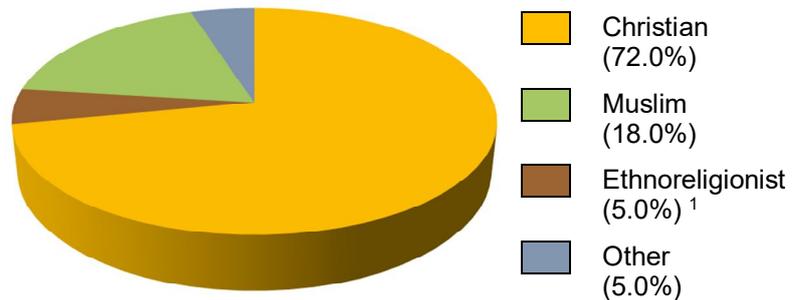


GHANA



Area: 238,535 km ²	Population²: 26,327,649	Political system: Democracy	Major Language(s): English ³
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Legal framework on freedom of religion and actual application

The Republic of Ghana is one of the most stable nations in West Africa, both with regard to respect for basic human rights and for economic development. Although its economic growth slowed from 7.1 percent in 2013 to 4.2 percent the following year, the medium-term prospects still look favourable. Ghana was largely spared the devastating consequences of the Ebola outbreak, which in 2014 and 2015 caused a huge crisis in several other West African countries.⁴

The stable economic and political situation contributes to the fact that relations between the various religions and faith communities in Ghana are in many respects exemplary. Where there is less poverty, incidents of social tension also tend to be fewer and less acute.

A former British colony, Ghana gained independence in 1957 – the first country in sub-Saharan Africa to do so. It has a particularly broad spectrum of faith communities. More than two-thirds of the people are Christian, with a far smaller group of Muslims. In addition to a small proportion of followers of traditional African religions, there are small numbers of Baha'is, Buddhists, Hindus and Jews.⁵

Dominant among the Christians are the Pentecostal and charismatic communities (28.3 percent), followed by Protestants (18.4 percent) and Catholics (13.1 percent).⁶ The Muslims mostly belong to a moderate form of Sunni Islam. Extremist Islam has few followers in Ghana, in contrast to many other countries in the region, such as Burkina Faso, Mali and Niger.

In the widely respected Ghana Conference on Religion and Peace (GCRP), in which the Ghana's Catholic Bishops' Conference is also involved, Christians and Muslims work constructively together in pursuit of their stated objective: the building of a country of peaceful coexistence.⁷

The basis for this peaceful coexistence among the religions is established in article 21 of the constitution which establishes the right to religious freedom.⁸ Officially, registration is compulsory

for all religious groups, though in practice many, in particular the traditional African communities, do not observe this law, which has been on the statute books since the 1980s. So far, they have suffered no consequences from their failure to do so.⁹

Generally speaking, not-for-profit religious activities, such as charitable work and education, are tax-exempt. During the period of this report, there were no indications of any problems between the various religious organisations.

These freedoms enable the Catholic Church in Ghana to play a full part in shaping society. In addition to its pastoral work, the Catholic Church is active in numerous ways in the social field. Outside the country, in the wider Catholic world, the Ghanaian Church is well respected; one example of this was the worldwide appeal by Ghanaian Cardinal Peter Turkson, President of the Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace, to take seriously and put into practice the papal encyclical *Laudato si*. For him, this papal encyclical carries not merely an ecological but above all a social message. In an interview with the Austrian magazine *Inpuncto*, he spoke of an “encompassing social encyclical” that combines the ecological, economic and political dimensions “in a unique manner”. For Turkson, the novel aspect of the encyclical is the combining of morality with spirituality. For him, the encyclical focuses particularly on themes such as poverty, social exclusion, human trafficking, refugees, the persecution of Christians, religious intolerance, the family, youth and the elderly. He also notes that economic and political rulers are called upon to recognise the consequences their decisions will have for others.¹⁰

One problem affecting not only Ghana but many other West African nations is the mass emigration of young people. Many attempt to get to Europe via the western or central Mediterranean. Just how many young people have lost their lives so far in this endeavour is unknown. What is certain is that there are many young people from Ghana among them.¹¹

Cardinal Turkson lamented the fact that most of these economic migrants harbour great illusions about their future in Europe. “The real story of their wanderings is never told at home. The sufferings and humiliations are not spoken about,” he observes. He would like to see realistic information given in Africa about the dangers of migration and the real situation in Europe. Cardinal Turkson also appealed to Europeans to tackle the causes of the exodus in the countries of origin. He said that what was needed also was “targeted development programmes for the endangered states, which would tackle education, training and democratic government practices on every level”.

Incidents

No incidents have been noted. So far, the phenomenon of Islamic jihadism has not yet appeared in the form of violent attacks in Ghana.

Prospects for Freedom of Religion

On account of its economic and political stability, Ghana is one of the safest destination countries in West Africa. This is one reason why the favourable security situation for the members of all the religions represented in Ghana is likely to endure, even though the number of refugees is considerable. During 2015, about 14,000 refugees were being cared for in Ghana by the UNHCR, including people who had fled the political unrest in the Ivory Coast, to the west of Ghana. But

several thousand people have also moved to Ghana from neighbouring Togo, many of them for economic reasons.¹²

¹ Traditional African religions

² CIA 2016: The World Factbook, Estimate, July 2015

³ English (official), Asante 16%; Ewe 14%; Fante 11.6%; Boron (Brong) 4.9%; Dagomba 4.4%; Dangme 4.2%; Dagarte (Dagaba) 3.9%; Kokomba 3.5%; Akyem 3.2%; Ga 3.1%; other languages 31.2%; CIA 2016: The World Factbook

⁴ http://www.auswaertiges-amt.de/DE/Aussenpolitik/Laender/Laenderinfos/Ghana/Wirtschaft_node.html

⁵ U.S. State department 2016: International Religious Freedom Report for 2014

⁶ Munzinger-Archiv 2016

⁷ Munzinger-Archiv 2016

⁸ <http://www.ghanareview.com/parlia/Gconst5.html>

⁹ US-State Department, International Religious Freedom Report for 2013

¹⁰ http://de.radiovaticana.va/news/2015/09/25/%C3%B6sterreich_turkson_papst-enzyklika_nicht_nur_%C3%B6kologisch/1174081

¹¹ http://www.deutschlandradiokultur.de/migration-die-folgen-der-fluechtlingswelle-fuer-ghana.979.de.html?dram:article_id=345271

¹² UNHCR 2016: 2015 UNHCR subregional operations profile - West Africa