

Introduction

Number of births in Vojvodina in the second half of the 20th century has fallen by more than half. Sremska Mitrovica is one of the regional centers in Vojvodina with population of 37.751 according to the Census 2011. In this city is one of the fourteen maternity hospitals in Vojvodina and with its good statistical base in long term provides an acceptable framework for the fertility analysis.

Method

The aim of the article is to present, analyze and compare fertility characteristics and indicators in this city in the long term (since 1900), with special emphasis on the factors that affect the reached fertility. For this paper are used analytical, synthetic, mathematical, statistical, demographic method, as well as a range of statistical sources and documentation (registers of births and sources based on Census). Field research was conducted through a questionnaire and a sample of 50 respondents (according to the women in fertile age group).

Results

In the observed period (1900-2011) birth rate has been steadily declining, with huge depressions during The First and Second World War (Registers of birth, 1900-2011).

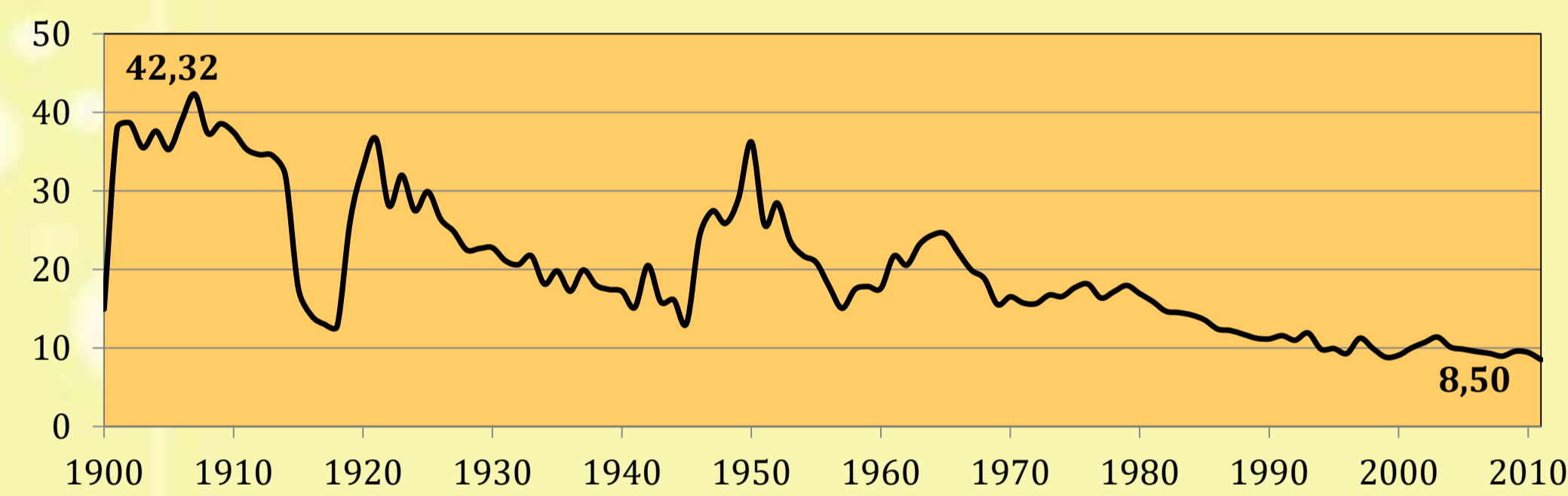


Fig. 1. Birth rates during the period of 1900-2011. Source: Registers of birth, 1900-2011, Census data 1921-2011.

The questionnaire survey gives an additional contribution to the analysis of fertile capacity, socio-economic status and attitudes about family planning.

