

**THE DEMOGRAPHY OF THE REPUBLIC OF BELARUS:  
MODERN SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC RISKS**

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ABSTRACT

The problem of demography in the Republic of Belarus is still important. From one point of view for the public administration, and from other point of view for other discipline like sociology, economy. The problem of demography is bad information for the labour market and also regional development policy.

**Key words:** demography, Belarus, labour market, depopulation

INTRODUCTION

In accordance with the data of UN, as fertility declines and life expectancy rises, the proportion of the population above a certain age rises. This phenomenon, known as population ageing, is occurring throughout the world. In 2015, there are 901 million people aged 60 or over, comprising 12 per cent of the global population<sup>1</sup>.

The population aged 60 or above is growing at a rate of 3.26 per cent per year. Currently, Europe has the greatest percentage of its population aged 60 or over (24 per cent), but rapid ageing will occur in other parts

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<sup>1</sup> United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Population Division (2015). *World Population Prospects: The 2015 Revision, Key Findings and Advance Tables*. Working Paper No. ESA/P/WP.241, p. 12.

of the world as well, so that, by 2050, all major areas of the world except Africa will have nearly a quarter or more of their populations aged 60 or over. The number of older persons in the world is projected to be 1.4 billion by 2030 and 2.1 billion by 2050, and could rise to 3.2 billion in 2100. In the short-to-medium term, higher numbers of older population are inevitable, given that the relevant cohorts are already alive<sup>2</sup>.

#### DEMOGRAPHY PROBLEMS IN THE BELARUS

The rate of mortality in the Republic of Belarus objectively is alarmingly high. This together with other negative demographic data does not allow to predict the required level of reproduction of the population. According to the methodology of the UN on global classification of the population the population is considered “aged” if the share of people aged 65 and older is 7 per cent of the population. What concerns Belarus its population was recognized “aged” since 50s years of the XX century, when the proportion of people over 65 has exceeded 7 per cent of the population.

In the next ten years the structural demographic factors will have a negative impact on fertility trends in the Republic of Belarus, as at the active childbearing age comes generation born in the 1990s. The consequences of the demographic decline and a gradual decline in the contribution of to the generation of fertility 1980s are already evident and affect all socio-economic indicators.

According to official data of the National Statistics Committee of the Republic of Belarus, at the beginning of 2011 the population of the country amounted to 9.481 million people<sup>3</sup>, and four years later, at the beginning of 2015, – 9.480 million people (Table 1)<sup>4</sup>.

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<sup>2</sup> *Ib*, p. 13.

<sup>3</sup> *В Республике Беларусь с 14 по 24 октября 2009 г. была проведена очередная перепись населения по состоянию на 14 октября 2009 г.* : Официальный сайт Нац. стат. комитета Респ. Беларусь, 1998-2015 [Электронный ресурс]. – 2015. – Режим доступа : <http://belstat.gov.by/homep/ru/perepic/2009/itogi1.php>. – Дата доступа : 15.03.2015.

<sup>4</sup> *Ib*.

Table 1. Population of the Republic of Belarus (the beginning of the year; thous. people)

	1996	2001	2005	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015
Republic of Belarus	10177,3	9956,7	9697,5	9513,6	9500,0	9481,2	9465,2	9463,8	9468,2	9480,9

Source: National Statistics Committee of the Republic of Belarus (2015)

Due to the number of population at the beginning of 2015 the Republic of Belarus (9.48 million people) ranked fifth place among CIS countries (after Russian Federation – 146,3 million people, Ukraine – 42.8 million people, the Republic of Uzbekistan – 30 million people, the Republic of Kazakhstan – 17.4 million people), the seventeenth place in Europe and the eighty-ninth in the world.

