

## Models of Matrimonial and Reproductive Behavior of Russian Youth



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**Abstract.** Based on statistical indicators, the Federal State Statistics Service presented the demographic forecast of the Russian Federation until 2035. In all three forecast options (low, medium, high), natural population growth is negative, only its intensity changes. Population growth is presented only in a high forecast and is corrected by a decrease in the rate of natural decline and intensification of migration growth. It is possible to reverse the negative trends and implement the high version of the forecast if favorable conditions are created for the implementation of the marriage and reproductive behavior of young people as the main demographic resource. The aim of the study is the analytical modeling of the marriage and reproductive behavior of young people under the age of 35 based on the data of the author's sociological research. The article is based on the methods of estimating average values according to the distributions of respondents' answers, their ranking to determine the priority of factors. Statistical methods for measuring and analyzing social information are widely used: chi-square statistic for testing hypotheses, contingency tables (cross-tabulation), Pearson and Chuprov's mutual contingency coefficients, as well as the concordance coefficient (multiple rank correlation). The results made it possible to implement analytical modeling of the matrimonial and reproductive behavior of young people under the age of 35, depending on the self-assessment of their standard of living, in particular, to reliably determine the impact of the standard of living of young people on their decision to start married life and have a child, to identify young people's opinions about the significance of motives to postpone the birth of a child for different groups depending on the self-assessment of the standard of living.

**Key words:** youth, prosperous family, matrimonial behavior, reproductive attitudes, behavior patterns, standard of living, mutual contingency coefficients.

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### **Introduction**

The demographic situation in Russia remains tense, the population is declining. Measures introduced by the government to support Russian families (maternity capital, housing allowances, concessionary mortgages for families with children) had a positive effect on the birth rate in Russia until 2016. In recent years there has been an increase in scientific research aimed at analyzing the matrimonial and reproductive behavior of contemporary Russian youth, as well as the values and goals underlying these types of behavior. The identification of social drivers and descriptions of social practices will contribute to the development of managerial decisions aimed at increasing the

overall fertility rate and the growth of demographic indicators in general, the development of support measures in accordance with the needs of young people who are married, have children, and are planning or postponing marriage and having children.

It is not possible to significantly correct the marriage and reproductive behavior of young people, especially in the short term, because in this case we can only talk about changing values and forming new attitudes. What is meant is the creation of conditions conducive to the fuller realization of young people's reproductive plans. A number of empirical studies show that the gap between

desired and expected numbers of children persists (Beaujouan, Berghammer, 2019; Arkhangel'skii et al., 2021), hence it is the implementation of plans to have the desired number of children that is the most promising scenario. The tendency in Russian society to postpone childbearing until older ages (Kalachikova, Korolenko, 2018) undoubtedly hinders the matching of the desired number of children with their expected number. Postponing the birth of the first child in young families not only reduces the likelihood of having subsequent children, but may also be an obstacle to the realization of reproductive function in the future, since fertility declines with age in both women and men, with the trend being most pronounced in women (Leridon, 2004; Zemlyanova, Chumarina, 2018). In connection with this, the results of the study based on analytical modeling are of practical importance, helping to assess the impact of factors (marital status and assessment of one's standard of living) on the decision to postpone having a child.

Operationalization of the concept of "prosperous family" allows defining the main metrics necessary to solve the problem: to conduct analytical modeling of matrimonial and reproductive behavior of young people under the age of 35 on the basis of the author's sociological research data.

The rationale for the concept of "prosperity" is presented in the strategic documents regulating the implementation of state family policy in Russia: "Concept of state family policy of the Russian Federation for the period until 2025"<sup>1</sup> and "The concept of state policy for the young family"<sup>2</sup>. The latter approved the model of a prosperous young family – registered marriage, a two-parent family, children, economic independence, a favorable psychological climate, and the performance of basic

functions. The model presented is an ideal type of family, and a comparison of the ideal type with real practices allows forming measures of social support, mechanisms that help to solve the basic problems of families, to form prosperity.

#### **Extent of prior research**

The methodological basis of the study is the concept of family prosperity, developed under the guidance of Professor T.K. Rostovskaya, doctor of sciences in sociology (Rostovskaya et al., 2021a; Rostovskaya et al., 2021b). The construction of this concept was carried out on the basis of classical and modern theories revealing the factors influencing the realization of the family's basic functions; systematizing the origins and resources of overcoming problems in the family; devoted to certain aspects of marriage and family relations, the search for values underlying matrimonial, marital and reproductive behavior; and with the help of empirical data collected by Russian and foreign scientists as a result of the evaluation of prosperity indicators. The concept of the prosperous family is developed on the basis of the analysis of empirical information collected by the author's team and is enriched by new data obtained as a result of theoretical discussion of the processes under study by modern sociologists, economists, and demographers. We take into account contemporary trends classified by A.G. Vishnevskii according to the first, second and third "demographic transitions": reduction of mortality, including infant mortality, transition to controlled births, secularization, breakdown of sexual, marital and reproductive behavior, etc. (Vishnevskii, 2014).

