

Reaching the Nations International Church Growth Almanac

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



Seychelles

Population: 0.09 millions (#203 out of countries)

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Geography

Area: 455 square km. Seychelles constitutes over one hundred small islands in the Indian Ocean north of Madagascar. Approximately one-third of the islands are rocky, hilly, granite-based islands, whereas the remainder of the islands are flat and coral-based. Tropical climate occurs year round with some seasonal fluctuation in temperature. Droughts are natural hazards and dependence on rainwater to satisfy fresh water needs is an environmental issue. Seychelles is divided into twenty-five administrative districts.

Peoples

Seychellois (mixed French and African): 98.4%

Indian/Chinese 1.1%[1]

Other: 0.5%

Population: 93,920 (July 2017)

Annual Growth Rate: 0.77% (2017)

Fertility Rate: 1.85 children born per woman (2017)

Life Expectancy: 70.4 male, 79.6 female (2017)

Languages: Seychellois Creole (89.1%), English (5.1%), French, (0.7%), other (3.8%), unspecified (1.4%). English and French are the official languages and commonly spoken. Seychellois Creole is a French-based Creole with low levels of intelligibility with other French-based Creoles.

Literacy: 91.8% (2012)

History

Europeans first sighted the uninhabited islands in the early sixteenth century, and in the eighteenth century, the French asserted possession of the islands. The British won control of Seychelles in 1814 following the Treaty of Paris, and the islands were administered as a dependency of British-controlled Mauritius until becoming a separate British Crown Colony in 1903. An independence movement took hold in the mid-twentieth century, and Seychelles became independent in 1976 from the United Kingdom. Political instability quickly enveloped the islands, resulting in the formation of a one-party socialist state in 1977 under Albert Rene. Multi-party elections occurred in 1993 and ended socialist rule. In recent years, political parties have fiercely competed for control of the government.[2]

Culture

Local culture draws primarily from French and African influences. The government provides free health care.[3] Many are born out of wedlock, and society is predominantly matriarchal. Seychelles is known worldwide for its strict environmental legislation and land conservation to protect its fragile island ecosystem. Many species are indigenous only to the islands.[4] Cigarette and alcohol consumption rates are lower than world averages. Seychelles is among the wealthiest nations in Africa and is Africa's least populated nation.

Economy

GDP per capita: $28,700 (2017) [48.2% of U.S.]

Human Development Index: 0.782

Corruption Index: 60 (2017)

Tourism has fueled economic growth, employing 26% of the labor force and generating 55% of currency earnings. Tuna fishing has also contributed to the economy. Cinnamon trees, fish, and copra are natural resources. Services employ 83.7% of the workforce and generate 74% of the GDP, whereas industry employs 23% of the workforce and generates 13.8% of the GDP. Agriculture accounts for 3% or less of the GDP and workforce. Common agricultural goods include coconuts, cinnamon, vanilla, fruit, and root crops. The United Arab Emirates, France, and the United Kingdom are the primary trade partners. Corruption was perceived as present in all levels of government as recently as a decade ago.[5] However, as of 2017 corruption levels in Seychelles were among the lowest in Africa and the Indian Ocean.

Faiths

Christian: 89.1%

Hindu: 2.4%

Muslim: 1.6%

Other non-Christian: 1.1%

Unspecified: 4.9%

None: 0.9%

Christians

Denominations – Members – Congregations

Catholic – 71,567

Anglican – 5,729

Pentecostal Assembly – 1,409

Seventh Day Adventists – 1,001 – 12

Jehovah's Witnesses – 341 – 4

Latter-day Saints less than – 10 – 0

Religion

Most Seychellois are Catholic (76%). Anglicans account for the second largest religious group (6%). The remaining 12% of the population is primarily Protestant. There are also small numbers of Hindus, Muslims, and Baha'is.[6]

Religious Freedom

The constitution protects religious freedom, which is upheld by the government. Religious groups are not required to register with the government but must register to obtain tax exempt status. There have been no reported recent societal abuses of religious freedom.[7]

Largest Cities

Urban: 56.7%

Victoria, Baie Sainte Anne, Anse Etoile, Cascade, Au Cap, Beau Vallon, Anse Royale, Anse Boileau, Anse aux Pins, Grand Anse.

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

None of the ten largest cities have an LDS congregation. Seventy-one percent (71%) of the national population resides in the ten largest cities. 90% of the population resides on Mahe Island.