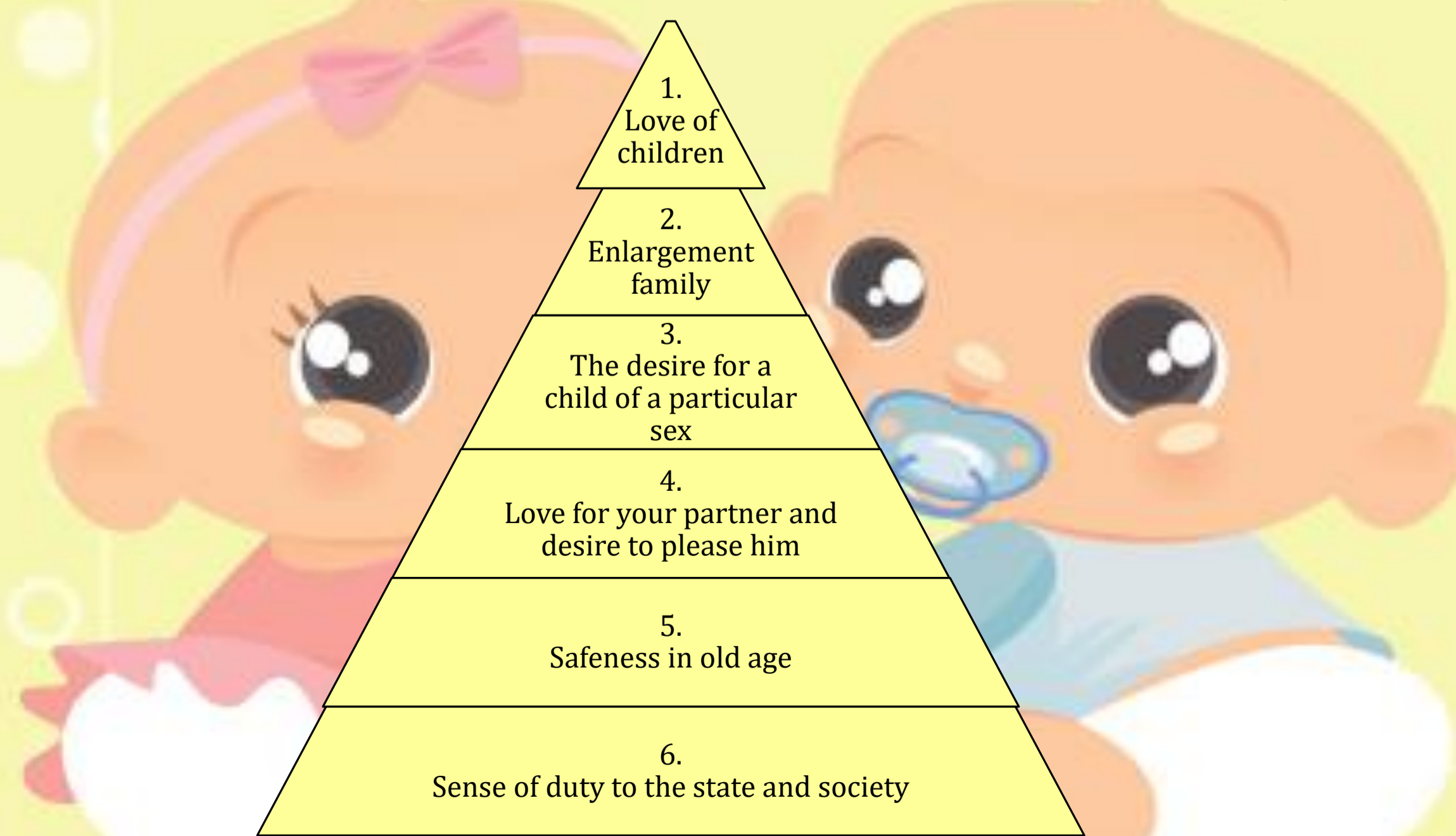


Fig. 4. Motives for having more children rated as the most common (1-most important, 6-least important) Source: Based on questionnaire survey

