



Kazakhstan

Republic of Kazakhstan

Asia

Geography

Area 2,717,300 sq km. World's ninth-largest country. Dominating Central Asia and trade routes between east and west. Much of the country is semi-desert.

| Population | Ann Gr | Density |
|------------|--------|---------|
| 2010 | 0.73% | 6/sq km |
| 2020 | 0.53% | 6/sq km |
| 2030 | 0.25% | 6/sq km |

Capital Astana 658,000. **Other major city** Almaty 1.4 million. The real population is higher than the official government figure. **Urbanites** 58.5%. **Pop under 15 yrs** 24%. **Life expectancy** 64.9 yrs.

Peoples

Diverse population with 76 peoples. The Kazakh diaspora is approximately 3.5 million. Since 1991, there has been a massive emigration of Europeans and an influx of Kazakhs. Increasing industry heralds large numbers of economic migrants.

Turkic 63.0%. Kazakh 56.2%; Uzbek 2.2%; Tatar(2) 1.7%; Uyghur 1.4%; Turkish(3) 0.5%; Azeri 0.5%.

European 35.9%.

Slavic 31.7%. Russian 27.2%; Ukrainian 3.5%; Belarusian 0.8%; Polish 0.2%.

Other 4.2%. German 2.4%; Kurdish 0.2%; Chechen 0.2%; Tajik 0.2%.

All others 1.1%. Korean 0.7%; Dungan 0.3%.

Literacy 99.5%. **Official language** Kazakh. **All languages** 43. **Indigenous languages** 8. **Languages with Scriptures** 8Bi 2NT 4por.

Economy

Enormous oil and mineral reserves have lubricated an unwieldy, reluctant change to a market economy. One of the world's fastest-growing economies. A minority profit

handsomely from the country's economic growth, while the majority suffer from poverty and the nation's well-documented ecological disasters (salt and toxic waste, radiation, pollution). **HDI Rank** 82nd/182. **Public debt** 8.6% of GDP. **Income/person** \$8,719 (18% of USA).

Politics

Declared independence after collapse of the USSR in 1991. Although a multiparty democracy, the only president since 1991 has continued his authoritarian rule and presided over recognizably tainted elections. Increased Kazakh influence in all aspects of state activity is being pursued.

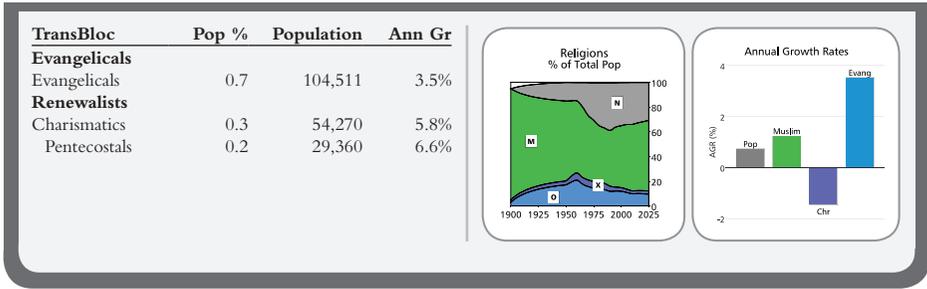
Religion

Under Communism all religion was suppressed. Today, only the traditionally recognized groups can operate freely. Increased Islamist agitation has caused the government to continually consider increasingly oppressive religion laws. These laws subsequently have an effect on the newer and more active Christian denominations and can be used to limit, restrict and even persecute Christians.

| Religions | Pop % | Population | Ann Gr |
|------------------|-------|------------|--------|
| Muslim | 53.68 | 8,456,457 | 1.2% |
| Non-religious | 33.94 | 5,346,724 | 0.8% |
| Christian | 12.15 | 1,914,045 | -1.5% |
| Buddhist | 0.15 | 23,630 | -4.9% |
| Ethnoreligionist | 0.03 | 4,726 | 0.7% |
| Jewish | 0.03 | 4,726 | -4.9% |
| Other | 0.02 | 3,151 | 15.7% |

| Christians | Denoms | Pop % | Affiliates | Ann Gr |
|--------------|--------|-------|------------|--------|
| Protestant | 48 | 0.83 | 131,000 | 2.4% |
| Independent | 8 | 0.11 | 17,000 | 5.6% |
| Catholic | 2 | 0.88 | 138,000 | -7.6% |
| Orthodox | 14 | 9.82 | 1,547,000 | -1.4% |
| Marginal | 7 | 0.28 | 44,000 | 2.7% |
| Unaffiliated | | 0.20 | 36,000 | 2.4% |

