

MISSIONARY ATLAS PROJECT

LATIN AMERICA AND CARIBBEAN

Venezuela

Snapshot Section

Country Name: Venezuela

Country Founded in: Declared independence from Spanish rule on July 5, 1811. Gained independence from Spain and became part of Gran Columbia in 1821. Seceded from Gran Columbia in 1829.

Population: 26, 023, 528 (July 2007 est.)

Government Type: Federal Republic

Geography / location in the World: Venezuela is located on the northern coast of South America, bordering both the Caribbean Sea and the Atlantic Ocean. In area, it is a little more than double the size of California. Venezuela's tropical climate makes it hot and humid nearly year round with a more moderate climate in higher elevations.

Number of People Groups: Four major people groups make up the population of Venezuela. Mestizos, people of mixed Spanish and Native American heritage, comprise the largest people group; this group also subdivides into many more specific people groups.

67% Mestizos

21% European

10% Black

2% Native American

Picture of Flag:



Religion Snapshot:

Major Religion and % of the population: nominal Roman Catholicism 96%

All Religions and % of each: Protestant—2%, Other and atheism—2%

Government interaction with religion: Venezuela's constitution allows for religious freedom, and the government's involvement with religion is somewhat partial to Roman Catholicism. Missionaries of other religions sometimes face opposition from the government to minister in prisons and areas where indigenous people live. Government leaders have made anti-Semitic remarks that led to the harassment of Jews.

Sources: Worldmark Encyclopedia of the Nations: Americas (10th ed.);

http://encarta.msn.com/encyclopedia_761560608/Venezuela.html;

<http://worldatlas.com/webimage/countrys/samerica/ve.htm>;

<http://www.peoplegroups.org/MapSearch.aspx?country=Venezuela>; <http://www.joshuaproject.net/countries.php>;

http://www.nationmaster.com/graph/rel_cat-religion-catholics; <http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/irf/2007/90271.htm>

Country Profile

Basic Facts

Country Name: República Bolivariana de Venezuela, República de Venezuela (Republic of Venezuela)

Demographics:

Population: 26, 023, 528

Age Structure: 0-14 years: 31.6% (male 4,169,979 / female 4,046,170)
15-64 years: 63.4% (male 8,120,661 / female 8,369,065)
65 years and over: 5.1% (male 586,863 / female 730,790)

Median Age: *total:* 24.9 years
male: 24.3 years
female: 25.5 years

Population Growth Rate: 1.486%

Birth Rate: 21.22 births/1,000 population

Death Rate: 5.08 deaths/1,000 population

Life Expectancy at Birth:
total population: 73.28 years
male: 70.24 years
female: 76.48 years

HIV/AIDS – adult prevalence rate: 0.7% (no country specific models provided)

HIV/AIDS – people living with HIV/AIDS: 110,000 (1999 est.)

HIV/AIDS – deaths: 4,100 (2003 est.)

Most of Venezuela's population lives near the coast in large cities. About 88% of the total population resides in urban areas. The capital, Caracas, has a population of 1,801,562. The most populous city, Maracaibo, boasts a population of 2,054,039. Other large cities in Venezuela are Valencia, with a population of 1,457,912, and Barquisimeto, with a population of 833,338. Roughly 24% of Venezuela's population lives in these four cities alone.

Mestizos, people with blended European and Native American (South American Indigenous) heritage, comprise about 67% of the total population. Europeans make up about 21% of the population. Blacks make up the remainder of the population except for about 2% of the population coming from an unmixed Native American heritage.

Although the recent discovery of petroleum has boosted Venezuela's economy, the population seems to be sharply divided between rich and poor. While those who own large amounts of land or have ties to government and oil live in relative wealth comparable to other Western nations, the common laborer struggles to survive in poverty.

Sources: http://encarta.msn.com/encyclopedia_761560608/Venezuela.html;
<https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/print/ve.html>

Language

Spanish is the official language of Venezuela, but numerous indigenous dialects are also spoken (see **People Groups** below for specific languages of people groups).

Society/Culture

Because indigenous cultures held little power or influence after the Spanish began their conquest in the 1500's, Venezuela's culture is largely a product of Spanish influence rather than retention of indigenous culture. Roman Catholicism pervades the culture as well, being claimed by over 90% of the population. Venezuelan literature has grown in popularity since the early 19th century with the most famous authors including the educator Simón Rodríguez (*Sociedades Americanas*), the poet Andrés Bello ("Silva a la Agricultura de la Zona Torrida"), the famous liberator Simón Bolívar ("Guerra a Muerta"), the poet Juan Antonio Pérez Bonalde ("Vuelta a la Patria"), the novelist Teresa de la Parra (*Iphigenia*).

The Venezuelan folk legend of the *llanero*, or a South American cowboy, is a colorful tradition that includes the national dance, the *joropo*, which involves native instruments like *maracas*, rattle-like percussion instruments, the *cuatro*, a small, four-stringed guitar, and the *arpa llanera*, a harp from the plains of Venezuela. Watch a video of a *joropo* band here:

<http://balafria.wordpress.com/2007/01/19/venezuelan-music-joropo/>.

Creole food is commonly served in Venezuela and is known especially for *arepas* and *cachapas* (breads made from cornmeal) and for various stews and soups. Another popular dish is *empanadas*, meat-filled, deep-fried pastries. The national dish of Venezuela is *paballón criollo*, which is made of shredded beef, black beans, rice, cheese, and fried plantains (a green, tropical fruit resembling a banana).

Sources: <http://www.lonelyplanet.com/worldguide/destinations/south-america/venezuela/essential?a=culture>;
http://encarta.msn.com/encyclopedia_761560608/Venezuela.html

Government

Venezuela's government is a federal republic run by a chief of state (president), a vice president, and a Council of Ministers (cabinet). The president is popularly elected to a six-year term and can be reelected for an additional six years. Before the adoption of a new constitution in 1999, the Council of Ministers consisted of two parts: the Senate and the Chamber of Deputies.

Venezuela's political parties are A New Time (UNT), Christian Democrats (COPEI), Democratic Action (AD), Fatherland for All (PPT), Fifth Republic Movement (MVR), Justice First, Movement Toward Socialism (MAS), Venezuela Project (PV), and We Can (PODEMOS).

Venezuela consists of 23 states (Amazonas, Anzoategui, Apure, Aragua, Barinas, Bolivar, Carabobo, Cojedes, Delta Amacuro, Falcon, Guarico, Lara, Merida, Miranda, Monagas, Nueva Esparta, Portuguesa, Sucre, Tachira, Trujillo, Vargas, Yaracuy, and Zulia), federal dependencies (seventy-two Venezuelan controlled islands in the Caribbean), and the Federal District, where the national capital, Caracas, is located. Each state has a popularly elected governor and legislature.

For a map of Venezuelan states, see this website: <http://www.a-venezuela.com/mapas/map/html/politico.htm>

Venezuela operates with an open, adversarial court system; the highest court in the system is the Supreme Tribunal of Justice, which has 32 judges that are appointed by the National Assembly to serve for 12-year terms.

The legal voting age in Venezuela is 18 and excludes no one regardless of sex or ethnicity. All males between 18 and 45 are required to serve 30 months of service if drafted into the military. In 2004, the combined forces of the Venezuelan armed forces numbered 82,300.

