

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.



Ukraine

Population: 44.29 millions (#32 out of countries)

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Geography

Area: 603,550 square km. Located in Eastern Europe on the shore of the Black Sea, Ukraine is the second largest country by geographic size in Europe and borders Russia, Moldova, Romania, Hungary, Slovakia, Poland, and Belarus. Two major rivers—the Dnieper and the Dniester—flow through central and western Ukraine, respectively. The Crimean Peninsula constitutes the southernmost region, which protrudes into the Black Sea. Fertile plains and plateaus account for most the terrain, although some mountains are found in the west (the Carpathians) and on the Crimean Peninsula. Temperate climate characterized by hot summers and cold winters occurs in most areas with some Mediterranean climatic conditions experienced along the Black Sea. Environmental issues include shortages of potable water, pollution, deforestation, and radiation contamination resulting from the 1986 Chernobyl Nuclear Disaster. Ukraine is divided into twenty-four provinces, one autonomous republic, and two municipalities.

Peoples

Ukrainian: 77.8%

Russian: 17.3%

Belarusian: 0.6%

Moldovan: 0.5%

Crimean Tatar: 0.5%

Bulgarian: 0.4%

Hungarian: 0.3%

Romanian: 0.3%

Polish: 0.3%

Jewish: 0.2%

Other: 1.8%

Ukrainians are concentrated in central and western areas, whereas Russians are primarily found in the east and along Black Sea coastal areas. Ukrainian and Russian population in many areas are heavily intermixed. Other ethnic groups typically reside near the border with the nations in which their respective ethnic group is primarily found.

Population: 43,952,299 (July 2018)

Annual Growth Rate: 0.04% (2018)

Fertility Rate: 1.55 children born per woman (2018)

Life Expectancy: 67.7 male, 77.4 female (2018)

Languages: Ukrainian (57%), Russian (32%), other/unspecified (11%). Ukrainian is the official language and Russian is a regional language. Languages with over one million native speakers include Ukrainian (25 million) and Russian (14.3 million). Languages with over 100,000 speakers include Bulgarian, Crimean Tatar, Romanian, and Hungarian.

Ukrainian is an Eastern Slavic language with heavy Polish influence as well as its own unique constructs. Some 80% of Ukrainians are estimated to be bilingual in both Ukrainian and Russian. Ukrainian is the official language, although Russian continues to be widely spoken, especially in the east and south, and there have been proposals to make Russian a second official language, as most Russian-speakers are not fluent in Ukrainian. Almost all Ukrainians can speak Russian, whereas few Russians can speak or understand Ukrainian. Both Ukrainian and Russian are spoken in Kyiv.

Literacy: 99.8% (2015)

History

Ukraine was the center of the first eastern Slavic state, Kyivan Rus, which was the largest state in Europe during the tenth and eleventh centuries. Weakened by internecine quarrels and Mongol invasions, much of Kyivan Rus was incorporated into the Grand Duchy of Lithuania and eventually into the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth; the eastern and southern portions of Ukraine were ruled by the Golden Horde. The cultural and religious legacy of Kyivan Rus laid the foundation for subsequent Ukrainian ethnic identity. A new Ukrainian state, the Cossack Hetmanate, was established during the mid-seventeenth century after an uprising against the Poles. Despite continuous Muscovite pressure, the Hetmanate remained autonomous for well over one hundred years. During the latter part of the eighteenth century, most Ukrainian ethnographic territory was absorbed by the Russian Empire; the western provinces bordering Galicia were annexed by Austria-Hungary during the partitions of Poland. Following the collapse of czarist Russia in 1917, western Ukraine achieved short-lived independence (1917–20) before being annexed into the Soviet Union. During Soviet collectivization, Ukraine endured two forced famines (1921–22 and 1932–33) during which over eight million died. Another seven to eight million Ukrainians died during World War II at the hands of German and Soviet forces.

Independence from the Soviet Union occurred in 1991. Democracy and prosperity remained elusive as the legacy of state control and endemic corruption stalled efforts at economic reform, privatization, and civil liberties. A peaceful mass protest known as the Orange Revolution in the closing months of 2004 led to the overturn of election results criticized for irregularities by international observers. Viktor Yanukovych was elected president in a February 2010 run-off election that observers assessed as meeting international standards. However, parliamentary elections in 2012 were widely regarded as flawed by Western observers. Yanukovych sought stronger ties with Russia and eventually fled the country in 2014 after the government used violence to end protests in Kyiv (i.e. Euromaidan Revolution or Revolution of Dignity) which resulted in dozens of deaths.

Russian President Vladimir Putin ordered an invasion of the Crimean Peninsula in early 2014. This military annexation and occupation of Crimea was legitimized as efforts to protect ethnic Russians in the region from the Ukrainian government. Crimean remains under Russian control as of early 2019 despite international condemnation of Russian aggression in the region. Furthermore, Russia has supplied and supported rebels in eastern Ukraine. As of early 2019, Russian separatists continued to control most of Donetsk oblast and significant portions of Luhansk oblast.

