

MISSIONARY ATLAS PROJECT

CENTRAL AMERICA

Snapshot

Country Name: Republic of Costa Rica

Country Founded: September 15, 1821 (from Spain)

Population: 4,133,884

Government Type: Democratic Republic

Geography/Location in the World: Central America, bordering both the Caribbean Sea and the North Pacific Ocean, between Nicaragua and Panama.



Number of people groups: 21

Picture of Flag:



Religion

Roman Catholic	76.3%
Evangelical	13.7%
Other	4.8%
None	3.2%
Jehovah's Witnesses	1.3%
Other Protestant	.7%

Government interaction with religion: Freedom of religion is guaranteed by the constitution.

Country Profile

Costa Rica

Basic Facts

Name:

Republic of Costa Rica

Demographics:

As of July 2007, the population of Costa Rica is 4,133,884. The population growth rate is 1.412%. The birth rate is 18.02 births/1,000 population. The death rate is 4.39 deaths/1,000 population. The net migration rate is .48 migrant(s)/1,000 population. The infant mortality rate

is 9.45 deaths/1,000 live births. The life expectancy for men is 74.61 years, and 79.94 years for women (2007 est.). The total fertility rate is 2.21 children born/woman (2007 est.). As of 2003, there are 1,200 people living with HIV/AIDS in Costa Rica. As of 2006, the unemployment rate is 6.6%.

Costa Rica has an overall population density of 82 people per square kilometer (211 people per square mile). Approximately 38% of the population lives in rural areas of the country. The majority of the population lives in the central plateau called the Meseta Central, located between mountain ranges.

The major cities in Costa Rica include San Jose, Costa Rica's capital and largest city (328,293 people in 2003); Alajuela (236,197); Cartago (139,786); Puntarenas (108,960); and Puerto Limón (96,185). The cities of San Jose, Alajuela, and Cartago are located in the Meseta Central plateau.

www.cia.gov/cia/publications/factbook
www.encyclopedia.com

Language:

Spanish is the official language of Costa Rica. English is also spoken widely.

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Society/Culture:

Approximately 94% of the population is white (including mestizo). The other 6% of the population is black (3%), Amerindian (1%), Chinese (1%), and Other (1%).

Costa Ricans call themselves Ticos. They celebrate 15 public holidays (most are religious in character). Christmas Eve is celebrated with drinking, dancing, gift giving, and midnight mass. Costa Rica's patron saint is Our Lady of the Angeles. She is celebrated on feast day, August 2. Independence Day is celebrated on September 15.

Some Amerindian people practice a form of folklore. They believe the world was created by a God named Sibú and the world is controlled by good and evil spirits. The Amerindians have *sukias* (shamans or medicine men); men who they believe are gifted with the ability to cure illnesses, control the weather, and foretell the future. Some non-Indian people in Costa Rica practice *Curanderismo* (curing). These people are always woman, 50 years of age or older. They are called *brujas* (witches). They believe they are able to cure people with herbs and chants. They also use love potions and cast spells.

Catholic folklore is found throughout Latin America and is prevalent in Costa Rica. Many Catholics pray to popular saints, believing that they are intermediaries before God. Many believe that it is good luck to have statues and pictures of saints in the home.

The parents of newborn children receive gifts from friends and family members and they ask a married couple to be the godparents of the child. The traditional role of godparents is to take the

infant to be baptized in the local church. The godparents assist in the raising of the child, and if the parents of the child die prematurely, the godparents will adopt the child.

Children usually enter school around the age of seven. Children of working-class parents may be expected to work small jobs by the age of six. The fifteenth birthday of a middle- or upper-class girl is a special event. No teenage fiesta or dance is complete without the naming of a “queen” and “princesses.” Costa Rican boys, on the other hand, have more freedom than girls do, and they are raised in a machismo environment.

Costa Rican women are considered past their prime by age 40. Costa Rican men celebrate their 50th birthday with a large party. Couples celebrate their silver and golden wedding anniversaries. Elderly women may spend much of their time in church, while elderly men meet in parks, cafes, or bars to talk to each other.

Funerals are required by law to be held within 24 hours of death. Few corpses are embalmed. A church ceremony is held when possible. Sometimes a wake is held and the deceased is placed in an open coffin in the family living room. Sometimes a rosary or a Mass is held on the anniversary of the death for a decade or two. Widows occasionally wear black for the rest of their lives. This practice is however becoming old-fashioned.

