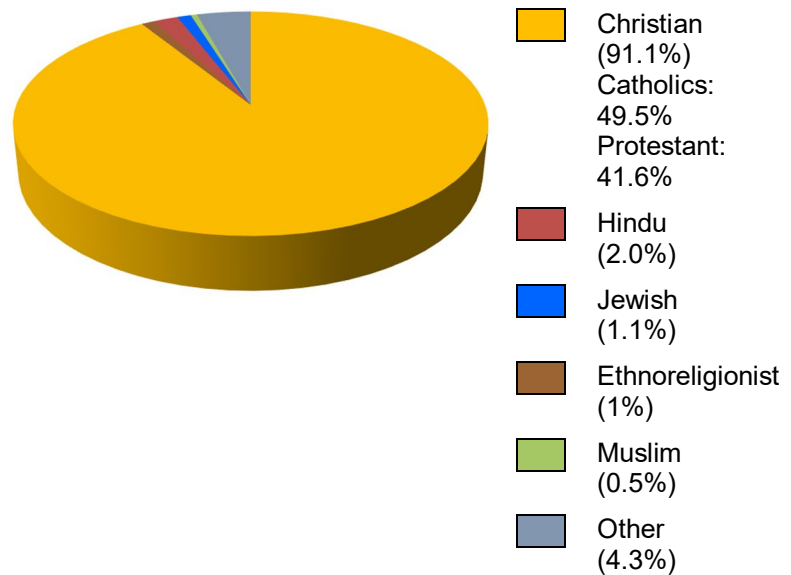


BELIZE



Area¹: 22,965 km ²	Population²: 324,000	Political system: Democracy ³	Major Language(s): English, Spanish, Belize Creole, Mayan, Garifuna
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Legal framework on freedom of religion and actual application

The preamble of the constitution of Belize recognises the “supremacy of God” and faith in human rights and fundamental freedoms. This constitution is the supreme law of the State. The country has no official religion. The constitution recognises the dignity of the human person, stating that each individual has equal rights and that they are inalienable.

The constitution guarantees respect for fundamental rights and freedoms, regardless of race, place of origin, political opinions, colour, creed or sex.

Freedom of conscience is protected, including “freedom of thought and religion, freedom to change one’s religion or belief, and freedom, either alone or in community with others, and both in public and in private, to manifest and propagate his religion or belief in worship, teaching, practice and observance.” No one can be forced to take an oath contrary to their religion.

Religious communities are allowed to establish and manage their own educational institutions, provided they maintain them themselves.

In order to be recognised by the State, religious groups must register, subject to a fee. However, churches and other places of worship are exempt from property taxes.⁴

Incidents

According to the International Religious Freedom Report for 2014 released by the United States Department of State, there were no cases of discrimination, persecution or intolerance in Belize during this period.⁵

Prospects for freedom of religion

In Belize, religious freedom is constitutionally protected. As in the previous period, no incidents of intolerance or discrimination were recorded between 2014 and 2016. Prospects for freedom of religion remain positive.

¹ <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-latin-america-18724590> accessed on 6 May 2016.

² <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-latin-america-18724590> accessed on 6 May 2016.

³ <http://www.belize.gov.bz/index.php/our-governance/how-we-are-governed/local-government> accessed on 2 March 2016.

⁴ <http://www.cdn.gov.bz/belize.gov.bz/images/documents/Belize%20Constitution%20Act%20Chap%204.pdf> accessed on 2 March 2016.

⁵ <http://www.state.gov/documents/organization/238734.pdf> accessed on 3 March 2016.