Roma community

Community profile

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

The profile gives estimates based on the OSCE's 2010 Community Profiles and 2013 Municipal Profiles. It notes that the Roma community partially boycotted the 2011 census.

EUROPEAN CENTRE
FOR MINORITY
ISSUES KOSOVO

COMMUNITY PROFILE: ROMA COMMUNITY

1. POPULATION SIZE AND LOCATION

The 2011 Kosovo census was partially boycotted by the Roma community; the census estimates the Roma population at almost half the level of other reliable estimates, such as the OSCE.[1] Therefore, estimates of the Roma community in Kosovo have to be based on alternative sources. Based on OSCE 2010 Community Profiles and 2013 Municipal Profiles, around 15,696 Roma are estimated to reside in Kosovo, making up roughly 0.84% of the total population.

The largest Roma community is concentrated in Prizren, while sizable Roma communities are also located inGračanica/Graçanicë,Pejë/Peć and Mitrovica/Mitrovicë South. Smaller Roma communities are located throughout the rest of Kosovo.

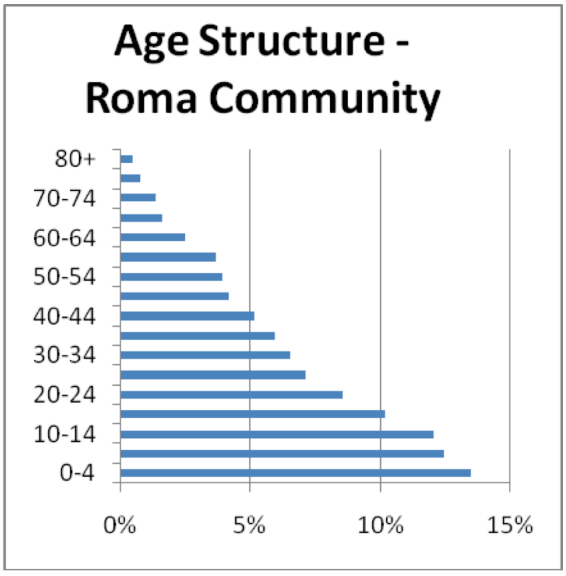
Roma community in Kosovo according to OSCE Reports*		
Municipality	**Percentage**	**Number of community members**
Prizren/Prizren	2.95%	5,300
Gračanica/Graçanicë	7.63%	2,000
Pejë/Peć	1.34%	1,300
Mitrovica/Mitrovicë South	1.7%	1,230
FushëKosovë/Kosovo Polje	2.19%	783
Gjakovë/Dakovica	0.78%	738
Obiliq/Obilic	2.82%	684
Suharekë/Suva Reka	1.08%	651
Kamenicë/Kamenica	1.11%	417
Gjilan/Gnjilane	0.43%	410
Lipjan/Lipljan	0.64%	380
Ferizaj/Uroševac	0.24%	260

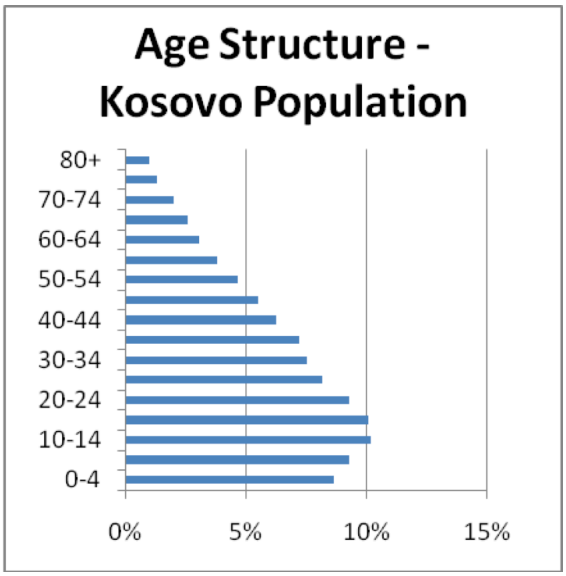
[1]For more information on minority community participation in the 2011 Kosovo census, see: 'Minority Communities in the 2011 Kosovo Census Results: Analysis and Recommendations', ECMI Kosovo, 18 December 2012.

