

# FINAL WWL 2019 COUNTRY DOSSIER

## NEPAL

### LEVEL 3/EMBARGO

(Reporting period: 1 November 2017 – 31 October 2018)

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## Introduction

### Copyright Notice

### Introduction

World Watch List Nepal	Points	WWL Rank
WWL 2019	64	32
WWL 2018	64	25
WWL 2017	-	-
WWL 2016	-	-
WWL 2015	-	-

*Scores and ranks are shown above whenever the country was among the fifty highest scoring countries (Top 50) in the WWL 2015-2019 reporting periods.*

**Please note:** 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”.

## WWL 2019: Keys to understanding Nepal

### Link for general background information

BBC country profile: <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-south-asia-12511455>

### Recent country history

In 1994 a short-lived Communist government ruled. 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. 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, leaving an estimated 9,200 people killed and causing a damage of around ten billion USD, which was 50% of the country's annual GDP. What has been less reported, though, is the fact that the government promised to fund the reconstruction of temples destroyed, but not of church buildings which were destroyed as well. Until WWL 2018, Nepal had been hovering at the threshold of the World Watch List for several years.

### The religious landscape

According to World Christian Database (WCD 2018) Nepal has a population of 29,624,000. The biggest religion in the country is Hinduism, with 66.5% of the population. Hinduism has dominated Nepal for centuries. It started to develop between 500 and 300 BC and was the state religion until the country became a secular republic in May 2008.

Stimulated by the success of their counterparts in neighboring India, Hindu radicals have campaigned for the return of Hinduism as state religion. As in India, their activities have been violent. In Nepal, however, they have not succeeded in achieving their goals (so far).

[Christianity in Nepal](#) has been on the rise since the government adopted secular democracy in 2008. Christian missionaries were previously banned from entering the country before the absolute monarchy came to an end in 2008, but it is now home to more than 8,000 Christian churches and over a million converts. Minority groups like the Dalits and the Kirats have particularly been drawn to

Christianity. According to the Federation of National Christians in Nepal, Dalits make up 60% of all Christians in the country.

## The political landscape

Ever since 2008 when Nepal changed from monarchy to a federal republic (dividing the country into provinces/states), there has been political bickering between various 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.

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

Nepal is governed according to the Constitution of Nepal, which came into effect on 20 September 2015. It defines Nepal as having multi-ethnic, multi-lingual, multi-religious, multi-cultural characteristics with common aspirations of people living in diverse geographical regions, and being committed to and united by a bond of allegiance to national independence, territorial integrity, national interest and prosperity of Nepal. However, despite Nepal being deemed secular, the new constitution curbs the freedom to proselytize and convert, regarding it as a punishable offence.

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

## The socio-economic landscape

Economic development in Nepal has been complicated by the constant change in political scenarios which has ranged from absolute monarchy to being ruled by Communists. An isolated, agrarian society until the mid-20th century, Nepal entered the modern era in 1951 without schools, hospitals, roads, telecommunications, electric power, industry or civil services. The country has, however, made progress toward sustainable economic growth since the 1950s with great improvement in living standards. The biggest challenges faced by the country in achieving higher economic development are the frequent changes in political leadership as well as corruption. Foreign aid to Nepal accounts for more than half of the development budget.

Agriculture remains Nepal's principal economic activity, employing about 65% of the population and providing 31.7% of GDP. Only about 20% of the total area is cultivable. Nepal's GDP is heavily dependent on remittances (29.1%) of foreign workers.

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.

## Concluding remarks

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 gradually improving, the enormous poverty is disappearing little by little. And Christianity is growing rapidly. Radical Hindus are worried about this, because most converts to Christianity come from Hindu background.

When compared with its neighbor India, the number of reported violent incidents against Christians in Nepal is relatively low, but it is increasing. In the WWL 2019 reporting period there have been threats, arrests, physical harassment, churches and homes of Christians damaged and foreign Christians expelled.

