

People Groups & “Unreached”

PEOPLE GROUPS

Before we talk about an *unreached* people group, we need to define what a *people group* is (regardless of its “reached-ness”). People groups can be viewed as what the Bible often calls *nations*, as in Matthew 28, “...go and make disciples of **all the nations** (Greek *ethne*).” Similarly, Revelation speaks of *every tribe, nation, tongue and people*. Lines between one people group and another can be drawn based on various factors such as:

- Language
- Social class/status (such as the caste system)
- Race or ethnic origin
- Geography

It is difficult to give clear criteria for what distinguishes one people group from another – there is not a one-size-fits-all method. For example, in Rwanda there are Hutus and Tutsis. Individuals from the two groups often look very similar, live among each other, and speak the same language, but there is a clear “us” and “them” mentality.

People groups are a universal concept, not just vocabulary for mission minded Christians. However, from a Christian and church planting perspective, a *people group* has been defined as *the largest group within which the gospel can spread as a church planting movement without encountering barriers of understanding or acceptance*. Once a significant barrier of understanding or acceptance is encountered, that may distinguish one people group from another. Language is almost always a barrier (i.e., if you can’t understand what they’re saying, you can’t understand the gospel!). Culture can lead to barriers as well, such as in India – if Christianity is identified as the faith of the dalits, then that is a major barrier to the gospel spreading to the upper castes.

Here is a summary definition that may make more sense at this point:

People Group (or people): A significantly large ethnic or sociological grouping of individuals who perceive themselves to have a common affinity with one another. For evangelistic purposes, it is the largest group within which the gospel can spread as a church planting movement without encountering barriers of understanding or acceptance.

UNREACHED PEOPLE GROUPS

Only when we have a concept of a *people group* can we talk about “unreached” people groups.

An **unreached** people group can be defined as a people group which has no indigenous community of believing Christians with adequate numbers and resources to finish evangelizing their community without outside, cross-cultural assistance.

In other words, if the Christians in a given people group could evangelize their own group, that PG would be considered “reached.” This does not mean that everyone in the people group has heard about Christ. Rather, **the gospel has reached that PG as a whole; the PG as a whole now has access to the gospel**. If outside, cross-cultural assistance is needed to evangelize their own PG, the PG is “unreached.” We must think in terms of people groups *as a whole*. The question is not, *Has everyone in the people group heard the gospel?* Rather, the question is, *Does the people group as a whole have access to the gospel?*

Other good sources of info:

- Chapter 5 of *Let the Nations Be Glad* (Piper)
- www.joshuaproject.net/definitions.html

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So here’s the big picture, plus the challenge for 121 Community Church....

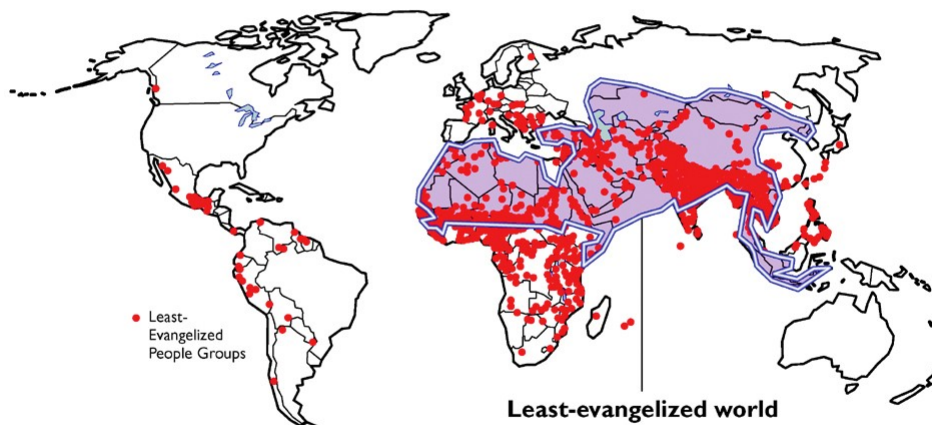
In some places, the people group picture is very simple. For instance, in Croatia, there is one major people group -- the Croats. There are a handful of other PGs, such as Gypsies and Serbs, but the vast majority of the population is Croat and identify with one another as “us.” In other places, the people group picture is far more complex. Some countries have one main people group, while others have hundreds. Here is the challenging news for 121 - *India is by far the most complicated country on earth in terms of people groups!* There are over 2,000 PGs in India – far more than any other country. As far as reached vs. unreached, the latest estimates are that there are approximately 6,000 UPGs in the world, and over 2,000 of those are in India!

