

SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

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Modern standards of reproductive behavior of the population and the objectives of pro-family population policy

The paper considers the trends in fertility in recent years and the factors causing them. The authors identify the changes in the standards of the population's reproductive behavior, especially reproductive attitudes of different age cohorts and the impact of family income upon the modern reproductive expectations. The conclusion about the urgent need for enhancing the state pro-family population policy is justified.

Trends in fertility, age structure, birth rate calendar, reproductive attitudes, pro-family population policy.



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In modern Russian conditions the main priorities of state population policy, of course, are in the area of reduction of mortality. To solve the problems of low lifetime of the population and a significant gap in the value of male and female indicators, the high mortality among the youth from external causes and among the middle age from heart diseases, significant dif-

ferentiation of lifetime in different regions and between urban and rural areas it is necessary to implement regularly the measures to rise the standard of living and to reduce social differentiation of our society, to improve the health system and to restore the availability of medical services, to promote the idea of a healthy lifestyle and to revive the children's sports, to

fight alcoholism, drug addiction, crime etc. However, this article will focus on the issues related to the need to improve the pro-family population policy, because today Russia is at the critical point that requires an immediate deepening and expansion of activities to promote the increase in the birthrate.

As you know, one of the most important features of the demographic processes – their socio-economic dependence. It was clearly demonstrated by last 15 – 20 years: the crisis in the socio-economic sphere considerably deepened the negative demographic trends existed in Russia before, having caused the unfolding of deep demographic crisis and the depopulation in the explicit form. Meanwhile, the thesis of the substantial inertia of demographic processes was put into question to some extent. The reaction of the population's demographic behavior to some extraordinary events: “shock therapy” in the beginning of the 1990's and hyperinflation in autumn of 1998 – was almost instantaneous and that immediately influenced on the level of demographic indicators.

It should be noted, however, that the level of birthrate indices have an influence upon a number of factors. Firstly, those or other changes in the age structure of reproductive contingents: rejuvenation of the age structure contributes to higher fertility, and its aging – to lowering rates. Secondly, changes in the

calendar (timing) of births: birth postponement of the population “to the best of times” or, on the contrary, the realization of deferred births; compaction of the birth calendar, for example, under the influence of incentives pro-family population policy or naturally following it rarefication of the birth field because of premature exhaustion of the final number of children in the family by the generations. Thirdly, the changes in the level in the population's reproductive attitudes: continuation of a long-term trend (such as a smooth evolution of their level in accordance with the historical trend of decreasing in demand for children) or an abrupt change in the population's reproductive expectations, determined by the strong impact of some external factor. Meanwhile, the changes of the age structure and the birth timing have, mainly, occasional fluctuations in the level of fertility, which do not change the generations' final number of children in the family, while changes in the reproductive attitudes lead to stable transformations in the mode of population's birthrate.

The increase in the total fertility rate (*fig. 1*), observed in Russia since 2000 (from 8.3 births per 1000 people in 1999 to 12.4‰ in 2009) [1], is primarily due to rejuvenation of the age structure of reproductive contingents as a result of attainability of the active childbearing age by relatively numerous generations that were born in early – mid 1980's.

Figure 1. Dynamics of the total fertility rate of population of the Russian Federation, births per 1000 people

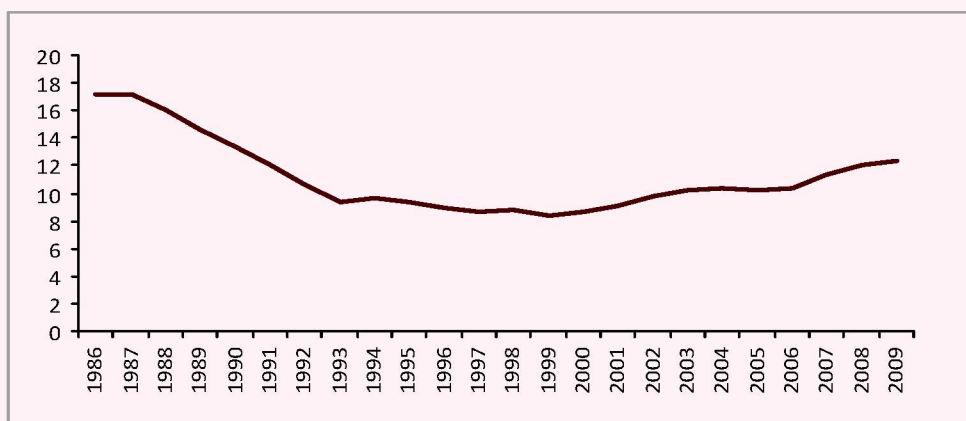


Figure 2. Dynamics of the total fertility rate in the Russian Federation per woman by the end of the childbearing period



In this case the births intensity has also been increased quite appreciably, that is indicated by the increase in the total fertility rate from 1.17 children per woman by the end of childbearing age in 1999 [2] to 1.49 in 2008 – 2009 [3] (fig. 2).

