

## LAST CENSUS IN RUSSIA: PROGRESS OR STAGNATION

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### Introduction

Censuses in Russia according to established methodology weren't held until relatively recently. First national census of population of Russian Empire was held in 1897 under the direction of Peter Semenov (1827-1914) who had vast statistical experience. He was the head of Central Statistical Committee (CSC) in 1864-1880, 1875-1879 he was chairman of Statistical Council at CSC. P.Semenov was a member of International Statistical Institution and was familiar with census procedures in Europe. In that same 1897 was held 6th conference of International Statistical Institution. Second national census of population was scheduled in 1917, but was disrupted by the First World War.

In Soviet period (1917-1991) censuses were not held on the regular basis. First complete census that embraced all population was all-Soviet population census in 1926. Followed by the census of 1937 which results were claimed unreliable. The heads of this census were repressed. Next census was in 1939 and its results were officially confirmed. Only in 20 years after that in 1959 the next census occurred. The gap between the two censuses included the Second World War when USSR has suffered colossal human losses which are still debated. After the 1959 census were held censuses in 1970 and 1979, the census of 1989 appeared to be the last census in USSR.

### Population censuses in Russian Federation

In August 1991 USSR broke up into independent states, the Russian Federation was founded. First Russian census was held in 2002. In the process of this census Russian statisticians for the first time faced the problem of refusal of population in participation in the census, mistrust to the registrars, tendency of abandoning registrars from their homes. In the conditions of totalitarian regime such problems never occurred. The change of demographic reproduction process in Russia in the transformational period of 90s has lead to the decrease of Russian population.

### Population of Russia

Years	Total, mln.	Urba n,	Rural ,
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	people	perce nt	perce nt
1897	67.5	15	85
1926	92,7	18	82
1939	108.4	33	67
1959	117.2	52	48
1970	129.9	62	38
1979	137.4	69	31
1989	147	73	27
2002	145.2	73	27
2009*	141.9	73	27

Source: [www.gks.ru](http://www.gks.ru)

\* current reporting.

The tendency of declining population sharpened the problem of validity of statistics.

Preliminary results of the population census 2010 were announced in March 2011 and the population of Russian Federation equals to 142.9 mln. people (Vserossiskaya perepis naseleniya (2010)). For the first time the census in 2010 was in the frame of round of censuses for many countries (according to UN recommendations).

### **Costs and quality**

The cost of census was equal to 18 bln. roubles or about 540 mln. euros (it is less than in Germany where census was held in the same time). The major part of costs was spent on the payment to the registrars and people who have checked the quality of collected data and entered it in electronic database – 73% of total costs. The rest of the budget national population census (NPC) was spent on printing documents – 6%, on fixed and current assets – 6%, advertising campaign and sociological observations – 4% (About the work of system of State Statistics, 2011).

The base of regulative documents was made, first of all, two Federal laws. The first one is “About Whole-Russian population census” January 25, 2002, №8-FL, edited on November 28, 2009, №293-FL. The second Federal law is “About making changes in particular legislative actions in Russian Federation” July 27, 2010, №204-FL. In order to execute these laws were adopted eight legislative actions that determined the procedure of census, granting of subventions to regional authorities for NPC 2010 and also they regulated the labor costs of census staff.

Distribution of the costs didn't consider difference between economic development levels of the regions and their level of wages. As the method of data collection was applied expedition method, which is very archaic. In the period of

first census of Russian Empire in 1897 this method was justified due to the illiteracy of population and now it can be explained by the low level of trust of population to government and census as official survey. The standard number of surveys per one registrar wasn't differentiated (400 people per 1 registrar in urban and rural areas as well). Considering that the density of population in Russia is quite uneven that appeared to be a problem for registrars.

Dramatic collision caused by economic crisis between preliminary census and Whole-Russian census reflected on the organization of preparation process. For the first time Russian statisticians passed up on the preliminary round of households and the census didn't include sampling (in previous censuses 25% of population was surveyed with the more detailed questionnaire).

On the eve of census appeared legal collision with the issue about nationality. According to the law "About personal characteristics" data about nationality can only be collected if respondent gave written permission for that. This collision was overcome by above-stated Federal law "About making changes in particular legislative actions in Russian Federation".

Uncertainty of census dates negatively influenced the census program. Questionnaire L (for permanent population) included 25 questions, 8 out of which were new and didn't go through approbation process during preliminary census. The questions about education were presented very detailed in survey: two-stage of high education (bachelor and master), two-stage of scientific degrees. Also the information about the sources of income was fully included (job, pensions, scholarships, savings, rent, subsidies, support from members of household, personal subsidiary plot and others). The questionnaire also considered characteristics of employment (full, partial employment, self-employment, second job place, unemployment).

The census program Automatic control system of NPC didn't use technology of geographical informational system.

Totally 1.2 mln. people refused to participate in census due to religion or other reasons, 2.6 mln. people were absent during census, 3.6 mln. people were registered on the basis of administrative sources (Surinov, 2010; Zbarskaya, 2010).

It became obvious that legal base can't provide full support for the census; it does not clarify that participation in census is a responsibility of every citizen. Survey could be answered by different means: in living place, in local survey office or by the phone. Two last options were effective in big cities. For example, 11% of total amount of respondents in Moscow and St. Petersburg were registered in local survey offices. Preliminary census has shown that survey by mail is not effective because of the low percent of responds. For example, in Saint-Petersburg this number was 0.3%. That's way mail survey was found inefficient. The possibility of Internet usage wasn't considered. Although, the level of informatization is quite high in large cities (Moscow, St. Petersburg, Perm, Nizhniy Novgorod, Samara and other). This fact of refusal from modern

technologies caused skeptical attitude towards NPC among population. Besides, a lot of people don't feel necessity of census in general, because they take into account existence of large number of administrative databases (Ministry of Defense, Tax Committee, Ministry of Labor and Social Security, Pension Fund and other). In present time all of these administrative sources are not integrated in one system. And it's planned for 2012 to start creating Integrated Interdepartmental Informational Statistical System. Rosstat should be in charge of this project.

Full results of the census will be announced in the fourth quarter of 2013. Publication of census results should be issued in 11 volumes.

### **Conclusion**

In our opinion regularity of population censuses reflects progress, especially if the census is held in the year recommended by UN and is a part of global round of censuses. In that sense the population census 2010 in Russia can be evaluated positively. However, organization of census was inconsistent and also economic crises had a negative effect. Data collection was made without new technologies. In the future the census can be expected to be held on the basis of register of population. This can be promoted with the creation of Integrated Interdepartmental Informational Statistical System.

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