Prior to the 1990s the population of the Republic of Belarus was constantly growing. However, the intensity of this growth started to decline. According to some sources a decrease was noted since the beginning of the 1970s<sup>5</sup>, but as it can be seen from the Table 2 the rate of population growth was significantly decreased from the 1990s<sup>6</sup>:

Table 2. Number and natural increase / decrease (-) of population

Years	Total Population		
	Born, thousand	Dead, thousand	Natural increase / decrease (-) of population, thousand
1950	197 164	61 944	135 220
1960	200 218	54 037	146 181
1970	146 676	68 974	77 702
1980	154 432	95 514	58 918

<sup>5</sup> Основные вызовы демографической безопасности: сходства и различия в Молдове и Беларуси / Л.П. Шахотько [и др.] ; отв.ред.: Г.А. Палади, Л.П. Шахотько, О.Е. Гагауз, Кишинев 2010, p. 39.

<sup>6</sup> Демографический ежегодник Республики Беларусь : статистический сборник / редкол.: В.И. Зиновский (пред.), И.А. Костевич [и др.], Минск, 2014, p. 125.

<b>1990</b>	142 167	109 582	32 585
<b>1995</b>	101 144	133 775	- 32 631
<b>2000</b>	93 691	134 867	- 41 176
<b>2005</b>	90 508	141 857	- 51 349
<b>2010</b>	108 050	137 132	- 29 082
<b>2011</b>	109 147	135 090	- 25 943
<b>2012</b>	115 893	126 531	- 10 638
<b>2013</b>	117 997	125 326	- 7 329
<b>2014</b>	118 697	121 601	- 2 904

Source: National Statistical Committee of the Republic of Belarus (2014)

At the beginning of the 1990s demographic processes in Belarus were influenced by such circumstances as unemployment and declining living standards. There was no firm confidence in the future, what negatively reflected on composition and the dynamics of reproduction of the population.

Overall, in the period from 1993 to 2013 the population of the Republic of Belarus was decreased on 742 315 people (Table 3):

Table 3. The natural population decrease in 1993 – 2013

1993 – 2013					
Total		Men		Women	
Born	Dead	Born	Dead	Born	Dead
2 110 821	2 853 136	1 087 745	1 486 101	1 023 076	1 367 035
Total decrease		Decrease men		Decrease women	
742 315		398 356		343 959	

Source: Made by author of the article

The Table 3 indicates the depopulation. For more than 15 years in the Republic of Belarus the annual number of deaths exceeds the number of births and in spite of the continued positive migration growth<sup>7</sup>, the population of the Republic of Belarus is constantly decreasing.

Under the first part of art. 3 of the Law of the Republic of Belarus "On demographic security of the Republic of Belarus" (January 4, 2002 № 80-Z)<sup>8</sup>, depopulation is a demographic threat – demographic events, trends, socio-economic consequences of which have a negative impact on the sustainable development of the Republic of Belarus.

The next reasons of depopulation in Belarus can be named:

- 1) high mortality rates among the citizens of the Republic of Belarus;
- 2) insufficiently high reproduction rate in the country;
- 3) insufficiently high migration increase (low levels of external migration);
- 4) high rates of abortion in early pregnancy;
- 5) late diagnosis of diseases;
- 6) high rates of infertility in men and women, as well as latent infertility;
- 7) extremely high rate of divorces among citizens of the Republic of Belarus and the consumer attitude to the institutions of marriage and family.

Mortality rates in different age groups are vary in number and gender. The only age group where the mortality rates of men in Belarus inferior rates of mortality among women – in the age group over 70 years where the mortality rates for men is on average 37.2 per cent of all cases of death (Table 4):

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<sup>7</sup> Загорец, В. *Внешняя миграция населения Республики Беларусь в 2014 г.: новые факторы и тенденции* / В. Загорец, И. Загорец // Журнал международного права и международных отношений. – 2014. – № 4. – Официальный сайт Международного общественного объединения по научно-исследовательским и информационно-образовательным программам «Развитие» [Электронный ресурс]. – 2015. – Режим доступа : <http://www.evolutio.info/content/view/2313/235/>. – Дата доступа : 30.07.2015.

<sup>8</sup> *О демографической безопасности Республики Беларусь* : Закон Респ. Беларусь, 4 янв. 2002 г., № 80-З ; в ред. Закона Респ. Беларусь от 31.12.2009 г. // Нац. реестр правовых актов Респ. Беларусь. – 2010. – № 15. – 2/1666.

