

# THE MARITAL AND FERTILITY BEHAVIOUR OF YOUNG WOMEN IN THE URBAN AREAS OF THE EAST KAZAKHSTAN REGION

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## **Abstract**

This paper primarily addresses nuptiality and fertility patterns among youth in the East Kazakhstan region. The data are obtained from censuses, vital statistics, and the survey 'Marital and Reproductive Behaviour of Young Women in Ust-Kamenogorsk' conducted in 2016. The aim of the paper is to study marital and reproductive behaviour in the East Kazakhstan region and in particular differentials by sex, age, nationality, place of residence, education, and living conditions.

**Keywords:** nuptiality, marriage, divorce, fertility, Kazakhstan, East Kazakhstan region, Ust-Kamenogorsk, youth

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## INTRODUCTION

Kazakhstan, which declared independence from the Soviet Union in 1991, is a dynamically developing country with a young population that has comparatively favourable indicators of nuptiality and fertility. The sharp decline in the birth rate in Kazakhstan in the 1990s changed to a relative rise in the 2000s, particularly among the Kazakh ethnic group, which coincided with a period of economic stability in the country (Alekseenko, 2004; Eshpanova, 2005). The net reproduction rate is on the rise in Kazakhstan, but the rate is uneven among regions. It is quite likely that the low population density in Kazakhstan (6.12 people per km<sup>2</sup>), the uneven settlement distribution, and the forthcoming decline of marital and birth rates in large cities will lead to a less favourable demographic situation in the country. There are also important regional differences in marital and reproductive behaviour in Kazakhstan; the southern regions have higher marriage and birth rates, while the northern and eastern regions experience lower nuptiality and fertility levels (Committee on Statistics

of RK, 2016). In this study, the trends in marital and reproductive behaviour based on data for the East Kazakhstan region are analysed.

## THEORETICAL ISSUES AND RECENT FAMILY TRENDS

In Kazakhstan, the terms marriage and family have undergone changes several times owing to political and socio-economic factors. The family has always been the basic social institution in Kazakh society. Until Kazakhstan became part of the Soviet Union, the majority of Kazakhs maintained nomadic way of life (except South Kazakhstan). The family formed a cell in the 'aul' (village in Kazakh), which was made up of several related families. Several 'auls' made up a family-'aul' community. The father was considered the head of the family, and was the spouse that managed all the family property, but not to the detriment of other members of the family. The wife, daughters, and even mothers had limited rights. Compared to other Central Asian women, Kazakh

women had greater freedom in the family and in social life. 'Adat' is a common-law relationship that does not restrict the number of wives a man may have. However, most families were pairs (a man and a woman in a family), and only rich Kazakh men were able to support several wives. Each wife was given her own household. The senior wife or 'baybishe' had more rights than the other wives. The common law prohibited exogamous marriages. The only exception was granted to the 'tore', the aristocratic class in Kazakh society, who were direct descendants of Genghis Khan. The most common type of marriage was a 'kalyim' (bride price) marriage. The marriage was considered legal once the 'kalyim' was paid for the bride. The agreement on marriage was concluded between the parents. The marriage could be dissolved by agreement of both parties by returning the 'kalyim'. The amount and content of the 'kalyim' varied across the regions, and the amount of the 'kalyim' was not defined by the common law. There were almost no divorces or one-parent (single mother) families in nomadic Kazakhstan since a single woman would not survive in these circumstances. What was known as the 'levirate' law, when in the case of a husband's death the widow would become the wife of a younger brother, was developed in order to protect the family from hunger (Masanov *et al.*, 2001).

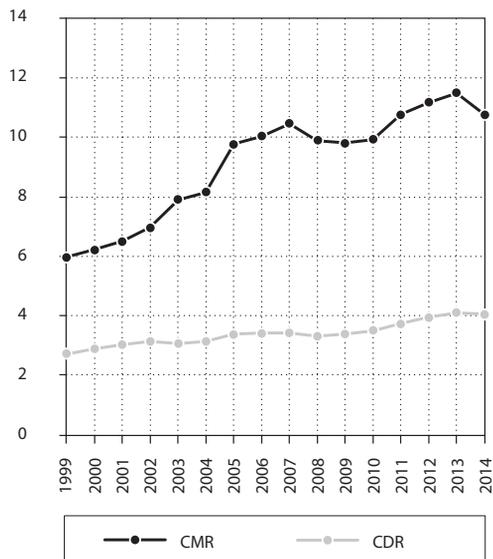
After the October Revolution of 1917 Kazakhstan became one of the republics in the Soviet Union and began a new stage in the development of family law. The Soviets destroyed the centuries-old nomadic way of life in the steppes of Kazakhstan. With the onset of collectivisation and industrialisation most Kazakhs abandoned the nomadic lifestyle and settled in villages, towns, and cities. On 18 December 1917, a decree on 'civil marriage, children and the introduction of civil status' was issued. That same year a decree on 'marriage dissolution' was enacted. Unregistered marriage was equated with registered marriage, and extramarital children were given the same rights as children born in marriage. The changes in the legal framework were reflected in a transformation of attitudes towards marriage. Marriage started to be seen as a special institution. The Soviet Union sought to define marriage differently than in the Western world. First, and marriage became secular since there was no place for religion in the Soviet community. Second, marriage

