

Poland

Ethnicity in Poland

Group selection

The following ethnic groups are politically relevant in Poland:

Poles, Germans, Ukrainians, Byelorussians, Jews and Roma.

The population numbers were coded at the beginning of each phase, even if the events that justify the inclusion of a new phase often led to an exodus (specifically of the Jewish population) in the immediately following years. Hence, the decline is only reported in the following phase, although this does not mean that the population was constant over the whole phase. This results in a rather low Polish population figure for 1946, as the expulsion of Germans was far from finished and continued until 1950. On the other hand, the flight and expulsion of Germans during the last year and directly after WWII as well as the forced mutual 'repatriations' between Poland and the Soviet Union, which also set in even before the end of the war in 1944 and lasted until 1946, are set prior to the 1946-1956 period (otherwise, no reliable population data would be available due to the massive population transfers in the direct aftermath of WWII). As a general rule, the analysis did not rely on census data (which clearly underestimate the size of minorities, just as the estimates by minority organizations overestimate them), but mainly used expert estimates. Where intervals or different estimates are available, the average has been used. The number of Poles is calculated by subtracting the estimated number of all minority members from the official census data on the overall population at the point of the estimate.

Power relations

The first time period, 1946-1956, is marked by Polish Stalinism under Bierut and lasts until the "Polish October" of 1956 and the following takeover of the national-communists under Gomulka. This also marks a temporary end of the openly assimilationist policies towards all minorities - e.g. several socio-cultural societies for different minorities were established and minority-language education was allowed. However, as in all communist countries, interest representation for minorities was organized in a top-down manner and was rather aimed at downplaying minority interests as "folklore" and controlling these groups than granting them any protection, let alone influence, and the more liberal attitude towards minority language

education was short-lived. Hence, in 1957-68, the minorities remain discriminated. The main justification for the first period break is the change in the status of the Jewish population (see below). One further short-lived liberalization that is not reported occurred during the Solidarnosc period 1980/81, which ended with the introduction of martial law.

Poles: The Poles' political status is dominant in the communist era, and monopoly after the transition to democracy. After the 2019 Polish parliamentary elections, the status of the Polish population remains Monopoly as there are no minority groups represented in the governing cabinet. In July 2020, President Andrzej Duda was re-elected for a second term in a narrow race against his opponent Trzaskowski a social liberal and currently the mayor of Warsaw (4324).

4324 [BBC, 2020]

Ukrainians: Polish-Ukrainian relations were traditionally tense: in the interwar-era, Ukrainians suffered under the mostly nationalist governments in the multi-ethnic Polish state, some of them resorting to terrorism. During WWII, Ukrainian resistance forces committed massacres among the Polish population of the Ukrainian territories. Their resistance continued even after the end of the war. In the afterwar-period, the Polish policy towards the remaining Ukrainian population was aimed at forced assimilation. In the "Operation Vistula" 1947, the complete Ukrainian population in south-east Poland was resettled towards formerly German regions (Silesia, East Prussia), where the German population had been expelled. In order to facilitate assimilation, the Ukrainians were dispersed across these regions, setting maximum thresholds for the number of Ukrainians in a district and separating former neighbors. Although the policy was liberalized temporarily after 1956 and the aim of complete Polonization ultimately failed, the policy towards the Ukrainians was coded as discriminatory throughout the communist era.

After 1989, Ukrainians were only marginally involved in national politics; examples include W. Mokry, an Ukrainian minority activist winning a seat in the Sejm in 1989 (via the Solidarnosc list) or the Association of Ukrainians in Poland being heard in a national committee (4325).

4325 [Vermeersch, 2007]

In recent years, it seems that the Ukrainians are still only marginally involved in national politics and that the trend of the community as becoming politically ever more irrelevant over time continues. There is no evidence for high-level political engagement in national politics by a political party representing the Ukrainian minority. Since an electoral reform in April 2001, national minorities do not any longer need to reach the 5 percent threshold to win seats in the national parliament. However, the dispersed settlement of the Ukrainian minority makes it difficult to organize and to collect the 5000 signatures required within a given territory (constituency). This explains partly, why there is no Ukrainian minority party active on a national level (Zielinski et al., 2011a: 14) Corresponding to the last parliamentary elections (2015), that did not see any Ukrainian mobi-

lization, their status is changed to irrelevant as of 2016.

In the aftermath of the outbreak of conflict in eastern Ukraine, a large number of Ukrainians found refuge in Poland (⁴³²⁶). This, however, did not lead to more politicization of the autochthonous Ukrainian minority in Poland. It was rather covered in terms of a pure immigration issue.

