

Ethnodemographic processes in the southern region of Kyrgyzstan: Population dynamics and changes in ethnic composition

Ainagul Jooshebekova

Doctor of Historical Sciences, Professor
I. Arabayev Kyrgyz State University
720026, 51A Razzakova Str., Bishkek, Kyrgyz Republic
<https://orcid.org/0009-0000-1840-2559>

Gulnaz Chynykeeva*

PhD in Historical Sciences, Associate Professor
Osh State University
723500, 21 Razzakov Str., Osh, Kyrgyz Republic
<https://orcid.org/0009-0000-4224-4378>

Ernisbek Alaychiev

PhD in Geographical Sciences, Associate Professor
Osh State University
723500, 21 Razzakov Str., Osh, Kyrgyz Republic

Samara Osmonova

PhD in Historical Sciences, Associate Professor
Osh State University
723500, 21 Razzakova Str., Osh, Kyrgyz Republic

Abstract. Increased migration flows, changes in birth rates, and the growing importance of the border factor in southern Kyrgyzstan necessitate an in-depth study of the region's ethnodemographic processes. This was particularly important in the context of socio-economic transformations and the growing influence of external factors. The aim of the study was to analyse changes in the population size and ethnic composition of the southern region of Kyrgyzstan in 1989-2022, identify their key determinants and provide an ethnodemographic assessment of the current situation. The methods included analysis of data from the 1999, 2009 and 2022 censuses, official statistics, materials from the 2019 ethnosociological survey. Ethnographic, demographic, statistical, comparative-observational and geographical approaches were used. The results showed that in 2022, the population of Kyrgyzstan reached 6,936,156 people, with the southern region accounting for about 52.5%. Population growth in the southern regions (83.2%) exceeded the national average (62.9%) between 1989 and 2022. The share of Kyrgyz increased to 77.6%, Uzbeks to 14.2%, while the number of Russians decreased to 4.1% and a number of other ethnic groups decreased tenfold. The largest increase was recorded in the Osh region (+105.3%), and the smallest in the city of Osh (+58.9%). Ethno-sociological data reflect a high orientation towards large families (≈81%), an increase in the age of marriage by 5-6 years, high unemployment (up to 80% of the working-age population) and the presence of latent inter-ethnic tensions in border areas. The practical significance of the study lies in the use of the data obtained to adjust demographic and migration policies, employment programmes and the prevention of interethnic conflicts in the southern regions of Kyrgyzstan

Keywords: demography; ethnicity; natural growth; migration; socio-economic situation; discrimination; "hidden" situation

Suggested Citation:

Jooshebekova, A., Chynykeeva, G., Alaychiev, E., & Osmonova, S. (2025). Ethnodemographic processes in the southern region of Kyrgyzstan: Population dynamics and changes in ethnic composition. *Journal of Osh State University. History*, 4(2), 8-17. doi: 10.52754/1694867X_2025_4(2)_08.

*Corresponding author



Copyright © The Author(s). This is an open access article distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution License 4.0 (<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>)

Introduction

Ethnodemographic processes in the southern region of the Kyrgyz Republic, covering the Batken, Jalal-Abad and Osh regions, have become particularly significant since the collapse of the Soviet Union. The region's historically diverse ethnic composition, which had developed over centuries, underwent significant changes, especially between 1989 and 2022. The relevance of studying these transformations is due not only to their impact on socio-economic development, but also to the need to understand the historical dynamics that led to the region's current state.

According to the Kyrgyzstan – Migration Situation Report (2023), prepared by the Mission of the International Organisation for Migration in the Kyrgyz Republic, migration processes are recognised as one of the key factors in the country's socio-economic development. The report notes that the collection and analysis of migration data is included in the Concept of State Migration Policy for 2021-2030, confirming its strategic importance for the state. The national mobility monitoring system, created in 2022 based on the Mobility Tracking Matrix methodology, allows for the systematic recording and analysis of internal and international population movements, providing an information basis for decision-making. These data underscore the need for further study of the impact of migration on demographic and social processes.

In the context of global and geopolitical changes in 2022-2023, migration in Central Asia has become the subject of active scientific discussion. A collective monograph by S.V. Kozin *et al.* (2025) shows that migration flows from Russia to the Kyrgyz Republic during this period were predominantly spontaneous in nature and were facilitated by a visa-free regime and historical ties. The majority of arrivals were men of working age seeking to avoid participation in military conflicts. This study demonstrates that ethnodemographic processes in the region were shaped not only by internal but also by external political factors.

Alongside labour and forced migration, educational migration became an important trend. The work of E.E. Pismennaya & B.A. Sydygalieva (2024) notes an increase in the number of foreign students arriving in the Kyrgyz Republic from neighbouring countries (Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, Tajikistan), as well as from South Asia (India, Pakistan). The authors conclude that the influx of students is linked to both economic factors and an interest in obtaining an education in the region. This broadens the understanding of migration processes, showing that academic mobility also contributes to the transformation of the ethnodemographic structure.

At the same time, it is impossible to understand contemporary processes without taking into account historical preconditions. In the article by S.Ch. Zhumalieva (2023), based on statistical data and archival sources, it is shown that the large-scale socio-economic

transformations of the Soviet period significantly changed the national and social composition of the population. The author emphasised that it was then that the foundations of ethnic interaction and assimilation were laid, which became the forerunners of post-Soviet changes. A similar line of analysis was developed by Z. Altymyshova & A. Mamadalieva (2024), who examined the consequences of the policy of dispossession of the kulaks in the 1920s and 1930s. Drawing on archival documents, the authors demonstrated that the destruction of traditional economic structures caused large-scale migration and demographic shifts. This source is important in that it allows to trace the continuity of processes from the early Soviet period to the current state of the ethnodemographic situation.