could not be considered a contract; it had to be free from material objectives. The concept of a 'communist marriage' was actively promoted. According to this concept, marriage is concluded on the basis of love and mutual interest and bears no contractual obligations, as an honest Soviet person would possess only what she had earned herself (Nechayeva, 1984).

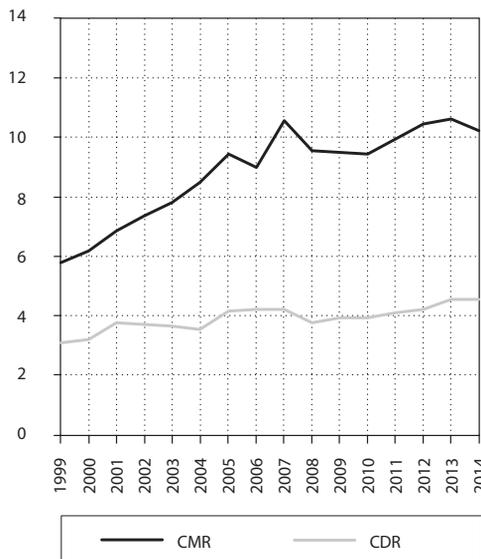
Later on, the concept of a 'communist marriage' was replaced by the concept of a 'socialist marriage', which was developed by theorists of socialist formation. In this concept, a lifelong marriage was included among the previous definitions. This notion of marriage was based on the natural assumption that one of the main goals of marriage should be to give birth to and raise children (Nechayeva, 1984). However, the principle of lifelong marriage even in the days of 'developed socialism' in the USSR was more something that was desired than real. The contrast between 'socialist' marriage and 'capitalist' marriage (Harchev, 1964) was especially emphasised in soviet literature. Soviet science showed a strong tendency to justify marriage in socialist society as a fundamentally new form of marital union between a man and a woman, different from the forms of marriage applied and experienced in other countries abroad. Unlike the Western family, which was based on private property, inheritance and family nurturing, the Soviet family did not have the right to private property, and all nurturing and education of children was delegated to society. Most scientific work consistently emphasised that marriage cannot be a bargain or agreement and must be a legally formalised, free, and voluntary union between a man and a woman, aimed at creating a family, in which mutual rights and obligations are generated (*Yuridicheskij enciklopedicheskij slovar*, 1984). Subsequently, as society developed, the concept of marriage in the Soviet science of family law underwent some changes, but it continued to be understood as the union of a man and a woman for the purpose of creating a family.

At the start of Perestroika in the 1990s there began another restructuring of the institution of marriage and the family. Influenced by the 'shock therapy' of socio-economic transformation and the uncontrolled flow of information with pornographic content, a part of the population, especially young people, began to view marriage as a temporary alliance formed to satisfy

**Figure 1a: The crude marriage rate and crude divorce rate in urban areas of Kazakhstan, 1999–2014 (in ‰)**



**Figure 1b: The crude marriage rate and crude divorce rate in urban areas of East Kazakhstan, 1999–2014 (in ‰)**



Source: The Agency of Statistics of Kazakhstan.

sexual needs and not with the aim of creating a family and having children. There began to be a growing number of cases of ‘serial monogamy’, i.e. repeated marriages (*Eshpanova, 2005*).

Only after a period of economic growth in 1998–2000 did marriage become a more stable institution again. In modern Kazakhstan, like in most other countries, marriage is a civil and not a religious act. Current marriage and family law does not set an upper age limit at which a person can marry, or a maximum number of times a person can marry, or a mandatory minimum period between divorce (or widowhood) and remarriage. The only restriction is one the minimum age at which a person can marry, and that is 18, but the age limit may be lowered by up 2 years if the bride is pregnant or if the intended bride and groom already have children together. Consequently, all religious and ethnic groups in the country are subject to the same conditions for determining marriage eligibility (*Narodonaselenie. Enciklopedicheskij slovar, 1994*).

