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# 07

## Slovenian society

**Inhabitants** (31 December 2006): 2,010,377

**Population density:** 99.1 inhabitants/m<sup>2</sup>

**Urbanization:** Approximately one third of the population live in towns with more than 10,000 inhabitants, the rest live in nearly six thousand smaller towns and villages

**Nationalities** (2002 census):

Slovene 1,631,363;

Italian 2,258;

Hungarian 6,243;

others: 149,259;

unknown: 174,913

**Births** (2005): On average 1.26 children per woman

**Life expectancy** (2005): 74.08 for men and 81.30 for women

**Religions:** According to the 2002 census the most of population (58 %) are Catholics

Source: Statistical Office of the Republic of Slovenia

Slovenia has a population of two million people, who are well educated and also have good employment opportunities. Similarly to other modern societies, the country has been facing demographic issues, such as ageing, and low birth rate. The family, as the basic unit in society, has been changing, while the average number of household members has been in decline.

### Population

Slovenia's population is slowly declining. Families used to be quite large, but have been growing smaller over recent decades. Both birth and mortality rates have decreased, and there has been growing concern about lower birth rates. The year 1993 was the first to see a negative demographic trend.

Since 1993 the population of Slovenia has been increasing only due to immigration, while the birth rate has been negative since 1993. In 2005, 18,157 children were born (1.26 children per woman), and 18,825 persons died. Fortunately, the mortality rate among infants is low (4.1 per 1,000 live births in 2005). The average age of a woman giving birth to her first child has been rising (27.8 in 2005). The average age of brides (28.2 in 2005) and bridegrooms (30.6 in 2005) has been rising as well; however, it is notable that many children in Slovenia are born outside wedlock – some to single mothers, and others to unmarried couples. With regard to the status of such couples and their offspring, no particular distinctions apply.

#### Families by type (%) (2002 census)

<b>Total</b>	<b>100</b>
Married couples and unmarried partners without children	23.0
Married couples and unmarried partners with children	58.3
Mothers with children	16.1
Fathers with children	2.6

Source: The Statistical Office of the RS

The age structure is changing not only because of the decreased birth rate, but also due to longer life. In 2005, life expectancy in Slovenia was 81.3 years for women and 74.08 years for men. Like in other developed countries, Slovenia's population is ageing. In the beginning of the 1950s the median age in Slovenia was around 30, surging to 40.3 years at the end of 2004. In the 1953 census, the ratio between persons younger than 15 and persons aged 65 or over was 27.6 per cent vs. 7.6 per cent in favour of the young, while in 2004 it was 14.4 per cent vs. 15.3 per cent in favour of persons aged 65 or over.

#### Average annual household expenditure in 2004 (in €)

Transport	2,702
Food and non-alcoholic beverages	2,529
Residence	1,719
Recreation and culture	1,623
Clothing and footwear	1,219

The original data was quoted in toalars, and calculated in euros by the central parity of SIT 239.64/€1 (the irrevocable exchange rate)

Source: The Statistical Office of the RS



The realisation of women's rights, guaranteed by the Constitution, is monitored by the Government Office for Equal Opportunities.

## Policy on women

In Slovenia, women make up almost a half of the work force and usually work full-time, like men. Despite the fact that women are on average better qualified than men, it is more difficult for them to find work, they register as sole traders less often, are in more junior positions, often have lower career prospects than men, and are not paid as much with regard to their qualifications. Legal protection from employment discrimination is exemplary; however, it needs to be implemented.

With regard to the percentage of the total population women are not appropriately represented at all political levels, despite having the same political rights as men. In the National Assembly, women currently comprise only 12 per cent of MPs, and only one government department is headed by a woman.

## Freedom of belief

Along with the guaranteed right of the preservation of national identity, the people of Slovenia have a right to their own religious beliefs. As the Constitution of the Republic of Slovenia states that nobody is obliged to declare their religious or other beliefs, there are no exact figures on numbers within various religious groups.

According to public surveys, most Slovenes are Catholic (around 60%) and the Roman Catholic Church is definitely the biggest and most active in public life.

All together there are 43 religious communities, spiritual groups, societies and associations registered in Slovenia. Among the oldest is the Evangelical Church, which has its roots in the Reformation and is most widely spread in the northeastern part of Slovenia.

## Urban areas and the countryside

The majority of Slovenes live in their own flats or houses. This is partly the case of pursuing one's dreams of owning property, while it is also due to the transition process, which made such housing affordable. In general, households are not big – a third of the population lives in four-person households, and a fraction over a fifth of the population in three-person households. Lately, there has been an increase of people

living with a partner or alone. However, there is a shortage of flats intended for young families, while property prices (particularly in Ljubljana) have surged. Just over a third of people live in urban areas with a population of over 10,000, while the remainder live in the countryside.

Since Slovenia does not have an urban metropolis, it is safe to say that almost all its inhabitants live a mere stone's throw from a meadow or a forest, so that they can enjoy the advantages of both rural and city life.

