



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.



Haiti

Population: 10 millions (#89 out of countries)

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Geography

Area: 27,750 square km. Occupying the western third of Hispanola, Haiti borders the Dominican Republic in the Caribbean. Most of Haiti experiences tropical climate and some inland areas are semiarid. Mountains and hills dominate the landscape. Deforestation is a major problem and threatens the large biodiversity endemic to the nation's forests. Hurricanes and tropical storms frequently impact the region between June and October. Haiti is divided into 10 administrative departments.

Population: 9,035,536 (July 2009)

Annual Growth Rate: 1.838% (2009)

Fertility Rate: 3.81 children born per woman (2009)

Life Expectancy: male 59.13, female 62.48 (2009)

Peoples

Black: 95%

Mulatto and white: 5%

Blacks arrived as slaves under French rule. Mulatto are mixed race. Whites have arrived more recently.

Languages: Haitian Creole (95%), other (5%). Haitian Creole and French are official languages. Other languages are spoken by white immigrants or Mulattos. There are few Spanish speakers near the Dominican border. Only Haitian Creole has over one million speakers (8.5 million).

Literacy: 52.9% (2003)

History

Indigenous tribes inhabited Hispanola prior to the arrival of Christopher Columbus in the late 15th century. The native population was almost completely wiped out during the first 25 years. French settlers arrived in the early 17th century and gained control of the western third of Hispanola from the Spanish in 1697. The French rapidly developed the colony with plantations and the arrival of slaves from Africa. Half a million slaves rebelled against France and declared independence as the first black republic in 1804. Following independence little economic progress occurred for the following 200 years. Poor government management and political violence have degraded the environment and economic development. The United States military assisted in restoring peace and order following a coup in the early 1990s. A second coup occurred in 2004 and has further destabilized Haiti. A United Nations stabilization mission has been underway since the 2004 coup. A 7.0 earthquake struck Haiti in January 2010 causing widespread damage throughout Port-au-Prince and its surroundings killing between 100,000 and 200,000 and crippling the nation's government and infrastructure.

Culture

African slaves retained many of their beliefs and practices despite colonization from the French for over a hundred years. Voodoo is widely practiced. Some French, Spanish and native customs have influenced Haitian culture.

Economy

GDP per capita: \$1,300 (2008) [2.8% of US]

Human Development Index: 0.532

Corruption Index: 1.4

Frequent natural disasters and high debt plague the economy. Haiti is the poorest country in the Western Hemisphere. 80% of the population lives below the poverty line. Few skilled workers deter economic growth and foreign investment. Two-thirds of

the workforce labor in agriculture which generates 28% of the GDP. Primary agriculture products include coffee, mangoes and sugarcane. A quarter of the workforce labors in services which account for half of the GDP. Several mineral resources remain unexploited, such as bauxite, copper and gold. Primary industries include sugar and flour production and textiles. The United States and the Dominican Republic are major import/export partners. The January 2010 earthquake crippled the economy which will likely take years to recover.

Haiti ranks as one of the most corrupt countries in the world; corruption is present in all levels of government and society. Corruption has limited economic growth for two centuries despite the inherit wealth of the country in natural resources, location, and one of the largest workforces in the Caribbean. The neighboring Dominican Republic also suffers from corruption, but has a GDP per capita six times higher than Haiti and half the number of people living under the poverty line. Haitian government officials show little empathy for Haitians in poverty and lack a willingness to address the issue. Corruption scandals involving the president include kidnappings and increasing murders. International assistance has provided 2.6 billion US dollars in developing the economy and fighting corruption, with has not seen any positive results and Haitian government officials demanding more aid and claiming that the international community has not provided enough assistance[1].

Faiths

Christian: 96%

Other: 3%

None: 1%

Christians

Denominations Members Congregations

Catholic 7,228,429

Baptist 903,553

Pentecostal 364,421

Seventh-Day Adventists 335,751 473

Latter-Day Saints 15,489 30

Jehovah's Witnesses 15,214 220

Religion

Most Haitians are Catholic. Protestant groups have grown rapidly in recent years. Around two percent solely practice Voodoo which came with slaves from West Africa. Voodoo practices and beliefs are widespread and retained by many Christians and include rituals to protect against evil spirits, veneration of the dead, and singing.

Religious Freedom

Persecution Index:

Religious freedom is protected by the constitution and upheld by the government as long as religious groups do not encourage lawlessness and disorder. Roman Catholicism was the official religion of Haiti until 1987. Foreign missionaries may operate freely in the country[2].

