



# THE PEOPLE OF LATVIA

Latvia is a comparatively small country in north-eastern Europe, whose history in the past century bears witness to the Latvians' relentless struggle for freedom. The country's present population is under 2.3 million, inhabiting a land area of 65 thousand km<sup>2</sup>. This is equivalent to the population of a single major European

city, such as Brussels, Rome or Vienna, dispersed across an area

larger than Belgium, Denmark, Switzerland or the Netherlands.

Text by PhD Ilmārs Mežs

## Latvia: country and society

Small already, the population of Latvia is actually continuing to fall instead of growing. **Latvia is one of the few countries whose population was larger 20 years ago, and even 100 years ago, than it is today.** A century ago, Latvia's population was comparable in size with that of Finland, Norway or Denmark, but today these countries have twice as many inhabitants as Latvia. This is the effect of two world wars, deportations, emigration and a demographic crisis. Sad to say, Latvia's population is set to continue falling in the future – unless a demographic miracle occurs, whereby the birth rate suddenly doubles.

Because of the low birth rate, the mean age of the country's population is very high, and is still growing. There is still a sex disproportion, resulting from wartime losses: the female population exceeds the male population. Male life expectancy is only 66 years, significantly lower than female life expectancy: women live to an average age of 77.

Appropriately for a country with a cool climate, Latvia's population density is quite low: 36 people per km<sup>2</sup>, a figure comparable with that of other countries lying at a similar latitude. Moreover, the majority (two thirds) of the population is concentrated in the cities, especially in the capital, Rīga, which is home to one third of the inhabitants. In few European countries is the capital city as dominant as it is in Latvia, particularly in the fields of industry, science and finance. The rural population, rather than being concentrated in villages, is mostly scattered on family farms, conforming to the historical pattern of individual farmsteads dispersed in the landscape, and in many cases quite isolated. Such farmsteads number almost 100 thousand. Before the Second World War, there were twice as many: a large number were destroyed in the war and during the Soviet occupation. Such

dispersed farmsteads are rare in the Latgale region and along the coast, where people mostly live in small villages. Characteristically, in Latvia each of these countless farms has a name, in many cases a historic one. Since many farm names go back several centuries, they are in many cases no longer intelligible to Latvians, although in the past they would certainly have had a clear meaning.

It is possible to see in this historical pattern of dispersed settlement the origin of particular Latvian character traits: reserve, self-reliance, independence and

persistence. Latvians may seem somewhat anti-social to others – overly reticent individualists – but in fact it's simply that Latvians need more time to develop trust and friendship.

### The population of Latvia's cities, 2004 (thousands).

Rīga	735
Daugavpils	111
Liepāja	86
Jelgava	66
Jūrmala	55
Ventspils	44
Rēzekne	37
Valmiera	28
Jēkabpils	27
Ogre	26

## Ethnic composition

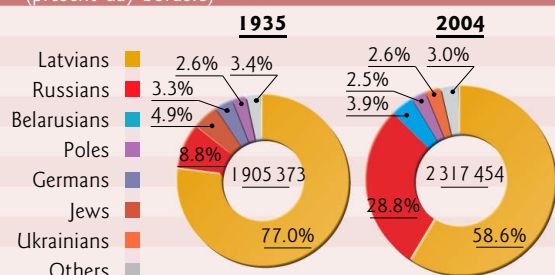
As in many parts of Eastern Europe, so too in Latvia, **ethnic consciousness is very pronounced**, sometimes even predominating over national or religious consciousness. It is possible that the basis for this strong kind of ethnic consciousness emerged during the centuries of rule by the German nobility, when all Latvians were peasants and servants, while the Germans were masters – a distinction that was strictly observed. The recent years of Soviet oppression, too, have only served to reinforce Latvian ethnic consciousness, since Latvians tend to contrast themselves with the large body of ethnic Russian immigrants who arrived during the Soviet era. It seems that the existence of this kind of strong ethnic division averted the process of Russification, so that the Latvians continued to use their language not only in the family, but also in education and culture.

A couple of centuries ago, Latvia's ethnic composition was relatively homogeneous, the Latvians constituting more than 90% of the total population. There was a small German population (Baltic Germans), belonging mainly to the ruling social stratum, and very small numbers of Russian, Jewish, Polish and other immigrants. The Roma (Gypsies) migrated to Latvia in about the 17th century, while the Jews arrived later, Jewish influx continuing right up to the 20th century. Mass immigration of Russians, now Latvia's largest minority, began already in the 18th and 19th century, when tens of thousands of Old Believers arrived in Latgale, seeking refuge from persecution. They were later joined by many Russian Orthodox settlers: migration was promoted by the Tsarist government through the priority sale of land to Russian Orthodox believers. Accordingly, the descendants of these Russian immigrants gradually came to dominate in about 10 parishes between Rēzekne and Daugavpils, where they still constitute the majority (Biķernieki, Maļinova, Sīlmalā, Audriņi, Čornaja and other parishes).

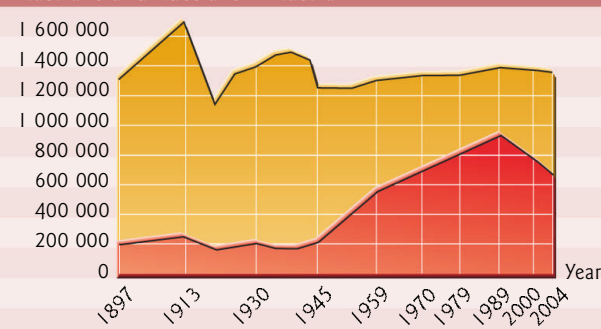
**Major changes in the composition of the population occurred during and after the Second World War.** In the first place, almost all the Baltic Germans left Latvia at the outbreak of war. Then, in 1941, the occupying Soviet authorities began deporting people to Siberia on a mass scale. This was followed by the Nazi German invasion, which brought virtual annihilation of the Jewish population, and the slaughter of the majority of the Roma. At the close of the war, several hundred thousand people fled from Latvia in fear of renewed Communist oppression and eventually found refuge in various countries around the globe: the USA, Canada, Australia, Germany, Sweden, etc. When the Soviet Army invaded Latvia again in 1944–45, the Communists recommenced repression against the local population, culminating in 1949, when 45 thousand of the most prosperous farmers were deported to Siberia in a single day. This deportation virtually eliminated armed Latvian resistance to the Soviet authorities, and the farmers were forced to join collective farms. In order to make up for the depletion of the workforce, and evidently with the aim of

changing the country's ethnic composition, **Moscow organised the migration of many hundreds of thousands of Russians into Latvia.** Many of these immigrants from Russia during the Soviet period were connected with the Communist Party, the security services (KGB) or the Red Army, since the process was aimed at strengthening Moscow's control over Latvia. However, there were also large numbers of ordinary economic migrants, attracted by the relatively higher standard of living. **During the years of Soviet occupation, a total of at least 1.5 million immigrants arrived in Latvia, half of whom stayed to live here.** Latvia's Russian population increased fivefold, while at the same time the Latvian population did not even regain its pre-war level.

