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Social Vulnerability of Families with Children in Modern Russia*



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Abstract. When performing its reproductive function, the family – the main institution for population reproduction – continues to bear increased risks of poverty. The goal of our paper is to study manifestations of social vulnerability of modern Russian families with children. Despite the active demographic policy implemented with the help of national projects since 2006, the actual situation concerning families with children has not undergone any significant changes. The birth of a child continues to reduce the standard of living to the point of crossing the poverty line; the housing market remains inaccessible, and the tools for combining parenthood and professional activities do not work. The resources of an average family do not promote the formation of human potential of the child population that would meet the demands of the knowledge economy and are reduced to a set of primary needs. The existing mechanisms of social support do not guarantee that the life of families with children will actually improve; childcare allowances

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are not growing and are not focused on achieving any standard of living, even the minimum subsistence level. Having few children becomes a conscious choice against the background of the crisis of marriage, which ceased to serve as a kind of contract according to which the husband is a breadwinner, and the wife gives birth to children and runs the house. Women have become full-fledged actors in the labor market. However, they still face discrimination in this regard. The analysis of gender statistics shows that women who have the same level of education, sphere of activity and official status as men receive an average wage that is one third lower compared to that of men. However, the phenomenon of working wives is not only and not so much a reflection of their desire for professional self-realization. Two working adults in an average family will provide a per capita income at the subsistence level in case they have no more than two children. In addition, satisfaction with the availability and quality of education and health services – the institutions that support the reproduction of the population and human potential – remains far from the desired level. Under the circumstances, the family with children remains one of the most socially vulnerable population groups; this fact requires the revision of the mechanisms of social policy and the principles of the social state in general. Scientific novelty of our study consists in the fact that it analyzes and classifies the manifestations of social vulnerability of modern families with children and puts forward the proposals to improve the social and demographic policy of the state. The findings of our research can be used in the practice of public administration.

Key words: family, children, state support measures, financial problems, housing problems, social services, reproductive potential, social policy.

Introduction

Modern Russian society, which is completing its demographic transition with an unusual combination of low birth rate and high mortality, is interested in a stable and healthy family, because a two-parent family, performing socially important functions, is the main condition for population reproduction (more than 70% of children are born in wedlock) [1, 2, 3, 4]. Having evolved from a production team to a free union based on love, the family is less and less associated with joint domestic life, bearing and upbringing children, leisure activities, interacting with relatives, and most importantly, primary control and responsibility for its members [5]. In the period of atomization of society [6, 7] the family, on the one hand, is the most important institution for people, and on the other hand – it is the problems and responsibilities that can be avoided. Therefore, divorce rate is

high, as well as cohabitation. The situation of families, especially the economic situation, is changing markedly with the birth of children, so they represent one of the main objects of social assistance provided by the state. Thus, studying and systematizing the problems of modern families with children and searching for effective ways to solve them are among urgent topics.

The goal of our paper is to study manifestations of social vulnerability faced by modern Russian families with children. Under social vulnerability we understand a situation where an individual or a group has limited access to material and intangible resources and/or is at risk of social exclusion in the near future in case of the absence of support from the state and society [8]. To achieve the goal, we address the following tasks: we study the existing measures and forms of support for families with children, we analyze and classify problems

of modern families with children, we develop possible ways to solve the existing problems and improve the social and demographic policy of the state. We analyze manifestations of social vulnerability of families with children on the example of the Russian Federation and the Vologda Oblast, as a region whose trends in demographic and socio-economic development are similar to the national average [9]. Scientific novelty of our research consists in the fact that we analyze and classify manifestations of social vulnerability of modern families with children and develop proposals to improve the social and demographic policy of the state.

Materials and methods

We use a set of scientific methods, in particular, comparative analysis, statistical analysis and sociological methods to achieve the goals and objectives. Theoretical basis of the research includes scientific works of leading demographers, economists, sociologists on the transformation of the institution of family and marriage, on the measures to support families with children, on demographic policy and the life cycle of families with children.

