



# 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.



## Guinea

Population: 11.47 millions (#76 out of countries)

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### Geography

**Area:** 245,857 square km. Guinea is located in West Africa and borders Mali, Cote d'Ivoire, Liberia, Sierra Leone, Guinea-Bissau, and Senegal. Plains and hills cover most areas, with some mountains and highlands in the central and southeast interior. Hot, humid weather conditions typically occur year round with a rainy season from June to September and a dry season from December to May. The Niger River and several small rivers have their headwaters in mountainous areas. Dust and haze from Harmattan is a natural hazard which at times reduces visibility and air quality. Environmental issues include deforestation, lack of fresh water, desertification, soil erosion, and overfishing. Guinea is administratively divided into 33 prefectures and one special zone.

**Population:** 10,057,975 (July 2009)

**Annual Growth Rate:** 2.572% (2009)

**Fertility Rate:** 5.2 children born per woman (2009)

**Life Expectancy:** male 55.63, female 58.6 (2009)

### Peoples

Fulani: 40%

Malinke: 30%

Soussou: 20%

Other: 10%

The Fulani, also known as Fula or Peuhl, are a Western Bantoid ethnic group and primarily populate central and northern areas whereas the Malinke are a Mande ethnic group and reside in eastern and southeastern areas. Coastal areas are home to the

Soussou, also a Mande ethnic group. Other ethnic groups include the Kissi in the Guinea Highlands and non-Guinean residents primarily concentrated in Conakry.

**Languages:** Pular (25%), Maninkakan (21%), Susu (9%), Kissi (3%), Kpelle (3%), Toma (1%), other or unknown (40%). French is the official language and there are eight recognized regional languages. 34 native languages are spoken. Indigenous languages with over one million native speakers include Pular (2.55 million) and Maninka dialects (2.09 million).

**Literacy:** 29.5% (2003)

## History

Neighboring powerful African kingdoms occupied portions of Guinea since AD 1000 including the Ghana, Mali, and Songhai Empires. The Fulani settled central Guinea in the 18th century and created an Islamic kingdom. Primarily the French colonized Guinea prior to formal integration into French West Africa around 1900. Guinea won independence from France in 1958. The military overthrew the government in 1984 establishing the beginning of General Lansana Conte's rule. Democratic elections were first held in 1993 and subsequent elections have continued, although many have questioned the results. Following Conte's death in 2008, Camara - a military leader - seized control of the government and suspended the constitution. More than 150 died when presidential guards opened fire on protesters opposing these changes in 2009. Camara fled the country in December 2009 following a failed assassination attempt which left him wounded. A transitional government currently manages the country.

## Culture

Guinea possesses a strong musical heritage. Islam highly influences daily living for the Fulani. Women have low literacy rates. Polygamy is widely practiced, especially in rural areas. Skilled workers tend to form the highest social class.<sup>[1]</sup> Alcohol and tobacco consumption rates are low.

## Economy

**GDP per capita:** \$1,000 (2009) [2.16% of US]

**Human Development Index:** 0.456

**Corruption Index:** 1.8

Abundant natural resources including bauxite, gold, and diamonds have been little extracted due to political instability and an underdeveloped infrastructure. Foreign investment has waned due to the recent coup and corruption. Inadequate electricity supply has also limited economic growth. In 2006, 47% of Guineans lived below the poverty line. Industry and services employ 24% of the workforce. Agriculture employs 76% of the workforce and accounts for 24% of the GDP. Primary agricultural products include rice, coffee, fruit, and potatoes. Mining is the largest industry and specifically extracts rich bauxite, gold, diamond, and alumina depositions. Primary trade partners include India, China, Spain, and France. Guinea ranks among the most corrupt nations in the world. Corruption is present in all aspects of society and continues to stunt economic growth and development. Little has been done to address these issues.

## Faiths

Muslim: 85%

Christian: 8%

Indigenous beliefs: 7%

## Christians

### Denominations Members Congregations

Catholic 250,000

Seventh Day Adventists 1,293 2

Jehovah's Witnesses 651 18

Latter-Day Saints less than 50

## Religion

The majority of Guineans are Muslim. Christians consist of Catholics, Anglicans, Baptists, Seventh Day Adventists, Jehovah's Witnesses, and some Evangelicals. Christians primarily populate Conakry, other large cities, and southern and eastern areas but remain a minority. Islam is strongly connected to everyday life in the Fouta Djallon region as Islam is highly integrated into Pehel (Fulani) culture. Some foreigners adhere to other religions but are small in number. Syncretism of traditional beliefs into Christianity and Islam is common. Refugees from some neighboring nations have greater numbers of Christians and followers of indigenous religions.<sup>[2]</sup>

## Religious Freedom

### Persecution Index:

The constitution protects religious freedom which is typically upheld by the government. In 2008, the constitution was suspended and has not been reinstated. The government has taken steps to ensure cooperation between religious groups. Christian and Muslim religious holidays are national holidays. Unregistered religious groups may operate but do not receive tax exemption status and can face expulsion but no cases have been recently reported. All religious groups which applied for government recognition were granted this status. There are some instances of social persecution of individuals who convert from Islam to Christianity.<sup>[3]</sup>

## Largest Cities

Urban: 34%

**Camayenne, Conakry, Nzérékoré, Kindia, Kankan, Kissidougou, Labé, Siguiri, Macenta, Mamou.**

Cities listed in bold have no LDS congregation

None of the 10 largest cities have an LDS congregation. 42% of the national population lives in the 10 largest cities.