Culture

Ukraine possesses a unique culture that has endured for over a thousand years. Russian and Soviet rule attempted to eliminate the indigenous cultural influences during the many years of occupation—particularly in the east and south—as evidenced by the

spread of the Russian language in these regions. Contemporary cultural and political divides largely reflect differences between the Russian-dominated East and the Polish and Austro-Hungarian legacy of the more independent West.

Ukrainian culture, architecture, music, and art have been influenced by its eastern and western neighbors. Gender roles tend to be traditional, although almost all women have worked since the Soviet era; grandparents play a greater role in raising children than in the West. Ukrainian customs are heavily influenced by Eastern Orthodox Christianity.

Orthodox Christianity remains a strong influence on native culture as does the legacy of communism from much of the twentieth century. Common foods include beef, pork, fish, chicken, and mushrooms. Pysanky—decorated Ukrainian eggs—are well-known for their designs and exquisite colors. Ukraine also boasts a rich legacy of literature, music, and dance. [1] Alcohol and tobacco cigarette consumption rates are high. Abortion is common and is often used as a form of birth control.

Economy

GDP per capita: $8,800 (2017) [14.7% of U.S.]

Human Development Index: 0.751 (2017)

Corruption Index: 30 (2017)

Ukraine's large population, fertile soil, and developed infrastructure made it one of the most productive and economically viable former Soviet republics. Ukraine produced four times as much output as the next most productive republic at the time of independence, but output dropped by 40% in the 1990s due to efforts to reform the economy and industry that previously served specialized needs for the Soviet Union. The economy remains highly sensitive and vulnerable to energy supplies and depends highly on Russia to meet these needs. Limited economic growth has occurred since independence due to political turmoil, corruption, and the challenges resulting from economic reform. In 2009, Ukraine suffered a severe recession as GDP fell by 14%. Slow economic growth occurred during the 2010s until another economic crisis that was triggered by Russia's annexation of Crimea. As a result, there was 17% decline in the GDP and inflation stood at nearly 60%. In the late 2010s, the government has collaborated with international agencies to help stabilize the economy and make needed changes to prepare for future prosperity albeit these efforts have thus far yielded few tangible results. Today Ukraine numbers among the poorest nations in Europe.

Services employ 67.8% of the workforce and produce 60.0% of the GDP, whereas industry employs 26.5% of the workforce and produces 28.6% of the GDP. Major industries include coal, electric power, metals, and machinery. The agricultural sector remains one of the strongest in Europe and employs 5.8% of the workforce and accounts for 12.2% of the GDP. Primary agricultural products include grain, sugar beets, and sunflower seeds. Underemployment and unreported unemployment are major problems. The most recent estimate for the unemployment rate is 9.2%. Primary trade partners include Russia, China, Turkey, Poland, and Germany.

Ukraine's dependence on Russia for energy supplies and the lack of significant structural reform have made the economy vulnerable to external shocks. In the early 2010s Ukraine depended on imports to meet about 75% of its annual oil and natural gas requirements and 100% of its nuclear fuel needs. After a two-week dispute that saw gas supplies cutoff to Europe, Ukraine agreed to ten-year gas supply and transit contracts with Russia in January 2009 that brought gas prices to world levels.

Corruption in Ukraine and Russia is perceived as the most widespread in Europe. Corruption, which in some cases intersects with the operations of Ukrainian and international organized crime, has reached a level that leads many Ukrainian and Western observers to describe it as a direct threat to the country's democratic development and economic prosperity.[2] Although the Orange Revolution in 2004 brought increased awareness and initiative to fight corruption, administrative corruption remains a major deterrent to foreign investment and economic development. Most tax and customs privileges were eliminated in a March 2005 budget law, bringing more economic activity out of Ukraine's large shadow economy, but more improvements are needed, including fighting corruption, developing capital markets, and improving the legislative framework. A small number of elite cartels control most the large businesses and industries. The general public typically tolerates corruption and downplays its significance. Government has historically lacked transparency and a system of checks and balances to fight and prevent corruption.[3] Only minor improvements have been made in the reduction of perceived corruption in Ukraine in the 2010s. Money laundering has been a problem that has seen some improvement. Illegal drugs are frequently trafficked through Ukraine for distribution worldwide.

Faiths

Christians: 84.8%

Jewish: 1.3%

Muslim: 0.2%

Unaffiliated: 12.6%

Unspecified: 1.1%

Christians

Denominations – Members – Congregations

Ukrainian Orthodox – 29,975.468

Ukrainian Greek Catholic – 3,428,279

Evangelicals – 1,737,245

Roman Catholic – 439,523

Jehovah's Witnesses – 138,513 – 1,522

Seventh Day Adventists – 49,441 – 1,133

Latter-day Saints – 11,167 – 48

Religion

Ukraine was Christianized by Prince Volodymyr in 988. Under Soviet rule, churches and religion were subject to suppression and political manipulation; since 1991, churches have experienced greater independence. A 2001 survey by the SOCIS research center reported that over 40% of the population claim to be atheists. A 2007 survey conducted by the Razumkov Center found that 40% of respondents identified as believers without belonging to a particular denomination, whereas 37% identified with a particular religious denomination. Twenty-five percent (25%) of respondents who identified with a particular denomination attended religious services at least once per month.[4]

Three Ukrainian Orthodox Churches operate in the country. The Ukrainian Orthodox Church-Moscow Patriachate (UOC-MP) is the largest Orthodox Christian denomination and has a significant presence in all but a few regions in the west. The Ukrainian Orthodox Church-Kyiv Patriachate (UOC-KP) is the second largest Orthodox group with members primarily concentrated in western and central Ukraine. Approximately 70% of the adherents of the Ukrainian Autocephalous Orthodox Church (UAOC)—the smallest Orthodox denomination—live in western Ukraine. The Ukrainian Greek Catholic Church (UGCC) is the largest non-Orthodox denomination, and nearly all its followers reside in western Ukraine, forming the majority in three western provinces as a legacy of historical Polish and Austro-Hungarian administration.

