



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.



United States

Population: 318.89 millions (#4 out of countries)

By David Stewart and Matt Martinich

Geography

Area: 9,826,675 square km. Geographically the world's third largest country, the United States consist of the contiguous 48 states between Canada and Mexico, Alaska, Hawaii, and five major overseas territorial possessions in the Caribbean and Pacific including American Samoa, Guam, the Northern Mariana Islands, Puerto Rico, and the United States Virgin Islands. Several small islands in the Pacific with no indigenous population are under United States sovereignty, such as Wake Island and the Midway Islands. Primary geographic features include the Great Plains, the Rocky Mountains, the Appalachian Mountains, the Great Lakes, and the Gulf of Mexico. Climate varies from arctic in northern Alaska to tropical in south Florida and Hawaii, with most areas experiencing temperate climate. Semi-arid conditions occur on the Great Plains, which stretch from the Canadian border nearly to the Mexican border between the Mississippi River and the Rocky Mountains. Western interior basin-and-range areas are generally arid desert marked by cool winters and hot, dry summers. Mediterranean climate prevails along the southern California coast whereas wet, temperate climate occurs in the Pacific Northwest. The Midwest and Northeast generally experience cold winters and hot summers with frequent precipitation. Warm temperate conditions occur in the Southeast with mild winters and frequent precipitation. Major rivers include the Mississippi, Rio Grande, Colorado, Columbia, Ohio, and Arkansas Rivers. Flooding, hurricanes, tornadoes, earthquakes, volcanoes, tsunamis, mud slides, and permafrost are natural hazards. Environmental issues include air pollution, water pollution, desertification, and water scarcity. The United States is administratively divided into 50 states and several incorporated unorganized territories, unincorporated organized territories, and unincorporated unorganized territories.

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Population: 313,232,044 (July 2011)

Annual Growth Rate: 0.963% (2011)

Fertility Rate: 2.06 children born per woman (2011)

Life Expectancy: 75.92 male, 80.93 female (2011)

Peoples

white: 79.96%

black: 12.85%

Asian: 4.43%

Amerindian and Alaska native: 0.97%

native Hawaiian and Pacific Islander: 0.18%

mixed race: 1.61%

Languages: English (82.1%), Spanish (10.7%), other Indo-European languages (3.8%), Asian and Pacific Islander languages (2.7%), other (0.7%). Languages with over one million speakers include English (257.2 million), Spanish (33.5 million), Chinese languages (2.0 million), French (1.6 million), Tagalog (1.2 million), Vietnamese (1 million), and Italian (1 million). According to the 2000 census, languages with between 200,000 and one million speakers included Korean (894,063), Russian (706,242), Polish (667,414), Arabic (614,582), Portuguese (564,630), Japanese (447,997), French Creole (453,368), Greek (365,436), Hindi (314,057), Farsi (312,085), Urdu (262,900), Gujarati (235,988), and Armenian (202,708).^[1]

Literacy: 99% (2003)

History

Native Americans are believed to have populated North America for millennia prior to its discovery and colonization by Europeans. The Spanish and French were among the first to explore the vast coastline and interior of the United States. The Dutch founded a colony on Manhattan Island named New Amsterdam which later became the British colony of New York. During the seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries, Britain founded thirteen colonies along the eastern coast of the present-day United States. Issues arose in the colonies regarding government representation in Britain and a desire for greater autonomous rule, which fueled the American Revolutionary War during the 1770s and 1780s and culminated in the emergence of the United States of America as a sovereign nation with a republican form of government and thirteen administrative states. The constitution was ratified in 1788 and the Bill of Rights was instituted in 1791. Following the Revolutionary War, the United States obtained territory ceded by the British west of the colonies to the Mississippi River and additional states were organized. Territorial expansion ensued during the nineteenth century as the United States nearly doubled in size from the Louisiana Purchase in 1803. Additional territories acquired included portions of present-day Minnesota and North Dakota in 1818; East Florida, West Florida, and a portion of present-day Louisiana in 1819; Texas in 1845; Oregon Territory from Great Britain in 1846; much of the western United States from Mexico in 1848; the Gadsden Purchase from Mexico in 1853; Alaska from Russia in 1867; Hawaii in 1898; Puerto Rico and several Pacific islands from Spain in 1898. The United States purchased the Virgin Islands from Denmark in 1917. The War of 1812 was fought with Britain and resulted in no changes in land holdings for either side. The United States fought the Mexican-American War between 1846 and 1848, which resulted in the acquisition of California and much of the Southwest. The debate over slavery sparked the American Civil War during the first half of the 1860s and ended with the freeing of the slaves, defeat of the Confederacy in 1865, and granting citizenship and voting rights to former slaves. Rapid industrialization occurred following the civil war and Spain's defeat in the Spanish American war in the late 1890s solidified the United States as a world power. The United States joined the Allies towards the end of World War I. Rapid economic growth in the 1920s came to an abrupt halt in 1929 and deteriorated into the Great Depression during the 1930s. The Dust Bowl left large areas of farmland in the Great Plains desolate following poor farming techniques and severe drought. The United States officially joined the Allies in World War II in 1941 following the surprise Japanese bombing of Pearl Harbor, Hawaii. Nuclear weapons were developed by the United States during the war and were dropped on Hiroshima and Nagasaki in 1945, effectively ended the war in the Pacific. Following World War II, the United States emerged with the Soviet Union as the world's superpowers and nuclear-armed nations. An arms race, a space race, and a series of proxy wars were fought between the United States and Soviet Union in nations such as Korea and Vietnam as part of the Cold War as the United States and the Soviet Union competed for domination in their respective ideologies. The Soviet Union won the race to launch the first satellite in 1957 and put the first man in space in 1961, but the United States successfully landed the first man on the moon in 1969. A cultural revolution addressing civil rights issues occurred in the 1960s and 1970s; various economic reforms were also instituted during this period. Economic stagnation and political instability led to the dissolution of the Soviet Union in 1991 and the end of the Cold War, leaving the United States as the world's dominant superpower. Economic prosperity and widening American cultural influence worldwide characterized the 1990s. Al-Qaeda terrorists carried out catastrophic terrorist attacks in New York and Washington on September 11th, 2001 which led to a global War on Terror launched by the Bush administration that led to military conflicts and occupations in Afghanistan in 2001 and Iraq in 2003. Economic instability occurred in the late 2000s. In 2008, the first African American president was elected into office. Increasing economic prosperity and technological development in China, Russia, and the European Union as well as economic stagnation and mounting national debt in the United States are increasingly leading to a multi-polar world in which the United States still holds a dominant position, but other nations play a strong role. These trends are expected to continue over the next several decades with the maturation of developing nations.

