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THE POSITION OF WOMEN IN SLOVAK SOCIETY

(Final Report of the Research Project)

Bratislava, June 1997

INTRODUCTION

This research report has been written thanks to the NATO Democratic Institutions Fellowship which was granted to Andrea Chorváthová for the academic cycle 1995-1997. The study presents an updated, broadened and revised version of the research report authored by Zora Bútorová et al.: “*She and He in Slovakia - Gender Issues in Public Opinion*” which was published in 1996 and financed by the European Union through a grant from Phare Democracy Programme awarded to the Alliance of Women of Slovakia.

Our analysis is based on rich statistical data from different sources describing the “objective” situation of Slovakia’s women. We are using also the results of a uniquely broad series of sociological surveys enabling to characterize the position of Slovakia’s women from the “subjective” perspective. These surveys were conducted by several research agencies in Slovakia, particularly by FOCUS, Center for Social and Market Analysis.

The team of researchers working on this report includes Zora Bútorová, O? ga Gyarfášová, Zuzana Fialová, Sylvia Vehovszká, and Romana Hambálková.

Our report brings also the findings of Ivan Dianiška and Mario Dobrovodský who co-authored the above-mentioned publication “*She and He in Slovakia - Gender Issues in Public Opinion*”.

The ambition of our study is describe in a comprehensive way the status of women in Slovakia, as well as its reflection in people’s awareness. We hope to encourage a public debate on these topics because we believe that they concern democracy and the very quality of our lives.

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1. WOMEN, MEN AND SOCIAL EXPECTATIONS

1.1. CONCEPTIONS ON “THE IDEAL WOMAN” AND “THE IDEAL MAN”

What attributes should the ideal woman and man have according to people in Slovakia? Our respondents replied to this question by ranking 26 submitted attributes by their importance.

Table 1: Very important attributes for the ideal woman and man through the eyes of Slovak population (%) *

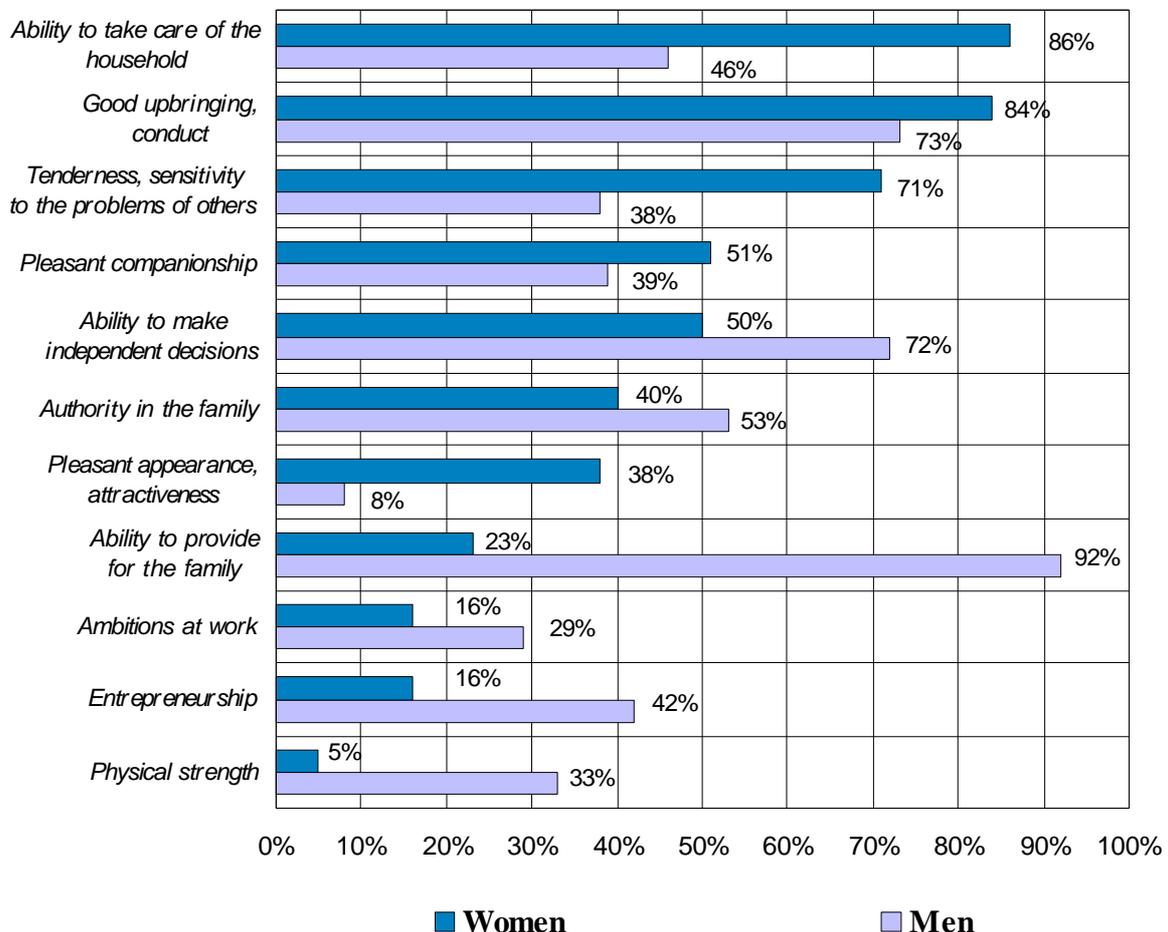
	Ideal woman	Ideal man
Ability to take care of the household	86	46
Good upbringing, conduct	84	73
Tenderness, sensitivity to the problems of others	71	38
Level-headedness	52	57
Pleasant companionship	51	39
Tolerance of others	50	45
Ability to make independent decisions	50	72
Respect at workplace	50	50
Adaptability	43	35
Authority at home, in the family	40	53
Pleasant appearance, attractiveness	38	8
Ability to protect weaker persons	35	35
Ability to provide financially for the family	23	92
Religious beliefs	18	15
Hobbies	17	20
Ambitions at work	16	29
Entrepreneurship	16	42
Interest in culture and the arts	16	11
Desire to excel in society	15	17
Self-assertiveness	12	18
Respect in the community	14	21
Good education	10	17
Ability to sacrifice oneself for country/nation	8	13
Interest in sports	7	16
Interest in public affairs	6	13
Physical strength	5	33

* The remainder of 100% comprises the answers ‘rather important attribute,’ ‘rather unimportant attribute,’ ‘absolutely unimportant attribute,’ don’t know.

Source: FOCUS, June 1995

Graph 1

**Specific feminine and specific masculine attributes
(FOCUS 1995)**



As **Table 1** and **Graph 1** show, there are three kinds of attributes:

- A. *Universal attributes*, i.e. attributes that have no significant gender identity, i.e. they are equally important for both women and men. For example, women and men should have good upbringing, they should be tolerant, level-headed, have respect at workplace.
- B. *Specific feminine attributes*, i.e. attributes expected to a greater degree from women, particularly the ability to take care of the household, tenderness, sensitivity to the problems of others, pleasant appearance.
- C. *Specific masculine attributes*, i.e. attributes expected to a greater degree from men, particularly the ability to provide for the family financially, make decisions independently, authority at home, in the family, entrepreneurship, physical strength, desire to excel at work.

What is the image of the ideal woman in the mind of women and men? To what degree do their views differ?

Table 2: Very important attributes for the ideal woman through the eyes of Slovak women and men (%) *

	Women's views	Men's views
Ability to take care of the household	86	85
Good upbringing, conduct	82	83
Tenderness, sensitivity to the problems of others	72	69
Level-headedness	56	48
Ability to make independent decisions	56	44
Tolerance of others	54	45
Pleasant companionship	49	53
Adaptability	44	41
Authority at home, in the family	43	36
Pleasant appearance, attractiveness	34	42
Respect at workplace	29	26
Ability to protect weaker persons	26	23
Ability to provide financially for the family	24	22
Religious beliefs	22	14
Interest in culture and the arts	20	13
Hobbies	18	16
Ambitions at work	18	15
Entrepreneurship	17	14
Desire to excel in society	16	14
Self-assertiveness	15	8
Respect in the community	15	13
Good education	10	10
Ability to sacrifice oneself for country/nation	9	8
Interest in sports	7	8
Interest in public affairs	7	4
Physical strength	5	4

* The remainder of 100% comprises the answers 'rather important attribute,' 'rather unimportant attribute,' 'absolutely unimportant attribute,' 'don't know.'

Source: FOCUS, June 1995

As **Table 2** indicates, the views of women and men about the ideal woman are remarkably similar. However, we do observe *subtle differences*. *The women* attribute a greater importance to spiritual dimensions like tolerance, religious beliefs, and cultural interests. Women place also greater emphasis on attributes that are usually associated with men, which, however, are necessary for the effective functioning of women in the family: ability to make independent decisions; authority at home and in the family; and self-assertiveness. *The men* include in their views of the ideal woman her pleasant appearance and attractiveness, pleasant companionship - in other words, attributes traditionally perceived as feminine.¹

¹ I. Mozný arrived at a similar conclusion in his study: "Women perceive themselves as more masculine than their partners perceive them." See Mozný, I.: *Rodina vysokoškolsky vzdelaných manželů*. (*The Family of University-educated Spouses*). Brno, UJEP 1983.

Table 3: Very important attributes for the ideal man through the eyes of Slovak women and men (%) *

	Women's views	Men's views
Ability to provide financially for the family	90	92
Good upbringing, conduct	77	70
Ability to make independent decisions	70	75
Level-headedness	59	55
Tolerance of others	52	38
Respect at workplace	50	49
Authority at home, in the family	49	58
Ability to take care of the household	46	45
Tenderness, sensitivity to the problems of others	44	31
Pleasant companionship	43	33
Adaptability	41	28
Entrepreneurship	39	44
Ability to protect weaker persons	38	31
Physical strength	32	34
Ambitions at work	25	32
Respect in the community	19	24
Religious beliefs	18	11
Hobbies	18	23
Good education	15	20
Desire to excel in society	14	20
Self-assertiveness	13	24
Ability to sacrifice oneself for country/nation	13	13
Interest in public affairs	13	14
Interest in culture and the arts	11	10
Interest in sports	11	22
Pleasant appearance, attractiveness	8	8

* The remainder of 100% comprises the answers 'rather important attribute,' 'rather unimportant attribute,' 'absolutely unimportant attribute,' don't know.

Source: FOCUS, June 1995

And how do men and women see the ideal man? As seen in **Table 3**, their views are different. *The men* put a greater stress on their ability to assert themselves; their entrepreneurship; their ambition to excel at work and in society; and their authority at home and in the family. *The women*, however, stress the tolerance in a man, his tenderness and sensitivity to the problems of others; his adaptability; and his ability to be a pleasant companion. This indicates that men emphasize traditionally masculine traits while women stress those men's attributes which are important for coexistence.

From these subtle differences we can deduce that ideas of women about the ideal woman and man are mostly based on the attributes necessary for *a balanced partnership of woman and man*. On the other hand, men put more emphasis on the *traditional differences between the strong and weak sex*.

1.2. HIERARCHY OF SOCIAL ROLES IN THE CONSCIOUSNESS OF WOMEN AND MEN

Table 4: Hierarchy of roles by their importance for women and men (% of answers ‘role is very important’)*

	Women	Men	All
Father/mother	90	82	86
Husband/wife	78	78	78
Man/woman	64	59	62
Son/daughter	58	61	60
Friend	54	55	54
Brother/sister	52	47	49
Employee	42	52	47
Colleague	34	31	32
Neighbor	26	28	27
Resident of the community	24	30	27
Citizen of the country	24	29	26
Manager	13	24	18

* Respondents were answering the question ‘To what degree is each one of these roles important in your life?’ The percentage is calculated from the total number of respondents who did not answer ‘does not apply.’

Source: FOCUS, June 1995

As **Table 4** indicates, people in Slovakia attribute the greatest importance to *family roles*, as well as to *gender roles*. *The work role* is somewhere in the middle of the importance range. This is an interesting finding, considering that in the official ideology of the socialist state, work was for decades praised as “the first life need of a man.” *The civil role* (be it national or local level) finds itself on the lower steps of the ladder.

Even though the hierarchy of men’s and women’s roles does not differ significantly, women put more stress on their family roles and less on their work roles and the civil role. These differences indicate that *the world of women is more concentrated on family while the world of men reaches out more to the broader societal context*.

Now let us examine how women and men in Slovakia evaluate their performance in different roles.

**Table 5: Order of roles according to their management by women and men
(% of answers 'I manage this role very well') ***

	Women	Men	All
Father/mother	51	44	48
Man/woman	47	55	51
Husband/wife	42	41	41
Friend	39	4	42
Brother/sister	37	37	37
Employee	37	39	38
Son/daughter	35	37	36
Colleague	34	38	36
Neighbor	28	32	30
Resident of the community	25	31	28
Citizen of the country	25	30	27
Manager	19	21	20

* The percentage is calculated from the total number of respondents who did not answer 'does not apply.'

Source: FOCUS, June 1995

Differences in the men's and women's views are not significant. Women evaluate the fulfillment of their key role - motherhood slightly more favorably. They see in a slightly worse light their performance in other roles: woman, friend, colleague, citizen, and resident of a community.