Estimates for the number of Muslims vary from 500,000 to two million, most of whom are Crimean Tatars. Roman Catholics tend to be Polish Ukrainians in central and western regions. Thirty percent (30%) of the religious communities nationwide are Protestant,[5] but Protestants account for approximately 1% of the population. The estimated number of ethnic Jewish Ukrainians varies between 100,000 and 300,000.[6]

Religious Freedom

The constitution protects religious freedom, which is upheld by the government. Religious groups are required to register with the government in order to participate in banking and property transactions and to publish literature. Noncitizen religious workers may proselyte and practice other religious activities under invitation of their respective religious organization and the government. In recent years, there have been some reports of societal pressures against Jews and Muslims. Minority religious groups report unequal treatment by local officials and sometimes experience difficulty registering congregations or constructing church buildings in new areas. Religious freedom is more restricted in areas controlled by Russian separatists, and rebels in these areas generally impose laws and restrictions comparable to the Russian government.[7]

Largest Cities

Urban: 69.4% (2018)

Kiev, Kharkiv, Odesa, Dnepropetrovsk , Donetsk, Zaporizhzhya, L'viv, Kryvyy Rih, Mykolayiv, Mariupol,' Luhans'k, Sevastopol,' Vinnytsya, **Makiyivka**, Simferopol,' Kherson, Poltava, Chernihiv, Cherkasy, Khmel'nyts'kyy, Zhytomyr, Chernivtsi, Sumy, Rivne, **Horlivka**, Ivano-Frankivs'k, **Dniprodzerzhyns'k**, **Kirovohrad**, Kremenchuk, **Ternopil,'** Luts'k, Bila Tserkva, **Kramators'k**, **Melitopol,' Kerch**, Uzhhorod, **Nikopol,' Berdyans'k**, **Slov"yans'k**, **Alchevs'k**, Yevpatoriya, **Pavlohrad**, **Syeverodonets'k**, Brovary, **Kamianets-Podilskyi**.

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

Thirty of the forty-five cities with over 100,000 inhabitants have congregations. Forty percent (40%) of the national population lives in the forty-seven largest cities.

Church History

Missionary work began in October 1990 when the first church meeting was held in Kyiv with seven prospective members and two missionaries.[8] The Austria Vienna East Mission first administered Ukraine and organized the first official congregation in Kyiv in June 1991 with about forty members.[9] Elder Boyd K. Packer dedicated Ukraine for missionary work in September 1991 with forty members, missionaries, and investigators present at the dedication held nearby a monument of Prince Vladimir, who introduced Christianity to Ukraine in 988 AD.[10] The Church obtained official registration with the government on September 9th, 1991.[11] The Austria Vienna East Mission was relocated to Kiev and renamed the Ukraine Kiev Mission in February 1992. At the time the mission served all of Ukraine.[12] In 1993, a second mission was organized in Donetsk, and seminary and institute began for the first time.

During the 1990s, missionary work encountered some frustrations with local governments preventing missionaries from proselytizing in additional cities. Dnepropetrovsk opened to missionary work in late 1993, and missionaries were banned from the city between 1994 and 1997; when missionaries were readmitted, tracting was not allowed, and missionaries worked primarily through member referrals, experiencing slow growth. Additionally, waning interest in the West and strengthening nationalistic ties to Orthodoxy also reduced receptivity to the Latter-day Saint gospel message.

In 2000, the Europe East Area began administering Ukraine. A third mission was to be organized in Odessa in 2000 [13] but was never created. In 2007, the Church announced the organization of a mission in Dnepropetrovsk,[14] and construction began on the Kyiv Ukraine Temple—the first to be built in the former Soviet Union.[15] The Kyiv Ukraine Temple was completed in August 2010. In 2013, a fourth mission was organized with headquarters in L'viv. The Church discontinued the Ukraine Donetsk Mission following political instability in eastern Ukraine. In 2014, the Church removed all twenty-three missionaries who were assigned to Crimea.[16]

A special gala concert was held in 2016 to celebrate the twenty-fifth anniversary of the Church in Ukraine.[17] In 2018, the Church closed the Ukraine L'viv Mission. By 2019, there were two missions headquartered in Ukraine (Kyiv and Dnepropetrovsk) and the Ukraine Kyiv Mission also serviced Moldova.

