

World  
Watch  
Research

## India: Full Country Dossier

February 2024



**OpenDoors**

Serving persecuted **Christians** worldwide

Open Doors International / World Watch Research

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[research@od.org](mailto:research@od.org)



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# Introduction

## World Watch List 2024

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

Rank	Country	Private life	Family life	Community life	National life	Church life	Violence	Total Score WWL 2024	Total Score WWL 2023	Total Score WWL 2022	Total Score WWL 2021	Total Score WWL 2020
51	Kenya	10.3	9.2	11.4	8.0	11.5	12.4	63	64	63	62	61
52	Tanzania	9.3	10.8	10.3	8.6	8.7	14.4	62	63	61	58	55
53	Nepal	12.1	10.4	9.5	13.2	12.3	4.4	62	61	64	66	64
54	Kuwait	13.1	13.6	9.4	12.0	12.2	0.9	61	64	64	63	62
55	Djibouti	12.3	12.6	12.7	10.1	12.3	1.1	61	60	59	56	56
56	Chad	11.6	8.2	10.2	10.2	10.3	10.6	61	58	55	53	56
57	UAE	13.3	13.4	9.5	11.3	12.8	0.7	61	62	62	62	60
58	Sri Lanka	12.9	9.2	10.8	11.5	9.7	5.9	60	57	63	62	65
59	Azerbaijan	13.2	9.9	9.6	11.9	13.6	1.7	60	59	60	56	57
60	Palestinian Territories	13.1	13.3	9.7	10.7	12.1	0.9	60	60	59	58	60
61	Kyrgyzstan	13.2	10.3	11.3	10.5	12.2	1.3	59	59	58	58	57
62	Russian Federation	12.7	7.7	10.6	12.8	12.9	1.7	58	57	56	57	60
63	Rwanda	9.4	7.7	9.0	10.4	11.7	9.4	58	57	50	42	42
64	Burundi	7.6	7.8	9.4	9.8	9.7	12.8	57	55	52	48	48
65	Bahrain	12.0	13.2	8.6	11.3	8.5	1.1	55	55	57	56	55
66	Honduras	7.9	4.7	12.2	7.3	9.9	12.6	55	53	48	46	39
67	Venezuela	6.0	4.4	11.1	10.0	10.8	10.7	53	56	51	39	42
68	Togo	9.2	6.7	9.3	7.1	11.0	8.9	52	49	44	43	41
69	Guinea	10.3	7.5	8.3	8.3	10.5	7.2	52	48	43	47	45
70	Uganda	8.1	5.0	7.4	6.7	8.8	15.9	52	51	48	47	48
71	Angola	6.8	6.7	8.1	11.5	11.4	7.2	52	52	51	46	43
72	Lebanon	11.0	10.2	7.0	6.1	6.6	7.2	48	40	11	-	35
73	Gambia	8.3	8.2	8.9	8.8	8.9	3.7	47	44	44	43	43
74	South Sudan	5.7	4.4	7.0	6.3	7.6	15.6	46	46	43	43	44
75	Belarus	9.6	3.8	5.8	9.7	13.3	3.3	46	43	33	30	28
76	Ivory Coast	12.0	6.5	8.7	5.9	8.0	3.3	44	44	42	42	42
77	Ukraine	5.5	4.8	8.0	11.6	11.6	2.8	44	37	37	34	33
78	Israel	9.8	8.6	5.8	6.3	6.9	6.7	44	38	41	40	38

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## Sources and definitions

- This country report is a collation of data and analysis based around Open Doors World Watch List (WWL) and includes statistical information on world religions, Christian denominations and people groups prepared by the World Christian Database (WCD).
- Highlighted links in the text can be found written out in full at the conclusion of each main section under the heading “External links”. In order to reduce the length of these reference sections, a table containing links to regularly used sources can be found at the beginning of the “Keys to Understanding” chapter under the heading “Links for general background information”. Where one of these sources has been quoted in the dossier text, a quote reference is supplied as indicated in the second column of the table.
- The WWL 2024 reporting period was 1 October 2022 - 30 September 2023.
- The definition of persecution used in WWL analysis is: “Any hostility experienced as a result of one’s identification with Christ. This can include hostile attitudes, words and actions towards Christians”. This broad definition includes (but is not limited to) restrictions, pressure, discrimination, opposition, disinformation, injustice, intimidation, mistreatment, marginalization, oppression, intolerance, infringement, violation, ostracism, hostilities, harassment, abuse, violence, ethnic cleansing and genocide.
- The latest update of WWL Methodology can be found on the research pages of the Open Doors website: <https://www.opendoors.org/en-US/research-reports/wwl-documentation/> and on the Open Doors Analytical website (password: freedom): <https://opendoorsanalytical.org/world-watch-list-documentation/>.

# WWL 2024 Situation in brief / India

## Brief country details

India: Population (UN estimate for 2023)	Christians	Chr%
1,419,656,000	71,120,000	5.0

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

## Map of country



India: World Watch List	Points	WWL Rank
WWL 2024	83	11
WWL 2023	82	11
WWL 2022	82	10
WWL 2021	83	10
WWL 2020	83	10

## Dominant persecution engines and drivers

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

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

## Brief description of the persecution situation

The rights of all categories of Christian communities are violated in India since Hindu radicals view all Christians 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 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.

## Summary of international obligations and rights violations

India has committed to respect and protect fundamental rights in the following international treaties:

1. [International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights](#) (ICCPR)
2. [International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights](#) (ICESCR)



3. [Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women](#) (CEDAW)
4. [Convention on the Rights of the Child](#) (CRC)

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

- Christians are killed for their faith (ICCPR Art. 6)
- Christian women and girls are raped and sexually abused because of their faith (ICCPR Art. 7)
- Christians are attacked, ostracized and unjustly accused of forcefully converting others (ICCPR Art. 18)
- Christians are victims of incendiary speech and smear campaigns that incite to violence and discrimination (ICCPR Art. 20)
- Peaceful religious gatherings of Christians are disrupted by mobs and attacks, in violation of the right to peaceful assembly (ICCPR Art. 21)
- Christian Dalits are excluded from government affirmative action because of their faith (ICCPR Art. 26 and ICESCR Art. 11)

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

- **4 May 2023, Churachandpur area of Imphal city in Manipur:** Meitei mobs vandalized and burned down 39 churches of the Manipur Presbyterian Singlup during the violence that broke out on 4 May as per a list published by Churachandpur District Christian Goodwill Church on 16 May. The Evangelical Churches Association and the Manipur Presbyterian Church Synod lost 14 churches each. Tuithaphai Presbyterian Church (Manipur Synod) lost 13 churches. All these churches were destroyed within two or three days of the violence breaking out. The Chief Minister (himself a Meitei) and the police force have not been able to prevent the violence and continuing attacks against Kukis (majority of whom are Christians) and their churches ([Matters India, 16 May 2023](#)).
- **18 December 2022, Narayanpur and Kondagaon Districts of Chhattisgarh state:** Local villagers forced approximately 200 Christians from 70 families to leave their homes after 20 “coordinated attacks” on Christians around the state in one day. “According to the Evangelical Fellowship of India, the villagers said the Christians must renounce their faith or leave the area. When some protested, they were beaten. The fellowship said some Christians were hospitalized because of their injuries, and police refused to take action when the victims filed complaints against their attackers.” (US State Department IRFR 2022 India)
- **28 November 2022, Azamgarh, Uttar Pradesh:** Police arrested nine pastors for alleged conversion activities. One of the pastors was hosting a wedding reception in his home for his daughter and son-in-law when police arrived, arrested the host, eight others, and the just-married couple on charges of conducting illegal conversions and confiscated Bibles and other Christian material (US State Department IRFR 2022 India).



## Specific examples of positive developments

As reported by BBC News on 13 May 2023, the Congress Party [took over power](#) from the radical Hindu BJP party after elections in the state of Karnataka. According to the Hindustan Times reporting on 25 May, the new Congress government intends to initiate a so-called “[de-saffronization drive](#)”; State Minister Priyank Karge stated that “many orders and laws enforced under the previous BJP regime such as school textbook revisions and anti-conversion laws were against state interest and will be revised or withdrawn”.

## External Links - Situation in brief

- Summary of international obligations and rights violations: International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights - <https://www.ohchr.org/en/professionalinterest/pages/ccpr.aspx>
- Summary of international obligations and rights violations: International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights - <https://www.ohchr.org/en/professionalinterest/pages/cescr.aspx>
- Summary of international obligations and rights violations: Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women - <https://www.ohchr.org/EN/ProfessionalInterest/Pages/CEDAW.aspx>
- Summary of international obligations and rights violations: Convention on the Rights of the Child - <https://www.ohchr.org/en/professionalinterest/pages/crc.aspx>
- Specific examples of violations of rights in the reporting period: Matters India, 16 May 2023 - <https://mattersindia.com/2023/05/121-churches-of-15-denominations-destroyed-in-manipur-diocese/>
- Specific examples of positive developments: took over power - <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-asia-india-65580765>
- Specific examples of positive developments: de-saffronization drive - <https://www.hindustantimes.com/india-news/bengaluru-karnataka-to-review-and-reverse-controversial-decisions-by-previous-bjp-government-in-de-saffronisation-drive-101684953761222.html>

