Fertility after Repartnering in Russia:
Pursuing the Two-Child Ideal in a Context of Increased Marital Complexity

Sergei V. Zakharov, Victor Agadjanian, Elena Churilova

Abstract

Despite the growing prevalence and acceptability of second unions in developed countries, the consequences of these developments for fertility have not been adequately studied. We analyzed data from three waves (2004, 2007, and 2011) of the Russian Generation and Gender Survey to examine trends and determinants of births in second and subsequent unions, both marriages and cohabitations. Our findings reveal that the contribution of non-first unions to overall fertility has increased tenfold in the past half-century. Moreover, the completed fertility in case of repartnering is not less than the completed fertility of women, which were in the persistent unions. Even women, who gave the first birth outside the union, in case of repartnering had the same number of children as women who did not experience a separation. Thus, stepfamily formation allowed Russian women to reach the two-child ideal at the same measure that living continuously with the first partner.

Introduction

Rapid deinstitutionalization of lifetime marriage in developed countries in the second half of the 20th century has resulted in a situation where diverse forms of traditional and non-traditional unions have become widely acceptable. On the one hand, all developed countries have seen increased risks of dissolution of first unions; on the other hand, these risks have been partly compensated by increases in second and subsequent unions (e.g., Vikat et al., 1999; Buber I., Prskawetz A., 2000; Thomson et al. 2009). Demographic consequences of these fundamental social shifts in different socioeconomic and cultural contexts have not yet been well studied. In particular, the contribution of second unions to the overall fertility levels has not been adequately addressed, especially outside western settings. In this paper, we use rich recent longitudinal survey data from the Russian Federation to describe the distribution of births in non-first unions over time and to model the risks of such birth from the characteristics of unions and partners. In a broader sense, the paper makes a contribution to the debate on the persistence of the two-child ideal in contemporary Europe (Sobotka 2014) by examining how childbearing in non-first unions corresponds to or deviate from this ideal.

Background

As in other developed countries, second union formation after the dissolution of the first union has become increasingly common in Russia over the past decades. According to the data from the Russian Generation and Gender Survey (RusGGS), half of both men and women from dissolved first unions find a new partner within 3-5 years of the dissolution; within fifteen years of the dissolution, these shares reach 80% and 70% among men and women, respectively. The mean interval between the first and second unions has been diminishing since the end of WWII: for first unions that dissolved in the 1950-1960ss it was about five years, compared to no more than four years today (Zakharov 2009). As a result, the share of life spent in union has increased, which, as evidence from other European settings suggest, for women means an increase in fertility (Beaujouan and Solaz, 2008; Thomson et al. 2009). Our estimates from RusGGS data show that for women who had their first child in a first union, the probability of having a second child in a second union is not much different from that of having a second child in an intact first union. This is a radical departure from some twenty-thirty years ago, when a young divorced woman with a small child had much greater difficulty to remarry and when the probability of a second birth in non-first unions was very low.

Moreover, judging by responses of RusGGS female participants, registered and non-registered second unions are now equally common: thus among women whose first marriages dissolved in the first half of the 1990s, ten years after the end of those marriages, 30% were

living in registered marriage while 31% in unregistered union. By comparison, for women who divorced in the 1970s and formed their subsequent unions mainly in the 1990s, the corresponding figures were 50% and 12%.

In sum, in contemporary Russia, subsequent unions not only compensate for more than half of dissolved first unions but entry into a second union occurs earlier than before and during active reproductive age, thereby creating conditions for births in second unions. As a result, despite considerable decline in stability of unions and increased probability of dissolution, there is no substantial shortening of the period (average duration) of exposure to the risk of pregnancy and birth. Yet, because of the increased diversity of the institutional forms of second unions, such unions now account for a high percentage of "out-of-wedlock" birth.

Research questions

Building upon prior research on union reconfiguration and recomposition and childbearing in western settings (e.g., (Vikat et al., 1999; Vikat et al 2004; Buber I., Prskawetz A., 2000; Henz. and Thomson, 2005; Beaujouan and Solaz, 2008), our paper looks at births in second unions in the context of the Russian Federation. Specifically, we examine variations in the likelihood of a childbirth in a second union across different types of union – e.g., registered marriage, cohabitation without subsequent registration, and cohabitation without registration. We also examine the role of other factors, such as demographic and socioeconomic characteristics of both partners, characteristics of previous unions and number and age of children from previous unions.

Data & Method

We use data from three waves of a nationally representative panel survey, RusGGS, which was carried out in the Russian Federation in 2004, 2007, and 2011 as part of the multi-country Generations and Gender Program coordinated by the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE 2014). More than 11,000 men and women 18 years old and older were interviewed in each wave; more than 7000 respondents were interviewed in all three waves.

