



Kyrgyzstan

Kyrgyz Republic

Asia

Geography

Area 198,500 sq km. Central Asian state in Tien Shan mountain range bordering on China, Kazakhstan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan. Most land area is mountainous.

Population	Ann Gr	Density
2010	5,550,239	1.23%
2020	6,159,279	0.94%
2030	6,543,486	0.51%

Capital Bishkek 863,650. **Other major city** Osh 231,000. **Urbanites** 36.6%. **Pop under 15 yrs** 29%. **Life expectancy** 67.6 yrs.

Peoples

Great ethnic diversity relative to its population.

Turkic 82.8%. Kyrgyz 64.8%; Uzbek 13.6%; Uyghur 1.0%; Tatar 0.9%; Kazakh 0.9%; Turk 0.7%.

European 14.4%.

Slavic 13.5%. Rapid decrease from 24.3% in 1989 through emigration. Russian 12.4%; Ukrainian 1.0%.

Other 0.9%. German 0.4%.

East Asian 1.6%. Dungan (Chinese Muslim) 1.1%; Korean 0.4%.

Other 1.2%. Tajik 0.9%.

Literacy 98.7%. **Official languages** Kyrgyz, Russian. **All languages** 32. **Indigenous languages** 3. **Languages with Scriptures** 2Bi 1NT 2por.

Economy

A predominantly agricultural country; still poor, but with potential in mining, hydro-electricity and tourism. Geography (very mountainous and isolated from major trade routes/partners) and the prevalence of corruption make economic development difficult. The previous government was notoriously corrupt. By contrast, the new government has stated good economic intentions,

but the fruit of these intentions remains to be seen. Widespread poverty and unemployment have caused up to 500,000 to seek work abroad, mostly in Russia and Kazakhstan.

HDI Rank 120th/182. **Public debt** 84.5% of GDP. **Income/person** \$951 (2% of USA).

Politics

Independent of the USSR in 1991. Was the first Central Asian republic to replace its post-Soviet regime, on the back of populist demonstrations in 2005 (the "Tulip Revolution"). The subsequent democratic government was troubled by the same accusations of corruption, ineptitude and heavy-handedness. Economic hardship, criminal influence over the economy and growing power of Islamic militants in the Fergana Valley in the south generate further uncertainty over the nation's political future. Riots in 2010 – orchestrated by the political opposition protesting corruption (especially in the 2009 election) and increased living costs – spread and escalated to a countrywide level. They ultimately led to the flight of the President and the swearing in of a new, provisional President in July 2010. These changes also heralded the creation of Central Asia's first parliamentary democracy. However, in June 2010, terrible violence occurred in the south of the country, mainly in two cities. Much of the violence was ethnically based (Kyrgyz and Uzbek). While the majority of those who suffered were ethnic Uzbeks, there is no evidence that a majority of Kyrgyz were involved in the violence. Most people of all ethnicities in the south fled from the troubles and simply wanted peace. There are also claims that the violence was initiated by anti-government and/or criminal drug interests.

Religion

The state has remained secular despite some pressure from Muslim and Orthodox groups for exclusive status. There has been a steady increase in restrictions on, and government scrutiny of, all religious practice, particularly since July 2007. Extremist Islamic movements are perceived by the government to be a threat, and a 2005 law against extremism was passed, as well as a new law on religious activity in January 2009. Christians, Muslims and other religious groups have all suffered in different ways under the past governments, although most persecution has been grassroots and not always "official". There is some hope that the religious laws may change under the new government, as they have restored much freedom of the press, but there are not yet any changes to the religious law.

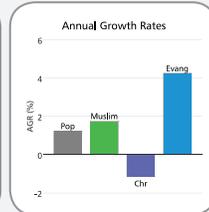
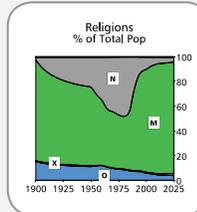
Religions	Pop %	Population	Ann Gr
Muslim	88.73	4,924,727	1.8%
Non-religious	5.30	294,163	-4.0%
Christian	5.27	292,498	-1.2%
Buddhist	0.42	23,311	3.3%
Ethnoreligionist	0.20	11,100	1.2%
Jewish	0.05	2,775	-2.4%
Baha'i	0.03	1,665	9.8%

Christians	Denoms	Pop %	Affiliates	Ann Gr
Protestant	27	0.44	24,000	0.5%
Independent	16	0.38	21,000	6.8%
Catholic	1	0.01	1,000	8.5%
Orthodox	9	4.34	241,000	-2.0%
Marginal	1	0.08	5,000	5.6%