Marriage rates in Kazakhstan are currently rising, but the increase has been rather moderate compared to the pre-transformation period. The crude marriage

rate was 9.22 ‰ in 2015, which is lower than it was in 1991 (10.1‰). The mean age of women at first marriage for urban areas increased from 23.5 years in 1999 to 24.9 years in 2015. In East Kazakhstan, the rise was even larger, from 23.1 in 1999 to 25.2 in 2015. It is well known that a decline in the marriage rates recently experienced by many countries not only in Kazakhstan is partly due to the postponement of marriage. In addition, a considerable part of the decline of the marriage rate can be explained by the increase in cohabitation (*Ualiyeva, 2012*).

The divorce rate is another important factor in the formation of a population’s marital-family structure and its reproduction. The divorce rate determines the marriage stability and traditionalism of a society. In recent decades divorce rates in Kazakhstan have stayed at almost the same level, but started to increase in the late 1990s. The crude divorce rate (CDR) increased from 1.7‰ in 1999 to 3.05‰ in 2014. The divorce rates in urban areas are much higher than in rural areas. For example, the CDR of urban Kazakhstan in 2014 was 4.04‰. For many years, the divorce rates in East Kazakhstan oblast were higher than the country average. The highest rate in East Kazakhstan was

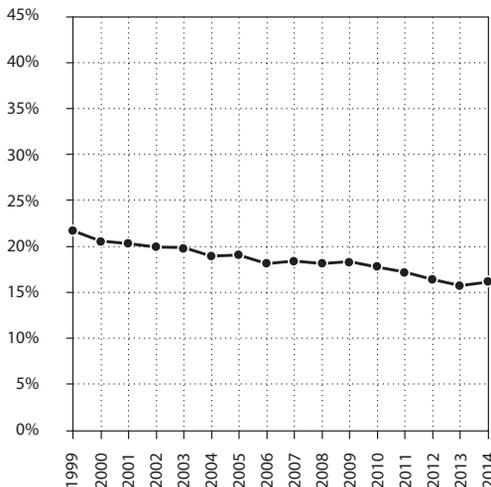
in the cities of Ust-Kamenogorsk and Ridder, where there is a high proportion of European population (*Committee on Statistics of RK, 2016*).

An interesting fact is how interethnic marriages have changed. For the past 15 years, the number of such marriages increased by 37%, but the proportion of interethnic marriages declined (*Committee on Statistics of RK, 2016*). The popularity of interethnic marriages in Kazakhstan was due to the existence of two big nations on the country's territory. When we compare interethnic marriages between Russians and Kazakhs by gender, we find that the percentage of Kazakhs of both genders that entered an interethnic marriage is lower than the percentage of Russians who did so. Certain differences between these two ethnic groups were identified. Kazakhs tend to register ethnically homogenous marriages, whereas Russians have higher rates of interethnic marriages. This situation could be explained by the different share of the population made up by each of the two ethnic groups and the traditional views of Kazakhs towards ethnically homogenous marriages. Moreover, from a gender perspective, there are more interethnic

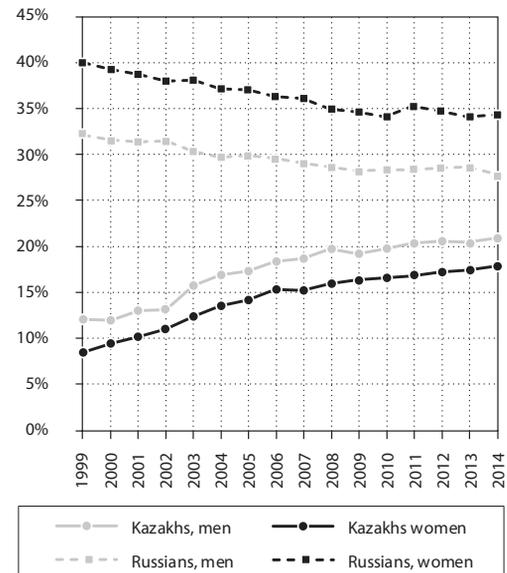
marriages concluded by Kazakh men than women. The proportion of interethnic marriages among Russians in Kazakhstan has experienced a steady decline. The reason for this trend is the outmigration of Russians, particularly the young population, to Russia after the 1990s (*Ualiyeva, 2012*). Therefore, the age structure of young people in the marriage market has altered since then. There is apparently a mix of cultures in city life, but Kazakh women still more often marry someone in their own ethnic group than a Russian.

