathmandu valley for over 54 years. After Prithvi Narayan Shah's conquest in 1769, the Capuchin Fathers and 57 newly converted Newar Christians were exiled to Bettiah, India. From then until 1950, missionaries were banned from Nepal.

In the early 1950s missionaries were allowed to engage in development work, education and health care. During the 1970s and 1980s there was significant church growth in Nepal. With this growth, persecution grew too and in the 1980s hundreds of Nepalese Christian leaders were imprisoned; many prominent Christian leaders had to flee the country at that time. Due to violent street protests in 1990, the king bowed to pressure and agreed to a new democratic constitution. The Church also experienced some freedom after 1990.

With the move towards democracy beginning again in 2006 - and especially after Nepal officially became a secular state in 2008 - the new religious freedom contributed towards a proliferation of various Christian denominations and groups. Christians are now actively participating in the political and decision-making arena and Christmas is even an official government holiday. However, despite Nepal being deemed secular, the new Constitution curbs the freedom to proselytize and convert, regarding this as a punishable offence. A bill proposing severe punishment for this is in preparation.

Theological education is not well established in Nepal, except for a few Bible schools. As a result, most of the Nepali Christian students go to India for higher theological education.

While there were very [few Christians](#) in the country in 1951, the census registered 458 after 10 years and 102,000 after forty years (Breakpoint, 12 May 2016). According to the 2011 census, that number already reached 375,000. However, church leaders have always alleged that the number of Christians in the country was greatly underestimated in the census which explains the vast difference to the WCD estimate. What is clear is that the number of Christians in Nepal continues to grow at breath-taking pace.

Church spectrum today

Nepal: Church networks	Christians	%
Orthodox	5,500	0.4
Catholic	7,600	0.6
Protestant	285,000	21.3
Independent	1,032,000	77.0
Unaffiliated	11,500	0.9
Doubly-affiliated Christians	0	0.0
Total	1,341,600	100.0
<i>(Any deviation from the total number of Christians stated above is due to the rounding of decimals)</i>		
Evangelical movement	535,000	39.9
Renewalist movement	920,000	68.6

Data source: Johnson T M and Zurlo G A, eds, *World Christian Database* (Leiden/Boston: Brill, accessed April 2021)

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

According to the World Christian Database (accessed April 2021), the largest denominations in Nepal are:

- Independents
- National Church Fellowship of Nepal
- Churches of Nepal
- Other Protestants

External Links - Church information

- Christian origins: few Christians - <https://www.breakpoint.org/faith-rise-nepal/>

WWL 2022: Persecution Dynamics / Nepal

Reporting period

01 October 2020 - 30 September 2021

Position on the World Watch List

Nepal: World Watch List	Points	WWL Rank
WWL 2022	64	48
WWL 2021	66	34
WWL 2020	64	32
WWL 2019	64	32
WWL 2018	64	25

Ranks are shown above whenever the country scored 41 points or more in the WWL 2018-2022 reporting periods

Nepal scored 64 points in WWL 2022, two points lower than in WWL 2021. The biggest pressure comes from radical Hindus and is highest in the Private, National and Church spheres of life. Violence by radical Hindus targeting Christians continued with churches being damaged, Christians being arrested, Christians being physically harassed and Christians being forced to leave their homes.

Persecution engines

Nepal: Persecution engines	Abbreviation	Level of influence
Islamic oppression	IO	Weak
Religious nationalism	RN	Strong
Ethno-religious hostility	ERH	Not at all
Clan oppression	CO	Strong
Christian denominational protectionism	CDP	Not at all
Communist and post - Communist oppression	CPCO	Weak
Secular intolerance	SI	Very weak
Dictatorial paranoia	DPA	Very weak
Organized corruption and crime	OCC	Not at all

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

Religious nationalism - Hindu (Strong):

Most of the persecution of Christians in Nepal comes from Hindu radical groups who want to turn Nepal back into a Hindu state. These radical Hindu groups have close ties with Hindutva groups in neighboring India. Persecution used not to be driven by government, but since 2015 a new constitution has been adopted, limiting freedom of religion. As mentioned above in *Political and legal landscape*, anti-conversion legislation was signed into law by the president on [16 October 2017](#) (Source: CSW, 20 October 2017). Another sign of a deteriorating situation for Christians.

