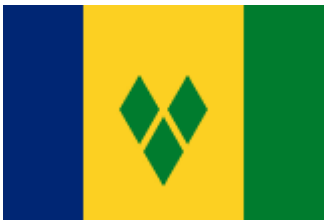


Reaching the Nations International Church Growth Almanac

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.



Saint Vincent and the Grenadines

Population: 0.1 millions (#201 out of countries)

By David Stewart and Matt Martinich

Geography

Area: 389 square km. Consisting of one main island and thirty-two tiny islands and cays, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines is located in the Caribbean between Grenada and Saint Lucia. Volcanic mountains cover most the terrain, which are subject to tropical weather year round. A rainy season occurs from May to November. Hurricanes and the active Soufriere volcano on Saint Vincent are natural hazards. Severe coastal ocean pollution is an environmental issue. Saint Vincent and the Grenadines and Grenada share administration of the Grenadines. Saint Vincent and the Grenadines is divided into six administrative parishes.

Peoples

Black: 66%

Mixed: 19%

East Indian: 6%

European: 4%

Carib Amerindian: 2%

Other: 3%

Blacks are the descendants of African slaves brought by Europeans in the seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries. The descendants of African slaves and Carib Amerindians account for most of the mixed ethnic population. Starting in the nineteenth century, East Indians arrived to work on the plantations. Although the islands were entirely populated by Caribs three centuries ago, today they account for 2% of the population. Over 90% of the population resides on Saint Vincent.

Population: 101,844 (July 2018)

Annual Growth Rate: –0.23% (2018)

Fertility Rate: 1.78 children born per woman (2018)

Life Expectancy: 73.7 male, 77.9 female (2018)

Languages: Vincentian Creole English (99.9%), other (0.1%). English is the official language. Vincentian Creole English shares many linguistic similarities with other Caribbean English creoles and standard English.

Literacy: 88% (2004)

History

Carib Amerindians resisted European efforts to settle and colonize the islands until the eighteenth century. Many shipwrecked or escaped African slaves from neighboring islands came to Saint Vincent and intermarried with the Caribs. The French began to establish coffee, tobacco, cotton, sugar, and indigo plantations in the early eighteenth century staffed by African slaves. Britain gained control over Saint Vincent in 1763, but the French retook the island in 1779 until Britain regained control in 1783 through the Treaty of Versailles. A failed revolt occurred in the late eighteenth century and resulted in the British relocating over 5,000 black Caribs to Roatan, a small island near Honduras. East Indians and Portuguese arrived to staff plantations after the British abolished slavery in 1834, but little economic development and improvement in living conditions occurred due to low sugar prices in the nineteenth century. In 1877, Saint Vincent became a Crown Colony. The United Kingdom attempted to establish several semi-autonomous dependencies in the Caribbean in the late 1950s and 1960s, which included Saint Vincent and most British-owned islands. Saint Vincent and the Grenadines gained full autonomy under associate statehood status in 1969 and was the last of the Windward Islands to gain independence in 1979. Since the beginning of the twentieth century, La Soufriere volcano had two major eruptions, one of which killed over 2,000 people. Hurricanes regularly hit the islands, causing widespread damage.[1]

Culture

Christianity, fishing, and agricultural activity heavily influence local culture and support the economy. Cuisine consists of fruits, vegetables, yams, potatoes, cassava, and pilau, a local dish eaten daily consisting of rice, pigeon peas, and meat. Whites and foreign-educated blacks constitute the wealthiest and most powerful class of society whereas Caribs are the poorest.[2]

Economy

GDP per capita: $11,500 (2017) [19.2% of U.S.]

