

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.



Ecuador

Population: 15.65 millions (#68 out of countries)

By David Stewart and Matt Martinich

Geography

Area: 283,561 square km. Located on the Equator in northwestern South America, Ecuador borders Colombia, Peru, and the Pacific Ocean. The Galapagos Islands consists of 18 main islands offshore of the South American mainland and are under Ecuadoran administration. Dramatic shifts in terrain and climate characterize Ecuador proper. The Amazon Basin occupies the eastern interior and comprises tropical rainforest. Climate is modified by high elevation in the highlands of the Andes Mountain range, which dominates central areas, stretching north to south. Cotopaxi is the highest active volcano in the world, located south of Quito. Temperate and alpine climate occur in highland areas. Pacific coastal areas include of forest and mangroves and experience a tropical climate. Earthquakes, landslides, volcanoes, floods, and droughts are natural hazards. Environmental issues include deforestation, soil erosion, pollution, and the degradation of interior tropical rainforest and Galapagos Islands ecosystems. Ecuador is divided into 24 administrative provinces.

Population: 14,790,608 (July 2010)

Annual Growth Rate: 1.466% (2010)

Fertility Rate: 2.46 children born per woman (2010)

Life Expectancy: 72.58 male, 78.6 female (2010)

Peoples

mestizo (mixed Amerindian and white): 65%

Amerindian: 25%

Spanish/other: 7%

black: 3%

Most Ecuadorans are mestizo. Amerindians constitute one-quarter of the population. Whites and black Africans together account for one-tenth of the population.

Languages: Spanish (89%), Quichua dialects (10%), other Amerindian languages (1%). Languages with over one million speakers include Spanish (13.2 million) and Quichua dialects (1.5 million).

Literacy: 91% (2001)

History

Ancient Amerindian civilizations prospered in modern-day Ecuador prior to the Inca Empire conquering the region. The Spanish invaded in the 1530s and began colonization. Much of the indigenous Amerindian population perished from disease during the first years of Spanish rule while the remainder engaged in forced labor. Ecuador rebelled against Spanish rule in the early nineteenth century and in 1822 drove away Spanish forces and joined the Republic of Gran Colombia. By 1830, Ecuador seceded as an independent nation. Political instability and frequent changes in government administration marked most of the nineteenth century. The Catholic Church played an important role in unifying the country during this period. Many Ecuadorans relocated from the highlands to coastal areas in the late nineteenth century as the cocoa industry grew with worldwide demand. As the profitability of cultivating cocoa declined in the early twentieth century, political instability returned and a military coup occurred in 1925. In the 1940s, Ecuador lost large amounts of territory claimed in the Amazon Basin to Peru. The remainder of the twentieth century was characterized by alternating periods of political stability and instability. A military dictatorship ruled during the 1970s and democratic rule occurred from 1980 to the early 1990s. From the late 1990s to late 2000s, various political rulers vied for power and civil uprisings were common. A new constitution went into effect in 2008. In recent years, the government has focused on improving living conditions and pursuing social justice.[1]

Culture

Contemporary Ecuadoran culture draws heavily upon indigenous and Spanish influences as reflected by most the population identifying as mestizo. The Catholic Church has historically been the dominant socio-religious institution and remains a vibrant traditional faith, but in recent years few attend mass regularly and the Church's role in society has been diminished. Some indigenous groups strongly adhere to their traditional languages and customs. African slaves shipwrecked in the mid-sixteenth century have given rise to Afro-Ecuadorans which have brought some aspects of African culture into the regions where they reside. Ecuador experiences a high degree of regionalism, with some of the greatest differences and rivalry occurring between Guayaquil and Quito. Lunch is the primary meal of the day and common foods include plantains, fish, beans, potatoes, meat, and rice. Music and family occupy important roles in society.[2] Alcohol and cigarette consumption rates are low compared to the worldwide average.

