



Reaching the Nations International Church Growth Almanac

Country reports on the LDS Church around the world from a landmark almanac. Includes detailed analysis of history, context, culture, needs, challenges and opportunities for church growth.



Mayotte

Population: 0.21 millions (#189 out of countries)

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Geography

Area: 374 square km. Located in the Mozambique Chanel of the Indian Ocean and comprising several small islands part of the Comoro Archipelago, Mayotte is a departmental collectivity of France with dependent status. Hilly terrain crossed with deep valleys comprise most the terrain. Some small islands surround the main volcanic island. Cyclones are a natural hazard. Mayotte is administratively divided into 17 communes.

Peoples

Mayotte native: 63.5%

Comorian: 28.3%

French/overseas French: 4.8%

Madagascan: 2.6%

Other: 0.8%

Two-thirds of the island population are indigenous. Most of the remaining one-third are Comorian.[\[1\]](#)

Population: 256,518 (September 2017)

Annual Growth Rate: 3.82% (2017)

Fertility Rate: 5.4 children born per woman (2010)

Life Expectancy: 60.99 male, 65.63 female (2010)

Languages: Maore (59%), Bushi (19%), other or unknown (22%). French is the official language. Maore is a Bantu language related to Swahili and Comorian, whereas Bushi is a Malayo-Polynesian language related to Malagasy.

Literacy: 92% (2011)

History

Along with the remainder of the Comoro Archipelago, Mayotte [the French corruption of the Arabic word Maore or Mawuti meaning island of the dead^[2]] was first populated by Austronesian and Bantu settlers during the first millennium AD. Arab traders and merchants traveled from the Horn of Africa and established a trading and transit center on the islands to traffic goods from the African interior. Arabs introduced Islam to the indigenous inhabitants and intermarried. In the mid-nineteenth century, the French gained control and established a colony. In 1974, Mayotte was the only island in the archipelago that did not vote in favor of independence from France. In March 2009, Mayotte voted to become France's 101st department and fifth overseas department. Comoros continues to claim Mayotte.

Culture

Mayotte shares many cultural similarities with Comoros but integrates many aspects of French and Western culture into society, specifically education. Nearly the entire population is Muslim. Arabs have heavily influenced culture, but locals have retained many of their own cultural practices, customs, and some indigenous beliefs. Rice, fish, coconuts, and roots are staple foods. Alcohol consumption rates are low. Polygamy has traditionally been socially accepted and legal, although polygamous marriages were banned in 2011 due to Mayotte becoming a department of France.

Economy

GDP per capita: \$10,516 (2015) [18.7% of U.S.]

Human Development Index: N/A

Corruption Index: N/A

Agricultural activity drives the local economy, mainly fishing and raising livestock. French financial assistance and food imports are vital to economic growth and stability, as Mayotte does not produce enough food to feed its population. Vanilla, ylang-ylang, coffee, and copra are common crops. Industries include construction and lobster and shrimp fishing. Trade primarily occurs with metropolitan France.

Faiths

Muslim: 97%

Christian: 3%

Christians

Denominations – Members – Congregations

Catholic – 6,934

Jehovah's Witnesses – 165 – 3

Seventh Day Adventists – 101 – 1

Latter-day Saints – 10? – 0

Religion

The population is homogenously Muslim. Christians account for virtually all remaining non-Muslims. Most Christians are

Catholic. There are small numbers of Protestants and Evangelicals.

Religious Freedom

The French constitution protects religious freedom, which is upheld by the local government. There are no restrictions regarding proselytism or the placement of foreign missionaries.

Largest Villages

Labattoir, Kawéni, Mtsapéré, Majicavo-Koropa, Pamandzi, Cavani, Sada, Koungou, Passamainty, Chiconi.

Villages listed in **bold** have no LDS congregations.

None of the ten largest villages have an LDS congregation. Forty-six percent (46%) of the population resides in the ten most populous villages.