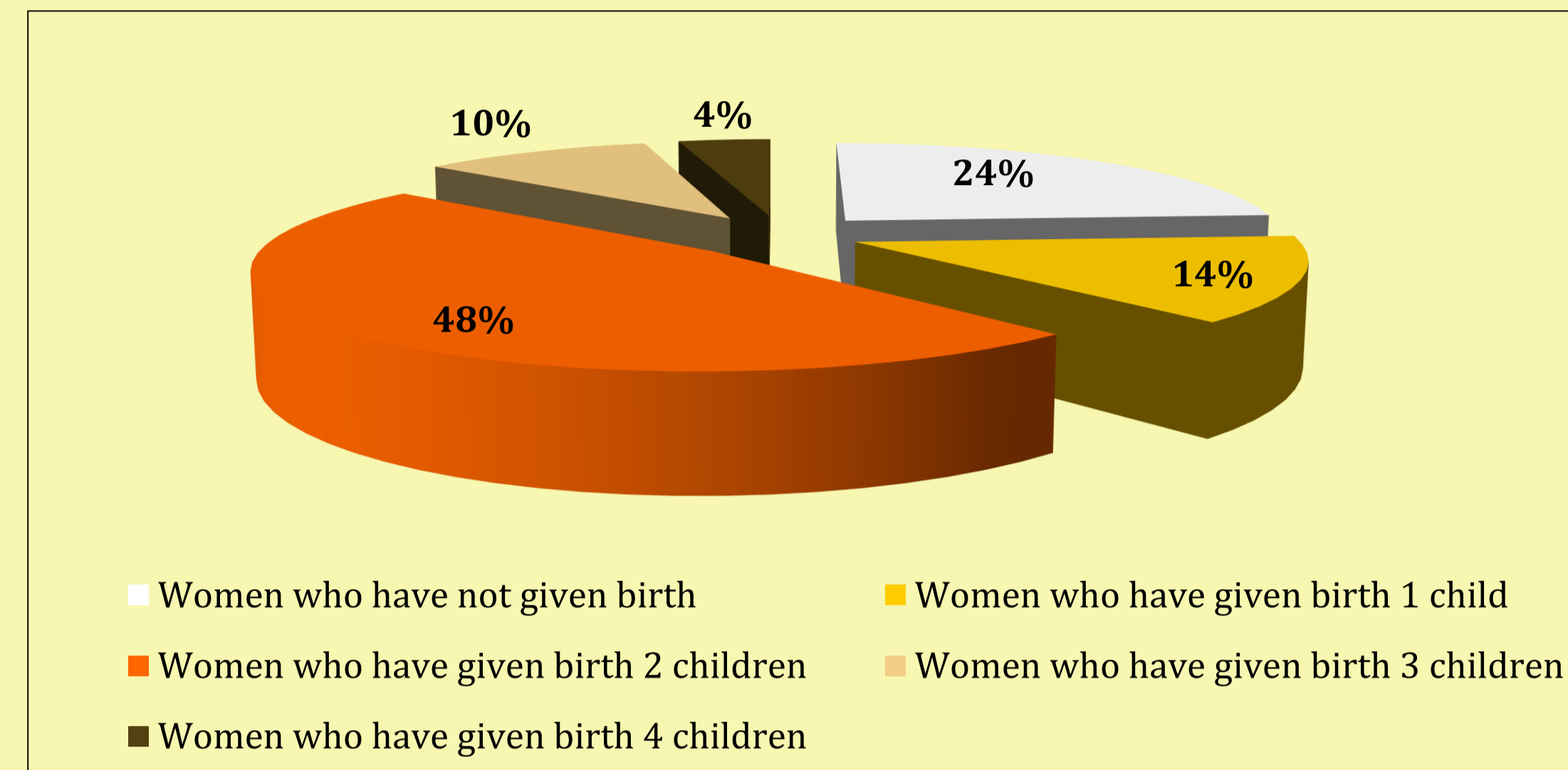


Fig. 2. Structure of respondents according to childbearing Source: Based on questionnaire survey

Modernization, expansion of secondary and university education have shifted the marriages to the European model of marriages and births to older age (Đurđev, 2004, 35). The share of women who have not given birth is 24%, their average age is 26.8, while the proportion of unmarried women is 14% and the average age is 25 years. The average age at marriage is 22.8.

The factors	Very much	Partly	Does not affect
Economic crisis and unemployment	96	4	0
Unfavorable housing conditions	76	24	0
Lack of adequate financial help from the authorities	74	24	2
Later marriage	16	74	10
Higher unemployment and autonomy of women	30	46	24
Increasing number of divorces	36	52	12
Insufficient number and quality of childcare institutions	22	48	30
Attitude that a small number of children in the family is better for their growth	20	46	34
Uncertain future and political situation	60	32	8

Fig. 5. The factors of fertility decline in Sremska Mitrovica (in %); Source: Based on questionnaire survey

* This paper is part of the project No. 114-451-845/2015-01 financed by the Provincial Secretariat for Science and Technological Development of the Vojvodina Province, Serbia

As desired number of children the most of respondents have stated three (46%) or two (36%) child, and, as the optimal number of children led three (62%). The most common motives for not accomplished the desired number of children are bad financial situation and unfavorable housing conditions (both answers 86%). Average number of children is 1.56. The time that elapses from marriage to first child birth is 1.3 years.