Sources: http://encarta.msn.com/encyclopedia_761560608/Venezuela.html;
<https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/print/ve.html>

Economy

Venezuela's basic unit of currency is the *bolivar*, made up of one hundred *centimos*. About 2,000 *bolivars* are equal in value to one American dollar.

Prior to Venezuela's involvement in oil production, its economy relied mainly on agricultural products such as coffee, cacao (where cocoa beans come from), cattle, and hides. Since the early 20th century, Venezuelan economy has relied heavily on petroleum production, which accounts for a third of the GDP. Because the oil market prices fluctuate unpredictably, Venezuela's economy is somewhat unstable. Since 1976, Venezuelan government has been in control of the petroleum industry. Because of economical and political instability, unemployment and underemployment (not enough work available to support oneself) is rampant; in 2006, 8.9% (over two million people) of the population was unemployed or underemployed. In 2005, 37.9% (over nine million people) of the population was living below the poverty line.

Because much economic focus has been directed at petroleum production, agriculture has been in decline, leading to the importation of one third of Venezuela's food by the 1950's. The majority of the most productive farmland belongs to a handful of rich landowners, so small farmers struggle to scrape out a living on smaller tracts of poor farmland. Some measures have been taken by the government to do some sort of redistribution of farmland, but landowners protest these measures as unconstitutional violations of property rights.

Other industries in Venezuela are forestry, fishing, and mining. Manufacturing has been a focus of development since the 1960's, but has not grown due to the instability of the petroleum market that funds it. The main manufactured goods produced in Venezuela are refined petroleum and petroleum products, but steel, aluminum, fertilizer, cement, tires, motor vehicles, processed food, beverages, clothing, and wood items are also manufactured.

Tourism is probably Venezuela's least-developed potential industry. Natural beauty ranges from tropical island beaches to snow-capped Andes Mountains, from the exotic flora and fauna of the rainforest, to Angel Falls, the world's tallest waterfall.

Since the railways are largely undeveloped, transportation in Venezuela relies almost entirely on the road system, 34% of which are paved. Interior waterways are also a means of transportation, especially the Orinoco River.

Literacy

Adult literacy in 2005 was 94%. Education for children 6-15 years is free and mandatory.

Land / Geography

Venezuela can be divided into four major geographic regions:

The **Northern Mountains** are part of the Andean chain, and peaks reach an average of 8,000 ft. This area is thickly forested, and many peaks have snow year-round. The Sierra de Perijá, a chain of mountains that forms the border between Venezuela and Columbia, is largely uninhabited. The majority of the population lives on the coast or near the coast.

The **Maracaibo Lowlands** are located in the northwest corner of the country and are enclosed in mountains. This is where much of the petroleum is mined. Lake Maracaibo (which technically ought to be considered a bay) dominates the Maracaibo Lowlands. Sugarcane and cacao farms are scattered across the Lowlands.

The **Llanos**, south of the coastal mountains, is a tropical grassland that extends over one third of the country and is the home of cattle ranches. This area experiences seasonal floods and droughts on a regular basis.

The **Guiana Highlands** is a remote, rugged region named for the Guiana bedrock found there; tropical rainforests and scattered grasslands cover the Highlands. Tepuys, flat-topped mountains, can be seen near the border of Brazil, and Angel Falls, the world's highest waterfall, is found in the Guiana Highlands. Much of this region is unpopulated.

Plant and Animal Life

Flora in Venezuela ranges from tropical forest plants and flowers to the grassy plains of the llanos. Trees cover about two fifths of Venezuela's land area. Mangrove forests grow in the Orinoco delta.

Fauna in Venezuela is varied and fascinating. Tropical forests give habitat for exotic birds and monkeys as well as more dangerous creatures like anacondas and jaguars. Several species of turtles, crocodiles, caimans, and alligators live in the numerous rivers that wind through the country. Other interesting creatures include bears, wild dogs, peccaries, and agoutis. The tropical waters of the coast afford habitats for a vast array of tropical reef fish, sharks, and manatees.

Sources: http://encarta.msn.com/encyclopedia_761560608/Venezuela.html;
<https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/print/ve.html>;
http://globalis.gvu.unu.edu/indicator_detail.cfm?Country=AT&IndicatorID=27;
<http://www.britannica.com/eb/article-219043/Venezuela>.

History

Half a million indigenous people are believed to have been living in Venezuela by 1498, when Christopher Columbus set foot on South American soil. The following year, Alonso de Ojeda named the land "Venezuela" or "little Venice" after seeing a waterside village on Lake Maracaibo. The Spanish conquest began in 1520, and in 1521 Cumaná became the first Spanish settlement. In 1528, Charles V of Spain granted a Bavarian banking family named Wesler the right to develop the region and build settlements as a way to pay back a debt. The Weslers began to enslave and mistreat the natives and weakened the morale of Europeans who settled there, so in 1546, Spain removed the Wesler family's authority.

The indigenous people of Venezuela fought valiantly against the Spanish conquest, but eventually failed largely due to the spreading of European diseases such as smallpox, which wiped out masses of native people. During the colonial period, Venezuela became known as a producer of tobacco, cacao, and beef; it also became a notorious hotspot for piracy and smuggling.

After Spanish explorers became disenchanted with discovering the mythic El Dorado, Spain began to neglect their Venezuelan colonies. In 1821, Simón Bolívar, known as "El Libertador" led the Venezuelans to freedom from Spain after the famous battle at Campo Carabobo. Bolívar had already liberated Colombia before he fought for Venezuelan freedom. Later he went on to liberate Bolivia, Ecuador, and Peru, as well, forming a united Gran Columbia, which lasted until Venezuela seceded in 1829 to become its own country under its own constitution. A popular hero of the revolution, José Antonio Páez, became the first president of the new country and established the nation's capital in Caracas. Páez remained in power until 1846.

In 1846, civil wars broke out between the Liberal Party, who wanted suffrage for all men, separation between church and state, and a weak central government that supplemented the local governments of individual states and provinces, and the Conservative Party, who wanted to maintain class distinctions, a close relationship between the government and the church, and a strong central government.

Antonio Guzmán Blanco came to power in 1870; although his rule is considered somewhat tyrannical, Blanco managed to reduce the national debt, begin railroad construction, and make positive steps toward improving education. His unpopularity grew, however, largely because he removed much power and wealth from the Roman Catholic Church.

Cipriano Castro ruled from 1899 to 1908. During this time, Venezuela entered into a conflict with several European powers including Britain, France, and Germany over unpaid foreign debts, which led to the blockading and bombing of Venezuelan ports. In 1908, Castro was deposed by General Juan Vicente Gómez, who began working hard to pay off his country's debt. When petroleum was discovered in Venezuela, Gómez took the necessary steps to ally Venezuela with other lead oil-producing companies. The agreement they reached enabled Gómez to eliminate the national debt. At the time, Venezuela was the only nation in the world to be debt-free.

Although Venezuela benefitted economically from Gómez's leadership, his tyrannical rule is punctuated by a lack of concern for public education, housing, and healthcare; he was also well-known for imprisoning, torturing, and executing his opponents. He ruled until his death in 1935, and Minister of War Eleazar López Contreras succeeded him. He was the first president to refuse reelection. In 1941, General Isaías Medina Angarita became president.

