



Greece

Hellenic Republic

Europe

Geography

Area 131,957 sq km. Southernmost part of Balkan Peninsula in southeast Europe and 150 inhabited islands in the Ionian, Aegean and Mediterranean Seas. The islands constitute 20% of the land area.

Population	Ann Gr	Density
2010	11,183,393	0.22%
2020	11,283,784	0.04%
2030	11,234,382	-0.07%

Capital Athens 3,257,213. **Other major city** Thessaloniki 837,000. **Urbanites** 61.4%. **Pop under 15 yrs** 14%. **Life expectancy** 79.1 yrs.

Peoples

Rapid and largely undocumented immigrant movements mean that all numbers are estimates.

Greek 85.9%. The descendants of the ancient Greeks whose civilization so enriched the world. Includes: Pontic Greeks 1.8%.

Other European peoples 8.5%. Albanian 4.0%; 'Slavomacedonian' 1.8%.

Others 5.4%. Turkish- and Bulgarian-speaking minorities 1.4%; Gypsy/Romani 0.8%; Filipino 0.6%; Arab(4) 0.4%.

Literacy 91%. **Official language** Greek. **All languages** 24. **Indigenous languages** 14. **Languages with Scriptures** 5Bi 3NT 3por.

Economy

EU membership now seems a millstone around Greece's neck. A combination of factors has propelled the economy downward from being potentially dangerous to being outright disastrous. Impossible debts and deficits, increasing unrest and no easy solutions all point toward a troubled financial future for Greece – and the entire EU – no matter what the outcome of the crisis. Tourism, agricultural products and industry are all important. Greece has the largest fleet of

merchant ships in the EU.

HDI Rank 25*/182. **Public debt** 97.4% of GDP. **Income/person** \$32,105 (68% of USA).

Politics

Nearly four centuries of Turkish rule ended with independence in 1827. The last 100 years have been punctuated by a civil war, two military dictatorships and tensions with neighboring Turkey over the political status of the Cyprus and Aegean borders. Historically hostile relations with Turkey have warmed in recent years due to mutual assistance after earthquakes in both countries. Large-scale immigration from the Balkans and Middle East/Asia is unsettling the ethnic/religious status quo. Greece is a republic with a parliamentary democracy.

Religion

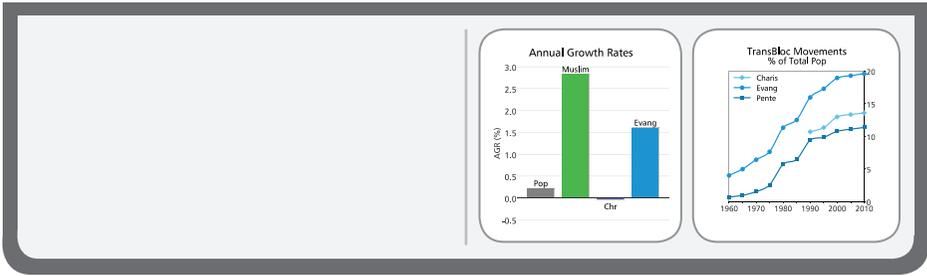
Historically protected by the state, the Orthodox Church is deeply linked to Greek identity. Rapidly increasing minority faiths (mostly through immigration) and corruption scandals in the Orthodox Church have loosened its grip as many call for a separation of church and state.

Religions	Pop %	Population	Ann Gr
Christian	91.46	10,228,331	0.0%
Muslim	5.80	648,637	2.8%
Non-religious	2.70	301,952	4.4%
Ethnoreligionist	0.02	2,237	0.2%
Jewish	0.02	2,237	-7.6%

Christians	Denoms	Pop %	Affiliates	Ann Gr
Protestant	19	0.36	40,000	1.6%
Independent	27	0.05	5,000	2.2%
Anglican	1	0.03	4,000	0.5%
Catholic	4	1.48	165,000	6.1%
Orthodox	7	91.84	10,271,000	0.2%
Marginal	2	0.42	47,000	0.8%
<i>Doubly affiliated</i>		-2.73	-305,000	0.0%

Churches	MegaBloc	Congs	Members	Affiliates
Ch of Greece (Orth)	O	29,700	8,564,103	10,020,000
Authentic Old Cal Orth	O	178	105,000	210,000
Catholic Church	C	134	120,438	165,000
Jehovah's Witnesses	M	390	30,500	47,000
Free Apos of Pentecost	P	180	9,000	18,000
Greek Evangelical Ch	P	34	2,640	6,600
Free Evang Chs of G	P	60	2,400	4,900
Foursquare Gospel Ch	P	11	1,688	2,600
Other denominations[49]		205	32,281	58,916
<i>Doubly affiliated</i>				-305,000
Total Christians[60]		30,892	8,868,050	10,228,016