## External Links - WWL 2019: Keys to understanding Nepal

- Recent country history: earthquakes  
<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nepal>
- The religious landscape: Christianity in Nepal  
<http://www.persecution.org/2016/12/06/christianity-continuing-to-grow-in-nepal-despite-persecution/>
- The political landscape: The elections  
[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/2017\\_Nepalese\\_legislative\\_election](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/2017_Nepalese_legislative_election)

## WWL 2019: Church History and Facts

### How many Christians?

Pop 2018	Christians	Chr%
29,624,000	1,225,000	4.1

Source: Johnson T M and Zurlo G A (eds.), *World Christian Database* (Leiden/Boston: Brill, accessed January 2018)

### How did Christians get there?

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

In the early 1950s missionaries were allowed to engage in development work, education and health care. During the 1970s and 1980s the churches started growing in Nepal. With this growth persecution grew too and in the 1980s hundreds of Nepalese Christian leaders were jailed; 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. At the time of writing (July 2017) a bill proposing severe punishment for this is to be submitted to parliament in the near future.

While there were virtually [no Christians](#) in the country in 1951, the census registered 458 after 10 years and 102,000 after forty years. According to the 2011 census, that number already hit 375,000 but church leaders have always alleged that the number of Christians in the country was greatly underestimated in the census which explains the vast difference to the WCD estimate. What is clear is that the number of Christians in Nepal continues to grow at a breath-taking pace.

## What church networks exist today?

Church networks: Nepal	Christians	%
Orthodox	5,100	0.4
Catholic	9,600	0.8
Protestant	304,000	24.8
Independent	905,000	73.9
Unaffiliated	1,100	0.1
Doubly-affiliated Christians	-4	0.0
<b>Total</b>	<b>1,224,796</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	569,000	46.4
Renewalist movement	1,025,000	83.7

*Please note: 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.*

*Source: Johnson T M and Zurlo G A (eds.), World Christian Database (Leiden/Boston: Brill, accessed January 2018)*

**The communities of expatriate Christians** are very small – mostly foreigners who reside in Nepal for their work. These communities are less than 1% of Nepal's Christians. These communities have been less affected by Hindu nationalism in the past, but they do experience limitations, for example in outreach.

**The historical Christian communities** are also small: Orthodox and Catholic Christians only form an estimated 1.2% of Nepal's Christians. These communities have also been less affected by Hindu nationalism, mainly because they are hardly involved in evangelizing. However, their ministries (also in educational institutions) are under tight government surveillance.

**The numbers of converts to Christianity** are growing fast. Most converts have a Hindu background but there are also converts from Buddhism and traditional religions like Animism. It is impossible to tell them apart from the non-traditional Christian communities which they nearly always join. They face huge pressure from their communities, radical Hinduist groups, local religious leaders and families.

**The non-traditional Christian communities** are by far the biggest group in Nepal. Most of these Christians have migrated from the north-eastern part of India who are Nepali speaking in origin. They experience most of the pressure against Christians because they are growing fast due to outreach activities and many Hindus feel threatened by this development.

## Religious context

Religious Context: Nepal	Numbers	%
Christians	1,225,000	4.1
Muslim	1,246,000	4.2
Hindu	19,689,000	66.5
Buddhist	3,461,000	11.7
Ethnoreligionist	3,851,000	13.0
Jewish	0	0.0
Bahai	4,600	0.0
Atheist	17,800	0.1
Agnostic	87,000	0.3
Other	42,800	0.1

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

Source: Johnson T M and Zurlo G A (eds.), *World Christian Database* (Leiden/Boston: Brill, accessed January 2018)

According to the [2011 census](#), 16.6% of the Nepalese population was Chhetri, 12.2% Bahun, 8.1% Newar, 6.5% Tharu, 5.8% Magar, 5.0% Tamang, 4.7% Khas-Kami, 4.4% Muslim, 4.0% Yadav, and 22.7% other.

## Notes on the current situation

- Hindu nationalists oppose the idea of secularism, which in the South Asian context simply means pluralism and equal treatment of all religions. However, early in September 2015 Nepal's parliament voted to maintain its identity as a [secular nation](#) in a new constitution after years of contentious debate. Hindu radicals bombed three churches in reaction.
- Despite the continuing unrest in the country (caused mainly by Hindu radicals), the number of reported violent incidents in Nepal is relatively low (compared to India).
- Banned from the Himalayan political arena until 10 years ago, [Christians are now a growing political force](#) with Christians being chosen as representatives of some local units in the first phase of local elections held on 14 May 2017.

