ETHNO-CULTURAL CHARACTERISTICS OF THE POPULATION
AS OF SEPTEMBER 7, 2021

Final data

The ethno-cultural characteristics of the population have been the subject of observation since the beginning of the 135-year history of censuses in the country. In the first censuses conducted at the end of the 19th century (1887 and 1892), the characteristics 'religion' and 'native language' were observed. In 1900, the characteristic 'nationality' was included. In the census conducted at the end of 1946, religion was dropped, and the other two characteristics appeared until 1975, using the designation 'mother tongue' instead of native language. Only in 1985 were these characteristics excluded from the census program. In the 1992 and 2001 censuses, the characteristics 'ethnic group', 'mother tongue' and 'religion' were observed, and in the 2011 and 2021 censuses, 'religiosity' was added.

In the last three censuses, questions related to ethno-cultural characteristics were voluntary. The definitions and methodology used, as well as the formation of the questions and answers in the census questionnaire, are fully consistent with the main principles and recommendations of the United Nations, related to the study of the population by ethnic and religious characteristics:
- ✓ Voluntary responses;
- ✓ Self-determination;
- ✓ Possibility of freely recorded answer.

Self-determination by ethnicity

The ethnic group is a community of persons who are close in origin, way of life, culture and language.

The trends in demographic processes, causing changes in the number and structures of the population, affect all ethnic groups in the country. As a result, the absolute number of the population of all three main ethnic groups decreased, and there were no significant changes in the ethnic structure between the last two censuses.

As of September 7, 2021, **the Bulgarian ethnic group** comprised 5 118 494, or 84.6% of the persons who answered the question about ethnicity. Compared to 2011, the share of this group decreased by 0.2 percentage points.
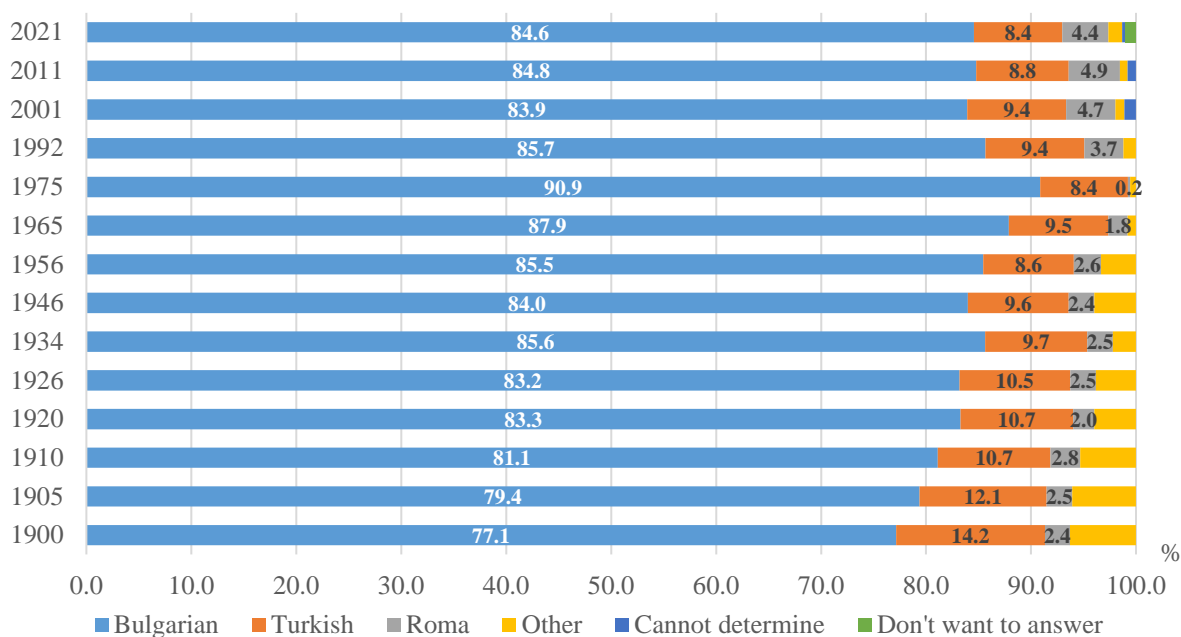
508 378, or 8.4% of the respondents, identified themselves as belonging to **the Turkish ethnic group.** Their relative share decreased by 0.4 percentage points compared to 2011.

266 720, or 4.4% of the respondents, identified themselves as the third-largest **Roma ethnic group.** The relative share of the population from this ethnic group decreased by 0.5 percentage points compared to 2011.

79 006 people, or 1.3%, identified themselves as belonging to **other ethnic groups**.

15 746 (0.3%) persons indicated that **they could not self-determine.** 63 767, or 1.0% of respondents, answered **'I do not want to answer'.**

Fig. 1. Structure of the population by ethnicity and census years[1]

Year	Bulgarian	Turkish	Roma	Other
2021	84.6	8.4	4.4	
2011	84.8	8.8	4.9	
2001	83.9	9.4	4.7	
1992	85.7	9.4	3.7	
1975	90.9	8.4	0.2	
1965	87.9	9.5	1.8	
1956	85.5	8.6	2.6	
1946	84.0	9.6	2.4	
1934	85.6	9.7	2.5	
1926	83.2	10.5	2.5	
1920	83.3	10.7	2.0	
1910	81.1	10.7	2.8	
1905	79.4	12.1	2.5	
1900	77.1	14.2	2.4	

■ Bulgarian ■ Turkish ■ Roma ■ Other ■ Cannot determine ■ Don't want to answer

Territorial distribution by ethnic self-determination

At the beginning of the last century, 18.2% of Bulgarians, 16.1% of Turks and 20.5% of Roma lived in cities. Over time, the Bulgarian ethnically self-identified population has urbanized considerably more than the other two main ethnic groups. As of September 7, 2021, 77.5% of the Bulgarian, 38.4% of the Turkish and 51.0% of the Roma ethnic groups live in the cities. The process of urbanization least affected the Turkish ethnic group, the majority of which throughout the period 1900 - 2021 continued to live in villages.

Fig. 2. Relative share of the population of the three main ethnic groups living in cities by census years

— Bulgarian — Turkish — Roma

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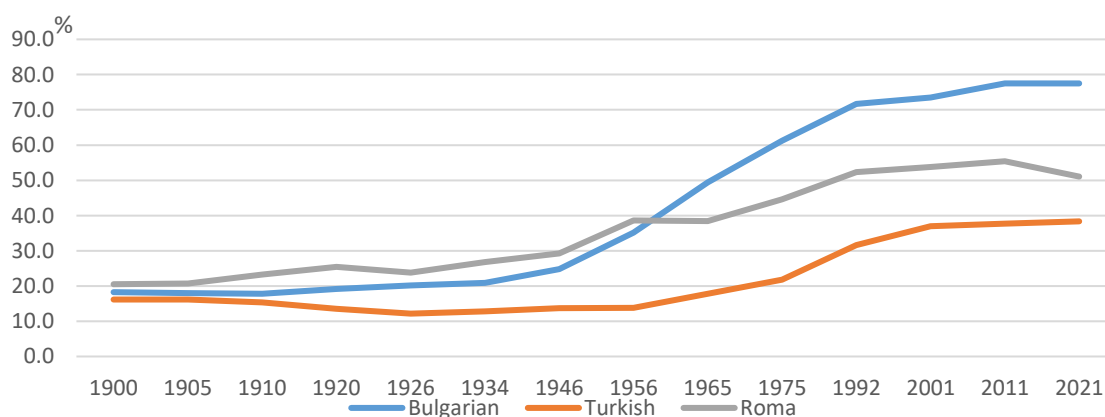
[1] By 1992 incl., those who have not declared their ethnic group were also included in the group 'Other'. In 2001, those who have not declared their ethnic group were also included in the group 'I cannot determine'.
Due to the voluntary nature of the ethnic self-determination question in 2011 and 2021, the structure was calculated for the total number of persons who answered this question, and not for the entire population.

