

This article is about the Armenian ethnic group. For specific information on residents or nationals of [Armenia](#), see [Demographics of Armenia](#).

Armenians (Հայեր)



[Tigranes the Great](#), [Gregory the Illuminator](#), [Ivan Aivazovsky](#), [William Saroyan](#), [Viktor Hambardzumyan](#) and [Tigran Petrosian](#)

Total population 2004: 7-8 million (est.)

Regions with significant populations	Armenia : 3,000,000 ^[1] (2005 est.)
	Russia : 1,131,000 ^[2] (2002)
	Iran : 500,000 ^[3] (est.)
	France : 500,000 ^[4] (est.)
	United States : 385,488 ^[5] (2002)
	Georgia : 248,900 ^[6] (2002)
	Syria : 190,000 ^[7] (est.)
	Lebanon : 140,000 ^[8] (est.)
	Nagorno-Karabakh : 120,000 ^[9] (est.)
	South America : 150,000 ^[4] (est.)
	Ukraine : 100,000 ^[10] (2001)
	Turkey : 100,000 ^[11] (est.)
	Jordan : 70,000 ^[12] (est.)
	Canada : 40,505 ^[5] (2001)
	Greece : 35,000 ^[13] (est.)
	Bulgaria : 10,832 ^[14] (2001)
	Iraq : 10,000 ^[4] (est.)
Israel : 9,800 ^[15] (est.)	
Spain : 8,333 (2006)	
Egypt : 8,200 ^[16] (est.)	
Rest of world: 100,000 ^[4] (est.)	

Language	Armenian
Religion	Predominantly Armenian Apostolic with Catholic , Evangelical and various Protestant denominations, especially in the diaspora .
Related ethnic groups	Hamshenis , other Indo-European peoples

The **Armenians** ([Armenian](#): Հայեր, *Hayer*) are a [nation](#) and an [ethnic group](#) originating in the [Caucasus](#) and eastern [Anatolia](#). A large concentration of them have remained there, especially in [Armenia](#), but many of them are also scattered elsewhere throughout the world (see [Armenian diaspora](#)). They have populated primarily eastern Anatolia and the southern Caucasus for over 4,000 years.

History

Prior to the 6th century BC, the predecessors of the [Armenian Kingdom](#) were the [Hayasa-Azzi](#), Hittite Empire, Kingdom of Urartu, as well as other small states and tribal confederations. [Herodotus](#) claims that Armenians were colonists of the [Phrygians](#). Hypotheses based on this narrative could place Armenians in their traditional homeland of eastern Asia Minor anywhere from around 1200 BC ("colonizing" at the same time as the Phrygian influx) to around 700 BC (pushed eastward by the invasions of the [Cimmerians](#) who ravaged Phrygia in 696 BC).^[17]

A competing view suggested by Thomas Gamkrelidze and Vyacheslav V. Ivanov in [1984](#) places the [Proto-Indo-European homeland](#) in the [Armenian Highland](#).^[18] A recent study (Gray & Atkinson) that applied the statistical tools used in timing genetic evolution to the lexical evolution of Indo-European languages strongly implied that the Indo-European homeland indeed appears to be in Asia Minor, and Armenian language (hence a well-defined group speaking it) split from it (along with Greek) at around 5300 BC, and split from Greek shortly thereafter (but the "split" from Greek was statistically less obvious, probably implying some interaction between the diverging populations until the split was "complete").^[19]



A relief of Armenian tribute bearer carrying a metal vessel with [Homa](#) (griffin) handles. From the eastern stairs of the [Apadana](#) at [Persepolis](#), [6th century BC](#).

The first state that was called Armenia (which is not the name Armenians themselves use) by neighboring peoples (Hecataeus of Miletus and [Behistun Inscription](#)) was established in the early

[6th century BC](#). At its zenith ([95–65 BC](#)), the state extended from northern Caucasus all the way to what is now central [Turkey](#), [Lebanon](#), and north-western [Iran](#). Later it briefly became part of the [Roman Empire](#) (AD [114–118](#)). Historically the name *Armenian* has come to internationally designate this group of people. However, Armenians call themselves *Hay* (pronounced *Hye*; plural: *Hayer*). The word has traditionally been linked to the name of the mythical founder of the Armenian nation, [Haik](#), which is also a popular Armenian name.