According to the findings of researchers monitoring human development across the world and translating the data into the Human Development Index, Slovenia is a very successful country, judging by its level of development. In 2006, Slovenia ranked 27th among 177 countries assessed, meaning that it has been effectively coordinating both social and economic factors.

## Health care system

The Health Care and Health Insurance Act, adopted in 1992 and later also amended, includes a number of measures aimed at improving general public health, promoting preventive medicine, the early discovery of diseases and their prompt treatment, the care and rehabilitation of the sick and injured, and regulating the rights relating to compulsory and voluntary health insurance, which ensures social security in case of illness, injury, childbirth or death.

The Act stipulates that the state has to prevent and address social problems of individuals, families and population groups. Social security rights are protected through measures and services for preventing and mitigating of social hardship, and providing contributions for individuals who do not have sufficient means due to circumstances beyond their influence. The compulsory health insurance scheme covers the whole population, either on the basis of employment and self-employment or residence (insured persons and their family members).



The picturesque village of Komenda in the Gorenjska region.

The right to health care services comprises services at the primary health care level, including dentistry, health care services in certain types of social care institutions, specialist outpatient services, hospital and tertiary level services. It also includes the right to health resort treatment, rehabilitation treatment, transport by ambulance and other vehicles, medicine, and technical aids.

Under the compulsory health insurance scheme, the insured persons are also entitled to different financial benefits (compensation of salary during temporary absence from work, reimbursement of travel costs etc.). In 2005, the share of GDP spent on health was 8.38%, of which 6.68% was public expenditure.

In addition to the public network of health institutions in Slovenia, private health care is also developing. Its share of the total health care services is around 10%. But the majority of the private health sector remains incorporated into public health insurance schemes.

Private health care is not permitted in some areas, such as blood supply, organ transplantation and pathology, whilst in other areas (for example, pharmacy, hospital health care, etc.) a concession is needed in order to be able to practise privately.

Health awareness in Slovenia is relatively high. Many people have given up smoking, lowering the percentage of smokers to less than 30. Sadly, many young people still continue to practice this unhealthy habit. A new, and stricter law is being drafted which will ban smoking in public places and workplaces.

## Social security

The state ensures the functioning of social care institutes, creates the conditions for private social work activities, and stimulates and supports the development of self-help, charity work, programmes enabling a more independent life for the disabled, and voluntary work. Rights to social care services and contributions are determined according to the principles of equal availability and free choice for all those entitled.

The state works towards preventing social exclusion, particularly by influencing the social position of the population in the areas of taxation, employment and work, and through grants, housing policy, family policy, health care, education and other policy areas.

In 2004, a new kind of employment subsidy for long-term social assistance beneficiaries was introduced. Its aim is to encourage the employment of people who depend on social assistance and to increase their income. The state also particularly promotes the training and employment of the disabled, and the care for people with mental or physical disabilities.

University Medical Centre  
in Ljubljana



In 2004, 12.1% of Slovenia's population lived below the poverty threshold (compared to 16% in the EU), and their equivalent income was lower than EUR440 per month.

## Pension system reform

Before 2000, Slovenia had one of the lowest retirement ages in Europe (56 years and 6 months). Since January 2000, higher retirement age (63 for men and 61 for women) has been gradually introduced to prolong working life. Pensioners accounted for 26.5% of the country's population in 2005, 0.3 percentage points more than in 2004.

The new Pension and Disability Insurance Act stipulates a number of special conditions in which it is possible to retire early (e.g. because of children, or employment before the age of 18), and introduces a new pension scheme – state pension.

## Free time and recreation

Slovenes have always loved riding bicycles and walking. While they used to do both out of necessity, as other, more comfortable ways of travel were not available to them, they now cycle and walk for exercise and to move faster through the congested traffic. Increasingly, people want to stay fit, and out of all outdoor activities, walking is the easiest to organise, so it is very popular. Every Slovenian town has its 'home summit', which is usually a small mountain, popular with the locals, who climb it in great numbers at weekends. The inhabitants of Ljubljana go to Šmarna gora on the outskirts of the city, which looks like a pilgrimage centre at weekends. Hiking and mountaineering are also popular. Even the less ambitious enthusiasts believe it is almost a 'moral' responsibility that every Slovene ascends Mt Triglav (2,864 m) once in their life.

One of the most popular sports in Slovenia is skiing. Sometimes Slovenian skiers win international medals. When thinking about the two best Slovenian athletes, one cannot avoid the impression that they tell us something about Slovenes – the female athlete of 2006 was Petra Majdič, a cross-country skier, while the title of male athlete of 2006 went to Matic Osovnikar, who runs in the 100 and 200 metres. In a way, they symbolise Slovenia: a country, which is young, but not shy of success.



Riding bicycles is very popular in Slovenia.



**[www.mddsz.gov.si](http://www.mddsz.gov.si)**

Ministry of Labour, Family and Social Affairs

**[www.zpiz.si](http://www.zpiz.si)**

Institute of Pension and Disability Insurance of Slovenia

**[www.zzvs.si](http://www.zzvs.si)**

Health Insurance Institute of Slovenia

**[www.ess.gov.si](http://www.ess.gov.si)**

Employment Service of Slovenia