Does Religious Freedom Exist?

**Supporting Questions**

1. What are the major religions of the world?
2. What is religious freedom?
3. How has religious freedom been represented over time?
4. What is the current status of religious freedom around the world?

# 6th Grade Religious Freedom Inquiry

## Does Religious Freedom Exist?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Supporting Question 1</th>
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<tbody>
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<td>What are the major religions of the world?</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Formative Performance Task

**Create a table that highlights how major world religions are similar and how are they different.**

### Featured Source

**Featured Source**

- **Source A:** Graph illustrating religious affiliation around the world
- **Source B:** “Major World Religions Overview Chart”
- **Source C:** Animated map of the history of religion
- **Source D:** “World of Religions” infographic

**Featured Source**

- **Source A:** Definitions of religious tolerance
- **Source B:** Definitions of religious freedom
- **Source C:** Excerpt from the Magna Carta
- **Source D:** Article 18 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and background

**Source A:** Excerpt on human rights from the Cyrus Cylinder

**Source B:** Excerpt from the Magna Carta

**Source C:** First Amendment text and “First Amendment and Religion”

**Source D:** Article 18 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and background

### Summative Performance Task

**ARGUMENT** Does religious freedom exist? Construct an argument (e.g., detailed outline, poster, essay) that discusses whether religious freedom exists using specific claims and relevant evidence from historical sources while acknowledging competing views.

### Taking Informed Action

**UNDERSTAND** Find current examples where people of different faiths coexist or are in conflict.

**ASSESS** Determine what factors support this instance of faiths coexisting.

**ACT** Conduct an interfaith gallery walk or create a display of major religions that informs and celebrates the perspectives of these religions and addresses the concept of religious freedom.
Overview

Inquiry Description

This inquiry focuses on the concept of religious freedom driven by the compelling question "Does religious freedom exist?" The question establishes the importance of religious freedom and tolerance as a way for students to learn about world religions. In learning more about the compelling question, students identify the major beliefs of world religions and begin to recognize similarities and differences. Through the examination of sources about the practices and geographic distribution of world religions, students develop a comparative understanding of major religions. They extend their emerging understanding by investigating how the concept of religious freedom has emerged over time and examining the current status of religious freedom around the world.

In addition to the Key Idea listed earlier, this inquiry highlights the following Conceptual Understanding:

- (6.4c) Belief systems and religions often are used to unify groups of people and may affect social order and gender roles.

NOTE: This inquiry is expected to take four to six 40-minute class periods. The inquiry time frame could expand if teachers think their students need additional instructional experiences (i.e., supporting questions, formative performance tasks, and featured sources). Teachers are encouraged to adapt the inquiries in order to meet the needs and interests of their particular students. Resources can also be modified as necessary to meet individualized education programs (IEPs) or Section 504 Plans for students with disabilities.

Structure of the Inquiry

In addressing the compelling question “Does religious freedom exist?” students work through a series of supporting questions, formative performance tasks, and featured sources in order to construct an argument supported by evidence and counterevidence from a variety of sources. The inquiry concludes with students Taking Informed Action on the issue in a classroom and/or community setting.

Staging the Compelling Question

This inquiry opens with the compelling question “Does religious freedom exist?” To engage students in considering the compelling question, teachers ask them to take part in a discussion in which they explore what they know about different religious traditions. In turn, teachers assist students by providing them with examples of religious traditions from their local community.
Supporting Question 1

The first supporting question—“What are the major religions of the world?”—provides students with a foundation from which to learn more about religious freedom. Some form of religious activity is practiced by 80 percent of the world’s population. The supporting question broadly frames the study of these religious activities to capture the breadth of major world religious beliefs and practices, as well as their unique characteristics. The formative performance task calls on students to analyze maps, graphs, and charts comparing the location, population, origins, major tenets, practices, symbols, and holy texts of world religions. Students then create a chart that highlights how major religions are similar and how they are different. Teachers should decide which religions students include on their charts. The featured sources focus primarily on the five major religions of Buddhism, Christianity, Hinduism, Islam, and Judaism founded during the time period ca. 2000 BCE–ca. 630 CE, but some information is also included about Confucianism, folk religions, and unaffiliated religious activity. Teachers are encouraged to incorporate information about belief systems found in their community, including materials from the Sikh Coalition.

