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Una visión de la responsabilidad social del Estado en la superación de la crisis demográfica a través de los valores de la juventud moderna*

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Resumen. La crisis demográfica que se desarrolla en Rusia refuerza la demanda de responsabilidad social del Estado. El objetivo del estudio fue determinar la opinión de los jóvenes sobre la responsabilidad social del Estado en la superación de la crisis demográfica. Para ello, los autores realizaron un análisis comparativo de las características de la imagen de la política estatal anticrisis en la mente de los jóvenes de las generaciones Y y Z. El estudio empleó métodos de análisis documental y entrevistas. El análisis de las transcripciones de las entrevistas (n = 50) reveló que los valores fundamentales de los encuestados giraban en torno a la familia, el desarrollo, la libertad y la salud, mientras que la identidad nacional-estatal ocupa un lugar secundario. Las medidas de apoyo familiar se perciben principalmente de forma positiva, pero su eficacia está vinculada a la estabilidad macroeconómica, la asequibilidad de la vivienda y la previsibilidad de las trayectorias vitales. Las opiniones sobre la incorporación de valores espirituales y morales tradicionales en la política educativa están polarizadas. Ambas cohortes muestran poca confianza en los canales oficiales y se orientan hacia fuentes personales y expertas, grupo de referencia que establece las condiciones para la legitimación de la responsabilidad estatal.

Palabras clave: estrategias estatales, familia, opiniones, valores tradicionales, apoyo social.

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A view of the social responsibility of the state in overcoming the demographic crisis through the values of modern youth

Abstract. The demographic crisis unfolding in Russia strengthens demand for the social responsibility of the state. However, the effectiveness of anti-crisis measures is largely decided by how they are perceived by youth, particularly in the Far East of Russia. The aim of the study was to establish the views of young people on the social responsibility of the state in overcoming the demographic crisis. To this end, the authors conducted a comparative analysis of the characteristics of the image of state anti-crisis policy in the minds of young people from Generation Y and Generation Z. The study employed methods of document analysis and interview. Analysis of interview transcripts (n = 50) revealed that the core values of the respondents revolved around family, development, freedom, and health, while national-state identity has a marginal status. Family support measures are mainly viewed in a positive light, but their effectiveness is linked to macroeconomic stability, housing affordability, and the predictability of life trajectories. Opinions on the incorporation of traditional spiritual and moral values in educational policy are polarized. Both cohorts display low confidence in official channels and orientation towards personal and expert sources, reference group that sets the conditions for the legitimization of state responsibility.

Key words: state strategies, family, opinions, traditional values, social support.

INTRODUCTION

The social responsibility of the state and the immediate future of the country greatly depend on the position of young people and their participation in measures initiated by key public administration entities (Shichkin et al., 2024). First, the younger generation possesses strong potential for modernization (Petukhov, 2020). Hence, they are expected to be actively involved in the processes of social life (Khammatova et al., 2021). Second, young people are subject to the influence of the so-called “political entrepreneurs,” i.e., government bodies or representatives of non-systemic opposition seeking to influence their views and behavior (Rastorguey, 2022: 91; Smolin & Palchikova, 2024). Third, young people as the actors of crisis sociality have more or less defined opinions on and assessments of the work of government bodies, which should be taken into consideration when planning socially significant programs at the local, regional, and state levels (Levashov, 2023: 10).

According to Russian researchers (Okhotsky, 2017; Shalaev, 2018; Aparina, 2023, etc.), the state is the main subject or decisive factor in preventing or minimizing negative consequences, being the entity that develops and implements anti-crisis strategies. Researchers argue that

the social responsibility of the state¹ needs to be developed at a strategic level. This approach will be able to support social optimism and the people's positive attitude towards the country and facilitate the development of a long-term outlook (Nestik, 2023), which is especially important for the sustainable development of society (Letova, 2022).

Thus, the research focused on the value, emotional, and informational aspects of the views of young people, their ideas about the future of Russia, and their attitudes to strategic measures in the field of demographic policy and the education system and the social responsibility of the state.

