



Australian Government

**Department of Immigration
and Multicultural Affairs**

UZBEK

COMMUNITY PROFILE





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This booklet has been compiled by the national office of the Department of Immigration and Multicultural Affairs to assist state and territory governments, service providers and other key settlement stakeholders to settle new entrants under Australia's Humanitarian Programme.

Accurate information about the pre-arrival experiences of refugees, including environmental conditions in camps, can be difficult to obtain and verify. While every effort has been made to ensure this document is factually correct, it may contain some inaccuracies.

Refugee experiences can vary considerably between individuals. Readers should note that this document is intended to provide a general background of the possible experiences of arrivals under the Humanitarian Programme. Information presented here may not always be applicable to individuals within the community in Australia or to new arrivals.

Where possible, more detailed information on specific groups of arrivals will be provided to service providers as an adjunct to this and other Community Profiles.

Policies in relation to Australia's Humanitarian Programme change over time. For current information visit the department's website at www.immi.gov.au.

The information provided in this document does not necessarily represent the views of the Commonwealth or its employees.

Introduction

The Republic of Uzbekistan is a landlocked country in Central Asia. It shares borders with Kazakhstan to the west and to the north, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan to the east, and Afghanistan and Turkmenistan to the south.

Uzbekistan was formerly part of the USSR. It declared independence from the Soviet Union in 1991, joining the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) – a grouping of former Soviet republics – after the collapse of the Soviet Union.

Uzbekistan covers 447 400 square kilometres. The capital city is Tashkent. Other major cities are Samarkand and Bukhara. Uzbekistan is the most populous country in Central Asia. Its 27 million people are concentrated in the south and east of the country.

A number of Uzbeks from the city of Andijan (also known as Andijon) were resettled in Australia in early 2006. These people were part of a group of 400 that was forced to flee Uzbekistan as a result of action taken against them by security forces while participating in a demonstration in Andijan on 13 May 2005.

After fleeing from Uzbekistan they sought refuge in neighbouring Kyrgyzstan and remained there for ten weeks in Sasik (also known as Sasyk) camp. They were then evacuated by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) to Timisoara Transit Centre (TTC) in Romania, due to concerns that they would be extradited from Kyrgyzstan by the Uzbekistan government to face possible reprisals. Romania has no extradition agreement with Uzbekistan.

The group was referred by UNHCR for resettlement to USA, Australia, Canada and other resettlement countries. The Uzbeks who came to Australia have been separated from their families and are likely to seek to have remaining close family members join them here once settled. One of the factors taken into consideration in the selection of this group is that families are related to other families within the group.

Community in Australia

Demographics

The group resettled in Australia comprises 26 males and 25 females, ranging from 1 year to 56 years of age. The majority of the group are of working age. The group comprises a mixture of single men and women, several husband and wife couples, a few family groups of father, mother and child or children, and some mothers with children. Approximately half are in some form of family grouping. Many have left family members in Uzbekistan, including immediate family members (spouses and dependent children up to 18 years old).

Language

This particular group speaks Uzbek, although most of them understand Russian at a rudimentary level. English was taught to children at Timisoara Transit Centre.

As the existing community of Uzbeks in Australia is very small, the availability of official translators/interpreters is limited. There are registered TIS interpreters available in Adelaide, South Australia.

Health

International Organisation for Migration (IOM) physicians conducted preliminary health assessments upon the group's arrival in Romania and found the group to be healthy overall.

Members of the group witnessed shootings and/or killing by government troops, including of relatives, prior to fleeing Uzbekistan. It is expected they may require counselling or psychological assistance. Trauma resulting from the violence they witnessed may be compounded by the emotional effects of separation from their families and fear for the safety of relatives left behind in Uzbekistan.



Cultural Background

The majority of the group are ethnic Uzbeks, although there are a few ethnic Tajiks and Kyrgyz as well.

Most of the original group resettled in Australia are Muslim, and follow some Muslim cultural practices, such as avoiding pork and slaughtering sheep according to halal practices. Traditionally, women eat separately, wear head scarves whenever they are outside, and do not mingle socially with men. In Timisoara Transit Centre (TTC) it was observed that some of the Uzbeks followed the tradition of Ramadan.

Education

The majority have between 8 and 10 years of education. The reported literacy rate for Uzbeks over the age of 15 years is 99 - 100 per cent.

