

Review of regional maternity capital programmes in Russia 2011-2023

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Abstract

The paper presents a comparative analysis of regional maternity capital programmes of 85 Russia's federal constituents. Their differences in terms of the size of benefits and benefit conditionalities are reviewed both spatially and temporally for the period from 2011 to 2023. The authors created a unified database of existing regional maternity capital programmes and made it publicly available on the Internet¹. Interactive maps and data sheets of the programmes detailing their features were prepared. An analysis of their differences was made, and a typology was set up of regional maternity capital programmes aimed at incentivising childbirth of various birth orders.

Keywords

regional maternity capital programmes, Russian regions, fertility rate, total fertility rate, birth order, interactive maps

JEL codes: J13, P35, P25

Introduction

According to the UN data (UN 2022), the average number of births per woman over the entire reproductive life² (total fertility rate, or TFR) has declined significantly over the past ten years. In 2021, the global average TFR was 2.3, down from about 5 in 1950. More than

1 Based on the regulatory legal acts of regional authorities, the authors have collected complete information on all regional maternity capital (RMC) programmes that existed in Russia from 2011 to 2023 and made it publicly available at <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.10804489>.

2 The woman's reproductive age is between 15 and 50 years.

60% of today's world population live in countries where the TFR is below 2.1, a level insufficient to stabilise the low-mortality population. According to the UN projections, the global average number of births per woman would be between 1.9 and 2.4 in 2050, with a 95% probability.

Russia is among the countries where the total fertility rate is below 2.1. According to the Federal State Statistics Service (Rosstat), the maximum national TFR during the last two decades was equal to 1.8 in 2015. Since 2015, the TFR began to decline to reach 1.4 in 2022 (Figure 1).

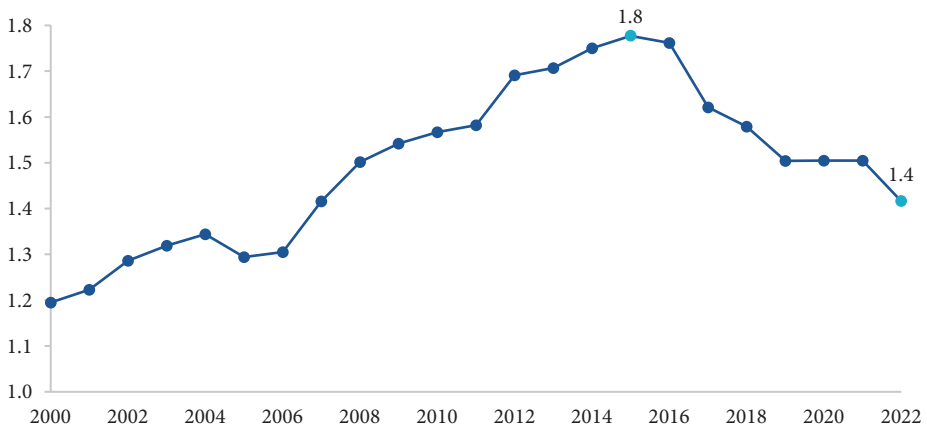


Figure 1. Evolution of the total fertility rate in Russia. *Source:* Rosstat.

Ms. Tatyana Golikova, Deputy Prime Minister of the Russian Federation, presented a report at the 548th meeting of the Federation Council held on 5th July 2023, on the implementation of the state social policy, raising the issues of conservation of people, maternity and child protection, support for families with children, and other issues towards the development of the social policy of the Russian Federation (Federation Council... 2023).

The study conducted to assess the demographic situation identified the regions with a high birth rate that ensures the natural population growth. These include the Chechen Republic, Republic of Tyva, Republic of Ingushetia, Republic of Dagestan, Altai, the Republic of Sakha-Yakutia, Buryatia, the Yamalo-Nenets Autonomous Okrug, the Zabaykalsky Krai, and the Tyumen Oblast. However, 28 regions (mostly in the Volga region, Central and North-Western Russia) have birth rates significantly below the national average. These regions make up what experts call the “demographic winter” cluster.

The Russian government has long promoted pro-natalist policies: for example, in 2007, the Federal Maternity Capital (FMC) was introduced (Federal Law 2006) aiming, among other things, at “creating conditions for a decent quality of life for families with children.” Since 2011, the Regional Maternity Capital (RMC) programme, which is a support measure for families with children, has been in place in a number of regions, funded by the respective regional budgets rather than the federal budget. In 2018, as part of the national project Demography, the Russian government set a total fertility rate target at 1.7, to be achieved by 2024, and was also tasked with introducing a mechanism of financial sup-

port for families when having children (Decree of the President of the Russian Federation 2018).

This paper presents a descriptive analysis and grouping by similar features of the regional maternity capital programmes that are in place in 85 Russian federal constituents³ according to the regulatory legal acts (RLA) of the regional authorities for the entire period of their operation. To the best of the authors' knowledge, at the time of writing, there was no single database of all regional maternity capital (MC) programmes and their descriptions. The current social project *Mnogo Detey* (Many Children) (<https://mnogodety.ru/>) provides information on regional maternity capital programmes for the current year only and does not allow for dynamic analysis.

This paper describes, compares and aggregates information on regional maternity capital programmes. We begin by defining the federal maternity capital programmes (FMC) and then regional maternity capital programmes (RMC). Next, we discuss the existing definitions of the term "maternity capital" and then, given the lack of consistency of terminology between the federal and regional regulatory legal acts, we give the definition of the maternity capital used below.

Further, we present the results of the analysis of regional maternity capital programmes from 2011 to 2023. We use interactive maps to show the conditionalities of use of the RMC funds. Two indicators are calculated for each region over the whole RMC period, the "target child" and the benefit growth rate. The Conclusion presents a typology of regions based on their similarities and summarises the results obtained.