In the presentation of the structure of the population by ethnicity and the calculation of the relative shares of the respective categories, the persons added from administrative sources, for whom there is no information in the registers used in the census, are not included.

The Bulgarian ethnic community predominates in all districts with the exception of Kardzhali and Razgrad districts, where it forms 29.0% and 39.7% of the district's population, respectively.

Fig. 3. Relative share of self-identified Bulgarian ethnic groups by district as of September 7, 2021
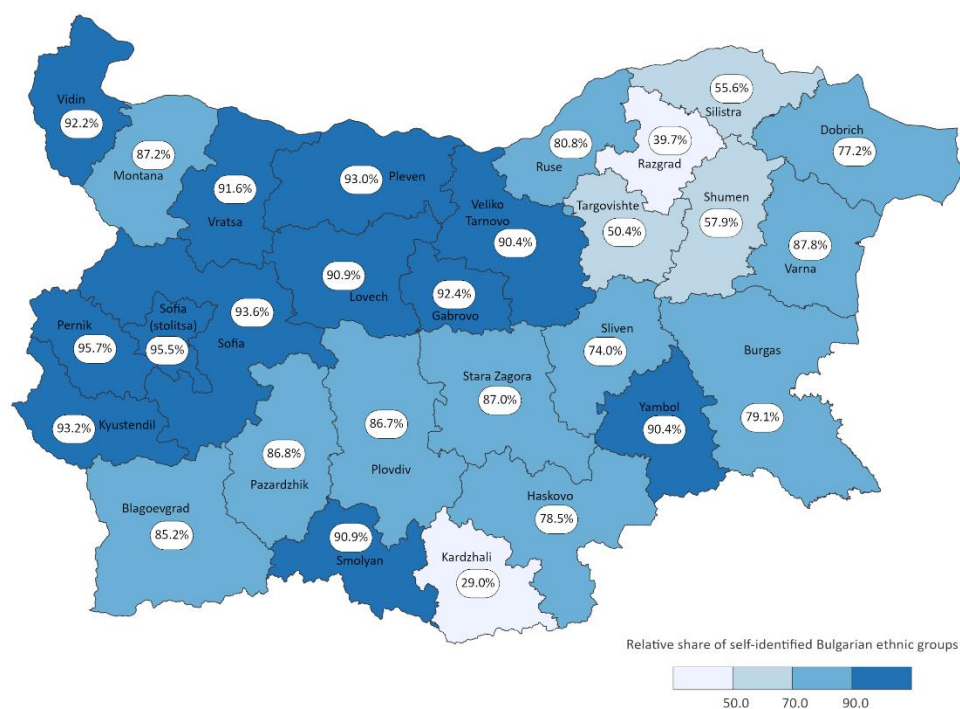

The persons who identified themselves as belonging to the Turkish ethnic community are territorially concentrated mainly in the districts of Kardzhali (64.5%), Razgrad (50.4%), Targovishte (37.7%), Silistra (37.1%) and Shumen (31.3%). In total, almost half of the population, self-identified to the Turkish ethnic group, lives in the five districts - 48.4%.

Fig. 4. Relative share of self-identified Turkish ethnic group by district as of September 7, 2021
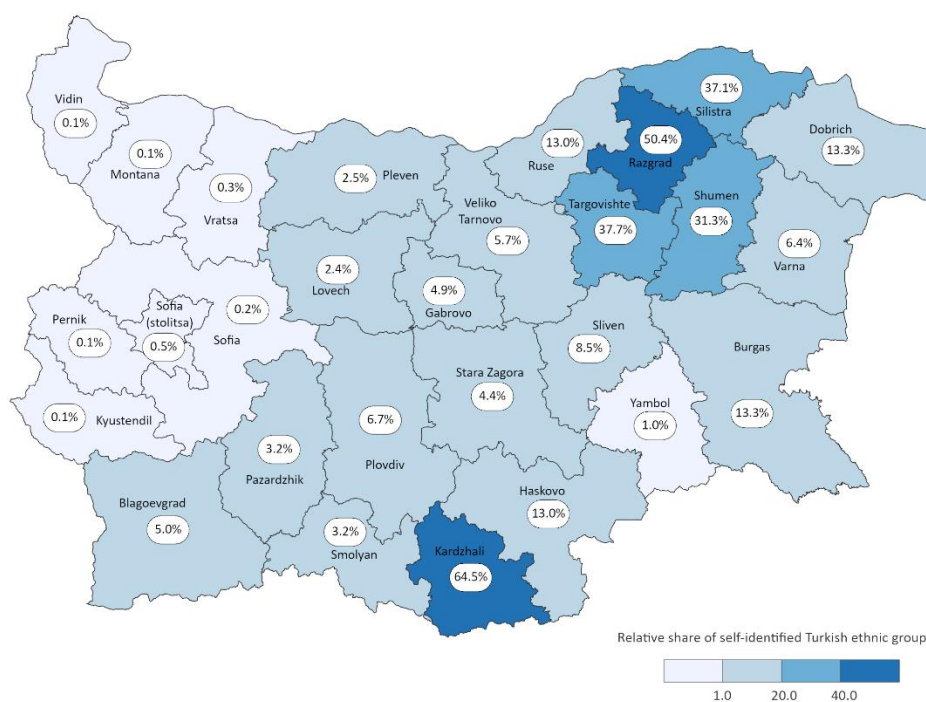
Persons from the Roma ethnic group are distributed territorially in all districts of the country. The largest share of the Roma ethnic group is in the districts of Sliven - 15.3% and Montana - 11.5%, followed by Shumen - 8.0%, Dobrich - 7.2% and Yambol - 7.1%.

