

Assessment of prospects for achieving the national goal of halving the poverty rate compared to the 2017

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ORIGINAL ARTICLE

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Abstract. The paper presents research on the problem of reducing poverty in Russian Federation. The purpose of the research is to assess the prospects for achieving the national goal of twofold poverty level reducing in Russia by 2030 compared to the 2017. However, in terms of dynamics to the approaches to the poverty, it will be possible to achieve the twofold poverty reduction by 2030 compared to the 2017. It can be implemented in accordance with Presidential Decree No. 474 on 21 July 2020. Moreover, it is not the problem solving; the measurement scale transformation is not the proper tool that can eliminate (or at least reduce) poverty in society. The practical significance of the research is the introduction of a differentiated progressive taxation scale and development of favourable conditions for the intensive development of high-tech and competitive production as the most effective tools for poverty reduction. It will cause an increase in the population's income, strengthening of the national distributive and redistributive functions. Additionally, it allows ones' to reduce the income gap between the richest and poorest segments of the population (reduction of the Gini index).

Keywords: prospects assessment; national goal; poverty reduction; poverty rate

JEL codes: I12, J11, N30

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Introduction

Among the national goals defined by Decree of the President of the Russian Federation No. 474 on July 21, 2020 (Fig.1), aimed at preserving the population, health, and well-being of people, achieving the goal of "reducing poverty by half compared to 2017" is relevant for the society¹.

Traditionally, when solving such problems (e.g. achieving the goal of poverty reduction), there are two types of factors:

- a category of objective factors related to the growth of population well-being;
- a category of subjective factors related to the gradation of population by standards of living (e.g. by the principle of "poor-not poor").

According to Rosstat, in 1995-2022, the population with monetary incomes below the subsistence minimum, considered as the poverty line, decreased at an average rate of 0.62% per year. It reached an absolute minimum in 2022 for the period under study – 9.8%² (Fig.2).

Moreover, there is an issue of real poverty level and its dynamics considered by Rosstat.

Therefore, importance of a correct assessment of the poverty level and its dynamics for the population preservation, health, and well-being of people determined the relevance of this study.

Hence the purpose of the study is to assess the prospects for achieving the national goal of reducing poverty in the Russian Federation by 2030 by two times compared to 2017, taking into account the correctness

¹ Decree of the President of the Russian Federation No. 474 on July 21, 2020 "On the National Development Goals of the Russian Federation up to 2030". Available at: <https://www.garant.ru/products/ipo/prime/doc/74304210> (Accessed 09.10.2023)

² The number of people with monetary incomes below the poverty line (the minimum subsistence level). Available at: <https://rosstat.gov.ru/folder/13723> (Accessed 09.10.2023)

of the assessment approaches used.

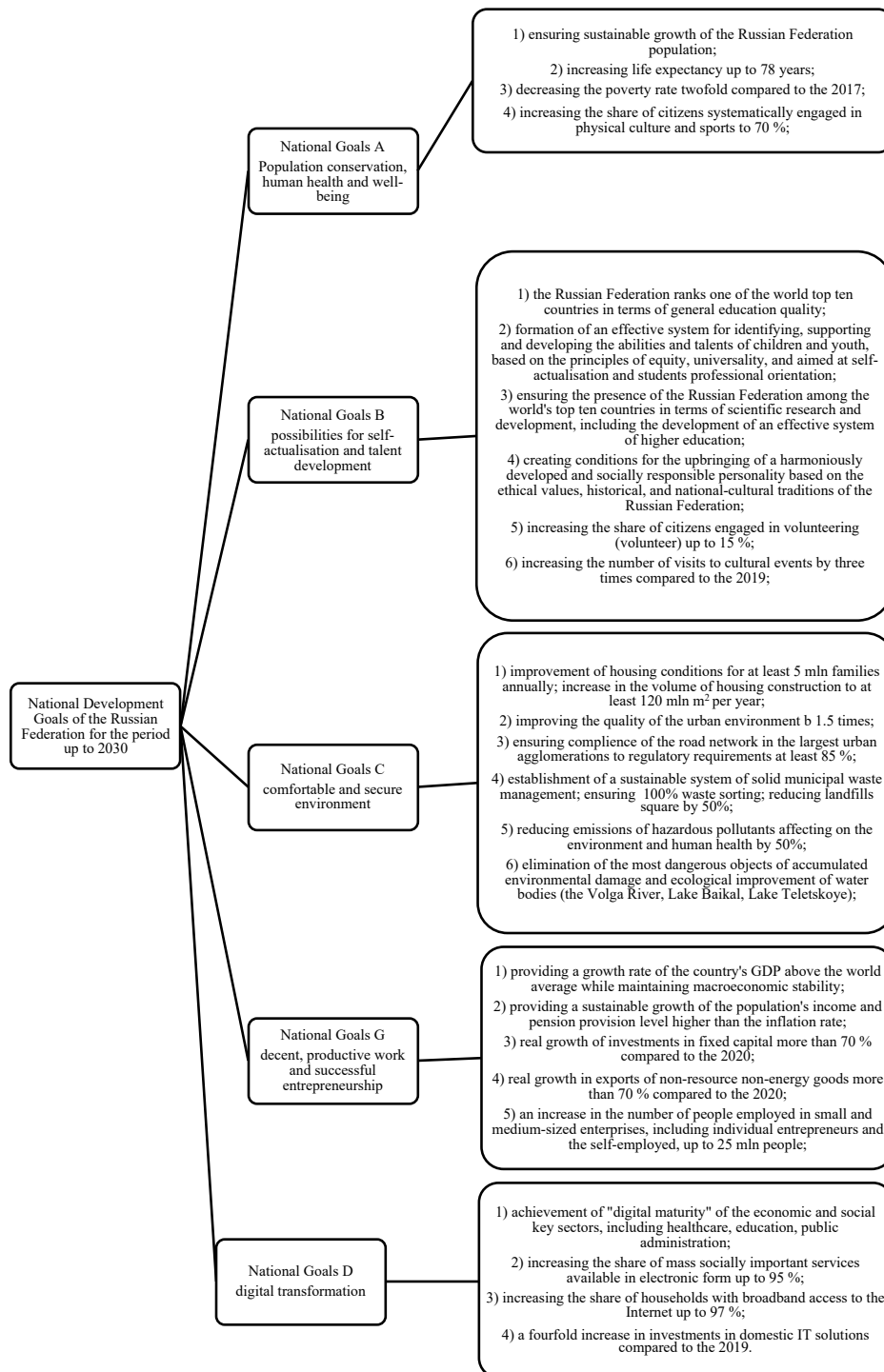


Figure 1. National Goals defined by Decree of the President of the Russian Federation No. 474 on July 21, 2020