Membership Growth

LDS Membership: 11,167 (2017)

Converts rapidly joined the Church shortly after the arrival of missionaries in 1990. The Kiev Branch was organized on 9 June 1991. By the end of the month, there were forty-four members in the branch.[18]

Membership totaled 1,700 in 1993, 3,100 in 1995, and 6,369 in 1999.[19] Ninety-five converts were baptized in June 1992 in the Ukraine Kiev Mission. During 1999, the Ukraine Kiev Mission averaged seventy convert baptisms a month. Growth rates fluctuated during the 1990s, with some years having as few as five to twenty-five convert baptisms a month per mission.

By year-end 2002, there were 8,627 members, 2,700 of which lived in Kyiv.[20] Around this time period, Donetsk had around 750 members. In 2004, the Kyiv area had about 550 young single adults—sixty of whom were returned missionaries, and thirty were currently serving missions.[21]

As recently as 1999, the Ukraine Kyiv mission was baptizing at least fifty people per month, or one baptism per companionship per month. By the late 2000s, Ukrainian missions were only baptizing as many converts in a year as they had previously baptized in a month in the early 1990s. The Ukraine Kyiv mission, which is tied for second place for growth in the Europe East Area with the Russia Rostov Mission and behind only the Armenia Yerevan Mission, reported 106 baptisms in 2006, eighty-four in 2007, and seventy-six in 2008.

Membership growth slowed substantially in the 2000s as members numbered 9,499 in 2004, 10,214 in 2006, and 10,557 in

2008. The annual membership growth rate dropped from over 7% in 2001 and 2002 to between 1% and 2% in the late 2000s. In the 2010s, membership generally increased by 0-2% a year. Membership reached 11,015 in 2011 and 11,559 in 2015. The Church transferred membership records for members in Crimea to Russia in 2016, resulting in a decrease in Ukraine-reported membership to 11,097 that year.

In 2017, one in 3,943 was a Latter-day Saint.

Congregational Growth

Wards: 8 Branches: 40 (2018)

Congregations multiplied prolifically in the mid-1990s from five to over fifty between 1994 and 1998. By year-end 2000, there were fifty-eight branches functioning in Ukraine. In 2001 branches functioned in Kyiv (13), Bila Tserkva, Bogatoye, Brovary, Cherkassy, Chernihiv, Chernivtsi, Dnepropetrovsk (4), Donetsk (6), Gorlovka (2), Illichivsk, Ivano-Frankivs'k, Kharkiv (7), Lugansk, L'viv, Makiyivka (2), Mariupol, Mikolaiv, Odessa (3), Poltava, Rivne, Simferopol,' Sumy, Vinnytsya, Yevpatoriya, and Zaporizhzhya.

Three districts were organized in Kyiv and were later consolidated into one district in the early 2000s in preparation to create the Kyiv Ukraine Stake. At one time the districts administered to fifteen branches in Kyiv until the number of branches were cut in half as branches were consolidated to increase the number of active members needed to turn the congregations into wards. Additional districts were organized in Donetsk (1995), Kharkov (1996), Odessa (1997), and Dnepropetrovsk (1999). Two districts once functioned for the eastern half of Donetsk (Makeyevka Ukraine District) and in Crimea (Sevastopol Ukraine District) and were both discontinued in the early to mid-2000s.

The first and only stake—the Kyiv Ukraine Stake—was organized in May 2004 with seven wards and one branch.[22] The number of congregations declined from fifty-nine in 2001 to fifty-three in 2003 due to unit consolidations in Kyiv. One city—Uzhorod—had its sole branch discontinued. New congregations were organized in the latter half of the 2000s as the number of congregations increased to fifty-seven in 2006 and sixty-four in 2009. Many new congregations were organized in cities with recently established mission outreach centers during the 2000s such as Boryspil, Khmel'nyts'kyy, Kremenchuk, Sevastopol,' and Zhytomyr. Groups for members meeting in some cities operated in 2010 such as in Pavlohrad. During the first half of 2010, two branches were discontinued in Donetsk and Odessa.

The Church in Ukraine generally experienced a contraction in its national outreach during the 2010s. Much of this reduction in national outreach was due to political conflict in eastern Ukraine. For example, all three remaining branches in Donetsk closed in 2014 (Donetsk Central, Petrovsky, Obyedinyoni) as well as the Church's only branch in Makiivka. The only branch in Horlivka closed in 2015. As of early 2019, these cities continued to be serviced by the Donetsk Ukraine District Branch for members who assemble in member groups. Several other cities had 1-2 congregations closed during the 2010s such as Bila Tserkva, Dnepropetrovsk, Kharkiv, Kyiv, L'viv, and Odessa. Additionally, the Church closed its only branch in Boryspil in 2013. As a result, the number of official congregations in Ukraine decreased from sixty-two in 2010 to forty-seven in 2016. Despite these challenges, the Church opened new branches in several cities additional cities and villages such as Fyodorovka (2013), Kryvyi Rih (2017), and Uzhhorod (2018). Also, the Church upgraded the Bila Tservka Branch into a ward in 2018, making Bila Tservka the first city outside of Kyiv to have a ward.

The Church also underwent changes in the discontinuation and creation of districts in the 2010s. The Dnepropetrovsk Ukraine District closed in 2011, reopened in 2016, and closed again in 2018. The Odessa Ukraine Tsentralny District closed in 2015, but was reinstated in 2016. The L'viv Ukraine District was organized in 2016. By 2018, there was one stake and five districts within the sovereign territory of Ukraine.

