

# GENDER RESEARCH

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## SOCIAL PORTRAIT OF SINGLE FATHERS: AN ANALYSIS WITHIN THE FRAMEWORK OF RESPONSIBLE PARENTHOOD



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*The relevance of the study is determined by unfavorable demographic trends – the decline in the population and the childbearing rate of Russian families, which negatively affects the resources of natural reproduction. Such factors as marriage and reproductive attitudes of men and women, maternity and paternity patterns determine the childbearing of Russian families. The presented study contributes to the solution of the following scientific problem – understanding the motivation and attitudes behind men’s marital and reproductive strategies; implementation of the role and functions of fatherhood. The purpose of the work is to identify the essential characteristics of the social portrait of fatherhood, namely responsible fatherhood on the example of the analysis of social practices of single fathers. In order to compare the social practices of single fathers and ideal types of fatherhood, we systematized theoretical approaches to the concept of “responsible fatherhood”. Then we compared the ideal types of responsible fatherhood with the social practices of single fathers described by in-depth interviews with fathers raising children on their own (the sample included men who are divorced, widowers, and those who have not officially divorced but have been raising children on their own for a long time). The questions for the in-depth interview were formulated according to the following plan: family and*

*reproductive experience of the respondent; motivation and attitudes towards marriage and reproductive behavior, practices of fatherhood realization, needs of single fathers. The obtained data made it possible to characterize the social portrait of single fathers, to reveal the peculiarities of social practices of this category of population and marriage and reproductive behavior.*

*Men, reproductive attitudes, marriage attitudes, children, parents, responsible parenthood.*

### **Relevance of the research topic**

Relevant data on the number of single-parent families are collected on the indicators of “structure of households” and “family units by number of children under the age of 18” and are formed only by the results of the population censuses. At present, the results of the 2020 Census have not been published in full. According to the 2010 All-Russian Census and the 2014 Census in the Crimean Federal District, updated in 2018, 67.3 percent of family units with children under 18 are married couples with children; 29 percent are mothers with children; and 3.7 percent are fathers with children<sup>1</sup>. In the tables from the 2015 Microcensus, the ratio is as follows: of 100% of family units with children under 18, 61% are married couples with children; 34.6% are mothers with children; and 4.4% are fathers with children<sup>2</sup>. On the one hand, it is premature to say that the number of families where the father raises children on his own is growing. On the other hand, there is an emerging agenda in Russia focused on increasing the role of the father in raising children, which may become a factor in the growth of responsible fatherhood practices both in cases of parental divorce and in situations of overcoming family crises and preserving marriages. Presidential Decree 573 dated 4 October 2021 established the celebration of Father’s Day (the third Sunday in October)<sup>3</sup>, approved awards, insignia, “Father’s

Glory” signs of honor (in the Belgorod Oblast they plan to encourage single fathers who raise three or more children; in the Tula Oblast they award fathers who have “personal services in the development and support of the institution of family and childhood, actively participating in various kinds of socially important activities in the interests of families and children”<sup>4</sup>). Thus, the relevance of studying fatherhood practices in Russia is growing, which requires updating the methodological and empirical basis for their study.

Single fatherhood can be considered as a model of responsible fatherhood, because it removes one of the main theoretical and practical problems (how to combine the roles of the “breadwinner” and the “involved father”) outlined in modern concepts that reveal the “image of the father” (Chernova, 2012; Chernova, 2018; Lundqvist, 2012; Randles, 2018, etc.). But the question arises, can the social portrait of a single father be considered as an ideal type of modern father according to the realized functions and practices? The negative answer to the posed question is caused by the fact that there are specific problems requiring solution in single-parent families (psychological difficulties of both father and child (children), role conflict, etc.). Nevertheless, it is necessary to identify how responsible parenthood practices of single fathers are formed, what motivation, what value orientations underlie them, etc. This will allow to form or optimize

<sup>1</sup> The structure of family units by the number of children under 18 (including married couples without children and with children, mothers with children, fathers with children). Official website of the Federal State Statistics Service. Available at: <https://rosstat.gov.ru/folder/13807> (accessed: December 18, 2022).

<sup>2</sup> Family units accounted for by Microcensus, according to the number of children under 18. Official website of the Federal State Statistics Service. Available at: [https://gks.ru/free\\_doc/new\\_site/population/demo/micro-perepis/finish/micro-perepis.html](https://gks.ru/free_doc/new_site/population/demo/micro-perepis/finish/micro-perepis.html) (accessed: December 18, 2022).

<sup>3</sup> Available at: <http://publication.pravo.gov.ru/Document/View/0001202110040015> (accessed: December 10, 2022).

