



Politics

Independent of Spain in 1821. A long history of a stable, multiparty democratic government. Costa Rica has exercised a stabilizing influence in the conflicts of surrounding lands.

Religion

Roman Catholicism is the official state religion and all limitations on the free exercise of other religions are illegal, but in practice other religions are not yet equal before the law.

Costa Rica

Republic of Costa Rica

Latin America

Geography

Area 51,100 sq km. Agriculturally and ecologically rich land that straddles the Central American isthmus.

Population	Ann Gr	Density
2010	4,639,827	1.40%
2020	5,249,816	1.16%
2030	5,761,733	0.86%

Capital San José 1,460,864. **Urbanites** 64.3%. **Pop under 15 yrs** 26%. **Life expectancy** 78.7 yrs.

Peoples

Spanish-speaking 93.9%. Costa Rican 76.9%; Mestizo 9.4%; other Latin American 7.6%.

Amerindian 1.1%. Five small groups as well as detribalized Amerindians.

Other 5.0%. Jamaican/Creole 1.3%; Chinese 0.8%.

Refugees 500,000–700,000 Nicaraguan refugees and migrant labourers.

Literacy 95.8%. **Official language** Spanish. English and Mekitelyu spoken on Caribbean coast.

All languages 13. **Indigenous languages** 10.

Languages with Scriptures 2Bi 1NT 3por 3w.i.p.

Economy

Traditionally dependent on agriculture. Recent growth in the tech sector and a boom in tourism (especially eco-tourism) have gone a long way in relieving a depressed economy. Inflation and the deficit are very high, and 20% still live in deep poverty. A leading country for ecological conservation.

HDI Rank 54th/182. **Public debt** 42% of GDP. **Income/person** \$6,544 (14% of USA).

Religions	Pop %	Population	Ann Gr
Christian	93.94	4,358,653	1.3%
Non-religious	4.17	193,481	4.4%
Ethnoreligionist	0.80	37,119	0.9%
Chinese	0.53	24,591	2.6%
Baha'i	0.28	12,992	1.4%
Other	0.13	6,032	6.9%
Buddhist	0.10	4,640	1.4%
Jewish	0.05	2,320	-2.2%

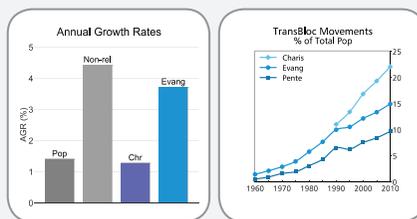
Christians	Denoms	Pop %	Affiliates	Ann Gr
Protestant	68	12.49	579,000	4.1%
Independent	67	4.62	214,000	3.3%
Anglican	1	0.02	1,000	-1.7%
Catholic	1	73.28	3,400,000	1.2%
Marginal	14	2.44	113,000	2.1%
Unaffiliated		3.73	173,000	-5.5%
<i>Doubly affiliated</i>		-2.64	-122,000	0.0%

Churches	MegaBloc	Congs	Members	Affiliates
Catholic Church	C	225	1,798,942	3,400,000
Assemblies of God	P	621	99,301	142,000
Seventh-day Adventist	P	200	56,000	127,120
Jehovah's Witnesses	M	300	24,300	51,030
Ch of God (Cleveland)	P	400	28,300	50,657
Latter-day Saints (Mormon)	M	85	25,374	37,300
Foursquare Gospel Ch	P	145	11,800	24,780
Assoc of Bible Chs	P	194	12,250	24,500
Pente Holiness Ch	P	87	9,160	21,800
Evang Assoc of C Am	P	115	5,400	15,444
Methodist Ch (UMC)	P	457	10,500	14,200
Other denominations[140]		2,687	193,497	399,197
<i>Doubly affiliated</i>				-122,500
Total Christians[151]		5,516	2,274,824	4,185,528

TransBloc	Pop %	Population	Ann Gr
Evangelicals			
Evangelicals	14.8	688,771	3.7%
Renewalists			
Charismatics	22.0	1,018,635	4.1%
Pentecostals	9.6	443,682	4.2%

Missionaries from Costa Rica

P,I,A 129 (84 long-term) in 14 agencies: to Africa 22, South America 19, Middle East 17.



Answers to Prayer

1 **The sustained and large-scale growth of evangelicals** from 2.5% in 1970 to 15% in 2010. Some reckon as many as 25% to be of evangelical persuasion, but these higher numbers cannot be substantiated by denominational statistics. One of Latin America’s most effective mission advances was established on this foundation.

