**Original research article**

# Demographic changes in the municipality of Svrljig

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**Abstract**

The demographic development of the municipality of Svrljig has significant changes in overall population size, natural and mechanical population dynamics, and age-sex structure. Statistical analysis of previously collected and processed data indicates that these trends result from a combination of interrelated factors that have adversely affected the municipality's demographic development in recent decades. This study examines key demographic processes, including population decline, migration and population aging, by identifying their primary causes and broader socio-economic implications. The results reveal a continuous population decrease caused by negative natural increase and sustained outmigration, particularly among younger and working-age groups. Consequently, a pronounced demographic imbalance has emerged, marked by population aging and a reduced workforce, posing substantial challenges for local development.

## 1. Introduction

In southeastern Serbia, uneven regional development has led to significant disparities in economic growth, which has particularly affected rural areas, including the municipality of Svrljig. Decades of neglect have resulted in economic and functional stagnation, reduced quality of life, and degradation of the physical and environmental structure (Igić at al., 2023). Demographic changes in Svrljig, such as population decline, aging, and negative natural growth, represent a key challenge for the sustainable development of the local community. Population is declining, especially in the hilly, mountainous, and border settlements of southeastern Serbia, driven by economic underdevelopment, poor infrastructure, and weak connections to urban centers. This decline is particularly pronounced in these areas due to the loss of fertile, working-age populations and limited economic opportunities (Jelić at al., 2019). Analyzing these changes allows for the identification of the main causes and consequences of depopulation, which is essential for shaping effective local and national policies.

The main research question of this study is: What are the causes and consequences of demographic changes in the municipality of Svrljig? The aim is to identify the major demographic trends and determine their impact on the local community.

Svrljig is among the most underdeveloped areas of Serbia — according to classification based on gross income, it belongs to the fourth group of municipalities with the lowest level of development, with a development index below 50% of the national average. Within this group, 23 local government units, including Svrljig, are classified as devastated areas due to their extremely low level of development, which leads to numerous negative socio-economic trends ("Sl. Glasnik RS, br. 107/2012). This situation results from a combination of economic, infrastructural, and demographic factors: traditional agriculture is in decline, with large areas of farmland abandoned due to population decline and aging, industrial and service activities are underdeveloped, unemployment is high, and both transportation and digital infrastructure, as well as access to social and cultural services, are limited (Milinić at al., 2025).

Demographic changes—negative natural increase, population aging, and the migration of young people— make the situation even worse (Kuburić at al., 2015). Similar patterns of demographic decline are evident in other underdeveloped municipalities of eastern and southeastern Serbia, which lost on average more than 30% of their population between 2002 and 2022; particularly severe declines are observed in Crna Trava, with nearly a 60% population decrease, and in Gadžin Han, Babušnica, and Medveđa, where the population has been reduced by approximately half, confirming that this is part of a broader regional trend (Marinković, 2023). During the same period, the population of Svrljig decreased by 37.6%.

The study is based on the analysis of statistical data, a review of relevant literature, and a comparison of long-term demographic trends. The paper's structure includes a theoretical framework, an analysis of Svrljig's demographic characteristics, an overview of the causes and consequences of demographic changes, and the main conclusions and recommendations.

## 2. Study area

Study area is the municipality of Svrljig, located in eastern Serbia, covers an area of 497 km² and includes the town of Svrljig along with 38 surrounding villages, with a total population of 10,781 according to the 2022 census (Sustainable Development Strategy of the Municipality of Svrljig, 2022). Archaeological evidence shows that the area has been inhabited since prehistoric times, with the first organized settlements established by the Romans in the 1st century BC, including Timacum Maius along the Svrljiški Timok River (Petrović, 2012). Human settlement here has long been closely linked to agriculture, which historically supported the population. Many modern villages are still located near these historical sites, reflecting a long-standing pattern of land use. However, despite this tradition, Svrljig, like other rural settlements, has faced a significant population decline and deagrarization in recent years, reflecting changes in the local economy and society (Jelić at al, 2019).