Fig. 5. Relative share of self-identified Roma ethnic group by districts as of September 7, 2021
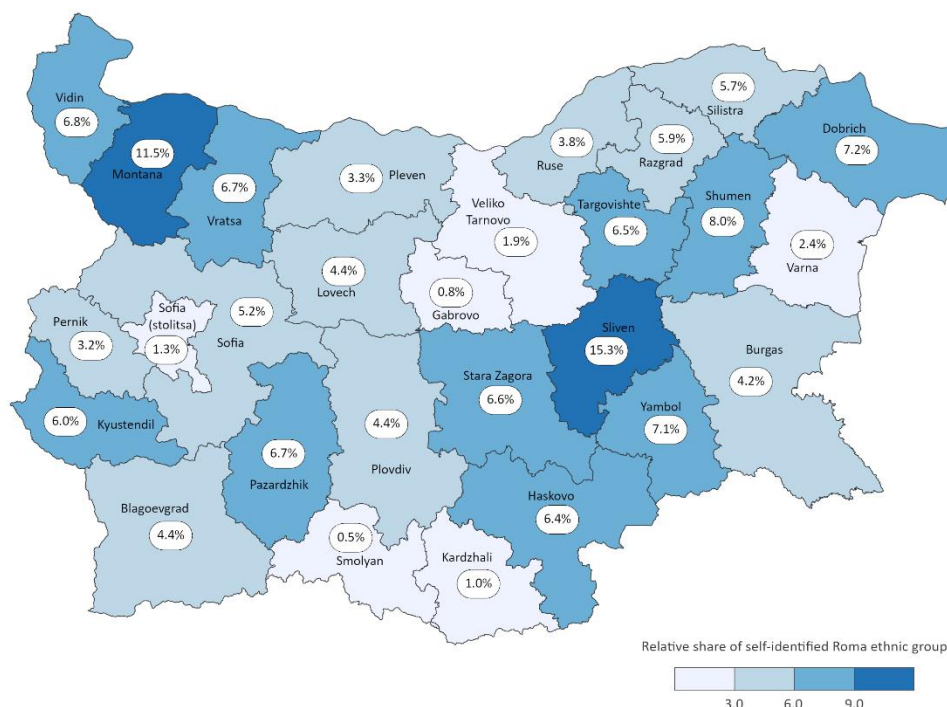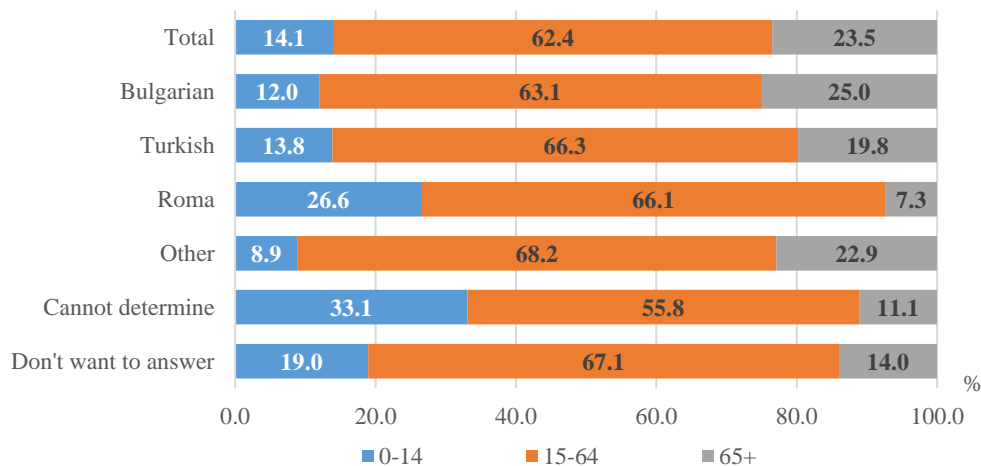

Age and ethnicity

The process of aging of the population, characteristic of the last decades, affects to the greatest extent persons from the Bulgarian ethnic community. In this group, the share of the population aged 65 and over is the highest - 25.0%, at 19.8% and 7.3% for the Turkish and Roma ethnic groups, respectively.

Among the three main ethnic communities, the share of the young population (0 - 14 years of age) is the highest among the Roma - 26.6% of those self-identified as this ethnic group. The share of young people among the Turkish ethnic group is almost twice as small (13.8%) and this share is the lowest among the Bulgarian community - 12.0%.

Fig. 6. Age structure of the population by ethnic groups as of September 7, 2021


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One-third (33.1%) of those who could not identify their ethnicity and one-fifth of those who did not want to answer were under the age of 14.

Education and ethnicity

There are significant differences in the educational structure of the population by ethnicity. While 79.7% of self-identified Bulgarians aged seven and over are well educated (29.2% with higher education and 50.5% with secondary education), 44.0% of the population from the Turkish ethnic group are well educated (8.1% with higher education and 35.9 % with secondary education), and for the Roma ethnic group, the relative share of this indicator is 15.2%, respectively 0.8% with higher education and 14.4% with completed secondary education.

Compared to 2011, a positive trend of increasing the absolute number and the relative share of persons with completed higher and secondary education is observed in all three main ethnic groups. In ten years, the share of the population with completed higher education increased from 0.3% to 0.8% among the Roma ethnic group, from 4.1% to 8.1% among the Turkish, and from 22.8% in 2011 to 29.2% in 2021 among those self-identified as belonging to the Bulgarian ethnic group.

Fig. 7. Distribution of the population by ethnicity and degree of completed education as of September 7, 2021
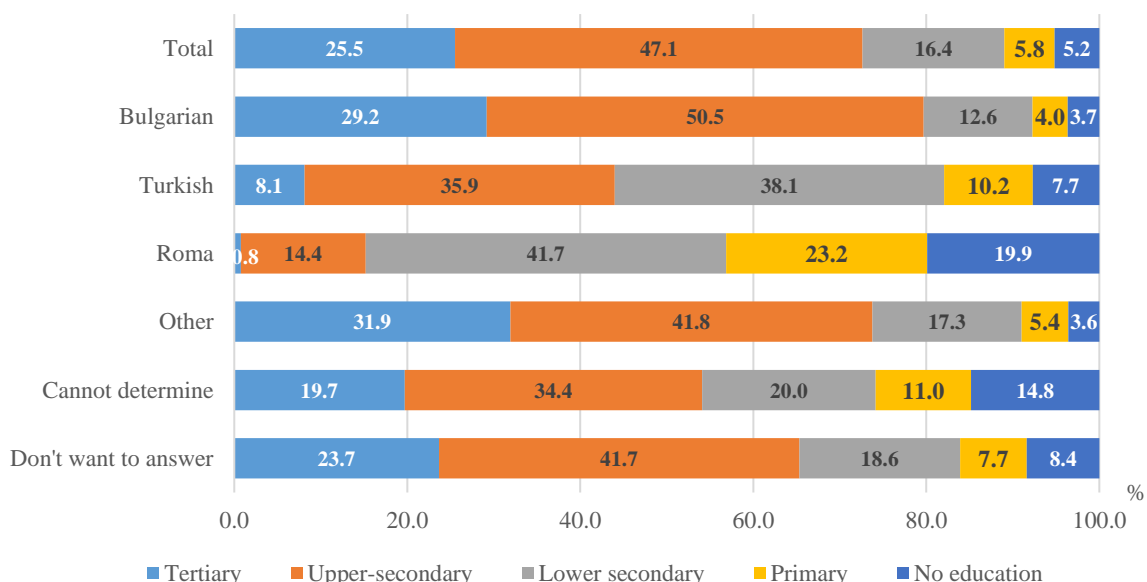
Of the persons aged 15 and over, 0.3% of those self-identified as belonging to the Bulgarian ethnic group, 1.9% from the Turkish and 6.4% from the Roma ethnic group have never attended school.

Children of compulsory school age (7 - 15 years of age) left out of the educational process are 8.0% of the Roma community, 4.4% of the Turkish community and 1.3% of the self-identified Bulgarian ethnic group in this age group.

Literacy is defined as the ability to read and write with understanding of what is read and written. As of September 7, 2021, 11.8% of self-identified Roma ethnic group aged 9 and over are illiterate. This share is 3.4% and 0.5% for the self-identified Turkish and Bulgarian ethnic groups, respectively.

