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# NBR ANALYSIS

**The Russian Federation at the Dawn of the  
Twenty-first Century: Trapped in a  
Demographic Straitjacket**

*Nicholas Eberstadt*

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For further information about NBR, contact:

THE NATIONAL BUREAU OF ASIAN RESEARCH  
4518 UNIVERSITY WAY NE, SUITE 300  
SEATTLE, WASHINGTON 98105-4530  
206-632-7370 PHONE  
206-632-7487 FAX  
nbr@nbr.org EMAIL  
<http://www.nbr.org>

## Foreword

Dr. Nicholas Eberstadt offers us a stark and chilling look at a society standing on the brink of a demographic crisis. The Russian Federation today faces the unprecedented dual challenge of simultaneously reversing the plummeting birth rates and skyrocketing mortality rates of the 1990s. What makes Russia's demographic prognosis all the more dire is the sharp and proximate contrast to its Asian neighbors, which face the reverberations of a "health" explosion. As a result of astounding improvements in population health and longevity, Russia's neighbors in the Asia-Pacific are traveling a very different demographic path.

Even China and India—which have long dealt with the challenges of large total populations and, like Russia, continue to face the challenges posed by emerging infectious diseases such as HIV/AIDS and tuberculosis—have seen a sharp improvement in the overall health and longevity of their populations.

The policy imperative here begins not only with the recognition that Russia's slide into a demographic abyss threatens its own social, political, economic, and epidemiological security, but also that of its neighbors. In a world where emerging infections can disembark from any plane without a visa or security check, Russia's failure to produce an innovative and effective policy response to its "health" crisis also constitutes a health threat of global proportions. In today's world, the former statistical abstraction of "national health" now looms as a concrete global threat measured in the most mundane of statistics—births, deaths, and causes of death.

The complicated but vitally important interrelationship among national policy response, health trends, and regional security issues indicates the need to develop more sophisticated analytical tools and approaches. This issue of the *NBR Analysis* marks just such a step forward in the form of joint sponsorship by NBR's new Center for Health and Aging and the Eurasia Policy Studies Program. We anticipate that this issue will be the first of many studies that will add health policy to a more textured discussion of policy formulation for the Asia-Pacific region.

We are grateful to the Henry M. Jackson Foundation for its support of the *NBR Analysis* series and to Pfizer, Inc. for its generous support of Dr. Eberstadt's research. As with all issues of the *NBR Analysis*, the author is solely responsible for the content and recommendations of this paper.

Michael P. Birt  
Director  
Center for Health and Aging

Stephen E. Hanson  
Senior Advisor  
Eurasia Policy Studies Program

# **The Russian Federation at the Dawn of the Twenty-first Century: Trapped in a Demographic Straitjacket**

*Nicholas Eberstadt*

Russia today is on the verge of a demographic crisis. The combination of falling birth rates and rising death rates among the population poses a serious threat to the country's long-term economic, health, and development prospects. While most countries are prone to experience such demographic shocks under conditions of instability or other disaster (e.g., war, famine, natural disasters), Russia's problems with depopulation, experienced over the past decade under conditions of relative peace and stability, threaten to become a chronic dilemma for Russian policymakers. In spite of President Putin's recognition of the acuteness of the demographic problems facing Russia, the situation remains dire. Although changing the direction of Russia's demographic trajectory remains a formidable challenge, beyond mere rhetoric, the country's political leadership and voting public continue to remain neglectful of the potential seriousness of Russia's current, and future, demographic challenges.

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Dr. Nicholas Eberstadt holds the Henry Wendt Chair in Political Economy at the American Enterprise Institute (AEI) in Washington, D.C., and is Senior Advisor to The National Bureau of Asian Research. He received his Ph.D. in political economy and government from Harvard University and his research focuses on economic disparity, poverty, infant mortality, and foreign aid in both East Asia and the former Soviet Union. His chapter, "Alternative Futures for the Korean Peninsula" will appear this September in *Strategic Asia 2004–05: Confronting Terrorism in the Pursuit of Power*.

## Introduction<sup>1</sup>

Modern readers might sometimes feel that they are exposed to an almost unending stream of grim prognoses about the world population situation—and in fairness to such sensibilities, there is some justice in those same perceptions. It *does* often seem as if much, even most, of the contemporary commentary on population questions is extraordinarily alert to the negative—if not positively alarmist in tone. Yet just as some paranoids really *do* have enemies who are out to get them, so countries at times *do* actually suffer from serious demographic problems, for which the term “crisis” is no overstatement. The Russian Federation today is one such country. In the following pages we shall attempt to demonstrate that post-Communist Russia is today beset by what may fairly be characterized as severe, dramatic, even critical population problems.

How can we justify such a sensational description of Russia’s demographic prospects? Quite simply, because Russia’s population trends and demographic characteristics are now altering the realm of the possible for the country and its people—continuously, directly, and adversely. Russian social conditions, economic potential, military power, and international influence are today all subject to negative demographic constraints—which only stand to worsen over the years immediately ahead.

Russia is now at the brink of a steep demographic decline—a peacetime population hemorrhage framed by a collapse of the birth rate and a catastrophic surge in the death rate. The forces that have shaped the slope of depopulation and debilitation down which Russia now

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<sup>1</sup> This essay is a revised version of a study that will appear as a chapter in a forthcoming volume tentatively titled *Sources and Limits of Russian Power*, edited by Eugene Rumer and Celeste Wallander. The author wishes to thank Timothy Heleniak of UNICEF and Dennis J. Donahue of the U.S. Bureau of the Census for their kind data provision, helpful comments, and thoughtful reflections. Additional valuable suggestions and constructive criticisms from Harley Balzer of Georgetown University and Boris Denisov of Moscow State University are also happily and gratefully acknowledged. Thanks are owed to Heather Dresser and Courtney Richard of AEI for their assistance in preparing the figures in this chapter. A special more unrestricted salute, however, is due at this point to Murray Feshbach, formerly of the U.S. Census Bureau and Georgetown University, and currently Senior Scholar with the Smithsonian Institution’s Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars. For over a generation, Murray Feshbach’s research has served as a sort of beacon, illuminating population and health conditions throughout the expanse now known as the former Soviet Union. Suffice it to say that Murray’s casting of light on real, existing social problems in the former Soviet Union is work for which he did not always receive thanks, either in the Soviet era or even in our ostensibly more open post-Soviet times. However, those of us who have had the good fortune to be introduced to the study of Soviet/Russian demography by dint of his startling findings, and further encouraged in our inquiries through his irascible, avuncular mentoring, are well aware of Murray Feshbach’s signal contributions to our understanding of the population and health troubles a long-suffering Russian nation continues to endure today.

slides are powerful ones, and they are by now deeply rooted in the Russian landscape. Russia's demographic and health troubles stand to act as potentially serious constraints on the country's economic recovery and development, and may have further, adverse implications for Russian security and foreign policy. In spite of President Putin's recognition of the acuteness of the demographic problems facing Russia, the situation remains dire. Altering Russia's demographic trajectory would be a formidable task under any circumstances. As yet, unfortunately, neither Russia's political leadership nor the voting public that sustains it have really even begun to sufficiently address the enormous magnitude of the country's demographic challenges.

### Negative Population Growth...

On New Year's Day 1992—one week after the dissolution of the USSR—Russia's population was estimated at 148.7 million.<sup>2</sup> As of mid-2003, according to the Russian State Statistics Committee (Goskomstat), the Russian Federation's population was 144.5 million.<sup>3</sup> During its first eleven and a half years of post-Communist independence, Russia's population had apparently declined by over four million people, or about 3 percent. In proportional terms, this was by no means the largest population loss recorded during that period. Indeed, according to estimates and projections by the UN Bureau of the Census, over a dozen states experienced a population decline between midyear 1992 and midyear 2003, ten of these amounting to drops of 3.1 percent or more.<sup>4</sup> Unlike some of these drops, however (e.g. Bosnia, whose population total fell almost 10 percent), Russia's decline could not be explained in terms of war and violent upheaval. In other places, population decline was due entirely to emigration (e.g., Armenia, Kazakhstan), or nearly so (Georgia). Russia, by contrast, had absorbed a substantial net *influx* of migrants during those years—a total net addition of over 5.5 million newcomers was tabulated between the territory's Soviet-era January 1989 Census and its October 2002 population count.<sup>5</sup>

Despite the mitigating impact of immigration, Russia's post-Communist population decline was larger in absolute terms than any other country's over the past decade. Furthermore,

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<sup>2</sup> David E. Powell, "Death as a Way of Life: Russia's Demographic Decline," *Current History*, vol. 100, no. 657 (October 2002), p. 344.

<sup>3</sup> ITAR-TASS, August 23, 2003; reprinted as "Russia Population Remains in Decline in 2003," in U.S. Foreign Broadcast Information Service (hereafter *FBIS*), *FBIS-SOV-2003-0821*, August 22, 2003.

<sup>4</sup> Estimates and projections taken from the U.S. Census Bureau's International Data Base, <<http://www.census.gov/ipc/www/idbagg.html>>.

<sup>5</sup> Timothy Heleniak, "The 2002 Census in Russia: Preliminary Results," *Eurasian Geography and Economics*, vol. 44, no. 1 (2003), p. 435.

continuing population decline—at a decidedly faster tempo—is envisioned for Russia for as far as demographers care to project into the future. The only question is how steep the downward path will be. The U.S. Census Bureau, for example, offers the relatively “optimistic” projection of a “mere” 10 million person drop in the Russian population between 2000 and 2025—an average net decline of about 400,000 persons a year. The United Nations Population Division’s (UNPD) “medium variant” projection, by contrast, suggests a drop of more than 21 million over that same quarter century—about 840,000 a year for the period as a whole (see Figure 1). Still greater declines are imagined in 2050 for Russia by all the major institutions venturing such projections—Goskomstat, UNPD, the U.S. Census Bureau, and the World Bank<sup>6</sup> (although we should remember that demographic projections become increasingly speculative the further they extend into the future).

### ...As Far As The Eye Can See

An acceleration in Russia’s population decline over the years immediately ahead is generally anticipated by demographic specialists because the prospective flow of net migration into Russia (barring only political catastrophe) looks likely to be lower in the coming years than it was in the recent past. As Figures 2 and 3 indicate, the officially tabulated annual levels of immigration to and emigration from Russia have declined markedly since the early 1990s, and officially measured net inflows to Russia have likewise dropped very significantly. These official numbers reflect the swelling, cresting, and spending of the migration wave of ethnic Russians from the “near abroad” who resettled to the Russian Federation during and immediately after the breakup of the Soviet Union. (It should be noted that these official figures understate the true volume of migration, as they do not track unofficial or illegal migration in and out of Russia. However, the overall trends for migration for Russia are likely similar to those outlined in Figures 2 and 3.)<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> Cf. Murray Feshbach, *Russia’s Demographic and Health Crises: Policy Implications and Consequences*, Washington, D.C.: The Chemical and Biological Arms Control Institute, 2003, pp. 5–7; Timothy Heleniak, “Russian Demographic Challenges in the 21st Century,” Figure 8, in Stephen Wegren, ed., *Russian Policy Challenges in the 21st Century*, Armonk, N.Y.: M.E. Sharpe, forthcoming.

<sup>7</sup> Official Russian migration statistics, we should note, have understated the net influx of outsiders into Russia since the final years of the Soviet Union. Due very largely to this undercount, Goskomstat was surprised to enumerate 1.2 million more people in the October 2002 Russian Federation Census than expected. See Heleniak, “The 2002 Census.” Some undetermined number of additional, undocumented immigrants also reside in Russia today—as Moscow’s border control authorities are well aware. (Cf. *Rossiyskaya Gazeta*, October 31, 2002, translated as “Russian Interior Minister Gryzlov on New Migration Law,” *FBIS-SOV-2002-1031*, November 12, 2002). These details may somewhat qualify the picture of population decline in the Russian Federation—but they do not change it.

In recent years, the draw of Russia for the (now smaller) pool of overseas Russians appears to have been much diminished, while the allure of living on Russian soil for foreign ethnics does not seem to be increasing appreciably. Writing in 2002, Harley Balzer cautioned against expectations of a substantial upswing of legal migration into Russia, reasoning that

many of the Russians who wanted to leave Central Asia and the Caucasus have done so, and this certainly includes most of those with the means to immigrate and skills suited to the Russian labor market. Improving economic conditions in Russia could attract additional immigrants, but it is more likely to be on the order of tens of thousands rather than millions.<sup>8</sup>

Balzer's assessment has, to date, been borne out by unfolding events. Russia's reported economic growth rate in the very first years of the twenty-first century has been positive, even brisk. Nevertheless, according to official figures, the net inflow of migration to Russia totaled less than 80,000 in all of 2002, and a mere 25,000 in the first seven months of 2003.<sup>9</sup> By the first quarter of 2004, according to official statistics, the officially tallied surfeit of immigrants over emigrants was barely 4,000 persons.<sup>10</sup> With immigration flows thus subsiding, Russia's population must mirror, with ever-greater faithfulness, the actual balance of births and deaths within the country. In post-Communist Russia, the current disproportion between deaths and births is stark, indeed astonishing.

Russia, to be sure, is not the only European country registering more deaths than births these days—according to the Council of Europe's numbers, fully eighteen European states currently report “negative natural increase” (see Figure 4). In other European settings, however, the balance is often still quite close. For example, in Italy—the poster child in many current discussions of a possible depopulation of Europe—there are today about 103 deaths for every live 100 births. Russia, by contrast, reports *over 170 deaths* for every 100 live births. Examples of extreme surfeits of mortality over natality are, to be sure, familiar from

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<sup>8</sup> Harley Balzer, “Human Capital and Russian Security in the Twenty-first Century,” in Andrew C. Kuchins, ed., *Russia after the Fall*, Washington, D.C.: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 2002, p. 169.

<sup>9</sup> Derived from ITAR-TASS, February 21, 2003, translated as “Russia's statistics committee reports 0.6 percent population decrease in 2002,” *FBIS-SOV-2003-0221*, February 24, 2003; and ITAR-TASS, September 19, 2003, reprinted as “State Statistics Show Russia's Population Down to 144 Million,” *FBIS-SOV-2003-0919*. For further background on and analysis of the migration phenomenon in Russia, see UN Population Division, *International Migration from Countries with Economies in Transition: 1980–1999* (September 2002), pp. 88–90, <[http://www.un.org/esa/population/publications/ewmigration/E-W\\_Migrationreport.pdf](http://www.un.org/esa/population/publications/ewmigration/E-W_Migrationreport.pdf)>; also Timothy Heleniak, “Migration of the Russian Diaspora after the Breakup of the Soviet Union,” *Journal of International Affairs*, vol. 57, no. 2 (Spring 2004), pp. 99–117.

<sup>10</sup> “Russian Population Down 0.16 Percent in Jan-Mar 2004,” *Interfax News Agency*, May 21, 2004.

human history—but in the past, these were witnessed only during times of famine, pestilence, war, or mass disaster. As a peacetime phenomenon, it is utterly new, and while it is not unique to Russia—the excess of deaths over births is nearly as great today in Bulgaria and Latvia, and even more exaggerated in Ukraine—the Russian Federation is perhaps the most important example of this post-Communist demographic condition.

At the moment, a pronounced excess of deaths over births can be seen as a regular and entirely characteristic feature of the Russian terrain. This may be illustrated by delineating Russia's rate of natural increase by the country's 89 constituent regions (see Figure 5). Of the 87 Russian regions reporting in 2001,<sup>11</sup> only 16 registered more births than deaths—and these were mainly “republics” and “autonomous districts” for non-Russian ethnic minorities. In all, these 16 regions accounted for barely 8 percent of the Russian Federation's population.

By contrast, all but one of Russia's 50 *oblasts*, or provinces, tallied more deaths than births in 2001. In Moscow and St. Petersburg, Russia's two most prosperous locales, the rates of “negative natural increase” in 2001 approached 1 percent a year (0.7 percent and 0.9 percent, respectively), and in 17 *oblasts*—most of them from the historical “heartland” of the original Russian kingdom—this pace of natural decline exceeded 1 percent per annum. In 2002, according to Goskomstat, deaths exceeded births by a factor of *three* in 26 of Russia's 89 regions.<sup>12</sup> Post-Communist Russia—the Russia of the so-called “transition”—is thus distinguished by demographic trends and population losses previously familiar in industrialized societies only in times of total war.

Russia's abrupt and brutal swerve onto the path of depopulation began during the final crisis of the Soviet state (see Figure 6). Over the two decades before Mikhail Gorbachev's 1985 accession to power, Russia's births regularly exceeded deaths; natural increase typically ranged 700,000 to 1,000,000 during those years. After 1987 however, births began to fall sharply, and death totals to rise. Both tendencies were further accentuated after the collapse of the USSR. The year 1992—the first full year of post-Communist governance for Russia—also marked the shift to negative natural increase for the Russian Federation, with 200,000 more deaths than births. A decade later, Russia's death total was over 50 percent higher than in 1987 (2.3 million vs. 1.5 million), while its birth level was over 1 million lower (1.4 million vs. 2.5 million). In 1987 Russia recorded a natural increase of nearly 1 million (968,000); in 2002, deaths surpassed births by almost exactly the same magnitude (935,000).

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<sup>11</sup> Chechnya and one other Russian locality were not registering vital statistics at the time.

<sup>12</sup> *ITAR-TASS*, August 23, 2003, reprinted as “Russia Population Remains in Decline in 2003.”

We can highlight an extraordinary but not exceptional trend: tabulated deaths have outnumbered births by 900,000 or more in Russia in 1999, 2000, 2001, and 2002—and the final count for 2003 may turn out to be no different. Although Goskomstat apparently has not yet released the official birth and death totals for calendar year 2003, according to preliminary returns, the excess of deaths over births between January and July was 530,000,<sup>13</sup> or 910,000 on an annualized basis. For the first quarter of 2004, according to recent returns, the excess of births over deaths in the Russian Federation amounted to just under 258,000,<sup>14</sup> an annualized rate of over one million.

In all, between the eve of 1992 and mid-2003 the Russian Federation evidently recorded 9 million more burials than births in the post-Communist era. This grim disproportion may possibly have surpassed 9.5 million by the start of 2004, and could well reach the symbolic milestone of 10 million sometime during the summer of 2004.

### **A Shock—But Not a Perturbation**

Russia's current depopulation bears all the trappings of a "demographic shock," reflecting as it does abrupt and violent changes in the nation's vital rates in the immediate wake of a momentous, system-shattering, historical event. This demographic shock, however, is probably *not* just a perturbation—that is to say, a temporary disturbance, after which patterns readjust to a pre-existing order.

Though it might seem reasonable—and logical—to expect that earlier, more "normal" demographic patterns would reassert themselves as the reverberations from Russia's "transition" subside, in reality there are good reasons to believe that Russia's current, seemingly anomalous population trends in fact define a new norm. Remarkably low birth rates, terrifyingly high death rates, and an impetus for depopulation due to the yawning gap between these two quantities can now indeed be described as permanent—rather than transitory—features of the new Russian demographic terrain.

Like other demographic trends for other human populations, the disturbing trends that characterize modern-day Russia could certainly change over time, and almost surely will—eventually. "Eventually," unfortunately, is an elastic and highly indefinite modifier. The point to

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<sup>13</sup> *Russky Kuryer*, September 23, 2003, translated as "Russia's Population Fell by Half a Million in January–July," *The Current Digest of the Post-Soviet Press*, vol. 55, no. 38 (October 22, 2003).

<sup>14</sup> "Russian Population Down," *Interfax*.

appreciate here is that a powerful and self-reinforcing network of social factors—forces typically resistant to rapid or easy emendation—is now working to keep fertility low, and mortality terribly high. Until these fundamentals change, depopulation and tragically foreshortened lives will be the distinguishing features of the Russian population profile.

