



# 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.



## Saint Lucia

Population: 0.16 millions (#192 out of countries)

By David Stewart and Matt Martinich

### Geography

**Area:** 616 square km. Located in the Caribbean, Saint Lucia is a small volcanic island north of Trinidad and Tobago between the North Atlantic Ocean and the Caribbean Sea. Mountains dominate the landscape, which is bisected by several fertile valleys. Tropical climate with marked dry and rainy seasons occurs throughout the island. Hurricanes and volcanoes are natural hazards. Environmental issues include deforestation and soil erosion. Saint Lucia is divided into ten administrative districts.

### Peoples

Black: 85.3%

Mixed: 10.9%

East Indian: 2.2%

Other/unspecified: 1.6%

Blacks primarily descended from African slaves brought to the island by Europeans. Most of those with mixed ancestry are part white European and black African. East Indians arrived as indentured servants during British rule.

**Population:** 165,510 (July 2018)

**Annual Growth Rate:** 0.31% (2018)

**Fertility Rate:** 1.74 children born per woman (2018)

**Life Expectancy:** 75.4 male, 81.0 female (2018)

**Languages:** Saint Lucian Creole French (99%), English (1%). English is the official language and spoken by many. Saint Lucian Creole French is not intelligible with standard French and is virtually the same as Dominica Creole French.

**Literacy:** 95% (2017)

## History

Arawaks and, later, Carib Amerindians populated the island prior to European discovery and colonization. Local Carib tribes thwarted European efforts to establish trading posts on the island in the sixteenth century. England and France competed for control over Saint Lucia, which changed possession fourteen times in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. In 1814, the United Kingdom officially gained ownership of the island. Greater self-government was granted in the 1920s. The United Kingdom attempted to establish several semi-autonomous dependencies in the Caribbean in the late 1950s and 1960s, which included Saint Lucia and most British-owned islands. The British used the island for cultivating tropical crops and granted autonomy to Saint Lucia in 1967. Saint Lucia won independence in 1979 and continues to hold strong ties with the United Kingdom, recognizing Queen Elizabeth II as the head of state.[\[1\]](#)

## Culture

Saint Lucia exhibits practices and customs adopted from African, French, and English cultures and shares many cultural similarities with neighboring islands. Most settlements on the island were originally founded as fishing villages. Catholicism is a major cultural influence, but the population is tolerant of non-Catholic Christian groups. Alcohol and tobacco cigarette consumption rates are comparable to world averages. Most children are born out of wedlock, partially due to the high cost of getting legally married.

## Economy

**GDP per capita:** \$14,400 (2017) [24.1% of U.S.]

**Human Development Index:** 0.747 (2017)

**Corruption Index:** 55 (2017)

In recent years, Saint Lucia has successfully attracted foreign investment through developing its tourist and banking sectors. However, the economy is vulnerable to due to dependence on foreign oil, fluctuations in the number of tourists visiting the island, high public debt, and natural hazards. Today tourism generates the most revenue (77% of the GDP) and employs many. Services employ 53.6% of the workforce. Industry generates 14.2% of the GDP and employs 24.7% of the workforce. Primary industries include clothing, electronics, food processing, and cardboard. Agriculture remains an important sector of the economy employing 21.7% of the workforce and generating 2.9% of the GDP. Primary crops include bananas, coconuts, vegetables, citrus, and cocoa. Forests, sand, pumice, mineral springs, and geothermal energy are natural resources. The United States is the primary import and export partner, accounting for more than half of all imports and exports. Saint Lucia experiences moderately low levels of perceived corruption in the Caribbean. Saint Lucia is a transshipment point for illicit substances from South America.

## Faiths

Christian: 92.3%

Other: 0.4

Unspecified: 1.4%

None: 5.9%

## Christians

### Denominations – Members – Congregations

Catholic – 101,789

Seventh Day Adventists – 23,625 – 58

Pentecostal – 14,730

Evangelicals – 3,807

Baptist – 3,641

Rastafarian – 3,145

Anglican – 2,648

Church of God – 2,483

Jehovah's Witnesses – 819 – 11

Latter-day Saints – 368 – 2

## Religion

Approximately 60% the population is Catholic. Most non-Catholics follow one of the many Protestant denominations that operate on the island. Non-Christians account for a small minority, and most are not religious. There is a small Muslim community of 400,<sup>[2]</sup> most of whom are local converts.<sup>[3]</sup>

## Religious Freedom

The constitution protects religious freedom, which is upheld by the government and society. The government maintains a secular position but has a close relationship with major Christian denominations. Religious groups with at least 250 members must register with the government. Religiously-motivated harassment primarily targets Muslims. Rastafarians complain that marijuana use is illegal.<sup>[4]</sup>

## Largest Cities

### Urban: 18.7% (2018)

Castries, **Bexon**, **Babonneau**, **Cicéron**, **Dennery**, Vieux Fort, **La Cléry**, **Morne du Don**, **Laborie**, **Micoud**.

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

Two of the ten largest settlements have an official congregation of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. Nineteen percent (19%) of the national population resides in the ten largest settlements.