In [301 AD](#), Armenia became the first nation to adopt [Christianity](#) as a state religion (*see* [Religion](#)). During its later political eclipses, Armenia depended on the church to preserve and protect its unique identity.



Haik, the legendary patriarch of Armenians.

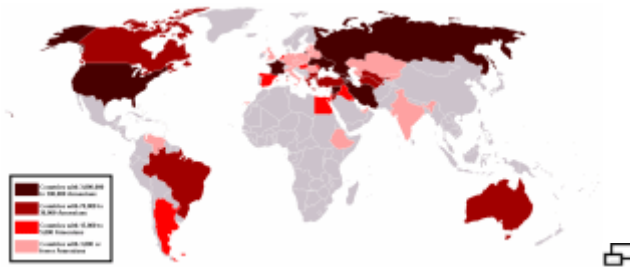
The history of Armenia consists of periods of independence interrupted by conquests by other peoples, during which time Armenia continued as an autonomous kingdom subject to various empires. The span of time during which Armenia itself conquered areas populated by other peoples is mainly limited to the imperial period (83 BC - 66 BC) during the reign of [Tigranes the Great](#). [Armenian Kingdom of Cilicia](#) created by Armenians pushed westward by the invading Seljuk Turks could also be added in that regard, although demographics in the region might have already shifted by the time the newest wave arrived and the kingdom was established. From around [1080](#) to [1375](#), the focus of Armenian [nationalism](#) was the [Armenian Kingdom of Cilicia](#), which had close ties with the [Crusader States](#). As with virtually all other nations of Near East and Asia Minor, between the [5th](#) and [19th centuries](#), Armenia was conquered and ruled by, among others, [Persians](#), [Byzantines](#), [Arabs](#), [Mongols](#), and [Ottoman Turks](#). In the [1820s](#), parts of historic Armenia under Persian control centering on [Yerevan](#) and [Lake Sevan](#) were later incorporated into the [Russian Empire](#).

The [ethnic cleansing](#) of Armenians during the final years of the Ottoman Empire is widely considered a [genocide](#), with one wave of persecution in the years [1894](#) to [1896](#) culminating in the events of the [Armenian Genocide](#) in [1915](#) and [1916](#). With [World War I](#) in progress, the Turks accused the (Christian) Armenians as liable to ally with Imperial Russia, and used it as a pretext to deal with the entire Armenian population as an enemy within their empire. The exact numbers of deaths in the latter period is hard to establish. It is estimated by many sources that close to a million perished in camps, which excludes Armenians who may have died in other ways. Most estimates place the total number of deaths between 800,000 and 1.5 million. Turkish governments since that time have consistently rejected charges of genocide, typically arguing either that those Armenians who died were simply in the way of a war or that killings of Armenians were justified by their individual or collective support for the enemies of the Ottoman

Empire. The recent decision by the French lower house on October 12, 2006 to pass a bill making it illegal to deny the Armenian genocide has provoked intense reactions in the Turkish media. Note, however, that the decision has yet to be ratified by the French Senate to fully become law.

Following the breakup of the Russian Empire in the [aftermath of World War I](#) for a brief period, from [1918](#) to [1920](#), Armenia was an independent republic. In late 1920, the communists came to power following an invasion of Armenia by the [Red Army](#), and in [1922](#), Armenia became part of the [Transcaucasian SFSR](#) of the [Soviet Union](#), later forming the [Armenian Soviet Socialist Republic](#) ([1936](#) - [September 21, 1991](#)). In 1991, [Armenia](#) declared independence from the USSR and established the second Republic of Armenia.

Geographic distribution



Map of the [Armenian diaspora](#).

