

## Human Potential of Russia's Rural Areas: Assessment and Interpretation\*



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**Abstract.** The paper proves that the market transformations of the 1990s resulted in a crisis that affected all aspects of life of rural residents. Despite the measures taken to support the village, its problems still linger; and they include a reduction in the rural population and its outflow to the cities, and the condition of social infrastructure that is worse in comparison with that in the cities. All this reduces the opportunities for reproduction and development of human potential in Russian villages. The diversity of theoretical approaches to the definition of human potential, the lack of unified views on its structural components and methodological approaches to its analysis lead to the necessity to develop a comprehensive methodology for assessing human potential in rural areas; such a methodology should combine not only quantitative analysis based on statistical data, but also qualitative analysis that would involve the use of sociological research findings. In our paper, we present domestic studies on this problem and group them according to three scientific schools, determine their specific features and their positive and negative aspects. The article substantiates the use of the approach of T.I. Zaslavskaya to the study of human potential in rural areas; her approach distinguishes activity-related potential along with socio-demographic, socio-economic, and socio-cultural potential. In accordance with this approach, a set of indicators reflecting the state and development of human potential of rural areas is proposed. This system was tested with the help of a survey of rural population in the regions of the Northwestern Federal District. The results obtained indicate the prevalence of the average level of knowledge, a great extent of unrealized accumulated potential due to

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non-compliance, in half of the cases, of the qualification to the job requirements, as well as employment outside one's specialty. The lack of necessary conditions for realizing one's potential due to the lack of jobs and the worse state of social infrastructure in the villages compared to the cities can lead to an outflow of rural population, although sometimes the decision to move is not taken voluntarily. One third of those who are planning to move would not want to live in the city, because they appreciate the rural way of life, the opportunity to have their own house and land, and to maintain existing social ties with their neighbor villagers. However, with effective administration, there is a possibility to prevent the outflow of people from rural areas.

**Key words:** rural areas, human potential, structure of human potential, approaches to assessment.

Thinking about the future of Russia, it is necessary to use the features of the population and the quality of people's life as the main criteria for all the decisions of federal and regional authorities. We cannot but agree with the thesis put forward and repeated by many that our national idea is "preservation of the people", and the main goal is to preserve every person in the country, every citizen.

N.M. Rimashevskaya

### Introduction

Nowadays, more and more rural residents intend to leave the village for the city in search of a better life; villages are becoming desolate. According to various estimates, it is believed that after *perestroika*, up to 30 thousand villages disappeared, and the process is continuing. Urbanization is becoming a global trend. There is a growing recognition that this process is inevitable and has both negative and positive consequences; the latter include, for example, increased opportunities for professional development and self-realization of talented youth. However, despite the fact that cities are becoming "self-sufficient", they still "feed off" the countryside in the demographic aspect and retain mental community with its population [Druzhinin A.G. Specific features of urbanization and ruralization... 2012]. The village has always been considered a basis of demographic potential due to the existence

of large peasant families; it has been the main symbol of the Russian spirit, "the cradle of culture" and the best traditions of the country. While at present, some settlements have virtually no prospects, there also exist those that, even with the outflow of population, retain their development potential. In some, you can find ancient churches and manor houses, which are of interest to tourists and serve as a resource for development. A.V. Merzlov, director of the Center for Sustainable Development of Rural Areas at Moscow Timiryazev Agricultural Academy, in his expert interview (radio SOL', "Angle of view" program, December 19, 2016) noted that the village could be developed primarily with the help of internal resources, and natural and cultural potential, which still remain unused [Merzlov A. Extinction of the Russian village... 2016]. Supporting his point of view, we believe that it is necessary to take into account human potential as one of the key drivers of sustainable development of rural areas.

Achieving this strategic goal make sit necessary to reconsider the place and role of rural areas in promoting socio-economic transformation in Russia [On the federal target program "Sustainable development of rural territories for 2014–2017 and for the period till 2020"]. We agree with A.V. Vorontsov, who points out that "liberal market reforms carried out in the 1990s without taking into

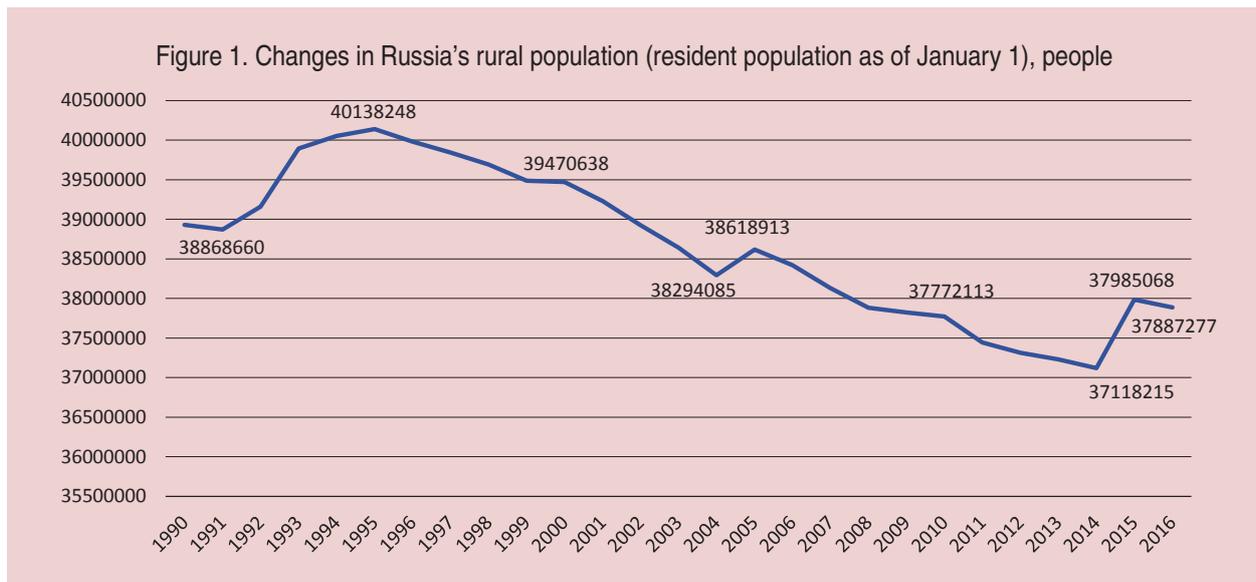
consideration historical, national and natural-climatic features led to a sharp deterioration of conditions and living standards of the population and caused deep and protracted crisis of the village which affected virtually all aspects of life of villagers” [Vorontsov A.V. The countryside sociology and a demography in statistics reflection. 2011. P. 138]. In the early 1990s, in one of the speeches of the participants of Vologda regional peasant gathering, it was noted that “the village is falling apart, and the rural population is left to sink or swim” [Russia on the eve of the 21st century. 1995]. The situation was similar in other regions. G.V. Kulik, Deputy of the State Duma of the Federal Assembly of the Russian Federation, in his report on Russia's agriculture describes in the following way the decadent moods of the population which existed then: “The village cannot survive any more, it won't be able to get back on its feet, village roots have been cut and the village is dying without hope, and the people lost faith in the possibility of revival of the Russian village” [Kulik G. V. Fifteen years with President Putin. Russia's agriculture will ensure the food independence of the country. 2016].

