

Unit 1: North-East India
Religious Composition

North-East India has a substantial number of population belonging to each of the major religious followed commonly in the country. Besides it has a large population following some tribal religions. Religion wise distribution is, however, to some extent different in the region from that in the country as a whole. According to the Census of 2011, Hindu is the most populous group accounting 54% of the total population of the region as against 79.80% in the country as a whole. The Muslims account for 25.36% against the national norm of 14.23%. The Christians represent 17.34% in the region against 2.30% of the country. The Buddhists in the North-East represent 1.01% of the total population of the region.

Within the region there are state wise variations in the proportions of people pursuing different religions. According to Census, 2011, Tripura has the highest proportion of the Hindus (83.40%), followed by Assam (61.47%), Manipur (41.39%), Arunachal Pradesh (29.04%), Meghalaya (11.53%), Nagaland (8.75%) and Mizoram (2.75%). So far Muslims are concerned, Assam has a significant high proportion (34.22%), followed by Tripura (8.60%), Manipur (8.40%), Meghalaya (4.40%), Arunachal Pradesh (1.95%) and Mizoram (1.35%).

The Christianity is a widely spread out religion in north east India. Nagaland has the highest proportion of its total population following Christianity (87.93%), followed by Mizoram (87.16%), Meghalaya (74.59%), Manipur (41.29%), Arunachal Pradesh (30.26%), Tripura (4.35%) and Assam (3.74%). A good number of Buddhist people are found in North-East region. Highest percentage of Buddhists are found in Arunachal Pradesh (11.77%), followed by Mizoram (8.51%), Tripura (3.41%) whereas it is very low in Assam (0.18%) followed by Manipur (0.25%). The person following Sikhism represents only 0.07% in the whole region of north-east. Highest percentage of Sikhism found in Arunachal Pradesh (0.24%) whereas it is very least in Tripura (0.03%). On the other hand, the followers of Jainism is found in Nagaland (0.13%), Assam (0.08%) it is very negligible in Tripura (0.02). almost all of them are from Rajasthan and engaged here in trade, commerce and industry.

A very significant fact about the religious composition of north-east India is the presence of a number of people following various tribal religions. In Arunachal important tribal religions are Donyi-Polo, Wancho and Nocte. In Assam a large number of Karbis and Bodos identify themselves as belonging to “unclassified religions”. Meghalaya has such tribal religions as Songsarek, Niamtre, and Bhoi. Manipur and Nagaland have tribal Naga and Kuki religions. However, it has been observed that the proportion of people professing tribal religions declining in recent periods.