A violent revolution broke out in Caracas in 1945, leading to the presidency of Rómulo Betancourt (AD). The government under Betancourt was led by a young, well-educated cabinet that focused on making Venezuela independent of food importation. Many steps were taken to dissolve the enormous ranches established by Gómez in order for smaller, crop-producing farms to be managed by local workers. In 1947, Venezuela ratified a new constitution. Although Betancourt's policies were intended to benefit Venezuela as a whole, they estranged important powers such as the church and the military.

In November of 1948, an army revolt led by Lieutenant Colonel Carlos Delgado Chalbaud overthrew Betancourt's government and formed a provisional junta. Chalbaud was assassinated in 1950 and was replaced by Germán Suárez Flámerich, who was a puppet of sorts for Colonel Marcos Pérez Jiménez. The junta under Jiménez made elaborate efforts to set up an electoral vote for the presidency, but Venezuelans showed little interest in participating. Only after the public was threatened to be punished if they did not register to vote, the election was held in 1952. When the election started to turn out negatively for Jiménez, the junta-backed Independent Electoral Front (FEI) installed Jiménez as president and disregarded the election results. Later

that year, a new constitution was formed and the name of Venezuela was changed from the United States of Venezuela to the Republic of Venezuela.

Jiménez's government took big steps to improve transportation and public buildings but largely ignored development of agriculture, education, or public health. The government under Jiménez was notorious for mishandling and embezzling funds. All who opposed Jiménez were quickly silenced, driving many political figures into exile to avoid imprisonment. When the official results of a plebiscite showed a majority of the population in favor with the way Jiménez was running things, the population rebelled with a general strike in Caracas. About 300 people were killed by the police during this uprising. Jiménez fled the country, and the Patriotic Junta was formed by a group of military men and civilians led by Rear Admiral Wolfgang Larrazábal. In 1958, former president Betancourt was reelected as president.

Under Betancourt (AD), Venezuela's social welfare, education, and foreign investments improved. The monopolized ranches were parceled out, enabling 700,000 farmers to have land of their own. Despite these improvements, many attempts were made to overthrow Betancourt's government. A new constitution guaranteeing labor and land rights was created in 1961, but it could not abate social unrest.

Raúl Leoni (AD) was elected president in 1963, marking the first time in Venezuelan history that power was handed peacefully from one elected president to the next. In 1966, however, the government had to halt a military uprising in Caracas as well as battle against constant guerilla warfare.

Rafael Caldera Rodríguez (COPEI) was elected president in 1968, and he managed to eliminate the guerilla threat by the end of the decade. In 1973, Carlos Andrés Pérez (AD) was elected president; he allied himself with communist Cuba and declared opposition to the dictatorship in Chile. Pérez put the iron and steel industry under government control in 1975, and in 1976, he did the same with the oil industry.

Venezuela's formerly strong economy took a turn for the worse under Luís Herrera Campíns (COPEI) who came to power in 1978. Even though oil had doubled Venezuela's income, the cost of living nearly doubled and the national debt tripled. Jaime Lusinchi (AD) was elected in 1983, and he followed unpopular austerity policies in order to cancel the national debt. Although he succeeded, the economy was badly damaged. In 1988, former president Carlos Andrés Pérez was reelected and given the difficult task of restoring Venezuela's economy. At that time, the average Venezuelan made 75% less than he had just a decade earlier, and the value of the *bolivar* had fallen 90% in just five years. Hard times brought about violent protests in Caracas, resulting in several hundred deaths. In 1993, Pérez was suspended from office because he was suspected of embezzling funds. Former president Rafael Caldera was reelected. In 1994, Banco Latino, the nation's largest bank, folded, causing much civil disturbance. Caldera attempted to introduce a new economic plan, which changed foreign investment policies, worked at slowing inflation, and

raised taxes. In 1996, the sales tax was raised from 12.5% to 16.5%, and in 1996 the cost of living doubled. The straw that broke the camel's back was a decline in world oil prices in 1998. The election that year named Hugo Rafael Chávez Frías as president of Venezuela.

Chávez was largely sympathetic to the plight of the poor and promised to end government corruption and to alleviate poverty by improving the economy. The public approved of electing a constituent assembly to redraft the constitution and assume the role of the National Congress. The new constitution, which renamed the country the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela and gave more political power to the president by lengthening the presidential term from five years to six, by allowing him to serve consecutive terms, and by condensing the bicameral National Congress into the unicameral National Assembly, was approved by 70% of the population. The new constitution also granted more power to the people by granting them the right to oppose legislation and to impeach elected officials.

Catastrophic floods in 1999 caused mudslides that wiped out entire villages, causing over 400,000 people to lose their homes and 30,000 to lose their lives.

Chávez was reelected in 2000, but he began to lose favor with the upper and middle classes because of his economic reforms. Military leaders forcibly removed Chávez from the presidency, but were pressured to reinstate him just three days later because of his popularity with the people. In 2002, a general strike in protest of Chávez's policies crippled Venezuela's economy with high unemployment and staggering inflation. With the rise in oil prices in 2004, however, the economy recovered somewhat, enabling Chávez to spend government money on literacy and health programs for the poorest of Venezuelan citizens. Opposition attempted to impeach Chávez in August of 2004, but they failed to have a majority vote. In December of the same year, supporters of Chávez managed to win all 167 seats of the National Assembly.

The following year, Chávez was reelected with about 60% of votes in his favor. Chávez requested the power to rule by decree for eighteen months, but his opposition saw this as a move toward socialism and an authoritarian regime. In 2007, however, the National Assembly granted Chávez this request, giving him power over areas such as economy, energy, and defense. Utilizing this new power, Chávez nationalized telecommunication, electric power, and oil industries. Nothing brought more opposition, however, than his taking the popular Radio Caracas Televisión (RCTV) off the air in May 2007. Chávez opponents cried out against his blatant suppression of free speech.

Sources: http://encarta.msn.com/encyclopedia_761560608/Venezuela.html

Christian History

Christian influence may have been present in Venezuela as early as 1516, when three Franciscan monks were killed by natives in the Venezuela/Columbia area. Roman Catholicism brought in by the Spanish conquerors was the earliest Christian exposure that the people of Venezuela had

seen. The first non-Catholics to start missions were the Anglicans in 1832. In 1897, Presbyterians started their first mission in Venezuela, marking the beginning of Protestant influence. The Evangelical Alliance Mission (TEAM) began to work in Venezuela in 1906 under T.J. Bach and John Christiansen. In 1949, the Southern Baptist Mission Board opened missions in Venezuela. Today, the majority of the population is nominally Roman Catholic, although Protestant religions are estimated to be the fastest growing group.

Sources: <http://home.snu.edu/~hculbert/line.htm>; Worldmark Encyclopedia of the Nations: Americas (10th ed.)

Religion

Non Christian

Roman Catholicism

The Catholic Church in Venezuela began in the early 1500's. By 1990, Roman Catholicism claimed 94% of the population at least on a nominal level. This is not surprising since Catholicism was brought along with the Spanish conquistadors; this was native Venezuelans' first exposure to any non-traditional religion. The political power attributed to the Roman Catholic Church allows it to oppose other religions and denominations, even to restrict the evangelization of indigenous groups.

