

AN OVERVIEW OF RELIGIOUS BELONGING PERCENTAGE IN ALBANIA

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ABSTRACT

Albania is characterized by the centuries-old presence of the two world religions, Islam and Christianity, with its two largest branches, the Catholic and the Orthodox Church. During the communist regime, religion was banned and the country was declared an atheist by the constitution of 1967. From that period until 2011, there was no state-level religious registration. In 2011 the National Census was conducted which included in its questionnaire the question of religious affiliation. The results given by this census in this regard were debated and rejected by some as unrealistic. But meanwhile, rarely tried anyone to consider other data in this regard. This research focuses exactly on the percentage of religious affiliation of the citizens of the Republic of Albania presented not only by the Census but also by 21 surveys conducted by various institutions in the period from 1991 to 2019.

Keywords: Census, survey, percentage, Muslims, Orthodox, Catholic.

1.1 INTRODUCTION

The residents and housing census was conducted in Albania in 2011 and following many public debates about its questionnaire, religious and ethnic affiliation was included, which were left as questions of free choice. After processing the data, INSTAT announced that 56.7% had declared themselves Muslims, 2.09% Bektashis, 10.03% Catholics, and 6.75% Orthodoxes. In addition to these traditional beliefs, the census showed 0.14% evangelicals, 0.07% other Christians, 5.49% believers who did not belong to any religion, 2.5% atheists, and 13.79% who did not accept to declare their religious affiliation.

1.2 Census Debate

This result was disputed in particular by the Orthodox Church for the obvious reason that it presented the Orthodox community as the most damaged during the period of the atheist communist regime Albania went through, which was inaccurate and unacceptable for the Orthodox Church. It stated that according to a written survey completed by Orthodox believers in some cities of Albania, initially with a sample of 7118 people and then with 25870 people, it turned out that 67.1% had stated that "they were not visited by

enumerators, or were not asked (and did not write) about religious affiliation.”¹ They also stated that according to the church records they have "(baptism records before and after persecution, as well as registers of 460 Orthodox parishes throughout the country) the number of Orthodox Christians exceeds 24% of the population of Albania."² They also claim that according to them, the data support the fact that the vast majority of those who according to the census is not expressed or defined as unqualified believers belong to the Orthodox believers.³

There have been similar reactions from some demographic researchers, who question and claim that these data are inaccurate.

For example, Prof. Ilija Telo, referring to the book of the demographer Prof. Fiqiri Sheri "Population of the World" a publication of 2006, shows that the composition of the population according to religion in Albania is: Muslims 65%, Orthodox 23%, and Catholics 12%⁴, not including any other affiliation, even atheist. He states that:

“Analyzing the census results and comparing with the data received before the census, it is noticed:

-Reduction of the Christian population. From about 35% to about 17%.

-Very low specific weight of Bektashis at 2.09%, while in the past Bektashis have not presented themselves separately.

-In particular, there is a large reduction in the specific weight of the Orthodox population. The percentage currently calculated is more than 1/3 compared to the percentage received before the 2011 census.”

He then refers to the survey conducted by the Orthodox Church as an argument for the inaccuracy of the Census.⁵

Another demographer in the same academic magazine, Prof. Arqile Bërxfholi in his article he criticizes in detail some elements of the methodology and some concepts used by INSTAT for the population census, and also opposes the religious percentages of this census, stating that from the earliest data to the year 1967, as well as some surveys (without specifying which ones) that have been done since the mid-1990s, show that the religious structure of the population of Albania appears more or less as follows: "Muslims and Bektashis occupy nearly the most population of the country (63 %), Orthodox accounted for about 22%, Catholics 8% and 7% were undeclared."⁶

¹ <https://orthodoxalbania.org/2020/kisha-jone/te-dhenat-e-censuset-2011-per-te-krishteret-orthodhokse-te-shqiperise-jane-teresisht-te-pasakta-dhe-te-papranueshme/>

² ibid.

³ ibid.

⁴ Fiqiri Sheri, "Popullsia e Botës". Tiranë, 2006. p. 149. (cited work)

⁵ Ilija TELO, REVISTA DEMOGRAFIA Nr. 1 Year 2013, p.16-17

⁶ Arqile Bërxfholi, REVISTA DEMOGRAFIA Nr. 1 Year 2013, p.35.

So, it seems that the above two scholars, similar to the Orthodox Church, mostly for rejecting this result refer to essentially old data as well as surveys that confirm more or less the same religious percentage declared by the early 1923 censuses and 1927 onwards, which affirm with some small differences more or less the same religious percentage even after the period of atheist rule in Albania.

Referring to the 1927 census, Muslims made up 67.67%, Orthodox 21.59%,⁷ and Catholics 10.75% of the country's population.⁸ So, the 2011 census represents a decline of 9.48% of Muslims (including Bektashis) and 15.15% of the Orthodox population nationwide, a more than threefold decline in the Orthodox population. The only ones who show an increase according to the census, however a light increase, are the Catholics.

1.2 Problems accompanying the Census

This brings up the question of how accurate are the census data in this regard and are there other sources to support or refuse these results?

