

Reaching the Nations International Church Growth Almanac

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





Martinique

Population: 0.39 millions (#180 out of countries)

By David Stewart and Matt Martinich

Geography

Area: 1,128 square km. Located in the Caribbean between Dominica and Saint Lucia, Martinique is an overseas department of France that borders the Caribbean Sea and North Atlantic Ocean. Mountainous terrain occupies most the island, which is heavily forested and subject to a subtropical climate moderated by a rainy season from June to October. Hurricanes and flooding are natural hazards. Environmental issues include pollution and deforestation. Martinique is divided into four administrative arrondissements.

Peoples

African/mulatto: 90%

White: 5%

Other: 5%

Africans and mixed African, white, and East Indians account for 90% of the population. Whites are primary French. Other ethnic groups include East Indians, Indian Tamil, and Chinese.

Population: 376,480 (January 2016)

Annual Growth Rate: -0.6% (2016)

Fertility Rate: 1.79 children born per woman (2006)

Life Expectancy: 79.5 male, 78.85 female (2006)

Languages: Martiniquan Creole French [Guadeloupean Creole French] (98%), French (2%). French is the official language and commonly spoken. Nearly the entire population speaks Martiniquan Creole French.

Literacy: 87% (2017)

History

Arawak and later Carib Amerindians populated Martinique prior to the arrival of Christopher Columbus in 1493. French settlers landed in 1635 and annihilated the Carib population as the colonists expanded their plantations and landholdings. African slaves began working the plantations during the seventeenth century. The British captured Martinique several times in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, but French rule was successively reestablished after each incident. Attempts to emancipate slaves in the late eighteenth century and early nineteenth century did not come to total fruition until the early 1830s. Indentured servants from India arrived in the late nineteenth century. Martinique became an overseas department of France in 1946. French economic assistance turned the island into one of the Caribbean's wealthiest during the latter half of the twentieth century.[1]

Culture

French culture and influence is greater on Martinique than other Caribbean islands. The Catholic Church is the primary influence on society. Commonly eaten foods include tropical fruits, vegetables, and seafood. Martinique is most known for its contributions to Caribbean music. Festivals for artists and musicians are widely supported and viewed by tourists. Theft is the most common crime.[2]

Economy

GDP per capita: $27,688 (2012) [53.8% of U.S.]

Human Development Index: 0.901 (for France) (2017)

Corruption Index: 72 (for France) (2018)

Tourism and economic aid from France drives the economy. Services employ 73% of the labor force and generate 83% of the GDP, whereas industry employs 17% of the labor force and generates 11% of the GDP. Major industries include construction, rum, cement, petroleum refining, sugar, and tourism. Agriculture employs 10% of the labor force and generates 6% of the GDP. Fruit, avocadoes, flowers, vegetables, and sugarcane are common crops. France and Guadeloupe are the primary trade partners.[3] Corruption is perceived at lower levels than in most Caribbean islands.

Faiths

Christian: 96.5%

Other: 3.5%

Christians

Denominations – Members – Congregations

Catholic – 340,000

Evangelicals – 24,861

Seventh Day Adventists – 16,059 – 72

Jehovah's Witnesses – 4,901 – 62

Latter-day Saints – 230 – 1

Religion

Catholics account for the vast majority of the entire Christian population. Nontraditional Protestant denominations such as Seventh Day Adventists and Evangelicals have experienced sustained church growth for many years. Hindus account for the

largest non-Christian religious group and comprise less than 5% of the population.

Religious Freedom

The constitution protects religious freedom, which in general is upheld by the government. Separation of church and state occurred in 1905. Religious organizations may register with the government as an association of worship or as a cultural association. Associations of worship may only organize religious activities whereas cultural associations grant religious organizations the right to make profits, receive government subsidies, and are not tax-exempt. Foreign missionaries may serve in France but are required to obtain a long-duration visa if their home country is not exempted from French visa entry requirements. Religious education does not occur in public schools.[4]

Largest Cities

Urban: 95%

Fort-de-France, **Le Lamentin, Le Robert, Schoelcher, Ducos, Le François, Saint-Joseph, Sainte-Marie, La Trinité, Rivière-Pilote.**

Cities listed in **bold** have no congregations of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

One of the ten largest cities has an official Church congregation. Sixty-eight percent (68%) of the island population resides in the ten most populous cities.