<sup>4</sup> On amendments to the Law 232 of the Belgorod Oblast “On Awards of the Belgorod Oblast”: The Law of the Belgorod Oblast dated November 2, 2022. Available at: <https://bel-pobeda.ru/news/politika/2022-10-27/belgorodskie-vlasti-utverdili-novyy-pochyotnyy-znak-ottsovskaya-slava-300000>; A badge of distinction “Father’s glory” in the Tula Oblast. Available at: <https://regions.eistr.ru/reestr/21423> (accessed: December 10, 2022).

the system of preparation of men for “involved” fatherhood in modal families (we consider a registered marriage union of a man and a woman with one or two children as a modal family).

Scientific novelty of the work consists in describing the social portrait of single fathers, in determining the range of marriage and reproductive behavior strategies, identified by the results of a series of in-depth interviews on the motivation, attitudes, values underlying social practices. We consider men’s self-rearing of children to be an example of responsible parenthood. The method of in-depth interviews allows us to structure the narratives, which will enrich the understanding of the motivations and attitudes underlying the implementation of the responsible fatherhood model.

The significance of the work presented by the authors lies in the in-depth study of responsible fatherhood practices, examples of marital and reproductive behavior of men who raise children on their own. It is of scientific and practical interest to look for the value orientations underlying men’s marital and reproductive strategies.

### **The main approaches to research and formation of the social portrait of responsible parenthood**

The main approaches to the substantiation of the concept of parenthood “social portrait” are systematized in the works of T.K. Rostovskaya, O.A. Khasbulatova, I.N. Smirnova, Z.Kh. Saraliev (Saraliev, 2014; Rostovskaya et al., 2022). Two approaches are used to describe the social portrait. The first is a socio-demographic one, which can be used to systematize the following indicators: gender, age, income level, education level, etc. The second is a value-based one, which helps to characterize single fathers by understanding their motivation, attitudes underlying everyday practices, and classifying behavioral strategies. The first approach involves the use of statistical data and mass survey data as an empirical basis, the second does not exclude the use of quantitative and qualitative data, at the same time it allows using only the re-

sults of an in-depth interview to achieve the research goal.

The concept of “responsible fatherhood” can be revealed through the identification of qualitative characteristics of everyday social practices, motivation and value orientations of actors, using the strategies of understanding sociology. The *Table* shows the main Western and Russian theoretical approaches that allow us to reveal the qualitative characteristics of the social portrait of fatherhood, from ideal types of fatherhood to real challenges.

The pool of Russian studies of fathers’ social practices includes a variety of approaches and methods: V.N. Arkhangel’skiy, O.N. Kalachikova, based on quantitative data, studied the dynamics of male fertility and reproductive behavior in the gender context (Arkhangel’skii, Kalachikova, 2021); Ch. Ildarkhanova, V.A. Gnevasheva, using the method of a mass survey, answered the question what value orientations underlie the behavior of young fathers, revealing the concept of the family thesaurus (Ildarkhanova, Gnevasheva, 2021); A.Y. Karpova, A.O. Savelyev, S.A. Kuznetsov (Karpova et al., 2021) traced the transformation of responsible fatherhood practices into deviant forms based on content analysis of texts in Internet communities of responsible fathers (revealed the presence of aggressive rhetoric, which may show radicalization of attitudes towards women). The problems and practices of single fatherhood have been systematized (Stasenkov, 2010; Popov, Anikina, 2014; Cheremisova et al., 2017). Separately, we will highlight the works of I.O. Shevchenko (Shevchenko, 2014; Shevchenko, 2015), in which qualitative studies of the social practices of fathers raising children independently were carried out. It has been revealed that they most often do not have an officially fixed status of single fathers; they feel insecure in some cases in the external environment, for example, in situations where most issues are solved by women (parent meetings, playgrounds, etc.); they cope with all functions, including thanks to the support of relatives (grandmothers, sisters, friends, etc.).

