

The average Belarusian: who is he? Actually, it's she

On 25th January 2018, top Belarusian media outlet TUT.BY compiled a portrait of the average Belarusian citizen. The media outlet used a combination of recent data from the National Statistical Committee of Belarus, the World Health Organization, and the United Nations. Apparently, the average Belarusian citizen is a 42-and-a-half-year old woman with higher education. She speaks Russian, votes for Lukashenka, and consumes 64 kg of potatoes per year.

At the same time, the recent statistical data on the Belarusian population raises a number of concerns. Belarus comprises an ageing nation with astonishing gender imbalances. While Belarusian women face difficulties in finding a marriage partner, Belarusian men fervently consume alcohol. The diet of Belarusian citizens still lacks fruit and vegetables, and their salary ranks among the least competitive in the region. Permanent stress eventually take its toll in the form of heart disease.

Who is the average Belarusian woman?

She is 42-and-a-half years old, and her name is most probably Alena, Maryna, Natallia, Sviatlana, or Tatsiana. She lives in Minsk and possesses higher education. She works in services, education, or healthcare. By October 2017, the average Belarusian woman earned \$426. This represents the second lowest salary in the region; only Ukrainians earned less – \$274.

The average Belarusian woman speaks Russian on a daily basis.

She formally belongs to the [Russian Orthodox](#) Church and in the last Belarusian presidential elections, she voted for Alexander Lukashenka.

Her family life starts at 26, and her first child appears at roughly the same age. Her family budget is quite tight though – the largest share of it (39%) goes on food expenses. The National Statistical Committee of Belarus proudly confirmed that the average Belarusian citizen consumed 64 kg of potatoes, 65 kg of fruit, 88 kg of vegetables, 76 kg of meat, and 274 kg of dairy products in 2017.

Yet the consumption of fruit, vegetables and dairy products still fails to meet the WHO recommendations. In many ways, small salaries force Belarusian families to forsake more expensive imported fruit and vegetables. This appears particularly disturbing in the wake of health consequences of the [Chernobyl disaster](#).

Who is the average Belarusian man?

An average Belarusian man is 37 years old. His name is most probably Alexander, Andrey, Siarhei, Uladzimir, or Viktar. He also lives in Minsk and predominantly works in agriculture, construction, industry, or transport. Unlike his female colleagues, he does not necessarily possess a higher education diploma. As for his salary, the National Statistical Committee of Belarus has not recorded a pay gap between men and women. Hence an average Belarusian man receives the same \$426 per month – an insufficient amount to support a family.



Photo: BELTA

He also speaks Russian and formally belongs to the Russian Orthodox church. Together with his female colleagues, he voted for Alexander Lukashenka in the last presidential elections. As regards the family budget, he might save a few Belarusian rubles by buying the cheapest petrol in Europe, but his daily bills will most probably include alcohol.

According to the WHO (2017), the average Belarusian man consumes 16.4 litres of alcohol per year. This represents [the second highest alcohol consumption](#) in the world: only Lithuanians drink slightly more. Belarusian psychiatrists cite hidden aggression and permanent depression as the root causes for such tremendous alcoholic addiction among men. The economic instability in Belarus has a lot to do with it as well.

At the same time, excessive alcohol consumption represents a common trend among the European part of the former Soviet Union. Moldova, Russia, and Ukraine also topped the latest chart of alcohol consumption per capita. Hence, this data clearly reflects a decrease in regional economic prosperity.

The land of strong and lonely women

Ladies dominate the gender ratio with 53 % of Belarusians being women and 47 % men. The gender discrepancy between men and women reflects a common demographic trend among Belarus's neighbours; Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Russia, and Ukraine. Much of the gender imbalance stems from tragic historical circumstances. The Russian Revolution, the "Great Terror" of the 1930s, and World War II had a devastating effect on the male population of the Soviet Union.



Source: BBC

The gap in life expectancy between men and women represents another remarkable demographic trend. Belarusian women have a life expectancy at birth of 79 years, while Belarusian men can expect just 69 years. This can be partly attributed to the increase in early mortality among men after the dissolution of the Soviet Union. A sharp decline in financial prospects led to numerous psychological traumas, which prompted excessive alcohol and drug abuse.

A similar demographic trend prevails in the European part of the former Soviet Union. According to the WHO (2015), Belarus, along with Latvia, Lithuania, Estonia, Russia, and Ukraine,

dominate the list of 10 countries with the largest life expectancy gap between men and women. War-torn Syria, post-genocide Rwanda, and post-war Vietnam also make the list. At the same time, both Belarusian men and women most frequently die from heart diseases. Economic instability and urban life, it would seem, take their toll on Belarusians of both genders.

To conclude, Belarusians represent an ageing yet educated nation with a range of demographic and health issues. The poor economic situation negatively affects the Belarusian diet and provokes depression and stress. This leads to excessive alcohol consumption and early mortality among men. Belarusian women face difficulties finding marriage partners and many die from heart diseases. These demographic trends largely prevail in the European part of the former Soviet Union, which endured a series of tragic historical circumstances in the 20th century.