**Model U.N. Peulah.**

Goals: Have in depth conversation about a particular Jewish value.

 Learn about religious involvement of populations around the globe

 Team work (in terms of coming up with a convincing argument)

Venue: Chadar Ochel (OCH will work too)

Procedure: Break campers up into groups by country.

Debate Subject: When it comes to praying at camp, what is the correct mode of prayer? Include the factors: time of day, amount of times per day, prayer space or surroundings, individual vs. communal, spiritual vs. tangible.

Countries: Iran, Japan, India, Madagascar, Italy/Vatican City, Netherlands.

Minuted By Minute:

0-5: meet in OCH

5-15: break up into delegations (countries) around OCH and distribute Info

15-30: Delegates will read and discuss info and prepare a formal presentation

30-60: Debate

60-65: Decision by presiding committee/ counselors (?)

65-70- maagal end of peulah.

TASK: You and your compatriots represent a delegation from a specific country. Your task is to answer and reflect on a question concerning a Jewish practice.

You will be given information regarding religious practices of the population of your country.

Using this information you will be able to answer the given question “as if” you were from your country.

Debate Subject: When it comes to praying at camp, what is the correct mode of prayer?

Discuss and debate factors such as:

time of day

amount of times per day

prayer space or surroundings

individual vs. communal

spiritual vs. tangible.

Debate Protocol:

1. Opening Statements.
2. Rebuttals/yielding the floor for responses and additional statements.
3. Closing Statements.

Iran

According to the CIA World Factbook, around 90–95%[[1]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Religion_in_Iran#cite_note-Iran,_CIA_-_World_Factbook-1) of [Iranians](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Iran) associate themselves with the [Shia](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Shia_Islam) branch of [Islam](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Islam), the official state religion, and about 5–10% with the [Sunni](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sunni_Islam) and [Sufi](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sufi) branches of Islam. The remaining 0.6% associate themselves with non-Islamic [religious minorities](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Religious_minorities_in_Iran), including [Bahá'ís](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bah%C3%A1%27%C3%AD_Faith), [Mandeans](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mandaeism), [Yarsanis](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Yarsan), [Zoroastrians](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Zoroastrians_in_Iran), [Jews](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Persian_Jews), and [Christians](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Christians_in_Iran).[[2]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Religion_in_Iran#cite_note-cia-2) The latter three [minority](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Minority_group) religions are officially recognized and protected, and have reserved seats in the [Iran parliament](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Iran_parliament).[[3]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Religion_in_Iran#cite_note-Colin_Brock_p_99-3) Zoroastrianism was once the majority religion, though today Zoroastrians number only in the tens of thousands.[[4]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Religion_in_Iran#cite_note-IRFR2009-Iran-4) Iran is home to the second largest Jewish community in the [Muslim World](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Muslim_World) and the [Middle East](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Middle_East).[[5]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Religion_in_Iran#cite_note-5) The two largest non-Muslim religious minorities in Iran are the [Bahá'í Faith](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bah%C3%A1%27%C3%AD_Faith) and [Christianity](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Christianity_in_Iran).[[6]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Religion_in_Iran#cite_note-uscirf-2013-6) The Bahá'í Faith, historically the largest religious minority in Iran,[[7]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Religion_in_Iran%22%20%5Cl%20%22cite_note-brookshaw-7) is not officially recognized, and has been persecuted during its existence in Iran.[[8]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Religion_in_Iran#cite_note-UN11-8)[[9]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Religion_in_Iran#cite_note-akhavi-9)[[10]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Religion_in_Iran#cite_note-tavakoli-10)[[11]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Religion_in_Iran#cite_note-Committee2006-11) Christianity, the largest non-Muslim minority religion that is recognized by the Iranian government, has the largest annual growth rate of all religions in Iran.[[12]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Religion_in_Iran#cite_note-222ministries-12)

Religion in Iran (census 2011)[[13]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Religion_in_Iran#cite_note-13)

 [Islam](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Islam_in_Iran)[[14]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Religion_in_Iran#cite_note-14) (99.4%)

 Other[[15]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Religion_in_Iran%22%20%5Cl%20%22cite_note-15) (0.3% non-Muslim; 0.3% not stated), (0.6%)

The Iranian government does not officially recognise the existence of non-religious Iranians. This leaves the true representation of the religious split in Iran unknown as all non-religious, spiritual, atheist, agnostic and converts away from Islam are likely to be included within the government statistic of the 99% Muslim majority.[[1]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Religion_in_Iran#cite_note-Iran,_CIA_-_World_Factbook-1) [Sunnism](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sunnism) was the predominant form of Islam before the devastating Mongol conquest, but subsequently Shi'ism became eventually utterly dominant in all of Iran and modern-day [Azerbaijan](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Azerbaijan) (though highly secular) with the advent of the [Safavids](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Safavids).[[16]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Religion_in_Iran#cite_note-books.google.com.au-16)

*Shia Islam*

Today Islam is the religion of 99.6% of Iranians of which approximately 89% are [Shia](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Shia_Islam) – almost all of whom are [Twelvers](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Twelvers).[[34]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Religion_in_Iran#cite_note-34) The Shia groups have distinctions between Fiver, Sevener and Twelver, derived from their belief in how many divinely ordained leaders there were who are descendants of the [Islamic prophet](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Prophets_of_Islam)[Muhammad](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Muhammad) through his daughter [Fatimah](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Fatimah) and his son-in-law [Ali](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ali). These Imams are considered the best source of knowledge about the [Quran](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Quran) and Islam, the most trusted carriers and protectors of Muḥammad's [Sunnah](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sunnah) (habit or usual practice) and the most worthy of emulation. In addition to the lineage of Imams, Twelvers have their preferred [hadith collections](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hadith_collections) – [The Four Books](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Four_Books) – which are narrations regarded by Muslims as important tools for understanding the Quran and in matters of jurisprudence. For Twelvers the lineage of Imams are known as [the Twelve Imams](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Twelve_Imams). Of these Imams, only one is buried in Iran – at the [Imam Reza shrine](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Imam_Reza_shrine), for [Ali ar-Ridha](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ali_ar-Ridha) who lived from 765 – 818 AD, before any Shi'a dynasties arose in Iran. The last Imam recognized by Twelvers, [Muhammad al-Mahdi](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Muhammad_al-Mahdi), was born in 868 AD as the Alavids spread their rule in Iran while in conflict with [Al-Mu'tamid](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Al-Mu%27tamid), the [Abbasid](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Abbasid)[Caliph](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Caliph) at the time. Several Imams are buried in Iraq, as sites of pilgrimage, and the rest are in Saudi Arabia. In addition two of the [Five Martyrs of Shia Islam](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Five_Martyrs_of_Shia_Islam) have connections to Iran – [Shahid Thani](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Shahid_Thani) (1506–1558) lived in Iran later in life, and [Qazi Nurullah Shustari](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Qazi_Nurullah_Shustari) (1549–1610) was born in Iran. The predominant school of theology, practice, and jurisprudence ([Madh'hab](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Madh%27hab)) in Shia Islam is [Jafari](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ja%27fari_jurisprudence) established by [Ja'far as-Sadiq](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ja%27far_as-Sadiq).[[35]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Religion_in_Iran#cite_note-35)