Table 4. Death rates for men and women, ranged in age

			2000		2011		2013	
	Total	Men	134 867	70 202	135 090	71 349	125 326	63 012
		Women		64 665		63 741		62 314
a	until 19 years	2 441	1 349	1 130	665	967	583	
			1 095		465		384	
b	20-29 years	2 791	2 256	2 167	1 749	1 652	1 289	
			535		418		363	
c	30-39 years	5 262	4 185	4 646	3 644	3 650	2 807	
			1 077		1 002		843	
d	40-49 years	10 338	7 829	9 127	7 002	6 802	5 085	
			2 509		2 125		1 717	
e	50-59 years	14 017	10 080	19 285	14 018	15 958	11 544	
			3 937		5 267		4 414	
f	60-69 years	29 594	18 687	21 610	14 559	20 009	13 446	
			10 907		7 051		6 563	
g	70 years and over	70 424	25 593	77 125	29 655	76 288	28 232	
			44 831		47 460		48 056	

Source: Made by author of the article

The highest number of deaths in 2013 is in the age group “g” (Table 4). Despite the high mortality rate in the age group “g” (70 years and older), in 2014 in the Republic of Belarus were 2 265 thousand women and men older working age (women over 55 years, men over 60 years) or 24 per cent of the population. What concerns people older 65 years (according to the UN methodology on classification population) in 2014 in Belarus there were 1 317 thousand people older 65 years – 13.9 per cent of the population (almost two times more than UN classification noticed) (Table 5).

Table 5. The number of population older working age

	1996	2005	2010	2014	2015
<b>The number of total population (the beginning of the year), thousands people</b>	10 177	9 697	9 500	9 468	9 481
<b>older working age (women over 55 years, men over 60 years)</b>	2 155	2 080	2 139	2 265	2 311
<b>younger older working age (0-15)</b>	2 350	1 680	1 514	1 579	1 610
<b>working age (women 16-54, men 16-59)</b>	5 672	5 937	5 847	5 623	5 560

Source: National Statistical Committee of the Republic of Belarus (2015)

In 2014 in Belarus on each 1000 people in working age were 684 people who are not obligated to work: among them 281 people younger working age and 403 are older working age<sup>9</sup>. These figures demonstrate the number of people of working age, what allows us to calculate the number of employed people in the economy and to determine the coefficients of demographic load on one person in working age.

In 2015 there were 3 921 thousand people who are not obligated to work (1 610 thousand people younger working age and 2 311 thousand people older working age). All 5 560 thousand people in working age are obligated to „take care” of 3 921 thousand people who are not obligated to work. It means that on each 1.4 person in working age there is 1 person who is not obligated to work (1.4:1).

However, by the official sources of National Statistic Committee of the Republic of Belarus, in June 2015 the economy of the Republic of Belarus

<sup>9</sup> Демографический ежегодник Республики Беларусь : статистический сборник / редкол.: В.И. Зиновский (пред.), И.А. Костевич [и др.], Минск, 2014, р. 45, р. 68, р. 71.

occupied just 4 467.6 thousand people<sup>10</sup> – on 1 093 thousand people in working age less than registered in Republic of Belarus (registered 5 560 thousand people). These persons might support the economy of Belarus, but do not do it for various reasons (illness, disability, prisoners, social dependency, somebody are temporarily abroad, etc.). Thereby the burden on the citizens of working age is increasing: 4 467.6 thousand employed people versus 3 921 thousand people who are not obligated to work. The burden on the citizens in working age increases from 1.4:1 to 1.1:1.

In 2015 ends the implementation of the National Program on Demographic Security of the Republic of Belarus for 2011 – 2015, approved by Decree of President of the Republic of Belarus in August 11, 2011 № 357<sup>11</sup>.