Of particular interest is the study by Zh. Abdullaeva (2020), which examines the southern region of the Kyrgyz Republic from the perspective of the present day and ethnodemographic development. Based on statistical data, the author analysed population dynamics, ethnic composition and migration processes, emphasising the impact of the transition to a market economy and the social reforms of the early years of independence. This work is similar in theme to the present study and provides an empirical basis for comparison.

Thus, a combination of contemporary and historical studies allows to view the south of the Kyrgyz Republic as an area where ethnodemographic processes are shaped by a complex set of factors, ranging from socio-economic reforms and migration flows to long-term historical trends. Given the gaps identified in the academic literature, the aim of this study was to analyse the dynamics of population growth in the southern region in 1989-2022, determine quantitative changes in the structure of ethnic groups, identify the reasons for these transformations, and provide a comprehensive ethnodemographic assessment of the current situation in the region.

Materials and Methods

The study of ethnodemographic processes in the southern regions of the Kyrgyz Republic (Batken, Jalal-Abad and Osh) was based on the comprehensive use of statistical, ethno-sociological and field materials. The official population censuses of 1989, 1999, 2009 and 2022, data from the National Statistical Committee of the Kyrgyz Republic, as well as state statistics reflecting population dynamics and ethnic structure (National Statistical Committee of the Kyrgyz Republic, 1989; 2009; 2022). These data made it possible to track long-term trends in population composition over more than three decades.

An important component of the source base was the materials from ethnosociological surveys conducted as part of the project "The Southern Region of Kyrgyzstan: Modernity and Ethnic-Demographic Development" (Chynykeeva *et al.*, 2020). The study was conducted in the Batken, Jalal-Abad and Osh regions using a random

sample of settlements, which ensured the representativeness of the data collected. The surveys examined the demographic attitudes of families, ethnic self-identification, migration intentions, characteristics of marital and family relationships, and interethnic interactions.

The methodological basis of the work was built on a combination of historical-demographic and ethnographic approaches. A comparative-historical method was used to analyse transformations in ethnic composition at different stages, a statistical method was used to identify quantitative changes and calculate growth rates, and an ethnographic method was used to interpret statistical data through the prism of specific social practices and local characteristics. In addition, published scientific studies covering ethnodemographic processes and migration trends in the post-Soviet and modern periods were used (Dzhooshebekova *et al.*, 2021). Demographic changes in Asia and the Pacific (n.d.) served as a key reference, with particular reliance on studies addressing the socio-economic prerequisites of migration, educational mobility, and historical transformations in the national composition. Their analysis allowed to correlate statistical data with the broader context of socio-economic and political changes in the Kyrgyz Republic.

A geographical approach was also used, taking into account the influence of spatial factors (border location, remoteness from centres, level of infrastructure development) on migration processes (Schuler, 2007; Kyrgyzstan – Migration Situation Report, 2023). Thus, the study was based on a multi-component source base and a set of methods that made it possible to compare official statistics, ethno-sociological materials and field observation data. This combination made it possible not only to reconstruct quantitative changes in the ethnic composition of the population of southern Kyrgyzstan between 1989 and 2022, but also to identify their social and cultural determinants.

Results and Discussion

An analysis of ethnodemographic processes in the Kyrgyz Republic requires a comprehensive examination of population size, the growth dynamics of various ethnic groups, and regional characteristics. The republic is characterised by a multi-ethnic population, reflecting both historical migration processes and the current socio-economic situation. Data from the official population and housing censuses for 1999, 2009, and 2022 made it possible to track the dynamics of population change by major ethnic groups (Table 1).

Table 1. Ethnic composition of the population of the Kyrgyz Republic

Nationality	1999	%	2009	%	2022	%
Kyrgyz Republic Total population:	4,822,938		5,362,793		6,936,156	
Kyrgyz	3,128,147	64.9	3,804,788	71.0	5,379,020	77.6
Uzbeks	664,950	13.8	768,405	14.3	986,881	14.2
Russians	603,201	12.5	419,583	7.8	282,777	4.1
Dungans	51,766	1.1	58,409	1.1	66,525	1.0
Tajiks	42,636	0.9	46,105	0.9	59,895	0.9
Uyghurs	46,944	1.0	48,543	0.9	31,559	0.4
Cossacks	42,657	0.9	33,198	0.6	28,244	0.4
Turks	33,327	0.7	39,133	0.7	22,074	0.3
Azerbaijanis	14,014	0.3	17,267	0.3	17,359	0.2
Tatars	45,438	0.9	31,424	0.6	11,219	0.2
Kurds	11,620	0.2	13,171	0.3	10,733	0.1
Peoples of India and Pakistan	506	0.0	1,319	0.0	8,310	0.1
Koreans	19,784	0.4	17,299	0.3	5,900	0.1
Ukrainians	50,442	1.0	21,924	0.4	3,875	0.1
Germans	21,471	0.4	9,487	0.2	2,831	0.0
Other nationalities	46,035	1.0	32,738	0.6	18,954	0.3

Source: compiled by the authors based on National Statistical Committee of the Kyrgyz Republic (1989; 2009; 2022), Demographic changes in Asia and the Pacific (n.d.)