What makes it difficult to answer this question is the fact that the registration process was preceded by a large public debate, which certainly affected the high percentage of those who refused to answer this question (13.79%). We can mention here the campaign undertaken by the Red and Black Alliance, which strongly opposed the inclusion of this question alongside that of ethnicity.⁹ The same initiative to refuse to include the question of religious affiliation was joined by the Muslim Forum of Albania, while the Muslim Community agreed to the registration of the religion, but expressed doubtful reservations about its progress.¹⁰ After the publication of the data, the spokesman of the Muslim Community stated, among other things, that Muslims were more than the figure declared by the census, according to him they were over 70% of the population.¹¹ Meanwhile, the Orthodox Church said before the Census that it agreed to include the question of religion in it and even suggested that the question be compulsory, like other questions. However, it drew attention to its statement afterward that this process was accompanied by uncertainty and fear from the citizens, precisely because this question was opposed by various politicians and religious circles.¹² The Catholic Church is not reported to have had any official rejection of the result, although after conducting the census and processing the data it also raised its objections to the irregularities they had observed during the census.¹³

⁷ According to the data presented by Teki Selenica, the total population in 1927 turns out to be 828,593 people, of which the Orthodox were 178,349, so they constituted 21.52% of the population, but from the collection of figures presented by prefectures and religious affiliations, the total number results slightly higher at 829,099 total population and the Orthodox population at 179,009. This error may be the result of the incorrect collection, as is the case with some other data there or due to error in data entry. However, the difference is quite small and this error does not change the base percentage.

⁸ Selenica Teki, Shqipria in 1927, Shtypshkronja "Tirana", Tiranë 1929, p. 491

⁹ <http://www.gazetatema.net/2011/10/01/nis-sot-regjistrimi-i-popullsis-e-aleanca-kuq-e-zi-grisni-fleten-per-fene-e-etnine/>

¹⁰ <http://www.e-zani.com/2011/10/04/kmsh-mbeshtet-censusin-edhe-pse-me-rezerva/>

¹¹ <http://www.panorama.com.al/fete-kunder-censusit-bektashinjte-nuk-u-pyetem/>

¹² <https://orthodoxalbania.org/2020/kisha-jone/te-dhenat-e-censusit-2011-per-te-krishteret-orthodhokse-te-shqiperise-jane-teresisht-te-pasakta-dhe-te-papranueshme/>

¹³ <http://www.arkivalajmeve.com/Katoliket-kunder-Censusit-Do-te-regjistrojme-besimtare.1047134631/>

Another element is the way of declaring religious affiliation, where in most cases the answers to religion were given by certain members of the family, who were in the apartment at the time of registration, thus responding instead of those who were not at home, and this obviously has its measure of subjectivity, as religious belief also contains the individual choice of each person and not just his family heritage. The other big problem is the issue of immigrants, whose religious affiliation requires a separate study and analysis. However, the purpose of the census is to present a photographic panorama at a given moment of the resident population and not of all citizens, regardless of their temporary residence.

The debate over the religious percentages of today's Albanians, especially after the fall of the communist state, has been highly sensitive not only from religious communities but also from other people. And this interest is also reflected in various surveys which, although often passed in silence for the Albanian public and without being taken seriously in their results, have included the religious affiliation of today's Albanians. Although these surveys do not have the accuracy of a census, thanks to the correct scientific methodology when it is rigorously applied, they can with high approximation give generally reliable results in this regard. Down below we will review some of these surveys over the years, to compare them with the 2011 Census. But before we start, we will first note the results of a mass survey, or differently, a mini-census that was undertaken shortly afterward by INSTAT, as a test of the accuracy of the Census conducted.

2. Mini census

Timing to verify the accuracy of the 2011 Census INSTAT conducted in the same year a mini-census, the details of which it states:

The sample size of Population and Housing Census 2011 is 3 % of Households (HH). The sample technique used to select the sample is simple random sample (SRS). The sample randomly selected was 21,665 households from 722,226 households in the whole country. For each selected household, there were listed all their individuals, 83,430 people from 2,800,138 people enumerated in Census. This sample is representative at the prefecture and national level.¹⁴

These data, differently from the census itself, are given in individual detail, which enables us to make possible correlations between them, to a better understanding result. In summary, the percentage of religious affiliations given by this mini-census compared to that of the mini-census is:

Religious belief	Mini-census percentages	Census percentages
Muslims	56,92%	56,70 %
Bektashi	2,07%	2,09 %
Orthodox	6,82%	6,75 %

¹⁴ INSTAT official website: http://www.instat.gov.al/media/1548/censusi_i_popullsis_dhe_banesave_2011_-_mikrodata.rar

Catholics	10,01%	10,03 %
Unspecified believer	5,44%	5,49 %
No answer	13,64%	13,79 %
Atheists	2,50%	2,50 %
Evangelicals	0,14%	0,14 %
Other Christians	0,08%	0,07 %
Other	0,01 %	0,02 %
NA / NAP	2,30 %	2,43 %
Total	100 %	100 %

According to these data, the census results for religious percentages are confirmed, while the differences between them are negligible.

