

## DEMOGRAPHY AND MIGRATION

### DEMOGRAPHIC SITUATION IN THE NORTHERN CAUCASUS: CURRENT STATE AND FUTURE PROSPECTS

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## ABSTRACT

**T**he paper examines the current state and future prospects of the demographic sphere of the North Caucasian regions. Probable trends of the region's demographic development are determined on the basis of statistical analysis. The sociological aspect of the study allows to evaluate the ways in which the younger generation's paradigms of matrimonial, reproductive and migration-related behavior are formed.

Research demonstrates that the regions of the Northern Caucasus currently manifest and will continue to preserve relatively high demographic indicator values compared to other Russian Federation con-

stituents. However, positive dynamics is slated to slow down in this region as well. Meanwhile, the results of the sociological poll demonstrate that a complete multi-child family remains the prevailing paradigm among Northern Caucasus youth. However, the transformation of young people's concepts of establishing a family and bearing children is becoming ever more apparent, especially in the region's major cities. All of this should create a certain degree of concern in the scientific and political environment and should be taken into consideration in the formation and implementation of demographic policy measures.

**KEYWORDS:** *demographic situation, Northern Caucasus, birth rate, migration, forecasts, sociological polls, youth.*

## *Introduction*

Over the course of many years, the demographic image of the North Caucasian regions has been based on two concepts: first of all, on the fact that the birth rate has always been very high here, and, secondly, on the fact that this is the land of long-living people. Meanwhile, the constituents integrated in the North Caucasian Federal District are highly heterogeneous in regard to their demographic tendencies and parameters due to the differences in the population size, peoples' ethno-cultural specifics, characteristics of demographic behavior and other circumstances. This is why, while the distinction of Northern Caucasus as a region characterized by a relatively high lifespan coincides with modern realities, it is slowly ceding its leadership positions in regard to birth rate indicators.

North Caucasian regions have always been characterized by positive demographic tendencies—a younger population, longer lifespans, a large number of childbirths, and a younger age of entering into marriage, which largely pre-determined the latter. Meanwhile, according to statistical data, the positive dynamics is slowing down in the region. This is why, in order to elucidate the demographic development tendencies, as well as the newest characteristics of marital and reproductive behaviors of the North Caucasian youth, which are capable of influencing the demographic situation in the near future, a poll was held among students in the form of a questionnaire.

## **Methods and Materials**

In a dynamic modern society, traditional socio-cultural values often undergo transformation. Such transformations concern, among other things, the deeply personal spheres of people's lives,

namely, family and marriage. The fact that the population of the administrative and cultural centers is particularly sensitive to everything new is rather predictable. The periphery, on the other hand, remains loyal to traditional values for a prolonged period of time.

The differences between the center and the periphery are particularly noticeable in this country, with North Caucasian regions being a pillar of conservatism. The young generation is especially susceptible to the influence of innovation. This is why in order to confirm or refute the hypothesis regarding the North Caucasian youth being devoted to traditional family values, as well as to reveal the prospects of demographic development of this southern region, in 2016, the employees of the Department of Population Reproduction and Demographic Policy of the Center of Social Demography of the Institute of Socio-Political Research of the Russian Academy of Sciences polled students via a questionnaire, aiming to study the attitude of the young people towards new phenomena in family life. The poll was conducted in five cities of the North Caucasian Federal District (Stavropol, Budennovsk, Makhachkala, Kizlyar, Karachaevsk) and was a part of a more large-scale study that encompassed eighteen Russian cities (Belgorod, Ioshkar-Ola, Khanty-Mansiysk, Kursk, Maikop, Moscow, Murom, Serpukhov, Sevastopol, Ulan-Ude, Ufa, Vladivostok, Vologda, Budennovsk, Karachaevsk, Kizlyar, Makhachkala, Stavropol). The total number of respondents was 1,874. 517 people were polled in the cities of the North Caucasian Federal District. 75% of the polled were female, 25%—male. A certain discrepancy towards a greater share of women is largely explained by the specifics of the specialization of the universities where the polls were conducted. However, the conclusions made on the basis of the research conducted may be considered reliable, since the reproductive behavior of a family largely depends specifically on women.

Selecting students as respondents was determined by several reasons. First of all, students are the young generation which will in the very near future establish their own families and give birth to children. That's why the intentions they declare today are likely to be realized. This simplifies the determination of the vectors of demographic development of the regions and the country as a whole. Secondly, university students are a component of the country's intellectual potential, which imposes higher demands on quality of life and extrapolates these demands on the choice of a marriage partner and the resolution of the issue of childbirth. And, thirdly, modern students are the young generation, for whom career expectations and the desire for professional self-realization contend with family, marital and reproductive intentions, which influences their matrimonial and reproductive behavior.

The choice of cities of the North Caucasian region where the poll was conducted is not random either. The city of Makhachkala is the administrative center of the Republic of Dagestan (the most populated region of the North Caucasian Federal District) and the largest city in the North Caucasian Federal District (593,000 people in 2016).<sup>1</sup> The city of Stavropol is the administrative center of Stavropol Territory, the only region in the North Caucasian Federal District that is not a national republic. Kizlyar and Budennovsk in the Republic of Dagestan and Stavropol Territory, respectively, belong to the category of small towns. They are sister cities with populations of a comparable size (48,200 and 63,000 in 2016). Karachaevsk is located in the Karachaevo-Cherkess Republic, the least populated region of the North Caucasian Federal District (467,800 people in 2017), and is one of the least populated of the republic's towns (21,000 people, second to last after the town of Teberda with a population of 8,700).<sup>2</sup> Thus, the choice of towns allows to draw parallels along the federal district's "large city-small town" lines.

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<sup>1</sup> See: *Regiony Rossii. Osnovnye kharakteristiki sub'ektov Rossiiskoi Federatsii*, Statistical collection, Rosstat, Moscow, 2017, 751 pp.; *Regiony Rossii. Osnovnye sotsialno-ekonomicheskie pokazateli gorodov*, Statistical collection, Rosstat, Moscow, 2016, 442 pp.

<sup>2</sup> See: *Regiony Rossii. Sotsialno-ekonomicheskie pokazateli*, Statistical collection, Rosstat, Moscow, 2017, 1402 pp.

## Discussion

The demographic phenomenon of the Northern Caucasus is the subject of research of many specialists in the context of studying its various aspects. The demographic situation in the region is the subject of many dissertations,<sup>3</sup> scientific monographs,<sup>4</sup> articles<sup>5</sup> and reference books.<sup>6</sup> It is always in the focus of media<sup>7</sup> and blog<sup>8</sup> attention as well.

The particularities of modern demographic parameters of Northern Caucasus led to the need for research that examines the historic prerequisites of the formation of population and their transformation at various stages of development. For instance, the work by Viktoria Cherkashina and Maria Makarenko *History of Demographic Modernization of the Northern Caucasus (Late 19th-First Quarter of the 20th Century)*<sup>9</sup> states that high demographic indicators are a consequence of this region's lagging behind in the process of demographic transformation. We should agree with the fact that this process "is characterized by an accelerated and intermittent nature [in the Northern Caucasus]. In the first third of the 20th century, only the Slavic population of the region had entered the demographic modernization process. Most of titular ethnic groups of the Northern Caucasus preserve the characteristics of an expanded reproduction."<sup>10</sup>

The article by Vitali Belozerov "The Transformation of Ethno-Demographic and Migration Process in the Northern Caucasus"<sup>11</sup> is devoted to the specifics of the formation of population of the Northern Caucasus, settlement stages, reproduction and migration of the population, as well as its ethnic characteristics.

Konstantin Kazenin, a well-known expert on socio-demographic problems of the Northern Caucasus, remarks that modern demographic processes in the region are undergoing major transformations that lead to deep shifts in the demographic, family and reproductive behavior of the population. He writes: "Departure from mass multi-children families changes many things, and not merely in the population statistics. It is usually parallel to very serious shifts in the private life of a regular person... The analysis of our polls in Daghestan demonstrates that early motherhood is to a large extent a conscious choice of a certain part of the young generation, first and foremost, its religious segment. It is not at all a blind reproduction of norms received from the elders."<sup>12</sup>

<sup>3</sup> See: V.F. Popov, "Demograficheskaia situatsiia na Severnom Kavkaze: etno-regionalnye osobennosti," available at [<http://www.disserscat.com/content/demograficheskaya-situatsiya-na-severnom-kavkaze-etno-region-osobennosti>], 14 January, 2019.

<sup>4</sup> See: "Demograficheskie i etnicheskie problemy Severnogo Kavkaza i puti ikh resheniia," available at [[http://www.bastion.ru/files/sprav/dem\\_kavkaz.doc](http://www.bastion.ru/files/sprav/dem_kavkaz.doc)], 14 January, 2019.

