Chapter 7

Marriage, Family, and Fertility Data in Russian and Soviet Censuses

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Soviet planners are interested in information on the fertility, marriage patterns, and family structure of the Soviet population because of the relevance of these data for monitoring and projecting population growth, for planning the demand for social services such as schools, for assessing social stability, and for studying the household economy. Both Soviet and Western researchers seek information on family and fertility in the Soviet population because of their bearing on questions of social structure and social change. Age of marriage, for example, is often regarded as an indicator of the social progress of women, as a large age gap between spouses can signal a situation in which males are strongly dominant. Also, the disappearance of the extended family has been considered part of the demise of a once traditional way of life.

Fertility differences among regions and among ethnic groups have come to be the major cause of differential rates of population growth. Higher Muslim than non-Muslim fertility generates concerns ranging from the effect of the high fertility of women in traditionally Muslim groups on the women’s status to alarm over the “yellowing of the Army” (Ogarkov, 1982) as the proportion of the total population from traditionally Muslim groups increases over time.

The traumas of Soviet history have affected patterns of marriage and family formation. World War II caused a severe male deficit, widowing many women, creating numerous single-parent families, and preventing a large number of women from marrying. These developments in turn affected female labor-force participation rates. Even now, a concern with

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labor shortage has fueled Soviet interest in the relationship between female labor-force participation, fertility, and child-care arrangements.

Family structure is central to the study of censuses because the way a census treats the individual, the family, and the household determines much of how the census is conducted. Whether family relationships are recorded, whether people need to be coresident to be considered members of the same family, and in what situations people can answer questions about others are all matters that hinge in this issue.

Overview of Family and Fertility Information in Russian and Soviet Census Reports

Table 7.1 summarizes the direct information on marital status, family structure, and fertility available in the published results of the Russian and Soviet censuses from 1897 to 1979. The only items available from all six censuses are marital status by currently married/currently not married, families (or households) by size, and the population by dependency status.

| Table 7.1. Availability of family and fertility data in Russian and Soviet census reports, 1897–1979 |
|-------------------------------------------------|------------|----------|------------|------------|----------|
| Marital status (married/not married)            | x          | x        | x          | x          | x        |
| Single, married, widowed, divorced               | x          |          |            |            | x        |
| Families or households by size                   | x          | x        | x          | x          | x        |
| Families/lone individuals                        |            | x        | x          | x          | x        |
| Families by type                                 |            |          | x          |            | x        |
| Children ever born                               |            |          |            |            | x        |
| Children at home                                 | x          |          |            | x          | x        |
| Crude birthrate                                  |            |          |            |            | x        |
| Children under one year of age                   | x          | x        |            | x          | x        |
| Population by dependent or not                   | x          | x        | x          | x          | x        |
| Dependents by type                               | x          | x        | x          | x          | x        |

The most basic distinction in family structure is between those who live in families and those who do not. Although the definition of a family differs from census to census, a family always must have at least two members. The family members must be related by blood, adoption, or marriage, and there is some requirement of coresidence, sharing of facilities, or sharing of a budget. Soviet censuses classify each member of the population according to whether that person is the head of a family, is not the family head but lives together with other members of
his or her family, is a member of a family not living together with the rest of his or her family, or is not a member of a family.

Overall, the 1926 census is the most complete of the six censuses, but the information gathered on family composition and on fertility has improved somewhat in post–World War II censuses. The 1970 and 1979 censuses collected and published more detailed information on the family for the Soviet Union as a whole than did earlier censuses.

Some information on family and fertility in Soviet censuses seldom appears in censuses anywhere. Only the 1979 census collected and published information on the number of children ever born to women. Similarly, crude birthrates rarely appear in censuses. In instances where these rates do appear, as in the 1959 Soviet census report, they had to be calculated by combining census data with vital-statistics data, a practice that usually is not followed.

Information on the dependency status of the population has always appeared in Russian and Soviet censuses. Some discussion of dependency is relevant to family and fertility because dependents are usually supported by other members of the family. Also, the relation between a woman’s dependency status and the presence of young children is a topic with great policy relevance.

Census Information on Family and Fertility

It is important to know what information relevant to family and fertility was collected and how the information was used to construct the measures in the census reports. The range of possible census results, of course, is constrained by what was asked. The instructions to interviewers also are helpful for understanding the meaning of the items.

Most questions about family and fertility were asked of the entire Soviet population. In most Soviet censuses, however, some questions were asked of only a part of the total population. Questions directed to a random sample of the population or directed at particular subgroups are often motivated by pressing policy concerns. Besides generating useful data, these special questions provide insight into the concerns of the census planners. In the 1926 census, some questions were asked only of urban residents. In the 1970 and 1979 censuses some questions were asked only of a random sample of the permanent resident families, and special questions were also asked of those working only in the domestic (household) economy or in private auxiliary agricultural employment.

*Organization of the census form.* The blanks for Russian and Soviet censuses have been published, but the instructions to enumerators usual-
ly do not state explicit questions to be asked. Table 7.2 shows the wording of the family and fertility items asked in each census. Every census asked sex and age for every person; sex and age (aside from age in months for those less than one year of age) are not listed in Table 7.2.