Judaism

Jews are divided into two groups based on heritage. The Sefardi Jews came from Spain; the Ashkenazi Jews are originally from central and eastern Europe and travelled to Venezuela after World War II. In the early 1990's, the Jews in Venezuela numbered around 20,000.

Traditional Religions

Although Roman Catholicism has converted many former adherents to traditional religions, people in the Chibcha, Arawak, and Carib groups still remain faithful to these beliefs. These religions are marked by aggression, superstitious reliance on medicine men (shabori), and the god Wadawadariwa (Son of Thunder).

Afro-American spiritism manifests itself in the cult of Maria Lionza (goddess of water and vegetation), which combines elements of African, Caribbean, Amerindian, and Catholic religions. Rituals in this cult are supervised by mediums (bancos), and people from diverse backgrounds and classes participate, even those who are nominally Catholic. Groups of this cult were officially and legally united in 1968 as the Aboriginal Cult of Maria Lionza (Culto Aborigen de Maria Lionza).

In the mid-1990's those adhering to ethnic religions were 145,000; this signifies a decrease in interest in traditional religions.

Islam

Islam adherents in Venezuela grew from 500 in 1970 to 62,000 in the mid-90's. Although this only accounts for just over one percent of the total population, Islam is spreading rapidly. Venezuela's largest mosque is located in Caracas.

Buddhism

A small Buddhist population held 0.1% of the Venezuelan population in the mid-90's.

Baha'i

Baha'i has gained enthusiastic support from Venezuelans recently. In 1995, 122,000 people claimed Baha'i as their religion. People of coastal black and Guajiro heritage are among the strongest supporters.

Nonreligious

Roughly 1.9% of Venezuelans (almost 500,000 people) claim no religion of their own.

Atheism

Those ascribing to atheism make up 0.2% of the population.

Spiritism

Those practicing spiritism constitute 2.4% of the population; however, because Catholicism has been so thoroughly mixed with spiritism, the percentage could be as high as 12% if all nominal Catholics who are also practicing spiritists were to be counted.

Chinese folk-religions

Less than five thousand people are adherents to Chinese folk-religions. The majority of this number is immigrants from China.

Christian or Evangelical

Protestants

Protestants make up roughly 2% of Venezuela's population. In some counts, this percentage is as high as 4%.

Independents

Independents make up 1.4% of Venezuela's population.

Marginal Christian

Marginal Christians constitute 1.2% of Venezuelans.

Orthodox

A small percentage (0.1%) of Venezuelans are Orthodox Christians.

Anglicans

Less than 1,000 Venezuelans are Anglican adherents.

Evangelicals

Evangelicals make up about 1.2% of the population; because evangelical influence really did not begin to take hold until the 1980's, evangelicals do not account for a high percentage of the Venezuelan population. The number of evangelical Christians has been increasing, however. In 1990, there were around 1 million evangelicals; in 2000, evangelical Christians numbered about 2.5 million.

Sources: Operation World: 21st Century Edition by Patrick Johnstone and Jason Mandryk (2001); World Christian Encyclopedia (2nd ed) Vol. 1 (2001); <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/print/ve.html>

People Groups

16454

Akawaio, Kapon (200)

The worldwide Akawaio population is 5,400. They speak Akawaio, a Karib language, and primarily dwell in the tropical forest, farming with slash-and-burn methods. The Akawaio are well-known for their trading skills. They are also known as Acahuáyo, Acaguáyo, Acawai, Acawóio, Akawóio, Guaica, Wacawai, Waica, Waika, Capohn, Kapohn, Capóng, Kapóng, and Patamuno, but they are call themselves Kapón.

At this time, 75% of the Akawaio claim to be Catholic, and less than 1% is evangelical. Currently, the Akawaio have access to written and recorded scriptures in their own language, but little effort has been made to plant churches among them in the past two years.

16455

Arab, Lebanese (?)

Lebanese Arabs speak Arabic, and they claim Islam as their main religion. It is difficult to determine how many Arabs currently live in Venezuela; estimates range from 126,000 to over 400,000. A little less than half of the Arab population is nominally Catholic, but less than 5% of Arabs is considered to be evangelical. Arabic Bibles and Christian literature are available, but little effort has been made so far to evangelize this group in Venezuela. WEC (Worldwide Evangelization Crusade) is currently planning to begin an outreach program for Arabs in Venezuela.

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American, United States (22,000)

English is Americans' primary language, and Christianity is their primary religion with 78% of them being adherents to an evangelical faith.

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Armenian (1,100)

Armenians (also called Armaine, Ermani, Ermini, and Hai) speak Armenian and belong chiefly to the Armenian Apostolic Orthodox Church. They have been exposed to Christianity since 301 AD, when Armenia became the world's first Christian nation. Evangelization of Armenians is on the rise with new churches and ministries geared toward their people group.

43713

Arutani, Auaque (39)

The Arutani (also called Awake, Uruak, and Auake) speak Arutani, which is a nearly extinct language. While about 30% of Arutani's have converted to some form of Christianity (most likely Catholicism), less than one percent is evangelical Christian. They live on the Venezuelan-Brazilian border and participate in slash-and-burn farming of manioc (or cassava, an edible root), bananas, yams, and some cotton.

The tribe's numbers were first decreased by rival tribes of Kaliana and Yanoama Indians. European explorers brought in foreign illnesses that further decreased their population. The Arutani began to intermarry with the Yanoama tribe by 1900, and today the 40 Arutani that live in the tropical forests of Venezuela are the only true Arutani in existence worldwide.

16458

Baníwa (2,408)

The Baníwa* are a peaceful Arawakan people who number 6,500 worldwide. They speak Baníwa and are also known as Baniua, Maniba, and Nhengatu. A Baníwa leader named Venancio Camico established a religious movement in the mid-19th century, which gave the group some much-needed unity after European-introduced diseases decreased their numbers.

The Baníwa have relocated several times since the 1800's to avoid military dictators and national border disputes, as well as to establish better commerce with other tribes. In the last half of the 20th century, the Baníwa have become increasingly acculturated, especially at the prompting of New Tribes Mission.

About 70% of the Baníwa claim Catholicism as their religion, but the number of evangelicals is unknown. At this point in time, the Baníwa have access to an Arawakan New Testament and other Bible portions, and church planting is still in its initial phase.

*Be careful to not confuse the Baníwa of Venezuela with the Wakuénai. Although the term Baníwa is sometimes applied to both groups, they are separate tribes with little connection to each other in language, customs, or otherwise.

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Baré, Maldavaca (500)

The Baré live on the Guainía River are farmers of manioc and other crops. Their native language is Baré, but most of the Baré now speak primarily Tukano or Nheengatú because they have become detribalized. Catholic missions ministered to the Baré between 1756 and 1761.

The majority of the Baré are involved in ethnic religions usually involving some amount of animism. Only about 17% of the Baré are even nominally Christian, and less than 2% of the Baré is adherent to evangelical Christianity. A complete Bible was first available to the Baré in 2000, but in recent years, little has been done to establish evangelical churches among them.