## External Links - WWL 2019: Church History and Facts

- How did Christians get there?: no Christians  
<http://www.persecution.org/2016/05/17/christian-community-in-nepal-growing-rapidly-despite-religious-tensions/>
- Religious context: 2011 census  
[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Demographics\\_of\\_Nepal](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Demographics_of_Nepal)
- Notes on the current situation: secular nation  
<http://www.ucanews.com/news/lawmakers-vote-for-secularism-in-nepal/74264>
- Notes on the current situation: Christians are now a growing political force  
<http://www.asianews.it/news-en/Christians-in-Nepal-enter-politics.-First-Christian-woman-elected-40824.html>

## WWL 2019: Short & Simple Persecution Profile

### Introduction

Reporting period: 1 November 2017 - 31 October 2018

With a score of 64 points, Nepal reached rank 32 in WWL 2019.

### What type of persecution dominates?

- **Religious nationalism:** Radical Hindu groups seek a return to a Hindu nation. Since 2015 a new constitution has been adopted, limiting freedom of religion. On 8 August 2017 the Nepalese parliament also passed anti-conversion legislation.
- **Ethnic antagonism:** Attempts are made to force ethnic group norms and values (e.g. family honor) upon Christians.

### Who is driving persecution?

Christians experience persecution from radical Hindus in various ways: Local and national authorities impose legal and other restrictions; local Hindu priests and Hindu radical movements carry out physical attacks against Christians; the local community often forms a hostile environment at the village level.

### What it results in

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

### Violence

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

Nepal	Reporting period	Christians killed	Christians attacked	Christians arrested	Churches attacked	Christian-owned houses and shops attacked
WWL 2019	01 Nov 2017 - 31 Oct 2018	0	74	25	7	3
WWL 2018	01 Nov 2016 - 31 Oct 2017	0	52	7	4	1

*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.*

## Examples of specific persecution in the reporting period

- On 5 May 2018, St Joseph's Catholic Church in Kohalpur, Banke District in Nepal was set on fire at night by unidentified arsonists. (Source: [Christian Solidarity Worldwide](#))
- On 7 June 2018, Pastor Govinda Prasad Dhakal, 63, was convicted for allegedly "frequently raping a minor" he and his wife had adopted in 2016. He was sentenced to 10 years imprisonment despite the fact that the complainant, the now-12-year-old girl's mother, confessed before the court that she had fabricated the rape story in a fit of anger over the pastor's unwillingness to pay the girl's school fees after he returned the child to her custody. The authorities had arrested Pastor Dhakal on 12 December 2017, based on the mother's initial statement. (Sources: OD Research, [Morning Start News](#))
- On 19 July 2018, the Secretary of the Federation of National Christians in Nepal (FNCN) and Pastor Sagar Baiju were attacked by an unidentified group of 7 people. They were physically beaten and the group threatened to burn down Pastor Baiju's church and also murder him. (Sources: OD Research, [Morning Star News](#))

## External Links - WWL 2019: Short & Simple Persecution Profile

- Examples of specific persecution in the reporting period: Christian Solidarity Worldwide  
<http://www.csw.org.uk/2018/05/09/press/3957/article.htm>
- Examples of specific persecution in the reporting period: Morning Start News  
<https://morningstarnews.org/2018/08/court-in-nepal-sentences-pastor-to-10-years-in-prison-on-rape-conviction/>
- Examples of specific persecution in the reporting period: Morning Star News  
<https://morningstarnews.org/2018/07/assault-on-christian-leader-in-nepal-reflects-growing-threat/>

## WWL 2019: Persecution Dynamics

### Introduction

Reporting period: 1 November 2017 - 31 October 2018

### Position on World Watch List (WWL)

With a score of 64 points, Nepal reached rank 32 in WWL 2019. This score is the same as in WWL 2018 when it reached rank 25. Persecution stems mainly from Hindu radicals, with ethnic tensions adding to the pressure in the background. There was also an increase in the number of violent incidents in the WWL 2019 reporting period.