Table 7.2. Wording of questions on family and fertility in the Russian and Soviet censuses, 1897–1979

Fertility

1897, 1926, 1939
How many years of age ____ years, or for children less than one year ____ months.

1959
How many years of age, or if less than a year of age, what is the age—in months? (Years ____ Months ____)

1970
Age (Years ____ Months ____)
For those who desire to work, which of the following would convince you to work: 1) Having children in day care, school-internat or group with an extended day, 2) Obtaining work for part of each day or part of the week, 3) Obtaining work in (my) speciality, 4) Obtaining work near my home, 5) Obtaining further training in my profession, 6) Obtaining work I would enjoy, 7) Other reason
(In form for those in the working ages who work at home or as private auxiliary workers in the rural economy)

1979
For women ask: a) the number of children under 16 years of age (Total, number under 1 year of age, 1–2 years of age, 3–6 years of age, 7–13 years of age, 14–15 years of age), b) Of that number, the number in day care, school-internat, or group with an extended day (categories as above)
(In form for those in the working ages who work at home or as private auxiliary workers in the rural economy)

Marital Status

1897
Single, married, widowed, divorced or separated

1926
Marital status (Married, widowed, never married, separated or divorced)

1939
Are you currently married (Yes, no)

1959
Are you currently married? (Yes, no, widowed indicated to interviewer as acceptable answers)

1970
Are you currently married (Yes, no)

1979
Marital status (Married, never married, widowed, divorced/separated)

Relationship to head of family

1897
Write down the head of household or head of family

1926
Relationship to head of family (Wife, son, daughter, etc., [indicate])

Whether the person is the son or daughter of the family head from a previous marriage

Number of family members, including family head, regularly living in the dwelling
(On family card, for the urban population)

Number of servants and members of families of servants regularly living in this dwelling
(On family card, for the urban population)

Number of marital pairs in family
(On family card, for the urban population)

If head of family is a member of a marital pair, number of years married
(On family card, for the urban population)

1939, 1959, 1970
Relationship to head of family (Wife, son, daughter, mother, sister, nephew, etc., [indicate])

1979
Relationship to head of family (Head, wife/husband, daughter/son, mother/father, sister/brother, mother-in-law/father-in-law, daughter-in-law/son-in-law, grandmother/grandfather, granddaughter/grandson, niece/nephew/other relative, lone individual, member of a family that lives elsewhere)

Dependency status

1897
Source of support

1926
If not working, indicate the main source of support

1939
Of what social group are you a member: in a group of workers, service personnel, kolkhozniks, cooperative kustars, individual peasants, a free professional, or a member of a cult or a nonworking element?

1959
If not working, indicate the main source of support

1970, 1979
Primary source of support (Work at an enterprise, in the public sector, work in a kolkhoz, work in own account [for kustars and individual peasants], work as a private individual, free professional, private auxiliary worker in the rural economy, pensioners, on a stipend, other governmental support, dependent, other source)

Although the census is conducted by an enumerator who visits the household and supposedly asks every person (except young children) to answer for himself or herself, the census blank appears similar to one designed for self-enumeration. For example, the census blank contains a heading, such as Pol (Sex), and then a blank (M or Zh) to be checked. However, some questions have acceptable responses indicated, and the
1970 and 1979 censuses have precoded categories for the answers to many questions.

The 1897 census was a census of individuals. Unlike later censuses, the basic enumeration unit was the household, rather than the family. Households were tabulated by size, and enumerators recorded whether or not the members of the household were related. The enumeration in the 1926 census and later censuses was based on the family. In fact, the 1926 census included a "family card" for urban residents on which information such as the duration of marriage of the family head was recorded.

Definition of the family head. In the 1926 census and every later census the enumerator had to first determine who the head of the family was. After that was determined, given the definition of family in effect, the information for other family members could be recorded properly.

The definition of family head in Soviet censuses has shifted from being based on economic support to being based on perceptions within the family. The definition was not important in the 1897 census, since that census was based on individuals and developed scanty information about the family. In 1926 and 1939, the family head was to be the person providing the main support for the family (Gozulov and Grigor'yaants, 1969: 153; Boyarskiy and Shusherin, 1951: 187; Pustokhod and Voblyy, 1940: 148). In the 1959, 1970, and 1979 censuses the enumerator was instructed to record as family head whoever the family thought was the head, within wide bounds. The family head had to be an adult member of the family whose permanent residence was with the family (Maksimov, 1976; USSR, 1958b; USSR, 1978). Although instructed to accept whoever was designated as head by the family, the enumerator was to give guidance if the respondents had difficulty formulating an answer. In post-World War II censuses, enumerators were advised that the family head should be the person who provided the bulk of support for the family—harking back to the 1926 and 1939 definitions.