#### The ethnic composition of Latvia (present-day borders)



#### Trends in the number of Latvians and Russians in Latvia



As a result of the Soviet occupation, Latvia's ethnic composition changed significantly: the proportion of ethnic Latvians fell from at least 80% before the Second World War to 52% percent in 1989, and would evidently have continued to fall, had Latvia not regained its independence. Meanwhile, the proportion of Russians grew from under 9% before the Second World War to as much as 30% in 1989. Also, the Belarusian population has increased fivefold since the war, and the Ukrainian minority appeared only in the Soviet period. The number of Poles and Lithuanians has remained approximately the same, while the Roma community has grown several times over, due to their high birth rate.

There are marked differences in the geographical distribution of the different ethnic groups. Thus, Latvians predominate significantly in the countryside and in the small towns of the Kurzeme and Vidzeme regions, and to a lesser extent also in the country districts of the Zemgale region and in the environs of Rīga. Most of the Russians live in Rīga and the other cities, and also in Latgale, where in certain areas they constitute up to half the population, and even as much as two thirds in certain parishes. Other ethnic groups, too, are concentrated mainly in Rīga and the other cities. Certain parishes of Krāslava District have a slight predominance of Belarusians. In no municipality does the Ukrainian population constitute more than 10%, and most Ukrainians live in Rīga, as well as in Liepāja and Ventspils. The majority of the Polish population is concentrated in Rīga, as well as in the city and environs of Daugavpils, where in certain parishes Poles constitute more than 20%. The Lithuanian population is dispersed along the whole length of the border with Lithuania, and in certain parishes Lithuanians make up more than 20%. Virtually the whole of the Jewish population lives in Rīga. As regards the other minorities,

the majority of Belarusians, Ukrainians, Poles and Jews speak Russian, while the Lithuanians, Estonians and Roma are for the most part Latvian-speakers.

In the cities, and the capital in particular, there are certain historically developed districts where Latvians are in minority. Thus, in the districts with single-family homes, and in those parts of the cities that were built up before the Second World War, the majority of the inhabitants (two thirds to three quarters) are Latvians, while the Russians form the majority in the districts of apartment blocks built during the Soviet era. However, the great majority of Rīgians live in houses with a mixed ethnic composition, so that there are practically no minority 'ghetto districts'.

There are only minor differences in the level of education and in socio-economic position between the Latvians and the minorities, and **there is no reason to consider that the minorities experience inferior living conditions or lower incomes.** Latvians predominate particularly in such areas of employment as public administration, agriculture and education, while the minorities tend to be employed more in transportation, industry and construction. Analysis of income levels among Latvians and non-Latvians leads to the conclusion that there are no significant differences in this regard. It should be added that among the Russian population there is a greater degree of segregation, since they are slightly more represented among the very poorest and also among the very richest people in Latvia. Likewise, comparison of the ethnic composition of the unemployed and employed workforce does not reveal any major ethnic differences.

When Latvia regained its independence, a **principle of inherited citizenship was applied:** all those who had been citizens of the Republic of Latvia in 1940, before the Soviet occupation, automatically regained Latvian citizenship, and it was bestowed automatically on all the direct descendants of the citizens. The people automatically granted Latvian citizenship also included tens or even hundreds of thousands of people from the minorities – Russians, Poles, Belarusians, Jews and others – regardless of their knowledge of the Latvian language. The remainder of the population, i.e. those who had arrived in Latvia in recent decades and their descendants, were offered a choice of either applying for citizenship from their country of origin or becoming permanent residents of Latvia without Latvian citizenship ('non-citizens'). A small section chose the former option, and at present Latvia is home to 30 thousand foreign citizens, mainly Russian nationals. Most, however, chose the second option, which also envisages the possibility of naturalisation. This process is open to anyone who has lived in Latvia for at least five years and passes a test in knowledge of Latvian language and history. During the past decade, 100 thousand people have chosen to become naturalised as Latvian citizens, a process that has gathered speed particularly since the country joined the EU. Latvia currently has one of the highest rates of naturalisation among EU countries: almost 1% of the population is granted citizenship every year. The Latvian language and history examination is not very difficult: 95% of all applicants pass the first time. Some foreign ambassadors have also taken the language test. The former British ambassador even admitted that the test is an easy one, and may be passed after attending a language course lasting six to eight weeks.

For children born in Latvia after the restoration of independence, the process of obtaining citizenship is made as easy as possible: their parents simply have to confirm in writing that they wish their children to become Latvian citizens and citizenship is then granted automatically. Unfortunately, most non-citizens are passive in this regard at the moment, and only a fifth of the children of non-citizens born in Latvia after 21 August 1991 actually become Latvian citizens.

In the period 1995–2005, the number and proportion of non-citizens has fallen rapidly, from 29% to 19%, and in the course of the next decade it is expected to approach the mean figure for the EU – around 10%. The non-citizens are mainly older people who have difficulty accepting the collapse of the Soviet Union and the great political changes associated with it, and most of this group will probably never wish to become Latvian citizens. In the independence referendum of 1990, a quarter of population (over 411 thousand) did not support the restoration of Latvia's independence. Many of these people feel that accepting Latvian citizenship would likewise mean betraying their Russian (Soviet) origin and identity.

## The legal status of different ethnic groups, at the beginning of 2005

Ethnic group	Citizens of Latvia	Non-citizens	Foreign nationals	as a percentage of citizens in the ethnic group		
				Total	of the total population	
Latvians	1 349 539	2 120	1 033	1 352 692	58.9%	99.8%
Russians	346 746	288 207	21 084	656 037	28.6%	52.9%
Belarusians	28 551	56 829	2 024	87 404	3.8%	32.7%
Ukrainians	13 812	40 952	3 813	58 577	2.6%	23.6%
Poles	40 642	14 885	556	56 083	2.4%	72.5%
Lithuanians	17 655	12 263	1 571	31 489	1.4%	56.1%
Jews	6 418	2 796	360	9 574	0.4%	67.0%
Estonians	1 522	658	349	2 529	0.1%	60.2%
Others	21 919	14 159	5 599	41 677	1.8%	52.6%
TOTAL	1 826 804	432 869	36 389	2 296 062	100.0%	79.6%

## The Latvians History

The area of present-day Latvia became free of the ice sheet only 10–12 thousand years ago, and the earliest settlers arrived soon after. It is known only that these people belonged to the earliest inhabitants of Europe, living here before the arrival of the Indo-Europeans. More than four thousand years ago, Latvia was settled by Finno-Ugric groups, and the present Livs and Estonians may be regarded as their descendants. Soon after the Finno-Ugric people, Proto-Baltic groups also arrived in Latvia, occupying the southern, and later also the central and eastern parts of the country. A thousand years ago, the area of present-day Latvia was populated by four Baltic groups: the Latgallians, Selonians, Semigallians and Couronians, along with a Finno-Ugric group – the Livs. The Latvian people emerged later, through the consolidation of these five groups. This process of consolidation ended in about the 16th century, although even at the present day, certain ethnographic and linguistic differences may still be found.