*Sunni Islam*

[Sunni Muslims](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sunni_Muslims) are the second largest religious group in Iran.[[36]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Religion_in_Iran#cite_note-irf2007-36) Specifically, Sunni Islam came to rule in Iran after the period Sunni were distinguished from Shi'a through the [Ghaznavids](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ghaznavids) from 975 AD, followed by the [Great Seljuq Empire](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Great_Seljuq_Empire) and the [Khwarazm-Shah dynasty](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Khwarazmian_dynasty) until the [Mongol invasion](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/History_of_Iran#Mongols.2C_Timurids_and_local_governments) of Iran. Sunni Islam returned to rule when [Ghazan](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ghazan) converted.

About 9%[[1]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Religion_in_Iran#cite_note-Iran,_CIA_-_World_Factbook-1) of the Iranian population are Sunni Muslims—mostly [Larestani people](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Larestani_people) (Khodmooni) from [Larestan](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Larestan), [Kurds](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kurd) in the northwest, [Arabs](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Arabs) and [Balochs](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Baloch_people) in the southwest and southeast, and a smaller number of [Persians](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Persia), [Pashtuns](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pashtun_people) and [Turkmens](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Turkmen_people) in the northeast.

Sunni websites and organizations complain about the absence of any official records regarding their community and believe their number is much greater than what is usually estimated. Demographic changes have become an issue for both sides. Scholars on either side speak about the increase in the Sunni population and usually issue predictions regarding demographic changes in the country. One prediction, for example, claims that the Sunnis will be the majority in Iran by 2030.[[37]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Religion_in_Iran#cite_note-37)

The [mountainous region of Larestan](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Larestan_County) is mostly inhabited by indigenous Sunni Persians who did not convert to Shia Islam during the [Safavids](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Safavids) because the mountainous region of Larestan was too isolated. The majority of [Larestani people](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Larestani_people) are Sunni Muslims,[[38]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Religion_in_Iran%22%20%5Cl%20%22cite_note-38)[[39]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Religion_in_Iran#cite_note-39)[[40]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Religion_in_Iran#cite_note-40) 30% of Larestani people are Shia Muslims. The people of Larestan speak the [Lari language](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lari_language), which is a [southwestern Iranian language](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Southwestern_Iranian_language) closely related to [Old Persian](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Old_Persian) (pre-Islamic Persian) and [Luri](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Luri_language).[[41]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Religion_in_Iran#cite_note-books.google.com-41) Sunni Larestani Iranians migrated to the [Arab states of the Persian Gulf](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Arab_states_of_the_Persian_Gulf) in large numbers in the late 19th century. Some Sunni Emirati, Bahraini and Kuwaiti citizens are of [Larestani ancestry](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hola_%28ethnic_group%29).

Iran's Ministry of Health announced that all family-planning programs and procedures would be suspended. Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei called on women to have more children to boost the country's population to 150–200 million. Contraceptive policy made sense 20 years ago, he said, but its continuation in later years was wrong. Numerous speculations have been given for this change in policy: that it was an attempt to show the world that Iran is not suffering from sanctions; to avoid an aging population with rising medical and social-security costs; or to return to Iran's genuine culture. Some speculate that the new policy seeks to address the Supreme Leader's concerns that Iran's Sunni population is growing much faster than its Shia one (7% growth in Sunni areas compared to 1–1.3% in Shia areas).[[42]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Religion_in_Iran#cite_note-42)[[43]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Religion_in_Iran#cite_note-43)

The predominant school of theology and jurisprudence ([Madh'hab](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Madh%27hab)) among Sunnis in Iran is [Hanafi](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hanafi), established by [Abu Hanifa](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Abu_Hanifa).

According to [Mehdi Khalaji](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mehdi_Khalaji), [Salafi](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Salafi) Islamic thoughts have been on the rise in Iran in recent years. [Salafism](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Salafism) alongside extremist [Ghulat](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ghulat)[Shia](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Shia_islam) sects has become popular amongst some Iranian youth, who connect through [social media](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Social_media) and underground organizations. The Iranian government views Salafism as a threat and does not allow Salafis to build mosques in Tehran or other large cities due to the fear that these mosques could be infiltrated by extremists.[[44]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Religion_in_Iran#cite_note-Khalaji-44)

It is allegedly reported that members of religious minorities, especially Sunni Muslims who supported rebels in [Syrian Civil War](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Syrian_Civil_War), are increasingly persecuted by authorities. The government imprisons, harasses and discriminates people because of their religious beliefs.[[45]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Religion_in_Iran#cite_note-45)

*Religious Freedom*

[Iran](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Iran) is an [Islamic republic](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Islamic_republic). Its [constitution](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Constitution_of_Islamic_Republic_of_Iran) mandates that the official religion is [Islam](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Islam) (see: [Islam in Iran](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Islam_in_Iran)), specifically the [Twelver](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Twelvers)[Ja'fari school](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ja%27fari_jurisprudence) of Islam, with other Islamic schools being accorded full respect. Followers of all Islamic schools are free to act in accordance with their own jurisprudence in performing their religious rites. The constitution recognizes [Zoroastrian](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Zoroastrian), [Jewish](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jewish), and [Christian](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Christian)[Iranians](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Demographics_of_Iran) as religious minorities.

