

SUPPORT FOR FAMILIES WITH CHILDREN AND FERTILITY PROMOTION

DOI: 10.15838/sa.2025.2.46.3

UDC 316.33;314.3 | LBC 60.561.51;74.95; 60.7

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YOUTH'S ATTITUDES TOWARD HAVING CHILDREN: POSSIBILITY OF ACHIEVING RUSSIA'S DEMOGRAPHIC INDICATORS



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The aim of the study is to assess the orientation of modern youth toward the implementation of reproductive plans and to identify the main causes and differences between the desired and actual number of children in terms of the possibility of achieving demographic indicators in accordance with the national development goals of Russia. The research design employed on a classical approach with an analysis of primary and secondary sources of information. When analyzing secondary sources, methods of content analysis, we used an aspectual and systematic approach to the study of articles, monographs, monitoring and statistical materials. The analysis of the primary information was

carried out on an array of data obtained as a result of two surveys conducted on the basis of the Institute of Socio-Economic Studies of Population of FCTAS RAS, which took place in 2017 and 2024 in the south-east of the Moscow Region and the adjacent part of the Central Federal District. The main task of the survey conducted using our comparable methodology was to study the attitude of modern youth to family and marriage issues. Some of the issues determine the consideration of the orientation of the younger generation toward the desired number of children. As a result, we obtained unique territorial (regional) data, which allowed for a predictive assessment (using the linear regression method), according to which the desired number of children in a family in 2031 could be: 11.9% – one child, 60.1% – two, 15.4% – three, 3.2% – four, and 9.4% have more than four. In terms of the total fertility rate, it may be 2.38 by 2031. The logical continuation of the work may consist in improving the tools and expanding the geography of the study. The results obtained can become the basis for the formation of regional and federal projects and programs to increase the birth rate in modern Russian realities.

Family, marital and family relations, fertility, prognostic assessments, socio-economic problems of the family, the desired number of children.

Introduction

According to the Presidential Decree “On the National Development Goals of the Russian Federation for the period up to 2030 and for the future up to 2036” (dated May 7, 2024), it is necessary to increase the total fertility rate to 1.6 by 2030, and by 2036 to reach the level of 1.8, and ensure an annual increase in the total fertility rate of a third child and subsequent children¹. Among the national development goals of the Russian Federation, the first is “to preserve the population, strengthen health and improve people’s well-being, and support families”. Among the 19 new national projects, the implementation of which began in 2025, the national project “Family” is in the first place. Its main objectives are comprehensive support for parents, taking care of reproductive health and strengthening family values. Special attention is paid to large families. To solve these tasks and achieve the goals set, effective solutions are needed, which cannot be developed without conducting

qualitative and quantitative research to obtain relevant information and create a base that allows making competent management decisions.

It is obvious that the leadership of the state, federal and regional authorities are making every possible effort to address demographic issues and create conditions for the realization of reproductive plans of the population. The Year of the Family, implemented in 2024, is already showing results and directing the vector of the desired number of children born toward having many children, which, according to the President of the Russian Federation, is the main essence of the family: “The main purpose of the family is the birth of children, procreation... the family regains a high moral meaning in Russian society”². However, the current socio-economic situation, and even more so the unprecedented external geopolitical pressure on Russia, negatively affects the implementation of the reproductive plans of the Russian population.

¹ Decree on the National Development Goals of the Russian Federation for the period up to 2030 and for the future up to 2036 (dated May 7, 2024). Available at: <http://www.kremlin.ru/events/president/news/73986> (accessed: 20.05.2025).

² The opening of the Year of the Family in Russia. Within the framework of the All-Russian forum “Family-loved ones”, Vladimir Putin launched the Year of the Family in Russia. (January 23, 2024). Available at: <http://www.kremlin.ru/events/president/news/73297> (accessed: 15.05.2025).

According to experts, Russian society has “missed” one child from every Russian family (if the desired number of children are born). This circumstance forces the political, economic and scientific community to look for new solutions to solve this problem.

In overcoming these difficulties, special attention should be paid to modern youth, whose reproductive preferences will ultimately determine the demographic trends of Russia's future. Obviously, in order to turn the situation around toward the birth of more children, it is necessary to “foster an orientation” toward having many children (in order to achieve a total fertility rate above 2) since school and create motivational incentives for having children from an earlier age. At the same time, social and economic (material) “protection” from the “descent” into poverty of families with two or more children should be fully ensured. Recent global studies conducted by the United Nations³ show that in all countries a significant number of people are unable to give birth to the desired number of children due to a conglomeration of economic and gender problems. According to the UNFPA⁴, the main factors preventing the realization of reproductive preferences are “significant expenses” for the implementation of parental responsibilities, problems with work (lack of a job), the cost of renting or buying housing, “concerns” about the current life situation, uncertainty about the future and the lack of a suitable partner. Financial opportunities remain the main and dominant obstacles to having the desired number of children (according to 39% of the respondents to the UNFPA). It was also noted (most often by women) that there was inequality in the

family regarding the distribution of household responsibilities (additional burden on a new mother). Obviously, all these difficulties can be approximated to our society to one degree or another.

