



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.



Barbados

Population: 0.29 millions (#184 out of countries)

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Geography

Area: 430 square km. The easternmost island in the Caribbean, Barbados is a small island east of Saint Lucia and Saint Vincent and the Grenadines in the North Atlantic Ocean. Flat terrain occupies most the island, with some central highland areas. Warm tropical weather occurs year round, marked by a rainy season from June to October. Hurricanes and landslides are natural hazards. Environmental issues include ocean pollution, soil erosion, and improper disposal of waste. Barbados is administratively divided into eleven parishes and one city.

Peoples

Black: 92.4%

Mixed: 3.1%

White: 2.7%

East Indian: 1.3%

Other: 0.2%

Unspecified: 0.3%

Blacks are the descendants of African slaves who arrived before the 1830s. The British later brought East Indians to work on the plantations. Most Europeans are British.

Population: 293,131 (July 2018)

Annual Growth Rate: 0.26% (2018)

Fertility Rate: 1.68 children born per woman (2018)

Life Expectancy: 73.3 male, 78.1 female (2018)

Languages: Barbadian Creole English [Bajan] (95%), standard English (5%). English is the official language.

Literacy: 99.6% (2014)

History

The British arrived in the early seventeenth century to find Barbados uninhabited as Amerindian groups had likely abandoned the island. British settlers colonized the island and in 1639 established the House of Assembly, the third-oldest legislative body in the Western Hemisphere. Barbados was subject to continuous British rule until independence in 1966 and experienced a high level of autonomy during its colonial period. The sugar industry drove economic growth, with plantations staffed by African slaves. Slavery was abolished in 1834, but white British landowners and merchants continued to control local government and political affairs. East Indians arrived to work on the plantations in the nineteenth century. In the 1930s, the black population began to demand greater democratic freedoms, which came to fruition in the 1950s and 1960s. Universal adult suffrage was granted in 1951, and by 1961, Barbados gained self-governing autonomy. Barbados was included in the failed West Indies Federation from 1958 to 1962, which included nine other British islands in the Caribbean. Following independence in 1966, Barbados has achieved steady economic growth and development.

Culture

British colonial rule and influence on local culture is among the most apparent in the Caribbean on Barbados, due largely to four centuries of uninterrupted British rule. Cricket is the most popular sport, and Anglicans are the largest Christian group. Alcohol consumption rates are average, whereas tobacco cigarette consumption rates are low. Barbados has one of the largest percentages of nonreligious individuals in the Caribbean.

Economy

GDP per capita: \$18,600 (2017) [31.1% of U.S.]

Human Development Index: 0.800 (2017)

Corruption Index: 68 (2018)

One of the wealthiest Caribbean nations, Barbados historically relied on the sugar industry for economic growth. In recent years, the economy has diversified to include tourism, finance, and light manufacturing. Small petroleum and natural gas reserves and fish are natural resources. Slow or stagnant economic growth has occurred in recent years. Services account for three-quarters of the labor force and generate 88.7% of the GDP, whereas industry employs 15% of the labor force and generates 9.8% of the GDP. Primary industries include tourism, sugar, light manufacturing, and component assembly. Ten percent (10%) of the workforce and 1.5% of the GDP is attributed to agricultural activity, which consists of sugarcane, vegetable, and cotton cultivation. The United States and Trinidad and Tobago are the primary trade partners.

Transparency International has consistently ranked Barbados as one of the least corrupt countries in the Western Hemisphere. Barbados is a transshipment point for illicit drugs.

Faiths

Christian: 75.6%

Other: 2.5%

None/unspecified: 21.9%

Christians

Denominations – Members – Congregations

Anglican – 70,058

Pentecostal – 57,161

Seventh Day Adventists – 19,436 – 59

Methodist – 12,312

Roman Catholic – 11,139

Wesleyan – 9,966

Nazarene – 9,380

Church of God – 7,035

Baptist – 5,276

Moravian – 3,518

Jehovah's Witnesses – 2,496 – 30

Rastafarian – 2,931

Latter-day Saints – 1,047 – 3

Religion

Christians account for three-quarters of the population and are overwhelmingly Protestant. The largest denominations include Anglicans, Pentecostals, Seventh Day Adventists, and Methodists. Roman Catholics constitute 4% of the population. Muslims number 3,000^[1] and consist primarily of East Indians from the Indian state of Gujarat.^[2] One-fifth of the Barbadian population is unaffiliated with a religious group.^[3]