The area populated by the Latvians, as well as that of the neighbouring Estonians, was conquered in the 13th century by German crusaders, who later established the Livonian Confederation. For a time, the area of present-day Latvia was also under Swedish and Polish rule, until in the 18th century it was gradually incorporated into the Russian Empire. The political situation after the First World War permitted an independent Latvian state to emerge, along with other new European states, and on 18 November 1918 the Republic of Latvia was proclaimed. Another year and a half passed before the Latvian army succeeded in driving German and Russian forces from the country, and soon after that, Latvia was recognised internationally.

Unfortunately, independence was short-lived. **In the summer of 1939, the German and Soviet leaders, Adolf Hitler and Josef Stalin, agreed that Latvia and its neighbours – Estonia, Lithuania and Finland – would belong to Moscow's zone of influence, while Berlin would have control over most of Poland.** The two criminal regimes were quick to implement their pact: in September Germany and the USSR occupied Poland. Moscow immediately requested that Finland and the Baltic States agree to the establishment of Soviet military bases on their soil. The Baltic States complied, while Finland refused, and was attacked by the Red Army. After the Soviet forces had occupied the Baltic States in June 1940, Moscow decided that the time had come to annex the three independent states to the USSR. Moscow established complete control over Latvia, Estonia and Lithuania, and Communist terror began. The terror was interrupted by the Nazi German occupation that followed a year later. In 1944–1945, the Soviet forces reoccupied the Baltic States, including Latvia, and stayed right up to 1994, when the occupying Russian (former Soviet) army finally left. Latvia regained its independence in 1990–1991, and in 2004 was accepted into the EU and NATO.

## Language

Latvian belongs to the Indo-European language family, and together with Lithuanian forms the Baltic language group, related to, but separate from the Slavic and Germanic language groups. The Latvian language, like Lithuanian, retains many **elements of proto-Indo-European** both in terms of vocabulary and grammar, and in this regard it is interesting for linguists.

Latvian is thought to be based mainly on the languages spoken by the Latgallians and Semigallians. The Latgallians were more numerous and populated the whole of Latgale and most of Vidzeme, while the Semigallians lived in the central part of the country. We have very limited information about the Couronian language, because it went out of use before it could be documented. However, the Couronians have left traces of their language in the many unusual place-names in Kurzeme and in certain features of the regional dialect. The case of the Selonians is similar:

they have left their mark on the local Latvian dialects. The Livs, for their part, when they merged with the Latvians, contributed to the development of an unusual Latvian dialect: the Liv or *tāmnieki* dialect, spoken in northern Kurzeme (Talsi and Ventspils Districts) and likewise in the western part of Vidzeme (Limbaži District and around Rūjiena). The descendants of the Livs, when they began speaking Latvian, retained certain characteristic features of Liv, such as the absence of gender distinctions and the omission of word endings. Likewise, the place-names in this area, most conspicuously those ending in *-āži* or *-īži*, are mostly of Liv origin. It is thought that the consistent stress in Latvian on the initial syllable of the word is a feature derived from Liv. Latvian also has several hundred words borrowed from Liv, especially in fields connected with fishing: *joma* – strait, *kaija* – seagull, *kīsis* – ruffe, *salaka* – smelt, *loms* – catch, *murds* – fish-trap, etc.).

The three major dialects of Latvian are subdivided into approximately 500 local dialects, which correspond approximately to the former limits of church parishes, secular parishes or large rural estates. The majority of these have practically gone out of use, but at least a hundred are still spoken. Most significantly, the Latvians of Latgale still make extensive use of their very distinctive local dialects. A second preserved group of local dialects belongs to the major Liv dialect, which, although heard less widely, is nevertheless still encountered in Talsi and Ventspils Districts, and less commonly in Limbaži District. Although at the present day literary Latvian is used in practically all walks of life across the whole country, many people's spoken Latvian does include elements of dialect. Thus, people from western Kurzeme may be distinguished by their broad pronunciation of the sound 'e', while people from the northern part of Kurzeme tend to omit word endings and in certain cases use short vowels in place of long ones. Today very rarely heard among speakers from Kurzeme is the soft or palatalised letter 'ŗ'. The *malēnieši*, as the people living in Alūksne and Gulbene districts are known, still often retain the characteristic broken intonation, while the speech of Latvians from the Jēkabpils and Madona areas may still be distinguished by the even intonation of the Selonians. Most distinctively, the Latvian spoken by people in Latgale still displays the unusual beauty of this region's dialects. If elderly Latvians from the opposite corners of the country were to meet, then they'd have a hard time properly understanding each other's speech, and unless they were fluent in standard Latvian, communication might be very difficult.

The earliest texts written in Latvian are preserved from the 16th century, but such texts may have been written even earlier. Right up to the early 20th century, Latvian was written in Gothic script, combinations of two or more letters being used for certain sounds. In 1908, a new orthography was adopted, based on the Latin alphabet, with diacritical marks to indicate characteristic sounds in Latvian – long vowels, soft consonants and sibilants. However, certain sounds are not distinguished in written Latvian. Thus, the two distinct sounds 'ō' and 'uo' are both written as 'o',

and the letter 'e' also indicates two different sounds. Foreigners sometimes have difficulty distinguishing short and long vowels, especially in cases where other syllables are stressed. Since in the territory of Latvia German was for many centuries the dominant language in education, science and administration, it too has strongly influenced the vocabulary of Latvian. The Latvian language developed intensively in the 19th century, when, in opposition to tendencies of Russification and Germanisation, it carved for itself an increasingly prominent role. In the second half of the 20th century, Latvian was influenced by Russian, while at the present day, English is beginning to exert its influence.

**The total number of Latvian speakers slightly exceeds 2 million, and for 1.4 million of them it is their native language,** while for the rest (non-Latvians) it is a second language. Following the restoration of independence, Latvian has been able to re-establish itself in all fields of life, including public administration, the armed forces and the police. 71.5% of the country's school pupils attend schools where Latvian is the language of instruction. Teaching at public higher education institutions is also in Latvian, and the majority of research papers are written in Latvian. Around 150 Latvian language newspapers are published, with a total circulation of 110 million, along with 200 magazines and journals. Also published in Latvian every year are about two thousand books with a total circulation of about 5 million. It should be added that the majority of books published in Latvian are original works, with translations mainly from English, less commonly from German or Russian.

