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CURRENT TRENDS AND MAIN FEATURES OF FAMILY PLANNING POLICY

Introduction. More attention is being paid to the study of real demographic processes and family planning problems in order to regulate population growth. The basic concepts and categories of family formation, the historically changing role of marriage and fertility in the reproduction of generations, demographic policy in the field of strengthening and supporting the family, all these areas are most relevant at the present stage of the development of civilization. Modern global trends have a significant impact on the constantly changing conditions of social reality and the state of the family institution in the country. The reproduction of new generations, their preparation for life and integration into society remain unchanged functions of the family. For centuries, the family has been making a decisive contribution to the upbringing and socialization of children, the formation of such integral personal qualities as worldview, value orientations and attitudes, as well as to the formation of the character of a growing personality, the development of intellectual, emotional and volitional spheres of personality (Alakbarov, 2019).

The family is the main foundation of social stability, human capital, and the formation of a value system in society. In classical sociological approaches (T. Parsons, W. Goode, and others), the family was analyzed as a functional structure, emphasizing its functions of socialization, reproduction, and economic support. However, in recent decades, the structure and functions of the family have changed globally, and postmodern and individualized models have come to the fore (Ələkbərov, 2019).

In studies conducted at the end of the 20th and beginning of the 21st century (Beck and Beck-Gernsheim, 1995; Cherlin, 2004), the family institution is presented as a social unit based largely on individual decisions, flexible and existing in various forms. These changes are manifested in an increase in the age of marriage, an increase in the number of divorces, the spread of extramarital unions and a decrease in the birth rate.

Within the framework of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) adopted by the United Nations in 2015, the family is indirectly linked to a number of goals. In particular, poverty reduction (SDG 1), health protection (SDG 3), quality education (SDG 4), gender equality (SDG 5) and decent work opportunities (SDG 8) are closely linked to the processes taking place in the family environment.

Reports by international organizations such as UNICEF, UN Women, the OECD, and DESA note that family stability is an important factor for child development, women's integration into society, and social well-being. In this regard, family policy, especially social protection, child care, maternity leave, women's employment and a balanced distribution of gender roles in the family, represents the social basis for sustainable development. In modern scientific literature, the family is considered not only as a social institution, but also as a strategic element of sustainable development. Taking into account changes in the family structure and adapting social policy to these transformations are important for ensuring both individual well-being and the long-term sustainability of society.

The main part. The research analysis focuses on a comprehensive study of historical and evolutionary foundations and theories using modern scientific and statistical methods. Various methods are used, such as comparative, historical, sampling, balance, statistical and graphical. Special attention is paid to demographic indicators and the use of innovative approaches to solving demographic problems in the context of family planning.

Family planning plays a key role in demographic policy, as it allows States and societies to manage demographic processes, including fertility, mortality, and migration. Family planning is an important tool for managing demographic processes. This helps to ensure a balance between the needs

of the population, economic opportunities and environmental constraints, which contributes to the sustainable development of society.

The importance of family planning is evident in several aspects: birth control, improving public health, promoting economic development, gender equality, and environmental sustainability.

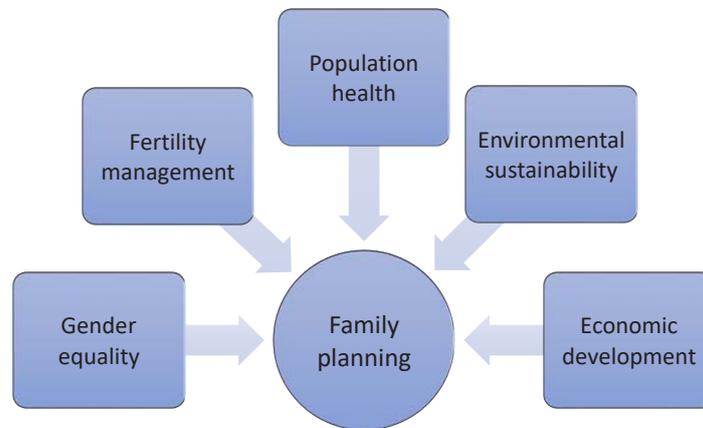


Fig. 1. Important aspects of family planning

1. Fertility management. In countries with high birth rates, family planning programs help reduce the number of unwanted pregnancies and stabilize population growth. In countries with low birth rates, family planning policies can promote informed parenting by supporting families, providing benefits, and improving living conditions.

