

MISSIONARY ATLAS PROJECT

EUROPE

Estonia

Snapshot Section

Country Name: Republic of Estonia (Formerly Estonian Soviet Socialist Republic)

Country Founded on: August 20, 1991

Population: 1,324,333 (July 2006 est.)

<http://www.cia.gov/cia/publications/factbook/geos/en.html>

Government Type: Parliamentary Republic

Geography/location in the world: Estonia is a Northeastern European country that has the Gulf of Finland as its Northern border, the Baltic Sea as its Western border, Latvia to the South and Russia to the East.

Number of people groups: PeopleGroups.org lists 2, while Joshua Project lists 22.

Picture of flag:



Religion Snapshot:

Major Religion and % of population: Evangelical Lutheran – 13.6%

<http://www.cia.gov/cia/publications/factbook/geos/en.html>

All religions and % for each:

Orthodox – 12.8%

Other Christian (including Methodist, Seventh-Day Adventist, Roman Catholic, Pentecostal) – 1.4%

Unaffiliated – 34.1%

Other and Unspecified – 32%

None – 6.1%

There are also traces of Buddhists, Muslims, Jewish, and Neopagans (worship Taara, a local ancient deity).

Government interaction with religion: The Constitution of the Republic of Estonia states, “Everyone has freedom of conscience, belief and thought. Belonging to a church or faith-based organization is voluntary. There is no state church. All are free to engage in acts of worship, in public or in private, as long as this does not impair public order, health or morals.”

http://www.estonica.org/eng/prindi.html?menyy_id=101&kateg=41&alam=56

Country Profile

Basic Facts

Demographics

The population of Estonia is 1,324,333.

Major Cities include:

Tallinn (Capital) (pop. 401,694 in 2005)

Tartu (pop. 100,872 in 2005)

Narva (pop. 69,410 in 2005)

Kohtla-Järve (pop. 44,679 in 2005)

Pärnu (pop. 43,528 in 2005)

Viljandi (pop. 20,283 in 2005)

0-14 years: 15.2% (male 103,367/female 97,587)

15-64 years: 67.6% (male 427,043/female 468,671)

65 years and over: 17.2% (male 75,347/female 152,318) (2006 est.)

The median age is 39.3 years

male: 35.8 years

female: 42.6 years (2006 est.)

The population growth rate is -0.64% with 10.04 births per 1,000 people. The net migration rate is -3.2% per 1,000 people.

Life Expectancy is 72.04 years.

male: 66.58 years

female: 77.83 years (2006 est.)

Around 7,800 people live with AIDS that reflects to 1.1% of the population living with AIDS. This is the highest prevalence rate in Europe right behind the Ukraine.

<http://www.cia.gov/cia/publications/factbook/geos/en.html>

<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Estonia#Religion>

http://www.parnu.ee/fileadmin/user_upload/pdf/linn_arvudes_eng_2004.pdf

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_towns_in_Estonia

Language

The official language is Estonian which is closely related to Finnish. Russian is also a significant language in Estonia due to its proximity to Russia and the requirement during the Soviet Era in Estonia's history that required that Russian be the official second language in the classroom.

Other languages spoken in Estonia are Ukrainian, Belarussian, Finnish, Latvian and Lithuanian.

“Sõida tasa üle silla” – “Cross the bridge quietly” is a phrase that characterizes the Estonian language with its quiet, almost melodic sound. Legend says this sentence won Estonian the silver medal in the competition for the world’s most beautiful language.

<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Estonia#Religion>

http://www.estonica.org/eng/prindi.html?menyy_id=1090&kateg=38&alam=101

http://www.vm.ee/estonia/kat_173/pea_173/413.html

Society/Culture

Estonia is a very urbanized country with nearly one-third of its population living in the capital city of Tallinn. The northern portion of the country is much more populated than the south, with the only highly populated areas in the south being Tartu, the cultural and probably educational center of the country, and Pärnu, a seaside resort city. The urban peoples of Estonia mostly consist of Russians while Estonians hold closer ties to rural life. This tie to rural even extends into the everyday life of an urban native Estonian.

Outdoor sports also play an important role in the society of Estonia. Sports such as basketball, soccer, and ice hockey are very popular as are leisure activities including horseback riding, bird-watching, cross-country skiing, and boating.

Estonian society and culture has been influenced by many neighboring countries throughout its history. Denmark and Sweden played a significant role by building the capital city of Tallinn and founding the University of Tartu in 1632, four years before the beginning of Harvard in the United States. Despite the closeness of Russia, of all its bordering countries, Russia has had the least influence over the centuries minus a few of the “Russifications” ordered by the authorities during the Soviet Era.

In the 16th and 17th centuries, as in many countries, Estonia experienced a conflict between Catholicism and Protestantism. Protestantism won out in the end and led to a great cultural interest in the written word, something not greatly emphasized by the Catholic Church during that time. As a result, writers became not only authors in the eyes of those around them but also spiritual leaders.

