

# Demographic Trends in Albania for Social-economic Development After 1990

Dr. Lindita Kiri<sup>1</sup>, Dr. Ledia Sula<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Faculty of Education and Philology, Department of History and Geography, Fan. S. Noli University, Albania

<sup>2</sup>Faculty of Economics, Department of Agribusiness Management, University College LOGOS, Albania

## Abstract

The paper evaluates the latest demographic trends in Albania for the socio-economic development of the space for the period 1990 - 2031. These indicators are calculated in terms of the existence of migration (Albania is a typical case), where the net migration rate is taken into account. The design methodology is presented on fertility, mortality and migration, which are combined in three scenarios of population change at the national level. The medium growth scenario is then regionalized and differentiated into three internal migration scenarios for projecting the population of Albania's counties. Forecasts at the national level are described and analyzed through the future demographic changes in Albania. In addition to the decline in birth and death rates, the population structure of Albania after the 1990s has been strongly influenced by the component processes of continuous emigration. The paper estimates that the population aging indicators would be up to 4% - 5% lower, if the emigration process was limited and controlled. From the analysis of statistical indicators, it is noted that, throughout the period from 2001 to the projection of 2031, the average annual growth of the population is estimated to be negative (-0.7%), while the annual growth of the population over the age of 65 is estimated to be positive (+0.5%). In order to slow down the phenomenon of the aging population of Albania and to mitigate the negative consequences of this aging, the drafting and elaboration of rigorous and continuous immigration and family policies is recommended.

**Keywords:** Emigration, Albania, Population, Aging, Social and Economic

## Introduction

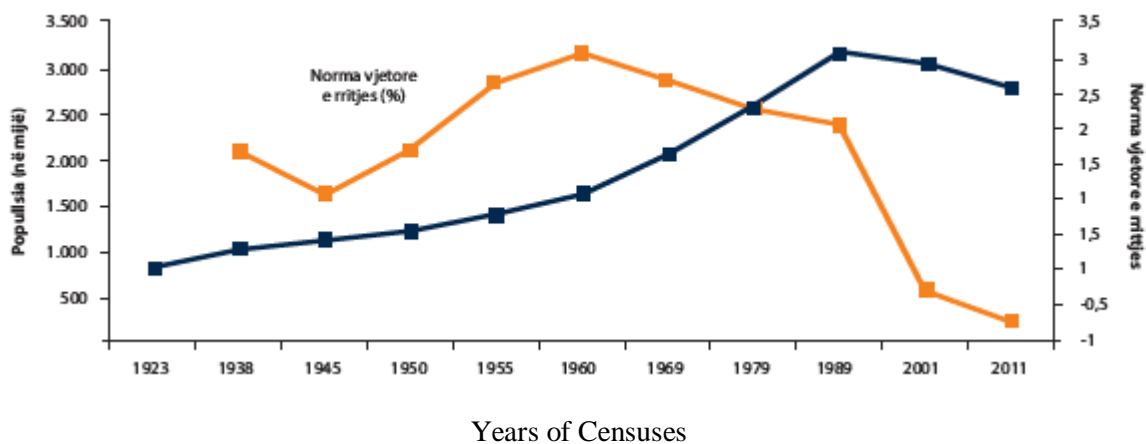
Population projection provides information about the future number, demographic structure and territorial distribution of the population. It serves as a basis for planning and social economic development of the space. This paper presents the results of the third population projection cycle of INSTAT. The first cycle was based on the 1989 Census and was carried out at the national level for a period of 21 years. It was then updated based on the 2001 Census for the country. In this period, the population of Albania was affected by migratory movements and by the reduction in the number of births. International migration continued and was spread throughout the country, leading to a steady decline in Albania's population. This was accompanied by internal movements, which increased the concentration of residents in urban areas, especially in Tirana and Durres. All counties were involved in a low birth rate trend, which no longer guarantees the demographic reproduction of the population in the future. The effects of low fertility and large-scale departures, mainly of young people, accelerated the pace of population aging. This third cycle of population projection aims to provide information about the most likely trends of demographic developments in Albania in the future and the population at the national level by age and gender until 2031, based on the last Population Census in 2011. In addition to the uncertainty in the future demographic evolution, the social economic context also remains unclear. The main destination countries of immigrants are currently facing a political, structural and financial crisis. The extension of this crisis will affect the future progress of Albanian migration with consequences not only on the population, but also on the economic

