

## **Slovak Republic: Nationalities-Religiousness Electoral Preferences**

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### **Introduction**

In the states of the former Eastern Block of Europe, early in 90s, in the sphere of the interests human geography, with the themes which for various reasons were marginal for almost five decades entered. In the sphere of nationality the doctrine of the socialist internationalism was rejected enabling to manage directly, or to eliminate the problems caused by living together of the population of many nationalities in various regions of Eastern Europe. In the sphere of religiousness, the principles of the freedom of religious confession were again exercised to the full extent and this demographic characteristic has also entered the structure of the database obtained within the framework of the census. The new electoral bills granted equality at the election to the parliament and municipalities, to all parties and movements, which fulfilled conditions needed for enrolment in the electoral documents, and structure of the political preferences of population has been substantially enriched.

The information about distribution of the members of various nationalities, the religious structure of the population and the electoral preferences, was included among the characteristics which allow on various religious level to present the new features of spatial structure of the states of Central and Eastern Europe. In this contribution the attention is given to the territory of the Slovak Republic, which originated on 1.1.1993 as an independent state. In view of the limited extent of our article, first of all, we want to inform on the broadest whole-state level about regional differentiation of the territory of SR, from the point of view of the nationality structure of the population, its religiousness and preference of the political parties. We offer such a drafted information as a basis for comparison of the statewide-orientated analysis of the subjects of the nationality and religiousness, or the theme of the electoral preferences, with the situation in the countries of former Eastern Europe.

### **Nationalities**

The present-day structure of the nationalities of the population in Slovakia is the result of the longdated development of its settlement, economic utilization and political views. In the last decades (1960–1990) it is characterized by the partial stability of the population share of the Slovak nationality (85–86% of the population). It is documented, also by information based on census in 1991, as shown in *Table 1*.

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Table 1. The structure of the nationality of the population SR (1991)

Nationality	Number (in thousands)	%
Slovaks	4 535,8	85,64
Hungarians	567,9	10,73
Gypsies	79,0	1,49
Czechs	60,1	1,14
Ruthenians	39,7	0,75
Other	13,3	0,25
<i>Total</i>	<i>5 295,8</i>	<i>100,00</i>

As Figure 1 shows, the major part of territory of the SR is dominated by the inhabitants of the Slovak nationality the share of which is the highest in the Western and Central Slovakia. In addition to this territory, there are two regions in Slovakia, in which dominate the members of different nationalities. The larger of them is situated at the southern border of the SR and there live about 96% of the population of the Hungarian nationality. It is divided into three subregions – Western Slovakia (in the south of the Podunajská Lowland, Central Slovakia (in the south of the Juhoslovenská Basin and Cerová Highland) and Eastern Slovakia (in the southeast of the Vychodoslovenská Lowland).

In the latter, smaller region, the dominant position belongs to Ruthenians. The members of this national minority have an absolute predominance only in some villages of the Northeastern Slovakia (the territory of Laborecká Highland and the Bukov Hills).

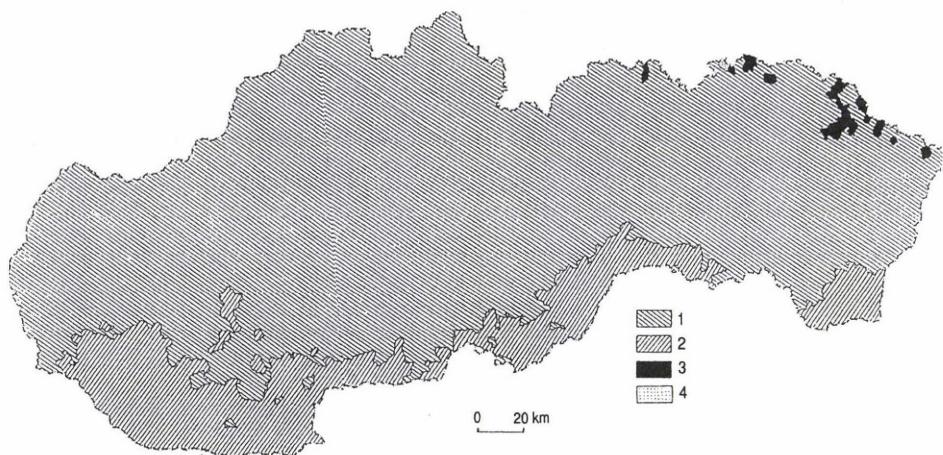


Figure 1. The structure of the nationality of the population of the SR (1991). – Dominant nationality: 1 = Slovaks; 2 = Hungarians; 3 = Ruthenians; 4 = Gypsies