The Uzbek language has traditionally been written in Cyrillic script but Latin script was introduced in 1991. This fact should be considered in translation of written information into Uzbek.

Skills/Qualifications

Most of the men are traders, craftsmen, small scale entrepreneurs or service workers such as cooks. A few have farming backgrounds. Most of the women are homemakers, although a few sometimes work as cleaners or seamstresses.

Pre-arrival experiences

The group resettled in Australia lived in refugee camps for approximately eight months. They fled to Kyrgyzstan from Andijan, Uzbekistan on 13 May 2005. In Kyrgyzstan they were accepted into a refugee camp near the town of Sasik. In late July 2005, they were flown to Romania and lived in Timisoara Transit Centre (TTC) until they were resettled in Australia in late February 2006.

Romania was chosen as a place of temporary asylum because the country has already had a positive experience with large-scale resettlement programmes. The country has no extradition arrangements with Uzbekistan, and a refugee camp (TTC) was available. Romania is also a candidate to join the European Union, and its refugee/asylum legislation and implementation are seen as effective and progressive.

Timisoara Transit Centre (TTC)

Timisoara is a city in western Romania near the Serbian border. The population of Timisoara is about 330 000. TTC is run by the National Refugee Office (under the Romanian Interior Ministry).

Conditions in the camp were acceptable, but crowded. The camp is 75m by 200m, and can accommodate approximately 200 people.

The refugees lived in four single-story buildings, men and women staying separately. They had a separate TV room. Most Uzbeks stayed in the camp for weeks at a time since they had no need to leave, and required special permission to do so.

They spent their time preparing their own food, playing soccer and table tennis, and watching television (mostly Russian channels available through satellite). There was also a soccer field in the middle of the camp. People played football, tennis and chess.

While at TTC, the Australian Cultural Orientation Programme (AUSCO) was provided along the lines of the programme delivered to humanitarian entrants in Cairo.

Uzbekistan country background

Location

Uzbekistan is in Central Asia, north of Afghanistan. It shares borders with Afghanistan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Turkmenistan, and includes the southern part of the Aral Sea. The capital, Tashkent, is in the northeast of the country, near the Kazakhstan border.



Uzbekistan is a dry, landlocked country of which 11 per cent consists of intensely cultivated, irrigated river valleys. More than 60 per cent of its population lives in densely populated rural communities.

Climate and topography

The country experiences long hot summers and mild winters. It has a sharply continental climate with a large range of temperatures during day and night, and in summer and winter. January is the coldest month of the year with temperatures of -8°C in the north while July is the hottest month of the year with temperatures of $25 - 30^{\circ}\text{C}$ in the north and up to $31 - 32^{\circ}\text{C}$ in the south. Temperatures of $42 - 47^{\circ}\text{C}$ are normal for all the plains and foothills of Uzbekistan. In the desert, during the hottest period, the temperature can rise to 70°C .

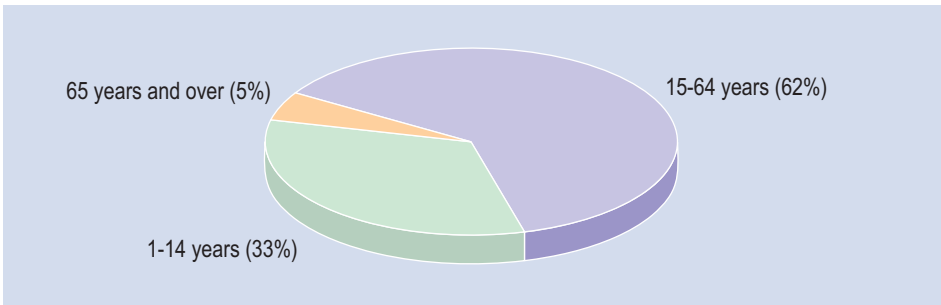
The terrain is mostly flat to rolling sandy desert, with broad, flat river valleys that are intensively irrigated.

Population

Uzbekistan has an estimated population of 27 million, with a population growth rate of approximately 1.7 per cent. Approximately 33 per cent of the population is aged one - 14 years, 62 per cent is aged 15 - 64 years and five per cent is aged 65 years and over. Average life expectancy is around 64 years (61 years for males, 68 years for females).

According to the World Health Organisation (WHO), the average family size in Uzbekistan in 1997 was 5.6 people, slightly higher in rural areas. Since 2000, the fertility rate has gradually decreased from 3.09 to a current rate of approximately 2.91 children born per woman.