development in the country. At the beginning, an analysis was made of the population trends in the past, at the national level, based on the INSTAT data of Albania since 1989. The forecast period is limited to 2031. Compared to the previous INSTAT projections, this third cycle uses a different methodology for a better emigration forecast and reviews the demographic trends in Albania. Forecasts at the national level are analyzed by identifying the main components of the future demographic changes in Albania.

*Statistical indicators of the progress of the population of Albania and their assessment*

Albania experienced a late start but a rapid pace of demographic transition (ie, a steady decline in mortality and birth rates). If mortality began to decline from the 1930s, birth rates remained high until the 1960s. As a result, the country exhibited one of the highest growth rates in post-war Europe (over 2% per year) (Figure 1). Despite the new age structure, the population was reduced to 3,069 thousand in 2001 and 2,907 in 2011, which corresponds to an annual decline of 0.3 and 0.8%, respectively. Emigration and declining birth rates were the main determinants of this population reduction.

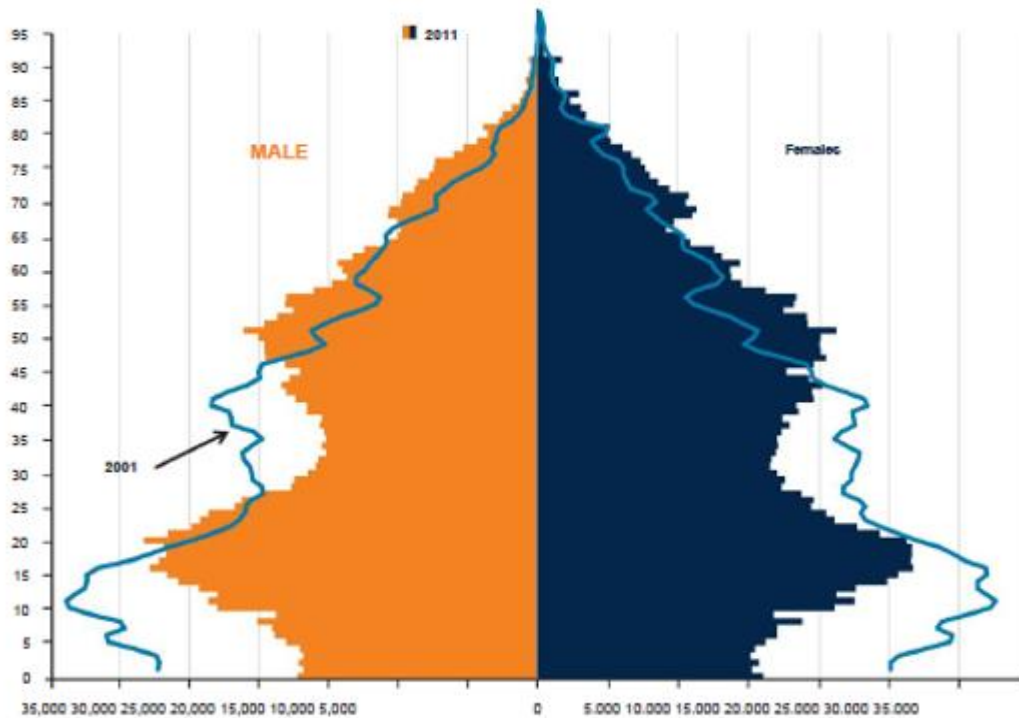
Figures. Population and its growth rate (in %) in Albania for the period 1923-2011



Sources: Population Censuses of Albania.

