

Moldova

Ethnicity in Moldova

Group selection

The **Moldovans** are the demographic majority. Other politically relevant ethnic groups are **Russian speakers, Gagauz, and Bulgarians**.

Group sizes stem from the census data of 2004 (referring to the entire territory of Moldova). In 2014, the government of Moldova issued an official population census to take place within the country's borders, accounting for a variety of measures, including inhabitants' ethnicity. Data for inhabitants living in Transnistria was not included in the ethnic group sizes of this update. Although Transnistria conducted a population census shortly after that of Moldova in 2014, more detailed results for this are not yet released, and thus the population sizes for ethnic minorities in Transnistria are still unknown.

Power relations

The **Moldovans** have the status of a senior partner since 2002, before they were dominant. In 2011, they, again, became the dominant majority.

The Russians and Ukrainians are the two largest minorities; they are categorized as "**Russian speakers**". The Russian speakers came to the position of a junior partner after the Communist Party (CP) regained huge majority power in the 2001 elections. Moldova is the only country of the Former Soviet Union, where the Communist Party regained power. The CP favors Russian speakers in the Soviet tradition and also fostered the direct influence of Russia in Moldova (³⁴¹⁹). The situation remained the same until 2010, although the CP lost some voters and did not enjoy a clear majority anymore. The CP lost all three elections in 2009 and 2010 and was excluded from the governing coalitions, which since consisted of members of the Alliance for European Integration (pro-European, 'liberal' parties). As an overwhelming majority of 73% of self-identified ethnic Russians voted for the CP in July's election of 2009, as well as in the other elections in 2010 (exit poll, data from ³⁴²⁰), the Russian Speakers are coded powerless starting from 2011. As a result of the elections in February, 2019 the pro-European party lost its power and the Socialist Party (PSRM) known for its pro-Russian orientation obtained the control of the new technocratic government (³⁴²¹). However,

³⁴¹⁹ [Roper, 2008]

³⁴²⁰ [Omar Mahmood et al., 2013]

³⁴²¹ [Freedom House, 2020]

pro-Russianness of the PSRM is understood more as a matter of foreign policy orientation rather than the representation of Russian-speakers in Moldova. Therefore, the latter group remains powerless until 2021.

The **Gagauz** Christian Turkic minority has local autonomy in Gagauzia in the southern part of the country (³⁴²²). In a unilateral move, Gagauzia was first declared an independent republic on 19.8.1990, with elections following in October 1990. The central government lost control over the region and negotiated - influenced by the experiences in Transnistria - a settlement during the following years (³⁴²³). An agreement was reached only in 1994 (³⁴²⁴), and included regional autonomy for Gagauzia as well as the ex officio membership of the Gagauzian governor in the national government. Therefore, the Gagauz have regional autonomy and are self-excluded from 1991 to 1994, which is followed by a period without central political power (status = powerless; the Gagauz representative in the national executive is a “token member”) and regional autonomy from 1995 to 2021.

The **Bulgarian** minority is powerless. The Bulgarians in Moldova are sometimes called Bessarabian Bulgarians. From the late 1980s, Moldovan Bulgarians established links to Bulgaria, and the Bulgarian minority in Moldova has been the subject of bilateral cooperation between Bulgaria and Moldova (³⁴²⁵), what should be seen as a sign of their political relevance.

The part of Moldova east of the Dnjepr river, Transnistria, is engaged in a secessionist struggle. The Moldovan government has no authority in Transnistria (³⁴²⁶). However, Transnistria’s separatism is not based on ethnicity. The population of Transnistria consists of approximately 60 percent Russian speakers and 30 percent Moldovans. But the majority of Russian speakers actually live in the rest of Moldova. Therefore, Transnistria’s separatism is not reflected in this coding of Moldova’s ethnic groups and their access to state power.

³⁴²² [Avram, 2010]

³⁴²³ [Chinn & Roper, 1998]

³⁴²⁴ [Parliament of the Republic of Moldova, 1994]

³⁴²⁵ [Minority Rights Group International, 2008]

³⁴²⁶ [Vahl & Emerson, 2004]

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Political status of ethnic groups in Moldova

From 1991 until 1994

Group name	Proportional size	Political status
Moldovans	0.7	DOMINANT
Russian speakers	0.21	POWERLESS
Gagauz	0.038	SELF-EXCLUSION
Bulgarians	0.02	POWERLESS

From 1995 until 2001

Group name	Proportional size	Political status
Moldovans	0.7	DOMINANT
Russian speakers	0.21	POWERLESS
Gagauz	0.038	POWERLESS
Bulgarians	0.02	POWERLESS

From 2002 until 2010

Group name	Proportional size	Political status
Moldovans	0.7	SENIOR PARTNER
Russian speakers	0.21	JUNIOR PARTNER
Gagauz	0.038	POWERLESS
Bulgarians	0.02	POWERLESS

From 2011 until 2014

Group name	Proportional size	Political status
Moldovans	0.7	DOMINANT
Russian speakers	0.21	POWERLESS
Gagauz	0.038	POWERLESS
Bulgarians	0.02	POWERLESS

From 2015 until 2021



Figure 687: Political status of ethnic groups in Moldova during 1991-1994.



Figure 688: Political status of ethnic groups in Moldova during 1995-2001.



Figure 689: Political status of ethnic groups in Moldova during 2002-2010.



Figure 690: Political status of ethnic groups in Moldova during 2011-2014.

Group name	Proportional size	Political status
Moldovans	0.751	DOMINANT
Russian speakers	0.107	POWERLESS
Gagauz	0.046	POWERLESS
Bulgarians	0.019	POWERLESS

Geographical coverage of ethnic groups in Moldova

From 1991 until 2021

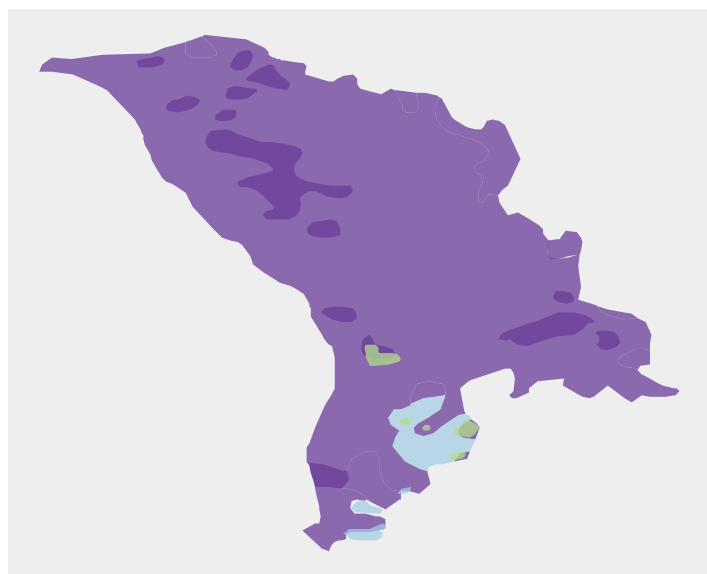


Figure 692: Map of ethnic groups in Moldova during 1991-2021.

Group name	Area in km ²	Type
■ Moldovans	30 351	Regionally based
■ Russian speakers	5000	Regional & urban
■ Gagauz	1197	Regionally based
■ Bulgarians	267	Regionally based

Table 258: List of ethnic groups in Moldova during 1991-2021.

Conflicts in Moldova

Starting on 1992-02-29

Side A	Side B	Group name	Start	Claim	Recruitment	Support
Government of Moldova	PMR		1992-02-29			