

**MISSIONS ATLAS PROJECT
AREA OF THE WORLD
COUNTRY**

Snapshots Section

Country Name: Republic of Seychelles

Country Founded in: June 29, 1976

Population: 87,476

Government Type: republic

Geography/location in the world: Seychelles is a group of 115 islands located in the Indian Ocean northeast of Madagascar. The primary island is *Mahe*. The capital, Victoria, is located on this island and a majority of the population lives there.

Number of people groups: Approximately 10

Picture of flag:



Religion Snapshot

Major Religion and % of population: Roman Catholic 82.3%

All religions and % for each:

Anglican 6.4%,

Seventh Day Adventist 1.1%,

Other Christian 3.4%,

Hindu 2.1%,

Muslim 1.1%,

Other non-Christian 1.5%,

unspecified 1.5%,

none 0.6% (2002 census)

Government interaction with religion: The government allows religious freedom.

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

<http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/irf/2008/108389.htm>

Country Profile

Basic Facts

Country Name: Republic of Seychelles

Demographics:

The estimated population of Seychelles is 87,476. Children up to fourteen years of age account for 22.8% of the population. There are 10,201 male children between the ages of newborn to fourteen years of age. There are 9,732 female children between these same ages. Adults between the ages of fifteen and sixty-four years of age account for 70.1% of the population. There are 31,870 males in this age category and 29,439 females. In the last age category, sixty-five years and above, there are 2,321 males and 3,913 females. This 65 and over group accounts for 7.1% of the population. The median age for males is 30.9 years, and the median age for females is 32 years.

The birth rate is 15.87 births for every 1,000 people. There are an estimated 1.93 children born to every woman. The infant mortality rate is 12.3 deaths for every 1,000 live births. The death rate is 6.21 deaths for every 1,000 people. The life expectancy for the total population is 73.02 years. The life expectancy for males is slightly lower at 68.33 years while the life expectancy for females is slightly higher at 77.85 years.

There are approximately 10 different people groups in Seychelles. Many people are of mixed French, African, Indian, Chinese, and Arab descent.

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

Language:

There are three major languages used in the Seychelles—Creole, French, and English. Creole, which is a mixture of French with some words from Malagasy, Bantu, English, and Hindi, became the official language in 1981. The government promoted its use and developed a written format and dictionary. French, the language of the original settlers, is still used by the Roman Catholic Church and by people in more formal situations. Government offices and businesses primarily use English.

http://www.virtualeyichelles.sc/pages/vs_ie.htm (Illustrated Creole)

<http://lcweb2.loc.gov/frd/cs/sctoc.html#sc0027>

Society/Culture:

The culture of Seychelles was strongly impacted by the diversity of the peoples who immigrated to the islands throughout its years as a colony. French planters first settled the area. The French planters elevated French ideals and culture as well as bringing a staunch loyalty to the Roman

Catholic Church. Today the people who are descendants of these original families are sometimes known as *Grand Blancs*.

The socialist government sought to equalize people's places in society so the Grand Blancs lost the immense status that they once held, yet they continue to wield some social and political power. They will work as business owners or own land. Usually among this class, people will marry legally. Women will be expected to be faithful to their husbands. Men are allowed to have discreet alliances with other women.

The French planters also brought African slaves from areas throughout the continent. The French planters used the slaves as field workers and household servants. As time passed, the French planters had children with African women. These offspring began to integrate parts of the French ways of their fathers and the African rituals of their mothers in order to create a new culture which became known as Creole. Today, Creole culture sets the societal norms for most people living in Seychelles.

The tradition of elevating the respect status of people with lighter skin remains strong. Officially, no racism exists today. Yet, people with darker skin usually desire to marry or have relationships with people of lighter skin. Possessors of lighter skin will tend to desire to marry people with similar skin tones.

Creole culture is strongly matriarchal. Because men and women slaves were often not allowed to marry legally, the traditional structure of the family essentially changed. Women became the dominant force in the home, because, they would care for and raise their own children. Different children could have different fathers due to the constraints and demands of slavery. Today, that cultural phenomenon, which was established so long ago, continues with the practice of *en ménage*. The government and Roman Catholic Church officially frown on the practice of *en ménage*, but people continue to participate in these types of unions due to the historical influence of the past and the financial constraints of the present. Official church weddings can be expensive. Along with a formal marriage comes the need to purchase a large quantity of trousseau for the bride along with household items. All of these expenses can equal an entire year's salary.