TransBloc	Pop %	Population	Ann Gr
Evangelicals			
Evangelicals	0.4	41,376	1.6%
Renewalists			
Charismatics	0.3	30,824	2.2%
Pentecostals	0.2	26,221	1.7%



Answers to Prayer

- 1 Increased openness**, if only on a legal level, as Greece comes to terms with the existence of large minorities in their midst and as the EU insists on increased religious liberties.
- 2 Greece and Turkey's relations**, while still delicate, continue to improve after centuries of hostility. This helps reduce tensions in this volatile region and offers possible solutions to other problems such as the reunification of Cyprus.

Challenges for Prayer

- 1 Greece's economic and social travails of the past few years** have caused much uncertainty, upheaval and disruption. The massive deficit and debt, the crisis of the Euro and the threat of financial meltdown regardless of what actions are taken cause fingers of blame to point in all directions. Protests and riots are increasingly common and frequently violent. Regardless of how low the Greek economy must sink until it hits rock-bottom, it has amounted to a genuine shaking of the nation's foundations. Pray that such shaking might drive the nation to cry out to God rather than to trust in the obviously flawed financial solutions offered by economists and politicians.
- 2 Greece was the first European country to be evangelized** (Acts 16:10), but Christianity is now mostly a cultural expression. Less than 3% of the population regularly attend church. Evangelical churches represent less than 0.5% of the population, including all non-Greek evangelicals. The Macedonian call to evangelize is just as valid today.
- 3 The Orthodox Church** was a rallying point for Greece during the long Ottoman and then German occupations. Orthodoxy became a deep part of Greek identity and contributed to an attitude of xenophobia. Other expressions of Christianity are seen as a threat. Renewal within the Orthodox framework tends to mean anti-heresy movements and increased monasticism. Most Greeks are ignorant of the gospel message and are unreceptive to any non-Orthodox witness. Points for prayer:
 - a) Spiritual renewal and reformation** are needed within the Greek Orthodox Church. Pray for the archbishop, the bishops and priests to be led by the Word of God and the Holy Spirit and to in turn lead the people of Greece into a life-changing encounter with the living God.
 - b) The relationship between Orthodox and Protestant communities** has been characterized by rivalry, mistrust and hostility. Pray that members and leaders in both might recognize the true enemy and work together to build God's Kingdom.
 - c) There are growing calls from within the Orthodox community** for the re-evangelization of the Greek people. Thank God for the recognition that there is spiritual work to be done; pray that this may lead to greater collaboration between Orthodox and evangelical churches.
- 4 Religious minorities** have in the past been persecuted by the Greek government and frowned upon socially by the majority. But in recent years things have improved, although discrimination occasionally occurs due to ignorance or fanaticism. While Muslims and Jews enjoy official recognition, Catholics and Protestants often face difficulties in getting the same recognition. In such cases, proselytism tends to be the stumbling block – any groups perceived as attempting to woo Greeks away from Orthodoxy will face opposition. Pray that such discrimination might end and, in turn, that

evangelicals might see the effectiveness of working toward the re-evangelization of Greeks in appropriate ways and through the right channels.

5 Ethnic Greek evangelicals are few. Please pray for:

- a) **Courage to witness** in a society where the extreme majority claim to be Christian yet do not have a living faith and relationship with Jesus. Greek society is not just secular and post-Christian, but is subject to a faith that is syncretistic – the amalgamation of Christianity, inherited superstition, atheism, paganism and such.
- b) **Wisdom in outreach and witness.** Greek Protestants acknowledge that proselytism is unnecessary, but that evangelism is. Greeks are more likely to experience new life in Christ through a revitalization of the Orthodox Church than through Protestants drawing Greeks away from their Orthodox background. Pray for ways that allow evangelicals to urgently communicate the need for salvation while respecting the great legacy and heritage of Orthodoxy.
- c) **Unity in the Spirit.** Unfortunately, divisions still exist even among the various Protestant denominations; division can compromise the message they preach. The Pan-Hellenic Evangelical Alliance works as a mouthpiece for all evangelicals and challenges illegal discrimination. Pray for all believing churches to join together and for the Evangelical Alliance to represent them with wisdom and clarity.

