

Kazakhstan

Ethnicity in Kazakhstan

Group selection

The size of the ethnic groups in Kazakhstan dramatically changed during the last twenty years. At the end of the Soviet Union, in 1991, the **Kazakhs** and Russians were almost equal in numbers (approximately 40% each), since then the amount of Kazakhs increased to 63% in 2009 and the Russians' size declined to 23%. We differentiate between **Russians and Ukrainians** in the early 1990s, but combine the remaining Slavic population as **Russian-speakers** afterwards.

Despite a strong sense of communal identity, accented by linguistic and religious distinctiveness, Kazakhstan's **Germans** are not highly mobilized or organized politically. They are represented primarily by cultural organizations, which however also demand political rights. The **Uzbeks** are concentrated in the densely populated areas in south Kazakhstan bordering Uzbekistan. Although being organized in groups, for example demanding education in Uzbek language, the Uzbeks are mostly excluded of the state administration (²⁷⁰⁸). The **Tatars** are rather politically inactive, although each Kazakhstan oblast has its own Tatar-Bashkir cultural center, dedicated to preserving their ethnic identity (²⁷⁰⁹). There are different **Uighur** organizations politically representing the Uighurs, such as the Uighur Association of Kazakhstan (²⁷¹⁰).

²⁷⁰⁸ [Minority Rights Group International, 2008]

²⁷⁰⁹ [Minority Rights Group International, 2008]

²⁷¹⁰ [Embassy of Kazakhstan in the United Kingdom]

Power relations

1991-1994

During this first period, Kazakhs are “senior partner” and Russians are “junior partner”. All other groups were politically powerless.

1995-2017

The mass exodus of Russians occurred due to the empowerment of the Kazakhs, the loss of influence of the Russians, the growing use of Kazakh language and the unpromising economic situation in Kazakhstan. Hence, a new period was added in 2006 to reflect the changes in the population sizes of the relevant ethnic groups. With regards to political power, the Kazakhs are coded as dominant and all other groups as powerless in this entire period.

It is possible that some groups sooner or later become irrelevant

should their numbers continue to decline. For example, the Russian minority in Kazakhstan has become increasingly de-politicized in the 2000s. Political movements and associations, such as the Cossacks, “Lad” and “Russkaya obshchina” failed to mobilize the millions of Russians living in the country (2711), but nevertheless such organizations show the continued political relevance of Russians. Ukrainians were also represented by the “Lad”, which is a movement representing all Slavic speaking people in Kazakhstan (2712). The “Lad”’s demands include equal rights, a share of national property and participation in the state administration. Political claims are usually made in the name of Slavic minorities or Russian-speakers but do not refer to Ukrainians as a distinct group from the Russians, which is why they are combined in the umbrella group “Russian-speakers.”

2711 [Peyrouse, 2007]

2712 [Minority Rights Group International, 2008]

The Uighurs are underrepresented in terms of employment in state administration and other areas of employment in the public sphere (2713).

2713 [Minority Rights Group International, 2008]

Kazakhstan experienced an influx of ethnic Kyrgyz and Tajik during the last decade because of the comparably better economic conditions in Kazakhstan, however, these new minorities are immigrants, have no citizenship rights and are not politically relevant. Kazakh law prohibits parties established on an ethnic, gender, or religious basis (2714), but some candidates in the parliamentary elections in 2012 were representatives of minority groups. In particular Russian-speaking minorities were better represented in this legislative compared to previous ones (2715). There are no laws prohibiting members of ethnic minorities from holding office and participating in political life (2716).

2714 [US Department of State, 2013]

2715 [Minority Rights Group International, 2012]

2716 [US Department of State, 2014-2016]

At the executive level, there were/are few ministers with ethnic minority origin, such as the prime minister who is supposed to have Uighur origins, a German minister (at least according to his name), and Russian ministers, such as the minister of finance in the years 1994-1998, 2002-2003, 2006-2007 (2717). However, they are clearly token members of these groups and, for instance, there was no sufficient evidence that they made any demands in the name of their ethnic groups.

