



El Salvador

Republic of El Salvador

Latin America

Geography

Area 21,041 sq km on the Pacific Coast of Central America. The smallest and most-densely populated Spanish-speaking mainland state in the Americas. Sub-tropical and susceptible to earthquakes.

Population	Ann Gr	Density
2010	6,194,126	0.44%
2020	6,617,741	0.73%
2030	7,176,865	0.80%

Capital San Salvador 1,565,202. **Urbanites** 61.3%. **Pop under 15 yrs** 32%. **Life expectancy** 71.3 yrs.

Peoples

Hispanic 90.1%. Ladino (Mestizo).

Amerindian 9.5%. Part-Indian 4.5%; Pipil (Aztec) 4.0%; Lenca 0.8%.

Other 0.4%.

Over 30% of Salvadoreans live outside the country due to economic migrations.

Literacy 80.6%. **Official language** Spanish. **All languages** 7. **Indigenous languages** 5. **Languages with Scriptures** 2Bi.

Economy

Centuries of exploitation of the majority, followed by years of devastating civil war, have held back development of this impoverished nation. There was subsequent improvement between 1991 and 2005, halving the number of those living in poverty. Coffee and light industry are the main economic activities, the service sector employs the majority and remittances from Salvadoreans working abroad are a very significant boost to many.

HDI Rank 106th/182. **Public debt** 44.7% of GDP. **Income/person** \$3,824 (8% of USA).

Politics

Independent from Spain in 1821 as part of a united Central America, and then as a separate nation in 1838. All power remained in the hands of wealthy plantation owners allied with the military. A long series of corrupt dictatorships and gross inequalities between the rich and poor provoked an armed leftist insurrection in 1981. Over 75,000 were killed in fighting, in crossfire or by death squads. The ending of the fighting, revulsion over human rights abuses and international pressure forced through a peace accord in 1992. The democratic government is more established, with the main leftist party having won 2009 elections after four successive right-wing governments.

Religion

The constitution recognizes the legal status of the Catholic Church, but there is freedom of religion for other denominations and faiths. The Catholic Church vocally opposed oppression and human rights abuses during the war, and several high-profile clergy were murdered as a result. Other clergy sympathized with and even aided the leftist militias.

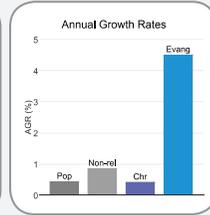
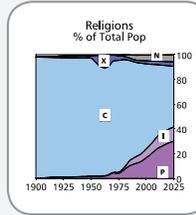
Religions	Pop %	Population	Ann Gr
Christian	94.63	5,861,501	0.4%
Non-religious	4.90	303,512	0.9%
Baha'i	0.40	24,777	0.4%
Muslim	0.03	1,858	0.4%
Buddhist	0.03	1,858	0.4%
Jewish	0.01	619	0.4%

Christians	Denoms	Pop %	Affiliates	Ann Gr
Protestant	45	26.83	1,662,000	4.5%
Independent	21	10.79	669,000	3.6%
Anglican	1	0.10	6,000	8.5%
Catholic	1	65.06	4,030,000	-1.1%
Marginal	2	3.04	188,000	1.7%
<i>Doubly affiliated</i>		<i>-11.19</i>	<i>-693,000</i>	<i>0.0%</i>

Churches	MegaBloc	Congs	Members	Affiliates
Catholic Church	C	325	2,214,286	4,030,000
Assemblies of God	P	1,560	139,000	315,000
Elim Church	P	71	142,857	200,000
Prince of Peace	I	514	90,000	198,000
Seventh-day Adventist	P	610	102,000	170,340
Apostolic Ch (A&P)	I	500	75,000	166,500
Baptist Convention	P	230	69,000	153,180
Ch of God (Cleveland)	P	440	45,000	112,500
Latter-day Saints(Mormon)	M	160	70,280	100,500
United Pentecostal Ch	P	300	40,000	100,000
Jehovah's Witnesses	M	580	35,000	87,500
Luth Salvadoran Synod	P	140	9,664	69,000
Central American Ch	P	160	24,000	53,280
Other denominations[57]		3,358	351,125	798,682
<i>Doubly affiliated</i>				<i>-693,120</i>
Total Christians[70]		8,948	3,407,2125	8,613,362

TransBloc	Pop %	Population	Ann Gr
Evangelicals			
Evangelicals	31.6	1,960,405	4.5%
Renewalists			
Charismatics	30.6	1,892,450	4.6%
Pentecostals	23.5	1,455,776	4.8%

Missionaries from El Salvador
P,I,A 165 long-term.