## WWL 2024: Keys to understanding / India

### Links for general background information

Name	Quote Reference	Link	Last accessed on
Amnesty International 2022/23 India report	AI India 2022	<a href="https://www.amnesty.org/en/location/asia-and-the-pacific/south-asia/india/report-india/">https://www.amnesty.org/en/location/asia-and-the-pacific/south-asia/india/report-india/</a>	27 June 2023
BBC News India profile - updated 21 March 2023	BBC India profile	<a href="https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-south-asia-12557384">https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-south-asia-12557384</a>	27 June 2023
Bertelsmann Transformation Index country report 2022 – covering 137 countries	BTI India Report 2022	<a href="https://bti-project.org/en/reports/country-report/IND">https://bti-project.org/en/reports/country-report/IND</a>	27 June 2023
CIA World Factbook India - updated 15 June 2023	World Factbook India	<a href="https://www.cia.gov/the-world-factbook/countries/india/">https://www.cia.gov/the-world-factbook/countries/india/</a>	27 June 2023
Crisis24 India report (Garda World)	Crisis24 India report	<a href="https://crisis24.garda.com/insights-intelligence/intelligence/country-reports/india">https://crisis24.garda.com/insights-intelligence/intelligence/country-reports/india</a>	27 June 2023
Economist Intelligence Unit India profile 2023	EIU India profile 2023	<a href="https://country.eiu.com/india">https://country.eiu.com/india</a>	27 June 2023
FFP's Fragile States Index 2023 – covering 179 countries	FSI 2023 India	<a href="https://fragilestatesindex.org/country-data/">https://fragilestatesindex.org/country-data/</a>	27 June 2023
Freedom House's 2023 Global Freedom Index – covering 210 countries	Global Freedom Index 2023 India	<a href="https://freedomhouse.org/country/india/freedom-world/2023">https://freedomhouse.org/country/india/freedom-world/2023</a>	27 June 2023
Freedom House's Freedom on the Net 2023 report – covering 70 countries	Freedom on the Net 2023 India	<a href="https://freedomhouse.org/country/india/freedom-net/2023">https://freedomhouse.org/country/india/freedom-net/2023</a>	17 January 2024
Georgetown's Women, Peace and Security Index 2021/2022 – covering 170 countries	GIWPS 2021 India profile	<a href="https://giwps.georgetown.edu/country/india/">https://giwps.georgetown.edu/country/india/</a>	27 June 2023
Girls Not Brides India report	Girls Not Brides India	<a href="https://www.girlsnotbrides.org/learning-resources/child-marriage-atlas/regions-and-countries/india/">https://www.girlsnotbrides.org/learning-resources/child-marriage-atlas/regions-and-countries/india/</a>	27 June 2023
Human Rights Watch World Report 2023 (India country chapter)	HRW 2023 India country chapter	<a href="https://www.hrw.org/world-report/2023/country-chapters/india">https://www.hrw.org/world-report/2023/country-chapters/india</a>	27 June 2023
Internet World Stats available in 2023	IWS 2023 India	<a href="https://www.internetworldstats.com/asia.htm#in">https://www.internetworldstats.com/asia.htm#in</a>	27 June 2023
RSF's 2023 World Press Freedom Index – covering 180 countries	World Press Freedom 2023 India	<a href="https://rsf.org/en/india">https://rsf.org/en/india</a>	27 June 2023
Transparency International's 2022 Corruption Perceptions Index – covering 180 countries	CPI 2022 India	<a href="https://www.transparency.org/en/countries/india">https://www.transparency.org/en/countries/india</a>	27 June 2023
UNDP: Human Development Report India	UNDP HDR India	<a href="https://hdr.undp.org/data-center/specific-country-data#/countries/IND">https://hdr.undp.org/data-center/specific-country-data#/countries/IND</a>	27 June 2023
US State Department's 2022 International Religious Freedom Report India	IRFR 2022 India	<a href="https://www.state.gov/reports/2022-report-on-international-religious-freedom/india/">https://www.state.gov/reports/2022-report-on-international-religious-freedom/india/</a>	27 June 2023
USCIRF 2023 India report – covering 17 CPC / 11 SWL	USCIRF 2022 India CPC	<a href="https://www.uscifr.gov/sites/default/files/2023-05/India%202023.pdf">https://www.uscifr.gov/sites/default/files/2023-05/India%202023.pdf</a>	27 June 2023
World Bank India data – 2021	World Bank India data	<a href="https://databank.worldbank.org/views/reports/reportwidget.aspx?Report_Name=CountryProfileId=b450fd57tbar=ydd=yinf=nzm=ncountry=IND">https://databank.worldbank.org/views/reports/reportwidget.aspx?Report_Name=CountryProfileId=b450fd57tbar=ydd=yinf=nzm=ncountry=IND</a>	27 June 2023
World Bank India overview – updated 21 April 2023	World Bank overview India	<a href="https://www.worldbank.org/en/country/india/overview#1">https://www.worldbank.org/en/country/india/overview#1</a>	27 June 2023
World Bank Macro Poverty Outlook India - April 2023	Macro Poverty Outlook 2023 India	<a href="https://thedocs.worldbank.org/en/doc/5d1783db09a0e09d15bceea8ef0cc0b-0500052021/related/mpo-ind.pdf">https://thedocs.worldbank.org/en/doc/5d1783db09a0e09d15bceea8ef0cc0b-0500052021/related/mpo-ind.pdf</a>	27 June 2023

## 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 and has even launched its own Mars probe.

Another feature that has changed in India over the last few decades is a notable decrease in the level of religious tolerance. Traditionally, Hinduism and Buddhism (both originating in India) used to be regarded as peaceful religions. Since the 1990s, Hinduism has taken on a much more aggressive 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 failing to prevent 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 against Christians have been recorded each year.

In the May 2019 elections, the BJP gained an even greater majority in parliament. This meant the Modi government stayed in power and that violent incidents against Christians continued unabated.

In May 2021, [hundreds of corpses](#), many suspected to be victims of COVID-19, were found left along riverbanks in northern India (HRW, 20 May 2021). Villagers indicated that fear of the disease and lack of funds to cremate were likely reasons for families to leave their dead. The abandoned corpses discovered near the Ganges in Uttar Pradesh and Bihar states raised serious questions about the accuracy of official COVID-19 statistics and would seem to be a clear indication of the spread of the pandemic in rural areas, where health infrastructure is still extremely weak, and containment measures were hindered by limited testing capacity, stigma, and low vaccination rates. According to Matters India reporting on 2 June 2021, [1.21 million](#) Indians are estimated to have died from COVID-19 related causes.

In October 2021 [a row erupted](#) in India over the use of Israeli spyware named Pegasus (NDTV, 27 October 2021) The government of Prime Minister Modi was accused of acting like Big Brother to put everyone under surveillance.

When Russia invaded Ukraine on 24 February 2022, [India did not join](#) in the international condemnation of Russia's action, making clear it did not want to take sides. India did not want to be weakened, needing its long-standing reliance on Russian military equipment to continue (BBC News, 13 May 2022).

## Political and legal landscape

India is the seventh largest country in the world and the most populous. Officially known as the Republic of India, it is a complex political entity. It is a federation with a central government in New Delhi which controls foreign affairs, the armed forces and the economy. The country consists of 28 states and 8 union territories (areas ruled by the central government with effect from 31 October 2019).

The political atmosphere of India is multi-faceted as is its religious landscape. The political table of India has many chairs round it, where secular, Hindu nationalist, socialist and communist politicians sit together. On various occasions, several political adversaries have come together to form a coalition government at State or Central level. At the current time, Hindu nationalists are very powerful.

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.

### Anti-conversion laws

India's Freedom of Religion Acts or "anti-forced-conversion" laws are state-level statutes that have been enacted to regulate religious conversions. Anti-conversion laws exist in eleven states: Odisha (1967), Madhya Pradesh (1968), Arunachal Pradesh (1978), Chhattisgarh (2000/2006), Gujarat (2003), Himachal Pradesh (2006/2019), Jharkhand (2017), Uttarakhand (2018), Uttar Pradesh (2020), Haryana (2022) and Karnataka (2022). The anti-conversion law in Arunachal Pradesh has not been fully implemented due to a lack of subsidiary rules; and the state of Rajasthan passed an anti-conversion bill, but it has yet to be signed by the President of India to make it law. The anti-conversion law in Karnataka is earmarked for [revision or withdrawal](#) in 2023/2024 (WWR, 19 June 2023).

There is also the [Indian Penal Code-295-A](#) (accessed 29 June 2022) which is a highly misused law against Christians. While there are some variations between the state laws, they are very similar in content and structure. All of the laws seek to prevent anyone from making or attempting to make another person change their religion (either directly or otherwise) through "forcible" or "fraudulent" means, or by "allurement" or "inducement." However, even in the states where this law has not been implemented, police have arrested Christians for evangelistic activities.

In May 2019, new parliamentary elections were held in India and the support for Prime Minister Modi increased even further with the BJP gaining an absolute majority. Consequently, it was no longer necessary for the BJP to form a coalition with other parties (and thus to accept compromises). It was therefore clear that Muslims and Christians would not experience any improvement in their situation.

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 insurgency that has been going on in Jammu & Kashmir for decades. The decision to end to the special status was an important event in Indian history. Article 35-A was removed as well, which allowed the 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 lost its state status and 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.

Two other major policy agendas of the BJP also deserve attention: The Citizenship Amendment Act and the Uniform Civil Code:

### **The Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA)**

The CAA was passed by Parliament on 11 December 2019. It amended the Citizenship Act of 1955 by providing accelerated pathway to Indian citizenship for persecuted religious minorities from Afghanistan, Bangladesh and India. The CAA 2019 drew criticism because it defined persecuted religious minorities in these countries as Hindus, Sikhs, Christians, Jains, Parsis and Buddhists, but excluded Muslims. Following countrywide protests, the government of India postponed implementation of the CAA. With elections fast approaching in April or May 2024, there are reports that the BJP might implement the CAA to seek [electoral benefits](#) (ABP News, 3 January 2024).

### **The Uniform Civil Code (UCC)**

The UCC is a long-standing proposal from the BJP (with support from some other political parties) since the 1980s. It seeks to formulate and implement personal laws of citizens that would apply to all citizens regardless of their religion. Personal laws cover marriage, divorce, adoption, inheritance and maintenance. Currently personal laws for various groups are governed by their respective religious scriptures. Religious minorities and indigenous communities are expected to be impacted the most if the UCC will be implemented. The BJP governed state of Uttarakhand is due to [roll out the UCC in January 2024](#) soon followed by its implementation in Gujarat which is also a BJP governed state (The New Indian Express, 14 January 2024). It is suspected that if BJP wins the general elections of 2024, UCC will be implemented across the country.

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

- “The constitution provides for freedom of conscience and the right of all individuals to freely profess, practice, and propagate religion; mandates a secular state; requires the state to treat all religions impartially; and prohibits discrimination based on religion. It also states citizens must practice their faith in a way that does not adversely affect public order, morality, or health. Thirteen of 28 states have laws restricting religious conversions for all faiths.”

- "All 11 states that have anti-conversion laws maintain broadly similar prohibitions against conversion through 'force', 'inducement' or 'fraud', which would include the provision of any gifts, promises of a better life, free education, and other standard charitable activities, and bar individuals from abetting such conversions. The law in those states also require individuals wishing to convert to another religion and clergy intending to officiate at a conversion ceremony to submit formal notification to the state government. The notification procedures require state police to determine if there are objections to the conversion."
- "The law requires religious groups that receive foreign funding to register with the Ministry of Home Affairs. Federal law requires NGOs, including religious organizations, that are registered under the law to maintain audit reports on their accounts and a schedule of their activities and to provide these to state government officials upon request. Organizations conducting 'cultural, economic, educational, religious, or social programs' that receive foreign funding are required to obtain a license. The central government may also require that licensed organizations obtain prior permission before accepting or transferring foreign funds. The central government may reject a license application or a request to transfer funds if it judges the recipient to be acting against 'harmony between religious, racial, social, linguistic, or regional groups, castes, or communities.'"
- "The constitution prohibits religious instruction in government schools. The law permits private religious schools. The law permits some Muslim, Christian, Sindhi (Hindu refugees), Parsi, and Sikh educational institutions that receive government support to set quotas for students belonging to the religious minority in question."