Szlovákia népességének nemzetiségi szerkezete (1991). – Domináns nemzetiségek: 1 = szlovákok; 2 = magyarok; 3 = ruszinok; 4 = cigányok

From any other national minorities, the Czechs are relatively evenly distributed in the Northwest and Central Slovakia. The Gypsies live especially, in the central part of the Eastern Slovakia.

## Religiousness

The present-day religious structure of the population of the SR is also the result of the long-dated historical evolution. Remarkable is, that its spatial extending by itself conserved numerous specific features, also in spite of that in 1950–1990 the religiousness was deliberately suppressed by the ruling system. Representation of the members of the various religious confessions in 1991 shows *Table 2*.

*Table 2. The religious structure of the population of the SR (1991)*

Religious confession	Number of individuals (thousands)	%
Roman-Catholic	318,7	60,3
Evangelic Augsburg	32,6	6,2
Greek-Catholic	17,8	3,4
Evangelic reformed	8,5	1,6
Orthodox	3,4	0,7
Other	0,6	0,0
Without confession	51,6	9,7
Not identified and not distinguished	91,8	17,5
<i>Total</i>	<i>5 27,4</i>	<i>100,0</i>

The spatial distribution of the members of individual religions is various. On the broadest level we may talk about Roman Catholic Western Slovakia, Roman Catholic-Evangelic Central Slovakia, Roman-Greek Catholic Eastern Slovakia (*Figure 2*). The general extension over the whole territory of Slovakia is represented only by Roman-Catholic religious confession, which considerably dominates especially in the Northwestern and Western Slovakia. More than 90% of inhabitants of the country communities confess this religion.

In the north part of Eastern Slovakia, which is inhabited by the Rutheniens, predominates the Greek Catholic religion, especially in the district of Svidník (with 38,5% population of Greek Catholic denomination). Evangelic Augsburg religion prevails in the Western Slovakia, at the boundary of Senica and Trenčín districts, in the Central Slovakia, in the district of Martin, in the Western part of the district Liptovský Mikuláš, in the districts Zvolen and Rožnava. Evangelic Reformed religion is represented mainly at the southern border of Slovakia. To this religion belong chiefly the members of the Hungarian minority. Those without confession are living mainly in the larger cities and in the Central Slovakia, in the district of Martin (17,2%), Banská Bystrica (16%), Rožnava (20%).

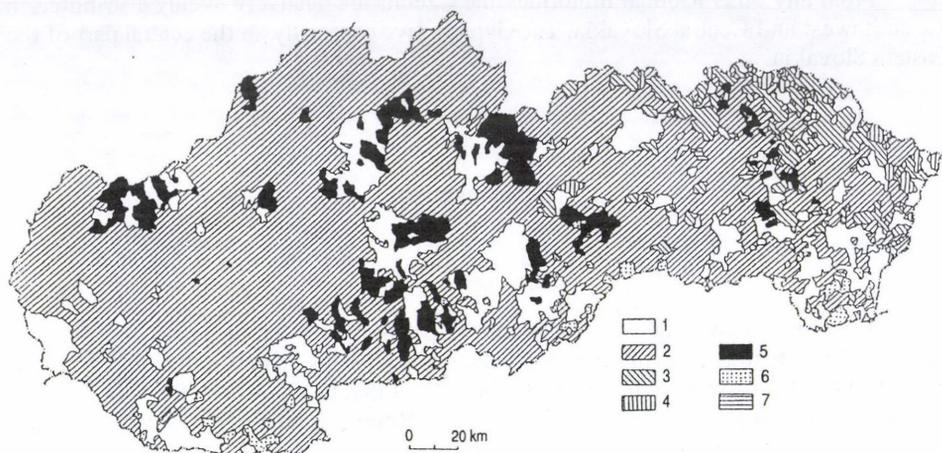


Figure 2. Religious structure of the population of the SR (1991). – Prevailing religious confessions of the population: 1 = none; 2 = Roman-Catholic; 3 = Greek-Catholic; 4 = Orthodox; 5 = Evangelic Augsburg; 6 = Evangelic Reformed; 7 = not identified and not distinguished (according to Š. OCOVSKY, 1993).

