



Reports

Dennis P. Petri, Teresa Flores, Jonathan Fox & Ariel Zellman

Global Religious Freedom Index 2024–2026

Latin American and the Caribbean

2026/15

International Institute
for Religious Freedom



International Institute
for Religious Freedom

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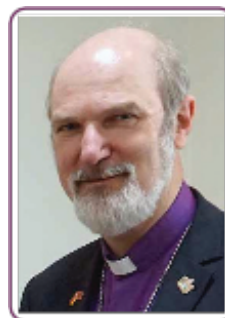
We understand Freedom of Religion and Belief (FoRB) as a fundamental and interdependent human right as described in Article 18 of the Universal Declaration on Human Rights. In line with CCPR General Comment No. 22, we view FoRB as a broad and multidimensional concept that needs to be protected for all faiths in all spheres of society.



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Global Religious Freedom Index 2024–2026

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Key facts

Most hostile religious policy 2023: Cuba		
Top 5 government religious support 2023: 1. Peru 2. Nicaragua 3. Argentina, Dominican Republic, Haiti	Mean government religious support 2023: 6.26 (maximum score in LAC 11) Increase government religious support 1990-2023 in LAC: 3.68 %	
Top 5 government discrimination against religious minorities 2023: 1. Cuba 2. Nicaragua 3. Venezuela 4. Peru 5. Colombia	Mean government discrimination against religious minorities 2023: 8.7 (maximum score in LAC 59) Increase government discrimination against religious minorities 1990-2023 in LAC: 16.92 %	
Top 5 government regulation of the majority religion 2023: 1. Cuba 2. Nicaragua 3. Mexico 4. Venezuela 5. Costa Rica	Mean government regulation of the majority religion 2023: 8.81 (maximum score in LAC 51) Increase government regulation of the majority religion 1990-2023 in LAC: 16.1 %	
Top 5 societal discrimination against religious minorities 2023: 1. Mexico 2. Argentina 3. Colombia 4. Haiti 5. Brazil	Mean societal discrimination against religious minorities 2023: 4.81 (maximum scores in LAC 18) Increase societal discrimination against religious minorities 1990-2023 in LAC: 71.05 %	
Top 2 killings of Catholics 2023 (VID): 1. Mexico (5) 2. Colombia (2)	Top 3 killings other/unknown Christians 2023 (VID): 1. Honduras (3) 2. Mexico (2) 3. Colombia, El Salvador, Guatemala (1 each)	Top 4 killings of Protestants 2023 (VID): 1. Colombia (15) 2. Honduras (10) 3. Mexico (7) 4. Brazil, Venezuela (1 each)

Executive summary

- This report is part of the Global Religious Freedom Index, a three-year collaboration between the International Institute for Religious Freedom and the Religion and State Project at Bar-Ilan University. It presents detailed data on religious freedom in Latin America and the Caribbean, scored annually from 1990 to 2023 across 27 countries. The data includes measures on government restrictions on religion, societal discrimination against religious minorities, and physical violence against religious groups.
- Over the past three decades, government and societal restrictions in the region have increased on all indexes presented. The largest rise is observed for societal discrimination against religious minorities, which has grown by 71.05% since 1990. Government regulation of the majority religion rose by 16.10%, government discrimination against religious minorities by 16.92%, and government religious support by 3.68 %.

- Cuba records the most hostile religious policy in the region in 2023 and tops the government discrimination index (score 59) and the government regulation index (score 51). Nicaragua and Venezuela follow Cuba on most of these measures. These three states, all categorized by as Non-specific Hostility regimes, account for a disproportionate share of regional government restrictions on religion.
- Societal discrimination against religious minorities is highest in Mexico (18), Argentina (17), Colombia (16), Haiti (13) and Brazil (11). It is largely uncorrelated with government discrimination: Cuba and Nicaragua, which top the government discrimination ranking, score very low on societal discrimination, while societally discriminatory countries tend to be states where organized crime, indigenous traditional authorities or ideologically driven societal movements target religious minorities.
- Physical violence against religious actors documented in the Violent Incidents Database in 2023 is concentrated in Colombia and Mexico (18 killings each), followed by Honduras (13). Of the 54 documented killings, 8 involved Christians categorized as “other/unknown”, 34 involved Protestants, 4 are classified as Unknown, 7 involved Catholics, and 1 involved a member of an animist, ancestor worship or traditional religion. Forced displacement (Colombia 197 cases, Mexico 93 cases), other forms of physical or mental abuse (Mexico 115, Colombia 83) and abductions (Haiti 24) further illustrate the broader pattern of religiously linked violence in the region.
- The data shows a peak in religious regulation around 2020, driven by COVID-19 closures of places of worship that were largely lifted by 2022. The long-term increases nevertheless persist beyond the pandemic, suggesting that some of the rise reflects structural changes in the relationship between states, societies and religious actors rather than a temporary public health adjustment.

Introduction

This Global Religious Freedom Index report presents data on Latin America and the Caribbean collected as part of Round 4 of the Religion and State Project. It is part of a series of regional reports plus a global report to be published between 2024 and 2027. A description of the data collection methods is available in Appendix 1.

Latin America and the Caribbean is often perceived as a region of comparatively high religious freedom given its historically Christian-majority composition and its mostly democratic regimes. The data presented in this report nevertheless show substantial variation across the 27 countries covered, and meaningful upward trends all the four indexes considered, particularly for societal discrimination. The report distinguishes between government restrictions on religion (Sections 2 to 4) and societal discrimination against religious minorities (Sections 5 and 6). For the section on physical violence, we draw on the Violent Incidents Database of the International Institute for Religious Freedom and the Observatory of Religious Freedom in Latin America, an event-based dataset that records and analyses public data on violent incidents related to religious freedom violations.

Separation of religion and state

One of the watershed dimensions of the relation between religion and politics is the separation of religion and the state. This relationship is not binary, as it presents many variations (see Fox, 2015). It can range from active state support for a single tradition, sometimes in the form of an official religion, to officially separationist arrangements and even nonspecific state hostility toward religion. Constitutional provisions on religion-state relations often coexist with very different policy realities on the ground, so it is necessary to look at religious policy more broadly (Fox, 2023; Petri & Fox, 2023). The RAS dataset provides a fine-grained typology of religion-state relations which includes three categories for official religions and eleven categories of state-religion relationships. Seven of these categories are present in Latin America and the Caribbean and are shown in Figure 1.

Of the 27 countries included in this report, 21 have a Catholic majority and 6 (the Bahamas, Barbados, Guyana, Jamaica, Suriname, and Trinidad and Tobago) have a Protestant Extended or General Christian majority. The only countries that declare an official state religion are Costa Rica and the Dominican Republic, without making Catholicism mandatory and without dominating the Church's institutions. A further eleven Catholic-majority states (Argentina, Belize, Chile, Ecuador, El Salvador, Guatemala, Haiti, Honduras, Panama, Paraguay and Peru), together with the Protestant-majority Bahamas, give Catholicism (or in the Bahamian case, Protestantism) the status of a Preferred Religion, while Bolivia and Colombia operate Multi-Tiered Preferences in which Catholicism is the most favored among several recognized religions.

The remaining countries adopt more separationist postures. Brazil, Jamaica, Suriname, and Trinidad and Tobago are classified as Supportive of all religions on a roughly equal footing, and Barbados and Guyana fall within the Accommodation category. Mexico and Uruguay are constitutionally separationist and adopt a more hostile posture toward religion. Cuba, Nicaragua and Venezuela are the only three Latin American and Caribbean countries classified as Nonspecific Hostility regimes. Consistently with its categorization in Figure 1, Cuba registers the most hostile religious policy in the region in 2023.

The RAS dataset includes an index that specifically describes government support for religion (Figure 2). It comprises 59 binary variables grouped under Legislating Religious Precepts, Institutions or Laws which Enforce Religion, Funding Religion, the Entanglement of Government and Religious Institutions, and Other Forms of Support for Religion. The religious support index ranges from 0 to 59. Peru records the highest score in the region in 2023 (11), followed by Nicaragua (10) and a three-way tie between Argentina, the Dominican Republic and Haiti (9 each). Bolivia, Brazil, Chile and Costa Rica each score 8, while Belize, Ecuador, Guyana, Trinidad and Tobago and Venezuela complete the top ten with 7.

The presence of an official state religion is not a determining factor: Peru, which tops the ranking, has no official state religion but maintains a 1980 concordat with the Holy See that grants Catholicism a privileged status, while Costa Rica and the Dominican Republic, which constitutionally recognize an Active State Religion, score below Peru.

