



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.



Cape Verde

Population: 0.54 millions (#174 out of countries)

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Geography

Area: 4,033 square km. Comprising a volcanic archipelago in the Atlantic Ocean off the coast of Senegal in West Africa, Cape Verde has nine inhabited islands: Boa Vista, Brava, Fogo, Maio, Sal, Santiago, Santo Antão, São Nicolau, and São Vicente. The terrain is generally mountainous and rocky. There is one active volcano on Fogo. Salt flats may be found on some of the islands. Temperate climate marked by irregular rainfall periods and semi-arid conditions occurs due to Cape Verde's latitudinal position and surrounding ocean which moderates temperatures. Drought, dust from the Sahara brought by the seasonal harmattan wind, earthquakes, and volcanoes are natural hazards. Environment issues include erosion, deforestation, water scarcity, desertification, beach sand extraction, and overfishing. Cape Verde is divided into 22 municipalities.

Population: 429,474 (July 2010)

Annual Growth Rate: 0.561% (2010)

Fertility Rate: 2.54 children born per woman (2010)

Life Expectancy: 68.27 male, 75.05 female (2010)

Peoples

Creole (mulatto): 71%

African: 28%

European: 1%

Most Cape Verdeans are Creoles, which claim mixed African and Portuguese ancestry. Due to hardships experienced from drought in the latter half of the twentieth century, many Cape Verdeans emigrated to other countries, resulting in the expatriate population exceeding Cape Verde's current population. The United States claims the largest body of Cape Verdeans outside of their home country. Portugal and other Portuguese-speaking African nations also have Cape Verdean communities.

Languages: Crioulo (96%), Portuguese (4%). Most Cape Verdeans speak Portuguese and Crioulo, a Portuguese-based

creole language with nearly one million speakers worldwide.

Literacy: 76.6% (2003)

History

Uninhabited until the arrival of Portuguese settlers in 1462, Cape Verde became a major hub for the transatlantic slave trade in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. African slaves worked Portuguese plantations for several centuries and were followed by European entrepreneurs and religious refugees. Cape Verde has been an important refueling and transit point for shipping and air travel for several centuries due to its ideal location. A growing independence movement in the mid-twentieth century led to a partnership between Cape Verde and Guinea-Bissau to oppose Portugal's efforts to quell increasing nationalism in its West African colonies. Cape Verde won independence in 1975 but did not allow multi-party elections until 1990. Plans to unify Cape Verde and Guinea-Bissau into one nation were abandoned in the early 1980s. In recent years Cape Verde has been praised as one of the most stable democratic nations in Africa.^[1]

Culture

Cape Verdean culture draws primarily from Portuguese and African influences. The Catholic Church has occupied a prominent role in society for centuries. African influence on local culture has been strongest on the island of Santiago. European immigrants escaping religious persecution in Europe have also contributed to the evolution of local culture. Local music draws upon Caribbean, Portuguese, African, and Brazilian elements. Cape Verde is perhaps most renowned for its rich legacy of poetry and literature. Cuisine consists of fish, rice, corn, vegetables, and fruit.^[2] Cigarette and alcohol consumption rates are slightly below world averages.

Economy

GDP per capita: \$3,600 (2009) [7.76% of US]

Human Development Index: 0.708

Corruption Index: 5.1

The economy of Cape Verde is strained due to a lack of resources. Fresh water may become scarce during long periods without rain and resulted in many hardships in the late 20th century. Due to a lack in water resources, agricultural production on land is limited. Fishing provides an important portion of the economy. The majority of the country's GDP emerges from services (74.4%). Economic growth resulted in the GDP per capita rising from \$3,400 to \$3,800 between 2006 and 2008. Some mining also occurs for salt and limestone. The country focuses on developing tourism. The economy in Cape Verde is vulnerable, with the majority of food in the country imported from other nations. Cape Verde exports primarily to Japan, Portugal and Spain. Imports into the country mainly come from Portugal.