Largest Cities

Urban: 47%

Port-au-Prince, Carrefour, Delmas, Cap-Haïtien, Petionville, Gonaïves, Saint-Marc, Les Cayes, Verrettes, Port-de-Paix.

All of the 10 largest cities have a congregation. Hinche (23,600) is the largest city without a congregation. 27% of the national population lives in the 10 largest cities.

Membership Growth

LDS Membership: 15,489 (2008)

In the summer of 1977, the first Haitian convert read the Book of Mormon, traveled to Florida where we was taught by missionaries, was baptized and returned back to Haiti. A year later 22 Haitians were baptized near Port-au-Prince[3]. President Thomas S. Monson dedicated Haiti for missionary work in April 1983[4]. Membership reached 500 in 1983, climbing to 2,200 in 1988 and 5,000 in 1993[5].

In late 1997 membership was 5,300[6]. Very little growth occurred during a five year period in the mid-1990s due to the withdrawal of foreign missionaries. Local leadership also focused on strengthening members and preparing for a stake. The return of rapid growth following the reintroduction of foreign missionaries suggests that at this time local membership was insufficient to provide enough missionaries and leaders to continue increasing membership and expanding into new areas of the country.

Membership reached 9,266 at the end of 2000. More than 200 member homes in northern Haiti were destroyed following the destruction left by Tropical Storm Jeanne[7]. Membership numbered 12,842 in 2004, 13,604 in 2006, and 14,493 in 2007.

Mission leadership feared that following the beginning of violence in 2004, membership growth would begin to slow as in the 1990s following the outbreak of violence. As predicted, membership growth rates fell from between 7.5% and 11.5% between 2001 and 2003 to 5.4% in 2004, 3.7% in 2005 and 2.1% in 2006. The slow membership growth rates were reversed starting following 2006 to over 6.5% for both 2007 and 2008.

By the end of 2008 one in 576 people in Haiti were members. At least 20 members perished in the 2010 earthquake[8].

Congregational Growth

Wards: 15 Branches: 16

The first mission contact with Haiti came from the Florida Fort Lauderdale Mission in 1977. Missionary work officially began in May 1980 and Haiti was assigned to the West Indies Mission. The Church created its first branch in Port-au-Prince in October

1980. The first Haitian called to serve a mission was in 1981[9]. A second branch was created in March 1981 in Petionville. By 1982 there were 12 missionaries serving in the country, the Petionville Branch was divided, four missionaries opened Cap-Haitien for missionary work, and the Haiti District was organized[10]. By 1984 the Haiti Port-au-Prince Mission was organized from the West Indies Mission.

An additional district was created in Les Cayes in 1990. The Church divided the Haiti District in January 1990 to create the Port-au-Prince Haiti North and Port-au-Prince Haiti South Districts likely in the early 1990s. Branches reached 18 in 1991 and there were 140 missionaries serving, 26 of which were Haitian[11]. 54 foreign missionaries were serving in Haiti when missionaries were evacuated in late 1991. Missionaries were evacuated to Miami, Florida, reassigned to other missions, or extended early releases[12]. In 1992, the first missionary called from Haiti in 1981 became the first Haitian mission president for the Haiti Port-au-Prince Mission replacing the evacuated foreign mission president from the previous year[13]. In 1994 there were 22 native missionaries serving in Haiti[14].

In 1993 members were anxiously working for the first stake to be created, but faced political instability which delayed its creation for several years. Very little congregational growth was experienced during the 1990s as branches increased by only two.

The first stake was created in Port-au-Prince in 1997. The Port-au-Prince Stake was created from both districts in the city and included seven wards and two branches: The Carrefour, Carrefour-Feuilles, Centrale, Delmas, Haut Delmas, Martissant and Petionville Wards and the Croix Des Bouquets and Croix-Des-Missions Branches[15]. Haiti remained part of the North America Southeast Area in 1998 following its division[16]. In 1999 an additional district was created in Gonaïves. In the early 2000s congregations met outside of Port-au-Prince in Gonaïves, St. Marc, Cap-Haïtien, Port-de-Paix, Les-Cayes, Petit Goave, Jacmel, and Croix-des-Bouquets

Foreign missionaries returned in the late 1990s and numbered half the missionary force in 2003[17]. A second stake, the Port-au-Prince Haiti North Stake, was created in 2003 with six wards. Missionaries were withdrawn from northern Haiti in early 2004 due to violence in the region[18]. All 56 foreign missionaries were evacuated in February 2004.