Economic activity and ethnicity

The data on the economic characteristics of the population refer to the position of persons on the labour market during the week preceding the critical moment of the census - August 31 - September 6, 2021.

There are significant differences in the labour market participation of individuals from different ethnic groups. The employment rate in the age group from 15 to 64 years is highest among the Bulgarian ethnic group with an employment rate of 66.8%, and the lowest among the Roma ethnic group - 21.6%.

Unemployment is highest among the self-identified Roma ethnic group. More than half (51.2%) of economically active persons from this ethnic group were unemployed during the observed period. Every fifth economically active person aged 15 - 64 from the Turkish ethnic group was also unemployed during the observed period. This indicator is the lowest among self-identified Bulgarian ethnic groups - 8.4% of economically active persons.

Fig. 8. Employment and unemployment rates and economically inactive persons by ethnicity for persons aged 15 - 64
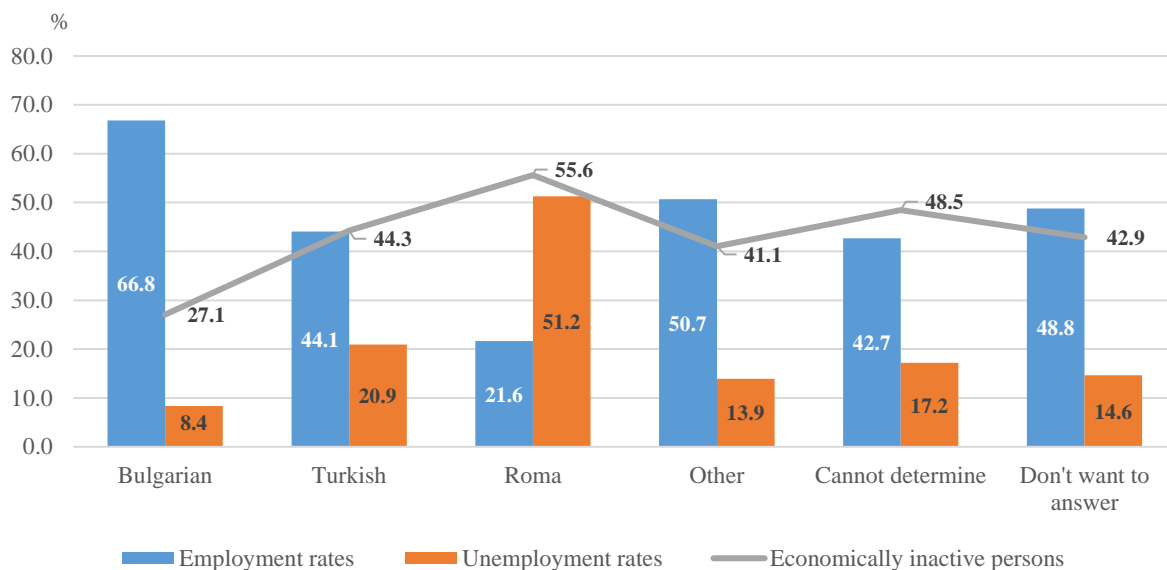
Unemployed and not participating in education aged 15 - 29 during the observed period ranged from 17.5% for the Bulgarian ethnic group, 38.0% for the Turkish to 62.6% for the Roma.

Mother tongue

Mother tongue is the second ethno-cultural characteristic traditionally studied in censuses.

The mother tongue is the first language learned at home in early childhood.

Bulgarian is the mother tongue of 5 037 607 people, or 85.3% of the population, Turkish - for 514 386 people, or 8.7%, and Romani - for 227 974 people, or 3.9% of those who answered the question.

Another mother tongue was indicated by 62 906 people, or 1.1%.

The persons who indicated that **they could not determine their mother tongue** were 10 633 (0.2%). 49 602, or 0.8% of respondents, answered, **'I do not want to answer'.**

Fig. 9. Population structure by mother tongue as of September 7, 2021[2]
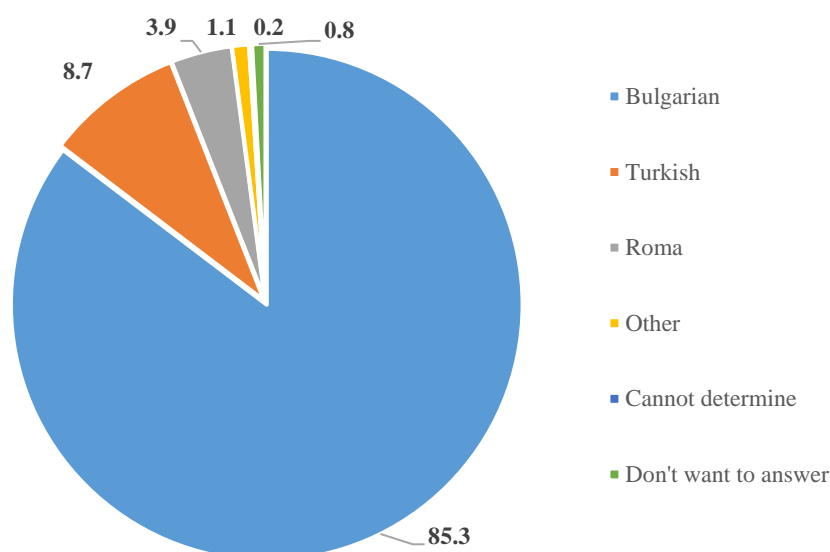
The relationship between ethnic self-determination and mother tongue self-determination is highly pronounced.

The most homogeneous in terms of mother tongue is the Bulgarian ethnic group - among those who answered both questions about ethnicity and mother tongue, 99.1% of the persons from the Bulgarian ethnic group indicated Bulgarian as their mother tongue, 15 687 (0.3%) - Turkish, 11 216 (0.2%) - Roma and 10 224 (0.2%) - other.

Among those self-identified as belonging to the Turkish ethnic group, 481 521 (95.8%) have Turkish as their mother tongue, and 19 354, or 3.8%, have Bulgarian as their mother tongue.

The Roma ethnic group is somewhat more diverse in its self-definition by mother tongue:

✓ 215 792 people, or 82.8%, indicated Romani as their mother tongue;
✓ 29 489, or 11.3% - Bulgarian;
✓ 14 185, or 5.4% - Turkish.

**Fig. 10. Structure of the population by ethnicity and mother tongue as of**
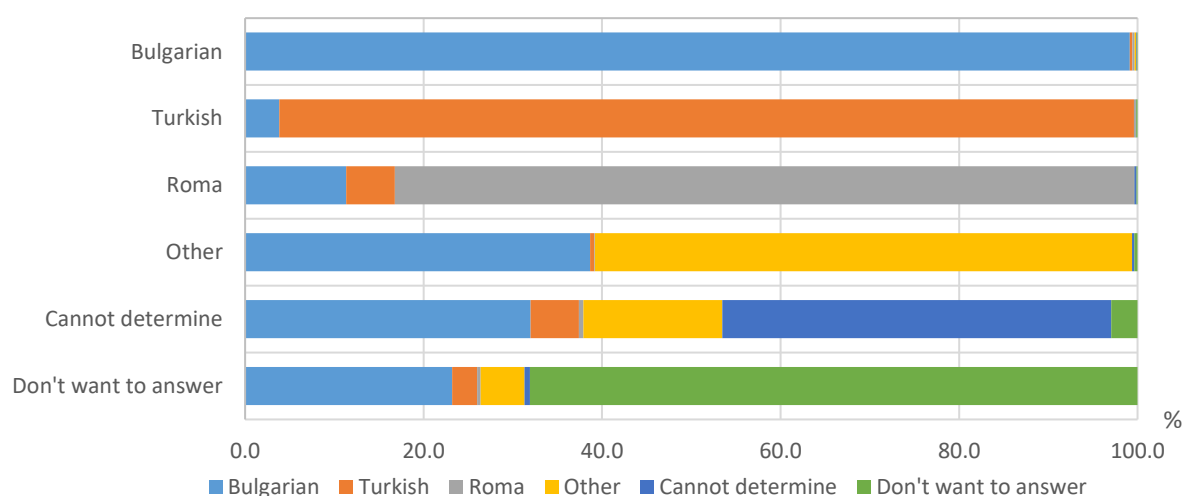
September 7, 2021

The territorial distribution of the population according to the indicated mother tongue is largely identical to the distribution by ethnicity.

