

FORCED MIGRATIONS AND CHANGED ETHNIC STRUCTURE OF SERBIA IN THE BEGINNING OF 21ST CENTURY

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Abstract. *In this article presented the ethnic structure of the population of Serbia according to the 2002 census results is presented, along with the ethnodemographic changes in the period 1991-2002, caused by the following relevant factors: natural increase, migration and changed declaration on national affiliation. Ethnocentric migrations (voluntary and forced) primarily influenced the change of the ethnic structure of Serbia in the sense of creating nationally more homogeneous regions, because of the national structure of refugee-population, more than the emigration of other nationalities which migrated to their mother countries due to political and economic reasons. On the whole, the ethnic picture of Serbia is a complex one and undergoing changes continuously. Having in mind that Serbia is a multiethnic and multiconfessional state, the protection of minority rights and good inter-ethnic relations are necessary for peace, stability and democratic development of Serbia and the Balkans region.*

Key words: *ethnic structure, migrations, refugees, national minorities, census of population, demographic development, Serbia.*

Towards the end of the eighties and beginning of the nineties the Balkans region was characterised by intensive movements of the population and refugees. Under different circumstances and with different intensity populations emigrated from Turkey, Romania, Albania, etc. In the most dramatic conditions, in the most dramatic form and a much larger number, the movement in the Balkans reached its peak in the former Yugoslavia.

Namely, political changes from the 1990's made migrations even more relevant from the demographic, economic and legal aspect, taking into consideration not only their scope, but new specific forms of migration movements as well (voluntary and forced migrations, ethnocentric migrations, refugees, displaced persons and others), and their reasons and consequences. Disintegration of the country, the civil war on the territory of the

former Yugoslavia and emergence of new ethnonational states, "ethnic cleansing", among other things, resulted in enormous population movements, as well as a considerable number of refugees who moved towards their mother countries.¹

The first census of the refugees was conducted in 1996 by UNHCR and the Commission for Refugees of the Republic of Serbia and Commission for Refugees of the Republic of Montenegro. According to that census 646.1 thousand refugees were registered (617.7 thousand in Serbia and 28.4 thousand in Montenegro).

Out of the total number of refugees in Serbia, 337.8 thousand were registered in Central Serbia, i.e. over one half (54.7%), and the majority were in Belgrade (171.1 thousand). This means that almost every tenth inhabitant presently residing in Belgrade fled from the war-affected regions of the former Yugoslavia. The inflow of this large number of refugees has further aggravated urban, infrastructural and even economic problems already existing in Belgrade. In Vojvodina there were 259.7 thousand refugees or 42.0% of the total number registered in Serbia. Only 20.2 thousand (3.3%) went to Kosovo and Metohia. The movement towards Vojvodina was to a great extent influenced by Serb historical migration routes. After the First and the Second World Wars, the Serbian population migrated to Vojvodina from the same regions from where the Serbs fled in this war. It is therefore natural that a large number of war affected persons found sanctuary with friends and relatives in this region of Serbia.

The civil war, which was dominated by nationalist and religious elements, forced those who belonged to different ethnic groups to flee from the environment of mixed nationalities. As the greatest number of Serbs outside Serbia in the former Yugoslavia lived in Bosnia and Herzegovina and Croatia, almost 97% of those war-affected persons, who were registered by the census, originate from these two former Yugoslav republics.

The very nature of the war in the former Yugoslavia forced refugees to flee to territories where their ethnic groups represented the majority. Serbs fled either to territories under the control of the Serb authorities or into Serbia. Consequently, over 90% of refugees in Serbia are Serbs (1.0% Croats, 1.2% Muslims, 1.8% Yugoslav, etc.). As opposed to other countries where refugees are mainly accommodated in refugee camps and collective centers, more than a half of the total number of refugees were accommodated in the homes of close relatives and family friends. The generosity expressed by the local population is primarily due to close family relationships and the traditional system of values. Therefore, hosting of refugees represents a tremendous financial effort for most host families. The number of refugees and their difficult financial position indicate that durable solutions for this population cannot be left to spontaneous processes, but that a government program must be created.