<sup>5</sup> See: S.V. Ryazantsev, "Demograficheskaia situatsiia na Severnom Kavkaze," available at [<http://pdf.knigi-x.ru/21ekonomika/4639-1-2002-ryazantsev-demograficheskaya-situatsiya-severnom-kavkaze-ryazantsev-sergey-vasilev.php>], 14 September, 2018; P.G. Abdulmanapov, "Tendentsii demograficheskogo razvitiia regionov Severo-Kavkazskogo federalnogo okruga," available at [<https://cyberleninka.ru/article/n/tendentsii-demograficheskogo-razvitiya-regionov-severo-kavkazskogo-federalnogo-okruga>], 7 January, 2019.

<sup>6</sup> See: "Demograficheskaia obstanovka na Severnom Kavkaze," available at [<https://www.kavkaz-uzel.eu/articles/13689/>], 21 November, 2018.

<sup>7</sup> See: "Na Severnom Kavkaze osobaia demograficheskaia situatsiia," available at [<http://st-vedomosti.ru/articles/2010/11/03/>], 12 August, 2018.

<sup>8</sup> See: "Demografiia Severnogo Kavkaza 1795-2002," available at [<https://timag82.livejournal.com/11445.html>], 8 January, 2019.

<sup>9</sup> See: V.N. Cherkashina, M.Iu. Makarenko, "Istoriia demograficheskoi modernizatsii Severnogo Kavkaza (konets XIX-pervaia chetvert XX v.)," available at [<https://elibrary.ru/item.asp?id=26348296>], 17 January, 2019.

<sup>10</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>11</sup> See: V.S. Belozerov, "Tranformatsiia etnodemograficheskikh i migratsionnykh protsessov na Severnom Kavkaze," available at [<http://www.demoscope.ru/weekly/2015/0663/nauka07.php>], 21 January, 2019.

<sup>12</sup> K. Kazenin, "Demografiia na Severnom Kavkaze b'et po traditsionalizmu," available at [<http://caucasustimes.com/ru/demografija-na-severnom-kavkaze-bet-po-traditsionalizmu-konstantin-kazenin/170>], 3 January, 2019.

The conclusions drawn by Igor Beloborodov, who had touched upon the problems of the demographic dynamics’ forecast for the North Caucasian Federal District, also coincide with the results of our project. According to him, the upcoming development of reproductive trends in the Northern Caucasus “nullifies the myth of the ‘demographic well-being’ of the Caucasian peoples.”<sup>13</sup> Clearly, the demographic characteristics of the North Caucasian peoples will long remain the subject of a scientific discussion, which our study aims to sustain.

## Results

The total fertility rate is the most informative in the evaluation of the situation in the birth rate sphere. And, if we evaluate the last several years, significant negative changes will become apparent. As the Russian Federation is entering a new phase of depopulation, a negative trend is clear in the constituents of the North Caucasian Federal District (see Table 1). This is apparent in both urban and rural areas of the district. Moreover, in a number of regions the total fertility rate in 2016 dropped lower than the average value for the Russian Federation. These include the Republic of Dagestan (urban population), Republic of Ingushetia (both urban and rural population), Kabardino-Balkar Republic (both urban and rural population), Karachaevo-Cherkess Republic (both urban and rural population), Republic of North Ossetia-Alania (rural population), Stavropol Territory (both urban and rural population). Thus, all the constituents of the North Caucasian Federal District, except the Chechen Republic, began to be characterized by a total fertility rate below the country average. Meanwhile, in 2016, the total fertility rate in the Chechen Republic also decreased in both urban and rural areas.

*Table 1*

**Total Fertility Rate, 2015-2017**

	Total Population	Urban	Rural
<b>RUSSIAN FEDERATION</b>			
<b>2015</b>	<b>1.777</b>	<b>1.678</b>	<b>2.111</b>
<b>2016</b>	<b>1.762</b>	<b>1.672</b>	<b>2.056</b>
<b>2017</b>	<b>1.621</b>		
<b>North Caucasian Federal District</b>			
<b>2015</b>	<b>1.979</b>	<b>1.738</b>	<b>2.233</b>
<b>2016</b>	<b>1.936</b>	<b>1.720</b>	<b>2.156</b>
<b>2017</b>	<b>1.872</b>		
<b>Republic of Dagestan</b>			
<b>2015</b>	<b>2.022</b>	<b>1.512</b>	<b>2.546</b>
<b>2016</b>	<b>1.978</b>	<b>1.464</b>	<b>2.498</b>
<b>2017</b>	<b>1.908</b>		

<sup>13</sup> I. Beloborodov, “Kavkazskii demograficheskii dreif,” available at [[http://ruskline.ru/analitika/2013/12/30/kavkazskij\\_demograficheskij\\_dreif/](http://ruskline.ru/analitika/2013/12/30/kavkazskij_demograficheskij_dreif/)], 19 January, 2019.

Table 1 (continued)

	Total Population	Urban	Rural
<b>Republic of Ingushetia</b>			
2015	1.971	1901	2.023
2016	1.752	1.643	1.834
2017	1.772		
<b>Kabardino-Balkar Republic</b>			
2015	1.753	1.706	1.791
2016	1.724	1.665	1.774
2017	1.612		
<b>Karachaevo-Cherkess Republic</b>			
2015	1.541	1.484	1.583
2016	1.518	1.536	1.502
2017	1.429		
<b>Republic of North Ossetia-Alania</b>			
2015	1.930	2.000	1.796
2016	1.891	1.971	1.744
2017	1.751		
<b>Chechen Republic</b>			
2015	2.799	2.957	2.709
2016	2.622	2.865	2.489
2017	2.730		
<b>Stavropol Territory</b>			
2015	1.644	1.550	1.809
2016	1.678	1.604	1.800
2017	1.538		
<p><i>S o u r c e:</i> Russia's Demographic Annual Report, available at [<a href="http://www.gks.ru/wps/wcm/connect/rosstat_main/rosstat/ru/statistics/publications/catalog/doc_1137674209312">http://www.gks.ru/wps/wcm/connect/rosstat_main/rosstat/ru/statistics/publications/catalog/doc_1137674209312</a>], 13 December, 2018.</p>			

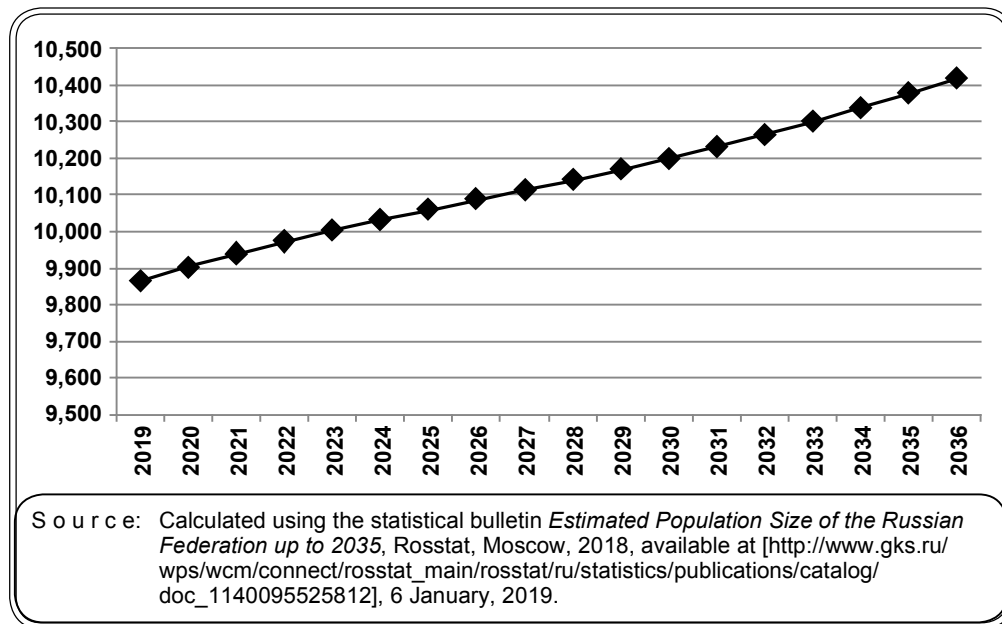
In 2017, an even greater decrease in the total fertility rate occurred throughout the North Caucasian Federal District. Only two entities in the Northern Caucasus (Republic of Ingushetia and Chechen Republic) have seen a growth in the total fertility rate in 2017 in comparison with 2016. In all the other constituents, the total fertility rate was characterized by a downward dynamic. A particularly sharp drop of this indicator occurred in one of the most populated constituents of the region—Stavropol Territory, where its rate of decrease had surpassed the country's average decline. Unfortunately, due to the specifics of access to statistical information, we are unable to produce the

total fertility rate data for 2017 in the urban/rural perspective. However, it is already possible to claim that in all of North Caucasian constituents, with the exception of the Chechen Republic, the level of this indicator does not allow to speak of expanded or even simple population reproduction. A model of decreased population reproduction is in place here, which will lead to a serious demographic crisis in the future due to the population getting older because of long lifespans and migration of primarily young people of reproductive age.

