

World
Watch
Research

India: Country Dossier

December 2019



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Serving persecuted **Christians** worldwide

Open Doors International / World Watch Research

December 2019

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Introduction

World Watch List 2020

Rank	Country	Private life	Family life	Community life	National life	Church life	Violence	Total Score WWL 2020	Total Score WWL 2019	Total Score WWL 2018	Total Score WWL 2017	Total Score WWL 2016
1	North Korea	16.7	16.7	16.7	16.7	16.7	11.1	94	94	94	92	92
2	Afghanistan	16.7	16.7	16.7	16.7	16.7	10.0	93	94	93	89	88
3	Somalia	16.5	16.7	16.6	16.6	16.5	9.4	92	91	91	91	87
4	Libya	15.3	15.5	15.8	16.0	16.4	11.3	90	87	86	78	79
5	Pakistan	14.0	13.9	15.0	14.9	13.7	16.7	88	87	86	88	87
6	Eritrea	14.5	14.9	15.9	15.9	15.4	10.9	87	86	86	82	89
7	Sudan	14.2	14.6	14.5	15.7	16.1	10.4	85	87	87	87	84
8	Yemen	16.6	16.4	16.4	16.7	16.7	2.6	85	86	85	85	78
9	Iran	14.1	14.3	14.1	15.8	16.5	10.4	85	85	85	85	83
10	India	12.9	13.0	13.5	15.0	13.5	14.8	83	83	81	73	68
11	Syria	13.5	14.2	13.0	13.9	14.4	12.6	82	82	76	86	87
12	Nigeria	12.2	11.9	13.5	12.8	13.0	16.7	80	80	77	78	78
13	Saudi Arabia	15.1	14.9	14.1	15.5	16.5	2.4	79	77	79	76	76
14	Maldives	15.4	15.6	14.0	15.9	16.6	0.7	78	78	78	76	76
15	Iraq	14.0	14.6	13.9	14.5	13.6	5.6	76	79	86	86	90
16	Egypt	12.1	13.1	10.7	13.2	10.5	16.1	76	76	70	65	64
17	Algeria	13.5	14.3	10.4	12.8	13.2	9.3	73	70	58	58	56
18	Uzbekistan	15.1	12.9	14.1	12.2	15.7	3.0	73	74	73	71	70
19	Myanmar	11.8	11.9	13.5	12.5	12.2	10.7	73	71	65	62	62
20	Laos	12.8	9.9	14.1	14.4	14.9	5.6	72	71	67	64	58
21	Vietnam	12.3	8.5	12.9	13.6	14.5	9.8	72	70	69	71	66
22	Turkmenistan	14.5	11.2	13.8	13.3	15.7	1.9	70	69	68	67	66
23	China	11.6	8.4	11.6	12.8	15.1	10.2	70	65	57	57	57
24	Mauritania	13.9	14.0	13.0	13.7	13.4	0.2	68	67	57	55	50
25	Central African Republic	10.1	9.1	13.1	9.8	10.2	15.6	68	70	61	58	59
26	Morocco	12.4	13.3	10.8	11.7	14.1	4.1	66	63	51	49	47
27	Qatar	13.6	13.4	10.8	12.2	14.1	2.2	66	62	63	66	65
28	Burkina Faso	9.4	9.7	10.2	9.4	11.8	15.6	66	48	-	-	-
29	Mali	9.2	8.2	12.8	10.0	11.7	13.7	66	68	59	59	55
30	Sri Lanka	11.5	9.0	11.0	10.9	9.6	13.1	65	58	57	55	53
31	Tajikistan	13.9	12.3	11.9	12.4	13.1	1.1	65	65	65	58	58
32	Nepal	12.4	10.8	9.9	12.1	12.2	7.0	64	64	64	53	53
33	Jordan	13.1	14.1	10.7	11.7	12.5	1.7	64	65	66	63	59
34	Tunisia	12.0	12.8	10.3	10.8	12.3	5.4	64	63	62	61	58
35	Kazakhstan	13.2	11.5	10.7	12.4	14.0	1.7	64	63	63	56	55
36	Turkey	12.6	11.8	10.7	13.3	11.3	3.7	63	66	62	57	55
37	Brunei	13.8	14.3	10.7	10.3	13.5	0.6	63	63	64	64	61
38	Bangladesh	11.1	9.9	12.7	11.1	8.9	9.3	63	58	58	63	57
39	Ethiopia	10.0	9.2	10.6	10.8	10.4	11.9	63	65	62	64	67
40	Malaysia	12.1	14.6	12.7	12.0	9.6	1.5	62	60	65	60	58
41	Colombia	8.9	7.8	11.9	9.8	8.9	15.0	62	58	56	53	55
42	Oman	12.7	13.1	10.0	11.5	12.7	2.0	62	59	57	53	53
43	Kuwait	13.2	13.1	9.9	11.5	13.4	0.7	62	60	61	57	56
44	Kenya	11.7	10.5	10.9	8.3	10.9	9.1	61	61	62	68	68
45	Bhutan	12.8	10.9	11.8	11.6	13.9	0.0	61	64	62	61	56
46	Russian Federation	12.2	8.3	10.7	10.4	12.1	6.9	60	60	51	46	48
47	United Arab Emirates	12.9	13.0	9.5	11.1	12.6	1.1	60	58	58	55	55
48	Cameroon	8.8	7.2	11.6	7.0	10.4	15.0	60	54	38	-	45
49	Indonesia	10.9	11.1	11.6	10.2	9.5	6.5	60	65	59	55	55
50	Niger	9.4	9.5	13.3	7.2	11.1	9.3	60	52	45	47	53
51	Palestinian Territories	12.2	13.0	9.2	10.2	11.9	3.1	60	57	60	64	62
52	Mexico	8.4	6.8	12.2	10.6	10.0	11.5	60	61	59	57	56
53	Azerbaijan	13.0	10.0	9.3	11.1	12.4	1.5	57	57	57	52	57
54	Comoros	11.7	11.5	9.1	9.9	13.9	0.9	57	56	56	56	56
55	Kyrgyzstan	12.9	10.3	11.1	9.4	11.9	1.1	57	56	54	48	46
56	Djibouti	12.3	12.3	10.3	10.0	11.2	0.2	56	56	56	57	58
57	Democratic Republic of the Congo	5.6	6.7	10.6	7.4	10.4	15.6	56	55	33	-	53
58	Chad	11.5	8.2	10.2	9.6	10.3	5.9	56	48	40	-	51
59	Bahrain	12.1	12.3	9.1	10.1	10.5	0.9	55	55	57	54	54

60	Tanzania	9.3	10.8	10.3	8.6	8.7	7.0	55	52	53	59	57
61	Cuba	9.6	5.6	9.5	11.8	12.0	3.5	52	49	49	47	42
62	Uganda	8.1	4.6	6.7	6.7	9.1	13.0	48	47	46	53	45
63	Burundi	5.1	5.8	9.7	9.2	9.6	8.7	48	43	-	-	-
64	Guinea	10.3	7.5	8.3	7.0	8.1	3.7	45	46	-	-	-
65	South Sudan	5.7	1.5	7.0	6.3	7.8	15.6	44	44	-	-	-
66	Mozambique	6.9	4.6	7.1	5.2	8.0	11.7	43	43	-	-	-
67	Gambia	8.3	8.2	8.7	8.3	8.8	1.1	43	43	-	-	-
68	Angola	6.4	3.6	7.0	8.7	10.4	6.7	43	42	-	-	-
69	Venezuela	3.8	4.4	10.6	9.3	9.5	4.8	42	41	34	-	-
70	Ivory Coast	9.8	8.6	8.2	5.5	6.6	3.5	42	43	-	-	-
71	Rwanda	5.3	4.4	6.7	7.8	10.1	7.2	42	41	-	-	-
72	Nicaragua	5.8	4.2	8.5	9.8	9.0	4.1	41	41	-	-	-
73	Togo	8.6	6.7	8.5	7.1	8.4	1.1	41	42	-	-	-

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Brief note on 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 2020 reporting period was 1 November 2018 - 31 October 2019.

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).

WWL 2020: Persecution summary / India

Brief country details

Pop 2019	Christians	Chr%
India		
1,368,738,000	66,194,000	4.8

Data source: Johnson T M and Zurlo G A, eds., *World Christian Database* (Leiden/Boston: Brill, accessed April 2019).

World Watch List India	Points	WWL Rank
WWL 2020	83	10
WWL 2019	83	10
WWL 2018	81	11
WWL 2017	73	15
WWL 2016	68	17

Scores and ranks are shown above whenever the country scored 41 points or more in the WWL 2016-2020 reporting periods.