Between 2000 and 2009 congregations increased from 20 to 31. Wards increased from seven to 15. The greatest congregational growth in the past decade occurred before 2004 and after 2006. In 2009, the Les Cayes Haiti District had four branches and the Gonaïves Haiti District had seven branches. By late 2009 additional branches were also meeting in Deschapelles and Jeremie. Branches in Jacmel increased from one to three during the late 2000s.

In early 2009 there were 67 missionaries[19]. A year later missionaries increased to 74. As of early 2010 only Haitian missionaries served in Haiti. Three Haitian Creole speaking branches met in the United States in early 2010: Two in South Florida and one in Massachusetts. Two additional branches meet up until the late 2000s in South Florida and were discontinued.

Activity and Retention

Haiti had 185 students enrolled in seminary in 1989[20]. In 1993 the number enrolled in seminary was 150 and in institute was 280[21]. By the 2008-2009 school year seminary and institute attendance increased to 383 and 989 respectively. Sacrament meeting attendance declined in northern areas following political instability and violence in 2004 and suffered large inactivity issues[22]. Church meetings were disrupted throughout the country in March 2004. Average active membership per congregation is likely around 125-150, indicating that active members likely number between four to five thousand or 30%.

Language Materials

Languages with LDS Scripture: Haitian Creole, French, Spanish.

All LDS scriptures are available in Haitian Creole, French and Spanish. General Conference has had Haitian Creole translations at least since the early 1990s[23]. Most Church materials are translated, including mission, temple, youth, priesthood, primary, Relief Society, and unit resources.

Meetinghouses

Meetinghouses numbered 13 in 2003[24]. The seven meetinghouses in Port-au-Prince served as shelters for 5,000 homeless following the earthquake in 2010[25]. Less than 30% were Church members[26]. Around half of meetinghouses are likely Church built with the remainder consisting of remodeled buildings or rented spaces.

Health and Safety

Those infected with HIV/AIDS constitute 2.2% of the population. Methods of infection include illicit sexual relations and drug use. Contaminated needles and HIV-positive mothers can also spread the disease. Although HIV/AIDS infection rates not higher than other nations in the Western Hemisphere, missionaries must take precautions in order to avoid infection and spreading the disease. Those infected with HIV/AIDS are less able than others to build the Church over the long term due to the disease significantly shortening their lifespan.

Safety concerns continue to keep foreign LDS missionaries from serving in Haiti. Violence can occur sporadically. One Haitian member was imprisoned for over three years for political reasons[27]. If a political crisis worsens it may be difficult to quickly evacuate non-native missionaries. Frequent natural disasters also pose safety threats from flooding, landslides, and hurricanes. Damage from the 2010 earthquake also severely impacted the poor health and safety conditions.

Humanitarian and Development Work

The Church has provided literacy programs[28]. American members donated farming tools in 2001[29]. Humanitarian aid was provided in 2004 and 2005 following tropical storms and hurricanes[30] [31]. Shelter and aid was provided for flood victims in 2007[32].

Humanitarian relief was promptly provided following the 2010 earthquake. A team of 18 LDS doctors arrived a week following the earthquake to provide medical care[33]. Many other LDS members contributed their time and talents in helping those

suffering, especially returned missionaries from the Haiti Port-au-Prince Mission. The First Presidency requested members worldwide to donate their time, money, and talents in meeting the humanitarian needs exacerbated by the earthquake^[34]. Over one million pounds of food and supplies were delivered in the first two weeks following the earthquake. The Church has made it clear that humanitarian and development work will continue for years to come^[35].

Opportunities, Challenges and Prospects

Religious Freedom

No legislation or cultural restrictions prohibit missionaries from proselytism in Haiti. The Church has taken advantage of this opportunity during times of greater national stability with foreign missionaries and consistently with native missionaries.

Cultural Issues

Members face challenges when they forsake Voodoo religion and practices when they join the Church. Members can be ostracized from their communities and family connections can be severed. Many Christians are tolerant of these practices. Ancestor worship in Voodoo may be misunderstood with Church teachings concerning salvation for the dead. Severe poverty limits the financial resources members can contribute toward building up the Church in their nation. Low literacy levels challenge outreach to those who are illiterate and helping them study on their own.

National Outreach

Out of countries with an official Church presence in the Western Hemisphere with over one million people, Haiti has the lowest percentage of Church members. Despite the small representation of membership in the population, all departments have at least one congregation except for three: Centre, Nippes, and Nord-Est. These departments have a combined population slightly over one million, or 11% of the national population. In addition to these departments, large areas of provinces with only one congregation have limited outreach. These departments include Nord, Nord-Ouest, and Grand 'Anse, each of which have congregations in the largest cities and a combined population of 1.7 million. The Ouest Department has the strongest Church presence, containing half the total congregations and a third of the national population. Congregations are most accessible to those living in Port-au-Prince and the largest cities.