As in most countries of the Western Balkans, changes in birth rates and migration have affected the structure of the population by age and gender in Albania. (Figure 2). The irregular shape of the population pyramid proves how the demographic behavior in the past affected the size of successive generations of those born that survive within Albania. The breaks in the shape of the pyramid in the middle testify to the high emigration of young people, especially men. . Compared to 2001, when women outnumbered men due to a dominance of men in emigration, the numbers are more balanced in 2011 due to an increasing participation of women in the phenomenon of migration, especially among the young people. Indeed, there is an over-representation of males in the population aged 20-29 (the gender ratio is 111 males for every 100 females). The childbearing generations (20-44 years) were not only fattened by large-scale migration, but also had a low birth rate. As the number of births decreased, the base of the pyramid narrowed. An overrepresentation of boys compared to girls is also evident. This may be related to the rapid increase in the gender ratio at birth (110 male births against 100 female births in 2010), which went parallel to the decrease in fertility from 1989, in a social context characterized by gender inequality and a culture that emphasizes the importance of having at least one son (UNFPA 2012).

Figures. Population pyramids of Albania according to the 2001 and 2011 Census



Sources: Population Census of Albania 2001 and 2011.

This may be related to the rapid increase in the gender ratio at birth (110 male births against 100 female births in 2010), which went parallel to the decrease in fertility from 1989, in a social context characterized by gender inequality and a culture that emphasizes the importance of having at least one son (UNFPA 2012). Youth emigration, declining fertility, and lower mortality since 1989 have reduced the weight of younger generations and increased that of older generations in the overall population, leading to demographic aging (Table below). The percentage of people under 15 decreased from 33% to 21% between 1989 and 2011, while that of people 65 and over increased from 5% in 1989 to 11% in 2011. So in 2011, a child was supported by three individuals of working age (ie aged 15 to 64), compared to two in 1989. On the other hand, there is one elderly person for every six individuals of working age, up from more than eight to in 2001. Albania is experiencing a replacement of the demographic dependence of the young by that of the elderly.

Table. Age structure of the population of Albania, Censuses 1979-2011, in (%)

Age group	Years of Censuses			
	1979	1989	2001	2011
0-14	37.0	33.1	29.3	20.7
15-64	57.8	61.6	63.2	68.0
65 years and older	5.3	5.3	7.5	11.3

Sources: Population Censuses of Albania.

However, Albania's population remains among the youngest in Europe, with a median age<sup>1</sup> of 32.6 years in 2011 compared to that of the 27 European Union countries with an average of over 41 years (Eurostat). Meanwhile, the transformation of the aging population has great economic implications. The cost to society of supporting the elderly is higher than the average cost of supporting a child (ONS UK, 2008). Hence the trends demographics should be closely monitored.

#### Birth rate

The average number of children per woman remained among the highest in Europe until 2001. However, vital statistics suggest a slight fertility recovery since 2008. Before 2001, fertility fell in all age groups, but the decline was more pronounced at ages 35 and older (Falkingham and Gjonça 2001; INSTAT et al. 2010). The decline in fertility in Albania is related to the spread of education, economic constraints as well as social and cultural changes. The fertility rate in the past was lower with at least one child in urban areas compared to rural areas (Dumani 1995). According to the 2011 Census, women aged 45 to 49 who had at most an elementary school diploma had given birth to an average of 3.3 children, compared to 1.7 for those of the same age with a university education. The recent transformations of fertility in Albania reflect the increase in the level of education as seen in Western Europe. Although Albania seems to follow the European trend in the decline and postponement of fertility, the average age at marriage remains low and the fertility level high, compared to other countries in the region (ISF varies from 1.3 in Romania to 2 in Kosovo in 2009; Eurostat; KDHS 2009). This can be explained by the later start of the fertility transition in Albania.