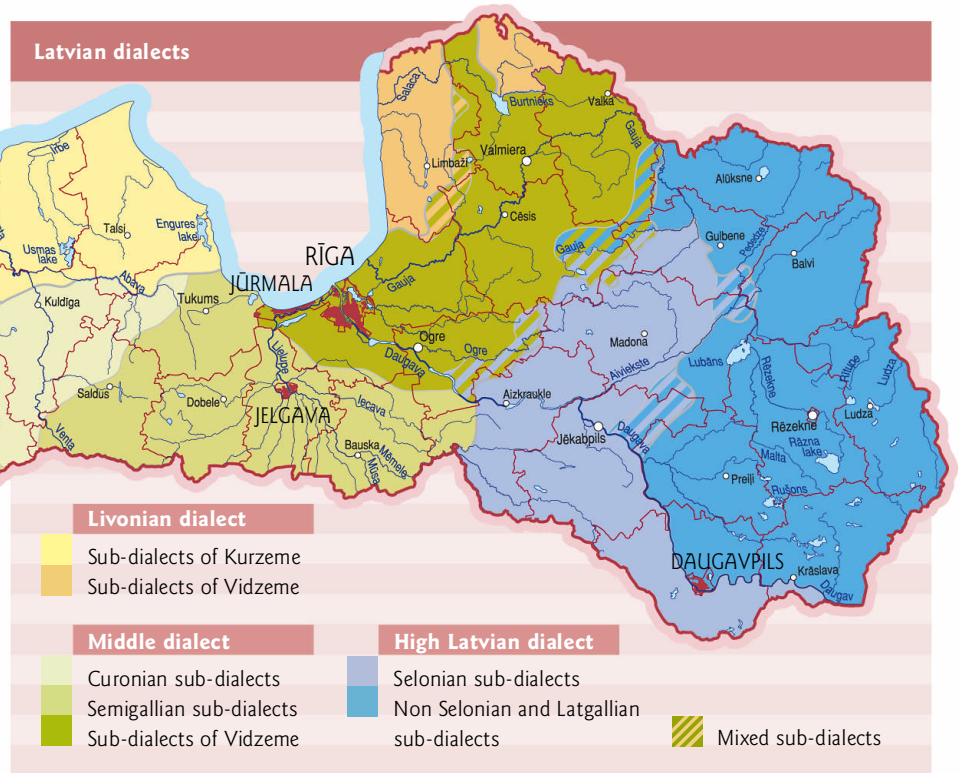
### The characteristics of the average Latvian

Ethnic Latvians number just over 1.5 million, around 90% of whom live in Latvia, the rest being dispersed in the USA, Russia, Australia, Canada, the UK and Germany, as well as Brazil, Lithuania, Sweden, Estonia and Ireland, with smaller communities in other countries.

#### Most Latvians belong to two North European

**physical types: Western Baltic and Eastern Baltic,** the first of which is distinguished by taller stature, the latter being distinguished by a more rounded face. Approximately two thirds of Latvians have light hair and grey, bluish or greenish eyes, the rest being of darker complexion, generally with brownish hair and eyes. (Few Latvians actually have black hair.) However, in terms of physical features, Latvians would be very hard to distinguish from Estonians, Lithuanians, Swedes, Belarusians or the Russians living in adjacent areas. On the other hand, Latvian behaviour and mentality, and the sound of the language, all permit them to be distinguished quite clearly from people belonging to other ethnic groups.

Today, classical ethnographic differences in terms of dress, tools, vernacular architecture, cuisine and folklore have all but disappeared. On the other hand, certain distinctive traits have been retained. Thus, Latvians tend to make and wear more knitted garments than other peoples, especially gloves, caps and jumpers. Latvians tend to adorn themselves with few ornaments, and silver may be more widely worn than gold. The distinctive braided 'Namejs' ring is worn as a Latvian ethnic marker. Women less commonly wear bright cosmetics, and in dress, too, Latvians favour restraint in colour and form. Dominant among colour tones are light, natural browns and greys, and Latvians rarely wear bright red, particularly in combination with light blue. On the other hand, paint companies have come to use the term



'Latvian yellow', referring to the tone of colour that Latvians most commonly choose for painting their homes. Interestingly, in contrast to the Estonians and Lithuanians, the Latvians tend not to paint the traditional wooden buildings of their farmsteads, so the Latvian rural landscape is dominated by the grey colour of old wooden buildings.

**Latvians are extremely fond of flowers, which are given very commonly and are still the best mark of attention, being given not only to women, but sometimes also to men.** Tastes in flowers may vary, but there are some unwritten rules here as well. Thus, even numbers of flowers are usually placed at the grave, so for other occasions odd numbers tend to be given – three, five, seven or nine flowers. Latvians have a distinctive cemetery cult: the cemetery is tended like a kind of memorial garden, and people visit their relatives' graves quite frequently – especially at All Souls' Day in the autumn, when hundreds of people light candles next to the graves.

Birthdays, it seems, are celebrated virtually the whole world over, **but Latvians have another, 'secondary' birthday – the namesday.** Each page of the calendar always gives one or more personal names on the same date, and in Latvia such personal names number about a thousand. On one's namesday, Latvians usually receive greetings and flowers, and guests may come without being specially invited. The all-time most popular Latvian name is Jānis, followed by the male names Andris, Juris, Edgars, Māris and Aivars, while the most popular women's names are Anna, Kristīne, Marija, Inese, Inga and Ilze. The fashion in personal names tends to change. New, modern names come into use, and old, long-forgotten names may reappear, while some centuries-old names have stood the test of time: Kārlis, Ilze, Pēteris, Anna, Juris, etc. The majority of Latvian names are local variants of European Christian names, while many others have been borrowed from neighbouring people, and about ten percent are unique to the Latvians: Irbe, Sniedze, Viesturs, Dzintars, Auseklis, etc.

Surname-giving was organised on a mass scale among the Latvians only at the beginning of the 19th century. Up to that time, very few people had surnames, being known instead by their first name and the name of their farm. It seems that about half of all Latvian surnames are of Latvian origin: Bērziņš, Kalniņš, Ozoliņš. Less common are German, Swedish, Polish, while nowadays Russian surnames are increasingly common. Most surnames of Latvian origin refer to a particular object: thus, Latvian prime ministers have included Mr Gailis (Rooster), Mr Krasts (Shore),

**The commonest Latvian personal names and surnames, 2005**

	Male names	Female names	Surnames
1	Jānis	Anna	Bērziņš
2	Andris	Kristīne	Kalniņš
3	Juris	Inese	Ozoliņš
4	Edgars	Inga	Jansons
5	Māris	Ilze	Ozols
6	Aivars	Līga	Liepiņš
7	Mārtiņš	Dace	Krūmiņš
8	Pēteris	Anita	Balodis
9	Ivars	Marija	Eglītis
10	Kaspars	Ieva	Zariņš
11	Valdis	Iveta	Pētersons
12	Uldis	Diāna	Vītols
13	Aigars	Sandra	Kļaviņš
14	Kārlis	Aija	Kārklīš
15	Aleksandrs	Rita	Vanags

Mr Šķēle (Slice), etc. In studying surnames, one can trace a family's roots to a particular parish. Thus, for example, very widespread in the Limbaži and Valmiera Districts are surnames ending in *-sons* (Pētersons, Jēkabsons, Jansons, etc.). Latgale has the greatest number of Latvians with Russian and Polish names, while German names occur most widely in Kurzeme. In some parts of Latgale, there are still isolated villages where most of the inhabitants have the same surname, since very few newcomers have arrived, the inhabitants mostly being descendants of the people living there 200 years ago. Thus, in the village of Pleševa (Šķilbēni Parish of Balvi District), almost all the inhabitants have the surname 'Bukšs', in the village of Ančipova the characteristic name is 'Šakins',

and in Porskova and Gusakova it is 'Circenis'.

