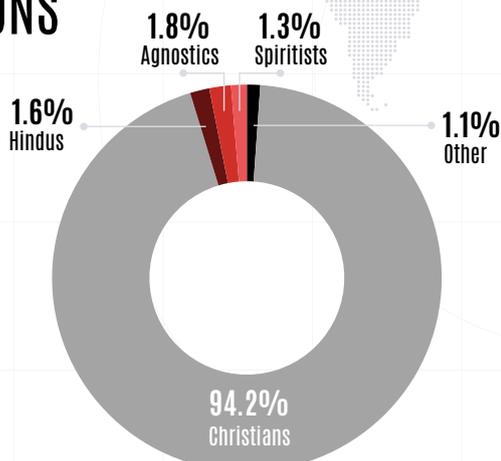




SAINT KITTS AND NEVIS

RELIGIONS



LEGAL FRAMEWORK ON FREEDOM OF RELIGION AND ACTUAL APPLICATION

The Preamble to the Constitution¹ of Saint Kitts and Nevis states that the nation was established on the basis of belief in Almighty God.

Article 3 of the constitution stipulates that everyone has certain fundamental rights and freedoms, irrespective of race, place of origin, birth, political opinions, colour, creed or sex, such as freedom of conscience, expression and association.

The right to conscientious objection to military service is recognised (Article 6, 3, c).

No one shall be denied the right to freedom of conscience, which includes freedom of thought and religion, freedom to change one's religion or belief and to manifest one's belief in worship, teaching, practice and observance, either individually or collectively, in public or in private (Article 11, 1).

No one attending an educational establishment, in prison or performing military service, shall be required to receive

religious instruction or attend any religious ceremony other than their own, except with their consent, or that of a parent or guardian in the case of a minor (Article 11, 2).

Every religious community is entitled to establish and administer their own educational establishments at their own expense (Article 11, 3).

No one may be compelled or coerced into taking an oath against, or in a manner contrary to, their beliefs or religion (Article 11, 4).

The constitution also stipulates that the law may not include any provision that is discriminatory in itself or in its effects (Article 13, 1). Discrimination means treating people differently on the basis of their race, place of origin, birth outside of marriage, political opinion or affiliation, colour, sex or creed (Article 13, 3).

Religious education in school cannot include catechism of any one particular religion.

Publicly-funded private educational establishments are responsible for the religious instruction imparted to the students who belong to the religion they profess.² Students who profess a different faith cannot be forced to receive religious instruction or attend any religious ceremony without their consent, or in the case of minors, that of their

parents or guardians.³

INCIDENTS AND DEVELOPMENTS

In January 2019, the press reported that Prime Minister Timothy Harris attended services in two churches, noting that “the Church plays a critical role in the social development of our people”.⁴

In March 2020, the Christian Council of Saint Kitts and Nevis expressed its support for the government in the fight against COVID-19. It announced that the Churches had already adopted preventive measures to avoid the spread

of the virus, suspending for example religious services (which would be accessible via social media), except for funerals.⁵

PROSPECTS FOR RELIGIOUS FREEDOM

Relations between the country’s Churches and the government are good. As in previous years, no episodes of religious intolerance or discrimination have been reported. The prospects for religious freedom in the future are positive.

SOURCES / ENDNOTES

1 Saint Kitts and Nevis 1983, Constitute Project, https://www.constituteproject.org/constitution/St_Kitts_and_Nevis_1983?lang=en (accessed 29th October 2020).

2 Education Act, 2005, Saint Christopher and Nevis, , <http://www.parliament.gov.kn/wp-content/uploads/2017/06/EducationAct2005.pdf> (accessed 31st March 2020).

3 Ibid.

4 “Rev. Cortroy Jarvis installs three Moravian Church pastors,” St. Kitts and Nevis Observer, 21st January 2019, <https://www.thestkittsnevisobserver.com/rev-cortroy-jarvis-installs-three-moravian-church-pastors/> (accessed 1st April 2020).

5 “St. Kitts Christian Council in full support with the Government of St. Kitts And Nevis and the National COVID-19 Taskforce,” Ziz Online. com, 28th March 2020. <https://zizonline.com/st-kitts-christian-council-in-full-support-with-the-government-of-st-kitts-and-nevis-and-the-national-covid-19-taskforce/> (accessed 1st April 2020).