To a large extent, it is young Russian families who find themselves in the “risk” zone, as they have a more vulnerable financial situation and certain difficulties in building marital and family relations. On the other hand, it is these families that have a higher demographic potential. The study of youth orientation toward the implementation of reproductive plans and the identification of the main reasons for the discrepancy between the desired and actual number of children in terms of the possibility of achieving demographic indicators of the national development goals of Russia has become the main task of our work.

Information base and research methodology

In order to analyze the orientation of young people toward having children in terms of obtaining a predictive assessment of the achievement of demographic indicators in Russia, a study was conducted that was based on a classic design. Secondary (desk) and primary (surveys) studies were carried out to obtain the necessary information in accordance with the claimed topic. The authors applied methods of content analysis, deconstruction, an aspect-based and systematic approach to the study of publications (articles, monographs, monitoring studies and reviews), as well as analytical and statistical materials (Rosstat data showcase) on childhood issues, trends in the development of marriage and family relations in Russia (including youth) and the orientation of the

³ The real reasons for the inability of families to have the desired number of children have been named. Available at: <https://www.mk.ru/social/2025/06/10/nazvany-realnye-prichiny-nevozmozhnosti-imet-semyam-zhelaemoe-kolichestvo-detey.html> (accessed: 20.05.2025).

⁴ UNFPA – United Nations Population Fund.

Russian population toward having a desired number of children. The primary information was obtained based on the results of a research conducted by the authors using their own original tools (Medvedeva, Kroshilin, 2017; Kroshilin, Medvedeva, 2025). The studies were carried out with an interval of seven years. The first data slice was obtained in 2017 (Medvedeva, Kroshilin, 2018), and the second in 2024 with the help of a comparable technique using CAWI technology. This made it possible to obtain a structured array of primary information for further generalization with the possibility of comparing the obtained research results. Special attention is paid to the formation of a quota sample (quotas were calculated based on the territorial and gender and age characteristics of the respondents). The sample in 2017 included 1,400 respondents, in 2024 – 450 (pilot survey). The geography of the study is the south-east of the Moscow Region and the bordering areas of the Central Federal District. Urban and rural residents of different age groups were surveyed. The majority (71.6% in 2024 and 71.9% in 2017) of respondents were youth cohorts aged 14 to 35 years, as well as the older generation of 35–50 years – 16.2% and 18.2% in 2024 and 2017, respectively. The older age group was 12.2 and 9.9% in the two study periods. The survey structure was primarily focused on studying the opinions of a young audience on the designated topic.

Limitations of the study: when conducting a survey in 2024, the sample was one third

of the total number of respondents in 2017. However, this fact was offset by the representativeness of the sample for the possibility of extrapolating the results to the entire general population (taking into account the characteristics of the studied territory and the gender and age structure of the population).

This approach allowed us to obtain empirical data, which, together with the results obtained during the analysis of secondary sources, formed the basis for constructing a predictive estimate⁵ (using the linear regression method⁶) of fertility (the desired number of children) for the possibility of comparing /achieving the planned demographic indicators of Russia within the framework of developed strategies and national projects. Based on the information received, data visualization (forecasts) was performed.

Analysis of secondary sources

The analysis of secondary literature sources shows that, as a rule, the “desired” and “real” number of children in Russian families, which individuals name without taking into account specific living conditions, current life circumstances and available financial opportunities, differ significantly. Despite the fact that there is an increase in the number of large families, the demographic situation in Russia⁷ remains quite complex and issues related to reproductive plans and the number of children born are becoming increasingly relevant for modern researchers.

⁵ This refers to the indicator of the “desired number of children”, which can be characterized by a predictive indicator, since it indicates the “limit” to which it is possible to “increase” the birth rate while creating “ideal conditions”, for example, through effective measures of social and material support for families, in which there would be no “problems” at the birth of a child, and various preferences would be created for women in various fields (ranging from education to providing a convenient form of employment if necessary/willing to work).

⁶ In this case, based on the use of linear regression, possible indicators (fractions of the number of births) were predicted with a time lag of 7 years based on the desired number of children. (“1”, “2”, “3”, “4” and “more than 4”). At the same time, the indicators were compared with Rosstat data for the territories under consideration, taking into account the gender and age structure and the number of people living in the studied settlements.

⁷ Reproductive plans of Russians: Do we write two, do we keep three in mind? (review on February 25, 2025). VCIOM. Available at: <https://wciom.ru/analytical-reviews/analiticheskii-obzor/reproduktivnye-plany-rossijan-dva-pishem-tri-v-ume> (accessed: 05.05.2025).

This issue has received considerable attention from Western scholars (Bongaarts, 2001; Philipov, 2009; Morgan, Rackin, 2010; Testa et al., 2011), and representatives of Russian science in the areas of social demography (Rimashevskaya et al., 2012; Arkhangelskiy, Dzhanaeva, 2014), reproductive plants (Grishina, 2008; Zhuk, 2016; Antonov, Guseva, 2019; Korolenko, Kalachikova, 2022) and studying the needs of the family (Medvedeva, Kroshilin, 2018; Arkhangelskiy et al., 2021; Shabunova, Kalachikova, 2024).

