

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.



New Zealand

Population: 4.4 millions (#127 out of countries)

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Geography
Area: 267,710 square km. New Zealand comprises two large islands east of Australia and administers several small, sparsely uninhabited island groups such as the Cook Islands, Niue, and Tokelau. Mountains cover most areas and plains stretch along some coastal areas. Temperate climate prevails throughout the country. Northern areas experience sub-tropical conditions whereas cold winters and warm to mild summers occur in southern and mountainous terrain . Mild earthquakes and volcanoes are natural hazards. Environmental issues include deforestation, invasive species, and soil erosion. New Zealand is administratively divided into 16 regions and one territory.

Population: 4,252,277 (July 2010)
Annual Growth Rate: 0.901% (2010)
Fertility Rate: 2.09 children born per woman (2010)
Life Expectancy: 78.52 male, 82.53 female (2010)

Peoples
European: 69.8%
Maori: 7.9%
Asian: 5.7%
Pacific Islander: 4.4%
Other: 0.5%
Mixed: 7.8%
Unspecified: 3.8%

Europeans live throughout the country. Most Maori live in urban areas and on the North Island. Maoris account for over 25% of the population in Northland, Bay of Plenty, and Gisborne Regions.[1] Most Asians identify as Chinese or Indian. 67% of Pacific Islanders live in the Auckland area.[2] Half of Pacific Islanders are Samoans. Pacific Islander groups with over 50,000 people include Samoans, Cook Islands Maoris, and Tongans.[3]

Languages: English (91.2%), Maori (3.9%), Samoan (2.1%), other (2.8%). English and Maori are official languages. Maori is spoken proficiently by a quarter of the ethnic population. Only English has over one million speakers.
Literacy: 99% (2003)

History
The Maori people settled New Zealand around 800 AD. In the early 19th century, the Maori and British signed the Treaty of Waitangi in which Maoris retained territorial rights but lost sovereignty to the British. During the 19th century, several wars were fought between the Maoris and the British over territorial claims. New Zealand won independence from the United Kingdom in 1907 and participated in both World Wars. In recent years, the nation has distanced itself from international affairs while becoming increasingly integrated into the world economy.

Culture
Past British rule and positive relations with the United Kingdom following independence have perpetuated many British cultural characteristics. Maori art, words, and place names are widespread. Wool and sheep byproducts are well known New Zealand products. New Zealanders have a reputation for being well educated and living healthy lifestyles. Cigarette consumption rates are low whereas alcohol consumption rates are high.

Economy
GDP per capita: $27,300 (2009) [58.8% of US]
Human Development Index: 0.950
Corruption Index: 9.4
In the past couple decades, New Zealand reduced its reliance on agriculture and developed a more industrialized economy. The economy can now compete internationally but is sensitive to overseas demand for New Zealand goods. Services employ 74% of the workforce and produce 70% of the GDP whereas industry employs 19% of the workforce and accounts for 26% of the GDP. Primary industries include food processing, wood products, machinery, tourism, and mining. Australia, the United States, Japan, and China are major trade partners.

New Zealand is regarded as one of the least corrupt countries in the world.

Faiths
Christian: 53.5%
Other: 3.3%
Unspecified: 17.2%
None: 26%

Christians

Denominations	Members	Congregations
Anglican	554,925	
Catholic	508,437	
Methodist	121,806	
Latter-Day Saints	100,962	203
Pentecostal	79,155	
Baptist	56,913	
Seventh-Day Adventists	10,756	79
Jehovah's Witnesses	14,091	174

Religion
Christians form a slight majority, many of which are Anglican or Catholic. Most non-Christians do not follow any organized religion resulting in a strong secular atmosphere in many areas. Hindus, Buddhists, and Muslims have increased in the past couple decades due to the continued arrival of Asian immigrants, but these groups constitute less than five percent of the population. Pacific Islanders are more religiously active than the overall population as 83% identified with a particular religious group and are almost entirely Christian. The majority of Pacific Islanders are Catholic.[4] Maoris tend to follow Maori-Christian denominations such as Ratana and Ringatu, the Presbyterian Church, and the LDS Church.

Religious Freedom
Persecution Index:
The constitution protects religious freedom which is upheld by the government. Missionaries may openly proselyte and religious groups report no government restrictions for their activities. There have been a few instances of societal abuse of religious freedom which have targeted Jews and Judaism.[5]

Largest Cities
Urban: 87%
Auckland, Wellington, Christchurch, Manakau, North Shore, Waitakere, Hamilton, Dunedin, Tauranga, Lower Hutt.

