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Materials of the 1959 All-Union Population Census as a Source on the History of Urban Family

Abstract

Using census materials for studying social history of Russia in the 20th century has serious restrictions determined by the census form and by selective publication of the obtained results. Using census forms themselves, fragmentary preserved in local archives, partially solves this problem. The researcher has to turn to the census materials for studying some topics, which are

not directly reflected in the census forms, due to limited social statistics on the Soviet society. The article is to clarify the possibility of using primary materials of the 1959 census, stored in the fond of the Regional Statistical Office from the State Archive of the Sverdlovsk Region, alongside with the published data, for studying urban family in Sverdlovsk. The study of the Russian urban family in the second half of the 20th century is important for assessing the consequences of demographic transition of the 1930s – 1980s and the degree of population structure deformation following the Great Patriotic War. Studying the Ural family is significant, as urbanization processes in the region during the said period proceeded extremely intensively. To systematize the information on the census forms, a database “Family of the city of Sverdlovsk, 1959” has been created, combining principles of individual and family registration. The database includes information from 1,200 forms for the Oktyabrsky district. Nearly 17 000 apartment census forms for other urban settlements of the region fall outside the scope of this analysis. Comparison with published data proves that the sample is representative in its most significant indicators. Significant deviations are recorded in the social composition of the population, reflecting specifics of a central district of a large city (dominance of employees, significant number of single-parent families, presumably recent migrants). Among other things, it has been established that most commonly families consisted of two and three persons; in a significant number of cases, the households were headed by young women. The obtained information permits to characterize the Sverdlovsk urban family in terms of the so-called second demographic transition, which significantly influenced family size, distribution of intra-familial roles, and strategies of matrimonial behavior. Given the undoubted scientific value of the primary census materials, discovery of other similar documentary complexes in the Russian archives should be an important direction of research.

### Keywords

Historical sources, all-Union population census of 1959, primary census materials, urban family, Sverdlovsk, database, demographic transition.

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