

SAINT LUCIA

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The U.S. government discusses religious freedom with the government as part of its overall policy to promote human rights.

Section I. Religious Demography

The country has an area of 238 square miles and a population of 170,000. Christianity is the dominant religion. According to the 2001 population and housing census, Roman Catholics account for approximately 67 percent of the population; Seventh-day Adventists, 9 percent; Pentecostals, 6 percent; evangelicals and Anglicans, 2 percent each; and Baptists and Methodists represent smaller percentages.

The number of non-Christians is very small. There are an estimated 350 Muslims. While some Muslims are immigrants from other Caribbean countries, the Middle East, and South Asia, most are local converts. Other religious groups include Bahais and Rastafarians. According to the 2001 census, Rastafarians number approximately 3,500 or an estimated 2 percent of the population. Nearly 5 percent of the population claims no religious affiliation.

Section II. Status of Government Respect for Religious Freedom

Legal/Policy Framework

Please refer to Appendix C in the *Country Reports on Human Rights Practices* for the status of the government's acceptance of international legal standards <http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/hrrpt/2010/appendices/index.htm>.

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The government is secular and does not interfere with an individual's right to worship. The government maintained an active relationship with the Christian Council, an organization consisting of representatives of the Catholic Church and mainline Protestant denominations.

The government implemented a revised registration policy for faith-based organizations. Official recognition allows a religious organization to have duty-free import privileges and exemption from some labor requirements.

The public school curriculum included Christian education; however, non-Christian students were not required to participate. There also were private schools sponsored by the Catholic and Anglican Churches.

The government prohibits the use of marijuana, including for religious purposes. Rastafarians complained that 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.

Restrictions on Religious Freedom

The government generally respected religious freedom in law and in practice. There was no change in the status of respect for religious freedom by the government during the reporting period.

There were no reports of abuses, including religious prisoners or detainees, in the country.

Section III. Status of Societal Actions Affecting Enjoyment of 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 discusses religious freedom with the government as part of its overall policy to promote human rights.