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# Los valores familiares de los jóvenes rusos en el contexto de los cambios sistémicos globales<sup>1</sup>

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**Resumen.** En el contexto de las tendencias actuales en la agenda sociopolítica de la sociedad rusa, dirigidas a fortalecer los valores tradicionales, apoyar las familias numerosas y la fertilidad, parece necesario analizar los valores matrimoniales y familiares actuales y las actitudes reproductivas de los jóvenes modernos. Sobre la base de una encuesta a jóvenes estudiantes, se obtuvieron datos sobre sus actitudes hacia el matrimonio y la familia, su deseo e intención de tener hijos y sus modelos familiares preferidos. Este estudio tiene como objetivo examinar y comprender el estado de ánimo actual de los jóvenes en la esfera familiar y matrimonial en el contexto de la política social en curso dirigida a mejorar la situación demográfica en el país. Los resultados del estudio permiten concluir que los jóvenes de hoy están orientados a la creación de una familia, pero el valor familiar principal es el matrimonio más que la paternidad. El valor de los niños en el sistema de valores de vida de los jóvenes no es una prioridad. También se reveló la actitud hacia los niños de tamaño mediano (dos hijos en la familia), pero es alarmante que más de una cuarta parte de los encuestados indicó que la familia puede no tener hijos.

**Palabras clave:** jóvenes, valores familiares, modelos familiares, actitudes reproductivas.

## Family values of Russian youth in the context of global systemic changes

**Abstract.** In the context of current trends in the socio-political agenda of Russian society aimed at strengthening traditional values, supporting large families and fertility, it seems necessary to analyse the current marriage and family values and reproductive attitudes of modern youth. On the basis of a questionnaire survey of young students, data were obtained on their attitudes towards marriage and family, their desire and intentions to have children, and their preferred family models. This study aims to examine and comprehend the current mood of young people in the family and marriage sphere in the context of the ongoing social policy aimed at improving the demographic situation in the country. The results of the study allow us to conclude that today's young people are oriented towards creating a family, but the main family value is marriage rather than parenthood. The value of children in the system of life values of young people is not a priority. The attitude towards medium-sized children (two children in the family) was also revealed, but it is alarming that more than a quarter of respondents indicated that the family may be childless.

**Key words:** youth, family values, family models, reproductive attitudes.

### INTRODUCTION

In sociological discourse, the current situation of the family institution is largely regarded as a crisis. However, in recent years it is possible to observe some, albeit insignificant, changes in the opposite direction. According to official statistics from Rosstat, in 2022 we have reached the level of 2017 in terms of the number of marriages (7.2 marriages per 1,000 people). The number of divorces for 2022 also increased, but less noticeably (4.7 divorces per 1,000 people). So the divorce rate in 2022 is 65.3%, which is 0.7% less than in 2019 and 0.3% less than in 2018. If you visualise this graphically, you can see the gap between marriages and divorces getting larger, showing some growth in the importance of marriage over the past few years. The surge in divorces after 2019 is due to the covid period and yet the trend has not persisted but has changed direction somewhat (Sivoplyasova, 2023). However, the problem of fertility is much more acute as there has been a decline from 2016 to date. According to the data for 2022, the birth rate is 1.42, which is comparable to the crisis of 2007.

American sociologist Mauro Guillen, when analysing the demographic situation in the world, draws conclusions about the continuing decline in fertility (Guillén, 2020). The researcher demonstrates that in all developed countries, since the 1960s, childbearing has declined to the point of inability to reproduce the population (less than 2 children per family). Only countries in Africa are exceptions. While population growth in some countries is only due to migration. Based on demographic trends, Guillén says that low fertility will be a problem by 2030 and predicts a decline in the total world population.

