

**MISSIONS ATLAS PROJECT  
CENTRAL AMERICA  
EL SALVADOR**

**Snapshots Section**

**Country Name:** El Salvador

**Country Founded in:** Spanish conquistadors arrived in the early 1500s. El Salvador achieved independence from Spain on September in 1821 and from the Central American Federation in 1839.

**Population:** 7,185,218 (July 2009 estimate)

**Government Type:** Republic

**Geography/location in the world:** Central America, bordering the North Pacific Ocean, between Guatemala and Honduras. Geographic coordinates: 13 50 N, 88 55 W

**Number of people groups:** 13

**Picture of flag:**



<http://www.visualgeography.com/countries/elsalvador.html>

**Religion Snapshot:**

Major Religion and % of population:

Roman Catholic 57.1%

All religions and % for each:

Protestant 21.2%

Jehovah's Witnesses 1.9%

Mormon 0.7%

Other religions 2.3%

Non-Religious 2.0%

**Government Interaction with Religion:** The Government generally respects religious freedom of all groups. The Constitution does recognize the Roman Catholic Church and grants it special legal status.

<http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/irf/2008/10825htm>

<http://www.state.gov/r/pa/ei/bgn/2033.htm>

<https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/print/es.html>

## Country Profile

### Basic Facts

**Country Name:** El Salvador

#### Demographics:

The population is 7,185,218. The birth rate is 25.72 births for every 1,000 people. The infant mortality rate is 21.52 deaths for every 1,000 live births. The death rate is 5.53 deaths for every 1,000 people. The life expectancy for the total population is 72.33 years. The life expectancy for males is slightly lower at 68.72 years while the life expectancy for females is slightly higher at 76.11 years.

<https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/print/es.html>

<https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/print/es.html>

<https://countrystudies.us/el-salvador/33.htm>

#### Language:

The official language of the country is Spanish. A few Amerindians continue to speak Nahua.

#### Society/Culture:

El Salvador culture is a blend of African, Indians, Northern European, and Hispanic influences. Spanish elements are the predominant culture as noted in the language and the importance of the Catholic Church in daily life. Attending church, being in church for confirmations and baptisms; these are ways the Catholic Church has strong influence on daily lives.

Hospitality is important to the people of El Salvador. They are friendly and very gracious. It is good for visitors to remember politeness counts. As a guest, one is expected to be respectful of the culture and of the people. When wanting to take pictures of people in their daily life, always ask permission.

<http://www.lonelyplanet.com/el-salvador/practical-information/health>

Daily foods include rice and beans, lots of seafood, and fruit. A favorite dish is called, *pupusa*, which is a corn tortilla filled with cheese and pork. Besides finding home cooked dishes at local eateries, one can find a variety of foods from different countries such as German and Chinese. If one is hungry for American fast food, Pizza Hut or McDonald's is around. San Salvador, the capital city, is the best place to find the international variety of restaurants.

Housing is very crowded in the urban areas. In 2001 El Salvador was hit by an earthquake that left about 25 % of the population without homes. Today, many live in adobe homes with earthen floors and straw roofs. Many of these people affected by the natural disasters have not recovered well. Those that can afford it have houses made from concrete blocks. Improvements in housing

continue as the government has received assistance from the international community in the area of financial aid.

<http://www.everyculture.com/Cr-Ga/El-Salvador.html>

Music is an important part of life. Radio stations are very popular. Much of that music comes from the United States and other Latin American countries. There is a folk movement that uses music as a venue to share about current events.

## Religious Holidays

### ***Holy Week*** (March/April)

As a Roman Catholic country, Holy Week is celebrated with carnival-like activities throughout the country in different cities by the large Catholic population. Salvadorians celebrate Holy Week before Resurrection Sunday or Easter Sunday.

### ***Day of the Cross***

The Day of the Cross is celebrated on May 3rd. This celebration is linked to the coming of the rainy season. It was to honor the "God of Rain" back in pre-colonial times. When the Spaniards came they introduced the Day of the Cross trying to teach the Indians about the God of the Universe. Today, one will find a Cross decorated with flowers and fruit in the yards of those who celebrate the day.

<http://embassy.el-salvador.org.uk/el-salvador/holidays/>

### ***Patron's Saint Festivities*** (August 1-7)

*El Salvador del Mundo* (Savior of the World), is the patron saint of El Salvador. The festival is also called *August Feasts* (Fiestas Agostinas). It is one of the country's most important festivals. The celebration usually lasts a whole week. The main attraction is the traditional "*Bajada*" or the parade of the Patron Saint, the Savior of the World that winds around the main streets of downtown San Salvador.

### ***All Souls Day*** (November 2)

All Souls Day is a country wide celebration. People will go to the cemetery, offer prayers and place flowers on the graves of their loved ones. The flowers can be shaped into wreaths made of natural or paper flowers, even cypress leaves which have a pleasant aroma.