However, such positive dynamics of the total fertility is mainly due to the changes in the birth calendar. While the indices of 1999 completely reflects the birth delay, practiced by people throughout the 1990's years and displayed much after August, 1998, the indices of 2008 – 2009 is under the increasing impact of the realization of the births deferred by older generations and compaction of the birth schedule of younger cohorts under the influence of the new state demographic initiatives. It means the adoption of federal laws "On amending some certain legislative acts of the Russian Federation with regard to state support for people with children" №207-FL of December, 5, 2006 [4], "On ensuring temporary disability allowance, maternity allowance for the citizens who are subjects to compulsory social insurance" №255-FL of December, 29, 2006 [5] and "On additional measures of state support of families with children" №256-FL of the same date [6], according to which since January, 1, 2007 the state certificate for the mother (family) capital has been introduced, as well as the develop-

ment of "Concept of demographic policy of the Russian Federation until 2025" [7], approved by the decree of the President №1351 of October 9, 2007.

Strengthening of the government's attention to the problems of fertility can help the generations of active childbearing age to implement the previously postponed births and to compact the birth calendar. But it's more important that such attention can help younger generations to form more positive reproductive health standards. Therefore, the new demographic initiatives taken by the government of Russia in 2006 – 2007 not only extended the positive trends of fertility of early 2000's and the signs of stagnation already shown in 2004 – 2006, but they allowed us to hope that the generations of small numbers of the late 1980's – early 1990's would be stimulated when forming their reproductive attitudes. Accordingly, they will not be lower than those of numerous generations of the mid 1980's and it will allow us to level the depth of coming collapse in the birth rate to a certain degree.

The global economic crisis starting in autumn of 2008 and affecting the Russian economy caused the rise in unemployment and drop in living standards. It may again aggravate the demographic problems, negating the state's efforts in overcoming the demographic crisis.

In 2009 the total fertility rate in the country was continuing to grow, although with a lowering rate: it increased from 12.1‰ in 2008 to 12.4 in 2009. The total fertility in 2009 is estimated at 1.49 as it was in 2008. However, the value of these indicators reflects the influence of many factors: the transformation of age structure, those or other changes in the birth calendar of different generations, the effect of completed fertility of some cohorts, declining conditions of the implementation of population's reproductive expectations, changes in the level of reproductive attitudes etc. Some of them contribute to increasing birth rates, others contribute to lowering birth rates. It is obvious that the impact of financial crisis on the dynamics of fertility in Russia, first of all, can manifest itself through deterioration in conditions for the implementation of reproductive attitudes that will lead to postponement of births and reduce in the degree of their realization. But the greatest danger is the probability of negative effects on reproductive standards of young generations that may have lasting consequences for the prospects of fertility.

On the basis of the results of sociological survey conducted in 2008 – 2009 and devoted to the economic and demographic aspects of family life, in comparison with the results of research conducted by one of the authors in 1994 [8] and in 2000 [9], we have analyzed the present patterns of change in the level of population's reproductive expectations by time and by age, estimated their potential implementation and prospects of fertility and revealed the opportunities to influence upon the population's reproductive standards. We emphasize that in no case it is the estimate of the financial crisis's impact on fertility (the majority of respondents were interviewed before the onset of its active phase) – it is rather the analysis of the situation when the crisis may manifest its aggravating impact.

Within the framework of the survey conducted in the territory of 14 municipal formations of the Komi Republic in the form of

hand-out questionnaires to a random sample with quoting by the type of inhabited localities and by age, 994 women of childbearing age were interviewed. 76.5% of respondents live in urban areas, 23.5 – in rural areas and it corresponds to the distribution of women by type of inhabited localities. The basic reproductive ages were covered to the greatest extent, i.e. the age structure of the sample is younger a little than the general fertile contingents at the expense of age groups up to 40 years old, who represent the greatest interest in the terms of their contribution to the total fertility. The specific weight of respondents at the age under 30 years old (41.7%), which currently accounts for about 75% of all births, is close enough to the share of these ages in the structure of women of reproductive age. The specific weight of the respondents aged from 30 to 39 years (45.9%) was exceeded by more senior contingents. Now about a quarter of all births fall to the people aged from 30 to 39, and mostly it is due to these age categories that the timing (i.e. determined by the realization of deferred births) part of the increase in fertility of early 2000's occurred. 12.4% of respondents at the age of 40 years and older, who also gave a timing increase to the level of fertility in the current decade, were interviewed. Under the present mode of fertility the reproductive cycle is almost completed by this age (about 1% of all births are after 40 years old), and this part of the sample can be viewed in terms of completed fertility of cohorts of 1959 – 1963 and 1964 – 1968 years of birth. It gives not only the opportunity to estimate the final number of children of these generations. Comparing it with reproductive expectations it also gives the opportunity to analyze the degree of implementation of reproductive expectations by the generations, most active childbearing age of them fell on the very unfavorable conditions of socio-economic decline of 1990's.

