

World  
Watch  
Research

## Nepal: Full Country Dossier

March 2024



**OpenDoors**

Serving persecuted **Christians** worldwide

Open Doors International / World Watch Research

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# Introduction

## World Watch List 2024

Rank	Country	Private life	Family life	Community life	National life	Church life	Violence	Total Score WWL 2024	Total Score WWL 2023	Total Score WWL 2022	Total Score WWL 2021	Total Score WWL 2020
1	North Korea	16.7	16.7	16.7	16.7	16.7	12.8	96	98	96	94	94
2	Somalia	16.5	16.7	16.6	16.6	16.6	10.6	93	92	91	92	92
3	Libya	15.9	16.0	15.9	16.1	16.4	10.2	91	88	91	92	90
4	Eritrea	14.6	14.9	15.5	15.9	15.7	12.8	89	89	88	88	87
5	Yemen	16.7	16.7	16.7	16.7	16.7	5.9	89	89	88	87	85
6	Nigeria	13.5	13.9	14.5	14.9	14.4	16.7	88	88	87	85	80
7	Pakistan	13.2	13.9	15.0	15.1	13.1	16.7	87	86	87	88	88
8	Sudan	14.1	14.2	14.9	14.9	15.5	13.3	87	83	79	79	85
9	Iran	15.0	14.6	13.5	15.8	16.5	10.9	86	86	85	86	85
10	Afghanistan	15.7	15.9	15.2	16.3	16.6	4.6	84	84	98	94	93
11	India	12.2	12.6	13.3	14.8	13.2	16.5	83	82	82	83	83
12	Syria	13.4	14.3	13.9	14.3	14.2	11.1	81	80	78	81	82
13	Saudi Arabia	15.2	15.3	14.8	15.7	16.6	3.3	81	80	81	78	79
14	Mali	11.1	10.1	14.7	12.8	15.1	15.6	79	76	70	67	66
15	Algeria	14.4	14.1	11.5	14.0	15.6	9.8	79	73	71	70	73
16	Iraq	14.2	14.4	14.0	14.8	13.9	7.8	79	76	78	82	76
17	Myanmar	12.2	10.6	13.4	13.7	13.0	16.1	79	80	79	74	73
18	Maldives	15.6	15.5	13.6	16.0	16.4	0.9	78	77	77	77	78
19	China	13.0	10.0	12.8	14.6	16.0	11.1	78	77	76	74	70
20	Burkina Faso	11.7	9.7	13.2	11.5	13.8	15.6	75	71	68	67	66
21	Laos	11.6	10.6	13.2	14.3	14.0	11.3	75	68	69	71	72
22	Cuba	13.2	8.7	13.8	13.3	15.1	8.7	73	70	66	62	52
23	Mauritania	14.6	14.2	13.8	14.2	14.2	1.3	72	72	70	71	68
24	Morocco	13.2	13.8	11.7	12.8	14.4	5.4	71	69	69	67	66
25	Uzbekistan	14.6	12.7	13.9	12.6	15.5	1.7	71	71	71	71	73
26	Bangladesh	12.4	10.6	12.5	10.8	10.4	14.1	71	69	68	67	63
27	Niger	9.4	9.6	14.5	7.7	13.1	15.9	70	70	68	62	60
28	CAR	10.3	8.6	13.9	9.6	12.2	15.6	70	70	68	66	68
29	Turkmenistan	14.2	12.3	13.6	13.9	15.5	0.6	70	70	69	70	70
30	Nicaragua	12.1	7.6	13.2	13.2	14.1	9.6	70	65	56	51	41
31	Oman	14.3	14.0	10.6	13.3	14.0	3.1	69	65	66	63	62
32	Ethiopia	9.9	9.7	12.6	10.4	12.1	14.4	69	66	66	65	63
33	Tunisia	12.3	13.2	10.2	12.4	13.8	6.9	69	67	66	67	64
34	Colombia	11.1	8.6	12.9	11.3	10.4	14.1	68	71	68	67	62
35	Vietnam	11.3	9.4	12.4	13.8	14.2	7.2	68	70	71	72	72
36	Bhutan	13.1	12.1	12.4	14.1	14.3	2.2	68	66	67	64	61
37	Mexico	11.5	8.5	12.5	11.1	10.6	14.1	68	67	65	64	60
38	Egypt	12.5	13.7	11.4	11.9	10.9	7.8	68	68	71	75	76
39	Mozambique	9.3	8.5	13.9	8.4	12.5	15.0	68	68	65	63	43
40	Qatar	14.2	14.2	10.5	13.2	14.4	0.6	67	68	74	67	66
41	DRC	8.0	7.9	12.6	9.7	13.0	15.9	67	67	66	64	56
42	Indonesia	10.9	12.3	11.5	10.2	9.7	11.5	66	68	68	63	60
43	Cameroon	8.8	7.6	12.6	8.0	13.1	15.9	66	65	65	64	60
44	Brunei	15.0	14.7	10.0	10.8	14.1	1.3	66	65	64	64	63
45	Comoros	12.7	14.0	11.2	12.4	14.2	1.1	66	66	63	62	57
46	Tajikistan	13.8	12.6	12.3	12.9	13.4	0.6	66	66	65	66	65
47	Kazakhstan	13.3	11.8	12.1	12.8	14.3	1.1	65	65	64	64	64
48	Jordan	12.9	14.2	10.5	12.4	12.8	2.2	65	65	66	64	64
49	Malaysia	13.0	14.1	11.5	12.2	11.1	2.4	64	66	63	63	62
50	Turkey	13.0	11.5	11.6	13.2	11.4	3.1	64	66	65	69	63

Rank	Country	Private life	Family life	Community life	National life	Church life	Violence	Total Score WWL 2024	Total Score WWL 2023	Total Score WWL 2022	Total Score WWL 2021	Total Score WWL 2020
51	Kenya	10.3	9.2	11.4	8.0	11.5	12.4	63	64	63	62	61
52	Tanzania	9.3	10.8	10.3	8.6	8.7	14.4	62	63	61	58	55
53	Nepal	12.1	10.4	9.5	13.2	12.3	4.4	62	61	64	66	64
54	Kuwait	13.1	13.6	9.4	12.0	12.2	0.9	61	64	64	63	62
55	Djibouti	12.3	12.6	12.7	10.1	12.3	1.1	61	60	59	56	56
56	Chad	11.6	8.2	10.2	10.2	10.3	10.6	61	58	55	53	56
57	UAE	13.3	13.4	9.5	11.3	12.8	0.7	61	62	62	62	60
58	Sri Lanka	12.9	9.2	10.8	11.5	9.7	5.9	60	57	63	62	65
59	Azerbaijan	13.2	9.9	9.6	11.9	13.6	1.7	60	59	60	56	57
60	Palestinian Territories	13.1	13.3	9.7	10.7	12.1	0.9	60	60	59	58	60
61	Kyrgyzstan	13.2	10.3	11.3	10.5	12.2	1.3	59	59	58	58	57
62	Russian Federation	12.7	7.7	10.6	12.8	12.9	1.7	58	57	56	57	60
63	Rwanda	9.4	7.7	9.0	10.4	11.7	9.4	58	57	50	42	42
64	Burundi	7.6	7.8	9.4	9.8	9.7	12.8	57	55	52	48	48
65	Bahrain	12.0	13.2	8.6	11.3	8.5	1.1	55	55	57	56	55
66	Honduras	7.9	4.7	12.2	7.3	9.9	12.6	55	53	48	46	39
67	Venezuela	6.0	4.4	11.1	10.0	10.8	10.7	53	56	51	39	42
68	Togo	9.2	6.7	9.3	7.1	11.0	8.9	52	49	44	43	41
69	Guinea	10.3	7.5	8.3	8.3	10.5	7.2	52	48	43	47	45
70	Uganda	8.1	5.0	7.4	6.7	8.8	15.9	52	51	48	47	48
71	Angola	6.8	6.7	8.1	11.5	11.4	7.2	52	52	51	46	43
72	Lebanon	11.0	10.2	7.0	6.1	6.6	7.2	48	40	35	34	35
73	Gambia	8.3	8.2	8.9	8.8	8.9	3.7	47	44	44	43	43
74	South Sudan	5.7	4.4	7.0	6.3	7.6	15.6	46	46	43	43	44
75	Belarus	9.6	3.8	5.8	9.7	13.3	3.3	46	43	33	30	28
76	Ivory Coast	12.0	6.5	8.7	5.9	8.0	3.3	44	44	42	42	42
77	Ukraine	5.5	4.8	8.0	11.6	11.6	2.8	44	37	37	34	33
78	Israel	9.8	8.6	5.8	6.3	6.9	6.7	44	38	41	40	38

