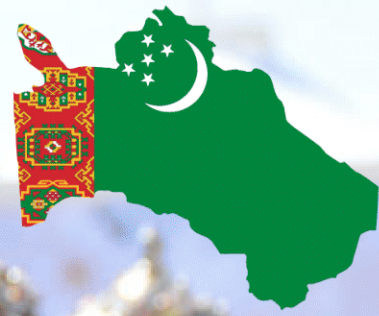


TURKMEN



Quick Facts

- Population: 8 million (worldwide)
- Progress: 1000+ believers
- Language: Turkmen
- Scripture: Entire Bible now available online
- Locations: Turkmenistan, Afghanistan, Iran, Iraq, Pakistan, Uzbekistan, Syria, China, Russia, Tajikistan



Turkmenistan's waterless terrain is inhospitable to plant and animal life, but it is still home to over five million Turkmen. Oases, found mostly along the foothills and rivers, are a welcome site in this nation comprised of 80% desert. Although desolate, its rolling sand dunes and ragged mountain ranges provide a beautiful landscape. With rich deposits of oil and gas, Turkmenistan has discovered great wealth even within the desert.

**"Water is a Turkmen's life, a horse is his wings,
and a carpet is his soul" -Proverb**

Once made a part of the Soviet Union, Turkmen property was taken, traditions were removed, and the Turkmen's nomadic lifestyle came to an end. Turkmenistan gained its independence from the Soviet Union in the 1990s, but change has been very slow. Communist rule was replaced by a dictatorship until 2006. Rising crime, poverty, unemployment, and drug use have made progress difficult. The administration, although claiming to be a presidential republic and secular democracy, has often operated under more authoritarian rules, sacrificing certain human rights and religious freedoms. Despite the wealth brought in by the oil and gas industry, many of the Turkmen people remain impoverished.



Their culture has been strongly influenced in the past by both the Turkic conquerors, who imposed their language on them, and the Arabs, who forced them to convert to Islam. Long ago, they developed a strong ethnic identity as "children of the desert" because they would plunder rich caravans of Persian traders.

Tribal loyalties continue to have a strong influence over the people. The largest descent group is the tribe, then the clan, then the family. Members of a tribe are bound by a strong sense of family loyalty. Tribal loyalty is reinforced by the fact that the Turkmen will only marry within their tribes. Arranged marriages are common, and families often intermarry to preserve wealth. Although there have been political and economic changes through the years, less changes have occurred in the areas of family life and religion.

Although the constitution claims religious freedom, the reality is quite different. With Sunni Islam (89%) and Russian Orthodoxy (9%) considered the only two legal religions, persecution of other faiths is prevalent. Unregistered religious gatherings are forbidden, often suffering grave consequences.

But persecution and restriction have only strengthened the Turkmen Church.

With almost all foreign missionaries expelled, several pastors exiled, beaten, or imprisoned, and the Bible not yet fully translated, the spread of the Gospel in Turkmenistan faces great challenges. Yet, the church continues to grow amid constant threat.

(Profile Information from Joshua Project and PrayerCast)



Engagement Opportunities

- Get informed - [PrayerCast](#) / [10 Things](#) / [Visual Tour](#) / [The North Korea of Central Asia](#) / [Turkmen of Tajikistan](#)
- Turkmenistan is very closed to foreign workers, but there are ways to serve long term among Turkmen diaspora in Central Asia and other countries

Pray

- that God would raise up strong, bold Turkmen believers that will preach the Gospel without fearing for their lives.
- for the Lord to call people who are willing to live among the Turkmen and share with them the love of Christ.
- that Christian radio broadcasts and literature will be made available to the Turkmen.

Is God calling you to serve? Let us help you respond. Contact us.