

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 Kitts and Nevis

Population: 0.05 millions (#215 out of countries)

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Geography

Area: 261 square km. Comprising two small volcanic islands, Saint Kitts and Nevis is located in the Caribbean between the Virgin Islands and Guadeloupe. Both islands are mountainous and experience tropical climate with little seasonal temperature variation. A rainy season occurs from May to November. Hurricanes are a natural hazard. Deforestation, soil erosion, and pollution are environmental concerns. Saint Kitts and Nevis is divided into fourteen administrative parishes.

Peoples

African: 92.5%

Mulatto (mixed African): 3.0%

White: 2.1%

East Indian: 1.5%

Other/unspecified: 0.9%

Population: 53,094 (July 2018)

Annual Growth Rate: 0.7% (2018)

Fertility Rate: 1.77 children born per woman (2018)

Life Expectancy: 73.7 male, 78.7 female (2018)

Languages: Saint Kitts Creole English (99%), other (1%). Most speak Standard English fluently.

Literacy: 98% (2005)

History

Carib Amerindians populated St. Kitts and Nevis when Christopher Columbus arrived at the islands in the late fifteenth century during his voyages. English and French settlers arrived in the 1620s. The French and English maintained joint rule over St. Kitts until 1713 when the island came under English rule. The French temporarily overtook the islands in 1782, but British rule was reestablished the following year. Both islands were included in the Leeward Islands colony from 1871 to 1956 and were part of the West Indies Federation from 1958 to 1962. In 1967, St. Kitts and Nevis joined with Anguilla to form a self-governing state under Great Britain. Anguilla left the union later that year and remains a British dependency. Independence from the United Kingdom occurred in 1983. Political stability has characterized most of the islands' post-independence history, although Nevis has attempted to secede several times.[1] Nevis continues efforts to seek independence.

Culture

British colonialism strongly influenced local culture as manifest by widespread use of English and half the population adhering to the Anglican Church. The people remain highly religious today. Several musical festivals are held throughout the year. Cuisine is representative of the West Indies and includes goat, fruit, dumplings, soup, and rum. Cricket is the most popular sport. Alcohol consumption rates compare to the average worldwide alcohol consumption rate.

Economy

GDP per capita: $28,200 (2017) [47.2% of U.S.]

Human Development Index: 0.778 (2017)

Corruption Index: N/A

The economy highly relies on tourism for survival, as the government closed the sugar industry in the mid-2000s due to poor economic growth. Hurricanes and oscillating tourist demand are economic challenges. The government has sought to diversify agricultural activity, expand the tourist industry, and establish an offshore banking sector. Services and industry generate 69% and 30% of the GDP, respectively. Tourism, cotton, and salt are the primary industries. Common crops include sugarcane, rice, yams, vegetables, and fruit. The United States is the primary trade partner. The islands are a transshipment point for illicit drugs en route to North America and Europe. Money laundering is also a concern.

Faiths

Christian: 95%

Other: 5%

Christians

Denominations – Members – Congregations

Anglican – 10,937

Methodist – 10,141

Pentecostal – 4,354

Church of God – 3,610

Catholic – 3,557

Moravian – 2,920

Baptist – 2,549

Seventh Day Adventists – 2,298 – 13

Jehovah's Witnesses – 281 – 5

Latter-day Saints – 211 – 1

Religion

Anglicans are the largest religious group, but constitute only 17% of the population as of 2011. Most of the population adheres to Protestant denominations. There are small numbers of Rastafarians, Muslims, Hindus, and Baha'is.[2]

Religious Freedom

The constitution protects religious freedom, which is upheld by the government. There is no official religion sponsored by the government. Schools to have daily morning prayers and hymn singing although students can be exempted from these religious activities. Rastafarians have reported concerns with societal discrimination in regards to wearing dreadlocks and have complained that marijuana is illegal.[3]

Largest Cities

Urban: 30.8% (2018)

Basseterre, **Charlestown**

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

One of the two largest cities has a Church congregation. Twenty-nine percent (29%) of the national population resides in the two largest cities. Seventy-five percent (75%) of the national population lives on St. Kitts.

Church History and Background

Latter-day Saint missionaries first arrived in 1984 on St. Kitts and in 1985 and organized the first branch.[4] The first converts were baptized in 1985.[5] Seminary and institute began in the 1990s. President Gordon B. Hinckley visited St. Kitts and Nevis in 2004 and met with the prime minister.[6] The West Indies Mission administered St. Kitts and Nevis until 2007, when the islands became part of the new Puerto Rico San Juan East Mission.[7] In 2010, the mission was consolidated, and St. Kitts and Nevis have since been assigned to the Puerto Rico San Juan Mission.