16459

Barí, Motilón (2,200)

The Barí (also called Barira, Motilones, Mapé, and Dobozi) live in the tropical forest of northwestern Venezuela. They are also known as Southern Motilones, “Motilones Bravos,” or the “Wild Motilones.” The Barí have held strongly to their native traditions. Peaceful contact wasn’t made with Europeans until 1772, and contact was hostile and violent from 1910 through 1960 largely because petroleum explorers were invading Barí land.

In 1980, many Barí were still living in their traditional housing – longhouses. The Barí are slash-and-burn farmers who grow mostly manioc and bananas, but they also grow plantains, sugar cane, tobacco, cotton, and other crops. The Barí have been prone to social conflict, social immobility, and poverty because of poor relations with outsiders.

Less than 2% of the Barí is considered evangelical Christian. They have a Bible in their own language, but no churches have been planted among the Barí in the past two years.

16460

Basque (5,500)

The Basque (also called Eskualdunak and Euzkadi) number 2,404,000 worldwide. The Basque in Venezuela speak the Guipuzcoan dialect of this language. The Basque are almost entirely Catholic (90%). It is estimated that less than 2% of the Basque is adherent to evangelical Christianity. A complete Bible in Basque was completed in 1998, but few churches have been planted in the past two years to minister to the Basque in Venezuela.

16461

British (7,300)

While most British in Venezuela are Protestant (79%), the number of evangelical Christians has not been estimated. Traditionally a Christian people, the British have access to Bibles, religious films, and inspirational literature, but little has been done to reach the British population in Venezuela.

16462

Carib, Galibí (8,200)

The Galibí (also called Carina, Coastal Carib, Galibi do Oiapogue, Galibi do Oiapoque, and Kalinya) are a mainland group of island Carib Indians. They number 16,000 worldwide and speak their native language, Galibí, as well as French, Portuguese, and Creole.

These people are highly acculturated and have been almost entirely assimilated into outside society. Much has been done to evangelize the Galibí, and a New Testament has been available to them since 2003 along with other Bible portions. At least 2% of the Galibí population is considered to be evangelical Christian.

16464

Catalonian (5,500)

Catalonians (also called Andorrans) number almost 12 million worldwide. Originally from Spain, Catalonians are almost entirely Roman Catholics (90%). They speak Cantalan-Valencian-Baleare, and a complete Bible was made available in this language in 1993. The number of evangelical Christians among Catalonians in Venezuela has not been recorded, and no active church-planting has been done among them recently.

00000

Chinese (58,000)

The Chinese in Venezuela speak Spanish and are primarily followers of their ethnic religions, although some 25% is adherent to Catholicism. Less than one percent is evangelical. Currently, many agencies are involved reaching the Chinese in Venezuela, and successful churches are being planted among them.

16465

Tunebo, Central Tunebo (400)

The Central Tunebo, also known as Uwa, Luna, Tunevo, and Tame, speak Chibchan and are a nomadic/foraging tribe that lives primarily near the headwaters of the llanos rivers and in the eastern Andes, in the province of Apure. During the Spanish conquest, the Tunebo migrated evasively, avoiding the destruction and disease that befell other tribes.

To this day, the Tunebo are suspicious of outsiders and pride themselves in being ethnically and culturally independent. Although they rely heavily on agriculture, the Tunebo are becoming

increasingly acculturated due to involvement in outside trade, education, and involvement with evangelical Protestants.

The Tunebo's religious beliefs are primarily animistic; however, 39.88% claim Christianity as their religion. Among these, few, if any, are evangelical Christians. The Tunebo are in need of church planting efforts and still lack a complete Bible in their language.

46909

Columbian (2,000,000)

Columbians speak Spanish, and most (90%) are Catholic adherents. At this time, the number of evangelical Christians is unknown. Columbians have access to Bibles and Christian literature in their language, but few evangelical churches have been planted among Venezuelan Columbians in the past two years.

00000

Cuban (82,000)

The Cubans of Venezuela are Spanish-speaking, and about 57% of their population is Roman Catholic. The number of evangelical Christians among Venezuelan Cubans is unknown. Currently, multiple agencies are reaching out to Venezuelan Columbians and are planting churches among them.

16466

Cuiba (454)

The Cuiba, also known as the Wamonae, Kuiba, Cuybas, Cuibos, Quiva, and Cuiva, are a nomadic people that survive by foraging for food. They are a subtribe of the Guahibo and are self-designated as "Hiwi." They live almost exclusively in the center of the Orinoco plains, which led to disputes when cattle ranches began to be established there because of its rich grazing possibilities.

For two hundred years, most contact between ranchers in the Cuiba has been violent, even to the point of ranchers seeking to exterminate the Cuiba in the 1970's and 1980's. In 1988, the New Testament was translated into Cuiba, but few Cuiba claim to be evangelical Christians and few agencies are working to establish churches among them.

16467

Curripaco (4,925)

The Curripaco (Curripako, Kurripako, Kuripako, Koripako) call themselves "Kurrim" and are a subgroup of the Wakuénai people. They are foragers/farmers who live along the Guainía River, eating fish and river animals and farming manioc. The Curripaco live in an extremely isolated area; therefore they had little contact with the outside until rubber gatherers and missionaries

ventured into the jungle. Now, because the Curripaco have become heavily involved in cash trade, most are bilingual—speaking both Curripaco and Spanish. The WEC has been working with the Curripaco since the 1960's, and currently around 10% claim an evangelical Christian faith.

16501

Deaf (150,000)

The Deaf of Venezuela are one of the least-reached people groups in Venezuela. They communicate with Venezuelan sign language. About 150,000 deaf people are believed to live in Venezuela, but this number could be over one million. Less than 2% is thought to be evangelical Christian, and few organizations are targeting Venezuelan deaf for evangelization. In the past two years, little effort has been spent in planting churches for the deaf in Venezuela.

00000

French (8,200)

The majority of the French in Venezuela are Christian (76%), but the percentage of these that are evangelical is unknown. Currently, successful churches are being planted among the Venezuelan French.

00000

German (8,200)

The Germans in Venezuela are primarily Christian (78%) but a percentage of evangelical Christians has not been calculated. The number of agencies working with Venezuelan Germans and the amount of church-planting work being done among them is also unknown.

00000

German Colonia Tovar (8,000)

The German Colonia Tovar used to speak a language (called German Colonia Tovar) that has roots in German, but is not interchangeable with it. Now most German Colonia Tovar people speak Spanish. They primarily live in the city of Colonia Tovar, which was established in 1843 by German immigrants.

Because of its isolated location, Colonia Tovar had little influence from the outside, enabling the inhabitants to maintain their Germanic heritage. Now Colonia Tovar is a popular tourist spot, famous for its average temperature of 61°F, Bavarian architecture, and traditional German food. The German Colonia Tovar are 88% Christian, and evangelical churches are well-established.

Additional source used: <http://www.venezuelatuya.com/centro/coloniatovareng.htm>

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Greek (6,000)

The Greeks have had a complete Bible in their own language since 1840, and 90% of Greeks in Venezuela is adherent to Christianity, mainly of Orthodox denominations. The number of evangelical Christians among Venezuelan Greeks is unknown.

16468

Guajibo, Guahibo (~11,000)

Guajibo (more commonly called Yanoama) is a distinct people group that lives in the highlands of southern Venezuela, isolated from almost all outsiders, even other native tribes. Unlike most other indigenous people in Venezuela, who farm manioc as their staple, the Guajibo farm plantains as their main source of food.