The lowest religious support scores in 2023 are observed in Uruguay (1), Honduras (2), the Bahamas, Cuba and El Salvador (3 each) and Mexico (4). The combination of Figures 1 and 2 confirms that the formal separation of religion and the state coexists in Latin America and the Caribbean with widespread

Religion-State Relations	Majority religion	
	Catholic	Protestant Extended or General Christian
Official Religion <i>Active State Religion:</i> State actively supports religion but the religion is not mandatory and the state does not dominate the official religion's institutions.	Costa Rica, Dominican Republic	
No Official Religion <i>Preferred Religion:</i> While the state does not officially endorse a religion, one religion serves unofficially as the state's religion receiving unique recognition or benefits. Minority religions all receive similar treatment to each other.	Argentina, Belize, Chile, Ecuador, El Salvador, Guatemala, Haiti, Honduras, Panama, Paraguay, Peru	Bahamas
<i>Multi-Tiered Preferences 1:</i> One religion is clearly preferred by state, receiving the most benefits, there exists one or more tiers of religions which receive less benefits than the preferred religion but more than some other religions	Bolivia, Colombia	
<i>Supportive:</i> The state supports all religions more or less equally. <i>Accommodation:</i> Official separation of church and state and the state has a benevolent or neutral attitude toward religion in general.	Brazil	Jamaica, Suriname, Trinidad & Tobago Barbados, Guyana
<i>Separationist:</i> Official separation of Church and state and the state is slightly hostile toward religion.	Mexico, Uruguay	
<i>Nonspecific Hostility:</i> While the state is hostile to religion, this hostility is at about the same level as state hostility to other types of non-state organizations. Religion is not singled out.	Cuba, Nicaragua, Venezuela	

Figure 1. Religion-state relations in Latin America and the Caribbean, 2023

practical support for the religious majority. Where support is low it tends to be for two very different reasons: in constitutionally separationist states such as Uruguay and Mexico, state institutions deliberately keep their distance from religion; in nonspecifically hostile regimes such as Cuba, the state withholds support from all religions as part of a broader posture against autonomous civic actors.

Rank	Country	2023
1	Peru	11
2	Nicaragua	10
3	Argentina	9
	Dominican Republic	9
	Haiti	9
6	Bolivia	8
	Brazil	8
	Chile	8
	Costa Rica	8
10	Belize	7
	Ecuador	7
	Guyana	7
	Trinidad and Tobago	7
	Venezuela	7

Figure 2. Top 10 religious support in Latin America and the Caribbean, 2023

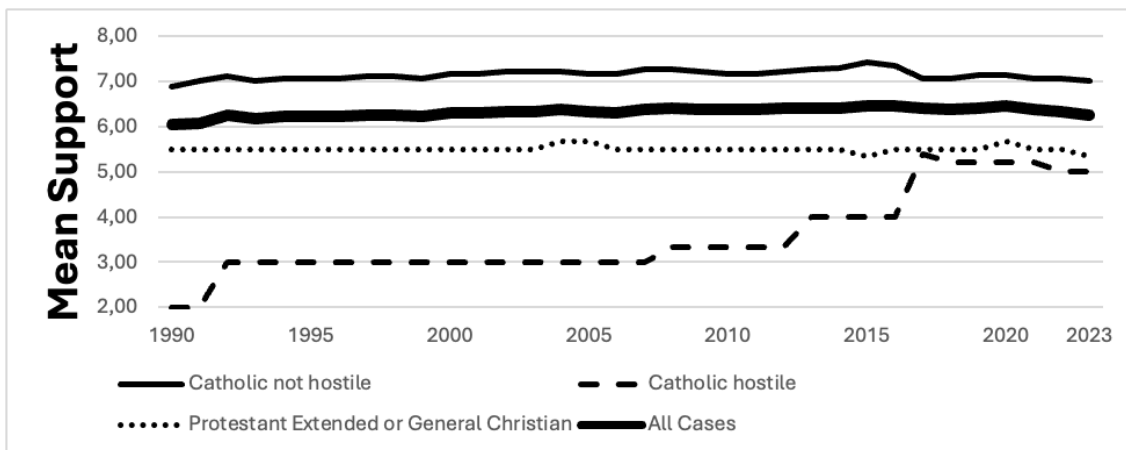


Figure 3. Support for religion in Latin America and the Caribbean, 1990–2023

The regional mean religious support score has remained remarkably stable over the past three decades, fluctuating in a narrow band between 6.04 in 1990 and 6.26 in 2023 (Figure 3). The most striking shift within this stable average is observed in countries with hostile Catholic majorities (Cuba, Nicaragua and Uruguay), whose group mean climbed from 2.00 in 1990 to 5.00 in 2023, a 150 % increase. This change is driven mostly by the Ortega-Murillo government in Nicaragua, which has appropriated Catholic and Evangelical symbolism for political purposes (placing statues of the Virgin Mary in public spaces, observing Catholic holidays as national holidays and instituting an obligatory civics class focused on “Christian, socialist and solidarity” values) while simultaneously repressing independent religious actors. By contrast, non-hostile Catholic majorities have moved only modestly (a 1.61 % increase), and Protestant majorities have declined by 3.03 %.

Five forms of governmental support for religion were present in close to half or more of the countries of the region in 2023:

- Prohibitive restrictions on abortion, present in 81.5 % of countries.
- A registration process for religious organizations which exists and is in some way beneficial, present in 66.7 % of countries.
- Government funding of religious primary or secondary schools or religious education in them, present in 63 % of countries.
- Religious education present in public schools, present in 48.1 % of countries.
- Presence of an official government ministry or department dealing with religious affairs, present in 48.1 % of countries.

In Peru, the law mandates that all public schools provide religious education through the primary and secondary levels and only permits the teaching of Catholicism in public schools; the religious curriculum is developed by the National Office of Catholic Education (ONDEC) and must be in compliance with the 1980 concordat signed with the Vatican (Observatory of Religious Freedom in Latin America, n.d.-d). In Costa Rica, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Religion is the body responsible for managing the government's relationship with the Catholic Church and other religious groups (United States Department of State, 2023a). In Argentina, since the 2015 reform of the civil and commercial code, non-Catholic religious groups may register with the Secretariat of Worship in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Worship on the same footing as the Catholic Church, with registration granting tax-exempt status, eligibility to apply for visas for religious officials and authorization to hold public activities; more than 5,300 non-Catholic religious groups have been recognized in this way (United States Department of State, 2015, 2019a).

Government discrimination against religious minorities

The government-based religious discrimination index covers 59 types of discrimination by state authorities against minority religions. To discriminate means to treat differently. All these forms of discrimination are therefore restrictions placed on minority religions that are not placed on the majority religion, or that are placed on minority religions to a greater degree than on the majority religion. Regulations and limitations affecting all religions or the majority religion are addressed in the following section. This distinction is important and is not found in most other religious freedom indexes, because the motivations for governments restricting minority religions and regulating the majority religion can be quite different. The 59 variables can be grouped under Restrictions on Religious Practices, Restrictions on Religious Institutions and the Clergy, Restrictions on Conversion and Proselytizing, and Other Restrictions. They are scored on a 0 to 3 scale and can be combined into an index ranging from 0 to 177.

Cuba stands out by a very wide margin in 2023 with a religious discrimination score of 59, almost three times that of the next country on the list (Figure 4). Nicaragua (21), Venezuela (18), Peru (13) and Colombia (12) complete the top five, followed by Honduras and Mexico (11 each), Costa Rica (9), and Bolivia, Brazil and Guatemala (7 each).

Rank	Country	2023
1	Cuba	59
2	Nicaragua	21
3	Venezuela	18
4	Peru	13
5	Colombia	12
6	Honduras	11
	Mexico	11
8	Costa Rica	9
	Bolivia	7
	Brazil	7
	Guatemala	7

Figure 4. Top 10 religious discrimination against minorities in Latin America and the Caribbean, 2023

Cuba’s exceptionally high score reflects the systematic state control exercised by the Office of Religious Affairs (Oficina de Asuntos Religiosos, ORA) of the Cuban Communist Party, which oversees and regulates virtually every facet of religious activity, especially for unregistered groups. Nicaragua’s score surged from 1 in 1990 to 21 in 2023, the largest absolute increase recorded in the region, propelled by the Ortega-Murillo government’s escalating repression of independent Catholic and Protestant religious actors since the 2018 protests. Venezuela’s score climbed from 8 to 18 over the same period, reflecting the consolidation of the Maduro regime’s discriminatory practices against religious groups perceived as politically disloyal.