Table 1 shows the demographic dynamics of the population of Kyrgyzstan by major ethnic groups: from 1999 to 2022, the share of Kyrgyz increased from 64.9% to 77.6%, Uzbeks increased slightly from 13.8% to 14.2%, and the number of Russians decreased from 12.5% to 4.1%. This indicates a significant shift in ethnic proportions – an increase in the size of the titular

community and a reduction in European and other minorities. The steady growth in the share of Kyrgyz in the ethnic structure of the population between 1999 and 2022 is primarily due to high natural growth, the continuing culture of large families and a significant proportion of young people. These factors are confirmed by demographic studies, which record a high birth rate

and a consistent decline in mortality as the main components of demographic growth in the Kyrgyz Republic in the 1990s and 2020s (Avdeev & Troitskaya, 2021).

The decline in the proportion of Russians, as well as Ukrainians, Germans and Belarusians in the ethnic structure of the population of Kyrgyzstan between 1999 and 2022 is primarily due to the large-scale migration of these groups to Russia and Germany, as well as the natural ageing of their demographic structure. The proportion of Russians fell from 12.5% in 1999 to 4.1% in 2022, the number of Germans fell from 21,500 to less than 3,000, and Ukrainians from 50,400 to 3,900. These processes reflect the consequences of the post-Soviet economic crisis, changes in language and education policy, and the resettlement programmes for “compatriots” actively implemented by Germany and Russia. Studies show that the migration waves of the 1990s and 2010s were distinctly ethnic in nature and mainly affected Russians and other East Slavic and Germanic groups who had historically arrived in Kyrgyzstan in the 19th and 20th centuries (Delicate ethnic balance, 2010).

The overall picture of migration is not only emigration to other countries, but also a noticeable internal population shift: ethnic Kyrgyz traditionally migrate to the capital region (Bishkek and Chui Province), while Russians leave rural and industrial areas. Uzbeks, on the contrary, demonstrate specific migration dynamics in the southern regions, moving from cities to rural areas and back, which changes the local ethnic structure (Schuler, 2007). The increase in the proportion of Kyrgyz reinforces ethnodemographic homogeneity, which

contributes to nationally oriented policies and cultural homogenisation. At the same time, analysis of censuses and field studies shows that the risk of inter-ethnic tensions remains precisely in the southern regions of Kyrgyzstan, where Uzbeks consistently make up a significant part of the population – from 13 to 15% in the overall structure and up to 40-45% in certain districts of the Osh and Jalal-Abad regions. Such a concentration of ethnic minorities in border areas creates conditions for local conflicts, which were particularly acute during the June 2010 events in the city of Osh (Asankhanov, 2020). Research by Human Rights Watch (2010) and the International Crisis Group (2012) indicates that the conflict was caused by a combination of demographic growth of the titular group, socio-economic inequality and ethno-political imbalances, which led to large-scale clashes that claimed the lives of more than 400 people and became the largest ethnic crisis in the post-Soviet history of Kyrgyzstan. These circumstances show that modern ethnic politics in the country require particular caution and systematic consideration of historical memory in order to prevent the recurrence of such scenarios.

According to census data, the Kyrgyz and Uzbeks consistently dominate the country's population structure, accounting for more than 91% of all residents in 2022. Ethnological materials are important for understanding the factors that support high natural growth in the southern regions. In order to examine and explain fertility processes in greater depth and identify regional differences in reproductive attitudes, the results of surveys conducted in the city of Osh, as well as in the Jalal-Abad and Batken regions, were used (Table 2).

Table 2. Regional differences in reproductive attitudes of the population of Kyrgyzstan (share of positive answers to the question “Do you want to have many children?”)

Region	% of positive responses
Jalal-Abad Region	31.0
Batken Region	25.3
Osh Region	18.8
Osh City	6.3
Total for the South	81.4

Source: compiled by the authors based on L. Nedoluzhko & V. Agadjanian (2015), National Statistical Committee of the Kyrgyz Republic and UNICEF (2019), G. Chynykeeva et al. (2021), Young population and high population growth rates. (n.d.)

The prevalence of attitudes favouring large families in southern regions is consistent with fertility rates measured in sample surveys: according to MICS-2018, the total fertility rate is 4.7 for the Jalal-Abad region, 4.5 for the Osh region and 4.3 for the Batken region, compared to 2.6 in Bishkek. The differences between rural and urban areas are equally pronounced (4.4 versus 3.3) and are due to both population structure and reproductive behaviour norms. These ratios statistically support the regional pattern identified in Table 2 of a higher willingness to have more children in the south of the country. Additional validation is provided by the

ethnic breakdown of MICS-2018: the total fertility rate in households with Kyrgyz and Uzbek heads of household is approximately the same (around 4.1-4.2), i.e. it is precisely those groups that are demographically dominant in the south that contribute most to maintaining high fertility rates and, consequently, to more frequent “yes” answers to the question about having many children.

The south of Kyrgyzstan is historically more agrarian and younger in terms of age structure, which reproduces the norms of earlier marriage and shorter inter-birth intervals; in the post-Soviet period, despite socio-economic shocks, it was natural increase, rather

than migration, that remained the main driver of population growth. Analytical reviews of demographic dynamics identify the combination of high fertility and declining mortality as the key source of growth, with the population concentrated around the Osh agglomeration and in the Fergana Valley. This explains why preferences for large families are consistently higher in the Jalal-Abad, Osh and Batken regions than in the capital (Young population and high population growth rates, n.d.; Avdeev & Troitskaya, 2021).

