THE STUDENT-AGE POPULATION
IN THE SOCIO-DEMOGRAPHIC CONTEXT
OF THE REPUBLIC OF SERBIA [*]

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Abstract. *Socio-demographic studies are indicating an increasing tendency for the decrease in the share of the young population and an increase in the elderly population in the overall population of the Republic of Serbia. Namely, while the share of the young population (ages 0-19) in the overall population has almost been reduced by half in the span of half a century (41,6% in 1948 and 22,4% in 2002), the share of the elderly population (60 years and over) in the same period has increased 2,5 times (8,8%:22,6%). In addition, numerous demographic indicators are pointing more and more to a process of the intense aging of the population of Serbia.*

This paper presents the research results obtained by this author, which refer to the share of the student-age population, in percents, (aged 20-24) and the student population in the overall population of the Republic of Serbia. They confirm the existence of contrasting demographic tendencies in the regions of Central Serbia and Vojvodina (in the period between 1981 and 2002): while, on the one hand, one part of the student-age population is diminishing, on the other, the share of the student population in the overall population is, however, increasing. In the area of Kosovo and Metohija, contrasting tendencies can be noted, but with a completely different outcome: the share of the student-age population has continued to grow, while the share of the student population is decreasing. The noted tendencies once again confirm that demographic processes are specific in certain areas of the Republic of Serbia, considering their geographic, socio-economic, cultural and ethnic features.

Key words: *age structure, student population, students, Republic of Serbia.*

INTRODUCTION

Demographic changes are a constituent part of deeper socio-economic changes that Serbia has undergone during the last decades of the 20th century. The economic crisis and political transition have influenced the movement and structure of the population of Serbia, so that the demographic transition has also had characteristics which differ from those of the countries in our environment and the countries of western Europe. The period of the overall social development of Yugoslavia and Serbia from the beginning of the 1990s is characterized by a very slow process of modernization and transformation from a command-planned into a market economy. Unlike the other central European and east European countries, in which a similar socio-economic transformation began with the abolition of the communist regimes and a relatively peaceful transition, in the case of Yugoslavia, this process was accompanied by events which mainly had negative consequences on the overall social, as well as demographic development. In that context, today's demographic image of Serbia is in part a result of population movement which is more and more marked by the negative values of certain indicators, that is, demographic "losses" sustained through emigration and the decrease in the national birth rate.

Considering the fact that demographic studies indicate a tendency of continued increase in the share of the elderly population, and the decrease in the share of the young population in the overall population of Serbia, the paper is aimed at answering the following questions: 1) is the decrease in the percentage of the student-age population a demographic process which occurs in all the regions of Serbia, 2) is the decrease in the percentage of the share of the young population and the decrease in the percentage of share of the student population in the overall population of Serbia mean a decrease in the number of students, that is, can the student population increase despite the decrease in the number of student-age individuals and 3) which are the significant determinants for the increase/decrease in the student population (number of students) in Serbia?

THE SOCIO-DEMOGRAPHIC CONTEXT: THE POPULATION OF THE REPUBLIC OF SERBIA

The Republic of Serbia, in a demographic, economic and cultural sense represents a heterogeneous territory, since the economic, political, educational and other conditions in the past have not been equally (un)favorable in all of the regions. The movement of the population of Serbia has its own specificities which are a reflection of the complex social-economic and political situation in what was formerly known as Yugoslavia. The results of numerous studies indicate changes in the population of Serbia, which took place during the demographic transition. All the way until the mid-20th century, certain areas (regions) could be identified based on the level of the homogeneity of the demographic features. However, since the 1960s, and up to this day, the process of polarization of demographic movement has been polarized. Large changes have been made in the development of the population of Serbia and have led to, on the one hand, the homogeneity of the demographic features (albeit of very opposite points) viewed from the level of macro units, central Serbia, Vojvodina and Kosovo and Metohija, and on the other hand, to a kind of polarization of the demographic flows, from the micro-regional to the macro-regional levels (Vojković 2003: 24). Thus already in the 1970s the area of central Serbia had very pronounced spatial-demographic polarized regions, in which 1/6 of the territory was in-

habited by 1/3 of its population, and since the 1990, the effects of this polarization have been clearly visible (Stojanović 1998: 77).