Dominant persecution engines and drivers

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

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

Brief description of persecution situation

All categories of Christians are experiencing persecution in India since Hindu radicals view them as alien to the nation. They want to cleanse their country from Islam and Christianity and do not shy away from using extensive violence to achieve this. Converts to Christianity – here from a Hindu background - bear the brunt of the persecution in India and are constantly under pressure to return to Hinduism, especially via campaigns known as Ghar Wapsi (“home-coming”). They are often physically assaulted and sometimes killed.

Specific examples of persecution in the reporting period

1. On 9 January 2019 hardline Hindus tore down a church building in Narnepadu village, Muppalla Mandal, Guntur District, in the state of Andhra Pradesh, because it was built on the west side of a village, which they claimed violated Hindu principles of placement and positioning. (Source: [Morning Star News](#), 17 January 2019)

2. On 10 April 2019, a Christian tribal man was attacked with swords, sickles and iron sticks in the Indian state of Jharkhand. He was killed by a crowd of Hindu radical "cow protectors" on suspicion of having slaughtered an ox, considered sacred by Hindus. Three other tribal Christians were injured in the attack. (Source: [AsiaNews](#), 15 April 2019)
3. On 2 October 2019 a Christian birthday celebration was attacked by Hindu radicals in Vasalamarry village, located 40 miles outside of Hyderabad in India's Telangana state. According to local reports, the mob of 30 radical nationalists stormed into the Christian home where guests had gathered for the birthday celebrations. The radicals vandalized decorations, terrified the guests and destroyed several household items owned by the Christian family. (Source: [International Christian Concern](#), 6 October 2019)

External Links - WWL 2020: Persecution Summary

External Links - WWL 2020: Persecution summary / India

- Specific examples of persecution in the reporting period: Morning Star News - <https://morningstarnews.org/2019/01/hindu-version-of-feng-shui-leads-to-demolition-of-church-building-in-southern-india/>
- Specific examples of persecution in the reporting period: AsiaNews - <http://www.asianews.it/news-en/Jharkhand-Christian-killed-over-sacred-cows.-Msgr.-Mascarenhas:-Tragedy-for-Humanity-46773.html>
- Specific examples of persecution in the reporting period: International Christian Concern - <https://www.persecution.org/2019/10/06/christian-birthday-celebration-attacked-radicals-india/>

WWL 2020: Keys to understanding / India

Link for general background information

BBC country profile: <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-south-asia-12557384>.

Recent history

From 1920 onwards, nationalist leader Mahatma Gandhi led non-violent protests against British colonial rule which eventually led to independence in 1947, which is also when Muslim majority Pakistan split off as a separate nation. In 1971 war over East Pakistan led to the creation of Bangladesh.

Since the 1990s India has also taken a much more assertive role in world politics and has attempted to become one of the new superpowers. India is a member of a group of countries called BRICS (i.e. Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa) that seeks to become an alternative to Western dominated global politics and economy. India possesses nuclear technology. It has even launched its own Mars probe.

Another feature that has changed in India over the past decades is the decrease in the level of tolerance. Traditionally, Hinduism and Buddhism (both of them stem from India) used to be regarded as peaceful. Since the 1990s Hinduism has taken on a much more violent character. Tolerance towards dissent, minorities, or respecting religious and cultural diversity has dwindled. A substantial part of the population sympathizes with authoritarian leadership. Such leadership does not shy away from imposing its will on opponents by violent means.

Since May 2014 India is governed by the hardline Hindu Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) under the leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi. Modi had a reputation for ignoring atrocities committed by radical Hindus when he was Chief Minister of Gujarat State in 2002, in which hundreds (if not thousands) of Muslims died in pogroms. Since May 2014 the level of intolerance in India has increased and hundreds of violent incidents have been recorded each year.

Political and legal landscape

India is a complex political entity. It is a federation with a central government in New Delhi which controls foreign affairs, the army and the economy. The country consists of 29 states and 7 union territories (areas ruled by the central government).

The Constitution of India declares the country to be a secular state. Hindu radicals are calling to change this and make Hinduism the national religion. They also want to impose anti-conversion legislation at the national level, but for this a two-thirds majority in parliament is needed. In spite of the official secular stance in politics and the army, Hinduism often functions as the default religion, putting Christians and Muslims at an obvious disadvantage. Despite the constitutional provision that India has religious freedom, each state defines its own policy regarding religion. Nine of them (Orissa, Himachal Pradesh, Gujarat, Madhya Pradesh, Chhattisgarh, Jharkhand, Uttarakhand, Rajasthan and Arunachal Pradesh) have implemented so-called anti-conversion legislation, a widely misused type of blasphemy law: Indian Penal Code-295-A. However, even in the states where this law has not been implemented, police have arrested Christians for evangelism activities.

Christians do not have a major political party of their own (barring a few attempts in Andhra Pradesh and Uttar Pradesh). Christians can only join existing parties. It may come as a surprise that some of them have even joined the BJP. In fact, many Christians voted for Modi because they liked his economic agenda and hoped that he would do away with the inertia that characterized the Manmohan Singh era. Christians are also hardly present in the judicial body.

In May 2019 new parliamentary elections were held in India and the support for Modi increased even further with the BJP gaining an absolute majority. This means it is no longer necessary for the BJP to form a coalition with other parties (and thus to seek compromises). It is therefore expected that Muslims and Christians will not experience any improvement in their situation; a deterioration is more likely.

In August 2019 the Modi government decided to remove article 370 from the state of Jammu & Kashmir – this article provided an exemption to the state from the Indian Constitution. The government decided to do this to put an end to the Muslim rebellion that has been going on in Jammu & Kashmir for decades. The decision to put an end to the special position was an important event in Indian history. Article 35-A was removed as well which allowed state to have the prerogative on citizenship. The process was conducted with heavy military deployment in the state. After the bill was passed in parliament, Jammu & Kashmir was rearranged: it lost its state status, and it was split up into two so-called Union Territories named Jammu & Kashmir and Leh & Ladakh. The central government in New Delhi has much more power in Union Territories than in states. As a result, India now has 28 states.

Religious landscape

Religious Context: India	Numbers	%
Christians	66,194,000	4.8
Muslim	197,708,000	14.4
Hindu	992,378,000	72.5
Buddhist	10,253,000	0.7
Ethnoreligionist	50,475,000	3.7
Jewish	11,000	0.0
Bahai	2,121,000	0.2
Atheist	2,226,000	0.2
Agnostic	16,301,000	1.2
Other	31,071,400	2.3

Data source: Johnson T M and Zurlo G A, eds., *World Christian Database* (Leiden/Boston: Brill, accessed April 2019).

OTHER includes Chinese folk, New religionist, Sikh, Spiritist, Taoist, Confucianist, Jain, Shintoist, Zoroastrian.

India is the next most populous country in the world after China. The largest religion in the country is Hinduism, with 72.5% of the population. Hinduism has dominated India for centuries (it started to develop between 500 and 300 BC). The second biggest religion in India is Islam with 14.4% of the population. This may seem an unimportant minority until you realize that India is the country with the second largest Muslim population on earth - only Indonesia has more Muslims. India is home to more Muslims than neighboring Pakistan and Bangladesh.

Christianity is the next largest religion in India, making up 4.8% of the population. The group of Christians in India growing fastest are the non-traditional Christian communities (including converts to Christianity). Bureaucracy and corruption are well-known factors all over India: If Christians try to build a new church, or renovate an existing one, they will encounter much red-tape and opposition. The only way to bypass the obstacle of bureaucracy is by paying bribes. Many of the lower administration personnel whose income is low need the extra income from corruption to survive. Christians in India are constantly encountering these obstacles in almost every aspect of their lives.

3.8% of the Indian population are adherents of so-called ethno-religionism. These are the traditional tribal religions, which predate the arrival of Hinduism and Buddhism in the country. Buddhism only makes up 0.7% of the country's population. Buddhism originated in Ancient India sometime between the 6th and 4th centuries BC, from where it spread through much of Asia.

Economic landscape

India used to be regarded as a developing country in the decades after it became independent in 1947, which was strengthened by the adherence of India's leadership to Socialist principles. This has changed completely: Thanks to liberal policies in the 1990s, India now has one of the world's fastest-growing economies, even though the economic crisis of 2008-2014 affected this growth markedly. According to the International Monetary Fund (IMF), as of [August 2018](#), the Indian Nominal GDP (in USD billions) is 2,602; it is the 7th-largest economy by market exchange rates. But the new wealth is not distributed equally and the gap between very rich and very poor is growing rapidly. Poverty is still high at 30%. Christians tend to be in an unfavorable position as they are often lacking in education and hence tend to find themselves in the lower strata of society.

