

# Religious Diversity in Spain: Towards an Inclusive Paradigm

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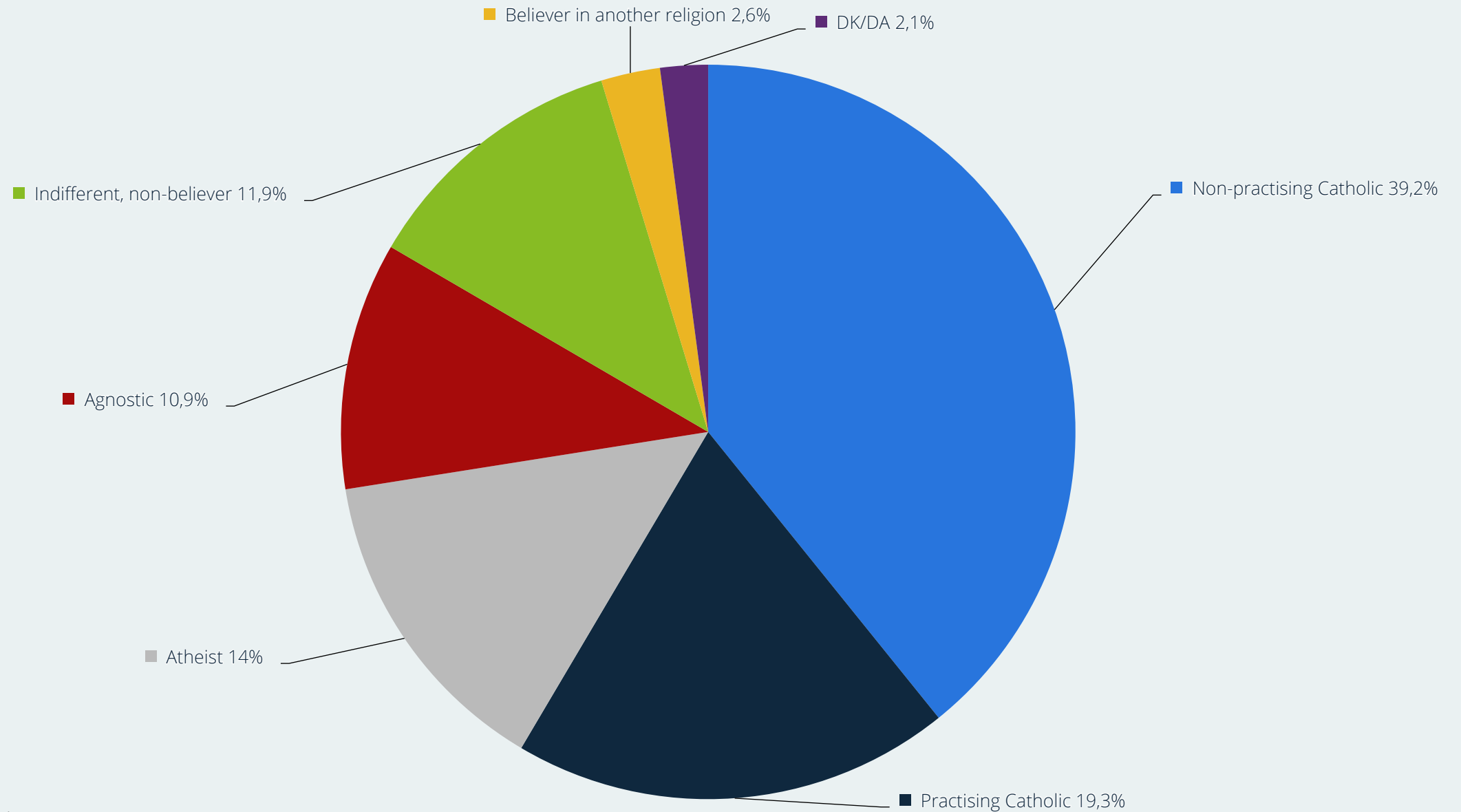
# Outlines

1. Introduction: religious diversity in data figures
2. The Normative Approach to Religious Diversity:  
Recent developments
3. A new policy paradigm toward religious  
diversity: the new religious governance
4. Conclusions