All 10 of the largest cities and all cities over 10,000 inhabitants have an LDS Church presence. 55% of the national population lives in the 10 largest cities. The Auckland Region accounts for 34% of national population.

LDS History
The first LDS missionaries arrived in 1854 from Australia where the Church had set up its headquarters for missionary work in the Pacific. 10 converts joined the Church that year and the first congregation was created in Karori. During much of the 19th century, many members immigrated to Utah, slowing local church growth. Greater receptivity than in other South Pacific areas prompted Church leaders to relocate Church headquarters for the Pacific to New Zealand. In 1880, there were seven branches and 133 members. Before this time, efforts had been concentrated on Europeans. In the 1880s, missionaries targeted Maoris who were more receptive to the Church due to many similarities between their native beliefs and Church teachings and the conversion of several Maori spiritual leaders who predicted a "true religion" would come to them one day. [6] The Book of Mormon was translated into Maori in the late 1880s. Between 1913 and 1931, the Maori Agricultural College (MAC) provided Maori LDS youth education in an effort to improve member activity and convert retention as other schools tended to be sponsored by other churches. Following World War II, missionary work began among all ethnicities. The Church provided high school education through the Church College of New Zealand between 1958 and 2009. In 1958, the New Zealand Mission was divided to create the New Zealand South Mission which later became the New Zealand Wellington Mission. [7] The Church College of New Zealand closed in 2009 in an effort to allocate more Church resources to more needy areas of the world.

Membership Growth
LDS Membership: 100,962 (2009)
By 1900, there were about 4,000 members, most of which were Maoris. Membership increased from 8,600 in the mid-1930s to 17,000 by 1958 and to 26,000 by 1966. There were almost 60,000 members by 1987. [8] In 1990, there were 76,000 members. In 1992, an estimated 60% of Church membership was Maori.[9] Membership grew steadily in the 2000s from 90,078 in 2000 to 94,722 in 2004 and 97,474 in 2006. Most years experience annual membership growth rates between 1% and 1.5%, just above the population growth rate.

The New Zealand census provides abundant data on LDS membership demographics. The census reported membership as

41,166 in 1996, 39,915 in 2001, and 43,539 in 2006. In 2006, 50% of self-identified Latter-day Saints were Maori and 30% were of European ancestry. Latter-day Saints of Asian origin numbered 1,299. The 2006 census tallied 9,558 Samoan, 5,025 Tongan, 2,619 Cook Islands Maori, 1,599 Niuean, 219 Fijian, 99 Tokelauan, and 57 Tuvaluan Latter-day Saints.

61% of self-identified members on the 2006 census resided in the Auckland and Waikato Regions. The 2006 census reported 1-2% of the population following the LDS Church in Northland, Waikato, Hawke's Bay, Gisborne, and Auckland Regions whereas fewer than 0.3% of the population claimed membership in the LDS Church in Southland, Canterbury, West Coast, Otago, and Tasman Regions.

In 2009, the New Zealand Auckland Mission set an all time record for yearly baptisms at 1,094. In May 2010, the mission set a new record for the most convert baptisms in one month (144).

In 2010, one in every 42 New Zealanders was LDS.

Congregational Growth
Wards: 155 Branches: 50
The Church organized its first stake outside of the United States and Canada in Auckland in 1958. By year-end 1960, three stakes functioned in the country. The total number of stakes increased to seven by 1970, 14 by 1980, 16 by 1990, and 25 by 2000. No new stakes were organized in the 2000s. Three districts functioned in 2010. The Dunedin and Nelson New Zealand Districts were organized in the 1890s on the South Island and Taranaki New Zealand District was organized in 1992. Only one stake and two districts function on the South Island whereas 10 stakes function just in the Auckland Region.

There were 79 branches by 1900 and 83 branches by the mid-1930s.[10] The number of total congregations increased to 151 in 1990, 184 in 1994, and 216 in 1998. In 2000, there were 210 congregations, 146 of which were wards. The number of total congregations declined to 200 in 2002 and slightly increased to 203 in 2009. In the past 10 years, wards increased by nine whereas branches decreased by 14.