Over two decades have passed, and the situation is now different. Among the most important milestones of agricultural policy is the national project “Development of the agro-industrial complex”, the Food Security Doctrine of the Russian Federation, the State Program for Agriculture Development for 2013–2020. [Barsukova S.Yu. Barsukova S.Yu. Milestones of agrarian policy of Russia in the 2000s. 2013]. An important place was given to solving the problems of social reconstruction of the village and improving the level of social services for the rural population. For example, according to the above-mentioned report by G.V. Kulik, the total amount of expenditures on social development of the village in 2003–2014

amounted to 406.0 billion rubles, and most of it was allocated to residential construction, particularly to the houses for professionals, who came to the village as permanent residents, to gasification and water supply of rural settlements.

Nevertheless, despite the measures undertaken, there still remain certain problems such as the outflow of population to the cities, and the decrease in rural population. One of the possible reasons lies in the fact that the existing sustainable rural development program mainly covers settlements located near large agro-industrial facilities, while most rural areas are not covered by the program, and the rate of disappearance of villages and their depopulation is still very high [Merzlov A. Extinction of the Russian village... 2016]. The latter is clearly illustrated by statistical data: over 20 years, the rural population of Russia decreased by three million people (7.5%); after the accession of Crimea to Russia, rural population has increased, but the key situation has not changed (*Fig. 1*).

The processes taking place in rural areas can be considered as a reason for increasing the number of research projects on the socio-economic problems of rural areas. We should point out the writings of T.I. Zaslavskaya [Zaslavskaya T.N. Pages of creative biography. 1999], and Yu.V. Arutyunyan [Arutyunyan Yu.V. Experience of sociological study of the village. 1968], which are devoted to methodological issues of studying the village and in which rural areas are considered as a socio-cultural world with special values and way of life. The potential of rural development and the real economy are studied in the works carried out under the supervision of T. Shanin [Shanin T. Reflexive peasant studies and the Russian village. 2002] (the Center of Peasant Studies and Agrarian Reforms), these works analyze the detailed biographies of families from rural areas.



The growth of research interest in this topic is partly due to the diversity of theoretical approaches to the definition of human potential. However, there is a lack of consensus on the components of human potential, as well as insufficient reflection of specific features of rural areas (such aspects as the stable development of rural communities, preservation of rural lifestyles and rural culture, etc. are often do not taken into account). We consider it urgent to develop a methodological approach to the assessment of human potential, the use of which would solve the controversial issues in order to develop management approaches further.

As we have previously noted [Chekmareva E.A., Ustinova K.A., Likhacheva T.N. 2017], each of the approaches to the study of human potential has its advantages and disadvantages, so it is necessary to focus on the development of such an approach that would attempt to minimize the latter. From our point of view, the technique for assessing human potential of rural areas should be comprehensive, combining not only quantitative, statistical data-based analysis, but also qualitative one, involving the use of sociological research findings. This actualizes the practical and scientific significance of the research.

**I. Theoretical foundations**

Theoretical foundations of research into human potential were laid by foreign scientists [William J. The Will to Believe, and other Essays in Popular Philosophy and Human Immortality. 1897; Moreno J.L. Sociometry. Experimental Method and the Science of Society... 1951; Maslow A.H. Motivation and Personality. 1954]: in the 1950s–1960s, major scientific schools were formed; they studied the influence of individual components of human potential on economic growth and innovation development of territories.

The 1970s–1990s witnessed an increased interest in the socio-economic concepts of human potential that focused on the changes in the forms of human potential through social and economic transformations [Sombart W. Modern Capitalism. 1992], and on the implementation of human potential in the interrelation of social and economic aspects [Simmel G. The Philosophy of Money. 1978]. In the framework of such concepts, human potential was considered, on the one hand, from the standpoint of the qualitative characteristics of a “sociological individual” whose behavior is sanctioned by society and whose social roles must be implemented in compliance

with existing social norms [Lindenberg S. An Assessment of the New Political Economy... 1985]; on the other hand – from the position of an “economic individual” oriented toward the development and implementation of their own abilities in the workplace [Aron R. Main Currents in Sociological Thought. 1993] by investing in themselves and in their environment [e.g. Bowen W. Investment in Human Capital and Economic Growth. 1968] to maximize economic benefits. From our point of view, it is necessary to take into account both social and economic aspects that influence the formation and use of human potential in interrelationship and interdependence.

There existed other widespread approaches: for example, in the 1990s, there was a transition from the concept of minimum needs (the International Labor Organization [The ILO Social Security (Minimum Standards) Convention, 1952 (No. 102)] to the concept of human development [United Nations Development Program. 1990], the main idea of which is to create conditions for the maximum implementation of human potential.

Some works on human potential, which appeared quite early in Russian science, considered only some of its components. Thus, Academician S.G. Strumilin in the 1920s analyzed the contribution of education to the economic growth of the USSR [Strumilin S.G. Problems of labor economics: essays and sketches. 1925]. For a long time, domestic research was dominated by “human utilization paradigm (resource-based approach) that considers man as a productive resource, whereas the alternative human development paradigm puts an individual at the center of reproductive process” [Human potential of Russian regions. 2013. P. 83]. The revision of the resource-based approach associated with the generalization of the achievements of domestic and foreign science resulted in the consideration of human

potential from the standpoint of the goal and criterion of social progress [Human potential of Russian regions. 2013. P. 83].

Having analyzed Russian research in the field of human potential we allocate three major scientific schools:

1. *Scientific school of B.G. Yudin* [Yudin B.G. Human potential as a critical resource of Russia. 2007; Yudin B.G. Human potential of Russia ... 2002] (RAS Institute of Human Sciences, after reorganization – RAS Institute of Philosophy). In the framework of this school, human potential is defined as a set of characteristics of an individual and society; these characteristics can be manifested in favorable circumstances or remain hidden. The formation and development of human potential is considered in the process of socialization of an individual [Yudin B.G. The concept of human potential ... 1998] at three levels: micro-level (man), mezo-level (group), and macro-level (country) [Yudin B.G. Human potential of Russia ... 2002; Lukov V.A., Yudin B.G. To the concept of the Internet project “Human potential of Russia”. 2009].