While several religious minorities lack equal rights with Muslims, complaints about religious freedom largely revolve around the persecution of the [Bahá'í Faith](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bah%C3%A1%27%C3%AD_Faith), the country's largest religious minority, which faces active persecution.[[70]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Religion_in_Iran#cite_note-fdih1-70) Several important Bahá'í cemeteries and holy places have been demolished, and there have been reports of imprisonment, harassment, intimidation, discrimination, and murder based on religious beliefs.[[132]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Religion_in_Iran#cite_note-2006Report-132)

[*Hudud*](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hudud) statutes grant different punishments to Muslims and non-Muslims for the same crime. In the case of adultery, for example, a Muslim man who is convicted of committing adultery with a Muslim woman receives 100 lashes; the sentence for a non-Muslim man convicted of adultery with a Muslim woman is death.[[133]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Religion_in_Iran#cite_note-133) In 2004, inequality of "blood money" ([diya](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Diya_%28Islam%29)) was eliminated, and the amount paid by a perpetrator for the death or wounding a Christian, Jew, or Zoroastrian man, was made the same as that for a Muslim. However, the International Religious Freedom Report reports that Baha'is were not included in the provision and their blood is considered *Mobah*, (i.e. it can be spilled with impunity).[[4]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Religion_in_Iran#cite_note-IRFR2009-Iran-4)

[Conversion from Islam to another religion](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Apostasy_in_Islam) (apostasy), is prohibited and may be punishable by death. Article 23 of the constitution states, "the investigation of individuals' beliefs is forbidden, and no one may be molested or taken to task simply for holding a certain belief." But another article, 167, gives judges the discretion "to deliver his judgment on the basis of authoritative Islamic sources and authentic fatwa (rulings issued by qualified clerical jurists)." The founder of the Islamic Republic, Islamic cleric Ruhollah Khomeini, who was a grand [Ayatollah](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ayatollah), ruled "that the penalty for conversion from Islam, or apostasy, is death."[[134]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Religion_in_Iran#cite_note-134)

At least two Iranians – [Hashem Aghajari](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hashem_Aghajari) and Hassan [Yousefi Eshkevari](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Yousefi_Eshkevari) – have been arrested and charged with apostasy (though not executed), not for converting to another faith but for statements and/or activities deemed by courts of the Islamic Republic to be in violation of Islam, and that appear to outsiders to be Islamic reformist political expression.[[135]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Religion_in_Iran#cite_note-135)[Hashem Aghajari](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hashem_Aghajari), was found guilty of apostasy for a speech urging Iranians to "not blindly follow" Islamic clerics;[[136]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Religion_in_Iran#cite_note-136)Hassan Youssefi Eshkevari was charged with apostasy for attending the ['Iran After the Elections' Conference](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/%27Iran_After_the_Elections%27_Conference) in Berlin Germany which was disrupted by anti-government demonstrators.[[137]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Religion_in_Iran#cite_note-ITFCA-137)

Japan

**Religion in Japan** is dominated by [Shinto](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Shinto) (the [ethnic religion](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ethnic_religion) of the [Japanese people](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Japanese_people)) and by [Buddhism](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Buddhism_in_Japan). According to surveys carried out in 2006[[1]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Religion_in_Japan#cite_note-Dentsu2006-1) and 2008,[[2]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Religion_in_Japan#cite_note-NHK2008-3) less than 40% of the population of Japan identifies with an [organized religion](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Organized_religion): around 35% are [Buddhists](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Buddhism), 3% to 4% are members of [Shinto sects and derived religions](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Shinto_sects_and_schools#Shint%C5%8D_inspired_religions), and from fewer than 1%[[3]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Religion_in_Japan#cite_note-Mariko_Kato-4)[[4]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Religion_in_Japan#cite_note-Mission_Network_News-5)[[5]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Religion_in_Japan#cite_note-Heide_Fehrenbach,_Uta_G._Poiger_2000_62-6) to 2.3% are [Christians](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Christianity).[[note 2]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Religion_in_Japan#cite_note-7)

Most of the Japanese (50% to 80% considering degrees of syncretism with Buddhism, [*shinbutsu-shūgō*](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Shinbutsu-sh%C5%ABg%C5%8D)[[6]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Religion_in_Japan#cite_note-ReischauerJansen215-8)) pray and worship ancestors and gods (神 [*kami*, *shin*](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kami) or, archaically, *jin*) at [Shinto shrines](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Shinto_shrine) or at private altars, while not identifying as "Shinto" or "Shintoist" in surveys.[[7]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Religion_in_Japan#cite_note-Breen,_Teeuwen._2000._p._3-9) This is because these terms have little meaning for the majority of the Japanese,[[7]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Religion_in_Japan%22%20%5Cl%20%22cite_note-Breen%2C_Teeuwen._2000._p._3-9) or because they define membership in Shinto organizations or sects.[[8]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Religion_in_Japan#cite_note-Engler,_Price._2005._p._95-10)[[9]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Religion_in_Japan#cite_note-Williams,_2004._pp._4-5-11) The term "religion" (宗教 *shūkyō*) itself in Japanese culture defines only [organized religions](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Organized_religion) (that is, religions with specific doctrines and required membership).[[10]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Religion_in_Japan#cite_note-Bestor,_Yamagata._2011._pp._66-67-12) People who identify as "non-religious" (無宗教 *mushūkyō*) in surveys actually mean that they do not belong to any religious organization, even though they may take part in Shinto rituals and worship.[[10]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Religion_in_Japan#cite_note-Bestor,_Yamagata._2011._pp._66-67-12)

Some scholars, such as Jun'ichi Isomae and Jason Ānanda Josephson, have challenged the usefulness of the term "religion" in regard to Japanese "traditions", arguing that the Japanese term and concept of "religion" (*shūkyō*) is an invention of the 19th century.[[11]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Religion_in_Japan#cite_note-13) However, other scholars, such as Hans Martin Kramer and Ian Reader, regard such claims as overstated and contend that the terms relate to terminology and categorizations that existed in Japan prior to the 19th century.[[12]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Religion_in_Japan#cite_note-14)[[13]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Religion_in_Japan#cite_note-15)

*Religious Practices and Holidays*

Most Japanese participate in rituals and customs derived from several religious traditions. Life cycle events are often marked by visits to a Shinto shrine. The birth of a new baby is celebrated with a formal shrine visit at the age of about one month, as are the third, fifth, and seventh birthdays (*[Shichi-Go-San](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Shichi-Go-San)*) and the official beginning of [adulthood](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Adulthood) at age twenty (*[Seijin shiki](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Seijin_shiki)*). [Wedding](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wedding) ceremonies are often performed by Shinto priests, but Western-style secular wedding ceremonies, called *howaito uedingu* ("white wedding"), are also popular. These use Christian-like [liturgy](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Liturgy) but are usually not presided over by an ordained priest.

