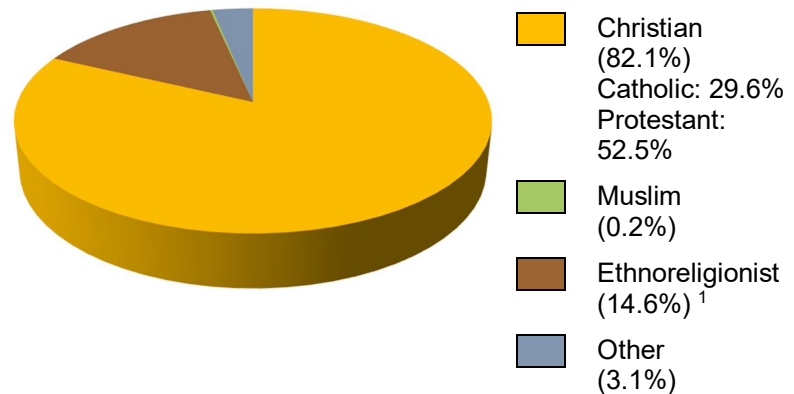


# ZAMBIA



<b>Area:</b> 752,618 km <sup>2</sup>	<b>Population:</b> 15.0 million	<b>Political system:</b> Democracy	<b>Major Language(s):</b> English
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## Legal framework on freedom of religion and actual application

Article 19 of the Constitution of Zambia enshrines the freedom of religion, the right to change one's religious faith, to express publicly one's faith and to make converts. An amendment introduced in 1996 in its preamble states that Zambia is a Christian nation which respects citizens' right of freedom of conscience and worship. Although the Constitution describes Zambia as a "Christian" confessional State, the document guarantees protection for non-Christians, who are given the right to follow their religion of choice. There are no other laws in the country which curtail this religious freedom.

Religious groups are required to register with the Registrar of Societies. Churches can apply for a certificate of exemption from paying taxes, which is normally applicable to non-profit making organizations.

As guaranteed by the law, citizens are free to convert to the faith of their choice, churches are free to evangelize openly, to build places of worship, to carry out pastoral and catechetical work and to fundraise, inside the country as well as to solicit and receive funds from abroad. No cases have been reported of deliberate discrimination in employment in government posts on religious grounds.

## Incidents

Although no cases of direct discrimination on religious ground have been reported, there have been cases in which joint teams of police, immigration, and registrar of societies' personnel interrupted prayer services of various religious groups in Lusaka and Copperbelt Provinces in search of illegal immigrants and to halt suspected illicit activities, such as drug smuggling. In August 2015 authorities raided 25 churches in Kitwe, apprehending several suspected illegal immigrants. In July another joint team interrupted Free Pentecost Assemblies in Kabwata while conducting investigations into suspected illegal activities, such as abduction and sexual abuse. Several weeks later, the government declared its support for the allegations and banned the church. The Independent Churches of Zambia, an association of religious groups, criticized the ban.

According to the State Government 2015 Religious Freedom Report, there are approximately 140,000 Muslims in the country, primarily concentrated in Lusaka and in the Eastern and Copperbelt Provinces and often divided along ethnic or national lines. Many are immigrants from South Asia, Somalia, and the Middle East who have acquired Zambian citizenship. The Somali immigrant population has increased significantly in recent years and is currently estimated at approximately 20,000. Other religious minorities include Sikhs, Hindus and Baha'is.

During 2015, members of the Muslim community reported acts of intolerance and complained of discriminatory treatment, particularly of being often branded as "terrorists" or/and "foreigners". Two Muslim women were physically attacked in May 2015 when a group of young people mistakenly associated them with the Boko Haram terrorist group. Although the First Lady made a high-profile statement condemning the attack, no arrests were made in connection with this act of violence.<sup>2</sup>

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

Zambia has always upheld the right to religious freedom, and is likely to continue doing so. The incidents reported appear to be either isolated cases of intolerance or linked to immigration policies.

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<sup>1</sup> Animists.

<sup>2</sup> <http://www.state.gov/j/drl/rls/irf/2014/af/238276.htm>