Clan oppression (Strong) - blended with Religious nationalism - Hindu:

In the context of Nepal, most of Christians are from Hindu background. Thus, it is extremely difficult for single believers to practice Christian worship who are from a radical Hindu family or community. If a convert from a radical Hindu family is found to be practicing Christian worship, he or she is likely to face pressure and violence and be expelled from their home. Furthermore, they are not allowed to inherit property.

Drivers of persecution

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

Nepal:									
Drivers of Persecution	IO	RN	ERH	CO	CDP	CPCO	SI	DPA	OCC
	WEAK	STRONG	-	STRONG	-	WEAK	VERY WEAK	VERY WEAK	-
Organized crime cartels or networks	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Multilateral organizations (e.g. UN, OIC etc.)	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-

The scale for the level of influence of Drivers of persecution in society is: Not at all / Very weak / Weak / Medium / Strong / Very strong. Please note that "-" denotes "not at all". For more information see WWL Methodology.

Drivers of Religious nationalism - Hindu

- **Government officials (Strong):** At the national level, the anti-conversion legislation puts government officials against Christians. At the national level, and at the local (and maybe also at provincial) level government officials have connections to the Hindu community. They may impose restrictions on religious freedom. This may lead to the arrest and harassment of Christians.
- **Non-Christian religious leaders (Strong):** Hindu leaders will at any level (local, provincial and national) try to exert influence and restrictions on other religions. As a result, the level of violence has gone up in Nepal in recent years.
- **Violent religious groups (Strong):** There are several Hindu radical groups and parties that are influenced by the tactics of their colleagues in India. Their activities and influence is growing.
- **Extended family (Strong):** Converts to Christianity are often under huge pressure from their families to return to the faith of the ancestors.
- **Ethnic or Clan group leaders (Medium):** Especially in the northern and extreme southern regions of Nepal ethnic group leaders have displayed religious intolerance. This has resulted in several incidents targeting Christian evangelists, pastors or newly planted churches.
- **Normal citizens (Medium):** At the community level especially, Hindus will impose pressure on converts and other Christians.
- **Political parties (Medium):** There are at least two Hindu political parties in the national parliament in favor of turning Nepal into a Hindu nation again.

Drivers of Clan oppression, often blended with Religious nationalism

- **Ethnic or Clan group leaders (Strong):** Tribal Hindu leaders, especially in the northern and extreme southern regions of Nepal, have displayed religious intolerance. This resulted in several incidents targeting Christian evangelists, pastors or newly planted churches. This is strongly linked to *Religious nationalism*.
- **Violent religious groups (Strong):** There are a number of Hindu radical groups and parties that are influenced by the tactics of their colleagues in India. In their eyes, Christianity is a religion that should not exist in Nepal.

- **Extended family (Strong):** Converts to Christianity are often under huge pressure from their families to return to the faith of the ancestors.
- **Government officials (Medium):** Local government agents (at the community level) will oppose Christian activities in their areas.
- **Normal citizens (Medium):** At the community level, ordinary Hindu citizens will impose pressure on converts and other Christians.

Areas where Christians face most difficulties

There are no hotspots of persecution of Christians in Nepal, but pressure on converts is stronger in the countryside than in urban areas.

Christian communities and how they are affected

Communities of expatriate Christians: These are mainly foreigners in Nepal who have their own, isolated meetings. They are hardly active in evangelism. The Constitution of Nepal has created difficulties for expatriate Christians, since foreign missionaries are not allowed to enter Nepal for religious purposes. If foreign visitors are found to be involved in evangelistic activities, they are immediately deported back to their respective country.

Historical Christian communities: By far the largest and most important of these is the Roman Catholic Church, plus a few Orthodox communities. They tend not to be involved in evangelistic activities. As a result, these communities are hardly exposed to hostilities from radical Hindus.