Isupov and Borisov (1978: 50–51), in commenting on the 1979 census, state that the designation of the family head is only an heuristic device and that husbands and wives in the Soviet Union have equal legal rights. In addition, they state that the census is not the place to determine whether a single family head exists or whether both marital partners share equally. Some Soviet scholars have complained about the inappropriateness of one person being designated as family head when two spouses share equally or when a family contains more than one marital pair (Ter-Izrael'yan, 1979). Nonetheless, the 1959 and 1970 censuses tabulated some information by the sex of the head of the family.
The recent Soviet definition of family head is generally in line with United Nations recommendations on the designation of the head of household. The UN recommends that

the head of the household is that person in the household who is acknowledged as such by the other household members. Although a more desirable definition for purposes of dependency statistics would be the person who bears the chief responsibility for the economic maintenance of the household, it is not recommended that this definition be applied because of the difficulty of collecting the information needed to determine economic responsibility. (UN, 1967a: 57)

The U.S. definition has differed substantially from UN recommendations. Before 1980, the definition stated:

The household head is the person reported as the head by members of the group, except that married women are not classified as heads if their husbands are living with them at the time of enumeration. (Shryock and Siegel, 1975: 302)

Since 1980, the United States has tabulated data in relation to a "reference person," who is that person or one of the persons in whose name the housing unit is owned or rented (Bianchi, 1982).

Determining who is a family member. Post–World War II Soviet censuses defined a family as follows:

A family for the purposes of the censuses includes those individuals, living together, related by blood or marriage¹ and sharing a common budget. Individuals living apart from the family, but who share with the family a common budget or a regular material link (regularnaya material'nya svyaz'), are also counted as family members, but as living apart from the family. Individuals not in a family and not sharing support with a family are counted as lone individuals. (USSR, 1974: 4)

The UN recommended definitions and the U.S. definition of family have been more concerned with coresidence than has the Soviet definition. The UN defines a family as

those members of the household... who are related to a specified degree, through blood, adoption or marriage. The degree of relationship used in determining the limits of the family is dependent on uses to which the data are to be put and so cannot be precisely set for world-wide use. (UN, 1967a: 48)

¹. Adopted children are also considered part of the family.
Before 1947, U.S. official usage defined a family as

all the persons who occupy a housing unit. A house, an apartment or other
group of rooms or a single room, is regarded as a housing unit when it is
occupied or intended for occupancy as separate living quarters. Separate
living quarters are those in which the occupants do not live and eat with
any other persons in the structure and in which there is either (1) direct
access from the outside or through a common hall, or (2) a kitchen or
cooking equipment for exclusive use of the occupants. (United States
Bureau of the Census, 1964: LV)

Since 1947, the former U.S. definition of a family has become the
definition of a household, and the definition of a family has become

the entire group of (two or more) persons in a household who are related by
blood, marriage, or adoption. According to this terminology, two related
married couples, a couple and a related parent-child group, or any other
group of two or more persons related to each other is counted as one family
if the members occupy the same living quarters and eat together as one
household. (Shryock and Siegel, 1975: 300)

Thus, the United States has moved from enumeration based on
households with coresidence as a necessary condition and kinship an
unimportant one to enumeration based on households with kinship
mattering but coresidence still being required. The Soviet definition of a
family concentrates on economic ties—sharing a common budget—for
those who are coresident, and on at least the maintenance of a regular
material link for family members who are not coresident.

The lack of a coresidence requirement for family membership in
Soviet census usage differs from census usage virtually everywhere else
in the world. Only in some parts of sub-Saharan Africa does the census
definition of family not require coresidence—leading to some families
reportedly containing over a hundred members in the case of Por-
tuguese Guinea (Burch, 1967: 356–58). In most parts of the world,

“Family” refers only to those kin with whom one co-resides. . . . Kin with
whom one does not share the same dwelling unit are not part of one’s
“family” in the demographic sense, even though they may live close by
(sometimes in adjacent dwellings), and even though there may be consider-
able social and economic integration among them. (Burch, 1979: 174)

Burch (1979: 182–83) notes that a common hypothesis that has
received little empirical support is that extended families tend to have
higher fertility than nuclear families. According to Burch and Gendell
(1970), one reason for this lack of empirical support may be the
restriction of consideration to kin who are coresident. The Soviet definition of family is more appropriate for a test of the hypothesized link between fertility and family extension than is the conventional definition of family.

The difference between most census definitions of family and the Soviet census definition of family is essentially the difference between the *family of residence* and the *family of interaction* (Burch, 1967: 348). Most censuses consider the family of residence; the Soviet definition is close to that of the family of interaction.

Even the sub-Saharan African definitions of family that do not require coresidence have assumed close residential proximity of those relatives considered family members (Goody, 1972: 106–10). The Soviet definition of the family does not limit the distance from the rest of the family that the "family members living apart" can reside and does not require that their residential separation be temporary—as long as they maintain a regular material link, they can be family members even though they are permanently resident elsewhere. Also, what constitutes a "regular material link" is a subjective matter determined by the family. There is no requirement that this link involve a majority of the support of the physically separated family member as long as the family considers it "regular."

