

Review paper

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REFUGEES IN SERBIA – TWENTY YEARS LATER

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Abstract: The paper analyzes the problem of refugees, twenty years after their settling to Serbia. According to population Census 2011, the share of refugees in total population is 1.04%. The most significant contribution of the refugee contingent are reflecting in quantitative terms (increasing of population). The paper represents the scope and territorial distribution of refugees, some of the demographic components were analyzed, including influence of refugee migrations on demographic increase of Serbian population. Changes were analyzed on the municipality levels in Serbia, according to available data for time period 1996-2011. Contribution of refugees to migrations are undoubted. Analyze confirmed that refugee contingent is no different than domicil population in demographics and other characteristics.

Keywords: refugees, territorial distribution, natural movement, Serbia

Introduction

Exile has always represented one of the inevitably consequences of war and uncivilized behavior of extremely regimes, no matter if that migration meant to be under pressure, great population movements or temporarily displacement of population. During human history, but even nowadays, are present mass expulsion, genocide and displacement of entire populations. The war in the former Yugoslavia in the 1990s, and ethnic conflict that preceded in some hotspots, ended with exile and persecution of many people from Croatia, Bosnia and Herzegovina. For Serbia, these migrations meant accepting a lot of people who were in exile in several waves and with different status (Stevanović, 2005). Before the collapse of former Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (SFRY), at the end of the 1980s, those who predicted future events were moving to Serbia, which included exchanging of properties and regulating citizenship. In the same period, number of people moved “temporarily” to the relatives and friends, making the later first or early waves of refugees.

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With war escalation (in Croatia from 1991, and in Bosnia and Herzegovina from 1992) the number of refugees is increasing, and refugees from Bosnia and Herzegovina officially got refugees status. After big persecution of Serbian people from Croatia in 1995, Serbia was flooded with great number of exiles, but they didn't get the same status as refugees even if they were no different from them, they had status of exiled people (Lukić & Nikitović, 2004). Most of them who were exiled in Serbia in that time, haven't got a refugee status according to international criteria (international convention from 1951 and Protocol from 1967, which former SFRY ratified), but according to republic legal acts (The Law Republic of Serbia about refugees, The official Gazette, 18/92, 42/2002, 45/2002).

Legislation of Republic of Serbia, which regulated these issues, divides people into two categories:

- Those who are by international law and legislation of Republic of Serbia considered refugees and,
- War-affected persons, who according to international norms and Law On Refugees of Republic of Serbia are not entitled to refugee status. The population of war-affected persons initially consisted mostly of former YNA (Yugoslavian National Army), former workers of federal administration and similar, who lived in other ex Yugoslavian countries. In these groups of people are also those one who never requested status of refugee and those whose request was denied.

The paper represents problems of refugee migrations in the last decade of the twentieth century, and its influence on total number change and composition of the population in Serbia. The trend of negative natural movement of population in Vojvodina since 1989 and in central Serbia from 1992, made migration component in the population change more important, since it is mostly a deciding factor in population growth. In this sense, the contribution of refugees to the values of the migration inflow of population is undeniable. This paper presents an analysis of the impact of refugees on the change of some selected demographic structures.

Serbia, twenty years after first war outbreak in the former SFRY, still hosts about 75.000 people with refugees status, and 75% of this number are refugees from Croatia. The largest number of refugees are located in AP Vojvodina (48,37%), more than ¼ of total population of refugees are living in Belgrade (28,67%), and in central Serbia 22,70%. According to Commissariat of refugees from September 2010, in the collective centers lived 967 refugees. Twenty years after war events, refugees, coming back, exiled, integration, there is a few solved

problems in lives of refugees, immigrants and returnee. Actually, in most of the cases, observing regional average, qualitative changes were results of individual efforts and wishes to win slow state systems. Over last twenty years, in Serbia are living about half millions of refugees from the ex SFRY. During that time, they fit less or more into new enviroment, with different level of adaptation that depends on factors such as education, profession etc, and the type of settlement in that refugee settled (urban or rural, collective centers).

