



Cuba

Republic of Cuba

Caribbean

Geography

Area 110,861 sq km. The largest island in the Caribbean.

Population	Ann Gr	Density
2010	11,204,351	0.02%
2020	11,193,470	-0.04%
2030	11,019,440	-0.23%

Capital Havana 2,130,000. **Urbanites** 76%. **Pop under 15 yrs** 18%. **Life expectancy** 78.5 yrs.

Peoples

Hispanic 98%. White Hispanic 62%; Mulatto & Mestizo 25%; Black 11%. Racial lines are extremely blurred; most likely the black population is higher than given.

Asian 1%. Primarily Chinese, also South Asian.

Other 1%. Haitian, Russian, Palestinian.

Literacy 99.8%. **Official language** Spanish.

All languages 4. **Indigenous languages** 2.

Languages with Scriptures 1Bi.

Economy

Sugar production, along with the rest of the economy, collapsed with the Soviet meltdown as aid and subsidies dried up. The US trade embargo, devastating hurricanes, repressive centralized socialist planning, corruption and poor productivity hamper progress. Lack of many essentials (including food) still affects the country, yet there is a high standard in literacy, education and health. Tourism is becoming more and more economically important.

HDI Rank 51*/182. **Public debt** 35% of GDP.

Income/person \$2,300 (5% of USA).

Politics

Independent from Spain in 1898. Castro's revolution brought Communism to power in 1959, replacing a corrupt and venal regime. After

decades of exporting revolution to Latin America and Africa, Cuba remains among the last protagonists of Communism. An ailing Fidel Castro passed along power to his brother, Raúl Castro (now President), in 2008. Subsequent economic reform has not been accompanied by civil or political change; political opposition remains illegal despite increasing dissident activity, prompting emigration and pervasive hopelessness.

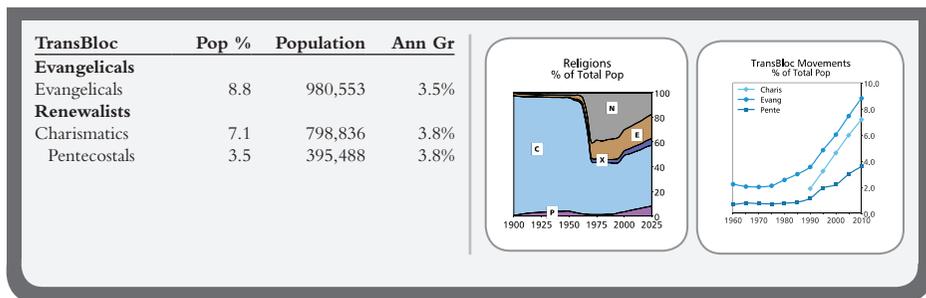
Religion

Strict control of all church activities and repression of religious freedom in earlier years of Communist rule, but since 1990 the degree of pressure has lessened. A secular rather than atheist state, discrimination against Christians is illegal. But discrimination and harassment continue as growing churches are often perceived as a threat to regime stability. The Cuban Council of Churches is the Protestant umbrella body sanctioned by the regime. It endorses an expression of faith more in keeping with the revolutionary ideals of the regime, including liberation theology.

Religion	Pop %	Population	Ann Gr
Christian	56.53	6,333,820	0.8%
Non-religious	25.01	2,802,208	-1.9%
Ethnoreligionist	18.00	2,016,783	0.6%
Hindu	0.14	15,686	1.5%
Chinese	0.14	15,686	0.0%
Other	0.14	15,645	0.0%
Buddhist	0.04	4,482	-4.4%

Christians	Denoms	Pop %	Affiliates	Ann Gr
Protestant	43	5.66	634,000	4.3%
Independent	14	1.83	205,000	4.2%
Anglican	1	0.12	14,000	7.0%
Catholic	1	48.37	5,420,000	0.5%
Orthodox	1	0.08	10,000	3.5%
Marginal	1	1.16	130,000	0.9%
Unaffiliated		1.5	168,000	-0.6%
<i>Doubly affiliated</i>		-2.19	-245,000	0.0%