#### THE FUTURE OF THE DEMOGRAPHY POLICY IN BELARUS

The current demographic situation dictates for state the need to change negative demographic trends, to develop new program on demographic security in the Republic of Belarus on 2016 – 2020. New program have to provide a complex of measures to decrease the depopulation as according to preliminary data the proportion of persons older working age in Belarus in 2025 could be 28 per cent, while the proportion of persons younger working age will reach just 17 per cent at the same time.

The forecasts are very realistic due to the fact that at the beginning of 2014 among the citizens of Belarus there were 1 859 thousands persons aged older 60 years (or 19.6 per cent of population of the Republic of Belarus).

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<sup>10</sup> *О занятости населения в июне 2015 г.* : Официальный сайт Нац. стат. комитета Респ. Беларусь, 1998-2015 [Электронный ресурс]. – 2015. – Режим доступа: [http://belstat.gov.by/ofitsialnaya-statistika/otrasli-statistiki/naselenie/trud/operativnaya-informatsiya\\_8/o-zanyatosti-naseleniya/o-zanyatosti-naseleniya-v-iyune-2015-g/](http://belstat.gov.by/ofitsialnaya-statistika/otrasli-statistiki/naselenie/trud/operativnaya-informatsiya_8/o-zanyatosti-naseleniya/o-zanyatosti-naseleniya-v-iyune-2015-g/). – Дата доступа : 30.07.2015.

<sup>11</sup> *Об утверждении Национальной программы демографической безопасности Республики Беларусь на 2011–2015 годы* : Указ Президента Респ. Беларусь, 11 авг. 2011 г., № 357 ; в ред. Указа Президента Респ. Беларусь от 12.09.2012 // Нац. правовой Интернет-портал Респ. Беларусь. – 14.09.2012. – 1/13752.



Negative trends in demographic sphere are under the influence of a wide range of related areas. The most vulnerable of which are: 1) institution of marriage and family; 2) education system; 3) pension system; 4) employment system; 5) health care system.

Negative tendencies there are in the sphere of *marriage and family*. For example in January – June 2015 in the Republic of Belarus were registered 31 439 marriages and 16 335 divorces<sup>12</sup>. That means each the second marriage in Belarus ends by divorce – fantastically high level of divorces.

Due to the decreasing index of births and decreasing number of school graduates in the field of *education* there are shortfalls enrollees in establishment of higher and secondary education. In 2013 there were enrolled 30 per cent enrollees less than in 2012 due to the increased passing scores on the subjects of centralized testing. In 2014 – 6 per cent enrollees less than in 2013 as there were less school graduates. As the result – less students and non-profitable student groups, reducing the amount of study courses, optimization the number of full-time teachers and support staff. However, it should be noted that these circumstances are the result of both depopulation in the country and also development and modernization of its education system.

According to the Ministry of Labor and Social Protection of the Republic of Belarus, the number of pension recipients in the country is 2500 thousand people. That indicates the modern social risks in *pension system*. The country is taking steps for prolongation the insurance period, to raise the retirement age for certain categories of citizens applying for social pensions. Currently, the average life expectancy for men in Belarus is 63 years old, despite the fact that the retirement age for men is 60 years.

In the economy of the Republic of Belarus in June 2015 were *employed* 4 467.6 thousand people what is 1.5 per cent less than in June 2014. According to the data of the Ministry of Labor and Social Protection of the Republic of Belarus the number of registered unemployed persons at the

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<sup>12</sup> *Одемографической ситуации в январе–июне 2015 г.*: Официальный сайт Нац. статистического комитета Респ. Беларусь, 1998-2015 [Электронный ресурс]. – 2015. – Режим доступа : [http://belstat.gov.by/ofitsialnaya-statistika/otrasli-statistiki/naselenie/demografiya\\_2/operativnaya-informatsiya\\_1/o-demograficheskoi-situatsii/o-demograficheskoi-situatsii-v-yanvare-iyune-2015-gl/](http://belstat.gov.by/ofitsialnaya-statistika/otrasli-statistiki/naselenie/demografiya_2/operativnaya-informatsiya_1/o-demograficheskoi-situatsii/o-demograficheskoi-situatsii-v-yanvare-iyune-2015-gl/). – Дата доступа : 30.07.2015.

end of June 2015 was 46.8 thousand people what is 2.2 times more than at the end of June 2014 and 4.7 per cent more than at the end of May 2015. The registered unemployment rate at the end of June 2015 amounted to 1 per cent of the economically active population (at the end of June 2014 – 0.5 per cent)<sup>13</sup>.

