

Albania

Key Facts

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| Total Population: | 3,029,278 |
| Population aged under 5years: | 198,000 |
| Population aged 0-14 years: | 18.8% |
| Population aged 15-24 years: | 18.7% |
| Migration to the UK: | 2001 Census identified over 2,000 people |
| Capital: | Tirana (Tirane) |
| Area: | 28,748 sq km |
| Languages: | Albanian 98.8% (official - derived from Tosk dialect) Greek Vlach Romani Slavic dialects |
| Major religions: | Muslim 70% |
| Albanian Orthodox | 20% |
| Roman Catholic | 10%. |
| Life expectancy: | 77.4 years |
| Political party: | Republic of Albania |
| President: | Chief of state: Bujar Nishani |
| Head of government: | Prime Minister Edi Rama |



Geographical Location



Economy

Although Albania's economy continues to grow, it has slowed, and the country is still one of the poorest in Europe. During the Nato bombing of Yugoslavia in 1999, nearly 500,000 ethnic Albanian refugees from Kosovo spilled over the border, imposing a huge burden on Albania's already fragile economy. Complex tax codes and licensing requirements, a weak judicial system, endemic corruption (reportedly the most corrupt country in Europe), poor enforcement of contracts and property issues, and antiquated infrastructure contribute to Albania's poor business environment and make attracting foreign investment difficult. Strong trade, remittance, and banking sector ties with Greece and Italy make Albania vulnerable to spill-over effects of debt crises and weak growth in the euro zone. Many Albanians have left the country in search of work; the money they send home remains an important source of revenue.

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|----------------------------|-------------|-------|--------|
| Labour force by occupation | Agriculture | 41.8% | (2014) |
| | Industry | 11.4% | (2014) |
| | Services | 46.8% | (2014) |

| | | | |
|--------------------------------------|--------|-------|--------|
| Unemployment rate youths aged 15-24: | Total | 30.2% | (2013) |
| | Male | 32.5% | (2013) |
| | Female | 26.1% | (2013) |

Population below the poverty line: 14.3% (2012)

Child labour: 12% / 72,818 : 5-14 year olds (2005)



Education

| | | |
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| Percentage of children aged over 15 who can read and write (2015): | Total | 97.6% |
| | Male | 98.4% |
| | Female | 96.9% |

Child Protection

| | | |
|--|-------|-------------|
| Percentage of children married - by age of 15: | 0.2% | (2005-2013) |
| - by age of 18: | 9.6% | (2005-2013) |
| Justification of wife beating: - males | 36.4% | (2005-2013) |
| - females | 29.8% | (2005-2013) |
| Violent discipline: | 76.9% | (2005-2013) |
| Births by age 18 years: | 2.5% | (2005-2013) |

Politics - Key political dates:

1912- Albania declared its independence from the Ottoman Empire in 1912

1939- Albania was conquered by Italy

1943- Albania was occupied by Germany during World War II

1944- Communist partisans took over the country

1960- Albania allied itself first with the USSR,

1978- Albania allied to China

1990s- In the early 1990s, Albania ended 46 years of communist rule and established a multiparty democracy.

2009- Albania joined NATO in April 2009

2013- Edi Rama, the Socialist Party leader, took over the reins of government in 2013

2014- In June 2014 Albania became a candidate for EU accession. The EU was keen to encourage further reform, particularly as regards stamping out organised crime and corruption and developing media freedom and property and minority rights.

From 1944 until 1990 Albania was a communist country. The transition to democracy has proven challenging as successive governments have tried to deal with high unemployment, widespread corruption, dilapidated infrastructure, powerful organized crime networks, and combative political opponents. There have also been claims of electoral fraud.

National Service

Albanian's armed forces consist of the Land Forces Command, Navy Force Command and Air Forces Command. The Albanian Parliament passed a law in August 2008 to initiate the end of conscription. By the beginning of 2010, Albania no longer had compulsory military service. The initiative is part of the reforms required by NATO, which the country hoped to join after meeting the Alliance's requirements. Nineteen is the legal minimum age for voluntary military service enlistment.



Illicit Drugs

Albania is increasingly the active trans-shipment point for Southwest Asian opiates, hashish, and cannabis transiting the Balkan route and to a lesser extent cocaine from South America destined for Western Europe. There are active Albanian narco-trafficking organisations expanding in Europe who activities extend to money laundering and trafficking of contraband.

