

TENDENCIES IN THE EVOLUTION OF RURAL POPULATION STRUCTURE IN THE REPUBLIC OF MOLDOVA

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Traditionally, the population structure in the Republic of Moldova according to the residential environment was favorable for the population dwelling in the rural area. Thus, according to the global and regional level from the 1960s up to the present moment, our country has twice exceeded Europe and Central Asia by the share of rural

population and in 2014 it was two and a half amount of EU countries and OECD members. Pursuant to the international statistics, a bigger share of rural population i.e. 77.7% was registered in Moldova at the beginning of 1960. The larger share of rural population has been maintained at present (Table 1).

Table 1. Evolution of Moldovan Population (total and according to environment, as of the 1st of January)

Years	Population amount, thousands of residents			% of the total amount	
	total	urban	rural	urban	rural
1960	2884,5	642,3	2242,2	22,3	77,7
1970	3568,9	1130,1	2438,8	31,7	68,3
1980	3949,8	1532,9	2416,9	38,8	61,2
1990	4335,4	2020,1	2315,3	46,6	53,4
2000	3644,1	1514,2	2129,9	41,5	58,5
2010	3563,7	1476,7	2087,0	41,4	58,6
2011	3560,4	1481,7	2078,7	41,6	58,4
2012	3559,5	1485,7	2073,8	41,7	58,3
2013	3559,5	1492,2	2067,3	41,9	58,1
2014	3557,6	1503,0	2054,6	42,2	57,8

Source: Statistical Yearbook of the Republic of Moldova. 2014. Chişinău, 2014, p. 32.

As it results from Table 1, essential changes took place in the evolution of Moldovan population structure: if in 1960-1990 there was a tendency of rapid growing of total population (from 2.8 mln to 4.3 mln dwellers), including the urban area where it increased threefold, the population share in the rural area decreased on the contrary from 77.7% to 53.4%, later in 1990-

2014, as a result of Transnistrian Conflict (1992) and intensification of migration processes the absolute amount of population decreased from 4.3 mln to 3.5 mln while the rural population share was reduced to 57.8% in 2014.

The population structure of the Republic of Moldova in relation to **territorial aspect** is given in Table 2.

Table 2. Stable Population according to Areas in Territorial Aspect, as of January 1, 2014.

	Total population	Urban population	Rural population	Urban population,%	Rural population,%
Total	3557634	1502996	2054638	42.2	57.8
Chişinău Municipality	804476	731678	72799	91.0	9.0
Northern Area	994844	359008	637936	35.9	64.1
Bălţi Municipality	149784	144855	4929	96.7	3.3
Central Area	1060409	207216	853193	19.5	80.5
Southern Area	536008	141739	394269	26.4	73.6
ATU Gagauzia	161897	65455	96442	40.4	59.6

Source: Statistical Yearbook of the Republic of Moldova. 2014. Chişinău, 2014, p. 35.

The analysis of statistical data given in Table 2 proves the non-uniform dwelling of country population depending on the territorial aspect. The highest concentration of urban population is in ATU Gagauzia (40.4) and in the Northern Area (35.9), while the highest concentration of

rural population is in the Central Area (80.5%) and in the Southern Area (73.6%).

The population structure can be characterized also depending on **age and economic activity (Fig. 3)**.

Table 3. Population Structure according to the Participation in Economic Activity, 2013.

Age group, years	Total population	Total active population	Employed population	Unemployed, BIM	Inactive population
Total	100.0	41.4	39.3	2.1	58.6
15-24	100.0	20.6	18.1	2.5	79.4
25-34	100.0	49.4	46.4	3.0	50.6
35-49	100.0	60.7	58.0	2.7	39.3
50-64	100.0	48.7	47.3	1.4	51.3
50 +	100.0	6.9	6.9	0.0	93.1
Male-total	100.0	44.5	41.8	2.7	55.5
Female-total	100.0	38.6	37.0	1.6	61.4
Urban-total	100.0	45.6	42.8	2.9	54.4
Rural-total	100.0	38.1	36.6	1.5	61.9

Source: Statistical Yearbook of the Republic of Moldova. 2014. Chişinău, 2014, p. 70.

