



Reaching the Nations International Church Growth Almanac

Country reports on the LDS Church around the world from a landmark almanac. Includes detailed analysis of history, context, culture, needs, challenges and opportunities for church growth.



Zambia

Population: 14.64 millions (#71 out of countries)

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Geography

Area: 752,618 square km. Landlocked in Southern Africa, Zambia borders Tanzania, Malawi, Mozambique, Zimbabwe, Botswana, Namibia, Angola, and the Democratic Republic of Congo. Southwestern Zambia consists of plains and northwestern Zambia contains some mountains. Zambia has a tropical climate and experiences a rainy season from October to April. The Zambezi River, one of Southern Africa's longest rivers, originates in Zambia. Several famous waterfalls exist where rivers cascade from high plateaus into valleys. Drought and tropical storms are natural hazards. Environmental issues include pollution, acid rain, poaching, deforestation, soil erosion, desertification, and fresh water scarcity. Zambia is divided into nine administrative provinces.

Population: 13,881,336 (July 2011)

Annual Growth Rate: 3.062% (2011)

Fertility Rate: 5.98 children born per woman (2011)

Life Expectancy: 51.13 male, 53.63 female (2011)

Peoples

African: 99.5% (Bemba, Tonga, Chewa, Lozi, Nsenga, Tumbuka, Ngoni, Lala, Kaonde, Lunda, and other African groups)

Other: 0.5% (Europeans, Asians, and Americans)

Population density is highest in and near urban areas, especially the Copperbelt Province and along the border with Zimbabwe. Over 70 different native ethnic groups live in Zambia.^[1] The Bemba, Chewa and Lunda mainly live in northern Zambia. The Tonga, Lozi, and Tumbuka reside in eastern Zambia with many of the other largest ethnic groups (Nsenga and Ngoni) found in eastern Zambia. Zambia experiences a high prevalence of HIV/AIDS as 15.2% of the adult population is infected with HIV/AIDS.

Languages: 43 indigenous languages are spoken in Zambia. English is widely spoken. Bemba (30.1%), Nyanja/Chichewa

(10.7%), Tonga (10.6%), Lozi (5.7%), Lunda (2.2%), Kaonde (2%), Luvale (1.7%), and English (1.7%) are all official. Other widely spoken languages include Chewa (4.9%), Nsenga (3.4%), Tumbuka (2.5%), and Lala (2%). Indigenous languages with over one million speakers include Bemba (3.3 million) and Tonga (1 million).

Literacy: 80.6% (2003)

History

Several ethnic groups in Zambia established themselves in the country in the centuries prior to European exploration in the late 1700s and 1800s. European explorers, such as David Livingstone, arrived in the area in the mid-1800s. Zambia became known as Northern Rhodesia in the late 19th century. The South Africa Company administered Northern Rhodesia until the British took full control in 1923. Copper mining began during this time. In the 1950s, Northern Rhodesia joined Zimbabwe and Malawi to form a federation which lasted until independence in 1964. The name Zambia was adopted at independence. Drought and low copper prices hurt the economy in the later quarter of the twentieth century. Political instability arose in the 1990s after the fall of one-party rule; political and economic stability improved in the 2000s.

Culture

Most Zambian customs and traditions are indigenous to the various Bantu ethnic groups. British colonization resulted in multiple tribes living in the same urban area, whereas previously, tribes lived separately. Corn, beans, other vegetables, meat, and fish are common foods.^[2] A 2003 survey found that 16% of married women were joined to a polygamous marriage.^[3] Cigarette and alcohol consumption rates are low comparable to the world average.

Economy

GDP per capita: \$1,500 (2010) [3.16% of US]

Human Development Index: 0.481

Corruption Index: 3.0

Since British colonialism, Zambia has been highly dependent on copper revenues for the growth and stability of the economy, and vulnerable to copper price fluctuations. The economy of Zambia, as of many other developing nations, is based primarily on raw materials and agriculture. A focus on education of skilled workers and professionals and infrastructure and industry will be necessary to develop the economy. Zambia incurred high debt during one-party rule in part due to declining copper prices. In the past decade, the economic situation in Zambia has improved, with the GDP increasing six percent a year between 2006 and 2008. Government has focused on trying to diversify the economy by placing less stress on copper mining. Despite the importance of copper mining, 85% of the workforce is employed in agriculture and 58% of the GDP originates from services. Zambia's imports from South Africa account for over 50% of all imports into the country. Export partners are mainly in Africa, Asia and Europe.