On 8 November 2016, the Government of India announced the demonetization of all 500 and 1,000 rupee banknotes of the Mahatma Gandhi series. It also announced the issuance of new 500 and 2,000 rupee banknotes in exchange for the demonetized banknotes. It was suddenly enacted by the single-hand decision of Prime Minister Modi, illegalizing the currency of 500 and 1000 at once. This decision led to the devastation of the unorganized sector (45% of the Indian economy), leaving a large population of low and lower middle-class and population below the poverty line, as well as jobless with an uncertain economic future. The recent decline of India's economy owes to this decision as de-monetization left 12 million Indians jobless. The move is a significant blow to the Church as well because large numbers of believers of the House Church belong to the affected categories.

There are recent signs that the Indian economic growth is losing steam. At the end of August 2019 [media reported](#) that the Indian economy continues to contract and has hit its lowest level recorded in the past five years according to a Reuters study on the country's growth. According to experts, in the April-June 2019 quarter the increase in gross domestic product (GDP) was "only" 5.7%: far lower than the same period in 2018, when growth was 8%, thus losing its place as the world's fastest growing economy.

The work of Christian NGOs has suffered from the fact that it has been made very difficult to receive financial support from abroad; all donations and support need to be reported to the tax office. The majority of Christians are from the lower social strata and many are poor. They have to face the daily challenges of discrimination, poverty, illiteracy, inadequate public healthcare and malnutrition. Many churches lack the finances to do anything about this. They need assistance from abroad to run social projects etc. but the government restrictions make this virtually impossible.

Social and cultural landscape

India has more than two thousand ethnic groups and every major religion is represented. Only the continent of Africa exceeds the linguistic, genetic and cultural diversity of the nation of India. The most common ethnic [languages](#) are Hindi dialects (41.03%), Bengali (8.11%), Telugu (7.19%), Marathi (6.99%), Tamil (5.91%), Urdu (5.01%), Gujarati (4.48%), and Kannada (3.69%).

The most characteristic social feature of India is the caste system – a hierarchical stratification of Indian 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”. The caste system is omnipresent in India with upper castes ruling the country.

It may come as a surprise that the caste system also permeates the Church in India. Most Christians in India come from the lower castes or even the Dalits. They converted from Hinduism partly to escape their hopeless situation as “Untouchables” only to find that the same barriers exist inside the Church. Many of them became disappointed and this is part of the explanation why the [Ghar Wapsi campaign](#) of the Hindu radicals has been effective in reconverting many back to Hinduism. Abolishing elements of the caste system still existing in the Church is a major challenge which needs to be dealt with.

Women and girls in India are still widely neglected and perceived to be inferior. They have lower literacy and education rates. Society’s preference for boys leads to selective abortion of girls and to female infanticide. India has a growing female population deficit of 35 million. The media in India bring reports of rape virtually every day. Police forces often do not show any real interest in helping victims or bringing justice to the perpetrators. There is no difference in the situation of women and girls if they are Christians.

Christians are the largest unemployed group among all minorities in India, without even including the number of the new Christian population who officially stick to their Hindu status due to various socio-economic reasons. Would this number of unofficial Christians have been included, the section of unemployed Christians would have been bigger.

Technological landscape

Among the rapid economic changes mentioned above, investment in technology has skyrocketed in India. Apart from its own space programme, India has taken up the challenge of the digital revolution. Bangalore is the Silicon Valley of India where many innovations are invented. Many Western IT companies are tapping in and have opened branches in India. The expectation is that advancements in technology in India will progress fast for some time to come. In July 2019 India even planned to launch a moon-landing but this was postponed.

The introduction of new technology started in the major cities, but India has also begun to modernize areas in countryside, giving almost everyone Internet access. This means that Christians and others have more access to Christian materials, but it could also open the eyes of people in India (especially the younger generation) to what is going on in the rest of the world. Hindu hard-liners are attacking the Christian media, accusing them of evangelism. There have already been instances where cable operators have been pressured by Hindu groups to remove Christian content even as Hindu content and channels multiply.

In the past decade Christian satellite TV channels and other Christian media have expanded enormously. India has no e-censorship which means that Christians are free to publish whatever they want. This means (among other things) that Christians have many more means to report on persecution in India as well. The site of the [Evangelical Fellowship of India](#) is a shining example of this. (Until January 2018, this website even had a section for posting updates about violent incidents.)

Security situation

A major issue in India is the high level of physical violence and the lack of respect for human life. Honor killings, acid throwing, beatings by mobs, executions and many other atrocities happen regularly all over the country. Christians are often the victims of these actions as testified by the long lists of violent incidents published annually.

Hindu radicals have gained momentum since the beginning of the 1990s. Their ultimate aim is to change India from being a secular country (as defined by the country's Constitution) into a country where Hinduism is the state religion. Over the years, Hindu radicals have carried out numerous violent attacks against non-Hindu religious minorities. There has been little if any protection against these attacks from the local, state or national authorities. Modi's administration refuses to speak out against this violence, which results in a constant increase in the level of impunity. Local police officers have a reputation for being corrupt. In the states and many other areas where the BJP forms the government, police officers are known for not being neutral and for often siding with Hindu hard-liners. They regularly take part in raids on Christian meetings, issue threats to Christians, refuse to register cases reported by Christians (FIR registrations) and give protection to radical Hindus involved in acts of persecution. When Christians want to register a complaint, the local police will refuse to do so in about 90% of the cases. The police also have a reputation for brutality and mistreating Christians who are in custody.

Another major problem for Christians in India is the presence of the Maoists, a.k.a. Naxalites. (It is believed that the term Naxal/Naxalite derives from the name of the village Naxalbari in the Indian State of West Bengal, where the movement had its origin.) They are a remnant of the Cold War era and are Communist militants whose strongholds are to be found in the poorest regions of India. These are regions that are difficult to control, such as the jungles of Andhra Pradesh, Bihar, Chhattisgarh, Jharkhand, Kerala, Maharashtra, Odisha and Telangana. Christians living in areas under Naxalite control are constantly monitored and cannot openly practice their faith. If they refuse to follow each and every command, the Naxalites will pick them out and set an example during a special village meeting. This may be limited to a severe beating, but can go as far as an open execution.

There are some major reasons why Christians are subjected to violence in the Naxal-prone areas:

- Local villagers who are generally anti-Christian sometimes encourage Naxalite action against Christians, convincing them that Christians in the villages are police informants reporting Naxal activities. As a result Naxals do not hesitate to kidnap, brutally beat and kill Christians.
- Christians are known to share their faith and thus help convert people (even Naxal leaders) to Christianity. This angers the Naxalite community which then abducts and kills Christian leaders.
- Christians in villages generally do not provide shelter and food for Naxals, unlike other locals.

Trends analysis

1. Social hostility against Christians has grown

Since Narendra Modi first came to power in May 2014 the level of religious persecution of Christians has gone up dramatically. Talking about the Christian faith to a wider group than the family is now generally regarded as a form of evangelism. Intolerance against this has grown over the past five years. Even just revealing one's Christian faith can be regarded as evangelism in the eyes of Hindu radicals. The growing social hostility towards Christians is increasingly expressed through (though not limited to) the widespread use of social media.

2. The BJP is consolidating its power-base

In the April and May 2019 elections, the BJP gained an absolute majority in parliament which means that Prime Minister Modi will stay in power for the next 5 years. Hardline Hindus will therefore continue to attack Muslims and Christians with impunity and the level of violence is likely to remain at an extreme level.

In August 2019 the Modi government took away the statehood of the Muslim majority region of Jammu and Kashmir, turning the region into two separate union territories (Jammu and Kashmir, plus Ladakh). This means that the central government can exert much more control there. Both Pakistan and China have reacted furiously and tensions are rising rapidly.

External Links - WWL 2020: Keys to understanding / India

- Link for general background information: <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-south-asia-12557384>. - <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-south-asia-12557384>
- Economic landscape: August 2018 - <https://www.imf.org/en/News/Articles/2018/08/07/NA080818-India-Strong-Economy-Continues-to-Lead-Global-Growth>
- Economic landscape: media reported - <http://www.asianews.it/news-en/Indian-economy-hits-five-year-low-47867.html>
- Social and cultural landscape: languages - https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Demographics_of_India
- Social and cultural landscape: Ghar Wapsi campaign - <https://www.worldwatchmonitor.org/coe/hindus-never-convert-people-says-indian-mp/>
- Technological landscape: Evangelical Fellowship of India - <http://www.efionline.org/index.php>

WWL 2020: Church information / India

Christian origins

According to the oldest tradition, the Apostle Thomas came to India in the 1st century AD and established the first churches in the country – mainly in Kerala. It is assumed that the initial converts were largely Jewish proselytes among the Cochin Jews who are believed to have arrived in India around 562 BC, after the destruction of the First Temple in Jerusalem. Another tradition mentions Saint Bartholomew who visited India in the 2nd century AD.