As it has been noted, over the period of 1999 – 2009 the total value of the fertility coefficient has increased in Russia from 1.17 children per woman to 1.49. In the Komi Republic the birth

rate has been analogous to all-Russian one since the late 1980's. In particular, the corresponding figures are almost identical: 1.18 in 1999 and 1.49 in 2009 [10]. In the rural areas of the republic in the past two years the psychologically important threshold of the population's simple reproduction was overcome: in 2008 – 2009 the total fertility made for 2.23 – 2.28 children, that corresponds to the mode of slightly expanded reproduction. In the urban areas this rate is almost twice lower: 1.27 – 1.31 children. However, even the total fertility rate of 2009 does not mean that modern women will have this average child number by the end of their childbearing age, since the features of this indicator does not allow us to characterize the final number of children of the real generations. The fact is that the overall coefficients were calculated for conventional generations by the year of observation, they bear the burden of reproductive histories of women of thirty five successive years of birth: from those who were 15 in the year of observation up to 49.

Thus, the level of total fertility rate of 2009 is determined by both the starting demographic history of those who were born in 1994 and the life history of those who were born in 1960. In particular, its value reflects not only the increasing impact of the implementation of births delayed in 1990's and the compaction of the birth calendar of younger generations, but also the lowering impact of early implementation as far back as 1980's of the final number of children by the part of generations who were born in 1960 (under the influence of the resolution of Central Committee of the Communist Party, Council of Ministers of the USSR №235 of January, 22, 1981 "On the measures to strengthen the state aid to the families with children" [11]), as well as the lowering effect of irreversible restriction of the extent of reproductive plans implementation by older generations and rethinking the reproductive expectations by the part of population in crisis years of 1990's. So neither the level of the total fertility rate nor even its dynamics

provide a reliable analysis of long-term trends in fertility and, especially, an estimation of its future prospects.

The values of population's reproductive plans, the people's ideas after the sociological researches about the number of children desired for the family under the most favorable conditions and about the number of children preferred from the standpoint of public interest provide more valuable information for both analysis and forecasting, especially if there is a possibility of dynamic comparisons. In our survey the levels of population's reproductive attitudes were determined by using the standard questions: "How many children do you plan to have (or did you plan to – if you aren't going to have any more children)?" (the so-called expected number of children), "How many children would you have if you had all the necessary (financial, housing, etc.) conditions?" (the so-called desirable number of children at all necessary conditions) and "How do you think of how many children is it the best to have in family?" (the so-called ideal number of children). In addition, in order to determine the degree of material factors influence on the implementation of the family's reproductive plans we asked "How many children can one have at the present time without infringing upon the financial interests of the family". The "continuity" of the reproductive standards was revealed by the question about the number of children in the family of orientation. And the "stability" of the reproductive attitudes was checked by the question: "How many children have you advised to have your children?"

As you know, under the conditions of deliberate regulation of fertility inside the family the person determines for himself or herself the number of children of her or his future family at the stage of reproductive standards, and later this level (in the absence of a strong perturbing effect of external factors) will not differ significantly from the planned level. Certainly, the level of expected number of children is a certain benchmark to which the family will seek in its

life. But the degree of implementation of the reproductive expectations is, as a rule, rather high, and under the favorable conditions it may be exceeded. So in our survey the real fecundity of generation of 1964 – 1969 years of birth, who were from 40 to 45 years old in 2008, was 1.89 children, the real fecundity of generation of 1959 – 1963 years of birth, who were more than 45 years, was 2.00 children – while the average expected number of children in both generations is 2.10 (*tab. 1*). In other words, the degree of implementation of the reproductive plans of generations, whose most active childbearing age fell on the very bad years of socio-economic crisis, is 90 – 95%. As for older generations, who were over the age of 30 years in 1990s, their reproductive plans were even overfulfilled: according to the survey of 2000, the real fecundity of generations of 1950s years of birth was 2.21, which is somewhat higher than their initial reproductive plans (2.15). Therefore, the index of the average expected number of children for a certain cohort of the population can be regarded as an assessment of

its level of completed fertility, i.e. the number of children by the end of the reproductive period.