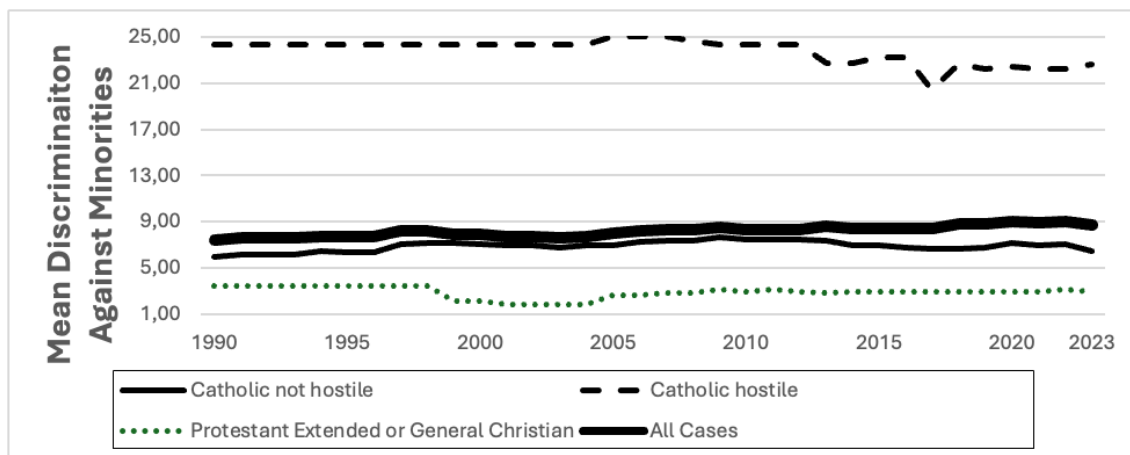


Figure 5. Discrimination against religious minorities in Latin America and the Caribbean, 1990-2023

At the other end of the spectrum, Suriname, Barbados and Paraguay each score 1 in 2023, and Belize and Trinidad and Tobago each score 2, indicating that minority religions in those countries are treated on terms broadly equivalent to those of the majority. The Dominican Republic recorded a sharp decrease from

11 to 4 between 2020 and 2023, and Paraguay fell from 12 in 1990 to 1 in 2023, suggesting meaningful policy improvements toward religious minorities.

At the regional level the mean religious discrimination score increased by 16.92 % between 1990 and 2023, rising from 7.44 to 8.70 (Figure 5). The trend is driven principally by countries with hostile Catholic majorities (Cuba, Nicaragua and Uruguay), whose group mean has fluctuated around 22 to 25 over the period, and by sharp upward shifts in individual countries such as Nicaragua and Venezuela. By contrast, the group mean for countries with Protestant Extended or General Christian majorities fell from 3.50 in 1990 to 3.00 in 2023, a 14.29 % decrease, indicating comparatively lower and even slowly declining discrimination in mostly Caribbean Protestant-majority states.

Five forms of governmental discrimination against religious minorities were the most observed in the region in 2023:

- Requirement for minority religions to register in order to be legal or receive tax status, present in 48.1 % of countries.
- Restrictions on proselytizing by foreign clergy or missionaries, present in 48.1 % of countries.
- Restrictions on access to existing places of worship, present in 22.2 % of countries.
- Restricted access of minority clergy to jails compared to the majority (mx35), present in 22.2 % of countries.
- Restrictions on formal religious organizations, present in 22.2 % of countries.

In Cuba, the ORA requires all religious groups to obtain official recognition before holding meetings, importing religious literature, receiving foreign visitors, purchasing vehicles or constructing, repairing or purchasing places of worship; unregistered Protestant house churches remain unable to import any religious literature, and authorities regularly confiscate religious materials and arrest pastors of unregistered congregations (United States Department of State, 2016a; Observatory of Religious Freedom in Latin America, n.d.-b). In Bolivia, the law requires religious groups to register with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs' Office of Religion and Nongovernmental Organizations as a nongovernmental organization; the operating fees are differentiated by type, with religious organizations paying US\$990 and "spiritual" organizations (a category that includes Animist and Ethnic Religionist communities) paying US\$590 (Observatory of Religious Freedom in Latin America, n.d.-a; United States Department of State, 2016b). In Venezuela, the Organic Law of Indigenous Peoples and Communities, passed in December 2005, stipulates that religious groups wishing to proselytize on indigenous territory must obtain prior authorization from the Ministry of Indigenous Peoples (International Work Group for Indigenous Affairs, n.d.; Asamblea Nacional de la República Bolivariana de Venezuela, 2005).

Regulation of all religions and/or the majority religion

The religious regulation index addresses the general regulation of religious practices and the regulation of the majority religion or all religions. It is analytically distinct from religious discrimination because it looks at how states restrict religious practice, including that of the majority religion. At its core, religious regulation disrespects the principle of the separation of religion and state because it involves the state interfering with, controlling or restricting aspects of religion. It can also violate freedom of religion by interfering with or controlling religious practices and institutions. The 52 variables that make up the index are grouped under Restrictions on Religion’s Political Role, Restrictions on Religious Institutions, Restrictions on Religious Practices and Other Regulation of Religion, scored on a 0 to 3 scale, and combined into a measure ranging from 0 to 156.

Rank	Country	2023
1	Cuba	51
2	Nicaragua	35
3	Mexico	21
4	Venezuela	15
5	Costa Rica	11
5	Haiti	11
7	Bolivia	9
7	El Salvador	9
7	Honduras	9
10	Panama	8

Figure 6. Top 10 religious regulation in Latin America and the Caribbean, 2023

As displayed in Figure 6, Cuba again tops the regional ranking in 2023 with a religious regulation score of 51, followed by Nicaragua (35), Mexico (21), Venezuela (15), and a tie between Costa Rica and Haiti at 11 each. Bolivia, El Salvador and Honduras follow with 9 each, and Panama closes the top ten with 8. Cuba’s score reflects the depth and breadth of state control exercised by the ORA across all denominations, including the monitoring of sermons, restrictions on printing and importing religious literature, requirements to obtain permits for nearly every religious activity and the placement of government informants inside places of worship. Nicaragua’s score climbed from 4 in 1990 to 35 in 2023, the steepest rise observed in the region, driven by mandatory weekly check-ins of clergy with the police, required submission of sermon drafts, plainclothes intelligence officers attending services, the banning of outdoor worship and religious processions for independent religious actors since 2023, and the stripping of legal status from more than 1,300 religious organizations since 2018.

Mexico’s persistently elevated score is anchored in the 1917 Constitution, which still imposes far-reaching restrictions on clergy political activity and on the public exercise of religion. Mexico’s score fell sharply from 50 in 1990 to 18 in 2000 following the 1992 constitutional reform and the subsequent re-establishment of

diplomatic relations with the Holy See and has remained around 20 ever since. By contrast, only the Bahamas (1), Jamaica (1) and Argentina, Belize, Dominican Republic and Guyana (2 each) record very low scores in 2023, indicating that broad regulation of religious practice is not the regional norm but is concentrated in a handful of countries.

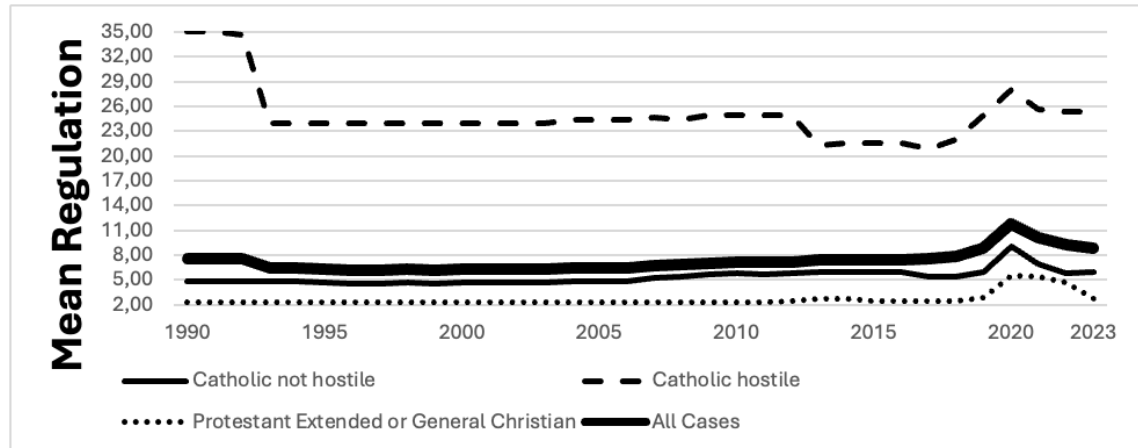


Figure 7. Regulation of all religions and/or the majority religion in Latin America and the Caribbean, 1990–2023

The regional mean rose from 7.59 in 1990 to a pandemic-era peak of 11.78 in 2020 and then settled at 8.81 in 2023, a 16.10 % increase over the period (Figure 7). The 2020 spike was driven by closures of places of worship under COVID-19 sanitary measures that were largely lifted by the end of 2022. The long-term increase remains heavily influenced by countries with hostile Catholic majorities, but Catholic non-hostile states also recorded a meaningful 24.27 % increase since 1990, while Protestant Extended majorities increased by 14.29 %. The largest individual country increases were registered in Nicaragua (from 4 to 35), Venezuela (from 4 to 15) and Ecuador (from 2 to 7). Mexico is the only top-ten country to register a substantial decrease in regulation across the period, although its 2023 score remains the third highest in the region.