A. G. Volkov, director of the Scientific Research Institute of the Soviet Central Statistical Administration, complained that the term "regular material link" was not clear and argued at the All-Union Conference of Statisticians convened prior to the 1970 Soviet census that the concept should be clarified. He noted, for example, that a student who had a wife and child at the place of his school but who still received financial aid from his parents could be considered a "family member living separately" in his parents' family. Since the student had his own family, though, Volkov maintained that he should not be thus classified. Despite this appeal, neither the term nor the instructions to interviewers on this point was changed (USSR, 1969: 311–12).

There are several likely consequences of the difference between the Soviet censuses will also contain fewer lone individuals than will American Definitional differences will cause Soviet families to be larger, to contain more dependents, and to be more extended than American families. Soviet censuses will also contain fewer lone individuals than will American censuses.

The difference stemming from the definitional interplay of current residence, place of permanent residence, and family membership can be illustrated by the different way Soviet and American censuses classify college students. According to Soviet convention in 1959 and 1970, students living away from home were classified as having their perma-
permanent residence at the place of the school, although they could still be classified as "family members, not living together with the rest of the family." In 1979, the designation of permanent residence at the place of the school applied only to Soviet students at specialized secondary or higher educational institutions. Since 1950, U.S. census procedure has classified college students away from home as permanent residents at the place of the college but secondary school students as permanent residents at the place of residence of their family of origin (Shryock and Siegel, 1975: 96). American students away at a university or college would not be considered members of their family of origin, but Soviet university students would still be members of their family of origin if they maintained a regular material link with that family.

The Soviet census definition affects the classification of families as extended. Imagine that the widowed mother of the family head lives in her own apartment, receives financial aid from her son, and eats with the son's nuclear family on weekends. U.S. definitions would consider the widowed mother a lone individual; Soviet definitions would consider her a member of her son’s family. U.S. definitions would consider the son’s family to be nuclear; Soviet definitions would consider it to be extended. Now imagine that the mother of the family head lives with her son’s family but maintains a separate budget. According to the Soviet census definition of family, she would not be a member of her son’s family; according to the American census definition of family, she would be a member of her son’s family. On balance, the Soviet definition is more likely to lead to recorded family extension than is the American definition. Volkov (1976: 22–24) notes that both the old and the young disproportionately appear in the categories "family members living apart from their families" and "lone individuals." Those in their 20s tend to be family members living apart, while those over age 50 tend more often to be lone individuals.

Definitions of who is permanently absent as opposed to temporarily absent are also important. In post–World War II Soviet censuses, information on many topics has been reported sometimes for the present population and sometimes for the permanent population; information on family always refers to the permanent population (Anderson and Silver, 1985). Soviet censuses define people as "temporarily absent" if their permanent residence is still with the family and if they have been absent less than six months. People who have been absent less than six months but who (in the opinion of the family) do not intend to return are permanently absent—that is, their permanent residence is elsewhere.

2. Students residing at school and members of the military are considered permanently absent even if they have been gone less than six months and even if they intend to return.
Family composition. Soviet censuses have presented information on the composition of the family, including the number of family members, the dependency status of family members, and the sex of the head of the family. Information on the type of family is usually not included in censuses. As Burch (1967: 352) notes, "No convenient international compilations are available on such questions as the number of generations, relationship of household or family members to the head of household, and so forth. Indeed, few nations have comprehensive census data on these more detailed aspects of family composition."

The distribution of families by size has appeared in the published results of each of the five Soviet censuses. This information refers not to all family members but only to the coresident members of the family. For 1970, however, it is possible to estimate the average size of the entire family, including non-coresident members. For the USSR as a whole in 1970, the average number of coresident family members was 3.7 (Volume 7, Table 25) and of all family members was 3.9 (from the number of family members and the number of lone individuals in Volume 7, Table 22, and from the number of families in Volume 7, Table 25). Although these differences are not large, neither are they trivial.

The lack of a coresidence requirement for family membership probably has more effect on the recorded proportion of families that are extended than on family size. Data on families by type (described below) refer to all family members, not just coresident family members; no data have been located that would allow estimation of the proportion of families that would be extended if coresident family members alone were considered. In 1970, 22.9 percent of families in the USSR as a whole were recorded as extended, that is, were of Types 2, 3, or 4b below (calculated from data in Volume 7, Table 27).

The inclusion of non-coresident family members may be making a large difference in the estimated proportion of families that are extended. If in 1970, for example, every non-coresident family member caused one family to be recorded as extended when that family would not have been recorded as extended based only on coresident family members, then only 6.2 percent of the families in the USSR as a whole would have been recorded as extended based on coresident family members rather than 22.9 percent based on coresident and non-coresident members. The actual effect of inclusion of non-coresident family members in the determination of whether the family is extended is certainly not as great as these calculations suggest is possible, but using the available data to compare the proportion of families that are extended for the USSR and for other countries would be very misleading.

For 1970 and 1979, the distribution of families by size was published according to nationality for families in which all members belonged to
the same nationality and also for families of mixed nationality. These
data are published by union republic and other nationality areas. They
also are published (not by nationality) by oblast. Coale, Anderson, and
Härm (1979) used these data to estimate marital fertility by nationality,
and Fisher (1980) suggested using them to estimate ethnic intermarriage
rates.