We based our study of the demographic prospects of the Northern Caucasus on estimated statistical data, as well as on the results of the sociological polls of the young people of the Russian Federation, including North Caucasian youth. This approach allowed to evaluate various aspects of the region’s demographic future. Based on the data on the estimated population of Russian regions in 2018-2036, it was concluded that among all federal districts, only in the North Caucasian Federal District will natural growth be the main source of population growth. The number of inhabitants of the Northern Caucasus is estimated to surpass the 10-million mark in 2023-2024, and, according to the average prognosis, by 2036 will likely constitute almost 10.5 million people. In other words, the population of the North Caucasian Federal District will increase by 5% (see Fig. 1).

Figure 1

**Estimated Population of the North Caucasian Federal District, thous. people**



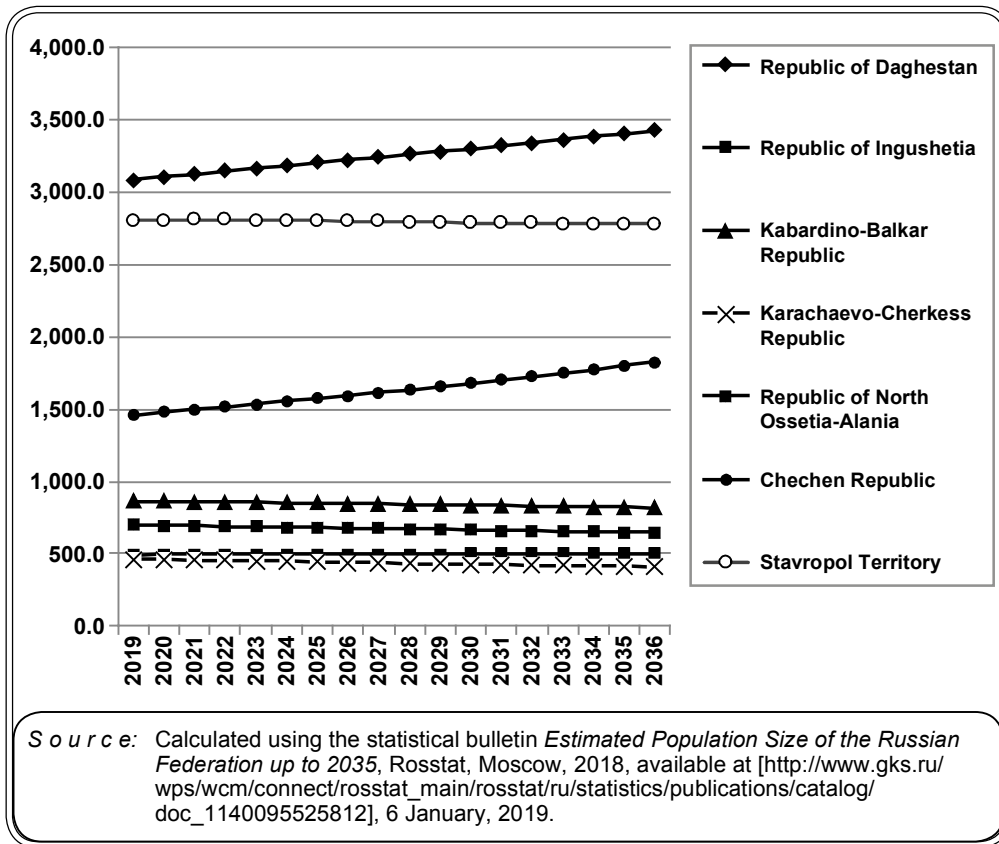
Meanwhile, a population increase in the district will occur owing to only three of its constituents—Republic of Daghestan (by 11%), Republic of Ingushetia (by 2%) and Chechen Republic (by 25%) (see Fig. 2).

The population of Chechen Republic, slated to grow the fastest, will reach up to 1,827,000 people in the next two decades. The republic’s share in the population of the district will increase from 14.8% in 2018 to 17.5% in 2036. The size of the population in the Republic of Daghestan, the most populated district constituent, will grow by 11%, increasing its share from 31.3% to 33.0%. The

population of the Republic of Ingushetia will increase insignificantly, and the republic's share in the district's population will remain practically the same. It will continue to amount to no more than 5% in 2036. In aggregate, these three constituents, which are characterized by a positive dynamic of population growth, will increase their share in the population of the North Caucasian Federal District to 55%.

Figure 2

Estimated Population of the Constituents of the North Caucasian Federal District, thous. people



Other constituents of the North Caucasian Federal District will be characterized by a negative dynamic of population size. It will be particularly pronounced in the Karachaevo-Cherkess Republic, where the decrease in population will constitute almost 12% by 2036.

Such variously directed trends in demographic dynamics in the constituents of the North Caucasian Federal District are linked to the processes of population reproduction and migration, which will likely be characterized by significant variability. For instance, if we were to judge by the indicators of natural, migration and total population growth up to 2036 (see Table 2), it would become apparent that

- Firstly, almost all of the North Caucasian Federal District constituents (except the Stavropol Territory) will be characterized by a positive natural growth.



- Secondly, almost all of the North Caucasian Federal District constituents (except the Stavropol Territory) will be migration donors.
- Thirdly, as a result of interaction between the natural population reproduction and migration processes, the total population growth in the North Caucasian Federal District will amount to almost 600,000 people in 2018-2035.

The largest absolute increase in population will be achieved in the Chechen Republic—390,000 people. The population will increase slightly less over the same period in the Republic of Daghestan (approximately by 366,000). The Republic of Ingushetia will see an approximately 15,000-people increase. Other constituents of the North Caucasian Federal District will post a negative dynamic of total population growth. In the Kabardino-Balkar and Karachaevo-Cherkess Republics, and the Republic of North Ossetia-Alania a decrease in population will be due to migration. Meanwhile, in the Stavropol Territory such a decrease is linked to a natural population decline, which will not be compensated by an insignificant growth due to migration.

*Table 2*

**Total Figures of Demographic Dynamics  
in the North Caucasian Federal District in 2018-2035,  
people (average forecast)**

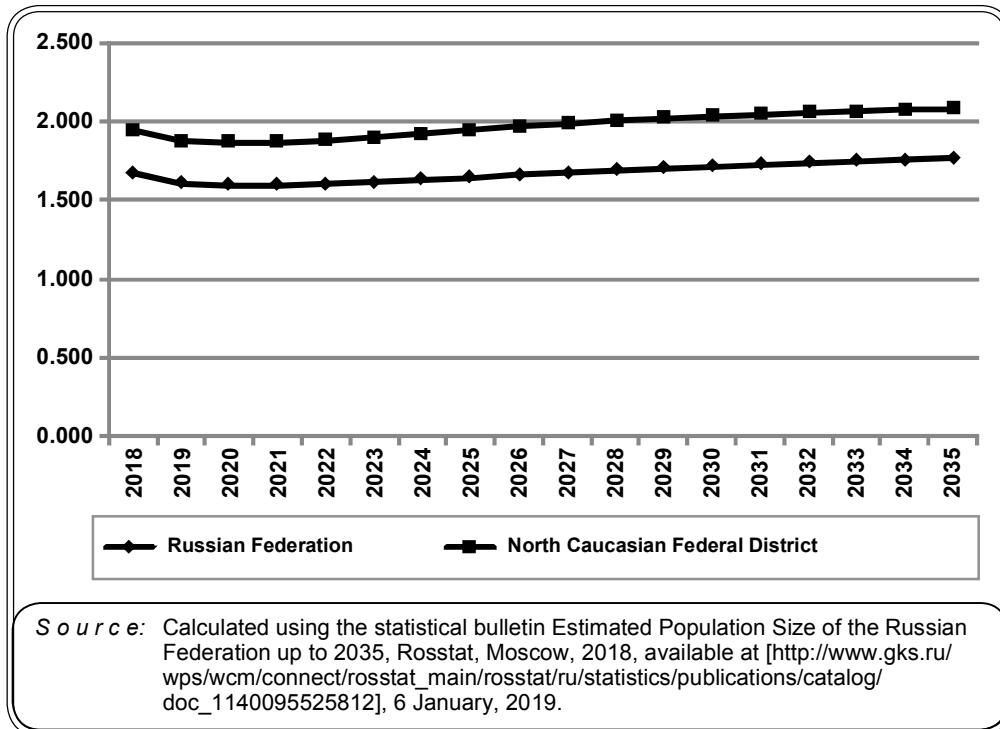
	Natural Growth	Migration Growth	Total Growth
<b>North Caucasian Federal District</b>	<b>1,142,292</b>	<b>-543,657</b>	<b>598,635</b>
<b>Republic of Daghestan</b>	<b>549,556</b>	<b>-183,700</b>	<b>365,856</b>
<b>Republic of Ingushetia</b>	<b>91,480</b>	<b>-76,515</b>	<b>14,965</b>
<b>Kabardino-Balkar Republic</b>	<b>38,717</b>	<b>-83,929</b>	<b>-45,212</b>
<b>Karachaevo-Cherkess Republic</b>	<b>2,897</b>	<b>-57,383</b>	<b>-54,486</b>
<b>Republic of North Ossetia-Alania</b>	<b>19,198</b>	<b>-72,146</b>	<b>-52,948</b>
<b>Chechen Republic</b>	<b>464,513</b>	<b>-74,471</b>	<b>390,042</b>
<b>Stavropol Territory</b>	<b>-24,069</b>	<b>4,487</b>	<b>-19,582</b>

*Source:* Calculated using the statistical bulletin *Estimated Population Size of the Russian Federation up to 2035*, Rosstat, Moscow, 2018, available at [[http://www.gks.ru/wps/wcm/connect/rosstat\\_main/rosstat/ru/statistics/publications/catalog/doc\\_1140095525812](http://www.gks.ru/wps/wcm/connect/rosstat_main/rosstat/ru/statistics/publications/catalog/doc_1140095525812)], 6 January, 2019.