Corruption in Zambia is widespread. Government officials show little transparency when working with the public and commonly take bribes, especially with land titles. There is little control and confirmation for government expenditures.^[4]

Faiths

Christian: 50-75%

Indigenous beliefs: 24-49%

Muslim or Hindu: 1%

Christians

Denominations	Members	Congregations
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Catholic	3,000,000	
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Seventh Day Adventists	590,098	1,725
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Jehovah's Witnesses 144,649 2,212

Latter-day Saints 2,237 11

Religion

During the colonial era, the British brought Christianity to Zambia. Ethnic groups previously followed indigenous religious. Christians constitute the majority, although syncretism occurs between Christian and indigenous beliefs. Catholics have the largest number of members. There are many Pentecostal and evangelical churches. The Seventh Day Adventist Church forms a large minority, claiming 10% of the population in southern areas. Muslims form a small minority mainly found in urban areas. A small Jewish community also exists in the country.

Religious Freedom

Persecution Index:

The constitution protects religious freedom which is upheld by the government. Several Christian holidays are recognized national holidays. Religious groups must register with the government to operate. To register, a religious group must demonstrate the ability to maintain law and order, hold a system of beliefs consistent with the constitution, and possess a unique name. Unregistered religious groups may be fined and imprisoned. There have been no recent reports of religious groups being denied registration. Christian instruction is required in public schools. There have been no recent instances of societal abuse of religious freedom.[\[5\]](#)

Major Cities

Urban: 35%

Lusaka, Ndola, Kitwe, **Kabwe**, **Chingola**, Mufulira, Luanshya, **Livingstone**, **Kasama**, **Chipata**.

Cities listed in **bold** have no LDS congregations.

Five of the ten largest cities have an LDS congregation. 25% of the population resides in the ten most populous cities.

LDS History

The Church had a missionary presence in the Copperbelt Province of northern Zambia in the 1960s, but this presence was discontinued later in the decade.[\[6\]](#) The first Zambians joined the Church outside of their home country. President Vern Marble from the Zimbabwe Harare Mission traveled to Zambia in 1991 to look for a couple who had been baptized and was reportedly living in the country. President Marble found the couple who had been baptized in England, which facilitated the Church's establishment in Zambia. Missionary work began with the arrival of a senior missionary couple in April 1992. The Church was formally registered with the government the following July. In August, Zambia was dedicated for missionary work by Elder Russell M. Nelson. The seminary program began in 1995. Zambia remained assigned to the Zimbabwe Harare Mission until 2011 when the Church organized the Zambia Lusaka Mission to administer Zambia and Malawi. Zambia is assigned to the Africa Southeast Area.

Membership Growth

LDS Membership: 2,587 (2010)

In 1992, there were 54 attending church meetings; a large increase from the less than ten in September 1991.[\[7\]](#) By the end of 1992 there were approximately 100 Latter-day Saints.[\[8\]](#) Membership increased to 500 in 1997 and 725 in 2000. Moderate membership growth occurred in the 2000s as membership climbed to 951 in 2002, 1,442 in 2004, 1,905 in 2006, and 2,237 in 2008. Annual membership growth rates during the 2000s ranged from a high of 25% in 2003 to a low of 6.7% in 2008. Membership generally increases by 100 to 300 members a year. Additional congregations opening throughout Lusaka and Copperbelt Province to missionary work in 2002 helped to increase membership growth rates in the mid-2000s. In 2009, one in 6,205 was LDS.

Congregational Growth

Branches: 11 Groups: 1

The first branch was organized in Lusaka in July 1992. A second branch was organized in Lusaka, named the Libala Branch, around 1997. By the end of 2000 there were four branches in Zambia. The number of congregations in Zambia increased rapidly in the early 2000s, from four in 2001 to ten by year-end 2003. The first district was organized in Lusaka in 2003. Branches totaled five in the district in September 2003.^[9] Two additional branches were organized in Lusaka, numbering seven by 2006. Three branches were established in the Copperbelt Province in the cities of Kitwe, Luanshya, and Ndola in 2002.^[10] These branches were united into a district in 2005 named the Kitwe Zambia District. An additional branch in Zambia, named the Zambia Branch, functioned for a number of years during the 2000s and was discontinued in 2009. This branch likely included several groups or members living in remote cities around the country. Missionaries serving in the Copperbelt Province in 2009 reported that a group was meeting in Kawama, on the outskirts of Mufulira, located 20 miles north of Kitwe. Kawama became a branch in 2011. A group began meeting in Bauleni, Lusaka in 2011.

Activity and Retention

The average number of members per congregation remain almost unchanged during the 2000s, increasing from 195 to 203 between 2000 and 2008. Shortly after the three branches were created in the Copperbelt Province in 2002, there were reported to be around 160 attending Sunday meetings among the three branches.^[11] A missionary serving in the Libala Branch in Lusaka reported in 2007 that sacrament attendance averaged around 40 people. Considering this was one of the smallest branches in Zambia, active membership in Zambia likely stands at an average of 75 per branch, or 750. Activity rates may be as low as 30% nationwide.