[Japanese funerals](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Japanese_funeral) are usually performed by Buddhist priests, and Buddhist rites are also common on death day anniversaries of deceased family members. 91% of Japanese funerals take place according to [Buddhist](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Buddhist) traditions.

There are two categories of holidays in Japan: [*matsuri*](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Matsuri) (temple fairs), which are largely of Shinto origin and relate to the cultivation of rice and the spiritual well-being of the local community; and *nenjyū gyōji* (annual feasts), which are largely of Chinese or Buddhist origin. During the [Heian period](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Heian_period), the *matsuri* were organized into a formal calendar, and other festivals were added. Very few *matsuri* or annual feasts are national holidays, but they are included in the national calendar of annual events. Most *matsuri* are local events and follow local traditions. They may be sponsored by schools, towns, or other groups but are most often associated with Shinto shrines.

Some of the holidays are secular in nature, but the two most significant for the majority of Japanese—[New Year's Day](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/New_Year%27s_Day) and [*Obon*](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bon_Festival)—involve visits to Shinto shrines or Buddhist temples, respectively. The New Year's holiday (January 1–3) is marked by the practice of numerous customs and the consumption of special foods. Visiting Shinto shrines or Buddhist temples to pray for family blessings in the coming year, dressing in a [kimono](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kimono), hanging special decorations, eating noodles on New Year's Eve, and playing a poetry card game are among these practices. During Obon, *bon* (spirit altars) are set up in front of Buddhist family altars, which, along with ancestral graves, are cleaned in anticipation of the return of the spirits. People living away from their family homes return for visits with relatives. Celebrations include folk dancing and prayers at Buddhist temples as well as family rituals in the home.

*Religion and Law*

In early [Japanese history](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/History_of_Japan), the ruling class was responsible for performing propitiatory rituals, which later came to be identified as Shinto, and for the introduction and support of Buddhism. Later, religious organization was used by regimes for political purposes; for instance, the [Tokugawa](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tokugawa_shogunate) government required each family to be registered as a member of a Buddhist temple. In the early 19th century, the government required that each family belong to a shrine instead, and in the early 20th century, this was supplemented with the concept of a divine right to rule bestowed on the emperor. The [Meiji Constitution](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Meiji_Constitution) reads: "Japanese subjects shall, within limits not prejudicial to peace and order, and not antagonistic to their duties as subjects, enjoy freedom of religious belief".

Article 20 of the [1947 Constitution](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Constitution_of_Japan) states: "Freedom of religion is guaranteed to all. No religious organization shall receive any privileges from the State, nor exercise any political authority". The [United States](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/United_States) privatized shrines and created the term "[State Shinto](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/State_Shinto)" during the [occupation of Japan](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Occupation_of_Japan) to reform native Japanese ideas of church and state, under the belief that it had supported the rise of [Japanese militarism](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Japanese_militarism) before and during [World War II](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/World_War_II).

In postwar years, the issue of the separation of Shinto and state arose in the Self-Defense Force Apotheosis Case. In 1973, Nakaya Takafumi, a member of the [Japanese Self-Defense Forces](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Japan_Self-Defense_Forces) and husband of Nakaya Yasuko, died in a traffic accident.[[55]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Religion_in_Japan#cite_note-:0-59) Despite Yasuko’s refusal to provide relevant documents for her husband’s enshrinement at the [Yamaguchi](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Yamaguchi_Prefecture) prefectural National-Protecting Shrine, the prefectural Veterans’ Association requested the information from the Self-Defense Forces and completed the enshrinement.[[55]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Religion_in_Japan#cite_note-:0-59) As a result, in 1973, Yasuko sued the Yamaguchi Prefectural Branch of the Self-Defense Forces, on the grounds that the ceremony of apotheosis violated her religious rights as a Christian.[[55]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Religion_in_Japan#cite_note-:0-59) Although Yasuko won the case at two lower courts, the ruling was overturned by the [Supreme Court of Japan](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Supreme_Court_of_Japan) on June 1, 1988, based on the precedent established by the [Tsu City Shinto Groundbreaking Ceremony Case](http://www.courts.go.jp/app/hanrei_en/detail?id=51). First, the Supreme Court ruled that because the Veterans’ Association—which was not an organ of the state—had acted alone when arranging the ceremony of apotheosis, no violation of Article 20 had occurred.[[56]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Religion_in_Japan#cite_note-:1-60) Second, the Supreme Court held that the Self-Defense Forces' provision of Takafumi’s documents to the Veterans’ Association did not constitute a religious activity prohibited by Article 20, because neither the intention nor the effects of its action harmed or patronized any religion.[[57]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Religion_in_Japan#cite_note-61) Third, the Supreme Court adopted a narrow interpretation of individual religious rights, by ruling that violation of individual rights to religion did not occur unless the state or its organs coerced individuals to perform some religious activity or limited their religious freedom.[[58]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Religion_in_Japan#cite_note-62) On June 2, 1988, a report by the [*Los Angeles Times*](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Los_Angeles_Times) described the Japanese Supreme Court’s decision as “a major setback for advocates of stronger separation of religion and state in Japan.”[[59]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Religion_in_Japan#cite_note-63)On June 7, 1988, an article published in the [*New York Times*](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_New_York_Times) expressed concern that the Japanese Supreme Court’s decision was likely to encourage the resurgence of [State Shinto](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/State_Shinto) and [nationalism](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nationalism).[[60]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Religion_in_Japan#cite_note-64) Because the prefectural National-Protecting Shrines perform the same ceremony of apotheosis as the [Yasukuni Shrine](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Yasukuni_Shrine) does, the significance of this case also lies in its implications for the constitutionality of state patronage of and official visits to the Yasukuni Shrine.[[56]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Religion_in_Japan#cite_note-:1-60)