| Churches | MegaBloc | Congs | Members | Affiliates |
|-----------------------------|----------|-------|--------------|---------------------------|
| Russian Orthodox | O | 206 | 825,175 | 1,180,000 |
| Ukrainian Orthodox | O | 95 | 190,625 | 305,000 |
| Catholic Church | C | 42 | 83,916 | 120,000 |
| Jehovah's Witnesses | M | 154 | 15,357 | 43,000 |
| Ev Chr & Baptist chs | P | 315 | 11,000 | 27,500 |
| Lutheran Church | P | 65 | 11,976 | 20,000 |
| Pentecostal groups | P | 156 | 7,800 | 19,500 |
| Presbyterian Church | P | 274 | 7,400 | 18,500 |
| Ukrainian Greek Cath | C | 2 | 12,587 | 18,000 |
| Old Believers | O | 10 | 10,490 | 15,000 |
| Methodist Churches | P | 28 | 6,944 | 12,500 |
| Unregistered Baptists | P | 45 | 2,000 | 7,500 |
| Other denominations[49] | | 392 | 53,297 | 90,159 |
| Total Christians[79] | | | 1,784 | 1,238,5671,876,659 |



Answers to Prayer

- 1 The Kazakh Church continues to grow in number and stature.** From virtually no Kazakh believers in 1990, there were about 15,000 in 2010! They meet in over 100 Kazakh-speaking congregations. Two-thirds of the country's *raions* (districts) have a Christian witness. Pray for further growth (the growth rate is slowing) and maturation. Kazakhs are taking on greater leadership in churches and reaching out cross-culturally in significant numbers.
- 2 Partnerships and alliances have emerged** that cross both ethnic and denominational lines, resulting in greater cooperation in evangelism and combined meetings. There are also a large number of mixed churches, where ethnicities formerly at odds with one another find oneness in Christ.

Challenges for Prayer

- 1 Economic boom times** from the bounteous natural resources are starting to transform Kazakhstan, as new buildings spring up and industries grow. While there are many public works going on, a few privileged elite are becoming incredibly rich, while most are being bypassed by this wealth, especially in rural areas. With new money comes increasing corruption, materialism and a strong urban pull. Pray that Kazakhstan will have a government with the best interest of all its citizens in mind and that it will use the newfound wealth on works that benefit all. Pray that the failures of secular materialism might not be repeated in Kazakhstan as in the West.
- 2 The revival of Kazakh identity.** The government's deliberate policy on this issue sees a notable increase in both the use of the Kazakh language and a renaissance of Kazakh traditional culture. Despite having a very diverse population, social cohesion is quite good – pray for continued stability. Pray also that a healthy appreciation of cultural minorities might strengthen and not undermine the nation.
- 3 “To be a Kazakh is to be a Muslim”** – but theirs is a folk Islam strongly influenced by shamanistic practices. Other Muslim countries (Saudi Arabia, Iran, Turkey, Pakistan) invest huge amounts of money to send Muslim missionaries – some are effective even in converting Russians to Islam. The number of registered mosques grew from 46 in 1989 to 1,282 in 2002 (quite apart from many unregistered ones). Traditional Islam is on the rise, even trendy in some sectors, despite the government actively opposing radical Islam. Orthodox Christianity is perceived as the religion of Russians, and evangelicals are often regarded as dangerous sects. Pray for this misconception to be broken; pray for freedom from historic spiritual bondages and prejudices.
- 4 Russians and Ukrainians** – from the early 1990s onward – have emigrated back to their ancestral homeland in large numbers. Most who remain are non-religious or Orthodox with German Catholics and Lutherans as well. The Orthodox Church increasingly aligns itself with Muslims, seeking to cement its own religious status at the expense of newer religious groups. Pray for renewal among the Orthodox. Many Russians are impacted by the fast-growing evangelical/charismatic/Pentecostal churches, much more so than Kazakhs.
- 5 Unreached minorities.** Kazakhstan's cultural and religious diversity provides many opportunities for evangelizing Central Asian peoples. A number of Uzbeks and Uyghurs in Kazakhstan are

turning to Christ – and beginning to take the gospel back to their own people! Christianity is still largely an urban phenomenon, but the churches and missions (Baptists, Korean groups, some Western agencies) are recruiting for village ministry. Pray that the gospel might be shared, in the listeners' language, in the many towns and villages of this sprawling land.