Supporting Question 2

The second supporting question—“What is religious freedom?”—introduces students to the concept of freedom of religion, which is complicated by the wide range of religious practices in the world. The formative performance task involves students writing a description of religious tolerance and freedom, given their prior knowledge and personal experiences. With their descriptions in mind, students then rewrite that description after they read the definitions of religious tolerance and religious freedom provided in the sources. The two featured sources include a multipart definition of religious tolerance from religiousrtolerance.org and a collection of definitions for religious freedom.

Supporting Question 3

The third supporting question—“How has religious freedom been represented over time?”—provides students with an opportunity to examine religious freedom at four important junctures in human history. In the formative performance task, students create an annotated timeline of relevant events in the history of religious freedom. To assist them, students examine four featured sources that describe the concept of religious freedom throughout history. Featured Source A presents the idea of religious freedom as conveyed in the sixth century by the Persian king Cyrus the Great. Featured Source B is an excerpt about religious freedom from the 13th-century Magna Carta in England. Featured Sources C and D are the First Amendment of the United States Constitution and Article 18 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. By exploring these featured sources, students should develop an understanding of how religious freedom has been represented over time.
Supporting Question 4

The fourth supporting question — “What is the current status of religious freedom around the world?” — turns to religious freedom in a modern context. The formative performance task is for students to construct a claim supported by evidence about the current state of religious freedom. By constructing this claim, students move closer to the Summative Performance Task in which they respond to the compelling question. Featured Source A is a map from Freedom House illustrating the status of freedom in general around the world. Featured Source B is a map from the Social Progress Imperative that shows levels of religious freedom around the world. Featured Source C provides information from the Pew Research Center about restrictions on religions around the world. Using these featured sources, students should be prepared to make a claim about the current state of religious freedom in the world.

Summative Performance Task

At this point in the inquiry, students have identified, compared, and contrasted major world religions; defined religious freedom; explored the history of religious freedom; and considered the status of religious freedom in the world today. Students should be able to demonstrate the breadth of their understandings and their abilities to use evidence from multiple sources to support their claims. In this task, students construct an evidence-based argument responding to the compelling question “Does religious freedom exist?” It is important to note that students’ arguments could take a variety of forms, including a detailed outline, poster, or essay.

Students’ arguments will likely vary, but could include any of the following:

- The major religions of the world share many beliefs, so people of different faiths should be able to get along.
- Although religious freedom has been important for all human history, not everyone today takes it seriously.
- Respect for religious freedom is needed in order for people of different faiths to be able to get along.

Students could extend their arguments by creating a Declaration of Religious Rights for all countries in the world to abide by as well as a description of how such rights will be protected.

Students have the opportunity to Take Informed Action by applying their new knowledge of religious freedom. Using what they have learned, students demonstrate that they understand when they locate current examples in which people of different faiths coexist or are in conflict. Students may then assess what factors support faiths coexisting. To accomplish this task, students might create a display of major religions that informs and celebrates each religion’s perspectives, unique qualities, and cultures. To act on what they have learned, students can create a display of major world religions or conduct an interfaith gallery walk in their classroom or school that informs and celebrates the perspective of these religions and addresses the concept of religious freedom.
Supporting Question 1

**Featured Source**

**Source A**: Graph illustrating religious affiliation around the world, 2015

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**World Religions**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Percentage of the global population</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Christian</td>
<td>33.39%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Muslim</td>
<td>22.74%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hindu</td>
<td>13.80%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Buddhist</td>
<td>6.77%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sikh</td>
<td>0.35%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jewish</td>
<td>0.22%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Baha'i</td>
<td>0.11%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other religions*</td>
<td>10.95%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-religious</td>
<td>9.66%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Atheists</td>
<td>2.01%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

2010 Estimate

### Supporting Question 1

**Featured Source**

Source B: Chart depicting characteristics of five world religions, “World Religions Overview Chart,” 2015