Culture

Christianity and agriculture were the dominant influences on American culture and society until recent decades as the population has become more urbanized and religion's influence has been increasingly superseded by materialism, secularism, and technology especially on the East and West Coasts and in major metropolitan areas. Christianity and churches nonetheless remain powerful forces in society, especially in the southern region nicknamed "the Bible Belt." Symbols of

American culture include fast food, shopping malls, cars, and traditional foods such as apple pie. Americans have integrated a variety of foreign foods into their diet that have been introduced by immigrants from Europe, Asia, and Latin America. Cigarette and alcohol consumption rates compare to the worldwide average. The United States has one of the highest divorce rates worldwide. Illicit drug use is high as the United States is the world's largest consumer of cocaine and Latin American heroin and marijuana. A variety of methamphetamines, hallucinogens, depressants, and stimulants are consumed. The United States has the highest reported number of prisoners incarcerated in the world, primarily on drug offenses.

Economy

GDP per capita: \$47,400 (2010)

Human Development Index: 0.902

Corruption Index: 7.1

The American economy is the world's largest, most technologically advanced economy and heavily influences world economic conditions. The GDP of the United States in 2010 was roughly the equivalent of the European Union and one-fifth of the total world GDP. In 2010, public debt accounted for 59% of the GDP. Economic growth occurred for much of the latter-half of the twentieth century as a result of market-based economic policies and private companies and enterprises accounting for most economic activity. The longest recession in American history since the Great Depression occurred in the late 2000s and resulted in attempts by the federal government to stabilize the situation by providing taxpayer "bailouts" to failing banks, increasing government spending on stimulus packages, and reducing interest rates. Although these measures added considerably to government debt, most economists feel that they had little impact on economic recovery. The United States has the world's largest coal reserves. Services generate 77% of the GDP whereas industry and agriculture generate 22% and 1% of the GDP, respectively. Industry is highly diversified; petroleum, steel, motor vehicles, aerospace, telecommunications, chemicals, electronics, food processing, lumber, and mining are major industries. Common agricultural products include grains, fruit, vegetables, cotton, beef, pork, poultry, dairy products, and fish. Canada, China, Mexico, and Japan are the primary trade partners.

Corruption is perceived as less prevalent than in most nations and comparable to some larger Western European countries such as the United Kingdom and France. Due to its large, advanced economy which is highly integrated into international markets, the United States is a money-laundering center. Inner-city areas, small rural towns, and the Mexican border are most prone to corruption.

Faiths

Christian: 78.5%

Jewish: 1.7%

Buddhist: 0.7%

Muslim: 0.6%

other/unspecified: 2.5%

unaffiliated: 12.1%

none: 4%

Christians

Denominations Members Congregations

Catholic 68,503,456

Southern Baptist 16,228,438

United Methodist 7,853,987

Latter-day Saints 6,144,582 13,628

Church of God in Christ 5,499,875

Seventh Day Adventists 1,059,388 4,925

Jehovah's Witnesses 1,178,349 12,995

Religion

Christians account for slightly over three-quarters of the American population, most of which are Protestant. 51% of Americans are Protestant; half of which are evangelical. Mainline churches and historically black church account for 18.1% and 6.9% of the population, respectively. Latter-day Saints comprise around 1.7% of the population whereas Jehovah's Witnesses constitute 0.7%. The United States is the world's greatest supplier of Christian missionaries. Non-Christian religious groups together comprise 4.7% of the population, 36% of which are Jewish, 15% are Buddhist, 13% are Muslim, and 9% are Hindu. Americans unaffiliated with a religious group or are nonreligious account for 16.1% of the population.[\[2\]](#)

Religious Freedom

Persecution Index:

The constitution protects religious freedom which is upheld by the government. There are no restrictions on religious freedom and few societal abuses of religious freedom.

Largest Metropolitan Areas

Urban: 82%

New York, Los Angeles, Chicago, Dallas, Philadelphia, Houston, Washington, Miami, Atlanta, Boston, San Francisco, Detroit, Riverside, Phoenix, Seattle, Minneapolis, San Diego, St. Louis, Tampa, Baltimore, Denver, Pittsburgh, Portland, Sacramento, San Antonio, Orlando, Cincinnati, Cleveland, Kansas City, Las Vegas, San Jose, Columbus, Charlotte, Indianapolis, Austin, Virginia Beach, Providence, Nashville, Milwaukee, Jacksonville, Memphis, Louisville, Richmond, Oklahoma City, Hartford, New Orleans, Buffalo, Raleigh, Birmingham, Salt Lake City, Rochester.

All 51 metropolitan areas with populations over one million have an LDS congregation. 54% of the national population resides in the 51 most populous metropolitan areas.

