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.

Guadeloupe

Population: 0.41 millions (#178 out of countries)

By David Stewart and Matt Martinich

Geography

Area: 1,628 square km. Located in the Lesser Antilles of the Caribbean, Guadeloupe is an overseas region of France between Antigua and Barbuda and Dominica that borders the Caribbean Sea and North Atlantic Ocean. In addition to the main island of Guadeloupe, Marie-Galante, La Desirade, and Les Saintes are also part of the Guadeloupe Region. Guadeloupe Island consists of two islands connected by a narrow isthmus. Rugged mountainous terrain occupies the western half (Basse-Terre), whereas low-laying terrain occupies the eastern half (Grande-Terre). Plains and hilly terrain cover the remaining small islands. Subtropical conditions occur year round with a rainy season from June to October. Hurricanes, flooding, and volcanoes are natural hazards. Environmental issues include deforestation and pollution. Guadeloupe is divided into two administrative arrondissements.

Peoples

Black/mulatto: 71%

East Indian: 15%

White: 9%

Lebanese/Syrian: 2%

Other: 3%

Over two-thirds of the population are descendants of African slaves brought to the islands in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. East Indians arrived as indentured servants primarily in the nineteenth century. Most whites are from metropolitan France.

Population: 394,110 (January 2016)

Annual Growth Rate: -0.18% (2016)

Fertility Rate: 1.9 children born per woman (2006)

Life Expectancy: 75.91 male, 82.37 female (2006)

Languages: Guadeloupean Creole French [Martiniquan Creole French] (95%), Haitian Creole (3.0%), French (1.9%), other (0.1%). French is the official language and commonly spoken. Nearly the entire population speaks Guadeloupean Creole French.

Literacy: 100% (2015)

History

Carib Amerindians populated Guadeloupe prior to European discovery of the island by Christopher Columbus in 1493. The French captured the island in the seventeenth century and began cultivating sugarcane. British forces annexed Guadeloupe multiple times in the eighteenth century, but France regained control through the Treaty of Paris in 1763. Political turmoil erupted following the French Revolution between monarchists desiring independence and republicans opting to remain part of the French Republic, resulting in civil disorder during the 1790s. Slave revolts occurred following the brief independence of Guadeloupe in the 1790s during which the upper class fled and sought British assistance in quashing the rebellion. Jurisdiction over Guadeloupe passed to Sweden and Great Britain until French control was reestablished in 1814. Slavery ended in the early nineteenth century. A massive cholera outbreak killed nearly 10% of the population in the 1860s. Guadeloupe became an overseas department of France in 1946 and Guadeloupe also administered Saint-Barthelemy and Saint-Martin until 2007. In 2009, a massive strike among lower-paid workers lasted over a month as protesters successfully demanded higher wages. The strike adversely affected the island's important tourist industry.[1]

Culture

The Catholic Church and French culture are the dominant influences on society. Literature and music are proud cultural legacies in Guadeloupe, and several locals have gained international recognition for their accomplishments. Soccer is the most popular sport. Cuisine consists of indigenous, French, East Indian, and African dishes and includes fish, fruit, meat, curry, beans, and okra. East Indians often retain many elements of Hinduism and its accompanying beliefs and practices. Increasing wealth disparities have resulted in socioeconomic class segregation and mounting tension between differing social classes.[2]

Economy

GDP per capita: $25,479 (2010) [49.5% of U.S.]

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

Corruption Index: 72 (for France) (2017)

European tourism drives the economy. There is some limited agricultural activity and light industry, including sugar, rum, bananas, and vegetable crops. Hurricanes pose a recurrent challenge for economic growth. Services account for two-thirds of the labor force and generate two-thirds of the GDP. Agriculture and industry account for the remaining one-third of the labor force and GDP. Metropolitan France is the primary trade partner. Corruption is perceived at lower levels than in most Caribbean islands.

Faiths

Christian: 95.9%

Other: 4.1%

Christians

Denominations – Members – Congregations

Catholic – 336,951

Evangelicals – 20,273

Seventh Day Adventists – 12,619 – 75

Jehovah's Witnesses – 8,332 – 121

Latter-day Saints – 512 – 3

Religion

Eighty-five percent (85%) of the population is Catholic, whereas approximately 6% is Protestant. Jehovah's Witnesses constitute 2% of the population. The remainder of the population is primarily Hindu.

