

REGIONAL DEMOGRAPHIC DEVELOPMENT



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This article analyses the demographic problems of the Pskov region. The authors propose a system of government regulation of demographic processes in view of the functions of the regional executive authorities.

**THE DEMOGRAPHIC PROBLEMS
OF THE PSKOV REGION
AND THE MAIN APPROACHES
TO SOLVING THEM
AT THE LEVEL
OF THE REGIONAL STATE
AUTHORITIES**

Key words: government regulation, demographic processes, regional executive authorities.



Speaking of the demographic situation in the Pskov region, Mrs. Vera Yemelyanova, the deputy governor of the Pskov region, emphasised: "An extremely difficult demographic situation has developed in the region. If we follow the default scenario, we will not stabilise it. Thus, our way is active and innovative. There is a need to control the migration process and create favourable conditions for population. Keeping this in mind, the regional administration in collaboration with the experts of the North-West Academy of Public Administration prepared the draft of the Comprehensive programme for demographic development of the Pskov region until 2015. To date, it has been decided to hold public hearing regarding this document. Public participation in the discussion about the draft governmental decisions affecting everyone is of utmost importance".

The demographic situation in Russia, especially in the last twenty years, has been deteriorating. The trends of the last decades signify that the economy of our country will be facing labour shortage. The reduction in financing and lack of due attention to the development of education system persistent over the last decades resulted in lower qualifications of the younger generation. The elder generation cannot compensate for labour shortage, for instance, due to high mortality rate and shrinking number of available high-quality medical services. Owing to the deterioration of financial situation of most citizens, major purchases, including housing, which are a necessary condition for forming a family and giving birth to next generations of Rus-

sian citizens, became unaffordable for them. These problems most severely affected employees of certain sensitive segments of the economy, first of all, the agricultural sector.

The facts mentioned emphasise the interconnection between the demographic and socioeconomic problems, first of all, in healthcare, education, housing, and agriculture. It is not surprising that these problems drew special attention of the government which found mechanisms of resolving the most acute problems within the corresponding national priority projects.

In our opinion, the ultimate goal of the national priority project implementation should be repaying the population debts related to services, which were not sufficiently provided in the years of reforms. It should be done not only in the framework of one-time services, but in the framework of establishing a reliable system of services provision in the fields of education, healthcare, and housing in view of the specific feature of providing these services to residents of rural areas.

Further state control measures in the field of socioeconomic development will be aimed to solve the problems, which will be given priority in each constituent entity of the Russian Federation. From the authors' point of view, such prognosis of the development of the state planning and control system is perfectly oriented towards ensuring sustainable development of our country.

The demographic and socioeconomic problems are closely connected. The formulation of state policy objectives requires serious consideration of demographic problems as a determinant of socioeconomic development of the Russian Federation, while any initiative in the framework of the state policy should undergo demographic expertise as to the evaluation of its consequence for the current and next generations of Russians.

The features of demographic processes in a certain region are determined by a set of different parameters that can be systemised as follows (fig. 1).

The classification of these parameters by their influence on demographic processes is a subject for special research. We can confidently state only that, for different regions, this influence will not be similar in its character and impact. So, the extreme conditions in the regions of the Far North and Siberia already caused migration outflow despite the developed social infrastructure. On the other hand, a low unemployment rate and a developed labour market do not lead to the increase in birth rates in Moscow and Saint-Petersburg. Owning accommodation does not become an incentive to give birth in small towns and rural settlements against the background of unemployment.

Since, the subject of our study is the demographic situation in the Pskov region and the ways to improve it; we will, first of all, analyse its features relevant to the development of a programme for demographic development in the region.