During the Soviet Era, Estonian culture was squelched. As a result, when independence was finally achieved in 1991, the cultural centers exploded and grew very rapidly as Estonians sought to once again define their culture and claim it as their own. Music, theater, and dance once again became very important.

During the Soviet Era, many of their folk and national songs were banned. However, beginning with the push for independence that culminated in 1991, song festivals were held in which the previously banned songs were once again sung in public. Even today national song festivals are held in Tallinn and Tartu. Estonians have one of the largest collections of folk songs in the world, numbering 133,000 written down.

Estonia has a national opera, ballet and drama theater, all located in the capital city of Tallinn. Estonians are striving to hold to their own culture in a world that seems to be growing smaller and smaller each day.

http://encarta.msn.com/encyclopedia_761563693_2/Estonia.html
http://www.estemb.org/lang_4/rub_62/rub2_840/rubviide_204

Government

Estonia has been a parliamentary republic since their independence from the USSR in 1991. The President is elected by Parliament, the *Riigikogu*, for a five-year term and is the Supreme Commander of the National Defence of Estonia. The Prime Minister, who acts as more the head of the government than the President, is nominated by the President and approved by Parliament. President Arnold Ruutel is currently in office along with Prime Minister Andrus Ansip, but elections will be held during the fall of 2006. Parliament, the *Riigikogu*, is made up of 101 seats and members are elected by popular vote for a four-year term. These elections are held during the spring with the next *Riigikogu* election occurring in March of 2007.

Estonia also has a National Court of judges where the chairman of the National Court is appointed by Parliament and holds the office for the extent of his life. The Republic of Estonia existed from 1918 until Soviet occupation in 1940. When independence was declared in 1991, this country was once again formed and they quickly drew up a new constitution, approved in 1992. This constitution established the Republic of Estonia as a parliamentary democracy and gave the right to vote to all citizens over the age of 18.

The *Riigikogu* holds a large portion of the power in Estonia as indicated above. The requirements to vote for members of the *Riigikogu* stand at being 18 and a citizen of the country. However, to be a member of the *Riigikogu*, one must be 21, be able to speak Estonian fluently, and be a citizen. Those running for the *Riigikogu* find themselves in a very different situation than Americans might expect them to be. As politicians they surprisingly disconnected from the people. A *Riigikogu* member is elected based on the number of votes he/she receives, the number of votes their party receives and how high up on the list they are within their party. It is possible for a member to be elected with very few personal votes based on the fact that they were high on the list of their party and their party received a high number of votes. Each party must receive a minimum of 5% of the country's vote to be considered for a place in the *Riigikogu*.

There are women present in the *Riigikogu*, although in 2001 only 18 of 101 members were women.

In 2003, there were 11 parties represented in the Parliamentary election, with some receiving as little as 990 votes out of about 501,000. The following is a list of these parties with a short description:

Centre Party of Estonia (*Eesti Keskerakond*)

This party is left of center, social liberal party and was founded in October 1991, thus being one of the oldest parties in Estonia

Union for the Republic - Res Publica (*Ühendus Vabariigi Eest - Res Publica*)

This conservative political party was formed in December of 2001. This party currently holds the largest number of seats in the *Riigikogu* with 28 in number.

Estonian Reform Party (*Eesti Reformierakond*)

This party is a free market liberal party that was founded in 1991. The current Prime Minister Andrus Ansip is the leader for this party.

People's Union of Estonia (*Eestimaa Rahvaliid*)

The original name for this party was Estonian Country People's Party with its inception in September of 1994. However, the name was changed in 1999. The party is an agrarian party with populist tendencies, even though they claim nationalism as their official stance.

Pro Patria Union (*Isamaaliit*)

The literal meaning of this party's name is the Fatherland Union. They mix what they term Christian democracy with nationalism and were formed in 1995.

Social Democratic Party (*Sotsiaaldemokraatlik Erakond* or *SDE*)

Formerly known as the Moderate People's Party, this party was actually formed in 1990 and focus on social democracy.

Constitution Party (*Konstitutsioonierakond*)

Estonian United People's Party is the original name for this party founded in 2005. This party is a minority party that central-left in its ideology and is mainly supported by the Russian minority.

Estonian Christian People's Union (*Eesti Kristlik Rahvapartei*)

This party is a Christian-conservative party that is opposed to the European Constitution.

Estonian Independence Party (*Eesti Iseseisvuspartei*)

This party opposes Estonia being a part of the European Union and has held no parliamentary seats.

Estonian Left Party (*Eesti Vasakpartei* - *EVP*)

Formerly known as the Estonian Social Democratic Labour Party, this party currently holds no parliamentary seats and a left socialist political party founded in 1990.

Russian Party in Estonia (*Vene Eesti Erakond*)

Independents

The government is essentially the arm of the *Riigikogu* in Estonia. They carry out the domestic and foreign policy set by the *Riigikogu*. This branch is headed by the Prime Minister and the members of the government are called ministers as well. These ministers represent the interests of their ministry to the government and then they also tend to head up that ministry. The government in 1999 put into place two additional ministers to the 12 already in place who have no ministry they are heading up. Their jobs, respectively, are to head up population issues and regional issues.

