

Recent Fertility and Mortality Trends in Georgia

In the last years, there have been significant changes, as fertility decline and mortality increase as well as increase of the number of families with a single child and population aging. These processes have particularly been distinguished from 1990-s and noticed for the most part among Georgian population. The share of first-born children grows within the general number of born children, specifically, in 1965-2005 years it grew from 31,5% to 58,8%; and the share of third children fell from 19,2% to 8,7%.

The main indicator of population reproduction – birth rate, has decreased. Nowadays, as fewer children are born, their number is not enough to cover the generation of parents. It should be noted that in 2005, 46,512 children were born in comparison to 92,815 children in 1990. In 15 years, the birth rate decreased exactly twice. The number of newborns half diminished. As a result, young-age groups reduce, and the share of 60-year-elder people grows, i.e. there is a population aging. In 1989 the share of 65-year older people equaled 8,9% out of the whole population; in 2005 this indicator is already 13,3%. Such change in the population age structure requires not only a renewed functioning of health care, but also the development and reorganization of social and insurance system. Total fertility rate is 1,346 (2005), net reproduction rate – 0,614. In the case of such tendencies, there is a threat of the longterm decrease of newborns. Particularly, in 2005 there have been 21,858 girls out of the 46,512 new-born babies. If one girl gives birth to a bit more than one child during her whole life, then after one demographic generation time (25-30 years) the number of newborns won't exceed approximate 25 thousand. Consequently, after one more demographic generation, there will be only 12 thousand children born. Thus, this implies the extinction of the nation. It would be difficult to develop country's economy, to have enough labor force and military contingent. Obviously, all these problems have demographic impact and require urgent attention.

As for the mortality trends, the dynamics of population mortality is characterized with quite negative tendency, especially the share of people who died at the labour age increased.

Even though in 2005 there have been 46,512 children born, in a year their number will significantly decrease, because the level of mortality among children who haven't reached one year-age, is high, notably, in 2005 – 916 children (in 2004 -1178), i.e. 19,7 children (in 2004 -23) out of the whole 1000 children. This indicator is almost twice higher than in newly independent states (NIS). Moreover, even though the mortality rate among children is declining in these countries, the situation in Georgia is different – the mortality rate signifies growth tendency. Unfortunately, the number of stillborns is also high. In 2005, 774 children was born dead, i.e. on every 1000 new-born the indicator of still-born equals 16,5 children. This indicator increased comparing to the previous year (in 2004 – 772, 15,3 out of 1000 new-born).

In Georgia, the number of women from the age 15 years and older is 1864 thousand, out of which married – 75,8%, never married – 21,7%, widows – 17,3%, and divorced -4,1%. This indicator is also quite unpleasant. Such condition is a real social and psychological problem not only for a single person, but also for the whole society, and even more attention-worth is the high rate of mortality in this section of the population. It's been noted, that those men who've never been married, have higher rate of mortality in comparison to the married men. Such difference in the case of the mortality rates of married and never-married women is much insignificant. Furthermore, the mortality rate of widows is also high. Thus, a family life-style significantly influences mortality level.

The population decrease is caused not only by declining birthrate, but also by intense emigration, due to it the population of Georgia has decreased by 20%.

For the demographic security in Georgia it's very important to keep the balance of the South Caucasus region. Unfortunately, for the last years the situation in our country has worsened. Due to the systematic decrease of population fertility rate, the share of Georgians has significantly decreased among

the population of the whole South Caucasus. If in 1926 there were more Georgians than Armenians by 456 thousand, more than Azeris – by 145 thousand; after about 60 years, in 1989 there Armenians prevailed Georgians by 108 thousand, and Azeris- by 2394 thousand.

According to the UN (Department of Social-Economic Information and Political Analysis), if in 1990 the share of Georgian population was 7,5% within the population of the South Caucasus and Turkey, then optimistically as well as realistically prognosis in 2050 this indicator will be not more than 5%. If the demographic balance built in the South Caucasus is changed, it will be difficult for Georgia to implement strategic and general national goals.

Today, our main goal is to stop the depopulation process and preserve even fertility of the population, i.e. an equal change of generations. However, this goal implies the development of economical situation of the country.

The paper presents the analysis of the recent fertility and mortality trends in Georgia. We define extra-marital births, maternal and infant mortality, the reasons of fertility decline and mortality increase and their determining factors, as well as other issues related to this theme.

The research is mainly based on different quantitative and qualitative resources, including statistical yearbooks and surveys and the information data provided by Georgian and foreign experts.