

Senegal

Ethnicity in Senegal

Group selection

The ethnic group list generally follows the list of Diouf (⁴⁴²⁸). The Soninke group, constituting only about 1% of the population, is included in an “umbrella” group termed “**Mandingue (and other eastern groups)**”. The Peul and Toucouleur groups are combined to one politically relevant ethnic group “**Pulaar**” (the term used in the country’s censuses from 1988 on). Together they launched the “Halpulaaren” movement in the 1980s to protect the Pulaar language, spoken by both of these groups (⁴⁴²⁹). It thus makes sense to classify them as one politically relevant ethnic group, in accordance with EPR’s coding rules.

⁴⁴²⁸ [Diouf, 1994]

⁴⁴²⁹ [O’Brien, 1998]

Included in the **Wolof** group are the Lebu, a tiny ethnic group that has for the most part assimilated to the Wolof and is often counted as a Wolof subgroup. Group size numbers vary considerably between different sources. It appears reasonable to rely on Diouf’s (⁴⁴³⁰) census data from 1988. These figures (rounded to half percentages here) are very close to Fearon’s (⁴⁴³¹) numbers.

⁴⁴³⁰ [Diouf, 1994]

⁴⁴³¹ [Fearon, 2003]

It should be noted that scholars have often argued that ethnic boundaries in Senegal are very blurred and that ethnicity does not play any important role in national politics, also due to the powerful trans-ethnic Islamic brotherhoods (⁴⁴³²; ⁴⁴³³; ⁴⁴³⁴). Nevertheless, as the following comments show, ethnicity has not been completely absent from Senegal’s politics.

⁴⁴³² [Creevey et al., 2005]

⁴⁴³³ [Galvan, 2001]

⁴⁴³⁴ [O’Brien, 1998]

Power relations

1960-1980; from independence to the voluntary demise of the first president Senghor

Senghor, a **Serer**, was the all-important and powerful person of the newly independent republic (as most other African presidents). Therefore, the Serer are coded as “senior partner”.

Although Senegal eventually became a de-facto one-party state, Senghor’s regime maintained a certain level of pluralism and democracy, reluctant to repression (⁴⁴³⁵, 480; ⁴⁴³⁶, 207-8; ⁴⁴³⁷, 52). His governments included representatives from all regions, ethnic and religious groups of the country (⁴⁴³⁸, 479; ⁴⁴³⁹, 111, 126). Ethnic power-sharing became an unwritten norm in independent Senegal (⁴⁴⁴⁰). Wolof elites, for example, were repeatedly named prime ministers and army chiefs. **Diola** and other leaders from the Casamance,

⁴⁴³⁵ [Creevey et al., 2005]

⁴⁴³⁶ [Diouf, 2001]

⁴⁴³⁷ [Galvan, 2001]

⁴⁴³⁸ [Creevey et al., 2005]

⁴⁴³⁹ [Diouf, 1994]

⁴⁴⁴⁰ [Diouf, 1994]

who were organizing themselves politically before and, after independence, were absorbed by Senghor's national party and included into the structures of the central state (⁴⁴⁴¹, 29-30; ⁴⁴⁴², 327; ⁴⁴⁴³, 155). All other groups were thus coded as "junior partners" in this period.

⁴⁴⁴¹ [Foltz, 1964]

⁴⁴⁴² [Morrison et al., 1972]

⁴⁴⁴³ [Wegemund, 1991]

1981-2012

Abdou Diouf, a Wolof, succeeded Senghor as president as of 1st January 1981. The Wolof were already the dominant group in the civil service (besides their demographic and cultural predominance) (⁴⁴⁴⁴, 28; ⁴⁴⁴⁵, 75-8, 207), but now also occupied the presidency. The leadership alternation caused by the 2000 presidential election did not change this situation, as power passed from one Wolof (Diouf) to another (Wade). Therefore, the Wolof are coded as "senior partner" throughout the entire period.

⁴⁴⁴⁴ [O'Brien, 1998]

⁴⁴⁴⁵ [Diouf, 2001]

Diouf sticks to Senghor's principle of including all regional and ethnic factions in the government, also the Diola (see below) and the Mandingue (⁴⁴⁴⁶). The U.S. State Department's Human Rights Report of 2005 (⁴⁴⁴⁷) suggests that the same was true for Wade's government, with 15 out of 40 cabinet members hailing from minority groups. Therefore, all other groups were coded as "junior partners" during both Diouf's and Wade's tenures.