Today, like many other municipalities in eastern Serbia, Svrljig faces significant demographic challenges that affect population size, structure, and distribution, as well as economic and social development. The area is mostly mountainous, covering around 70% of the municipality and the valley of the Svrljiški Timok River influence settlement patterns. Most of the population lives in the lower, more accessible basin areas, while mountainous and karst regions have a low population density (Gajić at al.,2021).Nearly one-third of rural settlements are located more than 20 km from the municipal center, connected mainly through the local road network, while major roads (M25 Niš–Zaječar, R-243 Svrljig–Bela Palanka) and the Niš–Prahovo railway provide links to urban centers (Sustainable Development Strategy of the Municipality of Svrljig, 2022).

The physical-geographical characteristics of the area — including the limestone structure of the mountains, numerous springs, and karst formations such as Prekonoška Cave, the Samar system, and the Budžak field — shape land use and economic activities, which in turn affect population distribution, settlement density, and demographic trends (Petrović, 2001). These factors lead to more people living in easily reachable areas, while remote and mountainous regions face population decline and an aging population (Joksimović at al., 2023).

## 3. Materials and methods

This paper presents the basic demographic characteristics of the Municipality of Svrljig and provides a detailed analysis of its territorial, natural, and socio-economic features, as well as the key factors influencing demographic trends. The aim of the study is to examine the demographic changes that have occurred in the modern era, primarily caused by economic and social conditions. A specific objective is to establish a comprehensive database and identify the principal demographic features of this region from the end of World War II to the present.

The analysis is based on population census data from 1948 to 2022, covering nine post-war censuses in total. The research includes 38 rural settlements and the urban settlement of Svrljig. The primary sources of data are official publications of the Statistical Office of the Republic of Serbia, while additional scientific and professional literature in the fields of demography, geography, and regional development provides contextual support.

The study uses statistical methods to process and interpret demographic data, together with analytical and synthetic approaches to examine long-term trends, identify cause-and-effect relationships, and create a clear demographic profile of the municipality. The data were organized and presented graphically to provide a clear representation of demographic dynamics.

This methodological framework enables a comprehensive and scientifically grounded understanding of demographic changes in the Municipality of Svrljig over a period covering nearly eight decades.

The literature review also highlights that depopulation is a complex and multidimensional phenomenon, influenced by economic, infrastructural, social, and cultural factors (Ku-

Table 1.  Population growth in the municipality of Svrljig

| Year | Population | Average annual increase | Absolute increase in population |
|------|-----------|-------------------------|---------------------------------|
| 1948. | 32.282 | | |
| 1953. | 32.939 | 131 | 657 |
| 1961. | 30.260 | -335 | -2.679 |
| 1971. | 26.505 | -376 | -3.755 |
| 1981. | 24.242 | -226 | -2.263 |
| 1991. | 20.740 | -350 | -3.502 |
| 2002. | 17.284 | -314 | -3.456 |
| 2011. | 14.249 | -337 | -3.035 |
| 2022. | 10.781 | -315 | -3.468 |

Source: Statistical Office of the Republic of Serbia

Table 2. – Change in the number of residents in rural and urban settlements

| Year | Population in rural settlements | Population in urban settlement |
|------|--------------------------------|-------------------------------|
| 1948. | 30.664 | 1.618 |
| 1953. | 31.010 | 1.929 |
| 1961. | 28.048 | 2.212 |
| 1971. | 22.942 | 3.563 |
| 1981. | 18.649 | 5.593 |
| 1991. | 13.614 | 7.126 |
| 2002. | 9.926 | 7.358 |
| 2011. | 6.696 | 7.553 |
| 2022. | 4.019 | 6.762 |

Sourse: Statistical Office of the Republic of Serbia

burić at el., 2015). It further notes that there is a limited number of empirical studies systematically examining the motivations behind migration and the sociocultural aspects of population outflow and return. These findings confirm that depopulation in Svrljig is not an isolated process but the result of the cumulative effect of multiple factors, requiring more detailed analysis and an interdisciplinary approach to understanding demographic changes (Loras-Gimeno et al., 2025).

