



# 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.



## Angola

Population: 19.09 millions (#59 out of countries)

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### Geography

**Area:** 1,246,700 square km. Angola occupies a large portion of the Atlantic Coast and western interior of southern Africa, bordered by the Democratic Republic of Congo, Zambia, and Namibia. The small exclave of Cabinda to the north is also part of Angola, bordering the Atlantic Ocean, the Republic of Congo and the Democratic Republic of Congo. Climate is semi-arid in the south and dry and cool in the summer in the north and rainy and hot in the winter. Most of the interior consists of plateaus.

Angola is divided into 18 provinces.

Population: 12,799,293 (July 2009)

Annual Growth Rate: 2.095% (2009)

Fertility Rate: 6.12 children born per woman (2009)

Life Expectancy: male 37.24 years, female 39.22 (2009)

### Peoples

Ovimbundu: 37%

Kimbundu: 25%

Bakongo: 13%

Mestico (mixed European and African): 2%

European: 1%

Other (Chokwe, Ganguela, Haneca-Humbe, Herero, Khoisan, Xindonga): 22%

Each ethnic group speaks their own language and many settled in Angola at different times. Ovimbundis form the largest ethnic group and historically were one of the most powerful. They are concentrated in the center of Angola along the coast and stretching into the interior. Kimbundus are found in the Luanda area and to the southeast interior. Northern Angola and Cabinda are predominantly Bakongo. Chokwe are found in the center and northeast parts of Angola, Ganguela in the southeast, Haneca-Humbe in the south, Herero in the southwest, Khoisan in the south, and Xindonga in the southeast. All of the ethnic groups are Bantu except Khoisan.

**Languages:** Portuguese is the official language of Angola and Bantu languages are widely spoken. 41 native languages are spoken in Angola. Indigenous languages with over one million speakers include Umbundu (4 million), Kimbundu (3 million), and Kikongo (1 million).

**Literacy:** 67.4% (2001)

### History

Various Bantu groups inhabited Angola before the arrival of the Portuguese in the 15th and 16th centuries. The coastal areas of Angola became a Portuguese colony. Many native Africans in Angola were taken as slaves and transported to Brazil to work in plantations. Independence from Portugal was not achieved until 1975, at which time civil war erupted and continued until 2002. Two groups, the Liberation of Angola (MPLA) and the National Union for the Total Independence of Angola (UNITA) fought for control over the country. The United States and several other nations supported the UNITA whereas the Soviet Union supported the MPLA, resulting in a proxy war. Over one million were killed and millions more displaced. The political and social systems have stabilized in the 2000s, although separatist movements continue in Cabinda.

### Culture

Due to centuries of Portuguese rule, Angolans share many cultural similarities with Portugal. Many native African customs with

food and drink have been lost. Although illegal, polygamy is common and socially accepted<sup>[1]</sup>.

## Economy

**GDP per capita:** \$9,000 (2008) [19.2% of US]

**Human Development Index:** 0.564

**Corruption Index:** 1.9

Angola has one of the fastest growing economies in the world and ranked number five for GDP growth rate in 2008. The Angolan economy is heavily dependent on oil revenues and exports. Since 2006 Angola has been a member of OPEC, which limit the amount of oil the country can produce. Although industry accounts for 65% of the country's GDP, 85% of the workforce is employed in agriculture. As a result, oil and industrial wealth are unevenly distributed, with most Angolans remaining very poor. In the mid-2000s Angola received loans from China to help rebuild the country's infrastructure which had been damaged due to the long civil war. This has resulted with an increased sphere of Chinese influence in Africa. China is the largest export partner, accounting for 33% of all exports. The United States is the second largest export and third largest import partner, with Portugal being the largest import partner. A large number of undeveloped natural resources exist in Angola, including diamonds, gold, and timber. Angola suffers from a high level of corruption and separatists movements in the oil-rich Cabinda region.

## Faiths

Christian: 53%

Indigenous beliefs: 47%

## Christians

**Denominations Members Congregations**

Catholic 4,863,731

Protestant 1,919,894

Seventh-Day Adventists 328,945 956

Jehovah's Witnesses 71,804 966

Latter-Day Saints 647 2

## Religion

Angolans widely observe indigenous beliefs, but some statistics claim that Christians constitute over 93% of the population and downplay the influence of indigenous religion<sup>[2]</sup>. Catholics form the largest Christian group in the country due to hundreds of years of Portuguese rule. Several Protestant denominations entered the country in the 20th century and have rapid growth.

## Religious Freedom

**Persecution Index:**

Angola has struggled with religious freedom after independence and did not allow foreign missionaries to enter the country until the early 1990s. Currently religious freedom is protected by the constitution of Angola and recognized by the government.

## Major Cities

**Urban: 57%**

Luanda, **Huambo, Lobito, Benguela, Namibe, Kuito, Lubango, Malanje, M'banza-Kongo, Uige.**

Only Luanda has a Church presence. The population of the 10 largest cities account for 27% of the total population of Angola.

