



Slovenia

Stable / Unchanged —



Religion

Population

Area

- Christians : **85.6%**
- Agnostics : **9.4%**
- Atheists : **2.5%**
- Muslims : **2.4%**
- Others : **0.1%**

2,069,000

20,273 Km²

Legal framework on freedom of religion and actual application

Following the country's secession from the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, newly independent Slovenia adopted a constitution in 1991 that upholds freedom of religion and the separation of Church and state.^[1]

In 2007 Slovenia's Parliament passed the Religious Freedom Act.^[2] Article 4 of the Act proclaims the neutrality of the state in matters of religion. Article 5 defines churches and religious communities as "organisations of general benefit", and article 29 stipulates that the state may give material support to religious communities because of the "general benefit" they provide. Article 13 states that in order to be registered, a religious community must have been operating in Slovenia for at least 10 years and must have at least 100 adult members.

According to the Office for Religious Communities, there are 43 registered religious communities in Slovenia.^[3] These include the Roman Catholic Church, several Protestant Churches, the Orthodox Church, as well as various groups of Muslims, Baha'is, Buddhists, and Hindus. Jehovah's Witnesses and Scientologists are also registered. More than three-quarters of the registered religious communities may be regarded as new religious movements (NRMs), and there are still others not formally registered as religious communities, but as associations. Overall, research into new religious and spiritual movements in Slovenia estimate that 70 to 100 NRMs operate there.^[4]

The Roman Catholic Church is by far the largest religious organisation, making up about three-quarters of Slovene citizens. The country is divided into six dioceses, including the two archdioceses of Ljubljana and Maribor. 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.^[5] Currently, there are 785 parishes in Slovenia, headed by some 1,050 priests and 11 bishops.^[6] The Church owns more than 2,900 churches and chapels. About 80 percent of the country's heritage buildings are owned by the Catholic Church. By 2011, the authorities had settled 99 percent of the

1,191 Catholic denationalisation claims for properties nationalised after World War II^[7]

The number of Catholics in Slovenia is in decline, according to the 2015 report of the Slovenian Catholic Church. The latter also shows a drop in the number of priests and church weddings in the country^[8]

Of the remaining religious communities, the two largest are the Orthodox (2 percent) and the Muslims (2 percent). The Orthodox are primarily Serbs; Muslims are largely Bosnians and Kosovo Albanians^[9]

In 2017 Slovenia celebrated the 500th anniversary of the Protestant Reformation. Although a predominantly Catholic country, Slovenia celebrates Reformation Day as a **national holiday because, Primož Trubar, a Protestant clergyman, authored the first books in the Slovenian language. This date is officially considered as the birth of vernacular literature in Slovenia.** ^[10]

| Incidents

In March 2016, unknown persons vandalised the Cathedral of St Nicholas in the capital Ljubljana with graffiti. The words “Church get out of my womb” were spray-painted on the wall of a church^[11]

On 15th June 2016, St Daniel’s Catholic Church in Celje was defaced with satanic words and symbols. Similarly vandalised were the Bishop’s residence and a historic column on which stands a statue of the Blessed Virgin Mary. The local police investigated the crime.^[12]

On two separate occasions in 2016, pigs’ heads were left at the site of a mosque under construction in Ljubljana^[13]

On 3rd January 2017, vandals desecrated **the Catholic chapel on Šmarna gora (St Mary), a hill overlooking Ljubljana. They defaced the building with graffiti written in Arabic.** The vandalism was strongly condemned by the Catholic Church as well as the Islamic community in Slovenia.^[14]

| Prospects for freedom of religion

Over the past decade, Slovenes have tended to follow the religious trends present in Western European countries. Although Catholicism remains the dominant religion, both attendance at Mass and religious vocations are in decline. Slovenian society has become increasingly secular, with divorce, abortion, euthanasia, and gender equality accepted as commonplace.