### ***Christmas Day Celebration*** (December 24)

Christmas in El Salvador is a major family time. Families gather for dinner after the entire family has attended Mass on Christmas Eve. All churches hold the Mass at midnight. After Mass, the family returns home to consume a large meal of oven roasted turkey or chicken served with rice, potato salad, and fresh salad. Kids are usually served fruit juices and the typical *Horchata*, which is mixture of milk, crushed cocoa beans, and ground pumpkin seeds.

Christmas is celebrated by the children with firecrackers while they wait for Santa Claus to arrive with toys. Catholics may decorate their homes with a Christmas garland made with

brilliant colorful decorations. Homes will have miniature Nativity scene that shows when Jesus Christ was born. The Nativity scene may include greenery, flowers, colored sawdust and art. The main parts of the Nativity scene are the figurines of Joseph, the Virgin Mary and baby Jesus.

### ***Festival Day of the Virgin Guadalupe*** (December 12)

This festival is celebrated the Virgin of Guadalupe, the Patron of Latin America. Young children dress up in Indian costumes and follow the depiction of the Virgin during the parade. They are remembering when a vision of the Virgin appeared to Juan Diego while he was among the hills of Tepeyac in Mexico.

<http://embassy.el-salvador.org.uk/el-salvador/holidays/>

### **Government:**

El Salvador is a republic and is currently governed under the constitution of 1983. The Executive Branch consists of the president, who is the head of state and head of the government, the vice president, and the cabinet. The president is elected by popular vote for a five-year term. The current positions are held by President Mauricio Funes since March 15, 2009, and Vice-President Ana Vilma Albanez De Escobar. The Council of Ministers is appointed by the president. They make up the cabinet.

<http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2009/03/16/AR2009031.ht>

The Legislative Branch has the Legislative Assembly. Members of the 84-seat assembly are elected for three-year terms. One of the duties of the Assembly is to appoint judges for the Supreme Court.

The Judicial Branch consists of the Supreme Court. There are 15 judges selected by the Legislative Assembly. Judges serve on the Supreme Court for five year terms. Under the Supreme Court are the chambers of second instance, or courts of appeal. Each chamber is composed of two judges who hear appeals of decisions handed down in the courts of first instance.

There are seven political parties in El Salvador: (1) Christian Democratic Party or PDC, (2) Democratic Convergence or CD (formerly United Democratic Center or CDU), (3) Farabundo Marti National Liberation Front or FMLN, (4) National Conciliation Party or PCN, (5) Nationalist Republican Alliance or ARENA, (6) Popular Social Christian Party or PPSC, and (7) Revolutionary Democratic Front or FDR.

Gall, Timothy L., and Hobby, Jeneen M., Ed. *Worldmark Encyclopedia of the Nations: Americas*, 12<sup>th</sup> Edition (Detroit: Thomson Gale, 2007), s.v. "El Salvador."

<http://infoplease.com>

<http://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/print/es.html>

[www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2009/03/16/AR200903.1ht](http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2009/03/16/AR200903.1ht)

### **Economy:**

El Salvador is the smallest country in Central America, but has the third largest economy. In 2006 El Salvador became the first country to ratify the Central America-Dominican Republic Free Trade Agreement (CAFTA). Since that time CAFTA has helped grow the export of processed foods, sugar, and ethanol for the country. Late in 2006, the government of El Salvador and the Millennium Challenge Corporation signed a five-year, \$461 million agreement to help stimulate economic growth. The agreement also addressed the need to reduce poverty in the country's northern region by providing more financial assistance in education, public services, enterprise development, and transportation infrastructure. In 2001 El Salvador adopted the US dollar as its currency.

<http://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/es.html> ]

El Salvador has long had an agriculture society. The main cash crop has been coffee, though the country has also grown cotton and sugar. The structure of the agricultural sector has been set up in such a way that the land is divided into huge plantations worked by landless peasants. As markets for these products ebb and flowed, cycles of boom and bust hit these people hard.

<http://www.everyculture.com/multi/Pa-Sp/Salvadoran-Americans.html>

Today, the agriculture sector provides 11% of the economy, industry contributes 28% of the economy, and services provide 61%. The average annual income for a family is \$7,100. Unemployment rate is around 7.2%.

<https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/es.html>

Exports run about \$4 billion with the major products being coffee, sugar, textiles, chemicals, electricity, and ethanol. The United States purchases 48% of the products that El Salvador sends out from the country. Guatemala and Honduras both purchase about 13% of the products El Salvador sends out.

The country spends over \$7 million on imports. Over 35% of products brought into the country come from the U.S. Products include consumer goods, petroleum, and raw materials.