<http://www.cia.gov/cia/publications/factbook/geos/en.html>

http://encarta.msn.com/encyclopedia_761563693_4/Estonia.html

http://www.estonica.org/eng/prindi.html?menyy_id=711&kateg=39&alam=48

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Politics_of_Estonia

Economy

Estonia is a member of the World Trade Organization as well as the European Union. They have connected their currency, the Estonian Kroon, to the Euro as most other European Union countries have done. They will make a complete transfer to the Euro sometime in 2007. The two strongest areas of their economy, telecommunications and electronics, are influenced by their three top trading countries, Finland, Sweden and Germany. Public debt is low generally and the state budget is, for the most part, in balance.

The GDP per capita for the year 2005 was \$16,700. 66.8% of the GDP came from services, 29.1% from industry and 4.1% from agriculture. These numbers are mostly reflective of the labor force as well (69% in services, 20% in industry and 11% in agriculture) while the unemployment rate stands at 9.2%.

The main agricultural products in Estonia are potatoes, vegetables, livestock and dairy products and fish. The industries include engineering, electronics, wood and wood products, textile, information technology and telecommunications.

When Estonia declared its independence in 1991, they quickly changed from the economic set-up of a Soviet state to a free-market economy. This was the fourth economic transformation the country had undergone in the 20th century. At the beginning of the 1900's, Estonia was an agrarian country with peasantry farming large estates owned by foreigners. In 1918, Estonia declared themselves free from Russia and split the large farms into small farms and distributed them among the people.

After World War II, Soviet Russia once again took Estonia under its control, put all of the smaller farms back into large conglomerations, and began pushing the industrial side of the economy. Estonia was the USSR's gate to the Western world and as a result received much more exposure to western ideas. When they declared independence in 1991, Estonia made use of these ideas and connections to develop their free-market economy.

Exports make up a large portion of Estonia's economy today. Due to this fact, Estonians are very open to foreigners entering their country.

If you want more detailed info about Estonia's economy, the following is a very good, detailed resource:

http://www.estonica.org/eng/prindi.html?menyy_id=1117&kateg=40&alam=81
<http://www.cia.gov/cia/publications/factbook/geos/en.html>
http://encarta.msn.com/encyclopedia_761563693_3/Estonia.html

Literacy

In 2003, the posted literacy rate was 100%.

<http://www.infoplease.com/ipa/A0107501.html>

Land/Geography

Estonia is a Northeastern European country that has the Gulf of Finland as its Northern border, the Baltic Sea as its Western border, Latvia to the South, and Russia to the East. It covers a total of 45,226 sq. km. and includes 1,520 islands in the Baltic Sea. This would be slightly smaller than New Hampshire and Vermont combined.

The west coast is covered in beaches with access to the many islands off the coast in the Baltic Sea. Pärnu is the main city on the western coast of Estonia and is known for its beautiful resorts, well-manicured parks, and quaint architecture. There are also castles and other resorts some that were frequented by the Russian royalty, located in the surrounding cities. Haapsalu is known for the town's 19th century feel and 13th century castle located at the heart of the town. The countryside is scattered with windmills, fishing villages and thatched cottages.

Southern Estonia is made up of forest-covered hills. Tartu, the home of one of Estonia's greatest Universities, makes up a portion of Southern Estonia. The pace in this portion of Estonia is very laid back and quiet. One of the unique parts of Southern Estonia is the settlement of Setus, an ancient Estonian people. These people still speak their own language, have a very distinctive dress, and live in wooden huts.

In Northern Estonia, one can stand at the top of jagged cliffs that plummet into the depths of the Baltic Sea and Gulf of Finland. The Gulf provides equal access to both Helsinki and St. Petersburg.

Lahemaa National Park is located on this northern coast and includes forest, wetlands, and hiking trails through the jagged cliffs making up the coastline. Castles, restored manor estates, and waterfalls are found throughout the countryside between Tallinn, the capital, and Narva, Estonia's easterly city. Narva is located on the river border between Russia and Estonia and has a unique culture as a result of these two cultures meeting.

Estonia has beautiful cities and beautiful countryside. With a majority of the people living in the cities, much of the countryside has been left untouched for years allowing it to grow to its natural state.

Estonia is separated into what they refer to as Higher and Lower Estonia. Many of the Estonians have chosen to settle in the west and the north with things being centered on industry and service. However, in lower Estonia (the east and the south) the economy is centered on agriculture that has yet to be as profitable as it once was. Those people on the coast are developing the fishing and tourist trades that have helped their situations in life. Many of the people who live in the lower inlands have begun a migration to the cities.

www.visitestonia.com

http://www.estonica.org/eng/prindi.html?menyy_id=497&kateg=38&alam=45

<http://www.infoplease.com/ipa/A0107501.html>

History

The history of Estonia can be traced back to 2500 B.C., which makes this country the longest settled European people in Europe. The Estonian language emerged as its own language around 500AD.