Divorce is difficult to obtain. This practice allows men and women to cohabit with each other for as long as is convenient for each. During that time period, each is expected to remain faithful to their partner. If the man decides to leave, the woman will usually retain the house and the right to the children's earning potential. Most social classes (outside of the Grand Blancs) have no condemnation of *en ménage* and do not stigmatize the children of such unions as illegitimate. Fathers may even recognize their children and could provide educational opportunities if they wished.

There are several major holidays—many of which are tied to Roman Catholicism. For example, Christmas is celebrated on December 25th to commemorate the birth of Jesus while Good Friday and Easter Sunday are reserved as a time of remembering Jesus' death and resurrection. The Day of the Immaculate Conception which honors Mary, the Mother of Jesus, occurs on December 8th. The *Fete Dieu* is a Roman Catholic feast day which usually occurs on the Thursday

following Trinity Sunday. Assumption Day is celebrated on August 15th and All Saints' Day is commemorated on November 1st.

The government has established some holidays which commemorate major political events. June 5th is known as Liberation Day and marks the anniversary of the 1977 Coup. June 18th is National Day while June 29th memorializes Seychelles' independence from Great Britain.

People tend to use holidays as a time to connect with family and friends. They may go to beaches and have picnics. Some musicians will gather among the coconut groves and participate in the celebration of the *moutia*. This practice involves traditional African dancing and the telling of stories. During colonial days, slaves would gather after a hard day's labor. Two men would begin the *moutia* by telling about the hardships of their day and then two women would join them in dancing and singing. Others would accompany the efforts of the dancers by beating on drums made from the hollowed-out trunks of coconut trees. Usually alcoholic beverages made from palm wine or sugarcane are served as part of the festivities. Traditional *moutias* are somewhat closed to outsiders, but people do perform public displays for tourists.

Creole culture honors storytellers and singers. Fables and songs are used to teach children the social values of their parents. Such folklore also teaches people the history of the islands. Sometimes people use proverbs to assist their teaching efforts. At night people may gather and play games or share stories as a way of passing the time. At one time, the government actually had the state-owned television station quit airing programming after 7:30 in order to encourage families to spend time together talking.

Weddings and funerals are significant times. Official weddings involve parties that can last all night and cost as much as a year's labor. The celebration is meant to display the wealth and social status of the family. People who do not entertain their guests lavishly enough could be judged. Similarly, funerals are times where families seek to establish their own importance. Wealthy Roman Catholic families will commemorate the passing of a family member by having the church bells rung three times while having singing and organ music. The priest will deliver a message. Middle class citizens will have bells rung twice and have a much less elaborate funeral ceremony. Those who cannot afford to pay for any funeral can still have one bell rung eleven times. Because this simple act of commemoration is free and indicates a lack of status, people will sometimes choose not to come because they fear that their attendance will change their own social status.

Wearing the appropriate clothing for different occasions is important. For everyday occasions women will generally wear cotton smocks and sandals. They may choose to don an African sarong. Men will tend to wear loose fitting pants and comfortable shirts. Some men will also decide to wear shorts. For formal occasions, like mass or parties, people will dress in their very best outfits.

The cuisine of the islands has been heavily influenced by the variety of different peoples who chose to settle there. Fish curry is one of the most popular dishes and tends to be quite spicy. Many dishes include different types of fish, shellfish, or octopus. Chicken and pork are common meats, too. Turtle meat was once another common meat, but the decline in the number of available turtles due to depopulation has changed this practice. Coconut milk is a key ingredient

for many sauces. Salads are often made from fruits such as mango, papaya, breadfruit, or pineapple. Rice is a common staple.

People often eat three times a day. When they awaken, people will eat a light breakfast of eggs and bacon. They will tend to eat their heartiest meal at noon while having a lighter repast in the evening.

Many people practice a form of religion called *gris-gris*. This religion evolved out of African tribal religions and deals with the occult. Witchcraft and sorcery are practiced by males called *bonhomme de bois* or females called *bonne femme de bois*.