It is known from historical sketches on demography of Russia that in the late XIX - early XX century the average number of children in a peasant family was nine, and in an urban family five-seven. In the second half of the XX century the birth rate has already decreased to the usual one or two children. Today, according to the "All-Russian Population Census" of 2020, in the Central

Federal District of Russia the number of single-child households is 60.4%, two-child households 30.9% and many-child households 8.7%. If we take data for the country as a whole, including remote and border regions, the number of large families is about 12 per cent. Domestic sociologists regularly conduct research to identify the actual reasons for the decrease or increase in the birth rate in families. I. Pavlyutkin, while studying 500 families with many children, identified the following key factors influencing the decision to have three or more children: value - trust between spouses and religiosity, socio-economic - income and education, as well as network support - from relatives and friends (Pavlyutkin, Goleva, 2020). Accordingly, the lack of these factors demotivates small families to have more children (Parfilova, 2015).

There are several classifications of family models in the scientific literature. The following typologies are of interest for our study (Downey, Lyons, Williams, 2022).

Russian sociologists proposed a classification of family models according to the style of upbringing and parental involvement in children's lives, including patriarchal, child-centred and conjugal models (Table 1).

**TABLE 1.** Classification of family models

| Sign of separation                              | Family model              | Description  |
|---|---------------------------|--|
| Parenting and participation in children's lives | Patriarchal (traditional) | Dependence of children on parents. Authoritarian style of upbringing. Children are perceived as a labour force in the family.                                  |
|   | Child-centred (modern)    | Raising children is the main meaning of family life. A child is desired and expected. Self-sacrifice for the sake of a child, indulging children's whims.      |
|   | Conjugal (post-modern)    | Care for the development of each spouse and children as autonomous individuals. The value of independence, freedom and self-realisation of each family member. |

The child-centred model is considered by some researchers as a transitional model, which is being replaced by the conjugal model and the concept of "quality time" spent with children. The preconditions for the emergence of detocentrism are the creation of capitalist society in the 18th and 19th centuries, the introduction of compulsory education for children and the restriction of their use in labour activities, which made children financially dependent on their parents. However, in the industrial era the ideal is childlessness as a way to increase the quality of life of spouses at the same labour costs. Thus, sociologists describe the following direction of changes in the structure of the institution: transition from patriarchal family (authoritarian style of upbringing; determination of children as a source of additional labour force), to a conjugal family, where the independence, freedom and self-realisation of each family member, including children, is the main one (Eflova, Maximova, 2019).

In the work on gender sociology Aulette & Connell (1991) identify a significant category considered in modern research – the distribution of power within the family in the context of gender role transformation. In the historical consideration of gender changes, the redistribution of power can be traced in each transition period. In this regard, we define a general typology of families on this basis, distinguishing patriarchal, matriarchal and egalitarian models (Table 2).

**Table 2.** Typology of families according to the distribution of power

| Sign of separation  | Type of family            | Characterisation  |
|---------------------|---------------------------|---|
| The nature of power | patriarchal               | Power is given to the eldest man (father) in the family   |
|                     | Matriarchal               | Power is given to the eldest woman (mother) in the family |
|                     | Egalitarian (partnership) | Power is situationally (equally) shared between spouses   |

American sociologist Morris Zeldich expands the typology of partner families, distinguishing the partner family with either husband or wife dominance, as well as the syncratic type, where power is distributed evenly. In turn, Zadvornova (2013), in her study of modern provincial families, differentiates the egalitarian model and defines: Soviet, neopatriarchal, bicareer and egalitarian (Table 3).

**Table 3.** Family models by gender role distribution

| Sign of separation           | Family model               | Description   |
|------------------------------|----------------------------|---|
| Gender distribution of roles | Soviet                     | Labour employment of both spouses. In this case, the woman's "double" workload is maintained, as domestic labour is entirely her responsibility.  |
|                              | Neopatriarchal (sponsored) | The husband is a representative of the economic elite. The wife fulfils the role of a housewife. The difference from the patriarchal model of the 20th century is in the changed position of the woman. She has power in the domestic and educational sphere, and can also delegate household chores to domestic workers. |
|                              | BicARRIER                  | Spouses are equally oriented towards professional and career growth. At the same time, they do not intend to sacrifice them for the sake of fulfilling family obligations. The latter role is assigned to relatives or employees.   |
|                              | Egalitarian                | Both spouses participate equally in professional and domestic work.   |

