

DEMOGRAPHIC DEVELOPMENT OF WEST HERZEGOVINA COUNTY DURING THE PERIOD 1961-2011

Jelica Galić¹

Received: April 07, 2016 | Accepted: October 29, 2016

ABSTRACT: *This paper analyzes the demographic development of West County which consists of four municipalities: Grude, Ljubuški, Posušje, and Široki Brijeg. The study covers the period 1961-2011 including five census years. The analysis is based on statistics and surveys. West Herzegovina County is a traditional emigration area that has been affected by the process of depopulation for decades. Mountainous areas have been significantly affected by the process of desolation after World War II, while the urban areas known as immigration centers were creating foci of economic and general development of West County. Depopulation in the mountainous parts of the County (mountainous areas) was followed by the abandonment of traditional economic activities (primarily agriculture and animal husbandry). It led to social devastation, changes in the landscape and the extinction of some settlements. This was supported by factors such as economic migration, urbanization, industrialization and a strong development of central and sub-urban areas. Significant emigration in the second half of the 20th century, the direct and indirect consequences of two world wars, various epidemics, agrarian reform, economic crises which have repeatedly occurred during the fifty years, had the most significant impact.*

Keywords: *West Herzegovina County, demographic development, economic migration, depopulation*

INTRODUCTION

After World War II, the territory of Bosnia and Herzegovina, as well as many European countries, has been faced with numerous demographic problems for the last few decades. Knowing the demographic situation in an area is of great importance for many decisions in the public and private sectors. The area that is analyzed in this paper refers to the West Herzegovina County, one of ten counties in the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina. The studied area covers 100 populated areas (96 rural and four urban settlements).

¹ Second Primary School, Pecara bb, 88220 Široki Brijeg, Bosnia and Herzegovina; e-mail: jelica.galic@tel.net.ba

The paper analyzes the changes in the population of West County in the period 1961-2011, which is a significant part of the demographic, economic and political changes that have marked this period. The lifespan of the population is significantly extended in the last sixty years; the population has been exposed to a number of factors that have changed its structural and dynamic characteristics. Residents of villages in mountainous areas are traditionally tied to agriculture and livestock, which largely determined the demographic development of the settlements in terms of economic and social rise of suburbs. Part of the population living in a particular area will have a key role in determining the demographic situation in the next few decades. Data on the dynamics of the population in West County are extremely important for the implementation of the program of full and efficient use of human resources.

This paper presents the general state of the demographic development of the County and the population change in the reporting period. Long-term emigration and the worsening age population over time caused a decrease in the rate of natural growth. This area is also affected by the natural depopulation that has continued to this day, with constantly increasing natural population decline. The age structure began to deteriorate significantly during the eighties of the 20th century, migration and reduced birth rate significantly contributed to this. Noticeably aging population will also affect the reduction of working population. Demographic development will be expressed by an overall rate of population change in municipalities.

SOURCES AND METHODS

The sources of statistical service of West County, Statistical Bulletins and yearbooks of the Institute for Statistics of the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina with relevant data were used while working on this paper. The development strategies of municipalities in the County whose themes include services related to the demographic development of West County as well as professional literature were also used. The paper used a statistical method that has been applied in the analysis of statistical data. The method of analysis and synthesis was applied in the study of the existing literature and sources and it was also applied while drawing conclusions based on them.

The problem is the lack of official census since 1991, there is only an estimate for year 2011. It is clear that the data between 1991 and 2011 cannot be fully comparable with data from previous censuses and should be taken with caution. After twenty-two years the census was carried out in Bosnia and Herzegovina in 2013, but its preliminary results are incomplete and insufficiently processed, and will not be analyzed in this paper.

GEOGRAPHICAL POSITION OF THE WEST HERZEGOVINA COUNTY

The West Herzegovina County is located in the south-western part of Bosnia and Herzegovina, and as such it borders with the Republic of Croatia on its south-western part, while the east is bordered by the Herzegovina-Neretva County and in the north by the Herzeg-Bosnia County. The County extends from the northern side of the mountain Čvrsnica to the border with the Republic of Croatia. The county seat is in Široki Brijeg. In addition to the municipality Široki Brijeg, the county includes three municipalities: Grude, Ljubuški and Posušje. The governing and administrative center of the West Herzegovina County is Široki Brijeg.

