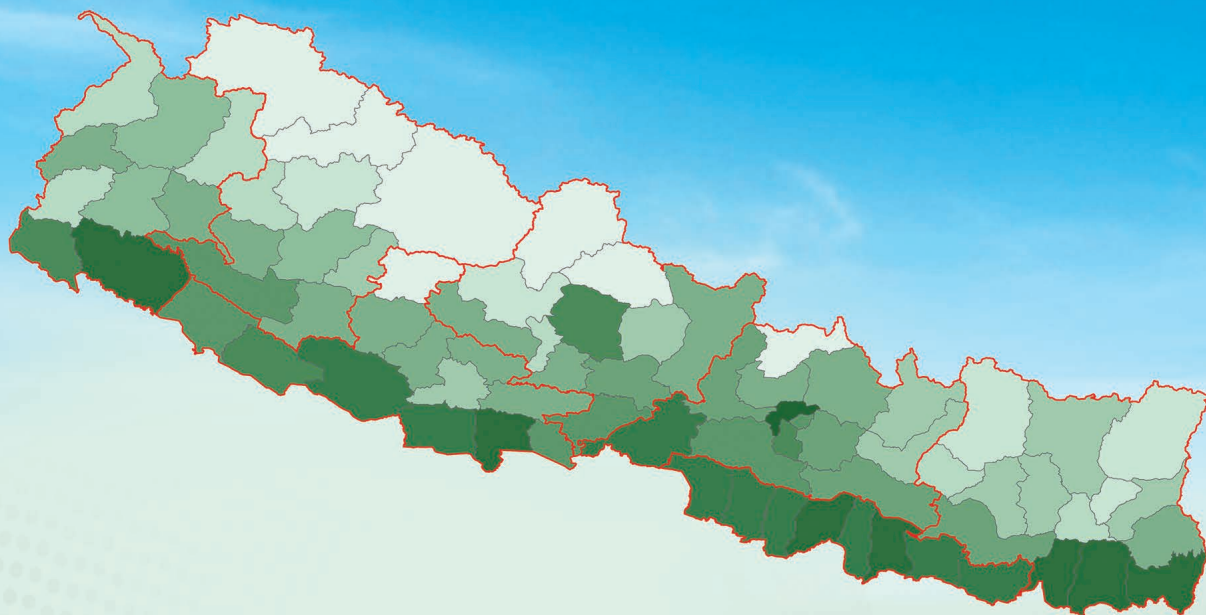
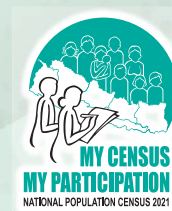


National Population and Housing Census 2021

Religions in Nepal



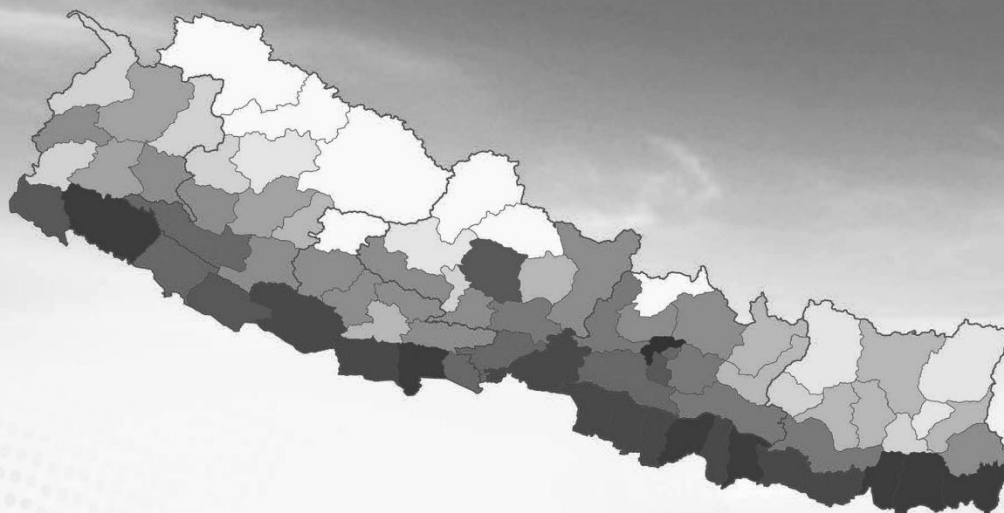
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Thapathali, Kathmandu



Thematic Report- XIII

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Tel: 5365323, 5341801, 5328406, 5345946 (47, 48) Fax No.: 977-1-5327720

E-mail: info@nsonepal.gov.np, Website: www.nsonepal.gov.np

E-mail: popcen@nsonepal.gov.np, Website: www.censusnepal.cbs.gov.np

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Cover Map: Population distribution by district, NPHC 2021



Government of Nepal
Office of the Prime Minister and Council of Ministers
National Statistics Office

Phone { 5345946
5345947
5345948
5341801
5328406

Fax: 977-1-5327720
Post Box No.: 11031
Thapathali, Kathmandu

Ref. No.



Foreword

The National Population and Housing Census (NPHC) is the only source that consistently provides demographic and housing data down to the lowest administrative unit, i.e., the Ward. To meet the needs of a broad range of users, we have included brief explanations of the data in our reports. Over the years, the National Statistics Office (NSO) has focused not just on statistical reports but also on valuable analytical ones that cater to a wide audience, both within and outside the country. The production and dissemination of quality statistics are not merely public goods but national resources in the data and information age.

The NSO is committed to serving as the central provider of high-quality official statistics to support informed decision-making. In the past, the former Central Bureau of Statistics (CBS) published population monographs following the release of all statistical results. This time, however, 21 thematic reports will be published, each focusing on key sectors of the national development plan.

I am pleased to present the long-awaited report *Religions in Nepal*. Religion patterns are shaped by historical, cultural, social, political, and demographic factors. These patterns significantly influence social structures, political dynamics, community cohesion, value systems, and individual identities. Understanding religious trends is crucial for policymakers to formulate inclusive policies on cultural rights, social integration, and interfaith harmony, thereby fostering a respectful, pluralistic, and politically stable society.

I extend my appreciation to all contributors for their dedication in bringing this important analysis to light. I am confident that these findings will guide policymakers and planners in shaping development strategies for a more prosperous and sustainable future.

I would like to specifically commend the Population Section staff for their tireless efforts in generating data, providing support, and reviewing the report. The Head of the Social Statistics Division at NSO played a crucial role in coordinating all activities, and I greatly appreciate his contributions. Special thanks to religion experts Dr. Janak Rai and Dr. Uddhav Sigdel for analyzing crucial data and presenting important findings, and to Mr. Uttam Narayan Malla, former Director General of the Central Bureau of Statistics, for reviewing the report from a government perspective. I also acknowledge the technical support provided by the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA). Additionally, I extend my gratitude to the British Embassy Kathmandu and the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC) for their financial support at various stages of this report's development.

Lastly, I encourage constructive feedback from our users to improve future editions of this report.

April 2025

Maddhu Sudan Burlakoti
Chief Statistician

LIST OF CONTRIBUTORS

S.N.	Name and Designation	Organization	Role
1.	Mr. Maddhu Sudan Burlakoti, <i>Chief Statistician</i>	National Statistics Office, Thapathali Kathmandu	Overall supervision
2.	Mr. Dhundiraj Lamichhane, <i>Deputy Chief Statistician</i>	National Statistics Office, Thapathali Kathmandu	Quality assurance and data processing/Reviewer
3.	Dr. Hem Raj Regmi, <i>Former Deputy Chief Statistician</i>	National Statistics Office, Thapathali Kathmandu	Reviewer
4.	Dr. Janak Rai, Associate Professor	Central Department of Anthropology, TU	Analyst
5.	Dr. Uddhav Sigdel, Associate Professor	Central Department of Population Studies, TU	Analyst
6.	Mr. Uttam Narayan Malla, <i>Former Director General, CBS</i>	Freelance Statistician	Reviewer
7.	Mr. Rajan Silwal, <i>Director</i>	National Statistics Office, Thapathali, Kathmandu	Reviewer
8.	Mr. Binod Sharan Acharya, <i>Director</i>	National Statistics Office, Thapathali, Kathmandu	Reviewer
9.	Mr. Deenanath Lamsal, <i>Statistics Officer</i>	National Statistics Office, Thapathali, Kathmandu	Data management
10.	Mr. Dol Narayan Shreshtha, <i>Computer Officer</i>	National Statistics Office, Thapathali, Kathmandu	Data and statistical table generation
11.	Mr. Kapil Dhital, <i>Statistics Officer</i>	National Statistics Office, Thapathali, Kathmandu	Support
12.	Mr. Ashok Neupane, <i>Statistics Assistant</i>	National Statistics Office, Thapathali, Kathmandu	Support

Additional Support

1.	Mr. Atul Joshi	Map Designer	Map generation
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कार्यकारी सारांश

यस विषयगत अध्ययनले राष्ट्रिय जनगणना २०७८ को धर्मसम्बन्धी तथ्याङ्क विश्लेषण गरी नेपालको धार्मिक विविधता, साथै जनगणनामा सूचित भएका १० ओटा धर्मको सामाजिक-आर्थिक तथा जनसाङ्ख्यिक विशेषताहरूबारे विस्तृत जानकारी प्रदान गर्ने उद्देश्य राखेको छ। राष्ट्रिय जनगणना २०७८ अनुसार नेपालमा १० ओटा धर्महरू अनुशरण गरिएका छन् र तिनमा हिन्दु, बौद्ध, इस्लाम, किराँत, इसाई, प्रकृति, बोन, जैन, सिख र बहाइ रहेका छन्। नेपालको धार्मिक विविधता विशेषगरी पर्यावरणीय, जातीय, तथा भाषिक विविधतासँग अन्तरसम्बन्धित रहेको देखिन्छ। विभिन्न जातीय तथा भाषिक समूहहरूद्वारा अवलम्बन गरिने धर्ममा विविधता रहेको छ।

जनगणनाको व्यक्तिगत तहको विश्लेषण २ करोड ९१ लाख जनसङ्ख्या आधारित छ भने घरपरिवारसम्बन्धी विश्लेषण २०७८ को जनगणनामा समेटिएका ६,६६०,८४१ गैरसंस्थागत घरपरिवारहरूमा आधारित छ। यस विषयगत प्रतिवेदनले विगत आठओटा जनगणनामा धर्मको जनसङ्ख्यामा आएको परिवर्तन, धर्मावलम्बीहरूको जनसाङ्ख्यिक विशेषताहरू, सामाजिक-सांस्कृतिक तथा आर्थिक अवस्था साथै सात प्रदेशहरूमा धार्मिक विविधताको विश्लेषण गरेको छ।

धर्मको जनसङ्ख्या र कालक्रमिक परिवर्तन

वि.सं. २०७८ को जनगणनाअनुसार नेपालमा हिन्दु धर्म अनुयायीको सङ्ख्याको आधारमा प्रमुख धर्म हो जुन कुल जनसङ्ख्याको ८१.२ प्रतिशत जनसङ्ख्याले अपनाएको देखिन्छ। सङ्ख्याकै आधारमा नेपालको दोस्रो (८.२%) र तेस्रो (५.१%) ठुलो धर्म क्रमशः बौद्ध र इस्लाम धर्म रहेका छन्। यस्तै, ३.२ प्रतिशत जनसङ्ख्याले किराँत धर्म मान्छन् भने इसाई धर्म १.८ प्रतिशतले र प्रकृति धर्म ०.३ प्रतिशतले अपनाएको देखिन्छ। बोन धर्म मात्रै जनसङ्ख्या ०.२ प्रतिशत छन् भने सिख र जैन धर्मतर्फ प्रत्येकमा ०.०१ प्रतिशत जनसङ्ख्या रहेका छन्। देशभरिमा बहाई धर्मावलम्बी जम्मा ५३७ जना मात्र छन्।

हिन्दु धर्मको कुल जनसङ्ख्या पछिल्ला आठओटा जनगणनामा लगातार बढेको देखिन्छ। तर, वि.सं. २०४८ देखि २०७८ को जनगणना अवधिमा हिन्दु धर्म मात्रै जनसङ्ख्याको प्रतिशतमा गिरावट आएको छ। यद्यपि वि.सं. २०५८ को तुलनामा २०६८ को जनगणनाका बिचमा थोरै वृद्धि भएको देखिन्छ। बौद्ध धर्मको जनसङ्ख्या वि.सं. २००९/११ देखि २०७८ को जनगणनासम्म नै उतार-

चढाव भइरहेको देखिन्छ। वि.सं. २०१८ देखि २०३८ को जनगणनाका विचमा बुद्ध धर्मावलम्बीको जनसङ्ख्या घटेको थियो भने वि.सं. २०४८ र २०६८ को जनगणनामा वृद्धि भएको थियो। वि.सं. २०७८ को जनगणनामा बौद्ध धर्म मान्ने जनसङ्ख्या घटेको देखिन्छ। यसको सम्भावित एउटा कारण बौद्ध धर्मावलम्बीहरूले अन्य धर्म अनुशरण गरेको हुनसक्छ।

इस्लाम तथा इसाई धर्मको जनसङ्ख्या वि.सं. २००९/११ देखि वि.सं. २०७८ सम्म लगातार बढिरहेको देखिन्छ। वि.सं. २००९/११ को जनगणनामा इस्लाम धर्म नेपालमा तेस्रो ठुलो धर्म थियो जसको हिस्सा २.५ प्रतिशत थियो। वि.सं. २०७८ सम्ममा यसको जनसङ्ख्या सातगुणाले वृद्धि भएको छ। इसाई धर्म पहिलोपटक १९६१ को जनगणनामा समावेश गरिएको थियो, जहाँ जम्मा ४५८ इसाईहरू समावेश थिए। वि.सं. २०१८ देखि २०३८ सम्म इसाई जनसङ्ख्यामा नौगुणाले वृद्धि भएको थियो।

वि.सं. २०४८ को जनगणनामा तीनओटा रैथाने (Indigenous) धर्म अभिलेखित भएका थिए। किराँत धर्मावलम्बीको हिस्सा वि.सं. २०४८ बाट २०५८ मा तीनगुणाले वृद्धि भएको थियो। यसले वि.सं. २०४६ को राजनीतिक परिवर्तनपछि आदिवासी जनजातिहरू तथा अन्य धार्मिक समूहहरू आआफ्ना मौलिक पहिचान र धर्मप्रति पुनः आकर्षित हुन थालेको प्रवृत्तिलाई उजागर गर्दछ। प्रकृति र बोन धर्म पहिलोपल्ट वि.सं. २०६८ को जनगणनामा अभिलेखन गरिएका थिए। प्रकृति धर्म अनुशरण गर्नेको सङ्ख्या वि.सं. २०६८ को तुलनामा २०७८ मा थोरै घटेको देखिन्छ। यसै अवधिमा बोन धर्म अनुयायीको सङ्ख्या पाँचगुणाले वृद्धि भएको पाइन्छ। अल्पसङ्ख्यक जनसङ्ख्याले अपनाएको जैन, सिख र बहाइ धर्मले विभिन्न जनगणनामा उतारचढावपूर्ण प्रवृत्ति प्रस्तुत गरेको छ।

भौगोलिक क्षेत्रानुसार धार्मिक जनसङ्ख्या वितरण

जनगणनाअनुसार हिमाल, पहाड र तराई क्षेत्रमा १० ओटा धर्मको जनसङ्ख्या वितरण फरक छ। हिन्दु धर्मावलम्बीहरूको बहुमत तराईमा देखिन्छ। तराईपछि पहाडमा हिन्दुहरूको दोस्रो ठुलो हिस्सा रहेको छ। हिन्दुहरूको कुल जनसङ्ख्यामध्ये केवल ५.४ प्रतिशत जनसङ्ख्या हिमाली क्षेत्रमा बसोबास गरेको देखिन्छ। बौद्ध धर्मानुयायीको जनसङ्ख्या पनि तीनओटा प्रदेशमा एकनासले वितरित देखिँदैन। बुद्ध धर्म मान्ने कुल जनसङ्ख्यामध्ये पहाड र हिमालमा ८० प्रतिशत र बाँकी २० प्रतिशत तराईमा बसोबास गरिरहेको देखिन्छ।

इस्लाम धर्मानुयायीको कुल जनसङ्ख्यामध्ये अत्यधिक अर्थात् ९५.२ प्रतिशत तराई क्षेत्रमा बसोबास गर्दछन्। कुल १४ लाख इस्लाम धर्मानुयायी मध्ये निकै सानो हिस्सा (११७२ जना) मात्र हिमाली

क्षेत्रमा र ४.७ प्रतिशत पहाडी क्षेत्रमा बसोबास गर्दछन्। नेपालका कुल इसाई धर्मानुयायीमध्ये ५५.७ प्रतिशत पहाडमा र ३०.४ प्रतिशत तराई क्षेत्रमा बसोबास गरेको देखिन्छ। पहाडी क्षेत्र किराँत, प्रकृति, बोन, बौद्ध तथा इसाई धर्मावलम्बीहरूको प्रमुख बसोबास क्षेत्र हो। पहाडमा किराँत धर्मानुयायीको करिब ५८ प्रतिशत जनसङ्ख्याको बसोबास रहेको देखिन्छ। बोन धर्म मान्नेहरूको अत्यधिक (८४%) हिस्सा पहाडी क्षेत्रमा बस्छन् जबकि ९५ प्रतिशत इस्लाम, ८१ प्रतिशत बहाई र ७५ प्रतिशत सिख जनसङ्ख्या तराई क्षेत्रमा बस्छन्।

नेपालको कुल जनसङ्ख्याको केवल ६.१ प्रतिशत हिस्सा मात्र हिमाली क्षेत्रमा रहेको छ। नेपालमा अस्तित्वमा रहेका १० मध्ये कुनै पनि धर्मको यस क्षेत्रमा सर्वाधिक ठुलो हिस्सा रहेको देखिँदैन। बौद्ध, किराँत, प्रकृति, बोन र इसाई धर्मको उच्च उपस्थिति पहाडमा रहेको छ। हिन्दु, इस्लाम र अल्पसङ्ख्यक जनसङ्ख्याले अनुशरण गरेका अरू (जैन, बहाई र सिख) धर्महरूको घनत्व तराई क्षेत्रमा उच्चतम देखिन्छ।

प्रदेशअनुसार धार्मिक जनसङ्ख्या वितरण

देशका सातओटै प्रदेशमा विभिन्न धर्मावलम्बीहरूको वितरण असमान देखिन्छ। नेपालका २ करोड ३७ लाख हिन्दुहरू सातै प्रदेशमा फैलिएका छन्। मधेस, बागमती र लुम्बिनी प्रदेशमा हिन्दुहरू तुलनात्मक रूपमा उच्च अनुपातमा छन्। कर्णाली प्रदेशमा ९४ प्रतिशत जनसङ्ख्या हिन्दु धर्म मान्ने भएकाले अन्य नौ धर्मको जनसङ्ख्यालाई उछिन्दै हिन्दु धर्म यहाँ पनि सङ्ख्याका आधारमा प्रमुख धर्मको रूपमा रहेको छ।

अरू धर्मको पनि प्रादेशिकस्तरमा सघनता फरक फरक देखिन्छ। बौद्ध र क्रिश्चियन धर्मावलम्बीहरू बागमती प्रदेशमा, किराँत, जैन र बहाई कोशी प्रदेशमा, इस्लाम मधेस प्रदेशमा, बोन गण्डकी प्रदेशमा र प्रकृति तथा सिख धर्म लुम्बिनी प्रदेशमा अधिकतम रहेका छन्। किराँत धर्म मान्नेहरूको बहुमत कोशी प्रदेशमा देखिन्छ।

इस्लाम धर्म मान्ने जनसङ्ख्या सबै प्रदेशमा बसोबास गरिरहेको भए तापनि उनीहरू मधेस र लुम्बिनी प्रदेशमा बढी केन्द्रित छन्। इस्लाम धर्म मान्ने जनसङ्ख्यामध्ये आधाभन्दा बढी मधेस प्रदेशमा बसोबास गर्दछन् भने एकचौथाइ जनसङ्ख्या लुम्बिनी प्रदेशमा रहेका छन्। क्रिश्चियन समुदाय सातै प्रदेशमा पाइए तापनि बागमती प्रदेशमा सबैभन्दा धेरै छन्। क्रिश्चियनको दोस्रो, तेस्रो र चौथो ठुलो हिस्सा कोशी, गण्डकी र लुम्बिनी प्रदेशमा रहेको देखिन्छ। नेपालमा क्रिश्चियन धर्म मान्नेहरूको सङ्ख्या सबैभन्दा कम मधेस प्रदेशमा छ।

जनसाङ्ख्यिक विशेषताहरू

धर्मअनुसार बालबालिकार वृद्धको अनुपात: राष्ट्रिय जनगणना २०७८ अनुसार धर्म र धर्मावलम्बीहरूको जनसाङ्ख्यिक विशेषताहरू बिचमा पनि सम्बन्ध देखिन्छ। दशओटा धर्ममध्ये इस्लाम धर्ममा ०-१४ वर्ष उमेर समूहका बालबालिकाको अनुपात सबैभन्दा उच्च (३८.६%) छ। बालबालिकाको दोस्रो ठूलो (२७.६%) हिस्सा हिन्दु धर्ममा छ भने इसाई धर्ममा २७.० प्रतिशत र प्रकृति धर्म अनुयायी जनसङ्ख्यामा बालबालिका (०-१४) को हिस्सा १७.२ प्रतिशत रहेको छ। चौध वर्षभन्दा कम उमेरका बालबालिकाको जनसङ्ख्या बहाइ धर्म अनुयायीमा २१.० प्रतिशत र बोन धर्म अनुयायीमा २१.० प्रतिशत छ। जैन धर्मावलम्बीहरूमा यो अनुपात सबैभन्दा कम (१७.०%) छ।

इस्लाम (४.६%) र इसाई धर्म (५.७%) मा ६५ वर्ष वा सोभन्दा माथिको वृद्ध जनसङ्ख्या अनुपात सबैभन्दा कम छ। किराँत जनसङ्ख्यामा ६५ वर्षभन्दा माथिको वृद्ध जनसङ्ख्या अनुपात राष्ट्रिय औसत (६.९%) भन्दा बढी छ।

धर्मअनुसार लैङ्गिक अनुपात र वैवाहिक अवस्था

वि.सं. २०७८ को जनगणनाले देखाएअनुसार हिन्दु धर्मावलम्बीहरूको लैङ्गिक अनुपात नेपालकै औसतसँग मिल्दो छ। बौद्ध, किराँत, इसाई, प्रकृति, बहाइ र बोन धर्मावलम्बीहरूको लैङ्गिक अनुपात राष्ट्रिय औसतभन्दा कम छ। मुस्लिम, जैन र सिख धर्मावलम्बीहरूको लैङ्गिक अनुपात राष्ट्रिय औसतभन्दा बढी छ।

जनगणनामा १० वर्ष र सोभन्दा माथिका जनसङ्ख्यालाई मात्र विवाहसम्बन्धी प्रश्नहरू सोधिएको थियो। हिन्दु धर्मावलम्बीहरूको वैवाहिक अवस्था राष्ट्रिय औसत (विवाहित ६२%) जस्तै देखिन्छ। पुरुषहरूमा अविवाहित दर बढी छ तर विधवा महिलाको सङ्ख्या भने विधुरभन्दा धेरै छ। धर्मअनुसार पहिलो विवाहको उमेरमा पनि निश्चित भिन्नताहरू देखिएका छन्। हिन्दु महिलाहरूमध्ये ४२.२ प्रतिशतको विवाह १८ वर्षभन्दा कम उमेरमा भएको थियो तर सो उमेरका विवाहित पुरुषहरूको हिस्सा केवल १५.५ प्रतिशत थियो। इस्लाम धर्मावलम्बीहरूमा १८ वर्षभन्दा कम उमेरमा विवाह हुने दर सबैभन्दा बढी (४९.२%) थियो। क्रिश्चियन धर्म मात्रै महिलाहरूमध्ये ३९.५ प्रतिशतले १८ वर्ष पूरा गर्नुअघि विवाह गरेका छन्। क्रिश्चियन पुरुषहरूमा यो अनुपात १६.१ प्रतिशत रहेको छ। नेपालमा इस्लाम धर्म मात्रै जनसङ्ख्यामध्ये लगभग आधा (४९.२%) महिलाहरूले १८ वर्ष नपुग्दै विवाह गरेका छन् भने पुरुषहरूमा यो अनुपात १७.७ प्रतिशत छ। पछिल्लो जनगणना २०७८ ले नेपालमा अन्य धर्मका अनुयायीहरूका तुलनामा इस्लाम धर्म मात्रै समुदायमा बालविवाहको दर सबैभन्दा उच्च रहेको देखिन्छ।

जातजातिअनुसार धर्म

नेपालको जनसङ्ख्याले अवलम्बन गरेको १० ओटै धर्महरू विभिन्न जातजाति र भाषिक समूहमाझ व्याप्त रहेको देखिन्छ। हिन्दु धर्म पहाडी र हिमाली जातीय समूहहरूका ९५.४—९९.५ प्रतिशतसम्म जनसङ्ख्याले अनुशरण गरेको देखिन्छ। मधेसका जातीय समूह र दलित समुदायले अरूका तुलनामा उच्च अनुपातमा हिन्दु धर्म मानेको देखिन्छ। मधेसका जनजातितर्फ ९५.८ प्रतिशतले हिन्दु धर्म अपनाएको पाइन्छ। अनुयायीको सङ्ख्याका आधारमा नेपालको दोस्रो धर्म बौद्ध धर्म हो जुन मुख्यतया पहाडी र हिमाली जनजातिले अवलम्बन गरेको देखिन्छ। यी जनजातिले नेपालका कुल बौद्ध धर्मानुयायीको ३१ प्रतिशत हिस्सा ओगटेको देखिन्छ। तामाङ्ग जातजातिका करिब ८५ प्रतिशतले बौद्ध धर्म अनुशरण गरेको देखिन्छ।

इस्लाम धर्म विशेषगरी मुसलमान जनसङ्ख्याले नै अवलम्बन गरेको देखिन्छ। वि.सं. २०७८ को जनगणनाअनुसार ६ ओटा फरक समुदायहरूले इस्लाम धर्म अवलम्बन गर्छन्। मुस्लिम समुदायको कुल जनसङ्ख्या ११.४ लाख छ, ती शतप्रतिशतले मुस्लिम धर्म अवलम्बन गरेको देखिन्छ।

वि.सं. २०७८ को जनगणनाअनुसार विशेषगरी पूर्वी नेपालका पहाडी र हिमाली जनजाति समूहहरूले किराँत धर्मको अनुशरण गरेको देखिन्छ। यस धर्मलाई मात्रै प्रमुख जातिहरूमध्ये दुई समूह 'कुलुङ र याक्थुङ/लिम्बू' रहेका छन्। बान्तवा समूहमा किराँत अनुयायीहरूको सङ्ख्या करिब पाँचगुणा र चाम्लिङ समूहमा दुईगुणा वृद्धि भएको देखिन्छ।

प्रकृति धर्म पहाड र तराई दुबै क्षेत्रका १६ जनजाति समूहहरूले मात्रै गरेका छन्। वि.सं. २०७८ मा प्रकृति धर्म मात्रै कुल जनसङ्ख्या (१,०२,०४८) मध्ये मगर अनुयायीहरूले मात्रै ६५.८ प्रतिशत हिस्सा ओगटेका थिए। त्यसैगरी, प्रकृति धर्म मात्रै छन्त्याल अनुयायीहरूको सङ्ख्या दस वर्षको अवधिमा करिब नौगुणा वृद्धि भएको छ। पछिल्ला दुई जनगणनामा धिमाल समुदायमा प्रकृति धर्मका अनुयायीहरू तुलनात्मक रूपमा स्थिर देखिए तापनि थोरै गिरावट आएको छ।

बोन धर्म २२ जनजाति समूहहरूले मात्रै गरेका छन्, जसमा धेरैजसो पहाडी र हिमाली क्षेत्रका जनजाति समूहहरू हुन्। पछिल्लो जनगणनामा गुरुङ समुदायमा बोन धर्म मात्रैहरूको सङ्ख्या सबैभन्दा बढी रहेको छ। पछिल्ला दुई जनगणनामा गुरुङ समुदायमा बोन अनुयायीहरूको सङ्ख्या ४.८ गुणा वृद्धि भएको देखिन्छ, जसले सम्भवतः यो जातीय समूहका केही सदस्यहरूद्वारा आफ्नो बोन पहिचान स्थापित गर्ने सामूहिक प्रयासलाई सङ्केत गर्छ। यस्तै प्रवृत्ति घले समुदायमा पनि देखिएको छ, जुन पहिलोपटक २०६८ को जनगणनामा समावेश भएको थियो।

नेपालमा जैन धर्म ७ ओटा जातीय समूहहरूले मान्ने गरेका छन् जसमा सबै तराई जाति समूहका छन् र ०.४ प्रतिशत भारतीय नागरिकहरूसमेत समावेश छन् जो जनगणनाको समयमा नेपालमा अक्सर बसोबास गरिरहेका थिए। नेपालमा मारवाडी समुदायमा जैन धर्म मान्नेहरूको सङ्ख्या सबैभन्दा बढी भए तापनि २०७८ को जनगणनामा यो समुदायको केवल ४.८ प्रतिशतले आफूलाई जैन धर्मावलम्बीका रूपमा पहिचान गरेका थिए। त्यसैगरी, २०७८ को जनगणनामा नेपालमा १,४९६ जना सिख धर्मका अनुयायी रहेको देखिएको छ। तीमध्ये करिब ६० प्रतिशत पञ्जाबी/सिख समूहका थिए।

भाषा र धर्म

नेपालको जनगणना २०७८ को तथ्याङ्कले नेपालको धार्मिक र भाषिक विविधताको अन्तरसम्बन्धलाई देखाउँछ। जनगणनाले समेटेका दशओटै धर्म विभिन्न मातृभाषी समूहहरूले अनुशरण गरेका छन्। उर्दू भाषा बोल्नेबाहेक हिन्दु धर्मलाई नेपालका सम्पूर्ण मातृभाषी समूहहरूले अनुशरण गरेका छन्। हिन्दु धर्मबाहेक इसाई धर्म पनि तीनओटै भौगोलिक क्षेत्र र प्रदेशहरूका अधिकांश भाषिक समूहहरूमा फैलिएको छ। बौद्ध धर्मलाई ११३ ओटा मातृभाषी समूहहरूले अनुशरण गरेका छन् भने किराँत धर्मलाई ९९ ओटा मातृभाषी समूहहरूले अनुशरण गरेका छन्।

इस्लाम धर्म केवल सात जातीय समूहहरूले अनुशरण गरेका छन्। चाखलाग्दो तथ्य यो छ कि इस्लाम धर्म ७४ मातृभाषी समूहहरूले अनुशरण गरेका छन्। प्रकृति र बोन अनुयायीहरू पनि विभिन्न भाषिक समूहहरूबाट आएका छन्। मातृभाषाका आधारमा सबैभन्दा कम अनुयायी भएको धर्म जैन हो जसका केवल १२ भाषिक समूहका अनुयायी छन्।

धर्मअनुसार जनसङ्ख्याको सामाजिक विशेषता

राष्ट्रिय जनगणना २०७८ बाट प्राप्त तथ्याङ्कअनुसार नेपालमा प्रचलनमा रहेका विभिन्न १० ओटा धर्मका अनुयायीको साक्षरता र शैक्षिक तह, पारिवारिक विशेषता, घर र आवाससम्बन्धी अवस्था, महिलाको नाममा भएको घरजग्गा आदि विवरणको सङ्क्षिप्त सार यहाँ प्रस्तुत छ।

धर्मअनुसार जनसङ्ख्याको साक्षरता

वि.सं. २०७८ को जनगणनाले १० ओटा धर्मका अनुयायीहरूमा महिला र पुरुषको साक्षरतादरमा ठूलो असमानता रहेको देखाउँछ। इस्लामबाहेक बाँकी सबै धर्मका अनुयायीहरूको साक्षरतादर राष्ट्रिय

औसत (७६.२%) भन्दा उच्च रहेको छ। इस्लाम धर्मानुयायी जनसङ्ख्याको साक्षरतादर ६१.७ प्रतिशत रहेको छ। यसमा पनि इस्लाम धर्मानुयायी महिलाको साक्षरतादर ५४ प्रतिशत मात्र रहेको देखिन्छ। हिन्दु, बौद्ध र इस्लाम धर्मका अनुयायीहरूमाझ महिलाहरूको साक्षरतादर पुरुषहरूको भन्दा कम छ। तर, अल्पसङ्ख्यकले अवलम्बन गरेका दुईओटा धर्म अर्थात् जैन र सिख जनसङ्ख्यामा पाँच वर्ष र सोभन्दा माथिको उमेरका व्यक्तिहरूको साक्षरतामा लैङ्गिक असमानता निकै कम छ। बहाइ धर्मको समग्र साक्षरतादर र महिलाहरूको साक्षरतादर अन्य सातओटा धर्मको भन्दा उच्च भए तापनि लैङ्गिक असमानता इस्लामपछि दोस्रो उच्च क्रममा देखिन्छ।

राष्ट्रिय जनगणना २०७८ ले हिन्दु र इस्लाम धर्मानुयायी जनसङ्ख्याको साक्षरताको स्थितिमा टड्कारै देखिने खालको लैङ्गिक अन्तर रहेको छ। महिलाको तुलनामा औपचारिक शिक्षाप्राप्त पुरुषहरूको सङ्ख्या निकै ठुलो रहेको छ। पूर्व बालविकासको चरणदेखि स्नातकोत्तर तहसम्मै पुरुषहरूले महिलालाई पछाडि पारेको अवस्था छ। शैक्षिक तहको तुलना गर्दा प्रारम्भिकदेखि उच्चत तहसम्मकै राष्ट्रिय औसतसँग हिन्दुहरूको स्थिति समान तहमा रहेको देखिन्छ। हिन्दु धर्ममा शिक्षाको सबै स्तरमा महिलाहरूको तुलनामा पुरुषहरूको सहभागिता बढी छ। स्नातक र स्नातकोत्तर तहमा यो असमानता मुस्लिम समुदायको भन्दा बढी देखिन्छ। शैक्षिक उपलब्धिको स्तर हेर्दा बौद्ध धर्मका पुरुषहरूको प्रारम्भिक शिक्षादेखि एसएलसी/एसईईसम्मका तह पूरा गर्ने अनुपात महिलाहरूको भन्दा उच्च छ। तर, इन्टरमिडिएट र स्नातक तह पूरा गर्ने महिलाहरू पुरुषहरूभन्दा बढी छन् जबकि स्नातकोत्तर र सोभन्दा माथिल्लो तहमा पुरुषहरूको सङ्ख्या महिलाहरूभन्दा बढी छ।

हिन्दु धर्मका अनुयायीहरूको साक्षरतादरमा लैङ्गिक असमानता इस्लाम र प्रकृति धर्ममा भन्दा कम देखिन्छ। तुलनात्मक रूपमा, बौद्ध धर्मका अनुयायीमध्ये महिलाहरूको साक्षरतादर इस्लाम, हिन्दु, बहाइ, बोन र प्रकृति धर्मका अनुयायीहरूभन्दा उच्च छ भने जैन, सिख, किराँत र इसाई धर्मका अनुयायीहरूको भन्दा लैङ्गिक असमानता अधिक रहेको देखिन्छ।

इसाई धर्ममा, उच्च माध्यमिक तह पूरा गर्ने महिलाहरूको अनुपात पुरुषहरूको भन्दा बढी छ। एसएलसी/एसईईसम्मको शिक्षामा महिला-पुरुष अनुपात झिनो मात्र फरक छ। इस्लाम धर्मानुयायी जनसङ्ख्यामा प्राथमिक तहपछि महिला-पुरुष शैक्षिक असमानता बढ्दै गएको देखिन्छ। अन्य धर्म अनुशरण गर्ने जनसङ्ख्याको तुलनामा इस्लाम धर्मावलम्बीहरूको विभिन्न शैक्षिक स्तर पूरा गर्ने प्रतिशत सबैभन्दा कम छ।

किराँत धर्म अनुयायी जनसङ्ख्यामा प्राथमिक तहमा महिलाहरूको तुलनामा पुरुषहरूको अनुपात बढी छ तर उच्च माध्यमिक र एसएलसी/एसईई पूरा गर्ने समूहमा लैङ्गिक असमानता कम हुँदै गएको छ।

परिवारको आकार र धर्म

राष्ट्रिय जनगणना २०७८ अनुसार ६ जना र सोभन्दा बढी सदस्य हुने परिवारको हिस्सा २३.३ प्रतिशत रहेको देखिन्छ। कुल परिवारमध्ये ५.४ प्रतिशत परिवारमा एक जना मात्र सदस्य रहेको देखिन्छ। हिन्दु र अन्य अल्पसङ्ख्यक जनसङ्ख्याले अवलम्बन गर्ने धर्मानुयायीको परिवारमा ६ जनाको औसत परिवार रहेको देखिन्छ। करिब ४७ प्रतिशत मुस्लिम परिवारमा परिवारको औसत आकार ६ जना वा सोभन्दा बढी रहेको देखिन्छ। बौद्ध धर्मानुयायीका १८.१ प्रतिशत परिवार र इसाई धर्मानुयायीका १८.२ प्रतिशत परिवारको आकार सानो रहेको देखिन्छ। क्रमशः ६.७ र ६.६ बौद्ध र रैथाने धर्मानुयायीका परिवारमा केवल १ जना सदस्य रहेको देखिन्छ।

परिवारको प्रकार (एकल परिवार र संयुक्त परिवार) हेर्दा जैन धर्मबाहेक अरू सबै धार्मिक समूहहरूको आधाभन्दा बढी घरपरिवार एकल परिवारको रूपमा रहेको छ। तर, धर्मअनुसार एकल र संयुक्त परिवारको वितरण वा अनुपात फरक छ। सिख, इसाई, बौद्ध र किराँत धर्मका अनुयायीमध्ये ६० प्रतिशतभन्दा बढी घरपरिवार एकल परिवारका रूपमा छन्। त्यसैगरी जैन, बहाइ, इस्लाम, बोन र प्रकृति धर्मका अनुयायीहरूमा ४० प्रतिशतभन्दा बढी संयुक्त परिवार देखिन्छ।

घरजग्गामा महिलाको स्वामित्व र धर्म

राष्ट्रिय जनगणनाअनुसार हिन्दु धर्मका ८३.४ प्रतिशत, बौद्ध धर्मका ८ प्रतिशत, इस्लाम धर्मका ३.२ प्रतिशत, किराँत धर्मका ३.१ प्रतिशत र इसाई धर्मका १.७ प्रतिशत महिलाहरूको घरजग्गाको स्वामित्व रहेका देखिन्छ। राष्ट्रिय औसतसँग तुलना गर्दा हिन्दु महिलाहरूको तुलनामा बौद्ध धर्मानुयायी र इस्लाम धर्मानुयायी परिवारका महिलाको घरजग्गामा न्यून स्वामित्व रहेको देखिन्छ।

आर्थिक विशेषता र धर्म

राष्ट्रिय जनगणना २०७८ ले १० वर्ष र सोभन्दा माथिको कुल जनसङ्ख्यामध्ये ६५.६ प्रतिशत श्रमशक्तिको रूपमा रहेको पाइन्छ। हिन्दु धर्मानुयायीहरू औसत राष्ट्रिय मानसँग नजिकै रहेका छन् भने बौद्धमार्गीहरू राष्ट्रिय औसतभन्दा थोरै माथि रहेका देखिन्छन्। श्रमशक्ति सहभागितादर सर्वाधिक (७६.६%) हुनेमा बहाइ धर्मावलम्बीहरू पर्दछन्। किराँत र प्रकृति धर्मका १० वर्ष र सोभन्दा

माथिका जनसङ्ख्यामध्ये क्रमश ७४.३ र ७०.८ प्रतिशत जनसङ्ख्या श्रमशक्तिका रूपमा रहेका देखिन्छन्। यो अनुपात जैन धर्मावलम्बीतर्फ ५५.५ प्रतिशत, इस्लामतर्फ ५६.५ प्रतिशत र सिखतर्फ ५८.५ प्रतिशत रहेको छ। पछिल्लो जनगणनाले जैन धर्मावलम्बी परिवारमध्ये ८०.६ प्रतिशत हिस्सा सम्पन्नताको सबैभन्दा माथिल्लो अर्थात् अति सम्पन्न वर्गमा रहेको देखाएको छ।

धर्मअनुसार घरपरिवारको कृषिबाहेकका घरेलु व्यवसाय

राष्ट्रिय जनगणना २०७८ अनुसार कुल ६६,६०,८४१ घरपरिवारमध्ये ९.४ प्रतिशत घरपरिवारले साना स्तरका घरेलु व्यवसाय सञ्चालन गरेका छन्। नेपालका कुल घरपरिवार (६६,६०,८४१) मध्ये कृषिबाहेकका साना घरेलुस्तरका व्यापार/व्यवसायमा संलग्न उच्चतम (८.३%) अनुपात अन्य अल्पसङ्ख्यक धर्मका अनुयायी परिवारमा थियो। व्यापार/व्यवसाय उपसमूहअन्तर्गत परिवारहरू क्रिश्चियन धर्मानुयायी परिवारहरूतर्फ ५.१ प्रतिशत, इस्लाम धर्मानुयायी परिवारतर्फ ५.१ प्रतिशत, हिन्दु ४.७ प्रतिशत र रैथाने धर्मका अनुयायी परिवारतर्फ ४ प्रतिशत रहेको देखियो।

धार्मिक विविधता र धार्मिक विविधता सूचकाङ्क

यस जनगणनाले हिमाली क्षेत्रको धार्मिक विविधता सूचकाङ्क (RDI) को मान ४.७ देखाएको छ पहाड र तराईको भन्दा निकै नै माथि रहेको छ। हिमाली क्षेत्रमा सबैभन्दा ठुलो उपस्थिति रहेको हिन्दु धर्मानुयायीको अनुपात र दोस्रो तथा तेस्रो हैसियतमा रहेका अन्य धर्मानुयायीको प्रतिशतगत मानमा खासै ठुलो अन्तर छैन तर पहाडमा पहिलो क्रममा रहेको हिन्दु धर्मानुयायी र दोस्रो र त्यसभन्दा पछाडि रहेका धर्मानुयायीको अनुपातमा उल्लेख्य अन्तर रहेको छ। पहाडी क्षेत्रको धार्मिक विविधता सूचकाङ्कको मान ३.७ छ। तराईको धार्मिक विविधता सूचकाङ्कको मान २.७ छ। यसले हिमाल, पहाड र तराईमध्ये धर्मानुयायीको सङ्ख्याको आधारमा सबैभन्दा ठुलो हिन्दु धर्म र दोस्रो तथा अन्य क्रममा रहेका धर्मानुयायीहरूको जनसङ्ख्या आकारको फरक सर्वाधिक छ।

रिग्रेसन विश्लेषणले देखाएअनुसार हिमाली तथा पहाडी जनजातिका घरपरिवारहरूमा धार्मिक विविधता पहाडी जातिका समूहहरूको तुलनामा ९ गुणा बढी हुने सम्भावना [OR=८.८६] छ। यसैगरी, पहाडी दलित घरपरिवारहरूमा एकभन्दा बढी धर्म अवलम्बन गरिने सम्भावना ४ गुणा बढी [OR=३.९६] छ। यसका साथै, तराई जनजातिका घरपरिवारहरूमा एकभन्दा बढी धर्महरूको सम्भावना लगभग ४ गुणा बढी देखिन्छ। तराई मधेस जातिका घरपरिवारहरूमा भने एकभन्दा बढी धर्महरूको सम्भावना कम पाइन्छ।

नीतिसापेक्ष सवाल

धार्मिक नीति: नेपालको संविधानले नै धर्मका सम्बन्धमा स्पष्ट व्यवस्था गरेको देखिन्छ। जनगणनाबाट प्राप्त धर्मसम्बन्धी विस्तृत तथ्याङ्कले विश्वका अन्य देशहरूमा झैं नेपालमा पनि सङ्घदेखि स्थानीय तहसम्मको योजना र नीति निर्माणका लागि महत्त्वपूर्ण आधार प्रदान गरेको छ। राज्यका अन्य नीतिहरू धार्मिक जनसङ्ख्याको सापेक्षतामा सङ्गतिपूर्ण छन् वा छैनन् भन्ने थप अध्ययन हुनु जरुरी छ।

धर्म र आर्थिक सामाजिक विशेषता: राष्ट्रिय जनगणना २०७८ ले धर्मको सापेक्षतामा साक्षरता, शैक्षिक उपलब्धिको तह, सम्पत्तिमाथिको स्वामित्व, वैवाहिक अवस्था, आर्थिक क्रियाकलाप, सम्पन्नताको तह लगायतका आयामहरूमा उल्लेखनीय विषमताहरूलाई उजागर गरेको छ। लैङ्गिक भेदभावको विद्यमानता विभिन्न धार्मिक विश्वासका अनुयायी जनसङ्ख्याविच असमान रहेको देखिन्छ। यस प्रतिवेदनका निचोडहरूले विभिन्न सामाजिक समूहहरूको धार्मिक आस्था तथा विश्वास र जनसाङ्ख्यिकीय एवम् सामाजिक-आर्थिक अवस्थासँगको अन्तरसम्बन्धले राज्यले नीति, योजना तथा कार्यक्रमहरूको तर्जुमा गर्दा विशेष प्राथमिकता दिनुपर्ने विषयहरूलाई तथ्यसहित सतहमा ल्याइदिएको छ।

धर्म र आर्थिक-सामाजिक विशेषता: राष्ट्रिय जनगणना २०७८ का प्रमुख नतिजाले नेपाल एक बहुधार्मिक देश भएको यथार्थलाई तथ्यमार्फत् पुष्टि गरेको छ। तथ्याङ्कले हिमाल, पहाड, तराई र सातै प्रदेश, ग्रामीण, अर्धसहरी र सहरी क्षेत्रमा धार्मिक विविधता रहेको देखाएको छ। आगामी जनगणनामा धर्मसम्बन्धी प्रश्न कसरी समावेश गर्ने भन्ने विषयमा सरोकारवालाहरूसँग पर्याप्त अन्तरक्रिया गर्नु मनासिब देखिन्छ।

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This thematic report explores Nepal's 2021 National Population and Housing Census (NPHC) data on religion to provide a thorough analysis of the state of Nepal's religious diversity, as well as the socioeconomic and demographic characteristics of the ten religions recorded in the census. The NPHC 2021 shows that Nepal's population follows 10 religions, namely Hinduism, Buddhism, Islam, Kirat, Christianity, Prakriti, Bon, Jain, Sikh, and Baha'i. The populations of these ten religions vary substantially, ranging from 23.68 million Hindus to barely 537 Baha'i followers, among others. The report's findings demonstrate that Nepal's religious diversity intersects with its ecological, caste/ethnic, and linguistic diversity. Each religion is followed by diverse caste/ethnic and linguistic groups who live across Nepal's three ecological zones.

This report uses published and unpublished data from Nepal's total population of 29.1 million and data from 6,660,841 non-institutional households from the 2021 census. The report covers changes in religious populations over the last eight censuses, demographic, socio-cultural, and economic characteristics of followers, and religious diversity across Nepal's provinces based on the 2021 census.

Population of religions : Changes over time

The Hindu Population in Nepal has gradually increased in actual numbers over the past eight censuses. Nevertheless, its share of the total population fallen from 1991 to 2001, aside from minimal rise between 2001 and 2021. Meanwhile, the total Buddhist population and percent have shown fluctuations from the 1952/1954 census up to 2021. In different period of time, the Buddhist population decline, growth, and subsequent decline. Specifically, both the number and proportion of Buddhist population dropped across the three censuses from 1961 to 1981, rose again in 1991 and 2011, but fallen once more in 2021.

The inter-census data shows that the absolute number of followers of Islam and Christianity steadily increased between the 1952/1954 and the 2021 censuses. With a succeeding of 2.5 percent of total population of Nepal, Islam was the country's third largest religion in 1952/1954 when the census on religion for the first time. In other words, Islam showed a significant population in the 1950s. By 2021, its population had grown sevenfold. Compared to the Muslim population, only 458 Christians were documented in the 1961 census, the first recording to include Christianity in the census. Between 1961 and 1981, its population rose nearly ninefold.

The Indigenous religions – Kirat, Prakriti, and Bon – were recorded in the census 1991. The followers of the Kirat increased by 2.5 times between the 1991 and the 2001 censuses,

suggesting the rise in trends of ethnic consciousness and claims to Indigenous identity during this period. Prakriti and Bon were first recorded in the 2011 census. The number of adherents of the Prakriti religion slightly declined between the 2011 and the 2021 censuses, while the number of Bon followers increased by more than five times in the 2021 census. The populations of three minority religions – Jain, Sikh, and Baha’i – show a similar trend of growth and decline during different censuses.

Ecological distribution of ten religions

The majority of Hindus are concentrated in the Tarai zone, followed by the Hill zone. Of the total Hindu population, only 5.4 percent of Hindus live in the Mountain zone. Similarly, Buddhists are unequally distributed across the three ecological zones. According to the 2021 census, of the total Buddhist population, 80 percent of Buddhists are located in the Hill and Mountain zones, while 20 percent reside in the Tarai.

In contrast, of the total Islam population, the vast majority (95.2%) of Islam are resided in the Tarai region. Only a very small number—1,172 individuals out of 1.4 million Muslims—reside in the Mountain zone, while 4.7 percent are found in the Hill region. Of the total Christian population, primarily concentrated in the Hill (55.7%) and Tarai (30.4%) zones, with fewer in the Mountain zone. Similarly, most Kirat followers (57.8%) are from the Hill zone, and their proportion in the Tarai is 10 percent points higher than in the Mountain zone.