### **Literacy:**

Nearly 80.2% of the total population over the age of 10 can read and write. As of 2003 estimates, 82.8% of men could read compared to 77.7% of women.

<https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/es.html>

### **Land/Geography:**

El Salvador is located in Central America. It is bordered on the south by the Pacific Ocean. Guatemala is on its northwest border and Honduras is on its northeast border. There are two east-west mountain ranges crossing El Salvador: the Sierra Madre along the northern border with Honduras, and a southern range that includes more than twenty volcanoes.

The geographic coordinates are: 13 50 N, 88 55 W. Total land area is 21,040 sq. km or 8,123 square miles. The size is slightly smaller than the state of New Jersey in the U.S.

Their climate is tropical. The rainy season is from May to October and the dry season is from November to April. The average rainfall is around 72 inches or 182 centimeters. The land has mountains with a narrow coastal belt and central plateau. El Salvador is known as the Land of Volcanoes; many are active and erupt frequently. They can be very destructive, along with earthquakes that occur because of the eruptions. El Salvador is also extremely vulnerable to hurricanes.



<https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/es.html>  
<http://www.everyculture.com/wc/Costa-Rica-to-Georgia/Salvadorans.html>

## History

The Pipil Amerindians are thought to have migrated from present-day Mexico to Central America in about 3000 BC. They were an agrarian society, similar to the Aztecs, except that the Pipil had abolished human sacrifice. The Pipil built lasting urban centers that later became the current cities, Sonsonate and Ahuachapán. They were a fierce people that, along with two smaller groups, the Pocomans and the Lenca lived in the area of present-day El Salvador. When the Spanish Conquistadors arrived in the 1520s, they were met with significant resistance by these Indian people. Eventually the Pipil people were overcome by the conquistadors.

The conquistadors named El Salvador. The country name means, “The Savior.” Those who had conquered developed a small ruling class of people of Spanish birth. They grew rich from the labor of the Indian population working their lands. This land was given to them by the Spanish Crown. Tribute was collected from the local people through their labor on the lands. Intermarriage occurred through time, blurring the racial division. Today the majority of Salvadorans are *mestizos*, descendants of both Spanish and Indian ancestors.

In 1821, during the Spanish colonial period a group of Central American colonies declared independence from Spain. Prior to this date freedom from Spanish rule had long been sought by *criollos* who were inspired by the American and French revolutions. These proponents of freedom gained support from the Indians and landless peasants by promising to end the abuses committed by landowners. However, after the revolution, Indians and peasants remained poor and without land or legal rights. At the La Merced church in San Salvador, Father José Matías

Delgado declared independence on November 5, 1811, a day commemorated as a national holiday in El Salvador even today.

After independence was gained from Spain in 1821, Central America was annexed by the Mexican emperor, Agustín de Iturbide in 1822. When the Central American provinces were joined with Mexico in 1822, El Salvador was one country that insisted on autonomy of the Central American countries.

In February of 1823, a revolution in Mexico ousted the emperor, and a new congress granted independence to the Central American provinces. When Iturbide was deposed a year later, the Central American states broke from Mexico to form a federation that included El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Nicaragua, and Costa Rica. This federation was named the United Provinces of Central America. After the federation dissolved in 1838, El Salvador became an independent republic. The republic of El Salvador was formally recognized January 25, 1859.

In the decades following independence El Salvador saw many uprisings by poor *mestizos* and Indians as they protested the unfairness of the land owners and inability to have voting rights. At this time indigo was the major export crop.

In 1833 there was an Indian uprising against the land owners by the indigo workers led by Anastasio Aquino. He demanded the land be distributed to the poor and the laws that applied to the poor be enforced fairly. The government ignored the demands and the rebellion was crushed. Thousands of rural workers were displaced as new laws took their lands and made the land part of large, "modern" coffee plantations. People were forced to work for very low wages. These coffee plantations were basically run by 14 families who also had inroads into the government.

In 1931, General Maximiliano Hernández Martínez took over the government and military rule became the form of government for almost 50 years. Hernández led the government for 13 years and oversaw *la matanza*, a brutal suppression of a peasant uprising in 1932, killing about 30,000 people. Some of those in power after Hernández tried to lessen the economic difference between the landowners and the landless classes, however, most did not succeed.

During the 1960's landless Salvadorans found land in neighboring Honduras. With the large amount of Salvadoran refugees, the Honduran government tried to restrict land ownership. Tensions rose between the two nations. On July 14, 1969, Honduras and El Salvador went to war for four days. This war was triggered by the Central American soccer championship between the two countries. El Salvador had won on a disputed referee's call. Violence erupted. Journalist from the United States dubbed it the "Soccer War." Between 3,000 and 4,000 people on both sides were killed. A cease fire was organized by the Organization of American States on July 20, 1969.

