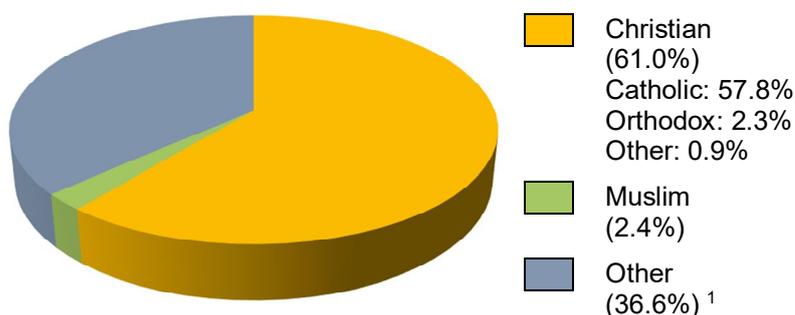


# SLOVENIA



Area:	Population:	Political system:	Major Language(s):
20,273 km <sup>2</sup>	1.96 million	Democracy	Slovene

## Legal framework on Freedom of Religion and actual application

Following the country's secession from federal Yugoslavia, the 1991 constitution of the newly independent Slovenia stipulated freedom of religion and separation of church and state.

In 2007 Slovenia's parliament passed a new law, the Religious Freedom Act.<sup>2</sup> Article 4 of the act proclaimed the neutrality of the state in matters of religion; Article 5 defined churches and religious communities as "organisations of general benefit". Article 29 stipulated additional possibilities with regard to state funding of religious communities. In order to be registered, a religious community must have been operating in Slovenia for at least 10 years, and have at least 100 adult members.

According to the Office for Religious Communities,<sup>3</sup> there are 43 registered religious communities in Slovenia including the Roman Catholic Church, the Lutheran Church, the Jewish Community of Slovenia, the Union of Baptist Churches, the Serbian Orthodox Church, the Islamic Religious Community, the Pentecostal Church, the Christian Adventist Church, Jehovah's Witnesses, the New Apostolic Church, the Free Church, the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, the Unification Church, the National Baha'i Community, the Reformation Christian Community, the Macedonian Orthodox Community "St. Clement of Ohrid", the Buddha Dharma, the Church of Scientology, and the Hindu Religious Community.

More than 75 percent of the registered religious communities can be categorised as new religious movements (NRMs). There are also numerous NRMs that are not formally registered as religious communities, but as associations. There are between 70 and 100 NRMs operating in Slovenia, according to research into these new religious and spiritual movements in Slovenia.<sup>4</sup>

Religious communities may set up educational institutions and schools at all levels. Public schools in Slovenia do not offer religious education. However, the academic subject Religions and Ethics is being introduced into the primary school curriculum, with the aim of teaching schoolchildren about important world religions.

The only higher education institution of religious communities in Slovenia is the Theological Faculty of the Roman Catholic Church, which is also a member of the University.

The national television includes an editorial board for religious programming. Religious communities have one representative in the Council of the National Radio and Television.

The Roman Catholic Church is by far the largest religion, accounting for about 75 percent of Slovene citizens. The country is divided into six dioceses, and includes two archdioceses – Maribor and Ljubljana, the capital. The Slovenian Bishops' Conference was founded in 1993. Slovenia signed an agreement with the Holy See in 2001, regulating specific issues between the state and the Catholic Church.<sup>5</sup> Currently, there are 785 parishes in Slovenia, headed by about 1,050 priests and 11 bishops.<sup>6</sup> The Church owns more than 2,900 churches and chapels. The Church-owned buildings make up 80 percent of all heritage-listed buildings in the country. The government has adjudicated on about 99 percent of the 1,191 Catholic denationalisation claims for properties nationalised after the Second World War.

The number of Catholics in Slovenia is on the decline, according to the 2015 report of the Slovenian Catholic Church. This also shows a drop in the number of priests, and church weddings. Of the other religious communities, the two largest are the Orthodox (46,000), and the Muslim (47,500). The Orthodox are primarily Serbs; the Muslims largely Bosnians and Kosovo Albanians.

The country's first Islamic education centre was opened in 2013. After a decades-long struggle to build a mosque in Ljubljana, a ground-breaking ceremony was held in 2013. The mosque, with Islamic centre, is due to be completed by the end of 2017 at a cost of around 35 million Euros. 80 percent of the money donated is provided by Saudi Arabia and Qatar. However, in February 2016, unknown persons have thrown pig heads at the Islamic centre construction site. The police had already investigated a similar occurrence the previous month, and this later incident has been seen as a criminal act of hatred, violence and intolerance, as defined in article 297 of the Criminal Law.

Slovenia also has 16,000 Protestants of several denominations. The largest is the Evangelical Christian Church (14,700 followers) whose strength is in eastern Slovenia. Its antecedents go back to the sixteenth-century Reformation.

The World Jewish Restoration Organisation has continued to negotiate with the government over a small number of outstanding claims for restitution. The total Jewish population in Slovenia, comprised of both Sephardi and Ashkenazi members, is estimated at 400.

## **Incidents**

No incidents were recorded during the period under review.

## **Prospects for Freedom of Religion**

Slovenes today live in conditions which are relatively pluralistic with regard to religion. While the status of NRMs is that of marginal groups, it would be hard to find any violation of religious freedom. However, this does not mean that the religious atmosphere in Slovenia can be described as entirely without tensions.

Religiosity of the young has decreased quite substantially in Slovenia. Belief in fundamental Christian dogmas is professed by only about a third of nominal Catholics. The number of people receiving the Sacraments, including Communion, Confirmation and Marriage, is on the decline as well. Various New Age phenomena have been embraced by a considerable number of nominal Catholics, including various leaders and other influential figures. Today the faith of Slovene Catholics is a heightened version of the wider European phenomenon of "belonging, not believing." The Church blames this trend on a shift of lifestyle, and increasing secularisation.

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<sup>1</sup> 2002 census

<sup>2</sup> The Religious Freedom Act (Official Gazette of the RS, No. 14/07)

<sup>3</sup> The Register of churches and other religious communities in the Republic of Slovenia (Office for Religious Communities)

<sup>4</sup> Aleš Črnič and Lesjak, 2006

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<sup>5</sup> The National Assembly of the RS ratified the Agreement between the Republic of Slovenia and the Holy See on legal issues on 28<sup>th</sup> January 2004 (Official Gazette of the RS - MP, 4/04).

<sup>6</sup> The 2015 report of the Slovenian Catholic Church