Religious Freedom

The constitution protects religious freedom, which is upheld by the government. Religious groups must register with the government to obtain tax benefits. Public education includes religious curriculum that focuses on Christianity but also studies other religious traditions. Rastafarians claim some discrimination and restrictions on religious freedom. There have been few recent reports of societal abuse of religious freedom, which have targeted Rastafarians and Jews.^[4]

Largest Towns

Urban: 31.1% (2018)

Bridgetown, **Speightstown**, Oistins, **Bathsheba**, **Holetown**.

Towns listed in **bold** have no congregations of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

Two of five most populous urban areas have a Church congregation. Thirty-eight percent (38%) of the national population resides in the five largest towns.

Church History

International Church leaders visited Barbados as early as the 1950s, but the first convert baptism did not occur until 1978, which came as a result of a convert from Scotland sharing his faith with friends. The Puerto Rico San Juan Mission opened Barbados to missionary work in September 1979. The following month, the first congregation was organized in Christ Church. Created in

1983, the West Indies Mission was originally headquartered in Barbados until 1994 when the mission relocated to Trinidad and Tobago.^[5] Seminary and institute were both operating by 1983. Elder Marvin J. Ashton dedicated the islands of the West Indies for missionary work in 1988.^[6] In 1988, the government restricted the number of missionary visas to 10, which required half of the missionaries assigned to Barbados to leave the country.^[7] In 2007, the Puerto Rico San Juan East Mission was organized and administered Barbados^[8] until the mission was discontinued in 2010. The West Indies Mission administered Barbados from 2010 until 2015 when the Barbados Bridgetown Mission was organized. The mission services most nations and dependencies in the Lesser Antilles, including Anguilla, Barbados, French Guiana, Grenada, Guadeloupe, Martinique, Saint Barthelemy, Saint Lucia, Saint-Martin/Sint Maarten, and Saint Vincent and the Grenadines. In 2018, Elder Dale G. Renlund dedicated Barbados for missionary work and attended a special district conference.^[9]

Membership Growth

Church Membership: 1,047 (2017)

Membership stood at 400 in the early 1990s. There were 557 members in 2000. Membership grew slowly in the 2000s, reaching 601 in 2003, 663 in 2006, and 696 in 2008. Membership decline occurred for two years in the 2000s in 2005 and 2009. Annual membership growth rates generally ranged from 1%– to 4% in the 2000s, and 3-6% in the 2010s. Membership reached 733 in 2010, 826 in 2011, 908 in 2014, and 1,005 in 2016.

In 2017, one in 279 was a Latter-day Saint.

Congregational Growth

Wards: 0 Branches: 3 (2018)

The first congregation was the Christ Church Branch (1979). A second congregation was organized in Black Rock (1983) and a third in Oistins (1985).^[10] A branch once operated in Speightstown, but closed in the late 1980s after a significant reduction in the number of missionaries assigned to the country.^[11] By the early 1990s, there were four branches. One of the branches was consolidated in the late 1990s. The three Barbadian branches were organized into a district in 2002. A fourth branch was recreated in 2006. In late 2010, branches functioned in Christ Church, Black Rock, Oistins, and Six Cross Roads. In 2012, the Church closed its branch in Six Cross Roads.

Activity and Retention

Full-time missionaries in 2010 reported that most active members joined the church in the late 1980s and early 1990s. Six were enrolled in seminary or institute during the 2008–2009 school year. In late 2010, there were twenty-two enrolled in institute. There were thirty who attended church in the Oistins Branch in the early 2000s. Approximately fifty attended church in the Christ Church in 2012. In the mid-2010s, approximately eighty attended the Christ Church Branch. Less than half of converts who join the Church appear to continue to attend Church one year after baptism.

Nationwide active membership is estimated at 200, or 20%.

Language Materials

Languages with Latter-day Saint Scripture: English.

All Latter-day Saint scriptures and materials are available in English.

Meetinghouses

All three branches have a meetinghouses, which consists of Church-built chapels or renovated buildings or rented spaces.

