

# A study of the regional specificity of state support for large families

## Un estudio de especificidades regionales de apoyo estatal para familias numerosas

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#### ABSTRACT:

One of the main goals of government policy is to increase fertility and improve the demographic situation in the country. A significant role in solving this problem is allotted to large families. Besides, large families, especially single-parent families with three or more children, have the highest risk and incidence of poverty. Because of the higher dependency burden and lower relative employment of family members, they stand out compared to other categories of families by all socio-economic indicators of living standards. Severe demographic problems of Russia and, above all, the problems of reproduction of the population dictate the need for special attention from society and the state to the situation of families with children. The development and implementation of effective demographic and social policies to support families are hampered by the lack of legally approved definition of a "large family". The conducted research allows evaluating the importance of support to families from the state.

**Keywords:** Social support, benefits, large families

#### RESUMEN:

1064/5000 Uno de los objetivos principales de la política del gobierno es aumentar la fertilidad y mejorar la situación demográfica en el país. Un papel importante en la solución de este problema se asigna a las familias numerosas. Además, las familias numerosas, especialmente las familias monoparentales con tres o más hijos, tienen el mayor riesgo e incidencia de pobreza. Debido a la mayor carga de dependencia y el menor empleo relativo de los miembros de la familia, se destacan en comparación con otras categorías de familias por todos los indicadores socioeconómicos de los niveles de vida. Los graves problemas demográficos de Rusia y, sobre todo, los problemas de reproducción de la población dictan la necesidad de una atención especial de la sociedad y el estado a la situación de las familias con niños. El desarrollo e implementación de políticas demográficas y sociales efectivas para apoyar a las familias se ve obstaculizada por la falta de una definición legalmente aprobada de "familia numerosa". La investigación realizada permite evaluar la importancia del apoyo a las familias del estado.

**Palabras clave:** apoyo social, beneficios, familias numerosas

## 1. Introduction

Large families are a special socio-demographic group, because they are united by age boundaries, the presence of a young child (children), as well as the presence of typical

socio-psychological, ethical and moral characteristics, similar social experience and way of life. At the same time, large families, especially single-parent families with three or more children, are characterized by the maximum risk and degree of poverty (Antonov and Medkov 1996; Khamatkhanova 2013). Because of the higher dependency load and the smaller relative number of employed family members, they are distinguished in comparison with other categories of families by all social and economic indicators of living standards.

From a methodological point of view, it is possible to single out large families into a separate social group. Based on the definition of G.S. Antipina, a social group is a group of people with a common social characteristic performing the required function in the overall structure of the social division of labor and activities (Antipina 1982).

Important demographic problems in Russia, and, above all, the problems of population reproduction, necessitate special attention on the part of society and the state to the situation of families with children (Concept of the Demographic Policy of the Russian Federation for the Period up to 2025, 2007).

The development and implementation of effective demographic and social policies to support families are hampered by the lack of a legally approved definition of a "large family".

The Presidential Decree No. 431 of May 5, 1992 authorized the regional authorities to determine how many children form a large family. In addressing this issue, the national and cultural features of the region are taken into account (National Survey of Welfare of Households and Their Participation in Social Programs, n.d.).

The trend of recent years is that in the overwhelming majority of the constituent entities of the Russian Federation, families with three or more children are considered large families.

According to the program of state support for large families in the Russian Federation for 2008-2015 (draft), a large family means:

- for the regions of the Russian Federation with a negative natural population growth, a family with three or more children (including adopted children), including: children attending general educational institutions, up to the age of eighteen; children studying at institutions of secondary vocational and higher vocational education of any organizational and legal forms on an intramural basis, until the end of training, until they reach 22 years of age;
- for Russian regions with a positive natural population growth – a family with four or more children (including the above categories of persons) (The Program of State Support of Large Families in Russia for 2008-2015 (Project), 2008).

In accordance with the Law "On Free Granting of Land Plots to Citizens", families with three or more children are recognized as large families.