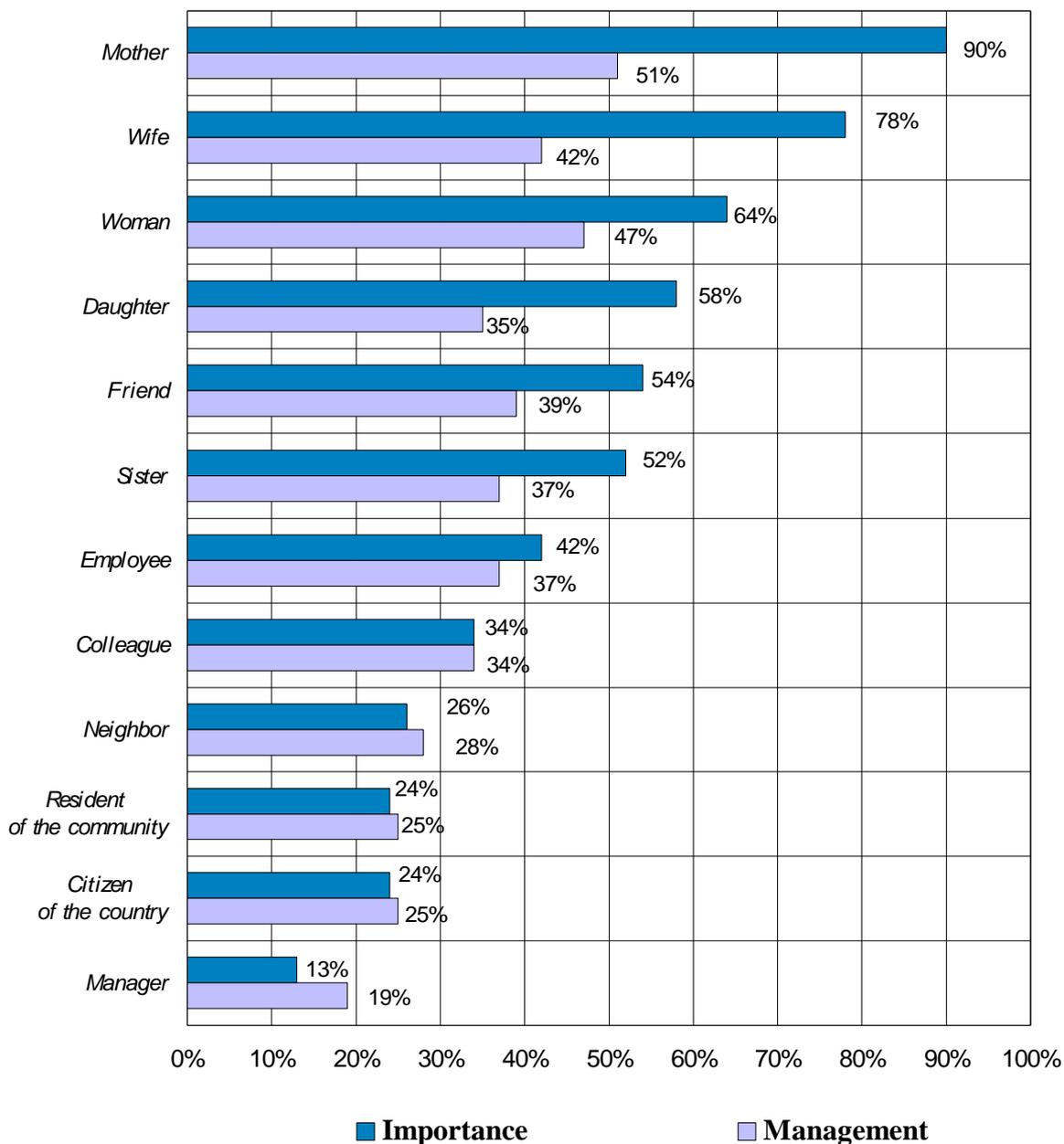
Now let us compare the degree of importance and the degree of success in the management of roles (**Tables 4 and 5 and Graph 2**). Both women and men perceive the biggest *discrepancy between the importance of the parenthood role and its actual management*: the ratio of women for whom this role is very important and of women who think they manage it very well is, 90% : 51%, while among men this ratio is, 82% : 44%. There is also a high *discrepancy between the importance and management of the marital role* (among women, 78% : 47%; among men, 78% : 55%). These findings point again to the important position the institution of family occupies in women's and men's lives.

Women experience less discrepancy between the importance and the management of roles of employee and colleague. This is probably because women attribute less importance to these roles.

Graph 2

Order of women's roles by their importance and their management

(FOCUS 1995)



Both women and men feel *no discrepancy between the importance and the management of the civil role* on a national or a local level. If we keep in mind what small importance they attribute to these roles, it is not surprising. The small relevance of these roles for women and

men correlates with the findings in **Table 1** where the interest in public affairs belongs to the least important attributes for either the ideal woman or the ideal man.

These findings are worth reflection. After decades of living in a society of authoritarian socialism, which stressed an all-powerful state and a helpless individual, it would be inappropriate to expect a sudden awakening of citizens. Before 1989, several generations experienced first-hand that the key to survival was to give up participation in public affairs and reduce ambitions to the private sphere. Eight years after the “velvet revolution,” fear of public involvement still exists.

Our findings suggest that Slovakia resembles more a traditional community (Gemeinschaft) than a modern society (Gesellschaft) involving impersonal, instrumental social relationships. J. Polehna went even further.² He sees the community (Gemeinschaft) as “feminine” because it is the world of love and mutual support, a world where “domesticity” permeates all other spheres. On the other hand, society (Gesellschaft) can be seen as “masculine,” because it is the world of performance, production, cold calculation, competition and contracts.

Relying on such distinctions, in his analysis of “habit” of the Czechoslovak society of the real-socialism of the second half of the 1980s, Polehna came to the conclusion that it was a *feminine society*. He argued that not only in the female population but also in the male population, the dominant behavioral patterns, value stereotypes and life interests were traditionally typical of the female population. In his opinion, *men were socially feminized*.

Similarly, M. Frišová described the decline of masculine civilization values: “Slovakia is traditionally conservative and decades of socialism isolated it even more from the outside world. Women and men had a common enemy - the regime. But what is more important, women did not feel the need for emancipation because even though life was hard, and socialism exploited them and used them as a cheap labor force, under socialism there were no basic values of masculine civilization - creativity, courage, ambition and success. It was only important to conform, to hunt for goods, arrange for kids to be accepted into schools, hold values of basic survival, maintain hearth and home - all feminine values. That’s how ended the proud achievement of the classical masculine ability of abstraction - socialism: masculine values were in decline and there was some sort of pseudomatriarchy.”³

This legacy of real-socialism was confirmed also by our findings on the stereotypes of the ideal woman and man, as well as on the hierarchy of social roles in the consciousness of men and women. The “civil dimension” of Slovak men has atrophied and the potential of their civil self-fulfillment is only insignificantly greater than that of women. Thus at the present time, it is important that a greater number not only of women, but also of men step out of their private sphere, take a part in public affairs and strive to achieve goals that would be beneficial for both women and men.

² The author’s name is a pseudonym. See Polehna, J.: *Spolecnost feminizovaná nebo femininní? (Society Feminized or Feminine?)*. In: *Sociologický obzor* 1987, No. 1.

³ Frišová, M.: *Slúzticky. (Slaveys)*. In: *ASPEKT* 1993, No. 1.

2. WOMEN, MEN AND PROBLEMS OF REPRODUCTION

2.1. OUTLINE OF THE DEMOGRAPHIC SITUATION IN SLOVAKIA⁴

To the end of 1996, Slovakia had a population of 5, 378 932 inhabitants. The ratio of women in the total population is showing a long-term oscillation around 51 % (51.5 in 1996), with strong age group dependence. In 1980 there were 1 035 women per 1 000 men; in 1990, 1049 per 1 000, in 1996, 1 061 women per men. The ratio is increasing with age, resulting in feminization of old age.

Despite a long-term (20 years) history of decreasing birth rates and numbers of newborn the population of Slovakia is still characterized as progressively developing. The number of births prevail above that of deaths. In 1993, 13.8 live children were born per 1 000 of the population, with 9.9 deaths per 1 000 in the same year; in 1996, 11.2 live children were born per 1000 of the population, with 9.5 deaths per 1 000. The rate of natural increase dropped to 1.7 per 1 000 of the population.

The age composition of the population is changing in favor of higher age categories due to the decreasing number of births and stabilization of deaths. The ratio of children (0-14 years) has been declining over recent years, with the productive age groups have been increasing in numbers. In 1992 the productive-age population was represented by 58.3 %, growing to 60.8 % in 1996. In the European context, however, Slovakia still maintains its status of a young population, with children up to 14 years forming 21.7 % of the population. The index of aging, expressed as the ratio of post-productive to pre-productive population groups still showed a prevailing children's population (73.9 in 1993; 81.1 in 1996).

The situation in Slovakia is less favorable when considering the health situation of population which reflects the economic, political position of Slovakia in Europe, as well as the psycho-social climate in the country⁵. The life expectancy reached 76.6 for women and 68.8 years for men in 1996. These unfavorable values place Slovakia in between advanced European and post-Communist countries.⁶ They are lower than in all EU countries⁷ and in the

⁴ This analysis is based particularly on the study Gurán, P. - Filadelfiová, J.: *Main Demographic Trends and the Family. World - Europe - Slovakia*. Bratislava, The Bratislava International Center for Family Studies 1995; Filadelfiová, J. - Gurán, P.: *Demografický vývoj (Demographic Development)*. In: Bútorá, M. (Ed.): *Slovensko 1996. Súhrnná správa o stave spoločnosti (Global Report on Slovakia 1996)*. Bratislava, IVO 1997; Demeš, M.: *Health Care*. In: Bútorá, M. - Huncík, P. (Eds.): *Global Report on Slovakia. Comprehensive Analyses from 1995 and Trends from 1996*. Bratislava, Sándor Márai Foundation 1997; Demeš, M. - Ginter, E.: *Zdravotníctvo (Health Care)*. In: Bútorá, M. (Ed.): *Slovensko 1996. Súhrnná správa o stave spoločnosti (Global Report on Slovakia 1996)*. Bratislava, IVO 1997.

⁵ See Demeš, M. - Ginter, E.: *Health Care...*

⁶ In 70-ies and 80-ies, the life expectancy of men in communist countries was stagnating, while the life expectancy of women was slightly increasing. However, this growth was much slower than in advanced Western European countries. For further international comparison see Demeš, M.: *Health Care...*

⁷ For example in Austria, life expectancy is continuously increasing among both sexes, more sharply among men than women. In 1993 life expectancy at birth was 79.4% for women and 72.9% for men. *See Women in Austria. 1985-1995*. Vienna, Ministry of Women's Issues 1995.

Czech Republic; similar as in Poland⁸; higher than in Hungary⁹, Rumania or Moldavia; much higher than in the countries of former Soviet Union. Moreover, the difference between life expectation of men and women in Slovakia (7.8 years) is too high from the European aspect.

In 1980-1992 the life expectancy of women had been 7-9 years longer compared to men. In general, women take better care of their health than men. 38% of women have never smoked. Approximately 26% of women smoke as opposed to 43% of men. On the average, men of all age categories drink more alcohol than women. In 1990 three times more men were officially diagnosed alcoholics. However, it has been proved that women use more medicines (sleeping pills, sedatives and painkillers). A large percentage of women is interested in healthy diet, however 30% of the randomly selected respondents were obese and 1% extremely obese.

⁸ See *The Situation of Women in Poland*. The Report of NGO's Committee. Warsaw, March 1995.

⁹ See *National Report of the Republic of Hungary for the United Nations Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing*. Budapest 1995.

2.2. RECENT TRENDS IN DEMOGRAPHIC BEHAVIOR

Until 1989, demographic development in Slovakia was marked by a long-term decline in the birth rate; at the end of 1980s, by an accelerated increase in the abortion rate, by the stabilization of the death rate on unfavorable levels, particularly with respect to men, from the second half of the 1970s; by a slight decline of the marriage rate and by a slight increase of divorce rate.

After the revolutionary change of the political and economic regime in 1989, the courses of most demographic processes in Slovakia have remained more or less the same (see **Tables 6-9**) The marriage rate and the birth rate continue to decline. The divorce rate is indicating an increase in the recent years. Only the abortion rate has undergone a significant change: previously increasing, it is now in sharp decline.

BIRTH RATE

In the past five years the birth rate in Slovakia has decreased from a high above standard to the standard European level. In most West European countries the gross birth rate is 10-14 live-births per 1 000 inhabitants. Compared to other postcommunist countries, Slovakia and Poland have the highest birth rates. Slovakia's natural increase was positive also in 1996. In other postcommunist countries the natural increase has been negative for a few years now.

After 1989, the birth rate has decreased dramatically. In 1987 already, it was 2.1 children per woman which, according to experts, was already below the level of simple reproduction. In 1996 the birth rate reached level 1.471 children per woman.¹⁰ According to Filadelfiová and Gurán, similar trend has been recorded not only in Slovakia, but also in other postcommunist countries. Such development has been characteristic for the West since the mid-sixties. In Slovakia, this process called "the second demographic revolution" began 20-25 years later.

ABORTION RATE

Until 1988, the decrease in the birth rate was not the result of a decline in the overall number of pregnancies, but rather, the result of a higher abortion rate. Since 1988, when the abortion rate reached a peak of 11.3 abortions per 1000 inhabitants and 70.9 abortions per 100 children born, the abortion rate has shown a decline.

The decrease of induced abortions in Slovakia in the nineties is due to the following factors: better access to information on sexual life, better opportunities for using contraception, strong public appeal to morals, and also introduction of fees for induced abortion in the past three years. Before, abortion was used to terminate unplanned pregnancies as result of a relatively liberal abortion act that had been valid since 1987 enacting free-of-charge abortions within the first eight weeks of pregnancy.

¹⁰ For comparison: In Poland, the years 1993 and 1994 were the years of birth regression The fertility rate (number of live-births for 1 000 women from 15-49) decreased from 76 in 1980 to 58 in 1990 and to 51 in 1993. See *The Situation of Women in Poland...*

BEGINNING OF SEXUAL LIFE

Sexual life of women in Slovakia begins rather early. According to a survey conducted by FOCUS in December 1996, the first sexual experience¹¹ was reported by 16% of women before age 16, 38% before age 18 and 58% before age 19.

The use of contraceptives during the first intercourse is not sufficient. Contraception was used only by *one third of girls and women*.¹² The most frequently used methods of contraception were condom (45%); withdrawal (42%); and hormone contraceptives (8%).

The first pregnancy comes relatively early. According to the survey¹³ conducted in December 1996, more than one fifth of respondents at ages 15-44 became first pregnant before the age of 20, more than a half before the age of 22. Only one half of first conceptions take place in wedlock. On average, the percentage of unplanned premarital conceptions is 45%.¹⁴

MARRIAGE AND CHILDREN

Marriage and family in Slovakia continue to retain their high status. The majority of the adult population enters into marriage at least once (among men 20 years of age and older only 18.0% are single, among women 10.4%). The majority of women find fulfillment in motherhood; the majority of children are born in wedlock. However, the share of extra-marital births in the total number of births is increasing. For instance, in 1996 it was 14.0%.¹⁵

Until 1990, Slovakia had one of the highest marriage rates in Europe. In 1995 and 1996, however, the marriage rate reached the lowest level in the history of Slovakia. Nonetheless, the marriage rate in Slovakia is still higher than in most advanced Western European countries.

The low matrimonial age is typical for Slovakia in comparison with Western countries. The average age for a bride is 22.7 years; for a groom 25.4 years. On average, first-time brides enter into marriage at 21 years of age and first-time grooms at 24 years of age. The average age

¹¹ In the Czech Republic the first sexual intercourse starts at a younger age than in Slovakia. According to a survey conducted in 1993, more than one half of Czech women have their first sexual intercourse at the age of 17, and as many as 87% at the age of 18. See *1993 Czech Republic Reproductive Health Survey*. (Final Report). Prague, Czech Statistical Office 1995.

¹² For comparison: In Austria 74% of young people used contraception during their first intercourse. The most frequently used methods of contraception during their first intercourse in Austria were condom (65%), pill (46%); withdrawal (6%). See *Women in Austria...*

¹³ See *Reprodukčné správanie žien na Slovensku (Reproductive Behavior of Women in Slovakia)*. Bratislava, FOCUS 1997.

