Ukraine

Ethnicity in Ukraine

Group selection

The **Ukrainians** constitute 77.8% of the population. The largest minority are the **Russians** (17.3%). The proportion of ethnic Russians and Russian speaking Ukrainians declines from East to West, the Russians are thus regionally concentrated in Eastern Ukraine and on Crimea ([5373], 527).

Other politically organized minorities are the **Hungarians**, the **Romanians and Moldovans** in the Zakarpattia and Chernivtsi regions and in Odessa, the **Rusyns** who also live in the Zakarpattia region, and the **Crimean Tatars** until 2014.

The Bulgarian and Polish minorities are also locally concentrated but politically irrelevant and thus not listed in this dataset ([5374]). There also is a Belarusian minority in Ukraine (0.6%), but they are not politically organized. Most Belarusians in Ukraine are assimilated and speak Russian or Ukrainian, such as former president Viktor Yanukovych who is said to be of Belarusian origin.

Since the annexation of Crimea in 2014, the population of Crimea is excluded from Ukraine. Following this, the relative group size has been adjusted and the **Crimean Tatars** have been removed from the Ukrainian census. Since 2015, the **Ukrainians** constitute therefore 80.6% of the population. Additionally, **Russians**, the largest minority, have decreased in relative population size from 17.3% to 14.8% ([5375], [5376]).

Power relations

1991-2014

Since Ukrainian independence, the **Ukrainians** rule in a power-sharing regime as senior partners together with the junior partner Russians. The **Russians** are considered junior partners because the ruling Party of Regions ideologically defends and upholds the rights of ethnic Russians and speakers of the Russian language in Ukraine ([5377]). Several ethnic Russians served as ministers since independence.

An important political issue is the language: According to the constitution, Ukrainian is the only official state language. Organizations and political parties in the Russian speaking community have complained that the increased use of Ukrainian in schools, the media, and the courts is a disadvantage ([5378]). In Ukraine, not only

[5373] [Bos, 2010]

[5374] [Kulyk, 2002]

[5375] [All Ukrainian Population Census, 2001]
[5376] [Crimean Federal District Census, 2014]

[5377] [Party of Regions Ukraine, 2009]

[5378] [U.S. State Department, 2006-2009]

the ethnic Russians speak Russian, but also the ethnic Ukrainians living in East and South Ukraine as well as in the capital Kiev prefer Russian as their first language. Indeed, there is a polarization between Ukrainian speakers and Russian speakers, which is mirrored in the voting behavior and a cleavage between the center (Ukrainian) and the regions (Russian). However, since this polarization between East and West Ukraine is rather a center-periphery issue and because several ethnic groups speak Russian (Ukrainians, Russians, Moldovans), the coding does not distinguish between Ukrainian speakers and Russian speakers but between ethnic Ukrainians and ethnic Russians. This distinction is supported by the fact that people in Ukraine, especially Ukrainian speakers, handle the language issue pragmatic and switch between Ukrainian and Russian language according to their conversational partners.

The **Hungarian** minority is largely concentrated in the Zakarpattia region. A treaty between Ukraine and Hungary provides the preservation of their ethnic, cultural, linguistic, and religious identities, which makes them politically relevant in national politics. But the Hungarian minority has no political power.

The **Tatars** are discriminated: Crimean Tatar minorities have complained about discrimination by the ethnic Russian majority in Crimea and the independent city of Sevastopol and called for the Ukrainian and Crimean Tatar languages to be given a status equal to Russian in Crimea. Crimean Tatars asserted that Crimean local officials' discrimination deprived them of equal opportunities for employment in local administrations and that propaganda campaigns, particularly by pro-Russian groups, promoted hostility towards them among other inhabitants ([5379]).

[5379] [U.S. State Department, 2006-2009]

The **Romanians and Moldovans** are coded as one combined ethnic minority, although in the Ukrainian census, these two groups are listed separately because the division is historically arbitrary. Also, in the Ukrainian census, the people are more or less arbitrarily allocated to the categories, mostly based on where they live (e.g. in the Zakarpattia and Chernivtsi regions there are Romanians, and in Odessa mostly Moldovans). In these three regions, there are schools teaching Romanian as a primary language, along with newspapers, TV, and radio broadcasting in Romanian. Ethnic Romanians are represented at the local councils of a number of Ukrainian districts. However, on the national political level, the Romanians/Moldovans are powerless ([5380]).