The 1926, 1970, and 1979 censuses include interesting information on
families by type. The 1926 census classified families as follows:³

Type A. Families including a marital pair
   A1. Not including children
      A1a. Without (other) relatives
      A1b. With economically inactive (other) relatives
      A1c. With economically active (other) relatives
   A2. Including children only of the marital pair
      A2a. Without (other) relatives
      A2b. With economically inactive (other) relatives
      A2c. With economically active (other) relatives
   A3. Including children from previous marriages
      A3b. With economically inactive (other) relatives
      A3c. With economically active (other) relatives

Type B. Families without a marital pair, but that include children of the
family head
   Ba. Without (other) relatives
   Bb. With economically inactive (other) relatives
   Bc. With economically active (other) relatives

Type C. Families without a marital pair that do not include children of the
family head
   Cb. With economically inactive (other) relatives
   Cc. With economically active (other) relatives

Type D. Complex families

The 1970 classification was

1. One marital pair with or without children
2. One marital pair with or without children, but with other relatives
3. Two or more marital pairs with or without children with or without
   other relatives
4a. A mother/father with children
4b. A mother/father with children, with other relatives
5. Other families

³ The letters and numbers assigned to the different types of families in 1926 are as assigned
in the 1926 census. No numbers or letters were assigned to the types of families in the 1970 or
the 1979 censuses. Numbers and letters are assigned here for convenient reference and
comparison.
The 1979 classification was

1. One marital pair with or without children
2a. One marital pair with or without children, but with one of the parents of the marital pair
2b. One marital pair with or without children, but with or without one of the parents of the marital pair but with other relatives
3. Two or more marital pairs with or without children with or without other relatives
4. A mother/father with children
5. Other families

All these typologies focused on the presence or absence of a marital pair, of children, and of nonnuclear relatives. In addition, in 1926 there was a concern with economic activity of nonnuclear kin. The 1979 census was more concerned with whether the family was extended only because of the presence of a parent of the head or a parent of the spouse of the head, while the 1970 census was more concerned with whether a family without a marital pair but with children of the head also included other relatives. The published results of the 1979 census noted that “children” for families classified as Type 1 included “children of all ages, living together with their parents and not married” (Vestnik statistiki, 1983: 70). Apparently if married children lived with their parents, the family would then be classified as Type 2b.

The data on dependency status are also interesting. In 1926, family members were classified as to whether or not they were “economically active.” The industry in which economically active people worked was cross-classified by the people’s marital status and other family characteristics. For those who were not economically active, the cross-tabulations were presented according to the industry in which the person supporting the dependent person worked. The data on dependents in the 1959 census are noteworthy because dependent women in the working ages were classified as to whether or not they had children younger than age 14. The dependency data reported from the 1970 and 1979 censuses did not include information on the presence of children for dependent women.

Currently married versus ever married. Russian and Soviet censuses have varied in the degree of detail for which data on marital status are collected and published. The 1897 and 1926 censuses recorded a full range of marital statuses: single, currently married, widowed, and divorced or separated. The 1939 census recorded only whether or not a person was currently married. In 1959, the interviewers were instructed to record people as married if currently married, widowed if widowed,
and not currently married otherwise. In the published 1959 census report, however, the widowed were not separately reported—only a classification by currently married/not currently married was given. In 1970, only current marital status was recorded. The 1979 census returned to the 1897 and 1926 practice of recording a full marital status distribution.

The return to a full marital status distribution in 1979 should allow fuller analysis of marital dissolution in the Soviet Union. However, the published 1979 census results have not yet presented detailed marital status in interesting cross-tabulations. Also, the lack of data by age, including marital status by age, seriously limits the usefulness of the information published to date from the 1979 census.

Who was considered a married person or a divorced person has varied among censuses. In 1897, enumerators were only supposed to record as married those who were legally (officially) married. In later censuses, people were to be recorded as married who considered themselves so, whether the marriage was registered or not. In 1897 and 1926, people were to be recorded as divorced only if the divorce was registered, while in later censuses, people who considered themselves divorced were to be recorded as divorced (or not married) whether or not the divorce was registered (Gozulov and Grigor’yants, 1969: 145).

The initial variant of the 1970 census conducted in 1966 and the test census conducted in 1967 included a full marital status distribution and questions on the duration of marriage for women and the month and year of first marriage and the month and year of dissolution of first marriage (where appropriate) (Gozulov and Grigor’yants, 1969: 163). None of these detailed questions were included in the 1970 census, although the detailed breakdown of marital status appeared in the 1979 census. In their review of the 1979 census methodology, Isupov and Borisov (1978: 52) do not comment on this change in detail on marital status for the 1979 census.