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.[3]

Largest Cities

Urban: 95%

Les Abymes, **Baie-Mahault**, **Le Gosier, Sainte-Anne, Petit-Bourg, Le Moule, Sainte-Rose, Capesterre-Belle-Eau, Morne-à-l'Eau,** Lamentin.

Cities in **bold** do not have congregations of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

Three of the ten most populous cities have an official Church congregation. Sixty-five percent (65%) of the population resides in the ten largest cities.

Church History

The first known Latter-day Saints to reside on Guadeloupe arrived in the early 1980s. The Guadeloupe Branch was organized in 1982 but was discontinued a few months later as a result of the apostasy of a member of the Church. French-speaking missionaries serving in Europe were assigned in 1984 to Guadeloupe under the West Indies Mission. The Grande-Terre Branch was organized that same year.[4] Seminary and institute began in 1993. The West Indies Mission administered Guadeloupe until reassigned to the newly organized Barbados Bridgetown Mission in 2015. Elder Quentin L. Cook visited Guadeloupe in 2017.[5]

Membership Growth

Church Membership: 512 (2017)

There were fewer than one hundred Latter-day Saints in 1993. By 1997, there were one hundred members. Membership reached 193 by year-end 2000.

Membership growth rates fluctuated from stagnation to moderate rates of growth in the 2000s. There were 251 members in 2002, 259 in 2004, 304 in 2006, and 383 in 2008. Annual membership growth rates ranged from a high of 20% in 2001 to a low of –1.9% in 2003, but generally ranged from 7%–10% for most years in the 2000s. Stagnant or very slow membership growth occurred in the 2010s. Church membership totaled 442 in 2009, 470 in 2012, and 507 in 2015.

In 2017, one in 770 was a Latter-day Saint.

Congregational Growth

Wards: 0 Branches: 3 Groups: 1? (2018)

One branch operated until the late 1990s. In 2000, there were two branches. The number of branches increased to three in 2002, five in 2005, and seven in 2008. Branches operating in 2008 and 2009 included the Abymes, Basse-Terre 1st, Basse-Terre 2nd, Capesterre, Gosier, Lamentin, and Moule Branches. In 2010, the number of branches declined to four as the Basse-Terre 2nd, Capesterre, and Moule Branches were discontinued. In 2011, the Gosier Branch was closed. Some discontinued branches may continue to meet as dependent branches or groups. For example, a member group operated in Capesterre-Belle-Eau as of the mid-2010s. However, it was unclear whether the group continued to operate in the late 2010s. The Basse-Terre Guadeloupe District was organized in 2002 and later renamed the Guadeloupe District. In early 2019, the district included five branches: three in Guadeloupe, one in French Guiana, and one in Martinique.

Activity and Retention

The average number of members per congregation decreased from ninety-seven in 2000 to sixty-three in 2009. However, the average branch had 171 members in 2017. Thirty-six were enrolled in seminary and institute during the 2009–2010 school year. One of the branches had sixty-five active members in the early 2000s. In approximately 2010, the number of active members by branch was as follows: Les Abymes (60), Lamentin (55), Le Gosier (40), and Le Moule (30). The Gosier Branch had approximately twenty-five active members in early 2011. In the mid-2010s, there were eighty active members in the Lamentin Branch and ten active members in the group in Capesterre-Belle-Eau. The Les Abymes Branch had seventy-five active members in early 2017. Nationwide active membership appears no greater than 200 or 39% of total church membership.

Language Materials

Languages with Latter-day Saint Scripture: French, Haitian Creole, English.

All Latter-day Saint scriptures and most church materials are available in French and Haitian Creole. The Liahona magazine has monthly issues in French and one or two issues a year in Haitian Creole.

Meetinghouses

The first church-built meetinghouse was completed in 1998[6] and houses the Abymes Branch. Other congregations meet in rented facilities.

Humanitarian and Development Work

Only one official community project has been conducted by the Church since 1985.[7] However, some service 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 serve regularly on Guadeloupe.