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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 2024 reporting period was 1 October 2022 - 30 September 2023.
- 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 can be found on the research pages of the Open Doors website: <https://www.opendoors.org/en-US/research-reports/wwl-documentation/> and on the Open Doors Analytical website (password: freedom): <https://opendoorsanalytical.org/world-watch-list-documentation/>.

# WWL 2024 Situation in brief / Nepal

## Brief country details

Nepal: Population (UN estimate for 2023)	Christians	Chr%
30,770,000	1,448,000	4.7

Data source: Todd M. Johnson and Gina A. Zurlo, eds., *World Christian Database* (Leiden/Boston: Brill, accessed March 2023)

## Map of country



Nepal: World Watch List	Points	WWL Rank
WWL 2024	62	53
WWL 2023	61	55
WWL 2022	64	48
WWL 2021	66	34
WWL 2020	64	32

## 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
Dictatorial paranoia	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 non-traditional church communities) experience pressure from family, friends, community and local authorities. Roman Catholic churches and churches where expatriates 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 given prison sentences. There were also Christians who had to flee their homes and villages because of threats. In addition, there are legal restrictions at the national level - for instance, the 2017 anti-conversion legislation (see below: *Political and legal landscape*).

### 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

No violent incidents were reported in the media during the reporting period. WWR sources have provided data, but for security reasons no detailed information can be given.

- **January 2023:** On 20 January 2023, Sajan Shrestha and a guest from the USA were preaching at Balaju, Kathmandu. They were reported to the police and subsequently taken to the police station for interrogation.
- **March 2023:** Hindu activists put pressure on two Christians to burn a copy of the Bible. They also tore the Bible and tried to burn it. Christians are regularly targeted by Hindu groups who accuse Christians of enticing people to change their religion.
- **April 2023:** The government of Nepal deported Yeon He Lee, a Korean national, for misusing his tourist visa on 10 April 2023 to propagate the Christian faith in Nepal. The investigation was launched after a complaint was made against Yeon He Lee. He is also banned from returning to Nepal for a year.
- **April 2023:** Two Christian women were arrested in Kapilvastu for allegedly forcibly converting others to Christianity.

## Specific examples of positive developments

- **December 2022:** “On 11 December, the Kaski District Court acquitted four Christians of proselytization, including two Catholic nuns, who had been arrested in 2021 and released on bail after two months.” Source: US State Department (IRFR 2022 Nepal).
- **April 2023:** The Evangelical Christian Alliance of Nepal, the first registered Christian organization in Nepali Christian history, announced its future action plan: Among other things, ECAN hopes to set up professional vocational education and training schools, colleges and Christian universities offering various courses to enable all Christian and non-Christian children and young women in Nepal to have access to education. Discussions with the government were reported as going ahead. Source: [Nepal Church, 26 April 2023](#).
- **June 2023:** An Indian Catholic priest and coordinator for NGO Nepal Carmel Mata Samaj, is taking steps to open a school in Dhangadhi to give a future to the children of those living in this extreme periphery at the foot of the Himalayas. Source: [AsiaNews, 25 June 2023](#).

For Buddhists from Tibet:

- **In 2022:** “Tibetan Buddhist community leaders highlighted an increased ability to celebrate some religious and cultural holidays without police interference during the year. The government allowed Tibetan Buddhists to celebrate nonpolitical events including Losar (Tibetan New Year), the Dalai Lama's birthday, and other religious events, but with the stipulation that they celebrated in small numbers within refugee settlement compounds.” Source: US State Department (IRFR 2022 Nepal).



## 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 positive developments: Nepal Church, 26 April 2023 - इकानको भावी कार्ययोजना : ख्रीष्टियन विश्वविद्यालयको स्थापना र सातै प्रदेशमा सम्मेलन भवन निर्माण गर्ने – NepalChurch.com
- Specific examples of positive developments: AsiaNews, 25 June 2023. - <https://www.asianews.it/news-en/Carmelites-of-Mary-Immaculate,-a-school-for-Nepal's-marginalized-58664.html>