The results of the study conducted by the researcher on a sample of 1200 people show the prevalence of the "Soviet" model (69%). While the "egalitarian" model is characteristic of a small number of families (4%). However, the sociologist studied the families of generation X, which is characterised by conformism expressed in adherence to the Soviet model. Some researchers note that the "Soviet" model is still present in Russian society and determines a significant share of families (Kletsina, Vekilova, 2020). Thus, the general trend of changes is characterised by the transition from patriarchal to egalitarian (partner) type of family.

## MATERIALS AND METHODS

As part of our own sociological research aimed at identifying the marriage and family values and attitudes of young people, a sociological survey was conducted using the online questionnaire method ( $n = 640$ ). The object of the study was Russian student youth aged 18 to 25 years old. The sample is mainly represented by young people from such cities as Kazan, Saransk, Saratov. The data were analysed using statistical methods in SPSS software.

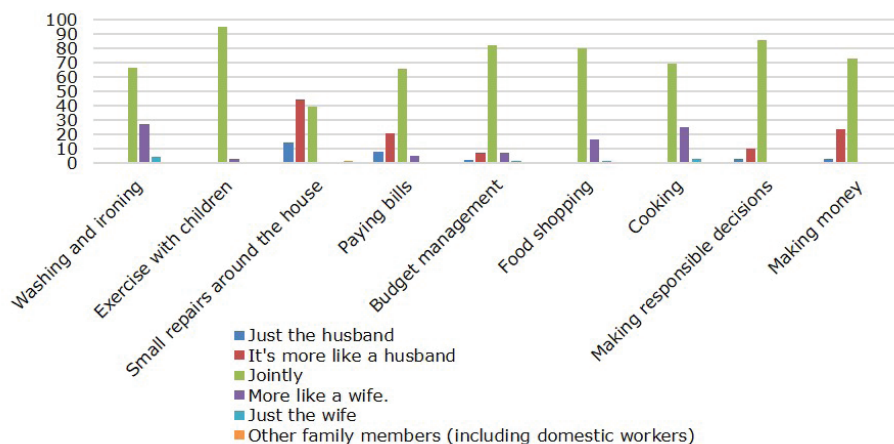
Marital and family values of today's youth were measured through three operational indicators:

1. Young people's perceptions of gender roles in the family and society;
2. Reproductive attitudes of young people;
3. Preferred family models and family practices of young people.

## RESULTS

The first block of questions of the questionnaire was aimed at identifying the attitudes of young people on the distribution of gender roles in the family. The results show that respondents mainly have attitudes towards joint distribution of family responsibilities, which corresponds to the egalitarian type of family (see Figure 1).

**Figure 1.** How do you think the following responsibilities should be distributed between spouses in a family/couple? (%)



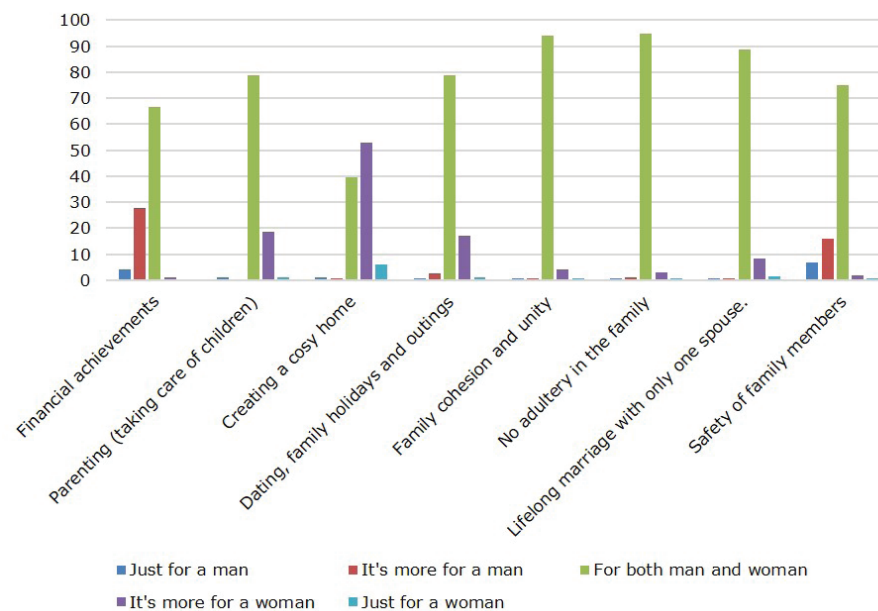
The exception is “minor household repairs”, which the respondents define rather to a man, which indicates the preservation of traditional ideas in the field of men's duties for a significant part of respondents (49%). It is also worth noting that the largest number of respondents (95.5%) are in favour of combining the duty of occupation with children. This confirms the hypothesis that children and fatherhood have become an integral part of a man's life in the eyes of modern youth.

