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## **RECENT TRENDS IN FIRST MARRIAGE IN RUSSIA: RETARDED SECOND DEMOGRAPHIC TRANSITION**

In Russia, marriage remained early and universal over the 20<sup>th</sup> century. By the 1990s, mean age at first marriage was the same as in the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. The traditional marriage pattern continued to persist despite the drastic political and economic changes that took place over the last 100 years since the collapse of the Russian Empire through the breakdown of the empire of the Soviet Union. Only did the Second World bring short-lived interruptions in age patterns of first marriage. In the mid-1990s, the age at first marriage began to increase, while the first birth is delayed. Cohabitation outside marriage develops intensively. Obviously, Russia is leaving the traditional marriage pattern for a new one. Two-three decades later than the western European countries, Russia is entering the Second Demographic Transition, and in the foreseeable future returning to the previous model of family formation is hardly possible.

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## **RECENT TRENDS IN FIRST MARRIAGE IN RUSSIA: RETARDED SECOND DEMOGRAPHIC TRANSITION**

### **Abstract**

It was until very recently, that, with surprise, observers pointed out to the fact that marriage in Russia retained all the characteristics of a traditional marriage pattern: in the 1980s Russians still marry very young (mean age at first marriage for men is about 24, for women is about 22), and remain single extremely rare (for women expected proportion of never been married at 50 is less than 5%). Actually, as one can judge from the data of the population censuses and period and cohort marriage tables, no significant changes in age-specific pattern of first marriage have been observed over a century since the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century through until about 1990. The traditional marriage pattern (non-European pattern according to Hajnal) continued to dominate regardless huge upheavals that a Russian society experienced in the course of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Moreover, in the 1970s-1980s the age at first marriage was decreasing in response to a decrease in age at sexual debut in conditions of a low prevalence of efficient contraception.

The last decade has witnessed a profound change in all characteristics of marriage in Russia: total marriage rate has dropped significantly; age on a legal first marriage is increasing; the registered divorce rate remains very high (nearing the world highest) while the duration of divorce is increasing. The number of remarriages compensating divorce does not increase.

It is the first time in the period of over a more than a century that younger generations of Russians postpone first birth, and the proportion of children born outside marriage has amounted to 1/3 of all births. Meanwhile, family planning is becoming increasingly efficient, since abortions have dropped twofold over the last decade. One can suppose that the number of early marriages stimulated by premarital conception is decreasing which enhances the upward trend in the mean age at marriage.

The paper analyses the most recent trends in marriage in Russia against a backdrop of long-time series of data and international comparisons. The author makes a conclusion that on-going changes in marriage pattern in today's Russia are the most serious among those observed over a more than a century. Most likely, Russia has entered the path of a long-term transformation of a marriage pattern and tempo of family formation, which might be characterized as a belated second demographic transition. The cohorts born after the late 1960s, one after another, are giving up the model of family formation characteristic of their parents.

### *Data and methods.*

The data for the paper come from the population censuses of 1897, 1926, 1979, 1989, 2002 and the 1994 micro-census, and also from long-time series of marriage registration statistics. The main method used for analyses of age pattern of first marriage is period and cohort tables which are built by a life table technique. The paper gives basic indices of all known period marriage tables for Russia obtained earlier by various authors based on the censuses' data and marriage registration statistics for the years close to the census dates.

The development of individual data of the 1994 micro-census allowed the author to build complete tables of first marriage for successive one-year cohorts of women beginning with women born at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

Period tables are used to estimate an age profile of marriage in peaceful times with respect to historical events (the censuses in Russia were conducted in the years of the highest stability of political and economic situations). Cohort tables serve as a tool to reveal the impact of historical events on marital behavior. Based on the latter, one can readily see that cohorts which have experienced social cataclysms at different stages of their life have had different marriage stories, e.g. it is trivial that the largest interruptions in age profiles of first marriage rate are observed among cohorts with the highest disproportion of the sex structure in associated with mobilization and death of young men in wars.