Generally speaking, there were three possible solutions of the refugee problem: repatriation, local reintegration and emigration abroad. During the period from 1996 to 2002 the number of refugees decreased: some of them returned to their place of origin, a number of refugees were granted citizenship, or they emigrated abroad. According to the census of population (2002) conducted by the Federal Office of Statistics 379.1 thousand

¹ According to UNHCR data from March 1995, the number of refugees in the region of the former Yugoslavia, irrespective of the nationality or habitual residence, is estimated at 3.9 million. According to the same source, at least an additional 500 thousand refugees from the region fled to third countries.

refugees were registered in Serbia. Out of this number in Central Serbia there lived 192.7 thousand refugees, while 186.5 thousand lived in Vojvodina. According to previous habitual residence, data indicate that more than one half of the total number of refugees fled from Croatia (220.2 thousand), 124.0 thousand from Bosnia and Herzegovina, 5.9 thousand from Macedonia and 6.1 thousand from Slovenia.

The ethnic structure of the population of Serbia has changed significantly as a result of the arrival of a large number of refugees in the direction of more homogenous nation states. The ethnic structure basically depends on three relevant factors: natural growth, migrations and change of ethnic affiliation. Since largely subjective factors are involved, the population's declaration by ethnic affiliation is heavily affected by the so-called non-demographic factors. That effect is particularly striking under extraordinary political circumstances, such as those prevailing at the last two population censuses. However, increases or decreases in the number of members of ethnic groups also result from assimilation – the effect of which is difficult to measure by quantitative indicators – as well as political circumstances (ethnic conflicts, civil wars and the like) that lead to forcible migrations resulting in a large number of refugees and displaced persons. The action of all of the mentioned factors is conducive to changes in the number of members of certain ethnic groups and their share in the total population, as well as to changes in their spatial distribution, which altogether make up the ethnic picture of individual regions.

According to the 2002 census results, **Republic of Serbia** has 7.5 million inhabitants altogether (excluding Kosovo & Metohia) of which about 6.2 million (82.9%) are Serbs, followed by Hungarians (3.9%), Bosniacs together with Muslims (2.1%), Roma (1.4%) and Yugoslavs (1.1%), while other ethnic groups account for less than 1% each (Table 1).

In view of territorial distribution and difference in size and concentration of nationalities in Central Serbia and Vojvodina, the data on the mentioned two regions are presented separately.

Of the altogether 5,466,009 inhabitants of **Central Serbia** in 2002, 4,891,031 (89.5%) were *Serbs*, which makes Central Serbia a highly homogenous region with elements of the unimodal type, in view of the fact that the share of all other ethnic communities in the total population (Muslims and Bosniacs 2.8%, Roma 1.4%, Albanians 1.1%, and all others under 1% each) (Table 2).

Of the total number of municipalities in Central Serbia, Serbs make up the absolute ethnic majority in 109 or 94% of them (Map).

The number of *Montenegrins* in Central Serbia decreased considerably and quite unexpectedly. There were 33,536 (0.6%) of them in 2002, which is almost 2.5 times less than at the 1991 census. One should take into account the political circumstances under which the last two censuses were conducted. Namely, certain variations in the Montenegrin declaration of ethnic affiliation were manifest precisely at the time of heavy ethnic turmoils and reconsideration of Montenegro's statehood.

Among the national minorities and ethnic groups living in Central Serbia, the most numerous are *Bosniacs* (151,539). *Bosniacs and Muslims* make up the absolute majority population in three municipalities: Tutin (28,542 or 94.2%), Novi Pazar (67,192 or 78.2%) and Sjenica (21,171 or 75.5%) and they also have considerable shares in two more municipalities: Prijepolje (41.1%) and Priboj (23.0%).

According to the results of the latest census, *Roma* are the third biggest ethnic community in Central Serbia in terms of their number and share in the total population

(79,139 or 1.4% respectively). The atypical oscillation of the total number of Roma from one census to another resulted from the changes they made in declaring their ethnic affiliation. The main causes of the mimicry practised by Roma are their discrimination, resulting in willful assimilation into the majority or some other ethnic group and loss or concealment of their ethnic identity.