1. Literature review

Maternity capital programmes and their impact on fertility in Russia have been analysed before, but only in a few studies of this kind. (Kazenin & Kozlov 2020) considers regional measures of material support to increase fertility, such as RMC payments, monthly allowances, and land allocation to large families. The authors found that of the measures listed above, RMC had the second highest prevalence in the regions, following land allocation, while the RMC size varied greatly from one region to another. The results of the study are presented in the summary tables, one of which ranks the Russian federal constituents (regions) by the RMC size for 2013, 2016, and 2019. The authors were not able to draw a conclusion about the effectiveness of the programmes to support families with children, including RMC, as this issue was not sufficiently explored and requires a separate study.

(Grishina & Cacura 2017) reviews the legislations of the Russian federal constituents. The authors identified differences in the RMC programmes in terms of the birth order, modalities and terms of RMC funds, possibility of readmission to the RMC programme, and conditionalities for the use of funds. The review is given for 2017 only and does not consider the amendments to the RMC programmes made during the previous years. Also, based on a 2015 survey of families with children in the Altai Krai and the Samara Oblast, which revealed low awareness of the population about the RMC programmes and RMC use conditionalities, the authors concluded that the programmes had little effect on the decision to

³ This paper does not consider the new territories of the Russian Federation as from 2022, as there is no data available on their regional maternity capital programmes.

have another child. However, the paper noted that some of the surveyed families planning to have children in the next three years reported that additional support measures would be a factor in their decision to have more children.

Based on the official Rosstat's data, (Sorvachev & Yakovlev 2020) reveals both short-term and long-term effects of the FMC and RMC programmes on fertility. The authors conclude that maternity capital programmes can increase fertility by an average of 20% over a ten-year period. Many regional maternity capital programmes allow the funds allocated to a family to be used to buy a home. In this regard, the authors found that the fertility growth rate was higher in regions where housing shortage was a problem.

(Vakulenko et al. 2023) gives a more up-to-date analysis. The authors collected panel data based on legislative acts of 80 regions of the Russian Federation for the period of 2011–2020, along with Rosstat's socio-economic and demographic indicators for the regions from 1995 to 2020, with a view to evaluating the RMC impact on fertility. The study found a positive relationship between the total fertility rate and the RMC at the time of the birth of a second child in the family.

The above papers studied the effect of regional maternity capital programmes on fertility, whereas this paper focuses on the features of the regional maternity capital programmes per se, their analysis and typology, which has not been done before in the literature.

2. Federal Maternity Capital (FMC)

Let us consider the federal maternity capital programme before analysing similar regional programmes. The concept of Maternity Capital (hereinafter FMC) represents the federal budget funds transferrable for the implementation of additional measures of state support in the form of a certificate (Federal Law 2006). From 2007 to 2019, families with a second or any subsequent child were eligible to receive the certificate, and only in 2020 this support measure was extended to include legal relations arising in connection with the birth of a first child. From 2007 to 2015, the FMC could be only used for improving the living conditions, building up the mother's funded pension, and child education. In 2016, its scope was extended to include purchase of goods and services intended for social adaptation and integration into society of children with disabilities.

From 2007 to 2015, an annual FMC indexation took place, whereas there was none from 2016 to 2019. In 2020, a benefit for a first child was introduced, which was an average of 150,000 RUB below the payment for a second or any subsequent child, and the indexation of all benefits resumed.

A family could apply for the utilisation of FMC certificate funds once the child has reached the age of three years. However, in the event of purchasing a home on credit, the maternity capital may be received prior to this age.

As of 1st January 2018, the federal maternity capital may also be used to receive a monthly benefit provided that the family's average per capita income does not exceed twice the subsistence minimum in the relevant region, as established at the time of application. As of 1st January 2023, the monthly benefit is equal in value to the subsistence minimum of the region of residence of the applicant family.

The benefit is provided against an application for disposal of the FMC certificate and will be paid out until the child reaches the age of three years. A monthly benefit may be assigned for each child if the family has more than one child aged below three.

3. Regional Maternity Capital (RMC)

3.1 Definitions and analysis of descriptive statistics

Unlike the FMC, the definition of the RMC varies from one region to another and is established by the relevant regulatory legal act. For example, according to the legislation of the Kaluga Oblast, “the maternity (family) capital” is a social support benefit granted at the birth of a second and any subsequent child and provided in the form of a lump sum payment to the applicant family that may be spent on any purpose (Law of the Kaluga... 2011). In the Yamalo-Nenets Autonomous Okrug, the “maternity (family) capital” is the Okrug budget funds provided in the form of a certificate at the birth of a third child, which may only be spent on improving the living conditions or medical care for the family members (Law of the Yamalo-Nenets... 2011). According to the Resolution of the Government of the Khabarovsk Krai, families with children are entitled to two benefits, a lump-sum payment in connection with the birth of their first child in the amount of twice the subsistence minimum, and an additional benefit in connection with the birth of their second child in the amount of 30% of the FMC (Resolution of the Government of the Khabarovsk... 2019). This benefit is defined by the above Resolution as the regional maternity (family) capital that may only be used for improving living conditions, education of the child (children) or for the purchase of goods and services intended for social adaptation and integration into society of children with disabilities. In order to receive it, the family needs to apply for the RMC funds at the social support centre. The legislation of the same region also establishes the concept of “Krai-level maternity (family) capital,” which is defined as the funds of the Krai budget to be provided in the form of a letter of guarantee for the use of the Krai-level maternity (family) capital (Law of Khabarovsk... 2011). The Krai-level maternity (family) capital may only be spent on improving living conditions, education of the parent or child, or on payment for medical services provided to the parent or child. The terms and conditionalities of the Krai-level maternity (family) capital as introduced by Law (Law of Khabarovsk... 2011) are different from those introduced by the Resolution of the Government of the same region (Resolution of the Government of the Khabarovsk...2019).

