

World  
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## Nepal: Country Dossier

December 2020



**OpenDoors**

Serving persecuted **Christians** worldwide

Open Doors International / World Watch Research

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# Introduction

## World Watch List 2021

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

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

## Copyright notice

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## Sources and definitions

- This country report is a collation of data and analysis based around Open Doors World Watch List (WWL) and includes statistical information on world religions, Christian denominations and people groups prepared by the World Christian Database (WCD).
- The highlighted links in the text can be found written out in full at the conclusion of each main section under the heading “External links”.
- The WWL 2021 reporting period was 01 October 2019 - 30 September 2020.
- The definition of persecution used in WWL analysis is: “Any hostility experienced as a result of one’s identification with Christ. This can include hostile attitudes, words and actions towards Christians”. This broad definition includes (but is not limited to) restrictions, pressure, discrimination, opposition, disinformation, injustice, intimidation, mistreatment, marginalization, oppression, intolerance, infringement, violation, ostracism, hostilities, harassment, abuse, violence, ethnic cleansing and genocide.
- The latest update of WWL Methodology including appendices can be found on the [World Watch List Documentation](#) page of the Open Doors Analytical website (password: freedom).

## Effect on data-gathering during COVID-19 pandemic

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

## External Links - Introduction

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

# WWL 2021 Short country profile / Nepal

## Brief country details

Nepal: Population (2020 UN estimate)	Christians	Chr%
30,260,000	1,285,000	4.2

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

Nepal: World Watch List	Points	WWL Rank
WWL 2021	66	34
WWL 2020	64	32
WWL 2019	64	32
WWL 2018	64	25
WWL 2017	53	0

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

## Dominant persecution engines and drivers

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

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.

## Specific examples of violations of rights in the reporting period

- **February 2020:** Five foreign citizens were deported due to allegations that they violated the country's controversial anti-conversion law. The District Administration Office of Gorkha expelled two Japanese and three Taiwanese individuals for spreading Christianity having entered the country on tourist visas. (Source: [International Christian Concern, 13 March 2020](#))
- **March 2020:** Police in Nepal arrested a pastor for allegedly creating misleading information about COVID-19 after a video appeared on social media of him preaching at his church. (Source: [Morning Star News, 26 March 2020](#)). Police later arrested another Christian, a woman, on COVID-19 related charges. (Source: [International Christian Concern, 5 April 2020](#))

## Specific examples of positive developments

- Despite the COVID-19 lockdown measures, Christians have been active bringing emergency relief and food to the poor in their neighborhoods. Some of the funding has been received from churches in the USA. (Source: [Nepal Church, 27 April 2020](#))
- A Catholic missionary group which first came to Nepal after the 2015 earthquake to help rebuild a village in central Nepal is currently helping over 400 orphans receive education. They plan to help 900 students by 2025. (Source: [Fides, 7 November 2019](#))

## External Links - Short country profile

- Specific examples of violations of rights in the reporting period: International Christian Concern, 13 March 2020 - <https://www.persecution.org/2020/03/13/nepal-deports-five-foreign-citizens-using-national-anti-conversion-law/>
- Specific examples of violations of rights in the reporting period: Morning Star News, 26 March 2020 - <https://morningstarnews.org/2020/03/police-in-nepal-arrest-pastor-for-touting-healing-prayer-amid-coronavirus-pandemic/>
- Specific examples of violations of rights in the reporting period: International Christian Concern, 5 April 2020 - <https://www.persecution.org/2020/04/05/christian-woman-nepal-arrested-praying-sick/>
- Specific examples of positive developments: Nepal Church, 27 April 2020) - <https://nepalchurch.com/21442/%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%85%E0%A4%A8%E0%A4%B2%E0%A4%BE%E0%A4%87%E0%A4%A8%E0%A4%9F%E0%A5%87%E0%A4%B2%E0%A4%BF%E0%A4%AD/>
- Specific examples of positive developments: Fides, 7 November 2019 - [http://www.fides.org/en/news/66913-ASIA\\_NEPAL\\_Claretian\\_Missionaries\\_care\\_and\\_education\\_for\\_earthquake\\_victims](http://www.fides.org/en/news/66913-ASIA_NEPAL_Claretian_Missionaries_care_and_education_for_earthquake_victims)

# WWL 2021: Keys to understanding / Nepal

## Link for general background information

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

## 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 religion 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.

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 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.