### Extreme Sub-replacement Fertility

Consider Russia's current fertility patterns. In a society with the Russian Federation's present survival schedule, according to recent official Russian calculations, women must bear an average of about 2.33 children per lifetime to assure population stability over successive generations.<sup>15</sup> (Demographers would refer to Russia's 2.33 figure as the "net replacement level" of childbearing.) In the late Soviet era, Russian fertility levels were near replacement: "snapshot" measures of the country's total fertility rate (TFR) fluctuated near 2 births per woman from the mid-1960s through the mid-1980s<sup>16</sup> (see Figure 7). But with the collapse of the Soviet Union, Russian fertility likewise collapsed, plummeting from 2.19 in the 1986 to 1987 term to 1.17 in 1999. In 2001 the Russian Federation's TFR was 1.25.<sup>17</sup> That same year, by the estimates of the Council of Europe, the country's "net reproduction rate" was 0.59,<sup>18</sup> with a rate of 1.0 signifying population replacement. If Russia's childbearing patterns from the year 2001 were extended indefinitely, each new generation of Russians would be over 40 percent smaller than its predecessor.

In Russia, extreme sub-replacement fertility is not peculiar to certain regions; to the contrary, it prevails across almost the entire territorial expanse of the Federation. This is demonstrated in Figure 8, which presents Goskomstat's estimated total fertility rates for 2001 for 79

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<sup>15</sup> *Kommersant*, February 13, 2004, p. 8, translated as "Russia's Population Will Fall by a Third," *Current Digest of the Post-Soviet Press*, vol. 56, no. 7 (March 17, 2004). We should note that for ordinary Western societies, the "replacement" level is notionally placed at 2.1—the discrepancy here being due to Russia's extraordinarily high levels of mortality for young people, a trend that *ceteris paribus* necessitates more births per woman so that successive cohorts can survive to childbearing ages.

<sup>16</sup> These "snapshot" calculations—referred to as "period" or "synthetic" measures by demographers—indicate the average number of children a woman could expect to bear in her lifetime, based on the overall fertility rate for a given year. "Cohort" fertility rates, by contrast, measure the average number of children that women of a particular age-group have borne.

<sup>17</sup> Mariele Eueds, "Russian Birth-rate Brings Glimmer of Hope Amid Population Gloom," *Agence-France Presse*, June 18, 2003.

<sup>18</sup> Council of Europe, *Recent Demographic Developments in Europe: 2002*, Strasbourg, France: Council of Europe Publishing, 2003, p. 81.

Russian regions.<sup>19</sup> Fertility exceeds the 2.0 mark in just two of these regions—Dagestan and Ingushetia, both non-Russian minority republics—and even there only by a slight amount. In another four areas—all of them “republics” for ethnic minorities—fertility levels ranged between 1.5 and 1.95. These six “high fertility” spots, however, accounted for barely 3 percent of Russia’s total population—while for the rest of the nation, total fertility rates were uniformly below 1.5.<sup>20</sup> In 56 of the remaining 73 regions, fertility was under 1.3; and in 41 of the regions, it was below 1.2. At 1.03, St. Petersburg registered the country’s lowest level of fertility.

Since 2001 there have been some tangible indications of a resurgence of fertility in the Russian Federation. For the year 2002, according to Goskomstat, the country’s total fertility rate has risen from 1.25 to 1.32.<sup>21</sup> And for the year 2003, according to Russian Federation President Vladimir V. Putin in his 2004 New Year’s Day address, an “especially joyous” auspice was the absolute increase in births over the previous year.<sup>22</sup> According to figures attributed to Goskomstat, Russia’s total births rose in 2003 to 1.36 million—by that report, a 6 percent increase over the previous year.<sup>23</sup>

These gathering signs beg the question: If Russian fertility fell suddenly and sharply with the end of Soviet power, might it not also rebound vigorously in an auspicious political and economic environment? That possibility cannot be entirely ruled out, since demographic science lacks any robust techniques for accurately predicting future fertility patterns for ordinary human populations. As demographers Sergei Scherbov and Harrie van Vianen cautioned in 2002, “Whether the current crisis will have lasting effects upon fertility therefore remains to be seen.”<sup>24</sup> If we suppose an improvement in social conditions and a general increase in levels of confidence (indicators, we should note, not entirely independent from the demographic trends under discussion here), there are a number of factors weighing against a significant upsurge in the Russian birthrate—much less a return to earlier, Communist-era levels of fertility.

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<sup>19</sup> In addition to Chechnya and the other region omitted from Figure 5, eight regions with small populations were excluded from these Goskomstat calculations.

<sup>20</sup> By way of perspective, in the year 2000, the total fertility rate for the U.S. state of Vermont was 1.56—and this was the *lowest* level for any of the 50 American states.

<sup>21</sup> Unpublished data from Goskomstat, January 2004, transmitted to the author by Timothy Heleniak.

<sup>22</sup> “Russian President Hails Population Increase,” *Associated Press Worldstream*, December 31, 2003.

<sup>23</sup> “Russia’s Economic Growth Led to Baby Boom,” *Pravda*, April 21, 2004, <<http://newsfromrussia.com/main/2004/04/21/53546.html>>. The story’s figures, however, contain a major inconsistency with previously reported Russian demographic data. According to the report, the year 2003 saw a total of “1,359,800 babies, or 76,700 more than in the previous year” in the Russian Federation. In its 2002 edition of its *Demographic Yearbook*, however, Goskomstat put the Russian birth total for 2002 at 1,396,800—37,000 *more* than the tally newly claimed for the year 2003.

<sup>24</sup> Sergei Scherbov and Harrie van Vianen, “Period Fertility in Russia since 1930: An Application of the Coale-Trussell Fertility Model,” *Demographic Research*, vol. 6 (June 2002), p. 466.

First, Russia's poor and declining overall health patterns prevail in the realm of reproductive health as well—meaning that involuntary infertility is a more significant problem for Russia than for Western countries, and a possibly worsening one.<sup>25</sup> Data on infertility for contemporary Russia are problematic. According to some recent reports, however, 13 percent of Russia's married couples of childbearing age are infertile—nearly twice the 7 percent figure for the United States in 1995 offered by the National Center for Health Statistics.<sup>26</sup> Other Russian sources point to an even greater prevalence of infertility today, with numbers ranging “from 15 percent for couples, or even... 15–20 percent for females and 5–10 among males, or, alternatively, 30 percent of all males and females of childbearing age.”<sup>27</sup> Whatever the true level, medical diagnoses of infertility in Russia today are reportedly “on the rise”<sup>28</sup>—raising the issue of whether the increase in fertility reported by Goskomstat is likely to be an inaccurate observation.

More specifically, with respect to female infertility, Russia suffers today from two pronounced and highly unusual risks. First, Russian womanhood has, quite literally, been scarred by the country's extraordinary popular reliance upon abortion as a primary means of birth control—with the abortions in question conducted under the less-than-exemplary standards of Soviet and post-Soviet medicine. Given past and existing patterns, a Russian woman can expect to have more abortions than births over the course of her childbearing years. In 1988, at the end of the Soviet era, Russian women underwent an officially tabulated 4.6 million abortions—two for every live birth. In 2002 the country officially reported 1.7 million abortions—over 120 for every 100 live births. In contemporary Russia, the procedure is hardly free from hazard: to the contrary, as Murray Feshbach has noted, “approximately 10 to 20 percent of [Russian] women become infertile after abortions according to numerous reports.”<sup>29</sup>

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<sup>25</sup> Some Russian specialists, it should be noted, contest the notion that the health of the Russian population is in decline. By this argument, mortality trends cannot be taken as a faithful indicator of health trends for the *surviving* population. One such expert is Moscow State University's Dr. Boris Denisov. He adduces the published research of Dr. Tatiana Maksimova as evidence to substantiate his assessment. See T.M. Maksimova, *Sovremennoe sostoianie, tendentsii i perspektivnye otsenki zdorov'ia naseleniia* (Contemporary state, tendencies, and prospects of the health of the population) Moscow: *Per Se*, 2002. Personal communication with Dr. Denisov, March 2003.

<sup>26</sup> Cf. Sharon LaFraneire, “Russians Feel Abortion's Complications,” *Washington Post*, February 22, 2003, p. A16; Caroline Savage, “Can Russia's Demographic Decline Be Reversed?” *Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty Newslines*, September 25, 2003, <<http://www.refr1.org/newslines/203/09/5-not/not-250903.asp>>.

<sup>27</sup> Cf. Feshbach, *Russia's Health and Demographic Crises*, p. 10.

<sup>28</sup> LaFraneire, “Russians Feel Abortion's Complications.”

<sup>29</sup> Feshbach, *Russia's Health and Demographic Crises*, p. 12.

The problem of involuntary infertility in Russia today is exacerbated by the current explosive spread of potentially curable sexually transmitted diseases (STDs). According to official figures, for example, the incidence of syphilis in 2001 was one hundred times higher in Russia than in Germany, and several hundred times higher for Russia than for a number of other European countries<sup>30</sup> (see Figure 9). Although comprehensive information on the overall prevalence of STDs in Russia is still lacking, indications suggest it is remarkably high. A survey recently conducted in St. Petersburg, for example, calculated that 15 percent of the college students questioned had *at least one* sexually transmitted disease.<sup>31</sup> Similarly, “harm reduction” practitioners in St. Petersburg currently report that among young women treated in the city’s polyclinics, roughly a quarter have *one or more* STDs.<sup>32</sup> Since untreated or inadequately treated STDs can result in sterility—among other sequelae—the potential for inadvertent impediments to childbearing for Russia’s young men and women due to such infections could be appreciable.

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*The problem of involuntary infertility in Russia today is exacerbated by the current explosive spread of potentially curable sexually transmitted diseases.*

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Second, Russian patterns of family formation have been evolving markedly over the past generation, and not in a direction conducive to larger families.<sup>33</sup> The basic trends may be seen in Figures 10 and 11. Simply put, young Russians are now much less likely to marry, and are ever more likely to divorce if they do. Between 1981 and 2001, crude marriage rates fell by over one-third, while crude divorce rates rose by one-third. In the year 2001, Russia recorded three divorces for every four new marriages—a crude breakup ratio even higher than Scandinavia’s.<sup>34</sup>

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<sup>30</sup> Because the United States has a significant STD problem of its own, Russia’s syphilis incidence in 2001 was “only” twelve times higher than America’s that year. Derived from Figure 9 and National Center for Health Statistics, *Health, United States, 2003*, Hyattsville, Md.: NCHS, 2003, Table 52. Bad as they appear, incidentally, Russia’s official 2001 syphilis numbers were surely underreported—and possibly substantially underreported—thanks to a 1998 law that imposed criminal penalties on those syphilis victims who were determined to have contracted the disease through illicit drug use. For more on this statistical wrinkle, see Feshbach, *Russia’s Health and Demographic Crises*, p. 38–39.

<sup>31</sup> John Curtis, “On Russia’s AIDS Front,” *Yale Medicine*, Spring 2003, <[http://www.med.yale.edu/extrnal/pubs/ym\\_sp03/aidsrussia.htm](http://www.med.yale.edu/extrnal/pubs/ym_sp03/aidsrussia.htm)>.

<sup>32</sup> Author’s personal communication with doctors from Humanitarian Action, St. Petersburg, June 19, 2003.

<sup>33</sup> For background on Russian marital patterns, see Alexandre Avdeev and Alain Monnier, “La nuptialité russe: une complexité méconnue,” *Population*, vol. 54, no. 4–5 (Jul–Oct 1999), pp. 635–676.

<sup>34</sup> In Sweden in 2001, there were three divorces for every five new marriages. The ratios were lower in Denmark, Finland, and Norway. Derived from *Demographic Developments in Europe in 2002*, pp. 49 and 61.

The human import of these trends can perhaps be better understood by thinking in terms of a woman's odds of getting married or divorced. In 1990 under Russia's then-prevailing nuptiality schedules, marriage was almost universal—and the odds of eventually divorcing were about 40 percent. By 1995 the odds of marrying (current age-specific patterns) were down to 75 percent—while the odds of eventual divorce had risen to 50 percent.<sup>35</sup> By those particulars, in just five years, a Russian woman's odds of forming a lasting marriage dropped from about three in five to three in eight. Since then, the odds of lasting marriage seem to have declined still further.<sup>36</sup>

At the same time that Russian marriages were becoming less common and more fragile, the disposition toward childbearing outside of marriage was increasing. In 1987—the recent high-water mark for Russian fertility—about 13 percent of the country's newborns were born out of wedlock. By 2001 the proportion had more than doubled, to nearly 29 percent. The overwhelming majority of Russia's newly emerging cohort of illegitimate children, it seems,

were being raised by single mothers. Consensual unions and cohabitation still account for the living arrangements of only a tiny fraction of Russia's young adults.<sup>37</sup>

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*The rapid decline of the two-parent family in contemporary Russia almost necessarily undercuts prospects for substantial increases in national fertility levels.*

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The rapid decline of the two-parent family in contemporary Russia almost necessarily undercuts prospects for substantial increases in national fertility levels.<sup>38</sup> Relative to available household re-

sources, all other things being equal, raising children in a mother-only family is a much more expensive and difficult proposition than in a father-mother union. It is true that fertility rates in Russia are currently 20 to 30 percent below those of the Scandinavian countries,<sup>39</sup> even though

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<sup>35</sup> Ibid, pp. 50 and 62.

<sup>36</sup> Cf. United Nations Population Division, *Partnership and Reproductive Behavior in Low-Fertility Countries*, May 2003, <<http://www.un.org/esa/population/publications/reprobehavior/partrepro.pdf>>. As of 1996 the conjunctural odds of entering into a lasting first marriage were down to 34 percent for Russian women—if age-specific patterns held into the future.

<sup>37</sup> Cf. United Nations Population Division, *Partnership and Reproductive Behavior in Low-Fertility Countries*.

<sup>38</sup> Stated another way by A. Adveev, "The fertility trends observed in 1990s Russia cannot be reduced to a temporary reaction or adaptation of the two-child system to a 'new social environment.'" A. Adveev, "The Extent of the Fertility Decline in Russia: Is the One-Child Family Here to Stay?" paper presented at the IUSSP Seminar "International Perspectives on Low Fertility: Trends, Theories and Policies," Tokyo, March 21–23, 2001, <<http://demography.anu.edu.au/Publications/ConferencePapers/IUSSP2001/PaperAvdeev.doc>>.

<sup>39</sup> Where 2001 TFRs ranged from 1.57 in Sweden to 1.78 in Norway. *Recent Demographic Developments in Europe: 2002*, p. 70.

the level of marital commitment in the Nordic countries is low, and the level of illegitimacy is high. But unlike the Scandinavian welfare states, Russia does not provide generous public benefits to help mothers raise their young children—nor could the Russian state afford to do so even if it were so inclined.

Third, with the end of the Soviet system, Russia has in some real sense commenced to rejoin the rest of Europe—and in present-day Europe, Russian fertility rates are by no means aberrant. True, Russia's fertility levels currently list toward the lower end of the European spectrum. Even so, they are actually higher than for some other post-Communist areas whose "transitions" to democracy and market order look rather more complete (Slovenia: 1.21; Czech Republic: 1.14), and are scarcely lower than the current levels in a number of the established market democracies of the European Union (Austria: 1.31; Greece: 1.29; Spain: 1.26; Italy: 1.24).<sup>40</sup> Viewed over a longer horizon, Russia's postwar fertility levels and trends look altogether "European." Although the precise timing of Russia's fertility decline looks to be distinct, Russia has nevertheless clearly followed the same general path as Italy, Spain, and Germany (see Figure 12).

From a European perspective, Russia's current levels of extremely low fertility would hardly stand out as exceptional. It is thus far from obvious that the further suffusion into Russia of "European" norms and attitudes about family size (to the extent that such attitudes and norms are not already firmly rooted in Russian soil) should serve to buoy childbearing in the Russian Federation. To the contrary, it is equally possible that an embrace of particular aspects of childbearing patterns currently manifest through much of the European Union could actually *depress* birth rates in Russia in coming years. Throughout the EU, the median age at marriage for women today is the late 20s, while it is still about 22 in Russia. Russia's median female age at first birth, correspondingly, is distinctly lower than in most EU countries (i.e., 23 vs. 27 to 29).<sup>41</sup> A shift toward these EU patterns of marriage and maternity would have the immediate effect of postponing births, and thus, lowering annual fertility further, at least temporarily.<sup>42</sup>

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<sup>40</sup> Data for 2000 or 2001. *Recent Demographic Developments in Europe: 2002*, p. 70.

<sup>41</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 54 and 75.

<sup>42</sup> There is of course the possibility—some would say the likelihood—that such postponed births would be regained later in the mother's childbearing career. Some recent analyses of Europe's unfolding "second demographic transition," however, suggest that the potential for "recuperative fertility" in Europe is being diminished by the pronounced postponement of family formation. See Hans-Peter Kohler, et al. [orig. Francesco C. Billari, and Jose Antonio Ortega], "The Emergence of Lowest-Low Fertility in Europe During the 1990s," *Population and Development Review*, vol. 28, no.4 (December 2002), pp. 641–680.

## Stubbornly, Catastrophically High Mortality

Arguably far more ominous for Russia than the fertility prospect is the mortality outlook. Broad segments of the Russian populace have suffered a disastrous long-term retrogression in health conditions. A marked long-term deterioration of public health in an industrialized society during peacetime seems counter-intuitive and highly peculiar. At first glance, the very fact that Russia's mortality catastrophe looks so anomalous in the modern world might seem to suggest that the problem should be intrinsically remediable—if not positively self-correcting. The particulars of Russia's health and mortality woes, however, underscore just how difficult it will be to achieve even modest improvements in the years immediately ahead—and how vulnerable Russia remains to further degradations of public health.

Over the four decades between 1961/62 and 2002, life expectancy at birth in Russia fell by nearly five years for males; it also declined for females, although just slightly, making for an overall drop in life expectancy of nearly three years over this four-decade span (see Figure 13). Age-standardized mortality rates cast an even grimmer light on Russia's continuing health crisis. Between the mid-1960s and the start of the twenty-first century, these rates underwent a long and uneven rise, climbing by over 15 percent for women and over 40 percent for men (see Figure 14).

Desperately poor health conditions, as reflected in the mirror of unnaturally high death rates, are distributed with a wretched evenness across the country. Regional male death rates for 2001 attest to this (see Figure 15). In that year, only two of the 79 regions assayed (once again, Dagestan and Ingushetia, the aforementioned exceptions with respect to fertility) were said to have lower age-standardized mortality levels than the country as a whole reported in 1965, three and a half decades earlier. Prosperous Moscow's male death rate in 2001 was the sixth best in the country—but even that was over 20 percent above the national average from 1965, and resplendent St. Petersburg's was over 30 percent higher than the 1965 average. And yet 37 of those 79 regions reported male mortality levels at least 20 percent higher than Moscow's—with pitiable Pskov's mortality over 50 percent higher than the capital's.

Russia's upswing in mortality was especially concentrated among its working-age populations, and here the upsurges in death rates were utterly breathtaking. Over the three decades between 1970/71 and 2001, for example, *every* female cohort between the ages of 20 and 59 suffered *at least* a 30 percent increase in death rates; for men between the ages of 40 and 59, the corresponding figures uniformly reached, and some cases exceeded, *60 percent* (see Figure 16).

What accounted for this peacetime collapse in public health standards? The question is most easily answered in a proximate sense. To go by Russia's (admittedly less than perfect) cause-of-death statistics, nearly all of the increase in mortality rates for men—and absolutely all of the increase for women—can be attributed to an explosion in deaths attributed to cardiovascular disease (CVD—heart disease and strokes) and injuries.

Between the mid-1960s and the end of the twentieth century, CVD mortality rates in Japan, Western Europe, and North America fell very sharply. In the United States, for example, the age-adjusted decline between 1965 and 2000 was over 56 percent.<sup>43</sup> Russia, by contrast, suffered an explosion of cardiovascular death over the same period. Between 1965 and 2001, Russia's age standardized death rate for CVD surged by 25 percent for women—and it soared by 65 percent for men (see Figure 17).