In this context, the distribution of attitudes by gender is interesting. The performed conjugacy analysis shows that men, in percentage terms, were significantly less likely to be in favour of joint distribution and more likely to distinguish between male and female responsibilities. For example, they were more likely to identify “washing and ironing things” as a woman's responsibility (44%)

than women themselves (28.2%, at  $\chi^2=14.794$  and  $p=0.011$ ). At the same time, traditionally male duties such as “minor household repairs” were similarly attributed more to men (84%) than women themselves (50.8%). The same results were obtained for the categories “earning money”, “protecting family members from dangers”, “making responsible decisions”, “cooking”, and “managing the budget”. However, in the categories “activities with children”, “paying bills”, “choosing food”, the egalitarian type of distribution dominates, preferred by men and women equally.

The results regarding the importance of life values between men and women in the family were interesting (see Figure 2).

**Figure 2.** In your opinion, for whom - a man or a woman - in the family is more important... (%)



Most of the selected values are characteristic for both men and women. An exception was found in “creating home comfort”. Both men and women believe that it is rather important for women (53%) than for both sexes (39.4%). This means that the role of a hostess in the house is attributed by today’s youth predominantly to a woman, which is in line with traditional perceptions. There is also a significant share of respondents who attribute “financial achievements” rather to the values of a man (27.7%). At the same time, a difference in the answers of men and women was also revealed. A total of 52% of men and 25.7% of women attribute them to the values of a man only or rather a man. This indicates that a significant part of today’s youth adhere to traditional values and assign the role of a provider, earning money for the family, to a man. Moreover, there are twice as many men as women among those who think this way.

In the issue of ensuring material well-being of the family, young men also more often than girls attributed it to the man’s responsibility (38% vs. 25.4%), which is a marker of the attitude to the patriarchal (neo-patriarchal) family model. Otherwise, the difference in answers remains at the error level. In general, 44.4% of the respondents believe that the one who is more capable of earning according to his/her predispositions and competences should provide for the family (egalitarian family model); 28.4% believe that a man should provide predominantly (patriarchal model) and 24.1%

prefer joint employment in the family (Soviet model). Thus, in the financial sphere of the family, the opinion of young people is divided. The egalitarian model is in the lead by a certain margin, while the patriarchal and Soviet models share the second place.

In addition, we present data on answers to the question about distribution of power in the family, since it is power that largely predetermines the family way of life and its status in the society (see Table 4).