A specific feature of this scientific school consists in the fact that it is based on a comprehensive interdisciplinary approach to the study of man, and it criticizes some of the provisions of the UNDP methodology (the use of the index method to characterize individual conditions of human development, rather than the directions of implementation of potential; insufficient attention to the protection and guarantee of human rights in society). The scientific school of B.G. Yudin overcomes these flaws, takes into account the economic, psychological, and cultural aspects of human existence [Maslow A.H. Motivation and Personality. One thousand nine hundred fifty four], the possibility of adaptation of an individual to the changing conditions, the separate parameters connected with protection

of the rights (the number of complaints from citizens on the violation of their rights [Vorontsov A.V. The countryside sociology and a demography in statistics reflection. 2011]). In accordance with this, in the structure of human potential there are educational, intellectual, cultural and spiritual components [Human potential... 1999], psychological competence, health (bodily and spiritual), readiness for family life and for upbringing of children, adaptability to social infrastructure [Yudin B.G. The concept of human potential ... 1998]. In our work, among the indicators for assessing human potential we should take into account the level of education and the level of knowledge (erudition), health status (including the number of sick days over the past year, the opportunity to work out and go in for sports), marital status, children and their number.

2. *Scientific school of N.M. Rimashevskaya* (Institute of Socio-Economic Studies of Population of the Russian Academy of Sciences, ISESP RAS), based on the methodology for assessing qualitative characteristics of the population taking into account such components [Rimashevskaya N.M., Kopnina V.G. Population quality. 1993] as health (physical, mental and social), professional and educational abilities that form intellectual potential, cultural and moral values and spirituality, and sociocultural activity. Social aspirations are also taken into account [Rimashevskaya N.M. Qualitative potential of the Russian population... 2001], which corresponds to the viewpoint of UNDP developers, who considered the potential of human social activity as one of the components of human development in 2010. The question whether material support aimed to maintain and improve human potential should be considered as part of human potential remains debatable [Human potential of Russian regions ... 2013. P. 86]. Criticism of certain provisions is

due to the problems of comparative analysis, the inability to make comparisons due to the fact that, for example, social activity and spiritual and moral values are described at the micro-level. On the one hand, this makes it possible to analyze the qualitative structure of human potential in terms of various demographic and social groups; but on the other hand, territorial features often remain untouched. Overcoming this limitation is due to the use of statistical data, which, in turn, involves problems related to the availability of regular information on the level of education (availability of data on the results of population censuses mainly for economically active and adult population), the lack of indicators to assess such components of human potential as culture and civic engagement [Human potential of Russian regions... 2013. P. 140], the availability of statistical data for the assessment of human potential mainly at the regional level. The latter problem makes it difficult to use the developed methodological approaches in relation to rural areas and brings to the fore the studies aimed to overcome these problems.

3. *Scientific school of T.I. Zaslavskaya* (Russian Presidential Academy of National Economy and Public Administration, RANEPA) that considers human potential from the position of the readiness and ability of the national community to develop actively, to make timely and adequate responses to multiple challenges of the environment, to compete successfully with other societies [Zaslavskaya T.I. Human potential in the modern transformation process. 2005]. One of the features of this scientific school is that it studies human potential in the context of transformation processes.

Summing up the experience of studies on the structure of human potential, we see that the most common of its components are intellectual, creative, communicative, value-

related and activity-related [Chekmareva E.A., Ustinova K.A., Likhacheva T.N. Theoretical and methodological approaches to human potential research of rural areas. 2017]. The last component determined by T.I. Zaslavskaya along with socio-demographic, socio-economic, and socio-cultural components, is expressed, in her opinion, in the objective opportunities of citizens to realize their social and creative potentials, to lead an active and full life [Zaslavskaya T.I. Twenty years of Russian transformation... 2010]. In turn, we consider it important to study activity-related potential from the standpoint of its influencing not only the implementation of other components of human potential, but also their formation. For example, professional development intentions and plans can have a positive impact on socio-economic and human potential in general.

The advantage of T.I. Zaslavskaya's approach lies in the component analysis of human potential in the context of transformation processes, which makes it possible to adapt this approach to rural areas. Given this fact, human potential of rural areas can be defined as a complex system that consists of socio-demographic, socio-economic, socio-cultural and activity-related potentials, the relationship and interaction of which ensures the reproducibility of the rural community, preservation of rural lifestyles, production of agricultural products and other goods and services, as well as social control over the territory [Chekmareva E.A., Ustinova K.A., Likhacheva T.N. Theoretical and methodological approaches to human potential research of rural areas. 2017. P. 104].

## II. Methods

The need to develop a comprehensive methodology for analyzing human potential of rural areas is due to the debatable problems of its research. In this article, we place the

emphasis on the sociological method since there are no well-established methodological principles in the study of this category, and there are no concrete parameters of its sociological assessment [Bychenko D.Yu. Methodological foundations of the study of human potential. 2011. P. 57].

Within the framework of our research, we developed a methodology based on a system of indicators corresponding to its structural components (socio-demographic, socio-economic, socio-cultural and activity-related; *Tab. 1*). Its approbation carried out on the data of 2017 made it possible to characterize comprehensively the state and development of human potential taking into account the factors influencing it (affecting the choice of profession and the development of professionalism; impeding employment within one's obtained specialty, visiting cultural events, physical education and sports, etc.).

The key role in the structure of human potential belongs to activity-related potential, which, on the one hand, affects all other components (*Fig. 2*) and serves as a decisive factor in their implementation; on the other hand – it “experiences” their significant impact [Zaslavskaya T.I. Twenty years of Russian transformation. 2010]. We support the position of T.I. Zaslavskaya and consider activity-related potential, first, in interrelation and interdependence with other components, second, as a separate component, which has its own specifics. In this component (see *Tab. 1*) we have included professional intentions, measures to preserve and promote health, social and political engagement of the population, etc.