<http://www.everyculture.com/Sa-Th/Seychelles.html>

Worldmark Encyclopedia of Cultures and Daily Life Volume 1 Africa

http://www.virtualseychelles.sc/tourism/tourism_events.htm

Government

The government returned to a multi-party election system in the 1990's and is officially a republic. Anyone over the age of 17 is welcome to participate in the voting process. The islands are subdivided into a series of 23 administrative districts with Victoria on the island of Mahe serving as the national capital and seat of the government. There are three branches to the government—the executive, the legislative, and the judicial.

The executive branch is headed by the president who holds the titles of Head of State, Head of the Government, and Commander-in-Chief of the Defense Forces of Seychelles. Each president may serve for five years and is eligible for re-election for two more terms of office. Presidents are elected by secret ballot in public elections. The president is responsible for appointing his Cabinet of Ministers, which has 7 to 14 members. A majority vote of the members of the National Assembly may choose to deny an appointment.

The current president is President James Alix Michel. He was elected in 2006. He received 53.73% of the vote. He had previously served as the appointed president when long-time President France Albert Rene chose to leave the office. The next election is scheduled to be held in 2011.

The legislative branch consists of a National Assembly (Assemblée Nationale). The members of this body will develop and pass bills which must be assented to by the President. There are places for 34 representatives. Twenty-five of these are elected by popular vote while 9 are allocated on a proportional basis to political parties who have gained at least 10% of the vote. Representatives will serve for five years. The last elections were held in 2007. The SPPF gained 23 seats while the SNP gained 11.

The SPPF, which is also called the People's Party (LP) is the strongest political party and is led by the current president. The Democratic Party (DP) is led by James Mancham and Paul Chow.

The judicial system functions under the latest Constitution which was ratified June 18, 1993. Laws are generally based on traditions learned from English common law, French civil law, and

customary law. The government has not accepted the jurisdiction of the International Court of Justice. The two highest courts are the Court of Appeals and the Supreme Court. The president appoints the justices for both of these bodies. The Seychelles Court of Appeals has five justices and also includes the president. The Supreme Court has 4 judges. Below these two bodies are the Magistrate Courts. Each court at this level is led by one senior magistrate who is assisted in making decisions by two others. The lowest level of courts is the tribunals.

http://www.virtalseychelles.sc/pages/vs_ie.htm

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

http://www.virtalseychelles.sc/pages/vs_ie.htm

Economy:

Seychelles has a more stable economy than many other sub-Saharan African nations. At independence, the economy was largely based upon subsistence farming; however, due to the expansion of tourism and industry, the economy has grown significantly. Most recently the Seychelles International Trade Zone (SITZ), which oversees the vast areas of ocean between the islands, provides economic incentives. In 2008, the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) was \$1.473 billion. The real growth rate was 3.1%. Revenues equaled \$318.1 million while expenditures were \$324.6 million. The national monetary unit is the Seychelles rupee.

In 2006, 39,560 people were part of the labor force. The unemployment rate was 2%. Three percent were involved in agriculture. Twenty-three percent worked in industry. Seventy-four percent worked in service related endeavors. The GDP per capita was \$17,000 in 2008. The average person works between 45 and 52 hours per week.

About 1.9% of the GDP came from agricultural related endeavors. The soil's lack of fertility and the mountains limit the amount of crops that can be grown. Much of the food has to be imported or is grown on small plots of family land adjacent to homes. Agricultural products include coconuts, cinnamon, vanilla, sweet potatoes, cassava, and bananas. The coconuts are usually processed for the copra, the dried kernel or meat of the coconut from which coconut oil is expressed which makes coconut oil. Tea and cloves are grown in smaller quantities. People will also raise chickens, cattle, pigs, and goats as sources of meat. Chickens provide a good source of eggs.

About 28.3% of the GDP came from industrial pursuits. The industrial growth rate was 4%. The largest industry during the late 1990's was tuna canning. The government sold a portion of a state company to Heinz and this company, known as the Indian Ocean Tuna Canning Factory, became the largest employer on the islands for a time. In 2006, though, Heinz decided to attempt to liquidate its assets in the tuna canning business. At the time of this writing, the state of the company is unknown.