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**World Religions Overview Chart**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Hinduism</th>
<th>Judaism</th>
<th>Buddhism</th>
<th>Christianity</th>
<th>Islam</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Founded</strong></td>
<td>~2000 BCE</td>
<td>~2000 BCE</td>
<td>~500 BCE</td>
<td>~30 CE</td>
<td>~600 CE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Founder</strong></td>
<td>No single founder</td>
<td>Abraham</td>
<td>Siddhartha Gautama (The Buddha)</td>
<td>Jesus Christ</td>
<td>Muhammad</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Symbol</strong></td>
<td>Om</td>
<td>Star of David</td>
<td>Eight-Spoked Dharma Wheel</td>
<td>Cross</td>
<td>Crescent and Star</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>God(s)</strong></td>
<td>Many-incl Brahma, Vishnu, Shiva etc.</td>
<td>One-Yahweh(God)</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>One-Jehovah(God)</td>
<td>One-Allah(God)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Sacred Texts</strong></td>
<td>Many-Vedas, Upanishads, Bhagavad Gita, Purana, etc.,</td>
<td>The Hebrew Bible with a focus on the Torah, Talmud</td>
<td>Many-Trisutra, Mahayana Sutras, Tantra, and Zen texts</td>
<td>The Bible</td>
<td>The Qur’an</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Major Branches</strong></td>
<td>Shaivism, Vaishnavism, Smartha, Shaktism</td>
<td>Orthodox, Conservative, Reform, Reconstructionist</td>
<td>Theravada, Mahayana, Vajrayana</td>
<td>Roman Catholic, Eastern Orthodox, Protestant</td>
<td>Sunni, Shi’a</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Major Beliefs</strong></td>
<td>Dharma (duties), Samsara (rebirth cycle), Karma (actions), Moksha (liberation from life cycle), Yogas (practices)</td>
<td>Follow the laws of God, belief in Jews as the Chosen People, Coming of the Messiah</td>
<td>4 Noble Truths—all beings suffer, attachment causes suffering, attachment can be overcome, Eightfold Path leads to detachment</td>
<td>Holy Trinity-God; Jesus, Holy Spirit; Belief in Jesus as the Messiah</td>
<td>5 Pillars-belief in Allah and Prophet Muhammad, Daily prayer, aims to poor, fasting during Ramadan, pilgrimage to Mecca</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Views on Afterlife</strong></td>
<td>Reincarnation or Moksha</td>
<td>Heaven</td>
<td>Reincarnation or Nirvana</td>
<td>Heaven and Hell</td>
<td>Heaven and Hell</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Founding Location</strong></td>
<td>India</td>
<td>Israel, large populations in some U.S. states</td>
<td>Began in India, but found mainly in other parts of Asia</td>
<td>Much of the world, popular in western countries</td>
<td>Much of the world; popular in Middle East, parts of Asia, and north Africa</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Created by Binghamton University for the New York K-12 Social Studies Toolkit, 2015.
Supporting Question 1

| Featured Source | Source C: Maps of War, animated map of the history of religion, “History of Religion,” no date |

NOTE: Teachers may wish to have students view the animated version of the map on the next page at the Maps of War website: [http://mapsofwar.com/ind/history-of-religion.html](http://mapsofwar.com/ind/history-of-religion.html). Please note that the website includes advertisements that cannot be turned off or opted out of.

Supporting Question 1

**Featured Source**  
**Source D:** Geographics, infographic about religion in Asia and the world, “World of Religions,” 2011

**NOTE:** A larger version of this infographic displaying religions in all parts of the world is available online at [http://visual.ly/world-religions](http://visual.ly/world-religions).

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Supporting Question 2


The term “religious tolerance” can apply to governments, religions, faith groups, individuals, etc. It can involve:

- Allowing others to freely hold different religious beliefs. This includes granting everyone freedom of personal belief, and freedom of religious speech.
- Allowing others to freely change their religion, or denomination, or beliefs.
- Allowing children to hold religious beliefs that are different from their parents to a degree that depends on their age.
- Allowing others to practice their religious faith, within reasonable limits. This includes granting everyone freedom of assembly and freedom to practice what their religion requires of them.
- Refusing to discriminate in employment, accommodation, etc. on religious grounds.
- Accepting that followers of various religions consider their own beliefs to be true.
  - Making a reasonable effort to accommodate other people’s religious needs. For example:
    - Allowing an employee to work overtime in order to take off a religious festival or holy day that is significant to them.
    - Scheduling meetings so that they do not conflict with common holy days.