## Membership Growth

**LDS Membership:** 647 (2008)

LDS Church members have lived in Angola since 1985. Although the Church did not have an official presence, a group of members met in the capital of Luanda for many years prior to a branch being organized. Many members were baptized in France and Portugal and later returned to Angola. Elder Earl C. Tingey of the Seventy visited Angola in 1992 and held a sacrament meeting with 50 in attendance. The Church was officially recognized in 1993. By 1996 there were a total of 400 members living in Angola who were baptized in Europe between 1985 and 1996<sup>[3]</sup>. 86 people attended when the first branch was organized in 1996<sup>[4]</sup>.

By the end of 2000, 510 members were living in the country. Membership increased steadily to 621 in 2004 and 759 in 2007. In 2008 membership dropped by over 100, likely as a result of membership updates. By the fall of 2009, unofficial member reports indicated that membership in Angola was over 800. Angolans living in European nations such as Portugal continue to join the Church.

## Congregational Growth

**Branches:** 2

A group functioned in Angola prior to the first branch's organization in 1996. When the Africa Area was divided in 1998, Angola became part of the Africa Southeast Area. In early 2005 Angola became part of the Mozambique Maputo Mission. Missionaries called to serve from Angola shortly thereafter reported to the Brazil MTC<sup>[5]</sup>.

A second congregation was created in Luanda, Angola in late 2008 named the Cassequel Branch. Young full-time missionaries began serving in Angola for the first time in late 2008. In the fall of 2009 four missionaries were serving in Angola, but were withdrawn briefly that fall due to visa difficulties. Visa problems appeared to have been resolved before the end of the year. In the fall, the Mozambique Maputo Mission appointed a mission counselor to administer to the Church in Angola. President Artur Miranda, a native Angolan who returned after living in Portugal, was given authority to direct the affairs of the Church in Angola, including the organization of additional groups for isolated members throughout the country, under the direction of the Mozambique Maputo Mission.

## Activity and Retention

In 2005 there were 200 attending Sunday meetings in the Luanda Branch<sup>[6]</sup>. Some Angolan members live too far away to attend the Luanda Branches. Active membership likely numbers around 300. Church Education System programs began in 2006. No reports are available on recent convert retention in Angola after the arrival of missionaries.

### **Language Materials**

#### **Languages with LDS Scripture:** Portuguese

Portuguese translations for Church materials are among the most widespread among foreign languages in the Church. Both Gospel Principles and The Prophet Joseph Smith's Testimony are available in Kikongo. No other native languages in Angola have translations for Church materials or scriptures available.

### **Meetinghouses**

The Luanda Branch was reportedly meeting in a renovated bakery in 2005<sup>[7]</sup>. The Cassequel Branch was meeting in a different, likely rented, building in Luanda.

### **Humanitarian and Development Work**

The Church has donated wheelchairs in Angola since 2004<sup>[8]</sup>. In 2005, LDS volunteers taught medical professionals neonatal resuscitation techniques<sup>[9]</sup>. Refugees were also assisted by the Church the same year<sup>[10]</sup>. Contributions were made to fighting measles 2006<sup>[11]</sup>.

### **Opportunities, Challenges and Prospects**

#### **Religious Freedom**

Angola has seen a great improvement in religious freedom, which together with widespread receptivity has allowed Christian churches to gain many new members. The LDS Church has yet to make full use of the opportunities for proselytizing in Angola.

#### **Cultural Issues**

Different ethnic groups in Angola share varying amounts of Portuguese influence, but possess different cultural traits. Following independence, many Angolans sought to return to their African traditions and culture. Polygamy is illegal but widely practiced and accepted; those involved in polygamous relationships cannot join the LDS Church without being divorced from all but one spouse.

#### **National Outreach**

Angola is one of the most urbanized African nations. This allows for the Church to make greater progress in reaching the population with fewer outreach centers. 19% of the inhabitants of Angola live in Luanda, where the Church is established. With just four missionaries, the city of five million remains underserved and relatively few people have heard of the LDS Church.

As missionaries arrived in Angola only in the fall of 2008, there has been limited opportunity for growth. With the calling of a counselor in the mission presidency in the Mozambique Maputo Mission in Angola, additional cities will likely have groups formed for Church services available to the few members living outside of Luanda. Angola was not part of a mission and appears to have reported to the Area Presidency until becoming part of the Mozambique Maputo Mission in 2005. Angola receives regular visits from the mission president in Mozambique, but distance and isolation likely limit the possibility of additional areas opening for missionary work and the training of local leadership.

Due to the Church's limited presence in Luanda, few of the ethnic groups in Angola have likely had exposure to the Church's teachings and representatives.