Proceeding from these prerequisites, the purpose of the study was to establish the views of young people on the social responsibility of the state in overcoming the demographic crisis.

METHODS

The study was founded on a comparative analysis of the image of state anti-crisis policy in the minds of young people from Generation Y (millennials, born in 1982-2000) and Generation Z (centennials, born in 2001 and later).

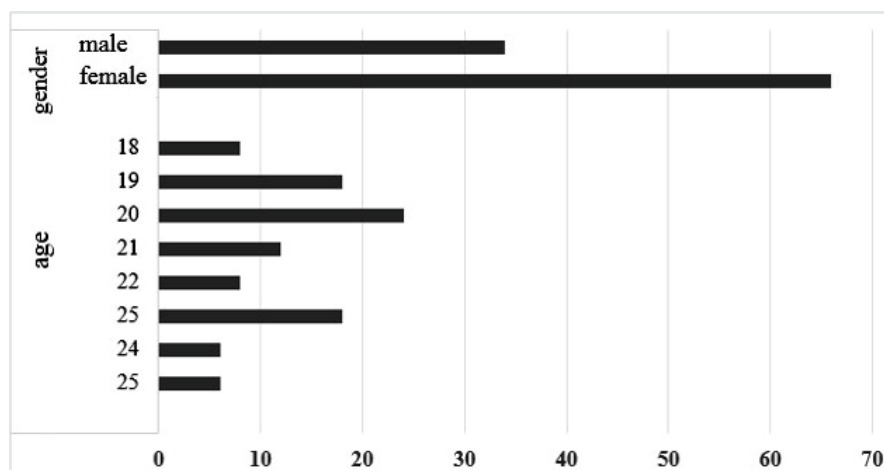
The study relied on the methods of document analysis and interviews. Documents and literary sources were selected as follows. The eLIBRARI.RU (RISC) system, which integrates the main streams of publications of Russian authors, was searched by keywords in article titles, obtaining a list of 901 sources, most of which related to economics and youth policy. By including the concepts of anti-crisis management in modern Russia and the attitudes of youth to the activities of the Russian state in the search, we obtained much longer lists – 1,205 and 100,357 publications, respectively². In addition, the task of diagnosing the attitude of young people towards the strategies developed by state leadership to protect the national interests of Russia required considering the concepts of crisis, strategies for the operation of government bodies, attitudes, and more, leading to the expansion of the range of sources.

Next, articles on the attitudes of young people in the Russian Far East to anti-crisis strategies and measures were selected by methods tested in similar studies (Marin, 2025; Marin et al., 2025).

Interviews. The study analyzed the transcripts of interviews conducted in the spring and summer of 2024 with 50 young people living in the Far East of Russia, including students in various (humanities and technology) specialties. The age of the interview participants varied from 18 to 25 years (average age – 21 years); 34% (17) of the respondents were young men (Figure 1). Comparative analysis was conducted to identify shared and specific features of the perception of government regulation measures in the context of an emergency by each of the two studied generations.

¹ Not only the state, but also other actors, but most importantly state authorities at all levels.

² Accessed 31.01.2025.

FIGURE 1. Sociodemographic characteristics of interview participants, %

Informants for the interviews were recruited by the method of availability sampling based on their consent to cooperation.

The script for the focused interviews consisted of 19 unstructured open-ended questions. In certain cases, interviewees answered the questions on their own in writing. The focused interview method was chosen for two reasons: first, the goal of painting a picture of opinions and assessments that would fully reflect the attitudes of young people to the key anti-crisis strategies of the Russian state; and second, the need to develop a questionnaire for an online survey for the next stage of the study, including closed-ended and semi-closed questions.