The average expected number of children in general for all of our respondents is 1.98 children. It is significantly higher than the level of total fertility indices of conventional generations of recent years. Although it should be mentioned that in the rural areas of the republic the average expected number of children (2.01) was less than the real total coefficient of 2008 – 2009 (2.23 – 2.28). It is obvious that under the conditions of low living standard of rural people the new measures of population policy have played a very significant role in rural areas, led to an extraordinary concentration of births. The consequence of this is likely to be much more significant (compared to urban areas) reduce in the total rural coefficient in the coming years (in this connection we note that the survey of 2008-2009 revealed a considerable convergence between rural and urban reproductive standards and that indicates the outlined convergence of models of demographic behavior of urban and rural populations).

Table 1. The level of reproductive attitudes among the women of different ages, according to the survey of 2008 – 2009, the number of children

Reproductive attitudes	Age (years old)							
	All ages	15 – 19 (1989 – 1993 years of birth)	20 – 24 (1984 – 1988 years of birth)	25 – 29 (1979 – 1983 years of birth)	30 – 34 (1974 – 1978 years of birth)	35 – 39 (1969 – 1973 years of birth)	40 – 44 (1964 – 1968 years of birth)	45 – 49 (1959 1963 years of birth)
Real number of children	1.12	0.15	0.40	0.87	1.19	1.71	1.89	2.00
Expected number of children	1.98	1.92	2.07	1.92	1.92	2.01	2.10	2.10
Number of children, desired under all necessary conditions	2.48	2.36	2.65	2.40	2.44	2.49	2.65	2.50
Ideal number of children	2.35	2.25	2.44	2.21	2.36	2.41	2.51	2.33
Number of children one can have without infringing upon your financial interests	1.31	0.47	1.43	1.26	1.35	1.73	1.60	1.51
Number of children in the family of orientation	2.41	1.94	2.23	2.36	2.42	2.44	2.90	3.00
Number of children you have advised to have your children	2.06	2.04	2.22	2.05	2.03	2.05	2.08	2.13

Figure 3. The average level of reproductive expectations, according to the surveys of 1994, 2000 and 2008 – 2009, children

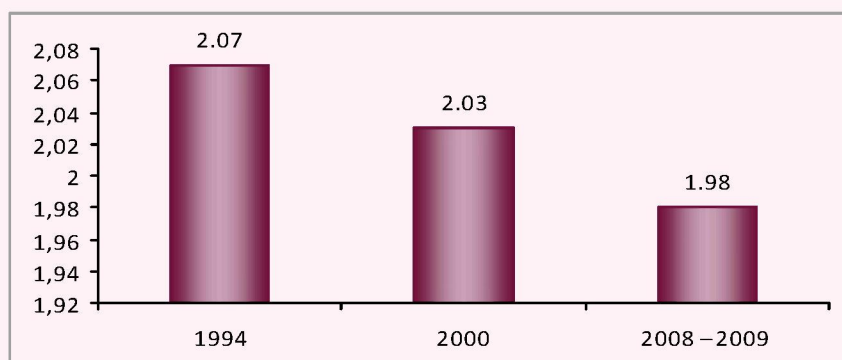
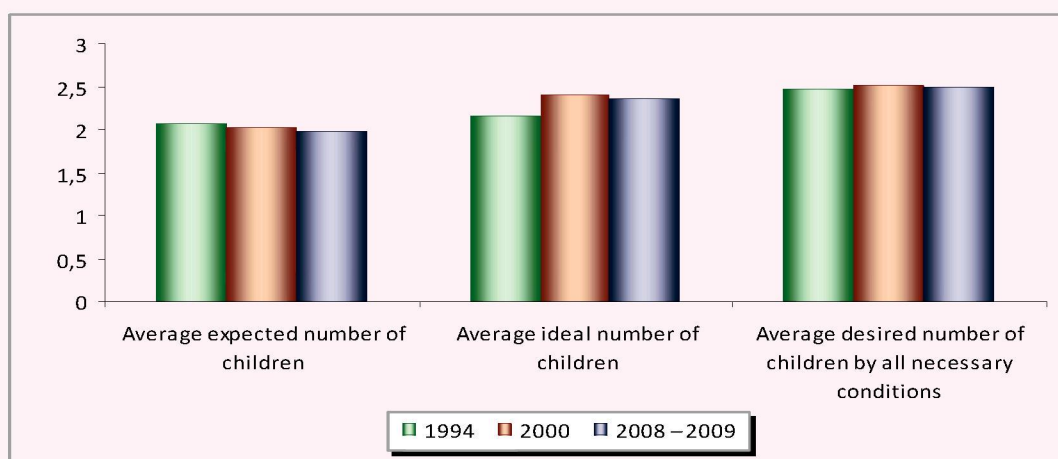