2. Improving public health. Family planning helps to reduce maternal and child mortality, including in high-risk pregnancies. Reducing the number of abortions, especially illegal ones, due to access to modern contraceptives.

3. Economic development. Reducing the financial burden on families and the state by optimizing family size. Increasing women's economic activity through the opportunity to plan for the birth of children and combine motherhood with a career.

4. Gender equality. Empower women through education, information, and access to contraception. The ability of women to independently make decisions about the number and time of birth of children.

5. Environmental sustainability. Family planning helps to reduce the burden on natural resources resulting from rapid population growth.

Family planning issues are an integral part of each country's demographic policy, and their implementation is based on the following tools: public education, modern methods of contraception, government support for financial and social programs, government support in the form of financial and social programs, medical services, including in the field of reproductive health, programs to prevent early marriage and unwanted pregnancy.

Family planning – the main policy tool:

Educating the population; Reproductive Health; Modern methods of contraception; Early marriages; State support for financial and social programs.

In the process of family planning, every country in the world has gone through certain stages of development, which have their own unique characteristics. As a result of the comparative analysis, certain stages and periods of development of family planning processes have been identified. To explain these processes, the analysis of the total fertility rate, maternal and infant mortality is of particular importance (Schoneveld: 2020). Maternal and child mortality rates are an important indicator of socio-economic development, the level of healthcare, and the effectiveness of the state's demographic policy. Their importance for demographic policy can be considered in several aspects: assessing the state of the healthcare system; defining social policy priorities; forecasting demographic trends; preparing targeted programs and reforms; International comparisons and attracting investments; Controlling and reducing maternal and child mortality is the main goal of demographic

policy, contributing to the sustainable development of society and improving the quality of life of the population. It is worth noting that Sustainable Development Goal 3.2.1, the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) adopted by the United Nations in 2015, are aimed at ensuring a healthy life and promoting the well-being of all children. Sustainable Development Goal 3.2.1 aims to end preventable deaths of newborns and children under the age of 5 by 2030. Within the framework of this goal, two tasks are highlighted: 1. Reduce neonatal mortality in each country to no more than 12 per 1,000 live births; 2. Reduce the mortality rate of children under the age of five in each country to no more than 25 per 1,000 live births.

Target 3.2.1 is closely linked to target 3.1.1. Reduce the global maternal mortality rate to below 70 per 100,000 live births and end all forms of malnutrition within target 2.2.1, as malnutrition is the leading cause of death in children under the age of five. These issues are reflected in the new Global Strategy for the Protection of Women's, Children's and Adolescents' Health, which aims to address new priorities in the field of child health and end preventable child mortality. Countries around the world should set their own goals, develop specific strategies to reduce child mortality, and monitor progress in reducing it. According to the UN, maternal mortality rates are: less than 20 – very low; less than 100 – low; 100-299 – average; 300-499 – high; 500-999 – very high; 1000 is considered extremely high. Family planning is of great importance in the Republic of Azerbaijan, as it affects various aspects of social, economic and demographic policy. Family planning is a key component of sustainable development in Azerbaijan (Davamlı İnkişaf üzrə II Bakı Forumu, 2023). This contributes to improving the health of the population, supports economic and social development, and allows the State to pursue effective social policies. The Azerbaijani family, which has rich traditions, has played a major role in the national development as the guardian of the high moral values of the Azerbaijani people and the carrier of their gene pool. The family model of the Azerbaijani people is considered unique not only in the West, but also in the East. Against the background of the integration of our republic into the Euro-Atlantic space, turning it into a center of intercultural dialogue and ethno-religious tolerance, the national family model, unique to our people, retains its traditional structure, essence and spiritual qualities (Mensah, 2019). Today, the Azerbaijani family has been able to preserve its integrity, purity, commitment to national customs and traditions, and spiritual values passed down through history. In this family model, everyone understands their place, position, function, and purpose correctly. Family relations based on strict moral criteria, traditions such as respect and honor for elders, love, compassion and attention to children have been preserved from ancient times to this day. The processes taking place in the modern world, globalization, technological development, integration of peoples, the influence of new models of thinking and information have not spared Azerbaijani families either. Therefore, the modern model of a healthy family in Azerbaijan should be based on the system of values of past generations, which are always relevant along with modern ones. Let's look at the main stages of Azerbaijan's family policy from the middle of the last century to the present day (*Azərbaycanın statistik göstəriciləri*, 2019).