Only 6.1 percent of Nepal’s population resides in the Mountain zone (NSO, 2023a). As a result, none of the ten religions has its largest number of followers in this zone. Five religions—Buddhism, the three Indigenous faiths of Kirat, Prakriti, and Bon, along with Christianity—have their highest concentration of followers in the Hill zone. In contrast, the other five—Islam, Hinduism, and the three minority religions—are primarily concentrated in the Tarai zone. Among the minority religions, followers of Jainism, the Bahá’í faith, and Sikhism are mostly based in the Tarai, with a smaller proportion of Jain and Sikh adherents living in the Hill zone.

Population of Religions by Province

The NPHC 2021 exhibits the unequal distribution of Nepal's ten major religions across the country's seven provinces. Hindus, with 23.7 million followers, are present in all provinces but are concentrated in Madhesh, Bagmati, and Lumbini, with the smallest share in Karnali, where they still form 94 percent of the population. Other religions also show regional concentrations: Buddhism and Christianity are concentrated in Bagmati; Kirat, Jain, and Baha'i in Koshi; Islam in Madhesh, Bon in Gandaki, and Prakriti and Sikh in Lumbini. The Islam population is primarily in Madhesh (over half) and Lumbini (a quarter). Christianity is spread across all provinces, with the

largest numbers in Bagmati, followed by Koshi, Gandaki, and Lumbini, while Madhesh has the smallest Christian population.

Demographic characteristics

The NPHC 2021 data on religion indicates an association between religion and the demographic characteristics of the followers. Among the population of 10 religions, Islam shows the highest proportion (38.6%) of children (0-14 years), followed by Hinduism (27.6%), Prakriti (17.2%) and Christianity (27.0%). Jains show the lowest population of children (17.0%), followed by Baha'i (21.2%) and Bon (21.1%). The proportion of the older population (65 and above years) is the lowest amongst adherents of Islam (4.6%) and Christianity (5.7%).

The NPHC 2021 reveals significant differences in the age at first marriage among followers of different religions in Nepal. Among Hindus, 42.2 percent of females and 15.5 percent of males married before age 18, with women marrying at a younger age than men. In Buddhism, 32.7 percent of females and 14.7 percent of males married before 18. For Christians, 39.5 percent of females and 16.1 percent of males married before 18. Among Muslims, nearly half (49.2%) of females and 17.7 percent of males married before 18, with Muslims having the highest prevalence of girl-child marriage in Nepal in 2021.

Caste/ethnic groups and religions

The NPHC 2021 explores Nepal's religious diversity, showing that all ten religions are followed by various caste, ethnic, and linguistic groups. Hinduism is predominantly adherents by Hill and Tarai Hindu caste groups, with 95.4–99.5 percent of their population identifying as Hindu. Madhesh/Tarai caste groups and Dalits have a higher proportion of Hindus than their Hill counterparts, and 95.8 percent of Madhesh/Tarai Janajatis also follow Hinduism. Buddhism, Nepal's second-largest religion, is mainly practiced by Mountain/Hill Janajatis, who make up 31 percent of the country's Buddhist population. About 85 percent of Tamang ethnic group adherent the Buddhist religion.

According to the 2021 census, six distinct social groups in Nepal follow Islam, with a total Muslim population of 1.14 million, all of whom adhere to the Islamic faith. Mountain/Hill Janajati groups, primarily from eastern Nepal, are the main followers of the Kirat religion. Among these groups, Kulung and Yakthung/Limbu have relatively maintained their number of Kirat followers, despite a slight decline in the 2021 census. The number of Kirat followers increased almost fivefold in Bantawa and two-fold in Chamling across the two censuses. Christianity is followed by 124 out of 142 caste and ethnic groups in Nepal, with followers ranging from 2 to 66,049 individuals. Christianity, after Hinduism, has the second-largest number of caste and ethnic group followers, spreading across various social groups. The ten groups with the highest Christian populations—

Bishwokarma, Tamang, Rai, Magar, Tharu, Chepang/Praja, Kshetri, Newa (Newar), Mijar, and Pariyar—comprise about 76 percent of Nepal’s Christian population.

Prakriti religion is followed by 16 Janajati groups from both the Hill and Tarai zones, with Magar followers making up 65.8 percent of the total Prakriti population (102,048) in 2021. Chhantyal and Dhimal also have a higher proportion of Prakriti adherents. Bon religion is practiced by 22 Janajati groups, mainly from the Mountain/Hill regions. The largest number of Bon followers are the Gurung. It is increased by 4.8 times from 2011 to 2021, indicating a movement to assert Bon identity. A similar trend is seen with the Ghale ethnic group, which saw a dramatic increase of 893 times in Bon followers since 2011, suggesting a growing distinction among some Buddhist followers in Nepal to identify as Bon adherents.

According to the 2021 census, the Jain religion is followed by 7 caste groups, all belonging to the Tarai caste groups and Indian citizens (0.4%) living in Nepal at the time of the census. The Marwadi community in Nepal has the highest number of Jain followers despite only 4.8 percent of the community identifying as adherents in the 2021 census. The 2021 census reported 1,496 followers of the Sikh religion; almost 60 percent of the Sikh adherents belonged to the Punjabi/Sikh group.

Religion by linguistic groups

The NPHC 2021 data exhibits the intersection of Nepal's religious and linguistic diversity. Each religion is followed by multiple mother-tongue groups. Hinduism is practiced by almost all linguistic groups except Urdu speakers. Christianity is widespread across various linguistic groups and ecological zones. Buddhism is followed by 113 mother-tongue groups, and Kirat by 99, indicating its expansion beyond traditional Kirati groups. Islam, though followed by only seven ethnic groups, is practiced by 74 mother-tongue groups, covering half of the groups identified in the 2021 census. The Indigenous religions, Prakriti and Bon, are also followed by various linguistic groups. Jainism has the fewest followers, with only 12 linguistic groups.

Social characteristics of the population by religion

NPHC 2021 data on the social characteristics of the followers of 10 religions in terms of literacy and educational attainment, household characteristics, toilet facility, housing unit and land, and female property ownership are assessed.

Literacy and educational attainment of the populations by religion

The literacy rate of the population of the ten religions reported in the 2021 census, disaggregated by sex and ranked in the order from high to low. The data shows that the literacy rate of the adherents of all religions except for Islam is higher than that of the national literacy

rate of 76.2 percent. The followers of Islam have the lowest literacy rate (61.7%), with the lowest literacy rate for women (54%) than the followers of the other nine religions.

NPHC 2021 shows that among the Hindu and Muslim populations, there is a significant gender gap; men are seen to outnumber women across all the formal education levels they have completed from early childhood to postgraduate degrees. The population of Hindu are similar level of educational attainment from early childhood to post graduate levels with compared to national average. The levels of educational attainments, the proportion of men completing the educational level is higher than women from early childhood to those who have completed SLC/SEE and equivalent level in the Buddhist population. However, Buddhist women outnumber Buddhist men in the population of those who have completed intermediate and graduate levels but lag behind Buddhist men in the population who have completed the post-graduate and above levels.

There is a higher percentage of Christian women than Christian men in the population who have completed the upper secondary level, and there is a marginal gender disparity in the proportion of Christian men and women who have completed the SLC/SEE and equivalent level. Among the Islam population, the gender disparity in the educational levels completed by males and females is stark after the primary level, and the gap continues to widen after the lower secondary level. In the Hindu population, gender disparity against women exists across all levels of education completed by men and women. The gender gap is significantly larger at the graduate and post-graduate levels than it is in the Islam community, but it is not as strongly skewed towards men overall.

The NPHC 2021 reveals that of the total households, 23.3 percent of the households have a household size of 6 and above, while 5.4 percent of households have only a single member household size (NSO, 2024b). Population of Hindu and other minority religions have as similar to national average of 6 and above household size. It is found that 46.9 percent of Muslim households reported a household size of 6 and above, while Buddhist (18.1%) and Christian (18.2) household sizes are seen to be lower. It is also noted that about 6.7 and 6.6 percent of Buddhist and Indigenous religion households had single member household size.

Among households where women owned property, 83.4 percent of the women were Hindus, followed by Buddhists (8.0%), Islams (3.2%), Kirat followers (3.1%), and Christians (1.7%). This indicates that Hindu women had a higher rate of property ownership. However, when compared to the overall national population distribution, women from Buddhist and Islam backgrounds were less likely to own property than Hindu women. Additionally, property ownership patterns differ notably across both provinces and religious groups.

Economic characteristics

NPHC 2021 exhibits that 65.6 percent of 10 years above population participated in labor force. Hindu adherents are similar to national average and Buddhist were slightly above the national average. Followers of Baha'i are observed to have the highest rate of participation, accounting for 76.6 percent. The followers of Indigenous religions such as Kirat (74.3%) and Prakriti (70.8%) are in the significant proportion of the labor force participation. The rate of labor force participation among the followers of Jainism (55.5%), Islam (56.5%) and Sikhism (58.5%) are less likely to other religious groups of Nepal. The NPHC 2021 has found that Jain households had the highest proportion (80.6%) of the highest wealth quintile category than other religions.

The NPHC 2021 findings show that only 9.4 percent of households engaged in the small-scale entrepreneurship of the total households (6,660,841). Among the trade/business category of small-scale enterprises, the highest proportion (8.3%) of the households were from other minority religions, followed by Christian households (5.1%), Islam (5.1%), Hindu (4.7%), Buddhist (4.6%) and Indigenous religions (4%). The households from the Christian religion (3.5%) were more engaged in small-scale enterprises than Hindu (1.9%). In the service sector, households from Christian (1.2%) had a higher proportion of engagement in small-scale enterprises than other minority religions (0.7%).

Religious diversity

The NPHC 2021 calculation shows that the Mountain region has the highest Religious Diversity Index (RDI) value at 4.7, indicating a more balanced distribution of religious groups. In this region, the gap between the largest religion (Hinduism) and other major religions is smaller compared to the Hill and Tarai. The Hill zone has an RDI value of 3.7, with a relatively larger difference between Hinduism and other zones. The Tarai zone has the lowest RDI value at 2.7, reflecting the greatest disparity between the dominant Hindu population and other religious groups among the three ecological zones.

The multiple regression analysis depicts that religious diversity was nine times more likely to be found in the Mountain/Hill Janajati households [OR=8.86] than the Hill caste groups. Similarly, Hill Dalit-headed households are 4 times more likely [OR=3.96] to have multiple religions in their households. It is also found that households of Tarai Janajati are almost 4 times more likely to have more than one religion in the households. The households from the Tarai Madhesh caste group are found to be less likely to have multiple religions in the household.

Conclusions and policy implications

The NPHC 2021 results reflect Nepal's constitutional provisions to religious diversity across different levels. The Mountain region has the highest religious diversity, followed by the Hill and

Tarai zones. Among provinces, Koshi is the most religiously diverse, followed by Bagmati and Gandaki, while Sudurpashchim and Karnali have the least diversity. In terms of caste and ethnicity, Mountain and Hill Janajati groups are the most religiously diverse, as they tend to follow multiple faiths.

Policy implications

- **Policy on religion:** Secularism is one of the indicator of religious freedom policy. Data from the population census serves as a key source of religious information for all three levels of government in Nepal. It is now timely to review the consistency of national policies in light of the religious composition of the population.
- **Religion and socio-economic characteristics:** The 2021 census reveal that socio-economic characteristics such as literacy, educational attainment, property ownership, and participation in formal economic activities vary across different religious groups, with notable gender disparities. The incidence of early marriage is higher among adherents of Islam compared to followers of the other nine religions in Nepal. These findings suggest that religion, alongside caste/ethnicity and class, should be considered in planning and policy-making to address these socio-economic challenges.
- **Religion and future census recording:** The NPHC 2021 reflect the spirit of constitutional diversity in religion at various levels, including national, provincial, ecological, district, and urban-rural contexts. Sufficient engagement with stakeholders is essential during the preparation of the upcoming census, particularly concerning the inclusion of questions related to religion.

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ABBREVIATIONS

CBS	Central Bureau of Statistics
n.a.	Not Available
NSO	National Statistics Office
NPHC	National Population and Housing Census
PES	Post Enumeration Survey
RDI	Religious Diversity Index
SDG's	Sustainable Development Goals
UNFPA	United Nations Population Fund
SLC/SEE	School Leaving Certificate [SLC]/Secondary Education Exam [SEE]

GLOSSARY

<i>Absentee population</i>	An individual absent from the household and currently living abroad for more than six months before the census date and has possibility to return.
<i>Age</i>	The number of years lived as at their last birthday, i.e., in reference to day of enumeration.
<i>Age-sex pyramid</i>	This visualizes the composition of the population in terms of its age and sex. It indicates the growth rate of the population and the nature of the population in terms of working and non-working sections.
<i>Average household size</i>	Average number of usually resident population of households. Total population of a specific area divided by the total number of households of that area provides average household size.
<i>Dependency ratio</i>	The ratio of dependent population aged 0-14 years and 65 years and above to the total working population aged 15-64 (or to 59) years multiplied by 100.
<i>Disability</i>	Any restriction or lack (resulting from impairment) of ability to perform an activity in the manner or within the range considered normal for a human being. It is a limitation in regard to the kind or number of activities a person can do due to long-term physical condition, mental condition or health problem.
<i>Economically active persons</i>	Persons aged 10 years and above who are engaged in economic activities.
<i>Economic activity</i>	An economic activity is a process based on inputs, leads to the manufacture of a good or the provision of a service.
<i>Economically active population</i>	All persons above a specified age who furnish the supply of labour to produce economic goods and services (employed and unemployed, including those seeking work for the first time) during a specified time reference period
<i>Family structure</i>	Family structure is understood by nuclear and extended family for the census purposes. Nuclear family is defined here as a family with

– i) married couple without children, ii) a married couple with one or more unmarried children, iii) a lone father with one or more unmarried children, iv) a lone mother with one or more unmarried children, or v) single person family (disregarding sex). Joint or extended family includes all types of families that have more than two generations and/or two or more couples with or without children. Institutional family includes official personnel residing at official house (offices, quarters, etc.).

<i>Household</i>	A group of people who normally live together and share a common kitchen.
<i>Level of educational attainment</i>	The highest level of school or college passed
<i>Literacy</i>	The ability to read and write a letter in any language. Literacy status assessments are made for persons of 5 years and above.
<i>Literacy rate</i>	The proportion of the population aged five years and above who are able to read and write in any language with understanding and able to do simple arithmetic.
<i>Median age</i>	The age that divides a population in two parts of equal size
<i>Occupation</i>	The kind of work performed in a job. The concept of occupation is defined as a “set of jobs whose main tasks and duties are characterized by a high degree of similarity.” A person may be associated with an occupation through the main job currently held, a second job, a future job or a job previously held.
<i>Population census</i>	The process of collecting, compiling, evaluating, analysing, and publishing demographic, economic and social data pertaining to all persons in a country or territory
<i>Population composition</i>	The description of the population characteristics in terms of factors such as their age, sex, marital status, education, occupation, and relationship to the head of household
<i>Population distribution</i>	The patterns of settlement and dispersal of a population
<i>Religious diversity</i>	Religious diversity refers to the coexistence of multiple religious beliefs and practices within society, reflecting a rich tapestry or traditions and cultures around world

Unemployment

Persons in unemployment are those of working age who were not in employment, carried out activities to seek employment during a specified recent period and were currently available to take up employment given the opportunity.

Usually economically active population

All persons above 10 years of age whose activity status, as determined in terms of the total number of weeks or days during a long-specified period (such as preceding 12 months or calendar year) who were either employed or unemployed

Working age population

Persons aged 15-64 years – although the age range varies from country to country.

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Census and religion

The persistence of religious diversity and the co-existence of multiple faiths have remained one enduring foundation of Nepal's cultural diversity since ancient times. In Nepal, religion remains a fundamental social institution which shapes people's worldviews, behaviours, cultural traditions, and their sense of self and collective identity (Bista, 1991). It continues to mediate inter and intra-group relations such as marriage, gender ideologies, sociality, and many other socio-economic and political domains (Basnet, 2010; Bennett, 1985; Bista, 1991; Gurung, 2012; Maslak, 2003; Sharma, 1978). Similarly, religion powerfully influences the state-citizen relations in Nepal as it becomes inescapably tied to the issues of rights, social justice, ending caste-based untouchability, violence and discrimination against women, inclusion, and exclusion, and many other aspects of development and governance (Gellner, D., Pfaff-Czarnecka, J., & Whelpton, J., 2012; Hachhethu, 2003). Thus, census data on religion can become an important resource for assessing emerging patterns and dynamics of religious diversity in Nepal. The census data on religion can equally be relevant and useful for policy and planning.

Census questions on religion were used in many countries in the West from the mid-nineteenth century (Thorvaldsen, 2014). Some nations never included questions on religion in the census, while others have dropped the religion section entirely or included it again in the census (see Thorvaldsen, 2014; Bhagat, 2013). In the South Asian context, the British colonial government undertook the first census in India around 1872, including questions on religion. The population data were published by religious and caste categories (Bhagat, 2013). In Nepal, the state first used the category '*mat [N]*,' one of the meanings of which is "a community or sect following a religious belief"¹ in the censuses of 1920 and 1930 (NSO, 2022, p.41). The use of common and popular Nepali term for religion – "*Dharma*" – has been used since the 1952/54 census to enumerate the religious affiliations of the population (NSO, 2022). Though the state had collected information on people's religious affiliations in the 1920 and 1930 censuses, the data on religion and caste affiliations were not made public.

¹ Nepal Academy. (2022). "mat". Nepal Pragya (Nepali Academy) Comprehensive Dictionary (Mobile App). <https://play.google.com/store/apps/details?id=np.com.naya.sabdakosh&hl=en&pli=1>

The 1952/54 census, for the first time made available the national data on the religious affiliation of Nepal's population into three groups: Hinduism, Buddhism, and Islam. The 1961 census added Jainism and Christianity, but the 1971 census did not mention Christianity, and it was again added in the 1981 census (Gurung, 2003/2005). The 1991 census added two new religious groups: Sikh and Kirat. The Baha'i religion was added in the 2001 census and the *Prakriti* (nature worship) was added in the 2011 census. The 2011 and 2021 censuses provide data on ten religious groups.

The data from the last eight decennial censuses shows Nepal's shifting religious dynamics and the changing state policies on religion. However, there is still a dearth of a thorough examination of the census data on religion that looks at the various aspects of religious diversity as well as the relationship between religion and socioeconomic characteristics and inclusion/exclusion metrics. This thematic report is the first of its kind that has attempted to analyze the NPHC 2021 data on religion from diversity and social inclusion/exclusion perspectives. It examines the 2021 census data to provide analytical information on the relations between religion and major socioeconomic, demographic, and other selected variables such as disability, child marriage, migration, intra-household religious diversity, and spatial dimensions.

1.1.1 Defining 'religion' in the census

Scholars generally agree that the complexity and range of actions which are experienced and practiced as religion defies its universally accepted definitions, even when all seem to know and recognize what "religion" is (Crawford, 2003; Jensen, 2019). Similarly, scholars and experts who have studied the census of religion explain that it is not easy to measure religious identity; people may report different religious identities depending on the question, the time, and the context of an interview. Current religious identity may vary from identities at other times and from identities ascribed by others. Variations in measurement strategies may lead to quite different conclusions about the size and characteristics of religious groups (see Hackett, 2014). For instance, the statistical analysis of Nepal's population census, undertaken by the Central Bureau of Statistics (CBS) during 1970-1980, considered a close association between language and religion, such that: "Nepali-speaking people are commonly considered as Hindus... and a possibility of misclassifying some Nepali-speaking Buddhists in the category of Hindus" (CBS, 1986, p. 86). Such association between language and religion, now discontinued in the census, was a flawed measurement of religious identity. Thus, the measurement strategies of religious identity by asking what deities people worship and about their birth and death rituals can "lead to quite different conclusions about the size and characteristics of religious groups" (Hackett, 2014, p. 396).

Countries that record religious affiliations in the census generally use simple operational definitions of 'religion'. For example, the census of the Government of Canada defines 'religion'

in its *'Dictionary, Census Population 2021'* as: "The person's self-identification as having a connection or affiliation with any religious denomination, group, body, or other religiously defined community or system of belief. Religion is not limited to formal membership in a religious organization or group (Statistics Canada, 2021)". The Canadian census also allows respondents to record if they do not have or follow any religions by self-identifying if they are atheist, agnostic, or humanist, or can provide another applicable response. This definition suggests that the Canadian census takes 'religion' as the self-reported affiliation of people with any religious denomination, group, body, or other religiously defined community or system of belief. It also recognizes and records the population without religion. The Australian Census has a similar operational definition of religion that "a person nominates an association," which may be different "from their practice of or participation in a religious activity." The census also allows people to respond with secular or spiritual beliefs and to indicate if they have no religious affiliation at all (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2022). Interestingly, 38.9 percent of the Australian population reported "No religion" as their religion in the 2021 census, the second largest category after Christianity (43.9 %).

In Nepal, the census definition of religion and its guidelines for determining a person's religion have undergone certain changes, while some features have been constant over successive censuses since 1952/54. For example, the 1952/54 census instructed that "religion means Hindu, Bouddha, Islam (Musalman), Christians, and others". The census further instructed not to record the names of the various sects or denominations, such as Vaishnav, Shaiva, and Hinyan, within the major religious groups. It further clarified that certain caste and cultural groups who worship specific deities belong to specific religious groups (NSO, 2022, pp: 41-42). The following census (1961) led with a similar approach. However, it directed the enumerators to identify the key deities people would worship during the birth and funeral rites to determine their primary religion (its sects or groups) when the respondents failed to say their religious affiliations. The 1990 and 2001 censuses removed the instructions for considering the respondents' caste and ethnicity. In a case of confusion, these censuses suggested asking people which specific ritual practitioners (priests and other ritual specialists) they use in death rituals and what festivals they celebrate.

The 2011 and 2021 censuses defined religion broadly as "traditions and beliefs people have followed and practiced." The 2011 census again restated that enumerators might inquire about the ritual specialists people employ for funeral rites and the major festivals they celebrate to determine the respondents' religions. However, this emphasis on ritual specialists and festivals was dropped from the instructions of the 2021 census. Given that it is a common practice that some deities were revered by more than one religious community, the 2011 and 2021 censuses advised enumerators not to consider deities people worship as the basis for determining their religions. In addition, the 2021 census instructed that members from a single family may follow

different religions, so the census takers were instructed to record each family member's religion which they followed. Thus, the 2021 census introduced the concept of religious diversity at the household level and attempted to assess the intra-household religious diversity in Nepal's population.

1.1.2 Religions in the 2021 Census

The 2021 census, like the previous census of 2011, identified 10 religions: Hinduism, Buddhism, Islam, Christianity, Kirati, Prakriti, Bon, Jain, and Sikh. The 2021 census does not provide data on 'other' religions, suggesting that Nepal's population follows one of these ten religions.

Kirati, Prakriti, and Bon are Indigenous religions in the sense that they originated in Nepal, and their adherents are mostly confined to Nepal and the Himalayan region. Kirat is the ancient religion of the Indigenous communities who identify themselves as the Kirati people, which include the Yakthung/Limbu, Rai, Sunuwar, Yakkha, Thami, Thulung, and others (see Chapter 5, Table 5.7). It was included for the first time in the 1991 census. Prakriti, which broadly refers to 'nature worship' or 'animistic' religion (Rai, 2013), was first included in the 2011 census.

Bon is the pre-Buddhist ancient religion in Tibet and the Himalayan region (Karmay and Nagano, 2020). The followers of the Bon religion are called Bon Po. The Bon religion was first included in the 2011 census, and its major followers come from the Gurung, Magar, Ghale, and Tamang – mostly from the followers of the Hill and Tarai Janajati groups.

Jainism is one of the oldest religions in the world, which originated in India at least 2,500 years ago (Starr, 2021; Long, 2009). There are about 4.5 million adherents of Jainism in India (ORGI, 2011). However, there are very limited studies on the history of Jainism and its spread in Nepal. Nepal's Marwadi community is associated with Jainism (Agrawal, 2020), but only 4.8 percent of the Marwadi community of thirty-three thousand people in Nepal identified as followers of the Jain religion in the 2021 census. In 2021, there are around 2300 Jain people in Nepal; their number has been declining over the censuses after the 1981 census, which reported 9,438 Jains (Dahal, 2014, Table 1.10, p. 18).

The links between Nepal and Sikh religion can be traced to the visits of Guru Nanak Dev, the first Guru of Sikhism, between 1514 and 1518 in different places in Kathmandu during his third Udasi (Maini, 2023) during the time of King Jay Jagat Malla (B.P. Koirala India-Nepal Foundation, 2019). The second important connection and presence of Sikhism in Nepal is believed to have been fostered when Maharani Jind Kaur of the Sikh Empire and the youngest wife of Maharaja Ranjit Singh had escaped the imprisonment of the British Empire in 1841 and took refuge in Kathmandu as a guest of Jun Bahadur Rana (Sijapati, 2019). The queen spent over a decade in exile, during which she established several small gurdwaras, or the places of worship and assembly of the Sikhs across the Valley, enshrined with the 1,430-page Guru Granth Sahib, a

holy handwritten Sikh manuscript – a collection of teachings and writings by Guru Nanak and his successors (Sijapati, 2019). Several Sikh families are believed to have settled in the Nepalgunj area when Maharani Jinda was in exile (Mani, 2003). When the queen left Nepal in 1861, more Sikh families who had stayed with her in Kathmandu joined the Sikh families in Nepalgunj. Thus, during those 11 years of the queen’s exile, “a foundation for the Sikh community in Nepal was laid down” (B.P. Koirala India-Nepal Foundation, 2019, p. 30).

Baha’i is one of the youngest world religions that developed in the middle of the 19th century in the Persian region of Iran (Hartz, 2009/2002). The official website of the Worldwide Baha’i Community claims that “the Bahá’í Faith is established in more than 100,000 localities in virtually every country and territory around the world”². The history of the religion in Nepal is still unexplored. The Bahá’í News Archive shows that there were some efforts to introduce the religion in Nepal during the early 1950s. A newspaper report in August 1960 showed that no Baha’i center existed in Nepal until 1958. In 1959, three assemblies were formed in Kathmandu Dolkha and Bhaktapur, and four groups in Dharan Bazar, Baglung, Pokhara, and Biratnagar. The Newspaper reported: “There were over one hundred believers in 1959, chiefly composed of the intellectual young generation” (Bahá’í News, 1960, p.9). These news archives suggest that there was an attempt by the international Baha’i community to spread the Baha’i faith in Nepal, at least from the early 1960s.

1.2 Policy context

Nepal remained a Hindu nation for more than 240 years (1769-2006) before becoming a secular nation-state in 2006 (Dahal, 2014). Nepal’s political transformation towards a secular nation in 2006 and its declaration in the 2015 Constitution has been a radical departure from how the state embraced the religion (Hindu) of the majoritarian as a constituent marker of Nepali nationalism for over two centuries (Shah, 1993). The Constitution (2015) recognizes Nepal as a multi-religious and secular nation. It guarantees the right to equality and freedom of religion and upholds that the state shall not discriminate against citizens on the grounds of origin, religion, caste/ethnicity, sex, economic condition, language, region, ideological conviction, or on similar other grounds (Article 2). The secularism of the constitution implies that the state has no religion but does not mean a strict separation between the state and religion. The state upholds all the religious traditions of its people equally. Secularism in Nepal “has changed the nature of the relationship between Hinduism and minority religions – from a paradigm of distant control under a tolerant hegemony to a situation of competition and negotiation among equals” (Letizia, 2012). For the minority groups, secularism has also been an essential step in the larger project to create a new, inclusive, and republican Nepal (Letizia, 2012). However, Nepal does

² <https://www.bahai.org/national-communities>. Accessed March 22, 2025

not have specific policies focused on religion and the meaningful implementation of secularism and there is therefore a need to make the census data on religion relevant for the policy implications. The census data on religion needs to be considered and utilized beyond the purpose of the state's recognition of people's identity and assessing the religious landscape of the nation. On the other hand, policymakers should seriously consider how religion can impact and aid development processes in the spirit and directive of the Constitution.

The census recording of citizens' religious affiliations is an important resource for assessing the principal tendencies toward religious diversity. By showing how religion is related to other socioeconomic factors such as demographics, gender, occupations, ethnicity, literacy, among others, census data on religion can offer valuable data with policy implications (Gutiérrez & De La Torre, 2017). For instance, the census data on religion has been useful for local urban planning in countries such as the United Kingdom and Australia, which have increasingly ethnic and religiously diverse populations (Bouma, G. D., & Hughes, P. J., 2014; Stringer, 2014). For instance, the Australian Bureau of Statistics (2024) highlights the relevance of its census data on religion for policy and planning purposes – for example, in determining the location and development of educational facilities, church buildings, aged care facilities, and services by religious organizations. It may also be used in assigning chaplains and other care providers to institutions such as hospitals, prisons, the armed services, and universities; and to determine the allocation of time to community groups on public radio and in other media.

The Constitution directs the state to protect and promote the traditions and heritages of all religions. It entrusts the provincial government with the responsibility and duty of “protection and use of languages, scripts, cultures, fine arts and religions” (Schedule 6). In this context, it is to note that the Constitution also recognizes that some religious practices and traditions may be discriminatory or infringe on the rights and freedom of individuals or genders. This is evident in the very preamble of the Constitution that the state shall protect and promote “unity in diversity, social and cultural solidarity” and ensure social justice by “eliminating discrimination based on class, caste, region, language, religion and gender and all forms of caste-based untouchability.” In stipulating ‘the Directive Principles, Policies and Obligations of the State’ (Part 4), the Constitution directs that “the social and cultural objective of the State shall be to build a civilized and egalitarian society by eliminating all forms of discrimination, exploitation, and injustice based on the grounds of religion, culture, tradition, or on any other similar grounds” (Article 2). In other words, the Constitution ensures the equality of all religions, the right to religious freedom, and the protection of the aged-old religious traditions and culture. However, it also directs the state to ensure that religious practices and traditions do not violate the rights and freedoms of any individuals.

Nepal is a signatory of and has ratified multiple international instruments of human rights, such as the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (ICERD), The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), The United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP), and many other instruments which invoke the issue of freedom and equality of religion as well as eliminating discriminations due to religious practices. Thus, religion is an important domain of governance, human rights, and international relations

The findings of this thematic report highlight how religious affiliations are associated with the socio-economic status of the family and the status of inclusion and exclusion of different religious groups. This analysis is expected to be useful or relevant for policy and planning purposes for the state and other agencies.

1.3 Objectives of the thematic report

The overall objective of this thematic report is to analyse the socio-economic, demographic, and spatial dimensions of religious groups based on NPHC 2021. The specific objectives are:

1. To review a global methodology and policy related to religious diversity;
2. To examine how religious diversity relates to socioeconomic factors and the dimensions of inclusion/exclusion, and;
3. To suggest policy recommendations related to the promotion of religious diversity, secularism, and inclusion within the framework of Nepal's constitution

1.4 Chapter organization

This report covers nine chapters. Chapter 1 provides an overview of the thematic report focusing on the background on census and religion, the policy context, and the objectives of this report. Chapter 2 discusses the methodology used for the analysis of the NPHC 2021 data on the census for this report, including brief discussions on the data quality. Chapter 3 discusses the changes in the population of religions in the last eight censuses. The chapter also examines the spatial distribution of the population of the ten religions enumerated in the 2021 census across ecological zones, provinces, urban-rural areas, and districts. It further explores the district-wise distributions of these religions via maps. Chapter 4 analyzes the demographic characteristics of population religion, focusing on the age, sex ratio, marital status, age at marriage, and migration characteristics of the followers of the ten religions. Chapter 5 discusses the cultural characteristics of population religions, association with caste/ethnicity and language. Chapter six discusses the followers of the ten religions and the association between literacy rate, level of educational attainment, and sex of the adherents of the ten religions. Chapter 7 analyzes the

economic characteristics of the adherents of the ten religions. It focuses on religion and economic activities, occupations, small-scale enterprises, household wealth index, and female property ownership. Chapter 8 analyzes the Religious Diversity Index (RDI) by ecology, province, and household level. It also examines the intra-household diversity of religion by socio-economic correlates. Chapter 9 provides a conclusion of the thematic report and highlights the related policy implications.

CHAPTER 2

METHODOLOGY

2.1 Context

The census is a fundamental resource for determining the principal tendencies toward religious diversity and providing the necessary conditions for pluralism. Since the 1952/1954 census, Nepal has been one of the nations in South Asia that have included questions about religious affiliation in its national census.

The question on religion was included in the census as part of a policy of national integration. Nepal's constitution of 2015 included secularism to address the problem of national integration. The concept of equality among citizens irrespective of their caste/ethnicity, language, and religion is enshrined in the Constitution of Nepal 2015. In this regard, secularism is a policy for recognizing religious diversity and treating all religions as equal. In recent times, the tendency towards religious diversification, not only in Nepal but across South Asia and in a global context (Pew Research, 2012), is modifying the original purpose of the census, changing it from an instrument designed to promote national unity to one that measures religious diversity.

The history of the census shows that questions related to religion have been asked since the scientific census of 1952/54 to date. Initially, the question was open-ended, with no predefined religion categories. However, since the 1971 census, the question on religion has been presented with predefined categories, except for the 2001 census. In these categorical questions, an "Other" option has been available to accommodate the addition of new categories as needed. The predefined religion categories have evolved, starting with the census of 1971. Table 2.1 illustrates the religion categories that were added in censuses conducted after 1971. Based on the data collected during census enumeration, detailed reports on religion have been prepared. These reports include analyses presented in numerical, percentage, graphical, map-based, and tabular formats.

Table 2.1: Questions asked in censuses 1952/54-2021, NSO 2022

Classification	1952/54	1961	1971	1981	1991	2001	2011	2021
Question asked without religion category	√	√	X	X	X	X	√	X
Question asked with following religion categories								
Hindu	X	X	√	√	√	√	X	√
Buddhist	X	X	√	√	√	√	X	√
Islam	X	X	√	√	√	√	X	√
Kirat	X	X	X	X	X	√	X	√
Christian	X	X	X	√	√	√	X	√
Prakriti	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	√
Bon	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	√
Jain	X	X	√	√	√	√	X	√
Bahai	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	√
Sikh	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	√
Others	X	X	√	√	√	√	X	√

Source: NSO, 2022 (Nepal ma Janaganna)

2.2 Analysis of religion

The 2021 census asked the responding individuals which religion they (and their household members) and the individual religious affiliations were recorded using the existing religion categories. This thematic report primarily utilizes the 2021 census data on religion. However, it has used the 2001 and 2011 census data to compare changes in the size of religions over the inter-census periods. This analysis delves into various aspects, including the religious categories of individuals and households. It considers age-sex structure, spatial dimensions, economic composition, social composition, and gender dimensions. By incorporating these different dimensions, the analysis aims to provide a comprehensive understanding of the religious landscape and how it intersects with other demographic and socio-economic factors. This approach will help to uncover patterns and trends within religious affiliations. It will offer insights into the broader societal impacts of religion on the population.

In addition to the aspects, the National Statistics Office (NSO) has already developed and measured the wealth index of the population. This wealth index serves as an important indicator for understanding the socioeconomic status of individuals and households. Similarly, other significant indicators, such as the quality of data assessment, have also been calculated by the previous report, such as the social composition of Nepal. These indicators are crucial for ensuring the reliability and accuracy of the data collected.

This report utilizes the methods developed by the NSO for assessing the quality of data to evaluate the overall quality of the census data. By employing these established methods, the report aims to provide a thorough and reliable evaluation of the census data, ensuring that the findings and conclusions drawn are based on high-quality and trustworthy data. This comprehensive evaluation process helps to maintain the integrity and credibility of the census data, ultimately contributing to more accurate and effective policymaking and planning based on the population's needs and characteristics. Finally, the report examines the phenomenon of changes in the size of the population following the religions identified in the censuses over different periods. This aspect of the analysis is particularly significant in understanding the demographic shifts and emerging changes of religious identities of people by caste/ethnicity as well as by spatial and ecological distributions of the population.

2.3 Methods of computation

2.3.1 Calculation of Religious Diversity Index (RDI)

The Religious Diversity Index (RDI) is determined through a three-step method. The first step involves squaring and summing the percentages of the ten religious groups studied. For instance, if the entire population belongs to a single religious group, the first step produces a score of 10,000 ($100^2 = 10,000$). In contrast, if the population is evenly split among the ten religious groups, each representing 10 percent, the score for this step would be 1,000 ($10^2 + 10^2 + 10^2 + 10^2 + 10^2 + 10^2 + 10^2 + 10^2 + 10^2 + 10^2 = 1,000$). This score of 1,000 represents the highest level of diversity achievable when considering ten groups.

In the second step, the first step score is reversed so that lower scores indicate less religious diversity, while higher scores signify greater diversity. This is done by subtracting the first-step score from the value representing no diversity (10,000). For instance, if the entire population belongs to a single religious group, the new score would be 0 ($10,000 - 10,000 = 0$). If the population is equally split among the ten religious groups, the score would be 9,000 ($10,000 - 1,000 = 9,000$). This adjusted second-step score of 9,000 now indicates the highest level of diversity achievable when considering ten groups. Third, the second-step score is divided by 875 to put the final Religious Diversity Index on a 0-10 scale. In the case where the entire population belongs to one religious group, the score would remain 0 ($0/875 = 0$). But in the case where the population is equally distributed among the 10 major religious groups, the score would now become 10 ($8,750/875 = 10$).

The Pew Research Center employed the Religious Diversity Index (RDI) to assess global religious diversity, analysing census and other data from 232 countries in 2010. This study is among the few yet highly regarded examinations of global religious diversity. The RDI calculates the proportion of each country's population belonging to eight major religious groups as of 2010.

Countries with more equal representation among these groups receive higher scores on a 10-point scale (Pew Research Center, 2014, Appendix 1, p.15).

2.3.2 Regression model

Regression analysis is a statistical technique used to study the relationship between two or more variables, enabling the prediction or explanation of one variable based on the others. This method examines how categorical or continuous independent variables relate to a single dichotomous dependent variable (Hosmer & Lemeshow, 1989). Multivariate logistic regression is represented by the equation:

$$\log (p/1-p) =\beta_0+ \beta_1X_1+ \beta_2X_2+\dots\dots\dots + \beta_nX_n$$

Where p is the probability of outcome variable, β_0 is the odds of intercept, $\beta_1, \beta_2+\dots\dots\dots + \beta_nX_n$ are the coefficients associated with the reference group and $X_1\dots\dots X_n$ are the independent variables.

2.4 Data quality

Nepal's National Statistics Office (NSO), formerly the Central Bureau of Statistics (CBS), conducts a population census every decade. While the primary goals and scope of these censuses have remained consistent, their methodologies and content have evolved in response to technological advancements and changing user expectations. In assessing the data quality, several factors such as census operating organization, human resources, census promotion, tools designing, fieldwork, coding, computer processing, and post-census enumeration (PES) contribute to the quality results (Karki, 1995). Recently, there has been a growing demand for more detailed and precise demographic and socioeconomic data from the census to monitor progress toward the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and other national and international development initiatives.

According to Karki (1995), the 1991 population census was found to be of higher quality than the previous censuses, particularly the 1981 census. However, an analysis of certain of the 1991 census's features makes it abundantly evident that much work needs to be done to raise the quality of Nepal's census data. With regard to the data on religion, Nepal's census has become more inclusive after the 1990 census to enumerate the nation's existing diversity. The inclusion of Baha'i as a distinct religious group in the 2021 census, with a following of 537 individuals, signifies this endeavour to comprehensively enumerate and represent Nepal's existing religious diversity in the national census. On the other hand, defining what constitutes religion and how people identify their religious affiliations are complex phenomenon. The census processes of enumeration and coding of people's responses on religions requires in-depth understanding of the social-cultural characteristics of the religious groups. The 2011 census data on religion,

particularly the disaggregated data on caste/ethnicity and religious affiliations, is still being used without the necessary updates for accuracy.

In 2021, extensive efforts were undertaken to enhance public awareness about the importance of the population census, utilizing both mass media and social media platforms. The quality and quantity of human resources involved in the census significantly improved, with a better enumerator-to-supervisor ratio and higher educational qualifications among both groups compared to previous censuses. To ensure the success of the "post-enumeration survey," which serves as a critical tool for evaluating the census count, it is well managed, and the enumeration was timely. The post-enumeration survey study, which was carried out for the first time by a third party – the Labour Studies Programme of Tribhuvan University – reported a 2.6 percent omission rate for the 2021 census. This rate is one percentage point less than for the 2011 census and half the reported omission rate for the 2001 census of 5.3 percent (NSO 2024a, Figure 2.1.), showing a significant improvement.

Since the 1971 census, Nepal has employed the Whipple Index method to evaluate the quality of age data. The results of the Whipple Index have been applied to six censuses conducted since then. The Whipple Index score of 149 of (98-point reduction from 1971 to 2021) highlights a notable improvement in age data reporting. In 1971, age heaping was more pronounced for females, whereas in 2021, no gender-based differences were observed.

Theoretically, the Myers Index ranges from 0 to 90, where a score of '0' indicates no age heaping, and '90' represents the extreme scenario where all reported ages end with the same digit. Positive values reflect a preference for certain digits, while negative values suggest underreporting. Typically, ages ending in 0 and 5 are favoured, whereas digits like 1, 4, 6, 8, and 9 are often understated. For Nepal, the Myers Index dropped significantly from 24.3 in the 1971 Census to 9.9 in the 2021 Census (NSO, 2024a) indicating substantial improvement. In earlier censuses, such as those of 1971, 1981, and 1991, the index was notably higher for females compared to males, but the gap has narrowed in recent years, with only a 0.5-point difference in 2021. These facts indicate the quality of data has been improved in every census from 1952/54 to date.

In every census since the 1952-54 census to the 2011 census, new religious categories were included. However, no new religious category was added in the 2021. Similarly, there are no data on other religions not included in the ten categories. The census data indicates that all of Nepal's people adhere to one of the 10 religions listed. The quality of the 2021 census data on religion are found to have improved as per the PES report of the NSO.

2.5 Limitation

The census data on religion draws from a single question related to the religious affiliation of the individual and her/his family members: “What religion do you follow?” It provides the religious affiliations of the population into the given ten census categories. However, a category of ‘others’ is provided. It assumes that all individuals necessarily follow at least one religion and thus the question of ‘no religion’ or ‘religion other than the given ten religions’ cannot be analyzed from the census data.

This report has attempted to analyze the changes in the population size of the ten religions by comparing the data on caste/ethnicity and religion of the 2001 and 2011 censuses, compiled by Dahal (2004, 2014), with that of the 2021 data provided by the NSO. Since there were no replica format files of 2001 and 2011 on the same data, it was not feasible to perform multiple analyses of the changing religious affiliations of the given caste and ethnic groups. This would have enhanced the quality and scope of this report.

CHAPTER 3

POPULATION OF RELIGIONS: CHANGES OVER TIME

This chapter analyzes the size, growth, and changes of populations of religion in Nepal in the last eight censuses. The 2021 census finds that ten major religions are followed in Nepal, and the population of these ten religions census varies greatly. There are 23.68 million Hindus but only 537 Baha'is, 1,496 Sikhs, and 2,398 Jain followers, among others. The 2021 census, like the past censuses, did not record the various dominations within a religion.

3.1 Population by religion

The findings of the 2021 census show that a majority of Nepal's population follow the Hindu religion. Nepal's total Hindu population size is the second-largest Hindu population in any country after India. Similarly, Nepal's percentage of Hindus (81.2%) is the largest share of the national population in the world (Pew Research Center, 2014, p.29; see Table 3.2).

Table 3.1: Distribution of population by religion, NPC 2021

Religion	Population	Percentage
Total	29,164,578	100.0
Hindu	23,677,744	81.2
Buddhist	2,393,549	8.2
Islam	1,483,066	5.1
Kirat	924,204	3.2
Christians	512,313	1.8
Prakriti	102,048	0.3
Bon	67,223	0.2
Jain	2,398	0.01
Sikh	1,496	0.01
Bahai	537	0.0

Source: NSO, 2021

Buddhism is the second largest religion in Nepal, followed by 8.2 percent of the total population. Islam is the third largest religion, followed by Kirati, Christianity, Prakriti, Bon, Jainism, Sikhism, and Baha'i, with 537 individual followers. Of these, the adherents of Hinduism, Buddhism, Islam, and Christianity comprise 96.2 percent of Nepal's population. These religions are four of the five widely recognized major world religions, followed by more than three-quarters (76.8%) of the world's population in 2010 (Pew Research Center, 2014).

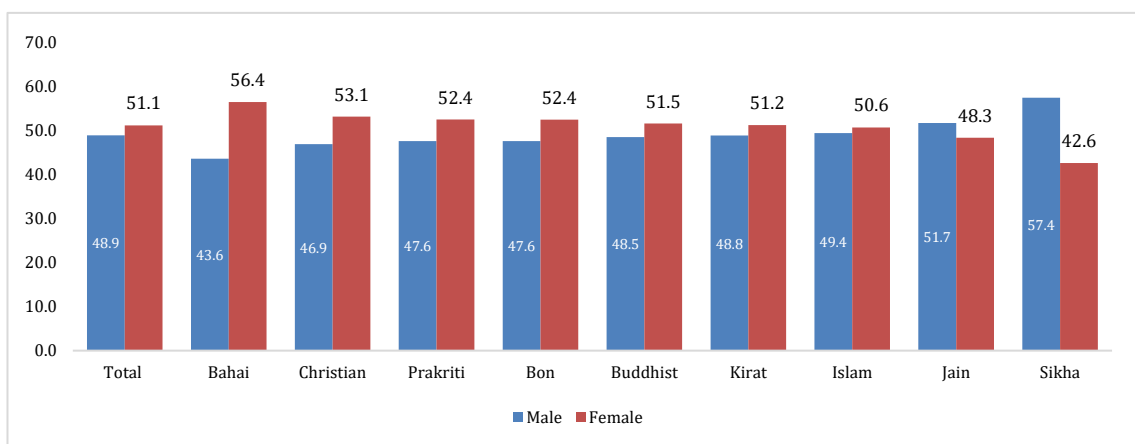
Table 3.2: Population by Religion: Nepal, India, and the World

SN	Religion	The World (2010)	India (2011)	Nepal (2021)
1	Hindu	15	79.8	81.2
2	Buddhist	7.1	2.3	8.2
3	Islam	23.2	14.2	5.1
4	Indigenous/Folk Religions*	5.9	Na	3.7
5	Christian	31.5	2.3	1.7
6	Jain	Na	0.3	0.01
7	Sikh	Na	0.70	0.01
8	Unaffiliated	16.3	Na	Na
9	Jews	0.2	Na	Na
10	Other**	0.0	Na	0.6
11	Not stated	Na	Na	0.24
	Total Population	29,164,578	1,210,854,977	1,210,854,977

Source: NSO (2023). National Report on Caste, Ethnicity, Language & Religion, NPHC 2021; Table 8., p.29. Census of India (2011). C -1 Population by Religious Community-2011. Pew Researcher Center (2014, pp. 17- 22). *Indigenous religion includes Kirat (3.04%), Prakriti (0.46%), and Bon (0.04%) in the 2021 census in Nepal. Globally, it includes African and Chinese traditional religions and American and Australian native religions. ** Other - Bahai (537 people, 0%) in Nepal. Globally, it includes Jains, Sikhs, Shintoists, Taoists, followers of Tenrikyo, Wiccans, Zoroastrians, and many other faiths. na – no data available.

The NPC 2021 data on religion and population by sex indicates that, except for Sikhism and Jainism, the population of women outweighs men among the followers of all religions. Among the Sikh adherents, the proportion of the male population outnumbered women by almost 9 percent.

Figure 3.1: Distribution of population by religion and sex, NPHC 2021



One reason for the relatively higher male Sikh population could be due to a higher number of male Sikh foreign nationals living in Nepal at the time of the 2021 census. The NPHC 2021 shows that almost 27 percent of the Sikh population are foreigners, out of which 65 percent are males, suggesting that more male Sikh individuals (of Indian nationality) than females were living in Nepal at the time of the census (Table 5.13). This study cannot point out the definite reasons for a relatively high proportion of male Jain followers.³ The Baha'i has the highest proportion of women adherents among the ten religions, indicating that this newer religion in Nepal has more women followers.

3.2 Population changes by religion (1952/54 – 2021)

The number of religions identified in Nepal's last eight decennial censuses has increased from a figure of 3 in the 1952/1954 census to 10 in the 2011 and 2021 censuses. The four decennial censuses conducted after the restoration of democracy in 1990 have added new religious groups in order to record Nepal's existing religious diversity. Table 3.3 presents the size and proportion of Nepal's population by religion for the last eight decennial censuses.

Table 3.3: Population by religion over the censuses 1952/54-2021

Religion	1952/1954	1961	1971	1981	1991	2001	2011	2021
Hindu	7,318,392	8,254,403	10,330,009	13,445,787	15,996,653	18,330,121	21,551,492	23,677,744
Buddhist	707,104	870,991	866,441	799,081	1,439,142	2,442,520	2,396,099	2,393,549
Islam	208,899	280,597	351,186	399,197	653,218	954,023	1,162,370	1,483,066
Kirat					318,389	818,106	807,169	924,204
Christian		458	2,541	3,891	31,280	101,976	375,699	512,313
Prakriti							121,982	102,048
Bon							13,006	67,223
Jain		831	5,836	9,438	7,561	4,108	3,214	2,398
Bahai						1,211	1,283	537
Sikh						5,890	609	1,496
Other	684			365,446	26,416	78,994		
Unstated		5,716			18,138		61,581	
Total	8,235,079	9,412,996	1,155,983	15,022,839	18,491,097	22,736,949	26,494,504	29,164,578

Source: Dahal (2014), Table. 1.10; p: 18 (*Population Monograph of Nepal Vol II: Social Demography, CBS*); NSO, 2021

³ In contrast to the case of Sikh foreign nationals, 51 percent of the Jain foreign nationals living in Nepal at the time of the census were women. One possible reason could be the Marwari Jain women identifying as 'Hindu' after they married and moved into the Hindu Marwari family (see, Agrawal, N.; 2020).

