

The Deaf of Greece

The Greek Sign Language Community



representative photo by Dietmar Temps CC

Deaf and hearing are like oil and water, if you leave them alone, they will separate. Many Deaf leave their biological family and join what they call their "Deaf family." Many hearing people tend to think the deaf are not very intelligent because of the communication barriers, as well as the speech patterns deaf exhibit. Many deaf people feel hearing people oppress them and purposely withhold information from them. There is very little "mixing" of the core deaf community with the hearing community.

The difficulty with being deaf is not the inability to hear, but the great barrier to communicating with the surrounding dominant culture, especially as related to acquiring information. Deaf children with hearing parents are the only ones in the world who do not learn language from their parents.

Since most deaf do not communicate with their hearing parents or religious leaders, they do not follow any religion. The vocabulary of one sign language is very different from that of another so each needs a separate translation of scripture. The goal of the team of translators is to produce a chronological "primary" Bible consisting of 110 stories representing about 8.5% of the Bible. It is planned for DVD and streaming on the web.

An alternate name for Greek Sign is Elleniké Noematiké Glossa. It is recognized as the official language of the deaf by a law passed in 2000. According to one source, in 1996 there were 12,000 children and 30,000 adults who were active users.

Primary Religion:

Christian

Disciples (Matt 28:19):

Unknown

Churches:

Unknown

Scripture Status (Matt 28:20):

None

Population (date):

42,000 (1996)



Greek Sign Language Community

Group Description

Population

Although we list the population as 42,000, we have other estimates ranging from 5,00 to 62,000.

When we speak about Deaf people as opposed to deaf people, we're making the distinction of, among other things, their language of preference. Simply stated, Deaf people identify with the Deaf culture and use that signed language; deaf people do not and prefer to use the spoken language. Estimating the population of a Deaf community is difficult. Quite honestly, no one knows how many Deaf there are in a given country.

However, some generalities seem to hold true. In 1st world nations (like the US) 1-2 people in 1000 are Deaf; in those nations that are considered "2nd world", 3-4 people per 1000 are Deaf; in 3rd world nations, the numbers are much higher: 6-8 people per 1000 are Deaf. Again, this is an estimation only. There is absolutely no quantifiable documentation to support these numbers. But, they are the best we know.

As implied, the estimated number of deaf is always larger than the number of those who learn sign language and become part of the Deaf community. Some become deaf late in life. Some children's parents do not have the funds to send their child to a deaf school and some of these children never encounter others with whom to communicate. Almost all deaf children are born to hearing parents. Instead these children grow and work at home where they use gestures and sounds but do not have a true language. The number of these is unknown.

Religion

The Greek Orthodox Church is the official church of Greece. The Orthodox Church was the strong force that perpetuated the Greek culture and language during the long Ottoman rule. It continues to be a significant part of the cultural identity of the nation and receives state funding. Most of the population (98%) considers themselves to be Orthodox, but less than three percent of the eleven million Greeks attend any church regularly. Although laws have changed lessening discrimination for non-Orthodox believers, Protestants and Catholics often face problems if it is perceived they are drawing Greeks away from the Orthodox Church. Evangelicals, both within and outside the Orthodox Church, are finding ways to evangelize the many who do not know the Gospel through service and other activities.

There are very few, true followers of Jesus among the Deaf.