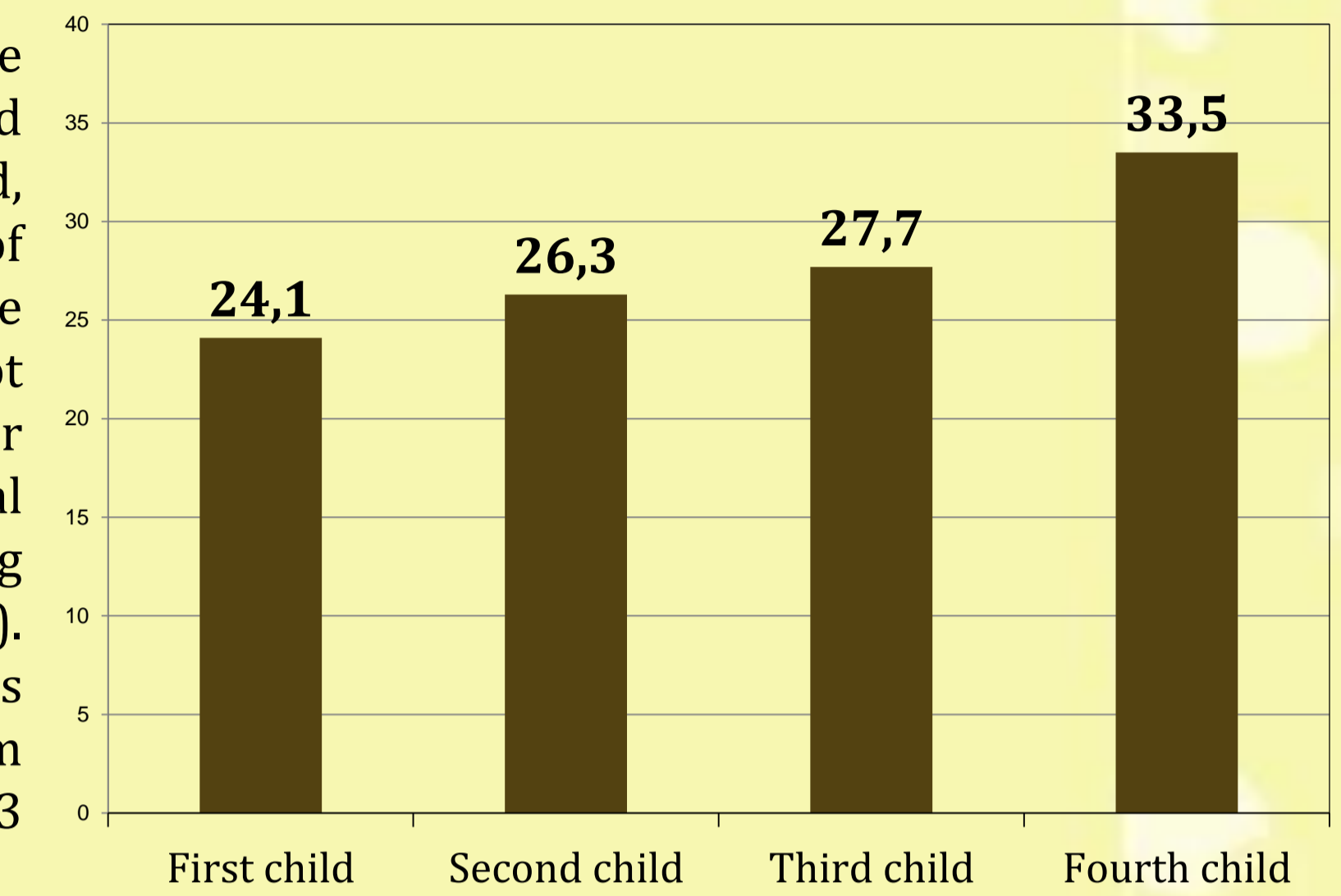


Fig. 3. Average age of childbearing Source: Based on questionnaire survey

The population policy measures	Very much	Partly	Does not affect
Child allowances, higher for each subsequent child	86	14	0
Less tax rates for children's clothes, food and so on	78	18	4
Grants and better credits for families with more children	72	12	6
Solving the housing problems of large families	86	12	2
Employment preference of parents with more children	88	10	2
Flexible working hours for parents with small children	78	18	4
Complete children coverage with pre-school institutions	60	38	2
Tax reliefs for families with more than two children	66	28	6
Financial help in the education for children from large families	86	14	0
Retirement growth for each subsequent child	74	20	6

Fig. 6. The population policy measures that might be stimulus (in %); Source: Based on questionnaire survey

Conclusion

In the new system of values the essence of parenthood has changed, because the parents rationally choose one or two children, satisfying their primarily emotional and psychological needs while avoiding risk. Socio-economic factors are manifested by the level of society economic development, the financial costs of regulating fertility and with psychological aspirations of birth costs, housing problems, less motives for second, third (and more) children, later marriage, they affect changes in reproductive behavior and family size in the long term.

Selected references

- Census Data 1921-2011.
 Đurđev, B. (2004). How Many Children Does Serbia Need. *Journal of Population* (1-4): 29-44.
 Kohler, H. P., Billari, F.C, Ortega, J. A. (2006). Low Fertility in Europe: Causes, Implications and Policy Options. In F. R. Harris (Ed.), *The Baby Bust: Who will do the Work? Who Will Pay the Taxes?* Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 48-109.
 Potančoková, M., Vaňo, B., Pilinská, B., Jurčová, D. (2008). Slovakia: Fertility between tradition and modernity. *Demographic research* (19): 973-1018.
 Rašević, M. (2004). Fertility trends in Serbia during the 1990s. *Journal of Population* (1-4): 7-27.
 Rašević, M. (2006). Postponing of childbearing in the optimal life age—a basic demographic consequence of the 1990s in Serbia, *Proceedings for Social Sciences Matica Srpska* (121):141-148.
 Registers of birth 1900-2011.