According to USCIRF 2023 India CPC:

- "In 2022, religious freedom conditions in India continued to worsen. Throughout the year, the Indian government at the national, state, and local levels promoted and enforced religiously discriminatory policies, including laws targeting religious conversion, interfaith relationships, the wearing of hijabs, and cow slaughter, which negatively impact Muslims, Christians, Sikhs, Dalits, and Adivasis (indigenous peoples and scheduled tribes). The national government also continued to suppress critical voices—particularly religious minorities and those advocating on their behalf—including through surveillance, harassment, demolition of property, and detention under the Unlawful Activities Prevention Act (UAPA) and by targeting nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) under the Foreign Contribution Regulation Act (FCRA)."

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.

### **Gender perspective**

Under India's pluralistic legal system, marriage laws vary according to religion. In addition to Hindu, Muslim and Christian legislation, the Special Marriage Act (1954) provides a means of

citizens getting married irrespective of religious background. However, a controversial new anti-conversion law that criminalizes interfaith relationships has put couples on edge in certain states, primarily Hindu-Muslim couples ([BBC News, 15 March 2021](#)).

Under the Special Marriage Act, forced marriages and child marriages are outlawed. Early marriages nonetheless remain widespread, and reportedly spiked in the context of COVID-19 ([Al-Jazeera, 14 April 2021](#)). According to Girls Not Brides India, 27% of Indian girls and 7% of boys are married before they reach 18 years of age. Divorce laws also vary in accordance with the relevant religious or civil law that the marriage occurred under. Under Christian and Muslim laws, a man is entitled to divorce his wife for any reason, whereas both genders have equal rights to file for divorce under the Special Marriage Act and Hindu Marriage Act.

India signed the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) and ratified it in 1993. A [2014 review](#) by the CEDAW committee highlighted a culture of impunity for perpetrators of violence against women (CEDAW, 2014, p.3). It further observed an increase in violent crimes against women, especially rape (including marital), kidnappings and abductions. Such issues remain widely reported ([BBC News, 16 December 2021](#)).

Female representation in Parliament in 2021 was 14.4%. Whilst modest, this represents a 9.4% rise from just 5% in 1990 ([Index Mundi](#), last accessed 4 July 2023), and compared to other countries in the region, women are broadly accepted as high-profile political leaders ([Pew Research Centre, 2 March 2022](#)).

### **Rising violence against women**

A report by the National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB) reveals that violence and [crimes against women](#) have risen by 4% in 2022 compared to 2021 (Frontline, 6 December 2023). In 2021 there were 4,28,278 and in 2022, there were 4,45,256 cases. Cruelty by Husband or his relatives (31.4%), Kidnapping and Abduction (19.2%), Assault (18.7%) and Rape (7.1%) were the significant categories noted in the report.

## Religious landscape

India: Religious context	Number of adherents	%
Christians	71,120,000	5.0
Muslim	211,324,000	14.9
Hindu	1,019,981,000	71.8
Buddhist	10,797,000	0.8
Ethno-religionist	52,033,000	3.7
Jewish	4,300	0.0
Bahai	2,283,000	0.2
Atheist	2,371,000	0.2
Agnostic	17,335,000	1.2
Other	32,407,000	2.3
<i>OTHER includes Chinese folk, New religionist, Sikh, Spiritist, Taoist, Confucianist, Jain, Shintoist, Zoroastrian.</i>		

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

The last census held by the government of India was in 2011. The decennial census due in 2021 was postponed because of the COVID-19 crisis and is now due only in 2025. The postponement of the census has impacted governance and welfare schemes since population numbers are outdated.

As can be seen in the table above, according to World Christian Database estimates (accessed March 2023), 1,019 million citizens are Hindus (71.8% of the population), 211 million are Muslims (14.9% of the population), over 71 million are Christians (5.0% 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. 14.9% may seem to be a fairly insignificant minority before realizing that India is the country with the third largest Muslim population on earth - only Indonesia and Pakistan have a greater number of Muslim citizens.

Christianity is the third largest religion in India. 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 staff in lower administrative posts have low incomes and seek extra income from corruption to survive. Christians in India are constantly encountering these obstacles in almost every aspect of their lives.



The fourth largest religious group in India are adherents of so-called Ethno-religionism. These are the traditional tribal religions, which predate the arrival of Hinduism and Buddhism in the country. Sikhs (mainly living in the state of Punjab in India's northwest), are the next largest group. Buddhists only make up 0.8% 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

According to World Bank India data:

- **GDP (current US\$) (billions):** 3.17 (2021)
- **GDP growth (annual):** 8.9% (2021)

India is the world's 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. Despite the economic growth, poverty is extremely high (see below: *Social and cultural landscape*).

The economy of India stands on 4 pillars: Agriculture, Unorganized sector, Organized or core sector and Micro Small and Medium Enterprises (MSME). All four sectors together contribute more than 90% to the GDP of India. 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 enacted by the single-handed decision of Prime Minister Modi. It resulted in a steep decline in all sections of Indian economy; however, the Unorganized sector (which makes up 42% of GDP) suffered most. Millions of jobs were lost and recession has struck the nation. It pushed 520 million people 'Below Poverty Line' (BPL). Most of rural Christians are already under BPL.

At the end of August 2019, media outlets published reports based on a Reuters study, showing that the Indian economy was [continuing to contract](#) (Asia News, 30 August 2019) and had hit its lowest recorded level for the past five years. According to experts, in the April-June 2019 quarter, the increase in 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 crisis surrounding the COVID-19 pandemic also had a huge impact on the Indian economy in 2020 and 2021. As society went into lockdown, many businesses had to stop their work, causing many people to lose their jobs and income. The Indian economy shrank 23.9% year-on-year in the second quarter of 2020, much worse than market forecasts of an 18.3% drop. This was the biggest contraction on record, caused by India imposing a nationwide lockdown in late March 2020 and extending it several times, thus halting most economic activities. IMF projected India's GDP would [plunge by 10.3%](#) in the fiscal year ending on 31 March 2021, the biggest contraction since the country became independent in 1947 (The New Indian Express, 13 October 2020).

In June 2021, BBC News published [a skeptical analysis](#) of India's economy under Prime Minister Modi. The analysis shows that Asia's third-largest economy is not doing well at all, and this is only partly due to COVID-19 measures. The pandemic battered what was an already under-par

performance. Mismanagement was also a very important factor (BBC News, 22 June 2021). As in many other countries, food and fuel costs began soaring in 2022. At the beginning of May 2022, India's central bank announced its first interest rate hike in two years in an attempt to slow inflation.

While the landmark '2009 Right to Education Act' (which made education free and compulsory for children between 6 and 14) has decreased the percentage of children out of school, many children – particularly girls – receive little education. However, the Christian community in India is the second most literate community in India; at the same time, it is the [largest unemployed group](#) among all minorities in India. Christians are further facing daily challenges of discrimination, 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. The work of Christian NGOs has suffered from the fact that it has been made very difficult (if not impossible) to receive financial support from abroad.

### Gender perspective

Economic pressures restrict the freedom of Christians, especially converts. Reports indicate that Christian men have experienced harassment within their workplace, or even lost their jobs due to their Christian faith. The loss of income affects their dependent family. Female Christians are additionally economically vulnerable on the grounds of their gender, due to lower education and employment rates for women and girls, and patrilineal inheritance practices ([The Conversation, 6 January 2021](#)). Sexual harassment at work also remains an entrenched problem. As women primarily work in the informal labor market, thousands missed out on emergency cash transfers during the COVID-19 pandemic, as they did not have a bank account (GIWPS 2021 India profile).

## Social and cultural landscape

According to the World Factbook India:

- **Main ethnic groups:** Indo-Aryan 72%, Dravidian 25%, Mongoloid and other 3% (2000 est.).
- **Main languages:** Hindi 43.6%, Bengali 8%, Marathi 6.9%, Telugu 6.7%, Tamil 5.7%, Gujarati 4.6%, Urdu 4.2%, Kannada 3.6%, Odia 3.1%, Malayalam 2.9%, Punjabi 2.7%, Assamese 1.3%, Maithili 1.1%, other 5.6%; note - English enjoys the status of subsidiary official language but is the most important language for national, political, and commercial communication; there are 22 other officially recognized languages: Assamese, Bengali, Bodo, Dogri, Gujarati, Hindi, Kannada, Kashmiri, Konkani, Maithili, Malayalam, Manipuri, Nepali, Odia, Punjabi, Sanskrit, Santali, Sindhi, Tamil, Telugu, Urdu; Hindustani is a popular variant of Hindi/Urdu spoken widely throughout northern India but is not an official language (2011 est.)
- **Urban population:** 35.9% (2022 est.)
- **Literacy rate:** 74.4% (male: 82.4%, female: 65.8%) (2018 est.)

According to UNDP HDR India:

- **HDI score and ranking:** 0.645 (0,573 for females, 0.699 for males), ranking 131
- **Life expectancy at birth:** 69.7 years (71.0 for females, 68.5 for males) (2019)

- **Expected years of schooling:** 12.2 (12.6 for females, 11.7 for males) (2019)
- **Gender inequality index:** 0.488
- **Labor Force Participation Rate (% ages 15 years and older):** Female: 20.5, Male: 76.1.

The most characteristic social feature of India is the caste system – a hierarchical stratification of Indian society dating back many centuries. According to a 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.

As many as [138,825 cases](#) related to crimes against Dalits were filed across the country between 2018 and 2020, Union Minister Ramdas Athawale told parliament on 22 March 2022. Athawale said 42,793 cases of atrocities were reported in 2018. The number rose to 45,961 in 2019 and 50,291 in 2020 (Hindustan Times, 23 March 2022).

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 the Scheduled Castes, commonly self-identified as Dalits. Many converted from Hinduism partly to escape their hopeless situation as “Untouchables” only to find that the same barriers exist inside the Church. The fact that several became disappointed partly explains why the [Ghar Wapsi campaign](#) of the Hindu radicals has been effective in reconverting many back to Hinduism (World Watch Monitor, 16 February 2017). Abolishing elements of the caste system still existing in the Church is a major challenge still to be dealt with.