Many Costa Ricans believe that they have no real friends other than relatives. In fact, many rarely invite non-relatives to their social gatherings at home unless they are a coworker or a childhood friend. A lot of socializing occurs outside the home, in clubs, bars, fiestas, or other similar places. Dating is uncommon and girls under eighteen are often chaperoned at night. Young adults get to know one another at movies, dances, and band concerts. If a boy and girl go out on a single date, they are generally thought to be novios (boyfriend and girlfriend) who do not date anyone else.

Costa Rica and Panama share the highest standard of living in Central America. The life expectancy in Costa Rica is about the same as in the United States, and the infant mortality rate is the lowest in Latin America. Most Costa Ricans live in small wooden or cement-block houses that have wood or tile floors, and roofs of zinc or corrugated iron. The urban poor usually live in overcrowded, rented, slum dwellings. Squatters' shanties can be found just outside the cities. Buses are the main form of public transportation. Automobiles are also very popular. Railroad tracks go through the capital to both coasts. Airplane landing strips can be found throughout the country.

The extended family makes up the Costa Rican society. The extended family is supposed to help family members out in their time of need. Several generations often live in the same household. Poor families may often abandon their children because they cannot afford to feed them. Family size has dropped since 1960 because of the introduction to birth control.

Most women work, and sex discrimination in hiring and salary is forbidden. Divorce has become commonplace and is no longer seen as a disgrace. Separation and desertion occur more frequently though. Women are often victims of domestic violence.

Urban working-class people enjoy wearing clean, unwrinkled clothing. Some will even miss meals in order to buy stylish clothes. Everyone except the poor dresses up for church and special occasions. The upper and middle classes dress more informally now. Many of Costa Rica's top

government ministers wear sports shirts or short-sleeved shirts with neckties. The young people of all classes wear jeans and tee shirts for everyday wear. Traditional style clothing for women includes a frilled, ruffled, or puffed white blouse and a full cotton skirt. Women also wear a colored silk or cotton rebozo (shawl) draped around the shoulders or over the head. They also usually wear circular golden earrings, and a cross, medallion, or locket necklace. Traditional men's attire consists of dark trousers and a long-sleeved white shirt with a red-knotted handkerchief at the neck and a colored sash around the waist. They also wear a straw Panama hat.

The Costa Rican diet consists of rice, beans, tortillas or bread, fried plantains, and strong black coffee. The coffee is sometimes made from homegrown berries with lots of sugar. Vegetables and fruits are grown throughout the year but they are not popular. The midday meal is the largest and the most important of the day. Costa Ricans eat a lot of beef, pork, and fish. The traditional stew named, *Ola de carne*, is made with beef, potatoes, corn, plantains, squash, yucca, and other vegetables. Other popular dishes include *paella* and *zarzuelas* (spicy seafood stews). *Pozol* is a popular corn-based soup in Mexico and other Central American countries. In Costa Rica, *Pozol* is made with beans. Other ingredients that may be added are rice, chayote (a pear-like fruit), and pig's head.

Costa Rica has a large community of artists, writers, actors, and musicians. Costa Rica has a national orchestra, opera house, and dance company. Traditionally, the guitar, mandolin, and accordion have been the most popular instruments to play. Interestingly, a government-subsidized House of the Artist has offered free lessons in painting and sculpture since 1951. The Museum of Costa Rican Art was founded in 1977.

Soccer is Costa Rica's national sport. The sport is played by most working-class males who grew up playing the sport. Soccer is also the most popular spectator sport. Boxing and wrestling are popular sports among the working-class males. Basketball, volleyball, and tennis are mainly played by the upper- and upper-middle-class boys. Their fathers primarily play tennis and golf. Baseball is often played in around the Caribbean coast. Other popular sports include horseracing and automobile- and motorcycle-racing. The once popular cockfighting is now illegal within Costa Rica's borders.

www.encarta.msn.com

Timothy L. Gall, ed. *Worldmark Encyclopedia of Cultures and Daily Life*. Vol. 2. Detroit, Michigan: Gale Research, 1998.

Government:

The Costa Rican government is a democratic republic. The country is governed under the constitution of 1949. Costa Rica has had no armed forces since 1948. The PLN (Partido de Liberación Nacional or National Liberation Party) came to power at that time and put an end to the military. The country currently has a small security force that includes the 4,500-member Civil Guard and the 2,000-member Rural Guard.

Costa Rica is divided into seven provinces: San José, Alajuela, Cartago, Puntarenas, Guanacaste, Heredia, and Limón. The president appoints a governor for each province.

A social security system has been available since 1942.

Executive Branch: This branch includes a president and two vice presidents. Each office is elected by direct popular vote with single four-year terms. Each candidate elected must receive at least 40% of the total vote. Voting is required for all people eighteen years of age and older. The president has a cabinet of about 20 ministers under him.