### Persecution engines

Persecution engines: Nepal	Abbreviation	Level of influence
Islamic oppression	IO	Not at all
Religious nationalism	RN	Strong
Ethnic antagonism	EA	Medium
Denominational protectionism	DPR	Not at all
Communist and post - Communist oppression	CPCO	Weak
Secular intolerance	SI	Weak
Dictatorial paranoia	DPA	Very weak
Organized corruption and crime	OCC	Not at all

*Please note: 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 (long version).*

#### Religious nationalism (Strong):

Most of the persecution of Christians in Nepal comes from Hindu radical groups who want to turn Nepal into a Hindu state again. These radical Hindu groups have close ties with Hindutva groups in neighboring India. Persecution used not to be driven by government, but since 2015 a new constitution has been adopted, limiting freedom of religion. On 8 August 2017 the Nepalese parliament also passed anti-conversion legislation which was signed into law by the president on [16 October 2017](#). Another sign of a deteriorating situation for Christians.

**Ethnic antagonism (Medium):** From time to time there are tensions between the various ethnic groups in Nepal. In most cases, this is linked to *Religious nationalism*.

## Drivers of persecution

Drivers of Persecution: Nepal	IO	RN	EA	DPR	CPCO	SI	DPA	OCC
	-	STRONG	MEDIUM	-	WEAK	WEAK	VERY WEAK	-
Government officials	-	Medium	-	-	Very weak	Very weak	Very weak	-
Ethnic group leaders	-	Medium	Medium	-	-	-	-	-
Non-Christian religious leaders	-	Strong	-	-	-	-	-	-
Religious leaders of other churches	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Violent religious groups	-	Strong	Medium	-	-	-	Weak	-
Ideological pressure groups	-	-	-	-	Weak	Very weak	Very weak	-
Citizens (people from the broader society), including mobs	-	Medium	-	-	-	-	-	-
One's own (extended) family	-	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 (long version).

### Drivers of Religious nationalism:

- This does not happen so much at the national level, but at the local (and maybe also at provincial) level *government officials* have connections to the Hindu community. They can impose restrictions on religious freedom, leading to the arrest and harassment of Christians.
- *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.
- *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*: There are several Hindu radical groups and parties that are influenced by the tactics of their colleagues in India. Their activities and influence is growing.
- *Normal citizens*: At the community level especially, Hindus will impose pressure on converts and other Christians.

- *Extended family*: converts to Christianity are often under huge pressure from their families to return to the faith of the ancestors.
- *Political parties*: There are at least two Hindu political parties in the national parliament in favor of turning Nepal into a Hindu nation again.

#### **Drivers of Ethnic antagonism:**

- *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.
- There are several *Hindu radical groups and parties* that are influenced by the tactics of their colleagues in India. In their eyes, Christianity is a religion that should not exist in Nepal.

## Context

[Christianity in Nepal](#) has been on the rise since the government adopted a secular democracy in 2008, a trend that has reportedly been driven by natural disasters and changes in society. Christian missionaries were previously banned from entering the country before absolute monarchy came to an end in 2008, but it is now home to more than 8,000 Christian churches and over a million converts. Minority groups like the Dalits and the Kirats have been drawn to Christianity since Nepal adopted a secular form of government in 2008. According to the Federation of National Christians in Nepal, Dalits make up 60 percent of all believers in the country.

The political map of Nepal has been quite helpful for the Christian minority in Nepal. First of all, fears that the new Constitution of Nepal would make the country officially Hindu again subsided when the Constitution was published in September 2015. Secondly, many political parties recognize the great potential of Christians (a rapidly growing community in Nepal) for their position. 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.

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. It can be compared to some extent to the class society that Europe had about seven centuries ago. Each human being is born into a specific caste and he can never escape from it. 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 – the appeal of Christianity for them stems from the sense of acceptance they get from their co-believers. Most Christians in Nepal belong to the lower social strata and have low incomes.

## 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. These churches have been less affected by Hindu nationalism in the past, but they will experience limitations, for example in outreach, when the country's new Constitution is implemented.