Vushtrri/Vucitrn	0.36%	260
Klinë/Klina	0.56%	220
Mitrovica/Mitrovicë North	0.68%	200
Podujevë/Podujevo	0.12%	108
Zveçan/Zvečan	0.6%	100
Novobërdë/Novo Brdo	1.03%	97
Mamuşa/Mamushë/Mamuša	1.53%	85
Rahovec/Orahovac	0.15%	84
Leposavić/Leposaviq	0.43%	80
Malishevë/Mališevo	0.12%	65
Prishtinë/Priština	0.03%	56
Istog/Istok	0.1%	39
Deçan/Deqani	0.09%	35
Štrpce/Shtërpcë	0.2%	26
Shtime/Štimlje	0.08%	23
Viti/Vitina	0.03%	12
Kaçanik/Kacanik	0.01%	5
Dragash/Dragaš	0.01%	3
TOTAL	**0.84%**	**15,696**

**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.*

Sufficient Roma participation in the 2011 Kosovo census provides a reliable overview of the community's age structure. The Roma population is considerably younger than Kosovo's general population, with an estimated average age of 25.2 years old, as opposed to the Kosovo average of 29.5 years old. It is the second youngest community after the Ashkalicommunity.





2. CULTURE AND RELIGION

The Roma community is believed to be descendents from migrants from Central India. Although small numbers of Roma are thought to have arrived in South-Eastern Europe before the 14th century, the bulk of the migration of Roma to this region took place in the 14th and 15th centuries AD.[2]

The Roma community shares cultural similarities and socio-economic issues with the Egyptian and Ashkali communities in Kosovo. However, Kosovo, through its institutions and legislation, recognises the Roma as a distinct and separate community and treats them as such. Roma communities can be found throughout the region and the rest of Europe, as well as in smaller numbers in other regions of the world. The Roma community in Kosovo is nominally Sunni Muslim, sedentary and urban. The International Romani Day, 8 April, is recognised as an official Kosovo Memorial Day.[3]

3. LANGUAGE

Most Roma speak Romani as their native tongue. Romani belongs to the Indo-European language family, and it is related to languages spoken in northern India. Kosovo's public education system offers no education in the Romani language. Depending on where they live, Roma speak either Serbian and/or Albanian as a second language. Although, in Gračanica/Graçanicë the size of the Roma community meets the legal requirements for its recognition as an official language at the municipal level, until present, this status has not been awarded to the Romani language. Currently, no standardised version of the Kosovo Romani dialect has been officially agreed on, contributing to the lack of official recognition for the Romani language.

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[2]For more information on Roma history please consult:
http://www.coe.int/t/dg4/education/roma/histoculture_EN.asp
[3]Law on Official Holidays in the Republic of Kosovo, No. 03/L-064

4. POLITICAL REPRESENTATION

The Roma community has one (1) seat guaranteed in the Kosovo Assembly,[4] and one (1) additional seat is awarded to the Roma, the Ashkali or the Egyptian community with the highest overall votes. The community also nominates two (2) members of the CCC.[5]

Over the past few years, the main Roma political party, and the only one participating in the general elections, has been 'Partia Rome eBashkuareKosovës' (PREBK), which has participated in all general and municipal elections since 2007. In the 2013 municipal elections inGračanica/Graçanicë, a new Roma political subject participated called 'Savez Roma Kosova'.

The Roma community has, until present, largely failed to organise itself well politically. Its political parties have only been able to gain a small minority of the Roma vote in both municipal and general elections. In the 2009 municipal elections, only one Roma was elected to the Muncipal Assembly (in Prizren), while in 2013 no Roma was elected to a Municipal Assembly. Moreover, voter support for Romani parties in general elections has also been extremely low. This lack of community support for Roma political parties is caused by the fact that a considerable number of Roma vote for Albanian and Serbian political parties or do not vote at all, as a result ofthe lack of trust in the Roma political parties.

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

	2007 (Gen.)	*2007 (Mun.)*	*2009 (Mun.)*	*2010 (Gen.)*	*2013 (Mun.)*
Partia Rome e Bashkuar e Kosovës (PREBK)	600	442	596	690	406
Savez Roma Kosova	/	/	/	/	132

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

	2007	2009	2013
Ferizaj/Uroševac	52	44	0
FushëKosovë/Kosovo Polje	36	46	19
Gračanica/Graçanicë	/	/	132**
Lipjan/Lipljan	4	/	/
Obiliq/Obilic	1	0	47

[4]Constitution of the Republic of Kosovo, article 64.
[5]Law on Communities, article 12.6

Pejë/Peć	57	123	117
Prizren	292	383	279

** *All votes for Savez Roma Kosova*

5. RETURNS

The 1991 Yugoslav census estimated the total number of Roma in Kosovo at 45,760. Following the 1999 conflict, many Roma fled Kosovo. The majority of Roma refugees fled to Serbia and other regional countries, withlarge numbers of Roma also going to Western Europe, particularly Germany. Since 1999,there remains a steady outflux of Roma to regional countries and Western Europe, mostly for economic reasons.