The data given in Table 3 demonstrate a relatively low level of young people employment (15-34 years) and a relatively high share of young rural population in the inactive population (61.9%).

A negative tendency also takes place in the **population demographic structure**. At the beginning of 2014 the female and male population between 0-15 years in the Republic of Moldova amounted to 610 thousand people, including women – 295.9 thousand; men between 16-61 years and women between 16-56 years – 2349.2 and 1135.9 thousand accordingly; men of 62 years and more, women of 57 years and more – 598.4 and 414.3 thousand accordingly.

A fast growth of **population ageing ratio**

(the number of population at the age of 60 years and more to 100 dwellers) has been observed recently. This ratio evolved in the Republic of Moldova in the following way: 1980 – 10.7, 1990 – 12.8, 2000 – 13.6, 2010 – 14.4, 2014 – 15.7 [1, p.39]. We would like to mention that throughout the studied period a permanent growth of share of population in the age groups 50-59 years has been observed. In 2014 it reached more than 7% in the rural areas. It leads to complex consequences in the current and future economic activities both at the national level and at the rural level.

The **demographic dependency ratio** has experienced essential changes over the last years (Table 4).

Table 4. Demographic Dependency Ratio (per 100 employable people).

	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014
Number of people of unemployable age – total,	50.9	50.3	49.9	50.2	50.7	51.5
of which:						
Number of people under the employable age	28.2	27.4	26.7	26.3	26.1	26.0
Number of people over the employable age	22.7	22.9	23.2	23.9	24.6	25.5

Source: Statistical Yearbook of the Republic of Moldova. 2014. Chişinău, 2014, p. 39.

The high demographic dependency ratio has an adverse effect upon the labor force efficiency and upon the income sources necessary for maintaining the social sphere.

In the studied years the negative tendencies also took place in **decrease in natural population** (Table 5).

Table 5. Ratio of Natural Movement of Rural Population (per 1000 dwellers).

Years	Live-born children	Still-born children	Natural increase	Married	Divorced	Deceased at the age under twelve months
1980	20.1	11.5	8.6	11.6	0.5	38.4
1990	18.5	11.9	6.6	8.5	0.5	20.6
2000	11.4	13.2	-1.8	5.7	1.4	17.8
2010	12.2	14.5	-2.3	6.4	0.6	12.7
2011	11.8	12.9	-1.0	6.1	1.2	11.9
2012	11.9	12.9	-0.8	5.8	1.4	10.8
2013	11.6	12.4	-0.8	5.8	1.5	9.3

Source: Statistical Yearbook of the Republic of Moldova. 2014. Chişinău, 2014, p.46.

Table 5 confirms the serious situation which occurred in the natural movement of population in the last decades: the ratio of newborns decreased from 20.1 to 11.6; the ratio of those deceased increased from 11.5 to 12.4; the natural increase was reduced from 8.6 to 0.8; the number of those married was reduced from 11.6 to 5.8 while the number of those divorced on the contrary increased from 0.5 to 1.5.

The unfavorable tendencies, which took place in the last decades in the population structure and in the demographic processes of the Republic of Moldova, had an adverse effect upon the social and economic situation and living standards of population:

- the rate of activity at the beginning of 2014 in the rural area constituted 39.1 %, being less than that in the urban area – 44.1% [5];

- the rate of rural population employment is maintained at a reduced level, constituting 38% in 2014 and being smaller as compared to the urban population (41.8%) [5];

- the unemployment rate in the rural area constituted 2.75, being smaller than that in the rural area – 5.2 % [5];

- the smallest wages are determined in the agricultural sector, they constitute less than 2/3 of the average monthly wage in the economy. The following figures prove the above stated fact: the average monthly nominal wage amounted to 291.8 US dollars in 2013, while in the agriculture it amounted to 192.3 US dollars [1];

- the standard of population well-being and

living –poverty remains a mass phenomenon in the countryside, poor people constitute 30.3% of the total rural population. The subsistence minimum (monthly average per person) amounted to 1612.3 lei in 2013 while the average monthly pension determined at the end of the year amounted to 1020.6 lei [1]. It results that the average monthly pension constitutes only 63.3 % of the subsistence minimum.