Fig. 11. Distribution of the population by mother tongue and regions

Legend: ■ Bulgarian ■ Turkish ■ Roma ■ Other ■ Cannot determine ■ Don't want to answer
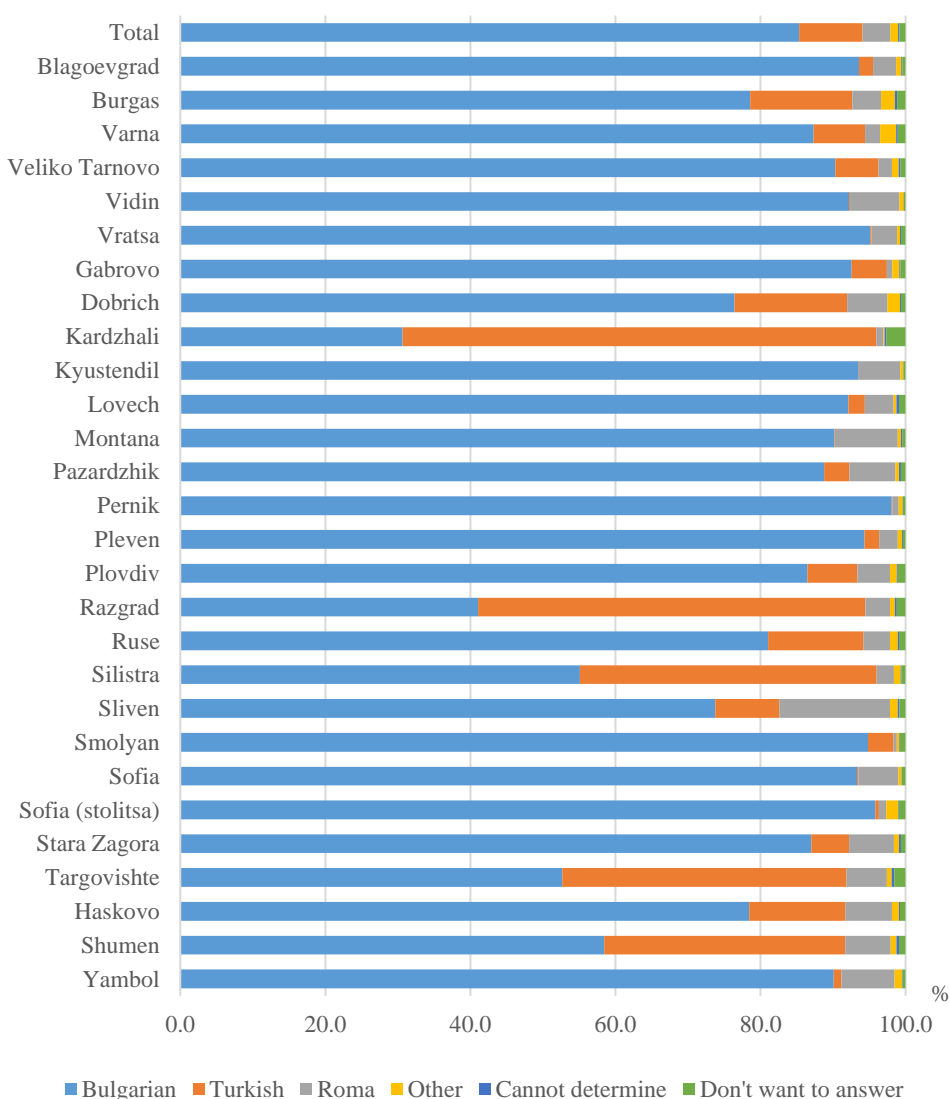
Religious denomination

Religious denomination is the affiliation of a person to a given historically established group, characterized by performing of specific religious rituals (Eastern Orthodox, Catholic, Protestant, Muslim, etc.).

4 219 270, or 71.5% of those who answered the question, self-identified as Christians. Eastern Orthodox Christians predominate among them - 4 091 780, or 97.0% of those who indicated a Christian religious denomination, followed by persons with a Protestant religious denomination - 69 852 (1.7%), Catholic - 38 709 (0.9%), and 5 002 (0.1%) indicated the Armenian apostolic creed. The answer 'other Christian' was chosen by 13 927, or 0.3% of those who answered the question.

638 708 persons, or 10.8%, indicated Muslim religious denomination, 1 736 Jews, and 6 451 persons professed other religions.

As of September 7, 2021, 305 102 (5.2%) individuals responded that they did not have a religion, 259 235 (4.4%) had difficulty identifying their religion, and 472 606 (8.0%) indicated that they did not want to answer.

Fig. 12. Structure of the population by religion as of September 7, 2021[3]
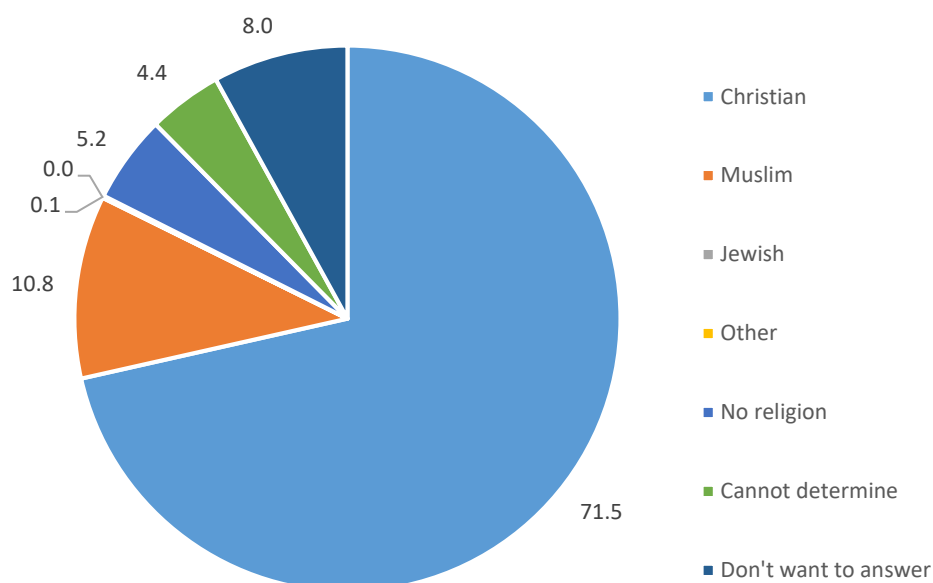
The age distribution of the persons who self-identified to the various religions shows that the highest relative share of adults (65+ years) is among the persons professing the Jewish religion - 28.6%, and the lowest - among those who indicated 'other' (7.0%). Similar to the distribution by ethnicity, where the highest share of persons under the age of 14 is in the 'cannot determine' category - 43.7% of those who indicated this answer.