## WWL 2024: Keys to understanding / Nepal

### Links for general background information

Name	Quote Reference	Link	Last accessed on
Amnesty International 2022/23 Nepal report	AI Nepal 2022	<a href="https://www.amnesty.org/en/location/asia-and-the-pacific/south-asia/nepal/report-nepal/">https://www.amnesty.org/en/location/asia-and-the-pacific/south-asia/nepal/report-nepal/</a>	14 July 2023
BBC News Nepal profile - updated 21 March 2023	BBC Nepal profile	<a href="https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-south-asia-12511455">https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-south-asia-12511455</a>	14 July 2023
Bertelsmann Transformation Index 2022 – covering 137 countries	BTI Nepal Report 2022	<a href="https://bti-project.org/en/reports/country-report/NPL">https://bti-project.org/en/reports/country-report/NPL</a>	14 July 2023
CIA World Factbook Nepal - updated 11 July 2023	World Factbook Nepal	<a href="https://www.cia.gov/the-world-factbook/countries/nepal/">https://www.cia.gov/the-world-factbook/countries/nepal/</a>	14 July 2023
Crisis24 Nepal report (Garda World)	Crisis24 Nepal report	<a href="https://crisis24.garda.com/insights-intelligence/intelligence/country-reports/nepal">https://crisis24.garda.com/insights-intelligence/intelligence/country-reports/nepal</a>	14 July 2023
Economist Intelligence Unit Nepal summary 2023	EIU Nepal summary	<a href="https://country.eiu.com/nepal">https://country.eiu.com/nepal</a>	14 July 2023
FFP's Fragile States Index 2023 – covering 179 countries	FSI 2023 Nepal	<a href="https://fragilestatesindex.org/country-data/">https://fragilestatesindex.org/country-data/</a>	14 July 2023
Freedom House's 2023 Democracy index – covering 29 countries, Nepal not included	Democracy Index 2023	<a href="https://freedomhouse.org/countries/nations-transit/scores">https://freedomhouse.org/countries/nations-transit/scores</a>	
Freedom House's 2023 Global Freedom index – covering 210 countries	Global Freedom Index 2023 Nepal	<a href="https://freedomhouse.org/country/nepal/freedom-world/2023">https://freedomhouse.org/country/nepal/freedom-world/2023</a>	14 July 2023
Freedom House's Freedom on the Net 2023 report – covering 70 countries, Nepal not included	Freedom on the Net 2023	<a href="https://freedomhouse.org/countries/freedom-net/scores">https://freedomhouse.org/countries/freedom-net/scores</a>	
Georgetown's Women, Peace and Security Index 2021/2022 – covering 170 countries	GIWPS 2021 Nepal profile	<a href="https://giwps.georgetown.edu/country/nepal/">https://giwps.georgetown.edu/country/nepal/</a>	14 July 2023
Girls Not Brides Nepal report	Girls Not Brides Nepal	<a href="https://www.girlsnotbrides.org/learning-resources/child-marriage-atlas/regions-and-countries/nepal/">https://www.girlsnotbrides.org/learning-resources/child-marriage-atlas/regions-and-countries/nepal/</a>	14 July 2023
Human Rights Watch World Report 2023 - Nepal country chapter	HRW 2023 Nepal country chapter	<a href="https://www.hrw.org/world-report/2023/country-chapters/nepal">https://www.hrw.org/world-report/2023/country-chapters/nepal</a>	14 July 2023
Internet World Stats available in 2023	IWS 2023 Nepal	<a href="https://www.internetworldstats.com/asia.htm#np">https://www.internetworldstats.com/asia.htm#np</a>	14 July 2023
RSF's 2023 World Press Freedom Index – covering 180 countries	World Press Freedom 2023 Nepal	<a href="https://rsf.org/en/nepal">https://rsf.org/en/nepal</a>	14 July 2023
Transparency International's 2022 Corruption Perceptions Index – covering 180 countries	CPI 2022 Nepal	<a href="https://www.transparency.org/en/countries/nepal">https://www.transparency.org/en/countries/nepal</a>	14 July 2023
UNDP: Human Development Report Nepal - data updates as of 8 September 2022	UNDP HDR Nepal	<a href="https://hdr.undp.org/data-center/specific-country-data#/countries/NPL">https://hdr.undp.org/data-center/specific-country-data#/countries/NPL</a>	14 July 2023
US State Department's 2022 International Religious Freedom Report Nepal	IRFR 2022 Nepal	<a href="https://www.state.gov/reports/2022-report-on-international-religious-freedom/nepal/">https://www.state.gov/reports/2022-report-on-international-religious-freedom/nepal/</a>	14 July 2023
USCIRF 2024 country reports – covering 17 CPC / 11 SWL, Nepal not included	USCIRF 2024	<a href="https://www.uscifr.gov/countries">https://www.uscifr.gov/countries</a>	22 February 2024
World Bank Macro Poverty Outlook Nepal - April 2023	Macro Poverty Outlook 2023 Nepal	<a href="https://thedocs.worldbank.org/en/doc/5d1783db09a0e09d15bbcea8ef0cec0b-0500052021/related/mpo-npl.pdf">https://thedocs.worldbank.org/en/doc/5d1783db09a0e09d15bbcea8ef0cec0b-0500052021/related/mpo-npl.pdf</a>	14 July 2023
World Bank Nepal data – 2021	World Bank Nepal data	<a href="https://databank.worldbank.org/views/reports/reportwidget.aspx?Report_Name=CountryProfileId=b450fd57tbar=ydd=yin=nzm=ncountry=NPL">https://databank.worldbank.org/views/reports/reportwidget.aspx?Report_Name=CountryProfileId=b450fd57tbar=ydd=yin=nzm=ncountry=NPL</a>	14 July 2023
World Bank Nepal overview – updated 4 April 2023	World Bank Nepal overview	<a href="https://www.worldbank.org/en/country/nepal">https://www.worldbank.org/en/country/nepal</a>	14 July 2023

## 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. Nepal has been hovering above and below 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 India to the border with China at the Lipulekh pass. The Nepali government protested, contending that the road crosses territory that it claims and accused India of changing the status quo without diplomatic consultations. Prime Minister Oli made it clear 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 reli-

gion 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 parliamentary elections held on 26 November and 7 December 2017 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.

Although all power has been removed from the monarchy, as far as real democracy is concerned, it is still a long way off. Nepal is lacking a strong government and political alliances tend not to last. An internal conflict in the Communist Party continued to lame the government for many months. (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 up 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 restored Nepal's Parliament for the second time after it was dissolved by the prime minister. 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](#)).

General elections took place in November 2022 with no party emerging as a clear victor. As reported by [WIO News on 5 January 2023](#): "After the Nepal elections, everyone anticipated that the ruling coalition of the Nepali Congress and Maoists would join hands. However, this partnership broke up on the issue of who would take the helm as prime minister. Eventually, the former Maoist leader Pushpa Kamal Dahal 'Prachanda' became the prime minister in a coalition with former rival KP Sharma Oli." The change of leadership had no major consequences for the country (Source: [Kathmandu Post, 10 October 2022](#)).

Any ruling coalition has to constantly bear in mind the opinions of its two powerful neighbors, India and China, who both want Nepal in their sphere of influence, Kathmandu has to walk a tightrope in order to follow an independent course.

## Other reports

According to the US State Department (IRFR 2022 Nepal):

- “The constitution establishes the country as a “secular state” but defines secular as the “protection of religion and culture handed down from the time immemorial.” It provides for the right of citizens to profess and practice their 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. It is not mandatory for Buddhist monasteries to register with the government, although doing so is a prerequisite for receiving government funding for maintenance of facilities, skills training for monks, and study tours. A monastery development committee under the Ministry of Culture, Tourism, and Civil Aviation oversees the registration process. Requirements for registration include providing a recommendation from a local government body, information on the members of the monastery’s management committee, a land ownership certificate, and photographs of the premises.”
- “Religious leaders continued to say the requirement for Christian NGOs to register annually with local government authorities placed their organizations at political risk. Civil society organizations reported that religiously affiliated organizations, including several with long histories of work in the country, had difficulty renewing their registrations. During the year, multiple religiously affiliated organizations reported lengthy delays, onerous requests for changes beyond those necessary to meet the requirements of the law, and lack of transparency when renewing or registering their organizations.”
- “Christian groups reported that the government-funded Pashupati Area Development Trust continued to prevent Christian burials in a communal cemetery behind the Pashupati Hindu Temple in Kathmandu while allowing burials there of individuals from Indigenous faiths (such as Kirats). Protestant churches continued to cite difficulties gaining access to land they had bought several years prior for burials in the Kathmandu Valley under the names of individual church members. According to the churches, local communities continued to oppose burial by groups perceived to be outsiders but were more open to burials conducted by Christian members of their own communities. Many Christian communities outside the Kathmandu Valley said they continued to be able to buy land for cemeteries, conduct burials in public forests, or use land belonging to Indigenous communities for burials. They also said they continued to be able to use public land for this purpose.”

