Ashkali community

Community profile

Figures as at the 2011 census; the 2024 census results are at **Kosovo Agency of Statistics (ReKos 2024).**

The profile supplements its 2011 census figures with OSCE data for northern Kosovo.

EUROPEAN CENTRE
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COMMUNITY PROFILE: ASHKALI COMMUNITY

1. POPULATION SIZE AND LOCATION

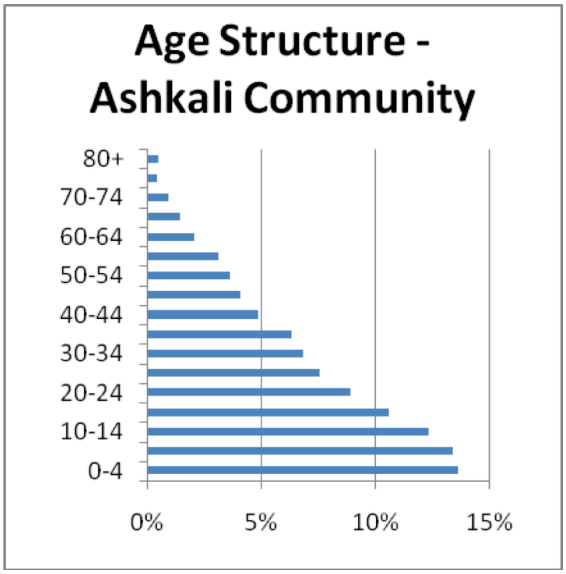
Based on the 2011 Kosovo census results, supplemented with OSCE data for northern Kosovo, ECMI Kosovo estimates that there are around 15,546Ashkali living in Kosovo, making up around 0.83% of the total population. The largest Ashkali communities are located in five municipalities: Ferizaj/Uroševac; FushëKosovë/Kosovo Polje; Lipjan/Lipljan; Prizren/Prizren; and, Shtime/Štimlje. Smaller communities can be found throughout the rest of Kosovo, although there are only a small number of Ashkali living in Eastern Kosovo.

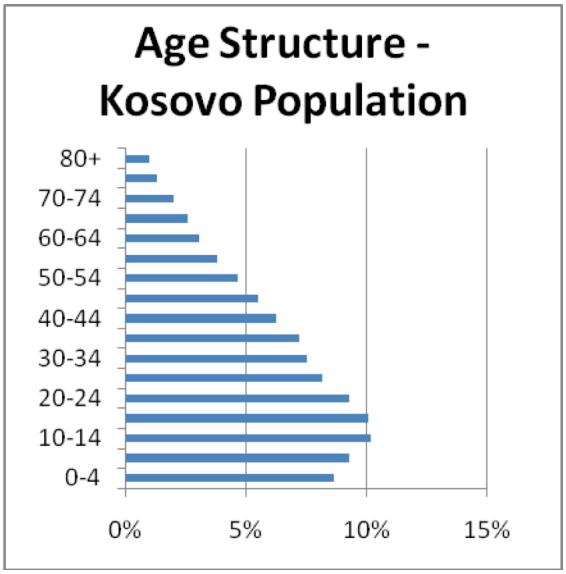
Ashkali community in Kosovo according to the 2011 Census*		
Municipality	**Percentage**	**Number of community members**
Ferizaj/Uroševac	3.35%	3,629
FushëKosovë/Kosovo Polje	9.02%	3,230
Lipjan/Lipljan	3.05%	1,812
Prizren/Prizren	0.75%	1,350
Shtime/Štimlje	2.75%	750
Podujevë/Podujevo	0.77%	680
Mitrovicë/Mitrovica South	0.89%	647
Gjakovë/Dakovica	0.65%	613
Obiliq/Obilić	2.28%	578
Prishtinë/Priština	0.28%	557
Suharekë/Suva Reka	0.82%	493
Rahovec/Orahovac	0.71%	404
Pejë/Pej	0.15%	143
Vushtrri/Vucitrn	0.2%	143
Istog/Istoq	0.27%	111
Gračanica/Graçanicë	0.4%	104
Klinë/Klina	0.22%	85
Leposavić/Leposaviq	0.37%	70
Deçan/Deqani	0.1%	42

Mitrovicë/Mitrovica North	0.14%	40
Gjilan/Gnjilane	0.02%	15
Viti/Vitina	0.03%	14
Mamuşa/Mamushë/Mamuša	0.22%	12
Skenderaj/Srbica	0.02%	10
Malishevë/Mališevo	0.01%	5
Dragash/Dragaš	0.01%	4
Novo Brdo/Novobërdë	0.03%	3
Kaçanik/Kačanik	<0.01%	1
Štrpce/Shtërpcë	0.01%	1
TOTAL	**0.83%**	**15,546**

** The 2011 Kosovo census did not cover northern Kosovo. Therefore the 2013 OSCE Municipal Profiles were used as source for the data on the northern municipalities with Ashkali communities. For all southern municipalities, the official 2011 Kosovo census was used as a source.*

Based on the 2011 Kosovo census, the Ashkali population is the youngest community in Kosovo, with an average age considerably lower than the Kosovo average;the mean age of the Ashkali community is 24 years old, as opposed to the Kosovo average of 29.5 years old.