Estimated average forecasts are based on the scenario that entails an increase in total fertility rate in the Russian Federation, including the North Caucasian regions, after an initial decline. The forecasted growth of the above-mentioned indicator will start in 2022 in all of the Russian Federation, and a year before in the Northern Caucasus. It is possible that the overly optimistic scenario will not be realized, however, it is apparent that in the near future the total fertility rate for the Northern Caucasus will significantly exceed that for all of Russian Federation. Presumably, it will vary between 1,600 (in 2020 and 2021) and 1,768 (in 2035). In the Northern Caucasus, the range will be between 1,869 (in 2020) and 2,083 (in 2035) (see Fig. 3).

Figure 3

Dynamics of the Total Fertility Rate in the Russian Federation and the North Caucasian Federal District, *people* (average forecast)



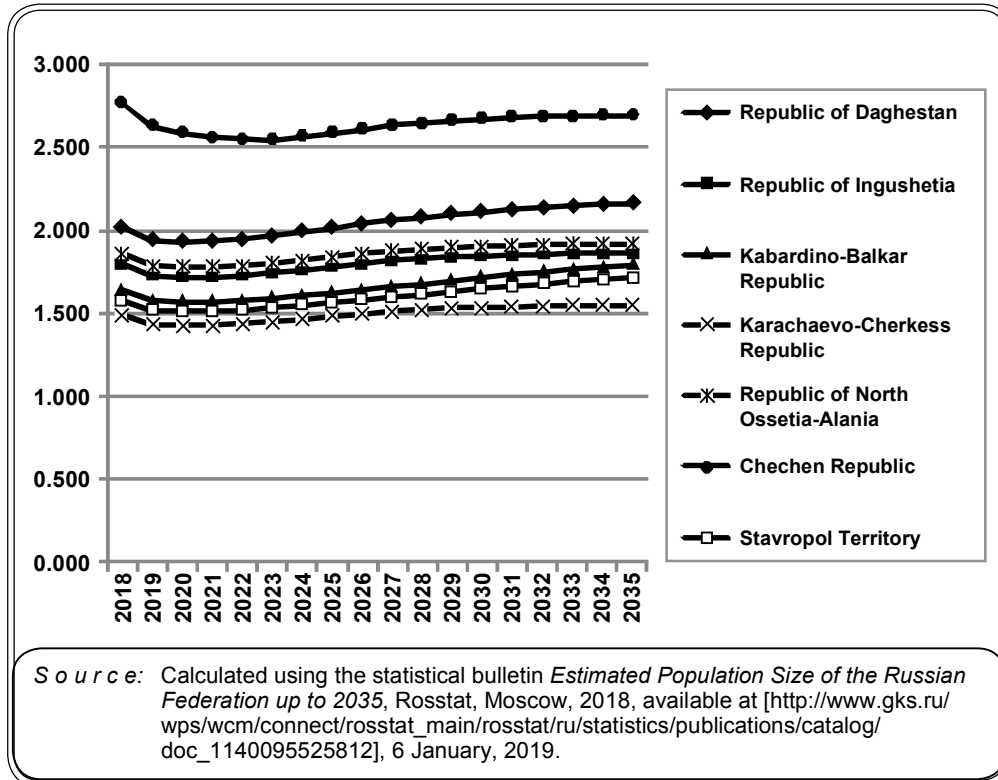
In accordance with the average forecast scenario, the total fertility rate in the Northern Caucasus in the period of study (2018-2035) will grow by almost 7%. However, in different constituents the birth rate dynamics will vary in a wide range (see Fig. 4).

In the time of a drop in the total fertility rate (in 2020) the indicators differentiated by constituent will equal to approximately 2.588 children per one woman of reproductive age (in the Chechen Republic) to 1.427 children per one woman of reproductive age (Karachaevo-Cherkess Republic). By the end of the forecast period (2035), the variation range will decrease somewhat—2.695 children per one woman of reproductive age (in the Chechen Republic) to 1.548 children per one woman of reproductive age (Karachaevo-Cherkess Republic). Meanwhile, the forecast stipulates that by 2036 the total fertility rate will increase by 3% to 9% in almost all the constituents of the North Caucasian Federal District in comparison with 2018. Only in the Chechen Republic will this indicator decrease somewhat (by 3%), which is likely linked to the stabilization of the already high birth rate.

As a result, we can state that, judging by the total fertility rate, we are expecting only the Chechen Republic to possess the capability of expanded population reproduction in the years to come. The Republic of Daghestan is expected to demonstrate simple population reproduction. Other constituents of the Northern Caucasus will be characterized by a decreased population reproduction, which holds a risk of depopulation trends.

Figure 4

Dynamics of the Total Fertility Rate in Constituents of the North Caucasian Federal District (average forecast)



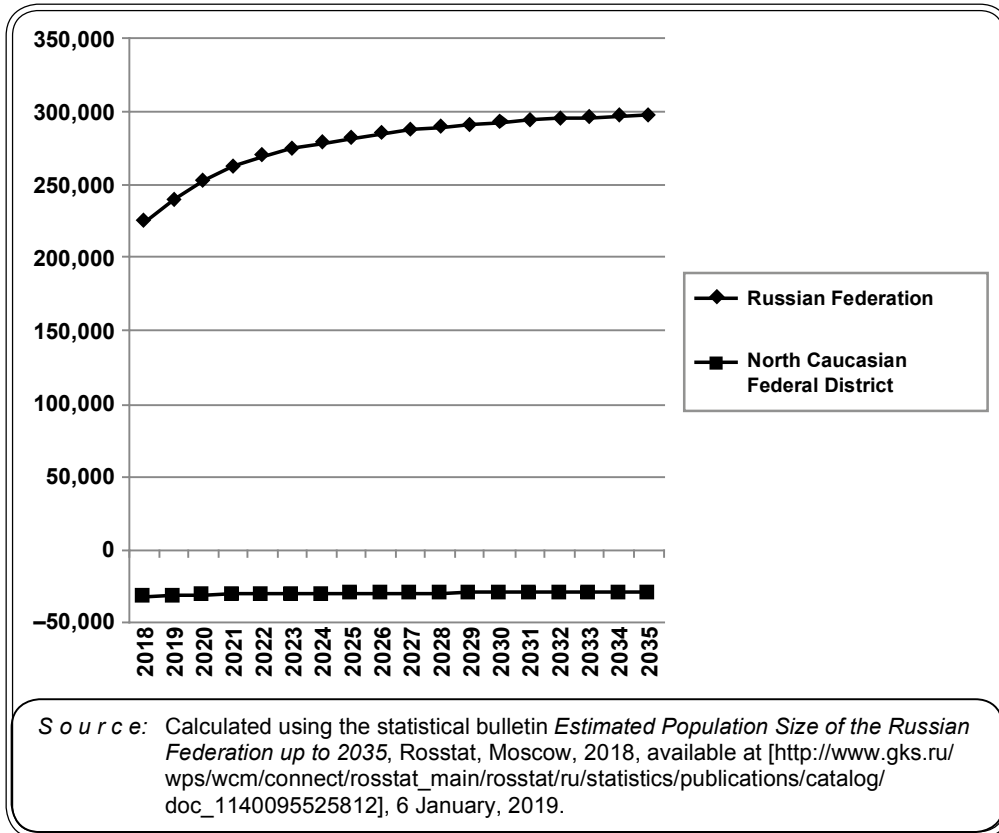
Depopulation processes in the Northern Caucasus will be exacerbated by the migration outflow in the analyzed period, due to which the district is bound to lose a total of up to 543,000 people by 2036. Unlike the expected positive migration balance in all of Russia, the migration dynamics in the Northern Caucasus in the upcoming period will be characterized by a negative trend (see Fig. 5).

The greatest migration outflow in absolute terms will be characteristic of the Republic of Daghestan, where a total negative balance in 2018-2035 is projected at up to 183,700 people (see Fig. 6). Migration dynamics in the Stavropol Territory are different and will continue to be different from the migration dynamics of the other constituents of the North Caucasian Federal District. In the forecast period, this entity will be characterized by a positive trend in migration processes. Additionally, unlike other entities, the Stavropol Territory will be a recipient of migrants. Its population will insignificantly increase due to migration, by a total of approximately 4,500 people. Other constituents will lose a total of 57,000-84,000 people each in the forecast period.

