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## The geography of crime in Albania 2000-2012

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### Abstract

*Crime is a serious concern in modern times in which we live. Day by day we encounter criminal event which starts from the weaker motivations to the more unusual ones. Types, forms and categories of crime are extended. Not few are the cases that shock the public. Crime varies from one country to another country. The causes and reasons for this are numerous. The aim of the article is to identify the geographical distribution of crime in Albania, new forms of crime that are applied by area, making a detailed study, based on official statistics over the years. The article begins with an argument of the relationship between geography and crime, as well as recognition of the importance of the geographical distribution of crime. Part of the objectives of purpose, the authors aim to present a logical analysis of the factors that have brought this overview of the geography of crime, based on the relationship of social geography with geography of crime.*

Keywords: crime, Albania

## 1. Introduction

### 1.1. *The role of social geography in crime studies*

Geography from its definition of the earlier translated as "earth graphs", and as such it has endless possibilities and space to study and interprets phenomena or cases that occur in a specific territory. Increasing the number of population in the world, and changes of the geography of the settlements, the development of society, is associated with significant problems. Science and technology progress in all directions, and yet it is impossible to conclude that the problems of humanity. Events and criminal acts have already been made daily and ordinary. In each informative edition we listen for criminal events from the easiest ones to those monstrous.

Many universities have increased their curricula which are an integral between Criminology and geography. Geographic research on the location of criminals began in Western Europe during the early 1800s (Warf, 2007).

A geographical approach to crime at the present time is usually employed to determine with what social factors or combination of social and physical factors variations in crime rates are associated (Cohen, 1941).

However, even though in many curricula of different countries: the geography of crime, criminal geographic profile studied as separate disciplines; report and link it has with human geography and social geography is too closely. The data of social geography help us to analyze the situation and the level of crime in a particular territory. In social geography, man's role appears more important for the contribution it gives to socio-geographical space (Axhemi, 2008).

Through the data and social indicators that we know for a territory, an area or an administrative division, we have sufficient information to make a logical interpretation for the level of criminality. Identification of social categories, social groups and social structures in an area, helps us with detailed knowledge of the inhabitants of the territory under study. Recognition of social categories and social groups is the first step which helps us, then further indicators of poverty and other social indexes are a great help to analyze the level of criminality.

The uniqueness of the geographer lies in the fact that he knows closely the territory, with its entire elements, natural, social, economic. Geographer receives the information from the terrain and then makes a concrete analysis, to the study of crime; therefore the study of crime from geographic perspective based on logical line argument, from social geography and population geography has a very close connection between them, and moreover is an important and inevitable element.

Consequently, Geographer through study and adequate knowledge that made in the territory, comes in very useful assistance to lawyer, not only to make it more accurate analysis of the causes of increasing crime in general on the one hand, but especially helps in the fight against crime prevention on the other hand, which is the main task of criminal justice.

Professor Harries provides evidence that crime and justice vary significantly from place to place and that the descriptive and analytical tools of the geographer are useful additions to the general social science effort to gain a better understanding of the nature and causes of crime (HARRIES, 1977). Also another method that helps geographical study of crime is the method of GIS, which in many countries is already a well known practical work. GIS Method plays an important role in the analysis and study of crime. However, below are mentioned two of its main roles:

- The first is to showcase a diverse array of GIS applications in crime analyses that are not limited to crime mapping (through crime mapping remains the primary and fundamentals functions of GIS). ..

- The second objective is to feature a broad range of new methods and techniques including geographical profiling, agent/based modeling, GPS tracking and web GIS (Wang, 2005)

Individual papers consider the role of national crime surveys, factors influencing violent crimes and residential burglaries, the ways in which burglars choose their targets, the relationship between neighborhood structure and fear of crime, and geographical aspects of social control (Evans, D.J, & Herbert, D. T. , 1989.)

## **2. Methodology of work**

To achieve the purpose, are used several methods. Methods of study are integrated in a way that comes to aid of the goal's paper. Studies and current research are focused to discover definitions for the current theoretical concepts. Also, part of the inquiry, have been the review of specific studies for statistical data of crime from General Prosecutor of Albania, General Director of Albanian State Policy, other similar articles and information. Also, part of methodology of work, are interviews with social experts, crime experts etc.

### 3. The general trend of crime in Albania

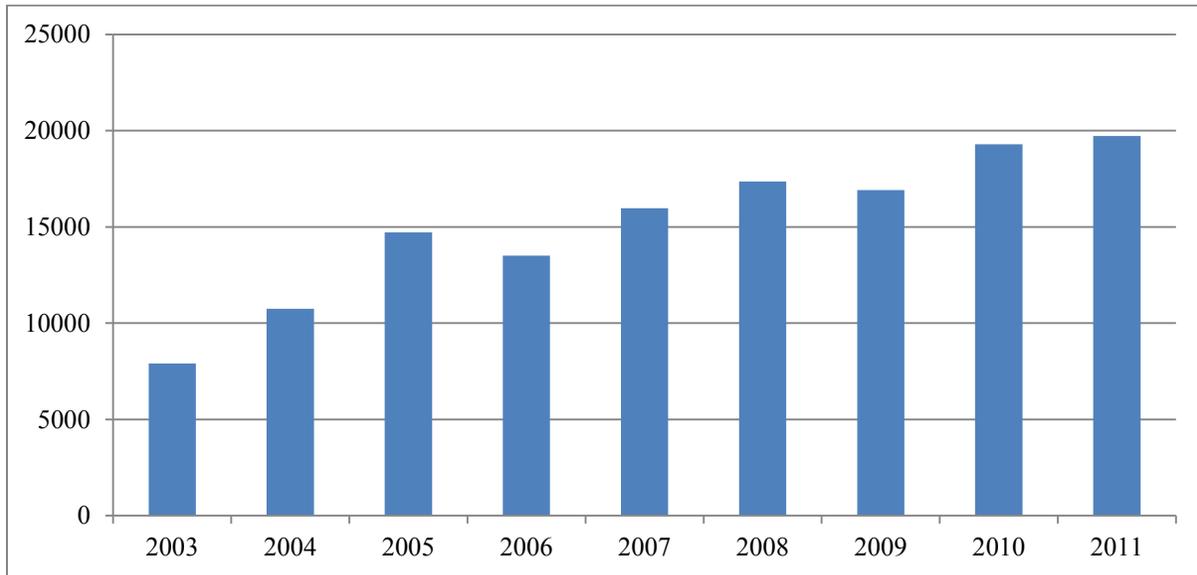
Spatial movement of population mostly intensified after 1990 in Albania. These migratory movements both internal and external brought changes in the geographical distribution of the population, therefore to the social and demographic characteristics of areas. From year to year the types and categories of crime are expanding and its geography also. Crime happens for several reasons originating from social, economic, proprietary, heedlessness etc. Facing of Albanian society in the transition, with a surge and immediate changes is reflected to the social behavior of individuals who made part of them the crime.