2. CULTURE AND RELIGION

Ashkali consider themselves an ethnic group whose ancestry can be traced back to ancient Persia. The Ashkali community started to organise itself into political and civil society organizations in the 1990s. They are concentrated mainly, but not exclusively, in Kosovo and Albania. They are nominally Sunni Muslim, sedentary and urban.

The Ashkali community shares cultural similarities and socio-economic issues with the Roma and Egyptian communities in Kosovo, but considers itself a distinct and separate community. Correspondingly, Kosovo, through its institutions and legislation, recognizes the Ashkali community's distinct identity and treats them as such. The Day of the Ashkali, 15 February, is official recognised as a Kosovo Memorial Day.

3. LANGUAGE

Ashkali are native Albanian speakers. Ashkali, particularly older generations educated under the Yugoslav system, occassionally also speak Serbian as a second language.

4. POLITICAL REPRESENTATION

The Ashkali community has one (1) seat guaranteed in the Kosovo Assembly,[1] and one (1) additional seat is awarded to the Roma, the Ashkali or the Egyptian community with the highest overall number of votes. As the largest of the Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian communities, the Ashkali political parties usually win this contested seat. The community also nominates two (2) members of the CCC.[2]

The community is relatively well organised politically. The 'PartiaDemokratike e AshkanlivetëKosovës' (PDAK) was the only party representing the Ashkali community until the emergence of a second Ashkali party in 2010: 'PartiaAshkalinjëvepërIntegrim' (PAI). The presence of two Ashkali political parties has essentially split the Ashkali vote and weakened its political voice.

In the 2009 municipal elections, three Ashkali were elected to the Muncipal Assemblies (in Ferizaj/Uroševac and FushëKosovë/Kosovo Polje). In 2013, only two Ashkali were elected to the Municipal Assemblies (in Ferizaj/Uroševac and FushëKosovë/Kosovo Polje).

Total number of votes for main Ashkali political parties in Kosovo elections since 2007 (local and general)

	2007 (Gen.)	2007 (Mun.)	2009 (Mun.)	2010 (Gen.)	2013 (Mun.)
The PartiaDemokratike e AshkanlivetëKosovës (PDAK)	3,443	2,645	1,337	2,871	1,958
PartiaAshkalinjëvepërIntegrim (PAI)	No participation	No participation	No participation	1,386	1,391

[1] Constitution, Article 64.
[2] Law on Communities (03/L-047), Article 12.6.

Total number of votes for Ashkali political parties per municipality since 2007 (local elections only)

	2007	2009	2013
Gjakovë/Dakovica	/	51	/
Ferizaj/Uroševac	838	576	1,264
FushëKosovë/Kosovo Polje	232	107	561
Lipjan/Lipljan	563	290	539
Mitrovicë/Mitrovica South	123	/	256
Obiliq/Obilić	/	26	52
Podujevë/Podujevo	270	103	243
Prishtinë/Priština	121	57	/
Prizren	156	59	60
Shtime/Štimlje	190	/	197
Suharekë/Suva Reka	152	68	158

5. RETURNS

Official data on the pre-1999 Ashkali population in Kosovo is hard to come by, as the Yugoslav censuses did not include Ashkali as a separate ethnic group. The 2010 OSCE Communities Profile estimates the pre-war population of Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian communities at 150,000 people. Other sources estimate these three communities at more than 200,000 before the 1999 conflict.[3]

There is no disaggregated data regarding voluntary returns of the Ashkali community, but according to UNHCR estimates, around 6,633 Egyptian and Ashkali have voluntarily returned to Kosovo from 2000 to June 2013, 378 Ashkali were forcibly returned between January 2011 and June 2013, and there remain 243 Ashkali community members displaced within Kosovo.[4]

Voluntary returns of the Egyptian and Ashkali communities, Jan. 2000 – June 2013 (UNHCR, June 2013)

	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013
Voluntary	0	533	882	1182	593	727	466	312	195	281	718	395	305	44

Ahskali forced returns, Jan. 2011 – June 2013 (UNHCR, June 2013)

[3] Human Rights Watch, '*Rights Displaced: Forced Returns of Roma, Ashkali and Egyptians from Western Europe to Kosovo'*, 2010.

[4] UNHCR Office of the Chief of the Mission, Pristina, Kosovo, 'Statistical Overview: Update at end of June 2013'.

	2011	2012	2013
Forced	121	163	94

6. SECURITY AND FREEDOM

Ashkali community members generally do not report significant security concerns or obstacles to their freedom of movement.