Against the background of presumed negative demographic tendencies in the Northern Caucasus, its population still preserves many traditional features that are conducive to the conservation of demographic potential. This idea is often supported by the results of sociological polls, which testify to certain psychological peculiarities, which, in comparison to other Russian regions, are more concerned with the tasks of strengthening family relations, the development of more effective reproductive behavior and spreading the multi-children family model.

Figure 5

Migration Growth in the Russian Federation and the North Caucasian Federal District in 2018-2035, people (average forecast)



One of such sociological studies was conducted by the authors on the basis of a sociological poll carried out in 19 Russian regions, in the Stavropol Territory, Republic of Dagestan and Karachaevo-Cherkess Republic, in particular. Polling the youth allowed to hold a comparative analysis of the peculiarities of the emerging attitudes of young people towards family, childbirth, demographic problems and demographic policy in the Northern Caucasus in comparison to the attitudes of the youth throughout Russia. Part of the results of this large-scale project had been used in this article.

It has been noted long ago that the values of demographic indicators depend on the size of a settlement. This is linked to the fact that the population of large cities adopts new attitudes, including marital and reproductive behavior, that are not characteristic of the local tradition more easily, while the population of smaller towns and villages adheres more often to traditional norms. That is why it is important to conduct an analysis of youth's reproductive and marital intentions in the Northern Caucasus in the small town-large city perspective.

For instance, the results of the study confirm that the young generation of the Northern Caucasus continues to be set on marrying at an earlier age than Russian youth in general (see Fig. 7). Almost 85% of North Caucasian respondents believe that the best age for marriage is under 25, while only 75% of Russian youth believe the same.

Figure 6

Migration Growth  
in North Caucasian Constituents in 2018-2035,  
people (average forecast)

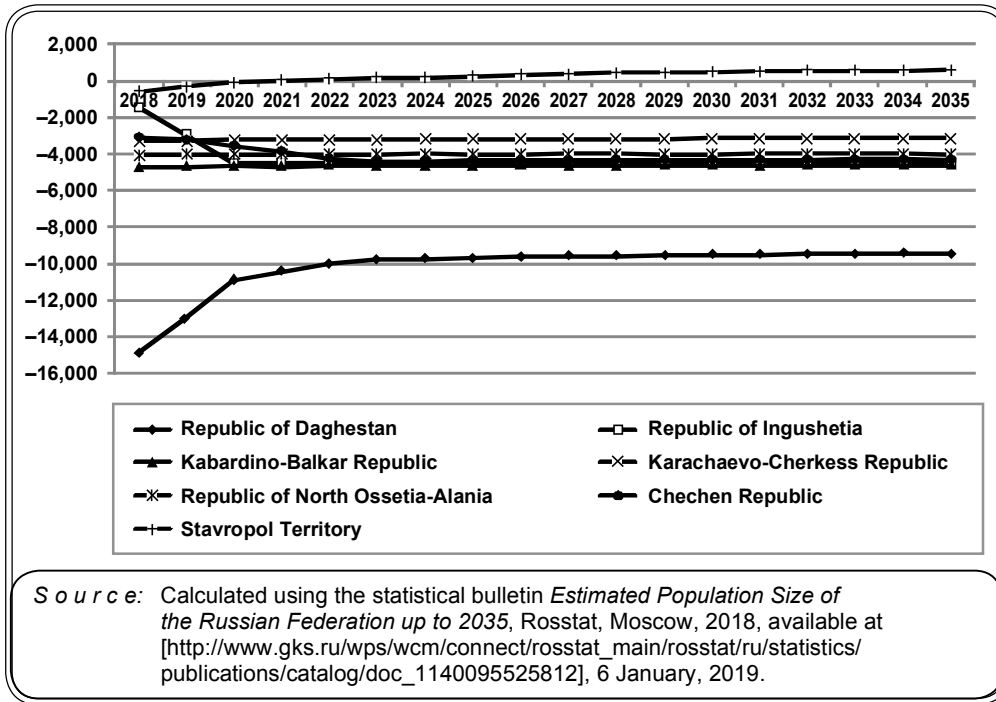
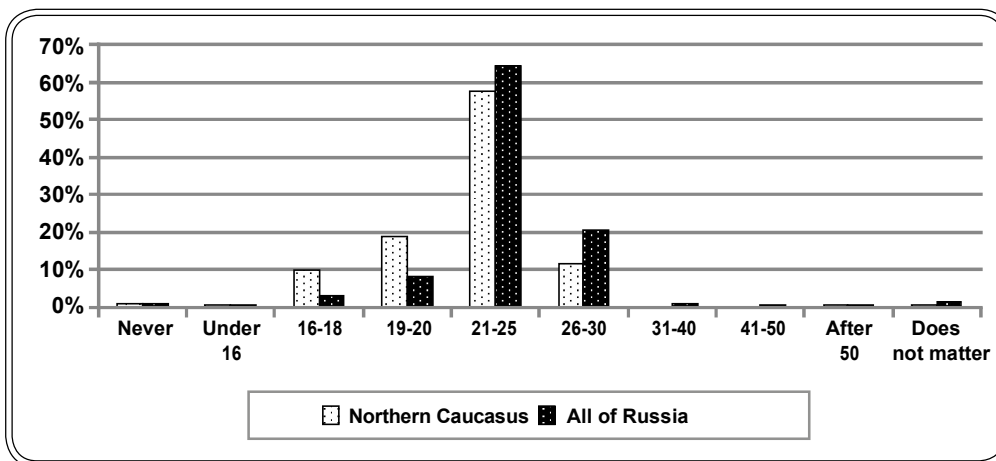


Figure 7

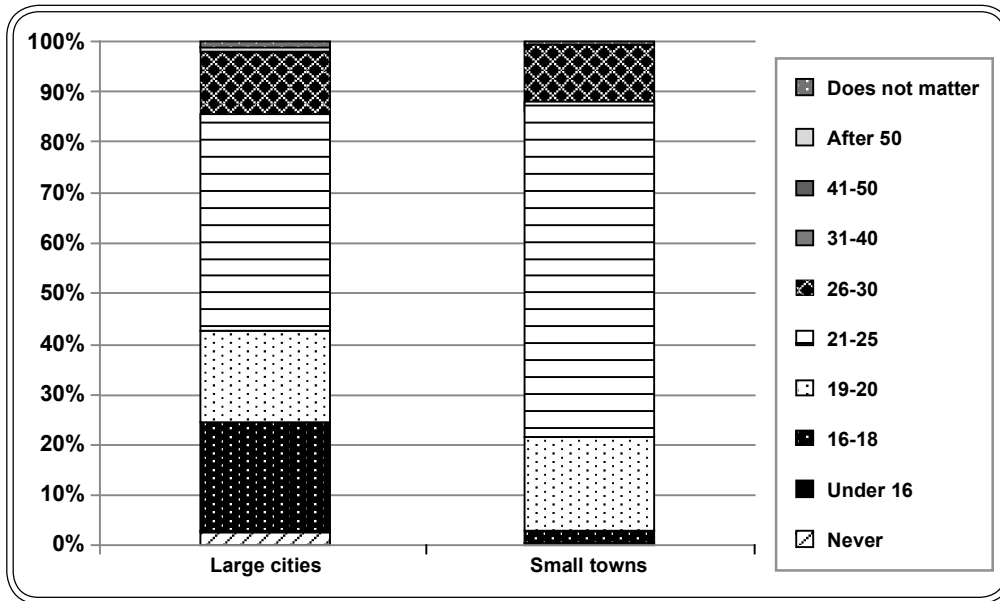
Distribution of Respondents' Answers to the Question of  
"What is the Best Age for Marriage?"



Meanwhile, the “small towns-large cities” perspective demonstrates significant differences in the answers to this question. For instance, a relatively large group of young people in large cities (over 40%) selected a younger age as a response. This group is far smaller among the respondents from small towns (just over 20%). The respondents from various categories were aligned in regard to older age. Approximately 12% of the respondents in both groups thought that the age of over 25 is optimal for marriage (see Fig. 8).

Figure 8

**Responses to the Question of “What Age Do You Think is Optimal for Marriage?” among the Respondents from Small Towns and Large Cities of the North Caucasian Federal District**



It thus has to be duly noted that in their choice of marital age, respondents from small towns manifest a greater similarity in attitudes than respondents from large cities. This fact may testify to the existence of an established view on this issue among the population of small North Caucasian towns, unlike large cities. Therefore, this fact needs to be taken into consideration while forming and implementing socio-psychological measures of demographic policy.

