

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.



Papua New Guinea

Population: 6.55 millions (#106 out of countries)

By David Stewart and Matt Martinich

Geography
Area: 462,840 square km. Bordering the Indonesian Province of Papua and occupying the eastern half of the second largest island in the world, Papua New Guinea hosts a wide variety of climates and terrains north of Australia. Tropical rainforest and mountains covers most of the landscape. Hundreds of islands also belong to the country, many of which form archipelagos to the east such as New Britain, New Ireland, Bougainville, and the Admiralty Islands. Some of the world's largest swamps occupy coastal areas. Western, interior areas consist of more populated highlands. Natural disasters from active volcanoes, earthquakes, mudslides, and tsunamis are common. Papua New Guinea is divided into 20 administrative provinces, one of which (Bougainville) has autonomous status.
Population: 6,057,263 (July 2009)
Annual Growth Rate: 2.069% (2009)
Fertility Rate: 3.62 children born per woman (2009)
Life Expectancy: male 64.08, female 68.72 (2009)

Peoples
Melanesian
Papuan
Negrito
Micronesian
Polynesian

Languages: Tok Pisin, English, and Hiri Motu (official). 830 languages are spoken constituting over 10% of the world's languages. Tok Pisin is commonly spoken by many as a second language in northern Papua New Guinea. Languages with the most native speakers include Enga (165,000), Melpa (130,000), Tok Pisin (122,000), Kuman (115,000), Kewa East and Kewa West (90,000), Wahgi and Wahgi North (86,000), Kamano (63,200), Kuanua (61,000), English (50,000), and Hiri Motu (39,000). No first languages are spoken by more than one million people.
Literacy: 57.3% (2000)

History
The native peoples occupied New Guinea for thousands of years prior to European exploration of the region. In 1885, the eastern half of the island was divided north to south between Germany and the United Kingdom. Australia took control of the southern portion in 1902 and the northern German portion during World War I. Independence from Australia occurred in 1975. The island of Bougainville attempted to secede from Papua New Guinea between 1988 and 1997, resulting in the deaths of thousands. Stability returned after the province was granted autonomous status. In the 2000s, efforts were underway to improve living conditions, address societal problems and develop the economy.

Culture
Papua New Guinea has fascinated anthropologists from around the world due to its extreme cultural diversity in a nation of only six million people. Some isolated tribes living in mountainous or remote areas did not receive contact from the outside world until the last century. The hundreds of languages spoken range from a couple dozen speakers to thousands.. Many indigenous species of plants and animals are only found in Papua New Guinea. Lawlessness resulting from thousands of years of tribal warfare has carried over to modern cities like Port Moresby. Crime is a serious problem. Papua New Guinea has the highest

percentage of people infected with HIV/AIDS in East Asia or Oceania at 1.5%. As larger villages grow into small cities, land disputes arise between urbanites and local tribes living out the outskirts.

Economy
GDP per capita: $2,300 (2008) [4.9% of US]
Human Development Index: 0.516
Corruption Index: 2.0
Rough terrain and an undeveloped infrastructure prevent greater exploitation of the abundant natural resources. Agriculture, industry, and services each account for about a third of the GDP. A third of Papuans live under the poverty line and 85% of the workforce labors in agriculture. Mineral resources account for a large amount of the export earnings, particularly gold and copper. Significant oil and natural gas reserves have begun to be exploited, contributing to the increase in economic growth. Aid from Australia continues to assist with the living and economic conditions. Lawlessness and civil disorder also contribute to a lack of greater economic progress.

Corruption is a major problem that has limited foreign investment and economic progress. Government officials have illegally allowed logging in tropical forests. Provincial governments often experience greater lawlessness and corruption.

Faiths
Christian: 96.4%
Bahai: 0.3%
Indigenous beliefs and other: 3.3%

Christians
Denominations Members Congregations
Catholic 1,635,461
Evangelical Lutheran 1,181,166
United Church 696,585
Pentecostal 520,925
Evangelical Alliance 314,978
Seventh-Day Adventists 242,995 871
Anglican 193,832
Baptist 151,432
Latter-Day Saints 16,664 53
Jehovah's Witnesses 3,647 58

Religion
Christianity has spread rapidly, resulting in almost the entire population belonging to a Christian denomination.

