

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.



Bosnia and Herzegovina

Population: 3.87 millions (#129 out of countries)

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Geography

Area: 51,197 square km. Nearly landlocked in Southeastern Europe, Bosnia and Herzegovina borders Croatia, Serbia, Montenegro, and the Adriatic Sea. Bosnia and Herzegovina is divided into two jigsaw-shaped entities—the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina and Republika Srpska. There are only twenty kilometers of coastline, as Croatia occupies narrow strips of land along the Adriatic coast. Most of the country consists of mountains and valleys. Temperate climate prevails throughout most areas, with hot summers and cold winters. The Sava River creates the northern border with Croatia. Earthquakes are natural hazards and air pollution, deforestation, inadequate waste disposal sites, water shortages, and residuals from the civil war are environmental issues. Bosnia and Herzegovina is administratively divided into two first-order divisions and one internationally supervised district.

Peoples

Bosniak: 50.1%

Serb: 30.8%

Croat: 15.4%

Other: 2.7%

Unknown: 1.0%

Bosniaks constitute the majority in central and far western regions in the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina. Serbs populate northern, west central, and eastern areas of the country in Republika Srpska. Croats reside in the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina in southern regions and in pockets in central areas.

Population: 3,856,181 (July 2017)

Annual Growth Rate: -0.16% (2017)

Fertility Rate: 1.3 children born per woman (2017)

Life Expectancy: 73.9 male, 80.2 female (2017)

Languages: Bosnian (52.9%), Serbian (30.8%), Croatian (14.6%), other (1.6%), unknown (0.1%). Bosnian, Croatian, and Serbian are official languages. Languages with over one million speakers include Bosniak (2.0 million) and Serbian (1.2 million).

Literacy: 98.5% (2015)

History

The Illyrians were among the first known peoples to settle Bosnia. The region came under Roman rule shortly after the birth of Christ though an intense military campaign. Following the fall of the Roman Empire, Bosnia came under rule of warring tribes including the Huns. Independent Bosnian rule was established for several centuries after 1000 AD until coming under rule of the Ottoman Empire beginning in the late fifteenth century. Bosnia remained under Ottoman control until integrating into the Austro-Hungarian Empire in the late nineteenth century. Following World War I, Bosnia became part of the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes, which later became Yugoslavia. During World War II, Nazi Germany invaded the region. Ethnic groups did not yield to Nazi rule, yet inter-ethnic fighting occurred. Josip Tito Broz took command of Yugoslavia in 1945 and established a communist regime that maintained its own sphere of influence separate from Eastern and Western Europe. Slobodan Milosevic became president in Serbia in 1989. Serbian dominance of political affairs under Milosevic resulted in Croatia, Slovenia, Macedonia, and Bosnia declaring independence in the early 1990s. In October 1991, Bosnia and Herzegovina claimed its sovereignty from Yugoslavia and in March 1992 declared independence from Yugoslavia. Bosnian Serbs protested the declaration and began an armed resistance with assistance from Serbia and Montenegro in an effort to unify predominantly Serb areas with Serbia proper. Bosniaks and Croats also divided along ethnic lines, creating a three-way civil war in 1992. In 1994, Bosniaks and Croats unified under the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina. The civil war continued until the signing of the Dayton Peace Accords in 1995, which established a democratic, multi-ethnic government that retained the original international boundaries and split the country into two divisions: the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina and the Republika Srpska. NATO led a peacekeeping force starting in 1995 that stationed over 60,000 troops to supervise military activity. The European Union overtook peacekeeping responsibilities for Bosnia and Herzegovina in 2004. At the end of 2009, around 2,000 troops remained in the country to provide civil policing due to residual tensions between the previously warring ethnic factions.