## 4. Results and discussion

Modern demographic trends are shaped by a wide range of natural, social, cultural, and economic factors. As in much of eastern Serbia, declining fertility rates and the depopulation of rural areas are especially pronounced. The municipality of Svrljig falls into the category of the oldest population regions, which brings a number of associated challenges. Table 1. presents the population trend in the municipality, clearly illustrating a continuous decline in the number of inhabitants.

According to the data in table 1., population growth is evident only in the immediate post-war period (from 1948 to 1953). The population growth of Svrljig after World War II was mainly due to high birth rates, decreased mortality thanks to improved healthcare, migration, and industrialization. After that, the number of inhabitants in rural settlements starts to decrease. The differences between the rural and urban population are shown in Table 2. The only urban settlement in the municipality recorded population growth until the most recent census in 2022, when the number of inhabitants dropped to 6.762.

Based on the table 2., a significant decline in the number of inhabitants is evident in rural areas. According to the 2022 census, the population of the 38 villages within the municipality of Svrljig decreased by as much as 87% compared to the 1948 census. The situation in the urban settlement is particularly different. Over the same period, the population of the municipality's only urban settlement increased four times —primarily as a result of intensive rural-to-urban migration. However, a decline is also visible in more recent years: the 2022 census shows an 11.5% decrease compared to 2011, when Svrljig reached its highest recorded population (7.553). The dynamics of these population changes are illustrated in Graph 1.

The following table shows all settlements belonging to the municipality of Svrljig, and the movement of the population according to the censuses after World War II.

Based on Table 3, it is evident that all settlements are significantly affected by depopulation, and the population of rural areas is continuously declining. According to the recent census, none of the rural settlements were

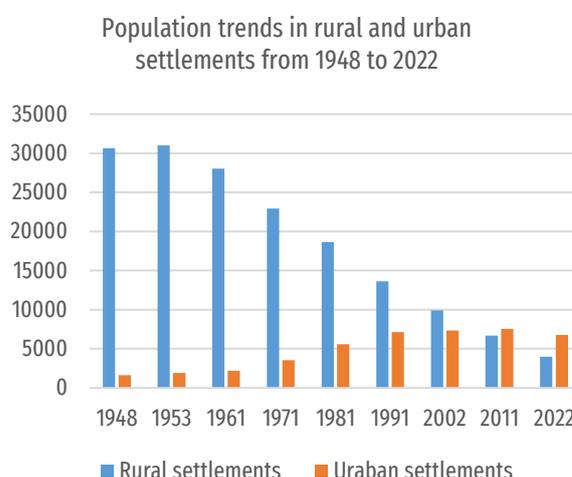Chart 1.  Population trends in rural and urban settlements from 1948 to 2022



Population trends in rural and urban settlements from 1948 to 2022

Table 3. - Trends in the number of inhabitants in the settlements of the municipality of Svrljig from 1948-2011

