



# Mali

## Republic of Mali

### Africa

### Geography

**Area** 1,240,192 sq km. Landlocked state. Dry southern grasslands merge into the Sahara Desert. The Niger River runs through the southern part of the country.

Population	Ann Gr	Density
2010	13,323,104	2.40%
2020	16,767,115	2.26%
2030	20,466,789	1.93%

**Capital** Bamako 1,698,520. **Urbanites** 33.3%. **Pop under 15 yrs** 44%. **Life expectancy** 48.1 yrs.

### Peoples

**Sub-Saharan African peoples** 89.4%. 55 peoples. Major people clusters:

- Malinke-Bambara** 30.2%. Bambara 28.9%.
- Gur** 17.4%. 23 peoples. Senoufo(4) 10.0%; Dogon(15) 5.4%; Bobo (Bomu/Bwa) 1.4%.
- Soninke** 12.5%. Soninke 8.1%; Bozo(4) 4.4%.
- Malinke** 10.2%. 9 peoples. Kita 6.9%; Khasonke 1.4%; Maninka 1.2%.
- Fulbe** 9.7%. Maasina Fulani 7.0%; 4 other groups.
- Songhai** 7.2%. Songhai(3) 6.5%; Idaksahak 0.7%.
- Other Sub-Saharan Africans** 2.2%.

**Arab/Berber** 10.5%. Tuareg (speaking two Tamacheq languages and including Bella, the former slaves of the Tuareg) 5.1%; Arab 5.4% including Moor 3.0%.

**Other** 0.1%. Mostly French.  
**Literacy** 19%. **Official language** French.  
**Trade languages** Bambara, Fulbe, Songhai. **All languages** 60. **Indigenous languages** 56.  
**Languages with Scriptures** 4Bi 10NT 20por 17w.i.p.

### Economy

One of the world's poorest nations. Subsistence farming and fishing occupies 80% of the

population; drought, locust plagues and desertification frequently devastate the land. The exports of gold and cotton are highly vulnerable to market fluctuations.

**HDI Rank** 178<sup>th</sup>/182. **Public debt** 72.5% of GDP. **Income/person** \$657 (1% of USA).

### Politics

The modern successor to the great Malian empire of AD 1230-1400. Independent from France in 1960. Popular protests ousted a military dictatorship in 1991. Elections and a multiparty democracy have since endured. Tuareg unrest in the northeast sees frequent outbreaks of violence, usually settled by government concessions over autonomy or poverty reduction. But restive Moors in the north and Al-Qaeda add to the trouble, augmented even further by rapidly growing drug cartels using the desert as a transshipment point for drugs from South America into Europe.

### Religion

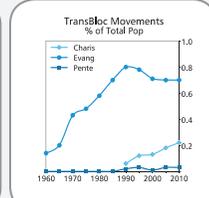
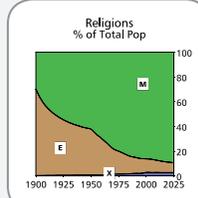
A secular state with freedom of religion despite the large Muslim majority. Islam is strongest in the north and centre. The traditionally animist peoples, such as Dogon, Bobo and Senufo, are now largely Muslim; the window of opportunity to reach them before their Islamization is now all but closed.

Religions	Pop %	Population	Ann Gr
Muslim	87.38	11,641,728	2.6%
Ethnoreligionist	9.88	1,316,323	0.8%
Christian	2.64	351,730	2.5%
Non-religious	0.10	13,323	2.4%

Christians	Denoms	Pop %	Affiliates	Ann Gr
Protestant	17	0.70	93,000	2.5%
Independent	8	0.01	1,000	5.1%
Catholic	1	1.92	256,000	2.4%
Marginal	1	0.01	1,000	1.5%

Churches	MegaBloc	Congs	Members	Affiliates
Catholic Church	C	45	143,017	256,000
Evang Protestant Ch	P	260	22,000	43,000
CMA	P	360	9,875	39,500
Assemblies of God	P	67	1,107	3,100
Seventh-day Adventist	P	4	1,650	2,250
Alliance Mission	P	24	486	1,020
Jehovah's Witnesses	M	11	275	880
Church of Pentecost	I	13	583	670
Norwegian Prot Mission	P	18	264	660
Evang Baptist Mission	P	8	242	460
Other denominations[15]		116	1,662	3,521
<b>Total Christians[27]</b>		<b>926</b>	<b>181,161</b>	<b>351,061</b>

TransBloc	Pop %	Population	Ann Gr
<b>Evangelicals</b>			
Evangelicals	0.7	93,630	2.5%
<b>Renewalists</b>			
Charismatics	0.2	29,347	6.2%
Pentecostals	<0.1	4,120	2.7%



## Answers to Prayer

**1** **The continuing stability**, in the midst of poverty, is a reason for praise. Mali stands as a role model of democracy and stability in a sea of troubled nations, free from the coups, civil wars and shady politics of its neighbours. It remains secular despite strong pressure from neighbouring countries to become an Islamic state.