We implemented the above idea of using the system of indicators in the framework of Project 16-32-01057 entitled “Human potential of rural areas in the period of socio-economic transformations” funded by the Russian Foundation for the Humanities. At the *first*

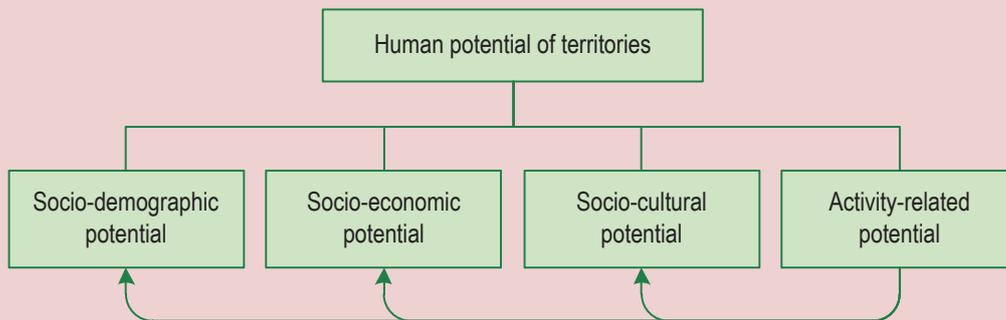
Table 1. System of indicators for integrated assessment of human potential of rural areas

Components of human potential	Content [Source: Zaslavskaya T.I. Twenty years of Russian transformation. 2010]	System of indicators (corresponds to the questions in the questionnaire)
Socio-demographic	It is determined by the structure of the population by generation, the average life expectancy of men and women, the ratio of births and deaths, marriages and divorces, the proportion of singles, as well as illegitimate, neglected children and those deprived of parental care. Important elements of this potential include the state of physical and mental health, the level and quality of education of citizens.	Sex Age Marital status Number of children State of health Sick leaves for the last year and their frequency Physical education and sports Level of education Specialty School performance Level of knowledge (erudition) Sources of knowledge
Socio-economic	It takes into account the level of qualification and professionalism of economically active citizens, public demand for their labor, the level and structure of employment, the degree of implementation of their labor, business and intellectual resources. The level of citizens' requests in respect of rights and freedoms, the degree of social protection, chances of success in life, etc., as well as their needs and effective demand for material and social benefits.	Qualities peculiar to man (responsibility, diligence, education, self-control, etc.) Qualities that are more helpful in the work Nature of work Occupation Work sphere Experience Degree of compliance of one's qualification with one's job Employment according to one's specialty/outside one's specialty Characteristics of cash income Monthly expenditure on food
Socio-cultural	Includes socially significant features of the mentality of citizens, in particular the normative and value consciousness, beliefs, respect for law, the level of morality, the structure of motivational sets and behavior patterns; values (personal or collective, etc.); the degree of readiness and ability of different groups and strata to interact to achieve common goals or, conversely, their ideological dissociation	Mental features Values (what is important in life) Religious views Moral feelings (guilt, remorse, etc.) Hobbies The use of profanity in communicating with others
Activity-related	It is expressed in the level of competencies of social actors, their energy, enterprise, and initiative. External indicators of this potential are the scale of entrepreneurial and other socio-innovative activity of the population, the development of the "third sector", venture industries, and civil structures.	Planning to move (change the place of residence) Having a side job Planning to improve one's professional skills Changing one's place of work and reasons for it Professional intentions Measures that a person is willing to take to preserve and strengthen their health Ways of spending free time Housing improvement Participation in the public life of the settlement Membership in public organizations Participation in political life
Source: the system of indicators for comprehensive assessment of human potential in rural areas that we developed taking into account the content of structural components by T.I. Zaslavskaya.		

*stage* (2016) of its implementation, the main task was to test its tools in the Vologda Oblast. The sample covered 400 rural residents of the region. The value of random sampling error was 3–4% at a confidence interval of 4–5%. At the *second stage* (2017), the rural areas of

the North-West were chosen as the object of research, since they are an important socio-territorial subsystem of the society. The sample is representative by gender and age, its total volume is 238 respondents.

Figure 2. Structure of human potential



Source: our own compilation.

At this stage, we used the results of a sociological survey carried out in 2017 by Vologda Research Center of RAS (formerly named ISEDT RAS) in rural areas of the Northwestern Federal District (the data for 2016 were not used due to the difference in the structure of the sample and the disparity of the data). The survey covered 17 small villages, 12 medium-sized villages, 12 communities and urban-type settlements such as the urban-type settlement of Proletariy, the settlements of Krestsy, Vazhskaya Zapan, Lovozero, Maloshuyka, Pavlovsk, the villages of Velikaya Niva, Zalesye, Plesovskaya, etc. The composition of respondents was as follows: 42% live in communities and urban-type settlements, 34% – in medium-sized villages, 24% – in small villages; including 13% – residents of district centers, 57% – residents of settlements located within a radius of 20 km from district centers, 20% – within a radius of 21–50 km from district centers, 10% – within a radius of 50 km from district centers.

When we were analyzing human potential of rural areas, we took into account both socio-demographic parameters (gender, age) and the territorial aspect – the type of settlement (small village, medium-sized village, community and urban-type settlement). When describing components of human potential, we considered

some indicators that revealed the content of the component to a greater extent: for example, in the case of socio-demographic potential it was the level of education and health status of the rural population; in the case of socio-economic potential – the employment within one's obtained specialty (outside one's specialty), employment by vocation (work as one's favorite activity), the degree of compliance of one's qualification with the work one performs; in the case of socio-cultural potential – the values (what is most important in life), closeness (remoteness) in relation to the residents of the settlement; in the case of activity-related potential – the intentions of the population, participation in the public life of the settlement. In addition, in view of a key problem – the outflow of population from rural areas – we placed the emphasis on identifying what aspects of rural life might attract people, and on the reasons why people would like to change their place of residence.

### III. Results

#### 1. Socio-demographic potential.

The characteristics of socio-demographic potential include the structure of population by generation, average life expectancy, physical and mental health, and the level and quality of education of citizens. In our study we examine the last two components.

The distribution of population by level of education shows that the entire rural population has secondary education, more than 40% were trained in the vocational school, about a quarter – in the technical school and only 15% – in higher education institutions (Tab. 2).

Despite the fact that there are virtually no respondents who have two or more higher educations among the rural population, in general they estimate the level of their knowledge as average in more than 60% of the cases, and as high – in 20% of the cases. Moreover, young people are more optimistic in their judgments compared, for example, with the population of retirement age (Tab. 3).

Men tend to describe their health status, one of the most important components of socio-demographic potential, as good (36% vs. 21% in women). Young people assess their health more positively than people of other age groups: a quarter of young people characterize it as excellent, in the middle-aged group the share of such assessments is several times less. The inhabitants of communities or urban-type settlements in comparison with those living in villages assess their health as excellent and good more often (Tab. 4).