LDS Background

The Church reported a small presence on Mayotte between 2005 and 2009. Most Latter-day Saints that lived on Mayotte during this period were native Mahoran. There were seven Latter-day Saints in 2005, thirteen in 2006, and seven in 2007. No membership totals have been reported since 2008. Most members appeared to have left Mayotte in 2008 and 2009, possibly emigrating elsewhere. In early 2011, there were likely less than ten members. The Mayotte Branch was discontinued in late 2009. LDS meetings previously occurred in a member's home. Most members appeared to be active in the late 2000s, and activity rates were likely over 50%. All LDS scriptures and most church materials are available in French and Malagasy. LDS materials translated into Comorian are limited to the Testimony of the Prophet Joseph Smith and Gospel Principles. The Liahona magazine has twelve French issues and four Malagasy issues a year. LDS Church had not conducted humanitarian or development work in Mayotte as of 2018. It is unclear whether a member group operates or Latter-day Saints remain on the island. Mayotte is assigned to the Madagascar Antananarivo Mission, the Africa Southeast Area, and the Johannesburg South Africa Temple district. The Madagascar Antananarivo Mission Branch administers Mayotte.

Opportunities

The government does not restrict missionaries from open proselytism. The Church does not appear to face any legal obstacles preventing the reestablishment of a branch or assignment of full-time foreign missionaries. Due to the small geographic size and high population density of Mayotte, half a dozen mission outreach centers could effectively reach the majority of the population. Reestablishment of the Church would most likely occur in the most populous urban areas of Mamoudzou and Pamandzi or in communities with concentrated numbers of Christians. However, there remain few, if any, active members on Mayotte. A few convert baptisms may have occurred when the Mayotte Branch operated. Latter-day Saint converts appear highly dedicated to the Church and experience moderate to high retention, as they must overcome strong ethno-religious ties. Mahoran and Comorian communities share common culture and closely related languages, reducing potential ethnic integration challenges at church. Widespread use of French reduces the need for additional translations of LDS materials into Comorian or Maore. Literacy rates are higher in Mayotte than in neighboring Comoros, which increases the utility of distributing LDS proselytism literature in French and Comorian. Local members staffed the leadership for the tiny Mayotte Branch when it operated. A lack of local members and potential leadership may have contributed to the closure of the branch. Independent local leadership will be required to ensure long-term sustainability.

Challenges

The highly homogenous Muslim population has tolerated a Christian minority but remains largely unreceptive and resistant to Christian missionary efforts. Reduced mosque attendance for Muslims appears the byproduct of the influence of Western secularism on the native population. Although Mayotte does not impose legal restrictions on proselytism like Comoros, Mayotte retains a deep Islamic heritage. The status change of Mayotte to an overseas department of France in 2011 may weaken some Islamic influence on society in the coming years, but religious practice may only become supplanted with secularism and indifference to religion altogether. With the closure of the Mayotte Branch in 2009, the entire population is unreached by the LDS Church. Low receptivity, limited missionary manpower and resources assigned to the Madagascar Antananarivo Mission, distance from established mission outreach centers, and few, if any, remaining native members challenge efforts to reestablish a church presence in the near future. Mayotte natives living in France or other overseas French departments are often accessible by LDS missionaries, but their small numbers and strong ethno-religious ties to Islam make concentrated mission efforts unfeasible. No missionaries appear to have served from Mayotte, and no foreign missionaries have been assigned. Infrequent visits from missionaries serving in the Madagascar Antananarivo Mission may occur. Mayotte is one of a few Muslim African nations that have ever had an official LDS branch. Somalia and Djibouti are the only other predominantly Muslim countries in East Africa or the Indian Ocean to have ever had an LDS presence. Missionary-oriented Christian groups have a tiny presence in Mayotte and have generally not achieved noticeable, sustainable growth due to challenges developing a missionary approach tailored to the religious and cultural background of the indigenous population. Nevertheless, the number of

Jehovah's Witness congregations has tripled from one to three and the number of active Witnesses has doubled within the past decade.

Prospects

A resistive population to Christian missionary activity, remote location, small population, lack of local Latter-day Saints, and limited missionary resources dedicated to the Madagascar Antananarivo Mission create a less favorable outlook for the future reestablishment of a permanent LDS congregation on Mayotte. The changed political status of Mayotte to an overseas department of France in 2011 may eventually improve the openness of local culture to Christianity, although this is uncertain, as Mayotte remains homogenously Muslim after more than a century and a half of French administration. The closure of the sole LDS branch in 2009 may indicate challenges for reestablishment of the church due to continued member emigration.

[1] "Mayotte," Wikipedia.org, retrieved 19 January 2011. <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mayotte>

[2] "Mayotte," Wikipedia.org, retrieved 19 January 2011. <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mayotte>