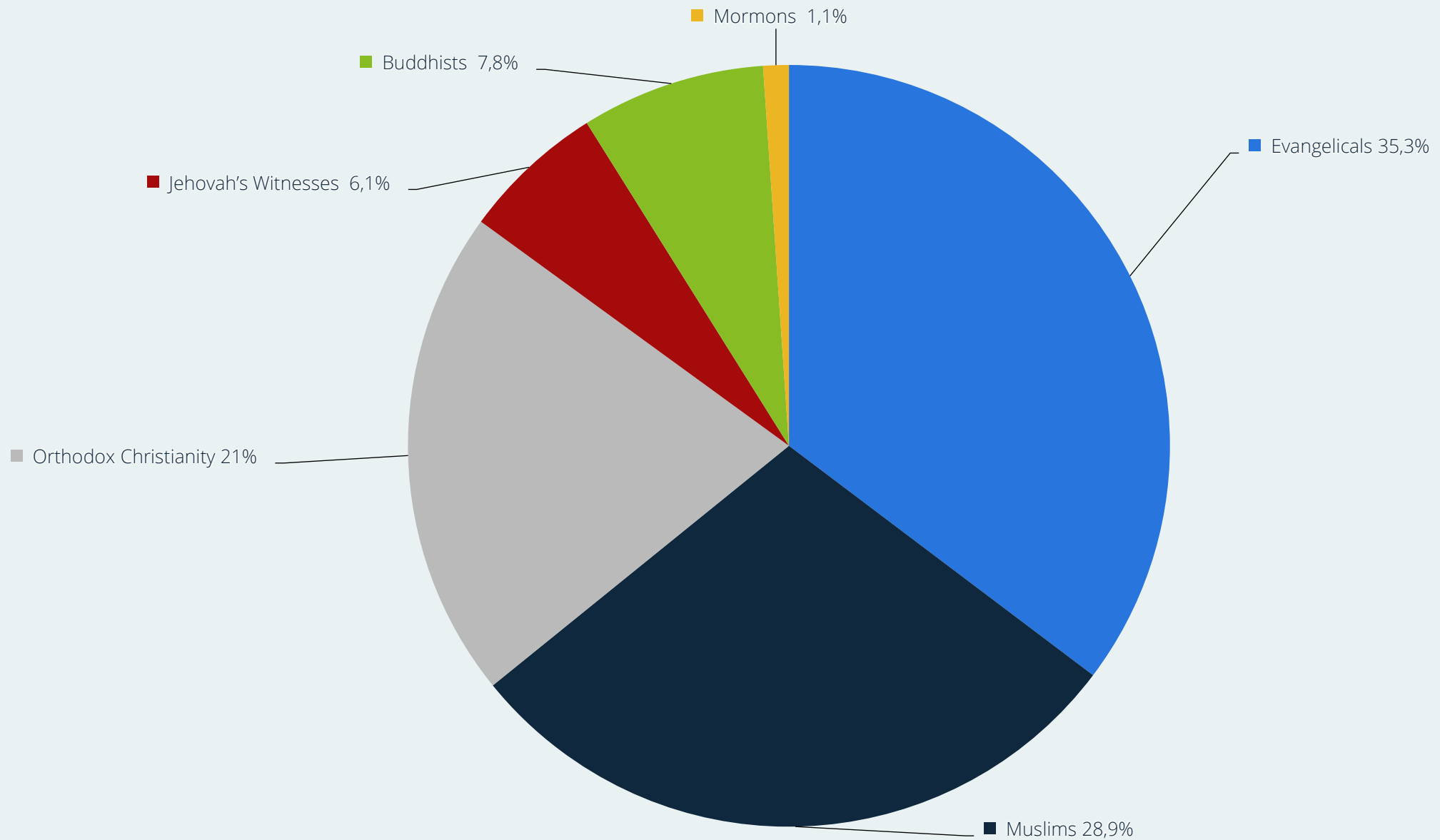


# 1. Introduction: Religious Diversity in Data Figures

# Percentage distribution of Spanish society in October 2024, according to religious beliefs



# Percentage distribution of non-Catholic believers in October 2024





# Consolidated norms

## 1. Spanish Constitution (1978):

- a) Respect and protection of fundamental rights inherent in human dignity (art. 10.1 CE)
- b) Pluralism (art. 1.1 CE)
- c) Participation (art. 9.2 CE)

