



© 2023 Lindita Kiri

This is an open access article licensed under the Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial 4.0 International License (<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/4.0/>)

## Demographic transition - Global population patterns and trends: The case of Albania

Dr. Lindita Kiri

*Faculty of Education and Philology, Fan. S. Noli University, Korce, Albania*

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.2478/ajbals-2023-0004>

### Abstract

The demographic transition means the transition from a traditional mode of demographic balance with high mortality and fertility, to a different mode of balance (modern) with low mortality and fertility throughout the course of the modernization of demographic processes. The demographic transition is associated with changing the indicators of population reproduction and the demographic balance regime. It is a process that the population of every country goes through. What is the demographic transition model based on historical stages? What are the global population trends? What are the characteristics of the demographic transition in Albania? The methods used in this manuscript are those of analysis, synthesis, comparison, etc. The demographic transition model has a global historical-geographical analysis value as it provides a global population assessment trend. The global population trend is towards the phenomenon of aging through decline or birth control and includes both central and semi-central countries. The analysis of the overpopulation in the territory has in essence the interventions by means of different measures to regulate the demographic regimes in function of the well-being of the population. In Albania, the transition has been accompanied by a large drop in births and high emigration. The time has come for this transition to be treated with priority as it affects the country's economy and its perspective.

**Keywords:** Demographic transition, Population; Population aging, Global trends, Albania.

### 1. Introduction

Today, developed countries are in the midst of a demographic transition with far-reaching consequences. People are having fewer children, living longer and healthier. Many of them are on the move in search of better opportunities. As a result, their population is aging rapidly. Some populations have begun to shrink. These demographic changes are often reflected as crises driven by different factors.

---

Populations are aging as people are healthier and live longer. The fertility rate is lower because women have more say, choice and opportunity. Population numbers are falling in some countries because people have more freedom to decide where they want to live and work. However, dealing with the effects of demographic change is not easy. The number of working-age population has decreased. Social systems are facing great pressure. Maintaining infrastructures and services in rural and less populated regions is quite expensive. These are trials that require solutions. Eastern Europe is mainly focused on increasing the birth rate. Even when the birth rate increases, the changes are few as investments for family policies are insufficient. There are obstacles such as: economic insecurity, high house prices, the inability to afford childcare costs, etc. What works in addressing demographic change is developing a comprehensive, family-centered, evidence-based package that addresses a variety of economic, political, and cultural factors that influence people's decisions and choices about their lives and futures. The purpose of the paper is to present demographic theories and models, global population trends and characteristics of the demographic transition in Albania. Demographic changes open new opportunities for countries to move towards a more prosperous future. Demographic changes provide the opportunity to build an inclusive and diverse society. The objectives of the paper are:

- Recognition of the demographic transition model on a global scale;
- Analysis of overpopulation and demographic pressure on the territory;
- Comparison and evaluation of the demographic transition model in Albania;

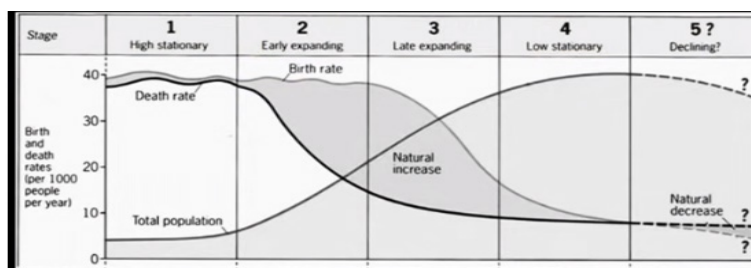
## **2. Demographic transition model**

Studying through models is one of the ways and methods of studying global spatial developments in today's geography (Caldo, 1987). The model is an idealized representation of the locations or processes of the phenomena of geographic objects in space. While for urban geographers the model is an arrangement of objects in space, referring to theories, idealized images or real examples. It is more about sketching than space. The demographic transition model is a generalized way of studying from a historical analysis of some developments demographic, mainly of Western countries, based on the cause-and-effect factors that are: economic developments, social, political and historical to basic demographic indicators such as birth rate, mortality, natural increase, etc (Armengaud, 1966). The phases or historical stages of transition and their typology are studied in function of a perspective forecast of demographic developments. Researchers in this field talk about 3, 4, or even 5 characteristic stages. These demographic characteristics have reflected on all the basic developments of human civilization such as social organizations, wars, poverty, the industrial revolution, technological consequences, demographic policies, the process of urbanization, etc. At the core of evolution is the relationship between births and deaths, which results in a certain quantitative increase in the population from the above factors.