Culture

Situated at the crossroads of East and West, Bosnia and Herzegovina adopts cultural practices and traditions from both influences. Sarajevo has served as one of the cultural centers for the Balkans for centuries in art, music, and literature resulting from a blend of Muslim, Catholic, and Orthodox influences. Sarajevo also hosted the 1984 Winter Olympics and was the site of the assassination of Archduke Franz Ferdinand of Austria, which sparked World War I. Bosnia and Herzegovina is Europe's most northern nation with a large indigenous Muslim minority. Vegetables constitute a large portion of Bosnian cuisine, which blends common Eastern and Western dishes. Cigarette consumption rates are high. Alcohol consumption rates are moderate. Divorce rates are very low.

Economy

GDP per capita: $11,400 (2017) [19% of U.S.]

Human Development Index: 0.750

Corruption Index: 38 (2017)

The civil war in the early 1990s devastated the economy as production dropped by 80%. Growth occurred following the conflict, with GDP growth rates above 5% between 2003 and 2008. The global economic crisis hurt the economy. Although economic conditions have improved in the 2010s, it has been difficult to attract foreign investment. An estimated 21% of the workforce is unemployed, and 17% of the population lives below the poverty line. Prospects for additional foreign investment appear positive, but excessive government spending, control of most of the financial sector by Austrian and Italian banks, and gray market activity accounting for a large portion of the economic activity are significant economic barriers for future development. Services employ 51% of the workforce and generate 65% of the GDP, whereas industry accounts for 30% of the workforce and 27% of the GDP. Metal working, minerals, vehicle assembly, and textiles are primary industries. Agriculture accounts for 19% of the workforce and 8% of the GDP. Major crops include wheat, fruits, vegetables, and corn. Primary trade partners include Croatia, Slovenia, Italy, and Germany.

Bosnia and Herzegovina has one of the highest perceived corruption levels among nations in the former Yugoslavia. Corruption is perceived as widespread and present in all areas of government and society, especially natural resource extraction, customs, public utilities, the judicial system, and taxes. Organized crime is also a concern. Under international pressure, anti-corruption institutions have been created, although there has been no progress in addressing corruption. The government continues to lack transparency and accountability with finances. Mismanagement of international aid has likely occurred.[1] Bosnia and Herzegovina is susceptible to money laundering and drug trafficking due to weak legislation, few regulations, and poor law enforcement.

Faiths

Muslim: 50.7%

Orthodox: 30.7%

Roman Catholic: 15.2%

Athiest: 0.8%

Agnostic: 0.3%

Other: 1.2%

Undeclared/Unknown: 1.1%

Christians

Denominations – Members – Congregations

Orthodox – 1,183848

Roman Catholic – 586,140

Jehovah's Witnesses – 1,144 – 16

Seventh Day Adventists – 602 – 23

Latter-day Saints – 69 – 2

Religion

Muslims are the largest religious group (50.7%), followed by Serbian Orthodox (30.7%), and Roman Catholics (15.2%). Religious affiliation is strongly correlated with ethnicity, as most Bosniaks are Muslim, most Serbs are Serbian Orthodox, and most Croats are Catholic. Protestants account for 1% of the population. Protestants and other small religious minority groups like Jews are concentrated in Sarajevo.[2]

Religious Freedom

The constitution protects religious freedom, which is generally upheld by both the federal and administrative governments. However, religious minorities report persistent societal abuse of religious freedom throughout Bosnia and Herzegovina as a result of weak and inconsistent enforcement of laws protecting religious freedom. A fragile national peace has been established through balancing power and the segregation of Catholic Croats, Orthodox Serbs, and Muslim Bosniaks. There is currently little tolerance for religious groups that do not fall into one of the three predominant religious traditions, or even for members of the major religious groups outside of their traditional geographical areas. The most severe persecution of religious minorities occurs between the three largest religious groups, such as Catholics and Orthodox in Muslim areas or Orthodox Christians in Catholic and Muslim areas. Those who commit crimes targeting religious minorities often go unpunished. Religious holidays of all three major religions are recognized by the federal government. To register with the government, a religious group must have at least 300 adult citizen members. Once approved, a registered religious group faces no restrictions on its operations. There are no

restrictions on proselytism.[3]

Largest Cities

Urban: 47%

Sarajevo, Banja Luka, Tuzla, **Zenica**, **Mostar**, **Bijeljina**, **Brcko**, **Bihac**, **Prijedor**, **Doboj.**

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

Three of the ten largest cities have an LDS congregation. Sixteen percent (16%) of the national population resides in the ten largest cities.