In the 4th century, several Christians from the Middle East came to India to evangelize. The colony of Syrian Christians established at Kodungallur may be the first Christian community in South India for which there is a continuous written record. The most important leader of these Christians was Thomas of Cana.

The Dominican missionary, Jordanus Catalani, was the first Catholic European to arrive in India in 1320 and start missionary work from the city of Surat. The 15th century saw the rise of colonialism. For India this meant the arrival of the Portuguese in Goa and other cities, and with them missionaries of the different orders (Franciscans, Dominicans, Jesuits, Augustinians, etc.) who began at once to build churches along the coastal districts where the Portuguese power made itself felt.

The first Protestant missionaries to set foot in India were two Lutherans from Germany, Bartholomäus Ziegenbalg and Heinrich Plütschau, who began work in 1705 in the Danish settlement of Tranquebar (now known as Tharangambadi in Tamil Nadu). In 1793, William Carey, an English Baptist minister came to India as a missionary. He worked in Serampore, Calcutta, and other places and translated the Bible into Bengali, Sanskrit and numerous other languages and dialects. He worked in India until his death in 1834. During the 19th century, several American Baptist missionaries evangelized in the north-eastern parts of India. Even today the heaviest concentrations of Christians in India continue to be in the northeast among the Nagas, Khasis, Kukis, and Mizos.

Church spectrum today

Church networks: India	Christians	%
Orthodox	5,273,000	8.0
Catholic	20,876,000	31.5
Protestant	22,700,000	34.3
Independent	19,486,000	29.4
Unaffiliated	174,000	0.3
Doubly-affiliated Christians	-2,314,000	-3.5
Total	66,195,000	100.0
<i>(Any deviation from the total number of Christians stated above is due to the rounding of decimals)</i>		
Evangelical movement	10,796,000	16.3
Renewalist movement	20,462,000	30.9

Data source: Johnson T M and Zurlo G A, eds., *World Christian Database* (Leiden/Boston: Brill, accessed April 2019).

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: Believers 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.

WWL 2020: Persecution Dynamics

Reporting period

1 November 2018 – 31 October 2019

Position on World Watch List (WWL)

With a score of 83 points, India ranked 10th in WWL 2020, the same as in WWL 2019.

The fact that the score seems to be levelling off does not mean that we may expect an improvement for Christians soon – in fact, the future is not looking good at all. The equal score is more an indication that the level of persecution in India continues to be extreme. Since the current government of Prime Minister Narendra Modi came to power in May 2014 (and was re-elected with even greater mandate in May 2019) India's ranking in the WWL has gone up. Hindu radicals have increased their attacks and the level of impunity is very high.

Persecution engines

Persecution engines: India	Abbreviation	Level of influence
Islamic oppression	IO	Weak
Religious nationalism	RN	Very strong
Clan and ethnic antagonism	CEA	Strong
Christian denominational protectionism	CDP	Very weak
Communist and post - Communist oppression	CPCO	Weak
Secular intolerance	SI	Not at all
Dictatorial paranoia	DPA	Strong
Organized corruption and crime	OCC	Weak

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 (Very strong):

The assertiveness and aggressiveness of all kinds of Hindu organizations have increased over the years. They claim that India belongs to Hinduism and that other religions should be driven out of the country. Radical Hinduism is by far the main persecutor in India. It is vocal, omnipresent and very violent. Other forms of Religious nationalism in India further worsen the score, e.g. from various radical groups such as Radical Buddhists in Ladakh, forms of Neo-Buddhism in Maharashtra and Uttar Pradesh, and Radical Sikhs in Punjab. Since 2014 religious nationalism is also influencing tribal groups, causing them to consider their religions as also being related to Hinduism.

Clan and ethnic antagonism (Strong):

In the states of Chhattisgarh, Jharkhand, Odisha, southern Madhya Pradesh, southern Gujarat, Arunachal Pradesh, Assam, Tripura, Nagaland and Manipur there are areas with tribal societies. The Hindu radical movement RSS has successfully infiltrated these tribal societies and have turned them against the Christian presence in those areas. In the tribal areas, people have come (and are still coming) to Christian faith. This is not something new; the Church has been in tribal areas for at least 100-150 years and experienced little violent opposition in that time.

However, since the late 1990's, the RSS, Vishwa Hindu Parishad (VHP) and their affiliates have been working systematically to divide tribal societies and generate opposition towards Christians. Increasingly, tribal converts are being threatened, boycotted socially, expelled, denied drinking water, raped and even murdered. In a number of cases, the construction of church buildings has been forcibly stopped by the villagers. Clan and ethnic antagonism is thus rapidly becoming a serious threat for the Church in India.

Dictatorial paranoia (Strong):

After winning the May 2019 elections, the BJP formed a new government under Prime Minister Narendra Modi who is being hailed as the strong man to lead India. As a result, dictatorial tendencies can be noticed. Social media control, inflammatory speeches, the gagging of media who question the schemes and numbers portrayed by the government are just some of the signs of a growing dictatorial movement within government circles. Attacks (including fake news) have been unleashed by state machinery on journalists, opposition leaders, human rights activists and media chiefs. The propaganda against 'alien' religions like Islam and Christianity is also increasing.

Both **Clan or Ethnic antagonism** and **Dictatorial paranoia** are strongly blended with Religious nationalism.

Drivers of persecution

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

Organized crime cartels or networks	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	Weak
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:

- **Non-Christian religious leaders (Very strong):** Hindu religious leaders are a main source of anti-Christian sentiments spreading among the Hindu masses. Prominent examples are Yogi Adityanath (founder of Hindu Yuva Wahini which is responsible for the most attacks in Uttar Pradesh), Sakshi Mahraj (Member of the Legislative Assembly), Sadhvi Pragya, Sadhvi Prachi, Rajrajeshwaracharya and Narendra Maharaj who are all known for their open hate-speech against Christians. They play the role of mediator between religious nationalist ideology and its actual manifestation on the ground, planning and executing misinformation and violent action against Christians and other minorities.
- **Violent religious groups (Very strong):** Various hardline Hindu groups are active in India: BJP, VHP, RSS, Sangh Parivar etc. They are almost always the hands and feet that exert Hindu pressure on Christians. Other violent groups include Naxalites and Islamic groups (such as the Islamic State group), although the latter have not yet attacked Christians.
- **Normal citizens (Very strong):** At the level of the village, community members play a big role in persecuting Christians, both converts from Hinduism and other categories of Christianity. Most of the time, it is these local villagers who actually carry out the hostilities against Christians, such as beatings, setting fire to churches, damaging cemeteries etc.
- **Political parties (Very strong):** The BJP is the political wing of RSS (a Hindu nationalist, paramilitary, voluntary organization known for its radical Hindu ideology) and has a majority in the political centre. It is the parent organization of all types of Hindu radicalism in India. All the top leaders of the ruling BJP come from this RSS background. In fact, all members of BJP are usually a member of RSS or one of its 35 direct branches. BJP has been giving direct political support to the Hindutva militant wings all over the country. Raghuraj Das (Chief Minister of Jharkhand), Adityanath (Chief Minister of Uttar Pradesh), Manohar Lal Khattar (Chief Minister of Haryana), Rajnath Singh (Home Minister of India) and other BJP ministers have been speaking publicly against Christians and other minorities. With the BJP in the political driving seat, radical Hindus feel empowered to persecute Christians and enjoy virtual impunity.
- **Government officials (Strong):** The BJP government under Prime Minister Modi, biased officials and Hindu extremists (members of the family of organizations of RSS) are major forces persecuting Christians. After the rise of Modi and BJP to power in May 2014, a power nexus of RSS's extremists + Media + government-controlled officials has come into existence and are working together against Christianity. This nexus is most responsible for the increase of Christians' persecution.
- **Ethnic leaders (Strong):** Tribal leaders commonly put pressure on Christian converts for leaving the culture of the ancestors and insulting the religion of the group (i.e. Hinduism).

- **Family members (Strong):** Close relatives of converts will very quickly regard any conversion to Christianity as shaming the honor of the family and act accordingly.

Drivers of Clan and ethnic antagonism:

- **Ethnic leaders (Strong):** Tribal leaders are traditionally Hindus. They will strongly oppose any Christian presence in their midst. There is a close link to Religious nationalism.
- **Non-Christian religious leaders (Strong):** Local Hindu leaders strongly opposing any Christian presence in their midst. There is a close link to Religious nationalism.
- **Violent religious groups (Strong):** Militant Hindu groups at the local level strongly oppose any Christian presence in their midst. There is a close link to Religious nationalism.
- **Normal citizens (Strong):** Local tribal people are per tradition Hindus. Quite often they form mobs to attack Christians in their villages. There is a close link to Religious nationalism.
- **Family members (Strong):** Local tribal families strongly oppose conversion to Christianity. There is a close link to Religious nationalism.
- **Government officials (Medium):** At the local level government officials will oppose Christians. They regard them as not belonging to the tribe whose culture traditionally is Hindu. There is a close link to Religious nationalism.

