

Feminization of poverty in Russia

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Summary

1. Reduction of poverty with scarce financial resources remains a priority for social welfare and social security. The paper on Feminization of Poverty in Russia attempts to scrutinize the reasons behind the impoverishment of the high poverty risk groups of Russian population. Poverty is known to have a diversity of forms where female poverty stands out as one of the more widespread. Identification of the key factors and patterns of poverty feminization in Russia is intended as the main purpose of this paper. In addition, the researchers attempted, subject to the results of the analyses made, to formulate specific measures of social policies needed to deter feminization of poverty in Russia.

2. The gender-based analysis of poverty levels of the population and households has produced evidence of feminization of poverty in Russia.

- a. **single-mother families and single elderly women make up a group with the highest poverty risk.** Different measurements of poverty have only proved the urgency of the feminization of poverty problem, indicating that female poverty shows extreme patterns in the form of stagnant and exceptional poverty (the poorest among the poor). The analysis has relied both on Russia-traditional methods used to measure poverty (the absolute method based on the comparison between money income or expenses and the cost of living) and the new methods, including deprivation method (structured around poverty measurements through deviations from the consumption standards prevailing in the society) and the subjective method (it measures poverty on the basis of public perceptions of the cash resources needed for a family not to be poor).
- b. **in case of single-mother families, poverty factors include both low individual income of the mother, and the insufficient amount of private and public transfers designed to partly offset the absence of the second income source in the family(children's alimony following the divorce, pensions for the benefit of children after the death of their father, single-mother allowances).** While some of the problems result from the underfinancing of social security programs by the government (children survivors' pensions and allowances), others belong to the sphere of economic conditions underlying female employment and remuneration, and inequality of economic opportunities available to men and women.
- c. **elderly population poverty factors belong to the sphere of insufficient amount of the effective pension allowances for individuals of the older retirement age, of which 90% are women:** the average pension allowance is a 2/3rds of a retiree's cost of living. The pensions fail to cover even the bare physiological necessities of the elderly population. The feminization of poverty among the elderly is further aggravated by the fact that the pension, which for this age group is largely the only source of income, is higher for men of the older retirement age than for women.
- d. **in the new economic environment the financial status of retirees and single-parent families has been further undermined by the dwindling public consumption funds.** Senior citizens whose pensions do not allow for medical

costs or social welfare find these services unaffordable and their poverty level growing because of the deprivation. From this point of view, single women of the older retirement ages prove the most vulnerable. For single-parent families, elimination of public consumption funds has also resulted in the growing medical costs. Additionally, they also have to finance their children's school education. The relatively low remuneration of women's labor precludes single-family children from getting access to quality education and quality medical aid.

3. The results obtained helped define **the set of measures needed to deter feminization of poverty in Russia**. There are two strategic areas perceived here:

- a. changes aiming to reduce the poverty level in the working population;
- b. measures of targeted social support to the traditionally poor groups of population.

Policies that would be exclusively geared to anti-feminization of poverty are largely associated with measures of targeted social support. However, it is only in parallel with the reduction in the overall poverty level among workers, which comprise all working women, that the desired effect could be attained.

4. Any measures aiming to reduce poverty levels among workers are primarily associated with the increase in the official wages drawn by the lower paid workers, the majority of which are women, and also with the legalization of unofficial incomes. The set of measures that are exclusively tackling feminization of poverty is broken by the authors into three key areas: measures promoting women's competitiveness on the labor market; measures designed to help single-parent families; and measures aimed to support single retirees.

5. The proposed set of measures intended to deter poverty feminization is not covering any issues whose identification needs extra scholarly discussion and additional research. Those would include intra-family distribution of material resources given increased differentiation of individual incomes; ways of adjustment available to women in a growing unofficial economy; specific time budgets of women depending on the demographic type of their families and its income; modernization of social and interfamilial support networks in a transitional economy.

Introduction

6. Many researchers have identified feminization of poverty as one of the intensifying tendencies in the 1980s and 1990s [1]. It was perceived as resulting from the growing number of divorces over the recent 25 years registered in most countries, and from the severe financial difficulties faced by mothers left with kids on their hands after the collapse of their marriage. In addition, the growing share of single-parent families resulted also from the more frequent births outside marriage. This paper is intended to discuss patterns and factors of poverty feminization in Russia. In contrast to western economies, feminization of poverty in Russia is contributed to not so much by the impoverishment of single-mother families as by the higher risk of poverty for single elderly women from the older retirement age groups.

7. One of the key factors leading to poverty feminization is the position of women on the labor market. Social mobility models are known to be different for men and women: for men, stable or growing mobility throughout their career is typical. Women less frequently than men would rise up the career ladder after they enter the labor market, and this pattern is to be observed for all women, even those of them who are not burdened by children care. Many Western researchers tend to believe that there is gender-based discrimination on the labor market. Patterns of discrimination may vary to include segregation which severely and negatively affects female careers limiting their chances for a professional rise, restricting their remuneration and negatively affecting the quality of their professional life. However, a lower pay drawn by women can only partly be attributed to the gender-based discrimination on the labor market. Researchers argue that since women are less inclined to work continuously, they choose employment areas and type of work that require less time, efforts or intellect and are therefore less remunerative [2]. As a result, in this case we are looking at certain patterns of female behavior on the labor market caused by the need to take care of home and children.

8. Global tendencies suggest that women are concentrated in lower-income industries. The analysis into the dependence between the level of feminization in the industry and pay levels in the Russian economy appears to support this conclusion. There is a clear-cut tendency towards a lower pay in the industries where most of the employees are women (government-sponsored low-income health care industries, education, culture). What we see currently is a process whereby women are crowded out of such previously «female» industries as banking and insurance. Moreover, the percentage of women in the management is shrinking: it dropped to 5.6% in the early 1990s, against 11% in 1985 [3].

9. Russian scholars who analyzed gender-caused differences on the labor market noted that the type of activity characteristic of women in Russia in general is often referred to as the **high plateau** type [4]. It is similar to the male type of economic activity and is typical of all former communist countries, including the USSR. This type characteristically shows higher labor involvement of women from younger through senior ages where the woman would combine a full-fledged labor with family duties throughout the life cycle. The research conducted in the Soviet time showed that even back then women were mostly employed in the professions with a low professional growth ceiling

and low pay, and were significantly lagging behind males in qualifications [5]. With the onset of economic reform there has been a tendency towards lower economic activity of population in Russia, both for men and women. Female employment has been affected by the following changes: reduced level of labor activity of working-age women; a tendency towards increased sectoral gender-based segregation; a tendency towards a growing gap in the men's and women's wages; higher propensity for discrimination in the female employment policies of the private sector of economy. Between 1940 and 1993 the sectoral segregation index in the Russian Federation doubled (from 17.28 to 34.52) [6].

10. Russia features both sectoral and occupational segregation, and there are cases of direct discrimination in recruiting, particularly by the private sector. However, basic conclusions made by Russian sociologists are similar to the opinion of its Western counterparts, viz., that women are disadvantaged in their careers primarily because men and women have disparate priorities on the labor market by virtue of their dissimilar role functions in the family. The result is that women choose those occupational and sectoral niches that require less effort, are less promising in terms of their careers and therefore lower-paid. Such situation cannot but reflect on the living standards of those families where women are the main breadwinners, i.e. single-parent — single-mother — families.

11. In the recent decade poverty feminization in Russia has been progressing against the backdrop of a broad range of exacerbated social problems that led largely to an unprecedented drop in money incomes and their increased differentiation. According to Russia's Goskomstat, the actual, officially paid wages in 1999 accounted for 33% of the 1990 levels. In the first half of 1999 the disparity of incomes measured as a ratio of incomes of 10% highest-income population and 10% lowest-income population, was 14.7% times [7]. Such tendencies are evolving in parallel with the shrinking of free benefits and services paid for from the public consumption funds. This is particularly true of education and health care.

12. The analysis of poverty in Russia used the share of population with substandard income as its main official indicator of the scope of poverty. The dynamics of change in this indicator is used to conclude on the type of change in the living standards of the population. The discussions are mostly focused on the methodology for the definition of the poverty line and measurement of the elements of the household living standards used to compare those with the poverty line to assess the scales of the poverty. The official methodology used by Goskomstat to define the share of poor population is based on the comparison of average monthly per capita incomes with the subsistence level calculated on the basis of the absolute concept of poverty. The family is considered poor if its per capita money income is below the subsistence level. According to the official data of Russia's Goskomstat, prior to the August 1998 crisis about 20% of Russian citizens were poor. After the August crisis the poverty level dropped to 35%. This assessment of the poverty level was subject not to the empirical conclusion, but the estimated income distribution series. The procedure for the construction of the estimated income distribution series involves a mechanism for the upward revaluation of the average income level. At certain years this revaluation was as high as 50%. The upward revaluation algorithm calls for a proportional increase in the levels of the empirical series.

Economically, such revaluation is supported by the fact that a larger portion of income is concealed. Most researchers tend to disagree with this assessment of the poverty level and argue that the hidden incomes are primarily concentrated by mid-income and high-income groups. Note that Goskomstat too publishes two assessments of the scale of poverty. The other assessment draws on the empirical data from the survey of household budgets and extrapolation of the sampling results over the general population. Since 1997 the assessment of the share of the poor population, the subsistence minimum is compared not with the incomes but with the household's disposable funds calculated as an aggregate of the household's gross incomes, previous savings and loans used for consumption and any receipts in kind of food, or allowances or benefits paid out in kind. According to the Goskomstat budget statistics, in Quarter III of 1999, 58.8% of the population had their money incomes at or below the subsistence minimum, and 49.5% had their disposable funds below the subsistence level [8].

