

# Russia: Reproductive strike?

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**The shrinking population of today's Russia is a sure sign of the failure of its economic and political project. It is telling that neither the new week-long waiting period before an abortion, nor 'traditional values' propaganda, nor even 'maternity capital' (welfare payments to families to be used on housing or education) have succeeded in reversing the birthrate's downward trend. The 2002 census put Russia's population at 145.2 million, almost 2 million fewer than in 1989; the median age (37) was four years higher than during perestroika, and the number of children and teenagers had declined by almost 30%.**

In March 2022, the number of births was 10%, or 13,000, lower than a year earlier, whereas in January and February 2022, only 1-3% fewer babies were born than in January-February 2021. The number of births in April turned out to be the lowest for that month 'in the entire history of the country since at least World War II, and possibly since the 18<sup>th</sup> century'.

According to a recent Russian Public Opinion Research Centre poll, 48% of women who would theoretically like to have children are not looking to do so in the next five years. Only 29% of women interested in having children plan to do so in the foreseeable future. Among those who would like to have children but cannot afford to, 39% cite financial difficulties as an obstacle and 38% mention instability or the 'negative political situation'.

It almost looks as if something's gone wrong!

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