

Azerbaijan

Ethnicity in Azerbaijan

Group selection

The declaration of independence in Azerbaijan was accompanied with severe ethnic conflict in the region of Nagorno-Karabakh mostly populated with ethnic Armenians. As a result of this conflict, Azerbaijan lost its control over the region. The conflict also resulted in the fact that the size of Armenians, who were one of the largest ethnic minorities in Azerbaijan before the conflict (5.6% in 1989), was reduced to 1.8% (¹⁷²). We identify the following politically relevant ethnic groups: **Azeri, Armenians, Lezgins, and Talysh**. The latest census took place in 2009. Numbers in the census 2009 differ only slightly from those of 1999.

¹⁷² [Population Statistics of Eastern Europe, 2009]

Power relations

1991-1993

Azeris are politically dominant, with president Aliyev dominating in practice the executive, legislative, and judicial branches of government (¹⁷³; ¹⁷⁴). In the 2013 presidential elections, the National Council of Democratic Forces participated against the ruling party, aiming for stronger democratic value and giving the minorities hope of political and social reforms. However, president Aliyev won the election (¹⁷⁵). In September 2016, the constitution was amended giving even more power to the President (¹⁷⁶).

¹⁷³ [US State Department]

¹⁷⁴ [CIA, 2017]

¹⁷⁵ [UNPO, 2015]

¹⁷⁶ [Amnesty International, 2017]

The Armenians are mostly concentrated in secessionist Nagorno-Karabakh and control the area with support from Armenia. All Azeris have been expelled from Nagorno-Karabakh (¹⁷⁷). The situation in Nagorno-Karabakh remains tense. Since the ceasefire in 1994, breaches have been reported regularly. April 2016 saw the most severe clashes since the ceasefire, resulting in more than 100 deaths, but no major changes in territorial control (¹⁷⁸). Armenians are thus categorized as having separatist autonomy for the entire period (self-exclusion).

¹⁷⁷ [Halbach, 1999]

¹⁷⁸ [Amnesty International, 2017]

The Lezgins in northern Azerbaijan remain powerless. They are a Sunni Muslim group whose lands are divided by the international border between the Russian republic Dagestan and Azerbaijan. Political organizations like the national movement of Sadwal that wants to unify the Lezgin people and create an independent Lezgistan do not receive much support from the Lezgin people, because Lezgins are well integrated into the Azeri society (¹⁷⁹; ¹⁸⁰). While Sadwal

¹⁷⁹ [Halbach, 1999]

¹⁸⁰ [UNPO, 2013]

dropped the call for independent Lezginistan in 1996, the potential for Azerbaijan to be destabilized by Lezgins still exists (¹⁸¹).

¹⁸¹ [Coene, 2010]

Sporadic incidents of discrimination against ethnic minority groups have been reported. These mostly include restrictions on the ability to teach in minority languages and harassment by local authorities (¹⁸²)

¹⁸² [US State Department]

1994-2017

The Talysh ethnic group is settled in the south-eastern parts of Azerbaijan, close to the border to Iran. They constitute approximately 1.3% of the total population. They have always been socially discriminated and under strong pressure to assimilate. First attempts to gain national liberation were made in 1993, when they declared the formation of the Talysh-Mugansk Republic. This Republic was, however, destroyed immediately, through the arrest of their leader Hummatov. Hummatov was imprisoned until 2004. The Talysh National Movement continued its activities, pursuing the goals of decentralization of power and stronger minority rights (¹⁸³; ¹⁸⁴; ¹⁸⁵). Hence, we code a the Talysh as politically relevant but powerless as of 1994.

¹⁸³ [Minority Rights Group International, 2017]

¹⁸⁴ [Novarank Foundation, 2005]

¹⁸⁵ [UNPO, 2015]

Besides, the ethnic power relations on the national level have not changed substantially, the Azeri still are the dominant ethnic group (¹⁸⁶).

¹⁸⁶ [CIA, 2017]

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Political status of ethnic groups in Azerbaijan

From 1991 until 1993

| Group name | Proportional size | Political status |
|------------|-------------------|------------------|
| Azeri | 0.92 | DOMINANT |
| Lezgins | 0.02 | POWERLESS |
| Armenians | 0.013 | SELF-EXCLUSION |

From 1994 until 2017

| Group name | Proportional size | Political status |
|------------|-------------------|------------------|
| Azeri | 0.92 | DOMINANT |
| Lezgins | 0.02 | POWERLESS |
| Armenians | 0.013 | SELF-EXCLUSION |
| Talysh | 0.013 | POWERLESS |



Figure 32: Political status of ethnic groups in Azerbaijan during 1991-1993.