In general, modern strategies of matrimonial and reproductive behavior are promising to consider as the results of increased rationalization of actors' behavior. A.I. Antonov, V.M. Karpova, and S.V. Lyalikova, studying family needs (desired and actual income), draw conclusions based on interviewing both spouses and comparing the data obtained. The introduction of the "desired" income indicator

<sup>1</sup> "On approval of the concept of state family policy in the Russian Federation for the period through to 2025": Government Decree 1618-r, dated August 25, 2014. Available at: <http://www.garant.ru/products/ipo/prime/doc/70627660/>

<sup>2</sup> The concept of state policy for the young family. Available at: <https://docs.cntd.ru/document/902060617>

shows the levels of spouses' claims affecting the number of children in the family, not only examining the ratio of "desired" to "real" income for both spouses, but also comparing income to the well-being of others (the social norm). The study partially reveals such an indicator of well-being as "economic self-sufficiency". Negative trends are revealed: the share of large families with per capita income below the subsistence level is 2.5 times higher than that of single-child families (Antonov et al., 2021). Thus, the material well-being of families decreases with the birth of each subsequent child if the parents' career or financial strategies are not effective. In this regard, young people are oriented toward finding a balance between the number of children and material well-being, which leads to postponement of parenthood, refusal to have children. Having many children is realized if the parents' values place children higher than material goods (parents' low aspirations); if the parents' values place children high and there are the necessary material opportunities. Both strategies of forming a large family are not typical in contemporary Russian society.

O.N. Kalachikova, M.A. Gruzdeva study the trends of changes in matrimonial behavior in the Russian Federation; on the basis of statistical data for 1994–2017 they record an increase in the age of the first marriage, an increase in the proportion of unregistered marriages. In sample surveys of the population's reproductive plans conducted by Rosstat (2012 and 2017), they found that about a third of those who are not officially married do not consider it necessary to register their marital relationship when they have a child either (Kalachikova, Gruzdeva, 2018). State family and demographic policy is aimed at encouraging legal unions, since participation in housing programs for those living without marriage registration is impossible, except for single-parent families with sufficient income to approve mortgage loans. However, as A.V. Artamonova and E.S. Mitrofanova

point out, state and church pressure has less and less influence due to changes in social norms, the legitimization of unregistered relationships, and the fact that the state and the church are not the only ones that have a significant influence on the situation (Artamonova, Mitrofanova, 2018).

A.V. Artamonova and E.S. Mitrofanova model the first marital unions and possible scenarios: no union; cohabitation as the first union; marriage as the first union. They found statistical correlations of increased odds of cohabitation and odds of marriage: place of residence (urban and rural areas), level of education (general or vocational and secondary), age, non-pregnancy. Living with parents, the well-being of the parental family, and postponing work careers reduce the chances of cohabiting relationships (Artamonova, Mitrofanova, 2018).

Family well-being not only affects the willingness to marry, but also contributes to the optimal performance of basic functions (reproduction, socialization, economic renewal, etc.). Responsible fatherhood contributes to a favorable psychological climate. O.N. Bezrukova explores the practices of responsible fatherhood (Bezrukova, 2012): emotional closeness with children, involvement in care, communication, care for the physical and personal development of the child. In Russia, the formation of responsible fatherhood moves slowly, while foreign studies show the effectiveness of supporting responsible fatherhood as part of family and demographic policy (Rehel, 2014; Duvander et al., 2020). Increased parental responsibility also leads to the rationalization of youth behavior, hence the postponement of marriage, the uncertainty that parents will handle raising a child, especially multiple children (Lebano, Jamieson, 2020).

#### **Methodological rationale**

In order to form patterns of matrimonial and reproductive behavior of Russian youth, we can identify a set of determinants that lead to changes

in matrimonial and reproductive behavior: increased education, increased employment of women, changes in the value matrix, etc. (Bagirova, Ilyshev, 2009; Wood, Neels, 2019; Isupova, 2020). In this study, we will focus on the following factors: financial status, age, and marital status, which influence behavioral patterns and are indicators of a prosperous family.

The models of matrimonial and reproductive behavior of contemporary Russian youth in the study are based on the data taken into account as a result of the All-Russian sociological survey “Demographic well-being of Russian regions”<sup>3</sup>, conducted on the territory of 10 regions of the Russian Federation (the city of Moscow, the Moscow Oblast, the Republic of Bashkortostan, the Republic of Tatarstan, Stavropol Krai, the Volgda, the Volgograd, the Ivanovo, the Nizhny Novgorod and the Sverdlovsk oblasts).

In accordance with the objectives of the study, unmarried persons aged 18–35 (borders are included) were selected from the total population of respondents. There were 1,541 such persons.

Formation of analytical models of matrimonial and reproductive behavior was carried out on the basis of identifying the dependence on standard of living factors and a number of other motives for starting a marital life (family values, personal

factors): cross-tabulation, hypothesis testing using  $\chi^2$  criterion, evaluation of the closeness of relationship by Pearson and Chuprov’s cross-correlation coefficients, multiple rank correlation coefficient – concordance coefficient as well as by constructed regression models.

The preliminary stage of the analysis determined the importance and influence on the likelihood of marriage of young people – respondents aged up to 35 years – the following five factors: the priority for the creation of a family is the desire to have a like-minded, kindred, loved one, not to feel lonely (first place); the second place is occupied by the desire to have a permanent sexual partner; the third and fourth places are shared by the desire to become a really mature, independent person and the desire to receive material benefits from more rational household management; and the fifth place is occupied by the desire to have a child in the near future (*Tab. 1*).

The demographic values of creating a family, based on the birth of children in the family, as follows from Table 1, are not given due attention in the youth environment today, the priority are social and psychological factors (primarily in the context of the significant importance of the desire to have a like-minded, kindred, loved one, not to feel lonely).