The body of qualitative data was processed through the deductive-inductive method. The interview questions focused on the categories of analysis, which were the key measures of the Russian state to overcome the crisis in the demographic sphere (maternity (family) capital, preferential mortgages, and restrictions on abortion) and in the education and upbringing of youth (the introduction of traditional spiritual and moral values). In addition, the interviews were designed to assess informants' value orientations, emotional mood, and trust in various information sources. The transcripts were processed to identify and code narrower topics reflecting the range of young people's opinions, judgments, and emotions (in general, the attitude) in relation to the major state anti-crisis strategies. The categories of analysis were measured at the nominal and ordinal levels.

The obtained data and conclusions were triangulated with the results of quantitative studies carried out by Russian sociologists in recent years.

Although the interview participants answered the questions in different ways (briefly or in detail, specifically or generically, stereotypically or originally, seriously or ironically), all of them, despite the complexity of the questions and the sensitivity of some of them, showed a willingness to interact with the researchers and were frank.

RESULTS

Value, emotional, and informational aspects in the attitudes of interviewees to anti-crisis strategies in the work of state authorities

The predominant orientation of informants' value orientations determines their position, opinions, and assessments. The diverse answers about the priorities of young people were organized based on the method of M. Rokeach (Table 1).

TABLE 1. Life values of focused interview participants.

Rank	Terminal values	Number of interviewees	% of the total number of respondents (49)
1	Family, children, "Family, whatever it is like" (M., 21); "Strong connection with loved ones" (F., 22)	28	57
2	Development, self-knowledge, self-development, personal growth, constant progress, "development as a person, not so much as a representative of the Russian nation, although it is important" (M., 23)	14	29
3-4	Freedom, independence, self-sufficiency	12	24
3-4	Health, "mental well-being for yourself and your inner circle" (M., 22)	12	24
5	Love, passion, devotion, loyalty	11	22
6	Material well-being, financial values, earnings, financial solvency	9	18
7-8	Career, professional growth	6	12
7-8	Self-realization (productive life)	6	12
9-10	Striving for knowledge, "unbiased curiosity" (F., 21), science (learning)	5	10
9-10	Work, dream job, own business, "realizing your potential... in some professional field" (F., 20)	5	10
11-14	Pleasure, hedonistic values, travel, sex (pleasures)	3	6
11-14	Creativity, ability to do your hobbies	3	6
11-14	The world, people, "the ability to help good people, especially those facing hardships" (M., 21) (others' happiness)	3	6
11-14	"Exciting life" (F., 20), "spiritual experiences (of life phenomena)" (M., 25), "harmony in everything, or at least attempts to achieve it" (F., 23) (active dynamic life)	3	6
15-16	Happiness	2	4
15-16	Recognition, "social status and place in society" (M., 18)	2	4
17-18	Prudence (wisdom in life)	1	2
17-18	Friendship	1	2

TABLE 1. CONTINUACIÓN

Rank	Instrumental values	Number of interviewees	% of the total number of respondents (49)
1	Honesty, sincerity, fairness, truth, openness	9	18
2	Kindness, humanism, humanity, empathy, desire to help, friendliness	7	14
3	Independence, “defending your opinion and boundaries” (F., 22)	6	12
4-5	Stability	4	8
4-5	Persistence, determination, stress resistance, “being true to yourself” (F., 21) (strong will)	4	8
6	Responsibility	3	6
7-9	Diligence, “achieving the set goals” (effectiveness in what you do)	2	4
7-9	Comfort, “no suffering, minimal anxiety” (F., 23)	2	4
7-9	Tact, flexibility (good manners)	2	4
10-12	Intellect (rationality)	1	2
10-12	Broad outlook (broadmindedness)	1	2
10-12	Privacy (“not everyone needs success and also popularity” (F., 20)	1	2

Source: study results.

The core values in the hierarchy of life priorities include family, development, freedom, and health. The family has different “weight” in the eyes of informants. Some respondents spoke of it as their main goal: “My career will depend heavily on what kind of family I want” (F., 20)³, but some did not give it priority: “And also [after material and hedonistic values] – *having a family, starting it*” (M., 24). Children were mentioned very infrequently, only three times.

None of the interviewees referred to patriotism; only one young man mentioned it indirectly in association with the value of self-development: “*development as a person, not so much as a representative of the Russian nation, although it is important*” (M., 23).