LDS History

The LDS Church was founded in upstate New York in 1830, ten years following the Church's first president Joseph Smith receiving the First Vision. The Church soon established its headquarters in Kirtland, Ohio and members began relocating to Independence, Missouri as a second gathering place. The Church completed its first temple in Kirtland in 1836. Persecution intensified in both church centers, forcing the Church to move its headquarters and main body of members to Nauvoo, Illinois in late 1839 and in the early 1840s. The revelations and writings contained in LDS scriptures today primarily originated between the late 1820s and early 1840s. Missionaries were sent to preach in the United States beginning in the 1830s and were called to serve in Canada, the British Islands, and French Polynesia shortly thereafter. Following the martyrdom of Joseph Smith in 1844 and the dedication of the Nauvoo Temple in 1846, Latter-day Saints under the direction of Brigham Young ventured westward in the face of consistent persecution, ultimately settling in the Salt Lake Valley in present-day Utah and establishing church headquarters in Salt Lake City. President Brigham Young initiated an aggressive colonization campaign designed to spur industry and self-reliance among the embattled Latter-day Saints. Colonies were founded throughout the western United States, primarily in Utah, Idaho, Wyoming, Arizona, Nevada, and Colorado, and later in Alberta, Canada and northwestern Mexico. The United States government remained suspicious of the Church throughout the nineteenth century, sending military personnel in the late 1850s to put down an alleged rebellion and passing anti-polygamy legislation designed to bar the territory statehood. The LDS Church officially discontinued the teaching and practice of polygamy in 1890 and government relations began to improve, resulting in the formation of the state of Utah in 1896. During the twentieth century, the Church remained a major societal force in Utah and areas of surrounding states due to the concentrated number of members in the region. In recent years, the Church has taken a firm stance opposing pornography, gambling, and same-sex marriage.

Missions

LDS missionary activity in the United States occurred without the organization of a mission until 1839 when the Eastern States Mission was organized. The Eastern States Mission was closed in 1850, reopened in 1854, closed in 1858, reopened in 1865, closed in 1869, and reopened in 1893. The California mission was organized in 1846, closed in 1858, and reopened in 1892. The Sandwich Islands Mission opened in 1850, closed in 1858, and reopened in 1864. In 1855, the Indian Territory Mission was organized and closed in 1860, reopened and closed in 1877, and reopened in 1883. By 1900, there were eight missions operating in the United States. By the end of 1950, 10 additional missions were organized. The number of missions increased from 18 in 1950 to 35 in 1973, 71 in 1987, 86 in 1993, 95 in 1997, and 100 in 2000. The number of missions in the United States reached a high of 106 in the mid-2000s and declined to 104 in 2009, 102 in 2010, and 100 in 2011 as missions were consolidated in Illinois (2), California, Connecticut, Georgia, New Jersey, Ohio, and Pennsylvania. In 2010, new missions were organized in Farmington, New Mexico and St George, Utah.

Membership Growth

LDS Membership: 6,144,582 (2010)

In 1973, there were 2.53 million members, 97.4% of which resided in a stake.^[3] Membership increased to 3.05 million in 1983, 4.1 million in 1987, 4.52 million in 1993, 4.92 million in 1997, and 5.21 million in 2000. There were 5.41 million members in 2002, 5.6 million in 2004, 5.78 million in 2006, 5.97 million in 2008, and 6.14 million in 2010. Church membership generally increased by approximately 100,000 a year. During the 2000s, annual membership growth rates ranged from a high of 1.95% in 2001 to a low of 1.41% in 2010 and generally decreased year to year. Increase of children on record in the United States may account for 50% or more of the worldwide increase.

During the 2000s membership growth was highest in the District of Columbia (87%), Tennessee (44%), Iowa and Kentucky (37%), and Texas and North Dakota (35%) whereas membership growth was lowest in California (2%), Oregon (9%), New Hampshire (10%), Michigan (11%), and Vermont (13%). In 2010, states with the most Latter-day Saints included Utah (1.91 million), California (763,370), Idaho (414,182), Arizona (387,950), and Texas (296,141). Overall membership increased by 18% between 2000 and 2010 in the United States.

In 2010, approximately one in 50 was nominally LDS (1.96%) whereas in 2000 one in 54 was nominally LDS (1.85%). The Pew Forum reported that Latter-day Saints comprised 1.7% of the United States population in 2009.^[4] States with the highest percentage of Latter-day Saints in 2010 included Utah (69.1%), Idaho (26.4%), Wyoming (11.2%), Nevada (6.5%), and Arizona (6.1%) whereas New Jersey, Rhode Island, Massachusetts, and Pennsylvania had the lowest (less than 0.4%). The greatest increase in the percentage of members in the general population between 2000 and 2010 occurred in Hawaii (0.43%), Alaska (0.41%), North Dakota (0.24%), and Montana and West Virginia (0.22%) whereas the percentage of members in the general population declined in Utah (-3.87%), Nevada (-0.93%), Idaho (-0.51%), California (-0.16%), Oregon (-0.12), and Arizona (-0.04%).

Congregational Growth

Wards: 11,592 Branches: 2,037

There were 8,682 congregations in 1987, including 7,456 wards. The number of congregations increased to 10,013 in 1993, 10,811 in 1997, and 11,562 in 2000. There were 11,879 congregations in 2002, 12,463 in 2004, 13,010 in 2006, 13,363 in 2008, and 13,601 in 2010.

The number of wards increased to 8,433 in 1993, 9,189 in 1997, and 9,853 in 2000. There were 10,158 wards in 2002, 10,567 in 2004, 10,978 in 2006, 11,289 in 2008, and approximately 11,560 in 2010.

The first stake in the LDS Church was organized in Kirtland, Ohio in February 1834 followed by a second stake in Clay-Caldwell, Missouri later that year. By 1840, there were ten stakes in the United States, most of which were in Illinois. As a result of the exodus of Latter-day Saints to Utah in the mid-1840s, all stakes were discontinued by 1846. A stake was established in Salt Lake in 1847 and the number of stakes increased to four in 1860, nine in 1870, and 23 in 1880. By the 1930s there were over 100 stakes in the United States. There were 537 stakes in 1973 and 1,108 stakes and 18 districts in 1987. The number of stakes increased to 1,169 in 1993, 1,257 in 1997, and 1,310 in 2000. There were 1,336 stakes in 2002, 1,380 in 2004, 1,410 in 2006, 1,438 in 2008, and 1,465 in 2010. In April 2011, states with the most stakes included Utah (550), California (158), Idaho (121), Arizona (91), and Texas and Washington (56). North Dakota became the last state to have an LDS stake organized in 1977.