| Name | 1948. | 1953. | 1961. | 1971. | 1981. | 1991. | 2002. | 2011. | 2022. |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Beloinje | 782 | 791 | 722 | 600 | 524 | 415 | 343 | 268 | 190 |
| Burdimo | 1.357 | 1.348 | 1.260 | 1.010 | 809 | 601 | 406 | 289 | 131 |
| Bučum | 490 | 482 | 463 | 365 | 275 | 185 | 106 | 76 | 34 |
| Varoš | 889 | 887 | 760 | 526 | 351 | 261 | 168 | 94 | 48 |
| Vlahovo | 655 | 623 | 523 | 470 | 397 | 255 | 163 | 107 | 61 |
| Galibabinac | 1.371 | 1.394 | 1.290 | 1.112 | 835 | 488 | 342 | 220 | 89 |
| Gojmanovac | 383 | 377 | 347 | 309 | 211 | 137 | 94 | 66 | 38 |
| Grbavče | 1.591 | 1.641 | 1.448 | 1.285 | 984 | 758 | 567 | 417 | 238 |
| Gulijan | 795 | 804 | 678 | 579 | 448 | 301 | 201 | 134 | 80 |
| Guševac | 756 | 784 | 827 | 696 | 593 | 459 | 320 | 213 | 122 |
| Davidovac | 836 | 881 | 762 | 619 | 519 | 311 | 199 | 133 | 57 |
| Drajinac | 1.536 | 1.537 | 1.371 | 1.077 | 1.033 | 866 | 706 | 542 | 392 |
| Đurinac | 122 | 145 | 166 | 268 | 421 | 536 | 547 | 189 | 135 |
| Željevo | 352 | 364 | 348 | 234 | 168 | 84 | 87 | 50 | 37 |
| Izvor | 1.930 | 1.996 | 1.908 | 1.497 | 1.259 | 924 | 722 | 439 | 183 |
| Kopajkošara | 544 | 562 | 478 | 423 | 297 | 190 | 112 | 68 | 31 |
| Labukovo | 744 | 694 | 616 | 469 | 318 | 198 | 122 | 70 | 19 |
| Lalinac | 1.332 | 1.354 | 1.226 | 944 | 757 | 586 | 445 | 303 | 192 |
| Lozan | 672 | 656 | 635 | 521 | 456 | 323 | 210 | 119 | 74 |
| Lukovo | 1.149 | 1.137 | 1.049 | 931 | 738 | 414 | 277 | 161 | 64 |
| Manojlica | 796 | 813 | 752 | 639 | 541 | 406 | 272 | 166 | 96 |
| Merdželat | 528 | 517 | 481 | 349 | 257 | 218 | 147 | 109 | 85 |
| Mečji do | 248 | 248 | 218 | 159 | 105 | 92 | 44 | 29 | 8 |
| Niševac | 1.185 | 1.239 | 1.131 | 895 | 752 | 607 | 203 | 416 | 287 |
| Okolište | 561 | 580 | 521 | 432 | 298 | 237 | 141 | 92 | 39 |
| Okruglica | 772 | 743 | 660 | 540 | 445 | 301 | 226 | 164 | 90 |
| Palilula | 239 | 268 | 245 | 222 | 145 | 101 | 75 | 51 | 26 |
| Periš | 752 | 779 | 725 | 593 | 512 | 300 | 220 | 125 | 59 |
| Pirkovac | 175 | 193 | 151 | 120 | 92 | 56 | 34 | 26 | 19 |
| Plužina | 1.221 | 1.267 | 1.133 | 944 | 746 | 587 | 370 | 255 | 157 |
| Popšica | 923 | 910 | 759 | 563 | 410 | 259 | 155 | 111 | 54 |
| Prekonoga | 1.386 | 1.483 | 1.284 | 1.018 | 929 | 739 | 578 | 465 | 382 |
| Radmirovac | 528 | 539 | 478 | 436 | 375 | 274 | 200 | 132 | 75 |
| Ribare | 723 | 748 | 671 | 549 | 458 | 364 | 296 | 232 | 191 |
| Svrljig | 1.618 | 1.929 | 2.212 | 3.563 | 5.593 | 7.126 | 7.358 | 7.553 | 6.762 |
| Slivje | 404 | 418 | 397 | 312 | 264 | 183 | 130 | 88 | 50 |
| Tijovac | 542 | 521 | 472 | 396 | 319 | 193 | 118 | 73 | 31 |
| Crnoljevica | 661 | 675 | 571 | 477 | 399 | 330 | 219 | 189 | 140 |
| Šljivovik | 734 | 612 | 522 | 363 | 209 | 75 | 41 | 13 | 15 |
| Total | 32.282 | 32.939 | 30.260 | 26.505 | 24.242 | 20.740 | 17.284 | 14.249 | 10.781 |

Sourse: Statistical Office of the Republic of Serbia

completely abandoned; however, the village of Mečji Do had the smallest population (8 inhabitants), followed by Šljivovik, Tijovac, Pirkovac and Labukovo. Šljivovik, located just 3.7 kilometers from Svrljig, recorded the largest percentage decrease in population during the observed period - an extraordinary 98%.