Humanitarian and Development Work

The Church has conducted twelve humanitarian projects since 1985, including eight community projects and four wheelchair donation initiatives.^[12]

Opportunities, Challenges, and Prospects

Religious Freedom

Problems existed in the late twentieth century with obtaining foreign missionary visas. However, Latter-day Saints currently face no government or societal restrictions regarding proselytism, assembly, worship, or obtaining visas for foreign full-time missionaries.

Cultural Issues

Barbados exhibits one of the most secular societies in the Caribbean, attributed to consistent cultural influence from the United Kingdom and economic prosperity. Full-time missionaries report challenges addressing widespread alcohol use and proselytizing the nonreligious population. Church-going Barbadians are difficult for Latter-day Saints to reach due to their strong social connections with their respective churches.

National Outreach

Mission outreach potentially reaches the majority of the Barbadian population, as 63% of the national population resides in the three administrative parishes with branches (Christ Church, St. Michael, and St. Philip). Full-time missionaries may occasionally work in other nearby parishes, but not on a systematic basis. Of the eight parishes that have no mission outreach centers, two (St. Andrew and St. James) have populations greater than St. Philip Parish, which is the parish with the smallest population with a branch. The remaining six parishes have small populations with fewer than 20,000 inhabitants each and are unlikely to have individual mission outreach centers established due to low receptivity, close proximity to parishes with a Church presence, and limited missionary resources. St. Andrew appears to be the most favorable location for the establishment of an additional congregation due to the large population (21% of the national population) and its location on the other side of the island from other branches. The Church performs no Internet outreach tailored to Barbados but has an ample supply of English-language materials and scriptures online. Internet outreach addressing specific local cultural and religious conditions may improve church growth prospects over time.

Even though the Church organized its own mission headquartered in Barbados in 2015, there has not appeared to have been any efforts to expand outreach in lesser-reached or unreached communities. Instead, additional mission resources and mission president oversight have focused on strengthening the remaining three branches on Barbados, and supervision the Church in ten additional countries or dependencies. The large geographical area of the mission and frequent travel by mission leadership between islands and countries exacts significant resources.

Member Activity and Convert Retention

Latter-day Saints achieved the greatest progress on convert retention in the 1980s and early 1990s, as full-time missionaries report many currently active members joined the Church at that time. Increase in active membership likely influenced the administrative decision to create a fourth branch in 2006, but convert retention rates appeared to decline in the 1990s and 2000s. Issues that may have created greater challenges to retain new converts compared to the 1980s and early 1990s include integrating new converts into socially tight-knit congregations of older Latter-day Saints, increasing secularism in society, and no noticeable progress in expanding national outreach.

Ethnic Issues and Integration

The relatively homogenous black population experiences few ethnic integration challenges. No ethnic integration issues have been reported at church for Latter-day Saints in Barbados.

Language Issues

No proselytism materials are translated into English-based Creoles spoken in the Caribbean. Standard English is widely used, reducing the need for materials in Barbadian Creole English, which is spoken by fewer than 300,000, but is nonetheless the primary language of Barbados.

Missionary Service

North American full-time missionaries appear to constitute the bulk of the full-time missionary force on Barbados. Local member activity rates rank among the lowest in the Caribbean, as indicated by poor seminary and institute attendance and few members serving full-time missions. Greater emphasis on seminary and institute, youth-oriented outreach initiatives, and local member involvement in teaching and reactivating Latter-day Saint youth will be required to achieve greater self-sufficiency in the

Barbadian full-time missionary force. Multiple missionary companionships are assigned to individual branches, which has likely created greater challenges with local leadership development as full-time missionaries undertake local leadership and member responsibilities. For example, one of the three branches had three missionary companionships assigned in early 2016.

Leadership

Barbados has self-sustaining local church leadership capable of staffing district and branch callings despite having fewer than 1,000 total Latter-day Saints and low member activity rates. Each of the island's three branches appears to have local branch presidents. Missionaries in the past have reported some challenges for branch presidents to unite members. Branch presidencies in the past may have lacked sufficient training and mentoring from mission leaders due to distance from mission headquarters in Trinidad and Tobago. The creation and dissolution of branches illustrates challenges maintaining sustainability.

Temple

Barbados pertains to the Caracas Venezuela Temple district although members usually attend the Santo Domingo Dominican Republic Temple. Temple trips likely occur infrequently on a district basis due to distance to the temple, travel expenses, few active members, and challenges obtaining needed travel documentation and visas. Prospects for a future temple closer to Barbados appear unlikely in the medium term due to the small number of members in the region.