Religious Freedom
Persecution Index:
Religious freedom is protected by the constitution and upheld by the government. Missionaries from different religions may openly proselyte.

Major Cities
Urban: 12%
Port Moresby, Lae, Madang, Wewak, **Arawa**, Goroka, **Vanimo**, **Kimbe,** Rabaul, **Mount Hagen**.

Six of the 10 largest cities have a published Church presence. 10% of the national population lives in the 10 largest cities.

Membership Growth
LDS Membership: 16,664 (2008)
The first members in Papua New Guinea were expatriates from Australia living in Port Moresby. The Church was established in the country in 1979, and there were 280 members in late 1980. The first convert baptisms occurred in 1980. By October 1982 there were 475 members. Elder L. Tom Perry dedicated Papua New Guinea for missionary work in April 1983[1]. Greater growth continued, with membership reaching 1,450 in March 1987[2] and 2,100 in 1989. 1,500 members lived in Port Moresby in 1989 with the remaining 600 residing in remote villages throughout the country[3].

In December 1991, there were 2,600 LDS members. Membership growth began to accelerate outside of Port Moresby. On a small island near the Indonesian border, the Daru Branch grew to 160 members after three months. Half of the convert baptisms in the Australia Brisbane Mission occurred in Papua New Guinea before the mission split.[4] Missionaries baptized 40 to 50 converts a month in 1995. The same year, the first stake was created in Port Moresby with 2,200 members.[5] By late 1998 there were over 5,000 members.[6]

LDS membership increased very rapidly in the late 1990s, reaching 9,808 at the end of 2000. Rapid growth continued with membership totaling 11,775 in 2002, 13,895 in 2004 and 15,517 in 2006. By the end of 2008, there were 16,664 members. Since 2000, the most rapid growth rates occurred in the first half of the decade with annual growth rates of 7-11%. Membership growth has declined since 2006 to 3.5% and 4.5% annually. Membership typically increases between 500 and 1000 annually. By 2008 one in every 355 Papuans was a member of the Church.

Congregational Growth
Wards: 5 Branches: 48
When missionary work began, Papua New Guinea was administered bythe Australia Brisbane Mission. The first branch was created in 1979 in Port Moresby. Three years later, branches increased to three. In 1983 there were five branches and one district. The first Papuan full-time missionaries began serving in 1984. Branches continued to multiply, growing to nine in March

1987 and to thirteen in 1989. By late 1989, twelve full-time Papuan missionaries were serving missions. Five sets of missionaries and seven senior couple missionaries were serving in Papua New Guinea.[7] 15 branches and one district functioned by December 1991. Five of the branches functioned outside Port Moresby in towns and villages like Daru and Kuriva. A branch began functioning in Popondetta before 1992.[8]

The Church organized the Papua New Guinea Port Moresby Mission in February 1992 from the Australia Brisbane Mission. Papuans consisted of most of the missionaries serving in the new mission. The new mission also included the Solomon Islands. A second district in Nine Mile was organized in 1993. In 1995, 34 elders and eight senior couple missionaries served in the Papua New Guinea Port Moresby Mission.[9]

Elder V. Dallas Merrell created the Port Moresby Papua New Guinea Stake on October 1995. The new stake included six wards and one branch: The Gerehu, Gorobe, Kila Kila, Korobosea, Port Moresby and Sabama Wards and the Konedobu Branch.[10] At the time of the stake's creation, only one other district functioned in Nine Mile. By 1999 a sufficient number of congregations in Daru allowed for the creation of another district. By the end of 2000 there was one stake, five wards, 26 branches, and three districts. One ward in the stake had returned to branch status.

Rapid congregational growth occurred in 2001. No new wards were organized, but the number of branches increased from 27 to 45. The following year, many new branches became part of several new districts which were created in Gerehu, Goroka, Kuriva, and Oro in 2002. The total number of districts increased to eight, with the remaining four districts in Daru, Isomu, Nine Mile, and central Port Moresby. The number of missionaries serving in the country increased to 77 by 2003.[11] The nomber of branches increased to 50 by 2004 and dropped to 48 in 2006, and remained unchanged as of late 2009.

