



France

Republic of France

Europe

Geography

Area 543,965 sq km. The largest country in Western Europe.

Population	Ann Gr	Density
2010	62,636,580	0.53%
2020	64,930,944	0.32%
2030	66,473,807	0.21%

Capital Paris 10,485,263. **Other major cities** Marseille 1.5 mill; Lyon 1.5m; Lille 1.0m; Nice 977,202; Toulouse 912,115. **Urbanites** 77.8%. **Pop under 15yrs** 18%. **Life expectancy** 81 yrs.

Peoples

Indigenous and immigrant ethnic-minority figures are approximate due to naturalization, assimilation, illegal immigration and a lack of official statistics.

European 83.5%.

French 69.5%. Regional identities have faded with increased movement of people within France and standardization of modern French.

Germanic 5.1%. Alsatian 2.6%; Fleming 1.3%; German 1.0%.

Other European 8.9%. Italian 1.7%; Basque 1.4%; Portuguese 1.4%; Slav(6) 1.4%; Spaniard 1.1%; Armenian 0.7%; Catalonian 0.5%.

North African/Middle Eastern 9.2%. Berber (Kabyle, Shawiya, Riff, others) 5.6%; North African Arab 2.0%; Levant Arab 0.6%; many other Middle Eastern/West Asian peoples.

African/Caribbean 4.0%. Representing every francophone nation, most West and Central African ethnic groups and French Caribbean ethnicities.

Asian 2.0%. Vietnamese 0.9%; Chinese 0.4%; Lao/Hmong 0.2%.

Other 1.3%. Jews 0.8%; Romani(4) 0.4%.

Literacy 99%. **Official language** French. Regional languages in decline. French is the first language of 136 million people worldwide. **All languages** 62.

Indigenous languages 23. **Languages with Scriptures** 10Bi 3NT 11por 2w.i.p.

Economy

The sixth-largest economy in the world. A solid base in agriculture and industry as well as the world's foremost tourist destination, leading to a strong service industry. Socialized economic policies provide good public service (such as health care), infrastructure and a highly trained professional workforce, but they have created a system prone to bureaucracy and strikes. Some sectors were hit hard by the economic downturn of 2008–2009. Systemic resistance to reform, coupled with fear of impending decline, paralyzes decisive action to improve the economy. Yet, this same conservatism guarded against even greater financial damage in 2008–09. Some of the immigrant/minority communities form a restive and, at times, violent economic underclass.

HDI Rank 8th/182. **Public debt** 68.1% of GDP. **Income/person** \$46,037 (97% of USA).

Politics

Democratic republic with a strong presidency/executive balanced by parliament. Left-right polarization of major parties. Traditionally centralized, but devolving toward regions and departments. A core member of the EU, trying to clarify its role in global politics while addressing serious challenges internally that have emerged from unassimilated minorities/immigrants.

Religion

Before the 1789 Revolution, a long history of severe persecution of dissenters and reformers; now a resolutely secular state with freedom of religion. Anti-sectarian legislation was passed in 2000, and obvious religious apparel is banned for those working in public services and education. Traditionally dominant Catholicism has been in decline for decades, while atheism and other faith groups grow. The government currently forbids collecting data on individuals' religious faith, so all statistics are estimates.

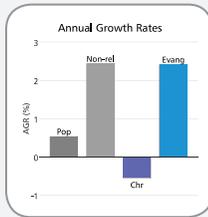
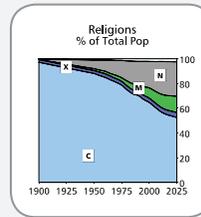
Religions	Pop %	Population	Ann Gr
Christian	61.14	38,296,005	-0.6%
Non-religious	26.03	16,304,302	2.4%
Muslim	10.50	6,576,841	2.8%
Buddhist	0.97	607,575	1.8%
Jewish	0.94	588,784	-0.9%
Other	0.40	250,546	0.5%
Baha'i	0.02	12,527	0.5%

Christians	Denoms	Pop %	Affiliates	Ann Gr
Protestant	100	1.91	1,193,000	1.1%
Independent	31	0.14	86,000	3.7%
Anglican	1	0.03	18,000	-1.1%
Catholic	3	57.58	36,068,000	-0.7%
Orthodox	12	1.05	660,000	1.1%
Marginal	16	0.56	350,000	0.1%
Doubly affiliated		-0.13	-80,000	0.0%

