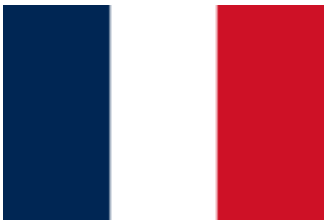


Reaching the Nations International Church Growth Almanac

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.



Saint Martin

Population: 0.03 millions (#222 out of countries)

By David Stewart and Matt Martinich

Geography

Area: 88.4 square km (Saint Martin: 54.4 square km, Sint Maarten: 34 square km). The smallest island divided between two countries in the world, Saint Martin and Sint Maarten are located in the Caribbean Sea between the Virgin Islands and Antigua and Barbuda and Saint Kitts and Nevis. The island is subject to tropical marine climate moderated by trade winds. Terrain is hilly and low-laying. Hurricanes are a natural disaster. Saint Martin is an overseas collectivity of France, whereas Sint Maarten is a constituent country of the Netherlands.

Peoples

Creole (mulatto) [mixed black African and other races]

Black African

Mestizo

White

East Indian

There are no reliable estimates of the ethnic breakdown of the population.

Population: Saint Martin: 32,284; Sint Maarten: 42,677 (July 2018)

Annual Growth Rate: Saint Martin: N/A; Sint Maarten**:** 1.39% (2018)

Fertility Rate: Saint Martin: N/A; Sint Maarten: 2.04 children born per woman (2018)

Life Expectancy: Saint Martin: N/A; Sint Maarten: 76.1 male, 80.9 female (2018)

Languages: Saint Martin: Creole English (44%), English (16%), French (10%), unspecified/other: (30%) Sint Maarten: English

(67.5%), Spanish (12.9%), Creole (8.2%), Dutch (4.2%), Papiamento (2.2%), French (1.5%), other (3.5%). English and Dutch are the official languages. English is the most commonly spoken language on both sides of the island.

Literacy: Saint Martin: 90% (2017); Sint Maarten: 87% (2017)

History

The Spanish claimed the island of Saint Martin in the late fifteenth century, and the Dutch overtook the island in 1631. Spain recaptured the island in 1633 but ultimately ceded it to the Dutch and French, who divided it between themselves in 1648. Conflict regarding the demarcation of the border persisted in the subsequent centuries between France and the Netherlands. African slaves were introduced in the late eighteenth century to work on sugar, cotton, and tobacco plantations. The French abolished slavery in 1848, and the Dutch abolished slavery in 1863. The economy transitioned from agriculture to tourism in the mid-to late twentieth century. Saint Martin voted to secede from Guadeloupe in 2003 and became an overseas collectivity of France in 2007. Sint Maarten originally pertained to the Netherland Antilles and became its own constituent country in 2010. Hurricane Irman damaged much of the infrastructure and 90% of the buildings on the island in 2017.

Culture

Tourism is the primary influence on island culture, as it is the backbone of the economy. Agriculture and Christianity were the traditional influences on local culture. Influence from Western Europe is strong and secularism has spread. Cuisine is diverse and commonly includes East Indian and Caribbean dishes. Alcohol consumption rates appear higher than the world average.

Economy

GDP per capita: Saint Martin: $19,300 (2005); Sint Maarten: $66,800 (2014)

Human Development Index: N/A

Corruption Index: N/A

Tourism drives the economy in both Saint Martin and Sint Maarten as 80%–85% of the labor force is employed in tourism. Over one million tourists visit the island annually. Saint Martin is believed to have the highest per capita income in the Caribbean and Sint Maarten has the highest per capita income among the five islands that comprised the former Netherland Antilles. Sugar is the primary agricultural product. Major industries include tourism, manufacturing, light industry, and heavy industry. Trade appears to primarily occur with East Asia, North America, and the Middle East. Corruption appears lower than most islands in the Lesser Antilles.

Faiths

Saint Martin: N/A

Sint Maarten

Christian: 82.2%

Hindu: 5.2%

Muslim/Jewish: 1.1%

Other: 1.3%

None: 7.9%

Unknown: 2.3%

Christians

Denominations – Members – Congregations

Catholic – 34,000

Seventh Day Adventists – 3,361 – 13

Evangelicals (only Saint Martin) – 972

Jehovah's Witnesses – 661 – 10

Latter-day Saints – 251 – 1

Religion

Catholicism is the traditional religious tradition, although the number of church-going Catholics appears to have declined in recent years, as materialism and wealth have increased. Protestants outnumber Catholics in Sint Maarten. Fifteen percent (15%) of the Sint Maarten population is Pentecostal. Seventh-Day Adventists are one of the largest Christian denominations on the island and primarily concentrated in Sint Maarten.

