



LDS Growth Encyclopedia on Missionary Work and Church Growth (Missiology)

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Children of Record

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Children of record consist of unbaptized children who are listed on official church membership records because they have one parent who is a Latter-day Saint. Generally infants have a membership record created following the naming and blessing ordinance. Children of record remain on church records until age 18 regardless of getting baptized at age eight and the membership status of either parent. The Church reports children of record in regards to annual increases in this statistic; otherwise there are no publicly-released figures on total, worldwide "children of record" figures. Increase of children of record provide virtually the only statistic available to the public for tracking natural growth and birthrates in the LDS Church. At times church leaders and statistical reports have referred to children of record as the "number of children blessed."

The Church has not published the annual increase of children of record prior to 1973. In 1973, the increase of children of record was 68,623. This statistic surpassed 70,000 in 1974, 80,000 in 1976, 90,000 in 1977, 100,000 in 1979, 110,000 in 1981, and 120,000 in 1982. Increase of children of record was generally in the 90,000s in the 1980s, 70,000s in the 1990s, and 90,000s in the 2000s. Increase of children of record jumped from 93,698 in 2007 to 123,502 in 2008 and has remained at approximately 120,000 between 2009 and 2012. The Church reported its smallest increase of children of record in 2001 (69,522) and its largest increase of children of record in 1982 (124,000). The Church did not report this statistic between 1988 and 1996 but rather reported the number of eight-year-old children of record baptized. The number of eight-year-old children of record baptized during this period generally ranged from 70,000 to 80,000 per year.

The annual increase of children of record accounts for a smaller portion of annual membership growth than convert baptisms. Since 1973, the annual increase of children of record for the average year has accounted for 29% of the combined increase of convert baptisms and increase of children of record. In other words, the increase of children of record generally contributes less than one-thirds of the membership increase the Church experiences on an average year. Within the past decade, the summation of convert baptisms and increase of children of record has surpassed the increase of total church membership by 61,000 on average. This discrepancy between the summation of new members added to church records a year and the total increase in church membership is attributed to the approximately 60,000 individuals a year who are removed from church records due to death, excommunication, or resignation. The Church retains all convert baptisms on church records regardless of the length of church activity and worthiness status and only removes those members as a result of death, excommunication, or resignation. The Church does not publish a country-by-country or region-by-region breakdown of the increase of children of record. Increase of children of record in the United States appears to account for 40-50% of the worldwide increase of children of record.

There are several factors that have influenced growth trends in the increase of children of [tag heuer replica watches](#) record statistic. One of the most prominent influences on increase of children of record in the United States has been the decline in the birth rate among Latter-day Saints.^[1] Precise data on LDS fertility and birth rates are difficult to obtain but sociologists have utilized birth rates in Utah as an indicator of LDS populations throughout the United States as nominal LDS membership accounts for the majority of the state population. The number of births per 1,000 residents fell from approximately 28 in 1980 to 22 in 1990,^[2] 20.8 in 2000, and 18.3 in 2010.^[3] In recent years Latter-day Saints continue to have more children than the national average. In 2006, Utah ranked as the state with the highest birth rate as approximately one in 12 women of child-bearing age gave birth whereas only one in 18 women gave birth nationally.^[4] The abrupt decline in birthrates in Utah between 1980 and 1990 coincided with a church-wide decline in the increase of children of record statistic during the mid to late 1980s.

Member activity and convert retention rates constitute the most significant factor influencing this statistic for the Church outside of North America. The Church has struggled to create full-member families in most countries resulting in the bulk of LDS membership consisting of part-member families. Most members on church records do not rear their children in the Church as less than one-third of Latter-day Saints outside the United States are active. Consequently, these children never appear as part of the increase of children of record statistic. One researcher noted that Mexican Latter-day Saints have fewer children on average than their non-LDS counterparts.^[5] The lack of full-member families outside North America and little progress increasing the number of full-member families internationally over the past three decades has coincided with lackluster growth in the increase of children of record statistic for the entire church.

Changes in the increase of children of record statistic has influenced other statistics relevant to the study of church growth. The decline in the annual increase of children of record that occurred in the early 1980s impacted full-time missionary numbers two decades later when these children reached the minimum age of missionary service. The annual increase of children of record declined by 23.4% between 1982 and 1985 whereas the number of full-time missionaries serving declined by 15.5% between 2002 and 2005. There is not a perfect correlation between increase of children of record and the number of full-time missionaries serving 20 years later because not all male members previously served a mission at age 19 or 20, there is some year-to-year fluctuation in the percentage of young men that served missions, and some members join the Church as children or youth and were never included in the increase of children of record statistic.

The outlook for future trends in the increase of children of record statistic appears good as the Church will likely sustain its recent increases of approximately 120,000 children of record per year. Increasing numbers of full-member Latter-day Saint families in the international church has good prospects to steadily augment this statistic in the coming years despite most countries with an LDS presence currently experiencing declining birthrates.

[1] "Vital Statistics," *Encyclopedia of Mormonism*, p. 1522 <http://contentdm.lib.byu.edu/cdm/compoundobject/collection/EoM/id/4391/show/4316>

[2] Thornock, Wade. "Birth & Death: Utah and National Trends," 2007 Utah's Health: An Annual Review, retrieved 8 December 2012. http://www.matheson.utah.edu/Annual_Review/UHReview/archives/18Birth-and-Death.pdf

[3] "Complete Indicator Report of Birth Rates," ibis.health.utah.gov, retrieved 8 December 2012. http://ibis.health.utah.gov/indicator/complete_profile/BrthRat.html

[4] Davidson, Lee. "Utah's birthrate highest in U.S.," *Deseret News*, 19 August 2008. <http://www.deseretnews.com/article/700251966/Utahs-birthrate-highest-in-US.html>

[5] Heaton, Tim B., "Religious Influences on Mormon Fertility: Cross-National Comparisons," in James T. Duke, ed., *Latter-day Saint Social Life*, Provo, UT: Religious Studies Center, 1998, 425-440.

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