The four most common religious regulation variables in 2023 were:

- Restrictions on clergy holding political office, present in 40.7 % of countries.
- Restrictions on clergy or religious organizations engaging in public political speech or propaganda, present in 25.9 % of countries.
- Restrictions on religious-based hate speech, present in 33.3 % of countries.
- Other religious restrictions, present in 29.6 % of countries.

Mexico offers one of the most explicit examples of restrictions on clergy in political life: the 1917 Constitution and the Religious Associations and Public Worship Law bar members of the clergy from holding public office, advocating partisan political views, supporting political candidates, voting, forming religious associations or criticizing the state; religious ministers must be Mexican by birth, periodical publications of a religious character may not comment on national political matters and political groups bearing religious names are strictly prohibited (Constitución Política de los Estados Unidos Mexicanos, 1917).

Nicaragua illustrates an aggressive form of regulation of clergy political speech: since the 2018 protests, independent clergy have been required to check in weekly with the police, to submit sermon drafts and to share social media posts; plainclothes intelligence officers attend services to monitor attendees, and outdoor worship and religious processions have been banned for independent religious actors since 2023 (Dell’orto, 2025).

In Brazil, religious-based hate speech is criminalized both by Article 208 of the Penal Code, which makes it an offence to publicly insult or taunt someone on the grounds of religion or to disrupt religious ceremonies, and by Law No. 7,716 of 1989, which prohibits any act of discrimination, including the publication of expressions of prejudice based on race, color, religion, ethnicity or national origin, with these provisions used by courts to fine or imprison those who publish religiously intolerant material (Brazil Penal Code, 1940; Lei No. 7.716, 1989; United States Department of State, 2014a).

Societal discrimination against religious minorities (general)

A societal module was added to the RAS dataset in 2017 with retroactive coding back to 1990. It focuses on actions taken by societal actors, including discrimination, harassment, acts of prejudice and violence against minority religions. The general societal discrimination index is discussed here; the section that follows zooms in on its violence-related measures. The index includes 34 variables grouped under Economic Discrimination, Speech Acts, Property Crimes, Non-Violent Harassment, Violence and Other Forms of Societal Discrimination. Variables are scored on a 0 to 3 scale and can be combined into a composite measure ranging from 0 to 102 (Fox, Finke & Mataic, 2018).

Rank	Country	2023
1	Mexico	18
2	Argentina	17
3	Colombia	16
4	Haiti	13
5	Brazil	11
6	Chile	10
	Venezuela	10
8	Peru	8
9	Ecuador	6
10	Guatemala	5

Figure 8. Top 10 societal discrimination in Latin America and the Caribbean, 2023

As Figure 8 illustrates, societal discrimination against religious minorities was most common in 2023 in Mexico (18), Argentina (17), Colombia (16), Haiti (13) and Brazil (11), followed by Chile and Venezuela (10 each), Peru (8), Ecuador (6) and Guatemala (5). This regional ranking does not coincide with the ranking for government-based discrimination: Cuba and Nicaragua, which dominate the

discrimination and regulation rankings, score very low on societal discrimination (2 and 0 respectively).

The pattern reflects two distinct dynamics. In countries such as Cuba and Nicaragua, the state is the main perpetrator of religious freedom violations and society is largely demobilized. In countries such as Mexico, Colombia and Brazil, by contrast, the state is comparatively neutral toward religion, but societal actors (organized crime groups, indigenous traditional authorities, ideologically driven movements, members of competing religious traditions) target religious minorities.

Eleven countries registered scores of 0 or 1 in 2023 (the Bahamas, Barbados, Belize, the Dominican Republic, Guyana, Honduras, Jamaica, Nicaragua, Panama, Paraguay and Suriname), suggesting that in much of the region societal discrimination against religious minorities remains the exception rather than the rule.

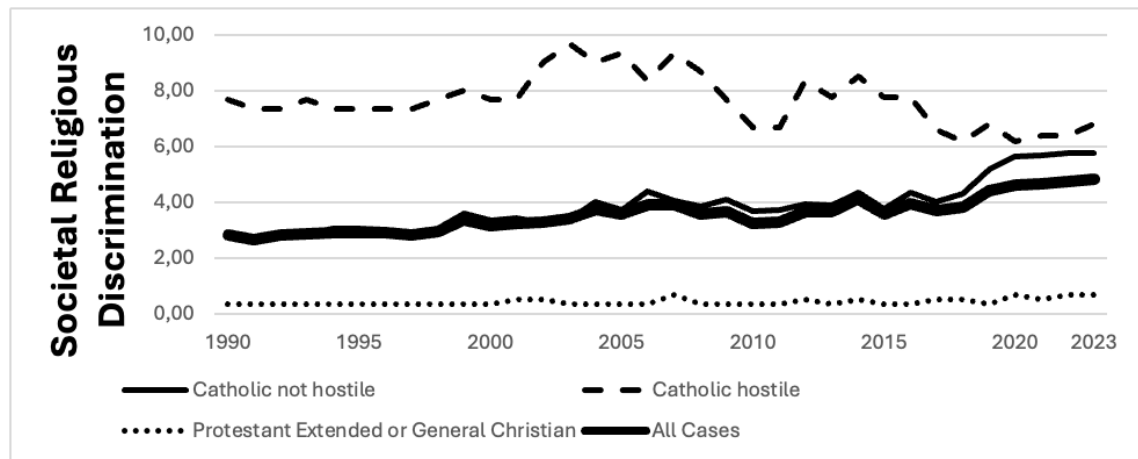


Figure 9. Societal Discrimination against religious minorities in Latin America and the Caribbean, 1990–2023

The regional mean for societal discrimination increased from 2.81 in 1990 to 4.81 in 2023, a 71.05 % rise (Figure 9), the steepest of any of the four indexes presented in this report. The largest increases were registered in non-hostile Catholic countries (a group mean rise of 102.94 %). Countries with hostile Catholic majorities recorded an 11.30 % decrease over the same period. The most striking individual country trajectories are those of Venezuela (from 0 to 10), Colombia (from 9 to 16), Haiti (from 4 to 13) and Brazil (from 2 to 11), all of which reflect the growing presence of armed non-state actors and ideologically driven societal movements targeting religious minorities or majority religious institutions.

Six forms of societal discrimination against religious minorities were observed in at least 44 % of the countries in the region at some point between 1990 and 2023:

- Anti-religious minority propaganda in mainstream private media, present in 51.9 % of countries.
- Vandalism against religious property such as places of worship, community centers, schools and cemeteries, present in 59.3 % of countries.
- Harassment of members of religious minorities, including non-violent verbal attacks, present in 55.6 % of countries.
- Other threats of violence, present in 44.4 % of countries.

- Lethal violence against any member of minority religions due to religious affiliation, present in 44.4 % of countries.
- Arson, bombing or concerted attacks against religious property, present in 48.1 % of countries.

In Chile, arson attacks on rural Catholic and Protestant churches in the predominantly Mapuche Araucanía Region began in 2016, when arsonists set on fire and burned down more than ten churches; the pattern has continued every year since, including attacks attributed to individuals associated with Mapuche indigenous groups in 2022 and 2023, when 23 churches received arson threats during a single year (United States Department of State, 2016c, 2019b, 2022a, 2023b; Open Doors, n.d.). In Haiti, the dramatic collapse of state authority following the assassination of President Jovenel Moïse in July 2021 has been accompanied by sustained gang and vigilante violence against religious leaders of all denominations, including the killing of a Voodoo sculptor and priest in Croix-des-Bouquets in October 2021, the killing of a Voodoo priest in Pétionville in June 2022, the killing of at least six worshippers during a Voodoo ceremony in Onaville in May 2023 and the execution of a Voodoo priest by vigilantes in Fort Jacques in August 2023 (United States Department of State, 2019c, 2023c; Mag Haïti, 2021; Exil, n.d.). In Brazil, practitioners of Afro-Brazilian religions such as Candomblé and Umbanda continue to suffer recurrent vandalism and harassment, with the Observatory of Religious Freedom in Latin America documenting attacks on terreiros in Esmeraldas, Realengo, Curitiba, Mosqueiro Island, Vitória da Conquista, Itajaí, Dias d'Ávila and São Luís during 2022 and 2023, as well as the targeted killing in 2023 of a Candomblé priestess and quilombo leader in Simões Filho (Observatory of Religious Freedom in Latin America, n.d.-c).

Societal discrimination involving physical violence

Figure 10 presents killings by non-state actors documented in the Violent Incidents Database (VID) in 2023 involving religious actors or communities in Latin America and the Caribbean. Colombia and Mexico stand out as the most affected countries, each registering 18 and 17 killings, followed by Honduras with 13. By contrast, Brazil, El Salvador, Guatemala, and Venezuela registered isolated incidents. In total, the VID documented 54 killings across the region during 2023.