This county with its area (1,362.2 km²) and population (81,433) is the seventh largest county in the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina. Population density of the West Herzegovina County is below the average of the Federation (89.5 ft./km²) and is 59.8 ft./km² (2010).

As natural geographical features are concerned, the County is located in an area which is dominated by the fertile valleys and high mountain ranges: Čvrsnica, Čabulja, Zavelim, Lib and Kušanovac. The County area is characterized by a large vertical relief dissection, considering that this area is located at altitudes that range from 60 to 2 228 m. Accordingly, this county belongs to two geographical regions called Niska Herzegovina and Visoka Herzegovina, which almost the entire northern part of the County belongs to (Spatial Plan of the West Herzegovina County for the period 2008-2028, 2012).

DEMOGRAPHIC DEVELOPMENT OF WEST HERZEGOVINA COUNTY

Contemporary demographic development

West Herzegovina County in the first half of the 20th century in the early sub stages of demographic transition and migration, with reduced mortality, still had a decisive influence in changing population. Unfortunately, there is no reliable data on vital statistics up to 1964, so it is very difficult to talk about exact figures of natural population growth, but there are only secondary data and estimates. However, these data show that the birth rate was quite high. At that time, the population is mainly engaged in the activities of the primary sector, traditional society is characterized by high birth rates, which are part of the compensation, due to the high rates of infant mortality.

A reduced population growth has significantly been affected by the economic crisis, war disasters, war living conditions, and reduced birth rate during the war years (Lukić and others, 2012). By 1953 population changes were slow. However, in the coming decades there have been significant economic, political and demographic changes that are still visible in the area. Until the end of World War II, this place was affected by the process of demographic stagnation, and in the post-war period there was a significant increase in population (Markotić, 1973). West Herzegovina County began to record slightly more favorable economic trends during the seventies and it started to connect in a

compact unit. This caused political changes that caused the demographic and economic stagnation and decline of the area.

A similar thing happened after the war of the nineties when the situation deteriorated further. The war brought new victims. The post-war recovery and progress have been delayed by the unregulated social and political opportunities at all levels, especially at the state level. After the nineties the development of the whole West County is closely linked with development of Široki Brijeg as an urban center and the main political and administrative center of western Herzegovina. Socio-political and economic development of this area was determined by favorable geographical position and natural geographical conditions. In the late 20th century there was intensive transport connection of the County with other parts of the region. Connections between certain parts of the County were improved, so all populated areas within the County were connected to each other.

This paper presents only a brief overview of the causes of changes in population in West County. If the situation is considered at the level of individual parts of West County, it is possible to reach the same conclusion - although various settlements of the County recorded population growth, all mountain areas of the county are in the process of intensive depopulation (Glamuzina and others, 2009).

Continuous population growth in the area of central settlements and neighbouring rural areas was present within the statistical overview 1961-1991, but is also present today, which indicates significant steady influx of residents from the peripheral mountainous areas of the County to the urban centres. This trend will continue, and will be the result of attraction due to the functions of the central places of the County, in which the most significant is the concentration of labor, business and production activities, which affect the quality of life together with a large number of facilities for public use. The potentially present possibility of further movement of population from other areas of Bosnia and Herzegovina to this area should also be taken into account. West Herzegovina County is a good example of an area where the polarized development has led to the depopulation of certain parts, particularly distant mostly mountainous villages, and the concentration of population in the cities and suburban areas, so it is now difficult to stop the negative trends that have been present in this area for decades.

Population growth in the period 1961-2011

The change in population in a given period is the result of interaction of three processes: birth, death and migration, which make dynamic components of population change and result in an increase, reduction or stagnation. Certain spatial and socio-economic factors and technology advances have a significant impact on the interaction of these three components. According to this, in the space-time interaction of these three components there are changes in population growth, population density and composition of the population (Nejašmić, 2005).