Fishermen need reliable boats so boat building is important to the economy. Other industries include manufacturers who process copra, cinnamon, and vanilla. A soda pop company, a brewery, and a plastics company had plants on the islands. The Seychelles Investment Bureau has information available to any company that wants to consider developing industrial endeavors on the islands.

About 69.9% of the GDP still comes from service related ventures. Much of this is related to the hotel and tourist industry. During the 1980's Seychelles was a very popular destination for U.S. and European tourists. Due to the recent effects of a recession, international tourists have sometimes chosen to vacation at less expensive areas, which has hurt the industry somewhat. The government, in conjunction with private businesses, has continued to work to provide vacationers with such a wonderful travel experience that they will return despite the monetary limitations of the recession.

Exports equaled \$425 million. Canned tuna, frozen fish, cinnamon bark, and copra were all important export products. Although the islands have no original natural deposits of petroleum, they do re-export petroleum products which have been brought from other countries. In 2007 about 23.7% of the exports went to Great Britain while 19.8% went to France. Mauritius received another 10% and Japan got 8.3% Finally, Italy received 5.7% and Spain purchased 5.1%.

Imports accounted for \$952 million. Commodities included machinery and equipment, foodstuffs, petroleum products, and chemicals. About 17.6% of the goods came from Saudi Arabia while 10.8% were of German origin.

http://www.virtualesechelles.sc/pages/vs_ie.htm

<http://www.sib.gov.sc/default.aspx>

Literacy

Little or no public educational opportunities existed in Seychelles until around 1851. Then, Catholic monks and nuns arrived to found parochial schools. Anglican teachers came to teach local children, too. These religious schools were the main source of education until 1944 when the government assumed responsibility for educating the young.

Educational opportunities expanded in 1970 when the establishment of a local teacher training program increased the number of teachers available to educate young minds. In 1981, the government made education free and compulsory for all children. This education stretches from grade one to grade nine. The government also worked to increase adult literacy rates by offering literacy classes for those adults who had not previously learned to read.

Primary education begins at age 5. Students learn how to read and write in Creole until they enter third grade where they begin to learn in English. Beginning in sixth grade, students have to study French. They will attend primary school for six years before entering a secondary program which lasts for three years. After completing their secondary education, students were once required to participate in the National Youth Service program before continuing on to further educational opportunities. This requirement has since changed and students may enter the Polytechnic school directly if they wish. There, students can study teacher training, business studies, humanities and science, and hotels and tourism.

In 2008, the literacy rate (which included all people over the age of 12 years of age) was 96%. The literacy rate was equal for males and females. The government spent approximately 269.6 million rupees in 2007 to fund schooling opportunities.

In 2008, there were 32 pre-primary schools. About 2,923 children attended programs at these nursery schools and were assisted by 206 teachers. The student to teacher ratio was 15:1.

There were 25 primary schools with a total enrollment of 8,744. About 4,416 males attended and 4,328 females attended. There were 616 teachers educating students, with 94 of them being male and 522 being women. The student to teacher ratio was 14:1.

There were 13 secondary schools with a total enrollment of 7,542. About 3,371 males were going to school and 3,811 females attending school. There were 502 teachers, with 218 being men and 284 being female. The student to teacher ratio was 15:1

There were 9 post-secondary non-tertiary schools with a total enrollment of 2,130 and a teaching staff of 216. The student to teacher ratio was 10:1.

Additionally, there was one special education school with an enrollment of 68 and a teaching staff of 25.

<http://www.virtualesechelles.sc/downloads/pdf/Seychelles%20In%20Figures%202008%20EDITION.pdf>
<http://memory.loc.gov/frd/cs/sctoc.html>

Land/Geography:

Seychelles is a group of 115 islands in the Indian Ocean. Their location is 4 35 S, 55 40 E. Their total area is 455 km² but they claim an Exclusive Economic Zone of 1.4 million km² in the Indian Ocean. The islands are subdivided into two separate groupings—inner and outer. The outer islands are more sand cays and atolls than substantial areas of land. About 2.17% of the land is arable while 13.04% is used to grow permanent crops. The other 84.79% of the land is used for other purposes such as the tourism industry.