**TABLE 4.** In your opinion, who should be the head of the family and make important decisions for the family? (%)

| Answer options  | Your gender |       | Total |
|---|-------------|-------|-------|
|   | Female      | Male  |       |
| The eldest man in the family (father)   | 11.0%       | 29.0% | 15.3% |
| The eldest woman in the family (mother)   | 0.3%        | 0.0%  | 0.2%  |
| The one who is the main breadwinner in the family and provides for it   | 3.1%        | 5.0%  | 3.6%  |
| Someone who is more aware of the current situation and can make a decision that is effective for the family   | 43.6%       | 40.0% | 42.7% |
| There should not be a head of the family - decisions are made jointly. But in the sphere of the household (children) decisions are more often made by the woman | 35.7%       | 25.0% | 33.2% |
| Other   | 6.3%        | 1.0%  | 5.0%  |

The option “the one who is better oriented in the current situation and can make a decision effective for the family” corresponds to the egalitarian family model (42.7%), and “there should be no head of the family - decisions are made jointly. But in the sphere of the household (children) decisions are more often made by a woman” corresponds to the Soviet model (33.2%). In third place is the patriarchal type of family, where power is in the hands of a man (15.3%). At the same time, cross-analysis showed that the patriarchal model is chosen more often by men (29%) than by women (11%). Since the option “the one who is the breadwinner in the family and provides for it” was chosen by only 3.6% of the respondents, it can be concluded that power in the family in the eyes of modern youth is not defined only by the ability to earn and financially provide for the family. Consequently, the neo-patriarchal family model is not popular among young people. Young people prefer to entrust the right to choose to someone who is more competent in the situation, or to jointly agree on making important decisions.

To identify the current expectations of young people towards potential spouses, respondents were asked to choose certain personality traits characteristic of an “ideal husband” and an “ideal wife”. The following feminine, masculine and androgynous qualities were offered for selection (see Table 5).



**TABLE 5.** Distribution of personality traits and their gender characteristics

| Quality                               | Characterisation    |
|---------------------------------------|---------------------|
| Physical strength                     | Masculine qualities |
| Ability to ensure material prosperity |                     |
| Commitment and determination          |                     |
| Courage                               |                     |
| Obedience and discipline              | Feminine qualities  |
| Tenderness and softness               |                     |
| Politeness and courtesy               |                     |
| Love for children                     |                     |
| Housekeeping                          | Androgynous         |
| A well-developed mind, intelligence   |                     |
| Kindness                              |                     |
| Sense of humour                       |                     |

The dependence of the choice of certain qualities on the gender of the respondent was found. Girls chose “developed mind, intellect” (76.2%), “purposefulness and determination” (72.4%), “ability to provide material wealth” (71.5%), “kindness” (64.3%), and “love for children” (61.1%) as the five main features of an “ideal husband”. Men, in turn, attributed to the qualities of an “ideal husband” - “well-developed mind, intellect” (89%), “ability to ensure material prosperity” (79%), “purposefulness and determination” (75%), “sense of humour” (54%). Such a quality as “love for children” was attributed to the characteristics of an ideal husband by slightly less than half of respondents (49 per cent). In general, this corresponds to women’s perceptions, but there are differences in the choice. For example, among men, only 47 per cent attributed the quality “kindness” to the portrait of an ideal husband, so it was not included in the top five qualities. The analysis also showed that the quality “love for children” was chosen by 61 per cent of women and only 49 per cent of men, and “tenderness and gentleness” was chosen by 31 per cent of women and only 15 per cent of men. At the same time, among other qualities, men more often than women identified strongly masculine traits as advantages of an ideal husband. Thus “physical strength” was chosen by 47% of men and only 26.3% of women, and “courage” - by 30% of men and 21.9% of women. Among women the situation is respectively opposite, the results of the survey show that women more often expect kindness and love for children from men.

The following data were obtained on the question about the qualities of an ideal wife. Men more often chose “tenderness and softness” (82%), “thriftiness” (79%), “love for children” (77%), “kindness” (72%), “developed mind, intellect” (65%). Women, in turn, chose “tenderness and softness” (71.5%), “thriftiness” (71.5%), “kindness” (71.5%), “developed mind, intellect” (71.2%), and “love for children” (68.7%). The distributions of qualities among male and female respondents generally coincide, but the percentages are different. Love for children in the image of an ideal wife, according to young girls, is in fifth place. While in the case of men this quality is in third place, which indicates a slightly higher preference of men to see a woman as a caring mother of their children. Among the remaining qualities, differences in the responses of men and women were also

found. Girls more than twice as often attributed “purposefulness and determination” to the qualities of an ideal wife (54.9%) than young men (24%). At the same time, 30% of male respondents and only 16.6% of female respondents preferred “obedience and well-manneredness”. This may indicate that some men expect their future wives to be mainly obedient and well-mannered, while women themselves tend to be more purposeful and determined. This requires special attention and additional research.