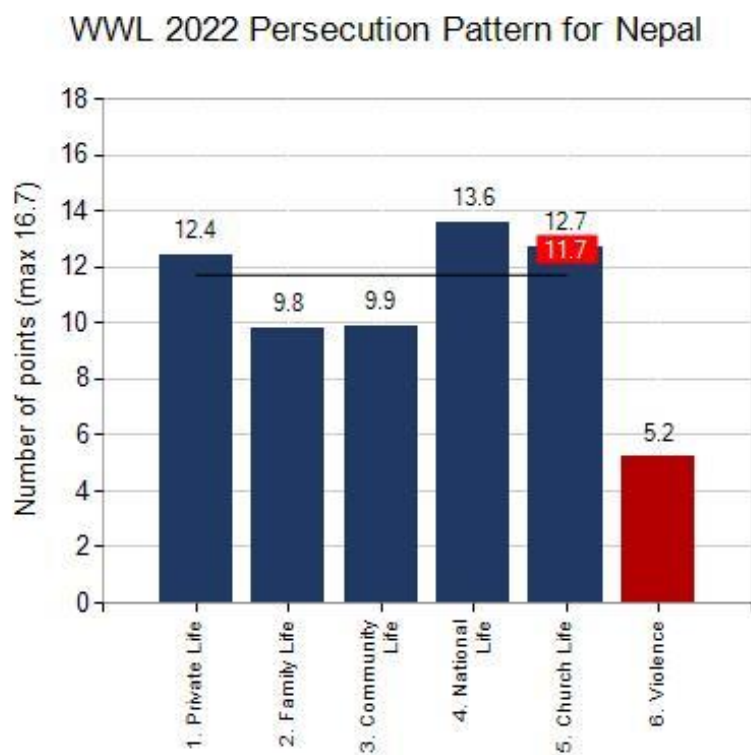
Converts to Christianity: Christians from a Hindu background are the largest group of Christians in Nepal and their numbers have continued to grow spectacularly over the years. They are facing the highest levels of persecution of all Christians in Nepal, with much pressure coming from local government officials, Hindu priests, family and community.

Non-traditional Christian communities: These mostly consist of independent churches. Converts from Hinduism will usually go the churches belonging to this category. As these churches are also most active in evangelism they experience high levels of persecution.

The Persecution pattern

The WWL 2022 Persecution pattern for Nepal shows:

- The average pressure on Christians is at a very high level (11.7 points), slightly higher than in WWL 2021 (11.4 points). Hindu pressure on Christians (especially against converts) is present at all levels of society, ranging from the personal level all the way up to the national and church levels. Christians experience opposition to conversions and baptisms constantly. Anti-conversion legislation has been imposed since 2017.
- The three spheres of life with the highest scores are *National, Church* and *Private life*. These are the spheres where Hindu pressure is most visible.
- The score for violence reached 5.2 points in WWL 2022 (a decrease from 8.5 points in WWL 2021).



Pressure in the 5 spheres of life

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

Pressure in Block 1 / Private sphere

Block 1.4: It has been risky for Christians to reveal their faith in written forms of personal expression (including expressions in blogs and Facebook etc.). (3.50 points)

Revealing one's Christian faith is equal to evangelism in the eyes of Hindu radicals. This will be opposed, sometimes violently. At first this was limited to family homes in the countryside, but today social media have taken the issue all over Nepal.

Block 1.8: It has been risky for Christians to speak about their faith with those other than immediate family (extended family, others). (3.50 points)

Speaking about Christian faith outside the immediate family is regarded as a form of evangelism by Hindus. Members of the extended family, friends and the community will oppose Christians who do this; the latter need to be very careful.

Block 1.1: Conversion has been opposed, forbidden, or punishable, including conversion from one type of Christianity to another. (3.25 points)

Hindu aversion of conversion to Christianity is growing in Nepal. Under the influence of Hindu radicals in India, Hindus in Nepal are becoming more violent against converts and any Christians active in evangelism. Because of this growing aversion, the Constitution of Nepal was adapted in 2015 with Article 26 effectively forbidding conversion by law.

Block 1.7: It has been risky for Christians to speak about their faith with immediate family members. (3.25 points)

If it is only one member of a family that converts to Christianity while others retain their original faith, it can lead to all kinds of confrontation and conflict. Most converts, if living away from their families, prefer not to tell them about their faith for fear of offending them.

Pressure in Block 2 / Family sphere

Block 2.5: Burials of Christians have been hindered or coercively performed with non-Christian rites. (4.00 points)

The Hindu and Buddhist tradition in Nepal is to cremate people when they die. There are no common burial grounds so the only places where Christians can be buried is in very few privately owned places - but even then there will be opposition from locals. Some families travelled to India to conduct burials of Catholics who had died in Nepal.