Activity and Retention

The Church initially reported good convert retention and member activity rates during the early 1990s. The member activity rate in the Ukraine Kyiv Mission was 72% in mid-1994. However, sacrament meeting attendance in three largest cities in the Ukraine Donetsk Mission averaged 38% in early 1996. Returned missionaries from the early and mid-1990s note that convert retention rates were lowest among the earliest converts who joined the Church[23] Nationwide or regional meetings have been well attended. Five hundred attended the dedication of the first meetinghouse in Donetsk in 1998.[24] In 2002, a three-day young single adult conference had 330 in attendance.[25] Approximately 3,200 members throughout Ukraine went to significant sacrifices in travel and expenses to attend a special meeting with President Hinckley in September 2002.[26] At this time there were over 1,000 temple recommend holders.[27] In 2004, 1,100 attended the creation of the first stake in Kyiv.[28]

Most branches appear to have an average of forty to fifty active members. Around forty attended sacrament meeting in Chernivtsi in 2009. Ivano-Frankivs'k had approximately thirty active members in mid-2009. In late 2009, the Odessa Cheriomushki Branch had about fifty attending sacrament meeting, the Sykhivs'ka Branch and the L'viv branch in L'viv had about thirty active members each, the Simferopol' Branch had thirty to forty attending weekly, and Zaporizhzhya had forty active members including ten to twelve priesthood holders.

Thirty of the seventy total members in the Dnipropetrovsk Livoberezhna Branch were active in late 2009. One of the branches in central Dnipropetrovs'k had fifty attending church weekly in 2010. Yevpatoriya had about ten active members out of forty total members in mid-2010. Recently opened cities—such as Kremenchuk and Zhytomyr—appeared to have less than twenty active members in 2010. Around seventy of the 300 members on the records attended the Vynohradars'kyi Ward in the Kyiv Ukraine Stake in early 2010. Most wards in the Kyiv Ukraine Stake appear to have between seventy and 150 attending weekly. In L'viv, the number attending church in 2009 was not significantly different than in 1999, only three years after members entered the city. Members in many other cities report similar findings of only minimal growth in church attendance during the 2000s, notwithstanding considerable increases in nominal membership. During the 2008–2009 school year, 613 were enrolled in seminary or institute. In 2007, President Dale E. Anderson of the Ukraine Donetsk Mission described converts as faithful and well-retained in his mission.[29] However, the decline in congregations in the Donetsk region indicates little growth in active membership. In most areas slowing growth has not brought higher convert retention, and historically only about one-third of Ukrainian converts are retained. Even the low present rates of nominal membership increase have significantly outstripped growth in church attendance. The exodus of many young people to the West for education, work, or marriage has also limited local congregational growth.

The average number of members per congregation increased from 125 in 2000 to 168 in 2009 and 233 in 2017. In the 2010s, returned missionary estimates for convert retention one year after baptism widely varied by year and mission, but generally range from 30-70%. In the mid-2010s, most branches outside of cities where major Church centers operate generally had between 20-40 active members. In the mid-2010s, returned missionaries reported average sacrament meeting attendance by congregation as follows: Dnepr Central (80), Lugansk (50), L'viv (45), Alekseyevka [Kharkiv] (40), Brovary (40), Cherkassy Tsentralny (40), Saltovsky [Kharkiv] (40), Simferopol (40), Poltava (35), Chernivetsi (30), Obolons'ka (30), Dnepr Left Bank (25), Rivne (25), Odessa Suvorovsky (25), Vinnytsia (25), Zaporizhzhia (25), Mariupol (20), Dnepr Pobeda (15-20), Kherson (15), Uzhhorod (10), Zhytomyr (10), and Kryvyi Rih (5). In 2016, more than 1,000 members attended a special stake conference for the Kyiv Ukraine Stake with Elder M. Russell Ballard.[30]

Active membership is estimated at no greater than 25% of total membership, or 2,800 people.

Language Materials

Languages with Latter-day Saint Scripture: Ukrainian, Russian, Polish, Hungarian, Romanian, Bulgarian, Armenian.

All Latter-day Saint scriptures are available in Ukrainian, Russian, Polish, Romanian, Bulgarian, and Armenian (East). Russian, Ukrainian, Polish, and Hungarian translations of many family history, missionary, Primary, young men, priesthood, Relief Society, Sunday School, unit, and temple materials are available, whereas fewer translations of these materials in Romanian, Bulgarian, and Armenian (East) are available. The Liahona has twelve issues a year in Hungarian, Russian and Ukrainian, six in Romanian, and four in Polish, Bulgarian, and Armenian (East). Ukrainian, Russian, Polish, Hungarian, and Bulgarian have several audio/visual materials and CES student manuals translated. The Church has translated few materials into Belarusian, including the Articles of Faith, The Testimony of the Prophet Joseph Smith, Gospel Principles Simplified, the sacrament prayers, a video on the First Vision and Restoration, and a couple family history forms. The Testimony of the Prophet Joseph Smith, Book of Mormon selections, Doctrine and Covenants, and Pearl of Great Price are translated in the western dialect of Armenian, which is commonly spoken outside of Armenia.

