

MODERN RUSSIA: IDEOLOGY, POLITICS, CULTURE AND RELIGION

2020.04.001. VALENTINA SCHENSNOVICH. DEMOGRAPHIC AND MIGRATION SITUATION IN RUSSIA DURING THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC // *Condensed Abstract*.

Keywords: Russia, population reproduction, mortality, preliminary assessment of the situation in 2020, pandemic, COVID-19, coronavirus, Central Asia, migration, labor migrants, educational migration, border regions.

Valentina Schensnovich,
Research Associate,
INION RAN

1. Alexey Kashepov. Epidemiological Transition Theory and the Demographic Situation in Russia in 2020 // *Modern Science*, 2020. № 7-1. P. 42–50.

2. Sergey Ryazantsev, Zafar Vazirov, Farzona Garibova. “Stranded on the Borders” between Russia and the Homeland: Migrants from Central Asia Countries During the COVID-19 pandemic* // *Scientific Review. Series 1. Economics and Law*, 2020, № 3. P. 45–58.

A.V. Kashepov [1] presents theories explaining the processes of population reproduction in Russia for the period 2000–2020. Special attention is paid to the problems of mortality

and the increase in life expectancy. The author provides a preliminary analysis of the 2020 crisis phenomena associated with the COVID-2019 pandemic, also provides statistical forecasts of epidemic mortality and calculations of its possible impact on the overall indicators for 2020.

The author notes mortality from biomedical causes (internal, natural causes) and socio-economic (external) causes in the structure of the causes of total mortality before the 2020 pandemic. Previously, it was assumed that the “internal” causes of death were stable, decreased slowly and were dependent on direct influence the economic and social situation in the country not to the same extent, and “external” reasons depended on the lifestyle and the state of medicine as well, but at the same time were under a stronger influence of state policy, economy, legislation.

The author takes several scientific paradigms as a basis. The paradigm of “demographic transition” developed by A.G. Vishnevsky in Russia is the most widespread in both world and domestic literature. Mortality and life expectancy are interpreted as a socio-biological process dependent on society, economy and government influence. The theory of “epidemiological transition” by A.R. Omran develops in parallel, according to which the primacy of endogenous and quasi-endogenous causes replaces the prevalence of exogenous causes of death (epidemics), i.e. there is a radical change in the structure of mortality. A. Kashepov believes that the 2020 pandemic may prove the premature of the conclusion about the withdrawal of such events from the global list of causes of death. Although, in his opinion, this theory can hardly be refuted by the events of 2020 if the “epidemiological transition” is considered in the context of the last few decades.

The author used the theory of the “demographic crisis” in his works to explain the sharply increased mortality over the significantly decreased birth rate in Russia in the 1990s. A. Kashepov suggests the following periodization of the

demographic situation in Russia: normal development (not without problems) along the trajectory of the “demographic transition” and “epidemiological transition” until 1991, the “demographic crisis” of the 1990s, and after “stabilization” and a gradual return to the trajectory of global development in 2000–2010. Although in Russia there were wave-like movements in the total population, natural growth, and birth rate during the period of stabilization before the pandemic, the researcher does not yet see any prerequisites for a return to the demographic catastrophe of the 1990s.

Mortality in Russia, which increased sharply during the demographic crisis of the 1990s, continuously decreased in the period 2002–2019, and the average life expectancy increased accordingly, amounting to 73.3 years in 2019. The researcher shows comparative data on mortality from various causes in Russia and some other countries. Cancer and cardiovascular diseases are the most common causes of death in developed countries. In developing countries, infectious diseases (in 2020, they suddenly overwhelmed the United States and other developed countries), as well as diseases of the digestive system and external causes usually play a large role. Over the past 20 years, mortality from infectious diseases in Russia has been higher than in the most developed countries, but the corresponding ratio was generally stable in comparison with a sharp decrease in mortality from accidents, poisoning and injuries.

The author considers the prospects for the overall mortality rate and the total population mortality and mortality from COVID-19 for 2020. The number of deaths is projected to increase in 2020. This can be called a pessimistic option, which comes from the economic recession as a factor only. A. Kashepov also gives an alternative estimate of mortality for 2020 based on the hypothesis that additional mortality from COVID-2019 will overlap with the basic trend of reducing mortality from all causes. At the same time, the estimated additional mortality of

people who are considered cured of COVID-2019, but will die from its consequences (from damage to the lungs, heart, etc.), as well as additional mortality of chronic patients will affect the demographic results of 2020. According to the author, it is necessary to reduce the overall mortality rate for the period after the pandemic, based on improving the standard of living and health promotion. It is necessary to radically increase health care costs as well. The author believes that in this way the tasks of “saving the people” and increasing the average life expectancy to the level of developed countries will be successfully solved in our society.