Outreach to rural communities remains a major challenge and opportunity for the Church. Poor transportation and poverty limit communication and movement between rural areas. These areas likely have few members who can assist in starting new groups or dependent branches. The greatest opportunity for additional outreach appears with larger cities and towns until more national active membership and leadership base is created. The 2010 earthquake has limited mission outreach temporarily as health and economic needs are first addressed.

Member Activity and Convert Retention

Poorer convert retention appears to occur more often when foreign missionaries served in Haiti. This may be due to the higher number of convert baptisms during these years resulting in less attention and care taken to fellowship and teach new converts. Foreign missionaries have been instrumental in developing member activity and leadership. Member activity and retention have been affected by the departure of foreign missionaries in several ways. The lack of Haitian missionaries in the 1990s likely resulted in the many years of preparation for the first stake to be organized. Focus shifted from expansion to consolidation during years of few missionaries serving. The lack of growth and activity problems in the 1990s may stem from a previous reliance on foreign missionaries from local membership to run Church meetings and fulfill callings which members failed to fulfill.

Member activity and convert retention further worsened during the early 2000s when foreign missionaries served as members per congregation increased from 463 in 2000 to 494 in 2004. This ratio has held stable since 2005 at around 515, likely indicating that convert retention and member activity have improved from earlier levels. In 2004, political unrest and heavy flooding limited membership growth and activity especially in northern areas in the Gonaïves Haiti District. These areas were also the first to have foreign missionaries evacuated. Low literacy levels have likely contributed to poor retention and activity as these individuals require greater care and support in understanding Church teachings and fulfilling callings.

Ethnic Issues and Integration

Due to the homogeneity of the Haitian population, few ethnic integration issues challenge Church growth. Unlike most nations with a predominantly black population the Church has the opportunity to conduct missionary work with a population lacking the ethnic complexities of most African and some Caribbean nations. Unity in culture and ethnicity may facilitate more rapid growth. Fellowshiping converts from the few immigrant groups may be a challenge due to differences in culture and language.

Language Issues

The Church is well mobilized with language materials to meet the needs of the linguistic demography of Haiti for proselytism. Minority groups speaking French and Spanish have a wide body of Church materials available in their native languages.

Leadership

Haiti has developed strong priesthood leadership in limited numbers. The first native mission president began serving in 1992 when membership was around 5,000. Most native mission presidents get called as mission presidents once membership reaches the tens of thousands. This decision was likely desperate due to the political situation at the time. A shortage of priesthood leadership has significantly limited the Church's growth in Haiti. In 1995, a lack of Haitian missionaries and active priesthood holders resulted in missionaries unable to serve as branch presidents thus preventing the creation of new branches^[36]. None of the members of the first stake presidency in 1997 worked for the Church, indicating that the Church was not dependent on Church Education System employees like in many poor nations with few members^[37]. Although the Church faces problems with finding enough leadership, the isolation of Haitian members from foreign missionaries has facilitated greater member development and leadership. Many nations grow dependent on foreign missionaries for the Church's functioning.

The Church has also been successful in avoiding an overrepresentation of Church employees serving in leadership positions.

The only Church employee to serve in one of the stake presidencies was when the second stake was created in 2003. The stake president was a facilities manager for the Church[38].

Temple

Haiti belongs to the Santo Domingo Dominican Republic Temple district. Haiti was assigned to the Guatemala City Guatemala Temple following its dedication. Members were usually unable to travel the long distance due to time, transportation, and financial problems. Language problems were also an issue since temple workers spoke Spanish[39]. The dedication of the Santo Domingo Dominican Republic drastically increased the accessibility of the temple to members. Violence and natural disasters has prevented members from attending the temple due to border closures such as in 2004.

Comparative Growth

The Church was established in the Dominican Republic at the same time as in Haiti, yet in late 2009 had a temple, a missionary training center, seven times as many members, nine times as many stakes, five times as many districts, and six and a half times as many congregations. Even during the 1980s when Haiti enjoyed greater political stability, growth in the Dominican Republic resulted with twice as many members as Haiti by the end of the decade. Other nations in the Caribbean with a primarily black population have seen greater outreach than Haiti. The first missionaries and congregations were established in Trinidad and Tobago in the late 1970s and in late 2009 most the population lived in areas where congregations met and one in 421 was a member. Jamaica has also seen similar results as Trinidad and Tobago.