⁴³²⁶ [The Guardian, 2015]

Byelorussians: The Byelorussians are the hardest to assess in terms of their treatment by the communist Polish state. Due to a high degree of assimilation, they were not as openly targeted as Ukrainians or Germans, despite their considerable numbers. On the other hand, unlike the Jews, they did not hold any considerable political power at any time. Coding them as discriminated might in comparison overstate, powerless somewhat understate their problems. Still, the latter coding option was chosen. Since 1990, the Byelorussian community has had some political relevance on the national level, presenting an electoral list in national elections (e.g. Białoruskie Zjednoczenie Demokratyczne or Białoruski Komitet Wyborczy - Belarusian Electoral Committee). However, the committee never won any seats. Byelorussians are therefore coded as being powerless for the 1990 - 2017 period (see also ⁴³²⁷).

⁴³²⁷ [Fleming, 2002]

In 2017, it seems that political parties exclusively representing Byelorussians on a country-level in Poland are not active any longer. There are, for example, no signs of activity of the previously mentioned Białoruskie Zjednoczenie Demokratyczne and the Białoruski Komitet Wyborczy - Belarusian Electoral Committee since 2004. However, according to Vasilevich (⁴³²⁸, 10), the Belarusian minority is still actively involved in Polish politics through the participation in national-wide parties, mainly located on the political left, such as the Democratic Left Alliance. Eugeniusz Czykwin, for example, a politician of the Democratic Left Alliance and elected member of the Sejm (1989-2005), belonged to the few representatives of the Belarusian ethnic minority in national politics. Since the fall of communism, there were in total four Belarusian MPs elected to the Polish Parliament from 1993-2005 all belonging to the Democratic Left Alliance (⁴³²⁹, 10). Notwithstanding, it should be noted that the presence of politicians representing the Belarusian minority is more pronounced in local politics (⁴³³⁰: 15).

⁴³²⁸ [Vasilevich, 2014]

⁴³²⁹ [Vasilevich, 2014]

⁴³³⁰ [Zielinski et al., 2011b]

Germans: In 1946, even officially (1946 census) 2.3 million Germans still lived in Poland, other estimates (⁴³³¹) even speak of 3.2-3.5 million. The status of Germans is discriminated from 1946-1989. The expulsions after WWII lasted until 1950, after which the official position was that no relevant German minority was left - a position that was only revised in 1989, when the authorities were rather surprised (see ⁴³³²) that a significant German population had remained in Poland and began to organize and mobilize after the end of communism (in the 1991 election the party of the German minority gained 130'000 votes and sent 7 deputies to the Sejm). During communist times, it was impossible to openly promote the cause of the German minority, because their existence was denied. In the 2009 -

⁴³³¹ [Lodzinski, 1999]

⁴³³² [Lodzinski, 1999]

2013 period, the Germans continue being politically relevant on the national level, having one representative in the Sejm (via the German Minority list). Since they do not have direct access to executive power, they are coded as being powerless (see also ⁴³³³).

⁴³³³ [Fleming, 2002]

In the 2015 elections, the German Minority successfully defended its seat in the national parliament (Ryszard Galla represents the interests of the German minority in the Sejm). The German Minority managed to defend its seat also during the 2019 parliamentary elections. Ryszard Galla remains the only representative of the German interests in the lower house of the national legislature of Poland. Thus, the German minority is politically relevant on a national level. However, as a consequence of their lacking access to executive power, they are still coded as being powerless.

Roma: Due to their extermination in the Holocaust, hardly any Roma population remained in Poland after WWII. Although the assimilationist policies were less pronounced than e.g. with regard to the much larger Ukrainian minority, there were state policies of forced settlement in order to end the nomadic lifestyle of the Roma. Insofar, Roma faced state discrimination as well. Some signs of discrimination can be seen throughout the 90s, for example in the downplaying of public officials of a series of communal attacks on Roma between '90 and '01 (⁴³³⁴, ⁴³³⁵). Furthermore, Roma are discriminated with regard to access to public goods, the judiciary and economic participation (⁴³³⁶, ⁴³³⁷). However, there are no signs for political discrimination of Roma or state policies (forced displacement, quotas, etc) that lead to intentional political discrimination indirectly. Voting rights are equal and the Roma have been officially recognized as ethnic minority in 1998, giving them special electoral rights such as the lifting of the 5% hurdle in national parliamentary elections. Under pressure from the EU Poland adopted the National Program for Roma in 2001, establishing a national integration strategy with special attention to specific regions. For example, during 2019, the Polish government allocated around 2.8 million dollars for various educational and cultural programs to support Romani children and students. Even though societal discrimination against Romani continues to be a problem in Poland (⁴³³⁸, there are no reports indicating active political discrimination. This assessment in combination with the absence of reports of political discrimination of Roma in Poland and the existence of a Polish association of Roma (⁴³³⁹) leads to the coding of powerless for the period 1990 - 20121.