The information base of the study includes the data of official statistics and sample observations of the Federal State Statistics Service (Rosstat): Comprehensive observation of living conditions of the population in 2011, 2014, 2016, 2018; Sample observation of incomes of the population and participation in social programs in 2017; Sample observation of reproductive plans of the population in 2012 and 2017, the data of the Territorial Office of the Federal State Statistics Service in the Vologda Oblast (Vologdastat). In addition, we use the findings of representative sociological surveys conducted by Vologda Research Center of the Russian Academy of Sciences in the Vologda Oblast and the Northwestern Federal District:

the monitoring of reproductive potential¹, the monitoring study “The study of conditions for the formation of a healthy generation” in 2017²; the survey “Socio-cultural modernization of regions – 2017”³.

Results

Measures and forms of support for families with children are part of the social policy of the state, in particular, its demographic and family policy. Throughout their existence, they have changed along with the transformation of the institution of the family and the state social policy. Among the main turning points, experts point out the October Revolution, after which the pressure on families decreased, divorce procedures were simplified, registration of marriages ceased to be mandatory, and a woman was given the right to decide on the performance of her reproductive function (legalization of abortions). However, since the mid-1930s the situation changed, Stalin’s conservatism was looking for support in

¹ The monitoring, which is a quantitative sociological survey, was conducted in 2005, 2008, 2011, 2014, and 2017 in the Vologda Oblast by Vologda Research Center of RAS, the sample volume in each year of the monitoring was 1,500 inhabitants of reproductive age (15–49 years old) from the cities of Vologda and Cherepovets and eight municipal districts of the Oblast; territorial, gender and age-specific sample quota was used; sampling error does not exceed 3%. The method of collecting information is a questionnaire; the information was analyzed with the help of SPSS Statistics.

² The study is a cohort monitoring conducted in 2017 on the territory of the Vologda Oblast by Vologda Research Center of RAS, the sample consists of families with children born in a certain year and aged from 0 to 18, the multistage and quota sample is based on territorial and age characteristics; sample size is 298 families, sampling error does not exceed 5%. The method of collecting information is a survey of parents, children aged 10 and older, and healthcare workers. The information was analyzed with the help of SPSS Statistics.

³ The sociological survey of the adult population “Socio-cultural modernization of regions” was conducted in 2017 by Vologda Research Center of RAS in the Vologda, Murmansk, Kaliningrad and Novgorod oblasts and in the Republic of Karelia. The sample quota by sex and age was used, the volume is 3,108 people, sampling error does not exceed 5%. The method of collecting information is a questionnaire, the information was analyzed with the help of SPSS Statistics.

traditional values, abortions were banned, and a number of legal acts aimed at strengthening the family and marriage were adopted; benefits for large families and single mothers were introduced for the first time [10]. Funds for these measures were sought by redistributing income in favor of families with children through the introduction of the so-called “tax on childlessness” [11]. However, with the predominance of an extensive type of production, which required a constant influx of workers, including women and older people, the family became increasingly focused on having few children, and the state created a system of childcare, partially taking over this function and reducing the role of grandmothers in the upbringing of and caring for the younger generation. In parallel, the institutions that replaced the family in the performance of a number of other functions (health, culture, law enforcement, etc.) were being developed [12]. After a sharp decline in birth rate in the 1960s, a revolutionary package of measures to support families with children (“maternity” leave, childcare allowances) was adopted, which by 1980 led to a noticeable surge in the birth rate [13].

A new wave of activation of demographic policy began in 2006. The introduced support measures, especially the resonant “maternity capital”, according to experts, significantly influenced the real changes in birth rate [14]. However, the net coefficient did not reach one, and after 2016 both the crude birth rate and the total fertility rate ceased to grow. Within the framework of the demographic transition concept, the equalization of birth and death rate and achieving the stationary population are substantiated by evolution [15, 16]. However, death rate in Russia remains high and it can lead to further depopulation and aggravate population

ageing; these issues urge the government to focus its demographic and social policy on stimulating the birth rate by supporting families with children.

Currently, a system of measures to support families with children has been established; it is aimed primarily at promoting the birth rate. At the same time, the policy of “poverty alleviation” and the task of creating a society of equal opportunities of the social state have also chosen the family with children as one of the objects for support, but only if the family meets certain criteria, namely, the average per capita income of the family should not exceed the subsistence level. The measures are differentiated according to the stage of the family’s life cycle: for families where a child is on the way and for families with one, two and three or more children (large families). Some of the measures are guaranteed at the federal level, others depend on regional financial capabilities; in addition, a number of benefits and payments depend on the demographic situation in the region⁴. Benefits are differentiated by the status of the recipient (those subject to compulsory social insurance in connection with motherhood – working under an employment contract; the unemployed; full-time students; those who serve in the army under the contract), and by the financial position of recipients (the majority of benefits and compensations are paid to low-income families). The most common forms of support for families with children are as follows: one-time and monthly payments; compensation for transport costs, parental fees for kindergarten, the insurance part of the pension, the cost of utilities; provision of free-of-charge medical care and food; free access to social and cultural services; partial payment of

⁴ Social support for families with children: some important facts for six years. *Official Website of the Russian Government*. Available at: <http://government.ru/info/32115/>

social services; provision of land ownership; tax deductions [17].