Changes of the number and territorial distribution of refugees in Serbia

According to UNHCR documents (UNHCR Global report 2011), Serbia is on top by the number of refugees and internally displaced people and thirteen in the world. Every sixth resident of former SFRY was in the refugee situation. That ratio is two times bigger (33.54%), when we considere just population from the origin refugees region. The number of refugess during 1996-2008 has dropped for 80%. It has been two decades since that first refugees came in Serbia from Croatia and Bosnia and Herzegovina. Since than, there were two official censuses, in 1996 and 2001, also registration in period 2004-2005.

According to the first Census in 1996 (Table 2) conduced by Commissariat for Refugees of Republic of Serbia and High Commissariat for Refugees (UNHCR) 537.937 refugees and exiled persons were registered. Most of them were settled in central Serbia, 337.800 or more than half (54.7%) people, and most of them were in Belgrade 170.900 (27,7 %). In Vojvodina 259.700 war affected persons found shelter or 42% of the total number registrated in Serbia. Migration towards Vojvodina were caused by historical migrations of Serbian people (Đurđev, 1996). Colonization of Vojvodina between two World Wars, and especially after Second, was carried by settling Serbian population. Because of that, it is normal that most of refugees have found shelters at friends and cousins, exactly in this part of Serbia (Stevanović, 2005).

On municipality level, 10 of them had part od refugees higher than 20% (Apatin, Indjija, Irig, Mali Zvornik, Ruma, Sremski Karlovci, Stara Pazova, Surčin, Temerin), while municipality with with highest level of refugees is Loznica (30%) (Figure 1).

