Croat community

Community profile

Historical population estimates; the 2024 census results are at **Kosovo Agency of Statistics (ReKos 2024).**

The 2011 census did not list the Croat community separately. The profile gives estimates based on OSCE reports and cites a separate estimate from Croatia’s State Office for Croats Abroad.

EUROPEAN CENTRE FOR MINORITY ISSUES KOSOVO

COMMUNITY PROFILE: CROAT COMMUNITY

1. POPULATION SIZE AND LOCATION

The Croat community is the smallest community in Kosovo. There are no exact numbers on the Croat community, as they were not included as a separate ethnic group during the 2011 census. However, ECMI Kosovo estimates, based on OSCE reports, places the total number of Croats in Kosovo around 259, or 0.01% of the Kosovo population.[1] The State Office for Croats Abroad from the Republic of Croatia estimates them at around 350 people.[2]

Croat community in Kosovo according to the OSCE Reports*		
Municipality	**Percentage**	**Number of community members**
Lipjan/Lipljan	0.37%	219
Viti/Vitina	0.08%	40
Total Kosovo Population	0.01%	259

**Sources: Data on municipalities not affected by the decentralisation are based on the 2010 OSCE Community Profiles (OSCE field teams estimations), while the data on municipalities affected by the decentralisation process and municipalities in northern Kosovo are based on the 2013 OSCE Municipal Profiles.*

Due to the lack of disagregated data on the Croat community, no exact data is available on the age structure of the community. However, reports indicate that the Croats have an aging population, considerably older than the Kosovo average, due to a significant outflux of young Croats since the 1990s.

2. CULTURE AND RELIGION

The Croat community is an ethnically Slav group, descendending from the Slav tribes that migrated to South-Eastern Europe in the sixth and seventh century AD. The community is predominantly Roman Catholic and maintains strong connections with the Church, which plays an important part in sustaining the community in Kosovo. A few Croat cultural heritage

[1] For more information on the methods used for data selection please check section III. Communities in Kosovo, p.12

[2] Republic of Croatia, State Office for Croats Abroad (SOCA), 'Status of Croatian minorities abroad', 2013.

sites, mainly churches, remain in Kosovo, including the Church of Saint Nicolas in Janjevë/Janjevo. The community was officially recognised by the Kosovo Government in 2011 through the amendment of the *Law on the on the Protection and Promotion of the Rights of Communities and Their Members in the Republic of Kosovo*.

3. LANGUAGE

The Croat community in Kosovo uses the Latin script and speaks the Croatian language, a Slavic language closely related to Serbian, Bosnian and Montenegrin. Out of the two official languages of Kosovo, Croats speak Serbian fluently, but only occassionally speak Albanian. The Kosovo public education system does not offer any education in the Croatian language.

4. POLITICAL REPRESENTATION

The Croat community does not have any guaranteed seats in the Assembly of Kosovo, but is entitled to nominate two (2) members of the CCC.[3] The lack of guaranteed seats is a consequence of a lack of recognition for the community when the Constitution of Kosovowas adopted in 2008. The amendment to the *Law on the on the Protection and Promotion of the Rights of Communities and Their Members in the Republic of Kosovo* in 2011 provided the community with representation in the CCC, but did not change the situation in the Assembly.

'Hrvatska Stranka Kosova' (HSK) is the only political party representing Croats' interests. It participated for the first time in Kosovo elections in the 2013 municipal elections (in Viti/Vitina and Lipjan/Lipljan), but did not gain any Municipal Assembly seats. Before these elections, the Croat Community did not have any political party representing them.

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

	2007 (Gen.)	2007 (Mun.)	2009 (Mun.)	2010 (Gen.)	2013 (Mun.)
Hrvatska Stranka Kosova (HSK)	/	/	/	/	313

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

	2007	2009	2013
Viti/Vitina	/	/	253
Lipjan/Lipljan	/	/	60

5. RETURNS

[3]Council Statute, Article 6(e).

According to the 1991 Yugoslav Census, there were estimated to be 8,062 Croats residing in Kosovo. The majority of the Croat community left Kosovo, mainly for Croatia, already prior to the 1999 conflict, following the wars of the early 90s in former Yugoslavia, with additional refugee movements during and after the 1999 conflict. Although there is no exact disaggregated data on the number of returnees from the Croat community, the current size of the Croat community points to extremely low numbers of returnees. This reflects the fact that most Croat refugees from Kosovo have settled in Croatia permanently.

6. SECURITY AND FREEDOM OF MOVEMENT

The Croat community generally feels safe in their places of residence, although some security incidents particularly in the Viti/Vitina municipality have been reported. They, however, often do not feel safe to use the Croatian language in other Albanian-majority areas and experience difficulties in exercising their freedom of movement, largely do to the isolated locations of the community.

7. ECONOMY

There is no disaggregated data on the rates of unemployment of the Croat community, nor is their data available on their employment in the civil service or the POEs. However, reports indicate that the employment and socio-economic situation of the Kosovo Croats is precarious. A large proportion of the aging community is dependent on social assistance from Kosovo, Serbia and/or Croatia, supplemented with small scale income generating activities, including agricultural and farming activities, crafts and trading.[4]

The economic and employment problems faced by the Croat community largely reflects the wider economic problems Kosovo encounters as a whole, exacerbated by the isolated location of the community, its old age structure and linguistic barriers.

8. EDUCATION

Kosovo's public eduction system offers no education in the Croatian language. Croat children follow the curriculum of the Republic of Serbia. As a consequence, they face many of the same issues as the Serb community in relation to education, including:

- A lack of qualified teachers,
- An absence of high-quality school infrastructure,
- A lack of equipment (school books, computers, etc).

9. ACCESS TO PUBLIC INSTITUTIONS

The Croat community continues to make use of the health system of the republic of Serbia. However, the Croat community often makes use of Kosovo system for other public services. In accessing these services communication problems are sometimes experienced, due to a lack of implemention of the *Law on the Use of Languages*.

[4]For more information on the Croat community in Viti/Vitina, please consult: OSCE Kosovo, 'The Kosovo Croats of Viti/Vitina Municipality: A Vulnerable Community', October 2011.

