

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.



Senegal

Population: 13.64 millions (#73 out of countries)

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Geography
Area: 169,722 square km. Located on the Atlantic coast and the westernmost portion of continental African, Senegal borders Mauritania, Mali, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, and The Gambia. Senegal almost completely surrounds The Gambia with the exception of where the Gambia River enters the ocean. Other important rivers include the Senegal River – which forms the boundary with Mauritania – and the Casamance River in the south. The climate consists of hot weather which is subject to a rainy season from May to November and a dry season from December to April. Low plains and some hills account for most the terrain. Flooding and droughts are natural hazards. Environmental issues include poaching, deforestation, overgrazing, soil erosion, desertification, and overfishing. Senegal is divided into 14 administrative regions.

Population: 14,086,103 (July 2010)
Annual Growth Rate: 2.68% (2010)
Fertility Rate: 4.86 children born per woman (2010)
Life Expectancy: 57.48 male, 61.34 female (2010)

Peoples
Wolof: 43.3%
Pular: 23.8%
Serer: 14.7%
Jola: 3.7%
Mandinka: 3%
Soninke: 1.1%
European and Lebanese: 1%
Other: 9.4%

Most Senegalese are from West Bantoid ethnic groups. The Wolof are the largest ethnic group and reside in western Senegal near Dakar. Serer also reside in western Senegal just north of The Gambia. Pular live in northeastern areas. Jola are primarily found in southern Senegal. Mandinka and Soninke are both Mande ethnic groups and populate the interior between the Gambia and Mali.

Languages: Wolof (33%), Pular dialects (25%), Mandinka dialects (10%), Serer-Sine (10%), Jola-Kasa (3%), other (19%). French is the official language. 37 native languages are spoken. Languages with over one million speakers include Wolof (3.93 million), Pular dialects (2.9 million), and Serer-Sine (1.13 million).
Literacy: 39.3% (2002)

History
Senegal has been populated for several millennia. Islam spread to the region around 1000 AD and neighboring African kingdoms to the east generally ruled the region until the arrival of Europeans in the 15th century. The French established a colonial presence which lasted for several hundred years until the 1950s. Following independence from France, Senegal and French Sudan joined to create the Mali Federation in 1960 which operated only a few months until Senegal declared independence. Senegal has developed one of the most peaceful and stable governments in all of Africa since independence and frequently mediates with international peacekeeping. Separatist movements have occurred over the past several decades in the Casamance region between Guinea-Bissau and the Gambia as this region has a small Wolof presence and fewer

adherents of Islam.

Culture
Daily life and society are often influenced by Islam. Senegal is known for its unique and influential musical heritage of mbalax – a popular form of dance and music which draws upon European and indigenous sources. Several Senegalese musicians are well-known for their work. Rice, fish, and vegetables are common food staples. Cigarette and alcohol consumption rates are lower than most nations. Polygamy is practiced in many areas.

Economy
GDP per capita: $1,600 (2009) [3.45% of US]
Human Development Index: 0.464
Corruption Index: 3.0
The economy remains reliant on foreign assistance for improvements in infrastructure and extracting natural resources. Economic reform in the 1990s has reduced inflation and some other economic problems frequently experienced in developing nations. Current projects which have received funding or investment from overseas include modernizing Dakar's sea port and constructing modern roads in the interior. The percentage of unemployed and those living below the poverty line remain high at 48% and 54%, respectively. Agriculture employs over three-quarters of the workforce and produces 14% of the GDP. Primary crops include peanuts, millet, corn, sorghum, and rice. Nearly two-thirds of the GDP originates from services. Major industries include mining, food processing, and fertilizer production. Primary trade partners include France, Mali, the United Kingdom, and India.

Corruption is generally regarded as widespread. A lack of government transparency remains a forefront problem. Some improvement and efforts to reduce corruption have occurred recently. Illegal drugs from Latin America and Southeast Asia destined for Europe and North America are trafficked through Senegal.

Faiths
Muslim: 94%
Christian: 5%
Indigenous beliefs: 1%

Christians
Denominations Members Congregations
Catholic 300,000
Jehovah's Witnesses 1,086 26
Seventh-Day Adventists 499 3
Latter-Day Saints less than 20 0

Religion
Over 90% of thepopulation is Muslim. Christians comprise of most of the non-Muslims and consist primarily of Catholics but also include Protestants and syncretic Christian groups. Followers of indigenous religious beliefs account for one to two percent of the population.[1]

Religious Freedom
Persecution Index:
The constitution protects religious freedom which is typically preserved through established government laws and policies. The law does not allow for the abuse of religious freedom or discrimination by government or individuals. There is no state religion. Muslims may choose to follow Islam-based laws concerning family. Both Muslim and Christian holidays are observed by the government. Registration for religious groups is usually granted and only rejected if a legal basis can be provided. Registered religious groups operate independently from the government and can own property, conduct business transactions, and receive many tax benefits. Private schools may teach their own religious curriculum. Government assists in funding the travel expenses for Muslims and Catholics making pilgrimages. No recent societal abuses of religious freedom have been reported.[2]

Largest Cities
Urban: 42%
Dakar, Grand Dakar, Thiès Nones, Saint-Louis, Ziguinchor, Tiébo, Mbaké, Kolda, Richard Toll, Joal-Fadiout.
Cities listed in **bold** have no nearby LDS congregation

None 10 of the largest cities have an LDS congregation. 41% of the national population lives in the 10 largest cities.

LDS History
Senegal became part of the Africa West Area in 1998.[3] In 2004, a Church member lived in Senegal for a couple months assisting the government on improving cultural and political conditions.[4] There has never been an official LDS presence in Senegal. Some Senegalese immigrants have received some mission outreach in the United States, particularly in Indianapolis.

