Chapter 11

Past and Present Population Development in the Republic of Moldova

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11.1 Introduction

The Republic of Moldova – the second smallest country among the republics of the former USSR – is situated in the south of Eastern Europe, between Romania and Ukraine. Located in the area surrounded by deltas of Nistru, Prut and Danube rivers, it has experienced frequent changes in borders and territory size. Moldova was part of the Russian Empire until 1918, then it declared independence and united with Romania. The newly formed Union of the Soviet Socialist Republics refused to recognise this unification and in 1924 established Moldavian Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic (MASSR) by partitioning the ethnically mixed part of Ukraine located by the Nistru river, although the share of Moldovan population in this region was only 30% (O'Loughlin *et al.*, 1998). During the Second World War, in August 1940, the Moldavian Soviet Socialist Republic was established in its present borders. Later, the territory was annexed by Romania and then again by the USSR at the end of the Second World War. During the post-war period an intense Russification of Moldavan society took place. Russian language was introduced into everyday life and the Cyrillic alphabet replaced traditional Latin alphabet in Moldavan language, which is similar to Romanian language.

After the first democratic elections held in February-March 1990, the new government took power in May 1990 and introduced series of radical changes – the major being the declaration of the sovereignty in June 1990, and the change of the republic's name first to the Soviet Socialist Republic of Moldova and then to the Republic of Moldova in May 1991. Subsequently, two inner regions declared their own independence: The Republic of Gagauzia (in August 1990) and the Transdniester Soviet Socialist Republic (in September 1990). The Gagauzian region is located in the rural south of the country and is mainly inhabited by an ethnic group of a Turkic origin known as the Gagauz, whose main religion is Orthodox Christianity. The Transdniester Moldovan Republic, with the capital in Tiraspol, is located in the so-called Transnistria, on the east bank of the river Nistru, and is populated mostly by Slavonic people.

Following the collapse of the 1991 August coup d'etat in the former Soviet Union, the Republic of Moldova declared its independence from the Soviet Union on 27 August 1991. The political situation in Transdniestria gradually escalated into a violent and armed conflict with casualties. As a result of peace negotiations between Moldov-

an, Ukrainian, Russian and Romanian authorities, in 1992 the conflict was ceased. Since then, Transdniestria has remained a separate "pseudo-state" ("Trans-dniester Moldovian Republic") with its own government, currency and parliament. In contrast with the Republic of Moldova, where Latin alphabet was reintroduced, law punishes its use in Transdniestria and people of the Moldovan nationality, despite being the largest ethnic group, are persecuted and discriminated there. In contrast, the Gagauz reached a compromise with the Moldovan Government in 1994, and at present this region has a special non-autonomous status.

11.2 Social and Economic Development

The population of Moldova is 4.3 million people living on the territory of 33.8 thousand square kilometres, which makes the population density about 127 people per km^2. The capital of Moldova is Chişinău, with 752 thousand inhabitants. The majority of population, 54%, lives in rural areas, what makes Moldova, besides Albania and Bosnia-Herzegovina, the least urbanised country of Europe. Almost 50% of the population are employed in agriculture, which uses plentiful rich black soils ("chernozem"). In the past, Moldova was often called "the garden of the Soviet Union" and agricultural products, especially wine, are still the principal export products.

The dissolution of the Soviet Union brought the loss of trade connections, export destinations and secession of industrial Transdniestria. General backwardness of economy as well as slow and chaotic implementation of economic reforms has resulted in continuing economic decline, high inflation and increase of poverty. During the period 1989–1996, the GDP officially declined by 65% and reached the value of US$590 per capita, which makes Moldova the poorest country in Europe. The legal economy was step by step substituted by "shadow economy", which reached alarming proportions. According to expert estimates, the size of the "shadow economy" is equal to 70% of the official GDP derived from legal economic activities (UNDP, 1998). Although the real wages are extremely low (average monthly salary was 220 Moldovan Lei, i.e. US$44, in 1997), the situation of unemployed people, retired persons and families with many children is even worse. The official unemployment rate was only 1.5% in 1997, but unofficial estimate was 25%. Two-thirds of Moldovan population had the average income under 90 Moldovan Lei per month (US$18) in 1997, and 77% of inhabitants lived under the minimum subsistence level (UNDP, 1998).

The deterioration of the living standards of the population accelerated by the price liberalisation has been the most severe consequence of the economic transition. According to estimates, the real income per capita declined 3.5 times during six years of economic transition since 1991 (UNDP, 1998).

11.3 Population structures

11.3.1 Age Composition

The age pyramid (Figure 11.1) illustrates disproportional population growth during the last 50 years. The periods of fertility decline (final years of the Second World War and the short subsequent period of famine, first half of the 1960s, following abortion liberalisation, and the 1990s) alternated with the periods of baby boom (in the mid-1950s and mid-1980s). A disproportional age structure is present among the older population. Due to higher male mortality, the proportion of women aged 60 years and over is substantially larger than that of men (there is, for instance, almost twice more women than men among people aged 70 years and over).

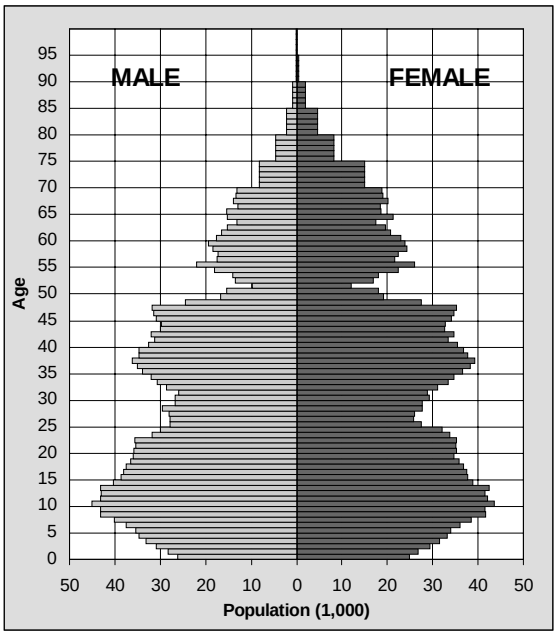

Figure 11.1: Age and Sex Structure of Population on 1 January 1997

Source: based on DASS, 1998

Although Moldova is experiencing demographic ageing and the share of older people is slowly increasing, in comparison with other European countries this process is relatively slow due to rather high level of fertility combined with rather high level of mortality in the past. The proportion of children (0–14 years) was 25.8% of the total population in 1997, which is 6% more than the average value for the Eastern European countries, and the share of old people aged 65 and over was only 9.1%, compared with the average of 13% for Eastern Europe and 15% for Western Europe

(Population Reference Bureau, 1998). Besides Albania and Macedonia, the Moldova's population is the youngest one in Europe (Table 11.1).

Table 11.1: Population by Main Age Groups, 1959–1997, selected years, per cent

Age group	Total					Male	Female
	1959	1970	1979	1989	1997	1997	1997
0–14	33.3	32.2	27.0	27.9	25.8	27.5	24.2
15–59	59.0	58.1	62.2	59.5	60.9	61.6	60.3
60+	7.7	9.7	10.8	12.6	13.3	10.9	15,5
65+			7.6	8.1	9.1	7.2	11.0
80+			1.0	1.2	1.2	0.8	1.6

Sources: DASS, 1996, 1997a, 1998; *Itogi vsesoyouznoi perepisi naselenia 1989 goda po SSR Moldova,* 1990

11.3.2 Marital status

The composition of population by marital status was lastly provided by the 1989 population census. Census data, presented in Table 11.2, demonstrates the prevalence of traditional patterns of demographic behaviour among Moldovan population during the Soviet period. In particular, early marriages were common among women: only 27.8% of women in the age group 20–24 years were single, while in the age group 25–29 years, this figure was 8.8%. The entry into the marriage was almost universal, and the proportion of persons remaining single among the people aged 40 years and over was extremely low, especially among men. Among people aged 45–49 years, only 1.1% of men and 3.3% of women were never married. Early and universal entries into marriage were supported by the population policy measures: men aged 18 years and more, who remained single, had to pay special so-called "bachelor" tax (7% of the salary).