By the dawn of the twenty-first century, the level of CVD mortality was of a totally different scale than anything seen in the West. For people in the working ages of 25 to 64, Ireland reported Western Europe's highest level of CVD mortality—but Russia's level was over four times higher than Ireland's. It was over five times higher than the rate in Germany; over six times higher than the rate in Sweden; nearly seven times higher than in Italy; and fully eight times higher than in France (see Figure 18). Contemporary Russia's CVD death rates, in fact, just may be the very highest ever suffered by any national population in all of human history.

As for mortality attributed to injury (murder, suicide, traffic, poisoning, and other violent causes) age-adjusted levels for men and women alike more than doubled between 1965 and 2001 (see Figure 19). Among contemporary societies at peace, Russia's level of violent deaths places the country practically in a category of its own. For men under 65 years of age, Russia's death rate from injury and poisoning is currently over four times as high as Finland's, the nation with the worst rate in the EU. Russia's violent death rate for men under 65 is nearly six times as high as Belgium's, over nine times as high as Israel's, and over a dozen times that of the United Kingdom. As is well known, men are more likely than women to die violent deaths—but in a gruesome crossover, these death rates for Russian *women* are now higher than for virtually any Western European *men*—over twice as high as in Germany, and nearly three times higher than in the Netherlands (see Figure 20).

Russia's dismal health record can be explained in terms of a multiplicity of unfavorable social, behavioral, and policy tendencies, such as: pervasive smoking, poor diets, sedentary

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<sup>43</sup> Derived from U.S. Bureau of the Census, *Statistical Abstract of the United States: 2002*, Washington, D.C.: U.S. Department of Commerce, 2002, Table 100.

lifestyles, increasing social atomization and anomie, the special economic stresses of Russia's variant of "transition," the unimpressive capabilities of the Soviet medical system, and the limited coverage of its successor. It is also impossible to overlook the deadly contribution of the Russian love affair with vodka to this sorry record.

From the sixteenth century—when vodka was first introduced to a receptive public—up to the present day, Russians have always demonstrated a predilection to drink heavy spirits in astonishing excess,<sup>44</sup> a fact remarked upon by visiting foreigners for centuries. Russia's thirst

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*Heavy drinking is directly associated with Russia's appallingly high risk of deadly injury—and Russia's binge drinking lifestyle also seems to be closely associated with death through cardiac failure.*

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for hard liquor seems to have reached dizzying new heights in the late Soviet era, and then again in the early era of post-Communism. By 1984, according to some estimates, the per capita level of alcohol intake in Russia was roughly three times as high as in 1913<sup>45</sup> (that pre-revolutionary era not exactly being remembered as a time of temperance). By the mid-1990s, Russian per capita alcohol intake may have even slightly surpassed its previous, Com-

munist-era zenith.<sup>46</sup> In 1994 for example, the estimate of pure alcohol consumed by the population aged 15 and older amounted to 18.5 liters per capita—the equivalent of 125 cc of vodka for everyone, every day<sup>47</sup> (about 4.9 gallons, or 4.2 ounces per day, respectively).

As it happens, in recent decades variations in alcohol consumption seem to track fairly closely with changes in Russian mortality (and especially with male mortality, as seen in Figure 21). Heavy drinking is directly associated with Russia's appallingly high risk of deadly injury—and Russia's binge drinking lifestyle also seems to be closely associated with death through cardiac failure.<sup>48</sup> Indicative of the deadly role that alcohol plays in Russia these days is a recent

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<sup>44</sup> For some background on the history of Russia's vodka problem, see Patricia Herlihy, *The Alcoholic Empire: Vodka and Politics in Late Imperial Russia*, New York: Oxford University Press, 2002.

<sup>45</sup> Cf. Jose Luis Bobadilla, Christine A. Costello, and Faith Mitchell, eds., *Premature Death in the New Independent States*, Washington, D.C.: National Academies Press, 1997; see especially Vladimir G. Treml, "Soviet and Russian Statistics on Alcohol Consumption and Abuse," pp. 220–238; and Vladimir M. Shkolnikov and Alexander Nemtsov, "The Anti-Alcohol Campaign and Variations in Russian Mortality," pp. 239–261.

<sup>46</sup> A.V. Nemtsov, "Alcohol-related human losses in Russia in the 1980s and 1990s," *Addiction*, vol. 97, no. 11 (November 2002), pp. 1413–1425.

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 1414.

<sup>48</sup> See, for example, David A. Leon, et al., "Huge Variation in Russian Mortality Rates 1984–1994: Artefact, Alcohol, or What?" *Lancet*, vol. 350 (August 9, 1997), pp. 383–388, and Vladimir Shkolnikov, Martin McKee, and David A. Leon, "Changes in life Expectancy in Russia in the 1990s," *Lancet*, vol. 357 (March 24, 2001), pp. 917–921.

study that reported on the postmortem blood alcohol concentrations of young and middle-aged men from a medium-sized city in the Urals. Over two-fifths of those who died of CVD or injury/poisoning were determined to have been drunk at the time of their death.<sup>49</sup> And if the acute risks from drinking are so directly implicated in current Russian mortality patterns, vodka's chronic impact would only add still further to the overall toll.

At the moment, the expert prognosis for Russian mortality in the years immediately ahead might fairly be described as pessimistic. The UN Population Division, for example, estimates the life expectancy for Russian men today to be lower than the average for men from the world's "less developed regions" (i.e., Africa, Asia, Latin America). Though UNPD projections envision improvements for Russia in the coming decades, Russia is still not projected to reach the level of the less developed regions until 2020 to 2025 (see Figure 22). The U.S. Census Bureau, for its part, estimates that life expectancy for Russian men over the coming two decades will approximate the levels for their counterparts in Bangladesh and Pakistan, and will remain steadily below the levels anticipated for India (see Figure 23).

Somber as these readings appear, they may nevertheless prove overly optimistic. The Census Bureau projections for Russian mortality, for example, are erring on the high side already: while the Census Bureau projected Russian male life expectancy for 2002 at 62.3 years,<sup>50</sup> Goskomstat's actual data for 2002, as we have already noted, show a life expectancy of 3.5 years less. And although the UNPD is predicting unexceptional improvements in male health levels over the next two decades—less than four years' increase between 2000/05 and 2020/25—there are reasons to view such a goal as highly ambitious under Russia's current circumstances. The problem, simply put, is that today's Russians seem to be less healthy than their parents. Consequently, merely managing to reattain the survival schedules reported by that earlier generation will take some doing. Modest as such a goal might sound, it is *not* an accomplishment that can be taken for granted.

The information presented in Figures 24 and 25 highlight the problem. As of 2001, figures for Russian men at any given age were indicating death rates higher than those under 1970 statistics for people five years older. In other words, the death rate in 2001 for men in their early twenties was worse than it had been for men in their late twenties back in 1970; the 2001 death rates for men in their early forties exceeded the 1970 death rates for men in their late

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<sup>49</sup> V. M. Shkolnikov, et al., "Is the Link between Alcohol and Cardiovascular Death among Young Russian Men Attributable to Misclassification of Acute Alcohol Intoxication? Evidence from the City of Izhevsk," *Journal of Epidemiology and Community Health*, vol. 56, no. 3 (March 2002), pp. 171–175.

<sup>50</sup> U.S. Census Bureau International Data Base, <<http://www.census.gov/ipc/www/idbagg.html>>, accessed December 19, 2003.

forties, and so on. A similar and only slightly less unfavorable situation prevailed for working-age women as well. Death rates in 2001 for women in their late twenties were about the same as the 1970 rates for women in their early thirties; women in their early fifties in 2001 reported about the same death rates as women in their late fifties in that earlier generation. If general mortality levels can provide a faithful reflection of the health status of those who remain among

the living, it would seem that the state of health of the Russian adult population is, by and large, distinctly more fragile and tenuous than it was a generation ago.

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Comparing the mortality schedules of successive birth cohorts in Russia places the problem of “negative health momentum” in even clearer perspective.

In industrialized Western societies in the postwar era, younger generations have routinely come to enjoy better survival rates than their predecessors. Sometimes these improvements have been truly dramatic. In contemporary Japan, for example, men born in the early 1950s have, over their life course thus far, experienced death rates roughly half as high at any given age as those that were recorded for the cohort born twenty years before them (see Figure 26). By contrast, there has been no improvement in survival schedules for rising birth cohorts among the two generations of Russian men born between the late 1920s and the late 1980s. Quite the contrary, over its life course, each rising cohort of Russian men seems to be charting out a more dismal mortality trajectory than the one traced by its immediate predecessor (see Figure 27).

The “negative momentum” apparent in Russia’s modern-day mortality trends makes the objective of broad, sustained improvements in public health especially problematic for the years immediately ahead. Russia’s life expectancy twenty years hence, for instance, will be calculated in the main on the basis of the survival patterns of the people alive in the country *here and now*—today’s teens will be tomorrow’s thirty-somethings; today’s fifty-year-olds will be in their seventies, and so on. Yet the future health prospects for Russia’s population will be shaped consequentially by the inventory of insults to their health that living Russians have *already* accumulated—a fearsome storehouse, as we have seen. On the current trajectory, these life-imperiling insults can be expected to claim a growing fraction of Russia’s youth and adults through premature mortality. Without radical changes in lifestyles and health policies, in other words, we can expect public health conditions in Russia to *worsen* for some time to come.

However, even major efforts to reverse Russia's health decline are likely to yield only pitifully modest returns in the near and medium term. A single example can illustrate just how imposing the task of simply returning Russia to the health patterns of an earlier generation will be. Consider the case of Russian men who are in their late twenties today. Five years from now, this group will be in its early thirties. For today's young Russian men to "enjoy" the survival chances experienced by men in their early thirties back in 1970, the current group would actually have to *reduce* its death rates as it grows older (back then the mortality level for men in their early thirties was 15 percent lower than it is for those in their late twenties today). Or to put it another way, to get back on the survival schedule from their fathers' time (i.e., 1970), today's men in their late twenties would have to achieve death rates 30 percent lower than those currently reported by men in their late thirties, 40 percent lower than those currently reported by men in their late forties, and about a third lower than those currently reported by men in their early sixties. In public health terms, effecting such a turnaround would qualify as a fairly daunting challenge. No less significant would be the meaning of success within this context—in 1970, Russia's male life expectancy at birth was just 63 years—very roughly, the level the Census Bureau and the UNPD project for India today.

None of this discussion, it is worth noting, has yet taken account of the possibility that additional and perhaps extensive new health troubles may lie in store for the Russian Federation. Yet precisely such problems are, quite plainly, gathering today. Foremost among them may be Russia's still-mounting epidemic of HIV/AIDS. As we have already seen, curable STDs are now rampant in Russia—and the world over, epidemic levels of curable STDs seem to serve as a tragically accurate leading indicator for the spread of HIV.

Data here are highly incomplete. Russian authorities have registered a cumulative total of about a quarter million cases of HIV, while the UN Joint Program on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS) estimates that 1 million people in Russia were living with HIV as of year-end 2003, and the U.S. National Intelligence Council (NIC) suggests that the true numbers as of 2002 could have been as high as 1 to 2 million.<sup>51</sup> If the UNAIDS central estimate were accurate, Russia's adult (ages 15 to 49) HIV prevalence rate would be about 1.3 percent; by the NIC's 2002 estimates, it could already have been as high as 2.5 percent in 2002.

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<sup>51</sup> UNAIDS, *AIDS Epidemic Update* 2003, December 2003, <[http://www.unaids.org/wad/2003/Epiupdate2003\\_en/Epi03\\_05\\_en.htm#P118\\_26729](http://www.unaids.org/wad/2003/Epiupdate2003_en/Epi03_05_en.htm#P118_26729)>; U.S. National Intelligence Council, *The Next Wave of HIV/AIDS: Nigeria, Ethiopia, Russia, India, and China*, September 2002, <[http://www.odci.gov/nic/other\\_nextwaveHIV.html](http://www.odci.gov/nic/other_nextwaveHIV.html)>.

The future course of Russia's HIV epidemic is likewise clouded in uncertainty today. Even so, the point to bear in mind is that HIV has the potential to cancel any prospective health progress in Russia over the coming generation. Simple demographic-epidemiological projections, using U.S. Census Bureau figures as a baseline, demonstrate as much. With a hypothetical adult HIV prevalence rate of 2 percent, almost all of the improvements in life expectancy that the Census Bureau imagines for Russia over the period from 2000 to 2025 would be erased (see figure 28).<sup>52</sup>

When one bears in mind that those improvements projected by the Census Bureau may be overgenerous to begin with (for reasons already discussed), and that Russia's current HIV prevalence may already surpass that illustrative 2 percent level, one begins to appreciate just how contingent and delicate the hopes for any substantial progress in Russia over the coming generation may actually be. Progress is of course to be hoped for—and under the right circumstances, some progress may be achieved.

However, major secular reductions in Russia's awful toll of excess mortality do not look to be in the cards any time soon. Also, the notion that overall life expectancy in a peacetime Russia in the year 2025 might ultimately prove to be lower than it had been half a century earlier cannot, in any case, be dismissed as fantastical any longer. Nor should it astonish that one of Russia's leading health officials—Dr. Yuriy Komarov, vice chairman of the Russian Medical Association—has just predicted that it may now take the Russian Federation roughly *a century* to catch up to developed Western countries' life expectancy.<sup>53</sup>

### **Russia's Tightening Demographic Straitjacket**

Russia's demographic trends have unambiguously negative implications for Russian development and security. The manifold and far-reaching ramifications can be complex, but the basic outlines of the more important considerations can be briefly and simply adduced.

Russia's lingering health and mortality crisis, to begin, promises to be an anchor against rapid economic development, frustrating the effort to move Russia onto a path of swift and sustained material advance. The reasons to expect health problems to constrain Russian development are not peculiar to Russia. To the contrary, they are instead indicative of the very

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<sup>52</sup> This paragraph draws on the author's research, as presented in Nicholas Eberstadt, "The Future of AIDS," *Foreign Affairs*, vol. 81, no. 6 (Nov/Dec 2002), pp. 22–45.

<sup>53</sup> *RIA*, April 15, 2004; translated as "Russian health care chief says Russia threatened by short life expectancy," *BBC Worldwide Monitoring*, April 15, 2004.

nature of modern economic growth. For in the modern era, the wealth of nations is represented, increasingly, in human rather than natural resources—and the richer the country, the more pronounced the tendency for an entity now called “human capital” to overshadow or replace “physical capital” and land in the production process.<sup>54</sup> Human health, of course, figures importantly in the overall composition of “human capital.” And by no coincidence, the correspondence between human health and economic productivity has been fairly robust, both within societies over time and among countries at any given point in time. In recent years, to judge by UN and World Bank data, an additional year of male life expectancy at birth has been associated with an increment of GNP per capita of about 8 percent (see Figure 29).

The relationship between health and economic productivity, to be sure, is multidimensional and simultaneous—improved wealth also makes for better health, and does so through a variety of avenues. However, it is difficult to see how Russia can expect, in some imagined future, to maintain an Irish standard of living if its workforce suffers an Indian schedule of survival—or worse.

Skeptics might argue that health does not seem to be constraining Russia’s economic progress today—recorded growth rates, after all, have been positive and high for the past five years (1999 to 2003)—and that health will not overly constrain Russian economic development in the years immediately ahead, since Russia can earn large dividends from the exploitation and sale of its abundant reserves of energy, ores, and the like. However, Russia’s past and current dependence upon extractive industries only emphasizes how very limited the role of human resources is in Russia’s international trade profile today.

In 2001 Russia reportedly earned about \$102 billion in revenues from its export of goods.<sup>55</sup> Of that sum, approximately \$53 billion was accounted for by oil, gas, and coal exports; another \$7 billion by the sale of non-ferrous metals (copper, nickel, aluminum, etc.); and about \$4 billion from wood and ore.<sup>56</sup> By those rudimentary figures, Russia’s export earnings from beyond the confines of its “enclave economy” would have been no more than \$38 billion, or well under \$300 per capita. If the CIA’s assessment that over 80 percent of Russian exports currently derive from the sales of energy resources, timber, and metals is correct,<sup>57</sup> the overwhelming majority of the Russian workforce would be contributing a mere

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<sup>54</sup> For a masterful exposition on the modern economic growth process, see Angus Maddison, *The World Economy: A Millennial Perspective*, Paris: OECD, 2001.

<sup>55</sup> International Monetary Fund, *International Financial Statistics*, October 2003, p. 812.

<sup>56</sup> United Nations, *International Trade Statistics Yearbook 2001*, New York: UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Statistics Division, 2003, vol. 1, pp. 827–828.

<sup>57</sup> U.S. Central Intelligence Agency, *World Factbook—Russia*, <<http://www.odci.gov/publications/factbook/geos/rs.html>>.

\$20 billion a year to the nation's export earnings—an amount that works out to less than \$150 a year for each Russian citizen. For Ireland, the comparable volume of non-resource exports in 2001 was about \$80 billion—four times Russia's total in aggregate, and about 150 times as much on a per capita basis.<sup>58</sup>

An economic policy shift and change of development strategy might of course help Russia capitalize more effectively on its existing endowment of human resources. That observation, however, does not conflict with the proposition that Russia's successful participation in

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*Russia's successful participation in the world economy will ultimately depend on its human resource base—which today is severely constrained by the nation's health and mortality problems.*

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the world economy will ultimately depend on its human resource base—which today is severely constrained by the nation's health and mortality problems. Today's mortality prospects, furthermore, stand to influence the country's economic potential far into the future. According to year 2000 survival schedules, for example, a 20-year-old Russian youth had only a 46 percent chance of reaching

age 65 (compared with a 79 percent chance for an American counterpart).<sup>59</sup> That discrepancy cannot help but affect the cost-benefit calculus of investments in education or training for one's work-life—and not in a manner conducive to the augmentation of technical skill for Russia's rising cohorts.<sup>60</sup>

In the short run, the collapse of Russian fertility may have little practical (as opposed to psychological) import for daily life or affairs of state. If, however, extreme sub-replacement fertility persists, current and continued childbearing patterns would directly shape the Russian future. In some non-trivial respects, it could materially limit Russian national options. In the decades immediately ahead, for example, Russia looks set to contend with a sharp fall-off in

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<sup>58</sup> Derived from *International Trade Statistics Yearbook 2001*, pp. 478–479, and *Recent Demographic Developments in Europe 2002*, p. 25.

<sup>59</sup> World Health Organization (WHO), "Life Tables for 191 Countries," <[http://www3.who.int/whosis/life\\_tables/life\\_tables.cfm?>](http://www3.who.int/whosis/life_tables/life_tables.cfm?>), accessed December 23, 2003. I am indebted to Professor Ken R. Smith of the University of Utah for directing me to this source. The discrepancy between the survival schedules for Russia and the United States is less severe for females than for males—but here as well the differences are far from trivial. In these estimated year 2000 life tables, 87 percent of U.S. women aged 20 could expect to reach 65—as compared to just 78 percent of their Russian counterparts.

<sup>60</sup> Some impact, indeed, may already be felt. Balzer observes, for example, that educational "coverage [the proportion of young people in an age cohort attending school] has declined at all levels except higher education since 1991." ("Human Capital and Russian Security in the Twenty-first Century," p. 174). Many factors, of course, help to account for this striking result; if educational attainment, health status, and health expectancy are all positively correlated, we would anticipate a disproportionate drop-off in educational coverage at the lower levels.

the nation's youth population (see Figure 30). Between 1975 and 2000, for instance, the number of young men aged 15–24 ranged between 10 million and 13 million—but by 2025, on current UNPD projections, the total will be down to barely 6 million. Those figures would imply a 45 percent decrease between 2000 and 2025 in the size of this pivotal population group—as compared with a projected 15 percent decline in Russia's overall population.

Apart from the obvious military implications of the envisioned disproportionate shrinkage of the age group from which Russian Army manpower is traditionally drawn,<sup>61</sup> there would be economic and social reverberations as well. With fewer young people rising to replace the older retirees graduating from the Russian workforce, the question of improving (or perhaps maintaining) the average level of skills and qualifications in the economically active population would become that much more pressing. And since younger people the world over tend to be disposed toward and associated with certain kinds of discovery, innovation, and entrepreneurial risk-taking, a pronounced choke-off of younger blood could have less tangible, but nevertheless real, consequences for Russia's social capabilities and economic responsiveness.