The decline in population is not only the result of declining natural population and continued outmigration. Numerous factors have contributed to this situation, including the abandonment of cultivalbe land, meadows, and pastures; limited road infrastructure; and insufficient communal and telecommunications services (Jelić at al., 2021).

Natural increase refers to changes in the total population of a given territory resulting from its two main components: births and deaths. The difference between these components represents the natural increase or decrease of a population (Kicošev et al., 2005). The following table presents the birth and mortality values for the municipality of Svrljig from 1961 to 2022.

According to Table 4., we can see that the natural increase has had negative rates from the 1971 census to the present. High mortality is a consequence of a demographically old population, significant migration and the emigration of young people. The natural increase rate for 2022 is -20.7‰, which places Svrljig among municipalities with a sharply negative natural population growth (Crna Trava - 29.1‰,

Gadžin Han – 23.4‰, Ražanj – 23.3‰), a rate significantly

The current average age in the Municipality of Svrljig is

Table 4. - Birth rates, mortality and natural increase for the period 1961-2022. year

| Year | Total population | Birth rate | | Mortality | | Natural increase | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | Number | Rate | Number | Rate | Number | Rate |
| 1961. | 30.260 | 343 | 11.3‰ | 241 | 8.0‰ | 102 | 3.3‰ |
| 1971. | 26.505 | 250 | 9.4‰ | 282 | 10.6‰ | -32 | -1.2‰ |
| 1981. | 24.242 | 183 | 7.5‰ | 331 | 13.7‰ | -148 | -6.2‰ |
| 1991. | 20.740 | 150 | 7.2‰ | 404 | 19.5‰ | -254 | -12.3‰ |
| 2002. | 17.248 | 119 | 6.9‰ | 271 | 15.7‰ | -152 | -8.8‰ |
| 2011. | 14.249 | 60 | 4.2‰ | 387 | 27.1‰ | -327 | -22.9‰ |
| 2022. | 10.781 | 71 | 6.5‰ | 295 | 27.2‰ | -224 | -20.7‰ |

Sourse: Statistical Office of the Republic of Serbia

Table 6. - Age structure

| Year | Age groups of the population | | | | | | | | Average age of the population | Average age in Serbia |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | 0-19 years | | 20-59 years | | Over 60 Years | | Unknown | | | |
| | Number | % | Number | % | Number | % | Number | % | | |
| 2002. | 2.508 | 14.54 | 7.945 | 46.06 | 6.565 | 38.02 | 266 | 1.54 | 48.8 | 40.25 |
| 2011. | 1.969 | 13.82 | 6.352 | 44.58 | 5.928 | 41.60 | / | | 50,6 | 42,2 |
| 2022. | 1.525 | 14.15 | 4.642 | 43.06 | 4.614 | 42.80 | / | | 51.0 | 43.8 |

Source: Statistical Office of the Republic of Serbia

lower than the national average (-7‰).

The sex structure for the observed period does not show any major oscillations. The data relating to the sex structure for the last three censuses are presented below.

Since this municipality belongs to the most economically underdeveloped areas, it is important to look at the participation of certain age contingents. The average age, the high participation of the group over 60, the phenomenon known as the "white plague", significantly contributes to this. Below is the age structure, its changes in the last three censuses (Demonja et al., 2019).

It has already been noted that the population of the Municipality of Svrljig is in a stage of deep demographic aging. In the last three censuses, the dominant age group has been between 20 and 59 years, followed by the population aged over 60. The youngest demographic group, up to 19 years of age, accounts for the smallest part (14.15% in 2022), while in the same year the age group over 60 made up 42.80% of the total population.