During the 1970s and 1980s, the proportion of divorced people increased. In 1989, it was the highest among the 40–44 years old men and women: 4.7% of men and 10.1% of women were divorced or separated by that age. After divorce, women had lower chance for remarriage. The excess mortality of men and the age difference between men and women within the marriage contributed to the high proportion of widowed women among old people. In the age group 70 years and over, only 28.8% of men were widowed, compared to 74.2% of women.

Table 11.2: Population by Marital Status, 1989, per cent

Age group	Single	Married	Divorced	Widowed	Unknown
	Male				
16–17	99.3	0.7	0.0	0.0	0.0
18–19	95.0	3.7	0.0	0.0	1.3
20–24	58.0	39.9	1.0	0.1	1.0
25–29	14.2	82.5	2.8	0.2	0.3
30–34	5.1	91.0	3.5	0.3	0.1
35–39	2.6	92.9	3.9	0.5	0.1
40–44	1.7	92.6	4.7	0.9	0.1
45–49	1.1	92.4	4.5	1.9	0.1
50–54	0.8	91.9	3.9	3.3	0.1
55–59	0.6	91.0	3.0	5.3	0.1
60–69	0.5	86.5	2.1	10.7	0.2
70+	0.4	69.6	0.9	28.7	0.4
16+	18.1	75.4	2.7	3.5	0.3
	Female				
16–17	95.7	4.1	0.1	0.0	0.1
18–19	..	..	..	..	..
20–24	27.7	67.8	3.5	0.5	0.5
25–29	8.8	84.4	5.7	0.9	0.2
30–34	4.9	86.0	7.3	1.7	0.1
35–39	3.8	84.0	8.8	3.3	0.1
40–44	3.6	80.3	10.1	5.9	0.1
45–49	3.3	76.5	9.8	10.3	0.1
50–54	3.3	72.6	8.5	15.5	0.1
55–59	3.7	65.9	6.4	23.8	0.2
60–69	3.0	51.8	4.6	40.3	0.3
70+	1.7	22.4	1.6	73.8	0.5
16+	12.5	65.5	6.0	15.7	0.3

Source: *Itogi vsesoyouznoi perepisi naselenia 1989 goda po SSR Moldova*, op. cit.

11.3.3 Ethnic Composition

Ethnic structure of the population provides a mixed picture (Table 11.3). The Moldovans form only weak majority of 64.5% inhabitants (according to the 1989 census) in their country, and there are large regional disparities in the ethnic composition of the population, which are, in turn, the principle source of ethnic tensions since the breakdown of the Soviet Union. Russians and Ukrainians, with the share of 13.0% and 13.8% respectively are, besides Moldovans, the most numerous ethnic groups.

In total, Slavonic nationalities make up a majority in Transdniestria (29% Russians and 29% Ukrainians compared with 33% Moldovans in 1995) (O'Loughlin *et al.*, op. cit.) and live mostly in urban areas, where Moldovans compose less than half of the total population (46% Moldovans, 24% Russians and 19% Ukrainians in 1989). The Russians were the most rapidly growing nationality in Moldova, especially in

the 1950s and 1960s, when "a large segments of Russian and Ukrainian population were established in Moldova through forced and incentive-induced migration" (UNDP, 1995). Another important nationalities in 1989 were the Gagauz (3.5%), the Bulgarians (2.0%) and the Jews (1.5%).

Table 11.3: Population by Ethnic Groups, 1959–1996, selected years

Ethnic group	1959	1970	1979	1989	1996[1]
	Number (1,000)				
Moldovans	1,886.6	2,303.9	2,525.7	2,794.7	2,986.4
Ukrainians	420.8	506.6	560.7	600.4	559.1
Russians	292.9	414.4	505.7	562.1	511.5
Gagauz	95.9	124.9	138	153.4	..
Jews	95.1	98.1	80.1	65.8	..
Bulgarians	61.7	73.8	80.7	88.4	..
Others	31.5	47.2	58.9	70.5	(277.4)
Total	2,884.5	3,568.9	3,949.8	4,335.3	4,334.4
	Percentage				
Moldovans	65.4	64.6	63.9	64.5	68.9
Ukrainians	14.6	14.2	14.2	13.8	12.9
Russians	10.2	11.6	12.8	13.0	11.8
Gagauz	3.3	3.5	3.5	3.5	..
Jews	3.3	2.7	2.0	1.5	..
Bulgarians	2.1	2.1	2.0	2.0	..
Others	1.1	1.3	1.5	1.6	..
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

[1]Estimate (UNICEF, 1998)
Source: *Itogi vsesoyouznoi perepisi naselenia 1989 goda po SSR Moldova*, op. cit.

In 1959, the Jews, along with the Gagauz, were the fourth and the fifth largest ethnic groups, but due to unfavourable age structure and since the 1970s especially due to intensive emigration to Israel, the size of Jewish population has been shrinking considerably. The emigration of Jews had intensified in the 1989–1991 period, and then continued, although less intensively. Since 1989, at least 50 thousand Jews from 65 thousand enumerated by the census have emigrated and, as a result, this nationality almost disappeared from Moldova.

Large migration flows since 1989 have caused the increase of ethnic homogeneity of Moldovans in Moldova and of Russians and Ukrainians in Transdniestria. Although there are no official statistics, the estimate of ethnic structure for 1996 shows considerable increase of the share of Moldovans in population from 64.5% in 1989 to 68.9% in 1996 (UNICEF, 1998).

11.3.4 Urban - Rural Differences

The regional population differences in Moldova are substantial. Besides large differences between the Transdniestria and the rest of Moldova, there are also large differences between the south, the centre and the north of the country. Even more visible are differences between urban and rural areas. The rural areas are more ethnically homogenous (80% of inhabitants were of Moldovan nationality in 1989) and more traditional in the sense of higher fertility of women (the crude birth rate in 1996 was 13.8‰ in rural areas and 9.8‰ – in urban ones), earlier entries of women into marriages, lower share of extramarital births (12.9% against 17.2% in urban areas in 1996) and lower share of divorced persons.

The level of mortality also differs in urban and rural areas. Already in 1985, the life expectancy at birth in rural areas was by 5.1 years lower than in urban areas, i.e. 64.1 years. The deterioration of mortality patterns in the 1990s was more distinct in urban areas and the urban-rural differences in the life expectancy at birth decreased only to 1 year for men and 2 years for women in 1996 (1.5 years for both sexes – the life expectancy at birth was 66.0 in rural and 67.5 in urban areas). Better access to the food supplies in rural areas may have played the role, as the malnutrition due to low income became a serious problem for many people.

11.3.5 Economic Activity

As the full participation of women in the "labour process" was part of the official ideology of the Soviet regime, the share of women in the productive workforce increased from 35% in 1945 to 51% in 1971 (*Itogi vsesoyouznoi perepisi naselenia 1989 goda po SSR Moldova*, op. cit.). This share remained stable till the mid-1990s. The inefficient economy experienced permanent deficit of the employees and high participation of women was necessary for its functioning: especially in services, women still form significant majority of the workforce, more than two-thirds (68.3%) in 1994 (UNICEF, 1997). In 1990, the share of economically active women was by 6–12% lower than the share of economically active men in all corresponding age groups. The highest labour force participation was between 25 and 44 years: 82% women and 94% men were economically active in that age group. The lower share of women is mainly caused by their participation in the child-rearing during the maternity leave period.