## LDS History

There has never been a reported Church presence in Guinea. Guinea has been assigned to the Africa West Area for over a decade but has never been assigned to a mission.

## Membership Growth

**LDS Membership:** less than 50 (2009)

Some members may live in Guinea which joined the Church elsewhere and returned home. Some foreign members may live temporarily in Guinea for business or employment.

## Congregational Growth

**Branches: 0**

There are no reported LDS congregations.

## Activity and Retention

Member activity is limited to any converts who returned to Guinea and continue to follow Church principles.

## **Language Materials**

### **Languages with LDS Scripture:** French

All LDS scripture and most church materials are available in French. Gospel Principles and The Prophet Joseph Smith's Testimony are translated in Pular, Maninka, and Kpelle.

## **Meetinghouses**

There are no LDS meetinghouses. Any church activity is limited to members' homes.

## **Health and Safety**

HIV/AIDS infects 1.6% of the adult population. . Poor sanitation conditions and endemic tropical diseases pose health concerns.

## **Humanitarian and Development Work**

In 2010, the Church had not conducted humanitarian or development work in Guinea.

## **Opportunities, Challenges and Prospects**

### **Religious Freedom**

The Church does not face any legal obstacles to obtaining government recognition. The lack of Church members living in Guinea and limited mission outreach resources in West Africa has likely prevented the establishment of the Church. Political instability and the high percentage of Muslims may be additional factors which have contributed to the lack of a Church presence.

### **Cultural Issues**

Literacy rates less than 30% create many challenges to establishing the Church. Only 18% of women are literate. Polygamy is widely practiced in rural areas. Those participating in a polygamous marriage must end these relations in divorce and be interviewed by a member of the mission presidency in order to be baptized. Low substance abuse rates are a positive cultural characteristic which may facilitate greater church growth in the future. The Fulani appear the most challenging group to reach due to strong cultural connections to Islam.

### **National Outreach**

No official missionary work occurs in Guinea. Outreach will most likely begin in Conakry due to its large population, easy accessibility from outside the country, greater use of French, and potential non-Guinean members who may reside in the country for employment which can help in leadership and church administration. Initial mission outreach in the Conakry metropolitan area may reach up to 20% of the national population.

Outreach elsewhere in Guinea will likely take many years following a formal Church establishment. Peoples which have been most receptive to Christianity reside along coastal areas and in the southeastern interior. Many of the ethnic groups present in the interior may also be found in interior Sierra Leone and Liberia, but have not received LDS mission outreach in these nations.

Missionary work will likely be under the direction of a nearby mission in West Africa, which will have to share limited mission resources with other nations within the mission's jurisdiction. This may result in a slower growth in mission outreach in Guinea, particularly if the amount of resources allocated to the mission is not increased.

## **Member Activity and Convert Retention**

Member activity remains limited to any members who joined the Church elsewhere and returned to Guinea or who are temporarily living in the country for employment. Active members appear too small in numbers to justify the creation of a congregation without the placement or regular visits of full-time missionaries to provide mentoring. Formal introduction of the Church will hinge on gathering any active members and the establishment of a congregation.

## **Ethnic Issues and Integration**

The Church will likely face ethnic issues and integration challenges early in its operation in Guinea due to the ethnic diversity in Conakry. The large array of ethnic groups from around the country provides opportunities for proselytism among many of Guinea's most prominent ethnic groups. Ethnic tensions are not as severe as in other African nations, and challenges the Church may face will likely be based on cultural, religious, and linguistic differences.

## **Language Issues**

Unlike many African nations without a Church presence, some Church materials are translated in indigenous languages which are spoken by nearly half the population. These materials provide a valuable resource for future mission outreach. The Church has very few materials translated in some of the most widely spoken indigenous languages.

## **Leadership**

Any Guineans baptized abroad who return to their home country will be crucial for filling leadership positions. Development of leadership among prospective converts in Guinea will likely take time and training.

## **Temple**

Any members in Guinea likely attend the Accra Ghana Temple. There are no organized temple trips.

## **Comparative Growth**

There are no nations with an official Church presence in continental West Africa west of Sierra Leone. Neighboring Sierra Leone possesses some similarities with Guinea such as a predominantly Muslim population. Sierra Leone has seen strong membership growth, but poor to modest convert retention over the past two decades.

Christians report little growth compared to many other African nations. Growth among Adventists and Jehovah's Witnesses has been slow and steady.

## **Future Prospects**

Continued political instability, few members, a Muslim-majority population, and limited mission resources have all played a role in the lack of a Church presence in Guinea. Close proximity to Sierra Leone and a visible Christian community in Conakry increase the likelihood of future mission outreach. More members relocating to Guinea, interest among Guineans in the Church, and an improved political situation will make a Church presence more likely.

[1] "Guinea," Countries and Their Cultures, retrieved 17 May 2010. <http://www.everyculture.com/Ge-It/Guinea.html>

[2] "Guinea," International Religious Freedom Report 2009, 26 October 2009. <http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/irf/2009/127236.htm>

[3] "Guinea," International Religious Freedom Report 2009, 26 October 2009. <http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/irf/2009/127236.htm>