Legislative Branch: The Legislative Branch consists of 57 deputies in a single-chamber Legislative assembly. Each deputy is elected for four-year terms.

Judicial Branch: This branch consists of a Supreme Court, appellate courts, a court of cassation (highest appeals court), and subordinate provincial courts. Capital punishment is banned in Costa Rica. Twenty-two justices are elected for eight-year terms by the Legislative Assembly.

Political Parties: The most important political groups in Costa Rica are the National Liberation Party (Partido de Liberación Nacional, PLN), a reformist party; the Social Christian Unity Party (Partido de Unidad Socialcristiana, or PUSC), a conservative party, and the Citizens' Action Party (Partido Acción Ciudadana, or PAC), a party formed in 2000 by former disgruntled members of the PLN.

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Economy:

Costa Rica's gross domestic product (purchasing power parity) in 2006 was \$48.77 billion. The GDP (official exchange rate) in 2006 was \$20.77 billion. The GDP real growth rate in 2006 was 4.7%. The GDP per capita is \$12,000 (2006 est.).

The GDP composition by sector is:

Agriculture:	8.6%
Industry:	31%
Services:	60.4% (2006 est.)

Concerning the budget, Costa Rica's revenues are \$3.134 billion. Costa Rica's expenditures are \$3.475 billion, including capital expenditures of \$NA (2006 est.). Public debt amounts to 53.4% of the GDP. The national external debt of Costa Rica (as of June 30, 2006) was \$6.42 billion. The currency is the Costa Rican Colon (CRC). The exchange rate is 511.3 Costa Rican Colones per US dollar.

Exports: \$7.931 billion (2006 est.).

Export Commodities: bananas, pineapples, coffee, melons, ornamental plants, sugar, textiles, electronic components, and medical equipment.

Costa Rica's export partners are:

United States	42.6%
Hong Kong	6.9%
Netherlands	6.4%

Guatemala 4.2% (2005 est.)

Imports: \$10.88 billion (2006 est.)

Import Commodities: raw materials, consumer goods, capital equipment, and petroleum.

Costa Rica's import partners are:

United States 41.3%

Japan 5.6%

Venezuela 4.8%

Mexico 4.8%

Ireland 4.3%

Brazil 4.2%

China 4.2% (2005 est.)

The labor force is estimated at 1.866 million, excluding Nicaraguans living in Costa Rica legally or illegally.

The labor force by occupation is:

Agriculture 20%

Industry 22%

Services 58% (1999 est.)

The unemployment rate is 6.6% (2006 est.). The population below the poverty line percentage is 18% (2004 est.).

Agriculture: Approximately 10.3% of Costa Rica's land is used for cultivation or for plantation agriculture. Coffee is mainly cultivated in the central plateau. Its production has declined since the mid-1990's. The coffee prices declined and the government encouraged farmers to grow other crops for export. Bananas are the country's main crop. They are raised on plantations in the tropical coastal regions. Some other agricultural products that Costa Rica exports are sugarcane, pineapples, corn, rice, vegetables, tobacco, and cotton. The country raises cattle and hogs for meat, and they produce dairy products.

Mining and Manufacturing: Costa Rica mines gold and silver in the western part of the country. Deposits of petroleum were found in the south, but the government has decided not to use them in order to preserve the environment. Other deposits of manganese, nickel, mercury, and sulfur have been found, but are unworked.

Manufacturing has grown quite a bit since the 1960's. In the late 1960's and the 1970's, large factories in the country began producing petroleum products, chemicals, pharmaceuticals, and plastics. Since the 1980's, foreign-owned companies opened up factories that assembled electronic products and clothing for export. Medical equipment companies and pharmaceutical companies also opened up plants in the country.

Energy: Costa Rica no longer has use for petroleum because it has developed its own hydroelectric resources. The country became an exporter of electricity in 1999. A few years later a new hydroelectric plant was being built in order to increase the country's electricity exports.

www.cia.gov/cia/publications/factbook
www.encyclopedia.com

Literacy:

96% of Costa Rica's total population (fifteen years of age and older) can read and write.

www.cia.gov/cia/publications/factbook

Land/Geography:

The total area of Costa Rica is 51,060 square kilometers (19,714 square miles). The distance across the country between the Pacific Ocean and the Caribbean Sea is between 120 and 265 km (75-165 miles). The country is bordered to the north by Nicaragua, to the east by the Caribbean Sea, to the southeast by Panama, and bordered to the west and southwest by the Pacific Ocean. The Cocos Island (ruled by Costa Rica) is located about 480 km (300 miles) southwest of Costa Rica in the Pacific Ocean.