Table 1. Ethnic composition of the population of Serbia (excluding Kosovo & Metohia), 1991-2002*

	Total population		Total population	
	1991		2002	
	Number	%	Number	%
<i>Total</i>	7576837	100.0	7498001	100.0
Serbs	6061917	80.0	6212838	82.9
Montenegrins	117761	1.6	69049	0.9
Yugoslavs	312595	4.1	80721	1.1
Albanians	74303	1.0	61647	0.8
Bosniacs	...	...	136087	1.8
Bulgarians	26416	0.3	20497	0.3
Bunjevci	21236	0.3	20012	0.3
Wallachs	15675	0.2	40054	0.5
Goranci	...	...	4581	0.1
Hungarians	337479	4.5	293299	3.9
Macedonians	44028	0.6	25847	0.3
Muslims	176401	2.3	19503	0.3
Germans	4745	0.1	3901	0.1
Roma	90853	1.2	108193	1.4
Romanians	37818	0.5	34576	0.5
Russians	2429	0.0	2588	0.0
Ruthenians	17795	0.2	15905	0.2
Slovaks	65363	0.9	59021	0.8
Slovenes	7811	0.1	5104	0.1
Ukrainians	4957	0.1	5354	0.1
Croats	94244	1.2	70602	0.9
Czechs	2675	0.0	2211	0.0
Other	11318	0.1	11711	0.2
Undeclared	9988	0.1	107732	1.4
Reg.affiliation	4706	0.1	11485	0.2
Unknown	34324	0.5	75483	1.0

* All members of ethnic nationalities numbering more than 2,000 in Serbia are presented in accordance with the Republic Office of Statistics classification.

Source: Final results of the 1991 and 2002 censuses, Republic Office of Statistics, Belgrade.

In contrast to the Albanian, Bulgarian and Bosniac national minorities, the Roma are highly dispersed. Of the total Romany population of Central Serbia, almost a quarter live in and around Belgrade (19,191).

There were 59,952 *Albanians* in Central Serbia in 2002 and in the latest inter-censal period (1991-2002), their share in the total population of Central Serbia decreased from 1.3% to 1.1%. According to the 2002 census, Albanians make up the majority population in two municipalities of Central Serbia: Preševo (31,098 or 89.1%) and Bujanovac (23,681 or 54.7%) and they also have a high share in the Municipality of Medvedja (2,816 or 26.2%).

Table 2. Ethnic composition of the population of Central Serbia, 1991-2002

	Total population		Total population	
	1991		2002	
	Number	%	Number	%
<i>Total</i>	5606642	100.0	5466009	100.0
Serbs	4936600	88.0	4891031	89.5
Montenegrins	73311	1.3	33536	0.6
Yugoslavs	141829	2.5	30840	0.6
Albanians	71790	1.3	59952	1.1
Bosniacs	...	...	135670	2.5
Bulgarians	24137	0.4	18839	0.3
Bunjevci	...	...	246	0.0
Wallachs	15544	0.3	39953	0.7
Goranci	...	...	3975	0.1
Hungarians	4189	0.1	3092	0.1
Macedonians	26913	0.5	14062	0.3
Muslims	170645	3.0	15869	0.3
Germans	1048	0.0	747	0.0
Roma	67646	1.2	79136	1.4
Romanians	3026	0.1	4157	0.1
Russians	1422	0.0	1648	0.0
Ruthenians	390	0.0	279	0.0
Slovaks	3120	0.1	2384	0.0
Slovenes	5139	0.1	3099	0.1
Ukrainians	468	0.0	719	0.0
Croats	21716	0.4	14056	0.3
Czechs	879	0.0	563	0.0
Other	6389	0.1	6400	0.1
Undeclared	4914	0.1	52716	1.0
Reg.affiliation	2254	0.0	1331	0.0
Unknown	23273	0.4	51709	0.9

Source and note: same as for Table 1.

The breakdown of the ethnic structure of Central Serbia shows that the share of all other ethnic communities in the total population is under 1% individually.

The highest increase was registered in the number and share of *Wallachians*, who more than doubled in just eleven years (from 15,544 to 39,953 and from 0.3% to 0.7% respectively). The increase in their number (24,409) is much higher than their natural

growth which is indicative of the effect of the subjective factor, i.e., growing declaration of affiliation to this group.

Bulgarians mostly inhabit the eastern part of Serbia that borders on Bulgaria. Of the total number of Bulgarians in Central Serbia, about 70% live in only two municipalities: Bosilegrad and Dimitrovgrad, where they make up the majority population.

The number of *ethnically undecided* people, which increased enormously over the last ten or so years (from 4,914 to 52,716), is also indicative of the social and political circumstances under which the latest census was conducted, meaning that 1% of the population expressed their indignation or feeling of insecurity by declaring their ethnicity in that way.

