



# Lesotho

## Kingdom of Lesotho

### Africa

### Geography

**Area** 30,355 sq km. A mountainous country completely surrounded by South Africa. Only 10% is arable.

Population	Ann Gr	Density
2010	2,084,182	0.88%
2020	2,244,475	0.69%
2030	2,358,881	0.45%

It is the only country in the world with its entire area above 1,000 metres in altitude.

**Capital** Maseru 228,000. **Urbanites** 26.9%. **Pop under 15 yrs** 39%. **Life expectancy** 44.9 yrs.

### Peoples

**Bantu** 99.4%. Basotho 81.0%; Zulu up to 15.0%; Phuti 2.4%; Xhosa 1.1%.

**Other** 0.6%. European, Asian.

**Literacy** 81.4%. **Official languages** Sesotho, English. **All languages** 6. **Indigenous languages** 5. **Languages with Scriptures** 5Bi.

### Economy

The mountainous topography, limited transport and communication infrastructures, and lack of agricultural land have kept the country poor and have hastened soil erosion. Half of the population live below the poverty line and unemployment can often reach as high as 45%. Poor soil quality and drought have meant that Lesotho cannot feed itself, even though the large majority engage in some subsistence farming. Sources of income include hydroelectricity, the textile industry, diamond mining and remittances from labourers working abroad, mostly in South Africa. AIDS has also had a devastating economic effect. Highly dependent on South Africa for trade. **HDI** Rank 156<sup>th</sup>/182. **Public debt** 58.2% of GDP. **Income/person** \$660 (1% of USA).

### Politics

A British protectorate in 1865. Independence in 1966, but a geographical hostage due to its

size and isolation as an enclave within South Africa. Now a constitutional monarchy with a mostly ceremonial kingship and a prime minister leading a multiparty parliament. After years of instability, dictatorship and political polarization resulting in South African Development Community (SADC) intervention, the young democracy is showing signs of stability and maturity.

### Religion

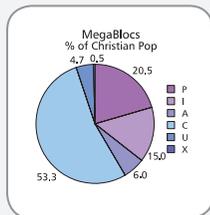
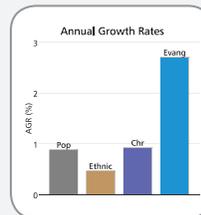
Freedom of religion.

Religions	Pop %	Population	Ann Gr
Christian	89.31	1,861,383	0.9%
Ethnoreligionist	9.50	197,997	0.5%
Baha'i	0.80	16,673	-1.5%
Non-religious	0.25	5,210	11.7%
Hindu	0.10	2,084	0.9%
Muslim	0.04	834	0.9%

Christians	Denoms	Pop %	Affiliates	Ann Gr
Protestant	26	18.27	381,000	1.4%
Independent	225	13.40	279,000	1.5%
Anglican	1	5.37	112,000	0.4%
Catholic	1	47.64	993,000	0.5%
Marginal	1	0.41	8,000	3.0%
Unaffiliated		4.20	88,000	2.2%

Churches	MegaBloc	Congs	Members	Affiliates
Catholic Church	C	514	616,770	993,000
Lesotho Evang Ch	P	600	86,901	272,000
Other Indigenous	I	858	128,743	215,000
Anglican Church	A	438	67,066	112,000
Assemblies of God	P	50	21,078	43,000
Zion Christian Church	I	45	7,083	17,000
Zion Foundation Ch	I	67	5,708	13,700
African Meth Epis Ch	I	47	7,000	12,500
Dutch Ref Ch in Afr	P	15	3,900	10,300
Methodist Church	P	10	5,000	10,000
Jehovah's Witnesses	M	70	3,400	8,500
Seventh-day Adventist	P	33	5,600	8,400
Mahon Mission	P	32	3,900	7,800
Full Gospel Ch of God	P	50	2,720	6,800
Other denominations[31]		342	18,677	43,524
<b>Total Christians[254]</b>		<b>3,171</b>	<b>983,546</b>	<b>1,773,524</b>

TransBloc	Pop %	Population	Ann Gr
<b>Evangelicals</b>			
Evangelicals	12.1	253,040	2.7%
<b>Renewalists</b>			
Charismatics	16.9	351,997	3.0%
Pentecostals	3.6	75,719	3.4%



# Challenges for Prayer

**1 Lesotho faces a tough future.** The nation is both protected and imprisoned by its isolated geographical location. Dwindling agricultural returns, an underdeveloped economy, widespread HIV/AIDS, urbanization, family breakdown, endemic poverty and unemployment for much of the population, and limited access to water all combine to place great burdens upon both the people and the government of Lesotho. Pray for wisdom in leadership and for new, creative and sustainable ways to improve the quality of life of the population.