11.3.6 Religion

Despite 45 years of atheistic ideology under the communism, the population preserved its religious traditions. In 1997, 94.2% people declared their affiliation with the Christian Orthodox church, 2.7% with other religions and only 3.1% claimed no religious affiliation – 5% in urban and 1% in rural areas (UNPF, 1998).

11.4 Population Development

11.4.1 Basic Components

The demographic behaviour of the population in Moldova was traditional in comparison with other European countries till the end of the 1980s. The crude birth rate was especially high, ranging around 20‰. As the crude death rate was varying between 7‰ and 11‰, the rate of natural increase was approximately 1% a year since the 1960s until the 1980s. The mobility of population was strongly regulated and with the exception of partly forced labour migration, rather intensive during the 1950s and 1960s, the population was almost closed.

The total population size jumped from 2.89 million in 1959 to 4.34 million in 1989. All the basic components of the population movement changed dramatically during the 1990s (Table 11.4). Between 1989 and 1996, the crude birth rate decreased from 18.9‰ to 12.0‰, the crude death rate slightly increased to 11.5‰ and natural increase fell almost to the zero level. Population increase had reversed into net population loss due to negative migration balance since 1991, but the total number of population decreased only slightly from 4.36 million in 1991 to 4.32 million in 1997. The population decrease was severe in Transdniestria, where the negative natural increase was combined with the negative migration balance. According to the statistics presented by O'Loughlin *et al*. (op. cit.), the population of Transdniestria dropped between 1991 and 1997 by 10.4%, from 731 to 657 thousand.

Table 11.4: Main Indicators of Population Development, 1960–1997, selected years

Year	Population[1]	Urban population	Live births	Deaths	Natural increase	Marriages	Divorces
	1,000	%	Per 1,000 inhabitants				
1960	2,967.7	22.3	29.3	6.4	22.8	9.3	0.9
1970	3,568.9	31.7	19.4	7.4	12.0	9.4	2.1
1980	3,987.2	39.3	19.8	10.1	9.8	11.5	2.8
1990	4,361.6	47.5	17.7	9.8	7.9	9.4	3.0
1991	4,366.3	47.5	16.5	10.5	6.0	9.1	3.2
1992	4,359.1	47.1	16.0	10.2	5.8	9.0	3.4
1993	4,347.8	46.9	15.2	10.7	4.5	9.1	3.3
1994	4,352.7	46.8	14.3	11.8	2.4	7.8	3.2
1995	4,347.9	46.8	13.0	12.2	0.8	7.5	3.4
1996	4,334.4	46.2	12.0	11.5	0.5	6.0	3.1
1997	4,320.0	46.2	..	..	..	..	..

[1]As of 1 January of a given year.
Sources: Council of Europe, 1998; DASS, 1996, 1997a, 1998

11.4.2 Migration Balance

The relaxation of the rigid migration laws and the dissolution of the Soviet Union have induced large migration movements since the end of the 1980s (Table 11.5). The largest migration flows out of Moldova were registered in 1990–1992, when, according to incomplete official statistics, 144 thousand people (mostly of non-Moldovan nationality) emigrated to the countries of the former Soviet Union, and 42 thousand people to other foreign countries. On the other hand, 123 thousand people emigrated to Moldova from the other areas of the former Soviet Union, most of them ethnic Moldovans. The migration balance has been negative during the whole period since 1990. The population loss due to emigration in 1990–1996 was 105 thousand people, according to official statistics, and 163 thousand people (3.7% of the population registered in 1990), according to expert estimates (Council of Europe, op. cit.). Besides the former Soviet Union, the principle emigration destination was Israel, where officially 42 thousand people have emigrated since 1990.

Table 11.5: External Migration, 1990–1996

	1990	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996
Immigration	155,958	133,524	104,896	86,165	68,374	60,963	57,441
Emigration	162,690	149,165	130,628	94,504	83,233	78,061	73,915
Net migration[1]	-6,732	-15,641	-25,732	-8,339	-14,859	-17,980	-1,474
Net migration[2]	-30,000	-33,400	-36,400	-15,100	-14,800	-17,100	-16,500
	Emigration by country/region of destination						
Former USSR	48,304	43,153	53,171	29,374	28,342	27,653	26,425
Israel	15,230	14,768	3,441	2,308	2,596	2,266	1,762
USA	672	2,418	2,366	2,814	1,918	1,379	1,482
Germany	634	799	1,088	1,166	1,729	1,625	1,286

[1]According to official statistics
[2]According to expert estimates (Council of Europe, op. cit.)
Sources: DASS, 1997b; Council of Europe, op. cit.

11.4.3 Fertility

The number of live births reached a peak in the mid-1980s at 94.7 thousand in 1986, and then it was declining continually to 51.9 thousand in 1996. Up to the end of the 1980s, the level of fertility in Moldova was the highest in the European part of the Soviet Union and in the mid-1980s was the second highest in Europe after Albania.

First large-scale reduction in fertility occurred after the legalisation of abortions in 1955, in particular between 1960 and 1965 (see Table 11.6). Total fertility rate (TFR) dropped from 3.6 in 1958 to 2.7 in 1965 and then remained between 2.4 and 2.6 until the beginning of the 1980s. These figures refer in reality to the two-year periods, 1958–1959 and 1965–1966, as the TFR in the USSR was published before 1986 for the two-year periods. The decline of the number of births of the higher birth orders was characteristic for this period. If in 1965, 32% of births were of the

fourth or subsequent birth order (biological birth order during reproductive life of mother), in 1980, their share was only 8% (Figure 11.2). Reduction of fertility of higher ranks influenced the average age of women at childbearing, which dropped from approximately 29 to 26 years.

Table 11.6: Main Indicators of Fertility, 1960–1996, selected years

Year	Live births	Crude birth rate (‰)	Total fertility rate	Mean age at childbearing	Live births out of wedlock (%)
1960	87,910	29.3	3.20[1]	29.0[1]	..
1965	67,996	20.4	2.68	29.0	..
1970	69,778	19.4	2.58[2]	28,2[2]	..
1975	79,169	20.6	2.55[3]	27.2	..
1980	79,580	19.8	2.39	26.5	7.4
1985	90,453	21.5	2.75	26.4	8.8
1986	94,726	22.3	..	..	..
1987	91,762	21.4	2.73	26.5	..
1988	88,568	20.5	2.64	26.4	..
1989	82,221	18.9	2.78	25.6	..
1990	77,085	17.7	2.39	25.4	11.0
1991	72,020	16.5	2.26	25.0	11.8
1992	69,654	16.0	2.21	25.0	11.6
1993	66,179	15.2	2.10	25.0	11.2
1994	62,085	14.3	1.95	25.0	12.3
1995	56,411	13.0	1.76	24.9	13.3
1996	51,865	12.0	1.61	25.0	14.6

[1]1961
[2]1969
[3]1974
Sources: DASS, 1996, 1997a, 1998; Council of Europe, op. cit.