Vojvodina is a multiethnic, multiconfessional and multicultural region, in consequence of many historic, political, economic and demographic factors. The highly heterogeneous ethnic structure of its population is increasingly acquiring the characteristics of the bimodal type, because despite the existence of many ethnic communities there, two prevail strikingly: those of Serbs and Hungarians.

According to the 2002 census, Vojvodina had 2.0 million inhabitants, including about 1.3 million (65%) *Serbs*, and about 700,000 (35%) members of national minorities and ethnic groups (Table 3). More than 80% of Vojvodina municipalities have ethnically heterogeneous populations. Serbs make up the absolute majority population in 33 municipalities (their share varying from 52.0% to 92.5%) and the relative majority in two (Vrbas 47.8% and Bac 46.7%). They prevail in 77.8% of Vojvodina municipalities.

In terms of their number and share (290,207 and 14.3% respectively), *Hungarians* make up the second biggest ethnic community in Vojvodina (second to Serbs, who account for almost 80% of the total population). Compared with 1991, their number decreased by about 43,000 (or 13%) and their share by 3%. The demographic development of Hungarians is characterised by negative natural growth (low fertility rates and high mortality rates because of their old age structure). In the 1991-2002 period, their total natural growth was negative, which is less than the absolute decrease in their number in the same period, largely resulting, most probably, from emigration to their parent country.

Hungarians, the second largest ethnic community in Vojvodina, made up the absolute majority population of six municipalities (Kanjiža 86.5%, Senta 80.5%, Ada 76.6%, Backa Topola 58.9%, Mali Idjoš 55.9% and Coka 51.6%) and the relative majority in two municipalities (Becej 48.8% and Subotica 38.5%). They make up the majority population in 17.8% of Vojvodina municipalities (Map).

According to the latest census, the number of *Slovaks* (56,637) is smaller than in 1991 (62,159). Despite their negative average annual growth rate, their share in the total population of Vojvodina shifted from the fifth biggest (1991) to the third biggest (2002), since the negative growth rates of members of all other ethnic groups (other than Serbs and Roma) were even higher. Like at the previous census, Slovaks made up the majority population in two municipalities: absolute in Backi Petrovac (9,751 or 66.4%) and relative in Kovacica (11,455 or 41.1%).

According to the 2002 census, there were 56,546 (2.8%) *Croats* in Vojvodina, which is by 22% less than in 1991. The war in Croatia and Bosnia and Herzegovina that went along with the disintegration of the former Yugoslavia prompted the Croatian population to move into their parent state. According to the latest census, the share of Croats varied from 0.2% to 11.5%. They were best represented in the municipalities of Apatin (3,766 or 11.5%) and Subotica (16,688 or 11.2%).

Table 3. Ethnic composition of the population of Vojvodina, 1991-2002

	Total population		Total population	
	1991		2002	
	Number	%	Number	%
<i>Total</i>	1970195	100.0	2031992	100.0
Serbs	1125317	57.1	1321807	65.0
Montenegrins	44450	2.3	35513	1.7
Yugoslavs	170766	8.7	49881	2.5
Albanians	2513	0.1	1695	0.1
Bosniacs	...	...	417	0.0
Bulgarians	2279	0.1	1658	0.1
Bunjevci	21236	1.1	19766	1.0
Wallachs	131	0.0	101	0.0
Goranci	...	...	606	0.0
Hungarians	333290	16.9	290207	14.3
Macedonians	17115	0.9	11785	0.6
Muslims	5756	0.3	3634	0.2
Germans	3697	0.2	3154	0.2
Roma	23207	1.2	29057	1.4
Romanians	34792	1.8	30419	1.5
Russians	1007	0.1	940	0.0
Ruthenians	17405	0.9	15626	0.8
Slovaks	62243	3.2	56637	2.8
Slovenes	2672	0.1	2005	0.1
Ukrainians	4489	0.2	4635	0.2
Croats	72529	3.7	56546	2.8
Czechs	1796	0.1	1648	0.1
Other	4929	0.3	5311	0.3
Undeclared	5074	0.3	55016	2.7
Reg.affiliation	2452	0.1	10154	0.5
Unknown	11051	0.6	23774	1.2

Notes: Same as for Table 1.