Costa Rica's terrain consists of coastal plains separated by rugged mountains. The Caribbean coast is low and marshy and has many swamps and lagoons. It doesn't have any good harbors. The Pacific coast is more rugged and its lowlands are narrower. The Pacific coast includes the Gulf of Nicoya, which is where the Puntarenas port is located.

The majority of the country is mountainous. The mountains include over 100 volcanic cones, and some are major volcanoes. The highest mountains are in the south where the mountains rise to more than 3,700 meters (12,000 feet). The highest mountain in Costa Rica is the Chirripó Grande (3,819 m/12,530 ft). Several mountain ranges nearly extend the length of the country. These include the Cordillera de Talamanca, Cordillera Central, and the Cordillera de Guanacaste. In 1968, the Arenal Volcano erupted for the first time in 500 years. The volcano caused major destruction and many deaths.

The Meseta Central is a central plateau located between the mountain ranges. The majority of the population lives on the Meseta Central. The soil of the Meseta Central is very fertile because of the volcanic ash left by volcanoes.

Approximately 4.4% of Costa Rica's land is used as arable land. About 5.87% of Costa Rica's land is used for permanent crops. Approximately 1,080 square kilometers of land is irrigated in the country.

Costa Rica doesn't have any long rivers. The main river is the San Juan River, an outlet of Lake Nicaragua. Other important rivers include the Reventazón River and the Río Grande de Térrabes. Costa Rica's largest lake is Lake Arenal, located on the eastern side of the Cordillera de Guanacaste.

The climate in Costa Rica ranges from tropical on the coastal plains to temperate in the interior highlands. The average temperature ranges from 89°F on the coast to 62°F inland. It rains a lot

in Costa Rica, and it rains the most in the mountains. The annual precipitation for Costa Rica is 120 to 140 inches. It rains pretty often on the coasts. The Caribbean coast has no dry season. The Pacific coast has a short dry season. In San Jose, the rain season is from May to October.

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History

Costa Rica is thought to have been inhabited by humans since approximately 5000 BC. The indigenous people groups were not highly developed in comparison to the Inca, Aztec, or Mayan civilizations. The Native Americans reacted violently to the Spanish soldiers and missionaries that met with them. Many left the area and escaped to other uninhabited areas.

Christopher Columbus landed on the Caribbean coast in 1502. At this time there were approximately 25,000 Native Americans in the country. Columbus named the area Costa Rica, meaning “rich coast.” He might have named the land after seeing gold on some of the natives. Costa Rica actually had few resources that were of interest to the Spaniards. Because of the hostility of the native and the lack of resources the Spanish conquest came later. Costa Rica was reorganized as a province by the Spanish in 1540. It was placed under the provincial administration in Guatemala.

Juan de Cavallón was responsible for leading the first successful Spanish colonizers into Costa Rica in 1561. The colonial capital of Cartago was founded in 1563 by Juan Vásquez de Coronado. Spain considered Costa Rica as part of the kingdom of Guatemala from 1570 on. Many Costa Ricans worked as subsistent farmers on small land grants. For the next couple hundred years Costa Rica stayed relatively unimportant. It wasn't until the eighteenth century that the country became somewhat valued as it began to grow and export tobacco.

With the growth of tobacco exports, Costa Rica turned into more of a prosperous society. Spanish rule ended in 1821 and Costa Rica became part of the Mexican empire until 1823. The provincial capital became San José in 1823. The country became part of the United Provinces of Central America from 1824-1838. In 1848 the Republic of Costa Rica was established. The most important Costa Rican development in the mid-19th century was the growth of coffee as the country's major export.

The first president, Juan Mora Fernández, launched educational reforms. An education law was instituted to provide free universal education for both sexes. Coffee-grower J. Rafael Mora served as president from 1849-1859. Costa Rica was threatened by William Walker, a US military adventurer. Walker and his troops took over Nicaragua in 1855. Walker invaded Costa Rica, but his troops were fended off. He was later captured and killed in 1860.

Mora was ousted by a coup in 1859. Tomás Guardia served as president from 1870-1882. During his term, the country became committed to heavy foreign investment in railroads and other public improvements. In 1871, Guardia set into motion a constitution. This constitution was frequently modified, but it remained as the country's basic law until 1949. In the late nineteenth century, US investors introduced banana cultivation along the Caribbean coast. The

banana empire became the United Fruit Company in 1899. The United Fruit Company developed the lowland Caribbean coasts and built railroads. However, it forced Costa Rica to rely on the foreign markets and capital.