Christian Solidarity Worldwide, [General Briefing: Nepal](#), 22 March 2022:

- While Article 26 of the Nepali Constitution states that “each person shall be free to profess, practice and preserve his religion according to his faith,” Article 26(3) states that to “convert another person from one religion to another or any act or conduct that may jeopardize other’s religion is punishable by law.” These clauses endanger both FoRB and freedom of expression.

- Although the constitution recognizes Nepal as a secular state, the current definition of secularism is restrictive, inconsistent with the international human rights framework, prejudiced against minority religions, and legitimizes discrimination on the basis of religion. Article 4 of the constitution explains 'secular' as "religious, cultural freedoms, including protection of religion, culture handed down from the time immemorial." A past Supreme Court judgement has interpreted this to mean protection of Hinduism.
- Nepal's penal code contains provisions that severely restrict FoRB:
  - Section 155** concerns "damaging or injuring or, in any way, defiling, destroying or polluting any place of religious worship with the intent of insulting the religion or religious feeling." Local sources report that in incidents where unidentified perpetrators damage shrines in Hindu temples, Christians are blamed, leading to negative feelings towards Christians.
  - Section 156** criminalizes the "outraging" of religious sentiments. This is poorly defined and widely misused to settle personal scores, target religious minorities or to further extremist agendas.
  - Section 157** states that "no one should create obstacles knowingly in the religious tradition of other faith being practiced since ancient times," which can be interpreted as referring to Hinduism, considered by many to be the oldest religion.
  - Section 158** criminalizes "conversion." This could be invoked against a wide range of legitimate expressions of religion or belief, including the charitable activities of religious groups, or merely speaking about one's faith.

### Gender perspective

As explained by [HRW 2024, Nepal country chapter](#):

- "Nepal's citizenship law still discriminates against women, even after being amended in 2023 to recognize the citizenship of many who had previously been denied documentation. The children of single Nepali mothers can receive citizenship only if the mother declares that the father cannot be identified. If the declaration is alleged to be false, she can be criminally prosecuted. Children of a Nepali woman and a foreign father can only receive a category of citizenship that excludes them from holding high office. These restrictions do not apply to Nepali fathers."

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 Nepal). Rape and domestic violence are illegal, but there is no specific law addressing violence against women. According to [HRW 2021 country chapter](#): "Legal gaps and lack of political continued to mar accountability for sexual violence, especially for victims from minority communities".

## Religious landscape

Nepal: Religious context	Number of adherents	%
Christians	1,448,000	4.7
Muslim	1,315,000	4.3
Hindu	20,093,000	65.3
Buddhist	3,748,000	12.2
Ethno-religionist	4,004,000	13.0
Jewish	0	0.0
Bahai	4,900	0.0
Atheist	16,600	0.1
Agnostic	93,500	0.3
Other	46,600	0.2
<i>OTHER includes Chinese folk, New religionist, Sikh, Spiritist, Taoist, Confucianist, Jain, Shintoist, Zoroastrian.</i>		

Data source: Todd M. Johnson and Gina A. Zurlo, eds., *World Christian Database* (Leiden/Boston: Brill, accessed March 2023)

According to the World Christian Database (WCD March 2023) 65.3% of the population of Nepal is Hindu. 13.0% are ethno-religionist and 12.2% of the population are Buddhist. Christians in Nepal make up 4.7% of the population, numbering just under 1.5 million.

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

Nepal is one of the least developed countries in the world and relies extensively on remittances from workers abroad and on foreign aid. Agriculture remains Nepal's principal economic activity, but only about 20% of the total area is cultivable.

According to World Bank data for Nepal:

- **GDP (current US\$):** 36.29 billion (in 2021)
- **GDP growth (annual %):** 4.2% (in 2021)

According to the World Bank Overview for Nepal:

- "Real GDP growth decreased to an estimated 1.9 percent in FY23, the lowest rate since FY20 and substantially below the 10-year average growth rate. Monetary tightening and the effects of import restrictions contributed to the slowdown. Economic activity was particularly subdued in the industry and services sectors, while agricultural output remained more resilient."
- "Strong energy sector growth helped to avoid an industrial contraction, since manufacturing and construction outputs shrank. Hydroelectric generation increased significantly for the second year in row and added close to 500 megawatts of hydroelectric power to the national grid. Nepal nevertheless remains a net energy importer."
- "Slow credit growth and import restrictions contributed to a reduction in private investment on the demand side. Lower capital expenditure and revenue underperformance drove lower public investment. As a result, total investment decreased by more than 10 percent, a sharper reduction than in FY20. Private consumption remained robust, owing to strong remittance inflows."
- "Inflation increased for the third successive year in FY23, and the increase was broadbased. Food prices rose due to supply side shocks and domestic policy changes. Non-food prices were pushed by higher housing and utility prices."

In 2022, Nepal faced the hard reality of a full-blown economic crisis with rising Inflation. To prevent the depletion of foreign exchange reserves, the government restricted imports, which consequently reduced tax revenue. The market is cash strapped, banks face a liquidity crisis because of loans to unproductive sectors. All this is not sudden. It was decades in the making. Successive governments failed to invest in manufacturing and agriculture to create jobs at home, and instead ran the country on revenue from taxes on imports. (Source: [Nepali Times, 20 May 2022](#))

At the end of April 2023 Nepal plunged into its first recession in six decades as economic output continued to be weighed down by inflation and political instability. Economists warn that the country, which is aiming for middle-income status in the next three years, will have a hard time getting out of the slump as political uncertainty, corruption and market vulnerability go deep. (Source: [Kathmandu Post, 30 April 2023](#))

## Gender perspective

The female labor force participation rate is 82.8%, just shy of 85.1% for men ([UNDP, Nepal Annual Report 2020](#)). This soars above the global female employment rate which sits at 46% (World Bank data profile). 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 World Factbook Nepal:

- **Main ethnic groups:** Chhettri 16.6%, Brahman-Hill 12.2%, Magar 7.1%, Tharu 6.6%, Tamang 5.8%, Newar 5%, Kami 4.8%, Muslim 4.4%, Yadav 4%, Rai 2.3%, Gurung 2%, Damai/Dholii 1.8%, Thakuri 1.6%, Limbu 1.5%, Sarki 1.4%, Teli 1.4%, Chamar/Harijan/Ram 1.3%, Koiri/Kushwaha 1.2%, other 19% (2011 estimate).
- **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%; note - 123 languages reported as mother tongue in 2011 national census; many in government and business also speak English (2011 est.)
- **Urban population:** 21.9% of total population (2023)
- **Literacy rate:** 71.2% (male: 81%, female: 63.3%) (2021)

According to the UNDP Human Development Report Nepal:

- **HDI score and ranking:** 0.602 (0.584 for females, 0.6203 for males), ranking 143
- **Total population:** 30.0 million (2021)
- **Life expectancy at birth:** 68.4 years (70.4 for females, 66.6 for males) (2021)
- **Expected years of schooling:** 12.9 years (12.9 for females, 12.8 for males) (2021)
- **Gender inequality index:** 0.452 (2021)
- **Labor Force Participation Rate (% ages 15 years and older):** Female: 78.7, Male: 80.8 (2021)

According to HRW 2023 Nepal country chapter:

- “In July, after public protests, parliament extended the statute of limitations for filing rape allegations from one year to two years for adult victims, and three years for children after they turn 18. Activists said that the statute of limitations remains among several obstacles to justice. Members of marginalized communities, including Dalits, are disproportionately affected by sexual violence and have particular difficulty accessing justice.”
- “A series of rape allegations led to protests and calls to address widespread sexual violence in Nepal. Official statistics show that the number of recorded rapes had risen in recent years. The victims disproportionately belong to marginalized social groups, including Dalits.”