¹⁴ Similar situation is also in other countries. For example in Austria, in the majority of cases the first child is not planned or arrives too early. Wish corresponds with reality in less than 50% of cases. See *Women in Austria...*

¹⁵ For comparison, in 1993, the share of extra-marital births in the Czech republic was 12.7%, in Hungary 15.6%, in Italy 6.7%, in France 33.2%, and in Sweden 50.4%. However, no data are available which would show whether children born to unmarried parents live in alternative families or with single mothers. See Horská, P.: *Problémy súčasnej rodiny očima demografa (Problems of the Today's Family Through the Eyes of Demographers)*. In: *Lidové noviny*. September 6, 1995.

of brides and grooms in Slovakia is approximately 5 years younger than in most EU countries. In the recent years the matrimonial age has been slightly increasing in Slovakia.¹⁶

Most mothers give birth to two children, usually in rapid succession. The reproductive period of our women is short and ends relatively early; the majority of children is born to mothers 20 - 24 years old, with fertility decreasing to a minimum after 30 years of age of the mothers.

92% of women are sexually active before they get married.¹⁷ First children are born very soon after the wedding: the average age of mothers at the birth of a first child is 22 years.¹⁸ Annually, more than 50% of first children born in wedlock, are born during the first eight months after the wedding. More than 60% of first children are born within the first year of marriage. This indicates a high incidence of premarital conceptions and is one of the distinctive features of demographic behavior in Slovakia. In the context of the complex social changes in 1989, a shift of these traditional patterns of behavior were expected to take place; however the number of premarital conceptions has not decreased.

Over the past years the number of children born to women older than 30 has slightly increased and the number of children born to mothers younger than 20 has decreased. However, the average age of first-time mothers has increased minimally and stays relatively low - 22 years.

Gradually, the model of a family with two children has stabilized.¹⁹ Among family households with dependent children, 46.2% are two-child families. There are 33.5% of families with one child where there is still a possibility of the second child, since these are mostly young families. 20.3% of families have more children. Their proportion, however, is declining.

These long-term trends result in the following consequences: accelerated exchange of generations; juvenation of grandparenthood; gradual stabilization of the two-child model; reduction of sibling relations and closing of sibling ages; reduction in the number of family-nucleus members; horizontal narrowing and vertical broadening of families (increase of the number of generations to include great-grandparents).

DIVORCE

Slovakia is among those countries which have a relatively low divorce rate. In the last years, this trend fluctuated, pointing since early 1990-ies to an increase. In 1996 it reached the highest level in the history of Slovakia (1.75 of divorces per 1,000 inhabitants). However, in the European context, Slovakia, southern European countries and Poland belong to the countries with the lowest divorce rates.²⁰

¹⁶ See Filadelfiová, J. - - Gurán, P.: *Demographic Development...*

¹⁷ See *Reproductive Behavior of Women in Slovakia...*

¹⁸ For comparison: the age at which women in Austria give birth to their first child has been rising steadily since the mid-seventies. In 1993, the age at giving birth averaged 26 years for married women. See *Women in Austria...*

¹⁹ For comparison: whereas the actual number of children in Austria is 1.48 per women, 20-40-year old women on an average want to have two children n. See *Women in Austria...*

²⁰ During the whole existence of Czechoslovakia, the divorce rate in Slovakia was significantly lower than in the Czech Republic. For example in 1992, i.e. the last year of existence of common state, the gross divorce rate in the Czech Republic was 2.8 and in the Slovak Republic 1.5. See Filadelfiová, J. - Gurán, P.: *Demographic*

One of the constant characteristics of divorces in Slovakia is the young age of divorcing couples. The most intense divorce ages are 25-29 for women and 30-34 for men. In the recent years the age of divorcing people and duration of their marriages have slightly increased.

Only 25% of divorced couples did not have any children. The rest have mostly dependent children which is the biggest problem in terms of divorce. In most cases - 40% - divorcées have one dependent child.

Since the sixties divorces have been filed mostly by women. In the present approximately 68% of divorces are initiated by women.

DISCUSSION

In the recent years, the decrease of birth rate and fertility below the level of simple reproduction has attracted interest of the public, experts, the Catholic Church and political circles. Various catastrophic prognoses predicting „extinction of the nation” have appeared and the pressure to take measures supporting fertility have increased. The focus of the discussion is the ethical side of the problem. The efforts to protect life are often connected with reluctance to introduce sexual education into schools and with the campaign against contraception.

However, experts are more sober and do not tend towards making premature decisions. The state administration has successfully managed to resist the pressure to implement any direct and one-time measures.

As correctly pointed out by Filadelfiová and Gurán, the current decrease of birth rate and fertility is not caused only by young people’s lack of interest to have children. It can as well be the consequence of postponing parenthood until older age and a more responsible approach towards marriage and parenthood. Taking into account the low stability and high divorce rate of young marriages, such trend would undoubtedly be positive. At present, it cannot be assessed whether the current situation is due to postponing of pregnancy or a to permanent decrease of birth rate, or perhaps, to a combination of the two. The answer will be clear within the next five years.

Lives of families and households generally manifest neither frequent nor rapid changes. Being based on values and norms accepted in a specific community, they tend to self - reproduction rather than alteration. This is even more true for the lives of families in Slovakia. Maintenance of „old habits“ is reinforced, in addition to spiritual and cultural traditions, through a low level of social and geographical mobility, strong social control exerted by communities and - paradoxically - the former communist system enforcing uniformity in society. Presently Slovakia’s families are in a period when „old habits“ struggle with „new ways“, cultural and historical tradition with changed economical and social conditions in all areas of life. Any definitive confirmation of results of this struggle between political - economical circumstances, cultural norms and demographic conditions will as yet take some time.

Table 6: Selected indicators of demographic reproduction in Slovakia from 1989-1996

Life expectancy of women at birth

Development...

1989	1990	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996
75.4	75.4	75.1	76.2	76.7	76.5	76.3	76.6

Life expectancy of men at birth

1989	1990	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996
66.9	66.6	66.7	67.6	68.4	68.3	68.4	68.8

Marriages per 1 000 inhabitants

1989	1990	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996
6.9	7.6	6.2	6.4	5.8	5.3	5.1	5.1

Divorces per 1000 inhabitants

1989	1990	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996
1.57	1.67	1.49	1.52	1.53	1.62	1.67	1.75

Live-births per 1 000 inhabitants

1989	1990	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996
15.2	15.1	14.9	14.1	13.8	12.4	11.5	11.2

Abortions per 1 000 inhabitants

1989	1990	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996
10.7	10.6	10.0	9.3	8.6	7.7	6.7	5.7

Abortions per 1 000 women aged 15-49

1989	1990	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996
42.9	41.6	39.3	36.0	33.1	29.7	25.5	21.7

Share of extra-marital births in total number of births

1989	1990	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996
7.2	7.6	9.0	9.8	10.6	11.7	12.6	14.0

Source: Gurán, P. - Filadelfiová, J.: *Main Demographic Trends and the Family. World - Europe - Slovakia*. Bratislava, The Bratislava International Center for Family Studies 1995; Filadelfiová, J. - Gurán, P.: *Demografický vývoj (Demographic Development)*. In: Bútorá, M. (Ed.): *Slovensko 1996. Súhrnná správa o stave spoločnosti (Global Report on Slovakia 1996.)*. Bratislava, IVO 1997.

Table 7: Age specific fertility rates**(Live-births per 1 000 females by age groups)**

	1980	1989	1993	1995
15-19	48.2	46.8	47.8	32.3
20 - 24	204.8	185.3	166.7	124.4
25 - 29	131.1	116.8	106.7	90.6
30 - 34	56.0	46.0	44.6	40.0
35 - 39	18.9	15.5	15.2	13.8
40 - 44	4.3	2.6	3.0	2.8
45 - 49	0.2	0.1	0.1	0.1
All	77.3	61.1	53.9	42.4

Source: Gurán, P. - Filadelfiová, J.: *Main Demographic Trends...*; Filadelfiová, J. - Gurán, P.: *Demographic Development...*

Table 8: Live-births by mother age (%)

	1980	1989	1993	1995
15 - 19	10.2	11.9	14.3	12.2
20 - 24	46.0	42.9	41.8	42.7
25 - 29	29.8	28.4	26.6	26.8
30 - 34	10.4	12.2	11.9	12,6
35 - 39	2.9	4.0	4.5	4.6
40 - 44	0.9	0.5	0.8	1.0
45 - 49	0.03	0.05	0.02	0.03

Source: *Statistical Yearbook of Slovak Republic 1996*. Bratislava, Veda 1996.

Table 9: Abortions per 1000 women aged 15-49

	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996
15-19	18.6	19.6	19.4	17.3	14.5	13.0
20-24	70.1	67.3	61.3	51.5	42.2	34.6
25-29	74.3	70.3	63.1	56.5	48.0	40.2
30-34	56.7	52.3	47.5	43.3	38.9	33.8
35-39	36.8	33.7	30.8	27.9	24.9	22.1
40-44	13.4	12.4	11.6	9.8	9.6	8.7
45-49	1.1	0.9	1.2	0.9	0.9	0.8
15-49	39.7	36.9	33.5	29.7	25.5	21.7

Source: *Statistical Yearbook of Slovak Republic 1996...*; Filadelfiová, J. - Gurán, P.: *Demographic Development...*

Table 10: The first sexual intercourse according to the age of women (%)

	in 16 or earlier	17-18	in 19 or later	No sexual intercourse yet	No answer
16 or younger	6	-	-	93	1
17 -18	27	11	-	60	2
19	10	42	6	35	4
20-24	14	35	25	11	15
25 or older	8	36	43	1	13
Total	11	31	32	15	11

Source: FOCUS, December 1996

2.3. CONCEPTIONS ON APPROPRIATE REPRODUCTIVE BEHAVIOR

After outlining the demographic trends, we can now begin searching for answers to the question: To what degree do the population's ideas on appropriate reproductive behavior match those trends? It will be of a particular interest to examine whether these ideas contain some *potential for the optimization of actual reproductive behavior*.

To answer these questions, we will present findings of the representative survey carried out in Summer 1995 by FOCUS Agency. In this survey, over 1,000 respondents, aged 15 and older, formulated their views on the appropriate age of women and men for becoming sexually active, marriage and child birth; their ideas on the optimal number of children in a family; their preference of alternative strategies for parenthood; their views on interruption of pregnancy and on contraceptive methods; and their assessment of the role of the schools and the media in sex and health education of children.

Let us start with the conceptions on the appropriate age for commencing sexual relations, entering into marriage, giving birth to the first child. We have examined these ideas with the help of three open-ended questions: 'In your opinion, what is the appropriate age for women/men to marry? What is the appropriate age of women/men for the birth of the first child? At what age should women/men commence sexual relations?'

The first interesting finding is that the distribution of women's and men's opinions is almost identical, so that *we cannot speak about specific feminine and masculine lenses*. Therefore, the subsequent **Tables 11** and **12** will present opinions of all respondents.

Table 11: "At what age should women become sexually active (a), enter into marriage (b), give birth to a first child (c)?" - %

	a	b	c
17 or younger	23	1	1
18 - 19	52	9	2
20 - 21	20	34	24
22 - 23	4	27	30
24 - 25	2	25	29
26 - 29	0	3	12
30 - 34	0	1	2
35 or older	0	0	0

Source: FOCUS, June 1995

Table 12: “At what age should men become sexually active (a), enter into marriage (b), give birth to a first child (c)?” - %

	a	b	c
17 or younger	17	1	0
18 - 19	41	1	0
20 - 21	28	6	3
22 - 23	7	14	9
24 - 25	6	40	28
26 - 29	1	24	38
30 - 34	0	13	19
35 or older	0	1	2

Source: FOCUS, June 1995

APPROPRIATE AGE FOR BECOMING SEXUALLY ACTIVE

As shown in **Tables 11 and 12**, people in Slovakia think that *women should start sexual life a little earlier than men*. According to 23% of respondents, women should become sexually active at or before age 17, according to 75% at or before age 19; according to 95% at or before age 21 years.

Men are given a little more time: according to 17% of respondents, they should become sexually active at or before age 17, according to 58% at or before age 19; according to 86% at or before age 21 years.

The opinions regarding the appropriate age of women and men for becoming sexually active do not correlate with respondents' sex, education, occupation, or the size of community. The only differentiating factors are age and religion. Favoring the postponement of the start of sexual relations of both women and men is more common among older respondents and people with deep religious beliefs.

PREMARITAL SEX

92% of women are sexually active before they get married²¹ This corresponds with the fact that for the majority of people (70%), premarital sex is acceptable, while 25% are against it.²² These attitudes reflect the situation when, as I. Mozný argued, “sexual inexperience of a young couple became undesirable.”²³

²¹ *Reproductive Behavior of Women in Slovakia...*

²² Research conducted in the Czech republic arrived at similar conclusion: 68% of respondents there did not reject premarital sex. See Cermáková, M. - Maríková, H. - Tuček, L.: *Rola muže a ženy v rodině a ve společnosti II. (The Role of Men and Women in Family and in Society II.)*. Data & Facts, No. 6., June 1995. Prague, Institute of Sociology of the Czech Academy of Sciences 1995.

²³ Mozný, I.: *Moderní rodina (Mýty a skutečnosti)*. (Modern Family (Myths and Reality)). Brno, Blok 1990.

Table 13: “Is it right to have premarital sex?” (%)

	Women’s views	Men’s views	All
Yes and rather yes	69	71	70
No and rather no	27	24	25
Don’t know	4	5	5

Source: FOCUS, June 1995

The tolerant attitude towards premarital sex is equally represented among women and men. It is most common among young and middle-aged persons; persons with a higher education; people identifying themselves with the middle and upper classes; and persons holding no religious beliefs. Entrepreneurs, business people, persons in white-collar professions and students share this tolerant opinion more frequently than blue-collar workers.

APPROPRIATE AGE FOR ENTERING INTO MARRIAGE AND THE BIRTH OF A FIRST CHILD

According to 44% of respondents, women should enter into marriage at or before age 21; according to 71% at or before age 23; and according to 96% at or before age 25.

Men are given more time . According to 8% of respondents, men should enter marriage at or before age 21; according to 22% at or before age 23; according to 62% at or before age 25; according to 86% at or before age 29; according to 99% at or before age 34.

According to 27% of respondents, women should give birth to a first child at or before age 21; according to 57% at or before age 23; according to 86% at or before age 25. Women are most commonly expected to give birth to the first child at age 20-25 (83%).

The curve representing the distribution of conceptions on the appropriate age for fathering a first child shifts significantly to higher age categories. According to 3% of respondents, a man fathering a first child should be under 22 years; according to 12%, under 24; according to 40%, under 26; according to 78%, under 30; according to 97% of respondents under 35 years. Most commonly, the respondents place the age at which man should father a first child in the age group, 24-29 (66%).