This is further confirmed by data on the average age of the population, which reflects the level of demographic aging. It is considered that populations with an average age of around 30 years are in the first phase of demographic aging (Golubović et al., 2016). The average age of the population in the Municipality of Svrljig reached the threshold value as early as the 1971 census, when it was 33.7 years. All later cen-suses recorded an increase, reaching over 50 years by 2022.

51 years, which is significantly higher than the national average (43.8 years). The average age of the female population is 52.1 years, higher than that of the male population, which stands at 49.8 years.

An negative age structure is most clearly illustrated by the population pyramid. It shows that the base of the pyramid is significantly narrower than its middle and upper sections. The analysis of the population pyramid reveals a contraction in the younger age groups and an expansion among older age groups (65+). According to the distribution of age groups and the overall shape of the pyramid, it can be concluded that Svrljig belongs to a category of severely demographically

Chart 2. Gender-Age Pyramid
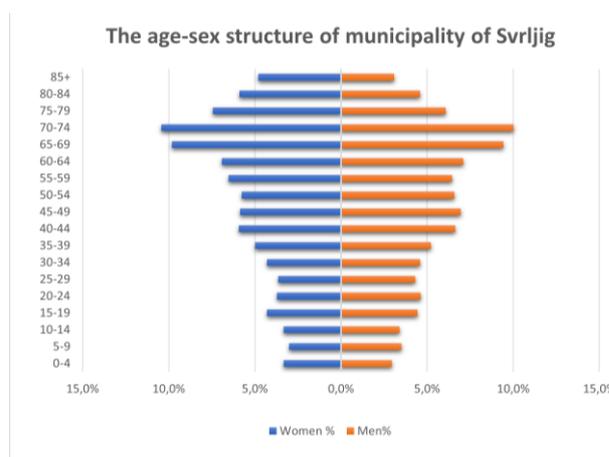


Source: Statistical Office of the Republic of Serbia

endangered areas, with a distinctly regressive population type. Svrljig is among the municipalities with the most unfavorable aging index, together with Ražanj, Gadžin Han, Ba-

The following table shows the distribution of households and the number of members in rural and urban settlements. In rural settlements, households with a single member are

Table 7. – Number of Households

| Year | Number of Households | | Average household size | |
|------|----------------------|--|------------------------|--|
|      | Rural Settlemnets | Urban settlement | Rural Settlements | Urban settlement |
| 1948. | 5.089 | 429 | 6,02 | 3,77 |
| 1953. | 5.318 | 473 | 5,83 | 4,08 |
| 1961. | 5.559 | 622 | 5,04 | 3,56 |
| 1971. | 5.538 | 1.143 | 4,14 | 3,11 |
| 1981. | 5.286 | 1.674 | 3,52 | 3,34 |
| 1991. | 4.739 | 2.146 | 2,87 | 3,32 |
| 2002. | 4.217 | 2.311 | 2,35 | 3,18 |
| 2011. | 3.049 | 2.409 | 2,19 | 3,13 |
| 2022. | 1.947 | 2.511 | 2,06 | 2,69 |

Sourse: Statistical Office of the Republic of Serbia

Table 8. – Households by members

| Settlements | Total | With 1 member | With 2 members | With 3 members | With 4 members | With 5 members | With 6 and more |
|-------------|-------|---------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|-----------------|
| Rural | 1.947 | 786 | 699 | 239 | 110 | 54 | 59 |
| Urban | 2.511 | 556 | 798 | 487 | 376 | 177 | 117 |
| Total | 4.458 | 1.342 | 1.497 | 726 | 486 | 231 | 176 |

Sourse: Statistical Office of the Republic of Serbia

Table 9. Population by Economic Activity and Gender, 2022

| | Economically Active | Employed | unemployed | Pupil/Students | Persioners | Other inective persons |
|--|---------------------|----------|------------|----------------|------------|------------------------|
| Total | 3.916 | 2.890 | 1.026 | 535 | 4.096 | 2.234 |
| Male | 2.252 | 1.659 | 593 | 241 | 1.903 | 1.021 |
| Female | 1.664 | 1.231 | 433 | 294 | 2.193 | 1.213 |

Sourse: Statistical Office of the Republic of Serbia

bušnica, and Crna Trava (Ranković, 2023).