Source: composed by the author

Methods

The methodological base of research in introduced by well-known scientific works on the issue of poverty in the XVIII-XX centuries Ch. Booth, V. Lenin, T. Malthus, K. Marx, J. Proudhon, S. Rowntree, E. Reclu, D. Ricardo, A. Smith, G. Spencer, P. Townsend, N. Balagurova³, M.A. Kurdova & D.A. Buraeva[4],

³ Balagurova N. *The problem of poverty and ways to solve it. Poor people.* Available at: <https://fb.ru/article/325856/problema-bednosti-i-puti-e-resheniya-bednyie-lyudi> (Accessed 09.10.2023)

L.T. Pechenaya, T. Panina⁴, S.V. Tolkacheva & I.E. Domarev [6], D.Yu. Rudenko [8], A.S. Seliverstov, D.E. Mitrofanov & A.A. Butskaya [7], R. Seligmann⁵, A. Tabakh⁶, A.A. Urusova [12], R.I. Cherneva [13], etc.

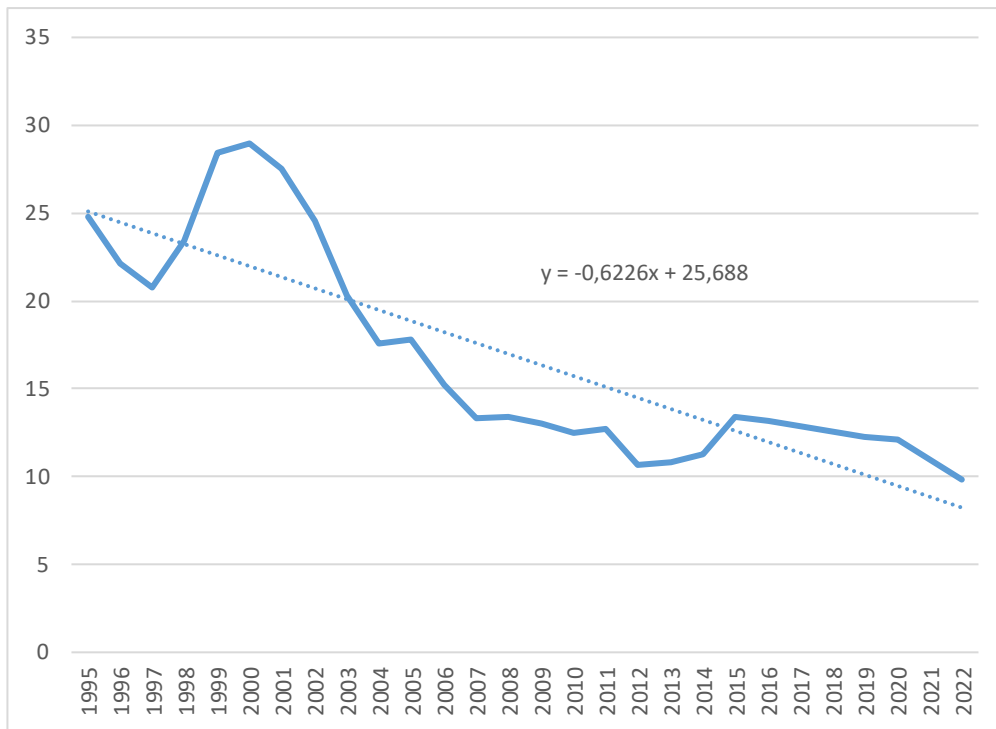


Figure 2. The dynamics of the population with monetary incomes below the subsistence level, considered as the poverty line, in the Russian Federation in 1995-2022, %

Source: Rosstat, 2022

Results

This study is devoted to assessing the prospects for achieving the national goal of "reducing poverty by half compared to 2017". However, it is a logical continuation of the author's research on the problems of achieving National Goals A "Population conservation, human health, and well-being" (Fig.1). In particular, this research considers ensuring sustainable population growth in the Russian Federation [14], and increasing life expectancy to 78 years [3]. At the first stage we will pay attention to the concepts of "poverty", "poverty level", etc.

Indeed, poverty is generally understood to be an economic situation of an individual or a social group in which they cannot meet a certain range of minimum needs necessary for life, retention of labour capacity, reproduction, etc.

According to A. Smith, the nature of poverty is the gap between the social standard of a person's material and actual material provision. It does not allow person to adhere this standard, and provides a sense of social shame of this person for his/her situation [10].

In general, poverty is considered as a relative and a complicated concept. Its interpretation depends on the accepted general standard of living in the society under study.

Indeed, the following main issues related to the problem of poverty have been studied for centuries:

- poverty concept;
- poverty level calculation;

⁴ Panina T. How the state of the economy can reduce poverty in the country. Available at: <https://rg.ru/2020/01/21/kak-sostoianie-ekonomiki-mozhet-snizit-bednost-v-strane.html> (Accessed 09.10.2023)

⁵ Seligmann R. The New Contract: how to reduce poverty in Russia. Available at: <https://www.forbes.ru/obshchestvo/420735-novyy-kontrakt-kak-snizit-uroven-bednosti-v-rossii> (Accessed 09.10.2023)

⁶ Anton Tabakh. Preferential maneuver: how to reduce poverty in Russia. Available at: <https://www.rbc.ru/opinions/economics/14/01/2020/5e1c6bc19a79475a132c6cd1> (Accessed 09.10.2023)

- nature of poverty patterns in society;
- governmental interference in poverty problem solving;
- extent of governmental interferences (if any).

There are some causes of poverty traditionally identified by researchers. They are shown in Fig.3.