Eleven years later border disputes continued between El Salvador and Honduras. The two countries worked out a peace agreement which was signed on October 30, 1980. A leftover border dispute was settled by the International Court of Justice (ICJ) in 1992.



In 1972, the military candidate for president was opposed by José Napoleón Duarte of the Christian Democratic Party (PDC). The opposition denied Duarte's victory in the election by fraud and sent him into exile. Leftist factions pushed pressure for reform. In response, the "death squad" was formed to intimidate and eliminate people who attempted changes to the government.

In the late 1970's, the situation erupted into civil war. Guerrilla fighters joined forces under the *Farabundo Martí National Liberation Front* (FMLN), and right-wing violence escalated. In 1979, a coup occurred that brought to power a set of reformist officers. The *junta* liberalized the political system and tried to nationalize banks and the coffee export trade. The government also tried to implement an ambitious and controversial land-reform program.

Attacked by both left and right extremists and political opposition, the *junta* was unable to suppress left-wing guerrillas or control its own security forces. The security forces began their own vigilante campaigns while the angry landowners hired "death squads" to put down opposition that was occurring among the poor, university students, clergy, and other groups.

This civil war continued into the 1980s. It led to huge population upheavals. Over 20% percent of the people left El Salvador. The estimates of deaths in the twelve years of civil war have reached close to or over 80,000. Many political activists felt strongly that "legal" political organizing was not going to affect political change. These activists began organizing the clandestine guerrilla units that formed the nucleus of the FMLN. By 1979 the FMLN was perceived as a threat by the military dictatorship.

Even the Catholic Church got involved in activism. Residents in rural areas and church workers began to form Christian "base communities" and agricultural cooperatives in the 1960s and 1970s. Priests and nuns formed Bible study groups trying to focus on local conditions in light of biblical texts. Some thought these base communities were communistic and subversive and so these base communities became targets of government repression.

In 1980, the archbishop of San Salvador, Oscar Romero, who was a forceful critic of military oppression, was assassinated while presiding over Mass. This outrage and compelled many people to seek out the base Christian communities and political organizations that were resisting the powers in authority.

In December 1980, José Napoleón Duarte of the Christian Democratic Party returned from exile. He was installed by the *junta* as president. He was El Salvador's first civilian head of state since 1931. During his administration, the country was rife with human rights abuses and bloodshed. With the assassination of the Archbishop, guerrilla warfare escalated.

It is estimated that at least 62,000 people died between October 1979 and April 1987 with most being civilians killed by death squads and government security sources.

The *junta*, headed by Duarte, presided over a new constitution which was adopted on December 1983 by interim president Álvaro Alfredo Magana and a constituent assembly that had been elected in March 1982. After the 1984 election, Duarte became the first constitutionally elected

president in over 50 years, defeating Roberto D'Aubuisson of the National Republican Alliance (ARENA). D'Aubuisson was accused of plotting against the government and supporting the death squads.

After the FMLN guerrillas launched a bloody nationwide offensive, pressure for a negotiated settlement to the conflict from the international community was put on the administration. On December 31, 1991, the government and the FMLN signed a peace agreement, overseen by the United Nations, and a cease-fire became effective February 1, 1992. The peace agreement called for a reduction in the size of the military, new directives for the armed forces stressing democratic values and banning an internal security role or forming paramilitary groups. The National Civilian Police replaced the National Police, which had been responsible for many of the atrocities committed against civilians. The peace agreement also included judicial, electoral, and social reforms resulting in land reform and government financed loans for land purchases. On December 15, 1992, the FMLN officially laid down its arms.

Calderón Sol won the presidential runoff election in 1994. He was a member of the ARENA party. He proposed an ambitious economic plan that resulted in cutting tariffs, privatizing banks and pensions, and attracting foreign investment. This resulted in a positive economic growth of 4 to 5% a year. However, underemployment and low wages continued in El Salvador and these issues lead to an increase of violent crime; bands robbing agricultural workers and organized gangs terrorizing people in the cities. In the 1997 elections the FMLN gained some seats in the legislation.

The ruling ARENA party managed to continue control in the 1999 elections. Francisco Flores was elected president, winning 51.4% of the vote. In the March 2000 parliamentary election, however, FMLN gained enough seats to become the strongest party in the Assembly. The FMLN continued to hold these seats in the March 2003 elections, but ARENA maintained its hold on the presidency. Elias Antonio Saca won the March 2004 presidential election. Despite public voices against the move, Saca upheld amnesty laws that protected former officials, including himself from being prosecuted for past involvement in death-squad murders during the civil war.

As of 2006, El Salvador was still trying to have a government that was trusted by the people who still struggled with the effects from the civil war. This recovery process has been further hindered by natural disasters that contributed to increased economic instability. Hurricane Mitch struck in 1998 and a number of earthquakes occurred in 2001. At least 1,200 people died and over one million others were left homeless. In October 2005, the Ilamatepec (Santa Ana) volcano erupted, causing thousands of people to leave their homes. This evacuation occurred just a few days before Hurricane Stan hit El Salvador, leading to more flooding and deadly landslides.