Nepal is lacking a strong government. Political alliances do not last. An internal conflict in the Communist Party continues to lame the government (Source: [Kathmandu Post, 10 July 2020](#)). 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.

## Religious landscape

Nepal: Religious context	Number of adherents	%
Christians	1,285,000	4.2
Muslim	1,300,000	4.3
Hindu	19,937,000	65.9

Buddhist	3,680,000	12.2
Ethno-religionist	3,900,000	12.9
Jewish	0	0.0
Bahai	5,000	0.0
Atheist	16,000	0.1
Agnostic	90,000	0.3
Other	46,800	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 February 2020)

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 [World Bank's April 2020 update](#) overview/data:

- **GDP (current US\$):** 29.17 billion (in 2018)
- **GDP growth (annual %):** 6.7. Nepal's GDP has been increasing since 2010

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, electric power, industry or civil services. The country has, however, made progress toward sustainable economic growth since the 1950s with great improvement in living standards.

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. The economy is projected to grow by 0.6 percent in 2021 (World Bank South Asia Economic Focus). 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. (Source: [Kathmandu Post, 9 October 2020](#))

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 foreign workers.

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. (Source: [World Bank](#))

## Social and cultural landscape

According to the [UNDP 2019 report](#) (page 300) and the [World Factbook](#) (accessed 1 July 2020):

- **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:** 20.6% of total population (2020)
- **Literacy rate:** 67.9%

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

- **HDI score and ranking:** 0.579, ranking 147
- **Total population:** 28.1 million
- **Life expectancy at birth:** 70.5 years
- **Expected years of schooling:** 12.2 years
- **Employment to population ratio (% ages 15 years and older):** 62.7
- **Population in multidimensional poverty, headcount (%):** data not available
- **Gender inequality index:** 0.909

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.

According to an article by Asian Pacific (published on 22 September 2020), 28.6% of the population Nepalese are living in poverty and inequality. (Source: [Asian Pacific Center, 22 September 2020](#))

## Technological landscape

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

- **Internet usage:** 55.6% penetration - survey date: December 2018
- **Facebook usage:** 29.8% penetration – survey date: December 2018

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

- **Mobile phone subscriptions (per 100 people - 2018):** 139.4

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

- Over the years, efforts to expand the telecom sector in Nepal have met with many challenges. The fixed line market in Nepal remains underdeveloped. A major reason for this is the dominance of the mobile segment. Overall penetration reached only 2.8% in 2019.
- 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. However, fibre-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. Fixed broadband penetration is predicted to reach 10% by 2024.
- 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's mobile market is now relatively developed and has experienced extraordinarily strong growth over the last years. Slower growth is predicted over the next five years to 2024. The market will be constrained from higher growth due to an already high penetration rate.

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](#):

- Small-scale politically motivated protests, demonstrations or strikes are not uncommon and can occur at short notice. Clashes between protesters and law enforcement agencies may occur.

- 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.
- There are reports that a criminal group has made efforts to extort businesses, NGOs and international schools.

In 2020 political tensions developed between India and Nepal as both countries claimed a border region as their own. The border between both countries is currently closed. (For more details about the dispute, see: [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 with the economy improving and the high levels of poverty being reduced little by little. Christianity is growing rapidly, which is causing radical Hindus to worry 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 WWL 2021 reporting period 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 done almost nothing to stop them. It is therefore very likely that Christians in Nepal will have to face growing oppression.

### 3) The political situation remains unstable

The level of political instability is expected to continue. The government of Prime Minister Khadga Prasad Oli that is currently ruling Nepal has been in power since 15 February 2018. This government has been responsible for recent anti-conversion legislation. During 2020 a split inside the Communist party became apparent.