In the early twentieth century, Costa Ricans took pride in having more teachers than soldiers, and they had the highest standard of living in Central America. Coffee remained the major Costa Rican export. During World Wars I and II, Costa Rica was a US ally, but they did not send troops or participate in the wars. In the 1930's a strong communist movement organized strikes on the banana plantations. The reformist National Republican Party (Partido Republicano Nacional, or PRN) won the presidency back to back with León Cortes Castro in 1936 and Rafael Angel Calderón Guardia in 1940. In the 1948, President Teodoro Picado Michalski annulled the 1948 elections to place Rafael Angel Calderón Guardia as president instead of the legally elected Otilio Ulate Blanco.

José Figueres Ferrer led a civilian revolt. He set up a junta which lasted 18 months. Figueres restored the democratic government and placed the legally elected president Ulate in charge. In 1949, a new constitution was created. Figueres led a new political power house, the National Liberation Party (Partido de Liberación or PLN). The new constitution was based on the constitution of 1871, and it reinstated free elections and banned a standing army. Figueres was elected president in the 1952 elections. Women were allowed to vote in that election for the first time in Costa Rica. During this time, Costa Rica became one of the most democratic and prosperous countries in Latin America. Figueres served as president from 1953-1958 and 1970 to 1974.

Daniel Oduber of the PLN won the election in 1974. During his presidency, Oduber had economic problems, as well as differences with Figueres. These issues brought about an alliance in opposition to Oduber. The leader of the alliance, Rodrigo Carazo Odio, was elected president in 1978. During Odio's presidential term, increasing instability and economic problems occurred throughout Central America. Falling coffee prices and rising oil prices made things even more difficult for the country. The government was unable to receive loans from the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and international bankers because they didn't meet the loan agreements. During the early 1980's the population grew but the economy did not.

Luis Alberto Monge Alvarez of the PLN was elected president in 1982. The government started an austerity program to help economic recovery. He also tried to avoid getting involved in Nicaragua's civil war. Monge went to the United States for aid. The country received aid with the promise that Monge would oppose leftist groups in Central America. He allowed contras (US backed counterrevolutionaries) to camp near the border of Nicaragua and to train there. Oscar Arias Sánchez, of the PLN, was elected president in 1986. He closed down the contras camps. Arias came up with a peace plan that set up a structure for settling civil wars and democratizing countries within Central America. This plan was backed by the leaders of the Central American countries. In 1987, Arias was rewarded the Nobel Peace Prize for his efforts to maintain peace in Central America. During Arias' term, the United States cut the aid they had been giving to Costa Rica.

In 1990, Rafael Angel Calderón Fournier (of the PUSC) was elected as president of Costa Rica. He is the son of former president Rafael Calderón. He encouraged free-market economic policies and cut public spending.

José María Figueres Olsen, of the PLN, was elected president in 1994. He was the son of former president José Figueres Ferrer. During Figueres term, taxes rose and the living standards dropped.

In 1998, Conservative economist Miguel Angel Rodríguez (of the Social Christian Unity Party) won the presidential election. The Social Christian Unity Party also won the election in 2002, as Abel Pacheco was elected president. The country continued to have economic problems and in 2004 a general strike took place and was followed by mass demonstrations. During this time, several scandals of major political figures were made public. The scandals included the current president at that time, Abel Pacheco, as well as former presidents Figueres and Rodríguez. Several government ministers were forced to resign.

In 2006, former president Oscar Arias Sánchez ran again for the presidency against Ottón Solís. The presidency of 2006 was won over the Central American Free Trade Agreement. Arias believed that Costa Rica must join the CAFTA with the other Central American countries. Solís believed that joining with the CAFTA would only hurt the country's farmers and the economy. Arias narrowly defeated Solís as president.

www.encyarta.msn.com

Timothy L. Gall, ed. *Worldmark Encyclopedia of the Nations*. "Americas." Vol. 3. Farmington Hills, Michigan: Gale Group, 2001.

Christian History

The first Catholic missionaries came to Costa Rica in 1514. Approximately 6,000 Chorotega Indians were baptized in 1522. Unfortunately, there was poor effective pastoral attention that was given to the area. In 1711, a visiting bishop identified the spiritually impoverished. He ordered the building of chapels in all parishes and the fulfillment of church obligations by all families. Unfortunately nothing came of this.

Spain was negatively affected by the Protestant Reformation and Central America was thus closed to the influence of all other European nations. This limited the economy and the religious development. After the country gained independence in 1821, it invited Europeans and Americans to help in its development. Expatriate businessmen helped Costa Rica's economy with contributions to the coffee and banana trade. They also helped start the first Protestant services in a private home in 1848.

After Costa Rica's independence, The Catholic Church was the only recognized religion. However, in 1848 the constitution was liberalized, and in 1860, even greater religious liberty was given. Approximately 15% of the urban population participates in mass on Sundays, and about 25% of the rural population participates.