There are a total of 43 inner islands. Two of these are coralline while the other 41 are granitic. The three largest islands are *Mahe*, *Praslin*, and *La Digue*. Mahe is 28km long by 8km wide. About 90% of the population of Seychelles lives on this island. Victoria, the capital, is also located on this island.

Praslin was named for the Duke of Praslin, who was the French Minister of the Ocean, in 1768. The French first claimed the Seychelles on this island by erecting a stone of possession. Today Praslin is the second largest island. About 6,500 people live there. It has a great harbor called Côte d'Or where pirates used to land to hide their treasure. Félicité, Marianne and the Sisters Islands are satellites of Praslin.

La Digue gets its name from a ship in the French fleet which first explored the islands in 1768. La Digue has swaths of forests that house exotic orchids and hibiscus. It is the fourth largest island.

The Outer Islands are those that lie past the Seychelles plateau. The main five groupings of islands are the *Aldabras*, the *Amirantes*, the *Farquhars*, the *Southern Coral*, and the *Alphonse*.

There are about 72 sand cays and atolls. Many are uninhabited or have a few people living there as caretakers. Alphonse and Desroches are two of the larger outer islands.

The climate is generally tropical. The coolest time of year occurs during the southeast monsoon which lasts from late May to September. The warmer season takes place between March and May during the northwest monsoon.

Water is a very important resource on the islands. Many of the sand cays have no permanent natural supply. When rains lessen, water shortages can be a real problem.

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

http://www.seychelles.travel/en/about_seychelles/geography.php (see this link for info. about each individual island)

<http://lcweb2.loc.gov/frd/cs/sctoc.html>

History

Arab traders may have marked these islands on their maps as good layovers on their voyages, but Europeans did not begin to note the existence of this archipelago until the 1500's. The British were among the first to record a specific expedition to the islands when in 1609 a landing party of the British East India Company explored *Mahe* and some of the surrounding islands for a few days.

These intrepid explorers left without claiming the islands for the Crown and in 1742, Frenchmen from Mauritius decided to explore as well. The French liked what they found on the islands and so decided to formally claim them in 1756. The French named the islands, Seychelles, after the French minister of finance under King Louis XV whose last name was Sechelles.

Initial settlers were supposed to plant crops so they could provide provisions for passing French ships. At first, the settlers found it more profitable to sell turtle meat to the ships. They also cut down hardwood trees and offered the wood to ships for repairs. As these resources declined, the French settlers began to establish plantations in order to grow the provisions that they had originally been supposed to provide and to grow cash crops like cotton.

The French planters placed a higher emphasis on the growing of items that would bring in revenue instead of the food crops which could sustain the burgeoning population. Their insistence upon such a strategy would lead islanders to become highly dependent upon the importation of food, a practice which continues into modern times. The plantation economy depended upon the labor of African slaves. Slavers would bring captured Africans to the islands and sell them to the planters. As time passed, the planters had progeny with some of the slaves. This mixed people became known as Creoles.

Due to the influence of the Napoleonic wars, the political fate of Seychelles shifted from the control of the French to the British Crown. The control of the islands passed back and forth before the French finally handed complete power to the British in the Treaty of Paris in 1814. The British were primarily interested in stopping the French from using the islands as a base for naval attacks and thus did not invest much energy initially in changing the lives of the islanders.

French planters were allowed to continue their lifestyles, generally, so long as they refused to cause problems for the reigning British authorities.

The abolition of slavery in 1834 changed this status slightly. Some French families took their slaves and decided to leave the islands for areas where their previous manner of living could continue. Others chose to stay and adapt to the new law. Freed slaves largely became paid laborers on the plantations where they had once been forced to serve. Some chose to open small businesses.

Added to this emerging culture was an influx of Africans who were rescued off of slave boats and shipped to the island by the British Navy. These rescued people were supposed to serve as "apprentices" to the plantation owners for a time before being given complete freedom. In reality, their existence became similar to that of the former slaves until they could finish such apprenticeships. Those liberated chose to watch the established Creole class and mimic their culture while combining elements of the culture that they had lost.