Churches	MegaBloc	Congs	Members	Affiliates
Catholic Ch	C	808	3,474,359	5,420,000
Assemblies of God	P	4,500	110,000	169,000
Jehovah's Witnesses	M	2,906	93,000	130,200
Bapt Conv of E Cuba	P	2,300	36,452	113,000
Evang Pentecostal Ch	I	306	55,000	110,000
Methodist Ch of C	P	533	16,000	60,000
Bapt Conv of W Cuba	P	1,118	19,000	45,600
Los Pinos Nuevos	P	250	27,000	45,090
Christian Pentecostal Ch	I	600	18,000	45,000
Seventh-day Adventist	P	262	25,100	33,000
Presbyterian Reformed	P	270	8,100	19,550
Pentecostal Holiness Ch	P	257	18,000	19,000
Ch of God (Cleveland) P		65	4,100	14,637
Episcopal Church	A	54	4,895	14,000
Open Bible Standard Ch	P	226	7,000	14,000
Other denominations[46]		2,098	80,215	120,017
<i>Doubly affiliated</i>				-245,000
Total Christians[61]		16,553	3,996,221	6,167,094



Answers to Prayer

- 1 **The Church has continued to multiply at impressive rates.** Growth from the 1990s continues and, while slowing, remains strong. Praise God for a dynamic and expanding Church.
- 2 **Opposition and hostility toward the Church has refined it,** causing believers to depend radically upon God, strengthening their prayer life (individually and corporately) and encouraging unity of the Body of Christ.
- 3 **Numerical growth is accompanied by increased maturity and confidence.** Although Christian resources are hard to come by for churches not aligned with the government, the Church in general is beginning to minister in innovative and bold ways, and members see no conflict between their “Cuban-ness” and their faith.

Challenges for Prayer

- 1 **Cuba faces a difficult future.** Pray for the following needs:
 - a) **Political.** This last bastion of Communism in the West defies fundamental change through the continued influence of Fidel Castro, his President brother, Raúl Castro, and “old guard” Party leadership. Pray for their salvation and for wise leadership that governs in the best interests of its people.
 - b) **Economic.** The current model is simply unsustainable in the long term, despite substantive assistance from Venezuela, China and Bolivia. While the Castro family sits on a personal fortune, endemic poverty has led to a thriving black market where crime, drugs and prostitution (including sex tourism) are widespread. Black and mulatto Cubans suffer greater deprivation with fewer opportunities than whites. Only Haiti and the Dominican Republic are poorer in the Caribbean region. Pray for sensible reforms and economic freedom, and that structural sins might be overcome by good.
 - c) **Demographic.** Cuba has a top-heavy population, with large and increasing numbers of aged dependent on too few in the younger generation for support. This demographic time bomb will place further stress on an already fragile economy.
 - d) **Ideological.** The wounds inflicted by Marxism need healing. More than 500,000 have been imprisoned for ideological reasons and over one million have become ideological or economic refugees, many in Florida, USA. Both the USA and Cuba have used refugees as a weapon of war. Pray that forgiveness might abound among all Cubans, and that relations might improve between Cuba and the wider world.
- 2 **Catholicism was the default religion** before the revolution. Although the majority still confess Catholicism, huge swathes of the church are rife with syncretism; it is often hard to tell where Catholicism ends and Afro-Cuban Spiritism begins. The statistics do not (and can not) reflect the depth of influence Spiritism possesses. Less than 10% frequent mass. Priests and nuns are less than half their pre-revolutionary numbers. However, the Catholic Church is experiencing something of a comeback after several very difficult decades. True believers are few but growing in number. Pray for the Catholic Church, that it might be purified, revived and established as a place where millions will

find Jesus.

3 Evangelical churches were devastated by waves of emigration to the USA as well as by persecution. Recovery has taken a long time, but the Church is now a force to be reckoned with. Protestants alone more than doubled between 1995 and 2010. Many new believers are young people. Charismatic/Pentecostal groups in particular report spectacular (albeit statistically dubious) growth. Pray that this dynamic faith community would be a light to the nation and have a powerful transforming effect on Cuba; the potential for positive impact is great.