Regarding the distribution of victims, most of the 54 documented killings involved Protestant Christians. Of the total cases recorded in 2023, 34 involved Protestants, while 8 involved Christians categorized as “other/unknown” and 7 involved Catholics. Colombia and Honduras registered particularly high numbers of killings involving Protestant actors, with 15 and 10 cases respectively. This pattern likely reflects the growing visibility of evangelical pastors, church leaders, and Protestant communities in areas affected by organized crime, gang violence, and local conflicts, particularly in areas where churches often play important social and community roles. The country-level totals shown in Figure 10 include not only the killing of religious actors themselves but also, where applicable, members of their extended family who were killed in the same incident; this accounts, for example, for the figure of five Catholic killings recorded in Mexico in 2023.

Colombia’s figures illustrate the intersection between religious vulnerability and prolonged armed violence. Together with Mexico, the two countries accounted

	Country	Christian Catholic	Christian Other/Unknown	Christian Protestant	Animist, ancestor worship, or traditional religion	Unknown	Total
1	Colombia	2	1	15	0	0	18
	Mexico	5	2	7	0	4	18
3	Honduras	0	3	10	0	0	13
4	Brazil	0	0	1	1	0	2
5	El Salvador	0	1	0	0	0	1
	Guatemala	0	1	0	0	0	1
	Venezuela	0	0	1	0	0	1
	Total	7	8	34	1	4	54

Figure 10. Top 5 killings by non-state actors in Latin America and the Caribbean, 2023 (Violent Incidents Database)

for 36 of the 54 killings documented in the VID in 2023. Most killings occurred within a broader environment shaped by the presence of armed groups, territorial disputes, illicit economies, and weak institutional protection in peripheral regions. Religious leaders and community actors in these contexts frequently serve as mediators, humanitarian actors, or defenders of local populations, which can place them in direct tension with non-state armed actors. Honduras also displays a dynamic of violence closely linked to organized crime, gang activity, and weak institutional protection in areas affected by insecurity and social fragmentation.

Brazil, El Salvador, Guatemala, and Venezuela registered comparatively low numbers of killings involving religious actors in 2023, with between one and two incidents documented in each country. Although these figures are significantly lower than those recorded in Colombia, Mexico, or Honduras, they still reflect localized contexts of insecurity, criminal violence, and social conflict affecting religious actors and communities.

Although Figure 10 focuses on killings by non-state actors in 2023, Appendix 5 shows that societal discrimination involving physical violence in Latin America and the Caribbean includes a broader range of violent incidents affecting religious actors and communities, including damage to religious buildings, abductions, forced displacement, other forms of physical abuse, and attacks on homes and businesses. Mexico and Colombia not only recorded the highest number of killings, but also some of the highest levels of other forms of violence documented in the region. Colombia registered 197 cases of forced displacement from home and 83 cases of other forms of physical or mental abuse, while Mexico recorded 115 cases of other forms of physical or mental abuse and 93 cases of forced displacement from home. Haiti, meanwhile, registered 24 abductions. These patterns suggest that violence affecting religious communities in the region often manifests through sustained intimidation, coercion, and insecurity beyond lethal violence alone.

Overall, the VID data suggest societal discrimination involving physical violence in Latin America is not necessarily linked to doctrinal hostility but to the broader

vulnerability of religious actors working in violent environments. Religious leaders frequently occupy positions of moral authority and community influence in areas where non-state armed actors seek territorial and social control. In this context, religious actors are often exposed to violence because of their civic, humanitarian, and community roles within these territories affected by criminal violence.

Conclusions

The data presented in this report provide an updated picture of religious freedom in Latin America and the Caribbean between 1990 and 2023. The region is not homogeneous: it contains countries where the formal separation of religion and the state coexists with substantial practical support for the Catholic Church (such as Peru, the Dominican Republic and Costa Rica), constitutionally separatist states (Mexico and Uruguay), and authoritarian regimes (Cuba, Nicaragua and Venezuela) that combine hostility toward religion with broader hostility toward autonomous civic actors.

Cuba records the most hostile religious policy in the region in 2023 and tops both the government discrimination index (59) and the government regulation index (51). Nicaragua follows in both rankings, with the steepest single-country rise across the period (its religious discrimination score rose from 1 in 1990 to 21 in 2023, and its religious regulation score from 4 to 35). Venezuela has likewise consolidated discriminatory and regulatory practices targeting religious groups perceived as politically disloyal. By contrast, Suriname, Barbados, Paraguay, Belize and Trinidad and Tobago show some of the lowest discrimination scores in the region, while the Bahamas, Jamaica and Argentina maintain very low regulation scores.

Societal discrimination against religious minorities follows a very different geography. The countries at the top of this ranking, namely Mexico, Argentina, Colombia, Haiti and Brazil, are not the same that lead in government discrimination, illustrating that state-driven and society-driven religious freedom violations respond to distinct dynamics. In countries such as Mexico, Colombia and Haiti, societal discrimination is closely linked to organized crime, armed non-state actors and weak institutional protection. In Brazil, vandalism and harassment recurrently target practitioners of Afro-Brazilian religions. These patterns are reinforced by the Violent Incidents Database, which records 54 religiously linked killings by non-state actors in the region in 2023, concentrated in Colombia, Mexico and Honduras.

Taken together, the report shows that the most pressing religious freedom challenges in Latin America and the Caribbean are concentrated in two distinct groups of countries: authoritarian states that use the law and the security apparatus to constrain religious actors, and democracies where weak institutional protection allows societal actors (organized crime, indigenous traditional authorities, ideologically driven movements) to target religious minorities and, in some cases, members of the majority religion. The 71.05 % rise in societal discrimination since 1990 is the steepest trend observed across the four indexes presented and deserves close attention from researchers, policymakers and religious communities.

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Appendix 1: data collection methods

The Global Religious Freedom Index is an initiative of the International Institute for Religious Freedom. It draws on data from the Religion and State round 4 (RAS) Project directed by Prof. Jonathan Fox and Dr. Ariel Zellman at Bar-Ilan University (Israel).

The RAS Project has been used in over 250 peer-reviewed publications including books, academic articles, doctoral dissertations and MA theses and is the most used database on religious freedom and religion-state relations in academic writings. However, it has not yet had a significant footprint in advocacy and policy circles. Its advantages over current data used for advocacy and policy is that it is far more accurate and detailed. RAS has established methods to collect this data using a wider array of sources than any other project. It is also the only academic (or non-academic) project that can provide cross-country standardized data on discrimination against religious minorities. Unlike other projects which give a general country score or focus on a single religious minority (e.g. Christians), the RAS scores minorities in each country separately and includes all minorities which are a minimum of 0.2 % of a country's population, as well as Jews, Muslim and Christian minorities that are smaller than 0.2 % but at least several hundred people. Round 3 of RAS included 771 such minorities in 183 countries and territories. Round 4 is adding more minorities primarily by providing more fine-tuned distinctions between different denominations of Christians and identifying small minorities missed previously. For example, in Sub-Saharan Africa the number of minorities included individually increased from 160 to 243. Minorities too small to be included for minority-level coding are still included in the country-level coding.

The most recent RAS round 4 (RAS4) data covers 1990 to 2023, with each year measured separately to track changes over time. It describes government involvement in religion through 171 variables describing Official Religion, Religious Support, Religious Restrictions, Religious Discrimination, as well as other topics. Additional variables measure specific religious policies including religious education, the registration of religious organizations, restrictions on abortion, restrictions on proselytizing, and religious requirements for holding public office or citizenship. RAS also measures 34 ways in which societal actors restrict or attack religious minorities including economic discrimination, property crimes, and violence, among other types of discrimination (Fox, Finke & Mataic, 2018).¹

Even though the RAS Project collects data on the intersection between religion and politics broadly, when analyzed together, its indicators can be taken to describe many of the dimensions of religious freedom.

¹ A full list of the variables is available at <https://ras.thearda.com>.