Economy

GDP per capita: $7,600 (2009) [16.4% of US]

Human Development Index: 0.695

Corruption Index: 2.5

The economy has consistently relied on oil export earnings for stabilization and modest levels of growth, resulting in high susceptibility to changes in world oil prices and demand. To respond to economic crisis in 1999 and 2000, the government adopted the US dollar as legal tender in March 2000. Poverty and low standards of living are major issues which frustrate economic development as 35% of Ecuadorans live below the poverty line. The global financial crisis and declining oil prices in the late 2000s have contributed to recession in recent years. Oil, fish, lumber, and hydropower are natural resources. Ecuador has one of the largest proven oil reserves in Latin America. Services employ 70% of the labor force and generate 58% of the GDP whereas industry employs 21% of the population and generates 35% of the GDP. Major industries include oil, food processing, clothing, wood products, and chemicals. Agriculture accounts for less than ten percent of the work force and GDP. Fruit, coffee, cocoa, rice, potatoes, manioc (tapioca), sugarcane, livestock, dairy products, wood, fish, and shrimp are common crops and agricultural goods. Over 25% of imports and exports are trafficked with the United States, making it the primary trade partner. Other important trade partners include Colombia, Peru, and Venezuela.

Ecuador ranks among the most corrupt Latin American countries. Illicit drug operations and insurgents often cross over the Colombian border. Cocaine produced in Colombia and Peru are often trafficked through Ecuador to the United States. Ecuador is highly vulnerable to money laundering and banking associated with illicit drug dealers as Ecuador has adopted the United States dollar since 2000 and has few regulations to safeguard against money laundering. Past presidential administrations have been accused of corruption.

Faiths

Christian: 99%

other: 1%

Christians

Denominations Members Congregations

Catholic 12,572,017

Latter-day Saints 190,498 300

Seventh Day Adventists 74,096 158

Jehovah's Witnesses 67,135 831

Religion

85% of Ecuadorans are nominal Catholics, with 15% regularly practicing their faith. Attendance at mass appears to have increased in recent years due to proselytism initiatives by the Catholic Church. There are over one million non-Catholic Christians and the largest denominations include Southern Baptists, Latter-day Saints, Jehovah's Witnesses, Pentecostals, and Evangelicals. In the Guayaquil area, many mestizos are Protestant. Protestant megachurches continue to experience strong growth.[3]

Religious Freedom

Persecution Index:

The constitution protects religious freedom and prohibits religious discrimination. The government has generally upheld the constitution. Religious groups and all nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) are required to register with the government. To register, a religious group must submit the names and signatures of at least 15 members, have nonprofit status, and possess a charter. All nonprofit organizations must report how any government funding has been spent. The government recognizes major Catholic holidays as national holidays. There have been no recent reports of societal abuse of religious freedom.[4]

Largest Cities

Urban: 66%

Guayaquil, Quito, Cuenca, Portoviejo, Machala, Santo Domingo, Ambato, Manta, Durán, Riobamba, Loja, Ibarra, Quevedo, Milagro, Esmeraldas, Babahoyo.

All 16 cities with over 100,000 inhabitants have an LDS stake or district and multiple congregations. 47% of the national population resides in the 16 largest cities.

LDS History

In October 1965, Elder Spencer W. Kimball dedicated Ecuador for missionary work.[5] That same year, the first full-time missionaries arrived to proselyte.[6] Based in Peru, the Andes Mission initially administered Ecuador until the creation of the Ecuador Mission in 1970, renamed the Ecuador Quito Mission in 1974. Seminary and institute began in 1971. The Church created a second mission based in Guayaquil in 1978. In 1980, the Church published the Book of Mormon translation in Quichua.[7] In 1981, the Church created its first all Amerindian stake in Latin American in Otavalo. International LDS leaders have suggested for decades that the Otavalo are among the descendants of Book of Mormon peoples.[8] LDS apostle Elder M. Russell Ballard toured Ecuador in 1989.[9] Ecuador's third mission, the Ecuador Guayaquil North Mission, was organized in 1991.[10] In early 1992, a missionary training center was completed in Bogota, Colombia, which trained new missionaries from Colombia, Ecuador, and Venezuela destined to serve in one of these nations.[11] Strong leadership and membership growth was apparent in the Guayaquil area in the early 1990s as the Guayaquil Ecuador East Stake divided to create two additional stakes.[12] There have been only a handful of instances in LDS Church history where three stakes were made from one. One stake divided into three stakes again in 1997 in Quevedo.[13] In 1997, local and regional church leaders set a goal for one million temple open house attendees once the Guayaquil Ecuador Temple was completed.[14] In 1997, President Hinckley met with the Ecuadoran president.[15] One Latter-day Saint perished in an earthquake in Portoviejo in 1998.[16] The Guayaquil Ecuador Temple open house received strong media attention as seven television stations, seven newspapers, two magazines,

and a radio station reported the event.[17] Flooding in 2001 and 2002 affected dozens of LDS families and damaged Church several church meetinghouses.[18] Ecuador pertained to the South America North Area prior to 2009 and at present is assigned to the South American Northeast Area.

