



**ETHNIC COUNCIL
OF SHEPPARTON AND DISTRICT Inc.**

Reg. No. A6321

Albanian Community Profile



July 2018

Country Background

Official Name

Republic of Albania

Location

Albania is a country in Southeast Europe, bordered by Montenegro to the northwest, Kosovo to the northeast, the Republic of Macedonia to the east, and Greece to the south and southeast. It has a coast on the Adriatic Sea to the west and on the Ionian Sea to the southwest. It is less than 72 km (45 mi) from Italy, across the Strait of Otranto which connects the Adriatic Sea to the Ionian Sea.

Albania has a total area of 28,748 square kilometres (11,100 square miles). It lies between latitudes 39° and 43° N, and mostly between longitudes 19° and 21° E (a small area lies east of 21°). Albania's coastline length is 476 km (296 mi) and extends along the Adriatic and Ionian Seas. The lowlands of the west face the Adriatic Sea.¹



Population

As of 1 January 2018, the population of Albania was estimated to be 2,890,054 people. This is a decrease of -0.04 % (-1,041 people) compared to population of 2,891,095 the year before. In 2017 the natural increase was positive, as the number of births exceeded the number of deaths by 17,260. Due to external migration, the population declined by 18,301. The sex ratio of the total population was 1.000 (1,000 males per 1 000 females) which is lower than global sex ratio. The global sex ratio in the world was approximately 1 016 males to 1 000 females as of 2017.²

According to the 2011 Census results, the total population of Albania is 2,821,977 with a low Fertility rate of 1.49 children born per woman. The fall of the Communist regime in 1990 Albania was accompanied with massive migration. External migration was prohibited in Communist Albania while internal one was quite limited, hence this was a new phenomenon. Between 1991 and 2004, roughly 900,000 people have migrated out of Albania, about 600,000 of them settling in Greece. Migration greatly affected Albania's internal population distribution. Population decreased mainly in the North and South of the country while it increased in Tirana and Durrës center districts. According to the Albanian Institute of Statistics, the population of Albania is 2,893,005 as of 1 January 2015.

Issues of ethnicity are a delicate topic and subject to debate. "Although official statistics have suggested that Albania is one of the most homogenous countries in the region (with an over 97 per cent Albanian majority) minority groups (such as Greeks, Macedonians, Montenegrins, Roma and Vlachs/Aromanians) have often questioned the official data, claiming a larger share in the country's population." The last census that contained ethnographic data (before the 2011 one) was conducted in 1989.¹

History

The history of Albania emerges from the pre-history of the Balkan states around 3000 BC, with early records of Illyria in Greco-Roman historiography. The modern territory of Albania had no counterpart in the standard political divisions of classical antiquity. Rather, its modern boundaries correspond to parts of the ancient Roman provinces of Dalmatia (southern Illyricum), Macedonia (particularly Epirus Nova), and Moesia Superior. The territory remained under Roman and Byzantine control until the Slavic migrations of the 7th century. It was integrated into the Bulgarian Empire in the 9th century.

The territorial nucleus of the Albanian state was formed in the Middle Ages as the Principality of Arbër and a Sicilian dependency known as the medieval Kingdom of Albania. The area was part of the Serbian Empire, but passed to the Ottoman Empire in the 15th century. It remained under Ottoman control as part of the province of Rumelia until 1912, when the first independent Albanian state was founded by an Albanian Declaration of Independence following a short occupation by the Kingdom of Serbia. The formation of an Albanian national

consciousness dates to the later 19th century and is part of the larger phenomenon of the rise of nationalism under the Ottoman Empire.

A short-lived monarchical state known as the Principality of Albania (1914–1925) was succeeded by an even shorter-lived first Albanian Republic (1925–1928). Another monarchy, the Kingdom of Albania (1928–39), replaced the republic. The country endured an occupation by Italy just prior to World War II. After the collapse of the Axis powers, Albania became a communist state, the Socialist People's Republic of Albania, which for most of its duration was dominated by Enver Hoxha (died 1985). Hoxha's political heir Ramiz Alia oversaw the disintegration of the "Hoxhaist" state during the wider collapse of the Eastern Bloc in the later 1980s.