Meetinghouses

The first church-built meetinghouse was dedicated in Donetsk in 1998.[31] However, this meetinghouse was seized by pro-Russian separatists in 2014 and remains in the country of rebel leaders.[32] The first two meetinghouses completed by the Church in the Ukraine Kiev Mission were dedicated in 2001 and were renovated buildings to serve as meetinghouses.[33] Some congregations meet in church-built meetinghouses, but most meet in renovated buildings or rented spaces.

Humanitarian and Development Work

There have been more than 900 humanitarian and development projects in Ukraine since 1985.[34] A large number of Church donations were medical equipment.[35] In February 1992, the Church donated 10,000 pounds of food and children's clothing to the needy in Kyiv, approximately half of whom where Church members.[36] In 1995, the Church donated six tons of urgently needed medical equipment to the Kiev Institute of Cardiovascular Surgery.[37] Church members have organized humanitarian relief groups caring for orphanages in recent years.[38] The Church has also provided vision treatment to the needy.[39]

Opportunities, Challenges, and Prospects

Religious Freedom

In the past, missionaries experienced harassment in some cities and were forced to serve elsewhere. Recently there appears to

be greater local government tolerance towards the Church and its missionary efforts, although challenges in some areas continue such as in Russian separatist regions. Nevertheless, the Church experienced challenges in 2017 when the Kyiv city government failed to reinstate the Church's lease of land in order to construct a new meetinghouse.[40] The Church has historically experienced challenges with the visa renewal process for foreign missionaries reentering the country with border guards refusing reentry.[41] Missionaries have typically traveled to Bulgaria during the visa renewal process, which is time-consuming and costly. However, foreign missionaries no longer appeared to have to travel outside of the country to renew their visas as of 2019. Russian separatist areas appeared to continue to be off limits to full-time missionaries as of early 2019.

Cultural Issues

High rates of divorce and tobacco use create a challenging climate for missionaries to work in, as many suffer from the negative effects of these practices. Converts who were unsuccessful in ending their substance abuse addictions prior to baptism rarely become active members. Those who participated in an abortion are required to be interviewed by a member of the mission presidency before baptism.

The Church has struggled to develop approaches oriented toward adherents of Orthodox denominations, as missionary work has historically been tailored to fit the needs of Western Christians. Increasing secularism and disinterest in religion from decades of communism have reduced Ukrainian's receptivity to the gospel message. Furthermore, many previously receptive Ukrainians were reached by Protestant denominations in the 1990s and shepherded into other churches. Returned missionaries in the 2010s have consistently reported low receptivity across Ukrainian missions primarily due to the strong cultural influence of Orthodoxy, anti-Americanism in some areas, and significant differences in Church teachings and common practices in Ukraine such as in regards to alcohol use and chastity.

Ukraine exhibits a complex religious demography, particularly in western Ukraine, where missionary efforts have had little exposure to the several different forms of Christianity practiced. The patchwork of Orthodox, Greek Catholic, and Roman Catholic Christians in an area with mission outreach generally limited to one city per province results in current mission efforts falling vastly short of their potential. Crimean Tatars also possess unique culture and religious background, which have remained almost totally unreached by mission outreach to date.

National Outreach

Missionary efforts continue to be concentrated in the largest cities with more than one congregation. Nearly half of the missionaries in the Ukraine Kiev Mission in 2010 were serving in the city of Kyiv, although Kyiv is home only 7% of the national population. Cities with an official ward or branch account for 35% of the national population. Five percent (5%) of the population resides in unreached cities with over 100,000 inhabitants. Most of these cities are located in central and eastern Ukraine. Some cities without a ward or branch also receive some mission outreach, such as Ternopil. However, the Church has tried for many years to establish a permanent presence in Ternopil with minimal results despite persistent efforts with full-time missionaries.

Very few cities with less than 100,000 inhabitants have received mission outreach. The few cities that have an outreach center have come primarily as the result of the efforts of local members. Congregations such as the Bahate Branch on the Crimean Peninsula and the Fyodorovka Branch near the Moldovan border offer exciting possibilities in expanding missionary work and increasing the vision of local members and leaders. The town of Bahate has fewer than 20,000 inhabitants and is a considerable distance away from other large cities with mission outreach centers. There are approximately 170 unreached cities between 10,000 and 100,000 inhabitants accounting for 15% of the national population. As many large cities remained unreached by mission outreach, cities with smaller populations are a lesser priority.

One of the primary purposes of creating the Ukraine Dnepropetrovsk Mission was to open additional cities for missionary work to increase the number of mission outreach centers.[42] Since the organization of the new mission in 2007, only a few new cities have had missionaries consistently or periodically assigned. Additional cities in central and eastern Ukraine may have member groups or branches organized once members become more self-sufficient in Church administration tasks and responsibilities. Challenges coordinating efforts between missionaries, Church leaders, members, and investigators in cities without congregations has slowed the pace additional cities have opened to the Church.[43] Limited resources and missionary manpower have reduced the number of potentially reached cities.

