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.

Luxembourg

Population: 0.52 millions (#175 out of countries)

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Geography

Area: 2,586 square km. Landlocked in Western Europe, Luxembourg is among the smallest nations in Europe and borders France, Belgium, and Germany. Wooded rolling hills account for most of the terrain, with more mountainous areas in the north. Continental temperate climate prevails, characterized by mild winters and cool summers. The largest rivers include the Sauer and Moselle. Air, water, and soil pollution are environmental issues. Luxembourg is divided into twelve administrative cantons.

Peoples

Luxembourger: 52.1%

Portuguese: 16.0%

French: 7.6%

Italian: 3.6%

Belgian: 3.4%

German: 2.2%

Spanish: 1.1%

British: 1.0%

Other: 13.0%

Luxembourgers descend from Celtic tribes that populated the region in antiquity. Nonnatives constitute nearly half of the population. Luxembourg experiences some of the most rapid annual population growth rates in Europe due to heavy immigration.

Population: 605,764 (July 2018)

Annual Growth Rate: 1.9% (2018)

Fertility Rate: 1.62 children born per woman (2018)

Life Expectancy: 79.9 male, 85.0 female (2018)

Languages: Luxembourgish (55.8%), Portuguese (15.7%), French (12.1%), German (3.1%), Italian (2.9%), English (2.1%), other (8.3%). Luxembourgish is the national language; German and French are administrative languages. Most natives are trilingual, speaking Luxembourgish, German, and French.

Literacy: 99% (2011)

History

Celtic tribes ruled modern-day Luxembourg until conquered by Rome in the first century BC. After Roman rule ended, local powers erected Luxembourg Castle, which later became integrated into the Holy Roman Empire during the Middle Ages. In 1815, the Congress of Vienna granted Luxembourg Grand Duchy status after 400 years of foreign occupation under Habsburg rule. King William I of the Netherlands granted political autonomy in 1839, allowing for internationally-recognized sovereignty. Perpetual neutrality was recognized by 1867, yet Luxembourg was occupied by Germany during both World Wars. In 1949, Luxembourg became one of the charter nations of NATO and two years later participated in the founding of the European Coal and Steel Community (today known as the European Union) in 1951. Stable economic growth and modernization occurred in the latter half of the twentieth century. In 2019, Luxembourg was the only Grand Duchy in the world, ruled by constitutional monarchy under Grand Duke Henri.[1]

Culture

Luxembourg shares many cultural similarities with Belgium, France, and Germany due to close proximity and adoption of foreign languages and customs. Medieval castles and churches stand as historical and cultural reminders of Luxembourg's past. The influence of the Catholic Church has waned as secularism has spread. Cuisine is heavily influenced by France and Germany. Luxembourg has one of the highest tobacco cigarette consumption rates worldwide. Alcohol consumption rates are also high.

Economy

GDP per capita: $105,100 (2017) [176% of U.S.]

Human Development Index: 0.904 (2017)

Corruption Index: 81 (2018)

With the highest GDP per capita in the European Union, the Luxembourgish economy is highly integrated into neighboring Belgium, France, and Germany. Industry originally blossomed through steel production, but in recent years industrial activity has declined due to strong growth of the financial sector. Services employ 78.9% of the labor force and generate 86.9% of the GDP. Industry accounts for 20.0% of the labor force and generates 12.8% of the GDP. Primary industries include banking, iron and steel production, construction, information technology, telecommunications, and transportation. Limited agricultural activity consists of cultivating grapes, grains, potatoes, and fruit, and raising livestock. Primary trade partners include Germany, Belgium, and France. Luxembourg experiences some of the lowest rates of corruption worldwide. However, financial scandals in the mid-2010s regarding tax avoidance schemes by multinational corporations and individuals with assets based in Luxembourg have posed corruption concerns.

Faiths

Christian: 70.4%

Muslim: 1.7%

Other: 0.5%

None: 27.4%

Christians

Denominations – Members – Congregations

Catholic – 330,000

Orthodox – 3,000

Evangelicals – 2,554

Anglicans – 2,500

Jehovah's Witnesses – 2,141 – 33

Latter-day Saints – 454 – 1

Seventh Day Adventists – 131 – 2

Religion

Approximately 70% of the population is nominally Roman Catholic, which has historically been the dominant faith of Luxembourg. However, many are only nominally affiliated with religious groups. In 2005, only 44% of citizens reported a belief in God.[2]The largest Protestant groups include Lutherans and Calvinists. Many Protestant denominations have a small presence. There are approximately 10,000 Protestants. There are approximately 10,000 Muslims, 3,000 Orthodox Christians, 2,500 Anglicans, and 1,500 Jews.[3]