The first results of the census in the Republic of Serbia from 2011 indicate that the demographic processes are attaining specific features at the level of macro-regions and at the regional level.[1] At the level of macro regions, Serbia – the North – sever (-52.106, an absolute decrease in the population between two censuses, index 98,6) and Serbia – the South (-325.229, index 91,6), differentiations are manifested in the population movement in the form of a more intense decrease in the population in the south of Serbia in the period from 2002 to 2011. On the other hand, "the differential processes of the demographic and regional development have led to the formation of regional systems in which in a spatial-demographic sense on all the regional levels, the effects of the municipal, regional or macro-regional centers can be felt, through the pronounced differences between the developed center and the underdeveloped peripheries (Vojković 2003: 31). In most of the regions of the Republic of Serbia (the Vojvodina region, the Šumadija region and west Serbia, south and east Serbia), a decrease in the population has been noted, while only in the Belgrade region do we find an absolute increase in relation to 2002 by 62.997 inhabitants (index 104,0) (no data exist on the Kosovo and Metohija region). Thus, almost 1/4 (23,02%, 1.639.121 inhabitants) of the population of Serbia lives in this region (7.120.666). However, in the regions in which a decrease in the population has been noted, significant differences can be seen in terms of the tempo and intensity of the decrease in the population. In that sense we can separate the south and east Serbia region, as the regions with the greatest decrease (-210.736 inhabitants, index 88,5), and the Vojvodina region with the smallest decrease in the population (-115.103, index 94,3) (RZS 2011: 15-18).

The reproduction of the population is the basis of the reproductive processes in society, since the changes in the number and spatial order of the population depend on the type of current reproduction, along with the future age structure of the population, the tempo of the replacement of one generation with another, which will also be reflected in the size of the contingent of the young, working age population and elderly population. On the territory of Serbia, we find regional differences in the domain of reproduction, or repopulation. While in the beginning of the 20th century the demographic youth of Serbia was prevalent, in all areas, the beginning of the 21st century marks a demographic aging with significant regional differences. The differences in the reproduction of the population of Serbia have been conditioned by the multiple effects of the factors of ethnic belonging, that is, the civilizational and ethno-cultural features of ethnic groups. The differences in the forms of social organization, value systems, migration patterns of ethnic groups and the way in which they adapt to new surroundings, the acquisition of new norms of behavior, as well as other features of demographic development have determined the dynamics of the population during the demographic transition and have contributed to the changes and the formation of the demographic image of Serbia (Marković Krstić 2011: 168).

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[1]The government of the Republic of Serbia on December 24, 2009 determined the boundaries of the regions (it passed the Regulation on the Statistical Regions). So Serbia was divided into *seven statistical regions*: *the Vojvodina, Belgrade, West, Central, East, South and Kosovo Region*. However, in February 2010 changes were suggested for the Law on the Regional Development with the number of regions was reduced from seven to five: the *Vojvodina Region, Belgrade Region, Šumadija Region and west Serbia, the Region of south and east Serbia and the Kosovo and Metohija Region*.

Table 1. The population of the Republic of Serbia 1948-2002

Macroregions	Based on the methodology of previous censuses							Based on the methodology of the 2002 census	
	1948.	1953.	1961.	1971.	1981.	1991.	2002.	1991.	2002.
R. Serbia	6527583	6978119	7641962	8446726	9313686	9778991	...	...	...
R. Serbia (without K and M)	5794837	6162321	6678247	7202915	7729246	7822795	7893125	7576837	7498001
C. Serbia	4154238	4463681	4823276	5250355	5694464	5808906	5794346	5606642	5466009
Vojvodina	1640599	1698640	1854971	1952560	2034782	2013889	2098779	1970195	2031992
Kosovo and M.	732746	815798	963715	1243811	1584440	1956196	...	...	