Religious Freedom

The constitutions of France and the Netherlands protect religious freedom, which is upheld by both governments. There have been no reports of significant societal abuse of religious freedom in either Saint Martin or Sint Maarten.

Largest Cities

Urban: Saint Martin: N/A; Sint Maarten: 100% (2018)

Lower Princess Quarter, Cul De Sac, Cole Bay, Upper Princess Quarter, Marigot**, Little Bay,** Phillipsburg.

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

The sole Church congregation operates within easy access of two of the seven most populous settlements.

Church History and Background

The first known Latter-day Saints to live on the island of Saint Martin arrived in the early 1980s from Guadeloupe. The island was assigned to the West Indies Mission and the first branch was organized in 1984 in Saint Martin. Full-time missionaries were first assigned in 1984. During the late 1980s, two branches functioned on the island, one on the French-side and one of the Dutch-side. In 1992, the two branches were consolidated into the Phillipsburg Branch.[1] The Marigot Branch was organized sometime in the 2000s and both branches were again consolidated into a single branch in 2011 based in Phillipsburg, Sint Maarten. The Phillipsburg Branch also administers Anguilla, Saba, and Saint Barthelemy. The island of Saint Martin was reassigned to the newly organized Barbados Bridgetown Mission in 2015. The branch was previously assigned to the Guadeloupe District, but returned to the direct supervision of the mission sometime in the late 2010s. The branch meets in a church-build meetinghouse in Cole Bay. A local member appeared to lead the branch as of early 2019. In 2016, a local member ran for public office. The branch is assigned to the Santo Domingo Dominican Republic Temple district.

Membership growth has been slow since the initial establishment of the Church. Church membership totaled 138 in 1999, 229 in 2004, and 202 in 2008. In 2010, there were 57 members in Saint Martin and 212 members in Sint Maarten. Membership totaled 230 in 2012, 260 in 2014, and 251 in 2017. In 2017, one in 299 was a Latter-day Saint.

Returned missionaries reported approximately forty active members in Saint Martin in the early 2000s. Active membership in the Marigot Branch was twenty in the late 2000s. There were approximately one hundred active members as of 2015. Current active membership appears no greater than 120, or 45%–50% of church membership on records. There were seven full-time missionaries assigned to Saint Martin in 2017.[2] Convert baptisms occur regularly and prospective members often attend church meetings and activities. Generally one senior missionary couple serves on the island to provide leadership and member support.

Opportunities

The small geographic size of the island requires few congregations to adequately reach the majority of the population. With the exception of Creole, all commonly spoken local languages have Church materials available. Widespread use of English simplifies missionary activity and facilitates member integration into congregations despite ethnic and cultural differences. There are no legal restrictions infringing on the religious freedom of members and missionaries. Religious plurality among Christians encourages integration into the Christian community and acceptance of the Church along with other nontraditional Christian faiths. Most have a background in Christianity, facilitating understanding and application of developed teaching approaches. Isolation from mission leadership has likely facilitated self-sufficiency notwithstanding few members, as indicated by one of the highest member activity rates in the Caribbean. The Church in Saint Martin and Sint Maarten appeared among the most self-sufficient among islands in the Lesser Antilles. The consolidation of the two branches presents challenges for extending outreach to both halves of the island albeit missionaries continue to be assigned to the most densely populated areas on both the Dutch and French sides of the island.

Challenges

Secularism, materialism, strong ties to local churches, and competition for converts among a tiny population present obstacles for mission outreach. The island's tiny population with few local members providing leadership and missionary manpower limit potential mission resources that may be allocated. Many Latter-day Saints appear to live temporarily on the island and provide no long-term support in building the Church. The local Latter-day Saint community is comparatively small and likely faces challenges with few resources to provide fellowshipping to new converts. Seminary or institute provide opportunities for youth-focused outreach and missionary preparation.

Future Prospects

The outlook for Church growth in Saint Martin and Sint Maarten appears mixed. Although the number of members who attend church appeared to significantly increase in the early and mid 2010s from levels reported in the 2000s, low receptivity, a tiny population, and few local Latter-day Saints pose challenges for future growth. There has been no noticeable increase in church membership for more than one decade. Furthermore, the Church is unable to support a separate branch for the French side of the island. Nevertheless, good member activity rates are encouraging even with steady numbers of converts who join the Church. The reestablishment of a branch on the French side of the island may occur if there are increases in active membership and qualified local leaders.

[1] "St. Maarten," Deseret News 2011 Church Almanac, p. 542–543.

[2] "Getting their message out: Missionaries on a Mission." The Daily Herald. 14 July 2017. https://www.thedailyherald.sx/supplements/weekender/67675-getting-their-message-out-missionaries-on-a-mission