

Armenia

Ethnicity in Armenia

Group selection

We identify the following politically relevant ethnic groups: **Armenians, Kurds, and Assyrians.**

Armenia was always the most homogeneous country of the Soviet Republics ⁽¹⁵¹⁾. While Azeris constituted the largest ethnic minority in Armenia (approx. 180 000 people) before 1990s, after the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict (end of 1980's-beginning of 1990's) the entire Azeri community was displaced to Azerbaijan ⁽¹⁵²⁾ leaving Armenia nearly a mono-ethnic country. Numbers here are taken from the census of 2001. The last census was conducted in 2011. While the size of the overall population of Armenia has decreased, the share of ethnic minorities in it has not altered significantly (according to the 2011 census data Armenians=98.1%). Both Census data are cited from Ulasiuk, 2013 ⁽¹⁵³⁾. Whether the refugee influx of ethnic Armenians after the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict in the end of 2020 significantly alters group sizes in Armenia remains to be seen. As of early 2021, approximately 60'000 refugees remained in Armenia but the displacement situation was described as “dynamic and continues to evolve” ⁽¹⁵⁴⁾.

The Kurdish minority in the data set is sometimes referred to as the Yezidi ethnic minority. In the 2001 census, there were a total of 42,139 Kurds registered, of which 40,620 were Yezidi Kurds (in the 2011 Census there was a total of 37,403 Kurds, of which 35.272 were Yezidi Kurds).

Power relations

1991-2021

Armenians hold a monopoly of political power, there are no members of ethnic minorities in the National Assembly or government cabinet, nor did any members of ethnic minorities participate in the presidential election ⁽¹⁵⁵⁾. All other ethnic groups are considered “powerless”. While the Armenian government made some positive moves towards the improvement of minority rights in 2003-2004 (particularly, in terms of improving the legal bases for equality), the political power configuration for ethnic minorities on the national political arena did not change substantially as a result ⁽¹⁵⁶⁾.

Some sources criticize that Kurds and Yezidis are treated as two different ethnic groups in Armenia, although in fact they belong to

¹⁵¹ [Minority Rights Group International, 2005]

¹⁵² [Minority Rights Group International, 2005]

¹⁵³ [Ulasiuk, 2013]

¹⁵⁴ [REACH Armenia, 2021]

¹⁵⁵ [U.S. State Department, 2005 - 2013]

¹⁵⁶ [Selimyan, 2004]

one group. Yezidis themselves, however, see themselves as a distinct ethnic group (¹⁵⁷). The political relevance seems to be originating primarily from Yezidi Kurds, as they account for the largest part of the Kurdish population. Therefore, the name Kurds/Yezidis is chosen for the group at hand. Although some members of the Kurdish minority are involved in the public and political life of Armenia, thanks to the emergence of NGOs and the establishment of a Kurdish program at Armenia's National Radio (¹⁵⁸), the Kurds/Yezidis are politically powerless. Some economic discrimination of the Kurds was reported, e.g. unfair adjudication of land, but no political discrimination (¹⁵⁹).

The Assyrians are nationally represented by the "Atour" Assyrian Association of Armenia, which was founded in 1989 and represents the political interests of Assyrians (¹⁶⁰; ¹⁶¹). They are, however, powerless.

The Russian minority declined in their size since the end of the Soviet Union, yet there are few Russian organizations and a Slavic university in Yerevan (¹⁶²; ¹⁶³). Russian is the only minority language in which education exists in Armenia. However, as there is no national political organization representing the interests of Russians, they are not taken into account.

By the end of 2015, Armenia held a popular referendum which resulted in a constitutional reform changing the political system from a presidential to a parliamentary republic. Amongst several changes, the new constitution includes 4 minority seats in parliament. In the elections in 2017, thus, 4 minority MPs were elected: one each from the country's Yezidi, Kurdish, Assyrian and Russian communities. In the elections of 2018 My Step (Nikol Pashnian's party) won all four seats representing ethnic minorities (¹⁶⁴). The fact that the minorities are not allowed to participate in the election with their own party but only as members of the existing national parties, however, leads to the critique that their influence is in fact marginal (¹⁶⁵; ¹⁶⁶; ¹⁶⁷; ¹⁶⁸).

¹⁵⁷ [Minority Rights Group International, 2015]

¹⁵⁸ [Asatryan, 2002]

¹⁵⁹ [U.S. State Department, 2005 - 2013]

¹⁶⁰ [Atour, 2004]

¹⁶¹ [Atour, 2012]

¹⁶² [U.S. State Department, 2005 - 2013]

¹⁶³ [Ulasiuk, 2013]

¹⁶⁴ [Freedom House, 2020]

¹⁶⁵ [AGOS, 2017]

¹⁶⁶ [Kurdistan24.net, 2017]

¹⁶⁷ [Eurasianet.org, 2017]

¹⁶⁸ [Sputnik, 2015]

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Political status of ethnic groups in A

From 1991 until 2021

Group name	Proportional size	Political status
Armenians	0.979	MONOPOLY
Kurds/Yezidis	0.013	POWERLESS
Assyrians	9.0×10^{-4}	POWERLESS



Figure 29: Political status of ethnic groups in Armenia during 1991-2021.

Geographical coverage of ethnic groups in Armenia

From 1991 until 2021

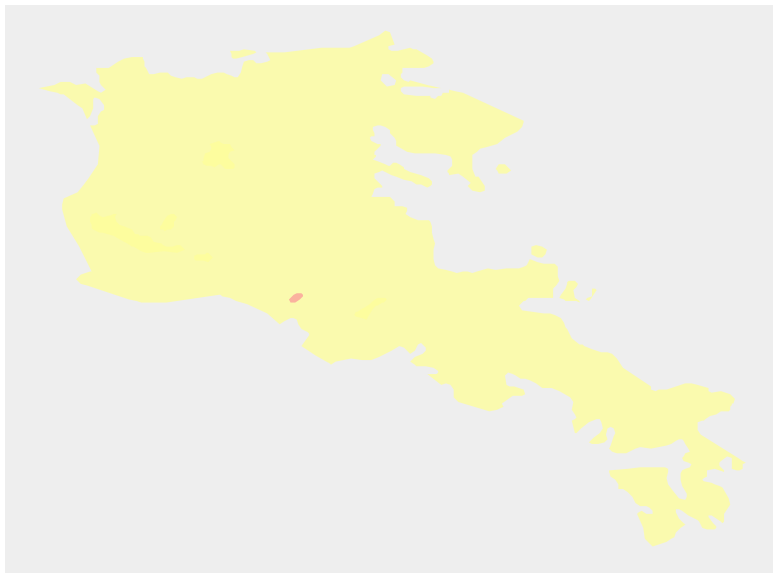


Figure 30: Map of ethnic groups in Armenia during 1991-2021.

Group name	Area in km ²	Type
Armenians	24 688	Regionally based
Kurds/Yezidis	469	Regionally based
Assyrians	17	Regionally based

Table 12: List of ethnic groups in Armenia during 1991-2021.