In January 2009 legislative and municipal elections were held. The incumbent ARENA party garnered 32 assembly deputies and 122 mayoralties, while the opposition FMLN won 35 legislative seats and 75 city halls (plus 21 additional mayoralties in which they participated as part of a coalition). The PCN, PDC, and CD carried 11, 5, and 1 assembly seats, respectively. The new assembly took office May 2009. Either of the major parties would be able to block legislation requiring a two-thirds (56 vote) supermajority.

The presidential election of March 15, 2009, saw FMLN candidate Mauricio Funes win by defeating ARENA candidate Rodrigo Avila. The final vote totals were 51.3% for the FMLN and 48.7% for ARENA. This is the first time since the 1992 peace agreement that ended the civil war that an FMLN candidate has been elected president. The new president took office June 1, 2009.

<http://www.everyculture.com/CR-GA/El-Salvador.html>

<http://country-studies.com/el-salvador/history.html>

<http://www.state.gov/r/pa/ei/bgn/2033.htm>

<http://www.everyculture.com/multi/Pa-Sp/Salvadoran-Americans.html>

## **Christian History**

Spanish Catholic priests first came to El Salvador in 1525 after it had been conquered by Spain. Because Spain did not press the exploration of the area, or the harvesting of natural resources, conversion to the church moved slowly.

A diocese was established in San Salvador in 1821, but was not officially recognized by Rome until 1842. The church had influence with various leaders in government through the years. In 1886 a constitution was established that provided for religious freedom.

As political instability increased throughout El Salvador, the Catholic Church in the 1930's began to advocate for the poor through what became known as "social Christianity." Basically, the Church saw its role as an advocate of change for many of the poor. The proponents of change came from the priests at the grassroots level, while those in the upper hierarchy of the Church tended to be less than enthusiastic about moving apart from the government.

In 1939 Luis Chavez y Gonzales was elected as archbishop, a position he held until 1977. Archbishop Chavez was more active for improvements for the lay person. He encouraged young men to consider the priesthood. A seminary was built in San Salvador for the training of priests. He also advocated for land cooperatives in the 1950's when many poor were losing their land.

Archbishop Chavez encouraged the activist priests and lay people to organize what became known as the Christian Base Communities in the midst of the civil war that was then waging in El Salvador. These groups sought social and political change.

These grassroots groups along with the unrest in the country cause the Catholic Church to become polarized. Many bishops did not approve of the grassroots movement. They wanted the Church to continue in a more traditional role that worked with the authorities of the country.

In 1977 Archbishop Chavez resigned and Oscar Arnulfo Romero y Galdamez became the new, archbishop. Archbishop Romero was also a supporter of social justice for the oppressed. He was very vocal in his views. In March 1980 Archbishop Romero was assassinated while he was saying mass.

The Catholic Church continues to have influence in the lives of the devout, though the Church, on the whole, has been in decline for the past 17 years. The number of priests has declined as well. In 1995 Fernando Saenz Lacalle was appointed the new Archbishop of San Salvador.

Protestant work began in El Salvador in 1896, with the establishment of the Central American Mission. They worked among the people, but did not establish churches. In 1911 the American Baptist Foreign Mission Society was invited to send two missionaries to El Salvador. From this beginning, Baptists founded two colleges.

Other denominations began work in El Salvador before World War I. These included the Church of God (Cleveland) and Seventh-day Adventists. All these churches have grown in membership through the years. The most impressive growth has come from the Assemblies of God, who have gained a large following since their arrival in 1922. As of 2001, Pentecostalism represented the main non-Catholic church in El Salvador.

Source: Barrett, David B., George T. Kurian, and Todd M. Johnson. *World Christian Encyclopedia: A Comparative Survey of Churches and Religions in the Modern World, vol. 1, 2nd Edition: The World by Countries: Religionists, Churches, Ministries* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001).  
<http://countrystudies.us/el-salvador/38.htm>  
<http://countrystudies.us/el-salvador/82.htm>

## Religion

### Non Christian

*Baha'i* – In 1995 it had around 25,000 adherents. In 2005 there were 37,656 adherents.

Johnstone, Patrick and Jason Mandryk. *Operation World*, 21st Century Edition. Updated and revised (Harrisonburgh: R.R. Donnelley & Sons, 2005), s.v. "El Salvador."  
Barrett, David B., George T. Kurian, and Todd M. Johnson. *World Christian Encyclopedia: A Comparative Survey of Churches and Religions in the Modern World*, vo. 1: *The World by Countries: Religionists, Churches, Ministries* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001).