⁴³³⁴ [ERRC, 1997]

⁴³³⁵ [ERRC, 2002]

⁴³³⁶ [Sobotka, 2001]

⁴³³⁷ [US State Department, 2016]

⁴³³⁸ [US State Department, 2016]

⁴³³⁹ [Minority Rights Group International, 2014]

Jews: After the Holocaust and pogroms in the direct afterwar years (e.g. Kielce 1946), many surviving Polish Jews left Poland, and the Jewish population dropped from a post-war peak of 180'000-240'000 to approximately 80'000-120'000. After the end of Stalinism, another emigration wave of approximately 50'000 Jews left Poland in the late 1950s, leaving approximately 40'000-70'000 remaining, mostly completely assimilated. After the anti-semitic campaign of 1968, almost the entire remaining Jewish population was forced to leave (1968-71) after mass expulsions from the party and from

teaching positions in schools and universities under political and secret police pressure. In 1989, the estimated Jewish population was as low as 5'000-10'000, most of them concealing their identity. After the fall of communism, the numbers went up again. Pan and Pfeil (⁴³⁴⁰, 340) give 7'000-15'000 (however, without providing a source), although the 2002 census only reports 1133. The current Jewish population is estimated with 20'000.

⁴³⁴⁰ [Pan & Pfeil, 2002]

The political status of the Jewish population is a sensitive issue, especially in the time before 1956. As noted, a large proportion of the surviving Jewish population had left Poland in the direct afterwar years. The remaining often stayed for political reasons - as devout communists. Although the term "Ydokomuna" (judeo-communism) is an anti-semitic stereotype, Jews were strongly represented in the PZPR and held prominent positions (e.g. Hilary Minc as vice-premier and minister of industry and economic affairs and Jakub Berman as minister for propaganda and "Stalin's right hand in Poland"). Of course, these high-ranking officials did not at all act as promoters of any form of minority rights for the Jewish population or even claimed to represent them (which is why they are not coded as junior partners). Still, in contrast to other minorities Jews held significant political power, a fact that is important to understand the anti-semitic campaigns. After the death (heart attack or suicide following the XX. party congress of the CPSU) of Bierut in 1956, the national-communists headed by Gomulka took over and purged the party from Stalinists, including many Jewish party members and officials. The Jewish exodus of the years 1957-59 is most likely not only related to the temporary liberalization of the system (which facilitated the departure) but also at least partly to the identification of Jews with Stalinists. Hence, the Jews are coded as discriminated from 1956 until 1989. Afterwards, Jews are coded as being irrelevant, as they lack a political organization claiming to represent them.

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Political status of ethnic groups in Poland

From 1946 until 1956

Group name	Proportional size	Political status
Poles	0.81	DOMINANT
Germans	0.14	DISCRIMINATED
Ukrainians	0.018	DISCRIMINATED
Byelorussians	0.009	POWERLESS
European and American Jews	0.004	POWERLESS
Roma	5.0×10^{-4}	DISCRIMINATED

From 1957 until 1967

Group name	Proportional size	Political status
Poles	0.978	DOMINANT
Germans	0.0068	DISCRIMINATED
Byelorussians	0.0048	POWERLESS
Ukrainians	0.0048	DISCRIMINATED
European and American Jews	0.0038	DISCRIMINATED
Roma	4.0×10^{-4}	DISCRIMINATED

From 1968 until 1989

Group name	Proportional size	Political status
Poles	0.98	DOMINANT
Germans	0.007	DISCRIMINATED
Byelorussians	0.005	POWERLESS
Ukrainians	0.005	DISCRIMINATED
European and American Jews	0.002	DISCRIMINATED
Roma	4.0×10^{-4}	DISCRIMINATED

From 1990 until 2015



Figure 842: Political status of ethnic groups in Poland during 1946-1956.

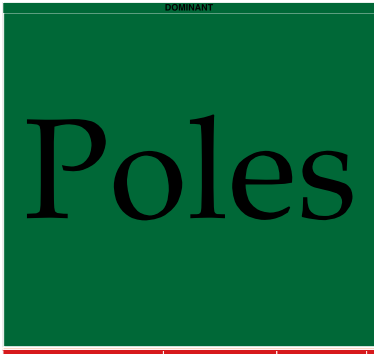


Figure 843: Political status of ethnic groups in Poland during 1957-1967.

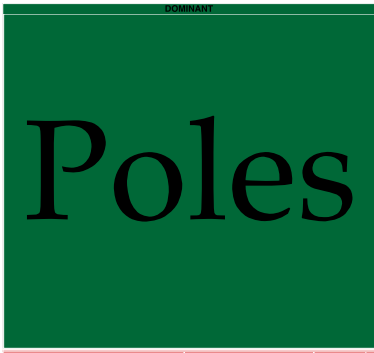


Figure 844: Political status of ethnic groups in Poland during 1968-1989.