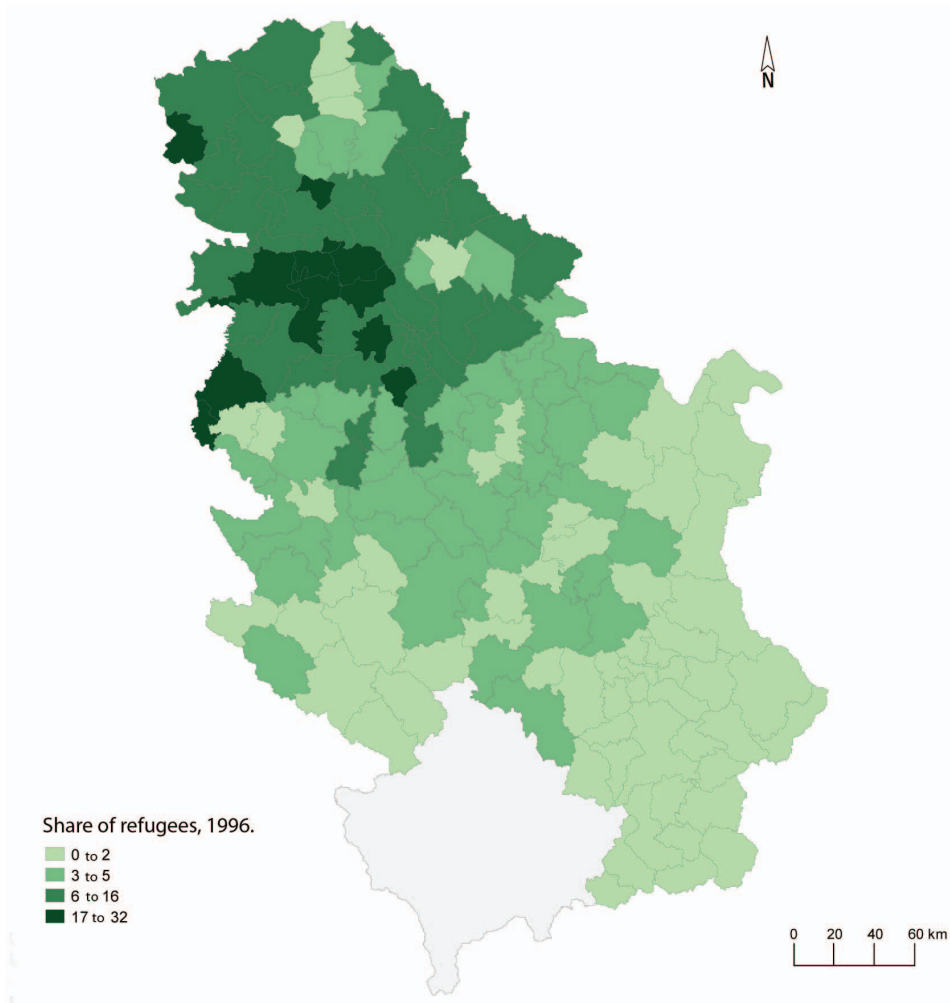


Figure 1. Share of refugees in total population by municipalities, 1996

According to Census (2001), there was 377.131 refugees: 139.076 in the territory of Belgrade city, 95.024 in Central Serbia without Belgrade, 442 in Kosovo and Metohia, and 217 438 in Vojvodina (Table 1). Comparing with Census in 1996, the total number of refugees decreased in Serbia for 165.748, and factor affecting this decrease beside returning or moving to third contry is mortality. By analyzing municipalities (Figure 2), we conclude that the highest share of refugees in total population live in Irig (30%), Mali Zvornik (27%), Surčin (26%), Šid (20%), Stara Pazova (19%) etc.

From all registrated persons, 73% came from Croatia, 26% from Bosnia and Herzegovina. More than half of registrated refugees came in Serbia during August and September of 1995 (Table 1). Comparing with Census of refugees from 2001, teritorial distribution of refugees in Serbia is almost the same. Average age of refugee population is 43 years, and most of them are married. Most of refuges have finished high school (47%), while lot of them are unemployed and their share is extremely high (60%)(Ministry for Human and Minority Rights 2004).

Table 1. Teritorial distribution of refugees in Serbia according to previous and current residence, 2001.

Residence before 1992	Central Serbia		Vojvodina		Kosovo and Metohia		In Total Serbia
	total	%	total	%	total	%	
BIH	78154	40.5	55522	30.2	73	18.9	133749
Croatia	114476	59.3	127962	69.7	306	79.1	242744
Macedonia	3	0.0	6	0.0	0	0.0	9
Slovenia	390	0.2	231	0.1	8	2.1	629
Total	193023	100	183721	100	387	100	378.589

Source of data: Census of refugees, Commissioner for refugees of the Republic of Serbia, 2001.

After the 2002 Census, number of refugees was continually decreasing. One part of them got citizenship of Republic Serbia, and some of them moved out of country, while some part return to the country of origin. Because all of mentioned above, in the end of 2004, it was estimated that refugees number must be again determine in Serbia, by registrating them. During registration of refugees in the period November 2004 - January 2005, refugee status was confirmed for 104.246 people (UNHCR, 2005).

Table 2. The number of refugees 1996-2011.

	1996	2001	2004-2005	2011
Serbia	537,937	378,589	104,682	74,487
Central Serbia	148,367	80,901	24,119	17,074
Vojvodina	229,811	183,721	50,436	36,521
Belgrade	140,662	113,580	29,867	20,709

Source of data: Commissioner for refugees of the Republic of Serbia, Census of refugees, 1996, 2001 and registration of refugees 2004-2005, 2011.

According to Census of 2002, total population in Serbia was 7.498.001. Owing to the influx of refugee population and their classification as de facto (total) population, decline in overall population in Serbia in inter-census period 1991-2002 was reduced to 78.836 persons (or -1%). Reduction of population of central Serbia was 140.633 (or -2.5%), while number of population in Vojvodina increased for 61.797 (or 3.6%). Owing to the population of refugees, some

municipalities, especially in Vojvodina increased their population: Šid, Indija, Sremski Karlovci, Stara Pazova etc. Within the central Serbia, the largest part of refugees in overall population is enumerated in Belgrade municipalities: Zemun, Barajevo, Čukarica etc.