The Soviet era (1950–1991). Since Azerbaijan was part of the USSR, the general demographic policy of the union applied to it, and the main focus was on increasing the birth rate. In the 1950s and 1960s, Azerbaijan pursued a policy of natalism. The main directions of this policy were the recognition of the family as the main unit of society and the encouragement of having many children. The use of contraceptives was limited and their availability was low. The main method of birth control was abortion. Abortions were legalized in the USSR in 1955. However, the 1970s and 1980s were marked by the beginning of childbirth under medical supervision. Information about contraceptive methods began to spread in cities, but this was observed mainly among the more educated segments of the population. The tradition of large families continued in rural areas. The first medical consultation centers on reproductive health began to appear, but their scale was limited. After the collapse of the Soviet Union and the restoration of independence in 1991-2000, Azerbaijan faced serious economic and social problems, which affected the demographic situation. The political and economic instability in the country, the Karabakh war and the deterioration of living conditions led to a decrease in the birth rate. Insufficient access to contraceptives and low awareness among the population led to an increase in the number of abortions. 1994 – The launch of the first national reproductive health programs with the support of international organizations such as the United Na-

tions and WHO. In 2000-2010, the Azerbaijani state began to develop the healthcare sector, including in the field of family planning. Reproductive health programs have been expanded with the support of international organizations.

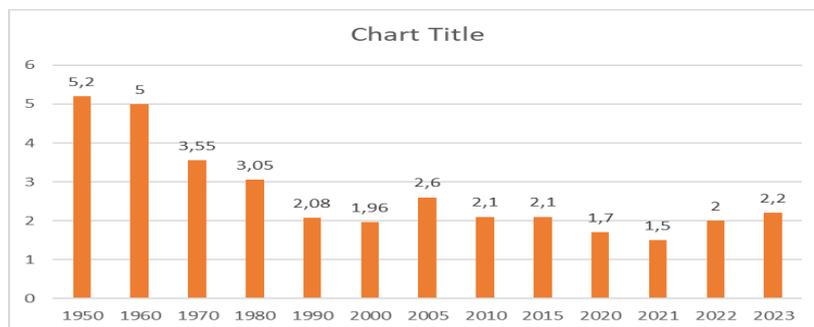


Fig. 2. Indicators of the total fertility rate in Azerbaijan for the years 1950–2023

Raising awareness about modern contraceptive methods. Creation of specialized family planning consulting centers. Government initiatives have been implemented to protect maternal health and reduce the number of abortions. In recent times, an active policy aimed at regulating demographic processes and increasing the birth rate began in Azerbaijan in 2010–2020. Development of the family planning system through educational and medical programs. The increased availability of contraceptives has led to a reduction in the number of abortions. Development of programs for the protection of women's reproductive health. Strengthening the promotion of a healthy lifestyle and responsible parenting. The government implemented a policy aimed at maintaining the birth rate and preventing depopulation, especially in rural areas (Family Planning: A Global Handbook for Providers, 2007–2022).

As can be seen from the data presented, the overall fertility rate in Azerbaijan has a positive trend. The policy of natalism implemented in the 1950s led to a significant increase in the birth rate, resulting in 5.2 births per woman of reproductive age. However, in subsequent years, there has been a decline in indicators. In the 1990s and 2000s, the country experienced a sharp decline in indicators related to socio-economic trends. The lowest rates are observed in 2020–2021 due to the COVID-19 pandemic. At the current stage, this indicator is close to normal. Similar dynamics are observed in other countries of Central Asia and the South Caucasus.

