



# Language and religion

from the Esri GeoInquiries™ collection for Human Geography

Audience – Human geography

Time required – 15 minutes

**Activity** Explore patterns of cultural diffusion through linguistic and religious data.

**APHG Benchmarks** APES: III.B2 Explain the diffusion of cultural traits through time and place.  
APES: III.B1 Explain cultural patterns as they vary by place and region.

**Learning Outcomes** • Students will be able to analyze diffusion patterns of languages and religions and to identify correlations between the two.

**Map URL:** <http://esriurl.com/humanGeoInquiry6>

## Ask

### How do linguistic patterns affect the spread of religion?

- Cultural diffusion is the spreading of cultural traits from one group or place to another.
- ? How can one cultural trait influence the spread of another cultural trait? How could language or religion influence the diffusion of the other? [*Language: ideas of a religion spread more easily to speakers of similar languages. Religion: often tied to the use of a particular language, the spread of a religion will spread the use of that language. Both: a colonizer can bring both language and religion to a new area (relocation diffusion).]*]
- ? What are some factors that would help the spread of a religion? [*Common language, colonialism, and economic interaction help spread religion.*]

## Acquire

### How are languages and religions distributed?

- Click the map URL above to launch the map.
- With the Details button underlined, click the button, Show Contents of Map (Content).
- ? What is noticeable about the distribution of religions? [*Religions diffuse more along lines of latitude than longitude; indigenous religions are located in lightly populated areas.*]
- ? Click the checkbox to the left of the layer name, Languages Families of the World.
- ? Which language family is the most widely diffused? [*Indo-European*]

## Explore

### How do patterns of religion vary?

- Click the button, Bookmarks. Select South America.
- Turn the language and religion layers on and off to explore patterns.
- ? Which religions are dominant in South America? [*Roman Catholic and indigenous.*]
- Pan the map to North America.
- ? Which religions are dominant in North America? [*Protestant, Roman Catholic, and Mormon.*]
- ? What relationship exists between language and religion in North America? [*Catholicism is tied to Romance languages, and Protestantism is tied to Germanic languages.*]

more ►



## Analyze

### Compare the patterns of European languages and religions.

- Click the button, Bookmarks. Select the Europe bookmark.
- Turn on only two layers, Major World Religions and Indo-European Language Branches.
- ? What connections do you see between the religions of Europe and the major Indo-European language branches? [*Catholicism is tied to Romance languages, Protestantism is tied to Germanic languages, and Eastern Orthodoxy is tied to Slavic languages.*]
- Turn off the layer, Indo-European Language Branches.
- Click the other bookmarks.
- ? Which region has the greatest religious diversity? [*Africa and Southeast Asia have the greatest diversity.*]



## Act

### What factors influence the diffusion of a religion?

- Press the button, Measure. Select Distance. Use Miles. (See Tooltip below for more.)
- ? Measure how far Islam has spread east & west from Mecca. [*~ 6,700 miles and ~3,800 miles, respectively.*]
- ? How did physical and human factors serve as barriers and supports for the spread of Islam? [*Mountains and cultural differences were barriers to diffusion, whereas plains, rivers, sea access, and cultural linkages enabled it.*]

### MEASURE

- Click the button, Measure.
- Click the button, Distance.
- Set the unit of measurement.
- Click once to start measuring, click again to change direction, and double-click to stop measuring.

### BOOKMARKS

- Click the button, Bookmarks.
- Click bookmark of interest to zoom to a map location and scale.

## Next Steps

**DID YOU KNOW?** ArcGIS Online is a mapping platform freely available to public, private, and home schools. A school subscription provides additional security, privacy, and content features. Learn more about ArcGIS Online and how to get a school subscription at <http://www.esri.com/schools>.

### THEN TRY THIS...

- Use the Overlay analysis tool to create a new data layer that combines both language and religion into a single layer. Then, analyze the geographic relationships.
- Create a story map to describe languages or religions around the world. Use photos, videos, or text to tell the story.



## TEXT REFERENCES

This GIS map has been cross-referenced to material in sections of chapters from these texts.

- *Human Geography: A Short Introduction* by Oxford University Press – Chapter 10
- *The Cultural Landscape* by Pearson – Chapters 5, 6
- *Human Geography: People, Place, and Culture* by Wiley Press – Chapters 5, 6