

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 (²⁸²⁴). The situation remains the same until 2010, although the CP lost some voters and does 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 consists 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 ²⁸²⁵), the Russian Speakers are powerless during the years 2011 - 2017.

The **Gagauz** Christian Turkic minority has local autonomy in Gagauzia in the southern part of the country (²⁸²⁶). In a unilateral move, Gagauzia was first declared an independent republic on

²⁸²⁴ [Roper, 2008]

²⁸²⁵ [Omar Mahmood et al., 2013]

²⁸²⁶ [Avram, 2010]

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 (²⁸²⁷). An agreement was reached only in 1994 (²⁸²⁸), 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 2017.

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 (²⁸²⁹), 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 (²⁸³⁰). 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.

²⁸²⁷ [Chinn Roper, 1998]

²⁸²⁸ [Parliament of the Republic of Moldova, 1994]

²⁸²⁹ [Minority Rights Group International, 2008]

²⁸³⁰ [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



Figure 591: Political status of ethnic groups in Moldova during 1991-1994.

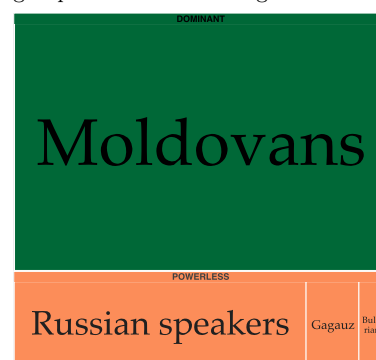


Figure 592: Political status of ethnic groups in Moldova during 1995-2001.



Figure 593: Political status of ethnic groups in Moldova during 2002-2010.



From 2015 until 2017

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



Figure 595: Political status of ethnic groups in Moldova during 2015-2017.

Geographical coverage of ethnic groups in Moldova

From 1991 until 2017

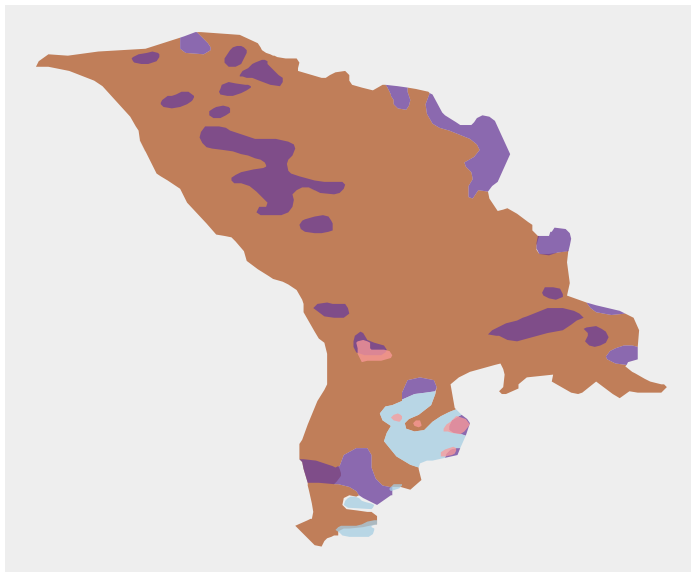


Figure 596: Map of ethnic groups in Moldova during 1991-2017.

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 208: List of ethnic groups in Moldova during 1991-2017.

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			