[5380] [Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada, 2004

The status of **Rusyns** (Carpatho-Rusyns) is controversial. "Since the 1990s, Slovakia, Poland, Hungary, Romania, Serbia, Croatia, and the Czech Republic have recognized Rusyns as a distinct national minority eligible for state support for educational and cultural activity" ([5381]). In Ukraine, their status is not recognized, but "the regional assembly in the Transcarpathian oblast (Zakarpattia) recognized Rusyns as a distinct nationality, and the central government in Ukraine adopted a law (August 2012) that lists Rusyn (rusynska) as one of the country' regional languages" ([5382]). There is an organiza-

[5381] [Magocsi, 2017]

[5382] [Magocsi, 2017]

tion called "Sojm Podkarpatskih rusinov", which demands regional autonomy. The organization and their leader Dimitry Sydor are being accused of being subsidized by Russia ([5383]). Whether these claims are true or not, this situation gives them political relevance. The Rusyns have no regional autonomy and are powerless. Since Ukraine does not recognize this ethnicity, finding reliable population figures is difficult (but see [5384]).

[5383] [Gvat, 2011]

[5384] [Magocsi, 2017]

2015-2021

Since the turbulent events in Ukraine starting in November 2013 with the Euromaidan movement, the Russians lost their status as junior partners. There are almost no Russian government members anymore (and if yes, they are pro-European) and the former ruling Party of Regions has lost its significance and was replaced by the Opposition Bloc ([5385]). Hence, the status of **Ukrainians** has changed to dominant.

[5385] [Kuzio, 2015]

The **Russians** are self-exclusionist. The eastern parts of Ukraine, the Donbas area (Donetsk and Luhansk), and Crimea are de jure still a part of Ukraine, but de facto controlled by Russia. While the referenda were strongly criticized, a large part of ethnic Russians is living in those territories beyond Ukrainian governmental influence ([5386]; [5387]). Thus, self-exclusion reflects the status quo most accurately ([5388]).

[5386] [BBC, 2014]
[5387] [BBC, 2015]
[5388] [Chossudovsky, 2014 and 2017]

Since the events of 2014, the **Hungarian** minority has gained more political relevance: their parties advocate "for a better representation of ethnic Hungarians in the Ukrainian government, granting more rights to the minority and do not raise separatist talks" ([5389]). Additionally, they demand recognition of their dual citizenship and the maintenance of their language rights. In September 2017, a controversial language law circumscribed minority language rights in general and it raised concerns among Hungarians. "The law, approved Sept. 5, restructures Ukraine's education system and specifies that Ukrainian will be the main language used in schools" ([5390]). Yet, the same coding as in the former period was applied.

[5389] [Chelyadina, 2016]

[5390] [AP News, 2017]

The **Romanians and Moldovans** in Ukraine do not ask for independence or even regional autonomy. However, they want to preserve their culture and language. Hence, as in the Hungarian case, the language bill of September 2017 was criticized and caused the Romanian president to cancel his visit to Ukraine ([5391]). In sum, the aftermath of the events of 2014 created tensions with almost every ethnic group in Ukraine ([5392]).

[5391] [Radio Free Europe Radio Liberty, 2017]

[5392] [Daynova, 2016]

The situation described above remained unchanged until 2021. With the conflict in the Donbas region still ongoing and the dispute about Crimea not being resolved, the coding of self-exclusion still applies for the **Russians** in Ukraine ([5393]; [5394]). Moreover, although the newly elected president Volodymyr Zelensky seems to advocate a national unity beyond ethnic cleavages, the dominant political power relations did not change ([5395]; [5396]). **Ukrainians** remain the

[5393] [Blackwill and Sestanovich, 2020]
[5394] [Pifer, 2020]

[5395] [Freedom House, 2020]
[5396] [Nahaylo, 2020]

politically dominant group while the **Hungarians, Romanians and Moldovans, Rusyns** remain powerless. In particular, language rights of ethnic Hungarians and Romanians remain to be a conflict issue. However, while some see also a potential danger of secessionist activism of these two groups, most sources assess this as rather unlikely ([5397]; [5398]).