LDS History

The Church began sending humanitarian aid during the civil war in the mid-1990s. In 1996, Elder Jeffrey R. Holland visited seventy American soldiers in Tuzla. At the time, Church activity was limited to members in the United States military who were administered by the Germany Service Members Stake.[4] Elder Holland offered a priesthood blessing in nearby Sarajevo on behalf of the war-torn region during his visit.[5] In 2000, Bosnia and Herzegovina became part of the Europe Central Area. In 2009, Elder D. Todd Christofferson visited Bosnia and met with thirty members and investigators in the home of Jason Colvin, where church services were held for expatriate members in Sarajevo. At the meeting, Elder Christofferson told those in attendance that they were preparing the way for missionaries to be assigned to Bosnia and Herzegovina.[6] In May 2010, the Church created the first congregation in the country, an administrative branch in Sarajevo named the Bosnia-Herzegovina Branch. In September 2010, Elder Russell M. Nelson dedicated Bosnia and Herzegovina for missionary work.[7] In early 2012, the Adriatic North Mission began administering Bosnia and Herzegovina, and the first LDS missionaries were assigned that March to Sarajevo and Banja Luka.

Membership Growth

LDS Membership: 69 (2017)

Between December 1995 and September 1998, almost 900 Latter-day Saint servicemen had been deployed to Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, and Hungary for peacekeeping operations.[8] In the late 2000s, missionaries in the Slovenia Ljubljana Mission taught an interested Bosniak youth living in Bosnia who was interviewed by the mission president on Skype and baptized shortly thereafter. The new Bosniak convert had learned about the Church through the Internet. At least two Latter-day Saint couples resided in the country in September 2010 in Sarajevo and Banja Luka.[9] In early 2012, there was only one Bosnian member in the Sarajevo Branch. By late 2012, there were six members in Tuzla.

Nearly stagnant membership growth has occurred since 2014 due to extremely few convert baptisms. The Church reported 61 members in 2014. Most members appear to reside in Sarajevo and Banja Luka.

Congregational Growth

Branches: 2 Groups: 1 (May 2018)

The Bosnia-Herzegovina (Administrative) Branch was organized in 2010. The branch was renamed the Sarajevo Branch in late 2010 or early 2011. A group began meeting in Banja Luka in the early 2010s. In late 2012, a group began meeting in Tuzla and missionaries were assigned. The Banja Luka Group became a branch in early 2013. A foreign senior missionary served as the Sarajevo Branch President in 2017.[10] Church leadership was almost entirely comprised of foreign members or full-time missionaries as of early 2018.

Activity and Retention

Active membership is limited to expatriates living in Sarajevo and a few Bosniak converts. Thirty-five attended an evening devotional at a member's home in Sarajevo with Elder Nelson in September 2010.[11] Returned missionaries reported approximately 15 active members in Sarajevo, less than ten active members in Banja Luka, and less than five active members in Tuzla in the mid-2010s. At the time approximately 30-50% of new converts in Bosnia and Herzegovina remained active one year after baptism. Total active membership is estimated at approximately 30, or 43% of church-reported membership.

Language Materials

Languages with LDS Scripture: Serbian, Croatian.

All LDS scriptures are translated in Croatian. Only the Book of Mormon is available in Serbian. However, the Church announced plans in 2017 to translate the Doctrine and Covenants and the Pearl of Great Price into Serbia.[12] The Church has translated many unit, temple, priesthood, Relief Society, Sunday School, young women, primary, missionary, Church proclamations, and family history materials in Serbian and Croatian. Many CES materials are translated in Croatian. The Liahona has one Croatian issue per year. No LDS materials are translated into Bosnian.

Meetinghouses

Church meetings are held in rented spaces.