From January 2000 until June 2013, 3,383 Roma returned voluntarily and 1,078 were forcibly returned between January 2011 and June 2013.[6] There remain 363 Roma community members displaced within Kosovo.[7]

Voluntary and forced returns of the Roma community, Jan. 2000 – June 2013 (UNHCR, June 2013)

	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013
Voluntary	20	210	390	287	430	235	303	581	86	214	371	120	127	5
Forced	No Data Available											300	462	316

6. SECURITY AND FREEDOM OF MOVEMENT

Most Roma speaking Albanian as a second language report no significant security concerns or obstacles to their freedom of movement. However, the Roma speaking Serbian as a second language, up to a certain extent, share the security concerns of the Serb community, and while feeling safe in their neighbourhoods of residence, do not always feel safe to travel to or through certain Albanian-majority municipalities.

7. ECONOMY

Together with members of the Egyptian and Ashkali communities, Kosovo Romaare strongly hit by Kosovo's overall difficult economic situation, suffering from some of the lowest levels of income in Kosovo and limited employment opportunities. Significantly, comparisons of the average incomes and unemployment rates among communities reveal their particularly vulnerable position:[8] according to UNDP, the Roma community, at around 60.22%,hasone of the highest rates of unemployment in Kosovo. Furthermore, despite the lack of reliable data and the widespread participation of Roma in unregistered income generating activities and

[6]UNHCR Office of the Chief of the Mission, Pristina, Kosovo, 'Statistical Overview: Update at end of June 2013'.
[7]*ibid*
[8]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%

informal commerce, Roma families' average total income is estimated at around €119.41a month.[9]

Poor levels of education and insufficient professional skills are commonly worsened by widespread exclusion policies and entrenched inequalities in the working environment, directly and often overtly linked to community members' ethnic belonging.[10]

Besides the scarce employment opportunities in the private sector, the Roma community also faces considerable obstacles in accessing employment in the public sector. The 2013 OCA's assessment of employment of non-majority communities within the Kosovo Civil Service reveals the considerable underrepresentation ofRoma in the Kosovo civil service, with Roma making up 0.2% of all civil servants, while the community makes up 0.84%of the total Kosovo population.[11]This trend of underrepresentation is present throughout the civil service, both at the central and local level, and is worse at the managerial levels. The same source reports that there are only 3Roma employed in Publicly Owned Enterprises.[12]

Roma also suffer from a continuing historical discrimination which makes private companies and local institutions reluctant to hire them. Roma women are among the most disadvantaged groups in Kosovo and only few are engaged in the labor market.

8. EDUCATION

The majority of Roma children attend education institutions funded and managedby the Republic of Serbia, where they have access to education in the Serbian language and curriculum. Roma children face serious barriers to accessing education in Romani, their mother tongue. Although a curriculum on Romani language, history and culture for grades 2-9 of the primary schools has been developed and adopted by the Ministry of Education (MEST) in June 2010, it has only been implemented as part of a pilot phase in four schools in Prizren, and textbooks and trained teachers are still lacking.

In general terms,in the existing Kosovo education system, the adopted curricula and materials insufficiently reflect the specific histories, cultures and other attributes of all communities within Kosovo, and strikingly fails in promoting common values and encouragingrespectand understanding of the country's cultural diversity.[13]

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[9] Kosovo Foundation for Open Society (KFOS–SOROS), 'The Position of Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian Communities in Kosovo', 2009, p. 20.
[10] European Roma Rights Centre, 'The Glass Box: Exclusion of Roma from Employment', February 2007.
[11]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.
[12]*ibid*, p. 30
[13] OSCE Mission in Kosovo, 'Community Rights Assessment Report, Third Edition,' July 2012, p. 24-28; ECMI Kosovo, 'Improving the Delivery of Education for Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian Communities: Good Practices and Recommendations – Manual for Municipal Officials', October 2012; European Commission, 'Kosovo* 2013 Progress Report,' October 2013; SWD(2013) 416 final, Brussels, 16 October 2013.

Regardless of which educational system Roma children attend, they continue to face many of the same challenges faced by the Ashkali and Egyptian communities. Therefore, the challenges described in the 'Education' section under the Ashkali profile can also be considered as representative for the Roma community.

9. ACCESS TO PUBLIC INSTITUTIONS

Depending on their area of residence, Roma make use of either Kosovo or Serbian public services. Roma who do not speak Albanian, can face language barriers in accessing Kosovo services, due to the inadequate implementation of the *Law on the Use of Languages*.

However, regardless of which system of public services is used, Roma share many of the challenges faced by Egyptian and Ashkali communities. Therefore, the challenges described in the 'Access to Public Institutions' section under the Ashkali profile can also be considered as representative for the Roma community.

