



Trinidad & Tobago



Stable / Unchanged —

Religion	Population	Area
<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ Christians : 63.4%○ Hindus : 24.3%○ Muslims : 6.4%○ Agnostics : 2.3%○ Spiritists : 1.4%○ Baha'is : 1.2%○ Others : 1%	1,365,000	5,127 Km ²

Legal framework on freedom of religion and actual application

In its preamble, the constitution^[1] states that Trinidad and Tobago is founded on principles that acknowledge the supremacy of God, the dignity of the human person and an individual's inherent rights. It stresses that these rights have been endowed by the creator.

Article four of the constitution also recognises the right to freedom, equality before the law, the protection of the law, the right of parents to choose their children's education, freedom of conscience and worship, freedom of thought and expression, freedom of association and the prohibition of discrimination based on race, origin, colour, religion or sex.

Article 29 of the Education Act^[2] states that no one can be refused admission to a state school on religious grounds. Religious education is allowed in state schools. Should parents request religious instruction for their children, space in the school timetable should be provided for a faith group willing to provide it. Participation is strictly voluntary.

Muslim marriage and divorce are regulated by law.^[3]

Judicial oaths can be taken on the New Testament by Christians, and the Old Testament by Jews. For those who do not belong to these religions, the oath can be administered in other ways.^[4]

The law prohibits acts that promote hostility against any group on religious grounds.^[5]

Religious groups must be registered with the government and need to demonstrate that they are active. Such groups must register as charitable organisations in order to obtain tax exemption status and be authorised to register civil marriages. Missionaries belonging to registered religious groups are allowed into the country.^[6]

The government funds activities carried out by the Inter-Religious Organisation (IRO), which represents most religious groups. Nondenominational state schools and religiously affiliated state schools receive government grants!^[7]

| Incidents

In 2017, two Christian places of worship, including a Catholic church, were burgled in Sangre Grande!^[8]

In February 2018 Prime Minister Keith Rowley said that those accused of criminal actions should not allege that they are being religiously discriminated against by the authorities, stressing that “nobody in this country is above the law.” He noted that “If the security services have information” about “criminal intent or [. . .] criminal conduct,” they must “protect the rest of the country regardless” of religion!^[9]

Police were accused of provoking members of the Muslim community at a 11th March 2018 rally held at a stadium in Marabella. Muslims had gathered to protest against the implications of a proposed anti-terrorism bill. Police agents were accused of carrying out excessive vehicle searches as well as conducting a body search of a security guard. The plain clothes officers conducting the search did not show any ID. At the protest, proposed changes to the current anti terrorism law were criticised on the grounds that they would affect constitutional rights. Fiaz Ali, a speaker at the event, made accusations of intent to incite Islamophobia exists!^[10]

| Prospects for freedom of religion

In common with 2014-16, the period under review saw no signs of intolerance to suggest that religious freedom is in decline.

| Endnotes / Sources

[1] All the articles cited are from the Trinidad and Tobago’s Constitution of 1976 with Amendments through 2007, [constituteproject.org](https://www.constituteproject.org/constitution/Trinidad_and_Tobago_2007.pdf?lang=en), https://www.constituteproject.org/constitution/Trinidad_and_Tobago_2007.pdf?lang=en (accessed 31st March 2018).

[2] Education Act (Chapter 39:01), Laws of Trinidad and Tobago, <http://laws.gov.tt/ttdllweb/revision/list?offset=150&q=¤tid=986#email-content> (accessed 3rd March 2018).

[3] Muslims Marriage and Divorce Act (Chapter 45:02), Laws of Trinidad and Tobago, <http://laws.gov.tt/ttdllweb/revision/list?offset=300&q=¤tid=1050#email-content> (accessed 3rd March 2018).

[4] Oaths Act (Chapter 7:01), Laws of Trinidad and Tobago, <http://laws.gov.tt/ttdllweb/revision/list?offset=320&q=¤tid=386#email-content> (accessed 3rd March 2018).

[5] Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights and Labor, “Trinidad and Tobago”, International Religious Freedom Report for 2016, US State Department, <https://www.state.gov/j/drl/rls/irf/religiousfreedom/index.htm#wrapper> (accessed 3rd March 2018).

[6] Ibid.

[7] Ibid., “Trinidad and Tobago”, International Religious Freedom Report for 2014, US State Department, <https://www.state.gov/j/drl/rls/irf/2014religiousfreedom/index.htm#wrapper> (accessed 3rd March 2018).

[8] ‘Church robbed again,’ CNC3, March 2017, <http://www.cnc3.co.tt/news/church-robbed-again>, (accessed 4th March 2018); ‘Catholic church robbed’, CNC3, 7th August 2017, <http://www.cnc3.co.tt/news/catholic-church-robbed> (accessed

4th March 2018).

[9] "Religion, politics a bad mix—Rowley", The Trinidad and Tobago Guardian, 24th February 2018, <http://www.guardian.co.tt/news/2018-02-23/religion-politics-bad-mix—rowley> (accessed 4th March 2018).

[10] Rhondor Dowlath, "Muslims claim police provocation at sando rally", The Trinidad and Tobago Guardian, 12th March 2018, <http://www.guardian.co.tt/news/2018-03-11/muslims-claim-police-provocation-san-do-rally> (accessed 31st March 2018).