In view of the lack of consistency of the concept of “maternity capital” in the regulatory legal acts across various regions of the Russian Federation, the term “RMC” hereinafter means *payments* as part of support measures for families with children, made by the Russian federal constituent’s own budget regardless of the form of issue, be it a certificate, a lump-sum monetary payment, or a letter of guarantee.

The RMC payments were initially introduced in 2011, when only four regions introduced payments for a second child: the Kaluga Oblast (50,000 RUB), Moscow Oblast (100,000 RUB), Sakhalin Oblast (204,263 RUB), and Ulyanovsk Oblast (50,000 RUB). In 2011, 33 regions introduced payments for a third or any subsequent child; the minimum payment was set by the Nizhny Novgorod Oblast at 25,000 RUB, the maximum, by the Yamalo-Nenets Autonomous Okrug at 350,000 RUB. The first region to introduce payments in the form of a certificate for a first child was the Kamchatka Krai: in 2015, the region started to issue certificates in the amount of 100,000 RUB for the birth/adoption of a first child. In 2017, the Ivanovo Oblast introduced a benefit (as a lump sum monetary payment) in the amount of 50,000 RUB for a first child. In 2019, more regions started to provide the RMC to families for the birth of their first child. Table 1 below explains the introduction of the RMC in regions in different years. It is worth noting that not all of the regions have currently an RMC programme in place. Some regions have discontinued the benefits, while others have never introduced them.

Table 1. Summary RMC statistics from 2011 to 2023

	Number of regions that pay the RMC	Nominal value			Real Value ¹⁾		
		Average RMC Value, RUB	Max. RMC Value, RUB	Min. RMC Value, RUB	Average RMC Value, RUB	Max. RMC Value, RUB	Min. RMC Value, RUB
Regional maternity capital payable for a first child							
2015 ²⁾	1	100,000	100,000	100,000	5.4	5.4	5.4
2016	1	107,000	107,000	107,000	5.5	5.5	5.5
2017	2	80,610	111,220	50,000	5.5	65.8	5.3
2018	2	83,891	115,732	52,050	5.6	5.9	5.3
2019	13	44,693	120,708	20,000	3.2	9.4	1.9
2020	15	60,111	150,000	20,000	4.2	12.8	1.9
2021	13	64,606	150,000	20,000	4.5	12.8	2.0
2022	14	80,355	165,800	20,000	5.1	12.9	1.9
2023	15	84,220	163,650	20,000	4.7	12.2	1.7
Regional maternity capital payable for a second child							
2011	4	101,066	204,263	50,000	13.5	20.7	9.2
2012	5	109,886	204,263	50,000	13.8	20.4	8.6
2013	5	109,886	204,263	50,000	12.3	18.4	7.5
2014	5	109,886	204,263	50,000	10.9	16.7	6.5
2015	5	109,886	204,263	50,000	9.6	15.1	5.6
2016	5	109,886	204,263	50,000	9.3	14.9	5.3
2017	4	112,357	204,263	50,000	9.5	15.3	5.2
2018	4	112,357	204,263	50,000	9.0	14.5	4.9
2019	14	137,612	204,263	50,000	10.1	22.5	4.7
2020	19	164,767	250,000	50,000	11.5	22.1	4.6
2021	14	161,393	250,000	50,000	11.0	15.7	4.3
2022	14	164,857	250,000	50,000	9.8	14.5	4.1
2023	13	177,968	250,000	50,000	9.3	13.9	3.6

	Number of regions that pay the RMC	Nominal value			Real Value ¹⁾		
		Average RMC Value, RUB	Max. RMC Value, RUB	Min. RMC Value, RUB	Average RMC Value, RUB	Max. RMC Value, RUB	Min. RMC Value, RUB
Regional maternity capital payable for a third child							
2011	33	118,776	350,000	25,000	16.7	34.3	4.2
2012	65	101,327	350,000	25,000	14.3	32.3	3.8
2013	67	102,490	350,000	25,000	13.0	33.2	3.9
2014	68	103,977	352,265	25,000	11.7	30.3	3.4
2015	68	107,134	352,265	25,000	10.5	25.9	3.0
2016	69	108,858	366,356	25,000	10.5	27.0	2.9
2017	66	112,053	366,356	50,000	10.6	26.6	4.4
2018	64	114,709	366,356	50,000	10.4	25.0	4.2
2019	63	118,883	366,356	50,000	10.2	22.3	4.4
2020	63	128,307	500,000	50,000	10.4	30.0	4.1
2021	60	130,156	500,000	50,000	10.2	29.4	3.9
2022	62	132,517	500,000	50,000	9.7	27.7	3.6
2023	59	136,451	500,000	50,000	8.7	23.9	3.2

Source: compiled by the authors on the basis of the respective regulatory legal acts (<https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.10804489>).

Notes: ¹⁾ The real RMC value was calculated as the ratio of the nominal RMC value in a given region to the value of the subsistence minimum in the same region in the same year;

²⁾ RMC benefits for a second and any subsequent child were introduced in 2011, for a first child, in 2015.

The above table allows to monitor not only the fluctuations in the number of RMC-paying regions along with the highest and lowest levels of benefits, but also the instances of benefit impairment. The column designated “Real Value” contains the ratios of the nominal RMC value to the subsistence minimum in the corresponding region. Evidently, some of the values have declined over time. This suggests that the inflation growth rate outpaced the growth rate of the RMC programme benefits. A detailed description of the regions where benefit impairment has taken place is provided below.

Variation in the size of RMC benefits at the birth of a first child (Figure 2) increased sharply in 2021, and an increase in the median value was also evident (the horizontal line in the diagrams), which is due to the termination or suspension of the RMC programmes for a first child in 11 regions (out of 15 in 2020) where the benefits were low. In 2019, an outlying case was observed due to the introduction of an RMC programme in the Novgorod Oblast with a benefit size of 100,000 RUB. Then in 2020, an RMC programme was launched in the Sakhalin Oblast, where the RMC amounted to 150,000 RUB.