In October 2022 media in Nepal reported that the country was suffering from serious hunger problems. (Source: [Kathmandu Post, 20 October 2022](#))

A large number of microfinance companies are known to be benefiting from poor people's ignorance about the functioning of the loan system, and exploiting their meagre resources to fill their own coffers. As Kantipur daily reported, many poor people from far-western districts of Dadeldhura, Bajhang, Achham, Bajura and Darchula, among others, are either committing suicide or absconding after failing to pay exorbitant levels of interest to microfinance companies. (Source: [Kathmandu Post, 9 February 2023](#))

The Nepal Human Rights Year Book 2023, published by Informal Sector Service Centre (Insec), documented 4,228 victims of women's rights violations in Nepal in 2022. The report documents 605 incidents of rape, 145 cases of attempted rape and 42 incidents of sexual abuse. In 2021, there were only 3,417 such victims in total, up from 2,606 in 2020. (Source: [Kathmandu Post, 8 March 2023](#))

### Gender perspective

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](#) (106.5 boys for every 100 girls born as of 2020) which points to a strong preference for sons (Our World in Data, 2022). Forced marriages – primarily of women and girls – reportedly occur to protect family honor, prevent 'unsuitable' relationships and control female behavior. 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](#)).

Nepal remains one of the top 10 countries with a high prevalence of child marriages among boys and studies indicate higher rates of depression and suicide among child grooms than child brides ([NPR, 2 January 2022](#)).

## Technological landscape

According to Internet World Stats (IWS 2023):

- **Internet usage:** 73.0% penetration (survey date: July 2022)
- **Facebook usage:** 51.8% penetration (survey date: July 2022)  
According to [NapoleonCat \(February 2024\)](#), 56.6% of Facebook users in Nepal are registered as male, while 43.4% are women.

According to World Bank data Nepal:

- **Mobile phone subscriptions:** 107.3 per 100 people (2021).  
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](#) (publication date: June 2023):

- “In relation to its telecom sector, Nepal has several topographical and economic constraints which have impeded efforts to expand network infrastructure and improve the quality of service for end-users.”
- “The fixed line market remains underdeveloped, and as a result most traffic is channeled via mobile networks. Fixed broadband penetration remains very low, though to address this the government has initiated several programs as part of the Digital Nepal Framework and the wider Optical Fibre Backbone Network Expansion Project, started in 2012. Supported by the Rural Telecommunications Development Fund, the programs include building out fibre backbone infrastructure and using this to provide broadband to schools and community centres nationally.”
- “Telcos have also invested in fibre networks, and competition in the market is intensifying. Cheap fibre-based services launched by CG Net in mid-2021 prompted responses from other ISPs to provide faster and more competitively priced offers.”
- “Nepal’s mobile market is relatively developed, with a focus on LTE. In 2021, the regulator considered a range of spectrum bands which could be used for 5G, while Nepal Telecom was charged with trialing services in five cities.”

Despite Nepal not being included in Freedom House’s Freedom on the Net report 2023, Internet access in Nepal is not restricted or hindered.

Christians in Nepal can freely access the Internet and foreign Christian websites. The Nepalese Christian website "[Nepal Church](#)" (last accessed 8 March 2024) operates without hinderance and many of its pages are in the local language.

## Security situation

In May 2020 a dispute with India erupted over a 17 km stretch of Nepalese border ([Al-Jazeera, 29 May 2020](#)). However, in general, relations with India have continued to gradually recover from its all-time low in 2015. In terms of regional cooperation, Nepal’s relationship with China is also improving.

The monarchy and Congress-led governments relied on financial and other support from India, while Maoist-led governments put more emphasis on improving cooperation with China and increasing economic support from Beijing. By shifting back and forth between India and China, Nepal has seemingly adopted a policy of playing these two regional powers off against one another. This policy recently came under strain following further border disputes with both China and India. Nepal remains caught between these two major regional powers and is largely unable to defend itself. After a decline in economic cooperation with India, which resulted in greater economic cooperation with China, Nepal is once again cooperating with India. (Source: [Bertelsmann Stiftung Nepal Country Report 2022, 8 March 2022](#))

Examples of the attempts to improve ties with both China and India began to show in early 2022. From 25-27 March 2022, Chinese Foreign Minister and State Councillor Wang Yi visited Nepal to improve trade and ties (Source: [Kathmandu Post, 21 March 2022](#)). Nepal's Prime Minister Sher Bahadur Deuba met his Indian counterpart Narendra Modi on 2 April 2022 during a three-day

visit to New Delhi and signed a series of agreements to enhance their ties. At the same time, Nepal has been deepening relations with India's rival, China (Source: [Associated Press, 2 April 2022](#)). On 16 May 2022, Prime Minister Modi visited Nepal. The Indian prime minister's visit took place in the wake of a series of visits to Kathmandu by officials from the USA, UK and China. Observers and analysts say the visit from Delhi may look purely like a religious one, but it did hold strategic significance (Source: [Kathmandu Post, 16 May 2022](#)).

In December 2022 Nepal and India signed a number of agreements that decreased tensions (Source: [Kathmandu Post, 13 December 2022](#)).

## 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 level of poverty is being reduced little by little. Christianity is also 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 has been increasing. In the past months and years there have been several threats, arrests, physical harassment, damage to churches and Christian homes and the expulsion of foreign Christians. Under the current circumstances, radical Hindu elements 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.

### 3) The political situation remains unstable

Observers are waiting to see whether the recent levels of political instability will continue. In 2020, a split within the Communist party seriously affected the coalition government which took power in 2018. 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. The ruling coalition that took over power after parliamentary elections in November 2022 does not yet generate confidence that the period of political instability is over.

## External Links - Keys to understanding

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- Security situation: Kathmandu Post, 13 December 2022 - <https://kathmandupost.com/national/2022/12/13/nepal-india-sign-three-memorandums-of-understanding-for-projects-to-be-developed-under-indian-assistance>

## WWL 2024: 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. Further, in August 2017 anti-conversion legislation was signed into law, and the new criminal code which came into effect in August 2018 also prohibits religious activities deemed by the authorities to be against public order or morality.

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 a fast rate.

## Church spectrum today

Nepal: Church networks	Christians	%
Orthodox	5,800	0.4
Catholic	7,800	0.5
Protestant	316,000	21.8
Independent	1,106,000	76.4
Unaffiliated	11,700	0.8
Doubly-affiliated Christians	0	0.0
<b>Total</b>	<b>1,447,300</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	567,000	39.2
Renewalist movement	959,000	66.2

Data source: Todd M. Johnson and Gina A. Zurlo, eds., *World Christian Database* (Leiden/Boston: Brill, accessed March 2023)

**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 March 2023), the largest denominations in Nepal are:

- Independents / Hindu background Christians
- National Church Fellowship of Nepal
- Churches of Nepal
- Other Protestants

## 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 home 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 make up 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 to churches belonging to this category. As these churches are also very active in evangelism, they experience high levels of persecution.