Figure 4. Dynamics of the major reproductive attitudes of the population, children

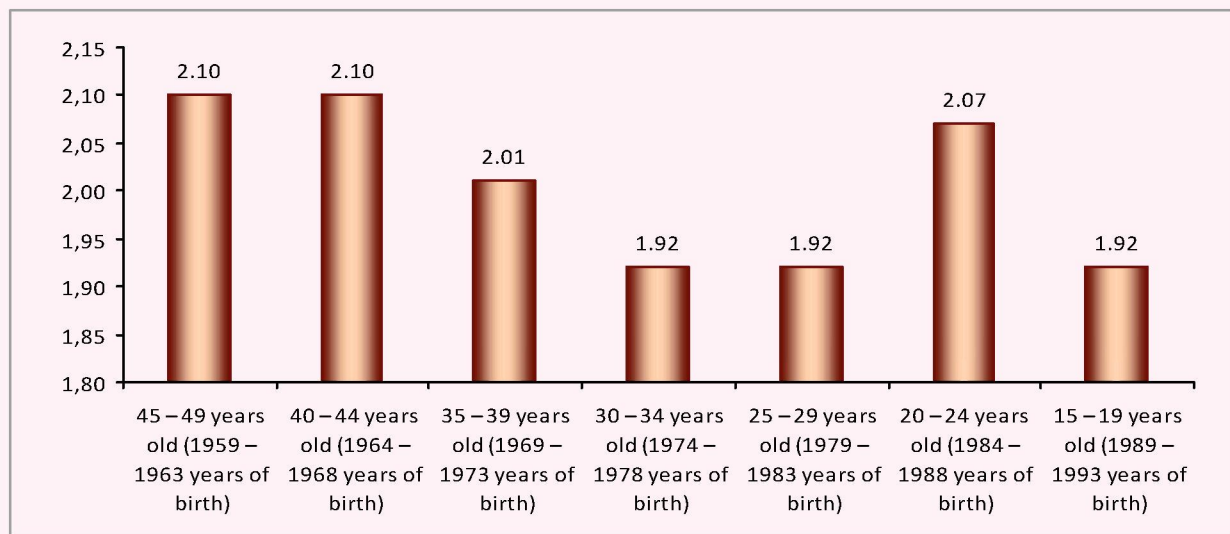


With similar characteristics of the sample set, the average expected number of children was 2.03 in 2000, 2.07 – in 1994 (*fig. 3*). At the same time the year of 1994 was the year of the highest inflation for Russia, the year of 2000 marked the beginning of a fairly long period of spontaneous, without any stimulating measures, implementation of delay births, that indicates rather favorable socio-economic environment, the years of 2008 – 2009 were the years when the government strengthened its attention to the problems of fertility. Thus, in 2000s we still observe a smooth downward trend in accordance with the concept of waning demand for children. The concept was formulated by our Russian scientists in the mid of 1970's [12] (by the way, it is perfectly illustrated

by the dynamics of the number of children in the parents family, depending on the age of the respondents - see Table 1). In other words, either the improvement in the socio-economic situation or the new demographic initiatives don't have a noticeable positive impact on the level of population's reproductive expectations in whole.

At the same time the average ideal number and the average desired number of children per family by all necessary conditions represent a certain reserve of exceeding of reproductive plans. These indices showed some growth by the year of 2000 (*fig. 4*) in contrast to the stable negative dynamics of the average expected number of children. The level of an ideal number of children has increased more considerably than usual, this fact is probably a consequence

Figure 5. The level of reproductive expectations by the age groups, according to the survey of 2008 – 2009, children



of rather broad discussion in 1990's. Its subject was consequences and potential threats of demographic crisis in Russia. This indicates good opportunities for socio-psychological measures of population policy. But economic measures of 2006-2007 also didn't have a stimulatory effect on the level of reproductive ideals and desires of the population: by 2008-2009 they generally decreased slightly.

However, the analysis of reproductive expectations by the age groups demonstrates the opportunity of positive impact on the level of population's reproductive plans. As follows from table 1, one can observe the decrease in reproductive expectations from older to younger age groups with subsequent stabilization: from 2.10 children for women over 40 (i.e. the generations of 1959 – 1963 and 1964 – 1968 years of birth) through 2.01 for the cohort of 1969 – 1973 years of birth – and up to 1.92 for younger generations. There is one deviation: the generation of 1984 – 1988 years of birth, who was from 20 to 24 years in 2008, the average expected number of children is 2.07 (*fig. 5*). It's obvious that recently this is the most numerous generation who is still in most active childbearing age and received the maximum impulse for the formation of their demographic standards.