The latest VCIOM research conducted in early 2025 shows that the majority of Russians (almost 90%) would like to have three or even more children in their family (according to the survey – 3.2 children). In terms of gender, men on average would like even more children in a family than women (3.6 and 2.8, respectively). In terms of the implementation of reproductive models in Russia, almost a third would like to have two children, slightly more (31%) – three, almost one in five (22%) – four or more⁸.

However, according to Rosstat⁹, the “real” birth rate in Russia remains low. If we analyze the total fertility rate (TFR), which should be slightly more than 2 for simple reproduction, then the last time in Russia such an indicator was observed only in 1971 (2.01). The TFR reached its maximum value in the modern history of Russia in 2015 (1.76) and 2016 (1.74). In the last five years, the total fertility rate has been significantly below the desired level, even in the short term. However, the medium-term forecast is more optimistic (*Fig. 1*).

Quite a lot of measures are being implemented in Russia in order to solve this problem. Low fertility in the country is caused not only by the socio-economic problems that the population has faced in recent decades,

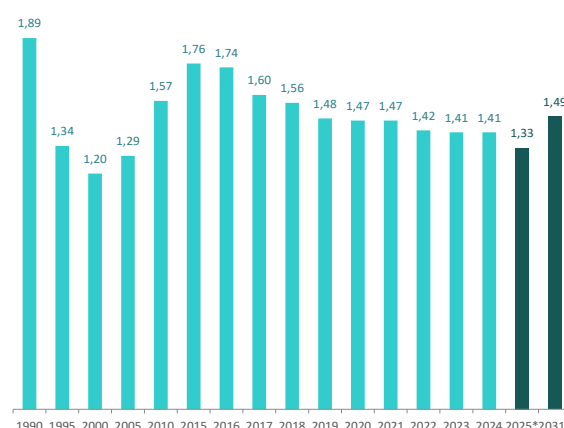


Fig. 1. Dynamics and forecast of the total fertility rate

Sources: Total fertility rate. EMISS. Government statistics. Available at: <https://fedstat.ru/indicator/31517> (accessed: 25.05.2025); Total fertility rate (forecast).

Official statistics / Population / Demography. Rosstat. Available at: https://rosstat.gov.ru/storage/mediabank/Progn_6.xls (accessed: 25.05.2025).

but also by global processes related to the demographic transition (Rimashevskaya et al., 2012), which is typical for many developed countries (for example, in Japan the TFR is 1.23, and in Germany it is 1.46). One of the directions for possible adjustment of the retrospective situation in the country is the development of the idea of having many children, which has historically been characteristic of Russian families. According to VCIOM surveys¹⁰, the “ideal family with many children” is increasingly the norm for young cohorts of the population (from 18 to 24 years old). In terms of gender, men are 1.8 times more likely than women to see their “ideal” family with a large number of children.

According to VCIOM analysts, “the gap between the real and desired number of children is significant: on average, the country has “missed” one child from each family (on average, Russians have two children, but would

⁸ Ibidem.

⁹ The number and composition of the population (storefronts). Official statistics / Population / Demography. Rosstat. Available at: <https://rosstat.gov.ru/folder/12781> (accessed: 25.05.2025).

¹⁰ Reproductive plans of Russians: Do we write two, do we keep three in mind? (review on February 25, 2025). VCIOM. Available at: <https://wciom.ru/analytical-reviews/analiticheskii-obzor/reproduktivnye-plany-rossijan-dva-pishem-tri-v-ume> (accessed: 05.05.2025).

like to have three)”¹¹. As a rule, such a gap is associated with the financial situation and living conditions, excessive workload, lack of time and resources, as well as the problems of professional adaptation of women after childbirth, especially those women who, like men, strive to build their own careers in parallel with “family” responsibilities. It is often girls who face the “glass ceiling” effect (Present and Future..., 2018).

An assessment by experts from the Higher School of Economics has found a stable relationship between family income and the reproductive model being implemented. Contrary to popular opinion, researchers have found that “with increasing wealth, the likelihood of having children in a family decreases” (Surinov, Kuzin, 2023), since the birth of children leads to a family with a relatively high income losing significantly more compared to the incomes of middle- and low-income families. As practice shows, in most Russian families, women quite often have an income not lower than that of men, and after the birth of a child they are forced to reduce their work activity or quit their job altogether. Thus, families shift to another level of “comfort” of their own living conditions (there is a loss of part of their income), which they clearly cannot put up with, therefore many postpone the birth of subsequent children (or even the first child) provided they receive a “normal” average income. Wealthier parents spend more on child support, and their investments are higher. That is why the desire to “have a child” in most cases

“has an inverse relationship with the costs of the family and a direct relationship with income”¹².

Despite the revealed trend, “wealthy” people in Russia are more likely to have many children than people with average incomes. Research conducted in 2024 (conducted within the framework of the Grushin VCIOM Conference) revealed that the majority (75%) of Russian businesspeople (aged 30–45 years) have a family, and 65% of the respondents have children, while more than half (53%) of them have large families¹³. According to the expert E.K. Zhuravleva, one of the organizers of the “Family 3.0” project: “... rich entrepreneurs often claim that they can afford to support several children and believe that upbringing should be collective, with the participation of an extended family” (Zhuravleva, Koptseva, 2024). A study of Russians included in the Forbes 2024 list (marital status and number of children were analyzed), conducted by experts from SVOI Agency¹⁴, showed that 78% of people on this list are in a registered marriage. Moreover, their average number of children is 1.5 times higher than the national average. Some of them have many children (for example, Roman Abramovich, Vladimir Potanin and Alexei Mordashov have 7 children each)¹⁵. This trend can be traced not only in Russia. Studies in the United States (Morgan, 2001) have shown that 85% of the rich (who make up 10% of the total population) are married, and among the 10% of the poorest, only a third have an official family¹⁶.