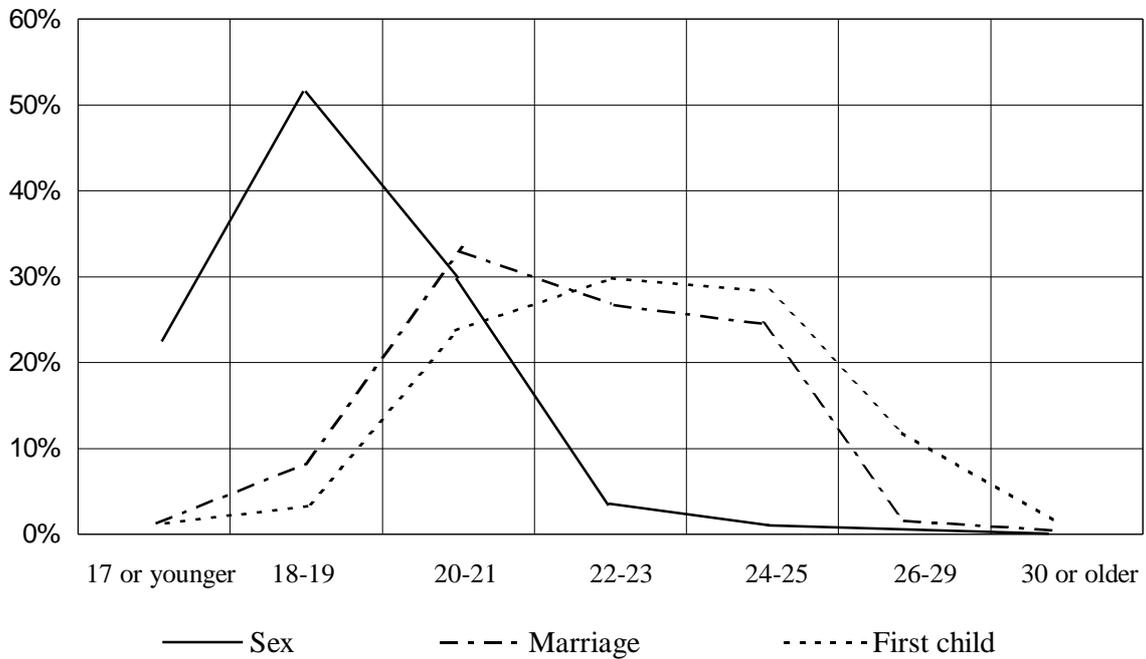
The postponement of marriage and parenthood is more accepted among women and men with higher education; among persons identifying themselves with the middle and upper classes; among persons holding no religious beliefs; among residents of metropolitan areas.

The degree of tolerance among educated Slovak women for postponing childbirth is rather low. *The sword of Damocles* hangs over the heads of those female university students who prefer not to marry and not to have their first child while they study.

To summarize, people in Slovakia accept the sequence of three life milestones: premarital sex - marriage - birth of a first child soon after getting married. With respect to all three of them, particularly with respect to the second and the third one, they perceive the earlier start of women as desirable (**Graph 3**). For men, they consider optimal a longer time period between the commencement of sexual relations and marriage (**Graph 4**).

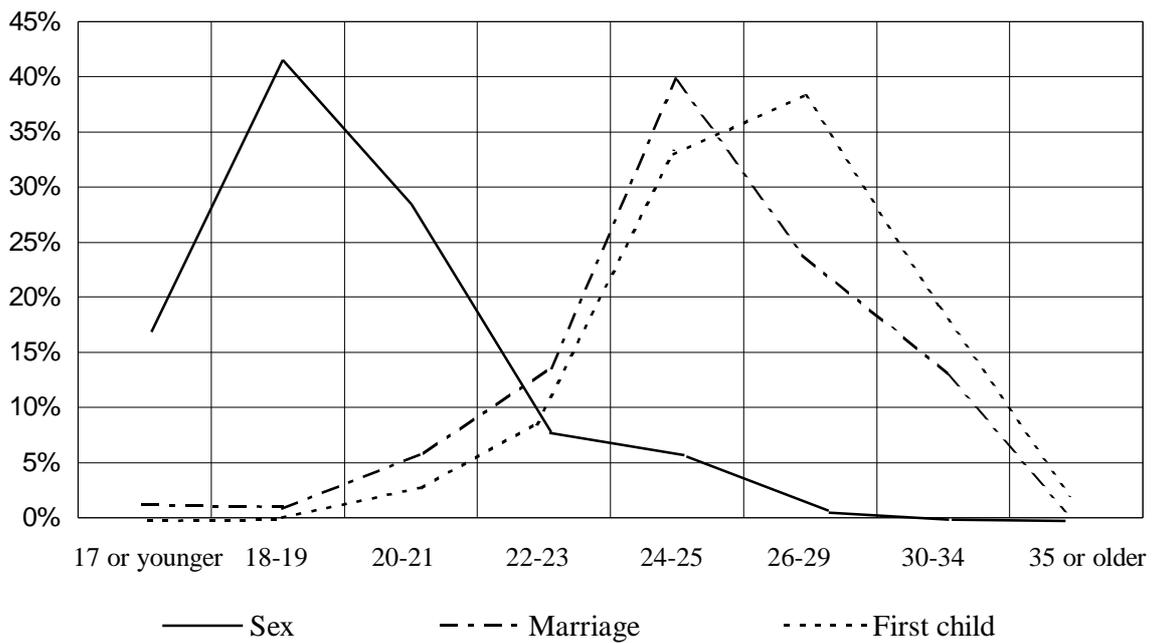
Graph 3

**When should women become sexually active,
marry and give birth to a first child?**
(Opinions of Slovak population - FOCUS 1995)



Graph 4

**When should men become sexually active,
marry and father a first child?**
(Opinions of Slovak population - FOCUS 1995)



The comparison of our findings with the demographic trends illustrated in **Tables 11 and 12** shows that *the opinions on the appropriate age of women for starting their sexual life, entering into marriage and giving birth to the first child do not fully correspond to the real behavior of women*. In real life, all three landmarks - the start of sexual life, entering into marriage and giving birth to the first child - take place in lives of a large majority of women earlier than ideally expected by the society.

It can be supposed, that in the future entering into marriage and giving first birth will be postponed. Especially the on-going diversification in lifestyles of various social classes might *gradually ease the social pressure on educated partners with professional ambitions with respect to early parenthood*. Such trend would undoubtedly be desirable.

CONCEPTIONS ON NUMBER OF CHILDREN IN THE FAMILY

As mentioned already, the model of the family with two children is firmly established in Slovakia: There are 46.2% of families with two children among the total number of family households with dependent children. The two-child family is the optimal model for 62% of respondents, while 23% of respondents prefer the three-child family, and 7% prefer only one child. 3% of respondents find that the ideal number of children is 4 or more and 1% of respondents consider the family with no children optimal.

The distribution of opinions among the population is remarkably even. Women, men and respondents of all ages, express almost identical views. However, the conceptions of persons with varying degrees of religiosity are significantly different. The more intense the religious beliefs, the weaker the support for the two-child and one-child model and the greater the preference for the three-child model. The two-child model has the greatest support among women with the highest education and among residents of Bratislava.

PREGNANCY INTERRUPTION

The most problematic issue with respect to the demographic behavior of the Slovak population is the high abortion rate.²⁴ In the late eighties the abortion rate in Czechoslovakia accounted for 47 per 1000 women at ages 15-44, whereas e.g. in Netherlands, Belgium and Switzerland it was less than 10, 15 in Italy and 20 in Sweden²⁵.

In most East Central European countries, this problematic behavior reflects the crucial influence of *the Soviet model of population policy*. While in the West, pregnancy interruptions at a woman's request were generally legalized only after a 10-year long development of female contraceptives,²⁶ in the former USSR and its satellites, bills allowing interruption of pregnancy for social reasons were passed in the second half of the 1950s. Pregnancy interruption was legalized as a kind of *drastic substitute for mostly unavailable contraception*. In Slovakia, too,

²⁴ High incidence of induced abortions was characteristic for all postcommunist countries. In many postcommunist countries the abortion rate was even higher than in Czechoslovakia. In the late eighties it was 65 in Bulgaria and as many as 210 per 1000 in Romania. See: Uzel, R., Ketting, E., Visser, A. Ph., Lehert, P.: *Contraceptive Practices and Attitudes of Czech and Slovak Women*. International Health Foundation 1991.

²⁵ Source: Uzel, R. - Ketting, E., - Visser, A. Ph. - Lehert, P.: *Contraceptive Practices...*

²⁶ In the United States, England and France the interruption of pregnancy was legalized only in 1970.

pregnancy interruption became a legal - though inappropriate - instrument for planned parenthood.

In the second half of the 1980s, after the liberalization of pregnancy interruption in 1986, the abortion rate sharply increased.

Most of the abortions are clustered around the age group 25-29. The probability of solving unwanted pregnancy by interruption increases with the age of woman. No less than 75% applicants for pregnancy interruption are married women with one or two children. This means that most of the interruptions take place in connection with postponing or refusing the second or the third child.²⁷

As **Table 6** shows however, beginning with 1988, the abortion rate has displayed a downward trend. Number of induced abortions decreased from 53 141 in 1991 to 35 879 in 1995, in all age groups including the youngest one. The number of abortions per 1000 women in fertile age decreased from 39,7 in 1991 to 21,7 in 1996.

The downward trend can be related to the preventive use of contraception methods. However, in comparison with advanced Western countries, the number of interruptions in Slovakia is still very high.

The problem of induced abortions is solved e.g. in the neighboring Poland by a restrictive legislative. In Slovakia, most physicians and experts are persuaded, and their opinion is officially accepted, that such restrictions do not have any impact on effective elimination of abortions, whereas they could oust abortions to illegal spheres.

Abortions are not only the means for the regulation of family size. The attitude towards them is an indicator of value orientation of the society and of the families. The standpoints of “pro-choice” professing the right to choose and “pro-life” according to which women have no right to have induced abortions, many times polarize the society and have become an important part of the current public and political discussions in Slovakia.

A large majority of people in Slovakia believe that women should have the right to decide whether to have a pregnancy terminated by induced abortion. According to a survey conducted by FOCUS in December 1996, 81% of women of fertile age agree with the above stated.²⁸

Table 14 shows the opinions of people regarding circumstances that would justify the interruption of pregnancy.²⁹

²⁷ See *Národná správa o postavení žien v Slovenskej republike. (National Report on the Status of Women in the Slovak Republic)*. Bratislava, Office of the Government - Center for Strategic Studies of the Slovak Republic 1994.

²⁸ Similar acceptance (85%) of the woman's right to decide about her pregnancy including the right to have induced abortions was recorded by the survey conducted in 1993 in the Czech Republic. See *1993 Czech Republic Reproductive Health Survey...*

²⁹ See *Results of the Comparative Research according to the European Questionnaire of Values - Slovakia 1991*. Bratislava, Institute of Social Analysis of Comenius University 1991.

**Table 14: “Do you approve the interruption of pregnancy in the following circumstances?”
(%)**

	Yes	No	Don't know
If a woman's health is in jeopardy because of pregnancy	90	6	4
If a woman was raped	83	10	7
If there was a chance that a child would be handicapped	82	10	8
If pregnancy is undesirable for any reason	59	31	10
If parents could not take appropriate care of their child for social reasons	55	35	11
If parents do not want any more children	50	41	9
If the woman was a minor	4	43	11
If the child was a result of an extramarital relation	31	54	15
If the woman is not married	23	66	11

Source: FOCUS, June 1995

Differences between the views of women and men are negligible. Within both groups, two differentiating factors are at play. The most important are religious beliefs. As might be expected, among strong believers the approval of interruptions is least common (15%). This distinguishes them from the category of believers (35%) and from persons holding no religious beliefs (58%). As for age, the highest tolerance towards pregnancy interruption is exhibited by women and men in the age group 25-44.

VIEWS ON METHODS OF CONTRACEPTION

Until recently, one of the reasons for the large number of pregnancy interruptions in Slovakia is *insufficient use of contraceptives*.³⁰ According to M. Kliment, the President of Slovak Family Planning Association, in Slovakia, there are still inhibitions regarding the use of contraception in spite of the fact that in the last few years the availability of modern contraceptives on the market has radically improved.

³⁰ 90% of applicants for pregnancy interruption in 1991 stated that they did not attempt to use any methods of contraception. See *Deti - zajtrajšok Slovenska. Situacná analýza. (Children - Future of Slovakia. Situation Analysis)*. Bratislava, Slovak Committee of UNICEF 1995.

Attitudes towards the use of various methods of contraception are to a great extent based on opinions held by potential users as to how reliable and safe these are for their health. As documented by a survey conducted by FOCUS in December 1996, the awareness of contraceptive methods of the women of fertile age is quite high in Slovakia; the knowledge of the most common methods is almost 100%. A decisive majority of women know where they can get contraceptives.

Table 15: “Have you ever heard of the following means of contraception ?” (% of positive answers)

Condom	99
Hormone contraceptives	97
IUD	93
Withdrawal	90
Rhythm or calendar method	88
Female sterilization	86
Male sterilization	76
Spermicidal creams or foams	72
Diaphragm	56

Source: FOCUS, December 1996

Table 16: Contraceptive methods according to perceived reliability and safety for health (% of those respondents who have ever heard of the method)

Method	Completely reliable	Partly reliable	Unreliable	Don't know
Female sterilization	82	5	1	12
Male sterilization	81	3	1	15
Hormone contraceptives	46	37	1	16
IUD	34	47	2	17
Condom	29	56	3	12
Diaphragm	13	40	2	45
Coitus interruptus	7	54	30	10
Spermicidal creams or foams	6	52	6	37
Rhythm or calendar method	4	52	32	13

Method	Completely safe	Partly safe	Unsafe	Don't know
Rhythm or calendar method	87	4	1	7
Condom	83	6	1	10
Coitus interruptus	74	14	3	9
Female sterilization	38	23	11	28
Male sterilization	36	23	10	31
Spermicidal creams or foams	27	33	4	36
Diaphragm	26	25	3	45
IUD	21	49	14	15
Hormone contraceptives	17	53	20	10

Source: FOCUS, December 1996

Sterilization is perceived as the most reliable method. Hormone contraceptives ranked second and are perceived as absolutely reliable by 46% of women. Compared to the results of surveys conducted in 1991³¹ and 1995³², the trust towards hormone contraceptives and IUD has displayed an upward trend. On the other hand, the survey indicated a relative decrease of trust towards condom as absolutely reliable. The attitudes towards natural methods remain the same as in the past years.

Natural and barrier (condom) contraceptive methods are viewed by women as the safest for health. IUD and hormone contraceptives are perceived as the least safe. Compared to the previous years the trust towards hormone contraceptives has increased.

Table 17 indicates that the Slovak women view the effective and reliable forms of contraception as less safe and vice versa.