In our opinion, the basis of this, above all, is a positive impact of the improved socio-economic situation and the increase in the birth rate of early 2000s: formation of reproductive attitudes rather strongly depends on the nature of socio-economic and demographic situation. Perhaps, the great number of generation of 1984 – 1988 years of birth has played some certain role: its representatives grew in a "lifestyle of relatively many children". In addition, the new measures of population policy are aimed at stimulation of the second child birth (it means mother (family) capital), this generation could have a fairly high probability of success when changing the existing reproductive attitudes toward their rising. The fact is that the representatives of this generation were between 18 and 22 years old by 2007 – this is the age of beginning of active reproductive activity (the parents of 50 – 60% of the firstborn are under 22).

Thus, the numerous generation of those who were born under the effect of the measures of population policy of 1980s had the highest demographic standards (we should note that this does not contradict the conclusions, obtained by us in the survey of 2000, which revealed the increased reproductive expectations among the generation born in first half

of 1980s compared with the generations of 1970's). Followed after this generation the smaller generation of 1989 – 1993 will determine the overall level of fertility in most of the nearest time, its reproductive expectations are at the level of 1.92 children, as the people born in the years of 1974 – 1983. It means that the state's demographic initiatives of 2006 – 2007 practically did not find a response from the representatives of the youngest reproductive ages.

The last figure, in fact, most clearly demonstrates in what reproductive background may manifest the long-term impact of the world financial-economic crisis on the prospects for fertility of the Russian population. It should be noted that from the chronological point of view the unfolding of global crisis in 2008 – 2010 is very unfavorable fact from the standpoint of fertility in Russia, since it occurred when the increasing opportunities of the age structure of reproductive contingents being exhausted, i.e. on the eve of the beginning of structurally lowering fertility. Meanwhile the crisis will help to deep the structural decline in fertility by worsening conditions for the implementation of existing reproductive attitudes of the population, thereby reducing the extent of their implementation. The worsening socio-economic context may lead to revision and further decrease in the low level of reproductive expectations of smaller generation of 1989–1993. This is more than likely if one takes into account that financial factor for the number of children is of extraordinary significance for this generation: according to the opinion of 15 – 19-year-old people one can have 0.47 children in the family without infringing upon their financial interests. It is almost three times lower than the average figures for the sample of respondents and it is four times lower than the reproductive expectations of this generation, and it's 5 times lower than its reproductive desires. In addition, the unfavourable conditions of financial and economic crisis will be the background for the formation of the reproductive attitudes of more scanty generation of

1994 – 1998 years of birth. In other words, the crisis may have a casual effect on the birth rate of the Russian population, deepening its structural decline and it may also have a long-term effect.

As a result, after a relatively high fertility rates of 2000's due to several mutually reinforcing factors (the great number of generations of active reproductive age, compaction of the calendar of their births, their higher reproductive attitudes, the implementation of delay births by older generations), we are faced with quite a long period of reduce in the birth rate, it is also due to several mutually reinforcing factors (small number of generations of active reproductive age, rarefaction of the birth field of births because of early implementation in the previous decade, reduced reproductive attitudes of generations that have reached an active reproductive age, reduction in the extent of reproductive attitudes under the influence of negative consequences of the financial crisis). It is obvious that in the next ten to fifteen years instead of some leveling of failure in the birth rate and instead of natural smoothing of demographic wave (which is characterized by a very large amplitude and adverse asymmetry because of peculiarities of its genesis), we should expect even greater increase in its scope.

The survey revealed the material factor had a significant impact on the number of children in the family: in the respondents' opinion, without material infringement of their interests in the family one can have 1.31 children. At the same time in 2008 – 2009 the influence of material factor even intensified, compared with the years of 1994 (1.41) and 2000 (1.48), it is not surprising, if one takes account of the operation of law on the leading growth of demands.