### 3. Analysis of the demographic transition model

In the first phase, which belongs to the pre-capitalist period until the 1970s, we have a high birth rate that was hidden by a high mortality rate. The latter as a result of difficult living conditions, wars, hunger, deaths, etc. So the natural increase was low. In some brief periods, as a result of mass epidemics and famine, deaths were higher than births. So the population was decreasing. For example in the XIV century the black plague killed more than 1/3 of the population in Europe. Population changes were more a function of mortality and less of birth rate. Only in times of peace there was a modest population growth. The doubling of the population from 200 million to 500 million took place over a century and a half and very slowly. In this first phase today there are few countries in the world such as Yemen, Ethiopia and Somalia (Shelley, 1994).

Graphic representation of the stages of the demographic transition (United Nations, 2009)



In the second phase, the period until the 1880s, the birth rate continues to be high, while the death rate begins to decline. This phase belongs to the early period of the beginnings of the industrial revolution. Improvements in hygienic-sanitary conditions, increased production, longer life expectancy, the beginnings of urbanization were factors that influenced the faster decrease in mortality than in birth rate, which continued to be high. This is because the majority of the population at that time lived in villages, which meant an agrarian society with a great need for labor. It is also known that cultural models change more slowly than technological models. This phase better reflects the transition from the rural-agrarian society to the industrial-urban one. The growth rate in this phase was 2-3 percent per year. This caused the population of the countries under consideration to double in a period of 20-25 years. This period also marks the beginning of the decline in the mortality rate and was called the “revolution of demographic mortality” (Shelley, 1994). In the third phase that comes up to the 1930 s, as a phase of industrialization, in the countries considered, the birth rate begins to fall and the population, especially the urban population began to control births. This is because many children were no longer a profitable asset in the industrial society but as needy with increasing demands and even unemployed. While mortality remains low due to factors of economic and social development and living conditions in continuous improvement, natural growth declines moderately.

We are in the stage of the birth of the first demographic views, such as the Malthusian ones. Annual growth rates are between 2-3 percent. In developing countries, the trend is approaching the second phase where the population grows at high rates. In the second and third phases, which are considered transitional, fertility has dominated, population growth is fast (second phase) and moderate (third phase) due to the factors we mentioned above. The second phase (Shelley, 1994) for some countries such as Britain and Ireland lasted for about 150 years.<sup>1</sup> The fourth phase is characterized by low births and deaths, i.e. with minimal population growth. In some Northern European countries, births were lower than deaths in short periods, which marked a decrease in the number of the population or demographic stagnation. Annual growth rates at this stage are estimated at 1-2 percent. For example, in 1991 the world's population grew by 1.7 percent per year. So the population doubling time at this stage takes more than 1,000 years. The influencing factors are economic in nature, but especially cultural and urbanism. In some countries, the coefficient of births and deaths have equalized and sometimes replaced each other at low rates. This population decline is observed in the developed countries of Western Europe and Japan, but it seems to be infecting other parts of the population in the developed world. This looks like a fifth stage trend. The dramatic decline in birth rates in these and other countries until the 1990s and beyond will lead to demographic decline and irreversible aging of the population around the world, which is a trend, albeit at a different pace, as characteristic of this phase.

#### **4. Demographic theories models and trends**

Some researchers have noticed that some underdeveloped or semi-peripheral developing countries seem to be in the second and third stages of this model, i.e. in the transitional stage. The growth of their population is at a high rate for countries such as: Yemen, Ethiopia, Somalia. In developing countries, the model is mainly approaching the third stage where the population grows at moderate and low rates, due to the control of mortality more than birth rate. This is different from the central or developed cities that are found in the fourth and fifth phases (referred to the graph of the demographic transition model). This means demographic stagnation or a decrease in the rate of population growth, where the basic factor is the control of the birth rate and the decrease in the rates of its growth.<sup>2</sup>

#### **5. Global population trends**

Referring to the fifth stage of the graph of the demographic transition model, it appears that in some countries, deaths and births are even, and sometimes they replace each other at low rates (UN, 2009).<sup>3</sup> As we pointed out, this is seen in the

<sup>1</sup> Eurostat (2015), Population structure: [http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statisticsexplained/index.php/Population\\_structure\\_and\\_ageing](http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statisticsexplained/index.php/Population_structure_and_ageing).

<sup>2</sup> Eurostat (2015). Healthy life yearly statistics: [http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php/Healthy\\_life\\_years\\_statistics](http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php/Healthy_life_years_statistics).