During the early history of Seychelles as a British colony, the authorities of Mauritius controlled the islands politically. Then in 1888, the colonial authorities allowed separate governing councils to be elected on the islands. Some landed islanders were given special advisory roles. The colonial administrator was later granted privileges which were similar to that of a colonial governor, although he did not officially possess such a title. Finally, in 1903, British authorities allowed the Seychelles islands to become a Crown colony in their own rights. The Farquhar Islands and Coëtivy Island were given to Mauritius for a time instead of being ceded to Seychelles.

In 1948, suffrage was given to about 2,000 of the wealthy male descendents of the original French planters. They were then allowed to elect four representatives to the Legislative Council. This august body advised the governor and possessed power to lobby for the planters' interests in such matters as crop marketing. As the political arena continued to evolve, two main parties came to the fore. The DP party, led by James Mancham, favored a capitalistic government and wanted to continue to garner British favoritism. The SPUP, led by Frances Albert Rene, claimed to be more socialist and wanted to garner the support of the working class. They also wanted to have complete autonomy and no required connections with the British government. When Great Britain decided to move control of three groups of islands—Île Desroches, the Aldabra Islands, and the Farquhar Islands—to the Indian Ocean Territory in 1965, the people of Seychelles were even more determined to move towards independence.

The islanders demand for increased autonomy led the British government to grant universal suffrage in 1967 while also creating a governing council that would oversee administrative matters. The DP won many of the seats on the new council initially.

In 1970, Britain gave islanders the right to handle internal security and the civil service, but withheld the right to have a voice in matters concerning foreign policy. At this point, Mancham became the chief leader of the islands while Rene became the leader of the opposition. The building of an airport on Mahe in 1971 brought more tourists to the islands and thus increased

the earning potential of the area. This increased source of potential wealth made control of the islands an even greater matter of importance.

Great Britain decided to accede to the wishes of the islands and formally granted them independence in June of 1976. Mancham and the DP party (sometimes also called the SDP) won control of the new government, but Rene and his party hotly protested the results of the elections had been corrupted. To help the new republic succeed, the British returned control of Île Desroches, the Aldabra Islands, and the Farquhar Islands to Seychelles while also giving them monetary support.

One year after gaining independence, a group of rebels overthrew Mancham's government. They chose to ask Rene to be the new President. Rene's party drew support from some smaller political parties and reformed as the Seychelles People's Progressive Front (SPPF). By 1979, a new constitution had been adopted which outlawed all parties except the SPPF and which supported a socialist approach to government. Rene was elected president and proceeded to promote socialist ideals while still working to improve the lot of the workers by enacting laws which created a minimum wage and helped form social security benefits for the elderly.

In 1991, after years of leadership by Rene and the SPPF, the government decided to return to a multiparty system. Elections held after the change still placed Rene in power as president. He did step down in 2004. Then, current president, James Alix Michel, took control. He was formally elected in 2006.

http://www.virtalseychelles.sc/pages/vs_ie.htm

<http://lcweb2.loc.gov/frd/cs/sctoc.html>

Christian History

The first French settlers brought Roman Catholicism with them when they settled the islands. African slaves were soon baptized and taught the basic tenets of Catholicism. Priests and nuns began to establish a system of parochial schools in the 1850's which became the predominant way children were educated until the government took control of the educational system in 1944. The Catholic Church in Seychelles continues to play a dominant role in the life of most people. Mass is usually well attended and people will make sure that their children are baptized into the Roman Catholic Church. Many attendees also visit the local *bonhomme de bois* or *bonne femme de bois* in order to seek to have their fortune told.

Protestant efforts towards evangelization began around 1843 when the British gained control of the islands. Reverend Joseph Francois began work in Victoria with Civil Chaplain Grandjean around 1886, but later moved to found a church at Anse Royale. Missionaries had the most success on the islands of Mahe and Praslin. The Anglican Church has started about 9 schools and remains active on these islands.

Seventh Day Adventist missionaries began work around 1930. Daniel Ignace, a Mauritian, planted a church that soon had 23 members. In 1936 Karl Sturzenegger supported evangelism efforts by starting a school. This school operated until 1979. In 1947, the Adventist churches officially organized as the Seychelles Mission.

AIM (Africa Inland Mission) workers began to hold fellowships around 1980. Stanley Roy Kline worked there for a time. Interdenominational classes were held in which participants were taught how to make ceramics and how to complete sewing projects.