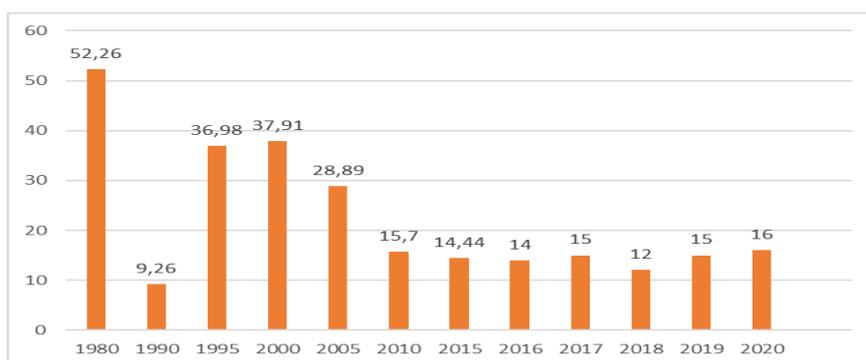


Fig. 3. Maternal mortality rate in Azerbaijan, 1980–2020 (per 100,000 live births)

It should be noted that the highest rates were observed in the 1950s and 1960s and the 1990s and 2000s of the 20th century (the period of the collapse of the USSR, political and economic instability). The following years are characterized by some stabilization of indicators. As a result of measures taken in Azerbaijan to protect the health of mothers and children, maternal and child mortality rates have decreased. The measures implemented thanks to the “Strategy of the Republic of Azerbaijan for the benefit of Children for 2020-2030” approved by President Ilham Aliyev have made it possible

to improve the quality of medical services in the field of maternal and child health and accelerate reforms in the field of perinatal care.

Family planning plays an important role in managing demographic processes, as it directly affects the birth rate and the general health of the population. The highest marriage rate in Azerbaijan was recorded in the 1960s (Figure 2.1.33). This situation is related to a number of demographic, social and economic factors characteristic of that period. Industrialization and urbanization. In the 1950s and 1960s, the Soviet Union actively pursued a policy of industrialization that affected many regions, including Azerbaijan. The improvement of economic conditions and the development of infrastructure in cities contributed to the migration of people from rural areas to cities. Urbanization has led to increased employment opportunities, improved housing conditions, and the creation of conditions for starting a family.

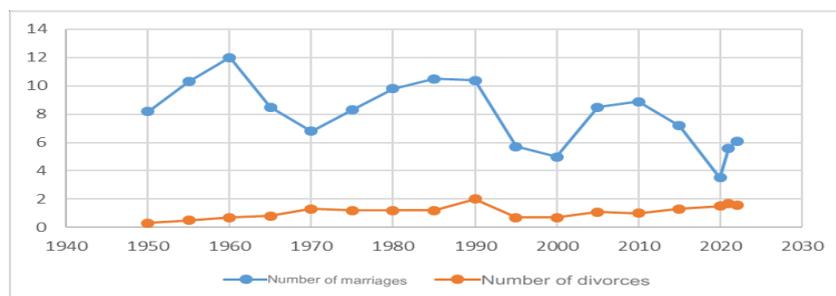


Fig. 4. Number of marriages and divorces in the Republic of Azerbaijan (per 1,000 population)

Cultural and traditional factors. Azerbaijan is a society with strong traditions and cultural norms, where marriage and family play a central role in people's lives. Young people, adhering to established traditions, tried to create families at a young age, which led to a large number of marriages.

Demographic structure. In the 1960s, Azerbaijan had a relatively young demographic structure, which meant that there were a large number of people of marriageable age. In addition, the high birth rate in previous decades has created significant demographic potential for marriage (UNFPA & Səhiyyə Nazirliyi. Reproduktiv Sağlamlıq və Ailə Planlaşdırması Proqramı, 2009–2020).