West Herzegovina County is a traditional emigration area that has been depopulating for decades. In the whole area process of depopulation began after World War II, while urban areas and their surroundings known as immigration centers were creating

foci of economic and general development of West County. Depopulation in populated mountainous parts of the County was followed by the abandonment of traditional economic activities (primarily agriculture and animal husbandry), which caused considerable social fallow (Crkvenčić, 1981) as well as changes in the landscape and the extinction of certain settlements, for example the settlement Gostuša near Široki Brijeg. On the other hand, the new settlements were created (in 1991), but their development is connected exclusively to statistical separation of individual hamlets from previously existing settlements: for example Drinovačko Brdo (settlement Drinovci) and Jabuka (settlement Tihaljina) in the municipality of Grude; Doci, Podvranić, Potkraj and Rujan (settlement Kočerina) in the municipality of Široki Brijeg. The population number in 2011 is based on the census conducted by the parish priests in the municipality of Široki Brijeg and personal interviews (Galić, 2012). There are no demographic data about villages in municipalities of Grude, Posušje and Ljubuški, their assessment is based on an assessment of the population of the entire municipality, based on data from the Federal Statistical Office.

The most important impact on the demographic development of Bosnia and Herzegovina as a whole, including the area of West County, had emigration in the second half of the 20th century, directly and indirectly effects of two world wars, various epidemics, agrarian reform, economic crisis that took place in several occasions occurred during the 20th century. This was supported by other factors as well, such as economic emigration from the mid-sixties of the 20th century, urbanization, industrialization and a strong development of central places, processes of abandonment of primary sector and rural life, transition of birthrate, the war in Bosnia and Herzegovina in the first half of the nineties of the 20th century, and inadequate population policy (Markotić, 2006).

High rates of natural growth managed to compensate for the loss of population caused by emigration, nevertheless the population continued to grow. However, by long-term emigration and the worsening age composition over time there has been a decrease in the rate of natural increase. In the second half of the 20th century this area was also engulfed by natural depopulation that has continued to this day, with constantly increasing natural population decline (Bubalo-Živković et al, 2010).

After World War II, the population of rural settlements mainly settled the central villages of the County that with the development of the industry provided jobs, which were one of the main attractive (pull) factors. Later resettlement was influenced by economic as well as numerous other factors (social, psychological and other).

Depopulation began in the period 1971-1981 and this trend continued until today. This process is caused by emigration, since the natural movement in the entire period up to 1981 was positive. Anyway, in the last two decades villages in the mountainous areas lost a large number of residents. However, the growth of the population of West County in the period 1961-1981 was almost entirely the result of population growth in the municipal centers and closer settlements, the rest of the suburbs began its significant demographic progress in the period 1981-1991.

The county recorded a slight decline in population in the period 1991-2011, which is a consequence of emigration and the war of the nineties. According to the data in this period the County recorded population decline by 4499 persons. The biggest population

decline was present in Ljubuški, by 3695 persons as a result of unemployment, emigration and the war, while the municipality of Grude recorded 718 persons less compared with the results in 1991. At the same time there was a slight decline in population in the municipalities of Posušje and Široki Brijeg. Demographic growth was higher in the mountainous parts of the County, which implies recovery of rural settlements (Table 1).

Table 1. Population growth in the municipalities of West County in the period 1961-2011

Municipality	1961	1971	1981	1991	2011
Grude	18972	19203	17767	16358	15640
Široki Brijeg	24721	27282	26204	27160	27137
Ljubuški	26630	28269	27603	28340	24645
Posušje	15847	16882	16455	17134	17071
WHC	86170	91636	88029	88992	84493

Source: *Census of population and housing in 1971, (1975); Census of population, households and dwellings in 1981, (1983); Census of households, housing and agricultural farms in 1991 (1998); West Herzegovina County in figures (2012); Data from the parish of West County (2011)*

In the observed period (1961-2011) there has been a continuous increase in the number of residents in the central settlements of the County, which indicates permanent resident influx from the peripheral areas of the municipality to the central urban areas. This trend is the result of attraction due to the function of the village, where the most significant is the concentration of labor and business and production activities, which in addition to a large number of facilities for public use also affect the quality of life. According to the census years in fifty years time demographic changes affect the size of the settlements in the whole County (Table 2). The already mentioned causes and spatial distribution of the population result in an increase in the number of the smallest villages. The number of settlements with less than 200 inhabitants has been growing since 1981 in all municipalities; those are mainly mountainous settlements, far from the central villages of the County and the main roads.