3. METHODOLOGY

The methodology followed in this paper is mostly descriptive and partly comparative. The research managed to collect 21 different surveys which have in their focus different topics, but which have also included in them the question of religious affiliation. These surveys are presented according to the institution which conducted them and if there is more than one survey, they are placed according to the schedule. The surveys are preceded by a brief introduction which talks about the survey methodology conducted by the relevant institution, referring to the source provided. In some cases, these data are more detailed and in other cases more concise, due to the number of details provided by the authors of these surveys. I have provided the tables for each survey in detail as quoted in the source. Percentages are derived from the tables, when they have been reflected, manually, and in some cases through the EPSS and EXEL program. Graphs are made via EXEL.

LITERATURE REVIEW

4. Surveys of religious affiliation over the years

4.1 INSTAT Surveys

INSTAT has been conducting over the years, before and after the 2011 Census, various surveys in cooperation with international institutions, where it has included the question of religious affiliation in them. Here are some of these surveys:

4.1.1 Survey of 2002

According to a 2002 survey conducted by INSTAT on reproductive health in Albania,¹⁵ based on a sample of 5697 women aged 15-44 and 1740 men aged 15-49¹⁶ we have the following data on religious affiliation divided by areas:¹⁷

Religious belief	Total	Urbane zone	Rural zone	Metropolitan Tirana	Other urban	Other rural
Muslims	84,0 %	75,9 %	91,1 %	84,0 %	71,6 %	91,4 %
Orthodox	8,8 %	15,0 %	3,4 %	7,6 %	18,4 %	3,6 %
Catholic	4,3 %	5,6 %	3,1 %	3,4 %	7,3 %	2,8 %
Other/non declared	2,9 %	3,5 %	2,4 %	5,0 %	2,7 %	2,2 %

4.1.2 The survey of 2005

According to another survey for women and children conducted by INSTAT in cooperation with UNICEF in 2005¹⁸, 5150 families and 5091 women aged 15-49¹⁹ were interviewed. This questionnaire also included the question about religion and according to the survey we have these results:

Out of the 5150 households interviewed, where males made up 88.1% and females 11.9% of the head of the household²⁰ and for 5091 women aged 15-49 years²¹ we have both these data:

¹⁵ REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH SURVEY ALBANIA, 2002 FINAL REPORT. Published on May 2005.

¹⁶ *ibid.* p. iii.

¹⁷ *ibid.* p. 23.

¹⁸ Monitoring the Situation of Children and Women, Albania Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey 2005 FINAL REPORT, published from INSTAT and UNICEF February 2008.

¹⁹ *ibid.* p.14.

²⁰ *ibid.* p. 49. In this survey by INSTAT no more detailed division of religious affiliations has been made, but only two divisions have been sufficient: Muslim and Orthodox, Catholic, and others, thus including all Christians and others in a single category.

²¹ *ibid.* p.50.

Religious belief	Percentages for 5150 households	Percentages for 5091 women
Muslims	79,9 %	82,3 %
Orthodox, Catholic and other	20,1 %	17,7 %
Total	100 %	100 %

4.1.3 Survey of 2008-2009, 2013 and 2017-2018

From another study conducted by the Institute of Statistics and the Institute of Public Health in 2008-2009 which included 7584 women and 3013 men²² and almost 9000 families, “selected in such a way as to allow calculations at the urban and rural level, as well as at the regional level for key indicators of population and health”.²³ According to another survey prepared by a research report on domestic violence in Albania in 2013 by INSTAT in cooperation with UNDP, the final sample had 3589 families and women aged 18 to 55 years, spread in all 12 prefectures of Albania, maintaining rural-urban ratios, as stated in the percentages released by the 2011 census.²⁴ The same study above was conducted in 2017-2018 with the participation of 15000 women and 6142 men.²⁵ For these three surveys we have these data:

Religious belief	Percentages for 2008-2009	Percentages for 2013	Percentages for 2017-2018
Muslims	78,05	78,4 %	78,7 %
Bektashi	1,55	1,4 %	1,55 %
Orthodox	7,85	8,2 %	7,2 %
Catholic	10,45	9,7 %	11 %
Other	0,5	0,2 %	0,55 %
Non-religious	-	2,1 %	-
Atheist	1,65	-	0,95 %
Total	100 %	100 %	100 %

²² Institute of Statistics, Institute of Public Health [Albania] and ICF Macro. 2010. Albania Demographic and Health Survey 2008-09. Tirana, Albania: Institute of Statistics, Institute of Public Health and ICF Macro. p. 38.

²³ *ibid.* p. 10.

²⁴ Domestic Violence in Albania: A National Population-Based Survey 2013, Report prepared by Dr. Robin N. Haarr UNDP International Consultant, November 2013, p. 27

²⁵ Institute of Statistics, Institute of Public Health, and ICF. 2018. Albania Demographic and Health Survey 2017-18. Tirana, Albania: Institute of Statistics, Institute of Public Health, and ICF. p. 36.