Table 3.4 shows the percentage of the population following the religions identified by the eight decennial censuses between 1952/54 and 2021.

Table 3.4: Proportion of population by religion over the censuses 1952/54-2021

Religion	Census year							
	1952/54	1961	1971	1981	1991	2001	2011	2021
Hindu	88.9	87.7	89.4	89.5	86.5	80.6	81.3	81.2
Buddhist	8.6	9.3	7.5	5.3	7.8	10.7	9.0	8.2
Islam	2.5	3.0	3.0	2.7	3.5	4.2	4.4	5.1
Kirat	-	-			1.7	3.6	3.0	3.2
Christian	-	-	0.02	0.03	0.2	0.5	1.4	1.8
Prakriti	-	-	-	-	-	-	0.5	0.4
Bon	-	-	-	-	-	-	0.04	0.2
Jain	-	0.01	0.05	0.06	0.04	0.02	0.01	0.01
Sikh	-	-	-	-	-	0.02	0.0	0.01
Bahai	-	-	-	-	-	0.01	0.01	0.0

Source: Dahal (2014), Table. 1.10; p: 18 (Population Monograph of Nepal Vol II: Social Demography, CBS); NSO, 2021

These census data on the changing size and proportion of religions indicate the following patterns:

1. The total Hindu population increased in the last eight censuses. However, its proportion to the total population declined from the 1991 census to the 2021 census, except for a slight growth between the 2001 and 2011 census. Before the 1991 census, the census did not record the religions of Janajati groups-Kirat, Prakriti and Bon. The indigenous religions were included as Hindus or Buddhists depending on the birth and death rituals and deities worshiped by these groups (CBS, 1987, p. 84). Following the political changes in 1990, Adivasi Janajati and others began reclaiming their Indigenous religions in the census. This also led to a decrease in the proportion of Hindu religion despite the increase in the population size of its followers in the census results. Similarly, the results of the distribution of religion by caste and ethnicity in the last three censuses show that the size and the proportions of the followers of Christianity from the Hill Dalits and mountain/hill Janajati have increased (Dahal, 2014, p. 18; Table 1.10 & Table 1.15, p.23). Hence, the additions of new religions in the census and shifts of religious affiliations can explain the decline of the percentage of the Hindu population in the census between the 1991 and the 2021 censuses

2. The total number and proportion of the Buddhist population fluctuated between the 1952/1954 and the 2021 censuses. It declined, grew, and again declined between different censuses. For example, the number and percentage declined in the three censuses between 1961 and 1981 during the Panchayat system (1960-1961). The Population Monograph of the 1981 census, published in 1987, explained that the decline of Buddhists in the absolute numbers and proportion to the total population during this period could be attributed to: a) difficulties in drawing distinctions between Buddhists and Hindus; b) Members of different ethnic and religious groups, including Buddhists, have increasingly adopted the *Nepali* language; since Nepali-speaking people are commonly considered Hindus, there is a possibility of misclassifying some Nepali-speaking Buddhists in the category of Hindus (CBS, 1987, p.86). The number and percentage increased in the 1991 and the 2011 censuses but decreased in the 2021 census. This could have resulted from the religious switching of the Buddhist communities to Christianity and the Bon in the last two censuses (Table 4.10)
3. The inter-census data shows that the absolute number of followers of Islam and Christianity steadily increased between the 1952/1954 and the 2021 censuses. With a following of 2.5 percent of Nepal's population, Islam was the country's third largest religion in 1952/1954 when the census made the data on religion for the first time. In other words, Islam showed a significant population in the 1950s. By 2021, its population had grown sevenfold. Compared to the Muslim population, only 458 Christians were documented in the 1961 census, the first recording to include Christianity in the census. Between 1961 and 1981, its population rose nearly ninefold, even under the Panchayat regime, which prohibited religious conversion. Following the fall of the Panchayat regime and the reinstatement of a democratic system in 1990, the rate of Christians surged rapidly – an 8-fold increase between 1981 and 1991 and a 16-fold increase between 1991 and 2021. The census conducted in Nepal did not include questions related to shifts in individual shifts in religious affiliations or conversions. Yet, the census data on religions indicates 'religious conversation' to be one major factor for the growing Christian population in Nepal over the last forty years
4. The Indigenous religions⁴ – Kirat, Prakriti, and Bon were – recorded in the census after the political changes of the 1990s. Kirat religion was first included in the 1991 census. The number of its followers increased by 2.5 times between the 1991 and the 2001 censuses, suggesting the rise of the ethnic consciousness and claims of Indigenous identity and rights during this period. Following this, its number and share in the total

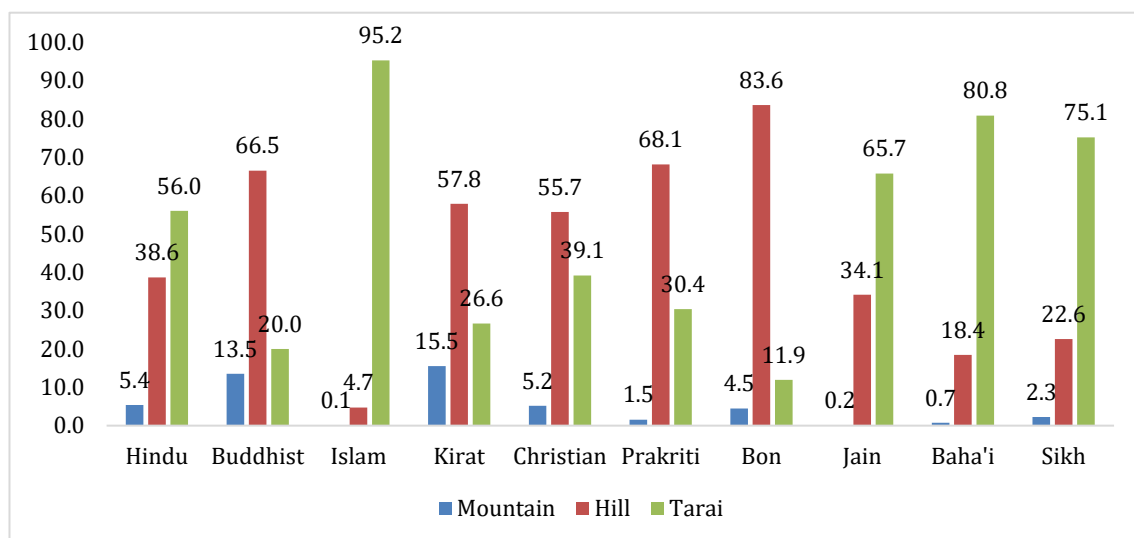
⁴ This term is used solely for analytical convenience in this report.

population slightly declined in the 2011 census but increased in the 2021 census. Prakriti and Bon are first recorded in the 2011 census. The number of adherents of the Prakriti religion slightly declined between the 2011 and the 2021 censuses, while those of the Bon followers increased by more than five times in the 2021 census.

5. The population following the three minority religions – Jain, Sikh, and Baha’i – show a similar trend of growth and decline during different censuses. Jain was first included in the 1961 census, and the population of its followers increased by 11 times between 1961 and 1981. However, it continuously decreased in successive censuses, with a three-fold decrease between 1991 and 2001. The reasons for this decrease in the population of the Jain followers have not been studied.
6. The Sikh religion was first recorded in the 2001 census, with a population of 5,890 followers. However, this number of followers drastically declined to just 609 people, or a decline of 88 percent in ten years. The factors which led to such a sweeping decline of the Sikh population in the two censuses has not been studied. Under-enumeration and other errors in the census could be one reason.
7. Baha’i, a relatively less-known religion in Nepal, was first recorded in the 2001 census, with 1,211 followers. Like the Sikh religion, Baha’i is a minority religion in Nepal. Its population size slightly increased in the 2011 census but decreased by half (537 followers) in the 2021 census.

3.3 Geographic distribution of population by religions

The 2021 census shows that the population concentration of the followers of the ten religions greatly varies across the three ecological zones. Figure 3.2 presents an overview of the share of the population of the religions by ecological zones in the 2021 census. Focusing on the individual religion in this method makes the minority religions with relatively smaller population sizes visible in the analysis.

Figure 3.2: Population distribution of 10 religions in three ecological zones, NPHC 2021

Most Hindu followers are concentrated in the Tarai followed by the Hill zone. Only 5.4 percent of the adherents of the Hindu religion live in the Mountain zone, where they constitute 72 percent of the total population of the ecological zone (Annex 2). There are no Hindu followers among the six Mountain Janajati groups, which include Sherpa, Karmarong, Lepcha, Dolpo, Hyolmo/Yholmopa, and Bhote. The followers of Buddhism are also unevenly distributed in the three ecological zones. The 2021 census shows that 80 percent of the Buddhists reside in the Hill and Mountain regions, with the rest (20%) living in the Tarai zone.

On the other hand, the overwhelming majority (95.2%) of Islam followers are from the Tarai region. Only a small number – 1,172 people out of 1.4 million Islam followers – live in the Mountain region, while 4.7 percent live in the Hill zone (Annex 2). Followers of Christianity are concentrated in Hill (55.7%) and Tarai (30.4%) as opposed to the Mountain region. Most of the Kirat adherents (57.8%) are from the Hill, and their rate in the Tarai zone is 10 percent higher than those in the Mountain region.

Only 6.1 percent of Nepal's population lives in the Mountain zone (NSO, 2023a). Hence, none of the ten religions has the most followers in this zone. Five religions – Buddhism, the three Indigenous religions of Kirat, Prakriti, and Bon, and Christianity – show their largest followers in the Hill zone. The other five – Islam, Hinduism, and the three minority religions – have the largest number of followers in the Tarai region. The followers of the three minority religions – Jains, Bahai, and Sikhism – are concentrated in the Tarai region, and a relatively smaller number of followers of Jain and Sikh are from the Hill region.

3.4 Distribution of the population by religion and sex in ecological zones

The 2021 census data on the distribution of the population of religion by sex shows that the proportion of male and female followers varies across the three ecological zones. In the Mountain zones, five religions, including Hinduism, Buddhism, Kirat, Prakriti, and Bon, have an almost equal proportion of male and female population. In contrast, the other five religions depict a skewed proportion. Islam, Sikhism, and Jain religions have an overwhelmingly higher proportion of the male population (Table 3.5). It should be emphasized here that these religions have a small number of the population of their adherents in the Mountain regions, who are predominately men, leading to a higher proportion of the male population.

For instance, compared to the Hill and Tarai zones, there were only 1,732 Muslims living in the Mountain regions in 2021 (Annex 1). Table 3.5 shows that the adherents of Islam who reside in the Mountain areas are overwhelmingly men. It can be inferred that these individuals may be Muslim men likely from the Tarai and Hill zones who living in the Mountain areas for work, trade, and other reasons.

Table 3.5: Distribution of the population of religion by sex in ecological zones, NPHC 2021 (in %)

Religion	Mountain		Hill		Tarai	
	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female
Hindu	49.2	50.8	48.6	51.4	49.2	50.8
Buddhism	49.5	50.5	48.6	51.4	47.4	52.6
Islam	84.9	15.1	61.4	38.6	48.7	51.3
Kirat	50.2	49.8	49.4	50.6	46.8	53.2
Christian	48.7	51.3	47.1	52.9	46.3	53.7
Prakriti	49.2	50.8	47.5	52.5	47.6	52.4
Bon	49.6	50.4	47.6	52.4	46.8	53.2
Jain	100	0.0	50.2	49.8	52.3	47.7
Sikh	97.1	2.9	61.5	38.5	55.0	45.0
Bahai	25.0	75.0	44.4	55.6	43.5	56.5

Source: NSO, 2021, Annex 1

On the other hand, Christianity shows a relatively higher proportion (51.3%) of the female population in the Mountain region. Compared to Baha'i, which has only four adherents in the Mountain zone, Christianity is followed by 26,414 people, or 1.5 percent of the Mountain population, showing a sizable population in this zone. Christianity has more female followers as a higher proportion of the female population is seen in all three ecological zones.

The Kirat and Jain religions have an almost balanced proportion of the male and female population in the Hill zone. On the other hand, the adherents of Hinduism, Buddhism, Christianity, Prakriti, Bon, and Baha'i have a relatively higher proportion of the female population. Two religions – Islam and Sikhism – show a relatively higher proportion of men. The number of Sikhs residing in the Hill zone is relatively small compared to that of Muslims. There is a population of 70,000 Muslims in the Hill zone (NPHC, 2021; Caste and Ethnicity Report, Table 5). Outside of the Kathmandu valley, many Hill Muslims arrived from north India in the 17th and 18th centuries by royal invitation for training in the manufacturing and usage of military armaments, agricultural tools, and glass bangles (Sijapati, 2011). In addition to Kathmandu district, the Hill districts of Kaski, Tanahu, Syanja, and Gorkha districts show Muslim populations ranging between 3,000 to 6,500 (NPHC, 2021: Caste and Ethnicity Report).⁵ The Muslim population residing in the Hill region shows a higher percent (61.4 %) of men than women. Compared to Muslim women, there are many Muslim men in metropolitan cities like Kathmandu and Pokhara, located in the Hill regions (NPHC, 2021; Caste and Ethnicity Report, Table 5).

In the Tarai zone, the Hindu religion has an almost equal proportion of male and female populations. The Jain and Sikh religions have a higher proportion of the male population in the Tarai. One possible explanation for the higher number of Sikh men is that a larger share of the male Sikh population of foreign origin lives in Nepal. At the time of the 2021 census, 42 percent of Sikhs of foreign origin lived in Tarai (NSO, 2023; Annex 1)⁶. The higher proportion of Jain male populations in all three ecological zones is of note and requires further study.

3.5 Distribution of the population of religions by province

The 2021 census findings show that the followers of the ten religions are unevenly distributed across the seven provinces. Table 3.6 shows the composition of the provincial population by religion in Nepal. It shows that Hinduism is the predominant religion across all provinces, with varying proportions of adherents. Sudurpashchim has the highest proportion of the Hindu population, 16 percent higher than the national percent.

⁵ The data is taken from the disaggregated data of religion for the province, district, and municipality level from NPHC, 2021: Caste and Ethnicity Report. <https://censusnepal.cbs.gov.np/results/downloads/caste-ethnicity>

⁶ Of the total population of Sikhs, 26 percent are foreigners, out of which 66 percent are male. Similarly, 42 percent of the foreign Sikhs lived in the Tarai in 2021 (NSO, 2023)

Table 3.6: Distribution of the population by religion in Provinces, NPHC 2021

Religion	Province							
	Nepal	Koshi	Madhesh	Bagmati	Gandaki	Lumbini	Karnali	Sudurpashchim
Total Population	29,164,578	4,961,412	6,114,600	6,116,866	2,466,427	5,122,078	1,688,412	2,694,783
Hindu	81.19	67.38	84.24	72.03	82.22	88.36	94.7	97.4
Buddhist	8.21	8.73	2.21	22.27	11.54	1.99	3.2	0.8
Islam	5.09	4.20	13.28	0.79	0.91	7.45	0.2	0.3
Kirat	3.17	16.84	0.05	1.34	0.12	0.01	0.0	0.0
Christian	1.76	2.32	0.18	3.30	2.36	1.15	1.7	1.4
Prakriti	0.35	0.45	0.03	0.16	0.67	0.92	0.2	0.1
Bon	0.23	0.04	0.0	0.1	2.17	0.1	0.0	0.01
Jain	0.01	0.02	0.01	0.01	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Bahai	0.001	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.01
Sikh	0.01	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.02	0.0	0.0
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

Compared to other provinces, Koshi shows the lowest proportion of the Hindu population, 14 percent lower than the national percent. No other religion except Hinduism has followers of more than one percent of the total population across all the provinces. Buddhism and Christianity have followers at a rate above one percent of the total population in six provinces, whereas Islam has followers at a rate above one percent in three provinces, and for two provinces for Kirat. The proportion of the second largest religion ranges from a rate of 22 percent for Buddhism in Bagmati, 16 percent for Kirat in Koshi, and 13 percent for Islam in Madhesh provinces. The followers of the other two Indigenous religions – Prakriti and Bon – are less than one percent of the population in all provinces. Jain, Baha’i, and Sikh are minority religions, with the population size ranging between 3 Sikh followers in Karnali and 1,027 followers of Jain in Koshi.

Table 3.7 presents the population distribution of individual religions across the seven provinces in 2021. It shows that Nepal’s 23.7 million Hindus are spread across all the provinces, with a relatively higher concentration in Madhesh, Bagmati, and Lumbini provinces. Karnali Province has the lowest share of Nepal’s total Hindu population. Nonetheless, the number of Hindus in Karnali still outnumbers the population of the other nine religions. 94 percent of the population in Karnali follow the Hindu religion.

Table 3.7: Province-wise distribution of the ten religions, NPHC 2021

Religion	Population	Koshi	Madhesh	Bagmati	Gandaki	Lumbini	Karnali	Sudurpashchim
Hindu	23,677,744	14.1	21.8	18.6	8.6	19.1	6.8	11.1
Buddhist	2,393,549	18.1	5.7	56.9	11.9	4.3	2.2	0.9
Islam	14,83,066	14.0	54.7	3.3	1.5	25.7	0.2	0.5
Kirat	924,204	90.4	0.3	8.8	0.3	0.1	0.0	0.0
Christian	512,313	22.5	2.1	39.4	11.4	11.5	5.7	7.3
Prakriti	102,048	22.0	1.5	9.6	16.3	46.2	2.9	1.5
Bon	67,223	3.2	0.4	8.4	79.4	7.4	0.8	0.3
Jain	2,398	42.8	19.4	32.2	1.6	2.5	0.3	1.3
Sikh	537	8.3	7.6	19.9	3.1	57.2	0.2	3.6
Bahai	1,496	36.1	0.7	6.3	4.7	17.1	1.5	33.5

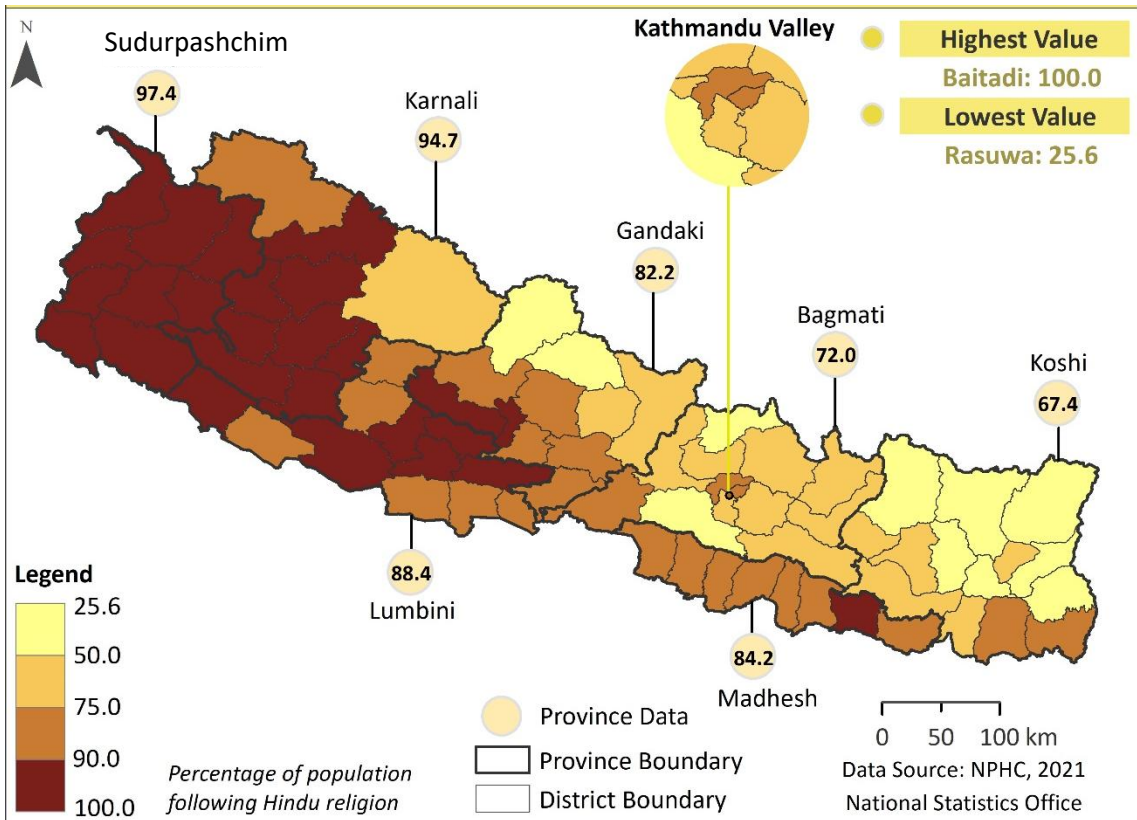
Source: NSO, 2021

Table 3.7 shows that, besides the Hindu religion, the followers of all nine religions are more concentrated than beyond 30 percent in one province than others – Buddhism and Christianity in Bagmati; Kirat, Jain, and Bahai in Koshi; Islam in Madhesh; Bon in Gandaki; Prakriti and Sikh in Lumbini provinces. The overwhelming adherents of the Kirat religion are in Koshi Province, then in Bagmati Province. The Muslim populations are distributed in all provinces but are mostly concentrated in Madhesh and Lumbini provinces. Over half of the Muslims are in Madhesi Province, with a quarter of them in Lumbini Province. Christian communities are distributed throughout all seven provinces, with the largest concentration in Bagmati, then in Koshi, Gandaki, and Lumbini. Madhesh Province has the smallest number of Christian adherents in Nepal.

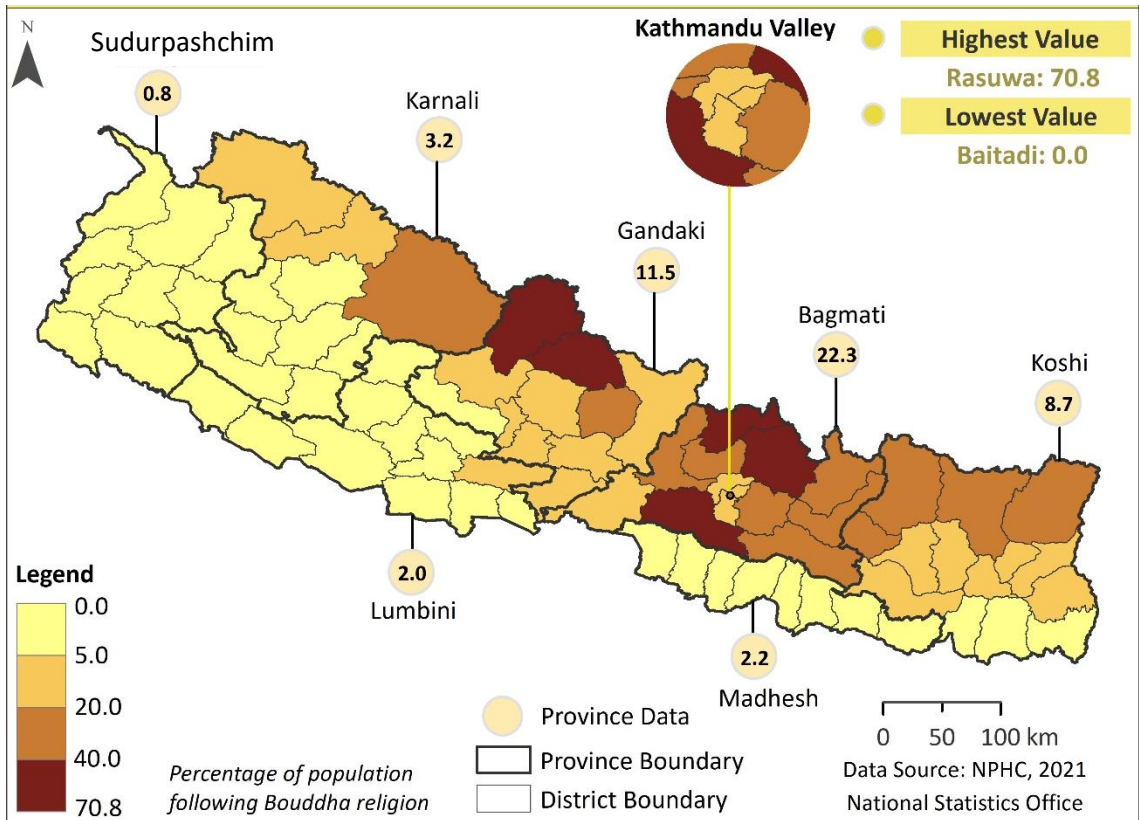
3.5.1 Distribution of religious population by provinces and districts

Map 3.1 shows that Hinduism is the dominant religion in the provincial population. In Sudurpaschim, 97.4 percent of the population identifies as Hindu, compared to only 72 percent in Koshi province. At the district level, Baitadi has a completely (100%) Hindu population, whereas in Rasuwa, only 25.6 percent of population follow Hinduism.

Map 3.1: Distribution of the Hindu population by Province and districts, NPHC 2021

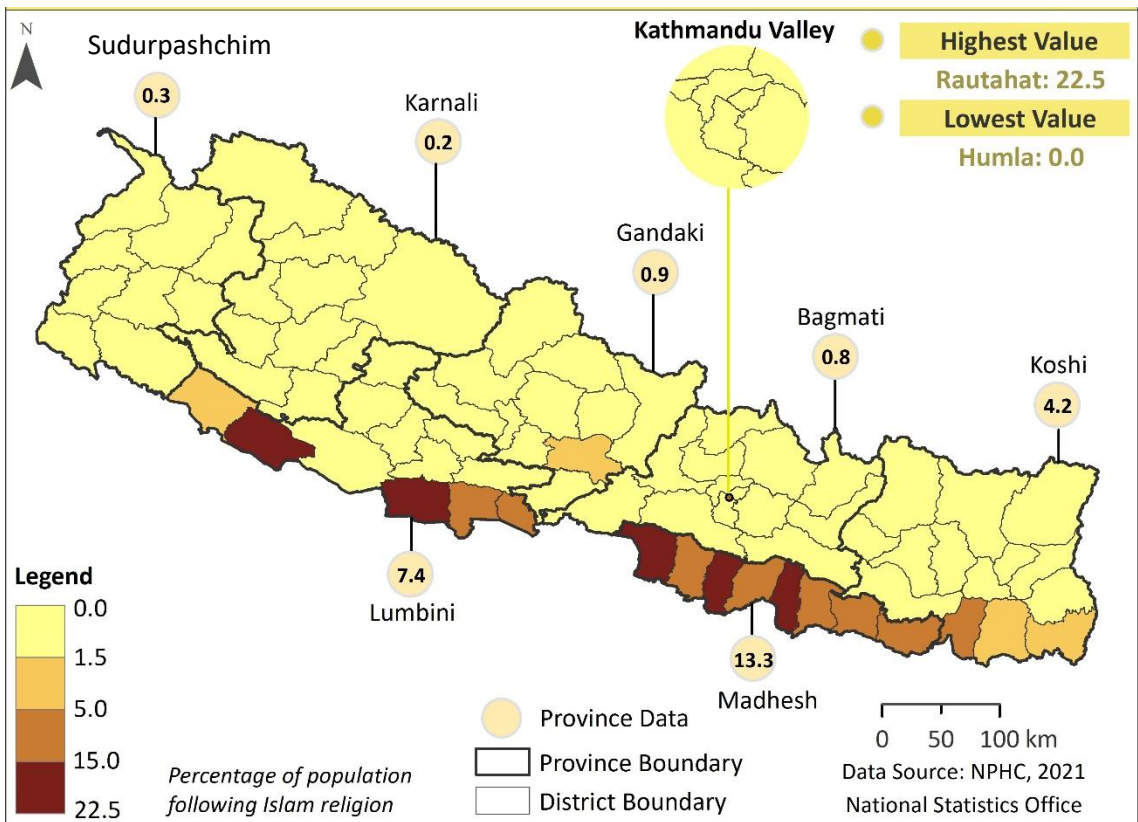


Map 3.2 presents the distribution of the Buddhist population across provinces and districts. It shows that the Buddhist population is concentrated in three provinces, with 22.3 percent of the total provincial population, Buddhists are in Bagmati Province, followed by 11.5 percent in Gandaki and 8.7 percent in Koshi. There is a relatively lower concentration of Nepal’s Buddhist population across districts in Nepal. Rasuwa district has the highest proportion (70.8%) and Baitadi (0.0%) has the lowest proportion of the district population.

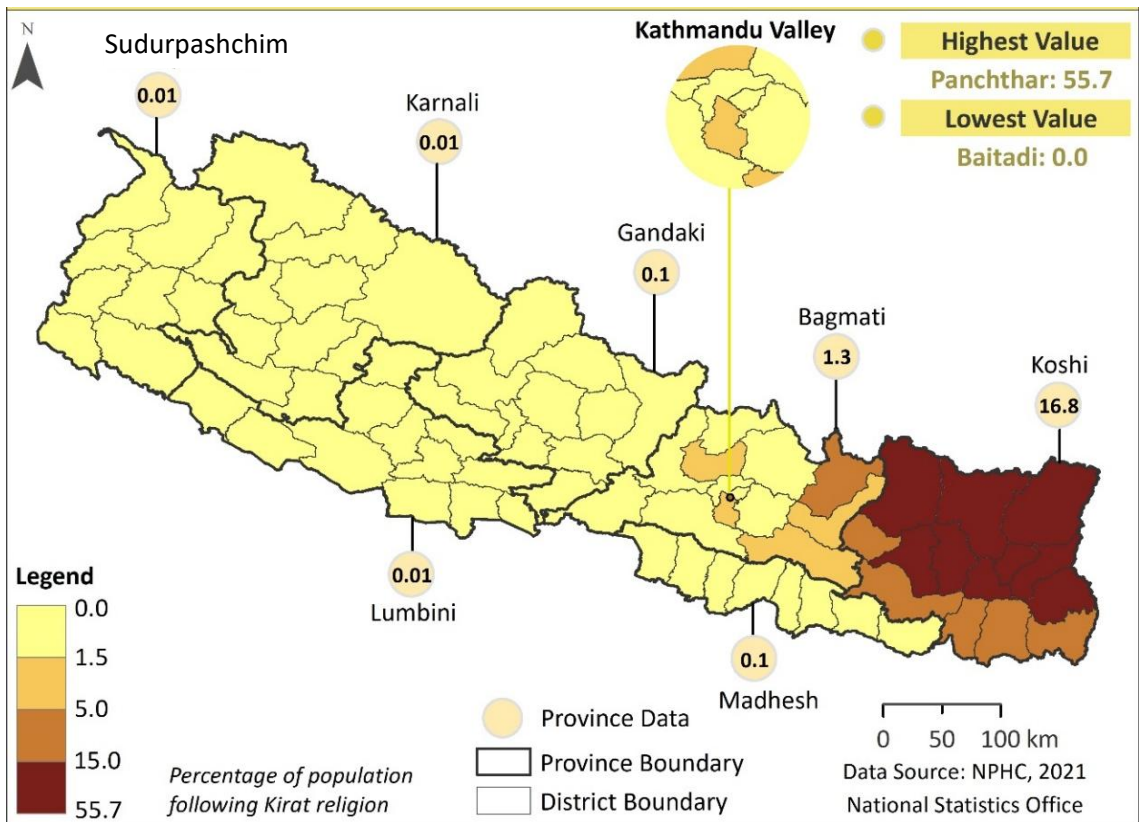
Map 3.2: Distribution of the Buddhist population by province and district, NPHC 2021

Map 3.3 shows that Madhesh Province has the highest proportion (13.3%) of provincial Muslim population, followed by Lumbini (7.4%). The Tarai districts in Madhesh, Koshi, and Lumbini relatively have a higher concentration of adherents of Islam in Nepal. According to the 2021 census, of the total district population, the district with the highest percent of Muslims in Nepal is Rautahat (22.5%), while the district with the lowest percentage is Humla (0.0%).

Map 3.3: Proportion of Islam population by province and district, NPHC 2021

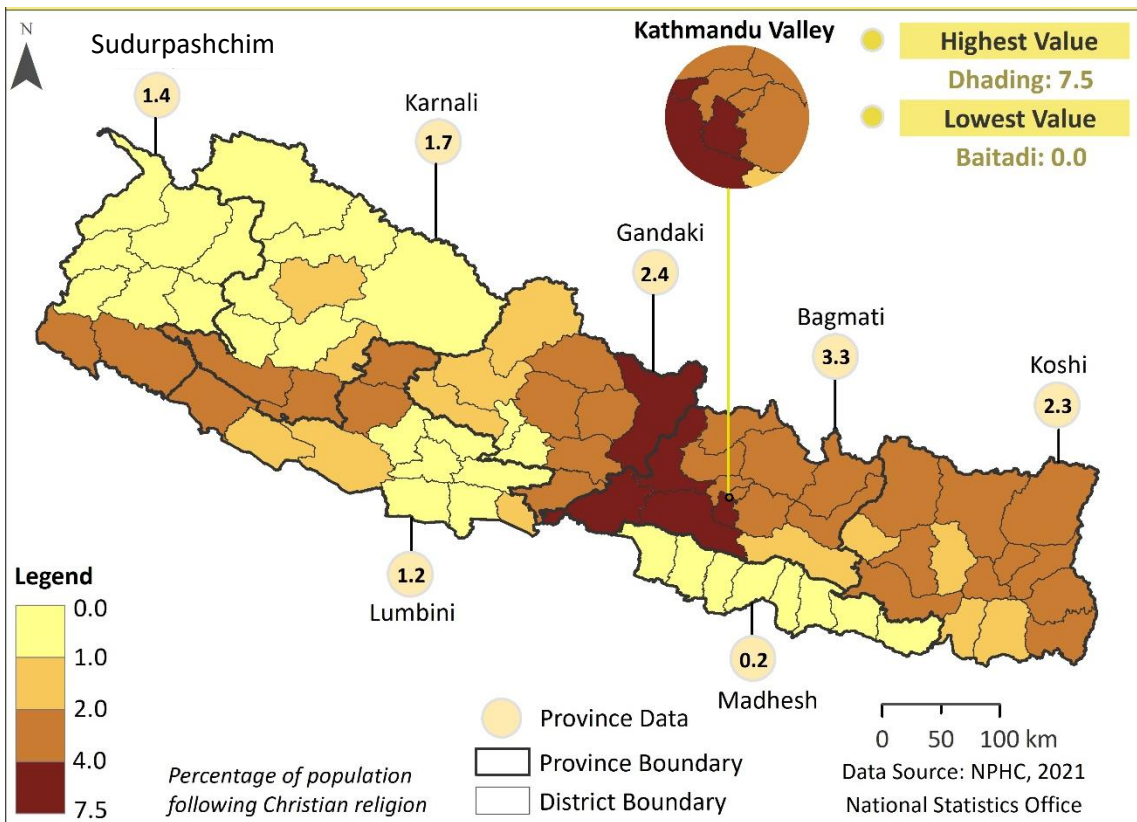


Map 3.4 shows that 16.8 percent of adherents of the Kirat religion predominately live in Koshi of the total provincial population. Of the total population of Panchthar, 55.7 percent are Kirat which highest and lowest in Baitadi (0.0%) of the total district population of adherents of the Kirat religion.

Map 3.4: Distribution of the followers of the Kirat religion by province and district, NHCP 2021

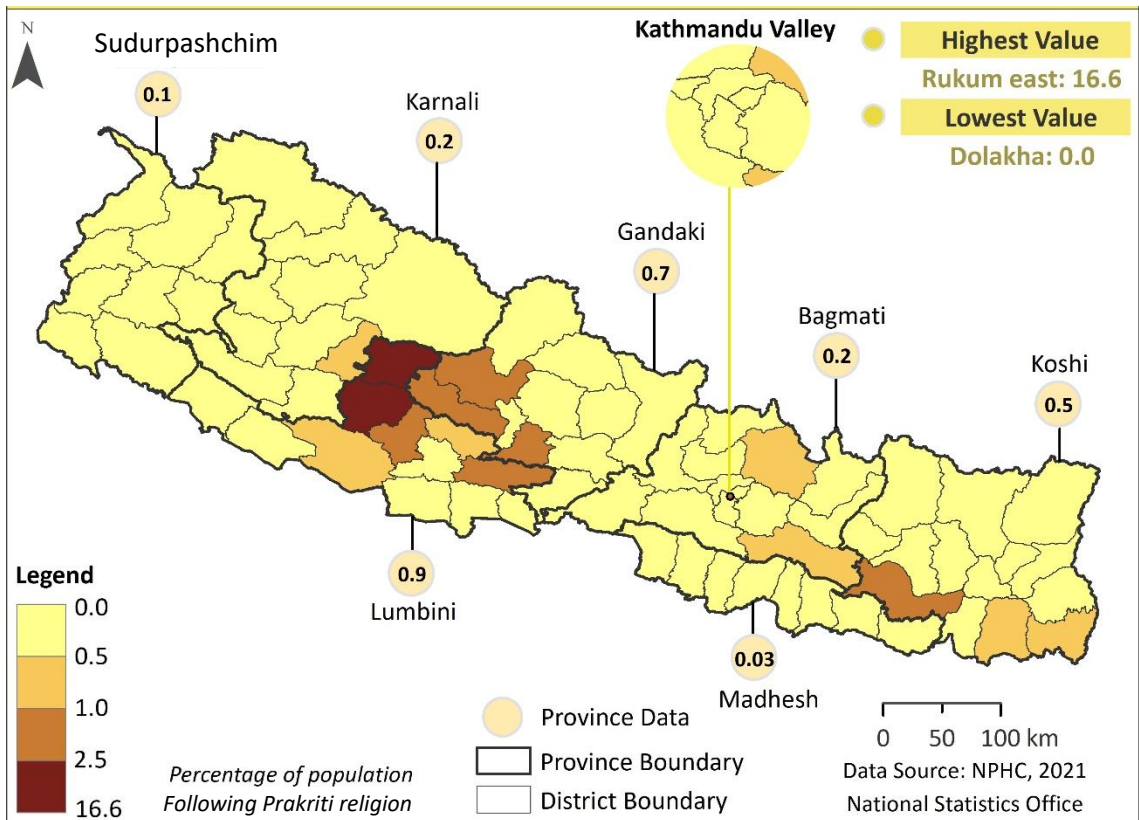
Map 3.5 shows the distribution of the Christian population in Nepal along the provinces and districts. In contrast to the Indigenous and other minority religions, Christianity has expanded throughout all seven provinces, albeit in different proportions, Bagmati Province has the largest proportion (3.3%) and lowest in Mahesh (0.2%) of the provincial population. By districts, with a higher concentration (7.5%) in Dhading of the district population and lowest in Baitadi (0.0%).

Map 3.5: Distribution of the Christian population by province and district, NPHC 2021



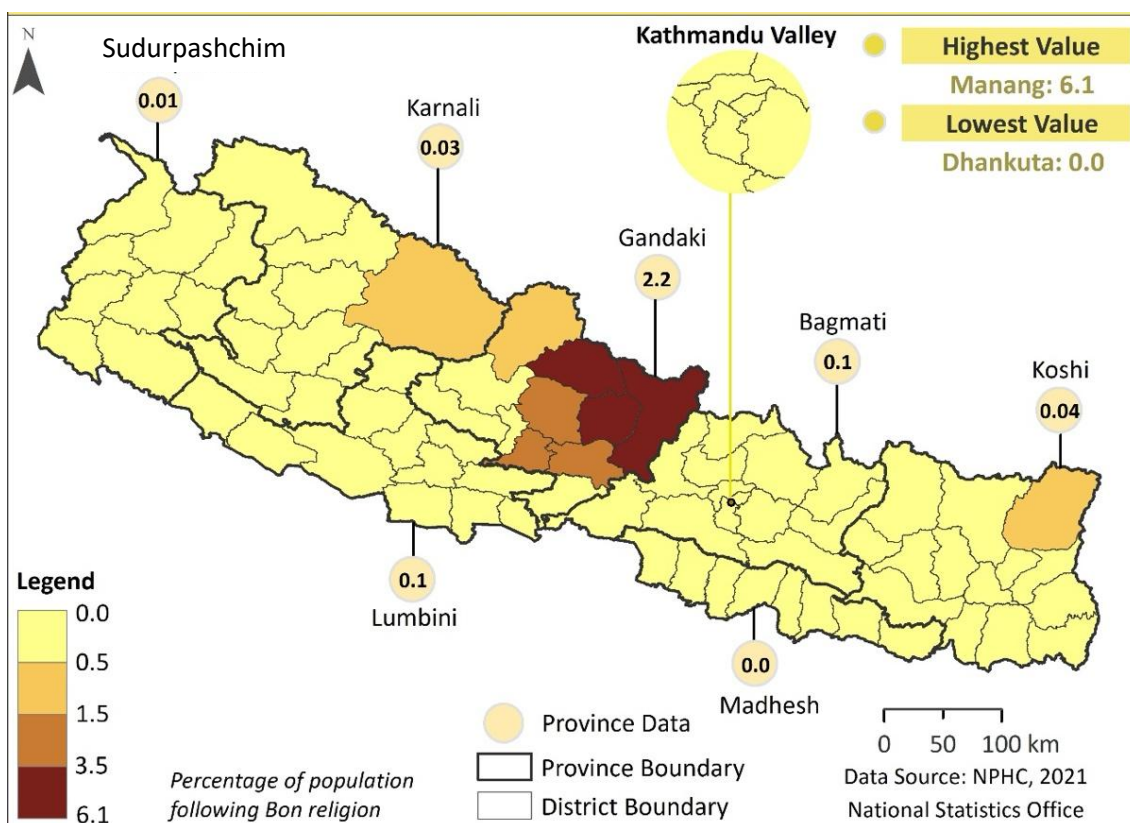
Map 3.6 presents the distribution of the population of the Prakriti religion in provinces and districts. Almost one percent of its adherents' lives in Lumbini of the provincial population, followed by Gandaki (0.7%) and Madhesh (0.03%). Of the total population of district, the largest followers of the Prakriti religion in Rukum east (16.6%) and lowest in Dolakha district (0.0%).

Map 3.6: Distribution of the population of the Prakriti religion by province and districts, NPHC 2021



Map 3.7 shows that the majority of the Bon followers, 2.2 percent of them are in Gandaki of the total Gandaki provincial population. Manag has 6.1 percent of the district population of the Bon followers, the largest in all districts and lowest in Dhankuta (0.0%) of the district population.

Map 3.7: Distribution of the population of the Bon religion by province and district, NPHC 2021



3.5.2 Population distribution of religions and sex by province

The 2021 census findings on the sex composition of the population of religion by provinces show that the Sikh population is represented largely by males across the seven provinces (see Table 3.8).

Table 3.8: Province-wise distribution of the population of religion with the proportion of females, NPHC 2021 (In %)

Area	Total	Hindu	Buddhist	Islam	Kirat	Christian	Prakriti	Bon	Jain	Bahai	Sikh
Nepal	51.1	51.1	51.5	50.6	51.2	53.1	52.4	52.4	48.3	56.4	42.6
Koshi	51.3	51.2	51.6	50.7	51.2	52.7	52.1	51.1	47.5	54.1	26.6
Madhesh	49.9	49.5	51.6	51.8	49.9	51.8	51.2	54.8	47.5	25.0	43.0
Bagmati	50.1	49.9	51.1	34.4	51.3	52.4	51.3	51.6	50.7	50.0	38.6
Gandaki	52.5	52.5	52.8	44.7	45.6	54.0	52.8	52.5	43.6	52.0	31.9
Lumbini	52.1	52.1	53.6	50.7	46.8	54.9	52.9	53.5	49.2	58.7	47.3
Karnali	51.2	51.2	51.9	45.2	20.0	53.5	52.0	50.2	0.0	62.5	0.0
Sudurpashchim	52.8	52.8	51.5	44.1	49.2	54.1	49.8	53.6	43.3	60.0	37.0

Similarly, only 26 percent of Koshi's Sikh population were women (Table 3.8). Jain populations also show a lower proportion of women in all provinces except in Bagmati, where a balanced proportion of the male and female populations is seen. On the other hand, Baha'i shows a relatively higher proportion, i.e., above 52 percent of women adherents in all regions except in Madhesh, where only a quarter of its followers are women.⁷

The proportion of the male and female Buddhist population is similar to that of Nepal's overall total population in all provinces with the exception of Lumbini, where a three-point higher percentage of the female population is seen. Districts such as Rupandehi, Kapilbastu, Palpa, Nawalparasi (West), and Dang, with a relatively high Buddhist population, show a higher proportion (above 52%) of female Buddhist population (NPHC, 2021: Caste and Ethnicity Report)⁸.

The sex composition of the adherents of the Kirat religion shows a higher proportion of women in Koshi and Bagmati, the two provinces where 99 percent of the adherents of the Kirat religion live (Table 4.1).

In other provinces, where the population of adherents of Kirat ranges between the figure of 95 and 3,100 individuals (NPHC, 2021), the gender proportion of the population is skewed towards men. Interestingly, the Christian population has a relatively higher proportion of female followers, ranging between 52.4 and 54.9 percent across the seven provinces.

The sex composition of the followers of Islam varies across different provinces. Among the seven provinces, Madhesh shows the largest population of Muslims, followed by Lumbini and Koshi. Compared to the Hindu population, the Muslim population has a slightly higher proportion of its female population in Madhesh, whereas a more balanced proportion are seen in Koshi and Lumbini provinces. However, there is a higher proportion of Muslim men in four provinces: Bagmati, Gandaki, Karnali, and Sudurpashchim. The district and municipality-level distribution of the population by religion reveals that Muslim men significantly outnumber Muslim women in the metropolitan and urban areas of these four provinces. This may be due to the prevalence of male migrant workers as a factor which contributes to the higher proportion of the male Muslim population.⁹

⁷ There are no in-depth studies on the Jain, Sikh, and Baha'i communities in Nepal that can help to explain the possible reasons behind the imbalanced proportion of the male and female population among the followers of these religions.

⁸ NPHC, 2021: Caste and Ethnicity Report. <https://censusnepal.cbs.gov.np/results/downloads/caste-ethnicity>

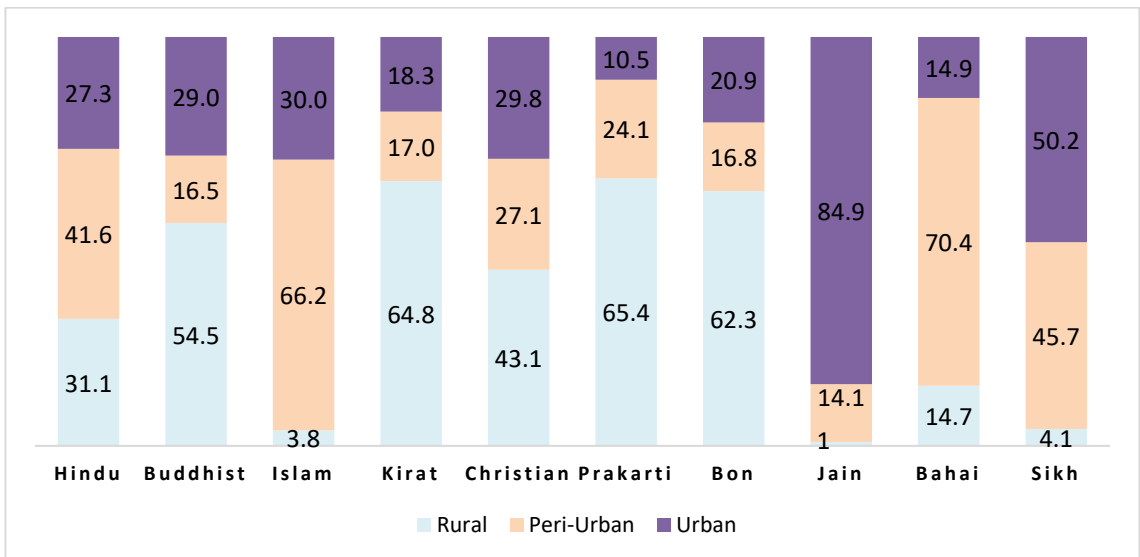
⁹ For instance, out of the total 2,558 Muslim population of Dhangadi Sub-metropolitan city, 52.3 percent is men; Birendranagar Municipality of Karnali has a higher proportion of male Muslim population (55 %) out of its 2,310 Muslims. Of 12,758 Muslims in Pokhara Metropolitan City, 65 percent are men (NPHC, 2021: Caste and Ethnicity Report).

3.6 Urban-rural distribution of religious population

According to the 2021 census, 33.2 percent of Nepal’s population lives in rural areas, while 39.7 percent reside in peri-urban and 27.1 percent in urban areas (NOS, 2024a, p. 33, Table 3.10). The 2021 census data shows that the followers of the ten religions are unevenly dispersed across rural, urban, and peri-urban areas of Nepal. The followers of the minority religions – Jain, Baha’i, and Sikhism – are concentrated in Nepal’s urban and peri-urban areas. Jain is predominantly an urban religion, with almost 85 and 14 percentage of its followers living in urban and peri-urban areas of Nepal. Likewise, the overwhelming majority (95.9%) of the Sikh followers live in urban and peri-urban regions. 70 percent of Baha’i followers live in the peri-urban areas, while almost equal numbers of its adherents live in Nepal’s rural and urban areas. In a similar pattern, less than 4 percent of Muslims reside in rural areas; most Islam adherents (66.2%) live in peri-urban areas, and 30 percent live in urban areas of Nepal.