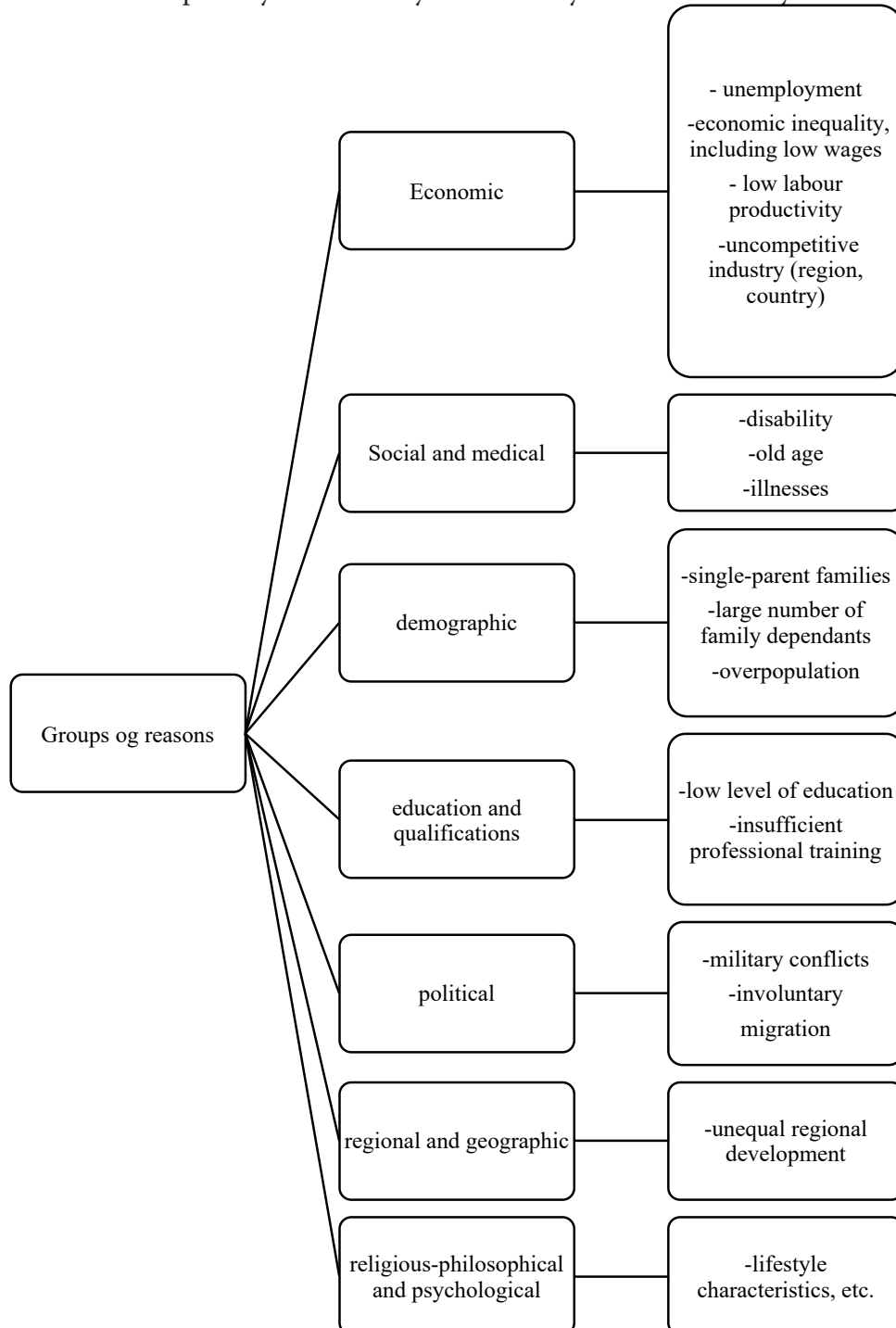


Figure 3. Traditionally distinguished groups of poverty causes

Source: composed by the author

According to researches of poverty issues in Russia made by Tikhonova & Gorshkova (2014) [11] 10 years ago, the causes of poverty are alcoholism and drug addiction, non-payment of salaries and delayed pensions, large flows of migrants or refugees, etc. Nevertheless, the absence of a sufficient number of jobs with decent wages was not mentioned (according to the National Goals of Group D (Fig.1) from the National Development Goals of the Russian Federation up to 2030). It also provides further research on poverty causes.

However, traditionally, in accordance with the recommendations of the United Nations Research Institute for Social Development⁷ (UNRISD), standard of living is interpreted as a level concerning degree of people satisfaction with a mass of goods and services used per unit of time⁸. Moreover, in accordance with the recommendations of the United Nations it includes a set of living conditions. They are shown in Fig.4.

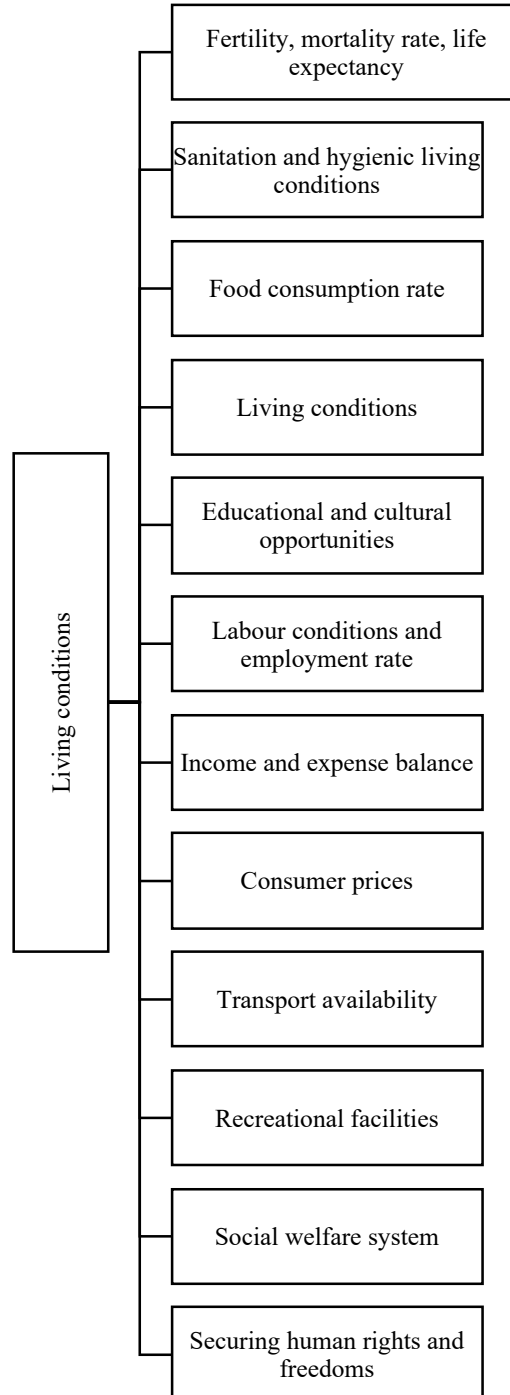


Figure 4. Complex terms of living conditions for assessing the standard of living (UN recommendations)
 Source: composed by the author

Generally, there are concepts of primary (absolute) and secondary (relative) poverty. In addition, the concepts of subjective poverty and deprivation poverty are distinguished. It is similar to relative poverty (Fig.5), but different from income one.