13th – 14th Centuries

Teutonic Knights came to Estonia building castles, imposing Christianity, and bringing their fellow Germans with them. The Teutonic Knights were a German Roman Catholic order founded in the 12th century in Jerusalem. The Baltic trade routes, along with the spread of Christianity, were the reasons for taking control. At the same time, in 1219 the King of Denmark, Waldemar II, built a fortress in the place that would later become the city of Tallinn. However, in 1345 Denmark sold their territories to the Livonian Order, a part of the Teutonic Knights after some two years of uprisings.

16th – 17th Centuries

During the 16th century, Russia, Poland, and Sweden began taking an interest in Estonia. In 1561, the nobility of northern Estonia received the protection of Sweden while the Knights continued to be expelled from Estonia. By 1591, the Teutonic Knights had been completely run out of Estonia. Until 1645, Poland had possession of the southern portion of Estonia, including Tartu. However by 1645, Sweden had taken control of the entire region. The 1670's and 1680's led to many developments by the Swedes that benefited the people, one of which was the formation of the University of Tartu in 1632. This benefited the people, but the nobility became resentful of the Swedes success.

18th – 19th Centuries

In 1721, Estonia was granted to Russia as spoils of war from the Great Northern War between Sweden and Russia. Peter the Great returned the power of the Estonian nobility

and by 1819 Alexander I abolished serfdom that had been in place since the German invasion of the 13th century. Peasants were allowed to purchase land and as a result, Estonians began developing a great sense of national being.

20th Century

The country we now know as Estonia was developed through the country's trials during the 20th century. On February 24, 1918, Estonia declared itself the Republic of Estonia, independent from Russian rule. This was possible due to the fall of the monarchy in Russia in the Russian Revolution in 1917. Two years of fighting with the Bolsheviks, who now had control of Russia, finally resulted in Russia recognizing Estonia's independence. Two years later the USSR was formed minus the country of Estonia.

In 1921, Estonia joined the League of Nations and signed a mutual defense pact with Latvia and Lithuania in 1934. From its initial declaration of independence, Estonia was a democracy focusing itself around its parliament. However, in 1934 the then Prime Minister Konstantin Päts led a coup and established authoritarian rule by dissolving parliament. Four years later Estonia drew up a new constitution that set-up a presidential government with a bicameral legislature where Päts was elected president.

In June 1940, Soviet troops occupied Estonia and in the next election, only Soviet approved candidates were allowed to participate. By August 6, 1940, Estonia was official incorporated into the USSR as the Estonian Soviet Socialist Republic. As part of World War II, Germany attacked the USSR and occupied Estonia in July of 1941. Estimates say 90,000 Estonians died during World War II, 60,000 of those being a direct result of Soviet occupation rather than the short time Nazi Germany held control. Three years later the Nazi's retreated out of Estonia and 60,000 Estonians fled to Sweden and Germany as a result of the returned rule of the Soviet party. Estonia lost a total of one quarter of its population either to death, deportation, or flight. By early 1945, there were no more that 800,000 people left in Estonia, 97-98% of those being ethnically Estonian.

During the reign of the Soviets, Estonian language and culture suffered greatly. The language was suppressed in the schools and in general society. The Communist Party was the only legal political party and those who opposed them or were even suspected of opposition were sent to the Gulags, soviet concentration camps many of which were in Siberia.

During this time, the population of Estonians in Estonia decreased due to the Gulags, immigration to other countries when possible, or even death. Scores of Russians migrated in to work in the new factories that were built in northern Estonia.

In January of 1987, the Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev announced his belief that the Soviet regime needed to be "democratized." This was the beginning of the end of Soviet rule in Estonia. In 1987 Estonians came together to protest a plan to expand phosphorite mining that would damage the local ecosystem. When the protests worked and the planned expansion was halted, the Estonian people realized they could make a difference.

By 1988, many political parties were formed and began demanding full independence from the Soviet state. By August 20, 1991, Estonia was the first Soviet republic to declare independence. The timing could not have been more perfect as a communist coup was currently being attempted against Gorbachev in Moscow. The coup was unsuccessful and in September, the USSR recognized the independence of Estonia as well as Latvia and Lithuania.

In 1992, Estonia adopted a new constitution that declared the Republic of Estonia to be a parliamentary democracy. Shortly after they held their first democratic election in which the 101 members of the *Riigikogu* were elected and they named their first president and prime minister.

Prime Minister Mart Laar lasted only two years before a vote of no confidence by the *Riigikogu* caused him to step down in 1994, the same year the remaining Russian troops left Estonia. The next few years were shaky in the Estonian government. Prime Minister Laar was replaced by Prime Minister Tiit Vähi in 1995. However, Vähi resigned in 1997 under rampant rumors of corruption. He was replaced by Mart Siimann who only lasted until 1999 when again Prime Minister Mart Laar was elected to the position. In January of 2002, Prime Minister Mart Laar once again stepped down and Prime Minister Siim Kallas held the position until the elections in 2003. After much debate and haggling, Juhan Parts was named Prime Minister.