Churches	MegaBloc	Congs	Members	Affiliates
Russian Orthodox	O	45	139,610	215,000
Ukrainian Orthodox	O	10	10,000	20,000
Ch of Jesus Christ	I	40	10,000	15,000
Pentecostal churches	P	35	4,000	8,200
Baptist churches	P	49	3,100	5,270

Jehovah's Witnesses	M	45	2,556	4,600
Lutheran Church	P	17	1,650	2,475
Seventh-day Adventist	P	28	1,000	2,400
Korean Methodist	P	8	861	1,550
Other denominations[32]		120	9,449	17,347
Total Christians[54]		397	182,226	291,842

TransBloc	Pop %	Population	Ann Gr
Evangelicals			
Evangelicals	0.7	40,152	4.3%
Renewalists			
Charismatics	0.6	30,885	5.7%
Pentecostals	0.4	23,200	5.2%



Answers to Prayer

1 **The Church grew impressively** in the first years after the nation's rebirth. It has since slowed in numbers but is maturing. Despite the laws, Kyrgyzstan still has more religious freedom than many neighbouring countries. Bible translation and resources (literature, electronic, radio and TV) have all been developed, though there is room for further growth.

Challenges for Prayer

1 **The government needs courage**, resources and even miracles to right the economy and society in general. The regimes subsequent to Communism have thus far only brought about greater corruption, crime and poverty; frequent demonstrations point to widespread disillusionment, and the 2010 protests and coup were a most poignant illustration of this. The swiftness and intensity with which such fierce violence broke out points to deeper-lying ethnic, political and communal tensions in the country. Hope and optimism for the future are scant, even though some positive foundations have been laid. Pray for a just and righteous government that will oversee the genuine transformation of the Kyrgyz nation.

2 **The people of Kyrgyzstan** continue to have the chance to hear of the Lord Jesus Christ. Pray that the harvest may continue and increase. Pray down the barriers to a people movement.

a) History. For centuries, foreigners have ruled the Kyrgyz and imposed their foreign religions – since the 8th Century foreign armies of various nations brought Islam; Russians in the 19th Century brought Orthodoxy and then imposed Communism in the 20th. Christianity is sadly associated with the occupiers who slaughtered many of the Kyrgyz people's ancestors and also with the West (and its wars in Afghanistan and Iraq).

b) A resurgent Islam. The vast majority of Kyrgyz are culturally Muslim, but practice and understanding of Islam are low. Northern Kyrgyz are more Russian-influenced, but southerners are more traditional and Islamic. Muslim missionaries (200 registered, many more unregistered) from several nations seek to strengthen and purify Islam. Around 2,000 mosques and prayer rooms were built between 2000 and 2005, mostly funded by foreign money. The close association of

Kyrgyz cultural identity and Islam makes becoming a Christian a difficult decision; the same holds true for other Central Asian peoples.

c) **Shamanism and ancestor worship** are significant forces beneath the façade of Islam. Fear of the “evil eye”, use of amulets, the occult and demonization are widespread. Shamans still wield great influence.

d) **Kyrgyz nationalism has grown** as Russian influence declined, although the Russian language serves as the vehicle of social intercourse among the 80 people groups of the country in all spheres of life. Most minorities do not speak Kyrgyz. The conflict between Kyrgyz and Uzbek in southern Kyrgyzstan in June 2010 demonstrated that all is not well in this post-Soviet multicultural society. It desperately needs healthy new ideas to fill the vacuum left by communism.

3 **Christianity** was exclusively limited to the non-indigenous communities before 1990, primarily Orthodox (mainly Slavs) and Protestant Germans. Large-scale emigration since the late 1980s has reduced Orthodoxy to a fraction of its previous population. Baptists, Pentecostals and Adventists face the struggle against decline through emigration. Newer post-1990 denominations have grown, with an increasing Kyrgyz component. The most notable growth is in charismatic churches, particularly the multicultural Church of Jesus Christ. The heady growth of the decade after independence, however, has all but halted and, in some cases, has reversed. Pray for:

a) **Further growth and multiplication of churches.** There were only 45 Protestant congregations in 1990; 20 years later that number is closing in on 300 and does not include illegal house churches. Pray that the fire and passion of the initial years will not give way to lukewarmness or false doctrines.