A negative impact upon the socio-demographic processes and rural labor market in the Republic of Moldova have **migration processes connected to searching for a job and obtaining a decent life**. The changes, which took place in the last two years in the political, economic and social life in the country, generated intense migration processes while their adverse effects are more evident for Moldova as compared to other countries.

When we refer to the official statistics, it is evident according to the data of the last census that 8.1% of population stayed temporary abroad for being employed there in 2014. The current analysis of statistical data indicates a continuing intensity of temporary migration for the purpose of employment. For about 9% of the total population (328.3 thousand people) or 27% of employable population stayed abroad in 2013. More than 3/4 of migrants are people at the age of 25-54 years. In 2000-2013 the ratio of emigrants from the rural area was constantly increasing, it constituted approximately 2/3 of those gone abroad, the maximum share was

achieved in 2013 when it constituted approx. 73%. For about two thirds of those declared gone abroad are men. This situation will have a direct consequence in the future and will results

in such negative phenomena as reduction of manpower, intensification of depopulation in the rural area and a negative impact upon the family state, including children education.

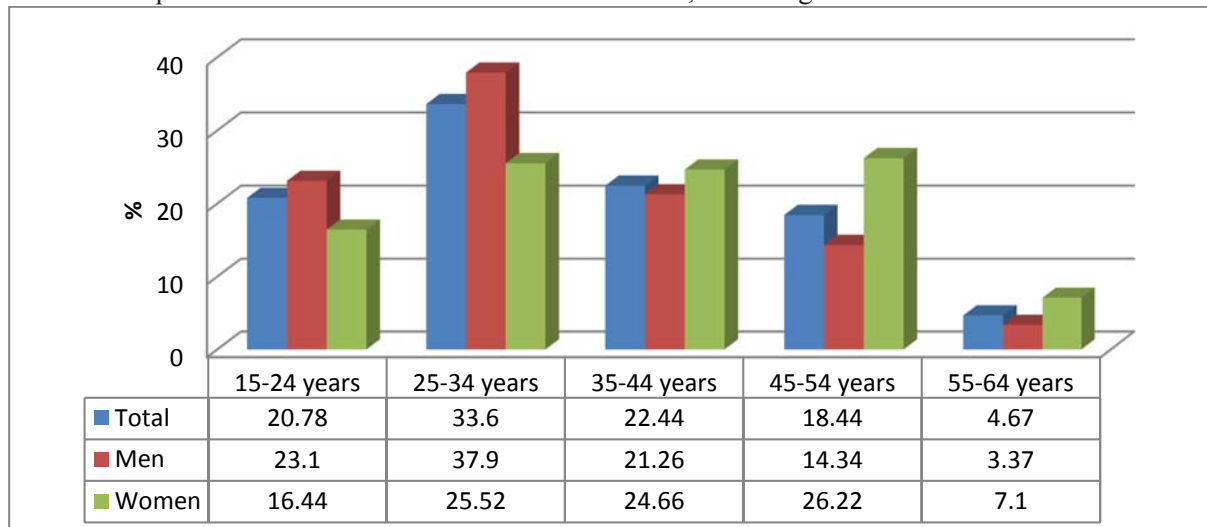


Figure 1. Distribution of Emigrants according to the Age and Sex Groups, % (2013)

Source: It is developed by the author based on statistical data of the National Bureau of Statistics.

The analysis of emigrants depending on *sex* and *age group* (Figure 1) reveals that the majority of women (76.40%) are included in the group of adults (25-54 years), having a uniform distribution between the age groups 25-34 years, 35-44 and 45-54 years (per 24-26%), and in a much smaller proportion (16.4%) in the group of young people (15-24 years) and 7.1% in the group of elderly people (55-64 years) accordingly. As concerns men, the largest share falls with the age group of 25-34 years (37.9%), followed by men at the age of 15-24 years (23.1%) and 35-44 years (21.26%). The average age of emigrants is 36.6 years for men and 38.5 years for women accordingly.

The apogee of population emigration was recorded in 2004-2005, when the number of people staying abroad and searching for a job there reached 345.3 and 394.5 thousand people or 24.1% and 27.3% accordingly in relation to the economically active population. This correlation is more considerable for the economically active population from the rural area (38.6%) as compared to the urban population (15.1%), with a constant tendency of growth in the last years. According to the studies of the National Bureau of Statistics [4], the grounds of labor migration for 52% of subjects is lack of job and for 42% it is small wages. In

case of urban population, leaving for working abroad is explained mostly by small wages (55%), while for rural population it is explained by lack of job (57%).