Cultural Issues

Most have a Catholic background, and many have been receptive to missionary-minded denominations, such as Jehovah's Witnesses and Seventh-Day Adventists. Increasing wealth and secular influence from France decrease receptivity to Latter-day Saint mission outreach among the Catholic majority. 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

In early 2019, 21% of the population resided in a city with an official branch. However, meetinghouses are within close proximity to Baie-Mahault and Pointe-à-Pitre, and a member group has historically functioned in Capesterre-Belle-Eau. As a result, the

Church appears to provide regular outreach to as much as 32.5% of the population. Prior to the closure of branches in Le Gosier and Moule, branches extended outreach to an additional 12.5% of the population. Full-time missionaries likely continue to visit Le Gosier and Moule and also perform some limited outreach in additional cities, perhaps increasing the percentage of the population reached by Latter-day Saints to as high as 50%.

Notwithstanding that Guadeloupe's population surpasses all other islands in the Lesser Antilles with the exception of Trinidad, there has never been a Latter-day Saint mission that has operated on the island. The West Indies Mission administered approximately 4.2 million people in the Guyanas and several islands in the Lesser Antilles in early 2011, resulting in low interaction with mission leadership and limited missionary resources dedicated to Guadeloupe. In early 2019, the Barbados Bridgetown Mission administered to approximately one dozen nations and dependencies/territories with a combined population of 1.8 million. The number of missionaries assigned to Guadeloupe is commensurate with the size of the population and the current level of receptivity exhibited by the population, as Guadeloupe receives greater numbers of full-time missionaries than most other island in the Lesser Antilles with the historical exception of Trinidad. Expansion of mission outreach led by local members will be required to reduce the reliance on foreign full-time missionaries and to form additional self-sustaining congregations. The assignment of larger numbers of full-time missionaries to Guadeloupe may reduce local member involvement in missionary work, as receptivity has been modest, and the size of church membership remains small.

The Church does not perform any Guadeloupe-directed Internet outreach, but a large number of French-language websites and church materials are available, including an online edition of the Latter-day Saint 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

Guadeloupe exhibited modest to moderate levels of convert retention during the 2000s as the number of congregations doubled, but several newly created congregations were discontinued by the close of the decade. A lack of active members and few priesthood leaders appear to be the primary reasons for the consolidation of four branches in the early 2010s. Despite these challenges, member activity rates appear moderate. Seminary and institute enrollment has experienced fluctuating numbers of students and experienced a slight increase in the late 2000s.

Full-time missionaries report that distance to Church meetinghouses has presented challenges for getting members and investigators to church. Relocating rented meetinghouse locations closer to areas with concentrated numbers of Latter-day Saints may improve member activity rates and reduce the dependence of some members on full-time missionaries and other members with cars for transportation to church. However, the Church in Guadeloupe has struggled to effective organize self-sustaining congregations in additional cities.

Ethnic Issues and Integration

Cultural and socioeconomic differences challenge efforts to proselyte and integrate nonblacks into predominantly black and mulatto congregations. Ethnic integration issues appear most pronounced among East Indians, Lebanese, and Syrians as many have a non-Catholic or non-Christian background and occupy differing socioeconomic classes than blacks and mulattos. French-speaking minorities appear the most capable of successful integration with the black majority at church. Full-time missionaries have not reported any major challenges integrating members from differing ethnic backgrounds into the same congregations, but this appears primarily due to the limited size of Church membership.

Language Issues

Widespread use of French simplifies missionary approaches. Nearly the entire population speaks French as a first or second language. The number of non-French speakers remains too small to merit specific language outreach with the limited missionary resources dedicated to the region. French Creole is widely spoken on Guadeloupe and Martinique with a total of 850,000 speakers worldwide. The need for materials translated into Guadeloupean French Creole is low due to fluency in standard French and the informal usage of French Creole.

Missionary Service

In mid-2009, there were fourteen elders and one senior couple assigned to Guadeloupe. However, only eight young missionaries appeared to be assigned to Guadeloupe by 2017. Few local members have served full-time missions. Increasing the number of local members who serve missions will be essential toward increasing the number of active priesthood holders. Emphasis on missionary preparation through seminary and institute attendance may increase the number of youth that serve missions.