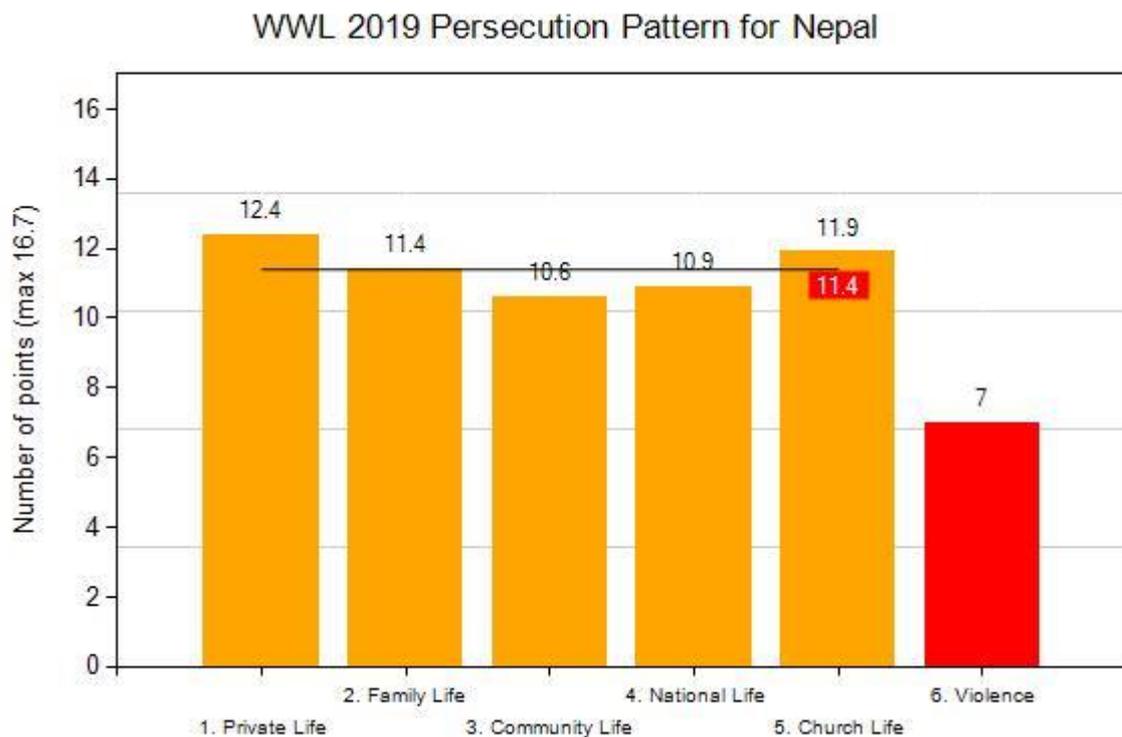
**Historical Christian communities:** By far the largest and most important of these is the Roman Catholic Church, plus a few Orthodox communities. They tend to be inward-looking and not involved in

evangelistic activities. As a result, these communities are hardly exposed to hostilities from radical Hindus.

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

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

## Pressure in the 5 spheres of life and violence



The WWL 2019 Persecution pattern for Nepal shows:

- The average pressure on Christians is at a very high level (11.4), decreasing from 11.8 in WWL 2018.
- All *spheres of life* show very high levels of pressure except *Community life* (which shows pressure at just under the threshold to the very high level). Pressure is highest in the *Private sphere of life*, reflecting the fact that the Hindu environment is imposing many restrictions on converts in particular.
- The score for violence is very high, rising from 4.6 in WWL 2018 to 7.0 in WWL 2019. The level of violence has risen, as could be seen in the reports of churches being attacked, of Christians being beaten, arrested and sentenced to prison. There were also Christians who had to flee their homes and villages because of threats.

**Private sphere:**

Converts always have to be very careful in the way they worship, especially if they are the only Christians in their family. Opposition from family and community makes it dangerous to keep Christian materials, especially in the remote areas. If converts are living with devout Hindu families, Bibles and other Christian materials have to be hidden carefully and can only be read with much caution. There is much opposition towards sharing the Christian faith with family and friends. Christianity is considered a foreign religion especially attractive to low caste people. Known converts are often closely monitored and there have been reports that youths, who had accepted Christian faith while studying in Kathmandu, were called back to their villages by their families.