The Church maintains an Internet site for Ukraine at http://www.ldschurch.com.ua/. The site explains Church doctrines and history in Ukrainian and provides opportunity to contact the Church and find meeting locations. The Church also maintains Ukrainian versions of other websites such as https://www.mormon.org/ukr and https://www.mormonnews.org.ua/. Internet-based proselytism efforts can help reach remote areas with few resources.

Member Activity and Convert Retention

Over the past decade, convert retention rates have remained mediocre due to limited pre-baptismal preparation and inconsistent practices regarding the development of regular church attendance and other gospel habits before baptism. Some initiatives have resulted in transient improvements in pre-baptismal teaching and the qualification of prospective converts, but such policies have not been sustained. Activity rates differ by city and can also be affected by relationships between members.

Kyiv appears one of the cities that have experienced some of the lowest convert retention rates, as three districts were merged into one to create the first stake due to inadequate numbers of active members to create three separate stakes over time. Donetsk has also likely experienced some of the lowest retention rates as several congregations have been consolidated or dissolved over the past decade. Full-time missionaries appear primarily responsible for finding, teaching, baptizing, and retaining converts. Only when full-time missionaries are removed from an area do local members undertake primary responsibility for missionary activity. Returned missionaries complain that few members participate in member-missionary activity, and most of these members are either unemployed or preparing to serve a mission in the near future. For example, local members in Donetsk prepared and baptized several new converts after the withdrawal of full-time missionaries in 2014.[44]

Ethnic Issues and Integration

Primary ethnic integration issues are between Ukrainians and Russians, especially in provinces with large populations of both groups. Congregations with the majority of active members consisting of Ukrainians can be a challenge to the fellowshipping of Russian speakers, and vice-versa. Separate congregations exist where there are enough Russian and Ukrainian-speaking members to staff them. However, most congregations are well-integrated and relationships are generally favorable between Ukrainian and Russian-speaking members.

Crimean Tatars and other ethnic minority groups have seen little, if any, mission outreach from Latter-day Saints. These groups will likely face greater challenges than Russians or Ukrainians assimilating into established congregations, especially if they have no members from their ethnic group in their respective congregations.

Language Issues

Full-time missionaries learned and taught the gospel in Russian until 1996 when missionaries began learning Ukrainian in the Missionary Training Center. By the late 1990s, about 35% of the missionaries were Ukrainian-speaking.

Language issues have presented challenges in a few locations, mainly those in which members struggle to communicate with each other. Two congregations used to meet in Bila Tserkva to address language needs, one for Russian speakers and one for Ukrainian speakers, until they were consolidated in 2012.

In cities with a single congregation, both Russian and Ukrainian are often spoken in a single meeting. During a visit to L'viv, sometimes considered the cultural capital of Ukrainian-speaking Ukraine, in 1999, five Ukrainian-language testimonies and two Russian-language testimonies were heard in sacrament meeting, and students in institute class often switched back and forth between Ukrainian and Russian over the course of the lesson. Ukrainian dialects vary regionally, and Russian words are sometimes borrowed to produce hybridized versions. As most Ukrainian-speakers are bilingual, these practices tend to generate more difficulties for missionaries, who are trained only in a single language, than for local people.

Most ethnic minority groups have many Church materials translated into their languages. Eastern Yiddish, Rusyn, and Crimean Tatar have the most speakers without any Church materials translated. Speakers of these languages together account for fewer than 5% of the total population and appear unlikely to have Church materials translated for the foreseeable future, as few if any members speak these languages.

Missionary Service

In 1992, thirty-five missionaries served throughout Ukraine.[45] In 2004, a conference for returned Ukrainian missionaries had over forty in attendance.[46] Between eighty and one hundred missionaries served in the Ukraine Kiev Mission in 2009 and 2010. In 2010 between 200 and 250 missionaries served in Ukraine.

Ukraine remains highly dependent on foreign missionaries to staff its two missions. The number of Ukrainian missionaries serving appears less than fifty. In the past, the Church has relied on recent converts to fill the need for native Ukrainian missionaries. However, recent declines in membership growth and low Latter-day Saint birth rates will likely limit the number of Ukrainian missionaries.

Leadership

Ukraine has developed the strongest local church leadership of all nations of the former Soviet Union. In early 2019, all branches appeared to have a native member serve as branch president (with the exception of the Kyiv Branch [English] and the possible exception of a couple branches in Crimea). However, foreign missionaries continue to fill roles in some local congregations. Vladimir Siwachok became the first Ukrainian-born mission president and presided over the Russia Rostov na Donu Mission in 1994.[47] In 1996, Aleksandr N. Manzhos began serving as mission president of the Ukraine Donetsk Mission, becoming the first Ukrainian to serve as a mission president in Ukraine.[48] In 2008, Sergiy N. Mikulin from Kharkov was called as an Area Seventy,[49] and Gennady Nikolaevich Podvodov from Donetsk began his tenure over the Russia St. Petersburg Mission.[50] In 2013, Gennady N. Podvodov from Donetsk was called as an area seventy.[51] Serhii A. Kovalov from

Dnepropetrovsk was called as an area authority in 2014.[52] In 2017, Kirill Viktorovych Pokhilko was called as the mission president of the Russia St Petersburg Mission.[53]