Drivers of Dictatorial paranoia:

- **Political parties (Very strong):** The BJP is a master in using modern technology and social media to promote their agenda. They are also master in creating fake news to attack their opponents. According to BJP leaders, Muslims and Christians should be [removed](#) from India by 2021. There is a close link to Religious nationalism.
- **Government officials (Strong):** In states and regions that are under the control of Hindu radicals, local government officials oppose Christianity. There is a close link to Religious nationalism.
- **Ethnic leaders (Strong):** In most states and regions local Hindus will dominate the government and oppose Christians. There is a close link to Religious nationalism.
- **Non-Christian religious leaders (Strong):** Local Hindu leaders will strongly support anti-Christian measures from the government. There is a close link to Religious nationalism.
- **Violent religious groups (Strong):** Radical Hindu groups like RSS and VHS will strongly oppose Christians. There is a close link to Religious nationalism.
- **Normal citizens (Strong):** Hindu mobs will support BJP government. They will even go further with their attacks on Christians as this can more or less be done with impunity. There is a close link to Religious nationalism.

Geographical hotspots of persecution

There are no particular hotspots of persecution in India. The worst regions are the states where the BJP forms the government, but that can change every 5 years due to elections.

Christian communities and how they are affected

Communities of expatriate Christians: There are several expatriate groups active in India. It is not only Westerners living in India who have their own congregations, but also refugees. One example is the Afghan community that has a congregation in New Delhi. Most of the time, these congregations do not draw the ire of the radical Hindus in India. There are two reasons for this: They have a very distinct ethnic membership, and they are not very active in outreach among Indian nationals.

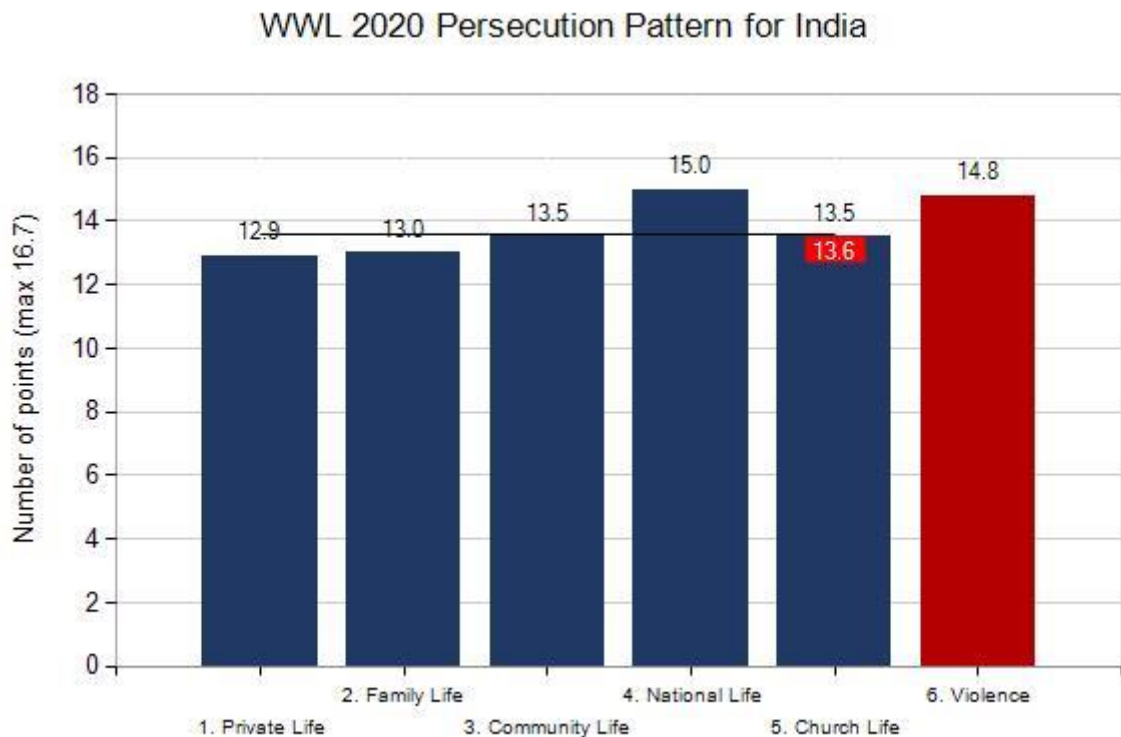
Historical Christian communities: These communities (e.g. the Roman Catholic, Orthodox and Anglican-based churches) bear witness that Christians have been in India for many centuries, with the (Orthodox) Kerala Mar Thoma Church dating back to the 3rd century AD. These churches are not growing strongly because they are hardly active in outreach. Nevertheless, even this group of Christians is sometimes attacked by radical Hindus who vandalize churches, religious statues and crucifixes. The Historical Churches usually own significant assets and immovable properties in India. Other than that Church body owns some of the finest educational and medical institutes and large amount of land, as the Constitution of India gives special provision to the Christians to start and manage the education centers of their own choice. The BJP government under Prime Minister Modi has made attempts to take away the right to manage the institutes. These institutes are vital for the educational growth of the Christian minorities and other marginalized communities. The government also is eyeing upon the land of the Church. In many places government has taken the properties from the Church.

Converts to Christianity: Christian converts from a Hindu background bear the brunt of the persecution in India. These Christians face harassment on an almost daily basis and are constantly under pressure to return to Hinduism. Converts are often physically assaulted, hospitalized and sometimes even killed. They live mostly in the countryside, where they face societal pressure not only from family, friends, community and local Hindu priests, but also from radical Hindus.

Other converts (from Islam, Sikhism and Buddhism) also face pressure from their social environment, but their numbers are far smaller. Christians with a Muslim background face persecution only in areas where there is a high concentration of Muslims in the local population.

Non-traditional Christian communities: After converts, Christians from Baptist, Evangelical and Pentecostal churches are regarded as the second main target by radical Hindus because of their involvement in outreach activities and conversion and hence face regular attack.

The Persecution pattern



The WWL 2020 Persecution pattern for India shows:

- The average pressure on Christians is at a very high level (13.6 points), rising from 13.5 in WWL 2019. 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 in at least 9 states. Threats are expressed and church meetings are disturbed very frequently.
- Although all spheres of life show at least very high levels of pressure, pressure is highest in the *sphere of National life*. Christians experience increasing restrictions in this realm: More states are considering the introduction of anti-conversion legislation to put an end to conversion by force and/or allurement; the media are increasingly negative and the level of impunity for militant Hindus has increased even further.
- The score for violence reached 14.8 points in WWL 2020 (a reduction from 15.2 points in WWL 2019). It had a big impact that less Christians were killed in the WWL 2020 reporting period. However, of the 12 categories of violence used in WWL analysis, most get the maximum score for India. Physical violence and attacks on the Christian religious assemblies are two most frequent forms of persecution in India.

Pressure in the 5 spheres of life

In each of the five spheres of life discussed below, details are shown from four of the highest scoring block questions, with those items scoring highest listed first. 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 0 – 4 points, please see the “WWL Scoring example” in the WWL Methodology, available at: <http://opendoorsanalytical.org/world-watch-list-documentation/>, password: freedom).

Private sphere:

- ***It has been risky for Christians to reveal their faith (Block 1.4 / Score: 3.75 points):*** Revealing one's Christian faith is regarded as evangelism in the eyes of Hindu radicals. They will also react aggressively to any social media posts. At first only converts were targeted, but now all Christian messages can expect to be under attack .
- ***It has been risky for Christians to conduct acts of worship by themselves (Block 1.2 / Score 3.5 points):*** Christians only used to experience problems in their private prayer times at the community level. Especially converts had to be careful how they carried out prayer in their family homes. However, sentiments against visible Christian behavior appear to have grown in India over the past five years. Protestants are now also monitored (because of suspicion of evangelism activities), and the phenomenon is no longer limited to the countryside. Being seen at prayer has become risky all over India (barring two or three north eastern states).
- ***It has been risky for Christians to speak about their faith with others than immediate family (Block 1.8 / Score 3.5 points):*** Talking about the Christian faith to a wider group than the family is now generally regarded as a form of evangelism. This affects not just converts, but also Protestants. Intolerance against this has grown over the past five years. Social hostility against Christians sharing their faith has increased, driven by Hindu radicalism.
- ***Conversion has been opposed, forbidden or punishable (Block 1.1 / Score 3.25):*** Conversion in India is currently one of the biggest issues used by Hindu radicals against Christians. They are using the term 'forced conversion' to attack pastors, church leaders and congregation. Accusations of conversion usually lead to physical violence, with Christians consequently being taken to the local police station on charges of 'forced conversion' and detained there. Seven states in India have currently implemented anti-conversion legislation: Orissa, Madhya Pradesh, Chhattisgarh, Gujarat, Himachal Pradesh, Jharkhand and Uttarakhand. Similar laws are pending in Arunachal Pradesh and Rajasthan. There have been rumors that Hindu radicals plan to implement similar anti-conversion legislation at the federal level, but so far these attempts have not led to concrete results. Other indications of the importance of the battle against conversion are i) the large-scale home-coming campaign (Ghar Wapsi) organized by Hindu radicals all over India; and ii) the impossibility for foreign Christians to obtain a missionary visa.