Religious Freedom

The constitution protects religious freedom, which is upheld by the government. There is no state religion. Several religious groups receive government funding, most prominently the Catholic Church. There are six recognized religious communities that receive government financial support and have formally approved conventions: the Roman Catholic Church, Orthodox Christians, Anglicans, the Reformed Protestant Church of Luxembourg and the Protestant Church of Luxembourg as one community, Jews, and Muslims. There have been no significant reports of the religious freedom of others being infringed by the government or society.[4]

Largest Cities

Urban: 91% (2018)

Luxembourg, **Esch-sur-Alzette, Differdange, Dudelange, Pétange, Sanem, Hesperange, Bettembourg, Schifflange, Käerjeng.**

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

One of the ten largest cities has a Church congregation. Forty-seven percent (47%) of the national population resides in the ten largest cities.

Church History

The Church first assigned missionaries to Luxembourg in 1963 and created the first branch in 1965. Prior to the discontinuation of the branch in 1971, church attendance typically consisted of six missionaries and one to three members.[5] The branch appeared to be reestablished in the 1980s. Over 1,000 attended a nine-day exhibit about the Church organized by local members and missionaries entitled "The Origin of Man" in 1989.[6] After 2000, the Europe West Area administered Luxembourg, which was consolidated with the Europe Central Area to create in the Europe Area in the late 2000s. The Belgium Brussels Mission included Luxembourg until its consolidation with the Netherlands Amsterdam Mission in 2002. Luxembourg was transferred to the Switzerland Geneva Mission in the 2000s. Luxembourg has pertained for the Nancy France Stake for

many years. Luxembourg is currently assigned to the France Paris Mission.

Membership Growth

Church Membership: 454 (2017)

Latter-day Saints numbered around one hundred for much of the 1990s. In 2000, there were 162 members. Membership nearly doubled in the 2000s, reaching 194 in 2003, 252 in 2005, and 290 in 2008. Only one year during this period experienced membership decline (2001). Annual membership growth rates ranged from –4% to 19% in the 2000s. Membership has generally increased by twenty per year, largely due to the immigration of Latter-day Saints, as few convert baptisms occur. In the 2010s, the Church experienced slow membership growth. Church membership increased to 312 in 2011, 405 in 2014, and 454 in 2017. Annual membership growth rates generally ranged from 5-8% in the 2010s. Portuguese immigrants appear to account for a sizeable portion of Latter-day Saints in Luxembourg.

In 2017, one in 1,309 was a Latter-day Saint.

Congregational Growth

Wards: 1 Branches: 0 (March 2019)

The Luxembourg Branch became one of four branches in the Metz France District, which was organized in 1994.[7] Luxembourg joined the Nancy France Stake in the early 2000s, and in 2007 the Luxembourg Branch became a ward.

Activity and Retention

Fourteen were enrolled in seminary or institute during the 2008–2009 school year. Returned missionaries reported twenty active members in the mid-2000s, and 60-100 active members in the mid-2010s. Nationwide active members is estimated at one hundred, or 22% of total church membership.

Language Materials

Languages with LDS Scripture: French, German, Portuguese, Italian.

All Latter-day Saint scriptures, most church materials, and monthly issues of the Liahona magazine are translated into French, German, Portuguese and Italian. Most immigrant groups have church materials in their native or second languages.

Meetinghouses

Sunday meetings were held at the Hotel Kons in the 1960s and early 1970s.[8] In 2010, Church meetings were held in northern Luxembourg City. In early 2019, the Luxembourg Ward met in a building out the outskirts of Luxembourg City in Strassen.

Humanitarian and Development Work

There have been no large-scale humanitarian and development projects in Luxembourg due to a lack of natural disasters and high standards of living. Service activities are limited to weekly service hour assignments by full-time missionaries and activities headed by local members.

Opportunities, Challenges, and Prospects

Religious Freedom

Latter-day Saints face no religious freedom restrictions. Foreign missionaries regularly serve in Luxembourg and proselyte openly.

Cultural Issues

Secularism is the greatest cultural barrier, as most are unreceptive to the Latter-day Saint gospel message and have not developed religious habits or routines. Traditional adherence of most Luxembourgers to the Catholic Church can create challenges for some to join the Church. Mission outreach will need to accommodate those without a belief in God in order to reach the majority of the population. Heavy alcohol and tobacco use creates additional challenges.

National Outreach

One-quarter of the national population resides in Luxembourg City, the only location with a mission outreach center. The two unreached administrative districts (Diekirch and Grevenmacher) account for one-quarter of the national population and have had little or no past mission outreach.