Only five informants spoke about work (“*dream job*,” “*realizing your potential in some professional field*,” etc.). Here we can concur with the conclusions of domestic sociologists: firstly, work is significantly less important to modern youth compared to the values of personal life and self-realization, and even then, it turns into a means of achieving financial well-being, career, development, happy family life, etc. (Vishnevsky, 2021: 255-282).

³ Hereinafter, italics highlight unedited fragments of interview transcripts.

In the hierarchy of instrumental values, the first three places were taken by honesty, kindness, and independence (Table 1). The leading position of honesty deserves special attention in the light of answers to other interview questions. The informants believed that it is important for the Russian state to be “*honest towards citizens, without ‘smoke and mirrors’*” (M., 23) and that mass media, including state-run, “*show only what is profitable to show*” (F., 23). These and other similar judgments of interview participants clearly or indirectly reflect the need of young people for truth, sincerity, and justice. At the same time, young people are more lenient towards themselves, with only three considering it important to be responsible for one’s actions (the value of “responsibility”).

The value of “diligence” was presented in the interviews in a new way: “*Learning something new and working, but not beyond measure, without overtime*” (M., 22). This phrasing hides a second value “layer” – the importance of comfort provided by stability (four respondents).

Overall, the overwhelming majority of interview participants prioritized the individualistic values of personal life (family, freedom, independence, health, and love), professional self-realization (development, career, and productive life), and comfort. This picture is significantly complemented by the value of accepting other people – honesty and kindness.

The value priorities of young people determine the ways they live their lives and their emotional mood.

At the start of the interview, the participants were asked to reflect on the past year, 2023, and name the memorable events and emotions experienced by them.

Slightly less than half (46%) of the interview participants described the previous year, 2023, with either adjectives, mainly qualitative (“*great,*” “*wonderful,*” “*productive,*” “*good,*” etc.) and less frequently superlative (“*one of the best in my life,*” “*one of the most active and exciting*”), or participles (“*busy,*” “*eventful*”) and adverbs (“*was quite exciting*”). More detailed characteristics can also be found in the transcripts, e.g., “*an interesting year full of events and new experiences,*” “*full of excitement.*”

A small number of respondents (16%) described the past year as “*regular,*” “*could be worse,*” and as mixed, having “*both ups and downs.*”

For 38% of interview participants, the past period was “*difficult,*” “*hard,*” or “*intense.*” These words more often summarized events related to respondents’ personal lives: “*took the USE and applied for universities; also stressed over moving*” (M., 22); and political events: “*memorable terrorist attacks, news about the SMO and sanctions*” (F., 18).

The emotions experienced by young people in 2023 and early 2024 were diverse (Table 2).

TABLE 2. List of emotions most commonly experienced by the interviewees in 2023 (abs., %).