<http://netministries.org/see/churches/ch00756>

Land, Gary. *Historical Dictionary of the Seventh Day Adventists*. Scarecrow Press, 2005.

World Christian Encyclopedia Volume 1

<http://www.wheaton.edu/bgc/archives/GUIDES/477.htm>

Religion

All information unless otherwise noted is taken from Operation World and World Christian Encyclopedia Volume I.

Non Christian

Islam—About 1.1% of the population is Muslim. Most of this population is Swahili or Indian.

Hinduism—Hindus living in Seychelles are largely immigrants from India. They remain somewhat isolated from others culturally. About 2.1% of the population are Hindu.

Baha'i—About .4% of the people may belong to this faith.

<http://news.bahai.org/story/272>

Catholic Church—Priests began arriving with early French colonists. Parochial schools were built around 1851. There is one diocese for the islands. It was erected in 1892. The current bishop is Denis Wiehe. In 2004 about 70,103 people aligned themselves with the Roman Catholic Church. There were 17 parishes and 16 priests.

Jehovah's Witness—This denomination began work around 1960. In 2005 there were 3 churches and 213 members.

Non-religious—About .6% have no religious affiliation.

Christian/Evangelical

Anglican Church—This church was founded in 1843. In 2005 there were 12 churches and 2,167 congregants.

Evangelical Church—This denomination began around 1980 as a mission of AIM. In 2005 there were 2 congregations and 487 members.

New Apostolic Church—This church formed around 1995. In 1995 there was one church with about 20 members.

Pentecostal Church—This church started around 1980 as a result of mission work by Canadians. In 2005 there were 2 churches and 400 members.

Seventh Day Adventists—This group began work around 1929. In 2005 there were 4 churches and 352 members.

People Groups

15476

British (1,601)

The British living in Seychelles may be descendants of colonists who came to occupy the island during colonial days or may be more recent immigrants who came due to diplomatic or business opportunities. They speak English, which is the principal language taught in schools. Many may also be familiar with some form of Creole.

The people are nominally Christian Protestants. The number of evangelical Christians is unknown. Many Christian resources are accessible in English.

00000

Deaf (population unknown)

The deaf live throughout the chain of islands. Those who have adequate access to educational opportunities will be able to use some form of sign language while those without such access probably use gestures. Recently, the first deaf person was crowned Miss Seychelles.

Christian resources are very limited, especially if the deaf person cannot read.

<http://www.nation.sc/index.php?art=15663>

http://www.4hearingloss.com/archives/2006/03/new_association.html

15477

French (977)

The French were the first to settle the islands. The French that currently live there may be descendants of the original planters that arrived to establish plantations or could be more recent immigrants who migrated in order to take advantage of new business opportunities. They speak French and thus have easy access to a multitude of Christian resources. The people are predominantly Roman Catholic. The number of evangelical Christians is unknown.

15478

Gujarati (200)

The Gujarati originally immigrated from India and have largely remained unintegrated with the larger population. Their primary language is Gujarati. They are predominantly Hindu. Less than one percent of the entire population is evangelical Christian.

Several Christian resources exist in their language. The entire Bible and several types of tracts have been printed. The *Jesus* film and *God's Story* video are accessible. Audio recordings and radio broadcasts can be heard.

15479

Han Chinese (400)

The Han Chinese probably live primarily in urban areas as they work as shopkeepers and businessmen. They speak a dialect of Chinese called Mandarin. The people either practice ancestor worship or some form of Christianity. The number of evangelical Christians is unknown.

Christian resources exist in Mandarin. The entire Bible and several types of tracts have been printed. The *Jesus* film and *God's Story* video are accessible. Audio recordings and radio broadcasts can be heard.

15480

Reunionese Creole (200)

This people migrated from the island of Reunion and speak a slightly different variation of Creole. Their version has two dialects. The urban dialect is similar to French while the popular dialect is similar to Bantu and West African languages. Their version of Creole is not intelligible with Seselwa Creole. The people are predominantly Roman Catholic. About .63% of the people are evangelical Christian.

A few Christian resources exist. The Bible has not been translated into their language. *Father's Love Letter* and the *Jesus* film are available films. Audio recordings exist.