The communist regime collapsed in 1990, and the former communist Party of Labour of Albania was routed in elections in March 1992, amid economic collapse and social unrest. The unstable economic situation led to an Albanian diaspora, mostly to Italy, Greece, Switzerland, Germany and North America during the 1990s. The crisis peaked in the Albanian Turmoil of 1997. An amelioration of the economic and political conditions in the early years of the 21st century enabled Albania to become a full member of NATO in 2009. The country is applying to join the European Union.³

Ethnicity, language and religion

Ethnicity

According to the 2016 Census results, the total population of Albania is 2,886,026 with a low Fertility rate of 1.51 children born per woman. The fall of the Communist regime in 1990 Albania was accompanied with massive migration. External migration was prohibited in Communist Albania while internal one was quite limited, hence this was a new phenomenon. Between 1991 and 2004, roughly 900,000 people have migrated out of Albania, about 600,000 of them settling in Greece. Migration greatly affected Albania's internal population distribution. Population decreased mainly in the North and South of the country while it increased in Tirana and Durrës center districts. According to the Albanian Institute of Statistics, the population of Albania is 2,893,005 as of 1 January 2015.

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Albania recognizes three national minorities, Greeks, Macedonians and Montenegrins, and two cultural minorities, Aromanians and Romani people. Other Albanian minorities are Bulgarians, Gorani, Serbs, Balkan Egyptians, Bosniaks and Jews. Regarding the Greeks, "it is difficult to know how many Greeks there are in Albania. The Greek government, it is typically claimed, says that there are around 300,000 ethnic Greeks in Albania, but most western estimates are around 200,000 mark (although *EEN* puts the number at a probable 100,000)." The Albanian government puts the number at only 24,243." The CIA World Factbook estimates the Greek minority at 0.9% of the total population and the US State Department uses 1.17% for Greeks and 0.23% for other minorities. However, the latter questions the validity of the data about the Greek minority, due to the fact that measurements have been affected by boycott.

According to the 2011 census the population of Albania declared the following ethnic affiliation: Albanians 2,312,356 (82.6% of the total), Greeks 24,243 (0.9%), Macedonians 5,512 (0.2%), Montenegrins 366 (0.01%), Aromanians 8,266 (0.30%), Romani 8,301 (0.3%), Balkan Egyptians 3,368 (0.1%), other ethnicities 2,644 (0.1%), no declared ethnicity 390,938 (14.0%), and not relevant 44,144 (1.6%).

Macedonian and some Greek minority groups have sharply criticized Article 20 of the Census law, according to which a \$1,000 fine will be imposed on anyone who will declare an ethnicity other than what is stated on his or her birth certificate. This is claimed to be an attempt to intimidate minorities into declaring Albanian ethnicity, according to them the Albanian government has stated that it will jail anyone who does not participate in the census or refuse to declare his or her ethnicity. Genc Pollo, the minister in charge has declared that: "Albanian citizens will be able to freely express their ethnic and religious affiliation and mother tongue. However, they are not forced to answer these sensitive questions". The amendments criticized do not include jailing or forced declaration of ethnicity or religion; only a fine is envisioned which can be overthrown by court.

Greek representatives form part of the Albanian parliament and the government has invited Albanian Greeks to register, as the only way to improve their status. On the other hand, nationalists, various intellectuals' organizations and political parties in Albania have expressed their concern that the census might artificially increase the number of Greek minority, which might be then exploited by Greece to threaten Albania's territorial integrity.¹

Language

Albanian is the official language of Albania. Its standard spoken and written form is revised and merged from the two main dialects, Gheg and Tosk, though it is notably based more on the Tosk dialect. Shkumbin river is the rough dividing line between the two dialects. Also a dialect of Greek that preserves features now lost in standard modern Greek is spoken in areas inhabited by the Greek minority. Other languages spoken by ethnic minorities in Albania

include Vlach, Serbian, Macedonian, Bosnian, Bulgarian, Gorani, and Roma. Macedonian is official in the Pustec Municipality in East Albania.

Albanians are considered a polyglot nation and people. Due to immigration and past colonialism, Albanians generally speak more than 2 languages. English, Italian and Greek are by far the most widely spoken foreign languages, which are increasing due to migration return, and new Greek and Italian communities in the country. La Francophonie states 320,000 French speakers can be found in Albania. Other spoken languages include Serbian, Romanian, German, Turkish and Aromanian. Albanians in neighbouring Kosovo and Macedonia are often fluent in Albanian and Serbian, Turkish, Slavic Macedonian, and other former Yugoslav languages.

