



RELIGIOUS FREEDOM IN CUBA

2022 REPORT



OBSERVATORIO DE DERECHOS SOCIALES
CUBA



Observatorio Cubano
de Derechos Humanos

Joven católico Leonardo Fernandez Otaño rezando mientras es increpado por seguidores de la revolución. (EFE)



Introduction

We present the most relevant findings of a new report by the *Social Rights Observatory* (Observatorio de Derechos Sociales, ODS-Cuba), this time in relation to Religious Freedom in Cuba. Thanks to the work of a team of collaborators residing in various provinces of the island, and with the assistance of international experts, it was possible to collect and analyze the perceptions of Cubans about the state and the exercise of their religious rights and freedoms.

In the last two decades there has been a certain improvement in the relations between the State and the hierarchy of some churches, which has been expressed in certain improvements in relation to administrative permits, access to some specific communication media, and presence in certain public spaces for the practice of specific religious acts and practices.

However, the study that we conducted in 11 provinces from all regions of the country shows that we are very far from considering that religious freedoms and rights are respected in Cuba, especially when we asked about the limitations or restrictions to religious acts, and to the very influence religious institutions should have on society.

DATA SHEET

UNIVERSE:

Resident population in Cuba
18 years and above, both sexes.

SAMPLE:

891 interviews.

SAMPLING METHOD:

Simple random.

SAMPLE STRATIFICATION BY CLUSTERS:

Habitat of residence, sex, age
and racial group.

GEOGRAPHICAL SCOPE:

11 of the 16 provinces
(87% of the population).

ALLOCATION:

Proportional.

MARGIN OF ERROR:

+/- 3.35 for global data.

CONFIDENCE LEVEL:

95%

FIELD WORK METHODOLOGY:

Personal interview with assisted
data entry through mobile phones.

FIELD WORK DATES:

25 January – 25 February 2022.

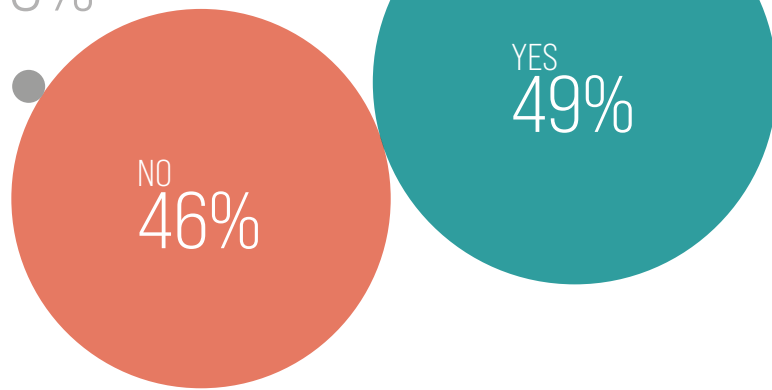


RELIGIOUS PEOPLE

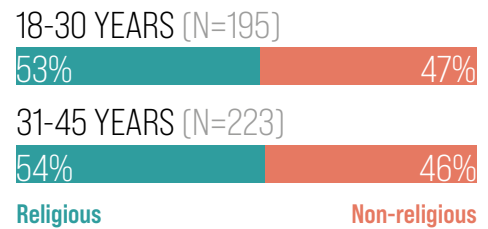
About half of the Cuban population professes a religion (49%).

The sum of the population groups between 31-45 years old and 18-30 years old declare themselves to be more religious than the rest of the respondents (46 and older), with percentages of 54% and 53% respectively.

I PREFER NOT TO ANSWER
5%



Age range distribution



WHERE IS THE COUNTRY HEADING?