## External Links - Keys to understanding

- Link for general background information: Nepal country profile - BBC News - <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-south-asia-12511455>
- Recent history: Fides, 5 May 2015 - [http://www.fides.org/en/news/37748-ASIA\\_NEPAL\\_The\\_Church\\_helps\\_quake\\_victims\\_in\\_remote\\_areas](http://www.fides.org/en/news/37748-ASIA_NEPAL_The_Church_helps_quake_victims_in_remote_areas)
- Recent history: Kathmandu Post, 29 May 2020 - <https://kathmandupost.com/national/2020/05/29/on-boundary-row-india-says-it-s-open-to-engage-with-nepal-on-the-basis-of-mutual-sensitivity-and-respect>
- Political and legal landscape: 2015 Constitution of Nepal - <http://www.lawcommission.gov.np/en/archives/category/documents/prevailing-law/constitution/constitution-of-nepal>
- Political and legal landscape: Kathmandu Post, 10 July 2020 - <https://kathmandupost.com/columns/2020/07/09/in-nepali-politics-you-can-never-trust-your-friends>
- Economic landscape: World Bank's April 2020 update - <https://data.worldbank.org/country/nepal?view=chart>

- Economic landscape: Kathmandu Post, 9 October 2020 - <https://kathmandupost.com/national/2020/10/09/world-bank-projects-nepal-s-economic-growth-for-2020-21-at-0-6-percent>
- Economic landscape: World Bank - <https://www.worldbank.org/en/country/nepal/overview>
- Social and cultural landscape: UNDP 2019 report - <http://www.hdr.undp.org/sites/default/files/hdr2019.pdf>
- Social and cultural landscape: World Factbook - <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/resources/the-world-factbook/geos/np.html>
- Social and cultural landscape: UN Global Human Development Indicators - <http://hdr.undp.org/en/countries/profiles/NPL>
- Social and cultural landscape: Asian Pacific Center, 22 September 2020 - <http://www.asianpacificcenter.org/covid-19--impact-on-nepalese-economy.html>
- Technological landscape: World Internet Stats - <https://www.internetworldstats.com/asia.htm#np>
- Technological landscape: World Bank's country profile - [https://databank.worldbank.org/views/reports/reportwidget.aspx?Report\\_Name=CountryProfile&id=b450fd57&tbar=y&dd=y&inf=n&zm=n&country=NPL](https://databank.worldbank.org/views/reports/reportwidget.aspx?Report_Name=CountryProfile&id=b450fd57&tbar=y&dd=y&inf=n&zm=n&country=NPL)
- Technological landscape: BuddeComm Research - <https://www.budde.com.au/Research/Nepal-Telecoms-Mobile-and-Broadband-Statistics-and-Analyses>
- Technological landscape: Nepal Church - <https://nepalchurch.com/>
- Security situation: UK Government travel advice - <https://www.gov.uk/foreign-travel-advice/nepal>
- Security situation: Current Shurrent, 20 August 2020 - <https://currentshurrent.com/2020/08/20/india-nepal-border-conflict/>

## WWL 2021: 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 the churches started growing 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.

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 but 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	5,400	0.4
Catholic	7,500	0.6
Protestant	270,000	21.0
Independent	991,000	77.1
Unaffiliated	11,300	0.9
Doubly-affiliated Christians	0	0.0
<b>Total</b>	<b>1,285,200</b>	<b>100.0</b>
<i>(Any deviation from the total number of Christians stated above is due to the rounding of decimals)</i>		
Evangelical movement	520,000	40.5
Renewalist movement	900,000	70.0

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

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

According to the World Christian Database data of February 2020 two of the largest official denominations are:

- National Church Fellowship of Nepal, with 120,000 members
- Churches of Nepal, with 95,000 members

## External Links - Church information

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

## WWL 2021: Persecution Dynamics / Nepal

### Reporting period

1 October 2019 - 30 September 2020

### Position on the World Watch List

Nepal: World Watch List	Points	WWL Rank
WWL 2021	66	34
WWL 2020	64	32
WWL 2019	64	32
WWL 2018	64	25
WWL 2017	53	0

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

Nepal scored 66 points in WWL 2021, two points more than in WWL 2020, indicating that the situation for Christians has deteriorated. 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 also increased with high numbers of churches damaged, Christians arrested, Christians physically harassed and Christians 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	Very 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. On 8 August 2017 the Nepalese parliament also passed anti-conversion legislation which was signed into law by the president on [16 October 2017](#). Another sign of a deteriorating situation for Christians.