LDS Background

There was no LDS presence in Seychelles as of mid-2018. Seychelles does not appear to have ever been officially assigned to a mission although it was assigned to the Africa Southeast Area as of 2018. In 1988, there were twenty Seychellois Latter-day Saints worldwide.[8] Active membership is limited to members worshiping in their homes, studying the gospel, and living church teachings on an individual basis. Estimated current LDS membership for the islands is less than ten. There are no LDS congregations operating. All LDS scriptures and most church materials are available in French. LDS humanitarian or development work has been limited to one emergency response project since 1985.[9] Seychelles appears assigned to the Johannesburg South Africa Temple.

Opportunities

There are no legal restrictions that would prevent an official LDS Church establishment in Seychelles. Religious freedom is respected by the government and society, and many missionary-oriented Christian groups freely operate. Latter-day Saint Seychellois living abroad may facilitate prospects for commencing mission outreach in the coming years. Establishing several mission outreach centers on the main island of Mahe would reach up to 90% of the population. European and African populations have thoroughly mixed over the past several centuries, creating a highly homogenous population. Ethnic integration issues do not pose a significant challenge to prospective LDS mission outreach. Most the populations speak English or French as a second language, reducing the need for LDS materials in Seychellois Creole. The small number of Seychellois Creole speakers worldwide reduces the urgency and need for translations of LDS scripture and church materials. Seychellois Latter-day Saints abroad appear capable of participating in future translation work if needed. In 2018, Seychelles was the only nation in the Indian Ocean that was predominantly Christian without an LDS presence and one of the few Christian African nations without an LDS congregation. South Sudan, Equatorial Guinea, and Sao Tome and Principe are the only other Christian-majority African nations without an official Church presence.

Challenges

The entire population is unreached by the LDS Church, as there are no LDS congregations operating and no missionaries assigned to the islands. Isolated location, a small population, greater prospects for growth in other African nations, no United States embassy in the country, and limited worldwide missionary resources appear to be the primary reasons why the Church has not invested in establishing a presence in Seychelles. Materialism and periods of political instability are cultural issues that

may have also contributed to the lack of an LDS presence. The high rate of children born out of wedlock is a major challenge for prospective LDS mission outreach. Traditional ties to the Catholic and Anglican Churches among most Seychellois create cultural barriers to proselytism and may result in low receptivity to the LDS Church. Many Seychellois are nominally Christian and have not developed personal religious habits that are regularly practiced. Several Seychellois Latter-day Saints have served missions since 1984,[10] but no local LDS leadership appears to have been developed. Most missionary-oriented Christian groups have a presence, but many report slow or stagnant church growth. Seventh Day Adventists report slow membership growth but have operated since 1936.[11] Jehovah's Witnesses regularly baptize small numbers of new converts and operate four congregations. However, Witnesses have not organized new congregations in Seychelles in nearly a decade or longer. Evangelicals have experienced the strongest growth over the past several decades.

Prospects

Seychelles offers favorable potential for establishment of an LDS presence over the medium term due to a predominantly Christian population, no reports of societal abuse of religious freedom, a couple dozen Seychellois Latter-day Saints living abroad since the late 1980s, and high standards of living. The small size of the population, remote location, no United States embassy headquartered in the country, and limited missionary resources continue to delay the establishment of the Church. Seychellois baptized into the Church abroad who return to the islands will be a valuable asset in developing self-sustaining local leadership one day.

[1] "Background Note: Seychelles," Bureau of African Affairs, 4 June 2010. http://www.state.gov/r/pa/ei/bgn/6268.htm

[2] "Background Note: Seychelles," Bureau of African Affairs, 4 June 2010. http://www.state.gov/r/pa/ei/bgn/6268.htm

[3] "Background Note: Seychelles," Bureau of African Affairs, 4 June 2010. http://www.state.gov/r/pa/ei/bgn/6268.htm

[4] "Seychelles," Wikipedia.org, retrieved 13 January 2011. http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Seychelles

[5] "Seychelles," Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor, 11 March 2008. http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/hrrpt/2007/100502.htm

[6] "Seychelles," International Religious Freedom Report 2016. Accessed 19 July 2018. https://www.state.gov/j/drl/rls/irf/2016religiousfreedom/index.htm?year=2016&dlid=268690#wrapper

[7] "Seychelles," International Religious Freedom Report 2016. Accessed 19 July 2018. https://www.state.gov/j/drl/rls/irf/2016religiousfreedom/index.htm?year=2016&dlid=268690#wrapper

[8] Williams, Sandra. "In His Own Language," Liahona, Aug. 1988, 25.

[9] "Where We Work," LDS Charities. Accessed 19 July 2018. https://www.ldscharities.org/where-we-work

[10] "FYI: For Your Information," New Era, June 1984, 44.

[11] "Seychelles Mission," Adventist Online Yearbook, retrieved 13 January 2011. http://www.adventistyearbook.org/default.aspx?page=ViewAdmField&AdmFieldID=SEYM