

Uncontacted Tribes of the World

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Not every community in the world has joined modern, connected society. Around the globe, dozens of **indigenous** groups remain completely **isolated**, deliberately avoiding **contact** with outsiders. Experts call these groups uncontacted peoples, and a major 2025 report by the group Survival International identified at least 196 such communities living across ten countries.

The most famous example is the Sentinelese, who live on North Sentinel Island in the Indian Ocean. Nobody knows their exact population — estimates range from around 50 to 200 people. India's government strictly protects their **territory**: boats must stay several kilometers away by law. In 2018, an American visitor who tried to reach the island illegally was killed, a reminder of how seriously the Sentinelese guard their isolation.

Most uncontacted groups live in the Amazon rainforest. Brazil's indigenous affairs agency, FUNAI, has identified more than 100 groups believed to live deep in the forest, **monitor**ing them from a distance rather than making contact. The Javari Valley, on the border between Brazil and Peru, holds the largest concentration of uncontacted peoples anywhere on Earth — home to at least nine confirmed groups.

Many of these communities became isolated on purpose. Some fled violence during past periods of colonization and exploitation; their **tradition** became retreating deeper into the forest rather than risking contact again. Disease is still the greatest danger: measles or influenza, carried by **outsiders**, can kill up to half of an uncontacted group within a single year, because their bodies have no immunity.

Today, illegal logging, mining, and land invasions **threaten** to shrink the territories these groups depend on to **survive**. Organizations like FUNAI and Survival International work to **estimate** population numbers, defend indigenous land rights, and keep outside contact at zero, believing these communities have the right to decide their own future.

A. Vocabulary

1. isolated ____	a. to roughly calculate or judge a value or amount
2. indigenous ____	b. a person who does not belong to a particular group
3. territory ____	c. to watch and check something carefully over time
4. survive ____	d. direct communication or meeting with someone
5. threaten ____	e. to continue to live, especially through difficulty
6. tradition ____	f. a custom or belief passed down over time
7. outsider ____	g. far away and separate from other people or places
8. monitor ____	h. belonging to a place naturally, native to a region

9. contact ____ i. an area of land that belongs to or is controlled by a group

10. estimate ____ j. to put something at risk of harm or danger

B. True or False

___ 1. Survival International's 2025 report identified at least 196 uncontacted groups.

___ 2. All uncontacted peoples live in Africa.

___ 3. Experts know the exact population of the Sentinelese.

___ 4. India's government requires boats to stay several kilometers from North Sentinel Island.

___ 5. In 2018, a visitor who illegally approached the island was killed.

___ 6. Most uncontacted groups today live in the Amazon rainforest.

___ 7. FUNAI has identified fewer than 10 uncontacted groups in total.

___ 8. The Javari Valley lies on the border of Brazil and Peru.

___ 9. Disease has little effect on uncontacted peoples because they live far from cities.

___ 10. Illegal logging and mining can threaten the land uncontacted groups depend on.

C. Fill in the Blanks

Word Bank: isolated, indigenous, territory, threaten, tradition, outsider, monitor, estimate

1. Survival International works to _____ how many uncontacted people exist worldwide.

2. India's government strictly protects the Sentinelese's _____ around North Sentinel Island.

3. Many communities remain completely _____, avoiding all contact with the modern world.

4. Disease carried by an _____ can be deadly because these groups have no immunity.

5. Illegal logging and mining continue to _____ the forest many tribes depend on.



D. Comprehension Questions

1. According to the 2025 Survival International report, how many uncontacted groups exist, and where are most of them located?
2. Why does India's government enforce a strict boundary around North Sentinel Island?
3. Explain why disease is considered the greatest danger to uncontacted peoples.
4. What role does FUNAI play in protecting uncontacted groups in Brazil?

E. Discussion Questions

1. Should governments ever try to make first contact with an uncontacted tribe? Why or why not?
2. What responsibilities do you think the rest of the world has toward protecting uncontacted peoples' land?
3. The Sentinelese have refused contact for generations. What does their choice teach us about the right to privacy?

Answer Key

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A. Vocabulary: 1-g, 2-h, 3-i, 4-e, 5-j, 6-f, 7-b, 8-c, 9-d, 10-a

B. True/False: 1-T, 2-F, 3-F, 4-T, 5-T, 6-T, 7-F, 8-T, 9-F, 10-T

C. Fill Blanks: 1-estimate, 2-territory, 3-isolated, 4-outsider, 5-threaten

D. Comprehension:

1. At least 196 groups exist across ten countries, and most are located in the Amazon rainforest of South America.
2. To protect the Sentinelese's isolation and safety, including protecting them from diseases outsiders could bring.
3. Because their bodies have no immunity, a disease like measles or influenza can kill up to half of a group within a year of contact.
4. FUNAI identifies and monitors uncontacted groups from a distance, without making contact, and works to defend their land.

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