



# 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.



## Antigua and Barbuda

Population: 0.09 millions (#204 out of countries)

By David Stewart and Matt Martinich

### Geography

**Area:** 442.6 square km. Antigua and Barbuda is located in the Caribbean east of Puerto Rico and comprises the small islands of Antigua and Barbuda. Low-lying coral-based terrain occupies most areas with some volcanic hills. Tropical maritime climate prevails year round. Hurricanes, tropical storms, and droughts are natural hazards. Environmental issues include fresh water scarcity and deforestation. Antigua and Barbuda is administratively divided into six parishes and two dependencies.

### Peoples

Black: 87.3%

Mixed: 4.7%

Hispanic: 2.7%

White: 1.6%

Other: 2.7%

Unspecified: 1.0%

**Population:** 95,882 (July 2018)

**Annual Growth Rate:** 1.2% (2018)

**Fertility Rate:** 1.99 children born per woman (2018)

**Life Expectancy:** 74.8 male, 79.2 female (2018)

**Languages:** Antigua and Barbuda Creole English (70%), standard English (29%), other (1%). Antigua and Barbuda Creole

English displays many linguistic similarities with other English Creoles in the Caribbean.

**Literacy:** 99% (2012)

## History

It is believed that the Siboney Amerindians settled Antigua as early as 2400 BC. Arawaks replaced the Siboney and populated the islands when Christopher Columbus landed in 1493 on his second voyage. In 1632, the English began colonizing the islands and later in the seventeenth century established sugar plantations staffed by African slaves who were emancipated in 1834. Poor economic and labor conditions continued until the mid-twentieth century due to lack of available land, an agriculturally-based economy, and no access to credit. A trade union movement between Antigua and Barbuda began in 1939 that brought about political change in the following decades.<sup>[1]</sup> Independence from the United Kingdom occurred in 1981. Queen Elizabeth II is considered the head of state and Antigua and Barbuda pertains to the British Commonwealth of Nations. In 2017, Hurricane Irma devastated Barbuda, resulting in the destruction of nearly all structures on the island.

## Culture

British and American culture is highly represented in local culture. Most attend church on a regular basis. Cricket is the most popular sport. Corn, sweet potatoes, rice, fish, and fruit are common foods.<sup>[2]</sup> Alcohol consumption rates compare to the worldwide average alcohol consumption rate.

## Economy

**GDP per capita:** \$26,400 (2017) [44.1% of U.S.]

**Human Development Index:** 0.780

**Corruption Index:** N/A

Tourism drives the economy, generating 60% of the GDP. With few natural resources, Antigua and Barbuda will remain dependent on the tourism industry to grow the economy. Limited water and a small workforce limit agricultural output, and hurricanes and tropical storms can damage the economy. Significant damage occurred after hurricanes in 2017. Services generated 77.3% of the GDP and employ 82% of the workforce, whereas industry generates 20.8% of the GDP and accounts for 11% of the workforce. Tourism, construction, and light manufacturing are the primary industries. Common crops include cotton, fruits, vegetables, coconuts, and sugarcane. Poland and the United States are the primary trade partners.

Corruption is less apparent than in most Caribbean nations. Antigua and Barbuda is a transshipment point for illicit drugs destined for the United States and Europe. There have been isolated reports of government corruption in recent years.<sup>[3]</sup> Human trafficking is a significant concern as Antigua is a destination and transit country for adults and children exploited for the sex trade and forced labor.