The Constitution (Scheduled Caste) Order 1950 identifies caste communities who have experienced extreme difficulties arising out of 'untouchability'. These Dalit communities were singled out for affirmative action benefits under various government policies, including education and employment. However, Paragraph 3 of the Constitution Order initially limited the classification of Scheduled Castes only to Hindus. In 1956 and in 1990, the Order was amended to expand Scheduled Castes to Sikhs and Buddhists, but Dalits from Christianity and Islam continue to be excluded. A major reason why many (Dalit) Christians do not officially convert to Christianity is because they stand to lose benefits from affirmative action. In April 2023, the Supreme Court decided to adjudicate on the issue of Dalit Muslims and Christians accessing benefits of affirmative action.

The 2020 COVID-19 pandemic had a huge impact on society, with many businesses being forced to stop working, which caused large numbers of employees to lose their jobs and income. 21 million salaried jobs were lost between April 2020 and August 2020, while the unemployment rate in India rose to 8.4% in August 2020 ([Centre for Monitoring Indian Economy](#), last accessed 27 December 2022). 95.2% of migrants lost their jobs and livelihoods, as confirmed by a survey conducted by Caritas India in the 18 states most affected by the pandemic. Millions of people have been thrust into extreme poverty and hunger, not through illness but because of the economic impact of the lockdown measures.

As stated above (see: *Economic landscape*), Christians make up the [largest unemployed group](#) among all minorities in India (without even including the number of new Christians who officially

stick to their Hindu status for various socio-economic reasons). Would this number of 'unofficial Christians' have been included, the proportion of unemployed Christians would have been even bigger. Many Christians live in slum areas where many of the residents become totally dependent upon food distribution programs carried out by the government and aid organizations. Christians have often been deliberately overlooked when this aid is distributed.

### Gender perspective

Against this backdrop of patriarchal norms and a hierarchical caste system, the weakest in society are exploited. Women and girls are considered weak and emotional subjects, so violations against Christian women and girls is often targeted at their body through molestation and sexual harassment ([Religious Freedom and Business Foundation, 3 November 2020](#)). Men and boys on the other hand, are viewed as physically strong. Persecution consequently targets their physical strength (through beatings and torture) as well as their role as family decision-maker.

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; thousands of girls have been reportedly aborted on the basis of their sex ([ADF, 6 May 2021](#); [BBC News, May 2022](#)). 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.

Sexual attacks on women harm the victim's wider family and community due to the connotations between sexual purity and pride and prestige within Indian culture. There is particularly strong stigma and shame around reporting sexual abuse against boys, which is also reported to be widespread (in part as they have more freedom to leave the home in India's patriarchal society, thus becoming more exposed to potential contexts of abuse) ([Reuters, 8 May 2018](#)). Domestic violence is also reportedly high, compounded by socio-economic dependency of women upon men, the impact of COVID-19 and the dominance of patriarchal norms ([BBC News, 3 May 2022](#); [UN News, 28 December 2020](#)).

### Technological landscape

According to Internet World Stats (IWS 2023 India):

- **Internet usage:** 59.5% penetration - survey date: July 2022
- **Facebook usage:** 38.2% penetration - survey date: July 2022

According to the World Bank India data:

- **Mobile phone subscriptions:** 83.6 per 100 people

According to the GSMA Mobile Gender Gap Reports: As highlighted in the [2020 GSMA Mobile Gender Gap Report](#), the gender gap in mobile internet awareness has decreased dramatically in recent years. 50% of women surveyed in 2019 reported awareness, compared to just 19% two years previously. However, progress has stalled. According to the [2022 GSMA report](#), Mobile in-

ternet adoption among men has climbed steadily to 51%, but there has been no notable increase among women, which remains flat at 30 per cent. (For more on the mobile gender gap, see the 2022 report: Spotlight: India, p.45).

According to [BuddeComm Research](#) (updated July 2023):

- "India's telecommunications sector has struggled for growth over the last five years. The sector's lacklustre performance has been in spite of concerted efforts by the government to bolster the underlying infrastructure in a bid to achieve universal coverage. Instead, the country's relatively liberal regulatory environment has encouraged fierce competition and price wars amongst the operators".
- "State-owned as well as private operators have been forced to seek redress from the government in order to avoid bankruptcy. One particular area of contention has been the billions owed by the operators to the government in the form of Adjusted Gross Revenue (AGR) dues – usage and licensing fees charged by the Department of Telecommunications (DoT) – that have been the subject of long-standing court battles over what should be counted as revenue."

According to Freedom on the Net 2023 India:

- "Internet freedom in India worsened during the coverage period, following marginal improvement the previous year, when efforts to bridge the country's digital divides expanded access to the internet. The government continues to impose internet shutdowns and is considering legislation that would expand its legal authority for such restrictions. Legal challenges to laws enabling the government to censor online content—including against the controversial Information Technology (Intermediary Guidelines and Digital Media Ethics Code) Rules, 2021 (IT Rules)—have seen limits imposed on some powers. However, the state continues to block online content at an increasing pace, and Indian internet users risk arrest for posts critical of the government. Misinformation and disinformation are frequently shared online, and journalists, nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), and members of marginalized groups remain at risk of being targeted by hate speech and harassment online."

### **Digital authoritarianism on the horizon**

Just beyond the WWL 2024 reporting period, there have been further negative developments concerning the regulation of Internet and other forms of communication. Over December 2023 and January 2024, the government of India proposed three new bills:

- The Broadcasting Services (Regulation) Bill
- The Telecom Bill
- The Digital Personal Data Protection Act, 2023.

Taken together, these bills can only serve to erode freedom of expression of both digital media institutions and citizens who use the Internet. Stated bluntly: This legislation threatens to inaugurate a new regime of digital authoritarianism in India.

## Further information

Among the rapid economic changes mentioned above, investment in technology has skyrocketed in India. The introduction of new technology started in the major cities, but India has also begun to modernize rural areas, giving almost everyone Internet access. A [report](#) published on 26 September 2019 by the Internet and Mobile Association of India (IAMAI) and Nielsen, showed that the total number of internet users in rural India is 227 million against 205 million of urban users.

This means that Christians and others have more access to Christian materials than ever before, 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 continually attacking the Christian media, accusing them of evangelism. There have already been instances where cable operators have been pressured by Hindu groups into removing 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 also have many more possibilities for reporting on violence, intolerance and discrimination. Websites reporting in this manner are: [Matters India](#), [Christian Today India](#) and the site of the [Evangelical Fellowship of India](#).

## 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. However, the media in India is often biased against Christians. It is often the case that, even if Christians report the hostility they face, the media simply ignore them or entirely focus their reports on the perpetrators. This is done in an attempt to either distort the true nature of the persecution going on or to justify the perpetrator's position by spreading suspicion and hatred towards Christians.

## Hindu radicalism

Hindu radicalism has gained momentum since the beginning of the 1990s. The ultimate aim of these Hindu groups 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 violence, intolerance and discrimination. 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.

### **Ethnic violence in Manipur affecting Christians**

In 2023, violence erupted between the Meitei (mostly Hindu) and Kuki (mostly Christian) ethnic groups in Manipur state. The Meitei are the majority (close to 53%) while Kuki-Zo are only 16%. The conflict was triggered when Meitei sought to extend their dominance by demanding their inclusion in the Scheduled Tribes list so that they could start occupying hill territories reserved for Nagas, Kuki-Zo and other tribal groups. The violence, which caused well over 100 churches to go up in flames (see above: *Specific examples of violations of rights*), was sparked by the Kukis protesting against the Meiteis' demand for tribal status. According to BBC News reporting on 12 July 2023: "Now the Kuki have demanded '[territorial autonomy](#)' for the group, a euphemism for a separate, independent administration. The Meitei have warned that any dismemberment of Manipur is out of question. ... Life and work between the two communities has stalled. Internet has been cut all over the state, further heightening the isolation." It is likely that ethnic unrest will continue until a political resolution is found.

### **Maoists/Naxalites**

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.

### **National security**

There are ongoing conflicts between India and its neighbors (especially Pakistan, China, Nepal). The relationship between India and Pakistan has always been tense since 1947 - especially concerning the region of Jammu & Kashmir. Border fighting between China and India occurred in [June 2020](#) when 20 Indian and 43 Chinese soldiers died (Asia News, 17 June 2020). On 11 Oc-



tober 2021 China and India [blamed each other](#) for the failure of high-level talks to ease tensions along the disputed Himalayan border, particularly the strategically important Galwan River valley between Tibet and India's Ladakh region (UCA News, 13 October 2021). This high-altitude conflict continues to simmer in the background.

A conflict broke out between [India and Nepal](#) about border region control in May 2020 (Hindustan Times, 10 June 2020). [Nepal's prime minister](#) Sher Bahadur Deuba met Prime Minister Modi in April 2022 during a three-day trip to New Delhi and signed a series of agreements to enhance their ties (Reuters, 2 April 2022). At the same time, Nepal is also deepening relations with India's rival China: Deuba's visit to India came just shortly after [Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi's visit](#) to Kathmandu (AP News, 26 March 2022).

### Concerning radical Islamic elements

According to US State Department IRFR 2022 India:

- "Terrorist groups *Lashkar-e-Taiyaba* and *Hizbul Mujahideen* killed several civilians and migrant laborers belonging to the minority Hindu and Sikh communities in Muslim-majority Jammu and Kashmir during the year. The South Asian Terrorism Portal said 30 civilians and 30 members of the security forces were killed in 151 incidents in the territory during the year [2022]."
- "In August [2022], local officials in Assam demolished three madrassahs in the Bongaigaon, Barpeta, and Morigaon Districts they said had supported terrorist groups. Police arrested 37 persons, including imams and madrassah teachers, for alleged links to the Ansarullah Bangla Team, an affiliate of Al Qaeda in the Indian subcontinent."

### Individual security / Gender perspective

Sexual assault is a pervasive issue in India, with the rape of a woman being reported every 15 minutes ([Reuters, 9 January 2020](#)). Women from lower castes and tribes are especially vulnerable (as exemplified by the rape and death of Dalit women in 2020 ([CBS, 1 October, 2020](#))). Recent figures from [National Crime Records Bureau](#) indicate that there was a nearly 20% increase in rapes across India in 2021, with a total of 31,677 cases or a daily average of 86 cases (Financial Express, 3 August 2022).

As noted by Human Rights Watch, a culture of victim-blaming remains prevalent and women face several obstacles in reporting crimes, including a lack of victim protection laws (HRW 2022 country chapter). Trafficking is also an endemic issue ([US State Department, Trafficking in Persons Report, June 2022, p.279](#)). Debt bondage traps entire families in forced labor, and many men, women and children are caught up in networks of human trafficking. Pre-adulthood, more boys are affected. Post-adulthood, more women are affected ([Asia Times, 6 February 2020](#)).

Violent and lethal attacks by radical Hindu groups have focused heavily on Christian leaders and pastors, the majority of whom are men (Open Doors International 2019 report "[We're Indians Too](#)"; [Christian Persecution, 9 July 2021](#)).