**Latvians have a particular respect for great trees, especially for old oaks that enhance the landscape.** Trees of considerable girth, e.g. 4 metres for oak, are specially registered and protected. Evidently, this respect for great trees is rooted in pre-Christian belief, when the ancestors of the Latvians worshipped various nature deities and performed their rituals under such great trees. Although the Latvians started to become acquainted with Christian teachings already in the 12th century, nevertheless even a couple of centuries ago pagan rituals were still widely practiced.

Latvians have a particular respect for storks, and, more recently, also for swans. The nesting of a stork by one's home is considered a particular blessing for the house and the people living there. The old name for the stork – *svētelis*, indicating holiness – suggests that it may have been regarded as sacred. Certain breeds of domestic stock have been developed in Latvia and are characteristic of this country: the Latvian brown cattle and dark-headed sheep.

In terms of behaviour, we may regard vociferous argument and discussion, with animated gesturing as uncharacteristic of Latvians. Much more commonly, **Latvians tend to be somewhat reserved and perhaps even uncommunicative. Any kind of fanaticism or exaggerated show of emotion is rare among Latvians.** Instead, Latvians might be viewed as sceptical and rational, and dislike being rushed into any decision. If Latvian and Russian schoolchildren were to exchange places, the Latvians would most likely wonder at how much interest their Russian fellow pupils take in them, establishing a relationship right from the start, while the Russian children might feel 'unaccepted', because Latvians need more time to become acquainted and make friends. **Among Latvians, there are more individualists who tend to rely solely on their own abilities, and fewer people willing to take risks.** However, it should be said that in general it is becoming increasingly difficult to determine a person's ethnic affiliation from their appearance and everyday behaviour, since globalisation is affecting this sphere as well.

Traditional Latvian cuisine includes a variety of foods also found among the Germanic and Slavic peoples. Nowadays, breakfast most commonly consists of some sandwiches with cheese or sausage, and a drink of tea or coffee. Lunch often includes soup with vegetables and meat (usually clear, rather than thickened soup), as well as potatoes, or less commonly rice, buckwheat or pasta, and meat, with a glass of kefir or fruit juice. Latvians attach considerable importance to traditional rye bread, especially of the home-baked kind, also favouring so-called

'sweet-sour' bread. **In a relatively large number of Latvian families, pies, apple tarts and cheesecakes are still baked,** but today very few people still brew their own beer or make their own wine. Recent years have seen significant changes in the pattern of consumption of alcohol: the consumption of vodka and other strong alcohol has fallen rapidly, while beer and wine consumption is on the increase. Country people often tap birch sap in April, drinking it fresh or else fermenting it for the summer. Certain foods are associated with particular regions, such as sour broth, barley broth with potatoes, etc. Elder-generation Latvians spend a great deal of time in their fruit and vegetable plots, preparing stocks for the winter: jams and fruit juices, as well as marinated and pickled vegetables, particularly cucumbers and sauerkraut. **Wild mushroom and berry picking still attracts all generations of Latvians. From July to September, most Latvians make trips to the forest to pick mushrooms and berries,** even if they don't have the time to prepare them for the winter.

Latvians who take an interest in their cultural heritage **attach considerable importance to folksongs (*dainas*), usually sung by choirs, and to folk costumes. The song festivals combine both, regularly bringing together many tens of thousands of choristers and large audiences.** The traditional Latvian folk costumes that were widely worn up to the 19th century are preserved in museums, with hundreds of local variants. Comparing the unusual, brightly-coloured costumes of Kurzeme with the simple and archaic dress of Latgale, it is hard to believe that they all belong to the same people. Many Latvians like having their own folk costume, which, however, they tend to wear only very rarely, on special occasions, such as the song festivals, the Midsummer celebrations or *Jāņi*, or when performing in choirs or dance ensembles. Latvian folk costumes went out of ordinary use already in the 19th century, and only in certain remote areas of Kurzeme did folk dress sometimes continue to be worn in the first half of the 20th century. After the Second World War, folk costume fell out of daily use almost completely.

The folksong has retained its everyday role to a greater degree. Although the number and variety of songs is not as rich as that recorded by folk song collectors in the 19th century, even in the present day, many Latvians belong to choirs. Unfortunately, singing at various family occasions and informal gatherings is becoming rarer and rarer. Also popular are songs of more recent origin: ballads that date back about a century, and very recent works by popular composers such as Imants Kalniņš and Raimonds Pauls. **Latvians are very fond of theatre, so that theatre attendance figures fall only slightly behind the figures for cinema attendance.**

**Latvians are very tolerant of various religious denominations: in some cases, congregations from two or even three denominations make use of a single church, and Latvians have difficulty understanding the character of religious conflict elsewhere in Europe.** The majority of Latvians have traditionally been Lutheran. Thus, before the Second World War, more than 70% of Latvians regarded themselves as Lutheran, while 22% were Roman Catholics, concentrated mainly in Latgale. A small proportion of Latvians were Russian Orthodox believers (4%), Baptists (1%) or belonged to other, minor denominations. At the present day, the majority of Latvians are no longer affiliated with any particular denomination, and even among those who regard themselves as religious, most do not actually attend church regularly. Among those who belong to a congregation, the numbers of Lutherans and Catholics are approximately equal, with a smaller number of people belonging to other denominations, including the new 'non-traditional religions'. Recently, birth and death registers show three major groups in Latvia's population: Lutheran, Catholic and Orthodox (Russian), each constituting 20–25% of the total population. Another 6–7% indicate affiliation to other religions, while a quarter do not give any religion. **Also worthy of mention is the religion *dievturība*, developed in the early 20th century, based on the traditional *dainas* and on the idea of re-establishing the pre-Christian ethnic religion of the ancient Latvians.**

**Polls have shown that Latvians most commonly celebrate four festivals: Christmas, Easter, Jāņi (Midsummer) and New Year's Eve.** *Jāņi*, marked on the eve of 24 June, deserves particular mention. The majority of Latvians travel out to the country for this festival: a bonfire is lit at dusk on a hilltop, ideally where there are oak trees around. People flying over Latvia on *Jāņi* Eve probably enjoy a very impressive spectacle, since the whole country is dotted with hundreds and thousands of bonfires. In advance of the festival, special *Jāņi* foods – cheese with caraway seed and bacon pies – are prepared, and beer is provided. Girls make themselves garlands of wild flowers, while the lads have wreaths of oak leaves. Although the singing of traditional *Jāņi* songs is increasingly being replaced by recorded music and stage performances, it seems that practically every Latvian knows at least a few *Jāņi* songs with the characteristic *līgo* refrain. Those *Jāņi* merry-makers with sufficient endurance stay up for the dawn of *Jāņi* Day, having spent most of the night singing and dancing, while amorous couples go in search of the mystical 'fern blossom'.

