

## THE SPECIFIC FEATURES OF DEMOGRAPHIC SITUATION IN NITRA COUNTY

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**Abstract:** It is necessary to outline several facts about the valuation of demographic situation of Nitra County. Firstly, the age structure of Nitra region inhabitants is less favourable than the age structure of the Slovak Republic. In comparison to Slovakia, post-productive age group is more represented in this county, but on the other hand, pre-productive group is below the average level. Index of ageing documents that demographic ageing in Nitra County was faster than in Slovakia. The second specific feature is represented by nationality structure of population. 30 per cent of Nitra County population declare Hungarian nationality (in the south of the county mainly). The natural decrease is typical for whole region. It is connected with low level of natality and growing level of mortality. According to spatial differences of natural increase/decrease and other demographic characteristics, the county area is divided into two parts, the north and the south.

**Key words:** population ageing, Hungarian minority, low natality, mortality increase, natural decrease, depopulation region

### 1. INTRODUCTION

According to the demographic characteristics, Nitra County belongs to the problematic areas. Some demographic processes and phenomena related to the population movement seem to have less favourable or negative running, comparing to other regions of the Slovak Republic. The demographic processes in every population depend on its structure. The processes of natural movement of Nitra county population are affected mainly by age structure.

The nationality structure being enough specific and closely related with boundary position of Nitra County has a strong influence, too. This paper brings information about the individual features of natural movement of Nitra County population. In addition, the

paper concerns particular selected demographic structures, which are specific with their characteristics and values in frame of the Slovak Republic and have a clear impact on dynamics of the county population. The development and intensity of the particular coefficients are compared with other areas of Slovakia in this paper.

## **2. THE SPECIFIC FEATURES OF DEMOGRAPHIC SITUATION OF NITRA COUNTY**

### **2.1. The age structure and ageing of population**

As it was mentioned above, the age structure of Nitra County population seems to be one of main problems of this region. In comparison to the Slovak average, a relative ageing of Nitra County inhabitants is faster and this basic feature of the population age structure is typical mainly for the southern part of the county. This shows deficiency of the pre-productive population group (0-14) being below the average in the Slovak Republic (21,66 per cent) and in other Slovak counties. Nitra County is the second one (after Bratislava County) with the lowest percentage of pre-productive group (19,89 per cent). These are the only two counties with the share of pre-productive group under 20 per cent. The percentage of pre-productive population is under the Slovak average on a district level, too. The pre-productive population does not exceed this average in any district of the county. The lowest share of "child" age group has been found in districts Komárno, Nové Zámky and Levice.

The percentage of post-productive inhabitants moves Nitra County to an extreme position. In comparison with other counties, Nitra County has the highest representation (19,59 per cent) of the post-productive population (60+ males, 55+ females), while the share of this age group is 17,62 per cent in Slovakia. South districts of Nitra County, i.e. Nové Zámky, Levice, Komárno and Zlaté Moravce reach the highest percentages on the district level (fig. 1).

Some other demographic coefficients refer to the increased presence of the post-productive population in Nitra County, too. Index of ageing shows one of the highest value (136,42) in Slovakia. This value is also higher than Slovak average (114,19; fig. 2). The percentage of the post-productive population is considerably above the Slovak average in all districts of Nitra County.

Average age is another coefficient confirming faster ageing of Nitra County inhabitants. Its value is 36,22, which is higher than the average value for the Slovak Republic (34,82). The same situation is being observed on a district level, too. The average age reaches the highest values in districts Nové Zámky (37,00), Levice (36,63), Komárno (36,64) and Zlaté Moravce (36,35).