## Trends analysis

### 1) Social hostility towards Christians has grown

Since Narendra Modi first came to power in May 2014 the level of religious freedom violations against Christians has gone up dramatically. Talking about the Christian faith to a group wider than one's own 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. Radical Hindu vigilantes use social media platforms to mobilize and attack Christians - disrupting prayer meetings in private homes, vandalizing churches, beating pastors etc. Social media platforms have failed to take action (e.g. taking down inflammatory posts) against such digital mobilization and hate speech by Hindu vigilantes.

### 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 are therefore likely to continue to attack Muslims and Christians with impunity and 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.

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## WWL 2024: Church information / India

### Christian origins

According to church 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 Catholic missionaries belonging to different orders (Franciscans, Dominicans, Jesuits, Augustinians, etc.) who began at once to build churches along the coastal districts where 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

India: Church networks	Christians	%
Orthodox	5,502,000	7.7
Catholic	22,241,000	31.3
Protestant	24,203,000	34.0
Independent	20,459,000	28.8
Unaffiliated	192,000	0.3
Doubly-affiliated Christians	-1,477,000	-2.1
<b>Total</b>	<b>71,120,000</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	12,791,000	18.0
Renewalist movement	22,752,000	32.0

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

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

## Areas where Christians face most difficulties

There are no particular hotspots of religious freedom violations in India. The worst regions are the states where the BJP is a major factor in the state government, but that can change every 5 years due to elections. Current examples of such states are Bihar, Gujarat, Haryana, Madhya Pradesh, Odisha, Punjab and Uttar Pradesh.

## Christian communities and how they are affected

**Communities of expatriate Christians:** There are several expatriate groups active in India. It is not only Christians from Western countries 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 usually 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 claiming to date back to the 3rd century AD. These churches are not growing strongly because they are not usually 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 frequently own significant assets and property in India. Other than that, church bodies own some of the finest educational and medical institutes and large amounts of land. The Constitution of India gives special provision to Christians to set up 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 these institutes. These institutes are vital for the education of the Christian minorities and other marginalized communities. In many places, government authorities have taken over church properties.

**Converts to Christianity:** Christian converts from a Hindu background bear the brunt of religious freedom violations 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 to the point of being hospitalized and sometimes even killed. They live mostly in rural areas, 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 violence, intolerance, and discrimination 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. They face regular attacks. It is mostly Dalit and tribal communities (Adivasis) who convert to Evangelical or Pentecostal Christianity, and these communities have historically been the targets of dominant caste Hindu groups.

# WWL 2024: Persecution Dynamics / India

## Reporting period

1 October 2022 - 30 September 2023

## Position on the World Watch List

India: World Watch List	Points	WWL Rank
WWL 2024	83	11
WWL 2023	82	11
WWL 2022	82	10
WWL 2021	83	10
WWL 2020	83	10

The overall score in WWL 2024 rose by one point. There was an increase in the violence score from 15.7 points in WWL 2023 to 16.5, which is almost the maximum level. All categories of Christian communities face hostility from Hindu radicals who view Christians as alien to the nation. They want to cleanse their country from Islam and Christianity and do not shy away from using extensive mob violence to achieve this. Converts to Christianity from a Hindu background bear the brunt of the persecution in India and are constantly under pressure to return to Hinduism. The world watched in horror when ethno-religious violence erupted in May 2023 in the northeastern state of Manipur. What began as a dispute between ethnic groups took on a disturbing religious dimension, as Christians were targeted across the ethnic groups. Thousands of Christians were displaced, hundreds of churches and public Christian properties were burned down and many Christians were killed. India also witnessed mob attacks against Christians in Chhattisgarh State in January 2023. Thousands of Christians were chased out of their homes and villages and Christian properties were destroyed. They had to take shelter in indoor stadiums and other locations.

## Persecution engines

India: Persecution engines	Abbreviation	Level of influence
Islamic oppression	IO	Weak
Religious nationalism	RN	Very strong
Ethno-religious hostility	ERH	Strong
Clan oppression	CO	Strong



Christian denominational protectionism	CDP	Weak
Communist and post-Communist oppression	CPCO	Weak
Secular intolerance	SI	Not at all
Dictatorial paranoia	DPA	Very 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 - Hindu (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 Buddhist extremists in Ladakh, forms of Neo-Buddhism in Maharashtra and Uttar Pradesh, and Sikh extremists in Punjab. Since 2014 *Religious nationalism* is also influencing tribal groups, causing them to regard their religions as being related to Hinduism.

### Dictatorial paranoia (Very strong) - blended with Religious nationalism - Hindu

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 are emerging. Social media control, inflammatory speeches, the gagging of media, who question government policies and statistics, 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.

A strong indicator of *Dictatorial paranoia* is the government's complete control over investigative and enforcement agencies and their misuse to target dissenters and opposition; and also the recent [suspension of over 140 MPs](#) from the parliament's winter session on the flimsiest of grounds (The Guardian, 19 December 2023). Consequently, the government was able to pass crucial laws without any debate or input from the opposition.

### Ethno-religious hostility (Strong) - blended with Religious nationalism - Hindu

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 has 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. But since the

late 1990s, the influence of Hindu extremists, pro-Hindutva government officials and media has been responsible for instigating violent attacks on tribal Christians. Jhabua region in Madhya Pradesh, Bastar region in Chhattisgarh and many other parts of Jharkhand and Odisha have witnessed this. 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. *Ethno-religious hostility* has thus become a serious threat to the Church in India.

### Clan oppression (Strong)

*Clan oppression* is particularly strong in parts of northern India. In what is called the Jat Belt (i.e. regions of Punjab, Haryana and parts of Rajasthan and Uttar Pradesh), the *Khap panchayats* (clan courts) hold sway. They are regarded as having power over life and death and function independently of the country's legal system, which often turns a blind eye. The police is collaborative; its membership comes largely from the same communities which run the *Khaps*. The *Khaps* seem to be against modernity, and oppose, for instance, marrying outside the community rules of kinship, religion and status. Naturally, conversion to Christianity is a serious crime in their eyes. *Clan oppression* is rapidly becoming a serious threat to the Church in India. In the tribal villages of mainland India, where the Christian population is scarce, many converts have been forced into 'Ghar Wapsi' re-conversion. Influenced by local radical Hindu groups, tribal village leaders are known to impose heavy fines on Christians and vandalize their homes. The Christians are socially boycotted and excommunicated if they refuse to comply with the leaders' orders.

### Drivers of persecution

India: Drivers of persecution	IO	RN	ERH	CO	CDP	CPCO	SI	DPA	OCC
	WEAK	VERY STRONG	STRONG	STRONG	WEAK	WEAK	-	VERY STRONG	WEAK
Government officials	-	Strong	Medium	Strong	-	-	-	Strong	Weak
Ethnic group leaders	Very weak	Strong	Strong	Strong	-	-	-	Strong	-
Non-Christian religious leaders	Very weak	Very strong	Strong	Medium	-	-	-	Strong	-
Religious leaders of other churches	-	-	-	-	Weak	-	-	-	-
Violent religious groups	Very weak	Very strong	Strong	Weak	-	-	-	Strong	-
Ideological pressure groups	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-

India: Drivers of persecution	IO	RN	ERH	CO	CDP	CPCO	SI	DPA	OCC
	WEAK	VERY STRONG	STRONG	STRONG	WEAK	WEAK	-	VERY STRONG	WEAK
Citizens (people from the broader society), including mobs	Very weak	Strong	Strong	Strong	Very weak	-	-	Strong	-
One's own (extended) family	Weak	Strong	Strong	Strong	Very weak	-	-	Weak	-
Political parties	-	Very strong	-	-	-	-	-	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 - Hindu

- **Non-Christian religious leaders (Very strong):** Hindu religious leaders are a main source of anti-Christian sentiment spreading among the Hindu masses. Prominent examples are Yogi Adityanath (founder of Hindu Yuva Wahini which is responsible for the majority of 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: 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 specifically.
- **Political parties (Very strong):** The BJP is the political wing of the RSS and has a majority in the political center. It is the parent organization of all types of Hindu extremism 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. Raghubar Das (Chief Minister of Jharkhand), Adityanath (Chief Minister of Uttar Pradesh), Manohar Lal Khattar (Chief Minister of Haryana), Rajnath Singh (Defense 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.

- **Normal citizens (Strong):** At the level of the village, community members play a major role in making life for Christians (both for converts from Hinduism and for other categories of Christianity) very difficult. Most of the time, it is local villagers who actually carry out the hostilities against Christians, such as beatings, setting fire to churches, damaging cemeteries etc.
- **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 hostile to Christians. After Modi and the BJP came to power in May 2014, a power nexus of RSS extremists, media and government-controlled officials has come into existence and work together against Christianity. This nexus carries most responsibility for the increase in hostility towards Christians.
- **Ethnic or Clan group leaders (Strong):** Tribal leaders commonly put pressure on Christian converts for leaving the culture of the ancestors viewing it as an insult to their religion, family and community.
- **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 Dictatorial paranoia

(Dictatorial paranoia is greatly influenced by *Religious nationalism* - both engines are strongly blended.)

- **Government officials (Strong):** In states and regions that are under the control of Hindu radicals, local government officials oppose Christianity.
- **Ethnic or Clan group leaders (Strong):** In most states and regions, Hindus will dominate the local authorities and oppose Christians.
- **Non-Christian religious leaders (Strong):** Local Hindu leaders will strongly support anti-Christian measures from the government.
- **Violent religious groups (Strong):** Radical Hindu groups like RSS and VHS are hostile towards Christians.
- **Normal citizens (Strong):** Hindu mobs will support the BJP government. They have been encouraged to increase their attacks on Christians since this can more or less be done with impunity.
- **Political parties (Strong):** The BJP is a master in using modern technology and social media to promote its agenda. It is also skilled at creating fake news to attack opponents with. One Hindu leader stated publicly in 2014 that Muslims and Christians should be [removed](#) from India by 2021 (Mail Online India, 19 December 2014).

**Drivers of Ethno-religious hostility**(*Ethno-religious hostility* is greatly influenced by *Religious nationalism* - both engines are strongly blended.)