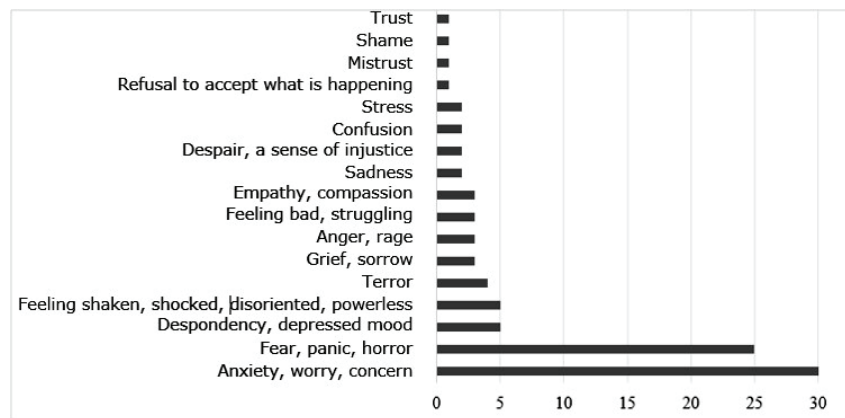
No.	Positive emotions	Frequency of mentions	% of total positive emotion mentions
1	Joy, fun	21	43
2	Positivity, positive emotions	5	10
3	Satisfaction (delight, contentment)	5	10
4	Discovery, novelty, interest in new things	3	6
5	Love	2	4
6	Happiness	2	4
7	Creative uplift, inspiration	2	4
8	Hope, anticipation of the future	2	4
9	Confidence in oneself and the future	2	4
10	Support, care	2	4
11	Engagement	1	2
12	Calm	1	2
13	Responsibility	1	2
Total for positive emotions		49	99
No.	Negative emotions	Frequency of mentions	% of total negative emotion mentions
1	Anxiety (concern, confusion, worry, unrest, uneasiness)	19	28
2	Unhappiness	10	15
3	Fear	7	10
4	Weariness, indifference, depression, loss of strength, hopelessness, emptiness	6	9
5	Negative, unpleasant, negative emotions	5	7
6	Stress, tension, tantrums	5	7
7	Hurt, sadness, sorrow	4	6
8	Shame	3	4
9	Anger	3	4
10	Loneliness	2	3
11	Astonishment	2	3
12	Uncertainty	1	2
13	Disappointment	1	2
Total for negative emotions		68	100

Source: Study results.

In addition to the clear numerical predominance of negative emotions (by 16%), the palette of positive emotions is less diverse. Joy appeared in the responses of interview participants the most often, which is unsurprising given that this reaction is characteristic of young people. Interest in new things and hope were rarely mentioned, and none of the interviewees experienced the emotion of pride.

Events in personal life, education, and work caused both positive and negative reactions. The profound macro event that is the Special Military Operation (SMO) changed the moral and psychological state of most informants, evoking a spectrum of negative (with rare exceptions) emotions (Figure 2): “*depression and rejection of what is happening*” (F., 20); “*I became angrier, more anxious, but more compassionate and merciful towards my inner circle*” (M., 23); “*In the beginning it was alarming and scary, then came indifference. Habituation occurred*” (M., 25).

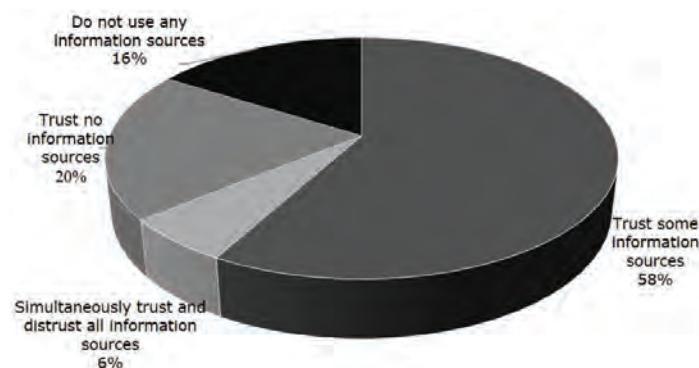
FIGURE 2. Emotions prevailing in the life of interviewees in the last two years (number of mentions).



Source: Study results.

Generally speaking, interview participants find importance in the values of active individualism, the events of one’s personal life. The main points of reference for young people are values directly related to meeting personal needs, while traditional values (with the exception of the family) matter to a limited number of respondents. The moral and psychological attitude of the interviewees is dominated by negative emotions, most of which are due to SMO-related events. These findings are supported by quantitative studies (Levashov, 2024: 270-272). The attitudes of young people to the anti-crisis measures of the Russian state are also influenced by their level of awareness and trust in official information sources (Figure 3).