## Ethnic minorities in Latvia

### The Russians

Up to the end of the 17th century, there were in Latvia only small numbers of Russian merchants, raftsmen, craftsmen or workers, who had settled in Rīga and elsewhere along the trade routes. **The first centres of Russian habitation developed in Latvia 300 years ago, when hundreds of Old Believers from neighbouring areas of Russia** (Pskov, Tver, Novgorod and Smolensk) **settled here, seeking refuge from persecution in Tsarist Russia.** Russian migrants fled the oppression of the estate owners, and arrived in Latgale, establishing villages in unpopulated areas, separate from the Latvians. When Latgale was joined to Russia in 1772, the immigration of Russians belonging to the Orthodox faith also increased, particularly after the abolition of serfdom. The Russian immigrants settled in rural areas, and especially in Rīga, which grew in the late 19th century into one of Tsarist Russia's largest industrial centres. **However, most of Latvia's Russian population consists of immigrants who arrived recently as a result of the Soviet occupation, and unfortunately, many of them take a different view** regarding the country's future and do not wish to recognise Latvian as the country's sole official language.

Russian is the most widespread minority language in Latvia, and is also the most widely used foreign language. Four out of five people in Latvia speak Russian – which is almost as high as the proportion of Latvian-speakers. For about 28% of the country's schoolchildren, at more than 270 state supported schools, Russian is the language of instruction, and such schools are found in practically all districts and cities of Latvia. In Latvia, around 50 local papers are published in Russian, with a total annual circulation of up to 70 million. Almost 200 books are published every year in Russian, with a total circulation of around 300 thousand. Several TV channels and radio stations also broadcast in Russian. There are virtually no assimilated (Latvianised) Russians in Latvia: all the Russians, including the younger generation, are fluent in spoken and written Russian, with the exception of some children in mixed families living in rural Kurzeme or Vidzeme.

Before the war, two religious denominations were dominant among the Russians: Russian Orthodox believers constituted slightly more than half (54%), practically all the rest being Old Believers (44%). Today, when the Russian population has increased several times through migration, the great majority of religious people (80%) indicate that they are Russian Orthodox believers, and only about a tenth of the Russians in Latvia affirm that they are Old Believers. Apart from this, there are also some Roman Catholic congregations in Latvia (in the southern part of Ludza District) where the majority of churchgoers count themselves as Russians. This unusual situation has come about through the Russification of local Catholic Latvians and Belarusians, whereby they have lost their native tongue and

ethnic identity, but have preserved their religious affiliation.

Visitors from Russia quickly notice, however, that Russians in Latvia have borrowed many Latvian characteristics, thus differing from Russians living in Russia itself. **Likewise, many Russians in Latvia consider that they probably wouldn't feel at home in Russia on account of mental and behavioural differences.** Russians from Latvia travelling to Russia are very often regarded as foreigners, even if they don't speak Latvian. Calmer behaviour, downplaying of emotions and sometimes even formal politeness in situations where a different kind of behaviour is expected in Russia, all reveal that they have been strongly influenced by the Latvians. Mention should also be made of the culture of tending graves, so important for Latvians, which has also been adopted by Russians after the Latvian example. The Russian language as used by Russians in Latvia sometimes includes a word or two of Latvian, or some characteristic Latvian phrase, but in general the language has become somewhat conservative here and with time may come to sound slightly antiquated and overly formal to Russians from Russia itself.

### The Jews and Roma

The Jews and Roma, or Gypsies, are long-established minorities in Latvia, living here since the 16th century. Both ethnic groups suffered atrociously during the Second World War.

At least four centuries ago, the first Jews obtained the status of local citizens. Three hundred years ago the first Jewish synagogue was built, and two hundred years ago the Jews succeeded in obtaining the status of permanent residents. Jewish craftworkers and traders from Ukraine and Belarus began to arrive in considerable numbers in Latgale already in the 17th century, and came to Kurzeme and Vidzeme from Germany in the 18th century. The largest numbers of Jews migrated to Latvia in the late 19th century from western parts of the Russian Empire, so that by the turn of the 20th century they numbered 142 thousand, or more than 7% of Latvia's total population. Before the Second World War, Latvia's Jewish population fluctuated around 93–96 thousand – about 5% of the country's total population. The first year of Soviet occupation, when a great deal of property was nationalised, particularly affected the Jews, and many were exiled to Siberia in the deportation of 14 June 1941. When the German army invaded Latvia, only about 15 thousand Jews succeeded in escaping to the Soviet Union, and the Nazis ruthlessly wiped out virtually all those who had remained. Only 14 thousand Jews returned to Latvia after the war. During the Soviet era, large numbers of Jews migrated to Latvia from Ukraine, Russia and Belarus, since anti-Semitism was less pronounced in Latvia, so that by 1970 the Jewish population had reached 37 thousand. A proportion of the Jews succeeded in obtaining the right to emigrate, and about half of Latvia's Jewish population left during the 1970s and 80s, mainly bound for Israel. Since the restoration of Latvia's independence, when all restrictions on emigration were lifted, Jewish emigration has continued. Nowadays the Jewish population numbers around 10 thousand, and the great majority live in Rīga and are members of various Jewish organisations.

Formerly, most of Latvia's Jews spoke Yiddish, especially in Latgale, while in Kurzeme German was more commonly spoken in Jewish families. Nowadays, the number of Yiddish-speakers is less than a thousand, and most are elderly people. Instead, with few exceptions, Russian is spoken in Jewish families. There are two Jewish schools in Rīga – one state school and one private school – and these are oriented towards teaching in Hebrew, this being the official language of the Jewish state. Rīga also has a Jewish synagogue and various Jewish societies. Latvia's Jews are the best educated ethnic group: almost half are graduates of higher education institutions, and Jews are also surprisingly numerous among Latvia's millionaires.