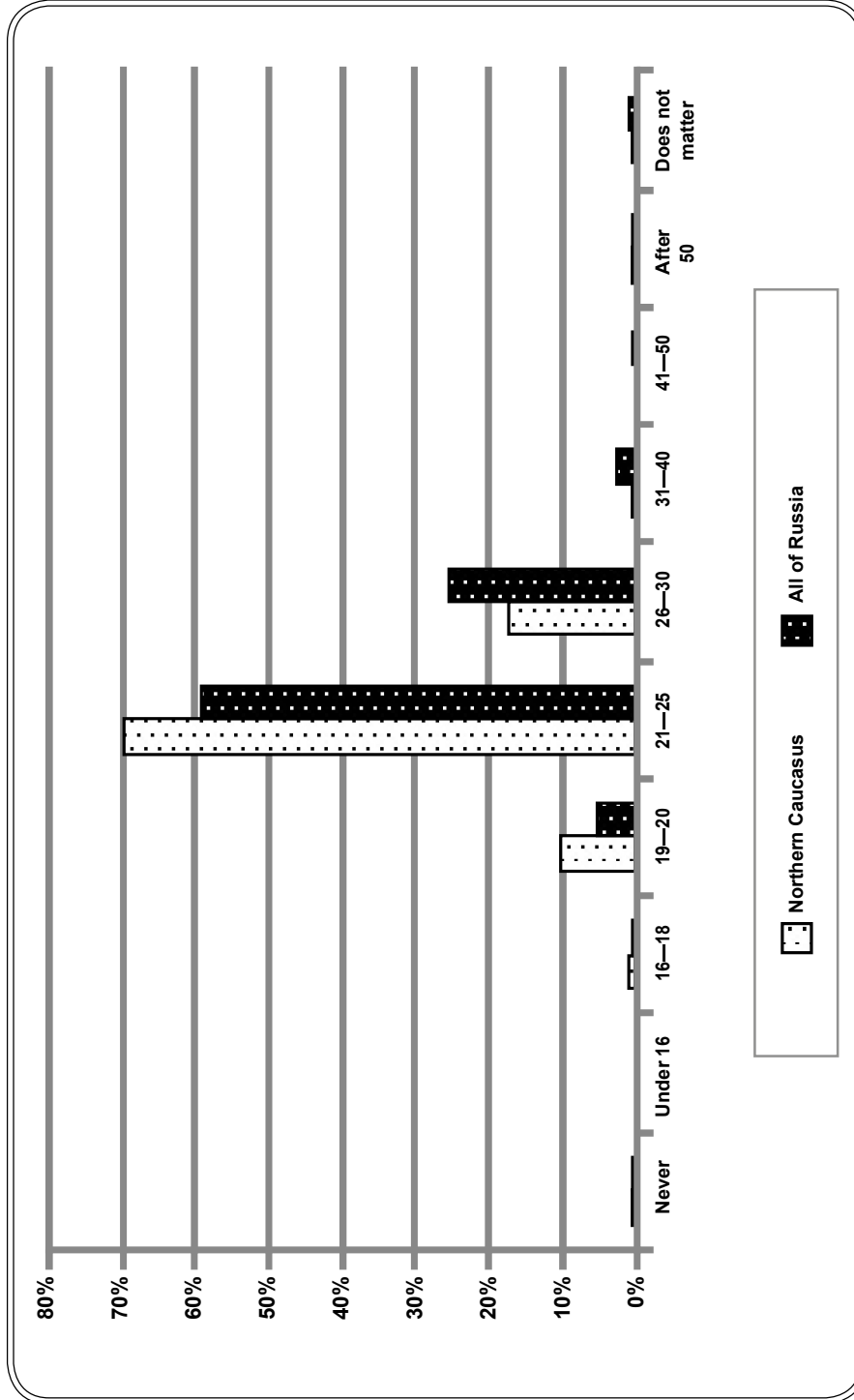
Issues of childbirth are the most important in the research. An analysis of answers to these questions allows to forecast the trends in demographic development of the regions and the country as a whole. For instance, one of the questions entailed selecting the optimal age for the birth of a first child.<sup>14</sup>

According to the young North Caucasians, an early age for the birth of the first child is a more opportune timeframe for the first childbirth (see Fig. 9). 80% among them believe that “early childbirth” (before 25) is preferable to “later childbirth.” The age of 25 and under was selected as optimal for the first childbirth by only 65% of respondents throughout Russia.

<sup>14</sup> See: E.P. Sigareva, S.Iu. Sivopliasova, “Osobennosti formirovaniia brachnogo i reproduktivnogo povedeniia studentcheskoi molodezhi v iuzhnykh regionakh Rossii (na primere g. Stavropolia i g. Budennovska),” *Vestnik SKFU*, No. 2 (47), 2015, pp. 289-295.

Figure 9

Distribution of Respondents' Answers to the Question of "What Age is Optimal for Giving Birth to the First Child?"



Meanwhile, a shift in attitudes is notable in the answers of large-city university students, with the answers trending towards older age, and in the answers of the students from small towns—on the contrary, towards younger age. It is curious to note that over 2% of respondents from large cities would be willing to delay the birth of their first child to the fourth or even fifth decade of their lives. There was no similar pattern discovered among small-town respondents. On the contrary, a group of a significant size (approximately 16%) of those who would prefer to start having children at the age of 16-20 is emerging.

The results of the conducted analysis determine the conclusion that the young population of the Northern Caucasus continues to remain on more conservative positions than young people of other Russian regions in regard to issues of marriage and childbirth.

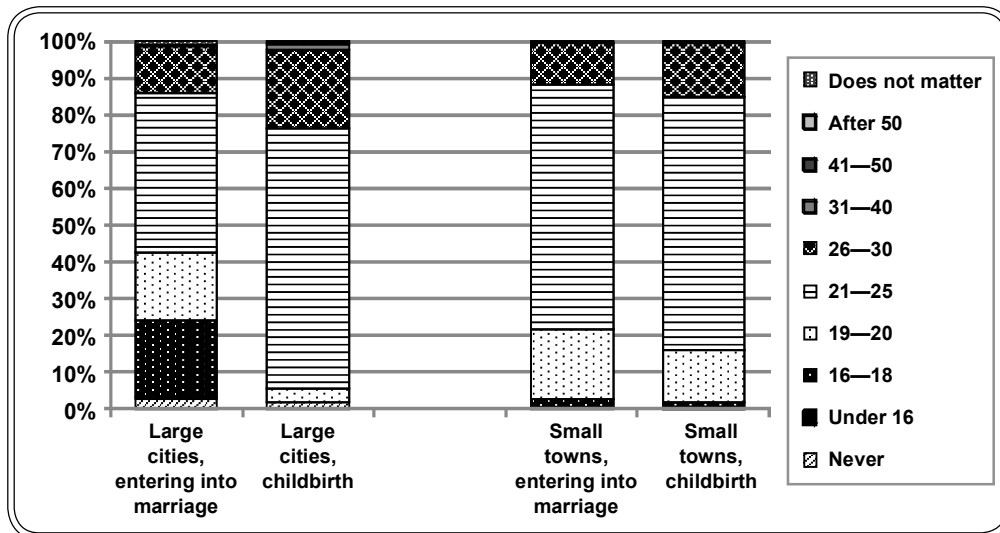
Simultaneously, the stipulated differences in the responses regarding the timeframe for marriage and the birth of the first child provided by the North Caucasian youth and youth from other regions are not critical (10%-15%). Judging from this fact, it seems logical to assume that the process of gradual convergence between the positions of North Caucasian youth and the youth of the country as a whole is currently underway.

Meanwhile, there is a certain divergence in the opinions of the respondents within the North Caucasian region in regard to the temporal lag between marriage and the birth of the first child (see Fig. 10).

For instance, small-town youth practically always selects the same age as the preferable age for both entering into marriage and giving the birth of the first child. The shares of respondents who have selected a certain response option are approximately equal. Simultaneously, large-city youth in the Northern Caucasus expresses more differentiated opinions. They prefer to enter into marriage at a younger age, and give birth to children at an older age. Apparently, the young people living in large cities allocate several years to “live for themselves” between entering into marriage and giving birth

Figure 10

**Responses to the Questions “What Age Do You Think is Optimal for Marriage?” and “What Age Do You Think is Optimal for the Birth of the First Child?” among the Respondents from Small Towns and Large Cities in the North Caucasian Federal District**





to children. Perhaps, this behavior is a certain way to “prolong” the time of youth and carelessness, enjoying all forms of human relations on a legal, socially acceptable basis.