Similar conclusions are made with the use of the data on the frequency and severity of diseases depending on the characteristics under

Table 2. Distribution of answers to the question: “What education do you have?”, each column makes 100%\*

Education level	Frequency, %
Secondary school	100.0
Vocational school	43.7
Technical school	23.9
Technical college	4.2
Incomplete higher education	2.5
Higher education	15.1
Two higher education degrees and more	0.8
Postgraduate education	0.8
Other	0.8
Without any education	0.0

\* The sum in the column is more than 100%, because the answer to the question involved indicating all the stages of education the respondents completed.

consideration (sex, age, type of settlement). Ailments are more common among middle-aged persons and pensioners (49% and 51% vs 30%, respectively); the same can be said about serious health condition (15% and 15% vs 2%; Tab. 5).

Building and developing socio-demographic potential depends on the willingness of the population to take measures to preserve and improve their health. Here some of the obstacles are subjective (lack of need, lack of free time) and objective (problems with the availability of sports facilities for this purpose). However, people consider subjective obstacles of crucial importance (about half of the respondents

Table 3. Assessment of the level of knowledge (erudition) and the presence of two or more higher education degrees, each column makes 100%

Answer	Sex		Age			Settlement		
	Men	Women	Youth	Middle-aged persons	Pensioners	Small village	Medium-sized village	Community or urban-type settlement
Two or more higher education degrees								
Yes	0.0	1.6	0.0	0.9	1.2	1.8	1.3	0.0
No	100.0	98.4	100.0	99.1	98.8	98.2	98.8	100.0
Level of knowledge (erudition)								
Very low	0.0	0.8	0.0	0.0	1.2	0.0	0.0	1.0
Low	9.7	9.7	2.1	10.2	13.4	8.8	10.1	10.0
Average	66.4	67.7	72.3	65.7	65.9	71.9	65.8	66.0
High	22.1	21.0	25.5	23.1	17.1	17.5	24.1	21.0
Very high	1.8	0.8	0.0	0.9	2.4	1.8	0.0	2.0

Table 4. Distribution of answers to the question: "How would you assess the overall state of your health", each column makes 100%

Answer	Sex		Age			Settlement		
	Men	Women	Youth	Middle-aged persons	Pensioners	Small village	Medium-sized village	Community or urban-type settlement
Excellent	7.1	8.8	27.1	3.7	2.4	1.8	5.0	13.0
Good	36.3	20.8	56.3	30.6	8.5	15.8	33.8	31.0
Satisfactory	52.2	54.4	16.7	59.3	67.1	66.7	52.5	47.0
Poor	4.4	13.6	0.0	6.5	18.3	14.0	7.5	8.0
Very poor	0.0	2.4	0.0	0.0	3.7	1.8	1.3	1.0

Table 5. Distribution of answers to the question: "Which of these statements suits you best?", each column makes 100%

Answer	Sex		Age			Settlement		
	Men	Women	Youth	Middle-aged persons	Pensioners	Small village	Medium-sized village	Community or urban-type settlement
I'm often and severely ill	0.0	4.9	0.0	0.9	6.2	7.0	1.3	1.0
I fall ill often, but my illnesses aren't severe	4.5	12.2	4.3	3.8	17.3	7.0	7.7	10.2
From time to time I have a serious condition	13.5	11.4	2.1	15.1	14.8	19.3	9.0	11.2
I feel unwell sometimes	48.6	43.9	29.8	50.9	49.4	47.4	57.7	35.7
I seldom fall ill or feel unwell	33.3	27.6	63.8	29.2	12.3	19.3	24.4	41.8

chose answers related to subjective aspects). This means that changing people's motivation to preserve and improve their health and the availability of appropriate attitudes would probably improve the situation. Judging from the results of the sociological survey, only a quarter of the population has no obstacles to the implementation of intentions in this direction.

## 2. Socio-economic potential

Taking into account the fact that this potential is associated with raising the professional level of the population and with the implementation of intellectual and business qualities, we consider it important to consider the parameters that indicate its inefficient use due to the mismatch between the educational system and the labor market (employment outside one's specialty, the degree of compliance of a person's qualification with the requirements of a job, etc.).

The study also shows that, like in all able-bodied population, only in half of the cases the qualification of rural residents meets the requirements of jobs and about one third of the villagers have a higher qualification than it is required for their job (*Tab. 6*). It should be noted that only in a small number of cases the qualification of respondents is below the requirements of their job, which may be due, on the one hand, to the lack of high-tech industries in rural areas, where employers would impose high requirements on the educational and qualification potential of employees, on the other hand, it can be due to overestimated self-assessments of the population.

The mismatch between the requirements of jobs and the specialty obtained in the course of education impedes the possibility of using the accumulated potential efficiently. In practice, compliance is ensured only in half of the cases, this occurs even less frequently among rural

Table 6. Distribution of answers to the question: "To what extent does your qualification correspond to the work you perform?", each column makes 100%

Answer	Sex		Age			Settlement		
	Men	Women	Youth	Middle-aged persons	Pensioners	Small village	Medium-sized village	Community or urban-type settlement
My qualification is higher than the requirements to my work	30.8	25.0	33.3	28.8	14.3	37.0	21.7	29.8
My qualification meets the requirements to my work	50.8	57.1	48.1	55.0	57.1	48.1	56.5	53.2
My qualification is lower than the requirements to my work	1.5	0.0	3.7	0.0	0.0	3.7	0.0	0.0
I don't know, it's hard to tell	16.9	17.9	14.8	16.3	28.6	11.1	21.7	17.0

Table 7. Distribution of answers to the question: "Do you work within your specialty?", each column makes 100%

Answer	Sex		Age			Settlement		
	Men	Women	Youth	Middle-aged persons	Pensioners	Small village	Medium-sized village	Community or urban-type settlement
Yes	49.2	50.0	44.4	51.3	50.0	33.3	52.2	55.3
No	49.2	50.0	51.9	48.8	50.0	66.7	47.8	42.6
Other	1.5	0.0	3.7	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	2.1

residents, which can be caused by the lack of jobs corresponding to the training they received (Tab. 7).

One of the problems is that only half of the villagers can work in the place of residence, while almost one third have to find a job in the city; this fact can lead to the outflow of the population from the village (Tab. 8). It should be emphasized that the absence of appropriate work in the place of residence in about half of the cases leads to employment outside one's specialty; other reasons that determine such a situation are the desire to

find a job "to one's liking" (18%), change activities and try something new (12%), etc. Despite the difficulties that arise with regard to employment, the majority of rural population like their work (Tab. 9).

