



ETHNIC DIVERSITY CHANGE IN KAZAKHSTAN DURING 2010-2020

Kazakhstan, inhabited by more than 120 ethnic groups, is the most ethnically diverse country among the post-Soviet states. Its polyethnicity is the result of the complicated historical events and the legacy inherited from the USSR. Kazakhstan's total population has recently reached 18,631,779 people, which is 14.9%, or 2,428,505 people, more than a decade ago in 2010. Thus, the average annual population growth over the past ten years was slightly above 1.1%. The period from 2010 to 2020 became a decade with the most rapid population growth in the history of independent Kazakhstan. These rapid demographic trends also brought certain changes to the ethnic composition of the country's population.

Based on the recent statistical data we can analyze the ethnic dimensions of the demographic trends that took place in Kazakhstan over the last decade. The data provide information on the size of 30 main ethnicities in Kazakhstan at the second subnational administrative division level (districts), which allows us to build a spatial representation of the ethnicity change in Kazakhstan during 2010-2020. According to the data, the demographic growth among ethnic Kazakhs made 88.9% of the total population growth in the country during the last ten years. The number of ethnic Kazakhs increased from 10,292,242 to 12,764,821 adding 2,472,579 people within a decade. There has been also a significant population growth among other ethnic groups. Thus, ethnic Uzbeks made the second-largest contribution to the population growth adding 136,587 people followed by Uighurs (+45,592), Azerbaijanis (+25,000), Turks (+14,019) and Kyrgyz (+13,369). In total, 17 out of 30 ethnicities specified in the statistics have shown an increase. In relative terms, the ethnic Kyrgyz minority presented the largest population growth of 64.4% during the sample period. Dungans have shown the second-largest percentage increase of 36.3%, followed by Uzbeks (29.4%), Tajiks (28.6%), and Azerbaijanis (28.6%).

On the other hand, the size of some ethnic groups declined during the sample period. The number of ethnic Russians, who are the second largest ethnic group in the country, as well as of other Slavic and European ethnicities, keep decreasing both in absolute and percentage terms. Thus, the total number of ethnic Russians over the course of 2010-2020 decreased by 261,192 people, or 6.9%. The size of other Slavic groups have

seen even a larger decrease in relative terms. The number of ethnic Ukrainians has shrunk by almost one fifth (19.4%) while Belarusian and Polish ethnic groups decreased by 18.2% and 12.5%, respectively. Kazakhstan continues to lose its Slavic population primarily due to their massive emigration mainly to Russia, although a lower birth rate among the Slavic population is also a factor contributing to its decrease.

The largest population declines in percentage terms were registered among small minorities like Mordvins (-29.7%), Chuvash (-20.3%), and Mari (-19.7%). It is important to note though that an extremely large decline rate of certain very small minorities doesn't necessarily mean massive emigration or abnormally low birth rates. A rapid population decline among small minorities might well be a result of mixed marriages or cultural assimilation. This usually applies to minority ethnic groups that are geographically dispersed when large distances and a small number of people make it difficult to maintain adherence to certain ethnic identities. Other ethnicities that decreased in terms of their size include Lithuanians (-8.2%), Bulgarians (-6.5%), Greeks (-4.7%), Bashkirs (-4.2%), Moldovans (-3.5%), Germans (-1.8%) and Tatars (-1.7%). It is interesting to note that most of the European ethnicities in Kazakhstan tend to show a demographic decline whereas the ethnicities that have traditionally been attached to Islam present a positive demographic growth. This can be interpreted as an indication of adherence of Muslim ethnic groups to traditional conservative values when it comes to family issues and demographic performance. One thing to mention is that the statistics does not take into account mixed ethnicities and there is a category of the population specified as "others" in regards to their ethnicity. The number of people categorized as "others" increased by 25.5% over the last decade reaching 124,132 people by 2020. Around 16% of all marriages currently registered are mixed marriages between people of different ethnic backgrounds. It is very likely that most of babies born in mixed marriages are within this category. In any outcome, we can also note a gradually increasing pattern of mixed marriages that leads to the growth of the number of people of mixed ethnicity.

In general terms, we can note that there has been a significant shift towards ethnic homogenization of the population in Kazakhstan during 2010-2020. Using the so-called

