



## Dimensions of fertility in post-socialist Ukraine

The transition from a state-administered to labor market economy has brought about changes not only to economic and social structures, but to fundamental human processes: reproduction. This study addresses how both macro- and micro-level changes have influenced reproductive decisions in post-socialist Ukraine. Since the breakup of the Soviet Union, fertility in Ukraine has declined precipitously – to a Total Fertility Rate of 1.1 children per woman on average. While many countries around the world have achieved similar low levels of fertility, Ukraine's fertility pattern is unusual; nearly all women have one child at a relatively young age and then stop. Hence throughout the transition to low fertility, some traditional aspects of childbearing have been maintained, while others have not. Economic uncertainty has created new obstacles to childbearing, while newfound opportunity has altered priorities and values. This study explores the conjunction between traditional, nearly universal behavior and the influences of and adaptation to new circumstances.

In this paper, I use qualitative data to provide an in-depth analysis of dimensions influencing fertility in Ukraine. The data was gathered during 22 focus groups and 12 in-depth interviews conducted around Ukraine in 2002 and 2003. The dimensions include physical conditions, such as housing, family income, and access to childcare, as well as psychological aspects such as preferences and attitudes. By comparing how men and women answer the same set of questions, I analyze how fertility decision-making differs by gender. I also address regional and rural/urban differences; Western Ukraine, which has historically been linked to Western Europe and is more nationalistic, has slightly higher fertility than Eastern Ukraine, which is more closely aligned with Russia and Soviet communism. Hence, by analyzing a specific behavior, childbearing, I show how dimensions associated with the transition to post-socialism have influenced both individuals and society in general.

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