13. The tendency toward the feminization of poverty evolved in parallel with the improved concept for the definition of poverty and its measurement. To a larger extent, the progress in the scholarly research was stimulated by the global changes in the living standards in the transitional economies resulting into a higher number of low-income families. What is typical of transitional economies is the multiple employment, concentration of incomes in the unofficial economy, widespread remuneration in kind (in lieu of cash). Combined with the irregularity of payment of salaries and wages or social transfers, such income patterns raise great doubts about the validity of the poverty identification method based on the comparison of current money incomes with the subsistence level, which is in fact the official method used in Russia to measure poverty. The world knows of at least three approaches to the assessment of poverty scales: absolute (based on the comparison of money incomes or expenses with the subsistence level); deprivation (structured around the measurement of poverty through deviation from the consumption standards prevailing in the population), and subjective (measuring poverty subject to the public perceptions of the amount of cash resources needed for a family not to be poor). These three approaches compliment each other and together help identify the poorest families: if the family is poor in accordance with the all three (or two of the three) criteria of poverty, it is classified as one of the poorer. This paper will suggest assessments of poverty scales basing on each of the above methods and on their combination. For purposes of the discussion of feminization of poverty, application of various poverty identification methods changes the whole picture as well as makes the issue even more apparent: single-parent families and single women of the older retirement ages compose the poor category under each of the poverty measurement criteria and their combination. Significantly, 40-50% of the «new» poor that basically comprise families with 1 — 2 children and two working parents, while preserving their status of a poor family under the income criteria, fail to uphold it when the deprivation method is applied. This seems to suggest that feminization of poverty manifests itself not only in the high probability of inclusion in the poor category by income, but also in the fact that female poverty shows exceptional patterns in the form of stagnant and extreme poverty (the poorest among the poor).

Family's Demographic Type and Poverty

1. In terms of living standards, the status of single-parent families in Russia is identical to that of families in other countries: it is exactly the single-parent families that lead in terms of their share of the poor among all other types of families, and their average income accounted for only 62% of that of complete families with children in 1993 [9]. This ratio ranged depending on the region in Russia between 55% in the Tver Region and Chuvash Republic, and 69% in the Orlov Region, where until mid-1990s they tried to preserve the state paternalism, if only at the regional level [10]. Figures suggest that two-parent and single-parent families income ratio is closer to that of the US rather than European countries where they have a rather efficient social safety network available to families with children, and in particular to single-parent families.

2. The high level of divorces persistent in Russia for some decades, which peaked in the mid-1990s at the record level of 51 divorces per a 100 marriages [11], the growing number of extra-matrimonial birth and instances of widowhood as a result of super-high mortality of the working-age males, compounded with the decreasing rate of repeat marriages — all that was contributing to the increasing number of single-parent families. According to the 1994 micro-census, single-parent families accounted for 13.4% of all households and 17% of all families with children under 18. Remarkably, their share is higher in urban population than in rural, and is particularly high in big metropolises (almost a quarter of all families with kids in St. Petersburg and in Moscow) [12].

3. Importantly, even before the time of reform single-parent families used to belong to a category of households most susceptible to the poverty risk: according to a 1998 survey of the population of Taganrog, a third of single-parent families proved below the poverty line against only 17% among two-parent families with children [13]. At that time, in terms of their poverty level, single-parent families were second only to single elderly people of which 82% were women: 47% of those had a substandard income, which can serve as another evidence of feminization of poverty — the pension system in the 1980s made senior citizens, particularly women, extremely disadvantaged in terms of their financial well-being.

4. In contrast to Western economies, the level of feminization of poverty in Russia defined by the extent of the material security gap in the single-mother families versus regular couples was changing in the past decade almost year on year, tracing the changes in the overall situation in the living standards area.

5. Major transformations in the socioeconomic sphere in the early 1990s brought about a severe decline in the living standards of all groups of population; as a result, the differentiation of incomes in various demographic groups narrowed, and families with regular couples came closer in their poverty to single-parent families. At the same time, single-mother families and single retirees where the overwhelming majority were women

found themselves beneath the poverty line already in the first year of reform — over a half of single-parent families and 2/3rds of single retirees (Table 1.1, Annex 1) [14].

6. The ability of families to adjust to a new economic and social environment is closely related to their demographic structure: family composition, gender and age of its members. As a result, the 1993 growth in real incomes caused by a number of factors failed to uniformly impact poverty of all types of families: regular adjustments in pension allowances in line with the growing costs of living at the time led to a significant reduction in the share of the poor among single elderly people or old-age couples without children while the simultaneous hikes in the minimum statutory wages and various new employment opportunities in the new market-oriented entities of the economy helped the bulk of two-parent families with few children break with the poor group. In this period of reform, which appeared fortunate in terms of the dynamics of living standards, the group of poor families was composed mostly of those demographic types that a priori belong to the risk group, which primarily are single-mother families. The income gap grew significantly: the proportion of the poor among single-parent families was 2.5 times that of the married couples' families (Table 1.1). Hence the former, pre-reform patterns re-established themselves, and families that had a higher potential for the adjustment to new conditions in the economy (working spouses with one or two children) promptly realized it.

7. However, the range of opportunities proved rather limited because of the yet unsophisticated new market mechanisms in the economy, and due to changes happening in the areas of the traditional employment. In the initial reform years the government was fighting the spiraling inflation, and their preferred methods triggered off new phenomena: systematic arrears in wages, pensions and other transfers. All that was followed in 1994 — 1995 by a slip in real incomes and a renewed rise of poverty in the country. It was contributed furthermore by the slower rates of pay increases in the government sector lagging behind the inflation rate, and also by an expanding gap between the subsistence level and the level of basic guarantees (minimum statutory wage, unemployment benefits or family allowances). The above processes were not offset by any expansion in the new forms of employment: the supply of job in the market sector of the economy did not grow at all.

8. The means of adaptation offered by the society at that time (employment in the market sector of the economy; supplementary employment, active reliance on part-time farming) did not prove acceptable to all groups of population. Single women with kids for most part were not able to escape their poverty. The 1993 — 1995 monitoring of the living standards conducted by the Social Security Ministry in 9 regions of Russia, with contributions from the present authors, showed that despite the significant differentiation in the material well-being from region to region, single-parent families lagged uniformly behind in terms of their material well-being, comparable in some regions only to single retirees affected by the backlog of unpaid pensions [15].

9. After the Goskomstat program of the budget-funded surveys incorporated in 1997 issues of the household composition and their demographic type, the information base

became considerably broader enabling analyses into the disparate living standards of certain groups and families. Bigger data sets covered by the budget-sponsored network across the territory of the country point to the persistent trends towards the lagging well-being of single-parent families vs. married couples with children (Table 1.2).

10. The extremely negative changes in the living standards of the population over the past two years caused by the August 1998 financial crisis, particularly conspicuous in case of married couples with children, narrowed the gap in poverty indicators for two- and single-parent families (55% and 58% for money incomes, and 45% and 46% for disposable funds, respectively). So, abrupt socioeconomic downturns in the country seem to somehow «equalize» all family categories at the exceptionally high level of poverty. Poverty is spilling out by incorporating «new poor», which comprise families with two working parents whose combined earnings are not enough to feed one or two dependents. The data recovered by the budget-funded network are in no way suggestible that in early 1999 the crisis was mitigated: the level of poverty continues to rise, and for single-mother families it is rising ever faster.

11. Up to now, our assessments of the level of poverty were income based. However, as we have noted above, in a transitional economy with the expanding employment in the unofficial sectors and widespread non-cash forms of remuneration, getting reliable information on household incomes is a task beyond any practical reach. It is therefore extremely important to resort to other methods of poverty assessment used by the Western sociology. The pilot project aimed to test whether the deprivation method of poverty assessment that was carried out by the present authors in 1997 in two European cities of Russia [16] allowed to judge on the level of poverty feminization basing on the direct analysis of the degree to which demands of a variety of household types were satisfied [17]. Additionally, we have also used the subjective poverty assessment method drawing on the answers to the question about what the current family income was sufficient for [18].

12. In terms of the proportions of various household types in the living standards assessment, all three methods coincided: single-mother families together with single retirees of which 90% are women make up the least protected group of population: over a third of single pensioners and a quarter of single-parent families belong to the poor category from the point of view of all three tests (Table 1.3). As such, these results considerably (almost 6 times) surpass similar results not only for France, but also for Slovakia [19], although single-parent families there invariably account for the majority in the most destitute group of population.

13. Thus, data of the budget-funded network and special surveys of the living standards from the late 1980s have been pointing to the working trend toward feminization of poverty in Russia although at certain years it was losing some of its severity because of sharp declines in the material well-being of all groups of population.

14. The bulk of single-parent families with children under 18 are families of divorcees. What is the effect of divorce on the material well-being of men and women? Western

sociologists note an abrupt decline in the living standards of women after divorce since it is by far and large the women who keep children, and besides their professional careers are less sustainable [20]. Subsequently, the situation remains unfavorable for those women who stay single with children, and it improves for those who remarry. As for males, the most recent research suggests that they too lose something in their living standards after the breakup. Their incomes drop by an average 20–25%. The main reason is alimony and other private transfers they have to pay, or else their income was lower than that of the wife before the dissolution of their marriage [21]. Thus matrimony offers support to the more socially disadvantaged, and it is exactly the socially disadvantaged partner who feels particularly hurt by the divorce and in the overwhelming majority of cases it is the woman.