Appendix 2: data tables

Religious support index

Country scores (1990, 2000, 2010, 2020, 2023)

Country	1999	2000	2010	2020	2023
Argentina	7	9	9	10	9
Bahamas	3	3	3	3	3
Barbados	4	4	4	5	4
Belize	7	7	8	7	7
Bolivia	7	7	10	9	8
Brazil	7	7	7	8	8
Chile	7	8	8	8	8
Colombia	7	6	6	6	5
Costa Rica	7	8	8	8	8
Cuba	2	2	3	3	3
Dominican Republic	8	8	9	9	9
Ecuador	7	7	7	7	7
El Salvador	3	3	3	3	3
Guatemala	5	5	5	5	6
Guyana	6	6	7	7	7
Haiti	9	9	9	9	9
Honduras	2	2	2	2	2
Jamaica	6	6	6	6	6
Mexico	2	5	5	5	4
Nicaragua	8	9	8	10	10
Panama	7	7	6	6	6
Paraguay	8	7	7	6	6
Peru	10	11	10	11	11
Suriname	6	6	6	5	5
Trinidad and Tobago	8	8	7	8	7
Uruguay	2	2	2	1	1
Venezuela	8	8	7	7	7

Means by year (1990–2023)

	Catholic not hostile	Catholic hostile	Protestant Extended or General Christian	All Cases
1990	6.89	2.00	5.50	6.04
	7.00	2.00	5.50	6.07
	7.11	3.00	5.50	6.26
	7.00	3.00	5.50	6.19
	7.05	3.00	5.50	6.22
1995	7.05	3.00	5.50	6.22
	7.05	3.00	5.50	6.22
	7.11	3.00	5.50	6.26
	7.11	3.00	5.50	6.26
	7.05	3.00	5.50	6.22
2000	7.16	3.00	5.50	6.30
	7.16	3.00	5.50	6.30
	7.21	3.00	5.50	6.33
	7.21	3.00	5.50	6.33
	7.21	3.00	5.67	6.37
2005	7.16	3.00	5.67	6.33
	7.16	3.00	5.50	6.30
	7.26	3.00	5.50	6.37
	7.26	3.33	5.50	6.41
	7.21	3.33	5.50	6.37
2010	7.16	3.33	5.50	6.37
	7.16	3.33	5.50	6.37
	7.21	3.33	5.50	6.41
	7.28	4.00	5.50	6.41
	7.29	4.00	5.50	6.41
2015	7.41	4.00	5.33	6.44
	7.35	4.00	5.50	6.44
	7.06	5.40	5.50	6.41
	7.06	5.20	5.50	6.37
	7.13	5.20	5.50	6.41
2020	7.13	5.20	5.67	6.44
	7.06	5.20	5.50	6.37
	7.06	5.00	5.50	6.33
2023	7.00	5.00	5.33	6.26
increase in % 1990–2023	1.61	150.00	-3.03	3.68

Most common variables (2023)

Ix06: Prohibitive restrictions on abortion

Present in 81.5 % of countries

Level	Countries
No	Cuba, Mexico, Colombia, Argentina, Uruguay
Yes	Bahamas, Haiti, Dominican Republic, Jamaica, Trinidad and Tobago, Barbados, Belize, Guatemala, Honduras, El Salvador, Nicaragua, Costa Rica, Panama, Venezuela, Guyana, Suriname, Ecuador, Peru, Brazil, Bolivia, Paraguay, Chile

Ix56: Registration process for religious organizations exists and is in some way beneficial

Present in 66.7 % of countries

Level	Countries
No	Bahamas, Trinidad and Tobago, Barbados, Belize, Honduras, El Salvador, Costa Rica, Suriname, Brazil
Yes	Cuba, Haiti, Dominican Republic, Jamaica, Mexico, Guatemala, Nicaragua, Panama, Colombia, Venezuela, Guyana, Ecuador, Peru, Bolivia, Paraguay, Chile, Argentina, Uruguay

Ix33: Government funding of religious primary/secondary schools or religious education in them

Present in 63 % of countries

Level	Countries
No	Bahamas, Cuba, Dominican Republic, Trinidad and Tobago, Mexico, Honduras, Colombia, Guyana, Peru, Uruguay
Yes	Haiti, Jamaica, Barbados, Belize, Guatemala, El Salvador, Nicaragua, Costa Rica, Panama, Venezuela, Suriname, Ecuador, Brazil, Bolivia, Paraguay, Chile, Argentina

Ix51: Religious education is present in public schools

Present in 48.1 % of countries

Level	Countries
No	Cuba, Haiti, Mexico, Honduras, El Salvador, Panama, Venezuela, Guyana, Suriname, Ecuador, Bolivia, Paraguay, Uruguay
Yes	Bahamas, Dominican Republic, Jamaica, Trinidad and Tobago, Barbados, Belize, Guatemala, Nicaragua, Costa Rica, Colombia, Peru, Brazil, Chile, Argentina

Ix45: Official government ministry or department dealing with religious affairs

Present in 48.1 % of countries

Level	Countries
No	Bahamas, Dominican Republic, Jamaica, Barbados, Belize, Honduras, El Salvador, Nicaragua, Panama, Colombia, Guyana, Suriname, Brazil, Uruguay
Yes	Cuba, Haiti, Trinidad and Tobago, Mexico, Guatemala, Costa Rica, Venezuela, Ecuador, Peru, Bolivia, Paraguay, Chile, Argentina

Religious discrimination index

Scores by country (1990, 2000, 2010, 2020, 2023)

Country	1999	2000	2010	2020	2023
Argentina	3	4	4	4	4
Bahamas	0	0	6	6	6
Barbados	9	1	1	1	1
Belize	0	1	2	2	2
Bolivia	8	11	5	11	7
Brazil	6	7	6	6	7
Chile	12	10	5	5	5
Colombia	5	11	11	12	12
Costa Rica	8	8	10	9	9
Cuba	58	58	57	60	59
Dominican Republic	11	11	11	11	4
Ecuador	5	5	7	7	6
El Salvador	2	6	6	6	6
Guatemala	4	4	7	7	7
Guyana	4	4	4	4	4
Haiti	4	4	4	6	6
Honduras	9	9	9	11	11
Jamaica	4	4	4	4	4
Mexico	10	10	11	11	11
Nicaragua	1	1	6	19	21
Panama	4	4	6	4	4
Paraguay	12	12	9	1	1
Peru	5	10	13	13	13
Suriname	0	0	0	0	1
Trinidad and Tobago	4	4	3	3	2
Uruguay	5	5	5	4	4
Venezuela	8	9	13	18	18

Means by year (1990–2023)

	Catholic not hostile	Catholic hostile	Protestant Extended or General Christian	All Cases
1990	5.94	24.33	3.50	7.44
	6.17	24.33	3.50	7.59
	6.22	24.33	3.50	7.63
	6.22	24.33	3.50	7.63
	6.44	24.33	3.50	7.78
1995	6.39	24.33	3.50	7.74
	6.39	24.33	3.50	7.74
	7.06	24.33	3.50	8.19
	7.17	24.33	3.50	8.26
	7.17	24.33	2.17	7.96
2000	7.06	24.33	2.17	7.89
	6.94	24.33	1.83	7.74
	7.00	24.33	1.83	7.78
	6.78	24.33	1.83	7.63
	7.00	24.33	1.83	7.78
2005	7.00	25.00	2.67	8.04
	7.28	25.00	2.67	8.22
	7.39	25.00	2.83	8.33
	7.39	24.67	2.83	8.30
	7.72	24.33	3.17	8.56
2010	7.44	24.33	3.00	8.33
	7.44	24.33	3.17	8.37
	7.50	24.33	3.00	8.37
	7.35	22.75	2.83	8.63
	6.94	22.75	3.00	8.41
2015	6.94	23.25	3.00	8.48
	6.82	23.25	3.00	8.41
	6.69	20.40	3.00	8.41
	6.69	22.60	3.00	8.81
	6.81	22.20	3.00	8.81
2020	7.19	22.40	3.00	9.07
	6.94	22.20	3.00	8.89
	7.06	22.20	3.17	9.00
2023	6.50	22.60	3.00	8.70
increase in % 1990–2023	9.35	-7.12	-14.29	16.92

Most common variables (2023)

mx34: Requirement for minority religions to register to be legal or receive tax status

Present in 48.1% of countries

Level	Countries
Not restricted / Not practiced	Bahamas, Dominican Republic, Jamaica, Trinidad and Tobago, Barbados, Mexico, Belize, Nicaragua, Panama, Guyana, Suriname, Brazil, Paraguay, Uruguay
Slightly restricted (most/all)	Haiti, El Salvador, Costa Rica, Colombia, Chile, Argentina
Prohibited / Severely restricted	Cuba, Guatemala, Honduras, Venezuela, Ecuador, Peru, Bolivia

mx46: Restrictions on proselytizing by foreign clergy or missionaries

Present in 48.1% of countries

Level	Countries
Not restricted / Not practiced	Bahamas, Haiti, Jamaica, Trinidad and Tobago, Barbados, Mexico, Belize, Suriname, Peru, Brazil, Paraguay, Chile, Argentina, Uruguay
Slightly restricted (some minorities)	Cuba, Honduras, Nicaragua, Costa Rica, Colombia, Ecuador
Slightly restricted (most/all)	Dominican Republic, Guatemala, El Salvador, Venezuela, Guyana, Bolivia
Prohibited / Severely restricted	Panama

mx24: Restrictions on access to existing places of worship

Present in 22.2% of countries

Level	Countries
Not restricted / Not practiced	Bahamas, Haiti, Dominican Republic, Jamaica, Trinidad and Tobago, Barbados, Mexico, Belize, Honduras, El Salvador, Panama, Colombia, Guyana, Suriname, Ecuador, Peru, Brazil, Bolivia, Paraguay, Chile, Uruguay
Slightly restricted (some minorities)	Guatemala, Nicaragua, Costa Rica, Argentina
Slightly restricted (most/all)	Cuba, Venezuela

mx35: Restricted access of minority clergy to jails compared to majority*Present in 22.2 % of countries*