India

**Religion in India** is characterised by a diversity of religious beliefs and practices. India is a [secular state](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Secular_state) by the 42nd amendment to the [Constitution](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Constitution_of_India) in 1976, meaning that all religions are treated equally by the state. The [Indian subcontinent](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Indian_subcontinent) is the birthplace of four of the [world's major religions](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Major_religious_groups); namely [Hinduism](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hinduism), [Buddhism](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Buddhism), [Jainism](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jainism) and [Sikhism](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sikhism). Throughout India's history, [religion](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Religion) has been an important part of the country's culture. Religious diversity and [religious tolerance](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Religious_toleration) are both established in the country by the [law](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Law_of_India) and [custom](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tradition); the [Constitution of India](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Constitution_of_India) has declared the right to [freedom of religion](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Freedom_of_religion) to be a [fundamental right](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Fundamental_Rights_in_India).[[1]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Religion_in_India#cite_note-1)

Northwest India was home to one of the world's oldest civilizations, the [Indus valley civilisation](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Indus_valley_civilisation). Today, India is home to around 90% of the global population of Hindus. Most Hindu shrines and temples are located in India, as are the birthplaces of most [Hindu](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hindu) saints. [Allahabad](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Allahabad) hosts the world's largest religious pilgrimage, [Kumbha Mela](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kumbha_Mela), where [Hindus](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hindus) from across the world come together to bathe in the confluence of three sacred rivers of India: the [Ganga](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ganges), the [Yamuna](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Yamuna), and the [Saraswati](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sarasvati_River). The Indian diaspora in the West has popularised many aspects of [Hindu philosophy](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hindu_philosophy)such as [yoga](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Yoga), [meditation](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Meditation), [Ayurvedic medicine](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ayurvedic_medicine), [divination](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Divination), [karma](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Karma), and [reincarnation](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Reincarnation).[[2]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Religion_in_India#cite_note-2) The influence of Indian religions has been significant all over the world. Several Hindu-based organisations, such as the [Hare Krishna movement](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/International_Society_for_Krishna_Consciousness), the [Brahma Kumaris](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Brahma_Kumari), the [Ananda Marga](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ananda_Marga), and others have spread Indian spiritual beliefs and practices.

According to the 2011 census, 79.8% of the [population of India](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Demographics_of_India) practices Hinduism and 14.2% adheres to [Islam](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Islam_in_India), while the remaining 6% adheres to other religions ([Christianity](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Christianity), Sikhism, Buddhism, Jainism and various [indigenous ethnically-bound faiths](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tribal_religions_of_India)). Christianity is the 3rd largest religion in India. [Zoroastrianism](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Zoroastrianism) and [Judaism](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Judaism) also have an ancient history in India, and each has several thousands of Indian adherents. India has the largest population of people adhering to Zoroastrianism (i.e. [Parsis](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Parsi) and [Iranis](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Irani_%28India%29)) and [Bahá'í Faith](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bah%C3%A1%27%C3%AD_Faith) in the world,[[3]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Religion_in_India%22%20%5Cl%20%22cite_note-3) even though these religions are not native to India. Many other world religions also have a relationship with Indian spirituality, such as the Baha'i faith which recognises the [Buddha](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Buddha) and [Krishna](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Krishna) as manifestations of the God Almighty.[[4]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Religion_in_India#cite_note-4)

India has the third largest [Shia](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Shia_Islam) population in the world and being the cradle of [Ahmadiyya](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ahmadiyya) Islam, it is one of the countries in the world with at least 2 million Ahmadi Muslims. The shrines of some of the most famous saints of [Sufism](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sufism), like [Moinuddin Chishti](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Moinuddin_Chishti) and [Nizamuddin Auliya](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nizamuddin_Auliya), are found in India, and attract visitors from all over the world.[[5]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Religion_in_India#cite_note-5) India is also home to some of the most famous monuments of Islamic architecture, such as the [Taj Mahal](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Taj_Mahal)and the [Qutb Minar](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Qutb_Minar). Civil matters related to the community are dealt with by the [Muslim Personal Law](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Muslim_Personal_Law_in_India),[[6]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Religion_in_India%22%20%5Cl%20%22cite_note-6) and constitutional amendments in 1985 established its primacy in family matters.[[7]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Religion_in_India#cite_note-7)

There are six religions in India which have been awarded "National minority" status—[Muslims](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Muslims), [Christians](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Christians), Sikhs, Jains, Buddhists and Zoroastrians.[[52]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Religion_in_India#cite_note-52)[[53]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Religion_in_India#cite_note-53)

*Law*

The preamble to the [Constitution of India](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Constitution_of_India) proclaims India a "sovereign socialist secular democratic republic". The word *secular* was inserted into the Preamble by the [Forty-second Amendment Act of 1976](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Forty-second_Amendment_Act_of_1976). It mandates equal treatment and tolerance of all religions. India does not have an official state religion; it enshrines the right to practise, preach, and propagate any religion. No religious instruction is imparted in government-supported schools. In [S. R. Bommai vs. Union of India](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/S._R._Bommai_vs._Union_of_India), the [Supreme Court of India](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Supreme_Court_of_India) held that secularism was an integral tenet of the Constitution.[[78]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Religion_in_India#cite_note-hinduswami-78)