Armenians today are scattered all over the world, constituting the [Armenian Diaspora](#). Within the Armenian community there is an unofficial classification of the different *kinds* of Armenians. Armenians who originate from Iran are referred to as *Parska-Hye*, Armenians from Lebanon are usually referred to as *Lipana-Hye* and Armenians who are from Armenia (that is, they or their ancestors were not forced to flee in 1915) are referred to as *Hyeastansees* meaning those that are from Armenia. In general, Armenians from Armenia, Iran, and Russia speak the Eastern dialect of Armenian while Armenians of the Diaspora speak the Western dialect of Armenian. The dialects vary considerably, however, Armenians of differing dialect can usually understand one another. In diverse communities (such as in Canada and the U.S.) where many different kinds of Armenians live amongst one another, there is a tendency for the different groups to cluster together.

A small Armenian community has existed for over a millennium in the [Holy Land](#), and one of the four quarters of the walled old city of [Jerusalem](#) is the [Armenian Quarter](#). There are also Armenian populations in [India](#) and [Myanmar](#) and South East Asia.

Since the arrival of [Martin the Armenian](#) to the Jamestown Colony around 1618 [\[1\]](#), Armenians have dispersed all throughout the United States. [Watertown, Massachusetts](#), [Fresno, California](#), [Detroit, Michigan](#), [Glendale, California](#), and [Los Angeles, California](#) are centers of Armenian population in the United States; there is also a significant concentration in [New York City](#). In Canada, large numbers of Armenians can be found in Toronto, Ontario, and Montreal, Quebec. Armenians are also present in every country in Latin America, with the largest concentrations being found in [Brazil](#), [Argentina](#), [Chile](#), [Costa Rica](#), [Nicaragua](#), [Venezuela](#), and [Mexico](#).

[Glendale](#), California, in particular, is famous for its high concentration of Armenians; there are approximately 78,000 Armenians, according to the 2000 U.S. census. Armenian residents of the city are active members in the municipal government and chamber of commerce. In Hollywood, California, a small portion is known as "[Little Armenia](#)" - it covers Wilton Avenue to Vermont Avenue from the east to west, and Hollywood Blvd. down to Santa Monica Blvd. from north to south.

Culture

Language

It is estimated that there are at least 10 million Armenian speakers in the world. 6 million of the Armenian speakers live in the Caucasus and Russia, and perhaps another 1-2 million people in the Armenian [diaspora](#) are also Armenian speakers.

According to US Census figures, there are 300,000 Americans who speak Armenian at home. It is the 20th most commonly spoken language in the United States, having slightly fewer speakers than [Haitian Creole](#), and slightly more than [Navaho](#).

Armenian is a sub-branch of the [Indo-European](#) family, and with some 7 million speakers one of the smallest surviving branches, comparable to [Albanian](#) or the somewhat more widely spoken [Greek](#), with which it may be connected (see [Graeco-Armenian](#)).

Religion

In 301 AD, Armenia adopted [Christianity](#) as a state religion, establishing a church that still exists independently of both the Catholic and the Eastern Orthodox churches, having become so in AD 451 as a result of its [excommunication](#) by the [Council of Chalcedon](#). The [Armenian Apostolic Church](#) is a part of the Oriental Orthodox communion, not to be confused with the Eastern Orthodox communion. During its later political eclipses, Armenia depended on the church to preserve and protect its unique identity.

The Armenians have, at times, constituted a Christian "island" in a mostly [Muslim](#) region. The [Armenian Kingdom of Cilicia](#), had close ties to European [Crusader States](#). The religiously based sympathies that some Armenians presumably held for Imperial Russia provided the pretext for the [genocide of 1915–1916](#) by the Ottoman Turks.

While the Armenian Apostolic Church remains the most prominent church in the Armenian community throughout the world, Armenians (especially in the diaspora) subscribe to any number of other Christian denominations. These include the [Armenian Catholic Church](#) (which follows its own liturgy but recognizes the Roman Catholic [Pope](#)), the [Armenian Evangelical Church](#), which started as a reformation in the Mother church but later broke away, and the [Armenian Brotherhood Church](#), which was born in the Armenian Evangelical Church, but later broke apart from it. There are other numerous Armenian churches belonging to Protestant denominations of all kinds.