Human Development Index: 0.723 (2017)

Corruption Index: 58 (2017)

Agriculture, construction, tourism, and remittances sustain the local economy. Heavy emigration has occurred as a result of sparse employment opportunities. Past natural disasters have crippled the economy, such as tropical storms and hurricanes and volcanic eruptions. In recent years, Saint Vincent has begun to meet international regulatory standards for its small banking sector and built a new international in 2017. However, little economic growth has occurred in recent years. Services employ 57% of the workforce and generate 75.5% of the GDP whereas industry employs 17% of the workforce and generates 17.4% of the GDP. Major industries include tourism, food processing, cement, furniture, and clothing. A quarter of the workforce engages in agricultural activity, which generates 7.1% of the GDP. Primary crops and goods include bananas, coconuts, sweet potatoes, spices, livestock, and fish. Jordan, the United States, Trinidad and Tobago, and France are primary trade partners.

Saint Vincent and the Grenadines has one of the lowest perceiving corruption ratings in the Caribbean. There has not been a significant change in the level of perceived corruption during the past decade.

Faiths

Christian: 82.3%

None/unaffiliated: 12.2%

Other: 5.5%

Christians

Denominations Members Congregations

Pentecostal – 28,152

Seventh Day Adventists – 15,427 – 41

Anglican – 14,178

Baptist – 9,078

Methodist – 8,874

Catholic – 6,426

Rastafarian – 1,122

Latter-day Saints 540 2

Jehovah's Witnesses – 344 – 8

Religion

Most the population is Christian. The largest denominations are Pentecostals, Anglicans, and Seventh-Day Adventists. There are small groups of Muslims, Hindus, and Baha'is.[3]

Religious Freedom

The constitution protects religious freedom, which is upheld by the government. Public schools offer optional religious education that teach Christianity. Most Christian groups promote religious tolerance and understanding among Christian denominations. Rastafarians report some societal discrimination and complained that marijuana use is illegal.[4]

Largest Cities

Urban: 52.2% (2018)

Kingstown, Kingstown Park**,** Georgetown, **Byera Village, Biabou**.

Urban areas listed in **bold** have no congregations of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

Three of the five largest urban areas have Church congregations nearby. Forty-five percent (45%) of the national population resides in the five largest cities or towns. Kingstown and its suburbs account for 25% of the national population.

Church History

The Church first explored prospects to establish a presence when Elder Joseph B. Wirthlin and the Puerto Rico San Juan Mission president visited in January 1980. Two months later, the first full-time missionaries were assigned.[5] Ebeneezer Theodore Joshua joined the Church in 1980 and served as the first branch president of the Kingstown Branch. Prior to joining the Church, he was a key independence activist and served as the first chief minister of Saint Vincent in 1960 when the United Kingdom granted greater sovereign constitutional rights. Thousands attended Joshua's funeral in 1991, which was also viewed by 30,000 to 40,000 on television. Eulogies delivered brought greater awareness to the general public that Joshua had joined the Church and offered an opportunity for the West Indies Mission President and a senior missionary couple to provide a brief explanation of the Church to many of the country's inhabitants. Saint Vincent's previous international airport, the E. T. Joshua Airport, was named in his honor.[6] Seminary and institute began in 1982. Saint Vincent and the Grenadines were reassigned to

the newly organized Barbados Bridgetown Mission in 2015.

Membership Growth

Church Membership: 683 (2017)

In 2000, there were 339 Latter-day Saints. During the 2000s, slow membership growth occurred as church membership totaled 366 in 2002, 373 in 2005, and 427 in 2008. Several years experienced a decline in church membership (2001, 2004, and 2007). Annual membership growth rates in the 2000s decade have ranged from –5% (2004) to 11% (2008).

Membership growth rates have accelerated since 2008 and convert baptisms have occurred regularly in both branches. Membership reached 540 in 2012 and 653 in 2016. Annual membership growth rates have generally ranged from 3-7% in the 2010s.

In 2017, one in 149 was a Latter-day Saint. At the time church membership comprised 0.67% of the national population.

Congregational Growth

Wards: 0 Branches: 3 (2018)

Only one congregation, the Kingstown Branch, operated from the early 1980s until a second branch was created in 2007, named the Calliaqua Branch. A third branch opened in Georgetown in 2017. All three branches are directly supervised by the Barbados Bridgetown Mission.