Like in the case of all other ethnic nationalities in Vojvodina (with the exception of Serbs and Roma), the number of *Romanians* decreased, so that at the latest census they numbered 30,419 (1.5%), which is by more than 10% less than in 1991. Most Romanians live in South Banat district and of their total number in Vojvodina, more than a half (53%) live in only three municipalities: Alibunar and Vršac (6,076 or 26.5% and 5,913 or 10.9% respectively, where they are second to Serbs only) and Pancevo (4,065 or 3.2%).

The territorial distribution of *Roma* is characterised by a high spatial dispersion. The 2002 census shows that they live in all parts of Vojvodina, their highest shares being in the municipalities of Nova Crnja (6.8%) and Beocin (6.5%) and the largest number in Zrenjanin (2,471).

Bunjevci live exclusively in North Backa and South Backa districts (97.5%). More than 83% of the total number (19,766) of Vojvodina Bunjevci live in Subotica alone (16,254 or 11.0%).

Ruthenians have considerable shares in Kula (5,398 or 11.2%) and Vrbas (3,765 or 8.2%) and 60% of the total number of *Ruthenians* in Vojvodina live in these two municipalities alone.

Macedonians numbered 11,785 (0.6%), which is by 5,330 less than in 1991. The absolute decrease in their number is much higher than their total negative natural growth.

The share of the members of many *other ethnic communities* (Czechs, Germans, Russians, Ukrainians, Poles, Jews and others) in the total population is very small, but they do contribute to Vojvodina's multiethnicity.

The results of the latest census show that the number of *Yugoslavs* decreased very much in relation to that registered in 1991 (by about 120,000 or 70%).

According to the latest census, many people did not want to declare themselves (55,016 or 2.7%) or did so in terms of regional affiliation: Vojvodinians, Banatians, Sremsians, etc. (10,154 or 0.5%), which reflects the ethno-political circumstances under which the census was conducted.

Evidently, the trends in territorial distribution of the population of Serbia by ethnic nationality are characterised by spatial demographic polarisation. Some areas have a more complex ethnic composition, while ethnic homogenisation of the population prevails in others, in consequence of different natural growth rates and ethnocentric migrations, as well as many political, economic, socio-cultural and other factors.

Serbia is characterised by the fact that many ethnic communities live in one and the same region, town and municipality. Thus, looking from the aspect of territorial and political division, it is quite possible for the majority to become the minority and vice versa. For example, the Serbs are the biggest ethnic community and they make up the majority, whereas in some parts of Serbia itself (some municipalities in the south of Serbia, in the north of Vojvodina and in Sandžak), they make up the minority, which is a very small one indeed at some places.