The first Roma people arrived in Latvia 500 years ago from Germany and Poland, and right up to the first half of the 20th century they largely retained their traditional way of life and pattern of seasonal movement, practicing various crafts and trading in horses. By the eve of the Second World War, the Roma popula-

tion had reached four thousand. In German-occupied Latvia, their itinerant way of life was condemned and they were presented as dangerous criminals. The Roma were subjected to terror: with the collaboration of local policemen, about two thousand Roma were slaughtered in various districts of Latvia: in Liepāja, Rēzekne and Ludza. Elsewhere, by contrast – in Sabile, Kandava, Talsi and other places – the local authorities assumed responsibility for the Roma, thus saving them from certain death. In the post-war years, with a high birth rate, the Roma population grew rapidly, and is now approaching nine thousand. The true population may actually be higher, since many Roma dislike revealing their ethnic background.

The Roma in Latvia speak four different dialects of Romany, the most widely spoken and most distinctive being the Kurzeme dialect, which has borrowed many words from Latvian. A small number of books have also been published in this dialect, and certain subjects are taught in this language in a few schools with ethnic Roma classes. Many Roma speak Latvian and Russian just as fluently as Romany, but knowledge of the written languages is a problem for many of them. Only the Roma of Latgale less commonly speak Latvian, while the Roma of Kurzeme often have difficulty expressing themselves in Russian. The majority of Roma still adhere to their distinctive traditions, where clan affiliation is of great importance and where authority is wielded by the head of the family. In studying the Roma of Latvia, ethnologists have discovered many interesting characteristics borrowed from the Latvians, such as the continued use of local Latvian dialects and other such features. In Latvia there are many unusual surnames that seem to be exclusive to the Roma: Čičis, Didžus, Paučs, Gindra and Pelcis, as well as the German and Polish surnames Kleins, Šimanis, Putraševics, Marcinkevičs, Čubrevičs, Tumaševics, etc. The majority of Roma lead a significantly different way of life from the Latvians: they are much more outgoing and are partial to bright colours and jewellery. Although linguistically and politically they represent the best-integrated minority in Latvia, in socio-economic terms the Roma experience the greatest problems. Very few Roma are well educated, and Roma graduates from higher education institutions are exceptionally rare: their proportion is 20 times smaller than in the general population (!). Many elder-generation Roma are illiterate. Thus, only about a tenth of the Roma find permanent employment, and most belong to the very poorest stratum of the population, with little possibility of improving their situation. Positive in this regard is the fact that in none of Latvia's towns or cities do the Roma live in ghetto-like districts: instead they tend to form a small minority living among the Latvians or Russians.

### **The Lithuanians and Estonians**

The Lithuanians and Estonians are the age-old neighbours of the Latvians, and share a somewhat similar history. Paradoxically, the Lithuanians and Latvians speak closely related languages, while the Estonians are closer to the Latvians in genetic terms. Over the centuries, the ethnic boundaries of the three Baltic peoples have corresponded approximately to administrative borders, or else have adapted to these, so that following minor changes to the border line in 1919–1920, the Latvian-Estonian and Latvian-Lithuanian state borders came to follow quite closely the ethnic boundaries. Lithuanian migration to the towns and parishes of Latvia began long ago, the process becoming most intensive around the turn of the 20th century, when Latvia had a Lithuanian population of around 30–40 thousand. In the course of the 20th century, too, many thousands of Lithuanians came to live in Latvia as farm labourers, while in the Soviet era they migrated for economic and political reasons – many of the former deportees were not allowed to return to Lithuania, so they settled in Latvia.

Of all the minority groups, the Lithuanians and Estonians are most completely integrated into Latvian society: there are practically no social, economic or political differences. In the census of 2005, 33.4 thousand residents of Latvia identified

themselves as Lithuanians, almost half of whom spoke Latvian as their native language. About two fifths of the Lithuanians, mostly from the older generation, indicated Lithuanian as their native language. There has been a Lithuanian grammar school in Riga for more than a decade, and the graduates are equally fluent in Latvian, Lithuanian and foreign languages. Latvia's Estonian population grew in the late 19th century, reaching ten thousand, but at the present day there are less than three thousand people who consider themselves Estonians. The largest Estonian communities are in Riga and along the border with Estonia – mainly in the Alūksne area, in Valka and elsewhere. An Estonian secondary school in Riga has become established and has developed in spite of the small number of Estonian pupils, since it attracts many Latvian pupils with an interest in the language and culture of their neighbours.

### **The Germans and Poles**

Almost a thousand years ago, German merchants and raiders began making regular trips to the area of present-day Latvia, and in the 13th century the country was conquered by German crusaders. The Germans represented the ruling stratum, in large measure retaining control of property and power right up to the early 20th century. The Germans constituted about 5–7% of the total population, but the German language was dominant in practically all spheres of life (except in Latgale) right up to the late 19th century, when, in the frame of the Tsarist Russification policy, it was gradually replaced by Russian. Before the Second World War, Latvia had a German population of 62–70 thousand (with a tendency to decrease). Although the Germans constituted only 4–5% of the country's total population, they played a role disproportionate to their number, especially in industry, commerce and education. However, around the turn of 1940, more than 51 thousand Germans left Latvia, and were re-settled, mainly in the areas taken away from Poland. After Latvia's forcible incorporation into the Soviet Union, the remaining 10 thousand Germans also left, so that only between one and two thousand were left, mainly members of mixed families, and nowadays only a few hundred still live in Latvia. In the years of Soviet rule, several thousand Germans arrived from eastern parts of the Soviet Union. They had suffered very badly from Stalin's Russification policy and had in many cases completely lost their national identity. Today, Latvia has a German community of around three thousand, dispersed in small numbers throughout the country, only 15% of whom still speak their native language.

The role of the German language fell dramatically during the 20th century. Thus, in the past, a knowledge of German was essential for any educated Rigan, but today German language knowledge is restricted mainly to the older generation. Only a fifth of school pupils learn German, usually from sixth grade or else only in secondary school.

The roots of the Polish minority in Latvia stretch right back to the late 16th century, when the lands populated by the Latvians came under the control of the King of Poland. The Poles played a particularly significant role in Latgale, where the majority of estate owners and priests were Polish. It is thought that the majority of Poles in Latgale are actually Polonised local Latvians and Belarusians, since there has never been any mass immigration of Poles. The majority of Latgale Poles were owners of small estates, dispersed as a relatively small minority in the Daugavpils and Krāslava areas. In the 1930s, a couple of tens of thousands of Polish guest workers arrived in Latvia, some of whom stayed to live in rural areas of Zemgale, as well as Kurzeme and Vidzeme. During the past century, Latvia's Polish population fluctuated around 60 thousand, representing 2–3% of the population, and this is still the case today. Today, the largest Polish communities are in Daugavpils (17 thousand) and Riga (16 thousand), as well as in Daugavpils District (five thousand), where in certain parishes – Svente, Demene and Medumi – Poles constitute more than a quarter of the population.