The only christian marriages that are valid in Costa Rica, are those celebrated in the Catholic Church. The Catholic religion is taught in the public schools and the Catholic church pays no

property taxes. In 1973, a law passed that stated that these privileges must extend to all churches.

In 1863, the first non-denominational church was built in San José. At that time there were 286 known Protestants in the country. In the late nineteenth century, many immigrants from the West Indies came to Costa Rica. Several West Indies churches sent missionaries to Costa Rica to minister to these West Indies immigrants. Several missionary societies were formed in the late nineteenth century including the Jamaica Baptist Missionary Society (founded in 1887), the Methodist Missionary Society (in 1894), and the Anglican SPG (in 1896). The first North American missionary society was the Central American Mission, founded in 1891. The American Methodists came to Costa Rica in 1917, and the Latin American Mission came in 1921. The Baptist Convention was aided by the BMS (UK) and since 1949, it has been controlled by the Southern Baptist in the USA.

In the early 1930's, Pentecostal missionaries from the Assemblies of God and the Church of God of Prophecy came to Costa Rica. The Church of God arrived on Costa Rica soil in 1935 and the International Church of the Foursquare Gospel arrived in 1953.

In the 1990's, Pentecostal/Charismatic Renewal continued to spread amongst most older churches and numbered some 494,000 followers (45% Pentecostals, 40% Charismatics, and 14% Independents). As of 2001, the Assembly of God church is the largest Protestant denomination in Costa Rica.

The Spanish Language Institute began in Colombia in 1942 by the United Presbyterians (USA) for training their missionaries. The institute moved to San José in 1950 and serves all Christian groups. By 1967, 3,325 missionary students representing over 100 different societies had studied at the institute. The average annual enrollment is 320.

David B. Barrett, George T. Kurian, and Todd M. Johnson. *World Christian Encyclopedia*. Vol. 1. Oxford University Press, 2001.

Religions

Non-Christians-

Traditional Religions

Traditional indigenous religions have mostly disappeared because of the decline of the indigenous Indian population. There are a small number of Jewish and Baha'I followers in Costa Rica.

Spiritists Groups

In 1972, about 2.5% of the population belonged to numerous small Protestant and quasi-Christian bodies. The 2.5% of the population includes Rosicrucians, Theosophists, Spiritists, , Aquarians, and Masons.

Catholics/Orthodox Churches

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Spain was negatively affected by the Protestant Reformation and Central America was thus closed to the influence of all other European nations. This limited the economy and the religious development. The Europeans also helped start the first Protestant services in a private home in 1848.

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In 1973, a law passed that stated that these privileges must extend to all churches.

Catholic Church in Costa Rica claims over 250 congregations with more than 1.5 million members. Many of these members are inactive in Catholic activities.

Jehovah's Witnesses

The Jehovah's Witnesses report over 222 congregations with more than 20,000 members and 50,000 adherents

Church of Jesus Christ of Later Day Saints (Mormons)

Mormons in Costa Rica claim over 120 congregations with nearly 23000 members.

Protestant/Evangelicals/Pentecostals

In 1863, the first non-denominational church was built in San José. At that time there were 286 known Protestants in the country.

The Baptist Convention was aided by the BMS (UK) and since 1949, it has been controlled by the Southern Baptist in the USA. The Baptist Convention serves through some 50 congregations with more than 3700 members

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As of 2001, *the Assembly of God* church is the largest Protestant denomination in Costa Rica. The Assembly of God churches number over 225 with around 33000 members

The *Church of God* (Cleveland) reports over 450 congregations with 20,000 members

The Association of Bible Churches has around 140 congregations with 9000 members

Baptist Bible Fellowship reports over 30 congregations with 5500 members

Foursquare Gospel Church has some 80 congregations with 5000 members

Evangelical Association of Central America has some 70 congregations with 6000 members

Methodist Church reports 80 congregations with over 6000 members

Churches of Christ have some 60 congregations and 6000 members

Council of National Evangelical Christians reports some 42 congregations with 4200 members.

Church of the Nazarene has 35 congregations with over 2000 members

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David B. Barrett, George T. Kurian, and Todd M. Johnson. *World Christian Encyclopedia*. Vol. 1. Oxford University Press, 2001. *Operation World*

People Groups

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Americans (10,000)

The primary language of the Americans is English. The primary religion is Christianity (87%). The other 13% of the American population practices Non-Religious beliefs. Approximately 35% of the Christian population is Evangelical.

Americans have access to Bible translations, Gospel recordings, radio broadcasts, and Jesus films.