Summing up the overview of socio-economic potential, we should note that its effective development and utilization is provided only in half of the cases. We have proved it with the help of the data on employment according to one's specialty, and on the compliance of people's qualification with requirements of their jobs.

Table 8. Distribution of answers to the question: "Do you work in the same settlement in which you live?", each column makes 100%

Answer	Sex		Age			Settlement		
	Men	Women	Youth	Middle-aged persons	Pensioners	Small village	Medium-sized village	Community or urban-type settlement
Yes	56.9	58.9	63.0	52.5	78.6	51.9	76.1	42.6
No, I work in another settlement	13.8	16.1	7.4	18.8	7.1	18.5	8.7	19.1
No, I work in the city	29.2	25.0	29.6	28.8	14.3	29.6	15.2	38.3

Table 9. Distribution of answers to the question: "Do you enjoy the work that you do?", each column makes 100%

Answer	Sex		Age			Settlement		
	Men	Women	Youth	Middle-aged persons	Pensioners	Small village	Medium-sized village	Community or urban-type settlement
Yes	26.2	25.0	22.2	23.8	42.9	29.6	21.7	25.5
Sooner yes	30.8	42.9	37.0	38.8	21.4	33.3	34.8	40.4
Sooner no	26.2	17.9	22.2	23.8	14.3	33.3	28.3	10.6
Definitely no	3.1	3.6	3.7	3.8	0.0	0.0	4.3	4.3
It's difficult to say	13.8	10.7	14.8	10.0	21.4	3.7	10.9	19.1

### 3. Socio-cultural potential

Socio-cultural potential is considered from the positions of morality and virtue, views and beliefs, and respect for law, as well as the features of normative and value-based consciousness; and a decisive role in this case belongs to values. In their list, the first place, regardless of socio-demographic characteristics of the population and their place of residence, is occupied by the family and home, the second – by the job and, as a consequence, by the means to ensure decent earnings. Besides, communication is of great importance, too (*Tab. 10*).

The importance of communication and maintaining stable relations with the inhabitants of the village is shown using the results of the answers to the question about the sense of closeness/remoteness in relation to the settlement. Social relations are given importance

in more than 40% of the cases, and among pensioners and residents of the settlements, this figure is more than 50% (*Tab. 11*). About one third of the rural population feels closeness with nature, which can contribute to the lack of desire to change their place of residence.

When considering socio-cultural potential, we can emphasize that the population of rural areas distinguishes such common aspects of value orientations as family and home, work and decent earnings, maintenance of social ties through communication; while professional development and spiritual development are not considered as very important. The low orientation of the rural population toward improving their skills and toward professional growth may be a reason for reducing opportunities to overcome the discrepancies between the educational system and the

Table 10. Distribution of answers to the question: "What is the main thing in life for you personally?", each column makes 100% (the answer "my own thing"; the sum exceeds 100% because respondents could choose up to 3 answers)

Answer	Sex		Age			Settlement		
	Men	Women	Youth	Middle-aged persons	Pensioners	Small village	Medium-sized village	Community or urban-type settlement
My work	37.2	23.2	29.2	43.5	12.2	24.6	41.3	23.0
Family and home	92.0	90.4	91.7	93.5	87.8	86.0	95.0	91.0
Study, education, advanced training	5.3	6.4	22.9	0.9	2.4	1.8	5.0	9.0
Communication with a certain circle of people	15.9	24.0	18.8	18.5	23.2	24.6	13.8	23.0
Decent earnings	32.7	19.2	31.3	33.3	12.2	22.8	35.0	20.0
Spiritual development	6.2	12.8	6.3	4.6	18.3	8.8	11.3	9.0
Other	0.9	0.8	0.0	0.9	1.2	0.0	1.3	1.0

Table 11. Distribution of answers to the question: "To what extent do you feel close to or remote from your settlement?", (answer "my own thing"; each column makes 100%)

Answer	Sex		Age			Settlement		
	Men	Women	Youth	Middle-aged persons	Pensioners	Small village	Medium-sized village	Community or urban-type settlement
Residents of the settlement	42.9	46.0	44.7	39.8	50.6	33.3	37.5	56.1
Nature of the settlement	31.3	41.1	34.0	37.0	37.0	43.9	40.0	29.6
Traditions and culture of the settlement	15.2	8.1	14.9	13.0	7.4	8.8	15.0	10.2
History of the settlement	7.1	4.8	4.3	7.4	4.9	10.5	7.5	2.0
Future of the settlement	3.6	0.0	2.1	2.8	0.0	3.5	0.0	2.0

labor market, expressed in the employment outside one's specialty, mismatch between an individual's qualification and the requirements of their jobs, and in choosing a job without taking into account one's preferences (lack of love for the profession as a life-work).

#### 4. Activity-related potential

Overcoming the above problems becomes possible through the use of activity-related potential, which includes not only social activity, but also business qualities, initiative and enterprise. Here a high priority must be placed on the intent (achieving a high financial status, establishing social relationships and expanding one's social circle) as the "source" promoting people's activity. Rural residents

pay less attention to such intentions as preservation and promotion of health, intellectual development (this is especially important for women, youth and the population living in settlements), growth of the cultural level, career promotion and achievement of a high position in society.

However, despite the above-mentioned priorities, there are some differences across socio-demographic groups. For example, women intend to expand their knowledge, promote health and expand their social circle more often as compared to men, while men intend to achieve high financial standing, engage in business activities, and achieve public recognition (Tab. 12).

Table 12. Distribution of answers to the question: "Which of the following coincide with your intentions?", each column makes 100%

Answer	Sex		Age			Settlement		
	Men	Women	Youth	Middle-aged persons	Pensioners	Small village	Medium-sized village	Community or urban-type settlement
<i>Improve my knowledge, become an erudite person</i>								
Yes	21.5	32.1	29.6	30.0	0.0	25.9	19.6	34.0
No	78.5	67.9	70.4	70.0	100.0	74.1	80.4	66.0
<i>Become a highly qualified specialist, respected by colleagues</i>								
Yes	33.8	23.2	29.6	32.5	7.1	29.6	21.7	34.0
No	66.2	76.8	70.4	67.5	92.9	70.4	78.3	66.0
<i>Get a promotion, make a career</i>								
Yes	16.9	17.9	37.0	13.8	0.0	11.1	17.4	21.3
No	83.1	82.1	63.0	86.3	100.0	88.9	82.6	78.7