Churches	MegaBloc	Congs	Members	Affiliates
Catholic Church	C	32,200	1,457,500	41,830,000
Reformed Church	P	479	50,000	300,000
Armenian Apos, W Eu	O	118	118,000	295,000
Assemblies of God	P	920	65,714	230,000
Jehovah's Witnesses	M	1,540	135,000	211,000
Ch of Augsburg (Luth)	P	315	119,760	200,000
Orthodox Church	O	23	6,000	133,000
Gypsy Evang Mission	P	191	34,535	115,000
Russian Orthodox Chs	O	108	53,947	82,000
Greek Orthodox Ch	O	43	55,639	74,000
Evang Lutheran Ch	P	47	4,000	40,000
Ref Ch, Alsace&Lorraine	P	52	2,400	36,000
Full Gospel Federation	P	86	16,000	26,720
Brethren Assen (Darby)	P	104	12,500	24,500
Seventh-day Adventist	P	130	12,500	13,400
Eglises d'Expressions Afr	P	38	5,909	13,000
Indep Reformed Ch	P	37	2,500	13,000
Eglise Prot Evangelique	P	6	5,300	6,625
Other denominations[141]		3,006	298,831	532,324
<i>Disaffiliated</i>				-5,800,000
<i>Doubly affiliated</i>				-80,000
Total Christians[163]		39,443	11,456,035	38,295,569

TransBloc	Pop %	Population	Ann Gr
Evangelicals			
Evangelicals	1.0	603,192	2.4%
Renewalists			
Charismatics	1.0	633,830	2.8%
Pentecostals	0.7	417,182	2.7%

Other studies identify a smaller number of evangelicals in France, but differences in definitions and methodology can account for the discrepancy.



Answers to Prayer

- 1 Evangelical Christianity has grown** over the last 50 years despite the systemic secularization of society, religious indifference and decline in church involvement. In 1960, evangelicals in France numbered 180,000; by 1990, they had reached nearly 400,000, and in 2010, they were 600,000. Evangelicals meet in over 2,500 fellowships with dozens more forming every year.
- 2 An encouraging growth of unity among evangelicals** has emerged in recent years out of a history of division and lack of cooperation. Through the French Evangelical Alliance, the French Evangelical Federation and the larger Pentecostal and charismatic unions, the National Council of French Evangelicals (CNEF) was initiated in 2001. It has since grown and now represents most of the 43 church unions of all denominations as the voice for evangelical Protestants in France.

Challenges for Prayer

- 1 France as a politico-economic entity is at a crossroads.** Amid a brave fight against globalization, radical reforms are urgently needed in industry and in state economic structures. France, like many European nations with an aging population, must face the inevitable and unsustainable pressure on the pension system and retirement age. Painful decisions that are right for the country must be made despite opposition. Coupled with this is the increasing tension between traditional French identity and the growing, restive immigrant community; the model of integration in which France has taken pride no longer appears to function. The majority of French are content individually but place little confidence in the collective future of the Republic; too many centrifugal social forces are at play.
- 2 Major spiritual strongholds** hinder acceptance of the gospel:

a) *France's religious history is stained with violence* – the bloody wars of religion in the 16th Century which claimed 200,000 lives, the brutal persecutions of the Huguenots in the 17th Century and the French Revolution in 1789–1801. Starting with the Reformation and then Counter-Reformation, France moved through the Enlightenment to philosophically culminate in modern-day atheistic existentialism and a materialist view of life.

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b) **The widespread involvement with occult practices.** There are more people earning a living in occult practices than there are registered doctors, and 10 times more than evangelical pastors and missionaries. The spiritual vacuum created by aggressive secularism has been filled with witchcraft and esotericism, since most French have no meaningful contact with dynamic Christian faith.

3 The accelerating decline of religious faith since the 18th Century has seen France's Catholic and mainline Protestant legacies plummet in recent years, even as atheism has grown. Hostility toward organized religion as well as the privatization of spirituality mean that regular attendance in any church is below 8%. Some surveys show that over 30% of French people are non-religious. Most French have a profound ignorance of, or indifference to, the gospel, many having never meaningfully encountered it. Yet, the relativism of postmodernity has generated acute emptiness and existential angst; as many have noted, this in turn has created a spiritual hunger that has grown rapidly in recent years. Pray that such hunger might overcome the suspicion toward religion. Pray that Christians would be prepared to patiently and relationally share Jesus with those who seek.