Health-linked impediments to per capita productivity improvements, in tandem with the all-but-certain prospect of continuing population decline, conjoin in Russia to suggest the possibility of continued relative economic decline internationally. Simply put, in a world of still-growing populations and generally improving health conditions, Russia would seem to face an uphill struggle in any effort to match the average global pace of aggregate global growth—i.e., simply to stay where it is in the international ranking of GDPs. Between 2000 and 2025, by UNPD medium variant projections, Russia's share of global population total is envisioned as shrinking by a third, from 2.4 percent to 1.6 percent. Over the same period, improvements in Russia's life expectancy are expected to somewhat under-perform compared to the global average. To maintain its share of world output, per capita economic growth in Russia would have to exceed the world's average by 1.6 points a year for the quarter century under consideration simply to compensate for relative population decline (compensating for relative health decline would seem to place additional expectations, and burdens, on Russia's non-demographic “sources of growth”).<sup>62</sup>

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<sup>61</sup> Some commentary, indeed, is now beginning to suggest that Russia's demographic squeeze may scuttle the envisioned transition to a voluntary military force, in effect necessitating “conscription forever.” Cf. Alexander Golts, “1.7 Conscription Forever,” *Yezhenedelnyi Zhurnal*, no. 18, May 10–16, 2004, translated in *What the Papers Say. Part B (Russia)*, May 13, 2004.

<sup>62</sup> If we compare the relative changes in the population of “working ages”—as demographers typically categorize the 15–64 year cohort—the disparity is even more acute. Whereas UNPD medium variant projections anticipate a global increase in these ranks by about 34 percent between 2000 and 2025, Russia's numbers are envisioned as declining by about 18 percent—making for a 2.0 percent per year divergence in the relative growth of potential manpower.

To the extent that a country's relative economic potential determines its international political influence and provides for its international security, Russia's demographic prospects establish an obvious challenge for the nation over the coming generation. Can it avoid, through compensatory economic policies and foreign policy stratagems, the geopolitical marginalization to which demographic trends *per se* would seem to consign it?

Russia's demographic decline can be viewed in terms of its specific regional as well as its broader global geopolitical implications. One area that falls under especially intense demographic pressure is the vast expanse of the Russian Far East. Despite the region's ostensible development potential, the fact is that the area has never attracted much in the way of natural settlement, nor supported much in the way of self-sustaining enterprise. Quite the contrary, the peopling of the Russian Far East, both during the Russian Imperial Age and the Soviet era, was historically predicated upon involuntary movement of forced labor—and massive economic subsidy.<sup>63</sup>

With those subsidies programmatically interrupted in the post-Communist era, the Russian Far East has registered especially sharp demographic decline, most of it due to out-migration. Whereas Russia as a whole reported a population decline of less than 1.5 percent between its 1989 and 2002 censuses, the Russian Far East registered a drop of about 15 percent. Some parts of the territory experienced even more precipitous depopulation over that interval: Sakhalin was down 23 percent, Kamchatka 24 percent, and Magadan over 50 percent.<sup>64</sup> Given the Russian Far East's environmentally and climatically challenged prospects for truly business-worthy undertakings, the impending decline of the Russian population base, and the national economy's less than unlimited potential for lavishing unrequited financial rewards upon current or future residents of the tract, it is by no means clear that this enormous territory's tiny population (currently, less than 7 million people stretched across a space of 2.4 million square miles) can remain at the current level of population density over the decades ahead.

The present “near-demographic vacuum” in the Russian Far East—and the prospect that population density in the region may decline still further in the years ahead—has invited continuing geopolitical speculations of a “yellow peril” hue in contemporary Russian journalistic and political circles, with sometimes anxious imaginings that a populous and overcrowded Chinese neighbor would encourage a *Volkswanderung* north, to colonize and (re)claim the

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<sup>63</sup> For background, see Anne Applebaum, *Gulag: A History*, New York: Doubleday, 2003, and Fiona Hill and Clifford Gaddy, *The Siberian Curse: How Communist Planners Left Russia out in the Cold*, Washington D.C.: Brookings Institution Press, 2003.

<sup>64</sup> Heleniak, “The 2002 Census,” Table 2.

terrain.<sup>65</sup> Those imaginings, it must be said, seem to be informed more by xenophobic fears than economic reasoning. The economic fundamentals of the frozen Russian Far East, after all, are scarcely more appealing to Chinese peasants than to the region's fleeing Russian citizens. (If anything, the region may be even less hospitable in Chinese than Russian eyes for a variety of cultural reasons).

Be that as it may, even if there is no "push" from China into this vast and open territory—an empty and otherwise unprotected expanse bordering both a rapidly changing China and a perennially belligerent North Korea and including the site of an unsettled territorial dispute with Japan—the region is likely to remain a continuing security concern to policymakers in Moscow, adding to the defense and internal affairs outlays that the Russian state's diminishing population will be obliged to finance over the years ahead.

### **Policy Responses to Russia's Population Crisis: Declamation, Distraction, Denial**

Russia's political leaders and leading politicians are by no means incognizant of the demographic vise gripping their nation. In fact, the country's political leadership talks about the nation's population constantly. The state of that discussion can perhaps be discerned from observations offered by three of the country's best-known political figures.

We should begin, of course, with Russia's president, Vladimir V. Putin. In his inaugural state of the nation speech, he listed population decline first among the sixteen "acute" national "problems" he ventured to address, volunteering that the country's "demographic situation is

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<sup>65</sup> For a rendition of this chorus, see *Nezavisimaya Gazeta*, August 6, 2002, translated as "According to analysts, the Chinese threat is a very real danger, but Russia refuses to dwell on it because of the 'Strategic Partnership' with China," *What the Papers Say (Russia)*, August 7, 2002; Peter Baker, "Chinese Immigrants Face Anger and Envy of Northern Neighbors," *Washington Post*, July 29, 2003, p. A9; NTV Broadcasting (Moscow), November 15, 2003, translated as "Chinese Expansionism Threatens Russia's Security—TV," *BBC Monitoring Reports*, November 17, 2003; "Russian Liberal Democratic Party Leader Suggests Closing Border with China," *Moscow Interfax*, April 25, 2003; Frank Brown, "Back to the Future? A New Face for Old-fashioned Russian Nationalism," *Newsweek*, December 22, 2003, p. 35. According to these voices, as many as 6 million Chinese have slipped into Siberia in recent years. The 2002 Russian census, by contrast, counted about 35,000 Chinese in all of the Russian Far East; officially, a total of 15,000 Chinese, North Korean, and Vietnamese citizens are employed within the area as a whole. *Rossiiskaya Gazeta*, November 26, 2003, translated as "Myths the Census Destroyed," *What the Papers Say, Part A (Russia)*, November 27, 2003; "Russia Concerned by Influx of Chinese Immigrants in Far Eastern Region," *ITAR-TASS*, March 1, 2004.

one of the most alarming now.”<sup>66</sup> Three years later, Putin continued to talk of Russia’s “demographic degradation,” announcing the “sad figures” pertaining to recent declines in Russian life expectancy, and warned that Russia’s health situation was being “aggravated” by “the spread

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*Putin has described Russia’s population situation as a “creeping catastrophe.”*

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of so-called new epidemics...including drug addiction and AIDS.”<sup>67</sup> Most recently, Putin has described Russia’s population situation as a “creeping catastrophe.”<sup>68</sup>

Next there is Yevgeniy Primakov, former Russian Federation Prime Minister and current *éminence grise*. In Primakov’s estimate, “The issue of demographics will be one of Russia’s biggest problems for years to come...But very little, or nothing at all, is being done to change the catastrophic demographic situation.”<sup>69</sup>

Finally, there is always Vladimir Zhirinovskiy, leader of Russia’s Liberal Democratic Party and a man never at a loss for words. Over the past three years he has spoken often and loudly about the country’s demographic crisis and has offered a number of prescriptions for the problem. Among these have been a ban on all foreign travel for Russian women,<sup>70</sup> a prohibition of abortion for any Russian woman under 42 years of age,<sup>71</sup> and the legalization of polygamy.<sup>72</sup>

In these remarks on Russia’s population crisis—and, for that matter, in all of the rest of the torrent of declamations by Russian authorities on the issue—what seems perhaps most striking is the fundamental lack of seriousness about a problem that is commonly depicted in the country’s circles of power as serious indeed. At first glance, President Putin’s grave presentation of the national demographic diagnosis may appear quite different from Zhirinovskiy’s

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<sup>66</sup> President Putin’s July 8, 2000 Address to the Federal Assembly, “The State of Russia: A Way to an Effective State,” Russian Permanent Mission to the United Nations, <[http://www.un.int/russia/pressrel/2000/00\\_07\\_00.htm](http://www.un.int/russia/pressrel/2000/00_07_00.htm)>, accessed September 1, 2003 (interestingly, this translation euphemized Putin’s Russian-language warning that Russia was becoming a “senile nation,” replacing the phrase with the formulation “ageing nation”).

<sup>67</sup> “Russian President Vladimir Putin’s State of the Nation Address to the Federal Assembly, the Kremlin, Moscow, May 16, 2003,” Russian Foreign Ministry, <<http://www.in.mid.ru/BI.nsf/arh/7F2BDEECE0C7A13143256D2B002714BA?OpenDocument>>.

<sup>68</sup> Fred Weir, “Russia Begins to Reconsider Wide Use of Abortion,” *Christian Science Monitor*, August 28, 2003.

<sup>69</sup> *Rossiyskaya Gazeta*, July 9, 2002, translated as “Russia: Primakov Answers Questions on Demographics, Business Issues,” *FBIS-SOV-2002-0726*, July 29, 2002.

<sup>70</sup> Sarah Karush, “Shrinking Russia,” *Associated Press*, April 28, 2001.

<sup>71</sup> Olga Sinkova, “Pill Replacing Abortion for Russian Women,” *Agence-France Presse*, February 4, 2002.

<sup>72</sup> Greg Walters, “Zhirinovskiy Offers All Kinds of Aid to Voters,” *St. Petersburg Times*, December 2, 2003.

clownish and self-amused population proposals—but upon closer inspection they are more alike than either might wish to admit. For at the end of the day, all that Russian policymakers have offered to redress the country's population ills is talk, and very little else.

To be sure, we should immediately note here that a growing number of indigenous organizations from Russian “civil society” are at work today grappling with diverse manifestations of the nation's “population crisis.” These groups and associations draw on a wellspring of talent, dedication, and commitment from across the country.

Official Russia's response to the nation's population crisis, furthermore, has not been entirely paralytic. At the local level, there has been a certain measure of governmental experimentation with social and health policies, while at the federal level, some motion has also been detectable. In November 2002 the government promulgated a law to regulate immigration from abroad.<sup>73</sup> More intriguingly, in November 2003 the government issued rules that would make it possible for foreigners to serve in the Russian Army—and earn Russian citizenship for their duty.<sup>74</sup> Both of these measures can be viewed as explicit steps to mitigate the country's looming prospective manpower shortages. The former measure (already criticized by President Putin as excessively “harsh”)<sup>75</sup> tacks toward Russian-chauvinist sentiment, the latter attempts delicately to ford the undercurrents of nationalism in Russia's post-Communist electoral politics. Even so, if we are to speak honestly about the matter, we have to report that Moscow has done almost nothing worth mentioning to reverse the demographic catastrophe that has been unfolding on Russian soil over the past decade.

To the extent that Russian policymakers have concerned themselves with the country's negative natural increase problem, they have focused almost entirely upon the birth rate—and how to raise it.<sup>76</sup> Not surprisingly, this pro-natalist impulse has foundered on the shoals of finance. In plain terms, serious pro-natalism is an expensive business, especially when the potential parents-to-be are educated, urbanized women accustomed to careers with paid recompense (to induce a serious and sustained increase in childbearing, a government under

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<sup>73</sup> Cf. *Rossiyskaya Gazeta*, October 31, 2002, translated as “Russian Interior Minister Gryzlov on New Migration Law,” *FBIS-SOV-2002-1031*, November 12, 2002.

<sup>74</sup> *Izvestiya*, November 14, 2003, translated as “Russia Opens Up Army Service to Foreigners: Pros, Cons of Volunteers Outlined,” *FBIS-SOV-2003-1117*, November 18, 2003.

<sup>75</sup> Andrei Reut, *Gazeta*, May 19, 2003, translated as “President Putin Has Scheduled Mikhail Kasianov's Election,” *What the Papers Say (Russia)*, May 19, 2003.

<sup>76</sup> For some description of local experiments with birth bonuses and modest infant stipends, in St. Petersburg and elsewhere, see “Russia's Economic Growth Led to Baby Boom,” *Pravda*; and *ITAR-TASS*, December 10, 2002, reprinted as “Russia takes steps to tackle population decline,” *BBC World-wide Monitoring*, December 10, 2002.

such circumstances must be prepared to get into the business of hiring women to be mothers—and this is a proposition that could make the funding of a national pension system look like pin money by comparison). Consequently, Russia’s government has concentrated most of its pro-natalist efforts on attempting to “talk the birth rate up”—and as a century of experience with such official chatter in Western countries will attest, that gambit is almost always utterly ineffectual.<sup>77</sup>

In 2003 the Russian government began experimenting with another variant of “pro-natalism on the cheap.” This was its quiet attempt to restrict the previous unconditional availability of abortion on demand.<sup>78</sup> There are, of course, ethical reasons for opposition to the promiscuous destruction of fetuses—but from a strictly demographic standpoint, the dividends derived from a slight and gradual tightening of the rules on pregnancy termination are distinctly limited.

Reducing the number of abortions, after all, does not mechanistically increase birth totals. If it did, there should have been a baby-boom in post-Communist Russia. (Remember: Russia had about three million fewer abortions in 2002 than in 1987—but also about a million fewer births). To the extent that Russia’s tentative steps toward the regulation of abortion may be seen as a factor boosting the nation’s fertility, the effect would largely be felt through the eventual enhancement of fecundity—which is to say, fewer Russian women would be rendered involuntarily sterile through such procedures in the years ahead. In the greater scheme of things, however, that could hardly be described as much of a stimulus.

While Russian policy circles trained their attention on a literally fruitless and largely misdirected effort to revitalize the birth rate, they treated the country’s catastrophic mortality conditions—upon which sustained interventions *would* have yielded some predictable results—with an insouciance verging on indifference. Indeed, Russian authorities have adopted a remarkably *laissez-faire* posture toward the calamitous conditions that currently lead to the “excess mortality” of close to 400,000 of their citizens each year.<sup>79</sup>

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<sup>77</sup> On this score see Paul Demeny, “Policy Interventions in Response to Below Replacement Fertility,” *Population Bulletin of the United Nations*, special issue nos. 40/41 (1999), pp. 183–193. For an earlier assessment of the futility of attempting to “talk the birth rate up” in low-fertility Western societies, see the 1950 analysis by Roy F. Harrod, reprinted as “R.F. Harrod on Reviving the Birth Rate,” *Population and Development Review*, vol. 27, no. 4 (December 2001), pp. 781–789.

<sup>78</sup> Steven Lee Myers, “Russia Retreats from 50 Years of Permissive Law; Abortion on Demand/Once a favored Birth Control Method,” *International Herald Tribune*, August 26, 2003, p. 2.

<sup>79</sup> These calculations for Russia’s levels of “excess mortality” compare survival schedules in the year 2000 with those in the year 1987. Other end-years would result in different totals—but the approximate order of magnitude mentioned above would not change greatly.

Russia's devastating cardiovascular epidemic and its carnage from violent death might not be immediately controlled or completely prevented, but their cost could be at least somewhat contained through considered, pro-active, and broadly applied government action. As best can be told, however, there is no firm interest in government circles in pursuing such options. Instead, President Putin—himself a teetotaler and exercise enthusiast—has taken to the podium from time to time to urge his electorate to take up sports to improve the nation's health.<sup>80</sup>

It will take more than a cheerleader-in-chief, unfortunately, to win Russia's battle against chronic disease, injury, and poisoning—just as it will take more than the *four* employees that the entire Ministry of Health reportedly had working on the country's HIV/AIDS epidemic (as of 2003) to bring that problem under control.<sup>81</sup> (Top-level attitudes toward Russia's HIV crisis seem to be undergoing some change—but as recently as 2002, Moscow's studied disinterest in its domestic AIDS situation was broadcast to the world by a well-publicized \$20 million pledge to the global HIV fight at a time when the Russian Federation was devoting less than \$6 million a year to such activities at home).<sup>82</sup>

Moscow's feckless approach to its ongoing national health emergencies will be regarded as a scandal in some foreign quarters. However, to Western eyes it also constitutes something of a mystery: how is it possible, one may ask, for such a manifestly inadequate regimen to be maintained in the face of disaster in what is—or arguably still remains—a somewhat open and pluralistic political system? The proximate explanation for this puzzle is that, until now, no great political pressure has been brought to bear for correction or adjustment of the government's course—and the absence of such articulated pressures reflects in turn a lack of perceived political concern by the public at large. Russia may have already lost two or more times the number of males as in World War I through premature mortality since 1992—but as yet there has been almost no public outcry about this peacetime outrage, and none of the dozens of competitive parties in Russia's new electoral environment has seen fit to champion the nation's health as its own political cause.

At the risk of belaboring the obvious, we may note that the prolonged lassitude the Russian political system has betrayed in its reaction to its health and demographic crises would be absolutely unimaginable in the modern-day political atmospheres of Western Europe, North

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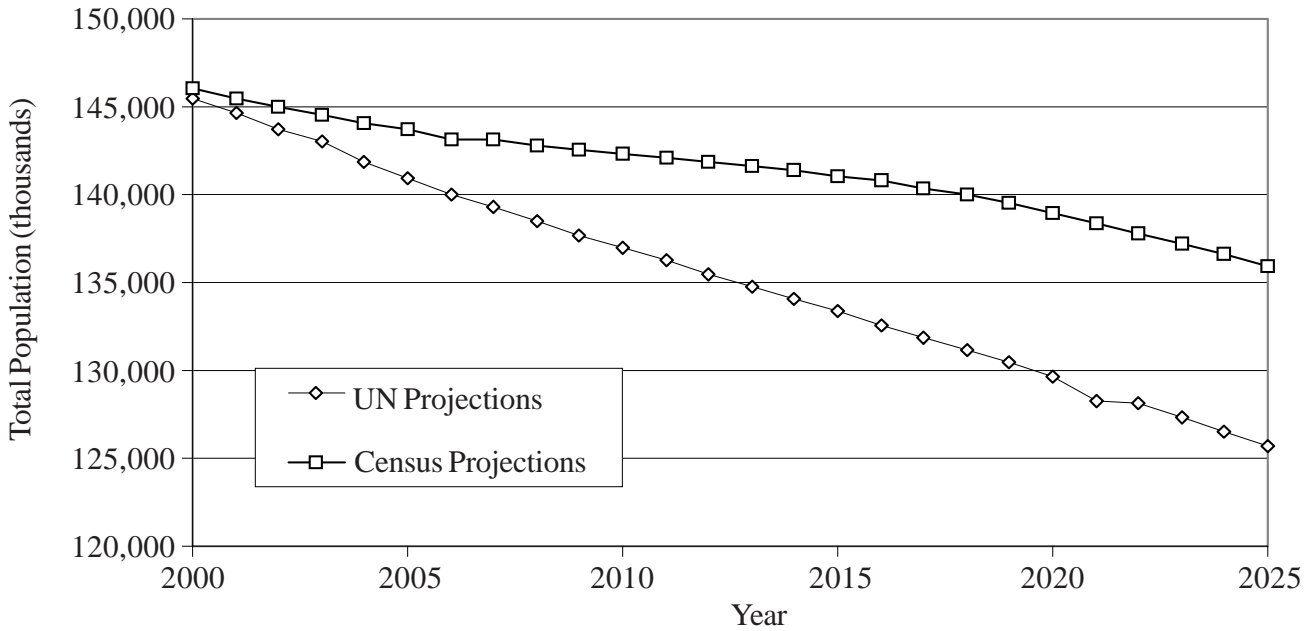
<sup>80</sup> Kevin O'Flynn, "Putin Works Up a Sweat over Sports," *Moscow Times*, February 1, 2002.