There were fewer than one hundred Latter-day Saints until the late 1990s. Stagnant membership growth occurred during the first half of the 2000s as there were 112 members in 2000, 115 in 2002, and 118 in 2004. Membership totaled 166 in 2005 and 184 in 2006 and then declined to 120 in 2007, as it appears membership totals for Dominica were originally included with the St. Kitts and Nevis totals but in 2007 were reported separately for the first time. Generally stagnant membership growth with small increases or decreases in membership occurred in the 2010s. Membership totaled 170 in 2009, 194 in 2013, and 238 in 2016. There were 211 members in 2017. In 2017, one in 250 was a Latter-day Saint.

One branch operated from 1985 to 2005 until a second branch was created on Nevis. In 2010, the branches were consolidated. A group continues to operate on Nevis. The Basseterre St. Kitts and Nevis District operated from 2004 to 2010 and had four branches in the late 2000s, two of which were on other Caribbean islands. In 2019, the St Kitts Branch also administered St. Eustatius.

Nine were enrolled in seminary and institute during the 2008–2009 school year. In 1994, there were seventy active members.[8] There were approximately thirty active members on St. Kitts in 1996.[9] One hundred members and guests attended the dedication of the Basseterre meetinghouse in 2004.[10] In early 2011, active membership was estimated at approximately eighty. In 2015, there were approximately five active members in the Nevis Group and forty active members in the St Kitts Branch. In early 2019, active membership appeared no greater than sixty, or 28% of church-reported membership. A local member served as the St Kitts Branch president in early 2019. In 1995, the Church acquired a remodeled house to hold church meetings.[11] In 2004, President Hinckley dedicated a new meetinghouse in Basseterre.[12] Humanitarian and development work since 1985 has been limited to seven community projects.[13]

Opportunities

Latter-day Saints face no restrictions on assembly, proselytism, or worship. Twenty-five percent (25%) of the national population resides in Basseterre where the only official branch operates. Virtually the entire population of St. Kitts and Nevis could be reached with approximately half a dozen mission outreach centers. Holding cottage meetings and forming dependent branches and groups may be a suitable method to better reach the population by creating a flexible, church-planting–based approach to proselytism. The wide array of English Latter-day Saint materials accessible online provides opportunities for Internet proselytism, but no missionary materials have been adapted to local cultural needs and circumstances. St. Kitts and Nevis experiences no significant ethnic integration challenges due to the highly homogenous black population. There have been no reported ethnic assimilation problems at church. Widespread use of Standard English reduces the translation need for materials in Saint Kitts Creole English. Full-time missionaries do not appear to be regularly assigned, and in the past senior missionary couples have served on the islands. In 1991, the first local member served a full-time mission.[14] In 1996, full-time missionaries were no longer stationed on St. Kitts, and local members fulfilled missionary responsibilities. Local leadership heavily emphasized reactivation and member-missionary efforts among youth,[15] which may result in more consistent numbers of members serving full-time missions. Emphasis on missionary preparation for youth may help increase the number of active priesthood holders over the long term.

Challenges

Participation in religion and the influence of Christianity on society remains strong, but there is less acceptance of nontraditional Christian groups like Latter-day Saints. Many have unfavorable attitudes about the Church, often attributed to misinformation. Some Latter-day Saint youth have lost friends as a result of joining the Church.[16] New converts, less active members, and investigators often face opposition from their families and the community for associating with the Church, which has led to limited receptivity and modest member activity rates. The small population of administrative parishes outside of Basseterre limits the practicality of opening additional mission outreach centers in outlying areas. Member activity rates have fluctuated over time as a result of new converts demonstrating brief periods of church activity and attendance together with inconsistent activity levels among older members. Inadequate pre-baptismal teaching and the failure of new converts to exhibit regular church attendance over longer periods of time have likely contributed to retention problems. Distance from mission headquarters and few missionary resources dedicated to the islands has facilitated the development of self-sustaining leadership but may have also led to inconsistent missionary approaches. Limited numbers of active priesthood holders delays the organization of additional congregations and likely contributed to the closure of the Nevis Branch in 2010. St. Kitts and Nevis pertains to the Santo Domingo Dominican Republic Temple district. Temple trips do not appear to occur regularly, and members likely attend the temple on an individual basis. Travel times and expenses prevent regular temple attendance. Members may utilize the San Juan Puerto Rico Temple once it is completed if they are able to obtain visas.