³¹ Uzel, R. - Ketting, E. - Visser, A. Ph. - Lehert, P.: *Contraceptive Practices and Attitudes...*

³² Bútorová, Z.: *Vybrané problémy plánovaného rodičovstva (Selected Issues of Planned Parenthood)*. Bratislava, FOCUS 1995.

EVER USE OF CONTRACEPTION

Table 18: “Have you ever used the following methods of preventing pregnancy?” (% of those respondents of fertile age who have had sexual intercourse)

Coitus interruptus	77
Condom	72
Rhythm or calendar method	46
Hormone contraceptives	40
IUD	27
Spermicidal creams or foams	10
Female sterilization	3
Diaphragm	1

Source: FOCUS, December 1996

The most often used forms for preventing unplanned pregnancy are coitus interruptus and condom. These forms have been used by approximately two thirds of women. Hormone contraceptives have been used (or are still being used) by a relative high percentage of women. Sterilization is a rare contraceptive method and was stated by 3% of women of fertile age.

CURRENT USE OF CONTRACEPTION

To assess the use of contraceptive methods it is necessary first to define the group of women of fertile age who are at risk of unplanned pregnancy, i.e. the women who can become pregnant, but who do not want to. The percentage of these women of fertile age is approximately 64%. As indicated by **Table 19**, approximately 20% are not using any contraceptives.³³

The comparison with surveys conducted in the past indicates that since 1991 the use of hormone contraceptives has increased from 6% to 22%. The use of IUD, condom and sterilization remains about the same.³⁴

³³ In contrast to Slovakia, in Austria, from the means of contraception, the “pill” tops the list: it has gained in importance especially in rural areas and in the traditional Catholic milieu. On the other hand, women who live in towns and are working in qualified professions, tend to prefer other methods of contraception, such as IUD, sterilization and “natural methods”. See *Women in Austria...*

³⁴ Uzel, R., Ketting, E., Visser, A. Ph., Lehert, P.: *Contraceptive Practices and Attitudes...*

Table 19: Current use of contraception of women at risk (% of women)

No method	20
Barrier (condom)	26
Hormone contraceptives	22
Natural methods	13
IUD	13
Sterilization	5
All	100

Source: FOCUS, December 1996

The fear of contraceptives' side-effects on health is the most frequently stated reason for not using contraception. About one third of respondents claimed religion as reason. Less importantly they have stated lack of information, high price, unavailability in stores or absenting recommendation by a physician.

The most evident factors of using contraceptives in terms of socio-demographic characteristics are women's education and religious feeling. Use of contraceptives by women at risk is more common in the biggest cities.

PLANNED PARENTHOOD

As many as 86% of respondents agree with the statement that "responsible persons use contraceptive methods and plan their parenthood" (Table 20). This opinion is shared equally by women and men and prevails at all age and education categories. Among the eldest and less educated people it has the lowest support. However, the most prominent differentiating factor is the attitude towards religion: unbelievers approve of planned parenthood more frequently than believers, particularly persons with deep religious beliefs.

Table 20: "Responsible persons use contraceptive methods and plan their parenthood (%)

	Women's views	Men's views	All
Agree	87	84	86
Disagree	10	12	11
Don't know	3	4	3

Source: FOCUS, June 1995

SOCIO-CULTURAL INFLUENCES

Our findings indicate the following *paradox*. Most people in Slovakia approve of planned parenthood. Yet there is low use of contraception and consequently a high abortion rate. It shows that proclaimed support of planned parenthood does not necessarily correlate with actual behavior. However, recently the number of pregnancy interruptions has decreased in Slovakia. This signals *the narrowing of the gap between abstract declarations and actual reproductive behavior of the population. This is, undoubtedly, a promising trend.*

In conclusion, let us summarize the most significant findings on the correlation between conceptions on appropriate reproductive behavior and between respondents' social characteristics.

Firstly, women's and men's conceptions on reproductive behavior are so similar that *we cannot speak about specific feminine or masculine opinions*. Women and men have similar opinions on when young women and men should become sexually active, enter into marriage and have children; on the optimum number of children in a family; whether and which contraception method to use; under what conditions women are justified to choose pregnancy interruption. The only significant difference is that women consider themselves to be more competent and informed on some issues, particularly on methods of contraception.

Secondly, the attitudes of women and men are deeply affected *by their religion and education*. It is characteristic of persons with deep religious beliefs, as well as of persons with the lowest education to frequently reject premarital sex; on the other hand, they consider a young age to be appropriate for entering into marriage and parenthood. At the opposite end are higher educated persons, as well as persons who are not strong believers. These individuals approve more frequently of premarital sex; the postponement of marriage and of the birth of a first child; the two-child model of a family; planned parenthood and pregnancy interruption; and modern methods of contraception.

2.4. SEX AND HEALTH EDUCATION

VIEWS ON HEALTH AND SEX EDUCATION OF CHILDREN

Due to the obvious connection between education and conceptions on appropriate reproductive behavior, in conclusion we will examine what opinions people in Slovakia have on educational role of two important institutions: schools and the electronic media.

In 1995, we asked the respondents to evaluate the attention paid by schools and electronic media to health and sex education. In **Table 21**, the areas of education are ranked from the most favorably assessed to the most critically assessed.

Table 21: “How much attention do the schools and the electronic media pay to the following issues?” (%)

1 = adequate attention

3 = too much attention

2 = insufficient attention

4 = Don't know

Schools	1	2	3	4
Adolescence, puberty	41	35	3	21
Dangers of drug use	36	35	9	20
AIDS prevention	35	35	9	21
Planned parenthood	29	47	2	22
Safe sex	28	43	4	25
Homosexuality	18	51	3	28
Television and Radio				
Adolescence, puberty	53	35	4	8
AIDS prevention	53	22	21	4
Dangers of drug use	51	28	16	5
Safe sex	42	39	9	10
Planned parenthood	40	48	3	10
Homosexuality	35	43	10	12

Source: FOCUS, June 1995

As **Table 21** shows, people find the biggest *deficit of schools and of media* in health and sex education in the areas of *homosexuality, safe sex and planned parenthood*. According to statistical analysis, the members of the youngest generation, people with higher education and persons with higher self-assigned status feel the highest dissatisfaction with the role played by schools and media.

SOURCES OF INFORMATION USED BY ADOLESCENT GIRLS

In December 1996, FOCUS Agency examined the sources of information about sex and health which are actually used by adolescent girls in Slovakia

Table 22: “Which has been the best source of information on the following issues for you?” (Responses by girls at age 15-18 - %)

1= family

2= school

3= friends

4= media

5=literature

6= club, civic association, other sources

7= I am not interested in this issue, I don't know

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Adolescence, puberty	24	35	19	7	12	0	3
Planned parenthood	14	22	17	13	20	3	12
Women's health during pregnancy	12	13	5	12	20	0	38
Safe sex	4	13	13	28	23	3	16
Homosexuality	1	6	9	43	13	0	28
AIDS prevention	2	19	4	57	10	1	7
Dangers of drug abuse	3	28	4	51	7	1	7

Source: FOCUS, December 1996

As **Table 22** indicates, girls get the most information on adolescence, puberty and planned parenthood in school and about safe sex in media and literature. Information about AIDS prevention and dangers of drug abuse are mostly provided by media and partly by school. The respondents get the most information on homosexuality from media and literature, whereas family does not provide any. Family is not a dominant source of information on any of the topics mentioned above.

At the beginning of this chapter, we posed the question of whether there is potential for favorable changes in reproductive behavior. Based on the survey results, we can answer that a great deal will depend on effective health and sex education in the schools and in the mass media.

3. WOMEN AND MEN IN MARRIAGE AND FAMILY

3.1. PREREQUISITES OF A SUCCESSFUL MARRIAGE

Marriage and family in Slovakia continue to be held in high esteem. Individuals remaining single constitute less than 10% of the adult population of Slovakia.

According to the last census in 1991, family households comprised 77.9% of the total number of 1,832,484 households. 86.6% of homes were two-parent households and 13.4% were single-parent households. Families with dependent children comprised 61.8% of the total number of two-parent households and 51.9% of single-parent households. The single-parent households headed by women comprised 83.4% of the total number of single-parent households.

As I. Mozný stated at the end of the 1980s, during the last several decades, Czechoslovak society had abandoned the traditional road to marriage and parenthood founded on Christianity. According to this vanishing tradition, “young people first get acquainted, then get to know each other and decide whether they were right for each other. They frequently seal this decision with a formal engagement. They would postpone the wedding until the man becomes economically independent and until both, the man and the woman finish preparing for their future vocations. Only on their wedding day do they move to their own home and become sexually active...Soon afterwards, the wife gets pregnant, the spouses become parents and the couple become a family.”³⁵

Due to abandoning this traditional way of founding a family, “not only the monopoly of marriage on one’s sex life ceased to exist but so did another traditional prerequisite for marriage and starting a family, namely, the requirement of economic independence and social viability of the family. The present dependency of young couples on parents,” I. Mozný continues in his monograph, “is frequently caused by not completing their vocational training (about one half of female university students get married before completing studies), by the insufficient professional stabilization of young men, as well as by the high ratio of couples who get married and start a family without having their own accommodation.” I. Mozný stated that at the end of 1980s “more than four fifths of young married couples start a family without having their own home.”

In this regard, not much has changed in Slovakia since then. According to sociological analyses, over 90% of young families depend on parents’ assistance. Over 80% of young families spend the first 1-5 years of marriage under their parents’ roof.³⁶

Obviously, starting a family this way is very risky. For immature partners, marrying at a young age, often because of the bride’s pregnancy, the marriage is a great burden. A young family must overcome a combination of several “firsts” (work, marriage, parenthood, founding a household), all in a very short time. The result is increased marital instability.

How do people react to such a challenging situation? To what degree have they preserved traditional conceptions regarding the prerequisites of successful marriage and to what extent did the norms legitimizing the current risky way of starting a family, take hold?

³⁵ Mozný, I.: *Modern Family...*

³⁶ *Children - Future of Slovakia...*

ECONOMIC SELF-SUFFICIENCY OF YOUNG COUPLES

Should a person marry when he or she becomes economically independent or is it unnecessary to postpone marriage until this requirement is fulfilled? The first option is for people much more acceptable: No less than 85% of the respondents supported the first view and only 16% supported the other one.

It is obvious, however, that the respondents subscribed to the first opinion without realistically assessing the circumstances. This is confirmed by their ideas on the appropriate age for getting married. Among respondents who stress the necessity of economic independence of young couples, no less than 56% consider 22 years as the appropriate age for women to enter into marriage and no less than 57% of respondents consider 25 years as the appropriate age for men to enter into marriage. As a rule, however, at this age the prerequisite of economic independence is not met. This is particularly true of young women studying at university.

SEPARATE ACCOMMODATION

A similar discrepancy can be observed when respondents evaluate the importance of separate accommodation for the good start of a young family. This requirement is emphasized by 78% of respondents. The opposite view, namely that “common living of several generations in one apartment or house (provided there are no serious space limitations) benefits both generations, young and old,” was held only by 21% of respondents.

However, the conviction about the importance of separate accommodation for a young family is in striking contrast with people’s ideas on optimal age for entering into marriage. Among those who emphasize that a young family should live separately, as many as 59% believe that women should enter into marriage before reaching the age of 22 and 60% think that men should do so before reaching the age of 25.

To summarize, we can observe an obvious *discrepancy* here. The majority of people realistically acknowledge that the economic independence of the young couple and the possibility of separate living are crucial for a good start to the marriage. However, a great number of people share the conviction that people should get married at a young age when, as a rule, the above prerequisites are not met. The explanation must be sought in the social pressure to which the people yield. The result is that in spite of the declaration of the necessity of independence for young couples, respondents base their conceptions regarding appropriate age for marriage mainly on the condition of biological maturity of young people. In real life, this discrepancy from the very beginning leads to tensions in a great number of young marriages. Statistical data indicate that marriages of 2 to 5 years duration are the most threatened by divorce.³⁷

³⁷ This agrees with the fact that the most intensive age at which women divorce is 25-29 years. See *Children - Future of Slovakia...*

PREMARITAL COHABITATION

Another factor that can affect the quality of the partners' decision to enter into marriage is premarital cohabitation. Such "trial marriage," which is fairly common in developed Western countries, is rare in Slovakia: 85% of women and 83% of men live in their parents' homes until their marriage.³⁸

The premarital cohabitation of young couples is not only rare, but has a low acceptance among the population. In our survey, it was approved of by 47% of respondents and rejected by 48%.³⁹ The reluctance to accept premarital cohabitation of young couples is partly due to moral inhibitions: 37% of respondents do not consider it moral for a young couple to live together without being married.

Women's and men's attitude to premarital cohabitation is similar and is affected by the same social factors as the attitude to premarital sex. It is more accepted by young people; by persons with higher education; individuals identifying themselves with the middle or upper middle class; persons without deeply held religious beliefs; and residents of large cities.

In such a social environment, young people have a better chance to check the quality of their relationships before legalizing them. However, this chance is frequently prevented by the lack of separate housing opportunities. Moreover, marrying is often sped up by the insufficient use of contraception.

And there the circle closes. Our findings illustrate the ambiguity of the current situation. Firstly, even though the traditional way of founding a family seldom takes place in Slovakia, in social consciousness, this practice is still perceived as an ideal. Secondly, only about half of people approves of premarital cohabitation of young couples. The other half condemns it as immoral, even though some of them approve of premarital sex.

It is only natural that such a double-edged approach is less acceptable for young people than for their parents and grandparents. Moreover, such ambiguity is less common among individuals with higher education higher social status, as well as among residents of large cities.

³⁸ *Children - Future of Slovakia...*

³⁹ On the other hand, as we have seen in Chapter 2., the share of respondents who approve of premarital sex is much higher, reaching 70%.

3.2. WOMEN, MEN AND THE ROLE OF THE BREADWINNER

In Slovak culture, the idea that a man must be able to provide for the family is deeply and universally rooted. This particular ability is considered to be the most important characteristic of masculinity. Men and women, persons of different age groups, levels of education, extent of religiosity, and regardless of the place of residence, all agree equally on this. In Slovakia, the conception of a man as a breadwinner is alive although the two-income household, where the breadwinning role is shared by both spouses, has been the dominant type of family model for several decades.

The ability to provide for the family is perceived by 92% of respondents as a very important, dominant virtue of an ideal man. Even though the ability to provide for the family is not perceived as the dominant virtue of an ideal woman, this ability is considered to be very important by 23% and rather important by 48% of respondents. Women place greater emphasis on the their breadwinning role than men.

Even before the breakdown of Communism in 1989, criticism of the high employment rate among women (one of the highest in Europe) was heard more and more in Slovakia.⁴⁰ It was argued that women's employment is not an expression of real emancipation, but in most cases the result of the unsatisfactory economic situation of the family. Women simultaneously performed the role of wage-earner and the role of homemaker and mother. The critics of the double-burden advocated the return to a traditional division of labor in the family, with the married women devoting themselves exclusively to their homemaking and child-rearing role.