¹¹ Kostarnova N. Russians are attracted to having many children. Available at: <https://www.kommersant.ru/doc/7534639> (accessed: 25.05.2025).

¹² HSE experts: Due to rising incomes, the likelihood of having children in the family decreases. Available at: <https://www.kommersant.ru/doc/6414088> (accessed: 25.05.2025).

¹³ Rich men in Russia are more likely to create families and have many children – sociologists’ conclusions. Available at: https://vkirove.ru/news/2025/04/14/bogatye_muzhchiny_v_rossii_chashche_sozdayut_semi_i_stanovyatsya_mnogodetnymi_vyvody_sotsiologov.html (accessed: 05.05.2025).

¹⁴ A study involving 400 entrepreneurs between the ages of 30 and 45.

¹⁵ The rich... have many children too! Available at: https://svoi.org/news/?element_id=199 (accessed: 05.05.2025).

¹⁶ To correct fertility figures, it is necessary to restore the meaning of the family for a person. Available at: <https://umstrana.ru/interview/elena-zhuravleva-chtoby-popravil-tsifry-v-rozhdaemosti-nado-vernut-smysl-semi-dlya-cheloveka> (accessed: 25.05.2025).

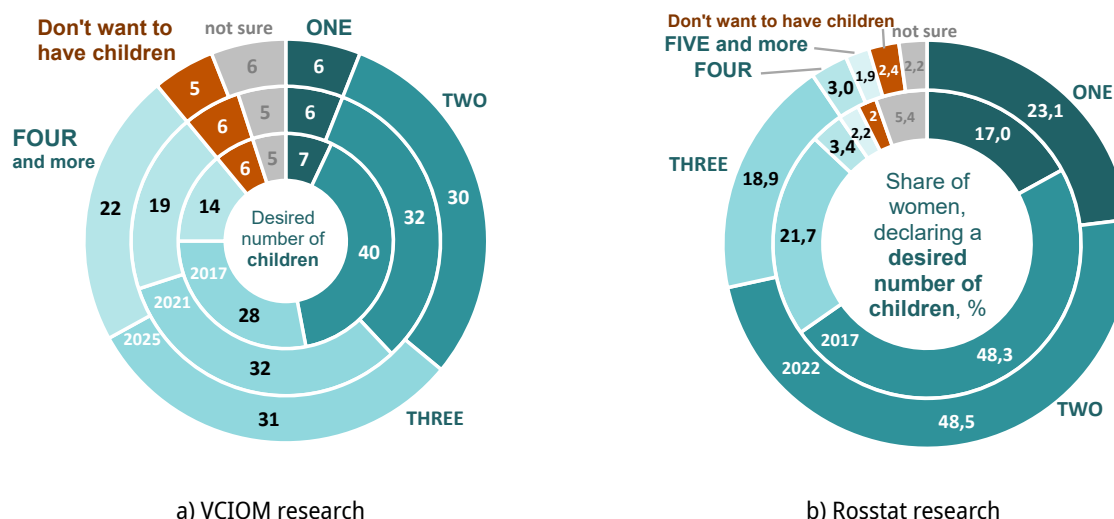


Fig. 2. Dynamics of Russians' responses about the desired number of children, %

Sources: How many children do you need for happiness? VCIOM. Available at: <https://wciom.ru/analytical-reviews/analiticheskii-obzor/skolko-detei-nuzhno-dlja-schastja> (accessed: 25.05.2025); Selective observation of the reproductive plans of the population in 2022. Distribution by desired and expected number of children. Rosstat. Available at: https://rosstat.gov.ru/free_doc/new_site/RPN22/reports.html (accessed: 25.05.2025); Selective observation of the reproductive plans of the population in 2017. Distribution by desired and expected number of children. Rosstat. Available at: https://rosstat.gov.ru/free_doc/new_site/RPN17/reports.html (accessed: 25.05.2025).

Today in Russia, the proportion of those who associate an “ideal” family with a large one is growing. According to VCIOM research, more than a third of citizens are ready to give birth to three children in “ideal” living conditions (31% in 2025), compared to 28% in 2017. In 2025, 22% are focused on having four or more children, in 2017 – only 14% (Fig. 2a). According to Rosstat, at the beginning of this year, there were 2.65 million large families in Russia, which is almost 11% of the total number of families with children. This is almost 10% more than in 2024¹⁷. The proportion of women with many children is growing in Russia: “For women who are now 32–33 years old (the average age of having a third child), this figure should rise to 25%”¹⁸.

