

# DOMINICA

## Executive Summary

The constitution and other laws and policies protect religious freedom and, in practice, the government generally respected religious freedom. The government did not demonstrate a trend toward either improvement or deterioration in respect for and protection of the right to religious freedom.

There were no reports of societal abuses or discrimination based on religious affiliation, belief, or practice, and prominent societal leaders took positive steps to promote religious freedom.

The U.S. government discussed religious freedom with the government as part of its overall policy to promote human rights. Members of the embassy met with all sectors of civil society and engaged in discussions of religious freedom on a regular basis.

## Section I. Religious Demography

According to the 2001 population and housing census, approximately 61 percent of the population is Roman Catholic. Seventh-day Adventists and Pentecostals represent 6 percent each, and Baptists and Methodists 4 percent each. There are also Anglicans, members of the Baha'i Faith, Christian Brethren, members of the Church of Christ, Jehovah's Witnesses, Muslims, Nazarenes, and Rastafarians. Six percent of the population claims no religious affiliation.

## Section II. Status of Government Respect for Religious Freedom

### Legal/Policy Framework

The constitution and other laws and policies protect religious freedom.

Religious organizations seeking non-profit status must register with the attorney general's office. By law, buildings used exclusively as places of worship wherein bans of marriage are published must be registered with the Registrar General. Any organization denied permission to register has the right to apply for judicial review.

The public school curriculum includes Christian education, and students are led in prayer during morning assembly. Non-Christian students are not required to participate. There are Catholic, Methodist, and Seventh-day Adventist schools, and the government subsidizes teacher salaries at these religiously affiliated schools.

The government prohibits the use of marijuana, including for religious purposes. Rastafarians complained marijuana is integral to their religious rituals.

The government observes the following religious holidays as national holidays: Good Friday, Easter Sunday, Whit Monday, and Christmas.

### **Government Practices**

There were no reports of abuses of religious freedom.

### **Section III. Status of Societal Respect for Religious Freedom**

There were no reports of societal abuses or discrimination based on religious affiliation, belief, or practice, and prominent societal leaders took positive steps to promote religious freedom. Rastafarians, however, complained of discrimination, especially in hiring and schools.

### **Section IV. U.S. Government Policy**

The U.S. government discussed religious freedom with the government as part of its overall policy to promote human rights. Embassy officials also discussed religious freedom issues with members of nongovernmental organizations, religious charitable organizations, and business leaders as a part of its overall engagement with members of civil society.