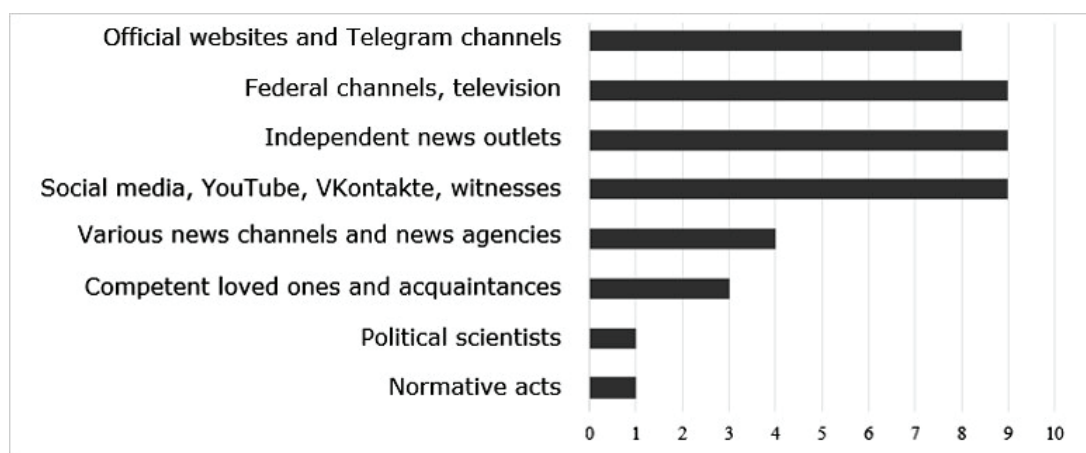
FIGURE 3. Distribution of interviewees by trust/distrust of the sources of information on the state of affairs in Russia (%).



Source: Study results.

The responses of “distrustful” interviewees differed. Some stated that they do not monitor the state of affairs in the country in principle, others explained their lack of awareness by workload: *“I’ve been more focused on work and studies lately”* (M., 23). Representatives of the third group admitted that they do not trust any sources of information: *“You can’t trust the media at all... Nobody’s going to tell you the truth”* (M., 25); *“I don’t believe anything”* (F., 18).

FIGURE 4. Sources of information on the state of affairs in Russia trusted by interviewees (number of mentions).



Source: study results.

Official sources are trusted by 13 respondents (45% of the number of “trustful”) (Figure 4), who listen to the President, the Minister of Defense, etc. (6 mentions). The rest of the participants, more than half of the sample, value the opinions of experts (unnamed economists, politicians, etc.; 9 mentions), bloggers (8), and relatives and friends (8).

For 60% of the participants in the interview, there are no authority figures in matters of politics and society. Many are fueled by the idea that they are not affected by contact with information sources: *“I don’t listen to other people’s opinions. I’m able to hear the information out myself and draw my own conclusions”* (F., 19), some are tired of information noise, and some are not interested in politics.

As a result, the study demonstrates a low level of trust among young people in both state and independent communication channels and the confidence of many of them in their own analytical abilities and ability to navigate the modern information space.

Comparing the responses of the two examined generations, we find that both millennials and zoomers have equally low trust in official sources of information and opposition news outlets. Personal information channels (friends, relatives) are perceived by youth as more trustworthy. In addition, there is some interest in scientific sources of information.

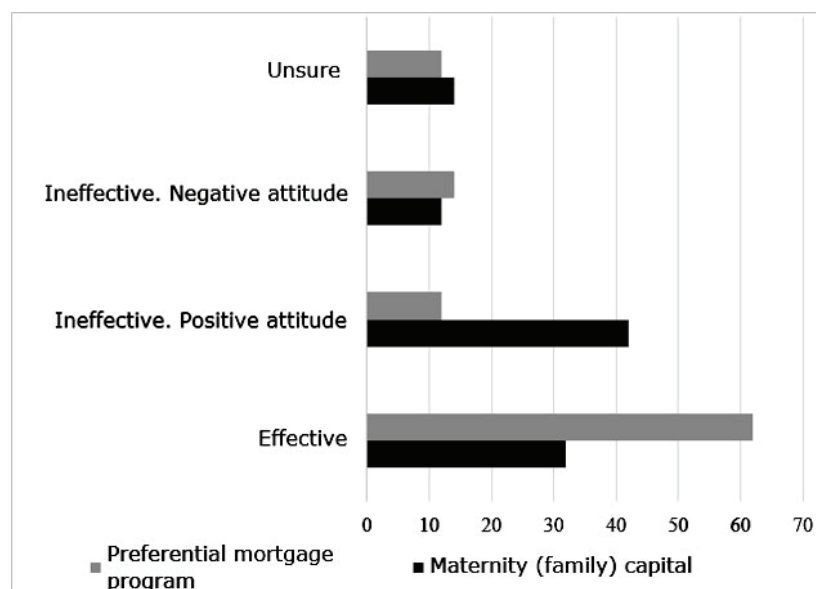
Attitudes of young people to key anti-crisis programs in state demographic policy