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Amerindian, Detribalized (41,000)

The primary language of the Amerindian people group is Spanish. The primary religion of this people group is Catholic (92%). The other 8% of the population practices Ethnic Religions (5%), Other/Small Religions (2%), and Non-Religious beliefs (1%).

The Amerindian people have access to Bible translations, Gospel recordings, radio broadcasts, and Jesus films.

24959

Arab (3,100)

The primary language of the Arab people group is Arabic, Standard. The primary religion of the Arab people is Roman Catholic (84%). The other 16% of the population practices Islam (10%), Non-Religious beliefs (5%), and Other/Small Religions (1%). Approximately .5% of the population is Evangelical.

The Arab people have access to Bible translations, Gospel recordings, radio broadcasts, and Jesus films.

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Basque (8,600)

The primary language of the Basque people group is Basque. The primary religion of the Basque people is Roman Catholic (94%). The other 6% of the population practices Non-Religious beliefs. Approximately .07% of the population is Evangelical.

The Basque people have access to Bible translations, Gospel Recordings, and Jesus films. They do not have access to radio broadcasts.

25022

Bribri (14,000)

The primary language of this people group is Bribri. The primary religion of the Bribri is Roman Catholic (93%). The other 7% of the population practices Ethnic Religions (5%) and Other/Small Religions (2%). Approximately 25% of the population is Evangelical.

The Bribri have access to portions of a Bible translation, as well as Gospel recordings. They do not have access to radio broadcasts or Jesus films.

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British (4,800)

The primary language of the British is English. The primary religion of the British is Christianity (84%) The other 16% of the population practices Non-Religious beliefs. Approximately 8% of the Christian population is Evangelical.

The British have access to Bible translations, Gospel recordings, radio broadcasts, and Jesus films.

00000

Brunka, Boruca (1,400)

The primary language of the Brunka people group is Boruca. The primary religion of the Brunka people is Catholic (85%). The other 15% of the population practices Ethnic Religions. Approximately 14% of the population is Evangelical.

The Brunka people do not have access to Bible translations, Gospel recordings, radio broadcasts, or Jesus films.

The Boruca people live in the Southern coast of Costa Rica, between Playa Bonita and Golfito.

24964

Chinese, generic (NA)

The primary language of the Chinese is Chinese, Hakka. The primary religion of the Chinese is not available.

The Chinese, generic have access to Bible translations, Gospel recordings, radio broadcasts, and Jesus films.

24966

Chinese, Mandarin (34,000)

The primary language of this people group is Chinese, Mandarin. The primary religion of the Chinese, Mandarin is Christianity (30%). The other 74.8% of the population practices Non-Religious beliefs (25.2%), Buddhism (25%), and Ethnic Religions (19.8%).

The Chinese, Mandarin have access to Gospel recordings, radio broadcasts, Jesus films, Bible translations.

24967

Chinese, Taiwanese (8,043)

The primary language of this people group is unavailable. The primary religion of this people group is unavailable.

The Chinese, Taiwanese do not have access to Bible translations, Gospel recordings, radio broadcasts, or Jesus films.

25024

Chirripo, Cabecar (17,230)

The primary language of this people group is Cabecar. The primary religion of this people group is Catholic (95%). The other 5% of the population practices Ethnic Religions. Approximately 14% of the population is Evangelical.

The Chirripo people group has access to a translation of the New Testament, as well as Gospel recordings. They do not have access to Jesus films or radio broadcasts.

The Chirripo people live in the Turrialba Region of Costa Rica.

24968

Costa Rican Mestizo (3,425,000)

The primary language of the Costa Rican Mestizo is Spanish. The primary religion of the Costa Rican Mestizo is Catholic (96.33%). The other 3.67% of the population practices Non-Religious beliefs (2.3%) and Other/Small Religions (1.37%). About 12.5% of the population is Evangelical.

The Costa Rican Mestizo's have access to Gospel Recordings, Jesus films, radio broadcasts, and Bible translations.

24975

Deaf (28,717)

The primary communication for the deaf is Costa Rican Sign Language. The primary religion of the deaf is Christianity.

The deaf has access to Jesus films.

00000

European, other (9,900)

The primary language of this people group is unavailable. The primary religion of this people group is Catholic (78%). The other 22% of the population practices Non-Religious beliefs (21%) and Other/Small beliefs (1%).

The availability of Bible translations, Gospel recordings, Jesus films, and radio broadcasts is unknown.

00000

French (900)

The primary language of this people group is French. The primary religion of the French is Catholic (76%). The other 24% of the population practices Non-Religious beliefs. About .5% of the population is Evangelical.

The French have access to Bible translations, Gospel recordings, radio broadcasts, and Jesus films.