Table 1. Significance of factors influencing the intention to start a future married life, the average score according to the answers of respondents who are not married and intend to get married under the age of 35

| Motive for marriage  | Average score<br>(on a 5-point scale) | Rank |
|--|---------------------------------------|------|
| Desire to become a mature, independent person  | 3.4                                   | 3.5  |
| Desire to have a child in the near future  | 2.7                                   | 5    |
| Desire to have a permanent sexual partner  | 3.5                                   | 2    |
| Desire to have the material advantages of a more rational household  | 3.4                                   | 3.5  |
| Desire to have a like-minded, kindred, loved one by your side, not to feel lonely  | 4.7                                   | 1    |
| Source: compiled according to the data of All-Russian sociological survey “Demographic well-being of the Russian regions”. |                                       |      |

<sup>3</sup> All-Russian sociological survey “Demographic well-being of Russia”, conducted in late 2019 – early 2020 in the Central, Northwestern, Volga, Urals, North Caucasian, and Southern Federal Districts. N = 5616, representatives of different population groups aged 18 to 50 years. The supervisor is Professor T.K. Rostovskaya, Doctor of Sciences (Sociology).

This defines the importance of a more detailed/ deep analysis of the determinants of matrimonial and reproductive behavior of young people (Brown et al., 2015). It is of interest to model the dependencies of the factors influencing the intention to marry and have a child in families, taking into account different assessments of their standard of living by respondents.

**Results of the study in the context of analytical modeling of matrimonial and reproductive behavior of young people under the age of 35**

The contingency characteristics of the responses of young people under the age of 35 in assessing the dependence of the respondent’s current family standard of living and the respondent’s intentions to marry (Tab. 2) are summarized as follows: intend to get married 54.38% of the respondents, and 3/5 of them characterize their standard of living as quite good (from 8 to 10 points on a 10-point scale); 25.63% of all respondents are not going to get married, 19.99% hesitate to answer. Among those who indicated that they did not intend to marry,

as well as among those who were undecided about marriage, one in two gave a score of 5 to 7 to their family’s standard of living at the present time.

Testing the hypothesis about the correlation between the respondent’s intentions to marry and their family’ current standard of living showed a connection: chi-square statistic  $\chi^2$  equals 143.439 (at 5% significance level  $\chi^2_{\text{табл.}} = 28.869$ ). Consequently, the respondent’s family standard of living is a determinant of marriage.

Data of Table 3, which characterizes the correlation of answers of young people under 35, who defined their life standard as quite good (from 8 to 10 points on a 10-point scale), according to the evaluation of dependence of marriage intentions and intention to have a child, show: among 63.94% of those who answered that they intended to get married, not all were interested in having a child in the nearest future, the postponement of childbirth is observed. At the same time, two respondents out of those who are going to get married are already expecting a child.

Table 2. Answers correlation of unmarried respondents under 35 years of age in their assessment of the dependence of their intention to start a future married life on their family’s standard of living at present, %

| Are you going to get married? | Your family’s current standard of living in points<br>(on a 10-point scale, where 10 points is very good; 1 point is very bad) |       |       |       |       |       |      |      |      |      | Total  |
|-------------------------------|--|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|------|------|------|------|--------|
|                               | 10   | 9     | 8     | 7     | 6     | 5     | 4    | 3    | 2    | 1    |        |
| Yes                           | 6.99   | 10.77 | 14.95 | 9.05  | 4.94  | 5.07  | 1.71 | 0.48 | 0.00 | 0.41 | 54.38  |
| No                            | 2.40   | 4.32  | 4.04  | 4.66  | 5.62  | 2.81  | 0.41 | 0.96 | 0.27 | 0.14 | 25.63  |
| Hesitate to respond           | 1.16   | 2.72  | 3.74  | 4.15  | 1.84  | 3.74  | 1.84 | 0.61 | 0.14 | 0.07 | 19.99  |
| <b>Total</b>                  | 10.55  | 17.80 | 22.73 | 17.86 | 12.39 | 11.62 | 3.96 | 2.05 | 0.41 | 0.62 | 100.00 |

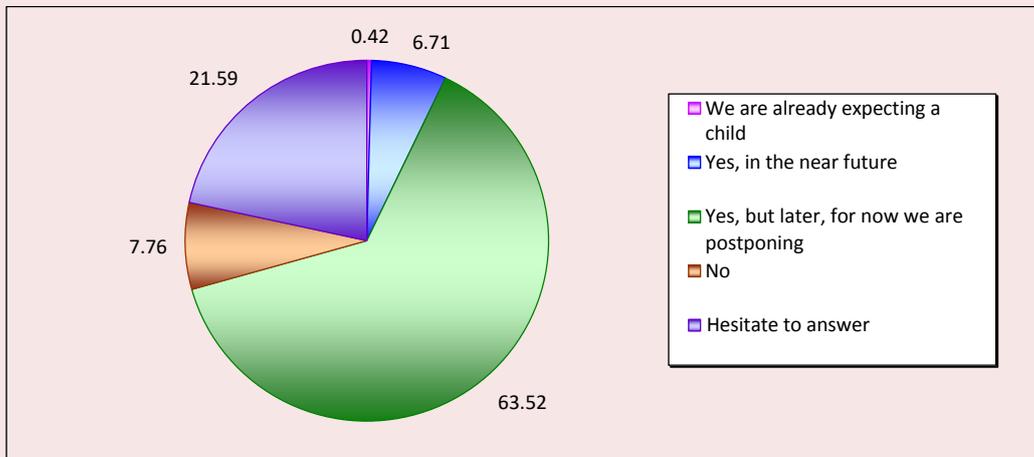
Source: compiled according to the data of All-Russian sociological survey “Demographic well-being of the Russian regions”.