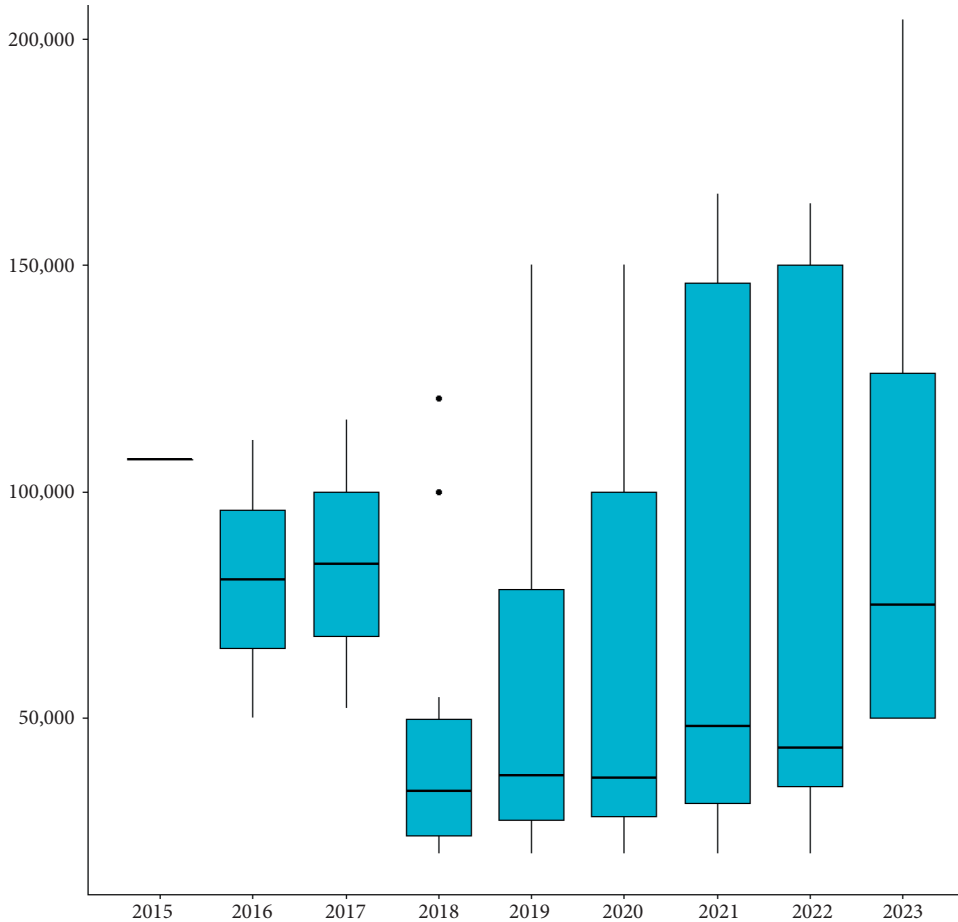


Figure 2. RMC benefits at the birth of a first child. *Source:* plotted by the authors.

Variation in the RMC benefits at the birth of a second child (Figure 3) was observed at approximately the same level from 2011 to 2018, while the situation changed in 2019, with decreased variation. Also, outlying cases were observed, with the peak value at the launch of an RMC programme in the Voronezh Oblast with a benefit size of 200,000 RUB as a lump-sum payment for any needs, and the minimum value of 50,000 RUB under the RMC programme for the Ulyanovsk Oblast, which had been in effect since 2011 providing for the issuance of a certificate with limited conditionalities of use. The diagram also shows an increase in the average benefit size starting in 2019, which suggests either an indexation of the RMC for a second child or the introduction of similar programmes in another regions with benefits in excess of 100,000 RUB.

Variation in the size of benefits under RMC programmes for the birth of a third and any subsequent child is quite large (Figure 4), which is caused by certain large-benefit RMC programmes. For example, in the Yamalo-Nenets Autonomous Okrug, the benefit amounted to 350,000 RUB starting in 2011 and 500,000 RUB starting in 2020. In the Nenets Autonomous Okrug, 300,000 RUB starting in 2011 and 379,911 RUB starting in 2020. In the Khabarovsk Krai, 200,000 RUB starting in 2011 and 297,824 RUB starting in 2023. There has also been an increase in the median value and the maximum RMC size, which suggests a gradual indexation of benefits.

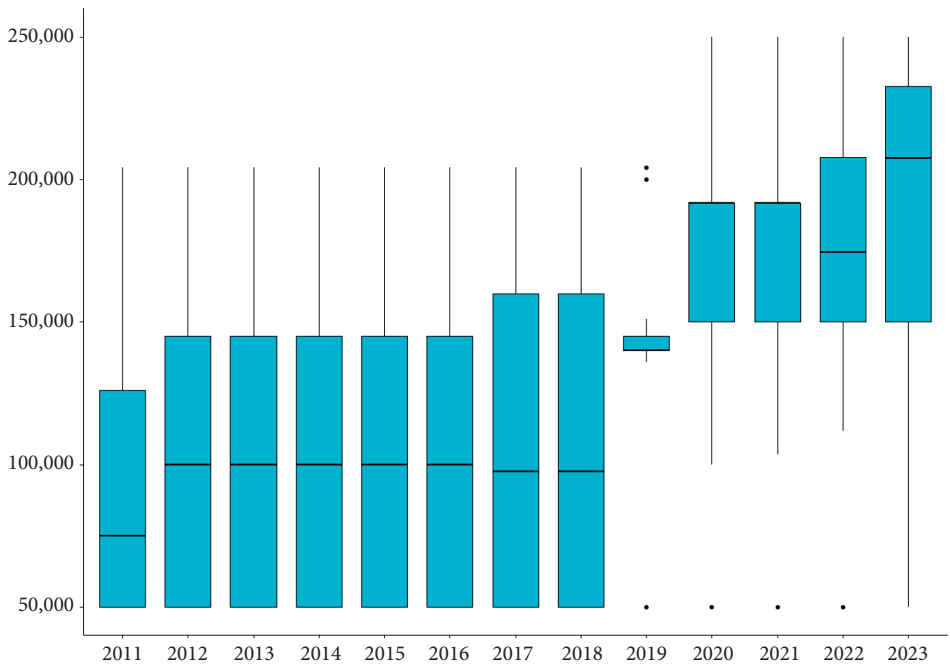


Figure 3. RMC at the birth of a second child. *Source:* plotted by the authors.