<sup>3</sup> United Nations (2009), World Population Ageing 2009. New York, Department of Economic and Social

---

developed countries of Western Europe and Japan, with population decline which seems to be infecting other parts of the population of the developed and developing world, including China. The decline in the birth rate in these countries has led to the irreversible aging of the population (Bravo, 1999). The decrease in the birth rate and the extension of life constitute today a dominant global demographic phenomenon, regardless of some exceptions which do not affect the general trend. This is also thanks to anti-birth policies in some large countries of the world, such as China, where the phenomenon of aging is becoming worrying (Lesthaeghe, 2010). The stages of demographic transition according to countries also show the demographic structure of their populations. In these stages of the model of these countries, the natural increase and its consequences in the age group and gender structure have contributed in the first place.

As a conclusion of the global analysis, it appears that, despite the absolute growth of the world population, its global growth rates are decreasing from 1.1-1.5 percent from over 3 percent, 20 years ago. The phenomenon of aging through decline or birth control has included both central and semi-central countries where it is worth mentioning China (Creedy, 1998). The phenomenon seems "infectious" for large and small countries for economic, cultural and social-cultural reasons.

## **6. Overpopulation and demographic pressure on the territory**

Population distribution in the world is very uneven. Geographers analyze it through two basic indicators: concentration and density. In this way, the places where the population is concentrated and where it is scattered can be mapped and evaluated. It is usually calculated per inhabitant per km<sup>2</sup>. We can analyze and evaluate it in relation to natural resources, territory and development (Taeuber, 1992). About 3/5 of the world's population is concentrated in the continent of Asia, where only China and India occupy about 40 percent of the world's population. Countries with large populations such as Brazil, Canada, USA, Russia can be grouped after them. These are the most populated territories in the world compared to other territories. In this way it can be analyzed that global demographic models are influenced by the conditions of these territories. People have historically been selective towards natural conditions; most of them are near or largely wetted by oceans and large rivers.

## **7. Overpopulation on the territory**

From a global perspective, we argue that the so-called overpopulation problem of the planet is not a simple issue of the number of the planet's population, but includes more the relationship between population and resources; unequal population distribution; unequal spatial distribution of well-being (Rocca, 1998). This oblique relationship and territorial and social inequality, beyond the territorial holding capacities, has created geographic, natural and human-regional and global consequences. This is expressed by the term overpopulation. There are many debates on population and

demographic policies. Regarding population growth and its consequences, there are different viewpoints that come from antiquity. But the most dominant was that of the English economist and demographer Thomas Malthus (Sauvy, 1958). He argued that uncontrolled population growth occurs in geometric progression, while wealth in arithmetic progression. So the growth of world wealth does not correspond to the growth of the population, especially in underdeveloped countries, and for this reason there is poverty, hunger, which will continue if this growth of the world population is not controlled. Today, his theory has been taken up again by the so-called neo-Malthusians. The latter accept regulated population-natural and human resources relationships and for this population growth to be in direct proportion to the production and consumption of material goods, i.e. to well-being. This reasoning is more realistic since uncontrolled birth control has consequences in the demographic balance, in the aging of the population, in demographic dependence and development. Sociologists and demographers claim that the time has come for the demographic transition (great decline in births and high emigration) to be treated with priority, since the stage they are in dictates all political and economic developments in the country (UNDP, 2019). States and UN population organizations have suggested certain demographic policies through various measures to regulate demographic regimes in function of the population's well-being.

## **8. Albania and the demographic transition**

In Albania, the demographic transition is characterized by a shape that coincides with the most typical profile (bell-shaped) as well as with many European countries. It is a short and relatively fast transition, for about 90 years (1925 - 2015) and it can be said that it has passed all three phases (INSTAT, 2004). The first phase of transition in Albania, which can be considered the period 1920-1950, marks a long period of about 30 years. During this phase, an increase in the coefficients of the natural addition of the population is observed with an average annual rate of about 1.7 percent. The second phase includes the period 1950-1970, when the death rates decrease systematically and the fertility rates, though they have started to decrease, again they continue to be at high levels. The annual population growth rate was 2.96 percent. The third phase includes the period 1970-2015. After the 1970s, birth and death rates have decreased continuously. In the 10-year period 1970-1980, the average annual rate of population growth decreased to 2.5 percent, and in the years 1980-1990, it decreased to 2.1 percent. After the 1990s, population growth is low, as births are much lower than in previous years. If we add mass emigration to this, in this period we also had a decrease in the number of the population from year to year. The demographic evolutions in this phase are explained in the framework of all the social and economic developments of the country. Overall, in this phase, the average annual growth rate of the population was around 1 percent. The population of Albania for about 90 years of demographic transition increased 4 times, while the population of Mexico for 80 years of demographic transition increased 7 times, while the population of Sweden for 150 years of transition has increased 3.8 times. Most of the countries of Europe

now have a common problem, an aging population. According to studies, during the next 40 years the percentage of the population aged 65 and this will increase from 12 to 22 percent (Lesthaeghe, 2010). The demographic composition of Albania is different. About 16.7 percent of Albania's population is younger than 15 years old. During the next 30 years for the EU countries, the working age population is expected to decrease by about 20 percent, while for most of the Central European countries the decrease will reach about 30 percent. For Albania, it is expected to remain almost unchanged, decreasing by 2-3 percent. This means that in the coming decades there will be a greater number of working age people than today. As a result of the decline in the birth rate and changes in the age structure, a "window of opportunity" is created that is important for a sustainable development for the country, because it frees up funds to be used for the creation and growth of human capital. This "window of opportunity" is called "demographic dividend" (Bloom, Canning and Sevilla, 2003). Thus, for the period 1989, 1990, 2000 and 2005-2019, the number of births in Albania was according to the table.