4.2 Eurobarometer and ESV surveys 1991, 1992, 2005

The 1991 survey was conducted by Gallup with a sample of 1000 people, with the participation of 504 males and 496 females, distributed in 15 cities, in the north, south, and central Albania.²⁶ The 1992 poll was conducted by Gallup with a sample of 1048 people, in the area of Tirana, in the north, in the center and in the south, with 533 male and 516 female elections.²⁷ The 2005 Eurobarometer survey had a sample of 1116 participants, of whom 584 were male and 532 females.²⁸ For all these surveys we have these data:

Religious belief	Year 1991		Year 1992		Year 2005	
	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent
Muslims	650	65,0 %	690	65,84 %	706	63,26 %
Orthodoks	207	20,7 %	167	15,94 %	162	14,52 %
Katholic	83	8,3 %	98	9,35 %	145	12,99 %
Protestant	-	-	1	0,09 %	-	-
None	50	5,0 %	83	7,92 %	21	1,88 %
Agnostic	-	-	-	-	4	0,36 %
Dk	7	0,7 %	2	0,19 %	2	0,18 %
Other	1	0,1 %	3	0,29 %	66	5,91 %
No response	2	0,2 %	4	0,38 %	10	0,90 %
Total	1000	100 %	1048	100	1116	100 %

²⁶ Reif, Karlheinz, & Cunningham, George (1992). Central and Eastern Eurobarometer 2 (Current Affairs and the Media). For Albania Fatos Tarifa, Center for Sociological Studies, University of Tirana. Web address: <https://doi.org/10.4232/1.2251>. See also Central and Eastern EUROBAROMETER, No. 2, January 1992, p. 99, 100.

²⁷ Reif, Karlheinz, & Cunningham, George (1993). Central and Eastern Eurobarometer 3 (Political Disintegration). In web: <https://doi.org/10.4232/1.2321>. Look and Central and Eastern EUROBAROMETER, February 1993, No. 3 p. 133, 135.

²⁸ Ilirjani, Altin, Bean, Clive, Gibson, Rachel K., McAllister, Ian, Billiet, Jaak, De Winter, Lieven, Frogner, Andre-Paul, (2015). Address in web: <https://doi.org/10.7804/cses.module2.2015-12-15>.

4.3 The EVS Surveys

4.3.1 The EVS Survey of 2008

This survey was conducted by the European Values Study²⁹ which included 12 regions of the country with the participation of 1534 people, 759 men, and 775 women³⁰. This survey has asked two questions that must have created some confusion in the answers given. One question was: *Do you belong to any religious denomination?* 1524 people have validly answered this question, out of which 1063 people have claimed to belong to a religious denomination, and 461 people have *denied* belonging to any religious group, so it turns out that 30.2% do not belong to any religious group! To these 1063 (whereof these 10 are invalid) the question asked was *Which denomination (religious do you belong to)?*³¹ and they have given the following answers:

Religious belief	Frequency	Percentages
Muslims	691	45,05 %
Bektashi	107	6,98 %
Orthodox	119	7,76 %
Catholic	132	8,6 %
Jehovah witness	4	0,26 %
Don't know	2	0,13 %
No response	8	0,52 %
NAP	471	30,7 %
Total	1534	100 %

²⁹ Gedeshi, Ilir (2010). European Values Study 2008: Albania (EVS 2008). Adresa në web: <https://doi.org/10.4232/1.10176>.

³⁰ EVS, GESIS (2010): EVS 2008 Method Report. GESIS-Technical Reports 2010/17. Retrieved from <http://www.europeanvaluesstudy.eu/>. p.4

³¹ But meanwhile the question: Do you believe in God? 1386 people answered positively, is over 90%, while 89 people answered negatively, is 5.8%! So how is it possible that those who believe in God are over 90% (1386 people) while those who do not belong to any religious group are over 30% (461 people)?! It can be said that this 20% difference are believers in God without religious affiliation. If so then this would be reflected in one of the other survey data. For example, to the question: Regardless of whether you go to Religious Objects or not would you say that you are 1. A religious person 2. A non-religious person 3. A convinced atheist? Only 42 people answered that they are convinced atheists and 87 people that they are non-religious people, and 1273 that they are religious, so if we add together the atheists with the non-religious people turn out to be 129 people, while above those who did not belong to any the religious group was 461 people! The question "Do you belong to a religious denomination?" in Albanian I think it is wrong, as Albanians understand a 'religious group' as a sect or religious organization, while it would be fairer to say: Do you belong to religious faith? Because Albanians have seen the Muslim, Orthodox, and Catholic communities as religious faiths, is as different religions and not as religious groups, even though Orthodox and Catholics belong to the same Christian religion. Meanwhile, the term denomination used in the west is more appropriate in Albanian for the term sect and was born as a necessity to distinguish between Christian sects, so I think that the answers afterward are contradictory.