The Guajibo are also different from almost every other native people group in Venezuela in that they never developed a river-dependent form of travel. Regular contact with the Guajibo was not achieved until the second half of the 20th century, and recent government decisions to limit their land usage threaten the tribe's existence.

About 85% of the Guajibo is adherent to the Catholic Church. An estimated 7.2% is evangelical Christian. A New Testament was made available to the Guajibo in 1982, but a complete Bible has not been translated. Many churches are being planted to minister to this people group.

16470

Guarequena, Warikyána (513)

The Guarequena (also called Warekena and Guarfekena) are collection of people groups that live near the Trombetas River. Because of European colonization and diseases, the Guarequena population declined rapidly from three or four thousand at the time of the Spanish conquest to around five hundred today. They are no longer considered a distinct tribe.

A little less than 60% of the Guarequena claim Catholicism as their religion, but there are no known evangelical Christians. At this time, the Bible has not been translated into a language that the Guarequena can understand.

00000

Italian (356,000)

Venezuelan Italians are primarily Catholic (83%), but the number of evangelical Christians is unknown. A complete Bible has been available in Italian since 1471, and Venezuelan Italians are well-reached with a large number of churches being planted.

16473

Jamaican (2,700)

About 49% of Venezuelan Jamaicans is Protestant, but the number of evangelical Christians is unknown. They speak Southwestern Caribbean Creole English. A widespread, developed church ministers to Jamaican people.

16474

Japredia, Japreria (216)

The Japredia live in northwestern Venezuela along the Palmar River. They are an agricultural community, and they are self-designated as Yokpa. About 40% of the Japredia people have Catholic beliefs, but few, if any, are evangelical Christians. The remaining 60% of the Japredia believe in ethnic religions, most of which involve some form of animism.

42201

Jewish (16,000)

The Jewish population in Venezuela is Spanish-speaking, and they hold to their ethnic faith of Judaism. They are one of Venezuela's least-reached people groups. There are no known Christians among Venezuelan Jews. Few agencies are working among these people, and little or no effort has been made to plant churches among them.

46852

Maco, Mako (~1,130)

The Maco of Venezuela number between 1,130 and 2,700. Their native language is Maco, and they live primarily along the Ventuari River and its tributaries. The Bible has not been translated into the Maco language, but about 6.5% is adherent to evangelical Christianity. Churches are being planted rapidly among them.

16475

Macushi, Makushi (?)

The number of Macushi that live in Venezuela is debated, and the estimates range from 83 to 1,200. They are a bilingual people who speak their native tongue of Macushi as well as Spanish. The Macushi first came in contact with Europeans in 1595 during Sir Walter Raleigh's expedition to locate El Dorado. The Macushi have become increasingly acculturated since they began to raise and sell cattle in their homeland on the Rupununi savannah in southeastern Venezuela.

Around 40% of the Macushi tribe follow Catholicism. No known evangelical Christians live among this people. New Testament was made available to the Macushi in 1996, but a complete Bible has yet to be translated.

16476

Mandahuaca, Mandawaka (~3,000)

The Mandahuaca live on the upper Orinoco River and maintain their tribal lifestyle, mainly isolated from the rest of the world except to do some minimal trading for items such as metal tools and clothing.

Most of the Mandahuaca (80%) are Catholic adherents, but the number of evangelical Christians is unknown. The Bible has not been translated into the Mandahuaca language.

46853

Mapoyo (365)

The Mapoyo live along the tributaries of the Orinoco River and survive raising corn, beans, manioc, plantains, rice, and chickens. Self-designated as “Wanai,” only a few of the Mapoyo still speak their tribal language; Spanish has become their main language. Inter-marriage with other tribes and joining the urban workforce has diminished the tribe’s numbers to the point of near-extinction.

About 40% of the Mapoyo is adherent to Catholicism, but the number of evangelical Christians is unknown. Currently, there are no evangelical churches that minister to the Mapoyo people.

16478

Maquiritari, Yekuana (6,523)

The Maquiritari people live in an extremely isolated area in the state of Bolívar; because of their isolation, the Maquiritari people maintain an aboriginal lifestyle, except that they have adopted the use of metal tools. An average Maquiritari village has about 45 members, and they survive mostly by farming and fishing.

Most of the Maquiritari speak their native Karib-dialect, but some can speak Spanish and Portuguese for trading purposes.

In 1970, a complete New Testament was made available in the Maquiritari language, but a complete Bible has yet to be translated. Most (80%) are Catholic adherents, but the number of evangelical Christians is unknown.

16497

Nhengatu (~1,294)

The population of Nhengatu is somewhere between 1,294 and 3,000. The Nhengatu language is the *lingua franca* for about 10,000 people in Brazil, Columbia, and Venezuela. About 68% of the Nhengatu is Christian, but the number of evangelicals has not been estimated. A New Testament was made available in Nhengatu in 1973, but a complete Bible has not been translated.

16480

Ninam (~100)

Of about 700 worldwide, between 100 and 200 Ninam live in Venezuela. The Ninam are a part of the Yanoama people group, which lives primarily in the highlands of southern Venezuela. Because of their mountainous homeland, the Ninam did not develop a river-culture like many other South American tribes. A little less than 70% of the Ninam is Christian, but few, if any, evangelical believers are known in the tribe. Initial church planting efforts have begun, and portions of the Bible were translated in 1970.

16481

Panare, Eye (4,207)

The Panare, who call themselves E'napa, live in a triangle-shaped piece of land that is bordered by the Suapare, Cuchivero, and Orinoco Rivers. They still maintain their tribal culture, adopting nothing from the Europeans except for metal tools. The Panare are primarily a farming culture, but they consider hunting and fishing to be extremely important as well. They are one of few tribes that are actually increasing in number.

About half of the Panare cling to their ethnic religions, usually involving animism; the other half of the population claims adherence to Catholicism. The number of evangelical Christians has not been calculated. In 2003, the New Testament was translated into Enapa Woromaipu, the native tongue of the Panare. A complete Bible has not been translated.

46850

Paraujano (11,205)

The Paraujano people live on the northwestern side of Lake Maracaibo in northwestern Venezuela. When the Paraujano shifted from subsistence fishing to commercial fishing, the process of acculturation sped up. Today, the Paraujano speak Spanish and intermarry with outsiders regularly.

Despite these concessions to the outside culture, the Paraujano maintain a strong sense of pride in their heritage. Many of the Paraujano (over 80%) are Catholic adherents. Only 1% is evangelical. No church planting has been attempted among the Paraujano in the past two years.

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Patamona, Patamuno (300)

About 5,400 Patamona live worldwide, and the Patamona of Venezuela live in far southeastern Venezuela. The Patamona are a subtribe of the Akawáios and speak Patamona, a Karib language. These village-dwelling people are highly acculturated, involving themselves in the economy, culture, and values of modern Venezuelans.

About 70% of the Patamona has adopted a Catholic faith, but the number of evangelical Christians is unknown. A New Testament was completed in 1974, but a complete Bible has yet to be translated.