Membership Growth
LDS Membership: less than 20 (2009)
Any LDS members living in Senegal are foreigners living temporarily for business or natives who joined the Church elsewhere and returned home.

Congregational Growth
Branches: 0
In 2010, the Church reported no organized congregations.

Language Materials

Languages with LDS Scripture: French
All LDS scriptures and most Church materials are available in French. Materials translated into Wolof, Fulani, and Mandinka include Gospel Principles and The Prophet Joseph Smith's Testimony.

Humanitarian and Development Work
Only one humanitarian activity has been reported by the Church in Senegal since 1985. The Church provided emergency relief for victims of conflict in Dakar.[5]

Opportunities, Challenges and Prospects

Religious Freedom
No legal obstacles appear to have prevented the official establishment of the Church in Senegal. Few predominately Muslim nations entitle non-Muslims with as many rights and privileges. Other Christian denominations have an open presence and generally do not experience opposition in conducting their activities. Conflict in southern Senegal resulting from the separatist movement may hamper outreach in this region longer than in others.

Cultural Issues
The importance of Islam in everyday living for most Senegalese creates the greatest cultural barrier for missionary work. Conversion from Islam is generally frowned upon. The LDS Church can take advantage of low substance abuse rates which fall in line with Church teachings. Those participating in a polygamous relationship must end these marriages in divorce and be interviewed by a member of the mission or area presidency to be baptized.

National Outreach
The entire population remains unreached by the Church. Distance from established mission centers in West Africa has likely been a major deterrent in establishing the Church in Senegal. The greatest potential for establishing the Church will likely be with Christians – especially Catholics – in the large cities. Dakar will be instrumental in developing national outreach capabilities as many of Senegal's ethnic groups have communities in the capital and can later take the Church to their home regions.

Many Senegalese work abroad in some nations with an LDS Church presence. Missionaries and members can work with Senegalese migrant workers and immigrants in an effort to establish bring the Church to Senegal one day.

Member Activity and Convert Retention
No convert baptisms appear to have occurred in Senegal. Member activity rates and issues will most likely resemble those in the countries which members joined the Church in.

Ethnic Issues and Integration
Ethnic tensions between Wolof and a few other ethnic groups exist in some areas, especially in the south. These tensions may result in the Church targeting the most receptive ethnic group during initial mission outreach efforts.

Language Issues
Two mission outreach resources – Gospel Principles and The Prophet Joseph Smith's Testimony – are available in the native languages spoken by 68% of the population. Church materials in French allow for increased proselytism efforts among most Senegalese. However not even 40% are literate, challenging future efforts to increase convert's understanding of the Gospel, serve in leadership, and distribute church literature. Humanitarian and development programs sponsored by the Church teaching literacy may help address this issue and establish a positive relationship with locals and the government.

Missionary Service
Few if any Senegalese have served full-time missions. No missionary work had occurred in Senegal as of 2010.

Temple
Senegal belongs to the Accra Ghana Temple district.

Comparative Growth
Several other Muslim-majority nations in West Africa have no official LDS presence. Nations in West Africa which have no reported congregations and few, if any, members include Mauritania, Guinea-Bissau, Guinea, the Gambia, Niger, and Burkina Faso.

Most Christian denominations have gained relatively few converts over the years, yet nonetheless have experienced growth. Over the past decade, Seventh-day Adventists have experienced very slow membership growth rates and no increase in the number of congregations. Jehovah's Witnesses also report low increases in membership, but have increased to 26 congregations nationwide.

Future Prospects
Senegal offers the considerable opportunity of a tolerant Muslim-majority nation with wide religious freedoms and no evident legal obstacles to establishing congregations or sending missionaries. The primary limitations appear to be on the LDS side, as neither LDS mission planners nor area leaders have felt that establishing a church presence is a sufficient priority to warrant the allocation of mission resources. The plateauing of LDS missionary manpower with the decline in LDS birthrates and the primary focus of the missionary program on the United States, Latin America, and other areas with well-developed membership, may delay any formal introduction of the Church in Senegal for many more years. Although the Senegalese population has shown less receptivity to Christianity than that of some other surrounding nations, opportunities for growth are still significant and meaningful. The record from other countries demonstrates that many years are often needed to develop local church leadership and strong member-missionary programs; neglect of opportunities that could be developed with the assignment of even two or three missionary companionships may leave the LDS Church unprepared for future opportunities of greater

receptivity, in contrast to groups like the Jehovah's Witnesses and Seventh-day Adventists which continue to grow local membership, develop indigenous leadership, and expand congregational outreach. As a rapidly growing nation of more than fourteen million, Senegal warrants greater consideration for LDS outreach from the standpoint of scriptural mandate, strategic importance, and humanitarian concern, in contrast to many much smaller areas where the Church has chosen to send missionaries, or to stagnant congregations in established areas where missionaries have made little difference.

[1] "Senegal," International Religious Freedom Report 2009, 26 October 2009.
http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/irf/2009/127252.htm
[2] "Senegal," International Religious Freedom Report 2009, 26 October 2009.
http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/irf/2009/127252.htm
[3] "5 new areas announced worldwide," LDS Church News, 4 July 1998.
http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/31389/5-new-areas-announced-worldwide.html
[4] Weaver, Sarah Jane. "Spurred to do good by religious convictions," LDS Church News, 21 February 2004.
http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/45122/Spurred-to-do-good-by-religious-convictions.html
[5] "Projects – Senegal," Humanitarian Activities Worldwide, retrieved 15 June 2010.
http://www.providentliving.org/project/0,13501,4607-1-2008-92,00.html