*Buddhism* - 0.03% of the population practice this religion. It claims 1,883 adherents.

Johnstone, Patrick and Jason Mandryk. *Operation World*, 21st Century Edition. Updated and revised (Harrisonburgh: R.R. Donnelley & Sons, 2005), s.v. "El Salvador."

*Islam* - There is a small Muslim community in El Salvador, mostly Salvadoran nationals and converts. There is a small mosque in San Salvador. In 2005 it was thought there were about 1,763 Muslims in El Salvador.

[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Islam\\_in\\_El\\_Salvador](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Islam_in_El_Salvador)

*Jews* - 0.01% of the population are Jewish. There are about 628 people who indicate they are practice the Jewish faith.

Johnstone, Patrick and Jason Mandryk. *Operation World*, 21st Century Edition. Updated and revised (Harrisonburgh: R.R. Donnelley & Sons, 2005), s.v. "El Salvador."

*Non-Religious* - About 2% of the population of El Salvador indicate they do not participate in any organized religion.

*Catholic/Orthodox* - El Salvador has always had a strong Roman Catholic identity. It is estimated there are nearly 3 million Catholics in El Salvador. This is about 74% of the total population.

<http://www.joshuaproject.net/countries.php?rog3=ES>

*Iglesia Apostolica Aposento (Apostolic Church of the Upper Room)*—According to 1995 statistics, there were 32 congregations and a membership of 4,800.

*Iglesia Apostolica de Dios en Cristo (Apostolic Church of God in Christ)*—Numbered 9 churches with 1,800 members in 1995.

*Iglesia Apos de los Apostoles y Profetas (Apostolic Church of the Apostles and Prophets)*—In 1995, there were 300 congregations with 45,000 members.

*Iglesia Apostolica de Neuva Jerusalem (Apostolic Church of the New Jerusalem)*—There were 4 churches and 700 members in 1995.

*Igl de JC de los Santos de los UD (Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints)*—began around 1952 and as of 1995 there were 77 churches with at total of 22,400 members.

*Iglesia de Dios de la Profecia Universal (Church of God of Prophecy)*—started in 1954 and in 1995 there were 101 churches with a total membership of 5,475.

*Iglesia Dios Manantiales Vida Eterna (Springs of Eternal Life Church of God)*—had 153 churches in 1995, with a membership of 6,600.

*Mision La Luz del Mundo (Light of the World Church)*—This church started in 1960; in 1995 there were 3,800 members with 38 churches.

*Profecia del Sinai (Prophecy from Mount Sinai)*—In 1995 there were 44 churches with 1,500 members reported.

*Testigos de Johava (Jehovah's Witnesses)*—Started around 1930; in 1995 there were 326 churches with 18,445 members.

### **Christian/Evangelical**

*Assambleas de Dios (Assemblies of God)*—Missionaries came in 1922. In 2005 there were 1,307 churches and 91,300 members.

*Assambleas Locales (Little Flock)*—This group began around 1990. In 1995 there were 4 congregations and 100 members.

*Asociacion Bautista de El Salvador (Baptist Association of El Salvador)* – The Baptists arrived in El Salvador in 1911. In 1995 there were 58 congregations and 7,229 members.

<http://www.oikoumene.org/en/member-churches/regions/latin-america/el-salvador/baptist-association-of-el-salvador.html>

*Concilio Latinoamericano (Latin American Council)*—In 1995 there were 161 congregations with 7,600 members.

*Consejo de Iglis Luteranas en CA & P (Lutheran Church)*—Began in 1947. As of 1995 there were 53 congregations with a membership of 7,600.

*Fraternidad Cristiana de ES (Christian Brotherhood of ES)*— Began around 1985 and as of 1995 there were 3 congregations with 2,000 members.

*Hermanos Libres (Christian Brethren, Plymouth)*—In 1995 there were 20 churches with 700 members.

*Igl Apostolica de la Fe en Cristo Jesus (Apostolic Church of the Faith in CJ)*—Began in 1950 and by 1995 there were 33 congregations with a membership of 1,300.

*Iglesia Adventista del Septimo Dia (Seventh-day Adventists, ES)*—Began in 1915 and in 1995 there were 160 churches with a membership of 23,000.

*Iglesia Adventista Reformada (Reformed Adventist Church)*—In 1995 there were 10 churches with a membership of 1,000.

*Iglesia Batista Independiente San Miguel (San Miguel Independent Baptist Church)*—As of 1995 there were 9 church with 4,500 members.

*Iglesia Centroamericana (Central American Church)*—Began in 1896. As of 1995 there were 250 congregations with 13,222 members.

*Iglesia Cristiana Reformada (Christian Reformed Church)*—Started in 1978; in 1995 there were 2 congregations with 80 members.

*Iglesia de Dios (Church of God: Anderson)*—There were 20 churches with 2,000 members reported in 1995.