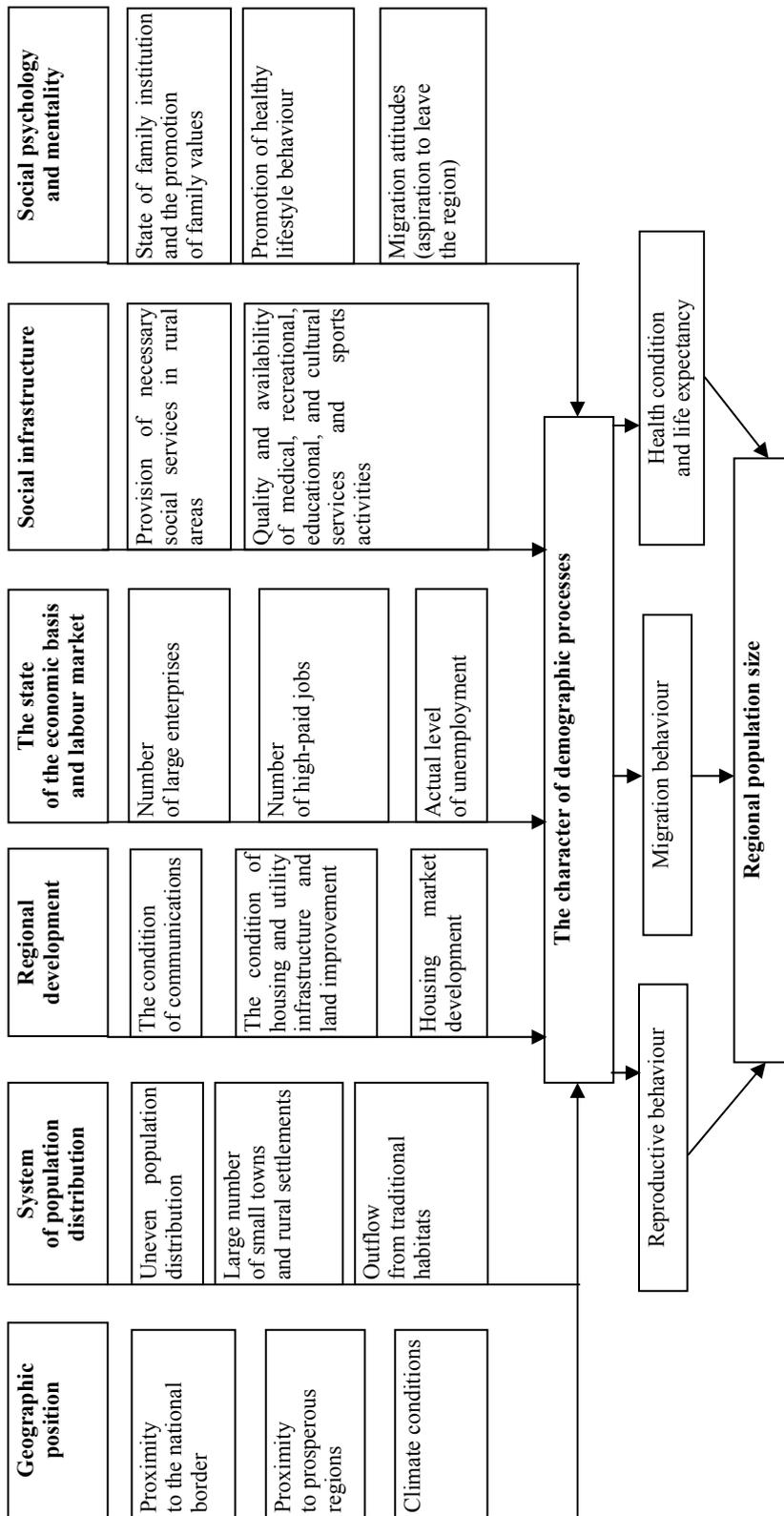


Fig. 1. The basic socioeconomic characteristics and factors of regional demographic development

The features of demographic situation in the Pskov region

The features of demographic situation in the Pskov region are, in general, typical of most peripheral regions of our country.

The geographical position of the Pskov region in relation to the metropolitan area, Saint Petersburg, the Baltic States, and Belarus contribute to an increase in population outflow to the neighbouring territories, which enjoy higher levels of socioeconomic development, offer more vacancies and higher standards of living. Such outflow dates back to the Soviet times. It is related to the need to rebuild Belarus destroyed during the WW II, construct the 'façade' of the socialist regime in the Baltics; it was a result of the disparity in the economic potentials of the Pskov region and the two economic centres of our country — Moscow and Leningrad/Saint Petersburg. It was mostly the working age population that left the region, which contributed to the decrease in the birth rate. This process was accompanied by the increase in the percentage of senior citizens, which resulted in high specific mortality rate. In this connection, the stable predominance of the mortality over the birth rate, the so called "demographic cross", came to existence in the Pskov region 25 years earlier than in Russia in general (fig. 2).