Cape Verde experiences lower levels of corruption than most African nations, but is a transshipment point for illicit drugs from Latin America destined for Europe. The government has taken steps to reduce the incidence of money laundering.

Faiths

Christian: 99%

other: 1%

Christians

Denominations	Members	Congregations
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Catholic	365,053	
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Latter-day Saints	7,149	18
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Seventh Day Adventists	6,426	31
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Religion

Informal surveys indicate that approximately 85% of the population is Catholic. The Church of the Nazarene is the largest Protestant denominations. Several other Christian groups operate on the islands, including Seventh Day Adventists, Latter-day Saints, Assemblies of God, Universal Church of the Kingdom of God, and many Pentecostal and evangelical churches. There are few Baha'i and Muslims.[\[3\]](#)

Religious Freedom

Persecution Index:

The constitution protects religious freedom which is upheld by the government. The law protects religious freedom and prohibits persecution and discrimination. Individuals enjoy the right to change and choose their religious status. There is no state religion as the constitution mandates separation of church and state. Many Christian holidays are recognized by the government. The Catholic Church receives favoritism from the government due to most of the population adhering to Catholicism. Religious groups are required to register with the government. There have been no reports of abuse of religious freedom.[\[4\]](#)

Largest Cities

Urban: 60%

Praia, Mindelo, Santa Maria, Assomada, **Pedra Badejo**, Porto Novo, São Filipe, Tarrafal, **Ribeira Grande**, **Ribeira Brava**.

Cities listed in **bold** have no LDS congregations.

Seven of the ten largest cities have an LDS congregation. 56% of the population lives in the 10 largest cities and 55% of the national population resides on Santiago where the capital of Praia is located.

LDS History

Cape Verde opened to LDS missionary work in late 1988 and early 1989 from the Spain Canary Islands Missions. Two elders were sent and the Praia/Lajes Branch was created. When the Europe Mediterranean Area was created in 1991, Cape Verde was included within its jurisdiction. Seminary and institute began in the early 1990s. Cape Verde was dedicated for missionary work by Elder Dallin H. Oaks on September 14th, 1994. In 2002, the Church created the Cape Verde Praia Mission from the Portugal Lisbon South Mission. The two missions based in Lisbon were consolidated at the same time to form the Portugal Lisbon Mission.

While returning home from dedicating the Ghana Accra Temple in 2004, President Hinckley stopped again in Cape Verde and visited 40 members of the Sal Branch. During the meeting, President Hinckley counseled members to pray daily, read the scriptures, participate in member-missionary work, and pay tithing. He also admonished them to help the Church to grow and to strengthen the branch.[\[5\]](#)

Membership Growth

LDS Membership: 7,149 (2009)

In the early 1990s, LDS membership increased from 200 to 2,000 in two years. In 1994, there were 2,500 members.[\[6\]](#) Membership reached 3,000 in 1995 and 4,167 by year-end 2000.

Rapid membership growth occurred in the early 2000s which slowed dramatically by the end of 2002. Membership stood at 5,759 in 2002, 6,202 in 2004, 6,501 in 2006, and 6,905 in 2008. Annual membership growth rates exceeded 15% in 2001 and 2002, but ranged from 1.8% to 3.8% from 2003 to 2009.

Latter-day Saints are found among some expatriate Cape Verdean communities in the United States. In 2001, some 40 members of the Church from Cape Verde resided in the Boston area and were the recipients of needed church clothing

provided by members in the Hingham Massachusetts Stake.[\[7\]](#) Many Cape Verdean members have lived in Portugal as well. In 2009, one in 60 was nominally LDS.

Congregational Growth

Wards: 0 Branches: 19 Groups: 1+

Branches were first organized in the late 1980s. The first district, the Praia Cape Verde District, was organized in November 1992. Two additional districts, the Fogo Cape Verde and Mindelo Cape Verde Districts, were created in 1993.