[Freedom of religion](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Fundamental_Rights_in_India#Right_to_freedom_of_religion) is a [fundamental right](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Fundamental_right) according to the Indian Constitution. The Constitution also suggests a [uniform civil code](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Uniform_civil_code) for its citizens as a [Directive Principle](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Directive_Principles_in_India).[[79]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Religion_in_India#cite_note-79) This has not been implemented until now as Directive Principles are Constitutionally unenforceable. The Supreme Court has further held that the enactment of a uniform civil code all at once may be counter-productive to the unity of the nation, and only a gradual progressive change should be brought about (*Pannalal Bansilal v State of Andhra Pradesh, 1996*).[[80]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Religion_in_India#cite_note-hinduiyer-80) In *Maharishi Avadesh v Union of India (1994)* the Supreme Court dismissed a petition seeking a writ of [mandamus](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mandamus) against the government to introduce a common civil code, and thus laid the responsibility of its introduction on the [legislature](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Legislature_of_India).[[81]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Religion_in_India#cite_note-rediffarvind-81)

Major religious communities not based in India continue to be governed by their own personal laws. Whilst Muslims, Christians, Zoroastrians, and Jews have personal laws exclusive to themselves; Hindus, Jains, Buddhists, and Sikhs are governed by a single personal law known as [Hindu personal law](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Modern_Hindu_law). Article 25 (2)(b) of the Constitution of India states that references to Hindus include "persons professing the Sikh, Jain or Buddhist religion".[[82]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Religion_in_India#cite_note-Bakshi1996-82) Furthermore, the [Hindu Marriage Act](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hindu_Marriage_Act) ,1955 defines the legal status of Jains, Buddhists and Sikhs as legal Hindus but not "Hindus by religion".[[83]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Religion_in_India#cite_note-Diwan1981-83) Supreme Court in 2005 gave verdict that Jains, Sikhs and Buddhist are part of broader Hindu fold, as they are Indic religions and interconnected to each other, though they are distinct religions.[[84]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Religion_in_India#cite_note-84)

*Rituals*

The vast majority of Indians engage in religious rituals on a daily basis.[[86]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Religion_in_India#cite_note-religiouslife-86) Most Hindus observe religious rituals at home.[[87]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Religion_in_India#cite_note-locceremonies-87) Observation of rituals vary greatly amongst regions, villages, and individuals. Devout Hindus perform daily chores such as worshiping [puja](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Puja_%28Hinduism%29), fire sacrifice called [Yajna](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Yajna) at the dawn after bathing (usually at a family shrine, and typically includes lighting a lamp and offering foods before the images of deities), recitation from religious scripts like [Vedas](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Vedas), [Puranas](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Puranas) singing hymns in praise of gods etc.[[87]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Religion_in_India#cite_note-locceremonies-87)

A notable feature in religious ritual is the division between purity and pollution. Religious acts presuppose some degree of impurity, or defilement for the practitioner, which must be overcome or neutralized, before or during ritual procedures. Purification, usually with water, is thus a typical feature of most religious action.[[87]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Religion_in_India#cite_note-locceremonies-87) Other characteristics include a belief in the efficacy of sacrifice and concept of merit, gained through the performance of charity or good works, that will accumulate over time and reduce sufferings in the next world.[[87]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Religion_in_India#cite_note-locceremonies-87)

Muslims offer [five daily prayers](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Salat#The_five_daily_prayers) at specific times of the day, indicated by [*adhan*](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Adhan) (call to prayer) from the local mosques. Before offering prayers, they must ritually clean themselves by performing [*wudu*](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wudu), which involves washing parts of the body that are generally exposed to dirt or dust. A recent study by the [Sachar Committee](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sachar_Committee) found that 3–4% of Muslim children study in [*madrasas*](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Madrasa) (Islamic schools).[[88]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Religion_in_India#cite_note-88)

*Ceremonies*

Occasions like birth, [marriage](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Indian_wedding), and death involve what are often elaborate sets of religious customs. In Hinduism, major life-cycle rituals include [*annaprashan*](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Annaprashan) (a baby's first intake of solid food), [*upanayanam*](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Upanayanam) ("sacred thread ceremony" undergone by upper-caste youths), and [*shraadh*](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Shraadh) (paying homage to a deceased individual).[[90]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Religion_in_India#cite_note-loclifecycle-90)[[91]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Religion_in_India#cite_note-shraddha-91) According to the findings of a 1995 national research paper, for most people in India, a [betrothal](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Arranged_marriage) of a young couple placing an expectation upon an exact date and time of a future wedding was a matter decided by the parents in consultation with [astrologers](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Astrologer).[[90]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Religion_in_India#cite_note-loclifecycle-90) A significant reduction in the proportion of arranged marriages has however taken place since 1995, reflecting an incremental change.[*[citation needed](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wikipedia%3ACitation_needed)*]

Muslims practice a series of life-cycle rituals that differ from those of Hindus, Jains, and Buddhists.[[92]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Religion_in_India#cite_note-locislamtrad-92) Several rituals mark the first days of life—including the whispering call to prayer, first bath, and shaving of the head. Religious instruction begins early. Male [circumcision](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Circumcision) usually takes place after birth; in some families, it may be delayed until after the onset of puberty.[[92]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Religion_in_India#cite_note-locislamtrad-92)

Marriage requires a payment by the husband to the wife, called Meher, and the solemnisation of a marital contract in a social gathering.[[92]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Religion_in_India#cite_note-locislamtrad-92) After burial of the dead, friends and relatives gather to console the bereaved, read and recite the Quran, and pray for the soul of the deceased.[[92]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Religion_in_India#cite_note-locislamtrad-92) Indian Islam is distinguished by the emphasis it places on shrines commemorating great Sufi saints.[[92]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Religion_in_India#cite_note-locislamtrad-92)

Madagascar

Madagascar has one of the highest prevalence of indigenous religious practitioners in Africa.

Madagascar has one of the highest proportions of indigenous religious practitioners in Africa. The constitution of Madagascar provides for the freedom of religion and registration of religious groups is allowed by the government. The religious landscape in Madagascar is characterized by tolerance, although isolated cases of societal discrimination are occasionally reported.

### **Traditional Malagasy Beliefs Honoring Zanahary and Family Ancestors**

The Traditional Malagasy Beliefs Honoring Zanahary and Family Ancestors is adhered to by 50% of the country’s population. The Malagasy people trace their ancestry to Asia, Arab, and African origin and thus pride in unique religious practices. The traditional religion is centered on one creator known as Zanahary or Andriamanitra who is neither male nor female. Zanahary is believed to have unlimited power and is, therefore, able to bless those who act according to his will and punish those who offend him.