Supporting Question 2

| Featured Source | Source B: Source bank: Common definitions of religious freedom |

**Dictionary.com**

The right to choose a religion (or no religion) without interference by the government. Freedom of religion [in the United States] is guaranteed by the First Amendment to the Constitution.


**Wikipedia**

Freedom of religion or freedom of belief is a principle that supports the freedom of an individual or community, in public or private, to manifest religion or belief in teaching, practice, worship, and observance; the concept is generally recognized also to include the freedom to change [one’s] religion or not to follow any religion.


**YourDictionary.com**

The right of people to hold any religious beliefs, or none, and to carry out any practices in accordance with those beliefs or with that absence of belief, so long as these practices do not interfere with other people’s legal or civil rights, or any reasonable laws, without fear of harm or prosecution.

20. I am Cyrus, king of the universe, the great king, the powerful king, king of Babylon, king of Sumer and Akkad, king of the four quarters of the world,
21. son of Cambyses, the great king, king of the city of Anshan, grandson of Cyrus, the great king, king of the city of Anshan, descendant of Teispes, the great king, king of the city of Anshan,
22. the perpetual seed of kingship, whose reign Bel (Marduk) and Nabu love, and with whose kingship, to their joy, they concern themselves. When I went as harbinger of peace into Babylon
23. I founded my sovereign residence within the palace amid celebration and rejoicing. Marduk, the great lord, bestowed on me as my destiny the great magnanimity of one who loves Babylon, and I every day sought him out in awe.
24. My vast troops were marching peaceably in Babylon, and the whole of [Sumer] and Akkad had nothing to fear.
25. I sought the safety of the city of Babylon and all its sanctuaries. As for the population of Babylon [...w]ho as if without div[ine intention] had endured a yoke not decreed for them,
26. I soothed their weariness; I freed them from their bonds (?). Marduk, the great lord, rejoiced at [my good] deeds,
27. and he pronounced a sweet blessing over me, Cyrus, the king who fears him, and over Cambyses, my son, and over my all my troops,
28. that we might live happily in his presence, in well-being. At his exalted command, all kings who sit on thrones,
29. from every quarter, from the Upper Sea to the Lower Sea, those who inhabit remote districts and the kings of the land of Amurrum who live in tents, all of them,
30. brought their weighty tribute into Shuanna, and kissed my feet. From [Shuanna] I sent back to their places to the city of Ashur and Susa,
31. Akkad, the land of Eshnunna, the city of Zamban, the city of Meturnu, Der, as far as the border of the land of Gut - the sanctuaries across the river Tigris - whose shrines had earlier become dilapidated,
32. the gods who lived therein, and made permanent sanctuaries for them. I collected together all of their people and returned them to their settlements,
33. and the gods of the land of Sumer and Akkad which Nabonidus – to the fury of the lord of the gods – had brought into Shuanna, at the command of Marduk, the great lord,
34. I returned them unharmed to their cells, in the sanctuaries that make them happy. May all the gods that I returned to their sanctuaries,
35. every day before Bel and Nabu, ask for a long life for me, and mention my good deeds, and say to Marduk, my lord, this: “Cyrus, the king who fears you, and Cambyses his son,
36. may they be the provisioners of our shrines until distant days, and the population of Babylon call blessings on my kingship. I have enabled all the lands to live in peace.

Supporting Question 3

| Featured Source | Source B: King John of England, a list of rights and protections extended to nobles in medieval England, *Magna Carta* (excerpts), 1215 |

First, that we have granted to God, and by this present charter have confirmed for us and our heirs in perpetuity, that the English Church shall be free, and shall have its rights undiminished, and its liberties unimpaired....