## External Links - Church information

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

# WWL 2024: Persecution Dynamics / Nepal

## Reporting period

01 October 2022 - 30 September 2023

## Position on the World Watch List

Nepal: World Watch List	Points	WWL Rank
WWL 2024	62	53
WWL 2023	61	55
WWL 2022	64	48
WWL 2021	66	34
WWL 2020	64	32

Nepal's one point increase in total score in WWL 2024 was due to higher scores in four *spheres of life*. The score of violence remained the same as in WWL 2023. Converts from Hinduism are put under most pressure as they are viewed as deviating from the faith of the ancestors. Most pressure comes from radical Hindus and is highest in the *Private, Family, Community and National spheres of life*. Violence by radical Hindus targeting Christians continued with churches being damaged, Christians being arrested, physically harassed and being forced to leave their

homes. Most of the persecution of Christians in Nepal comes from Hindu radical groups who want to turn Nepal back into a Hindu state, but since the adoption of the new Constitution in 2015, the government is also applying pressure.

## 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	Medium
Organized corruption and crime	OCC	Not at all

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

### 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 in 2017. Another sign of a deteriorating situation for Christians.

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

In the context of Nepal, most Christians are from Hindu background. Thus, it is extremely difficult for individual Christians 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.

### Dictatorial paranoia (Medium)

Nepal does not have a powerful, dictatorial government, but state agents are becoming more strict, especially at the local level.



## Drivers of persecution

Nepal: Drivers of persecution	IO	RN	ERH	CO	CDP	CPCO	SI	DPA	OCC
	WEAK	STRONG	-	STRONG	-	WEAK	VERY WEAK	MEDIUM	-
Government officials	-	Strong	-	Medium	-	Very weak	-	Strong	-
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	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Organized crime cartels or networks	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Multilateral organizations (e.g. UN, OIC etc.) and embassies	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-

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 national, provincial and local government levels, officials often have connections to the Hindu community. They may be influenced to impose restrictions on religious freedom which can 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 their counterparts in India. Their activities and influence is growing.
- **Extended family (Strong):** Converts to Christianity are often under intensive 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.

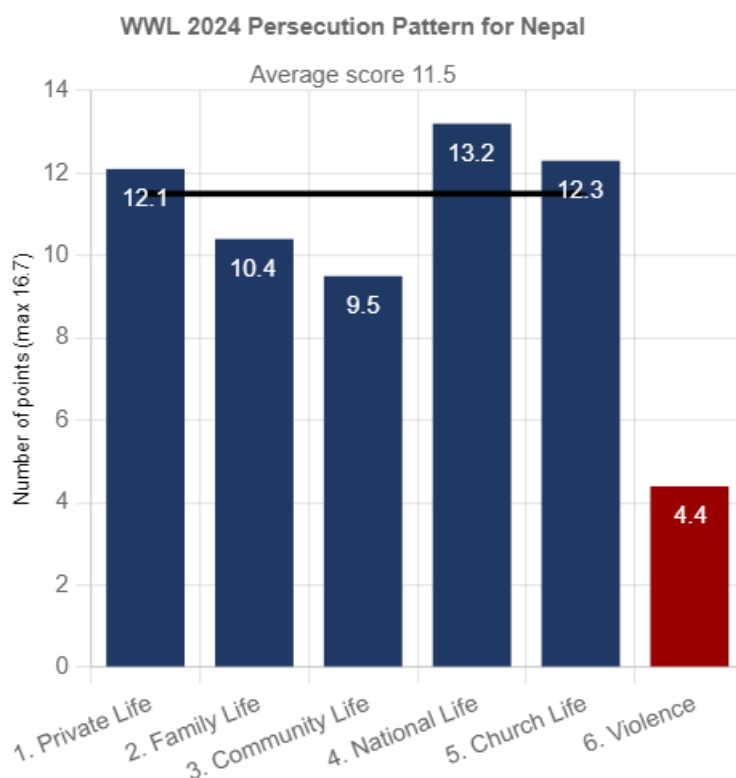
#### **Drivers of Clan oppression, often blended with Religious nationalism:**

- **Violent religious groups (Strong):** There are a number of Hindu radical groups and parties that are influenced by their counterparts in India. In their eyes, Christianity is a religion that should not exist in Nepal.
- **Extended family (Strong):** Converts to Christianity are often under intensive 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.
- **Ethnic or Clan group leaders (Medium):** Tribal Hindu leaders, especially in the northern and extreme southern regions of Nepal, have displayed religious intolerance. This has resulted in several incidents targeting Christian evangelists, pastors or newly planted churches. This is strongly linked to *Religious nationalism*.
- **Normal citizens (Medium):** At the community level, ordinary Hindu citizens will impose pressure on converts and other Christians.

#### **Drivers of Dictatorial paranoia:**

- **Government officials (Strong):** This does not happen so much at the national level, but at the local (and maybe also at provincial) level government officials are often influenced by the Hindu community and may use their position to harass and arrest Christians.

## The Persecution pattern



The WWL 2024 Persecution pattern for Nepal shows:

- The average pressure on Christians is at a very high level (11.5 points), very slightly higher than in WWL 2023 (11.3 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 spheres of life*. These are the spheres where Hindu pressure is most visible.
- The score for violence reached 4.4 points in WWL 2024 (the same as in WWL 2023).

## 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 2024 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 platforms 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 1.3: It has been dangerous to own or keep Christian materials. (3.25 points)**

Family, friends and community members have stepped up their opposition to Christians owning religious materials. At first this happened primarily in the countryside and affected mostly converts, but over the past few years this has grown. Now it also affects other Christians all over Nepal as these materials are usually considered as tools for evangelism by Hindu radicals.

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

Hindu hostility towards 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.

## Pressure in Block 2 / Family sphere

**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 2.5: Burials of Christians have been hindered or coercively performed with non-Christian rites. (3.50 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 have travelled to India to conduct burials of Catholics who had died in Nepal.

**Block 2.8: Christian children have been pressured into attending anti-Christian or majority religion teaching at any level of education. (3.25 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. (3.25 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.). (3.25 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. Unmarried Christians are often harassed for not following the Hindu tradition and rituals.

**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.

**Block 3.4: Christians have been hindered in sharing community resources. (3.00 points)**

In some rural areas Christians are socially boycotted and are not allowed to use community resources. In one such recent incidence, the Buddhists living in an earthquake-displaced camp did not allow Christians to share water from the same supply system, and two separate supplies were created. In two villages near Lamjung Christians were not allowed to take water and there are many such villages.

**Block 3.13: Christians have been interrogated or compelled to report to the local vigilante/police for faith-related reasons. (3.00 points)**

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

## 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 4.5: Christians have been discriminated when engaging with the authorities. (3.75 points)**

Some officials or government representative treat people differently when they find they are Christians or belong to other religious minorities. This is mostly influenced by local religious groups. The refusal of local authorities to grant burial access to Christian communities despite a Supreme Court ruling is an example of such discrimination.

**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.

**Block 4.9: Christian civil society organizations and/or political parties have been hindered. (3.50 points)**

In 2019, [new regulations](#) were drafted regarding NGOs in Nepal (HRW, 14 November 2019). 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 acquire registration. Christian NGOs face harassment by local authorities who often claim that they engage in unethical conversion.