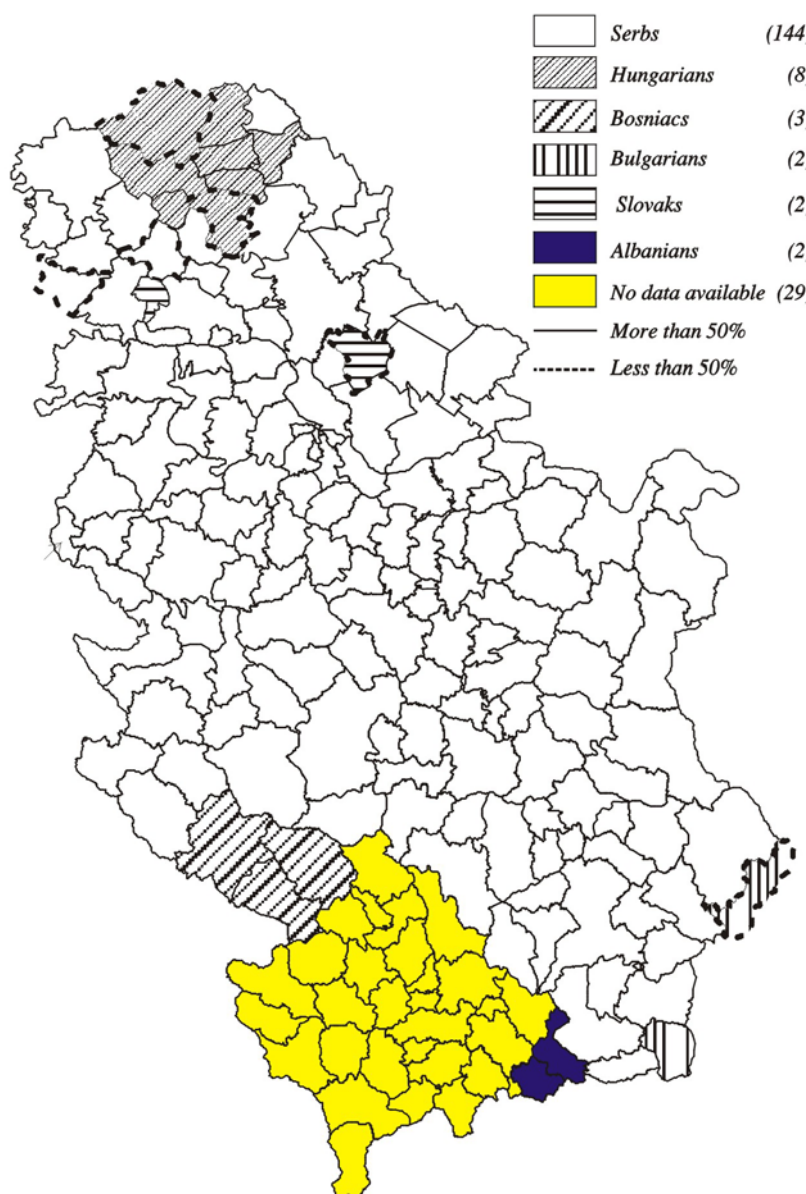
The minority issue is made more difficult also by the territorial concentration of the biggest national minorities (Albanians, Hungarians and Bosniacs) in the border-adjacent areas. The minorities manifest a striking need for the symbols and features that identify them and minority elites tend to organise themselves politically and control all needs of the minorities. This points to the ongoing homogenisation of the minorities and the major and more influential minorities demand political and territorial autonomy, which is a misuse of minority rights.

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The changes in the ethnic composition of the population of Serbia in the last few decades resulted from the action of political, economic, demographic, ethnic, social, cultural and other factors. In consequence of constant migrations of populations, different natural growth rates by nationalities and political circumstances, Serbia is ethnically and confessionally the most diversified Balkan state.

Major political and economic changes took place in Serbia in the last decade of the 20th century and they affected all fields of social life. An enormous number of refugees and displaced persons, and voluntary and forcible migrations were conducive to major changes in demographic development and ethnic picture of the population of Serbia. Generally, the ethnic structure of Serbia is a complex one and undergoing changes

continuously. Ethnic differentiation was also paralleled by the process of national homogenization, in consequence of natural and mechanical population movement and difficult political, social and economic situation characterizing the region towards the end of the 20th and in the beginning of the 21st century.



Majority representation of ethnic communities by nationalities, 2002*

*Kosovo & Metohia - no data available (2002 population census was not conducted in K&M).

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PRISILNE MIGRACIJE I PROMENA ETNIČKE STRUKTURE SRBIJE NA POČETKU XXI VEKA

Nada Raduski

U radu je prikazana, prema podacima popisa iz 2002. godine, etnička slika Srbije na početku XXI veka, kao i bitne etnodemografske promene koje su se desile u poslednjem međupopisnom periodu (1991-2002). Relevantni faktori koji su determinisali etničku strukturu i prouzrokovali značajne promene jesu etnički diferenciran prirodni priraštaj, migracioni saldo i drugačije deklarisanje stanovništva o svojoj nacionalnoj pripadnosti. Masovne migracije su pri tome fenomen koji je nesumnjivo obeležio kraj XX i početak XXI veka. Etnocentrične migracije (prisilne ili voljne) uticale su na promenu etničke strukture Srbije prvenstveno u smislu stvaranja nacionalno homogenijeg regiona zbog dolaska ogromnog broja izbeglica (pretežno Srbi), ali i emigracije pripadnika drugih nacionalnosti prema svojim matičnim državama ili u inostranstvo usled ekonomskih i političkih razloga. Vremenski posmatrano, etnički sastav stanovništva Srbije je složen i u stalnim promenama. Srbija je danas multietnička i multikonfesionalna država pa dobri međuetnički odnosi, poštovanje prava i zaštita manjina neophodni su za mir, stabilnost, i demokratski razvoj Srbije i Balkana.

Ključne reči: *etnička struktura, migracije, izbeglice, nacionalne manjine, popis stanovništva, demografski razvoj, Srbija.*