Membership Growth

LDS Membership: 190,498 (2009)

There were approximately 1,000 Latter-day Saints in 1970, increasing to 3,226 by 1975. Rapid membership growth occurred from the late 1970s to early 1990s as a result of high receptivity to the Church, low baptismal standards for converts, and high member involvement in missionary work through referral-based proselytism. Membership reached 19,000 by 1978 and 43,000 in 1986. By early 1991, there were 70,000 members.[19] By year-end 2000, there were 149,938 members.

Membership growth slowed substantially in the 2000s as membership increased to 161,396 in 2003, 170,736 in 2005, and 185,663 in 2008. Annual membership growth rates during this period ranged from two to three percent as membership generally increased by approximately 5,000 a year. In August 2010, the Ecuador Quito Mission baptized 202 converts. In 2009, one in 78 was nominally LDS.

Congregational Growth

Wards: 224 Branches: 76

There were 96 congregations in 1990, including 46 wards. The number of congregations tripled in the 1990s to 248 in 1993 and 383 in 1997. Congregational decline began in the late 1990s. By year-end 2000, there were 331 congregations (202 wards, 129 branches).

The number of congregations declined during the first half of the 2000s largely due to the consolidation of branches as there were 317 congregations in 2001, 297 in 2002, and 290 in 2003 (192 wards, 98 branches). In 2005, there were 295 congregations and in 2007 there were 293 (212 wards, 81 branches). Slight congregational growth occurred in the late 2000s and in 2010 as by late 2010 there were 300 congregations.

The first two Ecuadoran LDS stakes were created in Guayaquil in 1978. The following year, a third stake was created in Quito. Between 1980 and 1990, the number of stakes increased from four to nine as new stakes were organized in Guayaquil Prosperina (1980), Quito Santa Ana (1981), Portoviejo (1981), Quevedo (1981), Otavalo (1981), and Guayaquil Garcia Moreno (1989). By early 1991, there were ten stakes and eight districts.[20]

Most of Ecuador's stakes were organized between 1991 and 1998 as the number of stakes increased from nine to 33. During this period, there were seven new stakes created in Guayaquil, four in Quito, two in Duran, two in Esmeraldas, and two in Quevedo. Additional stakes were created in Milagro, Machala, Santo Domingo, Esmeraldas, Ambato, Manta, Otavalo Imbabura, and Cuenca. By year-end 2000, there were 32 stakes and 12 districts.

Four new stakes were created in the 2000s, three of which were from districts. New stakes were organized in Libertad (2004), Babahoyo (2005), Guayaquil La Pradera (2007), and Los Chillos (2009). The Church has discontinued three stakes in Ecuador, all of which were consolidated with neighboring stakes in their respective cities. Discontinued stakes include the Esmeraldas Ecuador San Rafael (1999), Quito Ecuador Inaquito (2002), and Quevedo Ecuador San Camilo (2003) Stakes.

By year-end 2010, there were 34 stakes and nine districts. Districts functioning at this time were located in Ibarra (1975), Jipijapa (1988), Loja (1991), Riobamba (1992), Vinces (1992), Santa Rosa (1994), Ventanas (1994), Pedro Carbo (1999), and El Triunfo (2002).

Activity and Retention

4,900 members attended a regional conference held in Quito in 1991, a third of which were Otavalo Amerindians.[21] 10,446 listened to the groundbreaking ceremony for the Guayaquil Ecuador Temple via local radio in the Guayaquil Coliseum in 1996.[22] In 1997, President Hinckley spoke to 15,000 members in two meetings in Guayaquil and 8,350 members in a single meeting in Quito.[23] 108,000 attended the Guayaquil Ecuador Temple open house[24] and 11,700 members attended the dedicatory services.[25] 22,000 members from the Guayaquil area attended a regional conference with President Hinckley the day prior to the dedication of the temple.[26] The average number of members per congregation increased from 453 in 2000 to 641 in 2009. 6,287 were enrolled in seminary and institute during the 2008-2009 school year.

In 2010, approximately 100 members attended the Armenia Ward in the Los Chillos Ecuador Stake. In late 2010, there were 20

active members in the Catamayo Branch. One of the branches in Santa Rosa had 65 attending church in 2010. Branches generally have between 50 and 100 active members whereas wards tend to have 100 to 150 active members. Nationwide active membership is estimated at 40,000, or 20% of total membership.