S.V. Ryazantsev, Z.K. Vazirov and F.M. Garibova [2] consider the problems of migrants in the border regions of Russia and Kazakhstan, as well as on the borders of Central Asian countries during the COVID-19 pandemic.

The COVID-19 pandemic, the authors note, has a negative impact on Central Asian labor migrants, who constitute the largest group of foreign labor in Russia. Most migrant workers face unemployment and lack of livelihood due to the coronavirus pandemic at this time. Migrants cannot return to their countries of origin due to restrictions and closure of state borders. At the same time, the economy of the host countries, especially the border regions of the Central Asian section of Russia’s borders, suffers from a shortage of agricultural workers.

Migrants from Central Asian countries, the vast majority of whom are of working age, are in demand in the labor markets in Russia. Labour migration also brings direct financial benefits to both the host country and donor countries as a contribution to the gross domestic product. All newly independent republics in Central Asia after the collapse of the USSR experienced a significant outflow of labor force abroad. Emigration has led to a shortage of highly qualified specialists in these countries.

Many experts believe that migration is still spontaneous. The visa-free travel regulations, as well as the geographical proximity between the countries of the region, stimulate

temporary labor migration, which is often seasonal in nature. The authors note that the level of legal literacy among migrants from Central Asian countries is low. As a rule, they come legally, but often become “undocumented” migrants due to ignorance of local migration laws and unscrupulous employers. This leaves them without social protection and the state without tax revenues from their employment.

International migration in the post-Soviet space plays an important role in shaping the demographic and socio-economic development of Russia and the countries of Central Asia in modern conditions. The situation with the COVID-19 pandemic has brought about significant changes in the nature and trends of migration in the post-Soviet space, redefining the problems with the situation of migrants, especially in the border regions, where many find themselves in a “frozen” position due to the closure of borders. At present, Russia and Kazakhstan are “migration magnets” for migrant workers from Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan. The number of migrants from Central Asian countries, who entered Russia for various purposes in the first quarter of 2020 is 1,060,401 people. Most of them are labor migrants and they are located in all regions of Russia, although most of them are concentrated in large cities and in the border regions of Russia.

To reveal the scale of the impact of COVID-19 on the situation of labor migrants in Russia, the authors provide preliminary results of the ISPR FCTAS RAS sociological online survey (April 2020), which showed that more than half (65%) of labor migrants were actually left without work due to restrictions in connection with the COVID-19 pandemic, 20% said they work in the same place, about 4% of respondents have found additional work. According to the survey, about a third of migrants (34%) wanted to go home, but were unable to do so due to the closure of borders. Kazakhstan closed borders and declared a state of emergency. The countries of Central Asia – donors of labor migrants – began to close their state borders. International

mobility has dropped sharply, and by the beginning of April has practically ceased as a result of travel restrictions. The borders were completely closed by Tajikistan and Uzbekistan. Kyrgyzstan accepts only evacuation flights with its citizens. As a result, the situation of migrants remains difficult, as people were left without means of livelihood, sources of income and cannot pay for housing and food. Experts say that “megapolis labor migrants” who lost their jobs during the COVID-19 pandemic have already begun to move to the southern regions of the Russian Federation, for example, to the Astrakhan region to look for work in order to survive this period. Russian President V.V. Putin canceled the payment of patents for migrant workers from March 15 to June 15, 2020 and employers were able to accept migrant workers without permits.

The COVID-19 pandemic, the researchers conclude, has transformed the migration situation and identified gaps in the migration policies of Central Asian countries and Russia. Travel restrictions and border closures have highlighted the vulnerability of stranded migrants to unsanitary conditions in crowded airports and checkpoints. The pandemic has affected global trends in international economic migration and the dynamics of remittances. When viewed through the lens of migration, the economic crisis caused by COVID-19 can be long, deep and widespread. An information vacuum must be overcome: information on the rules for hiring foreign labor should be intended not only for migrant workers, but also for potential employers.