



EDITORIAL

Demographic Processes in the Context of Demographic Well-Being

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Demographic well-being is a relatively recent concept, applicable at both individual and societal levels, ranging from interpersonal relationships to larger entities such as countries, regions, or territories. At the individual level, demographic well-being is associated with the adoption of reproductive and life-sustaining strategies that result in satisfaction with one's quality of life. At the societal level, it corresponds to positive and enduring demographic trends, reflected in optimal population reproduction and a balanced age–gender structure. These trends are intricately influenced by sociocultural, regional, and ethno-religious factors in a given social context. Additionally, demographic variables such as age, gender, marital status, and education have considerable influence on subjective perceptions of quality of life, shaping how individuals evaluate their physical, mental, and social well-being.

Renowned Russian demographer Sergei V. Ryazantsev offers a more nuanced perspective on the concept of demographic well-being. He suggests looking at it from two perspectives: on the microlevel, from the individual perspective, demographic well-being revolves around achieving life satisfaction through pursuits like marriage, reproduction, and migration, leading to desired physical, mental, social, and economic states for both the individual and the family. On the macro level, that is, on the level of a country or territory (region, area), demographic well-being can be seen as the harmonious interaction between quantitative and qualitative indicators of demographic development over at least a five-year period (Ryazantsev & Miryazov, 2021).

Demographic well-being partly intersects with the concepts of demographic resilience and demographic stability (for more on this see Rostovskaya & Sitkovskiy, 2024).

In turn, demographic resilience is closely linked with another crucial concept, that is demographic sustainability. Within the context of sustainable development,

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the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) defines demographic resilience as a goal that includes the ability to predict demographic shifts, understand their implications, and develop policy measures based on factual data considering human rights. This means transitioning from narrow approaches focused solely on population size to a comprehensive demographic and social policy aimed at ensuring prosperity and well-being for all (Programma, 2022). This suggests that demographic sustainability is a primary objective of state demographic policy, particularly in nations experiencing depopulation. A similar perspective is upheld by leading international scholars, who view demographic sustainability as the inherent capability of populations to withstand and recover from shocks (Capdevila et al., 2020).

Another international compilation highlights that demographic resilience embodies a country's (or region's) capacity to maintain both quantitative and qualitative reproduction of demographic structures in distinct historical, socio-economic, legal, and environmental contexts (Nikolaiets et al., 2023). Moreover, demographic resilience is also defined as the capacity to maintain a sustained trajectory of population growth over the long term (Colantoni et al., 2020).

Demographic stability is also a comparatively new concept introduced by Tamara K. Rostovskaya and Olga A. Zolotareva in 2022:

Recognizing the peculiarities and specifics of demography as both a science and a practice, the following interpretation of the concept of "demographic stability" can be presented. Demographic stability entails the establishment of qualitative and quantitative characteristics of marital, reproductive, self-preservation, and migratory parameters that foster a stable state and development of demographic processes, ensuring natural population reproduction at a level aligned with the national interests. (Rostovskaya & Zolotareva, 2022; Trans. by Ekaterina Purgina)

The suggested definition of demographic stability highlights a fundamental connection between demographic processes in a given country and the preservation of its integrity, independence, and sovereignty. It emphasizes the steadfast objective of maintaining and, where possible, improving the state's current status across its diverse operations.

This themed issue of the journal *Changing Societies & Personalities* presents various perspectives on demographic processes, with a focus on demographic well-being as a central element of social development. The current issue, dedicated to the Year of the Family in the Russian Federation, highlights aspects of the family institution and birth rates.

The team of contributors, consisting of prominent Russian demographers, addresses a range of aspects, including:

- demographic processes and national security;
- demographic well-being at both macro and microlevels;
- the role of large families in demographic development;
- dynamics of birth rates and mortality, alongside their socio-cultural influences;
- directions of migration policy.

According to current Russian legislation, the primary goal of state policies is to boost birth rates and incentivize young people to have more children, which reflects the national priority to support large families, especially in light of global challenges and internal threats to depopulation.

The themed issue begins with an article titled *Institutional Factors in Reproductive Decision-Making Among Large Families in Russia* by Tamara K. Rostovskaya, Olga V. Kuchmaeva, and Ekaterina N. Vasilieva. Recognizing demographic well-being as a fundamental component of national security, the authors emphasize the importance of research on institutional conditions that influence well-being in large families.

In 2007, Tamara Rostovskaya spearheaded the development of a model aimed at fostering the well-being of families. The model is aligned with *Kontseptsiiia gosudarstvennoi politiki v otnoshenii molodoi sem'i* [Concept of State Support for Young Families] (O Kontseptsii, 2007) and encompasses the following parameters of well-being:

1. *Demographic parameters*: complete family, legitimate marriage (in Russia, officially registered marriage is recognized only between a man and a woman), presence of children, functional connections with parental families and other relatives;
2. *Values*: family and children, health, trust, love, respect, understanding, care;
3. *Living conditions and financial security*: comfortable housing, provision of family members' needs, quality education and healthcare, opportunities for leisure;
4. *Socio-psychological parameters*: absence of harmful habits, dependencies, adherence to laws, warm trusting relationships between spouses, involved parenting, respect between parents and children.

Socio-demographic policies should address the aforementioned aspects to safeguard the well-being of large families. An important legislative step in this regard was the Decree of the President of Russian Federation No. 63 outlining social support measures and legal status for large families (O merakh sotsial'noi podderzhki, 2024).

