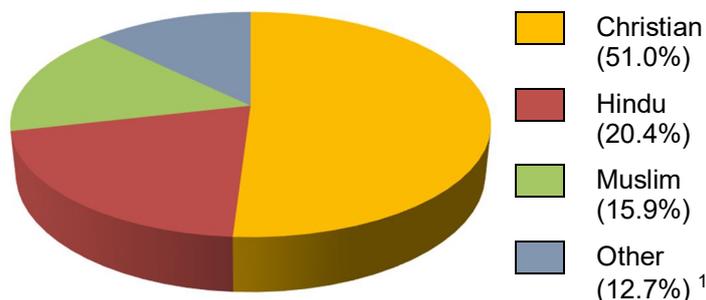


# SURINAME



Area:	Population <sup>2</sup> :	Political system:	Major Language(s):
163,265 km <sup>2</sup>	534,000	Democracy	Dutch <sup>3</sup>

## Legal framework on freedom of religion and actual application

The constitution guarantees that everyone has the right to freedom of religion and belief (article 18). No one may be discriminated on grounds of religion, including in the workplace (articles 8 and 28).

The right of conscientious objection to military service is recognised (article 180).<sup>4</sup>

Everyone has the right to choose or change religions. Freedom of religion is a right of the individual. Violation of this right can be brought before a court of law.

The Penal Code punishes those who publicly and by any means incite or promote discrimination based on religion or belief.

The law prohibits various forms of blasphemy without depriving offenders of their liberty.

Religious education is not allowed in public schools; however, religious holidays can be celebrated. Home schooling is also not allowed on religious or other grounds. However, private schools, many of which are religiously affiliated, can teach religion.

The State provides grants to a limited number of public schools run by various religious groups. Teachers are paid by the State since they are public servants.

The Armed Forces have chaplains of different faiths: Hindu, Muslim, Protestant and Catholic.

Five groups are represented on the Interfaith Council: the Catholic Church, two Hindu groups and two Muslim groups. It holds monthly meetings that plan interfaith activities and formulate proposals for government policies.<sup>5</sup>

## Incidents

In October 2014, the Minister of Agriculture of Suriname said that the debate over marijuana cultivation in the country was not a priority, since the priority is to produce the food the country lacks.<sup>6</sup> He was responding to a request from Rastafarian groups asking for the right to use marijuana as part of their religious rituals.<sup>7</sup>

In November 2014 the first meeting of Latin American Muslim leaders was held in Turkey, which included representatives from Suriname. The goal was to establish religious services and opportunities for co-operation between Muslims in Latin America.<sup>8</sup>

In June 2015, the Sheikh Zayed bin Sultan Al Nahyan Charitable and Humanitarian Foundation based in the United Arab Emirates (UAE) added the countries of Suriname and Trinidad and Tobago to its Ramadan programme. The latter provides adequate food for the observance of this Muslim religious holiday.<sup>9</sup>

Unlike other Caribbean countries, the Catholic Church has little social influence in Suriname, but neither has it been subject to any major case of discrimination, intolerance or religious persecution.

### **Prospects for freedom of religion**

No cases of intolerance have been reported during the period under review. Compared to the previous report, this suggests that the situation for religious freedom has remained unchanged. Religious education seems to be heavily restricted however this is not the case for families who turn to private schools. It would be desirable that equal access to religious instruction be improved.

---

<sup>1</sup> [http://www.thearda.com/internationalData/countries/Country\\_212\\_1.asp](http://www.thearda.com/internationalData/countries/Country_212_1.asp) accessed on 9 May 2016.

<sup>2</sup> <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-latin-america-19997673> accessed on 4 May 2016.

<sup>3</sup> [http://www.thearda.com/internationalData/countries/Country\\_212\\_2.asp](http://www.thearda.com/internationalData/countries/Country_212_2.asp) accessed on 8 March 2016.

<sup>4</sup> [http://www.thearda.com/internationalData/countries/Country\\_212\\_6.asp](http://www.thearda.com/internationalData/countries/Country_212_6.asp) accessed on 8 March 2016.

<sup>5</sup> <http://www.state.gov/documents/organization/238786.pdf> accessed on 8 March 2016.

<sup>6</sup> <http://www.iwnsvg.com/2014/10/13/suriname-wants-focus-on-food-security-not-marijuana/>

<sup>7</sup> <http://www.caribbeannewsnow.com/topstory-Suriname-wants-focus-on-food-security%2C-not-marijuana-23190.html> accessed on 8 March 2016.

<sup>8</sup> <http://www.caribbeannewsnow.com/topstory-First-Latin-American-Muslim-religious-leaders-summit-opens-in-Turkey-23647.html> accessed on 8 March 2016.

<sup>9</sup> <http://www.caribbeannewsnow.com/topstory-Suriname-and-Trinidad-and-Tobago-added-to-UAE-Ramadan-charitable-programme-26620.html> accessed on 8 March 2016.