Szlovákia népességének vallási összetétele (1991). – A lakosság vallási hovatartozása előzetes bevallás alapján: 1 = ateista; 2 = római katolikus; 3 = görög katolikus; 4 = görög keleti; 5 = evangélikus; 6 = református; 7 = nem meghatározható (Š. OCOVSKY, 1993 szerint).

### The electoral preferences

Changes in the domestic policy, being realized in Slovakia after 1980, have considerably manifested also during the elections to the Slovak Parliament. Between 1954–1985 always more than 97% of votes were given to the candidates of the National Front. This was replaced by the candidates of the individual political parties and movements. A manifested unanimous poll was replaced by free democratic polls, which confirmed that within the Slovakia there exists a relatively wide range of the electoral preferences. Furthermore, the results of the polls, which were realized within relatively short temporal interval (1990, 1992, 1994) showed, that the structure of the electoral preferences of the population in SR changes relatively quickly. The results of the elections to the national council of the SR, realized in 1992, shows *Table 3*.

Information about the dominant preferences of the individual political subjects, which are derived from the results of the elections to the Slovak national council in 1992, are in *Figure 3*. We have chosen these elections, because they best reflect the demographic situation from the temporal point of view. The situation, in which was realized the census in March 1991 (on these results are based the following data about the nationality and religiousness, utilized in the previous two parts of our contribution).

Table 3. The results of the elections to the National Council of the SR, realized 5. and 6. June 1992  
(Only political subjects, which obtained the mandates of the National Council of the SR)

Party, association, movement	Number abs.	Number of votes in %	Number of abs.	Mandates in %
HZDS	1 148 625	37,26	74	49,33
SDL'	453 203	14,70	29	19,33
KDH	273 945	8,88	18	12,00
SNS	244 527	7,93	15	10,00
MKDH - ESWS	228 885	7,42	14	9,33
Other	733 511	23,81	–	–
Total	3 082 696	100,0	150	99,9

HZDS – The Movement for the Democratic Slovakia

SDL' – Party of the Democratic Left

KDH – Christian Democratic Movement

SNS – Slovak National Party

MKDH-ESWS- Coalition of the Hungarian Parties

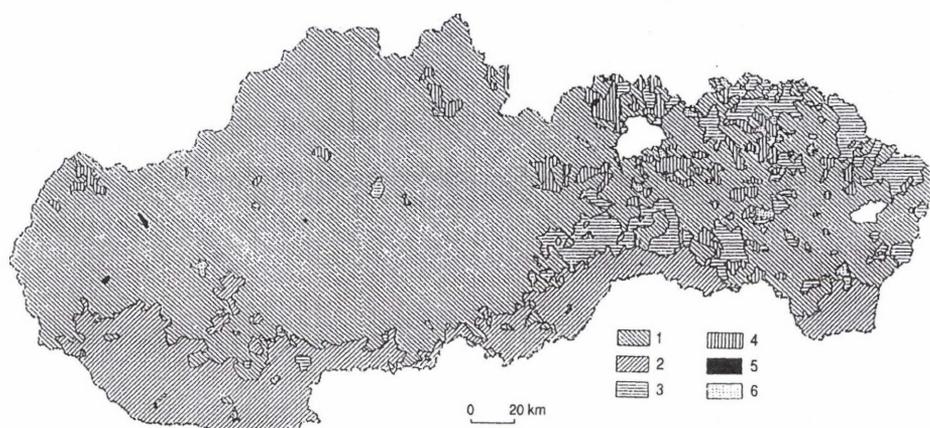


Figure 3. The electoral preferences of the population of the SR (1992). – Dominant political subject: 1 = HZDS; 2 = Coalition of MKDH – ESWS; 3 = SDL'; 4 = KDH; 5 = other; 6 = SNS