### Clan oppression (Strong):

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 out from their home. Furthermore, they are not allowed to inherit property. In most cases, *Clan oppression* is blended *Religious nationalism*.

## Drivers of persecution

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

<b>Nepal:</b>									
<b>Drivers of persecution per engine</b>	<b>IO</b>	<b>RN</b>	<b>ERH</b>	<b>CO</b>	<b>CDP</b>	<b>CPCO</b>	<b>SI</b>	<b>DPA</b>	<b>OCC</b>
	WEAK	STRONG	-	STRONG	-	VERY WEAK	VERY WEAK	VERY WEAK	-
One's own (extended) family	Weak	Strong	-	Strong	-	-	-	-	-
Political parties	-	Medium	-	-	-	Weak	-	Very weak	-
Revolutionaries or paramilitary groups	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
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 arrests 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 group leaders (Medium):** Especially in the northern and extreme southern regions of Nepal these leaders have displayed religious intolerance. This has resulted in several incidents, which were aimed to persecute 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 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, which were aimed to persecute 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 or persecution of Christians in Nepal, but pressure on converts is stronger in the countryside than in the urban areas.

### **Christian communities and how they are affected**

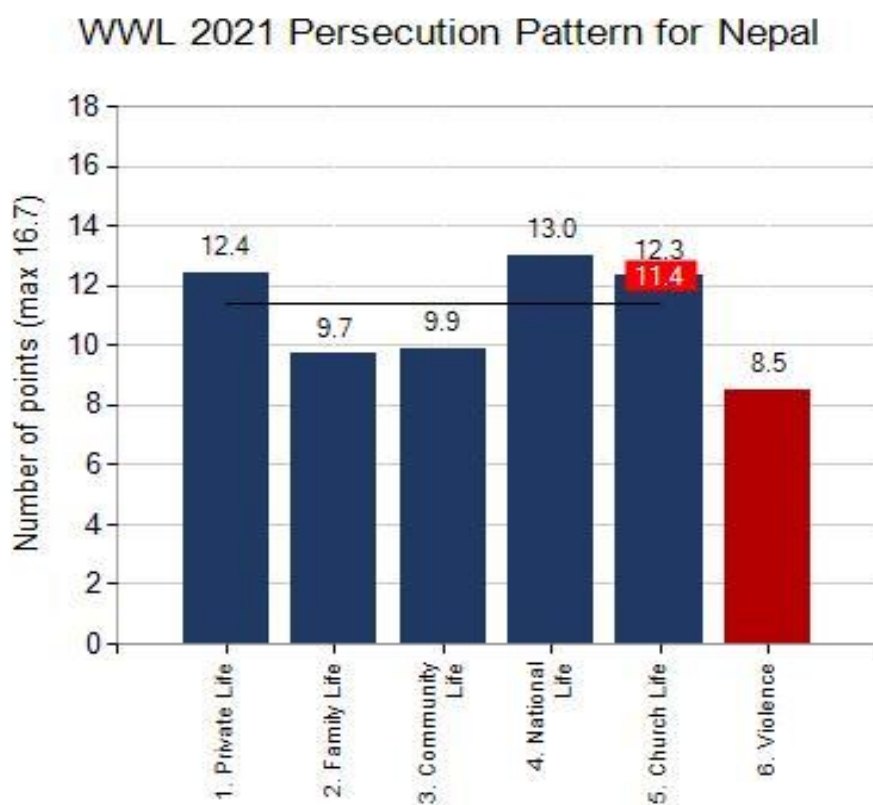
**Communities of expatriate Christians:** These are mainly foreigners in Nepal who have their own, isolated meetings. They are hardly active in evangelism. The Constitution of Nepal has created difficulties for expatriate Christians, since foreign missionaries are not allowed to enter Nepal for religious 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 2021 Persecution pattern for Nepal shows:

- The average pressure on Christians is at a very high level (11.4 points), very slightly lower than in WWL 2020 (11.5 points). Oppression by Hindus against 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*, *Private* and *Church life*. These are the spheres where Hindu pressure is most visible. Pressure in *Family life* decreased by 1.2 points and pressure in the *Community sphere of life* stayed at the same level as in the previous reporting period.
- The score for violence reached 8.5 points in WWL 2021 (an increase from 7.0 points in WWL 2020). Hindu violence targeting Christians caused churches to be damaged, Christians arrested, Christians physically harassed and Christians forced to leave their homes.