The negative tendencies of demographic development did only strengthen in the 1990s, since the influence of the aforementioned factors increased. The demographic behaviour of the region's population corresponds to the parameters of the modern type of natural reproduction characterised by low birth rates. But, if in richer regions of Russia, the decrease in birth rate takes place against the background of a large and evenly distributed by age groups contingent of women of childbearing ages, a decrease in the already small number of women of fertile age is being observed in the Pskov region. So, in 2001—2008, their number dropped by almost 17,000.

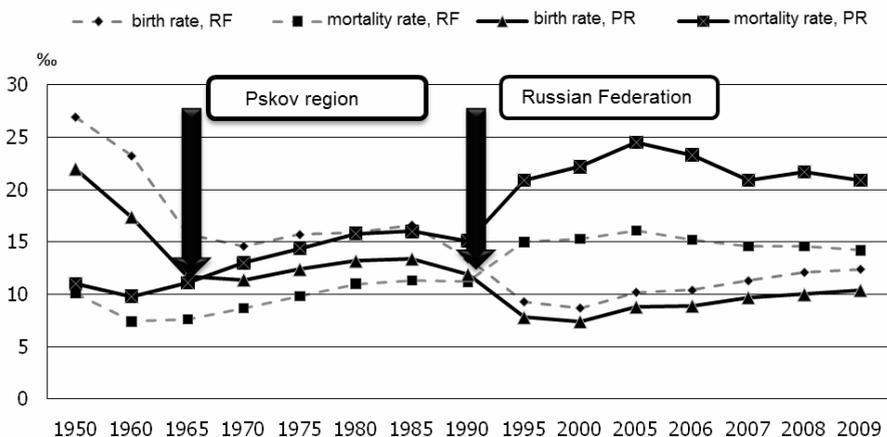


Fig. 2. The dynamics of the birth and mortality rates in the Pskov region and the Russian Federation

It seems that in the relatively favourable first decade of the 21st century, the situation could have changed. But, as statistics shows, it was not the case (fig. 3).

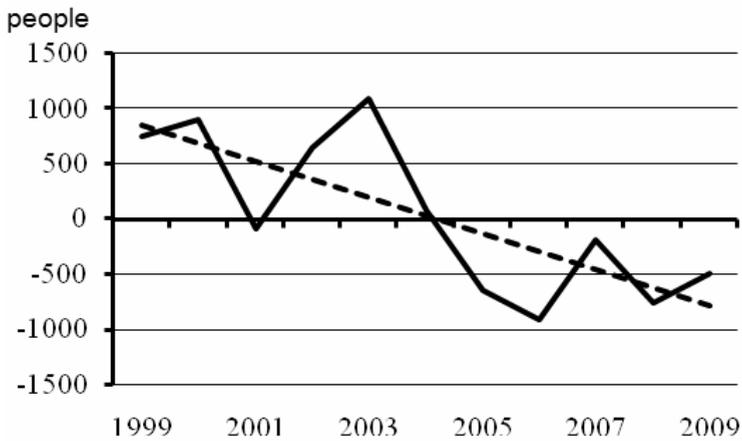


Fig. 3. The dynamics of migration in the Pskov region (1999—2009)

The correlation between those who left and those who arrived in the region is still to the disfavour of the working age population (fig. 4). In other words, the Pskov region still plays the role of the "donating" region as to the labour potential in North-west Russia.

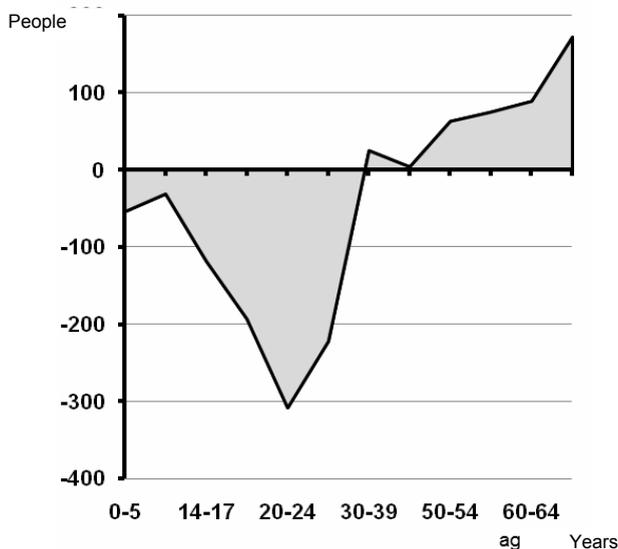


Fig. 4. The correlation of in- and out-migration in the Pskov region, 2009

At the same time, the region has a high mortality rate, which is no surprise: the mean age of the residents of the Pskov region in 2009 amounted to

41.1 years (the national average is 38.8, the North-west federal district average is 39.7 years). Throughout Russia, the share of senior citizens is 21.2% of the total population; that of the working age population is 62.9%. In the Pskov region, 60.7% of the residents are of working age; senior citizens account for 25.2% (in the North-West federal district, it is 63.4 and 22.3%, respectively).