According to the 2011 population census, 2,765,610 or 98.767% of the population declared Albanian as their mother tongue.¹

Religion

According to the 2011 census, 58.79% of Albania adheres to Islam, making it the largest religion in the country; Christianity is practiced by 17.06% of the population, and 24.29% of the total population is either non-religious, belongs to other religious groups, or are 'undeclared'. Both the Albanian Orthodox church and the Bektashi Sufi order refused to recognize the 2011 census results regarding faith, with the Orthodox claiming that 24% of the total population are Albanian Orthodox Christians rather than just 6.75%. Before World War II, 70% of the population were Muslims, 20% Eastern Orthodox, and 10% Roman Catholics. According to a 2010 survey, religion today plays an important role in the lives of only 39% of Albanians, and Albania is ranked among the least religious countries in the world. A 2012 Pew Research Center study found that 65% of Albanian Muslims are non-denominational Muslims.

The Albanians first appeared in the historical record in Byzantine sources of the late 11th century. At this point, they were already fully Christianized. Islam came first time in the 9th century to the region which is known as Albania today. It later emerged as the majority religion during the centuries of Ottoman rule, though a significant Christian minority remained. After independence (1912) from the Ottoman Empire, the Albanian republican, monarchic and later Communist regimes followed a systematic policy of separating religion from official functions and cultural life. Albania never had an official state religion either as a republic or as a kingdom. In the 20th century, the clergy of all faiths was weakened under the monarchy, and ultimately eradicated during the 1950s and 1960s, under the state policy of obliterating all organized religion from Albanian territories.

The Communist regime that took control of Albania after World War II persecuted and suppressed religious observance and institutions and entirely banned religion to the point where Albania was officially declared to be the world's first atheist state. Religious freedom has returned to Albania since the regime's change in 1992. Albania joined the Organisation of

the Islamic Conference in 1992, following the fall of the communist government, but will not be attending the 2014 conference due a dispute regarding the fact that its parliament never ratified the country's membership. Albanian Muslim populations (mainly secular and of the Sunni branch) are found throughout the country whereas Albanian Orthodox Christians as well as Bektashis are concentrated in the south and Roman Catholics are found in the north of the country.

The first recorded Albanian Protestant was Said Toptani, who traveled around Europe, and in 1853 returned to Tirana and preached Protestantism. He was arrested and imprisoned by the Ottoman authorities in 1864. Mainline evangelical Protestants date back to the work of Congregational and later Methodist missionaries and the work of the British and Foreign Bible Society in the 19th century. The Evangelical Alliance, which is known as VUSh, was founded in 1892. Today VUSh has about 160 member congregations from different Protestant denominations. VUSh organizes marches in Tirana including one against blood feuds in 2010. Bibles are provided by the Interconfessional Bible Society of Albania. The first full Albanian Bible to be printed was the Filipaj translation printed in 1990.

Seventh-day Adventist Church, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, and Jehovah's Witnesses also have a number of adherents in Albania.

Albania was the only country in Europe where Jewish population experienced growth during the Holocaust. After the mass emigration to Israel since the fall of Communist regime, only 200 Albanian Jews are left in the country today.

According to 2008 statistics from the religious communities in Albania, there are 1119 churches and 638 mosques in the country. The Roman Catholic mission declared 694 Catholic churches. The Christian Orthodox community, 425 Orthodox churches. The Muslim community, 568 mosques and 70 Bektashi tekkes.¹

Family Values

Albania is a patriarchal society based on male predominance. Women are accorded subordinate roles. The communist Party of Labour did much to emancipate women during a revolutionary campaign in the late 1960s and early 1970s, but many of the gains of that social revolution have been reversed since the introduction of democracy and a free market economy. Old traditions have revived, and despite legal equality and acceptance in the workforce, women have much less representation in public life than they did under the former regime.

Marriages in Albania are socially and legally restricted to heterosexual couples. They often are arranged at an early age in the countryside, traditionally by the parents of the groom with

the help of a matchmaker rather than by the couple. Remaining unmarried is looked on as a great misfortune. In some mountain regions, the bride was stolen from her family, that is, spirited away by an armed bridegroom or by his male relatives and companions. This usually symbolic though occasionally real theft of a bride was also a common custom among the Italo-Albanians of Calabria. In other regions, it was customary to purchase a wife.

Albanian weddings are impressive festivities. They are virtually the only popular celebrations observed today and thus are taken very seriously. Whole villages and, in towns, hundreds of people may be invited to take part in a wedding banquet. The celebrations can last several days. Traditionally, weddings take place during the full moon to ensure offspring. Monogamy was always the rule in Albania, but polygamous marriages existed up to the beginning of the twentieth century in some areas, particularly if the first wife was not able to bear a son. ⁴

Education and Economy

Education

Before the establishment of the People's Republic, Albania's illiteracy rate was as high as 85%. Schools were scarce between World War I and World War II. When the People's Republic was established in 1945, the Party gave high priority to wiping out illiteracy. As part of a vast social campaign, anyone between the ages of 12 and 40 who could not read or write was mandated to attend classes to learn. By 1955, illiteracy was virtually eliminated among Albania's adult population.