The range of causes of crime after 90s expanded and therefore it was necessary on the part of the Albanian legislatures drafted and approved a new Penal Code. In first Democratic Penal Code of 1995, was un-penalized several offenses labeled as such by the communist system before the 90s, but on the other side legislator, decided that a set of actions and omissions of unlawfully and socially dangerous formalized and defined as offense to the Criminal Code of 1995, the non-existent such as to the Penal Code before the 90s. This has happened because of pressure, brutal repression and restriction of daily activity Albanian society of that time.

The Penal Code of the Republic of Albania has undergone some changes, which have come as a necessity not only as a result of the legislation approach with that European and international as well as the necessity for criminal acts and events displayed in the country. Criminal Law of the Republic of Albania after 90s, is concrete and formalized by Law no. 7895, dated 27.1.1995 (The Penal Code of the Republic of Albania), which has undergone constant changes and amendments by laws: Law no. 8175 dated 23.12.1996, Law no. 8204 dated 10.4. 1997, Law no. 8279 dated 15.01.1998, Law no. 8733 dated 24.1. 2001, Law no. 9017 dated 6.3.2003, Law no. 9030 dated 13.3.2003, Law no. 9086 dated 19.6.2003, Law no. 9188 dated 12.2.2004, Law no. 9275 dated 16.09.2004, Law no. 9686 dated 26.2.2007, Law no. 9859 dated 21.1.2008, Law no. 10023 dated 27.11.2008, Law no. 23/2012 dated 03.01.2012.

Currently the Criminal Code of the Republic of Albania for 2011, provided all possible categories as illegal behaviors that constitute a criminal offense, such as crime against humanity, offenses against the person and crimes against life, offenses against property and the economic sphere , offenses against the environment, offenses that endanger relations with other countries offense affecting free elections and democratic system of election offense committed by armed gangs and criminal organizations.

To analyze the last decade about the progress of criminality should refer to statistical data, made available by the Albanian State Policy and General Prosecutor of Albania.

**Figure 1: Criminal acts during 2003-2011 in Albania**

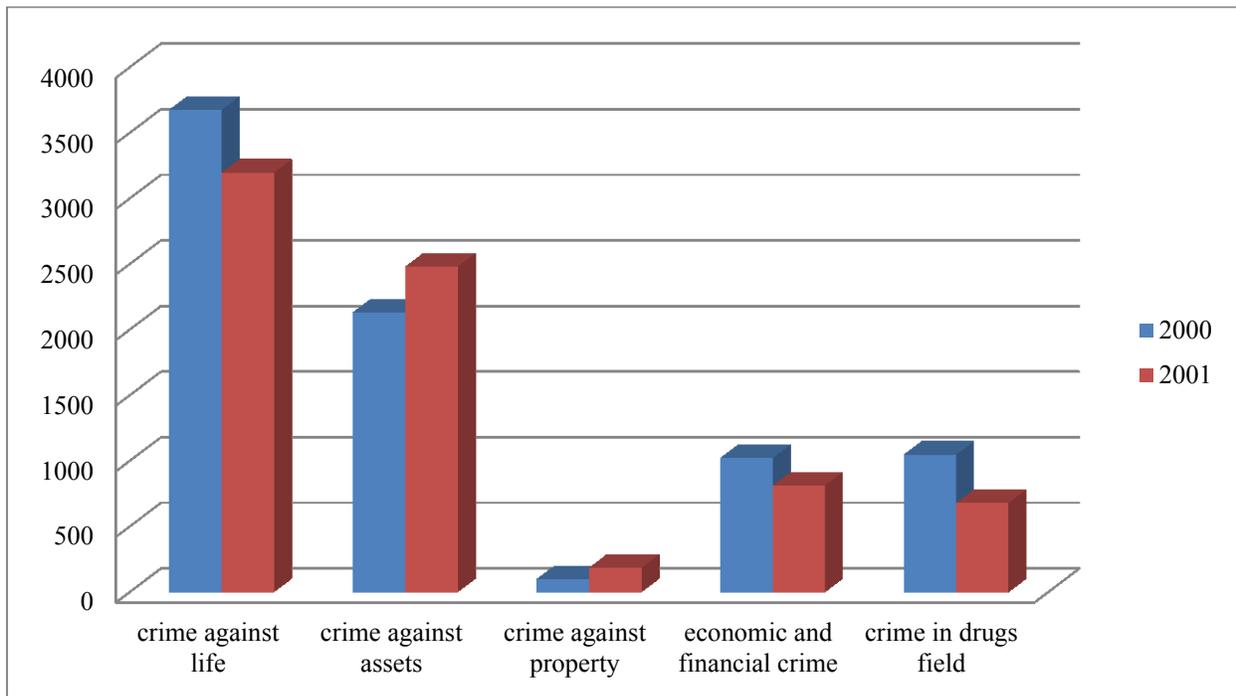
Source: Graphic is made According to Statistical Year Book 2003/2007 of Albanian State Policy & General Prosecutor "Raporti i Prokurorit te Pergjithshem mbi gjendjen e kriminalitetit 2011", p.19, (available <http://www.pp.gov.al/>)