Criteria for describing social practices of fatherhood

Ideal types of fatherhood	Approaches	Authors
Breadwinner, translates the masculinity model	Contemporary Masculinity Studies	D. Gilmore, R. Brannon, et al.
Emotional, close, "involved" parent. The image of the "new father" - the father both cares for and supports the children	Biosocial, Historical Analysis	W. Doherty, M. Lamb, J. Pleck, E. Rossi, et al.
Negotiates and responds to situational calls	Theory of Reflexive Modernization	E. Giddens
Real challenges of fatherhood	Approaches	Authors
Father's authoritarianism	Historical Analysis	J. Pleck
Feelings of ambivalence and guilt, because he cannot reproduce the image of the "new father"	Comparative analysis of paternity culture and real practices	R. LaRoss
The crisis of masculinity	Intersectional Analysis	E.A. Zdravomyslova, A.A. Temkina

According to: Gilmore, 2005; Kohn, 2008; Bezrukova, Kletsina, 2009; Maltseva, 2010; Zdravomyslova, Temkina, 2018; Zvonareva, 2019; Samoilova, 2020; Brannon, 1976; Lamb et al., 1987; LaRossa, 1988; Pleck, 1997; Doherty et al., 1998; Lundqvist, 2012; Randles, 2018.

### Research methodology

The methodological basis of the study is M. Weber's understanding sociology, including the theory of rational behavior and the concept of ideal types (Weber, 2021), and E. Giddens' intersectional analysis (Giddens, 2005), which made it possible to describe the practices of single fatherhood and the social portrait of men in this category. The research strategy was developed in stages. In 2020–2021 on the basis of the Institute for Demographic Research of the Federal Center of Theoretical and Applied Sociology of the Russian Academy of Sciences with the support of the Russian Science Foundation (project 20-18-00256, supervisor – Prof. T.K. Rostovskaya) a comprehensive All-Russian sociological study was conducted. At the first stage, a mass survey of the population was carried out in 10 regions of the Russian Federation (n=5616, multi-stage, quota sampling)<sup>5</sup>. According to the results of the mass survey, several important conclusions were made. Firstly, the desire of fathers to have more children increases with the growth of men's incomes, and secondly, women and men prefer to plan the birth of children after marriage. These circumstances indicate an increase in the relevance of scientific research on the phenomenon of fatherhood. At the second stage

of the study, the goal was to describe the social portrait of fatherhood, including responsible fatherhood on the example of social practices of single fathers.

This paper will present conclusions based on the results of in-depth interviews with fathers raising children independently (a targeted sample formed in 10 regions of the Russian Federation, n=20, namely 2 informants from each region, 1 informant from groups aged 18–35 and 36–50). The study was conducted in the following subjects of the Russian Federation: Moscow and the Moscow Oblast, Volgograd, Vologda, Ivanovo, Nizhny Novgorod, Sverdlovsk oblasts, the Republic of Bashkortostan, the Republic of Tatarstan, Stavropol Territory. The sample included men who are divorced, widowers, as well as those who have not officially filed for divorce, but in fact have been raising children on their own for more than a year. The questions for the in-depth interview were formulated in accordance with the following plan: marital and reproductive attitudes of men (family and reproductive experience); motivation, fatherhood practices, family needs for social support measures. Narratives were structured on the basis of axial coding around the category of "responsible fatherhood".

<sup>5</sup> More details on the research tools. Available at: <http://xn--2020-43drgi3a1bwz7c9i.xn--p1ai/sample-page>

### Research results

The first block of the in-depth interview guide included questions about the informants' parental family, since parents' experience is the basis for the formation of marital and reproductive behavior, as well as responsible parenthood. A positive image of the parental family contributes to the formation of attitudes towards the reproduction of a happy marriage.

*"When I was young, I wanted it to be like my parents had. To meet a girl with whom I would create my family"* (man, 40 years old, higher education, not divorced officially, 4 year old daughter, Republic of Tatarstan).

*"When I was young, yes. Yes, of course. All young people want to get married, this is a normal procedure"* (man, 33 years old, secondary professional education, divorced, 10 year old daughter and 9 year old son, Ivanovo Oblast).

*"I didn't want to intrusively, but I always thought it was wonderful. I didn't imagine it the way it turned out. I wanted to have a full family, even with everyday issues"* (man, 34 years old, higher education, not divorced officially, 7 year old daughter, Vologda Oblast).

*"I always thought that I would live the same way as my parents: I would have a strong family. I thought I was going to graduate, serve, and get married. I wanted to have three children: two sons and a daughter"* (man, 47 years old, secondary professional education, widower, 8 year old son, Volgograd Oblast).

In some cases the negative experience of the parental family becomes the basis for the reproduction of patterns of marital behavior for the informants.

*"I probably had my career in the foreground first, and then my family. Probably, this was caused by the family, the relatives. Few of our relatives had a happy marriage. Most of them got divorced because of different tempers, characters... their plans for life were different... To some extent, I also repeat my parents' fate. We didn't match up, for the most part, in terms of our life goals. We had slightly different characters, slightly different expectations from each other"* (man, 37 years old, higher education, divorced, 7 year old daughter, Stavropol Territory).