Language Materials

Languages with LDS Scripture: English

Church materials are available in two indigenous languages in Zambia. Bemba translations for Church materials are limited to Gospel Principles and the Testimony of the Prophet Joseph Smith. Nyanja (Chichewa) only has the Testimony of the Prophet Joseph Smith translated. The Church likely conducts church meetings in the most widely spoken languages of English, Bemba and Nyanja due to these languages often used in urban settings. Furthermore, the Church has also established itself in Lusaka and the Copperbelt Province, which is where Bemba and Nyanja are most spoken. English is likely used most often when various ethnic groups meet in the same congregation.

Meetinghouses

The first meetinghouse was dedicated in Lusaka in 1998.^[12] Most meetinghouses in Zambia are renovated buildings or rented spaces.

Public Health

Living conditions in Zambia are poor and result in inadequate health care. The large numbers of Zambians are infected with HIV. Those who join the Church and have HIV/AIDS are less able to build the Church in the long term due to the disease significantly shortening their lifespan. Tropical diseases are endemic and health care infrastructure is poor.

Humanitarian and Development Work

The Perpetual Education Fund became available in Zambia in late 2009. The first 10 applicants were returned missionaries.^[13] LDS Humanitarian and development assistance has been limited to donating school and hygiene kits to the needy in Lusaka.^[14]

Opportunities, Challenges and Prospects

Religious Freedom

Zambia has enjoyed religious freedom and stability that many African nations lack. Other Christian denominations have taken advantage of this opportunity to preach and gain large numbers of converts.

Cultural Issues

Polygamy is a common practice in Zambia and is legally recognized, with 16% of women involved in its practice.^[15] Participants in polygamous marriage can join the Church only after divorce. These challenges include establishing full-member families and assisting with the temporal welfare for members in need. Syncretism between Christianity and indigenous beliefs is common. Due to poverty and interest in religion, many churches in Zambia have seen increases in membership.

National Outreach

20% of the national population resides in cities with an LDS congregation. Only two of Zambia's nine provinces have a Church presence. In the Lusaka and Copperbelt Provinces, the Church is only established in the largest cities. No independent branch operates in any city with fewer than 100,000 inhabitants. Additional groups or dependent branches may exist in areas of Zambia which are not reported by the Church. Only the Copperbelt Province has had the Church actively open additional cities to missionary work in the past decade. Low levels of national outreach are linked to few missionary resources dedicated to Zambia as the LDS Church in Zambia in the past has depended on the Zimbabwe Harare Mission for outreach, which shared mission resources with Zimbabwe and Malawi. Implementing a centers-of-strength approach to proselytism and missionary work has contributed to a lack of progression expanding national outreach in recent years. The formation of the Zambia Lusaka Mission in 2011 will allocate greater numbers of missionary resources and increase prospects of additional cities opening for missionary work. Additional congregations will likely be established in lesser-reached communities in cities with an LDS presence in the Copperbelt Province.

Member Activity and Convert Retention

Membership activity and retention appear to be problematic in Zambia considering that the branches in Lusaka were not united into a district until 2003 when membership was nearly 1,000. Due to most Church members residing in Lusaka, much of Zambia's member activity and convert retention reflects member activity and convert retention in Lusaka. Rapid membership growth in Zambia has occurred in tandem with increases in congregational growth nonetheless, indicating some maturation of new converts into local leadership positions. The lack of any new branches organizations in Zambia since 2006 points toward low convert retention and lacking self sufficiency.

Ethnic Issues and Integration

Integration of members of different ethnic groups into church congregations has not posed major difficulties due to the widespread use of English and lesser ethnic tensions than in some other African nations.

Language Issues

Church services are mainly held in English, which appears to be adequate for current membership. Growth to date has been confined to just two provinces, and some language issues may arise when proselyting begins in ethnically diverse provinces where fewer people speak English. The Church can benefit from high literacy in Zambia for developing greater independence and leadership among its members.

Additional church materials may be likely to be translated into Bemba and Nyanja, as these languages are the most widely spoken where the Church is currently established in Zambia. As membership growth and leadership development continues, branches may be divided to address the language needs in areas of Lusaka or the Copperbelt Province. Many Zambian members are fluent in their native languages and English, which would facilitate the translation process for additional Church materials and scriptures.

Missionary Service

Two or three dozen full-time missionaries appeared to be serving in Zambia in early 2011. By 2009, 10 missionaries were serving in the Copperbelt Province. Local members regularly serve full-time missions throughout Africa and appear close to being self-sufficient in staffing their local missionary needs.

Leadership

Strong local leadership is present in the two districts in Zambia. Many Zambians have served missions and later returned to serve in leadership positions in their local branches. Additional Zambian returned missionaries will likely expedite the creation of a stake in Lusaka. Leadership development in Zambia appears limited due to its past isolation from mission headquarters in Harare, Zimbabwe. Visits from mission leadership are also divided with Malawi and Zimbabwe, the latter which has much larger membership and missionary effort. Senior couples serving in Zambia likely contribute to training and support Zambian membership and leadership. Isolation from mission headquarters appears to have increased self-reliance in some congregations.