### Pressure in the 5 spheres of life

In each of the five spheres of life discussed below, four questions have been selected from the WWL 2021 questionnaire for brief commentary and explanation. The selection usually (but not always) reflects the highest scoring elements. In some cases, an additional paragraph per sphere is included to give further information deemed important. (To see how individual questions are

scored on a scale of 0-4 points, please see the “WWL Scoring example” in the WWL Methodology, available at: <http://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 and

will either refrain from being baptized or have this done secretly. 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 jobs in general are not given a fair opportunity in employment, let alone in getting 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. (4.00 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 be based on facts, such selective reporting presents a highly distorted picture.)

**Block 4.9: Christian civil society organizations or political parties have been hindered in their functioning or forbidden because of their Christian convictions. (3.75 points)**

Christian NGOs face harassment from local authorities who often claim that the NGOs have been engaging in forced conversions. Also, new regulations have been introduced regarding NGOs. According to these regulations, NGOs require approval for each project that they run. Local authorities will be required to ban any projects which look as if they might be proselytizing. For instance, Christian organizations have been forced to remove any biblical or Christian words from their documentation prior to applying. Those who did not do so were unable to obtain registration.

**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.

## Pressure in Block 5 / Church sphere

### **Block 5.1: Church activities have been monitored, hindered, disturbed, or obstructed. (4.00 points)**

Monitoring Christian activities is mostly done by local councils and by Hindu community members and Hindu radicals. Since the passing of the anti-conversion laws surveillance of Christian activities has increased. The activities of all types of churches, Christian-run businesses and organizations are now officially monitored by state and unofficially by Hindu extremist groups. Local police become active in interrogating Christians after being alerted by neighbors.

### **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 in Nepal. Church property is registered under the name of private persons or NGOs. There is no provision for registering churches.

### **Block 5.5: Churches have been hindered from organizing Christian activities outside church buildings. (4.00 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 5.18: 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.

## Violence

*Violence is defined in WWL Methodology as the deprivation of physical freedom or as bodily harm to Christians or damage to their property. It includes severe threats (mental abuse). The table is based on reported cases as much as possible. Since many incidents go unreported, the numbers below must be understood as being minimum figures. In cases where it has been impossible to count exactly, a symbolic round figure (10, 100 or 1000) is given. (A symbolic number of 10 could in reality even be 100 or more but the real number is uncertain. A symbolic number of 100 could go well over 1000 but the real number is uncertain. A symbolic number of 1000 could go well over 10,000 but, again, the real number is uncertain.) In cases where it is clear that (many) more Christians are affected, but a concrete number could be given according to the number of incidents reported, the number given has to be understood as being an absolutely minimum figure. The symbol "x" denotes a known number which cannot be published due to security considerations.*



<b>Nepal: Violence Block question</b>	<b>WWL 2021</b>	<b>WWL 2020</b>
6.1 How many Christians have been killed for faith-related reasons (including state sanctioned executions)?	0	1
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?	10	7
6.3 How many Christians have been detained for faith-related reasons?	17	11
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?	2	4
6.5 How many Christians have been abducted for faith-related reasons (including Christians missing in a persecution context)?	0	2
6.6 How many Christians have been raped or otherwise sexually harassed for faith-related reasons?	1	0
6.7 How many cases have there been of forced marriages of Christians to non-Christians?	1	0
6.8 How many Christians have been otherwise physically or mentally abused for faith-related reasons (including beatings and death threats)?	60	10
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?	2	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?	0	0
6.11 How many Christians have been forced to leave their homes or go into hiding in-country for faith-related reasons?	16	0
6.12 How many Christians have been forced to leave the country for faith-related reasons?	1	5

For the WWL 2021 reporting period:

- **Churches and religious properties attacked:** At least 10.
- **Christians detained:** At least 17.
- **Christians sentenced:** 2.
- **Christians sexually harassed:** 1 Christian woman was pressured by her father-in-law to have sexual relations with him.

