

What makes Russian women (un)happy?

A closer look to the family

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July 31, 2008

Abstract

Two decades of economic transition in Russia revealed that Russian women on average are less happy than men, and this persisting evidence might be a signal of a vulnerable position of women in the country. This paper addresses intra-family decision making process and investigates whether this "unusual" gender happiness gap is caused by a mismatch between the socially imposed traditional gender roles and the actual performed ones. Understanding of the forces driving the phenomenon may help in elaboration of the appropriate social policies both for achieving gender equality goals and improving psychological climate in the transforming Russian society. In the article we test three main hypotheses: (1) social disapproval of the increasing earning power of women in relation to men (the latter lose their status of the bread-winners); (2) impact of the "fairness" of the division of housework (different categories of it) on individual well-being; (3) importance of a higher level of freedom for the men's choices with the sequential adjustment of the women's decisions to the choices of the proper partner. Prime-age adults living in partnership constitute the dataset which is a part of the Russian Longitudinal Monitoring Survey for 1994-2004. Given the ordered character of the satisfaction variable, it is modeled with the help of the seemingly unrelated bivariate ordered probit model aiming at the adjustment for unobserved factors influencing decisions of both partners respectively. The results show, for 1994-1998, a mixture of traditional and pro-equality views in evaluation of the well-being impact of the gender roles performed in a family, with women being less supportive to emancipation than men. In the second period of economic growth (2000-2004) we observe a tendency towards less traditional values when evaluating the time-use decisions' "fairness".

JEL codes: D13, J12, J22

Key words: Russia, subjective well-being, housework, fairness