2717 [Government of Kazakhstan, 2014]

Although ethnic clashes with the Tajik ethnic minority occurred in February of 2015 (2718), the incident was unique of its kind, and in combination with their small number, they are considered irrelevant. The ethnic Turkic minority in Kazakhstan experienced a similar occurrence (2719).

2718 [International Crisis Group, 2015]

2719 [International Crisis Group, 2016]

2020-2021

The size of the Kazakh ethnic group continued to grow significantly in relation to the total population size, while the Russian population share decreased (2720). Therefore, all group sizes were adjusted to the latest figures from 2019 given in the CIA Factbook (2721). Moreover, in spring 2019 Kazakh President Nursultan Nazarbaev resigned after 30 years in power, naming Senate speaker Kassym-

2720 [Bertelsmann Stiftung, 2020]

2721 [Central Intelligence Agency, 2020]

Jomart Tokaev as interim president. Tokaev ran as the ruling party candidate in the subsequent elections and won in a vote marked by irregularities (²⁷²²). Despite this transition, no shift in political power in favour of the ethnic minority groups was reported and the Kazakh majority remained dominant.

²⁷²² [US Department of State, 2019]

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Political status of ethnic groups in K

From 1991 until 1994

Group name	Proportional size	Political status
Kazakhs	0.397	SENIOR PARTNER
Russians	0.374	JUNIOR PARTNER
Germans	0.058	POWERLESS
Ukrainians	0.054	POWERLESS
Tatars	0.02	POWERLESS
Uzbeks	0.02	POWERLESS
Uighur	0.011	POWERLESS

From 1995 until 2005

Group name	Proportional size	Political status
Kazakhs	0.534	DOMINANT
Russian-speakers	0.337	POWERLESS
Uzbeks	0.025	POWERLESS
Germans	0.024	POWERLESS
Tatars	0.017	POWERLESS
Uighur	0.014	POWERLESS

From 2006 until 2019

Group name	Proportional size	Political status
Kazakhs	0.631	DOMINANT
Russian-speakers	0.258	POWERLESS
Uzbeks	0.028	POWERLESS
Uighur	0.014	POWERLESS
Tatars	0.013	POWERLESS
Germans	0.011	POWERLESS

From 2020 until 2021



Figure 553: Political status of ethnic groups in Kazakhstan during 1991-1994.



Figure 554: Political status of ethnic groups in Kazakhstan during 1995-2005.



Figure 555: Political status of ethnic groups in Kazakhstan during 2006-2019.



Figure 556: Political status of ethnic groups in Kazakhstan during 2020-2021.

Group name	Proportional size	Political status
Kazakhs	0.68	DOMINANT
Russian-speakers	0.208	POWERLESS
Uzbeks	0.032	POWERLESS
Uighur	0.015	POWERLESS
Tatars	0.011	POWERLESS
Germans	0.01	POWERLESS

Geographical coverage of ethnic groups in Kazakhstan

From 1991 until 1994

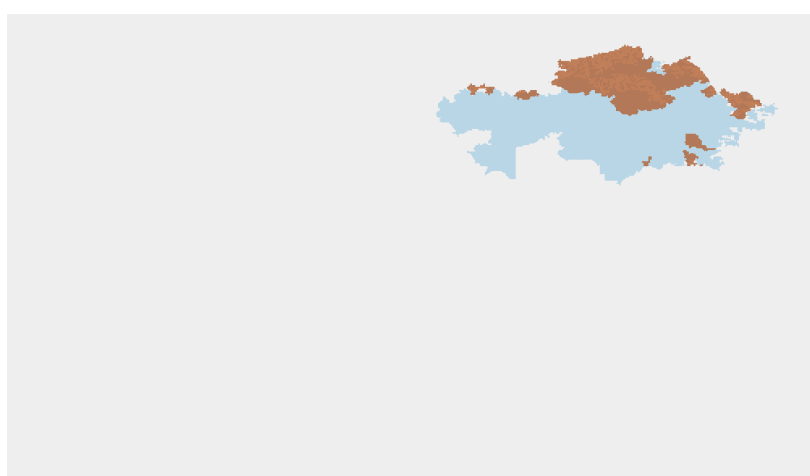


Figure 557: Map of ethnic groups in Kazakhstan during 1991-1994.