Since the late 1990s, the republic-wide balance has been significantly affected by the departure of the working-age population and ethno-selective international migration, but for the southern regions, the cumulative effect of migration on population size was less than the effect of natural growth. Studies of migration flows indicate that outflows affected the north and the Chui region more strongly, while the south retained a higher birth rate and the ethnic specificity of its settlement network, which reinforced the contribution of natural movement to demographic

outcomes. This is consistent with the more “pro-natalist” responses recorded in Table 2.

The combination of increased readiness for large families and a genuinely higher birth rate in the southern regions means that in the medium term, it is here that the main growth in the young population will take place. This will reinforce regional differences in the age pyramid and create an increased burden on education and employment systems, especially in border areas and the Osh agglomeration. Given the ethnic profile of the south and the results of the 2022 census (Kyrgyz – 77.6%, Uzbeks – 14.2%, Russians – 4.1% nationwide), maintaining inter-ethnic balance and the accessibility of social services in areas of rapid natural growth is becoming a separate task for demographic policy. Thus, the identified differences in reproductive attitudes are directly reflected in long-term demographic dynamics. While Table 2 showed intentions and cultural patterns of behaviour, Table 3 allows to trace how these attitudes were realised in terms of actual population growth by region and ethnic group.

Table 3. Dynamics of the population of Kyrgyz, Uzbeks and other nationalities in Kyrgyzstan

Nationality	1989	1999	%	2009	%	2022	%
Total population of Kyrgyzstan	4,257,755	4,822,938	13.27	5,362,793	11.19	6,636,803	3.87
Kyrgyz	2,229,663	3,128,147	40.29	3,804,788	21.63	4,896,186	4.27
Uzbeks	550,096	664,950	20.87	768,405	15.55	985,358	4.75
Other nationalities	1,477,996	1,029,837	-30.33	789,600	-30.42	755,259	-39.45
Osh Region	712,643	943,566	32.24	1,104,248	17.02	1,391,649	3.71
Kyrgyz	467,612	647,422	13.84	758,036	17.08	937,116	3.25
Uzbeks	205,858	261,776	27.16	308,688	17.92	407,270	4.66
Other nationalities	39,173	34,368	-12.27	37,524	9.18	47,263	4.54
Osh City	222,120	232,432	4.64	258,111	11.04	322,164	7.57
Kyrgyz	66,656	103,173	54.78	123,738	19.93	165,169	9.19
Uzbeks	93,767	103,870	10.77	114,036	9.78	137,601	6.70
Other nationalities	61,697	25,389	-43.30	20,337	-24.84	19,394	0.56
Jalal-Abad Region	743,279	869,259	16.94	1,009,889	16.18	1,260,617	3.80
Kyrgyz	452,868	607,036	34.04	725,321	19.48	904,851	3.68
Uzbeks	175,705	212,030	20.67	250,748	18.26	323,157	4.46
Other nationalities	114,706	50,193	-71.48	33,820	-51.59	32,609	0.71
Batken Region	311,761	382,426	22.26	428,636	20.08	548,247	4.40
Kyrgyz	204,997	284,110	38.59	327,739	15.35	424,129	4.50
Uzbeks	45,201	55,104	21.90	63,048	14.41	79,887	4.19
Other nationalities	61,563	43,212	-29.80	37,849	-14.16	44,231	2.07

Source: compiled by the authors based on Population of Kyrgyzstan in 1991–2005 (2014), National Statistical Committee of the Kyrgyz Republic (1989; 2009; 2022), Demographic changes in Asia and the Pacific (n.d.)

The data in Table 3 confirm that it is the Kyrgyz and Uzbek populations that remain the main drivers of demographic growth in the republic: between 1989 and 2022, the number of Kyrgyz increased by 117%, and the number of Uzbeks by almost 83%. At the same time, the number of Russians, Germans, Ukrainians and other “historical migrants” continued to decline: over the

same period, the number of Russians fell by more than half, while the number of Germans and Ukrainians fell to almost statistical error.

The differences are particularly striking in the south: in the Osh region and in Jalal-Abad, the growth of the Kyrgyz and Uzbek populations significantly exceeds the national average, while the share of other

ethnic groups is declining. In the city of Osh, there is a two-way dynamic: on the one hand, the Kyrgyz population has doubled, while on the other, the number of “other nationalities” has fallen by more than three times. This selectivity can be explained by differences in birth rates and migration outflows. International studies indicate that in the 1990s and 2000s, it was Russians, Germans and Ukrainians who left Kyrgyzstan en masse, taking advantage of repatriation programmes to Russia and Germany, while the Kyrgyz and Uzbeks continued to experience high natural growth (Schuler, 2007; Young population and high population growth rates, n.d.). It is noted that the

population growth rate for the period from 1989 to 2022 was 83.24%, which is 20.33% higher than the overall population growth rate in Kyrgyzstan.

Thus, Table 3 reflects not only quantitative population growth, but also a structural redistribution in favour of the two largest ethnic communities, which strengthens their political and social significance. Figure 1 clearly visualises these processes: the diagram shows a sharp increase in the Kyrgyz and Uzbek populations and a simultaneous decline in the number of representatives of other ethnic groups, especially Russians and Germans, which highlights the scale of ethno-demographic transformations in the southern regions.