Source: (2004) *A comparative review of the population 1948, 1953, 1961, 1971, 1981, 1991, 2002*, vol. 9, pg. 14.

The population of the Republic of Serbia, in the period between 1948 and 1991 increased by 33,3%. However, differences at the level of macro regions are obvious in terms of the intensity of the growth of the population in the periods between the censuses: the increase in the population in central Serbia and Vojvodina was much more moderate than the increase in the population of Kosovo and Metohija. The population of central Serbia up to 1991 increased by approximately 28,5% in comparison to 1948, only to decrease in the period from 1991 to 2002 by approximately 2,5%. The population of Vojvodina in 2002 in comparison to 1948 increased by approximately 21,8%. However, on this territory, in the period between censuses from 1981 to 1991 a decrease in the population was noted, only for it to increase in the period from 1991 to 2002 by approximately 3%, mainly due to the influx of refugees following the dissolution of the SFRY. Unlike central Serbia and Vojvodina, the population of Kosovo and Metohija showed signs of a significantly more intense growth. From 1948 to 1991 an increase was noted in the Kosovo and Metohija population approximately 2,7 times, primarily due to the high birth rate, which was the greatest in Europe (Vukmirović et al. 2008: 60).

The decrease in the population of central Serbia and Vojvodina (in certain periods between censuses) was the result of a variety of reasons, partly the low, negative birth rate, and partly due to the departure of the population which left to live abroad. On the other hand, an influx in the population occurred through the settling of the population from all the regions of the former SFRY sand from Kosovo and Metohija. The migrations were primarily caused by unfavorable life conditions and uncertainty in those areas, and were due to certain means of forced uprooting of the population. The result of such a natural and mechanical movement of the population (with specific features) in various directions (influx-out flow) are the differences in the percentage or share of the population in certain areas (macro regions) of the Republic of Serbia in the overall population. Namely, while the share of the population of central Serbia and Vojvodina in the overall population of Serbia decreased, the share of the population made up by Kosovo and Metohija was constantly increasing.

Great changes in the extent of the birth rate in the last few decades go hand in hand with the great changes in the economic, social and cultural structure of society. Altered social conditions create a motivation for the limitation of the birth rate. The position of the family has been altered, the role of the woman in the family and in society, the role and importance of children for the parents and for society. The demographic transition has transformed the traditional reproductive norms into norms of a more contemporary type of reproduction with a great decrease in the mortality rate of children and the population in general. An explanation of the tempo of change in certain rates (the birth

rate and mortality rate) cannot be viewed in isolation from the age structure. Thus, the decrease in the extent of the fertility and mortality during four decades has led to a series of changes in the age structure of the population of Serbia. The result of the rapid decrease in the rate of reproduction is also the altered age structure which is characterized by a high presence of the elderly population and continued decrease in the share of the younger population in the overall population of the Republic of Serbia.

Table 2. The age structure of the population of the Republic of Serbia in the period 1948-2002 based on great age groups (in %)