Four religions – Prakriti, Kirat, Bon, and Buddhism – show more than half of their population to live in Nepal’s rural areas. 29 percent of Buddhist followers live in urban areas. The three Indigenous religions of Kirat, Bon, and Prakriti have more than 60 percent of their adherents residing in rural areas, with less than one-quarter living in urban areas. The 2021 census data show most Hindu followers live in peri-urban residents, followed by those living in rural areas. Less than a quarter of Hindu followers live in urban areas, while 41.5 percent are peri-urban residents.

Figure 3.3: Distribution of Population of Religion by rural-urban place of residence



3.7 Distribution of the population by religion and sex in urban-rural areas

The NSO has used the three categories of urban, peri-urban, and rural classifications for the urban and rural areas (NSO, 2024a).¹⁰ According to the 2021 census, 27.3 percent of Nepal's total population resides in urban areas, 39.6 percent in peri-urban, and 33.1 percent in rural areas. The urban population has a nearly balanced gender composition, with a male population of 49.1 percent, whereas the peri-urban population has a slightly greater rate of females at 51 percent. Rural areas have the highest proportion of females (52.1%) (NSO, 2021).

Figure 3.4: The proportion of the female population by religion in the urban-rural areas, NPHC 2021

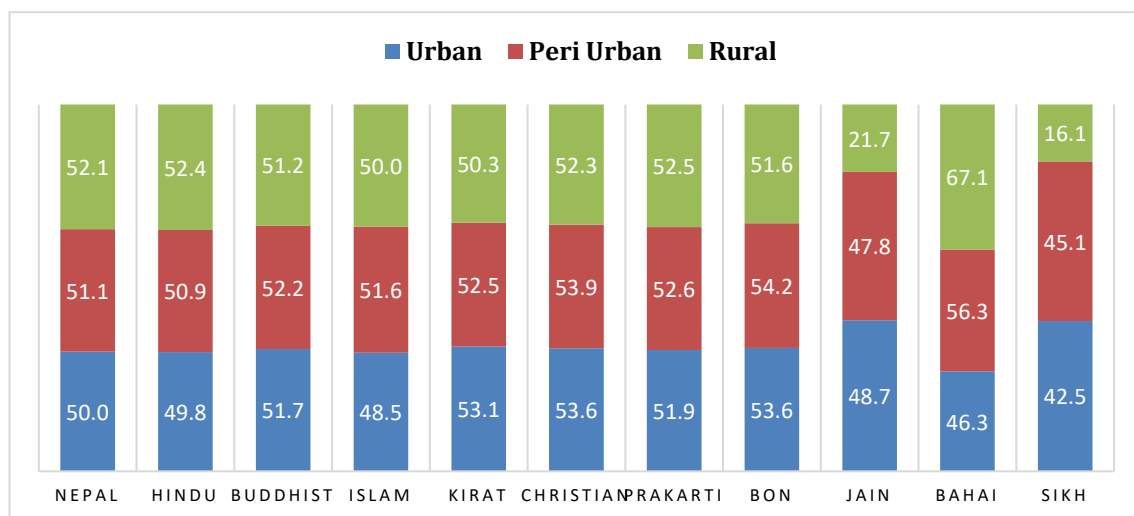


Figure 3.4 shows the proportion of female adherents of the ten religions in urban and rural areas of residence. The data shows that all the religions with the exception of Jainism and Sikhism have a higher proportion of female populations in urban areas. A lower proportion of female populations is seen across the urban, peri-urban, and rural areas. Particularly, the population of Jain and Sikh followers is shown to represent a greater rate of male populations of these religions across urban, peri-urban and rural areas.

Despite a lesser number compared to the other nine religions, Baha'i adherents are predominantly urban-peri-urban inhabitants (Fig 4.1), with women accounting for 56 percent (Fig 3.4). As a result, there are more women in urban and peri-urban areas and fewer in rural

¹⁰ The NSO uses these three categories based on the definitions of the Degree of Urbanization (DEGURBA) Working Group that include: (a) *Urban areas* are characterized by population density of 3 up to over 15 ppHa and population over 5,000, with 4-point contiguity. (b) *Peri-urban areas* are characterized by population density of 3-15 ppHa and no minimum population threshold, with 4-point contiguity, and (c) *Rural areas* are characterized by population density of 3 ppHa or below and population no more than 5,000 with 8-point contiguity (NSO, 2024a, p. 31)

areas. Buddhism, Kirat, Islam, Prakriti, Bon, and Baha'i have a higher proportion of women followers, exceeding 51.1 percent of the share of their peri-urban population.

Buddhism, Kirat, Islam, Prakriti, Bon, and Baha'i have a higher percentage of women followers at a rate of above 51.1 percent in the overall peri urban population. The Sikh and Jain religions, as discussed above, also have a higher percent of male adherents, hence indicating a lower percent of women followers in peri urban areas. Hinduism, Buddhism, Christianity, Jainism and the three Indigenous religions have a relatively higher number of female adherents in rural areas than the populations of Islam, Baha'i, and Sikhism. Figure 4.5 shows that less than 4 percent of Muslims live in rural areas, yet a marginally higher percent of Muslim men is seen in rural areas. This could be due to the pattern of Muslim men, although only few in numbers, residing in different rural areas of Nepal for work, trade, religious activities, and other activities at the time of the 2021 census.

CHAPTER 4

DEMOGRAPHIC CHARACTERISTICS

This chapter examines the NPHC 2021 data on the demographic dimension, household, and religion, including age, age at marriage, household size, family structure, and its relationship to religion. It also analyzes the household-level wealth status and housing facilities, such as toilet facilities, across the ten religious groups based on the NPHC 2021.

4.1 Distribution of population religions by age and sex

A significant demographic impact of Nepal's demographic transition is the shift in age distribution observed in every census from 1981 to 2021 (NSO, 2024a). In this analysis, age of population is categorized into seven overlapping groups, each representing different life stages (see Table 4.1). Children aged 0-4 years require intensive health care to support overall development. The percentage of Nepal's population in this age group declined from 9.7 percent in 2011 to 8.4 percent in 2021. The NPHC 2021 also revealed a high sex ratio of 112 males for every 100 females in the age group 0-4 years, reflecting a prevailing societal preference for sons in Nepal (NSO, 2024a).

Among the ten religions, the distribution of the population by five-year age groups indicates that Islam has the highest proportion (38.6 %) of children aged 0-14 years, followed by Hinduism (27.6%), Prakriti, and Christian (27 %). In contrast, Jain (17.0%) religion has the lowest share, followed by Baha'i and Bon (21%) and Sikh (22%) children aged 0-14 years. Conversely, in the older age groups of 65 years and above, the percentage of the population is reversed, with Islam showing the smallest proportion (4.6%), followed by Christianity (5.7%). The proportion of the population aged 5-24 years is highest in Islam. However, its share in the adult and elderly population declines compared to other religious groups. This data suggests that the proportion of the population under the age of 25 years is higher among Muslims due to the higher fertility rates and lower median age. Globally, Muslims have the highest fertility rate of any religious group at an average of 2.9 children per woman, a figure which is greater than the replacement level of 2.1 children, or the minimum which is typically needed to maintain a stable population (Pew Research Center, 2017). In addition, the growth of the Muslim population is supported by a lower median age of 24 years (in 2015), which is more than seven years younger than the median age of the non-Muslim population (32 years) (Pew Research Center, 2017).

Table 4.1: Percent distribution of population by age group and religion, NPHC 2021

Age Groups	Hindu	Buddhist	Islam	Kirat	Christian	Prakriti	Bon	Jain	Bahai	Sikh
0-4*	8.3	7.1	12.6	7.1	7.8	8.1	5.9	5.1	6.1	6.1
0-14**	27.6	24.4	38.6	25.2	26.9	27.0	21.1	17.2	21.2	22.4
5-24***	39.0	36.7	47.2	37.8	39.7	38.2	32.7	27.4	30.2	34.0
15-49†	55.4	55.3	51.1	54.8	58.1	53.2	52.5	53.5	61.4	56.2
25-44††	33.9	34.8	28.0	33.9	35.6	32.7	33.5	37.3	42.1	41.0
45-64†††	16.8	18.5	11.2	18.1	16.2	18.2	21.7	27.2	20.9	18.9
65+™	6.9	8.2	4.6	7.9	5.7	7.7	11.8	10.7	6.7	6.2
Total	23,677,744	2,393,549	1,483,066	924,204	512,313	102,048	67,223	2,398	537	1,496

Note: *Young children, ** Children, *** School, higher education, training age children and young person, †Childbearing age (females), †† Highly productive adults, ††† Middle age productive adults and ™ Old persons

This section displays graphic representations and discusses population pyramids based on NPHC 2021 data on the age and gender distributions of the ten religions. This analysis offers insights into birth rates, life expectancy, and overall population growth trends. The key aspects include the base width, the slope of the sides reflecting mortality rates, and the top representing the elderly population. A broad base suggests high birth rates, whereas a narrow base indicates lower birth rates. Similarly, a wider top signifies a higher proportion of elderly individuals in the population. In this analysis, the population of the ten religions is presented in the population pyramids.

The population pyramid of the Hindu population exhibits a convex shape, indicating a declining base and a concentration of population in the age group 15-19. This pattern aligns with the national population pyramid of Nepal (NSO, 2024a). The age structure suggests rising death rates due to an increasing proportion of elderly individuals, coupled with a continued decline in birth rates. The age distribution of the Hindu population shows a shift from the age group 0-4 towards the older age group groups. In terms of sex, the male population exceeds the female population in the age groups 0-4, 5-9, 10-14, and 15-19 (see Annex-13.1). However, this trend reverses from the population group aged 20, highlighting the clear preferences for sons within the Hindu population.

The age-sex distribution of the Buddhist population also follows a convex shape, reflecting a shrinking base and a population shift from the 0-4 age group to the 5-9 and 10-14 age groups. The Buddhist population pyramid, similar to the national trend, indicates declining fertility rates. In terms of sex distribution, the male population is higher than that of the females in the age group of less than 15 years. However, among the elderly population (65 years and above),

females outnumber males (see Annex-13.2). Overall, the shape of the Buddhist population pyramid differs slightly from that of the Hindu population pyramid (Figure 4.1).

The population pyramid of the adherents of Islam in Nepal differs significantly from those of the other nine religions. Figure 4.1 shows the population pyramid of Muslims as per the 2021 census. It demonstrates a broad base, with the largest share of the population in the age group 5-9, indicating that birth rates remain high among the Muslim population. Due to this wide base, the pyramid narrows significantly for the population aged 65 years and above, reflecting a relatively low proportion of the elderly population. Additionally, the male population outnumbers the female population up until the age of 15. It is also of note that the Muslim population's demographic transition occurs around two decades later than the national average.

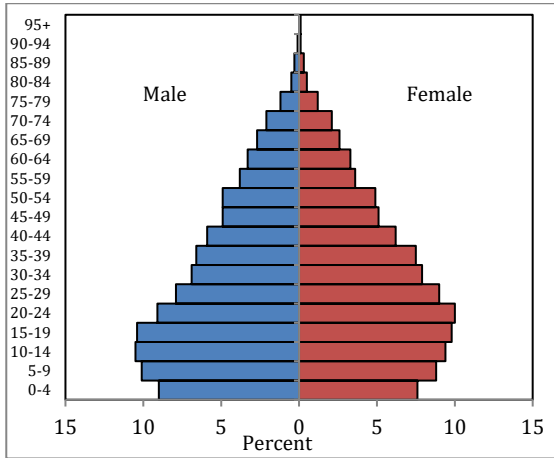
The population pyramid of the Kirat religion closely resembles that of the Buddhist population. However, the younger age groups, particularly 0-4 and 5-9, have been decreasing, with concentration shifting towards the age groups of 10-14 and 15-19 years. The pyramid also reveals that the elderly population (65 years and above) is higher than the national average of 6.9 percent. Additionally, about 37 percent of males and 34 percent of females are under the age of 15 years old, which is significantly higher than the national average of 27.8 percent.

The age-sex distribution of the Christian population shows a higher proportion concentrated in the age group 10-14 years (Figure 4.1). The pyramid of the population of the Christians shows high fertility from the age transition from children to adulthood, and to the elderly population. However, the elderly population is lower than the national average (6.9%).

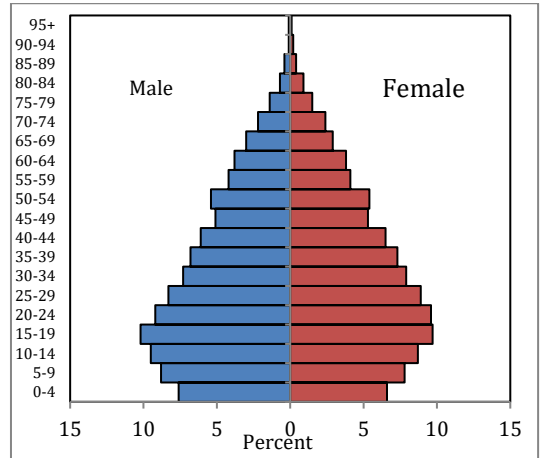
The population pyramid of those adhering to the Prakriti religion also reflects declining birth rates and a growing elderly population. The number of elderly females exceeds that of elderly males (Figure 4.1). Like the Hindu, Buddhist, and the Kirat population, there is a concentration of individuals in the age group 15-19. Key factors shaping this population structure include declining birth rates, and demographic transition from childhood to adulthood, and adulthood to old age.

Figure 4.1: Population pyramid of 6 religions, NPHC 2021

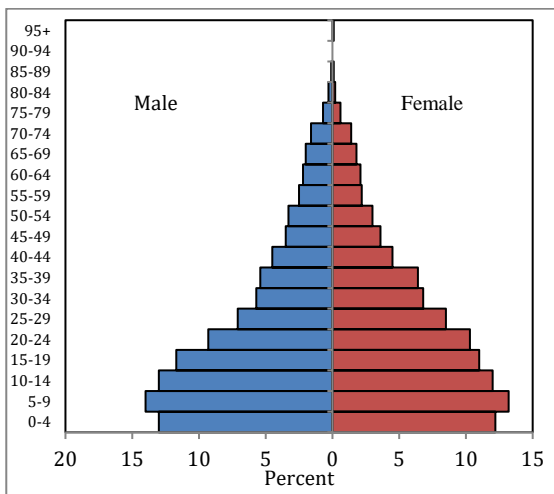
Population pyramid of Hindu religion, NPHC 2021



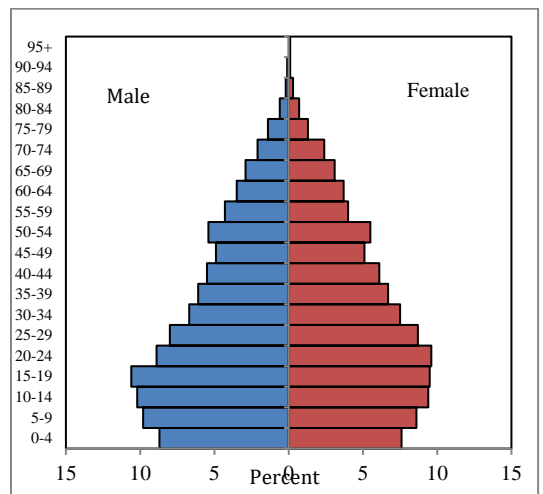
Population pyramid of Buddhist religion, NPHC 2021



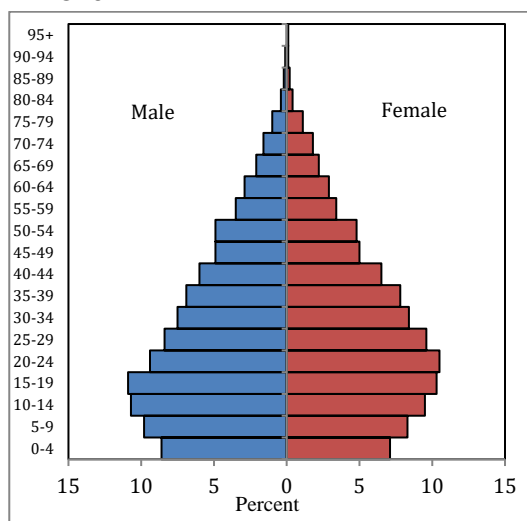
Population pyramid of Islam religion, NPHC 2021



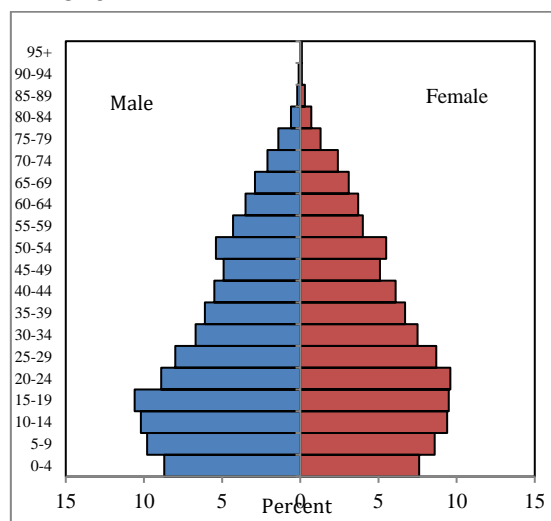
Population pyramid of Kirat religion, NPHC 2021



**Population pyramid of Christian religion,
NPHC 2021**



**Population pyramid of Prakriti religion,
NPHC 2021**

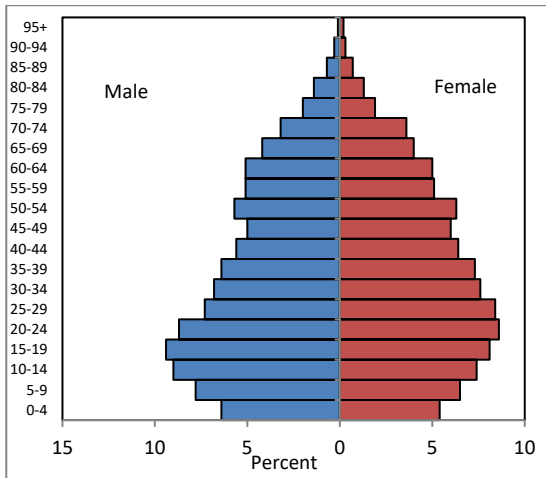


The population pyramid of the Bon religion reflects low birth rates and a demographic shift from the 0-4 age group to the 15-19 age group. The overall pyramid shape suggests the potential future of population growth within Bon religion. Factors such as declining birth rates, international absenteeism, and age transitions contribute to the increase in the elderly population.

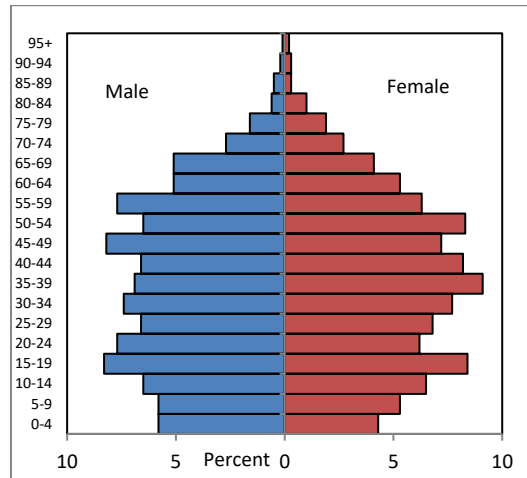
The population pyramid of Nepal's other religions (in minority by population), including Jain, Baha'i, and Sikhism, differs significantly from those of other religions in Nepal. The Jain population pyramid does not follow the normal age-sex distribution as compared to the national population distribution. It appears more rectangular than triangular, indicating the concentration of the Jain population in the working age group (15-64 years). Declining birth rates and migration of the working age group population are the key factors shaping this structure, leading to an increase in the elderly population. A similar trend can be observed in the Baha'i population. In contrast, the Sikh population pyramid has a different shape from Jain and Baha'i, but all three minority religions share common characteristics of declining birth rates. Such population pyramid structures have not been observed in any national censuses from 1952/54 to 2021.

Figure 4.2: Population pyramid of 4 religions, NPHC 2021

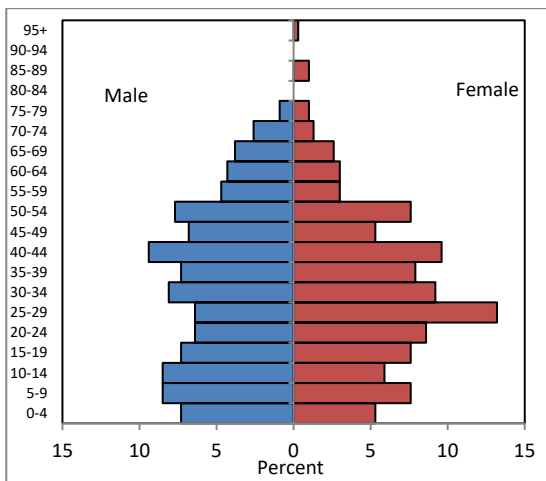
Population pyramids of Bon religion, NPHC 2021



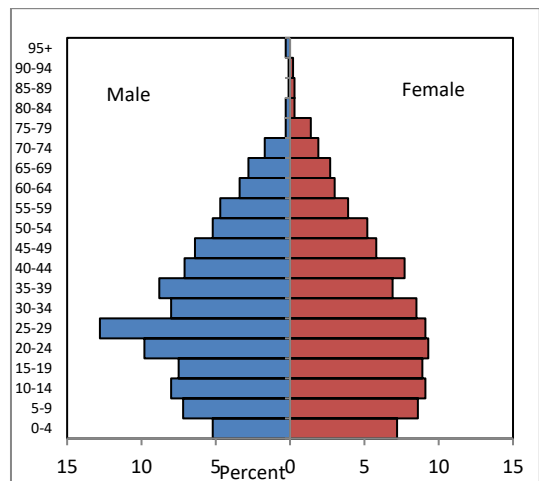
Population pyramids of Jain religion, NPHC 2021



Population pyramids of Bahai religion, NPHC 2021



Population pyramids of Sikh religion, NPHC 2021



4.2 Sex ratio

The sex ratio refers to the number of males per 100 females, measuring as an indicator of sex distribution in a population. Various factors, including biological, social, technological, cultural, and economic conditions, influence and shape the population sex ratio. In Nepal, variations in sex ratios are linked to the broader societal contexts. According to the census data, the sex ratio remained at 97 males per 100 females in the 1952/54 and 1961 censuses. However, the male population exceeded the female population in 1971 and 1981, with a sex ratio of 101 and 105,

respectively. The 1991 and 2001 censuses recorded an equal number of males and females (100), followed by a decline in the male proportion, with sex ratios of 94 in 2001 and 96 in 2021 (NSO, 2024a). The trend of more men migrating abroad for employment is a likely reason for this shift, as indicated by the age-specific sex ratios in 2021 (NSO, 2024a).

This analysis highlights differences in sex ratios among the population of the ten religious groups. The sex ratio among the Hindu population is similar to Nepal's national average, whereas the ratios for the adherents of Buddhist, Kirat, Christianity, Prakriti, Baha'i, and Bon fall below the national average. In contrast, the followers of Islam, and the two other minority religious groups of Jainism and Sikhism have higher than the national average sex ratio. As shown in Table 4.2, the population of two other minority religious groups, Baha'i and Sikh, exhibits extreme variations in the sex ratio, being significantly lower and higher than the national average respectively in the five-year age distribution.

An analysis of individual religious groups reveals variations in sex ratios across different age categories. Among the Hindu population, the sex ratio for individuals up to 19 years ranges from 102 to 114 males per 100 females, dropping to below 96 for those aged 20 and above, with the exception of the 50-54 and 55-59 age groups. In the Buddhist population, sex ratios exceed 100 in the 0-4, 5-9, and 10-15 age groups. For the Islam population, the sex ratio exceeds 100 in both the 0-19 and 50-89 age groups. Among the Kirat followers, the sex ratio remains above 100 in younger age groups (0-4 to 5-19). In contrast, the Christian population exhibits a sex ratio above 100 only in the age groups of 0-4 and 5-9. The population of Prakriti and Bon follow a similar pattern, with higher male-to-female ratios in younger age groups (0-19 years). For the other minority religions like Jainism and Baha'i, the sex ratio fluctuates across five-year age groups. Notably, the Sikh population appears to differ significantly from both the national sex ratio and those of other religious groups.

One of the major contributors to sex ratio differentials in Nepal is labour migration. A significant proportion (12.6% of males in compared to 2.6% of females) of Nepali men migrate abroad for employment and study (NSO, 2023; NSO, 2024a). In addition, the 2.5 percent of the foreign-born population living in Nepal with the skewed proportion of males also contributes to the change in sex ratios, particularly for the minority religions. This has further led to a lower male-to-female ratio in the working-age population. Sex preference is also a major factor for the imbalance of sex ratios in the population by religion in Nepal.

Table 4.2: Sex ratios by 10 population religions and five-year age groups, NPHC, 2021

Age groups	Hindu	Buddhist	Islam	Kirat	Christian	Prakriti	Bon	Jain	Bahai	Sikh
0-4	114	108	104	107	107	103	107	144	106	98
05-09	110	106	103	105	104	103	108	116	87	113
10-14	106	103	105	101	99	98	110	108	111	119
15-19	102	99	103	101	93	101	105	106	74	112
20-24	88	90	88	92	79	84	91	132	58	142
25-29	84	87	81	88	77	83	78	104	38	190
30-34	83	87	81	89	79	81	81	103	68	128
35-39	85	87	82	87	78	82	79	82	71	173
40-44	90	88	99	89	82	83	79	86	76	124
45-49	92	90	93	91	86	87	76	122	100	149
50-54	96	95	107	95	90	88	81	84	78	136
55-59	101	95	111	93	89	97	91	130	122	160
60-64	95	94	105	97	89	85	92	103	111	153
65-69	97	95	110	96	86	86	95	131	113	141
70-74	92	87	110	93	80	80	81	110	150	125
75-79	94	88	119	96	83	99	98	91	67	33
80-84	95	82	117	106	90	88	98	67	0	150
85-89	90	82	113	91	83	75	85	150	0	50
90-94	76	73	95	101	64	69	89	67	0	100
95+	64	63	82	74	66	82	89	50	0	0
Total	96	94	97	95	88	91	91	107	77	135

Source: NSO, 2021

4.3 Marital status

The NPHC 2021 collected data on the marital status of Nepal’s population aged 10 years and above. Information on marital status was categorized into five response fields: unmarried, married, widow/widower, divorced, and separated.¹¹ According to the NPHC 2021, 61.8 percent

¹¹ The definition of unmarried as person who is not married in any way (legally, religiously or socially), or who has not lived as husband or wife even once at the time of the census is known as a person who has never married. Any individual who has resided in the community as a husband or wife at the time of census enumeration and has continued to do so is considered married, regardless of how they are married, including the cases of polygamy and remarriage. Similarly, if the wife is dead at the time of the census, the person is known as a widower. If the wife loses her husband on account of his death she is included as a widow. In the case of such persons, if they have not remarried at the time of census they are known as widower or widow, but if they are remarried, they are considered to be married again.

A divorced person is one who have legally or by other means (customarily) ended their martial relationship at the time of the census enumeration. If the husband and wife continue to live separately for ever, they are considered to be divorced. If the wife has chosen another husband but if the husband has not yet remarried at the time of the

of the population aged 10 and older is married, with 4.5 percent widowed, 0.4 percent separated, 0.2 percent divorced, and 33.1 percent unmarried (NSO, 2024c). This section examines the marital status of the population (10 years old and older) of the ten religions, with a particular emphasis on the discrepancies in marital status between male and female respondents.

Among the Hindu followers, the marital status follows the national average. However, the proportion of unmarried males is higher than that of females (Table 4.3). Additionally, the number of widows is higher than that of widowers, and the proportion of divorced and separated women is also higher than that of men. In Hindu society, remarriage for divorced, separated, and widowed women is faced with various socio-cultural barriers that do not similarly affect men. The marital status of the Buddhist population is also similar to the national average. The proportion of widowed women is significantly higher than that of their male counterparts, suggesting the likelihood that widower is more likely to remarry than widowed Buddhist women. The primary factors contributing to this trend are the patriarchal social structure of Nepali society and the norms and values specific to different population groups.

Among the followers of Islam, a significant proportion (38%) were unmarried, followed by 58.8 percent who were married and 3 percent who were widowed (Table 4.3). In addition, of the total Muslim population (10 years above), 0.2 percent were separated and 0.1 percent were divorced. The data of NPHC 2021 indicates that the proportion of adherents of Islam across all the marital categories falls below the national average, except for those who were unmarried. The data reveals that Muslim women are more likely to be married, widowed, divorced, or separated than men, while the percentage of unmarried Muslim women is comparatively lower than Muslim men. The marital status of the Muslim population is markedly different than that of the Hindus and Buddhists, which may reflect the role of religion in regulating peoples' marriage practices.

The findings of the NPHC 2021 indicate that approximately 1 percent of the total Christian population (10 years and above) are separated, while the proportion of divorce is relatively high compared to the national average, accounting for 0.3 percent of the population aged 10 years and above (Table 4.3). In terms of gender, the marital trends among Christians are found to follow the national marital status patterns across all five categories.

census, the husband is considered divorced. But once the husband and wife have divorced and lived separately and after some time both remarry other people, they are considered to be married. A person who has not ended the martial union legally or by any means but living separately from his/her husband or wife without any relationship to each other is considered separated.

Among the followers of Indigenous religions, the proportion of the widow/widower population (5.0%) is higher than the followers of other religions in Nepal. Similarly, the proportion separated and divorced populations is higher compared to the national average (Table 4.3). However, the proportion of the population of widows/widowers is biased towards females, as in the case of other religions, implying that widowers are more likely to remarry. On the other hand, there is no difference in the proportion of the population of the divorced and separated men and women among the three Indigenous religions, suggesting a relative gender balance in terms of divorce and separation for both sexes.

Table 4.3: Distribution of 10 years and above followers of different religions by marital status and sex, NPHC 2021

Marital status by sex	Religions						
	Nepal	Hindu	Buddhist	Islam	Christian	Indigenous* religion	Other minorities religions**
Nepal	23,958,868	19,488,172	2,026,236	1,095,032	425,948	919,589	3,891
Male	11,519,621	9,374,714	970,173	534,470	195,857	442,363	2,044
Female	12,439,247	10,113,458	1,056,063	560,562	230,091	477,226	1,847
Unmarried	33.1	32.8	33.0	38.0	33.9	34.7	31.8
Male	38.2	38.0	37.1	44.1	38.0	38.9	36.0
Female	28.4	27.9	29.3	32.2	30.5	30.7	27.2
Married	61.8	62.2	61.3	58.8	60.4	59.2	63.9
Male	59.1	59.5	59.5	54.2	59.3	56.9	61.8
Female	64.3	64.7	63.1	63.2	61.4	61.5	66.3
Widow/widower	4.5	4.5	4.8	3.0	4.5	5.0	4.0
Male	2.2	2.2	2.6	1.6	1.9	3.1	1.8
Female	6.6	6.8	6.8	4.2	6.7	6.8	6.4
Divorced	0.2	0.1	0.2	0.1	0.3	0.3	0.1
Male	0.1	0.1	0.2	0.0	0.2	0.3	0.1
Female	0.2	0.2	0.2	0.1	0.4	0.2	0.1
Separated	0.4	0.4	0.6	0.2	0.8	0.8	0.2
Male	0.3	0.3	0.5	0.1	0.5	0.8	0.3
Female	0.5	0.4	0.6	0.2	1.1	0.8	0.0

* Kirat, Prakriti and Bon

** Jain, Sikh and Bahai

4.4 Age at marriage

According to NPHC 2021, the average reported age at first marriage indicates that a significantly higher proportion of females were married before the age of 20, whereas more males married after 20. Among females, 5.7 percent were first married between the ages of 10-14, while 16.9 percent were married between the ages of 15-17, and 19.9 percent were between the ages of 18-20 (NSO 2024a).

The census data provides a detailed overview of the marital pattern of the population (10 years and above) of the ten religions. It shows that a significant proportion of the married population were married between the ages of 15-24 years across the ten religions. It also reveals that child marriage practices before the age of 10 continue to prevail among the populations across the 10 religions. Furthermore, 14.3 percent of the population of followers of Islam were married at the age of 14 or below in 2011, which declined in 2021 to 8.4 percent, presenting a significant change. Table 4.4 shows the prevalence of child marriage among the population of 10 years and above age group for the followers of the ten religions.

Table 4.4 shows that 76.5 percent of the followers of Islam were married before the age of 20, compared to 39.9 percent of followers of other minority religions in the same age group. Similarly, nearly three-quarters of Hindu followers also showed to have married before the age of 20. In Nepal, the legal minimum age for marriage is set at 20 years and above for both males and females. The age at first marriage among the followers of 10 different religions in Nepal has declined across various age groups between the 2011 and 2021 censuses. Interestingly, the NPHC 2021 revealed that 0.1 percent of the followers of the Indigenous religions had their first marriage at 50 years and older.

According to NSO (2024a), child marriage was more prevalent in the Tarai region (42.2%) and less common in the Mountain (33.1%) and Hill (32.6%) zones. In 2021, the highest proportion of child marriage was reported in Madhesh (42.4%) and Karnali (37.9%) provinces, while the lowest proportion was observed in Bagmati (29.3%) and Sudurpashchim (29.1%) provinces. Madhesh communities experience a high incidence of child marriage, which reflects lower socio-economic development, lower education levels, higher fertility rates, and an increased maternal mortality ratio (NSO 2024a).

Table 4.4: Distribution of 10 years and above population by followers of 10 religions and age at first marriage, NPHC 2011-2021

Age	Hindu		Buddhist		Islam		Christian		Indigenous religions		Other minority religions	
	2011	2021	2011	2021	2011	2021	2011	2021	2011	2021	2011	2021
Below 10	1.1	0.4	0.5	0.1	0.9	0.2	0.5	0.1	0.4	0.1	0.5	0.2
10-14	10.7	7.4	6.6	4.7	13.4	8.4	8.6	6.2	5.1	3.5	4.3	3.9
15-17	28.0	22.6	24.5	19.8	33.1	26.8	27.7	23.0	20.1	16.4	15.5	11.8
18-20	33.2	34.4	33.1	33.1	37.7	41.3	31.8	32.9	31.0	30.9	29.7	24.0
21-24	16.3	20.3	20.2	23.0	9.6	15.2	18.0	21.0	23.5	25.3	27.1	26.5
25-29	8.2	11.3	10.7	13.7	4.2	6.5	9.4	11.9	13.5	16.1	18.4	26.0
30-34	1.9	2.7	3.0	3.9	0.8	1.1	2.6	3.3	4.3	5.2	3.5	5.8
35-39	0.4	0.5	0.9	1.1	0.2	0.2	0.8	0.9	1.4	1.6	0.8	1.5
40-45	0.1	0.1	0.3	0.3	0.1	0.1	0.3	0.3	0.5	0.5	0.2	0.3
45-49	0.0	0.0	0.1	0.1	0.0	0.0	0.1	0.1	0.2	0.1	0.1	0.11
50+	0.0	0.0	0.1	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.1	0.0	0.1	0.1	0.0	0.00
Total	10,926,964	13,102,750	1,206,051	1,356,667	532,994	678,853	184,281	281,368	452,098	600,579	2,790	2,653

The NPHC 2021 shows that there is a significant difference in the age at first marriage of men and women followers of the ten religions. Table 4.5 reveals that around 41.1 percent of females were married at an age below 18 years old, whereas only 15.4 percent of males experienced a first marriage in the same age group. In the population aged 50 years and above, males are more likely to be married than females across all religions.

Among the Hindu population, 42.2 percent of females were married before the age of 18 years, while only 15.5 percent of males in the same age group – regardless of their current marital status (widow/widower, divorced, and separated) – had married early. Among the Buddhist population, 32.7 percent of females and 14.7 percent of males married before the age of 18 years. Similarly, a significant proportion (39.5%) of followers of Christian females married before age 18 years, compared to 16.1 percent of Christian males.

Among the Muslim population, nearly half (49.2%) of women were married before the age of 18, compared to 17.7 percent of men. This data suggests that female child marriage rates among the Muslim population are relatively higher than compared to followers of other religions in Nepal. The socio-economic and cultural factors within the Muslim communities have contributed to this high incidence of child marriage (NSO, 2024a). Conversely, the percentage of individuals aged 10 and above who entered marriage between the ages of 15 and 17 is markedly lower among adherents of the three Indigenous and other minority faiths when compared with the national average and the statistics of other religious groups.

Table 4.5: Distribution of 10 years and above population by followers of 10 religions and age at first marriage and sex, NPHC 2021

Religion/ sex	Below 10	10-14	15-17	18-20	21-24	25-29	30-34	35-39	40-44	45-49	50+	Not Stated	Total
Nepal	0.3	7.0	22.3	34.4	20.6	11.5	2.8	0.6	0.2	0.0	0.02	0.2	16,022,870
Male	0.1	3.0	12.3	32.6	26.8	18.6	5.0	1.1	0.3	0.1	0.04	0.2	7,116,659
Female	0.5	10.2	30.4	35.9	15.5	5.9	1.1	0.3	0.1	0.0	0.01	0.2	8,906,211
Hindu	0.4	7.4	22.6	34.4	20.3	11.3	2.7	0.5	0.1	0.0	0.02	0.2	13,102,750
Male	0.1	3.1	12.3	32.6	26.8	18.7	4.9	1.0	0.2	0.1	0.03	0.2	5,814,602
Female	0.6	10.8	30.8	35.8	15.2	5.5	0.9	0.2	0.1	0.0	0.01	0.2	7,288,148
Buddhist	0.1	4.7	19.8	33.1	23.0	13.7	3.9	1.1	0.3	0.1	0.04	0.2	1,356,667
Male	0.1	2.6	12.0	30.1	27.3	19.4	6.0	1.7	0.5	0.1	0.07	0.2	610,220
Female	0.1	6.5	26.1	35.6	19.6	9.0	2.2	0.6	0.2	0.0	0.02	0.2	746,447
Islam	0.2	8.4	26.8	41.3	15.2	6.5	1.1	0.2	0.1	0.0	0.02	0.2	678,853
Male	0.1	3.3	14.3	43.5	23.8	11.9	2.2	0.5	0.1	0.0	0.02	0.1	299,013
Female	0.3	12.3	36.6	39.6	8.3	2.3	0.3	0.1	0.0	0.0	0.01	0.2	379,840
Christian	0.1	6.2	23.0	32.9	21.0	11.9	3.3	0.9	0.3	0.1	0.05	0.2	281,368
Male	0.1	2.6	13.4	31.5	26.9	17.8	5.4	1.5	0.4	0.1	0.09	0.1	121,427
Female	0.2	9.0	30.3	34.0	16.5	7.4	1.7	0.5	0.2	0.0	0.02	0.2	159,941
Indigenous religions	0.1	3.5	16.4	30.9	25.3	16.1	5.2	1.6	0.5	0.1	0.07	0.2	600,579
Male	0.1	1.8	9.1	26.0	28.9	22.6	7.9	2.4	0.7	0.2	0.11	0.1	270,089
Female	0.1	4.9	22.4	34.9	22.3	10.9	3.1	0.9	0.3	0.1	0.04	0.2	330,490
Other minority religions	0.2	3.9	11.2	23.1	26.5	27.1	6.1	1.6	0.3	0.1	0.00	0.0	2,465
Male	0.1	2.0	5.7	14.6	25.8	39.0	9.7	2.3	0.6	0.2	0.00	0.0	1,308
Female	0.2	5.7	17.7	33.2	27.2	13.3	1.9	0.7	0.0	0.0	0.00	0.0	1,345

4.5 Birth places

Birthplace of the individual presents an indication of migration patterns of the enumerated country. The NPHC 2021 classified the population of Nepal according to their birthplace, with those born in Nepal as; 'native-born' and those born in India and other countries were categorized as 'foreign-born'. The 2021 census recorded more than half a million (734,663 in number) foreign-born individuals, comprising about 2.5 percent of Nepal's total 29 million population.

Table 4.6 reveals that 97.5 percent of followers of Hinduism are native-born. 99.1 percent of Buddhists are within the same category. Interestingly, 33.8 percent of Jain individuals are foreign-born, followed by Sikhs (32.2%) and Muslims (8.1%). Additionally, followers of Indigenous religions such as Kirat and Prakriti show a higher proportion of native-born individuals compared to minority religions such as Jainism and Sikhism.

Table 4.6: Distribution of population by followers of 10 religions place of birth, NPHC 2021

Religion	Place of birth			
	Native born	Foreign born	Not stated	Total
Hindu	97.5	2.4	0.03	23,677,744
Buddhist	99.1	0.9	0.03	2,393,549
Islam	91.9	8.1	0.01	1,483,066
Kirat	99.0	1.0	0.05	924,204
Christian	98.3	1.7	0.04	512,313
Prakriti	99.4	0.5	0.04	102,048
Bon	98.7	1.3	0.07	67,223
Jain	66.2	33.8	0.00	2,398
Bahai	98.5	1.3	0.19	537
Sikh	67.8	32.2	0.00	1,496
Total	97.4	2.5	0.03	29,164,578

4.6 Country of birth

The NPHC 2021 findings reveal that most of the foreign-born population who are part of the ten religions were born in India, with a higher proportion of Sikh (99.9%) and Jain (99.1%) individuals within this category. Among the foreign-born adherents, Baha'i, Kirat, Buddhism, Christianity, and Bon had a relatively higher proportion of those who were born in foreign countries other than India.

Table 4.7: Distribution of population by followers of 10 religions country of birth, NPHC 2021

Religions	India	Other countries	Not Stated	Total
Hindu	97.8	2.1	0.02	573,255
Buddhism	80.7	19.3	0.05	20,874
Islam	99.4	0.6	0.01	120,220
Kirat	78.5	21.5	0.00	8,895
Christian	82.9	17.1	0.07	8,728
Prakriti	90.2	9.8	0.00	529
Bon	83.1	16.9	0.00	862
Jain	99.1	0.4	0.49	811
Baha'i	57.1	42.9	0.00	7
Sikh	97.9	2.1	0.00	482

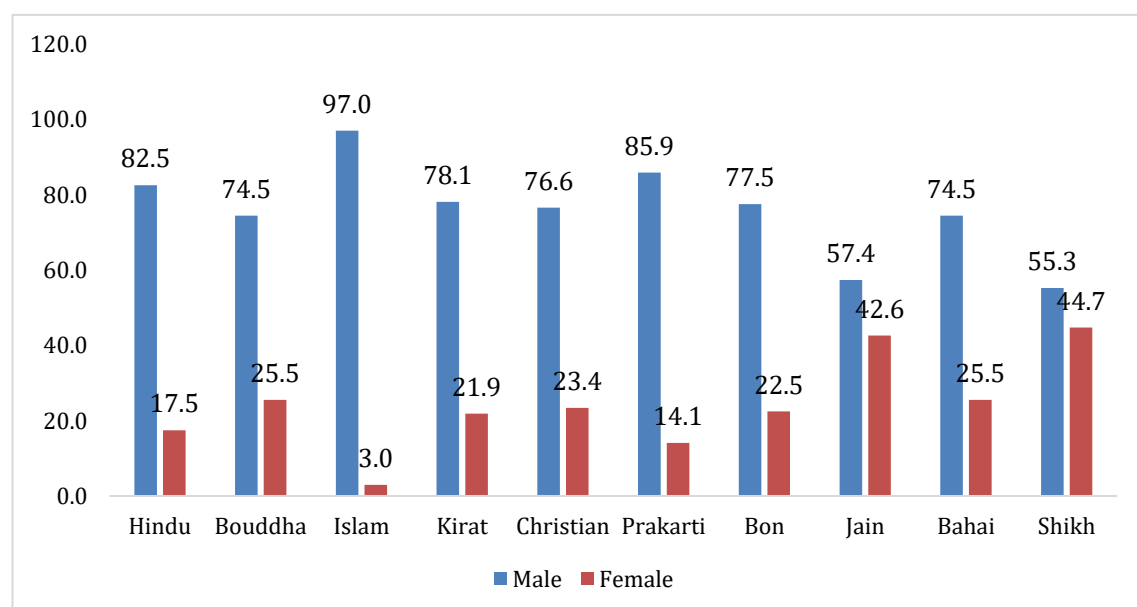
4.7 Absentee population

One important category of migration data relates to absentee populations, which includes individuals who have been living away from their homes, either within the country or abroad,

for over six months at the time of the census. The first census of Nepal to collect migration-related data was conducted in 1920, yet it only recorded male migrants. The NPHC 2021 enumerated that 2,445,483 households in Nepal had an absentee population, assessing for approximately 37 percent of all households (NSO, 2023). Of these, 889,522 households (13% of total households) had absentees residing within Nepal, while 1,555,961 households (23%) had absentees living abroad. Regarding the population, the census revealed that 15.3 percent of the total population (4,457,828 individuals) had been absent from their households for more than six months at the time of enumeration (NSO, 2024a). Among them, 7.8 percent (2,267,236 individuals) were residing within the country, and 7.5 percent (2,190,592 individuals) were living abroad. Hence the proportion of absentee population residing in the country and abroad was almost equal.

The NPHC 2021 finds a significant gender disparity across the adherents of 10 religions with the regard to the absentee populations living abroad. Specifically, among the adherents of Islam, 97 percent of the absentees abroad were male. A similar trend was observed among the followers of the Prakriti religion, where 85.9 percent of the absentees were male while 14.1 percent were female. However, the gender distribution showed greater balance among the Sikh absentees, with 55.3 percent males and 44.7 percent females. The census data reveals a broader pattern of male-dominated absenteeism across different religions. This suggests a cultural and economic tendency where men, often being the primary earners, migrate abroad more frequently for work or for other purposes.

Figure 4.3: Distribution of absentee population (international) by sex, NPHC 2021



CHAPTER 5

CULTURAL CHARACTERISTICS

This chapter discusses and analyses the 2021 census data on the social characteristics of the population by religion in terms of caste/ethnicity and linguistic groups. Additionally, it compares the 10 castes and ethnic groups with the largest number of adherents to the religions that have been recorded in the last three censuses. This comparative analysis provides insights into the patterns of the continuity and the changes in religious affiliations of social groups in the previous three censuses.

The chapter draws on the earlier analysis of the census data on religion and caste/ethnicity (Dahal, 2004, 2014) and expands additional areas of analysis to enhance comprehension of the patterns of shifts in the size and proportion of religions, followed by caste and ethnic groupings, during the last three decennial censuses. This chapter also includes an analysis of the census data on religion and linguistic groups which is an important area that has not been explored before.

5.1 Caste/ethnicity and religion

Caste/ethnicity and religion are important markers of individual and group identity in Nepal. In Nepal, religion is one important marker of distinction between caste groups and ethnic or Adivasi Janajati groups. Caste groups are traditionally Hindu groups belonging to the customary hierarchical social structure of the caste system based on the ideas of purity and impurity (Dahal, 2014, p.4; Gurung, 2005/2003). Ethnic groups or Adivasi Janajati are traditionally non-Hindu groups with distinct languages, religions, cultures, customary practices, history, and territories (Dahal, 2014; p.3). Hence, religion is a salient cultural institution that defines and distinguishes caste and ethnic groups in Nepal.

The absolute number of Hindus has increased in the last eight censuses, yet the percentage of the total population has decreased after the 1981 census (Dahal, 2004, p.18, Table 1.10). Following political changes in 1990, different social groups, the Adivasi Janajati in particular, have identified with their Indigenous religions – namely Kirat, Prakriti, and Bon – after 1990, reflecting the resurgence of ethnic identity movements as well as the state’s increasing recognition of cultural diversity in the census. In addition to the steady increase in the number of Christians and Muslims, the last three censuses have shown discernible shifts in the distribution of religions by caste and ethnic group, including an increase and subsequent

decrease in the total number of adherents of Buddhism, Prakriti, Kirat, Baha'i, and Sikhism. These changes require careful and in-depth analysis.¹² The 2021 census results reveal trends of change in religious affiliation self-reporting over inter-census periods.

5.1.1 Distribution of population by religion and caste/ethnicity (broad group)

The 2021 census has classified Nepal's population into eight broad categories related to caste/ethnicity (see NSO, 2024a, p. 49, Table 3.18 & Annex 7, p. 136). The religious affiliations based on these eight broad categories, provided in Table 5.1, reveal that Nepal's caste groups, particularly Madheshi caste groups, predominantly follow Hinduism and are less diverse in terms of their religious affiliations than the Janajati groups. On the other hand, Hinduism is followed by individuals across all these broad social groups, followed by Christianity, which is followed by all groups except the religious and linguistic groups.

Table 5.1 also shows the broad patterns and existence of in-group diversity and differences in religious affiliations, such as between Hill caste groups and Madheshi caste groups, Mountain/Hill Janajati and Tarai Janajati, and Hill Dalits and Tarai Dalits. Hence, these variations require further analysis to understand the persistence and shifts in religious affiliations across these different social groups.

Table 5.1: Religious affiliations by broad caste and ethnic social groups

Social Groups	Total	Hindu	Buddhism	Islam	Kirat	Christian	Prakriti	Bon	Jain	Bahai	Sikh
Nepal	29,164,578	81.2	8.21	5.09	3.17	1.76	0.35	0.23	0.01	0.0	0.01
Hill Castes	8,782,687	99.4	0.10	0.0	0.0	0.50	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Madhesh/Tarai Caste	4,682,277	99.5	0.02	0.35	0.00	0.10	0.0	0.0	0.04	0.0	0.0
Mountain/Hill Janajati	7,610,379	51.3	31.0	0.0	12.1	3.70	1.02	0.88	0.0	0.0	0.0
Tarai Janajati	2,608,191	95.9	0.92	0.0	0.02	2.27	0.9	0.0	0.0	0.01	0.0
Hill Dalit	2,506,612	95.4	0.0	0.0	0.00	4.63	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Madhesh/Tarai Dalit	1,392,378	99.1	0.0	0.6	0.00	0.28	0.03	0.01	0.0	0.0	0.0
Religious/Linguistic* groups	1,434,323	1.01	0.0	98.9	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.1
Others, Foreigners & Not Stated**	147,731	67.7	2.5	27.3	0.18	1.69	0.02	0.04	0.4	0.01	0.3

Source: NSO, 2021. * Religious/Linguistic* groups include three groups: Muslims and Sikhs (religious groups) and Bengali (linguistic groups). ** Others, Foreigners, and Not Stated Includes: People of foreign nationalities living in

¹² The past censuses in Nepal recorded only the religious affiliations of a person and their family members (see Chapter 1). It did not ask if the person or any members of her family had shifted or changed their religious affiliations between the two censuses. However, these census findings can indicate the shifting patterns of religious affiliation of the same groups between the subsequent censuses, and to some extent conversion from one religion to another in some cases.

