

World War, and later kept stable at 0.3–0.4, mostly due to relative stabilization of interfamily variation in fertility (family planning and birth control, predominantly by means of medical abortions). Component due to differential prereproductive mortality, I_m , has shown a 50-fold decrease during the 20th century as a result of social progress and improvements in medical care, and nowadays attained negligible values (<0.03). It means that in these urban populations process of selection relaxation, with respect to both components – I_f and I_m , has been almost completed. An important predictable consequence of selection relaxation is an increase of population genetic load, which implies further development of genetic counseling. Intensity of intergroup selection (based on interethnic variation in birth rates within each megalopolis), is many times lower than that of intragroup selection (interfamily variation), and also tends to decrease, presumably, as a result of demographic transition – changes of migrant's reproductive behaviour in urban environment. Judging by 1926 census data, at that time interethnic differentials in vital statistics in Moscow were much more significant than now, and almost all ethnic groups demonstrated a positive natural increase.

Key words: *Crow's indices, fertility, mortality, selection relaxation, urban populations, interethnic differentials*

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COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF PHYSICAL DEVELOPMENT OF SCHOOLCHILDREN FROM DIFFERENT COUNTRIES

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Comparative analysis of the main indices of physical development of children, teen-agers and youth at the age of 7–17 years from Belarus, Russia, Poland, Serbia, Bulgaria and Estonia was performed. All samples were examined in the late 1990's – early 2000's. Through decades and from one generation to another, changes in physical development of children and youth, in different territorial and ethnic groups are important to study. In Belarus, studies of children and youth physical development were conducted by the team of the Department of Anthropology and Ecology, Institute of History, National Academy of Sciences, from the beginning of 1980's till the beginning of the 21st century. Studies in Belarus were held in different parts of the Republic. Total number of the examined was 5744 persons (2900 males, and 2844 females). It was shown that the positive secular trend was going on in the populations of towns and villages in the 1990's, and that urbanization is an important factor influencing the age of puberty. The study also demonstrated local variations in growth patterns under extreme environmental conditions, and exposed different growth rates in Belarusian schoolchildren at the age period from 7-17 years. Annual growth rates in stature have been also analyzed in schoolchildren from different countries. On the whole, the variations of main physical parameters in children and youth showed similarities and differences in the examined ethno-territorial groups. Belarusian children of both sexes showed closest tendencies in growth dynamics with Russians and Poles, and boys also with Bulgarians. The tallest children are Serbians and Estonians. As in the case with height, Belarusian children of both sexes are similar in body weight to the Russians and Poles. Similar to height, the biggest differences are seen between Belarusian and Estonian children. According to the rates of growth, Belarusian children of 7 to 17 years old are similar to the other ethno-territorial groups, as maximal growth and weight gain is seen in similar age periods.

Key words: *physical development, schoolchildren, comparative analysis, ethno-territorial groups*

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