Based on official data of the the chart, offenses recorded in Albanian State Policy and to the General Prosecutor's Office shows that are growing from year to year. Coefficient of criminality<sup>1</sup> per 100.000habitant in 2011 was 695.12. In 2010, the coefficient of criminality per 100,000 inhabitants was 529 (General Prosecutor, 2012) . Recent crime statistics indicate an increase in violent crimes, the majority of which were either from remotely detonated car bombs or explosives placed at private residences, throughout Albania and show an increase in the use of explosives (OSAC, 2012).

Taking into consideration the changes in the The Penal Code, below are presented graphically, the data obtained from the Statistical Database of Albanian State Policy, about the progress of categories of crimes in Albania for the period 2000-2011. Until 2001 offenses were divided as follows: Crime Against life, Crime Against Assets, Crime against Property, Financial and Economic Crimes, and crime in Drugs field.

<sup>1</sup> The calculation of the coefficient of criminality is made on the data submitted by INSTAT, the document no. 37/1, dated 24.01.2011 of the Institute of Statistics. "Available only is the number of population by region for 2011, preliminary results of the Population and Housing Census 1 October 2011

**Figure 2: Crime by category under Penal Code of Republic of Albania, in Albania, during 2000-2001**



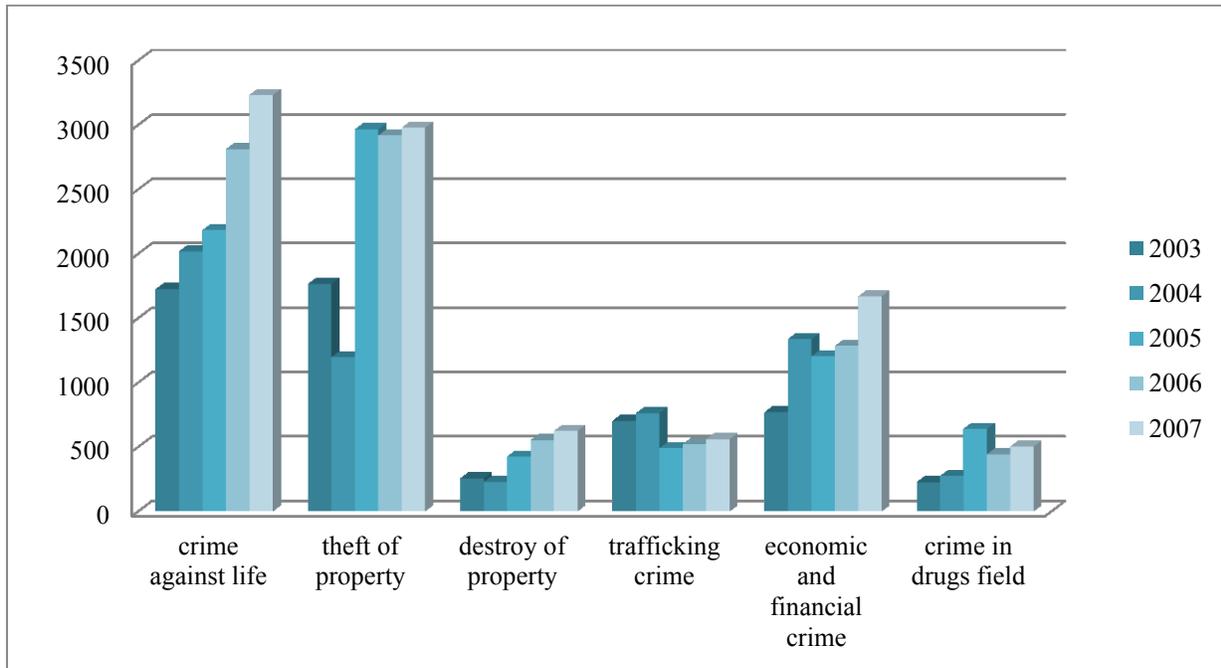
Source: Graphic is made According to Statistical Database of Albanian State Policy, 2000-2001

From the graph, is easily evidenced that the majority of offenses are in the category of Crime against Life and Crime against Assets. Economic-Financial Crime and Crime in Drugs Field are less. Crimes against property are in law level.

“Traffics”- This criminal phenomenon began after 1992, where our country's criminal networks, considering the profits that offered this criminal activity, established contact with the criminal networks of neighboring countries, mostly with Italy and Greece.

In 2001 and 2004 The Penal Code of the Republic of Albania changes were made, including as separate categories of crime "traffic", including: Trafficking in Human Beings, Trafficking and Trafficking in Motor Vehicles Arms and Ammunition. For the period 2003/2007 Trafficking Crimes are not too high level compared to other criminal offenses. It was highlighted in the analysis of evolution of crime during this period that is clear the growth of criminal acts in the group of crimes against life and property violations. Also, there has been growing, in the group economic and financial crime. Crimes occur in Drugs field levels, still lower than 2000/2001.