Before 1998, Estonia had rigid rules about who could and who could not become a citizen, one of which required that the individual must speak fluent Estonian. However, in 1998 Estonia relaxed its laws somewhat and began allowing Russian speaking countrymen become official citizens. In 2002, Estonia was invited to become a member of NATO (North Atlantic Treaty Organization) and became a full member in 2004, the same year it joined the European Union.

<http://www.visitestonia.com/index.php?page=61>
http://encarta.msn.com/encyclopedia_761563693/Estonia.html
<http://www.estonica.org/eng/>
<http://www.infoplease.com/ipa/A0107501.html>
<http://www.cia.gov/cia/publications/factbook/geos/en.html>

Christian History

Christianity was brought to Estonia in the 13th century in the form of Catholicism. The first successful invasion by the Germans was staged in 1208 when they conquered the castle of Otepää in southern Estonia. The pope had already given the archbishops of Hamburg-Bremen permission to do missionary work in Estonia in the 9th century. However, it took the military invasion to actually bring Christianity to Estonia.

The two main Christian powers in control of Estonia during the 13th century were the Germans, many of them crusaders, and the Danish. By the mid-13th century,

North Estonia belonged to the Danes and South and West Estonia and the islands were divided among the Livonian branch of the Teutonic Order and the Dorpat and Ösel–Wiek bishops. The first bishop of Estonia was Theoderich. He was named bishop in 1211 but was killed 8 years later. His brother Hermann was then named bishop in his stead. Immediately construction of cathedrals and churches began, despite the very shaky beginning of Christianity in Estonia.

Both the German and Danish priests began baptizing Estonians, most of the time without any Christian teaching or explanation. Baptism did not happen as a result of a life changed by a relationship with Christ, it was merely a ritual held by the Catholic Church. The friars traveled the countryside preaching and teaching and administering sacraments.

As in most European countries, the history of the church and the government/economy coincide to a high degree. By the 15th Century, many of the pagan customs of the native Estonians had been interwoven with the Christian teachings of the Catholic Church. The effect of the Catholic Church on society can be seen however in everyday life, even down to the changing over to Christian names by native Estonians in the 15th century.

The Reformation came to Estonia from Germany at a rather quick rate, probably due to the high number of Germans who still resided in the area. In 1520 the first Lutheran preachers made their way to Estonia and the Reformed theology slowly began to take root. The main reason for the changes in the church actually came as a result of the nobility, most of which were German, supporting the Catholic Church and the towns and lower class people, the groups most Estonians belonged to, chose to support the Lutheran Church. This was more of an economical and social decision than anything else.

During the 1500's and early 1600's, Catholicism and Lutheranism went back and forth as being the popular religion of the people. Much of this was due to the control of Sweden (a Lutheran country) in the northern part of Estonia and Poland's control (a Catholic country) in the south. But by 1625, Sweden had full control of Estonia and Catholicism and the recent arrival of the Jesuits were squashed and Estonia became a Lutheran country.

During the 16th and 17th centuries, Sweden saw it necessary to see their state church established in Estonia. They began conducting what they called "visitations" where higher clergy/bishops would attend services at various congregations and make sure the teachings were not of a Catholic or pagan nature. They also checked the language proficiency of the pastor, his morals, and his attitude about his expected duties, writing them down and keeping record as they went.

Pietism, a belief that emphasized individual piety and called followers to seek a more in-depth Christian life, made its mark on Estonia in the end of the 17th century. During this movement, large strides were made in religious literature in the Estonian language. The

full translation of the Bible first came out in 1739. The translators strove to write in a middle ground between the country people version of Estonian and the church language.

The Estonian Bible actually ended up regulating the written language of Estonian for the next hundred years. While Pietism seemed to make somewhat of an impact, Estonians were later drawn more to the Moravian Brethren who exist to this day around the world. The Moravians emphasized a personal relationship that caused a great awakening among the Estonians, most of which were subject to serfdom at the time.

In the mid-18th century, the Enlightenment, propagated by the German followers of the Enlightenment, entered Estonian society. Its impact ended up leading to a religious apathy amongst most of the population of Estonia, both peasants and landowners. In the early 1840's the Russian Orthodox Church made an impact on Estonian peasantry. Due to near famine and propagation by Russian Orthodox clergy, around 64,000 Estonian peasants converted to Russian Orthodoxy. It is interesting to note that the places where the Orthodox Church had the least amount of influence were the same places where the Moravian churches remained strong. As is noted in much of Estonian history, however, the hold of the Russian Orthodox Church did not last long. In fact, between the years of 1850 and 1870, nearly 35,000 Estonians petitioned for acceptance back into the Lutheran church. This back and forth between the Lutheran church and Russian Orthodoxy continued throughout the next century of Estonia's history.