*"The reason for divorce in the Soviet Union was almost the same for everyone, in principle.*

*There was a lot of alcoholism there. Just at that time. Well yes. They all were drinking a lot, to excess. Well, probably, as usual, everyone has all sorts of claims"* (man, 43 years old, 12 year old daughter, divorced, secondary technical education, Sverdlovsk Oblast).

We divided the informants into two groups according to their answers to the questions "How did your parents take care of you?", "What did your parents put into the concept of happiness?" The first group includes those who revealed the content of parental practices in the categories of active care for health and comfort, material well-being, without describing the structure of relationships (corresponds to the ideal type of the father breadwinner).

*"At that time, probably, earnings were important... Also probably, parenting and the possibility to make children happy. And, probably, living in a world where there is political, financial and social stability. To keep everything clean and tidy. Of course, mores are different now, but back then it was like this"* (man, 28 years old, unfinished higher education, divorced, 2 year old daughter, Sverdlovsk Oblast).

*"To have order at home was the most important thing for everyone. Order only, it was all for happiness. In the apartment. Physically, so to speak."* (man, 43 years old, 12 year old daughter, divorced, secondary technical, Sverdlovsk Oblast).

*"Initially, everyone endeavored so that there was family life, so that children had everything, they tried to create comfort for children, to give them education"* (man, 35 years old, higher education, divorced, 11 year old daughter, Republic of Bashkortostan).

*"My sister and I were always dressed and fed. My parents worked a lot, and we spent more time walking on the street. Yes, they took good care"* (man, 45 years old, higher education, divorced, son 15 years old, 11 year old daughter, Ivanovo Oblast).

The second group of informants characterized both marital and child-parent relations, using not only narratives of active care, but also emotional closeness (corresponds to the ideal type of emotional, close, caring parent).

*"Their marriage can be called happy. For my parents, the greatest happiness is family. We*

*always knew that the greatest value is children*” (man, 47 years old, secondary professional education, widower, 8 year old son, Volgograd Oblast).

*“We lived together. Probably in love and harmony. It seemed to be happy. The relationship was good”* (man, 43 years old, secondary education, divorced, 4 children, 16 year old daughter, 15 year old son, 12 year old twin boys, Republic of Bashkortostan).

*“I think we lived happily. Of course, parents sometimes swore as everyone, most often because of nonsense, well, it seemed so to me. They were always together, discussed everything together, raised children together. We celebrated all the holidays with our family. Probably, all this was happiness”* (man, 45 years old, higher education, divorced, 15 year old son, 11 year old daughter, Ivanovo Oblast).

*“For us, family happiness was travel, short journeys. We would go to the countryside or to neighboring towns, see the sights, take walks, have fun. We liked spending time with each other, somewhere far away, in the car, on the road, and so on”* (man, 27 years old, secondary education, divorced, 3 year old son, Stavropol Territory).

Parents’ emotional closeness with children and with each other is the basis for friendly relations with brothers and sisters.

*“We have a happy time together, we are often in touch”* (man, 47 years old, secondary professional education, widower, 8 year old son, Volgograd Oblast).

*“Our relationship are great, we still keep in touch. Our age disparity is only three and a half years, so we’re practically on the same wavelength.”* (man, 27 years old, secondary education, divorced, 3 year old son, Stavropol Territory).

*“We have very good relations, we are friends”* (man, 28 years old, secondary special education, 1 year old son, Republic of Tatarstan).

We have analyzed the results of all the cases received and revealed that the informants had formed positive reproductive attitudes even before marriage.

*“I wanted to have three children: two sons and one daughter”* (man, 47 years old, secondary professional education, widower, 8 year old son, Volgograd Oblast).

*“I was always planning to have 2 children, a boy and a girl”* (man, 33 years old, secondary professional education, divorced, 10 year old daughter and 9 year old son, Ivanovo Oblast).

*“When I was a teenager, I dreamed of two or three children so that I would have a happy family”* (man, 27 years old, secondary education, divorced, 3 year old son, Stavropol Territory).

The achievement of reproductive plans unrealized by the informants in the future will depend on many reasons, meanwhile the informants speak uncertainly about it. In cases where spouses maintain good relationships after divorce, single fathers do not abandon plans to marry again in the future, therefore, the probability of new births is higher. In families where the separation turned out to be painful or loneliness is associated with the death of a spouse, men are less likely to marry again. Single fathers compare marital attitudes with attitudes to responsible fatherhood, therefore, they implement several strategies: they do not dare to remarry; they build new relationships, but abandon them if the marriage threatens children’s well-being; the informants who have not completed divorce hope for reunification with their children’s mother.