The first half of the 1980s was a period of a moderate baby boom, which occurred as a reaction to the population measures implemented for the stimulation of higher birth order fertility. These measures were especially successful in stimulation of the third births (total number of the third births increased by 73% between 1980 and 1986), particularly also of the second (increase by 34%) and fourth and subsequent births (25% increase). The TFR increased from 2.4 in 1980 to 2.8 in 1986. In 1990, the TFR was 2.39, and fertility was mostly concentrated in the younger ages of women between 19 and 24 years, peaking at the age of 20 years (Figure 11.3). As in the other post-communist countries, the TFR dropped extensively after 1989 to the level of 1.61 in 1996.

Current fertility level in Moldova still remains somewhat higher than in the other Eastern European countries, but contrary to many of them, there are no signs of postponement of fertility to higher ages of women. The reduction of age specific fertility rates between 1990 and 1996 was rather equal within all age groups (30–40%), only somewhat more moderate between 24–28 years (reduction by 20–30%). Surprisingly, the fertility of the 15–17 years old women increased and those of 18 years old

women decreased only by 6%. The mean age of women at childbearing remained low (25.0 years in 1996, i.e. 0.4 years less than in 1990) and the mean age of women at first birth (22.2 years) was the lowest in Europe, although not far from the other Eastern European countries. In comparison with other countries, the level of fertility of teenage girls stands out: 16.9% of total births and 31.5% of first births occurred among women under 20 years in 1996 (based on DASS data).

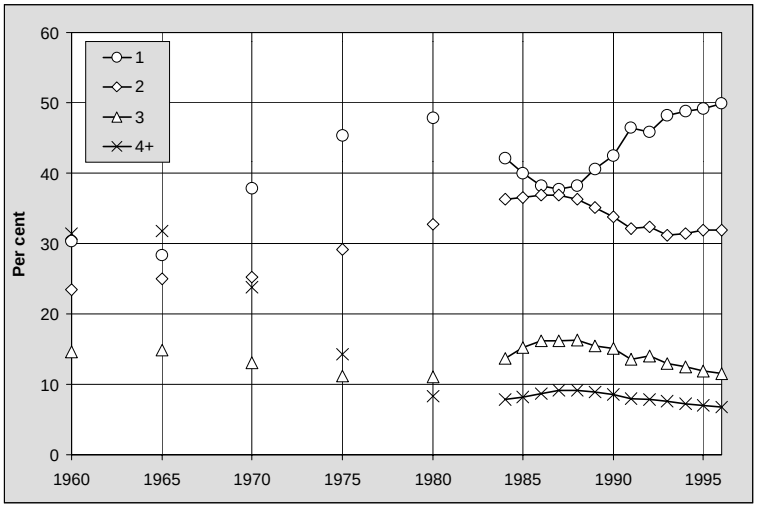

Figure 11.2: Proportion of Live Births by Birth Order, 1960–1996, selected years

Source: Council of Europe, op. cit.

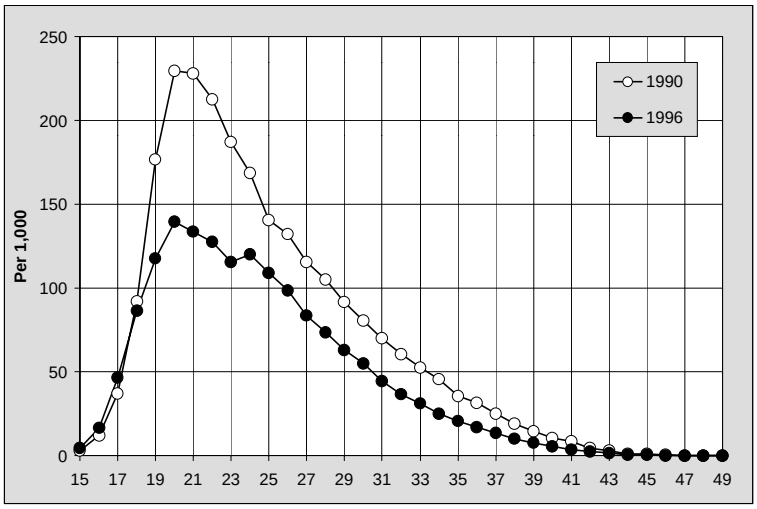

Figure 11.3: Age-specific Fertility Rates, 1990 and 1996

Source: based on DASS data

The fertility decline was more intensive among the third and subsequent birth orders. Their share increased after implementation of the population policy measures at the beginning of the 1980s. Due to the economic crisis and hyperinflation, these measures have lost their efficiency. The share of third births among the total number of births declined between 1989 and 1996 from 15.4% to 11.4%, the share of fourth and subsequent births decreased from 8.9% to 6.8%. On the contrary, the share of first births increased from 40.6% to 49.8%. These figures could indicate that most women want to have at least one child despite the economic crisis, and they do not want to postpone these births. On the other hand, the composition of the TFR according to birth order between 1990 and 1996 did not show any visible changes in the shares of individual birth orders during this period. The TFR of the first rank was 0.63 in 1996, i.e. 45.5% of the TFR.

Opposite to the marital fertility that has been decreasing since the end of the 1980s, the level of extramarital fertility stagnated, and the share of children born outside marriage increased from 8.8% in 1985 to 14.6% in 1996. The marital TFR decreased since 1990 from 2.14 to 1.38, but TFR for extramarital births in fact stagnated (decrease by 0.03 to 0.23). The number of children born outside marriage is around 8 thousand, majority of them being of the first birth order. Among the first children, the proportion of extramarital children was 18.4%, while among the second ones only 10.4%.

In 1997, the average ideal number of children was 2.2 (see UNPF, op. cit.). This number indicates that despite traditionally higher fertility, the family with two children is considered an ideal family model in Moldova.

11.4.4 Cohort Fertility

The 1989 census provided data about cohort fertility, which confirms some of the trends illustrated by the period fertility data. If we take into consideration only women aged 35 and over, who had almost completed their reproduction in 1989, we can compare the cohorts of women born between 1919 and 1953. The basic conclusions are as follows. First, completed fertility decreased gradually, as women born between 1919 and 1924 had on average 3.2 children and women born in 1946 – 2.2 children. Then the level of completed fertility stabilised and younger generations of women up to those ones born in 1954 had 2.2 children. Second, there was continuous reduction of higher birth orders: a quarter of women born between 1919 and 1924 had five or more children, while among women born in 1953 it was less than 5%.

Furthermore, among the older cohorts of women ultimate childlessness was also more common, nearly 15% of women born between 1919 and 1928 were childless, the corresponding figure for women born in 1951 or 1952 was less than 8%. This trend may have been influenced by the improvement of health care, which could have reduced the female sterility, but also by the perceived decrease of the social value of childless women combined with population policy (all women who were

married and childless had to pay tax of 6% of their salary). If the estimates of women infertility are accurate, the share of infertile women was the same as the share of the childless women born at the beginning of the 1950s – so almost every woman, who could have a child, had at least one. Step by step, the model of family with two children was asserted: around 45% among the women born in the first half of the 1950s had two children, almost 20% had three children, 18% had one child, 11% had four or more children and only 8% were childless (Figure 11.4).