Between 2000 and 2010 congregational growth was most rapid in Delaware (63%), Virginia (33%), North Carolina (32%), and Texas and Tennessee (29%) whereas congregational decline occurred in Louisiana (-18%), Connecticut and New York (-6%), Maryland (-5%), and New Jersey (-3%). During this period, the number of congregations increased by 2,039 in the United States; states with the largest increases in congregations were Utah (962), Idaho (229), Arizona (158), Texas (130), and Washington (49). The number of districts has declined over the past two decades from 16 in 1993 to 14 in 2004, 13 in 2006, 12 in 2008, and 10 in 2010. Districts currently function in Texas and New York (3) and Utah, Michigan, New Jersey, and South

Dakota (1).

Activity and Retention

The average number of members per congregation nationwide was practically unchanged between 2000 and 2010 from 451 to 452 due to commensurate membership and congregational growth rates. In 2010, states and districts with the highest average number of members per congregation were the District of Columbia (794), South Carolina (596), Florida (584), California (561), and Louisiana (560) whereas states with the lowest average number of members per congregation were South Dakota (297), Wisconsin (355), Iowa (357), Vermont (365), and Nebraska (379). The District of Columbia (370), Louisiana (173), New York (127), South Carolina (100), and Connecticut experienced the greatest increase in the number of average members per congregation between 2000 and 2010 whereas Delaware (-81), Idaho and Utah (-26), Virginia (-12), and California (-7) experienced the greatest decrease in the average number of members per congregation. The average number of members per congregation increased in 43 of the 50 states during this period. 349,595 were enrolled in seminary or institute during the 2009-2010 school year. Between the 2007-2008 and the 2009-2010 school years, seminary enrollment was unchanged (196,000) whereas institute enrollment slightly increased from 141,752 to 153,305. With considerable variation by mission, most U.S. missions report short-term convert retention rates of 50% or higher, although activity of converts after one year appears to be below this figure. The number of active members per congregation varies dramatically by congregation and region, with the intermountain west often supporting the largest congregations generally between 200 and 400 active members per ward whereas most wards in other regions of the country generally have between 100 and 250 active members. Most branches have fewer than 100 members. Nationwide active membership is estimated at 2.5 million, or 40% of total church membership.

Language Materials

Languages with LDS Scripture: English, Spanish, Chinese (traditional and simplified characters), French, Tagalog, Vietnamese, Italian, Korean, Russian, Polish, Arabic, Portuguese, Japanese, Greek, Hindi, Farsi, Urdu, Armenian, Navajo.

All LDS scriptures and most church materials are available in English, Spanish, Chinese (traditional and simplified characters), French, Tagalog, Vietnamese, Italian, Korean, Russian, Polish, Arabic, Portuguese, Japanese, Greek, and Armenian (East). Only the Book of Mormon and a limited number of church materials are available in Hindi, Navajo, Farsi, and Urdu. LDS materials in Native American languages are limited to Navajo and Apache. Some General Conference addresses have been available in Apache in recent years. The Liahona magazine has monthly issues in English, Spanish, Chinese, French, Tagalog, Italian, Korean, Russian, and Japanese; four issues a year in Armenian (East), Polish, and Vietnamese; three issues a year in Urdu; and one issue a year in Greek. Many other immigrant languages from Europe and East Asia have LDS materials available, such as Romanian and Hmong.

Meetinghouses

In early 2011, there were approximately 7,000 LDS meetinghouse in the United States. With only a few exceptions for small branches, groups, and newly organized units in small rural towns or the inner city, all congregations meet in church-built meetinghouses.

Health and Safety

Some inner city areas pose safety concerns due to higher crime rates.

Humanitarian and Development Work

The number of humanitarian and development projects pursued by the Church in the United States (425) exceeds the number of projects undertaken in any other country and is greater than any continent with the exception of Asia.^[5] One-quarter of LDS humanitarian projects in the United States have occurred in Utah. Nearly all projects in the United States have consisted of donating food, clothing, bedding, furniture, wheelchairs, emergency relief for natural disasters, and services for the homeless, poor, and disabled.^[6]

Opportunities, Challenges and Prospects

Religious Freedom

The LDS Church benefits from full religious freedom. Members and missionaries freely proselyte, worship, and assemble. Foreign missionaries regularly serve in the country.

Cultural Issues

The United States is an outlier among the wealthy industrialized nations of the world as the rates of affiliation with a Christian church and church activity are moderately high notwithstanding long-term economic prosperity and many cultural similarities with secularized Western European nations where rates of church attendance and self-identification with organized religious groups are low. These cultural conditions in the United States have provided fair opportunities for LDS missionary activity for decades as most have a Christian background and have developed some personal religious habits. The LDS Church in the United States provides significant financial stability for the international church, allowing for church operations to continue in nations which are not self-sustaining in church finances from local members due to low activity or challenging economic conditions.

The heavy reliance of the LDS Church on the United States as its principal base of active membership, full-time missionaries, and church finances has offered both advantages and disadvantages to the international church. The seasoned US member base, a strong economic foundation, and high rates of US missionary service have been helpful in establishing the Church in new areas. However, the disproportionate reliance on US membership has sometimes resulted in over-reliance on U.S. missionaries abroad, over-subsidization of international units, difficulty tailoring the gospel message to cultures and regions for which the American worldview is not well-suited, and decreased responsiveness to conditions and opportunities in nations without a strong existing LDS membership base.

Increasing secularism has contributed to declining church attendance in the United States over the past half century and threatens to continue to reduce the activity and affiliation of additional Christians in the future. Secular ideals and philosophies which oppose LDS teachings include widespread acceptance of casual sexual relations, indifference and ridicule of organized religion, and increasing tolerance to some forms of illicit drug use. Such attitudes and practices have generated a challenging atmosphere which has reduced receptivity to the LDS Church in the general population and threatens member activity rates for many LDS youth and young adults, especially if member testimonies are underdeveloped and members desire social acceptance. The Church has addressed some of these cultural issues at universities and colleges by operating several church-operated schools and by providing institute outreach in many public schools, particularly in the west. The high degree of individualism in American culture has reduced personal responsibility for family and can encourage behaviors and attitudes not in harmony with LDS teachings.