Table 3. Answers correlation of respondents under the age of 35, who are not married and indicated their standard of living as quite good (8–10 points), in assessing the dependence of their intention to start a future married life and the birth of a child in their family, %

| Are you going to get married? | Are you going to have a child?   |                         |  |       |                     | Total  |
|-------------------------------|----------------------------------|-------------------------|--|-------|---------------------|--------|
|                               | We are already expecting a child | Yes, in the near future | Yes, but a little later, for now we are postponing | No    | Hesitate to respond |        |
| Yes                           | 0.27                             | 4.29                    | 40.62  | 4.96  | 13.81               | 63.94  |
| No                            | 0.00                             | 0.40                    | 2.68   | 13.14 | 4.83                | 21.05  |
| Hesitate to respond           | 0.00                             | 0.27                    | 5.76   | 2.68  | 6.30                | 15.01  |
| <b>Total</b>                  | 0.27                             | 4.96                    | 49.06  | 20.78 | 24.93               | 100.00 |

Source: compiled according to the data of All-Russian sociological survey “Demographic well-being of the Russian regions”.

Figure 1. Structure of young people’s answers to the question “Are you going to have a child?” among those who estimated their standard of living at 8–10 points and expressed their desire to start a married life, %



Source: compiled according to the data of All-Russian sociological survey “Demographic well-being of the Russian regions”.

Among the respondents who characterized their standard of living as quite good (8–10 points) and indicated their intention to get married, 63.52% are going to have a child somewhat later (delaying for now) and only 6.71% expressed their desire to have a child in the near future (Fig. 1).

Analyzing the correlation between the opinions of respondents under the age of 35, who described their standard of living as quite good (8–10 points) according to their intention to marry and desire to have a child, we note the connection between the factors in question: the chi-square statistic  $\chi^2$  is 260.268 (at 5% significance level  $\chi^2_{\text{табл.}} = 15.507$ ). The connection between the intention

to create a family and the desire to have children was confirmed by contingency criteria: Pearson mutual contingency coefficient is 0.519; Chuprov’s mutual contingency coefficient is 0.351 (a moderate relationship between the analyzed attributes).

Thus, young people who rate their standard of living at 8–10 points out of a possible 10 have a pronounced desire both to get married and to have a child (albeit in the future, postponing the birth for a certain period of time).

The data of Table 4, showing the correlation of answers of respondents aged under 35, who indicated their standard of living as average and above average (5 to 7 points on a 10-point scale),

Table 4. Correlation of answers of respondents aged under 35, unmarried, who assessed their standard of living by 5–7 points, according to the dependence of their intention to start a future married life and the birth of a child in their family, %

| Are you going to get married? | Are you going to have a child?   |                         |  |       |                     | Total  |
|-------------------------------|----------------------------------|-------------------------|--|-------|---------------------|--------|
|                               | We are already expecting a child | Yes, in the near future | Yes, but a little later, for now we are postponing | No    | Hesitate to respond |        |
| Yes                           | 0.82                             | 3.59                    | 23.37  | 3.92  | 13.73               | 45.42  |
| No                            | 0.98                             | 1.14                    | 3.92   | 16.18 | 8.99                | 31.21  |
| Hesitate to respond           | 0.00                             | 0.49                    | 7.19   | 3.92  | 11.76               | 23.37  |
| <b>Total</b>                  | 1.80                             | 5.23                    | 34.48  | 24.02 | 34.48               | 100.00 |

Source: compiled according to the data of All-Russian sociological survey “Demographic well-being of the Russian regions”.

according to the evaluation of the connection between the intention to get married and having a child, show: among 45.42% of those who answered that they intended to get married, not all were interested in having a child in the near future, and the postponement of childbirth is observed. At the same time there is a large proportion of those who are going to get married and are already expecting a child (0.82%, or 5 respondents). Among young people who rate their standard of living at 5–7 out of a possible 10 points, there is an equality between those who are postponing having a child (34.48%) and those who hesitate to answer the question about the possibility of having a child (34.48%). And 24.02% of them do not plan to have a child.

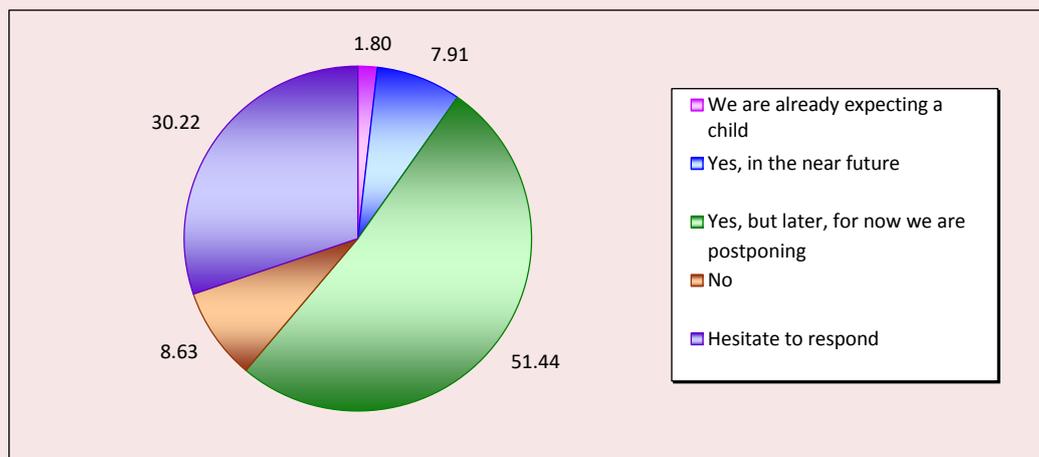
Among those respondents who characterize their standard of living as 5–7 (on a 10-point scale) and indicated an intention to marry, 51.44% are going to have a child somewhat later (postpone it for now), which is 12.08 percentage points lower than among respondents who rate their standard of living more highly. However, the redistribution of percentages did increase the proportion who would like to get married and have a child in the near

