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While Uzbeks make up more than three-quarters of the population, there are 115 ethnic minorities, according to government data. The number of Russians, Ukrainians and Jews continues to fall as many decide to leave; no precise government statistics are available, however. The last official census was conducted by Soviet authorities in 1989.

Government and laws continued to restrict religious activity, especially for unregistered groups. The registration criteria are burdensome and strict, which allows the government to cite technical grounds for denying registration petitions. Consequently, numerous small Protestant churches remain unregistered and face the threat of prosecution since any religious service conducted by an unregistered religious organization is illegal. The number of known cases of arrest, detention, or conviction based on alleged membership in religious extremist organizations appeared to decline, however. Moreover, the government is continuing to restrict the numbers of *hajj* pilgrims to 5,000, though the number of people who could potentially go is about fivefold.

While the society remained generally tolerant of traditional religions such as Islam, Judaism, Roman Catholicism and Russian Orthodox, minority religious groups, especially churches with ethnic Uzbek converts, encountered difficulties and social prejudice. Ethnic Russians and other minorities frequently complained about limited job opportunities. There has been growing concern among the Kazakh minority that a failure to register as an ethnic Uzbek will force them to migrate to Kazakhstan.

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