In 1995, there were 17 branches and by year-end 2000 there were 18 branches. The Vila de Ribeira Brava Branch operated on the island of São Nicolau, but was discontinued in the early 2000s. In 2008, the Fogo Cape Verde District had six branches (five on Fogo, one on Brava), the Mindelo Cape Verde District had six branches (four on São Vicente, one on Sal, and one on São Antão), and the Praia Cape Verde District had six branches on Santiago. The number of branches remained unchanged until 2009 when a nineteenth branch was created, the Cape Verde Praia Mission Branch, to administer small groups of members in remote locations. In 2010, the two branches in São Felipe were consolidated into one branch and the Achada Grande Branch was renamed the Praia 4th Branch.

Missionaries reported that a group met in the town of Patim on Fogo in 2009.

Activity and Retention

Cape Verde experiences low member activity rates. President Hinckley visited in 1998 and addressed 780 members.[\[8\]](#) 458 were enrolled in seminary and institute during the 2008-2009 school year. The average number of members per congregation increased from 276 in 2000 to 376 in 2009. Most branches appear to have between 50 and 100 active members. Active membership is estimated at no more than 2,000, or 25% of total membership.

Language Materials

Languages with LDS Scripture:

All LDS scriptures and most church materials are translated into Portuguese. Only The Prophet Joseph Smith's Testimony is translated into Crioulo.

Meetinghouses

Latter-day Saints have constructed several meetinghouse in Cape Verde. In 2010, there were at least 12 meetinghouses. Groups and small branches often meet in rented spaces or renovated buildings.

Health and Safety

Access to healthcare on most islands is limited.

Humanitarian and Development Work

The Church has conducted several humanitarian projects, including employment training, medical assistance, nursing education, vision treatment, and donating school supplies, newborn kits, and clothing.[\[9\]](#)

Opportunities, Challenges and Prospects

Religious Freedom

The LDS Church experiences full religious freedom and full-time missionaries and local members may proselyte, worship, and assemble freely. Foreign full-time missionaries report no major challenges obtaining needed documentation to serve in Cape Verde.

Cultural Issues

The strong Christian influence on Cape Verdean society and religious plurality are cultural conditions which have favored receptivity to the LDS Church. Ethno-religious ties among Catholics appear weaker than in many other Catholic-majority nations. Casual church attendance and low levels of daily religious observance appear to have contributed to low member activity rates in the LDS Church. Poverty in Cape Verde is not as severe as in many African nations, but is still a factor which challenges mission outreach and the self-sustainability of local membership. Economic hardships and drought have encouraged emigration and continue to threaten the establishment of resilient LDS communities, but have likely improved receptivity in many areas.

National Outreach

Cape Verde experience a high level of mission outreach as 76% of the national population resides in an administrative municipality with an LDS mission outreach center. Most municipalities have a small geographic area, reducing the need for multiple mission outreach centers in some areas of the islands. 10 of the 22 municipalities appear unreached by the Church and three of the nine inhabited islands have no reported LDS congregations. Most unreached municipalities are within 15-20 kilometers of an LDS congregation. The combined population of islands without mission outreach amounts to approximately 27,000 (6% of the national population).

Prospects appear highest for expanding national outreach in the most populous municipalities without an LDS congregation or in lesser-reached towns and villages. It is likely that there are many less-active members in these locations. The establishment of dependent branches and groups may spur greater member activity in conjunction with reactivation efforts headed by local leaders and full-time missionaries. Missionary work is challenging on the sparsely populated unreached islands as they likely lack active membership to provide leadership for congregations and offer low potential for growth due to their small populations.