⁷ United nations research institute for social development. Available at: <https://www.unrisd.org/en> (Accessed 09.10.2023).

⁸ States of disarray: the social effects of globalization: an UNRISD report for the World Summit for Social Development. Available at: <https://archive.org/details/statesofdisarray00unit> (Accessed 09.10.2023).

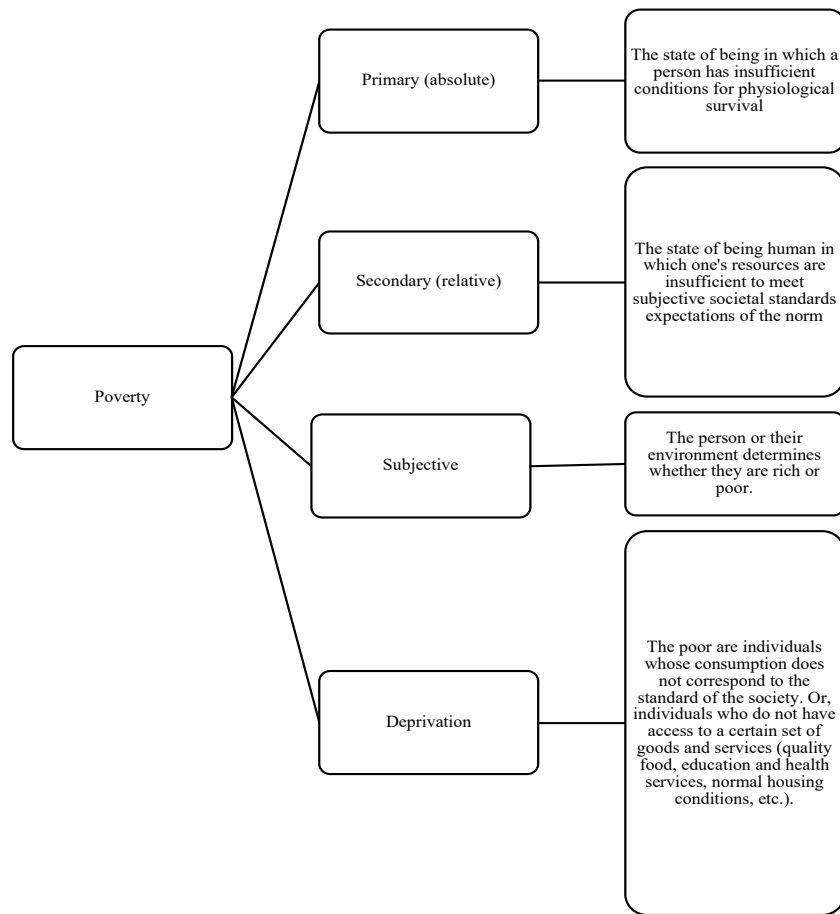


Figure 5. Characteristics of the concepts of absolute and relative poverty

Source: composed by the author

The concept of "poverty line" is used when a person's income level is below the subsistence level.

In regard to the concept of living standards (Fig.4), the concepts of "welfare level" and "consumption level" are traditionally used as synonyms; Corrado Gini Index (Fig.6), Henri Theil Index [1], Anthony Atkinson Index [2], etc. are traditionally used as indicators characterizing them.

Indeed, those indices aimed mainly at determining the degree of irregularity of living standards (stratification of society). They only indirectly characterize the poverty level itself. In this regard, we consider the known indicators of poverty assessment presented in Table 1.

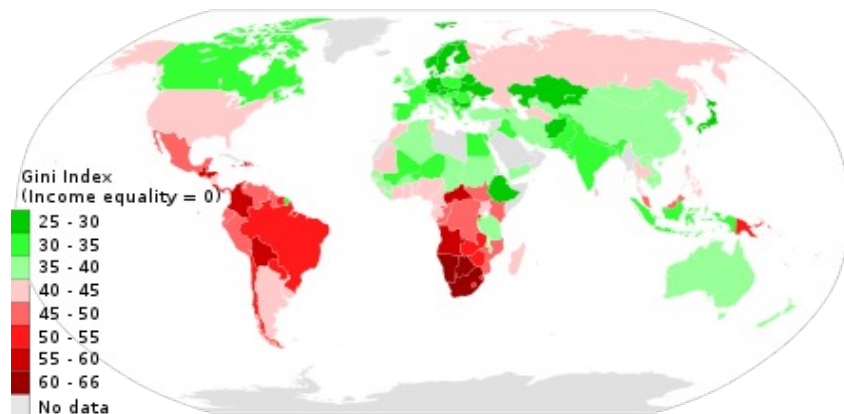


Figure 6. Gini Index demonstrates the level of population stratification by income at 2014*

* For Russia, Gini Index is in the range G=0.4-0.45

Source: Gini index, 2023⁹

⁹ World Bank Database. Available at: <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SI.POV.GINI> (Accessed 09.10.2023)

Table 1 – The main indicators for assessment of poverty level

Indicator (index)	Calculation formula	Symbols	Indicator (index) characteristics	Note
Generalized poverty indicator	$P_a = \frac{1}{H} \sum_{h=1}^a \left(\frac{Z_h - Y_h}{Z_h} \right)^a$	<p>P_a is the overall poverty level, H is the total number of households under study, q is the number of poor households, h is the current number of the household under study, Z_h is the poverty line of the h-th household, depending on its composition; Y_h is the income level of the h th household; a is a parameter indicates the poverty assessment: $a=0$ – indicates the poverty coefficient and the level of poverty; $a=1$- shows the poverty depth index; $a=2$- shows the poverty severity index.</p>	The indicator was developed by J. Foster, J. Greer, E. Torbeck	basic indicator for assessing the poverty level
Poverty Rate	$P_a = \frac{1}{H} \sum_{h=1}^a \left(\frac{Z_h - Y_h}{Z_h} \right)^0$	Similar to formula (1)	Shows the proportion of poor households in the total number of households under study	The poverty level (2) is non-common option of the generalized poverty indicator of J. Foster, J. Greer, E. Torbeck (1) and has limited informative value because characterises the degree of poverty prevalence among households, not allowing to assess the households positions below the poverty line