Even though the answer to the question on marital status seems straightforward, the question is subjective. Partners sometimes disagree as to whether or not they are married. For example, comparison of the estimated numbers of Soviet women and men who in 1959 reported themselves as married reveals that larger numbers of women than of men are married at all ages. This discrepancy probably occurs partially because widows sometimes report to census takers that they are married. Also, Goldstein, Goldstein, and Piampiti (1973) found evidence for Thailand that men living apart from their wives sometimes report that they are not married, while their wives more often report themselves as married.

Gozulov and Grigor’yants (1969: 147–48) discuss this phenomenon for those reaching marriageable age in the 1920s through World War II
in the Soviet Union. They state that more women than men reported themselves married or divorced (rather than never married) among those who reached marriageable age, even though owing to social turbulence and the shortage of marriageable males, more women than men remained legally unmarried. For the Soviet population as a whole in 1959, based on the reported numbers of men and women aged 16 and over (as published in the 1970 Soviet census report) and the reported proportions of men and women married (as published in the 1959 census report), there were 42,892,500 married men and 43,642,700 married women. Thus, for every 1,000 women reported as married, there were 17 missing husbands, that is, 17 fewer men who reported themselves as married.

In the 1926 census, a larger number of women than men were also reported as currently married. This larger number of currently married women than men for Soviet Central Asia in 1926 has sometimes been interpreted as evidence of polygamy. However, the ratio of the number of married women to married men for Soviet Central Asia in 1926 falls within the range of this ratio for all the Soviet union republics in 1926. Hence, there seems no solid evidence of substantial polygamy in 1926 but only the typical greater tendency of women than men to report themselves as married.

*Children present and children ever born.* Censuses usually do not record information directly bearing on fertility. Only the 1979 Soviet census includes a direct question on fertility.

The closest that Soviet censuses before 1979 came to recording fertility information was to ask the age in months of children less than one year of age on the census date or to tabulate the number of children of the family head or of the wife of the family head who resided with them. The data on children under one year of age are related to recent fertility but are affected by infant mortality and by the well-known tendency for children under one year of age to be missed by the census or to be reported as one year of age (Ewbank, 1981).

The special questions in the 1926 census for the urban population reflect a concern at that time with urban living conditions and the nature of the urban family. For Moscow, Leningrad, and other large cities in the RSFSR, there are tabulations of the number of children by marital duration and of the number of children by occupation of the family head. However, these 1926 data only include surviving children residing in the same household and are not tabulated for all types of families. The data on children by marital duration only refer to families in which the family head is part of a marital pair and in which there are either no children (Type A1) or all the children in the household are the offspring of the
family head’s current marriage (Type A2). The data on the number of children by occupation of the family head only refer to families in which the family head is a member of a marital pair (Types A1 and A2) or the family head is not a member of a marital pair but the family includes children of the family head (Type B). For these urban populations, additional data are also presented for families with the head a part of a marital pair and which contain children all of whom are offspring of the current marriage (Type A2). These data provide the average age of the oldest child and the average age of the youngest child, by social group of the family head. With some qualifications, and in combination with data on the number of children in the family, these data can be used to investigate the timing of fertility.

The 1970 Soviet census also included data on the number of children. As in 1926, these data did not refer to all children ever born; they referred only to surviving children residing with their families. Also, the table that presented the number of children by age of mother (Volume 7, Table 32) and the tables that presented the number of children per 1,000 women (Volume 7, Tables 35–37) only referred to children who were coresident with their mother in families that included only one marital pair or a mother living with her children (types 1, 2, 4a, and 4b). In Volume 7, Table 32, the number of families in the USSR as a whole with two children was 14,473,833. In Volume 7, Table 28, which only required that children live with their families, the number of families with two children was 15,490,031. This illustrates the more general point that it is important to understand to what population subgroup any given table refers.

These 1970 data imperfectly reflect age-specific fertility because they are affected by differential mortality, patterns of home-leaving, and differential rates of occurrence of families with more than one marital pair. In Central Asia, for example, extended families might have higher fertility than nuclear families have. If so, these data would underestimate age-specific fertility in Central Asia because they would not include the fertility of women living in extended families that included more than one marital pair.

The inclusion of a question in the 1979 census (in the 25 percent sample) on the number of children ever born was a marked departure from earlier practice. “Children ever born” included living children residing with their mother, living children who resided elsewhere, and children who had died. Tabulations of the number of children of a woman living in the same family are much more common in all countries, because they do not require a special question but only a roster specifying the relationships between family members.

In 1979, the question on children ever born was to be asked of all
women aged 16 or older (in the 25 percent sample), regardless of marital status. Information for women younger than age 16 was only supposed to be recorded for those young women who had borne children. It was not clear how the enumerator was to determine whether a woman younger than age 16 had borne children. According to Isupov and Borisov (1978: 57), this question was included because obtaining material on the combination by age and other characteristics of the level of fertility of different generations of women by ten-year age groups allows the examination of the differences in fertility in relation to education and nationality. All of this is necessary for the scientific study of the factors related to fertility and the creation of a great furthering of the conditions for the development of Soviet families.