Cape Verde provides a suitable base for expanding missionary work in unreached nations in West Africa. Mauritania, Senegal, The Gambia, Guinea, and Guinea-Bissau all had no official church presence in early 2011. Guinea-Bissau appears to be the most likely country to come under the administration of the Cape Verde Praia Mission due to cultural, linguistic, and historical similarities and a small Cape Verdean community in the capital of Bissau. Mission outreach in Portugal and the United States offers opportunities to facilitate the establishment of LDS communities among Cape Verdeans abroad. In early 2011, the Church conducted no Cape Verde-directed internet outreach, although abundant Portuguese-language resources are available on LDS websites.

Member Activity and Convert Retention

Low member activity and poor convert retention have persisted since the establishment of the Church in the late 1980s largely due to inconsistent mission policies that encouraged the rushed baptism of converts with minimal pre-baptismal preparation. Missionaries in the 2000s reported that most branches had large numbers of inactive members, many of whom appeared to have joined the Church as youth during the 1990s and early 2000s. The baptism of converts who typically lacked regular church attendance habits before baptism, inadequate and poorly trained local leadership, little pre-baptismal preparation being offered by full-time missionaries, and the lack of systematic convert retention programs were characteristics of Portuguese LDS missions between the late 1980s and early 2000s that affected missionary work in Cape Verde. Distance from mission headquarters in Lisbon and infrequent visits by mission leaders further worsened the lack of emphasis and accountability regarding convert retention in Cape Verde. Between 1995 and 2004 LDS membership doubled, yet only one new congregation was added as few converts became active members. Rapid membership growth came to an abrupt halt in 2002 following the creation of the Cape Verde Praia Mission as mission focus changed to emphasize on reactivation and higher baptismal standards.

Low member activity rates continue to delay the creation of additional congregations. The number of congregations reported by the Church did not increase between 1997 and 2010. A handful of dependent branches or groups may have been organized during this period however. Stable, slightly increasing numbers of members enrolled in seminary and institute indicate that there has been some improvement augmenting member activity rates among youth. The number of Cape Verdean Latter-day Saints serving full-time missions also appears to have increased since the creation of the mission. Emigration continues to threaten member activity and self-sufficiency. Missionaries report that many active members are diligent and stalwart in their callings and responsibilities.

Ethnic Issues and Integration

The highly eclectic culture and society of Cape Verde has fostered the acceptance of differing ethnic groups into the same communities with little conflict. No major ethnic integration issues have been reported by LDS missionaries.

Language Issues

Most speak both Portuguese and Crioulo fluently as Portuguese is the language of government and education, whereas Crioulo

is used in more informal settings of daily life. Fluency in Portuguese reduces the need for Crioulo-language materials. Church services at times use both languages.

Missionary Service

Local members began serve as full-time missionaries early in the Church's history. Elder Oaks reported when he visited the islands in 1994 that 48 Cape Verdeans were serving missions, mostly in Portugal. At the time there were only two returned missionaries in Cape Verde. A total of 48 missionaries were serving in the country at the time.^[10] In the 2000s, Cape Verdean missionaries have regularly served in the Mozambique Maputo Mission where Portuguese is also spoken. Cape Verde has demonstrated a greater self-sufficiency in staffing its full-time missionary force than many other nations with fewer than 10,000 members. Continued emphasis on missionary preparation and seminary and institute attendance will be needed to sustain and increase the Cape Verdean missionary force and stabilize the number of active priesthood holders.

Leadership

Most if not all branches have local members serving as branch presidents. Local leadership remains limited as many branches do not appear to have all administration positions fully staffed and some branches rely on full-time missionaries to operate. Cape Verde has demonstrated some success developing greater self-sustainability with the calling of Joselito Medina Costa Neves as the first native Cape Verdean mission president of the Cape Verde Praia Mission in 2008. He previously served as a district president and other various leadership positions in the Church in Cape Verde.^[11] In 2006, missionaries serving from Cape Verde received missionary training in the Brazil Missionary Training Center along with missionaries from other Portuguese-speaking African countries.^[12] One of the factors which has prevented the establishment of a stake is that membership is scattered throughout the archipelago. A stake would be more likely, and perhaps would have already been organized, if current membership were concentrated on one island.