Answers to Prayer

- 1** The consolidation of peace, stability and democracy since 1992 is an answer to prayer, after the intense suffering of civil war. Elections and economics now replace death squads and assassinations.
- 2** The astonishing increase of evangelicals during the war has continued, albeit at a slower rate. Evangelicals were but 2.3% of the population in 1960, leaping to 32% in 2010. Some of Latin America's largest megachurches are found in El Salvador.

Challenges for Prayer

- 1** Recovery from the social and psychological wounds of centuries of oppression and 12 years of civil war is a priority. The web of violence, hate, suspicion, atrocities and murder will take time to unravel. At the height of the war, 20% of the population fled the country, and the USA poured in \$6 billion to shore up the government. Overall, more than 75,000 were killed. Pray for repentance, reconciliation and a fair society based on respect for human rights.
- 2** Rapid social and demographic shifts are changing the face of the country and require prayer and action. Most notable among them are the following:
 - a) The 3.3 million Salvadoreans living abroad**, many in the USA. Their remittances sent home keep many out of poverty, yet they have spiritual needs of their own. Many are working illegally and are vulnerable to exploitation. Their absence has also triggered social shifts back home.
 - b) The new urban population.** In one generation, El Salvador has gone from a predominantly agrarian, rural society to one in which 60% live in cities. This flow to the cities generates new challenges regarding infrastructure, crime and poverty.
 - c) The large numbers of youth** involved with the powerful *maras*. These gangs have attracted up to 70% of young men, partially orphaned by absent fathers. The Church finds that reaching the 15-30 age bracket is particularly difficult with its current methods. New methods must be adopted or an unchurched generation will quickly emerge in El Salvador.
 - d) The massive megachurches**, such as Elim and *Tabernáculo Bíblico Bautista*, both of which have grown from almost nothing to over 100,000 affiliates in their wider networks. With significant financial and political clout, these cell-based churches have the opportunity to powerfully and positively influence society.
- 3** The growth of Evangelicals in the midst of travail has been a modern-day miracle, but now the need is for consolidation of the work. There is a growing number of ex-evangelicals that underscores this need. The 1990s saw bold goals set for church planting; although those goals were not met, as many as 9,000 churches were planted. This fervour has subsided of late, even though more evangelical congregations are needed in the country. Pray for effective discipling and motivation of believers for service, witness and missions. Pray also for increased unity and vision for outreach so that this nation might belong to Jesus — *El Salvador* is Spanish for 'the Saviour'.

4 Leadership for churches must be multiplied. The war, lack of finance and insufficient staff crippled what training was available. Pray for the Bible schools, seminaries and TEE programmes. Pray for the provision of all material needs for staff and students in this time of economic stress. This ministry needs more missionary input. Many mission agencies are heavily committed to health, social betterment and educational ministries.

5 Missions vision has grown. The ministries of COMISAL (the national expression of COMIBAM) and of indigenous missions – such as MIES, AMIGA, EDEHM, COMIFAD, ADN, TRES, ATN and AoG Missions – are expressions of El Salvador’s missions vision. These are in addition to international mission groups such as OM and YWAM/JUCUM. An estimated 165 missionaries are serving in other lands. Pray that mission involvement might increase and be fruitful.

6 Sections of society of special challenge:

a) *The Amerindian population* retain many of their cultural values and traits, even though they have largely lost their languages. Their treatment in the 20th Century has been horrific. Pray for effective ministries to begin and for culturally sensitive church planting among them.

b) *The 115,000 university students.* MUC(IFES) has 35 student groups, reaching most universities and colleges. CCCI also works in El Salvador. Training leaders is the greatest challenge.

7 The impact of Christian institutions and media is wide-ranging and ever-increasing. There are three Christian universities, around 80 Christian schools, five TV stations and 30 radio stations. Those leading these ministries can enrich themselves if they seek to do so, or they can have a real Kingdom impact on society. Pray for the latter.