No free man shall be seized or imprisoned, or stripped of his rights or possessions, or outlawed or exiled, or deprived of his standing in any other way, nor will we proceed with force against him, or send others to do so, except by the lawful judgement of his equals or by the law of the land.

To no one will we sell, to no one deny or delay right or justice.

Supporting Question 3


First Amendment to the United States Constitution

Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof; or abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press; or the right of the people peaceably to assemble, and to petition the Government for a redress of grievances.

Public domain.

First Amendment and Religion

The First Amendment has two provisions concerning religion: the Establishment Clause and the Free Exercise Clause. The Establishment clause prohibits the government from “establishing” a religion. The precise definition of “establishment” is unclear. Historically, it meant prohibiting state-sponsored churches, such as the Church of England.

Today, what constitutes an “establishment of religion” is often governed under the three-part test set forth by the U.S. Supreme Court in Lemon v. Kurtzman, 403 U.S. 602 (1971). Under the “Lemon” test, government can assist religion only if (1) the primary purpose of the assistance is secular, (2) the assistance must neither promote nor inhibit religion, and (3) there is no excessive entanglement between church and state.

The Free Exercise Clause protects citizens' right to practice their religion as they please, so long as the practice does not run afoul of a "public morals" or a "compelling" governmental interest. For instance, in Prince v. Massachusetts, 321 U.S. 158 (1944), the Supreme Court held that a state could force the inoculation of children whose parents would not allow such action for religious reasons. The Court held that the state had an overriding interest in protecting public health and safety.

History of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which was adopted by the UN General Assembly on 10 December 1948, was the result of the experience of the Second World War. With the end of that war, and the creation of the United Nations, the international community vowed never again to allow atrocities like those of that conflict happen again. World leaders decided to complement the UN Charter with a road map to guarantee the rights of every individual everywhere. The document they considered, and which would later become the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, was taken up at the first session of the General Assembly in 1946. The Assembly reviewed this draft Declaration on Fundamental Human Rights and Freedoms and transmitted it to the Economic and Social Council “for reference to the Commission on Human Rights for consideration...in its preparation of an international bill of rights.” The Commission, at its first session early in 1947, authorized its members to formulate what it termed “a preliminary draft International Bill of Human Rights.” Later the work was taken over by a formal drafting committee consisting of members of the Commission from eight States, selected with due regard for geographical distribution.


Article 18

Everyone has the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion; this right includes freedom to change his religion or belief, and freedom, either alone or in community with others and in public or private, to manifest his religion or belief in teaching, practice, worship and observance.


Supporting Question 4

**Featured Source**

**Source A:** Freedom House, map depicting the status of freedom in countries around the world, “Freedom in the World,” 2015


©Freedom House / Freedom in the World. Used with permission.
Supporting Question 4

**Featured Source**

**Source B:** Social Progress Imperative, map comparing social progress and religious freedom around the world, “Social Progress Index,” 2015

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**NOTE:** This source is best viewed online at [http://www.socialprogressimperative.org/data/spi#map/countries/idr49/idr49](http://www.socialprogressimperative.org/data/spi#map/countries/idr49/idr49).

Reproduced with permission from the Social Progress Imperative.  
Supporting Question 4

**Featured Source**


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**Restrictions on Religion, by Year**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>% of countries where levels are high or very high</th>
<th>% of global population living where levels are high or very high</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Government Restrictions on Religion</strong></td>
<td><img src="#" alt="Graph" /></td>
<td><img src="#" alt="Graph" /></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2012</td>
<td>29%</td>
<td>64%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2013</td>
<td>27%</td>
<td>63%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Social Hostilities Involving Religion</strong></td>
<td><img src="#" alt="Graph" /></td>
<td><img src="#" alt="Graph" /></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2012</td>
<td>33%</td>
<td>74%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2013</td>
<td>27%</td>
<td>73%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Overall Restrictions on Religion</strong></td>
<td><img src="#" alt="Graph" /></td>
<td><img src="#" alt="Graph" /></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2012</td>
<td>43%</td>
<td>76%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2013</td>
<td>39%</td>
<td>77%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Data are for calendar years 2012 and 2013.


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