Eroding moral values and societal conditions provide a mixture of challenges and opportunities for the Church, but generally reduce receptivity and exacerbate member attrition. The United States experiences moderate rates of cigarette and alcohol use and high rates of illicit drug use, requiring a specific mission outreach approach addressing substance abuse and addiction for potential converts and less-active members using these substances to successfully overcome their addictions and live LDS teachings. Gang activity in many larger cities has created a criminal culture in which illegal activity and organized crime are glamorized. Severing gang connections for gang members investigating the Church can be an arduous and dangerous process, jeopardizing the safety of LDS missionaries and potential members. The United States has the highest reported number of incarcerated prisoners in the world and the Church operated 97 correctional facility branches in the United States in April 2011 primarily to serve Latter-day Saints in prison. Nearly all correctional facility branches are in the west and are located in Utah (65), Arizona (5), Idaho (5), Oregon (5), Washington (5), California (3), Texas (3), Nevada (2), Wyoming (2), Oklahoma (1), and Missouri (1). Rates of recidivism are also high and challenge efforts to perform outreach among inmates. Divorce rates in the United States are among the highest in the world and the outcomes of divorce often severely affect the mental health of affected family members and create major barriers for LDS mission outreach. Divorce rates are somewhat lower for Latter-day Saints who have been married in the temple, but are still significantly higher among temple-married Latter-day Saints than in general American society fifty years ago. Many converts and members alike have suffered from the disintegration of the family's role in American society, which has been manifested by a host of other societal problems.

Public dialogue on the widening divide of social issues has often involved Latter-day Saints and the LDS Church. The LDS Church and its members are often portrayed as highly conservative in their political disposition in the media largely due to the stress on traditional moral standards and the LDS Church taking an official position on moral issues which are viewed as impacting political dialogue notwithstanding the Church officially declaring political neutrality. The public perception of the Church as politically conservative can attract converts and investigators with a conservative political orientation but create a barrier to outreach among those with more liberal views. A misunderstanding of the political disposition of most members and the actual teachings and doctrines of the LDS Church has fueled conflict and social disagreements in some LDS congregations which at times can reduce member activity and convert retention rates. Most Americans know few basic LDS beliefs and generally view Latter-day Saints as friendly and family oriented but kept to themselves and peculiar. In recent years, the Church and its members have come under greater scrutiny by the public for some members holding public offices and defining the traditional institute of marriage as only between a man and a woman.^[7] Many members feel defensive about their identity as a Latter-day Saint.

Due to a long-term LDS presence and large LDS populations, a tight-knit LDS culture has arisen in many areas of the United States which has created challenges for LDS Church growth as many seasoned members keep to themselves and lose the needed member-missionary and social skills needed to interact and invite nonmembers to learn about the church and attend meetings or activities in a natural way. Like political issues, many face difficulty distinguishing LDS doctrines and teachings from customs, traditions, and attitudes which have originated from member communities. Manifestations of "cultural

Mormonism" include overemphasis on church socializing activities, the marginalization of middle-aged and older single adults, the expectation of youth attending church schools, and at times the diminished fellowshiping of youth and young adults which do not conform to church standards or express no desire to serve full-time missions. Church leadership has attempted to address these issues, which nonetheless still occasionally occur among lay membership and local leadership. Consequently rates of member-missionary work vary by region and marital status. Self-identified Latter-day Saints are less likely to share their faith on a weekly basis in Utah (13%) and the western United States (20%) where there are larger LDS communities and fewer nonmembers compared to other regions (37%) and Latter-day Saint converts are twice as likely to share their faith on a weekly basis compared to members born into the Church (38% versus 19%).^[8]

National Outreach

Between 70% and 80% of the national population likely resides in a city or town with an LDS congregation. 280 of the 282 American cities with over 100,000 inhabitants have an LDS congregation. The two cities over 100,000 inhabitants without an LDS congregation, Port St. Lucie (165,300 inhabitants) and Miramar (122,041 inhabitants), are both located in Florida and receive some LDS mission outreach from LDS congregations meeting in nearby cities. Dozens of cities in California, the south, and the northeast have over 100,000 inhabitants and only one LDS congregation, resulting in many lesser-reached neighborhoods with few Latter-day Saints located far from the nearest meetinghouse. LDS congregations are most frequently established in lesser-reached or unreached cities and towns by active members moving to these locations, especially from Utah. Of the 3,143 counties nationwide in April 2011, approximately 1,100 had no LDS congregation operating. Most counties without an LDS congregation are located in rural locations of the Great Plains, Texas, and the south and have small populations.

The Church has conducted few church-planting initiatives in the United States which have generally focused on reaching less-active or inactive members in a concentrated area or ethnic minority groups that speak a different language. LDS missionaries serving in Little Rock, Arkansas reported in early 2011 that they were commissioned to organize a home group and begin a congregation from scratch by baptizing and retaining new converts in an urban area of the city. After several months, 25 recent converts attended regularly and full-time missionaries were preparing local members for leadership responsibilities in order for an independent unit to be established. Similar opportunities exist in many communities in the country's largest cities which at present are far from LDS meetinghouses and have few active members.

In April 2011, there were 12 military-designated congregations in the United States functioning in California, Colorado, Florida, Georgia, Illinois, Kentucky, Missouri, North Carolina, South Carolina, Texas, and Virginia. The LDS Church only devotes mission outreach resources to correctional facilities, residential treatment facilities, and nursing homes in high-member density regions of the Mountain West. In April 2011, there were 97 care center branches and 28 retirement branches operating for elderly Latter-day Saints oftentimes in nursing homes or retirement communities. These congregations operate only in Idaho and Utah in locations with high Latter-day Saint population densities as evidenced by 92 of the 97 care center branches and 27 of the 28 retirement branches functioning in Utah and the remaining six branches functioning in southeastern Idaho. Three youth center branches operated in West Jordan, Utah to meet the needs of troubled teens in residential treatment for substance abuse and other mental disorders.

