

The Eastern Highland Otomi of Mexico



The Otomi speakers of southern Mexico share their mountain homeland in close proximity with three other cultural communities. This arrangement started in the 17th century when Spanish governors gathered small, scattered populations together “within the sound of the bell,” to give administrators and missionaries better control over the indigenous populations.

Across hillside fields, families plant maize, beans and chili peppers they will eat. People also raise coffee or sugar cane as cash crops. Though some Otomi keep domestic fowl for personal use, they do not typically raise any livestock. And today, many migrate to cities or immigrate to the U.S. for better jobs.

Several villages produce colorful, decorative clothing. Women still typically wear dresses and blouses with this embroidery. They also sell their stitchery, varying in size and intricacy, from small napkins and blouses to large bedspreads.

People have learned to make paper from the bark of several specific fig tree varieties. Local painters covet this bark paper called “amate” for their art. Talented Otomi also design jewelry, beads and small bags.

In their largest town, as many as 70 percent of the residents may claim they are Christians. And in the wider region, it’s about 20 percent. Despite those positive numbers, most Otomi believers also venerate the spirit world. Many have not learned that the one, true God of the Bible has ultimate authority in both the natural and the spirit

Primary Religion:

Ethnic Religion

Disciples (Matt 28:19):

Perhaps 10%

Churches:

Yes

Scripture Status (Matt 28:20):

New Testament

Population (date):

49,300 (2007)



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Have They Heard The Gospel?

Response to the Gospel	The Spanish colonial era left towns clustered around churches and produced thousands of nominal Christians. And for hundreds of years, many people have misunderstood the Christian message, because the Otomi did not speak the same language of traditional churches and later denominations.
Is the Word of God Translated?	The New Testament is available and work has begun on translation of the Old Testament
Other Forms of Gospel Presentations Recordings:	Audio-visual Bible lessons in 40 pictures, with Bible overview from creation to Christ, and teaching on the Christian life.
Films/videos:	Jesus Film
Estimated Number of Christian Congregations	In their largest town, as many as 70 percent of the residents may claim they are Christians. And in the wider region, it's about 20 percent.
Hindrances to Scripture Use	Most Otomi believers venerate the spirit world.
Bilingualism	4,700 monolinguals
Language of Wider Communication or Trade Language	Spanish [spa]

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Group Description

Population all countries

World Population For This People	49,300
World Population (Date)	2007

Geography & Environment

Location	Otomi-Tepehua, Otomi de la Sierra Baja, Hidalgo, Huehuetla and San Bartolo Tutotepec municipalities; Veracruz-Llave, Ixhuatlan de Madero and Tlachichilco municipalities; Puebla, Pantepec, Tlaxco, Tlacuilotepec and Pahuatlan municipalities
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Alternate Language Names

	Eastern Otomi, Otomí de Huehuetla, Otomí de la Sierra, Otomi de la Sierra Madre Oriental, Otomi de la Sierra Oriental, Otomí del Oriente, Sierra Oriental Otomi, Yuhu
Percent Monolingual	10%

Linguistically Related Languages

Otomi, Eastern Highland [otm], Otomi, Estado de México [ots], Otomi, Ixtenco [otz]. Otomi, Mezquital [ote], Otomi, Querétaro [otq], Otomi, Temoaya [ott], Otomi, Tenango [otn], Otomi, Texcatepec [otx], Otomi, Tilapa [otl]

Neighboring Languages

Tenango Otomi, Tlachichilco Tepehua, Huehuetla Tepehua, Pisaflores Tepehua

Literature

Dictionary and a Grammar

Literacy

Adult Literacy Percentage	Literacy rate in Otomi: 1%. Literacy rate in Spanish: 40%.
Active Literacy Program	Yes, with indigenous teachers.