**Family sphere:**

Organizing a baptism has become much more risky as those Christians attending will be accused of proselytism according to the new Constitution. Celebrating a Christian wedding faces the danger of being stopped; a wedding is frequently opposed by converts' families since it could strengthen the converts' new faith. Christian funerals are impossible as the churches are not given any burial grounds, so Christians are forced to either bury their deceased secretly or cremate them. Christian converts face opposition when trying to raise their children according to Christian beliefs. The hostility often arises from their own non-Christian spouse and also family members. Children of Christians, not just of converts, will be forced to learn non-Christian teachings and mocked by other children. Converts can be isolated from their families and reports from Western Nepal show that converts are sometimes forced to leave their family homes.

**Community sphere:**

Since 2017, Nepali society became more opposed to Christians. Christians are viewed with dislike, as a result of which they are threatened or obstructed in their daily lives. Especially in rural areas, converts face strong pressure from family, friends and neighbors to recant their Christian faith. This is often accompanied by an intensive social boycott which includes private and business life. Children of converts often have to face discrimination by teachers and fellow pupils in schools, especially if they deny taking part in the Pooja, an act of worshipping Hindu gods and goddesses.

**National sphere:**

The new Constitution reads in Part III on Fundamental Rights on the paragraph on Religion: "5. Religion: Every citizen, having regard to the current traditions, may practice and profess his own religion as handed down from the ancient times. Provided that no person shall be entitled to change his religion." There are still plans pending to introduce a space on the new national ID card for religious affiliation, but the government has had to take care of other priorities first. The media frequently portray the presence and continuing growth of Christianity as a result of bribery by foreigners. Christians are frequently the victims of smear campaigns and radical Hindu groups mislead society with false information and cause increasing mistrust. Perpetrators attacking Christians have frequently been left unpunished, whereas Christians falsely accused of crimes have not received a fair trial.

**Church sphere:**

There is no legal recognition of churches. Church property is registered in the name of private persons only. There is no provision for registering churches. According to reports by locals from different sources, after the earthquake in April 2015 the government announced that it would help rebuild temples, mosques and Buddhist shrines, but did not include churches, which illustrates the bias against Christianity. Gatherings and church meetings were also disrupted, for example in the Dhading district.

Church activities are and will be increasingly monitored in order to see if churches are converting people and whether therefore the authorities and/or radical groups can act against them. The report by a Canadian satire magazine stating that the Gideons International would ship Bibles to Nepal instead of emergency aid in 2015 was taken seriously by radical Hindu groups in Nepal and in India alike, indicating that it is becoming increasingly risky to distribute Bibles and other Christian materials.

