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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)

– According to statistics?

Members in religious and philosophical communities - Norway 2004

<i>Church of Norway (state church)</i>	85.7%
<i>Other Christian Churches</i>	4.5%
Pentecostals	1%
Roman-Catholics	1%
Lutheran free churches	0.5%
<i>Non-Chr. Communities</i>	2.5%
Islam	1.8%
<i>Philosophical Communities</i>	1.5%
Norw. Humanist Association	1.5%
<i>No community</i>	5.8%

Church of Norway statistics 2004

<i>Baptisms</i>	77.3% of all births
<i>Confirmations</i>	67.7% of all 14 years old
<i>Church funerals</i>	92.4% 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 moslem countries.
Establishing of non-Christian religious communities
1984: General Synod of Church of Norway (the state church)
2002 and 2006: Proposal of disestablishment of the state church

- Tendencies:
- **Secularization**
 - of politics
 - of education
 - of 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

– Church law given by the Storting and by the King

– The King as the formal head of church,

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

appointing bishops and rural deans.

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

Church economy:

– 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

• **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

ethical standards

missional = international horizon

abstinence from alcohol

Pietism – Anti-Pietism-complex

• **State church system and the freedom of religion**

The meaning of Lutheranism as "official religion" (Constitution §2): Supreme Court 1982:

Does only bind the state when it governs the church. Religion gives no restrictions on the Storting as law maker.

Compensatory system: Religious and philosophical communities are supported as much as the state church per capita.

New debate/development in state-church relations

2002: Church appointed commission proposes disestablishment of state church system

(Bakkevig commission)

2006: State appointed commission proposes disestablishment of state church system (Gjønnnes commission)

• **Religious education in public schools**

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

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.