Nepal at the time of the census and who were enumerated for the census. 4,436 persons were included in the “Not Stated” population in the not stated category (NSO, 2024a, Annex 9, p.136).

Nepal’s caste groups include the four groups out of the eight broad categories given in Table 5.1, these being the Hill caste group, the Madhesh/Tarai Caste group, Hill Dalits, and Madhesh and Tarai Dalits. Between 95.4 and 99.5 percent of members of the Hill and Madhesh/Tarai caste groups identified their religion as Hindu, making them the largest followers of the Hindu religion in Nepal. Within the caste groups, the Madhesh/Tarai caste groups and Dalits show a relatively higher proportion of the Hindu population than their Hill counterparts. The Hill Dalits have the largest share (5%) of Nepal’s Christian population, while only 0.28 percent of the Tarai/Madhesh Dalits are Christians.

The comparison of religious affiliations of the Mountain/Hill and the Madhesh/Tarai Janajati provides interesting insights. With the exception of the religious and linguistic group which predominately comprises the Muslim population, the Mountain/Hill Janajati groups have the lowest proportion of the Hindu population (51.3%) in Nepal. In contrast, a significant majority (95.8%) of the Madhesh/Tarai Janajati identify Hinduism as their religion. Therefore, religion alone does not necessarily distinguish between the Janajati and caste groups regarding how individuals self-identify their religious affiliations.

The Mountain and Hill Janajati are more diverse in terms of the different religions they follow, including the highest share of Nepal’s Buddhist population at 31 percent. In contrast, only 1 percent of the Tarai Janajati follow Buddhism, which is lower than the percentage of Christians (2.3%). The followers of the three Indigenous religions – Kirat, Prakriti, and Bon – are exclusively from the Janajati groups. The Mountain and Hill Janajati constitute the second largest group of Christians (3.7%). On the other hand, the proportion of Tarai Janajati who identified as followers of the Prakriti religion is almost equal to that of the Mountain/Hill Janajati. Additionally, the Tarai Janajati includes 368 followers out of 537 adherents of the Baha’i Faith in Nepal, making this the largest group of this minority religion.

5.1.2 Religion and individual caste/ethnic groups

The 2021 census identified 142 caste and ethnic groups and provided data on the proportion of different religions followed by each group. Annex 4 provides the 2021 census data on the distribution of religious affiliations of the 142 caste and ethnic groups. This data can inform on the intra- and inter-group religious diversity. Table 4.2 shows the number of religions which Nepal’s individual caste and ethnic groups followed in 2021 and indicates the number of different religions (out of the ten) that individuals from a caste/ethnic group identified as their religion in the 2021 census, even if encompassing only one individual.

Table 5.2: Numbers of religions followed by caste/ethnic groups, NPHC 2021

Number of religions followed	Number of caste/ethnic groups following the specified number of religions
1	14
2	53
3	31
4	30
5	11
6	2
7	1
Total	142

Source: NSO, 2021. See Annex- 2 for details.

Table 5.2 illustrates that individual caste and ethnic groups in Nepal adhere to between 1 and 7 of the ten religions listed in the 2021 census. However, only one group – Baniyan, a Tarai caste group with a population of 53,655 – was found to follow seven religions, excluding Prakriti, Islam, and Baha'i (Annex-2). Similarly, members of Dhuniya, who may be either a Tarai caste or Muslim group, along with Khawas, a Tarai Janajati, follow six religions. Thirteen out of the 142 caste and ethnic groups are recorded to exclusively practice only one religion. These groups include:

- i. Musalman, following Islam (1);
- ii. Hindu (11);
- iii. Tarai Caste groups: Dhankar/ Dharikar, Dev, Bhumihar, Rauniyar, Beldar and Chai/Khulaut;
- iv. Tarai Dalits: Halkhor, Khatik;
- v. Tarai Janajati: Patharkatt/ Kushwadiya;
- vi. Hill Janajati: Fri and Raute;
- vii. Buddhists: Topkegola and Karmarong (2).

Of the thirty groups who followed four religions, 26 were from the Janajati groups, and the 11 groups who followed five religions were also additionally from the Janajati, which indicates that these groups have embraced several religious faiths.

Table 5.3: Distribution of maximum and minimum religious followers, NPHC 2021

Rank	Religion	No of Group following (142) *	Maximum followers	Minimum Followers
1	Hindu	134	4,760,865	34
2	Christian	124	66,049	2
3	Buddhism	62	1,391,866	6
4	Kirat	35	438,212	1
5	Bon	22	58,162	1
6	Prakriti	16	67,186	219
7	Jain	7	16,39	5
8	Islam	6	1,418,677	167
9	Sikh	2	1,084	10
10	Bahai	6	278	19

Source: NPHC, 2021. Annex-4. *Does not include foreigners, others, and not stated categories.

Table 5.3 shows the number of caste/ethnic groups following the ten religions. Two religions, Hinduism and Christianity, are followed by the most caste and ethnic groups of Nepal. The Sikh religion shows the smallest group of followers in Nepal.

5.1.3 Followers of the Hindu religion

According to the 2021 census data, 134 groups out of the 142 caste and ethnic groups of Nepal follow the Hindu religion.

Table 5.4: Ten largest caste/ethnic groups following Hinduism, 2001-2021

Rank	Caste/Ethnicity	Population following Hinduism			% of the group's total population		
		2001	2011	2021	2001	2011	2021
1	Kshetri	3,547,976	4,365,113	4,760,865	99.5	99.3	99.2
2	Brahman - Hill	2,887,317	3,226,903	3,282,134	99.7	99.6	99.7
3	Tharu	14,97,516	17,37,470	1,743,890	97.6	94.0	96.5
4	Magar	12,10,276	14,90,611	1,585,744	74.6	79.0	78.8
5	Bishwokarma	866,296	1,212,674	1,403,942	97.7	96.4	95.5
6	Newa (Newar)	1,047,561	1,155,134	1,194,502	84.1	87.4	89.1
7	Yadav	893,427	1,051,165	1,228,031	99.8	99.7	99.9
8	Pariyar	381,739	456,179	543,026	97.8	96.5	96.0
9	Thakuri	332,107	4,22,679	490,120	99.4	99.3	99.1
10	Teli	302,056	3,68,151	431,037	99.2	96.6	99.9
Total		12,966,271	15,486,079	16,663,291	% of the total Hindu population		
Total Hindu Population		18,330,121	21,551,492	23,677,744	71.0	72.0	70.0

Source: Dahal (2004, Annex 3.4, p. 133); Dahal (2014, Annex 1.4, p.44); NPHC, 2021

Table 5.4 lists the ten caste and ethnic groups with the largest followers of the Hindu population in the 2021 census, with the group's corresponding Hindu population in the previous two censuses namely the 2001 and 2011 censuses. This data also informs the changes in the size of the Hindu population in these caste/ethnic groups.

The 2021 census finds that, out of the ten groups with the largest Hindu population, three are Hill caste groups: Kshetri, Hill-Brahman, and Thakuri; 2 are Tarai/Madhesh caste groups: Yadav and Teli; 2 are Hill Dalits: Bishwokarma and Pariyar, and 2 are Janajati groups: Tharu and Magar. Table 5.3 shows the absolute number of the Hindu population increased in all these ten groups between 2001 and 2021. Together, these ten groups contribute 70 to 72 percent of the total Hindu population recorded in the three censuses.

Table 5.4 shows that the percentage of Hindus in the six caste groups – Kshetri, Hill-Brahman, Thakuri, Yadav, and Teli – did not change between 2001 and 2021 and consistently remained over 99 percent. On the other hand, the proportion of the Hindu population decreased among the Hill Dalit groups – Bishwokarma and Pariyar – between 2001 and 2021. The number and proportion of Christian populations have increased among Bishwokarma and Pariyar in the 2011 and 2021 censuses, suggesting a possibility of an increased shift of religious affiliations towards Christianity (see Table 5.8; Dahal, 2014).

The percent of the Newa Hindu has increased gradually in the last three censuses. On the other hand, it fluctuated among the Tharu and Magar during the same period. Between 2001 and 2011, the percentage of Tharu Hindus decreased by 3.6 percent. During this period, the absolute number of Buddhist Tharu increased by 1.9 times, and that of Christian Tharu grew by 3.6 times. Similarly, 13,732, or 0.8 percent of the Tharu, identified themselves as followers of the Prakriti religion in the 2011 census (Dahal, 2014, Annex 1.4, p.44). These shifts in religious affiliations of the Tharu in the 2011 census can explain the decreased percentage rate of the Hindu Tharu between the 2001 and 2011 censuses. However, between, 2011 and 2021, the total number of Buddhist Tharu decreased by 2.5 times, while the total number of Tharu followers of the Prakriti religion also fell by 2.8 times. These changes in the religious affiliations could have contributed to the rise in the percentage of the Tharu Hindu population between the two censuses.

The proportion of Magar followers of the Hindu religion grew by 4.4 percent between the 2001 and 2011 censuses but remained almost the same between the 2011 and 2021 censuses.

5.1.4 Followers of Buddhism

Buddhism is the second-largest religion in Nepal, with a following of 2.4 million people, or 8.21 percent of the total population in the 2021 census. Buddhism is followed by 62 out of 142 different caste and ethnic groups. Of these 62 groups include: 2 Tarai Dalit groups (Sarbaria and Dhandi); 2 Tarai caste groups (Baniyan and Done); 3 Hill caste groups (Kshetri, Hill Brahman, and

Thakuri); 8 Tarai Janajati, and 47 Mountain/Hill Janajati. Buddhist followers are predominately from the Mountain/Hill Janajati groups. The list of the ten social groups with the largest Buddhist population in the last three censuses is given in Table 5.5.

Table 5.5 Ten largest caste/ethnic groups following Buddhism, 2001-2021

Rank	Caste/Ethnicity	Population Following Buddhism			% of the group's total population		
		2001	2011	2021	2001	2011	2021
1	Tamang	1,157,461	1,344,139	1,391,866	90.2	87.3	84.9
2	Magar	3,97,036	3,40,608	314,745	24.4	18.0	15.6
3	Gurung	3,75,252	327,813	296,124	69.0	62.7	54.4
4	Sherpa	143,528	111,068	128,341	92.8	98.3	98.2
5	Newa (Newar)	190,629	141,982	120,812	15.3	10.7	9.0
6	Tharu	29,893	56,949	22,593	1.9	3.3	1.2
7	Ghale	na	12,825	20,007	na	56.1	56.5
8	Bhote	11,665	13,173	15,536	60.5	98.3	98.2
9	H yolmo/Yholmopa	570	10,677	9,765	98.4	99.3	99.4
10	Thakali	8,434	8,995	7,648	65.0	68.1	65.1
Total		2,314,468	2,368,229	2,327,437	% of the total Buddhist Population		
Total Buddhist Population		2,442,520	2,396,099	2,393,549	95.0	98.0	97.2

Source: Dahal (2004, Annex -3.4, p. 133); Dahal (2014, Annex -1.4, p.44); NPHC, 2021.

All ten major groups with the highest Buddhist population in the 2021 census belong to the Mountain/Hill Janajati except for the Tharu, the largest Tarai Janajati group. The adherents of Buddhism from these ten groups comprised between 95 and 97 percent of Nepal's total Buddhist population in the last three censuses. (Table 5.5). With 1.39 million followers, the largest Buddhist population in Nepal is seen in the Tamang community, and the tenth largest group is Thakali, with 7.6 thousand Buddhist adherents. Tharu only has 1.2 percent of its population following Buddhism, yet the population size of the followers is high (22,593). This is also the case with the Newa (Newar); only 9 percent of Newa are Buddhists yet they are Nepal's fifth largest Buddhist group, according to the 2021 census.

Table 5.5 indicates that most of the population (above 98%) from the highland mountain groups – Sherpa, H yolmo, and Bhote – have retained their traditional religious affiliation. The case of H yolmo, a Mountain/Hill Janajati, is of particular interest. H yolmo was first identified in the 2001 census with a total of 507 population, of which 98.4 percent identified as Buddhists. In the following census, the H yolmo population reached a total of 10,677 from 507 people, a 21 times growth between 2001 and 2011. This large rise in the H yolmo population indicates the heightened awareness of the group in asserting a distinct ethnic identity. On the other hand, as H yolmo was likely included as 'Sherpa' in previous censuses, this growth of the H yolmo

population could have contributed to the drop in the Sherpa population between 2001 and 2011 (Dahal, 2014).

In the 2001 census, 38 percent of Bhote and 6.26 percent of Sherpa identified themselves as Hindus (Dahal, 2004). Nevertheless, in the ensuing censuses of 2011 and 2021, there was no record of a Hindu population from these two groups, suggesting a greater consciousness of asserting their religious identity in the census. The Bhote and Sherpa cases are examples of shifts from Hinduism to Buddhism (and vice versa) that have also occurred in other groups, which aids our understanding of the variations in population size and the percentage of adherents to these two major religions in the censuses. In this context, the case of the Gurung community is of relevance. Between 2001 and 2021, the total population of the Gurung has decreased by 79,128 people, or by a rate of 21 percent. However, the percent of Gurung Buddhists fell by 14.6 in this period. The population decline of Gurung in the last two censuses may have been caused by the identification of Pun in the 2021 census and Ghale as distinct ethnic groups in the census of 2011. On the other hand, the gradual decline in the number and percent of Gurung Buddhist adherents could have been due to the rise in the absolute number of Gurung people who followed Hinduism, Christianity, and Bon religions in the last three censuses.

In the same pattern, the absolute number of Newar Hindus shows progressive growth, while that of Buddhist Newars shows a progressive decline of 36.6 percent between 2001 and 2021. These shifts can explain the decline in the number and percentage rate of Newar Buddhists in the last three censuses; a common pattern of change in religious affiliations among Tamang, Tharu, and Magar, which could have resulted in the decline of the number and percent of Buddhist followers from these three Janajati groups. In addition to this, the shift among the Magar in the last censuses toward the two Indigenous religions – Prakriti and Bon – might have also contributed to the decline of the Buddhist population as the numbers of the Hindu and Christian Magars grew in absolute numbers, and percent during this period.

5.1.4 Followers of Islam

The total number of Muslims and their percent of the population has increased in every census since the 1951-1952 census recording during which religious data was first made public. The 2001 census separately recorded the Hill Muslim or Churaute and Musalman, the Tarai Muslim. However, the 2011 census dropped the category of 'Churaute', with no distinction between the Hill and the Tarai Muslims. The 2021 census shows that six distinct social groups follow Islam. In addition to Musalman, with a total population of 11.4 million and a rate of 100 percent Muslims, the other five groups include two Tarai Dalit groups – Chidimar and Natuwa – and three Tarai groups – Hajam/Thakur, Dhunia and Dhobi. The 2021 census listed Hajam/Thakur, Dhunia, and

Dhobi under the Tarai/Madhesh caste groups (NSO, 2024a, Annex 9, p. 137-138). Their populations follow both Islam and Hinduism in varying proportions.

Table 5.6: Caste/ethnic groups with the largest Muslim population, NPHC 2001-2021

Rank	Caste/ethnicity	Population size by the census year			% of the group's population		
		2001	2011	2021	2001	2011	2021
1	Musalman	949,473	1,161,810	1,418,677	97.8	99.8	100.0
2	Hajam/Thakur	na	na	2,563	na	na	0.2
3	Dhobi	na	na	7,085	na	na	7.01
4	Dhunia	na	na	13,826	na	na	91.9
5	Natuwa	na	na	460	na	na	15.9
6	Chidimar	na	na	167	na	na	10.3
7	Churaute	4,550	na	na	93.0	na	na
8	Foreigner	0	260	40,083	na	2.4	29.2
9	Not stated/others	0	300	205	0.03	6.7	4.6
Total		954,023	1,162,2370	1,483,066	% of the total Muslim population		
Total Muslim Population		954,023	1,162,2370	1,483,066	100.0	100.0	100.0

Source Dahal (2004, Annex 3.4, p. 133); Dahal (2014, Annex 1.4, p.44); NPCH, 2021.

The data on religion by caste and ethnicity shows that, out of the total population (1,36,487) of Hajam/Thakur recorded in the 2021 census, 98 percent are Hindus, and 2 percent are adherents of Islam religion (Annex 4). They have been included as caste groups in the census because both Hindu and Muslim barbers are called 'Hajam' in the Madhesh region. The same is noted for Dhobi (cloth washers), with a total population of 10,1089 people (NPCH, 2021). According to the 2021 census, most Dhobi people (92.9%) identify as Hindu, while the remaining people identify as Muslims. Interestingly, Chidimar, a marginalized Tarai Dalit group which also holds a numerically smaller (1,615 people) population size, has 10.3 percent of its population following Islam religion, as per the 2021 census finding. Likewise, 16 percent of the population of Natuwa, another marginalized Tarai Dalit group with a total population of 2,896 people reported themselves as Islams. There were no adherents of Islam from these two Dalit groups in the 2011 census.

The 2021 census recorded those 40,083 foreigners identified themselves as the adherent of Islam, the second-largest Muslim population living in Nepal at the time of the 2021 census.

5.1.5 Followers of the Kirat religion

The 1991 census recorded the Kirat religion for the first time, recognizing the long-standing religious customs of the Kirati people as a separate religion that had been disregarded in earlier censuses. In the 1991 census, 318,389 people, or 1.72 percent of Nepal's population, were followers of the Kirat religion (see Table 5.3). In the following census, the number of Kirat followers surged by 2.5 times, making this the second highest growth of followers after Christianity (Dahal, 2014, Table 1.10, p.18). 91 groups out of 100 caste and ethnic groups identified in the 2001 census reported their religion as Kirat. However, its absolute number and proportion to the national population slightly decreased by 1.3 percent or by 10,937 between the 2001 and 2011 censuses (Table 5.7). Interestingly, the number of groups with a smaller number of adherents following the Kirat religion considerably dropped from 91 in the 2001 census to only 17 in the 2011 census (Dahal, 2004; Dahal, 2014).

Table 5.7: Ten major ethnic groups with the largest followers of the Kirat religions

Rank	Ethnic Groups	Population size by the census year			% of the group's total population		
		2001	2011	2021	2001	2011	2021
1	Rai	450,288	405,279	438,212	70.9	65.4	68.4
2	Yakthung/Limbu	310,108	315,991	332,826	86.3	81.6	80.2
3	Kulung	na	26,768	30,248	na	93.6	90.6
4	Sunuwar	16,553	0.0	25,280	17.4	0.0	32.0
5	Yakkha	13,846	21,040	13,716	81.4	86.5	78.5
6	Thami	3,357	0.0	13,322	14.6	0.0	40.7
7	Bantawa	na	2,397	11,819	na	52.1	75.2
8	Chamling	na	4,432	8,614	na	66.5	70.7
9	Yamphu	na	6,117	7,577	na	88.2	83.1
10	Nachhiring	na	6,806	6,407	na	95.1	87.8
Total (of ten)		7,94,152	7,88,830	890,042	% of the total Kirat population		
Total population of Kirat		818,106	807,169	924,204	97.1	97.7	96.3

Source: Dahal (2004, Annex 3.4, p. 133); Dahal (2014 Annex 1.4, p.44); NPHC, 2021

The 2011 census added the two new religions of Prakriti and Bon. It is likely that some of the individuals who had identified their religion as Kirat may have opted for the Prakriti religion in 2011 (see Dahal, 2014, pp. 21-22). In the 2021 census, the number of Kirat followers increased by 1,17,035, or by 0.13 percent; the number of the different caste/ethnic groups following this religion also increased to 35 in 2021 (see Table 3.3). Interestingly, the adherent population of the Prakriti religion decreased in the 2021 census by almost 20 percent in the last two censuses (see Table 3.3). Some of those who had identified as adherents of the Prakriti religion may have switched to the Kirati religion in the 2021 census. The case of the Thami people indicates such a

shift between the Kirat and Prakriti religions. In the 2001 census, 14.6 percent of Thami, 3,3357 out of 22,999 people identified themselves as adherents of the Kirat religion (Dahal, 2004, Annex 3.4, p. 133). However, there was not a single Thami follower of Kirat in the 2011 census (Table 5.7). On the other hand, 53.2 percent of Thami were followers of the Prakriti religion in the 2011 census (Dahal, 2014, Annex -1.4, pp. 44-47), suggesting that many of the Thami may have reported their religion as Prakriti. Similarly, there were no Thami followers of the Prakriti religion in 2021, yet 13,322 (or 37.6%) identified as followers of the Kirat religion in the last census (Table 5.7). This shift, if not due to any error in the census enumeration, illustrates the possible inter-switching between the followers of the Kirat and Prakriti religions between 2001 and 2021. A similar pattern can be observed for Sunwar, as evident in Table 5.7. Not a single Sunuwar individual was listed as a Kirat follower in the 2011 census, despite 17 percent of Sunuwar people following Kirat religion in the 2001 census.

Table 5.7 shows that Mountain/Hill Janajati groups, mostly from eastern Nepal, are the major followers of the Kirat religion. Of the major ethnic groups following the religion, two groups – Kulung and Yakthung/Limbu – relatively retained the number of followers of the Kirat religion in the last two censuses, despite a slight decrease in the 2021 census. The Kirat followers increased by almost fivefold in Bantawa and two-fold in Chamling. In the case of Yamphu, the absolute number of Kirat followers increased in 2021. However, its proportion to the total population decreased by five percent due to a slight increase in the number of Hindu followers and an increase of 2.6 times the number of Christians (Dahal, 2014, Annex 1.4, p.44; NSO, 2021). Similarly, between the two censuses, there was a minor fall in the number of Kirat followers among the Nachhiring (by 399 individuals); however, the decline was 7.33 percent from the 2011 census. The growth of the number of Hindu followers by percentage rate and the 3.5 times growth of Christian followers in the Nachhiring community could be possible reasons for the 7.33 percent decline in Kirat followers in the 2021 census. Consequently, a more thorough examination of the census data on caste/ethnic groups and their religious affiliations can offer clues or explanations for how the dynamics of religious affiliations in Nepal have changed over time.

5.1.6 Followers of Christianity

Christianity was first introduced in the 1961 census with a total of 458 followers, which increased to 2,541 in 1971. This was already a growth of 5.54 times during the Panchayat regime. The 1981 census recorded 3,849 Christians, which surged to 318,389 – an almost 83 times increase in one decade (Dahal, 2014, Table 1.10, p.18). Between the 1991 and 2001 censuses, followers of Christianity increased by more than 226 percent; it increased by 268.4 percent or a total figure of 273,723 during the 2001 and 2011 census period (Dahal, 2014, p.22). The 2021 census recorded 512,313 followers of Christianity, which is a growth of 36.36 percent in one decade.

The inter-census growth of the population of Islam was 27.58 percent, and that of Hindus was 9.86 percent during this period, while the population of Buddhists declined (2011-2021). Table 5.8 shows the ten major caste/ethnic groups with a higher Christian population.

Table 5.8: Ten major groups following the Christianity religion, NPHC 2001-2021

Rank	Caste/Ethnic Groups	2001	Percent	2011	Percent	2021	Percent
1	Bishwokarma	6,747	0.7	42,666	4.1	66,049	4.5
2	Tamang	24,235	18.9	54,819	4.1	59,156	3.6
3	Rai	13,069	2.1	32,907	6.3	46,862	7.3
4	Magar	8,314	0.5	40,904	2.2	43,304	2.1
5	Tharu	3,332	0.2	30,314	1.9	35,588	1.9
6	Chepang/Praja	4,589	8.8	17,487	45.5	34,091	40.4
7	Kshetri	5,435	0.1	25,907	0.6	29,852	0.6
8	Newa (Newar)	5,007	0.4	22,276	1.7	26,049	1.9
9	Mijar	3,229	1.0	16,300	4.3	25,808	5.7
10	Pariyar	2,483	0.6	11,356	2.4	22,906	4.1

Source: Dahal (2004, Annex-3.4, p. 133); Dahal (2014, Annex-1.4, p.44); NPHC, 2021

The 2021 census shows that the percentage of Christian followers is higher among the Hill Dalits (4.6%), followed by Janajati groups – 3.7 percent for the Mountain/Hill and 2.3 percent for the Tarai Janajati. The Madhesh/Tarai caste and Dalit groups had the lowest proportion of Christian followers in 2021. This pattern is further reflected in the ten major groups with higher Christian populations according to the 2021 census. Of these ten major groups, three belong to the Hill Dalits, six belong to the Mountain/Hill Janajati, and one each belongs to the Tarai Janajati and Hill caste groups.

Table 5.8 reveals that the Christian demographic within these ten groups experienced a significant expansion from 2001 to 2011, showcasing an increase of 2.8 times, equating to a remarkable growth over a decade. Interestingly, Kshetri saw an increase of 4.7 times in the Christian population, compared to a growth of between 4.57–6.32 times for the three Dalit communities, namely Bishwokarma, Mijar, and Pariyar, between 2001 and 2011.

In addition to Tharu, Santhal, an Adivasi group from eastern Nepal, has the second highest Christian population among the Tarai Janajati. According to the 2021 census, the total population of Santhal is 57,310, with 10,495 (or 18%) of this group following Christianity (NPHC, 2021, Annex- 4). This follows a growth of 2.4 times since the 2001 census (Dahal 2004, Annex-3.4, p. 133). The results of the last three censuses indicate that not only did the number of Christians rise, but the total number of Santhal Hindus also increased during the same period

(35,463 in 2001; 39,829 in 2011; and 44,272 in 2021). Conversely, the population of Santhals adhering to native faiths either experienced a significant decline (Prakriti religion) or completely vanished (Kirat religion) during the same period.

5.1.7 Followers of the Prakriti religion

Many Indigenous or Adivasi Janajati do not have specific names to identify their traditional religious practices. This is further true with many Indigenous communities across the world. According to the Pew Research Center (2012, December), more than 400 million people practice various folk or traditional religions, including African traditional religions, Chinese folk religions, Native American religions, and Australian aboriginal religions in the world as per its survey of 2010. In the context of Nepal, 1991 and 2001 censuses did not include the religious practices of many Adivasi Janajati communities.

The 2001 census registered 78,994 individuals, or 0.34 percent of the total population, in the 'Other' category of religion, 2.9 times increase from the 1991 census. This number of populations under the 'other' category of religion also suggests to include the indigeneous religion like Prakriti to be included in the 2011 census.

121,982 people, or 0.46 percent of the total population identified themselves as followers of the Prakriti religion in the 2011 census. It was followed by 56 out of the 100 caste and ethnic groups identified by the 2011 census (Dahal, 2014). The followers mostly came from the Janajati groups from all ecological zones. However, in the 2011 census, there were followers of the Prakriti religion from Madhesh/Tarai caste groups such as Brahman-Tarai, Bareree, Kahar, Bin, Nurang, and Lodh and from the three Tarai Dalit groups of Mushar Bantar/Sardar, and Sarbaria. Interestingly, Kshetri was the only Hill caste with 744 adherents of the Prakriti religion in the 2011 census (Dahal, 2014, Annex-1.4, p. 44). However, the 2021 census shows that there are no Kshetri believers of the Prakriti religion. Compared to the 2011 census, the number of followers of the Prakriti religion fell by 19,934 persons in 2021 (see Table 3.3). According to the 2021 census, the religion is followed by 16 different groups, of which 15 are from Tarai/Hill/Mountain Janajati and only one Tarai Dalit, namely Mushar.

Table 5.9: Ten major groups following the Prakriti religion, NPHC 2011-2021

Rank	Ethnic Groups	Population size by the census year		% of the group's population size	
		2011	2021	2011	2021
1	Magar	9,229	67,186	0.3	3.3
2	Dhimal	10,766	9,412	40.9	36.7
3	Majhi	13,366	5,045	15.9	4.5
4	Tharu	3,303	4,775	0.7	0.2
5	Danuwar	12,541	3,218	14.9	3.8
6	Santhal	5,621	2,543	10.8	4.4
7	Chhantyal/Chhantel	272	2,431	2.3	20.3
8	Chebang/Praja	6,643	1,923	9.7	2.2
9	Oraon/Kudukh	5,809	1,856	15.5	3.9
10	Tajpuriya	4,141	1,463	21.5	6.9
Total (ten)		71,691	99,852	% of the total Prakriti	
Total population of Prakriti		121,982	102,048	59	98

Source: Dahal (2014 Annex -1.4, p.44); NPHC, 2021

Table 5.9 shows the ten major groups with a larger number of adherents of the Prakriti religion in the 2021 census. It indicates that Magar has substantially contributed to the population of the Prakriti religion in the 2021 census, with 7.9 times increase. The Magar followers alone account for 65.8 percent of the total population (10,2,048) of the Prakriti religion (Table 3.3). Similarly, Chhantyal adherents of Prakriti Dharma increased almost ninefold in ten years. The Prakriti religion appears to have held its followers in Dhimal throughout the last two censuses despite a modest decline.

With the exception of Dhimal and Tharu, the absolute number and percentage of followers of the Prakriti religion among the major Tarai Adivasi groups declined in the 2021 census, whilst increasing among the major Hill Janajati groups except Chebang. The number of followers considerably declined amongst other major groups following this religion, namely Danuwar, Chebang, Oraon, Santhal, and Tajpuriya, by 7.43 to 14.53 percent across the last two censuses. The significant decline in the number of followers from these groups may be due to many reasons. Reporting other religions may be one factor. The absolute number of Hindu followers and their share in the group's total population increased in Tajpuria, Danuwar, Santhal, and Oraon/Kudukh between 2011 and 2021. For instance, the total population in Tajpuria increased by a figure of 4,507, or by 30.4 percent in 2021. The Christian population increased by 1.76 times among the Santhal between 2011 and 2021. Similarly, Christianity grew by 2.68 times among the Chebang between the two censuses (Dahal, 2014, Annex-1.4, p.44). Some Chebang followers

of Indigenous religions, such as Prakriti Dharma, likely reported to Christianity between 2001 and 2021 (Rai, L., 2019). The Chepang did not have a single follower of Buddhism in the 2001 census. Still, there were 1,332 Chepang Buddhist followers in 2021, indicating a shift most likely from the followers of Prakriti or the Hindu religion from Chepang. Such changes of reporting in religious affiliations could have led to a decline in the size of adherents of the Prakriti religion among Chepang, Tajpuria, Danuwar, Santhal, and Oraon/Kudukh in the 2021 census.

5.1.8 Followers of the Bon religion

Bon was first recognized as a distinct religion in the census in 2011. The Bon religion had 121,982 followers or 0.46 of the total population from 12 out of 100 caste and ethnic groups listed in the 2011 census (Table 3.3). While Gurung had the largest number of Bon followers at a figure of 12,134 people or 2.32 percent of its population in the 2011 census, Lophya, an ethnic group, had only one Bon follower (Dahal, 2014, Annex 1.4, p.44). According to the 2021 census, there are 67,223 Bon followers, which is an increase of 0.55 times the 2011 Bon population. The religion is followed by 22 different groups, with one follower from Ranatharu, a Tarai Adivasi, and 5,81621 followers from the Gurung group (Table 4.3). Table 5.10 lists the size and proportion of the ten caste/ethnic groups with the largest number of Bon followers in the 2011 and 2021 censuses.

Table 5.10: Ten major caste/ethnic groups with the largest population following Bon, NPHC 2011-2021

Rank	Ethnic Groups	Population size by the census year		% of the group's population size	
		2011	2021	2011	2021
1	Gurung	12,134	58,162	2.32	10.7
2	Ghale	5	4,469	0.02	12.6
3	Magar	565	2,519	0.03	0.1
4	Tamang	107	868	0.01	0.05
5	Baram / Baramu	0	212	0.0	2.7
6	Tatma/Tatwa	0	183	0.0	0.1
7	Dura	0	158	0.0	2.8
8	Thakali	29	122	0.2	1.04
9	Bhote	3	106	0.02	0.7
10	Bankariya	0	90	0.0	50.0
Total (ten)		12,843	66,889	% of the total Bon	
Total population of Bon		13,006	67,223	98.7	99.5

Source: Dahal (2014 Annex- 1.4, p.44); NPHC, 2021

Table 5.10 reveals that Gurung shows the largest number of Bon followers in the 2021 census. In the last two censuses, the number of Bon followers among the Gurungs increased by 4.79

times. A similar pattern is seen in the case of Ghale, an ethnic group first included in the 2011 census, which showed 893 times increase in the number of Bon followers in ten years. Although there are only between 212 and 90 Bon adherents from the other six groups – namely Baram, Tatma, Dura, Thakali, Bhote, and Bankariya – the figures are nevertheless significant. Considering that the Baha'i religion has only 537 adherents according to the 2021 census, the number of Bon followers from these six caste/ethnic groups holds comparable significance. For example, half of the population of Bankariya, an endangered Hill Janajati, and 183 members of the Tatma/Tatwa Tarai Dalit community have stated their religion as Bon in the 2021 census.

5.1.9 Followers of other minority religions: Jain, Baha'i, and Sikh

The 2021 census reports that there are 2,398 Jain adherents in Nepal, which is less than 843 individuals or 26 percent from 2011 (Table 3.3). This is the second largest decrease in the number of people who follow a religion listed in the census, following Baha'i. According to the 2021 census, Jainism is followed by seven different Tarai caste groups (Table 3.3). According to the 2011 and 2022 censuses, none of the Hill caste/ethnic groupings and Tarai Janajati groups follow Jainism. Table 5.11 presents the social groups adhering to the Jain religion as recorded in the 2021 census, including their population sizes and proportions relative to the total Jain population in the 2001 and 2011 censuses for comparative analysis.

Table 5.11: Major groups following Jain, NPHC 2011-2021

Rank	Ethnic Groups	Population size of Jain by caste/ethnicity			% of the group's population size		
		2001	2011	2021	2001	2011	2021
1	Marwadi	1,977	3,156	1639	4.5	6.13	4.8
2	Foreigner	na	36	500	na	0.8	0.4
3	Dhunia	na	na	189	na	na	1.3
4	Jaine	652	na	na	64.2	na	na
5	Badhee	na	na	23	na	na	0.04
6	Natuwa	na	na	13	na	na	0.5
7	Yadav	na	14	6	na	0.4	0.0
8	Sundi	na	na	5	na	na	0.0
9	Baniyan	na	na	5	na	na	0.01
10	Not stated/others	288	8	18	0.1	0.1	0.4
	Total	2917	3214	2398	% of the Jain population		
	Total Jain population	4,108	3214	2398	71	100.0	100.0

Dahal (2004, Annex 3.4, p. 133); Dahal (2014, Annex-1.4, p.44); NPHC, 2021

Table 5.11 indicates a substantial drop of 41 percent in the Jain population over the last three censuses. Jainism was first added in the 1961 census with a total population of 831. Its population increased to 5,836 in 1971 and 9,438 in 1981, showing an increase of 11.3 times over two decades. Nevertheless, after 1981, the population experienced a decrease from 7,561 in 1991 to 3241 in 2011. As no studies have focused on this issue, the reasons behind the decline in followers of Jainism in Nepal remains unexplored. The Marwadi community in Nepal has the highest number of Jain followers, despite only 4.8 percent identifying as its adherents in the 2021 census (Table 5.11). The decline of the Marwadi population is most likely one reason for the steady fall in Jain followers in Nepal. In addition to this, the number of Marwadi identifying themselves as Jain followers fell by 48 percent between 2011 and 2021 (Dahal, 2014).

The 2001 census data on Jain followers by caste and ethnicity is not clear. While the Marwadi community had the largest number of Jain followers (1,977), the 2001 census showed that other different caste and ethnic groups followed the religion. Aside from Marwadi, the census included 'Jaine' as a distinct group with a total population of 1,015 persons, out of whom 652 or 64.23 percent were Jains (Dahal, 2004, Annex 3.4). However, this category was dropped in the subsequent censuses.

The 2001 census also showed that 33 different caste and ethnic groups, including Tamang (101), Gurung (199), Rai (52), Hill-Brahman (61), Kshetri (99), amongst other groups had Jain followers (Dahal, 2004). This data does not reflect the cultural and social characteristics of the Jain adherents in Nepal. Interestingly, the 2011 census report only recorded two social groups following the Jain religion – Marwadi, with 3,152 people, and Yadav, with 14 followers (see Dahal, 2014, Annex 1.4). All Jain followers from the other groups reported in the 2001 census disappeared in the 2011 census, suggesting some errors in the census reporting or some of these individuals did not identify themselves as adherents of Jainism in the 2011 census.

Table 5.12 shows the social groups following the Sikh religion between the 2001 and the 2021 censuses. The Sikh religion was first included in the 2011 census with 5,890 followers. However, its followers decreased to only 609 persons in 2021 – a decline of 98.8 percent, which is the largest drop of the ten religions recognized in the 2011 census (Table 3.3). The reasons for this scale of decline are unknown. Dahal (2014) did not analyze the census data of 2001 and 2011 on minority religions. It can be inferred that there was likely an error in the census reporting of the data on the Sikh religion in the 2001 census. Sikhism is a religion of and largely followed by the Punjabi people. The 2001 census showed that the Sikh religion was followed by more than 50 caste and ethnic groups, with other groups. The census showed that Dhimal, a Tarai Adivasi group following the Prakriti religion, had 598 Sikh followers, while Punjabi/Sikh had only 380 followers (Dahal, 2003).

Table 5.12: Major groups following the Sikhism in Nepal, NPHC, 2001-2021

Rank	Ethnic Groups	Population size of Sikh by caste/ethnicity			% of the group's population size		
		2001	2011	2021	2001	2011	2021
1	Punjabi/Sikh	380	579	1084	6.5	8.8	59
2	Foreigner	na	18	398	0.0	0.4	0.3
3	Gurung	646	0	4	11.0	0.0	0.1
4	Dhimal	599	0	0	10.2	0.0	0.0
5	Unidentified/not stated	567	12	0	9.6	0.1	0.0
6	Rajbanshi	490	0	0	8.3	0.0	0.0
7	Majhi	209	0	0	3.5	0.0	0.0
8	Baniya	199	0	10	3.4	0.0	0.0
9	Tajpuriya	166	0	0	2.8	0.0	0.02
10	Santhal	144	0	0	2.4	0.0	0.0
	Total	3400	609	1496	% of the Sikh population		
	Total population of Sikhs	5890	609	1496	57.7	100	100

Source: Dahal (2004, Annex 3.4, p. 133); Dahal (2014, Annex 1.4, p.44); NPHC, 2021.

The 2021 census reported 1,449 followers of the Sikh religion. Except for the ten persons who identified their religion as Sikh from Baniyan, a Tarai caste group, almost 60 percent of the Sikh adherents belonged to the Punjabi/Sikh group, followed by foreigners (26%). The data from the last three censuses indicate that the population of Sikhs is declining in Nepal.

Baha'i religion was added to the census list in 2011, with 1,211 followers from 8 groups, including foreigners and unstated groups. Table 5.13 presents the caste and ethnic groups with followers of the Baha'i religion in the 2021 census, along with their population size and proportion to the total population of these groups in the last censuses (Dahal, 2014; Table 5.13). The Gurung followers of Baha'i were completely absent in the 2021 census. Ranatharu, with 90 adherents, was the new group to follow the Baha'i religion in 2021.

Table 5.13: Major groups following Baha’i religion, NHPC 2011-2021

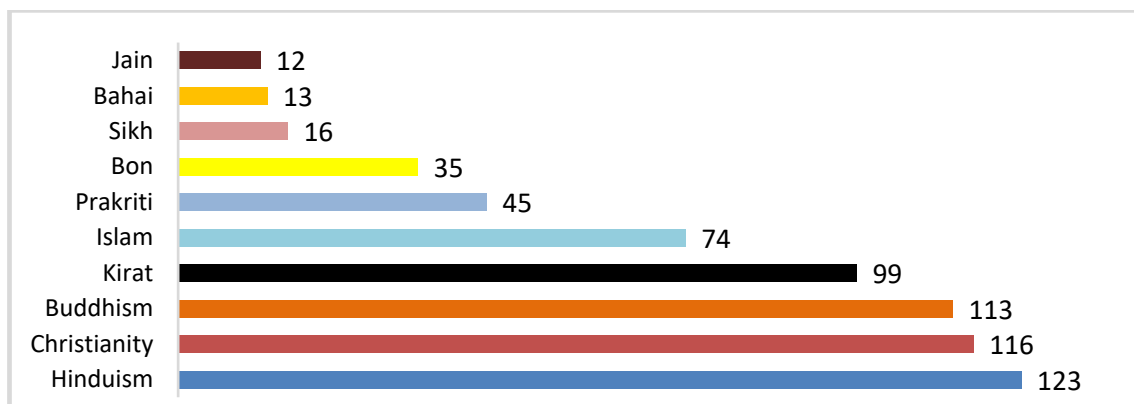
Rank	Caste/Ethnic Groups	Number of Baha’i		% of the group’s population	
		2011	2021	2011	2021
1	Tharu	626	278	0.04	0.02
2	Ranatharu	na	90	na	0.1
3	Kshetri	241	67	0.01	0.0
4	Brahman – Hill	117	54	0.0	0.0
5	Gurung	114	0	0.01	0.0
6	Rai	104	20	0.1	0.0
7	Bishwokarma	79	19	0.01	0.0
8	Foreigner	1	9	0.0	0.0
9	Not stated	1	0	0.0	0.0
	Total	1283	537	% of the Baha’i	
	Total Baha’i	1283	537	100.0	100.0

Source: Dahal (2014 Annex 1.4, p.44); NPHC, 2021

Tharu and Ranatharu, the only two groups from the Tarai/Madhesh, also have the two largest Baha’i followers in 2021 (Table 5.13). Baha’i religion is followed by Janajati, Hill caste groups, and Hill Dalits, with a small number of followers ranging between 19 to 278 people. In 2011, Tharu had the largest number of Baha’i followers, with 626 people, followed by Kshetri with 241 followers. Nevertheless, the number of followers of these groups decreased by 55 percent to 72 percent. The number of Baha’i followers has a 53.1 percent fall in the last census, making it the religion with the fewest adherents in Nepal.

5.2 Religion and language

Nepal is a linguistically diverse nation. There are 124 mother tongues, according to the National Population and Housing Census 2021 in Nepal. This section of the report analyzes the mother tongue composition of the followers of the ten religions listed in the 2021 census. In the analysis of the relationship between language and religion, the past census report claimed that there is a strong association between mother tongue and religion in Nepal such that a vast majority of Nepali speakers are Hindus and those who speak Maithili, Bhojpuri, and Abadhi are also entirely Hindus, except for a negligible fraction of Muslims (CBS, 1971, p. 51). Such a view of a strong and one-to-one correspondence between language and religion cannot be supported by empirical studies and the 2021 census data.

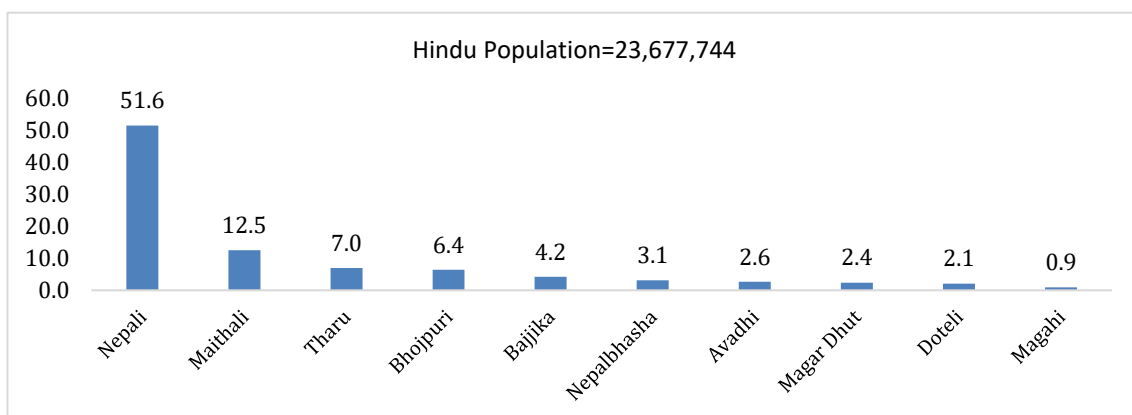
Figure 5.1: Number of mother tongue groups following the ten religions, NPHC, 2021

Source, NPHC, 2021.

Figure 5.1 shows that the followers of the ten religions belong to multiple linguistic groups and, hence, are linguistically diverse. Hinduism is followed by all the mother tongue groups except for the speakers of Urdu. In addition to Hinduism, Christianity has spread to most linguistic groups across all ecological zones and provinces. Buddhism is followed by 113 mother-tongue groups, while Kirat is followed by 99 mother-tongue groups, suggesting that the religion has spread beyond its traditional linguistic and cultural niche groups of the Kirati groups. While Islam is followed by only seven social groups in terms of ethnicity, interestingly, the religion is followed by 74 mother-tongue groups, i.e., by half of the mother-tongue groups identified by the 2021 census. The followers of the two Indigenous religions, Prakriti and Bon, also come from different linguistic groups. In terms of mother-tongue followers, Jain has the fewest followers, with 12 linguistic groups.

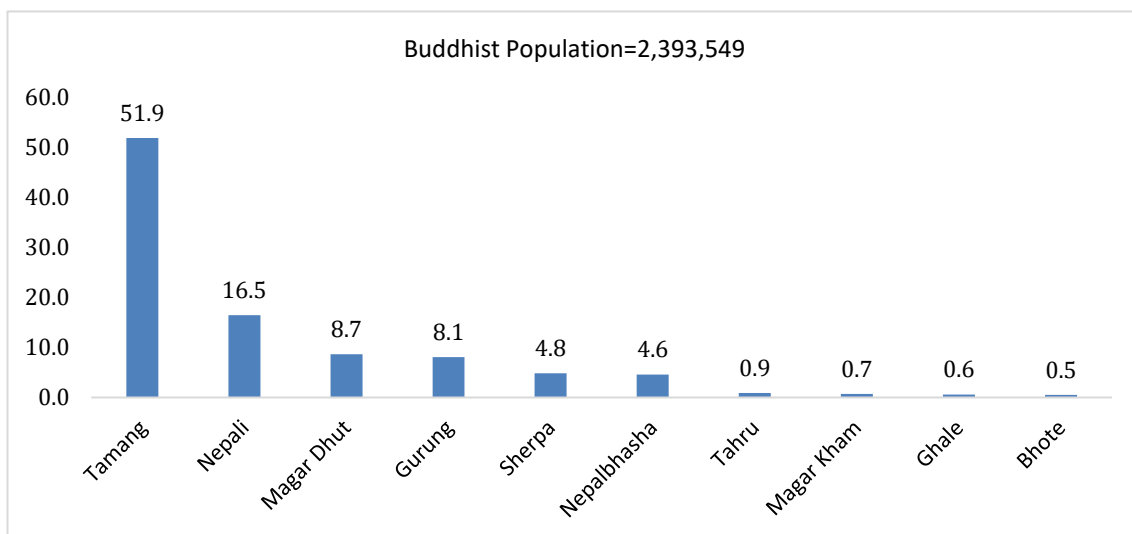
According to the 2021 census, around half of the Hindu followers in Nepal are speakers of the Nepali language (mother tongue). The other nine major linguistic groups following the Hindu religion include 7 Indo-Aryan languages: Maithali, Tharu, Bhojpuri, Bajjika, and Avadhi, which are mostly spoken in Nepal's Tarai region and India, in addition to Nepalbhasa – the mother tongue of the Newa (Newar) people – and the Doteli language from Karnali and Sudurpashchim provinces.

Figure 5.2: Ten largest linguistic groups (mother-tongue) following Hinduism, NPHC 2021



The 2021 census found that the largest adherents (51 %) of Buddhism in Nepal come from the Tamang language speakers, followed by 16.5 percent of Nepali speakers (mother-tongue), Magar Dhut speakers (8.7 %), Gurung language speakers (8.1 percent %), Sherpa language speakers (4.6 %) and Nepal Bhasa speakers (4.6) speakers. The other four major linguistic groups following Buddhism include Tharu, Magar Kham, Ghale, and Bhote language speakers. Eight of the major linguistic groups following Buddhism are the speakers of Tibeto-Burman languages – the mother tongues of Mountain/Hill Janajati groups.