Block 2.4: Christian baptisms have been hindered. (3.50 points)

Baptism is regarded as the final sign that one has left Hinduism to become a Christian. Many Christians realize that baptisms can lead to strong reactions from the family and community. The pressure on Christians has grown to such an extent that baptismal services are held in secret in churches.

Block 2.8: Christian children have been pressured into attending anti-Christian or majority religion teaching at any level of education. (3.50 points)

Even though the country is now officially secular, Hindu practices and customs are deeply embedded in the education system. Children of non-Hindu faiths will routinely find themselves participating in Hindu customs as part of school activities. For instance, the daily prayers in schools are recited to a Hindu goddess of learning, Saraswati. The school curriculum teaches about Hindu festivals and cultural practices. There is no pressure to participate in these activities and there is no government agenda as such to establish Hindu monopoly through these activities. However, the all-round presence of a majority religion or culture in day-to-day life and the inability of schools to develop an inclusive outlook can lead children from religious minorities to feel alienated.

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

Some children of Christian parents face difficulties or harassment from their friends. Other children refuse to play with them where parents have told them not to mix with Christian children. Relatives and neighbors may also discriminate against them by not showing so much

love for them as they did before the family became Christian.

Pressure in Block 3 / Community sphere

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

At the community level, Christians (especially converts) are often threatened by their family or members of the community. Christian house meetings are regularly disturbed and obstructed. Single Christians are often harassed for not following the Hindu tradition and rituals.

Block 3.2: Christians have been monitored by their local communities or by private groups (this includes reporting to police, being shadowed, telephone lines listened to, emails read/censored, etc.). (3.50 points)

All Christian activities at the community level are monitored. Mostly, this is done by community members, but sometimes there are also Hindu or Buddhist radicals active in this respect. Even local government officials monitor church activities with police being sent to churches to gather information.

Block 3.13: Christians have been interrogated or compelled to report to the local vigilante/police for faith-related reasons. (3.50 points)

Local police and councils often force Christians to come to their offices for questioning. They are asked to report about their church activities.

Block 3.10: Christians have been discriminated against in public or private employment for faith-related reasons. (3.25 points)

Christians in government service, and especially those in the armed forces have been discriminated against. Christians in public employment are not given fair opportunity for promotion. Private non-Christian organizations also discriminate against Christians regarding employment and promotion. Instead, less qualified Hindus (or people of another religion) are given the opportunities that arise.

Pressure in Block 4 / National sphere

Block 4.1: The Constitution (or comparable national or state law) limits freedom of religion as formulated in Article 18 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. (4.00 points)

Nepal is a secular state and the Constitution guarantees religious freedom, which means people can practice their religion and culture freely. However, conversion from one religion to another is prohibited. The new criminal code of Nepal, which came into effect in August 2017, also prohibits religious behavior that disrupts public order or goes contrary to public morality. Hence, while the law generally remains positive, there is the possibility that these new provisions can be used to target and punish members of minority groups.

Block 4.10: Media reporting has been incorrect or biased against Christians. (3.75 points)

Most national media in Nepal are biased against Christians. However, there is no blatant media propaganda or whipping up of hate and paranoia against Christians as in some other countries. However, there is a tendency to portray evangelical groups as luring innocent villagers with money and false promises. Conversion is shown in a very negative light. Such unfavorable representation helps to stereotype Christians and elicit negative attitudes towards them. (Such negative depiction has also found its way into international media. While such stories may have a factual basis, such selective reporting presents a highly distorted picture.)

Block 4.11: Christians have been subjected to smear campaigns or hate speech. (3.75 points)

Christian social workers are often accused of engaging in unethical conversion through their work. Also, pastors are targeted in hate speech for conducting Christian activities which are viewed as attempts to convert people.

Block 4.14: Those who have caused harm to Christians have been left unpunished. (3.75 points)

No action is taken against those who harass or intimidate Christians. This is especially true in the case of Hindu extremist elements. This is even more so at the local level.

Pressure in Block 5 / Church sphere

Block 5.2: It has been difficult to get registration or legal status for churches at any level of government. (4.00 points)

There is no legal recognition of churches or provision for their registration in Nepal. Church property is registered under the name of private persons or NGOs.

