

MOLDOVA (*Moldova*)



QUICK FACTS

Population: 3,546,847

Area: 33,851 sq. km (slightly larger than Maryland)

Capital: Chisinau (650,000)

Languages: Moldovan (official) 58.8%, Romanian 16.4%, Russian 16%, Ukrainian 3.8%, Gagauz 3.1%, Bulgarian 1.1%

EDUCATION

The education system in Moldova has experienced numerous reforms and suffered from a lack of efficiency and declining quality since independence. It currently has a compulsory 11-grade education system for ages 6-17. Grading is on a 10-point scale (1 being lowest, 10 highest and 5 passing). The literacy rate for 15 and over is 98.5%; however, results of Program for International Student Assessment 2009 Plus show that 60% of 15-year-olds lack the basic levels of proficiency in reading and math literacy and are among the lowest in Europe. Efforts are underway to address this.

Present day Moldova was carved from Romania (Bessarabia) and Ukraine (Transnistria) in 1940 and annexed to the Soviet Union. Two thirds of Moldovans are of Romanian descent. The languages are virtually identical and they share a common cultural heritage, despite separate recent histories and, at times, strained relations. Transnistria declared independence from Moldova with the collapse of the USSR but is not internationally recognized and the conflict remains unresolved. This area is populated by Ukrainian and Russian speakers. Moldova is one of the poorest countries in Europe.

RELIGION

The constitution of Moldova provides for freedom of religion; however, the law allows for some restrictions that can inhibit the activities of some groups such as: Jehovah's Witnesses, Jews, and Pentecostal believers. The law requires religions to register and some groups, especially Muslims, have been unable to register. Orthodox Christianity is the dominant religion with 96% of the population claiming membership in either of two Orthodox denominations, Moldovan (88%) or Bessarabian (8%). Adherents of other religious groups, constituting less than 10% of the population include Roman Catholics, Baptists, Pentecostals, Seventh-Day Adventists, Muslims, Jehovah's Witnesses, Baha'is, Jews, Unification Church, Lutherans, Presbyterians, and evangelical Christian groups.

ETHNICITY

Moldovans/Romanians are the largest ethnic group and account for 78.2% of the population, followed by Ukrainians (8.4%) and Russians (5.8%), according to the 2004 census. The latter two groups emigrated in large numbers following the collapse of the USSR. The Gagauz (4.4%), a Christian Turkic people, live in the south in the autonomous region of Gagauzia. There is controversy as to whether Moldovans constitute a subgroup of Romanians or a separate ethnic group.

FAMILY, RELATIONSHIPS & CUSTOMS

Due to tradition as well as social and economic factors, Moldovan youth tend to live with their parents through their education and after marriage. Grandparents and godparents often play a significant role in childrearing. Children are expected to be God-fearing and shy and not participate in adult conversations without being asked to do so. Some major holidays include: Orthodox Christmas (January 7 according to the Julian calendar), Women's Day (March 8), Orthodox Easter, Labor Day (May 1 and 2), Victory/Memorial Day (May 9) and "Limba Noastra" or "Our Language" (August 31).





CONTEMPORARY MOLDOVA

Present-day Moldova has experienced Byzantine, Ottoman, Hungarian, Russian, and Soviet domination, and in 1999 celebrated 640 years of statehood. As Bessarabia, it was incorporated into the Russian Empire in the 18th century. During the interwar period (1918-1940), it was reunited with Romania, only to be ceded to the Soviet Union as a result of the Ribbentrop-Molotov agreement in 1940, and combined with the Transnistria region of western Ukraine to form the Soviet Socialist Republic of Moldavia. It gained independence in 1991, but has been plagued by an unresolved separatist conflict in the Ukrainian/Russian-dominated Transnistria region where Russian troops remain today. Tensions in this region escalated into a full-fledged war in spring 1992 resulting in over 1,000 deaths and over 100,000 displaced persons. The conflict was not ethnic by nature but between independence-minded leaders in the capital and pro-Soviet predominantly industrial and military forces in Tiraspol. Moldovans and non-Moldovans were found on both sides of the conflict.

The suppression of Moldovan/Romanian ethnicity under Soviet rule and intensive Russification accompanied by a policy stressing differentiation between Moldovan and Romanian has resulted in a conflict regarding Moldovan identity and the self-perception of the Moldovan people as a nation. While there was once talk of reunification with Romania, this has faded over the years and disagreements between the governments make reunification highly unlikely. In a 1994 referendum, 95% of voters preferred independence. Moldova's economy is based on agriculture, and despite progress, it remains one of Europe's poorest countries, with per capita GDP even lower than Bosnia and Herzegovina or Kosovo. With few natural energy resources of its own, Moldova is dependent on Russia for energy.

Corruption remains a huge problem in Moldova. In late 2014, large-scale theft was discovered by Moldovan oligarch Ilan Shor. Anti-corruption protests led to political instability until the rise of Pavel Filip in 2016. Moldovan politicians have recently called for Russian "peacekeepers" to withdraw from Transnistria, to be replaced by a multinational force.



Vineyards in Moldova

MOLDOVANS IN THE USA

Emigration increased with the country's independence and subsequent conflicts in the 1990s and peaked following the economic crisis of the late 1990s. Roughly a quarter of the population emigrated to Russia, Ukraine, and Romania. Today, most emigration is labor migration. There are roughly 25,000 Moldovans in the US.



The flag bears a Roman eagle carrying a yellow cross in its beak, a green olive branch in its right talons and a yellow scepter in its left talons. The colors are based on the Romanian flag.



Moldovan school kids (UNICEF)

LANGUAGE

An Eastern Romance Language, it is officially called Moldovan, but its relationship to Romanian can be likened to that of English spoken in the USA and in the UK. However, the issue of whether it is a separate language or not remains a controversial and politicized issue. The Latin alphabet was reintroduced to replace the Soviet imposed Cyrillic alphabet on August 31, 1989, a date celebrated as the 'Limba Noastra' ('Our Language') day. In Transnistria the Cyrillic alphabet is still used.

NAMES

Frequent suffixes for Romanian names are: -esc (-escu), -an (-anu), and -ean (-eanu).

WORDS

(ț=ts, ă=uh, ea=ya, c=k, but ce, ci=che, chi)
Hi Salut!
Bye La revedere
Good day Buna ziua
Yes Da
No Nu
Please..... Va rog
Thank you..... Mulțumesc
You're welcome..... Cu plăcere
How are you? Ce mai faceti?
I do not understand Nu înțeleg
Do you understand? Înțelegem?
What is your name?..... Cum te cheamă?
My name is Ma numesc...
Where are you from? De unde sunteți?
Welcome! Bine ați venit

USEFUL LINKS

- [BBC Moldova Profile](#)
- [BBC Trans-Dniester Profile](#)
- [Infotag News Agency in English](#)
- [Language Pronunciation](#)