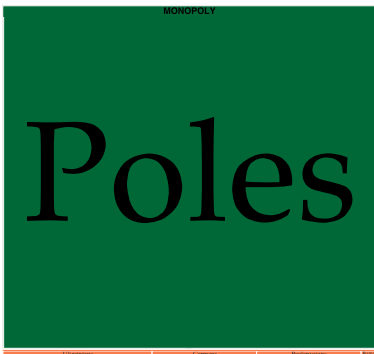


Figure 845: Political status of ethnic groups in Poland during 1990-2015.

Group name	Proportional size	Political status
Poles	0.96	MONOPOLY
Ukrainians	0.01	POWERLESS
Germans	0.007	POWERLESS
Byelorussians	0.007	POWERLESS
Roma	0.001	POWERLESS
European and American Jews	3.0×10^{-4}	IRRELEVANT

From 2016 until 2021

Group name	Proportional size	Political status
Poles	0.96	MONOPOLY
Ukrainians	0.01	IRRELEVANT
Germans	0.007	POWERLESS
Byelorussians	0.007	POWERLESS
Roma	0.001	POWERLESS
European and American Jews	3.0×10^{-4}	IRRELEVANT

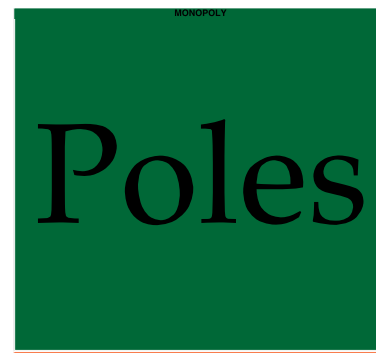


Figure 846: Political status of ethnic groups in Poland during 2016-2021.

Geographical coverage of ethnic groups in Poland

From 1946 until 1989

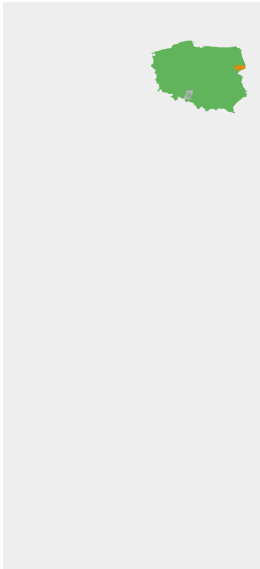


Figure 847: Map of ethnic groups in Poland during 1946-1989.

Group name		Area in km ²	Type
<div></div>	Poles	311 664	Statewide
<div></div>	Germans	3236	Regionally based
<div></div>	Byelorussians	3022	Regionally based
<div></div>	Ukrainians	0	Dispersed
<div></div>	European and American Jews	0	Dispersed
<div></div>	Roma	0	Dispersed

Table 313: List of ethnic groups in Poland during 1946-1989.

From 1990 until 2015

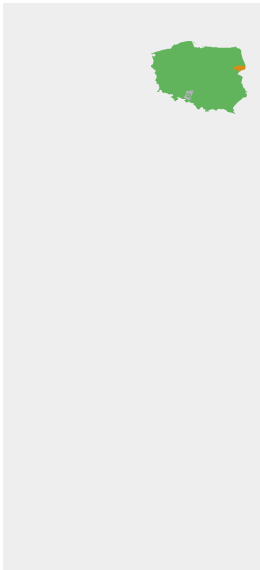


Figure 848: Map of ethnic groups in Poland during 1990-2015.

Group name		Area in km ²	Type
<div></div>	Poles	311 664	Statewide
<div></div>	Germans	3236	Regionally based
<div></div>	Byelorussians	3022	Regionally based
<div></div>	Ukrainians	0	Dispersed
<div></div>	Roma	0	Dispersed

Table 314: List of ethnic groups in Poland during 1990-2015.

From 2016 until 2021

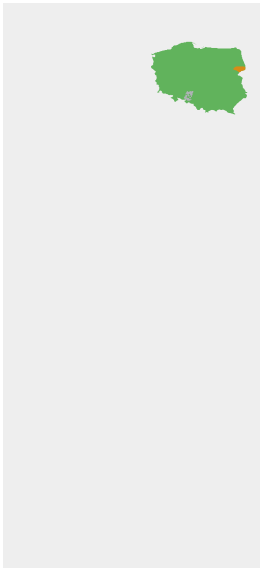


Figure 849: Map of ethnic groups in Poland during 2016-2021.





	Group name	Area in km ²	Type
	Poles	311 664	Statewide
	Germans	3236	Regionally based
	Byelorussians	3022	Regionally based
	Roma	0	Dispersed

Table 315: List of ethnic groups in Poland during 2016-2021.