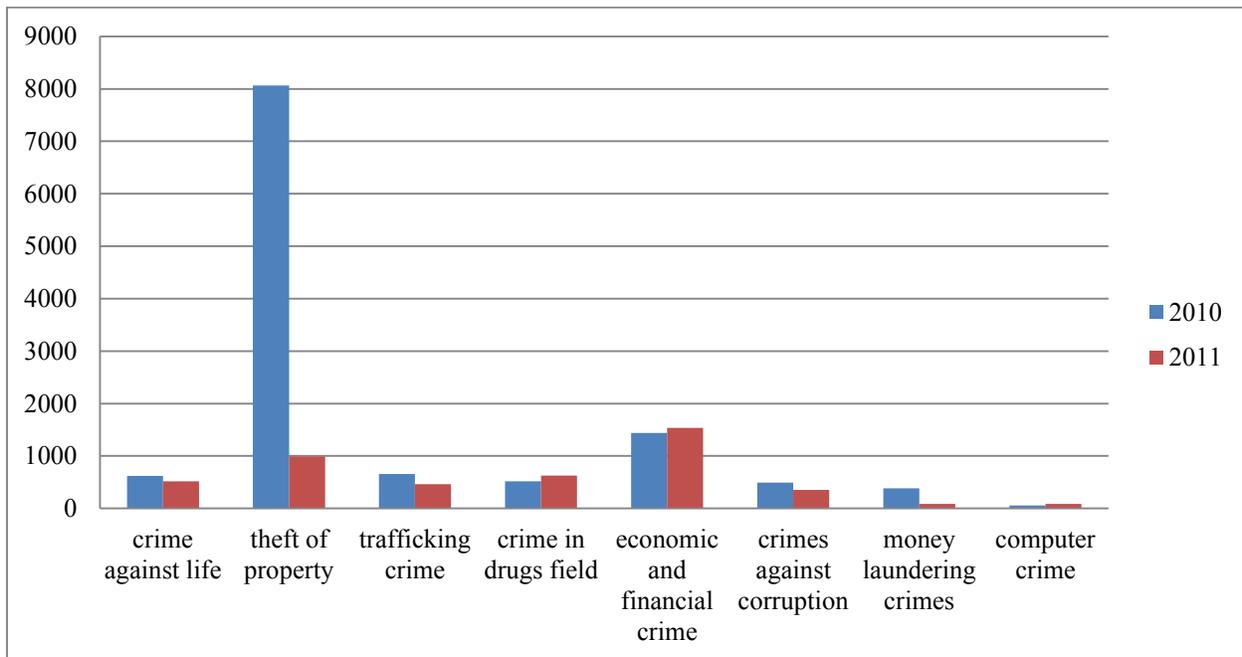
**Figure 3: Crime by category under Penal Code of Republic of Albania, in Albania, 2003-2007**



*Source: Graphic is made According to Statistical Database of Albanian State Policy, 2003-2007*

Changes made to The Penal Code, resulting in 2008 to have a restructuring Penal Code, bringing changes in the criminal offenses groups. So add two new groups of crimes, namely the category are offenses of corruption and money laundering, while the group of criminal offenses damage of property and assets in a join in one corpus .

For the period 2008/2009 the largest number of crimes belongs to the category of property damages. From the statistical data of General Prosecutor's Office we obtained results that in 2008 has increased by 66.66% compared to 2007 registered the criminal proceedings, in 2009 has decreased by 60% in comparison with 2008 the criminal proceedings institution registered in General Prosecution.

**Figure 5: Crime by category under Penal Code of Republic of Albania, in Albania**

Source: Graphic is made According to Statistical Database of Albanian State Policy, 2010-2011

In the year 2010 has increase of 162.5% compared to 2009 for the registered criminal proceedings; and in 2011 has decreased by 71.42% compared to 2010 for registered of criminal proceedings for the offense provided for by article 114 / b "Trafficking in women" Criminal Code (General Prosecutory, 2012)

#### 4. Geographical diffusion of crime

From the administrative point of view, Albania is divided into 12 regions, and 36 districts, which have their own organizational structures. Each region has a General Directory of Police, which has in dependent police stations placed in the districts that make up the region. In the dependence of General Prosecution, are 22 prosecutors, spread in the districts.