*“No, no. No marriage, no child... Never... I don’t think so, because... there are a lot of memories left about the previous marriage... Regarding the child, I am happy with one. And I want to transfer my knowledge and experience to one child. I realized that I don’t want and wouldn’t have a second child”* (man, 28 years old, unfinished higher education, divorced, 2 year old daughter, Sverdlovsk Oblast).

*“I didn’t think about it... I don’t want to have children and get married yet”* (man, 47 years old, secondary professional education, widower, 8 year old son, Volgograd Oblast).

*“I tried, but, as they say, it’s not about me right now. The age of the second half is such that the requests are frenzied, she is trying to share me with our daughter, that is, I am divided between them, and I will never leave the child”* (man, 35 years old, higher education, divorced, 11 year old daughter, Republic of Bashkortostan).

*“In the future, of course, there are goals that there will be another child, that the family will be*

*full, I still hope that our mom will return, as they say, and everything will be fine. Well, in the worst case scenario, even if my wife and I have to go to divorce, of course, I plan to create a full-fledged family anyway and to have more children, because I still dream to have three or four children”* (man, 40 years old, higher education, the divorce is not registered officially, 4 year old daughter, Republic of Tatarstan).

In some cases, the challenges of realizing the father’s role can be defined as situational (the theory of reflexive modernization). These are the death of a spouse, mother’s antisocial behavior (as a result, restriction or deprivation of parental rights in relation to the mother; mother’s actual refusal to take care of children; children’s refusal to live with the mother), mother’s unwillingness to raise the child, children are not perceived by the mother as a value, her attitudes to career growth or personal life prevail (mothers leave for other cities, build a career, remarry, arrange their personal life).

*“We were very happy. I’m not the right age to find such a woman. We were rocking with her (note – with the wife), splendid! There are people who are easy outgoing, it is easy to perform all kinds of tasks with them. I liked it... It won’t happen anymore. Even if I meet an ideal woman. I realized that there would be no one after my wife. Say she had left me, or if I had left her, then maybe. There would be a chance to find someone not to be alone. I feel very fine right now”* (man, 48 years old, secondary specialized education, 22 year old son, 9 year old daughter, widower, Vologda Oblast).

*“She was drinking, I was working. I come home, there are three men and three women sitting there and drinking. Well, that’s it, once started, it went on, we broke up because of this. Yes. And so we parted. I filed for divorce myself, I wrote an application. Mistakes are not forgiven”* (man, 43 years old, secondary education, divorced, 4 children, 16 year old daughter, 15 year old son, 12 year old twin boys, Republic of Bashkortostan).

*“She looked at other men with burning eyes, and once I realized that the child would feel better with me, because the mother does not need a child, she needs some bright relationships, emotions, feelings... Therefore, I defended my right in court, and my daughter lives with me. This may*

*not be a typical case, but it also happens... As it turned out, the mother is not really interested in her daughter’s life. And attention and care are important to the girl”* (man, 37 years old, higher education, divorced, 7 years old daughter, Stavropol Territory).

*“She got into sects, and they hammered it into her head, that she can live better. She saw no one, nor the child, neither anyone else... The daughter first lived with her mother for 2–3 weeks, maybe a month, then she called me and asked to take her back”* (man, 35 years old, higher education, divorced, 11 year old daughter, Republic of Bashkortostan).

*“My wife believed that a person should be and belong to only one person. She was jealous of me even to the child. She had the opportunity, but I was still the only one who was engaged in the child”* (man, 43 years old, 12 year old daughter, divorced, secondary technical education, Sverdlovsk Oblast).

*“But it happened that during the divorce... My ex-wife said that her career is more important for her...”* (man, 28 years old, unfinished higher education, divorced, 2 year old daughter, Sverdlovsk Oblast).

*“After the divorce with my wife, it turned out that the children stayed with me, due to the fact that she wanted to build a new personal life. After we failed with her, she did not despair and continued to look for options for building her happiness. The children stayed with me, I was not against it, I was all in favor of it. I didn’t want to interfere with my ex-wife to build her happiness with someone else”* (man, 33 years old, secondary professional education, divorced, 10 year old daughter and 9 year old son, Ivanovo Oblast).

*“My wife left me, she just found another man and, as it turned out, she didn’t need her son”* (man, 27 years old, secondary education, divorced, 3 year old son, Stavropol Territory).

In other cases, challenges are rationalized (the theory of rational action, the type of action is value–rational), for example, children are the result of an unplanned pregnancy for the mother, but they are valuable for the father.