16484**Pemón, Parukoto-Pemón (~5,600)**

The Pemón are one half of a larger tribe called Paraukoto; the Pemón can be further divided into three subgroups: the Arekuna, Kamarakoto, and Taurépan. European contact was not made until 1914, with William Farabee's anthropological expedition. The Pemón live near the Uraricapara River in southeastern Venezuela. They are an agricultural people, relying heavily of the production of manioc. They also rely on hunting and fishing as a food source.

This group has also experienced an increase in population, partly due to the medical help of Protestant missionaries in the mid-1900's.

About 60% of the Pemón is adherent to Catholicism. 13.54% are evangelical Christians. Bible portions were translated into Pemón in 1990, and the churches among the Pemón are growing and reproducing.

16485**Piapoco, Dzaze (1,939)**

The Piapoco, who called themselves the Tseese, live near the Columbian border on the Orinoco River. Although their earliest contact with outsiders caused the Piapoco to relocate, today they are almost entirely acculturated, adopting Western-style clothing by the 1920's and speaking Spanish as their primary language. The Piapoco are subsistence farmers who raise manioc, maize, rice, bananas, chickens, and pigs.

About half of the Piapoco are Catholic adherents. The number of evangelical Christians is unknown. A New Testament has made available in Piapoco in 1986, and initial church-planting has begun.

16486**Piaroa (?)**

Between 12,000 and 20,000 Piaroa are thought to live in Venezuela that live along the tributaries of the Orinoco River in the Guiana Highlands. They are self-designated as "Wotuha." The Piaroa are famous suppliers of curare, a poisonous drugs used in war and hunting. They value peace and tranquility over aggression, however; their isolation was what saved them from annihilation during the European conquest. They are farmers of yucca, potatoes, squash, bananas, maize, pineapple, sugar cane, peppers, and cotton.

Only about 20% of the Piaroa population is Catholic or Evangelical; 80% of the population practices ethnic religions. The number of evangelical Christians is unknown. In 2001, the New Testament was translated into Piaroa, and currently the church among the Piaroa is experiencing tremendous growth.

16487**Polish (8,200)**

The Polish people in Venezuela speak Polish and are primarily Roman Catholic. About 85% of Polish Venezuelans is Catholic. Less than 1% is evangelical Christian. No active church planting has been attempted among the Polish in the last two years.

16488**Portuguese (110,000)**

The Portuguese Venezuelans are primarily Roman Catholic. The vast majority of this people group (90%) claims Christian adherence, but the number of evangelical Christians among the Portuguese Venezuelans has not been calculated. No active church planting has taken place among the Portuguese in the past two years.

16489**Puinave (1,307)**

The Puinave live along the Orinoco River near the Federal Amazonas Territory in Venezuela. They have relocated numerous times in the past to avoid contact with outsiders; nevertheless, acculturation pressures threaten their cultural existence.

A little less than 60% of the Puinave adherent to Catholicism, but the number of evangelical Christians is unknown. The New Testament was translated into the Puinave language in 1964, but the whole Bible has yet to be translated. The Puinave are currently part of a reproducing church movement.

16490**Romanian (1,500)**

Romanian Venezuelans are primarily Roman Catholic, with 80% claiming Christian faith. The number of evangelical Christians among the Romanian Venezuelans is unknown. Numerous churches minister to Romanian Venezuelans, but new churches have not been planted in the past two years.

16491**Russian (4,600)**

Russian Venezuelans are primarily nonreligious, although close to half is Christian. The number of evangelical Christians among Russian Venezuelans is unknown, and new churches have not been planted in the past two years.

16492**Sáliba, Sáliva (265)**

The Sáliba are a forest-dwelling people who live near the Columbian border on the Meta River. They farmer sweet manioc, maize, and chili peppers, and after contact with Spanish explorers, the Sáliba began to farm bananas as well. Although this people group is highly acculturated, they still maintain a strong tribal identity. The rest of the 2,000 Sáliba live in Columbia. About 55% of the Sáliba is Christian, but the number of evangelical Christians is unknown. They do not have a Bible in their native language.

16493

Sanuma, Xamatari (3,035)

The Sanuma live in the mountains between the Orinoco River and the Amazon Basin. They survive mostly through hunting and fishing, although they do farm as well. They hunt tapirs, peccaries, monkeys, and armadillos. Because of their isolated location, the Sanuma avoided the negative effects of the European conquest.

Their isolation also accounts for about 75% of the Samuma being adherent to traditional religions. The other quarter of the population is adherent to Christianity, but the number of evangelical Christians has not been calculated. The Bible has not been translated into the Sanuma language.

43716

Sapé, Kaliana (25-200)

The Sapé are a linguistically isolated people group that lives along the Paragua River. They are famous among other tribes for their expertise in healing and religious rituals. Hunting and fishing provide the main source of food, but the Sapé also farm manioc. This people group is dwindling to extinction.

About 70% of the Sápe population is adherent to Catholicism, but the number of evangelical Christians is unknown. Some portions of the Bible have been translated into the Sapé language.

00000

Sikiana (800)

During the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, the Sikiana were a very mobile people, travelling widely to trade with the people of the llanos, the jungle, the Andes, and the Orinoco basin. Only after they developed a more agricultural society with slash-and-burn farming did they settle in one area, raising manioc as their main source of food. Although the Sikiana are well acculturated today, they still maintain a strong sense of tribal identity, with the majority of their population still speaking the tribal tongue.

A little less than 60% of the Sikiana is Christian, but the number of evangelical Christians is unknown. Churches are being planted among the Sikiana, but a Bible still needs to be translated into their language.

00000

Spaniard (82,000)

An overwhelming majority of Spaniards (90%) is adherent to Catholicism, but the percentage of evangelical Christians has not been calculated. Currently, churches ministering to Spaniards in Venezuela are growing and reproducing.

00000

Spanish Creole, Pidgin (137,000)

Spanish Creoles have African and Hispanic lineage; they speak Spanish. The majority of Spanish Creoles (80%) is adherent to Christianity, but the number of evangelical Christians is unknown. Currently, there are many growing and reproducing churches that minister to Spanish Creole people in Venezuela.

00000

Tabare, Tabajari (1,800)

At the time when this profile was being created, no information was available about the Tabare people in Venezuela.

00000

Turk (27,000)

The Turks are one of Venezuela's least-reached people groups. Their primary religion is Sunni Islam. There are no known Christians among the Turks in Venezuela, and few agencies are committed to ministering to this people group.

16498

Ukrainian (9,300)

A complete Bible was first made available to Ukrainians in 1903. About 62% of Ukrainians in Venezuela is Orthodox Christian, but the number of evangelical Christians is unknown. No active church-planting has taken place among Ukrainian Venezuelans in the past two years.

16499

Venezuelan (26, 023, 528)

Roman Catholicism accounts for about 86% of the Venezuelan population. It has been estimated that about 10% of Venezuelans is adherent to evangelical Christianity.

16506

Warrau, Warao (~28,000)

The Warrau live in the swamps of the Orinoco delta of northeastern Venezuela. Their isolated location has protected them from Europeans as well as other tribes. They survive primarily on harpoon fishing and eating the starchy pith of the ite palm, which is mixed with various other foods. The Warrau are famous for their boat building skills.