- **Christians forced to marry:** 1 Christian woman was forced by her parents to marry a Hindu man.
- **Christians attacked:** There were 60 cases of physical abuse (including death threats).
- **Houses and/or properties of Christians damaged:** 2.
- **Shops/businesses attacked:** 2.
- **Christians forced to leave their homes:** 16 incidents were noted where people were either forced to leave their homes or villages. This is a notable increase in comparison to the previous WWL when no cases were reported.
- **Christians forced to leave the country:** A pastor from Chitwan District had to hide and move to Africa for some time because he spoke against Hindu gods in an interview.

## 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.

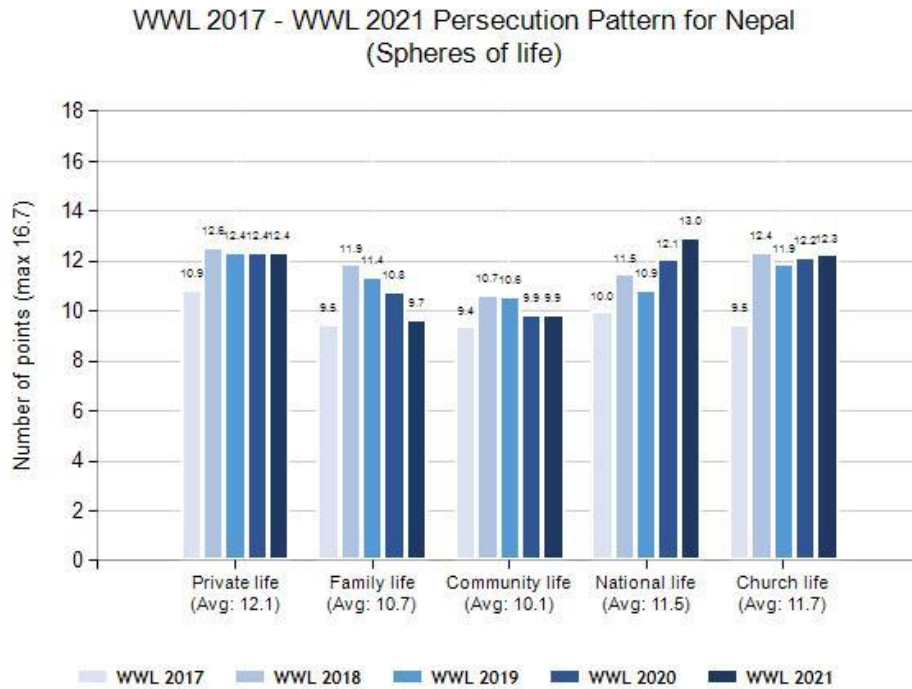
### 5 Year trends: Average pressure

Nepal: WWL 2017 - WWL 2021 Persecution Pattern history	Average pressure over 5 Spheres of life
2021	11.4
2020	11.5
2019	11.4
2018	11.8
2017	9.9

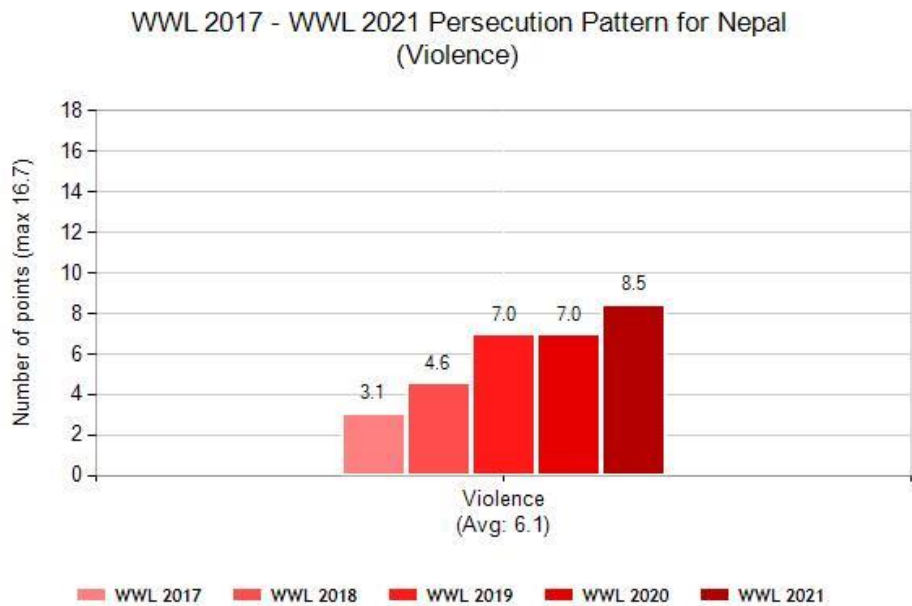
The average pressure level against Christians in Nepal has stabilized at the very high level of 11.4/11.5 points in the last three reporting periods. Hindu pressure on Christians in Nepal is very high but it is still much lower than in neighboring India.