15. The analysis of the «effects of the divorce» on the standards of living of men and women conducted by the present authors on the basis of two special surveys in 1993 and 1998 [22] proved the above conclusion right: the material well-being becomes more depressed for single mothers with children than for those who remarried. For the former, the negative net effect on their material well-being after the divorce stood at 45.3%, whereas the remarried women had it only at 12.6% [23] (Fig. 1.1, Fig.1.2). Such features as age or occupational status at the time of union dissolution, of course, would also affect the dynamics of the living standards (older ages or wageworkers would be hit harder) but none of these features can eliminate the effect of the main factor — the marital status after divorce

Factors contributing to the feminization of poverty

16. For each of the household types identified as the most susceptible to poverty (single-mother families, single retiree women), there is a range of factors contributing to the impoverishment of these groups of population.

17. **Single-parent families.** The analysis of the disparity in the living standards of women in single- and two-parent families immediately raises the issue of what would be conducive to the lagging standards of the former: high *dependence burden* or insufficient family income, which in turn could be related to both low *individual incomes of the mother*, and with the insufficient amount of *private and government transfers* (children alimony after divorce, pensions due to children after the death of their father, allowances to single mothers).

18. The number of children in the family, which is the indicator describing the average dependence burden, proves higher in two-parent families: 1.6 children per one family in average 1.37 in single-parent families [24], which for the most part have only one child. However, since in a half of two-parent families there is only one child per two parents, in the single-parent families the dependence burden would have the higher probability of producing poverty. The children dependency is supposed to be partially offset by *private or government transfers*, however, the current situation with the payment of alimony, benefits or the amount of survivor's pensions makes this compensation extremely inadequate.

19. **Alimony.** The surveys of divorced men and women indicated the worsening situation with the payment of alimony throughout the 1990s. According to the 1993 survey of women, alimony on average hardly covered half of the child's food costs. This actually means that the other half of the food plus all other, no less important child expenses (clothes, footwear, education, pre-school daytime care, medical services, etc.) would have to be borne by the mother. Only in 2% cases did alimony prove relatively high (close to the average per capita income in the country at the time of the poll) [25]. Given the widespread unofficial employment and uncontrolled incomes it is practically impossible to exercise the provision in the RF Family Code (1995) on the recovery of alimony from all incomes, thus the amount of alimony is not infrequently limited to the statutory percentage of the formal wages or salary for the main job. Given that, a relative assurance of the regular payment of alimony and its higher amount is the arrangement between the former spouses without any recourse to court: the 1998 survey showed that women would 2 times as often resort to this measure (27% versus 14% in 1993), although in this case both the amount and frequency of support to their children would fully depend on the good will of the father and cannot be controlled by the government institutions. This only reinforces uncertainty and instability of the living standards for the families of divorced women with dependent children.

20. In the absence of a national information basis, it is difficult to judge about the payment of alimony, however our local surveys of the recent years point to a disastrous

situation: over 50% divorced women with children fail to get their alimony in time. In smaller towns this indicator stands at more than 60%. The backlog of alimony payments is on average one and a half year long [26]. The main reasons for that are the wage arrears experienced by the fathers and their unofficial, undeclared employment. Even if alimony arrives, its amount in the late 1990s remained at the same low level as in 1993: less than half of the subsistence level of a child, whereas the amount of alimony in the aggregate income of single-mother families accounted for a meager 17%.

21. **Survivor's pension.** The higher mortality rate for working-age males in Russia in the 1990s has produced a new problem: material support to children surviving their fathers. However, the applicable type of pensions (survivor's pension) is an average of Rbs 257 (1998 [27]), i.e. 51% of the minimum subsistence of a child, which in no way can fully compensate for the reduced family income.

22. **Benefits.** If the single-parent family resulted from the birth of a child outside marriage, the high dependence burden is supposed to be partly compensated for with monthly government allowances to children under 16. The amount of the allowance, which has not changed over the past 3 years, accounts today for only 20% of the subsistence level [28]. The resulting effect impacts significantly the dynamics of the growing poverty in single-parent families since the extramarital birth rates in Russia, although slightly lower than in the West, have nevertheless doubled over the past decade (from 12% of all births in 1990 to 25.3% in 1997) [29]. True, a certain percentage of mothers with children born out of the wedlock would actually live in two-parent families in the unregistered marriage, however such instances are still relatively rare in Russia (according to 1994 micro-census, only 7% of couples did not register their marriage [30]).

23. Pursuant to the Law «On government subsidies to citizens with children» (29 July 1998), *monthly children's allowances* should be drawn by all families with children under 16 whose incomes are below 200% of the subsistence minimum in any region of the Russian Federation. Since this allowance is paid out from the regional budgets, the situation with the payment of the allowance would vary from region to region and would depend on their economic potential. Overall, the allowance fails to mitigate poverty for families with children as it accounts for an average 10% of the subsistence level [31]. The issue of government support to families with children is further aggravated by chronic delays in the payment of these meager amounts that in different years and in different regions could last from several months to one or two years.

24. Private transfers via *interfamily mutual assistance* network. Close inter-family ties with the support rendered in cash, in kind or in services could to some extent compensate for the lack of government social support to families with kids. Traditionally frequent in Russia formerly, this phenomenon today tends to grow and transform in line with the social changes in the society. Its role in the adaptation of families to the new economic environment has been largely under-researched: profound qualitative studies are needed to show the extent of interfamilial safety net in cities and villages. Our local surveys of the urban population point to the important role of the material support from relatives to families with children, particularly, single-mother families [32]. The share of households

drawing material support amounted to 32–36% depending on the size of the city (1997 survey), interestingly, regular support was almost 2 times as frequent in larger cities (15%) than in smaller towns (7%). Over half of single-parent families receive material support from their relatives (56–58% families), and 21–24% of them receive it regularly; this support accounts for over one fifth of the overall family income.

25. *Individual incomes of women.* In the absence of any valuable compensation for the second source of income in single-parent families via the system of government and private transfers, the woman is faced with the problem of supporting her children with her individual income. What are the opportunities for that available on the labor market? Is there any selective approach to the opportunities available to women in the professional area depending on the family type? Or should we rather touch on a more global issue of inequality of economic opportunities for men and women?

26. The research done in the Western countries suggests that after divorce women become more actively involved in their professional activity, starting or resuming the job, trying to minimize their losses in the living standards after the dissolution of marriage. It is noted that after a pause in the professional activity they come less prepared than their colleagues and their career outlook proves less positive. In Russia where female employment was roughly on the same level with men irrespective of the marital status, it was difficult to prove this pattern. However, the socioeconomic transformations of the 1990s have been changing the traditional behavior in the professional area, encouraging unemployment and unofficial employment, and thus affecting primarily women.

27. The background and qualifications of women in two- and single-parent families do not allow to argue in favor of a significant gap between them in terms of their education or qualification, but in fact at the moment it is not these factors that define the successful career or higher pay. The income-affecting factors include employment by the private sector of the economy, or additional employment. From this point of view, the level of working activity is higher with single mothers (Table 1.4) [33]. However, even in the best of times in the national economy when there appeared to be more opportunities for employment outside the government sector of the economy, the unemployment level was relatively low (1993), and the overall salaried incomes of single mothers on average did not reach up to the level of male incomes, and only slightly exceeded incomes of women from two-parent families (by 18%). The reason lies in the limited range of occupational areas where a woman can earn some income, as well as in more objective obstacles that appear with the private sector employment: work for a private firm or business requires more time and total devotion of efforts whereas the underdeveloped social infrastructure, household services or children's daycare institutions, compounded with the need to care for the children, do not allow women to give all of their time to the job and be more active professionally. The preference at high-pay private sector jobs, as a result, is with men, and women, as a rule, are employed there for secondary jobs. Not infrequently they prove incapable of competing on the labor market and cannot radically improve the position of their family, and this is particularly true of women with small children.

28. In the new economic environment, the material status of single-parent families is further aggravated by the *decline of the public consumption funds*. For single-parent families, it is reflecting primarily on their need to finance school education for their children. By law, Russia continues to guarantee free school education. However, parents have to contribute to it, because in the time of the economic crisis the government funding of school education was cut by half. According to VTsIOM [34], although 97% of school children study at free government schools, their parents have to pay for text books and manuals (82%); maintenance repairs of schools (86%); various charges due to the parents' committees (70%); security at schools (35%); school lunch (32.5%); additional classes (21%); and other mandatory fees (21%). Only 26% of the school children are eligible for free lunches, and their overwhelming majority would not have been able to afford lunch if they had to pay for it. Apart from mandatory fees needed to support the curriculum activities at school, parents are paying for individual tutorship (15%) and pre-college tutorial classes (7%).

29. Thus, despite the high activity in the production sphere, single mothers are not in a position to compensate for the missing second source of income, i.e. the husband's income; of particular importance here is the disparity in the wages of men and women. Although single-parent families are social transferees and are actively involved in the interfamilial ties, such alternative sources of well-being fail to offset the lack of the second breadwinner. Moreover, the dire financial situation in single-parent families is even further aggravated by the collapse of the public consumption funds.

30. **Poverty of the elderly.** A significant place in the structure of the poor population has always been, and will be held by the pensioners. Although pensioners belong to the socially vulnerable groups of the population, in the measurement of poverty through the comparison of money incomes and subsistence level, the affiliation with the retirement group in Russia is not the factor of a high poverty risk. According to the official statistics prior to 1998 in the households with pensioners the probability to fall into the poor category was lower (50%) than for other households [35].