6 The Christian population in Kazakhstan is slowly shifting from an ethnic European majority toward an Asian one. Korean churches have grown, as have most charismatic, Pentecostal and some Baptist groups among Central Asian ethnicities. The challenges are manifold:

- a) **Training is vital.** There were a healthy number of Bible colleges and seminaries as well as discipleship schools; all have had to shut down due to changes in the law, and none have been allowed to re-register. TEE and distance learning have potential, if churches are willing to invest in the concept. Appropriate models of training that can be implemented on a wider level are essential as budding leaders need mentors and spiritual fathers. Pray for programmes that develop informed, well-trained, godly leaders.
- b) **Culturally helpful forms of following Jesus communally.** Spirit-led expressions of Kazakh, as well as multicultural, worship, prayer, discipleship and teaching are necessary for the Church to go to the next level. Only 26% of believers are men; clearly some cultural preconceptions need to be shifted.
- c) **Persecution is increasing.** Harassment from authorities, from strident Muslims and from unbelieving family members makes life difficult, especially for converts outside the two main cities. Unconstitutional laws on registering churches are complicated by obstructionism for those who try to register and heavy fines for those who don't.
- d) **The level of unity and partnership is encouraging.** The Evangelical Alliance of Kazakhstan is at a growing stage but has great potential to draw the many groups together. Pray that in the face of increasing opposition and growing theological diversity, believers may stay united.
- e) **Kazakhstan is becoming a sending nation,** a distant dream only 15 years ago. Several mission-training institutes in Kazakhstan had been supported by a number of indigenous, Russian, Western and Korean groups and agencies until their recent closure. Kazakhs (including ethnic minorities) are a strategic key to reaching Central Asia and the Muslim world. Pray for this very young mission movement to grow and spread.

7 The expatriate Christian community is very diverse. Many speak Kazakh and are committed to long-term work in Kazakhstan. Russians, Americans, Koreans, Germans and many other nationalities all enrich the ministry in their own way. Pray for humility as they serve the indigenous Church. Thank God for the coordinating work of the Kazakh Partnership. There are many needs – reaching the unreached, training, discipling, tentmaking as well as business-as-mission and work focused on material needs. The government can be suspicious of and hostile to the presence of missionaries – pray for the doors to remain open to minister. The threat of intimidation, expulsion and even violence exists, even if it is not common.

8 Christian mercy ministries. There is widespread dysfunction and brokenness in many Kazakh families. Alcoholism and drug addiction are widespread; heroin is as easy to obtain as alcohol. Family breakdown and widespread corruption exacerbate the suffering of many. Pray for Christians to have a powerful transforming effect on society as they demonstrate Christ's love. There are increasing numbers of ministries focusing on these needs. One of the most remarkable is Mission Agape, a live-in programme where addicts are disciplined and trained – over 100 have become missionaries and church planters.

9 Christian media ministries for prayer:

- a) **Literature.** A number of denominations and organizations produce literature in Kazakh and Russian, ranging from children's books to apologetic materials. The range of topics and of target audiences is still very limited; resources for young people need to be developed. Most publications have been translated from other languages. Encouragement and help for local writers, publishers and distributors are needed to stimulate indigenous literature production. Distribution is also a challenge. Pray for God's protection and blessing from conception to distribution.
- b) **Bibles.** There is a great demand for Bibles, both among the Kazakhs and the Russians. Thousands of Bibles and portions have been distributed, but only a fraction of them in Kazakh. The NT in Kazakh is now complete (and available on cassette); the Kazakh OT is nearly complete. Also

recently completed is *God's Blessed Way*, a Russian-language Bible that is culturally sensitive to Central Asian Muslims. Pray for wide and wise distribution of all biblical materials, and pray for ongoing translation projects.

- c) **The Alpha Course** is having a significant impact. Alpha coordinators have bold visions for both church planting and leadership development.
- d) **The JESUS film** is available in Kazakh, Russian, Ukrainian, Uyghur and several other languages. A large proportion of the population have seen the film.
- e) **Radio**. Praise God for the establishment of two local Christian radio stations! These will allow the good news to be disseminated much more easily to populations in the largest cities. Only five hours a week are broadcast in Kazakh from abroad. There are also Christian broadcasts in other languages beamed in from abroad, although Russian predominates. Pray for increasing numbers of quality Kazakh programmes and for development of media ministries by the people of Kazakhstan for their own.