

THE SOCIO-DEMOGRAPHIC DEVELOPMENT OF THE REGION IN SITUATIONS OF PANDEMIC

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Abstract

A study raises issues of the influence of quarantine restrictions and pandemic on the socio-demographic development of the region. Even though the real extent of pandemic consequences will become clear only at the end of 2021, the pandemic is already having a negative impact on reducing fertility and on the transformation of fertility behavior. According to Rosstat, in 2020 the demographic situation was unfavorable: the number of births decreased in 78 subjects, and the number of deaths increased by 62. At the same time, in the whole country, there were almost 1.5 times more deaths than births (last year this difference was 1.2 times). Modern migration in an increasingly globalized world has itself been a trigger for accelerating the spread of the disease. Therefore, border closures and quarantine events for regions at high risk of infection, which are classic methods of combating epidemics and pandemics, drastically reduce the scale of population movement, change traditional migration directions, and create significant problems for migrants. These areas update the study, which aims to identify and substantiate risk factors and reduce the threat of destabilization of the socio-demographic development of the region to form a sustainable regional policy.

Key words: socio-demographic development, pandemic, depopulation, government support measures.

JEL Code: J11, J61, J18

Introduction

The COVID-19 pandemic had a significant impact on the world economy and national economies as well as on the demographic development in the world. Russia is no exception in this. First of all, the mortality rate has increased. We note that the overall for April – December 2020 in Russia were registered 162429 people who have died with an established COVID-19 diagnosis, which is 111 cases per 100,000 of the resident population (including, 71 cases per 100 000 people, who have died with the COVID-19 diagnosis as the main cause

of death and 40 deaths from COVID-19 per 100 000 people). It is worth mentioning that the mortality rate from pneumonia for the 2019 year amounted to 16.3 cases per 100 thousand people, and on average for 2015-2019 years – 19.3 cases per 100 thousand people (Shcherbakova, 2021).

Even though it will be possible to understand the real extent of the deterioration in fertility rates only at the end of 2021, the pandemic, of course, is already having its negative impact on both the decline in fertility and the transformation of reproductive behavior. According to Rosstat in 2020, the number of births decreased in 78 subjects of the Russian Federation. And in the whole country, births were almost 1.5 times less than deaths (last year this difference was 1.2 times) (Natural population movement, 2021).

The impact of the pandemic on family relations is an obvious fact. The self-isolation regime caused considerable negative and even destructive processes in families: domestic violence, the tension in the psychological climate, and relations between spouses and between parents and children. It is possible that in the future the number of dissolved marriages will increase (Berger, Ferrari, 2021). The negative impact on the reproductive behavior of the population is not only the reason for the actual 24-hour work schedules of employees who have switched to remote work but also the generally high level of anxiety during a period of uncertainty, as well as the large-scale transfer of medical institutions, including non-core ones, to the needs of the treatment of patients with coronavirus infection (Arora, 2021).

The impact of the pandemic on migration mobility in the post-Soviet area was negative. There has been a near-complete cessation of migration between countries. The drastic measures taken by the countries of the world to prevent the spread of infection provoked a severe crisis in the economy and affected all spheres of everyday life of people, regardless of their social situation and status (Uddin, Imam, 2021). The main restrictions affected migration since the main goal of states was to minimize personal contacts of the population and control the further spread of the virus. These actions led to significant changes in the world migration processes, as many countries closed their borders without the opportunity for migrants and their population to leave the country or return to their homeland. Many migrants faced mass layoffs, and as a result, a lack of money both for returning home and for living (Luppi, Arpino, 2020).

The Russian authorities had imposed the hybrid mode of restrictions that was called by different names: the first week – non-working days, then – self-isolation and increased preparedness in the regions (at the discretion of the regional authorities); in early May 2020 – the restriction regime. Therefore, border closures and quarantine measures for regions with a

high risk of infection, which are classic methods of combating epidemics and pandemics, drastically reduce the scale of population movement, change traditional migration directions, and create significant problems for migrants. This, in turn, creates high risks for migrants who are not in their usual habitat not only to become the most vulnerable part of society but also to simply survive (Muszynska, 2008).