Temple

Cape Verde is assigned to the Madrid Spain Temple District and will most likely pertain to the Lisbon Portugal Temple district when the temple is completed. Temple trips appear to regularly occur, but long distance and transportation costs limit temple attendance. Once multiple stakes are organized, a temple may be announced for Cape Verde due to its geographically isolated location. The Church has tended to announce temples for island nations even if they have small LDS populations. Temples were announced for Fiji, Taiwan, and Tahiti when each of these nations had fewer than 12,000 members and only a few stakes.

Comparative Growth

Cape Verde is the country with the highest percentage of Latter-day Saints among countries in Africa, mainland Asia, and Europe, but has one of the lowest member activity rates in Africa. The percentage of members enrolled in seminary and institute is higher than many European nations, but lower than most African nations. In 2010, Cape Verde was the country with the fifth most members without a stake.

Some missionary-oriented Christian churches report comparatively-sized church membership and national outreach. Jehovah's Witnesses claimed 1,774 members in 34 congregations in 2008 whereas Seventh Day Adventists reported 6,060 members in 32 churches in 2008. These and other Christian groups report higher member activity rates than Latter-day Saints and more self-sustaining member-missionary programs due to higher standards and longer periods of preparation before baptism as well as a primary focus on outreach through local members rather than itinerant missionaries.

Future Prospects

Moderate levels of receptivity, the development of local leadership, increasing self-sufficiency, and improving youth activity rates over the past decade generate a positive outlook for future LDS growth in Cape Verde. Low member activity rates resulting from poor prebaptismal teaching and low standards for baptism prior to the establishment of the Cape Verde Praia Mission continue to hamper reactivation progress. Additional congregations may be organized on the most populous islands over the medium-term. Stakes will only be organized once local membership reaches the standard of at least 120 active, tithe-paying Melchizedek Priesthood holders. The Praia Cape Verde and Mindelo Cape Verde Districts appear to be the closest to becoming stakes in the coming years.

^[1] "Background Note: Cape Verde," Bureau of African Affairs, 1 December 2010. <http://www.state.gov/r/pa/ei/bgn/2835.htm>

^[2] "Cape Verde," Wikipedia.org, retrieved 8 January 2011. http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cape_verde

^[3] "Cape Verde," International Religious Freedom Report 2009, 26 October 2009.

<http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/irf/2009/127222.htm>

[4] "Cape Verde," International Religious Freedom Report 2009, 26 October 2009.
<http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/irf/2009/127222.htm>

[5] "Pres. Hinckley emphasizes "home" at island meetings," LDS Church News, 24 January 2004.
<http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/44981/Pres-Hinckley-emphasizes-home-at-island-meetings.html>

[6] "Republic of Cape Verde dedicated by apostle," LDS Church News, 24 September 1994.
<http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/25230/Republic-of-Cape-Verde-dedicated-by-apostle.html>

[7] "Service projects in Boston area," LDS Church News, 10 March 2001.
<http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/39454/Service-projects-in-Boston-area.html>

[8] Hart, John L. "Nations will 'never be same' after lengthy African trip," LDS Church News, 28 February 1998.
<http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/30680/Nations-will-never-be-same-after-lengthy-Africa-trip.html>

[9] "Projects - Cape Verde," Humanitarian Activities Worldwide, retrieved 8 January 2011.
<http://www.providentliving.org/project/0,13501,4607-1-2008-94,00.html>

[10] "Republic of Cape Verde dedicated by apostle," LDS Church News, 24 September 1994.
<http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/25230/Republic-of-Cape-Verde-dedicated-by-apostle.html>

[11] "New mission presidents," LDS Church News, 24 May 2008.
<http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/52020/New-mission-presidents.html>

[12] Soli, Ana Claudia. "'Happiest place' is Brazil's MTC," LDS Church News, 7 January 2006.
<http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/48352/Happiest-place-is-Brazils-MTC.html>