Leadership

The Church in Guadeloupe benefits from a strong, albeit small, body of active priesthood holders capable of serving in

leadership and administrative duties. Local leaders staffed the Basseterre Guadeloupe District and all four branches in early 2011; notwithstanding, there were fewer than 500 total members on the island. The closure of four branches in 2010 and 2011 may have resulted from these congregations relying on full-time missionaries to staff leadership positions. Only one Guadeloupe native has served in an international church leadership position. In 2009, Claude Remy Gamiette from Lamentin was called to preside over the West Indies Mission.[8] In 2013, Brother Gamiette was called as an Area Seventy.[9] Limited interaction from mission leaders and a commensurate number of full-time missionaries assigned to Guadeloupe's mission needs appear to have increased self-sufficiency of local leadership over time.

Temple

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

Comparative Growth

Notwithstanding Guadeloupe possessing one of the lowest percentages of Latter-day Saints in the general population among Caribbean islands, congregational growth rates outpaced most islands in the region during the 2000s. Guadeloupe had the fewest Latter-day Saints with as many congregations in the Caribbean and was the only Caribbean country in 2010 with fewer than 550 members and a district. Membership growth rates and convert retention rates are comparable for the region, whereas member activity rates are slightly higher than most countries. The size and maturity of local leadership in Guadeloupe has outpaced most the Caribbean.

Outreach-oriented Christians have experienced strong church growth on Guadeloupe for decades. Seventh-Day Adventists rank among the largest non-Catholic groups and report slow, consistent membership and congregational growth. The percentage of active Jehovah's Witnesses in the population is among the highest worldwide at approximately 2%. Witnesses generally baptize over 200 new converts a year. However, Witnesses reported a decrease of approximately 15 congregations and a slight decrease of a couple hundred active members between 2010 and 2018. Evangelicals also report widespread church growth. Unlike Latter-day Saints, these groups have relied on local members to head and staff proselytism efforts and began outreach in Guadeloupe often several decades before The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

Future Prospects

Moderate-to-low levels of receptivity, commensurate congregational and membership growth during the 2000s, an adequately-sized missionary force to service the population, and developed local leadership in many areas suggest a more positive outlook for future growth in the coming years compared to other islands in the Lesser Antilles with strong ties to Western Europe. The late establishment of the Church on Guadeloupe resulted in Latter-day Saints missing the window of opportunity in which the population was most receptive to missionary outreach. The closure of four congregations in the early 2010s may discourage the creation of more member groups or branches until established branches become large enough to divide. Greater numbers of local members serving full-time missions, the establishment of additional congregations, and efficiently utilizing limited missionary resources will be necessary to continue church growth into the 2020s and maintain and increase current levels of self-sufficiency.

[1] "Guadeloupe," Wikipedia.org, retrieved 19 February 2011. http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Guadeloupe

[2] "Guadeloupe," Countries and Their Cultures, retrieved 21 February 2011. http://www.everyculture.com/Ge-It/Guadeloupe.html

[3] "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

[4] "Guadeloupe," Country Profile, 8 October 2010. http://newsroom.lds.org/country/guadeloupe

[5] Weaver, Sarah Jane. "Elder Cook meets with president of Dominican Republic, speaks at religious freedom symposium during visit to Caribbean island nations," LDS Church News. 7 December 2017. https://www.thechurchnews.com/archive/2017-12-07/elder-cook-meets-with-president-of-dominican-republic-speaks-at-religious-fre

[6] "Guadeloupe," Country Profile, 8 October 2010. http://newsroom.lds.org/country/guadeloupe

[7] "Where We Work," LDS Charities. Accessed 25 February 2019. https://www.ldscharities.org/where-we-work

[8] "New mission presidents," LDS Church News, 7 February 2009. http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/56592/New-mission-presidents.html

[9] "Newly called to Quorums of the Seventy," LDS Church News. 23 April 2013. https://www.thechurchnews.com/archive/2013-04-27/newly-called-to-quorums-of-the-seventy-39497