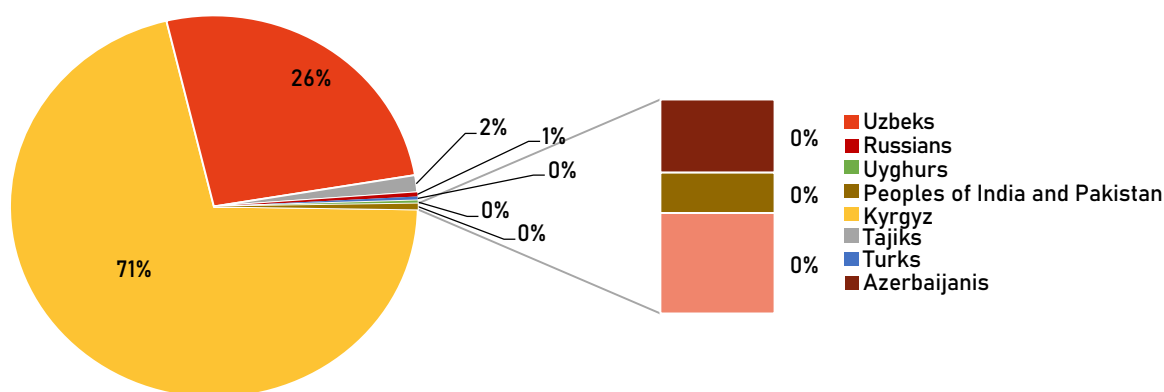


Figure 1. Quantitative indicators of ethnic groups in the southern region of Kyrgyzstan from 1989 to 2022

Source: compiled by the authors based on Population of Kyrgyzstan in 1991–2005 (2014), National Statistical Committee of the Kyrgyz Republic (1989; 2009; 2022)

Based on the data and visualisation presented, it can be noted that there is a consistent trend in the southern regions of Kyrgyzstan: the Kyrgyz and Uzbek populations are showing long-term growth, while many small groups, including Russians, Germans and Ukrainians, are experiencing a sharp decline. These processes reflect not only natural growth and differences in reproductive strategies, but also the consequences of ethno-selective migration, which intensified after the collapse of the USSR. The visualisation in Figure 1 clearly shows that it is the south of the republic that is undergoing the most noticeable ethnodemographic transformations, where the growth of the titular group is combined with a decline in the number of “historical migrants”.

The analysis of ethnodemographic dynamics in the southern regions of Kyrgyzstan should also be considered in the context of regional security challenges. As noted by A. Vilks (2024), after the “Taliban” came to power in Afghanistan, the threats of destabilisation for Central Asia intensified, especially for Tajikistan and Uzbekistan, where ethnically related groups make up a significant proportion of the population. Similar processes are also reflected in Kyrgyzstan: the Uzbek and Tajik populations in the south of the country, demonstrating high natural growth, are simultaneously in

the zone of potential influence of transnational identities. In addition, the threat of water shortages associated with the Qosh-Tepa canal project increases the socio-economic vulnerability of the region, which may exacerbate migration and demographic processes. Thus, the results obtained are confirmed by the conclusions of A. Vilks that demographic changes cannot be analysed in isolation from geopolitical and resource challenges.

The study by A. Smailova & U.M. Tynaliyev (2025) broadens the understanding of demographic processes in Kyrgyzstan through the analysis of youth migration aspirations using the “aspiration/ability” model. The authors show that macro-level factors, including public perceptions of migration and the consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic, have a stronger influence on young people’s migration intentions than family or individual circumstances. These results help explain why southern regions, which have high birth rates and a traditional orientation towards large families, simultaneously maintain high migration potential. Thus, the identified growth in the Kyrgyz and Uzbek populations may be combined with a trend towards youth emigration, confirming the complex interaction between demographic growth and migration.

The work of V. Norov (2024) emphasised that the phenomenon of youth migration in Central Asia is

massive and transnational in nature, covering both the labour and education spheres. The author notes that more than half of the region's population is under 30 years of age, which means that migration is becoming a universal strategy for realising life projects. In contrast to the results obtained in this study, which focuses on the southern regions of Kyrgyzstan, V. Norov's analysis covers the entire region and shows the systematic nature of the challenge – from the “brain drain” to the new geography of educational flows. Thus, the processes identified in Kyrgyzstan are part of a general trend: the young population sees migration not only as an economic necessity, but also as a path to social mobility. This confirms that the problem of migration is global, but in each country it manifests itself through similar goals and expectations of young people.

The study by C.K. Scott *et al.* (2024) focuses on the At-Bashy District of the Naryn Region, where the authors analysed the impact of migration on gender roles and the perception of women in rural communities. The authors showed that female migration is perceived as both economically necessary and socially problematic: women who support their families through remittances are condemned for deviating from traditional practices of motherhood and marriage. Unlike the present study, which focuses on the southern regions (Osh, Jalal-Abad, Batken), the work of C.K. Scott *et al.* records changes in the central highland zone of Kyrgyzstan. Both studies conclude that migration is a key factor in social transformation, but its consequences vary: in the Naryn region, they are expressed through the transformation of gender roles, while in the south, ethnodemographic changes and the growth of the Kyrgyz and Uzbek populations are more noticeable.