Challenges for Prayer

1 **Evangelical churches lose almost as many as they gather.** Many unattached evangelicals and many more “ex-evangelicals” have returned to the Catholic Church, turned to sects or given up on religion altogether. The following causes need to be addressed in prayer:

- a) **A failure to disciple converts.** Most Costa Rican churches are good at reaching out and winning “converts”, but they fail in raising them in godly lifestyles and biblical knowledge. When times get difficult, spiritually stunted Christians either fall away or migrate to a different church.
- b) **Pastors are under-resourced,** usually surviving on minimal incomes and without strong teams to help in their work. This generally leads to a failure to provide solid pastoral care for struggling believers, which in turn leads to members drifting away.
- c) **Rivalry and divisions** among and within denominations and congregations disillusion many. Pray for a spirit of unity and love to prevail.
- d) **Rigid legalism** and failure to enculturate the gospel forced alien forms of faith and culture onto Costa Rican Christianity. Pray for dynamic, relevant and culturally appropriate ministries and churches to spring forth.

2 **The Roman Catholic Church** is deeply impacted by charismatic renewal. Many have come to a living, personal faith in Christ, which has strengthened the Catholic Church (higher mass attendance, more indigenous seminarians and priests). Although 73% of the nation is Catholic, this percent declines every year, and most Catholics are quite nominal in their faith. From the charismatic renewal, many left the Catholic Church for evangelical churches; however, large and increasing numbers of “post-evangelicals” have returned to the familiarity and structure of Catholicism. Pray for both charismatics who stayed in the Catholic Church and those who have returned – may their faith bring further renewal to the mainstream of Catholicism.

3 **These are signs of progress:**

- a) **Increased cooperative efforts for outreach and mission,** despite lingering hesitations on the part of some evangelicals. The Costa Rican Evangelical Alliance, representing the majority of denominations, initiated the programme “Costa Rica Century XXI” to promote the development of churches at every level. Pray for a cutting edge to this vision, and for the leaders of this ambitious programme.
- b) **Some of the best training options in Latin America.** There are 26 Bible schools and seminaries and a very extensive and effective TEE programme (SEAN). Two of the most influential are

UNELA (Evangelical University of the Americas) and UBILA (Latin American Biblical University); both train Christians to minister effectively to all segments of society – be it through church work, missions or marketplace ministry. There are plenty of training opportunities; pray that Costa Ricans would use them to raise the bar for leadership and to strengthen the Church.

4 Ethnic minorities:

- a) **Amerindian tribes** are small in number, but each is culturally unique and special to God. Most are nominally Catholic or animist. There is, however, an active indigenous Church among the Cabécar, and evangelical missionary input to the Boruca, Bribri, Guaymi and Maleku. The Bribri have a NT – after nearly 100 years of translation work! Pray that these peoples might see truly indigenous biblical churches planted and thriving, and using their mother tongues.
- b) **The Chinese population** is increasing rapidly, with many Chinese immigrating from Taiwan and mainland China. Some have become Catholic, and there are now some growing evangelical fellowships. The Chinese Christian Mission started a work among them in 1985. Pray that workers would be raised up from both Costa Rica and the global Chinese diaspora to reach these people.
- c) **The Mekitelyu African Caribbean community** on the Caribbean coast is nominally Protestant, but few people have a vital, life-affecting faith in Christ. Pray for revival within these churches and for the more dynamic Costa Rican churches to reach out to these people.
- d) **Asian immigrants** are relatively small in number but increasing. They are mainly Arab, Iranian and South Asian, and are Muslim as well as Hindu.
- e) **English speakers** may number more than 100,000 and are usually affluent and unconnected to any local church. Pray for ministry geared specifically toward them.

5 **Ministry to young people** is essential, given that two-thirds of Costa Ricans are under age 30. As with many other nations, alcoholism, drug addiction, violence and immorality plague this generation. Christian student and youth ministry has been weak in the past, but vision is growing and ministry increasing. ECU (IFES) in 17 universities and 17 colleges, Alfa y Omega (CCCI), Maranatha (a Pentecostal student work) and others are very active. On the “Street of Bitterness”, located near the national university, there exist both many social problems and sustained outreach.

6 **Missions.** The largest agencies are YWAM, LAM, AoG, RG, IT, ABWE, CCCI. The country’s stability makes it an ideal base for many regional and global ministries. Pray for cooperation and close fellowship among agencies – efforts are too often duplicated. In many agencies, North Americans’ dominance of personnel, money and culture can diminish both diversity and the opportunity for local expressions.

7 **National ministries and missions are beginning to blossom** as the Costa Rican Church matures and as foreign missions hand over control to nationals. These most often take shape as holistic ministries aimed at helping the poor, the sick, the broken and children at risk. Some exciting partnerships are forming. One example is Christ for the City, whose work has resulted in short-term mission teams sent abroad as well as ministry to the most needy at home.

8 Christian help ministries:

- a) **Radio and TV.** There are six Christian radio stations, one TV channel and five Internet radio sites; other secular stations air Christian programmes. Pray for quality programming that will reach into the hearts of the lost and build up believers.
- b) **The Bible Society.** Demand for Scriptures is strong and growing. Works in reaching students and Nicaraguan immigrants are especially fruitful.
- c) **The Spanish Language Institute,** where many missionaries learn Spanish. Pray for staff and missionary students.