Census	0-19	20-39	40-59	60+	Aging index (60+/0-19)	Average age
Republic of Serbia						
1948.	41,6	28,9	20,7	8,8	0,21	28,9
1953.	38,6	30,3	21,9	9,2	0,24	29,4
1961.	36,4	33,6	19,6	10,4	0,29	30,5
1971.	34,3	30,4	22,3	12,9	0,38	32,4
1981.	31,7	29,5	26,4	12,5	0,39	33,7
1991.	30,5	29,0	24,4	16,0	0,53	34,9
2002[2].	22,4	26,6	28,4	22,6	1,01	40,2
Central Serbia						
1948.	41,3	29,2	20,9	8,5	0,21	28,9
1953.	37,8	31,2	22,2	8,9	0,24	29,5
1961.	34,7	34,9	20,0	10,4	0,30	31,1
1971.	31,4	31,2	23,7	13,6	0,43	33,6
1981.	27,6	30,1	29,0	13,3	0,48	35,5
1991.	26,1	28,7	26,9	18,0	0,70	37,4
2002.	22,4	26,4	28,2	23,0	1,03	40,3
Vojvodina						
1948.	37,5	30,1	22,3	10,1	0,27	30,6
1953.	35,0	30,3	24,0	10,7	0,31	31,3
1961.	33,3	33,2	21,7	11,8	0,36	32,3
1971.	30,1	30,7	24,3	14,8	0,49	34,6
1981.	26,9	29,9	28,4	14,9	0,55	36,2
1991.	25,8	28,8	27,1	18,3	0,71	37,5
2002.	22,7	27,0	28,8	21,5	0,95	39,7
Kosovo and Metohija						
1948.	52,0	24,3	16,1	7,6	0,15	25,1
1953.	50,8	25,8	15,8	7,6	0,15	25,0
1961.	51,2	27,6	13,9	7,3	0,14	24,4
1971.	53,3	26,4	13,2	7,1	0,13	23,9
1981.	52,4	26,6	14,5	6,4	0,12	24,2
1991.	48,3	30,0	14,7	7,0	0,15	25,4
2002.	-	-	-	-	-	-

Source: Penev, G., Devedžić, M. and G. Vojković 2006, str. 43-47; (2002) *The National Statistics Service Report.* No. 295, pg. 2. and http://www.stat.gov.rs.

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[2] The data for Serbia for 2002 do not include Kosovo and Metohija.

On the basis of the data shown in Table 2. we can note a tendency of decrease in the share of the young population (ages 0-19) and a decrease in the share of the elderly population (60 years and over) in the overall population of the Republic of Serbia. While the percentage of the young population was almost reduced by half (41,6% in 1948 and 22,4% in 2002), the share of the elderly population in the same period increased 2,5 times (8,8%:22,6%). The continued decrease in the share of the young, and the increase in the share of the elderly population influences the increase in the aging index (from 0,21 in 1948 to 1,01 in 2002). Aging on the entire territory of the Republic of Serbia is conditioned by the decrease in the birth rate, with the addition that the differences in the way this process is unfolding along the more limited territorial regions can be explained through the differential fertility and mortality rates based on certain generations (Penev, Devedžić and Vojković 2006).

The tendencies in the migration of the population of Kosovo and Metohija differ significantly from the demographic tendencies in the remaining territorial units of the Republic of Serbia (central Serbia and Vojvodina). Namely, the share of the young aged up to 20 years was above 50% up until 1981, and in the period from 1981 to 1991 reduced somewhat for the first time. The progressive age structure is the result of a high birth rate and low mortality rate of newborns and small children (a central transitional sub-stage). Thus, up until 1981 there was a rejuvenation of the age structure here (the stage of demographic youth), and only in 1991 did this population cross the threshold of demographic maturity.

The average age of the population of the Republic of Serbia is constantly increasing (11,3 years in the period from 1948 to 2002). The average age of the population is an indicator of the aging process that the population is undergoing and has increased from 28,9 years (1948) to 40,2 years (2002). The differences in the level of the average age are very pronounced: while central Serbia is experiencing a sharp increase in the average age (from 28,9 to 40,3), and similar tendencies are being manifested in Vojvodina – from a starting value of 30,6 years (1948) it has increased to 39,7 years (2002), while Kosovo and Metohija are marked by a pronounced low average age of 25,1 years (1948) and 25,4 years (1991), that is, a noticeable decrease in the average age (a rejuvenation) during the studied period (1948-1971) and a "mild increase" in the average age (1981-1991).

