

WORLD WATCH LIST 2026

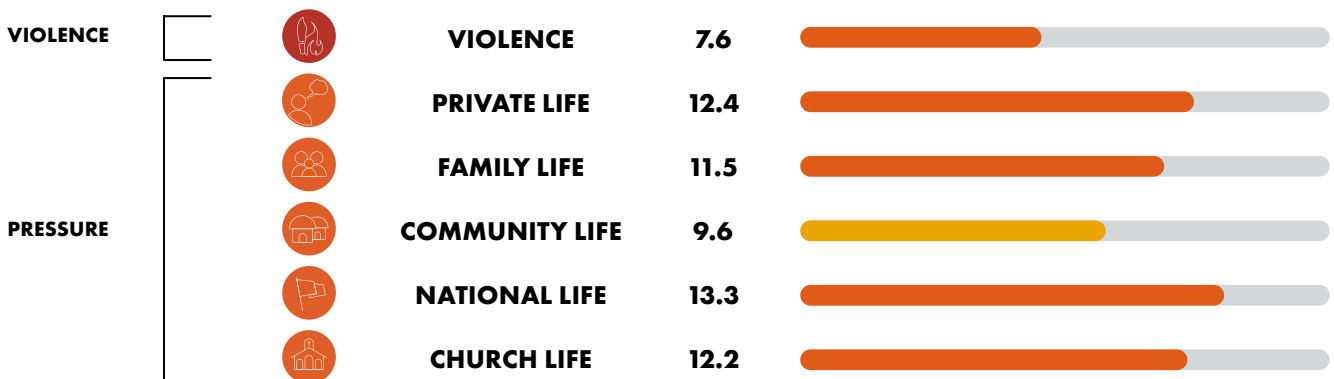
SITUATION OF RELIGIOUS FREEDOM FOR CHRISTIANS

NEPAL

WORLD WATCH LIST NO.
46



LEVELS OF VIOLENCE AND PRESSURE



Each of the six categories is scored out of a maximum of 16.7 points. The categories added together total 100 points (6 x 16.7 = 100).

Key findings

The church in Nepal is growing slowly due to anti-conversion legislation. In the WWL 2026 reporting period, the level of attacks by Hindutva extremists on Christians increased. Another major trend is the huge political instability in Nepal.

Quick facts

LEADER

Interim PM Sushila Karki

POPULATION

31,577,000

NUMBER OF CHRISTIANS

1,480,000¹

MAIN RELIGION

Hinduism

GOVERNMENT

Federal Parliamentary Republic



Context

Religious context	Number of adherents	% of adherents in country
Christians	1,480,000	4.7
Hindus	20,533,000	65.0
Ethnic religionists	4,242,000	13.4
Others	5,323,300	16.9
	Total	100%

Source²

Converts from Hinduism are put under the greatest pressure as they are viewed as deviating from the faith of their ancestors. Converts (and members of non-traditional church communities) experience pressure from family, friends, community and local authorities. Roman Catholic churches and churches where expatriates gather experience the least problems. From time to time Hindutva extremists take advantage of the ongoing political instability by attacking Christians, mostly with impunity. There have been reports of churches being attacked, of Christians being beaten, arrested and given prison sentences. There were also Christians who have had to flee their homes and villages because of threats. In addition, there are legal restrictions at the national level—for instance, the 2017 anti-conversion legislation. In September 2017, Nepal's parliament approved a new criminal code punishing all religious conversions as well as all activities of evangelization

and proselytizing. The law applies to both Nepali citizens and foreigners (missionaries included) and came into effect on August 2018. Since most Nepalis are Hindus, minorities feel the legislation is designed to discourage their faith, especially Christianity.

