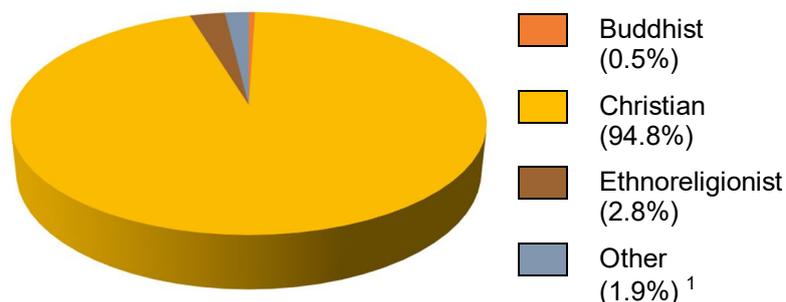
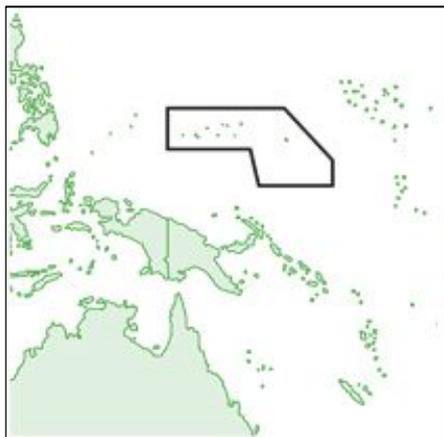


MICRONESIA



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|-------------------------------------|-------------------------------|---------------------------------------|--|
| Area: 702 km ² | Population: 103,395 | Political system: Democracy | Major Language(s): English, Chuukese, Kosraean, Pohnpeian, Yapese |
|-------------------------------------|-------------------------------|---------------------------------------|--|

Legal framework on Freedom of Religion and actual application

The Federated States of Micronesia, made up of Yap, Chuuk, Pohnpei and Kosrae, gained independence in 1979. Comprising more than 600 islands, it was formally a part of the Trust Territory of the Pacific Islands but it formed its own constitutional government and became a sovereign state after signing a Compact of Free Association with the United States. Each of the four states in the heart of the Caroline Islands Archipelago has a distinct culture and identity individual to its history and 17 indigenous languages are still in use today.

Religious freedom is protected by the constitution and other laws enforced by the government. According to government policy, the Embassy of the United States of America has worked with the government of Micronesia as well as Church-related non-governmental organisations to promote religious tolerance and human rights. Within the constitution, the Bill of Rights prohibits state religion and outlaws governmental restrictions on religious freedom. The US Department of State's 2014 Report on International Religious Freedom stated that, although governmental authorities could fund non-religious activities in some schools, there was no evidence to suggest this affected the free exercise of religion and there were no reports of "significant societal actions affecting religious freedom" in 2014.² The government also provides grants to Church-affiliated schools, suggesting a balance in attitudes towards religion.

Incidents

There were no incidents recorded during the period under review.

Prospects for Freedom of Religion

Despite the diversity across Micronesia's four states, Christianity is widespread throughout the country. The faith arrived in the region in mid-nineteenth century when European missionaries came. The Roman Catholic Church is present in each of the states, as are several Protestant denominations. Many of the denominational affiliations are based on local tribal identities. In Yap and Chuuk, the majority of the population is Catholic, with 80 percent and 60 percent respectively.

In Kosrae, the population is 90 percent Protestant whereas the local population of Pohnpei is evenly divided between Catholic and Protestant believers.³ Other Protestant groups include Baptists, Salvation Army, and Seventh-day Adventists. A small percentage of citizens of the Federated States of Micronesia are Jehovah's Witnesses, members of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints and members of the Baha'i faith.

The larger Micronesian islands have been Christian for more than a century, although in some parts of the nations, Christian theology is often mixed with indigenous beliefs in magic. All Christian denominations are active within society, with many Church groups managing schools and other institutions. There has been no reported tension between Catholic and Protestant groups and an Inter-Denominational Council exists to tackle social problems and promote official cooperation. According to some reports, some newer Protestant groups have reportedly limited their adherents' contact with other religious communities and have rejected invitations to join the council or the Christian Ministerial Association.⁴

¹ http://www.thearda.com/internationalData/countries/Country_150_1.asp

² <http://www.refworld.org/docid/562105a715.html>

³ <http://www.refworld.org/docid/562105a715.html>

⁴ <http://www.state.gov/documents/organization/171659.pdf>