In modern realities, there is a “turning point” in the issue of the age of childbirth: women tend to have a third and fourth child later. However, along with the trend of “it’s normal to have a lot

of children,” there is also a tendency in some cohorts to “have no children at all,” but there are fewer of them every year¹⁹. Having many children is becoming “popular” in Russia. For example, in 2022, Rosstat research stated that the majority of Russian women want no more than two children (71.6%; Fig. 2b), in 2017 their share was 65.3%. In 2022, there was a slight decrease in the number of women who would like to have many children (the proportion of those wishing to have three children decreased to 18.9%, by 3 percentage points compared to 2017, four children – to 2.9%, a decrease of 0.5 percentage points). During this period, there was an increase in the number of those who do not want to have children (up to 2.4%).

It is obvious that there is a “turning point” in our society in deciding on the desired and actual (born) number of children in a family. During this period, it is important to create all the necessary conditions on the part of

¹⁷ Family, motherhood and childhood (showcase). Official statistics / Population. Rosstat. Available at: <https://rosstat.gov.ru/folder/13807> (accessed: 25.05.2025).

¹⁸ Kostarnova N. Russians are attracted to having many children. Available at: <https://www.kommersant.ru/doc/7534639> (accessed: 25.05.2025).

¹⁹ How has the desire of Russians to have children changed in five years? Available at: <https://www.rbc.ru/economics/23/03/2023/641985c39a794773887481bd> (accessed: 15.05.2025).

the state and society so that the reproductive model of the Russian family “lean” more toward the desired number of children. This is what will contribute to solving modern demographic problems. However, in order to make effective and informed decisions at all levels of government in the current socio-economic situation, research is needed not only across the country to assess the situation as a whole, but also local regional studies to assess the situation and develop practical measures “on the ground.”

Analysis of survey data for predictive evaluation

The results of two surveys conducted by the Institute of Socio-Economic Studies of Population – Branch of the Federal State Budgetary Scientific Institution Federal Center of Theoretical and Applied Sociology of the Russian Academy of Sciences (ISESP FCTAS RAS) in 2017 and 2024 using comparable methods showed that for 63.2% of respondents, family is primarily “procreation” (in 2017, respondents chose this answer more often by 4.3 percentage points). For 62.7%, the answer is “parenting”, it ranks second. We should note that almost 10% more respondents chose this option compared to their share in 2017. The third place is occupied by the “traditional” formulation of “social unit” (52.5 and 40.6%, respectively, in 2024 and 2017). This option was chosen more often – by almost 30% in the compared periods. Respondents also see the

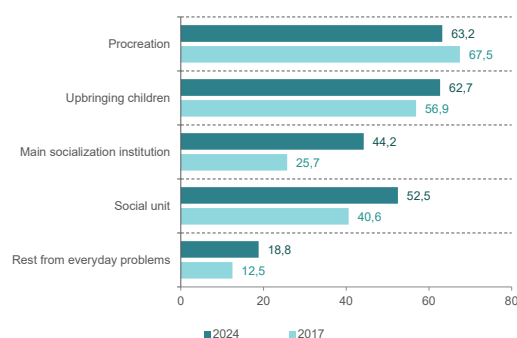


Fig. 3. Results of respondents' answers to the question "What do you see as the purpose of the family?" (the five most frequently chosen answers are indicated), %

Compiled according to: results of research conducted by ISESP FCTAS RAS in 2017 and 2024.

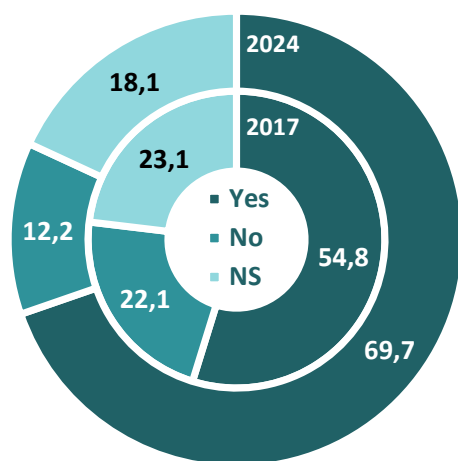
family as “the main institution of socialization” (44.2%) and “a break from everyday problems” (18.8%; Fig. 3).

One of the blocks of questions in the questionnaire concerned the topic of studying the approaches of modern youth to “building” marriage and family relations (Fig. 4); 54.8% of respondents in 2024 believed that it is necessary to create a family (marry) “once and for life.” In 2017, there were more of those by 14.9 percentage points. Almost a fifth of respondents in the final survey did not share this opinion. About the same number could not decide on an answer (Fig. 4a); 59.4% of respondents in 2024 were confident that “family is a necessary condition for achieving stability and confidence in life” (5 percentage points more in 2017). About 12% of the respondents could not decide on the answer to this question (Fig. 4b).