The close relationship between the living and the ancestors is integral in the traditional religion. Ancestors are believed to be the link between the living and the Supreme God and to be actively looking for their descendants. Adherents of the religion observe various taboos (fady) to avoid the disapproval of the ancestors.

The Malagasy hold periodical ceremonies to venerate their ancestors, where they open their family tombs and re-wrap the dead in fresh shrouds amidst the jubilant celebration. Tomb building is a common practice in Madagascar, and the tombs are often more expensive and substantial concerning the houses of the living. Tombs have become a cultural landmark on the African island. Respect for ancestors is widespread in the Island and unites all the citizens, even most of those who practice other religions.

### **Protestant Christianity**

Protestant Christianity boasts 25% of Madagascar’s population. The religion is mainly rooted among the Merina ethnic group, who are concentrated in the country’s central highlands. Protestantism Christianity on the island is traced back to 1818 when the first Christian Missionaries from the London Missionary Society arrived. The missionaries translated the Bible, erected churches and began converting the Malagasy people.

Although the process of conversion to Christianity was stifled by Queen Ranavalona I, the religion found its bearing during the reign of Queen Ranavalona II. Protestantism grew to become the religion of the royalty and nobility on the island. The three oldest denominations are the Lutheran, Anglican, and Church of Jesus Christ in Madagascar are all part of the Malagasy Council of Churches which has significant influence in the country’s politics. Other Protestant Churches include the Seventh-day Adventist and Jehovah’s Witness. Most of the adherents integrate Christianity with traditional religious practices.

### **Roman Catholicism, Orthodox, Mormonism and other Forms of Christianity**

Roman Catholicism, Orthodox, Mormonism and other Forms of Christianity are represented by 16% of the country’s population. The Roman Catholic Church is popular with the Betsileo ethnic group. Introduced to the island by French missionaries, Roman Catholicism gained popularity during French colonization. Being part of the Malagasy Council of Churches, the Catholic Church maintains a degree of political influence in the country.

Orthodox Christianity was introduced to the island by Greek traders and still has a following till date. A smaller population subscribes to Mormonism as well as other forms of Christianity.

### **Islam**

Islam is practiced by 7% of Madagascar’s population. Madagascar’s history reflects the immigration of Arabs to the island and continued interactions with Arab merchants and traders. Arab immigrants trace their origin to Comoros, Pakistan, and India. Sunni Islam is the most dominant Islam branch alongside small numbers of Shia Muslims and Ahmadis. Modern day immigration from Islamic territories including Yemen and Iran has further influenced the number of Muslims in the country. Muslims are actively involved in commerce and Islam has a notable presence in the country’s media.

## **Other Forms Of Beliefs And Religions**

Baha’i Faith, Hinduism, other Beliefs and Irreligion have a 2% share of the country’s population. Hinduism is mainly a reserve for the Indian immigrants in the country. Baha’i Faith is a relatively new religion in the country, having been introduced in the 1950s. Irreligion reflects a small number of Malagasy people.

**Fundamental Beliefs.**

A firm belief in the existence of close ties between the living and the dead constitutes the most basic of all traditional beliefs and the foundation for Malagasy religious and social values. All the Malagasy peoples have traditionally accepted the existence of a supreme God, known commonly as Zanahary (Creator) or Andriamanitra (Sweet, or Fragrant, Lord). The dead have been conceived as playing the role of intermediary between this supreme God and humankind and are viewed as having the power to affect the fortunes of the living for good or evil. The dead are sometimes described as "gods on earth," who are considered the most important and authoritative members of the family, intimately involved in the daily life of the living members. At the same time, the *razana* (best defined as "ancestors") are the sources from which the life force flows and the creators of Malagasy customs and ways of life. The living are merely temporary extensions of the dead. Great hardship or trouble can result if the dead are offended or neglected.

Italy

[Roman Catholicism](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Roman_Catholicism) is, by far, the largest religion in the country, although since 1985 no longer officially the [state religion](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/State_religion).[[243]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Italy#cite_note-245) In 2017, the proportion of Italians who identified themselves as Roman Catholic was 74.4%.[[2]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Italy#cite_note-Ipsos2017-2)

The [Holy See](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Holy_See), the [episcopal jurisdiction of Rome](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Diocese_of_Rome), contains the central government of the entire [Roman Catholic Church](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Roman_Catholic_Church), including various [agencies](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Roman_Curia) essential to administration. Diplomatically, it is recognised by other subjects of international law as a [sovereign](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sovereignty) entity, headed by the [Pope](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pope), who is also the [Bishop of Rome](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bishop_of_Rome), with which [diplomatic relations](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Diplomatic_relations) can be maintained.[[244]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Italy#cite_note-246)[[245]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Italy#cite_note-247) Often incorrectly referred to as "the Vatican", the Holy See is not the same entity as the [Vatican City](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Vatican_City) State, which came into existence only in 1929; the Holy See dates back to early Christian times. Ambassadors are officially accredited not to the Vatican City State but to "the Holy See", and papal representatives to states and international organisations are recognised as representing the Holy See, not the Vatican City State.

Minority Christian faiths in Italy include [Eastern Orthodox](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Eastern_Orthodox), [Waldensians](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Waldensians) and other [Protestant](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Protestant) communities. In 2011, there were an estimated 1.5 million Orthodox Christians in Italy, or 2.5% of the population;[[246]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Italy#cite_note-248) 500,000 [Pentecostals](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pentecostals) and [Evangelicals](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Evangelicals) (of whom 400,000 are members of the [Assemblies of God](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Assemblies_of_God)), 251,192 [Jehovah's Witnesses](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jehovah%27s_Witnesses),[[247]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Italy#cite_note-249) 30,000 Waldensians,[[248]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Italy#cite_note-250) 25,000 [Seventh-day Adventists](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Seventh-day_Adventists), 26,925 [Latter-day Saints](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Church_of_Jesus_Christ_of_Latter-day_Saints), 15,000 Baptists (plus some 5,000 Free Baptists), 7,000 [Lutherans](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lutherans), 4,000 [Methodists](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Methodists) ([affiliated with the Waldensian Church](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Union_of_Methodist_and_Waldensian_Churches)).[[249]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Italy#cite_note-251)