Roughly 80% of the Warrau follow native, animistic religions. About 20% of the Warrau is Christian, with 1.44% being evangelical Christians. A New Testament was translated into Warrau in 1974, but a complete Bible has yet to be translated. Currently, a strong group of churches is ministering to the Warrau people.

16469

Wayuu, Guajira (~213,000)

Previous to the Spanish conquest in 1499, the Wayuu were hunters; the introduction of cattle brought about a new way of life for the tribe. After stealing cows from the Spanish, the Wayuu developed a culture that depended almost primarily on raising cattle in the scrubland of the Guajira Peninsula shared between Venezuela and Columbia.

The primary religion of the Wayuu is animism (70%), while the rest of the population is adherent to Christianity. Less than one percent is evangelical Christian. The New Testament was translated into Wayuu in 2002, but a complete Bible has yet to be translated. Churches that minister to the Wayuu people are growing and reproducing.

16507

Yabarána, Yauarana (292)

The Yabarána (Yabaana, Guaiquairo) live in the extreme south of Venezuela. They live near rivers and maintain infrequent contact with the outside world for trading purposes. Rubber harvesting has nearly obliterated this tribe, and tribal identity is minimal.

About 75% of the Yabarána adheres to tribal religions, usually animistic in nature, and roughly 25% is Christian. There are very few, if any, known evangelical Christians among the Yabarána, and little effort has been made in the past to years to minister to this people group.

16508

Yanomamo, Yanomam (~12,234)

Yanomamo is a broad term that designates a large group of Amerindians. They can be divided into four main subgroups: (1) the Sanumá (Sanimá, Sanomá), who live in the north, (2) the Orinoco Waiká (Uaica, Oico) and the Ocama Waiká, both living in the central lowlands, (3) the Cobari, who live in the central mountains, and (4) Yainomá (Yanomán, Yanomám) or Shamatiri (Xamatari), who live in the south. They raise plantains as their staple crop, and they maintain a strong sense of tribal ethnicity. A reduction of tribal land by the Venezuelan government will most likely lead to a decline in the Yanomamo population.

Only about 15% of the population is adherent to Christianity, with the majority of the Yanomamo ascribing to native religions involving some form of animism. Less than 1% (0.75%) of the population is considered to be evangelical Christian. A New Testament was translated into Yanomamo in 1984, but a complete Bible has yet to be translated. At least one church is currently ministering to the Yanomamo, but little effort has been made to reach them in the past two years.

16509

Yaruro, Pumé (~5,800)

The Yaruro, who called themselves Pumé, live primarily on the llanos, or plains, of southern Venezuela. They employ slash-and-burn farming techniques during the rainy season to raise manioc, corn, and plantains, while in the dry season they survive mainly through fishing and hunting animals such as turtles and crocodiles. Although they have adopted the use of metal tools such as knives and fishing hooks, they maintain their traditional tribal culture. Even though their tribe seemed to be heading toward extinction due to exposure to European diseases, the Yaruro have been increasing in population and are surviving as a people group.

Most Yaruro (90%) maintain tribal beliefs, and Christians make up the remaining 10% of the population. The number of evangelical Christians among the Yaruro is unknown. Portions of the Bible were translated into Pume in 1999, but a complete Bible still needs to be translated.

16510

Yuana, Yuwana (767)

The Yuana live in the forested region of southeastern Venezuela. The term Yuana is used mostly by missionaries who have had contact with the people group. They are more commonly known as Hotí, and are locally called Waruwaru or Ongwa. They speak a language independent from all others, and they typically live in villages of 15 to 20 people, generally comprised of two or three families. The Yuana women are in charge of farming while the men are the hunters, fishers, and foragers. While the majority of food comes from agriculture, the Yuana still place large importance on hunting and fishing. Except for the use of metal tools, their culture is largely untouched by European influence.

Only about 3% of the Yuana is Christian, with the rest of the population being adherent to tribal religions. The number of evangelical Christians is unknown. There is at least one church that ministers to the Yuana, and portions of the Bible were translated into Yuana in 1999.

16463

Yukpa, Northern Motilon (7,522)

The Yukpa are divided into eight subtribes: (1) the Irapa (Tukukus), (2) Japreria (Sabril, Sapirria), (3) Macoita (Macoas), (4) Pariri, (5) Shaparru (Shaparu, Chaparro), (6) Viaksi

(Viakshi), (7) Wasama, and (8) Rionegrinos. The Yukpa have strong tribal and subtribal pride and have a long history of violence amongst subgroups and outsiders alike. After warring with the Spaniards, the Yukpa retreated to the Sierra de Perija Mountains. The Yukpa continued to behave aggressively toward outsiders until 1960, when the Venezuelan government gave them their own reservation.

In the 1960's, a missionary group called the Plymouth Brethren began to work with the Yukpa. Today, they have been well-incorporated into society. About half of the Yukpa hold to tribal religions; the other half is Christian. About 7.5% of the Yukpa is evangelical Christian. Today, many evangelical churches are ministering to the Yukpa people, and new churches are being planted. Unfortunately, a Bible has not been translated into the Yukpa language.

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Zambo (14,000)

Although 'Zambo' can be taken as a derogatory term in some cases, it usually refers to people with both African and Native American heritage. During the colonial period, shipwrecked or escaped slaves integrated into indigenous tribes and intermarried with native people. In Venezuela, Zambos speak mainly Spanish. Although these people have suffered through significant discrimination, even the current president of Venezuela has some Zambo heritage.

About 70% is adherent to Catholicism, but the number of evangelical Christians has not been determined. They currently have a reproducing church movement.

Additional sources: <http://www.everyculture.com/South-America/Afro-Venezuelans-Orientation.html>;
<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Zambo>.

Missiological Implications

1. Evangelical Christians and Churches should regain an evangelistic desire for the peoples of Venezuela. This desire should be under girded by prayer and furthered by direct missionary efforts in the country.
2. Evangelical Christians and Churches should develop and share with the evangelical Christians in Venezuela methods for sharing the Good News with followers of the Roman Catholic Church. An Obvious group is the main population of the nation, the Venezuela people that numbers over 26,023,584 of which only about 2,602,358 of 10% could be counted as evangelical Christians.
3. Evangelical Christians and Churches should make definite plans for evangelizing and starting churches among certain subgroups of European peoples who are mostly Roman Catholics—Italians, Basque, Columbians, Cubans, French, Germans, Spanish, and Portuguese.

4. Evangelical Christians and Churches should set their evangelistic sights on the Jewish people and the Chinese people in Venezuela. Some evangelistic work is being practiced among the groups but evangelicals could find ways to aid the groups working among these target populations and augment the work.
5. Evangelical Christians and Churches should set in motion means to evangelize and start churches among those groups that adhere to traditional religions—the Yaruro (Pume), Yanomamo, Yabarána, Wayuu (Guajira), Warrau, Sanuma, Piaroa, Japredia, Panare, Curripaco, and other smaller groups. Groups should undertake evangelism and church planting among these groups.
6. Evangelical Christians and Churches should seek to aid believers in Venezuela to combat the rampant Spiritualism that is so active in Latin America.
7. Evangelical Christians and Churches should sponsor further Bible translation work for those groups that do not have the Scriptures in their own tongues.

Links

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

<http://www.lonelyplanet.com/worldguide/destinations/south-america/venezuela>

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