Temple

Zambia is assigned to the Johannesburg South Africa Temple District. Although closer than many other countries in the temple district, Zambian members of the Church have limited opportunities to visit the temple. No temple excursions were reported to occur regularly by missionaries serving in Zambia, although this does not indicate that they do not exist. Neighboring Zimbabwe appears as a likely possibility for a future temple due to the size and activity of LDS membership in that nation. A temple in Zimbabwe would likely allow for greater numbers of Zambians with closer, more feasible and frequent access to a temple.

Comparative Growth

Zambia rests in the middle of the spectrum for church growth in African nations opened to missionary work in the early 1990s. Some nations have experienced slower growth, such as Botswana which in late 2008 had about 1,000 fewer members than Zambia and five congregations. Other nations have experienced more rapid growth, such as the Republic of Congo, which grew to over 4,000 members in 14 congregations in 2008.

Jehovah's Witnesses and Seventh Day Adventists have experienced some of the strongest growth in Africa in Zambia. Seventh Day Adventists report that areas with the highest percentages of membership are south of Lusaka and between the Copperbelt and Lusaka, with up to 10% of the population belonging to the Adventist Church in some areas. Strong growth has occurred in these and other Christian denominations due to religious freedom and interest among Zambians in Christianity.

Stronger LDS growth has not occurred in Zambia due to low resource allocation as mission resources were divided among the three nations of the Zimbabwe Harare Mission before the organization of the Zambia Lusaka Mission, with Zimbabwe receiving the majority of resources, missionary manpower, and attention from mission and area leaders. Widespread syncretism between Christianity and indigenous beliefs presents challenges for proselytism, and LDS outreach in Zambia has been cautious to ensure that new members are adequately pastored. Strong membership growth in most denominations reflects high local receptivity.

Future Prospects

The LDS Church has the potential to grow much more rapidly in Zambia due to the establishment of a membership and leadership base to nurture and fellowship additional converts. The Lusaka Zambia District will likely become a stake in the coming years when membership and leadership are able to meet the requirements. The district in late 2009 had enough congregations to become a stake, but may be lacking in total membership or member activity as no new congregations had been created in the city since 2006. In coming years, additional cities will likely be opened for missionary work with the recent organization of the new mission, especially in the Copperbelt Province, as several large cities without missionaries are in close proximity to established church centers. Likely candidates for future missionary efforts include Chililabombwe, Chingola, and Mufulira in the Copperbelt Province and Kabwe, between Lusaka and the Copperbelt.

[1] "Zambia," Wikipedia.org, retrieved 4 April 2011. <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Zambia>

[2] "Zambia," Wikipedia.org, retrieved 4 April 2011. <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Zambia>

[3] "Zambia," Social Institutions and Gender Index, retrieved 4 April 2011. <http://genderindex.org/country/zambia>

[4] "Zambia," 2011 Index of Economic Freedom, retrieved 4 April 2011. <http://www.heritage.org/Index/Country/Zambia>

[5] "Zambia," International Religious Freedom Report 2010, 17 November 2010. <http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/irf/2010/148728.htm>

[6] "Branches organized in Zambia," LDS Church News, 4 January 2003. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/43043/Branches-organized-in-Zambia.html>

[7] Mostert, Mary. "Prayers of dedication offered on 4 nations in central, southern Africa," LDS Church News, 26 September 1992. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/22452/Prayers-of-dedication-offered-on-4-nations-in-central-southern--Africa.html>

[8] "Zambia," Country Profile, 18 October 2010. <http://newsroom.lds.org/country/zambia>

[9] "Fireside focuses on family history," LDS Church News, 6 September 2003. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/44294/Fireside-focuses-on-family-history.html>

[10] "Branches organized in Zambia," LDS Church News, 4 January 2003.
<http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/43043/Branches-organized-in-Zambia.html>

[11] "Branches organized in Zambia," LDS Church News, 4 January 2003.
<http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/43043/Branches-organized-in-Zambia.html>

[12] "Zambia," Country Profile, 18 October 2010. <http://newsroom.lds.org/country/zambia>

[13] "Perpetual Education Fund benefits Zambia returned Mormon missionaries," LDS Church News, 4 November 2009.
<http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/58173/Perpetual-Education-Fund-benefits-Zambia-returned-Mormon-missionaries.html>

[14] "Projects - Zambia," Humanitarian Activities Worldwide, retrieved 4 April 2011.
<http://www.providentliving.org/project/0,13501,4607-1-2008-158,00.html>

[15] "Zambia," Social Institutions and Gender Index, retrieved 4 April 2011. <http://genderindex.org/country/zambia>