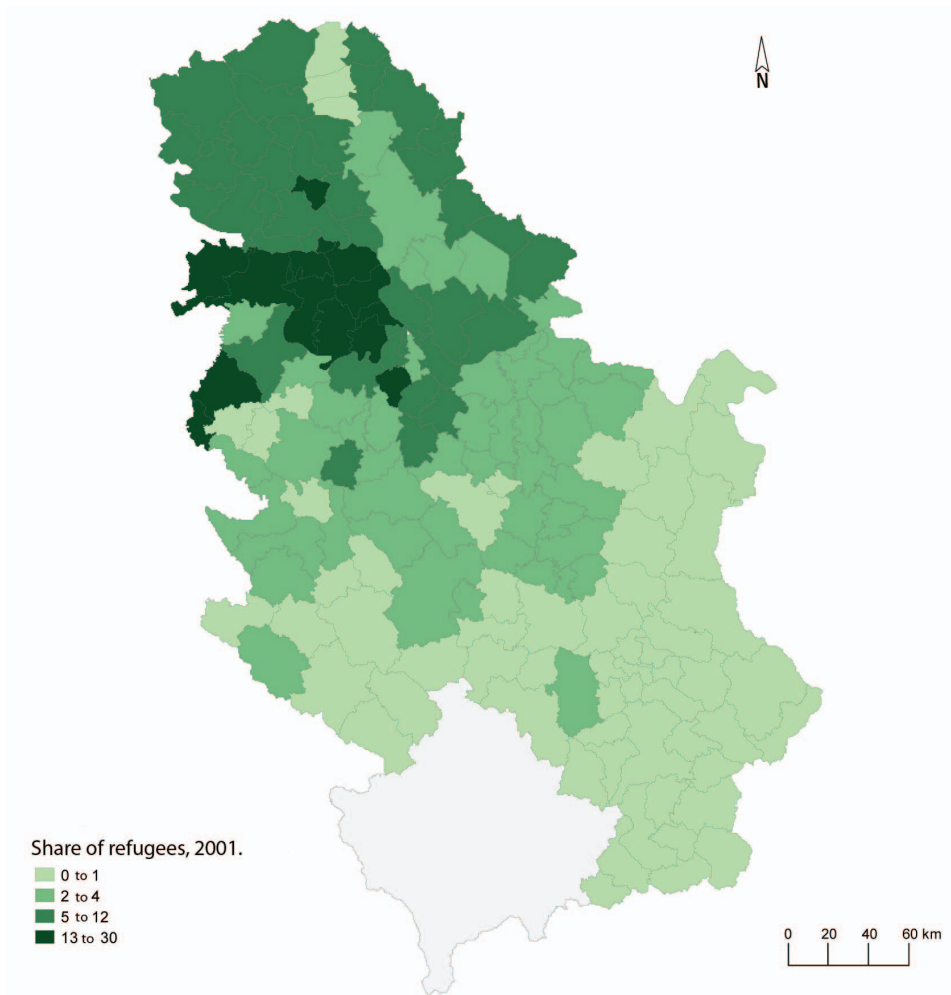


Figure 2. Share of refugees in total population by municipalities, 2001

As previously mentioned, the number of refugees according to Censuses was continually decreasing and as main reasons for this is acquiring of citizenship of the Republic of Serbia and gaining personal documents, the return to the countries of origin or moving to some other country. The process leaving to

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some third country took place between first two Censuses (from 1996 and 2001) and even after that. It is estimated that in this way permanent solution provided over 50.000 persons (Serbian Commissariat for Refugees, 2006).

Table 3. The number of population from 2002, 2011 and number of refugees from 2011

	Number of population 2002	Number of population 2011	Absolute increase/ decrease (2002 - 2011)	Number of refugees 2011	Share of refugees 2011 (%)
Serbia	7,498001	7,186862	-311139	74487	1.04
central Serbia	3,889885	3,595613	-325229	17074	0.47
Vojvodina	2,031992	1,931809	-115103	36521	1.89
Beograd	1,576124	1,659440	62997	20709	1.25
Apatin	32813	28654	-4159	988	3.45
Barajevo	24641	27036	2395	775	2.87
Zemun	152950	166292	13342	4461	2.68
Indjija	49609	47204	-2405	1818	3.85
Irig	12329	10717	-1612	489	4.56
Stara Pazova	67576	65508	-2068	3333	5.09

Source of data: Census of population from year 2011, Statistical office of the Republic of Serbia Belgrade. Registration of refugees 2011, Commissioner for refugees of the Republic of Serbia.

According to last available data from 2011 (Table 3), the number of refugees significantly decreased, in Serbia, there was registered 74.487 refugees which represents only 1% of total population of Republic of Serbia (in central Serbia, 17.074 or 0.47% and in Vojvodina 35.521 or 1.9%). From the data above, we can conclude that today, twenty years after arrival of the first refugees in Serbia, this contingent of the population is participating with only 1% in overall population. Analyzing participation of this contingent in municipalities (Figure 3) in 65 municipalities there is no refugees and in 34 municipalities noted participation is over 1%. Municipalities that record significant participation of refugees are Apatin, Zemun, Stara Pazova, Ruma, Indjija etc.