4 The Catholic Church has lost much of its influence in society, a process accelerating since the 1980s. In 2005, only 150 men in France completed training for the priesthood. Recent polls suggest as few as 51% of French self-identify as Catholic – but this still constitutes a majority of the population. Tensions exist among conservative traditionalists, liberals, modernists, radicals and charismatics; the traditionalists (opposed to the “liberalizing” Vatican II changes) and charismatics are the most vigorous wings of the Church today. Such rapid decline has removed from Catholicism much of the meaningless ritual and paternalism and has taught humility. The Alpha Course is widely used in Catholic parishes. Pray for these changes to bring gospel light and life to French Catholicism.

5 Protestants were accepted at the Reformation, and at one stage some estimate that up to 25% of the French population had embraced the new teaching. But persecution (from the mid-16th Century until the late 18th Century), humanism and nominalism (in the last 200 years) have reduced this to 1.9% in 2010. Protestantism – though widely respected – is spiritually compromised by liberal theology, universalism and the acceptance of contradictory doctrinal and ethical views. Protestants are more numerous in Alsace and the south, but nominalism and decline are common. Yet there are staunch evangelical believers in most Reformed and Lutheran congregations. Pray for restoration to the faith and commitment shown by their martyr forebears.

6 Evangelical Christians are few (1.0% across all confessions), split between many denominations and confessions. They demonstrate high levels of commitment and are a younger population than France's average. Growth is steady, and a new congregation is planted almost every week. Pentecostals and charismatics are the fastest growing. This is all in the face of strong secularizing trends in public life. Pray for:

a) **The public perception of evangelicals.** To most French people, the evangelical message is still seen as an alien ideology of immigrant groups and of the American right wing rather than an indigenous expression of spirituality. This bias has led to discrimination and difficulties in dealing with local authorities. Pray for transparency and good conduct by evangelicals that will demonstrate the positive impact on society their faith can have.

b) **Unity among true believers** has made great strides in recent years. Most evangelicals can be found in member churches of the CNEF or the *Fédération Protestante*. Further cooperation is being planned, at times involving believing Catholics as well. Pray especially for a deepening of unity between the various immigrant churches and French indigenous congregations.

c) **The fast-growing minority churches**, especially Africans, Antilleans and Gypsies. More than 250 ethnic churches exist just in the greater Paris area, and more pop up every month. The passion and faith of these groups bring new verve to evangelicalism, but they suffer a negative bias from local government and media, which is generally but not always unearned. These minority churches tend to attract the poorest and most vulnerable of society, which is both an answer to and a challenge for prayer. Pastors tend to have little training or accountability. Pray for strengthening of the recent alliances formed for African churches (CEAF and ECOC) and for Caribbean churches (UEEHAC).

d) **Physical and human resources are a key to church growth** in France. Having a visible building gives the Church credibility. But pioneer churches have to face two challenges

simultaneously: hiring a pastor and finding a building. Pray for God to provide solutions to these formidable challenges.

- e) **Vision for outreach.** The deep malaise and emptiness of secular postmodernity create a hunger for truth and for those who live it out. French evangelicals are coming out of their shell to rediscover evangelism anew. The CNEF has picked up the vision started by France Mission to plant one church for every 10,000 people. France remains difficult ground for church planting; pray for the grace, endurance and faith needed to establish the 4,200 fellowships remaining to meet this goal.

7 The unreached sectors of French society are many, such as:

- a) **The nearly 50 million French people** who have no real link with a Christian church.
- b) **Many urban areas**, where evangelical presence is proportionately low. Inner-city Paris, Nantes, Nancy and other cities need many more congregations planted.
- c) **Of the 37,000 communes, around 35,000 have no evangelical church.** Many rural communes are quite traditional and resistant to change. More than 300 towns and cities of over 10,000 people have no evangelical presence.
- d) **The Loire Valley and Brittany, Picardy and Centre regions** are particularly lacking in evangelical congregations.
- e) **The Basques** in the southwest are virtually without an evangelical witness in their language; they are suspicious of outside influences and allegedly quite disinterested in spiritual things.
- f) **The island of Corsica**, birthplace of Napoleon, is quite closed to outside influences. In the population of 290,000, there are perhaps 300 evangelical believers.