Articles presented in this special issue explore institutional factors shaping large family dynamics, trends in the structure of young Russian families, motivations for having many children, life in large families, and their satisfaction with state policies. Empirical evidence is drawn from various sources including national censuses (with a particular focus on the All-Russian Population Census 2020), the extensive national survey *Demograficheskoe samochuvstvie regionov Rossii* [Demographic Well-Being of the Regions of Russia] conducted in 2021, in-depth interviews with parents of multiple children across 10 Russian regions, expert surveys with government representatives responsible for family policies, and a study on “student families” conducted in 2022. Based on these data, the studies offer recommendations for demographic policy tools to enhance family reproductive potential, covering stages from the birth of the first child to planning subsequent children. Additionally, the research suggests that policymakers should prioritize support for large families, as is it the well-being of such families that significantly influences population growth in Russia.

The article by Vladimir N. Arkhangel'skiy, Svetlana Yu. Sivoplyasova, and Evgeniya M. Moiseeva *Exploring Fertility Dynamics and Factors Shaping Russia's Demographic Prospects* explores Russia's current depopulation trend, offering a detailed analysis of birth rate patterns. Using current birth rate calendar indicators alongside data from the

All-Russian Population Census 2020, the authors examine trends in real generations. Compared to traditional population census methods, this approach employs one-year age coefficients and provides us with a deeper understanding of age-specific fertility dynamics. The study examines several factors that influence fertility, such as demographic shifts and marriage rates. It draws on both statistical analysis and sociological surveys conducted by Rosstat [Federal State Statistics Service] and the Institute for Demographic Research—Branch of the Federal Center of Theoretical and Applied Sociology of the Russian Academy of Sciences. Furthermore, the article evaluates the fertility level needed to offset natural population decline in Russia and describes potential strategies to increase fertility rates.

The article by Elmira K. Naberushkina, Olga E. Fomina, Anna D. Levshits, and Ekaterina A. Knyazkova *Social Profile of Mothers Raising Children With Disabilities: A Survey in Rural and Small-Town Russia* highlights the specific challenges faced by women raising children with disabilities. In their research conducted in 2024, the authors focus on women residing in provincial towns of Vladimir and Nizhny Novgorod Oblasts. The study provides a detailed sociological profile of these women, encompassing such demographic characteristics as age, marital status, number of children, standard of living, financial situation, housing conditions, educational background, employment status, and personal interests. The study provides valuable insights into various aspects of these mothers' lives, including their overall life satisfaction, levels of support from the state and society, and the stigma associated with raising disabled children. The study also emphasizes the challenges faced by families raising disabled children in different spheres, spanning education, healthcare, social support, rehabilitation services, access to cultural and recreational activities, psychological and pedagogical assistance.

Anna P. Bagirova, Natalia D. Blednova, and Aleksandr V. Neshataev in the article "*Who if Not a Mother?": Development of Parental Leave Design in Russia* showcase the need to establish a more systematic approach to parental leave policy. Even though in Russia not only mothers but also fathers or other relatives may take advantage of childcare leave, statistics reveal that only 2% of fathers opt for parental leave instead of their spouses, which points to a significant disparity. To probe into the reasons behind this phenomenon, the authors conducted a series of in-depth semi-structured interviews with both mothers and fathers eligible for childcare leave at the time of the study ($n = 30$). Among other factors, women themselves often indicate their reluctance to relinquish their role as the primary caregivers. The reasons were classified as objective and subjective, reflecting entrenched gender stereotypes from both male and female perspectives. The research highlights the need for reevaluating and reshaping the current parental leave system in Russia, alongside targeted efforts to alter public opinion on this matter.

One of the most discussed topics in Russian demographic literature is the regional variation in mortality and the quest to uncover its determinants, which is necessary to develop effective policies for addressing regional disparities. In this context, the significance of the article by Alla E. Ivanova, Victoria G. Semyonova, Tamara P. Sabgayda, and Elena V. Polyanskaya *Regional Differences in Life Expectancy in Russia Through*

the Lens of Epidemiological Transition becomes apparent. To deal with depopulation and potential labor shortages, it is crucial to reduce premature mortality rates, which will also alleviate socio-demographic costs associated with factors like marriage dissolution due to widowhood and the increasing number of incomplete families.

Although the concept of epidemiological transition primarily describes the historical periodization of mortality, its fundamental methodological principles remain highly relevant for understanding current regional mortality differentials. The wide variation in life expectancy among Russian regions, amounting to a 16-year gap, signifies a disparity in the epidemiological era, characterized by fundamentally distinct age-specific and nosological mortality patterns and their underlying determinants. With the help of a classification system developed for Russian regions based on factors such as age-related life expectancy losses and the main causes of death in various age groups, the study identifies the key factors that affect mortality rates in these groups.

The concluding article by Galina I. Osadchaya, Tatyana N. Yudina, Olga A. Volkova, and Egor Yu. Kireev *Migrants From Central Asia in the Moscow Agglomeration: Social Well-Being and Demographic Attitudes* relies on findings from a 2023 survey conducted among Central Asian migrants living and working in Moscow. The article sheds light on various demographic attitudes and social well-being among migrants and builds their profile, encompassing marital status, fertility, reproductive and migration behaviors, values orientation, job satisfaction, daily life satisfaction, social mood, and prospects for the realization of their life plans.

On behalf of the contributors, we extend our gratitude to the journal's editorial board for the opportunity to prepare and publish this thematic issue on issues of demographic development. We look forward to continued collaboration and are confident that the journal will persist in publishing engaging and significant research for the advancement of both scientific knowledge and social well-being.

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