One of the methods for the determination of the character of the age structure is the classification of the population into *stages of demographic age*. Thus, on the basis of certain indicators[3] the population is classified into one of seven stages of demographic age: 1) the young demographic youth, 2) demographic youth, 3) demographic maturity, 4) the threshold of demographic maturity, 5) demographic old age, 6) very old demographic age and 7) the greatest demographic age. This enables us to give a more "clear" demographic image of a certain territory and to "recognize the population" as "young" or "old".

Based on the values of the indicators shown in Table 3, the population of Serbia in 1981 and 1991 was in the fifth stadium of geographic age. Nevertheless, individual values indicate that the population of Serbia in 1981 was demographically younger than ten years later. Already in 2002 the population of Serbia was in the sixth – *stage of advanced demographic age*. All of the indicators point out a process of intense aging of the

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[3] The average age, the share of the young population under 20, the share of the individuals younger than 40, the share of those over 60 and the aging index.

population of Serbia. Thus, it is a case of an extremely complex social phenomenon, and thus the demographic processes can be included in the basic social processes, and the demographic indicators in the so-called social indicators.

Table 3. The indicators of demographic age and the achieved stadium of demographic age in the Republic of Serbia (1981-2002)

Indicator	1981.		1991.		2002.	
	Value	Stage	Value	Stage	Value	Stage
Republic of Serbia						
Average age (yrs.)	35,8	5	37,7	5	40,2	6
0-19 (%)	27,6	5	26,1	5	22,4	6
0-39 (%)	56,9	5	54,5	5	49,0	6
60+(%)	14,1	4	18,8	5	22,6	6
Aging index (60+/do 20)	0,51	5	0,72	5	1,01	6

Source: Penev, G. et al. 2006, pg. 125.

THE SHARE OF THE STUDENT-AGE POPULATION AND STUDENTS IN GENERAL IN THE OVERALL POPULATION OF THE REPUBLIC OF SERBIA

At the beginning of the 21st century, the Republic of Serbia is faced with great demographic problems, decreased reproduction and its most severe consequence – the aging of the population. Over the last few decades the demographic studies of Serbia have revealed an increasing smaller share in the young population (which is a precondition for every social-economic and cultural development). In addition, there are differences in the migration patterns of the population in certain areas of the Republic of Serbia, which are in accordance with their territorial, geographic, ethnic, and cultural features. Thus, demographic processes are interconnected, and so the measures taken in regard to the population migration could only be successful if they are mutually integrated for the purpose of "rejuvenating" the population of Serbia, that is, the opening of possibilities for young people in all walks of life – education, employment, starting a family, having children.

In the demographic analyses of the share of certain age groups in the overall population, we often use functional age-gender contingents, since the realization of certain rights, the execution of certain commitments, the determination of certain activities is related to the current age, that is, gender of certain individuals. Thus, functional age-gender contingents are defined. "Age and gender boundaries on the basis of which we determine one's belonging to a certain functional contingent are not identical in all periods of time and all environments. The achieved degree of development, proper legislature, the usual norms or the personal attitude of the author are a factor which influence the acceptance of the borders of functional age groups" (Penev et al. 2006: 126-127). In that sense, we make a distinction between: the preschool contingent (ages 0-6), the school age contingent (ages 7-14), the population which has reached the legal age of maturity (18 and over), the working age contingent (males aged 15-64, females aged 15-59), the elderly contingent (60 and over) and others. Monitoring the attitude and the movement of functional age contingents is significant for the various spheres of social planning and economic development, networks of necessary social institutions or demographic investments (preschools, schools, health facilities), then education, employment, social security and the like.

For the purpose of the demographic study of the student population in Serbia, it is necessary to study the migration patterns of a certain selected functional age contingent – *the higher education/student contingent* (population aged 20-24). The age interval is defined so as to enable a comparison of all the censuses, even though in the student population we can even find those individuals who, considering their age (younger or older), do not belong to this functional age contingent.