Separate support measures are provided for the families with disabled children, foster families, families of servicemen, and families who lost a breadwinner. Despite such a wide range of forms and measures of support for these families with children, the question of the adequacy of social assistance to solve their problems remains open.

Problems of families with children

If we consider the experience of modern researchers and review the existing forms of support for families with children in Russia, we can say that modern families with children have to deal with financial, housing and social issues. No doubt, they are in some cases interrelated and interdependent, but the degree of their importance for the development of the modern family allows us to consider them separately.

According to subjective estimates, material and housing conditions are among the major factors that hinder the increase in the birth rate in Russia. These factors have remained acute for a long time (Tab. 1). In recent years, there has been a significant increase in the importance of such factors as “risk of losing a job” (by 20

p.p.), “unstable economic situation” (by 8 p.p.) and “career priority, the desire “to live for myself” (by 8 p.p.).

If the first two reasons proceed from the objective economic situation in the country and the specifics of the existing institutional environment (in particular, the difficulties that women face when combining reproductive and labor activities), the third one stems from the value transformations expressed in the desire to satisfy personal needs and maintain successful competition between “family-oriented”, professional and creative life goals.

The reasons for postponing or abandoning the birth of children are related to fact that parents expect a *deterioration of the financial situation* of the family after the child is born. In modern Russian conditions, families with children face greater risk of falling below the poverty line. “With each subsequent child, the family plunges into deeper poverty: the relative poverty of a full nuclear family with one child is 42%; a full nuclear family with two children – 48%; a full nuclear family with three children – 55%” [18]. Thus, according to sample surveys of Rosstat, among households with children under the age of three, 35% were among the

Table 1. Distribution of answers to the question “In your opinion, what impedes the increase in the birth rate in our country?” (percentage of respondents)

Answer	Survey year					2017 to 2005, +/-
	2005	2008	2011	2014	2017	
Poor housing and material conditions of most families	68.3	80.4	70.0	70.7	66.6	-1.7
Unstable economic situation	43.5	51.8	45.8	46.3	51.9	+8.4
Uncertainty about the future*	н/д	50.7	47.1	38.8	46.3	-
Risk of losing a job	15.5	36.1	30.5	33.7	36.3	+20.8
Career priority, the desire “to live for myself”	8.3	27.1	13.6	16.1	16.3	+8.0
Birth of a disabled child	12.5	23.5	13.4	13.3	11.9	-0.6
Childcare routine	12.2	25.8	15.1	12.7	11.9	-0.3
Socially accepted norms (the fashion for small families)**	no data	no data	4.1	4.2	3.0	-
Other	0.6	1.3	0.5	0.4	0.2	-0.4