Indicator (index)	Calculation formula	Symbols	Indicator (index) characteristics	Note
Poverty Depth Index	$P_a = \frac{1}{H} \sum_{h=1}^a \left(\frac{Z_h - Y_h}{Z_h} \right)^1$	Similar to formula (1)	The poverty depth index allows ones' to assess the incomes of poor households in terms of the poverty line	The poverty level (2) is non-common option of the generalized poverty indicator of J. Foster, J. Greer, E. Torbeck (1)
Poverty Severity Index	$P_a = \frac{1}{H} \sum_{h=1}^a \left(\frac{Z_h - Y_h}{Z_h} \right)^1$	Similar to formula (1)	It is calculated as the average low income interval squared and attributed to the total number of households under study; it has greater weight to the income deficit of poorer households	The poverty level (2) is non-common option of the generalized poverty indicator of J. Foster, J. Greer, E. Torbeck (1)
Synthetic Poverty Index	$S = L \left(N = \frac{d}{P} G_p \right)$	S is the Sen Index, L is the share of the poor population, N is the ratio of the average income deficit to the poverty line, d — average income of poor households, P is the poverty line, G p is the Gini coefficient for poor households.	The synthetic poverty indicator combines three components of the assessment: the prevalence of poverty, the material insufficiency of poor households, and the degree of stratification of poor households by income.	The synthetic poverty indicator was developed by Amartya Sen

Source: composed by the author

According to domestic practice of assessing the national poverty level, until recently it was estimated using the Methodology for Calculating the Indicator "Poverty level" up to 2024¹⁰, approved by the Decree of the Government of the Russian Federation on July 17, 2019 N 915¹¹. It is developed "to the absence of a methodological approach to forecasting poverty reduction indicators for the subjects of the Russian Federation". Additionally, to the concepts used (Fig.7), the poverty level associated with the subsistence minimum wage.

¹⁰ The methodology for calculating the indicator "Poverty level" for the period up to and including 2024, including for the reporting period (current year) and for the planning period of two years following the reporting period. To the Decree of the Government of the Russian Federation on July 17, 2019 N 915. Available at: <https://base.garant.ru/72330006/62ca3c9a93aac147338fa0b3dccb5683> / (Accessed 09.10.2023)

¹¹ Resolution of the Government of the Russian Federation on July 17, 2019 No. 915 "On approval of methods for calculating indicators for evaluating the effectiveness of the activities of senior officials (heads of supreme executive bodies of State power) of the subjects of the Russian Federation and the activities of executive authorities of the subjects of the Russian Federation, as well as on invalidation of certain acts of the Government of the Russian Federation" (with amendments and additions) (the document has expired). <https://www.garant.ru/products/ipo/prime/doc/72230006> / (Accessed 09.10.2023)

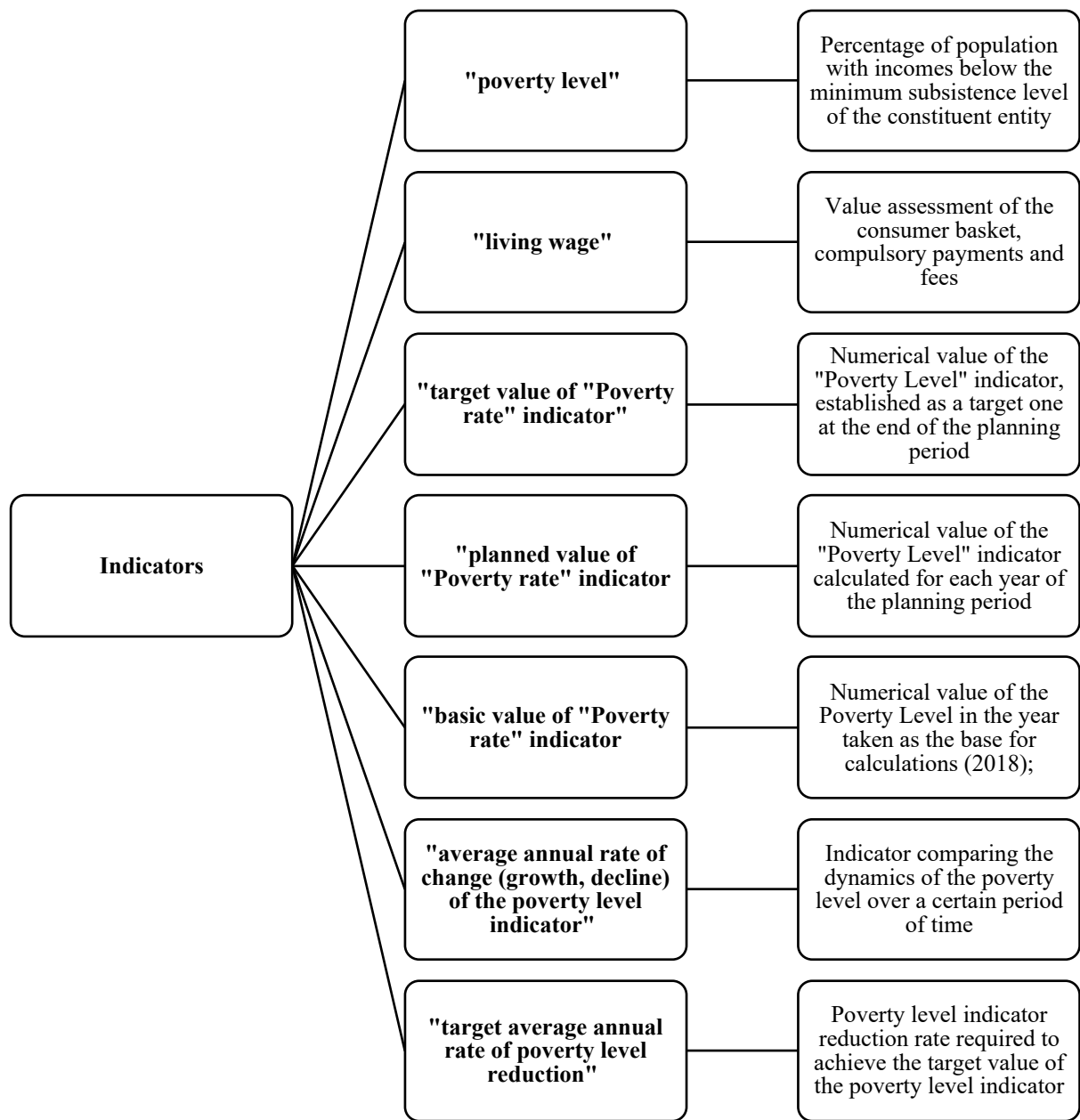


Figure 7. Basic concepts used in the Methodology for Calculating "Poverty level" Indicator up to 2024

Source: composed by the author

On the one hand, the target value of the poverty level indicator in the Russian Federation as a whole was established as the basic value of the poverty level indicator. On the other hand, the task ensures twofold reduction in the poverty level in the Russian Federation as a whole by 2024 – from 13.2% to 6.6%.

