

Religion in Norway

Opening question: How much does religion mean in Norway? Is Norway a Christian country?

– According to the Constitution:

”All inhabitants of the Realm shall have the right to free exercise of their religion.” (added 1964)

”The Evangelical-Lutheran religion shall remain the official religion of the State. The inhabitants professing it are bound to bring up their children in the same.” (1814)

From 2013 (proposal):

§ 2: ”The value basis remains our Christian and Humanistic heritage. This Constitution shall secure democracy, rule of law and human rights.”

§ 16: ”All inhabitants of the Realm shall have the right to free exercise of their religion. The Church of Norway, a Evangelical-Lutheran Church, remains the Folk Church of Norway, and is as such supported by the state. Rules about its organisation shall be given by law. All religious and philosophical communities shall be supported equally.

– According to statistics?

Members in religious and philosophical communities - Norway 2007

<i>Church of Norway (state church)</i>	82.9%
<i>Other Christian Churches</i>	4.8%
Pentecostals	0.9%
Roman-Catholics	1.1%
Lutheran free churches	0.5%
<i>Non-Chr. Communities</i>	2.1%
Islam	1.7%
<i>Philosophical Communities</i>	1.7%
Norw. Humanist Association	1.7%
<i>No community</i>	8.5%

Church of Norway statistics 2005

<i>Baptisms</i>	75.9% of all births
<i>Confirmations</i>	66.3% of all 14 years old
<i>Church funerals</i>	91.4% of all funerals

Survey Data 1998

<i>Believe in God</i>	50%
<i>Believe in a higher power</i>	25%
<i>Do not believe in God (atheist)</i>	12%
<i>Do not know what to believe (agnostic)</i>	12%
<i>Jesus is my saviour</i>	41%
<i>Believes in reincarnation (multiple lives)</i>	13%
<i>Go to church at least once a month</i>	9%

• Interpreting the meaning of Church membership

”Folk church” (folkekirke). Christianity as part of the common culture. Belonging without (necessarily) believing. Church rituals interpreted and utilized in personal ways.

Different groups of Church members: Active Christians (10%); passive Christians (40%); general religious (35%); non-believers (15%).

• **Historical sketch:**

900–1000: Viking kings are adopting Christianity in its Western form
1030: The death of St. Olav

1537: Lutheran Reformation introduced to Norway.
State church system

1736: Pietist reform: Confirmation and public schools

1814: Constitution

1845: Law allowing religious (Christian) minorities
First Roman Catholic congregation
1851: Jews allowed

1850–1950: Pietistic revivals. Formation of voluntary organisations

1940–45: German occupation. The church in conflict with the state

1956: Norwegian Humanist Association

1964: Freedom of religion mentioned in constitution

From 1970s: Immigrants and refugees from muslim countries.
Establishing of non-Christian religious communities

1984: General Synod of Church of Norway (the state church)
2008: Political agreement on major changes in state-church
relationships

Tendencies: • Secularization (of politics, education and culture)

• Privatization of religion

• Pluralization

Religious pluralism: Until the last years mainly a pluralism in the secular–religious dimension. Last years: Pluralism including different religious and non-religious alternatives

• Towards freedom of religion and equal treatment of religious communities

• The church developing from a branch of the government to an independent body

• **Church of Norway**

Protestant / Lutheran Church.

Main Sunday Service. Formal liturgy

Rituals: Baptism / Confirmation / Church weddings / funerals

approx. 1300 Parishes 11 Dioceses / bishops

State Church system

(status 2008 - will change from 2013)

– Church law given by the Storting and by the King (2013: *Only by the Storting*)

– The King as the formal head of church,

governing the church through the Government (restricted to Church members)

appointing bishops and rural deans. (2013: *King no more head of the church, the Church elects its own leaders*)

– Synodical system: Church councils at different levels with a general synod at the national level

Church economy (*the system continues after 2013*)

- The state pays for pastors' wages
- Local municipalities pays for church buildings and other local church workers

Church politics: Tendency of mild control of the church from the politicians (esp. labor party).
Securing its "broadness and openness"

Theological profile / theological conflicts (conservatism–liberalism)

- Conflict issues:
- Female pastors and bishops
 - Ordination of homosexuals living in partnership

Main issue in debate on church–state: Freedom of religion vs. tradition/culture/welfare

The state and other religious and philosophical communities: Compensatory system.
The need for rethinking politics towards religion on a general basis.

• **Voluntary organisations and pietistic movements**

Missionary organisations / deaconal institutions / hospitals / schools

Partly rooted in the influence of pietistic revival movements, often connected to local prayer houses

Regional differences.

Northern Norway: Laestadianism

The broader cultural meaning of Norwegian Pietism
group building / voluntary organisations
choice / commitment / strong ethical standards
missional → international horizon
abstinence from alcohol

• **Religious education in public schools**

According to school laws, schools should stimulate "a Christian and moral upbringing"

2007: Commission proposes new way of stating the value basis of the public school (Bostad commission).

Until 1997: Religious Education built on the Lutheran confession (not compulsory for non-church-members)

From 1997: KRL: "Christian Knowledge Religious and Ethical Education". Compulsory subject, with a main emphasis on Norwegian Lutheranism, but also knowledge of other faiths and beliefs.

2004: UN Human rights committee rules that KRL may violate freedom of religion. As a consequence, the subject is revised.

2007: European Court of Human rights in Strasbourg rules that aspects of KRL violates The European Convention on Human rights