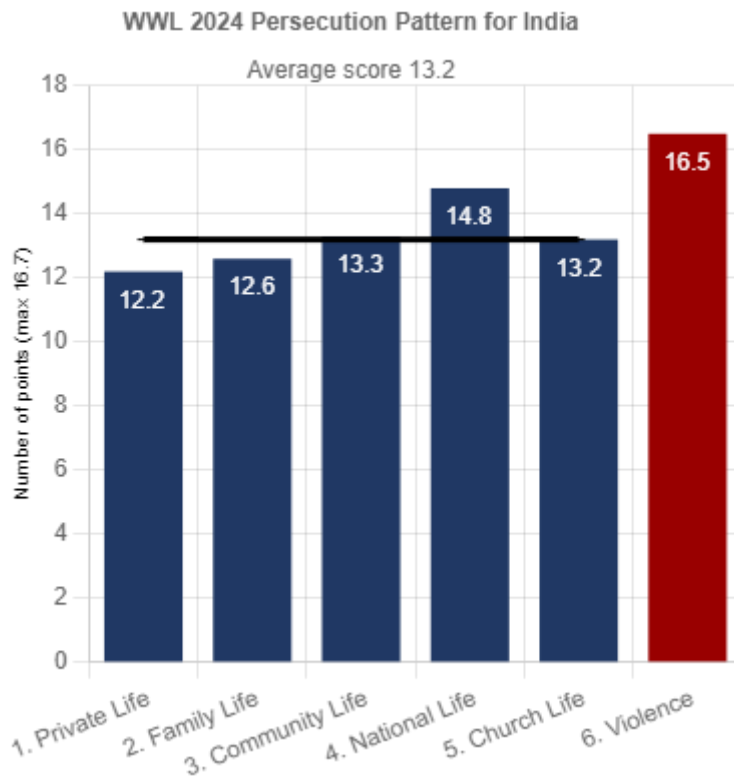
- **Ethnic or Clan group leaders (Strong):** Most ethnic groups in India are traditionally Hindus. They will strongly oppose any Christian presence in their midst.

- **Non-Christian religious leaders (Strong):** Local Hindu leaders are generally hostile to any Christian presence in their communities.
- **Violent religious groups (Strong):** Militant Hindu groups at the local level are intolerant of any Christian presence in their areas of influence.
- **Normal citizens (Strong):** Local ethnic people are per tradition Hindus. Quite often they form mobs to attack Christians in their villages. Their view is that no one should leave the faith of the fathers.
- **Family members (Strong):** Local ethnic families strongly oppose conversion to Christianity. No one should leave the faith of the fathers.
- **Government officials (Medium):** At the local level, government officials will oppose Christians. They regard them as not belonging to the ethnic group whose culture traditionally is Hindu. There is a close link to *Religious nationalism*.

#### Drivers of Clan oppression

- **Government officials (Strong):** At the local level, councils and police will side with the majority tribal group. This means Christians may often face opposition.
- **Ethnic or Clan group leaders (Strong):** Some tribal leaders are strongly opposed to the main religions in India. This not only affects Christianity and Islam, but occasionally also Hinduism, especially where Hindu radicals have put pressure on tribal people to accept Hinduism. This has led to conflicts.
- **Normal citizens (Strong):** Tribal people will do their best to protect their own culture and resist conversion to Christianity. This has already led to violence.
- **Family members (Strong):** Tribal families will oppose any conversion of one of their members away from their traditional faith. This may result in house arrest and violence for Christian converts.
- **Non-Christian religious leaders (Medium):** Hindu radicals will put pressure on tribal people to accept Hinduism as the default religion and attack other religions. (Most of the time, the level of pressure from tribal religions on Christians is much less.)
- **Violent religious groups (Medium):** Tribes may have their own ancestral beliefs, or have accepted Hinduism (especially under pressure from Hindu radicals). Militant tribal groups are actively hostile towards Christians.

## The Persecution pattern



The WWL 2024 Persecution pattern for India shows:

- The average pressure on Christians is at a very high level (13.2 points), more or less the same score as in WWL 2023. Oppression by Hindus against Christians (especially against converts) is present at all levels of society, ranging from the private 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 11 states. Threats are issued and church meetings are disturbed very frequently.
- Although all other spheres of life show very high levels of pressure, pressure is extremely high in the *National sphere of life*. Christians experience increasing restrictions with more states considering the introduction of anti-conversion legislation to put an end to conversion allegedly 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 increased to 16.5 points in WWL 2024. The WWL 2024 reporting period marked exceptional violence against Christians in Manipur. This outburst of violence was not typical for India.

## Pressure in the 5 spheres of life

*In each of the five spheres of life discussed below, four questions have been selected from the WWL 2024 questionnaire for brief commentary and explanation. The selection usually (but not always) reflects the highest scoring elements. In some cases, an additional paragraph per sphere is included to give further information deemed important. (To see how individual questions are scored on a scale of 0-4 points, please see the “WWL Scoring example” in the WWL Methodology, available at: <https://opendoorsanalytical.org/world-watch-list-documentation/>, password: freedom).*

## Pressure in Block 1 / Private sphere

### **Block 1.8: It has been risky for Christians to speak about their faith with those other than immediate family (extended family, others). (3.50 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.

### **Block 1.1: Conversion has been opposed, forbidden, or punishable, including conversion from one type of Christianity to another. (3.25 points)**

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, congregations etc. Accusations of conversion usually lead to physical violence, and then Christians are taken to police post on charges of 'forced conversion' and detained there. Anti-conversion laws are in force in eleven out of 28 states, namely: Arunachal Pradesh, Odisha, Madhya Pradesh, Chhattisgarh, Rajasthan, Gujarat, Himachal Pradesh, Jharkhand, Uttarakhand, Haryana and Karnataka (see above: *Political and legal landscape*). 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 the impossibility to obtain missionary visas for foreign Christians and the large-scale 'home-coming campaign' (Ghar Wapsi) organized by Hindu radicals all over India.

### **Block 1.4: It has been risky for Christians to reveal their faith in written forms of personal expression (including expressions in blogs and Facebook etc.). (3.25 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 bearing Christian content. At first only converts were targeted, but now all Christian messages can expect to be under attack.

### **Block 1.5: It has been risky for Christians to display Christian images or symbols. (3.25 points)**

Christians displaying Christian symbols (e.g., a cross) have come under increasing pressure from Hindu radicals in India. Christian symbols are regarded as yet another tool for evangelism, as in: "You can see I am a Christian and if you want to know more about my faith, just talk to me". Christian symbols are also an identification tool. It makes it easy for Hindu radicals to know who their targets are. As a result, Christians all over India are increasingly cautious to display such symbols. This question is not about displaying Christian symbols on buildings - this is taken care of in another question in Block 4.



## Pressure in Block 2 / Family sphere

### **Block 2.6: Christian couples have been hindered in adopting children or serving as foster parents because of their faith. (3.75 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.

### **Block 2.8: Christian children have been pressured into attending anti-Christian or majority religion teaching at any level of education. (3.50 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.

### **Block 2.4: Christian baptisms have been hindered. (3.25 points)**

Due to the enormous pressure from Hindu radicals, baptisms in India have become low-key celebrations. 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.

### **Block 2.13: Christians have lost their inheritance rights because of their conversion to Christianity or (if a person already was a Christian) other types of Christianity. (3.25 points)**

The law allows for disinheritance due to conversion and this is a common issue with new converts to the faith.

## Pressure in Block 3 / Community sphere

### **Block 3.2: Christians have been monitored by their local communities or by private groups (this includes reporting to police, being shadowed, telephone lines listened to, emails read/censored, etc.). (3.75 points)**

Over the past five years, the monitoring of Christians and their activities has increased. This is being implemented by the community authorities and members, but also by various Hindu organizations (Bajrang Dal, Hindu Yuva Vahini, Shiv Sena, Vishwa Hindu Parishad, etc.) The goal is to stop any form of missionary activity.

**Block 3.7: Christians have been pressured by their community to renounce their faith. (3.50 points)**

Local communities 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.

**Block 3.4: Christians been hindered in sharing community resources because of their faith (e.g. clean drinking water). (3.25 points)**

Christians often find themselves barred from the social life of the village community and are sometimes forced to flee their homes. Many incidents of social discrimination have been reported where, for instance, the access of Christians to drinking water and other community resources including land for cattle etc. has been cut off. Probably the most serious type of hindrance is the denial of access to community sharing of labor. And if a social boycott is implemented, it means that Christians will not get any work and their livelihood is severely impacted.

**Block 3.5: Christians have been put under pressure to take part in non-Christian religious ceremonies or community events. (3.25 points)**

Christians who do not take part in Hindu village festivals are at least required to make monetary 'donations' towards the Hindu festivals and often face violence if they object.

## Pressure in Block 4 / National sphere

**Block 4.1: The Constitution (or comparable national or state law) limits freedom of religion as formulated in Article 18 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. (4.00 points)**

Anti-conversion laws are in force in 11 Indian states (see above: *Political and legal landscape*). These laws regulate and limit religious freedom. Article 25 of the Indian Constitution, which gives religious freedom, is itself subject to public order which has not been defined. Thus, the sub-clause to Article 25 gives state authorities permission to formulate laws which restrict the freedom of religion.

**Block 4.9: Christian civil society organizations or political parties have been hindered in their functioning or forbidden because of their Christian convictions. (4.00 points)**

Hindu radicals have increasingly limited the options for Christians to operate such organizations or political parties over the past five years. Christian political parties continue to be a seasonal phenomenon without any impact. Christian organizations receiving funds from abroad have always been restricted through the Foreign Currency Regulation Act because they are viewed as engaging in proselytization or advocacy related activities. Many Christian groups and organizations received requests from the authorities to give details of their activities, including the names of all the workers as well as those who have ever worked with them. Some schools run by religious minorities have also been asked to give the names of Christian students.

**Block 4.10: Media reporting has been incorrect or biased against Christians. (4.00 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.

**Block 4.11: Christians have been subjected to smear campaigns or hate speech. (4.00 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 2014 hoping to [eradicate Islam and Christianity](#) from India by 2021 (Mail Online India, 19 December 2014). That 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 regularly blaming Christians for luring Hindus to convert to Christianity. Disinformation about Christians on social media during the COVID-19 pandemic (when the use of social media increased immensely) led to an increase in attacks against Christians.

## Pressure in Block 5 / Church sphere

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

**Block 5.8: Christian preaching, teaching and/or published materials have been monitored. (4.00 points)**

Hindu extremists and local authorities monitor Christian materials (including digital material on the Internet) very closely. They will also constantly monitor the movements of evangelists and Christian workers.

**Block 5.20: It has been risky for churches or Christian organizations to speak out against instigators of persecution. (4.00 points)**

The risk to speak out against the attackers of Christians has risen in recent years. Hindu radicals have been emboldened by the inaction of the central government. They feel they can carry out their atrocities with impunity. In social media, death-threats, trolls, leaking of personal information on media and emotional attacks on families have risen. To speak out against the

Hindu radicals behind this (or against the far from impartial judiciary) will only act as an incentive for such attacks against Christians to be intensified.