Block 5.18: Churches have been hindered in establishing, managing, maintaining and conducting schools, or charitable, humanitarian, medical, social or cultural organizations, institutions and associations. (4.00 points)

Christian NGOs and other social service organizations have come under heavy restrictions. Pressure is especially focused on charitable work as there is always the suspicion of conversion activities taking place. There are examples of organizations that were requested to remove Christian references in their documents, including prefaces stating which Christian communities originally founded the charity.

Block 5.5: Churches have been hindered from organizing Christian activities outside church buildings. (3.75 points)

Over the past years, the increasingly hostile Hindu environment has prevented many churches and groups from organizing open-air activities which had been possible a few years ago. The police recommend churches not to organize activities outside church-buildings for security reasons.

Block 5.14: Openly selling or distributing Bibles and other Christian materials has been hindered. (3.75 points)

Openly selling Christian materials in Nepal is not forbidden: The selling and distribution of Bibles and other Christian materials is limited within the church and Christian shops. But the free distribution of these materials is immediately linked to evangelism with the aim of conversion and is strictly opposed. Pressure at this point is higher at the local than at the national level.

Violence

Violence is defined in WWL Methodology as the deprivation of physical freedom or as bodily harm to Christians or damage to their property. It includes severe threats (mental abuse). The table is based on reported cases as much as possible, but since many incidents go unreported, the numbers must be understood as being minimum figures. The following 5 points should be considered when using the data provided in the Block 6 table:

1. Some incidents go unreported because the Christians involved choose not to speak about the hostility being faced. Possible reasons for this may be:

- *Doing so would expose them to more attacks. For example, if a family member is killed because of his/her faith, the survivors might decide to keep silent about the circumstances of the killing to avoid provoking any further attacks.*
- *In some circumstances, the reticence to pass on information may be due to the danger of exposure caused by converts returning to their previous faith.*
- *If persecution is related to sexual violence - due to stigma, survivors often do not tell even their closest relatives.*
- *In some cultural settings, if your loved one is killed, you might be under the obligation to take revenge. Christians not wishing to do that, may decide to keep quiet about it.*

2. Other incidents go unreported for the following possible reasons:

- *Some incidents never reach the public consciousness, because no one really knows about it; or the incident is simply not considered worth reporting; or media coverage is deliberately blocked or distorted; or media coverage is not deliberately blocked, but the information somehow gets lost; or the incidents are deliberately not reported widely for security reasons (e.g. for the protection of local church leaders).*
- *In situations where Christians have been discriminated against for many years, armed conflict can make them additionally vulnerable. Christians killed in areas where fighting regularly takes place are unlikely to be reported separately. Examples in recent years have been Sudan, Syria and Myanmar.*
- *Christians who die through the deprivation of basic necessities such as clean water and medical care (due to long-term discrimination) are unlikely to be reported separately. Christians are not always killed directly; they can be so squeezed by regulations and other oppressive factors that they die – not at once, but in the course of years. This often includes the deprivation of basic necessities such as clean water and medical care, or exclusion from government assisted socio-economic development projects. These numbers could be immense.*

3. For further discussion (with a focus on the complexity of assessing the numbers of Christians killed for their faith) please see World Watch Monitor's article dated 13 November 2013 available at: <https://www.worldwatchmonitor.org/2013/11/number-of-christian-martyrs-continues-to-cause-debate/>.

4. The use of symbolic numbers: *In cases where it has been impossible to count exactly, a symbolic round figure (10*, 100* etc.) is given and indicated with an asterisk. A symbolic number of 10* could in reality even be 100 or more but the real number is uncertain. A symbolic number of 100* could go well over 1000 but the real number is uncertain. A symbolic number of 1,000* could go well over 10,000 but, again, the real number is uncertain. The same applies for symbolic numbers 10,000*, 100,000* and 1,000,000*: Each could indicate much higher numbers, but WWR chooses to be cautious because the real number is uncertain.*