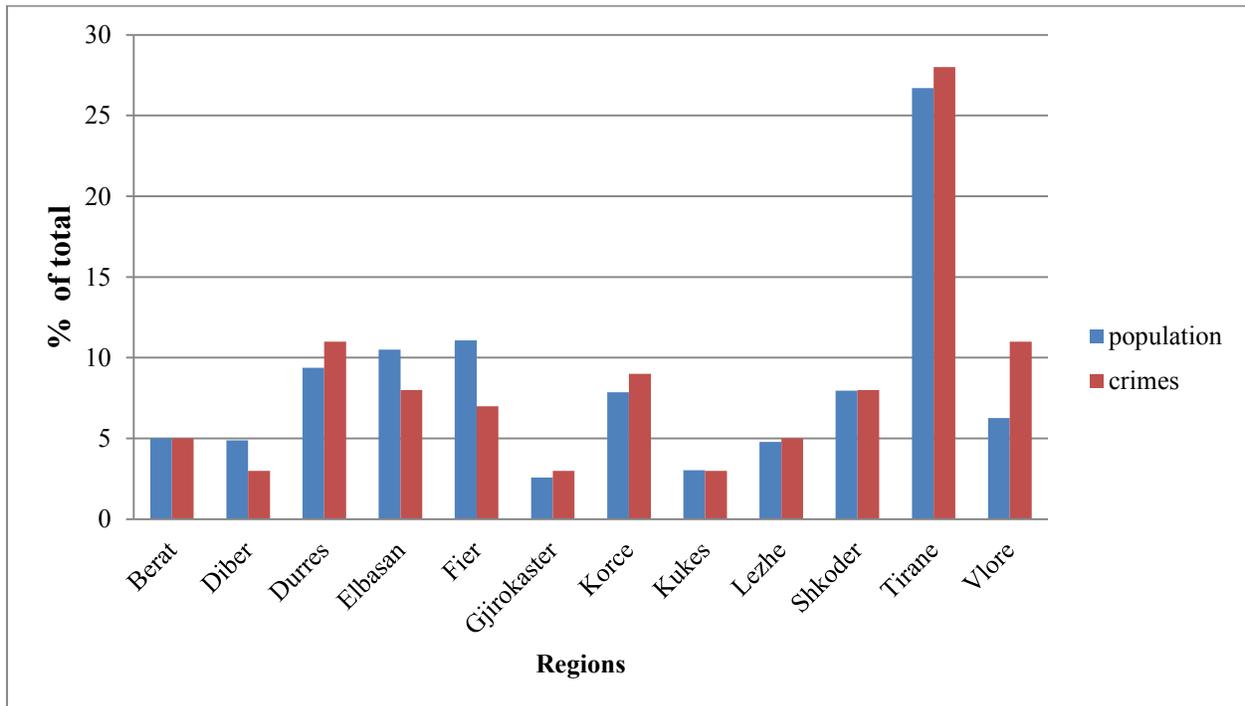
Urban spaces are created by people and they draw their character from the people that inhabit them (Knox,P.,& Pinch, S.,, 2006). People live, work, and meet their needs, thus giving the city its characteristics. They adapt to the natural and human environment. Residents are always dependent on each other. Large urban areas are those holding the brunt of crime. This comes as a result of a greater number of the population, the match and faces of several types of social categories, social structures and social groups. Type's offenses are those with weak motivations, to organized crime, revenge, vengeance, etc.

Given the fact that most of the Albanian population is concentrated in the Western Lowland <sup>2</sup>, generally it is also part of the territory of Albania, which carries the main weight of the criminal acts. Tirana, Durres, Vlore are some of the cities that have the highest number of crimes. But other cities which in recent years have faced internal migration wave occasionally mark criminal events that have conflict due to weak motives.

<sup>2</sup> Western Lowland-field near-coastal, or Wetlands Near-Adriatic, which lies from Hani Hoti from the north, to the Gulf of Vlore in South

On October 1, 2011 resident population of Albania was 2,821,977 inhabitants. A decrease in the population of approximately 8.0% compared to the 2001 Census, where population count was 3,069,275 inhabitants (INSTAT, 2011.). But even though the number of people has been declining, the number of criminal acts has not progressed at the same rate. Official sources imply that the crime rate has increased significantly.

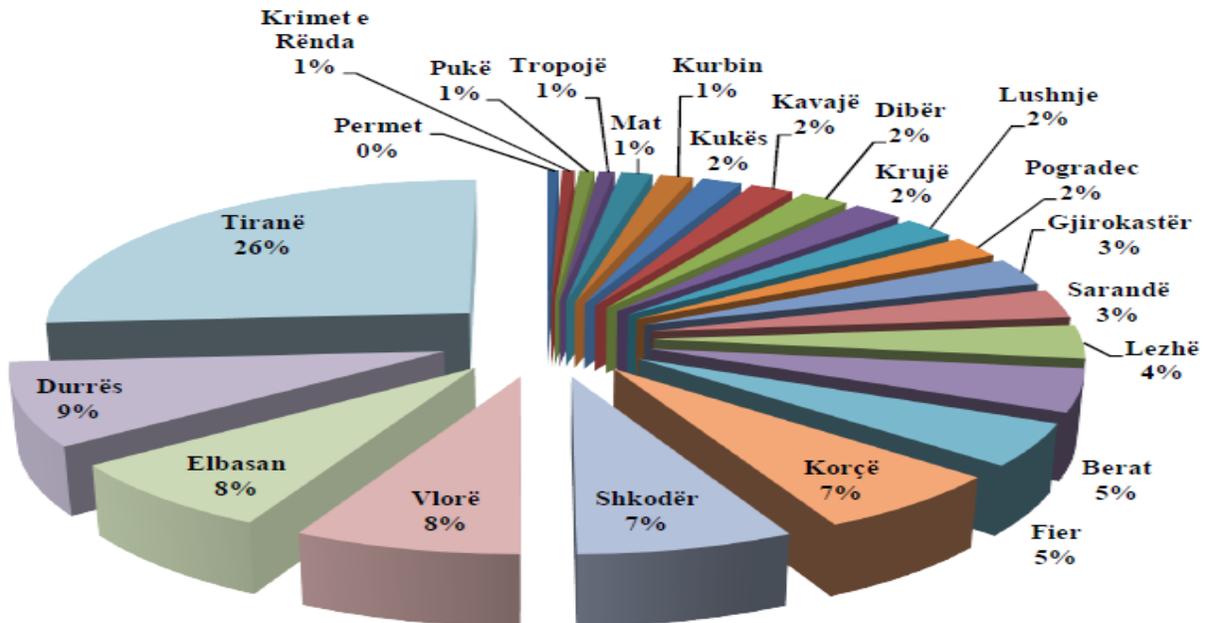
**Figure 6: Geographical distribution of Population and registered Criminal Proceedings in Albania , 2011**



*Source: Graphic is made According to statistical database of INSTAT and General Prosecutor*

Undoubtedly is Tirana, capital of the country, along with the surroundings, even as the concentration of population is the most problematic area in the geographical map of criminal offenses. In Tirana occur vast majority of offenses that provides all types of crime prevented in Criminal Code.