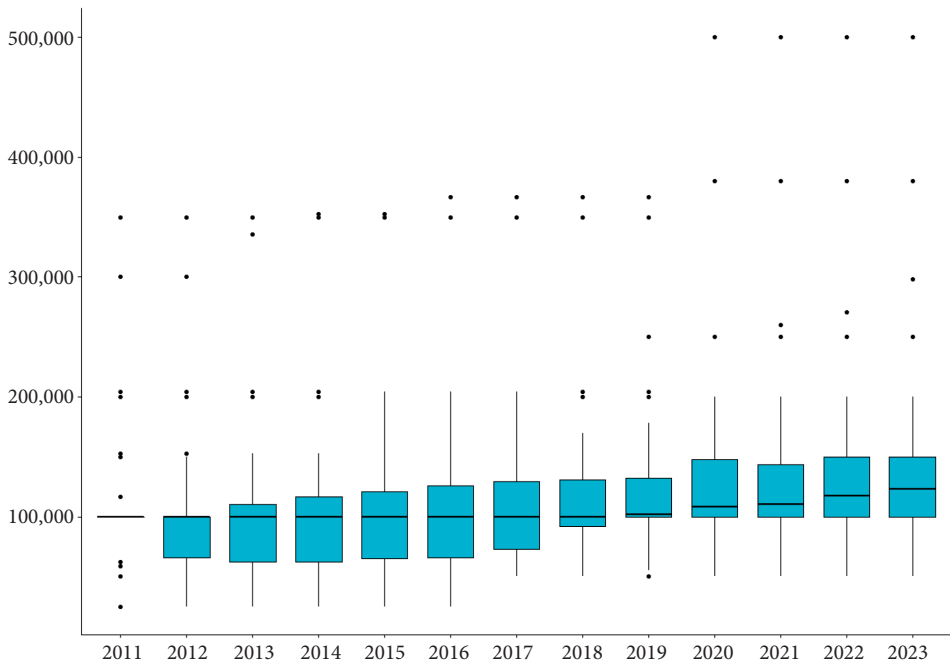


Figure 4. RMC at the birth of a third and any subsequent child. *Source:* plotted by the authors.

3.2. Format of RMC benefits

The link (<https://datawrapper.dwcdn.net/D2ygs/4/>) takes the reader to an interactive map of RMC provision in different payment formats (a lump-sum payment or issuance of a certificate). Also, the terms and conditionalities for using the RMC funds in various regions and the last year of operation of the programme (drop-down programme data cards for each region) are presented there.

As of 2021, a total of 11 regions of the Russian Federation have never introduced any RMC programme. Some of them do run programmes to support families with children, but these are social benefits unrelated to the maternity capital.

Some regions discontinued their RMC benefits until 2023. The interactive map shows the last year of operation of the relevant programme for each region. Furthermore, Table 1 shows the number of regions (by the okrug) that ran RMC programmes from 2011 to 2023.

Various regions establish various conditionalities for the use of state funds received in the form of regional maternity capital. The basic conditionalities established in most regions include purchase (construction) of a home, improvement of living conditions, payment for educational services, obtaining of paid medical services, purchase of goods and services intended for social adaptation and integration into society of children with disabilities. However, some regions do not impose some of these conditionalities, or, conversely, introduce additional ones, such as, for example, payment of costs of subsistence farming, purchase of a domestic vehicle, a down payment on a mortgage to buy or build a home, etc. Some regions allow using the RMC funds for any needs. To learn more about the conditionalities of use of the maternity capital in a particular region, the reader is referred to the interactive map at (<https://datawrapper.dwcdn.net/D2ygs/4/>).

3.3. RMC geography

Initially, regional maternity capital benefits for a first child were introduced in the Far Eastern Federal District in 2015, although they were confined to the Kamchatka Krai. In 2017, the Ivanovo Oblast (Central Federal District) started to pay out the RMC. In 2019, families in the Lipetsk Oblast (Central Federal District) and Novgorod Oblast (Northwestern Federal District) were made eligible for the benefits. In the same year, almost all regions of the Far East started to pay the RMC to families with one child. The Tyumen Oblast (Ural Federal District) joined the list in 2020. As of 2023, two regions of the Central Federal District, one region of the Northwestern Federal District, one region of the Ural Federal District and eleven regions of the Far East pay the regional maternity capital for a first child.

The regional maternity capital for a second child was initially introduced in 2011, but by a few regions only: the Kaluga and Moscow Oblasts (Central Federal District), the Ulyanovsk Oblast (Volga Federal District) and the Sakhalin Oblast (Far Eastern Federal District). In 2012, families in the Jewish Autonomous Region (Far Eastern Federal District) started receiving the benefits. In 2017, the Moscow Oblast terminated the benefits. In 2019, the Voronezh Oblast (Central Federal District) introduced the benefits, but only until 2020. In 2020, the benefits were introduced in Sevastopol (Southern Federal District), the Nenets Autonomous Okrug (Northwestern Federal District) and in two regions of the Ural Federal District, the Tyumen Oblast and the Yamalo-Nenets Autonomous Okrug. The Smolensk Oblast (Central Federal District) introduced the benefits in the same year, too, only to terminate them in 2021. Since 2019, families in almost all regions in the Far East have been receiving the benefits for a second child.