The basis for determining the target indicator of the poverty level in the subjects of the Russian Federation in the considered methodology, the value of the population share with monetary incomes below the regional subsistence minimum in the total population of the constituent entity of the Russian Federation in 2018 was taken.

The gradation of the country's regions by poverty level and, accordingly, the poverty reduction coefficients for these regions provided in accordance with the considered methodology are shown in Fig.8.

According to the Methodology for calculating the indicator "Poverty level" for the period up to 2024, the target value of the indicator "Poverty level" for each of the subjects of the Russian Federation was to be determined based on the ratio:

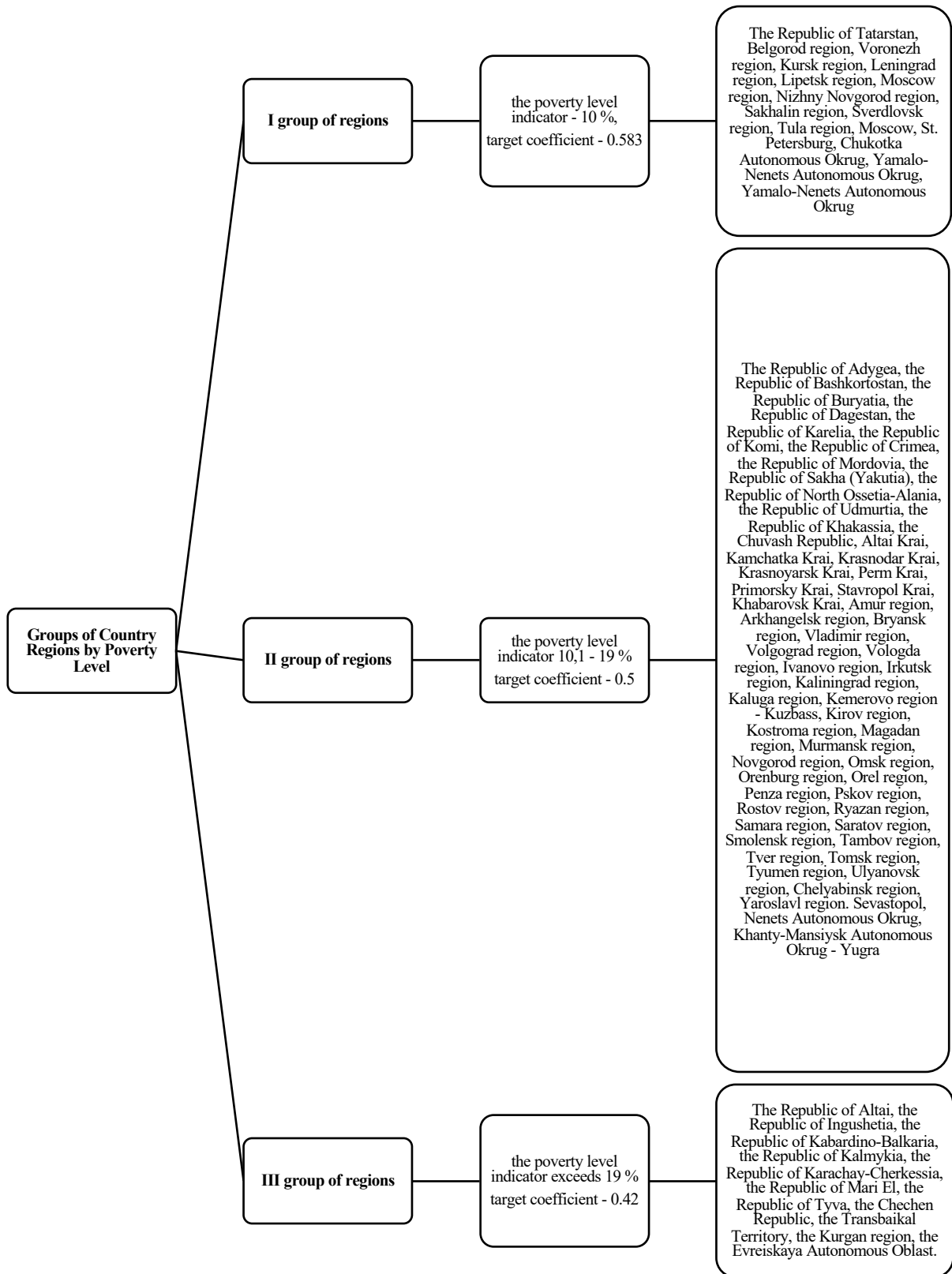


Figure 8. The gradation of the country's regions by poverty level and poverty reduction coefficients for these regions provided in accordance with the Methodology for Calculating the Indicator "Poverty level" up to 2024

Source: composed by the author

$$PL_{TV}(i) = PL_{F2017}(i) * TC(i),$$

where: $PL_{TV}(i)$ is the target value of the indicator "Poverty level" for the i-th region,
 $PL_{F2017}(i)$ – the actual value of the indicator "Poverty level" for the i-th region in 2017,
 $TC(i)$ is the target poverty reduction coefficient provided for the i-th region (see Fig.4).

Also, the Methodology for Calculating the Indicator "Poverty level" up to 2024 provides the average annual rate of change in the indicator "Poverty level" by region, determined by the ratio:

$$AR_{av}(i) = (PL_{Ft}(i) / PL_{Ft-2}(i))^{0.5} \times 100\%,$$

where: $AR_{av}(i)$ is the average annual rate of change in the indicator "Poverty level" for the i-th region,
 $PL_{Ft}(i)$ is the actual value of the indicator "Poverty level" for the i-th region, recorded in the year t;
 PL_{Ft-2} is the actual value of the indicator "Poverty level" for the i-th region, recorded two years earlier (in the year t-2).

Moreover, Methodology for Calculating the Indicator "Poverty level" up to 2024 provides determining the target average annual rate of the "Poverty level" indicator reduction in the entities of the Russian Federation based on the following ratio:

$$PLtaar(i,t) = \exp[\ln(PL_{TV}(i) / PL_{BP}(i)) / t],$$

where $PLtaar(i,t)$ is the target average annual rate of reduction of the "Poverty level" indicator for the i-th region for the t-th year;

$PL_{TV}(i)$ is the basic value of the indicator "Poverty level" for the i-th region, determined as a ratio (6),
 $PL_{BP}(i)$ is the basic value of the indicator "Poverty level" for the i-th region, determined as of 2018,
t is the number of years of the planned period, years.