4.3.2 The EVS Survey of 2017

This survey was also conducted by the same institution with the same questions, using the same text in Albanian in terms of questions related to religion and belief. This survey was attended by 1435 participants, out of which 905 were females and 530 males, with the same criteria as the 2008 survey³². Question: Do you belong to any religious denomination? 1345 people answered positively and 85 people negatively (and 3 without answers, 2 do not know).³³ While the question: Do you believe in God? They answered with Yes 1384, while with No 51 persons, is in the ratio of 96.45% to 3.55%. The question *which religious denomination you belong to* was answered as follows:

Religious belief	Frequency	Percentages
Muslims	1017	70,87 %
Bektashi	80	5,57 %
Orthodox	94	6,55 %
Catholic	138	9,62 %
Evangelist	7	0,49 %
Other	7	0,49 %
No response	2	0,14 %
NAP	90	6,27 %
Total	1435	100 %

4.4. ESS Survey of 2012

Another survey by a foreign international organization is that of the European Social Survey (ESS). In this survey undertaken by the "Open Society Foundation for Albania" participated 1201 people, out of which 549 were men and 652 women and based on the declarations of their religious³⁴ affiliation we have the following results:

³² Gedeshi, Ilir, Kritzing, Sylvia, Poghosyan, Gevorg, Rotman, David, Pachulia, Merab, Fotev, Georgy, Kolenović-Đapo, Jadranka, . . . (2020). European Values Study 2017: Integrated Dataset (EVS 2017). GESIS Data Archive, Cologne. ZA7500 Data file Version 3.0.0, <https://doi.org/10.4232/1.13511>.

³³ In this case, there seems to be a noticeable improvement in the answer, as the confusion must have been less for reasons of perhaps a better clarification of what is meant by this question.

³⁴ As it appears on the data in the table, 309 people, or 25.7% of the respondents were not included in the answer to this question, because they answered the question "Do you consider yourself to belong to a certain faith or religion?" negatively, but meanwhile the question: *Regardless of whether or not you belong to a certain religion, how many believers do you consider yourself?* only 54 people responded at all religiously. So, there are equally contradictions between this large number who declare that they do not belong to any faith or religion and the small number of those who are not religious at all!

Religion or denomination belonging to at present

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent
Valid	Roman Catholic	105	3,7	11,8
	Protestant	1	,1	,1
	Eastern Orthodox	115	9,6	12,9
	Other Christian denomination	6	,5	,7
	Islamic	653	54,3	73,3
	Eastern religions	1	,1	,1
	Other non-Christian religions	5	,4	,6
	Total	891	74,2	100,0
Missing	Not applicable	309	25,7	
	Refusal	1	,1	
	Total	310	25,8	
Total		1201	100,0	

4.5 UNDP and IDM Survey of 2017

Other surveys including the question of religious affiliation involve that of the United Nations Development Program (UNDP) conducted in collaboration with the Institute for Democracy and Mediation (IDM).

According to this survey conducted by UNDP and IDM in 2017 in Albania, about religious tolerance, with a representative sample of 1100 people from 40 different municipalities, the following religious percentages resulted:³⁵

Religious belief	Percentages
Muslims	52,06 %
Bektashi	7,5 %
Orthodox	13,08 %
Catholic	13,82 %
Protestant	1,74 %
Other	1,19 %
Atheist	4,03 %
Don't know/unsure	5,58 %
Refuse to response	1 %
Total	100 %

³⁵ Religious Tolerance in Albania, drafted by UNDP and IDM 2018. p. 31

4.6 Friedrich Ebert Foundation Surveys

The German Foundation "Friedrich Ebert" with an office in Tirana has conducted several social surveys among young people, in some of them one of the questions asked was which religion do young people belong to or practice.

4.6.1 Albanian Youth Survey 2011 and 2015

In this survey 2011³⁶ and 2015³⁷ with Albanian youth, which was attended by 1200 people, out of these 639 men and 561 women, the question "which religion you practice" was answered as follows:

Religious belief	Percentages 2011	Percentages 2015
Muslims	55,58 %	76 %
Bektashi	3,75 %	2 %
Orthodox	11,58 %	7 %
Catholic	8,75 %	10 %
Atheist	1,92 %	1,2 %
Do not practice any religion	16,5 %	2 %
Others / no response	1,92 %	1,8 %
Total	100 %	100 %

The inclusion of the answer "does not practice any religion" between religious affiliations, creates a kind of confusion, because identification with a certain religion does not necessarily mean its practice, in the understanding of today's people, and they are not atheists either, as this survey shows. So this relatively high percentage should be divided between unqualified believers, other religious affiliations, those who say *I do not know*, and agnostics.

4.6.2 Albanian Youth Survey of 2018/2019

In the same line as the previous two surveys, the foundation conducted a third survey with 1200 young people, aged 14-29,³⁸ where among other questions was the one about religious affiliation, which was answered in this way:

³⁶ Albanian Youth 2011, "Between Present Hopes and Future Insecurities!" published in 2013, p.35, 36. In web: <http://library.fes.de/pdf-files/bueros/albanien/10056.pdf>

³⁷ Albanian Youth 2015, "Slow change, internet support ... and trust in the EU!" Web source: <http://library.fes.de/pdf-files/bueros/albanien/12299.pdf>

³⁸ Albanian Youth 2018/2019, p. 5. source in web: <http://library.fes.de/pdf-files/bueros/albanien/15257.pdf>

Religious belief	Percentages
Muslims	69 %
Bektashi	4 %
Orthodox	10 %
Catholic	12 %
Do not belong to any religious faith	3 %
Protestant	1 %
No response	1 %
Total	100 %

If in the first two surveys conducted by this foundation the category of "does not practice any religion" is included, in the third case it is formulated differently as "does not belong to any religion" which differs in essence and gives different results, and of course, this is more accurate in terms of the question of religious affiliation.