RMC programmes for a third child were initially introduced in 2011 in 33 regions of the Russian Federation. In 2012, the number of such regions almost doubled to reach 65. Many of the regions where the benefits were introduced in 2012 have retained them to this day. In the North Caucasus Federal District, however, only two regions introduced the benefits for a third child. This policy may be related to the fact that the overwhelming majority of families in the Caucasus usually have more than four children. In some parts of the North Caucasus Federal District, allowances are paid for a fifth and any subsequent child, but these are not part of the RMC programme.

Based on the analysis of the number of regions by the federal districts that pay the maternity capital, we can conclude that the RMC is paid at the birth of a third child in the vast majority of regions. Two federal districts stand out from the general picture, the North Caucasus, and the Far East. In the former case, strong traditions mean the district has no fertility problems. According to the Rosstat data, the North Caucasian Federal District has the highest TFR among all the districts of Russia at 1.8 (Rosstat 2022). In the latter case, it is the opposite. The birth rate in the Far East is falling every year due to the high mobility of the young reproductive population. To encourage regional fertility, many oblasts have introduced an RMC starting from a first child.

3.4. Target child of RMC programmes

We developed and calculated the following index to determine the ordinal number of the child who is mainly targeted by the RMC programme, with due account of the respective benefits:

$$\text{Target Child} = \frac{\sum_{n=1}^3 y_n^2 n}{\sum_{n=1}^3 y_n^2}, \quad (1)$$

where y – benefit size for a child of the birth order n , RUB;

n – ordinal number of the child; first, second, and third children were included in the analysis.

Following are maps showing the target child indices by the region for 2015 (the first year of introduction of the RMC for a first child).

Figure 5 shows the distribution of benefits for the target child across all the regions in 2015. Regions shown in grey are those with no RMC programme in place in 2015 (17 regions), dark blue, where the target child is a third child (64 regions). Only a few regions had a higher weight of benefits for a second child in 2015, the Jewish Autonomous Region and the Kamchatka Krai. In the Moscow and Sakhalin Oblasts, the index is equal to 2.5, as the benefits for a second and a third child in 2015 were the same in these two regions.

The figure at the link (<https://datawrapper.dwcdn.net/sDv8b/3/>) shows the distribution of the target child indices across all regions in 2023. Regions shown in grey are those with no RMC in place for 2023 (20 regions), dark blue, those where a third child is the target (53 regions). There is a significant increase in the number of regions where a second child is the target (11 regions). In general, benefits for a second child have a greater weight in the Far East and in the Novgorod and Tyumen Oblasts. In the Ivanovo Oblast alone, the benefits for a first child have a greater weight, since, as of 2023, the region retained the maternity capital programme only for mothers under 24 years of age who give birth to their first child. The RMC programme for a second and third child in the Ivanovo Oblast was terminated in 2016.

Target child – child with the highest benefit weight in the region (1st child, 2nd child, 3rd child)





Figure 5. Target Child Index for the regions of the Russian Federation in 2015. *Source:* compiled by the authors. Figures stand for the target child index. The index is equal to zero for regions that have no RMC programmes in place. The interactive map is found at <https://datawrapper.dwcdn.net/iiVSy/5/>

As we compare the two maps, we observe a downward trend in the target child index. This is due to the introduction or increase of benefits for a first and second child. Whereas at the outset of the RMC programmes regional benefits mainly focused on a third child, later on many regions started to introduce programmes covering families that had their first or second child. This trend may be related to the decline in the total fertility rate, as previously mentioned above. Fewer and fewer families are having more than two children. Moreover, the child-free ideology, a deliberate reluctance to have children, has recently become popular among the young population (Garifullina & Mukhametshina 2023), which also contributes to the decline in fertility.

3.5. RMC benefit size for a third and any subsequent child

Since a third child is the target child in most regions, this section considers RMC benefits for a third and any subsequent child. The following maps present the values of RMC benefits by the region during the first year of the programmes (2011 – RMC for a second, third and any subsequent child)⁴.

According to the maps (<https://datawrapper.dwcdn.net/sfl1g/1/>), compared to the programme's first year, the benefit size and the number of regions where the programme operates have increased significantly in 2023 (Figure 6).

⁴ Similar RMC benefit maps for a first and second child will be provided upon request.

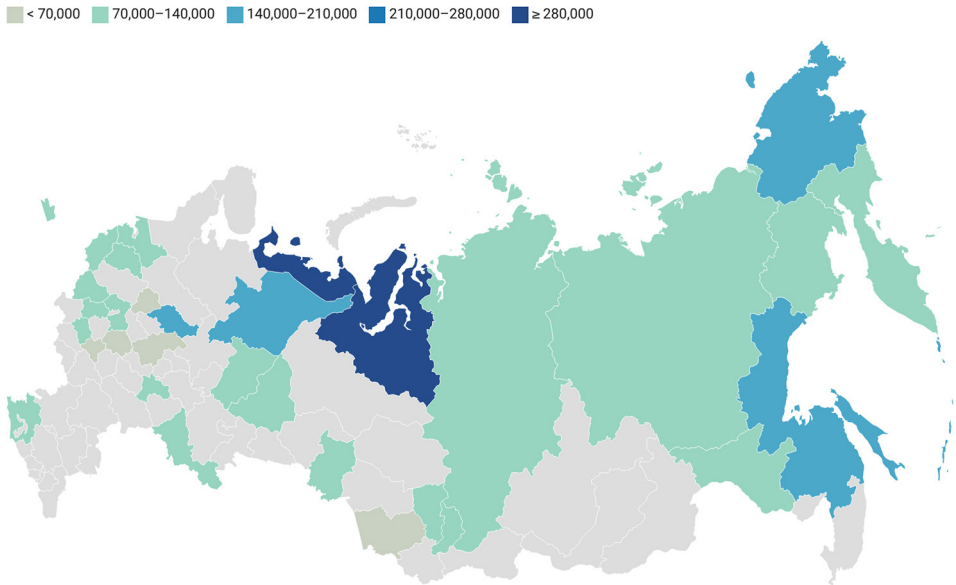


Figure 6. The RMC benefit size for a third child in 2011. *Source:* compiled by the authors. Interactive map: <https://datawrapper.dwcdn.net/akACY/1/>