The Port Moresby Papua New Guinea Central District was discontinued in 2007. At least one of the branches became part of the stake in Port Moresby, increasing the number of branches in the stake to three. In 2008, the Isumo Papua New Guinea District combined with the Daru Papua New Guinea District in preparation for a stake.[12] Also in 2008, a new district was created in Rigo, southeast of Port Moresby, out of half a dozen mission branches.

Several mission branches do not belong to a stake or district and report directly to the mission presidency. These branches are located in Angoram, Lae, Moim, Morovamu, Pinang, Rabaul, Sisiak, and Wewak. Several dependent branches or groups likely function across the country.

Activity and Retention
In November 1995, 206 members held a temple recommend. At the creation of the first stake, members were challenged to grow the Church sufficiently large in Port Moresby for the creation of a second stake the following year.[13] As of late 2009, no additional stakes have been organized however, indicating decelerating growth and a retention and activity problem especially prevalent in Port Moresby. The average number of members per congregation between 2000 and 2008 has remained nearly unchanged, dropping from 316 to 314. Due to the rapid increase of congregations in 2002, the ratio of members per congregations fell to 236. This ratio has subsequently increased as membership growth has outpaced congregational growth. The average ward or branch appears to have approximately 100 active members. Total active membership is estimateed at five to six thousand active members, or 30-40% of nominal membership.

Language Materials
Languages with LDS Scripture: English
Plans to translate scriptures into Pidgin English were reported in 1991, but had not occurred as of late 2009.[14] Several Church materials are translated into Motu including Gospel Fundamentals and limited unit, priesthood, primary materials, and family history materials. The Living Christ Testimony is also translated into Motu.

Meetinghouses
The first church-built meetinghouse was completed in 1984.[15] Chapels were later constructed in Kuriva and Popondetta in the late 1980s and early 1990s.[16] Most congregations likely meet in sheltered areas in villages, rented spaces, or renovated buildings.

Health and Safety
Papua New Guinea suffers from the highest rates of HIV/AIDS in East Asia and Oceania. HIV/AIDS infects 1.5% of the population. Methods of infection include sexual relations, drug use, contaminated needles, and HIV-positive mothers. . High crime rates have discouraged the sending of a greater number of foreign missionaries and contribute to Papuans forming the majority of the missionaries serving in Papua New Guinea.

Humanitarian and Development Work
Missionaries have taught members and Papuans literacy skills since the early 1990s.[17] Local members in Popondetta prepared sterilized gauze for a local hospital[18]. A major project to increase self reliance and improve living conditions of members and the general population began in 2001. Accomplishments of the project included installing 18 potable water stations in villages, donating desks, computers and school supplies to 45 schools, and donating equipment to hospitals. Emphasis has been placed on improving education and by early 2003, 13 Papuans were studying at BYU-Hawaii.[19] Australian members living just south of Papua New Guinea on Thursday Island donated needed items for Papuans living in the Western Province[20]. The Church assisted with measles vaccination programs in 2008.[21] Projects to preserve family history information of Papuans have caught interest of government officials.

Opportunities, Challenges and Prospects

Religious Freedom
No legal obstacles prohibit the Church from proselytism.

Cultural Issues
Warfare and lawlessness threaten the Church's outreach and likely limit the opening of additional areas. Immoral ity appears

commonplace and is not in harmony with Church teachings. The extensive outreach of Christian denominations has brought most to a belief in Christ, providing a great opportunity for missionary work among a humble people with a Christian background. The transition of some from rural to urban living environments challenges cultural traditions and may contribute to lawlessness and violence in larger cities like Lae.

National Outreach
Members anxious to share their beliefs with those around them present major opportunities for the Church to increase its national outreach. The Church's establishment outside of Port Moresby can be credited to the willingness and faith of members living in Port Moresby sharing Church beliefs with family and friends living in their home villages in remote areas. Some of the villages which have a congregation have a population of less than 5,000 or as little as several hundreds. Church members greatly assisted in the establishment of the Church in Daru. As converts join the Church in Daru and returned to the mainland, they conducted member missionary work among those around them and brought the Church to very isolated, sparsely populated areas such as Isumo, Suki and Sogere.