Family sphere:

- **Christian couples have been hindered in adopting children (Block 2.6 / Score 4 points):** Although India's Supreme Court passed the Juvenile Justice Act in 2015 (which allows adoption of Hindu children by non-Hindu parents), Christians still find it extremely difficult (if not impossible) to adopt children. Procedures are very complicated - sometimes intentionally - in an attempt to block adoptions by Christians. Members of the committees who decide about the adoptions are sometimes very biased against Christians. Therefore, although the Juvenile Justice Act seemed to promise an improvement for Christians, in reality it has so far brought no change for the better.
- **Christian children have been pressured into attending anti-Christian teaching (Block 2.8 / Score 4 points):** Christian children are forced to participate in many Hindu elements in the classroom, even in Christian schools. Examples of this are Hindu mythology, Yoga lessons and Hindu literature. State-run schools go much further and demand that Christian children attend Hindu festivals and take part in Hindu worship.
- **Christian baptisms have been hindered (Block 2.4 / Score 3.25 points):** Due to the enormous pressure from Hindu radicals, baptisms in India have become a low-key affair. Baptism is regarded as the final sign that one has left Hinduism to become a Christian. This also affects pastors; there is perhaps nothing as worrying for a pastor as a convert's baptism service because of the possible consequences. Even traditional churches fear the reaction of government officials and police at baptismal services. As a result, open air baptisms are now regarded as being too risky.
- **Christian children have been harassed or discriminated against (Block 2.9 / Score 3.25 points):** Christian children are increasingly discriminated against and (physically) harassed in their communities. This is due to a growing influence of Hindu radicalism who believe that Christians do not belong there. Children of converts are especially targeted, but children of other Christians are also affected.

Community sphere:

- **Christians have been monitored by their local communities or by private groups (Block 3.2 / Score 4 points):** Over the past five years monitoring Christians and their activities has increased. This is being implemented by the community authorities and members, but also by a long list of Hindu radical organizations (Bajrang Dal, Hindu Yuva Vahini, Shiv Sena, Vishwa Hindu Parishad, etc.) The goal is to stop any form of evangelism.
- **Christians have been harassed, threatened or obstructed in their daily lives (Block 3.1 / Score 3.75 points):** Over the past five years the number of incidents at the community level of harassment, threats and obstructions has increased to unprecedented levels. Social hostility to Christians has become a severe problem in India.
- **Christians have been hindered in sharing community resources (Block 3.4 / Score 3.5 points):** Many incidents of social discrimination have been reported. These are incidents where the access of Christians to drinking water and other community resources including land for cattle etc. has been cut off. They are barred from social life of the village community and are sometimes forced to flee their homes.

- **Christians have been pressured by their community to renounce their faith (Block 3.7 / Score 3.5 points):** The community will exert pressure on the Christians in their midst to convert them (back) to Hinduism. There have been home-coming campaigns (Ghar Wapsi) organized by radical Hindus.

Christians in India have also been discriminated in public or private employment. They have also frequently been interrogated by Hindu radicals and local police.

National sphere:

- **The Constitution (or comparable national or state law) limits freedom of religion as formulated in Article 18 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (Block 4.1 / Score 4 points):** Anti-conversion laws exist and are in force in seven states (listed in a previous section above) and in two further states legislation has been passed but not yet implemented. In Tamil Nadu the law was passed but later repealed. These laws regulate and limit religious freedom. The Article 25 of the Indian Constitution that gives religious freedom itself is subject to public order which has not been defined. The sub-clause to Article 25 gives states permission to formulate law to restrict the freedom of religion.
- **Media reporting has been incorrect or biased against Christians (Block 4.10 / Score 4 points):** The media in India, especially those publishing in Indian dialects, are generally very biased against Christians and are positively hostile in rural areas, where hate-speech and propaganda from Hindu extremists is given plenty of space.
- **Christians have been subject to smear campaigns (Block 4.11 / Score 4 points):** Hindu radicals have been targeting Muslims and Christians since the 1990s. An example of this are remarks made by a radical Hindu leader in December 2014 hoping to [eradicate Islam and Christianity](#) from India by 2021. It would mean getting rid of about 250 million people from India. This is an extreme view and totally unrealistic, but it is a fact that most Hindu leaders are prone to making sweeping statements against Muslims and Christians. Further examples of hate-speech can regularly be found in commentaries by radical Hindu leaders such as Yogi Adityanath, Mohan Bhagwat, Praveen Togadia, Vinay Katiyar, Sadhvi Prachi, Sakshi Maharaj, Indresh Kumar, Suresh Chahvan; some central government leaders like Rajnath Singh (Home Minister of India), Giriraj Singh, Mukhtar Abbas Naqui (Minister of Minority Affairs) are also openly involved. They are continuously blaming Christians for luring Hindus to Christianity.
- **Those who caused harm to Christians have deliberately been left unpunished (Block 4.14 / Score 4 points):** Over the past five years the level of impunity in India has risen dramatically. The central government under Prime Minister Narendra Modi constantly ignores the crimes of Hindu radicals against Christians. Hindu radicals (especially those in the countryside) raid Christian meetings, beat and mishandle Christians and then take them to the police station. The perpetrators are mostly set free (on bail) or are exonerated of their crimes, while the victims languish in jail and later face the harassment of court cases that can go on for years.

Christians in India have also experienced hindrances in travelling. Christian civil society organizations or political parties have been hindered. Christians have been accused of blasphemy (India has the similar blasphemy laws to Pakistan). Christians are often deprived of fair treatment in court. International monitoring is blocked by the Indian authorities.

Church sphere:

- **Activities of churches have been monitored, hindered, disturbed or obstructed (Block 5.1 / Score 4 points):** The state is constantly monitoring Christian activities and has imposed many restrictions (e.g. concerning foreign funding, invitations for foreign missionaries, difficulties with registration, anti-conversion laws, blasphemy laws etc.). Hindu radicals have stepped up their activities against Christians over the past years - there have been many cases of Hindu mobs staging raids, of carrying out beatings and causing arrests, and of ordering Christians to leave their homes. Since Hindu radicals can mostly pursue such activities with impunity, the level of fear among many Christians has increased.
- **Christian preaching, teaching and/or published materials have been monitored (Block 5.8 / Score 4 points):** Hindu extremists and local authorities are doing an excellent job of monitoring all Christian materials including digital material on the Internet. They will also constantly monitor evangelists and Christian workers.
- **Churches have been hindered in their interaction with the global church (Block 5.19 / Score 4 points):** The central government in New Delhi has imposed very strict regulations to hinder foreign missionaries effectively from entering India: they need a special type of visa, which is almost impossible to get. Foreigners visiting the country, even for tourism, are severely restricted and have to sign a statement saying that they will not carry out preaching or conversion activities. Many Christian foreigners living in India with a work visa have been deported - the number could be over 100 - and many foreigners of Indian-origin have been deported because they were part of churches or Christian groups in India.
- **It has been risky for Christians to speak out against instigators of persecution (Block 5.20 / Score 4 points):** Over the past five years, the risks involved in speaking out against those who have attacked Christians have risen dramatically. Hindu radicals have been emboldened by the inaction of the central government and feel they can act with impunity. Thus there have been increased levels of death threats on social media, of leaking personal information and other forms of attack on families. Also, if Christians do speak out against Hindu radicals or against the biased judiciary, this simply gives the Hindu militants all the more reason to step up their attacks.

Christians in India have also experienced problems in establishing or running schools and charitable organizations.

Violence

The following table is based on reported cases. Since many incidents go unreported, the numbers below must be understood as being minimum figures.