Table 4. The share of the population aged 20-24 (the student contingent) in the overall population of the Republic of Serbia 1981, 1991 and 2002

Macro units	Age 20-24			The share in the population of the 20-24 group in the overall population (in %)		
	1981.	1991.	2002.	1981.	1991.	2002.
Republic of Serbia	713.596	692.430	512.429	7,7	7,1	6,8
C. Serbia	422.644	377.173	369.988	7,4	6,7	6,8
Vojvodina	150.900	127.564	142.441	7,4	6,5	7,0
Kosovo and Metohija	140.052	187.693	/	8,8	9,6	/

Source: (1983) *Municipalities in Serbia 1982*; (1993) *Municipalities in the Republic of Serbia* 1992; (2002) *Serbian Statistical Yearbook 2002*; (2003) *Serbian Statistical Yearbook 2003*; (2003) *Population. Gender and age*.

The demographic image of the student contingent is in accordance with the tendencies in the migration patterns of the population of the Republic of Serbia. Namely, seeing how the population aged 20-24 is the main part of the population of young people in Serbia, it is only used to confirm negative demographic tendencies (a decrease in the population of the young, a differentiation considering the territorial origin, the increase in the share of the elderly in the overall population). The share of young people ages 20-24 has been continually decreasing over a two-decade period (1981-2002) and percent-wise has a value of 28,2%. Similar migration patterns in the young population can also be noted in central Serbia and Vojvodina, with the exception that the decrease in Vojvodina is of a somewhat smaller extent. In Kosovo and Metohija we find the opposite tendency – there is an increase in the number of young people aged 20-24 in the ten-year period (1981-1991)[4], which notes an increase of 25,4%.

Once we analyze the percent of the share of the population aged 20-24 in the overall population of the Republic of Serbia, we can note an interesting distribution: every fifteenth inhabitant (6,8%) is of this age (with a smaller or greater variation in central Serbia and Vojvodina), while in Kosovo and Metohija almost every tenth inhabitant is of this age (9,6%).

If we were to look at the number of students in the Republic of Serbia we can note that during the studied period (1981-2006) there was a noted increase from 197.620 to 238.710, with the addition of a "critical period" (1991) which marked a significant decrease in the number of students by 70.574 and a subsequent "spike" (2002). In central Serbia in the movement of the number of students there are no significant deviations in comparison to the Republic in general, and a similar tendency can also be discerned in Vojvodina. In Kosovo and Metohija, here, as in other analyses, there is a specific deviation from the remaining territories within the Republic which are characterized by a very pronounced decrease in the number of students in 1991 which was almost reduced four times (3,5 times).

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[4] The 2002 census did not include Kosovo and Metohija, so the data related to this age group is missing.

Table 5. The share of the student population in the overall population
of the Republic of Serbia 1981, 1991 and 2002

Macro unit	Number of students				The share of the student population in the overall population (in %)		
	1981.	1991.	2002.	2006.	1981.	1991.	2002.
Republic of Serbia	197.620	127.046	182.941	238.710	2,1	1,3	2,4
C. Serbia	119.199	92.127	144.768	183.947	2,1	1,6	2,6
Vojvodina	38.050	23.485	38.173	54.763	1,9	1,2	1,9
Kosovo and Metohija	40.371	11.434	/	/	2,5	0,6	/

Source: (1983) *Municipalities in Serbia 1982*; (1993) *Municipalities in the Republic of Serbia 1992*; (2002) *Serbian Statistical Yearbook 2002*; (2003) *Serbian Statistical Yearbook 2003*; (2003) *Population. Gender and age*; (2007) *Serbian Statistical Yearbook* 2007.

The number of students per 10.000 inhabitants of the Republic of Serbia in 2002 was 244, which in regard to the data which refer to Yugoslavia in 1995, which was among the final five countries in Europe (ahead of Albania, Macedonia, Hungary and Romania), represents progress (1. Finland – 403, 2. Norway – 401, 3. France – 362, ... , 21. Germany – 265, ... 30. Yugoslavia – 157, 31. Hungary – 151, 32. Romania – 148, 33. Macedonia – 137, 34. Albania – 93) (Ivković 2003: 278).