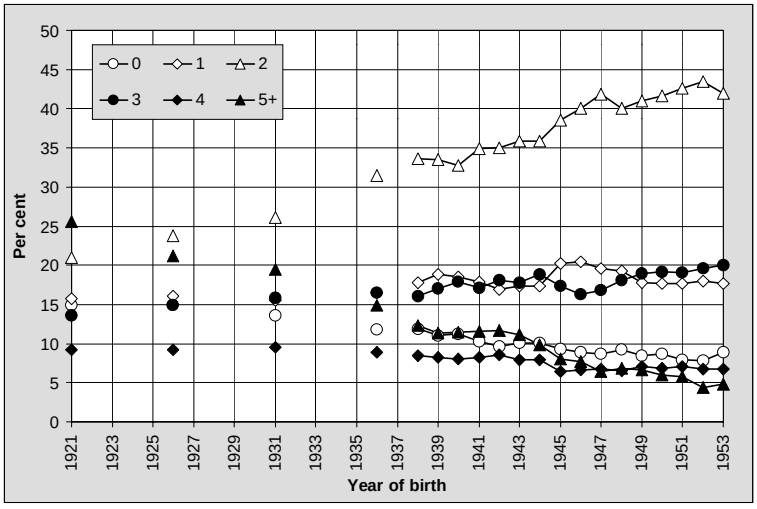

Figure 11.4: Proportion of Women Born Between 1919 and 1953 According to Number of Live-born Children, per cent

Source: *Itogi vsesoyouznoi perepisi naselenia 1989 goda po SSR Moldova*, op. cit.

11.5 Abortions, Contraception and Reproductive Health

After the re-legalisation of abortions in the USSR in 1955, which allowed abortions to be performed on demand through the first trimester of pregnancy, induced abortions became a principal means of fertility regulation. Although some modern contraceptive devices were available – especially condoms and since the 1960s also the intrauterine device (IUD) – their use was limited. The supply of condoms was several times lower than the potential demand and the availability of chemical contraceptives (pills) was extremely scarce as they were officially considered threatening to woman's health (and the brands available in the USSR really were, at least till the 1970s). Together with the absence of appropriate sexual education and general lack of information, "the only easily accessible method of family planning was induced abortion, which was permitted on the basis of social background" (Popov, 1991).

The statistics of induced abortions are based on incomplete figures and estimates, as the surgical induced abortions were registered separately from the vacuum aspirations: statistics on vacuum aspirations (miniabortions) were incomplete and, on the other hand, the statistics of total abortions included spontaneous abortions. Moreover, inclusion of the illegal abortions could further increase the number of abortions by 13%, according to official estimates, and by 50–70%, according to independent estimates (Popov, op. cit.).

According to our estimates, based on official statistics, the number of legal abortions had increased sharply until the mid-1960s when around 80 thousand abortions were performed annually (Table 11.7). Estimated total induced abortion rate (TIAR) was 3.1, the highest since the abortion legalisation. The parallel increase of TIAR between 1960 and 1965 (from 2.0 to 3.1) and decrease of the total fertility rate from 3.6 to 2.7 confirms the hypothesis of the use of abortions as a method of family planning (Figure 11.5).

Table 11.7: Main Indicators of Abortion, 1960–1996, selected years

Year	Abortions	Induced abortions[1]	Index of induced abortion[2]	TIAR[3]	TCR[4]
1960	60,687	48,755	55.2	2.0	6.0
1965	88,604	79,354	115.8	3.1	6.2
1970	86,093	76,598	108.9	2.8	5.8
1975	93,334	82,558	102.9	2.6	5.6
1980	96,283	85,423	106.2	2.5	5.3
1985	102,661	90,283	98.9	2.7	5.9
1986	110,011	97,113	101.6	..	..
1987	112,426	99,921	107.9	2.9	6.1
1988	94,998	82,930	92.8	2.4	5.5
1989	90,860	79,674	96.2	2.7	5.9
1990	81,931	71,441	91.9	2.2	4.9
1991	73,454	63,771	87.9	2.0	4.5
1992	71,430	61,773	88.0	1.9	4.4
1993	64,178	55,242	82.9	1.7	4.1
1994	58,777	50,380	80.5	1.6	3.8
1995	57,181	49,460	87.0	1.6	3.6
1996	46,010	38,901	74.4	1.2	3.1

[1]Including non-specified and criminal abortions (estimations until 1990)
[2]Per 100 births
[3]Authors' estimation
[4]Total conception rate (TCR) is computed by the summation of the total fertility rate (TFR), total induced abortion rate (TIAR) and total spontaneous abortion rate (TSAR); expert estimation
Sources: ASM, 1998; Council of Europe, op. cit.; DASS data

During the period between 1960 and 1989, the estimated total conception rate (including spontaneous abortions) was ranging between 5.3 and 6.2 conceptions per woman during her reproductive life and the TIAR after moderate decrease stabilised around 2.5 since the mid-1970s. This decrease could be caused by the spread of IUD, which was used by more than 20% women in reproductive age at the end of the 1980s.

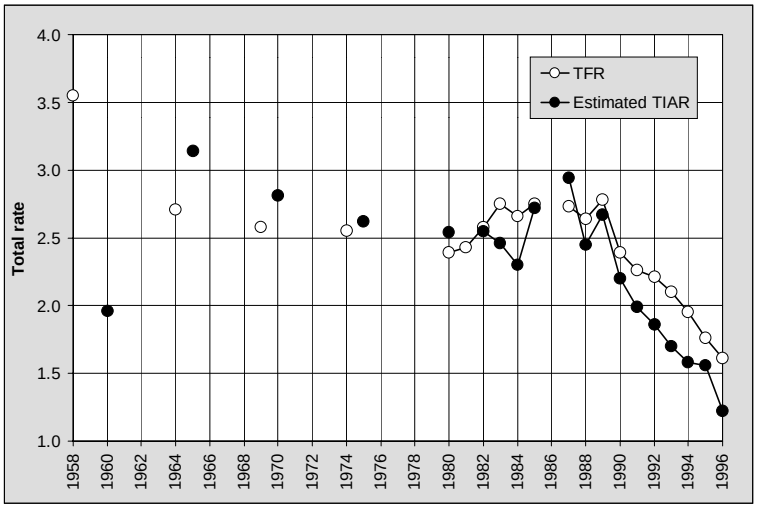

Figure 11.5: Total Fertility Rate (TFR) and Estimated Total Induced Abortion Rate (TIAR), 1958–1996, selected years

Sources: ASM, op. cit.; Council of Europe, op. cit.; DASS data

The official figures indicate decrease in the number of induced abortion during the last ten years. According to this data, the TIAR fell from 2.7 in 1989 to 1.2 in 1996. The real number of induced abortions was higher than 39 thousand registered in 1996. There is under-registration of "miniabortions", and abortions performed in private clinics and out of the hospitals are not reported at all. The under-registration of the vacuum aspirations is signalled by the disproportion between the share of vacuum aspirations in the total number of induced abortions according to official figures (25% in 1996) and according to the reproductive health survey (39%, UNPF, op. cit.). Opposite to the official numbers, the data from the survey indicates increasing share of the vacuum aspirations, which do not endanger the health of women as much as the surgical abortions: from 12% in 1988 to 39% in 1996.

As in the times of the Soviet Union, abortions are still used mostly by the married women, who already reached desired number of children. The large majority of women have liberal attitude towards abortion, with only 1.2% responding that abortion is quite unacceptable and 18.2% responding that abortion is acceptable under some circumstances (UNPF, op. cit.).

The insufficient prevalence of modern contraceptives is slowly eliminated with the help and technical assistance of international family planning organisations. The use of modern contraceptives remains inadequate: in 1997, only 50% of women who were married or in union used modern contraceptive devices (38.4% IUD, 5.9% condom, 3.4% were sterilised and only 2.1% used chemical contraception) and another 23.6% practised traditional methods (21.6% – coitus interruptus and 2.0% – calendar method). The Moldovan Government formulated in 1998 target goals for the year 2003, among them the increase in the oral contraception use to 15% of women

in reproductive age, reduction of induced abortion by 50%, reorganisation of the family planning centres and introduction of the system of "family education" (UNPF, op. cit.).