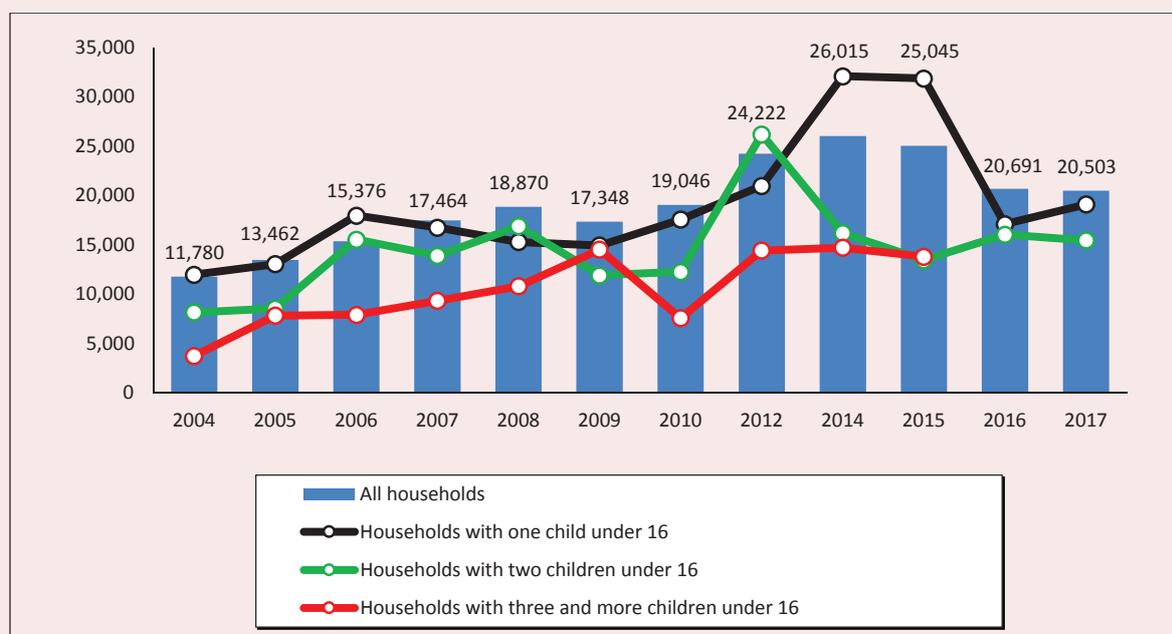
*For the first time included in the answers in 2008.
 ** For the first time included in the answers in 2011.
 Source: Monitoring of reproductive potential. VolRC RAS.

Table 2. Key indicators of income differentiation and poverty in Russia, 2016

Indicator	All households	Among them – households with children under 18			Households with children under 3
		1 child	2 children	3 and more children	
Per capita average cash income, % of the subsistence level	261.5	229.2	175.0	118.0	153.0
Proportion of the poor, %	13.1	12.2	26.3	51.0	35.2
<i>Cash income of the poor</i>					
average per capita per month, rubles	6 945	7 335	7 159	6 275	6 842
% to the subsistence level	69.2	72.9	71.0	63.0	67.9
<i>Cash income deficit</i>					
average per capita per month, rubles	3 085	2 729	2 930	3 683	3 236
% to the subsistence level	1.5	1.4	4.2	15.7	7.2

Source: Selective monitoring of people's income and participation in social programs. Rosstat. 2017.

Figure 1. Cash income of households of the Vologda Oblast, on average per 100 households, rubles*



Note. Since 2016, Vologdastat distinguishes between two groups of households: with one child and with two or more children.

* In comparable prices of 2017.

Source: Statistical Yearbook. Vologdastat. 2017.

poor, that is, the average per capita income was below the subsistence level. One in two households with three or more children was characterized as poor, and the income deficit was more than 3,500 rubles for each family member (Tab. 2).

The dynamics of per capita income of households with children in the Vologda Oblast shows similar trends: with each subsequent child, the level of income in the family decreases and approaches the average per capita subsistence minimum (Fig. 1).

Cash income of families with many children is significantly lower than that of all households in the region. In addition, families with two or more children are more sensitive to the manifestations of economic crises; this was reflected in the downward dynamics of their incomes in 2009–2010 and in 2011–2013.

According to researchers, families with one or two children, that is, the most common families in Russia, along with citizens of working age living alone and families without children, fall into the category of the “new”⁵ poor and make up about 50% of the total poor population. This means that the increase in poverty was mainly due to new types of families whose heads are of working age [19]. According to the Ministry of Labor, in 2018, 70% of the poor in Russia were families with children. As noted by the Minister of Labor M. Topilin, with the birth of a child/children the income of a family falls⁶.

Housing conditions

Housing is an important condition for the implementation of reproductive plans. The

acquisition of living space is one of the most significant costs of the family budget of Russians. That is why financial problems are exacerbated by housing problems for those who do not have their own housing as a property or their dwelling place does not meet sanitary requirements. Almost half of families with children in Russia are in need of larger living space, and the greater the number of children, the smaller the size of living space per person (*Tab. 3*). There are not enough tools available to expand housing; an average family most often has no other option but to use mortgage lending. Despite the widespread use of mortgages, preferential rates, and the possibility of refinancing active loans at a reduced rate of 6% for families with a second and third child, there are still a number of restrictions that do not help solve housing problems to the fullest extent:

– first, preferential rates apply only to the primary market, which may have either unreasonably high prices or a poor quality of construction;

Table 3. Characteristics of housing conditions of households in 2018, %

Indicators	All households	With children	Without children	Young families	Young families with children	Families with many children
Number of households living in all types of accommodation, total	100	100	100	100	100	100
<i>Including the households that indicated that they</i>						
do not feel the lack of living space	77.4	58.5	87.0	64.0	58.8	42.7
feel a certain lack of living space	17.0	29.8	10.5	28.1	29.6	35.0
feel a great lack of space	5.5	11.6	2.4	7.8	11.6	22.3
not defined	0.1	0.1	0.1	0.0	0.0	0.0
Size of living space per household member, m ²	15.75	11.53	20.26	11.22	10.03	9.62
Number of living rooms per household	2.37	2.62	2.24	2.07	2.39	3.01
Source: Sample survey “Comprehensive observation of living conditions of the population”. Rosstat. 2018.						

⁵ During the Soviet period, such families were not considered as poor.

⁶ The Ministry of Labor noted that 70% of poor Russians are families with children. *Gazeta “Izvestia”*, 2018, no. 93. Available at: <https://iz.ru/748878/2018-05-28/topilin-nazval-semi-s-detmi-bolshinstvom-sredi-zhivushchikh-v-bednosti> (accessed 15.01.2018).

– second, the preferential rate covers a small share of those loans that families pay for decades, denying themselves other expenses (currently the preferential rate is active for three years – at the birth of a second child from 2018, for five years – at the birth of a third child, its maximum period is 8 years, if a third child is born during the period of the first subsidy);

– third, under the terms of the program at least 20% of the cost of housing must be paid as a down payment. Therefore, if a family with children does not have savings, inheritance, or cannot attract co-borrowers and other types of assistance, then the acquisition of housing via mortgage is difficult. The already small income of the family should be used to accumulate a down payment.

Maternity capital has proved to be an effective tool for solving the housing problems of families with two or more children. This is especially noticeable in the regions [20]. According to a monitoring survey “Studying the conditions for the formation of a healthy generation”, families participating in the program “Maternity capital” in 2017 noted more often that after the birth of a child their living conditions have become better (67%), compared with families who did not participate in this program (only 22.4% of them noted the improvement of living conditions). Consequently, the order of the birth of the child indirectly affects the material possibilities of the family in terms of housing. About 60% of families used maternity capital to solve their housing problem⁷.

Social problems of families are characterized by a whole range of manifestations and can be internal and external, can include various

⁷ According to the Pension Fund of Russia. Official website of the newspaper “Izvestia”. Available at: <https://iz.ru/731062/tatiana-gladysheva/rossiiskie-semi-potratile-matkapital-na-ipoteku> (accessed 02.02.2019).

socio-psychological aspects (patterns of life cycle, deviations of various kinds, etc.), difficulties in obtaining social services, social integration issues, etc. Taking into account their relevance in modern conditions of development, let us focus on the difficulties that families have to face when obtaining social services, and on those institutional and mental barriers that impede the effective implementation of reproductive function.

The participation of the state as the “customer” of certain reproduction parameters is not limited to financial instruments of direct or indirect support for families with children. An important role is played by the creation and maintenance of institutions that support the family at the birth and upbringing of children, help combine reproductive and labor activities, form social norms concerning the number of children in the family, marriage and partnership, and acceptable life strategies in general.

Thus, for example, the socially approved desire to “stand on one’s own feet”, to achieve success in work and acquire social “maturity” entails the postponement of births, the aging of motherhood and, as a consequence, a decrease in the birth rate and an increase in child morbidity. This is one of the factors leading to depopulation in Russia [21].

The existing contradiction between the work, financial well-being and the birth of a child forces most families to make a choice in favor of childlessness and postpone the birth of a child, taking into account the external situation. According to experts, today’s social policy to support the family in Russia is such that it does not allow women to combine work with normal childbirth [3].

First, there still exists gender-based wage discrimination. A survey carried out by Vologdastat shows that under equal conditions

Figure 2. Distribution of answers to the question “How do you assess your career prospects?” (percentage of respondents)



Source: “Socio-cultural modernization of regions – 2017” survey, Northwestern Federal District. Conducted by VoIRC RAS.

(level of education, type of economic activity, position at work) women have an average wage of one third lower than men [22].