future among the respondents with a life standard of 5–7 points (on a 10-point scale), but not by much (by 1.21 p.p.). The proportion of those who intend to marry, but hesitate to answer the question about having a child, increased substantially (Fig. 2).

Taking into consideration the correlation between the opinions of respondents under the age of 35, who assessed their standard of living as average and above average (5–7 points), regarding the intention to marry and desire to have a child, we note the connection between the factors in question: the chi-square statistic  $\chi^2$  is 167.995 (at 5% significance level  $\chi^2_{\text{табл.}} = 15.507$ ). The relationship between intention to create a family and desire to have a child according to the Pearson (0.462) and Chuprov's (0.298) mutual correlation coefficients is defined as weak and is not a statistically confirmed relationship at a significance level of 0.05.

Consequently, young people who rate their standard of living at 5–7 out of a possible 10 points are characterized by uncertainty in making decisions both about starting a family life and about the possibility of having a child in the future.

Figure 2. Structure of young people's answers to the question "Are you going to have a child?" among those who assessed their standard of living in 5–7 points and expressed their desire to start a married life, %



Source: compiled according to the data of All-Russian sociological survey "Demographic well-being of the Russian regions".

Table 5. Answers correlation of respondents aged under 35, unmarried, who assessed their standard of living as 1–4 points, according to the dependence of their intention to start a future married life and the birth of a child in their family, %

| Are you going to get married? | Are you going to have a child?   |                         |  |       |                     | Total  |
|-------------------------------|----------------------------------|-------------------------|--|-------|---------------------|--------|
|                               | We are already expecting a child | Yes, in the near future | Yes, but a little later, for now we are postponing | No    | Hesitate to respond |        |
| Yes                           | 0.55                             | 2.19                    | 23.50  | 1.09  | 18.03               | 45.36  |
| No                            | 0.00                             | 0.55                    | 1.09   | 10.93 | 13.11               | 25.68  |
| Hesitate to respond           | 0.00                             | 0.55                    | 3.83   | 4.92  | 19.67               | 28.96  |
| <b>Total</b>                  | 0.55                             | 3.28                    | 28.42  | 16.94 | 50.82               | 100.00 |

Source: compiled according to the data of All-Russian sociological survey “Demographic well-being of the Russian regions”.

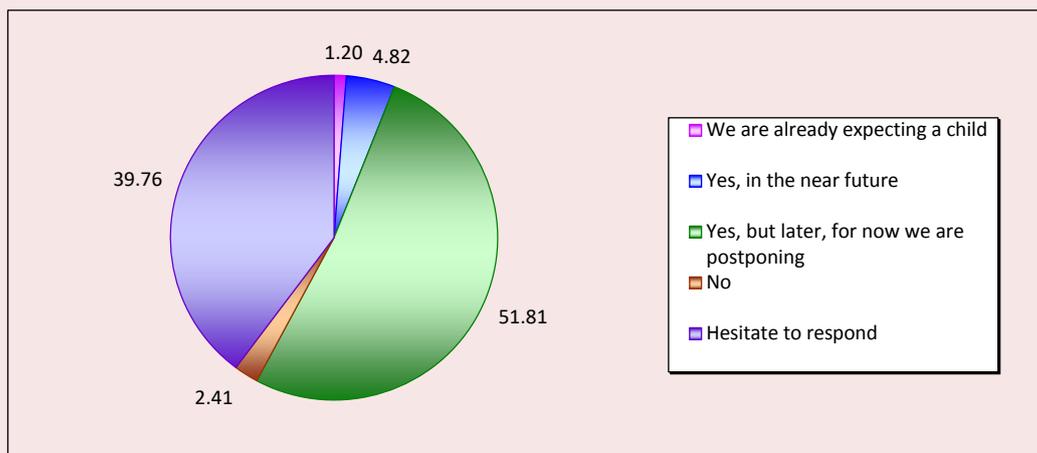
The data in *Table 5*, showing the correlation between the answers of respondents aged under 35 who assessed their standard of living as below average (from 1 to 4 points on a 10-point scale), in assessing the relationship between intention to marry and having a child, show that 45.36% of them intend to get married. At the same time, among these respondents there is a larger proportion of those who find it difficult to answer the question about the possibility of having a child (50.82%).

It is an interesting fact that among respondents who estimated their standard of living at 1–4 points (on a 10-point scale) and indicated that they intend

to get married, the proportion of those who intend to have a child in the future but are still postponing is 51.81% (*Fig. 3*), which almost coincides with the opinions of young people who estimate their standard of living at 5–7 points. Consequently, the deterrent to the decision to have a child in each of these two groups of respondents is their material well-being.

