



Guatemala

Republic of Guatemala

Latin America

Geography

Area 108,889 sq km. A land of mountains, volcanoes and lakes. Mexico's southern neighbour.

Population	Ann Gr	Density
2010	14,376,881	2.50%
2020	18,091,326	2.20%
2030	21,692,293	1.71%

Capital Guatemala City 1,104,072. **Urbanites** 49.5%. **Pop under 15 yrs** 42%. **Life expectancy** 70.1 yrs.

Peoples

Spanish-speaking **Ladinos** 53.0%. Mixed European and Indian.

Amerindian 44.7%.

Maya 36.3%. 31 ethnic groups. Largest: Quiche(8) 22.7%; Mam(6) 5.3%; Kekchi 3.9%; Kanjobal(2) 1.2%; Pocomchi(2) 0.9%; Pocomam(3) 0.5%.

Other Central America indigenous 8.4%. 21 groups. Cakchiquel(11) 5.0%.

Other 2.3%. Korean, Chinese, Arab, Garifuna, Western, other.

Literacy 69.1%. Much lower in practice. **Official language** Spanish; 23 recognized Amerindian languages. **All languages and dialects** 42-52%.

Languages with Scriptures 6Bi 27NT 37por 21w.i.p.

Economy

Agriculture provides 23% of the country's GDP but provides 75% of its exports and half of the nation's jobs – mainly coffee, sugar and bananas. Major inequity in income and living standards as the majority still live in poverty; indigenous peoples are particularly oppressed. Since the 1996 peace accord, economic growth and living standards have improved. Leaving ruin in their wake, frequent hurricanes have been major setbacks. A major transshipment point for the

drug trade; 70% of the cocaine bound for the USA passes through Guatemala.

HDI Rank 122nd/182. **Public debt** 25.7% of GDP. **Income/person** \$2,850 (6% of USA).

Politics

Independent from Spain in 1821, and from the Federation of Central American States in 1838, but controlled by a few plantation owners through a series of dictatorships and military governments. The poor, particularly the Mayans, suffered years of indignity and deprivation, which exploded in 1960 into 36 years of guerrilla war, with around 200,000 deaths, mainly at the hands of the US-armed military. The human rights record during those years was appalling, with over 40,000 "disappearances", widespread torture and displacement of 1 million internal and 250,000 international refugees. The 1996 peace agreement ended warfare and allowed the country to move forward. Elections in 2007 saw a centre-left party win on a platform that emphasized national unity and opportunities for Mayan peoples.

Religion

Official separation of church and state for over 100 years has given great freedom for evangelicals and increased their influence at the expense of the previously dominant Catholic Church. A significant proportion of Catholics are basically syncretized Christo-pagans, with their traditional Mayan gods becoming Catholic "saints". Syncretism is also a challenge for evangelicals, especially those of Amerindian background.

Religions	Pop %	Population	Ann Gr
Christian	96.12	13,819,058	2.4%
Non-religious	3.50	503,191	5.7%
Ethnoreligionist	0.30	43,131	-3.2%
Buddhist	0.05	7,188	2.5%
Chinese	0.02	2,875	2.5%
Muslim	0.01	1,438	2.5%

Christians	Denoms	Pop %	Affiliates	Ann Gr
Protestant	42	19.23	2,765,000	3.0%
Independent	28	6.57	945,000	3.3%
Anglican	1	0.02	2,000	2.6%
Catholic	1	55.19	7,935,000	2.0%
Marginal	3	2.06	296,000	3.4%
Unaffiliated		15.07	2,167,000	-0.5%
<i>Doubly affiliated</i>		-2.03	-292,000	0.0%

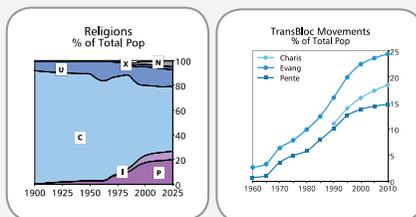
Churches	MegaBloc	Congs	Members	Affiliates
Catholic Church	C	285	4,289,189	7,935,000
Assemblies of God	P	2,720	133,127	430,000
Ch of God, Full Gospel	P	1,900	210,000	378,000
Evang Ch, C Amer	P	2,414	140,000	280,000
Latter-day Saints(Mormon)	M	687	127,027	235,000
Prince of Peace Evang	P	1,900	135,000	229,500
Seventh-day Adventist	P	477	120,787	215,000
Ch of the Nazarene	P	580	76,500	153,000