Church History

The first known Latter-day Saint from Martinique joined the Church in France while serving in the military and returned to Martinique in 1980. The West Indies Mission president visited in 1983, and the first full-time missionaries assigned to the island arrived in May 1984 and held the first Church meeting. Two General Authorities visited later that year. The Martinique Branch was organized in October 1985.[5] In 2007, a full-time missionary companionship became lost in the island's mountains for three days before being found by a local farmer.[6] Martinique was assigned to the West Indies Mission until 2015 when the island was reassigned to the newly organized Barbados Bridgetown Mission.

Membership Growth

Church Membership: 230 (2017)

There were fewer than one hundred members in 1993. Membership reached one hundred in 1997 and 143 by 2000. Stagnant membership growth occurred for much of the 2000s and 2010s as membership totaled 137 in 2002, 140 in 2004, 142 in 2006, 203 in 2010, 215 in 2014, and 230 in 2017. Slow membership growth has been due in part to converts immigrating to metropolitan France.[7]

In 2017, one in 1,676 was a Latter-day Saint.

Congregational Growth

Wards: 0 Branches: 1 Groups: 1 (2018)

The name of the Martinique Branch was later changed to the Fort de France Branch. A second branch was organized in 2007 in Trinité but closed in 2011. A group continues to operate in Trinité. The Fort de France Branch pertains to the Guadeloupe District.

Activity and Retention

Fifteen were enrolled in seminary and institute during the 2009–2010 school year. There were approximately twenty-five active members in Martinique in the early 2000s. In early 2011, the Fort de France Branch appeared to have between fifty and seventy-five active members, whereas the Trinité Branch had likely fewer than twenty active members. In the mid-2010s, there were approximately seventy active members in the Fort de France Branch and fifteen active members in the Trinité Group. At the time approximately one-third to one-half of new converts continued to attend church one year after baptism. Total active membership is estimated at ninety members, or 39% of church membership.

Language Materials

Languages with Latter-day Saint Scripture: French.

All Latter-day Saint scriptures and most church materials are available in French. The Liahona magazine has monthly issues in French.

Meetinghouses

In 2009, the Fort de France Branch met in a rented space on the second floor of a commercial building, whereas the Trinité Branch met on the second floor of a residential home. In 2019, both congregations appeared to meet in rented spaces.

Humanitarian and Development Work

There have been no major humanitarian or development projects sponsored by the Church in Guadeloupe. Some services activities are carried out by local members and full-time missionaries.

Opportunities, Challenges, and Prospects

Religious Freedom

Latter-day Saints benefit from full religious freedom to proselyte, worship, and assemble. Foreign full-time missionaries regularly serve on Martinique.

Cultural Issues

Secularism from Europe decreases receptivity of the local population to Church teachings due to increasing wealth and the strong cultural connection with metropolitan France. Most have a Catholic background, and many have been receptive to missionary-minded denominations such as Jehovah's Witnesses and Seventh Day Adventists. Non-Catholic Christians are often entrenched and highly active in their churches, reducing their receptivity to The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

National Outreach

One-quarter of the island population resides in cities with a branch or member group and 63% reside in the two administrative arrondissements reached by the Church. Prospects for expanding national outreach appear most favorable in cities located in the central portion of the island between Fort-de-France and La Trinité. Establishing mission outreach centers in Le Lamentin, Le Robert, Sainte-Marie, and Ducos would increase the percentage of the population residing in a city with a Church congregation to 70%.

With the third largest population among islands of the Lesser Antilles, Martinique receives some of the most limited mission resources in the region, largely due to mediocre receptivity and the frequent emigration of converts. The assignment of larger numbers of full-time missionaries to Martinique may reduce local member involvement in missionary work, as receptivity has been modest, and the size of church membership remains small. Nevertheless the assignment of a senior missionary couple may facilitate the expansion of national outreach through coordination with local branch presidents and mission leadership, but missionaries must be vigilant that they do not take administrative and ecclesiastical responsibilities away from local leaders.

The Church does not perform any Martinique-specific Internet outreach, but a large number of French-language websites and church materials are available, including an online edition of the scriptures in French. Reference to these resources by local members and full-time missionaries and the development of member-missionary Internet proselytism can facilitate greater national outreach.

Member Activity and Convert Retention

Moderate rates of convert retention have occurred on Martinique as evidenced by slow, steady increases in active members that appear commensurate with total church membership. Member activity rates have appeared to hold steady at approximately 40% for at least the past decade. Seminary and institute enrollment has been consistent year to year, indicating that member activity

rates have not experienced any major fluctuations.