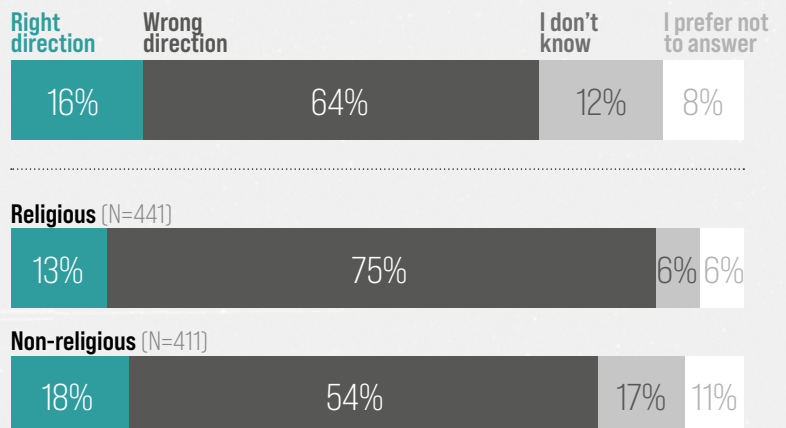


The majority of Cubans (64%) consider that things in the country “are heading in the wrong direction; young people, the most critical, reach 68%”.

21% do not know or prefer not to answer. Only 16% consider that they are heading in the right direction.

The negative perception increases among those who profess a religion, reaching 75% of this group.

Do you think things in the country are heading in the right direction?





IN CASE OF HARASSMENT OR ACTS THAT VIOLATE RELIGIOUS RIGHTS AND FREEDOMS,

only 2 out of 10 Cubans know how and to where to report such violations.

Do you know how and where to report a violation to the practice of faith/religion?



YES
20%

NO
37%

DON'T KNOW
39%

I PREFER NOT TO ANSWER
4%



67% of those interviewed admit to having been or knowing someone who professes a religion and has, to some extent, been

harassed, repressed, threatened, or hindered in their daily life for reasons related to their faith.