Herfindahl-Hirschman index (HHI) we can measure ethnic diversity at the district level. $HHI = \sum_{i=1}^N s_i^2$, where s_i^2 is the percentage share of ethnicity and iN is the number of ethnicities. $HHI = 1$ when there is absolute homogeneity and it approaches 0 with the increasing heterogeneity. The index of Kazakhstan was equal to 0.460 in 2010 whereas in 2020 it reached 0.507 indicating an ethnic homogenization during the sample period. As one might expect, the northern parts of the country present a high level of ethnic diversity than the southern districts. The regions like Kostanai, North Kazakhstan, Akmola, Pavlodar, Karagandy, and East Kazakhstan are the most diverse regions in terms of the ethnic composition of the population mainly due to the presence of the Slavic population. These regions are also the ones that have the highest emigration rates. The same is true for the northernmost districts of the Aktobe and West Kazakhstan regions that experience significant outmigration of the ethnic Slavic population. Interestingly, the southern Turkestan, Zhambyl, and Almaty regions also present a significant level of ethnic diversity. In the Almaty region, apart from the Slavic population, the presence of ethnic Uighurs is a key factor of ethnic diversity. In the Zhambyl region, ethnic diversity is primarily reached thanks to large groups of ethnic Dungans and Turks. In the Turkestan region, ethnic Uzbeks and Tajiks are the main contributors to ethnic diversity. The western regions of Aktobe, Mangystau, Atyrau, and West Kazakhstan as well as the southern Kyzylorda region are extremely homogeneous in terms of the ethnic composition since the share of ethnic Kazakhs there is well over 90%. It is not surprising that cities tend to be more ethnically diverse than rural areas and the degree of diversity generally positively correlates with the size of cities. The statistical data about the ethnic composition of the population of Kazakhstan for 2010-2020 show roughly the continuation of the previous patterns of gradual homogenization. Although the figures of the demographic change differ a lot among different ethnicities, there is a clear pattern of emigration of the Slavic ethnic minorities. Moreover, it is important to note that in net terms the population of Kazakhstan as a whole is experiencing outmigration since 2011 at an increasing rate, which is obviously not a positive sign.

Politics, Foreign Affairs, and Security

- During a working visit to Russia, Belarusian President Alexander Lukashenko held talks with his Russian counterpart Vladimir Putin in Sochi. The Russian leader expressed his support to Lukashenko's proposal regarding the constitutional reform following the presidential election in Belarus. According to Putin, Moscow remains committed to all agreements, including those arising from the Treaty on the Union State and the Collective Security Treaty Organization, and will provide Minsk with a \$1.5 billion loan (President of Russia, 14.09.2020).
- The annual OSCE Counter-Terrorism Conference, organized by OSCE 2020 Chair Albania, was held in Vienna. The event brought together, in person and online, more than 500 participants from across the OSCE area. High-level representatives and experts from governments, state agencies, international organizations, civil society, and academia shared best practices and lessons learned in forming effective public-private partnerships in the fight against violent extremism and radicalization that leads to terrorism (OSCE, 15.09.2020).
- Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi visited Mongolia and held talks with President Khaltmaagiin Battulga and other officials. The parties discussed ways to strengthen the bilateral comprehensive strategic partnership and expand economic cooperation, including by increasing the trade turnover to \$10 billion. On the first day of Wang's visit, around 100 people gathered in Ulaanbaatar to protest Beijing's new education policy that requires schools in the Chinese province of Inner Mongolia to use Chinese language textbooks (Montsame; The Diplomat, 16.09.2020).
- The leadership of the parliaments of Turkmenistan and Turkey held a videoconference meeting to exchange views on the development of multidimensional interstate cooperation. The parties confirmed the interest of the two countries in expanding relations in political and diplomatic, trade and economic, cultural and humanitarian spheres. They also highlighted the need to intensify inter-parliamentary cooperation and exchange experience in improving their national legislations (Turkmenistan Today, 15.09.2020).
- During his visit to Tajikistan, acting Foreign Minister of Afghanistan Mohammad Haneef Atmar met with President Emomali Rahmon and high-ranking Tajik officials. The parties discussed the inter-Afghan peace negotiations and prospects of bilateral relations, with a focus on security issues, trade and economic cooperation, people-to-people contacts, as well as science and education, humanitarian and information spheres. They also noted the importance of joint implementation of regional energy infrastructure projects (President of Tajikistan, 17.09.2020).
- The 2020 edition of the Noble Partner multinational military exercise was held at Georgia's Vaziani and Camp Norio training areas near Tbilisi. Over 2,700 troops from the Georgian Defense Force, France, Poland, the United States and the United Kingdom participated in the maneuvers. The exercise included situational training, live-fire drills, combined mechanized maneuvers, a counter-terrorist assault operation, and a medical evacuation (Agenda.ge, 14.09.2020).