#### Mortality

Due to major improvements in the health system and public health since 1950, mortality in Albania has followed a steady decline for all ages. The total number of deaths increased slightly from 18,193 in 1989 to 20,012 in 2011 because generations many births in number reached old age, the age where mortality increases rapidly<sup>2</sup>. Until 2011 the number of infant deaths fell from 47 to 9 for every 1,000 male births and from 43 to 8 for every 1,000 female births. Life expectancy at birth continued to increase during the 1990s by more than four and less than five years for men and women. Life expectancy increased from 72.9 to 74.5 years for men between 2001 and 2011, compared to 78.6 and 79.3 years for women. Consequently, male mortality began to converge towards the lower female level. The structure of causes of death in Albania is similar to that in Bulgaria, Romania and Macedonia. This is different from Western and Southern European countries where tumors are almost as important as circulatory diseases. The risk of mortality in these countries has decreased due to developments in the diagnosis, therapy and prevention of these diseases (WHO 2010).

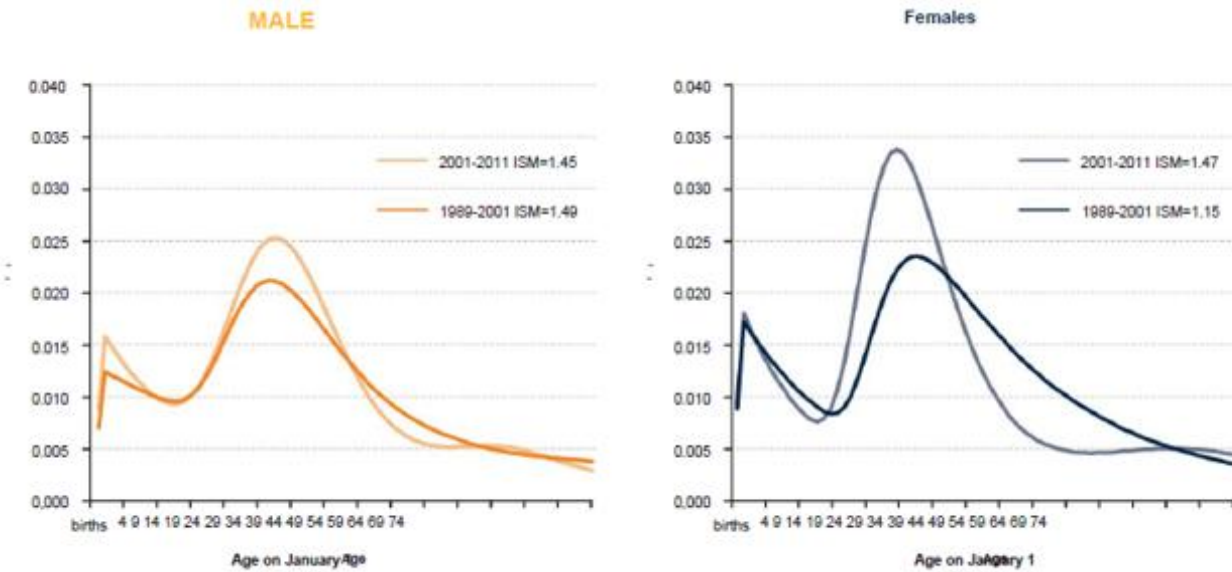
#### International migration

Estimates of the number of Albanians living abroad testify to the large scale of emigration. The net stock of migrants increased to 220,000 in 1992 and more than 600,000 in 2001 (INSTAT 1999, 2004). A net difference in migration of 450,000 was estimated for the last decade (see "Migration in Albania" Report). Thus, an annual average of at least 50,000 individuals left Albania during the decades of the 1990s and 2000s (representing 1.4 % of the total population each year). As in the case of Moldova, Albanian emigration was among the highest in Europe. Male departures did not change, but female departures increased to such a degree that they dominated net migration (see "Migration in Albania" Report). During the 1990s, migration was dominated by young people, although individuals aged from 40-year-olds to 60-year-olds were also part of the departures. During the 2000s, emigration became more selective, because it included more young people in the age group of 20 to 30 years and especially women. So, factors were economic and social opportunities. According to ADHS in the years 2008/9, 61% of female immigrants moved for family reasons and 26% for work reasons, unlike male emigration where employment motives dominated; (INSTAT et al. 2010). Women also left Albania at younger ages than men at age 22 versus men at age 26-27.