The calculation of poverty level planned values for the I-th region for each year of the planning period (PL PV) in the Methodology for Calculating the Indicator "Poverty level" up to 2024 is proposed to be provided by multiplying the base value of the indicator "Poverty level" for the i-th region. It is determined as of 2018 (PL BP(i)) by the value of the target average annual rate of decrease in the indicator "Poverty level" of the $PLtaar(i,t)$, raised to the degree corresponding to the year number of the planning period t relative to the base year 2018:

$$PL PP = PL BP(i) * (PLtaar(i,t))^t$$

However, the Methodology for Calculating the "Poverty level" Indicator up to 2024, introduced in 2019, was cancelled in November 2021. The Government of the Russian Federation approved a new procedure for determining the national poverty level¹². According to it, a new indicator is used to calculate the "Poverty level" – the "poverty line".

The basis of the new model for calculating the subsistence minimum and the minimum wage is not the cost of the food basket, as it was before, but the average median income and median salary per capita.

An aggregated algorithm for implementing a new approach to determining the poverty level is presented in Fig.9.

Indeed, the last calculated value of the subsistence minimum, determined on the basis of a consumer basket cost, is taken as the initial value of the poverty line.

The reasons for the change in the methodology for assessing the poverty level have both objective and subjective components.

The one of the main arguments is the need to ensure data comparability on the poverty level for past periods with current measurements and future estimates. Moreover, there is a reference to the instruction of the President of the Russian Federation "to ensure the comparability of the reported data on the poverty level of previous periods. Those periods the subsistence minimum was calculated on the consumer basket

¹² Resolution of the Government of the Russian Federation No. 2049 on 11.26.2021. "On Approval of the Rules for Determining the Boundaries of Poverty in the Russian Federation in Terms of "Poverty Level" Indicator, and on Amendments to the Federal Plan of Statistical Work." Available at: <http://publication.pravo.gov.ru/Document/View/0001202111270008> (Accessed 09.10.2023)

basis, current and medium-term data, and the subsistence minimum is calculated on the basis of the median income ratio¹³.

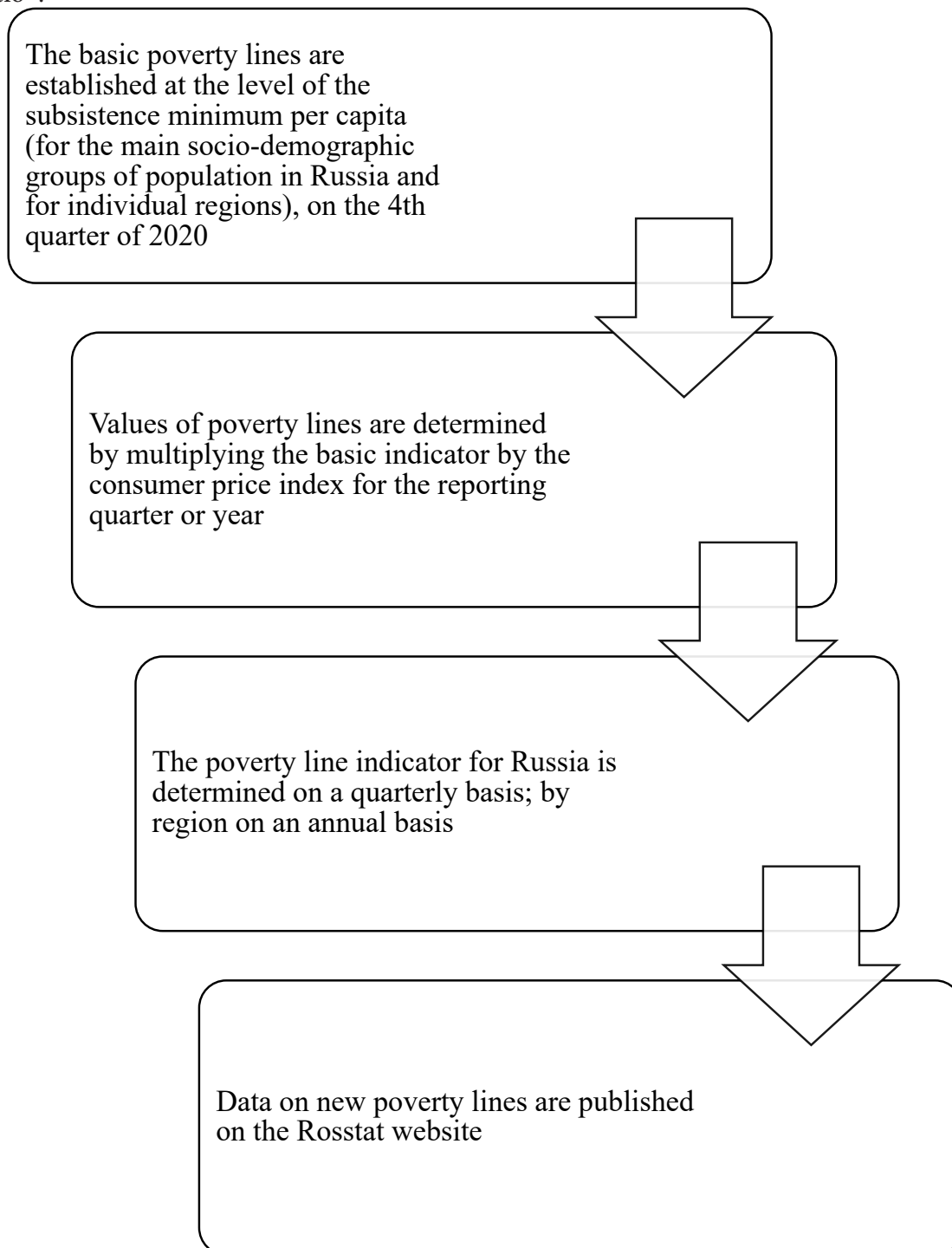


Figure 9. Aggregated representation of the algorithm for implementing a new approach to determining the poverty level

Source: composed by the author

Therefore, "with the introduction of the "poverty line", the President's instruction will be fulfilled: the indicator "poverty level" will be comparable with previous periods and ensure the impact of inflation on poverty"¹⁴.

As critical remarks regarding the content of the new Rules for Determining the Poverty Line, are as

¹³ The poverty line in Russia. <https://gogov.ru/articles/standard-of-living/poverty-line> (Accessed 09.10.2023)

¹⁴ The poverty line in Russia. <https://gogov.ru/articles/standard-of-living/poverty-line> (Accessed 09.10.2023)

follows:

Firstly, the transition from calculating the subsistence minimum based on the consumer basket (rightly criticized for underestimating figures for decades) to calculating based on median income is very conditional. The initial value of the poverty line is taken as the last calculated value of the subsistence minimum. It also determined in accordance with a consumer basket cost, and used subsequently as a multiplier. The consumer price index for the reporting period is also determined by calculating the growth of the consumer basket value.

