

Ukraine

Ethnicity in Ukraine

Power relations

The Ukrainians constitute 77.8% of the population. The largest minority are the Russians (17.3%). Ethnic Russians have founded several political parties and cultural associations. The proportion of Russians and Russian speaking Ukrainians declines from East to West, the Russians are thus regionally concentrated in Eastern Ukraine and on the Krym (³⁵⁹⁵, 527). I categorize the Russians as “junior partner” because the ruling Party of Regions ideologically defends and upholds the rights of ethnic Russians and speakers of Russian language in Ukraine (³⁵⁹⁶). The current prime minister, Mykola Azarov, is an ethnic Russian, and 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 puts them at a disadvantage (³⁵⁹⁷). In Ukraine, not only 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 the before-mentioned polarization between East and West Ukraine is rather a center-periphery issue and because several ethnic groups speak Russian (Ukrainians, Russians, Moldovans), the analysis 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 – what makes them politically relevant in national politics. But the Hungarian minority has no political power. The Bulgarian and Polish minorities are also locally concentrated but politically irrelevant (and thus not listed in this dataset) (³⁵⁹⁸). There is also

³⁵⁹⁵ [Bos, 2010]

³⁵⁹⁶ [Party of Regions Ukraine, 2009]

³⁵⁹⁷ [U.S. State Department, 2006-2009]

³⁵⁹⁸ [Kulyk, 2002]

a Belarusian minority in Ukraine (0.6%), but they are not politically organized. Most Belarusians in Ukraine are assimilated and speak Russian or Ukrainian, like president Yanukovich who is said to be of Belarusian heritage. 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 discrimination by Crimean local officials 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 (³⁵⁹⁹). It might be correct to categorize the Romanians and Moldovans as one combined ethnic minority although in the Ukrainian census or in other data sets these two groups are listed separately. Romanians and Moldovans are aggregated into one category since the division is historically rather arbitrary. Also, in Ukrainian censuses the people are more or less arbitrarily allocated to the categories, mostly based on where they live (e.g. in the Zakarpattia and Chernivtsi region 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. On the national political level, however, the Romanians/Moldovans are powerless (³⁶⁰⁰).

³⁵⁹⁹ [U.S. State Department, 2006-2009]

³⁶⁰⁰ [Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada, 2004]

Update 2009 – 2013: No changes in the power states between 2009 and 2013, despite the turbulent events in Ukraine starting in December 2013 with the “Euromaidan” movement, which will be relevant for the next update that includes the year 2014.

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Political status of ethnic groups in Ukraine

From 1991 until 2013

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



Figure 796: Political status of ethnic groups in Ukraine during 1991-2013.

Geographical coverage of ethnic groups in Ukraine

From 1991 until 2013

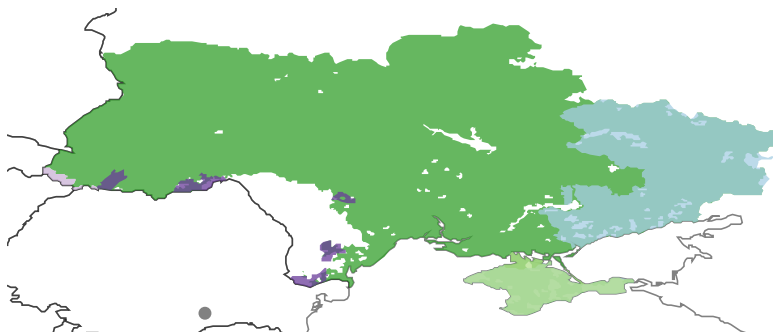


Figure 797: Map of ethnic groups in Ukraine during 1991-2013.

Group name	Area in km ²	Type
Ukrainians	562 459	Regional & urban
Russians	132 647	Regional & urban
Crimean Tatars	25 560	Regionally based
Romanians/Moldovans	9 005	Regionally based
Hungarians	1 639	Regionally based

Table 233: List of ethnic groups in Ukraine during 1991-2013.