Currently, in the Tyumen Region a large family that can apply for help to state bodies is a family with three or more children under the age of 18, provided that each member of the family has an income below the subsistence minimum established in the given territory.

This is established by the Law of the Tyumen Region of December 28, 2004 No. 331 "On the Social Support for Certain Categories of Citizens in the Tyumen Region". At the same time, a family with three or more children is recognized as a large family and has the right to receive social support from the state, only if it is classified as a low-income family.

The proportion of large families is low, but there is a weak growth. In 2002, among family units with children under the age of 18, the share of families with three or more children was 5.4%. In 2010, it reached 5.8%.

In Russia, large families are mostly families with three children – 75% of large families. Only 17.3% of families have four children, 7.7% of families – five or more. In this case, having many children, as a rule, has a "regional character". For example, the North Caucasus republics can be distinguished in this regard – mainly their rural population. According to Lidiya Prokofieva, Senior Research Associate at the Center for Analysis of Income and Living Standards at the Institute for Management of Social Processes of the Higher School of Economics, in other subjects of the Federation having many children is a rare phenomenon (Trends in Changing the Family Structure of the Population of Russia, n.d.).

Accurate counting of large families becomes more complicated, because since 1998, civil registry offices stopped counting the order of appearance of a child in the family. And social security bodies count only those who applied to them for help.

Currently, the appearance of a child in the family, as a rule, significantly reduces the level of life, and the presence of three or more children in the majority of cases makes a family poor (The Program of State Support of Large Families in Russia for 2008-2015 (Project), 2008). Therefore, state support for large families is relevant (Khusnutdinova & Vorobev 2015).

The features of the interaction of large families with government and their social support are reflected in the results of the research conducted among representatives of large families of the city of Tyumen in the Tyumen Region.

## 2. Methods

In 2015-2016, the authors studied large families belonging to one of the public organizations of the city of Tyumen. At the time of the survey, the organization had 224 families in 2015, and 352 families in 2016 (Table 1).

**Table 1**  
Average number of children in the family, a member of the public organization

The number of children in the family	The share of households, %	
	2015	2016
3	50.9	53.1
4	23.2	25.9
5	14.7	12.2
6	4.9	3.7
7	3.6	2.8
8	1.8	0.6
9	0	1.0
10	0.4	0.3
11	0.4	0.3
The average number of children in the family	4	4

More than half of respondents were families with three children; a quarter of families had 4 children and during the last year, the number of such families increased. For families with five or more children, the trend is contrary, their number decreases. Less than 10% of respondents had six or more children. Based on the data presented in Table 1, the dynamics of a decrease in the number of families with five or more children are observed (Khamatkhanova & Khusnutdinova 2017).

## 3. Discussion and results

Large families are often regarded as "social dependents" (Khusnutdinova, 2015b). This public opinion is refuted by the results of the survey. More than 75% of respondents made a

decision about the birth of another child, irrespective of the role and programs of state support (Table 2). At the same time, they note the significant role of social support from the state.

**Table 2**

Measures of social support for large families contributing to the birth of the third and subsequent children

Answers	%
payment of child support corresponding to the subsistence level	18
a real prospect of improving housing conditions	41
respect from others	23
social guarantees for the mother during pregnancy and childcare	23
the opportunity to send the child to a good kindergarten	10
the opportunity to move out of town, live and work in the countryside	3
attentive, kind attitude to children in hospitals and to parturient women in maternity hospitals	9
including all childcare time under a certain age in the parents' years of service	10
possibility of earlier retirement	15
distribution of land	18
common religious reasons	28
recommendations of a spiritual advisor	2
programs that facilitate repair in hospitals, hospitals, clinics, the purchase of equipment	3
the increase in the size of pension depending on the number of born (adopted) children	7
payment of maternity capital	9
the need for a child of a particular sex	18
a positive example, when the state helps a large family with children living in the neighborhood, and other families who intend to have children can hope for the same help	21
possibility to repay a loan under the Young Family program	10
confidence in the long-term social guarantees of the state	21

The most important reasons for the birth of a child with the help of "government stimulation" can be ethical principles and causes associated with the improvement of living conditions (Khusnutdinova 2015a).