### **Block 5.5: Churches have been hindered from organizing Christian activities outside church buildings. (3.75 points)**

In many areas, the organizing of Christian activities in public has become very difficult and very unsafe. Hindu radicals tend to immediately regard outdoor events as a form of evangelism and are likely to react aggressively.

## **Violence**

*Violence is defined in WWL Methodology as the deprivation of physical freedom or as bodily harm to Christians or damage to their property. It includes severe threats (mental abuse). The table is based on reported cases as much as possible, but since many incidents go unreported, the numbers must be understood as being minimum figures. The following 5 points should be considered when using the data provided in the Block 6 table:*

### **1. Some incidents go unreported because the Christians involved choose not to speak about the hostility being faced.**

*Possible reasons for this may be:*

- *Doing so would expose them to more attacks. For example, if a family member is killed because of his/her faith, the survivors might decide to keep silent about the circumstances of the killing to avoid provoking any further attacks.*
- *In some circumstances, the reticence to pass on information may be due to the danger of exposure caused by converts returning to their previous faith.*
- *If persecution is related to sexual violence - due to stigma, survivors often do not tell even their closest relatives.*
- *In some cultural settings, if your loved one is killed, you might be under the obligation to take revenge. Christians not wishing to do that, may decide to keep quiet about it.*

### **2. Other incidents go unreported for the following possible reasons**

- *Some incidents never reach the public consciousness, because no one really knows about it; or the incident is simply not considered worth reporting; or media coverage is deliberately blocked or distorted; or media coverage is not deliberately blocked, but the information somehow gets lost; or the incidents are deliberately not reported widely for security reasons (e.g. for the protection of local church leaders).*
- *In situations where Christians have been discriminated against for many years, armed conflict can make them additionally vulnerable. Christians killed in areas where fighting regularly takes place are unlikely to be reported separately. Examples in recent years have been Sudan, Syria and Myanmar.*
- *Christians who die through the deprivation of basic necessities such as clean water and medical care (due to long-term discrimination) are unlikely to be reported separately. Christians are not always killed directly; they can be so squeezed by regulations and other oppressive factors that they die – not at once, but in the course of years. This often includes the deprivation of basic necessities such as clean water and medical care, or exclusion from government assisted socio-economic development projects. These numbers could be immense.*

### **3. The use of symbolic numbers**

*In cases where it has been impossible to count exactly, a symbolic round figure (10\*, 100\* etc.) is given and indicated with an asterisk. A symbolic number of 10\* could in reality even be 100 or more but the real number is uncertain. A symbolic number of 100\* could go well over 1000 but the real number is uncertain. A symbolic number of 1,000\* could go well over 10,000 but, again, the real number is uncertain. The same applies for symbolic numbers 10,000\*, 100,000\* and 1,000,000\*: Each could indicate much higher numbers, but WWL chooses to be cautious because the real number is uncertain.*

<b>India: Violence scores per Block 6 question in questionnaire</b>	<b>WWL 2024</b>	<b>WWL 2023</b>
6.1 How many Christians have been killed for faith-related reasons (including state sanctioned executions)?	160	17
6.2 How many churches or public Christian properties (schools, hospitals, cemeteries, etc.) have been attacked, damaged, bombed, looted, destroyed, burned down, closed or confiscated for faith-related reasons?	2228	67
6.3 How many Christians have been detained for faith-related reasons?	2085	1711
6.4 How many Christians have been sentenced to jail, labor camp, sent to psychiatric hospital as punishment, or similar things for faith-related reasons?	247	39
6.5 How many Christians have been abducted for faith-related reasons (including Christians missing in a persecution context)?	8	9
6.6 How many Christians have been raped or otherwise sexually harassed for faith-related reasons?	35	9
6.7 How many cases have there been of forced marriages of Christians to non-Christians?	10	34
6.8 How many Christians have been otherwise physically or mentally abused for faith-related reasons (including beatings and death threats)?	10000 *	10000 *
6.9 How many houses of Christians or other property (excluding shops) have been attacked, damaged, bombed, looted, destroyed, burned down or confiscated for faith-related reasons?	5878	180
6.10 How many shops or businesses of Christians have been attacked, damaged, bombed, looted, destroyed, burned down, closed or confiscated for faith-related reasons?	1572	37
6.11 How many Christians have been forced to leave their homes or go into hiding in-country for faith-related reasons?	62119	834
6.12 How many Christians have been forced to leave the country for faith-related reasons?	110	0

The numbers for Christians killed and for churches or public Christian properties attacked were much higher in the WWL 2024 reporting period than in WWL 2023. The same applies to houses of Christians or other property attacked, shops or businesses of Christians attacked, and Christians forcibly displaced from their homes. The media is often biased and even if Christians report the persecution they face, the media simply ignores them or entirely focuses on the perpetrators in an attempt to either lie about the persecution or attempt to justify the perpetrator's position by spreading suspicion and hate towards Christians.

## 5 Year trends

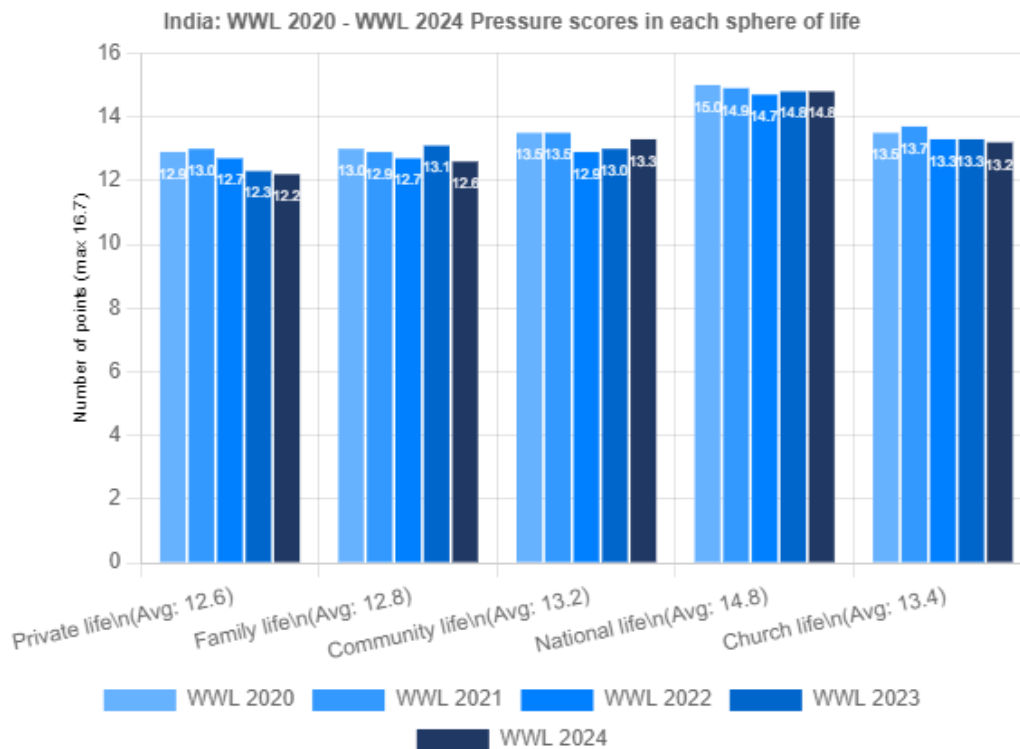
The following three charts show the levels of pressure and violence faced by Christians in the country over the last five WWL reporting periods.

### 5 Year trends: Average pressure

India: WWL 2020 - WWL 2024	Average pressure over 5 Spheres of life
2024	13.2
2023	13.3
2022	13.3
2021	13.6
2020	13.6

A very large increase in pressure was visible in the years directly after the current government of Prime Minister Narendra Modi was first elected in 2014. However, over the past five reporting periods, the average pressure against Christians in India has been very high, but stable – with all scores within the range of 13.2-13.6 points. The score for average pressure in WWL 2024 was nearly the same as in WWL 2023, an indication that the situation in the country has not improved for Christians.

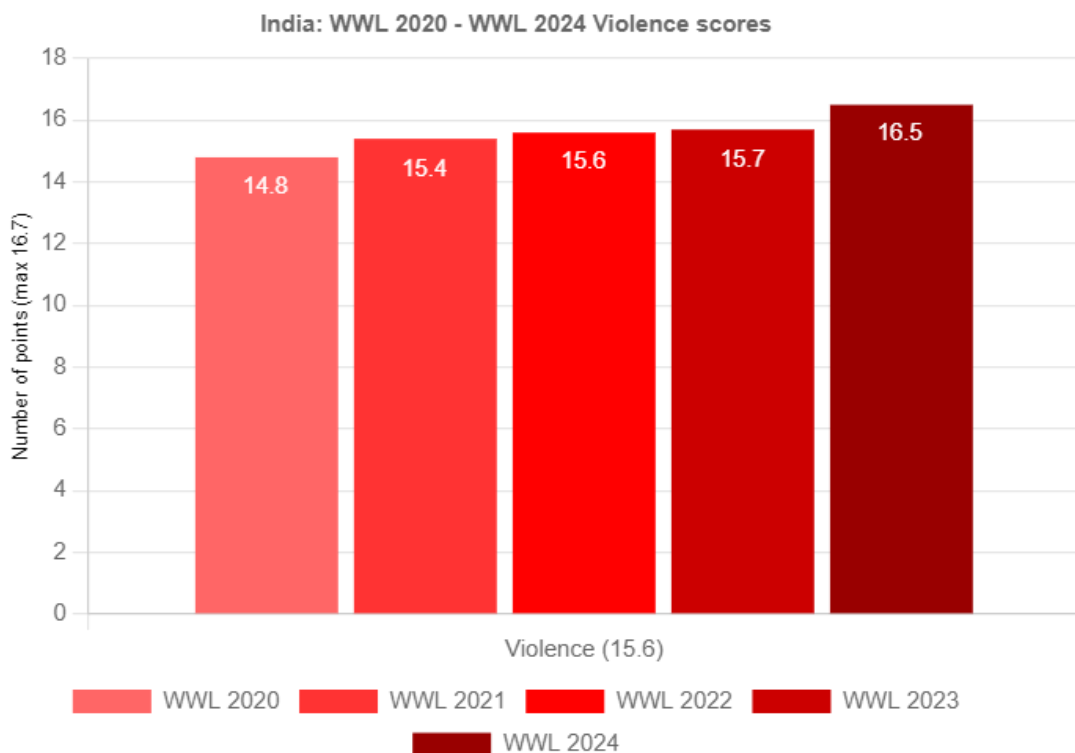
### 5 Year trends: Pressure in each sphere of life



Over the past five years the scores for pressure in most of the five spheres of life have remained very high, with extremely high scores in the *National sphere*. This means that the situation for Christians in the country has been constantly problematic under Prime Minister Modi's leadership and is not getting better.