The Yamalo-Nenets Autonomous Okrug provides the largest benefits (500,000 RUB in the form of a certificate). However, according to the respective strategy of socio-economic development, despite the fact that oil and gas production is the region's strategic industry and that 70% of the Autonomous Okrug's budget revenues comes from the fuel and energy sector, the region remains one of the most sparsely populated (Resolution of the Legislative Assembly... 2021). The Autonomous Okrug is situated in the extreme natural and climatic zone of the Far North and the Arctic Circle, belongs to the zones of extreme (tundra and forest-tundra) or high (northern taiga) climatic discomfort, and since 2012 there has been an outward migration of individuals seeking, among other things, employment opportunities in regions with a more favourable climate.

The Nenets Autonomous Okrug ranks second after the Yamalo-Nenets Autonomous Okrug in terms of the benefit size, 379,911 RUB (in the form of a certificate). Similar to the region described above, the Nenets Autonomous Okrug focuses on production and processing of gas and oil products and encounters the same challenges: harsh climate, low population density and outflow of population. However, the Okrug is the only federal constituent located in the European part of Russia that does not have a permanent land transport connection with other regions, so transport accessibility is a challenge, and the quality of life in the Arctic is affected by the outdated social infrastructure (Resolution of the Assembly of Deputies... 2019).

The regions of the Far Eastern Federal District, too, provide large benefits under the RMC programmes. According to the Khabarovsk Krai development strategy (Resolution of the Government of the Khabarovsk... 2018), the region is one of the leaders in the extraction and processing of mineral resources. Machine building, metal processing, ferrous metallurgy

and fishing industry are also well developed in the Krai. However, the Krai is also sparsely populated, has a monsoon continental climate, the winter is long and harsh, and therefore the regional conditions are comparable to the Far North.

The Sakhalin Oblast, despite its high level of development of the fishing industry, oil and gas production, coal mining, as well as its high fiscal capacity and high social spending (Resolution of the Government of the Sakhalin... 2019), faces the problems of poor infrastructure development and, due to its insularity, poor transport accessibility. There is a decline in the population, and finding a job in the neighbourhood is problematic. The socio-economic development strategy notes the lack of appeal to talent and youth as a challenge, along with low public satisfaction with the quality of services.

The Primorsky Krai is the most populated region of the Far Eastern Federal District. It serves as Russia's transit export hub in the Far East, being the largest exporter of fish products, oil products, metals, and wood products. The region's development strategy (Resolution of the Primorsky... 2018) mentions the Krai's high financial capacity, with the resources primarily focusing on the development of social assets. Decline in the labour force resulting from an outward migration is a major challenge facing the region.

Benefits are larger in size in the Bryansk and Kostroma Oblasts than in other regions of the Central Federal District. The Bryansk Oblast has well developed industries such as food, machine building (railway, road construction, agricultural and specialty machinery), metalworking, manufacturing of electronic and electrical equipment for road transport, timber processing. However, according to the region's development strategy (Resolution of the Government of the Bryansk... 2019), the shortage of labour and skills and low wages are among the Oblast's main challenges.

The Kostroma Oblast is one of the sparsely populated regions of the Central Federal District. According to the region's development strategy (Order of the Administration... 2021), its main industries include woodworking, jewellery (over 60% of Russia's total jewellery output), metalworking and electric power industry. However, the region faces challenges such as a shrinking working-age population, a notable disparity in the living standards between urban and rural areas, as well as a shortage of financial resources. Despite the latter, the region provides a welfare benefit of 200,000 RUB to build or buy a home to families who had their third child.

3.6. RMC benefit growth rate

We have calculated the benefit growth rate as follows to analyse the evolution of RMC benefits across the regions:

$$\text{Benefit growth rate} = \frac{\text{RMC size in the last operating year}}{\text{RMC size in the first year of operation}}. \quad (2)$$

The RMC size was considered in both nominal and real terms. The higher the regional rate, the greater the indexation of benefits. The largest growth of the nominal value of benefits during the period under review was observed in the Magadan and Ivanovo Oblasts, at 4.06 and 3.27 times, respectively. In the Lipetsk, Saratov, and Tyumen Oblasts, the rate was equal to 1, i.e. no indexation of benefits took place during the period under review. In the other regions, the rate was slightly above 1, i.e. there was an insignificant increase in the benefit size.

The analysis of the benefit growth rate as calculated from the nominal RMC values suggests that no decrease in the benefit size has taken place in any region during the entire period of the programme⁵. However, if calculated based on the real RMC values⁶, the same rate in some regions falls below 1, i.e. the growth rate of the subsistence minimum outpaced the growth rate of RMC benefits. The real benefit growth rate for a first child for regions running an RMC programme varies from 0.77 to 3.19. The rate is below 1 in the Jewish Autonomous Region, the Lipetsk, Sakhalin, Tyumen Oblasts, the Chukotka Autonomous Okrug, and the Khabarovsk and Primorsky Krai. The growth rate leaders, similar to the case of the nominal RMC values, are the Magadan and Ivanovo Oblasts, at 3.19 and 2.32, respectively. The other regions showed an insignificant growth of benefits in real terms.

As for the benefits for a second child, their growth rate in nominal terms varies from 1 to 1.67. That is, the indexation of benefits for a second child was not as high as the indexation of benefits for a first child during the period under review. The rate was at its maximum in the Far East, namely, in the Amur Oblast (1.66), the Primorsky Krai (1.66), and the Zabaykalsky Krai (1.67). Nine regions saw no variation in the RMC size: the Voronezh, Kaluga, Moscow, Smolensk, Tyumen, and Ulyanovsk Oblasts, the Chukotka, Yamalo-Nenets, and Nenets Autonomous Okrugs.