#### **Member Activity and Convert Retention**

In 2005 there were over 200 people in attendance for Church meetings in the sole Luanda Branch, yet at the time membership stood at 669. Activity rates in Angola appear lower than most African nations because of returning members baptized overseas being dispersed throughout the country, the organization of the branch in Luanda only in 1996, and limited Church infrastructure for pastoring members. Church infrastructure was very limited until the arrival of missionaries in 2008 and the creation of a second branch.

#### **Ethnic Issues and Integration**

Tensions between ethnic groups have resurfaced following independence, with political conflict mirroring ethnic divisions. It does not appear that ethnic issues present problems to the functionality of the Church presently, but challenges may arise once the Church adds more members from unreached interior ethnic groups.

#### **Language Issues**

Portuguese is widely spoken throughout Angola due to the centuries of colonialism from Portugal and so Church meetings and missionary work are conducted in Portuguese. Due to the growth of the Church in Mozambique, considerable greater Portuguese language African resources are available.

The Church faces many challenges in teaching Angolans in their first languages. No effort has been made to translate Church materials or scriptures into native languages spoken in the country besides Kikongo, which is spoken by some Church members in neighboring Republic of Congo and Democratic Republic of Congo. Kimbundu and Umbundu appear to be likely candidates for the translation of church materials. To encourage unity and facilitate communication among converts of various ethnic groups, Church meetings and materials will likely be conducted and translated into Portuguese until greater membership growth occurs.

#### **Leadership**

Although Angolan members of the Church were able to sustain the Luanda Branch for over a decade prior to the beginning of formal missionary work in the country, little growth in leadership and membership was experienced. The Angolan civil war has caused many Angolans to move away from their homeland and live in other nations. One of the first leaders of the Church in

Mozambique fled his home country of Angola as a child<sup>[12]</sup>. Few Angolan Church leaders have emerged despite Angolan membership numbers. Only three full-time missionaries were serving from Angola in late 2009, two of which were women.

### Temple

Angola is part of the Johannesburg South Africa Temple District. No reports are available on whether branches in the country have organized temple trips for members in Angola. A potential temple in Kinshasa, Democratic Republic of Congo would greatly reduce the distance and expenses for Angolan members to participate in temple ordinances.

### Comparative Growth

Angola ranks as one of the slowest growing for the LDS Church in Africa. Slow growth has resulted from isolation from Church leadership due to the civil war. Although missionaries began working in the country in 2008, increases in activity and convert baptisms appear less rapid than in most African nations first opened to missionary work.

Jehovah's Witnesses and Seventh-Day Adventists have experienced some of the strongest growth in Africa in Angola. These and other Christian denominations likely developed local leadership and mechanisms of member-missionary outreach which were able to perpetuate their churches' organization and development during the civil war years. The LDS Church heavily depends on foreign missionaries for outreach, which were unavailable to serve during the civil war due to proselytizing restrictions.

### Future Prospects

The Church is still working to develop a foundation to facilitate greater membership and congregational growth. Groups serving small numbers of members living in larger cities throughout Angola appear likely in the near future. With the calling of a counselor to preside over Angola in the Mozambique Maputo Mission, Angolan membership will be able to receive increased training and care. This may allow for additional missionaries to be sent to the country. Increased humanitarian work is needed and could result in greater awareness of the Church.

The first district in Angola will likely be created in Luanda once additional branches are organized. Due to the separation from the Mozambique Maputo Mission and its large population, Angola could one day support its own mission.

<sup>[1]</sup> <http://genderindex.org/country/angola>

<sup>[2]</sup> [http://www.thearda.com/internationalData/countries/Country\\_7\\_2.asp](http://www.thearda.com/internationalData/countries/Country_7_2.asp)

<sup>[3]</sup> <http://newsroom.lds.org/ldsnewsroom/eng/contact-us/angola>

<sup>[4]</sup> <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/28209/First-branch-formed-in-Angola-after-years-of-strife.html>

<sup>[5]</sup> <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/48352/Happiest-place-is-Brazils-MTC.html>

<sup>[6]</sup>

<http://www.lds.org/ldsorg/v/index.jsp?vgnextoid=7cecc8fe9c88d010VgnVCM1000004d82620aRCRD&locale=0&sourceId=237e9150>

<sup>[7]</sup>

<http://www.lds.org/ldsorg/v/index.jsp?vgnextoid=7cecc8fe9c88d010VgnVCM1000004d82620aRCRD&locale=0&sourceId=237e9150>

<sup>[8]</sup> <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/50277/Helping-in-Brazil-by-giving-mobility.html>

<sup>[9]</sup> <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/48131/Saving-babies-lives.html>

<sup>[10]</sup> <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/48384/Unprecedented-year.html>

<sup>[11]</sup> <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/49498/Measles-initiative-continues-to-fight-disease-in-Africa.html>

<sup>[12]</sup> <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/43773/Spreading-the-gospel-in-Africa.html>