More rapid membership and congregational growth has not occurred in Haiti as in other similar Caribbean nations due to political turmoil and poverty. Since most areas rely heavily on foreign missionaries for greater national outreach, greater gains in unreached areas typically occurred during the years foreign missionaries served in the country. Natural disasters have also set back growth as focus shifts to meeting the temporal needs of the population more than the spiritual.

Future Prospects

Accelerated membership and congregational growth in the late 2000s without any foreign missionaries may indicate that the Church in Haiti has become better able to spur greater progress in outreach and growth without the assistance of foreign missionaries. Poverty and the 2010 earthquake may limit mission outreach in order to meet Haitian's humanitarian needs.

A district from three mission branches in Jacmel will likely be created. A third stake may be organized in Port-au-Prince. The Gonaïves Haiti District may also mature into a stake. Congregations may be organized in remaining departments with a Church presence in cities such as Hinche, Miragoâne, and Fort-Liberte. Cities which have had one branch for over a decade may also divide to create additional congregations in locations such as Cap-Haïtien and Port-de-Paix. Political instability, poverty, limited active members and leadership, and the close proximity of the Santo Domingo Dominican Republic Temple may deter a temple announcement until these conditions change.

[1] <http://www.fride.org/publication/583/other-publications>
[2] <http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/irf/2009/127394.htm>
[3] <http://newsroom.lds.org/ldsnewsroom/eng/contact-us/haiti>
[4] <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/43711/Merchant-seeking-truth-opened-way-for-Church.html>
[5] <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/23661/Temple-to-be-built-in-the-Caribbean.html>
[6] <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/29785/New-stake-presidencies.html>
[7] <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/46173/Deadly-storm-season-exacts-precious-toll.html>
[8]
[9] <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/58495/Latter-day-Saint-aid-to-Haiti-continues-under-huge-emotional-impactful-experiences.html>
[10] <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/23990/Present-day-pioneers--Many-are-still-blazing-gospel-trails.html>
[11] <http://newsroom.lds.org/ldsnewsroom/eng/contact-us/haiti>
[12] http://www.lds.org/ldsorg/v/index.jsp?hideNav=1&locale=0&sourceId=810c72712fddb010VgnVCM1000004d82620a____&vgnextoid=024644f8f2
[13] <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/20986/Haitis-civil-strife-prompts-removal-of-missionaries.html>
[14] <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/23990/Present-day-pioneers--Many-are-still-blazing-gospel-trails.html>
[15] <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/24358/From-around-the-world.html>
[16] <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/29785/New-stake-presidencies.html>
[17] <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/31389/5-new-areas-announced-worldwide.html>
[18] <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/43702/Happy-in-Haiti-celebrating-dedications-20th-year.html>
[19] <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/45120/Missionaries-relocated-amid-civil-strife-in-Haiti.html>
[20] http://www.lds.org/ldsorg/v/index.jsp?locale=0&sourceId=3bbcb9b658f5e110VgnVCM100000176f620a____&vgnextoid=024644f8f2
[21] <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/19425/Early-morningdaily-seminary-builds-foundation-in-gospel-program-has-expanded-to-haiti.html>
[22] <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/23990/Present-day-pioneers--Many-are-still-blazing-gospel-trails.html>
[23] <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/45120/Missionaries-relocated-amid-civil-strife-in-Haiti.html>
[24] <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/20724/850-cable-systems-to-carry-conference.html>
[25] <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/43702/Happy-in-Haiti-celebrating-dedications-20th-year.html>
[26] <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/58465/Returned-missionary-and-family-are-among-those-finding-refuge-on-LDS-meetinghouse.html>
[27] <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/58495/Latter-day-Saint-aid-to-Haiti-continues-under-huge-emotional-impactful-experiences.html>
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[32] <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/47567/Dennis-torments-coast.html>
[33] <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/51332/Inundated-state.html>
[34] <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/58460/LDS-medical-team-en-route-to-Haiti-finds-new-uses-for-lunch-boxes.html>
[35] <http://newsroom.lds.org/ldsnewsroom/eng/news-releases-stories/first-presidency-appeals-to-church-members-to-help-people-in-haiti.html>
[36] <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/58528/Help-for-Haiti-a-long-term-effort.html>
[37] <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/26394/From-around-the-world.html>
[38] <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/29785/New-stake-presidencies.html>
[39] <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/44369/New-stake-presidents.html>
[40] <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/24358/From-around-the-world.html>