Taking into consideration the dependence of the opinions of respondents aged under 35, who indicated their standard of living as below average (1–4 points), on the intention to marry and desire to have a child, we note the existence

Figure 3. Structure of young people’s answers to the question “Are you going to have a child?” among those who assessed their standard of living in 1–4 points and expressed their desire to start a married life, %



Source: compiled according to the data of All-Russian sociological survey “Demographic well-being of the Russian regions”.

of a connection between the factors in question: the chi-square statistic  $\chi^2$  is 65.857 (at the 5% significance level  $\chi^2_{\text{tabl.}} = 15.507$ ). The relationship between the intention to create a family and the desire to have a child according to the Pearson (0.515) and Chuprov's (0.357) mutual correlation coefficients is defined as moderate.

Thus, among young people who rate their standard of living at 1–4 out of a possible 10 points, there is uncertainty in the decision to start a family life. It is difficult for them to decide on the possibility of having a child in the future (and this uncertainty is more pronounced than for young people who estimate their standard of living at 5–7 points).

Analytical modeling of the relationship between the standard of living and matrimonial

and reproductive behavior of young people under the age of 35 showed that with a decrease in the assessment of their standard of living, confidence in making the decision to start a married life and have a child decreases, the latter to a greater extent.

In accordance with the analytical modeling we built regression models of reproductive behavior for different groups of young people, depending on their assessment of the standard of living in the family at present, which allow us to confirm the findings (Tab. 6).

The results of the simulation are presented in Table 7.

The modeling results suggest that it is possible to build an adequate model of reproductive behavior for young people who rate their family's standard of living at 5–7 and 8–10 points.

Table 6. Description of variables in the models

| Variable   | Question  | Description  | Statistics   |
|--|---|--|--|
| $y$<br>(resultant)   | Are you going to have a child?                    | The variable takes values:<br>1 – we are already expecting a baby;<br>2 – yes, in the near future;<br>3 – yes, but later, for now we are postponing;<br>4 – no;<br>5 – hesitate to respond | Average values for groups of young people depending on their own assessment of their living standards:<br>0–4 points: $\bar{y}_1 = 3.747$<br>5–7 points: $\bar{y}_2 = 3.575$<br>8–10 points: $\bar{y}_3 = 3.434$ |
| $x_1$  | What is your family's current standard of living? | The variable takes values in points (on a 10-point scale, where: 10 points – very good; 1 point – very bad)  | Average values for groups of young people depending on their own assessment of their living standards:<br>0–4 points: $\bar{x}_1 = 1.530$<br>5–7 points: $\bar{x}_2 = 6.209$<br>8–10 points: $\bar{x}_3 = 8.757$ |
| $x_2$  | Are you going to get married?                     | The variable takes values:<br>1 – yes<br>2 – no<br>3 – hesitate to respond   | The statistics are based only on cases for which $x_2 = 1$   |
| Source: compiled according to the data of All-Russian sociological survey "Demographic well-being of the Russian regions". |   |  |  |

Table 7. Summary data on regression models

| Your family's current standard of living   | Constant | $\beta$ | F (equation significance) | t (parameter significance $\beta$ ) | Regression model             |
|--|----------|---------|---------------------------|-------------------------------------|------------------------------|
| 0–4 points   | 3.807    | -0.04   | 0.366 (insignificant)     | -0.604 (insignificant)              | -                            |
| 5–7 points   | 4.516    | -0.152  | 4.023 (significant)       | -2.006 (significant)                | $\hat{y} = 4.516 - 0.152x_1$ |
| 8–10 points  | 2.223    | 0.138   | 6.73 (significant)        | 2.594 (significant)                 | $\hat{y} = 2.223 - 0.138x_1$ |
| Source: compiled according to the data of All-Russian sociological survey "Demographic well-being of the Russian regions". |          |         |                           |                                     |                              |

For young people who rated their standard of living as average or above average (5–7 points), the uncertainty about the possibility of having a child at marriage decreases as the standard of living increases. However, for respondents with a higher standard of living (8–10 points), with its increase there is a shift from the intention to have a child in the near future to “postponement”, which in turn may indicate the difficulties of combining reproductive and labor functions.

In general, the analysis reveals the propensity of young people to postpone childbearing at marriage, which determines the importance of assessing the causes of such reproductive behavior.

An analysis of the factors influencing the decision to postpone childbirth revealed that, for the most part, the opinions of respondents under the age of 35 were similar and did not depend on self-assessment of living standards, but there was considerable disagreement on some of the most significant ones.

We note that young people, regardless of their assessment of their standard of living, currently put the need to find a better-paying job at the top of the list of reasons for postponing having a child. The factor is a priority determinant, but differs in the strength of influence on the decision to postpone having a child - the average score out of 5 possible increases with decreasing living standards (*Fig. 4*):

- young people, who rate their standard of living at 8–10, rate the importance of the need to find a better-paying job at an average of 3.89 points;
- young people, who rate their standard of living at 5–7 points, rate the importance of the need to find a better-paying job at an average of 4.07 points;
- young people who rate their standard of living at 1–4 points rate the importance of the need to find a better-paying job at an average of 4.33 points.