The high abortion rates with significant share of surgical abortions are often connected with post-abortion complications and high sterility rates. Short-term complications were reported by 11% of women that underwent abortions, and long-term complications were reported by 5% of women. Large share of recorded infertility (officially, around 8% of women in the reproductive age) was caused by the surgical or illegal abortion. Around one fifth of maternal mortality (40.8 per 100,000 live births in 1995) resulted from botched abortions or post-abortion complications.

The lack of affordable contraceptives, decay of the preventive health care and possibly increased sexual activity among young people had contributed to the dramatic growth of morbidity from syphilis – from 7.1 to 200.1 cases per 100,000 inhabitants between 1989 and 1996. The spread of AIDS has also accelerated since 1995.

11.6 Family Formation and Dissolution

11.6.1 Nuptiality

The annual number of marriages was around 40 thousand between 1985 and 1993, then it dropped to 26 thousand in 1996. The singulate mean age at marriage (SMAM), first introduced by J. Hajnal (1953) and computed from the proportion of ever-married people by age group, was 23.8 years for men and less than 21 years for women, according to the 1989 census.

As in the case of fertility, the level of nuptiality dropped between 1990 and 1996, the female total first marriage rate (TFMR) declined from 1.13 to 0.62 and male TFMR – from 1.10 to 0.64 (Table 11.8). The timing of the first marriages did not change during this period; the mean age at first marriage in 1996 was 21.6 years for women (-0.1 year compared to 1990) and 24.2 years for men (+0.4 year). The mean age at first marriage for Moldovan women is currently the lowest in Europe. The reduction of the first marriage rates was strongest at the ages of highest nuptiality, between 21 and 24 years for men (-42%) and between 18 and 21 years for women (-45%). On the other hand, the first marriage rate of 16 and 17 years old women increased (see Figure 11.6). Strong decline in nuptiality of young men and women could be the sign of the postponement of marriages to a later age. Despite this reduction, the age of highest nuptiality remained at 19 years for women and at 22 years for men. Majority of women still marries in a narrow age span: 42% – between 16 and 19 years and another 44% – between 20 and 24 years.

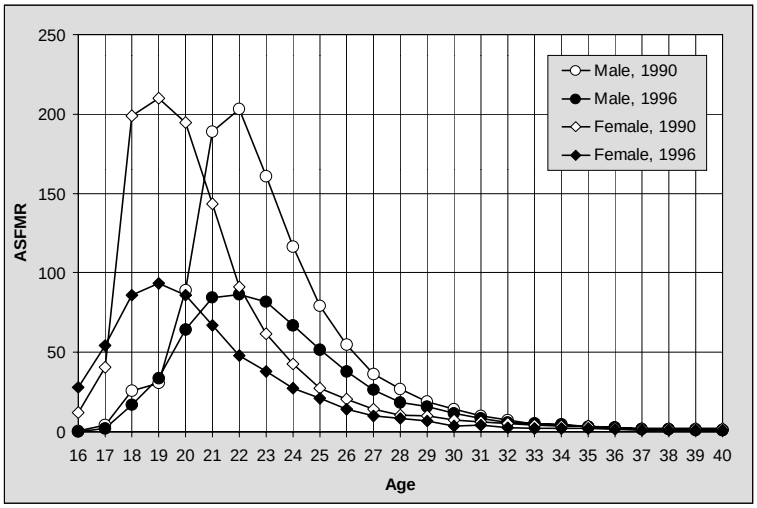

Figure 11.6: Age-specific First Marriage Rates (ASFMR), 1990 and 1996

Source: based on DASS data

Table 11.8: Main Indicators of Nuptiality, 1960–1996, selected years

Year	Marriages	Crude marriage rate (‰)	Total first marriage rate, female[1]	Mean age at first marriage, female[1]	Divorces	Crude divorce rate (‰)	Total divorce rate
1960	27,963	9.3	..	..	2,660	0.88	..
1965	22,871	6.9	..	..	3,554	1.07	..
1970	33,692	9.4	..	..	7,472	2.08	0.21
1975	40,596	10.6	..	..	8,655	2.25	0.23
1980	46,083	11.5	1.11	22.2	11,273	2.81	0.28
1985	40,901	9.7	1.06	21.7	11,176	2.65	0.27
1990	40,809	9.4	1.13	21.7	13,135	3.01	0.30
1991	36,609	9.1	1.05	21.5	13,879	3.18	..
1992	39,340	9.0	1.03	21.3	14,821	3.40	..
1993	39,469	9.1	1.03	21.2	14,468	3.33	0.33
1994	33,742	7.8	0.85	21.3	13,811	3.17	0.32
1995	32,775	7.5	0.80	21.5	14,617	3.37	0.34
1996	26,089	6.0	0.62	21.6	13,440	3.11	0.31

[1]Authors' estimation

Sources: Council of Europe, op. cit.; DASS, 1997a.

The proportion of marriages of divorced people in the total number of marriages is slowly increasing (Table 11.9). In 1996, 18.0% of grooms and 15.5% of brides were divorced. The share of marriages among widowed persons has stabilised at 3% for both men and women during the last twenty years. Between 1990 and 1996, the total marriage rate for divorced people did not drop as sharply as the total first marriage and was 0.11 for females and 0.14 for males. If this level of remarriage would sustain

for long period, almost half of divorced men and more than third of divorced women would be remarried. Since 1990, the mean age at marriage among divorced men and women increased by 0.6 years, reaching 33.4 years for men and 34.9 for women in 1996.

Table 11.9: Marriages by Marital Status of Persons Marrying, 1975–1996, selected years

Year	Male			Female		
	Single	Divorced	Widowed	Single	Divorced	Widowed
1975	86.1	..	..	90.0	..	..
1980	85.6	11.1	3.3	89.7	7.7	2.6
1985	82.5	14.1	3.4	85.6	11.3	3.1
1990	81.3	15.4	3.3	84.5	12.3	3.2
1994	81.3	15.9	2.8	83.6	13.4	3.0
1995	79.2	17.9	2.9	82.3	14.9	2.8
1996	78.9	18.0	3.1	81.4	15.5	3.1

[1]Category "widowed" includes also unknown cases
Source: DASS, 1996, 1997a, 1998.

Although the proportion of children born outside marriage has been increasing during the 1990s, consensual unions are still rare in traditional Moldovan society. The marriage is considered to be one of the most important events during the life cycle, especially in rural areas, and the extent of pre-marital cohabitation is still negligible. According to data from the reproductive and health survey of 1997 (UNPF, op. cit.), only 2.2% women of reproductive age were living in a consensual union.

11.6.2 Divorces

The annual number of divorces at the beginning of the 1960s was 2.7 thousand and the crude divorce rate was as low as 0.89. Since then, both had been continually increasing and peaked in 1992 at 14.8 thousand and 3.40, respectively. The divorce became quite common, and the total divorce rate exceeded 30% during the 1990s.

11.7 Mortality

The situation in mortality worsened after 1990 (see Table 11.10). Life expectancy according to official data was the highest around 1970, when it was 66.4 years for men and 71.8 years for women. Afterwards, life expectancy at birth for men slowly declined and that for women stagnated, so in 1990 it was 65.0 and 71.8, respectively. In the 1990s, the situation did not improve, and, after reaching the lowest level in 1995, life expectancy at birth slightly rose in 1996, when it was 62.9 for males and 70.4 for females. The female life expectancy at birth in Moldova at that time was

the lowest in Europe, while the male life expectancy at birth was the fourth lowest after Russia, Ukraine and Belarus. The deterioration of mortality is also apparent in the values of age-specific mortality rates, as shown in the Table 11.11.