## Faiths

Christian: 93%

Other/unspecified: 7%

## Christians

### Denominations Members Congregations

Anglican – 16,875

Pentecostal – 11,697

Seventh Day Adventists – 9,412 – 32

Moravian – 7,958

Roman Catholic – 7,862

Methodist – 5,369

Wesleyan Holiness – 4,315

Church of God – 3,931

Baptist – 3,452

Jehovah's Witnesses – 479 – 7

Latter-day Saints – 237 – 1

## Religion

Most of the population is Christian and regularly attend church. There is a high degree of pluralism among Christians as the largest Christian denomination, the Anglican Church, accounts for 26% of the population. Other prominent Christian groups include Methodists, Moravians, and Catholics. At most recent report, there are between 1,000 and 1,500 Rastafarians, over 200 Muslims, almost 200 Hindus, and approximately 50 Baha'is.[\[4\]](#)

## Religious Freedom

The constitution protects religious freedom, which is upheld by the government. There is no state religion, and the government maintains strong ties with the Antigua Christian Council. The government does not require religious groups to register, but religious groups must incorporate to own property, enjoy tax-exempt status, and receive other duty-free concessions. Rastafarians complain that marijuana use is illegal and that they are sometimes discriminated against. There have been no recent reported societal abuses of religious freedom.[\[5\]](#)

## Largest Cities

### Urban: 24.6% (2018)

St. John's, **All Saints**, **Liberta**, **Potters Village**, **Bolans**.

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

One of the five most populous settlements has a Church congregation. Forty-five percent (45%) of the national population resides in the five largest settlements. Over 98% of the national population resides on Antigua.

## Church History and Background

In 1984, West Indies Mission president Kenneth Zabriskie visited St. John's, Antigua and received permission to assign full-time missionaries. Later that year, the first missionaries were assigned, and the first convert was baptized.[\[6\]](#) The sole branch was organized the following year in St John's.[\[7\]](#) As many as six missionaries were assigned to Antigua by the late 1980s. Seminary and institute began in the 1990s. Some Latter-day Saints were among those who lost employment and housing as a result of hurricanes Luis and Marilyn in 1995.[\[8\]](#) The Church donated approximately \$10,000 for hurricane victims in 1995.[\[9\]](#) In 2002, some members from Antigua traveled to Trinidad to meet Church President Gordon B. Hinckley in 2002.[\[10\]](#) In 2007, Antigua and Barbuda was assigned to the newly created Puerto Rico San Juan East Mission.[\[11\]](#) In 2010, the islands were assigned to the Puerto Rico San Juan Mission.

There were approximately 70 members in 1995.[\[12\]](#) Membership totaled 112 by year-end 2000. During the 2000s membership slowly increased to 140 in 2002, 172 in 2005, and 181 in 2008. Stagnant growth or a slight decline in membership occurred during 2006 and 2007. Stagnant or very slow membership growth rates persisted into the 2010s. Church membership totaled 189 in 2010, 196 in 2014, and 237 in 2017. In 2017, one in 400 was a Latter-day Saint.

The St. John's Branch meets in a Church-built meetinghouse that is centrally located in St. John's. The branch also services

the islands of Barbuda and Montserrat. A local member appeared to lead the branch in early 2019. Twenty-four were enrolled in seminary or institute during the 2008–2009 school year. Nationwide active membership is estimated at between eighty and one hundred, or 35-40%. The St John's Branch is assigned to the Santo Domingo Dominican Republic Temple district. In 2014, there was one young missionary companionship assigned to the branch. In the mid-2010s, one senior missionary couple served on the island as member/leader support missionaries.

## **Opportunities**

Latter-day Saints benefit from full religious freedom to worship, proselyte, and assemble. Foreign full-time missionaries do not appear to face any restrictions. The high degree of religious plurality in Antigua reduces challenges for Latter-day Saints to assimilate in the local culture. The St. John's Branch is the only mission outreach center on Antigua and reaches at least 32% of the national population. With the opening of a few additional congregations in the most populous, lesser-reached urban locations such as All Saints, nearly the entire population would reside within five kilometers of a Church congregation. The Church has developed an ample supply of English-language Internet resources, yet none of these materials have been customized to the needs of the population of Antigua and Barbuda or other English-speaking Caribbean nations. Membership growth grates have been slow, but Antigua has achieved higher member activity rates than many other Caribbean nations, likely due to strong member involvement in proselytism and the teaching of investigators and new converts; the development of regular church attendance habits before baptism; and independence and self-sufficiency that has arisen from isolation from mission leadership. The homogenous black population experiences no significant ethnic integration issues. Standard English is widely spoken and understood, reducing the need for Creole language materials although there are approximately 120,000 speakers of Antigua and Barbuda English Creole worldwide. The informal usage of the Creole further reduces any likelihood of future translations.