Consequently, even those young people who rate their standard of living as good enough (8–10 points) still seek more income. At the same time, such reasons for postponing having a child, as lack of financial opportunities and own housing, are not leading in importance for this category of young people – the average score on the factors is 3.41 (5th place) and 3.30 (6th place), respectively. Among the factors influencing the decision to postpone having a child, the greatest importance is given to having completed education (2nd place, mean score 3.64) and being married (3rd place, mean score 3.45).

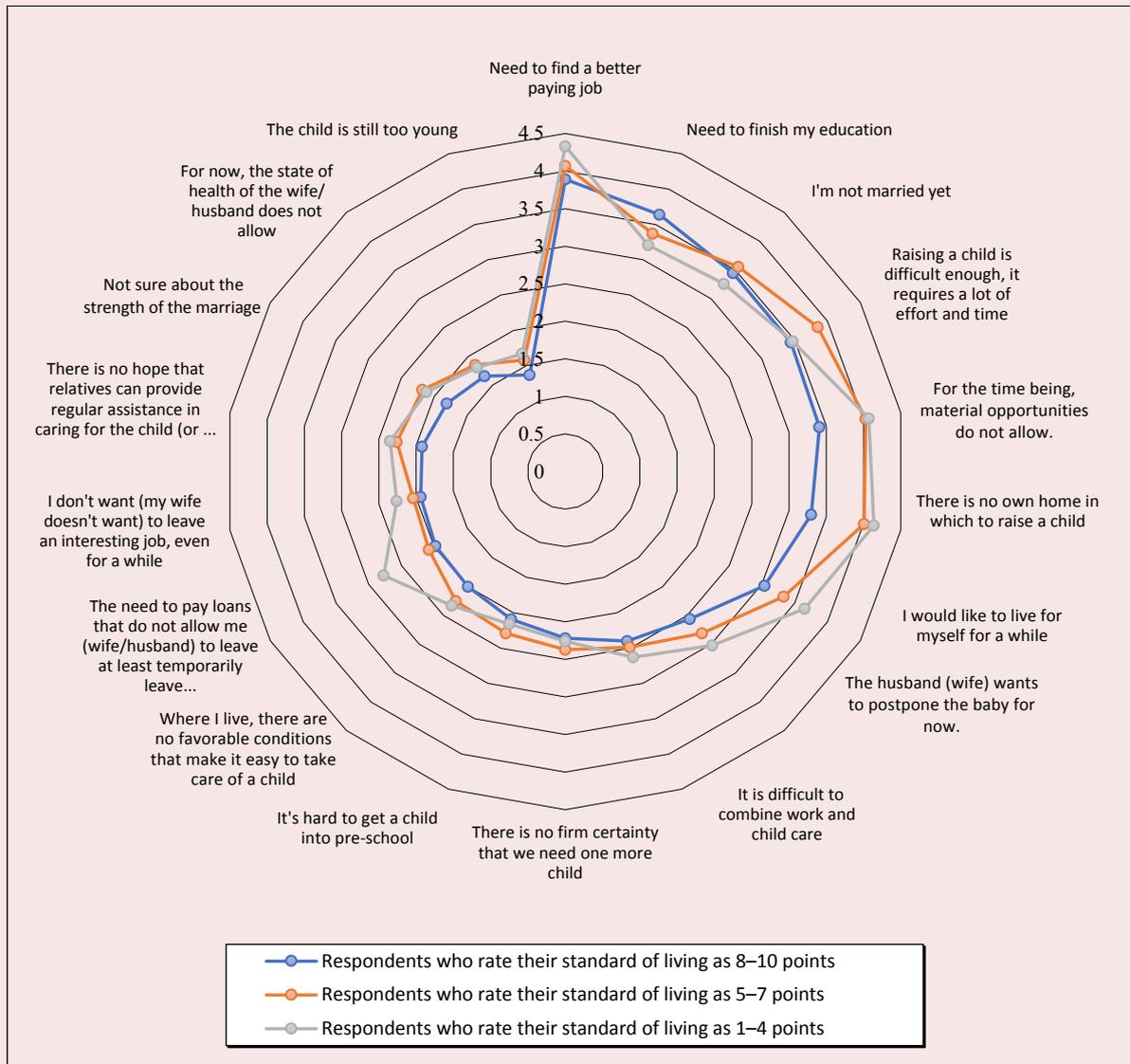
At the same time, for young people who rate their standard of living at 5–7 points and 1–4 points the second and third most important reasons are related to material well-being: the birth of a child is postponed, as they do not have enough money or own housing in which to raise a child. The average factor score is more than 4 out of a possible 5.

The need to complete education ranks 6th and 7th, but the importance of this factor decreases as the standard of living decreases: the average score is 3.37 – 6th place (a standard of living score of 5–7 points); the average score is 3.21 – 7th place (a standard of living score of 1–4 points).

It is worth noting that young people who rate their standard of living as quite good (8–10 points) and average or above average (5–7 points) are equally aware of social responsibility for a child, the factor “raising a child is quite difficult, requires a lot of effort and time” is in fourth place in their importance; while young people with a standard of living score of 1–4 are less socially responsible and rank the factor “I would like to live at least some time for myself” in fourth place, pushing the consciousness of the difficulty of raising a child to fifth place.

For young people with an assessment of their standard of living of 8–10 and 5–7 points, the importance of the factor “desire to live for yourself at least some time” ranks seventh.

Figure 4. Opinions of young people on the importance of motives for postponing childbearing for different groups, depending on their assessment of living standards, mean score



Source: compiled according to the data of All-Russian sociological survey "Demographic well-being of the Russian regions".