Today the overall literacy rate in Albania is 98.7%; the male literacy rate is 99.2% and female literacy rate is 98.3%. With large population movements in the 1990s to urban areas, the provision of education has undergone transformation as well. The University of Tirana is the oldest university in Albania, having been founded in October 1957.¹

Economy

Albania's transition from a socialist centrally planned economy to free-market capitalism has been largely successful. There are signs of increasing investments, and power cuts are reduced to the extent that Albania is now exporting energy. In 2012, it's GDP per capita (expressed in Purchasing Power Standards) stood at 30% of the EU average, while AIC (Actual Individual Consumption) was 35%. Still, Albania has shown potential for economic growth, as more and more businesses relocate there and consumer goods are becoming available from emerging market traders as part of the current massive global cost-cutting exercise. Albania, Cyprus, and Poland are the only countries in Europe that recorded economic growth in the first quarter of 2010. International Monetary Fund (IMF) predicted 2.6% growth for Albania in 2010 and 3.2% in 2011.

Albania and Croatia have discussed the possibility of jointly building a nuclear power plant at Lake Shkoder, close to the border with Montenegro, a plan that has gathered criticism from Montenegro due to seismicity in the area. In addition, there is some doubt whether Albania would be able to finance a project of such a scale with a total national budget of less than \$5 billion. However, in February 2009 Italian company Enel announced plans to build an 800 MW coal-fired power plant in Albania, to diversify electricity sources. Nearly 100% of the electricity is generated by ageing hydroelectric power plants, which are becoming more ineffective due to increasing droughts. However, there have been many private investments in building new hydroelectric power plants such as Devoll Hydro Power Plant and the Ashta hydropower plant.

The country has large deposits of petroleum and natural gas, and produced 26,000 barrels of oil per day in the first quarter of 2014 (BNK-TC). Natural gas production, estimated at about 30 million m³, is sufficient to meet consumer demands. Other natural resources include coal, bauxite, copper and iron ore. Albania has the largest onshore oil reserves in Europe. Albania's crude output amounted to more than 1.2 million tonnes in 2013, including 1.06 million by Canada's Bankers Petroleum, 87,063 tonnes from Canada's Stream Oil and 37,406 tonnes by Albpetrol on its own. Three foreign firms produced the rest.

Agriculture is the most significant sector, employing a significant proportion of the labor force and generating about 21% of GDP. Agriculture in Albania employs 47.8% of the population and about 24.31% of the land is used for agricultural purposes. Domestic farm products accounted for 63% of household expenditures and 25% of exports in 1990. As part of the pre-accession process of Albania to the EU, farmers are being aided through IPA 2011 funds to improve Albanian agriculture standards. Albania produces significant amounts of tobacco, olives, wheat, maize, potatoes, vegetables, fruits, sugar beets, grapes; meat, honey, dairy products, and traditional medicine and aromatic plants, figs (13th largest producer in the world) and sour cherries. Albania's proximity to the Ionian Sea and the Adriatic Sea give the underdeveloped fishing industry great potential. World Bank and European Community economists report that Albania's fishing industry has good potential to generate export earnings because prices in the nearby Greek and Italian markets are many times higher than those in the Albanian market. The fish available off the coasts of Albania are carp, trout, sea bream, mussels, and crustaceans.

Tourism is gaining a fair share of Albania's GDP with visitors growing every year. As of 2014 exports seem to gain momentum and have increased 300% from 2008, although their contribution to the GDP is still moderate (the exports per capita ratio currently stands at \$1100). Although Albania's growth has slowed in 2013 tourism is expanding rapidly and foreign investments are becoming more common as the government continues the modernization of Albania's institutions.¹

Albanian Community in Australia

The first recorded Albanian to settle in Australia was Naum Konxha who arrived in Brisbane in 1885 with his English wife and decided to stay permanently. However, the first significant Albanian migration to Australia started in the 1920s after the United States of America placed migration quota restrictions for Southern Europeans.

Many Albanians who arrived in the 1920s settled in rural areas and engaged in agriculture related employment – mainly fruit growing.