In effect, the same law subordinates the dependence of the definite number of children on income levels: when the well-being of the family being increased its reproductive plans are falling. However, as a result of many studies of both domestic and foreign researchers, it was found that the curve showing the dependence of the number of children on the family

Table 2. The level of reproductive attitudes among women in the families with different income per capita, according to the survey of 2008 – 2009, children

Reproductive attitudes	On the average sample	Average monthly income per a family member, rubles						
		Under 3000	3000-5400	5400- 7000	7000-12000	12000- 17000	17000-25000	Over 25000
Expected number of children	1.98	2.06	2.08	2.03	1.94	1.91	1.72	1.91
Number of children expected by all necessary conditions	2.48	2.55	2.64	2.53	2.44	2.41	2.15	2.52
Ideal number of children	2.35	2.35	2.48	2.38	2.39	2.23	2.13	2.09
Average age of respondents, years old	31.3	28.3	30.7	31.8	31.7	32.1	32.7	33.6
Specific weight, %	100.0	11.1	20.0	18.8	27.7	13.0	7.1	2.3

income has not monotonically decreasing but U-shaped character. It was also confirmed in our survey (tab. 2). In this case the living-wage bound serves as a starting point of such parabolic trajectory of dependence of the reproductive attitudes on the income level in the current Russian situation. In the families with the average income below the living-wage which are entitled to certain allowances, benefits and subsidies, when the income level increasing, the reproductive attitudes increase. Further, with increasing prosperity, their quantity is naturally reduced. And only the families with income, providing a decent standard of living (in the Komi Republic the figure in 2008 – 2009 was above 25,000 rubles a month per a family member, and such families in our sample were a few – only 2.3%), are characterized by a quite significant increase in the reproductive expectations and desires. The value of the ideal number of children, in essence, reflects the socially normed need for children regardless of personal preferences and living conditions. The results of our survey show that after the family having achieved the living wage, the value of the ideal number of children is characterized by a steadily decreasing trend. In our opinion, this fact as well as the excess of the average desired number of children typical for post-reform period by all necessary conditions in comparison with the average ideal value (see table 1 and 2) reflect a very skeptical public attitude to the issue on the need to increase fertility in modern Russia. Under the favorable situation in their family, people want more children than

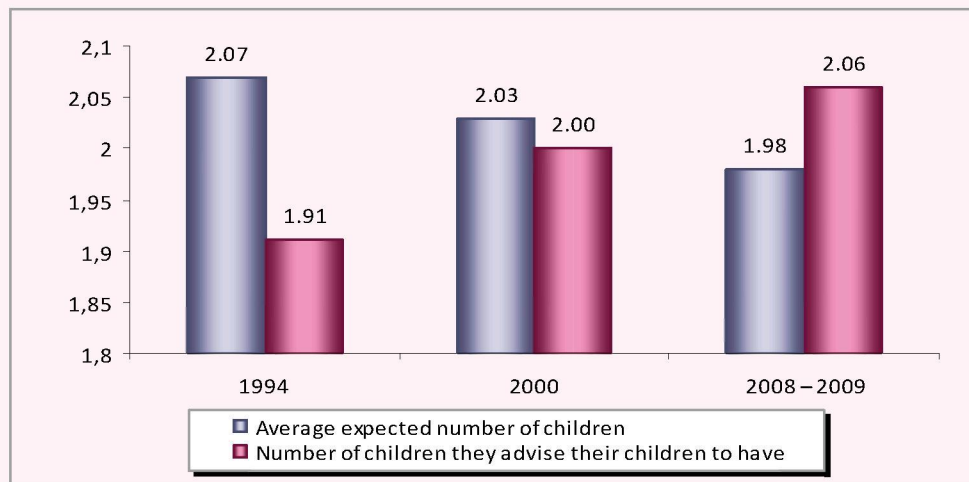
it's necessary and possible in the society which does not have necessary conditions for high number of children.

Accordingly, in order to stabilize the birth situation more or less in the country, in fact, one must create the stable favourable environment for the life of families with children. Corresponding to the extended reproduction in all age groups, the values of the ideal and desired number of children by all necessary conditions suggest that there are some reserves to increase the number of children in the families in Russia: as already noted, in favorable conditions the final fecundity of the family may exceed the initial reproductive expectations.

Moreover, in favorable conditions the mothers are going to advise their children to have more children than they plan (planned) themselves (fig. 6). While the average expected number of children steadily decreased from survey to survey, the number of children that women are going to advise their children, on the contrary, increased and in 2008 – 2009 it exceeded the average expected number of children (2.06 vs. 1.98), including those in the youngest age group. It reflects not only the manifested hope, finally, that “our children will live better than us”, but also the objective improving the implementation of reproductive attitudes before the global financial crisis.

However, against the backdrop of the crisis the cardinal improvement of living conditions of the Russian family has made it much less likely. So now, at least, it is necessary to update immediately the demographic policy measures.

Figure 6. Dynamics of reproductive expectations and “reproductive instructions”, children



Such improvement was already required by the beginning of a new decade without the crisis, and we have written about it over the past years.

