

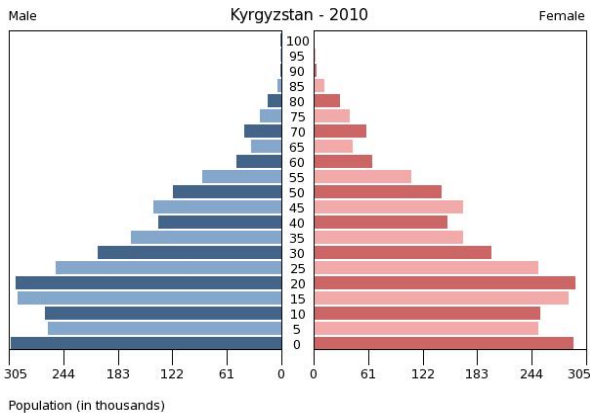
Kyrgyzstan – additional information and resources

Geography:

Kyrgyzstan is a landlocked mountainous country located in central Asia. It consists of many mountains and deep valleys and is estimated to have 2,200 glaciers. The country is situated on an active seismic zone. The last earthquake was on the 5th of October 2008 and measured up to 6.6 on the Richter scale in the southern province of Osh. It was reported that 60 people died as a result of the earthquake and over 100 people were injured. As well as being at risk of earthquakes, Kyrgyzstan also experiences many landslides and avalanches. The last major landslide was recorded in 2009 on the 16th April. It occurred in the Jalalabad region close the boarder of Uzbekistan; there were 16 fatalities as a result of the landslide and 5 houses collapsed. The increase in landslides in the country is said to be caused by overgrazing in the lower mountains.

The climate in Kyrgyzstan is dry continental for most of the country. In the high Tien Shan the climate is defined as polar with snow on the highest peaks all year round. Towards the south of the country the temperatures are often more sub-tropical with the highest temperatures recorded in Osh.

People:



¹As depicted in the pyramid below, the population of Kyrgyzstan is continuing to grow in a style that is often related to developing countries. With a birth rate of 2.46 children born/women the population is heading towards stabilization. This could be consistent with the rural to urban migration that is currently happening – more families are heading to cities like Bishkek in search of better accommodation and more jobs. In rural

areas people have more children as there is more space, more children are required for labor and there

¹ <http://www.census.gov/ipc/www/idb/country.php>

is often a higher infant mortality rate. If there is a mass migration towards urban areas there will be a resulting decrease in the number of births.

²The increase in population demographic between 15-20 years could be a response to the independence of Kyrgyzstan in 1991. The subsequent lull in births is anomalous but could be explained by an increased use in birth control and the rural to urban migration.

The population again increases in the demographic of 0-5 year olds although it still displays evidence of a growing population that is beginning to stabilize (this is reflected by the birthrate of 2.46 children born/per woman). The slight increase in this particular age group could be a response to economic growth, better standards of living and a falling infant mortality rate.

Above the age of 35 there are slightly more females than males, this could be due to migration. More men would have left the country to find work than women who would have traditionally had to stay at home to look after the family. It could also be due to women having a higher life expectancy than men. The average life expectancy is 69.43 years, for men it is 65.43 and it is 73.64 years for women.

There are several different ethnic groups in Kyrgyzstan, the largest group is Kyrgyz at 64.9 percent of the 5,431,747 population. Uzbek's make up 13.8 percent of the population and are the second largest group closely followed by Russian at 12.5 percent. The official language in Kyrgyzstan is Kyrgyz and is spoken by 64.7 percent of the population, due to the diversity of ethnic groups and Kyrgyzstan's recent history Russian is another official language and is spoken by 12.5 percent of the population. Although not an official language Uzbek is more widely used than Russian with 13.6 percent of the population able to speak it.

Politics:

The borders of present day Kyrgyzstan were formed in 1924 while the country was under Soviet rule. The name of Kyrgyzstan then was 'Kirgizia' which was reflected in the name of the sole legal political party: the Kyrgyz Communist party. In 1990 the Kyrgyz Communist Party opposed changes to the Soviet

² Population pyramid is from: <http://www.census.gov/ipc/www/idb/country.php>
(accessed 4/10/2010)

Constitution which allowed non Communist parties to compete in politics. Despite this, the new laws helped Askar Akayev become the first President of Kyrgyzstan in 1990.

Kyrgyzstan declared independence the following year with the collapse of the Soviet empire. Askar Akayev won another term as President after standing unopposed by other candidates. He was then re elected in 1995 with more than 70% of the vote, and elected again in 2000. However, in 2005, opposition candidates were prevented from challenging him in elections and there were calls for Akayev to resign as President. A newly elected parliament recognized Kurmanbek Bakiyev as acting President and Prime Minister in 2005. His reign was characterised by an almost constant battle with parliament over where the constitutional balance of power should be held, with Parliament or the President.

In 2010 Bakiyev lost his post as President, and an interim government was set up led by the former Foreign Minister Roza Otunbayeva. Under Roza, the country adopted a new Constitution which changed the form of government from a presidential system to a parliamentary democracy. This is the first to exist in the Central – Asia region. Parliamentary elections which followed were heralded by the international community as Kyrgyzstan’s first fully free and fair elections. 120 seats in parliament were decided and the nationalist Ata Zhurt party won the most seats; however it did not gain enough for a majority, forcing a coalition government between five parties to be formed. Currently, the votes are being recounted to ensure there is not a sixth party that should be included in the coalition and decisions are being made as to who should head the coalition.

More resources:

www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/kg.html (CIA world fact book provides plenty of facts and figures about the geography, economy and population of Kyrgyzstan)

www.fco.gov.uk/content/en/travel-advice/asia-oceania/kyrgyzstan/fco_trv_ca_kyrgyzstan (The British foreign and commonwealth office website provides an insight in to the potential threats in Kyrgyzstan as well as information on the politics, local laws, customs and geography of the area.)

news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/1296485.stm (BBC provides an overview of the country, a brief look at the recent politics and facts of the country and an insight into the Kyrgyz media)

<http://www.state.gov/r/pa/ei/bgn/5755.htm>

<http://www.lonelyplanet.com/kyrgyzstan>

<http://www.nationsencyclopedia.com/Asia-and-Oceania/Kyrgyzstan-HISTORY.html>

<http://www.census.gov/ipc/www/idb/country.php>