During the Soviet rule, as in most countries, Estonian youth were taught the Marxist ideals of atheism. Church services were strictly monitored or banned all together. When Estonia declared their independence, the church became a stabilizing factor in society. Most people returned to the church for reasons of national identity.

The current state of the church in Estonia stands with the Protestant Evangelical Lutheran Church. However, *less than a quarter* of ethnic Estonians consider themselves active believers. The Eastern Orthodox Church still has a claim in Estonia, mostly among the Russian minority. There are conflicting reports of numbers involved in local churches. Some say only 31% consider themselves of any faith (including Estonian Evangelical Lutheran, Orthodox, Baptist, and Roman Catholic). Other reports state that 60% of the ethnic Estonians are a part of some Christian faith (that would equal 52% of the total population).

In 1989, the Council of Estonian Churches (CEC) formed with the purpose to unite Estonian Christian churches. They now train chaplains for both the army and prisons, broadcast morning prayers on Estonian radio, and show Christmas and Easter Services on television. The Lutherans, the Baptists, the Methodists, the Pentecostals, and the Armenian Apostolic Church have all joined forces in this Council. The Apostolic-Orthodox Church and the Seventh Day Adventists both hold observer status in the organization.

<http://www.estonica.org/eng/>
<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Estonia#Religion>
www.joshuaproject.net

Religion

Non-Christian

Buddhists

Traces are found with two congregations known. The number of adherents is not known.

Muslims

In 2003 there were approximately 20,000 known Muslims. A majority of these Muslims are of the Tatar and Azer ethnic origins. They follow the Shi'a school of thought within the Muslim belief system.

Jewish

In 2003 there were approximately 3,000 followers of Judaism in Estonia.

Neopagans

Followers believe in a local ancient deity named Taara. The belief system has its roots in Finnish folk religion. In a poll taken of 1000 Estonians, 6% said they held to a belief in Taara, however it is not known officially how many adherents there are to this particular religion or if this percentage is a true representation of the population as a whole.

Catholics/Orthodox Churches

Estonian Apostolic-Orthodox Church

This is the second largest church with 58 congregations and approximately 18,000 members registered with the Ministry of Internal Affairs.

Russian Orthodox Church

There is a somewhat significant number of Russian Orthodox Churches in Estonia, but as they have yet to register with the government, they are not sure of the total number of congregations.

Old Believers

There are approximately 15,000 followers and 11 congregations across Estonia. The Old Believers practice what they would call the pure form of Russian Orthodoxy. They are descendents of Russians who fled religious persecution by Patriarch Nikon in the 1650's. Patriarch Nikon reformed the Russian Orthodox Church to be more in line with the Greek

Orthodox Church. The Old Believers rejected his reforms and thus brought themselves under persecution.

Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (Mormon)

In 1997 there were approximately 300 adherents and 3 congregations across the nation.

Jehovah's Witnesses

In 1998 there were approximately 3,846 and 43 congregations across the nation.

Non-Religious

The non-religious made up of atheists, communists, and other non-believers make up around 60% of the people in Estonia or 843,000 persons. This group outnumbers all groups (including Catholic, Orthodox, and Protestant) by over 200,000

Protestant/Evangelicals/Pentecostals

Estonian Evangelical Lutheran Church

This is the largest church in Estonia. They have approximately 170 congregations and approximately 175,000 members. Estonia has never had an official state church, but due to the long history of Lutheranism in Estonia, it has become the most prominent religion in Estonia.

<http://www.eelk.ee/english.php>

Alliance of Estonian Evangelical Baptist Congregations

The third largest church in Estonia is the Baptist Church. They consist of 89 congregations and approximately 6100 members.

Christian Pentecostal

The groups reports over 45 congregations with more than 3250 members

New Apostolic Church

This independent group has 14 congregations with more than 3000 total members

Methodist

The Methodists have some 19 congregations with around 1900 members

Union of church Free Congregations

The group claims 6 congregations and 1200 members

All other denominations together report 126 congregations and 13000 members.

People Groups

000000

Armenian (pop. 1,707)

Armenians, by culture and history, are Christian. The Apostolic Catholic Church is a key part of their Armenian identity. They do not see being a Christian as entailing a personal relationship with Christ, is merely a part of who they are nationally. They consider themselves born Christians. Traditionally they occupy the region around Mount Ararat in Turkey, although they are found around the world. The Armenian Republic dates back to 1920 officially and at one time were under Soviet Russian rule.

There are 1,707 Armenians found in Estonia. Their traditional language is Armenian. 50% of the Armenians in Estonia are considered Christian, but it is unknown what numbers of those are evangelical.

<http://www.joshuaproject.net/peopctry.php?rop3=100516&rog3=EN>

000000

Azerbaijani, North (pop. 1,311)

The Azerbaijani, like the Estonians, are a people who have been subject many invasions throughout their history. Due to the tribal nature, and these invasions, the Azerbaijani have spread themselves through Central Asia and even to other parts of the world. The population of Azerbaijani in Estonia numbers 1311. Their native language is that of the Northern Azerbaijani and the number of Christians within their population is unknown. Their primary religion is Islam.