These areas highlight the research which aims to identify and justify risk factors and the decline of the threat of the destabilization of socio-demographic development of the region to establish a sustainable regional policy.

Analysis of demographic situation in the Omsk region during the pandemic

The empirical territorial object of the study is the Omsk region. The study was based on statistics and an expert survey of government representatives, which provided an opportunity to approach the problem from different angles.

According to data for January 1, 2021, the population of the Omsk region amounted to 1903.7 thousand people. It can be noted that in 2020 the downward trend in the number of residents of the region, which developed in the 1990s, continued. As a result of natural and migration losses, the population of the Omsk region over the past year decreased by 23 thousand people. The reduction in the population is increasing: 31.4% more than in 2019 (17.5 thousand people). At the same time, the rural population is declining at a faster pace. In 2020 the rural population decreased by 1.3 %, urban – by 1.2 % (The number and migration of the population of Omsk region, 2021).

Tab.: The population number in the Siberian Federal District (people)

The region	2020 year	2021 year	Growth rate, %
The Altay Republic	220181	220954	0,351075
The Tuva Republic	327383	330368	0,911776
Republic of Khakasia	534262	532036	-0,41665
Altai region	2317153	2296353	-0,89765
Krasnoyarsk Territory	2866255	2855899	-0,36131
Irkutsk region	2391193	2375021	-0,67632
The Kemerovo area	2657854	2633446	-0,91833
Novosibirsk region	2798170	2785836	-0,44079
Omsk region	1926665	1903675	-1,19325
Tomsk region	1079271	1070339	-0,8276

Source: The number and migration of the population of Omsk region, 2021

The Omsk region held a twenty-fifth place in the Russian Federation in terms of population and sixth place in the Siberian Federal District. Compared to the regions of the Siberian Federal District, in the Omsk Region was recorded the highest rate of population decline in 2020 (Table).