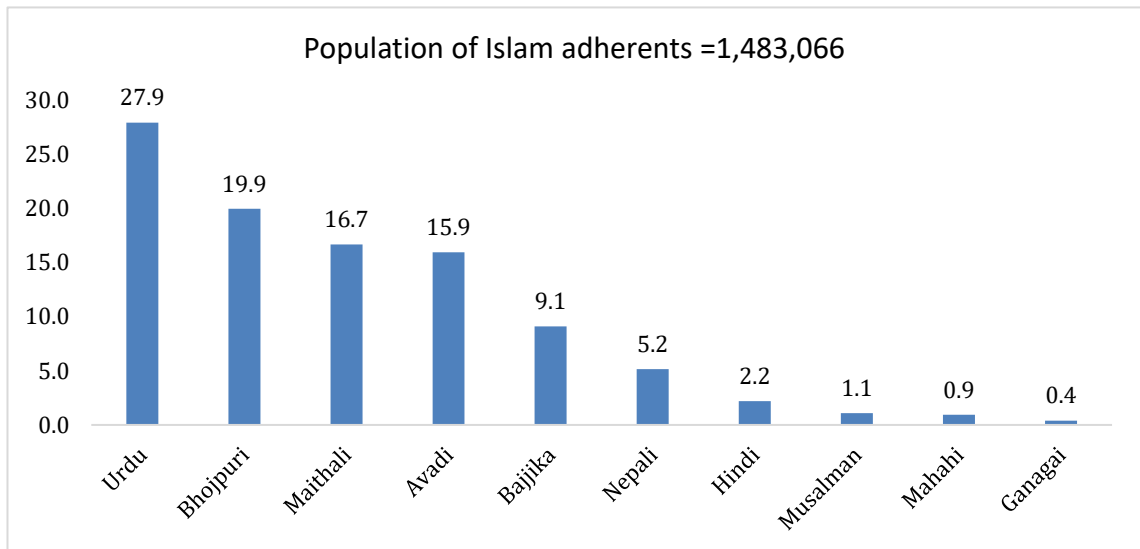
Figure 5.3: Ten largest linguistic groups (mother-tongue) following Buddhism, NPHC 2021



The overwhelming majority of the followers of Islam, or 95 percent, live in Nepal’s Tarai region. In terms of the major linguistic groups, except for the Nepali language speakers (Hill Muslims), all the other major linguistic groups following Islam come from the Indo-Aryan languages spoken

in Nepal's Tarai zone and in India (Figure 5.5). Urdu is the mother tongue of 27.9 percent of the followers of Islam, followed by Bhojpuri, Maithali, Avadhi, Bajjika, Nepali, Hindi, and others.

Figure 5.4: Ten largest linguistic groups (mother-tongue) following Islam, NPHC 2021



The largest followers of the Kirat religion come from the speakers of the Yakthung/Limbu language, the mother tongue of the Limbu people, while the speakers of the Nepali language are the second-largest adherents. Bantawa, Rai, and the other six linguistic groups of the Kirati language (Chamling, Kulung, Thulung, Sunuwar, Sampang, and Khaling) are the major followers of the Kirat religion.

Figure 5.5: Ten linguistic groups (mother-tongue) with a higher population following Kirat religion, NPHC 2021

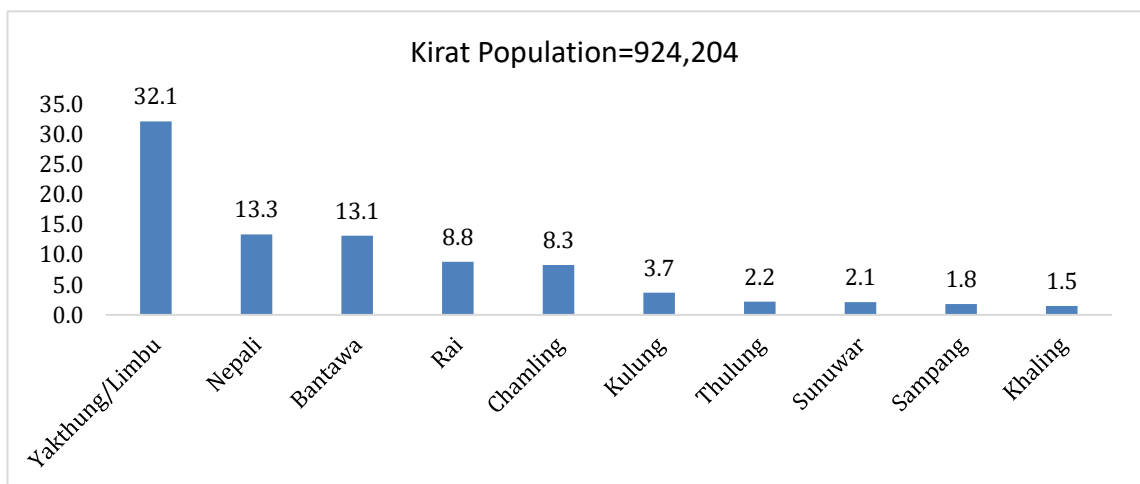
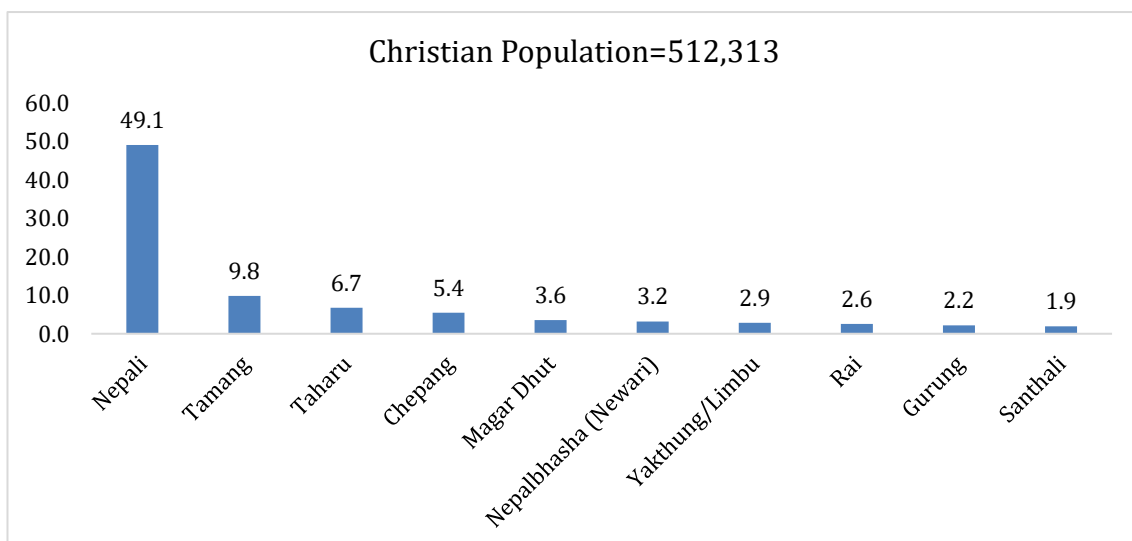


Figure 5.6: Ten largest linguistic groups following Christianity, NPHC 2021



According to the 2021 census, mother-tongue of most of the Christian population is Nepali. Of the ten major mother-tongue groups following Christianity in Nepal, seven are the mother tongues of the Mountain/Hill Janajati groups, and two of them (Tharu and Santhali) are the mother tongues of the Tarai Janajati groups.

Table 5.14: Ten largest linguistic groups following Prakriti and Bon religions, NPHC 2021

Rank	Prakriti			Bon		
	Mother Tongue	Population (102,048)		Mother Tongue	Population (67,223)	
		No.	Percent		No.	Percent
1	Magar Kham	28,538	27.97	Gurung	52,051	77.43
2	Nepali	23,794	23.32	Nepali	7,851	15.08
3	Magar Dhut	20,537	20.12	Ghale	4,063	7.81
4	Dhimal	8,557	8.39	Magar Dhut	1,388	2.67
5	Tharu	5,000	4.90	Tamang	738	1.10
6	Santhali	2,486	2.44	Magar Kham	382	0.57
7	Majhi	2,162	2.12	Maghai	113	0.17
8	Oraon/Kudukh	1,814	1.78	Dura	108	0.16
9	Danuwar	1,745	1.71	Maithili	98	0.15
10	Chhantyal	1,519	1.49	Thakali	49	0.07

The major ten mother tongue groups following the Prakriti and Bon religions predominately come from the Indigenous languages of Janajati groups. Regarding the Bon followers, the two major linguistic groups are Maghai and Maithili, belonging to the Indo-Aryan linguistic groups spoken primarily in Nepal's Tarai and India. According to the 2021 census, the Bon religion is followed by a few Tarai caste groups, such as Dhanuk, Tatma, and Baniyan. Hence, the speakers of Maghai and Maithali, Indo-Aryan languages spoken in the Tarai, are one the major mother tongue groups following the Bon religion in the 2021 census (Table 5.14).

Table 5.15: Ten largest linguistic groups following Jain, Baha'i, and Sikh, NPHC 2021

Rank	Sikh			Jain			Baha'i		
	Mother-Tongue	Population (1,496)		Mother-Tongue	Population (2,398)		Mother-Tongue	Population (537)	
		No.	Percent		No.	Percent		No.	Percent
1	Avadhi	587	39.2	Marwardi	1,374	57.3	Tharu	278	51.8
2	Punjabi	490	32.8	Hindi	416	30.3	Nepali	125	23.3
3	Nepali	165	11.0	Nepali	253	18.4	Ranatharu	90	16.8
4	Hindi	157	10.5	Maithali	239	10.0	Magar Dhut	13	2.4
5	Bhojpuri	46	7.8	Bhojpuri	30	2.2	Chamling	10	1.9
6	Bajika	10	0.7	Others	27	2.0	English	6	1.1
7	Maithali	8	0.5	Urdu	23	1.7	Rai	5	0.9
8	Others	8	0.5	Awadhi	22	1.6	Bhajangi	4	0.7
9	Musalman	6	0.4	Bangla	6	0.4	Others*	6	1.1
10	Sindhi	6	0.4	Rajbanshi	2	0.1			

*includes Maithali, Darchuleli, Baitadeli, Dadeldhuri, Achami, and Baitadeli

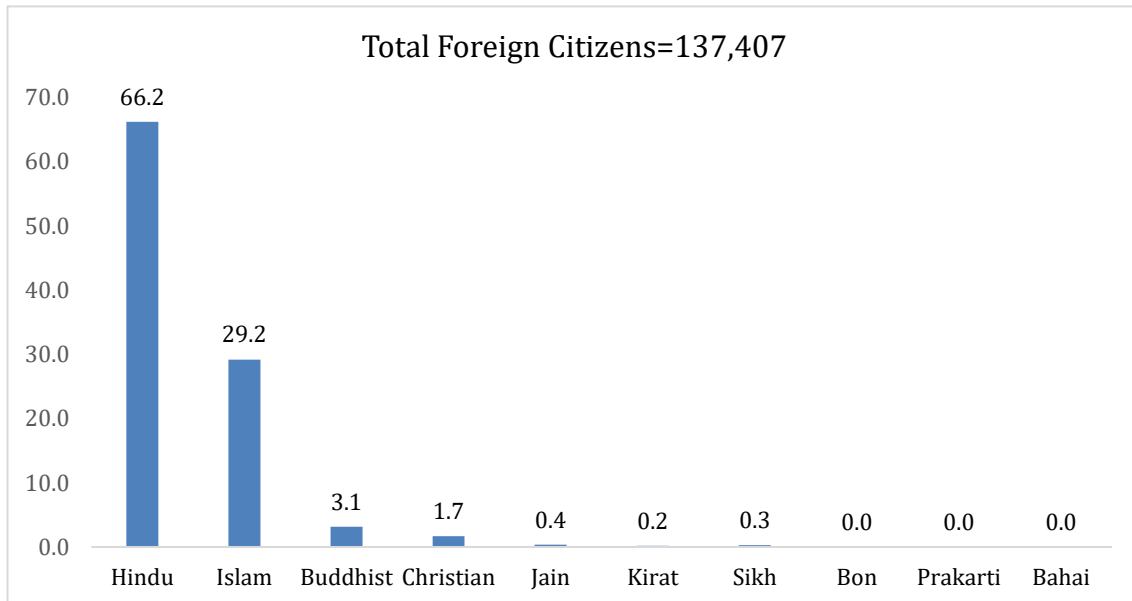
The three other minority religions -- Jainism, Baha'i, and Sikhism – are followed by 12 to 16 mother-tongue groups. Interestingly, the number of mother tongue groups following these three religions is higher than the number of caste/ethnic groups following the Jain, Baha'i, and Sikh religions. For instance, according to the 2021 census, the major adherents of the Sikh religion in Nepal are Punjabi/Sikh, Baniyan, and foreigner groups. In terms of linguistic groups, the religion is followed by 16 different languages/mother tongue groups, namely speakers of Nepali, Maithali, Bhojpuri, Avadhi, Hindi, Rajbhansi, and others. In other words, the religion is followed by diverse linguistic groups, or each religion is linguistically diverse.

5.3 Religions followed by foreigners living in Nepal

Since 1961, Nepal’s censuses have collected information on citizenship, indicating trends in the presence of migrants within the country. The 2021 census reported that 137,407 foreigners were residing in Nepal at the time of the census, accounting for 0.47 percent of the total population (NSO, 2021). Of these foreigners who lived in Nepal in 2021, 96.6 percent were of Indian origin, 1.37 percent were citizens of China, and 2 percent were citizens of other nations (NHPC, 2021; Annex -5). By religious affiliation, Hindus made up the majority of foreigners living in Nepal at the time of the 2021 census, followed by Muslims, Buddhists, and Christians. There are only 331 foreigners following the three indigenous religions: Kirat, Prakriti, and Bon. Similarly, there were nine foreigners following Baha’i, 500 following Jainism, and 398 following the Sikh religion. In other words, the number of foreign nationals following the Jain and Sikh religions in Nepal was higher than that of the Indigenous religions and Baha’i in 2021.

Figure 5.7 shows the distribution of the number and percentage of foreign citizens following the ten religions. Of the total foreign citizens living in Nepal, 66.2 percent are Hindus, followed by Islam (29.2%), Buddhist (3.1%) and Christian (1.7%). The small number of Jain, Kirat, Sikhs, Bon, Prakriti and Baha’i are also living in Nepal (Annex-5).

Figure 5.7: Proportion of Foreigners living in Nepal by religion, NPHC 2021



The majority of foreigners who practiced other religions except Buddhism were Indian citizens, as Figure 5.8 shows. At the time of the 2021 census, nearly 46 percent of foreigners who

practiced Buddhism were Chinese nationals, whereas 35.5 percent of Christians who were citizens of nations other than China and India were followers of Christianity.

Figure 5.8: Religious affiliation of foreign citizens in Nepal, NPHC 2021

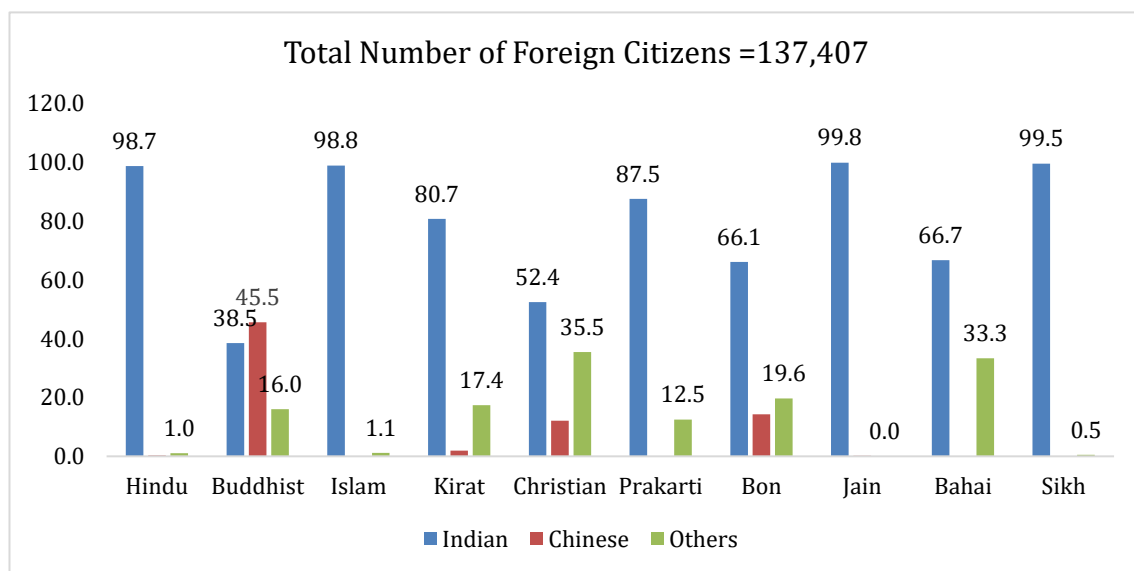


Table 5.16 shows the religious makeup of Nepal's male foreign-citizen population in 2021, disaggregated by ten religious' affiliations. It also reveals that the percentage of male Indian nationals who practiced Hinduism, Islam, Christianity, and other minority religions was higher than the percentage of female Indian nationals who practiced Buddhism.

Table 5.16: Male foreigners by religion, NPHC 2021

Religion	Citizens of India		Citizens of China		Other Countries	
	Total	Male	Total	Male	Total	Male
	132,781	55.2	1,882	62.0	2,744	51.8
Hinduism	89,704	53.3	268	84.0	947	51.8
Buddhism	1,099	48.9	1,301	52.3	457	49.2
Islam	39,606	59.7	19	42.1	458	56.8
Christianity	1,211	51.4	280	86.8	819	50.9
Indigenous religions	260	37.7	13	69.2	58	46.6
Other minority religions	901	55.8	1	100.0	5	20.0

Source: NPHC, 2021; Annex 5.1

Indian nationals following Hinduism, Islam, Christianity, and other minority religions had a higher proportion of males, while those following Buddhism had a higher proportion of female adherents among Indian nationals. Of the 1,882 Chinese nationals residing in Nepal, only 268

(0.3%) identified as Hindu, and 84 percent of Chinese Hindus were male. Similarly, 87 percent of Chinese Christians in Nepal were men. In contrast, the majority of Indian nationals following Indigenous religions were women (62.3%), compared to 44.2 percent of female adherents among those Indian citizens following other minority religions. Foreigners from countries other than India and China who practiced minority religions like Sikhism, Bahá'í, and Jainism were overwhelmingly women (80%). On the other hand, males accounted for almost 60 percent of the population of Indian Muslims living in Nepal at the time of the 2021 census. Furthermore, among Chinese nationals in Nepal at the time of the 201 census, men outnumbered women in all religions except Islam, which had a higher proportion of Muslim women.

CHAPTER 6

SOCIAL CHARACTERISTICS

This chapter examines the NPHC 2021 data on the social characteristics of the followers of 10 religions in terms of literacy and educational attainment, household characteristics, toilet facility, housing unit and land, and female property ownership.

6.1 Literacy and educational attainment

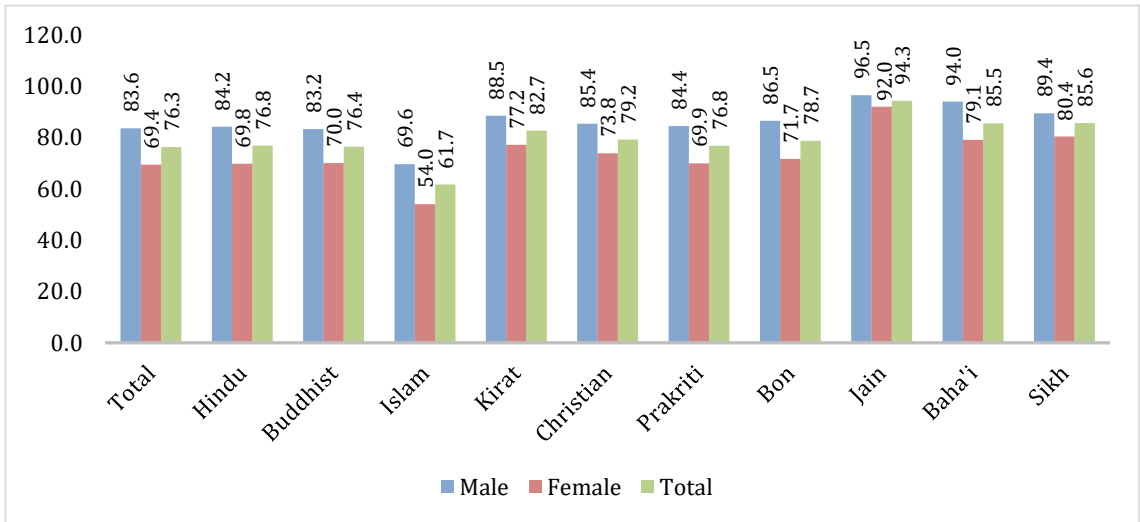
The 2021 census reported that 76.2 percent of the population 5 years old and above were literate. The gender disparity in literacy has significantly improved from the past censuses. However, the literacy rate of men (83.6%) is still 14.2 percent higher than that of women (69.4%) (NSO, 2024a, p.53). Figure 6.1 shows the literacy rate of the population of the ten religions reported in the 2021 census, disaggregated by sex and ranked in the order from high to low. The data shows that the literacy rate of the adherents of all religions except for Islam is higher than that of the national literacy rate of 76.2 percent. The followers of Islam have the lowest literacy rate (61.7%), with the lowest literacy rate for women (54%) than the followers of the other nine religions.

Figure 6.1 indicates the level of sex disparity in literacy rate for the followers of the ten religions. It shows that Jain has the lowest gender disparity in literacy, followed by the Sikh religion. The case of Baha'i is of particular interest. While its overall literacy rate and that of women is higher than the other seven religions, the sex disparity in literacy rate among the Baha'i adherents is the second highest after Islam. Compared to the other religions, the gender disparity in the literacy rate among the followers of Hinduism is lower than only the adherents of two religions, these being Islam and Prakriti religions. Comparably, Buddhists have a lower gender gap in literacy than adherents of Islam, Hinduism, Baha'i, and the two Indigenous faiths, Bon and Prakriti, but a higher gender disparity in the literacy rate than those who follow Jainism, Sikh, Kirat, and Christianity.

Figure 6.1 also shows that Kirat adherents have a higher percent of female literacy compared to the four major religions with the highest numbers of adherents – Hinduism, Buddhism, Islam, and Christianity – and the other two Indigenous religions, Prakriti and Bon. Except for Sikhism and Jainism, the gender disparity in literacy among the followers of the Kirat religion is lower than that of the other seven religions. The other two Indigenous religions, Bon and Prakriti, have a higher female literacy than the followers of Hinduism and Islam, yet lower than those following

Buddhism, the three minority religions, Kirat religion, and Christianity. These two Indigenous religions also have a higher gender disparity in the literacy rate than other religions with the exception of Baha'i and Islam.

Figure 6.1: Distribution of five years and above population of religious groups by literacy, NPHC 2021



The census data on religion, literacy, and gender suggest an association between religion and literacy among their adherents. It also highlights the disparities in literacy rates between male and female adherents of the same religion and between adherents of other religions.

Educational attainment

Education attainment in terms of attendance in school-level education (below School Leaving Certificate [SLC]/Secondary Education Exam [SEE]) among persons aged 5-25 years is an important indicator to inform the level of educational attainment. The 2021 census provides information on school attendance in three categories: currently attending, ever attended, and never attended (NSO, 2023). In 2021, approximately 93 percent of 5-years-old and older individuals had completed some form of schooling, compared to about 91 percent in 2011 (NSO, 2024a). In 2021, nearly half (48.6%) of the reference age group had completed basic education, of which 28.7 percent had completed lower basic education (Grades 1–5) and 19.9 percent the upper basic education. The proportion of 5-year-olds and older who had completed secondary education grew from 28.1 percent in 2011 to 37.7 percent in 2021 (NSO, 2023; NSO 2024a). The 2011 and 2021 censuses found that significantly more males than females had completed all levels of education, with the largest male-female disparity at the postgraduate and higher level, despite the gender gap decreasing from 2011 to 2021.

Table 6.1: Educational attainment by sex in four major religions, NPHC 2021

Education Level Completed	Religion								Nepal	
	Hinduism		Islam		Buddhism		Christianity			
	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female
Early childhood	54.3	45.7	53.0	47.0	52.6	47.4	52.0	48.0	54.0	46.0
Primary	53.2	46.8	52.0	48.0	54.6	45.4	52.4	47.6	53.4	46.7
Lower secondary	53.6	46.4	56.9	43.1	53.9	46.1	50.9	49.1	53.3	46.7
Upper secondary	53.2	46.8	60.3	39.7	52.5	47.5	49.5	50.5	53.7	46.3
S.L.C./ S.E..E & equivalent	54.2	45.8	61.3	38.7	53.0	47.0	50.1	49.9	53.3	46.7
Intermediate & equivalent	51.7	48.3	63.8	36.2	48.0	52.0	46.0	54.0	54.1	45.9
Graduate & equivalent	56.0	44.0	67.5	32.5	49.3	50.7	48.8	51.2	51.3	48.7
Post graduate equivalent & above	64.4	35.6	74.7	25.3	53.4	46.6	57.7	42.3	55.4	44.6

Table 6.1 shows the level of educational attainments by the male and female population in the four major religions of Nepal in 2021. It indicates that among the Hindu and Muslim populations, there is a significant gender gap; men are seen to outnumber women across all the formal education levels they have completed from early childhood to postgraduate degrees.

In the Buddhist population, the proportion of men completing the educational level is higher than women from early childhood to those who have completed SLC/SEE and equivalent level. However, Buddhist women outnumber Buddhist men in the population who have completed intermediate and graduate levels, however they are lesser represented than Buddhist men as a population who have completed the post-graduate and above levels.

Similarly, there is a higher percentage of Christian women than Christian men in the population who have completed the upper secondary level, and there is a marginal gender disparity in the proportion of Christian men and women who have completed the SLC/SEE and equivalent level. However, similar to the case of the Buddhist population, Christian women outnumber Christian men in the population who have completed intermediate and graduate education levels yet Christian men show a larger population of those who have completed the post-graduate and above degrees.

Among the Muslim population, the gender disparity in the educational levels completed by males and females is stark beyond the primary level, and the gap continues to widen after the lower secondary level. It is important to note that the percentage of Muslims who have completed the various educational levels is comparatively lower than that of people of other religions (Annex 6). The 2021 census data suggests that women in the Muslim population may face greater barriers to higher education beyond the primary level than Muslim men.

In the Hindu population, gender disparity against women exists across all levels of education completed by men and women. The gender gap is significantly larger at the graduate and post-graduate levels than it is in the Muslim community, yet it is not as strongly skewed towards men overall. The male-female disparity differs in the Buddhist and Christian populations. In terms of educational attainment, Buddhists and Christians only have a relatively smaller gender gap between men and women, but also a higher percentage of women who have completed upper secondary (among Christians) as well as intermediate and graduate levels in both Christian and Buddhist populations.

Table 6.2: Educational attainment by gender in Indigenous religions, NPHC 2021

Educational level completed	Religion							
	Kirat		Prakriti		Bon		Nepal	
	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female
Early childhood	52.0	48.0	51.6	48.4	51.6	48.4	54.0	46.0
Primary	54.6	45.4	53.4	46.6	53.1	46.9	53.3	46.7
Lower secondary	53.8	46.2	52.9	47.1	52.2	47.8	53.7	46.3
Upper secondary	52.6	47.4	53.6	46.4	55.1	44.9	53.3	46.7
S.L.C./ S.E..E & equivalent	51.4	48.6	54.2	45.8	58.5	41.5	54.1	45.9
Intermediate & equivalent	45.7	54.3	48.0	52.0	47.3	52.7	51.3	48.7
Graduate & equivalent	46.9	53.1	48.0	52.0	41.6	58.4	55.4	44.6
Post graduate equivalent & above	56.8	43.2	63.5	36.5	50.4	49.6	63.7	36.3

Table 6.2 shows the percent of men and women who have completed different educational levels among the followers of the three Indigenous religions: Kirat, Prakriti, and Bon. The 2021 census data reveal that a higher percentage of men than women have completed early childhood education to SLC/SEE and comparable levels in the three Indigenous religions. However, women across the three Indigenous religions outnumber men in the populations who have completed intermediate and graduate levels of education. This finding is insightful and necessitates the need for further study in order to understand why women from these three groups appear to be in a better position to complete the college and graduate levels of education. The proportion of men and women who have completed the post-graduate level is almost equal among the Bon population, but men outnumber women by 13.5 percent in Kirat and by 27.1 percent in Prakriti.

The percent of women who have completed the post-graduate level is highest among the Bon population, outnumbering the proportion of men by 16.8 percent. In the Kirat religion, the male-female disparity is higher in the population who have completed primary education than in the

population of the Bon and Prakriti religions, but the gender disparity towards a higher male proportion decreases in the population who have completed upper secondary level and SLC/SEE, and women outnumber men in the population who have completed the post-SLC/SEE educational levels except for the post-graduate level.

Table 6.3: Educational attainment by gender in other minority religions, NPHC 2021

Education Level Completed	Religion							
	Jainism		Baha'i		Sikhism		Nepal	
	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female
Early childhood	52.4	47.6	38.5	61.5	58.2	41.8	54.0	46.0
Primary	47.3	52.7	56.1	43.9	61.7	38.3	53.3	46.7
Lower secondary	46.4	53.6	50.0	50.0	58.2	41.8	53.7	46.3
Upper secondary	53.2	46.8	44.9	55.1	64.7	35.3	53.3	46.7
S.L.C./ S.E.E & equivalent	44.6	55.4	44.1	55.9	69.9	30.1	54.1	45.9
Intermediate & equivalent	51.5	48.5	40.5	59.5	56.3	43.8	51.3	48.7
Graduate & equivalent	59.0	41.0	55.9	44.1	58.7	41.3	55.4	44.6
Post graduate equivalent & above	59.0	41.0	64.5	35.5	55.8	44.2	63.7	36.3

Table 6.3 shows the gender proportion of the population who have completed different levels of education in three minority religions: Jainism, Baha'i, and Sikhism.

Within the three minority religions, the percent of Sikh men who have completed all educational levels (from pre-school to post-graduate and beyond) is higher than the percent of Sikh women who have completed the same educational levels. The Sikh population also has a higher number of men (57.4%) than women (42.3%) (NPHC, 2021), which could be one reason for the greater existing male-female disparity in the attainments of different educational levels. In a similar pattern, there are more men (51.7%) in the Jain population in Nepal, as per the 2021 census data (NPHC, 2021). On the other hand, more Jain women than men have completed primary education, lower secondary level education, and have finished the SLC/SEE and similar levels. However, there is a wider disparity in the completion of the graduate and post-graduate levels between Jain women and men. Specifically, fewer Jain women than Jain men have finished the post-SLC/SEE educational levels: intermediate, graduate, and post-graduate degrees.

According to the 2021 census, the Baha'i religion, despite its smaller population of 537 people in Nepal, has the highest proportion of women adherents (56.4%) among the ten religions listed by the 2021 census (NPHC, 2021). The proportion of Baha'i women who have completed early childhood education, upper secondary, and SLC/S.E.E. is higher than Baha'i men in the same educational levels. Notably, an equal number of Baha'i men and women have completed lower

secondary education. In addition, women significantly outnumber men in the population (5 years and above) who have completed upper secondary level, SLC/S.E. E, and intermediate levels by 10 to 18.9 percent. Nonetheless, the proportion of Baha’i women who have earned graduate degrees and post-graduate degrees and above is far lower than that of Baha’i males, with a large difference of 12 percent to the 29 percent in favour of Baha’i men.

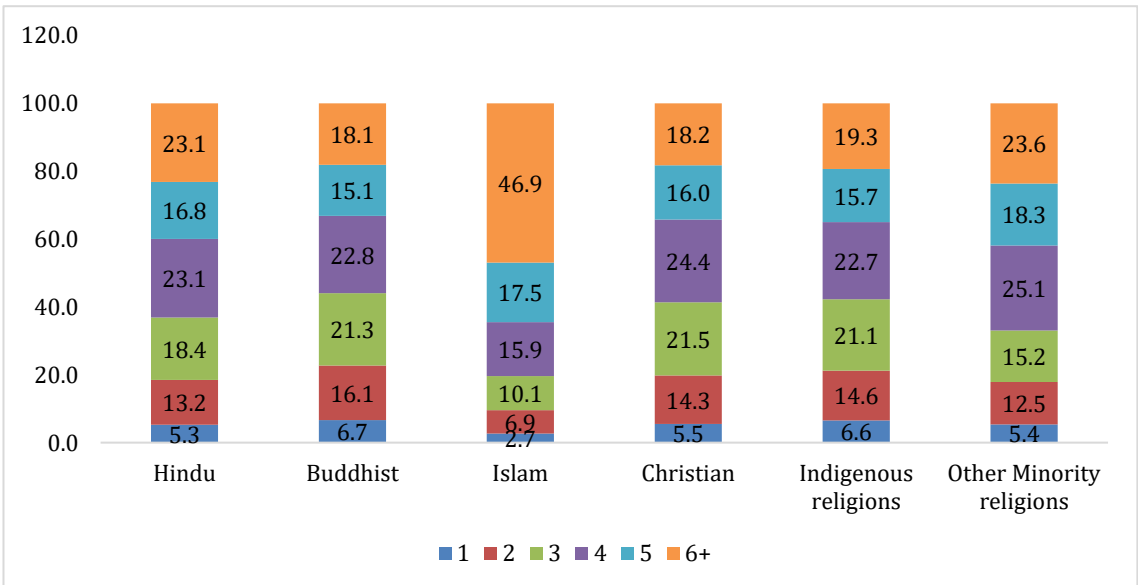
6.2 Household characteristics

6.2.1 Household size

The average household size in Nepal decreased from 5.4 persons in 1952/54 to 4.4 persons in 2021 (NSO, 2024a). It was highest (5.8) in 1981, which gradually decreased over the subsequent censuses. Economic development results in lowering fertility rates, smaller size of households, and a rise in nuclear family structure. According to Bongaarts (2001), key factors contributing to this declining household size include higher levels of urbanization, industrialization, and the enhanced education of the population.

The NPHC 2021 reveals that of the total households, 23.3 percent of the households have a household size of 6 and above, while 5.4 percent of households have only a single member household size (NSO, 2024b). Figure 6.2 reveals that 46.9 percent of Muslim households reported a household size of 6 and above, while Buddhist (18.1%) and Christian (18.2) household sizes are seen to be lower. It is also noted that about 6.7 and 6.6 percent of Buddhist and Indigenous religion households had single member household size.

Figure 6.2: Distribution of households by household size and followers of religion, NPHC 2021

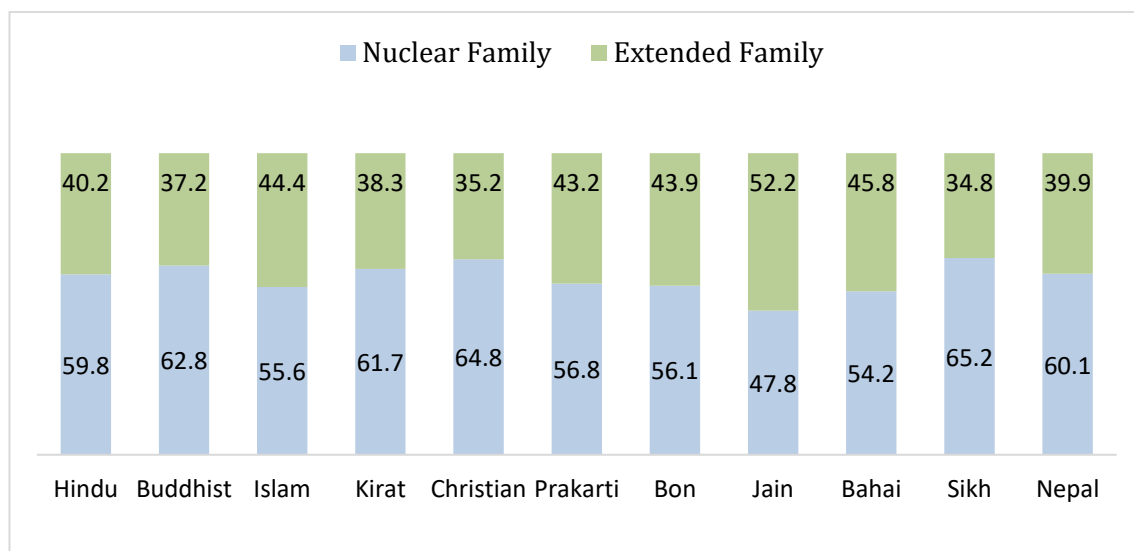


6.2.2 Family structure

The NPHC 2021 categorizes family structures into three main types: nuclear, extended, and institutional. A nuclear family may include: i) a married couple without children; ii) a married couple with one or more unmarried children; iii) a father with one or more unmarried children; iv) a mother with one or more unmarried children, and; v) a single-person household, regardless of gender. Extended families consist of households with more than two generations or multiple couples with or without children. Institutional families refer to official personnel living in designated accommodations such as offices and quarters. In this analysis, only nuclear and extended family structures are analyzed.

The NPHC 2021 recorded that 60 percent of Nepal's total households (6,666,937) are of nuclear family structure, while 40 percent are of an extended family structure (NPHC, 2023, Table 3.12, p.37). The census data on the family types (nuclear and extended) of the households by religion shows that, except for the Jain population, more than half of the households of all religious groups are nuclear families (Figure 6.3). However, the proportion of the nuclear and extended families varies across the ten religions. Compared to other religions, the proportion of the nuclear family is higher (above 60%) among Sikhs, Christians, Buddhists, and the Kirat. Followers of Jainism, Baha'i, Islam, Bon, and Prakriti have a somewhat greater percentage of extended families (over 40%) than the overall percentage of households in Nepal with extended families (Figure 6.3).

Figure 6.3: Family structure (nuclear and extended) by religion, NPHC 2021



6.3 Family structure by religion across ecological zones

The 2021 census data shows that the proportion of nuclear families among urban-dwelling Hindu, Buddhist, Muslim, Christian, Prakriti, and Baha'i households is comparatively higher than in the peri urban and rural areas. While the Jain population has a higher proportion of nuclear families in the peri urban areas, the Kirat, Bon, and Muslim populations have a higher proportion of nuclear families among those living in the rural areas (see Table 6.4). Except for the three minority religions, the proportion of the extended family is relatively higher in peri urban areas for all the religions. Jains have a higher proportion of extended family in the urban areas, while Baha'i and Sikhs have a higher proportion among those residing in households in rural areas.

By ecological belt, most households (64%) in the Mountain zone are nuclear families with an average family size of 4.33 persons in 2021 (NSO, 2023a). However, the 2021 census data shows the proportion of the households with nuclear families varies across the ten religions in Mountain zone. Christian, Buddhist, and Kirat households have a higher proportion of nuclear families, above the national average (64%), in the Mountain region.

Table 6.4: Proportion of the nuclear and extended families by religion across ecological zones and urban-rural distributions

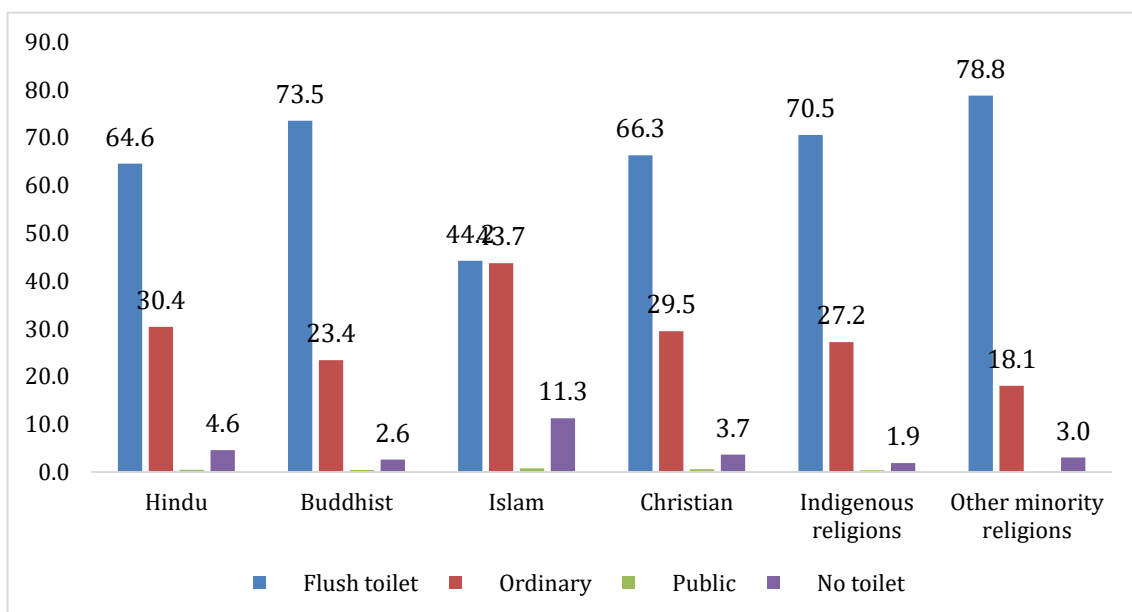
Family type	Mountain	Hill	Tarai	Urban	Peri Urban	Rural
Nepal						
Nuclear family	63.8	63.3	56.8	63.8	66.3	61.0
Extended family	36.2	36.7	43.2	36.2	43.7	39.0
Hindu						
Nuclear family	61.7	63.3	56.9	64.0	56.3	60.3
Extended family	38.3	36.7	43.1	36.0	43.7	39.7
Buddhist						
Nuclear family	68.8	63.6	55.5	64.7	57.4	63.3
Extended family	31.2	36.4	44.5	35.3	42.6	36.7
Muslim						
Nuclear family	59.6	59.1	55.4	56.3	54.9	61.6
Extended family	40.4	40.9	44.6	43.7	45.1	38.4
Kirat						
Nuclear family	68.3	62.1	57.1	61.7	56.8	62.9
Extended family	31.7	37.9	42.9	38.3	43.2	37.1
Christian						
Nuclear family	70.9	67.2	60.4	67.8	61.2	64.8
Extended family	29.1	32.8	39.6	32.2	38.8	35.2

Family type	Mountain	Hill	Tarai	Urban	Peri Urban	Rural
Prakriti						
Nuclear family	68.3	57.0	55.7	59.4	56.1	56.6
Extended family	31.7	43.0	44.3	40.6	43.9	43.4
Bon						
Nuclear family	53.4	57.3	47.8	54.5	52.4	57.6
Extended family	46.6	42.7	52.2	45.5	47.6	42.4
Jain						
Nuclear family	0.0	48.3	47.5	46.1	58.1	57.1
Extended family	0.0	51.7	52.5	53.9	41.9	42.9
Baha'i						
Nuclear family	0.0	67.9	51.3	60.0	53.5	50.0
Extended family	100.0	32.1	48.7	40.0	46.5	50.0
Sikh						
Nuclear family	0.0	70.2	63.4	64.1	67.3	50.0
Extended family	100.0	29.8	36.6	35.9	32.7	50.0

6.4 Toilet facility

The findings of the 2021 census reveal that 64.6 percent households from Hindu and 73.5 percent of households from Buddhists, the three minority religions, and Indigenous religions have flush toilet facilities, whereas only 44 percent of Muslim households have such a facility. The findings of NPHC 2021 also show that 43.7 percentage of Islam households have ordinary toilet facilities, the highest proportion among the ten religions. Similarly, Muslims have the highest proportion of households (11%) without any toilet facility across all the ten religions which is highest proportion among religions. Hence, in terms of the toilet facility by religion, Muslim households are the most deprived groups. In other words, the findings show that a higher proportion of Muslim households lacked toilet facilities and were using ordinary toilet facilities across all religions in Nepal at the time of the 2021 census. Similarly, the NPHC 2021 finds that 4.6 percent of Hindu households have no toilet facilities. It is very likely that many of these households belong to the Dalit households, as shown in the Thematic Report (NSO, 2024b; see Annex 9).

Figure 6.4: Distribution of households by toilet facilities, NPHC 2021



The NPHC 2021 found that more than 80 percent of households from religions except for Islam and Prakrit religions in urban areas contain flush toilets. Among the households from the Jain religion of peri-urban place of residence, only 27 percent have flush toilets whereas 57 percent in rural, and 95 percent in urban areas. The findings of NPHC 2021 indicate that more households (11.3%) from the Islam religion are deprived of the basic facilities of toilets.

Table 6.5: Distribution of households by type of toilet facility, religion and urban-rural, NPHC 2021

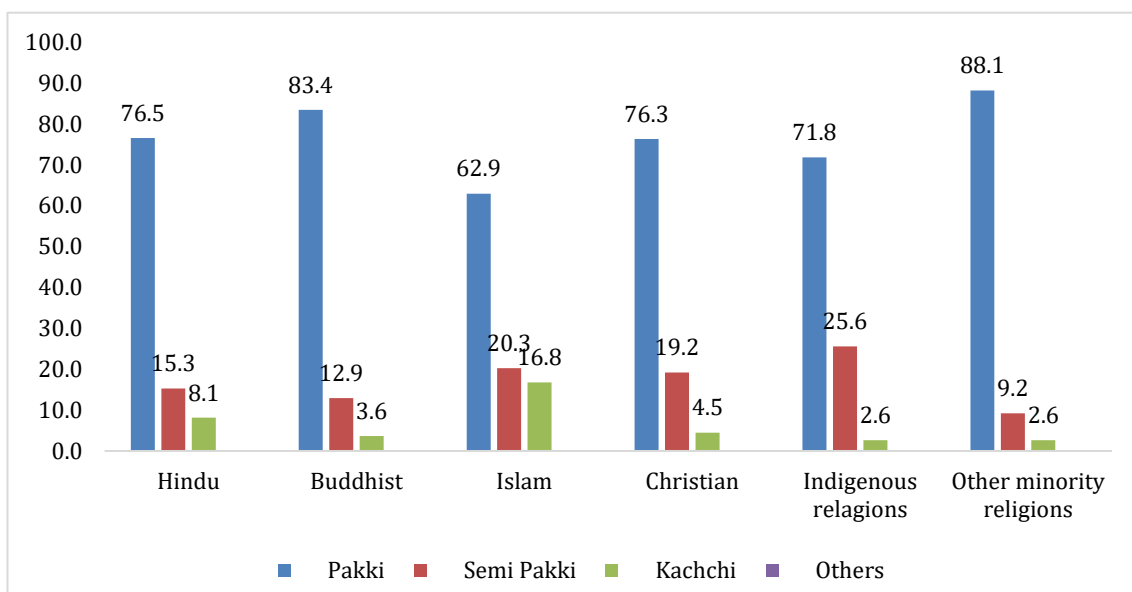
Urban/Rural areas and type of toilet facility	Religion										Total
	Hindu	Buddhist	Islam	Kirat	Christian	Prakriti	Bon	Jain	Baha'i	Sikh	
Nepal											
Flush toilet	64.6	73.5	44.2	70.0	66.3	66.8	82.6	86.3	56.3	77.3	4,321,490
Ordinary	30.4	23.4	43.7	27.9	29.5	29.2	15.6	13.1	42.3	15.2	2,005,480
Public	0.5	0.4	0.8	0.3	0.6	0.4	1.0	0.0	0.7	0.0	32,381
No toilet	4.6	2.6	11.3	1.8	3.7	3.7	0.8	0.6	0.7	7.5	301,490
Total	5,412,814	598,372	248,947	230,101	128,666	23,693	17,262	496	142	348	6,660,841
Urban											
Flush toilet	81.6	86.6	58.4	82.8	80.2	75.7	93.0	95.3	80.0	92.3	1,574,171
Ordinary	16.5	12.7	34.2	16.3	18.6	22.8	6.8	4.7	20.0	7.7	326,884
Public	0.3	0.3	0.6	0.4	0.5	0.4	0.1	0.0	0.0	0.0	6,750
No toilet	1.6	0.4	6.7	0.5	0.7	1.2	0.1	0.0	0.0	0.0	31,196

Urban/Rural areas and type of toilet facility	Religion										Total
	Hindu	Buddhist	Islam	Kirat	Christian	Prakriti	Bon	Jain	Baha'i	Sikh	
Total	15,87,467	181,509	76,457	45,186	41,441	2,695	3,599	427	25	195	193,9001
Peri-urban											
Flush toilet	49.8	65.5	37.8	58.7	57.9	48.3	86.1	27.4	48.5	58.5	1,213,504
Ordinary	41.2	31.8	47.9	39.0	37.4	46.1	13.5	67.7	49.5	25.2	1,001,372
Public	0.7	0.6	0.8	0.4	0.7	0.8	0.2	0.0	1.0	0.0	16,404
No toilet	8.3	2.2	13.4	1.8	3.9	4.8	0.3	4.8	1.0	16.3	200,799
Total	2,092,528	95,516	161,685	38,978	34,396	5,855	2,811	62	101	147	2,432,079
Rural											
Flush toilet	66.8	68.6	39.9	69.1	60.8	72.4	78.2	57.1	68.8	50.0	1,533,815
Ordinary	30.1	27.0	48.7	28.4	32.8	23.7	19.1	42.9	31.3	16.7	677,224
Public	0.4	0.5	0.7	0.3	0.6	0.2	1.5	0.0	0.0	0.0	9,227
No toilet	2.8	4.0	10.7	2.2	5.8	3.7	1.1	0.0	0.0	33.3	69,495
Total	1,732,819	321,347	10,805	145,937	52,829	15,143	10,852	7	16	6	2,289,761

6.5 Housing unit and land

A housing unit is one basic need of human beings and an indicator of a family's well-being. Hence, the housing unit and its various characteristics are recorded for planning and policy purposes by different agencies, including the National Statistics Office in Nepal (NSO, 2024b). Nepal's recent censuses have categorized the types of housing units into *Pakki* (permanent), *Ardha pakki* (semi-permanent), *Kachchi* (temporary), and 'Other' (temporary housing units made with non-durable materials) based on the main materials used in walls and roofs of the housing unit (NSO, 2024b, p:22-23). The NPHC 2021 finds that more than a quarter (76.5 percent) of the total households in Nepal are Pakki housing, and the number of Pakki housing units has doubled in the last ten years, during the 2011 and 2021 censuses (NSO, 2024b, p:22). The NPCP thematic report (2024) on housing and household dynamics reveals that the types of such housing units vary across the ecological zones, provinces, urban-rural municipalities and along Nepal's caste and ethnic groups (see NSO, 2024b). However, the report does not include the findings on the housing types by the religions in Nepal.