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

**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 5.7: Churches have been hindered from openly integrating converts. (3.75 points)**

Conversion is strictly forbidden (see above: *Block 1.1*). Integrating converts into a church is therefore also forbidden. Apart from the legal viewpoint, there is also family and community pressure against converts and the churches accepting them.

**Block 5.20: It has been risky for churches or Christian organizations to speak out against instigators of persecution. (3.75 points)**

If the instigators of persecution are government officials or police (mostly at the local level) it is no use speaking out against them as this might result in heavier punishment. If the instigators are Hindu radicals or local community members it is also useless to speak out as most of these people have strong ties with those in power.

## 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 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.*

Nepal: Violence scores per Block 6 question in questionnaire	WWL 2024	WWL 2023
6.1 How many Christians have been killed for faith-related reasons (including state sanctioned executions)?	0	0
6.2 How many churches or public Christian properties (schools, hospitals, cemeteries, etc.) have been attacked, damaged, bombed, looted, destroyed, burned down, closed or confiscated for faith-related reasons?	3	4
6.3 How many Christians have been detained for faith-related reasons?	10	9
6.4 How many Christians have been sentenced to jail, labor camp, sent to psychiatric hospital as punishment, or similar things for faith-related reasons?	0	1
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?	4	2
6.8 How many Christians have been otherwise physically or mentally abused for faith-related reasons (including beatings and death threats)?	9	82
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?	10	0
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?	1	0



6.11 How many Christians have been forced to leave their homes or go into hiding in-country for faith-related reasons?	21	16
6.12 How many Christians have been forced to leave the country for faith-related reasons?	1	0

In the WWL 2024 reporting period:

- **Churches and public Christian properties attacked:** At least 3. On 30 August 2023, a Hindu mob attacked 3 churches in Lumbini Province by smashing windows and gates. When the pastors informed the police no action was taken.
- **Christians detained:** At least 12. According to the International Christian Concern's (ICC) November [2023 report on the status of religious freedom in Nepal](#), at least 10 Christians were detained in Nepal in 2023 for faith-related reasons. These Christians were detained on charges such as proselytizing, blasphemy and disturbing religious harmony.
- **Forced marriage of Christians:** At least 4. It is mostly women who are forced to marry a non-Christian. In one situation, a girl who had completed post-graduate studies and become a Christian, was forced by her parents to marry a non-Christian.
- **Christians attacked:** At least 9 Christians were physically attacked.
- **Christian houses or properties attacked:** According to ICC's November 2023 report (mentioned above), at least 10 Christian houses and other property were attacked in 2023.
- **Christian shops attacked:** At least 1 shop was attacked.
- **Christians forced to leave their homes:** At least 21 Christians were forced to leave either their homes or villages.
- **Christians forced to leave the country:** On 10 April 2023, the government of Nepal deported Yeon Hee Lee, a Korean national, for misusing his tourist visa.

## 5 Year trends

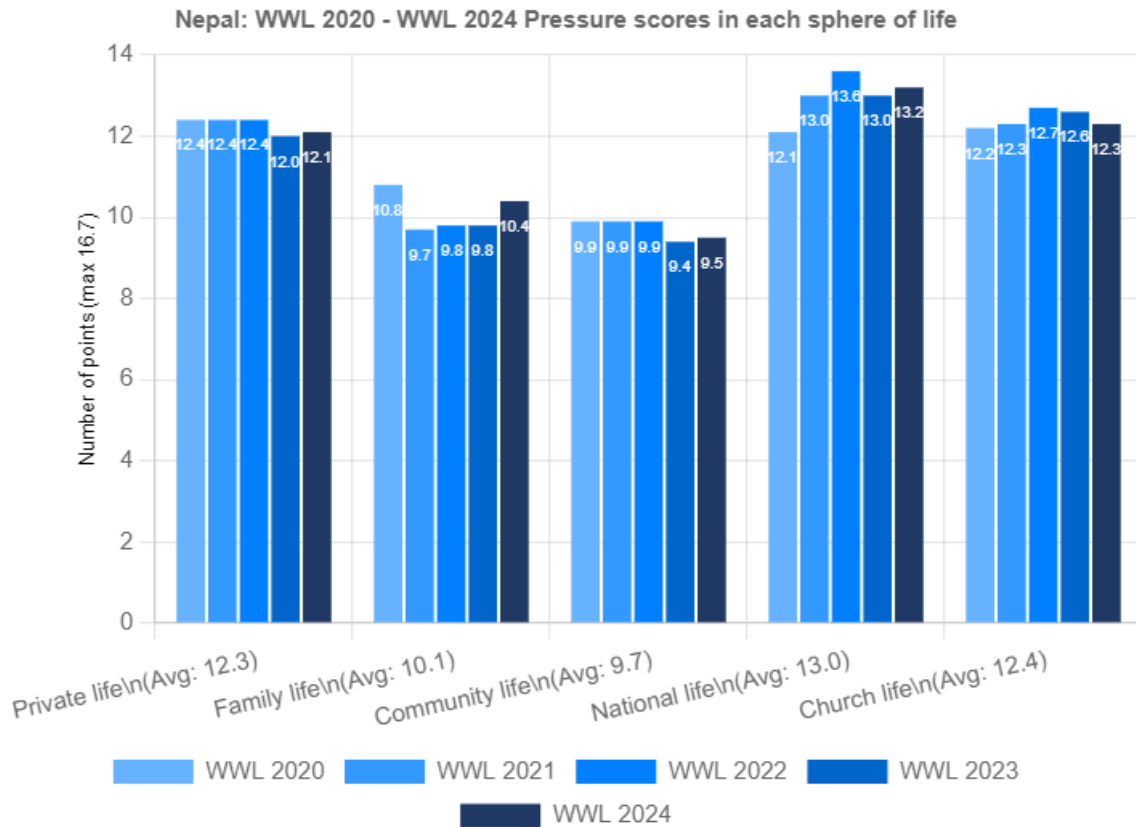
The following three charts show the levels of pressure and violence faced by Christians in the country over the last five WWL reporting periods.

### 5 Year trends: Average pressure

Nepal: WWL 2020 - WWL 2024	Average pressure over 5 Spheres of life
2024	11.5
2023	11.3
2022	11.7
2021	11.4
2020	11.5

The average pressure on Christians in Nepal has remained more or less stable within the range 11.3 - 11.7 points. Hindu pressure on Christians in Nepal is categorized as 'very high' but it is still much lower than in neighboring India.