The point is, at least, about the substantial increase in the size of child benefit: all the previous years there was only indexation of child benefits, but it didn't cover even the official level of inflation [13]. Only in 2010 the state rather appreciably increased the maximum size of maternity benefit and the monthly benefit for child care up to 1.5 years : respectively, from 25,390 rubles up to 34,583 rubles (instead of the planned 27,170 rubles.) and from 7,492 rubles up to 13,833 rubles. However, in our view, the upper limit of the maternity benefits should be cancelled at all. It is in line with quantitative and qualitative goals of population policy. The well-earning woman who has established herself in a professional way puts her future career at risk when giving birth to a child, and in modern Russia it could be reason enough to abandon the birth of the child desired, at least, the woman should be spared from the motivation for refusal because of financial reasons.

Targeting of child benefits only to low-income families should also be excluded from the practice. It refers to a monthly allowance for children. Either we must abandon it completely (the size of this benefit doesn't make

it possible to make anything like a tangible contribution to the family budget), or we must grant it to all children: we can't focus on the economic failure and inferiority of the families with children.

Moreover, the birth of a child should not appreciably reduce the family's economic status. Now, on the threshold of the structural reduction of birth rate, the country faces the need to demonstrate, finally, its political will and to equate the mother's labor to productive work outside the family.

The experience of the U.S. and France proves that the systematic and large-scale financial incentives of motherhood sooner or later reach their results. The value of monthly benefits for child care up to one and a half year, which currently accounts for 40% of the average monthly salary and its maximum size reached 40% of the maximum benefits for pregnancy and childbirth again only in 2010, should also be comparable with the wages. When in 1981 a similar allowance (care of the child under 1 year) first appeared in the country, its value (35 rubles per month) amounted to less than 40% of the average wage. However, in 1980s it was a completely new measure of population policy, and it played a very significant role. But 30 years later such monthly allowance for child

care, which is already the usual measure for our population, is considered in a completely different way. On the threshold of population well, no budget savings justify the loss in population policy.

In this case, of course, it is necessary not only to increase the size of child allowances sizeably, but also to facilitate the woman's family and vocational roles, in particular, to solve the question of catastrophic shortage of places in kindergartens and to stop the general commercialization of health and education system and to extend the directions of using of "maternal capital", and other activities.

We should particularly mention the increase in the opportunities to improve housing conditions for families with children, i.e. to provide the available mortgage loans and, more importantly, to introduce the privileges for its repayment with the children's birth. This is a very effective factor in increasing the birth rate: in our survey of 2008 – 2009 more than a third of women (35.8%), wanting to have a child in the nearest time, said about the improved living conditions as a necessary condition. However, while only 9.7% of the respondents were the participants in the programs for housing loans. And under the conditions of mortgage having collapsed at the very beginning of the financial and economic crisis, the people's participation in such programs is even less probable. The possibility of an early use of "maternal capital" to cover the mortgage credit was given to the population in 2009 – 2010, and it, of course, mitigated the situation. But it hasn't solved the acute housing question fundamentally. If young family hasn't any starting conditions such as, at least, a room in the hostel or in the shared apartment, or if they haven't wealthy parents, they cannot afford to purchase flat on mortgage even with the "maternal capital", especially in large cities.

Likewise, voiced in the Federal President's Message for 2010 [14] the instruction to the Government to develop a mechanism for provid-

ing the family with land to build the house for the third of the Child is unlikely to make a substantial contribution to solving the housing problems of Russian families. With a marked decrease in the average income per capita with the birth of another child the family with three children is in difficulty to find the necessary funds for more or less rapid construction of house.

At the same time the fact that the President's Message of 2010 focused on the population issues, and especially the issues of fertility is a rather favourable and timely factor. Any strengthening of the government's attention to the problems of fertility, to the needs of ordinary families and to the conditions of socialization of the younger generations can be seen as deepening the social and psychological measures of the pro-family population policy, which, as it has already noted, sometimes have even better opportunities than the economic measures. The demography problems are raised over and over again at the highest levels of government and "the issue on the second baby" raised in 2006 – 2007 gradually develops into "the issue on the third child" so necessary to overcome the restricted mode of reproduction of Russia's population.

These facts inspires us with some hope that the reproductive standards of very small generations of the middle – second half of 1990's years of birth will get some stimulating pulse and will be more positive because they will be formed against the background of the favorable demographic pro-family atmosphere in the society. However, as we have repeatedly emphasized in this article, in order to stabilize the situation with the birth or at least to level the birth failure coming in the near future, it is necessary to improve the state population policy all the time, consistently renewing and expanding the range of its activities. If the state is interested in improving the birth rate in the country, it really should, as the President said, "get to grips with the demographic problem seriously and permanently".

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