Figure 6.5: Ownership of housing unit and land by religion, NPHC 2021



The NPHC 2021 shows most of the households, ranging between 62 percent to 88 percent, live in Pakki households across all ten religions. However, there is a difference in the types of ownership of housing units by religion. Most households (88%) belonging to families of other minority religions such as Jain, Baha’i, and Sikh are Pakki households. Jains have the highest proportion (94%) of Pakki households in all religions, compared to 63 percent of the Pakki households among Muslim families, the lowest among all ten religions. Similarly, Muslims have the highest proportion of families living in Kachchi and ‘others’ type households. Of all the families by religion, families belonging to Indigenous religions have the highest proportion of (25.6%) semi-pakki households, followed by Islam (20.3%) and Christian (19.2%).

In contrast, only 2.6 percent of the families belonging to other minority religions owned Kachchi housing units, while 16.8 percent of the Muslim families, the largest proportion of families across all households by religion, lived in Kachchi households. It was also found that 8.1 percent of Hindu households had Kachchi housing units. This higher percentage of the Kachchi Hindu households also includes 33.6 percentage of Madhesi Dalits and 3.5 percent of Hill Dalits Kachchi households (NSO, 2024b). In addition, more than 90 percent of Hill and Madhesh Dalits are followers of Hinduism.

6.6 Female property ownership

The capability to own property, including houses and land, is a crucial aspect of women’s empowerment. Significant progress has been made in recent years to strengthen women’s property rights in Nepal. In 2015, the government introduced a 25-50 percent discount on land

registration fees when land is registered under a woman's name (Landlinks, 2018). Additionally, the civil code enacted in 2018 grants daughters the right to retain their share of their parent's property even after marriage. Furthermore, divorced women are entitled to their husband's share of the property if the divorce is deemed to be due to the fault of the husband.

Table 6.6: Distribution of households among female property ownership by religion, ecological zone, provinces, and urban-rural, NPHC 2021

Area	Hindu	Buddhist	Islam	Kirat	Christian	Prakriti	Bon	Others	Total
Nepal	83.4	8.0	3.2	3.1	1.7	0.3	0.3	0.0	1,588,968
Province									
Koshi	74.2	7.8	2.4	12.9	2.1	0.5	0.0	0.0	100.0
Madhesh	87.0	2.4	10.3	0.1	0.2	0.0	0.0	0.0	100.0
Bagmati	79.4	16.2	0.3	1.3	2.6	0.1	0.1	0.0	100.0
Gandaki	84.2	10.9	0.6	0.1	2.0	0.5	1.8	0.0	100.0
Lumbini	90.9	2.9	4.1	0.0	1.3	0.6	0.2	0.0	100.0
Karnali	93.8	3.3	0.2	0.0	2.4	0.2	0.0	0.0	100.0
Sudurpashchim	96.8	1.0	0.1	0.0	1.9	0.1	0.0	0.0	100.0
Ecological belt									
Mountain	61.9	24.8	0.0	10.8	2.3	0.1	0.2	0.0	100.0
Hill	80.5	12.4	0.4	3.5	2.2	0.4	0.5	0.0	100.0
Tarai	86.7	3.8	5.5	2.3	1.3	0.2	0.1	0.0	100.0
Urban/rural									
Urban	83.9	8.6	2.7	2.6	1.8	0.2	0.2	0.0	100.0
Peri-urban	86.6	4.4	5.3	1.8	1.4	0.3	0.2	0.0	100.0
Rural	76.7	13.4	0.5	6.1	2.2	0.6	0.5	0.0	100.0

The NPHC 2021 findings show that only 23.8 percent of the total 6,660,841 households were found to have female ownership of land, houses, or land and houses. Between 2001 and 2021, the proportion of households with female ownership of houses rose from 0.9 percent to 2.3 percent. Female ownership of land increased from 6.2 percent to 9.7 percent, while ownership of both houses and land grew from 4.7 percent to 11.8 percent. However, by 2021, most households (74.6%) still did not show any female ownership of land or housing (NSO, 2024b).

Among households with female property ownership, 83.4 percent of women belonged to the Hindu religion, followed by Buddhists (8.0%), Muslims (3.2%), Kirat followers (3.1%), and Christians (1.7%). This highlights a higher proportion of female property ownership among Hindu women. However, compared to the national population distribution, women from Buddhist and Muslim communities were less likely to own property compared to their Hindu counterparts. Property ownership also varies significantly across provinces and religions.

CHAPTER 7

ECONOMIC CHARACTERISTICS

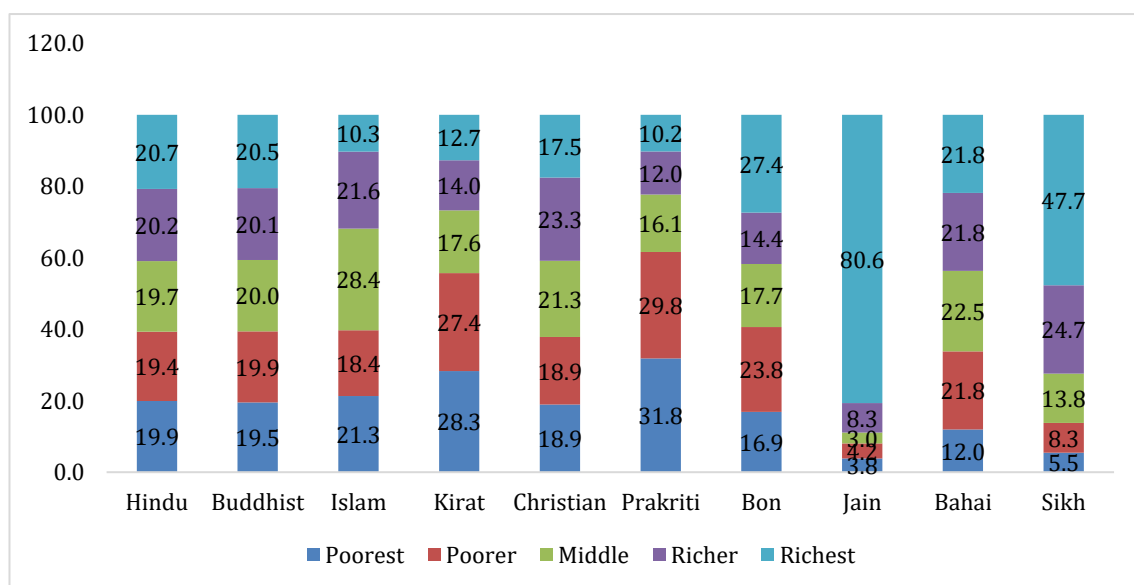
This chapter examines the NPHC 2021 data on the economic characteristics of the followers of 10 religions in terms of wealth quintile, economically active population, labor force participation, occupation, and involvement in small-scale industry.

7.1 Wealth quintile

Households are grouped into wealth quintiles based on a set of basic criteria. Factors such as housing structure (e.g., foundation, floor, outer walls, and number of rooms), source of drinking water, cooking fuel, lighting, and type of toilet facilities are considered. In addition, the availability of assets such as telephones (landline and mobile), vehicles, refrigerators, televisions, computers, and internet services also contribute to determining a household's wealth quintile. Wealth quintiles divide households into five equal groups, ranked from the poorest to the wealthiest. This classification is useful for analyzing economic disparities and understanding inequality among households. The wealth quintiles presented here are calculated using data from the 2021 National Population and Housing Census (NPHC).

Figure 7.1 shows that households from the followers of Jainism had the highest proportion (80.6%) of the richest category than other religions. Similarly, households of the followers of Hindu and Buddhism have almost equal 20 percent households in all five categories of wealth quintile. Followers of Islam, Kirat, and Prakriti have the lowest proportion of the richest category (10% of each religion) among the followers of the ten religions.

It is observed that household of the followers of Prakriti (31.8%), Kirat (28.3%) and Islam (21.3%) fall into lowest category in wealth quintile. The variation of households between the followers of different religious group indicates an association between religion and socio-economic marginalization in Nepal.

Figure 7.1: Distribution of households by wealth quintile and religion, NPHC 2021

7.2 Economic active population

The 2021 census collected information on the economic activities of the population aged 10 years and above by classifying them into economically active, usually economically active and employed persons that are defined as follows:

- **Economically active persons:** Persons aged 10 years and above who are engaged in economic activities.
- **Economic activity:** An economic activity is a process based on inputs, leads to the manufacture of a good or the provision of a service.
- **Economically active population:** All persons above a specified age who furnish the supply of labour to produce economic goods and services (employed and unemployed, including those seeking work for the first time) during a specified time reference period.
- **Employment:** Persons in employment are those of working age who, during a short reference period, were engaged in any activity to produce goods or provide services for pay or profit. They comprise employed persons “at work”, “not at work” due to temporary absence from a job, or to working-time arrangements.

The NPHC 2021 found that, among the total 23.9 million (23,958,868) population aged 10 years and above, around - one third (34.3%) were considered to be not economically active population. Of the total Hindu population, similar types of trends have been found in economic

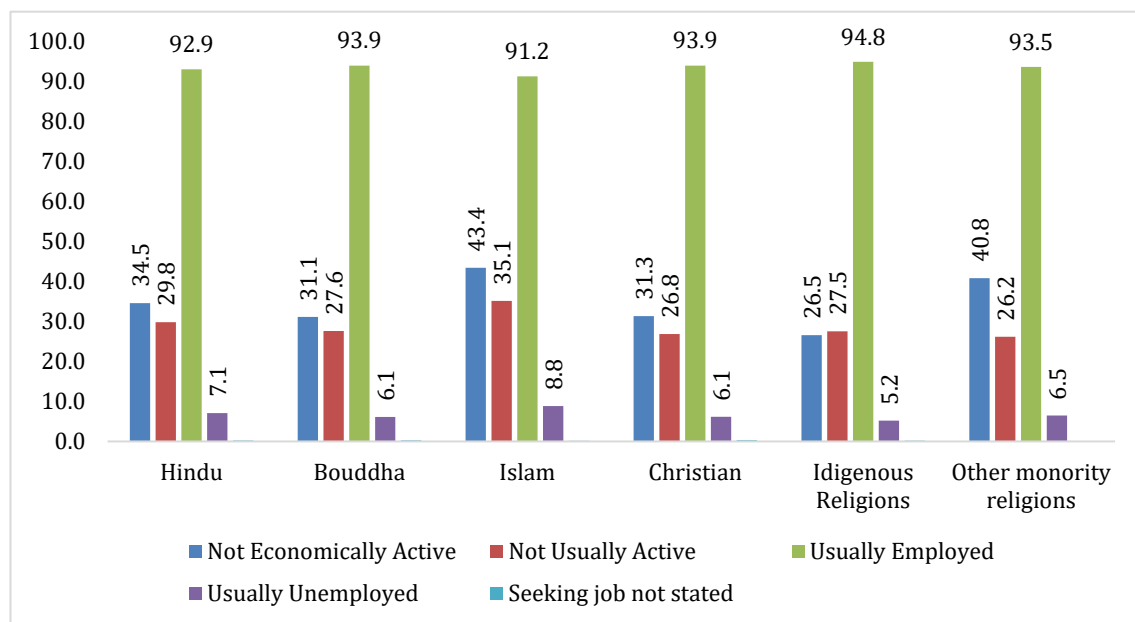
activities at per with the national level. Table 7.1 shows that 44.1 percent of Jain are 'not economically active', followed by Islam (43.4%), Sikh (41.5%), Hindu (34.5%) and least from Baha'i (23.4%) religion. Of the total usually active population (10 years and above), 93.0 percent were 'usually employed' as they were engaged in economic activities for six months or more or had worked three to five months during the last 12 months. More than ninety five percent of the total Kirat and Baha'i population were usually employed.

Table 7.1: Distribution of 10 years and above population by economic activity status in the past 12 months, NPHC 2021

Religion	Count/ %	Total population (10 years and above)	Economic activities				
			Economically not active	Economically active population		Seeking job not stated	
				Usually not active	Usually active		
				Usually employed	Usually unemployed		
Total	Count	23958868	8211012	4651672	10270447	767658	58079
	%		34.3	29.6	93.0	7.0	0.2
Hindu	Count	19488172	6727408	3787147	8293778	631831	48008
	%		34.5	29.8	92.9	7.1	0.2
Bouddha	Count	2026236	629937	383521	945659	61762	5357
	%		31.1	27.6	93.9	6.1	0.3
Islam	Count	1095032	474843	216981	366156	35494	1558
	%		43.4	35.1	91.2	8.8	0.1
Kirat	Count	776610	198924	155192	401108	20735	651
	%		25.6	26.9	95.1	4.9	0.1
Christian	Count	425948	133294	78170	200074	13100	1310
	%		31.3	26.8	93.9	6.1	0.3
Prakriti	Count	84468	24234	18265	39091	2410	468
	%		28.7	30.6	94.2	5.8	0.6
Bon	Count	58511	20785	11794	22991	2216	725
	%		35.5	31.9	91.2	8.8	1.2
Jain	Count	2142	945	322	799	74	2
	%		44.1	26.9	91.5	8.5	0.1
Bahai	Count	461	108	91	251	11	0
	%		23.4	25.8	95.8	4.2	0.0
Shikh	Count	1288	534	189	540	25	0
	%		41.5	25.1	95.6	4.4	0.0

Figure 7.2 shows that 94.8 percent of followers of Indigenous religions are in 'usually employed status' whereas 91.2 percent of followers of Islam fall in usually employed category. About less than 10 percent of the usually active populations in across the followers 10 religions are usually unemployed.

Figure 7.2: Distribution of 10 years and above population by economic activity status in the past 12 months, NPHC 2021



There is a marked gender difference in the involvement in economic activities across the ten religions. For instance, about 58 percent of women from other minority religions are not economically active, followed by Islam (53.6%) and Indigenous religions (29.4%). In terms of usually employed women, of the total economically active Hindu population, 91.8 percent of women were usually employed, whereas only 85.4 percent of women from Islam were employed. Overall, men are more in each religion (except Buddha and Indigenous religions) usually employed than women (Table 7.2).

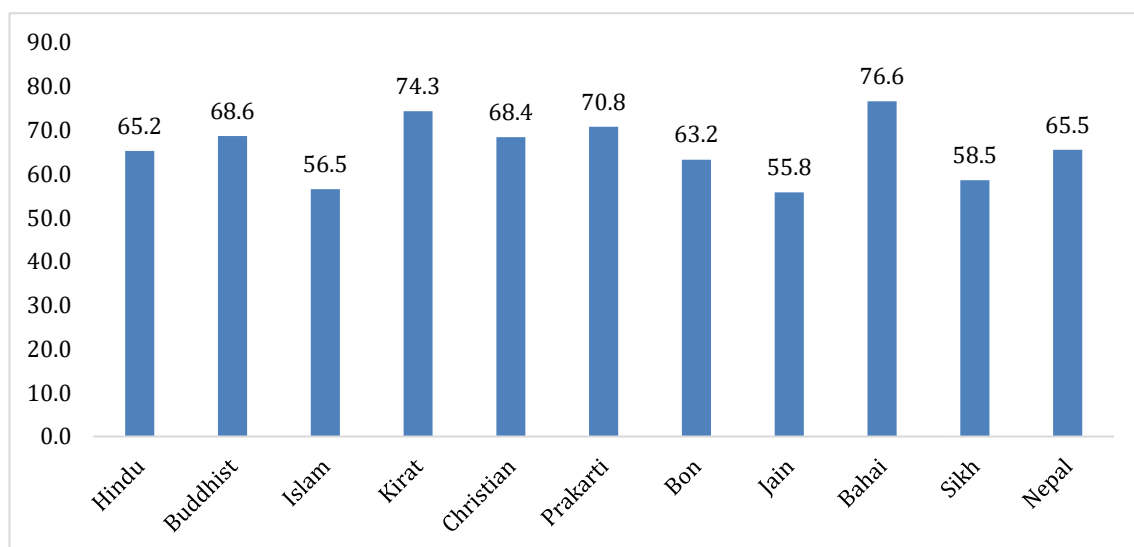
Table 7.2: Distribution of population by religion, gender, and economic activity in the past 12 months, NPHC 2021

Religion		Total	Hindu	Bouddha	Islam	Christian	Indigenous religions	Other minority religions			
Total Population 10 and above 10 years	Total	23958868	19488172	2026236	1095032	425948	919589	3891			
	Male	11519621	9374714	970173	534470	195857	442363	2044			
	Female	12439247	10113458	1056063	560562	230091	477226	1847			
Economic activities	Not economically active	Total	8211012	6727408	629937	474843	133294	243943	1587		
		Male (%)	28.6	28.8	27.2	32.6	26.6	23.5	25.5		
		Female (%)	39.5	39.8	34.6	53.6	35.3	29.4	57.7		
	Economically active population	Not usually active	Total	4651672	3787147	383521	216981	78170	185251	602	
			Male (%)	21.4	21.3	21.8	20.9	20.0	22.8	12.2	
			Female (%)	38.7	39.1	33.5	54.7	33.5	32.2	53.3	
		Usually active	Usually employed	Total	10270447	8293778	945659	366156	200074	463190	1590
				Male (%)	93.8	93.7	93.7	93.5	94.3	94.5	95.5
				Female (%)	92.0	91.8	94.0	85.4	93.3	95.1	86.3
	Usually unemployed		Total	767658	631831	61762	35494	13100	25361	110	
			Male (%)	6.2	6.3	6.3	6.5	5.7	5.5	4.5	
			Female (%)	8.0	8.2	6.0	14.6	6.7	4.9	13.7	
	Seeking job not stated	Total	58079	48008	5357	1558	1310	1844	2		
		Male (%)	0.2	0.2	0.2	0.1	0.3	0.2	0.0		
		Female (%)	0.3	0.3	0.3	0.1	0.3	0.2	0.1		

7.3 Labor force participation

Figure 7.3 exhibits that 65.6 percent of 10 years above population participated in labor force of the country’s total 10 years and above population. Followers of Baha’i are observed to have the highest rate of participation, accounting for 76.6 percent. The followers of Indigenous religions such as Kirat (74.3%) and Prakriti (70.8%) are in the significant proportion of the labor force participation. The rate of labor force participation among the followers of Jainism (55.5%), Islam (56.5%) and Sikhism (58.5%) are less likely to other religious groups of Nepal.

Figure 7.3: Distribution of 10 years above followers of religion by labor force participation, NPHC 2021



7.4 Occupation and religion

Table 7.3 presents the occupations of the population following the ten religions in 2021. It indicates that the occupational engagements of the population who follow the ten major religions vary and diverge from the national pattern of the percentage of occupations of Nepal's economically active population in 2021 (NSO, 2024a, Table 38, p. 485).

For instance, according to the NPHC 2021, half of Nepal's economically active population was engaged as skilled workers in agriculture, forestry, and fishery. Nonetheless, when considering the economically active population by religious affiliation, only Buddhists and adherents of the three indigenous religions – Kirat, Prakriti, and Bon – have a higher share of the population (50 percent and above) as skilled workers in agriculture, forestry, and fishery. Out of all ten religions, Kirat adherents make up the largest percent (71%) of those who work in this occupation. In contrast, only 2.6 of Jains were engaged in this occupation. Slightly more than half of the Jain population were involved in two occupations: managers and service and sales workers. Jain has the highest percent of adherents (29%) working as managers than other religions. In a similar pattern, only 7.7 percent of Sikhs are involved as skilled agricultural, forestry, and fishery workers. Besides the elementary occupation, more Sikhs are involved in three occupations: service and sales, managers, and plant and machine operators/assemblers. Of the ten religions, Sikhs had the highest percentage of followers working as plant and machine operators/assemblers.

The elementary occupation has the second largest share of the economically active population in all religions except Islam, where it has the highest share of people (37.5%) taking up this occupation. Of all the ten religions, Kirat had the lowest share of its adherents following the elementary occupation. However, its share of the economically active population in other occupations, such as professionals, managers, and technical professionals, is lower than that of the national percent, and that of Hindus, Buddhists, Christians, and other minority religions.

In addition to the elementary occupation and skilled workers in agriculture, forestry, and fishery, the proportion of Hindus engaged in service and sales workers, managers, craft and related workers, and professionals are relatively higher than that of the national share of the economically active population in these occupations. This group also has the highest share of people in the armed forces. Buddhists show a similar pattern of occupational participation to that of Hindus. However, compared to Hindus, a comparatively smaller percentage of Buddhists are employed as professionals and in the armed forces. Christians also have a relatively higher share of the economically active population in service and sales works, professionals, managers, and office assistants than Kirat, Islam, and Prakriti followers.

Out of the ten religions, Islam had the largest percentage of adherents (12.5%) working in crafts and associated trades, followed by Christians (8.8%) and Sikhs (8.6%) who follow this occupation. In 2021, out of the 5,76,125 economically active-age Muslim population, only 212 were working in the armed forces. Similarly, less than one percent of the Muslim population works as clerical support workers and technical and associate professionals.

Table 7.3: Distribution of population aged 10 years of followers of religion and major occupation group, NPHC 2021

Major occupation group	Religion										
	Nepal	Hindu	Buddhist	Islam	Kirat	Christian	Prakriti	Bon	Jain	Baha'i	Sikh
Skilled agri., forestry and fishery workers	50.1	48.9	57.6	35.5	71.1	48.7	65.5	60.6	2.6	48.0	7.7
Elementary occupations	23	23.4	17.4	37.5	12.8	22.7	18.2	18.3	28.1	14.7	28.1
Craft and related trades workers	5.6	5.3	5.3	12.5	3.2	8.8	4.2	2.7	3.1	2.9	8.6
Service and sales workers	5.8	6.0	5.6	5.3	3.3	5.6	2.5	4.6	21.7	4.3	14.6
Clerical support workers	1.3	1.4	1.2	0.4	0.7	1.2	0.6	1.1	3.4	2.9	1.3
Technicians & associate professionals	1.9	2.0	1.6	0.8	1.1	1.6	1.0	1.4	5.6	6.1	4.7

Major occupation group	Religion										
	Nepal	Hindu	Buddhist	Islam	Kirat	Christian	Prakriti	Bon	Jain	Baha'i	Sikh
Plant and machine operators/ assemblers	2.7	2.7	3.1	2.8	1.3	3.1	1.9	2.0	1.3	2.9	11.7
Professionals	3.8	4.1	2.8	1.8	2.6	3.1	2.5	3.4	4.9	9.5	8.2
Managers	5.1	5.3	5.1	3.4	3.7	4.9	3.1	5.5	29.3	7.2	14.5
Armed forces	0.7	0.8	0.4	0.0	0.3	0.3	0.2	0.2	0.0	0.3	0.6
Don't know	-	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.1	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Not Reported	-	0.1	0.1	0.1	0.0	0.1	0.3	0.2	0.0	1.2	0.0
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

Table 7.4 shows the proportion of male and female adherents of the ten religions involved in the major occupations in 2021. The percentage of men and women by religion in each listed occupation points to both patterns of convergence and divergence from the gender distribution of Nepal's economically active people working in these occupations listed by the NPHC 2021. It shows that most economically active female followers of all other religions, except the Sikh and Jain populations, were employed as skilled workers in forestry, agriculture, and fishery sectors – this being the occupation that had the largest share of Nepal's economically active population in 2021 (NSO, 2023). In comparison, the Buddhist and the three Indigenous religions have a higher (more than 60%) proportion of the female population engaged as skilled workers in forestry, agriculture, and fishery. Similarly, a higher percentage of women worked in elementary occupations than males across all religious groups in 2021. Among them, a comparatively greater percentage of women from Islam, Jain, and Sikh religions – between 51 and 63 percent – were working in elementary jobs.

There is a noticeable gender disparity in the plant and machine operator and assembly jobs, where less than 1 percent of women of all religions – with the exception of Sikh and Baha'i – are employed. Across all ten religions, the craft and associated trade works likewise reveal a comparatively higher percentage of males than women involved. Similarly, less than 0.1 percent of women from the Hindu, Buddhist, Islamic, Christian, Prakriti, and Bon religions were employed in the armed forces at the time of the 2021 census, whereas no women from the Baha'i, Jain, or Sikh religions were employed in the armed forces in 2021. However, in contrast to other professions, the gender gap is comparatively smaller in technical and associate professional roles as well as in clerical support occupations. Compared to the female population, the proportion of the male population in professional occupations is relatively higher among the followers of Islam and Baha'i. In comparison to men, women make up a larger percentage of professionals among Sikhs, Jains, and Bon, and a slightly higher percentage among Kirat. Among those working as managers, the proportion of the male population is relatively higher than that

of the female adherents of all religions. Almost 38 percent of the Jain men, 16.4 percent of the Sikh men, and 12.5 percent of the Baha’i men were working as managers in 2021. Compared to other religious groups, the percentage of women managers was higher among Jain and Sikh followers, while it was lowest among Muslims.

Within the four religions of Islam, Hinduism, Buddhism, and Prakriti, the proportion of men outnumbers women in every occupation except for two: skilled laborers in forestry, agriculture, and fishery, and elementary occupations. On the other hand, among the followers of the Kirat religion, an equal proportion of men and women were working as technicians and associate professionals, service and sales workers, and clerical support workers. The proportion of Kirat women as professionals was slightly higher than that of Kirat men, while they also had the least gender disparity (the male-female proportion) among the professionals across the ten religions.

Table 7.4: Distribution of Population 10 years and above by occupations, gender, and religion, NPHC 2021

Types of occupation by Sex	Religions										
	Nepal	Hindu	Buddhist	Islam	Kirat	Christian	Prakriti	Bon	Jain	Baha’i	Sikh
Skilled agriculture, forestry and fishery workers											
Male	43.92	42.4	52.7	32.7	69.2	42.4	60.3	57.6	1.3	37.5	8.6
Female	56.89	56.1	62.5	39.5	73.0	54.8	70.4	63.3	5.5	56.2	4.9
Elementary occupations											
Male	19.43	19.8	15.0	27.7	11.3	19.8	17.4	16.4	12.6	11.2	17.0
Female	26.85	27.4	19.8	51.7	14.3	25.4	19.0	20.1	62.8	17.5	60.7
Craft and related trades workers											
Male	8.68	8.3	7.6	19.3	4.9	13.2	6.9	4.4	4.0	5.9	10.8
Female	2.14	2.0	2.9	2.6	1.5	4.4	1.6	1.1	1.2	0.5	2.2
Service and sales workers											
Male	7.12	7.4	6.2	7.0	3.3	6.0	2.7	5.2	27.2	4.6	17.9
Female	4.36	4.4	4.9	2.9	3.3	5.3	2.4	4.1	9.3	4.1	4.9
Clerical support workers											
Male	1.43	1.6	1.2	0.5	0.7	1.2	0.7	1.0	3.6	3.9	1.1
Female	1.19	1.3	1.2	0.2	0.7	1.2	0.5	1.1	2.9	2.1	1.6
Technicians and associate professionals											
Male	2.28	2.5	1.8	1.0	1.1	1.9	1.1	1.5	7.1	5.3	5.0
Female	1.39	1.5	1.3	0.3	1.1	1.3	0.9	1.3	2.3	6.7	3.8
Plant and machine operators & assemblers											
Male	4.85	4.9	5.7	4.5	2.4	5.9	3.7	4.0	1.5	4.6	15.3
Female	0.28	0.3	0.3	0.2	0.1	0.4	0.1	0.2	0.6	1.5	1.1
Professionals											
Male	4.34	4.7	2.9	2.5	2.5	3.4	2.7	2.5	4.6	13.2	6.9
Female	3.19	3.4	2.8	0.9	2.7	2.9	2.4	4.1	5.5	6.7	12.0

Types of occupation by Sex	Religions										
	Nepal	Hindu	Buddhist	Islam	Kirat	Christian	Prakriti	Bon	Jain	Baha'i	Sikh
Managers											
Male	6.64	6.9	6.0	4.7	4.0	5.7	3.8	6.8	37.9	12.5	16.4
Female	3.50	3.5	4.2	1.6	3.3	4.1	2.3	4.4	9.9	3.1	8.7
Armed forces											
Male	1.22	1.4	0.7	0.1	0.6	0.4	0.3	0.3	0.0	0.7	0.7
Female	0.12	0.1	0.1	0.0	0.0	0.1	0.1	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0

7.5 Small scale entrepreneurship

The NPHC 2021 collected data on small scale entrepreneurship with different categories (see Table 7.5). Table 7.5 shows that about only 9.4 percent of the total households (6,660,841) were engaged in small-scale entrepreneurship. Among the trade/business category of small-scale enterprises, the highest proportion (8.3%) of the households were from other minority religions, followed by Christian households (5.1%), Islam (5.1%), and Indigenous religions (4%).

The households from the Christian religion (3.5%) were more engaged in cottage industry enterprises than Hindu (1.9%). In the service sector, households from Christian (1.2%) had a higher proportion of engagement in small scale enterprises than other minority religions (0.7%). The findings of NPHC 2021 indicate that the two religions with fast-growing population in Nepal: Islam and Christianity, have a greater proportion of their followers in small-scale enterprises (Table 7.5).

Table 7.5: Distribution of households by small-scale enterprises and religion, NPHC 2021

Small Scale Enterprises	Hindu	Buddhist	Islam	Christianity	Indigenous religions	Other minority religions	Total
Cottage industry	1.9	2.7	2.1	3.5	3.1	2.6	137,644
Trade/business	4.7	4.6	5.1	5.1	4.0	8.3	310,851
Transportation	0.5	0.5	0.6	0.7	0.4	0.8	34,656
Service	1.1	1.0	1.0	1.2	0.9	0.7	69,177
Others	1.1	1.1	1.6	1.3	1.1	1.6	75,559
No small-scale business	90.4	89.7	89.2	87.7	90.3	85.5	6,011,349
Not reported	0.3	0.3	0.4	0.4	0.3	0.4	21,605
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	6,660,841

CHAPTER 8

RELIGIOUS DIVERSITY

This chapter provides an analysis of Nepal's religious diversity by examining the data across multiple forms, including provincial, ecological, urban-rural place of residence, and at the household level. By exploring religious diversity from these various dimensions, the analysis aims to offer a comprehensive understanding of how different regions, ecology, and living conditions influence the religious diversity of the country. The robust analysis reveals that religious diversity is present at every level in Nepal, from the national scale down to individual households. The 2021 census analysis highlights regional differences, such as variations in diversity between urban and rural areas or across ecological zones (Mountain, Hill, and Tarai eco-zones), indicating that religious diversity is not uniform but shaped by geographic, cultural, and social factors. Understanding these patterns provides insights into the dynamics of religious pluralism in Nepal and its impact on social harmony and cultural identity at both local and national levels.

8.1 Religious diversity index (RDI)

In this report, the religious diversity of a spatial unit such as the ecological zone and provinces is assessed using the Religious Diversity Index (RDI) developed by the Pew Research Center (2014). The difference between the percent of the largest and the second largest and other religions of a country or other spatial unit becomes important in assessing the RDI value. It should be emphasized that the RDI index does not reflect the diversity of the existing religious practices in Nepal's ecological zones.

Table 8.1: Proportion of the size of ten religions in the total population and the religious diversity in ecological zones and provinces

Ecological Zone	RDI	Hindu	Buddhist	Islam	Kirat	Christian	Prakriti	Bon	Jain	Sikh	Baha'i
Mountain	4.4	71.8	18.27	0.07	8.1	1.49	0.1	0.17	0.0	0.0	0.0
Hill	3.7	77.8	13.5	0.6	4.5	2.4	0.6	0.5	0.0	0.0	0.0
Tarai	2.7	84.8	3.1	9.0	1.6	1.3	0.2	0.1	0.0	0.0	0.0
Provinces											
Koshi	5.1	64.7	8.7	4.2	16.8	2.3	0.4	0.04	0.02	0.0	0.0
Madhesh	2.7	84.2	2.2	13.3	0.1	0.2	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Bagmati	4.3	72.0	22.3	0.8	1.3	3.9	0.2	0.1	0.0	0.0	0.0
Gandaki	3.1	82.2	11.5	0.9	0.1	2.4	0.7	2.2	0.0	0.0	0.0

Ecological Zone	RDI	Hindu	Buddhist	Islam	Kirat	Christian	Prakriti	Bon	Jain	Sikh	Baha'i
Lumbini	2.1	88.3	1.2	7.4	0.01	1.1	0.9	0.1	0.0	0.02	0.0
Karnali	1.01	94.7	3.2	0.2	0	1.7	0.2	0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Sudurpashchim	0.5	97.4	0.8	0.26	0.01	1.4	0.1	0.01	0.0	0.0	0.0

Mountain region: Nepal's Mountain region, despite its low population size (6.1 % of the national population), has the highest level of religious diversity among the three ecological zones. The Mountain region has an RDI value of 4.7, which is the highest value in the three ecological zones. In comparison to the Hill and Tarai zones, the difference in the share of the percentage of the largest religion (Hindu) and that of the second largest and other important religions is lower in the Mountain region.

Hill region: The Hill region is home to 40.3 percent of Nepal's total population. The size of the followers of all religions, including the three minority religions, is higher in the Hill zone compared to the Mountain region. However, the higher number of adherents of other religions – namely Buddhism, Islam, Christianity, and Indigenous religions – in the Hill than in the Mountain zone contributes to its religious diversity. The RDI value of the hill region is 3.7. Compared to the Mountain region, the difference in proportion between the largest religion (Hinduism), the second largest, and other major religions is relatively higher in the Hill zone.

Tarai region: The RDI value of the Tarai region is 2.7, indicating that the difference in population size between the largest religion and that of the second and other regions is highest in all the ecological zones.

Table 8.1 shows that the state of religious diversity varies among the seven provinces. Based on the Religious Diversity Index (RDI) developed by the Pew Research Center (2014), Koshi Province has a higher degree of religious diversity than the other six provinces. Bagmati and Gandaki are the next two most religiously diverse provinces, followed by Lumbini, Madhesh, Karnali, and Sudurpashchim provinces.

8.2 Religious diversity at household level

The results of the 2021 census show that there is religious diversity at the sub-national level, including provincial, and ecological zone. The 2021 census revealed that households in Bagmati Province had the highest proportion (3%) of multiple religions within a single household, while Madhesh Province reported only 0.4 of the households having multiple religions within. Both Bagmati and Gandaki provinces have over 1 percent of households with family members following more than one religion, whereas Lumbini, Karnali, and Sudurpashchim provinces have less than 1 percent of such households.

In terms of ecological zones, households in the Hill zone show the highest proportion of multiple religions, with 2.2 percent, followed by 1.8 percent in the Mountain and 1.1 percent in the Tarai. This indicates that religious diversity at the household level is more in practice in the Hill and Mountain regions, where households are more likely to include members practicing different religions. The religious landscape at the household level in these zones reflects the broader cultural and ethnic diversity that characterizes the Hill and Mountain regions. These areas, historically known for their varied ethnic groups and traditional practices, are also home to a wide range of religious beliefs, leading to greater inter-religious interaction within families.

As expected, urban areas show greater religious diversity compared to rural setting households. According to the classification by the NSO, a peri-urban category was introduced alongside urban and rural places of residence. The 2021 Census revealed that 2.2 percent of households in urban areas have members following more than one religion, while this figure stands at 1 percent for peri-urban areas. These results suggest that both urban and rural areas are gradually experiencing an increase in households with multiple religions.

Table 8.2: Distribution of households by diversity of religion at province, ecological zone, and urban-rural, NPHC 2021

Household Characterises	HH with solo/single religion	HHs with more than one religion	Total
Nepal	98.4	1.6	6,666,937
Provinces			
Koshi	97.4	2.6	1,191,556
Madhesh	99.6	0.4	1,156,715
Bagmati	97.1	2.9	1,570,927
Gandaki	98.5	1.5	662,480
Lumbini	99.1	0.9	1,141,902
Karnali	99.2	0.8	366,255
Sudurpashchim	99.3	0.7	577,102
Ecological Zone			
Mountain	98.2	1.8	409,799
Hill	97.8	2.2	2,949,056
Tarai	98.9	1.1	3,308,082
Urban/rural			
Urban	97.8	2.2	1,942,599
Peri-urban	99.0	1.0	2,433,241
Rural	98.3	1.7	2,291,097

8.3 Religious affiliation of the household head and religious diversity at the household level

An analysis of religious diversity at the household level by the religious affiliation of the household head in the 2021 census reveals that members of Baha'i religion households are the most likely to follow more than one religion, followed by those in Jain, Sikh, and Christian-headed households, with the lowest diversity seen in Muslim households. The census data shows that 23 percent of individuals in Baha'i households also practice Hinduism, while 0.8 percent follow Kirat, and 0.3 percent reported Buddhism. Similarly, 13 percent of members of Jain households follow Hinduism, 0.5 percent practice Islam, and 0.2 percent follow Buddhism. This indicates a notable religious diversity across various faiths within households in Nepal.

Table 8.3: Religious diversity at household level, NPHC 2021

HH head religion	Hindu	Buddhist	Islam	Kirat	Christian	Prakriti	Bon	Jain	Baha'i	Sikh	Total
Hindu	99.6	0.2	0.0	0.0	0.1	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	100.0
Buddhism	2.2	97.5	0.0	0.2	0.2	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	100.0
Islam	0.3	0.0	99.7	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	100.0
Kirat	1.6	0.6	0.0	97.6	0.2	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	100.0
Christianity	7.1	1.0	0.0	0.4	91.5	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	100.0
Prakriti	2.0	0.2	0.0	0.1	0.1	97.6	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	100.0
Bon	1.0	0.3	0.0	0.1	0.1	0.0	98.5	0.0	0.0	0.0	100.0
Jainism	13.2	0.2	0.5	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	86.0	0.0	0.0	100.0
Baha'i	22.6	0.3	0.0	0.8	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	76.2	0.0	100.0
Sikhism	7.5	0.2	0.7	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	91.5	100.0
	81.2	8.2	5.1	3.2	1.8	0.3	0.2	0.0	0.0	0.0	100.0

8.4 Socio-economic correlates and religion

A logistic regression statistical model is used to identify religious diversity at the household level. One of the main applications of logistic regression is to determine or forecast the chance of the occurrence of a particular outcome of the response variable based on independent or explanatory variables by fitting a given data to a logit function. In this analysis, all 12 household-level variables are introduced in the regression equation to know the factors for the presence of multi-religious households.

Among the variables introduced in the regression equation, caste/ethnicity is the most influential factor to multiple religions in the households. The multiple regression analysis depicts that religious diversity was 9 times more likely to be found in the Mountain/Hill Janajati

households [OR=8.86] than the Hill caste groups. Similarly, Hill Dalit-headed households are 4 times more likely [OR=3.96] to have multiple religions in their households. It is also found that households of Tarai Janajati are almost 4 times more likely to have more than one religion in the households. The households from the Tarai Madhesh caste group are found to be less likely to have multiple religions at the households. The findings of the regression analysis indicate that caste/ethnicity of households is the main dimension of the religious diversity of religion at the household level.

In the case of the type of family, households of the extended family are almost 2.5 half times [OR=2.47] more likely to have multiple religions than nuclear family households. As examining the provincial level, the households from the provincial also indicate the diversity of religion. Households from Koshi Province were almost 2 times more likely [OR=1.83] to have multiple religions than Sudurpashchim Province at the household level. Similarly, households from Bagmati Province were 1.5 [OR=1.54] times more likely to have more than one religion in a household than those from Sudurpashchim Province. The diversity of religion at the household level is found in all provinces, but the degree of diversity is different at the province level.

The logistic regression indicates that the wealth index of the households also affects their religious diversity. It was found that households of the poorest, poorer, and middle categories were more likely to have religious diversity than the richer and richest categories of households. Similarly, Households from urban areas (place of residence) and women-headed households also correlate with religious diversity. Households with migrant household heads and those headed by disabled persons were more likely to have religious diversity than non-migrant and non-disabled. Educational attainment, absentee status, and occupation of the household head are also influential factors for the religious diversity at the household level.

Table 8.4: Logistic regression analysis of social, economic demographic correlates of religious diversity of household level, NPHC 2021

Explanatory Variables	Odds Ratio	Explanatory Variables	Odds Ratio
Urban/rural		Provinces	
Urban	0.99	Koshi	1.83
Peri-urban	0.88	Madhesh	0.72
Rural	1.00	Bagmati	1.54
Ecological Zone		Gandaki	0.92
Mountain	1.13	Lumbini	0.78
Hill	1.08	Karnali	0.96
Tarai	1.00	Sudurpashchim	1.00

Explanatory Variables	Odds Ratio
Sex of household head	
Female	1.09
Male	1.00
Caste/ethnicity of household head	
Hill caste group	1.00
Madhesh/Tarai Caste	0.75
Mountain/Hill Janajati	8.86
Tarai Janajati	3.96
Hill Dalits	3.92
Madhesh/Tarai Dalit	1.07
Religious/Linguistic groups	3.31
Others, Foreigners & Not stated	5.38
Education of household head	
No education	1.00
ECD (0)	0.91
Secondary(9-inter)	1.04
Higher(bachelor+)	1.11
Others	1.04
Occupation of household head	
Agriculture	1.00

Explanatory Variables	Odds Ratio
Non-Agriculture	1.30
Education of household head (in broad group)	
Primary	1.09
Secondary	1.01
Bachelor's and above	1.00
Migration status of household head	
Migrants	1.46
Non-migrants	1.00
Wealth_ quintile	
Lowest	1.00
Lower	1.07
Middle	1.15
Higher	1.16
Highest	1.09
Family structure	
Extended Family	2.47
Nuclear	1.00
Absentee status of households	
Household no absentee abroad	1.22
Absentee	1.00

CHAPTER 9

CONCLUSIONS AND POLICY IMPLICATIONS

The continued prevalence of religious diversity and the co-existence of multiple faiths have remained one enduring foundation of Nepal's cultural diversity since ancient times. The political transformation towards a secular nation in 2006 and the constitutional enshrining of Nepal as a secular nation in 2015 has been a radical departure from how the state embraced the religion of the majoritarian as a constituent marker of Nepali nationalism for over two centuries. The Constitution ensures the equality of all religions, the right to religious freedom, and the protection of old religious traditions and culture. It also directs the state to ensure that religious practices and traditions do not violate the rights and freedoms of any individuals. Religion is the domain of fundamental rights and collective identity. It is equally related to the well-being of citizens, economic empowerment, social justice, and many other issues of governance and development. As such, the enumerated census data regarding people's religious affiliations must also be considered with policy and planning relevance to align with the spirit of the Constitution and secularism.

The analysis of this report on Religion is prepared with the dual objectives of providing the empirical representation of Nepal's existing religious diversity based on the 2021 census and offering evidence-based policy suggestions for the government and other stakeholders. The number of adherents of these ten religions recorded by the 2021 census varies widely; the largest is 23.68 million Hindus, while the smallest being 537 Baha'I followers. The followers are dispersed throughout the seven provinces and all three ecological zones, along with urban, peri-urban, and rural residences, and are followed by various caste, ethnic, and linguistic groups. The census data on religion does not necessarily reflect the diversity of religious practices and the complexity and localized forms of rituals, rites, and traditions associated with the ten religions followed by Nepal's population. Nevertheless, the census data is the most comprehensive information on Nepal's existing level of religious diversity and the spatial, caste-ethnic, and gender distributions of these different religions. Furthermore, it provides the socio-economic and demographic association of the population by religion.

9.1 Religious diversity in Nepal

The spirit of the constitution on religious diversity is reflected in the NPHC 2021 results at the national, provincial, ecological zone, urban-rural, and household levels. Based on the Religious

Diversity Index, Nepal's Mountain region has a relatively higher level of religious diversity than the Hill and the Tarai zones. The Hill zone, on the other hand, has a relatively higher religious diversity than the Tarai region. Province-wise, Koshi Province is the most religiously diverse province, followed by Bagmati and Gandaki provinces. Comparatively, Sudurpashchim and Karnali provinces have the least religious diversity based on the RDI. In terms of caste and ethnicity, the Mountain and Hill Janajati are the most diverse social groups in Nepal, as they tend to follow multiple religious faiths as per the 2021 census.

The findings of cross-tabulation analysis indicates that 1.6 percent of the households had more than one religion. The multiple regression analysis of household-level shows a close association between caste/ethnicity and religion. The results of logistic regression analysis show that multiple religions in Mountain/Hill Janajati households [OR=8.86] are nine times more likely than in Hill caste groups. Similarly, Hill Dalit-headed households are four times more likely [OR=3.96] to have multiple religions at the household level than Hill caste groups. It is also found that households of Tarai Janajati are almost four times more likely to have more than one religion at the household level.

9.2 Socio-economic and demographic dynamics

The literacy rate is considered an important indicator of women's empowerment. The 2021 census data on religion, literacy, and sex indicates an association between religion and literacy rate of women. In terms of the literacy rate by sex, Islam shows the lowest literacy rate for women (54%) followed by Hindu (68.8%) and Prakriti (68.9 %) religions. The literacy rate of the followers of Nepal's second-largest religion, Buddhism, is 70 percent which is higher than only three other religions – Islam, Hinduism, and slightly higher that of Prakriti. In other words, Nepal's three largest religions, in terms of the number of followers, show a lower literacy rate for women than other religions.

The disparities in literacy rates suggest that the cultural, social, and possibly economic factors within these religious groups could contribute to the educational gap by gender. These disparities could be due to a variety of factors, including traditional gender roles, socio-economic challenges, and limited access to educational resources for women in certain communities. Addressing these challenges requires policies that not only promote literacy but also target the socio-cultural barriers that prevent women from accessing education.

Moreover, results of the NPHC 2021 also show that 47 percent of Muslim households had six and above family members, while only 2.7 percent of Muslim households had a single family, demonstrating larger family sizes among Muslim households than compared to other religions. This large family size has socio-economic consequences, particularly for Muslim women. Similarly, the NPHC 2021 also shows that 11 percent of Muslim households have no toilet facility,

followed by Hindu (4.6%) and Indigenous religion (1.9%) households. In other words, the findings show that a higher proportion of Muslim households lacked toilet facilities and were using ordinary toilet facilities than across all religions in Nepal at the time of the 2021 census.

Among the adherents of Islam in Nepal, nearly half (49.2%) of females married before the age of 18, whereas the rate of 17.7 percent was seen for males. The 2021 census findings show that, when comparing the populations of the 10 main religions in Nepal, child marriage is the highest among Muslim populations. This finding suggests that the state's efforts to reduce the early age at marriage are less effective for the followers of Islam.

The findings of the 2021 census reveal a correlation between religious affiliation and the wealth quintile of each group's followers. Households adhering to Islam, Prakriti, and Kirat religions are generally less well-off compared to those belonging to other religious groups. This finding concerning the wealth quintile ranking may give the impression that the Hill and the Tarai Dalits fare better than the followers of Kirat, Prakriti, and Islam religions, however it should be emphasized that Hindu households include the majority (95 percent and above) of Hill and Tarai Dalit groups based on their religious affiliations in the census. Hence, the finding of the associations between religion and wealth quintile do not necessarily reflect the wealth quintile ranking of Nepal's Dalit populations and this should be contextualized and compared with the data on caste/ethnicity and wealth indexes.

Finally, promoting a shift in cultural norms around gender roles could allow for more balanced opportunities, encouraging women to pursue economic roles, including overseas work if they choose. By addressing these socio-economic and cultural factors, Nepal can promote a more equitable approach to labour migration that benefits families and communities across all religious groups.

9.3 Policy implications

- **Policy on religion:** Secularism is one of the indicators of religious freedom policy. Data from the population census serves as a key source of religious information for all three levels of government in Nepal. It is now timely to review the consistency of national policies in light of the religious composition of the population.
- **Religion and socio-economic characteristics:** The 2021 census reveal that socio-economic characteristics such as literacy, educational attainment, property ownership, and participation in formal economic activities vary across different religious groups, with notable gender disparities. The incidence of early marriage is higher among adherents of Islam compared to followers of the other nine religions in Nepal. These

findings suggest that religion, alongside caste/ethnicity and class, should be considered in planning and policy-making to address these socio-economic challenges.

- Religion and future census recording: The spirit of constitutional diversity regarding religion is well-reflected in the results of the NPHC 2021 at various levels: national, provincial, ecological zones, and district, as well as in urban-rural residential contexts and household settings. The NSO has periodically updated the list of caste and ethnic groups and languages spoken in Nepal. Similarly, it added new categories of religions after the 1981 census. The NSO can work with scholars, experts, members of parliament, civil society, representations of faith groups and others to develop acceptable criteria to expand or modify the list of new religions.