Elim Christian Mission	P	1,314	92,000	138,000
Christian Brethren	P	920	58,000	121,800
Baptist Convention	P	350	43,000	99,000
Lluvias de Gracia	I	179	42,000	84,000
Calvary Christian Min	P	288	23,000	46,000
Ev Miss, Holy Spirit	I	267	24,000	40,080
Voice of God Ev Assoc	I	333	20,000	40,000
Other denominations[60]		10,281	680,285	1,518,647
<i>Doubly affiliated</i>				-291,900
Total Christians[75]		24,895	6,213,915	11,651,127

TransBloc	Pop %	Population	Ann Gr
Evangelicals			
Evangelicals	24.4	3,514,428	3.2%
Renewalists			
Charismatics	18.5	2,659,311	3.7%
Pentecostals	14.8	2,123,430	3.0%

Missionaries from Guatemala

P,I,A 161 (103 long-term) in 29 agencies: in Guatemala 21, elsewhere in Central America and Mexico 41, Middle East 20, Europe 19.



Answers to Prayer

- 1 Growth among evangelicals** (and charismatics) was sustained over several decades to reach a peak of 24.4% of the population. Some see this growth continuing, but those more sober-minded point to an impending evangelical decline. Contributing factors to this growth are the devastating 1976 earthquake, the violence and pain of war, the effective witness of believers and the large, dedicated force of missionaries.
- 2 The authorities' appreciation for and cooperation with evangelicals and committed Catholics** contributing toward solutions of social problems such as street children, substance abuse, homelessness and illiteracy.
- 3 The rightful placement of justice** for the Mayan peoples on the social agenda, after centuries of dispossession, exploitation and oppression. Both the government and the churches are beginning to address a litany of wrongdoings.

Challenges for Prayer

- 1 Sins of the past must be recognized**, repented of and reparations made. Most notably this includes the terrible mistreatment of the indigenous population and a generation of war with atrocities on both sides. The part played by the USA in arming the oppressors and turning a blind eye to human rights abuses has only been partially acknowledged. There must also be a recognition of the multicultural character of the country. Progress is being made in these areas. Pray especially for evangelical leaders from both Mayan and Spanish-speaking communities as they work toward the healing of the nation.
- 2 Violence is a present-day plague** caused by the upheaval and ruin of the last few decades. Murder is common, and life is cheap. Guatemala has the highest murder rate in all Latin America. The causes: *maras* (youth gangs), drug traffickers, organized crime and "social cleansing" – a.k.a. death squads. Government forces can do little to tackle these issues, and private armed guards outnumber police two to one. Pray for a binding of the spirit of murder and for the peace of Christ to prevail.
- 3 The Catholic Church has declined** in influence and number. Defection to evangelicalism or to the revived Mayan spirituality is massive. Efforts by the Church to limit the impact of the large, charismatic renewal movement have only further hastened the decline, with many Catholic charismatics leaving to start new churches or to join evangelical denominations. Pray for new life to permeate the Church, and that charismatics may be rooted in Scripture rather than in subjective

experience.

4 Widespread evangelism occurs by many means – city crusades, nationwide efforts, 148 Christian schools and institutes, two Christian television channels, more than 50 local Christian radio stations, numerous Christian magazines and newspapers as well as the fervent personal witness of individual Christians. Pray that the fruit may be retained, the believers matured and the new generation won for Christ. Shallow professions of faith and an increased rate of backsliding are becoming common as evangelicals become more “popular”. Nominal evangelicalism is a new challenge facing the churches.

5 The strength and growth of evangelicals are not yet fully reflected in their social impact and spiritual depth. There are now as many as 25,000 congregations of evangelical persuasion. A number of rapidly growing megachurches have recently emerged to ascend to great size and influence. These are often based on cell models and prosperity theology. Pray that unity among evangelical leaders might continue to improve and be maintained, an aim of the Evangelical Alliance of Guatemala, which represents the vast majority of evangelicals. Pray that these quickly-growing churches might reach out to address the many needs in the wider community.

6 The future of evangelicalism is uncertain. While there has been great growth since the 1960s, especially among Pentecostals, much of this growth is superficial, impressive only in number. Discipleship is sorely lacking as a deep value in most evangelical churches. Syncretism is nearly as common in many evangelical churches – particularly among Amerindians – as it is in Catholicism. If serious efforts are not made to build disciples on a solid biblical foundation, the next couple of decades will see stagnation and possibly a disastrous decline in evangelicalism. Some claim this decline has been occurring for over 10 years, obscured only by strong growth in a few churches and zealous over-reporting in most others. Pray that this crucial issue of turning converts into disciples might be rightly addressed by evangelicals as the key to Guatemala’s spiritual future.