The rate of total population change by census periods indicates the variability in relation to certain periods in all municipalities of West County (Table 3). In all census periods a continued positive rate of overall changes in central and suburban areas is conditioned by migratory movements. There is a noticeable negative rate of overall changes in all mountainous villages of the County. Intensive emigration from mountainous areas of the County has resulted in a negative rate of change in most rural areas in all four municipalities. Permanent negative rate of change in total between 1971 and 2011 is recorded in distant rural villages of the municipality of Grude.

Table 2. Distribution of settlements according to the population in the municipalities of West Herzegovina County in the period 1961-2011

Municipality	Population	1961	1971	1981	1991	2011
		Number of settlements				
Grude	Less than 200	/	/	/	2	3
	From 200 to 500	3	3	3	3	2
	From 501 to 1000	2	2	2	2	2
	From 1001 to 2000	/	/	2	3	3
	More than 2000	6	6	4	3	3
	Settlements	11	11	11	13	13
Š.Brijeg	Less than 200	/	/	1	3	7
	From 200 to 500	10	9	8	10	10
	From 501 to 1000	13	15	16	14	9
	From 1001 to 2000	7	5	4	7	6
	More than 2000	1	2	2	1	2
	Settlements	31	31	31	35	34
Ljubuški	Less than 200	3	3	3	3	7
	From 200 to 500	10	10	12	13	10
	From 501 to 1000	14	14	14	10	11
	From 1001 to 2000	5	5	5	6	4
	More than 2000	3	3	3	3	3
	Settlements	35	35	35	35	35
Posušje	Less than 200	1	1	1	2	4
	From 200 to 500	1	1	3	2	/
	From 501 to 1000	7	6	6	8	9
	From 1001 to 2000	8	9	6	5	3
	More than 2000	/	/	1	1	1
	Settlements	17	17	17	18	17
WHC	Less than 200	4	4	5	10	21
	From 200 to 500	24	21	24	28	22
	From 501 to 1000	35	36	38	34	31
	From 1001 to 2000	19	19	17	21	16
	More than 2000	10	11	10	8	9
	Settlements	94	94	94	101	99

Source: Census of population and housing in 1971 (1975); Census of population, households and dwellings in 1981, (1983); Census of households, housing and agricultural farms in 1991 (1998); West Herzegovina County in figures (2012); Data from the parish of West County (2011)

Table 3. The rate of change in the total population of West County in municipalities 1961-2011; (in ‰)

Municipality	1961-1971	1971-1981	1981-1991	1991-2011
Grude	1,2	-7,5	-7,9	-4,4
Široki Brijeg	10,4	-4	3,6	-0,1
Ljubuški	6,2	-2,4	2,7	-13,0
Posušje	6,5	-2,5	4,1	-0,4
WHC	6,3	-3,9	1,1	-5,1

Source: *Census of population and housing in 1971 (1975); Census of population, households and dwellings in 1981, (1983); Census households, housing and agricultural farms in 1991 (1998); West Herzegovina County in figures (2012)*

According to the analysis of the census in 1971 and 1991 and the estimated number of population of the County in 2011, the population in the municipalities of County decreased from 91 636 to 81 523, i.e. to 11% (with a negative average annual growth rate which is -0.15%). This fall amounted 3% before the war. Observed by municipalities in the pre-war period, the largest decrease in population is recorded in the municipality of Grude (14.8%) and the municipality of Široki Brijeg (0.5%), with a slight increase in the number of residents in the municipalities of Posušje (1.5%) and Ljubuški (0, 3%).