*Iglesia de Dios (Church of God: Cleveland)*—Began in 1904. As of 1995 there were 312 churches and 2,000 members.

*Iglesia del Evangelio Cuadrangular (International Church of Foursquare Gospel)*—Originated in 1973. By 1995 there were seven churches and 305 members.

*Iglesia del Nazareno (Church of the Nazarene)*—Began in 1973. 1995 statistics reported 25 churches with a membership of 2,560.

*Iglesia del Principe de Paz (Church of the Prince of Peace)*—started around 1945 and reported 5,556 churches with 50,000 members in 1995.

*Iglesia Episcopal: Del Salvador (Episcopal Church)*—Reported 2 churches and 180 members in 1995.

*Iglesia Evangelica de la Profetia (Evangelical Church of Prophecy)*—1995 statistics reported 13 churches and 2,000 members.

*Iglesia Evangelica Meonita (Evangelical Mennonite Church)*—Began in 1968; in 1995 there were 3 churches with 125 members.

*Iglesia Evangelica Porfetica Peniel (Peniel Prophetic Evangelical Church)*—Originated in 1979 and reported 11 churches with 1,100 members in 1995.

*Iglesia LEV Luterana de CR (ELC in Costa Rica)*—Started in 1954 and in 1995 there were 81 churches with a membership of 6,450.

*Iglesia Pentecostal de Dios (Pentecostal Church of God)*—Had 20 churches with 3,000 members in 1995.

*Iglesia Pentecostal Unida (United Pentecostal Church)*—Started in 1975. In 1995 there were 487 churches and 19,500 members.

*Iglesia de Cristo (Churches of Christ)*—As of 1995 there were 167 churches with 4,000 members.

*Mision Bautist Internacional (Baptist International Missions)*—Formed in 1955; in 1995 there were 167 churches and 4,000 members.

*Mision Cristiana Elim (Elim Christian Mission)*—Started around 1965 and in 1995 there were 71 churches and 72,000 members.

*Mision Esandarte de la Biblia Abierta (OBSC: USA)*—Originated in 1975. There were 9 churches with 293 members in 1995.

*Mision Evangelica do Voz de Dios (Evangelical Mission of Voice of God)*—There were 35 churches and 3,500 members in 1995.

*Mision Mundo Unida (United World Mission)*—This church reported 10 churches and 1,000 members in 1995.

*Mision sin Fronteras (Mission without Frontiers)*—In 1995 there were 15 churches and a membership of 1,500.

*Interden El Tabernaculo de Fe (Tabernacle of Faith)*—Started in 1978 and in 1995 there were 1,300 members in 100 churches.

*Movimiento del Iglesia de Israel (Church of Israel Movement)*—There were 47 churches with 2,800 members in attendance in 1995.

*Other Independent Charismatic Churches*—Reported 100 churches and 10,000 in attendance in 1995.

*Other Indigenous Pentecostal Church*—In 1995 there were 300 churches with 20,000 members.

*Other Protestant Denominations*—There were 40 churches reported with a membership of 5,000 in 1995.

<http://www.joshuaproject.net/countries.php?rog3=ES>

## People Groups

People code and population in this country, unless otherwise noted, is taken from:

<http://www.joshuaproject.net/peopctry.php>

### **110448**

#### **American (9,100)**

Americans living in El Salvador came mainly because of business reasons. Their primary language is English. About 87% of the population is affiliated with the Protestant religion. Of these it is not known how many are evangelical Christian.

Many Christian resources are available for this people group. Along with the complete Bible and printed Christian materials, there is also the *Jesus* film. Radio broadcasts and Gospel recordings are available for this population.

### **100425**

#### **Arab (1,200)**

Some 1,200 Arabs live in El Salvador. Their heart language is Standard Arabic. Their primary religion is Islam. Approximately 93% of all Arabs are Muslim. Sunni Muslim is the predominant group. It is estimated 2% are evangelical Christian.

Many Christian resources are available in Standard Arabic. The Bible, other printed Christian materials, the *Jesus* film, radio broadcasts, and Gospel recordings as well as ethnic worship music are available.

### **102927**

#### **British (300)**

An alternate people name for the British is Anglo-Pakistani. Approximately 70% are considered Christian, but it is not known how many are evangelical. Their main language is English. There



are numerous Christian resources available to them including printed Bibles, audio scriptures, the *Jesus* film, and radio broadcasts.

### **114916**

#### **El Salvador Deaf (27,028)**

The deaf live throughout the country. They use Salvadoran Sign Language to communicate. Their primary religion is Christianity. It is estimated that 21% are evangelical Christian. The deaf may be familiar with Spanish and so can use Christian printed materials produced in this language.