<sup>81</sup> Author's interview with Dr. Alexander Goliusov, Moscow, June 18, 2003. Dr. Goliusov runs the STD unit of the Russian Ministry of Health, and has a total of five officials working under him—two of whom work on non-HIV STDs.

<sup>82</sup> Kevin O'Flynn, "President Challenged to Boost AIDS Funds," *Moscow Times*, July 24, 2002.

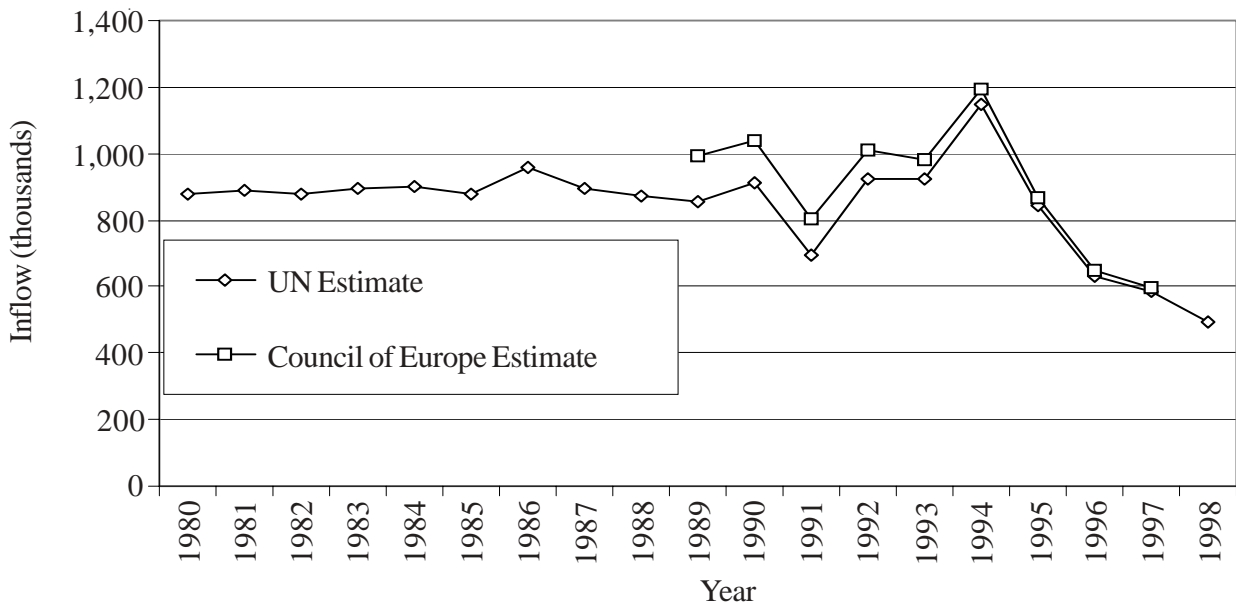
America, or any of the other industrially advanced OECD democracies. Perhaps the awaited signal for Russia's completion of its long transition to a "normal" Western nation will be an unequivocal indication by Russia's voting public that this situation is intolerable for them as well. It is just such a signal that may ultimately be required to arouse Russia's public servants from their deadly lethargy and to mobilize them for this unexpected, but absolutely necessary, struggle in defense of the motherland.

**Figure 1. Projected Total Population: Russia, 2000–2025**



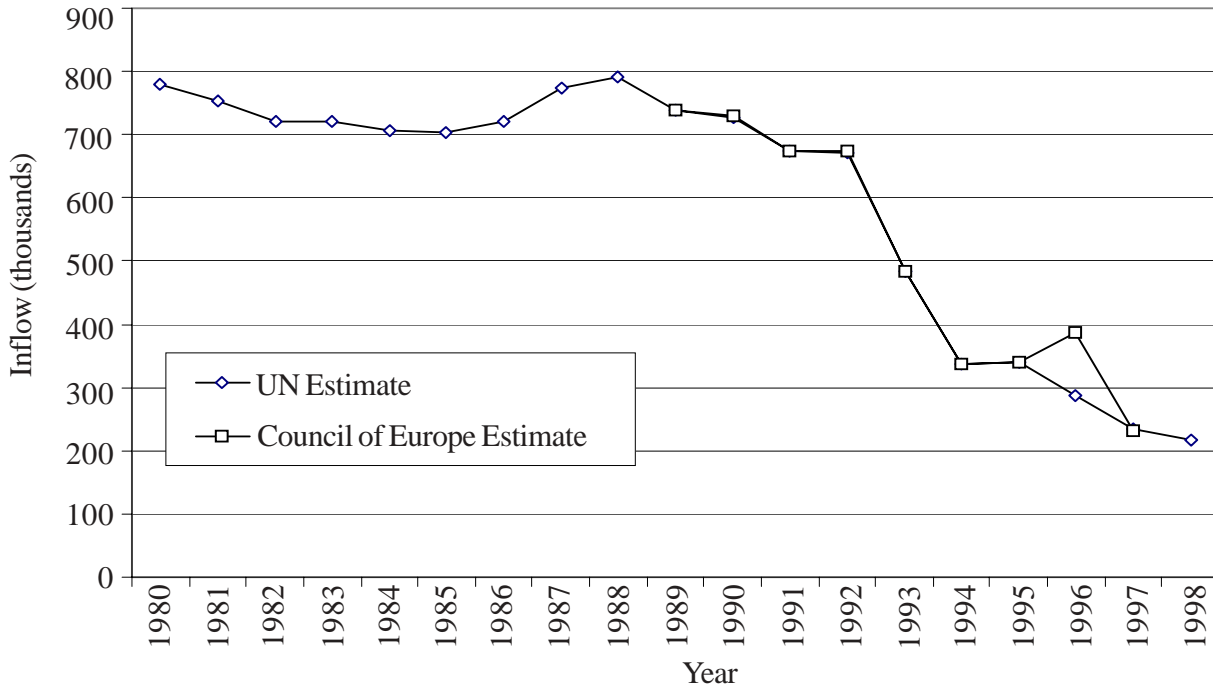
Sources: U.S. Bureau of the Census, International Database; United Nations Population Division, *World Population Prospects: The 2002 Revision*.

**Figure 2. Inflows of Foreign Population to Russia, 1989–2000**



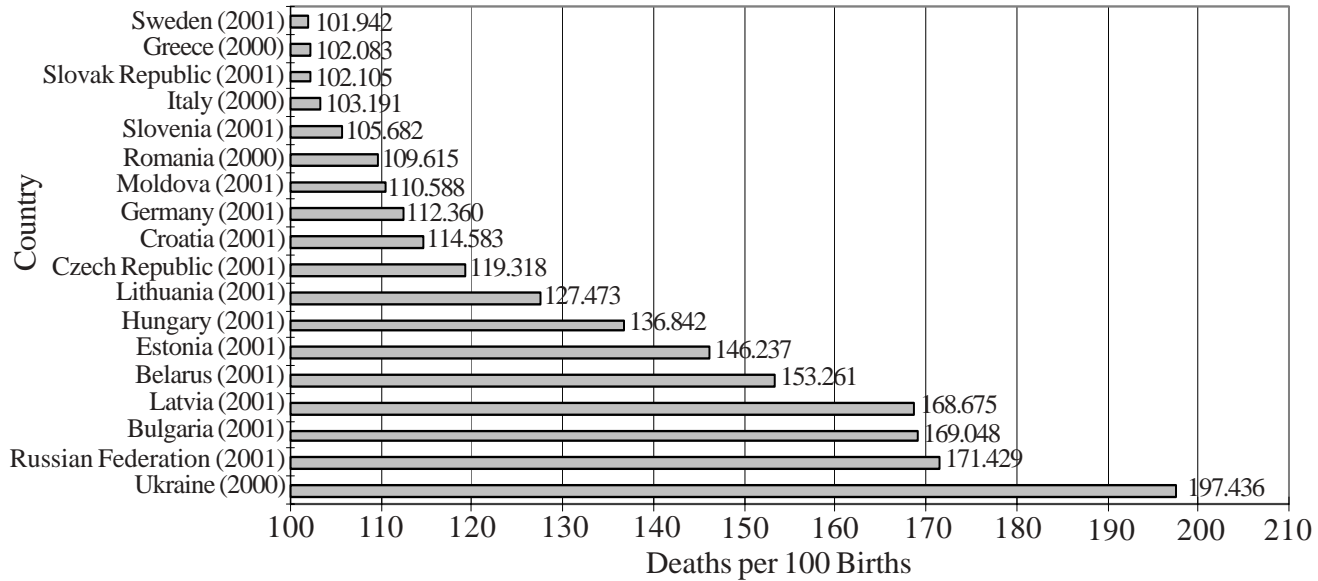
Sources: Council of Europe; United Nations Population Division, *International Migration from Countries with Economies in Transition: 1980–1999*, September 11, 2002.

**Figure 3. Permanent Emigration from Selected Central and Eastern European Countries, 1989–1999**



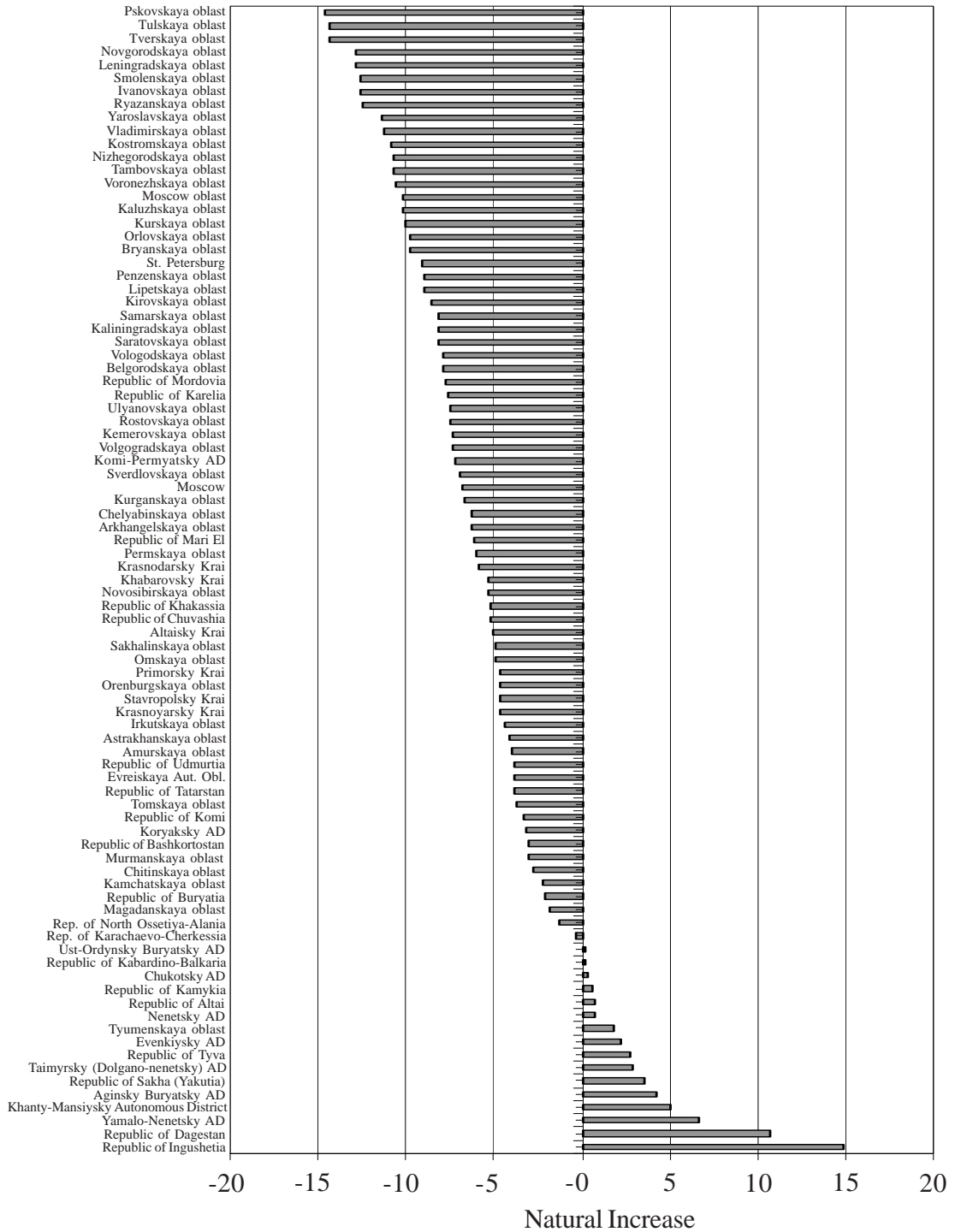
Sources: Council of Europe; United Nations Population Division, *International Migration from Countries with Economies in Transition: 1980–1999*, September 11, 2002.

**Figure 4. Deaths per 100 Births in Negative Natural Increase Countries**



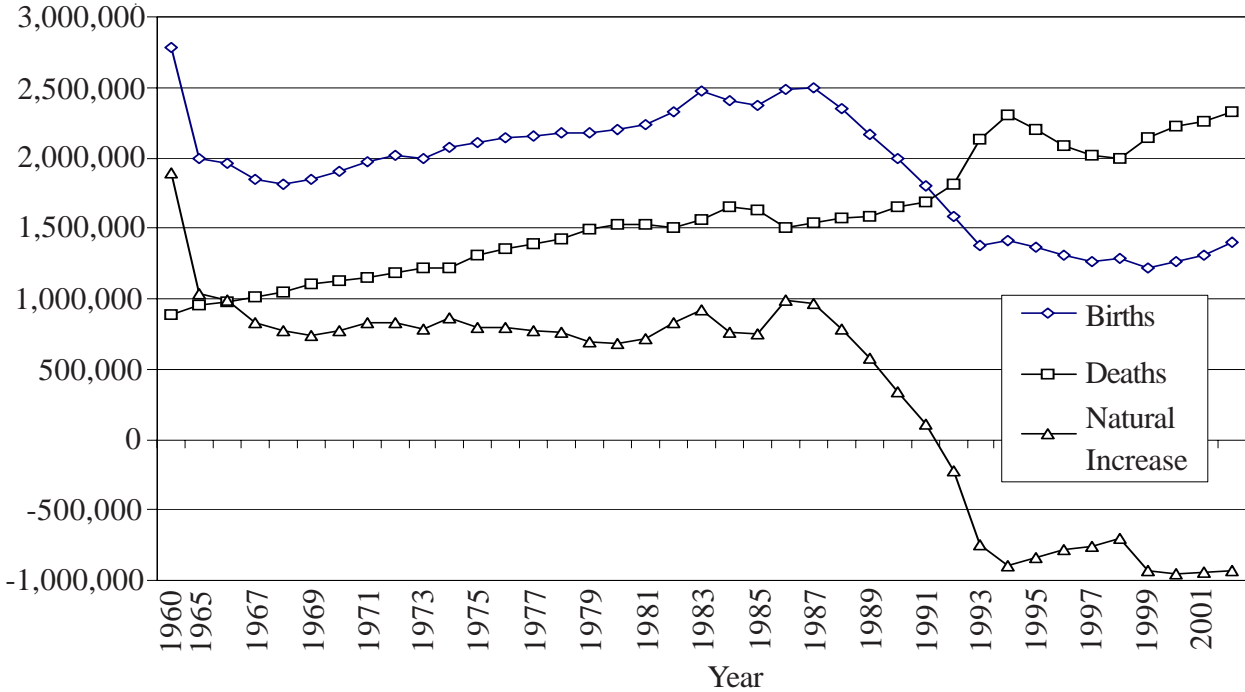
Source: Calculated from Council of Europe, *Recent Demographic Developments in Europe*, December 2002.

**Figure 5. Natural Increase by Region, Russia, 2001**



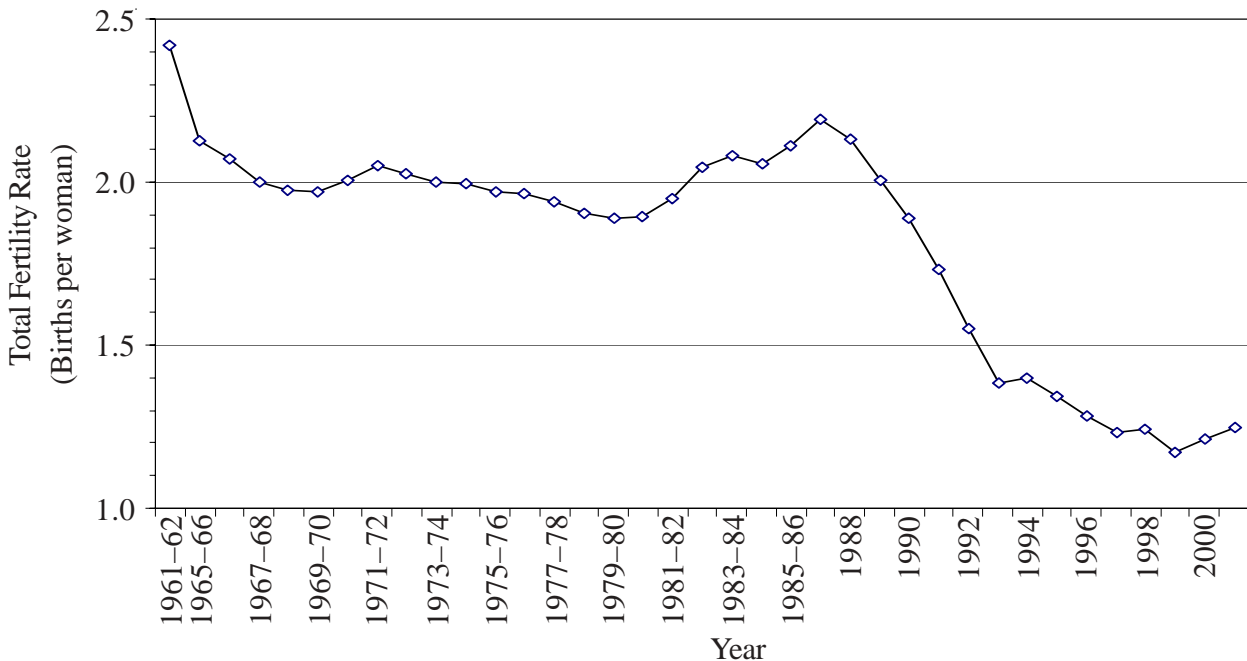
Source: *The Demographic Yearbook of Russia: 2002*, Moscow: State Committee on Statistics, 2002, pp. 61–71.