Fig. 13. Age structure of the population by religion as of September 7, 2021

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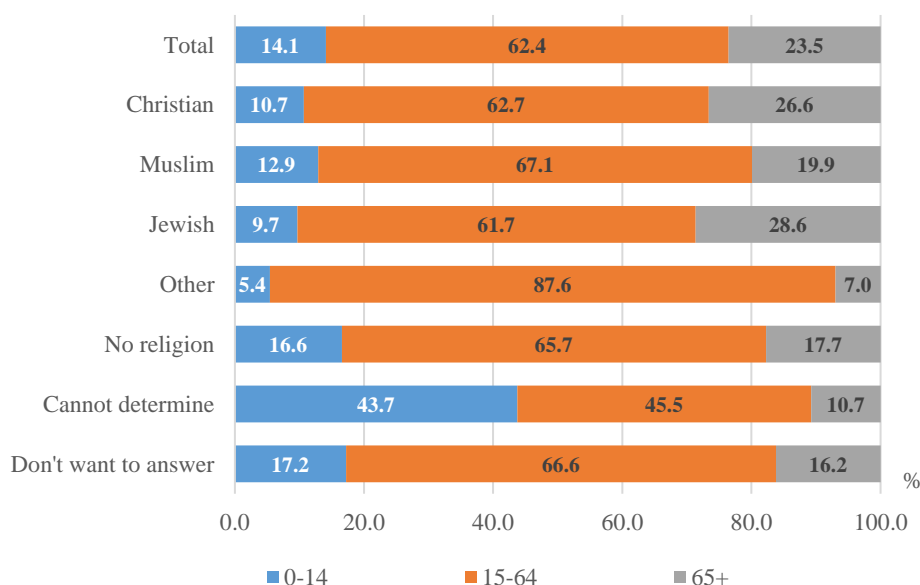
[3] The presentation of the structure of the population by religion and the calculation of the relative shares of the respective categories do not include persons added from administrative sources for whom there is no information in the registers used in the census.

Religious denomination and ethnicity

Among the persons who identified themselves as belonging to the Bulgarian ethnic group, 3 980 131 people, or 79.9%, are Eastern Orthodox, 33 749 (0.7%) - Catholic, 34 152 (0.7%) - Protestant and 107 777 (2.2%) - with Muslim religious denomination. 245 845 (4.9%) persons indicated the answer 'I don't have', and 'I cannot determine' - 190 807, or 3.8% of those who self-identified to the Bulgarian ethnic group.

For 447 893 people (89.1%) of the self-identified Turkish ethnic group, the stated religion was Muslim, 4 435 (0.9%) chose the Eastern Orthodox religious denomination, 13 195 (2.6%) of this ethnic group indicated that they had no religion, 15 622 (3.1%) were unable to self-determine.

Among those self-identified as belonging to the Roma ethnic group, those with the Eastern Orthodox religious denomination predominate - 75 745, or 29.1%. Muslim religious denomination was indicated by 45 817 (17.6%) of the Roma, Protestant - by 32 325 (12.4%), 'I do not have' religion was noted by 37 232 (14.3%) and 'cannot determine' by 41 517 (15.9%) from the self-identified to the Roma ethnic group.

The highest share of persons who declared that they do not wish to indicate their religion is among the Roma ethnic group - 9.1%, and the lowest - among persons who self-identified as belonging to the Turkish ethnic group (4.0%).

Fig. 14. Structure of the population by ethnicity and religion as of September 7, 2021
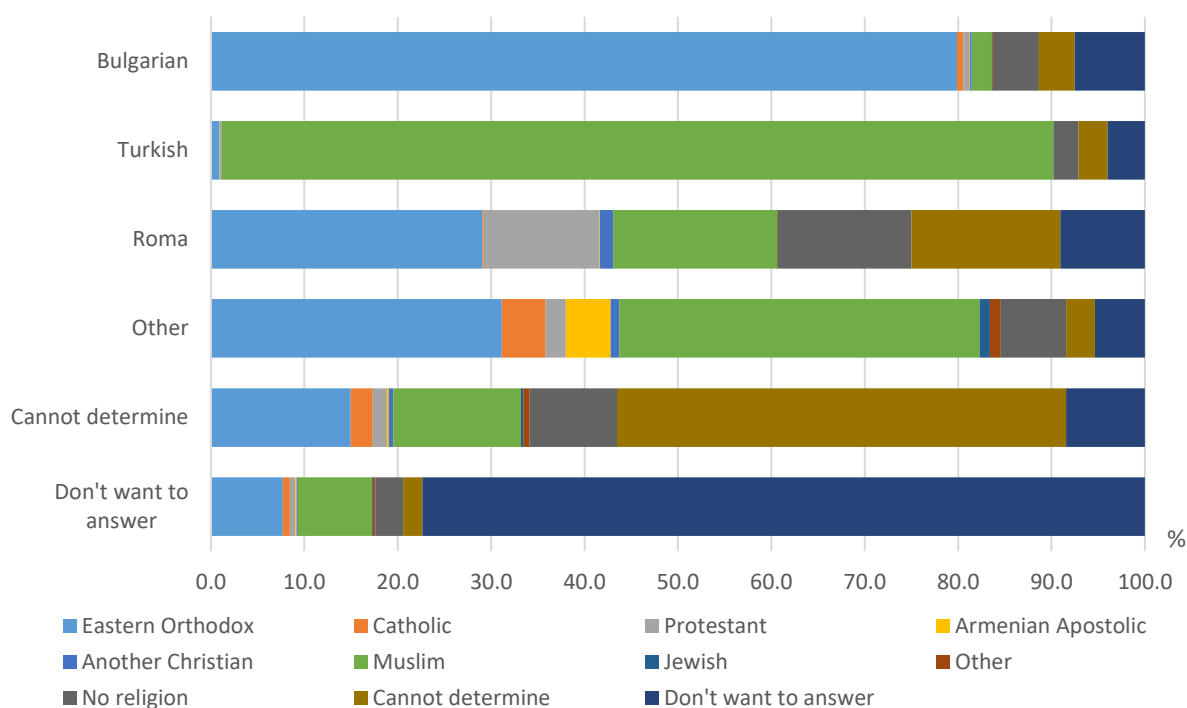
In terms of territory, the highest share of self-identified Christians is in the districts of Kyustendil (88.5%), Vidin (86.9%), Pernik (86.6%) and Sofia (83.4%), and the lowest - in the districts of Kardzhali (15.6 %), Smolyan (24.2%) and Razgrad (35.8%).