### **103305**

#### **German (6,300)**

Of the population of Germans in El Salvador, 78% are reported to be Christian. It is not known how many are evangelical Christian. A variety of Christian resources in the German language are available including the entire Bible, audio recordings, the *Jesus* film, and radio broadcasts.

### **100425**

#### **Han Chinese, Cantonese (1,200)**

The Han Chinese people in El Salvador speak the Chinese language, Yue. They primarily practice ethnic religions. It is estimated that 8% are evangelical Christian. Christian resources that are available include portions of the Bible, the entire New Testament, audio scriptures, the *Jesus* film, and radio broadcasts.

### **109538**

#### **Jew (90)**

Most of the Jewish immigrants came in the late 1800's. Today, they speak either English or Spanish, but, some may use Jewish dialects. Within the Jewish population only 0.20% is known evangelical Christian.

Many Christian resources are available for the Jewish people group. Along with the complete Bible and printed Christian materials and audio scriptures, people can view the *Jesus* film and other films based on the Christian belief system. Radio broadcasts and Gospel recordings are available for this population.

### **104806**

#### **Kekchi/Quecchi (12,000)**

The Kekchi people speak Q'eqchi. The primary religion of the Kekchi is Christianity, but it is not known how many are evangelical Christian. Several Christian resources include the Bible, the *Jesus* film, and audio Bible recordings are available in their language.

### **105714**

#### **Lenca (47,000)**

Within the Lenca population, Spanish is their main language. The primary religion is Christianity; it is unknown how many are evangelical Christian. They have the complete Bible available. Other Christian resources include audio scriptures, the *Jesus* film, and radio broadcasts.

**108048**  
**Pipil (248,000)**

The Pipil people speak Spanish. Christianity is the primary religion, though it is not known how many are evangelical Christian. Many Christian resources are available in Spanish, including the complete Bible, audio scriptures, the *Jesus* film, and radio broadcasts.

**108560**  
**Salvadorians (5,552,000)**

The Salvadoran people are the largest people group. They live throughout the country. Their language is Spanish. They are primarily Catholic with 15% being evangelical Christian.

Christian resources available to the Salvadorians include the entire Bible, and a variety of other resources including audio scriptures, the *Jesus* film, printed Christian materials/tracts, and radio broadcasts.

**113818**  
**Turk (600)**

The Turks in El Salvador probably are descendents from those who migrated to the country. Their numbers are quite low in El Salvador.

The Turks are predominantly nominally Sunni Muslim. However, they also have many ethnic and animistic beliefs and superstitions. The percentage of evangelical Christian Turks in El Salvador, are approximately 0.11%.

Christian resources available for the Turkish people group include the *Jesus* film, Christian videos, the complete Bible, and printed Christian materials/tracts, audio scriptures, radio broadcasts and Gospel recordings.

<http://www.peoplegrou.org>

<http://www.joshuaproject.net/peopctry.php>

<http://www.ethnologue.com>

### **Missiological Implications**

1. Evangelical Christians and churches should develop and train local believers to use various methods of evangelizing Roman Catholics. These methods could be shared with the local evangelicals.

2. Evangelical Christians and churches should seek to aid in recovery from the social and psychological wounds of centuries of oppression and 12 years of civil war. The web of violence, hate, suspicion, atrocities, and murder will take years to overcome. At the height of the war 20% of the population fled the country and the U.S. poured in \$6 billion to shore up the government. Overall, more than 75,000 were killed. Pray for repentance, reconciliation and a fair society based on respect for human rights.
3. Evangelical Christians and churches should seek to aid the believers in El Salvador to consolidate their work and engage in effective discipleship and motivation of believers for service, witness, and missions.
4. Evangelical Christians and churches should seek to aid the El Salvador evangelicals in their goals for the first decade of the millennium. In 2000, the Salvadorean Evangelical Con-fraternity representing over 50 denominations set the goal of multiplying congregations from 3,400 in 1987 to 12,000. This goal was not quite achieved, but probably reached 9,000. Pray for increased unity, renewed vision, and multiplied effective outreach that this nation might belong to Jesus—*El Salvador* is Spanish for 'the Savior.'
5. Evangelical Christians and churches should seek to aid local believers in adopting the methods of Bible Storying and train leaders in the use of these methods.

Johnstone, Patrick and Jason Mandryk. *Operation World*, 21st Century Edition. Updated and Revised. (Harrisonburgh: R.R. Donnelley & Sons, 2005), s.v. "El Salvador."

### **Pictures from El Salvador:**

<http://www.everyculture.com/Cr-Ga/El-Salvador.html>  
[http://www.everyculture.com/images/ctc\\_02\\_img0347.jpg](http://www.everyculture.com/images/ctc_02_img0347.jpg)  
[http://www.everyculture.com/images/ctc\\_02\\_img0348.jpg](http://www.everyculture.com/images/ctc_02_img0348.jpg)  
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