The end of Table 12

Answer	Sex		Age			Settlement		
	Men	Women	Youth	Middle-aged persons	Pensioners	Small village	Medium-sized village	Community or urban-type settlement
<i>Do (continue doing) creative work</i>								
Yes	4.6	1.8	7.4	2.5	0.0	0.0	2.2	6.4
No	95.4	98.2	92.6	97.5	100.0	100.0	97.8	93.6
<i>Achieve a high financial position</i>								
Yes	49.2	19.6	44.4	38.8	0.0	40.7	26.1	42.6
No	50.8	80.4	55.6	61.3	100.0	59.3	73.9	57.4
<i>Engage in entrepreneurial activities, open a business, become a farmer, etc.</i>								
Yes	13.8	7.1	25.9	6.3	7.1	14.8	13.0	6.4
No	86.2	92.9	74.1	93.8	92.9	85.2	87.0	93.6
<i>Engage in socio-political activities, become a deputy, a leader of a party, movement, trade union, etc.</i>								
Yes	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
No	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
<i>Raise my cultural level</i>								
Yes	7.7	19.6	18.5	12.5	7.1	11.1	13.0	14.9
No	92.3	80.4	81.5	87.5	92.9	88.9	87.0	85.1
<i>Rise to eminence in society</i>								
Yes	6.2	8.9	14.8	6.3	0.0	7.4	13.0	2.1
No	93.8	91.1	85.2	93.8	100.0	92.6	87.0	97.9
<i>Gain public recognition (receive awards, honors)</i>								
Yes	10.8	3.6	7.4	7.5	7.1	7.4	6.5	6.4
No	89.2	96.4	92.6	92.5	92.9	92.6	93.5	93.6
<i>Improve my health</i>								
Yes	16.9	32.1	14.8	25.0	35.7	33.3	21.7	21.3
No	83.1	67.9	85.2	75.0	64.3	66.7	78.3	78.7
<i>Make my nervous system stronger</i>								
Yes	20.0	17.9	3.7	21.3	35.7	25.9	17.4	17.0
No	80.0	82.1	96.3	78.8	64.3	74.1	82.6	83.0
<i>Expand my social circle, make many friends and acquaintances</i>								
Yes	30.8	35.7	25.9	33.8	42.9	33.3	32.6	34.0
No	69.2	64.3	74.1	66.3	57.1	66.7	67.4	66.0

Intentions are realized through the activity of the population, including their community activity. According to the results of our sociological research we reveal that about half of the population does not participate in the social life of their locality, with the exception of community cleanup days (about a third of respondents) and sociological surveys (*Tab. 13*).

We think that one of the reasons why community activity of the population is low consists in the lack of desire to live in rural areas. In this regard, of interest are the answers to the question concerning the plans of their children and grandchildren to live in rural areas

– more than 40% of both men and women gave a negative answer (*Tab. 14*). Pensioners hold a similar position in more than half of the cases, the share of such answers among young people is slightly less. At the same time, the residents of urban-type settlements are more likely to be positive than the residents of villages.

About a quarter of the population (both men and women) plan to change their place of residence; a similar situation is revealed in the context of age groups (except for middle-aged persons; *Tab. 15*).

Despite the desire to change their place of residence, more than one third of rural residents

Table 13. Distribution of answers to the question: "Do you participate in the community life of your settlement?", each column makes 100% (the sum exceeds 100% because several answers could be selected)

Answer	Sex		Age			Settlement		
	Men	Women	Youth	Middle-aged persons	Pensioners	Small village	Medium-sized village	Community or urban-type settlement
I participate in creative activities, concerts	5.3	8.0	6.3	8.3	4.9	3.5	7.5	8.0
I participate in community cleanup days	30.1	36.8	22.9	38.0	34.1	31.6	35.0	34.0
I participate in social projects, promotions, flash mobs	3.5	6.4	4.2	8.3	1.2	5.3	5.0	4.0
I participate in sociological surveys, interviews, focus groups	20.4	21.6	22.9	18.5	23.2	8.8	16.3	32.0
I write publications, notes (posts) in print and electronic editions	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
I do charity work	0.0	2.4	0.0	1.9	1.2	0.0	1.3	2.0
I am engaged in volunteer activity	0.9	1.6	2.1	0.0	2.4	0.0	1.3	2.0
Other	0.9	0.8	0.0	0.9	1.2	3.5	0.0	0.0
<i>I don't participate in anything</i>	<i>54.9</i>	<i>46.4</i>	<i>52.1</i>	<i>50.9</i>	<i>48.8</i>	<i>59.6</i>	<i>56.3</i>	<i>41.0</i>

Table 14. Distribution of answers to the question: "Would you like your children and grandchildren to live here?", each column makes 100%

Answer	Sex		Age			Settlement		
	Men	Women	Youth	Middle-aged persons	Pensioners	Small village	Medium-sized village	Community or urban-type settlement
Yes	35.4	36.0	33.3	37.0	35.4	24.6	28.8	47.0
No	42.5	48.0	39.6	41.7	53.7	64.9	45.0	35.0
It's difficult to answer	22.1	16.0	27.1	21.3	11.0	10.5	26.3	18.0

Table 15. Distribution of answers to the question: "Would you like to move, to change your place of residence?", each column makes 100%

Answer	Sex		Age			Settlement		
	Men	Women	Youth	Middle-aged persons	Pensioners	Small village	Medium-sized village	Community or urban-type settlement
Yes	25.7	26.4	41.7	28.7	13.4	17.5	28.8	28.0
No	74.3	73.6	58.3	71.3	86.6	82.5	71.3	72.0

do not plan to live in the city, primarily because they value the peace and quiet, the lack of urban bustle, and the opportunity to be closer to nature and have their own house and land (Fig. 3).

In our opinion, finding a solution to priority problems, among which more than half of the

respondents named the need to increase the level of financing of social infrastructure and the number of jobs, could prevent the outflow of population from rural areas. Rural residents, regardless of socio-demographic characteristics, find it important to improve living conditions (Tab. 16).