Level	Countries
Not restricted / Not practiced	Bahamas, Dominican Republic, Trinidad and Tobago, Barbados, Mexico, Belize, Guatemala, Honduras, El Salvador, Nicaragua, Panama, Guyana, Suriname, Ecuador, Peru, Brazil, Bolivia, Paraguay, Chile, Argentina, Uruguay
Slightly restricted (some minorities)	Haiti, Jamaica
Slightly restricted (most/all)	Cuba, Costa Rica, Colombia, Venezuela

mx25: Restrictions on formal religious organizations*Present in 22.2 % of countries*

Level	Countries
Not restricted / Not practiced	Haiti, Dominican Republic, Jamaica, Trinidad and Tobago, Barbados, Mexico, Belize, Guatemala, Honduras, El Salvador, Costa Rica, Panama, Colombia, Guyana, Suriname, Ecuador, Peru, Brazil, Paraguay, Argentina, Uruguay
Slightly restricted (some minorities)	Bahamas, Nicaragua, Venezuela, Chile
Slightly restricted (most/all)	Bolivia
Prohibited / Severely restricted	Cuba

Religious regulation index

Scores by country (1990, 2000, 2010, 2020, 2023)

Country	1999	2000	2010	2020	2023
Argentina	0	0	0	6	2
Bahamas	1	1	1	1	1
Barbados	4	4	4	8	4
Belize	2	2	2	6	2
Bolivia	6	7	11	9	9
Brazil	3	3	3	7	3
Chile	2	2	3	7	3
Colombia	3	3	3	6	3
Costa Rica	10	10	11	15	11
Cuba	50	49	50	53	51
Dominican Republic	0	0	0	4	2
Ecuador	2	2	6	11	7
El Salvador	7	7	9	13	9
Guatemala	6	6	5	9	6
Guyana	2	2	2	6	2
Haiti	12	10	10	15	11
Honduras	8	6	7	13	9
Jamaica	0	0	0	5	1
Mexico	50	18	20	24	21
Nicaragua	4	4	13	35	35
Panama	8	8	8	8	8
Paraguay	6	6	6	11	7
Peru	3	3	3	5	3
Suriname	2	2	2	6	3
Trinidad and Tobago	5	5	5	7	5
Uruguay	5	5	5	9	5
Venezuela	4	4	4	19	15

Means by year (1990–2023)

	Catholic not hostile	Catholic hostile	Protestant Extended or General Christian	All Cases
1990	4.78	35.00	2.33	7.59
	4.78	35.00	2.33	7.59
	4.78	34.67	2.33	7.56
	4.78	24.00	2.33	6.37
	4.78	24.00	2.33	6.37
1995	4.67	24.00	2.33	6.30
	4.56	24.00	2.33	6.22
	4.56	24.00	2.33	6.22
	4.67	24.00	2.33	6.30
	4.56	24.00	2.33	6.22
2000	4.61	24.00	2.33	6.26
	4.61	24.00	2.33	6.26
	4.67	24.00	2.33	6.30
	4.61	24.00	2.33	6.26
	4.78	24.33	2.33	6.41
2005	4.78	24.33	2.33	6.41
	4.78	24.33	2.33	6.41
	5.22	24.67	2.33	6.74
	5.39	24.33	2.33	6.81
	5.61	25.00	2.33	7.04
2010	5.78	25.00	2.33	7.15
	5.72	25.00	2.33	7.11
	5.78	25.00	2.50	7.19
	5.94	21.25	2.67	7.48
	5.88	21.50	2.67	7.48
2015	5.88	21.50	2.50	7.44
	5.94	21.50	2.50	7.48
	5.38	20.80	2.50	7.59
	5.44	22.00	2.50	7.85
	5.94	25.00	2.83	8.78
2020	9.06	28.00	5.50	11.78
	6.94	25.60	5.33	10.04
	5.81	25.40	4.67	9.19
2023	5.94	25.40	2.67	8.81
increase in % 1990–2023	24.27	-27.43	14.29	16.10

Most common variables (2023)

nx03: Restrictions on clergy holding political office

Present in 40.7 % of countries

Level	Countries
No restrictions	Bahamas, Haiti, Dominican Republic, Jamaica, Trinidad and Tobago, Belize, Colombia, Venezuela, Guyana, Suriname, Ecuador, Peru, Brazil, Chile, Argentina, Uruguay
Significant restrictions	El Salvador, Nicaragua, Costa Rica, Panama
Illegal / Large-scale	Cuba, Barbados, Mexico, Guatemala, Honduras, Bolivia, Paraguay

nx05: Restrictions on clergy/religious organizations engaging in public political speech or propaganda

Present in 25.9 % of countries

Level	Countries
No restrictions	Bahamas, Haiti, Dominican Republic, Jamaica, Trinidad and Tobago, Barbados, Belize, Guatemala, Panama, Colombia, Venezuela, Guyana, Suriname, Ecuador, Peru, Brazil, Paraguay, Chile, Argentina, Uruguay
Slight restrictions	Bolivia
Significant restrictions	Honduras, Nicaragua
Illegal / Large-scale	Cuba, Mexico, El Salvador, Costa Rica

nx42: Restrictions on religious-based hate speech

Present in 33.3 % of countries

Level	Countries
No restrictions	Bahamas, Cuba, Haiti, Dominican Republic, Jamaica, Barbados, Mexico, Belize, Guatemala, Nicaragua, Costa Rica, Panama, Venezuela, Guyana, Peru, Bolivia, Argentina, Uruguay
Slight restrictions	Chile
Significant restrictions	Honduras, El Salvador, Colombia, Suriname, Ecuador, Paraguay
Illegal / Large-scale	Trinidad and Tobago, Brazil

nx51: Other (1) religious restrictions*Present in 29.6 % of countries*

Level	Countries
No restrictions	Dominican Republic, Jamaica, Trinidad and Tobago, Barbados, Mexico, Belize, Honduras, Nicaragua, Costa Rica, Panama, Colombia, Guyana, Suriname, Peru, Brazil, Bolivia, Paraguay, Chile, Argentina
Slight restrictions	Bahamas, Haiti, Guatemala, Venezuela
Significant restrictions	Cuba, El Salvador, Ecuador
Illegal / Large-scale	Uruguay

Societal discrimination index

Scores by country (1990, 2000, 2010, 2020, 2023)

Country	1999	2000	2010	2020	2023
Argentina	18	18	16	19	17
Bahamas	0	0	0	0	0
Barbados	1	1	1	1	1
Belize	0	0	0	0	0
Bolivia	2	2	2	2	2
Brazil	2	4	4	5	11
Chile	6	3	4	6	10
Colombia	9	14	12	16	16
Costa Rica	1	1	1	2	2
Cuba	3	3	2	2	2
Dominican Republic	1	0	0	0	0
Ecuador	0	1	2	0	6
El Salvador	0	0	0	8	2
Guatemala	3	6	2	8	5
Guyana	0	0	0	2	1
Haiti	4	4	8	17	13
Honduras	0	0	1	0	0
Jamaica	1	1	0	0	0
Mexico	18	18	17	18	18
Nicaragua	0	0	1	0	0
Panama	1	0	0	0	0
Paraguay	0	0	1	0	0
Peru	4	7	6	7	8
Suriname	0	0	0	0	0
Trinidad and Tobago	0	0	1	1	2
Uruguay	2	2	1	3	4
Venezuela	0	0	6	8	10

Means by year (1990–2023)

	Catholic not hostile	Catholic hostile	Protestant Extended or General Christian	All Cases
1990	2.83	7.67	0.33	2.81
	2.67	7.33	0.33	2.67
	2.89	7.33	0.33	2.81
	2.89	7.67	0.33	2.85
	3.06	7.33	0.33	2.93
1995	3.06	7.33	0.33	2.93
	3.00	7.33	0.33	2.89
	2.89	7.33	0.33	2.81
	3.06	7.67	0.33	2.96
	3.61	8.00	0.33	3.37
2000	3.33	7.67	0.33	3.15
	3.44	7.67	0.50	3.26
	3.28	9.00	0.50	3.30
	3.39	9.67	0.33	3.41
	4.00	9.00	0.33	3.74
2005	3.72	9.33	0.33	3.59
	4.39	8.33	0.33	3.93
	4.06	9.33	0.67	3.89
	3.83	8.67	0.33	3.59
	4.11	7.67	0.33	3.67
2010	3.67	6.67	0.33	3.26
	3.72	6.67	0.33	3.30
	3.94	8.33	0.50	3.67
	3.88	7.75	0.33	3.67
	4.35	8.50	0.50	4.11
2015	3.76	7.75	0.33	3.59
	4.35	7.75	0.33	3.96
	4.00	6.60	0.50	3.70
	4.31	6.20	0.50	3.81
	5.19	6.80	0.33	4.41
2020	5.63	6.20	0.67	4.63
	5.69	6.40	0.50	4.67
	5.75	6.40	0.67	4.74
2023	5.75	6.80	0.67	4.81
increase in % 1990–2023	102.94	-11.30	100.00	71.05