I PREFER NOT TO ANSWER
2%

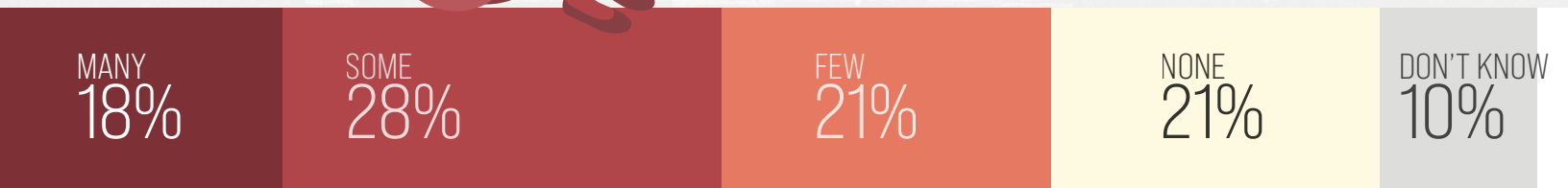
MANY
18%

SOME
28%

FEW
21%

NONE
21%

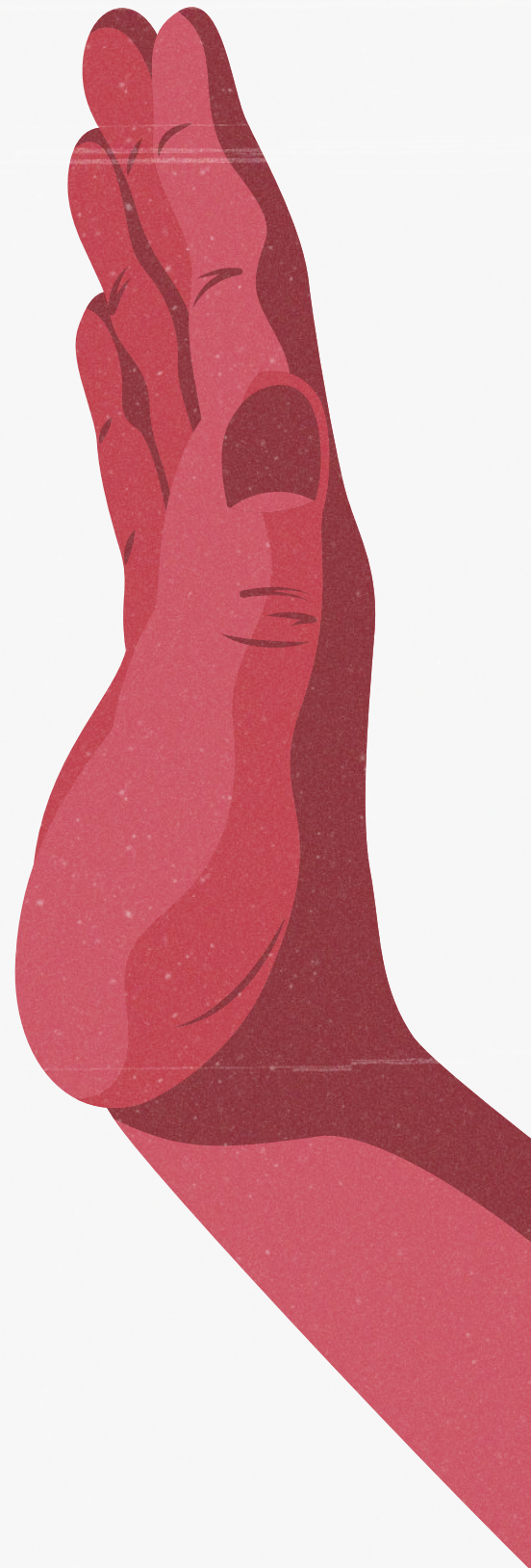
DON'T KNOW
10%



DISCRIMINATION

23% of the sample considers **discrimination on religious grounds to be a “big” obstacle to the functioning of civil society or organizations in the opposition.**

A percentage that **rises to 47%** if we add the “Big+somewhat” answers of the group of people who declare themselves to be religious.

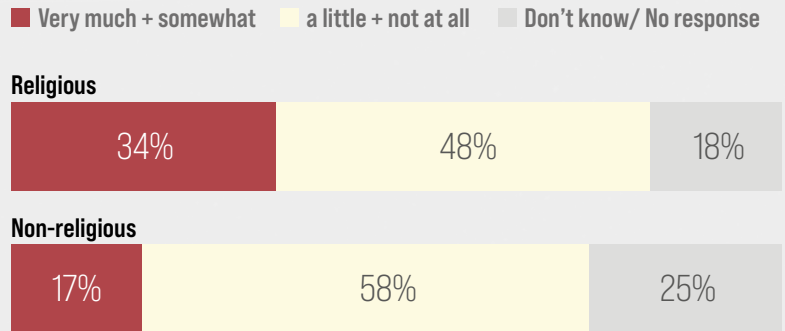


ANTI-RELIGIOUS ACTIONS



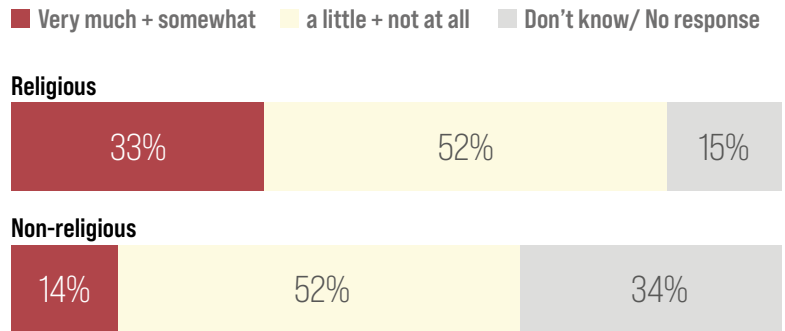
34% among the religious group consider that churches have been prevented to some extent (“somewhat” or “Very much”) from organizing religious activities within their place of worship.

Have churches been prevented from organizing religious activities within their house of worship?



33% of religious people consider that there have been impediments (“somewhat” or “Very much”) to training leaders or members of religious groups.

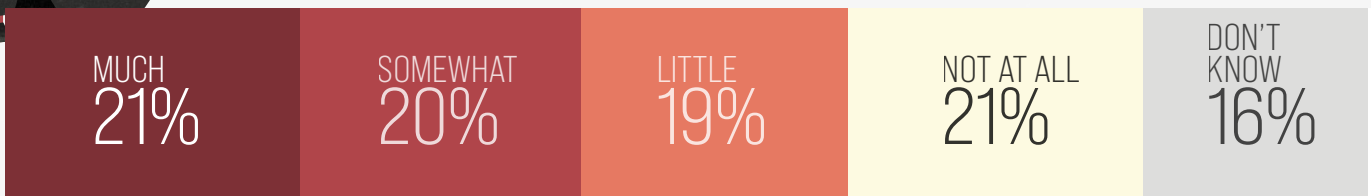
Have religious people been prevented from training their own religious leaders or members?



