

## The Deaf People of Uruguay

### Uruguayan Sign Language Community

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Secularism and affluence have made Uruguay one of the least evangelized countries in South America. These factors make reaching the deaf population with the Gospel even more challenging. Every deaf community takes on the characteristics of the country they are in, and Uruguayans in general are hard to reach for Christ; the deaf community is harder. Just putting an interpreter in a church is not the answer, especially when the deaf do not have any Bible background or knowledge. Some have estimated that deaf people attending a church with interpretive sign language alone understand only two percent of the message. However, their understanding increases to 100 percent when the entire worship service including the sermon is in sign language.

Although deaf schools initially used oralism as the preferred communication philosophy in deaf education, bilingual methods that incorporated sign language and Spanish began to be adopted into deaf schools in 1989. There may be some variation in sign language use throughout the country, with some sources pointing to geographical region and age being sociolinguistic variables impacting language use, it still appears that the Uruguayan deaf community uses a single sign language: Uruguayan Sign Language

The Uruguayan Deaf Association and Center for the Investigation and Development of Deaf People are effectively bringing the deaf community together and training interpreters to meet ongoing educational and social access needs throughout Uruguay. Future community development work is focused on increasing access to interpreters in university and health care settings as well as creating an atmosphere where deaf Uruguayans have equal employment opportunities that capitalize on their individual skills and training.

**Primary Religion:**

Christian

**Disciples (Matt 28:19):**

Less than 2%

**Churches:**

11

**Scripture Status (Matt 28:20):**

Unknown

**Population (date):**

30,000 (2011)