Activity and Retention

Ten were enrolled in seminary or institute during the 2008–2009 school year. In early 2010, both the Kingstown and Calliaqua Branches set new records for church attendance of 121 and 65, respectively. In the late 2010s, active membership may be as high as 300, or 30% of total church membership.

Language Materials

Languages with Latter-day Saint Scripture: English.

All Latter-day Saint scriptures and materials are available in English.

Meetinghouses

The first and only Church-built meetinghouse began construction in 1985[7] and houses the Kingstown Branch. The Calliaqua Branch began meeting in a larger rented facility in mid-2010 to accommodate the increase in active membership.

Humanitarian and Development Work

The Church has completed twelve humanitarian projects since 1985, including nine community projects, two emergency response efforts, and one wheelchair donation event.[8] One of these projects was a donation of appliances, fans, utensils, and linens to a children's hospital.[9]

Opportunities, Challenges, and Prospects

Religious Freedom

Latter-day Saints worship freely on Saint Vincent. There are no restrictions on proselytism, the placement of foreign missionaries, or assembly.

Cultural Issues

Discipleship in other Christian denominations is high, leading to competition between the various churches on the islands. Missionary efforts benefit from high levels of religious interest and a homogenous Christian population, but many are active in other denominations and demonstrate little interest in learning about the Church from full-time missionaries. Saint Vincentians frequently emigrate abroad, resulting in challenges with building up the Church if converts move away from the country.

National Outreach

Fifty-two percent (52%) of the national population resides in areas with Church congregations. Full-time missionaries proselyte in and around Kingstown, Calliaqua, and Georgetown – three of the four most populous areas of Saint Vincent. No mission outreach has occurred in the Grenadines, which are sparsely populated and less accessible.

Latter-day Saints have yet to explore mission outreach prospects on the east and west parts of Saint Vincent. The number of full-time missionaries assigned will likely not increase in the foreseeable future due to the small population of the island and lack of full-time missionaries in the Barbados Bridgetown Mission and worldwide. Branch missionaries and ordinary local members will be needed to expand national outreach in less populated areas currently unreached by the Church. Larger towns that may have mission outreach centers established include Layou and Richmond.

No noticeable breakthroughs with the native population appeared to have occurred as a result of Ebeneezer Theodore Joshua's affiliation with the Church. Public relations and awareness of the Church may have been improved as a result of Jacob's membership in the Church. Full-time missionaries have taught literacy skills by using the Book of Mormon, creating finding opportunities and also performing development work.

Member Activity and Convert Retention

Convert retention rates have been poor in the past, but have improved since the late 2000s, as indicated by increases in active membership and the creation of two additional congregations. In early 2010, the West Indies Mission addressed poor convert retention apparent in many areas of the mission by increasing baptismal standards. To be baptized, investigators were required to attend church for three consecutive Sundays and read the Book of Mormon every day for at least fourteen days. Many local members have actively fellowshipped new converts, which has contributed to the recent increase in convert retention rates. High levels of church affiliation in Saint Vincent among the general population has likely contributed to convert attrition, as some converts return to their previous churches if offended in The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints or if pressured by family and friends.

Ethnic Issues and Integration

Latter-day Saint demographics appear to reflect the general population, with blacks and those of mixed ethnicity constituting the bulk of Church membership. There are some white members on the island. Missionaries report no significant ethnic integration challenges at church.

Language Issues

There are no materials in Vincentian Creole English or any other Caribbean English creoles. Full-time missionaries and church leaders utilize scriptures and materials in standard English. There do not appear to be any significant language challenges using standard English materials. Prospects for translations of Church materials in Vincentian Creole English appear low due to the few number of speakers and adaptability of most locals to standard English.

Missionary Service

Very few local members have served full-time missions. In mid-2010, a local senior couple was called to serve as full-time missionaries in the West Indies Mission. However, there have appeared to be few locals who have served missions since that time. Missionary preparation classes offered through institute or local congregations may increase the number of youth who serve missions and over time lead to an increase in available leadership.

