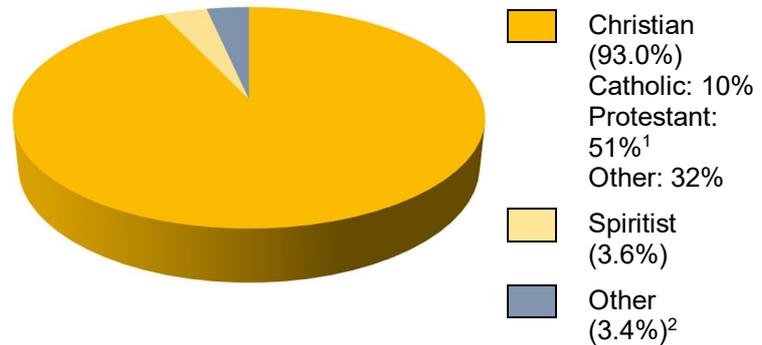
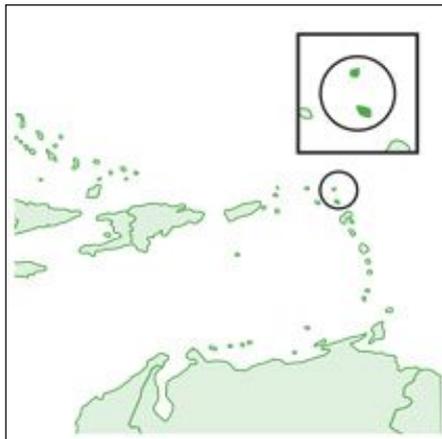


ANTIGUA AND BARBUDA



Area: 442 km ²	Population³: 90,800	Political system: Monarchy ⁴	Major Language(s): English, Antiguan Creole
-------------------------------------	--	---	---

Legal framework on Freedom of Religion and actual application

Article 3 of the constitution of the Republic of Antigua and Barbuda of 1981 recognises the fundamental rights and freedoms of individuals regardless, of creed and other considerations, subject, among other factors, to respect for freedom of conscience, expression, peaceful assembly and association.

Article 6, which covers slavery and forced labour, recognises the possibility of conscientious objection in lieu of compulsory military service.

Article 11 extensively protects freedom of conscience and religion, specifying that the term "freedom" includes freedom of thought and religion, freedom to change one's religion or beliefs, and freedom to manifest and propagate, in public or in private, individually or collectively, one's religion or beliefs through teaching, practice and observance of worship.

The constitution ensures that no person attending a place of education shall be required to receive religious instruction or to take part in or attend any religious ceremony or observance if they relate to a religion other than his or her own.

In article 14, the constitution provides protection from discrimination based on religion or beliefs. Nobody can be forced to take an oath against his or her religion or beliefs. Likewise, the law cannot violate the aforementioned protections of religious freedom.

No person can be appointed as a Senator or Member of Parliament if they are ministers of religion (articles 30 and 31).⁵

Religious organisations must register their assets with the Inland Revenue Department to determine tax payments and sources of tax concessions, especially in the case of the construction or renovation of temples.

The law bans the use of marijuana, even for religious purposes, a situation that is the subject of continuous criticism from Rastafarian believers who claim that the substance is an integral part of their religious rituals. Rastafarians are also critical of public education that requires students to be vaccinated and to remove their traditional caps for safety reasons, as these stipulations are contrary to their beliefs.⁶

Incidents

In October 2014, Bishop Charlesworth Browne, of the Christian Ministries Church, called for the banning of a show by the artist Alkaline. The prelate went so far as to call for a boycott of the Independence Day celebrations if the show went ahead.⁷

In March 2015, Austin Kirby's public complaint that the Seventh-day Adventist Church refused to baptise him unless he shaved his dreadlocks (which are typical of the Rastafarian religion) caused controversy.⁸

In August 2015, Dr Twaites took issue to criticism made on national radio by the host and naturalist, James Luke, who said that he had refused to let a female doctor perform a urological examination because it went against his religious beliefs (he is a Seventh-Day Adventist). Instead Dr Twaites, director of the annual prostate cancer screening programme, personally examined Mr Luke. The doctor said that the radio was not an appropriate place to discuss such concerns.⁹

In November 2015, the practices of an astrologer of Indian origin were described as "witchcraft," and as attacks against the country's development. The allegations were made by 'The Movement', a newly formed activist group. A delegation of three members of the Christian Assembly Ministry, led by Pastor Paul Andrew, visited the astrologer, who was told that if he did not leave the country, they would come back with the police because he was operating in Antigua and Barbuda without a commercial licence.¹⁰

In November 2015, three Indian nationals were arrested in Antigua and Barbuda. They were charged with promoting Obi (Obeah), a cult whose practices are illegal under existing legislation. A Jamaican religious leader called on Christian churches to support the abolition of such legislation. Both Bishop Charlesworth Browne and Catholic Bishop Kenneth Richards refused.¹¹

Prospects for freedom of religion

Acts of intolerance and religious discrimination have occurred. These have led to the stigmatisation of decisions based on personal beliefs, as well as of some practices understood as forms of worship or belief. To improve protection of religious freedom would require a greater respect and appreciation for individual beliefs and for freedom of conscience as basic elements for peaceful co-existence in society.¹²

¹ Anglicans: 26.02% Evangelicals: 25%

²<http://www.state.gov/documents/organization/238726.pdf> accessed on 8th March 2016.

³<http://www.bbc.com/news/world-latin-america-18706079> accessed on 4th May 2016.

⁴ Constitutional monarchy with a parliamentary system. The British monarch, Queen Elizabeth II, is the head of state, represented by a Governor General; http://www.thearda.com/internationalData/countries/Country_10_1.asp accessed on 8th March 2016.

⁵http://www.thearda.com/internationalData/countries/Country_10_6.asp accessed on 8th March 2016.

⁶<http://www.state.gov/documents/organization/238726.pdf/> accessed on 8th March 2016.

<https://freedomhouse.org/report/freedom-world/2015/antigua-and-barbuda> accessed on 8th March 2016.

⁷<http://antiguaobserver.com/bishop-browne-says-ban-alkaline/> accessed on 8th March 2016.

⁸<http://antiguaobserver.com/seventh-day-adventist-refusal-of-dreadlocked-man-stirs-10s-of-thousands/> accessed on 8th March 2016.

⁹<http://antiguaobserver.com/dr-thwaites-responds-to-criticism-of-colleague-during-prostate-screening-clinic/> accessed on 8th March 2016.

¹⁰<http://antiguaobserver.com/indian-astrologer-gets-marching-orders> accessed on 08/03/2016

¹¹<http://antiguaobserver.com/regional-legislator-deems-attempts-to-criminalise-obeah-outrageous/> accessed on 8th March 2016.

<http://antiguaobserver.com/christian-leaders-reject-calls-to-remove-obeah-act/> accessed on 8th March 2016.

¹²<http://www.state.gov/documents/organization/238726.pdf> accessed on 8th March 2016.