LDS online outreach in the United States provides significant opportunities not only for Americans but also for internet-users worldwide as the Church has an extensive number of websites providing information on LDS beliefs and teachings, contact information for full-time missionaries, options on mormon.org to chat with a missionary online, free online requests for church literature and the Book of Mormon, General Conference addresses in over 90 languages, family history materials, and self-reliance and provident living resources. In recent years, the Church has encouraged internet proselytism from members and missionaries by utilizing online social networks like Facebook and Twitter. The Church has regularly broadcast messages on television emphasizing family values and core church beliefs, offering free videos and copies of the scriptures, and relating the personal experiences of members in the Church. Media-based approaches are often costly and inefficient in extending invitations for nonmembers to learn about the Church or attend church services, but provide opportunities for nonmembers to discuss LDS teachings and beliefs with known Latter-day Saint friends and acquaintances. This approach is somewhat effective in addressing member anxiety and reluctance to actively bring up their faith with others.

Member Activity and Convert Retention

Membership and congregational growth rates have been commensurate over the past two decades, indicating that convert retention rates have been relatively stable. Member activity rates appear highest in Utah and the western United States and lowest in the northeast and south but vary substantially on a local level from the inner-city, to suburbs, small towns, and rural communities. Generally the inner-city and rural communities experience the lowest member activity rates due to transportation challenges, limited local leadership, lower standards of living, greater ethnic diversity in the inner city, and the desire for many active Latter-day Saint families to reside in suburban communities and small cities which tend to be more family-oriented and exhibit higher standards of living. Receptivity to LDS mission outreach has been highest in suburbs and the inner city, whereas retention rates appear highest in suburbs due to greater member involvement and reduced reliance on full-time missionaries for administrative duties. Areas with small LDS populations have been more susceptible to quick-baptism tactics by full-time missionaries and minimal post-baptismal fellowshiping, which has adversely affected convert retention rates. Overall the LDS Church in the United States heavily utilizes full-time missionaries for finding, teaching, and reactivation as indicated by the operation of 100 missions in 2011. Dedicated large numbers of full-time missionaries to areas that are self-sufficient in leadership and capable of member-missionary activity has resulted in a sense of reduced responsibility for local members to participate in missionary activity. The entrenchment of LDS populations has resulted in reduced interaction with the general

population, further exacerbating low levels of member-missionary efforts essential toward maintaining high member activity and convert retention rates.

Many converts are youth or young single adults; in recent years many do not speak English as their first language. The creation of hundreds of Spanish-speaking and young single adult (YSA) congregations has significantly increased nationwide congregational growth rates, which may indicate that convert retention and member activity rates are more modest for the general LDS population. The organization of Spanish-speaking and YSA congregations has occurred in part to focus greater resources into reaching less-active and inactive members among these populations, both of which experience low member activity rates and convert retention struggles. Self-reported rates of weekly church attendance are lower among single self-identified Latter-day Saints (60%) compared to married Latter-day Saints (82%),^[9] although actual activity rates are considerably lower for both groups as many individuals on LDS membership rolls do not identify the LDS Church as their faith of preference, and other sociologic studies demonstrate actual US church attendance is often substantially less than self-reported figures. The Church has focused on meeting the needs of local members, particularly those with the highest promise toward securing long-term growth for the Church and that demonstrate the strongest receptivity to LDS teachings, although the most receptive groups in the short term often face poorer long-term activity rates. Ethnic minorities often experience lower retention rates in ordinary LDS wards and branches due to cultural and linguistic barriers, transient lifestyles, factors related to their culture of origin, and decreased effectiveness of local fellowshiping. The organization of other language-specific congregations can ameliorate convert retention rates depending on mission outreach vision of local leadership, sufficient resources to meet the language and cultural needs of a given population, and desire by ethnic minorities to serve in the Church and teach friends and family.

Outreach to young single adults is of key importance to the Church in ensuring long-term stability in leadership and ecclesiastical administration, member activity rates among Latter-day Saints raised in the Church as children, and the retention of youth and young single adult converts. The Church underwent a massive reorganization of student-single and young single adult congregations in 2010 and 2011 in Utah and Idaho in an effort to consolidate resources, reduce confusion, and concentrate on reactivation efforts among one of the largest concentrations of young single adult Latter-day Saints in the United States. 147 student-single and young single adult congregations were realigned into 121 congregations in April 2011 in the Salt Lake area following successful implementation of the merger of student-single and young single adult units in several other areas of Utah and Idaho. Young single adult congregations in several of the largest cities in Utah and Idaho were organized into young single adult stakes in 2010 and 2011, resulting in the renaming of student single adults stakes to young single adult stakes and the creation of an additional twelve young single adult stakes in Utah.^[10] Efforts by local young single adult members to reach out to some 4,600 fellow less-active or inactive members resulted in the short-term reactivation of 1,100 young adults in St. George, Cedar City, Logan, and Ephraim by early 2011.^[11] In April 2011, there were approximately 1,200 young single adult and student single congregations and 124 student married congregations in the United States.

Ethnic Issues and Integration

Non-English speakers are often poorly integrated into English-speaking congregations and are more prone to lower member activity rates due to fellowshiping and teaching challenges and cultural issues. Differing cultural backgrounds can result in some minorities feeling isolated in predominantly white congregations, but local members who have served full-time missions are often instrumental in conducting outreach to these groups, particularly if they served in the home country of a given immigrant group. At present, many of the largest American cities have large numbers of inactive members from immigrant minority groups that have been unable to support a language-specific congregation. Some past attempts to instill self-sufficiency and develop local leadership have failed, such as with Cambodians in Boston, Massachusetts and Sudanese in Omaha, Nebraska. Today local English-speaking congregations struggle to meet the needs of many ethnic minority groups, resulting in little outreach to these populations and limited understanding of their respective cultures and religious beliefs and practices. Ethnic groups which receive the greatest outreach are those who come from nations with the largest LDS populations. Overall Russians, non-English speaking Europeans, South Asians, and Arabs are almost entirely unreached by the Church whereas Polynesians, Spanish-speakers, and some Southeast Asian groups like Hmong received the greatest LDS mission outreach. Chinese, Koreans, Vietnamese, Haitians, and Portuguese-speakers receive moderate levels of outreach. Ethnic groups with moderate populations including Russians, Germans, Japanese, Burmese, and Swahili-speaking Africans receive outreach in Utah but rarely in other states,

The Church has struggled on a local level determining how and when non-English speaking congregations should be organized as non-English speaking ethnic groups generally have insufficient local LDS leadership to staff local congregations but often do not successfully integrate into often predominantly-white LDS congregations. Many congregations with an insufficient number of members speaking a given language to create a separate congregation often hold a Sunday school class in the language and offer translations of sacrament meeting talks by headset, or function as a semi-autonomous group under the administration of an English-speaking ward.