The share of the student population in the overall population of the Republic of Serbia is very small, so that in 1991, for every hundred inhabitants only 1,3 were students, while in central Serbia, 1,6 were students. In Kosovo and Metohija the situation was even more alarming – 0,6 students per 100 inhabitants in this area. In 2002 the percentage of students in the overall population changed, so that in central Serbia there were 2,6 students per 100 inhabitants, while there is no data available for Kosovo and Metohija. Thus, in all of the analyzed parameters we find differentiations in the distribution of the population aged 20-24 and the number of students, in terms of the territory they belong to (central Serbia, Vojvodina, Kosovo and Metohija).

CONCLUSION

A comparison of the data related to the share of the populate aged (the student contingent) and the share of the student population in the overall population of the Republic of Serbia brings us to some significant conclusions: (1) even though in central Serbia and Vojvodina the share of the population aged 20-24 has been decreasing continuously (with smaller deviations due to the influx of refugees), the share of the student population in the overall population over time has, however, increased; (2) even though in Kosovo and Metohija the share of the population aged 20-24 has increased continuously, the share of the student population in the overall population has decreased significantly.

We can conclude that the demographic, regional, territorial, ethnic and cultural features do have an influence, both on the development of education, and on the relationship between young people towards education and its importance. If the environment is more developed and the conditions more favorable, (production-wise, in terms of the economy, in terms of the culture) the relation towards education is more positive, education is more developed, more available, and the result of that is an increasing number of young people who are now getting an education. Considering the changes in the age structure of the

population of the Republic of Serbia, which indicate the tendency of a decrease in the share of the young, and a significant increase in the average age on the territory of central Serbia and Vojvodina, we can conclude that the number of students will increase, since even such a small number of young people of the appropriate age, noting the great significance and contribution of education for professional and social mobility, will receive an education.

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STANOVNIŠTVO STUDENTSKOG UZRASTA U SOCIODEMOGRAFSKOM KONTEKSTU REPUBLIKE SRBIJE

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Sociodemografska proučavanja sve više ukazuju na tendenciju smanjenja udela mladog, a povećanja udela starijeg stanovništva u ukupnom stanovništvu Republike Srbije. Naime, dok se udeo mladog stanovništva (0-19 godina) u ukupnom stanovništvu skoro prepolovio u pedesetogodišnjem periodu (41,6% u 1948. godini i 22,4% u 2002. godini), udeo starijeg stanovništva (60 i više godina) u istom periodu povećao se za 2,5 puta (8,8%:22,6%). Pored toga, brojni demografski indikatori sve više upućuju na proces intenzivnog starenja stanovništva Srbije.

U radu se prezentuju istraživački nalazi autorke koji se odnose na udeo stanovništva studentskog uzrasta (20-24 godine) i studenata u ukupnom stanovništvu Republike Srbije. Oni potvrđuju postojanje suprotnih demografskih tendencija na području centralne Srbije i Vojvodine (u periodu 1981-2002. godine): dok se, na jednoj strani, udeo stanovništva studentskog uzrasta smanjuje, na drugoj strani se udeo studentske populacije u ukupnom stanovništvu, ipak, povećava. Na području Kosova i Metohije takođe se javljaju suprotne tendencije, ali sa sasvim drugačijim ishodom: udeo stanovništva studentskog uzrasta kontinuirano raste, dok se udeo studentske populacije smanjuje. Uočene tendencije još jednom potvrđuju da su demografski procesi specifični na pojedinim područjima Republike Srbije, s obzirom na njihova geografska, socioekonomska, kuturna i etnička obeležja.

Ključne reči: *starosna struktura, stanovništvo studentskog uzrasta, studenti, Republika Srbija.*