*Table. The number of births in the years 1989-2019*

| Years | Number of Births | Years | Number of Births |
|-------|------------------|-------|------------------|
| 1989  | 85,432           | 2011  | 34,285           |
| 1990  | 82,125           | 2012  | 35,295           |
| 2000  | 51,242           | 2013  | 35,350           |
| 2005  | 38,898           | 2014  | 35,760           |
| 2006  | 35,891           | 2015  | 32,715           |
| 2007  | 34,448           | 2016  | 31,733           |
| 2008  | 33,445           | 2017  | 30,869           |
| 2009  | 34,114           | 2018  | 28,934           |
| 2010  | 34,061           | 2019  | 28,561           |

*Source: Published by INSTAT for the years 1989, 1990, 2000 and for the years 2005-2021*

The number of births in the future is also predicted to decrease, as a result the percentage of the population aged 0-14 for the next 30 years is predicted to decrease from 16.7 percent in 2019 to 12.5 percent in 2051. During these years, the death rates decreased systematically and the birth rates still continued to remain at high levels. We recall that in this phase of the transition, the annual population growth rate was nearly 30 people per 1,000 inhabitants.

## 9. Conclusion

The demographic transition analyzes the process of population development through certain stages of socio-economic development, based on the generalization of the empirical facts of the change in the components of the natural movement of the population. The global trend of the population is towards the phenomenon

of aging through decline or birth control and includes both central and semi-central countries. From a global perspective, geographers argue that the so-called overpopulation problem of the planet is not a matter of the number of the planet's population, but involves the relationship between population and resources; unequal population distribution; and unequal spatial distribution of well-being. In Albania, the demographic transition has been accompanied by a large drop in births and high emigration. The time has come for this transition to be treated with priority as it affects the country's economy and its perspective. As a result of the drop in the birth rate and the age changes that this phenomenon brings to the country's population, an important "window of opportunity" is created for sustainable development of the country, which is known as "demographic dividend". Changing the ratios between the active working population and the number of young people frees up funds from "investment for children" to invest in another sector. In this case, there are more taxpayers than tax "consumers" in the country. This leads to increased income and savings, improved quality of "human capital" and quality of life by receiving more and better services. So, it would take time for this demographic dividend to become efficient and it is not always guaranteed and would depend on a skilled, competitive workforce in Europe and beyond. To achieve this, Albania must pursue an ambitious agenda, especially in education. Until 2015, the weights of the second age have decreased as a result of the decrease in the number of births. This happened as an effect of the demographic dividend. For the future, scenario assessments show that active labor force weights will increase as a result of population aging.

## References

- Armengaud A. (1966). *Démographie et sociétés*, Stock, Paris.
- Bravo, J. (1999). Fiscal Implications of Ageing Societies Regarding Public and Private Pension Systems. In *Population Ageing: Challenges for Policies and Programmes in Developed and Developing Countries*. Cliquet, R. and Nizamuddin (Ed).
- Caldo, C. (1987). *Geografia Umana*. Palermo.
- Creedy, J. (1998). *Pensions and Population Ageing: An Economic Analysis*. Cheltenham. Edward Elgar Publishing.
- Koçi, N. (2008). *Demography*. Tirana.
- Lesthaeghe, R. (2010). The Unfolding Story of the Second Demographic Transition. *Population and Development Review* 36(2): 211-251.
- Rocca G. (1998). *Geografia della comunicazione. Metodologie e Problematiche dei processi di mobilita territoriale*. Bologna, Patron Editor.
- Shelley F. (1994). *Human and cultural geography. A global perspective*. WCB publishers.
- Sheri, F. (2006). *World Population*. Publication of Albpaper, Tirana.
- Taeuber, C M. (1992). Sixty-Five Plus in America. *Current Population Reports, Special Studies*. pp. 23-178. Washington, DC.: United States Bureau of the Census.
- Telo, I. (2016). *Aging, the state and society.*, Tirana.
- Telo, I. (2008). *Demography*. Tirana.
- United Nations (2009). *World Population Ageing 2009*. New York.