Economic and social motivation. During this period, government programs such as the provision of new housing led to an increase in the number of marriages. Young couples could hope to buy an apartment or improve their living conditions, which encouraged them to start a family. Thus, a combination of demographic factors, government social policy, cultural and religious traditions, as well as economic incentives led to the largest number of marriages in Azerbaijan in the 1960s.

In the 1970s, the number of marriages began to decline sharply. This is due to a gradual decrease in the birth rate and a decrease in the number of young people who have reached marriageable age and are ready to marry. The slowdown in economic growth, the active participation of women in public life, etc. The lowest rates for both marriages and divorces were observed in the 1990s and 2000s, due to the economic and political crisis that arose after the collapse of the USSR, political instability and tension in Azerbaijan.

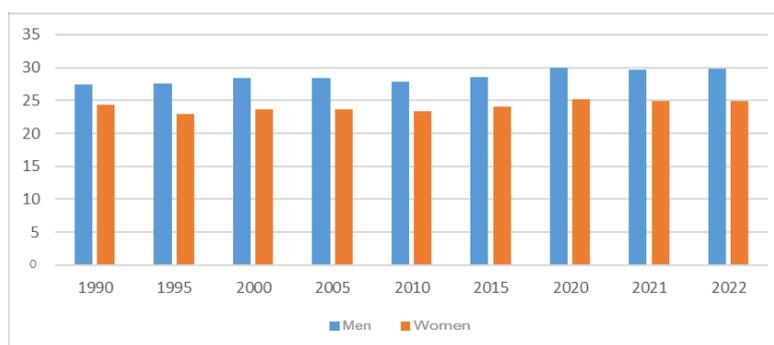


Fig. 5. Average age of marriage in the Republic of Azerbaijan

In Azerbaijan, the age of marriage is increasing among both men and women. According to the State Statistical Committee of Azerbaijan, in 2019, the average age of marriage for women was 24.7 years, and for men – 29.4 years. In 2020, these figures increased to 25.2 years for women and 30 years for men, which is the highest rate in the last 30 years. The minimum age for marriage in Azerbaijan is set at 18 for men and 17 for women. However, in recent years, discussions have been underway to raise the minimum age for women to 18, which would bring it in line with the age limit for men.

These changes reflect a general trend observed worldwide. Thus, as a result of a longer period of study, the trend towards building a professional career and changing social values, people prefer to start families at a later age. Thus, in the period 1950-2024, family planning underwent significant changes reflecting global demographic, social, economic, and medical processes (UNFPA. United Nations Population Fund). When considering the total fertility rate, high fertility rates – 5-7 children per woman – were observed in the 1950s, especially in developing countries. In the 1970s and 1990s, the introduction of family planning programs and increased availability of contraceptives reduced the birth rate to 3-5 children. In developed countries, between 2000 and 2024, the fertility rate dropped to 1.3-2 children, which creates the problem of population aging. Although fertility rates in developing countries are also declining, they remain relatively high (2.5-4 children). The average age of marriage has also increased in recent years. In the 1950s, people married at an early age (16-22 years old). In the 2020s, the age of first marriage in developed countries reached 30-35 years, and in developing countries – 25-30 years. The availability of various methods of contraception (oral contraceptives, implants, sterilization, emergency contraception) has increased significantly, which allows women to better control their reproductive functions. Maternal and child mortality rates have decreased significantly compared to the 1950s and 1970s. Medical advances, the widespread use of vaccines, and improvements in prenatal care have led to lower mortality rates.