Returned missionaries have reported some instances of ethnic integration challenges in the south among whites and African Americans which has resulted in challenges maintaining member activity rates particularly among the African American minority. Studies have found that the large majority of African-Americans Christians in the US largely worship in black congregations; relatively few worship in substantially diverse congregations. These entrenched social trends present cultural and ethnic barriers to integration into LDS congregations that are not predominately black.

Local leaders stress the need for members from both ethnic groups to fellowship one another as church members and overcome cultural and ethnic differences will be required for greater progress to have LDS demographics become

representative of the general population in many southern states. Several large cities in the south and east have large numbers of inactive African American members due to increased distances to travel to church meetinghouses upon the closure of some inner-city congregations, the lack of African American LDS leadership in some areas, and challenges assimilating African Americans, whites, and other ethnic groups into the same congregations.

Language Issues

The LDS Church in the United States operates a large number of non-English speaking congregations. In early April 2011, there were approximately 765 Spanish-speaking congregations in the United States (299 wards and 466 branches), accounting for 5.6% of LDS congregations in the United States. 22.7% of branches in the United States were Spanish-speaking during this period. Other language-specific LDS congregations in the United States in early April 2011 included Tongan (67), Samoan (40), Chinese languages (14), Korean (12), Hmong (9), Portuguese (6), Marshallese (5), Cambodian (4), Laotian (4), Vietnamese (4), Haitian-Creole (3), Tagalog (3), Fijian (2), Japanese (2), Navajo (2), French (1), German (1), Karen (1), Russian (1), and Swahili (1). One Laotian-speaking ward in Salt Lake City, Utah also accommodates Thai speakers. The LDS Church once operated a handful of congregations that meet the needs of Armenian, Nuer, and Polish speakers, but these congregations were discontinued in the 2000s. Dependent branches, groups, and Sunday School classes operate in several areas to meet non-English speakers.

Missionary Service

The LDS Church in the United States supplies the Church with the most full-time missionaries of any country. The Missionary Training Center in Provo, Utah provides foreign language education in approximately 50 languages and can accommodate up to 4,000 missionaries at a time,^[12] although in recent years the number of missionaries at the training center has generally been only around 2,000. The number of American members serving full-time missions has declined over the past decade due to declining birthrates among Latter-day Saint families in the 1980s resulting in fewer mission-aged youth by the early 2000s, the percentage of members serving missions remaining unchanged or stagnant during this period, continuing challenges keeping youth and young adult active, inconsistent missionary preparation among teenage members, and higher standards for missionary service. The lack of progress in maintaining and increasing the number of American members serving missions during the 2000s is represented in the decline in the number of full-time missionaries serving worldwide during the 2000s from a high of 61,638 in 2002 to 52,225 in 2010. Coordination with parents and youth leaders on missionary preparation, financial planning, and the development of personal religious habits such as scripture reading, weekly church attendance, and daily prayer will be essential in overcoming ongoing challenges in increase the number of full-time missionaries serving. Additional emphasis on missionary preparation for non-English speaking American members is warranted as fewer Spanish-speaking members serve full-time missions compared to their English-speaking counterparts.

Leadership

Most areas have an ample supply of well-trained members capable of holding a myriad of administrative and leadership positions. Available leadership among non-English-speaking members remains limited, frequently necessitating returned missionaries with second language abilities to serve as branch presidents particularly for Spanish-speaking branches. The large number of returned missionary members provides a significant strength to local and international church leadership, but has at times been detrimental in fostering self-sufficiency on a local level among some foreign-language speaking congregations as local members rely on outsourced returned missionaries to perform administrative and ecclesiastical duties. American Latter-day Saints are overrepresented in international church leadership as in April 2011 two of the three members of the First Presidency, all members of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, five of the seven members of the Presidency of the Seventy, 31 of the 57 members of the First Quorum of the Seventy, 16 of the 20 members of the Second Quorum of the Seventy, and all three members of the Presiding Bishopric were born in the United States. American Latter-day Saints constitute the majority of temple and mission presidents worldwide.

Temple

The first LDS temple was constructed in the United States in Kirtland, Ohio in 1836 followed by a second temple in Nauvoo, Illinois in 1846 at great sacrifice of local members. The Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (RLDS), today known as the Community of Christ, took ownership of the Kirtland Temple in 1880 whereas the Nauvoo Temple was destroyed by an arson fire in 1848 and a tornado in 1850. Additional temples were constructed following the relocation of the body of church members to Utah with temples dedicated in St. George (1877), Logan (1884), Manti (1888), and Salt Lake (1893). The first LDS temple constructed outside of North America was dedicated in Laie, Hawaii in 1919 and the first LDS temple constructed along the Pacific coast was dedicated in Los Angeles in 1956. The Washington D.C. Temple became the first LDS temple built east of the Mississippi River in 1974. The number of temples operating in the United States increased from four in 1900 to seven in 1950, nine in 1970, 13 in 1980, 21 in 1990, 51 in 2000, 66 in 2010. The large increase in the number of temples in the 1990s was attributed to the construction of dozens of small temples to service small LDS populations distant from larger temples. In April 2011, there were 77 LDS temples in the United States, 64 of which were operating, two were undergoing renovation, three under construction, and eight of which were still in the planning stages. 35 of the 50 states have an LDS temple and 20 have only one temple (Alabama, Alaska, Connecticut, Georgia, Indiana, Kentucky, Louisiana, Maryland, Massachusetts, Michigan, Minnesota, Montana, Nebraska, New Mexico, North Carolina, North Dakota, Ohio, Oklahoma, Pennsylvania, and South Carolina). States with more than one temple include Utah (15), California (7), Arizona and Idaho (5), Texas (4), Washington (3), and Colorado, Florida, Hawaii, Illinois, Missouri, Nevada, New York, Oregon, and Tennessee (2).