Despite the progress made, half of the twenty provinces do not have a congregation and only seven have more than one congregation. The most populous province, the Southern Highlands, has 544,000 inhabitants and no Church congregations. Morobe, second most populated province of 537,000, has one congregation in the largest city of Lae. The Western Highlands is the third most populated province (439,000) and has no congregations. It is not until the fourth most populous province, Eastern Highlands (429,000), that more than one congregation functions in a single province.

With the exception of the Rabaul Branch, no congregations function throughout any of the islands to the east of the mainland. These islands have smaller populations isolated from the rest of the country. Great language challenges face the Church in reaching these areas.

The greatest Church resources appear focused in and nearby Port Moresby due to greater difficulty for travel to other areas of the country. This has also likely come as the result of many of the converts' home villages being in closer proximity to the capital than villages in other areas. Five of the seven districts are within 100 miles of Port Moresby. The greatest opportunities for mission outreach are in provinces surrounding Port Moresby and the Simbu Province in the interior where congregations have been established among more densely populated areas.

Member Activity and Convert Retention
Member activity appears strongest among the youth. Over 600 were enrolled in seminary in the 2008-2009 school year, the equivalent of enrollment in many nations with more than twice as many members such as Costa Rica, Panama, Spain, and Tonga. Most countries have higher institute enrollment than seminary enrollment. However in Papua New Guinea institute enrolment is only a third of seminary enrollment, which points toward higher activity and membership among youth than young adults.

Papua New Guinea is the country with the largest membership with only one LDS stake.. This likely indicates that activity levels are not strong enough for the creation of additional stakes or that multiple large congregations are not sufficiently localized for stake function. The goal presented to Papuan members at the creation of the first stake to create a second stake the following year has yet to be realized over fourteen years later. Inactivity problems appear greatest in Port Moresby as there has been nearly no increase in congregations in this region over the past decade and a half. The dissolution of the Port Moresby Papua New Guinea Central District points toward activity and retention problems. Many of the retention and activity problems appear to reflect limited understanding of gospel principles and societal problems influencing membership. Violence, poverty, and unemployment present challenges for member activity. A lack of language materials may also have contributed to lower activity.

Some branches in remote areas have combined in the late 2000s, like the result of activity problems. In Lae, two additional branches functioned, named the West Taraka and Kamkumung Branches. Both of these units were discontinued in the late 2000s. Otherwise membership in remote areas appears more resilient than in Port Moresby.

Ethnic Issues and Integration
Although ethnic tensions exist in some areas, the greatest challenge in integrating differing ethnic group into the Church is due to language. It is unclear how the Church accommodates speakers of different languages into one congregation. Land disputes along the peripheries of larger towns and cities result in increased ethnic tensions which may impact some church members..

Language Issues
Tok Pisin is most widely spoken in the northern areas and likely help unify members from different tribes meeting in the same congregation. Congregations established in remote villages likely have fewer problems than larger cities concerning multiple languages spoken among members of the same congregation. The first missionaries received help from local members translating English into Pidgin and Motu in the early 1980s.[22] Foreign missionaries have been able to learn Pidgin English in the past, but Papuan members usually serve in the country due to their familiarity with local languages. The absence of any Church materials in languages spoken by members in remote areas is a major challenge in developing greater doctrinal understanding, leadership, and missionary work. Church materials and LDS scriptures in Tok Pisin would greatly accelerate the Church's growth and strength. Other likely languages in which the Church may translate materials include Kiwai (spoken in Daru), Orokaiva (spoken in Popondetta) and languages with over 50,000 speakers.

Leadership
Growth in congregations only occurs as member activity and local leadership potential allow. In 1989, all 13 of the country's branches were led by local members[23]. Since 1997, mission presidents for the Papua New Guinea Port Moresby Mission have all come from Polynesia, primarily from Tonga..[24] Several leaders of the country's sole stake have been employed by the Church. The first stake president of the Port Moresby Papua New Guinea Stake was a security guard for a company and one of his counselors worked as a security guard for the Church.[25] In 2002, the stake presidency was reorganized and both counselors worked for Church maintenance and facility management.[26]

Temple
Papua New Guinea belongs to the Sydney Australia Temple District. One of the first temple trips occurred in late 1991 when 138 Papuans received their temple ordinances in the Sydney Australia Temple. It is unclear how often temple trips occur, but many Papuans hold temple recommends.