4.7 ALPSA Surveys of 2005-2006

These surveys were conducted by the Comparative Study of Electoral Systems (CSES) based in Michigan, USA, which deals with the study of electoral opinion around the world. These surveys were conducted in cooperation with the Albanian Political Science Association (ALPSA).

The first survey was conducted in July 2005 with a sample of 1500 people, where 48% of the interviews (or 705) were conducted in the six main districts of the country distributed in 83 interview units (Primary Sample Units).³⁹ The rest (or 795 interviews) were conducted in other districts distributed in 90 interview units.⁴⁰ The second survey was conducted in December 2005 on 910 families in Tirana and Durrës.⁴¹ The third survey was conducted with "a random sample of residents in Tirana, Albania in June 2006. The fieldwork took place during the period 5-11 June. The survey was administered through

³⁹ Altin Ilirjani, Summary of some results of the Albanian Electoral Survey 2005, published by the Albanian Political Science Association (ALPSA). p. 2. Web source: <http://alpsa.org/aes/docs/AES2005-permbledhje.pdf>

⁴⁰ Ibid p. 32.

⁴¹ Altin Ilirjani, Albania Survey # 1: Tirana – Durrës The First 100 Days of the Democratic Party Government, p. 24.

face-to-face interviews in apartments with a representative sample of 1,200 individuals over 18 years of age.⁴² From these surveys, we have the following data:

Religious belief	Percentages July 2005	Percentages December 2005	June 2006	
			Frequency	Percentages
Muslims	64,2 %	67 %	755	63,55 %
Bektashi	6 %	6 %	110	9,26 %
Orthodox	14,7 %	13 %	166	13,97 %
Catholic	13,2 %	6 %	79	6,65 %
None	1,9 %	6 %	58	4,88 %
Other	-	2 %	20	1,68 %
Total	100 %	100 %	1188	100 %

As can be seen in the second and the third survey, the number of Catholics is smaller, for the understandable reason of their greater concentration in the northern and northwestern areas of Albania.

4.8 World Values Survey (WVS) Surveys

WVS has organized several surveys in Albania, when, among other things, the question of religious affiliation has been part of them.

4.8.1 Albania Survey of 1998

This survey was conducted in December 1998 with a sample of 999 people, divided by age group, starting from 18 years old, as well as by regions and sex according to a random selection.⁴³ The question about religious affiliation was answered as follows:⁴⁴

⁴² Altin Ilirjani, Globic Public Opinion Survey # 2: Albanian Public Opinion, Chapel Hill, North Carolina, USA June 2006, p.3 Web source: http://albania.globic.us/docs/globic2_report_shqip.pdf

⁴³ Under the direction of Prof. Dr. Hans-Dieter Klingemann and in collaboration with Index Albania, Ltd., Tirana WV3 Technical Report Albania 1998, web source: <http://www.worldvaluessurvey.org/WVSDocumentationWV3.jsp>

⁴⁴ WV3_Results Study # Albania 1998_v20180912, p. 50, In web: <http://www.worldvaluessurvey.org/WVSDocumentationWV3.jsp>

V179.- Religious Denomination

Cross by

-- None selected --		
	Number of cases	%/Total
Roman Catholic	70	7.0%
Protestant	4	0.4%
Orthodox	204	20.4%
Jew	2	0.2%
Muslim	706	70.7%
No, not a member	12	1.2%
NA	1	0.1%
(N)	(999)	100%

Selected sample: Albania 1998 (999)

The answer to this question as people who do not belong to any religion turn out to be 1.2%, but meanwhile the other question in the survey whether you are religious or not, 4.9%⁴⁵ answered as a convinced atheist! This contradiction can probably be explained by the fact that some people even though they do not believe, continue to identify themselves when asked about religion with that of their family, or there may have been a misunderstanding of how the questions might have been asked, as in the case mentioned above.

4.8.2 Albania Survey 2002

This survey was conducted in February-March 2002 with a sample of 1000 people and the answers for religious affiliation were as follows:⁴⁶

V184.- Religious denomination

Cross by

-- None selected --		
	Number of cases	%/Total
No answer	4	0.4%
None	129	12.9%
Evangelical	13	1.3%
Muslim	580	58.0%
Orthodox	180	18.0%
Other	6	0.6%
Roman Catholic	88	8.8%
(N)	(1,000)	100%

Selected sample: Albania 2002 (1000)

⁴⁵ WV3_Results Study # Albania 1998_v20180912, p. 51.