Forecasts presented by The Data Insider (2024) indicate a continuing demographic trend towards population growth in Kyrgyzstan: the population was expected to reach 7.80 million by 2030 and almost 9.64 million by 2050, with a subsequent slowdown in growth rates. These estimates confirm that the southern regions, where natural growth is most pronounced, will indeed remain the country's demographic centres. However, an important addition to the qualitative and ethnosociological conclusions of the study is the idea that, in the medium term, natural growth may give way to structural demographic transformation: age shifts, migration changes and the potential for population ageing will require adaptive regional policies.

Thus, the demographic future of Kyrgyzstan is linked not only to quantitative population growth, but also to its qualitative transformation – changes in age structure, ethnic balance and migration strategies. A comparison of the results of this study with current forecasts and academic works confirms that the ethnodemographic processes in the south of the country are part of broader regional and global trends. This opens up prospects for further research aimed at

understanding how socio-economic policy and ethnic factors will determine the demographic trajectory of Kyrgyzstan in the 21st century.

Conclusions

Historical and demographic analysis has revealed consistent trends in the transformation of Kyrgyzstan's ethnic composition over the past three decades. Population data showed that between 1989 and 2022, the republic's population increased by more than 60%, with the highest growth rates recorded among the Kyrgyz and Uzbeks, who together make up more than nine-tenths of the population. At the same time, the number of ethnic groups such as Russians, Germans and Ukrainians has declined significantly, reflecting the historical process of return to their historical homeland and changes in migration patterns in the post-Soviet period.

Regional specifics are of particular importance: the southern regions of the country have become a demographic centre where natural population growth remains high. This reflects the cultural continuity of attitudes towards large families, which historically developed in the agrarian environment of the Fergana Valley. These data allow to assert that at the beginning of the 21st century, southern Kyrgyzstan has consolidated its importance as a territory with increased demographic dynamics, despite socio-economic challenges and migration outflows. The results obtained emphasise that ethnodemographic changes cannot be viewed in isolation: they are woven into the broader historical context of the transformation of society after the collapse of the USSR. The decline in the number of European ethnic groups coincides with the political and economic instability of the 1990s, while the growth of the titular nation and large Muslim ethnic groups reflects a long-term trend of revival of traditional family structures and high fertility.

Thus, the study has achieved its objectives: it has shown that contemporary demographic processes in Kyrgyzstan are a continuation of historical migration and cultural trajectories, as well as a new stage in the formation of ethno-political balance. The practical significance of the work lies in the possibility of using the identified patterns to predict future changes and develop strategies for maintaining interethnic harmony. Further research requires attention to the long-term consequences of demographic shifts, including the influence of age structure, urbanisation and cross-border factors, which will allow for a deeper understanding of the historical dynamics of ethnic development in Kyrgyzstan.

Acknowledgements

None.

Funding

None.

Conflict of Interest

None.