India	Reporting period	Christians killed	Christians attacked	Christians arrested	Churches attacked	Christian-owned houses and shops attacked
WWL 2020	01 Nov 2018 - 31 Oct 2019	9	1497	302	34	54
WWL 2019	01 Nov 2017 - 31 Oct 2018	10	12512	207	98	26
WWL 2018	01 Nov 2016 - 31 Oct 2017	8	23812	635	34	24

Christians killed refers to the number of Christians killed for faith-related reasons (including state-sanctioned executions). Christians attacked refers to the number of Christians abducted, raped or otherwise sexually harassed, forced into marriage to non-Christians or otherwise physically or mentally abused (including beatings and death-threats) for faith-related reasons. Christians arrested refers to the number of Christians detained without trial or sentenced to jail, labor camp, sent to psychiatric hospital as punishment or similar things for faith-related reasons. Churches attacked refers to the number of churches or Christian buildings (schools, hospitals, cemeteries, etc.) attacked, damaged, bombed, looted, destroyed, burned down, closed or confiscated for faith-related reasons. Christian-owned houses and shops attacked refers to the number of houses of Christians or other property (including shops and businesses of Christians) attacked, damaged, bombed, looted, destroyed, burned down, closed or confiscated for faith-related reasons.

EXPLANATION OF TABLE

- **Christians killed:** According to data from Indian research-partners, 9 Christians were killed in India. Most were killed by Naxalites (4), but radical Hindus, family members and villagers were also responsible for murders. Most Christians were killed in Chhattisgarh, Jharkhand and Odisha, the others in Assam and Bihar.
- **Christians attacked:** Over 175 incidents were reported in which a total of almost 1,500 Christians were physically attacked. Radical Hindus, family members and villagers were the main culprits of these attacks. These attacks occurred all over India, but the states with the highest number of incidents were Odisha, Chhattisgarh, Bihar, Maharashtra, Assam and Uttar Pradesh. Other states with fewer incidents: Andhra Pradesh, Gujarat, Haryana, Karnataka, Madhya Pradesh, Manipur, Punjab, Rajasthan, Tamil Nadu, Telangana and West Bengal.
- **Christians arrested:** Over 94 incidents were reported in which just over 300 Christians were arrested. These arrests occurred all over India, but the states with the highest number of incidents were Uttar Pradesh, Jharkhand, Bihar and Haryana. Other states with fewer incidents: Chhattisgarh, Delhi, Goa, Gujarat, Himachal Pradesh, Karnataka, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Odisha, Punjab, Rajasthan, Telangana, Uttarakhand and West Bengal. Of the seven Christians who were sentenced to life imprisonment in Odisha in 2013, two were released during the WWL 2020 reporting period.

- **Churches attacked:** There were reports of 34 churches, schools, buildings or other church properties being attacked and damaged. These incidents occurred all over India, but the states with the highest number of incidents were: Tamil Nadu, Telangana, Odisha, Bihar and Maharashtra. Other states with fewer incidents: Andhra Pradesh, Assam, Chhattisgarh, Daman and Diu, Gujarat, Punjab, Uttar Pradesh and West Bengal.
- **Christian homes/shops attacked:** 54 incidents were reported in which one or more homes, shops or properties of Christians were attacked. These incidents occurred all over India, but the states with the highest number of incidents were: Odisha, Assam, Gujarat, Chhattisgarh and Maharashtra. Other states with fewer incidents: Andhra Pradesh, Bihar, Haryana, Himachal Pradesh, Manipur, Punjab, Rajasthan, Tamil Nadu, Tripura and Uttar Pradesh.

Persecution in India is extremely violent. The number of reported incidents is very high, but it should be noted that this is just the tip of the iceberg – many incidents are not reported in the media or recorded by researchers.

5 Year trends

The following three charts illustrate how the situation for Christians in India has deteriorated markedly over the last five reporting periods.

Chart 1: The chart below shows that the rise in the average pressure on Christians may now be levelling off above the very high 13.2 mark. The WWL 2020 level of 13.6 is just under the threshold to the category "extreme" These five WWL reporting periods cover the period in which government leadership under Narendra Modi became firmly established. (He first came to power as prime minister in May 2014.)

WWL 2016 - WWL 2020 Persecution Pattern history: India	Average pressure over 5 Spheres of life
2020	13.6
2019	13.5
2018	13.2
2017	11.9
2016	10.9

Chart 2: In all *spheres of life*, the score for pressure has gone up - there are no exceptions. On the one hand this is caused by the increasing pressure on Christians resulting from the higher number of incidents, but on the other hand this is also the effect of more and more parts of India coming under the rule of the radical Hindu party, BJP. The oppression of Christians goes much deeper than simply the suffering caused by violent incidents. Christians have experienced (and are continuing to experience) restrictions in their private lives, pressure from family, friends and the community, but also at the national level.

WWL 2016 - WWL 2020 Persecution Pattern for India (Spheres of life)

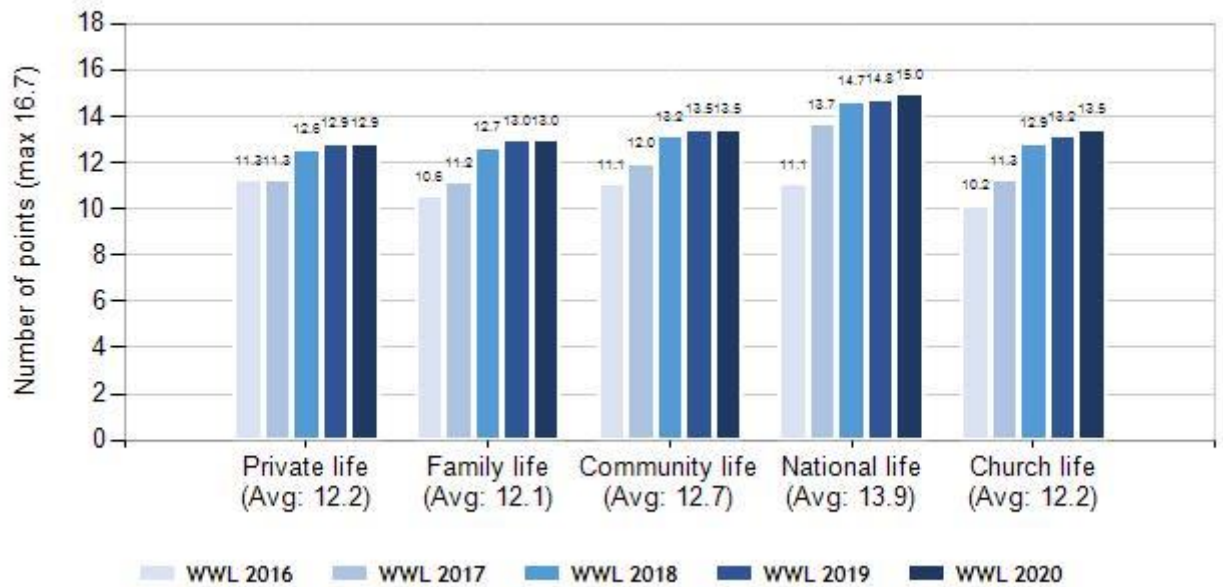
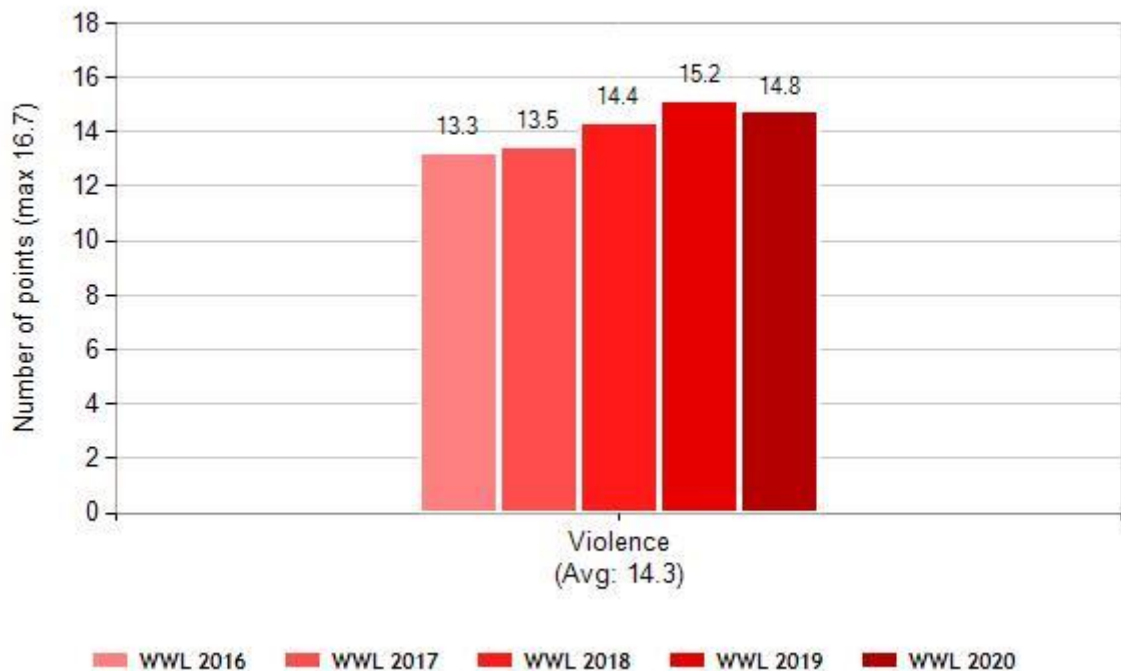


Chart 3: The rise in the level of violence over the last years peaked in WWL 2019. In WWL 2020 it went down to a lower - but still extreme - level of 14.8 points.