⁴⁶ The survey was conducted in cooperation with Index Albania and under the direction of Prof. Kosta Bajrabas, WV4_ResultsStudy #Albania 2002_v20180912, p. 77, Web Source: <http://www.worldvaluessurvey.org/WVSDocumentationWV4.jsp>

4.9 Survey of the USIA (United States Information Agency) in 1991

Given that this agency of the United States Department of State was transformed in 1999 into another institution,⁴⁷ I found it impossible to provide a direct source for the survey conducted by it in 1991 in Albania, even after some thorough internet searches. For this reason, I referred to prof. Fatos Tarifa, as the publisher and director of this survey on behalf of this foreign institution. According to what prof. The survey fee was conducted in October 1991, by the Scientific Sector of Sociology at the Faculty of Philosophy and Sociology of the University of Tirana with a sample of 1000 people, from fifteen districts of the country. One of the questions contained in that survey was also about religious affiliation, where the answers to it were:⁴⁸

Religious belief	Percentages
Muslims	26 %
Orthodox	14,7 %
Catholic	6,9 %
None	52,4 %
Total	100 %

5. Summary table of all surveys:⁴⁹

⁴⁷ Integrating with the State Department in October 1999 see: <https://www.federalregister.gov/agencies/united-states-information-agency>

⁴⁸ Fatos Tarifa, *To Albania, With Love*, Hamilton Books 2007, p. 69.

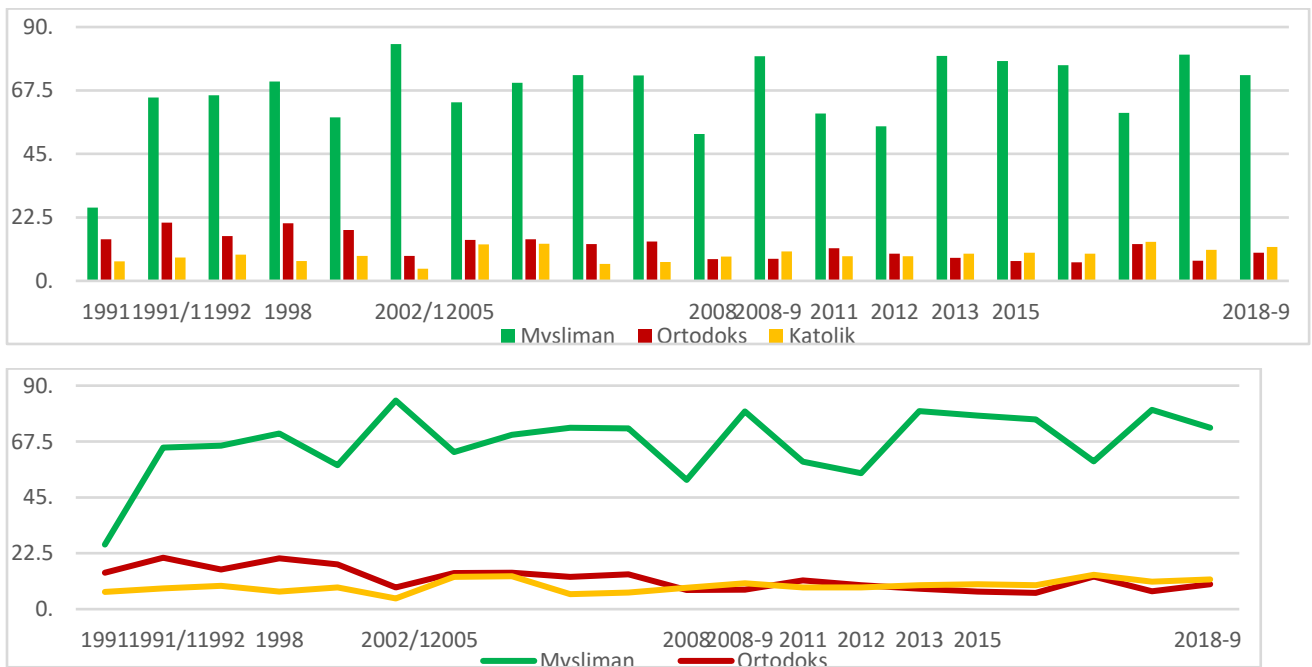
⁴⁹ The Bektashis here no longer appear on their own, but are included among the Muslims. We have included the Jewish category in *others*.

Year/ Religion	1991 USA	1991 ESV	1992 GL	1998 WVS	2002 WVS	2002 IS	2005 IS	2005 EB	2005 ALPISA July	2005 ALPISA December	2006 ALPISA	2008 EVS	2008-9 IS	2011 FE	2012 ESS	2013 IS	2015 FE	2017 EVS	2017 EDM	2017-8 IS	2018-9 FE	Average	CENSUS	
Medians	26	65	65,84	70,7	58	84	81,1	63,26	70,2	73	72,81	52,03	79,6	59,3	54,8	79,8	78	76,44	59,56	80,2	75	67,74	58,79	
Orthodox	14,7	20,7	15,94	20,4	18	8,8		14,52	14,7	13	13,97	7,76	7,85	11,58	9,6	8,2	7	6,55	13,08	7,2	10	12,18	6,75	
Catholic	6,9	8,3	9,35	7	8,8	4,3		12,99	13,2	6	6,65	8,6	10,45	8,75	8,7	9,7	10	9,62	13,62	11	12	9,31	10,03	
Evangelist/P movement				0,4	1,3														1,74			1	0,99	0,14
Other christian												0,26			0,5								0,38	0,07
Atheist													1,65	1,92			1,2		4,03	0,95			1,95	2,5
Agnostic								0,36															-	-
None / don't practice any religion	52,4	5	7,92	0,2	12,9			1,88	1,9	6	4,88			16,5		2,1	2				3		-	-
Unspecified																							5,49	
Other, First religion		0,1	0,29	0,2	0,6	2,9		5,91		2	1,68		0,5	1,92	0,5		1,8	0,49	1,19			1,51	0,02	
No response		0,2	0,38					0,9				0,52			0,1			0,14	1		1	0,53	13,79	
Don't know		0,7	0,19					0,18				0,13							5,58				-	-
Orthodox, Catholic, other							18,9																-	-
No/None				0,1								30,7			25,7			6,27					2,43	