Table 11.10: Main Indicators of Mortality, 1958–1996, selected years

Year/ period	Life expectancy at age								Infant mortality rate (‰)	Deaths	Crude death rate (‰)
	0		1		15		30				
	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F			
1958–59	65.6	69.8	..	..	57.2	60.9	18.5	20.7	..	..	..
1969–70	66.4	71.8	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	8.4
1980	62.4	68.8	64.1	70.5	51.2	57.3	11.9	14.3	35.1	..	..
1985	63.1	69.5	64.2	70.2	51.2	56.9	11.7	17.1	30.8	46,075	10.9
1990	65.0	71.8	65.4	72.0	52.1	58.6	12.5	14.8	19.2	42,427	9.7
1991	64.3	71.0	64.7	71.3	51.4	57.8	14.7	17.7	20.0	45,849	10.5
1992	63.9	71.9	64.3	72.3	51.1	58.8	15.1	18.3	18.6	44,522	10.2
1993	64.3	70.9	64.7	71.5	51.3	57.8	14.5	17.3	21.5	46,637	10.7
1994	62.3	69.8	63.0	70.4	49.7	56.8	13.8	16.6	22.9	51,514	11.8
1995	61.8	69.7	62.6	70.1	49.1	56.5	13.6	16.4	21.5	52,969	12.2
1996	62.9	70.4	63.3	70.7	50.0	57.2	13.9	16.9	20.5	49,748	11.5

Sources: Council of Europe, op. cit.; DASS, 1996, 1997a, 1998

Between 1990 and 1996, high infant mortality rate had negatively influenced the life expectancy at birth for men and was responsible for the 6.3% of its decline. Large contribution to the decline had also all ages over 40. The ages over 70 contributed 22.0% of the decline. In the case of women, the contribution of age 0 was not significant (2.0%), while the contribution of ages over 70 was almost 50%.

High infant mortality is still a persistent phenomenon in Moldova. The situation did not change in the 1990s, and infant mortality rate is still around 20 deaths per 1,000 live births during the first year of life (among European countries, only Romania has higher rate). Consequently, the life expectancy at age one is still higher than the life expectancy at birth. In urban areas, the situation remains unchanged as well, where the infant mortality rate was 18.7‰ in 1996, compared to 21.1‰ in rural areas.

The gap between male and female mortality broadened from 6.8 years in 1990 to 8 years in 1992 and 7.5 years in 1996. The first age group contributed 6.2% to this gap, while the other important "contributors" were the age group 50–54 (11%) and the older age groups.

The medical care in Moldova depends on the economic situation, which has been deteriorating since the breakdown of the USSR. In 1996, there were 250 inhabitants per one doctor and 82 persons per one hospital bed. These numbers are higher than in the Western European countries, what indicates the poor efficiency of medical care in Moldova. In the comparison with developed Western European countries, for example with the Netherlands, mortality conditions of Moldovan men are much

worse at the age 0 and at ages over 40. Moldovan women have also higher mortality at the age 0 and at ages over 55, particularly above 70.

Table 11.11: Age-specific Death Rates, 1990 and 1995, per thousand

Age group	1990		1995	
	Male	Female	Male	Female
0–4	1.28	0.98	1.36	0.99
5–9	0.18	0.10	0.20	0.10
10–14	0.12	0.08	0.12	0.10
15–19	0.28	0.15	0.32	0.11
20–24	0.65	0.18	0.55	0.17
25–29	0.69	0.18	0.78	0.22
30–34	0.80	0.27	1.08	0.35
35–39	1.12	0.44	1.49	0.50
40–44	1.60	0.71	2.34	0.94
45–49	2.59	1.29	3.20	1.40
50–54	3.80	2.01	5.08	2.41
55–59	5.19	3.20	6.68	3.87
60–64	7.98	4.55	9.57	5.61
65–69	10.62	6.91	13.40	8.55

Source: DASS, 1996–1998

The structure of causes of death (Table 11.12) did not change much, except that the share of the circulation system diseases increased up to 50% of all deaths in 1996. The death rates for malignant neoplasms are much higher in the north of the country, which is close to the Chernobyl nuclear power plant (UNICEF, 1997).

From 1987 to August 1998, out of around 5 million people tested for HIV, 828 tested positively. The proportion of those who tested positively had been gradually increasing: in 1996 it was 21.3 per 100,000 tested, in 1997 – 145.3, and in the first 8 months of 1998 – 223.2. Out of 828 tested positively, 792 were citizens of Moldova. The main cause of infection were use of drugs (84%) and heterosexual relationship (15%). 60% of HIV positive persons were 20–29 years old, 21% aged 30–39, and 73% of all who tested positively were men. 88% of all cases were concentrated in four towns: Bălți, Chişinău, Tiraspol and Bendery.

In 1996, there were 773 suicides in Moldova (17.9 per 100,000 inhabitants) and 586 homicides (13.5 per 100,000), what aren't extreme values, although the number of homicides rose by about 50% since 1990.

Table 11.12: Causes of Death, 1990 and 1996

Cause of death	1990		1996	
	Death rate	Proportion	Death rate	Proportion
	Per 100,000	%	Per 100,000	%
Total	972.20	100.0	1,149.65	100.0
Of which caused by:				
Infection and parasitic diseases	10.77	1.1	16.75	1.5
TBC or expiratory diseases	4.61	0.5	10.93	1.0
Diseases of the circulatory system	419.27	43.1	576.56	50.2
Acute myocardial infarction	21.60	2.2	22.95	2.0
Malignant neoplasms	131.37	13.5	132.65	11.5
Diseases of the respiratory system	64.55	6.6	70.37	6.1
Pneumonia	20.94	2.2	24.13	2.1
Diseases of the digestive system	91.98	9.5	103.05	9.0
Cirrhosis of liver	69.89	7.2	78,50	6.8
Diseases of the nervous system	8.30	0.9	11.07	1.0
Others	143.71	14.8	131.63	11.4
External causes	102.25	10.5	107.57	9.4

Source: DASS, 1997a

11.8 The Background of Current Changes in Demographic Behaviour

Current changes in demographic behaviour are above all the result of the economic crisis after the dissolution of the Soviet Union.

Moldovan economy, which was rather backward even during the Soviet era, faced one of the steepest declines among Eastern European countries during the 1990s. Securing of the basic needs, especially of the food supplies, became the principal concern for most inhabitants. As the value of maternity leave provisions, child allowances and other family income supplements depreciated due to high inflation, childbearing became an expensive and financially risky "undertaking" and, therefore, a problematic choice for many. Majority of young women in the reproductive age reduced their fertility plans to one or two children, and if the current situation would continue unimproved, large part of women will likely remain childless.

On the other hand, the demographic picture of Moldova would be incomplete if we would explain all the current changes only as a consequence of the economic crisis in traditional society. Already during the Soviet times, there were "progressive" changes in demographic behaviour, which were similar to those in Eastern Europe. Differently from Western Europe, where the changes were generated by the spreading of the new cultural norms and patterns, which then were reflected in the liberal

reform of the legislation, the changes in the demographic behaviour of Moldovan population occurred mostly as a consequent reaction to the legislative changes. The liberalisation of abortion in 1955 and easy access to divorce since 1965 were the major legislative norms that enabled spread of induced abortions and increase in family dissolution.

Both processes are considered to be a sign of the second demographic transition (van de Kaa, 1987, 1997). However, besides these two processes, no other changes associated usually with the second demographic transition were observed in Moldova before the end of the 1980s. There were extremely limited possibilities for the free choice of career, independent activities or travelling abroad and there was no space for alternative lifestyles similar to those appearing in the West. All these possibilities were the engine for the processes typical for the second demographic transition like cohabitation, postponement of births, increase in the share of children born outside marriage or increase in the voluntary childlessness – none of them were occurring in Moldova till the end of the 1980s – beginning of the 1990s.