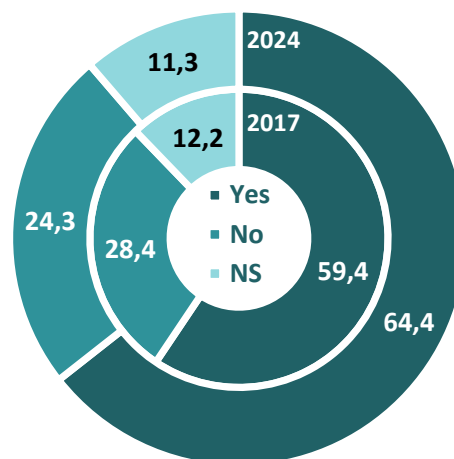
The attitude of young people toward marriage registration remains one of the pressing issues that all Russian sociologists and economists are studying today, as this decision usually affects the birth rate and the planned number of children. That is why one of the questions in the questionnaire directly addressed this aspect. It should be noted that 60% of the respondents gave a positive answer to the question “Is marriage registration necessary in case of the birth of a child?” in two sections. However, there are 8.4 percentage points more undecided in 2024 (one fifth of the respondents; Fig. 4b). A similar consensus was expressed by respondents when answering the question “Do you think that any marriage must necessarily be based on mutual love?”: 85.8 and 83.6% of respondents answered “yes” in 2024 and 2017, respectively (Fig. 4d).

Since modern youth face many socio-economic problems when forming a family and building marital and family relations, the questionnaire contained questions that allowed them to identify ways to solve them (Fig. 5).

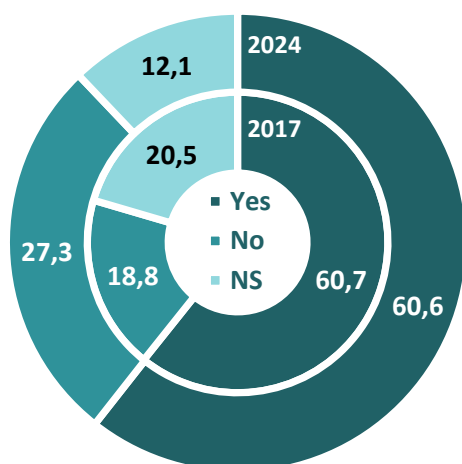
One of the main difficulties is the financial component, which determines the possibility of solving the “housing issue”. The answer “yes, it is very important” was chosen by 45.2% of respondents in 2024 (in 2017 there were 12.9



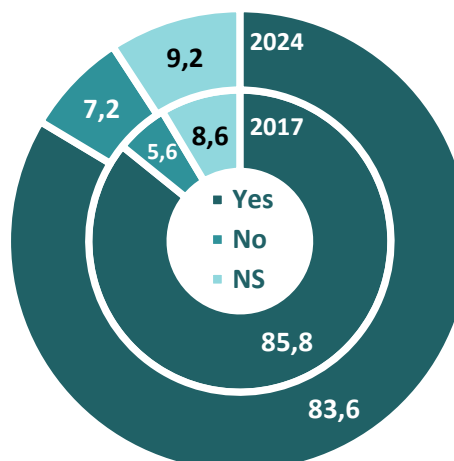
a) Do you think that starting a family (getting married) is necessary "once and for a lifetime"?



b) Do you think that family is a necessary condition for achieving stability and confidence in life?



c) Is marriage registration necessary in case of the birth of a child?



d) Do you think that any marriage must necessarily be based on mutual love?

Fig. 4. How respondents see the "building" of marital and family relations in a modern family, %

Compiled according to: results of research conducted by ISESP FCTAS RAS in 2017 and 2024.

percentage points fewer of them). We should note that mortgage rates (Yarasheva, Makar, 2024) were much lower during that period, and the availability of loans to the population was one of the highest. This is probably why in 2017, 51.8% of respondents were able to answer "this is important, but not crucial," and in 2024 their number decreased by 7.9 percentage points. In 2024, the number of "no, it doesn't matter" responses decreased by half (only 6.3% of respondents; Fig. 5a).

As part of the research, respondents were also asked two main "family questions": "Who do you think should be in charge of the family?" and "Who should be the breadwinner in the family?". We should emphasize that modern youth are increasingly advocating for equality: almost 70% chose this answer in 2024 (in 2017, it was 14.4 percentage points less). Just over 3% of respondents "voted" for "matriarchy" in the family in two sections (Fig. 5b). There were more people who answered