Human Rights

Human rights continue to be breached in Albania and the EU has identified protection of human rights as one of the five priority areas for Albania when it was granted candidate status in 2014. There is a large gap between human rights protection that citizens should have in theory and how individuals or groups experience protection of their rights in reality. The treatment of vulnerable groups is highly problematic. Discriminatory attitudes and practices prevail against the Roma/Egyptians and LGBT communities.

While there was a peaceful transfer of power following national elections in 2013, politics continues to be severely polarised hampering parliamentary proceedings and reforms. Many aspects of the state do not function effectively. The country's poor economic situation is a massive stumbling block to sustained development. Territorial and administrative reforms, the merging of rural and urban areas into 61 new municipalities, have not led to any significant improvements.

Widespread corruption and impunity is a contributory factor to the country's poor human rights record. Various studies have shown that the general public viewed most public institutions, especially the justice sector, as corrupt. Human rights defenders struggle to be heard. Often politicians and the media discredit their opinions and recommendations. The media is not considered free and independent. Women human rights defenders often face strong societal and cultural barriers when carrying out their work.

The right to life and physical integrity

The right to life and protection against torture is guaranteed in the Constitution. Albania is a signatory to international human rights treaties and conventions. There is an ongoing problem of mistreatment by police officers and they often behave with impunity.

Domestic violence against women is a serious problem. Statistics show that nearly 60% of women in rural areas suffer physical or psychological violence and nearly 8% are victims of sexual violence. Protection orders are often violated. In 2015 UNICEF reported that 77% of Albanian children have been subjected to some form of violent punishment at home. Hundreds of children are being forced to beg or subjected to other forms of forced labour within the country and even abroad.

The right to liberty and security of person

While steps have been undertaken to improve conditions and treatment in prisons and pre-detention centres overcrowding persists. Basic facilities are inadequate and many prisoners are forced to sleep on the floor with unsanitary bedding. Underfunding has led to inadequate access to health care and medicines. Political pressure to use custodial sentences even for minor offences with delayed court proceeding exacerbates the problem. Other issues include the unlawful detention in prisons of persons found to be mentally ill and psychiatric patients. High number of suicides in prison is still occurring. The use of solitary confinement is still in use.

The situation for the LGBT community is precarious with reports of LGBT people been held against their will by family members, simply because of their sexuality. A residential shelter has been set up in Tirana for young LGBT people who are victims of or at risk of domestic violence, physical or psychological. LGBT organisations are also working with the police to train officers on issues affecting the LGBT community.

The trafficking of women and children for forced prostitution and cheap labour is an ongoing problem. The Albanian government has shown some commitment to combat trafficking but has been criticised



for not fully complying with the minimum standards for the elimination of trafficking and failing to develop effective measures in witness protection.

The right to respect for private life and family life

The right to private life and family life is generally respected. Problems persist however for Roma/Egyptian and LGBT people and families on low income. The lack of protection from forced evictions of the Roma/Egyptian communities has greatly affected the right to family life for these two marginalised communities. Statistics demonstrate a disproportionately high number of Roma/Egyptian children who are living apart from their families as a result of being housed in residential institutions. The lack of a targeted social protection system has left many Roma/Egyptian families at high risk as these groups often lack access to legal documentation and knowledge of how to claim their rights.

A draft law on same-sex partnership prepared by the Ministry of Social Welfare and Youth is currently stalled at the Ministry of Justice and so it is not yet clear when the law will be sent to the Parliament for consideration. In a separate finding the Commissioner for Protection from Discrimination has raised concerns regarding the family registration law that discriminates against women. As a result heads of households, who are overwhelmingly men, have the right to change family residency without their partners' permission.

The right to a fair trial and to effective remedy

The Albanian justice system is systematically corrupt with high levels of impunity. There are cases of judges and prosecutors demanding bribes in exchange for favourable judgements and the police tampering or destroying evidence. Many citizens have difficulty accessing the justice system. Free legal aid in civil cases is denied to many, especially those from marginalised groups such as the Roma and Egyptian communities.

The right of freedom of thought, conscience and religion

Religion was prohibited from 1967-1990. All churches and mosques were shut down and religions practices were prohibited in an effort to promote nationalism. Religious freedom is now guaranteed by the Constitution and is generally respected. Albania is a secular state and religion does not play a central role in public life. There is minimal sectarianism in the country and the Inter-Religious Council of Albania issues joint statements.