According to official data, in 2009 and has the same trend for 2010 - in Tirana, occurring 29% of all criminal offenses in the country. Durres holds second place with 10%, to complete in the oasis of peace surprisingly called Tropoje. According to statistics, in Tropoje and Permet not occur almost no offense (Vangjeli, 2012).

**Figure 7: Graphical distribution of recorded criminal proceeding**

Source: General Prosecutor "Raporti i prokurorit te Pergjithshem mbi gjendjen e kriminalitetit 2011", p.19, (available <http://www.pp.gov.al/>)

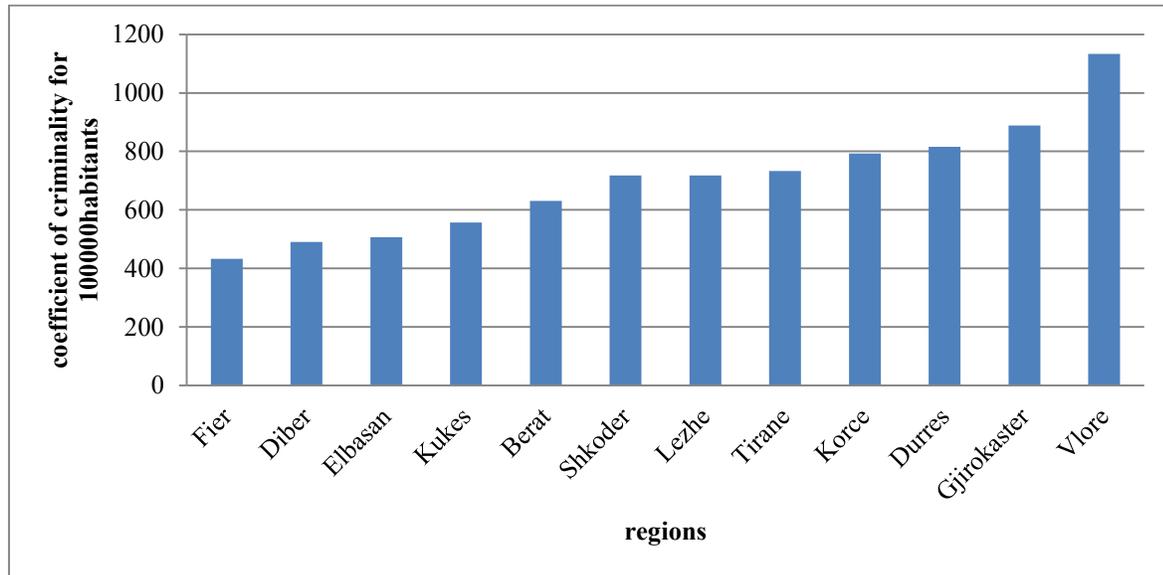
Tirana region as the region in which is concentrated the majority of population has specifically 26.7% of the total population of Albania and 28% of the total offenses and criminal proceedings institution registered in General Prosecution.

But not always correspond to regions that have large populations also have a high level of criminality. Such is the case for example Vlora region, which has only 6.2% of the total population and 11% of the total criminal offenses and proceedings recorded. This comes as a result of the history level of crime in this region. During this transition region of Vlora, is identified as a region with problematic and high level of criminality.

Not only that but geographical position of Vlora city is very important. Vlora is a coastal city, and with considerable geographical proximity with the Italian state water territorial boundaries. The geographical positions has affected quick links and close to '90 were created between persons or structured criminal groups of Vlora, structured criminal groups or criminal organizations of Italian state, where the latter have intervened, not least in the city of Vlora. The intervention of Italian crime in the city of Vlora has been very sensitive, especially in certain activities of criminals have managed to infiltrate the regional institutions of this city becoming the center of the southern region.

The region of Dibra, Elbasan and Fier distinguishing from among others because they have the lowest percentage recorded in criminal proceedings compared to the percentage of population.

To have a clear image below we present coefficient of criminality for 100000 inhabitants by region of the Republic of Albania.

**Figure 8: The coefficient of criminality for 100000 habitants in Albania in 2011**

Source: Graphic is made according to data of General Prosecutor "Raporti i prokurorit te Pergjithshem mbi gjendjen e kriminalitetit 2011", p.21,

Based on data released by the General Prosecutor, are emphasized even more the regional divide about the level of crime in Albania. Vlorë region is the region which has the highest coefficient of crime for 2011. Fier region has the lowest coefficient of criminality, per 100,000 inhabitants. Region of Tirana, Shkodra, Durrës, Korça have a high level of criminality coefficient for 2011.