Figure 1. Population by age group



Ethnicity

There are many ethnic groups in Uzbekistan. However, the largest group is Uzbeks at 80 per cent.

Figure 2. Ethnicity in Uzbekistan (Per cent)

Uzbek	Russian	Tajik	Kazakh	Karakalpak	Tartar	Other
80.0	5.5	5.0	3.0	2.5	2.5	2.5

Health

The most common causes of health problems in Uzbekistan are poverty and water contamination. An increase in HIV infection has been reported by United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), who claim that a lack of sexual education for young people is a contributing factor.

Education

In 2003, Uzbeks over 15 years had a literacy rate of approximately 99 per cent.

Language

Uzbek is the official language of the state, and Russian is the acknowledged second language. Uzbek is a Turkik language but is mutually unintelligible with most other Turkik languages such as Turkish, Mongol, Kazakh and Azeri. Residents of Uzbekistan are required to study Uzbek to be eligible for citizenship.

Uzbek is the most commonly used language in the country, although Russian remains the language of inter-ethnic communication and business. Turkish and Arabic are also spoken. English and other Western languages are increasingly common, particularly in Tashkent and other urban areas.

Figure 3. Languages spoken in Uzbekistan (Per cent)

Uzbek	Russian	Tajik	Other
74.3	14.2	4.4	7.1

Economy

Uzbekistan is the world's second-largest cotton exporter, a large producer of gold and oil, and a regionally significant producer of chemicals and machinery. Major occupations include agriculture and forestry (44 per cent), industry and construction (20 per cent) and service industries (25 per cent).

According to the World Bank, in 2000, 27.5 per cent of the population of Uzbekistan was living in poverty.

History

In the 1st century BC, present-day Uzbekistan formed a part of the trade route, known as the Great Silk Road, linking China with the Middle East and imperial Rome. Territories in this area



Credit unions provide access to financing for thousands of small businesses. (World Council of Credit Unions, Inc)

of the world became a part of the Persian empire in the 6th century and elements of this rich culture are evident today. Throughout the 7th and 8th centuries, Arabs conquered Uzbekistan and introduced Islam. The Persian Samanid dynasty dominated in the 9th and 10th centuries when the important centre of Islamic culture, Bukhara, was created. Late in the 10th century, this culture began to decline and the Turks moved in. During the 13th and 14th centuries, Genghis Khan and his Mongol empire took over Uzbekistan and Central Asia. The Turkic ruler, Tamerlane, fought and captured Uzbekistan in the 14th century, making Samarkand the capital of the land. Following the fall of the Turkish empire, Uzbek nomads ruled the region.


Russia conquered Uzbekistan in the late 19th century. Stiff resistance to the Red Army after World War I was eventually suppressed and Uzbekistan was incorporated into the USSR in 1924. During the Soviet era, intensive production of cotton and grain led to overuse of agrochemicals and the depletion of water supplies, which have left the land poisoned and the Aral Sea and certain rivers half dry. Independent since 1991, the country has sought to gradually lessen its dependence on agriculture while developing its mineral and petroleum reserves.

Political

Uzbekistan gained independence following the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991. Although a new constitution was adopted on 8 December 1992, the legal system still resembles Soviet civil law and Uzbekistan lacks an independent judicial system.



Flag of Uzbekistan



The current president, Islam Karimov, has held his position since 1990 when he was elected by the Supreme Soviet. He was re-elected in a general election in 1991. In 1995, a referendum extended his term of office until 2000. In January 2000 he was re-elected and then in 2002, another referendum further extended his term to seven years. The next election is due in 2007. Current government concerns include terrorism by Islamic militants, economic stagnation and the need to maintain political stability.

On 13 May 2005, citizens (reportedly up to 10 000 people) gathered in Andijan to protest against the government. The demonstrations were the culmination of a series of events that the Uzbek Government perceived as criminal, anti-government and organised by religious fundamentalist terrorists. Hundreds of people were reportedly killed in Andijan when security forces opened fire on the crowd. The United Nations and many countries have called for an independent, international inquiry into the event. The international community and many non-governmental organisations have expressed concerns about the human rights situation in Uzbekistan.

Sources of information

The information compiled in this report comes from a variety of sources as follows:

- emails and discussions with relevant staff working with entrants from this community
- discussions with staff in the department's national office as well as state and territory offices
- the department's Settlement Database
- the following references:

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