In students’ perceptions, a normal Russian family should have two children; this answer option was chosen by a third part of respondents (33.2%). However, it is alarming that a significant share of respondents (28.4%) chose the answer option “A family can have no children” (See Table 6).

**TABLE 6.** Distribution of respondents’ answers to the question: In your opinion, how many children should a Russian family have?

| Answer options                               | %    |
|--|------|
| 1. One is enough                             | 9.8  |
| 2. Two children                              | 33.2 |
| 3. Three children                            | 10.5 |
| 4. More than three children                  | 1.7  |
| 5. A family can be a family without children | 28.4 |
| 6. I can’t answer that                       | 16.5 |
| Total  | 100  |

Young people describe their own intentions regarding children as a desire to have two children (34.4%). 11.5% of respondents plan to have one child, and 13.4% of respondents plan to have three children. At the same time, 18.4% chose the answer option “I am against planning a certain number of children”. Thus, we can conclude that one third of young people see the Russian family as a two-child family (average number of children) and wish to have the same number of children. The absence of a desire to have children is characteristic of only 8.1% of respondents. However, 28.4% of young respondents admit that a family can be without children, considering it normal.

This is also confirmed by the answers to the question about choosing among the proposed statements. The first statement - “only spouses with children can be considered a normal Russian family”, the second - “spouses even without children can be considered a normal Russian family”. As a result, 49.1% fully or partially adhered to the second statement and only 27.1% were inclined to the first one. Neutral assessments were given by 23.6% of respondents.

Among the factors positively influencing the desire to have children, young people consider “high incomes of both or one of the spouses” (84.2%), “trust and mutual understanding between spouses” (68.7%), “security and stability in the country” (58.7%). Raising the prestige of families with children and social benefits were chosen by only 9.1% and 24.3% of respondents, respectively. Consequently, government actions aimed at financial support for families with children and raising their prestige do not appear to be motivating for most young people. This emphasises the urgency of developing effective measures in the sphere of state family policy.

This study also analysed the preferred family models on the basis of parenting and participation in children's lives, among which patriarchal, child-centred and spousal models are distinguished (See Table 7).

**TABLE 7.** Distribution of respondents' choices regarding the statements

| Answer choice   | Your gender |       | Total |
|---|-------------|-------|-------|
|   | Female      | Male  |       |
| Children in the family should help with household chores and chores. They should be taught family and moral values  | 36.7%       | 45.0% | 38.7% |
| Children should come first and receive maximum care. It is better to deny something to yourself than to your child  | 10.3%       | 18.0% | 12.2% |
| Children stand on equal footing with their parents and develop freely. Parents care for their children as much as they care for themselves  | 49.5%       | 28.0% | 44.4% |
| Children develop freely. At the same time parents are more occupied with self-realisation and career advancement. The upbringing and care of children lies with experienced people (relatives or nannies) | 2.2%        | 4.0%  | 2.6%  |

A statistically significant dependence was found when pairing with the respondent's gender. Young men are more inclined to choose the patriarchal (traditional) family model, where children are perceived as an additional labour force, there is an authoritarian style of upbringing, and family values are instilled (45%). Girls, in their turn, more often chose the conjugal (post-modern) model, where there is equality of family members among themselves and children are taken care of in the same way as they take care of themselves (49.5%). In comparison with female representatives, only 28 per cent of young men surveyed chose such a model of family upbringing. However, it is impossible to draw an unambiguous conclusion that they prefer only the traditional model, as a difference was also observed in the choice of the child-centred family model, which is characterised by the answer option "it is better to sacrifice one's own desires but take care of the child". This option was preferred by 18% of men and 10% of women, which indicates that men are slightly more willing to take care of children even to the detriment of their own interests.