Humanitarian and Development Work

In 1993, Latter-day Saints in London, England shipped forty-five boxes filled with personal hygiene and food items to Bosnia to provide relief to victims of the civil war.[13] 800 pounds of personal hygiene and clothing was sent from members in the United States.[14] 8,100 boxes of food were shipped by the Church to Bosnia in 1994.[15] In 2009, the Church donated wheelchairs to the disabled.[16] In 2010, senior missionary couples began extensive development work, which included the building of greenhouses, clean water projects, and providing education in neonatal resuscitation techniques in many locations throughout the country. Senior missionary couples continued to engage in these type of development projects as of 2018.

Opportunities, Challenges, and Prospects

Religious Freedom

The LDS Church does not appear to face any legal obstacles in performing missionary work in the country. Full-time missionaries indiscriminately teach Christians and Muslims and openly proselyte without restrictions. The Church continues to fall vastly short of the required 300 adult citizen members needed to apply as a religious community to enjoy full religious freedom.

Cultural Issues

High smoking and alcohol consumption rates produce a more challenging atmosphere for Latter-day Saints to live and proselyte than many other countries. Proselytism will need to address substance abuse needs in order to reach a larger population and achieve higher convert retention rates. A high correlation of ethnicity and religion creates significant cultural challenges for interested Bosnians to join the LDS Church and remain active.

National Outreach

LDS congregations and full-time missionaries reach about 16% of the national population. With the exception of personal contacts of members and missionaries, the entire population was unreached by LDS mission outreach until early 2012. Communism prior to independence and ethnic violence thereafter contributed to the lack of an LDS presence until the early 2010s. Missionary activity will likely continued to be concentrated in Sarajevo and the most populous cities due to a large target population, a higher degree of religious plurality than smaller cities or rural areas, and greater tolerance of minority faiths than in ethnically homogenous regions of the countryside. No expansion of LDS outreach has occurred since Tuzla opened to proselytism in late 2012.

Despite the lack of specific Internet outreach directed toward Bosnia and Herzegovina, some have become acquainted with the LDS Church through the Internet, and one individual joined the Church in the late 2000s. Internet proselytism approaches including the use of Serbian and Croatian language materials and social networking may provide a more effective approach for mission outreach to Bosnians given societal and cultural challenges to employ traditional LDS proselytism tactics such as street contacting.

Member Activity and Convert Retention

Active membership is limited to foreigners temporarily living in the country and the few Bosnian members. Due to the small numbers of Latter-day Saints, members must be self-reliant in living church principles. Returned missionaries report that there is almost no involvement of local members in proselytism efforts primarily due to the extremely small number of active Bosnian members.

Ethnic Issues and Integration

The ethnic patchwork present throughout the country presents major challenges for future church growth outside of melting-pot cities like Sarajevo because of lesser tolerance and receptivity in regions dominated by a single faith and because of persistent ethnic tensions. The post-independence segregation of Bosniaks, Croats, and Serbs may require the creation of ethnic-specific congregations until greater tolerance among ethnicities is achieved.

Language Issues

Although there are no Bosnian language LDS materials, Serbian and Croatian are understood by most the population, resulting in little need for Bosnian language materials in the foreseeable future. Established Latter-day Saint communities in Croatia and Serbia have necessitated the translation of many church materials in these languages, which can be utilized in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

Missionary Service

No missionaries are known to have served from Bosnia and Herzegovina.

Leadership

There appear to be few native church members living in the country capable of holding church leadership positions. The lack of prospective local leaders requires foreign members and missionaries to administer leadership needs at present. Developing self-sufficient leadership will likely be an ongoing challenge due to the small number of Bosnian members who have joined the Church recently. Overreliance on full-time missionaries for leadership needs may frustrate church growth prospects over the long term.

Temple

Bosnia and Herzegovina is assigned to the Bern Switzerland Temple district. No organized temple trips appear to occur. Travel to the nearest temple requires significant planning in crossing international boundaries and demands financial sacrifice.