Second, women estimate their own professional prospects significantly lower than men. This is mainly manifested in the issues of demand (47% vs. 56%, *Fig. 2*) and self-realization (37% vs. 45%) in the profession, as well as decent wages (32% vs. 39%). At the same time, women consider their career prospects as least realistic (29%).

Moreover, according to a research conducted by the McKinsey Global Institute, the fight against global gender inequality can lead to an additional increase in global GDP by 11–26% by 2025 [23]. In addition, the removal of institutional barriers concerning women in the labor market may give them more opportunities to implement reproductive plans, be socially protected when taking maternity leave, combine childbearing and employment and thus influence the demographic situation in the country.

The inertia of demographic attitudes led to the fact that, having achieved the right to do “the prestigious work that men do”, women began to bear a double burden in family life. Along with men, they now provide material security in the family, and the husband is no longer considered the breadwinner and head of the family. The range of family and marriage responsibilities of women is much wider, and they perform most of them without relying on someone else’s help [24]. Thus, the need to prove their professional worth, to be in a constant struggle for the opportunity to implement the social roles of “mother” and “wife” without losing social status, skills and independence, puts modern women in a situation in which they have to make a choice. They either plan maternity and leave their job temporarily (adjust the calendar of births to suit themselves, postpone childbirth, increase or decrease the intervals between successive births), or such planning is associated with the involvement of mother-substitution resources

(grandparents and other relatives, nannies, nurseries, husband, etc.), or they prefer a career and an independent life without planning to expand the family.

The system of pre-school education is the main institution that allows parents to continue working and thus improve their financial situation. Despite the close attention of the federal and regional authorities to the problems that exist in the system (the strategy for development of regions and municipalities is taken into consideration in the “May decrees” of the President), the problem of providing children with places in kindergartens has not yet been solved. The issue is acute in cities as well: for example, in the Vologda Oblast in 2017, the groups were compacted – there were 109 children per 100 places [25]. This creates such a threat as high morbidity in children, and consequently, increases the likelihood of parents taking a sick leave to stay at home with their children [26].

Another important aspect for parents is to ensure the development of children. It is done with the help of school education and additional education. Although the provision of population aged from 5 to 18 with additional education has increased significantly, this figure in 2016 was far from the benchmark set by the President’s May decrees (63% against 75%). The reason for this lies both in the deterioration of facilities, equipment and other resources and in the ageing of the staff of children’s art centers, hobby groups and clubs, as well as in the weakness of the private sector of providers of such services (a problem that, in particular, should be addressed by the new reform of additional education related to the transition of this sector to per capita financing). In the sphere of school education, the personnel problem remains very acute: in 2004–2016, the number of teachers in secondary schools

of the Russian Federation decreased by more than 20%. In this regard, as well as due to the increase in the number of children in recent years, the number of students per teacher has increased significantly (by 18% nationwide – from 12.0 to 14.2 students; by 27% in the Vologda Oblast – from 11.4 to 14.5 students) [27].

As for medical care, according to the results of sociological surveys in the Vologda Oblast, the majority of parents are more or less satisfied with the medical care their children receive, but a significant part of them indicates the presence of serious problems in medical institutions, such as queues (45%), lack or high cost of medicines (26%), lack of necessary specialists (18%), inability to get an appointment with the doctor (15%), and insufficient equipment of a medical institution (13%).

Discussion

Considering and classifying the problems of families with children in different ways, most researchers point to the lack of effective assistance provided to these families in modern Russian conditions. The residual principle of provision of financial support to childbearing and family continues to prevail [3, 10, 28, 29]. The reasons why families with children are poor include first, a low level of wages, and second, insufficient state support provided to children and unemployed [19]. An important consequence of this is the spread of child poverty, which exceeds the poverty of the adult population and leads to serious problems related to children’s health deterioration, underutilization of human potential, reduction of opportunities for their development and education. Researchers note that “in all types of families, the extent of child poverty in Russia is 4–5 times higher than the OECD average, and in Western Europe – 10 times higher” [18]. Reducing child poverty will depend both on

addressing labor market issues such as reducing the prevalence of low-income employment and reducing unemployment and on improving the effectiveness of social programs for targeted support of families with children (benefits, maternity capital, etc.) [30]. The Ministry of Labor believes that the recent increase in the minimum wage and the implementation of the President's "May decrees" will improve the situation concerning the incomes of families.