## 5. Geographical distribution of crime categories

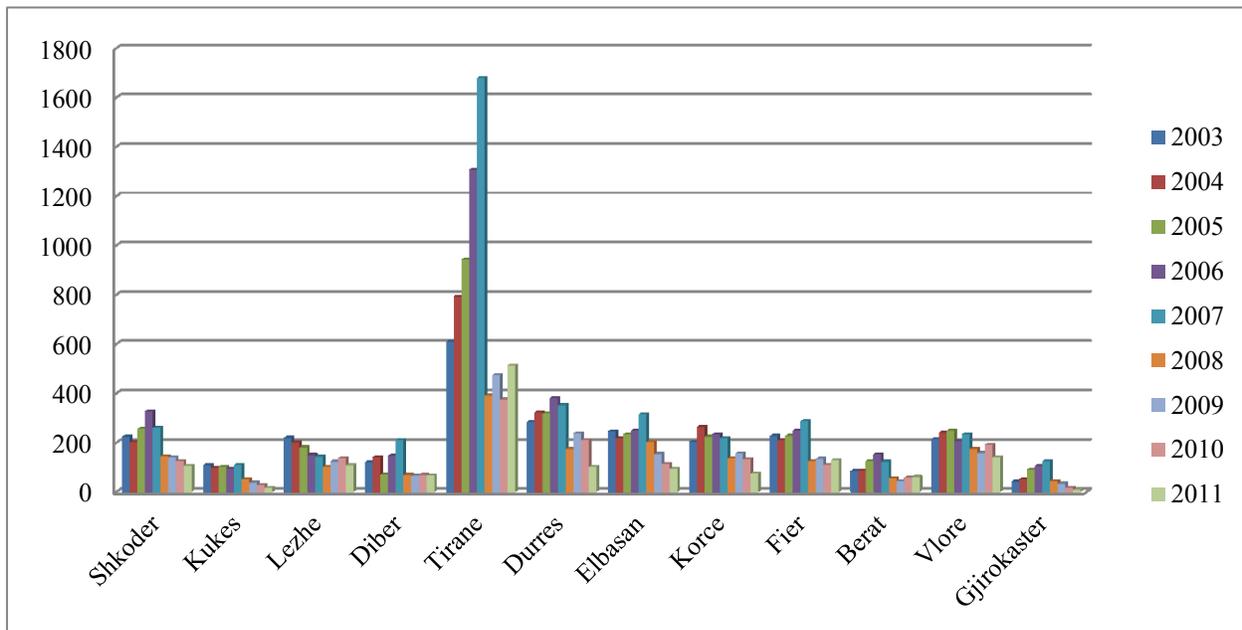
### 5.1. Crime against life and against persons

From year to year the Criminal Code of the Republic of Albania has made some changes, taking into account all the possible recommendations of internationals, to punish criminal acts. From the statistical analysis above issues, have noted that crime in general has gone growing, distinguishing from among some categories of crime which prevail more than others, or that have grown rapidly in recent years. The following graph shows the geographical distribution of criminal offenses against life against the person.

If we examine the motives and purposes of criminal offenses by region would evidence some of their specifications. So, for example, a part of offenses against life and against the person occurring in the region of Shkodra, highlight the phenomenon of revenge. Carryover conflicts and their heritage from generation to generation, was reopened again after the 1990s, recalling in the scene the Canon of Lek Dukagjin<sup>3</sup>, which results in further offenses, continuing crime. However, if I refer to the chart, there is a positive indicator because Shkodra region marks the decrease in the overall progress of the level of crimes against life and against the person.

<sup>3</sup> **Kanuni (Canon) i Lekë Dukagjinit** is a summary of the laws, regulations, customs northern Albania Albanian in a book, in the course of several hundred years, before and after life of [Lekë Dukagjinit](#) from the XV Century onwards. Laws of the "Canon" have served for more than 500 years as a way of grounding social behavior and self-government clans of northern Albania, even when the region was ruled by Ottoman Empire. Republished in 2001.

**Figure 9: Geographical Distribution of Crimes against Life and against the Person in Albania, 2003-2011**



Source: Graphic is made According to the Statistical Database of Albanian State Policy

In the Lezha region often have weak motives which lead to the criminal offenses against the person and life. Generally distinguish areas that are populated during the recent, as result of migratory movements; encounter of narrow minded individuals, and not very friendly to each other, for reasons that have weak links with ownership or other conflicts often lead murder.

Region of Berat , Gjirokastra and Dibra have lower levels of criminal offenses against life and against the person.

Tirana remains the region that prevails in this category of crime, as it carries a large population in its territory, besides this the population coming from all regions the country (since it is the metropolis of Albania, Tirana was transformed into the epicenter destination of internal migration movements), which brings crashes lead to these type of criminal offenses.

Also the suburbs of Tirana often become havens perpetrators of criminal acts to other districts, which in most cases perform other criminal offenses in Tirana and in its suburbs.

Region of Durres, Fier and Vlora, have high levels of criminal offenses against life and against the person, but generally a part of e murders related to organized crime, or what language media called "settling of accounts", residues from riots from the first years of transition and especially from years 1997-1998.

## 5.2. Trafficking crime

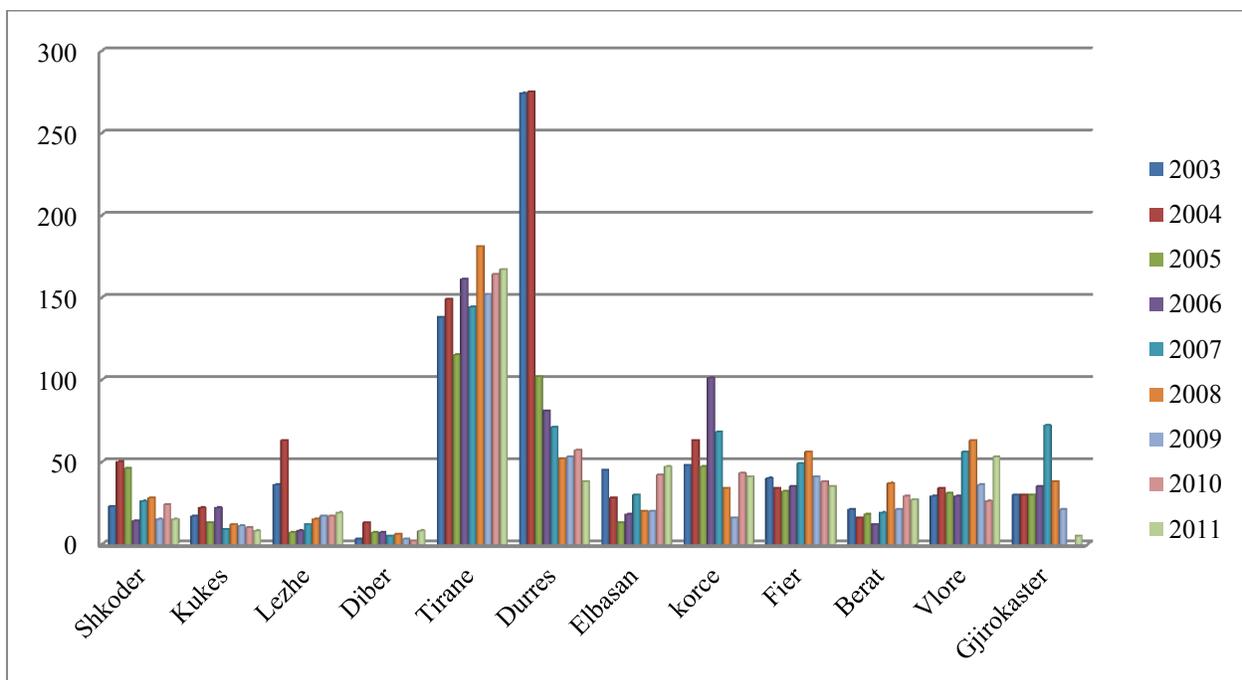
Albania is a source country for men, women, and children subjected to sex trafficking and forced labor, including the forced begging of children. Albanian victims are subjected to conditions of forced labor and sex trafficking within Albania and Greece, Italy, Macedonia, Kosovo, and Western Europe. (U.S.D.S, 2011:p.67)