5. The symbol "x" in the table: *This denotes a known number which cannot be published due to security concerns.*

Nepal: Violence Block question		WWL 2022	WWL 2021
6.1	How many Christians have been killed for faith-related reasons (including state sanctioned executions)?	0	0
6.2	How many churches or Christian buildings (schools, hospitals, cemeteries, etc.) have been attacked, damaged, bombed, looted, destroyed, burned down, closed or confiscated for faith-related reasons?	5	10
6.3	How many Christians have been detained for faith-related reasons?	7	17
6.4	How many Christians have been sentenced to jail, labor camp, sent to psychiatric hospital as punishment, or similar things for faith-related reasons?	0	2
6.5	How many Christians have been abducted for faith-related reasons (including Christians missing in a persecution context)?	0	0
6.6	How many Christians have been raped or otherwise sexually harassed for faith-related reasons?	0	1
6.7	How many cases have there been of forced marriages of Christians to non-Christians?	0	1
6.8	How many Christians have been otherwise physically or mentally abused for faith-related reasons (including beatings and death threats)?	33	60
6.9	How many houses of Christians or other property (excluding shops) have been attacked, damaged, bombed, looted, destroyed, burned down or confiscated for faith-related reasons?	0	2
6.10	How many shops or businesses of Christians have been attacked, damaged, bombed, looted, destroyed, burned down, closed or confiscated for faith-related reasons?	4	0
6.11	How many Christians have been forced to leave their homes or go into hiding in-country for faith-related reasons?	10 *	16
6.12	How many Christians have been forced to leave the country for faith-related reasons?	10	1

Violence - additional information:

- **Christians forced to leave the country:** For example, on 10 January 2021, a couple from Belgium were deported following accusations involving religious conversion.

5 Year trends

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

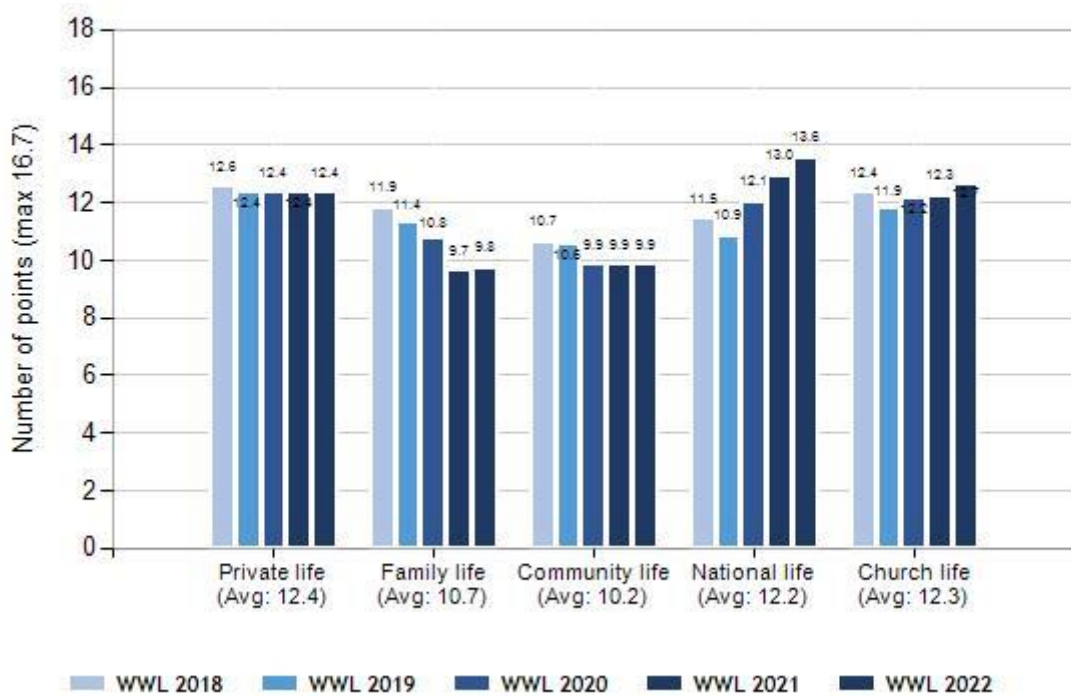
5 Year trends: Average pressure

Nepal: WWL 2018 - WWL 2022 Persecution Pattern history	Average pressure over 5 Spheres of life
2022	11.7
2021	11.4
2020	11.5
2019	11.4
2018	11.8

The average pressure on Christians in Nepal is more or less stable within the range 11.4 - 11.8 points. Hindu pressure on Christians in Nepal is very high but it is still much lower than in neighboring India.