Figure 33: Political status of ethnic groups in Azerbaijan during 1994-2017.

Geographical coverage of ethnic groups in Azerbaijan

From 1991 until 1993

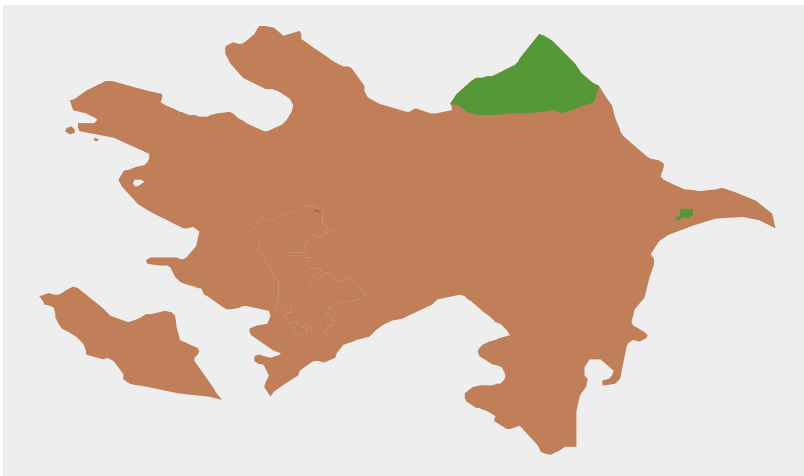


Figure 34: Map of ethnic groups in Azerbaijan during 1991-1993.

| | Group name | Area in km ² | Type |
|---|------------|-------------------------|------------------|
| ■ | Azeri | 81 859 | Regionally based |
| ■ | Armenians | 3994 | Regionally based |
| ■ | Lezgins | 3818 | Regionally based |

Table 14: List of ethnic groups in Azerbaijan during 1991-1993.

From 1994 until 2017

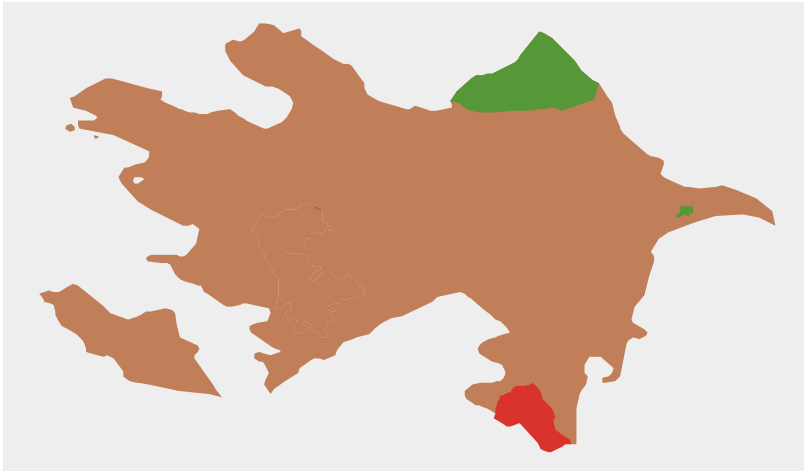


Figure 35: Map of ethnic groups in Azerbaijan during 1994-2017.

| Group name | Area in km ² | Type |
|--|-------------------------|------------------|
| ■ Azeri | 81 859 | Regionally based |
| ■ Armenians | 3994 | Regionally based |
| ■ Lezgins | 3818 | Regionally based |
| ■ Talysh | 1619 | Regionally based |

Table 15: List of ethnic groups in Azerbaijan during 1994-2017.

Conflicts in Azerbaijan

Starting on 1991-12-28

| Side A | Side B | Group name | Start | Claim | Recruitment | Support |
|--------------------------|----------------------|------------|------------|----------|-------------|---------|
| Government of Azerbaijan | Republic of Art-sakh | Armenians | 1991-12-28 | Explicit | Yes | Yes |

Starting on 1993-06-05

| Side A | Side B | Group name | Start | Claim | Recruitment | Support |
|--------------------------|--|------------|------------|-------|-------------|---------|
| Government of Azerbaijan | Military faction (forces of Suret Husseinov) | Azeri | 1993-06-05 | No | No | No |
| Government of Azerbaijan | OPON Forces | Azeri | 1994-09-29 | No | No | No |