



Kuwait

State of Kuwait

Asia

Geography

Area 17,818 sq km. An oil-rich wedge of desert between Iraq and Saudi Arabia at the northwest end of the Arabian Gulf.

Population	Ann Gr	Density
2010	3,050,744	171/sq km
2020	3,690,110	207/sq km
2030	4,272,555	240/sq km

The fluctuating expatriate community dramatically affects the size and composition of the population.

Capital Kuwait City 2,305,404. **Urbanites** 98.4%. **Pop under 15 yrs** 23%. **Life expectancy** 77.5 yrs.

Peoples

Arab 61%.

Kuwaiti 35%.

Foreign Arab 22% (Egyptian, Syrian, Lebanese, Palestinian).

Bidoon 4%. Stateless Arab refugees.

Others 39%. South Asian, Filipino, Iranian, Western, Chinese, others.

Literacy 93.3%. **Official language** Arabic. **All languages** 7. **Indigenous languages** 3. **Languages with Scriptures** 1Bi 1por.

Economy

Previously a poor Arab backwater, Kuwait's oil (10% of the world's reserves) has enriched it immeasurably. The Iraqi invasion and Gulf War in 1990-91 wrought destruction, but the oil industry has recovered and accounts for 95% of export revenues. Total reliance on oil and foreign labour. **HDI Rank** 31st/182. **Public debt** 7.6% of GDP. **Income/person** \$45,920 (97% of USA).

Politics

Former British protectorate; became independent in 1961. Constitutional monarchy

and parliamentary democracy with the Sheikh and his family exercising quasi-autocratic control. Stuttering democratic progress since 1986; only recently granted women's suffrage. Key Western ally in the region.

Religion

Sunni Islam is the state religion with a large Shi'a minority. Immigrant religious minorities are permitted some worship facilities. Religious tolerance in Kuwait is significantly higher than in most of the region. Proselytizing Muslims is forbidden, and much of jurisprudence is influenced by shari'a.

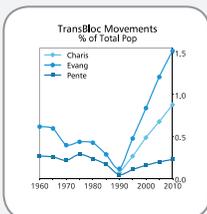
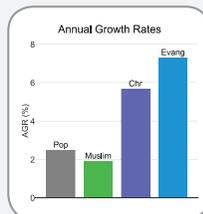
Religions	Pop %	Population	Ann Gr
Muslim	81.64	2,490,627	1.9%
Christian*	13.79	420,698	5.7%
Hindu	3.30	100,675	4.4%
Buddhist	0.65	19,830	8.0%
Non-religious	0.60	18,304	0.9%
Baha'i	0.02	610	2.5%

*The vast bulk of Christians in Kuwait are expatriates.

Christians	Denoms	Pop %	Affiliates	Ann Gr
Protestant	26	0.91	28,000	6.2%
Independent	19	0.42	13,000	6.8%
Anglican	4	0.04	1,000	13.2%
Catholic	8	9.24	282,000	6.6%
Orthodox	5	3.08	94,000	3.0%
Marginal	1	<0.01	<500	4.8%
Unaffiliated		0.10	3,000	0.0%

Churches	MegaBloc	Congs	Members	Affiliates
Catholic Church	C	20	183,333	220,000
Coptic Orthodox Ch	O	7	41,053	78,000
Other Catholic	C	10	40,000	60,000
National Evang Ch	P	3	7,983	19,000
Independent churches	I	53	5,278	9,500
Syrian Orthodox	O	5	4,037	6,500
Greek Orthodox	O	3	3,205	5,000
Melkite Greek Cath	C	1	1,111	2,000
Other denominations[34]		63	10,919	18,000
Total Christians[63]		165	296,919	418,000

TransBloc	Pop %	Population	Ann Gr
Evangelicals			
Evangelicals	1.5	46,391	7.3%
Renewalists			
Charismatics	0.9	26,720	7.8%
Pentecostals	0.2	7,070	5.7%



Answers to Prayer

1 The **underground Kuwaiti Church** is gaining strength, numbers and maturity, and more converted Kuwaitis are making themselves known publicly. These latter believers are gathering for worship, teaching and prayer with boldness and open witness. While those who openly identify themselves as Christian are still a small minority, both this group and the much larger underground are growing rapidly.

2 **Satellite television** is probably the most powerful tool in reaching not only Kuwait but also the entire Gulf region. Several full-time Arabic-language channels offer a wide array of programmes focused on evangelism and discipleship. There are signs of great response from seeking Muslims. *Al Shifaa* (Healing), the Miracle Channel, *Al Hayat*, **SAT-7**, a Lebanese Maronite channel and more are having an impact and need prayer and support.