⁴⁴⁴⁶ [Diouf, 1994]

⁴⁴⁴⁷ [US State Department, 2005–2013]

Special note concerning the Diola: There was no convincing evidence for the political exclusion or discrimination of the Diola, in the sense of the EPR definitions of the terms. There have been issues of land expropriation, the appointment of a military governor to the Casamance region and also the arbitrary dismissal of personnel of Casamance origin from the ministry of the interior at one point (⁴⁴⁴⁸). Indeed, the land tenure reforms of the 1970s resulted in a large number of expropriations in the Basse-Casamance, in favor of tourism projects but also of immigrants from northern Senegal (⁴⁴⁴⁹, 148-9; ⁴⁴⁵⁰, ⁴⁴⁵¹, 141-2; ⁴⁴⁵², 361). The local economy came increasingly under control of "northerners" (⁴⁴⁵³; ⁴⁴⁵⁴, 135-6). Yet, at the same time, Diola and other politicians from the Casamance have been included in the post-Senghor governments (appointed to important posts sometimes, as, for instance, chief of the army) (⁴⁴⁵⁵; ⁴⁴⁵⁶). For some time, the Basse-Casamance was even overrepresented in the government (⁴⁴⁵⁷, 131; ⁴⁴⁵⁸, ⁴⁴⁵⁹, 365).

⁴⁴⁴⁸ [Diouf, 1994]

⁴⁴⁴⁹ [Diouf, 1994]

⁴⁴⁵⁰ [Humphreys & Mohamed, 2005]

⁴⁴⁵¹ [Wegemund, 1991]

⁴⁴⁵² [Woocher, 2000]

⁴⁴⁵³ [Humphreys & Mohamed, 2005]

⁴⁴⁵⁴ [Wegemund, 1991]

⁴⁴⁵⁵ [Diouf, 1994]

⁴⁴⁵⁶ [Humphreys & Mohamed, 2005]

⁴⁴⁵⁷ [Diouf, 1994]

⁴⁴⁵⁸ [Humphreys & Mohamed, 2005]

⁴⁴⁵⁹ [Woocher, 2000]

Wade was reelected in 2007. Once a political "liberalizer", toppling the long-time hegemonic PS party, Wade has himself fell prey to his hunger for power, and his once oppositional PDS is now a hegemonic party itself. Nevertheless, Senegal continued to be a prime example of ethnic power-sharing in African politics. According to the U.S. State Department's Human Rights Reports from 2006 to 2009 (⁴⁴⁶⁰), there was always a considerable number of representatives of "minority groups" included in the cabinet during these years. Moreover, maybe even more powerful than the politicians are Senegal's marabouts, the leaders of the country's Islamic Sufi brotherhoods, which are trans-ethnic in nature. As explained above,

⁴⁴⁶⁰ [US State Department, 2005–2013]

ethnicity is not a highly important factor in Senegalese politics. This assessment has not changed recently (see e.g. ⁴⁴⁶¹). Political parties are ethnically very diverse, and ethnicity does not have much relevance for individuals' party affiliation (⁴⁴⁶²).

⁴⁴⁶¹ [US State Department, 2005–2013]

⁴⁴⁶² [Cheeseman & Ford, 2007]

The only serious “ethnic question” in Senegal is the issue of the Diola and the Casamance. As stated above, the Diola group seems to have always been included in central state power. Overall, the conflict has been more about regional autonomy and the “invasion” of northerners in the traditional Diola territory than about representation at the center. Accordingly, it has always exhibited a clear regional character (⁴⁴⁶³, 85). “Diola representation in the central government was actually strengthened in the years between the first outbreak and the escalation [of the conflict]. More relevant than national resources appear to have been local resources. It was in an environment of intensified regional economic scarcity that the described ethnicization of politics led to a fiercer call for independence of the Casamance by a Diola organization and to the escalation of the conflict” (⁴⁴⁶⁴, 87). Also Beck’s (⁴⁴⁶⁵) analysis of Senegal’s clientelistic democracy implies that the actual problem was not a lack of inclusion of Diola elites but rather the latter’s limited authority among the Diola population whose social structure is of a more egalitarian, individualistic nature than the social systems of Senegal’s northern ethnic groups. The inability to deliver large mobilized blocs of voters to the ruling party affected the standing of these elites within the system of the central state, reducing their own political power.

⁴⁴⁶³ [Vogt, 2007]

⁴⁴⁶⁴ [Vogt, 2007]

⁴⁴⁶⁵ [Beck, 2008]

2013-2021

In March 2012, Macky Sall, half Pulaar (father) and half Serer (mother), was elected president. During the presidential campaign he tried to mobilize voters on the basis of his Pulaar origin (see e.g. ⁴⁴⁶⁶). No signs were found for the exclusion of any of the ethnic groups in the national government under president Sall (⁴⁴⁶⁷). Therefore, the Pulaar were coded as being senior partners, while all other groups constitute junior partners.

⁴⁴⁶⁶ [Senenews, 2012]

⁴⁴⁶⁷ [Bertelsmann Stiftung, 2014]

In February 2019, Macky Sall won a second term as president. In the run-up to the elections, two of the main opposition candidates, Khalifa Sall and Karim Wade, were barred from running for president because of corruption convictions (⁴⁴⁶⁸). Whereas the timing of the persecution suggested political motives, there is no evidence for ethnic exclusion in the national government during Sall’s second term as president (⁴⁴⁶⁹). To date, no parties compete along ethnic lines, and the political culture is inclusive and pluralist (⁴⁴⁷⁰; ⁴⁴⁷¹).