References

- [1] Abdullaeva, Zh. (2020). Southern region of Kyrgyzstan: Modernity and ethno-demographic development. *Mendeley Data*. doi: [10.17632/3r6dsmvp.1](https://doi.org/10.17632/3r6dsmvp.1).
- [2] Altymyshova, Z., Mamadalieva, A. (2024). Dekulakization policy in Kyrgyzstan and Kazakhstan: A comparative analysis. *Kazakh History*, 4, 24-32. doi: [10.62183/2024-4-4-24](https://doi.org/10.62183/2024-4-4-24).
- [3] Asankhanov, A. (2020). *The April events and interethnic conflict in June 2010: Why did ethnic groups with common genetic roots take up arms against each other?* Retrieved from <https://www.caa-network.org/archives/19947>.
- [4] Avdeev, A.A., & Troitskaya, I.A. (2021). Features and factors of demographic dynamics in the Kyrgyz Republic. *Population and Economics*, 5(2), 29-54. doi: [10.3897/popecon.5.e67183](https://doi.org/10.3897/popecon.5.e67183).
- [5] Chynykeeva, G., Asankanov, A., Zhooshebekova, A., Kalysh, A., Kadyrov, T., Apyshova, A., Zhumashova, G., Tilekova, U., & Abdullaeva, Z. (2020). The southern region of Kyrgyzstan: Modernity and ethnic-demographic development. *Open Journal of Social Sciences*, 8(10). doi: [10.4236/jss.2020.810001](https://doi.org/10.4236/jss.2020.810001).
- [6] Delicate ethnic balance. (2010). *The new humanitarian*. Retrieved from <https://surl.li/tpxgef>
- [7] Demographic changes in asia and the pacific. (n.d.). *Economic and social commission for Asia and the pacific (ESCAP)*. Retrieved from <https://www.population-trends-asiapacific.org/data/KGZ>.
- [8] Dzhooshebekova, A., et al. (2021). External migration problems of Kyrgyzstan population in the post-soviet period. *Advances in Applied Sociology*, 11(3), 113-129. doi: [10.4236/aasoci.2021.113009](https://doi.org/10.4236/aasoci.2021.113009).
- [9] Human Rights Watch. (2010). "Where is the Justice?": *Interethnic violence in Southern Kyrgyzstan and its aftermath*. Retrieved from <https://www.hrw.org/report/2010/08/16/where-justice/interethnic-violence-southern-kyrgyzstan-and-its-aftermath>.
- [10] International Crisis Group. (2012). *Kyrgyzstan: Widening ethnic divisions in the south*. Retrieved from <https://surl.li/ghnzss>.
- [11] Kozin, S.V., Zhidyayeva, T.P., & Zakieva, R.R. (2025). Migration from Russia to Kyrgyzstan: A sociological study. *DEMIS. Demographic Research*, 5(1), 193-201. doi: [10.19181/demis.2025.5.1.12](https://doi.org/10.19181/demis.2025.5.1.12).
- [12] Kyrgyzstan – Migration situation report. (2023). *International organization for migration (IOM)*. Retrieved from <https://dtm.iom.int/es/node/38131?close=true>.
- [13] National statistical committee of the Kyrgyz Republic and UNICEF. (2019). *Kyrgyzstan multiple indicator cluster survey 2018, Survey Findings Report*. Retrieved from https://mics.ipums.org/mics/resources/enum_materials_pdf/report_kg2018a_eng.pdf.
- [14] National statistical committee of the Kyrgyz Republic. (1989). *All-union population census 1989*. Retrieved from <https://datacatalog.ihsn.org/catalog/434/study-description>.
- [15] National statistical committee of the Kyrgyz Republic. (2009). *Census of population and housing of the Kyrgyz Republic, 2009 – IPUMS subset*. Retrieved from <https://microdata.worldbank.org/index.php/catalog/1632/study-description>.
- [16] National statistical committee of the Kyrgyz Republic. (2022). *Population and housing census of the Kyrgyz Republic 2022*. Retrieved from <https://stat.gov.kg/en/publications/perepis-naseleniya-i-zhilishnogo-fonda-kyrgyzskoj-respubliki-2022-goda-kniga-i-osnovnye-socialno-demograficheskie-harakteristiki/>.
- [17] Nedoluzhko, L., & Agadjanian, V. (2015). Between tradition and modernity: Marriage dynamics in Kyrgyzstan. *Demography*, 52(3), 861-882. doi: [10.1007/s13524-015-0393-2](https://doi.org/10.1007/s13524-015-0393-2).
- [18] Norov, V. (2024). *Central asia's youth migration: Challenges and opportunities ahead*. *Horizons Summer*, 27.
- [19] Pismennaya, E.E., & Sydygalieva, B.A. (2024). Educational migration in Kyrgyzstan: Trends and prospects. *DEMIS. Demographic Research*, 4(3), 138-153. doi: [10.19181/demis.2024.4.3.9](https://doi.org/10.19181/demis.2024.4.3.9).
- [20] Population of Kyrgyzstan in 1991-2005. (2014). Retrieved from <https://open.kg/en/about-kyrgyzstan/population/239-naselenie-kyrgyzstana-v-1991-2005-gody.html>.
- [21] Schuler, M. (2007). Migration patterns of the population in Kyrgyzstan. *Espace Populations Sociétés*, 1, 73-89. doi: [10.4000/eps.1967](https://doi.org/10.4000/eps.1967).
- [22] Scott, C.K., Sexsmith, K., & Chi, G. (2024). Gendered migration patterns and social change in rural Kyrgyzstan. *Migration and Development*, 13(2), 176-198. doi: [10.1177/21632324241285086](https://doi.org/10.1177/21632324241285086).
- [23] Smailova, A., & Tynaliev, U.M. (2025). Migration aspirations among kyrgyzstan's youth: Analysis of micro, meso, and macro level factors. *Central Asian Affairs*, 11(3-4), 361-386. doi: [10.30965/22142290-bja10060](https://doi.org/10.30965/22142290-bja10060).
- [24] The Data Insider. (2024). *Future population projections for Kyrgyzstan (2025-2100)*. Retrieved from <https://www.populationpyramid.net/kyrgyzstan/2050/>.
- [25] Vilks, A. (2024). The Taliban movement as a challenge to security and political order in Central Asia. *Foreign Affairs*, 34(5), 120-130. doi: [10.46493/2663-2675.34\(5\).2024.120](https://doi.org/10.46493/2663-2675.34(5).2024.120).
- [26] Young population and high population growth rates. (n.d.). *Policy Brief*. Retrieved from https://kyrgyzstan.unfpa.org/sites/default/files/pub-pdf/Policy_brief_2_eng.pdf.
- [27] Zhumaliev, S.Ch. (2023). On the issue of ethnodemographic changes in Kyrgyzstan in the 1920s-1930s. *Russia & World: Scientific Dialogue*, 4, 148-163. doi: [10.53658/RW2023-3-4\(10\)-148-163](https://doi.org/10.53658/RW2023-3-4(10)-148-163).

Кыргызстандын түштүк регионундагы этнодемографиялык процесстер: калктын сан динамикасы жана улуттук курамдагы өзгөрүүлөр

Айнагүл Жоошбекова

Тарых илимдеринин доктору, профессор
И. Арабаев атындагы Кыргыз мамлекеттик университети
720026, Раззаков көч., 51А, Бишкек ш., Кыргыз Республикасы
<https://orcid.org/0009-0000-1840-2559>

Гүлназ Чыныкеева

Тарых илимдеринин кандидаты, доцент
Ош мамлекеттик университети
723500, Раззаков көч., 21, Ош ш., Кыргыз Республикасы
<https://orcid.org/0009-0000-4224-4378>

Эрнисбек Алайчиев

География илимдеринин кандидаты, доцент
Ош мамлекеттик университети
723500, Раззаков көч., 21, Ош ш., Кыргыз Республикасы

Самара Осмонова

Тарых илимдеринин кандидаты, доцент
Ош мамлекеттик университети
723500, Раззаков көч., 21, Ош ш., Кыргыз Республикасы