WWL 2016 - WWL 2020 Persecution Pattern for India (Violence)



Gender profile of persecution

Female Pressure points:

- *Abduction*
- *Denied access to social community/networks*
- *Denied communal resources*
- *Denied food or water*
- *Discrimination/harassment via education*
- *False charges*
- *Forced divorce*
- *Forced marriage*
- *Forced out of home/expulsion*
- *Forced to flee town/country*
- *Incarceration by family/house arrest*
- *Imprisonment by government*
- *Trafficking*
- *Violence - death*
- *Violence - physical*
- *Violence - psychological*
- *Violence - sexual*
- *Violence - verbal.*

India is a religiously diverse and democratic society whose national Constitution provides legal equality for all citizens irrespective of their religion, sex, race or caste, and prohibits religion-based discrimination. However, the reality is far different; other simultaneously existing laws uphold ancient traditions, which are by nature patriarchal and exploitative of weaker classes of society. Women and girls are considered meek and emotional subjects, so persecution of Christian women and girls is often targeted at their body through molestation, rape and other forms of sexual harassment. In many regions, a woman's sexuality is controlled by men (members of her family) and any act of harm towards it can result in embarrassment for the family. This is mental torture for women and girls, as her sexual purity connotes pride and prestige of the woman and her family. This is the context in which World Vision India conducted a survey of 45,844 children between the ages of 12 and 18 across 26 states and found that one in every two children was a victim of sexual abuse. 99% of overall child sexual abuse cases were not reported.

For those in Christian communities, young Christian women in tribal areas may be subjected to sexual predation of various forms, with targeted trafficking reported. Physical attacks on Christian women have included acid attacks and attempted murder.

First generation Christian women risk incarceration by their family and local community, forced marriage, forced divorce and, with the legalization of polygamy, being abandoned or expelled from their home/village.

Furthermore, many incidents of social discrimination have been reported, including denial of the access of Christians to drinking water and other community resources including land for cattle.

Women and girls are often physically abused, abandoned and treated no better than animals. The females of the lower strata have always been exploited by the high caste Hindu who mostly adhere to RSS's ideology today. Many women from this lower caste community have turned to Christianity; this makes them a double target - for being Dalit and now Christian. It is said that "India's patriarchal society is possibly a worse enemy of women than religious bigotry. Together, the two make a fatal cocktail."

Male Pressure points:

- ***Denied access to social community/networks***
- ***Denied communal resources***
- ***Denied food/water***
- ***Denied inheritance and property***
- ***Discrimination/harassment via education***
- ***Economic harassment via work/job/business***
- ***Economic harassment via fines***
- ***False charges***
- ***Forced to flee town/country***
- ***Forced out of home/expulsion***
- ***Imprisonment by government***
- ***Military/militia conscription/service against conscience***
- ***Travel bans/restriction of movement***
- ***Violence – death***
- ***Violence - Physical***
- ***Violence - psychological***
- ***Violence - verbal.***

Despite legal protection, Christian men and leaders found talking about Christianity or choosing to adhere to the Christian faith are subjected to violence in many forms. The forms of persecution faced by men and boys include verbal, mental and physical abuse. Men and boys are seen as physically strong, and so the persecution of Christian men targets their physical strength as well as their position as decision-maker in the family and head of the household (if older). Persecution includes various forms of beating and emotional torture such as being forced to watch torture carried out on family members.

Another prevalent and effective form of persecution in India is social exclusion, including social boycott, family boycott, opposition from whole village against one person or few people, expulsion from village, exclusion from taking seats in councils/access to government schemes, and exclusion from government projects and benefits. Men are the main breadwinners and, because of their Christian faith, some will face expulsion from their job, transfer to faraway places, be given increasing workloads and/or face client boycotts. Economic deprivation also takes the form of denial of legal inheritance.

False charges are often used as a form of persecution, such as accusations of attempting to convert Hindus, molestation or rape of women, or denigrating Hindu gods and goddesses. These charges are usually brought against pastors and preachers, which is currently a highly risky vocation. Imprisonment of Christians carries a stigma which falls on their family as well. Pastors' families too are targeted, because Hindu radicals will focus their attacks on church leaders in order to set an example.

Persecution of other religious minorities

Hindu radicals have called both Islam and Christianity foreign religions which should eventually be removed from the country. Thus the Muslim minority experiences similar treatment as Christians do at the hands of militant Hindus. Buddhists and Sikhs find they are more acceptable to Hindu radicals, since their religions originate from the territory of India.

Examples of persecution:

- On 7 April 2019, Muslim Shaukat Ali was made to kneel in mud and eat pork. The Hindu group was furious because the man had been selling cow meat, which is the sacred animal of the Hindu religion. This sparked outrage among the nationalists who repaid him with the religious concept of "just punishment", i.e. they forced him to eat the animal considered impure by Islam. (Source: [AsiaNews](#), 9 April 2019)
- On 15 May 2019, Hindu radicals killed Muslim Nayeem Shah in the Indian state of Jammu & Kashmir. Shah was ferrying cattle in his vehicle, when he was intercepted by unidentified persons late Tuesday night. He was allegedly shot dead by a village defence committee (VDC). (Source: [Times of India](#), 17 May 2019)
- On 11 July 2019, a group of madrasa students playing cricket in the Government Inter College (GIC) ground in Uttar Pradesh were attacked by a group of Hindus, forced to chant Jai Shri Ram and were beaten with cricket bats. (Source: [Hindustan Times](#), 12 July 2019)

Future outlook for the church

The outlook for Christians as viewed through the lens of:

- **Religious nationalism:** Hindu radicals are constantly engaged in violence against Muslims and Christians. In the past, large-scale pogroms cost many Muslims and Christians their lives, and militant Hindus will not shy away from planning more such attacks. So far, Hindu radicals have been able to carry out their atrocities with impunity, and as Modi won the May 2019 elections, it may be expected that the Hindus will feel encouraged to even step up their violence.
- **Clan and ethnic antagonism:** Tribal Hindus will in all likelihood continue to oppose any Christian presence in their midst. With the reelection of the BJP government, tribal Hindus may even increase levels of violence against Christians.
- **Dictatorial paranoia:** India is often seen as the largest democracy on earth. But the current government is a master in manipulating information to their advantage and in outmaneuvering their opponents. With the BJP at the helm after the May 2019 electoral victory, it may be expected that militant Hindus will feel encouraged to step up their violence. The central government is likely to continue to look the other way and reports of attacks against Muslims and Christians are likely to remain uninvestigated.

External Links - WWL 2020: Persecution Dynamics

- Drivers of persecution: removed -
<https://www.dailymail.co.uk/indiahome/indianews/article-2879597/We-free-India-Muslims-Christians-2021-DJS-leader-vows-continue-ghar-wapsi-plans-restore-Hindu-glory.html>
- Pressure in the 5 spheres of life : eradicate Islam and Christianity -
<https://www.dailymail.co.uk/indiahome/indianews/article-2879597/We-free-India-Muslims-Christians-2021-DJS-leader-vows-continue-ghar-wapsi-plans-restore-Hindu-glory.html>
- Gender profile of persecution: survey of 45,844 children -
<https://www.hindustantimes.com/india-news/one-in-every-two-children-victim-of-sexual-abuse-says-survey/story-spc4MsZTJsmjyrITZJep7L.html%20>
- Persecution of other religious minorities: AsiaNews - <http://www.asianews.it/news-en/Assam,-a-Muslim-forced-to-eat-pork-by-cow-protectors-46723.html>
- Persecution of other religious minorities: Times of India -
<https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/india/man-ferrying-cows-shot-dead-in-bhaderwah-in-jk/articleshow/69364027.cms>
- Persecution of other religious minorities: Hindustan Times -
<https://www.hindustantimes.com/india-news/muslim-boys-beaten-up-forced-to-chant-jai-shri-ram-in-unnao/story-Cee4IEdxO1cnsLUuiMO1PN.html>

Additional reports and articles

WWR in-depth reports

A selection of in-depth reports is available at: <http://opendoorsanalytical.org/reports/> (password: freedom).

At the time of publication there were no items specifically on India.

World Watch Monitor news articles

Articles are available at: <https://www.worldwatchmonitor.org/countries/india>

Recent country developments

Up-to-date articles are available at: <http://opendoorsanalytical.org/?s=India> (password: freedom).