One of the longest-established minority religious faiths in Italy is [Judaism](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Italian_Jews), Jews having been present in [Ancient Rome](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ancient_Rome) since before the birth of Christ. Italy has for centuries welcomed Jews expelled from other countries, notably Spain. However, as a result of the [Holocaust](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Holocaust), about 20% of Italian Jews lost their lives.[[250]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Italy#cite_note-isbn0553343025-252) This, together with the emigration that preceded and followed World War II, has left only a small community of around 28,400 Jews in Italy.[[251]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Italy#cite_note-253)

Soaring immigration in the last two decades has been accompanied by an increase in non-Christian faiths.There are more than 800,000 followers of faiths originating in the Indian subcontinent with some 70,000 [Sikhs](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sikhs) with 22 [gurdwaras](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gurdwaras) across the country,[[252]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Italy#cite_note-254)

The Italian state, as a measure to protect religious freedom, devolves shares of income tax to recognised religious communities, under a regime known as [Eight per thousand](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Eight_per_thousand) (*Otto per mille*). Donations are allowed to Christian, Jewish, Buddhist and Hindu communities; however, Islam remains excluded, since no Muslim communities have yet signed a concordat with the Italian state.[[253]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Italy#cite_note-255) Taxpayers who do not wish to fund a religion contribute their share to the state welfare system.[[254]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Italy#cite_note-256)

For centuries divided by politics and geography until its eventual unification in 1861, Italy has developed a unique culture, shaped by a multitude of regional customs and local centres of power and [patronage](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Patronage).[[269]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Italy#cite_note-271) During the Middle Ages and the Renaissance, a number of magnificent [courts](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Court_%28royal%29) competed for attracting the best architects, artists and scholars, thus producing an immense legacy of monuments, paintings, music and literature.[[270]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Italy#cite_note-272)

Italy has more [UNESCO](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/UNESCO)[World Heritage Sites](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_World_Heritage_Sites_in_Italy) ([53](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Table_of_World_Heritage_Sites_by_country)) than any other country in the world, and has rich collections of art, culture and literature from many different periods. The country has had a broad cultural influence worldwide, also because numerous Italians emigrated to other places during the [Italian diaspora](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Italian_diaspora). Furthermore, the nation has, overall, an estimated 100,000 monuments of any sort (museums, palaces, buildings, statues, churches, art galleries, villas, fountains, historic houses and archaeological remains).[[271]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Italy#cite_note-Eyewitness_Travel_2005,_pg._19-273)

The Netherlands

The Dutch are among the most informal and easy-going people in Europe, and there are not many strict social taboos to speak of. It is unlikely that Dutch people will be offended simply by your behaviour or appearance. In fact it is more likely that visitors themselves will be offended by overly *direct* conversation. Nevertheless, the standards for *overt* rudeness and hostility are similar to those in other western European countries. If you feel you are deliberately being treated offensively, then you probably are.

The exception to this openness is personal wealth. It is considered vulgar to for instance reveal the height of your salary, so asking somebody about this will be considered nosy and will probably just get you an evasive answer. Likewise, it's not advisable to be forceful about your own religion or to assume a Dutch person you've met is a Catholic or a Calvinist, since most people do not adhere to any faith at all, and the country has a long, proud history of cultural and religious tolerance. In urban areas it is not considered rude to ask somebody about this, but you'll generally be expected to be entirely tolerant of whatever the other person believes and not attempt to proselytize in any way. Openly religious behaviour is usually met with bewilderment and ridicule rather than hostility. An exception is the Dutch Bible Belt which runs from Zeeland into South Holland, Utrecht and Gelderland, and consists of towns with many strong Dutch Reformed Christians, who are more likely to be insulted by different religious views. Openly nationalist sentiments are likewise viewed with some suspicion among the general public, though there are a number of nationalistic celebrations like King's Day (*Koningsdag*, April 27th) and during football championships. Mostly though, these nationalistic celebrations are mostly used as an excuse to party together rather than being true "nationalistic" events.

The majority of the Dutch are irreligious and religion is in the Netherlands generally considered as a very personal matter which is not supposed to be propagated in public.

TOP RELIGIOUS AFFILIATIONS OF THE NETHERLANDS

### **Atheism**

Atheism is the belief that God does not exist. Atheism started in 1880 but became widespread in 1960 when other major religions began declining. The Netherlands is one of the most unreligious countries in the world with only 32.2% of its population reporting an official religious belief. According to a study in 2015, 63% of the Dutch believed that religion does more harm than good in a country.

### **Agnosticism Or Undefined Christianity**

Agnosticism is the belief that the existence of God cannot be confirmed nor defined within the confines of humankind. 31% of the Dutch population is agnostic, with the majority of them classified as strong agnostics.

### **Roman Catholic Christianity**

The Roman Catholic Christianity practiced in the Netherlands is part of the worldwide Catholic Church under the leadership of the pope. It is the single largest religious group in the country although the number of its believers is decreasing. In 2006, the Sunday church attendance by the Roman Catholic faithful in Netherlands had decreased from 1.2 million people to the current level of around 200,000. Historically, members of the Catholic church were sometimes discriminated against, often treated as second-class citizens. The government even banned the religion in 1580 although it was later restored.

A large majority of the Dutch population believes that religion should not have a determining role to play in politics and education. Religion is also decreasingly seen as a social binder,[[4]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Religion_in_the_Netherlands#cite_note-nos.nl-5) and is generally considered a personal matter which should not be propagated in public.[[5]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Religion_in_the_Netherlands#cite_note-6)

The Dutch constitution guarantees freedom of education, which means that all schools that adhere to general quality criteria receive the same government funding. This includes schools based on religious principles by religious groups (especially Roman Catholic and various Protestant). Three out of thirteen political parties in the Dutch parliament ([CDA](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Christian_Democratic_Appeal), [ChristianUnion](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/ChristianUnion), and [SGP](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Reformed_Political_Party)) are based upon the Christian belief. Several Christian religious holidays are national holidays (Christmas, Easter, [Pentecost](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pentecost) and the [Ascension of Jesus](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ascension_of_Jesus)).