Secondly, many researchers believe that focusing on median income is actually not the best option. Moreover, at a high level the stratification of society by income level (in Russia) it shows better results of the modal approach, demonstrating salary sampling (in this case, in the region of the country) is most common. Focusing on median income is positioned as more objective than calculating based on average earnings (since the latter is overestimated due to high salaries of senior staff). According to the materials, the modal income per capita in almost half of the country's regions is close to the subsistence minimum (higher by 5-25%)¹⁵. At the same time, if the source of income is lost, the majority of Russians (62%) will have enough money for living for no more than three months¹⁶.

In addition to critical remarks regarding the content of the new Rules for Determining the Poverty Line, there are a lot of quite reasonable issues. The major are the following ones.

Firstly, violation of statistical assessment general principle (principle of results comparability).

Secondly, consider new Rules for Determining the Poverty Line as an achievement.

Thirdly, violation of general principle of statistical assessment – the principle of results comparability for assessing the poverty level can cause obvious changes in this sphere.

Hence a lot of attempts to assess the poverty level is similar to the use of "creative" accounting, highlighted in the methodology of assessing the poverty level by T. Scone [9], or with the advent of a new company office in the ERNST & WHINNEY [14] (now ERNST & YOUNG) methodology, used as diagnostic signs of an enterprise bankruptcy.

Otherwise, there is a high probability of prevalence of the efforts vector aimed at finding acceptable measurements that can ensure demonstration of poverty reduction in the country by 2030 by half of the 2017 figure, in accordance with Presidential Decree No. 474 of 21 July 2020.

Similar examples of changing statistical approaches to improve reporting have already been observed in domestic practice:

– in the transition from the OKVED form to the OKVED-2 form in 2016 e.g. organizations and their geographically separate divisions (legal entities);

– in the transition from the 3rd edition of the Oslo Manual to the 4th edition of the Oslo Manual in 2017, e.g. statistical assessment of organizations innovative activity level.

According to previously conducted studies, the transition to new concepts (both taking into account the number of organizations and their geographically separate divisions (legal entities), their innovative activity) demonstrated a short-term surge in indicators, providing positive dynamics of reporting, but did not solve the relevant urgent problems. The negative dynamics of these indicators have been preserved.

Therefore, in terms of dynamics to the approaches to the poverty, it will be possible to achieve the twofold poverty reduction by 2030 compared to the 2017. It is in accordance with Presidential Decree No. 474 on 21 July 2020. However, it is not the problem solving, since the measurement scale transformation is not the proper tool that can eliminate (or at least reduce) poverty in society.

Conclusions

Thus, this research conducted on the basis of the analysis of statistical data on the standard of living, incomes, expenditures and savings of the population, social security and social assistance, income distribution,

¹⁵ *The poverty line. I calculated how many regions of Russia live below the poverty line, if we draw it according to European standards. Available at: https://dzen.ru/a/YaIOMD-P6XQU_QAC (Accessed 09.10.2023)*

¹⁶ *The Russians talked about the timing of the depletion of the financial cushion. RBC: most Russians will live on savings for no more than three months with loss of income. Available at: <https://lenta.ru/news/2022/02/10/rosnakop/> (Accessed 09.10.2023)*

subsistence level, poverty level, consumer expectations, and methodological approaches to determining the poverty level, allowed us to formulate the following conclusions regarding the assessment of prospects for achieving national goals of twofold reducing the poverty level compared to the indicator of 2017.

Firstly, poverty is generally considered as a relative and ambiguous concept, its interpretation depends on the accepted general standard of living in the society under study. It implies a multiplicity of its interpretations and approaches to assessment.

Secondly, twofold reducing the poverty level in Russia by 2030 compared with the indicator of 2017, defined by Decree of the President of the Russian Federation No. 474 on July 21, 2020 as a national goal.

Thirdly, new approach to defining the poverty line cannot be considered without drawbacks due to the following circumstances.

On the one hand, the transition from calculating the subsistence minimum based on the consumer basket to calculating on the basis of median income is very conditional. The initial value of the poverty line is taken as the last calculated value of the subsistence minimum, determined based on the consumer basket cost. Subsequently used as a multiplier, the consumer price index for the reporting period is also determined based on the calculation of the growth in the consumer basket cost.

On the other hand, many researchers believe that focusing on median income is actually not the best option. Moreover, at a high level the stratification of society by income level (in Russia) it shows better results of the modal approach, demonstrating salary sampling (in this case, in the region of the country) is most common. Focusing on median income is positioned as more objective than calculating based on average earnings (since the latter gives an overestimate due to high salaries of senior staff).

Fourth, the conducted studies have shown that the relatively frequent change of approaches to assessing the national poverty level (including the Methodology for Calculating the Indicator "Poverty Level" up to 2024 and the Rules for Determining the poverty line 2021) is similar with the use of "creative" accounting, allocated in the assessment methodology by T. Scone [9], or with the advent of a new office in the methodology of ERNST & WHINNEY [14] (now ERNST & YOUNG), used as diagnostic signs of enterprise bankruptcy.

Fifth, there are well-known examples of changing approaches to statistical accounting to improve reporting indicators in domestic practice. They concern changes in accounting for the number of organizations and their geographically separate divisions (legal entities) during the transition from the OKVED form to the OKVED-2 form in 2016; transition in statistical assessment of organizations innovative activity level from the 3rd edition of the Oslo Manual for the 4th edition of the Oslo Manual in 2017. These measures demonstrated a short-term surge in indicators, providing positive dynamics of reporting, but did not solve the relevant topical problems. The long-term negative dynamics of these indicators remained.

Therefore, in terms of dynamics to the approaches to the poverty, it will be possible to achieve the twofold poverty reduction by 2030 compared to the 2017. It is in accordance with Presidential Decree No. 474 on 21 July 2020. However, it is not the problem solving, since the measurement scale transformation is not the proper tool that can eliminate (or at least reduce) poverty in society.

Hence we can consider the creation of favourable conditions for the intensive development of high-tech and competitive production as the most effective tools for poverty reduction. It will cause an increase in the population's income, strengthening of the national distributive and redistributive functions. Moreover, to reduce the income gap between the richest and poorest segments of the population (reduction of Gini index) it can include the introduction of a differentiated progressive taxation scale.

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CONFLICT OF INTEREST

The author declares no conflict of interest.

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