**2 AIDS** is the greatest challenge facing Lesotho. It has devastated the population with an HIV infection rate of 23.2% (now stabilizing, but among the world's highest), already leaving 100,000 orphans. The 20–40 age group, so vital to the economy, is also the most afflicted. A host of agencies, missions and church ministries are answering this challenge in many ways (education, prevention, care). But the risk of reductionism is present as spiritual ministry to needy souls is at times taken over by the overarching spectre of HIV. Pray for a balanced ministry approach that brings life to the whole person.

**3 The Basotho** were Christianized generations ago, but most were never fully converted. The social pressure against becoming *bapholosa*, or born again, is wielded by traditional religious forces, mainline churches and family members alike. All the factors have reduced the mainstream church to maintaining the religious status quo with marginal redemptive impact on society. Pray for the Holy Spirit to sweep out impurities from the churches and bring new life. There are two issues of particular importance:

a) **Traditionalism and nominalism** are common in the Catholic Church and in the Lesotho Evangelical Church. The latter is the fruit of the great pioneering work by French missionaries of the Paris Evangelical Missionary Society.

b) **Many AIC churches compromise** with African traditional religious practices and beliefs. Sometimes this is due to a lack of biblical teaching; sometimes it is a deliberate syncretization. Practices like *balimo* (ancestor worship), curses and charms, and the *Sephiri* (a secret society involving African traditional magic rites) are all an affront to the holiness of God and the purity of the gospel.

**4 Newer evangelical/renewalist groups** and agencies continue to see growth (**AIM, YWAM, IMB**, various South African groups). Special items for prayer:

a) **Bible teaching.** A strategic need, since most evangelical pastors lack experience and training. There are five residential Bible colleges/seminaries, as well as further TEE programmes, the Bible Training Centre for Pastors and the missions-specific ECMTTC (Operation UP).

b) **Theological purity.** Several foreign African groups have entered Lesotho preaching a gospel that includes excessive or incorrect emphases on prosperity, healings and other issues. Pray for discernment for the leaders of Lesotho's churches to know what is right and biblical and appropriate for their own context.

c) **Unity in the churches.** There are many evangelical, charismatic and Pentecostal groups for such a small country, but no central body through which they can relate together. Pray for a spirit of humility and cooperation.

**5 The mountain population of 600,000** are among the poorest and most vulnerable. Nominally Christian, they have little contact with the life-giving gospel. Lesotho's churches are beginning to wake up to this challenge. Operation UP, an indigenous agency, is committed to reaching every family in the mountains and planting 50 evangelical churches in the next five years. Other agencies include **AIM**, Joy to the World, **YWAM**, Fill the Gap Ministries, the Full Gospel Church and Global Evangelism Ministries. Many villages are accessible only on horseback, others by **MAF** plane. Pray for fruitful and sustainable ministry that yields thriving churches.

**6 Christian support ministries:**

a) **MAF** has a unique and vital role in this land of high mountains and few roads. **MAF** planes operate on 26 landing strips with 17 full-time workers and 6 aircraft. They provide support for Christian workers and a fly-in doctor service. Pray for these pilots, their families/support teams and for their safety.

- b) Youth work.** Scripture Union is active in sharing God's Word with young people, especially through school groups.
- c) Christian literature** in Sesotho (the mother tongue for most) is in short supply. Operation UP and others are working on addressing this shortage by translating materials from English.
- d) Christian radio** has had a strong and positive impact in the lowlands. Harvest FM, Catholic Radio, *Jesu ke Karabo FM*, Mo-African FM and KEL Radio. These stations are instrumental in reaching even non-churchgoers. Pray that they will be used for spiritual rather than political purposes. **TWR** broadcasts daily in English.