Here are the five countries that present the greatest challenge from a people group perspective:

<u>Country</u>	<u># People Groups Total</u>	<u># Unreached Peoples</u>
India	2329	2094
Pakistan	477	472
China	494	409
Nepal	393	330
Bangladesh	375	277

The reason that the “10/40 Window” has gotten so much attention is the vast majority of remaining unreached people groups are inside that area. Here's a look at the big picture of the least reached groups:

Who has not heard?

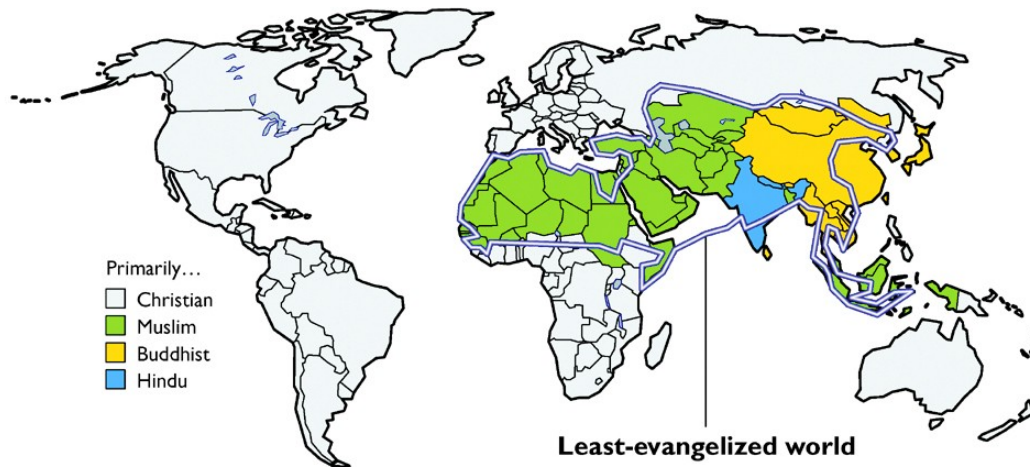


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If we lay aside the “people group” terminology and just focus on individuals, here is another way to see it. Of the more than 6.4 billion people in the world, 1.8 billion are unevangelized:

- Nearly 1/3 live and die never having *any opportunity* to hear the gospel (i.e., they have no access to the gospel).
- Adding 700 million with very limited access, there are 2,300,000,000 with no or very limited access to even hearing the gospel
- *Saved vs. lost* measures **response**. *Reached vs. unreached* measures **access**.

The world by religion



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Where are the Long Term Missionaries?

The following table gives the most comprehensive and up-to-date picture of where missionaries have been sent...

<i>Region</i>	<i>Aliens received total</i>	<i>Aliens received per million</i>	<i>Population estimate for 2010</i>
Africa	90,463	115.3	973,315,192
Antarctica	10	2,222.2	6,193
Asia	57,970	15.7	4,135,949,307
Europe	105,699	145.0	724,242,074
Latin America	108,121	208.3	595,030,371
North America	41,400	133.7	332,050,930
Oceania	15,766	518.7	34,179,316
WORLD A	10,178	16.8	744,275,621
WORLD B	103,065	27.4	4,193,116,856
WORLD C	306,186	180.7	1,857,380,906
GLOBAL TOTAL	419,429	69.3	6,794,773,383

World A *peoples* are defined as “ethnolinguistic peoples each with over 50% of population unevangelized.”

(World A *countries* are defined as “countries in which evangelized individuals number under 50% of the population.”)

World B *peoples* are defined as “ethnolinguistic peoples among whom evangelized persons number over 50% but Christians under 60%.”

(World B *countries* are defined as “countries in which evangelized persons number over 50% but Christians number less than 60%.”)

World C *peoples* are defined as “ethnolinguistic peoples among whom 60% or more of the population are Christian” (using Christian in the broadest sense).

(World C *countries* are defined as “countries in which Christians number 60% or more of the population.”)

NOTE: These statistics are using the term “Christian” in the broadest sense, including Catholics, nominal believers, etc.

Source: *World Christian Encyclopedia* (David Barrett, George Kurian, Todd Johnson; 2001 edition).