



on Islands

Stable / Unchanged —

Religion

Population

Area

- Christians : **95.2%**
- Ethnoreligionists : **3.2%**
- Others : **1.6%**

595,000

28,896 Km²

Legal framework on freedom of religion and actual application

The Solomon Islands consists of six major islands and 900 smaller ones in Oceania to the east of Papua New Guinea.

Under the constitution, every person has the right “either alone or in community with others, and both in public and in private, to manifest and propagate his religion or belief in worship, teaching, practice and observance.”^[1] This includes the right to change religion. These constitutional rights may be qualified by law if that is reasonably required “in the interests of defence, public safety, public order, public morality or public health” or “for the purpose of protecting the rights and freedoms of other persons.” There are no indications that these rights were violated in the period under review.

The country is almost entirely Christian and the five largest denominations are: the Anglican Church of Melanesia (around 30 percent); the Catholic Church (around 20 percent); the South Sea Evangelical Church (around 17 percent); the Seventh Day Adventists (around 12 percent) and the United Church (around 10 percent). There are also a number of smaller Christian Churches, as well as Baha'is, members of the Kwaio community (a form of animism) and Muslims.

According to the constitution, religious communities are entitled to establish, manage and maintain places of education, as well as provide religious instruction. No one who attends such places of education is required to receive instruction in a religion other than his or her own. The curriculum of public schools makes provision for an hour of religious instruction each day.^[2] The Solomon Islands Christian Association (SICA) is an ecumenical non-governmental organisation formed by Catholics, Melanesian Anglicans and United Methodists; the Seventh Day Adventists and the South Sea Evangelicals are associate members.^[3] SICA agrees the content of the religious element of the school curriculum. The five largest Christian denominations run schools and health services; they receive government subsidies in proportion to the services offered.^[4] There have been no indications that subsidies are allocated on a discriminatory basis.

Religious groups are required to register with the Registrar of Companies and to complete the necessary formalities. There have been no reports that religious groups were denied registration.

Major Christian feast days are celebrated as public holidays, including Good Friday, Easter Saturday, Easter Monday, Whit Monday and Christmas Day.

Incidents

In the recent past there have been isolated incidents relevant to the topic of religious freedom. A novice in the Melanesian brotherhood was murdered in 2014, though the motive for the attack does not appear to have been religious.⁵ In 2015 there was a religiously-motivated attack by Anglicans on a Seventh Day Adventist church building and the Adventists were told to leave the island.⁶ There have been no reported incidents of societal conflict between religious groups since.

Prospects for freedom of religion

Although there have been reports of disagreements between different religious groups, there are no records of attacks on religious freedom in the period under review. There is no reason to believe that this situation will change in the foreseeable future.

Endnotes / Sources

[1] Solomon Islands' Constitution of 1978 with Amendments through 2014, [constituteproject.org](https://www.constituteproject.org/constitution/Solomon_Islands_2014.pdf?lang=en), https://www.constituteproject.org/constitution/Solomon_Islands_2014.pdf?lang=en, (accessed 17th February 2018).

[2] Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights and Labor, 'Solomon Islands', International Religious Freedom Report for 2016, U.S. Department of State, <https://www.state.gov/j/drl/rls/irf/religiousfreedom/index.htm#wrapper>, (accessed 17th February 2018).

[3] 'Solomon Islands', World Council of Churches, <https://www.oikoumene.org/en/member-churches/pacific/solomon-islands>, (accessed 17th February 2018).

[4] Bureau of Democracy..., *ibid*.

[5] Assumpta Buchanan, 'Murder accused to be tried in Court', Solomon Star, 4th August 2015, <http://www.solomonstarnews.com/index.php/component/content/article/146-news1/national/7670-murder-accused-to-be-tried-in-high-court>, (accessed 17th February 2018).

[6] Kent Kingston and Solomon Star, 'Church Demolished, Adventists Threatened with Exile', Adventist News Network, 17th September 2015, <https://news.adventist.org/en/all-news/news/go/2015-09-17/church-demolished-adventists-threatened-with-exile/>, (accessed 17th February 2018).