Distance from mission headquarters, a small secular population, limited numbers of full-time missionaries, and few convert baptisms have reduced mission outreach resources allocated to Luxembourg by mission leaders. Prospects appear poor for greater mission outreach with full-time missionaries. Increasing local Latter-day Saint involvement in member-missionary efforts may help increase national outreach without additional full-time missionaries, particularly in the suburbs of Luxembourg City and in unreached areas in Diekrich and Grevenmacher.

Member Activity and Convert Retention

Few convert baptisms occur in Luxembourg, and convert retention rates appear modest. The number of active members has been large enough to staff the needed administrative callings required for a ward to function since 2007. There remain an insufficient number of active members to organize additional congregations.

Ethnic Issues and Integration

The large number of foreign Latter-day Saints creates assimilation challenges with Luxembourger members due to cultural and language differences. However, the large influx of immigrants in recent years is a demographic issue that natives encounter daily and is unlikely to manifest conflict at church. There appear to be no major challenges with differing ethnic groups attending the same congregation at present.

Language Issues

The large number of nonnative members communicate and work with local members in French, German, or occasionally English. Greater growth in active membership may lead to the creation of a Portuguese-speaking congregation. There are no Church materials translated into Luxembourgish, which has few Christian materials, likely due to the lack of monolingual speakers and few total speakers worldwide. Competency of most in French or German reduces the need for Luxembourgish Latter-day Saint materials.

Missionary Service

Few Luxembourgers have served full-time missions, and Luxembourg depends on foreign full-time missionaries to staff its missionary force. At least four full-time missionaries were assigned in 2010. Emphasis on institute and seminary attendance may help increase the number of local full-time missionaries and returned missionaries over time.

Leadership

The small Latter-day Saint leadership base continues to meet the requirements for a ward to operate. Foreign members hold many of the callings in the ward, especially Portuguese immigrants. The creation of additional congregations may not have occurred due to reliance of native membership on foreigners to fill administrative callings.

Temple

Luxembourg is assigned to The Hague Netherlands Temple district. Temple trips occur regularly. There are no likely prospects of a temple significantly closer to Luxembourg due to few Latter-day Saints in bordering areas and low church growth rates in the region.

Comparative Growth

In the 2000s, Luxembourg experienced the most rapid membership growth rate in Western Europe, primarily due to immigration.

Luxembourg possesses one of the largest Latter-day Saint populations for European nations with fewer than one million inhabitants. The percentage of Latter-day Saints in the population compares to neighboring Belgium and France.

Missionary-oriented Christian denominations report slow growth and no significant breakthroughs reaching the native population. Immigrants constitute a large portion of the membership of many non-Catholic churches. A large number of Seventh-Day Adventists are Portuguese immigrants. Jehovah's Witnesses appear to be one of the few Christian groups to attract a large number of natives and develop self-sustaining leadership staffed by Luxembourgers. However, Witnesses reported minimal increases in active membership and no increase in the number of congregations between 2010 and 2018.

Future Prospects

Prospects for future church growth appear mediocre due to low receptivity among the indigenous population, reliance on immigrant convert baptisms or new move-ins to increase church membership, lack of native full-time missionaries, distance from mission headquarters, and limited missionary resources dedicated to Europe. Member-missionary activity concentrated among the associates and families of local members may help reverse the many decades of low convert baptism rates. Original and creative methods for finding investigators and fostering interest in the Church among the native population are needed. The establishment of language-specific congregations, especially for Portuguese, appears likely once the number of active members is adequate to meet leadership needs.

[1] "Background Note: Luxembourg," Bureau of European and Eurasian Affairs, 24 September 2010. http://www.state.gov/r/pa/ei/bgn/3182.htm

[2] "Religion in Luxembourg," Wikipedia.org, retrieved 9 October 2010. http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Religion_in_Luxembourg

[3] "Luxembourg," International Religious Freedom Report for 2017. Accessed 28 March 2019. https://www.state.gov/j/drl/rls/irf/religiousfreedom/index.htm?year=2017&dlid=280930#wrapper

[4] "Luxembourg," International Religious Freedom Report for 2017. Accessed 28 March 2019. https://www.state.gov/j/drl/rls/irf/religiousfreedom/index.htm?year=2017&dlid=280930#wrapper http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/irf/2009/127322.htm

[5] "From around the world," LDS Church News, 9 July 1994. http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/25332/From-around-the-world.html

[6] "Luxembourg," Country Profile, retrieved 9 October 2010. http://beta-newsroom.lds.org/country/luxembourg

[7] "Luxembourg," Country Profile, retrieved 9 October 2010. http://beta-newsroom.lds.org/country/luxembourg

[8] "Luxembourg," Country Profile, retrieved 9 October 2010. http://beta-newsroom.lds.org/country/luxembourg