We start the analysis with descriptive statistics on the distribution of births by birth order across first and second unions and across key demographic and socioeconomic predictors. For the multivariate analysis, we use logistic regression and survival analysis techniques to test for the effects of covariates of interest on the probability of having a child in a second union.

Preliminary results

Table 1 presents the distribution of births that occurred in the 1950s, 1960s, 1970s, 1980s, 1990s, and in 2000-2009. Contribution of repeated marriages in the total number of births of all orders consistently increased. In the mid-20th centuries, less than 2% of all births were provided with non-first unions. In the first decade of the 21st century, re-unions gave life to every tenth firstborn, every fourth second birth and more than 40% of all third births.

Table 2 presents the distribution of births across age cohorts by order of union and order of birth. As can be seen, the number of non-first births increases considerably among the youngest cohort. Yet, the table also illustrates the rapid increase in the share of second and third births in second unions.

In all, the contribution of non-first unions to overall fertility has increased tenfold in the past half-century.

Table 1. Contribution of first and second unions to the total number of first and higher-order births by birth orders in 1950-1959, 1960-1969, 1970-1979, 1980-1989, 1990-1999, 2000-2009

Union by order	Year of childbirth					
	1950-1959	**1960-1969**	**1970-1979**	**1980-1989**	**1990-1999**	**2000-2009**
First births						
First	99.6	98.0	98.2	96.8	95.6	89.1
Second	0.4	2.0	1.8	3.2	4.4	10.9
Second births						
First	98.6	93.7	88.9	87.9	81.1	75.0
Second	1.4	6.3	11.1	12.1	18.9	24.1
Third births						
First	100.0	93.2	77.1	73.5	75.0	57.1
Second	0.0	6.8	22.9	26.5	25.0	42.9

Source: Panel data of Russian GGS-2004, 2007, 2011
Note: Women born in 1930-1986 included in analysis.

Table 2. Contribution of first and second unions to the number of first and higher-order births by birth orders for women born in 1930-1939, 1940-1949, 1950-1959, 1960-1969, 1970-1979, 1980-1986

Union by order	Birth cohort of women					
	1930-1939	**1940-1949**	**1950-1959**	**1960-1969**	**1970-1979***	**1980-1986***
First births						
First	97.9	97.7	96.3	97.5	95.6	93.1
Second	2.1	2.3	3.7	2.5	4.5	6.9
Second births						
First	93.5	88.3	84.8	87.3	81.0	78.6
Second	6.5	11.7	15.2	12.7	19.0	21.4
Third births						
First	89.4	75.0	73.0	78.8	61.4	66.7
Second	10.6	25.0	27.0	21.2	38.6	33.3

Source: Panel data of Russian GGS-2004, 2007, 2011
* Preliminary estimates because of younger women's age at the survey.

No less intriguing is changing the structure of births that occurred in the first and in the second unions, depending on marital status of parents. *Table 3* shows that, for example, the second order children are increasingly born to mothers who are not officially married. Since the second unions less than the first unions are happen to be official marriages, the proportion of second children born to mothers who dwells in the second union that is cohabitation reaches 80 percent or more of the total number of second births occurred in second unions.

Table 3. Contribution of marriages and cohabitations of first and second union orders to the total number of second births in 1950-1959, 1960-1969, 1970-1979, 1980-1989, 1990-1999, 2000-2009

Marriage or cohabitation	Year of childbirth					
	1950-1959	**1960-1969**	**1970-1979**	**1980-1989**	**1990-1999**	**2000-2009**
First unions						
Marriage	88.6	79.1	76.9	78.0	70.3	58.1
Cohabitation	11.4	20.9	23.1	22.0	29.7	41.9
Second unions						
Marriage	100.0	23.5	38.1	39.2	22.7	17.0

Marriage or cohabitation	Year of childbirth					
	1950-1959	**1960-1969**	**1970-1979**	**1980-1989**	**1990-1999**	**2000-2009**
Cohabitation	0.0	76.5	61.9	60.8	77.3	83.0

Source: Panel data of Russian GGS-2004, 2007, 2011
Note: Women born in 1930-1986 included in analysis.

The data presented in *Tables 4 and 5* show that in Russia, continuous first partnerships, may not give a woman more advantages in terms of the total number of ever born children.

Thus, the cumulative age function of the average number of births to women who gave birth to her second child within the first union and that to women who gave birth to her second child within the second union, have no systematic differences in favor of continuous first unions. Moreover, as for the generations of mothers born in 1940s, 1950s and 1970s one can even suggest that women who had the experience of several partnerships, gave birth to an average of more children than their peers, continuously lived with the first and only partner (*Table 4*).

Table 4. Cumulative cohort fertility by indicated age depending on whether the second child was born in a continuous first union or the second child was born in the second union, birth cohorts of women 1930-39, 1940-49, 1950-59, 1960-69, 1970-79, 1980-86.