[5397] [De Waal and Jarabik, 2018]

[5398] [Dunai, 2019]

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Political status of ethnic groups in U

From 1991 until 2014

Group name	Proportional size	Political status
Ukrainians	0.778	SENIOR PARTNER
Russians	0.173	JUNIOR PARTNER
Romanians/Moldovans	0.008	POWERLESS
Crimean Tatars	0.005	DISCRIMINATED
Hungarians	0.003	POWERLESS
Rusyns	2.0×10^{-4}	POWERLESS

From 2015 until 2021

Group name	Proportional size	Political status
Ukrainians	0.806	DOMINANT
Russians	0.148	SELF-EXCLUSION
Romanians/Moldovans	0.009	POWERLESS
Hungarians	0.003	POWERLESS
Rusyns	2.0×10^{-4}	POWERLESS

Figure 1077: Political status of ethnic groups in Ukraine during 1991-2014.

Figure 1078: Political status of ethnic groups in Ukraine during 2015-2021.

Geographical coverage of ethnic groups in Ukraine
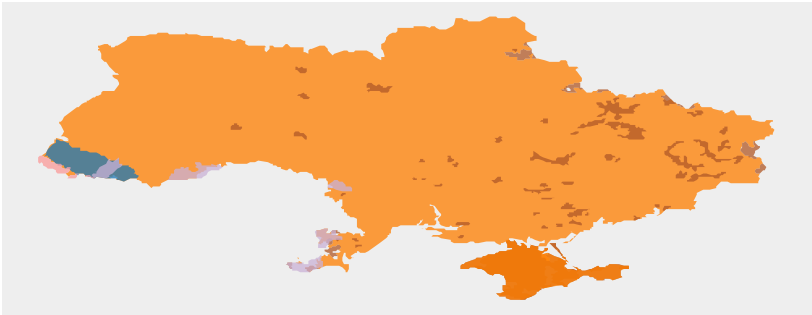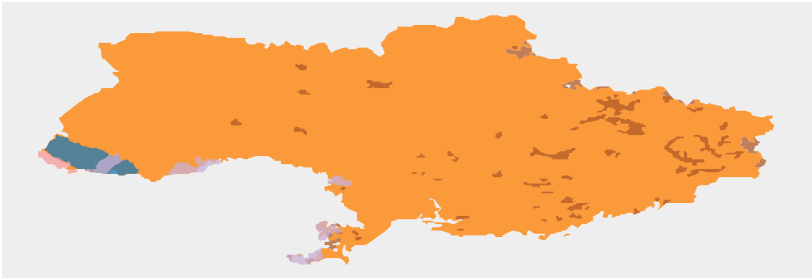
From 1991 until 2014

Figure 1079: Map of ethnic groups in Ukraine during 1991-2014.

Table 392: List of ethnic groups in Ukraine during 1991-2014.

	Group name	Area in km²	Type
	Ukrainians	578 247	Statewide
	Russians	47 827	Regionally based
	Crimean Tatars	25 619	Regionally based
	Rusyns	10 518	Regionally based
	Romanians/Moldovans	9248	Regionally based
	Hungarians	1642	Regionally based

From 2015 until 2021

Figure 1080: Map of ethnic groups in Ukraine during 2015-2021.

	Group name	Area in km^2	Type
■	Ukrainians	559 329	Statewide
■	Russians	22 160	Regionally based
■	Rusyns	10 518	Regionally based
■	Romanians/Moldovans	9248	Regionally based
■	Hungarians	1642	Regionally based

Table 393: List of ethnic groups in Ukraine during 2015-2021.

Conflicts in Ukraine

Starting on 2014-01-21

Side A	Side B	Group name	Start	Claim	Recruitment	Support
Government of Ukraine	Maidan	Ukrainians	2014-01-21	No	Yes, from EGIP	Split

Starting on 2014-04-11

Side A	Side B	Group name	Start	Claim	Recruitment	Support
Government of Ukraine	DPR	Russians	2014-04-11	Explicit	Yes, from EGIP	Yes

Starting on 2014-05-03

Side A	Side B	Group name	Start	Claim	Recruitment	Support
Government of Ukraine	LPR	Russians	2014-05-03	Explicit	Yes, from EGIP	Yes

Starting on 2014-09-16

Side A	Side B	Group name	Start	Claim	Recruitment	Support
Government of Ukraine	United Armed Forces of Novorossiya	Russians	2014-09-16	Explicit	Yes, from EGIP	Yes
Government of Ukraine	DPR	Russians	2015-06-10	Explicit	Yes, from EGIP	Yes
Government of Ukraine	LPR	Russians	2015-06-10	Explicit	Yes, from EGIP	Yes