

# People Group Research Template Resource

## PEOPLE GROUP RESEARCH

In 2013, a Mission Frontiers article said: “Unengaged are unengaged for many reasons—but the greatest reason by far is that these UUPGs are not individually (by name) on anyone’s ‘radar’.” A survey conducted by Global Mapping International found that only 48% of missionaries and 35% of mission-minded lay people are even aware of the term UUPG.

This guide is intended to accelerate any asking-seeking-knocking Christian who is striving to engage and multiply churches among people groups. It is a collection of insights gained while researching [Tunisia’s unengaged, unreached people groups](#). We discovered that Tunisia’s people group data was over fifty years old, and very inaccurate. This is basically a summary of what we wish someone had told us and is intended to be practical, not academic.

### intro to research for church planters

Ethnic groups (people groups, nations, tongue, and tribes) are referenced throughout scripture and are integral in the most significant themes such as:

- global punishment (Genesis 10)
- God’s purpose to bless the whole world (Genesis 12, Psalms 67, etc.)
- the completion of His purposes for history (Matthew 24:14)
- the church that God created for a mission (Matthew 28:18-20), and
- our eternity with Him (Revelation 7:9-10)

Though we don’t know exactly how God defines ethnic groups, because church planting efforts are hindered by cultural, linguistic, and geopolitical differences, we do research to understand where unique church planting efforts are needed, and whether engagement is progressing.

### preparation before starting research

- potentially valuable resources
  - [Perspectives On the World Christian Movement course](#)
  - [Kairos Course](#)
- learn vocabulary and its purposes
  - **People Group:** An ethno-linguistic group with a common self-identity that is shared by the various members. For strategic purposes it is the largest group within which the Gospel can spread without encountering barriers of understanding or acceptance.
  - **Unreached People Group:** A people group is considered unreached (UPG) when there is no indigenous community of believing Christians able to engage this people group with church planting. Technically speaking, the percentage of evangelical Christians in this people group is less than 2 percent.
  - **Unengaged Unreached People Group:** Unreached people groups are

unengaged (UUPG) when there is no church planting strategy, consistent with evangelical faith and practice, under way. Gathering believers and planting churches are the keys to establishing an effective and multiplying presence among these people groups.

- get familiar with existing people group lists and their corresponding purposes
  - [Joshua Project](#)
    - a research initiative seeking to highlight the ethnic people groups of the world with the fewest followers of Christ
    - Joshua Project is not a formal research organization, but rather seeks to compile and integrate ethnic peoples information from various global, regional and national researchers and workers into a composite whole. Each of these sources may have varying methodologies, standards and levels of accuracy. Therefore, the margin of error may vary from data point to data point. While the data is the best available, numbers should be considered "ballpark."
  - [People Groups](#)
    - adopt an ethnolinguistic approach to understanding people groups (see "What is a people group?"). Their list is determined by International Mission Board field personnel in ongoing dialogue with local Baptist partners, Great Commission Christian partners, and other reliable information sources (see "Where does this information come from?"). The people group list and supplemental data is updated weekly based on new information received from the field as well as on feedback received through this site (see "What is the Registry of Peoples?").
  - Finishing the Task
    - source: [PeopleGroups.org](#)
    - purpose: To see every people group in the world engaged with an indigenously led church planting movement.
  - Other
    - World Christian Database is strongly shaped by the people groups' languages. It costs thousands of dollars, so we don't know much else about it.
    - Census data done by corresponding governments
- engagement
  - For a people group to be considered engaged, they need to meet all four of the following criteria. There needs to be an apostolic presence in residence, committed to working in the local language, committed to long term ministry, and sowing in a manner consistent with church planting multiplication fruitful practices.

### **doing research**

As you travel and interview members of various groups, you will need to keep in mind the goal of your research. The overarching question you are asking is, ultimately, *"Will these people go to church together? If there were an existing church (for example of the majority people group), would this people naturally join it and feel a part of it?"* If the answers are "no," you may be dealing with a unique people group.

- make a budget
  - thorough research will require travel and spending time among the potential

groups. Here are categories to consider when developing a budget:

- housing
- meals
- gas
- rental vehicle
- tolls
- hospitality and payment of guides
- internet/phone expenses
- begin on the internet
  - are there Facebook groups or online communities that you can contact before traveling that might give you insight into the best places to go?
  - are there people you can contact online and schedule face-to-face meetings with?
- check out the following resources for things to consider when researching:
  - [A People Group Profile Guide](#)
  - [Profile Research and Writing Guide](#)
  - [UUPG research tips \(Arabic\)](#)
- **A sample guide:**
  - **Name of Ethnic Group:**
  - **Alternate Names:**
  - **Location**
    - What countries and cities are these people located in?
    - What is the current population estimate?
  - **Identity**
    - What people groups are they related to?
    - What are the sub-divisions for this group?
    - What are commonalities and contrasts in culture between this group and other ethnic groups in Tunisia?
    - How does this people group relate to other groups?
    - What is the relationship between the people group and the majority people group (Tunisian Arabs)?
    - Are there contiguous or interspersed people groups and relationships with those groups?
    - Age and education demographics
  - **Customs**
    - What are their lives like?
    - What are their needs?
    - What are the distinguishing cultural and visual characteristics of this group?
    - Are they nomadic?
    - Do they have access to media: internet, TV, phones, radio? What is their prevalence?
      - if TV, is it satellite or other?
      - if radio, what bands?
      - are smart phones in use?
    - What are their primary economic drivers?
  - **Language**
    - What is their heart language?
    - What other languages do they speak?
    - What languages are they literate in?
    - What is the literacy rate in these languages (not any age or geographic

- patterns in these)?
    - What are the percentages for each relevant language?
  - **Religion**
    - What is their primary religion?
    - How do they practice their religion? Any distinguishing characteristics?
    - What is the level of attendance at religious gatherings (mosques)?
    - How much evidence of folk Islam/animism?
    - Is there any Christian presence, including from other groups?
    - Is there any anecdotal info regarding attitudes or interest in outsiders and/or Christianity?
  - **Other**
    - Travel recommendations (including forms of transport available)?
    - Housing recommendations?
    - Food availability and recommendations?
    - Level of government control and influence
    - Are there any suggestions on ways to make local contacts?
    - What is the security situation both in terms of official (government/mosque) or unofficial (family/tribe)?

## sharing your research

update the data

- JoshuaProject
  - [profiles@joshuaproject.net](mailto:profiles@joshuaproject.net)
- [PeopleGroups.org](http://PeopleGroups.org)
  - you will need to contact an IMB worker that lives in your region to begin the process of pushing your research to this group

## champion engagement in fruitful practices

- make priorities
  - which UUPGs to engage
- engage
  - begin with prayer engagement
    - start small groups that pray together for these UUPGs. Check out [Pray4Tunisia.com](http://Pray4Tunisia.com) for examples and resources.
    - organize [prayer journeys](#)
    - consider if there are existing churches who would [adopt](#) these groups
  - continue to *Ask, Seek, and Knock* until God raises up workers for this harvest who would engage these groups.
- share your progress!
  - as these groups become engaged with apostolic men and women who share the Gospel with boldness and begin to multiply disciples, share how God is moving. It will inspire and encourage others to define the task where they are living and working and to move forward in finishing the task of the Great Commission.
- contact [uupg@nym.hush.com](mailto:uupg@nym.hush.com) with progress