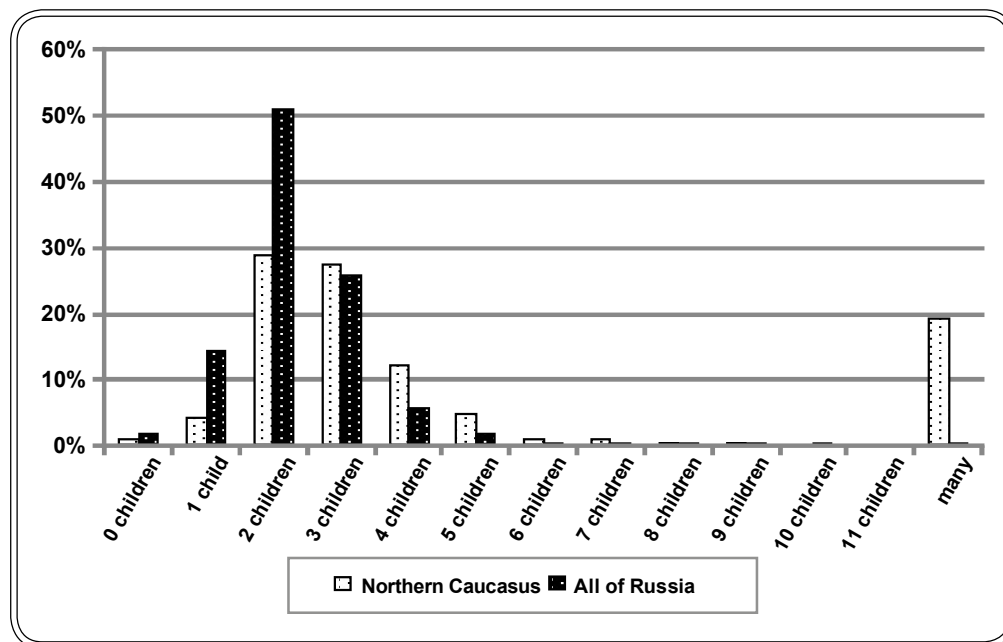
The problem of increasing the number of multi-children families, of which there are currently unjustifiably few, is important for Russia’s (including the Northern Caucasus) demographic future. However, the results of the sociological study demonstrate that the focus on the multi-children family is still characteristic for the North Caucasian youth. However, the real trends in the demographic development of this region allow to note the emerging contradiction between the reproductive intentions of the North Caucasian youths and their realization. Polling results demonstrate that young North Caucasians choose the “many children” option as a response to the question of “How many children do you want to have?” than young people from other regions of the country (see Fig. 11). Almost 20% of respondents from the Northern Caucasus selected this option, while in the general results for the country as a whole this answer is characteristic of a minimal number of respondents.

In addition, while only 33% of responses throughout all of Russia reflected an orientation towards multiple childbirths, 66% of North Caucasian responders plan to parent many children. In other words, having many children as a reproductive choice is twice as preferable in the North Caucasian constituents than in other Russian regions. This fact allows to conclude that demographic prospects are significantly better for Northern Caucasus than for other Russian regions.

However, respondents’ answers differ significantly depending on the place of residence. For instance, the analysis of results demonstrated that the majority of young people who are studying in the large cities plan to have two children (40.8% of respondents). Meanwhile, small-town youths are geared at a two- or three-children family model (up to one-third of respondents selected each option)

Figure 11

**Distribution of Responses to the Question of “How Many Children are You Planning to Have?”**



(see Fig. 12). At the same time, the greater share of respondents from large cities who want to limit themselves to one child or remain childless (7.9% and 2.6%, respectively) draws attention. Small-town youth, on the other hand, is characterized by more positive reproductive intentions—over one-quarter of the respondents would like to have four and more children (vs. only 16% in the large cities).

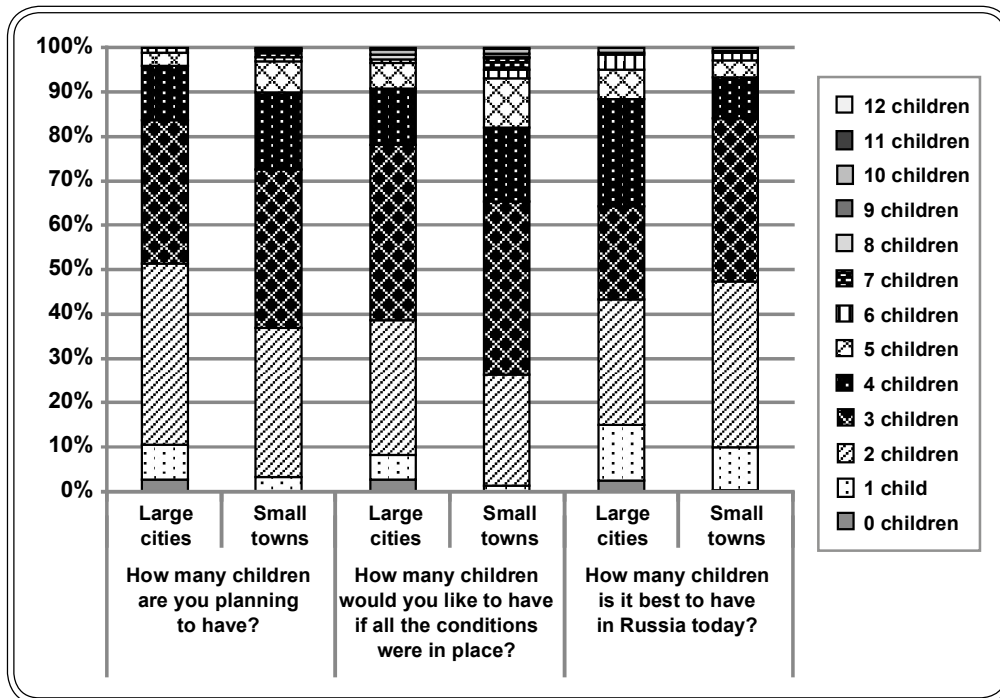
The preferred number of children is a hypothetical reproductive intention of the respondents, which would be realized if all the conditions were met. It is the maximum that could be attained while realizing a complex of demographic policy measures. It is apparent that there are always barriers to giving birth to a greater number of children. That is why this number is traditionally higher than the number of children planned.

If all the required conditions are fulfilled, the reproductive plans of student youth look more positive. Respondents from both small towns and large cities may have become parents of two or three children (with a slight predominance of the latter). Meanwhile, the share of those who would like to have four and more children is greater in small towns. It is important to note that a significant increase in the number of multi-children families, if all the conditions are in place, will occur in large cities due to a sharp rise in the number of three-child families, and in small towns—due to an increase in the number of families with five and more children.

Responses to the question of the ideal number of children are largely determined by the socio-economic conditions in the country as a whole and in the specific regions in particular. An analysis of

Figure 12

**Responses to the Questions of “How Many Children are You Planning to Have?” “How Many Children Would You Like to Have if All the Conditions were in Place?” and “How Many Children is It Best to Have in Russia Today?” among the Respondents from Small Towns and Large Cities of the North Caucasian Federal District**



the responders' answers demonstrated that, according to the North Caucasian youths from small towns, it is best to have two or three children in modern Russia (37.5% and 36.7%, respectively), and according to young people from large cities—two, three or four. This distribution of responses may be linked with a greater familiarity of large-city population with the state measures of support of families with children.

It is possible to determine how many children the respondents are planning to have by calculating the average planned number of children (see Fig. 13).

Under the current conditions, small-town young people are planning to have an average of 2.63 children, which is 0.06 more than large-city youths. With all conditions in place, the average number of children would increase significantly—to 2.72 in large cities and 2.81 in small towns. Thus, an expansion of demographic policy measures aimed at supporting families with children will allow to increase the average number of children in young families of large cities and small towns of the Northern Caucasus by 0.15 and 0.18 children, respectively, in the best case scenario.

The comparison of average and ideal number of children seems interesting. The results demonstrate that under current conditions, small-town youths intend to have as many children as currently possible, while the large-city youths reject the prospect of having more children, even though the required conditions seem to be in place.

The following circumstances may act as barriers over time to implementation of marital and reproductive paradigms of the North Caucasian youths.

- First of all, it is the socio-economic situation in the North Caucasian constituents, characterized by a low level of material well-being, which creates additional difficulties for the successful implementation of the young generation's plans to have multi-children families.
- Secondly, it is the clear vector of the North Caucasian youths' migration behavior, aimed at leaving their regions.

As for the former fact, it may be explained by the results of the conducted poll. For instance, one of the questions for youths of reproductive age was related to the projected intentions about the

*Figure 13*

**Average Planned Number of Children among Respondents from Small Towns and Large Cities of the North Caucasian Federal District**