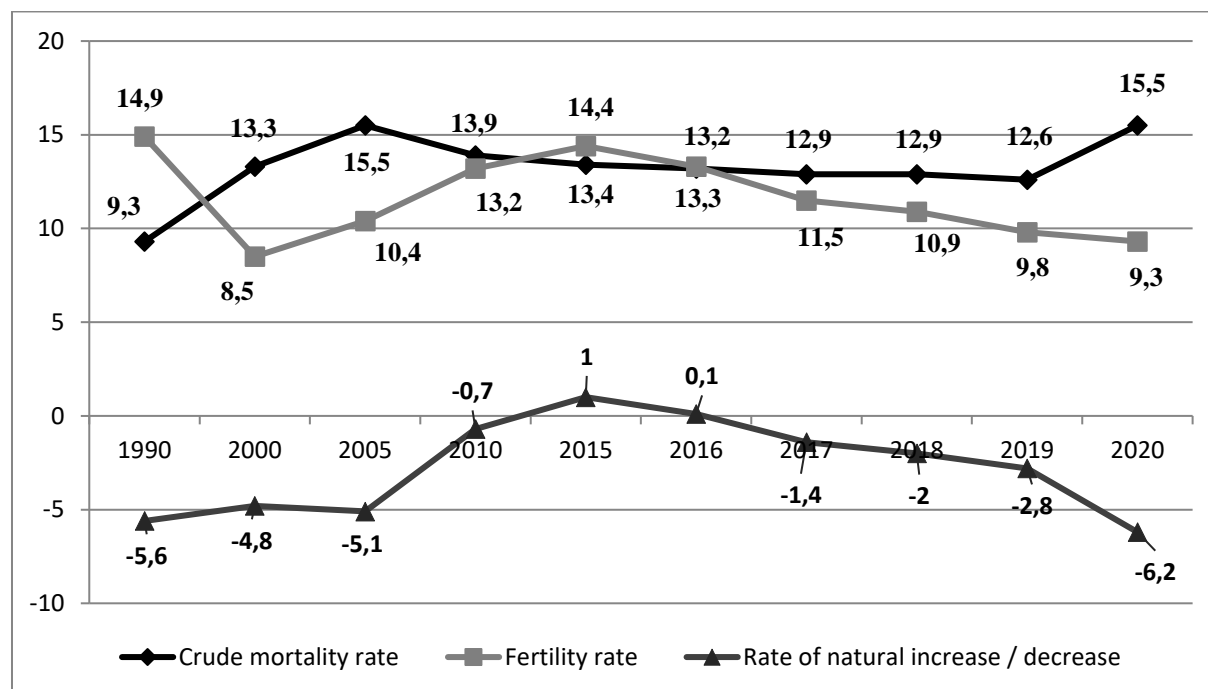
Following the 2020 results fertility rate in the Omsk region has been declining by 6.7 %. It should be noted that the fall in fertility in 2020 has slowed down (in 2019, the decrease was almost 11 %). In the context of municipalities, 7 municipal districts of the Omsk region recorded an increase in fertility rates (in 2019, an increase in fertility was observed in only 1 municipal district) (Omskstat, 2021). An expert from the Demographic and Family Policy Department of the Ministry of Labor and Social Development of the Omsk Region emphasizes that, given the biological life of the child (9 months), it is now premature to assess the impact of the pandemic on the reproductive plans of the population. At the same time, in December 2020 (9 months after mass self-isolation), a 10 % increase in fertility was recorded compared to December 2019. The number of pregnant women is also increasing. In the 4th quarter of 2020 alone, their number increased by more than 400 potential mothers. It should be noted that to some extent, in this case, large-scale measures to support families with children have affected, which were adopted and increased in 2020. At the expense of the federal budget, payments were made for children under the age of 16 in the amount of 10 thousand rubles (twice) and a single 5 thousand ruble payment for children under the age of 7 years. At the expense of the regional budget, needy families were receiving food packs.

Regarding the number of deaths, they obviously had decreased. The growth compared to the previous year is 21,8 %.

From the territorial aspect, the mortality rate is significantly differentiated. The largest value of the indicator – in the Kolosovsky district (21 ppm) – is almost 2 times higher than the minimum value recorded in the Azov German national region (10.6 ppm) (Omskstat, 2021). In 2020, the mortality rate of the population increased in all but one municipal district of the region (Medford, Trias-Llimós, 2020).

Thus, the natural movement of the population of the Omsk region in 2020 was characterized by an increase in natural decline (Figure). The number of deaths exceeded the number of births by 12,033 people or 1.7 times. Compared to 2019, natural losses of the population increased 2.2 times.

Fig.: Crude mortality, fertility rate and rate of natural increase/decrease in Omsk region (promille)



Source: Omskstat, 2021

In 2020 in the Omsk region were registered 10 388 marriages. Compared to 2019, the decrease in the rate of marriage was 13 %. The current trend, on the one hand, is logical due to the decrease in the number of young people of the most active marriage age (20-34 years). Over the past two years, the number of potential grooms and brides of these ages has decreased by 42.1 thousand people. On the other hand, in connection with the pandemic, traditional social ties are being destroyed, the acquaintance of young people is difficult due to restrictions on social contacts and interactions, and part of the marriages was postponed due to the inability to hold wedding ceremonies as the newlyweds would like (Chetverikova, 2021).

The rate of divorce in 2020, in turn, had grown by 7,9 % compared to 2019. The tension in the psychological climate and relations between spouses and between parents and children during the pandemic had a negative effect on family and marriage relationships (Omskstat, 2021).