Muslims in the Balkans traditionally practice a moderate form of Islam but a number of factors such as the influx of a conservative branch of Sunni Islam and recent economic problems have led to hundreds of ethnic Albanians joining radical groups in Iraq and Syria. According to Terrorism Monitor, over 150 Albanian citizens have joined terrorist organisations in Iraq and Syria.

The right to the freedom of expression

Although freedom of expression is guaranteed under the Constitution, a strong, independent media has not developed in the country. Media ownership is not transparent and most media outlets, including broadcasters, are openly biased to political parties. The current government is not seen to engage in oppressive methods but they try to control public opinion with heavy propagandistic communication especially on social media.

The rights to protection against discrimination

The Albanian paradox is that while there is good legislation to protect citizens against discrimination, in reality there is poor enforcement of the law. Roma/Egyptian communities, LGBT and people with disabilities experience prejudice and discriminatory behaviour from public institutions and the general public.

Roma/Egyptians are the most deprived community in Albania and are constantly exposed to discrimination and hate speech. Many Roma/Egyptians live in extreme poverty and face exclusion from education, healthcare and employment. Poor housing is an ongoing issue facing Roma/Egyptians. Around 20 families in Elbasan and around 60 families in Tirana have been unable to legalise their homes and face the threat of eviction without compensation from their homes. The Law



on Legalisation of Illegal Buildings, amended in 2014, has adversely affected these people, as they put families living in shacks at risk of eviction without proper compensation or alternative housing. Albanian legislation does not protect citizens from forced evictions.

Albania remains a deeply conservative country. Homophobia and transphobia are widespread. There are very few openly gay people in public life. There is low awareness of LGBT rights within the LGBT community itself and the general public. Bullying is prevalent in schools and many LGBT people face social isolation especially if they live outside of Tirana.

Family life

Traditionally women were expected to stay at home and obey their husbands, fathers and brothers. Under the communist government, however, women were emancipated. Since 1945, girls and women have been encouraged to attend school and establish a career outside the home. Many of the country's doctors and teachers are now women. Men typically play a main role in management of major decisions pertaining to family, though this practice has begun to change.

The family is considered the most stable institution. As in other third world cultures, it is believed that the more children, especially male children, one raises, the more security one will have in one's old age. A childless marriage is considered a great misfortune, and a woman living without a husband and children is inconceivable. Fatherhood is determined by marriage. The mother's husband is the father of a child born during the marriage, or a child born within 300 days after the dissolution of marriage (even if the biological father may be different). Greater importance is attributed to the birth of sons than to that of daughters and in the past male children were generally treated better.

Domestic violence is seen as a private matter between husband and wife and is not addressed by public policies. As more laws are enacted, this practice has begun to change.

Traditionally several generations lived in the same household due to financial constraints. Today, if financially stable, young couples may prefer to live alone.

Cultural Etiquette

- Children are typically taught both Albanian and English.
- Albanians use many physical gestures such as hand motions.
- Hugs and kisses are given upon greeting. Actual contact of lips is not as important as the contact of cheek and cheek, and an audible kissing noise is made.
- Traditionally head nods are reversed. Vertical head nod means no and a horizontal head nod means yes. Head nods have evolved over time. A left/right tilt can be interpreted as yes, but means no. It expresses disagreement and confusion. In contrast, a vertical head nod means no and expresses agreement and understanding.

