

250TH ANNIVERSARY SCORECARD

United States of America

Religious Liberty

1776:

Religious freedom in America was relatively strong during the time of its founding. While the American approach was already moving toward greater openness and diversity, several colonies still maintained official tax-supported churches. The Declaration of Independence reinforced the idea that rights come from a Creator. America was progressing toward a more tolerant and flexible religious environment that would continue to expand in the years that followed.

2026:

Religious freedom in the USA is widely recognized as one of the strongest in the world. Americans are able to practice whatever faith they choose openly without any government interference. While America has some of the strongest safeguards in the world, rabid secularists remain hostile to religious liberty.

Status of Racial and Ethnic Minorities

1776:

The USA was founded at a time when civil rights were still limited and developing across the globe. Slavery existed and Native American tribes were generally treated as separate nations rather than part of the new republic. However, the ideals expressed in the Declaration of Independence were permeating through the young nation and these principles established a foundation that would guide the future expansion of rights for racial and ethnic minorities.

2026:

The quality of life and opportunities available to racial and ethnic minorities in the USA have progressed significantly. Members of all different minority groups are now participating fully in civic, economic, and political life.

Status of Women

1776:

At this time, women were largely excluded from the legal and political framework of the new nation, just as they were throughout the world. Their roles were mostly confined to the domestic sphere, with limited access to formal education and virtually no presence in professional or political life.

2026:

In 1869, women were first given the right to vote in Wyoming, and subsequently all the other states endorsed the franchise. Now the legal and social status of women in the USA has been significantly transformed through constitutional amendments and federal legislation.

Latin America

Religious Liberty

1776:

Dominated by the Spanish Empire, religious liberty was not respected as the imperial administrators used the Catholic Church to bolster the regime.

2026:

While the majority of Latin American countries have laws protecting religious liberty, the Communists in Cuba, Nicaragua, and Venezuela actively suppress religious expression.

Status of Racial and Ethnic Minorities

1776:

At the time, Latin America was dominated by a racial hierarchy. Further, slavery was a flourishing institution that was critical to the economy of most of the region with some territories having more than half of the population in bondage.

2026:

While slavery was officially outlawed in the 19th century across the region, racial and ethnic minorities continue to face discrimination and generally have limited opportunities for advancement.

Status of Women

1776:

Although under Spanish law women were in a subordinate station to men, they had the right to inherit property. There was very little in the way of formal education for girls.

2026:

While women have achieved greater legal protections, they continue to suffer from entrenched economic inequalities and violence.

Africa

Religious Liberty

1776:

There was no concept of religious liberty anywhere in Africa in 1776. In many parts of the continent, Islam was the dominant religion and adherence was often mandated by local rulers.

2026:

The status of religious liberty is dire in Africa. Fueled by violent Islamic extremists and weak or failing states unable to protect their people, it is estimated that 93 percent of Christians martyred for their faith in the last year lived in Africa.

Status of Racial and Ethnic Minorities

1776:

Slavery was deeply entrenched across Africa. Not only were black African enslaved by their own people, it is estimated that over 1 million white European Christians were enslaved by Muslims of the Barbary Coast between 1530 and 1780.

2026:

Although completely legally abolished in the 1980s, Africa remains the epicenter of slavery with estimates of more than seven million people in bondage across the continent. Since the end of the colonial empires, the continent has been racked by ethnic cleansing and genocide.

Status of Women

1776:

The vast majority of women lived in extreme hardship and had very little legal protections.

2026:

There have been slight gains for women. While there is greater political participation and according to some estimates 46 percent of all African legislatures are women, there are still systemic problems holding women back.

Middle East

Religious Liberty

1776:

At the time the Middle East was dominated by the Ottoman Empire. The Ottomans allowed Christians and Jews to exist as second class citizens providing they pay a special tax. Outside of this, non-Muslims had no rights within the Ottoman Empire at the time.

2026:

While the political landscape of the Middle East has changed in the last 250 years, as a general rule, the region remains hostile to religious liberty. As a matter of fact, the region is home to some of the most religiously intolerant regimes in the world. The driving force behind religious oppression is Sharia law, a radical Islamic measure.

Status of Racial and Ethnic Minorities

1776:

While some minorities were able to enjoy a degree of freedom in their own communities, the Ottoman regime still considered these people second-class citizens and denied them many rights outside of their enclaves. Further, slavery remained a legal, flourishing, and integral institution deeply embedded within the economic and social fabric. Most of the slaves came from sub-Saharan Africa or Europeans captured by Barbary pirates.

2026:

Currently, many ethnic and racial minorities face dire conditions in the Middle East. Modern slavery is alive and well in the region. Today, there are approximately 1.7 million people forced into modern slavery across the region.