How the situation varies by region

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



¹Gina A. Zurlo, ed., World Christian Database, Leiden/Boston: Brill, accessed April 2025

² Other refers to all the rest to make up 100%: Gina A. Zurlo, ed., World Christian Database, Leiden/Boston: Brill, accessed April 2025

Main sources of persecution and discrimination

Most of the persecution of Christians in Nepal comes from Hindutva extremist groups who want to turn Nepal back into a Hindu state. These groups have close ties with Hindutva groups in neighboring India. Until recently, persecution was not primarily government-driven; however, since the adoption of the 2015 constitution, restrictions on freedom of religion have increased. The introduction of anti-conversion legislation in 2017 has further curtailed religious expression and significantly affected Christian evangelism.

Nepal does not have a powerful or authoritarian government, but state authorities, especially at the local level, are showing increased strictness in implementing laws and regulations related to religious activity.

Who is affected?

COMMUNITIES OF EXPATRIATE CHRISTIANS

These are mainly foreigners in Nepal who have their own, isolated meetings. They are hardly active in evangelism. If foreign visitors are found to be involved in evangelistic activities; they are immediately deported back to their respective home country.

HISTORICAL CHRISTIAN COMMUNITIES

By far the largest and most important of these is the Roman Catholic Church, plus a few Orthodox communities. These communities are much less exposed to hostilities from Hindutva extremists because they tend not to be involved in evangelistic activities.

CONVERTS TO CHRISTIANITY

Converts from Hinduism are put under the most pressure as they are viewed as deviating from the faith of the ancestors.

NON-TRADITIONAL CHRISTIAN COMMUNITIES

These mostly consist of independent churches. Converts from Hinduism will usually go to churches belonging to this category. As these churches are also very active in evangelism, they experience high levels of persecution.



How are men and women differently affected?

WOMEN

Young female believers are sometimes disowned by their parents, extended family, and tribal communities and abandoned by their husbands, leaving them without protection or support. Others risk house arrest, starvation, and physical violence from relatives aiming to force them to renounce their faith. Many are cut off from phones, churches, and Christian friends, or coerced into marriage with non-Christian men, where they endure domestic abuse and pressure to follow Hindu rituals. In Nepal's patriarchal society, Christian women, especially from Dalit backgrounds, face lasting discrimination, harassment, and isolation.

Female typical pressure points:

- Denied access to social community/networks
- Denied communal resources
- Forced divorce
- Forced marriage
- Incarceration by family (house arrest)
- Violence – physical
- Violence – psychological
- Violence – sexual
- Violence – verbal

MEN

Christian men and boys in Nepal face severe persecution, especially converts, pastors, and those in military or government service. Male converts are often disowned, denied inheritance, or refused citizenship documents. Church leaders are frequent targets; beaten, threatened, and even paraded with smeared faces and circulated on social media to deter conversions. In state institutions, Christians are pressured to join Hindu rituals or face discrimination. Violence and social exclusion leave men unable to provide for their families, causing economic hardship and insecurity. Faith-related persecution thus impacts entire Christian households through both physical and economic oppression.

Male typical pressure points:

- Denied access to social community/networks
- Denied citizenship
- Denied communal resources
- Denied inheritance or possessions
- Economic harassment via business/job/work access
- False charges
- Forced to flee town/country
- Imprisonment by government
- Violence – physical
- Violence – psychological
- Violence – verbal



WWL 5 year trend

WWL Year	Position on Open Doors World Watch List	Persecution rounded score out of 100
2026	46	67
2025	54	63
2024	53	62
2023	55	61
2022	48	64

The score of 67 points in WWL 2026 is 4 points higher than in WWL 2025. This resulted in a rise of 8 places in the ranking. The score for average pressure increased from 11.5 in WWL 2025 to 11.8 points in WWL 2026. The most significant increase occurred in Violent incidents where the score rose from 5.9 points in WWL 2025 to 7.6 points in WWL 2026. There was an increase in churches attacked, Christians arrested and Christians physically and mentally abused. The score also increased in Private, Family, Community and National life.