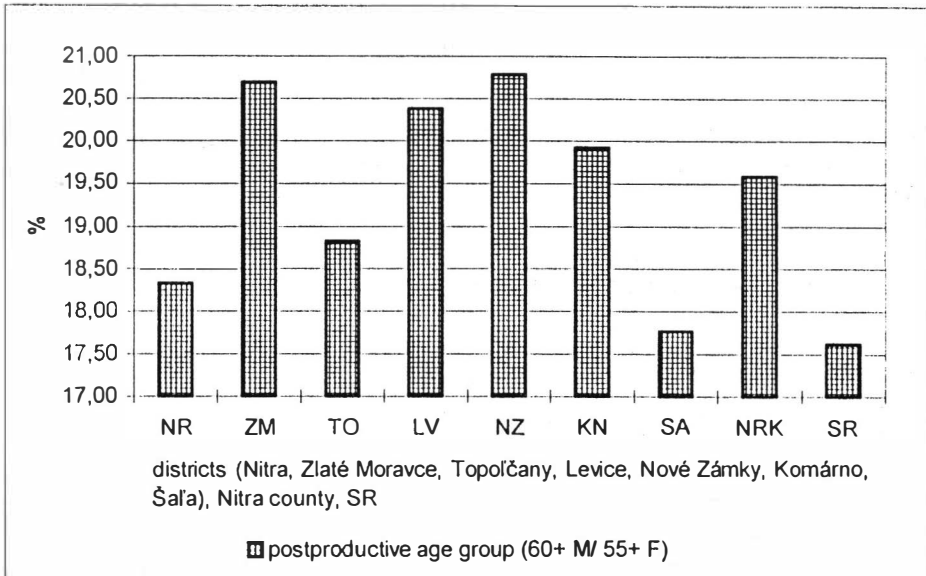


Fig. 1 Percentage of postproductive population age group pf Nitra county according to districts in 1996

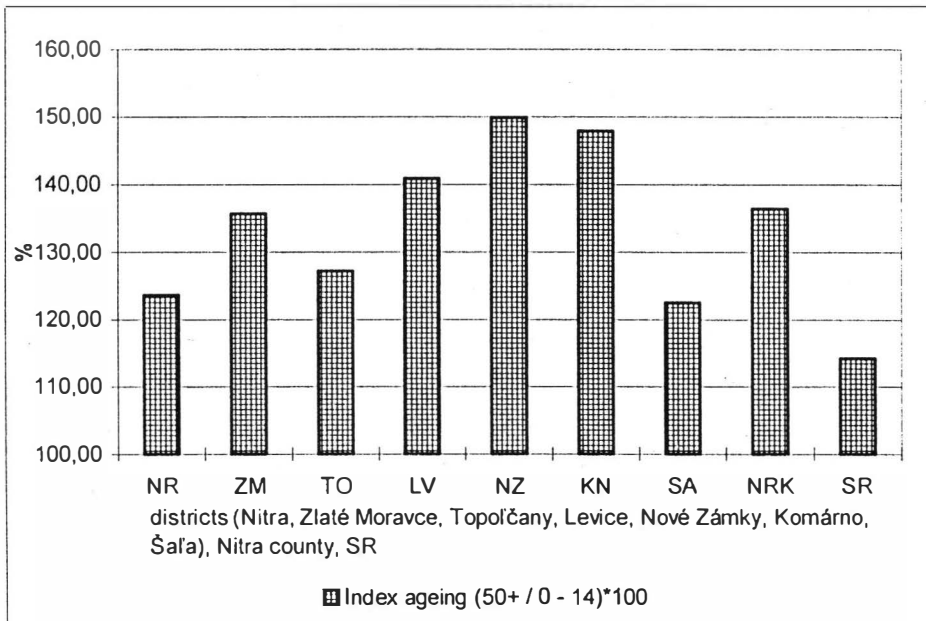


Fig. 2 Index of ageing of Nitra county population according to districts in 1996

The population age structure of particular settlements, districts as well as in Nitra County gets worse by increasing number of the post-productive inhabitants and decreasing the pre-productive population group, i.e. a relative ageing comes from "above" and from "below" (more than 40 per cent of the Nitra County population). This type of settlements occurs mainly in the south districts Nové Zámky, Levice and Komárno.

## 2.2. The specific nationality structure

In evaluation of the spatial differentiation of the population age structure in Nitra County, it is necessary to pay attention to its national composition, which is very specific in this part of Slovakia. In 1991, 68,1 per cent of 720,000 inhabitants of Nitra County declared Slovak nationality and 30,2 per cent declared Hungarian nationality. In comparison, the percentage of inhabitants with Hungarian nationality in the Slovak Republic in 1991 was 10,8 per cent. Spatial distribution of Hungarian population is not uniform in the county's area. This population group is concentrated in the south districts, which border on Hungary, mainly Komárno district with 2/3 of inhabitants with Hungarian nationality (72 per cent). In this special case, it is difficult to speak about a national minority, since the percentage of inhabitants with Slovak nationality is only 26 per cent in this district (fig. 3).

