

## Overview of Christian traditions and denominations

Unless otherwise stated, all figures are taken from the  
2020 World Christian Encyclopedia (Edinburgh University Press)

Group	Region	Influential leaders	Denominations
<p><b>CATHOLIC</b> 1.3 billion followers, according to the Vatican's <a href="#">Pontifical Yearbook for 2022</a>.</p>	<p>Global reach, with substantial presence in Europe, Latin America, Africa, Asia and North America. In 2020 49% of all Christians were Catholic.</p>	<p>The Pope (head of the worldwide Catholic Church), Cardinals, Bishops. National Bishops' Conferences are major decision making bodies within countries.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Highly active, influential locally and largely self governing are the Catholic religious orders or communities of which the largest are the Jesuits, Franciscans, Benedictines, Augustinians and Dominicans (all male).</li> <li>• There are nearly 2,000 Catholic women's congregations globally; their numbers have fallen significantly in the global North, they are growing in the Global South. Five of the 10 biggest women's religious institutes are headquartered in India.</li> <li>• There are Orthodox tradition Churches affiliated with Rome – Maronites of Lebanon and the Syro-Malabarese Churches in India.</li> <li>• There are a small minority of Independent Catholic churches that are not affiliated with the worldwide Church.</li> </ul>
<p><b>PROTESTANT</b> 586 million followers</p>	<p>North America and Europe (though populations are declining), Africa, Latin America, Asia, Oceania (generally growing).</p>	<p>Varies greatly. In institutional churches: Archbishops/Bishops, Moderators, Pastors, Elders</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• There are many different families of churches within Protestantism, amounting to around 47,000 denominations, although the majority belong to the old traditions, such as Methodists, Baptists and the Churches with archbishops such as the Anglicans and Lutherans, many of whom do not define themselves as 'Protestant'.</li> <li>• The largest are Anglican, joint Lutheran/Reformed, Baptist, United (union bodies of different traditions), Episcopalian, Reformed/Presbyterian, Adventist, Methodist, Nondenominational, Holiness, Congregational, Brethren, Disciples, Mennonite, Salvationist, Friends (Quaker) and Moravian.</li> </ul>

Group	Region	Influential leaders	Denominations
<p><b>ORTHODOX</b> 292 million followers</p> <p><b>Other Orthodox</b> (Oriental being a collective term) 56 million</p>	<p>Concentrated in Eastern Europe, especially post Soviet republics, but Ethiopia has 14% of the total Orthodox population (around 36 million followers). Growing rapidly in Western Europe, Scandinavia and USA.</p> <p>Other Orthodox include the Coptic Church of Egypt; the Ethiopian Orthodox, Armenian, Syrian, Assyrian</p>	<p>The Ecumenical Patriarch of Constantinople is First Amongst Equals, with Patriarchs in Alexandria, Antioch and Jerusalem, as well as in Russia (not in Communion with other Churches), Serbia, Romania, Bulgaria and Georgia.</p> <p>Other Orthodox do not recognise the Orthodox Churches above, and vice versa, although they are exploring greater collaboration.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• There are four ancient 'patriarchates': Constantinople, Alexandria, Antioch, Jerusalem</li> <li>• The five other Patriarchates are more nationally focused and Russia is out of step with them all. There are large new Orthodox communities from mission efforts in East and Southern Africa and across Europe and the USA/Canada.</li> <li>• The Oriental Orthodox, primarily from the Middle East, Iraq, Iran and parts of northeast Africa, have been deeply affected by social changes in their homelands so many of the largest communities are in Europe and especially the USA</li> </ul>
<p><b>Evangelical</b> 387 million</p>	<p>Very strong in Africa, Latin America and Asia. While the US has the most Evangelicals, globally, Evangelicalism is a predominantly non-White movement, with 77% of all Evangelicals living in the Global South in 2020.</p>	<p>The World Evangelical Alliance (WEA) brings together 660 million self identified Evangelicals and thousands of organisations from World Vision the largest faith-based development organisation, to hard-line Bible Colleges. The WEA has pioneered sustainability and ecology in its most recent programmes.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The growth of Evangelical churches, sometimes within older traditions but mostly through the creation of new denominations such as the Three Self Patriotic movement in China or the network of more independent Churches linked through the World Evangelical Alliance, is a recent phenomena of the last 150 years.</li> <li>• This is where many of the 47,000 different Churches can be found as the Evangelical movement spins off new churches regularly depending upon different understandings of leadership and the Bible.</li> <li>• They are often in the poorest and most socially deprived areas and provide education, community and literacy for often struggling communities. Often socially active on issues around poverty, women and, increasingly, the environment from a Biblical basis.</li> <li>• In the US, Evangelicalism is a largely white, politically conservative movement but elsewhere it is often concerned with issues such as immigration, social welfare.</li> </ul>

Group	Region	Influential leaders	Denominations
<b>Independent churches</b> 391 million	Primarily in former colonial areas of the world. Strong across Africa, in Latin America and in places such as Vietnam and Indonesia.	Often these churches are led by powerful founder or founder family figures. They tend to be tight-knit and not easy to access unless through local Councils of Churches – which are predominantly Protestant, such as Kenya, where these churches have a strong presence.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Independent churches emerged as a response to colonialism – rejecting the European/American traditions and often fusing indigenous traditions with a specific understanding of Christianity.</li> <li>For example the Kimbanguists of the Congo region (12 million), Zion Christian Church(3.5 m) and the Universal Church of the Kingdom of God in Brazil (7.5 m)</li> <li>Prosperity theology has become a major issue for some Independent churches.</li> </ul>
<b>Charismatic/Pentecostals</b> 644 million	Worldwide. Widespread throughout the Protestant, Evangelical and Independent churches but also forming new communities in the same regions.	<p>Varies greatly. In some areas, the issue of megachurches dominated by bold personalities has led to problems with leadership in the second generation. Lack of theological training is also a challenge.</p> <p>Again, links to national Councils of Churches can provide introductions to the most serious and engaged leaders.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The Charismatic Movement is a form of Christian worship while the Pentecostal tradition lays claim to direct inspiration from the Holy Spirit, often by-passing formal traditional church structures.</li> <li>They are often socially active on issues around poverty, women and, increasingly, the environment from a Biblical basis.</li> <li>The Global South is home to 86% of all Pentecostals/Charismatics in the world.</li> <li>The largest Charismatic movement today is the Catholic Charismatic renewal (Brazil – 61 million, the Philippines – 26 million, the US – 18 million)</li> </ul>