## Church History

One of the first Latter-day Saint converts from Saint Lucia joined the Church in England in 1982 and returned to her homeland. Missionary work began under the West Indies Mission in 1983 when four full-time missionaries were assigned to the island. The first branch, the Castries Branch, was created in January 1984, and the first convert baptisms occurred the following September. Anti-Mormon sentiment grew on the island as a result of negative media reports circulated in the mid-1980s. This led to challenges for missionary visa renewal, and full-time missionaries were removed in 1986 at the request of immigration officials. The Church discontinued the Castries Branch in 1994 and reorganized the branch in 2003.<sup>[5]</sup> Seminary and institute began in the 1990s. Since the reestablishment of an independent branch in 2003, local and area leadership has worked with government officials to allow the return of full-time missionaries. In 2015, Saint Lucia was reassigned to the newly organized Barbados Bridgetown Mission.

## Membership Growth

### Church Membership: 368 (2017)

The Church did not report membership statistics for Saint Lucia until 2003 at which time there were sixty-four members. Slight

membership decline occurred for the following three years as in 2006, there were fifty-five members. Fifty converts were baptized in the Castries Branch from mid-2007 to the end of 2008. Moderate membership growth rates have occurred between the late 2000s and late 2010s. Church membership reached 113 in 2007, 205 in 2009, 261 in 2012, and 338 in 2015.

In 2017, one in 448 was a Latter-day Saint.

## **Congregational Growth**

**Wards: 0 Branches: 2 Groups: 1? (2018)**

The Castries Branch was reorganized in 2003. The Church created a second branch in Vieux-Fort in 2007. Both branches are mission branches and are not part of a stake or district. The Church organized a member group in Soufrière in 2013. However, it was unclear whether the member group continued to operate as of early 2019.

## **Activity and Retention**

Twenty-one were enrolled in seminary during the 2008–2009 school year. The Vieux Fort Branch in mid-2010 had fifty active members and the Castries Branch had around one hundred. In the mid-2010s, returned missionaries reported that one of the branches had fifty active members. Retention of new converts one year after baptism may be as low as 30% as of the mid-2010s. Total active membership is estimated at no greater than 150, or 40%.

## **Language Materials**

**Languages with Latter-day Saint Scripture:** English.

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

## **Meetinghouses**

The Church completed an expansion of the Castries Branch meetinghouse in late 2008 needed due to the recent large increase in the number of convert baptisms. Over 120 can assemble in the renovated meetinghouse. The Vieux-Fort Branch appears to meet in a church-built meetinghouse or a renovated building.

## **Humanitarian and Development Work**

The Church has conducted twenty-four humanitarian and development projects since 1985. Most of these projects have been community projects although there have been a few emergency response efforts and wheelchair donations.<sup>[6]</sup> In late 2008, the local media filmed full-time missionaries serving in Castries that were performing service cleaning a Red Cross building. Local members have also organized service projects in their communities.

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

### **Religious Freedom**

The Church appears to have received government recognition in order for the Church to receive special privileges entitled to registered groups, such as tax exemption status and the right for clergy to perform marriages. Local members and full-time missionaries may assemble, proselyte, and worship freely.

### **Cultural Issues**

Full-time missionaries have historically reported significant challenges baptizing families due the government requiring couples who wish to marry to pay a large fee unaffordable for most. Many couples are not legally married and cannot be baptized until they are married legally. Society has been more tolerant of Latter-day Saints in the past decade than during the 1980s. Latter-day Saint proselytism approaches are tailored toward the needs of nations like Saint Lucia in which most the population has a Christian background.

## **National Outreach**

Latter-day Saints currently operate permanent mission outreach centers in two of the ten administrative districts (Castries and Vieux Fort), which together constitute 49% of the national population. An additional 5% of the population lives in Soufrière where mission outreach has occurred in the past and may continue at present. Some limited proselytism and mission outreach may occur in the most populous neighboring administrative quarters, like Gros Islet and Micoud, perhaps increasing the percentage of the population reached by Latter-day Saints to as high as 70%.

Saint Lucia has historically received a large number of full-time missionaries despite the small size of the island and few inhabitants. The missionary complement will likely not increase in the near future due to limited numbers of missionaries assigned to the Barbados Bridgetown Mission, which has many administrative and convert retention challenges in other areas. Additional mission outreach centers will likely not be established until branches in Castries and Vieux Fort become more self-sustaining in administrative duties, and their missionary programs, which, once achieved, may permit mission leaders to relocate some full-time missionaries to favorable areas to have prospective congregations established.

The Church does not maintain an Internet site for Saint Lucia. Missionaries and members can utilize English materials on the Church's main website at present. Internet outreach specific to the needs of Saint Lucians has yet to be explored.