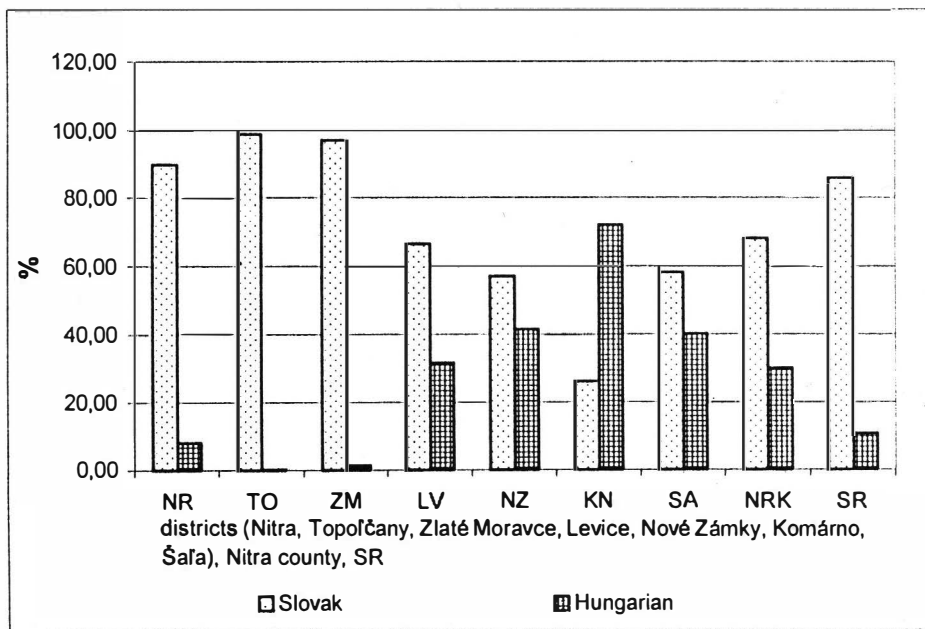


Fig. 3 Nationality structure of Nitra county population according to districts in 1991 (Slovak, Hungarian nationality)

The higher concentration of Hungarian population (about 40 per cent) is observed in districts Nové Zámky, Šaľa and in Levice district (31 per cent). The north of the county, with districts Zlaté Moravce, Topoľčany (about 1 per cent) and Nitra (8 per cent), is characterised by a low concentration of Hungarian population (Graph 3). The similar situation occurs on the local level, too. South of the county is formed by almost coherent belt of settlements, where the share of Hungarian population reaches more than 50 per cent. In this territory, two compact cores of the settlements with over 80 per cent of Hungarian inhabitants can be identified.

### **2.3. The problems of natural increase**

From a global point of view, the natural movement of Nitra County population is rather adverse. The natural increase puts the county to an extreme position within Slovakia. Comparing with other counties, Nitra County had the highest value of natural decrease (-1,49‰) in 1997, the value of natural increase in the Slovak Republic was 1,30‰ in the same year. The districts in the south of the county belong to a belt drawing across the south of Slovakia, being often described as an area with the lowest population increase.

On the one hand, the natural decrease is related to low natality and on the other hand with higher mortality than in other regions of Slovakia. As for the spatial differences of natural increase/decrease, Nitra County is formed by two different regions.

The natural increase reaches the highest values in settlements situated in the north part of the county, i.e. districts Zlaté Moravce, Topoľčany, Nitra and Šaľa. This group of settlements can be characterised by natality around the average and above the average level of the Slovak population. The settlements with the natural increase are in prevalence in this part of the county. This is a feature, which make total differences between the north and the south of the county.

As far as natural population renewal is concerned, the settlements in the north districts show out a more positive age structure (younger population) and a strong prevalence of Slovak nationality. This feature significantly influences the course of the natural increase as well as mortality and natality being closer to average levels of the Slovak population. The settlements belonging to the particular regions are related by the similar values of natality, mortality and natural increase resulting from the relationship between those two coefficients. The low level of natality is typical for a group of settlements located in the south and the southwest of the county, i.e. districts Levice, Nové Zámky, Komárno. The values of this coefficient in the observed time period in these districts were considerably below the Slovak average value (crude birth rate in Slovakia within 1993-1995 was 12,60‰). The second feature is high mortality with values above the Slovak average (crude death rate in Slovakia within 1993-1995 was 9,80‰). The above mentioned less favourable population age structure in the south part of Nitra County has to be taken into account, too.

