

3.14.1. Overview

COMMON ANALYSIS

Last update: May 2024

The 2004 suspended Constitution of the former government explicitly recognised 14 ethnic groups: Pashtun, Tajik, Hazara, Uzbek, Turkmen, Baluch, Pachaie, Nuristani, Aymaq, Arab, Qirghiz, Qizilbach, Gujur, Brahui, ‘and other tribes’. There are various estimates of the relative sizes of the ethnic groups. Estimates of the share of Pashtuns ranged from 40 to 50 % of the population, Tajiks 25–27 %, Hazaras 9–18 %, Uzbeks 6–15 %, and Turkmen 1.5–3 % [[Targeting 2022](#), 6.1., p. 126].

The predominant religion in Afghanistan is Islam. More than 99 % of the population are estimated to be Muslims. The majority are Sunni of the Hanafi School of jurisprudence. 10–15 % of the population are Shia, most of whom are Hazara. Most Shia Muslims in the country adhere to the Jafari School of jurisprudence, but there is also a small community of Ismaili Shias [[Targeting 2022](#), 6.1., p. 126].

The Taliban have not enacted any formal discriminatory policies against ethnic or religious groups. However, non-Pashtun groups are poorly represented in public positions. The lack of representation negatively impacts non-Pashtun groups and marginalises their possibilities to participate in decision-making processes. [[Country Focus 2023](#), 4.5.1., p. 82]

Shortly after the takeover, the Taliban stated, that human rights in general would be respected in Afghanistan ‘within the framework of Islamic law’. No specific mention was made of religious freedom. Afghanistan experts observed that, in theory, the Taliban leadership generally respected minorities, but in practice Taliban rank-and-file often did not [[Country Focus 2023](#), 4.5.1., p. 82].

Since August 2021, religious freedom conditions have deteriorated. The *de facto* authorities have not only enforced a harsh interpretation of sharia, but have also failed to provide ethnic and religious communities with safety and security against violence perpetrated towards them by ISKP and by ‘factions of the Taliban itself’. Physical and verbal attacks against religious minorities have been reported. Furthermore, since 15 August 2021, a pattern of forced evictions and land grabbing based on ethnicity or political association was reported. Members of religious minorities, including Christians, Ahmadiyya Muslims, Baha’is, and nonbelievers have not been able to openly express their faith and belief [[Country Focus 2023](#), 1.2., p. 21; 4.3.3., p. 69; 4.5.2., p. 84].

See other topics concerning ethnic and/or religious minorities:

- [3.14.1. Overview](#)
- [3.14.2. Individuals of Hazara ethnicity and other Shias](#)
- [3.14.3. Hindus and Sikhs](#)
- [3.14.4. Salafis](#)
- [3.14.5. Tajiks](#)