Most common variables (any time between 1990 and 2023)**wsocdis05: Anti-religious minority propaganda in mainstream private media***Present in 51.9 % of countries*

Level	Countries
Not present	Bahamas, Belize, Cuba, Dominican Republic, El Salvador, Guyana, Haiti, Jamaica, Nicaragua, Panama, Peru, Suriname, Trinidad and Tobago
Low level	Barbados, Bolivia, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Ecuador, Guatemala, Honduras, Mexico, Paraguay
Moderate / High level	Argentina, Uruguay, Venezuela

wsocdis10: Vandalism against religious property (places of worship, community centers, schools, cemeteries)*Present in 59.3 % of countries*

Level	Countries
Not present	Bahamas, Costa Rica, Dominican Republic, Guatemala, Guyana, Honduras, Jamaica, Panama, Paraguay, Peru, Suriname
Low level	Barbados, Belize, Bolivia, Colombia, Cuba, Ecuador, Mexico, Nicaragua, Trinidad and Tobago, Uruguay, Venezuela
Moderate / High level	Argentina, Brazil, Chile, El Salvador, Haiti

wsocdis17: Harassment of members of religious minorities (non-violent, including verbal attacks)*Present in 55.6 % of countries*

Level	Countries
Not present	Bahamas, Barbados, Belize, Dominican Republic, El Salvador, Guatemala, Guyana, Nicaragua, Panama, Peru, Suriname, Trinidad and Tobago
Low level	Bolivia, Costa Rica, Cuba, Honduras, Jamaica, Paraguay, Uruguay, Venezuela
Moderate / High level	Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Ecuador, Haiti, Mexico

wsocdis21: Other threats of violence*Present in 44.4% of countries*

Level	Countries
Not present	Bahamas, Barbados, Belize, Bolivia, Costa Rica, Cuba, Dominican Republic, Guyana, Honduras, Jamaica, Nicaragua, Panama, Paraguay, Suriname, Trinidad and Tobago
Low level	Ecuador, El Salvador, Guatemala, Peru, Uruguay, Venezuela
Moderate / High level	Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Haiti, Mexico

wsocdis27: Lethal violence against any member of minority religions due to religious affiliation*Present in 44.4 % of countries*

Level	Countries
Not present	Bahamas, Barbados, Belize, Bolivia, Chile, Costa Rica, Cuba, Dominican Republic, Jamaica, Nicaragua, Panama, Paraguay, Suriname, Trinidad and Tobago, Uruguay
Low level	Argentina, Brazil, Ecuador, Honduras, Mexico, Venezuela
Moderate / High level	Colombia, El Salvador, Guatemala, Guyana, Haiti, Peru

wsocdis28: Arson, bombing, or concerted attacks against religious property*Present in 48.1 % of countries*

Level	Countries
Not present	Bahamas, Barbados, Costa Rica, Cuba, Dominican Republic, El Salvador, Guyana, Honduras, Jamaica, Nicaragua, Panama, Paraguay, Peru, Suriname
Low level	Argentina, Belize, Bolivia, Brazil, Ecuador, Mexico, Trinidad and Tobago, Uruguay
Moderate / High level	Chile, Colombia, Guatemala, Haiti, Venezuela

Physical violence involving religion

Incidents of Religious Violence by Non-State Actors in Latin America and the Caribbean (2023), categorized by Religion of Victim (Violent Incidents Database)

Country	Religion of Victim(s)	Killings	Religious buildings damaged	Religious buildings closed	Arrests	Sentences	Abductions	Sexual assaults	Forced marriages	Other forms of physical/mental abuse	Attacks on houses	Attacks on shops or businesses	Forced to leave home	Forced to leave country
Argentina	Christian Catholic	0	16	0	0	0	0	0	0	6	1	0	0	0
	Christian Other/Unknown	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
	Christian Protestant	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
	Jewish	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
	Total	0	17	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	6	1	0	0
Bolivia	Christian Catholic	0	4	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
	Christian Other/Unknown	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
	Total	0	4	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Brazil	Animist, ancestor worship, or traditional religion	1	6	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0
	Christian Catholic	0	6	0	0	0	0	0	0	3	0	0	0	0
	Christian Other/Unknown	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
	Christian Protestant	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
	Total	2	13	0	0	0	0	0	0	3	1	0	0	0
Chile	Christian Catholic	0	11	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	3	0	0	0
	Christian Other/Unknown	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
	Christian Protestant	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
	Total	0	13	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	3	0	0	0

Country	Religion of Victim(s)	Killings	Religious buildings damaged	Religious buildings closed	Arrests	Sentences	Abductions	Sexual assaults	Forced marriages	Other forms of physical/mental abuse	Attacks on houses	Attacks on shops or businesses	Forced to leave home	Forced to leave country
Colombia	Animist, ancestor worship, or traditional religion	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
	Christian Catholic	2	33	0	0	0	0	0	0	28	1	0	0	0
	Christian Other/Unknown	1	4	0	3	0	0	0	0	0	4	0	90	0
	Christian Protestant	15	10	1	0	0	9	1	0	55	39	0	107	2
	Total	18	48	1	3	0	9	1	0	83	44	0	197	2
Cuba	Animist, ancestor worship, or traditional religion	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
	Christian Catholic	0	12	0	0	0	0	0	0	3	2	0	0	0
	Christian Other/Unknown	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
	Christian Protestant	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	4	0	0	0	0
	Other	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
	Total	0	13	0	0	0	0	0	0	7	2	0	0	0
Dominican Republic	Christian Catholic	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
	Total	2	13	0	0	0	0	0	0	3	1	0	0	0
Ecuador	Christian Catholic	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
	Christian Protestant	0	3	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
	Total	0	4	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0

Country	Religion of Victim(s)	Killings	Religious buildings damaged	Religious buildings closed	Arrests	Sentences	Abductions	Sexual assaults	Forced marriages	Other forms of physical/mental abuse	Attacks on houses	Attacks on shops or businesses	Forced to leave home	Forced to leave country
El Salvador	Christian Catholic	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
	Christian Other/Unknown	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
	Christian Protestant	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0
	Total	1	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0
Guatemala	Christian Catholic	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0
	Christian Other/Unknown	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
	Total	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0
Haiti	Christian Catholic	0	2	0	0	0	23	0	0	7	1	0	0	0
	Christian Other/Unknown	0	3	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
	Christian Protestant	0	2	3	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	3	3	0
	Total	0	7	3	0	0	24	0	0	7	1	3	3	0
Honduras	Christian Catholic	0	7	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	1	0	0	0
	Christian Other/Unknown	3	1	0	0	0	1	0	0	2	0	0	0	0
	Christian Protestant	10	7	0	0	0	0	2	0	41	4	0	10	0
	Total	13	15	0	0	0	1	2	0	45	5	0	10	0
Mexico	Christian Catholic	5	69	0	0	0	6	0	0	73	3	0	50	0
	Christian Other/Unknown	2	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0
	Christian Protestant	7	3	0	10	0	3	0	0	43	6	0	43	0
	Unknown	4	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
	Total	18	73	0	10	0	9	0	0	115	10	0	93	0

Country	Religion of Victim(s)	Killings	Religious buildings damaged	Religious buildings closed	Arrests	Sentences	Abductions	Sexual assaults	Forced marriages	Other forms of physical/mental abuse	Attacks on houses	Attacks on shops or businesses	Forced to leave home	Forced to leave country
Nicaragua	Christian Catholic	0	6	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
	Christian Other/Unknown	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
	Christian Protestant	0	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	3	0	0	0	0
	Jewish	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
	Total	0	9	0	0	0	0	0	0	3	0	0	0	0
Paraguay	Christian Catholic	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	1	0
	Total	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	1	0
Peru	Christian Catholic	0	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
	Christian Other/Unknown	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
	Total	0	3	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Trinidad and Tobago	Christian Protestant	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	4	0	0	0	0
	Hindu	0	12	0	0	0	0	0	0	3	2	0	0	0
	Total	0	13	0	0	0	0	0	0	7	2	0	0	0
Venezuela	Animist, ancestor worship, or traditional religion	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
	Christian Catholic	0	5	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
	Christian Other/Unknown	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
	Christian Protestant	1	8	0	0	0	1	0	0	12	1	0	10	0
	Total	1	13	0	0	0	1	0	0	12	1	0	10	0

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