Language Materials

Languages with LDS Scripture: Spanish, Quichua

All LDS scriptures and most Church materials are available in Spanish, including an LDS edition of the Bible complete with full LDS footnotes, bible dictionary, and topical guide. Quichua translations of LDS materials are limited to the Book of Mormon, a family guide book, Testimony of the Prophet Joseph Smith, one Priesthood manual, one Relief Society manual, and Gospel Principles.

Meetinghouses

There were over 150 LDS meetinghouses in late 2010, nearly all of which were built by the Church.

Humanitarian and Development Work

Latter-day Saints have performed humanitarian outreach since the late 1980s. American LDS physicians collected books for a medical school based in Guayaquil in 1989.[27] Local media reported a local service project in which over 250 members from the Guayaquil area cleaned Guayaquil Park in 1994.[28] In 1997, the Church sponsored a citywide clean-up project in Quevado.[29] 300 attended a provident living and preparedness fair led by the Church in Quito in 2002.[30] Later that year, nineteen full-time missionaries provided over 700 hours of service as translators for American doctors and dentists providing medical care for the poor in rural areas.[31] Brigham Young University has worked for several years completing development projects in rural areas. In 2002, a water system was installed in the remote city of Cuambo[32] and micro-farming projects have occurred. Missionaries provided translating services again in 2004 for medical military personnel.[33]

Opportunities, Challenges and Prospects

Religious Freedom

Latter-day Saints face no governmental or societal restrictions and proselyte, worship, and assemble freely. Foreign full-time missionaries report no major difficulty obtaining visas. Regional rivalries, illicit drug trafficking, and corruption do not appear to have significantly affected LDS mission outreach potential.

Cultural Issues

Low rates of regular religious participation among Catholics has created challenges for LDS missionaries when finding, teaching, baptizing, and reactivating investigators, recent converts, and inactive members with a Catholic background. There has been little success eliciting long-term regular church attendance among Ecuadorans as LDS missionaries have rushed most into baptism with little pre-baptismal and post-baptismal teaching that specifically rectifies low church attendance trends prevalent among the general population. Low alcohol and cigarette consumption rates complement LDS teachings and have likely contributed to past church growth successes. Cultural customs and practices in some regions and among some ethnic groups has improved receptivity to the LDS Church, such as among the Otavalo in northern Ecuador. Some Otavalo customs and traditions are aligned with LDS teachings and have similarities with stories found in the Book of Mormon.[34] The Otavalo Amerindians have demonstrated affinity for the Church and full-time missionaries report that the two stakes in Otavalo are highly self-sufficient. High receptivity in this region was noted as early as 1965 when the Church was first established in Ecuador.[35]

Strong growth among some Protestant churches in recent years indicates that the population is overall receptive to nontraditional Christian denominations and that the cultural characteristics of Ecuador are favorable for church growth as long as mission outreach is tailored to meet local needs. Regional rivalries can create challenges assimilating Ecuadorans from differing regions into the same LDS congregations and communities.

National Outreach

58% of the national population resides in a city of over 15,000 inhabitants with an LDS mission outreach center. Outreach

occurs in some rural areas, which may increase the percentage of Ecuadorans reached by LDS missionary efforts to 65%. 35 of the 42 cities between 20,000 and 100,000 inhabitants have an LDS congregation. 1.6% of the national population resides in unreached cities with populations greater than 20,000 which include Nueva Loja, Huaquillas, La Maná, Naranjal, Pedernales, Calceta, and Macas. Distance from mission headquarters, remote location, and small populations has contributed to the lack of LDS outreach in these cities. Dependent branches or groups may function in some of these locations.

315,000 reside in the two administrative provinces without LDS mission outreach, Morona Santiago and Sucumbios, which account for two percent of the national population. Eight provinces have only one LDS congregation and include Bolivar, Carchi, Cotopaxi, Galapagos, Napo, Orellana, Pastaza, and Zamora-Chinchipe. The provinces with only one LDS mission outreach center account for 8.5% of the national population. Cotopaxi is the province with the largest population with only one LDS congregation (421,900 inhabitants).

During the 2000s, the Church established only a few new mission outreach centers in previously unreached areas, such as in Puerto Francisco de Orellana. The consolidation of dozens of congregations during this period has reduced the scope of mission outreach in many urban areas. Administrative challenges and dependence of full-time missionaries for many congregations to operate has prevented the opening of additional mission outreach centers.

