

## **AGEING OF POPULATION IN THE COUNTRIES OF TRANSCAUCASIA: SOCIO-ECONOMIC ASPECTS**

Ageing of the population – is the most typical demographic phenomenon of a modern epoch, which is caused by a complex of the factors including features of the reproduction of population, intensity and direction of population migration, and also the demographic consequences of wars. As a whole, demographic ageing of the population can be defined as an increase of the layer of pensionable age persons in the structure of population. As is well known, the dimensions and rates of the population growth are not identical in various countries. However, the distinctive feature of changes of the structure of population in many countries is an evident decrease of relative number of the children's population (0-14 years) and the marked increase of a part of the population of elder ages. The relative number (a part) of persons of middle age in the total number of the population is usually defined for an estimation of ageing of the population.

Nowadays almost all the European countries experience a long recession in a birth rate and, hence, ageing of the population. Parameters of birth rate in the majority of them are below the level of reproduction of the population, that leads to reduction of a natural increase of the population, and in some cases - to a natural loss. At the same time, the part of economically and socially inactive elder persons in the structure of population continues to grow, while the number of able-bodied population is reduced concerning the all population.

Such demographic tendencies can lead to destructive consequences for economy of these countries: the reduction of a part of able-bodied population may lead to reduction of the human capital and, hence, to productivity slowdown; the pension system and the system of social insurance can become too burdensome; the care of the growing elderly population can entirely fall on households' shoulders; the growth of the elderly population demands a substantial increase of the public health services charges.

Several years have passed already since the political changes in Eastern Europe affected also the three Republics in the Transcaucasia (South Caucasus) - Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia. The opportunity for changes towards a market oriented economy and a democratic society has not bypassed these countries, and they are now on their way to integrate themselves into the international community. Challenges like civil conflicts, crises in the economic development and, hence, serious demographic problems, like huge flows of refugees, a decrease in birth rate and increase of the death rate of population, had to be faced by all of these countries.

The Azerbaijan Republic in XX century related to a number of those countries of the world in which the rate of growth of the population left behind an average rate of growth of the world's population. If the population of globe for the last century has increased from 1,6 up to 6 milliard persons (more than for 4 milliard persons), or in 3,7 times, then the population of Azerbaijan for the period 1897-1999 has increased from 1,8 up to 7,9 million persons (for 6,1 million persons), that is in 4,4 times. It means, that the rate of growth of the population in Azerbaijan for the specified period exceeded rates of growth of the world's population (*Muradov, Muradov, Gyozalova 2000, p. 38*).

However the demographic development in Azerbaijan always was complex enough. Relatively high birth rate, being retained for a long time, generally was not supported with the corresponding improvement of a financial position of families, which negatively influenced a living standard and state of health of the large families. By the time of collapse of the USSR the demographic situation in the Republic was characterized by: an average level of birth rate (although the differences in a level of birth rate of the urban and rural population existed); relatively high level of infant and maternal mortality; low social and territorial mobility of the population, and also nonuniform settling of people (*Efendiyev, 2006*).

Change of a death rate of the population of Azerbaijan in the first years of gaining of independence was under significant influence of complex sociopolitical conditions, in particular,

the armed aggression from Armenia and till now an unresolved Nagorno-Karabakh conflict. Since 1988, as a result of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict 20 percent of the territory of Azerbaijan is occupied, the hundred thousands of our compatriots became refugees and internally displaced persons (IDP), including more than 250 thousands Azerbaijanians had been expelled from Armenia. Victims of the conflict in Karabakh for 1988-1994 became 22,000 persons - from them 19,5 thousands Azerbaijanians, from which 12 thousands Azerbaijan military men and 7,5 thousands peace citizens-Azerbaijanians (among them nearby 600 persons were killed by the Armenian militants in Khodzhalj (Khojaly) and 300 persons in Shusha). As a result of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict in Azerbaijan live 850 thousands refugees and the IDPs (*Erlikhman 2004, p. 23-24*). The peak of the death rate fell to 1994 year and made 7,3 persons/1,000 population (*Population of Azerbaijan 2006 (statistical bulletin), pp. 26-27*). For the period from 1995 till 2005 the death rate in Azerbaijan decreased. The explanation of this phenomenon consists that, since 1995, in republic the mode of cease-fire was established.

Traditionally, considering the population structure and the dynamics of its development, parameters of the population growth and sex-age structure are taken into account. The coefficient of the population growth depends on natality and the coefficient of net migration. The general coefficient of the population growth shows the annual changes of population (counting upon 1,000 persons), which allows comparing the countries with the various populations.

Let's examine the basic demographic characteristics in three countries of Transcaucasia.

## **ARMENIA**

(Source: CIA - The World Factbook – Armenia, <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/am.html>)

Population: 2,971,650 (July 2007 est.).

Age structure:

- 0-14 years: 19.5% (male 307,610/female 271,381)
- 15-64 years: 69.3% (male 962,126/female 1,098,192)
- 65 years and over: 11.2% (male 132,705/female 199,636) (2007 est.)

Median age:

- total: 30.8 years
- male: 28.1 years
- female: 33.6 years (2007 est.)

Population growth rate:

-0.129% (2007 est.)