Childbearing in Kazakhstan has traditionally been tied to marriage. But in recent years there has also been a trend of increasing extra-marital births. SANGE, a research centre in Kazakhstan, conducted surveys ordered by UNFPA (2004), the Ministry of Education of Kazakhstan (2009), and the Committee on Statistics of RK (2008) and identified a sharp rise in extramarital births in Kazakhstan. For a long time before the 1990s, the proportion of extramarital births in Kazakhstan ranged between 5 and 7% of the total births, and since the early 1990s the numbers have grown fourfold, reaching almost

**Figure 2a: Proportion of interethnic marriages in Kazakhstan (in %)**

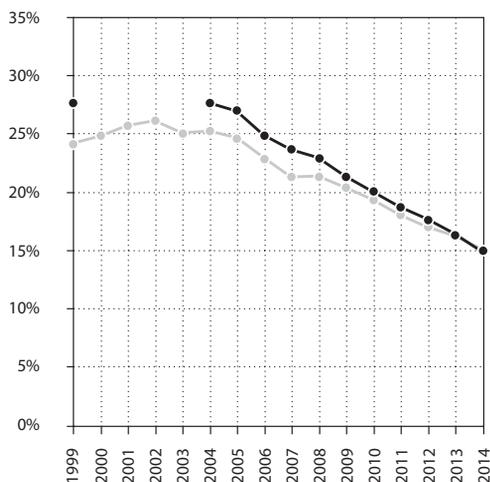


**Figure 2b: Proportion of interethnic marriages by ethnicity and sex of spouses in Kazakhstan (in %)**



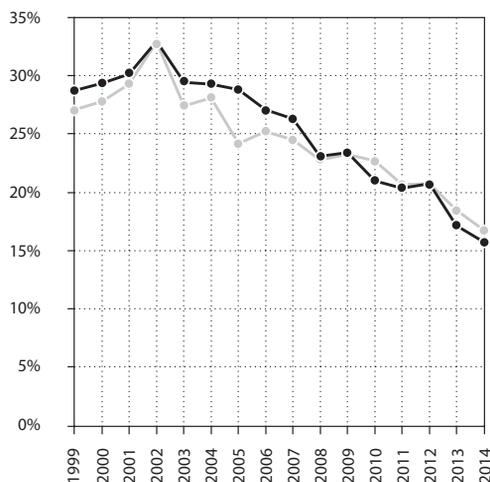
Source: The Agency of Statistics of Kazakhstan.

**Figure 3a: Proportion of extramarital births in Kazakhstan for all births and for births in urban areas (in %)**



—●— Kazakhstan, total    —●— Kazakhstan, urban

**Figure 3b: Proportion of extramarital births in East Kazakhstan for all births and for births in urban areas (in %)**



—●— East Kazakhstan, total    —●— east Kazakhstan, urban

Source: The Agency of Statistics of Kazakhstan.

30% in 2005. The proportion then started decline slightly, but the numbers are still very high compared to the 1990s. Increasingly, more children born outside marriage are being registered by both parents instead of just a lone mother, indicating that more children are being born to cohabiting couples. Since higher extramarital birth rates were registered in the northern and eastern regions, it is possible to assume that this is due to the higher proportion of Russian population living there (SANGE, 2015).

The question of the future of the family remains open. The state's lack of interest in the population's marital behaviour continues in the absence of a system of proper and current statistical records of marriages and divorces and of government policies aimed at strengthening the institution of the family. Kazakhstan and Russia have now, at the beginning of the 21st century, a very peculiar model of mating behaviour: going from traditional patriarchal families with many children to unregistered and periodically changing unions with children and without. At present, Kazakhstani women have become more like European women in their behaviour. Women's desire for higher education, the increase in the average marriage age,

and the rise in the number of lone-parent families are trends that confirm this shift.

This paper examines the demographic behaviours of the two main ethnicities in East Kazakhstan oblast and the influence of such factors as ethnicity, education, and place of residence on their marital and reproductive behaviour. East Kazakhstan oblast, compared to other regions, has lower birth and marriage rates, higher divorce rates, a larger share of non-native ethnicities residing in urban areas, and a larger proportion of female workers employed in the industrial sector.

## DATA AND VARIABLES

The core of this paper is based on a survey that was conducted by the author. The sociological survey was conducted in order to extend our knowledge about marital and reproductive behaviour among young people in East Kazakhstan oblast. The survey was named 'The Marital and Reproductive Behaviour of Youth of Ust-Kamenogorsk City' and it was conducted in August–September 2016 in the city Ust-Kamenogorsk in East Kazakhstan oblast, Kazakhstan.

Ust-Kamenogorsk is a city with a well-developed infrastructure, universities, and jobs, which makes it attractive for the region's rural inhabitants.