**Figure 6. Births, Deaths, and Natural Increase in Population, Russia, 1960, 1965–2002**



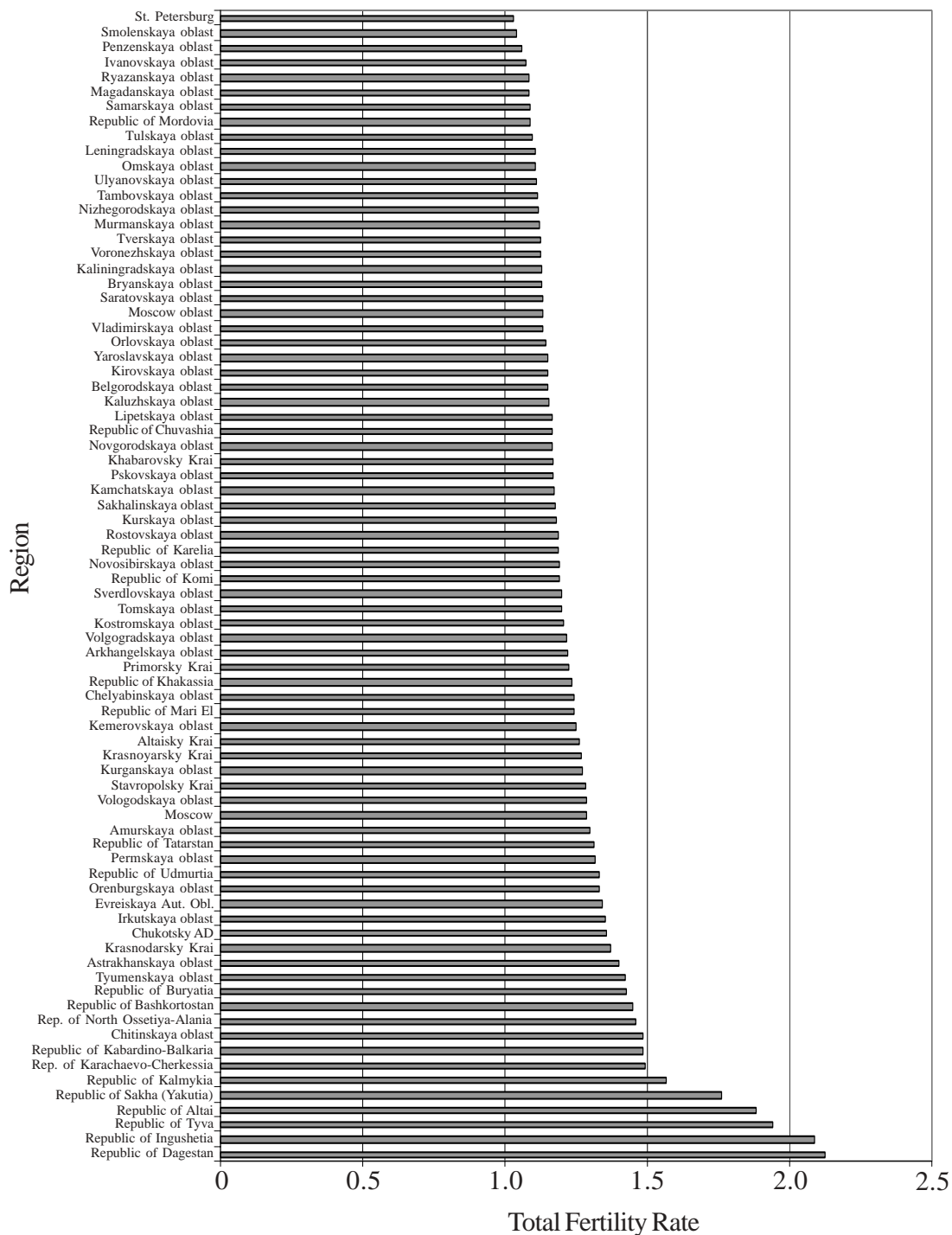
Sources: *The Demographic Yearbook of Russia: 2002*, Moscow: State Committee on Statistics, 2002, Table 2.1; 2002 figures: State Committee on Statistics, as reported by *ITAR-TASS*, February 21, 2003.

**Figure 7. Total Fertility Rate, Russia, 1961–62, 1965–2001**

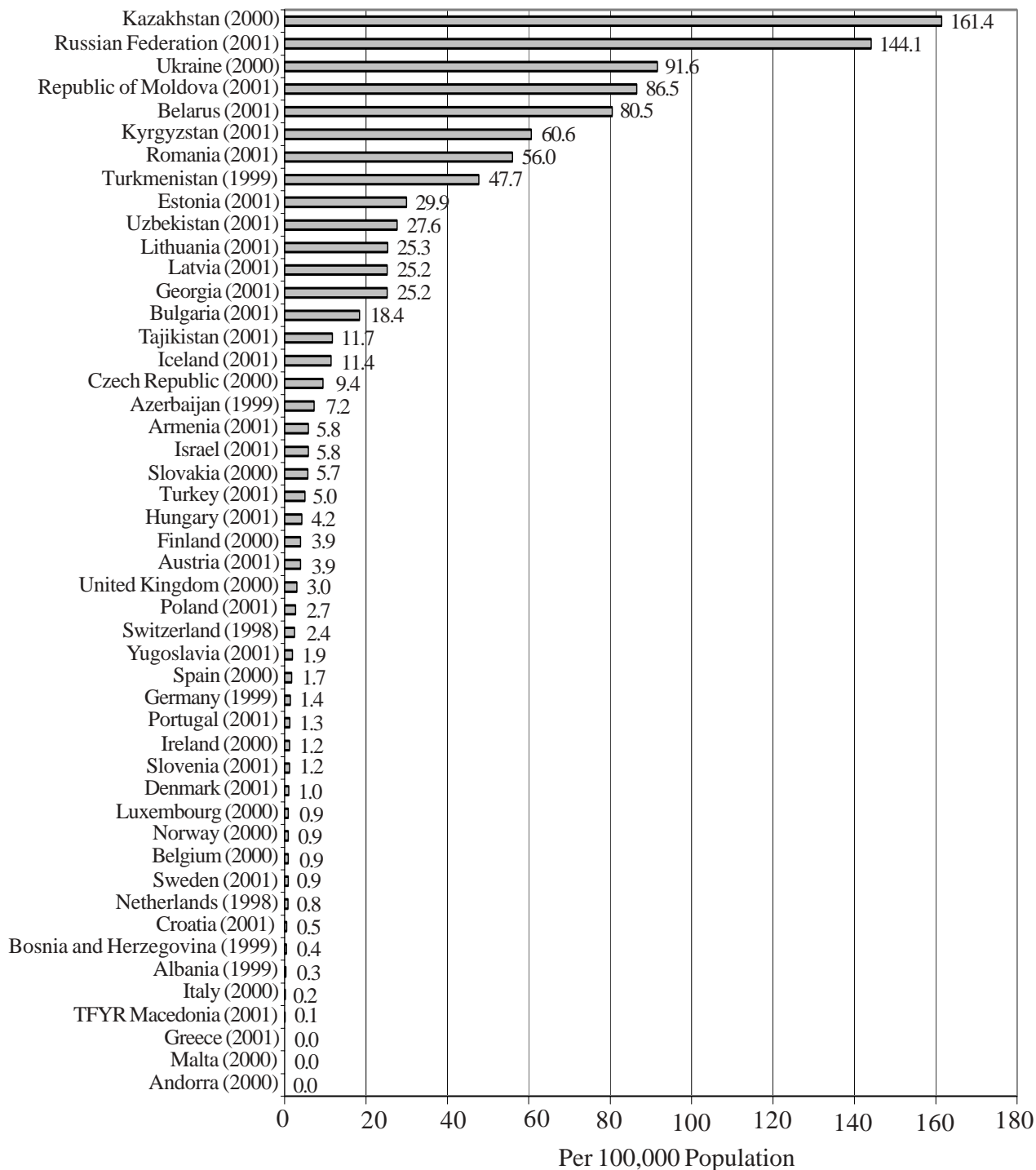


Sources: *The Demographic Yearbook of Russia: 2002*, Moscow: State Committee on Statistics, 2002, Table 2.6; *The Demographic Yearbook of Russia: 1993*, Moscow: State Committee on Statistics, 1993, Table 2.5.

**Figure 8. Total Fertility Rate by Region, Russia, 2001**

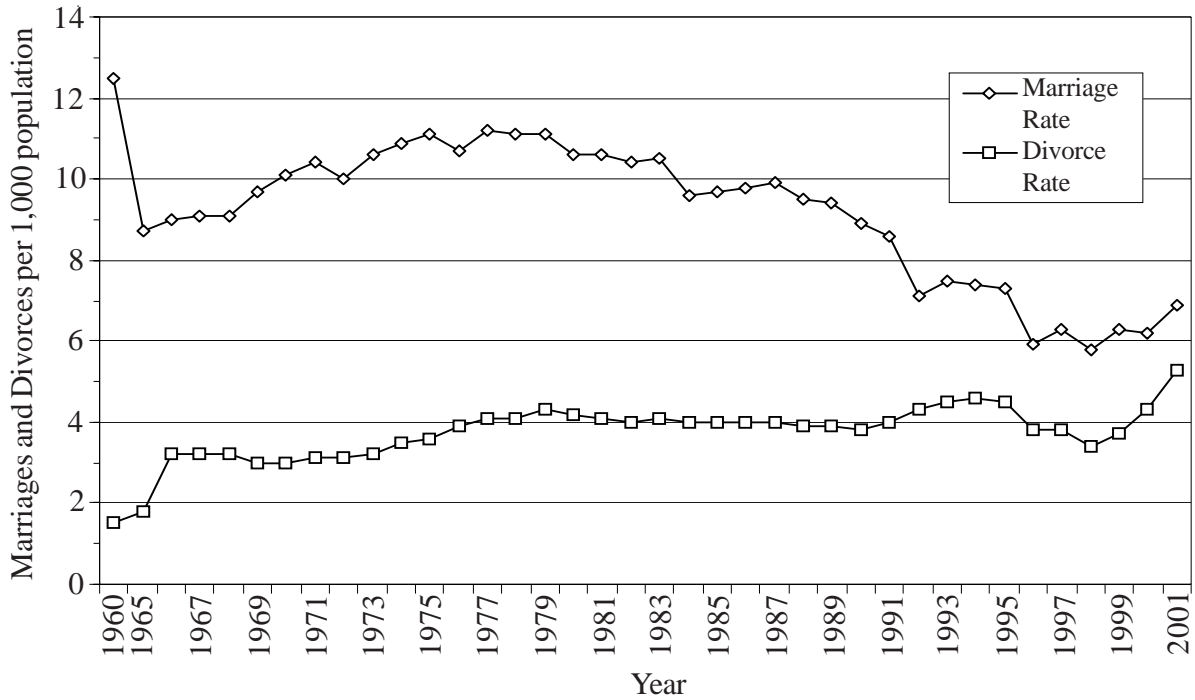


Source: *The Demographic Yearbook of Russia: 2002*, Moscow: State Committee on Statistics, 2002, p. 95.

**Figure 9. New Cases of Syphilis, Russia and Europe**

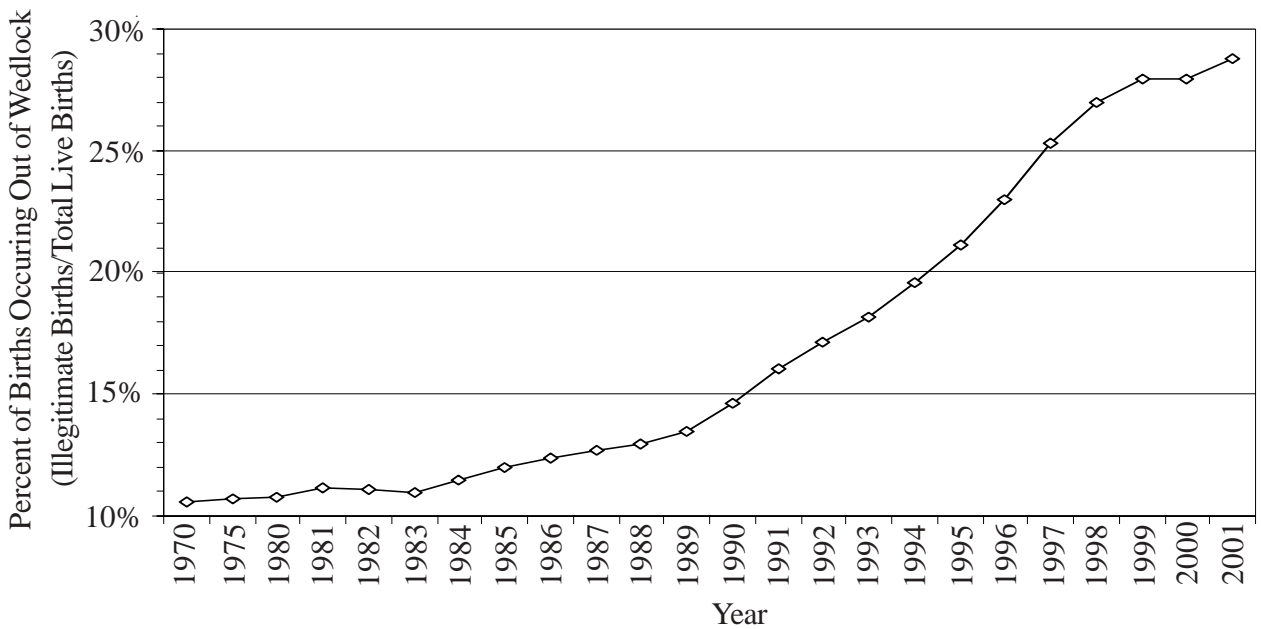
Source: World Health Organization, *Atlas of Health in Europe*, 2003, p. 66.

**Figure 10. Marriage and Divorce Rates, Russia, 1960, 1965–2001**



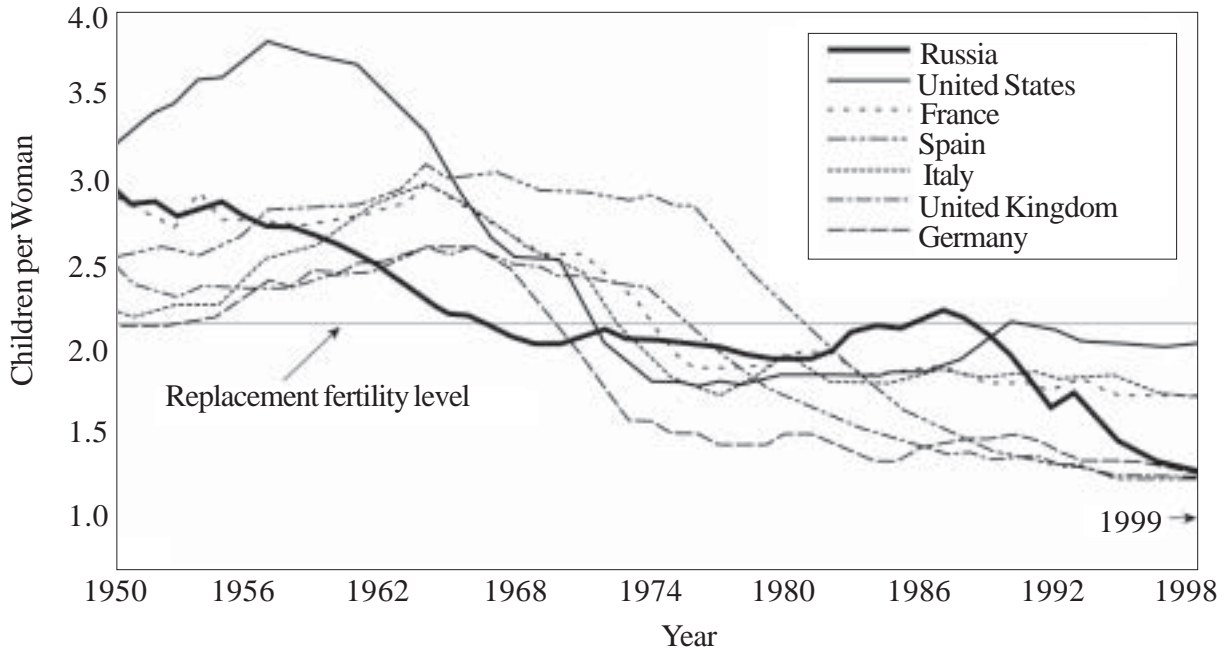
Source: *The Demographic Yearbook of Russia: 2002*, Moscow: State Committee on Statistics, 2002, p. 119.

**Figure 11. Illegitimate Births, Russia, 1970, 1975, 1980–2001**



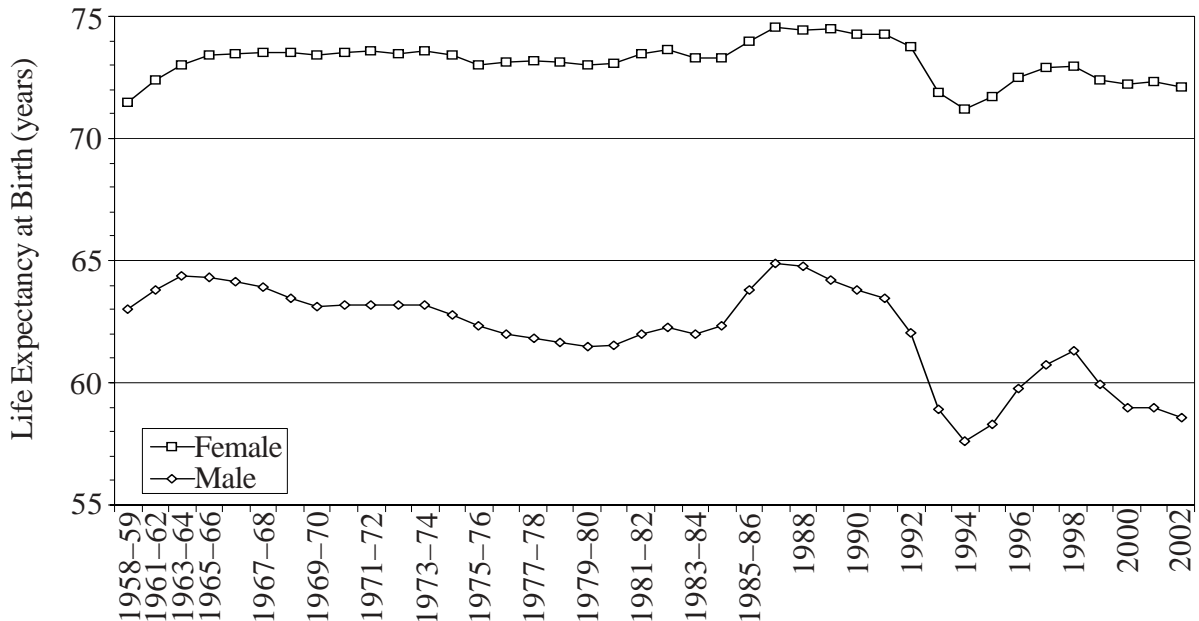
Source: *The Demographic Yearbook of Russia: 2002 Statistical Handbook*, Moscow: State Committee on Statistics, 2002, Table 4.5.

**Figure 12. Total Fertility Rate in Russia and Six Western Nations**



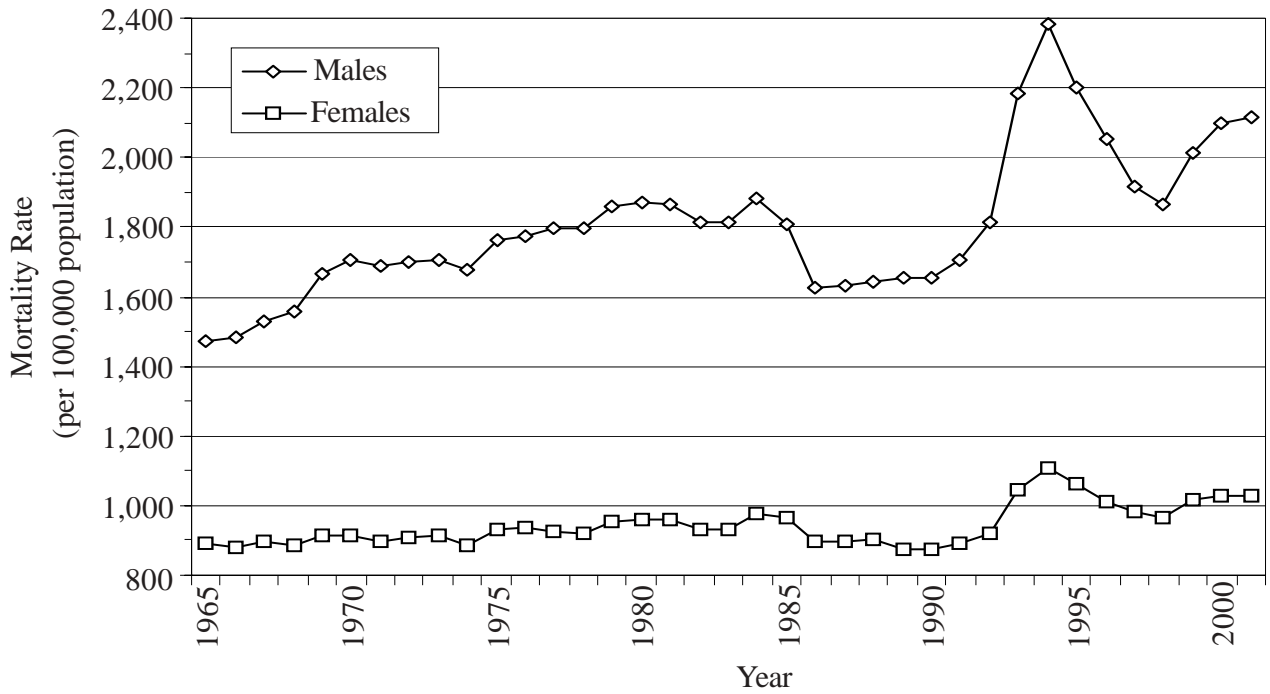
Source: From Julie DaVanzo and Clifford Grammich, *Dire Demographics: Population Trends in the Russian Federation*, RAND, 2001.