31. In Russia over the years of reform, the financial status of pensioners became particularly critical after the August 1998 crisis when pensions in real terms were shrinking faster than the money income and wages and salaries of the population. In the second quarter of 1999, the amount of the average calculated pension fell to an unprecedented low level and stood at 67% of the pensioner's subsistence minimum [36]. Insofar, the minimal pension has reached 44% of the subsistence minimum of a pensioner even with the account of all additional payments included. Thus, the level of the of the pension maintenance has fallen to a dangerously low level which with the absence of additional sources of income fails to provide even for a physiological subsistence minimum of pensioners. The situation of the retired population has become even more complicated for after the crisis access to alternative sources of income, such as wages and salaries, has considerably been circumscribed. Before the crisis, pensioners mostly were employed at job places with low salaries and wages which were not attractive for working-age population. The financial crisis lead first and foremost to cuts of highly paid job places and forced young employees to shift their interest towards lower paid positions

which, in its turn, has led to the weakening of employed pensioners' competitive status. According to S. Misikhina's calculations done on the basis of RLMS data, in 1998, the share of working pensioners dropped to the lowest level observed over the reform period and amounted to 15.5% of the total pension population. As compared to 1996, the number of working pensioners went down by 10% [37], while the general employment decline rate reached 2.6% [38]. As a result, according to the Goskomstat of the Russian Federation, the poverty level in the oldest age group of pensioners increased in 1998 by 18%, as compared to the subsistence minimum of the money income, and by 24% with respect to the disposable funds index (see Table 1.5.).

32. Calculations performed on the basis of the RLMS data show that among households which participated in this longitudinal survey 25% are the «new poor» (these are the poor who did not belong to this category at the previous stage of the survey), specifically: this category includes pensioners' households, while among the entire poor population the share thereof has reached 15% [39]. Therefore, the growth rate of the poor pensioners has exceeded the average growth rate of the poor in general. Particular attention is given in the report to the analysis of the pensioners' living standards mainly due to the fact that with respect to the demographic structure pensioners in Russia are predominantly women, which may be easily accounted for by the younger pension age and the shorter male life expectancy. It is particularly noteworthy that in the past ten years the proportion between the two genders in the oldest age categories has somewhat changed with a certain increase in the share of the male population. According to the Goskomstat, in 1989, men accounted for 25.5% of the pensioners, while women for 74.5% respectively. In 1999, the share of retired men increased to 30% with a respective drop in the share of retired women to 70%. However, the above demographic shifts are manifested differently in different age groups (See Table 1.6). The changes are particularly notable in groups of pensioners of the older age groups (between 65 and 69 and 70 and 74 years). In this age group the number of women per 1000 men of the respective age has decreased over the decade by 20–30%. In the oldest age groups the share of men has increased again, though not too significantly, particularly given the fact that women generally prevail among those older than 80 years, and this trend is more prominent with the older age groups.

33. At first sight, the Goskomstat data on the pensioners' standards of living does not confirm the relevance of the poverty feminization factor in the category of pensioners of older ages where the share of women is the largest. In families of single pensioners, according to the data of budget-based surveys of the RF Goskomstat, the share of the poor is two times lower than given in the average statistics with respect to the total population (in 1998 the figures were 19.2% versus 40.9%) [40]. The statistics on the poverty levels of individual gender and age groups of the population also show that despite the increase of the poor in the older age groups of the retired population, the poverty risk does not exceed the average level in Russia. At the same time, feminization of poverty of the aged is concealed due to the specifics of the budget-based statistic data aggregation. On the one hand, single pensioners' households do not run the high risk of poverty because of a large share of «young» pensioners. A relatively low level of poverty observed in the first categories of pensioners is accounted for by a large share of pensioners working during the first five years after their retirement (between 55% and

59% for women and 60% and 64% for men). Insofar, male «young pensioners» employment is significantly higher than the female one: 48.1% versus 36.7% respectively [41].

34. On the one hand, in the retired population gender and age groups we cannot single out pensioners who live in families and separately. The data of the survey of the urban population which was carried out in various regions of Russia over the past decade shows a considerable difference in the poverty levels of pensioners who live separately and provide for themselves and those living in families together with other relations of working age. Out of the entire retired population 50 to 70% of pensioners live separately, which includes married couples and single pensioners (see Table 1.7.). In Russia, the share of pensioners who reside separately differs depending on the type of the population: in large cities single pensioners mostly live in families, while in smaller towns they mostly reside on their own. In pre-reform period the key factor regulating the process was the specifics of inheriting housing. In conditions when housing was not privatized and it was impossible to transfer it into inheritance, in major cities where housing was more prestigious pensioners tended to reside together with other relatives.

35. The split up of the retired population of older ages into pensioners who reside with families and those living separately allowed the researchers to draw a conclusion that families of single retired women are the poorest among all the retired category. The data of Table 1.8. shows that in the residential centers which were analyzed the share of the poor among single aged women residing in large cities was two times higher and in smaller towns one and half times higher than the average poverty level. It should be also noted that in the oldest age groups the amount of pensions is obviously higher with men, which is accounted by the prevalence of men among the retired who enjoy various benefits (war veterans, former employees of heavy and harmful industries, etc.) and whose pensions are two to three times higher than the average level. It should be emphasized at the same time that some ten years ago feminization of poverty was far more relevant due to the impoverishment of single women of older ages. In the recent years an increase of all types of pensions by a certain percentage, lump sum payments to pensioners, and finally provision of certain benefits to a considerable part of pensioners (for instance, for transport, housing and utilities services) have become key measures of social policy pursued with respect to the aged. All the above steps resulted in the situation when the dependence of pensions on labor payments has become completely irrelevant, and all the relationships between the main indices of pension maintenance have been disrupted, that is the balance between the minimal, medium and maximum levels, while the real value of pensions has dropped. All this has led to leveling of income in the area of pension maintenance which caused the growing poverty of the entire aged population irrespective of the age.

36. If with respect to income level, pensioners are not considered to be a group subject to excessive poverty risks, when deprivation method is applied to determine the poorest population, the oldest age groups pensioners rank first among the poor. Our attempts to combine the two methods (the income- and deprivation-based) in poverty measurement has allowed to conclude that families of single pensioners, similarly to incomplete

families, relate to groups where the highest degree of poverty both with respect to deprivations and incomes is observed. Moreover, it is among single pensioners that the share of those who, though not poor with respect to income, suffer considerable deprivations is considerable (about 30% [42]). Our surveys showed that the above deprivations were first and foremost related to impossibility to receive medical services in the required amount. Against the background of permanently decreasing government allocations for health care (only in the first half of 1999, the volume of funding dropped by 34% against similar periods in 1998), the scope of paid-for medical services is noticeably growing. According to the analysis of healthcare expenditures held jointly by the Boston University and Institute for Social Research, the share of government allocations in funding of expenditures on medicare (including medicines) in late 1998 accounted for only 37%, and this is with the account that the retired population is guaranteed free medical care and a 100–50% discounts of payments for medicines.

37. Paid-for medical services are mainly accessible to only wealthy categories of the population, which is confirmed by the data of our surveys showing that families paying for medical services are mainly concentrated in the three latter income groups, and the statistics from RF Goskomstat. According to the official statistics, in the fourth quarter of 1998 the total expenditures of the population for medical services in the first decile group of the population accounted for 1 %, while the last one — for 46.4% [43]. We would like to emphasize that the differentiation of income of the population with respect to medical services is higher than the general one with respect to expenditures for consumptive use. According to the RF Goskomstat, in the total amount of expenditures for consumptive use the first decile group accounts for 2.8%, while the last one — for 22.4%.

38. Single pensioners of older age are generally not represented among the 30% of the wealthiest. The VTsIOM [44] analysis shows that despite the rights to purchase medicine at a discount granted to the retired, this social program has not been backed up by the appropriate funding, therefore, for most pensioners eligible for benefits this right proved to be purely formal. This was confirmed empirically by the results of the survey. The below listed categories of the population failed to receive necessary medicines on beneficial terms eligible therefor: invalids of the Great Patriotic War (65%), members of families of those who perished during the war conflicts (82%); survivors of political purges (80%); the disabled of the 1st group (75%); the disabled of the 2nd group (69%); the disabled of the 3d group (65%), confirmed invalids (72%). Single women residing on their own are represented in many of those categories.

39. Thus, the most relevant characteristics of feminization of poverty include high risk of poverty among single retired women of older age groups. Women residing on their own at the age of 65 and older, who have no other additional payments but pensions and who lost their physical ability to earn extra income and engage in individual smallholding found themselves, as a rule, beneath the poverty line. Similarly to instances with incomplete families, this fact becomes more prominent when the poverty level is relatively low. When the share of the poor goes up, the possibility to join the category of the poor for single pensioners of older age groups nears the general poverty level. This is confirmed by the results of the comparative analysis of the share of the poor in large and

small towns (see table 1.8.). The population tends to adapt themselves more successfully to the on-going market reform in large cities than in small ones where the crisis is reflected in a more concentrated and dramatic manner. Along with the low-income poverty, the material status of single retired women is aggravated by the destruction of free health care system which causes dramatic social deprivations. Therefore, the poverty of such kind of families differs not only is the scale of incidence, but the extreme forms of its manifestation.

Position of Women in the Labor Market: Factors and Consequences of Gender Asymmetry

41. The data illustrating the employment of population at the economically active age testifies to the fact that over the years of reform, up to the late 1998, a trend towards stable deterioration of possibilities to use the economic activity of the population had taken shape (Table 2.1., Annex 2). With other conditions equal, this presupposes activation of competition in the labor market. The figures in Table 2.2. give an idea of how this processes impacts the gender structure of the labor force.