Figure 3. Distribution of answers to the question: "What features of rural life do you find appealing?" (each column makes 100%; the amount of positions exceeds 100% because it was possible to select not more than three features)

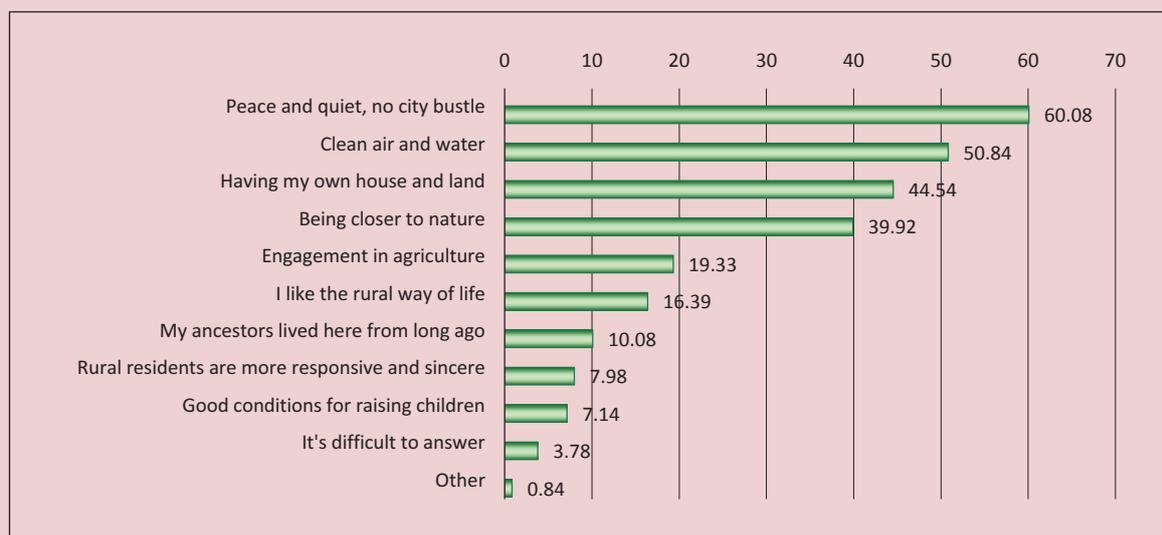


Table 16. Distribution of answers to the question: "What do you think should be done to make life in your settlement better?", (each column makes 100%; the sum exceeds 100% because multiple answers could be selected)

Answer	Sex		Age			Settlement		
	Men	Women	Youth	Middle-aged persons	Pensioners	Small village	Medium-sized village	Community or urban-type settlement
Increase financing of organizations that provide public services	61.1	56.8	50.0	66.7	53.7	42.1	57.5	69.0
Expand the range of services/activities offered	31.0	31.2	31.3	34.3	26.8	17.5	35.0	35.0
Increase the number of jobs	62.8	61.6	58.3	66.7	58.5	49.1	77.5	58.0
Strengthen state support for citizens' initiatives	31.0	28.8	27.1	35.2	24.4	24.6	33.8	29.0
Open new educational institutions	15.0	18.4	12.5	16.7	19.5	7.0	17.5	21.0
Improve living conditions	48.7	48.0	45.8	50.0	47.6	28.1	56.3	54.0
It's difficult to answer	12.4	13.6	20.8	9.3	13.4	15.8	10.0	14.0
Other	4.4	9.6	4.2	4.6	12.2	17.5	0.0	7.0

Reproduction of activity-related potential creates prerequisites for the development of human potential in general and its individual components. The growth of intellectual potential, professional and cultural level of

the population and, as a consequence, career promotion and achievement of a certain position in the society would contribute to overcoming the existing discrepancies. A low tendency to increase the professional level and

to engage in community activities can lead to problems in the realization of the potential accumulated. This is evidenced by the results of our sociological research, according to which in only half of the cases the qualification meets the requirements of jobs, and only half of the rural population works within their specialty. Among the reasons that have led to this situation, which can lead to the outflow of rural population to cities we should name the lack of jobs and the changes in professional plans and problems with social infrastructure.

In our view, it would be possible to mitigate the negative impact of population outflow, given the fact that in some cases the decision to move may not be voluntary. This is evidenced by the data of our sociological research: one third of those planning to move do not want to live in the city, because they appreciate the rural way of life, the opportunity to have their own home and land, live in the absence of fuss, and maintain existing social ties with the residents of their settlement. That is, the formation of a favorable environment for living and implementing their potential creates the possibility that the residents of rural areas who left for the city might come back. It is extremely necessary to solve the problems related to social infrastructure and jobs, because among the vital values of the rural population, along with the family and home, there is work and decent earnings, and among the intentions – the desire to achieve a high financial position.

#### **IV. Discussion**

Due to the fact that in our study we used sociological methods, it is necessary to focus on their advantages and disadvantages. On the one hand, the use of such methods creates prerequisites for analyzing qualitative characteristics of the population (lifestyle, abilities and opportunities, value orientation, adaptation to the social infrastructure of society, etc.) and the degree of implementation

of life strategies; it also allows us to work with large amounts of data, to compare different characteristics of the population in dynamics and in the context of socio-demographic groups. On the other hand, in practice, one has to deal with the problem of the quality of the data one collects, the probability of occurrence of displacement effects caused by the problems the questionnaire as the main research tool and with deviations of the fact from the plan in the formation of a sample, which can be accompanied by unrepresentativeness of the data obtained. In addition, the research in the conditions of a large sample is labor-consuming in combination with ineffective selection strategies [Zaslavskaya T.I. Twenty years of Russian transformation. 2010. Pp. 184, 186, 188-189].

In our case, the set sample in its structure corresponds to the general one. The quality of the data obtained is partly ensured by the integrated nature of the study, taking into account, in accordance with the concept of T.I. Zaslavskaya, all the structural components of human potential of rural areas and factors affecting its condition and development. In order to overcome the problem of biased data we tried to take into account different points of view when forming the answers to the survey questions, to enable the respondents to indicate their version. It was important for us to comply with the “compromise” between open and closed questions to reduce the likelihood of a large number of unanswered questions, on the one hand, as well as the risks of non-disclosure of certain features of the object of study, on the other.

One of the significant problems often encountered in practice, including ours, is to preserve a balance between the content of the questionnaire as a whole and the need to ensure the simplicity of the answers so that the respondents would have no difficulty in

answering them. In addition, we should point out the complexity of the study, it is related to the preliminary collection of statistics data (to form a set sample, too), and to organizational aspects (interviewers are reluctant to go to rural areas to carry out sociological research, and respondents are sometimes wary of such activities). As can be noted, not only the sociology of rural population research should develop, but also the statistics of rural areas. Now one usually has to deal with such problems as lack of and infrequent publication of statistical data in the context of urban and rural areas (official statistical sources contain few indicators involving mainly demographic aspects of human potential). Sometimes the studies of human potential are not comprehensive, they do not take into account the need for component-based analysis, the need to identify problems of development of this potential and factors influencing it. Obtaining such information is essential for the development of a system of measures by the governing bodies aimed at improving human potential of rural areas as a whole and its components.

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