

Family development across regions in Albania: trends and patterns in demographic and social behaviour

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Introduction

The family is a dynamic institution in Albania, a country that is experiencing signs of a cautious entry in the “second demographic transition” as observed by Lerch (2011) and reported by the Albanian Institute of Statistics (INSTAT, 2014). Geographical variations patterns are identified in several domains of development during the last twenty years of transition. The analysis summarized here discuss about the extent the family/household demographic and social behaviour have changed from 1989 to 2011, focusing on the fluctuations across the Albanian regions. The changes are interpreted under the broad concept of “second demographic transition” and more concretely: family/household type and size, the number of children (still alive) combined with family/household formation, changes in marriage and divorce, the presence of young children and of the employment activity status in the family/household, make up the outline of this poster.

Method

Taking as a starting point the 1989 Census data, followed by the 2001 Census and ending with the 2011 Census situation, we provide an overview of some main geographical features regarding demographic and social behaviors observed. Albania is divided into 12 administrative counties (prefectures).

Results

- Family/household type and size

From 1989 to 2011, the family type “norm” that emerges clearly in all the regions is the household with one family nuclei. However, at the beginning of transition some variation was evident across the regions and the highest share of this family type were encountered in the Centre of Albania (Tirana, Durrës) as well as in the South (Vlore) while North tended to have around 30 percent of the households with two or more family nuclei. Whereas, in 2001 and 2011 the situation was more homogenous. Interestingly, the country capital Tirana, seem to have somehow lost his leading role in introducing modernity – because the share of one family nuclei type has reduced in years (from 87 percent in 1989 to 80 percent in 2011). This confirms that migrant families that moved to Tirana (Tirana is highly affected by internal migration from North and especially rural areas in the last twenty years) keep accommodating the lifestyle of their origin locality.

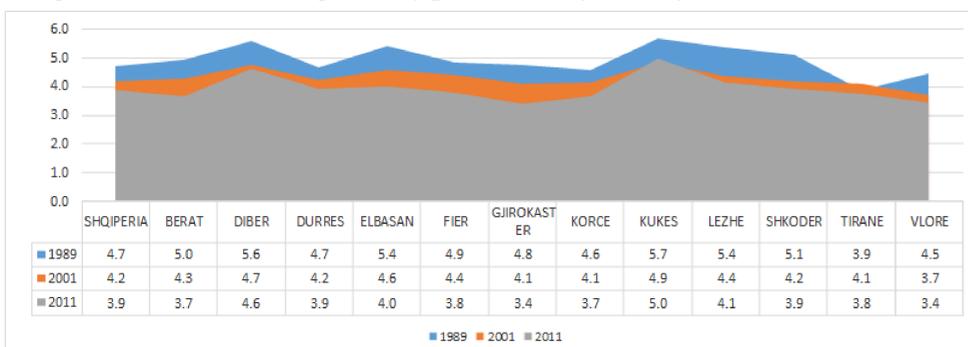
Table 1. Household type from 1989 to 2011, by prefectures

COUNTRY	Census 1989*		Census 2001		Census 2011			
	Households with one family nuclei	Households with two or more family nuclei	Households with no family nuclei	Households with one family nuclei	Households with two or more family nuclei	Households with no family nuclei	Households with one family nuclei	Households with two or more family nuclei
BERAT	80.4	19.6	4.8	82.3	12.1	8.3	81.6	10.1
DIBER	82.4	17.6	2.9	83.3	13.1	6.5	82.8	10.6
DURRES	72.2	28.1	4.2	82.3	12.8	4.2	82.0	13.7
ELBASAN	83.0	17.0	4.7	82.2	12.4	7.0	82.5	10.4
FIER	77.8	22.2	4.5	84.0	10.8	6.3	82.1	11.6
GJIROKASTER	81.1	18.9	2.9	82.3	14.4	6.2	82.5	11.3
KORCE	78.0	22.0	5.2	81.9	12.2	10.7	81.4	7.7
KUKES	76.7	23.3	4.7	79.2	15.6	8.9	80.2	10.8
LEZHE	72.6	27.7	5.5	84.3	8.6	4.1	85.2	10.6
SHKODER	75.8	24.3	5.0	84.3	9.8	6.3	82.6	11.0
TIRANE	79.6	20.6	6.9	82.2	9.8	9.3	81.1	9.5
VLORE	87.1	12.9	5.0	81.8	12.2	10.4	80.4	9.0
	84.0	16.0	6.6	82.1	10.3	11.4	81.5	7.0

*Census 1989 categorised the one person households as household with one nuclei

At a national scale, household size has changed in years. In 1989, the Albanian population lived in 675.456 households: an average of 4.7 persons. In 2001, the population lived in 726.895 households: an average of 4.2 persons in each household. In 2011 there were 722.262 households and an average of 3.9 persons in each household. There is a continuous decline since 1989, equally in all the regions - this shows a decline of the two-child family model, which is mostly due to the reduced number of children.