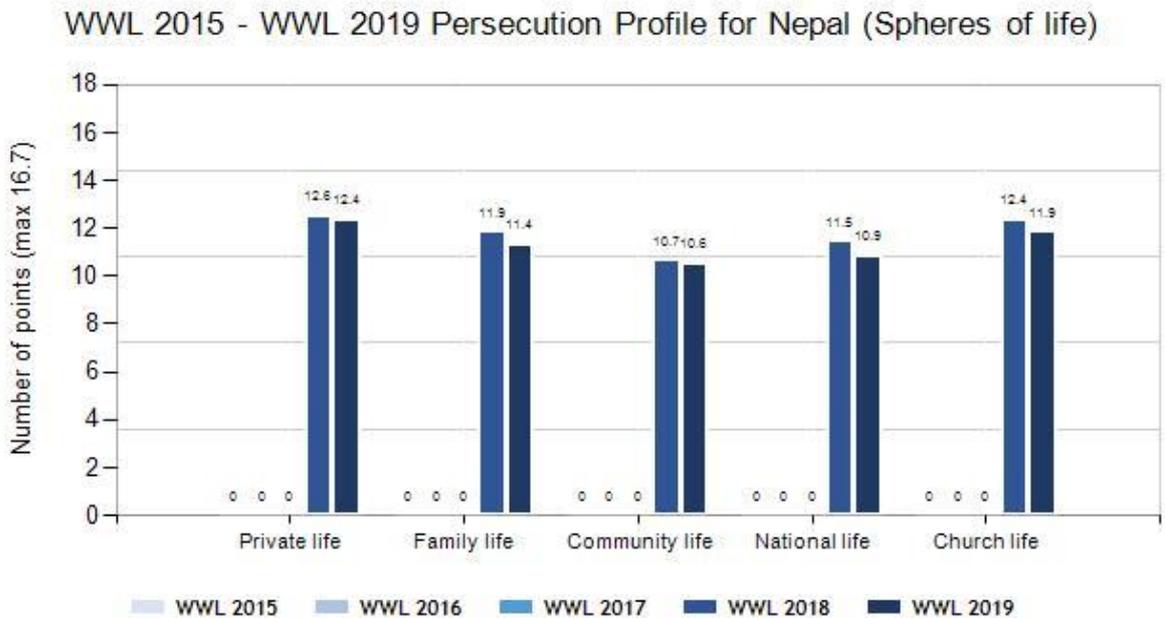
**Violence:**

Persecution in Nepal is increasing as Hindu radicals are stepping up their pressure against other religions. Violence is much lower than in India, but it has clearly increased since the WWL 2017 reporting period. In the WWL 2019 reporting period it was reported, for instance, that 74 Christians were seriously beaten and 7 churches were damaged by attacks. On 6 July 2018, a married Christian couple were officially deported from Nepal to their native countries of the Philippines and Indonesia.

For a summary of the statistics on violence and further examples see the Short and Simple Persecution Profile section above.

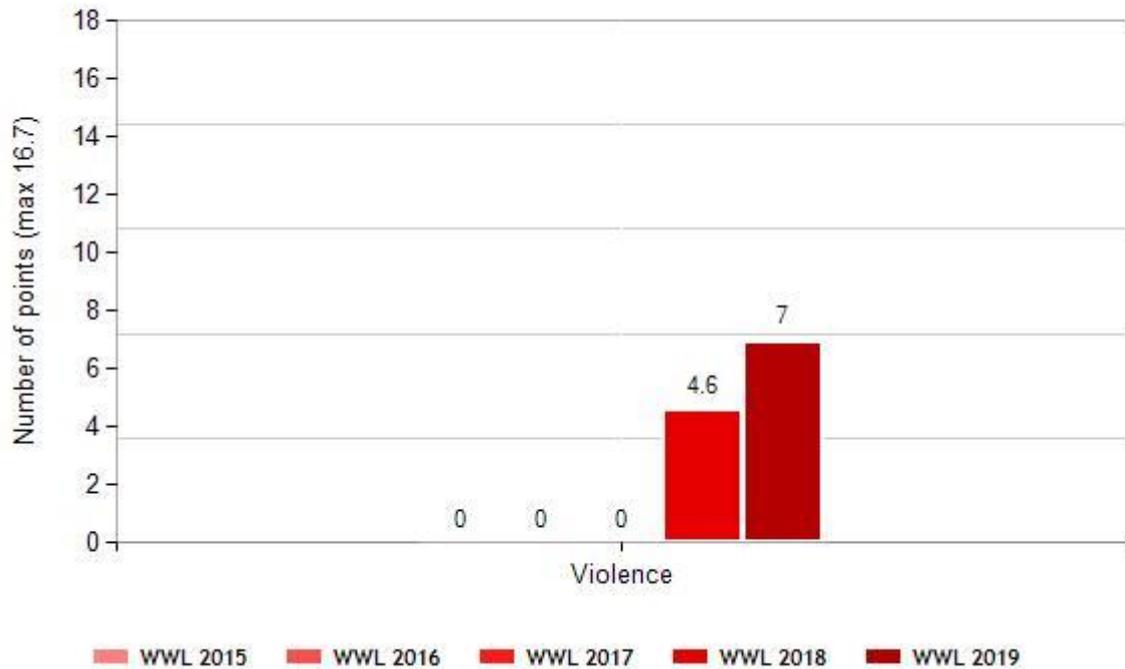
**5 Year trends**

Due to the fact that Nepal has been in the World Watch List only since WWL 2018, it is not possible to describe a five-year trend. The charts below show so far that pressure has gone down in all spheres of life since WWL 2018 but remain at high and very high levels. This decrease is also reflected in the average pressure which remains very high (chart 2). In contrast to the decrease in pressure, the score for violence has risen to a very high level (chart 3).