7 Leadership training is a key issue, but a solid foundation has been laid. There are six seminaries, including SETECA (Central American Theological Seminary), founded by CAMI and now under Guatemalan leadership. It has 1,000 students from 18 countries, and 2,000 graduates serving worldwide. There are many Bible schools (including 27 of AoG) and over six TEE programmes. TEE was pioneered here by Presbyterians in the 1960s and is now used worldwide. Pray especially for effective ways to train leaders of poorer rural churches. Pray also that pastors and leaders would demonstrate Christ-like humility and graciousness and rise above petty divisions, pride and carnality.

8 Mayan culture is enjoying a renaissance after the rediscovery of their ancient civilization. For some, this is a resurrection of the old, long-submerged Mayan religion, but to others, it is a blossoming of indigenous Christianity aided by the many new translations of the Bible in indigenous languages. There are church-planting movements among many groups, most notably the Kekchi (Baptists and Mennonites). CAMI, CoN and Mennonites also work among Mayan peoples. There has been outreach to every tribe. Pray for these churches to become mature, effectively led and a vital contribution to the Church in the nation.

9 Bible translation. SIL made a significant contribution to 38 Amerindian peoples in overseeing NT translations for many of them. National believers now carry the torch for most or all of the dozen remaining translation projects. Pray for the successful completion and effective use of these translations.

10 The less-reached:

- a) *Amerindian peoples* with fewer active believers – the Chorti, Pocomchi, Ixil and Jacaltec show less response to the gospel, yet there are active, growing churches and ministries among them.
- b) *Garifuna (Black Carib)*, who are descendants of Africans and Carib Amerindians. The JESUS film has been dubbed in their language, and the whole Bible was completed in their language in 2002.
- c) *Asians, including the Chinese.* Only a few small fellowships of believers are known for this rapidly growing population. The numbers of Koreans and Arabs are also growing.
- d) *Young people and students* are a massive harvest field; 72% of the population are under 30 years old. Both CCCI (four groups) and GEU/IFES (seven groups) have campus ministries and evangelistic outreach – but there are over 100 colleges in the capital city alone.

11 Children at risk. The majority of children between ages six and 18 live in extreme poverty, with large numbers orphaned or from broken homes. Non-existent social support structures drive them to child labour or toward drugs, gangs or the sex industry. Around 15,000 children live on the streets. Many documented cases exist of death squads murdering these unwanted “nuisances”. A number of local and international ministries seek to help them; pray for real solutions to these desperate needs.

12 The Guatemalan missionary movement began in 1982 with a vision for the world. In 1984, the *Agencia Misionera Evangélica* (AME) was founded, and since then, other missions have been launched. There are at least three missionary training centres. CONEM (the National Commission of Mission to the World) coordinates the national missions effort. A missions conference for pastors put on by national mission organizations is a new development; pray for its effectiveness in helping church leaders catch a vision for missions.

13 Foreign missions have lavished attention on the land. The pioneer missionaries’ battle of faith sowed today’s harvest. Special note must be made of the Presbyterians, **AoG**, ICFG, **CAMI**, Brethren and Nazarene pioneers. Though much foreign input is being phased out, there are still key areas where mission input is important.

14 Christian media:

- a) **The JESUS film**, available in 13 languages, has been widely used by many churches. Please pray for progress in the translation and production of the JESUS film in the remaining languages of smaller, isolated people groups who currently have little or no access to Scripture in their mother tongue.
- b) **Christian TV/Radio programmes** are widely available on many national and local radio stations – there are literally dozens of stations. **HCJB** moved its TV operations to Guatemala and cooperates with a local Christian station to broadcast to Guatemala and globally. Radio Cultural TGN is one of a few broadcasting in several indigenous languages. However, a number of Christian radio stations are being forced to shut down due to pressure from secular radio on the government.
- c) **Audio recordings** are vital for the many illiterates. **GRN** has gospel resources in 47 languages. Scripture tapes produced by SIL and others are a key contribution to teaching. Pocket-sized digital audio players packed with Scripture and Christian teaching are proving effective; translating the materials into indigenous languages is the next challenge.