Among the rural population working abroad the largest share falls with those gone to Israel (78.5%), Ukraine (78%), Russia (75.1%), Italy (approx. 64%) and in other countries (62.5%). An intense migratory mobility of rural population is directed to Russia: in case of men – for all age groups with an average ratio of approx. 80% for each group while in case of women – with a maximum ratio of migrants at the age of 15-24 years (62.5%). According to the official statistics, an intense mobility of women from the rural area is directed to Italy, especially in groups aged 35-64 years, the maximum share is registered in category of 45-54 years and 55-64 years (52% at the average).

The number of children left in the country without care of parents, who are absent due to working abroad, is a real challenge for the further demographic processes. According to the official statistics, 42% of labor migrants have preschool children, who are left at home, a big part of them i.e. 73% live in the countryside. Simultaneously with the risks of social, emotional, psychological disfavor, which these children are subject to, they constitute a category

of people which is predisposed to entering the second migration wave either by family integration or by effects of habituation and development of “*migration culture*”, when migration becomes a standard.

The measures meant for reducing the negative demographic phenomena, which affect directly the labor market in the rural area, should be based on the economic revival focused not only on stimulation of natural increase but also on stimulating the migrants’ coming back home. The main element of rural development strategies should constitute industrialization and development of social infrastructure in the countryside, management of migration flows, including by development of economic activities, which will satisfy the demand for jobs in the rural area, including by the development of village networks and rational employment.

The Republic of Moldova has three strategies connected with agriculture at present. They are:

- National Strategy for Sustainable Development in the Agro-industrial Complex (2008-2015),
- Food Safety Strategy (2011-2015),
- Strategy of Development of Rural Extension Services for 2012-2022. All these strategies are referred to different aspects of the sector, however there is no holistic approach to the sector challenges at present.

A special interest evokes the Strategy of Agricultural and Rural Development for 2014-2020, which proposes to apply a vision based on coherence between the agriculture, rural area and development, which represent problems of economic, environmental and social nature. The vision is the following:

a) a competitive agro-business sector will encourage the Moldovan rural area to become attractive for employment and living, having a necessary infrastructure. The agriculture and rural area will supply goods and services and at the same time will preserve the biodiversity, cultural and traditional values for the future generations;

b) the Strategy is aimed at increasing the competitiveness of agricultural and food sector by means of vast restructuring and remodeling and improvement of life quality and of work in the rural area by implementing a synergy between agricultural and food activities and

natural environment.

One of strategic priorities refers to improvement of rural living standards. The Republic of Moldova faces many problems in the rural area and therefore there is an evident need of improvement of living standards in the countryside. The strategy proposes the following measures for this purpose:

1. Increase of investments in the physical and service infrastructure in the rural areas.

The support for improving of infrastructure and physical rural services is essential, it is necessary to invest in renovation and reconstruction of supply and sewage systems, power supply systems and local roads. Such an upgrade would certainly enhance the rural living standards and would improve the access to more markets (local, urban, labor market, etc). The modern infrastructure is also one of the most significant premises for continuing the capital investments.

2. Increase of employment opportunities in the non-agricultural sphere and income increase in the countryside. The support is necessary for creating opportunities of employment in the non-agricultural sphere in the countryside. It would take the form of support for creation and development of agro-tourism services or non-agricultural small-scale businesses aiming at production and provision of services in the rural area and supporting existing small-scale and medium-sized businesses for increasing their capacities.

3. Stimulation of local community involvement in the rural development. The local community involvement is essential in creating incentives for rural dwellers to contribute to the well-being of their community. The support is therefore necessary for allowing the local population to express their opinion regarding the way in which they want to develop their living conditions. It is very important to enhance the attractiveness of rural areas by improving social and cultural aspects at the local level and by developing the infrastructure of services for rural communities.

Thus, regardless the alarming demographic state, the countryside remains to be an important potential from the point of view of sustainable socio-economic development while the country future is to a great extent determined by the solution of problems of rural population.

References

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