Conclusions. As a result of the analysis, various trends and periods were identified as a result of the analysis of the dynamics of family planning in Azerbaijan for the years 1950-2023. One of the main indicators used in demography and family statistics to analyze the stability of the family and the social structure of society is the ratio of marriage and divorce. The 1950s are considered a period of high stability of families with a minimum divorce rate (1 divorce for every 27 marriages). The 1980s and 1990s were a period of early social change when the divorce rate was rising rapidly: in 1990, there was 1 divorce for every 5 marriages. The years 2000-2010 were a period of some stability, when the number of marriages decreased, but the divorce rate remained stable (1 divorce for every 7-9 marriages). 2020-2023 is a period of high divorce rates (1 divorce per 2.5 marriages). One of the important factors influencing this process in 2020 was the COVID-19 pandemic. An increase in the average age of first marriage (women from 20 to 27 years old, men from 25 to 30 years old), social and gender changes are of great importance. During this period, the total fertility rate decreased to a low level (from 5-6 children per woman to 1.8-2.0 children), approaching the level of natural population growth. Compared to previous years, there has been a significant decrease in maternal and child mortality rates, and positive trends in this area have been recorded. The use of modern birth control technologies and contraceptive methods has expanded, leading to more effective and safer approaches to family planning.

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Summary

Shovkat Mustafazade. Current trends and main features of family planning policy. – Article.

Managing new demographic trends and ensuring sustainable population growth require an integrated approach to sustainable development, integrated solutions, and more effective policies. Political priorities vary from country to country and region to region, but cooperation, coordination, communication, and dialogue between all countries are crucial for the sustainable future of humanity. The idea of sustainable development occupies a central place in modern world politics and economics, aimed at ensuring a balanced coexistence of people, nature and economic systems. The sustainable development of a country depends on various factors, among which demographic indicators play a crucial role. Demographic trends directly affect economic growth, social cohesion, and environmental sustainability. In modern conditions, the problems of family planning and population growth regulation are becoming particularly relevant. The article provides a comparative analysis of the main indicators influencing the family planning policy in Azerbaijan in different periods, as well as a comparative analysis with global trends. The realization of the depletion of natural resources, the deterioration of the environment and the impossibility of the old concept of economic development led to the search for a new paradigm for the sustainable development of the territory. This paradigm is based on the trinity and equality of three directions of development: environmental, social and economic. In this model, demographic indicators are an integral part of the social sphere, and without taking this factor into account, it is impossible to give a complete long-term forecast of the socio-economic development of the country. In the context of economic transformation and reorganization of the economic system, demographic issues are becoming particularly acute and relevant.

Key words: sustainable development, family planning, population growth, comparative analysis, global trends.

Анотація

Шовкат Мустафазадє. Сучасні тенденції та основні риси політики планування сім'ї. – Стаття.

Управління новими демографічними тенденціями та забезпечення сталого зростання населення вимагають інтегрованого підходу до сталого розвитку, комплексних рішень та більш ефективної політики. Політичні пріоритети відрізняються від країни до країни та регіону до регіону, але співпраця, координація, комунікація та діалог між усіма країнами мають вирішальне значення для сталого майбутнього людства. Ідея сталого розвитку посідає центральне місце в сучасній світовій політиці та економіці, спрямованої на забезпечення збалансованого співіснування людей, природи та економічних систем. Сталий розвиток країни залежить від різних факторів, серед яких вирішальну роль відіграють демографічні показники. Демографічні тенденції безпосередньо впливають на економічне зростання, соціальну згуртованість та екологічну стійкість. У сучасних умовах особливої актуальності набувають проблеми планування сім'ї та регулювання зростання населення. У статті проведено порівняльний аналіз основних показників, що впливали на політику планування сім'ї в Азербайджані в різні періоди, а також порівняльний аналіз із світовими тенденціями. Усвідомлення виснаження природних ресурсів, погіршення довкілля та неможливості старої концепції економічного розвитку призвело до пошуку нової парадигми сталого розвитку території. Ця парадигма базується на триєдності та рівноправності трьох напрямів розвитку: екологічного, соціального та економічного. У цій моделі демографічні показники є невід'ємною частиною соціальної сфери, і без урахування цього чинника неможливо дати повний довгостроковий прогноз соціально-економічного розвитку країни. В умовах економічної трансформації та реорганізації економічної системи особливої гостроти та актуальності набувають демографічні проблеми.

Ключові слова: сталий розвиток, планування сім'ї, зростання населення, порівняльний аналіз, світові тенденції.