The Polish language was once very widely used in eastern Latvia, but its role is now much reduced. Only a fifth of Latvia's

Poles have retained the knowledge of their native language, and most of these are pensioners. Five towns and cities in Latvia have state schools with teaching in Polish, attended by under a thousand pupils. In many Catholic churches, services are held in Polish. The Polish Society of Latvia has recommenced its activities and publishes a monthly magazine.

### The Belarusians and Ukrainians

The Belarusians and Ukrainians, closely related ethnic groups, constitute Latvia's second and third largest ethnic minorities, respectively. The majority of people in Latvia who belong to these Eastern Slavic peoples have lost the knowledge of their native tongue and have become Russified to a greater or lesser degree. The majority of Ukrainians and Belarusians do not speak Latvian and have not obtained Latvian citizenship.

Belarusians have lived in south-eastern Latvia for several centuries at least. In this region, Belarusians still form a considerable proportion of the population. In Latgale, it has long been difficult to make any precise distinction between Belarusians and Russians, since in the 19th century it was customary to regard as Belarusians all those Russians living in the Province of Vitebsk, even the Old Believers. Accordingly, the statistical data from the early 20th century appears to show the Belarusian population falling by half. Before the Second World War, the Belarusian population fluctuated in the range of 27–37 thousand, with a tendency to fall. A large section of Latvia's Belarusians are descended from ethnic Latvians of a few centuries ago: they were gradually assimilated, as is indicated by the many ancient Latvian place-names (Kokini, Bārtuļi, Nauļāni, Krūmāni, Vonogi, etc.), by the surnames of local Belarusians (Spalvis, Plociņš, Joniņš, Trušelis, Skangals, etc.) and by historical evidence, including the census data from 1897. Because these Belarusianised Latvians later became Russified, losing their native language, a combination unknown elsewhere has developed in this part of Latvia (particularly around Zilupe): a majority population of Russian-speaking Roman Catholics.

In the Soviet years, Latvia's Belarusian population grew several times over, due to massive immigration from Belarus, reaching 120 thousand by 1989. Today, there are about 80–90 thousand Belarusians, but for many of them ethnic affiliation is more a matter of ethnic roots than of identity. Only a fifth of Belarusians have retained knowledge of their native tongue, and only very rarely is this the language spoken in the family, since most Belarusians live in mixed families where Russian tends to dominate. Even in those border parishes with a majority Belarusian population, the language is unlikely to be heard, and it may even be hard to find anyone who actually uses Belarusian on an everyday basis. At the present day, there is only one small Belarusian language school in Rīga, and there are several Belarusian cultural societies. About two fifths of Latvia's Belarusians have been born in Latvia, and almost a third are Latvian citizens.

Latvia's present Ukrainian population numbers 60 thousand, but most were born in Ukraine and arrived in Latvia in recent decades as a result of the general Soviet migration policy. In the Second World War, the German army settled in Latvia many thousands of Soviet prisoners of war, among them many Ukrainians. Before the war, Latvia's Ukrainian population numbered only between one and two thousand. Today, half of Latvia's Ukrainians live in Rīga, the rest being dispersed across the country, mainly in the cities, being best represented in Liepāja and Ventspils (5–6%). In Latvia, about 25 thousand people speak

Ukrainian, mainly those Ukrainians who arrived in Latvia several decades ago. In Rīga there is a Ukrainian secondary school with almost 300 pupils: the graduates are equally fluent in Ukrainian, Latvian and Russian. The majority of Ukrainians live in mixed Ukrainian-Russian families, and even in ethnically homogeneous Ukrainian families Russian tends to be spoken at home. Only one in five Ukrainians is a Latvian citizen.

### The Livs (Livonians)

**The Livs or Livonians are thought to be descended from the ancient Finno-Ugric inhabitants, and are Latvia's only indigenous minority: their ancestors have lived in Latvia at least as long as the Balts.** Liv culture flourished in the 10th–13th century: at this time, beautiful costumes were worn, which had much in common with Scandinavian dress. Before the Second World War, the Livs numbered around a thousand, living in 12 fishing villages along the coast of northern Kurzeme. The many plagues and wars over the centuries have drastically reduced the Liv population, and today only about 170 people count themselves as Livs, while the language is actually understood by only very few of them. Only a few individuals, now aged over 80, can boast of having retained their knowledge of Liv. A small number of enthusiasts have mastered Liv as a second language, among them researchers in Estonia, Finland and elsewhere. Everyday use of Liv in the family ended already in the early part of the 20th century, but even a few decades ago there were still Livs who tried to re-establish the language. However, because of the Liv population is so small and dispersed, and because the language is so different from Latvian and from Indo-European languages in general, this effort has not succeeded. The Liv language belongs to the Finnic language group of the Finno-Ugric language family, and retains many archaic features significant for Finno-Ugric linguistics. Although Liv is related to the other Finnic languages, neither the Estonians, nor the Finns can understand more than a few words of Liv. Several books have been published in Liv; the Livs are described in internet resources and their language may be heard on compact discs recorded by some folklore ensembles. It should be noted that a considerable proportion of Latvians are actually descended from Livs. Nowadays, Liv is the rarest language in the European Union, and it is a matter of honour and a duty for Latvia to maintain and promote the language. A special unit has been established by the government to preserve, study and promote the Liv cultural heritage.

### Other ethnic groups

Apart from the minorities described above, Latvia is home to people from more than a hundred other ethnic groups, the majority of whom have arrived in recent decades from various parts of the Soviet Union. Among the most numerous groups are the Tatars (numbering 3000), Armenians (2600), Moldavians and Romanians (2500), Azeris (1700), Georgians (1000) and smaller numbers of Chuvases, Mordvins, Russian Finns, Bulgarians from Ukraine, Ossetians, Udmurts, Karelians, Uzbeks and dozens of other ethnic groups. The majority live in mixed marriages, and for the most part they have become Russified already in the Soviet era, losing the knowledge of their native language. During the last decade, immigrants from many other countries have also begun to settle in Latvia, so that some small Asian communities – Sri Lankan, Lebanese, Chinese, etc. – have begun to form. In the coming decades, immigration is set to continue on a relatively small scale, but later, when a labour shortage is felt in the Latvian labour market, on account of the low birth rate, the pace of immigration may increase several times over.

## FACT SHEET

This fact sheet can be freely copied, distributed and cited, on condition that the Latvian Institute is acknowledged as source.

ON LATVIA



The Latvian Institute promotes knowledge about Latvia abroad. It produces publications in several languages on many aspects of Latvia.

For further information please contact the Latvian Embassy or Consulate in your country or the Latvian Institute: Latvijas institūts, Smilšu iela 1/3, Rīga, LV 1050, Latvia. Phone: (+371) 750-3663, Fax: (+371) 750-3669 E-mail: info@li.lv http://www.li.lv