The results of our survey also showed that a significant proportion of young people have a neutral (37%) or positive (31.7%) attitude towards abortion. Only 11% of respondents categorically deny abortion. No difference in the answers between men and women was found ( $p=0.239$ ). However, a direct correlation was noticed on the basis of belief. 48.9% of people who do not consider themselves believers and only 4.7% of people who consider themselves believers have an unequivocal positive attitude towards abortion ( $\chi^2 = 137.253$  and  $p=0.00$ ). This suggests that non-believers are more tolerant of abortion and believe that termination of pregnancy is acceptable. While believers are either neutral or strongly opposed to abortion.

It was also observed that boys and girls have different attitudes towards the fact that a woman can make her own decision about abortion, even if the father of the child is against it. According to the cross-sectional analysis, 57.4 % of girls chose a positive attitude. For young men, this percentage is about half as high at 26%.

When asked what could influence the adoption of a joint decision on the preservation or termination of pregnancy with the father of the child, the respondents chose the answer options “in any case decisions are made jointly” (54.9%), “spouses are married” (37.4%). Thus, we can conclude that, in general, today’s young people believe that such a decision should be made jointly and demonstrate the special significance of an official marriage union between people. At the same time, men are more interested in joint decision-making than women, which may indicate the increasing role of fatherhood in modern conditions.

In order to identify how modern young people view large families, respondents were asked to evaluate them according to the attributes of “happiness”, “security”, “freedom”, “activity in society” and “well-being”. Average scores for each attribute were obtained, which means a balanced image of a large family in the eyes of respondents. In other words, young people do not consider these families to be unambiguously happy or unhappy; well-off or unprovided, etc., giving mostly neutral assessments. However, if we consider only the part of respondents who chose assessments other than neutral, then such characteristics of large families as “happier”, “poorer” and “active in society” were more frequent (FitzGerald, Quiñones, 2023).

The survey results revealed another noticeable trend - postponement of childbirth to a more distant perspective. Respondents were asked to determine at what age, in their opinion, it is best to plan the birth of the first child. The results show that the majority of respondents (52.7%) consider the age of 23-26 to be the optimal age for a woman to have her first child. In relation to a man, opinions were divided into two equal groups: those who chose the age of 23-26 and 27-30 (35.8% and 36% respectively). Among the reasons preventing the birth of children, respondents singled out “lack of money” (92.8 %), “incomplete education” (60.4 %) and “lack of confidence in a partner” (57.5 %). Thus, young people tend to postpone having children until later, especially men, which may be related to the desire to achieve financial stability and complete their education. Financial issues play a key role in the decision to have children, reflecting the economic realities and priorities of young people.

## CONCLUSION

Based on the results obtained, we can conclude that there is a significant separation of different family models in society. Among the main ones is the egalitarian model based on equality and complicity of spouses. However, there are also adherents of the patriarchal and Soviet models among young people.

In general, young people want to have children, but at the same time, a significant proportion of respondents consider childlessness to be the norm. Young people are determined to have quality family relations and wish to be ready for having children, both financially and psychologically. They take the choice of a spouse quite seriously and do not seek early marriages, emphasise the lack of mutual understanding between spouses as an obstacle to the desire to have children and name the main reason for divorces. Also, the younger generation tends to consider the quality of relationships in marriage more valuable than its duration, which allows us to conclude about the further spread of “serial monogamy”.

Based on the obtained results, it can be concluded that young men significantly more often than girls prefer traditionalism in the family related to the role of a provider, leader and distribution

of household duties. Exactly the same differences are noticed on the basis of faith. Young people who consider themselves believers more often distribute gender roles traditionally.

The reproductive attitudes of young people and the level of stability of young families will largely determine the prospects for demographic development of Russian society. Therefore, the social policy of the state should include the implementation of an effective youth policy aimed at ensuring the necessary conditions for the creation and development of young families, as well as the formation of value orientations and attitudes towards large families and the preservation of a complete family.

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