The 1933 Australian Census recorded 770 Albania-born living in Australia, mostly in Queensland and Victoria. Many Muslim Albanians settled around Mareeba in northern Queensland and most of the Christian Albanians settled in Brisbane. In Victoria, most Albanians settled around Shepparton in the Goulburn Valley fruit growing district.

The communist regime which ruled the post-war Albania placed immigration restrictions on its citizens. As a result only a small number of post-war refugees arrived in Australia after World War II. These restrictions remained in place until the 1990s.

A small number of Albania-born continue to migrate to Australia.

The latest Census in 2011 recorded 2,398 Albania-born people in Australia, an increase of 19 per cent from the 2006 Census. The 2011 distribution by state and territory showed Victoria had the largest number with 1,500 followed by South Australia (309), Queensland (224) and New South Wales (198).

The median age of the Albania-born in 2011 was 39 years compared with 45 years for all overseas-born and 37 years for the total Australian population.

The age distribution showed 3.6 per cent were aged 0-14 years, 13.3 per cent were 15-24 years, 42.5 per cent were 25-44 years, 25.2 per cent were 45-64 years and 15.4 per cent were 65 years and over.

Of the Albania-born in Australia, there were 1,199 males (50 per cent) and 1,199 females (50 per cent). The sex ratio was 100 males per 100 females.

The main languages spoken at home by Albania-born people in Australia were Albanian (1830), English (222) and Greek (154).

Of the 2175 Albania-born who spoke a language other than English at home, 68.1 per cent spoke English very well or well, and 29 per cent spoke English not well or not at all.

At the 2011 Census the major religious affiliations amongst Albania-born were Islam (958), Catholic (422) and Eastern Orthodox (292).

Of the Albania-born, 18.5 per cent stated 'No Religion' which was lower than that of the total Australian population (22.3 per cent), and 8.1 per cent did not state a religion.

The Albanian Community in Greater Shepparton

Albanian migrants were one of the earliest groups to arrive and settle in Greater Shepparton. They began arriving nearly 100 years ago, and now there are over 3000 people in our community who can lay claim to having an Albanian heritage.

The Albanian community is one of Shepparton's strongest and most established multicultural communities, and the oldest formally recognised Albanian communities in Australia.

Albanians from the Korce region began arriving in Shepparton in the mid 1920s. Albanian migration to Australia before World War II consisted almost entirely of young single men journeying to different parts of the country in search of work. As seasonal labourers, some Albanians found work on farms in rural areas such as Shepparton and in time, they were able to pool sufficient resources to buy small farms of their own.

Albanians in Shepparton maintained their distinct cultural heritage and language by building, in the 1960s, the first mosque in Victoria, and by organising Albanian community events, many of which continue today.

The second wave of migration took place in the mid 1990s. The vast majority of the second wave of migrants were also from Korce, with many arriving because of their long established family contacts in Shepparton.

Since World War II, some Albanian migrants have come from Macedonia or Kosovo, but more than 90% still originate from Korce and its surrounding villages.

While most of the original Albanian migrants worked on the land, they have now moved into all fields of professional, business, and community service life, with all retaining their family and community links with Shepparton.⁶

The Albanian Mosque

The Albanian mosque was the first mosque built in Victoria. The first stone was laid in 1956 by Myrteza Adem and R. Sherif Islam, with the building opening in 1960. The mosque remains one of Shepparton's most important buildings. It is an integral part of our migrant and social heritage, and is frequently visited by Muslims of all cultural backgrounds.

2015 has seen some substantial upgrades to the mosque, including new front and back fencing, new garden beds, exterior painting, and installation of an automatic sprinkler system. These upgrades were made possible thanks to generous donations from their community members.

The local Albanian Community has well integrated with the wider community and there are no significant issues.

They are discussing a possibility of a community BBQ area, new car park area, rendering of external walls of the mosque and potentially an extension of the mosque.

The Greater Shepparton City has a sister city relationship with Korce Albania.

Contacts

President – Enver Sabri

Albanian Moslem Society Shepparton Inc.

PO Box 960

Shepparton Victoria 3632

Imam - Eljam Bardi

Albanian Moslem Mosque

Phone: 0423 391 880

1 <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Albania>

2 <http://countrymeters.info/en/Albania>

3 https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/History_of_Albania

4 <http://www.everyculture.com/A-Bo/Albania.html>

5 https://www.dss.gov.au/sites/default/files/documents/02_2014/albania_0.pdf

6 <https://sheppartonalbaniansociety.org/>