⁴⁴⁶⁸ [BBC, 2019]

⁴⁴⁶⁹ [Bertelsmann Stiftung, 2020]

⁴⁴⁷⁰ [BBC, 2018]

⁴⁴⁷¹ [US Department of State, 2019]

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Political status of ethnic groups in Senegal

From 1960 until 1980

Group name	Proportional size	Political status
Wolof	0.435	JUNIOR PARTNER
Pulaar (Peul, Toucouleur)	0.23	JUNIOR PARTNER
Serer	0.15	SENIOR PARTNER
Mandingue (and other eastern groups)	0.08	JUNIOR PARTNER
Diola	0.055	JUNIOR PARTNER

From 1981 until 2012

Group name	Proportional size	Political status
Wolof	0.435	SENIOR PARTNER
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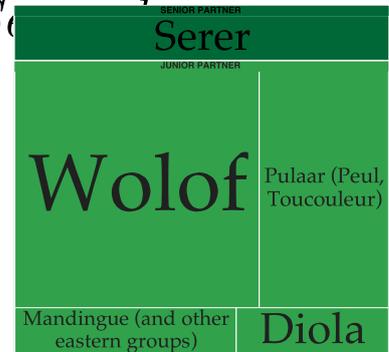


Figure 887: Political status of ethnic groups in Senegal during 1960-1980.

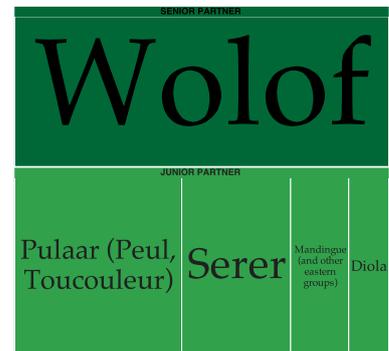


Figure 888: Political status of ethnic groups in Senegal during 1981-2012.

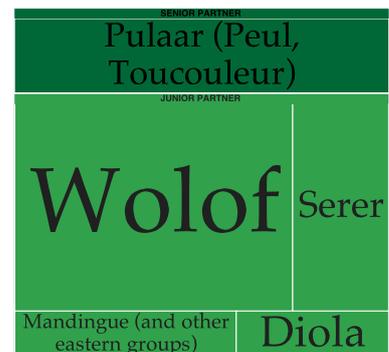


Figure 889: Political status of ethnic groups in Senegal during 2013-2021.

Geographical coverage of ethnic groups in Senegal

From 1960 until 2021

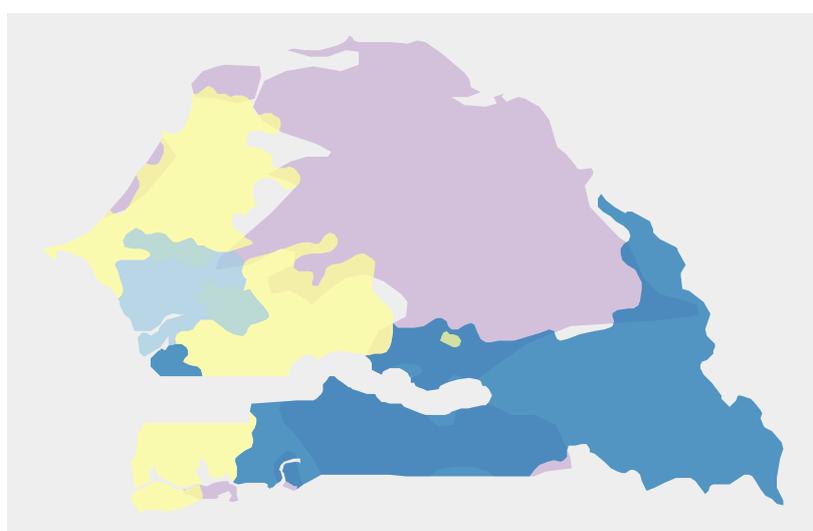


Figure 890: Map of ethnic groups in Senegal during 1960-2021.

Group name	Area in km ²	Type
■ Pulaar (Peul, Toucouleur)	99 132	Regionally based
■ Mandingue (and other eastern groups)	62 080	Regionally based
■ Wolof	36 347	Regionally based
■ Serer	10 439	Regionally based
■ Diola	7 061	Regionally based

Table 329: List of ethnic groups in Senegal during 1960-2021.

Conflicts in Senegal

Starting on 1988-12-30

Side A	Side B	Group name	Start	Claim	Recruitment	Support
Government of Senegal	MFDC	Diola	1988-12-30	Explicit	Yes	No