As documented in Chapter 4, after 1989, some new trends in the employment of women have developed. The share of working women out of the total number of women of fertile age has decreased. At the same time, the number of unemployed women, as well as of women who did not work or search for work increased.⁴¹

Majority of unemployed women (about 63%) are married. The above-average share of married women out of the unemployed women could be explained by two simultaneously contradictory and complementary reasons. As employment statistics show, women with small children have great difficulty in finding jobs. As many as 75% of women registered with the Employment Office by the end of 1996 are women under 39 years of age. In addition, married women are not very active in their job search, compared to divorced women and widows. That could mean that they find it a worthwhile task to care for their children until they finish elementary school.

It is too early to answer the question of whether the latest decrease in employment of women results in the lessening of the conflict between women's breadwinning role and their child-rearing and homemaking role. The fact is that this is frequently not an unencumbered decision on the part of women but a decision imposed by external circumstances. This is particularly true of unemployed women.

In any case, the economic situation in Slovakia has not improved to an extent which would allow women to decide freely, according to their personal preferences whether they want to work or not. Only a small number of women is fortunate enough to be able to make such a

⁴⁰ Cermáková, M. - Navarová, H.: *Zeny a transformační procesy v československé společnosti. (Women and the Transformation Processes in the Czechoslovak Society)*. In: *Sociologický časopis* 1991, No. 2.

⁴¹ *Children - Future of Slovakia...*

choice. For the majority of families the situation is difficult: from 1989 to 1993, real household consumption in the Slovak Republic decreased on average by 25-30%. This fact is one of the most important causes for the prevalence of the two-income household model. Indirectly, it was also confirmed in **Table 23**.

Table 23: “To what extent is your family dependent on your income?” (%)

	Women	Men
My family is dependent also on my income	73	70
My family is practically dependent on my income	13	21
My family is not dependent on my income	14	9

Source: FOCUS, June 1995

73% of women answered that their families are dependent on their income. In 13% of households, the entire family budget is dependent on a woman’s income. Only 14% of women stated that their families are not dependent on their income.

The result of such a state of affairs is that the majority of people in Slovakia consider the separate income of a woman, independent from her husband or parents, as something of a given. Among women, 73% agree with this view. More frequently, these are women with a higher level of education and women who are young and middle aged. Among men, this view is accepted by 59%.

Similar conclusion can be drawn also from the representative survey carried out in Spring 1996.⁴² Majority of respondents (68%) agreed with the idea that young women today should strive for their own income and economic independence from their husband or partner. Only 21% of them thought the opposite. 11% were unable to choose between the two alternatives. The strategy of economic independence was supported by 75% of women and 59% of men.

How do women and men react to the situation where a woman fulfills the breadwinning role more successfully than a man? While most of women (61%) think that higher income of the woman compared to her husband does not necessarily harm the marital relationship, only half of the men agree.

The traditional model of a man as a dominant breadwinner and of a woman as the provider of supplementary income, finds the highest support among persons with the lowest education and persons of retirement age. More educated and young people - the groups most active in modernization of the Slovak society - adopted a model which is more based on a partnership between husband and wife. This model respects the necessity of both incomes to the household, as well as the growing number of highly educated women in the population.

⁴² The survey was carried out by FOCUS on a representative sample of 1,110 men and women aged 18-54. See *Postavenie a problémy žien na Slovensku a ich odraz v médiách: v tlači, rozhlase, televízii. (Position and Problems of Women in Slovakia and Their Reflection in Media: Press, Radio, and TV)*.

Bratislava, Gondwana 1996..

3.3. DOUBLE-BURDEN: WOMEN AT HOME AND AT WORK

Should women give up the idea of going to work?

Let us examine a question which seems quite Utopian: How would families with children react to an improvement in economic situation that would allow women to leave their jobs and devote themselves exclusively to the care of their families?

At first glance, such a solution looks simple. It offers an attractive possibility for women to get rid of the double-burden that during the so-called socialist women's liberation, reached an exceptionally critical level. But are women in Slovakia willing to resign from their jobs?

Table 24: "A married woman should not work but instead devote herself to the care of children and the household" (%)

	Women	Men	All
Agree	48	61	54
Disagree	51	38	45
Don't know	1	1	1

Source: FOCUS, June 1995

As shown in **Table 24**, less than half of women agree with the opinion that a married woman should devote herself exclusively to children and household. For the other half of women, such a solution to their double-burden is difficult to accept. On the other hand, men are stronger supporters of a traditional model which limits women's activities to family and household.

Categories of women that are more inclined to combine the role of a homemaker with the role of an economic provider, are more educated women; younger women; women engaged in intellectual professions; women identifying themselves with the middle class; women without deeply held religious beliefs; and unmarried women.

During the decades of full employment, women's work became an economic necessity as well as a particular lifestyle, which despite several well-known negative phenomena (overworked women, sickly children, etc.), enjoyed social approval. Work became for women a space for satisfying important social needs. This is illustrated in **Table 25**.

Table 25: “Are the following reasons important for your working?”(%)

	Yes and rather yes	No and rather no	Don't know
I need to provide financially for my family	95	4	1
I enjoy working	89	10	1
I enjoy contact with other people	84	14	2
I need security in my old age and during sickness	80	18	2
I want to serve as an example to my children	79	17	4
My work is important for other people	71	25	4
I want to utilize my education	68	31	1

Source: FOCUS, June 1995

The critics of women's employment argue that a working mother cannot provide her child with as much love and security as the mother who is not employed. However, this argument does not enjoy majority acceptance (**Table 26**).

Table 26: “A working mother cannot provide her child with as much love and security as the mother who is not employed”(%)

	Women	Men	All
Agree	74	60	68
Disagree	26	38	31
Don't know	0	2	1

Source: FOCUS, June 1995

74% of women and 60% of men are of the opinion that the working mother can provide her child with as much love and security as the mother who does not work. As we can see, the views of men regarding the ability of working women to adequately fulfill her child-rearing role are again more skeptical.

All in all, we can say that employment of women has become an established part of the lifestyle and value system of the Slovak population. Therefore, it would be a simplification to identify the alleviation of women's double-burden with their exclusion from work.

All in all, we can say that employment of women has become an established part of the lifestyle and value system of the Slovak population. Therefore, it would be a simplification to identify the alleviation of women's double-burden with their exclusion from work.

Let us examine which forms of work and organization of work time women perceive as optimal. **Table 27** brings the findings of the survey of Democratic Union of Slovakia's Women carried out in December 1996 on a representative sample of 1 070 women.

**Table 27: „Which of the following forms of work would you prefer?“
(Answers of women - %)**

Full-time job with varying working hours	43
Full-time job with stable working hours	22
Reduced working schedule or part-time job	14
Housewife caring for children and household with no job	8
Work at home	8
Business on your own, license holder	7
Combination of several jobs	4
Other possibility	2
One-time job away from the place of residence, also abroad	2
Seasonal job	2

Source: Filadelfiová, J. - Gurán, P.: *Zeny o sebe (Women about Themselves)*. Bratislava, DÚZS 1997

As the **Table 27** shows, majority of women share strong orientation toward the work and professional career. Their attitude toward the new, non-traditional forms of work is rather reluctant. 65% prefer stable work time (8.5 hours per day). Only 14% prefer reduced working schedule or part-time job.⁴³

Let us look on the women's ideas which measures in terms of social policy should be implemented by the Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs.

⁴³ In the neighboring Austria women have different ideas about the optimal forms of work. According to a recent Gallup survey, 48% of women in this country prefer part-time job;; 28% prefer to work full-time; 18% prefer to stay at home. See Gyarfášová, O.: *Obcianska aktivita rakúskych zien za zrovnoprávnenie. (Citizen Initiative of Austria's Women Aimed at Their Equality)*. Manuscript. Vienna, 1997.

Table 28: "If you were minister of labor and social affairs, which of the measures would you choose to be implemented as soon as possible?"(%)

Increase of maternity benefits and children's allowance	76
Availability of affordable services	69
Special privileges for women with small children at work	48
Availability of affordable preschool facilities	44
Increase of children's alimonies	42
Prolongation of maternity leave	40
No obligation of women with small children to work	36
Retraining programs for women subsidized by the state	33
Special programs for women in pre-pension age	32
Better social services for women in crisis	29
Special benefits for single mothers	19
Other	10

Source: Filadelfiová, J. - Gurán, P.: *Women about Themselves...*

ONE-CAREER OR TWO-CAREER MARRIAGE?

In Slovak society, the traditional one-career (meaning the man's career) marriage model is no longer a universally accepted model. Socialist modernization, which from the beginning of the 1950s utilized women's labor, has significantly changed the traditional model of the division of labor between sexes. The foundation of the *traditional patriarchal model*, states J. Alan, basing his ideas on T. Parsons, was the "inequality of both sexes expressed by the idea that segregation of roles of both sexes - man as a breadwinner and woman as a homemaker - represents a functional necessity for marriage and family stability. Preventing the disturbance of the fragile bond between spouses can only be achieved when the woman's vocation is not a "career... Vocation of women can be reduced to only "going to work" which is by its economic content complementary and by its nature (from the point of view of "status" and competencies) non-competitive for the man since the integration of the family system is according to this model based on the absence of competition between spouses."⁴⁴

The other model of gender roles is based on the principles of equality and partnership between a man and a woman. In this model, the stability of the marriage and family life presupposes mutual respect and cooperation. The affirmation of this *partnership model* was accompanied by a dramatic and controversial increase in employment of women and by a radical increase in their education and qualifications. These processes created the dilemma of two-career marriages whose existence contradicts the spirit of the patriarchal model. In Slovakia, the foundations of the partnership model were laid during the so-called socialist emancipation of women.

⁴⁴ Alan, J.: *Etapy života očima sociologie. (Life Stages through the Eyes of Sociology)*. Prague, Panorama 1989.

The conflict between the patriarchal and partnership is far from being resolved. **Table 29** is a clear illustration of it.

Table 29: “Which of the following views do you agree with the most? (%)

A. In the family, only one spouse should pursue a career and this should be the man

B. In the family, only one spouse should pursue a career: which one it would be should be agreed upon by both partners

C. The family can function properly even when both spouses pursue a career”

	Women	Men	All
Approving statement A	20	28	24
Approving statement B	24	24	24
Approving statement C	50	42	46
Don't know	6	6	6

Source: FOCUS, June 1995

24% of respondents support the one-career family model of patriarchal type in which the man pursues a career. An equal number prefer the one-career marriage model, though maintain that both spouses should decide whether the man or the woman will pursue a career. The advocates of two-career marriages present approximately half of the population (46%).

The differences between the views of women and men are symptomatic. Women prefer the two-career marriage model more frequently than men; while the men favor the one-career marriage of patriarchal type more frequently than women.

More pronounced differentiation takes place within the two groups. A traditional conception of a man pursuing a career is particularly common among persons with the lowest education; persons of old age; and persons from the lowest steps of the social ladder.

An important factor affecting the conceptions of respondents is the education of their parents. The higher their education, the stronger the preference for a two-career marriage. This indicates that the conceptions regarding an ideal model of integrating family duties and career requirements are transplanted from the parents' home. This is particularly true of the conceptions of men.

DIVISION OF HOUSEHOLD DUTIES - IDEAL AND REALITY

The majority of women of productive age fulfill both roles - the role of an employed worker and the role of a homemaker and a mother. For a long time, one of the most pressing problems for women in Slovakia has been their double-burden. Let us now examine the division of domestic duties between women and men and their conceptions regarding optimal division of responsibilities and tasks. We will direct our attention at those activities which traditionally belong to the domain of women's tasks. To what extent are women in Slovakia prepared to hand over a part of their traditional domestic duties to men? And, to what extent are men prepared to take them over? The answers are included in **Tables 25** and **26**.

A much bigger burden of everyday household responsibilities is placed on women. Women do the laundry, prepare meals, clean the house and wash dishes. The involvement of men in these duties is minimal. The proportion of women who share these tasks equally with men is between 16-30%. In case of some activities, such as doing laundry and cooking, women do not expect to be helped by men.

Sharing of responsibilities is more typical with tasks such as helping children with their homework, taking care of administrative matters or taking children to kindergarten and school. Women expect more help from their partners especially in helping children with their homework (the difference between the actual and the ideal state is 48%), taking children to kindergarten and school (difference 30%), regular shopping (30%), household cleaning and dish washing (27%).

The comparison of **Tables 25** and **26** shows that the present division of domestic duties suits men more than women; the difference between the actual and ideal division of tasks is smaller for men. The conceptions of men on the ideal distribution of the majority of routine household tasks are very close to the actual division of these activities; men are satisfied that these tasks are performed by their partners. Men envisage greater involvement in controlling children's homework (difference 19%) and taking children to kindergarten or school (difference 17%).

**Table 30: “Who in your household carries out, or should carry out the following duties?”
(Women’s opinions - %)**

1 = as a rule man

4 = mainly woman

2 = mainly man

5 = as a rule woman

3 = shared equally

	1	2	3	4	5
Cooking					
Reality	1	1	16	37	45
Ideal	0	0	28	55	17
Washing dishes					
Reality	1	1	23	45	31
Ideal	0	1	50	40	9
Regular shopping					
Reality	1	4	30	46	19
Ideal	1	3	60	33	4
Cleaning					
Reality	0	1	21	42	36
Ideal	0	1	44	44	11
Laundry					
Reality	0	0	6	37	56
Ideal	3	1	6	42	48
Control of homework					
Reality	2	4	33	46	15
Ideal	1	2	81	14	2
Taking children to kindergarten, school					
Reality	1	4	49	32	15
Ideal	1	2	79	16	3
Taking care of administrative matters					
Reality	10	20	40	19	12
Ideal	10	27	57	5	1

Source: FOCUS, June 1995

**Table 31: “Who in your household carries out, or should carry out the following duties?”
(Men’s opinions - %)**

1 = as a rule man

4 = mainly woman

2 = mainly man

5 = as a rule woman

3 = shared equally

	1	2	3	4	5
Cooking					
Reality	3	2	17	43	35
Ideal	1	0	23	56	21
Washing dishes					
Reality	3	3	27	46	22
Ideal	1	1	31	51	16
Regular shopping					
Reality	3	6	40	42	10
Ideal	1	2	48	44	5
Cleaning					
Reality	3	2	25	46	25
Ideal	1	0	37	48	14
Laundry					
Reality	3	1	6	42	48
Ideal	1	1	10	56	33
Control of homework					
Reality	1	5	46	38	10
Ideal	1	3	67	26	3
Taking children to kindergarten, school					
Reality	1	5	52	30	11
Ideal	1	2	69	22	7
Taking care of administrative matters					
Reality	17	27	39	14	4
Ideal	12	31	51	5	2

Source: FOCUS, June 1995

Let us now compare the views of men and women on the division of household tasks. We can see that women are greater supporters of a balanced division than men. On the other hand, the traditional model, where the largest share of responsibilities falls on women, is more acceptable for men. Preference of the partnership model by men rises with increased education. It is also much stronger among residents of large cities than in a rural environment.⁴⁵

It can be concluded that, similar to many other countries, the stereotypes of everyday life in the Slovak households are close to the traditional division between masculine and feminine tasks. The strengthening of the partnership model presupposes abandonment of deeply rooted stereotypes regarding the roles of man and woman, handed down through socialization.