Figure 1. Household average size, by prefectures, by census year

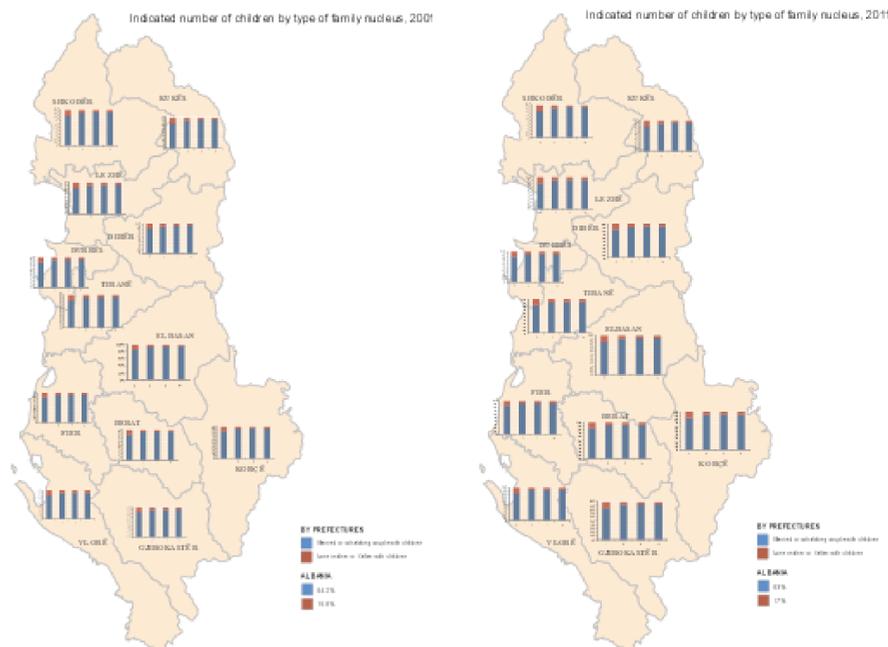


At local level, large household sizes are most frequent in the North-East (from Kukës to Elbasan and Diber) there are households above the country average size. This locality keep preserving yet the old norms: higher fertility and grandparents most frequently cohabite with children and grandchildren. The smallest households are in the South (Gjirokastrë and Vlore). But there are also households below the average size in the Center (in Durrës and in Tirana). The capital prefecture with 3.9 persons per household, has not the smallest household size; the southern area is more advanced in this direction.

-Having children and the changes according to the family/household type

Having children also maintains its attractiveness since very few women remain childless in Albania. Fertility has declined for several decades and has accelerated its downward movement in the intercensal periods. In 1989, the North-East of the country (Kukës and Diber prefecture) had the highest number of children. The South was mixed, with high fertility in Gjirokastrë and, Berat, but Korçë prefecture had much lower ratios.

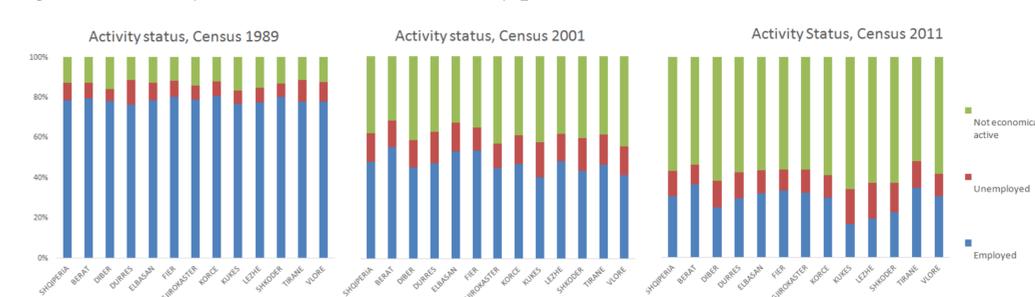
Tirana had the weakest fertility (data not shown). In 2001 as well as in 2011, many of the regional contrasts have been maintained, but fertility levels have seriously dropped everywhere. Childbearing and childrearing occurs within marriage. Being a family with lone mother or father and children is still an isolated phenomenon for the Albanian reality in all regions: as in 2001 and in 2011 this family nucleus typology is below 18 percent of the total families with a valid nucleus.



-The presence of young children and the employment status of parents

The presence of young children under the age of 6 and parent’s position in the labour force are strong predictors for family functioning and social stability. In 2011, parents that live in Northern part where 40 % of households have young children (in Kukës, Diber) are significantly challenged compared to parents that live in South where around 20 % of households are at this situation. Parent’s unemployment rates influence fertility (Goldstein et al.2009) and the effects are extended also on the quality of child rearing as the reduced financial resources change both living and school situation in many families. In late 1980s, the stability in parents employment is aligned with family functional stability in all geographical localities. In 2011, the situation was deteriorating and the share of employed individuals ranged from 40 to 50 % in all the regions.

Figure 2. Activity status from 1989 to 2011, by prefectures



Conclusions

- The family dynamics of the last two decades of economic and social turmoil are displayed also with geographical variations from 1989 to 2011.
- Family formation behaviours are re-shaped in years bringing childlessness and a shrinkage in household size, in all Albanian localities. However, in majority, children are raised in traditional-married families. Very tiny differences exists among regions, with the North of the country being a bit behind in this changing process.
- The Center of Albania (Tirana and Durrës), which has experienced the highest internal migration flows displays over the years a very interesting family transformation, that deserves further detailed investigation.
- To be married continue to be the “normal” way of living for the Albanian adult population (aged 15+) and the civil status patterns have not reported sensitive fluctuations in the past two decades from 1989 to 2011. Nearly five in ten persons are married at the time of the census with a homogenous distribution of the civil status across the regions. A change is proven in the share of the divorced individuals which has increased in 2011 compared to 2001 – almost uniformly in all the regions of Albania.
- The long term demographic changes have almost equally extended to all the geographical localities, despite cultural barriers, putting Albania progressively in line with European standards.
- This information from the trends in years will add a lot to our knowledge about family and geographical variations, which can further inform to refine small area planning for social services.

References

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