According to analytical indicators, the population of the Municipality of Svrljig is marked by pronounced population aging. In addition to negative natural increase, the primary factors driving this aging process are low and declining fertility rates, along with a negative migration balance among young and early middle-aged residents. Demographic aging is a widespread phenomenon, affecting a large number of municipalities (Milosavljević et al., 2023).

With regard to the number of households, a clear decreasing trend is visible in rural areas. Over the observed period, the number of rural households decreased by 62%, and the average household size today is just 2.06 members. This is primarily a result of the decline of agriculture as the main economic activity, especially livestock farming, which previously dominated in mountainous regions. In the municipality's only urban settlement, the average household size has also declined, although the total number of households has increased.

predominant, and the male population exceeds the female population.

According to this table, households with a smaller number of members predominate in the settlements within the municipality of Svrljig (63.7% are households with 1 or 2 members), while in rural areas single-member households prevail.

*The economic structure* of the population in the municipality of Svrljig reflects long-term demographic trends and changes in local economic activities. A steady population decline, aging, and limited employment opportunities have shaped the distribution of economically active, inactive, and dependent residents. Today, the local labor force is reduced, while the share of dependent and elderly population continues to grow, influencing the overall socio-economic development of the municipality (Sokolovska, 2018).

Due to the large share of the elderly population, 38% of the total population belongs to the group of pensioners. In

the coming years, this trend is expected to continue, accompanied by a constant decrease in the share of employed persons. This is accompanied by a continuous decline in the proportion of employed individuals. The anticipated growth in the share of pensioners, combined with the reduction in the number of employed persons, further exacerbates unemployment. This is driven by mismatches between qualifications and labor market demands, adverse economic conditions, limited opportunities for job creation, and the closure of existing companies (Kuburić at al., 2015). According to the census, the group of economically inactive population includes children under the age of 15, persons with income from property or investments, persons engaged in the production of goods for their own household needs, persons performing unpaid household work within their own homes, and others.

## 5. Conclusion

The analysis of demographic trends in the municipality of Svrljig confirms the presence of a long-term and intensive depopulation process, primarily reflected in a continuous population decline, negative natural increase, and pronounced outmigration of young and working-age residents. A particularly unfavorable age structure, in which more than 40% of the population is aged 60 and over, indicates deep demographic aging and severely limited potential for natural population renewal. Although the urban center of Svrljig records temporary population growth due to internal migration, this trend cannot offset the intensive depopulation of rural and mountainous settlements, further undermining the demographic and economic sustainability of the municipality.

The original contribution of this study lies in its comprehensive, locally focused analysis of demographic trends and their structural determinants, including economic underdevelopment, insufficient infrastructure, and limited access to educational, healthcare, and social services. The results demonstrate that demographic decline is not an isolated phenomenon, but rather the outcome of cumulative and interrelated factors that jointly weaken local economic potential and overall quality of life.

Based on the findings, the study emphasizes the need for coordinated and long-term development policies that integrate demographic, economic, infrastructural, educational, and healthcare measures. Particular attention should be given to encouraging higher fertility, retaining young residents, creating conditions for the return of former inhabitants, and providing financial and infrastructural support to families and youth in rural areas. At the same time, the development of small and medium-sized enterprises, improvements in transport and digital infrastructure, and the sustainable valorization of natural and cultural resources—especially through agriculture and tourism—represent key mechanisms for long-term demographic and socio-economic recovery.

Although the research primarily addresses demographic and economic dimensions, future studies should also incorporate cultural, institutional, and psychosocial aspects of migration in order to better understand the motivations behind youth outmigration and return, as well as the effects of specific local policies on demographic processes. Overall, the findings clearly indicate that only targeted, integrated, and territorially adapted interventions can slow depopulation and provide a foundation for the sustainable development of the municipality of Svrljig.

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