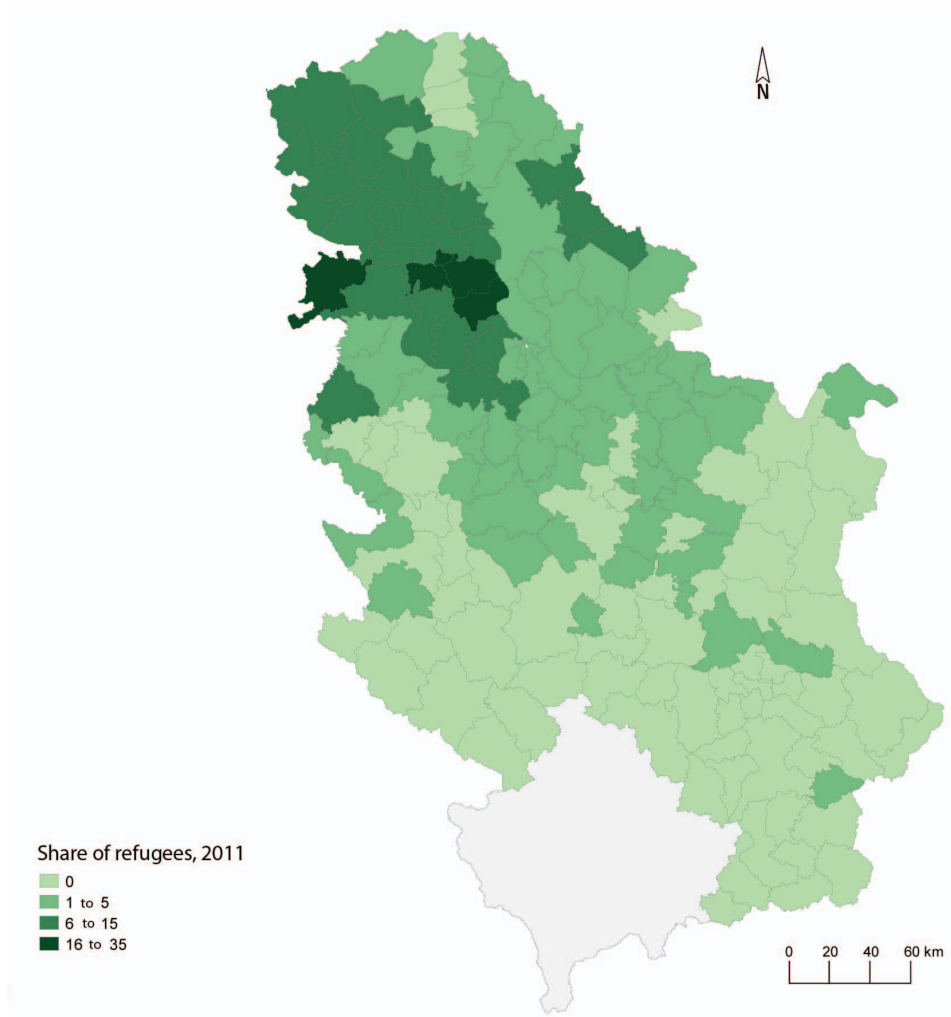


Figure 3. Share of refugees in total population by municipalities, 2011

Basic demographic characteristics of refugee population

On the population change, the crucial influence has the natural movement, but also historical events occurring in the regions of the former SFRY, which encouraged migration of the population, which contributed to the mixing of different ethnic groups. The difficult economical situation, impoverishment of the great part of population, the great increase of unemployment, general uncertainty, political turbulence are some of the many factors which influenced decline of natality (Bubalo-Živković, 2001).

In Vojvodina, apart from negative natural increase in the period from 1991 to 2002 the total increase of population is noticed, which means that positive net migration (the less number of emigrated than immigrated). Owing to refugee population, particular municipalities especially in Vojvodina, enlarged population greatly: municipality Šid (23.4%), Inđija (21.1%), Sremski Karlovci (18.9%), Stara Pazova (18.6%)(Kokotović, 2008).