The survey was mainly aimed at young women residing in the urban area, but for the purpose of the study some categories of rural female respondents were included. We proceeded from the assumption that stereotypes about the marital-reproductive behaviour of women were formed from the social reality in which people acquired their own life experience. Therefore, it was assumed that the length of time a person had lived in the city had some impact on determining fertility processes and reproductive traditions. Generally, the period of a person's adaptation to their new place of residence was considered to be 8–10 years. Within that time a migrant would have the chance to become acquainted with the moral and social norms of the place and to adjust their mentality to the new environment. In order to simplify the objective of the survey, we assumed that women who had lived in the city since the age of ten had a similar attitude as women who were native residents of the city (*Zayonchkovskaya*, 1994). However, it was necessary to bear in mind that family and relatives would still have a significant influence on the woman's behaviour.

The four main respondent groups were formed in the survey based on the above-mentioned assumptions: Kazakhs born in Ust-Kamenogorsk; Russians born in Ust-Kamenogorsk; Kazakhs who moved to Ust-Kamenogorsk before the age of 10; and Kazakhs who moved to Ust-Kamenogorsk after the age of 10. A distinction according to the ethnic group of respondents is that the migratory activity of Kazakh women is higher than that of Russian women. Since the migration rate from rural areas to urban areas is low among the Russian population, we only considered the native Russian population in the urban area. Generally, Russians prefer to migrate to their historical motherland, Russia, while Kazakhs migrate from rural to urban areas. Thus, the proportion of Kazakhs in cities has increased. According to recent research on the issue of the reproductive behaviour of women in the East Kazakhstan region, Kazakh women who migrated from villages were more likely to find jobs and become city residents after graduating from university than Russian women were, who were more likely to return to their villages after graduating (*Zakharov*, 2008).

Since the focus of this study is the reproductive behaviour of young women, we restricted the age range to between 18 and 29. Kazakh law defines youth as people aged 16–29. But since marriage is officially allowed from the age of 18, and nuptiality is still a dominant factor determining fertility, we used the 18–29 age range.

All the women were divided into three age groups (18–21, 22–24, 25–29). Respondents were also asked to indicate their education level. The age group of 18–21 was selected, because we assumed that the majority of women in this group would be pursuing their education. Women in this age group usually complete secondary school and continue to study at either a university or a college. The survey showed that 93.1% of women in this age group were in the education process. The second age group was characterised by women who had already finished their education and had the opportunity either to continue their education and pursue a graduate degree, or they could start working, or they could get married and stay at home on maternity leave. According to the survey, this age group was made up mostly of women who were already working (63.4%) and only some who were continuing their education (26.7%), most of whom were pursuing their Master's degree, and for them marital life was postponed to a later period. The last age group was made up of the oldest women in our survey. Most of them had already married and had children. The majority of women (80.6%) in the 25–29 age group were already working or had worked. In this age group 11.9% of the women were on maternity leave, comparing to 8.1% in the 22–24 age group.

For our analysis, we chose to model a cumulative logistic regression.

Logistic regression describes the relationship between a categorical response variable and a set of predictor variables. SAS software was used to obtain the required model (see the annex).

The analysis included several different measures of the young women's characteristics at or before the time of marriage:

*Predictor variables (categorical)*

1. Respondent's age: 18–21, 22–24, 25–29 (reference category '22–24').

Table 1: Distribution of women according to ethnicity, age, and length of time residing in the city

Ethnicity	Age groups	Status of residence			Total
		City-born	Moved before the age of 10	Moved after the age of 10	
Kazakhs	18–21	40	40	40	120
	22–24	40	40	40	120
	25–29	40	40	40	120
Russians	18–21	40	0	0	40
	22–24	40	0	0	40
	25–29	40	0	0	40
Total		240	120	120	480

Source: Sample Survey Ust-Kamenogorsk, 2016.

Table 2: Distribution of data according to variables included in the model

Variable	Category	Total
Age	18–21	160
	22–24	160
	25–29	160
Ethnicity	Kazakhs	360
	Russians	120
Residential status	City-born	240
	Moved to the city before the age 10	120
	Moved to the city after the age 10	120
Education	Secondary or vocational	234
	Tertiary	246
Marital status	Single	304
	Ever married	176
Type of residence	Rented or shared with relatives	350
	Own	130
Number of children	Zero	368
	One	82
	Two+	30

Source: Sample Survey Ust-Kamenogorsk, 2016.