*“And accordingly, she got pregnant, but initially said: “I don’t want a baby.” Accordingly, I thought that since she got pregnant, I should*

*take full responsibility. And I kind of persuaded her to keep the baby. We agreed. And six months have passed, and she said, "I don't need this child," and accordingly, she is no longer involved in the upbringing of the child"* (man, 28 years old, secondary special education, 1 year old son, Republic of Tatarstan).

Thus, fathers act either situationally or rationally, the main point is that children are valuable to them. The relationship of children with their mother after the separation of parents develops depending on whether the mother is ready to maintain a relationship. Fathers, even if they do not feel warm feelings for the mother of the child (in cases where the separation is not officially formalized, the man is ready to reconcile), can accept help, do not interfere with the communication of the child with the mother.

*"She does not help, I fully provide for the child"* (man, 35 years old, higher education, divorced, 11 year old daughter, Republic of Bashkortostan).

*"No, we don't keep in touch. The child neither, just occasionally. And the mother does not ask anything, almost"* (man, 43 years old, 12 year old daughter, secondary technical education, divorced, Sverdlovsk Oblast).

*"No, we don't communicate. She went to another city with her, probably, future young man... maybe young, maybe not, I don't know. I'm not interested, because, so to speak, she left us with the child. If she does not think about her child, then what can I talk to her about"* (man, 28 years old, secondary special education, 1 year old son, Republic of Tatarstan).

In those families where the mother is ready to support the child (children), the process of upbringing occurs jointly in some cases.

*"Yes, of course, I keep relationship, we regularly call up, solve some questions about children. We have a dialogue, and the dialogue is good. No one restricts each other in communicating with each other and solving issues about children. We bring them up together, even in such a situation that we are divorced. She often takes them to her place, spends time with them, takes them to entertainment events. There are no problems with this"* (man, 33 years old, secondary professional education, divorced, 10 year old daughter, 9 year old son, Ivanovo Oblast).

*"Of course, we keep in touch. We communicate. When she has an opportunity, she comes here, we communicate with the child together, we go for a walk with the child"* (man, 40 years old, higher education, divorce is not formalized officially, 4 year old daughter, Republic of Tatarstan).

The informants' decision to raise children alone was perceived positively by their relatives, friends and the external environment. In some cases, there is no crisis of masculinity, the informants note that they do not care what people around them think. In other cases, the crisis is fixed.

*"Yes, it's hard. It's too hard. There were times when I was sitting crying, washing for the four of them when they went to school"* (man, 43 years old, secondary education, divorced, 4 children, 16 year old daughter, 15 year old son, 12 year old twin boys, Republic of Bashkortostan).

Single fathers' social practices are close to the ideal type of a "new father", i.e. fathers who are both emotionally close to children and support them. Father's closeness to the child is manifested in his concern for the health, development, education of the child, in concern for their emotional comfort. Traditional models of masculinity are also being built, where the father considers the main role of the breadwinner, and he needs the help of relatives for more effective performance of other functions.

*"The main difficulties now come precisely with the organization of the working day, that is, it is necessary to earn money, and to take the child from the kindergarten and all other points should also be taken into account. That is, the organization of the working day comes in the first place. Well, the second point is the development of the child, it is also very important that the child is well-brought up, in terms of self-confidence, feeling happy, loving; so that the problems that are happening now, well, in family terms, do not concern the child personally, so that he does not feel these burdens and difficulties"* (man, 40 years old, higher education, divorce is not formalized officially, 4 year old daughter, Republic of Tatarstan).

*"Probably, it's like about any man, because a man does not keep a good eye on the house,*

*because he is a man... he's like a breadwinner, he should come tired... Well, yes, I was tired, but I coped with this burden somehow, I cleaned up. Also, relatives helped with cooking, cleaning, etc. It's just the workload, a kind of multitasking. Washing, cooking, cleaning, work, daughter"* (man, 37 years old, higher education, divorced, 7 year old daughter, Stavropol Territory).

"New fathers" introduce children to sports, take them to medical examinations, organize proper nutrition. Increased responsibility for children in some cases is a motive for the single fathers' implementation of self-preservation behavior.

*"We visit the polyclinic, we go to hospitals, where we need to take tests. We go to the swimming pool, walk"* (man, 35 years old, higher education, divorced, 11 year old daughter, Republic of Bashkortostan).

*"I walk a lot, ride a bike when it's the season. Children also ride a bike. In summer we go to the sea, have wellness treatments. I would like to live 80 years, depending on what kind of old age to live. My children are healthy, there are no problems. They have only seasonal acute respiratory infections and diseases"* (man, 33 years old, secondary professional education, divorced, 10 year old daughter, 9 year old son, Ivanovo Oblast).