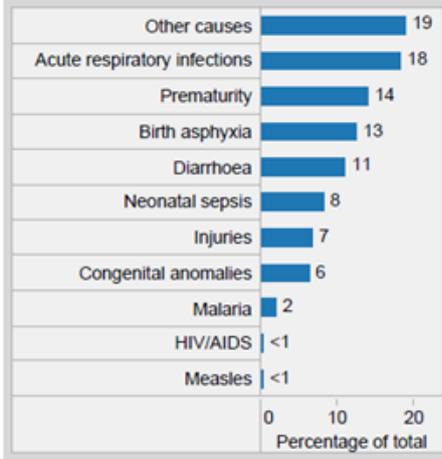
Health

Mortality

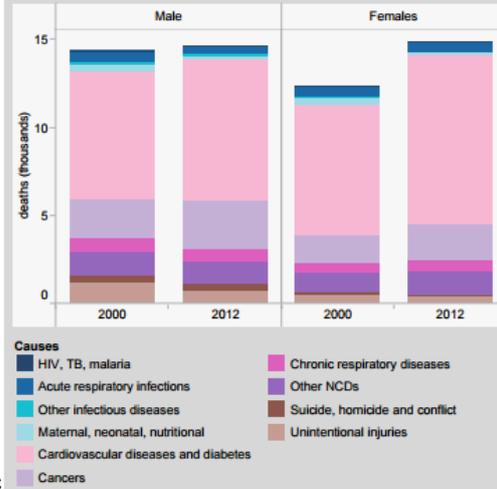
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|---|----|--------|
| Neonatal mortality rate per 1000 live births: | 7 | (2013) |
| Infant mortality rate per 1000 live births: | 13 | (2013) |
| Under 5 mortality rate per 1000 live births: | 15 | (2013) |



Distribution of causes of deaths in children under-5, 2013



Deaths by broad cause group



Top 10 causes of death

Ischaemic heart disease was the leading cause of death, killing 7.5 thousand people in 2012

| | No of deaths (000s) 2012 | Crude death rate 2000-2012 | Change in rank 2000-2012 |
|--|--------------------------|----------------------------|--------------------------|
| Ischaemic heart disease (25.4%) | 7.5 | | ▲ |
| Stroke (25.2%) | 7.4 | | ▼ |
| Trachea, bronchus, lung cancers (3.5%) | 1.0 | | ▲ |
| Lower respiratory infections (3.5%) | 1.0 | | ▼ |
| Chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (2.8%) | 0.8 | | ▲ |
| Stomach cancer (2.4%) | 0.7 | | ▼ |
| Hypertensive heart disease (1.8%) | 0.5 | | ▲ |
| Kidney diseases (1.5%) | 0.4 | | ▲ |
| Cardiomyopathy, myocarditis (1.4%) | 0.4 | | ▲ |
| Road injury (1.4%) | 0.4 | | ▼ |

Rank: ■ decreased ■ increased

Infectious diseases

- TB - This country has a low rate of tuberculosis (less than 40/100,000)
- HIV - The rate of HIV in this country is $\leq 1\%$; with less than 0.1% amongst people aged 15-24 years (2013)
 - Comprehensive knowledge of HIV by 15-24 year olds: male 22% ; females 35.9% (2009-2013)
- Hepatitis B - Albania has an intermediate prevalence of hepatitis B
- Hepatitis C - Albania has a higher prevalence of hepatitis C than the UK.



Immunisations

Percentage coverage in under 1s:

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|----------------------|-----|--|
| DPT3/pentavalant Hib | 99% | combination vaccine: diphtheria, tetanus, pertussis, hepatitis B and Hib |
| Measles | 99% | |
| BCG | 99% | |
| PCV3 | 99% | |
| HBV3 (hepatitis B) | 99% | |
| Rotavirus | 0% | |
| Hib | 99% | |
| Polio | 99% | |

Newborns protected against tetanus 87%

Nutrition

Percentage of babies exclusively breastfed for 6 months: 38.6%

Introduction to solid, semi-solid or soft foods 6-8 months: 78.3%

Breastfeeding at age 2: 31%

Percentage of whose growth was stunted: 23.1%

Percentage whose growth was wasted: 9.4%

Anaemia - The estimated prevalence of anaemia in pre-school children is 20-40%

Vitamin A deficiency - There is a risk of vitamin A deficiency in Albania

Health Beliefs

- Illness of an individual is a concern for the entire family.
- Albanians may believe that illness is caused by unfavourable climate, poor eating or physical or psychological oppression.
- Albanians may not want to bathe or wash their hair due to the belief that they may get sick.
- Albanians believe that telling the patient directly of the condition may make it worse.
- Many Albanians believe that mental health problems stem from evil due to a general lack of understanding.
- Albanians may be reluctant to seek health services due to infrequent utilisation of healthcare in their native country.
- Albanians may not consider preventative care as valuable.
- Verbal agreements are taken seriously and may be considered slights of honour if not adhered to.
- Remember difference in communication style such as reversed head nods.
- Explain the purpose of touch before approaching the patient.

