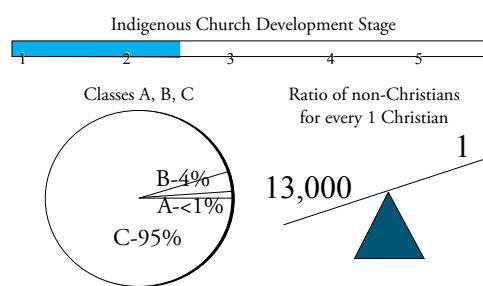


# Turkmen



## Quick Facts

**Population:** 7,500,000  
Turkmenistan: 4,000,000  
Iraq: 1,200,000  
Iran: 1,000,000  
Afghanistan: 800,000  
**Religion:** Islam-Sunni, Shia  
**Believers:** 0.007%  
**Scriptures:** Portions  
**Ministry Tools:** JRGT  
**C Status:** 2  
**M Status:** 2  
**MS Subgroups:** 20+



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 Turkmen are a confederation of seven major tribes, and many smaller ones, which speak related dialects and share a common history and identity as a military alliance of Turko-Mongolian nomadic bands. In their Southwestern migration, beginning in the 9th century, they absorbed many northern Iranian peoples, forming a unique culture and genetic mix.

**Lifestyle:** As recently as the last century, almost all Turkmen lived in Yurts (large tents) and maintained mobility for the sake of their herds. Today 40% of the population is urbanized, and oil revenue is transforming the economy, albeit at a slow pace due to high levels of government corruption. Around 80% of Turkmenistan is desert, and only 1% of the country is arable through irrigation from the Amu Darya river, which is heavily polluted.

**Customs:** Traditionally, a man will leave his father's household at around

the age of 30 or 40, or once his own sons become of age to work and his daughters can be married off. The bride price is typically set at 10 camels or 100 sheep, and once the exchange is made, the bride becomes a member of her husband's household. During the day, women work together to weave elaborate carpets. Once sold, they quickly find their way to international markets.

**Religion:** The Central Asian Turkmen have always regarded their Hanafi Sunni heritage as part of their ethnic identity. However, in the last two centuries many Middle Eastern Turkmen have become Shiites due to influence from local Persian and Arab Shia groups. In a bizarre twist, the highly orthodox Turkmen are now led by a dictator in Turkmenistan who is seeking to create his own version of Islam, which is essentially an imposed and undesired personality cult.

**Christian Outreach:** The fledgling Turkmen Church in Turkmenistan has

been brutally persecuted over the last decade. Around 15 underground fellowships continue to operate under the radar of constant surveillance. Since 1997 all missionaries known to the government have been forced to leave, and indigenous pastors have been separated from their families through state-enforced exile, following their arrest.

## How to Pray:

❖ Pray for those missionaries working secretly in Turkmenistan that they might be hidden in Christ, and that their work might be productive in spite of ministry restrictions.

❖ Pray for the completion of the Bible in Turkmen, and that its distribution in Turkmenistan would not be hindered by the government or religious leaders.

❖ Praise God for the deployment of missionary teams throughout each of the major Turkmen population centers in the Middle East and Central Asia in the last decade. Pray for continued open doors and open hearts.

❖ Pray for specialized outreach to each of the major Turkmen tribes: the Teke, Yomut, Gokle, Salor, Saryk, Chaudor and Ersari.

**Every year 70,000 Turkmen die without Christ.**