Most urban areas receive a high level of LDS mission outreach achieved by the operation of multiple mission outreach centers, but most rural areas remain unreached and have no nearby mission outreach centers. Many Ecuadoran Latter-day Saints likely reside in these areas but are not active in the Church. The creation of dependent branches and groups may facilitate expansion of national outreach and increase member activity rates in the more populated rural areas. Holding cottages meetings in these areas allow for sporadic mission outreach to occur without assigning disproportionate numbers of full-time missionaries to remote, sparsely populated locations and presents opportunity to assess receptivity and mission outreach prospects over the medium-term.

The Church maintains a website for the South America Northeast Area at http://www.iglesiadejesucristo.org.co/. The website offers Spanish information regarding church doctrines, news, temples, and missionary contact information. Use of the website by local members and missionaries can assist proselytizing efforts both in reached and unreached areas.

Member Activity and Convert Retention

Membership growth rates have widely varied by location, but low convert retention rates have been consistent throughout Ecuador. Low member activity rates as indicated by few LDS congregations for large numbers of Latter-day Saints on paper have been prevalent for decades. In 1988, Cuenca experienced some of the slowest growth and had two LDS congregations for 800 members in the area.[36] There were just three branches part of the Esmeraldas Ecuador District when it was organized in 1988 yet there were 1,500 Latter-day Saints.[37] The average number of members per congregation increased by nearly 200 during the 2000s as few new congregations were organized and dozens of formerly-operating congregations were consolidated due to inadequate numbers of active priesthood holders and low member activity and participation rates overall. The discontinuation of three stakes between 1999 and 2003 further illustrates challenges retaining new converts, maintaining member activity rates, and developing sustainable local leadership. Culturally low religious activity rates in the general population and quick-baptize tactics by full-time missionaries practiced for several decades appear to be primary causes of poor LDS member activity and convert retention today. There have been inconsistent improvements addressing these issues through the missionary guide Preach My Gospel as the standards for baptism in the guide do not appear to be consistently implemented nationwide.

A recent success improving member activity and covert retention is highlighted in the creation of the Los Chillos Ecuador Stake from the San Rafael Ecuador District in 2009, in which each of the six original branches became wards. Within a year of the creation of the stake, a seventh ward was organized; an unusually short amount of time for an additional congregation to be organized for Latin American stakes created from districts. Significant nationwide improvements in member activity have yet to occur as indicated by no increase in seminary and institute enrollment during the late 2000s.

Ethnic Issues and Integration

Ecuador overall experiences few ethnic integration challenges as most are Amerindian-Spanish mixed mestizos. Language barriers between Amerindians and mestizo and white Ecuadorans are the most likely obstacle to be encountered by the Church.

Language Issues

Some LDS scriptures and church materials are translated into the native languages of 99% of the population. Amerindian languages without LDS materials at present appear unlikely to have LDS materials translated for the foreseeable future due to few speakers of these languages among Church members, the lack of mission outreach in areas where these languages are spoken, and bilingualism among many in Spanish. There have been challenges integrating Amerindians that do not speak Spanish into Spanish-speaking mestizo congregations and Spanish-speaking mestizos into Quichua-speaking congregations. These challenges have been primarily encountered in the Otavalo and Quito areas. The creation of language-specific

congregations in northern Ecuador may improve member activity and convert retention rates in these areas.

Missionary Service

Local members regularly serve full-time missions and Ecuador appears close to becoming self-sufficient in its full-time missionary force. In mid-1997, there were approximately 670 missionaries serving in Ecuador.[38] In late 2010, there were likely between 500 and 600 missionaries assigned. Obstacles preventing greater numbers of members completing full-time missions include low member activity rates, a lack of youth-oriented missionary preparation programs, and undeveloped local priesthood leadership in many areas.

Leadership

Ecuador possesses developed priesthood leadership in appreciable numbers in Guayaquil and Quito, but other areas often report inadequate numbers of active Ppriesthood leaders to allow the creation of additional congregations. Overreliance on full-time missionaries in many of these locations for administrative and local member duties is a major concern for development of greater self-sufficiency. A lack of active priesthood holders is the primary obstacle preventing several of Ecuador's districts from becoming stakes. Ecuador was one of the few Latin American countries that as of 2010 had never had a local member serve as a temple president.