At the same time, a question was asked that helped to identify the most popular measures

of state support. Among the types of the received government support, large families pointed out targeted social benefits (Table 3).

**Table 3**  
Popular measures of social support for large families

Answers	%
maternity allowance	23
child care allowance for children aged under 1.5 years	36
family income supplement	32
targeted social assistance to large low-income families	35
payments for compensation of expenses on payment of services of housing and communal services	29
transport cards children or money instead of these cards	27
medicines for children under 6 years	18
milk products for children under 2 years	7
summer camp passes	29
Christmas gifts	38
weekend trips	23
discounts in music, sports, art schools	25
free meals at school	39
free consultations of specialists in social protection agencies	8
survivor's pension	2
means of rehabilitation	5

It should be noted that some types of assistance are put in a "comprehensive" way. For example, when applying for a benefit as a low-income family (that is, having a per capita income of less than 10,329 rubles per month, and in some cases less than 5,000 rubles), a family has the right to simultaneously apply for a transport card and compensation for payment for housing and communal services (The Decree of the Government of the Russian Federation "On the Establishment of the Subsistence Minimum per Capita and for the Main Socio-Demographic Groups of the Population in the Whole of the Russian Federation for the Second Quarter of 2017", 2017). However, some respondents marked these items selectively, which most likely indicated a low level of awareness of the population about related support measures.

When asked "Do you receive adequate state support?", only 4% of the respondents answered in the affirmative; more than half of the respondents (59%) were dissatisfied with the amount of the benefits received, 36% of the respondents answered that they did not

need any help (Table 4). (Kharchev 2003).

As the most relevant areas of the state's activities aimed at social support for large families and increasing their prestige, the respondents singled out the following:

**Table 4**  
Relevant measures to support large families

<b>Answers</b>	<b>%</b>
state assistance to large families in solving housing problems	86
improving the system of state benefits	28
increasing the accessibility of education for members of large families	59
ensuring access to health services	12
forming an attractive image of a large family in society	21
assistance in employment of members of large families	3
state assistance to non-profit organizations involved in social support for large families and protection of their rights	10
granting additional transport privileges for large families	27
support of farming and horticulture farms of large families	12
support of large business owners	14

The respondents noted that the most significant measure of state assistance was solving the problem of the accessibility of housing. Also, the availability of education plays an important role, both for underage children and for parents themselves.

Despite the existing programs, respondents also found the most imperfect moments of social support measures (Table 5).

**Table 5**  
Disadvantages of measures of social support for large families

<b>Answers</b>	<b>%</b>
the inattention and indifference of the authorities	36
ill-conceived laws, disagreement of new projects with families themselves	63
negative attitude of others towards large families	21
the lack of money	58
poor housing conditions	63
corruption	9
careless performance of duties by ordinary officials	10

the image of a large family as an antisocial family (which is supported by the media)	30
the confidence of others that a large family get privilege at the expense of small families	32

## 4. Conclusion

In conclusion, we note that almost all respondents believe that public authorities are able to enact laws that will create more favorable living conditions for large families. This is the opinion of 94% of respondents. In addition to pure numbers, it says that large families in their complicated life rely on the local authorities, believing that they can make laws that improve their lives. It should also be remembered that, according to the Russian Public Opinion Research Center (VTsIOM), 5% of large families give 25% of all births in the country, children and parents' attitude to the state is laid in the family.

The overwhelming majority of the interviewed representatives of large families believe that state social assistance is not enough. Despite the ongoing efforts in Russia to encourage fertility and help large families, at present the legislative base of the Russian Federation, developed at the federal level, remains rather meager. The federal law on state support of large families, adopted by the State Duma on November 17, 1999, requires major redesign and improvement.

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