<http://www.joshuaproject.net/peopctry.php?rop3=100675&rog3=EN>

000000

Byelorussian (pop. 8,841)

The Byelorussians are of Eastern Slavic decent and are considered a Eurasian people group. Their native language is Belarussian and come from Belarus. Traditionally they are of the Eastern Orthodox faith, but it is unknown how many are Christian.

<http://www.joshuaproject.net/peopctry.php?rop3=101833&rog3=EN>

000000

Chuvash (pop. 1,209)

The Chuvash people are of Turkic decent, the largest populations of which are found in Chuvashia. Chuvashia is located in the western portion of Russia. Those located in Estonia speak Chuvash and are considered 35% Christian. As far as is known, only portions of the Bible have been translated into Chuvash. They have yet to have an entire Bible in their native language.

<http://www.joshuaproject.net/peopctry.php?rop3=102226&rog3=EN>

000000

Deaf (pop. Unknown)

The deaf in Estonia use an Estonian Sign Language. They are Christian, but the percentages of Christians and evangelicals are unknown.

<http://www.joshuaproject.net/peopctry.php?rop3=114916&rog3=EN>

102954

Estonian, Estlased (pop. 853,303)

The Estonians are native to the area and speak Estonian. They are considered to be generally Christian, Lutheran although they are not very evangelical. 80% of all Estonians live in Estonia, the other 20% are spread throughout the world, with the highest concentrations being in Germany, Russia, Sweden, and the United States.

<http://www.joshuaproject.net/peopctry.php?rop3=102954&rog3=EN>

000000

Finnish (pop. 16,086)

The Finnish people are one of the larger minorities in Estonia, probably due to their native country's close proximity. The Finnish people speak Finnish and are traditionally Christian. Of those found in Estonia, 87% claim Christianity. They are considered evangelical to a certain degree.

<http://www.joshuaproject.net/peopctry.php?rop3=103021&rog3=EN>

000000

Georgian (pop. 600)

The Georgians are of Eurasian decent and actually trace their heritage back to Japheth, son of Noah. They speak Georgian and are considered 30% Catholic , with Christianity being their primary religion. Less than 5% are evangelical and they have a full Bible translation in their own language.

<http://www.joshuaproject.net/peopctry.php?rop3=103298&rog3=EN>

000000

German (pop. 3719)

The native language for Germans is German. They are of Eurasian decent. Of the population in Estonia, 78% are Christian and greater than 10% of those are evangelical.
<http://www.joshuaproject.net/peopctry.php?rop3=103305&rog3=EN>

000000

Ingrian (pop. 803)

This people group, also known as the Ingrian Finns, are from Ingria, a small country that was once a part of Finland and is now part of Russia, in the St. Petersburg region. Ingrians speak Finnish or Russian, depending on where they now reside. During World War II, the many of the Ingrians were dispersed, killed, or displaced to Siberia, Central Asia and various other regions. Very few Ingrians were left in their native land. At the end of World War II, many Ingrians settled in Estonia. Not much is left of their original culture, but many stick to their Finnish roots religiously and hold to the Lutheran church. There are no Bibles in the Ingrian language, but this does not seem to be a deterrent as very few Ingrians speak a national language of their own.

<http://www.joshuaproject.net/peopctry.php?rop3=104135&rog3=EN>
http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ingrian_Finns

000000

Jew, Eastern Yiddish-Speaking (pop. 4,827)

The Jews in Estonia speak Eastern Yiddish, a combination of Hebrew, German and various other local bits of language. Their religion is Judaism, but less than 5% adhere to this religion. So far there is no missionary work targeting this people group in Estonia.
<http://www.joshuaproject.net/peopctry.php?rop3=104247&rog3=EN>

000000

Karelian (pop. 904)

The Karelian are descendants of the Finno-Ugric peoples. They speak Karelian and of the population in Estonia, 67% are Christian. Less than 5% are evangelical, but the rate of new fellowships is accelerating. For more info on the native Karelian people:

<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Karelian>
<http://www.joshuaproject.net/peopctry.php?rop3=104657&rog3=EN>

000000

Latvian (pop. 2,012)

The Latvian people in Estonia speak Latvian and are 90% Christian. One congregation per 100,000 individuals is evangelical in nature. Most are Lutheran, but there are some who hold to the Russian Orthodox or Roman Catholic faith.

<http://www.joshuaproject.net/peopctry.php?rop3=105674&rog3=EN>

000000

Lithuanian (pop. 2,012)

The Lithuanians have many similarities to the Latvians. They are both Baltic peoples. However, the Lithuanians tend more toward the Roman Catholic tradition. Of those living in Estonia, 85% are Roman Catholic. Their native tongue is Lithuanian.