7. ECONOMY

The Ashkali community is strongly hit by Kosovo's overall economic difficulties, suffering from low levels of income and insufficient employment opportunities. Significantly, a comparison of the average incomes and unemployment rates among communities reveals their persistent particularly vulnerable position:[5]according to UNDP's most recent figures, 60.46% of Ashkali in Kosovo are unemployed. Furthermore, despite the lack of reliable data and the widespread participation of Ashkali in unregistered income generating activities and informal commerce, the Ashkali families' average total income is estimated at around €115.68 a month.[6]

Ashkali are among the most underrepresented groups in the Kosovo civil service, with the OCA reporting that 0.2% of all civil servants in Kosovo are Ashkali, while the community makes up 0.89% of the total Kosovo population.[7] Moreover, within publically owned enterprises, some of the biggest employers in Kosovo, only 7 Ashkali (0.1% of employees) are employed.[8]

The only exception to this trend of underrepresentation is to be found in the municipality of Ferizaj/Uroševac, where Ashkali occupy 4.15% of positions of civil servants, while constituting 3.34% of the local population.[9]

The high unemployment rate is due to multiple mutually-reinforcing factors shared with the Roma and Egyptian communities, including lower levels of education and professional qualifications, physical separation of the areas of residence, and a lack of identification documents. Moreover, this situation is commonly worsened by widespread exclusion policies and entrenched discrimination in the working environment, often based on ethnic considerations.

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[5]UNDP, 'Kosovo Human Development Report 2012: Private sector and employment'. – As terms for comparison in the framework of Kosovo, consider: average monthly salary per person in Kosovo in general is 260€, the lowest in the region after Albania; unemployment among Albanians is rated 47.02%.

[6] Kosovo Foundation for Open Society (KFOS–SOROS), 'The Position of Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian Communities in Kosovo', 2009, p.20.

[7]Office of Community Affairs, 'Assessment on the employment of members of non-majority communities in the Kosovo civil service and publicly owned enterprises', May 2013, p.22.

[8]*ibid*

[9] OSCE Mission in Kosovo, 'Representation of Communities in the Civil Service in Kosovo', February 2013, p. 11.

8. EDUCATION

MostAshkali children are native Albanian speakers and attend the Kosovo education system. As opposed to other minority communities, therefore, language does not constitute a barrier for Ashkali pupils. However, at the same time, they have no access to community-specific educational subjects enabling the preservation or promotion of their identity and the teaching of their culture, history and language.[10]

Low and irregular attendance in compulsory education, widespread late school enrolment and high drop-out rates are commonly observed among this community.[11] Girls are particularly hit by these trends, primarily as a result of early marriages and deeply-entrencheddiscriminatoryperceptions of gender roles.

Several factors contribute to the current situation, first among them the community's socio-economic situation and marginalization, the families' difficulties in facing the costs related to education, and widespread inclusion of children in income-generating activities. Moreover, a lack of understanding of the importance and value of formal education, insufficient awareness on the necessary enrolment procedures, as well as a lack of official documentation required for registration, further hinder Ashkali children's regular enrolment.

Irregular attendance and late enrolment, together with cases of segregated education, inevitably impact negatively onto the pupils' performance and on the opportunities of inter-ethnic exchange and integration. Indeed, the level of interaction among students, teachers and academics coming from different ethnic groups is overall extremely low and strictly depends on individual initiatives rather than on a general trend.

9. ACCESS TO PUBLIC INSTITUTIONS

Due to the community's fluency in the Albanian language, no language barriers exist in accessing public institutions. However, their vulnerable and marginalised status negatively impacts their equal access to public services.

Health conditions of the Ashkali community are commonly poor, especially with regard to women's reproductive health and children's care. This is primarily due to harsh living conditions, unsustainable housing solutions, limited enjoyment of social assistance, and difficulties in covering the costs of treatments and medication.[12] Moreover, insufficient levels of awareness among community members with regard to the offered support schemes and medical services further hamper their access to public services and facilities.

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[10] European Roma Rights Centre (ERRC),'Abandoned Minority: Roma Rights History in Kosovo', December 2011, p. 92.
[11] *ibid*
[12] European Roma Rights Centre (ERRC), 'Abandoned Minority: Roma Rights History in Kosovo', December 2011.

The Ashkali community's housing conditions are frequently inadequate. Most neighbourhoods (Mahalas) are separated from the surrounding areas and often lack basic infrastructure, with overcrowded homes in poor conditions.[13]

The issue of civil registration constitutes a widespread problem in Kosovo, affecting Ashkali in particular, together with members of the Roma and Egyptian communities.[14]Despite the fact that some active measures have been undertaken in the last years, barriers to the actual access to registration persist. Moreover, unregistered births remain a persistent problem among the concerned communities.[15]This situation affects the community considerably in several domains, such as the non-enrolment of children in school, the failure to benefit from social welfare programs, healthcare services, employment opportunities, pension entitlements, etc.

[13] OSCE Mission in Kosovo, 'Community Rights Assessment Report Third Edition', July 2012; European Commission, 'Kosovo* 2013 Progress Report', October 2013;SWD(2013) 416 final, Brussels, 16October 2013.
[14] OSCE, 'Access to Civil Registration in Kosovo', July 2012 ; OSCE, 'Civil Registration of the Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian Communities', January 2007.
[15] UNICEF,'Every Child Counts: Birth Registration in Kosovo', 2009.