Religiosity among the young has decreased substantially in recent years. That said, the proportion of young adult Slovenes identifying themselves as Catholics remains quite high compared to those of other EU countries; research indicates that only 13 percent of them never attend Sunday Mass.^[15]

Violations of religious freedom are rarely a problem in Slovenia; the erosion of traditional thinking among contemporary Slovenes may pose the greater threat to the vitality of religion in this country. The three main Christian groups – Catholics, Orthodox and Lutherans – look set to continue to face the problem of growing secularisation in the coming years and decades.

| Endnotes / Sources

[1] Slovenia’s Constitution of 1991 with Amendments through 2013, [constituteproject.org](https://www.constituteproject.org), https://www.constituteproject.org/constitution/Slovenia_2013.pdf?lang=en, (accessed 1st May 2018).

[2] The Religious Freedom Act (2007), Uradni List (Official Gazette) RS, n. 14/07, www.legislationonline.org, (accessed 1st May 2018).

[3] Government Communication Office, 'Religious communities in Slovenia', Republic of Slovenia, http://www.ukom.gov.si/en/media_room/major_events/visit_of_pope_john_paul_ii_to_the_republic_of_slovenia/religious_communities_in_slovenia/ (accessed 1st May 2018).

[4] Aleš ?rni? and Gregor Lesjak, 'A systematic Study of New Religious Movements – The Slovenian Case', in Religions, Churches, and Religiosity in Post-Communist Europe, Irena Borowik (ed), Krakow: Zak?ad Wydawniczy NOMOS, 2006, pp. 142-157.

[5] Slovenia's National Assembly ratified the agreement with the Holy See on 28th January 2004. See Act ratifying the agreement between the Republic of Slovenia and the Holy See on legal issues (2004), Uradni List (Official Gazette) RS, n. 13/2004, www.legislationonline.org, (accessed 1st May 2018).

[6] 'Number of Slovenian Catholics decreasing', The Slovene Times, 6th January 2016, <http://www.sloveniatimes.com/number-of-slovenian-catholics-decreasing>, (accessed 1st May 2018).

[7] Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights and Labor, 'Slovenia', International Religious Freedom Report for 2012, U.S. State Department, <https://www.state.gov/j/drl/rls/irf/2012religiousfreedom/index.htm#wrapper>, (accessed 1st May 2018).

[8] 'Number of Slovenian Catholics decreasing', op. cit.

[9] Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights and Labor, 'Slovenia', International Religious Freedom Report for 2016, U.S. State Department, <https://www.state.gov/j/drl/rls/irf/religiousfreedom/index.htm#wrapper>, (accessed 1st May 2018).

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[11] 'Tudi islamska skupnost je obsodila grafite na fasadi ljubljanske stolnice (Slovenia's Islamic community condemn graffiti on Ljubljana St Nicolas Cathedral)', Dnevnik, 12th March 2016, <https://www.dnevnik.si/1042731709/lokalno/ljubljana/tudi-islamska-skupnost-je-obsodila-grafite-na-fasadi-ljubljanske-stolnice>, (accessed 1st May 2018).

[12] 'Fasado celjske stolnice popisali z žaljivimi graffiti (Offensive graffiti on Celje cathedral façade)', Delo, 16 June 2016, <http://www.delo.si/novice/kronika/celjsko-stolnico-popisali-z-zaljivimi-grafiti.html>, (accessed 1st May 2018).

[13] 'Chapel above Ljubljana defaced with Islamic graffiti', The Slovenia Times, 3rd January 2017, <http://www.sloveniatimes.com/chapel-above-ljubljana-defaced-with-islamic-graffiti>, (accessed 1st May 2018).

[14] Andraž Rožman, 'Neznanci z napisi, ki pozivajo k verski nestrpnosti, oskrunili kapelico na Šmarni gori (Persons unknown desecrate chapel on Šmarna gora/Mount St Mary with offensive graffiti)', Dnevnik, 4th January 2017, <https://www.dnevnik.si/1042758508/lokalno/ljubljana/neznanci-z-napisi-ki-pozivajo-k-verski-nestrpnosti-oskrunili-kapelico-na-smarni-gori>, (accessed 1st May 2018).

[15] Stephen Bullivant, 'The scary truth about young Europeans and the Church', Catholic Herald, 22nd March 2018, <http://www.catholicherald.co.uk/issues/march-23rd-2018/the-scary-truth-about-young-europeans-and-the-church/>, (accessed 1st May 2018).