Fig. 15. Relative share of persons who self-identified as Christians, by district as of September 7, 2021
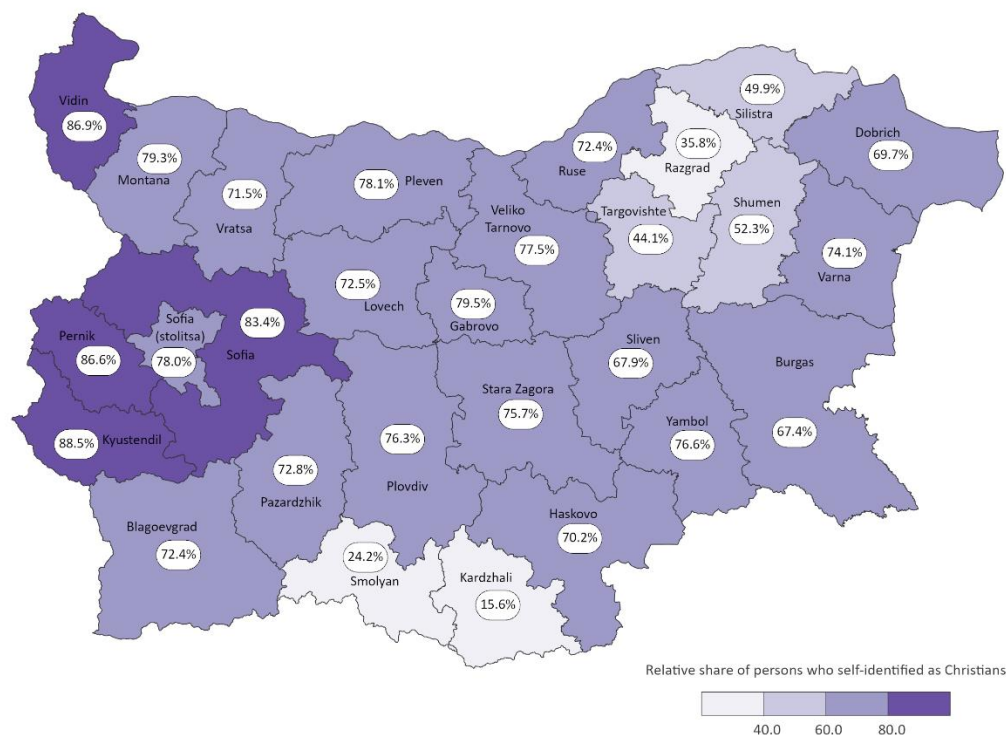
The persons who self-identified as Muslim are mainly concentrated in the districts of Kardzhali (69.6%), Razgrad (55.0%), Targovishte (43.7%), Smolyan (41.1%), Silistra (39.1%) and Shumen (34.3%). This share is the lowest in the districts of Vidin, Montana, Pernik and Kyustendil - 0.1% of those who answered the question.

Fig. 16. Relative share of persons who self-identified as Muslim, by district as of September 7, 2021
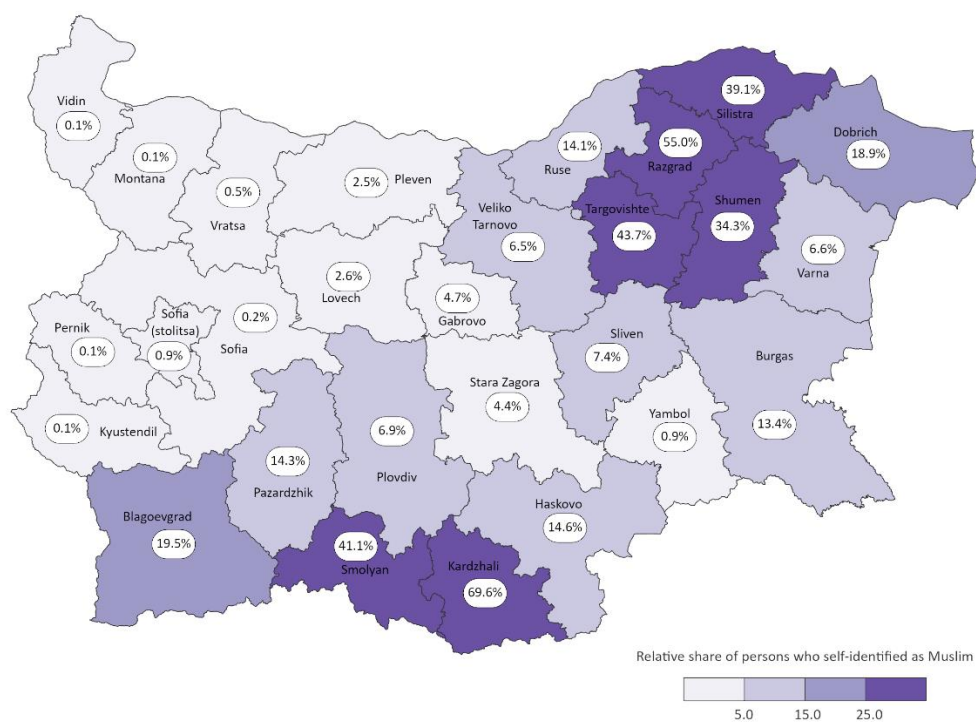
Religiosity

Religiosity is a worldview and behaviour, attitudes and customs based on the belief in a divine or higher being, supernatural forces, as well as a set of moral norms, practices, values, institutions and rituals accompanying this worldview.

As of September 7, 2021, 3 031 289, or 51.4% of respondents, answered 'Yes' to the question 'Are you religious?', 24.7% answered 'No', 13.0% 'can't tell' and 10.9% have chosen the answer 'I do not want to answer the question'. Of those who answered yes, 56.0% were women and 44.0% were men.

Combining the religion and religiosity questions shows that 77.6% of those who self-identified as Muslim stated that they were religious, while among those who self-identified as Christian this share was 59.1%.

Fig. 17. Distribution of the population by religion and religiosity as of September 7, 2021
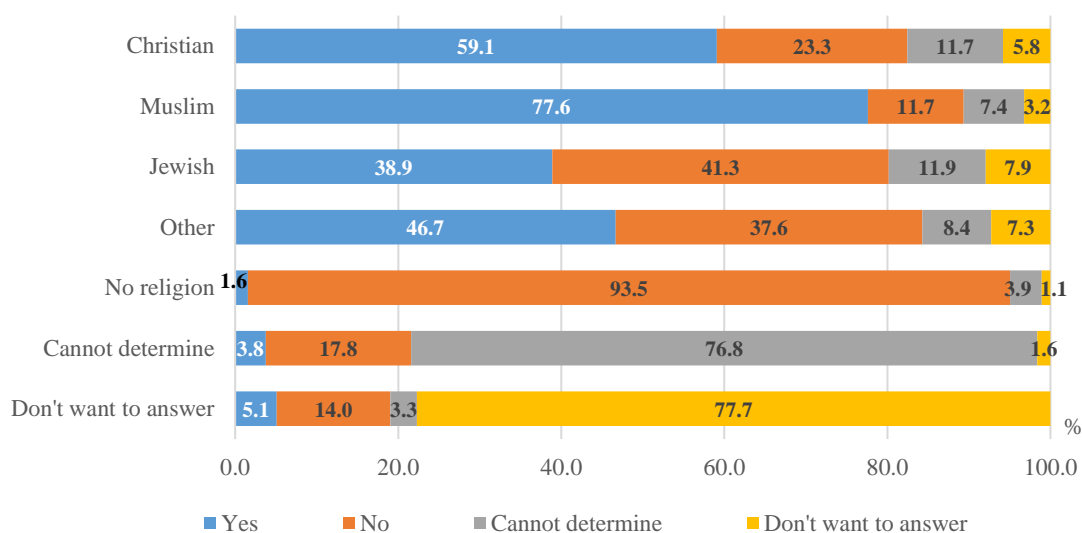
1. Population by ethnicity and by districts as of September 7, 2021