Some of the demographic changes in the 1990s can be interpreted as the signs of the new demographic behaviour. The fall of the total fertility rate and the total first marriage rate, continual increase of the share of extramarital births or certain increase in the use of the modern contraceptives, are changes connected with changing lifestyles. On the other hand, we must take into consideration that up to now these changes mostly occurred as the consequences of the economic crisis and not as the results of the spread of "western values" or new cultural patterns. This hypothesis is supported by the persistence of very low mean ages of women at marriage and at childbearing, currently the lowest in Europe.

11.9 Population-related Policies and Programmes

At present, the social and population policy is very weak, and the real value of grants and allowances depreciated since the beginning of the economic crisis. The deficits of the state budget do not allow improvements in the social security system or significant increase of the real value of grants, allowances and other social provisions.

The system of the legislation on the family, social welfare and labour under the Soviet era can be divided into measures that were openly pronatalist and into measures, which were more social welfare measures than a deliberate pronatalist incentives. Openly pronatalist were two measures, which were already mentioned: special tax for men remaining single after they reached 18 years (7% of their salary) and similar tax for women remaining childless after they got married (6% of their salary). These taxes were abolished around 1990.

Other measures were introduced primarily as social provisions, but they also served as fertility incentives since the beginning of the 1980s. Rather complicated system of grants and allowances (see, for example, Heer, 1977; Weber and Goodman, 1981) consisted of maternity leave, maternity grants, family income supplements and child allowances, from which only maternity leave and child allowances were important.

Postnatal maternity leave was gradually extended up to 1.5 years after the childbirth, but initially it was unpaid. Partially paid leave (35 Roubles per month at the time when 1 Rouble was officially around US$1.5) was introduced in the first half of the 1980s. Family income supplements for low-income families were first introduced in 1974 for families with low per capita income; this programme provided an allowance for each child under the age of 8 (12 Roubles). The child allowances, granting women a lump sum payment, originally did not begin until the birth of the third child (20 Roubles) and gradually increased till the birth of the eleventh child (250 Roubles). Since 1981, families were getting 50 Roubles upon the birth of the first child and 100 Roubles upon the birth of the second and third child. Single mothers received additional money until the child reached the age of 12. Non-existent regular child allowances (with mentioned exceptions) were substituted by providing free of charge education including pre-school institutions and boarding schools.

The improvements in the first half of the 1980s were introduced after a long period of discussions concerning fertility decline and "critical manpower shortage" in the USSR. They were designed to encourage births of the second and third birth order, and in achieving this goal they were relatively successful. Generally, the economic pronatalism was typical for the Soviet population policy since the 1970s. Even more obscure was the fear of the loss of the country's position in the world due to slow population increase (Heer, op. cit.).

Most of the population policy measures implemented during the Soviet era remained valid up to the present times. Only the real value of the social transfers depreciated and, moreover, a large part of allowances has been paid with long delay or has not been paid at all. Mother gets a one-time payment of 148 Lei (US$1 was equal approximately 9 Lei in 1998) after the childbirth, and in addition to the fully-paid maternity leave of 56 days before and 56 days after the birth, women can take up to 18 months of partly-paid maternity leave (in 1998, the average payment was only 26.8 Lei per month). Mothers can spent another 18 months on unpaid maternity leave, which makes total of 3 years of a maternity leave after the birth with the reservation of their work place. However, this advantage is only theoretical, as many workplaces are lost or reorganised during this three years period. The provisions for single mothers as well as the provisions for the poor families with children aged from 1.5 to 16 are negligible, reaching on average 9.3 Lei (US$1) per month (UNDP, 1998).

The most important change of social policy is the proposed increase of the retirement age. Until 1998, the retirement age was 60 years for men and 55 years for women. Although the share of old people in Moldova is low in European context, there was the pressure from the World Bank and other international institutions, which called

for the pension reforms. In 1998, the Moldovan Parliament ratified the law establishing the increase of the retirement age by 0.5 years per year during the period 1999–2008. At the end of the year 2008, the retirement age will be 60 years for women and 65 years for men. The difference of five years between men and women remained unchanged in favour of women, although post-soviet republics are countries with the highest difference between life expectancy of men and women in the world (again, in favour of women). In 1996, women in Moldova had 7.5 years longer life expectancy at birth than men. Paradoxically, the current level of male life expectancy at birth (62.9 years in 1996) is lower than proposed retirement age of 65 years in 2008.

11.10 Summary

Until the end of the 1980s, the demographic behaviour of Moldovans was rather traditional: almost all men and women entered the marriage at an early age and almost all women had at least one, mostly two or three children. During the 1990s, the patterns did not change radically, but the levels of demographic processes did. Total fertility rate and total first marriage rate declined considerably, while the timing of births and marriages remained unchanged. The structure of births was changing slowly, the main trend being the increase of the proportion of extramarital births and the increase of the share of first births. Due to rather intensive emigration and steep decline of natural increase, the high population increase recorded till the end of the 1980s turned into moderate population decrease. The health care and health conditions of the population deteriorated since 1989 and life expectancy declined, although not as dramatically as in Russia. With the help of some international institutions and organisations, sexual education was introduced, and expanded availability of modern contraceptives enabled to reduce high levels of induced abortion rates. Most of the recent demographic changes resulted from the serious decay of the quality of life, while the influence of Western cultural norms and behavioural patterns was negligible.

11.10.1 Data Reliability

Although most of the data used in the paper is correct and reliable, we were confronted many times with incomplete or less authentic data. Some unreliability is caused by the incomplete data on the age structure of the population: the age structure was corrected after the 1989 population census, but large migration flows of the first half of the 1990s, which were not recorded in full, brought some inaccuracy to present official estimation of the population age and sex structures.

Moreover, there was an important change in the recording of the population movement: until the end of the 1980s, statistical data was processed centrally for the whole Soviet Union and only since the independence of Moldova all the data has been processed in Moldova. Some of the currently available data covers therefore only short period between 1990 and 1996. Furthermore, due to some methodological changes, there are some inconsistencies between the figures for the 1980s and for the 1990s.

While interpreting the data, we took the possibility of inaccuracy into consideration, however we did not comment some changes caused, in our opinion, by age structure incompleteness or by the changes of methodology, especially in the period 1988–1990. For instance: the increase of the TFR between 1988 and 1989 despite decrease in the total number of births by 6 thousand (7%), the sudden increase of the fertility rate among young women aged 15–19 years in 1990 in parallel with the drop of fertility rates among women aged 25 years and over, etc.

Then, there is a problem of an ambiguous meaning of some data. For example, the data concerning female nuptiality (see, for instance, Council of Europe, op. cit.) indicates a very high level of female total first marriage rate. However, it may be the case that total marriage rate includes also data on remarriages. On the other hand, we know that data for the last few years (at least, for the years 1994–1996) indicates the real total first marriage rate. Finally, when there were concerns about data validity and reliability, we had to use estimates or to handle these data very carefully. All data concerning abortions belongs to this category.

Another problem was caused by the secession of Transdniestria. Until 1996, the data for Transdniestria was obtained by the Moldovan Department of Statistical and Sociological Analysis through the Russian Institute for Statistics (Goskomstat) in Moscow. Up to April 1999, the data for Transdniestria for the years 1997 and 1998 was not available. That is why our analysis mostly ends up with the year 1996.

Notes

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