WWL 2015 - WWL 2019 Persecution Pattern history: Nepal	Average pressure over 5 Spheres of life
2019	11.4
2018	11.8
2017	0.0
2016	0.0
2015	0.0

### WWL 2015 - WWL 2019 Persecution Profile for Nepal (Violence)



### Gender specific persecution

**Female:**

Nepal is a patriarchal society where girls have less opportunities. Education and exposure to wider society is minimal as they are kept within the boundaries of the home and are expected to cope with a large amount of household duties. Those who become Christians do so mainly through witnessing healings and miracles in their own or closest family life. Christian women and girls are subjected to physical violence but initially they are usually emotionally pressurized by immediate family members (e.g. husband, in-laws, parents). The physical abuse starts gradually until finally they are regarded as social outcasts by family and community. This makes them vulnerable and victims of sexual oppression.

**Male:**

Most Christian men and boys are subjected to physical, mental and social forms of suffering as they are usually ostracized from family and society. They are also denied their ancestral property and even basic human rights such as citizenship by immediate family members and village level government units. Christian men mostly migrate to new cities or areas, live under a new identity and are economically deprived in the first phases of persecuted life.

In many cases, Christian men and boys are the breadwinner of the family. After being persecuted, the family often suffers through a reduced income as the men and boys are severely beaten and socially ostracized. Often the local police administration takes the male Christians away for intensive and lengthy interrogation. Thus, when men and boys suffer for their faith in this way, the whole family is in trouble economically and insecure socially.

## Persecution of other religious minorities

All religions except Hinduism are persecuted to some degree - e.g. Buddhists, Muslims, Bahai, Jehovah's Witnesses and Sikhs. All these groups have joined forces to promote freedom of religion in a movement named Dharmik Chautari. But there is also discrimination of low caste Hindus.

Examples:

- In May 2018 the Asian Human Rights Commission (AHRC) received information from the Terai Human Rights Defenders Alliance (THRDA) that 50 Dalit households had been barred from entering the local Shiva Temple located at Jhawani, Bara District, despite providing monetary donations and their labor for its construction. (Source: [AHRC](#))
- In October 2018 the Province 2 government introduced a bill to make the foreign funding of madrassas officially possible and visible. Some Hindu politicians see this as a contradiction of the Constitution and as a way of inviting Muslim radicalization with serious implications for national security. (Source: [Kathmandu Post](#))

## Future outlook

**The political outlook:** The level of political instability is expected to continue. The government of Prime Minister Khadga Prasad Oli that is currently ruling Nepal has been in power since 15 February 2018. This is the government that is responsible for the anti-conversion legislation.

**The outlook for Christians - through the lens of:**

- **Religious nationalism:** Pressure to turn back history and make Nepal a Hindu country again is growing. The current government has already implemented anti-conversion legislation. In the last two years Hindu radicals have stepped up their activities against non-Hindus - also with support from radical Hindu movements based in India. It is to be expected that radical Hindus will increase their activities in Nepal. The influence of this Persecution engine is therefore expected to grow.
- **Ethnic antagonism:** Ethnic tensions in Nepal (closely linked to Religious nationalism) are expected to continue to determine national politics.

**Conclusion:** Under the current circumstances, Hindu radicals have been able to continue and increase their attacks against non-Hindus with impunity. So far, the government of Nepal has done almost nothing to stop them. It is therefore very likely that Christians in Nepal will have to face growing oppression.

## External Links - WWL 2019: Persecution Dynamics

- Persecution engines: 16 October 2017  
<http://www.csw.org.uk/2017/10/20/press/3763/article.htm>
- Context: Christianity in Nepal  
<http://www.persecution.org/2016/12/06/christianity-continuing-to-grow-in-nepal-despite-persecution/>
- Persecution of other religious minorities: AHRC  
<http://www.humanrights.asia/news/urgent-appeals/AHRC-UAC-027-2018>

- Persecution of other religious minorities: Kathmandu Post  
<http://kathmandupost.ekantipur.com/news/2018-10-30/bill-floated-to-allow-foreign-funds-for-muslim-schools.html>

## Additional Reports and Articles

### WWR in-depth reports

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

### Open Doors article(s) from the region

A selection of articles is available at: <http://opendoorsanalytical.org/articles/> (password freedom).

### World Watch Monitor news articles

Use the country search function at: <https://www.worldwatchmonitor.org/>

### Recent country developments

Use the country search function at: <http://opendoorsanalytical.org/> (password: freedom).