- Respondent's ethnicity: Kazakhs, Russians (reference category 'Kazakhs').
- Respondent's residential status: city-born, moved before the age of 10, moved after the age of 10 (reference category 'city-born').
- Respondent's education: secondary or vocational, tertiary (reference category 'tertiary').
- Respondent's type of residence: own residence, rented or shared with relatives (reference category 'rented or shared with relatives').
- Respondent's marital status: single, ever married (reference category 'ever married')  
*Response variable (categorical)*  
Number of children: zero, one, two+.  
The modeled probabilities are cumulated over the lower-order values

## FINDINGS

Even though society in Kazakhstan is modernising,

**Table 3: The results of the cumulative logistic regression (the modelled probabilities are cumulated over the lower-order values)**

Effect	Estimate	p-value	Odds ratio	95% Confidence limits	
Age					
Age group 18–21 vs 22–24	-2.0291	0.0132	0.131	0.026	0.653
Age group 25–29 vs 22–24	0.2197	0.5350	1.246	0.622	2.497
Ethnicity					
Russians vs Kazakhs	-1.3594	0.0022	0.257	0.108	0.611
Residential status					
Moved before the age of 10 vs city-born	0.00903	0.9826	1.009	0.447	2.276
Moved after the age of 10 vs city-born	-0.3709	0.3412	0.690	0.321	1.483
Education					
Secondary or vocational education vs tertiary	0.4357	0.2269	1.546	0.762	3.137
Marital status					
Being married vs being single	-4.1876	<.0001	65.865	0.005	0.048
Type of residence					
Having own residence vs rental or shared residence	0.8679	0.0056	2.382	1.290	4.397

Source: Sample Survey Ust-Kamenogorsk, 2016.

marriage remains an important value for many young women. It is common in Kazakh society to marry before having children. However, recently new trends have emerged in family formation: a rapid increase in cohabitating couples, an increase in the divorce rate, and the postponement of childbirth. In this paper, an analysis will be made of the marital and family norms of young women. The survey questionnaire included such topics as the marital behaviour of young women, and the values they were asked to rank included such values as marriage and childbearing compared to education and career-building.

Despite the fact that most of the results in Table 3 are not statistically significant, owing to the small size of the sample, they indicate the basic strategies in the marital and fertility behaviour of young women in East Kazakhstan. The most important result for us is that marriage is still very significant for having children. Married women have 66 times higher odds of having children compared to single ones. We can therefore conclude that studying marriage patterns in Kazakhstan is of great importance for understanding reproductive behaviour. The 'first marriage then children' string of logic continues to be held by young women.

The analysis did not seek to observe how the behaviour of women in a registered marriage differs from the behaviour of women in an unregistered marriage, since in absolute terms the proportion of respondents in the second group was very small. It was expected that the likelihood of having a child increases with age. Thus, women aged 25–29 have 1.246 times higher odds than women aged 22–24 of having a child. The probability of having children is lower in younger age groups. Ethnicity also has a big impact; Russians have 0.257 times lower odds of having more children than Kazakhs. Length of residence in the city has almost no influence on the chosen indicator. Girls with a lower level of education are more likely to give birth to a child than girls with higher education. Another important finding is that the number of children is affected by housing. The results of the study show that respondents who indicated that they live in their own homes were more likely to be parents than those who indicated they lived with their parents or in rented accommodation. This suggests most young people prefer to start living on their own once they are married and when they have their own living space they are more likely to start their own family.

The general tendency observed in the survey results is that young women still want to get married rather than stay single in pursuit of a career or education. The responses of the married female respondents indicate that they still take a traditional view of marriage.

## VALUE ORIENTATION OF RESPONDENTS

The women who were married at the time of the survey were asked about the duration of their relationship with their future husband before marrying, and whether they had dated other partners before that. From these questions it was possible to estimate how traditional relationships in society are, since a longer relationship before marrying and premarital sexual relationships are features of a modern society. The process of family formation is an important characteristic from which it is possible to determine the future of the family. We tried to understand how much married women were thinking about forming a family before marrying, how long they had been in a relationship with their current husband before getting married, and what social criteria influenced their choice of partner. The survey showed that the majority of women of both ethnicities met their current husbands at school/university (25.2%) or at a party (37.8%). This means that the institution of matchmaking, where a young pair is introduced to each other some family meeting, does not function anymore and that family institution is growing weaker. Up until the pre-revolutionary period in Kazakhstan, a woman's parents chose a spouse for her. In Soviet times, these traditions were abandoned, but in rural areas parents still had the last word on a couple being able to marry. This still occurs in the case of young women who have difficulty finding a partner to marry. They are brought together with single men through relatives and friends. However, the survey showed that this is not done in the city.

Also, according to survey data, the majority of married women (44.4%) got married in the first year of dating future husbands, and this data did not vary in relation to the duration of residence in Ust-Kamenogorsk. Thus, the attitudes of rural and urban inhabitants were similar in this case. Almost the same number of women (40.4%) were in a relationship for

2–3 years before marrying. This suggests that there have been changes in society and that women are becoming more emancipated. Marriage is a matter of choice, and most young women prefer to test their relationships over time. This may also be a matter of the financial and other difficulties that young couples face when living in an urban environment.