Birth rate:

12.34 births/1,000 population (2007 est.)

Death rate:

8.29 deaths/1,000 population (2007 est.)

Net migration rate:

-5.34 migrant(s)/1,000 population (2007 est.)

## **AZERBAIJAN**

(Source: CIA - The World Factbook – Azerbaijan, <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/aj.html>)

Population: 8,120,247 (July 2007 est.).

Age structure:

- 0-14 years: 25.4% (male 1,086,271/female 975,100)
- 15-64 years: 67.7% (male 2,695,428/female 2,799,047)
- 65 years and over: 7% (male 211,438/female 352,963) (2007 est.)

Median age:

- total: 27.6 years
- male: 26 years
- female: 29.4 years (2007 est.)

Population growth rate:

0.688% (2007 est.)

*Birth rate:*

17.47 births/1,000 population (2007 est.)

*Death rate:*

8.35 deaths/1,000 population (2007 est.)

*Net migration rate:*

-2.25 migrant(s)/1,000 population (2007 est.)

## **GEORGIA**

*(Source: CIA - The World Factbook – Georgia, <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/gg.html>)*

*Population:* 4,646,003 (July 2007 est.)

*Age structure:*

- 0-14 years: 16.7% (male 413,506/female 364,407)
- 15-64 years: 66.6% (male 1,489,081/female 1,605,021)
- 65 years and over: 16.7% (male 311,098/female 462,890) (2007 est.)

*Median age:*

- total: 38 years
- male: 35.5 years
- female: 40.4 years (2007 est.)

*Population growth rate:*

-0.329% (2007 est.)

*Birth rate:*

10.54 births/1,000 population (2007 est.)

*Death rate:*

9.37 deaths/1,000 population (2007 est.)

*Net migration rate:*

-4.45 migrant(s)/1,000 population (2007 est.)

The above-stated indices are evidence of various demographic situations in 3 countries of Transcaucasia. Azerbaijan takes the first place by population, and is followed by Georgia and Armenia. In the age structure of population a part of the population in the age of 0-14 years is the highest in Azerbaijan (25.4%); Armenia (19.5%) and Georgia (16.7%) follow next. In the age of 15-64 years the highest part of population is in Armenia (69.3%), next follows Azerbaijan (67.7%) and Georgia (66.6%). In age group of 65 years and over the highest part of population lives in Georgia (16.7%), then in Armenia (11.2%) and at last in Azerbaijan (7%). Thus the given parameter testifies that the situation with ageing of the population is disturbing enough in Georgia and Armenia, while in Azerbaijan lives relatively young population. The confirmation of this conclusion is the parameter of median age of the population, which value for Azerbaijan makes up 27.6 years, for Armenia - 30.8 years, and for Georgia, accordingly – 38 years. It is necessary to note also that at a positive population growth rate in Azerbaijan, this parameter is negative for Armenia and Georgia. Thus, in Azerbaijan birth rate makes 17.47 births/1,000 population (with death rate 8.35 deaths/1,000 population), in Armenia birth rate makes 12.34 births/1,000 population (with death rate 8.29 deaths/1,000 population), and in Georgia with a level of birth rate 10.54 births/1,000 population, the death rate makes up 9.37 deaths/1,000 population.

The general conclusion that can be made on the basis of the given parameters is the following: the problem of ageing of the population in the countries of Transcaucasia, first of all, is actual for Georgia, then for Armenia and, at last, for Azerbaijan, where a situation for the present is relatively favorable.

Let's cite the data on dynamics of a degree of ageing of the population in the former Soviet Union's republics.

THE PART OF POPULATION IN THE AGE OF 60 YEARS AND OVER  
IN THE FORMER SOVIET UNION'S REPUBLICS FOR 1994-2004 YEARS  
(in % to total population)

Former SU's Republic	1994	2004
1. Armenia	12,0	14,7
2. Azerbaijan	7,9	9,3
3. Belarus	17,8	18,8
4. Estonia	18,9	21,5
5. Georgia	15,9	18,0
6. Kazakhstan	9,6	11,4
7. Kyrgyzstan	8,0	7,7
8. Latvia	19,0	22,3
9. Lithuania	17,3	20,5
10. Moldova	13,0	13,7
11. Russia	16,5	17,3
12. Tajikistan	5,9	5,2
13. Turkmenistan	6,2	6,3
14. Ukraine	18,3	21,0
15. Uzbekistan	6,3	6,3

Source: *The World Health Report 2006 (Annex Table 1 Basic indicators for all Member States)*, pp. 168-176.

According to the data from the Table 1, for the period 1994-2004 years the percentage of the people in the age of 60 years and over amongst the countries of Transcaucasia is minimal in Azerbaijan and amongst the countries of the Central Asia - in Tajikistan, while in the Baltic countries the value of the given parameter is high enough.

What are the real problems of ageing in Azerbaijan and other countries of Transcaucasia? Despite of the obvious tendency to ageing of the population (according to the Table 1), the ratio of the number of pensioners to the total population yet does not cause special anxieties. Whether it is possible to consider this as the positive factor? Whether it speaks that our anxiety about the ageing is groundless? Not entirely. As the global practice testifies, the demographic transition is inevitable, and consequently societies, as well as the governments, should accept this fact.

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