Comparative Growth
Despite having the largest native population and second largest overall population in Oceania, outreach has been limited. Only the Solomon Islands has a lower percentage of Church members in Oceania.. Some of the lack of greater outreach is due to the Church's more recent establishment in 1979. Most other Pacific nations had the Church first established before 1950. Other nations which had their first Church presence established in the 1970s in Oceania have seen greater outreach, such as Kiribati, where in late 2008 there were two stakes and one in eight people were LDS. Membership and congregational growth in Papua New Guinea has been some of the strongest over the past two decades in the Pacific. The large, diverse population challenges missionary efforts which in most other Pacific nations focuses on a small and linguistically homogenous populations.

Many Christian denominations experience rapid growth and operate in most provinces. These denominations have built upon several decades of outreach. Seventh-Day Adventists had over 50,000 Papuan members when the LDS Church first arrived in the late 1970s. In 2008, Adventists claimed 4% of the population throughout the country, had converted 7% of the population in the Eastern Highlands and Simbu Provinces, and had established congregations on many of the eastern islands. Despite civil strife on Bougainville, Seventh-Day Adventists claim 5,500 members in 37 congregations. Seventh-Day Adventists and other Christian groups devote many resources from other nations and build up local missionary forces. The LDS Church in Papua New Guinea relies primarily on local members and native missionaries for outreach..

Future Prospects
Membership experiences linear growth and may continue to see annual increases between 500 and 1,000 members until additional areas open for proselytism. The Daru Papua New Guinea District appears closest to becoming a stake. Other districts which may mature into stakes in the near future include Goroka and Nine Mile. Only one potential district seems likely to be created in Angoram from at least three mission branches. Since cities and villages tend to open as the result of member missionary work and members moving to unreached areas, smaller villages may open in greater amounts in the future. Once multiple stakes function, the likelihood of a temple announcement for Port Moresby will greatly increase.

[1] http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/43105/Self-reliance-A-plan-for-Papua-New-Guinea.html
[2] http://newsroom.lds.org/ldsnewsroom/eng/contact-us/papua-new-guinea
[3] http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/19186/New-Guinea--Light-and-truth-pouring-into-nation-10-years-following-Churchs-arrival.h
[4] http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/22528/7-new-missions-created-total-now-275.html
[5] http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/26682/Faith-leads-to-first-Papua-New-Guinea-stake.html
[6] http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/28725/Early-beginnings.html
[7] http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/19186/New-Guinea--Light-and-truth-pouring-into-nation-10-years-following-Churchs-arrival.h
[8] http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/22557/Hall-of-famer.html
[9] http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/26682/Faith-leads-to-first-Papua-New-Guinea-stake.html
[10] http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/26056/New-stake-presidencies.html
[11] http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/43105/Self-reliance-A-plan-for-Papua-New-Guinea.html
[12] http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/57337/Long-trip-for-Papua-New-Guinea-members.html
[13] http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/26682/Faith-leads-to-first-Papua-New-Guinea-stake.html
[14] http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/21669/Members-make-historic-trip-to-temple.html
[15] http://newsroom.lds.org/ldsnewsroom/eng/contact-us/papua-new-guinea
[16] http://www.lds.org/ldsorg/v/index.jsp?hideNav=1&locale=0&sourceId=fd523ff73058b010VgnVCM1000004d82620a____&vgnextoid=
[17] http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/23747/Literacy-opened-whole-new-world-for-her.html
[18] http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/23489/From-around-the-world.html
[19] http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/43105/Self-reliance-A-plan-for-Papua-New-Guinea.html
[20] http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/49670/Helping-neighbors-in-Papua-New-Guinea.html
[21] http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/52000/Fighting-measles.html
[22] http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/18623/He-knew-there-was-something-different-about-the-young-men-dressed-in-white-shirts
[23] http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/19186/New-Guinea--Light-and-truth-pouring-into-nation-10-years-following-Churchs-arrival.h
[24] http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/26682/Faith-leads-to-first-Papua-New-Guinea-stake.html
[25] http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/26056/New-stake-presidencies.html
[26] http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/41842/New-stake-presidents.html