**2** **The consolidation of the gospel** is an answer to prayer:

- The Church** is taking root in a number of the cultures and peoples of Mali as believers persevere and second-generation Christians emerge.
- A diversity of ministry** sees church planting, development work and all types of holistic approaches bear fruit. Most missions combine outreach with works of compassion, since both are clearly needed.
- Partnerships** have formed for all Protestant ministries in Mali – *Association des Groupements d'Églises et Missions Protestantes Évangéliques au Mali* (AGEMPEM) – and for the evangelization of seven of the largest or most strategic peoples in Mali or West Africa generally: the Bozo, Fulbe, Malinke, Soninke and Tuareg.

## Challenges for Prayer

**1** **Mali's socio-economic quandary is sobering.** It is one of the poorest nations on earth, with people making on average \$1.5US/day. Cotton growing employs one-third of the population but is highly vulnerable to world market fluctuations and competing growers elsewhere. Functional literacy is low and secondary school enrolment is under 20%. About one-fifth of children will not survive to the age of five, and of those who do, one-third will be malnourished. Two-thirds of the land area is desert or semi-desert, and the threat of desertification is ever present. Pray that Mali's leaders have wisdom and insight in knowing how to provide health, education, gainful employment and long-term stability to their people.

**2** **Islam in Mali** tends to be moderate and uniquely West African. The large majority practice a tolerant brand of Islam that incorporates elements of African traditional religions and superstitious folk practices. Large amounts of aid from Libya and Saudi Arabia keep the population further tied to Islam. In Bamako alone, over 3,000 Qur'anic schools and individual *marabouts* teach about 40% of children. Pray for Muslims in Mali to have the opportunity to hear, read about and experience Jesus and the assurance of salvation He alone offers.

**3** **The number of Christians has not increased by enough** to even keep pace with Mali's rapid population growth – evangelicals fell from 0.91% of the population in 1990 to 0.69% in 2010. Most growth is biological, and many who make decisions for Christ return to their former religion. This could be addressed with better follow-up through evangelism activities, discipleship programmes, pastoral training and Bible schools, but lack of funds to train for and support such ventures is a real problem. There are nearly 700 evangelical congregations, but most of them are not actively engaged in evangelism and outreach, despite many in Mali being spiritually open. Pray for boldness, passion and a burden for the unsaved to awaken in the churches and for a new wave of evangelism such as happened in the 1980s.

**4 Opportunities abound for a positive impact** by caring Christians. Pray for the many agencies actively involved in the following: church planting and evangelism (Avant, **CAPRO**, World Venture); relief, local development to conserve soil, vegetation and water (**CRWM**, Norwegian Lutherans); education (UWM); digging wells; and medical outreach (**CMA**, *Allianz Mission*). All of these groups minister in more than just one way, and many others work in Mali as well. The door is open to serve in Mali; ask God to send more workers for the harvest.

**5 Missions have multiplied** and few areas of the country are untargeted, but breakthrough has not yet been seen. Mali is still a pioneer missions country, with two-thirds of the population unevangelized. For years there were only four Protestant missions – Avant, **CMA**, and then UWM and Evangelical Baptists. Only in the more receptive Avant and **CMA** areas have strong churches emerged. There are now over 40 agencies from all continents, comprising several hundred workers. But the trickle of responses has not yet become a flood. More and more African and even Malian ministries work here; pray for them to collaborate with foreign missions and to have a galvanizing effect on the national churches.

**6 Bamako, the capital** and only major city in the country, has 60 small churches and over 100 expatriate missionaries, but only a minority are involved in urban church planting. Many suburbs are still without a meaningful witness, even as the city rapidly grows and spreads. The churches struggle with limited facilities and with expanding what facilities do exist. A prominent, visible Christianity – with actual buildings as symbols of growth and presence – would be an answer to prayer; a dynamic, growing movement of people to Christ irrespective of physical infrastructure would be even greater!

**7 Of the 60 indigenous ethnic groups**, only five are more than 1% evangelical – the Bambara (1.1%), Bobo (2.9%), Dogon (3.5%) and Senufo (1%). All peoples are in desperate need of the good news; 35 of them are categorized as unreached. Pray also for the smaller (therefore often neglected) groups of 25,000 people or less with no or few known believers (Wolof, Fulbe Jeeri, Kagoro, Banka, Yalunka, Jahanka, Humburi-Senni, Pana, Tiemacewe). Ask God to reveal the right approach so that they might be reached with the gospel. Pray for a decisive breakthrough among all peoples.