⁴⁵ “About three years ago when my husband was away from home I wanted to mow the grass. I was mowing and every time I saw a car coming, I threw away the scythe. I don’t do this any more; I mow without being ashamed”. Old people even taunt the young ones: “You peel the potatoes?! Your father never did that!” See statements of female respondents from the countryside in Rosová, T.: *Zeny na Slovensku. (Women in Slovakia)*. In: *ASPEKT* 1994, No. 3.

4. WOMEN AT WORK

Women in the socialist Czechoslovakia, as in other countries of the former Soviet bloc, even though legally guaranteed equal status with men, were not always able to exercise their rights. *Equality de jure* was often *inequality de facto*.

In the process of the so-called socialist emancipation of women, the educational system and the labor market opened up for „the other gender.“ The educational level and employment rate of women rose significantly. However, this process had a dark side to it - one of the highest employment rates in Europe; low numbers of part-time jobs; under-utilization of women’s qualifications; wage discrimination; career discrimination; and low numbers of women in managerial positions.⁴⁶

In the centralized Czechoslovak economy, the development of the labor force was different for women than it was for men. Women worked in different professions and mostly carried out work for which they received less remuneration. Whenever women and men performed the same profession, inequalities were to be found (this is particularly true of professions requiring a university degree). Some professions, and even entire branches of the economy were feminized. This concentration of women caused a decline in the prestige of such professions or branches, e.g. education, health care, and services.

After this brief historical excursion, let us look at some statistical data illustrating the present status of women in Slovakia’s labor market.

4.1. WOMEN'S RIGHTS AT WORK DE IURE⁴⁷

The principles emanating from the Convention on the Elimination of All forms of discrimination against women are anchored in full within the Constitution of the Slovak Republic in effect from January 1, 1993.

On basis of the SR Constitution the individual stipulations of the Convention are also elaborated in the form of numerous original and amended laws and their executive measures. Approximation of the SR legislative system to that of the European Union countries has recently been implemented in link with the ongoing economical and social transformation as well as with the status of Slovakia as an associate EU member.

The Slovak Republic abides by the principle that rights of women are indelible components of human rights.

⁴⁶ See Cermáková, M. - Navarová, H.: *Women and Transformation Processes...*

⁴⁷ For more information on legislature concerning women’s issues see *Initial Report of the Slovak Republic on the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women*. Bratislava 1996; Okruhlicová, A.: *Uplatňovanie princípů rovnoprávnosti v právnem systéme Slovenskej republiky. (Principle of Equality as Applied in the Legal System of SR)*. Paper at parliamentary seminar Equal Opportunities of Men and Women on Labor Market. Bratislava, National Council of Slovak Republic 1997.

In accordance with Article 2 of the Convention, Title 12 of the Constitution of Slovakia specifies that all people are free and equal in dignity and rights. Fundamental rights and liberties are inalienable and unbreakable. These fundamental rights and liberties are guaranteed in the territory of the Slovak Republic to all *regardless of sex*, race, color of skin, language, faith and religious denomination, political or other affiliation, national or social origin, membership of a nationality or ethnic group, property, lineage or any other position. Nobody may be defaced or discriminated, either for or against, for any of the above reasons.

According to Title 35 of the SR Constitution all persons are entitled to freely select their vocation and professional preparation, to perform business or other gainful activities. It is furthermore stipulated that citizens have the right to work and that the state provides adequately for the subsistence of citizens unable to exercise this right for reasons they hold no responsibility for.

The right of all employees to just and satisfactory labor conditions is anchored in Title 36 of the Constitution:

- (a) The right to compensation for work executed sufficient to maintain a dignified standard of living
- (b) Protection against licentious firing and discrimination in work
- (c) Protection of labor safety and occupational health
- (d) Maximum permissible worktime length
- (e) Adequate time for rest after work
- (f) Minimum permissible duration of paid vacation
- (g) The right to collective bargaining.

According to Titles 38 and 39 of the Constitution of Slovak Republic women are entitled to increased protection of occupational health and to particular working conditions. Women in pregnancy have the right to special care, protection in labor relations and corresponding working conditions.

Article 2 of the Convention is fixed in Title 11 of the Constitution, establishing that „international Conventions on human rights and fundamental liberties, ratified by the Slovak Republic and promulgated by methods specified by the law shall have preference before its national laws in cases where they provide for a greater extent of constitutional rights and liberties“, in expression of wishes of the Slovak Republic to keep up with the pace of international developments in the field of protection and progression of human rights including the rights of women.

Any acts or practices discriminating against women are contrary to the Constitution of the Slovak Republic.

All laws of the Slovak Republic must comply with the Constitution, and there is presently no law discriminating against women.

4.2. THE STATUS OF WOMEN IN THE “OBJECTIVE” MIRROR

EMPLOYMENT

After the sharp increase in the employment rate of women, at the end of 1980s the percentage of women in the economically active population has stabilized. In 1960, women comprised 39% of the labor force; in 1970, 44%; in 1980, 45%; and in 1990, 45%.⁴⁸ Also after 1990, women represent an important segment of labor force.

Table 32: Trends in women’s participation in labor force

Year	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995
% of women in the total labor force	43.3	41.9	42.1	41.7	41.8
% of women in the public sector	46.1	44.5	45.0	44.8	45.0
% of women in the private sector	35.1	35.2	37.8	39.0	39.0

Source: *Statistical Yearbook of Slovak Republic 1996...*

In 1991, the percentage of employed women out of the total number of women reached 45.5%, while the percentage of economically active men out of the total number of men was 54.0%. In the fourth quarter of 1996, the percentage of employed women out of the total number of women was about the same and reached 45.8%, while the percentage of economically active men out of the total number of men was 54.2%. The percentage of working women from out of the total number of women in productive age represented 88.3%, while the percentage of economically active men out of the total number of men in productive age was 90.5%.⁴⁹

More young women than men start to be economically active at ages 15-19. In the recent years, the highest numbers of economically active women have been recorded in the age groups 35-39 (92.2% of living women in this age group), 40-44 (89.9%) and 30-34 (89.3%). High percentages of economically active women have also been recorded in the age groups 45-49 (85.0%) and 25-29 (84.9%).

The high rate of economically active women is connected with their level of education. More than 40% of total number of economically active women have full secondary education, almost one fourth are apprenticed, 10% have a university diploma. 15% have only elementary education.

⁴⁸ See *Štatistické ročenky CSSR za roky 1961, 1971 a 1981. (Statistical Yearbooks of CSSR 1961, 1971 and 1981)*. Prague, SNTL 1961, 1971, 1981.

⁴⁹ The percentage of economically active women in SR is higher than in Austria (43.3%) and Germany (42.2%) and lower than in Scandinavian countries (Finland - 48.5% and Sweden 48.9%).

CHARACTERISTICS OF WOMEN'S EMPLOYMENT

The Slovak Republic is characteristic for its high number of full-time employment of women (97.7% of women of the total number of employed women). Part-time jobs are not preferred because most families are dependent on two incomes. Women comprise 79% of employees with part-time jobs. The most frequently stated reasons for reduced working schedule were health reasons, initiative of employer, care of children and also convenience for employees.

Concentration of women in certain branches and professions is characteristic for women's employment in Slovakia. Most women work in textile, garment and food-processing industries, educational and health care facilities, public administration and in commerce. Women also comprise a significant share of employees in agriculture.

Table 33: Predominantly feminine branches of economy in Slovakia

Branch of economy	Percentage of employed women
Garment industry	87.6
Health care	81.7
Textile industry	81.6
Education	78.5
Leather industry	75.2
Banking and insuring	73.0
Hotels and catering	69.0
Communications	60.0
Commerce	59.7
Food industry	53.4

Source: *Statistical Numbers and Graphs. Results of the Census of the Labor Force for the Fourth Quarter of 1996.* Bratislava, Statistical Office of Slovak Republic 1997.

EDUCATIONAL POTENTIAL OF WOMEN

The high number of economically active women is closely connected with the level of their education. More than 40% of all economically active women have full secondary education, almost one fourth is apprenticed, 15% have elementary education and 10% have a university diploma.

The current relatively high educational level of economically active women resulted from the policy of the communist regime which stressed also in its ideology equal access of women and men to education. However, the development of women's employment before 1989 was characteristic of the widening gap between the increase of "women's educational level on one hand and stagnation of the utilization of their education in work on the other hand".

The level of education of the Slovak residents is gradually rising. It is important that the number of students accepted to universities is increasing. For example in the eighties about 15% of the eighteen-year old people were accepted to universities, in 1994 it was as many as 22% of this population.⁵⁰

Table 34: Percentage of women and men in individual educational categories of the labor force

	Women	Men	All
Elementary	57.5	42.5	10.8
Apprenticed (without leaving exam)	34.0	66.0	31.7
Secondary apprentice training center without leaving exam	34.5	65.5	6.9
Apprenticed with leaving exam	35.0	65.0	4.0
Full secondary comprehensive (with leaving exam)	62.1	37.9	4.5
Secondary vocational (with leaving exam)	56.4	43.6	29.5
University	44.9	55.1	11.1

Source: *Statistical Numbers and Graphs...1997*

Women comprise more than one half of employees with elementary education, and with full secondary education (either comprehensive or vocational). Men comprise a large majority of employees with apprentice training and a slight majority of employees with university education.

INCOME INEQUALITIES

Women are guaranteed equal remuneration for work with men by the Slovak legislation. However, on the average employed women earn less compared to men in the long-run.

The following table contains comparison of average hourly wages of men and women in the third quarter of 1996.

Table 35: Average hourly wages of men and women by sex - third quarter of 1996

Average hourly wage in SR	47.70.- SK/hour
Average hourly wage of men	52.51.- SK/hour
Average hourly wage of women	41.61.- SK/hour

Note: SK = Slovak crowns

⁵⁰ Zahradníková, E: *Zeny na trhu práce v Slovenskej republike. (Women on Labor Market in SR.)* Paper at parliamentary seminar Equal Opportunities of Men and Women on Labor Market. Bratislava, National Council of Slovak Republic 1997.

Source: TREXIMA Bratislava, Ltd. Cited from Zahradníková, E: *Women on Labor Market...*

The differences in all indicators - education, age, wage rate categories or branches of economy - reveal the disadvantage of women.

Table 36: Ratio of average wage women/men by education - third quarter of 1996

Elementary	0.76
Apprenticed	0.76
Apprenticed with leaving exam	0.81
Secondary comprehensive	0.83
Secondary vocational	0.78
University	0.77
Graduate with academic degree	0.81

Source: TREXIMA Bratislava, Ltd. Cited from Zahradníková, E: *Women on Labor Market...*

Table 37: Ratio of average wage women/men by age - third quarter of 1996

Less than 20	0.86
20 - 29	0.82
30 - 39	0.77
40 - 49	0.77
50 - 59	0.79
60 or more	0.70

Source: TREXIMA Bratislava, Ltd. Cited from Zahradníková, E: *Women on Labor Market...*

Wages of women of different education comprise 76% - 83% of men's wages. The smallest difference was recorded between wages of women and men with secondary comprehensive education: in 1996 women's wages accounted for 83% of wages of men with the same level of education.

Wages of women of different age comprise 77% - 86% of men's wages. The smallest difference between wages of men and women was recorded in the age group up to 20 years. The biggest difference was recorded in the age group above 60 years.

Women receive less remuneration than men in all wage rate categories. However, women look for new jobs in order to earn more money less frequently than men. According to the findings of the Statistical Office of Slovak Republic in 1996 this reason for finding a new job was stated by 35% of women as opposed to 45% of men.⁵¹

⁵¹ Zahradníková, E.: *Women on Labor Market in SR...*

PROBLEMS OF UNEMPLOYMENT

Unemployment in Slovakia arose as a new phenomenon in the second half of 1990. Since then the unemployment rate of women has been slightly higher compared to men. The difference between women and men's unemployment rates started to increase more significantly in 1994. Since then it has been around 2%.

Table 38: Average unemployment rate in Slovakia (v %)

	Women	Men	All
1990	0.59	0.57	0.58
1991	7.36	6.75	7.04
1992	11.63	11.02	11.32
1993	13.01	12.72	12.86
1994	15.01	13.85	14.39
1995	14.81	12.84	13.76
1996	14.12	11.33	12.63

Source: Ministry of Labor, Social Affairs and Family of the SR. Cited from Zahradníková, E.: *Women on Labor Market...*

In terms of marital status, married women prevail among unemployed women (long-term percentage above 63%). Single women comprise less than 28% of unemployed women. For comparison: the number of married unemployed men has been below 45% and the number of single men has been around 45%.

The highest unemployment rates were recorded in the younger age categories. Among women at ages 15-19 the unemployment rate is 38%, at ages 20-24 years - 13%; at ages 25-29 years - 14%; at ages 30-34 years - 15%; at ages 35-39 years - 10%; at ages 40-44 years - 8%; at ages 45-49 years - 7%; at ages 50-54 years - 7%.

A low level of education is a disadvantage for women on the labor market. E.g. in the fourth quarter of 1996 the unemployment rate accounted for 67% among women without school education, 22% among women with elementary education 9% among women with full secondary vocational education and 4% among women with university education.⁵²

Educational structure of unemployed as well as percentage of women in educational categories are indicated by **Table 39**.

⁵² *Statistical Numbers and Graphs. Results of the Census of the Labor Force for the Fourth Quarter of 1996.* Bratislava, Statistical Office of Slovak Republic 1997.

Table 39: Unemployed according to education (%)

	1994		1995	
	Total	Of which women	Total	Of which women
Elementary	27.4	47.5	29.4	48.8
Apprenticed	35.0	36.8	36.2	37.0
Secondary	7.6	49.0	7.4	46.9
Apprenticed with school-leaving exam	3.7	32.8	2.7	40.4
Secondary comprehensive	4.0	62.5	4.3	64.3
Secondary vocational	18.2	58.7	16.9	61.2
University	3.5	50.4	2.6	55.9
Without school education	0.1	47.8	0	46.6

Source: Statistical Yearbook of Slovak Republic 1996...

LONG- TERM UNEMPLOYMENT

Undoubtedly negative is the upward trend of long-term unemployment (i.e. unemployment lasting more than one year) which has serious destructive impact on people's ability to find a job. At the end of 1991 only 6% of the total amount of unemployed were unemployed for a long time. By the end of 1994 their share increased to 42% of unemployed men and 46% of unemployed women. By the end of 1996, out of the total number of registered unemployed women 46% had been unemployed for more than one year (18% for 13-24 months and 28% for more than 2 years).