Examples of violence in the reporting period

- December 2024:** A pastor from Sudurpaschim province was arrested in December 2024. The arrest followed a complaint lodged by a Hindutva extremist group accusing him of religious conversion. In January 2025, he was released on bail after paying NPR 250,000 (approximately \$1,825 USD). (Open Doors)
- January 2025:** Local authorities in Sunsari questioned 17 US citizens and one Indian citizen who were doing community volunteer work and helping build a church. The complaint was filed by Hindutva extremists, who accused them of trying to convert people. Their documents were sent to the Immigration Department for further investigation. ([Kathmandu Post, 7 February 2025](#))
- March 2024:** Police in Kathmandu, Nepal, detained six Christians from 28 March to 1 April after arresting them—reportedly for their own safety—during violent protests organized by Hindutva extremist and pro-monarchy groups in the eastern part of the capital. (Christian Solidarity Worldwide, 9 April 2025)



WWL Year	Christians killed	Churches or Christian buildings attacked or closed	Christians physically or mentally abused	Christians forced to leave their homes
2026	0	10*	10*	176
2025	0	5	10*	232

This table includes only a few categories of faith-based violence during the reporting period – for full results see the violence section of the country’s corresponding WWL Persecution Dynamics. Since many incidents go unreported, the numbers must be understood as minimum figures. In cases where it has been impossible to count exactly, a symbolic round figure (10, 100* or 1000*) is given which in reality could be significantly higher. The same applies for symbolic numbers 10,000*, 100,000* and 1,000,000*.*

PRIVATE LIFE

Revealing one's Christian faith is equal to evangelism in the eyes of the Hindu population. This will be opposed, sometimes violently. Family, friends and community members have stepped up their opposition to Christians owning religious materials. At first this happened primarily in the countryside and affected mostly converts in their families, but now it also affects other Christians all over Nepal as these materials are very likely to be viewed as tools for evangelism by Hindus.

FAMILY LIFE

Many Christians realize that baptism can lead to a severe reaction from family and community and will either refrain from being baptized or have this done secretly. Pressure on Christians has grown to such an extent that baptismal services are held in secret in churches. The Hindu and Buddhist tradition in Nepal is to cremate people when they die. There are no common burial grounds so the only places where Christians can be buried is in a very few privately owned places—but even then, there will be opposition from locals.

COMMUNITY LIFE

At the community level, Christians (especially converts) are often threatened by their family or members of the community. Christian house meetings are regularly disturbed and obstructed. In some rural areas, Christians are socially

boycotted and are not allowed to use community resources. In two villages near Lamjung, Christians were not allowed to draw water; this has been the case in several other villages too.

NATIONAL LIFE

Nepal is a secular state and the Constitution guarantees religious freedom, which means people can officially practice their religion and culture freely. However, conversion from one religion to another is prohibited. Some officials or government representatives treat people differently when they find out they are Christians. This reaction is mostly influenced by local religious groups. No action is taken against those who harass or intimidate Christians—particularly at the local level. This is especially true in the case of Hindu extremist elements.

CHURCH LIFE

Christian NGOs and other social service organizations have been placed under heavy restrictions. Pressure is especially focused on charitable work as there is always the suspicion of conversion activities taking place. If the instigators of persecution are government officials or police (mostly at the local level), speaking out against them could result in heavier punishment. If the instigators are Hindu radicals or local community members it is also useless to speak out as most of these people have strong ties with those in power.



International obligations & rights violated

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

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

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

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

Situation of other religious minorities

Christians and other religious minorities face the combined threat of social attack and legal ostracization in a system that fails to treat them as equal members of society.



Open Doors in Nepal

Working through local partners, Open Doors is focused on the following areas:

- Distribution: Bibles
- Training: Holistic training including persecution preparedness modules
- Socio-economic development: Livelihood and community development
- Advocacy: Field advocacy
- Urgent aid: Help for persecuted Christians



ABOUT THIS DOSSIER

- The content of this Country Dossier is based on detailed analysis carried out by World Watch Research (WWR), the research department of Open Doors International. This dossier may be used and distributed free of charge, but please always acknowledge the source as: © 2026 Open Doors International.
- All 50 Country Dossiers – along with the latest update of WWL Methodology – can be accessed [here](#).
- The WWL 2026 reporting period was 01 October 2024 - 30 September 2025.

Some photos in this dossier are for illustrative purposes.