Group name	Area in km ²	Type
 Kazakhs	2 399 048	Regionally based
 Russians	671 502	Regionally based
 Germans	0	Dispersed
 Uzbeks	0	Dispersed
 Ukrainians	0	Dispersed
 Uighur	0	Dispersed
 Tatars	0	Dispersed

Table 203: List of ethnic groups in Kazakhstan during 1991-1994.

From 1995 until 1997

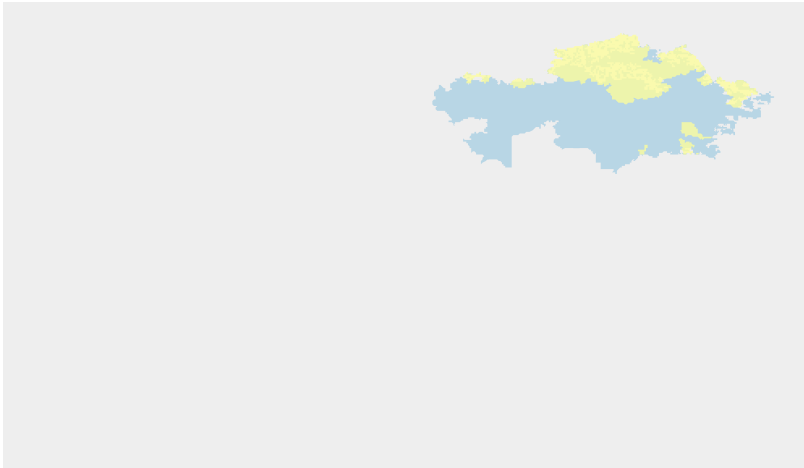


Figure 558: Map of ethnic groups in Kazakhstan during 1995-1997.

Group name	Area in km ²	Type
■ Kazakhs	2 399 048	Regionally based
■ Russian-speakers	671 502	Aggregate
■ Germans	0	Dispersed
■ Tatars	0	Dispersed
■ Uighur	0	Dispersed
■ Uzbeks	0	Dispersed

Table 204: List of ethnic groups in Kazakhstan during 1995-1997.

From 1998 until 2021

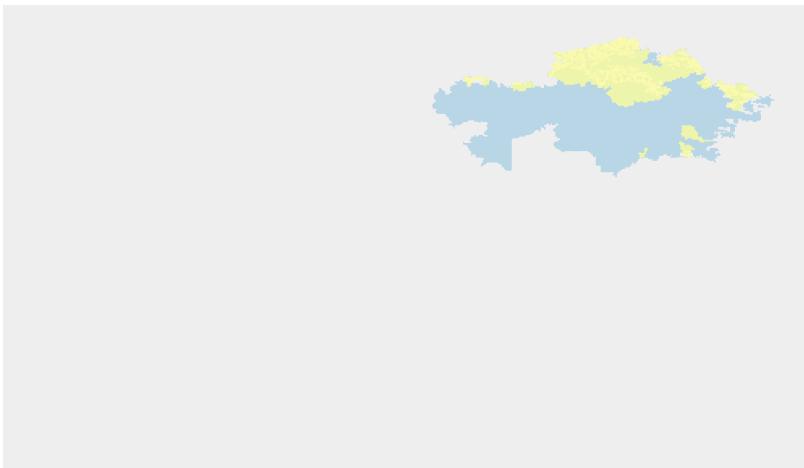


Figure 559: Map of ethnic groups in Kazakhstan during 1998-2021.

	Group name	Area in km ²	Type
■	Kazakhs	2 399 048	Regionally based
■	Russian-speakers	671 502	Aggregate
■	Germans	0	Dispersed
■	Tatars	0	Dispersed
■	Uighur	0	Dispersed
■	Uzbeks	0	Dispersed

Table 205: List of ethnic groups in Kazakhstan during 1998-2021.