- Pressure in the *Private sphere of life* over the past five years has always been very high - it has never been lower than 12.2 points.
- Pressure in the *Family sphere of life* has also been very high over the past five years. It started at 13.0 points in WWL 2019, and more or less stayed at that level. In WWL 2024 it was 12.6 points.
- Pressure in the *Community sphere of life* peaked at 13.5 points in WWLs 2020-2021. In WWL 2022 it went down to 12.9 points but increased to 13.3 points in WWL 2024.
- Over the past 5 years pressure in the *National sphere of life* has been extremely high. In WWL 2020 it reached 15.0 points. In WWL 2022 the score dropped to the still extreme level of 14.7 points. It increased to 14.8 in WWL 2023 and WWL 2024.
- Pressure in the *Church sphere of life* peaked in WWL 2021 at 13.7 points. It went slightly down to 13.2 points in WWL 2024.

## 5 Year trends: Violence against Christians



For a country that describes itself as the world's largest democracy the level of violence against Christians over the past five years has been extremely high, with yearly scores increasing to almost maximum level. The greatest force behind this has been the radical Hindu groups that are aiming at eradicating 'alien' religions (such as Islam and Christianity) from the country. They have been able to carry out their violence (including killings) with impunity as the BJP govern-



ment in New Delhi and various states hardly ever take action against such hostility.

## Gender-specific religious persecution / Female

Group	Female Pressure Points
Economic	-
Political and Legal	Denied custody of children; Forced divorce; Forced marriage
Security	Abduction; Incarceration by family (house arrest); Trafficking; Violence – physical; Violence – sexual
Social and Cultural	Violence – psychological; Violence – Verbal
Technological	-

The ongoing conflict in the north-eastern state of Manipur has resulted in forced displacement of tens of thousands of people, destruction of churches and Christian properties, and many deaths. Alarmingly, there were increased reports of abduction, rape, torture and murder of Christian women. Whilst termed an ethnic conflict, there has been a noticeable undercurrent of religious intolerance. Christian women carry multiple vulnerabilities in this conflict due to their gender and faith, with Geeta Pandey, a BBC reporter in Delhi, explaining “women’s bodies have become a battleground” ([BBC News, 20 July 2023](#)).

There have been numerous brutal and violent attacks on women in Manipur, intentionally undertaken to inflict trauma and humiliation. In many of the cases the state police were either bystanders to violence inflicted on women and girls, or were complicit in the crime by handing over the victims to the mob. Just one example is from 4 May 2023, when two Christian Kuki women were filmed being paraded naked by a mob, groped and later gang raped ([BBC News, 20 July 2023](#); [Stream, 26 July 2023](#)). Other women and girls have been sexually abused and brutally murdered. The footage of the Kuki women sparked outrage in India and globally, highlighting the complicity of the police and culture of impunity in Manipur. This has placed the authorities under pressure to act swiftly to prosecute perpetrators and bring justice to the survivors, especially those from minority Christian groups.

In the wider Indian context, Christian women, especially converts, continue to face additional challenges. In addition to enduring harsh treatment in a society which has traditionally favored boys to girls, practiced child marriage, and restricted access to education and employment, Christian women and girls face persecution from the communities they have left. As noted above, such persecution often targets their physical body through molestation, rape and sexual harassment. Daughters, sisters and wives of pastors are particularly vulnerable. Shame is a very powerful force in Indian society, with sexual attacks being seen to corrode the honor and prestige of her whole family. Young Christian women and girls are particularly vulnerable in tribal areas to sexual predation, and those who are easy identifiable, such as Catholic nuns, often become victims of violence. In many states, Christian women were frequently shamed for not wearing (Hindu) symbols connoting a married woman, such as bangles, *mangalsutra* (a necklace)

and vermilion on the forehead. Christian women were often labelled (mostly by Hindu women) as prostitutes or loose women for not displaying these symbols.

Physical attacks on Christian women have historically included acid attacks, brutal beatings, including with the butt of a gun, and killings. While both male and female converts face pressures if their faith is discovered, female converts are more vulnerable to domestic violence, placing them under extreme pressure to give up their faith in Jesus. Those who convert to Christianity are also at risk of losing custody of their children, causing lasting emotional distress. Christian women risk incarceration (house arrest) by their family, abduction, forced marriage, and forced divorce. A country expert comments: “Women and girls are targeted more because they are likely to not being able to retaliate. In families of Christian leaders, often his wife and his daughters are attacked or abused when they are alone”.

## Gender-specific religious persecution / Male

Group	Male Pressure Points
Economic	Denied inheritance or possessions; Economic harassment via business/job/work access; Economic harassment via fines
Political and Legal	False charges; Imprisonment by government
Security	Forced out of home – expulsion; Forced to flee town/country; Violence – death; Violence – physical
Social and Cultural	Denied food or water; Violence – psychological; Violence – Verbal
Technological	-

Despite legal protection, Christian men who are discovered talking about Christianity or choosing to adhere to the Christian faith are likely to be subjected to violence in many forms across most Indian states. 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), or head of the church. Violations against men includes brutal beatings, killings via mob violence and emotional torture such as being forced to watch family members being assaulted.

Church leaders are particularly vulnerable; being a pastor continues to be understood to be one of the riskiest vocations in the country today. For example, a country expert shares that “young Christians and itinerant pastors are subject to abuse and various forms of torture, including forcible tonsuring of the hair ... and being [forced] to swallow the excrement and urine of the cow”. Another male Christian leader was interrogated by police and “humiliated for conducting prayer at his house. He was threatened not to do any sort of prayer in the house.” Hindu radicals target Christian leaders and their families in order to set an example to the wider Christian community. Fear grows with each attack.

Economic deprivation takes the form of unjust fines and being detained for extended periods of time. Social boycott (including boycott from labor-sharing) is also a significant mode of economic

deprivation that Christians face in rural areas. As men are the main providers this can throw the whole family into poverty. It also serves to dishearten the local community. False charges are often brought against men, such as accusations of blasphemy, attempting to convert Hindus, molestation or rape of women, or denigrating Hindu gods and goddesses. These charges are usually brought against pastors and preachers. Imprisonment of Christians carries a stigma which falls on their family as well. A country expert explained that “police torture can include being denied food and water, or beatings.” Whilst most detainees are released after a few days, some cases drag on for years.

## Persecution of other religious minorities

Hindu-Muslim violence in Haryana Nuh (Livemint, 1 August 2023):

- On 31 July 2023 [communal violence erupted between Hindus and Muslims](#) in Nuh region of Haryana. The Vishwa Hindu Parishad held a procession through the Muslim dominated area which was disrupted by stone-throwing. In reaction, religious sites were vandalized and shops were torched and looted; six people were killed and more than 70 injured. Violence spread to many other parts of the state through an apparently well-orchestrated plan.

According to HRW 2023 India country chapter:

- “The Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP)-led government continued its systematic discrimination and stigmatization of religious and other minorities, particularly Muslims.”
- “In October [2022], police in Gujarat publicly flogged Muslim men accused of disrupting a Hindu festival in a form of abusive punishment while authorities in Madhya Pradesh demolished the homes of three men accused of throwing stones at a Hindu ceremonial dance, without any legal authorization.”

“In June [2022], a BJP politician’s remarks against the Prophet Mohammed led to widespread protests by Muslims across the country. Police in Jharkhand allegedly used excessive force against protesters, killing two people, while authorities in Uttar Pradesh illegally demolished homes of Muslims suspected of being ‘key conspirators’ behind protest violence.”

“In April [2022], authorities in Madhya Pradesh, Gujarat, and Delhi summarily demolished property mostly owned by Muslims in response to communal clashes. Although they tried to justify the demolitions by claiming the structures were illegal, the destruction appeared intended to be collective punishment for Muslims.”

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

- “The Associated Press (AP) reported that police arrested ‘dozens’ of Shiite Muslims in Srinagar, Jammu and Kashmir on August 7 [2022], as they took part in processions without permits marking the Muslim month of Muharram. The AP said that the Muslims were defying security restrictions in the area, which included a ban on Shiite mourning processions during Muharram that had been in effect for the previous 25 years.”
- A “crowd attacked a group of six Sikh pilgrims from Punjab in Bihar on January 16 [2022] because they refused to donate money for the construction of a Hindu temple.”

## Future outlook

The outlook for Christians as viewed through the lens of:

### Religious nationalism

Hindu extremists are often engaged in violence against Muslims and Christians. In the past, large-scale pogroms cost many Muslims and Christians their lives. So far, radical Hindus have been able to carry out their attacks with impunity, and as Prime Minister Modi won the May 2019 elections, it turned out that militant Hindus felt encouraged to step up their plans for further violence, and will continue doing so.

### 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 out-maneuvering their opponents. With the BJP at the helm after the May 2019 electoral victory, militant Hindus 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.

### Ethno-religious hostility

Hindus from an ethnic minority background will in all likelihood continue to oppose any Christian presence in their communities. With the re-election of the BJP government, tribal Hindus may even increase levels of violence against Christians.

### Clan oppression

Tribal people will continue to cling on to their traditional faith and culture. Hindu radicals will support them in this as they consider tribal religions to be part of the indigenous culture of India – in contrast to ‘alien’ religions like Islam and Christianity. It can therefore be expected that tribal people will continue to exert pressure on converts and those Christians they accuse of luring their people into a faith that is not part of their traditions.

## External Links - Persecution Dynamics

- Persecution engines description: suspension of over 140 MPs - <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2023/dec/19/indian-government-accused-attack-democracy-mps-suspended-modi-bjp?ref=upstract.com>
- Drivers of persecution description: 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>
- Block 4.11: Christians have been subjected to smear campaigns or hate speech. (4.00 points): 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-specific religious persecution Female description: BBC News, 20 July 2023 - <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-asia-india-66253389>
- Gender-specific religious persecution Female description: BBC News, 20 July 2023 - <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-asia-india-66253389>
- Gender-specific religious persecution Female description: Stream, 26 July 2023 - <https://stream.org/christian-women-abused-in-india/>

- Persecution of other religious minorities: communal violence erupted between Hindus and Muslims - <https://www.livemint.com/news/india/nuh-violence-what-triggered-communal-tension-in-haryana-explained-11690856276953.html>

## Further useful reports

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

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

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

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

An advocacy report is available on the Open Doors UK&I website:

- <https://www.opendoorsuk.org/about/how-we-help/advocacy/uk-india-resource-booklet.pdf>.