Starting from the 8th place there is a full correspondence in the distribution of the importance of the reasons contributing to the decision to postpone having a child (in descending order of importance): husband (wife) wants to wait with having a child; it is difficult to combine work and child care (the main housework is on me) / wife finds it difficult to combine work and child care (the main housework is on her), etc. (see fig. 4).

Overall, despite the differences among respondents under the age of 35 in their assessment of their standard of living, their opinions on the reasons for postponing childbirth are fairly consistent. Calculation of the multiple rank correlation showed a fairly close relationship: the coefficient of concordance (W) is 0.973 and is confirmed at the significance level of 0.05.

### Conclusion

Currently, a young family is recognized as a married couple consisting of persons, each under the age of 36 years, that is, the upper limit is defined by the age of 35 years inclusive. This young age limit is set in accordance with the federal law “On youth policy in the Russian Federation”, dated 2020, which expanded the category from 30 to 35 years old inclusive<sup>4</sup>. In this regard, the study was based on data characterizing the matrimonial and reproductive behavior of young people – respondents aged 18 to 35 years inclusive. It is this category that includes the reproductive ages where the greatest age-specific fertility is observed, which speaks to the practical relevance of the analysis performed.

Summarizing the results of the research methodology, we can formulate the following main conclusions. First, young people have a clear preference for having a child in marriage, which requires an understanding of the significance of matrimonial factors. At the same time, young people’s likelihood of getting married depends on their assessment of the standard of living. Among young people who estimate their standard of living at 8–10 points out of 10 possible, the highest propensity to decide to get married was revealed. Young people who rate their standard of living at 5–7 and 1–4 are significantly less likely

to make the decision to marry compared to the previous group. The second, analytical modeling of the relationship between living standards and the matrimonial and reproductive behavior of young people showed that with a decrease in the assessment of living standards, confidence in the decision to marry decreases only to a certain level, while confidence in the decision to have a child acquires a pronounced uncertainty. This indicates a significantly greater influence of the standard of living of young people on fertility than on marriage rates. The third, but most important conclusion of the analysis is that postponing the birth of a child when deciding to marry is becoming the scourge of Russia’s demographic development. Young people, even those with the highest standard of living score of 8–10, when deciding to get married, prefer not to have a child soon, but to postpone the birth until later. In this regard, the results of regression modeling are undoubtedly significant in both scientific and practical aspects, as they allowed identifying the features of changes in reproductive attitudes for different social groups of young people. Thus, for the category of young people with a quite high self-assessment of living standards (8–10 points), we identified an increase in the likelihood of deciding to postpone having a child when living standards improve. It can be assumed that a high income is associated with a heavy workload and awareness of the lack of time and energy to raise a child (the reason is in the top five in importance among all the motives for postponing the birth of a child). Such hypotheses require further sociological research that also takes into account, for example, questions to characterize respondents by occupation and position.

The reproductive attitudes of young people, characterized by postponing childbearing after marriage, are a threat not only to the growth of

<sup>4</sup> “On youth policy in the Russian Federation”: Federal Law 489-FZ, dated December 30, 2020. Available at: <https://www.garant.ru/products/ipo/prime/doc/400056192/>

fertility, but also to the current level of natural reproduction (the extreme assumption is the possible transition to a single-child family model and the spread / growth of the proportion of childless families), which is linked to the ability of the couple to conceive, decreasing fertility with age (Syrkasheva et al., 2016).

At present it is important for the state to pay due attention to young families and the problems of their functioning. It is necessary to change the priority demographic attitude of young people: the trend of postponing the birth of a child “for later” (confirmed in dynamics by Rosstat data on the increase in the average age of mothers when giving birth<sup>5</sup>), which has been established in recent decades, needs to be reversed.

The solution to this question is based on an understanding of the reasons why young people decide to postpone having a child. The priority determinant is the rationalization of young people’s behavior and their orientation toward the formation of a prosperous family – a family based on registered marriage, with children and characterized by economic independence. However, the desire to achieve economic independence in the form of a high-paying job, regardless of one’s estimate of living standards, is the main motive influencing the decision to postpone having a child.

In general, the opinions of young people with different assessments of their standard of living about the reasons for postponing childbirth are

fairly consistent, as evidenced by the obtained value of the concordance coefficient, equal to 0.973. We should note that the assessment of the multiple rank correlation has elements of scientific novelty in relation to the problem of research.

One should take into account the importance of the various reasons for postponing childbearing, taking into account that some of the most important ones differ significantly among young people with different assessments of their standard of living. For example, young people with the highest assessment of living standards (8–10 points) among the priority factors influencing the decision to postpone having a child, recorded the need to complete education, while the importance of this factor is less pronounced among young people with an assessment of living standards of 5–7 points and 1–4 points. This conclusion also determines the practical relevance of the study. The demographic policy mechanisms being developed to stimulate the birth rate must be based both on a set of general measures and on a targeted approach, based on the development and implementation of narrowly targeted, selective measures to support young families, from material additional payments to expanding the potential for self-organization and self-actualization of family members, including opportunities to balance the triad: family, education and employment.

It is reasonable to consider all the results of the study when developing managerial decisions aimed at achieving strategic national goals in the field of demographic development, including fertility growth, as well as the development of the institution of a well-to-do young family.

<sup>5</sup> Demographic Yearbook of Russia. 2021: Statistics Collection. Rosstat. Available at: <https://rosstat.gov.ru/storage/mediabank/dem21.pdf>

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