Comparative Growth

Membership growth in Barbados ranked slower than most Caribbean nations in the 2000s, but Barbados remains one of the few small island Caribbean nations with a functioning district. Membership growth rates in the 2010s have been average or slightly higher than most nations in the region. Several Caribbean nations with fewer than 1,000 members had their districts discontinued in the late 2000s and in 2010, including St. Kitts and Nevis, Aruba, and the Bahamas, although both Aruba and the Bahamas have since had districts reinstated. The percentage of Latter-day Saints in the general population is comparable to the regional average and is similar to Curacao and Grenada. Barbados has historically had one of the lowest percentages of members enrolled in seminary or institute worldwide. Member activity and congregational growth rates compare to most Caribbean nations.

Missionary-minded Christian denominations have more members than The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints and generally have achieved stronger and more consistent church growth. Many of these groups have operated on Barbados for decades longer than Latter-day Saints and take a church-planting and member-missionary approach to proselytism. Seventh-Day Adventists have functioned since the 1920s and today number among the largest denominations with over 19,000 members and nearly 60 churches. Jehovah's Witnesses have experienced greater success in Barbados than in many other Caribbean nations. However, Witnesses have reported stagnant growth for the past decade.

Future Prospects

The experience of the Church in Barbados demonstrates that contrary to some expectations, developed local church leadership, political stability, and a traditionally Christian population do not guarantee favorable church growth conditions. The majority of active Barbadian members have become entrenched in the Church, resulting in poor member-missionary participation and slow church growth. Furthermore, member activity rates have appeared to decrease from 30% to 20% within the past decade as most new converts baptized during this time have not been retained. Reliance on full-time missionaries for finding, teaching, and baptizing new converts has appeared to decrease retention rates for new converts. Although the Church organized a new mission headquartered in Barbados in 2015, there has not appeared to have been measurable progress achieved with strengthening the Church or accelerating growth based upon metrics available such as church-reported membership and the number of congregations. Additionally, full-time missionary reports indicate only modest increases in the number of people who attend Church, and it is unclear whether these increases have occurred in all three branches or only in the Christ Church Branch. Increasing the number of retained new converts and the establishment of congregations in additional areas of the island such as Speightstown will be necessary to reverse stagnant church growth trends sustained over the past 2-3 decades.

[1] "Barbados," International Religious Freedom Report for 2017. Accessed 18 February 2019. <https://www.state.gov/j/drl/rls/irf/religiousfreedom/index.htm?year=2017&dlid=281048#wrapper>

[2] "Barbados," International Religious Freedom Report 2010, 17 November 2010. <http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/irf/2010/148734.htm>

[3] "Barbados," International Religious Freedom Report for 2017. Accessed 18 February 2019. <https://www.state.gov/j/drl/rls/irf/religiousfreedom/index.htm?year=2017&dlid=281048#wrapper>

[4] "Barbados," International Religious Freedom Report for 2017. Accessed 18 February 2019. <https://www.state.gov/j/drl/rls/irf/religiousfreedom/index.htm?year=2017&dlid=281048#wrapper>
<http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/irf/2010/148734.htm>

[5] "Barbados," Country Profile, retrieved 8 December 2010. <http://beta-newsroom.lds.org/country/barbados>

[6] "Barbados," Deseret News 2010 Church News Almanac, p. 429.

[7] Crockett, David R. "History of the Church in Barbados." Accessed 18 February 2019. <http://www.crockettclan.org/www/barbados.html>

[8] "New missions bring total to 347 New Missions," LDS Church News, 10 February 2007. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/50112/New-missions-bring-total-to-347-New-missions.html>

[9] Lloyd, R. Scott. "Elder Renlund Dedicates Barbados, Visits Caribbean Nations," Church News. 2 March 2018. <https://lds.org/church/news/elder-renlund-dedicates-barbados-visits-caribbean-nations?lang=eng#3312057686>

[10] "Barbados," Deseret News 2010 Church News Almanac, p. 429.

[11] Crockett, David R. "History of the Church in Barbados." Accessed 18 February 2019. <http://www.crockettclan.org/www/barbados.html>

[12] "Where We Work," LDS Charities. Accessed 18 February 2019. <https://www.ldscharities.org/where-we-work>