It should be noted that in the Republic of Belarus the phenomena of unemployment was hidden and its official indexes were fantastically low (0.5 - 0.6 per cent) what unfortunately is not a positive indicator as in accordance with the legislation unemployed person is a person who is officially registered in social government agencies. All other persons who were unemployed but don't registered in social government agencies were out of this statistics. That means that the unemployment index in Belarus does not reflect the real situation in the field of unemployment and employment. Moreover, the non-equal status of “unemployed persons” and “not working persons” soon will be the basis of different offensive consequences.

In accordance with the standards of the World Health Organization the rate of mortality is high if the index of mortality exceed 10 persons per 1 000. According to the National Statistics Committee, in the Republic of Belarus in 2014 the death rate was 13.1 people per 1 000 population; in January – July 2015 – 13.3 per 1 000 persons<sup>14</sup>. The level of male mortality is 3 times higher than the death rate of women. According to the World Health Organization in Belarus the death rate of men aged 15-60 years old is 3 – 4.5 times higher than in the European Union. Almost 60 per cent of deaths occur due to diseases of the cardiovascular system; 15 per cent – due to the cancer; 4 per cent – due to respiratory diseases and digestive system;

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<sup>13</sup> *О занятости населения в июне 2015 г.:* Официальный сайт Нац. статистического комитета Респ. Беларусь, 1998-2015 [Электронный ресурс]. – 2015. – Режим доступа :[http://belstat.gov.by/ofitsialnaya-statistika/otrasli-statistiki/naselenie/trud/operativnaya-informatsiya\\_8/o-zanyatosti-naseleniya/o-zanyatosti-naseleniya-v-iyune-2015-g/](http://belstat.gov.by/ofitsialnaya-statistika/otrasli-statistiki/naselenie/trud/operativnaya-informatsiya_8/o-zanyatosti-naseleniya/o-zanyatosti-naseleniya-v-iyune-2015-g/). – Дата доступа : 29.07.2015.

<sup>14</sup> *О демографической ситуации в январе – июне 2015 г. :* Официальный сайт Нац. статистического комитета Респ. Беларусь, 1998-2015 [Электронный ресурс]. – 2015. – Режим доступа : [http://belstat.gov.by/ofitsialnaya-statistika/otrasli-statistiki/naselenie/demografiya\\_2/operativnaya-informatsiya\\_1/o-demograficheskoi-situatsii/o-demograficheskoi-situatsii-v-yanvare-iyune-2015-g/](http://belstat.gov.by/ofitsialnaya-statistika/otrasli-statistiki/naselenie/demografiya_2/operativnaya-informatsiya_1/o-demograficheskoi-situatsii/o-demograficheskoi-situatsii-v-yanvare-iyune-2015-g/). – Дата доступа : 30.07.2015.

10 per cent – due to external reasons (accidents, drowning, poisoning, suicide, alcoholism, etc.).

#### SUMMARY

According to the National Statistics Committee in 2013 in Belarus were made 9 per cent abortions more than in 2012: 31 206 in 2013; 28 628 in 2012)<sup>15</sup>. On each 100 births there are 26.6 abortions. Thus Belarus loses every fifth unborn child. High mortality and low birth rates increase the burden on the economically active population, the health care system and social security.

The main risking sphere is social and economic development of the country as depopulation inhibits the growth of labor productivity, an aging population slows down its development.

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<sup>15</sup> Здоровье населения Республики Беларусь 2009 – 2013 : статистический сборник / редкол.: В.И. Зиновский (пред.), И.А. Костевич [и др.]. – Минск : Нац. стат. ком. Респ. Беларусь, 2014. – С. 103.

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