To understand how traditional the premarital behaviour of young women was, we asked them how many serious relationships they had been in before marrying. We did not directly ask them about the number of premarital sexual partners because this is considered impolite in Kazakhstan. But it could be argued that a serious relationship implies in most cases premarital sex. Kazakh respondents showed their traditionalism in answering the question about premarital partners. Women said that they did not change partners frequently before marriage; 57% of respondents reported that they had not had any boyfriends and 30.2% said that they had had only one boyfriend before marrying. Rural migrants changed their partners more often, while the majority of city residents said that they had not had any serious relationships with other men or that they had had only one. Russian women demonstrated more loyalty in choosing a partner (38.9% of them indicated that they had had one boyfriend and 25% that they had had several partners before meeting their husband). From the responses, one can conclude that women were less traditional before marriage.

To determine family and children represent a value for young people, respondents were asked to rank twelve values, starting from the ones they deemed the most important. The values they were presented with included education, work, social recognition, implementing one's own ideas, power, money, marriage, life in a happy marriage, having children, raising children, etc.

The most important values for both ethnicities were education, career, marriage and having children. Education was the most important priority (39.4% of all respondents ranked it in the first place), and it was especially important for the youngest age group 18–21 (56.3%). The second most important value was a well-paid job, which was chosen by 31.3% of respondents, and again it was the most popular choice in the youngest age group 18–21 (40.6%). Getting

Table 4: Ranking of values by ethnicity (in %)

Value	1st rank		2nd rank		3rd rank	
	Kazakhs	Russians	Kazakhs	Russians	Kazakhs	Russians
Education	41.9	31.7	3.1	10.8	5.0	5.0
Job	12.5	16.7	33.3	25.0	5.8	15.8
Marriage	13.6	11.7	16.1	16.7	28.1	16.7
Having children	6.1	12.5	15.0	9.2	18.3	20.8
Husband	5.0	5.0	10.8	7.5	9.4	10.0
Power	0.8	0.8	1.1	3.3	4.4	2.5
Money	0.0	0.8	1.4	3.3	3.3	6.7
Raising children	7.8	6.7	7.5	9.2	9.2	9.2
Quiet life	6.4	3.3	2.8	5.0	6.1	2.5
Active life	4.2	7.5	3.6	3.3	6.1	4.2
Public recognition	1.1	0.8	1.9	1.7	2.5	4.2
Creative realization	0.6	2.5	3.3	5.0	1.7	2.5
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

Source: Sample Survey Ust-Kamenogorsk, 2016.

married only ranked third in importance for young women (25.2%), and it was more important for young Kazakh women (19.3%). Having children ranked fourth for respondents (13.4%). This order of values, where marriage is a higher priority than having a child, implies that marriage is still the traditional route to family formation. The significance of family formation increased with age. It is obvious that young women are still highly oriented toward family formation, after which they have children.

Living with a husband, raising children, and living a quiet or active life were all of secondary importance to our respondents. The least prioritised values were authority, the implementation of creative ideas, money, and public recognition. The majority of respondents ranked them as the 10th–12th most important values.

The importance of life values differed among various social groups. Age was one significant differentiating factor. Values such as marriage and having children were significant priorities for the oldest age group of 25–29, which suggests that family formation has not lost its significance, but the age at which it is more significant has shifted. Nowadays, young women prefer to establish their social status, and only then to form a family, which is a normal consequence of adaptation to the new economic environment.

It is also worth noting that education and a job are the most highly prioritised values for those women who moved to the city recently, which probably has to do with the purpose of their migration and implies a change in the reproductive behaviour of villagers. Family formation is more of an issue in cities than in villages because the modern urban family does not require many children.

It was surprising to observe that the value orientations of both ethnicities were almost identical. There was only a little difference in the desire to marry (19.3% of Kazakh and 15% of Russian women wanted to marry). Other parameters were almost identical. Another important factor in assessing the values of young people is their attitude towards premarital sex. Respondents had a less traditional view of premarital sex. The majority indicated it was okay to have premarital sex if they were in love – 36.5%, while 31.5% of women indicated a woman could only have sex with her future husband, and only 20.4% of respondents were intolerant of premarital sex, and 10% of women considered premarital sex as generally acceptable. Russian and urban Kazakh women were more accepting of sex before marriage. The youngest women had more romantic views and were more against premarital sex, while the oldest group of women in the study were more cynical and considered premarital sex acceptable even without love.

Thus, we can observe that family and children are highly valued among respondents. Young women, like twenty years before, were prioritised getting married based on love, having children, and educating their children. However, new preferences were also included among these feminine values, such as getting a tertiary education or building a career. Respondents had a healthy attitude towards their sex life, which could have a positive impact on their reproductive behaviour.