8 The unreached minorities. France has integrated several waves of immigrants in the past two centuries, but it has not always been easy. Recent difficulties with integrating immigrant communities have led to tightened policies, a climate of fear and insecurity and increasing frustration for both sides. Pray about the following:

- a) **The French Jewish community** ranks third in the world in size, following the USA and Israel. There are between 580,000 and 700,000 French Jews – 320,000 in Paris alone and a further 100,000 in Marseille. Of the total Jewish population, 77% never attend a synagogue service. There are about 600 Messianic Jews in France – 95% of these are integrated into evangelical churches. The other 5% are affiliated with the three known Messianic assemblies. Fewer than 20 workers in six missions labour among Jewish people in France (MT, CWI, JFJ, CPM and the French TMPI). A number of French Jews are leaving as a result of increasing anti-Semitism, perpetrated by some Muslims and the far-right-wing movements.
- b) **North Africans** are almost entirely Muslim, few having ever heard the gospel. The majority live in large, low-cost housing areas in larger cities; antagonism between them and the French majority – coupled with unemployment, discrimination and hopeless frustration among youth – make for a ticking time bomb. Pray for churches and agencies seeking to break down barriers through friendship evangelism, radio, film, BCCs and literature. Believers of Muslim backgrounds do enjoy good relations with other evangelicals, a good testimony to Muslims and atheists alike. Agencies involved: **AWM, CCCI, WEC, IMB** and **OM**.
- c) **The Berbers** form a large minority among the North Africans and possibly make up the majority of Algerians. Kabyle believers are increasing in number, although not on the scale of growth happening among their brethren in Algeria. Christian videos, audio resources, radio programmes and literature in Kabyle are being developed.
- d) **Black Africans** have come in large numbers from Francophone Africa as students, refugees and work-seekers. There is great imbalance in Christian presence and ministry among them, with vibrant churches full of Central Africans while the West African Bambara, Wolof, Malinke, Soninke and others languish with few Christians and little outreach.
- e) **The large number of Indo-Chinese refugees** of the 1970s and '80s from France's former colonies retain a mostly insular existence. There are over 82 Asian evangelical churches, including 33 Chinese, 17 Korean, 11 Hmong and 9 Vietnamese. There is a definite shortfall of pastors and full-time workers for these people who remain unreached. COCM (Chinese) and CMA (Southeast Asians) are two groups ministering among Asians.

9 Islam is now the second religion of France. Growth is largely through immigration and a higher birth rate, but there are an estimated 150,000 French converts to Islam, mostly via marriage. Pray for the following issues:

- a) **There are deep divisions within French Islam**, primarily between fundamentalists and secularists. Over 70% of Muslims in France are of Maghrebian origin, but many mosques are financed by hard-line groups from other countries.
- b) **Assimilation of Muslims into French society** is a huge concern for a republic founded on secularism and integration. A large percentage of Muslims live in poor urban contexts, forming an increasingly dissatisfied underclass that is conflicted about its own identity. Rates of crime, unemployment and under-education are all higher in French Muslim communities.
- c) **Christian ministry to Muslims.** Fear and ignorance prevent Christians from reaching out; there are only around 100 full-time Christian workers doing so. Despite this, reports suggest that up to 15,000 Muslims are converts to Christianity, one-third of those becoming Protestant.

10 There are around 10 evangelical Bible schools and seminaries, both denominational and interdenominational, with around 250 students. Notable among the latter are *Institut Biblique de Nogent* and Vaux Evangelical Seminary. There are also denominational seminaries for Baptists, Pentecostals/**AoG** and the Aix-en-Provence Seminary for Reformed Church students. The Geneva Bible Institute in Switzerland also attracts many French students. Pray for:

- a) **Full-time workers** to be called to ministry in France. Most evangelical congregations cannot support a pastor, creating the need for bivocational ministry. Most of the few pioneer church planters are expats. The lack of support, both financial and cultural, for full-time Christian ministers yields a shortage of believers willing to undergo full-time training for ministry, which in turn puts pressure on training institutions.
- b) **A deep work of the Holy Spirit** to equip those trained with the theological understanding and spiritual maturity to make an impact for eternity. There is a serious lack of basic Bible knowledge in France generally, although there is growing interest among evangelicals for short-term and modular training.
- c) **The blessing of the whole Francophone world** through French and foreign students who graduate. A high proportion of students are from other lands, with great potential to impact all French-speaking peoples.