42. Between 1992 and 1998, the total number of the employed went down by 18,6%, the number of the employed men — by 18%, and the employed women — by 19.3%. Despite the decrease in the number of employed women the recorded differences cannot be regarded as a confirmation of a weak competitive status of women ion the labor market at the time when tension grows. Extrusion of women from the employment sphere is followed at the same time by the process when women more actively withdraw from the working population and move to the category of housewives, students, etc. The share of women in the labor force went down between 1992 and 1998 from 47.7% to 47.1% respectively.

43. Under the developing market relations the transition of women to the category of economically inactive population may be accounted for by several reasons. On the one hand, this transition may be related to an increase in the income of other family members, which allows women to lower the total work load while giving up professional activity. Women themselves often consider such a transition positively, since it does not lead to a significant decline in the family standards of living. On the other hand, under aggravated competition in the labor market the alternative strategies for managing the household are changing. Under economic growth, an alternative to managing the household is employment corresponding to a woman's qualification level. Under the crisis, an alternative to household duties may be either search of suitable wok with little chance of employment, or unstable underpaid work requiring little qualification, in other words «unsuitable» employment (for instance with regular administrative unpaid holidays, delays in wages, etc.). Under the circumstances the transfer of women to the category of housewives most often leads to a considerable drop in the living standards. The results of the surveys conducted by the authors of the report in late 1980-s [45] on the eve of large scale economic changes allow us to conclude that in the soviet times the first group of factors was prevailing (high income of the husband made it possible for the woman not to work after childbirth). With the start of the economic crisis the key reason for the transition of women to the housewives category was the aggravated competition in the labor market. This is indirectly confirmed by the data provided in Table 2.3. Among socially active groups of population housewives and unemployed married women are largely represented in the low income category. With respect to the low income group of respondents, the share of housewives in the structure of all socially active groups of the population ranks second after the unemployed, being even more numerous than the group of women unemployed due to the maternity leave. Therefore, refusal of low-income

housewives to engage in certain activity which would bring income to the household is largely caused by the unfavorable market conjuncture. Thus, though the involuntary withdrawal of women from the labor market is a form of adjustment to the market conjuncture, it is determined by a limited choice of forms of active behavior, and runs contrary to the concept of a decent living standard.

44. Between 1992 and 1998, female employment in sectoral aggregates (agrarian production, industrial production and production of services) was changing along the same lines as the general employment with the following trends in the dynamics thereof:

- maximum decline was observed in industrial production where the employment dropped by 31 %, with a 13% fall in agrarian production and 5% fall in the services sector.
- the only industries where the employment grew were those related to market infrastructure. Due to the above growth and a relatively low decline in the services sector, in late 1996 early 1997 the predominant share of the employed concentrated in the production of services (the role of women employment in the process is illustrated by the data given in Table 2.4.).

45. The gender specifics of the above changes found reflection in the following trends: the women's employment growth rate was lagging behind, while the employment decrease went at an accelerated rate. IN the infrastructure sectors women employment increased by 24%, while in industry it fell by 43%, in agrarian production — by 25%, the service sphere — by 5.5%/ That is to say that with the trend towards cuts in job places, women's chances to lose their jobs stood higher than those of men, while when jobs were created, to get a job was far less probable for women than for men. Thus, the weaker competitive status of women is manifested both in case of redundancy of work force and in the event of additional employment.

46. Stabilization of female occupancy between 1995 and 1998 was provided by the production of services which was determined not only and not so much by the growth of women's employment (mainly in infrastructure sectors), but rather by structural factors. The production of services, in contrast to agrarian and industrial production, was characterized by the dominating female employment, therefore the growth of the share of employees of this aggregate sector, up to the leading position in the overall structure of employment contributed to a certain enhancement of the women's status. The services sector the share of which also tended to grow played a significant role in the above transformations, meanwhile the prevailing female employment continued in the service sector (see Table 2.5.).

47. Despite the absolute growth of the number of women employed in trade, public catering and management, the gender structure in the above and other market infrastructure sectors (with the exception of transport where female employment is low) was changing not in favor of women. Men «pressed» women out in all infrastructural segments which prior to the reform had been traditionally considered women's employment sphere (with the exception of transport). This process did not tell on those

social services sectors which relate to social infrastructure: health care, education, culture and art covering at least 80% of all women employed in the service sector. The reasons for the high level of feminization of social infrastructure sectors typical for pre-reform decades remained mostly unchanged. Most organizations operating in the above sectors are funded from the budget, the wages of employees depend not so much on the demand for their labor, but on budget limitations. Thus, the weaker competitive status of women is manifested not so much in prompt cuts of job places occupied by women, but the concentration of female employees in sectors with traditionally low labor payment.

48. The absolute growth of the female employment in the production of services relates to the emergence of new up-to-date forms of employment where women have managed to ensure a decent position for themselves in their competition with men. For instance, in organizations related to market infrastructure among experts in advertising or image-makers women account for 40 to 50%. The army has also become a new professional sphere for women who serve as officers, petty-officers, soldiers. However, only 3% of women in military service have the ranks of officers [46].

49. The late 1998 saw the start of economic revival initiated by the growth of industrial and agrarian production. According to the RF Goskomstat, from October 1998 to October 1999, the employment rate grew by 11.2%, while unemployment fell by 2.3%. These processes influenced the employment structure which found reflection in the employment growth in all three aggregate sectors, including infrastructural industries and the service sphere (See Table 2.6). Accelerated development in agrarian and industrial production found reflection in an increase in the share of these aggregate sectors in the general employment structure. The above changes also influenced the gender employment structure (See Table 2.7.).

50. On the whole, during the period under review, female employment growth rate in all groups of industries, with the exception of infrastructural ones, was somewhat higher than that of men. The drop in the living standards related to the crisis gas stimulated economic activity irrespective of the gender factor. However, the overwhelming majority of women have lower claims with respect to the amount of payment than men. Therefore, the decline in real wages after the financial crisis of 1998 has contributed for a certain period of time to the improvement of the women's competitive status. Insofar, projections for the future are not quite favorable: prolongation of economic growth, according to certain estimates, will lead to an increase in vacancies for men (in mining and processing industries). In education, which is traditionally a sector employed by women, there may even be a reduction of vacancies. The development of public work development of the RF Ministry of Labor is by no means oriented to women (road construction, urban labor intensive works). And even the Presidential Program for Advanced Training of Managers Abroad is fully targeted at men.

51. Strengthening of women's positions in the labor market largely depends on whether they will manage to retain their advantages with respect to education which have not yet been sufficiently realized. According to the RF Goskomstat [47], women so far have taken the lead with respect to higher education (24% of employed women versus 19% of

employed men), and secondary professional education (38% versus 30%). Insofar, it is women with higher and secondary special education who make up the majority of the registered unemployed (over 70%). This is evidence to the fact that to adapt themselves to market demand many women will have to go through the retraining process from the very start and additionally master less fundamental professions.

Specifics of Female Unemployment

52. Weaker competitive status of women is manifested not only in characteristics of employment, but unemployment too. Though the gender structure of unemployment does not seem to confirm this observation, since men are prevailing among the unemployed, women experience more serious problems with finding jobs. This is reflected in the average job search time and the numbers of those seeking for a job for at least a year (See Table 2.8).

53. A longer job search time also shows how vulnerable women are in the labor market. An attempt to explain this phenomenon exclusively by the passivity of women related to the self-protection of the family does not seem convincing. The above statement may be backed by the data on how active men and women are in ways and methods they resort to when searching for jobs (see Table 2.9.).

54. The most essential gender differences may be observed in such ways of a job search as application to government employment agencies (this way is preferable for women) and turning to friends and, in particular, directly to potential employers (these methods are more typical for men). The priorities which are taking shape in practice reflect the actual efficiency of a certain job search method, in other words, if the unemployed turns to friends in search of a job, men stand better chances to get a job. This is why women most often have to more actively use the services of government employment agencies (among officially registered unemployed two thirds are women) the number of applications to which generally grows irrespective of the gender in proportion to the growth of tension in the labor market. In gender terms this means that at a certain point in time the situation in the labor market may be less favorable for women, than men.

55. Inequality of the gender status of the unemployed in the labor market is confirmed by the data of our local sample surveys of urban households which illustrate the movements in social and demographic structure of the unemployed respondents in cities. For the analysis we split up the unemployed into the following categories: 1st type — potential breadwinners (married men, mothers in incomplete families etc.), 2nd type — married women, 3d type — other relatives of breadwinners (mainly children of the working parents). If between 1992 and 1993 [48] the share of potential breadwinners in all cities subject to the survey accounted for no more than 40% of the unemployed, in 1997 the share thereof grew to 53%. Changes in the unemployment structure were mostly related to the decreasing share of married women, that is of the category which due to unfavorable conjuncture in the labor market seizes to search for jobs.

56. Our calculations based on the RLMS data confirm that women are the first to suffer in case of redundancies, therefore the threat to lose a job remains a serious problem for them. The overwhelming majority of employed women fear to lose their jobs and almost a half are not at all sure that they will be able to find a job which is not worse than their current one (Tables 2.10, 2.11).

57. Insofar, the degree of fear to lose the job and certainty to get a new one depends on the age of the respondent and his (her) education. Fears related to employment peak in the pre-pension age category, the problem evokes less concern with younger people and working pensioners. meanwhile, the higher the education, the less a person fears to lose his job and the more sure he is of his potential. However, the correlation with the educational level may be accounted for by the age factor impact, since new generations start their working life with a higher educational level than that of their parents' generation. The professional status of respondents was less relevant, though experts with higher education are more certain of their possibilities in finding a job.