*"I believe that I am completely healthy. No, I do not undergo a scheduled medical examination, but I do sports very rarely when it is possible. I dream of living to be 100 years old. My child is healthy, I am glad that he is healthy"* (man, 27 years old, secondary education, divorced, 3 year old son, Stavropol Territory).

*"I undergo an annual scheduled medical examination at work, where they check for any diseases or suspicious symptoms. The daughter also undergoes annual examinations in the kindergarten, at school, and if any suspicious symptoms are detected, we conduct additional examinations. Yes, I do sports outside. There is a movement called Street Workout, if you know. Street sports. Push-ups, pull-ups. I perform various gymnastic exercises, also pump the abs, do squats, go jogging. Sports harden. I also teach my daughter in this way. <...> but due to the fact that I work at a harmful enterprise, I think that my age*

*will definitely not be three digits, but I still hope that I will see the figure 80"* (man, 37 years old, higher education, divorced, 7 year old daughter, Stavropol Territory).

The facts show that the attitude towards single fathers is changing in society. For example, I.O. Shevchenko notes that single fathers had to change or leave work (see Shevchenko, 2014). According to the results of our research, it was revealed that the career of single fathers is developing (relatives or friends help, children are gradually growing up, elder children take part of the responsibility for younger ones).

*"Good (note – a career is developing). Pretty good, especially after I got divorced. I have more time for work and for myself. I manage to do third-party projects, and the work has gone uphill"* (man, 28 years old, unfinished higher education, divorced, 2 year old daughter, Sverdlovsk Oblast).

*"Now my schedule is a little different. But now I know that they will survive without me for two days. And even three days. On the contrary, I have a stable job and earnings at least"* (man, 48 years old, secondary special education, 22 year old son, 9 year old daughter, widower, Vologda Oblast).

Single fathers in all cases noted that they would need help from the state, but they do not believe in the effectiveness of this assistance, do not want to waste time on bureaucratic procedures, some were refused appointment, because their family was not acknowledged as a low-income one.

*"No. Never had it at all. Nothing. No, I don't get child benefit. I was refused. They eat for free at school. I do not receive any benefits. Sure, I need some help"* (man, 43 years old, secondary education, divorced, 4 children, 16 year old daughter, 15 year old son, 12 year old twin boys, Republic of Bashkortostan).

*"They told me something – go there. I've been running around with these papers. Such red tape. Now it may be easier due to Multifunctional Public Services Center. Salary certificates from work are required everywhere. My salary allows everything everywhere. I was told: "You are not entitled to these payments." So the payments are small. I won't run because of them. There was something about 200 rubles at that time. I didn't*

even bother. And I didn't beg for any rations. That is I didn't use anything much apart from the maternity capital" (man, 48 years old, secondary special education, 22 year old son, 9 year old daughter, widower, Vologda Oblast).

"Yes... It's a typical government bureaucracy. And there are not such large sums there to change something for them, to do something. So I just gave up on it all. When I hear about payments, I think there is not so much money there" (man, 28 years old, unfinished higher education, divorced, 2 year old daughter, Sverdlovsk Oblast).

"Financial assistance is always necessary, but in what amount will it be provided? <...> Only material assistance is needed... and payment for health resorts, camps or some medical services would also not hurt" (man, 33 years old, secondary professional education, divorced, 10 year old daughter, 9 year old son, Ivanovo Oblast).

"Our material capabilities are enough. We don't need anything. We have housing, but I pay the mortgage. The family budget is on all me. Relatives help, but not financially. I ask them not to do it myself. They help a lot with education. The pandemic has really complicated our financial situation, especially the transition to remote. But now everything is fine" (man, 34 years old, higher education, divorce is not formalized officially, 7 year old daughter, Vologda Oblast).

The informants note that the following support measures are needed: placement in kindergarten out of turn; increasing the availability of free additional educational classes for children (clubs, sections); assistance in obtaining permits to children's camps and sanatoriums; repayment of a mortgage loan in case of loss of a breadwinner.

"Well, it's not about financial support mainly, but maybe some additional classes for a child, dancing for example; maybe a sanatorium or a camp. It would be good to have access to some social activities for children, so that they develop" (man, 35 years old, higher education, divorced, 11 year old daughter, Republic of Bashkortostan).

"Well, they could forgive mortgage loans to a family, for example. Especially in case of the loss of the breadwinner. Well, maybe you don't need a pension. Or at least there could be such an option.