**Figure 13. Life Expectancy at Birth, Russia, 1958–59, 1961–62, 1963–64, 1965–2002**



Sources: *The Demographic Yearbook of Russia: 2002 Statistical Handbook*, Moscow: State Committee on Statistics, 2002, Table 2.6; *The Demographic Yearbook of Russia: 1993 Statistical Handbook*, Moscow: State Committee on Statistics, 1994, Table 2.5.

**Figure 14. Age-Standardized Mortality, Russia, 1965–2001**

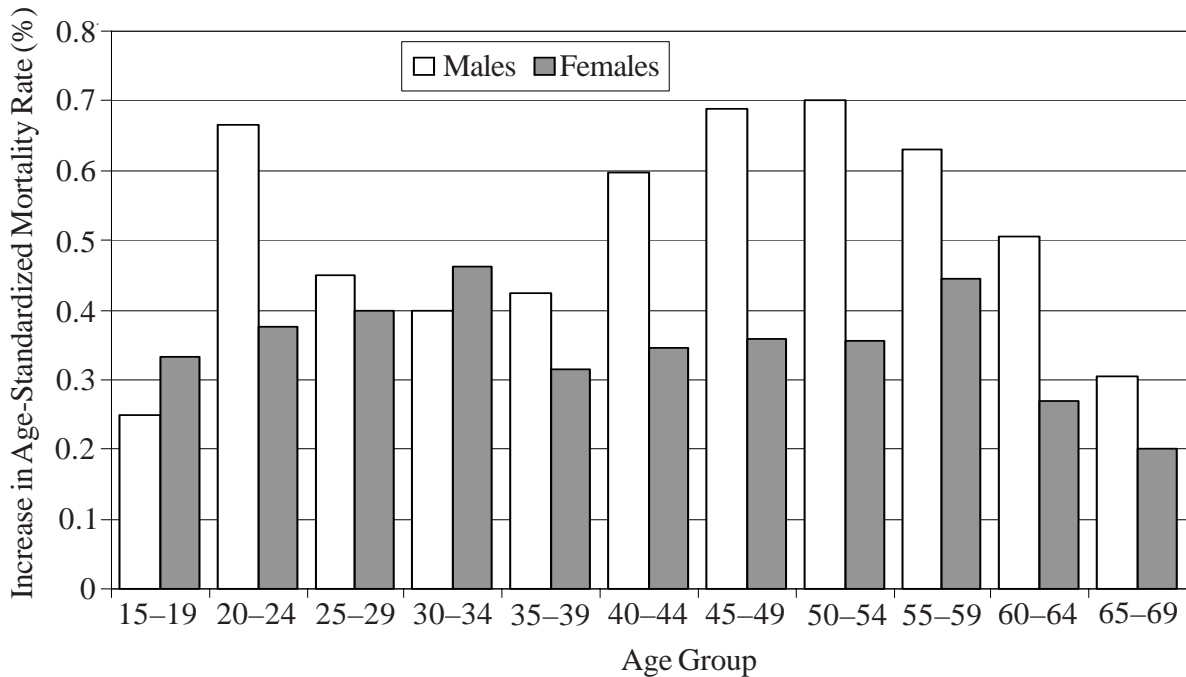


Source: *The Demographic Yearbook of Russia: 2002 Statistical Handbook*, Moscow: State Committee on Statistics, 2002, Table 6.4.

**Figure 15. Male Standardized Mortality, Russia, 2001**

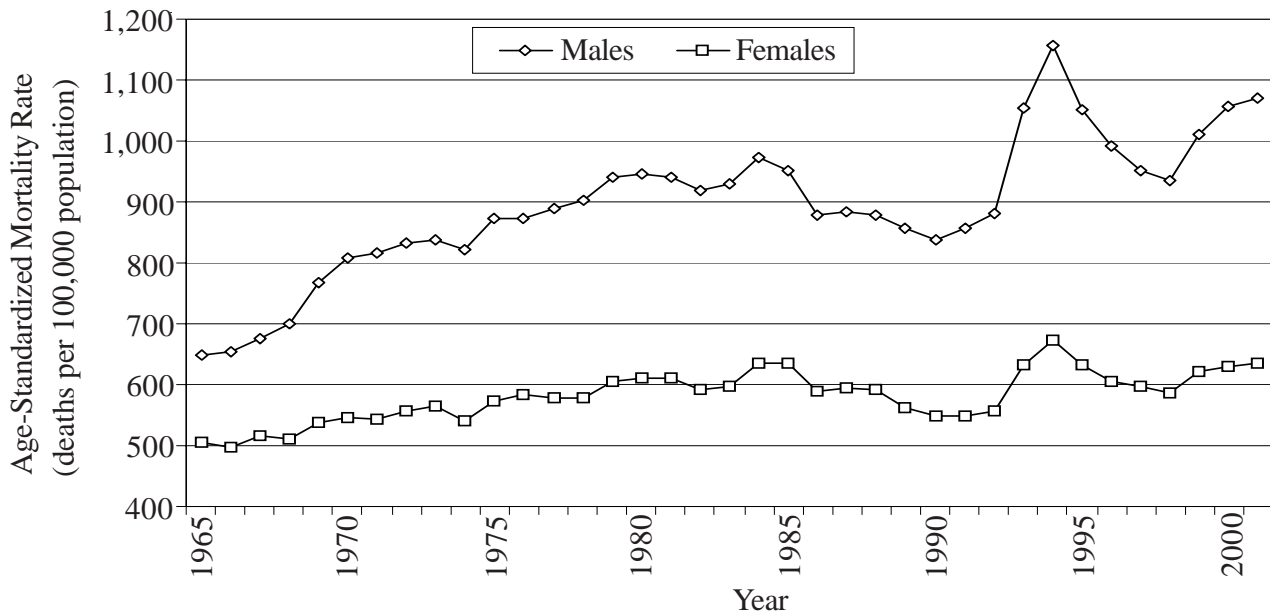
Source: *The Demographic Yearbook of Russia: 2002*, Moscow: State Committee on Statistics, 2002, pp. 241-49.

**Figure 16. Rise in Mortality, Russia, 1970–71 to 2001**

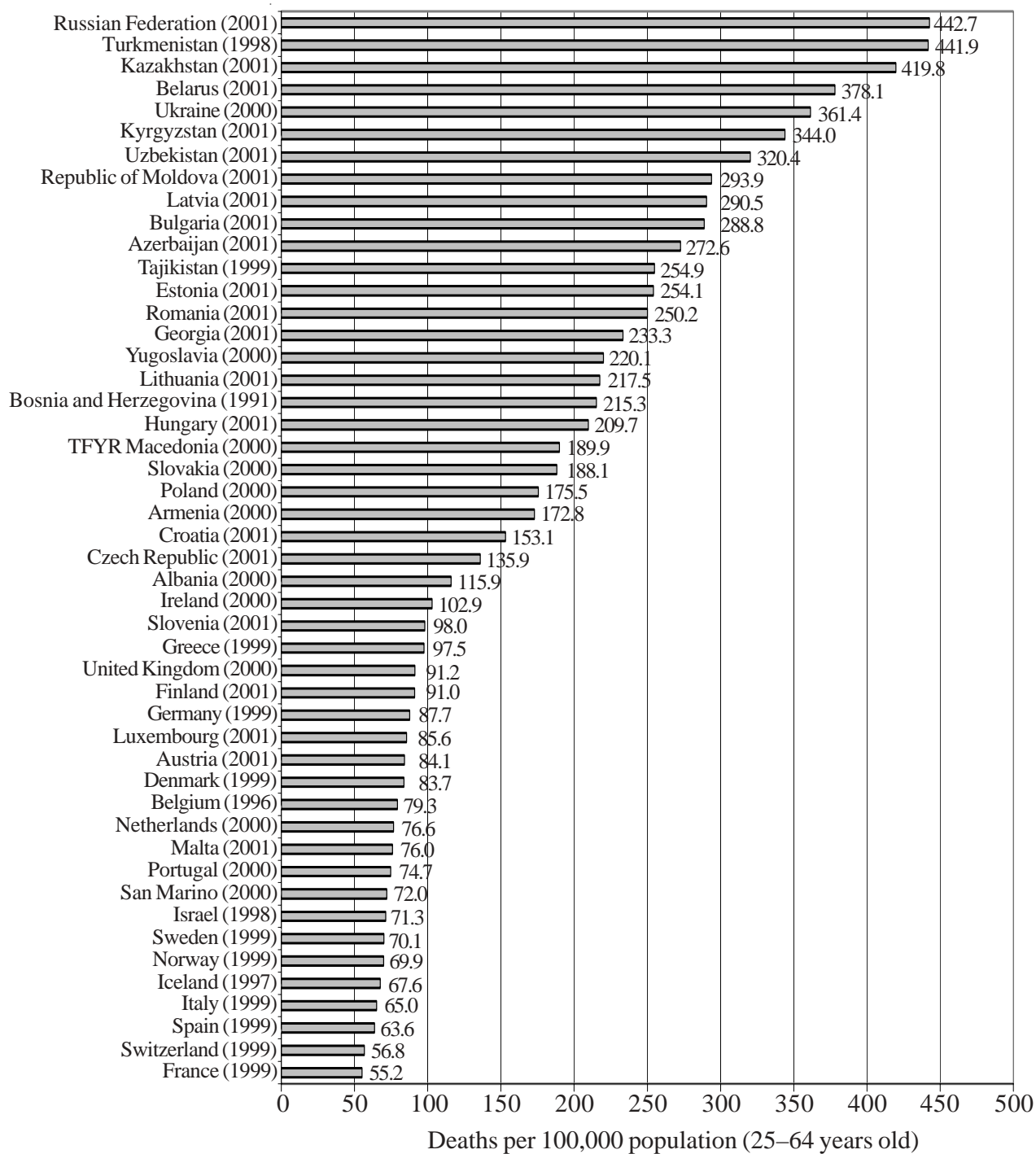


Source: *The Demographic Yearbook of Russia: 2002 Statistical Handbook*, Moscow: State Committee on Statistics, 2002, Table 2.6; *Russian Statistical Yearbook*, Moscow: State Committee on Statistics, 1997, Table 2.17.

**Figure 17. Cardiovascular Disease Mortality, 1965–2001**

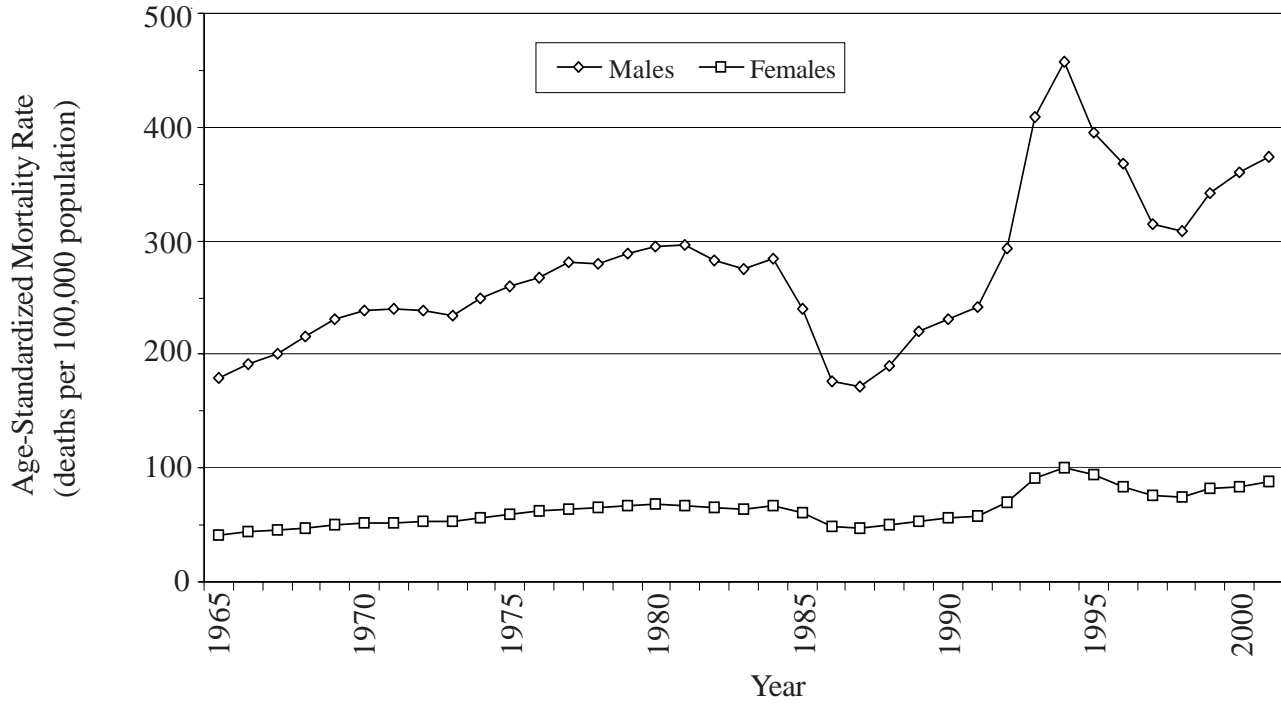


Source: *The Demographic Yearbook of Russia: 2002 Statistical Handbook*, Moscow: State Committee on Statistics, 2002, Table 6.4.

**Figure 18. Circulatory Disease Mortality, Russia and Europe**

Source: World Health Organization, *Atlas of Health in Europe*, p. 38.

**Figure 19. Injury and Accident Mortality, Russia, 1965–2001**



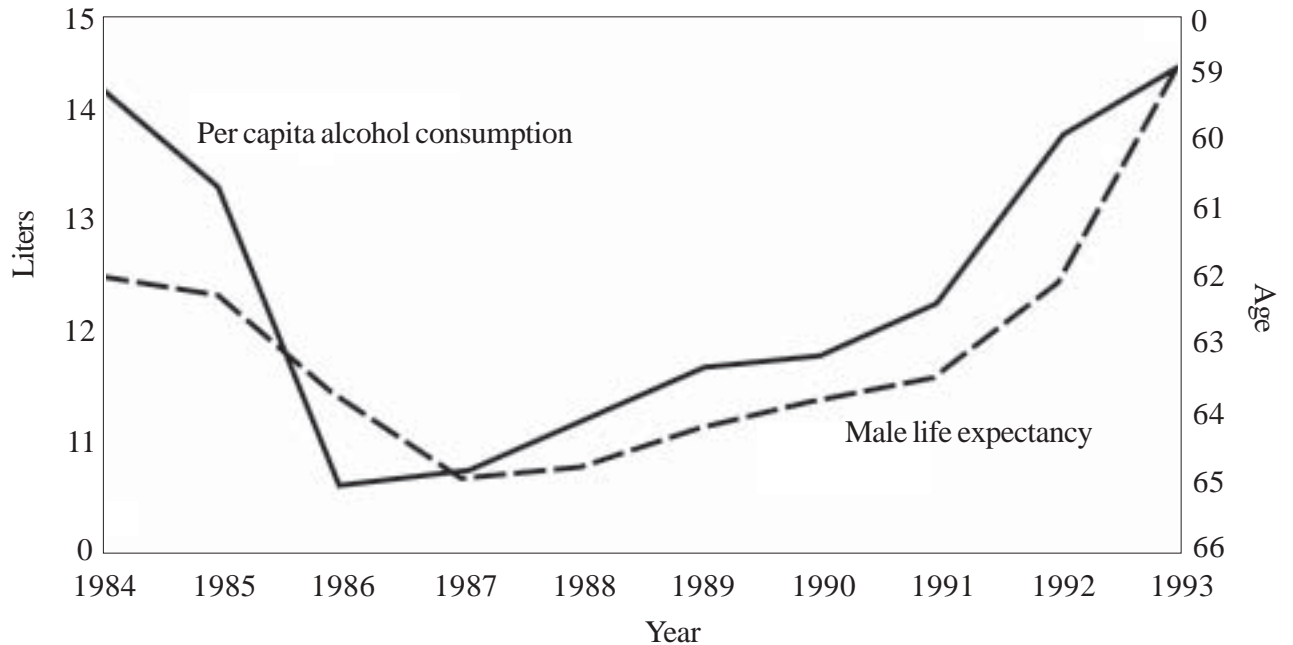
Source: *The Demographic Yearbook of Russia: 2002 Statistical Handbook*, Moscow: State Committee on Statistics, 2002, Table 6.4.

**Figure 20. Deaths from External Causes of Injury and Poisoning, Russia and Europe**



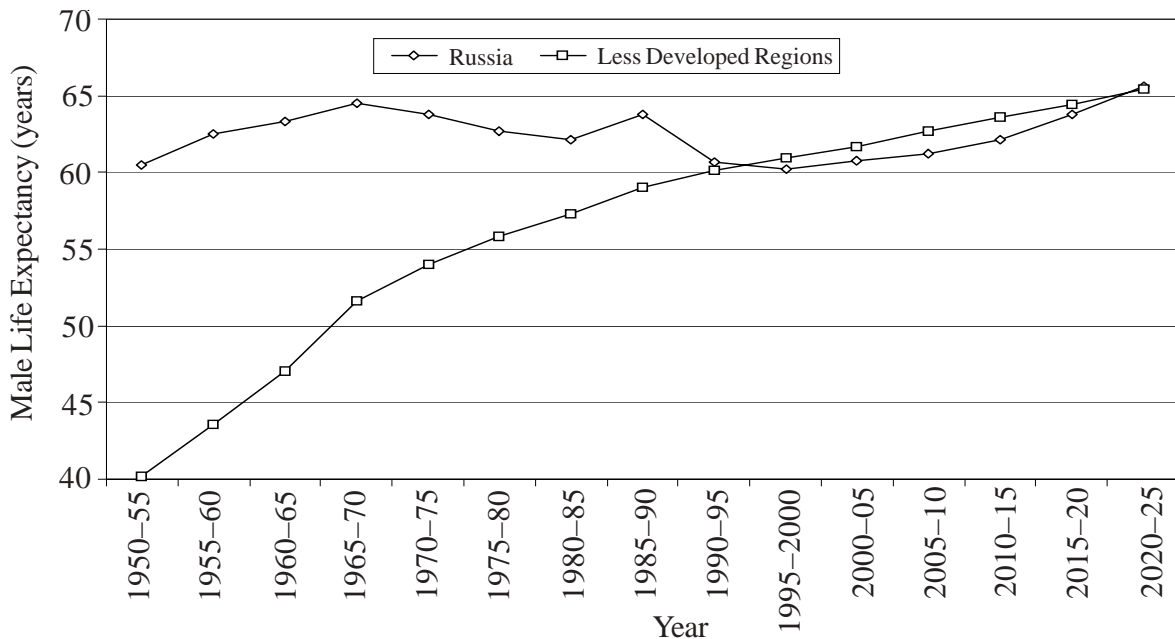
Source: World Health Organization, *Atlas of Health in Europe*, <[www.euro.who.int/document/E79876.pdf](http://www.euro.who.int/document/E79876.pdf)>.