4 Persecution of Christians, more severe in the past, continues in the form of harassment and discrimination including occasional imprisonment of leaders. A seven-year sentence handed down to an evangelical pastor was the harshest thus far. Following Jesus remains a sacrificial choice while the regime fears the Church as a social movement like that which undermined Communism in Eastern Europe and China. Pray for continued courage and perseverance for suffering believers.

a) **The government has tried to strangle Christian growth** by making it nearly impossible economically to build new churches; the resulting house church movement has proved even more fruitful!

b) **Disunity plagues the Cuban Church**. While government attempts to reign in the house churches yielded some greater unity across groups, cross-denominational cooperation and ministry remain difficult. Historical infiltration by informers yielded more stringent membership and baptism criteria, in turn generating more committed and mature members; however, it has simultaneously produced a destructive climate of distrust and suspicion.

5 Leadership for the churches remains an urgent need. Many fled or were expelled following the revolution. Praise God for those who stood firm and were trained in the school of suffering; many are weary from long years of service and need fresh vision. Cuba has a dozen evangelical and two Catholic Bible schools or seminaries. Student numbers are limited by government interference and a lack of both material and human resources. TEE programmes, itinerant and visiting intensive training modules and hand-couriered laptops crammed with Bible resources are creative ways of addressing this challenge. Pray for a multiplication of visionary leadership for the churches that enables them to cope with the growth and change.

6 The less reached:

a) **Spiritism** has been actively supported by the government as “cultural”. African Caribbean religions under a thin veneer of Catholicism have a greater following than the 18% attributed to Spiritism. There may be more than three million devotees of *Santería* and other cults which resemble Haitian voodoo; “*Santería* tourism” grows as increasing numbers come on pilgrimage to Cuba. Pray that Christians may exercise love, understanding and spiritual power to see many delivered from this satanic bondage.

b) **The Indians, Chinese and Palestinians** have been largely assimilated into the Hispanic majority, but still retain much of their old culture. Little is being done to specifically reach them.

7 Foreign missions are largely restricted to tactful support and occasional visits from outside the country. A few workers remain in low-profile teaching ministry; others visit to train church leaders in all aspects of ministry. The government blacklisted dozens of foreign organizations, one way of denying precious resources to the national Church. Pray that wise input from abroad will serve Cuba in an effective way.

8 There are over one million Cuban refugees (legal and illegal) living in the USA, mainly from the white middle and upper classes and predominantly Catholic. Pray that they will not be victims of the temptations offered by the “free” society they sought so desperately. Pray that the Cuban diaspora might also find Christ and have a redemptive influence on their nation of origin. Pray that their faith might shape their views and approaches to their home country.

9 Christian help ministries for prayer:

a) **Bible distribution** – the need remains urgent as church growth outstrips supply. Over one million copies of the Scriptures have been printed in-country on the Cuban Bible Society press, and many thousands are imported every year. A new easy-to-read Spanish Bible will help make the gospel more accessible to many, but it is still difficult for many Christians to get a Bible. The need for the state-appointed Council of Churches to approve Bible translations limits options and prevents good

translations from being available.

- b) *Christian literature*** has been extremely hard to acquire for years and is an intense need. As the church and its leaders grow, more materials are needed. More can now be imported, but permission for local printing is difficult to obtain. Pray that the wide range of Spanish-language resources would make its way into Cuba.
- c) *Christian radio*** remains an untapped potential. Although a cumulative 878 hours per week are broadcast, almost all of it is over shortwave, which is very hard to receive as shortwave radios are illegal in Cuba. Some FM Christian radio can be picked up from other Caribbean islands. Local Christian broadcasting is still not permitted.
- d) *Music*** is a core aspect of Cuban culture and identity. Raising up and training Christian musicians and worship leaders is hugely strategic. Some prominent musicians have become believers, increasing Cuba's exposure to the good news.