Dependent branches and groups appear to meet in several locations, some of which used to be independent branches but were discontinued in the late 1990s and early 2000s. The Kawerau Branch was a dependent branch in the Bay of Plenty Region which had 50 attending Church meetings in 2010. Prior to reorganizing Church meetings in Kawerau, an unused Church-built chapel sat vacant for many years.[11]

Activity and Retention
Nationwide meetings were well attended before they were discouraged by regional Church leadership. 12,000 members assembled for the New Zealand Area conference in 1976.[12]

The average number of members per congregation rose between 2000 and 2009 from 429 to 497, indicating that convert retention appears modest. The total of Latter-day Saints reported by the 2006 census was only 45% of total LDS Church membership reported by the Church that year. An increase in self-reported LDS membership of just 5% between 1996 and 2006 suggests little change in active church membership over that period. Including part-actives, participating LDS membership is estimated at around 40,000, or 40-45% of total membership, although average weekly church attendance rates appear to be closer to 25-30% as not all self-identified Latter-day Saints attend weekly.

Several branches in more remote areas of the country have few members, especially on the South Island. The Greymouth Branch had less than 20 active members in 2010. Activity rates appear low in many rural areas and smaller towns without a congregation.

Language Materials
Languages with LDS Scripture: English, Maori, Samoan, Tongan, Fijian, Rarotongan, Niuean, Tuvaluan.

All LDS scriptures are available in Samoan, Tongan, Fijian, and Rarotongan. Most Church materials are available in Samoan, Tongan, and Fijian. Only the Book of Mormon and hymns are translated into Maori. Book of Mormon selections are only available in Niuean. A limited number of family history, Priesthood, Relief Society, Sunday School, Primary, unit, and missionary materials are translated into Niuean and Rarotongan. Translations of Church materials in Tuvaluan consist of the sacrament prayers, Gospel Fundamentals, the Articles of Faith, and The Prophet Joseph Smith's Testimony.

Meetinghouses
Most congregations meet in Church-built meetinghouses, including some dependent branches and groups.

Humanitarian and Development Work
The Church has completed few humanitarian or development projects in recent years partially due to the level of economic prosperity experienced in New Zealand. Service and development work is primarily limited to missionaries' weekly service hours and service projects organized by local congregations.

Opportunities, Challenges and Prospects

Religious Freedom
Church activities and missionary work face no restrictions or difficulties from local laws or government policies. Missionaries openly proselyte and foreign missionaries appear to serve with few if any complications.

Cultural Issues
Increasing secularism has reduced interest in religion among many New Zealanders. Commercial activities were banned on Sundays until the early 1990s as this was recognized as many as a day for Christian worship. Religion is often seen as a private matter for whites and is usually not discussed in a public setting. However, the Church appears to have experienced

increases in membership among all ethnic groups. High religious activity among Pacific Islanders results in many from this group already being shepherded in other Christian churches, which can reduce receptivity to LDS missionary efforts. Rugby is the most popular sport.

National Outreach
New Zealand receives excellent mission outreach as two LDS missions serve a national population just over four million. All large population centers have established congregations and full-time missionaries assigned. Urban areas without mission outreach consist of small towns with fewer than 10,000 inhabitants often located near larger towns or cities with a congregation. Only 13% of the national population lives in rural areas, many of which are distant from cities with organized LDS congregations. Most of the unreached population is concentrated on the South Island, reflecting that the majority of church members are northern Maoris who constitute less than 8% of national population. Although the LDS Church is one of the largest religious groups, many know little about the Church and its beliefs and practices due to the disproportionate ethnic and geographic concentration of church membership among minority ethnic groups and small number of members among the majority population of European ancestry.

Over the past decade, very few if any congregations have been opened in new areas. . The unreached population likely consists of as few as 10% of the national population and may be most effectively reached by holding cottage meetings and periodic visits by member-missionaries and full-time missionaries. Due to low levels of interest in religionin many areas, creative and appropriate methods for proselytism will be required to reach out to the population.

The Church maintains an Internet site for New Zealand at http://www.ldschurch.org.nz/. The website provides information about the Church and can be used for Internet outreach. A church visitors' center at the Hamilton New Zealand Temple is open daily.