<http://www.joshuaproject.net/peopctry.php?rop3=105803&rog3=EN>

000000

Moldavian (pop. 1,311)

The Moldavian peoples originally come from what is now known as Romania. Moldavia, their native country, has not officially existed for over 100 years. There is a Republic of Moldova, a former part of the USSR. Ethincally, the Moldavians are still considered a people group and their native tongue is Moldovan, but it is essentially the same as Romanian. Of the Moldavians who live in Estonia, 82% are Christian.

<http://www.joshuaproject.net/peopctry.php?rop3=106730&rog3=EN>

<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Moldavian>

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Republic_of_Moldova

000000

Mordvinian (pop. 1,006)

The Mordvins are native to the republic of Mordovia, part of the Russian Federation. The Estonian Mordvinian's native language is Erzya. Of those living in Estonia, the primary religion is Christianity. 65% of the Mordvins consider themselves Christian.

<http://www.joshuaproject.net/peopctry.php?rop3=106791&rog3=EN>

<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mordvinian>

000000

Polish (pop. 2,510)

The Polish people are of Slavic decent and their native language is Polish. Of those living in Estonia, the primary religion is Christianity. However, it is not know how many actually consider themselves Christian. There are currently mission agencies targeting this people group.

<http://www.joshuaproject.net/peopctry.php?rop3=108096&rog3=EN>

108452

Russian (pop. 398,005)

The largest minority in Estonia is the Russian minority. These people speak Russian and many of them speak only Russian. Russian Orthodox is the main religion among these people although only 31.3% of those living in Estonia actually claim any form of Christianity as their religion.

<http://www.joshuaproject.net/peopctry.php?rop3=108452&rog3=EN>

000000

Swedish (pop. 30)

Of Scandinavian decent, the Swedes of Estonia make up the smallest minority in the country, which is surprising considering the part Sweden has played in the history of Estonia. Their native language is Swedish and while Christianity is their primary religion, it is unknown how many Swedes in Estonia claim Christianity personally.

<http://www.joshuaproject.net/peopctry.php?rop3=109650&rog3=EN>

000000

Tatar (pop. 3,516)

The Tatar are of Turkic decent and are spread throughout nearly every former republic of the USSR. There are over 7 million Tatars in the world. Tatar is their native language and Islam is their primary religion. Most of the Tatars in Estonia are Sunni Islam. Less than 2% of the Estonian Tatars consider themselves part of any Christian religion.

<http://www.joshuaproject.net/peopctry.php?rop3=109874&rog3=EN>

000000

Ukrainian (pop. 24,226)

Ukrainians make up the third largest population in Estonia. The Ukrainian culture has ties both to the Polish and Cossack traditions. Their native language is Ukrainian and their primary religion is Christianity. Of those living in Estonia, 69% consider themselves Christian.

<http://www.joshuaproject.net/peopctry.php?rop3=110376&rog3=EN>

000000

Uzbek, Southern (pop. 600)

The Uzbeks are of Turkic decent. There are two Uzbek people groups, the northern and the southern. The northern are found primarily in Uzbekistan, but the southern are found primarily in Afghanistan. Of the 2.5 million Southern Uzbeks in the world, only 15,000

live in Uzbekistan with over 2.4 million of them living in Afghanistan. Their native language is Uzbek, Southern and their primary religion is Sunni Islam.

<http://www.joshuaproject.net/peopctry.php?rop3=110472&rog3=EN>

Missiological Implications

1. Evangelical Christians and Churches must be most concerned about the large numbers of non-religious persons in Estonia. These persons should be the primary target group for evangelistic efforts. New churches should be planted precisely to attempt to reach this group.
2. Evangelical Christians and Churches should also target the 398,000 Russians in Estonia. Many of these persons will be counted in the non-religious group but many also are simply unchurched. Definite plans for evangelizing the non-religious in Estonia is a much needed ministry.
3. Evangelical Christians and churches should seek means to evangelize the Jewish peoples in Estonia. Only 5 % of these actually participate in the Jewish religion. Christians should seek ways to start churches that target this group.
4. Evangelical Christians and churches should seek to associate with the Lutheran churches in Estonia and find ways to cooperate with them in their ministries.
5. Evangelical Christians and churches should seek means to reach the youth of Estonia. These young people of Estonia are like many in other countries, as they believe religion is for the elderly and that they will find God when they reach the age that they need him. Only 15% of the young claim to follow any type of Christian/Protestant faith. The young people of this country need Christ.
6. Evangelical Christians and churches should seek to aid the churches in Estonia in leadership training. Some schools are attempting to train both pastors and lay leaders but are not able to meet the need for trained leadership.
7. Evangelical Christians and churches should seek to help the people in Estonia to combat the less desirable effects of capitalism. While the introduction of capitalism has brought a measure of wealth and luxury to the country, these advances have been accompanied by a moral lapse. Evangelicals need to share the biblical teachings of productivity without the problems of moral decay.

Links

<http://www.estonica.org/>

<http://www.culture.ee/>

<http://www.vm.ee/estonia>

http://www.estemb.org/lang_4/rub_62/rub2_856/rubviide_1847#general