

Lithuania

Ethnicity in Lithuania

Group selection

The **Lithuanians** are the demographic and politically dominant majority. Politically relevant minorities include the **Poles** and **Russians**. There are three periods in Lithuania: Two with same ethnic power relations but different group sizes and one with a shift in power relations. The periods were divided according to the census in 1989 and 2001. The relative number of Lithuanians increased and the number of Russians declined.

Power relations

1991-2019

The ethnic power relations have remained the same for most of the time since independence with Lithuanians as politically dominant ethnic group. The Lithuanians constitute a clear majority with 83.5% ⁽³⁰⁴⁹⁾. In Lithuania the minority situation is not such an important political issue as in the other Baltic States ⁽³⁰⁵⁰⁾.

The Poles and the Russians are powerless: The Polish minority is represented by the party AWPL ⁽³⁰⁵¹⁾, but they have only a small voter support in the country, and only in those municipalities with high share of Poles. Poles living in Lithuania do not face any significant disadvantage ⁽³⁰⁵²⁾. In the parliamentary elections of 2012, the “Electoral Action of Poles in Lithuania” party won eight seats in the Parliament, one seat in the European Parliament, and 11 seats in coalition with the Russian Alliance in the Vilnius City Municipality ⁽³⁰⁵³⁾. Yet, there are (and were) tensions between Poles and Lithuanians concerning language rights (especially in schools), spelling rules in official documents (the Latvian alphabet lacks the “W” which is important for many Polish names) and historical experiences ⁽³⁰⁵⁴⁾.

The Russians usually live in larger cities ⁽³⁰⁵⁵⁾, they do not face disadvantages either ⁽³⁰⁵⁶⁾, but are less organized than the Polish minority. Still, the Russian minority does have political organizations, such as the Russian Union and Alliance of Lithuanian Citizens, and there are organizations promote Russian culture in Lithuania.

³⁰⁴⁹ [Statistics Lithuania, 2014]

³⁰⁵⁰ [Zaagman, 1999]

³⁰⁵¹ [AAkcja Wyborcza Polakow na Litwie, 2010]

³⁰⁵² [Zaagman, 1999]

³⁰⁵³ [The Baltic Course, 2011]

³⁰⁵⁴ [The Economist, 2012]

³⁰⁵⁵ [Library of Congress, 2009]

³⁰⁵⁶ [Zaagman, 1999]

2020-2021

In July 2019, the Electoral Action of Poles in Lithuania, Christian Families Alliance (EAPLCFA), the political party representing Poles in Lithuania joined the government coalition and occupied two ministries: the Ministry of Internal Affairs and the Ministry of Transport and Communication ⁽³⁰⁵⁷⁾. This has marked the greatest success of the party since the independence of the country ⁽³⁰⁵⁸⁾. Hence, a new period is added, where Lithuanians are coded as a Senior Partner and Poles are coded as Junior Partner.

In the parliamentary elections of 2020, the EAPL failed to pass the 5% threshold in multi member districts for the first time since 2008 amid growing criticism for its pro-Kremlin views. However, the Lithuanian Poles continued to play a significant role in politics. Notably, Evelina Dobrovolska “ran for parliament with the Freedom Party and won, not as an ethnic Pole on the list of an ethnic party, but as an idealistic politician running on a set of policy proposals and values” ⁽³⁰⁵⁹⁾. She was later named Justice Minister ⁽³⁰⁶⁰⁾. Therefore, the Poles are considered well integrated into Lithuania’s polity and continue to be coded as Junior Partner.

³⁰⁵⁷ [Center for Eastern Studies, 2019]

³⁰⁵⁸ [ICELDS, 2019]

³⁰⁵⁹ [Matačiūnaitė-Boyce, 2020]

³⁰⁶⁰ [Lithuanian Radio and Television (LRT), 2020]

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Political status of ethnic groups in Lithuania

From 1991 until 2000

Group name	Proportional size	Political status
Lithuanians	0.766	DOMINANT
Russians	0.094	POWERLESS
Poles	0.07	POWERLESS

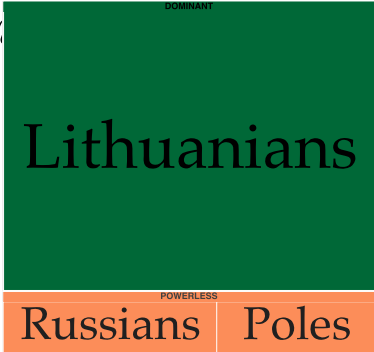


Figure 618: Political status of ethnic groups in Lithuania during 1991-2000.

From 2001 until 2019

Group name	Proportional size	Political status
Lithuanians	0.842	DOMINANT
Poles	0.066	POWERLESS
Russians	0.058	POWERLESS



Figure 619: Political status of ethnic groups in Lithuania during 2001-2019.

From 2020 until 2021

Group name	Proportional size	Political status
Lithuanians	0.842	SENIOR PARTNER
Poles	0.066	JUNIOR PARTNER
Russians	0.058	POWERLESS



Figure 620: Political status of ethnic groups in Lithuania during 2020-2021.

Geographical coverage of ethnic groups in Lithuania

From 1991 until 2021

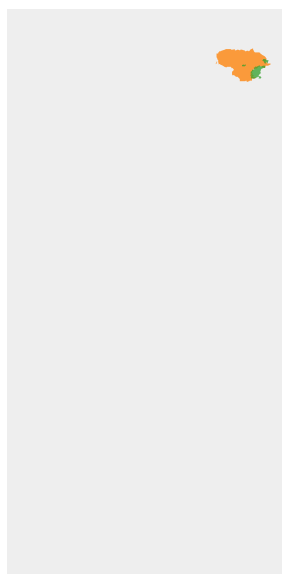


Figure 621: Map of ethnic groups in Lithuania during 1991-2021.

Group name	Area in km ²	Type
■ Lithuanians	59 805	Regional & urban
■ Poles	7801	Regional & urban
■ Russians	0	Urban

Table 228: List of ethnic groups in Lithuania during 1991-2021.