11 French evangelicals have sent out around 400 missionaries, about half of those to other lands. General missions interest in Protestant churches is low and support small. The largest agencies are **YWAM, AoG, WEC, SIM, OM**. Pray for French churches to see beyond the significant challenges in their own country and gain a vision for world evangelization. Pray also for the impact of the French edition of *Operation World*, entitled *Flashes sur le Monde*.

12 Mission agencies, both French and foreign, play a vital role in evangelism and church planting. There are not enough full-time French Christian workers to begin to meet the need. Adapting to French culture and communicating the gospel in this context are difficult. Foreign cultural baggage must be left behind, and authentically French forms of witness and fellowship adopted. Fruit is hard-won, discouragements many and the missionary dropout-rate high. Larger mission agencies working in France include France Mission Trust, **CB/CMML/ EoS, Baptists, ECM, AWM, WT, TEAM, CW, GEM, AV, WEC, WH, OM**, others. Pray for good identification with French culture, perseverance, effectiveness, adequate provision of financial support and spiritual power.

13 Youth ministries are vital in a nation suffering a crisis among young people. A generation has grown up with a crisis of identity, with young people longing for meaning, purpose and belonging. The steep rise in violent crime among youth, high rates of youth unemployment (23%, and up to 40% among ethnic minorities) and Europe's highest rate of youth suicide point to a deep malaise. Once believers, young people are often strongly committed to spiritual community. But they need deep and lasting discipleship to instil a Kingdom worldview, replacing the permissive amoral relativism they are used to.

- a) **Children's ministry** – **AEE/CEF** ministers through Good News Clubs, Holiday Bible Clubs and camps. From their Paris base, French literature for children is exported around the world.

- b) **Young people** are receptive to the gospel, having experienced the emptiness of secularism in their parents' generation. Many groups specialize in this ministry – **YFC**, **YWAM**, **CCCI**, Young Life, **TEAM** and *Jeunesse de l'Action Biblique* are but a few. Camps and youth clubs are the main locus of ministry: Teen Challenge among drug addicts, SU through publishing and the Internet. Pray for many young people to be saved and integrated into good evangelical churches – the latter step usually being much harder than the former!
- c) **Youth networks and movements** are emerging to encourage and connect French Christian youth. Some examples of groups and events are *Mission Radicale*, ON AIR, Alive-3 and Teen Street. Pray for this fire to spread and grow and to have a national impact among young people, saved and unsaved.
- d) **There are over two million students in tertiary education** in hundreds of universities and *grandes écoles*. Of these, 270,000 are foreign students (the world's third-highest number), so ministry to these students has global implications! Witness in this highly secular and post-Christian environment can be difficult. Evangelical ministry has been slow to develop, but now there are 85 GBU(**IFES**) groups. **CCCI**, Navigators and Crossworld also have campus ministries, as does the French-originated *Foyer Évangélique Universitaire* (FEU). Students are more open than ever, especially foreign ones.

14 Christian Help Ministries for prayer:

- a) **The Bible is alien to most French people** – less than 10% own a Bible and 80% have never even handled one. Yet, Bible sales are at an all-time high, spurred by the spiritual hunger evident among many and the availability of inexpensive (\$2) Bibles in supermarkets and secular bookstores. Study Bibles are proving popular as well. The French Bible Society, Geneva Bible Society and Biblica all contribute to printing, sale and distribution of hundreds of thousands of copies every year.
- b) **Literature** is a valuable tool for evangelism and discipleship. Literature campaigns by CMM (EHC) are useful to sow the seed widely. **AoG** and Baptists publish Christian magazines and books nationally to add to the many titles translated from English. Pray for Christian bookstores (more than 80), of which 13 are run by **CLC**.
- c) **Radio and TV ministry** are important in this media-rich nation. Pray that Christians may cooperate to make effective use of these media. **TWR** broadcasts by satellite, AM and shortwave. Local expressions such as the *Radio Evangile* ministry and the station Radio Colombe/PHARE FM (as well as others) utilize web radio and audio downloads as well as conventional Christian radio. There is at least one Christian TV station in France as well, but marginalization sees evangelicals arrive late to this scene.
- d) **Internet resources abound** in French. Savvy and media-rich sites such as topchretien.com, unpoissondansle.net and vi7vi.com offer evangelistic, apologetic and discipleship materials.