

SAINT VINCENT AND THE GRENADINES

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 on religious freedom on a regular basis.

Section I. Religious Demography

According to the 2001 census, the Anglican Church (18 percent) and Pentecostals (18 percent) are the largest religious groups, followed by Methodists (11 percent), Seventh-day Adventists (10 percent), Baptists (10 percent), and Roman Catholics (7 percent). Other religious groups include Baha'is, Rastafarians, Jehovah's Witnesses, members of the Church of God, and other evangelical groups.

Section II. Status of Government Respect for Religious Freedom

Legal/Policy Framework

The constitution and other laws and policies protect religious freedom.

Students in public schools receive nondenominational religious instruction based on Christianity; however, attendance is not mandatory. Representatives from different religious groups, especially Anglican and Catholic, are occasionally invited to speak to students. Teachers may provide information on other religious groups.

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

The government occasionally organizes interfaith services through the Christian Council, an organization consisting of the Anglican, Catholic, and Methodist Churches, and the Salvation Army.

The government observes the following religious holidays as national holidays: Good Friday, Easter, 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 in 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.