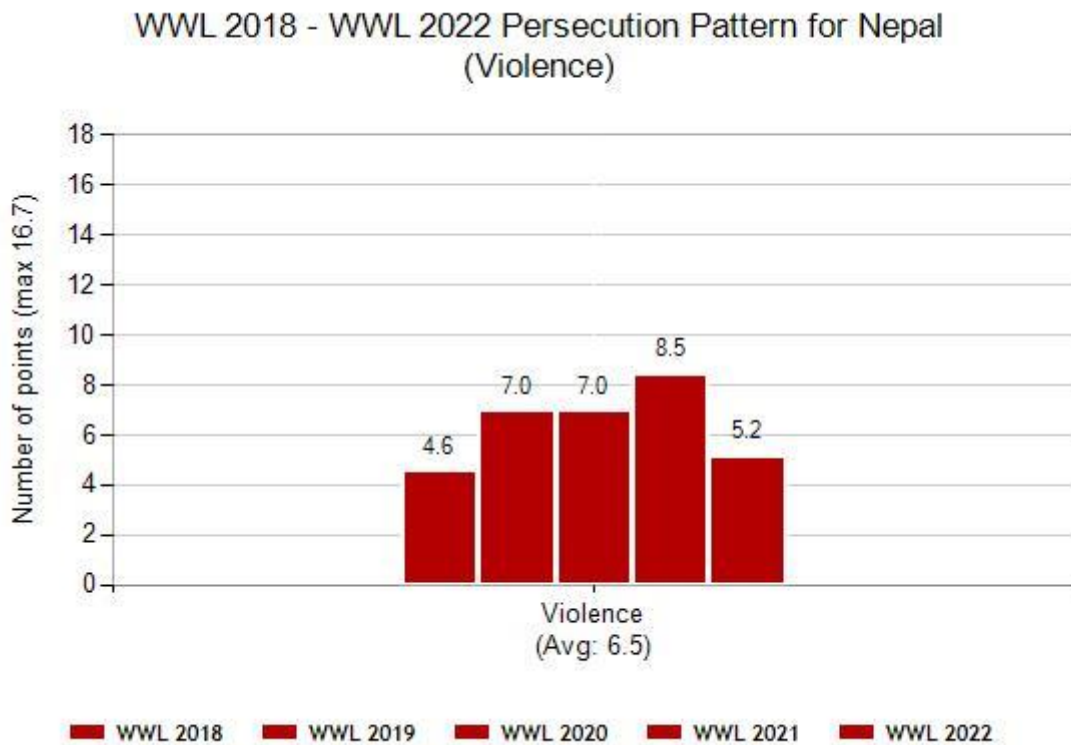
5 Year trends: Pressure in each sphere of life

WWL 2018 - WWL 2022 Persecution Pattern for Nepal (Spheres of life)



Over the past five WWL reporting periods, pressure has tended to be highest in the *National*, *Private* and *Church spheres of life*. Whereas pressure in *Private life* has plateaued at the very high level of 12.4 points, pressure in the *National sphere* has increased in large steps and in the *Church sphere* more gradually. The downward trend in *Family* and *Community life* (evident in WWL 2018 - WWL 2020) has since halted.

5 Year trends: Violence against Christians



Violence against Christians in Nepal had been on the increase in the WWL 2018 - WWL 2021 reporting periods, aided by the effect of anti-conversion legislation passed in 2017. However, the score fell in WWL 2022, due to fewer reports of incidents. The greatest force behind this violence are radical Hindu groups and family and community that oppose conversions.

Gender-specific religious persecution / Female

Group	Female Pressure Points
Economic	-
Political and Legal	Denied citizenship; Forced divorce; Forced marriage
Security	Incarceration by family (house arrest); Violence – physical; Violence – sexual
Social and Cultural	Denied access to social community/networks; Denied communal resources; Violence – psychological; Violence – Verbal
Technological	-

Although the multi-cultural society of Nepal was granted religious freedom in the 2015 Constitution, anti-conversion and blasphemy laws continue to remain in place. It is dangerous for converts to Christianity to reveal their faith. When their faith becomes known, female converts face a variety of forms of pressure. “Initially they are emotionally tortured,” a country expert explains, “then gradually physical torture starts to take place. Finally, they are subjected to being

social outcasts from the family and community.”

The immediate family members of female Christian converts may lock them up at home, often depriving them of basic needs and financial support.

On rare occasions, families make premarital arrangements to marry their daughters to a non-Christian man. This is done in order to save their family’s reputation. Within such marriages, women are highly pressurized to leave their Christian faith. If a woman is already married at the point of conversion and her husband is not supportive of her faith, she is unlikely to be aware of the legal possibilities of defending herself and her children and may be divorced.