Have pastors or other religious leaders been particularly targeted to be repressed?

41% believe that pastors and other religious leaders have been particularly targeted to be repressed for reasons related to their faith.

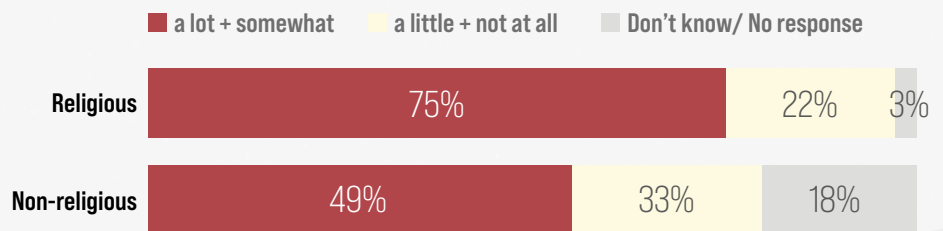
I PREFER NOT TO ANSWER
3%





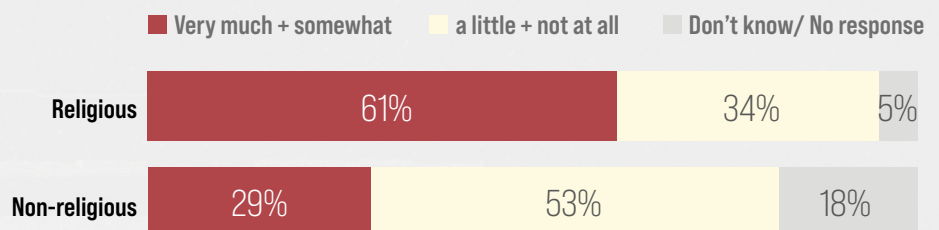
IMPEDIMENTS USING THE MEDIA

Most people perceive that there are broad impediments for the use of the media by churches, religious organizations, institutions, or groups to present their faith. The most generalized opinion in this sense is that of religious people, where 56% state that the use of, for example, “radio, television, Internet” has been impeded. 36% of interviewees considers that “a lot” is impeded.



FREEDOM TO COMMUNICATE THEIR FAITH ON SOCIAL NETWORKS

Just over 60% of people who profess a religious faith consider it a risk to discuss matters related to faith in written forms, such as blogs or Facebook, as well as talking about their faith with people who are not family members or meeting with other religious people.



Conclusions

The results of this report indicate that religious freedoms are not fully respected or guaranteed in Cuba. The Cuban regime continues to use its surveillance systems to repress and criminalize communities that profess their faith, whether through threats, arrests, discrimination, harassment on social networks, travel restrictions, etc.

For example, 67% of those interviewed admit knowing someone who professes a religion and has been harassed, repressed, threatened, or hindered in their daily life for reasons related to their faith. 41% believe that pastors and other religious leaders have been particularly targeted to be repressed for this reason; a situation that coincides with various testimonies and complaints that the OCDH has documented during the J11 demonstrations and the Civic Day of 15N. More than 60% of people who profess a religious faith consider it a risk to discuss matters related to faith in written forms, such as blogs or social networks. Or 90% of those surveyed that profess a religion consider that the use of the media by churches, organizations, institutions, or religious groups to publicly present their faith is impeded in some way.

Religious freedoms are not fulfilled by the fact that there is a certain freedom of worship (prohibited for some independent groups), or that circumstantial permits are authorized to carry out processions or carry out renovation works in some churches, they mainly have to do with freedom of conscience and the possibility that any person or religious group can act according to the criteria of their faith, not only in their private life, but fundamentally in public spaces. This includes the right of parents to choose the type of education they want for their children, the right of religious communities and lay groups to participate actively and autonomously in community advocacy projects, or the right of a Christian to be critical of the government, or to act politically inspired by the principles and values of their faith without being harassed or discriminated against for it.