Leadership

The creation of a second branch in 2007 and a third branch in 2017 indicates greater strength and numbers of active priesthood holders needed to fill administrative positions in local congregations. All branches appear led by local members. Active local leadership remains very limited and insufficient to create additional congregations and a district. In 2010, the branch president of the Kingstown Branch was an American expatriate whereas a local member led the Calliaqua Branch.

Temple

Saint Vincent pertains to the Caracas Venezuela Temple district although many members likely attend the Santo Domingo Dominical Republic Temple. Several families have traveled to the temple, but regular temple trips to do not appear to occur. Senior missionary couples have assisted preparation efforts for families to travel to the temple for the first time and in 2010 prepared three families to go to the temple. Prospects for the Church to construct a temple closer to Saint Vincent are unlikely due to few Latter-day Saints in the region.

Comparative Growth

Slow membership growth and modest activity rates are representative of most small island Caribbean nations. The percentage of Latter-day Saints in Saint Vincent is among the highest in Caribbean nations and is the highest in the Lesser Antilles. Only the Dominican Republic and Puerto Rico have a higher percentage of Latter-day Saints in the population. Slightly accelerated membership growth since the late 2000s outpaced most small island countries in the Caribbean.

Some Christian groups that actively proselyte report strong church growth in Saint Vincent, such as Pentecostals and Seventh-Day Adventists. Adventists have consistently growth over the past century years, and today constitute over 10% of the national population. Jehovah's Witnesses have experienced stagnant membership growth during the past decade.

Future Prospects

The Church in Saint Vincent and the Grenadines has reported slow, but steady, growth since the late 2000s. The number of branches tripling from one to three and the opening of two additional cities to missionary activity since 2007 stand as the greatest accomplishment of the Church in recent memory. Furthermore, there have also appeared to be good progress with local leadership development. These trends have been sustained for several years and offer a promising outlook for long-term church growth if sustained. Continued growth in the Kingstown Branch may necessitate the creation of a fourth branch. Prospects for the formation of a district will depend on the creation of additional congregations and increases in the number of qualified local leaders. Member-missionary activity appears the only feasible method to expand national outreach into rural areas due to the small population and limited missionary resources available regionally and internationally.

[1] "Background Note: Saint Vincent and the Grenadines," Bureau of Western Hemisphere Affairs, 14 July 2010. http://www.state.gov/r/pa/ei/bgn/2345.htm

[2] "Saint Vincent and the Grenadines," Countries and Their Cultures, retrieved 5 November 2010. http://www.everyculture.com/No-Sa/Saint-Vincent-and-the-Grenadines.html

[3] "St. Vincent and the Grenadines," International Religious Freedom Report for 2017. Accessed 24 January 2019. https://www.state.gov/j/drl/rls/irf/religiousfreedom/index.htm?year=2017&dlid=281100#wrapper

[4] "St. Vincent and the Grenadines," International Religious Freedom Report for 2017. Accessed 24 January 2019. https://www.state.gov/j/drl/rls/irf/religiousfreedom/index.htm?year=2017&dlid=281100#wrapper

[5] "Saint Vincent," Country Profile, retrieved 5 November 2010. http://beta-newsroom.lds.org/country/saint-vincent

[6] "Island's first chief minister, a convert, eulogized at funeral," LDS Church News, 30 March 1991. http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/21540/Islands-first-chief-minister-a-convert-eulogized-at-funeral.html

[7] "Saint Vincent," Country Profile, retrieved 5 November 2010. http://beta-newsroom.lds.org/country/saint-vincent

[8] "Where We Work," LDS Charities. Accessed 24 January 2019. https://www.ldscharities.org/where-we-work

[9] "Projects—Saint Vincent and the Grenadines," Humanitarian Activities Worldwide, retrieved 5 November 2010. http://www.providentliving.org/project/0,13501,4607–1–2008–102,00.html