Member Activity and Convert Retention
Member activity appears to vary by many factors such as ethnicity, location, and socio-economic situation. Rural areas appear most prone to higher inactivity rates whereas urban areas tend to experience higher Church attendance, likely due to closer proximity to meetinghouse locations and more close-knit support networks. Many of New Zealand's inactivity issues have been present for many decades and have continued to accumulate. Convert retention rates may have improved in the Auckland areas in the past few years as additional congregations have been established. Concentrating mission efforts in cities on the North Island without a nearby congregation may offer outreach for reactivation, although the chronicity of LDS inactivity over several decades notwithstanding numerous prior initiatives suggests limited reactivation potential. Forward-looking efforts to ensure the development of gospel habits and ensure fellowshipping and integration of prospective converts into established congregations before baptism may present the best opportunities to improve convert retention rates and, over time, member activity.

Some areas like Greymouth have very few youth or middle aged members and may close to missionary work once older members pass away. Cities with few members present social challenges for new converts and new move-ins to successfully integrate with active membership and remain active. Senior missionary couples have been assigned to many of these cities to help with these issues.

Some recent converts serve in leadership positions and assist in member-missionary efforts, although . maturing Church membership and leadership may be partially responsible in declining membership growth rates over the past couple decades as older members tend to limit much of their social interactions to fellow Latter-day Saints. Several areas of the world which have many active recent convert members and leaders have achieved greater success in local missionary efforts.

Ethnic Issues and Integration
The Church appears to experience few ethnic integration issues as English is widely spoken, and New Zealanders have reconciled many past ethnic conflicts between European settlers and Maoris during the 19th and 20th centuries. Interethnic relations are generally positive. Many language-specific congregations help reduce potential challenges and misunderstandings between Pacific Islanders and the rest of the population, as many Pacific Islanders were born abroad. The Church will likely experience the greatest outreach challenge to ethnicities with few Christians and few LDS members, like the Asian and Indian communities which each have over 100,000 individuals.

Language Issues
The large number of Samoan and Tongan Latter-day Saints has resulted in the creation of dozens of language-specific congregations to meet their needs. Both New Zealand-born and overseas-born Tongans and Samoans have more speakers of their respective languages speakers than any other Pacific group with over 10,000 people.[13] Non-Samoan and non-Tongan Pacific Islanders have smaller populations and have a lower percentage of people who can speak their native languages. Consequently. the Church has no congregations for these other languages with the exception of one Niuean-speaking ward.

Mission outreach to Samoans and Tongans has been excellent in many areas. The New Zealand Auckland Mission in 2010 had specific language programs for Samoan and Tongan. Each language program had over 20 participating missionaries.

Missionary Service
In the early 1990s, a typical stake had approximately 30 members serving full-time missions.[14] New Zealand appears able to sustain its own missionary force currently, but North American and Pacific Islander missionaries frequently serve in large numbers in the two missions. New Zealand has yet to reach its potential in providing missionary manpower for the region in view of its large LDS population and developed church leadership.

Leadership
Elder Douglas J. Martin became the first native New Zealander General Authority and was called to the First Quorum of the Seventy in 1987.[15] Many New Zealanders have served as regional Church leaders.[16] In 2010, Ian S. Ardern was called as an Area Seventy.[17]

Temple

New Zealand belongs to the Hamilton New Zealand Temple district. In 2010, the temple operated Monday through Saturday. Six endowment sessions were held Tuesday through Friday, five on Saturday, and three on Monday. The temple works below capacity much of the time, partially due to its distance from Auckland. In 2010, a native couple began serving as the temple president and matron.[18]

Comparative Growth
New Zealand has the second most Church members in the Pacific area after Australia and was one of the first nations worldwide to have missionaries assigned. Member activity rates are comparable to most nations in the region. Only Chile and Uruguay have over one million inhabitants and a higher percentage of LDS members than New Zealand. Like most nations in Oceania, no new stakes or districts have been organized in the past decade and membership growth rates have declined. Recent Church growth trends in New Zealand closely compare with recent Church growth trends in Australia.

Over the past decade, most Christian denominations have gained few if any new members or are in decline. Membership growth rates are slightly higher for Jehovah's Witnesses than for the Latter-day Saints whereas the number of Seventh-day Adventists has remained nearly unchanged over the past decade.

Future Prospects
The Church benefits from mature leaders and a strong local membership base able to accommodate future growth. However, increasing secularism and low to modest convert retention rates over the decades have slowed church growth. Greater convert retention will be required for the creation of additional congregations. Recent record-breaking numbers of convert baptisms in the New Zealand Auckland Mission point to positive developments in missionary work, but will have little significance if convert retention rates do not improve and increased growth rates are not sustained. Prospects for a second temple appear high as the Church has purchased land with the intent to build a temple in Auckland next to the New Zealand Missionary Training Center.

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