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ANNEXES

Annex 1: Distribution of religious population by sex and ecological zone, NPCH 2021

Area	sex	Total	Hindu	Buddhist	Islam	Kirat	Christian	Prakriti	Bon	Jain	Baha'i	Sikh
Nepal	Total	29164578	23677744	2393549	1483066	924204	512313	102048	67223	2398	537	1496
	Male	14253551	11587529	1159790	732006	451193	240206	48527	31968	1239	234	859
	Female	14911027	12090215	1233759	751060	473011	272107	53521	35255	1159	303	637
Ecological Zone												
Mountain	Total	1772948	1273309	323871	1172	143554	26414	1581	3005	4	4	34
	Male	874260	625855	160223	995	72006	12875	778	1490	4	1	33
	Female	898688	647454	163648	177	71548	13539	803	1515	0	3	1
Hill	Total	11757624	9149795	1590987	70000	534575	285346	69477	56189	818	99	338
	Male	5717247	4442524	772743	42948	264114	134526	33008	26721	411	44	208
	Female	6040377	4707271	818244	27052	270461	150820	36469	29468	407	55	130
Tarai	Total	15634006	13254640	478691	1411894	246075	200553	30990	8029	1576	434	1124
	Male	7662044	6519150	226824	688063	115073	92805	14741	3757	824	189	618
	Female	7971962	6735490	251867	723831	131002	107748	16249	4272	752	245	506

Annex 1.1: Distribution of population by ecological zone and sex, NPCH 2021

Religion	Mountain		Hill		Tarai	
	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female
Hindu	49.2	50.8	48.6	51.4	49.2	50.8
Buddhism	49.5	50.5	48.6	51.4	47.4	52.6
Islam	84.9	15.1	61.4	38.6	48.7	51.3
Kirat	50.2	49.8	49.4	50.6	46.8	53.2
Christian	48.7	51.3	47.1	52.9	46.3	53.7
Prakriti	49.2	50.8	47.5	52.5	47.6	52.4
Bon	49.6	50.4	47.6	52.4	46.8	53.2
Jain	100.0	0.0	50.2	49.8	52.3	47.7
Baha'i	25.0	75.0	44.4	55.6	43.5	56.5
Sikh	97.1	2.9	61.5	38.5	55.0	45.0

Annex 2: Distribution of individual religious population by province, NPHC 2021

Province	Hindu		Buddhist		Islam		Kirat	
	Population	%	Population	%	Population	%	Population	%
Koshi	3343183	14.1%	433264	18.1%	208311	14.0%	835486	90.4%
Madhesh	5151005	21.8%	135325	5.7%	811878	54.7%	3099	0.3%
Bagmati	4406030	18.6%	1362392	56.9%	48405	3.3%	81687	8.8%
Gandaki	2027990	9%	284642	11.9%	22361	1.5%	2968	0.3%
Lumbini	4525623	19.1%	102098	4.3%	381558	25.7%	619	0.1%
Karnali	1598437	7%	53292	2.2%	3570	0.2%	95	0.01%
Sudurpashchim	2625476	11%	22536	0.9%	6983	0.5%	250	0.03%
Total	23677744	100.0%	2393549	100%	1483066	100%	924204	100%

Province	Christian		Prakriti		Bon		Jain	
	Population	%	Population	%	Population	%	Population	%
Koshi	115253	22.5%	22417	22.0%	2153	3%	1027	42.8%
Madhesh	10898	2.1%	1549	1.5%	263	0.4%	465	19.4%
Bagmati	201794	39.4%	9780	9.6%	5675	8%	771	32.2%
Gandaki	58315	11.4%	16635	16.3%	53405	79%	39	1.6%
Lumbini	59056	11.5%	47118	46.2%	4999	7%	59	2.5%
Karnali	29457	5.7%	3009	2.9%	534	1%	7	0.3%
Sudurpashchim	37540	7.3%	1540	1.5%	194	0.3%	30	1.3%
Total	512313	100%	102048	100%	67223	100%	2398	100%

Province	Baha'i		Sikh	
	Population	%	Population	%
Koshi	194	36.1%	124	8.3%
Madhesh	4	0.7%	114	7.6%
Bagmati	34	6.3%	298	19.9%
Gandaki	25	4.7%	47	3.1%
Lumbini	92	17.1%	856	57.2%
Karnali	8	1.5%	3	0.2%
Sudurpashchim	180	33.5%	54	4%
Total	537	100.0%	1496	100.0%

Annex 3: Distribution of religious population by sex and ecological zone, NPCH 2021

Area	sex	Total	Hindu	Buddhist	Islam	Kirat	Christian	Prakriti	Bon	Jain	Baha'i	Sikh
Nepal	Total	29164578	23677744	2393549	1483066	924204	512313	102048	67223	2398	537	1496
	Male	14253551	11587529	1159790	732006	451193	240206	48527	31968	1239	234	859
	Female	14911027	12090215	1233759	751060	473011	272107	53521	35255	1159	303	637
Koshi	Total	4961412	3343183	433264	208311	835486	115253	22417	2153	1027	194	124
	Male	2417328	1630427	209501	102677	407733	54485	10734	1052	539	89	91
	Female	2544084	1712756	223763	105634	427753	60768	11683	1101	488	105	33
Madhesh	Total	6114600	5151005	135325	811878	3099	10898	1549	263	465	4	114
	Male	3065751	2601040	65462	391255	1553	5254	756	119	244	3	65
	Female	3048849	2549965	69863	420623	1546	5644	793	144	221	1	49
Bagmati	Total	6116866	4406030	1362392	48405	81687	201794	9780	5675	771	34	298
	Male	3048684	2206396	666641	31735	39759	96059	4765	2749	380	17	183
	Female	3068182	2199634	695751	16670	41928	105735	5015	2926	391	17	115
Gandaki	Total	2466427	2027990	284642	22361	2968	58315	16635	53405	39	25	47
	Male	1170833	962467	134282	12374	1616	26818	7845	25365	22	12	32
	Female	1295594	1065523	150360	9987	1352	31497	8790	28040	17	13	15
Lumbini	Total	5122078	4525623	102098	381558	619	59056	47118	4999	59	92	856
	Male	2454408	2166923	47346	188101	329	26652	22211	2327	30	38	451
	Female	2667670	2358700	54752	193457	290	32404	24907	2672	29	54	405
Karnali	Total	1688412	1598437	53292	3570	95	29457	3009	534	7	8	3
	Male	823761	780691	25621	1958	76	13693	1443	266	7	3	3
	Female	864651	817746	27671	1612	19	15764	1566	268	0	5	0
Sudurpashchim	Total	2694783	2625476	22536	6983	250	37540	1540	194	30	180	54
	Male	1272786	1239585	10937	3906	127	17245	773	90	17	72	34
	Female	1421997	1385891	11599	3077	123	20295	767	104	13	108	20
Koshi	Total	4961412	3343183	433264	208311	835486	115253	22417	2153	1027	194	124
	Male	48.72%	48.77%	48.35%	49.29%	48.80%	47.27%	47.88%	48.86%	52.48%	45.88%	73.39%
	Female	51.28%	51.23%	51.65%	50.71%	51.20%	52.73%	52.12%	51.14%	47.52%	54.12%	26.61%
Madhesh	Total	6114600	5151005	135325	811878	3099	10898	1549	263	465	4	114
	Male	50.14%	50.50%	48.37%	48.19%	50.11%	48.21%	48.81%	45.25%	52.47%	75.00%	57.02%
	Female	49.86%	49.50%	51.63%	51.81%	49.89%	51.79%	51.19%	54.75%	47.53%	25.00%	42.98%
Bagmati	Total	6116866	4406030	1362392	48405	81687	201794	9780	5675	771	34	298
	Male	49.84%	50.08%	48.93%	65.56%	48.67%	47.60%	48.72%	48.44%	49.29%	50.00%	61.41%
	Female	50.16%	49.92%	51.07%	34.44%	51.33%	52.40%	51.28%	51.56%	50.71%	50.00%	38.59%
Gandaki	Total	2466427	2027990	284642	22361	2968	58315	16635	53405	39	25	47
	Male	47.47%	47.46%	47.18%	55.34%	54.45%	45.99%	47.16%	47.50%	56.41%	48.00%	68.09%
	Female	52.53%	52.54%	52.82%	44.66%	45.55%	54.01%	52.84%	52.50%	43.59%	52.00%	31.91%
Lumbini	Total	5122078	4525623	102098	381558	619	59056	47118	4999	59	92	856
	Male	47.92%	47.88%	46.37%	49.30%	53.15%	45.13%	47.14%	46.55%	50.85%	41.30%	52.69%
	Female	52.08%	52.12%	53.63%	50.70%	46.85%	54.87%	52.86%	53.45%	49.15%	58.70%	47.31%
Karnali	Total	1688412	1598437	53292	3570	95	29457	3009	534	7	8	3
	Male	48.79%	48.84%	48.08%	54.85%	80.00%	46.48%	47.96%	49.81%	100.00%	37.50%	100.00%
	Female	51.21%	51.16%	51.92%	45.15%	20.00%	53.52%	52.04%	50.19%	0.00%	62.50%	0.00%
Sudurpashchim	Total	2694783	2625476	22536	6983	250	37540	1540	194	30	180	54
	Male	47.23%	47.21%	48.53%	55.94%	50.80%	45.94%	50.19%	46.39%	56.67%	40.00%	62.96%
	Female	52.77%	52.79%	51.47%	44.06%	49.20%	54.06%	49.81%	53.61%	43.33%	60.00%	37.04%

Annex 4: Distribution of population by caste/ethnicity and religion (broad group), NPHC, 2021

Caste groups	Total	Hindu	Buddhist	Islam	Kirat	Christian	Prakriti	Bon	Jain	Baha'i	Sikh
Number											
Total	29164578	23677744	2393549	1483066	924204	512313	102048	67223	2398	537	1496
Hill Castes	8782687	8730210	8539	0	0	43817	0	0	0	121	0
Madhesh/Tarai Caste	4682277	4658135	954	16389	21	4888	0	13	1867	0	10
Mountain/Hill Janajatis	7610379	3904449	2356228	0	923389	281743	77601	66949	0	20	0
Tarai Janajatis	2608191	2499971	24048	0	520	59303	23961	20	0	368	0
Hill Dalit	2506612	2390542	0	0	0	116051	0	0	0	19	0
Madhesh/Tarai Dalit	1392378	1379985	57	7712	4	3961	463	183	13	0	0
Religious/Linguistic groups	1434323	14505	0	1418677	0	57	0	0	0	0	1084
Others, Foreigners & Not Stated	147731	99947	3723	40288	270	2493	23	58	518	9	402
Percentage											
Total	100	81.19	8.21	5.09	3.17	1.76	0.35	0.23	0.01	0	0.01
Hill Castes	100	99.4	0.10	0.00	0.00	0.50	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
Madhesh/Tarai Caste	100	99.5	0.02	0.35	0.00	0.10	0.00	0.00	0.04	0.00	0.00
Mountain/Hill Janajatis	100	51.3	31.0	0.00	12.1	3.70	1.02	0.88	0.00	0.00	0.00
Tarai Janajatis	100	95.9	0.92	0.00	0.02	2.27	0.92	0.00	0.00	0.01	0.00
Hill Dalit	100	95.4	0.00	0.00	0.00	4.63	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
Madhesh/Tarai Dalit	100	99.1	0.00	0.55	0.00	0.28	0.03	0.01	0.00	0.00	0.00
Religious/Linguistic groups	100	1.01	0.00	98.9	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.08
Others, Foreigners & Not Stated	100	67.7	2.5	27.3	0.18	1.69	0.02	0.04	0.4	0.01	0.27

Annex 5: Nationality of the followers of the ten religions, NPHC, 2021

Country	Total	Hindu	Buddhist	Islam	Kirat	Christian	Prakriti	Bon	Jain	Baha'i	Sikh
Total	29164578	23677744	2393549	1483066	924204	512313	102048	67223	2398	537	1496
Nepalese	29027171	23586825	2390692	1442983	923945	510003	102032	67167	1898	528	1098
Indian	132781	89704	1099	39606	209	1211	14	37	499	6	396
Chinese	1882	268	1301	19	5	280	0	8	1	0	0
Others	2744	947	457	458	45	819	2	11	0	3	2

Annex 5.1: Religious affiliation of foreign nationals for the ten religions, NPHC, 2021

Religion	Indian		Chinese		Others		Total
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.
Hindu	89704	98.7	268	0.3	947	1.0	90919
Buddhist	1099	38.5	1301	45.5	457	16.0	2857
Islam	39606	98.8	19	0.05	458	1.1	40083
Indigenous Religions	260	78.5	13	4	58	17.5	331
Christian	1211	52.4	280	12.1	819	35.5	2310
Other Minority Religions	901	99.3	1	0.1	5	0.6	907

Annex 6: Educational attainment by gender and religion, NPHC 2021

Religion	sex	Total	Educational level completed							
			Early childhood	Primary	Lower secondary	Upper secondary	S.L.C./S.E..E & equivalent	Intermediate & equivalent	Graduate & equivalent	Post graduate equivalent & above
Total	Total	20408124	896546	5855732	4071331	3148180	1939631	2600903	930176	441585
	Male	10845300	54.0%	53.3%	53.7%	53.3%	54.1%	51.3%	55.4%	63.7%
	Female	9562824	46.0%	46.7%	46.3%	46.7%	45.9%	48.7%	44.6%	36.3%
Hindu	Total	16701465	727837	4626309	3286005	2599781	1620577	2211116	822273	398637
	Male	8888576	54.29%	53.17%	53.61%	53.25%	54.24%	51.69%	55.97%	64.44%
	Female	7812889	45.71%	46.83%	46.39%	46.75%	45.76%	48.31%	44.03%	35.56%
Buddhist	Total	1695560	62500	516747	353339	249196	163141	207864	60166	24301
	Male	890694	52.61%	54.60%	53.90%	52.49%	53.05%	47.97%	49.32%	53.41%
	Female	804866	47.39%	45.40%	46.10%	47.51%	46.95%	52.03%	50.68%	46.59%
Islam	Total	803665	7.8%	44.7%	22.0%	11.2%	4.1%	5.3%	1.6%	0.6%
	Male	444936	53.00%	52.00%	56.95%	60.34%	61.27%	63.79%	67.51%	74.75%
	Female	358729	47.00%	48.00%	43.05%	39.66%	38.73%	36.21%	32.49%	25.25%
Kirat	Total	707482	23715	195892	147165	134853	78270	81955	20342	8153
	Male	368287	51.95%	54.59%	53.83%	52.61%	51.36%	45.67%	46.87%	56.75%
	Female	339195	48.05%	45.41%	46.17%	47.39%	48.64%	54.33%	53.13%	43.25%
Christian	Total	374194	15156	120208	81395	53959	33246	41993	11074	4033
	Male	187414	51.98%	52.44%	50.94%	49.46%	50.11%	46.04%	48.83%	57.72%
	Female	186780	48.02%	47.56%	49.06%	50.54%	49.89%	53.96%	51.17%	42.28%
Prakriti	Total	72144	2864	23736	15581	11250	6035	7272	1529	683
	Male	37469	51.61%	53.39%	52.92%	53.63%	54.18%	48.03%	48.01%	63.54%
	Female	34675	48.39%	46.61%	47.08%	46.37%	45.82%	51.97%	51.99%	36.46%
Bon	Total	49829	1496	13071	10293	8513	5110	7202	1498	552
	Male	25864	51.60%	53.07%	52.25%	55.06%	58.49%	47.26%	41.59%	50.36%
	Female	23965	48.40%	46.93%	47.75%	44.94%	41.51%	52.74%	58.41%	49.64%
Jain	Total	2146	42	264	207	252	249	398	510	217
	Male	1125	52.38%	47.35%	46.38%	53.17%	44.58%	51.51%	59.02%	58.99%
	Female	1021	47.62%	52.65%	53.62%	46.83%	55.42%	48.49%	40.98%	41.01%
Baha'i	Total	432	13	82	70	69	34	74	34	31
	Male	205	38.46%	56.10%	50.00%	44.93%	44.12%	40.54%	55.88%	64.52%
	Female	227	61.54%	43.90%	50.00%	55.07%	55.88%	59.46%	44.12%	35.48%
Sikh	Total	1207	55	240	225	204	73	208	138	52
	Male	730	58.18%	61.67%	58.22%	64.71%	69.86%	56.25%	58.70%	55.77%
	Female	477	41.82%	38.33%	41.78%	35.29%	30.14%	43.75%	41.30%	44.23%

Annex 7: Percent distribution of households by gender and religion, NPHC 2021

Religion	Household Headship by Gender	Household size						Total
		1	2	3	4	5	6+	
Hindu	Male	3.1	11.4	15.2	23.7	18.6	28.0	3,714,214
	Female	10.0	17.1	25.6	21.8	12.9	12.6	1,698,600
Buddhist	Male	3.9	14.4	19.3	24.1	16.8	21.5	398,518
	Female	12.2	19.5	25.2	20.2	11.6	11.4	199,854
Islam	Male	2.0	6.3	7.7	13.5	17.2	53.3	184,200
	Female	4.6	8.5	16.8	22.7	18.6	28.8	64,747
Kirat	Male	4.2	12.0	19.5	24.4	17.5	22.4	155,079
	Female	11.6	20.1	25.1	19.7	11.5	12.0	75,022
Christian	Male	3.1	11.5	18.9	26.0	18.1	22.4	79,762
	Female	9.5	18.9	25.9	21.8	12.6	11.4	48,904
Prakriti	Male	2.5	11.0	16.0	23.1	19.2	28.3	15,716
	Female	10.1	16.5	23.3	21.2	13.6	15.2	7,977
Bon	Male	4.4	15.9	19.0	22.5	16.6	21.7	10,434
	Female	13.1	19.6	24.1	19.3	12.1	11.9	6,828
Jain	Male	2.0	10.0	16.6	23.6	17.3	30.5	440
	Female	5.4	17.9	17.9	17.9	14.3	26.8	56
Baha'i	Male	5.2	13.4	15.5	28.9	20.6	16.5	97
	Female	4.4	17.8	26.7	24.4	20.0	6.7	45
Sikh	Male	10.0	15.6	10.3	24.9	20.3	18.9	301
	Female	8.5	2.1	19.1	40.4	12.8	17.0	47
Total		5.4	13.3	18.6	22.8	16.6	23.3	6,660,841

Annex 8: Proportion of the nuclear and extended families by religion across ecological zones and urban-rural distributions, NPHC 2021

Religion/family structure	Mountain	Hill	Tarai	Urban	Peri Urban	Rural
Nepal						
Nuclear Family	63.8	63.3	56.8	63.8	66.3	61
Extended Family	36.2	36.7	43.2	36.2	43.7	39
Hindu						
Nuclear Family	61.7	63.3	56.9	64.0	56.3	60.3
Extended Family	38.3	36.7	43.1	36.0	43.7	39.7
Buddhist						
Nuclear Family	68.8	63.6	55.5	64.7	57.4	63.3
Extended Family	31.2	36.4	44.5	35.3	42.6	36.7
Islam						
Nuclear Family	59.6	59.1	55.4	56.3	54.9	61.6
Extended Family	40.4	40.9	44.6	43.7	45.1	38.4
Kirat						
Nuclear Family	68.3	62.1	57.1	61.7	56.8	62.9
Extended Family	31.7	37.9	42.9	38.3	43.2	37.1
Christians						
Nuclear Family	70.9	67.2	60.4	67.8	61.2	64.8
Extended Family	29.1	32.8	39.6	32.2	38.8	35.2
Prakriti						
Nuclear Family	68.3	57.0	55.7	59.4	56.1	56.6
Extended Family	31.7	43.0	44.3	40.6	43.9	43.4
Bon						
Nuclear Family	53.4	57.3	47.8	54.5	52.4	57.6
Extended Family	46.6	42.7	52.2	45.5	47.6	42.4
Jain						
Nuclear Family	0	48.3	47.5	46.1	58.1	57.1
Extended Family	0	51.7	52.5	53.9	41.9	42.9
Baha'i						
Nuclear Family	0	67.9	51.3	60.0	53.5	50.0
Extended Family	100	32.1	48.7	40.0	46.5	50.0
Sikh						
Nuclear Family	0	70.2	63.4	64.1	67.3	50.0
Extended Family	100	29.8	36.6	35.9	32.7	50.0

Annex 9: Distribution of households by type of toilet facility, religion and urban-rural, NPHC 2021

Urban/Rural areas and type of toilet facility	Religion										Total
	Hindu	Buddhist	Islam	Kirat	Christian	Prakriti	Bon	Jain	Baha'i	Sikh	
Nepal											
Flush toilet	64.6	73.5	44.2	70.0	66.3	66.8	82.6	86.3	56.3	77.3	4,321,490
Ordinary	30.4	23.4	43.7	27.9	29.5	29.2	15.6	13.1	42.3	15.2	2,005,480
Public	0.5	0.4	0.8	0.3	0.6	0.4	1.0	0.0	0.7	0.0	32,381
No toilet	4.6	2.6	11.3	1.8	3.7	3.7	0.8	0.6	0.7	7.5	301,490
Total	5,412,814	598,372	248,947	230,101	128,666	23,693	17,262	496	142	348	6,660,841
Urban											
Flush toilet	81.6	86.6	58.4	82.8	80.2	75.7	93.0	95.3	80.0	92.3	1574171
Ordinary	16.5	12.7	34.2	16.3	18.6	22.8	6.8	4.7	20.0	7.7	326884
Public	0.3	0.3	0.6	0.4	0.5	0.4	0.1	0.0	0.0	0.0	6750
No toilet	1.6	0.4	6.7	0.5	0.7	1.2	0.1	0.0	0.0	0.0	31196
Total	1587467.0	181509.0	76457.0	45186.0	41441.0	2695.0	3599.0	427.0	25.0	195.0	1939001
Peri Urban											
Flush toilet	49.8	65.5	37.8	58.7	57.9	48.3	86.1	27.4	48.5	58.5	1,213,504
Ordinary	41.2	31.8	47.9	39.0	37.4	46.1	13.5	67.7	49.5	25.2	1,001,372
Public	0.7	0.6	0.8	0.4	0.7	0.8	0.2	0.0	1.0	0.0	16,404
No toilet	8.3	2.2	13.4	1.8	3.9	4.8	0.3	4.8	1.0	16.3	200,799
Total	2,092,528	95,516	161,685	38,978	34,396	5,855	2,811	62	101	147	2,432,079
Rural											
Flush toilet	66.8	68.6	39.9	69.1	60.8	72.4	78.2	57.1	68.8	50.0	1,533,815
Ordinary	30.1	27.0	48.7	28.4	32.8	23.7	19.1	42.9	31.3	16.7	677,224
Public	0.4	0.5	0.7	0.3	0.6	0.2	1.5	0.0	0.0	0.0	9,227
No toilet	2.8	4.0	10.7	2.2	5.8	3.7	1.1	0.0	0.0	33.3	69,495
Total	1,732,819	321,347	10,805	145,937	52,829	15,143	10,852	7	16	6	2,289,761

Annex 10: Distribution of religious population by age at first marriage and gender, NPHC 2021

Religion/ Gender	Age at first married												Total
	Below 10	10-14	15-17	18-20	21-24	25-29	30-34	35-39	40-44	45-49	50+	Others	
Nepal	0.3	7.0	22.3	34.4	20.6	11.5	2.8	0.6	0.2	0.0	0.02	0.2	16022870
Male	0.1	3.0	12.3	32.6	26.8	18.6	5.0	1.1	0.3	0.1	0.04	0.2	7116659
Female	0.5	10.2	30.4	35.9	15.5	5.9	1.1	0.3	0.1	0.0	0.01	0.2	8906211
Hindu	0.4	7.4	22.6	34.4	20.3	11.3	2.7	0.5	0.1	0.0	0.02	0.2	13102750
Male	0.1	3.1	12.3	32.6	26.8	18.7	4.9	1.0	0.2	0.1	0.03	0.2	5814602
Female	0.6	10.8	30.8	35.8	15.2	5.5	0.9	0.2	0.1	0.0	0.01	0.2	7288148
Buddhist	0.1	4.7	19.8	33.1	23.0	13.7	3.9	1.1	0.3	0.1	0.04	0.2	1356667
Male	0.1	2.6	12.0	30.1	27.3	19.4	6.0	1.7	0.5	0.1	0.07	0.2	610220
Female	0.1	6.5	26.1	35.6	19.6	9.0	2.2	0.6	0.2	0.0	0.02	0.2	746447
Islam	0.2	8.4	26.8	41.3	15.2	6.5	1.1	0.2	0.1	0.0	0.02	0.2	678853
Male	0.1	3.3	14.3	43.5	23.8	11.9	2.2	0.5	0.1	0.0	0.02	0.1	299013
Female	0.3	12.3	36.6	39.6	8.3	2.3	0.3	0.1	0.0	0.0	0.01	0.2	379840
Christian	0.1	6.2	23.0	32.9	21.0	11.9	3.3	0.9	0.3	0.1	0.05	0.2	281368
Male	0.1	2.6	13.4	31.5	26.9	17.8	5.4	1.5	0.4	0.1	0.09	0.1	121427
Female	0.2	9.0	30.3	34.0	16.5	7.4	1.7	0.5	0.2	0.0	0.02	0.2	159941
Indigenou s religions	0.1	3.5	16.4	30.9	25.3	16.1	5.2	1.6	0.5	0.1	0.07	0.2	600579
Male	0.1	1.8	9.1	26.0	28.9	22.6	7.9	2.4	0.7	0.2	0.11	0.1	270089
Female	0.1	4.9	22.4	34.9	22.3	10.9	3.1	0.9	0.3	0.1	0.04	0.2	330490
Other minority religions	0.2	3.9	11.2	23.1	26.5	27.1	6.1	1.6	0.3	0.1	0.00	0.0	2465
Male	0.1	2.0	5.7	14.6	25.8	39.0	9.7	2.3	0.6	0.2	0.00	0.0	1308
Female	0.2	5.7	17.7	33.2	27.2	13.3	1.9	0.7	0.0	0.0	0.00	0.0	1345

Annex 11: Distribution of religious population by age at first married and gender, NPHC 2011

Religion/sex	Age at first marriagee											Others	Total
	< 10 yrs.	10-14	15-17	18-20	21-24	25-29	30-34	35-39	40-44	45-49	50+		
Nepal	0.3	7.0	22.3	34.4	20.6	11.5	2.8	0.6	0.2	0.04	0.02	0.2	16022870
Male	0.1	3.0	12.3	32.6	26.8	18.6	5.0	1.1	0.3	0.07	0.04	0.2	7116659
Female	0.5	10.2	30.4	35.9	15.5	5.9	1.1	0.3	0.1	0.02	0.01	0.2	8906211
Hindu	0.4	7.4	22.6	34.4	20.3	11.3	2.7	0.5	0.1	0.03	0.02	0.2	13102750
Male	0.1	3.1	12.3	32.6	26.8	18.7	4.9	1.0	0.2	0.06	0.03	0.2	5814602
Female	0.6	10.8	30.8	35.8	15.2	5.5	0.9	0.2	0.1	0.01	0.01	0.2	7288148
Buddhist	0.1	4.7	19.8	33.1	23.0	13.7	3.9	1.1	0.3	0.08	0.04	0.2	1356667
Male	0.1	2.6	12.0	30.1	27.3	19.4	6.0	1.7	0.5	0.12	0.07	0.2	610220
Female	0.1	6.5	26.1	35.6	19.6	9.0	2.2	0.6	0.2	0.04	0.02	0.2	746447
Islam	0.2	8.4	26.8	41.3	15.2	6.5	1.1	0.2	0.1	0.02	0.02	0.2	678853
Male	0.1	3.3	14.3	43.5	23.8	11.9	2.2	0.5	0.1	0.03	0.02	0.1	299013
Female	0.3	12.3	36.6	39.6	8.3	2.3	0.3	0.1	0.0	0.01	0.01	0.2	379840
Christian	0.1	6.2	23.0	32.9	21.0	11.9	3.3	0.9	0.3	0.08	0.05	0.2	281368
Male	0.1	2.6	13.4	31.5	26.9	17.8	5.4	1.5	0.4	0.13	0.09	0.1	121427
Female	0.2	9.0	30.3	34.0	16.5	7.4	1.7	0.5	0.2	0.04	0.02	0.2	159941
Indigenous religions	0.1	3.5	16.4	30.9	25.3	16.1	5.2	1.6	0.5	0.12	0.07	0.2	600579
Male	0.1	1.8	9.1	26.0	28.9	22.6	7.9	2.4	0.7	0.18	0.11	0.1	270089
Female	0.1	4.9	22.4	34.9	22.3	10.9	3.1	0.9	0.3	0.06	0.04	0.2	330490
Other minority religions	0.2	3.9	11.8	24.0	26.5	26.0	5.8	1.5	0.3	0.11	0.00	0.0	2653
Male	0.1	2.0	5.7	14.6	25.8	39.0	9.7	2.3	0.6	0.23	0.00	0.0	1308
Female	0.2	5.7	17.7	33.2	27.2	13.3	1.9	0.7	0.0	0.00	0.00	0.0	1345

Annex 12: Distribution of religious population by gender and occupation, NPHC 2021

Types of occupation by sex	Hindu	Buddhist	Islam	Christian	Indigenous religions	Other minority religions	Total
Nepal	81.0	8.9	3.8	1.9	4.4	0.01	14983310
Male	81.1	8.6	4.3	1.8	4.2	0.02	7876322
Female	80.8	9.3	3.3	2.0	4.6	0.01	7106988
Armed Forces	92.4	4.9	0.2	0.7	1.8	0.00	104669
Male	92.5	4.8	0.2	0.6	1.9	0.01	95804
Female	91.2	5.8	0.2	1.0	1.7	0.00	8865
Managers	83.6	8.9	2.5	1.8	3.1	0.06	771445
Male	85.0	7.8	3.1	1.5	2.6	0.08	522645
Female	80.7	11.2	1.5	2.3	4.3	0.02	248800
Professional	86.9	6.7	1.8	1.5	3.0	0.03	568690
Male	88.1	5.7	2.4	1.4	2.4	0.03	341992
Female	85.2	8.1	0.9	1.8	4.0	0.02	226698
Technical and associate professional	86.7	7.5	1.6	1.6	2.6	0.04	278586
Male	87.5	6.9	2.0	1.5	2.1	0.05	179889
Female	85.2	8.5	0.8	1.9	3.5	0.03	98697
Clerical support workers	87.0	7.9	1.2	1.7	2.2	0.03	197196
Male	88.1	6.9	1.6	1.4	2.0	0.04	112963
Female	85.5	9.2	0.6	2.1	2.6	0.02	84233
Service and sales workers	83.6	8.5	3.5	1.8	2.5	0.04	870619
Male	84.7	7.5	4.2	1.5	2.0	0.06	560675
Female	81.6	10.4	2.2	2.4	3.5	0.02	309944
Skilled agri., forestry and fishery workers	79.1	10.3	2.7	1.8	6.1	0.00	7502385
Male	78.3	10.3	3.2	1.7	6.4	0.00	3458947
Female	79.8	10.2	2.3	1.9	5.8	0.00	4043438
Craft and related trade workers	77.4	8.5	8.6	2.9	2.6	0.01	835914
Male	77.7	7.6	9.6	2.7	2.4	0.01	683511
Female	76.3	12.6	4.0	4.1	3.1	0.01	152403
Plant and machine operators and assemblers	81.4	10.2	4.0	2.2	2.2	0.03	402127
Male	81.4	10.1	4.1	2.1	2.2	0.03	382019
Female	81.3	10.9	2.6	2.8	2.4	0.03	20108
Elementary occupations	82.5	6.8	6.3	1.8	2.6	0.02	3438931
Male	82.8	6.7	6.2	1.8	2.6	0.01	1530496
Female	82.3	6.8	6.4	1.9	2.6	0.02	1908435
DK	83.6	6.0	6.3	2.1	2.0	0.00	4559
Male	83.6	5.8	6.7	1.8	2.1	0.00	3035
Female	83.6	6.6	5.3	2.7	1.8	0.00	1524
Not reported	81.7	8.8	3.6	1.9	4.0	0.05	8189
Male	81.8	7.9	4.8	1.8	3.6	0.02	4346
Female	81.6	9.7	2.2	2.0	4.4	0.08	3843

Annex 13: Distribution of population by district and religion, NPHC 2021

Area	Hindu	Buddhist	Islam	Kirat	Christian	Prakriti	Bon	Jain	Baha'i	Sikh	Total
Nepal	23677744	2393549	1483066	924204	512313	102048	67223	2398	537	1496	29164578
Koshi	67.38	8.73	4.20	16.84	2.32	0.45	0.04	0.02	0.00	0.00	4961412
Taplejung	30.45	21.97	0.09	44.22	2.60	0.01	0.66	0.00	0.00	0.00	120590
Sankhuwasabha	40.43	26.74	0.31	28.84	3.21	0.00	0.45	0.00	0.00	0.02	158041
Solukhumbu	37.74	28.31	0.01	30.80	3.13	0.01	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	104851
Okhaldhunga	64.95	20.01	0.00	13.46	1.52	0.03	0.03	0.00	0.00	0.00	139552
Khotang	52.20	8.34	0.01	36.20	3.07	0.17	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	175298
Bhojpur	46.39	16.04	0.02	36.29	1.21	0.04	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	157923
Dhankuta	49.56	13.11	0.10	34.74	2.47	0.01	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	150599
Terhathum	50.96	13.51	0.02	33.20	2.08	0.12	0.11	0.00	0.00	0.00	88731
Panchthar	29.21	12.26	0.10	55.71	2.72	0.01	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	172400
Ilam	44.19	15.96	0.08	36.20	3.51	0.03	0.02	0.00	0.00	0.00	279534
Jhapa	79.10	4.94	3.33	9.38	2.60	0.63	0.01	0.02	0.00	0.00	998054
Morang	81.47	4.06	4.94	6.64	1.97	0.80	0.02	0.06	0.01	0.00	1148156
Sunsari	74.35	3.64	12.34	7.72	1.69	0.22	0.02	0.02	0.00	0.00	926962
Udayapur	70.37	11.68	0.80	12.97	2.95	1.22	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	340721
Madhesh	84.24	2.21	13.28	0.05	0.18	0.03	0.00	0.01	0.00	0.00	6114600
Saptari	88.47	1.72	9.60	0.08	0.06	0.01	0.00	0.05	0.00	0.00	706255
Siraha	90.27	1.11	8.28	0.12	0.11	0.10	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	739953
Dhanusa	88.98	1.13	9.69	0.03	0.13	0.01	0.02	0.00	0.00	0.00	867747
Mahottari	82.68	1.55	15.55	0.03	0.16	0.03	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	706994
Sarlahi	85.69	4.99	8.89	0.06	0.32	0.04	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	862470
Rautahat	75.72	1.50	22.55	0.02	0.20	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	813573
Bara	80.90	4.06	14.71	0.04	0.28	0.01	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	763137
Parsa	80.84	1.21	17.80	0.01	0.12	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.01	654471
Bagmati	72.03	22.27	0.79	1.34	3.30	0.16	0.09	0.01	0.00	0.00	6116866
Dolakha	66.47	26.00	0.06	5.39	2.05	0.00	0.02	0.00	0.00	0.00	172767
Sindhupalchok	54.17	41.41	0.04	1.13	2.49	0.58	0.19	0.00	0.00	0.00	262624
Rasuwa	25.61	70.84	0.03	0.03	3.44	0.04	0.01	0.00	0.00	0.00	46689
Dhading	70.71	20.26	0.41	0.43	7.55	0.38	0.26	0.00	0.00	0.00	325710
Nuwakot	56.98	38.13	0.20	2.09	2.55	0.01	0.04	0.00	0.00	0.00	263391
Kathmandu	78.49	16.28	1.29	1.43	2.36	0.05	0.06	0.03	0.00	0.01	2041587
Bhaktapur	86.40	9.93	0.49	1.14	2.02	0.01	0.01	0.00	0.00	0.00	432132
Lalitpur	74.69	17.17	0.73	2.45	4.82	0.06	0.04	0.01	0.00	0.02	551667
Kavrepalanchok	63.31	33.89	0.19	0.16	2.11	0.35	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	364039
Ramechhap	70.66	23.87	0.03	3.15	2.08	0.17	0.04	0.00	0.00	0.00	170302
Sindhuli	68.24	26.92	0.10	2.21	1.84	0.67	0.01	0.00	0.00	0.00	300026
Makwanpur	48.73	43.90	0.70	0.33	6.12	0.17	0.06	0.00	0.00	0.00	466073
Chitawan	81.43	12.48	1.33	0.08	4.19	0.16	0.33	0.00	0.00	0.00	719859
Gandaki	82.22	11.54	0.91	0.12	2.36	0.67	2.17	0.00	0.00	0.00	2466427
Gorkha	69.95	15.98	1.35	0.51	6.00	0.47	5.73	0.00	0.00	0.00	251027
Manang	40.69	50.60	0.05	0.09	2.37	0.07	6.13	0.00	0.00	0.00	5658
Mustang	38.14	58.59	0.19	0.07	1.88	0.03	1.11	0.00	0.00	0.00	14452

Area	Hindu	Buddhist	Islam	Kirat	Christian	Prakriti	Bon	Jain	Baha'i	Sikh	Total
Myagdi	87.55	8.20	0.22	0.02	1.52	2.12	0.37	0.00	0.00	0.00	107033
Kaski	81.11	12.44	1.04	0.21	2.34	0.28	2.56	0.01	0.00	0.01	600051
Lamjung	62.44	29.54	0.77	0.03	2.48	0.08	4.66	0.00	0.00	0.00	155852
Tanahu	84.08	9.73	1.56	0.05	2.30	0.46	1.82	0.00	0.00	0.00	321153
Nawalparasi - East	87.13	8.80	0.67	0.02	3.01	0.21	0.17	0.00	0.00	0.00	378079
Syangja	86.35	7.92	0.90	0.01	0.33	1.16	3.32	0.00	0.00	0.00	253024
Parbat	92.70	5.28	0.47	0.03	0.59	0.49	0.44	0.00	0.00	0.00	130887
Baglung	91.31	4.91	0.34	0.01	1.19	2.22	0.02	0.00	0.00	0.00	249211
Lumbini	88.36	1.99	7.45	0.01	1.15	0.92	0.10	0.00	0.00	0.02	5122078
Rukum -East	79.04	0.86	0.00	0.00	3.47	16.63	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	56786
Rolpa	87.48	1.76	0.12	0.00	2.39	8.21	0.03	0.00	0.00	0.00	234793
Pyuthan	96.47	1.24	0.34	0.00	0.25	1.61	0.09	0.00	0.00	0.00	232019
Gulmi	96.58	2.15	0.22	0.00	0.20	0.60	0.24	0.00	0.00	0.00	246494
Arghakhanchi	98.28	0.78	0.68	0.00	0.17	0.09	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	177086
Palpa	91.39	5.43	0.62	0.01	0.91	1.62	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	245027
Nawalparasi - West	87.59	3.61	7.24	0.03	1.12	0.01	0.39	0.00	0.00	0.00	386868
Rupandehi	87.02	3.77	8.09	0.02	0.69	0.17	0.22	0.00	0.00	0.00	1121957
Kapilbastu	80.71	0.74	18.21	0.00	0.23	0.09	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.01	682961
Dang	95.34	0.88	1.06	0.01	1.77	0.93	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	674993
Banke	78.90	0.67	18.66	0.02	1.61	0.01	0.01	0.00	0.00	0.12	603194
Bardiya	93.40	0.71	3.12	0.00	2.71	0.03	0.01	0.00	0.01	0.00	459900
Karnali	94.67	3.16	0.21	0.01	1.74	0.18	0.03	0.00	0.00	0.00	1688412
Dolpa	70.63	27.77	0.07	0.01	0.45	0.00	1.06	0.00	0.00	0.00	42774
Mugu	91.77	7.43	0.02	0.00	0.77	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	64549
Humla	87.45	12.15	0.00	0.05	0.35	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	55394
Jumla	97.30	1.45	0.08	0.00	1.16	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	118349
Kalikot	99.79	0.07	0.01	0.00	0.13	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	145292
Dailekh	95.91	2.75	0.19	0.01	0.81	0.32	0.01	0.00	0.00	0.00	252313
Jajarkot	98.65	0.31	0.04	0.00	0.93	0.07	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	189360
Rukum -West	97.53	0.61	0.06	0.00	1.23	0.57	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	166740
Salyan	95.89	1.10	0.12	0.00	2.72	0.17	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	238515
Surkhet	91.60	4.07	0.60	0.00	3.54	0.17	0.02	0.00	0.00	0.00	415126
Sudurpashchim	97.43	0.84	0.26	0.01	1.39	0.06	0.01	0.00	0.01	0.00	2694783
Bajura	98.72	1.14	0.09	0.00	0.05	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	138523
Bajhang	99.68	0.22	0.00	0.00	0.10	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	189085
Darchula	99.77	0.10	0.03	0.00	0.10	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	133310
Baitadi	99.96	0.01	0.01	0.00	0.03	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	242157
Dadeldhura	98.18	1.35	0.05	0.00	0.26	0.15	0.00	0.00	0.01	0.00	139602
Doti	98.97	0.67	0.06	0.01	0.14	0.15	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	204831
Achham	99.14	0.50	0.14	0.00	0.17	0.06	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	228852
Kailali	95.91	1.31	0.64	0.02	2.06	0.05	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.01	904666
Kanchanpur	95.54	0.80	0.10	0.01	3.40	0.09	0.04	0.00	0.03	0.00	513757

Annex 14: Age-sex distribution of religious population, NPHC 2021

Annex Table 14.1: Distribution of followers of Hindu and Buddhist population by age and sex, NPHC 2021

Age	Hindu				Buddhist			
	Male (%)	Female (%)	Male (N)	Female(N)	Male (%)	Female (%)	Male (N)	Female(N)
00-04	9.03	7.60	1,046,360	918,434	7.57	6.60	87,778	81,411
05-09	10.07	8.75	1,166,455	1,058,323	8.78	7.80	101,839	96,285
10-14	10.48	9.44	1,214,889	1,140,962	9.47	8.68	109,848	107,035
15-19	10.43	9.81	1,208,362	1,185,751	10.18	9.70	118,019	119,690
20-24	9.10	9.95	1,054,636	1,203,468	9.17	9.63	106,382	118,829
25-29	7.86	8.99	910,307	1,086,798	8.28	8.94	95,996	110,258
30-34	6.87	7.89	795,760	953,318	7.33	7.91	85,002	97,556
35-39	6.62	7.48	767,535	904,562	6.77	7.32	78,512	90,288
40-44	5.87	6.23	680,169	753,598	6.06	6.48	70,307	79,936
45-49	4.88	5.07	565,679	613,569	5.10	5.30	59,144	65,432
50-54	4.88	4.87	565,488	589,293	5.44	5.39	63,117	66,449
55-59	3.80	3.62	439,929	437,720	4.17	4.10	48,351	50,630
60-64	3.26	3.29	377,774	397,810	3.78	3.77	43,868	46,461
65-69	2.67	2.64	308,825	318,989	2.96	2.93	34,361	36,161
70-74	2.06	2.14	238,440	258,649	2.20	2.39	25,559	29,533
75-79	1.20	1.23	139,169	148,137	1.42	1.52	16,422	18,756
80-84	0.54	0.54	62,356	65,729	0.91	0.00	8,667	10,527
85-89	0.25	0.27	29,299	32,635	0.38	0.44	4,435	5,397
90-94	0.09	0.11	10,563	13,879	0.13	0.17	1,529	2,090
95+	0.05	0.07	5,534	8,591	0.06	0.08	654	1,035
Total	100.00	100.00	11,587,529	12,090,215	100.00	100.00	1,159,790	1,233,759

Annex Table 14.2: Distribution of followers of Hindu and Buddhist population by age and sex, NPHC 2021

Age	Islam				Kirat			
	Male (%)	Female (%)	Male (N)	Female (N)	Male (%)	Female (%)	Male (N)	Female (N)
00-04	13.01	12.19	95,249	91,536	7.55	6.75	34,063	31,943
05-09	13.97	13.18	102,287	98,962	9.27	8.41	41,810	39,778
10-14	12.96	11.99	94,847	90,070	9.48	8.92	42,768	42,180
15-19	11.67	10.99	85,407	82,570	10.68	10.06	48,175	47,563
20-24	9.33	10.32	68,305	77,527	9.26	9.60	41,769	45,400
25-29	7.10	8.49	51,939	63,730	8.27	8.95	37,323	42,313
30-34	5.67	6.79	41,483	51,031	7.35	7.88	33,178	37,274
35-39	5.40	6.41	39,504	48,167	6.57	7.20	29,653	34,047
40-44	4.51	4.45	33,050	33,459	5.73	6.15	25,859	29,069
45-49	3.47	3.64	25,414	27,332	4.74	4.96	21,397	23,482
50-54	3.29	3.00	24,075	22,557	5.20	5.22	23,469	24,669
55-59	2.53	2.22	18,544	16,672	4.11	4.23	18,538	19,997
60-64	2.23	2.06	16,289	15,493	3.89	3.83	17,540	18,098
65-69	2.04	1.81	14,955	13,557	3.01	2.98	13,562	14,108
70-74	1.64	1.45	11,971	10,853	2.24	2.29	10,114	10,848
75-79	0.74	0.60	5,384	4,517	1.39	1.38	6,277	6,546
80-84	0.26	0.22	1,891	1,621	0.79	0.71	3,561	3,356
85-89	0.11	0.09	774	682	0.34	0.36	1,535	1,694
90-94	0.04	0.05	321	338	0.10	0.10	468	465
95+	0.04	0.05	317	386	0.03	0.04	134	181
Total	100.00	10.00	732,006	751,060	100.00	100.00	451,193	473,011

Annex Table 14.3: Distribution of followers of Christian and Prakriti population by age and sex, NPHC 2021

Age	Christian				Prakriti			
	Male (%)	Female (%)	Male (N)	Female (N)	Male (%)	Female (%)	Male (N)	Female(N)
00-04	8.62	7.12	20,707	19,364	8.65	7.59	4,198	4,060
05-09	9.84	8.32	23,642	22,652	9.76	8.57	4,737	4,585
10-14	10.67	9.51	25,641	25,867	10.16	9.43	4,929	5,046
15-19	10.92	10.35	26,219	28,157	10.60	9.53	5,143	5,103
20-24	9.42	10.47	22,621	28,484	8.92	9.59	4,329	5,134
25-29	8.44	9.63	20,267	26,210	7.99	8.68	3,876	4,646
30-34	7.47	8.35	17,953	22,721	6.72	7.48	3,259	4,003
35-39	6.89	7.76	16,551	21,129	6.09	6.75	2,957	3,611
40-44	6.03	6.47	14,474	17,609	5.54	6.07	2,687	3,251
45-49	4.89	5.04	11,736	13,710	4.90	5.12	2,379	2,739
50-54	4.90	4.79	11,774	13,038	5.37	5.54	2,608	2,967
55-59	3.47	3.43	8,334	9,324	4.31	4.02	2,093	2,150
60-64	2.93	2.91	7,047	7,927	3.50	3.71	1,697	1,985
65-69	2.14	2.20	5,133	5,985	2.92	3.08	1,419	1,646
70-74	1.61	1.78	3,860	4,830	2.13	2.43	1,033	1,299
75-79	0.99	1.05	2,383	2,861	1.42	1.30	691	697
80-84	0.45	0.44	1,079	1,195	0.63	0.65	306	348
85-89	0.21	0.23	512	620	0.24	0.29	116	155
90-94	0.07	0.10	176	277	0.10	0.13	47	68
95+	0.04	0.05	97	147	0.05	0.05	23	28
Total	100.00	100.00	240,206	272,107	100.00	100.00	48,527	53,521

Annex Table 14.4: Distribution of followers of Christian and Prakriti population by age and sex, NPHC 2021

Age	Bon				Jain			
	Male (%)	Female (%)	Male (N)	Female (N)	Male (%)	Female (%)	Male (N)	Female (N)
00-04	6.37	5.38	2,036	1,898	5.81	4.31	72	50
05-09	7.76	6.52	2,481	2,297	5.81	5.35	72	62
10-14	8.95	7.37	2,862	2,600	6.54	6.47	81	75
15-19	9.43	8.14	3,014	2,870	8.31	8.37	103	97
20-24	8.70	8.63	2,782	3,043	7.67	6.21	95	72
25-29	7.28	8.44	2,327	2,975	6.62	6.82	82	79
30-34	6.76	7.55	2,161	2,662	7.43	7.68	92	89
35-39	6.38	7.33	2,040	2,584	6.94	9.06	86	105
40-44	5.57	6.37	1,782	2,244	6.62	8.20	82	95
45-49	5.02	6.00	1,604	2,115	8.15	7.16	101	83
50-54	5.69	6.33	1,819	2,233	6.54	8.28	81	96
55-59	5.08	5.07	1,623	1,786	7.67	6.30	95	73
60-64	5.15	5.05	1,645	1,779	5.08	5.26	63	61
65-69	4.19	4.00	1,338	1,410	5.08	4.14	63	48
70-74	3.20	3.57	1,022	1,257	2.74	2.67	34	31
75-79	2.02	1.86	647	657	1.61	1.90	20	22
80-84	1.39	1.28	444	451	0.65	1.04	8	12
85-89	0.66	0.70	210	247	0.48	0.35	6	4
90-94	0.26	0.27	84	94	0.16	0.26	2	3
95+	0.15	0.15	47	53	0.08	0.17	1	2
Total	100.00	100.00	31,968	35,255	100.00	100.00	1,239	1,159

Annex Table 14.5: Distribution of followers of Christian and Prakriti population by age and sex, NPHC 2021

Age	Baha'i				Sikh			
	Male (%)	Female (%)	Male (N)	Female (N)	Male (%)	Female (%)	Male (N)	Female (N)
00-04	7.26	5.28	17	16	5.24	7.22	45	46
05-09	8.55	7.59	20	23	7.22	8.63	62	55
10-14	8.55	5.94	20	18	8.03	9.11	69	58
15-19	7.26	7.59	17	23	7.45	8.95	64	57
20-24	6.41	8.58	15	26	9.78	9.26	84	59
25-29	6.41	13.20	15	40	12.81	9.11	110	58
30-34	8.12	9.24	19	28	8.03	8.48	69	54
35-39	7.26	7.92	17	24	8.85	6.91	76	44
40-44	9.40	9.57	22	29	7.10	7.69	61	49
45-49	6.84	5.28	16	16	6.40	5.81	55	37
50-54	7.69	7.59	18	23	5.24	5.18	45	33
55-59	4.70	2.97	11	9	4.66	3.92	40	25
60-64	4.27	2.97	10	9	3.38	2.98	29	19
65-69	3.85	2.64	9	8	2.79	2.67	24	17
70-74	2.56	1.32	6	4	1.75	1.88	15	12
75-79	0.85	0.99	2	3	0.35	1.41	3	9
80-84	0.00	0.00			0.35	0.31	3	2
85-89	0.00	0.99		3	0.12	0.31	1	2
90-94	0.00	0.00			0.12	0.16	1	1
95+	0.00	0.33		1	0.35	0.00	3	0
Total	100.00	100.00	234	303	100.00	100.00	859	637

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