Gender inequality in wages and salaries

58. A factor which maintains competitive ability of women on the labor market is a low value of female work force. In many respects this is the heritage of the soviet era where, though the centralized tariff policy officially established uniform tariffs with respect to gender, in fact preference was given to traditionally «male» sectors, that is, heavy and processing industry, construction and assembly work and transport. In the sectors which were considered less relevant from a social aspect, specifically light and food industries, education, health care where female employees were dominating, wages and salaries were considerably lower. Men more often than women were paid various additional payments for labor intensive work, work in the northern regions and overtime. The hierarchy of job positions was also in favor of men, therefore, wages and salaries of men at any enterprise, organization or region were higher than those of women (in the national economy in general — on the average by a third).

59. During the reform period the trend grew more prominent. The indices related to employment are most illustrative here. The share of women employed in the service sphere from 1990 to 1998 considerably declined: in trade and public catering by 18 percentage points, in financial and credit sphere — by 16, in communications sphere by 11. The above sectors were traditionally considered «women's» sectors, since the employees were mainly women. The process when women are actively squeezed out of such a sphere as management is being observed: the share of women employed in management over the period under review went down by 20 percentage points. An increase of men employed in this sphere is accounted for by the most significant growth of salaries and wages of the employees, and men claim for jobs previously held by women.

60. Average salaries in health care and the social sphere sectors in pre-reform times amounted to only 65 to 75% of the average wages in the country. Over the reform period the situation in these sectors has deteriorated even more. Wages and salaries of women in these sectors, according to the 1998 data, amounted to only 57–63% of the average wages in the country. As a result, a considerable part of women (according to 1998 data the figure accounts for 30% of the total number of working women) received wages which failed to provide consumption for themselves (let alone the dependants) at the subsistence level. As for men employed in these sectors, in 1998 the figure stood just at 6%, while their wages were higher than those of women by 25% on the average.

61. Moreover, the analysis of distribution of positions (see Table 2.12) shows that most women in public service take mainly junior, senior and leading positions requiring higher professional qualification, but less responsibility and independence in decision-making. Our calculations performed on the basis of RLMS sampling (1998) evidences that the number of major officials among women is 1.5 times lower than among men. According to the same data, 20% women and 23% men interviewed for the survey have subordinates, but women, insofar, head mainly smaller groups of 12 persons on the average. While men holding major official positions head collectives of 42 persons on the average. Women

engage in business rarer than men: 9.1% women and 16.4% men of the economically active age were trying to start their own business, and only 2.1% of women and 4.4% of men succeeded in so doing.

62. Wages and salaries of men and women of the same profession and employed in similar organizations are very much the same (for instance, at communications enterprises, construction organizations, in education and health care). However, for women in «men's» positions salaries are generally lower, which is confirmed by the data in Table 2.13 (see data on petrochemical and refining industries) received on the basis of a one-time sample survey of the Goskomstat in the major sectors of the national economy in 1997.

63. The analysis of intra-sectoral differentiation in salaries and wages shows that in 1998 the average wages and salaries for men exceeded the average wages of women in all sectors. At the same time, differences fluctuated within 9% in agriculture, 17% in education and 31% in industry. The gender wage differentiation ratio (excess of the male average wages over female average wages) in the national economy at large equaled 30% (see Table 2.14).

64. On the basis of the given data the authors of the survey arrived at the following conclusions on the gender inequality in labor payment:

- wages and salaries of women in all sectors, even with [prevailing female labor are lower; the differentiation of women's wages and salaries within a certain sector and at an inter-sectoral level is considerably lower than that of men;
- in «male-dominated» sectors women receive lower wages and salaries, while in «female-dominated» sectors men are better paid;
- if a woman works in a traditionally «male-dominated» sector, her chances to earn more are higher than those of a woman of the same profession employed in the «female-dominated» sector.

65. Thus, the inequality in labor payment of men and women has two components to it: an intra- and inter-sectoral ones. Insofar, wage discrimination of men and women is not manifested at the level of individual firms and enterprises. Therefore, unequal access to highly-paid positions manifests itself not directly, but indirectly. It should be also noted that the Goskomstat data records a lower level of wage inequality than other surveys. For instance, according to VTsIOM survey, the gender wage differentiation ratio amounts to 45-50%.

66. The main reason for feminization of low-paid employment is rooted in the objective specifics of female competitiveness related to reproductive behavior and «double» employment of women. That is why on a broad scale women in families are «second» bread-winners, while men are the «first» ones. In statistical rows of employee distribution with respect to the amount of wages, gender differences are manifested in female prevalence in the left (low-paid) field of the distribution graph, while men — in the right (highly-paid) one.

67. In the 1990-s, in connection with a two- or three-fold (according to different estimates) fall in real wages, the social functions thereof have considerably changed. To a significant extent official wages and salaries lost the characteristics of income which also accounted for the dependants burden, as well as of an income providing for the simple work force reproduction. According to the Goskomstat, only 8% of employees received wages and salaries within the subsistence minimum, while the average statutory wages exceeded the above minimum by over two times (with the average dependence ratio of 1.5). In 1998, according to VTUZh, wages and salaries of one third of employees fell below the subsistence minimum (with the purchasing power halving, as compared to 1989 data), while the average wages were 1.4 times its amount [49]. Thus, the dependency factor is neglected in the wages and salaries of not only most «second» bread-winners, but the «first» ones too, which has become the key reason for poverty spreading among employees.

68. As noted above, job places with socially low incomes concentrate mainly women whose wages and salaries do not take into account either any dependency load, or the reproduction of labor ability. For instance, according to the Goskomstat, in November 1999, in such «women-dominated» sectors as education, culture and art average salaries exceeded the subsistence minimum only by 6%. Such low labor income has been telling on the material status of women who are objectively the «first» bread winners (the main and only breadwinners in a family, women in incomplete families). Weak labor income protection of such households is actually a major reason for gender differences in the poverty indexes of employees, which are higher for women than for men. For instance, according to the data of our 1997 surveys, among the employed respondents of St. Petersburg women with per capita income at the level of subsistence minimum exceeded men by 15%.

69. Indirectly the change in the structure of the actual number of working hours per week spent at the main job place is evidence of the greater impact of low payment on the material well-being of women. According to the Goskomstat, this index tends to grow both in case of men and women, while men still remain in the lead (in 1999 the figure for men was 39-40 hours per week, while the respective figure for women stood at 36-37 hours). However, over the period from 1995 to 1999 the share of women employed 41 hour per week and over increased three times, while the men's share grew 2.6 times. Most likely, it is not the wish to achieve self-actualization but dissatisfaction with labor payment which forces women to increase their work load through working overtime.

Gender aspects of lack of social protection of employees

70. Changes in the labor market over the reform years should be considered with the account of a relevant transformation of social and legal terms of employment which has found reflection in mass violations of labor guarantees to employees. This has found reflection in such large-scale phenomena as «administrative» holidays (in other words involuntary unpaid holidays), transfer by the decision of management to a reduced working schedule, wage arrears. According to RLSM data, over 60% of employees experienced delays in labor payments. In 1999 wage arrears tended to go down, as of the Goskomstat, the respective figure reached 46,6 trillion rubles against 77 trillion, as of January 1, 1999.

71. Violation of labor legislation mostly centered around the following areas of legal regulation: labor payment (voluntary setting of the wages and salaries rates, fines as an administrative penalty amounting to 50% of the monthly wages), working schedule (unlimited working hours without due compensation for working overtime and on week-ends), dismissal procedures (without dismissal wage, lack of protection against voluntary dismissal), social guarantees (denial of a regular holiday and payment of compensation of temporary disability). These violations are more typical of private enterprises than state ones and are more frequent in the «field» of informal employment [50].

72. The gender specifics of Labor Code violations is manifested in the infringements by the employer of the rights of women employees related to reproductive behavior. For instance, according to Russian Labor Inspection Agency, illegal dismissal of women during their maternity leave and pre-natal and post natal leaves have become most widely spread. Female employees face serious problems when formalizing and receiving sick-leave compensation for taking care of an ailing child. If at state, joint stock and municipal enterprises over two thirds of women believe that they do not have such problems, at private enterprises the respective figure is only 40%. Women who are unofficially employed by private persons have no right to sick-leaves altogether [51]. Infringements upon the rights of working women to perform their maternal duties is also reflected in the drop of the number of women who are temporarily absent from work for a week (the main reason for absence is stated as taking care of ailing children). According to the Goskomstat, in 1995 this figure ran to 9% of all the employed women against 5.1-5.3% in 1999.

73. Informal employment which covers, according to expert estimates, about 9% of economically active population involved in the sector with different degree of regularity, proves to be the only alternative to unemployment for a certain category of those who found themselves redundant. Today informal employment has become a sphere of open discrimination and overexploitation of women. Highly-paid jobs are generally male-dominated, while unqualified labor with unlimited working hours and extremely low payment offered by private employers is 100% female [52]. Informal employment is beyond any legal regulation, and the employed are entirely dependent on the employer in any matters relating to the working schedules, working conditions and terms of payment.

For women this results in detriment to health, including their reproductive health (due to physically strenuous and harmful occupations), impossibility to combine labor and family functions in an adequate manner, loss of labor potential due to the disqualification and inadequate wages and salaries.

