

Regional and European Perspectives on Infant and Child Mortality in Albania: The Impact of Demographic Factors After 1990

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Abstract

This article provides an analysis of infant and child mortality trends in Albania, emphasizing demographic, economic, and social influences on health outcomes post-1990. Albania has experienced substantial improvements in health indicators, particularly following the country's transition from a centralized health system under communism to a more integrated, European-standard model. Despite notable advancements, significant challenges persist, including data underreporting, changing in the methodology of data analysis for infant and child mortality rates, as well as regional health disparities. Therefore, this article tries to examine these mortality trends within the broader regional and European contexts, drawing on historical data and

demographic shifts to shed light on Albania's progress and remaining health challenges.

Key demographic shifts in Albania since the early 1990s, including large-scale emigration, declining birth rates, and population aging, have introduced new pressures on the health system and influenced mortality rates among infants and children. Albania's infant mortality rate, though improving, remains relatively high compared to neighboring Balkan countries and significantly above the EU average. Factors such as maternal age, birth spacing, access to healthcare, and socio-economic conditions are examined as critical elements affecting these mortality trends. The article findings highlight the "Albanian paradox"—a situation where Albania has

achieved relatively favorable health outcomes despite economic challenges, in part due to historical policies focused on maternal and child health. Regional and EU disparities reveal ongoing inequities in healthcare access between urban and rural areas, with rural populations facing higher mortality rates due to limited healthcare infrastructure and fewer specialized services.

The study concludes with recommendations for policy actions aimed at reducing infant and child mortality rates. Emphasis is placed on increasing healthcare investments, particularly in rural areas, expanding education programs focused on family planning and child health, and improving data reporting mechanisms to ensure reliable mortality metrics. Strengthening healthcare access and addressing socio-economic disparities are critical to aligning Albania's health indicators with European standards, reducing inequalities, and improving health outcomes for future generations.

Keywords: Albania, mortality, infant, children, demography, impact, factor.