Several local members have served in regional and international church leadership positions as mission presidents, regional representatives, and area seventies. Carl B. Pratt from Quito was called as the Spain Seville Mission president in 1988.[39] In 1989, Walter Fermin Gonzalez from Quito was called as a mission president.[40] In 1996, B. Renato Maldonado E. from Quito was called as the Ecuador Guayaquil North Mission president.[41] In 2003, Jorge Fermin Betancourth from Guayaquil was called to preside over the Uruguay Montevideo Mission and Jose Vicente Larrea from Guayaquil was called to preside over the Colombia Bogota North Mission.[42] In 2005, Jose Felix Lara from Quevedo was called to preside over the Ecuador Quito Mission.[43] In 2006, Francisco Washington Fierro Altamirano from Quito was called as a mission president[44] and Sofocles Euripides Moran from Guayaquil was called to preside over the Chile Santiago East Mission.[45] In 2010, Jorge Gonzalo Montoya from Quito was called to preside over the Venezuela Valencia Mission[46] and Fernando Enrique Calderon from Quito was called to preside over the Bolivia Santa Cruz Mission.[47]

In 1991, Cesar Hugo Cacuango from Quito was called as a regional representative.[48] In 1993, Jorge Alberto Uboldi from Quito[49] and Walter F. Gonzalez from Quito were called as regional representatives.[50] In 1995, Walter F. Gonzalez and Carl B. Pratt were called as area seventies.[51] In 1997, Carl B. Pratt was called to the First Quorum of the Seventy.[52] In 2002, B. Renato Maldonado was called as an Area Authority Seventy.[53] In 2005, Fernando E. Calderon from Quito was called as an Area Seventy.[54]

Temple

Ecuador pertains to the Guayaquil Ecuador Temple district. Local members regularly held stake temple trips to Peru following the dedication of the Lima Peru temple in 1986. Temple trips during this period generally lasted over a week as it was a three-day journey by bus one way.[55] The fourteen year gap between the announcement of the Guayaquil Ecuador Temple in 1982 and groundbreaking in 1996 was due to a variety of challenges, including obtaining needed government approvals.[56] At present, the temple appears to be moderately attended by members in the district. In 2010, six endowment sessions were scheduled on Tuesdays through Fridays and sessions on Saturdays occurred hourly from 8 AM to 2 PM. Prospects for the construction of additional temples in Ecuador will become more favorable once temple attendance increases and the number of active priesthood holders increases. Only Quito appears to be a possible future temple site over the medium term.

Comparative Growth

The LDS Church in Ecuador followed membership, congregational, and national outreach growth trends comparable to several other western South American nations, such as Colombia and Bolivia. Ecuador had the ninth largest number of LDS members and eleventh most stakes in the world in 2010. The ratio of the general population to LDS missions in Ecuador is 4.9 million people per mission, close to the average of South America of approximately six million per mission. Ecuador ranks seventh among countries with the largest number of members per congregation and member activity rates appear representative for the region. In late 2010, Ecuador was the country with the most Latter-day Saints with only one temple operating, announced, or under construction. Membership growth rates in Ecuador during the 2000s have compared to growth rates in Colombia during this period and have ranked average for the region. The percentage of Latter-day Saints in the Ecuadoran population ranks average among South American nations.

Many missionary-minded Christian groups report rapid church growth in Ecuador and some have outpaced LDS Church growth in terms of the number of active members, the number of congregations operating, and current membership growth rates. Seventh Day Adventists achieved moderate levels of membership and congregational growth in the 2000s as did Jehovah's Witnesses. Evangelicals appear to be the most successful nontraditional Christian group, largely due to their effectiveness in member-missionary work. Latter-day Saints exhibit some of the lowest convert retention rates among the major non-Catholic Christian churches.

Future Prospects

The population remains receptive to Latter-day Saint teachings and full-time missionaries, but inconsistent mission practices regarding the teaching and baptizing of new converts have compromised member activity and convert retention rates for decades. Many nominal Catholics that have converted to the LDS Church have become nominal Latter-day Saints or no longer identify as Latter-day Saints today. Future long-term growth will depend on increasing the number of active priesthood holders, implementing culturally-sensitive proselytism approaches, decreasing the dependence of smaller congregations on full-time missionaries for administrative functions, establishing additional mission outreach centers, and implementing convert baptism standards that require consistent church attendance prior to baptism and supply adequate pre-baptismal and post-baptismal teaching. The creation of additional stakes appears most likely over the short and medium terms in Guayaquil, Quito, and other large cities. Achieving commensurate membership and congregational growth will indicate progress toward resolving member activity and convert retention issues.

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