The estimated number of population of West County in 2011, due to the war, intensive out-migration and reduced reproduction of the population, shows huge and troubling disparities in relation to population censuses in 1971 and 1991. Between 1971 and 2011 the County recorded the highest decline in population in the municipality of Grude (19.4%) and Ljubuški (16.4%). The smallest decline was recorded in the area of Široki Brijeg (3.2%), which is understandable due to the central role of this settlement in the administrative part of the county (Table 4). Suburbs and settlements along the roads are developing and recording an increase in population due to more favorable opportunities for work and education for young people. Settlements in peripheral mountainous areas record a decreased number of population and most of them are on the verge of extinction, as young people leave in search of a better life in urban centers or abroad. Older people are forced to stay in passive and neglected parts of the County with the minimum conditions for a better quality of life.

The intensity of depopulation in the villages of West County in the period 1971-2011 was best shown by the change in the size of the settlements. During the forty-year period the number of the smallest settlements grew because of intensive emigration of young people. The largest part of these small settlements is located in the mountainous area of the County (peripheral parts of all municipalities). Furthermore, in the same period the number of settlements with fewer than 500 inhabitants increased.

There was no any village in the county in 1971 that had more than 5000 inhabitants, which means that it still kept its population in rural areas although the relocation was caused by industrialization and going to temporary work abroad. The only central settlement Široki Brijeg had more than 5,000 inhabitants according to the census in 1991.

By comparing the position of villages due to the number of inhabitants in 1971, 1991 and 2011 it is obvious that the focus of population was shifted to central municipali-

Table 4. General information on the population of the municipalities of West County according to census 1971 and 1991, and estimates for 2011; (in%)

Municipality	Population 1971	Population 1991	Population 2011	Change 1971-1991	Change 1971-2011
Grude	19203	16358	15482	-14,8	-19,4
Široki Brijeg	27282	27160	26413	-0,5	-3,2
Ljubuški	28269	28340	23634	0,3	-16,4
Posušje	16882	17134	15994	1,5	-5,3
WHC	91636	88992	81523	-2,9	-11,0

Source: *Census of population and housing in 1971 (1975); Census of households, housing and agricultural farms in 1991 (1998); Data from the parish of West County (2011); West Herzegovina County in figures (2011)*

ty settlements and suburbs and villages along the main roads. The causes of this spatial distribution of the population and increased number of the smallest settlements are numerous (Lukić and others, 2012). Mountainous settlements have been emigration area for several decades, whose population is constantly decreasing, not only as a result of emigration, but also long-term low fertility.

The process of abandonment of the primary sector in rural areas and the industrialization and urbanization of suburban areas of West County are the main cause of depopulation in mountainous villages. The process of depopulation of mountainous villages was intensified after the seventies of the last century and after the war in the nineties as a result of political changes, and poor economic conditions in the post-war period. Unfortunately, due to the aforementioned circumstances some settlements completely died out according to the assessment in 2011 (mountainous village of Bare and Vučipolje – municipality of Posušje). The same process was observed in the neighbouring Croatia, which is about ten kilometers far from the West Herzegovina County and which is, according to natural geographic features, very similar to the County (Glamuzina, 2009).

CONCLUSION

The area of Bosnia and Herzegovina, including the West Herzegovina County, recorded during the 20th century a strong internal and external migration, which was primarily caused by economic and political factors. Because of agrarian overpopulation, high natural increase of the rural population, the crisis in the agricultural production and the deterioration of the socio-economic conditions population was forced to emigrate. With the opening of the Yugoslav borders in the sixties of the last century a significant population of Bosnia and Herzegovina, including the population of West County, decided to go on temporary work abroad. Accelerated processes of abandonment of the primary sector and rural areas in Bosnia and Herzegovina after World War II were not adequately supported by creating new jobs in the secondary and tertiary sector, which resulted in high unemployment; the people were forced to seek employment in the European markets which were in demand for workers.

Socio-economic conditions in the country after World War II encouraged the move from passive rural areas to urban centers. As a result of the emigration of young, active working population, there was a disproportion between demographic resources in urban areas and rural areas. This imbalance significantly contributed to the destabilization and depopulation of rural areas of West County.