5.2 CONCLUSIONS

These were some of the surveys I managed to collect, which some of them have large differences in the percentages they show. Of course, it is difficult to make a final assessment, but they differ in terms of methodology and practice followed. But in the meantime, some of the differences between these surveys can be explained by the years when the demographic changes took place, which is related to two main elements: internal and external migration and generations change, but meanwhile, the third reason may involve the change itself of the state of religiosity among people, which is reflected in their expression of religious affiliation, although the latter is difficult to test only based on the statements of these surveys, what I think most is the methodology and practice followed in each moment. For example, questions in some cases are unclear and sometimes exclude or include in the answer's different groupings. Also, often the presentation of alternatives restricts and unknowingly directs the respondent towards a certain answer, such as the actual relationship that is created between the interviewer and the respondent, the presence or absence of other people, the completion of the survey sheet by the person or interviewer, etc. All of these are possible elements in explaining these changes.

However, the answers to the three traditional beliefs in Albania are easier to analyze and clearer in the answers. So, if we limit ourselves to only those three, for which there is even higher sensitivity, we will have this graph of surveys over the years:⁵⁰



As can be seen from the graph, the polls show large value changes over the years, especially for Muslims and Orthodox, while for Catholics less. According to these surveys, Muslims fluctuate in extreme values from 26% to 84%, Orthodox from 6.55% to 20.7%, and

⁵⁰ I removed the results from the 2005 INSTAT survey where Orthodox, Catholics and others are included together.

Catholics from 4.3% to 13.82%, but for the latter, as I mentioned above, this difference is more readable and understandable if we take into account the places where the surveys were conducted and knowing that most of them are concentrated in a certain area of Albania. Meanwhile, if we would take all these values for granted and would dare to draw an average, for each faith, for this thirty-year period, we would have the following values: Muslims 67.08%, Orthodox 12.18%, and Catholics 9.31%. If we compare these values with those of the census, we will have this difference, less than the average of the polls over the years: for Muslims 8.29% and for Orthodox 5.43%. Both of these together make up 13.72%, which is surprisingly almost equal to the percentage of those who refused to answer during the census (13.79%). It may also indicate to whom exactly those who have refused to answer belong, who turn out to be Muslims and Orthodox. In fact, this may be supported by what we presented at the beginning that the communities that contested the most before and after the 2011 census were Orthodox and Muslims, and at the same time those who most refused to answer the question of their religious affiliation. Meanwhile, for Catholics, in contrast to the census, the average number of polls over the years is about 0.72% less, a negligible figure, which confirms the stability of data over the years for this community. Atheists turn out to be on average 1.95% while the census has put them at a value of 2.5%. The difference here can be explained by the difficulty presented by the figures of some of the surveys, which often do not have a clear definition for this category. The same can be said for the percentage of unspecified believers, who may have been included in other categories and in any other category, in the surveys presented. Meanwhile, the average of surveys for evangelicals gives a relatively much higher figure (0.99%) than that of the census (0.14%), but even this can be explained by the reasons given above. What needs to be kept in mind, in this case, is that we have a timeline that spans three decades, and the issue of faith is not something fixed, such as the issue of ethnicity, but is affected both by birth rate, migration, and conversions. So, the 2011 census considering what we said, despite the reserves raised, turns out to be quite close to accurate. The question that arises in this case is how is it possible that based on the old data of 1927 the Orthodox community turns out to be the most damaged, at least by about 8%, compared to the polls? The answer to this can be given with several possibilities, which are currently possible hypotheses, but which will be considered in another study:

- First, because the Orthodox community is most affected by emigration abroad, especially including the Greek minority which is a good part of the Orthodox in our country.

- Secondly, because the Orthodox community is mostly concentrated in the southern areas has been affected by low birth rates and an aging population, which is more pronounced in these areas.

- Third, because the Orthodox community is the most urbanized, and as such it is likely to have been even more affected by secularism during the communist regime and conversion after the 1990s. Urbanization also affects the low birth rate and aging population, mentioned above.

- Fourth, the Muslim population, is traditionally the largest in number and spread throughout the country, has also been included by migration, urbanization and its consequences, is by low birth rate and secularization and of course by conversions, after the 90s. This is more than true, but the compensation for Muslims seems to have been made by the high birth rate of the northern and northeastern areas of Albania in particular, which are traditional areas with populations of the Islamic faith. But all these assumptions remain to be verified.

Undoubtedly all this overview is a rough look at the percentages of religious affiliations, taking into account all these surveys conducted during these 30 years, and comparing them with the 2011 Census, while some of them are highly controversial for very high or low values they give for each of the traditional religious affiliations in Albania and for other categories. The next census, if not accompanied by the issues raised in the past, may or may not confirm these conclusions accurately.

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