Many states without temples have temples nearby such as Maine, Mississippi, Virginia, and Wyoming.

Large temples in the western United States are the most well-utilized by the Church worldwide, especially in Utah and Arizona where some temples schedule endowment sessions every 20 or 30 minutes from the early morning until late evening such as at the Jordan River Utah Temple. The busiest temples in the central and eastern United States generally offer endowment sessions no more than one per hour on weekdays and every 30 minutes on Saturdays. Most medium-sized temples are well-utilized, such as the Denver Colorado Temple and the Orlando Florida Temple. Member usage of the new generation of small, 10,700-square-foot temples unveiled in the late 1990s depends by location, with some small temples such as the Columbia South Carolina Temple and the Columbus Ohio Temple scheduling upwards of six endowment sessions on some days whereas other temples requiring appointments to attend due to few temple staff and patrons. Small temples are most well-utilized in the western United States but generally have four or fewer endowment sessions scheduled per day.

Prospects for the continued construction of additional temples are excellent due to moderate member activity rates, steady congregational growth, and high rates of temple attendance among active members in most locations as well as ample financial funds originating from the large body of tithe-paying American Latter-day Saints. Cities which appear most favorable for potential LDS temples in the coming decade include Jacksonville, Florida; Tucson, Arizona; Cedar City, Utah; Price, Utah; Layton, Utah; Pocatello, Idaho; Eugene, Oregon; Rogers, Arkansas; Charlotte, North Carolina; Richmond, Virginia; Cincinnati, Ohio; Bakersfield, California; Farmington, New Mexico; and Pensacola, Florida.

Comparative Growth

The LDS Church in the United States has the most members, stakes, congregations, missions, and temples of any country and possesses five times as many members as the country with the second most members (Mexico), six times as many stakes as the country with the second most stakes (Brazil), almost seven times as many congregations as the country with the second most congregations (Mexico), nearly four times as many missions as the country with the second most missions (Brazil), and six times as many temples as the country with the second most temples (Mexico). The percentage of the population residing in a city or location with an LDS congregation in the United States is higher than any other country with over 50 million people. The ratio of the general population to LDS missions in the United States of three million to one is lower than any other country with over 30 million inhabitants and is comparable to Central America. Generally at least half of the increase of congregations for the LDS Church occurs in the United States annually and in recent years between one-quarter and one-half of all new LDS stake organizations occur in the United States. The LDS Church in the United States constituted over half of international church membership until March 1996^[13] and accounted for 43.5% of worldwide church membership in 2010. In recent years, American convert baptisms may account for as few as 20% of worldwide convert baptisms. Member activity and convert retention rates in the United States are among the highest for countries with over 100,000 Latter-day Saints notwithstanding the number of less-active and inactive American members surpassing the number of active Latter-day Saints outside of the United States.

Other major outreach-oriented Christians report comparable growth trends to the LDS Church in the United States but self-identified Latter-day Saints are among the most active and devote of all Christians. Self-identified Latter-day Saints in the United States report the second highest weekly church attendance rates (76%) of any religious group whereas Jehovah's witnesses report the highest (82%). Latter-day Saints and Jehovah's Witnesses report the highest percentage of church attendance on a week, monthly, or yearly basis (92%). Latter-day Saints are no less likely than the general population in sharing their religious beliefs on a weekly basis (24%) whereas Jehovah's Witnesses are nearly three times as likely (76%).^[14] When taking into account inactive and disaffiliated members, the LDS Church reports activity rates comparable to most mainstream denominations, although active Latter-day Saints demonstrate more intense participation. Other missionary-minded Christian groups engage in more proactive member-missionary programs than the LDS Church, such as Jehovah's Witnesses.

Some Christian groups before greater outreach among ethnic minority groups than Latter-day Saints. The Seventh Day Adventist Church generally increases by 10 to 50 new congregations a year and 20,000 members while baptizing about 30,000 new converts annually. Adventists have established a greater number of congregations to meet the needs of non-English speaking minority groups and operate several congregations throughout the country for ethnic groups seldom reached by Latter-day Saints in the United States including Russians and Ukrainians. Adventists even operate a Hungarian-speaking congregation in New York City and several Indonesian-speaking churches. The extent of outreach directed toward Spanish-speakers is comparable to Latter-day Saints although Adventists maintain a far greater number of Spanish-speaking congregations in the Northeast whereas Latter-day Saints maintain a many more Spanish-speaking congregations in the Southwest and in Utah.

Future Prospects

Steady congregational growth for decades, a strong leadership base, a large number of youth and young adult converts serving missions, an increased emphasis on member-missionary activity, and an abundant supply of mission and administrative resources generate a positive outlook for future LDS growth in the United States. Greater consistency regarding convert baptismal standards, reactivation efforts, and missionary preparation for LDS youth will be required to sustain growth and reduce convert and seasoned member attrition. LDS proselytism approaches will likely need to be increasingly more modified to suit investigators and less-active members that have a secular background due to declining religious activity in public and family life. Dozens of additional LDS stakes will likely be organized on a yearly basis for the foreseeable future but prospects for increasing outreach among non-Polynesians and non-Spanish speaking minority groups is bleak due to low receptivity, inadequate LDS leadership manpower among minority groups in many areas, and a lack of vision by stake leaders in many

locations. Additional missions will likely be consolidated in less-productive areas of the United States such as the northeast due to limited international LDS missionary manpower. The ongoing trend of temple construction will likely continue due to high rates of temple attendance among active members in many areas of the United States.

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