Sociologist Tania Rands Lyon observed that in Ukraine, “Intelligentsia are relatively well represented among early converts to Mormonism. Especially in Kiev there are scientists, lawyers, university professors, business executives, engineers, two prominent surgeons and other health professionals, musicians and artists, a ballet master and a dramatist, several journalists and a prominent anchorwoman for Ukrainian television, linguists, teachers, and museum docents.”[54]

The original stake presidency of the Kyiv Ukraine Stake had no Church employees, indicating that the Church has been successful at developing sufficient leadership without relying on church employees.[55] However, when the stake presidency was reorganized in 2017, all members were church employees.[56] It is unclear whether this change may reflect challenges with the number and quality of Ukrainian leaders who are not also Church employees. In 2009, a North American senior missionary was serving as the branch president in Chernivtsi over a decade after missionaries entered the city. Cities with few active members are most vulnerable to require full-time missionaries serve in branch leadership positions.

Temple

Ukraine has developed moderate to high rates of temple attendance and recommend holders, resulting in the construction of the first temple in Eastern Europe in Kyiv. The Church announced the Kyiv Ukraine Temple in 1998, although construction began only in 2007. The delay was attributed primarily to finding a spot of land as large as the Church had requested. The temple was originally planned to serve members throughout Eastern Europe, including the Baltic States.[57] In April 2010, a total of thirteen European nations and 31,000 members were projected to utilize the temple.[58] Prior to the completion of the Kyiv Ukraine Temple in 2010, the country and much of the Europe East Area traveled to the Freiburg Germany Temple. Members faithfully attended the temple by traveling thirty hours each way by bus prior to the completion of the temple in Kyiv. Temple trips were organized on a monthly basis.[59] In 2012, the temple scheduled four endowment sessions Tuesdays through Fridays and five sessions on Saturdays. In 2019, the temple scheduled four endowment sessions Tuesdays through Saturdays. The temple currently services most of Eastern Europe, Southeastern Europe, the Middle East, and Russia.

Comparative Growth

Evidenced by the creation of the first stake, the construction of the first temple in the former Soviet Union, and a Church membership close to twice the combined Church memberships of the former Soviet republics excluding Russia, Ukraine has arguably seen the greatest success in missionary work for the Church in Eastern Europe. Early receptivity that became self-sustaining likely contributed to the Church’s decision to announce a temple for Kyiv in 1998. Member activity and convert retention rates in recent years have appeared comparable to most countries in the region. Neighboring Russia has twice as many members and congregations as Ukraine, but a national population three times as large as Ukraine. The percentage of the population with access to a mission outreach center is similar to access rates in most of Eastern Europe.

Recently arrived nontraditional Christian denominations have historically experienced strong growth in Ukraine, particularly in the 1990s. In the late 2000s, Seventh Day Adventists had six times as many members and Jehovah’s Witnesses had fourteen times as many members as The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. Both Adventists and Witnesses maintained more than ten times as many congregations than Latter-day Saints in the late 2000s and have developed much more widespread outreach as well as stronger local self-sufficiency. However, both Adventists and Witnesses have experienced decline in the past decade. Both denominations reported a net loss of approximately 12,000 members between 2010 and 2017. Moreover, Witnesses have reported a decrease of nearly 200 congregations during this time. Evangelical denominations appear to have experienced the greatest growth since the early 1990s and today are nearly two million nationwide.

Future Prospects

Ukraine would seem to be, in many ways, a fertile field for missionary work. Western Ukraine is pluralistic and very tolerant of religions; many people are deeply religious; alcohol and tobacco use, although prevalent, are less ubiquitous than in Russia; people are generally open and approachable; and there is very little anti-Mormon activity. Elder Andersen of the Twelve stated in 2009 that “the temple will be a blessing to Ukraine” and that “people will join the Church here by the hundreds and thousands.”[60] However, much remains to be done to accomplish this ambitious mandate. Contemporary growth rates in Ukraine for The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints have fallen significantly below rates in stagnant Western European missions in the mid-1990s.[61] Contemporary missions are now baptizing only as many people in a year as were baptized in a month through much of the 1990s. Low convert retention and member activity and heavy dependence on the North American church for funds and missionary manpower remain major challenges. Moreover, political instability and war in Russian separatist areas have posed significant challenges for the Church that have all but erased ambitions for a stake in Donetsk one day. Efforts to organize stakes in additional cities continue to experience setbacks and frustration. Only Kharkiv appears likely to have a stake organized within the foreseeable future, and this seems only possible with the addition of branches from the former Dnepropetrovsk Ukraine District and other outlying mission branches in northeastern Ukraine. The Church continues to rely on full-time missionaries to open new cities for missionary work, yet the number of Ukrainian missions and number of missionaries assigned to Ukraine has declined in recent years, limiting the needed manpower to start new congregations in unreached cities. Although essentially all mission branches have native members who serve in essential leadership positions, most of these outlying congregations have less than thirty active members despite most of these cities having a Church presence for two

decades or longer. Emigration of active members away from Ukraine and low birth rates in the Church remain significant challenges for the stability of the Church in the long-term. Dramatic changes in the current dynamics appear unlikely in the medium term.

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