## **Challenges**

Although regular church attendance and interest in religion remain high, receptivity to the Church is modest, as most are shepherded into the many denominations on the islands to which they are socially and religiously bound. Most know little about Latter-day Saint teachings and beliefs and do not personally know a Latter-day Saint. Few local leaders, moderate member activity rates, a small population, and limited missionary resources allocated challenge any advances in expanding national outreach in the coming years. Few, if any, local members have served full-time missions. Local leadership remains limited and able to staff only one congregation at present. It will be necessary for male Latter-day Saints to receive the priesthood, maintain regular church attendance, serve full-time missions, and remain in their home country for additional congregations to be organized. Organized temple trips likely do not occur, and members appear to attend on an individual or family basis. The future San Juan Puerto Rico Temple will likely service Antigua and Barbuda and reduce travel times, but may not provide full accessibility due to visa requirements.

## **Comparative Growth**

Like Grenada, St. Kitts and Nevis, and Martinique, Antigua and Barbuda has followed the predictable pattern of Church growth for Caribbean islands with fewer than 400 members as membership increased between 30% and 70% during the 2000s, and one or no new congregations were organized. Member activity rates in Antigua appear higher than average for the region.

With the exception of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, all other major missionary-minded Christian groups have a strong presence in Antigua and have functioned for many decades. Generally, with few members and limited outreach in the Caribbean, Jehovah's Witnesses have had a robust community of nearly 500 active members organized into seven congregations since as early as 2009. However, the number of Witnesses and number of Witness congregations has remained unchanged during the past decade. Seventh-Day Adventists rank among the island's largest denominations and operate thirty-two congregations.

## **Future Prospects**

With a small population and few mission outreach resources dedicated, Antigua and Barbuda has demonstrated consistent but slow membership growth in recent years. Infrequent interaction with international Church leaders and reliance on local members to operate the Church have facilitated moderate member activity rates and self-reliance. Growth in the number of active members and local leadership development may lead to the organization of a second congregation on Antigua over the medium term.

- [1] "Background Note: Antigua and Barbuda," Bureau of Western Hemisphere Affairs, 15 July 2010.  
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- [3] "Antigua and Barbuda," Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor 2006," 6 March 2007.  
<http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/hrrpt/2006/78876.htm>
- [4] "Antigua and Barbuda," International Religious Freedom Report 2010," 17 November 2010.  
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- [5] "Antigua and Barbuda," International Religious Freedom Report for 2017," 18 February 2019.  
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- [6] "Antigua and Barbuda," Country Profile, retrieved 21 January 2011.  
<http://beta-newsroom.lds.org/country/antigua-and-barbuda>
- [7] "Antigua and Barbuda," Deseret News 1995–96 Church Almanac, p. 193.
- [8] Weaver, Sarah Jane. "Extensive hurricane damage, but LDS safe," LDS Church News, 30 September 1995.  
<http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/26611/Extensive-hurricane-damage-but-LDS-safe.html>
- [9] Weaver, Sarah Jane. "'Strong partnership' shared by Church, Red Cross," LDS Church News, 6 June 1998.  
<http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/30431/Strong-partnership-shared-by-Church-Red-Cross.html>
- [10] "Visit to West Indies because 'We love you,'" LDS Church News, 1 June 2002.  
<http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/41901/Visit-to-West-Indies-because-We-love-you.html>
- [11] "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>
- [12] "Antigua and Barbuda," Country Profile, retrieved 21 January 2011.  
<http://beta-newsroom.lds.org/country/antigua-and-barbuda>