Comparative Growth

St. Kitts and Nevis is among Caribbean countries or territories with the fewest Latter-day Saints. Church growth trends on St. Kitts and Nevis have been similar to those experienced on these islands, marked by fluctuating member activity rates and the operation of only one or two congregations. St. Kitts and Nevis, Aruba, and the Bahamas each had their sole LDS districts discontinued in the late 2000s due to leadership development and sustainability problems, albeit districts were reinstated for Aruba and the Bahamas in the 2010s. Most missionary-minded Christian groups report slow, steady growth and higher member activity rates than Latter-day Saints. Adventists report steady growth. These denominations have developed a small, local member community and maintain multiple mission outreach centers.

Future Prospects

Attempted mission outreach expansion in the 2000s only endured for half a decade before coming to a close in 2010 and produced mixed results, as only one official congregation remains, member activity rates remain low, and local priesthood leadership is extremely limited. Efforts to establish a self-sufficient congregation in Nevis continue to be frustrated due to low receptivity, few active members, and priesthood leaders who move away from the island. The consistent assignment of a senior missionary couple may address these issues without compromising the limited self-sufficiency developed in Basseterre. However, local members will need to take responsibility for finding, teaching, and preparing prospective members for baptism and lifelong discipleship for real growth to be achieved.

[1] “Background Note: Saint Kitts and Nevis,” Bureau of Western Hemisphere Affairs, 14 July 2010. http://www.state.gov/r/pa/ei/bgn/2341.htm

[2] “St. Kitts and Nevis,” International Religious Freedom Report 2017, Accessed 18 February 2019. https://www.state.gov/j/drl/rls/irf/religiousfreedom/index.htm?year=2017&dlid=281096#wrapper

[3] “St. Kitts and Nevis,” International Religious Freedom Report 2017, Accessed 18 February 2019. https://www.state.gov/j/drl/rls/irf/religiousfreedom/index.htm?year=2017&dlid=281096#wrapper

[4] Weaver, Sarah Jane. “Caribbean members plan to celebrate achievements of pioneers—those on island and of 1847 trek,” LDS Church News, 22 June 1996. http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/27928/Caribbean-members-plan-to-celebrate-achievements-of-pioneers—-those-on-island-a

[5] Deseret News 2003 Church Almanac, “St. Kitts and Nevis,” p. 407.

[6] “Pres. Hinckley emphasizes ‘home’ at island meetings,” LDS Church News, 24 January 2004. http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/44981/Pres-Hinckley-emphasizes-home-at-island-meetings.html

[7] “New missions bring total to 347 New Missions,” LDS Church News, 10 February 2007. http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/50112/New-missions-bring-total-to-347-New-missions.html

[8] Deseret News 2003 Church Almanac, “St. Kitts and Nevis,” p. 407.

[9] Weaver, Sarah Jane. “Caribbean members plan to celebrate achievements of pioneers—those on island and of 1847 trek,” LDS Church News, 22 June 1996. http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/27928/Caribbean-members-plan-to-celebrate-achievements-of-pioneers—-those-on-island-a

[10] “Pres. Hinckley emphasizes “home” at island meetings,” LDS Church News, 24 January 2004. http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/44981/Pres-Hinckley-emphasizes-home-at-island-meetings.html

[11] Weaver, Sarah Jane. “Caribbean members plan to celebrate achievements of pioneers—those on island and of 1847 trek,” LDS Church News, 22 June 1996. http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/27928/Caribbean-members-plan-to-celebrate-achievements-of-pioneers—-those-on-island-a

[12] “Pres. Hinckley emphasizes “home” at island meetings,” LDS Church News, 24 January 2004. http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/44981/Pres-Hinckley-emphasizes-home-at-island-meetings.html

[13] “Where We Work,” LDS Charities. Accessed 18 February 2019. https://www.ldscharities.org/where-we-work

[14] Deseret News 2003 Church Almanac, “St. Kitts and Nevis,” p. 407.

[15] Weaver, Sarah Jane. “Caribbean members plan to celebrate achievements of pioneers—those on island and of 1847 trek,” LDS Church News, 22 June 1996. http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/27928/Caribbean-members-plan-to-celebrate-achievements-of-pioneers—-those-on-island-a

[16] Weaver, Sarah Jane. “Caribbean members plan to celebrate achievements of pioneers—those on island and of 1847 trek,” LDS Church News, 22 June 1996. http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/27928/Caribbean-members-plan-to-celebrate-achievements-of-pioneers—-those-on-island-a