Ethnic Issues and Integration

The homogenous black/mulatto population presents minimal ethnic integration issues for the Church. East Indians appear the most challenging group to accommodate into congregations due to their small numbers and differing cultural and religious background.

Language Issues

Standard French is spoken by virtually the entire population as a result of the strong cultural and societal influence from metropolitan France. Martiniquan French Creole is widely spoken on Martinique with a total of more than 400,000 speakers worldwide. The need for materials translated into Martiniquan French Creole is low due to high rates of bilingualism in Standard French and the informal usage of French Creole.

Missionary Service

Four full-time missionaries were assigned to Martinique in mid-2009. There generally appears to be one missionary companionship assigned to Trinité and two missionary companionships assigned to Fort de France. Few if any local members have served full-time missions. The development of a local full-time missionary force will be essential toward ensuring the continued self-reliance of local leadership over the long term.

Leadership

Local members have appeared to serve as the branch president in the Fort de France Branch for many years. Assignment to the Guadeloupe District provides opportunities for mentoring from local leaders in Guadeloupe instead of mission leadership. Limited interaction with mission leaders and few full-time missionaries assigned to the island have encouraged local members to take greater responsibility in administrative and leadership tasks.

Temple

Martinique is assigned to the Caracas Venezuela Temple district although many members likely attend the Santo Domingo Dominican Republic Temple. Organized temple trips likely occur occasionally under the Guadeloupe District. Martinique may be reassigned to the San Juan Puerto Rico Temple once it is completed. Distance to the temple and travel expenses limit temple attendance for most members. Prospects for a future temple closer to Martinique than in Puerto Rico appear unlikely in the medium term due to the small number of members in the region.

Comparative Growth

Martinique has the smallest percentage of Latter-day Saints in the general population among Caribbean islands with an official church presence with the exception of Cuba. Guadeloupe has the second lowest percentage of Latter-day Saints in the region, which is twice as great as the percentage of members on Martinique. Membership growth rates have ranked among the slowest in the region, whereas member activity rates are higher than most of the Lesser Antilles. The Church in Martinique appears to have one of the most developed local leaderships among Caribbean islands with fewer than 250 members. The percentage of the population reached by mission outreach is among the lowest in the region.

Missionary-minded Christian groups continue to report slow, steady growth and have achieved some of the greatest church growth in the Caribbean on Martinique. Seventh Day Adventists baptized over 500 new converts and organized seven additional congregations in 2009.[8] However, Adventist membership has increased by only 10% during the past decade. Jehovah's Witnesses report slow growth with slight increases in the number of congregations and active members.

Future Prospects

Emigration of converts to metropolitan France, limited missionary resources dedicated to Martinique, struggles to establish a second branch, and the tiny church membership are the primary obstacles preventing greater church growth for Latter-day Saints. The establishment of the Church on Martinique occurred many years after other missionary-oriented Christians arrived, and these denominations had already developed a strong community base and shepherded much of the receptive population into their congregations. Dissuading members from emigrating, increasing the number of active members in established congregations, and augmenting the number of local members serving full-time missions will be required to achieve greater church growth in the coming years. Towns between Fort de France and Trinité present some of the greatest opportunities to form member groups and explore prospects for the expansion of missionary activity.

[1] “History of Martinique,” Wikipedia.org, retrieved 21 February 2011. http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/History_of_Martinique

[2] “Martinique,” Countries and Their Cultures, retrieved 22 February 2011. http://www.everyculture.com/Ma-Ni/Martinique.html

[3] “Economy of Martinique,” Wikipedia.org, retrieved 21 February 2011. http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Economy_of_Martinique

[4] “France.” International Religious Freedom Report for 2017. Accessed 23 February 2019. https://www.state.gov/j/drl/rls/irf/religiousfreedom/index.htm?year=2017&dlid=280906#wrapper

[5] “Martinique,” Country Profile, 8 October 2010. http://newsroom.lds.org/country/martinique

[6] “Missionaries Found Unharmed in Martinique,” News Release, 6 December 2007. http://newsroom.lds.org/article/missionaries-found-unharmed-in-martinique

[7] “Martinique,” Country Profile, 8 October 2010. http://newsroom.lds.org/country/martinique

[8] “Martinique Conference (1990-Present),” Adventiststatistics.org, retrieved 22 February 2011. http://www.adventiststatistics.org/view_Summary.asp?FieldInstID=1525393