Public authorities more and more often point out the need to improve the targeting of social payments and other assistance and the need to exclude from the list of recipients of services unscrupulous citizens who hide their real incomes⁸. However, public discussions come to the conclusion about the prevalence of negative consequences from selective social policies, and these consequences surpass the amount the budgets save on social benefits: low efficiency (according to the experience of foreign countries); the need for a strict system of monitoring recipients and officials of social protection; aggravation of disintegration of society; perceiving the recipients of social assistance as socially defective; compression of effective demand, etc.[31, 32, 33, 34]. "While making the transition to social support only for the most needy, Russia is forming the following image of the future society: split, with limited human potential and high social risks" [31].

In recent decades, active work to expand financial support has yielded results, allowing people to implement plans for the birth of a second child, increasing the birth rate [14]. However, any tool has its own limit of effectiveness, and it is no coincidence that researchers come to the conclusion that modern

policy aimed to support families with children should be revised. The first signal for its renewal was the awareness of the authorities of the need to stimulate the birth of a first child; this need was expressed in real support measures since 2018. However, focusing on the principle of targeting, the majority of social payments, benefits and compensations were made with a focus on the poor; this fact generally limits the possibilities of full-fledged development of other families, whose incomes slightly exceed the established norms relative to the subsistence minimum, which implies the level of physical survival, but which cannot provide a decent quality of life and promote the development of human potential.

Summary

In conclusion, we should note that families with children, even despite their number, are a vulnerable category of the Russian population and one of the main recipients of social assistance, as they face a whole range of problems. The birth of children entails a significant reduction in income, in some cases – falling below the poverty line. The consequences of these processes carry the risk of insufficient resources for the development of human potential of children. Modern measures of social support are aimed at ensuring physical survival, addressing housing problems of families, but this does not allow them to get out of the category of "poor". The status of the needy, of those who need assistance contributes to the fact that parenthood is endowed with negative features and is associated with financial and other problems that successfully compete with psychological reproductive motives (the joy of becoming parents).

In addition, the instability of the situation of women with children in the labor market is manifested in the fact that women agree to a demotion at work or to an employment

⁸ Social support in Russia should be targeted. *RIA NOVOSTI*. Available at: <https://ria.ru/society/20180327/1517365826.html> (accessed 15.02.2019).

with less favorable conditions, and to the abandonment of career prospects. Revision of family roles causes women to be competitive and engaged both in family life and in work and contributes to the postponement of births and determination to have few children. Pre-school institutions are designed to remove some of the worries of childcare, education and development, but in the context of the relatively numerous generations of those born in the 2000s, there is a situation in which not every child gets a place in the kindergarten. Moreover, in urban kindergartens groups are compacted and parents (usually mothers) are forced to get a sick leave from time to time, thereby further worsening their financial situation and relations with the employer.

Thus, on the one hand, the situation in the families with children makes it necessary for the state to provide them with support; on the other hand, it is the quality of life of families that is an indicator that shows the effectiveness of the policies focused on them. According to the results of our research, we concluded that the existing measures are not enough, since a number of problems remain relevant. There is a need for management decisions that can ensure a decent quality of life for families with children and take them out of the zone of social vulnerability.

Among the individual tools for solving the problems we can identify systemic steps that will help save and promote the institution of the family, establish an institutional structure that will allow women to combine professional development and motherhood and that will

create conditions for positive upward mobility and decent wages for women.

In modern realities, experts and analysts appeal to the need to revise the social policy of the Russian Federation. In our opinion, in this case two options are possible: to continue selective policy, but with the revision of criteria according to which the family can be considered “poor”, or to make a purposeful transition to the universal type of distribution of privileges. In particular, based on the analysis of the existing problems, the question arises concerning the development of such measures of social support for families with children, which would affect them regardless of income and number of children and which would create conditions for the harmonious development of all family members. Both of these options require substantiation of financial costs, creation of mechanisms for adapting to modern conditions, but without such changes it is impossible to improve the standard of living and quality of life of families with children, improve the quality characteristics of the population, achieve sustainable trends in the growth of birth rate, and consequently, sustainable socio-economic development of the country and its regions.

The results of our study and the proposals that we put forward can be used as an information base for management decision-making, transformation of social and demographic policy, as well as by teachers and students of higher education institutions and all those interested in the evolution of the institution of family in Russia.

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