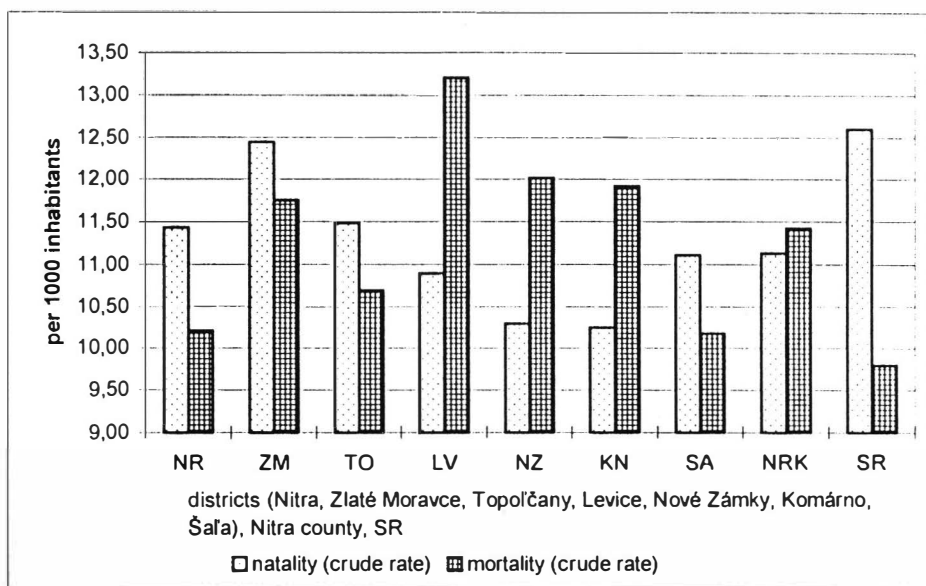


Fig. 4 Natural movement of Nitra county population according to districts in 1993 - 1995

### 3. CONCLUSION

The fast relative ageing of population is a consequence of low natality as well as higher mortality. The settlements with prevalence of older inhabitants not involved actively into the process of natural increase are located primarily in the south districts of Nitra County. The national structure of population plays an important role in this demographic situation, too. The demographic features of Nitra County are characterised by low natality, high concentration of older inhabitants and raising level of mortality, low natural increase (the specific feature of Hungarian nationality in the Slovak Republic). Reproductive behaviour of the Hungarian minority population is similar to the population of Hungary, more than to the Slovak Republic. This is reflected in various developments of natural movement and its spatial differentiation in Nitra County. Observing the demographic processes and phenomena, we can find significant differences between the south and the north of this county.

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### Resume

#### Osobitosti vybraných demografických charakteristík Nitrianskeho kraja

Dôsledkom nízkej natality je rýchle relatívne starnutie obyvateľstva a tým vyššia úmrtnosť. Najmä v južných okresoch sú silne zastúpené obce s prevahou staršieho obyvateľstva, ktoré sa už do procesu prirodzeného pohybu aktívne nezapája. Podiel na tejto demografickej situácii, charakteristickej nízkou natalitou, zvýšeným zastúpením staršieho obyvateľstva a zvýšenou úmrtnosťou, nízkym prirodzeným prírastkom má aj národnostné zloženie obyvateľstva, ktoré je v rámci SR špecifické výrazným zastúpením maďarskej národnosti. Obyvatelia maďarskej menšiny majú reprodukčné správanie bližšie k populácii Maďarska ako Slovenska, čo sa odzrkadľuje na priebehu prirodzeného pohybu obyvateľstva a jeho priestorovej diferenciácie v Nitrianskom kraji, kde vidieť pri sledovaní jednotlivých čiastkových procesov výrazný rozdiel medzi jeho severom a juhom.

Najvyššie hodnoty dosahuje prirodzený prírastok v severnejšie ležiacich obciach, t. j. v okresoch Zlaté Moravce, Topoľčany, Nitra a Šaľa. Túto skupinu obcí charakterizuje živorodenosť okolo priemeru až nad priemerom SR. V tejto časti kraja sú obce s prirodzeným prírastkom v prevahe, s čím ju diametrálne odlišujú od juhu, juhovýchodu kraja. Z hľadiska prirodzenej reprodukcie obyvateľstva majú "lepšiu" vekovú štruktúru, resp. mladšiu a tiež sú charakteristické, v porovnaní s juhom kraja, výraznou prevahou obyvateľstva slovenskej národnosti, čo tiež značne ovplyvňuje priebeh prirodzeného prírastku ako aj mieru úmrtnosti a pôrodnosti, ktoré sú svojimi hodnotami bližšie k priemeru SR.