Professional careers of men and women

74. For many decades the efforts of the Russian state were targeted at attracting women to public production, and due to such efforts by late 1980-s the level of female employment did not actually differ from that of male employment: 90% of the working age women were either working or studying which determined the changes in the way of life and social orientation of several generations of women. Equal access to education allowed women not only to compete with men in this sphere, but even outpace them: according to the 1989 census, 46% of working women had higher and secondary special education against 34% of men. The gap of 10-12% remained almost the same in the mid-1990s [53].

75. What are the differences in the social mobility [54] of men and women in the 1970-s and 1980-s and what changes occurred in the dynamics thereof due to social and economic transformations of society in the latest decade? When one takes a look at the pre-reform period, even at that time women lagged behind men with respect to their social mobility. The general mobility balance calculated as a difference between positive and negative mobility stood at +53,3% and +18% for men and women respectively [55] (Table 2.15). This was the result of prevailing horizontal career in case of women, and a somewhat lower professional status as compared to men. The higher incidence of horizontal mobility relates to a certain extent to the female-dominated employment sector (the budget sphere, service sector, light and food industries) which had never been ranked top-priority for the state.

76. On the other hand, lack of a developed infrastructure combined with patriarchal concepts on the role of women existing to a certain extent both in the family and society, and shared sometimes by women themselves, turned them into «second rate» employees, despite the educational level of women which is relatively higher than that of men. This is most convincingly demonstrated in the minimal share of women who managed to achieve notable success in their careers: there is a 4 times difference with men. But even in this instance, the «ceiling» for the professional growth of women is considerably lower: women in the leading positions are heads of groups or sectors, but almost never is a woman assigned top manager of an enterprise or an institution.

77. The positive movements in the social mobility were traditionally linked to the age of the employee: both for men and women this is a positive dependence. However, from the working career aspect, the first period of the life cycle, the time when children are born and the initial stages of childcare and education — and in Russia, as compared to Western countries, this period corresponds to a very young age of a mother — proves to be the most difficult one for women. According to demographers, the average age of a mother giving birth to her first child fell from 24.8 to 22.9 years from 1965 to 1991, and remains at the same level (By way of comparison, the average age of a mother giving birth to her first child is 27.9 years) [56].

78. These figures show that for most women in Russia the time when they get their professional knowledge and skills overlaps with the time for childbirth, which cannot but tell on their working career. The social mobility gap between men and women in the age group under 30 is more than 6 times. Further on this gap decreases, but yet remains at a rather high level (2.2 — 2.7 times), with the share of descending career of women remaining almost stable for all age groups (16 to 19%).

79. The changes in the mechanism of functioning of the economy determined in the past decade a considerable shift in the direction of social mobility. The age and the work history related thereto seized to be a factor determining a positive social mobility. The mobility balance for men dropped from +53.5% to +3.3%, for women from +18% to -6.6%. Thus, despite a more favorable situation for men as compared to that of women from the social career aspect, the above drop of the mobility balance in the past ten years seems to be more significant and is perceived stronger due to the high positive growth in the past. Women lost less, but today their social mobility balance has a negative value, that is, there are more instances of a descending career to be observed than those of mounting ones.

Time budget and ambitions of men and women

80. A major reason for unequal opportunities existing for men and women in the employment sphere and labor payment is rooted in a different structure of their time budget determined by the role functions in the family and the values set. A mother due to the reproductive function is more busy with children and her withdrawal from an active professional life at the time when children are born in the family, childcare in the first years of the baby's life restricts considerably the possibilities of a woman as an equal competitor on the labor market. Even in those instances when children grow out of pre-school age or there are no children in the family, household duties take up a great deal more of a woman's than man's time. There are grounds to believe that in recent years this situation is not improving, but getting worse due to the growing prices for services which are aimed to ease the household labor and which households are unable to pay because of a drop in their incomes.

81. Having to cope with the «double work load» women are unable to participate in labor market competition on an equal basis with men. Men are involved in public production to a greater extent than women, while the latter deal more actively with home matters. Thus, both men and women specialize in the accumulation of capital of a certain type — either the market, or «household» one [57]. But only the activity in public production receives economic evaluation of society, while the household labor of women is not categorized as «work» and is considered as part of leisure time. Active involvement in the sphere of «household labor» in many respects accounts for the stereotype of women's behavior in the labor market: women do not set ambitious career goals and select those professions and positions which enable them to leave some time for keeping the house and taking care of the children. According to VTsIOM surveys, all the care about family members is in 71% of households the responsibility of the woman, and the woman again is involved with household duties and managing the children to a greater extent than all other family members [58].

82. Egalitarian approach to the problem of gender opportunities, however, provides for the existence of equal opportunities both for men and for women allowing each personality to realize his or her potential through exercising equal rights and freedoms granted to both men and women equally. In this respect, an important factor which influences the individual's social status is a possibility to freely chose the sphere of activity and occupation conforming to the abilities and inclinations of the person, thus making it possible for a person to translate his or her ambitions into reality irrespective of the gender. To successfully pursue such a strategy it is necessary to have a certain freedom of choice in dividing the time between the family life and professional activity. Due to the existing traditions, the freedom of choice in this area is rather limited for Russian women, and orientation to the family is dominating over the career aspirations. The reproductive function apriori determines a certain degree of inequality between men and women in everyday life. The most frequent answer to the question «What activity wears you most?» from the 1997 survey conducted among female workers was «household duties related to servicing the family» [59]. According to the survey held in

the 1960s among industrial workers in cities women spent three quarters of her active non-working time on household duties and childcare [60].

83. Introduction of technological innovations into everyday life, use of various home appliances has made the housekeeping process considerably easier, but there was no radical change in the situation. Women are as busy as ever with their household chores [61]. The analysis of the time budget, according to 1998 RLMS data testifies to a considerable inequality of possibilities to distribute spare time of men and women [62]. The range of everyday household chores is much broader for women than for men: women spend on the average three times more time than men on household activities. (Figure 2.1.). Many chores remain, in fact, fully the responsibility of women: preparing meals and washing the dishes (this is the work done by 96,1 of female respondents against 44.1% of male respondents) washing and ironing (83.7% of women against 16.2% of men) (See Table 2.16). The only kind of household chores on which men spend just as much time as women is shopping for food.

84. Most active men are in bringing up and educating children. According to RLMS, 75% of men during the week preceding the day of the poll participated in taking care of the children. However, the time contribution is fairly modest here and the care of the younger generation is still mainly the responsibility of women. Women devote to their minors on the average 32 hours per week, while men — just 14 hours. Childbirth and childcare, organization of their leisure time, psychological and emotional support do not leave any personal time for women, bring down the possibilities for recreation and raising their professional level. It should be noted here that mothers with small children devote up to 45 hours per week to them. For men this figure is considerably lower (17 hours).

85. The link between the level of income and preoccupation of women with household chores may be observed fairly distinctly. A higher financial status of a woman allows her to reduce the time spent on housework, since women with higher income have a chance to use paid services, and on the average they spent less time on household chores. Women belonging to a high-income group use the maximum of five hours per week of household labor. The level of education and type of profession depend on the degree of involvement of a woman in household duties to a smaller degree, though a certain trend may be also observed: women with a higher level of education are dealing with household problems less and devote more time to their creative activity. These differences though are statistically irrelevant.

86. For women a large load of household duties eats up their time for professional activity and leisure. On the average men devote by 4.5 hours per week more to their jobs than women, and sleep longer by almost an hour (Figure 2.1.). However, despite the fact that men are more actively working in the production sphere than women, the aggregate work load (including household chores) of a working woman is 20 hours per week longer than that of men, and amounts to 76.5 hours per week. This situation actually excludes the equality of economic possibilities for men and women and is a major factor restricting the possibilities of women to realize their potential in the professional sphere. With the start-up opportunities being equal at a younger age (for instance, (availability and

accessibility of education) women are markedly lagging behind men in their professional growth during the time of family development and childbirth.

87. It seems noteworthy that women are rather pessimistic in the assessments of their chances in the labor market. While trying to identify the qualities which are valued under the current economic situation women, in contrast to men, tend to be less sure that they possess such qualities (Figure 2.2.). Only 8% of women are inclined to think that they have the qualities necessary for successful competition today on the market, while 32.6% are of the opinion that they have none. On the whole, about 60% of women have very low self-assessment. The above RLMS data corresponds to the results of the public opinion poll conducted by VTsIOM in July 1999 [63]. Answering the question: «Do you agree with the statement that today people like you in Russia have a good chance to improve their living standards?» 69% of women gave a negative answer. A pessimistic view of the situation and their own possibilities restricts women in their choice of more successful live strategies to adjust themselves to new economic conditions.

88. The stereotypes related to formal equality of economic opportunities for men and women which have been propagated for years account for the overwhelming positive attitude towards gender equality with respect to employment issue. When answering the question: «Do you agree or disagree to the assumption that when being hired for a new job men and women should enjoy equal rights?» only 18% of men and 9% of men would not agree to this statement (Figure 2.3). At the same time, the results of the public opinion poll held by VTsIOM in January 1995 [64] show that women themselves do not have the ambition to be equal with men in the professional sphere, at least at those particular stages of the life cycle when the care of the family and children is their much greater concern. In answering the question: «Do you believe that women should be working full-time, part-time or stay at home when having a child of a pre-school age?» 59% of men and 52% of women think that women should be staying at home. They make this choice in favor of the family, being fully aware that the conditions to combine these two spheres of activity have not yet been created in society. Despite the declarations on the emancipation of women made for decades, up till now the question: «What is of major importance for most women today a job or a family?» 37% of women give preference to the family, and only 9% to work. The stand that «both the family and the job are equally significant for a women today» is shared by 48% of women, but it should be noted in this connection that 70% of female respondents believe that the main reason for women to work is the insufficiency of the husband's income.