## **Member Activity and Convert Retention**

Some of the highest convert retention rates ever achieved in the Caribbean for Latter-day Saints have occurred in Saint Lucia in the late 2000s and 2010 as a result of adequate pre-baptismal preparation, emphasis on developing firm gospel habits, post-baptismal teaching of new converts, strong local member involvement in missionary activity, and emphasis placed on developing self-sustaining local leadership to head proselytism efforts. However, these rates have appeared to significantly decrease in the past decade, largely due to the augmentation of inactive members of membership rolls likely caused by rushed prebaptismal preparation and difficulties with socially integrating new converts into established congregations. The historical placement of a senior missionary couple in each branch has also significantly contributed to mentoring new converts in their ecclesiastical responsibilities. The Church's progress in Saint Lucia since the late 2000s demonstrates that high convert retention and real church growth are possible in areas with small, rapidly growing Latter-day Saint populations as church membership quadrupled between the beginning of 2007 and year-end 2009. Acceptable convert retention has also been manifest by the expansion of the Castries Branch meetinghouse due to large increases in church attendance. However, there has not appeared to have been a measurable increase in church attendance for much of the 2010s despite church-reported membership increasing by more than one hundred. Convert retention rates have also appeared to have significantly fallen during this period.

## **Ethnic Issues and Integration**

Blacks constitute the bulk of the population and Church membership. There are few ethnic integration challenges encountered by the Church in Saint Lucia due to little ethnic diversity.

## **Language Issues**

Missionaries typically speak English. Full-time missionaries have assisted members and others in developing stronger literacy skills. There are no proselytism materials in Saint Lucian Creole French, which are needed to develop greater gospel study and comprehension among the Creole-speaking population.

## **Missionary Service**

In April 2008, there were two senior couples and four young elder full-time missionaries assigned to the island. In 2009, two additional missionaries were assigned. The first sister missionaries assigned to the West Indies Mission began their service in Saint Lucia in August 2009. The two missionaries were from Trinidad and Tobago and Guyana. In the late 2000s, several local members were preparing to serve full-time missions in the near future. In the late 2010s, one or two missionary companionships appeared to be assigned to each branch.

## **Leadership**

Local members appear to usually lead both branches on Saint Lucia. Full-time missionaries serving in 2010 report that progress had been made with the branches being less reliant on full-time missionaries by local members officiating in priesthood ordinances and finding and baptizing new members. Leadership and active membership remain too limited for the branches to be organized into a district.

## **Temple**

Saint Lucia pertains to the Caracas Venezuela Temple district although members likely attend the Santo Domingo Dominican Republic Temple. Several members hold temple recommends, but few have attended the temple, most prior to relocating to Saint Lucia after living abroad. Local members do not travel to the temple regularly due to the high expense of travel. Senior missionary couples have taught temple preparation classes.

## Comparative Growth

Saint Lucia experienced the strongest membership growth and highest convert retention rates among Caribbean nations with fewer than 1,000 members during the late 2000s and early 2010s. Dominica experienced the second most rapid membership growth during this period, yet convert retention has been poor, and congregations were consolidated into a single branch in 2010. Other island nations in the Caribbean experienced the discontinuation of branches or districts during the late 2000s and early 2010s, including Aruba, Dominica, and Saint Kitts and Nevis. The percentage of Latter-day Saints in the population is less than most nations in the Caribbean and is comparable to Antigua and Barbuda, Dominica, and Haiti.

Many Christian groups that engaged in proselytism have a visible presence on Saint Lucia and achieve modest growth rates. Most of these groups have had a long-term presence on the island and are self-sustaining. The Seventh-Day Adventist Church is the most successful proselytism-focused denomination. The number of Adventists increased by more than 5,000 during the past decade. Adventists are the second largest denomination in the country and constitute 14% of the population. Jehovah's Witnesses experience slow, steady membership growth. The number of active Witnesses has increased by more than one hundred since 2010.

## Future Prospects

The outlook for church growth in the near future appears mixed. The Church has struggled with mediocre convert retention rates and decreasing member activity rates for most of the 2010s. As a result, no new branches have been organized. Nevertheless, the Church continues to report dozens of new converts who join the Church each year in the two branches. Additional congregations may be organized in the most populous lesser-reached areas as well as in Castries and its surroundings. Once three or more branches operate, a district may be created. Self-sustaining growth over the long term will depend on locals serving full-time missions, remaining in their home country, and increasing the number of active priesthood holders to fill leadership positions.

[1] "Background Note: Saint Lucia," Bureau of Western Hemisphere Affairs, 23 July 2010. <http://www.state.gov/r/pa/ei/bgn/2344.htm>

[2] "Saint Lucia," Internatinoal Religious Freedom Report for 2017. Accessed 5 February 2019. <https://www.state.gov/j/drl/rls/irf/religiousfreedom/index.htm?year=2017&dliid=281098#wrapper>

[3] "St. Lucia," International Religious Freedom Report 2009, 26 October 2009. <http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/irf/2009/127403.htm>

[4] "Saint Lucia," Internatinoal Religious Freedom Report for 2017. Accessed 5 February 2019. <https://www.state.gov/j/drl/rls/irf/religiousfreedom/index.htm?year=2017&dliid=281098#wrapper>

[5] "Saint Lucia," Country Profile, retrieved 22 October 2010. <http://beta-newsroom.lds.org/country/saint-lucia>

[6] "Where We Work," LDS Charities. Accessed 18 February 2019. <https://www.ldscharities.org/where-we-work>