Table 40: Unemployed according to the duration of unemployment (as registered by Labor Offices - %)

	1991		1992		1994		1995	
	Total	Of which women						
up to 3 months	32	31	30	26	28	23	30	21
4 to 6 months	29	30	16	17	12	13	15	16
7 to 9 months	20	21	10	11	8	10	7	9
10 to 12 months	13	12	8	9	7	8	6	7
more than 12 months	6	6	36	37	47	46	42	47

Source: Source: Statistical Numbers and Graphs. Results of the Census of the Labor Force for the Fourth Quarter of 1991, 1992, 1994, 1995. Bratislava, Statistical Office of Slovak Republic 1992, 1993, 1995, 1996.

The analysis did not indicate a higher number of women laid off due to redundancy compared to men. The number of women who were laid off in 1993-1995 due to redundancy was lower than the number of men laid off because of the same reason.

Table 41: Percentage of employees laid off due to redundancy

	1993	1994	1995
Women	40.1	42.2	47.8
Men	59.9	57.8	52.2
Total	100	100	100

Source: *Statistical Numbers and Graphs. Results of the Census of the Labor Force for the Fourth Quarter of 1993, 1994, 1995.* Bratislava, Statistical Office of Slovak Republic 1994, 1995, 1996.

ATTITUDES TOWARDS RETRAINING

Compared to men, the unemployment rate of women is higher, although women are more active in looking for a job and are more willing to adjust their qualification to new conditions and requirements of the labor market.

Women are more active and willing to participate in retraining courses. For example, in 1996 25.86 per milles of unemployed women took part in retraining courses as opposed to 8.78 per milles of unemployed men.

Table 42: Participation of unemployed women and men in retraining courses

	Per milles of unemployed women who took a retraining course	Per milles of unemployed men who took a retraining course
1993	12.03	7.94
1994	9.43	4.61
1995	11.89	5.55
1996	25.86	8.78

Source: Zahradníková, E: *Women on Labor Market...*

More efforts to look for a job are made by women and men with higher education, at younger age, single and with no children. Due to their family duties, women are less interested in employment abroad and are less mobile compared with men. Women with elementary education and women who terminated their maternity leave are more likely to change careers.

Most women prefer having a job to being unemployed even if they have to change careers or receive a lower income.

Based on surveys of unemployment conducted in 1991-1995, the characteristics of the so-called feminine model of behavior on the labor market can be summarized as follows:

- reduced work flexibility, especially lesser willingness to work shifts, night shifts or take a temporary job
- lesser regional mobility, i.e. lesser willingness to move because of a job or to commute
- lesser willingness to take a job abroad
- lesser willingness to start their own business
- higher preference of atypical forms of employment (part-time jobs, work with PC at home, help in households, etc.)
- higher preference of a stable job connected with the willingness to wait longer for a optimal job
- higher tendency to change careers and involve in retraining
- more initiative aimed at finding a job and lesser relying on labor office.

WOMEN AS ENTREPRENEURS

Even though the percentage of women working in the private sector is increasing, for the most part women work as employees and not as self-employed entrepreneurs. In 1994, female entrepreneurs represented 21.6% of the total number of entrepreneurs with no employees and 19.7% of the total number of entrepreneurs with employees.⁵³ In the second quarter of 1995, these numbers were slightly higher: women comprised 25.7% of entrepreneurs with no employees and 25.5% of entrepreneurs with employees.⁵⁴

The number of women-entrepreneurs has displayed an upward trend, mainly in small businesses, however men play the decisive role in the private sector. In 1993 women comprised 21.7% of entrepreneurs with no employees and 19.7% of entrepreneurs with employees. In the fourth quarter of 1996 women comprised 25.0% of all entrepreneurs; 24% of entrepreneurs with no employees and 25.0% of entrepreneurs with employees.⁵⁵

In the fourth quarter of 1996, out of the total number of economically active women employed women comprised 96.6% and women-entrepreneurs 3.2%. Out of the economically active men, employees comprised 91.5% and entrepreneurs 8.4% .

⁵³ *Ibid.*

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*

WOMEN AS MANAGERS

In the second quarter of 1995, women occupied only 28% of managerial positions in large organizations. The same percentage of women occupied managerial positions in small enterprises.⁵⁶ In the fourth quarter of 1997, women occupied 29.5% of managerial positions in large organizations and 31% of positions in small enterprises.⁵⁷ This number of women in managerial positions has been stable for a long period of time.

While in 1980 women comprised 40% of all judges, their number increased to 52% in 1994. The number of female prosecutors increased from 27.3% in 1980 to 41.5% in 1994. The number of female lawyers decreased from 19.4% in 1980 to 13.8% in 1993. In 1994 women comprised 18% out of the total number of ambassadors. Women comprise about 40% of directors of cultural facilities.

In state administration in municipalities women mostly hold posts of chiefs of departments of social affairs, education, culture, protection of consumers, whereas the number of women in managing position is higher in lower positions (exact data are not available).

THE LOAD OF DOMESTIC WORK

The majority of women work full-time, which averages out to 8.5 hours a day. According to the statistical data for 1993, only 2.2% of employed women were working part-time. According to data from 1990, domestic work took on average 5 hours a day. In comparison, the domestic work of men took 2.5 hours a day.⁵⁸

It must be emphasized that the domestic work of women produces significant value. According to M. Potucek, „a considerable part of the social wealth (according to estimates, as much as 40% of the reported gross domestic product in the developed countries) is created through the unpaid domestic work. The domestic work, for the most part, is carried out by women.⁵⁹

PARTICIPATION OF GIRLS IN EDUCATION

According to the Slovak legislation, all citizens are guaranteed equal access to elementary education and nondiscriminatory access to higher education with no quota established for either sex, including postgraduate and doctorate studies.

The number of girls enrolled in individual types of schools has been stable for a long time. The analyses has not indicated any major shifts since 1980. Girls are prevailing among grammar school students and secondary professional schools. The representation of women among university students is about 48%.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*

⁵⁸ *National Report on the Status of Women in the Slovak Republic...*

⁵⁹ Potucek, M.: *Sociální politika. (Social Policy)*. Prague, SLON 1995.

Table 43: Percentage of girls enrolled in individual types of schools in Slovakia in 1991-1995 (full-time study)

	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995
Elementary schools	49.1	49.0	49.0	49.0	48.9
Secondary vocational apprentice schools	36.8	35.9	35.9	36.9	37.5
Grammar schools	60.6	60.5	60.4	59.6	58.3
Secondary vocational schools	65.7	65.1	63.8	63.3	62.7
Universities	47.2	47.1	47.6	47.9	47.7

Source: *Statistical Yearbook of Slovak Republic 1996...*

The numbers of girls and boys enrolled in schools differ significantly depending on the type of school. In support of this finding we state the number of girls in selected secondary schools and universities (full-time study) in 1995:

Table 44: Percentage of girls in selected secondary schools and universities (full-time study)

Secondary schools	
Secondary teacher-training schools	94
Secondary schools for health-workers	91
Secondary schools for librarians	88
Secondary commercial schools	74
Conservatories	54
Secondary agricultural schools	53
Secondary technical schools	38
Secondary schools of forestry	5
Universities	
Education*	78
Natural sciences*	64
Medicine*	57
Law*	54
Economics	54
Culture and arts	47
Agriculture	44
Mathematics and physics*	29
Technology	29

* Comenius University, Bratislava

Source: *Statistical Yearbook of Slovak Republic 1996...*

4. 3. THE STATUS OF WOMEN IN THE “SUBJECTIVE” MIRROR

In the previous chapter, the majority of the objective characteristics conveyed the unequal status of women and men in the labor market. This situation is not in accordance with the Constitution of the Slovak Republic, as well as the Convention on the Elimination of All forms of discrimination. In this chapter, we will examine the extent to which women and men realize such inequality. Do they accept it or reject it as being discriminatory?

IF A PERSON OF OPPOSITE SEX HELD MY JOB...

The status of women and men in the workplace was examined with the aid of a hypothetical question involving two situations: A man was replaced in the job by a woman and vice versa. This question was posed to economically active men (**Table 45**) and economically active women (**Table 46**).

Table 45: “Suppose that your current job was given to a woman. what would her situation be?” (Opinions of economically active men - %)

Wages:	
A woman would earn higher wages	1
A woman would earn the same wages	50
A woman would earn lower wages	36
Don't know	13
The amount of respect paid to her:	
A woman would enjoy more respect	5
A woman would enjoy the same respect	42
A woman would enjoy less respect	39
Don't know	14
Work performance:	
A woman would work better	5
A woman would work equally well	44
A woman would work less	36
Don't know	15

Source: FOCUS, June 1995

The common, but not the prevailing view among employed men is that a woman would earn the same wages, enjoy the same prestige and perform equally well. However, more than a third of them admit that a woman holding their job would find herself in a disadvantageous situation in terms of wages and respect. At the same time, more than a third of these men think that the work performance of women would be weaker than that of men. As statistical analysis has shown, the assumption about lower wages and lower respect for women was expressed more frequently by those men who also presume that a woman's performance would be weaker. The men who presume that a woman would perform equally well will, for the most part, also presume that she would receive the same wages and enjoy the same respect. And what were the answers of women?

Table 46: “Suppose that your current job was given to a man. what would his situation be?” (Opinions of economically active women - %)

Wages:	
A man would earn higher wages	34
A man would earn the same wages	50
A man would earn lower wages	2
Don't know	15
The amount of respect paid to him:	
A man would enjoy more respect	22
A man would enjoy the same respect	51
A man would enjoy less respect	9
Don't know	18
Work performance:	
A man would work better	4
A man would work equally well	60
A man would work less	20
Don't know	15

Source: FOCUS, June 1995

The highest percentage of women presume that a man would receive the same wages, enjoy the same respect and perform equally well. One third of women presume that if they were replaced by a man he would receive higher wages; one fifth presume more respect for a man. At the same time, there is hardly a woman who thinks that a man would deliver a better work performance in her job; on the contrary, one fifth of them expect that a man would work less.

WHO HAS BETTER OPPORTUNITIES AT WORK?

Respondents also expressed opinions regarding other aspects of the status of women and men in the workplace.

Table 47: “What is the situation in your workplace if you compare the opportunities of men to women?” (%)

1 = better opportunities for women

2 = no different for men and women

3 = worse opportunities for women

	1	2	3
Promotion to a higher position:			
Women’s opinions	10	28	62
Men’s opinions	5	37	58
To receive a wage increase:			
Women’s opinions	7	39	54
Men’s opinions	2	49	49
To stay on the job after a lay-off:			
Women’s opinions	10	42	48
Men’s opinions	6	47	47
To get a better job at their workplace:			
Women’s opinions	10	44	46
Men’s opinions	8	49	43
To get a new job:			
Women’s opinions	19	46	35
Men’s opinions	6	52	42

Source: FOCUS, June 1995

As we can see in **Table 47**, the majority of women and men think that women in the workplace have fewer opportunities to be promoted to higher positions. Approximately half of the women and half of the men think that women have fewer chances regarding the wage increase and staying on the job after a lay-off. A relatively high percentage (35-46%) of both women and men think that women have a lesser chance of receiving a better job at their workplace and a lesser chance to obtain employment.

The percentage of women who think that there is gender equality is less than half when evaluating the opportunities of women and men to get a new job or to get a better job at their

workplace. The portion of men who think that there is gender equality when they evaluate the opportunities of women and men to obtain employment, get a better job at work, higher wages, and stay on the job after a lay-off, is about fifty per cent.

The opinion held most seldom by women and men is that women would have better opportunities than men.

The comparison of women's and men's views shows that their evaluations do not differ in principle. This means that women do not see their opportunities in the workplace in a more critical light than men do.

Much the same assessment of women's opportunities in Slovakia was observed four years ago.⁶⁰ It can be assumed that such similarity demonstrates not only the stability of opinions of the population, but also the unchanging opportunities of women at work, compared to the opportunities of men.

WOMEN AND MEN AS MANAGERS AND ADMINISTRATORS

As previously shown, the majority of women and men agree that a woman has fewer opportunities than a man to be promoted to a higher position. Such an assessment of women's opportunities is a realistic reaction to the "masculinization" of management, i.e. the low percentage of women in management. This is illustrated by **Table 48**.

Table 48: "Have you ever had a female manager?" (%)

	Women	Men	All
I have had both, male and female managers	62	30	47
I have only had male managers	23	68	45
I have only had female managers	14	2	8

Source: FOCUS, June 1995

45% of respondents have had only male managers and 47% have had both, male and female managers. On the other hand, only 8% of respondents have had only female manager.

The experience of women is very different from the experience of men. While the experience with male managers is prevalent among men, women have had more experience with managers of both genders. Significantly, women have had the most experience with female managers.

Let us now move from past experience to current preferences. Who is more acceptable in the role of a manager: a man or a woman?

⁶⁰ See Cermáková, M. - Gatnar, L.: *Zeny v sociální strukture 1991. Výzkum pracovních a životních podmínek žen v ČR a SR. (Women in Social Structure 1991. Conditions of Work and Life of Women in Czech and Slovak Republics)*. Prague, Institute of Sociology of the Czech Academy of Sciences 1991.

Table 49: “Whom would you prefer as your manager?” (%)

	Women	Men	All
It makes no difference	49	43	46
A man	40	51	45
A woman	11	6	9

Source: FOCUS, June 1995

As **Table 49** indicates, a man is more acceptable in the role of manager than a woman. This preference is more common among men (51% : 6%) than women (40% : 11%). For almost half of women (49%) and men (43%), the manager’s gender is not an issue. The percentage of women and men who would prefer a woman as their manager, is small. The differences between the views of women and men are not significant.

ATTITUDES TO PREFERENTIAL TREATMENT OF MEN

Our findings indicate that most of people in Slovakia do not think that the opportunities for women and men in the labor market are equal. A significant percentage of men, and an even more significant percentage of women, see the current situation as disadvantageous to women. The question is whether people find this situation acceptable and just. To what extent do people approve of, or condemn this situation? The answer can be found in **Table 50**.

Table 50

“Men should have better jobs and higher wages because they have to provide for their families” (%)

	Women	Men	All
Agree	56	72	64
Disagree	43	27	35
Don’t know	1	1	1

“Men Should Be Given Preference in Hiring when there Are Job Shortages” (%)

	Women	Men	All
Agree	43	67	55
Disagree	56	31	44
Don’t know	1	2	1

Source: FOCUS, June 1995

Preferential treatment of men in hiring is considered appropriate by two-thirds of men and by almost half of women. Preferential treatment of men in the workplace is approved of by two thirds of men and by over half of women.

As we see, women are less willing to accept discriminatory practices directed against women. Nevertheless, a substantial part of them perceive such treatment as normal and do not question these deep-rooted cultural beliefs.

Still, it is encouraging to observe that the women's discrimination is viewed more critically by younger, better educated persons.