Birth cohort of women	**By age 25**	**By age 30**	**By age 35**	**By age 40**
Gave a birth of the second child within continuous first union				
1930-1939	0.96	1.58	1.91	2.02
1940-1949	0.89	1.55	1.85	1.91
1950-1959	0.97	1.59	1.90	1.97
1960-1969	1.20	1.70	1.86	1.92
1970-1979	1.12	1.49		
1980-1986	1.01			
Gave a birth of the second birth within second union				
1930-1939	0.93	1.50	1.84	2.01
1940-1949	1.07	1.61	2.02	2.19
1950-1959	1.11	1.58	1.97	2.11
1960-1969	1.20	1.59	1.72	1.83
1970-1979	1.18	1.53		
1980-1986	1.53			

Source: Panel data of Russian GGS-2004, 2007, 2011

Table 5 presents our estimates of the cumulative fertility by age of 40 for female cohorts born in 1930s, 1940s, 1950s and 1960s, depending on the most common scenarios of their partnership histories.

Table 5. Cumulative cohort fertility by age of 40 depending on different partnership histories, birth cohorts of women 1930-39, 1940-49, 1950-59, 1960-69.

Partnership histories of women	Birth cohort of women			
	1930-1939	**1940-1949**	**1950-1959**	**1960-1969**
Gave a first birth within the first union				
Women have experienced continuous first union which has not dissolved before age of 40	2.00	1.90	1.94	1.88
Women have experienced a dissolution of the first union before age of 40 and then experienced the second union	1.77	2.25	2.13	1.82
Women have experienced a dissolution of the first union before age of 40 and then has not experienced the second union	1.79	1.72	1.64	1.57
Gave a first birth out of union				
Women has ever experienced the union after the first birth	2.54	2.09	2.07	1.81
Women has not ever experienced the union after the first birth	2.03	1.70	1.73	1.51

Source: Panel data of Russian GGS-2004, 2007, 2011

The first case is the most traditional when the first marital or consensual union is not interrupted for women in their reproductive age (below 40 years) and comes with the first and subsequent births.

The second case concerns women who gave birth to their first child within the first union, and then they had the experience of the second union. It is only about the 1940-1949 female cohort we can say that their cumulative fertility function is significantly different, and, surprisingly, these differences are in favor of those women who have had the experience of several unions but not in favor of women which experienced only one partnership.

For those women who have not succeed with formation of the second union after the termination of the first union (in which her first child was born), the final number of children ever born, as expected, is on average lower by about 0.2-0.3 births per woman for different female cohorts *(see Table 5)*, and this difference is statistically significant for our sampling. At the same time it should be noted that even for the less successful women in building of marital career, the average number of children ever born is large enough to say that more than half of them somehow been able to achieve during the life of an ideal of two children.

The most difficult situation - this is when the first child was born out of a partnership (the respondents did not declare the existence of partners with whom resided at the time of the birth of the first child). It is obvious that the total number of children born to them will be highly dependent on whether it can find a partner to create a family or not. If the mother was living alone at the time of birth of a child and did not find a husband later in her life, we have a minimum average number of children ever born - 1.51 for the 1960-1969 cohort, which is 0.37 less than for women of the same cohort, who gave birth to all her children within the first continuous union *(see Table 5)*. This is a very significant difference in statistical and demographic sense. However, even in this case we can say that half of women who have never lived with their partners could have two or more children.

Results for women born in the 1930s, 1940s and 1950s, are even better - the lack of experience of stable unions did not prevent them from having an average of more than 1.7 live births (in accordance with the instructions of GGS program cohabitation recognized as valid partnership union if the partners live together in one dwelling during for at least 3 months).

Finally, in a situation when a woman begins her reproductive career as a single mother, but later becomes a spouse, the number of her children ever born does not differ from the number of children among women who were in continuous first union for any of the female birth cohorts under study *(see Table 5)*. Rather, you can even put a question that women with experience of lone mothers tend to have more children, on average, if they successfully manage to create a conjugal family.

Preliminary conclusions and further steps.

Second unions play an important role in the implementation of reproductive intentions. They are almost completely compensate for the loss in childbearing due to the collapse of the first union. The lack of legitimacy of the second union as a formal marriage does not interfere too much a woman to follow generally accepted social norm and after all to have two children. Gaining sustainable relationship with a new partner plays for women in reproductive age a key role in how much children she will have.

As we prepare the paper for presentation at PAA, we will use Kaplan-Meier survival analysis and logistic regression models, which will be fitted to examine the effects of union characteristics and partners' background. The results of these analyses will be related to the body of scholarship on union formation and dissolution and fertility in developed settings.

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