## 2. Spanish Statutory Treatment of Religion (1980):

- Focus on non-Catholic religious groups
- Individual and collective rights included in the constitutional guarantees of religious freedom

## 3. Cooperation Agreements with religious minorities (1992)

- Bilateral Agreements with some religious denominations: "well-known roots" (Protestants, Jews, Muslims, Mormons, Jehovah's Witnesses and Buddhists)
- The State has only signed agreements with the Federation of Evangelical Religious Entities of Spain, the Federation of Israelite Communities of Spain, and the Islamic Commission of Spain.
- Although they are considered positive law, their actual implementation is not.

# Recent developments of the effective protection of religious diversity

To be registered as 'a religion'

## 1. Archetype of the Catholic Church:

- A religious group must substantiate its status as a religious organization → objectives
- Applications were frequently rejected
- Sentence Constitutional Court change this restrictive interpretation (2001):
  - ✓ Reject only if there is a genuine threat
  - ✓ The right to registration is included under the right of religious freedom

## 2. Reform of the Registry of Religious Entities (2015):

- To align its regulatory framework with the jurisprudence of the Constitutional Court
- Abandon the restrictive comparison with the Catholic Church
- A set of indicators to determine the religious nature of an entity

### 3. A New policy paradigm toward religious diversity: the new religious governance

# The evolution of Church-State relations and the governance of religious diversity

## 1. Failed implementation of the Religious Freedom Act of 1980:

- Designed as a top-down framework, it excluded the participation of regional and local governments
- Many obstacles to its effective application
- Consequently, many rights guaranteed to religious minorities were undermined in practice

## 2. The “problematization” of religion and policy transformation (2004-):

- 11M terrorist attempts → rapid inclusion of religion as a public issue in the political agenda → new perception of Islam
- Immigration and the new religious diversity
- Limitations of Spain’s institutional church-state arrangements to address these new challenges

# Governance reforms and the role of the Pluralism and Coexistence Foundation (FPC)

## 1. Creation of the Foundation of Pluralism and Coexistence (2004):

- Promoting religious freedom and cooperation State-Religious Confessions
- Funding activities of religious minorities:
  - 1) Strengthen the institutional capacity of religious minority federations and communities
  - 2) Supporting their cultural, educational, and social activities
  - 3) Providing training for religious leaders
- Observatory of Religious Pluralism in Spain (2011):
  - ✓ To empower local authorities by providing guidelines, best practices, and reliable data to address the challenges of religious diversity

# Governance reforms and the role of the Pluralism and Coexistence Foundation (FPC)

## 2. Spain's approach to Religious Diversity Governance:

- From Top-Down Governance to Networked Governance
- Emphasis on Soft Power Strategies
- Importance of integrating religious communities into municipal governance structures:
  - Plans for citizen participation at the local level
  - The Directorate General for International Legal Cooperation and Relations with Religions (DGCJIRC) and the Foundation collect demands:
    - ✓ Opening places of worship, protecting religious freedom in public spaces, and addressing labor, health, and education-related concerns
    - ✓ Burial practices, equitable public funding, legal recognition of religious marriage ceremonies, and combating hate crimes and offenses against religious beliefs
    - ✓ Harmonizing regulations on religious freedom to ensure equal application to all groups
      - try to rectify the asymmetry that historically favors the Catholic Church

# Conclusions

- ✓ Immigration in Spain has been reshaping religious diversity for years. Religious communities demand to be treated on an equal footing with the Catholic Church.
- ✓ The normative framework of religious freedom in Spain has not evolved much and only thanks to jurisprudence were some changes adopted, such as the inscription in the Register of Religious Entities.
- ✓ The evolution of Spain's governance of religious diversity reflects a gradual shift from rigid, top-down institutional arrangements to more flexible, networked approaches

# Thank You

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