Анотация. Кыргызстан түштүк аймагында миграциялык агымдардын күчөшү, төрөттүн өзгөрүшү жана чек ара факторунун өсүп жаткан мааниси этнодемографиялык процесстерди терең изилдөөнү зарыл кылууда. Бул айрыкча социалдык-экономикалык трансформация шарттарында жана тышкы факторлордун күчөп жаткан таасири астында өзгөчө актуалдуу болуп саналат. Изилдөөнүн максаты – 1989-2022-жылдары Кыргызстан түштүк регионундагы калктын санынын жана улуттук курамдын өзгөрүшүн талдоо, алардын негизги детерминанттарын аныктоо жана учурдагы абалга этнодемографиялык баа берүү болду. Методдор катары 1999, 2009 жана 2022-жылдардагы эл каттоолорунун маалыматтары, расмий статистикалык көрсөткүчтөр, 2019-жылдагы этносоциологиялык сурамжылоонун материалдары колдонулду. Этнографиялык, демографиялык, статистикалык, салыштырма-байкоочу жана географиялык ыкмалар пайдаланылды. Натыйжалар көрсөткөндөй, 2022-жылы Кыргызстандын калкы 6 936 156 адамга жеткен, анын ичинен түштүк региондун үлүшү болжол менен 52,5 % түзгөн. 1989–2022-жылдар аралыгында түштүк облустардагы калктын өсүшү (83,2 %) республика боюнча орточо көрсөткүчтөн (62,9 %) жогору болгон. Кыргыздардын үлүшү 77,6 %га, өзбектердики 14,2 %га чейин көбөйсө, орустар 4,1 %га чейин кыскарган, башка этностордун бир катар өкүлдөрү ондогон эсе азайган. Эң жогорку өсүш Ош облусунда (+105,3 %), эң төмөнкү – Ош шаарында (+58,9 %) катталган. Этносоциологиялык маалыматтар калктын көп балалуулукка жогорку багыттуулугун (~81 %), никеге туруунун жаш курагынын 5-6 жылга жогорулашын, эмгекке жөндөмдүү калктын 80 %га чейинки деңгээлде жумушсуздугун жана чек арага жакын аймактардагы латенттик этникалар аралык чыңалуунун бар экендигин чагылдырды. Изилдөөнүн практикалык мааниси түштүк региондордо демографиялык жана миграциялык саясатты, жумуш менен камсыз кылуу программаларын жана этникалар аралык жаңжалдардын алдын алуу механизмдерин өркүндөтүүдө алынган маалыматтарды колдонууга негиз берет

Ключові слова: демография; этникалык таандыктык; табигый өсүш; миграция; социалдык-экономикалык абал; дискриминация; «жашыруун» кырдаал

Этнодемографические процессы в южном регионе Кыргызстана: динамика численности населения и изменения в национальном составе

Айнагуль Джоошбекова

Доктор исторических наук, профессор
Кыргызский государственный университет им. И. Арабаева
720026, ул. Раззакова, 51А, г. Бишкек, Кыргызская Республика
<https://orcid.org/0009-0000-1840-2559>

Гульназ Чыныкеева

Кандидат исторических наук, доцент
Ошский государственный университет
723500, ул. Раззакова, 21, г. Ош, Кыргызская Республика
<https://orcid.org/0009-0000-4224-4378>

Эрнисбек Алайчиев

Кандидат географических наук, доцент
Ошский государственный университет
723500, ул. Раззакова, 21, г. Ош, Кыргызская Республика

Самара Осмонова

Кандидат исторических наук, доцент
Ошский государственный университет
723500, ул. Раззакова, 21, г. Ош, Кыргызская Республика

Анотація. Усилення міграційних потоків, змінення рождаємості і зростаюче значення приграничного фактора на юге Кыргызстана обусловлюють необхідність глибокого вивчення етнодемографічних процесів регіону. Це особливо важно в умовах соціально-економічних трансформацій і наростаючого впливу зовнішніх факторів. Метою дослідження було проаналізувати змінення численності населення і національного складу південного регіону Кыргызстана в 1989-2022 гг., визначити їх ключові детермінанти і дати етнодемографічну оцінку сучасного стану. Методи включали аналіз даних переписів 1999, 2009 і 2022 гг., офіційної статистики, матеріалів етносоціологічного дослідження 2019 г. Використовувалися етнографічний, демографічний, статистичний, порівняльно-наблюдальний і географічний підходи. Результати показали, що в 2022 г. населення Кыргызстана досягло 6 936 156 осіб, при цьому частка південного регіону становила близько 52,5%. Приріст населення за 1989-2022 гг. в південних областях (83,2%) перевищив середній по країні (62,9%). Частка кыргызов збільшилася до 77,6%, узбеків – до 14,2%, тоді як численність росіян скоротилася до 4,1%, а ряд інших етнічних груп – в десятки разів. Найбільший приріст зафіксований в Ошській області (+105,3%), найменший – в г. Ош (+58,9%). Етносоціологічні дані відображають високу орієнтацію на багатодітність (≈81%), зростання віку вступлення в шлюб в 5-6 років, високий рівень безробіття (до 80% трудоспособного населення) і наявність латентних міжетнічних напружень в приграничних районах. Практичне значення дослідження полягає в використанні отриманих даних для корекції демографічної і міграційної політики, програм зайнятості і профілактики міжетнічних конфліктів в південних регіонах Кыргызстана.

Ключові слова: демографія; етнічна приналежність; природний приріст; міграція; соціально-економічна ситуація; дискримінація; «схована» ситуація