

# Kyrgyzstan

## *Ethnicity in Kyrgyzstan*

### *Group selection*

We identify the following politically relevant ethnic groups: **Kyrgyz** (64.9% of the population) <sup>(2420)</sup>. The largest minority are the **Uzbeks**. They live mostly concentrated in the South of Kyrgyzstan in the regions Jalal-Abad, Osh und Kara-Suu. We also identify **Russians and Uyghurs**.

<sup>2420</sup> [International Helsinki Federation for Human Rig

### *Power relations*

#### *1991-2004*

Under president Akajev, the Kyrgyz were senior partner and the Russians junior partner <sup>(2421)</sup>. Akajev based himself on the power structures from the Kyrgyz SSSR, where Russians played an important role; consequently, under his rule, the Russians remained “junior partners”. Uyghurs and Uzbeks were both powerless and remained so in following years.

<sup>2421</sup> [Gorenburg, 2005]

#### *2005-2010*

Almost all public officials are ethnic Kyrgyz <sup>(2422)</sup>. The Uzbeks gained some more influence under president Bakijev since 2005, because his power foundations rely on southern clans (especially in Jalal-Abad), where the Uzbeks are somewhat influential. Nevertheless, the Uzbeks - despite having some representatives in the legislature - are underrepresented and thus virtually powerless. In 2006, an Uzbek member of the Parliament advocated without success that Uzbek become an official language <sup>(2423, 2424)</sup>. The Russians finally lost their influential position after the Tulip Revolution in 2004, when president Bakijev exchanged the old Soviet nomenklatura (to which Russians belonged) and replaced them with with Kyrgyz. Hence, the Kyrgyz are coded as having a monopoly on power thereafter. The Russians are now powerless, but politically organized to express their demands, for example in the organization “Slavic Diaspora” <sup>(2425)</sup>.

<sup>2422</sup> [International Helsinki Federation for Human Rig

<sup>2423</sup> [International Helsinki Federation for Human Rig

<sup>2424</sup> [US Department of State, 2006-2009]

<sup>2425</sup> [International Helsinki Federation for Human Rig

The Uyghurs have a very low level of organization and there is no representation of Uyghurs in government structures (Central Asia-Caucasus Analyst, 2002), but the Uyghurs have a strong group identity and the community for example appeared on the political scene when they demonstrated for better conditions for their kin

in China (<sup>2426</sup>). They are therefore considered politically relevant throughout.

<sup>2426</sup> [Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty, 2009]

### *2011-2017*

In 2010, Kyrgyzstan experienced another political turnover during the second Tulip Revolution. As a consequence, president Bakijev was ousted, and ethnic tensions between Kyrgyz and Uzbeks dramatically increased. In particular in the South, ethnic clashes and riots occurred, resulting in more than 400 deaths (mostly Uzbeks) and nearly 100,000 forced migrants. After these clashes, societal, educational and economic discrimination of Uzbeks increased. For instance, Uzbek schools (and some Tajik schools) were closed and Uzbek business seized by Kyrgyz (<sup>2427</sup>).

<sup>2427</sup> [Vela, 2011]

The International Crisis Group informs that final school examinations are no longer held in the Uzbek language, that officials have started to single out members of the Uzbek community as members of Islamic State in the South. Furthermore the trial surrounding Uzbek activist Azimjan Askarov remains unresolved (<sup>2428</sup>). Tynan writes that since the 2010 attack, the community has retreated from political activities, and that the government blames the group for not trying to assimilate more (<sup>2429</sup>). The U.S. Department of State notes that the southern region is characterized by its discrimination against the Uzbek minority in an area such as government, amongst others (<sup>2430</sup>). Kyrgyz law requires that at least 15 percent of candidates on party lists be members of ethnic minorities. 14 members of the parliament belong to minorities (<sup>2431</sup>). However, this rule alone does not detract from the government-orchestrated discrimination against Uzbeks, so that they are coded as “discriminated” after 2010. Kyrgyz still have a monopoly on power, and the other groups are powerless.

<sup>2428</sup> [International Crisis Group, 2017]

<sup>2429</sup> [Tynan, 2016]

<sup>2430</sup> [US Department of State, 2016]

<sup>2431</sup> [US Department of State, 2013]

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## *Political status of ethnic groups in Kyrgyzstan*

*From 1991 until 2004*

Group name	Proportional size	Political status
Kyrgyz	0.524	SENIOR PARTNER
Russians	0.215	JUNIOR PARTNER
Uzbeks	0.129	POWERLESS
Uyghur	0.01	POWERLESS

*From 2005 until 2010*

Group name	Proportional size	Political status
Kyrgyz	0.649	DOMINANT
Uzbeks	0.138	POWERLESS
Russians	0.125	POWERLESS
Uyghur	0.01	POWERLESS

*From 2011 until 2017*

Group name	Proportional size	Political status
Kyrgyz	0.649	DOMINANT
Uzbeks	0.138	DISCRIMINATED
Russians	0.125	POWERLESS
Uyghur	0.01	POWERLESS



Figure 498: Political status of ethnic groups in Kyrgyzstan during 1991-2004.



Figure 499: Political status of ethnic groups in Kyrgyzstan during 2005-2010.



Figure 500: Political status of ethnic groups in Kyrgyzstan during 2011-2017.

## *Geographical coverage of ethnic groups in Kyrgyzstan*

*From 1991 until 2017*



Figure 501: Map of ethnic groups in Kyrgyzstan during 1991-2017.

Group name	Area in km <sup>2</sup>	Type
<span style="color: blue;">■</span> Kyrgyz	94 042	Regionally based
<span style="color: lightblue;">■</span> Russians	7958	Regional & urban
<span style="color: yellow;">■</span> Uzbeks	3178	Regionally based
Uyghur		Dispersed

Table 170: List of ethnic groups in Kyrgyzstan during 1991-2017.