In the 1979 census, the published tabulations from this question report the data for all women aged 15 or older rather than aged 16 or older. Probably the denominator is all women aged 15 or older while the numerator is reported children ever born of all women, even those few children born to women aged 14, 13, or even younger. The lack of agreement between the ages of women who were asked the number of children ever born and the ages used in the publications to date suggests that more fertility was found among women younger than age 16 than the census planners had expected. However, no data on the number of children ever born by age of mother have been published from the 1979 census.

The Soviet definition of a live birth will also make some difference in the number of children ever born. While women were supposed to report all live births, they were not to include stillbirths. The official Soviet definition of a live birth classifies some births as stillbirths that the American definition would classify as live births (United States, Department of Health, Education and Welfare, 1962: 24). If women responded to the Soviet census enumerator in accordance with the Soviet definition of a live birth, then the reported number of children ever born would be somewhat fewer than if the American definition of a live birth had been used.

The identical form was administered to those without public sector jobs in 1970 and 1979. It included items on reasons for not working and on children under age 16 by child-care arrangements. These questions were asked because of the government’s strong interest in finding ways to mobilize labor reserves and especially ways to motivate women with young children to take public sector jobs (Isupov and Borisov, 1978). Neither the detailed census results nor research based on these special questions has been published, although the original tabulation plans for
the 1970 census included some results using these questions (USSR, 1969: 673). Since plans were originally made to publish some of the data from this special form, something must have happened in the late 1960s or early 1970s which changed that decision.

Data Reliability

In Soviet censuses, as in other censuses and surveys, some rules are more likely to be violated than others. For example, it has commonly been found that more women report themselves as separated or divorced (rather than never married) than do men, even beyond what can be explained by differential remarriage rates. One possible explanation for this phenomenon is that once-married men can plausibly report themselves as single, while women with children have more difficulty doing so. In addition, unwed mothers often report themselves as divorced, separated, or widowed (Shryock and Siegel, 1975: 286). The extent of this misreporting has declined in the United States, possibly owing to a lessening disapproval of illegitimacy (Shryock and Siegel, 1975: 286). At the All-Union Conference of Statisticians held in advance of the 1970 Soviet census, it was noted that differences in the full marital status distribution by sex from the test censuses looked even more implausible than the differences by sex using only the married/not married classification (USSR, 1969: 230). Fuller publication of the detailed marital status data from the 1979 census would allow independent examination of this issue.

The question on temporary absence is certain to cause some difficulty for respondents. People normally have trouble reporting whether events happened more or less than a given length of time in the past. For example, reports on births in the last year are often biased by inaccurate perception of the reference period (Brass, 1975). Also the answer to the question on temporary absence may be affected more by the strength of the feelings of attachment of the rest of the family for the "temporarily absent" member than by the exact length of time the person has been gone or whether the person intends to return.

In addition, in post–World War II censuses the data on family members living apart from the rest of the family are likely to contain some error. For the data to be correct, those living together with the rest of the family and those living apart would need to be in perfect agreement as to whether a person maintained a "regular material link" with the rest of the family. Such agreement is unlikely.

It is well known that older women tend to underreport the number of their children ever born, partially because of omission of dead children
and partially because of omission of children who have left home. It would be surprising if this did not happen to some extent in Soviet censuses. Publication of the number of children ever born by age of the mother would provide information that could be used to determine the extent to which such underreporting has occurred (Brass, 1975).

Calculation of Measures Indirectly or in Combination with Noncensus Data

Measures of fertility and family structure can be direct or indirect. On the most direct level, individuals are asked questions, and the distribution of answers is reported. Information obtained by combining answers from more than one respondent is more indirect. For example, censuses sometimes report the distribution of families by type, such as the number of families with one marital pair, with more than one marital pair, and so on. This kind of information is constructed from the set of responses on age, sex, and relationship to the family head from all the respondents in a given family.

Information can be obtained even more indirectly. Usually censuses report information on the status of the population at a given time, such as on the population by marital status by age or the number of women by number of children ever born. Censuses rarely report data on the timing of occurrences of events. For example, censuses rarely report recent births by age of women or recent marriages by age of spouses. Event occurrence data (also called current-accounts data) are usually obtained from the vital-registration system rather than from the census operation. Vital registration obtains information on the number of people to whom some event, such as marriage or birth, has happened in a given time period, but the information from the vital-registration system alone is not sufficient to calculate a rate of occurrence. The vital-registration system cannot provide information on the number of people “at risk” of the event, that is, the number of people to whom the event could have happened—the denominator for a rate. Information on the population at risk is typically obtained from a census. The rate then is calculated from various pieces of information, of which the census provides an important part.

Even more indirect measures can be constructed using census data. Fertility measures are sometimes estimated from census-based population information that does not include items directly referring to fertility at all. For example, the age distribution of the population in combination with a mortality assumption can be used to estimate fertility.
Calculation of marital status. Just as census data are needed to provide denominators for fertility rates when birth data come from vital registration, vital-registration data are necessary to update census estimates of the population by current status between census dates. Naturally, vital-statistics data on births and deaths are used to revise total population estimates. However, vital-registration data on marriages, divorces, and deaths (widowhood) are also used to update estimates of the composition of the population by marital status. For example, using both census and vital-statistics data, the researcher can construct a nuptiality table in the form of a multiple decrement life table for the USSR which is sensitive to period effects on nuptiality (cf. Anderson, 1982; Volkov, 1979).