Considering the growth rate calculated on the basis of real RMC values, the rate is below 1 in many regions, too. Those are mostly the regions where there were no amendments to the benefit size during the period under review, since the real rate decreases as the subsistence minimum grows every year. The Kaluga and Ulyanovsk Oblasts saw the lowest real impairment rate, 0.39 and 0.42, respectively. The highest one was in the Primorsky Krai (1.29) and in Yakutia (1.28). In these regions, the growth rate of the subsistence minimum was lower than the rate of indexation of RMC benefits.

The benefit growth rate for a third child in nominal terms varies from 1 to 4. The highest rate was observed in the Nizhny Novgorod and Bryansk Oblasts, where the size of RMC benefits for a third child grew four times over the period under review. In several regions (the Arkhangelsk, Tula, Lipetsk, Chelyabinsk Oblasts, the Republic of Kalmykia and the Primorsky Krai), the benefit size grew two times. In 24 regions, the RMC growth rate was equal to 1, i.e. the size of maternity capital benefits has not changed.

If calculated on the basis of real RMC values, the same rate is below 1 in more regions (63). This suggests that in many regions, although indexation of RMC benefits did occur, it was not sufficient to keep pace with the annual adjustment of the subsistence minimum. The most significant decrease in the real RMC was observed in the Chukotka Autonomous Okrug (growth rate = 0.35) and in the Tambov Oblast (growth rate = 0.38). The highest growth was observed in the Nizhny Novgorod and Bryansk Oblasts, 2 and 1.6 times, respectively.

Looking at the RMC growth rates across all the regions, it is noteworthy that no region decreased their benefit size in nominal terms. However, if analysed in real terms, the indexation of benefits in most regions does not cover the annual inflation growth. In those regions, there is a gradual impairment of the RMC benefits.

5 Depicted in the interactive drawings are the growth rate (formula (2)) of benefits for a 1st child in real terms (<https://datawrapper.dwcdn.net/w88mk/3/>); the growth rate of benefits (formula (2)) for a 2nd child in real terms (<https://datawrapper.dwcdn.net/51VLR/3/>); and the growth rate of benefits (formula (2)) for a 3rd child in real terms (<https://datawrapper.dwcdn.net/Dz7zY/3/>).

6 As a reminder, the real RMC rate was calculated as the ratio of the nominal value to the subsistence minimum in the relevant region.

Conclusion

There is a wide variety of measures for providing support to families with children in Russia's federal constituents depending on the latter's socio-demographic situation and fiscal capacity. The vast majority of regions pay regional maternity capital to families with three or more children, but in some regions families that had their first or second child are also eligible. Most of the regions that provide benefits for a first and second child are located in the Far Eastern Federal District, but some regions in the Central, North-Western, Southern, Volga, and Ural Federal Districts provide such benefits, too. In two federal districts, the North Caucasus and the Siberian Federal Districts, their constituent regions where the RMC operates, provide only benefits for a third and any subsequent child. The fact that these two federal districts provide such support is probably due to socio-cultural reasons and specifics of their development.

There are also differences in the modality of providing the regional maternity capital. Some regions offer a lump-sum monetary payment to families with children, while others provide a certificate or a letter of guarantee.

Furthermore, various regions have different conditionalities for the use of regional funds to support families with children under the RMC programme. In general, regions can be divided into those with basic conditionality⁷ for the use of funds; those with a unique conditionality (including, e.g., purchase of a domestic vehicle or payment for health resort treatment); and those where maternity capital funds may be used for any needs.

Moreover, the regions differ in terms of the benefit size provided to families with children. In some regions, the benefit for a third child does not exceed 50,000 RUB (the Republic of Buryatia and the Republic of North Ossetia–Alania, 2023), while in others, it is 10 times larger amounting to 500,000 RUB (the Yamalo-Nenets Autonomous Okrug, 2023). Such differentials may be explainable by the region's level of economic development, fiscal capacity, and geographical situation.

The analysis of the target child index allowed to show which child, in terms of birth order, is the focus of the RMC programme in different regions. Interestingly, at the outset of RMC programmes for all children, almost all regions focused mainly on a third and any subsequent child. As of 2023, however, the situation has changed: many regions of the Far Eastern Federal District and some other regions gave a higher priority to the benefits for a second child. The downward trend in the target child index may be related to the decrease in the Russian national total fertility rate and therefore, the authorities started to provide more incentives for the birth of a first and second child.

Sadly, further updating of RMC programmes has been abandoned in some regions, i.e. no indexation has been carried out since the introduction of the benefits, although both inflation and the cost of living have risen over this time. Also, some regions have discontinued their maternity capital programmes altogether. There may be two reasons for this: positive, if the region has achieved a birth rate target during the programme period, or negative, if the regional budget lacks funds.

⁷ The basic conditionality was described earlier in the paper and includes purchase (construction) of a home, improvement of living conditions, payment for educational services, receiving paid medical services, purchase of goods and services intended for social adaptation and integration into society of children with disabilities.

Referring to the term “demographic winter”⁸ found above in Introduction, it should be noted that as of 2023, only a few regions of this cluster provide active support to families with children through the RMC. Most regions in the respective federal districts offer either low RMC benefits or no support at all. It seems likely that the Government will focus its attention on these regions in the near future, with the aim of supporting their fertility rates.

In summary, the analysis of the regional maternity capital programmes has shown that, over time, authorities in more and more regions are beginning to support families with children through various support measures. Some regions are paying particular attention to such programmes through the indexation of benefits and the expansion of their availability and use.

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⁸ Regions of the “demographic winter” are situated in the Volga region, Central and Northwestern Russia. Their fertility rates are below the national average.

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