<sup>1</sup>The median age is the age at which half of the population is the youngest and the other half the oldest.

<sup>2</sup>Sources: Gjonça (2001), Vital Statistics, RHS, DHS, Censuses 2001 and 2011

Figures. Annual average emigration rates by gender and age for Albania 1989-2001 and 2001-2011 (%)<sup>3</sup>



Sources: Population censuses of Albania 1989, 2001, 2011.

Information on immigrants mainly concerns return migration, which until recently was low. According to the 2011 Census, the number of Albanians who had ever lived abroad and returned increased from 5,000 in 2001 to 36,000 in 2011, which remains a low figure compared to the number of emigrants. The explanatory factors for this increase are unclear. However, we can mention the consequences of the Italian and Greek crises. However only about 15%

of Albanians living in Greece in 2012 planned to return since the beginning of the crisis (Gëdeshi and De Zwager 2012). In addition, the increasing number of people crossing the border from Greece (the influx in the period 2008-2012 represented a fifth of the Albanian population in that country; ACIT and USAID 2012), may have expanded the pool of new candidates for emigration. Most of the returnees consisted of men in the age group of 20 to 39 years

#### *Albania's population trends*

The population of Albania in 2031<sup>4</sup>, according to the design, is calculated to be 2,745,996 inhabitants. This number is about 36 thousand inhabitants less compared to the number of the population in the population projection 2011 - 2031. The change in this number is a direct consequence of the lower birth rates and the gender distribution of immigrants which does not coincide with the hypothesis of the projection in population 2011 - 2031.<sup>5</sup>

The slow growth of the ISF, accompanied by the entry into the reproductive age of generations of women fewer in number than the current ones, will cause the number of births not to undergo significant changes during the period 2019 - 2031. At the same time, the number of deaths will continue to rise as a result of a larger aging population. These two changes will also bring the natural addition down to about 3.2 thousand in 2031. During the period 2011 - 2018, the emigration rates of men turned out to be higher than what was assumed in the previous projections. While the opposite was true for women, the emigration rates were several times lower than previously

<sup>3</sup>Albania Population projections, 2011-2031 pg.5

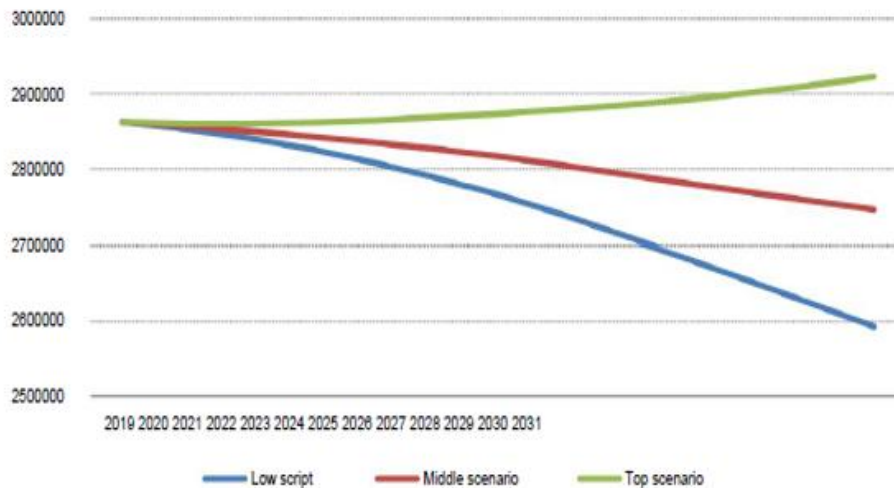
<sup>4</sup>Albania Population projections, 2011-2031 pg.10

<sup>5</sup>Albania Population projections, 2011-2031 pg.16



assumed. These changes in migratory behavior have also brought about a change in the gender structure of the population. In 2011, Albania was a country where there were more men than women.