89. Women themselves are most modest in the evaluation of their professionalism. According to the RLMS (1998), 34.8% of women consider themselves high class professionals against 43.6% of men (See Table 2.17). The degree of self-assessment of the respondent's professionalism largely depends on the age, but the gap in the evaluation of their professional level by men and women could be observed in all age groups (to a lesser degree_ — in younger groups, to a greater — in older age groups). The maximum lag in the evaluation of professional qualities is observed in the medium age groups, when children have already grown up and require less attention from mothers, but

professional skills have been lost or have not been acquired: women of pre-retirement age spoke about their low professional level 5 times more often than men.

90. Trying to adjust themselves to new life conditions, women tend to take risks and drastically change their lives less frequently than men. Under a difficult situation men more often take active measures: change their job places, find some extra work (See Table 2.18). The RLMS data show that the active strategies of adaptation to new conditions under a market economy are more typical of men: 22.9% of the working men have changed their jobs and 10% found extra work. For women the respective indices are 18.7% and 8.3%. Insofar, women more often than men prefer to economize, borrow money, and sell things. Under the current situation, 73.5% of working women started to economize on clothing and 61.6% economize on food. In other words, women more often than men demonstrate passive forms of adaptation to new economic conditions. However, it is obvious that young women are more active than women of other age groups and act more energetically to improve their situation (25% of women under 30 changed their jobs, 10% left state enterprises for private ones, 15% — changed their residence). It is noteworthy that the activity of men and women [with respect to work and employment] in younger ages is more or less the same (for younger men the figures are 28, 10 and 13% respectively). This indirectly confirms that new economic conditions cause changes in social and economic behavior of young women: as compared to older generations, they are oriented to a greater extent to a professional career, more mobile on the labor market, and tend to delay the birth of the first child. All this trends, however, have been insufficiently studied and require additional analytical effort and organization of special surveys.

Measures to overcome feminization of poverty

91. Two major directions may be distinguished within the system of social policy measures aimed to prevent poverty:

- macroeconomic changes targeted at bringing down the poverty level of the employed;
- measures of mission-oriented social support of traditionally poor categories of the population.

The policy which is exclusively aimed at combating feminization of poverty is rather associated with the measures of well-directed social support. Meanwhile, such policy may achieve a desirable effect only if it is pursued along with the measures aiming at bringing down the overall poverty level of the employed which also includes all employed women. With the rise of the nominal statutory wages insurance payments to government social funds (the pension fund, employment fund, etc) will also go up, which will make it possible to increase pensions and resolve the pension arrears issue. An increase in pensions will create objective prerequisites for bringing down poverty among single pensioners which is a specific manifestation of feminization of the Russian poverty.

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Table 1.1. Proportion of poor families in all demographic types of families (%)

	1992, summer	1993, autumn
Working age single individuals	16.4	6.7
Retirement age single individuals	65.0	17.4
Couples with no children	31.3	4.4
Families with children under 18	37.5	18.3
o/w:		
Two-parent families	34.4	14.2
Single-parent families	53.4	35.5
Other households	27.5	18.1
All households	36.4	14.2

Table 1.2. Proportion of poor households among households of various demographic types, %

	1997		1998		1999 (III Quarter)	
	Money income	Disposable funds	Money income	Disposable funds	Money income	Disposable funds
All households	35.9	25.7	40.5	30.4	51.8	41.9
of which:						
Working age single individuals	15.4	9.4	15.3	10.0	23.7	17.8
Retirement age single individuals	15.1	5.8	19.2	7.9	31.9	16.9
Couples with no children	21.6	11.6	26.7	15.1	39.2	26.7
Families with children under 18	50.0	38.5	55.4	45.0	56.0	57.8
o/w:						
Two-parent	48.9	37.7	54.8	44.6	55.0	56.5
Single-parent	54.3	41.5	57.8	46.5	70.0	62.7

Table 1.3. Proportion of poor households among households of various demographic types calculated with the three poverty assessment methods, %

	Poverty by at least one of the features			Poverty by two features			Poverty by all three features
	1- by income	2- by subjective assessment	3- by deprivation	1+2	1+3	2+3	
Working-age singles	12.7	37.2	29.1	9.1	9.1	18.2	5.5
Retirement-age singles	60.6	62.0	53.5	46.5	38.0	46.5	35.2
Couples with no children	24.5	29.9	23.8	12.9	10.9	17.7	9.5
Families with children under 18	37.7	27.1	28.3	18.9	16.8	17.5	12.0
of which:							
Two-parent	32.7	22.8	21.1	14.8	11.5	12.5	7.6
Single-parent	50.9	38.6	47.4	29.8	30.7	30.7	23.7
All households	33.2	30.0	28.8	18.4	16.3	18.9	12.7

Fig. 1.1. Change in the living standards of women between the divorce and the interview: remarried women (%)

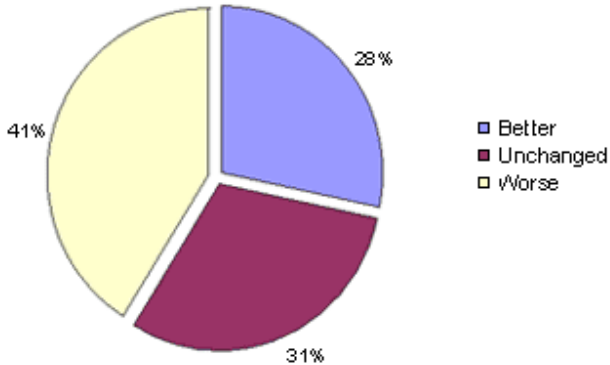


Fig. 1.2. Change in the living standards of women between the divorce and the interview: women who have not remarried (%)

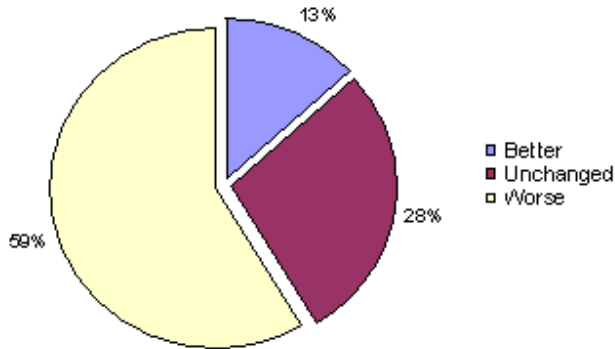


Table 1.4. Major characteristics of labor activity of women from single-partner and two-partner families (%)

Age (in years)	Women in two-partner families			Women – heads of single-partner families		
	Have salaried income	Have supplementary earnings	Engaged in entrepreneur-ship	Have salaried income	Have supplement-ary earnings	Engaged in entrepreneur-ship
20-29	51.0	21.4	3.8	57.0	20.7	3.4
30-39	82.0	14.5	2.5	93.0	30.4	3.3
40-49	89.0	13.4	2.5	97.0	20.2	3.5
50-59	65.0	9.1	0.6	76.0	15.9	1.0
Total	70.0	14.5	2.5	85.0	23.1	3.3

Table 1.5. Level of poverty of retirees by their age groups. %

	Total surveyed	Including those with substandard incomes:			
		Per capita money income		Per capita disposable funds	
		1997	1998	1997	1998
Population total	100	42.8	47.9	32.1	37.8
Men Age group:					
60-69	100.0	25.7	32.9	15.3	19.6
70-79	100.0	26.6	34.1	15.3	21.8
80 and older	100.0	21.7	29.1	13.7	20.4
Women Age group:					
55-59	100.0	22.7	30.8	14.5	20.1
60-69	100.0	28.2	33.3	17.2	20.5
70-79	100.0	32.3	37.1	20.0	24.3
80 and older	100.0	37.3	44.2	24.6	30.7

Table 1.6. Proportion of men and women in older age groups

(number of women per a 1000 men of the respective age group)

Age Groups	1989	1999
Total population *	1140	1133
of which of age:		
55-59	1258	1295
60-64	1581	1390
65-69	2298	1613
70-74	2612	2117
75-79	3067	3121
80 and older	4238	3945

Table 1.7. Demographic patters of pensioners, 1997*

	Large cities	Small towns
All pensioners:	100,0	100,0
Of which:		
men	30,2	32,4
women	69,8	67,6
Of total pensioners:		
Living separately	50,7	68,2
of which:		
men	31,7	31,7
women	68,3	68,3
of which singles	12,7	20,5
of which:		
men	6,9	13,9
women	93,1	86,1
Living in families with working relatives	49,3	31,8
of which:		
men	28,7	33,9
women	71,3	66,1

* The number of pensioners is not inclusive of survivor's pensioners when they are children, and retired army offices who are still in their working age.

Table 1.8. Proportion of poor pensioners depending on the demographic type of their household and gender, 1997, %

	Large cities	Small towns
Proportion of poor in:		
-total population	33.9	43.4
-total pensioners	41.5	55.7
Of which:		
- men	38.6	49.1
- women	42.8	58.8
Proportion of poor among pensioners living separately	51.9	53.3
of which:		
- men	44.0	44.7
- women	55.6	57.3
of which:		
singles	61.2	61.1
of which:		
- men	20.0	60.0
- women	64.2	61.3
Proportion of poor pensioners living in families with working relatives	30.8	60.7
of which:		
- men	32.5	57.9
- women	30.1	62.2