Table 4. Components of natural population movement by municipalities with high share of refugee population according to dates 2010.

Municipality	In total	Natural growth		
		total	livebirths	died
Novi Sad	330,527	427	4.080	3.653
Apatin	29,864	-250	238	488
Sremski Karlovci	8,819	-25	90	115
Stara Pazova	70,621	-137	622	759
Ruma	55,890	-325	453	778
Inđija	48,075	-285	421	706
Pečinci	21,568	-104	192	296
Zemun	161,531	-1	1.853	1.854
Surčin	40,974	-3	453	456
Loznica	82,175	-258	778	1036

Source of data: Natural Movement of population in Serbia, Statistical office of the Republic of Serbia 2012

The decrease in number of born children is direct consequence of two factors. First is undesirable changes in age composition of population (decreased number of female in optimal fertile age or older than 20-34) present only in low natality regions of Serbia. The main component means the further decrease of fertility or decrease total fertility rate (Rašević, 2007). In the second part of XX century, the low reproductive norms were present with most of Serbian population. The changes of the fertility level in Serbia in the 1990s were going in the direction of the further decline, which were influenced by changes in the range and structure of female fertile contingent. The generation of women aged from 35 to 39 at low natality region in Serbia represents exception, because in this age cohort is noted the slight decline of born children compared to women of the same age in 1991. The difference amounts to 0.08 in Central Serbia id.est. 0.05 child per women in Vojvodina. Looking data from (Figure 4), we can conclude that all municipalities with significant part of refugee population have negative natural growth, which leads us to fact that influx of population during nineties didn't make any changes in natural movement of population, or even if the influence existed, it was short (1994-1995).

Refugees had contributed to increased mortality during nineties. Lot of older people that came, left behind not only their properties, but also position and their status (Bubalo-Živković, 2001). In the period 1994-1995 in Serbia and Central Serbia, it was noted increase of mortality rate ,while in Vojvodina this indicator had dropped from 13,6 ‰ (1994) to 13,4 ‰ (1995). This tendency is noticed in municipality Indjija (12,1-11,2 ‰),while in municipalities Stara Pazova and Šid, continuous increase is noted.

During last twenty years, the process of transformation in age and sex structure of Serbian population is present. Essentially, changes in age structure meant decrease in share of young population (0-19), and increase in share of population (65+).Changes in sex structure mostly manifested as increasing in share of women in total population. In Serbia, according to census data from 2001, male sex ration of refugees were 907, while at domestic population according to census data from 2002, were 948. Up to nineties, because of the selectivity of migration by age (younger middle age population is the largest), migration differently affected formation the age structure. In the period of positive net migration, they were stopping migration aging, while during the time of negative net migration, they have accelerated same process. In the inter-census period 1991-2002, and besides of coming exiled population, that created positive net migration, precisely the process of aging population continued. Among refugee population, the share of old population (65+) is smaller (Penev,2007).