To mitigate crisis processes in the demographic sphere, the Russian state is implementing a comprehensive strategy in which family support is given a priority (Vaslavskiy & Vaslavskaya,

2022; President of the Russian Federation, 2024). The programs of maternity (family) capital and preferential mortgages for families with children are currently the main tools employed to achieve targets in increasing the birth rate and satisfaction with housing conditions. These programs are very expensive, widely known, and have proven themselves well. Below we shall examine how these programs were evaluated by interview participants (Figure 5).

While attitudes towards these state measures to support families are generally loyalist, the program of preferential mortgages for young families was described with a large number of positive words. Importantly, proper living conditions are the leader among the prerequisites for having a child (Vishnevsky, 2021: 104-105). In addition, describing the merits of the maternity capital program, respondents often noted that it can help families solve the “housing issue”: *“In my opinion, it is effective, because my family invested the money from maternity capital into a country house that benefits every family member”* (M., 22).

FIGURE 5. Attitudes of interviewees to the maternity (family) capital and preferential mortgage programs (%).



Source: Study results.

The negative attitudes towards these programs are explained by the interviewees differently, but most commonly by the fact that the maternity (family) capital is not enough to cover the needs of the family and that the loan, however preferential, must be paid back. Less often, these programs were argued to be external motivation tools that cannot significantly affect the birth rate or the desire of spouses to have children: *“The decision to have a child depends on many factors apart from finances and housing.”* (F., 19); *“People who think about their development or career and other things are not particularly stimulated by this. People with lower income – maybe...”* (M., 25) (Vishnevsky, 2021: 332-333).

Therefore, it is not surprising that the participants in the interview proposed a whole range of measures to overcome the demographic problems of Russia.

More than half of the respondents (58%) expressed the opinion that the state should create better conditions for people's lives. This involves, firstly, economic instruments, including both general economic parameters and improving the quality of life, income growth (in particular, wages), price regulation, etc.: *"More and more rests on the **economy**. If people are more well-off, more stable, and happier, they will naturally raise demographics themselves, most likely even without any benefits and capitals"* (F., 19).

The second instrument is expanded social measures, such as support for families, the employment of parents, and housing provision: *"Increase the size of maternity capital with the birth of each child"* (F., 19); *"state-funded homeownership"* (M., 23).

Interview participants frequently used words and phrases like "stability," "sustainability," "confidence in the future," etc., emphasizing that these conditions are currently absent (Vishnevsky, 2021: 340-341): *"Stabilization of the situation within the country, reinforcement of the position of the ruble, cessation of the SMO and mobilization, why give birth when the husband is at war?"* (F., 23).

Only one in five of the respondents who offered their proposals spoke about the need to work in the realm of values.

Thus, the study reveals a mainly positive attitude of young people to the measures by which the Russian state seeks to mitigate crisis trends in population reproduction. However, interview responses often contain critical assessments directly or indirectly dictated by dissatisfaction with the economic situation and living conditions in the country.

Opinions and assessments of interviewees on the state anti-crisis strategy in the field of education

The preservation and development of traditional spiritual and moral values, such as patriotism, family, civic engagement, creative work, etc. is currently one of the main tasks of Russian education (Letova, 2024). In line with this task, the system of school and university education is undergoing a transformation (Shaimieva et al., 2024). The focused interview demonstrates an ambiguous attitude of young people to the incorporation of traditional spiritual and moral values into the education system.