## DISCUSSION

The premarital background of young people, including such characteristics as education, occupation, and parental family, influences the marital behaviour of young people. Young people who obtain more education, work in the paid labour force, and live apart from their parents marry at later ages than those with fewer non-familial experiences. We tried to evaluate how important marriage is for young people and found that even though the marriage rate among respondents is relatively low, marriage is still highly valued. Marriage remains the foundation of family life for the majority of women, and it is associated with having children. The high value placed on marriage suggests that the number of women who remain single will not be large. However, the delay in marrying among the majority of women automatically shortens the reproductive life of women and delays the birth of children.

At the same time, there are new tendencies emerging in society: cohabitation, divorce, premarital sex, and mixed marriages. These new behaviours are adopted more by Russian women than Kazakh women, who are more traditional in outlook.

Kazakh migrant women have a more traditional attitude towards family relations, but their attitude changes when they live in the city. This is reflected in the postponement of marriage and having children, the increased value placed on education and having a job, and the weakening of norms about sexual behaviour. Regardless of how long they have resided in the city, the majority of women prefer to have a nuclear family.

During the transformation period female emancipation progressed in a highly controversial way in Kazakhstan. It was, and still is, developing, while traditional/patriarchal attitudes towards

gender roles still exist. During the transformation, the conflict between traditional/patriarchal gender role expectations and actual female roles became more visible. Kazakhstan is notable for its high female employment rate, especially among young women. Furthermore, the educational level of women exceeds that of men and during the transformation the difference increased even further (because of the devaluation of higher education in the early 1990s, when it yielded a lower income, and consequently fewer male students were drawn to universities). According to data from the 1999 census, the proportion of women with a higher education was almost 1.5 times that of men in all age groups up to age 50.

There is an evident contradiction between the high rate of female employment and education and the dominance of patriarchal attitudes in Kazakhstan. However, the spreading signs of female emancipation, which include women spending a longer time studying, their searching for career opportunities, striving for a strong material position and economic independence, and their varied leisure activities, indicate there is a need for essential social changes and adequate policy responses. Society's delay in adapting to the new roles performed by women forces women to develop new strategies with which to best fulfil their needs and abilities and to solve the problem of reconciling the various challenges of daily life. They postpone childbearing for a later period, have fewer children, or refuse to have children altogether. It is against this backdrop in Kazakhstan that we find the clear relevance of the ideas of McDonald (2002) that alongside the modernising, public gender system (female employment, education), the private gender system (in the family) remains traditional and preserves the asymmetries (in the division of roles, partner relations, etc.). It is natural that fertility falls to a low level under such circumstances.

We do not want to assert that young women are leaning towards the Western family model. However, there is a tendency towards the formation of small families and increasing independence among young women, who are pursuing careers, and this may lead to a decrease in fertility.

Preliminary conclusions to be drawn from the survey could be summed up as follows:

1. Marriage still has a great value for many young women. We can justifiably claim that it is still true that

‘everybody wants to get married.’ The main reason for this is love.

2. The value of family (having children) is lower than the value of marriage. After getting married women do not rush to have children, and the reasons are financial. Women who are not yet married have only an abstract notion about having children, even

though they are at the most suitable age for having children.

3. Marriage has retained its traditional role as the place to build a family. Young women still follow the pattern of first getting married and only then having children. As the survey showed, extramarital births were not very popular among the young respondents.

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## Annex 1: Description of names of variables and categories used

Name	Description	Values
agegroup	Age groups	18–21 22–24 25–29
nation	Ethnicity	1=Kazakhs 2=Russians
Dur_city_st	Duration of being city resident	1=City-born 2=Moved to the city before the age 10 3=Moved to the city after the age 10
Educ	Education	1=Secondary or vocational education 2=Tertiary education
Marstat	Marital status	1=Single 2=Ever married
Typeres	Type of residence	1=Rented or shared with relatives 2=Own
Num_child	Number of children	1=0 2=1 3=2+

The cumulative logistic function was chosen to specify categorical variables as explanatory ones. LOGIT is the log odds function. PROC LOGISTIC fits the binary logit model when there are two response categories and fits the cumulative logit model when there are more than two response categories (in program SAS 9.4 Help and Documentation).

```
proc logistic data=anketa.ANKETA;
class agegroup (ref='22-24') nation (ref='1') Dur_city_
st (ref='1') Educ (ref='2') marstat (ref='2') typeres
(ref='1') / param=ref;
model Num_child = agegroup nation dur_city_st educ
marstat typeres / expb;
run;
```