Challenges for Prayer

1 **Kuwait's material wealth** has answered few problems. The government is divided between modernists and traditionalists. Islamist activity is increasing. Young people are frustrated and very bored. Materialism still holds powerful sway, since many have no greater vision about how to use their wealth for good. Pray that Kuwaiti leaders and people might embrace the Saviour.

2 **Expatriate ethnic minorities.** Part of Kuwait's tolerance for other faiths is based on the reality that foreigners comprise most of the workforce. Few expatriates are permanent residents – most are men on short-term work contracts who must leave their families back home. Poor and unfair treatment of these labourers is all too common; this, combined with loneliness, opens many to sensitive Christian witness.

a) Arab groups. Palestinians were the largest group in the past, but Palestine's support for Iraq in the Gulf War resulted in discrimination against Palestinians and expulsion of many. Egyptians make up for the decrease in Palestinian numbers, as do Lebanese, Iraqis and many other Arab groups. There are many nominal Christians among them all – and many opportunities to minister the love of Christ.

b) The Bidoon (literally “without”) are stateless Arabs originally from the Kuwait region, but now adrift in the Middle East. They are present in Kuwait in significant numbers. They have no known believers and almost no ministry to them.

c) Asians. South Asians and Filipinos predominate, but there are also many Indonesians, Chinese and Koreans. They are largely contract laborers or domestic servants. A large number of Kuwaiti families leave much of the child raising to the maids and nannies who are often committed believers. Increasing numbers live and work in difficult circumstances, since they are considered beneath Arabs and there are no official channels handling the mistreatment and abuse that regularly occurs. Fortunately, the situation is beginning to improve through changes to the law. Pray for God to encourage the many believers and, through them, break into the lives of those from other faiths. Precisely because of their humble occupations, many of these Asians have amazing access to the homes and lives of Kuwaitis.

3 **Expatriate Christians** have a good reputation thanks to a hundred years of medical mission history. The churches have been allowed to grow, but evangelism of Muslims is illegal; pray for greater freedom or shrewder boldness in this regard. Pray that the rich diversity of congregations would be united in making the Kingdom of God manifest, rather than merely tending to their own interests. The pastors must lead the way in this regard. Kuwait's Catholics, Orthodox, Anglicans and Protestants have formed the Fellowship of Christian Churches in Kuwait, for the purposes of working together to play a larger role in society and having a greater voice and impact therein. Advocacy on behalf of the poor and disadvantaged is a strong point of the Church's presence in Kuwait. Pray also that indigenous Kuwaiti believers might be given the chance to increasingly take the lead in ministering the gospel to the peoples of Kuwait.

4 **Further growth is hampered** by the fact that meetings are permitted only on a handful of compounds; each of these is then used many times by many congregations through the

week. The majority of congregations are of South Indian or Filipino composition. The National Evangelical Church compound hosts 60 congregations, representing 25,000 people. The most significant grievance by Kuwaitis regarding churches is that their informal meetings (that is, of those who do have compounds) cause too much traffic and noise. While sharing physical resources and compound space has encouraged greater fellowship and cooperation among churches, pray nevertheless that the government might release more land to the churches so that they might continue to increase. This has occurred already for the Coptic Church.

5 **Kuwaiti Arabs are increasingly exposed to Christians** via travel, business contacts and studying abroad. This is particularly so for students; Kuwaiti students abroad are being reached so effectively that many families are now sending their children to study in Egypt, UAE, etc. in order to protect them from Christian witness. Pray that Christians might take advantage of these opportunities to share and demonstrate the good news and that it might fall on open hearts prepared by the Holy Spirit. Pray also for those Kuwaitis who hear and want to respond; cultural and familial pressures prevent many from following Christ.

6 **Christian literature** is a strategic ministry with considerable freedom. UBS, a private book importer (Book House), and the Catholic-run Bible Resource Centre contribute to making Scriptures available in Kuwait. Pray that Christians might make the best use of these services and that the Word of God might make its way into the hands of all who are open. Pray that permission might be granted to open a Christian bookshop in the capital city.

7 **Other Christian media** are valuable, both for evangelism and for discipling and training. Pray for:

- a) **Radio broadcasts** – 105 hours per week in several languages (42 hours per week in Arabic), mostly by FEBA, IBRA, **TWR** and AWR. Pray for more programmes on FM and satellite, instead of shortwave and medium wave. Pray also for wide audiences and lasting responses.
- b) **Christian audio and video materials**. Pray for effective distribution and follow-through. The JESUS film on video has been widely and quietly disseminated.
- c) **Kuwait's Christian website** (www.prayforkuwait.com) is becoming an effective tool in reaching Kuwaitis with the good news, in discipling Kuwaiti believers and in communicating the spiritual needs of Kuwait to the rest of the world.