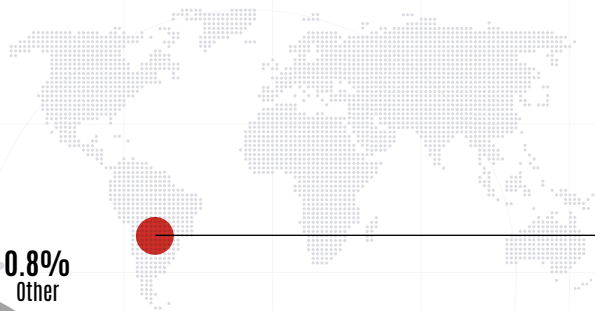
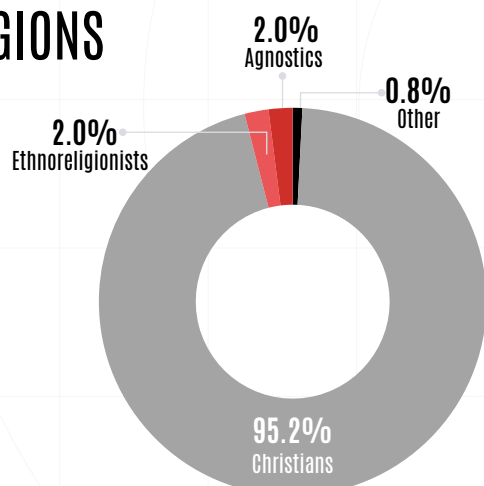




PARAGUAY

RELIGIONS



LEGAL FRAMEWORK ON FREEDOM OF RELIGION AND ACTUAL APPLICATION

The Preamble to the constitution¹ invokes God and reaffirms the principles of a “pluralistic democracy”.

Under Article 24, “freedom of religion, of worship, and ideological [freedom] are recognized without any restrictions other than those established in this constitution and in the law.” Under Article 82, “the predominant role of the Catholic Church in the historical and cultural formation of the nation is recognized.” Nevertheless, Article 24 specifies that “No religious faith will have official character” and “The relations between the State and the Catholic Church are based on independence, cooperation, and autonomy.”

Article 24 also guarantees “The independence and the autonomy of the churches and religious faiths”, except for restrictions imposed by law. It also stipulates that “No one may be interfered with [molestado], questioned, or forced to give testimony by reason of their beliefs or of their ideology.”

Article 37 provides that “The right to conscientious objection for ethical or religious reasons is recognized for those

cases in which this Constitution and the law admit it.” In case of conscientious objection to military service, Article 129 stipulates that objectors will perform a civilian service in assistance centres, as regulated by Law 4013 of 2010. The latter set up the National Council of Conscientious Objection to Compulsory Military Service.²

Article 46 states: “All the inhabitants of the republic are equal in dignity and rights.”

Article 63 of the constitution recognises and guarantees the right of indigenous peoples to preserve and develop their ethnic identity, noting that they have the right to “freely apply their systems of political, social, economic, cultural and religious organization.”

Article 74 enshrines the “the right to a religious education” and “ideological pluralism”.

Article 88 condemns religious discrimination against workers.

The Ministry of Education and Science includes a Vice Ministry of Religion, which has jurisdiction over religious education, the registration of religious organisations and certifying foreign missionaries. It also monitors freedom of religion and inter-faith dialogue.³

Under Articles 197 (5) and 235 (5) of the constitution,

members of the clergy cannot run for president or vice president, nor Congress (Chamber of Deputies and Chamber of Senators).

INCIDENTS AND DEVELOPMENTS

In December 2018, the National Directorate of Conscientious Objection issued the regulatory framework overseeing this right.⁴ By January 2019, more than 24,000 applications had been filed. A number of bills were later tabled to modify certain aspects of the law,⁵ all in 2019. In November of the same year, legal action was undertaken to prove the unconstitutionality of the provision, which, among other things, requires applicants to state a motive for their conscientious objection.⁶ During this period, recognition was granted to some religious figures.

In June 2018, a vast crowd filled Asunción's largest football stadium for the beatification of Sister Chiquitunga. Coming soon after an election, both the outgoing president and president-elect were present at the event.⁷ In March 2019, the Paraguayan Senate paid tribute to Spanish Jesuit Francisco de Paula Oliva, better known as Pa'i, little father in Guaraní.⁸

In August 2018, the "Educate to Remember-Holocaust, Paradigm of Genocide Act" was enacted as part of the country's educational programme.⁹

In September 2018, an investigation was launched against an Evangelical pastor for destroying traditional and worship objects belonging to an elderly indigenous man in Caaguazú.¹⁰

In July 2019, the traditional festival in honour of Saint Francis Solanus (San Francisco Solano) was held in the town of Emboscada. Paraguayan faithful devoted to the Spanish friar celebrated in the streets in a show of popular religiosity.¹¹

Following the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic in March 2020, the government suspended all group activities, including religious gatherings. As recommended, the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (Mormons) closed its doors and suspended its activities,¹² including the Asunción Paraguay Temple (Templo de Asunción).¹³

In April 2020, Catholic bishops asked the government to ensure that the measures it adopted during the easing phase would allow acts of worship.¹⁴ The following month, the Church agreed with the government to reopen places of worship for baptisms and weddings with a reduced

number of people present.¹⁵ The Evangelical Church followed suit, accepting the recommendations of the Ministry of Health, including the free movement of accredited pastors and religious leaders.¹⁶

In July 2020, after a meeting with the authorities, Evangelical Churches came up with a health protocol that would allow a greater number of worshippers at their religious events.¹⁷

Although the constitution does not allow members of the clergy of any creed to run for Congress, one senator is actually an Evangelical pastor. In April 2020, she came under investigation for failing to respect the quarantine regulations after contracting COVID-19.¹⁸

PROSPECTS FOR RELIGIOUS FREEDOM

No cases of religious intolerance have been reported. The state is seen as well disposed towards religion and open to dialogue. The situation of religious freedom has not changed and the future outlook is positive.

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