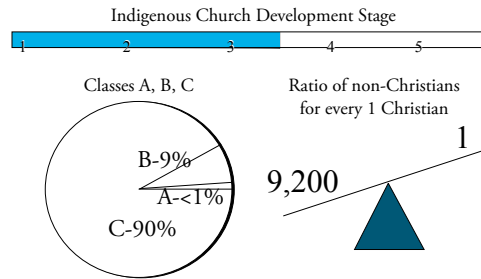


Azeri



Quick Facts

Population: 23,000,000
 Iran: 15,000,000
 Azerbaijan: 7,000,000
 Turkey: 700,000
 Iraq: 150,000
Religion: Shia Islam
Believers: 0.01%
Scriptures: NT, OT
Ministry Tools: JRGT
Church Status: 3
Mission Status: 2
MS Subgroups: 25+



Class A- Are members of a Culturally Relevant Church
 Class B- Have close access to a CRC, but have not yet joined
 Class C- Have no reasonable or close access to a CRC

Identity: The Azeris are the third largest Turkish ethnicity in the world. Their language is closely related to Anatolian Turkish, though the two are not mutually intelligible. As an ethnic group they are divided culturally between the Persian Azeris and the Azerbaijanis, the two populations having been isolated from one another due to the politics of the region.

Lifestyle: In both Iran and Azerbaijan, the Azeris have historically done well economically due to fertile agricultural land in Iran and abundant oil reservoirs in Azerbaijan. The Soviets rapidly industrialized Azerbaijan, seeking to create a model for other Turkish groups. Post-Soviet life has been marred by incredible corruption, resulting in a steady deterioration of living standards and a rise in poverty.

Customs: Traditionally, the Azeris practiced a clan residential system in which all the members of the clan

shared a common pastureland and place of worship. As the population grew, this evolved into a strict social stratification with status groups and classes being divided between those with land and those without—the latter being further divided between an exploited peasantry on one end and wealthy families engaging in business and trading on the other.

Religion: In Iran, the Azeris follow Shia Islam along with the Persians and celebrate the same festivals and historical remembrances. In Azerbaijan, they are divided between 70% Shia and 30% Sunni. The most important celebration for the Azeri Shias is the *Muharram*, which recalls the martyrdom of Muhammad's grandson Imam Hussain by Umayyid Caliph. This celebration annually reinforces the Shia mistrust of secular leaders and government.

Christian Outreach: The breakthrough among the Azerbaijanis began in the city of Baku through Russian speak-

ing congregations. Now hundreds of Azerbaijanis are coming to faith in Christ every year and dozens of new fellowships have been pioneered which are a majority Azeri. In Iran, however, the breakthrough has yet to come and Christian outreach is minimal.

How to Pray:

☞ Praise God for the recent completion of the Bible in Azeri. Pray for its effective use among Azeri believers for both discipleship and evangelism.

☞ Ask God to thrust out Azeri believers in Azerbaijan to proclaim the gospel among the Iranian Azeris, which are twice as large in population.

☞ Praise God for the transition from a Russified Azeri Church to a truly indigenous one. Pray for the selection and training of Azeri leaders, and for God's continued blessing on the Bible colleges in Baku.

☞ Pray for continued freedom to proclaim the gospel in Azerbaijan, and for favorable conditions in Iran for the establishment of the Church. Pray against anti-Christian legislation that seek to restrict the public expression of the Church.

Every year 210,000 Azeris die without Christ.