



Religion

Population

Area

- Christians : **84.5%**
- Spiritists : **10.1%**
- Agnostics : **4.1%**
- Others : **1.3%**

2,803,000

10,990 Km²

Legal framework on freedom of religion and actual application

The constitution (Article 13)^[1] establishes that the state has an obligation to promote universal respect and observance of human rights and personal freedoms, to which everyone is entitled by virtue of their inherent dignity as persons.

Article 13 of the constitution also recognises freedom of thought, conscience, belief and observance of political doctrines, the right of association and equality before the law as well as the right not to be discriminated against because of religion.

In Article 17, the constitution enshrines the right to religious freedom, which includes the right to change one's religion and to manifest one's belief, alone or with others, in public or in private, in worship, teaching, practice and observance.

This article of the constitution declares that a religious organisation cannot be altered without the consent of the governing authority of that organisation.

Article 17 also states that every religious organisation has the right to provide religious instruction to its members, irrespective of whether it receives public funds or not.

The article also indicates that, except with their own consent (or that of their parents or guardian in case of minors), no person attending a place of education shall be required to receive religious instruction or attend a ceremony other than their own.

According to article 14 of the constitution, any person detained has the right to communicate with and be visited by a religious counsellor.

Various authorities must take an oath of allegiance before taking office. The oath includes the final phrase "So help me

God”.

| Incidents

In September 2017, the Church of SS Peter and Paul in Kingston suffered an arson attack. Within the space of a year, the church was attacked again.^[2]

In September 2017, a police officer attached to the Mandeville Police Station, Manchester, claimed that he was the victim of discrimination after reports emerged that his service pistol was taken from him for reading the Qur’an. He was apparently put forward for a psychiatric evaluation to determine whether he had been radicalised^[3]

| Prospects for freedom of religion

In the period from June 2016 to March 2018, there were reports of acts of vandalism against places of worship, as well as expressions of police intolerance or discrimination against an officer for reading the Qur’an. There was another incident in which someone opened fire against people attending a funeral but it was unclear if the motive of the attack was religious. As there were no reported episodes of intolerance in 2014-16, it would appear that the period under review saw a decline in religious freedom, but there is no reason to believe a negative trend has been established.

| Endnotes / Sources

[1] Jamaica’s Constitution of 1962 with Amendments through 2015, [constituteproject.org](https://www.constituteproject.org/constitution/Jamaica_2015.pdf?lang=en), https://www.constituteproject.org/constitution/Jamaica_2015.pdf?lang=en, (accessed 31st March 2018).

[2] Warren Bertram, ‘Church put on backbench – Psychiatrist says society is detached from house of God’, The Star, 18th January 2018, <http://jamaica-star.com/article/news/20180118/church-put-backben-ch-psychiatrist-says-society-detached-house-god>, (accessed 4th March 2018).

[3] Akino Ming, ‘Cop claims gun taken away over religion’, The Sun, 12th September 2017, <http://jamaica-star.com/article/news/20170912/cop-claims-gun-taken-away-over-religion-%E2%80%94-muslim-lawman-says-he-being>, (accessed 4th March 2018).