Districts	Total	Ethnic group				I cannot determine	I do not want to answer	Unknown
		Bulgarian	Turkish	Roma	Other			
Total	**6519789**	**5118494**	**508378**	**266720**	**79006**	**15746**	**63767**	**467678**
Blagoevgrad	292227	236951	14028	12318	11197	1210	2558	13965
Burgas	380286	280388	47286	14893	5992	1369	4436	25922
Varna	432198	352886	25678	9634	7664	1192	4995	30149
Veliko Tarnovo	207371	178491	11348	3655	1652	598	1716	9911
Vidin	75408	68143	65	5055	345	59	247	1494
Vratsa	152813	137587	424	10132	444	260	1379	2587
Gabrovo	98387	89394	4723	792	735	224	844	1675
Dobrich	150146	109041	18835	10118	2035	265	1039	8813
Kardzhali	141177	37383	83280	1354	2130	640	4269	12121
Kyustendil	111736	101735	56	6555	329	107	402	2552
Lovech	116394	103484	2789	4999	407	574	1628	2513
Montana	119950	99539	136	13130	381	275	709	5780
Pazardzhik	229814	184677	6782	14320	4686	594	1595	17160
Pernik	114162	107459	128	3544	388	106	612	1925
Pleven	226120	200197	5367	6999	937	611	1218	10791
Plovdiv	634497	513249	39585	26296	5004	1220	6914	42229
Razgrad	103223	38873	49318	5806	1957	367	1539	5363
Ruse	193483	148845	23958	7041	2060	358	1957	9264
Silistra	97770	51579	34392	5244	694	162	631	5068
Sliven	172690	115607	13217	23918	1861	305	1386	16396
Smolyan	96284	86818	3049	483	3589	236	1373	736
Sofia	231989	204662	342	11380	742	221	1238	13404
Sofia (stolitsa)	1274290	1058553	5881	13960	13766	2592	13494	166044
Stara Zagora	296507	239770	12170	18158	2465	816	2113	21015
Targovishte	98144	46455	34729	5980	2828	466	1625	6061
Haskovo	211565	154088	25555	12572	1764	362	1892	15332
Shumen	151465	81907	44263	11268	2118	424	1448	10037
Yambol	109693	90733	994	7116	836	133	510	9371

2. Population by mother tongue and by districts as of September 7, 2021

Districts	Total	Mother tongue				I cannot determine	I do not want to answer	Unknown
		Bulgarian	Turkish	Romani	Other			
Total	**5037607**	**514386**	**227974**	**62906**	**10633**	**49602**	**616681**	**6519789**
Blagoevgrad	254268	5252	8620	1930	414	1224	20519	292227
Burgas	271756	48765	13702	6565	1103	4044	34351	380286
Varna	342065	27898	8048	8740	904	4141	40402	432198
Veliko Tarnovo	174457	11522	3601	1808	405	1386	14192	207371
Vidin	68040	80	5030	428	26	165	1639	75408
Vratsa	142732	205	5311	610	229	920	2806	152813
Gabrovo	89460	4712	691	935	157	686	1746	98387
Dobrich	105702	21514	7694	2368	179	885	11804	150146
Kardzhali	39062	83293	1198	274	335	3322	13693	141177
Kyustendil	101911	58	6225	412	68	286	2776	111736
Lovech	104818	2536	4520	458	390	1036	2636	116394
Montana	100593	126	9686	493	240	473	8339	119950
Pazardzhik	182818	7148	13090	1012	503	1341	23902	229814
Pernik	109992	120	979	584	68	419	2000	114162
Pleven	199213	4284	5426	1171	354	745	14927	226120
Plovdiv	498281	39581	26113	5180	965	6088	58289	634497
Razgrad	39653	51560	3277	669	244	1163	6657	103223
Ruse	146537	23836	6630	1900	274	1650	12656	193483
Silistra	50368	37366	2166	866	95	526	6383	97770
Sliven	112350	13393	23291	1633	292	1315	20416	172690
Smolyan	90526	3373	443	321	85	731	805	96284
Sofia	199087	336	11762	952	166	1026	18660	231989
Sofia (stolitsa)	1013423	5195	10842	17131	1278	9825	216596	1274290
Stara Zagora	233510	14063	16594	1892	695	1665	28088	296507
Targovishte	47607	35457	4996	622	314	1413	7735	98144
Haskovo	150186	25424	12198	1831	313	1450	20163	211565
Shumen	81356	46271	8709	1119	454	1267	12289	151465
Yambol	87836	1018	7132	1002	83	410	12212	109693

3. Population by religious denomination and by districts as of September 7, 2021

Districts	Total	Religious denomination					I cannot determine	I do not want to answer	Unknown
		Christian	Muslim	Jewish	Other	No religion			
Total	**6519789**	**4219270**	**638708**	**1736**	**6451**	**305102**	**259235**	**472606**	**616681**
Blagoevgrad	292227	196841	52958	46	127	3925	6648	11163	20519
Burgas	380286	233008	46320	85	265	23746	13626	28885	34351
Varna	432198	290407	25738	90	549	22905	16520	35587	40402
Veliko Tarnovo	207371	149662	12525	35	155	9481	7980	13341	14192
Vidin	75408	64086	51	8	18	3406	2011	4189	1639
Vratsa	152813	107264	715	7	30	14673	13072	14246	2806
Gabrovo	98387	76802	4543	7	46	4683	3987	6573	1746
Dobrich	150146	96386	26207	21	103	4420	3835	7370	11804
Kardzhali	141177	19872	88705	21	24	1902	3518	13442	13693
Kyustendil	111736	96474	107	20	44	3662	3501	5152	2776
Lovech	116394	82468	3009	6	50	10673	7574	9978	2636
Montana	119950	88497	83	4	35	10147	6876	5969	8339
Pazardzhik	229814	149934	29357	33	83	5316	8036	13153	23902
Pernik	114162	97117	165	10	70	4349	3919	6532	2000
Pleven	226120	165004	5281	33	71	17763	11124	11917	14927
Plovdiv	634497	439779	39851	156	522	21980	27060	46860	58289
Razgrad	103223	34548	53121	11	24	1513	2120	5229	6657
Ruse	193483	130955	25514	40	131	6599	5995	11593	12656
Silistra	97770	45638	35767	4	13	2550	2703	4712	6383
Sliven	172690	103380	11341	21	79	15271	10481	11701	20416
Smolyan	96284	23079	39217	25	43	6519	8044	18552	805
Sofia	231989	177956	360	15	102	7713	8904	18279	18660
Sofia (stolitsa)	1274290	825290	9828	901	3487	63607	44211	110370	216596
Stara Zagora	296507	203134	11899	57	171	16013	14612	22533	28088
Targovishte	98144	39836	39481	9	31	2081	3148	5823	7735
Haskovo	211565	134343	27914	39	78	6900	7764	14364	20163
Shumen	151465	72792	47752	17	65	3846	7298	7406	12289
Yambol	109693	74718	899	15	35	9459	4668	7687	12212