Választási eredmények a Szlovák Köztársaságban (1992). – Domináns politikai erők: 1 = Demokratikus Szlovákiáért Mozgalom; 2 = a magyar pártok koalíciója; 3 = A Demokratikus Baloldal Pártja; 4 = Kereszténydemokrata Mozgalom; 5 = egyéb pártok; 6 = Szlovák Nemzeti Párt

From the point of view of the electoral preferences, the territory of the SR is divided into three regions. The vastest of them extends over a substantial part of the Western and Central Slovakia and is characterized by the dominant support of HZDS. But subregions with the highest preference of HZDS are the districts: Cadca (61,2%, Žiar nad Hronom (59,1%), Povazská Bystrica (57,2%).

The second region represents the territory of the Eastern Slovakia, which is characterized by the substantially more miscellaneous, spatial structure of the electoral preference. The majority of the country communities is dominated by HZDS. But there are more subregions preferring SDL' (the Northern part of the districts of Rožňava, Bardejov, Humenné) or KDH (parts of district Poprad, Stará Ľubovňa, Spišská Nová Ves, Prešov). The third, significant region of the political preference of the population of the SR consists of the country communities lying at the southern border of the Slovakia. This region is dominated by the coalition of MKDH-ESWS (60–80% of votes), especially due to predominance of the inhabitants of Hungarian nationality.

### Conclusion

The analysis of the spatial structure of the Slovakia, realized on the basis of three criteria (nationality, religiousness, electoral preferences) enable to document some general features of the differentiation of the demographic base of the SR. Moreover, it illustrates the actual differences between the relatively homogeneous region of the Western Slovakia and substantially more differentiated region of the Eastern Slovakia, as well as the relation between the distribution of the population of the Hungarian minority and the specification of the electoral preference. The learnt knowledge can serve as a suggestion for working out a similar analysis on larger territory, consisting of several countries (e.g. the countries of Eastern Europe). Those results facilitate a detailed documentation of the topical features of the demographic structure in the macroregional dimensions.

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## A NÉPESSÉG NEMZETISÉGI ÉS VALLÁSI ÖSSZETÉTELE ÉS A VÁLASZTÁSI EREDMÉNYEK KÖZÖTTI ÖSSZEFÜGGÉS A SZLOVÁK KÖZTÁRSASÁGBAN

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### Összefoglaló

A tanulmány a köztársaság területének általános megoszlását vizsgálja a népesség nemzetiségi- és vallási szerkezete és a politikai pártokra leadott szavazatok összehasonlításával. Amint az *1. ábra* alapján látható, az ország túlnyomó részén a szlovák nemzetiségűek vannak többségben; arányuk Nyugat- és Közép-Szlovákiában a legmagasabb. Szlovákiában két régió területén vannak más nemzetiségek túlsúlyban.

A vallási megoszlás az egyes régiókban változó képet mutat. Általánosságban római katolikus Nyugat-Szlovákiáról, római katolikus-evangélikus Közép-Szlovákiáról és római katolikus-görög katolikus Kelet-Szlovákiáról beszélhetünk (*2. ábra*).

Választási preferenciák szempontjából a Szlovák Köztársaság területe három részre osztható. Közülük a legnagyobb az ország nyugati és középső részének jelentős területeit foglalja magában, ahol a választók túlnyomó részben a Demokratikus Szlovákiáért Mozgalomra (HZDS) adták szavazataikat.

Kelet-Szlovákiában a pártok támogatottsága elaprózódottabb térbeli megoszlást mutat. A települések többségében a HZDS a domináns erő, több alrégióban viszont a Demokratikus Baloldal Pártja (SDL) vagy a Kereszténydemokrata Mozgalom (KDH) kapta a legtöbb szavazatot. A harmadik régióra a magyar pártok koalíciójának (MKDH-ESWS) 60-80%-os többsége jellemző, elsősorban a magyar népesség túlsúlya következtében.

Fordította: BASSA L.