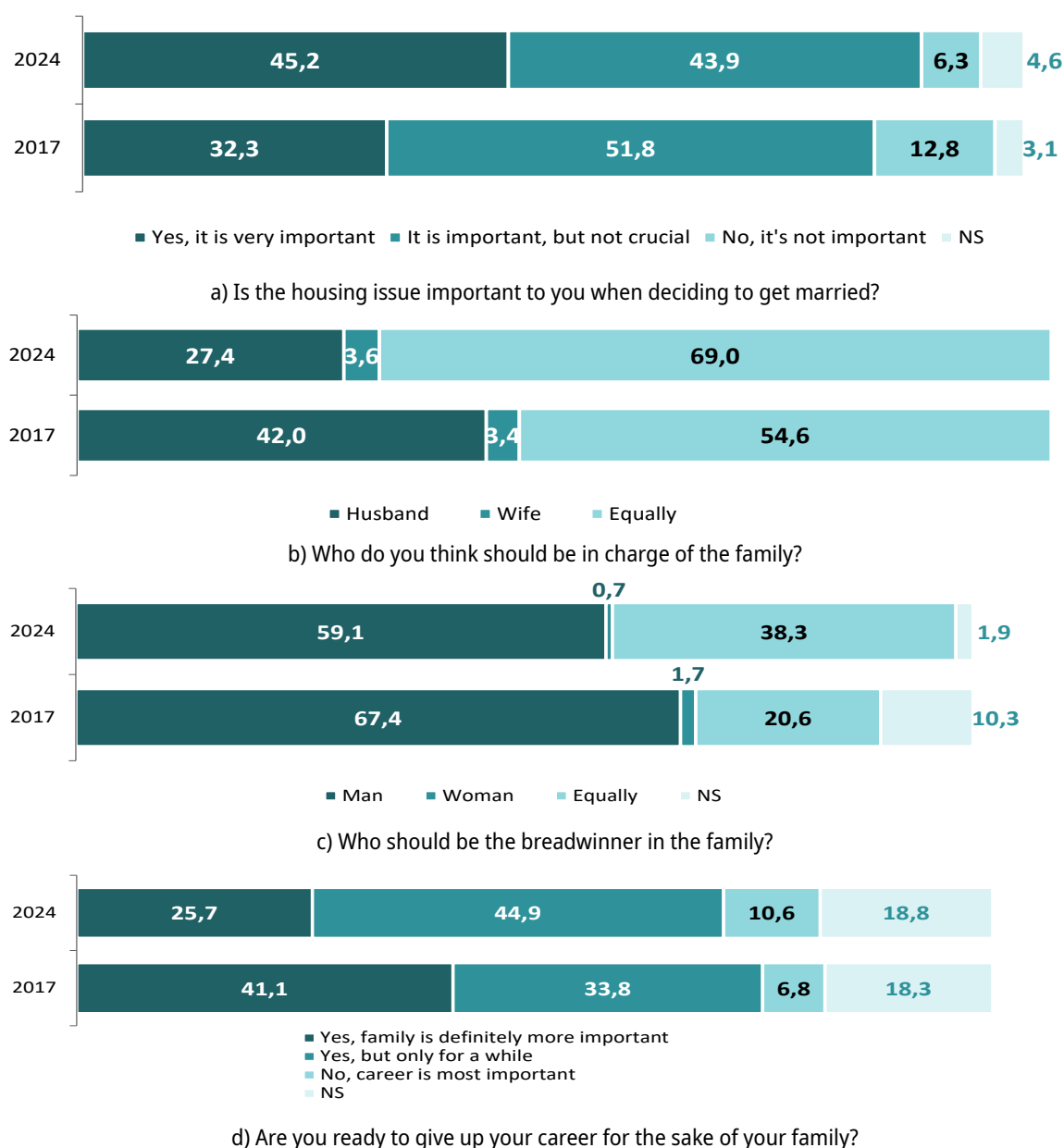


Fig. 5. Options for addressing socio-economic problems in the modern family, according to the respondents, %

Compiled according to: results of research conducted by ISESP FCTAS RAS in 2017 and 2024.

“we must earn equal amount of money” – 38.3 and 20.6%, respectively, in 2024 and 2017. And the number of those who believe that a man should earn more than a woman decreased (by 8.3 p.p.; Fig. 5c). A quarter (25.7%) of respondents are ready to give up their career for the sake of family, as they believe that “family is definitely more important” (their share decreased by 15.4 percentage points compared to the previous survey). Almost one in ten indicated that “career is the main thing”

(their number increased by 3.8 percentage points). This is due to the more complex current socio-economic situation, which is not comparable with the “pre-COVID” 2017. We should emphasize that about 45% in 2024 were ready to give up building a career for the sake of a family only for a while (Fig. 5d).

Obviously, all the issues that have been analyzed in the framework of the research significantly influence the decision on the birth of children and their number. According to

the answers to the direct question “How many children would you like to have in your family?” in 2024, the following results were obtained: one child – 17.0%, two children – 58.3%, three – 16.6%, four – 2.5% and more than four – 5.7%. These data were compared with the figures obtained in 2017, as well as with Rosstat data. Using the linear regression method, predictive estimates²⁰ of the desired number of children were implemented/calculated (Fig. 6).

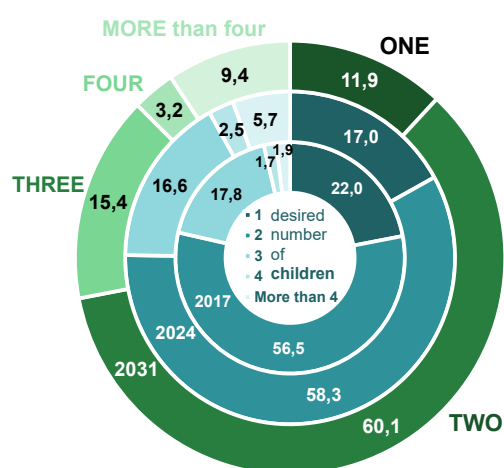


Fig. 6. Predictive assessment of the desired number of children, %

Compiled according to: results of research conducted by ISESP FCTAS RAS in 2017 and 2024.

According to the predictive assessment obtained (the data obtained have a step of 7), for 2031 the desired number of children in the studied audience should be: one child – 11.9%, two – 60.1%, three – 15.4%, four – 3.2%, more than four – 9.4%. If the result is recalculated into the total fertility rate²¹, we will get an indicator equal to 2.38 by 2031. We should note that according to the results of the survey conducted, the TFR in the studied territory, if the desired number of children were born, could reach 2.22 as early as 2024.