**Figure 21. Alcohol Consumption and Russian Male Life Expectancy, 1984–1993**



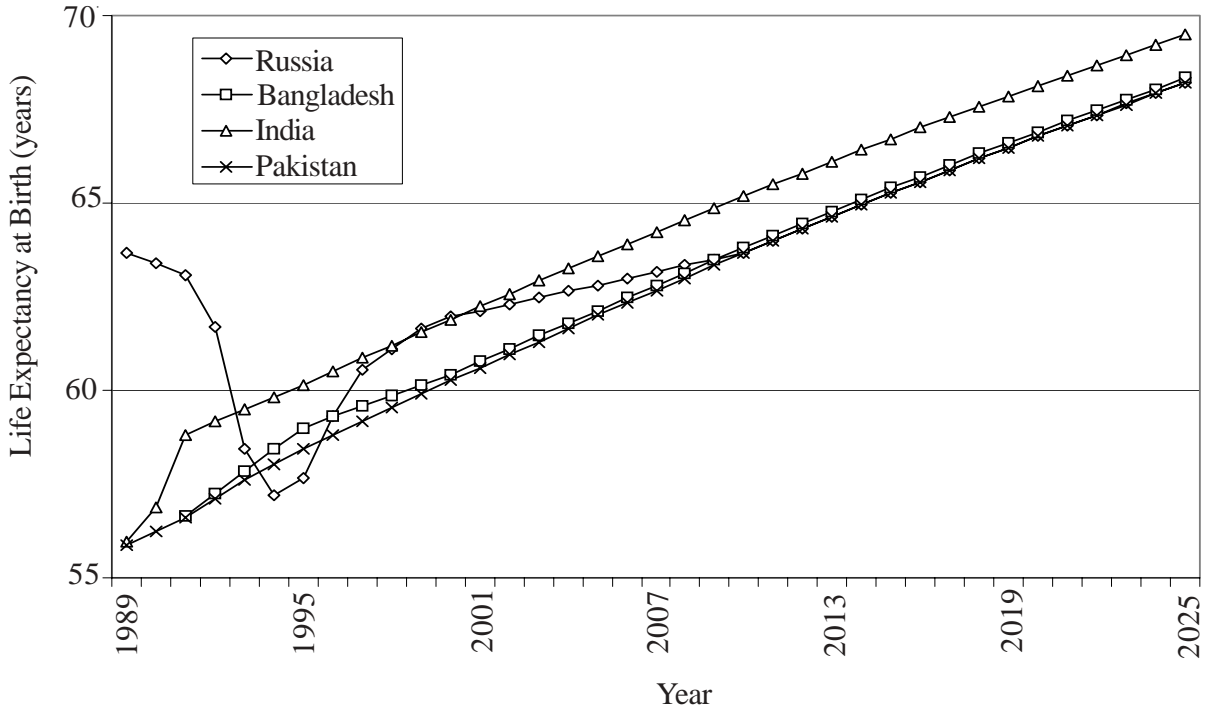
Source: From Julie DaVanzo and Clifford Grammich, *Dire Demographics: Population Trends in the Russian Federation*, RAND, 2001.  
 Note: Graph is inverted to scale for life expectancy.

**Figure 22. Male Life Expectancy: Russia vs. Less Developed Regions, 1950–2025**



Source: United Nations Population Division, *World Population Prospects: The 2002 Revision*, Population Database.

**Figure 23. Male Life Expectancy: Russia vs. South Asia, 1989–2025**



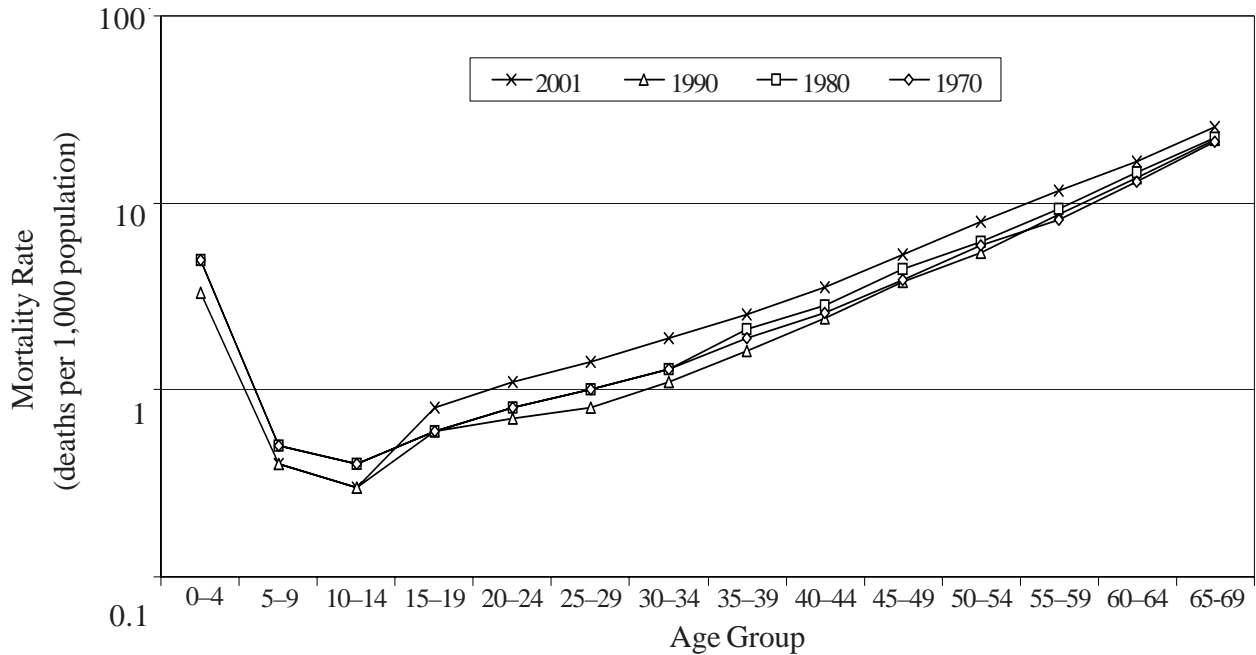
Source: U.S. Bureau of the Census, International Database.

**Figure 24. Russian Male Mortality by Age, 1970, 1980, 1990, 2001**



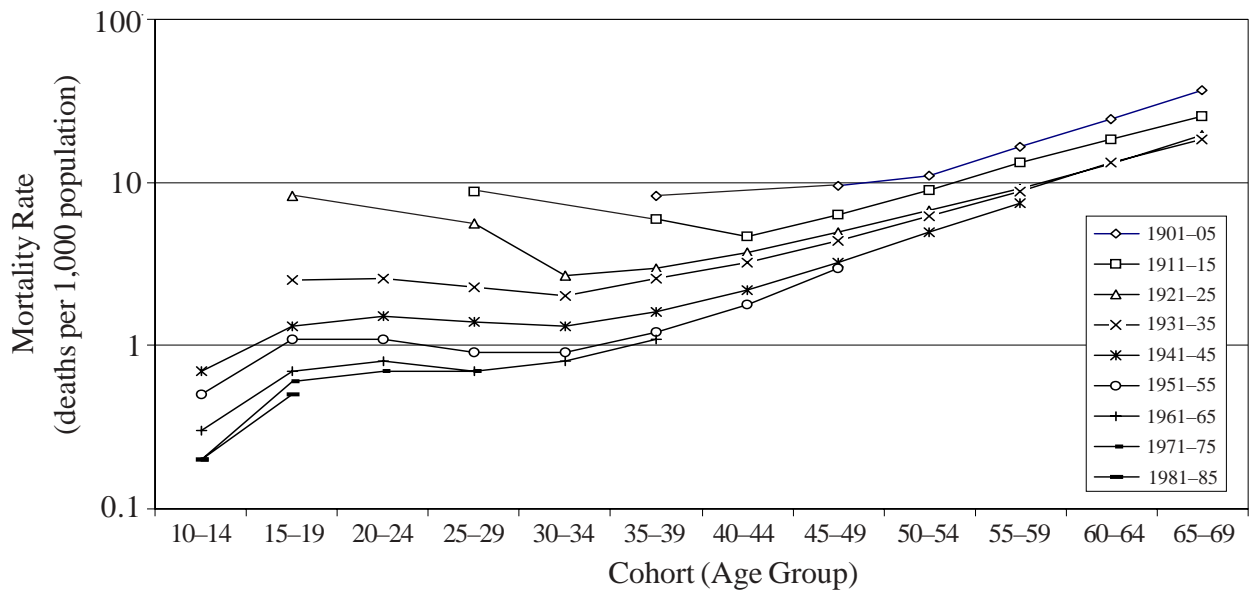
Source: Russian Statistical Yearbook, Moscow: State Committee on Statistics, 1997, Table 2.17.

**Figure 25. Russian Female Mortality by Age, 1970, 1980, 1990, 2001**



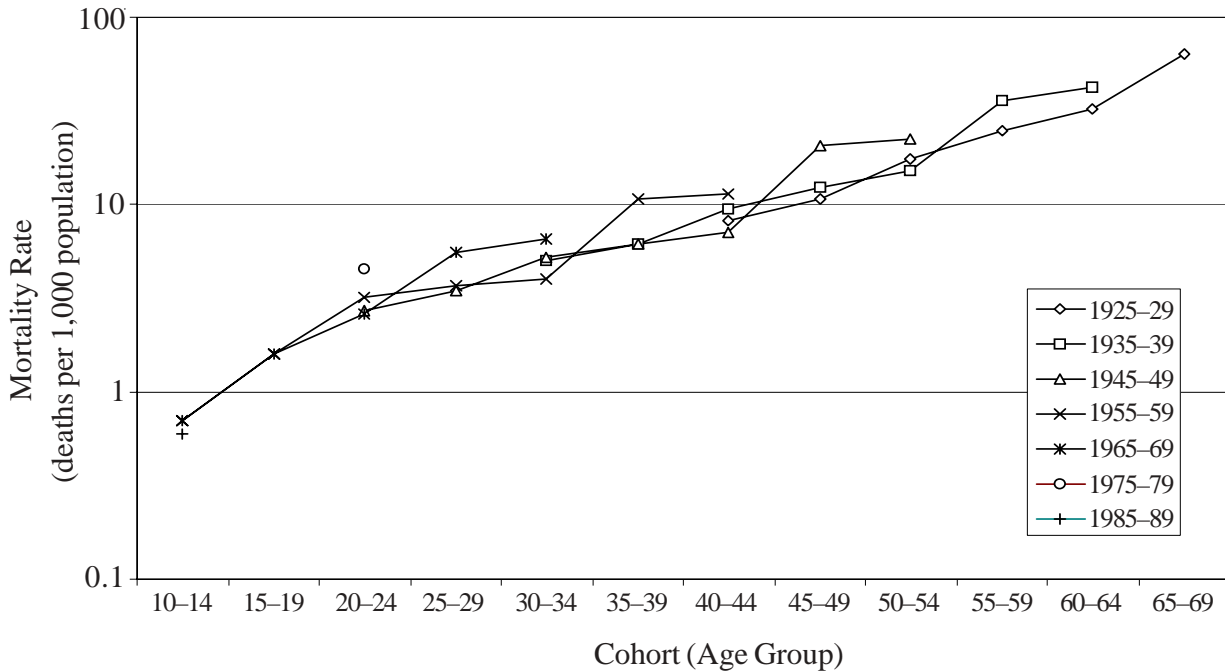
Source: *Russian Statistical Yearbook*, Moscow: State Committee on Statistics, 1997, Table 2.17.

**Figure 26. Male Mortality by Birth Cohort, Japan, ca. 1901–1985**



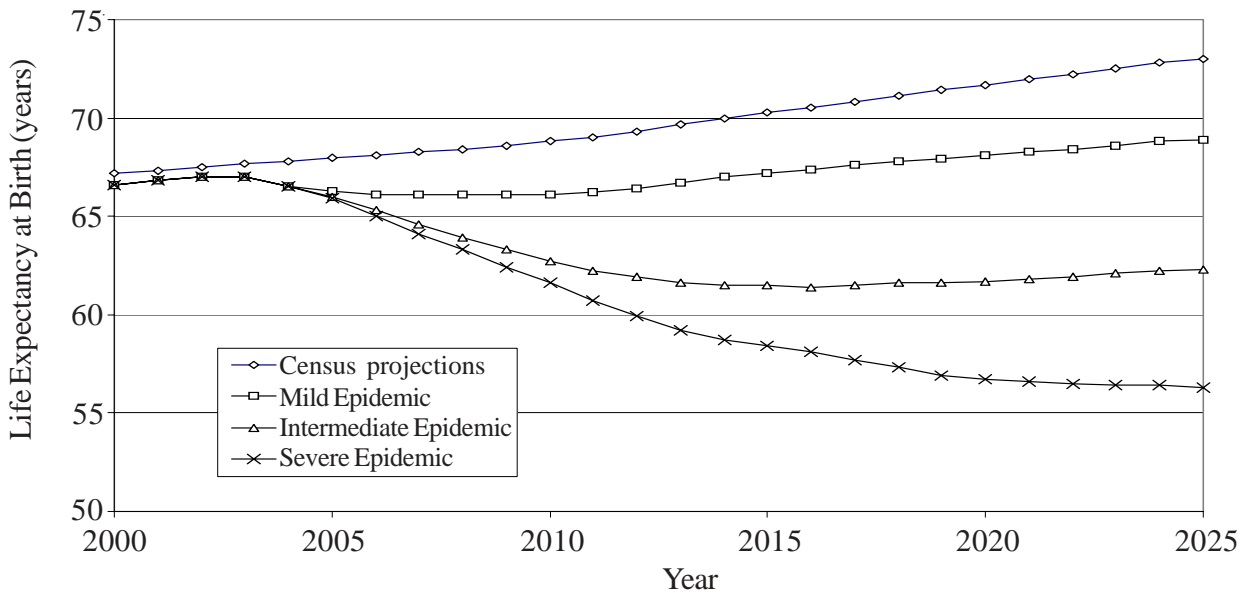
Sources: *UN Demographic Yearbook*, 1952, 1978, 1985, and 1992 editions; Japanese Ministry of Health, Labour, and Welfare, 2001.

**Figure 27. Male Mortality by Birth Cohort, Russia, ca. 1925–1989**



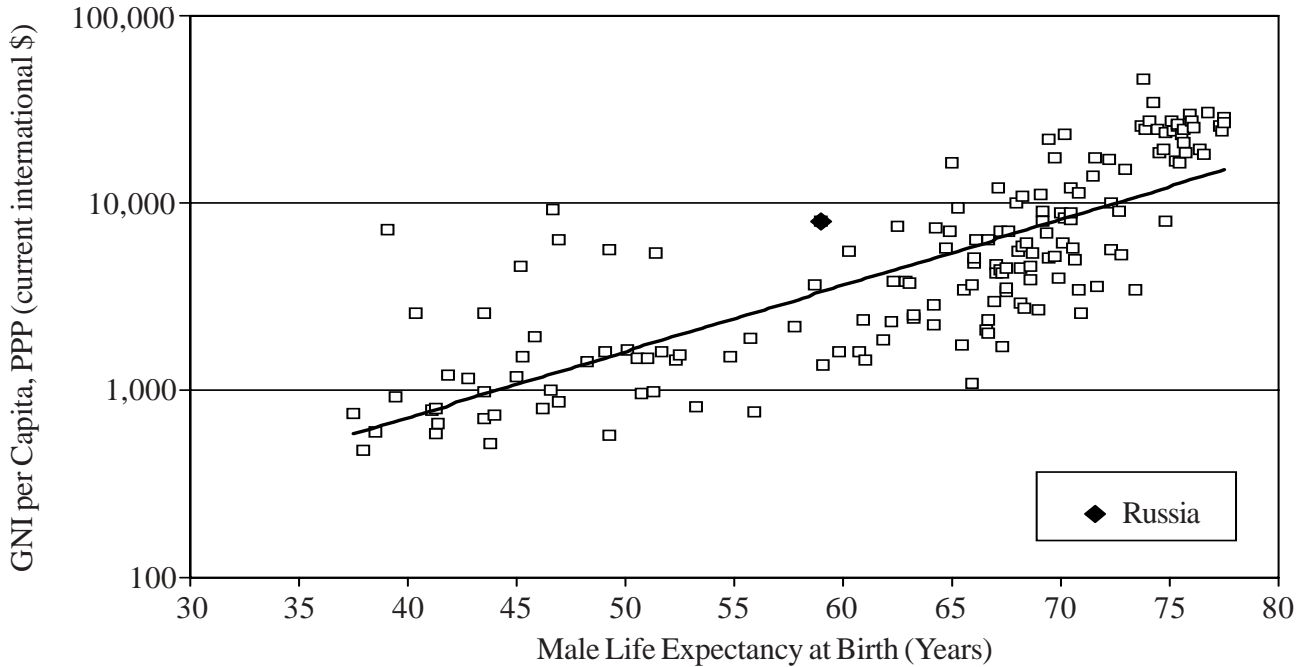
Sources: Population SSSR 1987, p. 326; Demographic Yearbook SSSR 1990, p. 363; *Demographic Yearbook of Russia*, 1995, p. 219; *The Demographic Yearbook of Russia*, 2002, p. 165.

**Figure 28. Projected Life Expectancy, Russia, 2000–2025**



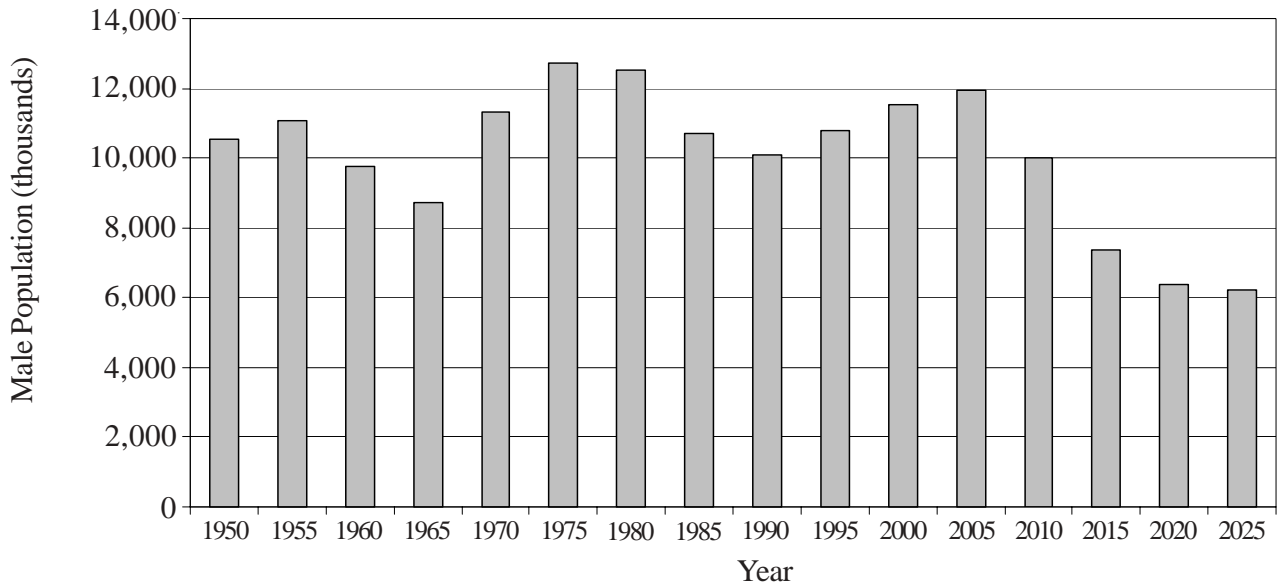
Source: Nicholas Eberstadt, "Projecting HIV in Eurasia: Our Methodology (Charts)," <[www.aei.org/docLib/20021222\\_pseber021112a.pdf](http://www.aei.org/docLib/20021222_pseber021112a.pdf)>.

**Figure 29. GNI per Capita vs. Male Life Expectancy, 2000**



Source: United Nations Population Division, *World Population Prospects: The 2000 Revision*, CD-ROM.

**Figure 30. Male Population Age 15–24, Russia, 1950–2025**



Source: United Nations Population Division, *World Population Prospects: The 2002 Revision*.



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