Another important component of the demographic development of the Omsk region is population movement. Taking as a starting point the 2010 population census, during all subsequent years, except 2014 and 2015, migration had a decisive influence on the formation of the population of the Omsk region. At the same time, the total migration balance was positive only once – in 2014. In subsequent years, migration decline increased and in 2018

exceeded 12 thousand people. This is 22.8 % more than a year earlier. At the same time, 80 % of movements are associated with a change of residence, that is, non-refundable (Gokova & Kiseleva, 2017).

Among the regions of the Siberian Federal District, the Omsk region has the worst migration decline (-5,4 per 1000 inhabitants). The negative migration balance was due to the departure of the population to other regions of Russia, which continues to increase. The migration outflow of the population in 2020 amounted to -10.4 thousand people (in 2018 and 2019 years – 12.1 thousand people). The geography of interregional migration remains. The regions of the preferred departure remain Moscow and Moscow Region, St. Petersburg and Leningrad Region, Krasnodar Territory, Tyumen Region. Almost half of the migration outflows to other regions of Russia (45 %) are due to a change in place of work (Omskstat. 2020).

In 2020 the migration policy was implemented within restrictive measures. Therefore, migration flows of the population have decreased (both external and internal migration) for objective reasons. According to an expert from the Ministry of Labor and Social Development of the Omsk Region, the region loses from 12 to 15 thousand people annually, and it must be understood, that the most capable, energetic, and mobile people leave the region for the search of higher wages, more comfortable living, leaving the region due to environmental problems, and so on, but the main thing is to leave for prospects and opportunities to succeed and to realize themselves.

Conclusion

Undoubtedly, there should be confidence in the future to improve the demographic development of the regions of Russia. The uncertainty of the future that the current pandemic carries, associated with the uncertainty of the timing of its end, the emergence of new «records» of the disease, the inability to predict the economic situation, the vague idea of personal survival risks, are superimposed on skepticism about the measures taken to combat it. The level of social trust of the population of many countries in the measures developed and implemented by the leadership to combat viral infection has fluctuated significantly over months (Kwok & Wong, 2021).

Economic support of families with children was well received and approved by the population: there were lump-sum payments for children from 3 to 16 in May and August (10,000 rubles each); monthly payments for children under 3 in April – June (5000 rubles

each); increase in childcare allowance to 1.5 years. Each of these measures received a high-efficiency rank in almost 60 % of respondents (All-Russian Sociological Study «Demographic Well-Being of Russia», end 2019 – beginning 2020). More than half of respondents noted the following measures as highly or maximally effective: transfer of educational institutions to remote work; re-profiling hospitals for the treatment of coronavirus patients; increased unemployment benefits; extension of unemployment benefits. The remaining analyses introduced at the initial stage of the pandemic are less effective in terms of respondents.

In addition, in 2020 the process of obtaining government services became more user-friendly, the process of obtaining social assistance for citizens in terms of the pandemic was also automated. Given the development of digitalization in the territory of the Russian Federation, most of the services have already been converted to electronic form. So by the end of 2021, the process of obtaining almost all municipal services through the public services portal will be automated (Mogi & Spijker, 2020).

Answering the question «How have the pace and priorities of conducting the economic and socio-demographic policy of the region changed?» An expert from the Ministry of Economy of the Omsk Region replied that «priorities have changed: the main focus is on compliance with anti-coronavirus restrictions, a simplified procedure has been introduced for coordinating and approving regulatory legal acts that contain instructions for COVID-19, several measures have been canceled and the released funds are used to equip medical institutions, purchase medical equipment, organize observances, etc. Other topics have been postponed to better times. All instructions not completed in 2020, unfulfilled target indicators, and expected results (in-state programs, forecasts) are written off for anti-coronavirus restrictions. At the same time, in 2020, the necessary documents were adopted to restore business activity, restore indicators of the socio-economic development of the region to the level of 2019».

The results of the study become important for the adjustment of regional socio-demographic policies by the authorities under the post-pandemic conditions to minimize risks, maintain the demographic security of the region and ensure its sustainability. This could be followed by creating a model of the socio-demographic sustainability of the territory in the face of global challenges.

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