Thus, the results obtained indicate that if each Russian family implements its plans for the birth of the desired number of children, the country would be able to show and ensure an increase in the total fertility rate planned by the President of the Russian Federation (according to the Decree “On the National Development Goals of the Russian Federation for the period up to 2030 and for the future up to 2036”), to 1.6 by 2030 (the necessary level to achieve the national goal of “Preserving the population, strengthening health and improving human well-being, family support”)²² and even exceed it.

Conclusions and recommendations

Based on the data obtained as a result of the conducted research, it can be summarized that the implementation of reproductive plans for the desired number of children in Russian families could contribute to the achievement of demographic indicators set out in the strategic development plans of the Russian Federation for the period up to 2030 and for the future up to 2036. However, several main components hinder their implementation: material costs for the “full-fledged realization” of parental responsibilities, problems with work, change or absence of a job, including for the expectant mother, who is forced to work less or completely stop working due to the emergence of a situation of “double employment”. This leads to a likely reduction in stable high income and a decrease in the standard of living of the family due to the birth of a child, including the deterioration of housing conditions. There is an impact of the current socio-economic situation and the geopolitical situation in the world, as well as various life situations, which leads to a lack of confidence in the future. One of the dominant

²⁰ Obviously, very often the desired number of children is not realized in practice (in real life). During the calculations, it was assumed that there were “ideal conditions” when all desired/possible/planned births were realized.

²¹ The recalculation was carried out according to the median values of the survey results obtained, taking into account the existing fertility trend in the territories under consideration, based on Rosstat data by region by calculating the average estimates of the TFR.

²² Decree on the National Development Goals of the Russian Federation for the period up to 2030 and for the future up to 2036 (dated May 7, 2024). Available at: <http://www.kremlin.ru/events/president/news/73986> (accessed: 20.05.2025).

factors is the lack of a suitable partner to implement one's plans for the desired number of children.

The real indicators of the total fertility rate in the last five years are significantly lower than desired, and even in the medium-term optimistic forecasts do not reach the required value. The chosen trend toward having many children in Russian families, which has been actively cultivated by the state over the past few years, can correct the situation. It brings certain results. For example, for young cohorts of the population (from 18 to 24 years old) the "ideal family" is more and more often associated with having many children. According to research conducted by VCIOM, in 2025, more than 1/5 of Russian families are focused on having four or more children. There are 2.646 million large families in Russia today, which is 246,000 more than in 2024. This positive trend is related to many factors, including government policies and ongoing support programs.

The identified factors and trends were confirmed by our research based on two surveys conducted. Almost 2/3 of the respondents believe that the family is primarily related to "procreation"; almost the same number associate it with the upbringing of children. More than half of the young people surveyed believe that starting a family (getting married) is necessary "once and for life", 2/3 believe that family is a necessary condition for achieving stability and confidence in life. However, the problem of solving the housing issue remains the most important and difficult – 45% of respondents indicated this. In recent years, equality has been observed (almost 70%) in matters of household chores, and for almost 40% it is also important in terms of income generation.

Based on two cross-sections of studies approximated by Rosstat data using the linear regression method, the forecast (predictive estimates) showed that in 2031 the desired number of children among the studied

audience (in the analyzed region) could reach a total fertility rate of 2.38. Even partial implementation of such reproductive plans could contribute to achieving the demographic indicators set in Russia's strategic development goals.

It is obvious that today there is a "turning point" in our society regarding decision-making about the desired and actual (born) number of children. During this period, it is important to create all the necessary conditions for the reproductive model of the Russian family to "lean" more and more toward the desired number of children. This requires regional studies that help to understand the specifics and peculiarities of the reproductive behavior of the population in a particular constituent entity of the Russian Federation. Based on relevant regional research data, it is possible to formulate and propose practical measures "locally" to increase the birth rate. Among such measures, an important direction can be noted, which is already being implemented by the country's leadership through the development of state and regional programs to support young families. Targeted regional assistance allows young parents (primarily mothers) to obtain a prestigious profession to ensure stable earnings for themselves/ their family and a decent standard of living. One of the options is to implement a mechanism for combining study and/or work with parenting. It is this approach that can help solve the problem of "deferred parenthood." Undoubtedly, programs and projects are needed that will contribute to solving the housing problem. Research shows that the absence of housing problems (the number of square meters per family member) directly correlates with the desired, and most importantly, with the actual number of children. This problem can be partially solved on the basis of the existing mechanism of "maternity capital", which must be effectively indexed, choosing the appropriate amount of payments for different

regions of residence, as well as for the first and second child, and subsequent children.

The results obtained in the framework of the study can become the basis for the formation of regional and federal projects and programs aimed at increasing fertility in modern Russian conditions. Theoretically and practically, the presented data are aimed at informing specialists who study the development of marriage and family relations and fertility problems. The use of predictive assessment has proved that the reproductive

plans of Russian families, if implemented, can improve demographic indicators. The logical continuation of the work may be to expand the geography of the study using proven tools, which will allow comparing regional data. This will definitely contribute to the implementation of the overall socio-economic strategy of the country's leadership and the chosen course to strengthen the institution of the family to address demographic challenges outlined in the national development goals of the Russian Federation for the future until 2036.

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