

# The Analysis of Demographic Changes in Croatia During Past Fifty Years

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## 1. Population history in Croatia during past fifty years.

In the second half of the last century Croatia has undergone dramatic changes in number of inhabitants and also regarding their age, sex, illiteracy, educational attainment, migration, economic activity and ethnicity.

The number of live births has dramatically fallen from 68,873 in the year 1964 to 40,993 in the year 2001, the fall of 40.48%. This tendency is clearly seen from figure 1. On the contrary, the number of deaths has risen from 43,720 in the year 1968 to 49,552 in the year 2001. These figures are the result of smaller number of live births per woman, economic and political migrations and wars. Partially, it could be also blamed on the fast economic development and prosperity during socialism, increasing the level of women rights and their education.

According to censuses, the sex structure has also changed: percentage of women in 1953 was 52.7, which is due to losses of male population in the World War II. In 1991 the figure was 51.5% as it is natural percentage, but in the last census in 2001 it was 51.9% which is the consequence of the war for independence.

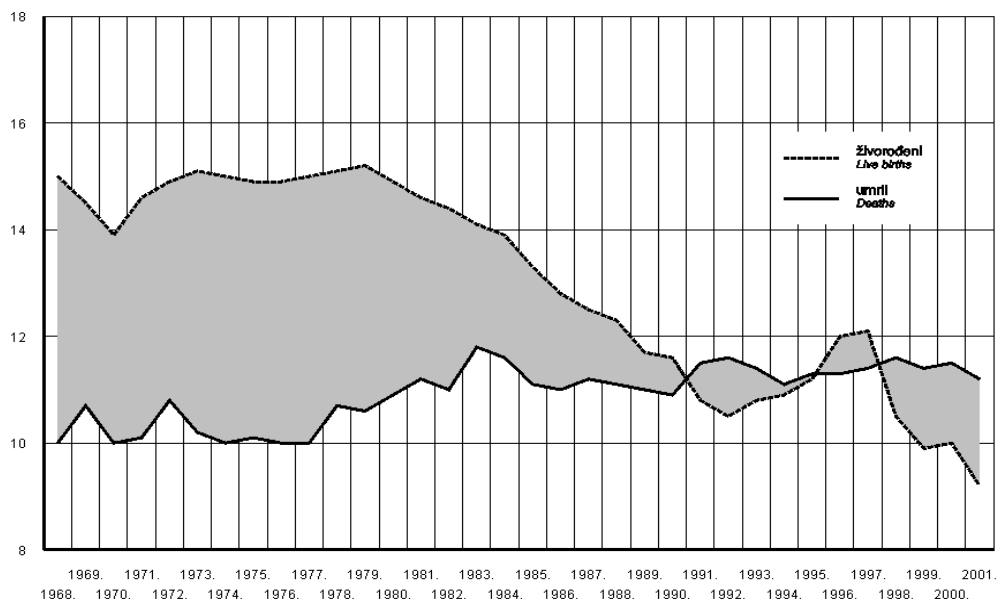
The ageing of the population is the most severe problem. In the year 1953 the percentage of population aged 65 or more was 7.0%, but in the year 2001 it was 15.7%, thus creating great problems for national economy as well as pension funds. The percentage of younger population aged up to 14 years has fallen from 27.0% in 1953 to 17.1% in 2001. Even with the percentage of younger population being so low, there are big problems with unemployment, resulting from war and also economic transition which was and still is somehow chaotic.

The biggest achievement was in the reduction of illiteracy. From 1953 to 2001 the illiteracy percentage has fallen from 12.9% to 1.8% with the percentage of 70.5% belonging to the age group over 65. We could conclude that the problem of illiteracy is vanishing.

The percentage of the higher educated people within the entire population has risen from 1.8% in 1961 to 11.9% in 2001 with the upward trend according to the number of enrolled students in recent years.

Agricultural population as a percentage of total population has experienced the steepest descent from 43.9% in 1961 to 5.5% in 2001.

Regarding ethnicity there was also significant change because of the war for independence. Percentage of Croats within entire population has risen from 80.3% in 1961 to 89.63% in 2001. Percentage of Serbs has fallen from 14.16% to 4.54% during the same period.



**Figure 1. Natural Change of Population (per 1000 inhabitants)**

## 2. Population projections in Croatia until the year 2050.

As the population in Croatia has been decreasing in recent years, the estimates for the future is not very optimistic. From the present number of 4,437,460 it would fall to 4,320,000 in the year 2050 with the growth rate of  $-0.3\%$  annually. The estimate of life expectancy in 2050 is 80.7 years compared with 73.7 in the year 2000. The estimates of the population are based on number of women in fertile age in the next years and also on total fertility rate. The estimate of life expectancy is based on the rise of standard of living and improving medical care.

These estimates show population that is ageing rapidly, thus posing great problems for the economy and future development of the country.

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