Table 5- Age-gender structure by ten-year age groups 2002

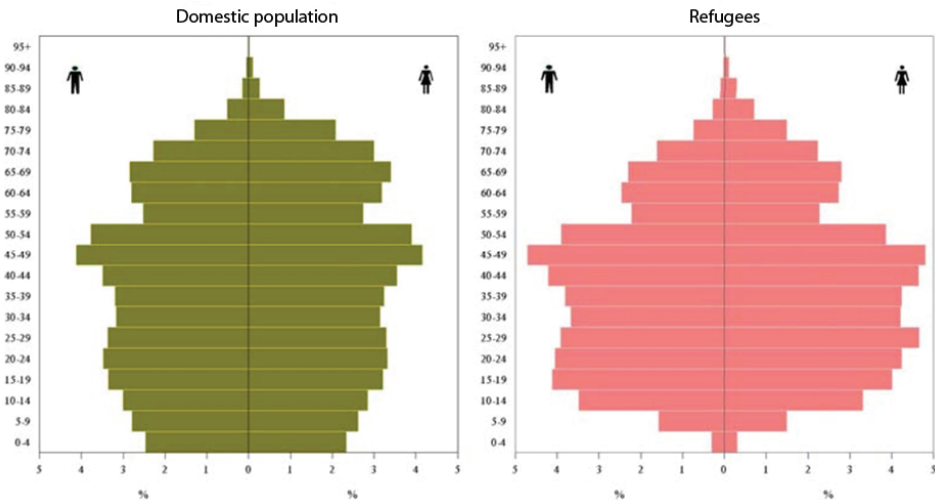
	G	In total	Age groups (%)							
			0-9	10-19	20-29	30-39	40-49	50-59	60-69	70+
Total population	a	7498001	9.8	12.5	13.6	12.8	15.4	12.8	12.1	10.4
Serbia	f	3645930	10.4	13.1	14.1	13.1	15.7	12.8	11.4	8.6
Total refugee population	a	379135	3.7	14.8	16.7	15.8	18.2	12.2	10.2	7.6
refugee population	m	180389	3.9	15.8	16.6	15.6	18.6	12.8	9.9	5.8
Population (without refugees)	f	198746	3.4	13.8	16.8	16.0	17.9	11.6	10.4	9.1
Republic of Serbia	a	7118866	10.2	12.4	13.4	12.7	15.2	12.8	12.2	10.6
	m	3465541	10.7	13.0	14.0	13.0	15.6	12.8	11.5	8.8
	f	3653325	9.6	11.7	12.8	12.4	14.9	12.9	12.8	12.2

Source:-Refugee corps in Serbia, according to Census Population 2002, Ministry of Human and Minority rights Serbia and Montenegro, Belgrade 2004)

In the census of 2002 (Table 5), the share of old population among refugees was 12%, while at domicile population this share was 16%. This small share of old population was unexpected, because refugee population had extremely small share of young one.

Disbalance in age structure of refugee population is consequence of small share of older population than 65 on one side, and intensive repatriation of old people, but also of their high mortality, comparing with domestic population, on the other side. Data from the census 2002 showed that in a meantime, age structure of refugee population had significant changes, and those changes or „deformation“ were most profound in the base of population pyramid.(Figure 4)

Figure 4. Age-gender pyramid of refugee and domestic population in Serbia, by census 2002



Source-Population and households in Serbia, by census 2002, Statistical office of the Republic of Serbia Belgrade, 2006.

According to registration of refugee population in the period 2004-2005, most of them were in age category 19-59 year (59,6%), although, and important share is in category 60+ (25,9 %). Average age is 43 years, which is higher then Republics average(42). Ratio between sexes are in favour of women 51.4/48.6%. Looking by age groups, the highest difference have those older than 60+ years old, where share of female population is 64% and male population 36%, which is dicrectly related with war casualties of male populations (Lukić, 2003).

Final remarks

Based on the analysis of some demographic facts, for refugee and domestic population, we conclude that, there is no difference between them. Influence of refugee population is clearly trough population increase, especially in Vojvodina, where according to census 2002 made increase of 3% (Nikitović&Lukić, 2010). The refugees had to adopt to new environment, which means changing that environment also, not just by number of them, but also

according to their cultural, ethnics and psychological characteristics. However, neither age and sex structure of refugee population is different than structure of domestic population. Permanently settling of refugees have slowed depopulation tendencies in the low fertility areas, but what is really important is that how that tendencies could be in the future period.

Although, most of the refugees, exiled and war-affected persons are naturalized, they are still dealing with lots of problems such as employment, habitation and also, need help, in the country of origin, so they could have all the legal rights and they could have normal life in the local communities in Serbia, and easier integration process. Integration of refugees is a complex process which requires all available help in resolving refugees problems as finding jobs, housing issues, pension, health and social insurances, etc. Great number of refugees in Serbia are from Croatia. They are keeping refugee status, in the hope that it will help them solving all existential problems, integration problems or process considering returning. The local integration of refugees who are living in the poor municipalities, should be helped by using modified model of support of local integrations. That model would provide extra financial resources, different kinds of programs for supporting their own private jobs. And after closing collective shelters, join them to the national care program, which are available only to the users of recognized collective centers .

From all of above mentioned it is clearly that refugees needs are still very high. It is necessarily that state provides all resources for dealing with housing issues, and 200.000 refugees should not be ignored even if they got in meantime citizenship of Republic of Serbia.

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