



ENCYCLOPEDIA OF WOMEN AND ISLAMIC CULTURES

Women and Literacy: Central Asia

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The Muslim majority Central Asian states are Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan and Afghanistan. Literacy rates in these countries, with the exception of Afghanistan, tend to be some of the highest internationally for women. For the purposes of this datasheet literacy is defined as the ability read and write a statement that is applicable to everyday life. ¹

- ❖ Adult women (ages 15 and over) are 100% literate in Uzbekistan. ² Since 1997 Uzbekistan has been working to reform the country's educational system to ensure that lifelong education is available for the population. Uzbekistan maintains a number of Community Learning Centres (CLC) run through UNESCO; these centers operate in lower income areas to foster literacy and numeracy skills. ³
- ❖ Kyrgyzstan is 99.2% literate. Women in Kyrgyzstan are 99.8% literate while men are 99.7% literate. ⁴ Like Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan offers continuing education in the form of free community classes. The Alay Regional library offers a variety of opportunities for young women and men to pursue financial literacy as well as other means to improve their economic opportunities. ⁵
- ❖ Tajikistan is a highly literate country; the overall literacy rate for Tajikistan is 99.7%. ⁶ Both Tajik women and men are 99.9% literate. These numbers, like those in Uzbekistan place the country's literacy rates ahead of Israel, China, India and the United States. ⁷
- ❖ Kazakhstan has an overall literacy rate of 99.7%. Both men and women are highly literate with 99.9% of women designated as literate by UNESCO. ⁸ Like in Uzbekistan, UNESCO has partnered with the Kazak government to offer extended learning through Community Learning Centres.
- ❖ Due to the ongoing U.S. military involvement in Afghanistan UNESCO is unable to provide literacy rates for the region. Estimates for the region report that in 2003 literacy rates were 47% for men versus 15% for women with the disparity among the two expected to rise. ⁹ Despite a \$200 million program, the U.S. military has failed to increase literacy among male security forces in the region. ¹⁰

¹ <http://www.uis.unesco.org/literacy/Pages/default.aspx#top>

² http://www.unicef.org/infobycountry/uzbekistan_statistics.html

³ <http://www.unesco.org/ui/litbase/?menu=14&programme=119>

⁴ http://www.unicef.org/infobycountry/kyrgyzstan_statistics.html

⁵ <http://beyondaccess.net/members/kyrgyzstan-alay-regional-library/>

⁶ http://www.unicef.org/infobycountry/Tajikistan_statistics.html

⁷ <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/fields/2103.html#136>

⁸ http://www.unicef.org/infobycountry/kazakhstan_statistics.html

⁹ <http://www.prb.org/Publications/Articles/2000/AfghanWomenandMenFarApartinLiteracy.aspx>

¹⁰ http://www.nytimes.com/2014/01/29/world/asia/afghanistan-literacy-effort-stalls.html?_r=0