Comparative Growth

Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo, Macedonia, and Montenegro were among the last four noncity-state countries in Europe without independent branches and were dedicated for missionary individually in September 2010.[17] Among these, Bosnia and Herzegovina and Kosovo have the most members and are the only countries with multiple branches. Most of the former Yugoslavia has experienced major challenges in convert retention, leadership development, and slow membership growth over the past two decades. A senior missionary couple in early 2018 noted that there were only 200 people who attended sacrament meeting in the five countries that comprise the Adriatic North Mission – only 10-15% of church-reported membership for the mission.

Missionary-oriented Christian groups have experienced little success in Bosnia and Herzegovina, especially in recent years. The number of Seventh-Day Adventists has remained nearly unchanged over the past decade. Jehovah's Witnesses and Evangelicals also report slow growth. However, all of these groups have indigenous members and leaders in several areas of the country, whereas there are few Bosnian Latter-day Saints.

Future Prospects

The small number of indigenous members, few missionary resources devoted to the Balkans, low regional receptivity, strong ethno-religious, and possible hesitance to participate in more widespread missionary activity until formal registration with the government occurs may result in little growth for years to come. The Tuzla Group may become an official branch in the foreseeable future, and a separate Bosnian-speaking group may be organized in Sarajevo to facilitate growth among the indigenous population. However, consistent proselytism efforts since 2012 have yielded no noticeable increase in church membership since 2014 and no development of indigenous church leadership. As a result, the Church in Bosnia and Herzegovina will likely continue to remain strongly dependent on full-time missionaries to meet its leadership and administrative needs or years to come.

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[2] “Bosnia and Herzegovina,” International Religious Freedom Report 2009, 26 October 2009. http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/irf/2009/127302.htm

[3] “Bosnia and Herzegovina,” International Religious Freedom Report 2016, https://www.state.gov/j/drl/rls/irf/religiousfreedom/index.htm?year=2016&dlid=268796#wrapper. Accessed 19 May 2018.

[4] Stallings, Carol Turnbow; Hendrix, Cmdr. Bill. “Elder Holland visits Hungary, Bosnia,” LDS Church News, 24 August 1996. http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/27174/Elder-Holland-visits-Hungary-Bosnia.html

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[6] “First meetinghouse dedicated in Croatia,” LDS Church News, 20 June 2009. http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/57494/First-meetinghouse-dedicated-in-Croatia.html

[7] Avant, Gerry. “Elder Nelson pronounces blessings on six Balkan nations,” LDS Church News, 23 September 2010. http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/59902/Elder-Nelson-pronounces-blessings-on-six-Balkan-nations.html

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[9] Avant, Gerry. “Elder Nelson pronounces blessings on six Balkan nations,” LDS Church News, 23 September 2010. http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/59902/Elder-Nelson-pronounces-blessings-on-six-Balkan-nations.html

[10] Sowby, Laurie Williams. “Senoir Missionary Couples Are Making a Difference in Adriatic North Mission,” lds.org, 12 December 2017. https://www.lds.org/church/news/senior-missionary-couples-are-making-a-difference-in-adriatic-north-mission?lang=eng

[11] Avant, Gerry. “Elder Nelson pronounces blessings on six Balkan nations,” LDS Church News, 23 September 2010. http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/59902/Elder-Nelson-pronounces-blessings-on-six-Balkan-nations.html

[12] “Approved Scripture Translation Projects,” lds.org, 9 October 2017. https://www.lds.org/bc/content/ldsorg/church/news/2017/10/09/15159_000_letter.pdf?lang=eng

[13] “Around the world,” LDS Church News, 18 December 1993. http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/23440/Around-the-world.html

[14] “From around the world,” LDS Church News, 5 February 1994. http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/24202/From-around-the-world.html

[15] “Food being shipped to families in need,” LDS Church News, 3 December 1994. http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/24827/Food-being-shipped-to-families-in-need.html

[16] “Wheelchairs,” Humanitarian Services, retrieved 6 September 2010. http://lds.org/library/page/display/0,7098,6213–1–3215–1,00.html

[17] Avant, Gerry. “Elder Nelson pronounces blessings on six Balkan nations,” LDS Church News, 23 September 2010. http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/59902/Elder-Nelson-pronounces-blessings-on-six-Balkan-nations.html