Population development of West County in the 20th century can be divided into two phases - the first phase which lasted until the seventies, and the other one which lasted from the 1970s to today. In the first phase of development the steady growth of the population was recorded in the County, which is primarily the result of positive natural increase. Population growth continued until 1971, when under the influence of industrialization there has been a rural exodus of the population. After that, the County is characterized by population regression, which was primarily caused by the negative migration balance. Depopulation in mountainous area of the County began in the late seventies and with time became more intensified. The main cause of these differences in demographic development in some parts of the County is economic development of urban and suburban areas as well as processes of abandonment of primary sector and rural areas in the mountainous parts of the County. Depopulation of most of the mountainous areas of West County was recorded in the period 1981-2011, when due to socio-economic factors mountainous areas of the County lost their population (5536 persons).

The contemporary socio-economic changes in West County took place in accordance with the socio-economic situation and dominant trends throughout the Republic of Bosnia and Herzegovina, but also under the influence of specific regional circumstances. All these changes have significantly influenced the spatial and functional transformation of the settlements in the County. Among the factors and processes that have had a profound influence on the physiognomy and functional transformation of the area certainly there are processes of abandonment of primary sector and rural area, war during the nineties and the development of secondary and tertiary activities. Most of the urban areas are attracted by the population and the economy in the entire Bosnia and Herzegovina.

REFERENCES

- Bubalo-Živković, M., Kovačević, T, Ivkov, A. (2010). Migration in the Former Yugoslav Republics, Migrations From and To Southeastern Europe, Bologna: Longo Editore Ravenna.
- Crkvenčić, I. (1981). Socijalnogeografski aspekti pojave ugara, odnosno neobrađenih oranica. Zagreb: Geografski glasnik, 43.
- Galić, J. (2012). Stanovništvo i naselja općine Široki Brijeg od 1948. do 2011. godine, Sutton, Široki Brijeg.
- Glamuzina, M., Glamuzina, N., Šiljeg, A. (2009). Demogeografski aspekti ruralnih dijelova srednjodalmatinske zagore, Prvi međunarodni geografski znanstveni simpozij-Transformacija ruralnog područja u uvjetima tranzicije i integriranja u Europsku Uniju, Kaštela.

- Lukic, T., Stojsavljevic, R., Đurđev, B., Nagy, I., Dercan D. (2012). Depopulation in the Western Balkan countries, *European Journal of Geography* 3, no. 2.
- Markotić, A. (1973): Stanovništvo zapadne Hercegovine 1948-1971. Prilog poznavanju socio-geografskih utjecaja na njegovu dinamiku i strukturu, (magistarski rad), Prirodoslovno-matematički fakultet Sveučilišta u Zagrebu, Zagreb.
- Markotić, A. (2006a). Promjene u demografskoj slici Širokog Brijega u 20. stoljeću, www.pobijeni.info/dokumenti/samostan/Brig/Promjene-demografske-slike.pdf, 21.10.2013.)
- Nejašmić, I. (2005). Demogeografija: stanovništvo u prostornim odnosima i procesima. Zagreb: Školska knjiga.
- Wertheimer-Baletić, A. (1999). Stanovništvo i razvoj. Zagreb: Mate.

Sources

- Popis stanovništva 1961. godine. (1965). Beograd: Savezni zavod za statistiku
- Popis stanovništva i stanova 1971. (1975). Beograd: Savezni zavod za statistiku
- Popis stanovništva, domaćinstava i stanova 1981. godine. (1983). Sarajevo: Zavod za statistiku
- Popis stanovništva, domaćinstava/kućanstava, stanova i poljoprivrednih gazdinstava 1991. godine. Uporedni podaci 1971, 1981, 1991. (2013). Sarajevo: Federalni zavod za statistiku
- Prostorni plan Županije Zapadnohercegovačke za period od 2008. do 2028. godine. (2012). Zagreb/Mostar/Čitluk: Ministarstvo prostornog uređenja, graditeljstva i zaštite okoliša Zapadnohercegovačke županije
- Statistička služba opštine Široki Brijeg. (2012). Široki Brijeg: Zapadnohercegovački kanton u brojkama
- Zapadnohercegovački kanton u brojkama. (2012). Sarajevo: Federalni zavod za statistiku