Economy, Finance, and Energy

- Speaking at the government meeting, Kazakhstan's Agriculture Minister Saparkhan Omarov presented the measures to stabilize food prices, such as ensuring the supply of 29 main food commodities including through import substitution. The total cultivated area across the country increased by 439,200 hectares to reach 22.7 million hectares. It is planned to harvest 18 million tons of grains this year, which would ensure both domestic demand and exports (Kazinform, 15.09.2020).
- The European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD) launched a \$30 million Green Economy Financing Facility to support gender inclusive green investments in Kazakhstan. The initiative will allow households and small and medium-sized enterprises across the country to benefit from loans of around \$1,500 for investment in energy efficiency and climate adaptation technologies and services. These may include solutions such as thermal insulation, photovoltaic solar panels, geothermal heat pumps and water-efficient irrigation systems (EBRD, 17.09.2020).
- The National Bank of Kyrgyzstan achieved a record level of the country's gross international reserves as they exceeded \$3 billion in August 2020. Despite the bank's ten interventions to support the national currency, the reserves have grown by \$647 million since the beginning of 2020. This increase is the result of intensive purchases of gold, and the National Bank plans to continue this policy. The current volume of gold and foreign exchange reserves allows to cover Kyrgyzstan's imports for 6.5 months (24.kg, 15.09.2020).
- The chambers of commerce and industry of Tajikistan and Uzbekistan organized a meeting of business circles of the two countries in Dushanbe. More than 150 Tajik and over 40 Uzbek entrepreneurs attended the event, aimed at expanding bilateral trade, economic and investment cooperation. The parties discussed potential joint investment projects in the food, textile, chemical, agricultural, leather, electrical engineering, construction, and tourism industries and signed a number of trade contracts (UzDaily, 19.09.2020).
- Turkey and Ukraine held consultations in Ankara as part of the talks on the conclusion of a free trade agreement between the two countries. In early September 2020, the parties agreed to restart the negotiation process, which has been continuing intermittently since 2012, and to find a mutually beneficial solution. Ukraine is interested in a free-trade area since higher import tariffs introduced by Turkey have a negative impact on Ukrainian companies (Ukrinform, 14.09.2020).
- The Finance Ministry of Belarus plans to sign a \$20-million loan agreement with the OPEC Fund. The money will be used to compensate for the state budget's previous expenditures on fighting the spread of COVID-19. Belarus intends to continue cooperating with the financial institution as the fund is ready to lend the country up to \$100 million. To mitigate negative economic consequences of the pandemic, Belarus already borrowed €90 million from the World Bank and works to attract funds from the European Investment Bank (BelTA, 15.09.2020).

Society and Culture

- As part of the 175th anniversary of Abai, Ambassador of Kazakhstan to Germany Dauren Karipov presented the 2nd class Order of Dostyk (Friendship) to translator of Abai's work, German author and literary critic Leonhard Kossuth. The ambassador expressed gratitude to Kossuth for his contribution to strengthening friendly relations between Kazakhstan and Germany. Leonhard Kossuth translated Abai's "The Book of Words" in 2007 and published a collection of Abai's poems in German in 2018 (MFA of Kazakhstan, 14.09.2020).
- Kazakhstan's National Scientific and Practical Center "Til-Kazyna" held an international online seminar on the topic "Turkic World: the Language Situation, Latin Alphabet and Methodology". The forum was attended by Turkologists from Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Moldova, Russia, Turkey and Uzbekistan. The participants discussed traditional and innovative methods in teaching Turkic languages and issues related to the adoption of the Latin script, including different alphabet versions used by Turkic peoples (Ministry of Culture and Sport of Kazakhstan, 17.09.2020).
- A two-day conference devoted to the contribution of the leaders of Tajikistan and Uzbekistan to strengthening friendship, good-neighborliness and trust between the two countries was held in Dushanbe. The event brought together about 200 scholars and experts from Tajik and Uzbek research institutes, analytical centers and higher educational institutions. Participants discussed ways to expand bilateral strategic cooperation and ensure security and sustainable development of the entire Central Asian region (UZA, 15.09.2020).
- The UNICEF Representative Office in Turkmenistan held a briefing on the prevention of the COVID-19 pandemic for editors-in-chief and reporters of the country's media. The event focused on disseminating messages for parents in the context of the pandemic, and specifically, on how to communicate with children and help them adjust to a new reality. Based on international experience, media representatives were encouraged to report COVID-19 related issues focusing on positive stories of people recovering from the disease (UNICEF, 16.09.2020).
- The National Confederation of Entrepreneurs (Employers) Organizations of Azerbaijan (ASK) held an online ceremony to present the book "Biz Türklüz! Çadırımız gök kübbesi" (We are Turks! Our ceiling is heaven) devoted to the common rich history and culture of the Turkic World. More than 40 participants attended the event, including representatives of the Turkic interstate organizations, diplomats, parliamentarians, and academicians (Turkic Council; ASK, 16.09.2020).
- During his working visit to Hungary, Foreign Minister of Kyrgyzstan Chingiz Aidarbekov visited the Representation Office of the Turkic Council in Budapest. Janos Hovari, the executive director of the office, briefed the minister about its activities aimed at enhancing cooperation with Hungary and developing closer ties with the European institutions. Minister Aidarbekov noted the office's important role in representing the Turkic World in Europe and reaffirmed his country's full support to its efforts (Turkic Council, 18.09.2020).