15481

Seychellese Creole (75,876)

The *Seychellese Creoles* are the most populous people group on the islands. This people group is descendents of the many immigrants that came and intermarried through the last two centuries as the island were populated. Each group contributed to ideals and cultural concepts that became unique to the evolving island culture. Today, the people primarily speak their own version of Creole called Seselwa Creole French.

The people are predominantly Roman Catholic. Many are actually nominal converts who do not have a clear understanding of the gospel. They will attend mass occasionally and will make sure that their children are baptized as infants. They will also participate in rituals associated with traditional African religions brought by their forefathers and find little incongruence of having this system of dual beliefs. About 5.19% of the people are evangelical Christians.

A few Christian resources exist. Bible translation efforts began around 1974. The New Testament was completed in 2000. The *Jesus* film has been reproduced in their language. Audio recordings and radio broadcasts can be heard.

<http://www.worldmissioncentre.com/SESELWA.html>

15482

Swahili (70)

The Swahili people living in the islands are immigrants who may have come for business or political purposes. They speak a language called Swahili and are 100% Muslim. There are no evangelical Christians.

Many Christian resources exist in their language due to translation efforts in Kenya and Tanzania, where the language is also spoken. The entire Bible and several tracts have been printed. *The Jesus* film, *God's Story* video, and the *Father's Love Letter* film are available. Audio recordings and radio broadcasts can be heard.

<http://www.worldmissioncentre.com/SHIRAZISWAHILI.html>

15483

Tamil (100)

The Tamil population probably originally migrated from India. They stay largely unintegrated with the larger population. They speak a language called Tamil. The people predominantly practice Hinduism. About 60% have converted to some other type of religious faith. The number of evangelical Christians is unknown.

Many Christian resources exist. The entire Bible and several tracts have been printed. *The Jesus* film, *God's Story*, and the *Father's Love Letter* are also available in film. Audio recordings and radio broadcasts can be heard.

Missiological Implications

1. Evangelical Christians and churches should seek to provide means for evangelizing the Roman Catholics in the Seychelles. Many of the people are nominally Roman Catholic. They undergo the rites of baptism and confirmation and then believe that they are right with God. Yet, they still practice black magic and herbalism. They incorporate superstitious rituals into their daily lives and lack a real understanding of who Jesus Christ really is. Evangelicals should equip local believers in ways to evangelize the nominal Catholics
2. Evangelical Christians and churches should seek ways to provide training in Christian living and service. This ministry would include development of leadership curriculum that is needed to help church leaders grow in their knowledge of doctrinal issues and pastoral roles. More believers are needed to help teach the Bible and discipleship classes. Also, strong prayer warriors are needed to combat the supernatural forces that would seek to hold people in ignorance concerning the true state of their souls.
3. Evangelical Christians and churches should develop patterns to aid new believers who are under pressure from their families to turn back to the practice of *gris-gris*, the African religion that delves into the occult. People who become evangelical Christians could face ostracism from their families who do not understand their new beliefs and who wonder why they are leaving the Roman Catholic Church.

4. Evangelical Christians and churches should adopt ways to increase evangelism and church planting in the outer islands. People living on the outer islands have limited contact with the gospel due to the lack of Christian presence.
5. Evangelical Christians and churches should seek opportunities to provide higher education that is needed for aspiring youth who wish to train as church leaders. Also, youth discipleship programs are needed to strength the faith of young believers.
6. Evangelical Christians and churches should introduce the ideas of house churches and other small group approaches to evangelism.
7. Evangelical Christians and churches should adapt techniques of oral Bible Storying as a proclamation means and train local believers in this method. The culture in these islands would open the opportunities for Bible Storying.

Pictures



http://www.virtalseychelles.sc/pages/vs_ie.htm
http://www.virtalseychelles.sc/pages/vs_ie.htm

Links

<http://lweb2.loc.gov/frd/cs/sctoc.html>
<http://www.joshuaproject.net/countries.php>
<http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/hrrpt/2008/af/119022.htm>
http://travel.state.gov/travel/cis_pa_tw/cis/cis_1015.html
<http://www.state.gov/r/pa/ei/bgn/6268.htm>
<http://www.worldstatesmen.org/Seychelles.html>
<http://www.education.gov.sc/stats1.html>
<http://www.moh.gov.sc/>