The summary figures reflecting the situation in the region [2—5; 7] are presented in table 1.

Table 1

The indicators of demographic situation in the Pskov region in 2009

Indicator	Russian Federation	Pskov region	Rank among other regions of the RF
Population change (per year,%)	-0.1	-1.3	81
General mortality rate (per 1,000 people) including:	14.6	21.7	83
from cardiovascular diseases (per 100,000 people)	835.5	1332.7	83
from neoplasm (per 100,000 people)	203.8	240.7	76
General birth rate (per 1,000 people)	12.1	10.0	78
Life expectancy, years	67.9	63.6	77
Dependency rate (per 1,000 people of working age)	337	416	78
Net migration rate (per 10,000 people)	18	-11	55

The data presented in the table suggest that the demographic situation in the Pskov region is characterised by very high mortality against the background of stable migration outflow.

These factors lead to a number of other negative tendencies and problems. Some of them are:

- low life expectancy, especially for men;
- deteriorating health of the population;
- high dependency rate;
- low birth rate;
- weakening of the family institution;
- depopulation of rural areas.

If the authorities do not take prompt actions towards changing the demographic situation, its development according to the default scenario will inevitably lead to the exacerbation of these tendencies.

Overcoming this situation requires active government interference and innovations in the socioeconomic policy and migration control. The correlation between the two population projections for the Pskov region [1; 6] are presented in fig. 5.

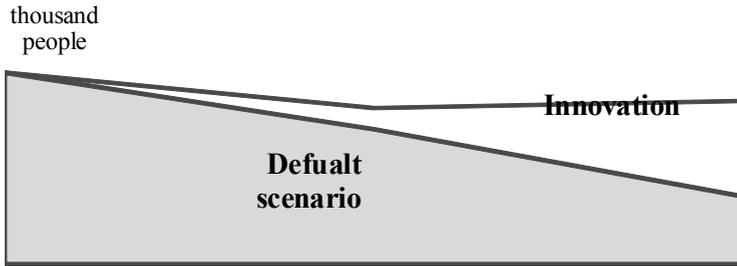


Fig. 5. Possible demographic development scenarios in the Pskov region until 2020

It requires the development and implementation of long-term programmes of a strategic character. The measures taken by the state authorities should be aimed not only at solving the current problems but also at preventing them in the future.

Thus, the principal objective of the regional authorities should be the **overcoming of the current negative tendencies and the creation of conditions for the transition of the Pskov region to sustainable demographic development.**

The accomplishment of this principal objective requires the achievement of the following strategic goals:

- decrease in supermortality and increase in life expectancy;
- curbing the population outflow to other regions of the country;
- stimulation of the increase in birth rate and support for the family;
- creation of favourable conditions for attracting qualified specialists to the Pskov region.

The success of governmental initiatives is ensured by the complex nature of implementing measures aimed at achieving these goals, which underlies the development of the “Comprehensive programme for the demographic development of the Pskov region until 2015” by the administration of the Pskov region in collaboration with the experts from the North-west Academy of Public Administration. The structure of measures taken within the Programme is determined by the current fields of administration activity:

- 1) healthcare and health improvement;
- 2) social security for citizens, family, and children;
- 3) housing market development;
- 4) development of the regional economic base;
- 5) improvement of the population distribution system;
- 6) integrated development of territories and improvement of living conditions;
- 7) initiative in the field of youth policy and sport;
- 8) initiative in the field of migration policy;
- 9) social and political and information initiatives.

Let us briefly describe the essence of the main initiatives of committees and departments of the administration of the Pskov region in the framework of the mentioned fields.

Healthcare and health improvement.

1. Preventive healthcare: measures aimed at the decrease in sickness and mortality rates by means of preventing most spread diseases (including infectious lifestyle-related diseases).

2. Availability and high quality of medical services: measures aimed at ensuring availability of healthcare system services for all residents of the Pskov region throughout one's life — from birth (obstetrics) to advanced age (specialised medical institutions (services) for the elderly).