For example, a woman is left alone with two children – one is 5 years old, the other is 1 year old. What will happen to her? How will she pay? It's good if you have set some money aside. In case of death, the Pension Fund pays pension contributions. But in the case of my death, for example, the child automatically gets into the orphanage. So I want to live" (man, 48 years old, secondary special education, 22 year old son, 9 year old daughter, widower, Vologda Oblast).

"Well, of course, if there is financial support, it will be good, because then I will be able to pay more attention to the child. And of course, I would like to have more programs, well, if we consider it formally, not the financial side, I would like there to be more programs for children's development, something more accessible for children" (man, 40 years old, higher education, divorce is not registered officially, 4 year old daughter, Republic of Tatarstan).

An incomplete paternal family is exposed to many social risks that endanger its well-being. When asked what a prosperous family is, the informants answered that it is a complete family with both parents (therefore, the families under study need psychological support, but single fathers do not talk about this); financially stable (men implement the breadwinner model); with a favorable psychological climate (men work on the psychological comfort of children). The concepts of a prosperous and happy family in some cases are synonymous for the informants.

"A happy family is one with a husband, a wife and children. A full family. Because marriage is not for a year, not for two, it's for life. A prosperous family is when they have everything, so that the children do not need anything. That is, material prosperity. And it should be a full family with children, a wife and a husband, and so that the husband does not drink. This is probably the main thing" (man, 43 years old, secondary education, divorced, 4 children, 16 year old daughter, 15 year old son, 12 year old twin boys, Republic of Bashkortostan).

"Well, probably a full-fledged family is when there is a husband, a wife, child and parents. This is healthy communication, when people do not hide anything from each other, always discuss problems, try to help, treat each other with respect,

*share responsibilities as they need, and are just happy. And they live as they want, and they don't feel any things that can't be changed and that make life worse. A prosperous and happy family is the same in my understanding"* (man, 28 years old, unfinished higher education, divorced, 2 year old daughter, Sverdlovsk Oblast).

*"A prosperous family means that family members will not think about what to cook for dinner, due to the fact that there is no money. Children and parents, as well as grandparents, are always fed, always dressed, provided with everything necessary. Yes, I think that in our time everything is tied to money. Well-being is also tied to money. And it is synonymous with the word happy. In principle, these are equivalent concepts"* (man, 33 years old, secondary professional education, divorced, 10 year old daughter, 9 year old son, Ivanovo Oblast).

*"A prosperous family is when no one is sick, it is when there are children and parents, it is when there is work to support the family. Stability. All this affects well-being. Yes, if there will be prosperity, there will be happiness. I believe that one thing follows from the other"* (man, 45 years old, higher education, divorced, 15 year old son, 11 year old daughter, Ivanovo Oblast).

### **Conclusion**

According to the results of the study, we can say that the social portrait of a single father consists of several components. The basic component is a man's value orientations. The results of our mass survey proved that if usually men have health and material well-being in the first place, then single fathers have children, and only then health and material well-being. It is important to note that this is a specific hierarchy, which is the basis for the implementation of the model of responsible fatherhood through a value-rational type of behavior. The goal-oriented type of behavior leads to deferred parenthood, the authoritarian style of fatherhood corresponds to the traditional type of behavior (single fatherhood

is not a traditional type of behavior in Russia, which is confirmed by statistics, but we will be careful in our conclusions, because they are not true for some ethnic groups living in the territory of the Russian Federation).

The second variable component is motivation specific to different types of responsible fatherhood, which has a significant impact on social practices. This is the material provision of children (the ideal type of breadwinner, the realization of masculinity); the material well-being and psychological comfort of children (the ideal type of "involved father"). Since the study was conducted in families that did not fall under the criteria of low-income, there were no cases in which the father did not systematically assess the children's well-being.

Some fathers experience a crisis of masculinity, manifested in increased anxiety when performing household tasks, implementing multitasking. Other fathers do not experience psychological difficulties in adapting to new functions. In general, single fathers are flexible and act according to the situation, look for solutions to all problems, structure the world around their family, take into account risks and threats, protect their child (children).

For single fathers, reproductive and marriage plans have not been fully implemented, and their traumatic experience makes it difficult to implement them. Single fathers have a great potential for creating a prosperous family, a full family, and the birth of subsequent children. To realize this potential, single fathers need comprehensive social assistance: material, psychological, with children's leisure, development, and education organization. The resources of the informants included in the sample are sufficient to maintain the existing family model, but family growth can lead to a decrease in material prosperity. In this case, men begin to implement a model of goal-oriented behavior, which leads to the rejection of the expansion of the family structure, delayed marriage and parenthood.

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