

URUMQI 乌鲁木齐

Urumqi City, the capital of the Xinjiang Uygur Autonomous Region in northwest China, is home to more than 1.6 million people. Xinjiang was formerly part of a self-governing land called Eastern Turkestan, before it was annexed by China in 1876 and renamed Xinjiang, which means 'New Frontier'. Urumqi is actually a Mongol name, meaning 'fine pasture'. In Chinese, the four characters used to transliterate the name of the city are pronounced "Woo-loo-moo-chee".

Although more than three-fourths of the people now living in Urumqi are Han Chinese, many parts of the city have a decidedly Islamic feel about them. The city is home to more than 160,000 Uygurs, 83,000 Hui, and 15,500 Kazaks—all Muslim groups. The Central Asian flavor of Urumqi can be seen by the wide array of smaller ethnic groups also living here, including 7,000 Manchus, 4,500 Mongols, 3,000 Xibe, 2,200 Russians, 1,200 Uzbeks, 900 Kirgiz and 700 Tatar. In total, people from 41 of China's 55 official minority groups have taken up residence in Urumqi City.

The history of Urumqi dates back 3,000 years, when it was a major stop on the ancient Silk Road that was inhabited by various Turkic and Mongolian tribes. Transformation has been dramatic in Xinjiang in recent

Population:
1,217,316 (1990)
1,635,900 (2000)
2,198,500 (2010)

Province:
Xinjiang

Major Ethnic Groups:

Han 76.8%
Uygur 13.3%
Hui 6.8%
Kazak 1.3%

Christians:
30,000 (1.8%)

decades. In 1953, 70% of the population of Xinjiang was Uygur, with only a small number of Han in the region. The Chinese have since migrated into Xinjiang in massive numbers. The Uygurs are now a minority in their own homeland. In Urumqi, they comprise just 13% of the population. The population of Urumqi boomed after the completion of the trainline from Lanzhou in the 1950's. Winters in Urumqi are extremely harsh, with heavy snowfall and temperatures often falling to around -25°C (-13°F).

The Uygur minority group are an ancient and proud Turkic people, now numbering about nine million members in China.

They are as different from the Han Chinese as can be. Many of them are larger and thick-set, have big noses and olive skin, and are zealous adherents to Islam. Uygur women wear colorful dresses and headscarves. Northwest China and Mongolia are actually the original homelands of the Turk race. Those Turkic peoples now living throughout Central Asia, Russia, and of course Turkey, are believed to have migrated from China and Mongolia long ago. In recent years, the Uygurs have been encouraged by the political developments among their kin in the former Soviet Republics, and a growing independence movement has surfaced in Xinjiang. Riots, bombings and protests by the Uygur have been met with brutal force by the Chinese

authorities, who are not willing to give up an inch of Xinjiang. In 1996 alone, 57,000 Uygurs were arrested and 1,700 executed for "separatist activities." There is considerable racial tension between the Han and the Uygurs in Xinjiang. The Uygurs consider their homeland an occupied country, but it is difficult to see them overcoming the Chinese, especially as nearly half of the province's population is now Han. The Uygurs are being overwhelmed by sheer weight of numbers. In many ways, the situation in Xinjiang mirrors what happened to many Native American tribes after the West was opened up.

The tension between people groups has led to a curious situation among the church in Urumqi. Many of the Chinese who volunteered to resettle in Xinjiang were Christians, who saw the move as an opportunity to share their faith with the minority groups there. Hatred and prejudice, however, run so hot in Xinjiang that the Han Christians have found it virtually impossible to share the Gospel with the Uygurs or the other Muslim minorities. One visitor reported, "Many Han church leaders in Xinjiang openly acknowledge, without guilt or shame, that they do not have a burden for these people." One church elder, when asked about evangelizing Uygurs, "responded by shouting, 'You're crazy!'"

Ironically, during the 12th and 13th centuries the majority of Uygurs were considered Christian. In the 14th century Christianity disappeared from among the Uygurs for 500 years, and they converted to Islam. The Swedish Missionary Union recommenced work among them in 1892. By the 1930's more than 300 had been converted. In 1933 Abdullah Khan expelled the missionaries, and eliminated the Uygur believers in a mass execution. Today, even though there is a growing Han church in Urumqi, the Uygurs and other Muslim groups remain almost completely untouched and unevangelized.



Before their conversion to Islam, the Uygur people worshipped fire. Today, their women's colorful dress is designed to imitate flames when they dance and twirl.

Pray for Urumqi

- 1 Pray the Prince of Peace will come in and bring peace between the peoples in Urumqi by Jesus Christ coming into people's hearts and changing them from the inside-out.
- 2 Pray the Han believers in Xinjiang would repent of any feelings of bitterness and superiority against the Uygurs, and would humbly seek God for ways to win them to Christ.
- 3 Pray the Uygurs would return to their former Christian roots and again be known as a people who follow the Lamb of God.

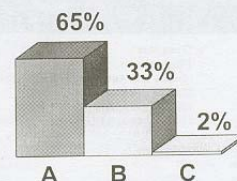
Overview of Urumqi

Pronunciation : "Ooh-roo-moo-chee"
Old Spelling : Wu-lu-mu-chi
Location : Xinjiang Uygur Autonomous Region, northwest China
Population : 1,217,316 (1990 census)
Males : 631,194 (51.85%)
Females : 586,122 (48.15%)
Households : 317,543
Average household : 3.83 people
Divorced people : 13,482
% of population : 1.11%
Centurions (1990) : 7 people aged 100 or more
Immigrants to City : 28,357 per year
From same province : 17,655 (62.3%)
From other provinces : 10,699 (37.7%)

Employed people : 638,093 (52.2% of total population)
Main Industries : Industrial 36.4%; Professional 18.5%; Commerce 13%
Educational : University: 4.6%
Attainment : High School: 64.6%
(highest level attended) : Primary School: 22.2%
Never attended any level of school: 9.5%
Population under 15 : 18.2%
Adult Literacy : 92% (men 95%; women 88%)
Major Nationalities : Han 934,877
Uygur 161,643
Hui 83,001
Kazak 15,462
Manchu 6,730
Others (37 groups): 15,603
Christians : 30,000 (1.8%)



Status of Evangelization (Awareness of Christ and the Gospel)



A = have never heard the Gospel or the name of Christ
B = were evangelized but have not yet become Christians
C = Adherents to any form of Christianity