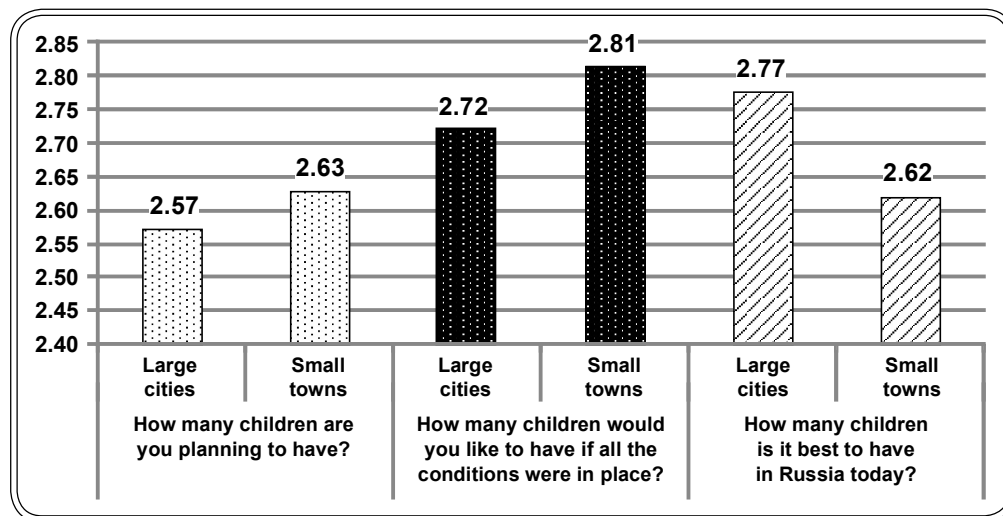
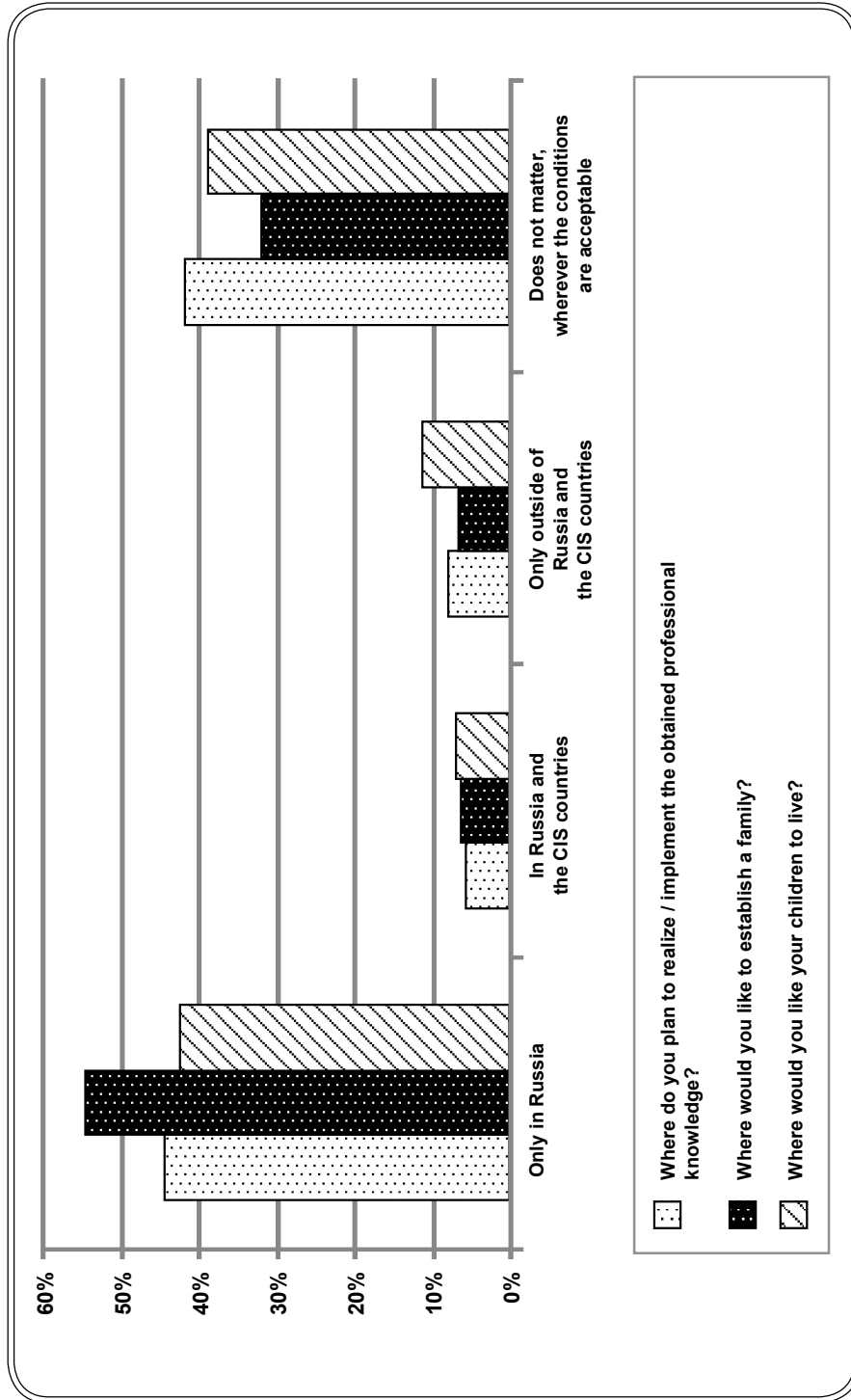


Figure 14

Distribution of North Caucasian Respondents' Answers to Questions of Presumed Locations of Work, Establishing a Family and Children's Residence



location of their future job, establishing a family and place of residence of the respondents' children. Fig. 14 illustrates the presumed choices of the North Caucasian youths. It follows that a relatively large group of young people is currently basing its decisions on practical considerations of the location for establishing a family. The "patriotic" choice ("I want to establish a family only in Russia") was selected by 56% of the respondents in the Northern Caucasus; the answer characterized by pragmatism ("Does not matter, wherever the conditions are acceptable") was selected by 32% of the polled. An even greater share of North Caucasian respondents was pragmatic about the presumed place of residence of their children. Approximately 43% of respondents wanted their children to only live in Russia, while 39% pointed out that the place of their children's residence will likely be determined by the suitability of conditions. All of this speaks of the development of a practical expediency ideology in the mentality of a significant part of North Caucasian youths, which is set against the ideology of patriotism.

Moreover, if the answers of respondents from the Northern Caucasus and throughout Russia are compared, it will become apparent that the North Caucasian youth is set on a location beyond the post-Soviet territory in applying their professional knowledge, establishing a family and residence of children to a relatively greater extent. The response proportions are as follows: applying professional knowledge only outside of Russia and CIS countries 8% (North Caucasian youth) vs. 2% (youth in all of Russia); establishing a family—7% vs. 5%; children's residence 11% vs. 9%. Thus, the development of family relations is a multi-sided process for North Caucasian youths, which is influenced by both ideological concepts and socio-economic conditions.

Considering the fact that families in a number of North Caucasian regions are experiencing particular economic difficulties,<sup>15</sup> the transformation of family and reproductive behavior of the young generation under new conditions may have a negative impact on the demographic development of the Northern Caucasus and Russia as a whole.

## *Conclusion*

In the *Strategy of Socio-Economic Development of the North Caucasian Federal District Up To 2025*,<sup>16</sup> which has been implemented for almost a decade, the region's demographic potential is rather optimistic. The "excess labor" resources of the Northern Caucasus intend to migrate from the region. "In order to resolve the issue of excess labor resources of the North Caucasian Federal District, the annual size of labor migration must amount to 30,000-40,000 of people. Dozens of Russian regions must be engaged as migration recipients."<sup>17</sup> However, it is already becoming apparent that migration of young people of reproductive age from the North Caucasian region destroys the demographic potential of this region. In addition, as modern research demonstrates, no significant improvement in birth rate parameters is expected due to the arrival of North Caucasian residents in other regions. Thus, an analysis of the results of the study by Konstantin Kazenin "speaks of the fact that from the point of view of forecasting the natural migration of North Caucasian population, no increase in the birth rate is expected in these population groups in the future."<sup>18</sup> However, representatives of

<sup>15</sup> "Samye bednye sem'i Rossii zhivut v Dagestane i Kabardino-Balkarii," available at [[http://obzor.io/2018/06/10/samye-bednye-semi-rossii-zhivut-v-Dagestane-i-kabardino-balkarii-51383/?utm\\_referrer=https%3A%2F%2Fzen.yandex.com](http://obzor.io/2018/06/10/samye-bednye-semi-rossii-zhivut-v-Dagestane-i-kabardino-balkarii-51383/?utm_referrer=https%3A%2F%2Fzen.yandex.com)], 14 June, 2018.

<sup>16</sup> "Strategiia sotsialno-ekonomicheskogo razvitiia Severo-Kavkazskogo federalnogo okruga do 2025 goda," available at [<http://government.ru/docs/19061/>], 14 June, 2018.

<sup>17</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>18</sup> K.I. Kazenin, "Vlianie migratsii na rozhdamost: sopolstavlenie imeiushchikhsia gipotez na materiale Severnogo Kavkaza," *Narodonaselenie*, Vol. 21, No. 1, 2018, pp. 48-59, available at [DOI: 10.26653/1561-7785-2018-21-1-04].

governmental bodies continue to perceive the demographic situation in the Northern Caucasus with hardly justifiable optimism. The head of the government of the Russian Federation Dmitry Medvedev remarked at the meeting of the commission of the socio-economic development of the Northern Caucasus: “Good indicators, especially those that concern the demographic situation: the Northern Caucasus remains an established leader in the length of the lifespan, with the average lifespan longer than in other places.”<sup>19</sup>

The following theses are the results of our research based on the current and forecasted statistical data up to 2036, as well as on the results of a sociological study of family, reproductive and migration behavior:

1. Modern reality in its new manifestations sharply transforms and polarizes the life strategies of the North Caucasian youth.
2. Although traditional family values and demographic development potential are still strong, there already are serious negative trends in place.
3. Without significant federal and regional support of the young generation and its family and reproductive behavior, the Northern Caucasus risks losing a significant part of the young generation through migration or will lose the status of the most promising from the point of view of demographic indicators.

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<sup>19</sup> “Medvedev dovoletn demograficheskoi situatsiei na Severnom Kavkaze,” available at [<https://tass.ru/obschestvo/2433360>], 19 January, 2019.