3. Ensuring coherence in the implementation of rehabilitation and health improvement initiatives aimed at different groups of population (including the prevention of occupational diseases and disabilities).

Social security for citizens, family, and children.

1. Prevention of family dysfunctionality, namely, the provision of financial, legal and psychological support including the improvement of living conditions, the provision of targeted material and psychological support to families with children, the establishment of counselling centres, the organisation of festivals, competitions, etc.

2. Prevention of child maltreatment, provision of support to children, including those left without parental care as well as children with special needs, etc.

3. Support to the population groups in need of social security, including women with small children, elderly people with special needs, veterans, and senior citizens.

Housing market development.

1. Investment into housing development, including accommodation for experts required for the due socioeconomic development of the Pskov region, the construction of apartment houses in the framework of public-private partnership.

2. The development of mortgage lending (including interest rate subsidies) and the creation of conditions for accommodation purchase in view of the limited purchase power of residents of the Pskov region.

3. Land policy, which would include measures aimed at the development of legal framework for land use and property management. The simplification of the land purchase procedure will have a positive effect on the development of the demographic situation in the Pskov region, for instance, young families and the families of experts.

The development of the regional economic base.

1. The establishment of new enterprises.

2. The development of the existing enterprises, the use of local natural and labour resources, the restoration of industrial capacities, agriculture, and recreational complex; environmental protection.

3. The development of the regional labour market, including small and medium business.

The improvement of the population distribution system.

1. The development and implementation of legal provisions on the spatial planning in municipalities, including the schemes of municipal district spatial planning and the rules of land use and construction.

2. The programming of the socioeconomic development of municipalities aimed at the improvement of their socioeconomic development.

3. Support to small towns and rural settlements.

The integrated development of territories and improvement of living conditions.

1. Infrastructure development (roads, gas, water, etc.).

2. Support for housing and utility infrastructure and land improvement aimed at the better living conditions for the residents of the Pskov region.

3. The development of social infrastructure (education, museums, regional studies, recreational zones, etc).

Initiatives in the field of youth policy and sport.

1. The formation of positive mind-set in youth, the engagement of younger generation in social and political life, cultivation of working skills, the development of a network of youth recreation centres.

2. The prevention of unhealthy lifestyle: the organisation of events aimed at maintaining reproductive health of younger generation, prevention of consumption of psychoactive substances, alcohol, and tobacco by children and adolescents.

3. The development of sports infrastructure: the organisation of mass sporting events, the creation of conditions for practicing sports at education institutions, the development of a network of sports training institutions, the encouragement of sports activities of children and youth.

Initiatives in the field of migration policy.

1. The facilitation of repatriation programme, for example, through the creation of best conditions for the repatriation of specialists that are in demand in the Pskov regional labour market, first of all, in the rural area.

2. Integration of migrants.

3. Support to traditional ethnic communities in the Pskov region and the development of cross-border cooperation aimed at the preservation of cultural features of tradition ethnic communities, the increase in the economic potential of border regions.

Social and political and information initiatives.

1. Increase in the business social responsibility: the development of legal framework of business social responsibility, support for entrepreneurs implementing social programmes.

2. The promotion of image of the Pskov region in mass media as an attractive residential location, the creation of a positive image of the region.

3. The formation of healthy lifestyle attitudes in the population, the promotion of family values.

4. Closer cooperation between the administration of the Pskov region and non-governmental organisations — including the Russian Orthodox Church — aimed at solving the demographic development issues.

Summarising the system of measures of government regulation of demographic processes at the regional level, one can come to the following conclusions.

1. The priorities of public demographic policy should reflect regional features.

2. For the Pskov region, in view of the severe demographic crises, which began in the region 25 years earlier than nationwide, such priority should be the overcoming of depopulation and ensuring sustainable demographic development.

3. The reasons for demographic crises in the Pskov region lie in the low level of socioeconomic development leading to the population outflow including that of women of childbearing age into richer regions.

4. Migration outflow resulted in a sex and age disparity in the regional population, which leads to a greater percentage of senior people and the increase in dependency rate.

5. The measures aimed at governmental regulation of demographic process should be of complex nature, i. e. influence not only the demographic processes, but also the factors affecting them.

Thus, regional state socioeconomic policy should have a demographic determinant, which is absolutely necessary not only for the Pskov region, but for all regions of the Russian Federation experiencing the repercussions of depopulation.

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