Trafficking crimes include crimes of trafficking in persons, motor vehicles, arms and ammunition. This category of crime is primarily concentrated in areas with large populations but specifically at those crossings. Durres, one of the regions with the largest population, there are a high number of illegal trafficking, but one additional element, is the fact that the Sea Port Durres is the largest in our country, which holds the key of weight sea imports and exports. For this reason the trafficking of persons, motor vehicles and arms is a phenomenon, which is more extended to this region. If we analyze the performance, over the years, we will see that the trend is falling.

Other regions that have to spread this category of crime are the region of Vlora, Korca, Gjirokastra and Fier. Vlora Region is a region of sea and land border. Large coastal line or even the presences of some custom land border with Greece are those which favor trafficking.

Fier region is involved in this crime category, thanks to favorable geographical position, because it is situated at the junction of roads that lead to different areas of Albania, and besides this the proximity and ties to the region of Vlora and Gjirokastra. It should be noted that the regions of Vlora, Fier and Gjirokastra are associated with high levels of drug cultivation and trafficking, mainly, Cannabis Sativa.

**Figure 10: Geographical distribution of Trafficking Crimes in Albania ,during 2003-2011**



*Source: Graphic is made according to Statistical Database of Albanian State Policy*

While other regions such as the Shkoder, Lezhe, Berati, Dibra, Kukes, are regions which have low levels of this category of crime. Region of Shkoder, Dibra, Kukes, have lower levels of illegal trafficking. This with the fact that they are limited to no more developed countries (such as Kosovo, Macedonia) and the border areas generally are empty as a result of migratory movements. The main tendency is mostly illegal trafficking in border with Greece and the points of harbors land where amid ships from different countries. Also there is another explanation, since after 1990 generally followed the lines of traffic these geographic areas.

## 6. Conclusions:

Constant changes made over the years to improve the Criminal Code, but especially the changes of 2013, aiming at the prevention of some serious criminal offenses which are more disturbing nowadays one hand, and for stricter punitive measures against those on the other criminal offenses, such as murder within the family<sup>4</sup> the murder of the husband / wife, parents, children, etc.), murder police officers or other employees of law enforcement institutions<sup>5</sup>, these murders because of duty, murder for revenge<sup>6</sup> as a phenomenon that has obviously seen for years, mainly in the district of Lezhe and Shkodra.

Northern areas of the country, mainly communes around Shkoder, Kukes and villages Lezhe Region are identified as areas where still apply, Canon of Lek Dukagjin, the phenomenon of revenge. Generally families "in the blood" are isolated for years because of murder for the motive of "blood-making". The risk is mainly evident for children of families who are deprived from education, and grow isolated within the home, in difficult economic conditions. While parents who were unable flee abroad, have little chance to make normal life because of the risk that is the "door". In the southern areas of the country Canon of Lek Dukagjin almost not recognized. It was replaced with the term murder for "settling of accounts".

The low level of education, the generation that grows in some remote areas of the country, insufficient economic conditions for a normal life, unemployment, tendency to become rich "without much effort", etc., are some of the main factors of push young people on the path of crime. We should not leave without mentioning that corruptions in the justice bodies have given breath crimes.

It should also be noted that in cities like Tirana (has special specific because it is the capital of the country), Durres (the largest port city of the country) and Vlora (the second city with the largest port in the country, and closest distance with Italy , but also with Greece because coastal city Sarande included under the territorial jurisdiction Region of Vlora) are characterized by high levels of crime, especially economic crime and its sophisticated forms (structured criminal groups or criminal organizations) because of higher economic interest prevailing in these three cities, which are at the same time the three main centers of the three regions of our country.

While in cities like Berat, Puke, Diber, Lushnja, Korca, etc., prevail more ordinary crimes such as instant quarrels, conflicts property (claims on the property boundaries), etc.

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<sup>4</sup>The new law provides: "willful murder of a person who is a spouse, former spouse, cohabitant or former cohabitant, or close gender marriage close to the offender shall be punished with imprisonment of not less than twenty-eight years or life imprisonment "

<sup>5</sup>Article 79 / b, provides: "willful murder the State Police officers during duty or because of it, the qualities of the victim are obvious or known, is punished with imprisonment of not less than twenty-eight years or to life imprisonment. "

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