Figure: Updated population projections according to 3 scenarios 2019 – 2031



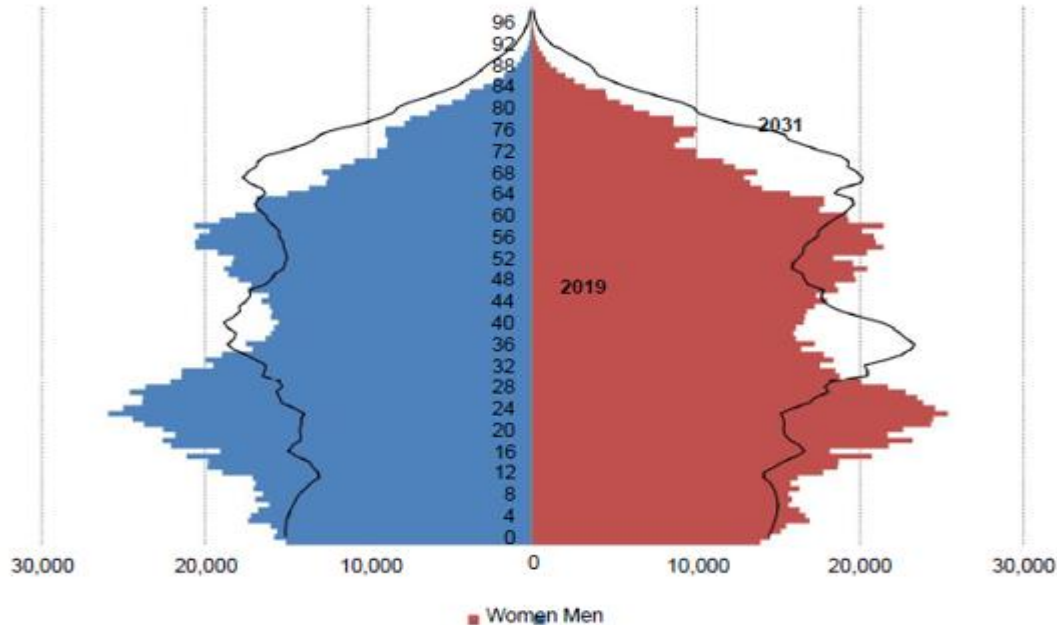
Source INSTAT 2018

This has already changed in 2019, since in Albania the gender ratio stands at 99.8 men for every 100 women. According to updated projections, the gender ratio is expected to deepen in favor of women, reaching up to 89.1 men for every 100 women. The population of Albania will continue the aging process and it is expected that its median age will reach 42.1 years in 2031 <sup>6</sup>. This aging process is accompanied by a rapid increase in the elderly dependency ratio from about 20.5 elderly people per 100 working-age people in 2019 to about 35.0 elderly people for every 100 working-age people. During this period, the youth dependency ratio will remain at constant levels of around 25.0 young people for every 100 people of working age.

Figure: Population pyramids according to updated population projections, 2019-2031 <sup>7</sup>.