6 Evangelism and discipleship remain the real needs in reaching Greece. Short-term ministries (AMG, Hellenic Ministries, OM, WEC and others) spread the gospel to many, but to have a lasting impact, a longer-term presence is needed. Pray that national churches might develop in the areas of prayer, outreach and church planting. The 2004 Olympics saw the awakening of greater vision for outreach and the completion of some excellent facilities for this purpose, such as the AMG Cosmivision Center. New, non-threatening forms of outreach are being developed that are more engaging and acceptable to a society wary of evangelism. Many of these involve community development service by young people, sports and activities; beyond the gospel being shared, the desired outcome is strengthened families and communities.

7 Theological training still needs improving. There are two training institutes, the Greek Bible Institute (GEM) and the AoG college. A seminary to provide advanced training is a real need.

8 Many Greeks have never clearly heard the gospel. More specifically, pray for:

- a) **The 150 islands.** Most of the Dodecanese, the Cyclades, the Ionian Islands and others are without evangelical congregations. The believers who are there find themselves spiritually isolated. Hellenic Ministries uses its yacht *The Morning Star* in short-term outreaches to evangelize these isolated communities.
- b) **University students.** CCCI and IFES have strong works among students in Thessaloniki and Athens, but most of the 300,000 students in tertiary education have little exposure to the gospel.
- c) **Albanians** number at least 500,000, many of whom are in Greece illegally. Involvement in smuggling and criminal activities results in stigmatization and high incarceration rates. Pray for Greeks and others to reach out in Christian love to this, Greece's largest ethnic minority.
- d) **Immigrant communities.** Many thousands of immigrants and asylum-seekers pour into Greece every year from Iraq, Afghanistan, Pakistan, Iran and other places. After a long history of emigration, Greece must recognize that more than 10% of those in the country are foreigners – many from unevangelized nations. The fastest growing churches are the immigrant churches – Russians, Romanians, Filipinos, Africans, Afghans, Iraqis and Pakistanis. Helping Hands (HH) is one ministry that combines compassion with evangelism; many refugees and immigrants have encountered the risen Lord through such outreach. Pray for more churches to get involved in this fruitful ministry.
- e) **Indigenous ethnic minorities in the north.** Centuries-old Balkan conflicts have left these groups less-reached than most groups in Greece. Pray for effective outreach to the Albanians and to the Muslim Turks, Romani (Gypsies) and Bulgarian-speaking Pomaks.
- f) **The 200,000 drug addicts.** Philemon Center, Kerameas, Pan-Hellenic Mercy Mission, Betel, Reto and others have a year-round ministry to them.
- g) **Ministry to the 10,000 prostitutes** is bearing some fruit. Among ministries working in this area

are Lost Coin (International Teams), United World Mission, *Nea Zoh* (New Life), *Porta Zohs* (Door of Life). Most women are trafficked in from other countries.

9 Foreign missions have not found Greece to be an easy field because of strong nationalism, visa restrictions and the high degree of cultural adaptation required. A general lack of responsiveness (or outright hostility) means that calling must be certain to endure long-term. Major Western mission agencies include **GEM**, **IT**, **CB/CMML**, **AMG**. Greece's EU membership facilitates the residence of missionaries from other member states, an opportunity not yet fully utilized. Pray for more workers and greater fruit from their faithful labour.

10 The Greek missionary movement is very small; only a handful of Greeks serve cross-culturally abroad. But increasing mission interest among a younger generation of believers and growing awareness of the unreached within Greece indicate that Greece might soon become much more of a sending nation than it is today. Greece's position near the Arab, Turkic, Balkan and Slavic worlds makes it highly strategic.

11 Literature has proven to be a useful tool in the past, but greater variety would be a blessing. Pray for the seed-sowing work of the Greek Bible Society and the Gideons in disseminating the Scriptures and SU in producing Bible reading aids. AMG founded the publishing house *O Logos* and operates five Christian bookstores around the nation; other publishing ministries include *Pergamos* and *Anogeion*.

12 Christian Radio and TV. Some evangelistic programmes have been aired, including the JESUS film. The legalization of private radio stations will allow both Pentecostals and evangelicals to start FM stations once permits are actually given. **TWR** broadcasts by satellite and on secular stations. Pray for the best use of these media and for effective impact.

13 The large Greek diaspora totals nearly 7 million of Greek background in 108 countries: USA 3.0 million; Australia 800,000; Germany 400,000; Canada 220,000; Britain 200,000; South Africa 120,000; Russia 100,000. It is both an opportunity for evangelism (especially through the many evangelical Greek churches in USA, Australia, Canada and others) and a good source of Christian workers for Greece itself.