**8 There are a few strategic peoples** among whom pioneer work has been established, but for which prayer is requested:

a) **The Bambara** are a key people for the evangelization of the country. Many agencies work among them, and most denominations include some Bambara speakers. There are small victories in evangelism but no major breakthroughs. Pray for the spiritual and numerical growth of the church among this strategic people.

b) **The Fulbe** (mostly Fulbe Maasina), who are often semi-nomadic, reside throughout the country but are concentrated in central Mali. Several groups of believers are disciplined by workers from nine different agencies, including the Norwegian Lutherans, **CRWM**, Pioneers and the Eglise Protestante. Some solid foundations are laid for a more significant spiritual breakthrough among these peoples.

c) **The Northern peoples** are more strongly Muslim, yet hard pioneering work has resulted in some congregations and believers among the Tamacheq/Tuareg and Songhai.

i *Work among the desert-dwelling, semi-nomadic Tamacheq* is often disrupted by frequent insurrections, but upheaval, desertification and urbanization create opportunities for the gospel. The Idaksahak, a distinct Muslim people living among the Tamacheq, appear responsive. There are now congregations of Tamacheq believers and a NT.

ii *The Songhai*, once rulers of an empire, practice folk Islam with strong elements of sorcery. There is Baptist work among them, and the JESUS film and portions of Scripture – especially in audio format – are proving effective.

d) **The Dogon**, including 15 sub-groups, are known for their traditional religion with rich mythology, songs and masks. But many looking for alternatives now turn to Islam. The Dogon are more evangelized than most groups in Mali through the **CMA**, and they have a relative wealth of Christian resources (NT, the JESUS film, audio resources, holistic ministry projects); this unprecedented opportunity for the gospel must not be missed.

e) **The Soninke group**, including the four Bozo fishermen peoples, has very few Christians but are engaged by teams from many different missions. The Soninke presence across much of

West Africa makes them strategic. A spiritual breakthrough amid all the ministry in Mali could easily spill into several other countries.

## 9 Christian specialist and support ministries for prayer:

- a) **Bible translation.** Translation work is in progress for 18 languages. Nine languages have definite translation needs; another four have probable needs. Only eight Malian languages have a NT and only one has the entire Bible. Bible translation is a key ministry that must involve all confessions. Pray for effective partnership among SIL, the Malian Bible Society and all the churches and missions working with each people group in Mali.
- b) **Literacy projects** to raise Mali's low literacy rates are essential if Bible translations are to be useful. UBS (Alpha Project), World Vision and a host of others have projects that will help spread the Word and uplift the people.
- c) **Oral learning projects** are much more in keeping with the strong oral traditions of Mali. One-story (**IMB**) and Listening to the World (**UBS**) are two initiatives that train believers to share stories from Scripture in a style that connects with Malians.
- d) **Media ministry** is crucial in a culture where functional literacy could be as low as 15%.
  - i *Audio resources.* With such low literacy rates, cassettes, digital audio Scriptures and stories are greatly appreciated and highly effective. **GRN** has made recordings in 43 dialects and languages. **FCBH**, The God's Story Project, and The Story of Jesus are all Christian audio resources available in several languages.
  - ii *Christian programmes on Radio Mali* have a wide audience. The 42 FM stations run under the auspices of the **ACCM/Christian Association of Communication** in Mali (but run by several different missions and churches) cover Bamako and six other states. Most of these stations broadcast many hours a day and in several languages: French, Bamanankan (Bambara), Pulaar (Fulani), Songhai, Tamacheq and others. **IBRA**, **FEBA** and **TWR** also broadcast in shortwave into Mali.
  - iii *TV* is another crucial medium with high-perceived value but only one national station. Pray for the biblical TV programmes produced by **ACCM** (70 minutes per week) to have great impact; pray also for provision of funds for production and broadcast expenses.
  - iv *The JESUS film* is a major instrument for opening whole areas and peoples for church planting. It is available in 17 languages. Pray for the effective use of this precious resource and for many to respond as they see and hear the gospel in their heart language.
- e) **Student ministry.** **GBEEM(IFES)** began in Mali in 1980 and has 330 students in over 20 groups. **YWAM** also works among young people and students from six different locations.
- f) **Bible training and correspondence courses** are beginning to be used, and **TEE** classes are helping to train Christian leaders. New seminaries and training centres are popping up, including Bethel Bible Institute, Global Mission Institute and, vitally, **FATMES** (*Faculté de Théologie et de Missiologie Evangélique au Sahel*).
- g) **Christian education** is a potent tool to bless a country in need of educational development and to make clear the gospel to students and families alike. There are dozens of schools run by Christians.