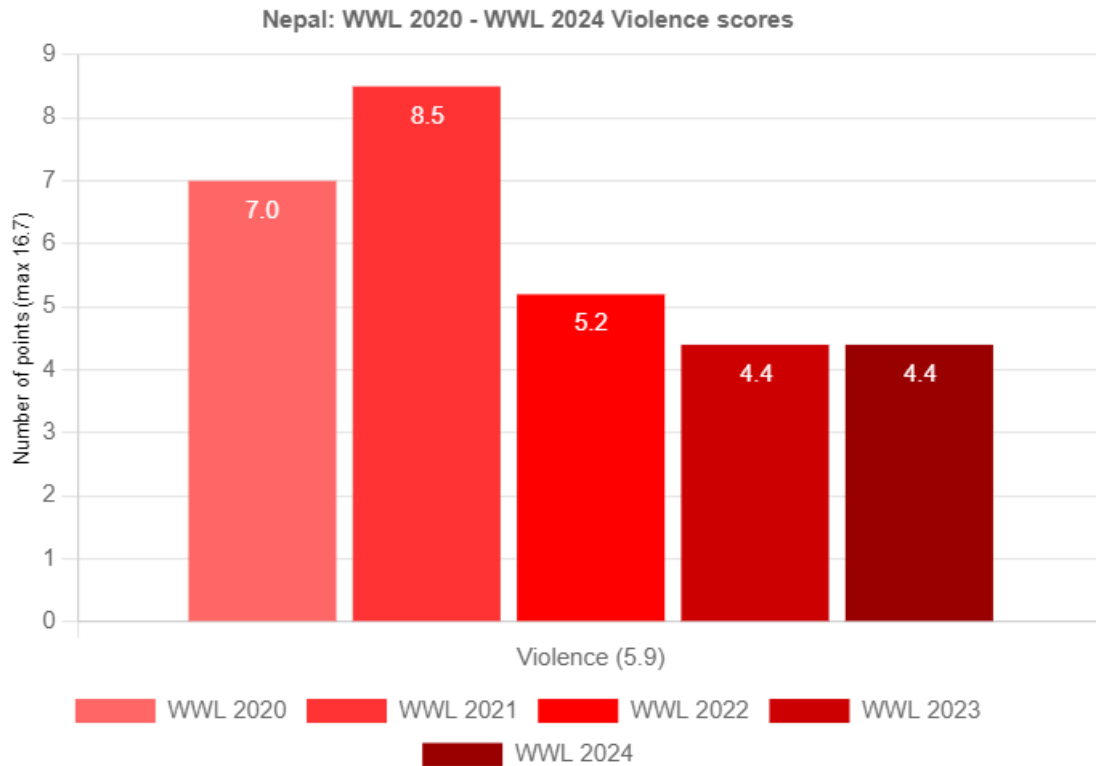
### 5 Year trends: Pressure in each sphere of life



Over the past five WWL reporting periods, pressure has been highest in the *National, Church and Private spheres of life*. This was still the case in WWL 2024. The political turmoil in Nepal since 2022 has meant a decrease in state pressure. But at the local level, the influence of especially hardline Hindus is growing.

### 5 Year trends: Violence against Christians

As can be seen in the chart below, violence against Christians in Nepal had been on the increase in the WWL 2020 - WWL 2021 reporting periods, aided by the effect of anti-conversion legislation passed in 2017. However, the score went down in WWL 2022 and has now levelled off in the WWL 2023 and WWL 2024 reporting periods at 4.4 points.



## Gender-specific religious persecution / Female

Group	Female Pressure Points
Economic	-
Political and Legal	Forced divorce; Forced marriage
Security	Incarceration by family (house arrest); Violence – physical; Violence – sexual
Social and Cultural	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 multiplicity of pressures. The immediate family members of female Christian converts may lock them up, often depriving them of basic needs and financial support, as well as restricting their contact with social networks and other Christians. Families may also make arrangements to marry their daughters to a non-Christian man. Within such marriages, women are highly pressurized to leave their Christian faith. A country expert explains “as the boy’s family are considered to be dominant in Nepal, girls who are Christian have to suffer a lot if she is married to a Hindu” or person from any other religion.

For women converts who are forced into marriage, this is often a gateway to other forms of persecution pressure being applied; “Intensity is very high because when married to non-Christian, threat to their faith becomes very high. It is difficult to get out of the marital bond after marriage....when a stand is taken, it results in physical assault, starvation, house arrest, abandonment and divorce.” Psychological pressure to participate in Hindu or other rituals is also common, for example fasting for their husband’s long life, and following restrictions during menstruation.

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 forcefully divorced. There have been a number of cases in the WWL 2024 reporting period of men leaving their wives upon discovering that they have become a Christian. Christian women and girls are also vulnerable to sexual violence, and may be harassed or raped for faith-related reasons.

In the historically Hindu and culturally patriarchal society of Nepal, women and girls have less ability to exercise their rights, face difficulty in accessing education and are often limited to care and household work. Dalit and religious minority women in particular face increased disadvantages. Perhaps the most difficult aspect for those who convert to Christianity in Nepal is the persistency of the harassment, be it physical, emotional or sexual; such pressure can be unrelenting.

### Gender-specific religious persecution / Male

Group	Male Pressure Points
Economic	-
Political and Legal	Denied citizenship; Imprisonment by government
Security	Forced to flee town/country; Military/militia conscription/service against conscience; Violence – physical
Social and Cultural	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. Converts are often socially outcast, 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.

Local independent church pastors and leaders are the main targets of harassment for faith related reasons. A country expert explains that “as they are the one to engage in active gospel preaching, baptizing new believers, and counselling new believers, they are often targeted by angry non-Christian family members of newly converts, religious group of other religion, and anti-Christian minded people.” 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. An expert explains: “Ethnic group 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.” Pastors are threatened with physical assault and on some occasions, forced to leave their communities ([BBC News, 14 January 2023](#)). 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 tortured by police. Because of the severity of the beating, he became paralyzed. There are also reports of male Christian pastors being followed when they leave the house, threatened and violently beaten by groups of youth.

In the Nepalese army, government positions and police, Christians can be 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. Particularly for members of the armed forces who are Christian, not participating in these rituals opens them up to experiencing hate speech and negative treatment.

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 trouble and social insecurity.

## Persecution of other religious minorities

According to the US State Department (IRFR 2022 Nepal):

- “According to the Center for Education and Human Resource Development, 1,014 madrassahs were registered with district education offices, compared to 911 in 2021. Some Muslim leaders stated that as many as 2,500 to 3,000 full-time madrassahs continued to be unregistered.”
- “According to NGOs, Hindu priests and other “high-caste” individuals continued to discriminate against persons of “lower” castes, particularly Dalits, although the law prohibits caste-based discrimination. An elected ward chairman and two other individuals from the Bajura District of western Nepal assaulted a Dalit man on September 29 for entering a Hindu temple, according to media reports. They were arrested and charged with caste discrimination and physical assault and released on bail on October 20. As of December, the case was still pending. Catholic and Protestant sources stated that general discrimination against Christians, including on social media, continued.”

## 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.

### **Dictatorial paranoia**

National politics in Nepal are likely to continue to be messy, at least in the short-term. At the same time, pressure from Hindu radicals on local authorities are expected to grow. As a result, Christians may have to face increasing level of pressure – especially at the local level.

## External Links - Persecution Dynamics

- Pressure in Block 4 / National sphere: new regulations - <https://www.hrw.org/news/2019/11/14/nepal-new-ngo-law-should-protect-rights>
- Violence / Block 6 - commentary: 2023 report on the status of religious freedom in Nepal - <https://www.persecution.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/11/Nepal-Report.pdf>
- Gender-specific religious persecution Male description: BBC News, 14 January 2023 - <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-asia-64235873>

## Further useful reports

A selection of in-depth reports and smaller articles are available on the Research & Reports pages of the Open Doors website:

- <https://www.opendoors.org/en-US/research-reports/>.

As in earlier years, these are also available on the Open Doors Analytical website (password: freedom):

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