Results of vital-statistics data collection on marriage and marital dissolution are published by the Soviet Central Statistical Administration in the monthly Vestnik statistiki. Marriages and divorces per 1,000 population by sex and age are frequently published for the Soviet population as a whole. Often marriages and divorces per thousand population by sex (not by age) are also published by union republic. Data on divorce by duration of marriage for the total Soviet population are available, but union republic-level data on marriage and divorce by age are more scanty and are found erratically in Narodnoye khozyaystvo volumes for union republics.

Models of marriage can be applied to Soviet data on marital status to estimate first-marriage patterns (Coale, Anderson, and Härm, 1979). Such fitted models can be useful for comparing the dynamics of marriage across census dates, unaffected directly by changes in the age distribution.

Calculation of fertility measures. Most conventional fertility measures, such as the crude birthrate or age-specific fertility rates, are calculated through a combination of birth data (or birth data by age of mother) from the vital-registration system and total population data (or data on the female population by age) from the census. Sometimes, however, a lack of fit between census data and vital-statistics data distorts measures. In late-nineteenth-century European Russia, for example, different definitions of urban were used for different purposes (Fedor, 1975). Thus, differences between the urban definition used in the census and that used in vital statistics led to distorted fertility measures for some guberniyas (Coale, Anderson, and Härm, 1979: 212–13).

While in the Soviet Union, as in most countries, the census is under central control, the vital-statistics system is more decentralized. At the All-Union Conference of Statisticians convened before the 1979 Soviet census, R. M. Dmitriyeva, director of the Sector on Statistics of
Population, Health, and Social Welfare of the Soviet Central Statistical Administration, noted that the coverage of vital-statistics data in the Soviet Union is generally less complete than census data and that improvement of the quality of the current-accounts data should be a concern of those involved in the census (Ter-Izrael’yan, 1979: 144–51).

Demographers have long relied on census data by age and sex to obtain fertility estimates. Estimation of recent fertility was clearly the main motivation behind the question on the number of children under one year of age which has been included in some Russian and Soviet censuses. Some evidence suggests that estimates of fertility for 1897 based on the number of children under one year of age are more accurate than estimates based on vital registration (Coale, Anderson, and Härm, 1979: 207–19).

Demographers sometimes employ the child/woman ratio, which is usually the number of children under 5 years of age per 1,000 women aged 15–49, as an indicator of fertility. Researchers using Soviet data have more often used the ratio of children aged 0–9 to women aged 20–49 because of the age categories in which Soviet data are presented (cf. Lewis, Rowland, and Clem, 1976; Mazur, 1967; Silver, 1974). Child/woman ratios are, however, imperfect measures of fertility because they are affected by differential mortality and by differences in the age structure of women within the childbearing ages. We know, for example, that fertility is higher in Central Asia than in the Baltic area. We also know that the age structure is older in the Baltic area than in Central Asia. The higher infant and child mortality in Central Asia will lead the child/woman ratio to underestimate Central Asian fertility in comparison with the Baltic region. On the other hand, the younger age structure in Central Asia will lead to an overestimate of Central Asian fertility in comparison with that of the Baltic. There is no assurance that these countering tendencies will cancel each other out.

Another means of obtaining a fertility estimate involves fitting a population model to the available data by age. For example, a mortality assumption can be used in combination with the proportion of the population under a given age, such as under age 10, in order to fit a model stable population (Brass, 1975; UN, 1967b). A fertility estimate can then be obtained from the fitted model stable population (cf. Coale, Anderson, and Härm, 1979). If the mortality assumption is correct for the given population, and if the population sufficiently fits the other assumptions of stable population models, the mortality level and the age structure will be taken into account by using this method.

The age structure by marital status can also be used to estimate both marital fertility and aspects of the marriage pattern, if certain stable
population assumptions are met (Coale and Trussell, 1974). Some regions of the Soviet Union, such as Central Asia, fit these assumptions more closely than other regions, such as European Russia.

Yet another method involves obtaining a regression predictor of fertility from known relationships in order to estimate fertility for groups for which the desired data are not published. Mazur (1976) used this approach in estimating the total fertility rate by nationality from the relation between the Soviet version of the child/woman ratio and the crude birthrate by geographical area of the Soviet Union and between the crude birthrate and the total fertility rate from non-Soviet data. Coale, Anderson, and Härm (1979) used a regression approach to estimate marital fertility in the USSR by nationality in 1970 based on the relation between a measure of marital fertility and the distribution of families by size across provinces.

Both Soviet and Western scholars have been interested in the demography of the Soviet family. The Soviet government has collected extensive data on this topic, although they have not always been published in full. The importance of these data suggest that Soviet statistics on marriage, fertility, and family structure will continue to be collected. It is hoped that they will also continue to be published.

References


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