In the historically Hindu nation and culturally patriarchal society of Nepal, women and girls have less ability to exercise their rights. Perhaps the most difficult aspect is the persistency of the harassment for those who convert to Christianity, be it physical, emotional or sexual harassment.

Gender-specific religious persecution / Male

Group	Male Pressure Points
Economic	Denied inheritance or possessions; Economic harassment via business/job/work access
Political and Legal	Denied citizenship; False charges; Imprisonment by government
Security	Forced to flee town/country; Military/militia conscription/service against conscience; Violence – physical
Social and Cultural	Denied access to social community/networks; Denied communal resources; Violence – psychological; Violence – Verbal
Technological	-

Christian men and boys are most vulnerable to persecution if they are recent converts, in public service, or church leaders of independent churches. Recent converts are particularly vulnerable to physical and mental abuse from family and society, and are made to feel like social outcasts. Converts are occasionally denied access to ancestral property by immediate family members and denied basic legal rights to a birth certificate and citizenship by local government administrators. Furthermore, known converts face harassment in public places such as markets and the workplace. Men and boys have also been victims of false charges and accusations, which have resulted in imprisonment on rare occasions.

According to Nepali law, citizens cannot be barred from public office because of their religious beliefs. However, Christians in public service, especially in the armed forces, have complained that in actual practice they are denied promotion because of their faith. In rural areas, it is reported that Hindus obstruct Christians from being a part of communal and other public forums. In the Nepalese army, government positions and police, Christians are forced to worship Hindu gods and observe Hindu festivals. This includes eating food offered to idols or putting

vermilion powder on their heads during the Hindu festivities. Christian men usually migrate to new cities or areas to set up afresh and avoid economic deprivation.

Local independent church pastors and leaders are the main targets of harassment for faith related reasons. Hindu radicals will focus their attacks on church leaders firstly to set an example to other Christians in the area, and secondly because they are regarded as being the main actors behind the increasing numbers of Christian conversions. Pastors are falsely accused of crimes, threatened with physical assault and on some occasions, forced to leave their communities. Exemplifying the dangers, in May 2021, a church leader was falsely accused of drug smuggling and was kept in custody for 48 days where he was physically and mentally abused by police. Because of the severity of the beating, he became paralyzed.

When men and boys are severely beaten and socially ostracized, they have fewer economic opportunities for supporting their family. Most men and older boys are the providers for the family, so this form of discrimination means that the whole family faces both economic troubles and social insecurity.

Persecution of other religious minorities

According to the [US State Department \(IRFR 2019\)](#):

- The Constitution provides for the right to profess and practice one's own religion. The law does not provide for registration or official recognition of religious organizations as religious institutions, except for Buddhist monasteries. All other religious groups must register as NGOs or non-profit organizations to own property or operate legally.
- Police arrested five Jehovah's Witnesses during 2019 for proselytizing, eventually deported two, and released two on bail who were awaiting trial at year's end.
- Muslim groups said they continued to face difficulties in buying or using land for burials.
- In September 2019, police dispersed a clash between Shia Muslims commemorating Muharram and local Hindus in Rajpur.

Future outlook

The outlook for Christians as viewed through the lens of:

Religious nationalism - Hindu

Pressure to turn back history and make Nepal a Hindu country again is growing. The current government has already implemented anti-conversion legislation. In the last two years, Hindu radicals have stepped up their activities against non-Hindus - also with support from radical Hindu movements based in India. It is to be expected that radical Hindus will increase their activities in Nepal. The influence of this Persecution engine is therefore expected to grow.

Clan oppression (often blended with Religious nationalism)

Since most Christians in Nepal are from a Hindu background and since anti-conversion legislation has been in force since 2017, it may be expected that pressure from clan elements (families, friends, and communities) on Christians will remain high. It will be of no surprise, if this pressure increases in the coming years.

External Links - Persecution Dynamics

- Persecution engines description: 16 October 2017 - <http://www.csw.org.uk/2017/10/20/press/3763/article.htm>
- Persecution of other religious minorities: US State Department (IRFR 2019) - <https://www.state.gov/reports/2019-report-on-international-religious-freedom/nepal/>

Further useful reports

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

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