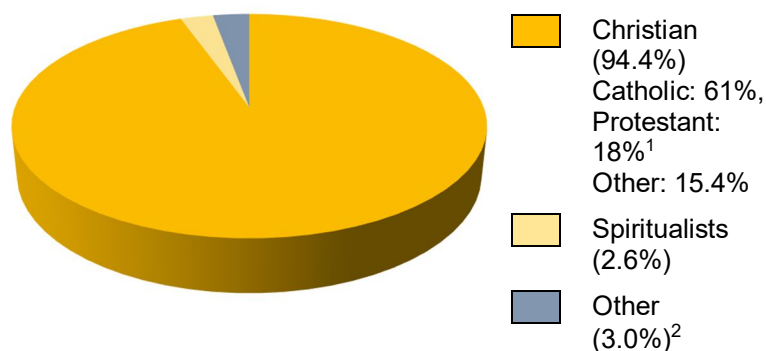
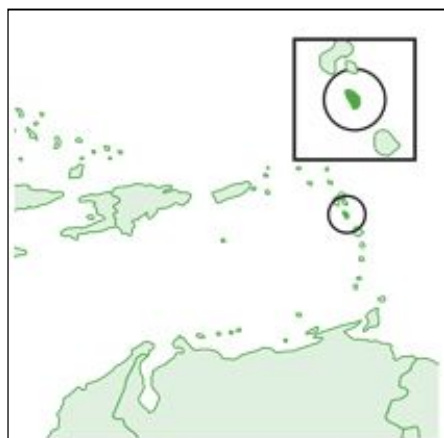


DOMINICA



Area:
751 km²

Population³:
71,000

Political system:
Democracy⁴

Major Language(s):
English, Dominican
Creole French⁵

Legal framework on freedom of religion and actual application

In the preamble of the constitution, the People of Dominica affirm that the Commonwealth is founded upon the following principles: the supremacy of God; respect for fundamental human rights and freedoms; the position of the family in a society of free men and free institutions; the dignity of the human person; and the equal and inalienable rights with which all members of the human family are endowed by their Creator. There is, however, no official religion.

Chapter One, on the Protection of Fundamental Rights and Freedoms, states that every person in Dominica is entitled to the protection of his or her fundamental rights and freedoms, regardless of race, place of origin, political opinions, colour, creed or sex, subject to respect for the rights and freedom of others as well as to the public interest.

More specifically, article nine refers to the protection of freedom of conscience, which includes “freedom of thought and of religion, freedom to change his 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.” At the same time, it is stipulated that no one shall receive, without his or her consent, instruction in a religion other than their own. The article also states that every religious community is entitled to establish and to manage, at its own expense, educational institutions.⁶

Legally, the government has the power of derogation vis-à-vis freedom of conscience, as reasonably required by public morality and public interest.

Religious organisations can be recognised as non-profit organisations by registering with the Attorney General's Office, which keeps a record of such organisations. Places of worship must also register and can only be used for the purpose of worship.

Incidents

In February 2014, Caribbean political and religious leaders met in the city of St John's (Antigua) to promote interfaith dialogue and cooperation in order to contribute to the social transformation of the Caribbean countries, with an emphasis on curbing social conflicts.⁷

In May 2014, religious leaders from Dominica accepted a request made by the Council of Churches of Grenada, which became involved in negotiations with the International Monetary Fund, to restructure the external debt of the Caribbean islands, where poverty and unemployment are high.⁸

The Catholic Church is an influential shaper of public opinion and, with Protestant religious leaders, it takes part in discussions about the country's social problems.

Prospects for freedom of religion

In Dominica, freedom of worship is enjoyed by many religions; some situations, however, have led to differences of opinion, such as the use of marijuana by Rastafarian groups as an integral part of their religious rites. In the period between 2014 and 2016 there have been no incidents of intolerance or discrimination; on the contrary, efforts have been made in favour of dialogue and joint action by the various Churches. Thus, prospects for religious freedom are good.

¹ Evangelicals

²http://www.thearda.com/internationalData/countries/Country_69_2.asp accessed .2nd May 2016

³<http://www.bbc.com/news/world-latin-america-19246342> accessed on 1st May 2016.

⁴ Parliamentary democracy with separation of powers

⁵<http://www.dominica.gov.dm/about-dominica/country-profile> accessed on 3rd March 2016.

⁶<http://www.constitution.org/cons/dominica.htm> accessed on 3rd March 2016.

⁷http://www.caribbean360.com/news/antigua_news/caribbean-looks-to-religion-for-spiritual-help accessed on 3rd March 2016.

⁸<http://www.caribbean360.com/news/caribbean-religious-leaders-inspire-imf-sunday-schools> accessed on 3rd March 2016.