

INTRODUCTION

ORIGINALLY founded in 1830 in the United States in upstate New York, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (LDS Church) has church members and an organized presence in approximately 180 countries and territories today. The Church experienced an acceleration in membership and congregational growth during the latter half of the twentieth century as congregations were organized in previously unreached nations and territories, and missionaries were introduced to these locations. As a result of these efforts, church membership increased from one million members and 2,574 wards and branches in 1947 to ten million members and 24,697 wards and branches in 1997. Notwithstanding this progress, the Church has faced serious shortcomings in most countries retaining new converts, maintaining acceptable member activity rates, achieving commensurate unit and membership growth rates, and consistently opening new areas to proselytism. In 2011, we estimate that approximately 30% of worldwide Latter-day Saints regularly attend church meetings and that 22% of the world's population resides in a location with an LDS congregation that they can legally attend.

This almanac-styled book provides the most comprehensive statistics, historical data, and analysis on LDS Church growth available at present. Individual profiles were completed for 211 countries and territories, and regional profiles were completed for ten world regions. We have organized country and territory profiles by region in this book and have also produced regional profiles providing a synopsis of issues relating to church growth for ten of the eleven regions. Topics examined in regional and country profiles include geography, people groups, population, languages, history, culture, economy, religion, religious freedom, largest cities, LDS history, membership growth, congregational growth, member activity and convert retention, finding, language materials, meetinghouses, health and safety, and humanitarian and development work. Each profile includes an analytical section that examines opportunities and challenges for LDS growth in regards to religious freedom, cultural issues, national outreach, member activity and convert retention, ethnic issues and integration, language issues, missionary service, leadership, temple, comparative growth, and future prospects. Information on indices cited in profiles such as the Human Development Index and Corruption Index can be found in the bibliography section.

Aside from our desire to create a resource that catalogs facts on LDS Church growth and presents demographic, historic, economic, cultural, and religious background by country and region, we have analyzed the interplay of these factors on LDS growth and identified challenges, opportunities, and prospects for future growth. The analytical nature of this book is such as to help educate the general public about the distribution of LDS membership and issues that have favored and hampered growth in the past, as well as to suggest useful methods from accumulated experience to achieve the greatest real growth possible in locations around the world. We hope that this work will encourage lay members and leaders alike to learn from prior successes and failures around the world and adopt and implement growth strategies that are scripturally based, consistent with church teachings, and promote local self-sustainability in growth and leadership.

This work is divided into two volumes, with the first volume covering regions that have traditionally had a strong LDS presence or longstanding missionary outreach, including the Americas, Oceania, and Europe. The second volume covers the continents of Asia and Africa, where sustained missionary efforts have begun more recently and LDS populations are typically smaller. Although there are some exceptions to these generalizations – for example, the Philippines is home to the largest population of LDS members outside of the