b) **The maturing and growth of Kyrgyz-speaking congregations.** From being a tiny minority in the Church, Kyrgyz believers are now a significant proportion of the nation’s Christians. Effective Kyrgyz Christian leaders have come to the fore, and more services are being held in Kyrgyz. There is a growing missionary concern for their own people, for other Central Asian peoples and beyond. An inter-church mission society has been formed, and several churches have sent out workers to surrounding countries

c) **Preparing leaders** is vital as the Church multiplies, matures and becomes more indigenous. While some Bible schools continue to operate, some have closed. TEE courses and training, locally run, are highly valuable. Discipleship-training courses are also being offered.

d) **Wisdom in outreach.** Culturally relevant and appropriate means need to be found and used. Muslims and Orthodox will often react strongly against perceived proselytism. Many Kyrgyz are held back from faith by fear of alienation from families, fear of not being given a proper burial and by negative propaganda.

e) **Unity among Christians.** Cooperation/collaboration of denominations and ethnicities is vital for the sake of both effectiveness and a good testimony to all in this nation where racism is evident. The wide gulf between the Orthodox and non-Orthodox continues to be a problem.

4 **Expatriate Christians** number several hundred from Asia, the Americas and Europe. Most are tentmakers and need to minister with discretion. Missionaries need to work with the goal of developing the local church so that it is strong and has a healthy relationship with the global body of Christ. Good relationships between national and expatriate believers is also a key; several informal networks focus on unity and strategy for all believers working for God’s Kingdom in Kyrgyzstan.

5 **Persecution** is partly the consequence of church growth and evangelism in a Muslim land. The government is taking a harder line toward any religious expression which it feels may cause social or political instability, and this includes evangelicals. Registration is commonly denied to churches, and expatriate work permits are limited. Beyond growing government hostility, resurgent Islamism targets evangelicals with intimidation, property destruction and physical violence. Scaremongering by Muslims, claiming astronomical and untrue growth in the churches, helps little. Pray for believers to stand firm and demonstrate the power and love of Christ.

6 **The economic situation affects all.** The poor, the elderly and the disabled suffer the most. Pray that local Christians might find gainful, legal employment; micro-enterprises are making a difference in this area. There is a large-scale movement of people from rural to urban areas in order to find work, creating a growing underclass of slum dwellers in Bishkek. Large numbers leave Kyrgyzstan to find work in Kazakhstan and Russia. High rates of alcoholism, corruption, international drug trafficking, gambling, prostitution and unemployment are all huge challenges; pray that believers can address these and have a transformational effect on society and the economy.

7 The less evangelized for prayer:

- a) **The rural and semi-nomadic pastoralist Kyrgyz** who usually live in more remote villages. Few have heard of Christ, and the majority of the nation's unreached live in rural areas.
- b) **The Fergana Valley** in the south is shared with Tajikistan and Uzbekistan. The Tajik and large Uzbek minorities (770,000 combined) are mostly unreached. This is where Islamic insurgents flow in across the borders and where Islam is more strident. The few successful church plants here are meeting significant opposition.
- c) **The Dungan** are descendants of Chinese Muslim refugees who speak Chinese but use a Cyrillic alphabet. In 2000, a significant multi-agency effort to reach them began.
- d) **The many smaller ethnicities** blanketing the country who have little to no specific outreach: Tatars, Chinese, Uyghur, Jews and many others.

8 Christian support ministries are varied. There are many possibilities in literature and electronic media, but the greatest potential for positive impact might be medical, community development and business ministries. Pray specifically for:

- a) **Bible translation, publishing and distribution.** The NT was first published in 1992, the same time as a Kyrgyz version of the Qur'an. In 2000, Beam of Hope published a translation of both the Old and New Testaments. This is widely used by Kyrgyz Christians. IBT, UBS and Linguaserve, together, produced an improved and more readable NT in 2006. Work has started on a revision of the Old Testament.
- b) **Christian literature** is a great challenge. There are three main Christian publishers as well as a key bookstore in Bishkek. Little Christian literature is available in Kyrgyz, and evangelistic, apologetic and teaching materials are needed. Pray for economic self-sufficiency, for Christian publishers, for increased numbers of indigenous authors and for a greater variety of titles for this ministry.
- c) **The JESUS film** is widely viewed on TV and in film showings in Russian and in Kyrgyz. It is also available in many other minority languages. God's Story is also available in Kyrgyz.
- d) **Christian radio.** TWR airs programmes in Kyrgyz, in other Central Asian languages and in Russian, which most people understand.