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Guatuso, Maleku Jaika (1,200)

The primary religion of the Guatuso is Maleku Jaika. The primary religion of the Guatuso is Catholic (80%). The other 20% of the population practices Ethnic religions. Approximately 4% of the population is Evangelical.

The Guatuso has access to Gospel Recordings, but they do not have access to Jesus films, radio broadcasts, or Bible translations.

The Guatuso live in the Northern Region of Costa Rica.

24976

Guaymi (27,602)

The primary language of the Guaymi is Ngabere. The primary religion of the Guaymi is Catholic 92%. The other 8% of the population practices Ethnic Religions (5%) and Other/Small beliefs (3%). Approximately 6% of the population is Evangelical.

The Guayami has access to a translation of the New Testament, Gospel recordings, and Jesus films.

00000

Jamaicans (58,000)

The primary language of the Jamaicans is Jamaican Creole English. The primary religion of the Jamaican people is Catholic (94.4%). The other 5.6% of the population practices Ethnic Religions (3%), Other/Small religions (2%), and Non-Religious beliefs (.6%). Approximately 15% of the Christian population is Evangelical.

The Jamaican people have access to Jesus films and Gospel recordings. They need a complete translation of the Bible.

00000

Jew (3,000)

The primary language of this Jewish population is Spanish. The primary religion of the Jewish people is Judaism (90%). The other 10% of the population practices Non-Religious beliefs (9%) and Christianity (1%).

The Jewish people have access to Bible translations, Gospel recordings, radio broadcasts, and Jesus films.

00000

Latin American, other (297,000)

The Latin American people primarily speak Spanish. The primary religion of this people is Catholic (96.9%). The other 3.1% of the population practices Non-Religious beliefs (2.5%) and Other/Small religions (.6%). Approximately 9% of the population is Evangelical.

These people have access to Bible translations, Gospel recordings, radio broadcasts, and Jesus films.

00000

Plautdietsch, Low German (500)

The primary language of this people group is Plautdietsch. The primary religion of this people group is Catholic (90 %). Approximately 10% of the Christian population is Evangelical. This people group has access to Bible translations, Gospel recordings, and Jesus films.

00000

Teribe (400)

The primary language of this people group is Teribe. The primary religion of this people group is Catholic (84%). The other 16% of the population practices Ethnic Religions (10%) and Non-Religious beliefs (6%). Approximately 2% of the population is Evangelical.

The Teribe people have access to Gospel recordings and portions of a Bible translation. The Teribe do not have access to Jesus films, radio broadcasts, or a complete translation of the Bible.

24978

Western Carribean Creole (45,947)

The primary language of this people group is Southwestern Carribean Creole English. The primary religion of this people is not available.

The Western Carribean Creole have access to Gospel recordings and Jesus films, but do not have access to Bible translations or radio broadcasts.

All of the information on people groups has been gathered from three websites, unless noted. These three websites are www.peoplegroups.org, www.joshuaproject.org, and www.ethnologue.com.

Missiological Implications

Christians are free to share their faith in Costa Rica. Freedom of religion is guaranteed to all people by the constitution. The Catholic denomination has dominated the country's religious system, but evangelical work is growing.

1. Evangelicals should develop a program to evangelize followers of the Roman Catholic Church. This program should be shared with the Christians in Costa Rica in order that they might win their friends in the Catholic Church.
2. Evangelicals should especially strive to win those who claim to be non-religious. This need is especially needed among the Europeans in Costa Rica.
3. Evangelicals should develop and provide programs to Christians in Costa Rica to evangelize those who follow Traditional Religions.
4. Evangelicals need to continue work on translations of the Bible for people groups who have no translations or people groups that only have small portions of translations. Many of the people groups that primarily practice Catholicism have little or no translations of the Bible. Completing translations of the New Testament or the complete Bible would really help in the multiplication and evangelism of these people groups. Translations would also help with the development and growth of new Christians.
5. Evangelicals should provide more Christian laborers. New church planters are needed to work on new church plants throughout the people groups of Costa Rica. New missionaries are needed to work amongst the people groups, to teach and disciple them. In addition, people groups need more Jesus films, radio broadcasts, and Gospel recordings translated into more languages of the people groups.
6. Evangelicals should emphasize the necessity of exhibiting Christian living, especially among Christian leaders.

Links:

www.vacationscostarica.com (Travel)

www.costarica.com (Travel)

www.allcostarica.com (Travel)

www.costaricaguides.com (Travel)

www.ticotimes.net (Newspaper)

www.insidecostarica.com (News)

www.costaricareisen.com/unterhaltung/index_eng.htm (Entertainment)

www.costaricalife.net

www.casapres.go.cr/ (government)

www.facesofcostarica.com