### 5 Year trends: Pressure in each sphere of life

Over the past five years the scores in the five spheres of life in Nepal have varied (see graph below). The general impression is that over the years pressure on Christians has mainly been felt in the *Private, National and Church spheres of life*. Whereas pressure in *Private life* has plateaued at the very high level of 12.4 points over the last three reporting periods, pressure in the *National sphere* has increased in large steps and in the *Church sphere* more gradually. In the same period of time, pressure has reduced in *Family and Community life*.



## 5 Year trends: Violence against Christians



Although the number of violent incidents is still far lower than in India, the trend in Nepal is worrying. Violence against Christians in Nepal has constantly been on the increase over the past five WWL reporting periods. The greatest force behind this are the radical Hindu groups and family and community that oppose conversions. The passing of the anti-conversion legislation in 2017 has also led to a deterioration of the violence level.

## Gender-specific religious persecution Female

Female Pressure Points
Denied access to social community/networks
Denied citizenship
Denied communal resources
Denied food or water
Discrimination/harassment via education
Forced divorce
Forced marriage
Forced out of home – expulsion
Incarceration by family (house arrest)
Violence – physical
Violence – psychological
Violence – sexual
Violence – Verbal

Although the multi-cultural society of Nepal is granted religious freedom in the 2015 Constitution, there are also anti-conversion and blasphemy laws in place. It is dangerous for converts to Christianity to reveal their faith. When their faith becomes known, they are often discriminated against by their peers, socially ostracized and risk being severely beaten by family members. The immediate family members of female Christian converts may lock them up. After being isolated, they are often deprived of basic needs, educational support, family possessions, and basic legal rights such as citizenship. Physical violence comes gradually after emotional and mental pressure. In an initial phase, they may be locked in the home, but they may end up being social outcasts, putting them in a particularly vulnerable position. On rare occasions, families make premarital arrangements to marry their daughters to a non-Christian man or expel the convert from the home to fend for herself.

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. One woman who

converted four years ago continues to suffer mental, physical and now sexual abuse at the hands of her father-in-law if she goes to church. In other situations, if a Christian woman's husband is not Christian and 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.

## Gender-specific religious persecution Male

Male Pressure Points
Denied access to social community/networks
Denied citizenship
Denied communal resources
Denied inheritance or possessions
Discrimination/harassment via education
Economic harassment via business/job/work access
False charges
Forced to flee town/country
Imprisonment by government
Military/militia conscription/service against conscience
Violence – physical
Violence – psychological
Violence – Verbal

Christian men and boys who are recent converts are particularly vulnerable to physical and mental torture from family and society, and are made to feel like social outcasts. They are often 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 i) to set an example to other Christians in the area, and ii) because they are regarded as being the main actors behind the increasing numbers of Christian conversions. Religious training is closely monitored and funding for Christian institutions closely scrutinized.

When men and boys are severely beaten and socially ostracized, they have fewer economic opportunities for supporting the 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's IRF 2019 report](#):

- 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

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

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 the tribal elements (families,

friends, and communities) on Christians will remain high. The number of violent incidents in Nepal are still relatively low, but we should not be surprised if this will increase 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's IRF 2019 report - <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:

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