Various assessments and opinions were obtained in answers to the question of whether school and university education in the spirit of traditional spiritual and moral values will promote cohesion and patriotism among Russian youth and solve the demographic problem.

Affirmative answers to this question were given by 21 (42%) participants. Some of the respondents clarified that the positive impact of traditional values on youth and the reproductive behavior of young people can be expected in the future: *"With the help of such measures, the patriotism of young people will definitely rise, because it will become just value propaganda and the new generation will see it as the right thing"* (F., 23).

Some interviewees noted that the process of cultivating traditional values is not simple: “This approach is extremely difficult to implement” (M., 20), “yes, I think, if these values could be revived to the level of being taken seriously, as they were two or three centuries ago” (M., 25).

Interestingly, the same arguments were made by the respondents who opposed this strategy, believing that it will not solve the demographic problem nor make Russian youth more patriotic and united.

DISCUSSION

Overall, the attitudes of informants to the state anti-crisis strategy in demography, education, and the cultivation of Russian identity reflect the complex relationship between the axiosphere and social reality. Young people quite accurately pinpointed contradictions in the implementation of these strategies and evaluated their intended results.

The opinion of young people about the maternity capital program turned out to be contradictory (32% of respondents consider it effective, 54% ineffective). The attitudes of respondents to the program of preferential mortgages for young families were more approving compared to maternal (family) capital, assessed positively by 74% of interviewees.

The informants with negative opinions on these state strategies formulated a number of arguments that could be analyzed by state structures. The presence of serious objections to some state initiatives calls into question the success of their implementation.

The analysis of young people’s responses to questions about measures to counter the demographic crisis showed heterogeneity in respondents’ assessments. The root cause of this incongruence is differences in their values.

Additionally, the study included comparative analysis of responses on state anti-crisis policy among respondents depending on their generation. The sample of respondents included representatives of Generation Y (millennials, born in 1982-2000) and Generation Z (centennials, born in 2001 and after). Generational differences with respect to the basic conditions necessary for the life and development of Russian youth were not clearly distinguishable.

Millennials were more likely than zoomers to mention material values, pleasure, independence, cognitive values, and happiness. In turn, representatives of Generation Z spoke more often about self-development, self-realization, and career.

The values of national-state identity play practically no role for both generations. However, in assessing the current level of their development, **millennials give more categorical judgments**. In other words, the older generation was more often to express dissatisfaction with the state of affairs in this area.

To summarize, the representatives of the millennial and zoomer generations have equally low trust in official sources of information and in opposition news outlets. In contrast, personal information channels (friends, relatives) are perceived by young people as trustworthy. There is also interest in scientific sources of information (Abdullayev et al., 2024).

When discussing measures to overcome Russia's demographic problems, interview responses revealed no clear generational differences. Millennials were more inclined to propose economic measures, while zoomers advocated for their greater variability.

It is noteworthy that attitudes towards restrictions on abortions were equally negative among millennials and zoomers. This perception is influenced by the values of freedom and self-determination in matters of family and reproductive rights. Young people stand against government interference in these issues.

CONCLUSION

With regard to the basic conditions necessary for the life and development of Russian youth, the results of the study paint the image of future Russia desired by young people, the country in which they would like to live. The image of the Russia of the future can be outlined by the epithets most often found in the answers of interview participants: prosperous, with stable politics and economy, strong, adhering to the principles of peaceful coexistence, sovereign, free, and safe (for more details see the attached report file).

The core values in the hierarchy of young people's life priorities include family, development, freedom, and health. Among the values of development and self-realization, there is only one mention of a term relating to national-state identity.

Overall, the overwhelming majority of interview participants adheres to individualistic values: personal life (family, freedom, independence, health, love), professional self-realization (development, career, productive life), and comfort. This picture is significantly complemented by the value of accepting other people – honesty and kindness. Thus, it can be concluded that the values of young people present a combination of individualism and social orientation.

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