<sup>6</sup>Albania Population projections, 2011-2031 pg.20

<sup>7</sup>Albania Population projections, 2011-2031 pg. 38



Source INSTAT 2018

The demographic changes that the population of Albania is expected to go through until 2031 will have their impact on its distribution among the regions of the country. <sup>8</sup>By 2031, only the population of the district of Tirana is expected to be higher than that of 2019, reaching about 954 thousand inhabitants. In 2031, about 35% of Albania's population is expected to live in the region of Tirana. The districts with the lowest population will continue to be the districts of Gjirokastra and Kukës, respectively with about 53 thousand and 60 thousand inhabitants

### Conclusion

Albania experienced marked demographic changes during the last thirty years. From the highest population growth in Europe during the post-war period, Albania has experienced population decline since 1990. Together with internal migration, this has led to a concentration of population in major urban centers. In Albania, the decrease in the total number of births intensified and the number of elderly people increased, leading to a rapid population aging process. These recent demographic trends will continue into the future. The low birth rate and continuous emigration in the future would be the main causes of the change in the age structure of the population of Shiperia. The number of young people will continue to decline and the number of elderly people will increase by more than four fifths by 2031. This will lead to an aging population like in European countries. The transition from a youth-dominant population to an elderly-dominant population may take only a generation in Albania, compared to half a century in Western Europe. Population growth until 2031 can be expected only for Tirana (up to 30%) and, to a lesser extent, for Vlora and Durrës. The biggest decrease in the number of inhabitants until 2031 is predicted for the North and South counties (up to -30%). The negative natural growth of the population will include most of the inhabited centers in the country. Population aging will progress faster in the South due to the early onset of the transition of fertility and large-scale emigration since the 1990s. This demographic dynamic will highlight the geographical concentration of Albania's population in the main economic centers in country, and especially in Tirana. According to the medium growth scenario, by 2031, 45% of the population is expected to live in the region of Tirana and Durrës (against 35% in 2011).

<sup>8</sup>Albania Population projections, 2011-2031pg.46

### ***Bibliography***

- ACIT, & USAID. 2012. Study on the Economic Impact of the Greek Crisis in Albania. Dumani, B. 1995. Fertility and social economic development in Albania. Cahiers du Cidep- 28. Academia-Bruylant, pp.41-48.
- Dumani, B., & B. Subashi. 2011. Determinants of Fertility in Albania with Attention to Specializing in the Immigration Role. In UNFPA, UNICEF, INSTAT, Ministry of Health, Institute of Public Health, Advanced Analysis of the Demographic and Health Survey of Albania 2008-09 Date, pg. 113-154. Tirana: Pegi Publishing House.
- Falkingham, J., & A. Gjonça. 2001. The Birth Transition in Communist Albania, 1950-1990. Population Studies 55(3):309-318.
- Gedeshi, I., & N. De Zwager. 2012. Effects of the Global Crisis on Migration and Remittances in Albania. in I. Sirkeci, JHC
- Cohen, & D. Ratha Migration and Remittances during the Global Financial Crisis and Beyond. Washington DC: World Bank.
- Gjonça, A. 2001. Communism, health and lifestyle: the paradox of the fertility transition. Westport: Greenwood Press.
2006. Trends and structure of mortality in post-communist Albania, presented in The changes of the 1990s and the demographic future of the Balkans, Sarajevo.
- INSTAT. 1999. Population Projections of Albania 1995-2010. Tirana: INSTAT, UNFPA. INSTAT 1989-2018
- 2018 . Migration to Albania. Tirana: Albanian Institute of Statistics.
- 2004 Projections for the population of Albania 2001-2021. Tirana: Albanian Institute of Statistics.
- INSTAT, PHI, & ICF Macro. 2018. Demographic and Health Survey of Albania 2008- 2009. Tirana: Albanian Institute of Statistics, Institute of Public Health and ICF Macro.
- Lerch, M. 2013. Declining Birth Rate during the Crisis of Albanian Society and Consolidation its continuous . European Journal of Population 29(2):195-220.
- UNFPA. 2012. Gender imbalances at birth in Albania. in UNFPA (p. 120). Tirana: Word Vision.
- Eurostat 2020 [http://appsso.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/nui/show.do?dataset=demo\\_find&lang=en](http://appsso.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/nui/show.do?dataset=demo_find&lang=en)