Status of Women

1776:

Women enjoyed a degree of legal protection at the time. However, the Ottoman Empire strictly segregated women from the male dominated society.

2026:

While some point to the economic advancement of women in the Gulf countries as evidence of progress, by and large the status of women has deteriorated primarily as a result of more stringent implementations of Sharia law and multiple conflicts that have ravaged the region.

Eurasia (Russia)

Religious Liberty

1776:

Tsarist Russia was never a bastion of freedom. During the reign of Catherine the Great, she used religion to advance her political aims. Early in her reign, Catherine strongly favored the people converting to the Russian Orthodox Church, but at the same time she effectively neutered the influence of its clergy.

2026:

Little has changed in Russia in the last 250 years regarding religious liberty. The Kremlin still uses religion to advance its political aims. Traditional religions, including the Russian Orthodox Church, certain Islamic institutions, Judaism, and Buddhism, operate with a degree of support from the state.

Status of Racial and Ethnic Minorities

1776:

During the reign of Catherine the Great, Russia was in a

period of attempting to modernize and centralize. This led to harsh repressions of minority groups.

2026:

The status of racial and ethnic minorities in Russia remains about the same as it was in 1776. Although serfdom was officially abolished in 1861, the Kremlin continues to push policies of forced assimilation on minority ethnic groups across the vast nation.

Status of Women

1776:

Despite being a female ruler, Catherine the Great did not usher in an era of widespread liberation for women. The vast majority of women remained poor, uneducated serfs with limited legal protection.

2026:

The status of women is much improved in modern Russia. Women gained the right to vote in March of 1917. Many women have a high degree of economic and educational achievements.

Europe

Religious Liberty

1776:

In 1776, European nations had laws that protected freedom of religion. However, not all religious groups had absolute freedom to practice.

During 18th century England, Catholics did not receive the same rights and protections as the Church of England and other Protestant denominations. Worshippers were forbidden from saying Mass, owning land, or establishing schools. Catholics who were found to be celebrating Mass or practicing their

faith were subjected to fines and imprisonment.

In France, Catholicism had been the official state religion after the Edict of Nantes was passed in 1598. However, during the early 1770s, rules were enacted that restricted which regions of the country Protestants could worship.

2026:

Countries in Europe in 2026 guarantee the rights of all citizens to freely worship and practice their respective faith. In 2026, almost all European nations have freedom of religion protections in their constitutions. In recent years there have been reports of discrimination of religious minorities and an increase in hate crimes against Christians and Jews.

Status of Racial and Ethnic Minorities

1776:

In 1776 Europe, racial and ethnic minorities were often not given equal rights. Minority groups that lived there were not treated equally to the majority population. But it must be said that England was the first country in the world to ban slavery, a cause promoted by Christians. In fact, in 1776, Western Europe was the only place in the world where slavery did not exist.

2026:

Racial and ethnic minorities have equal rights in Europe in 2026.

Status of Women

1776:

In 1776, women were seen as of a lower stature than men. This was reflected in the way they were treated throughout the

major European nations.

2026:

The status of women in 2026 European society has greatly improved compared to 1776. All European nations give women the right to vote and the right to citizenship.

Asia

Religious Liberty

1776:

Countries in Asia such as China, Korea and Japan, favored Eastern religions, but forbade Western religions such as Christianity.

2026:

Religious freedom in Asian nations in 2026 is more secure compared to the societies in the 18th century. A large majority of Asian countries allow for the universal practice of all faiths and religions in their constitutions. However, in Malaysia, while they guarantee freedom of religion, they also have Islam as their official state religion. In China, religious freedom is heavily restricted. North Korea essentially bans religious liberty.

Status of Racial and Ethnic Minorities

1776:

In the 18th century, Asian territories often had a hostile view towards minorities, particularly and sought to ostracize or eliminate these groups. In 18th century Japan, non-Japanese ethnic minorities were often excluded and shunned from main society. Chinese rulers sought the forced removal and genocide of several different ethnic groups. In Korea, foreigners and ethnic minorities were discouraged from living

in the Korean peninsula.

2026:

In 2026, Asian societies are more welcoming to ethnic minorities than in 1776. Most countries give protections and services that help minorities assimilate into society.

However, some nations continue to discriminate. In China, reports from human rights groups and the USA government have noted mass imprisonment and torture of predominately Muslim ethnic minorities, most notably the Uyghurs. The Communists in North Korea continue the oppression of the masses.

Status of Women

1776:

In the 18th century, women in Asian countries had little to no rights and were seen as inferior and subordinate to men.

2026:

In 2026, in a large majority of Asian countries, women have equal rights to men in terms of suffrage, freedom of employment, right to education, and marriage.