Fertility in the highly developed countries: continuing postponement and regional diversity

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Vienna Institute of Demography

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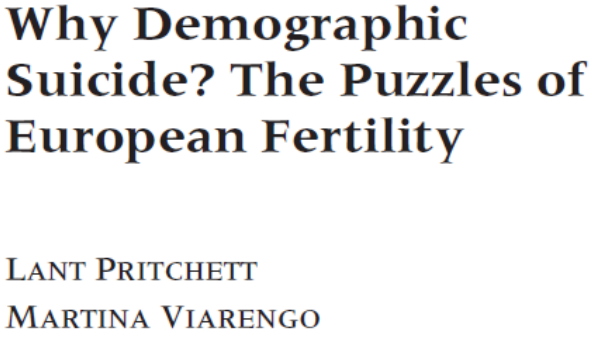
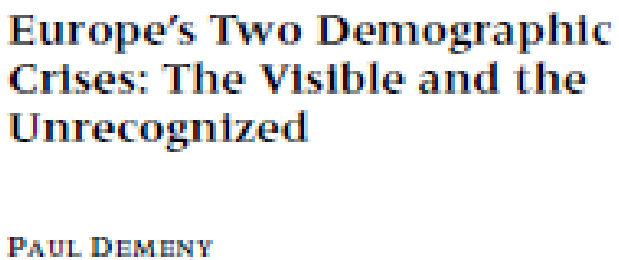
Background: the diversity of low fertility

Highly developed countries & broader regions: contrasts in low fertility trends and their underlying factors

- The “Great divergence” in fertility? (Billari 2018)
- The near-universal sub-replacement fertility
- Continuing influence of delayed parenthood on period fertility trends

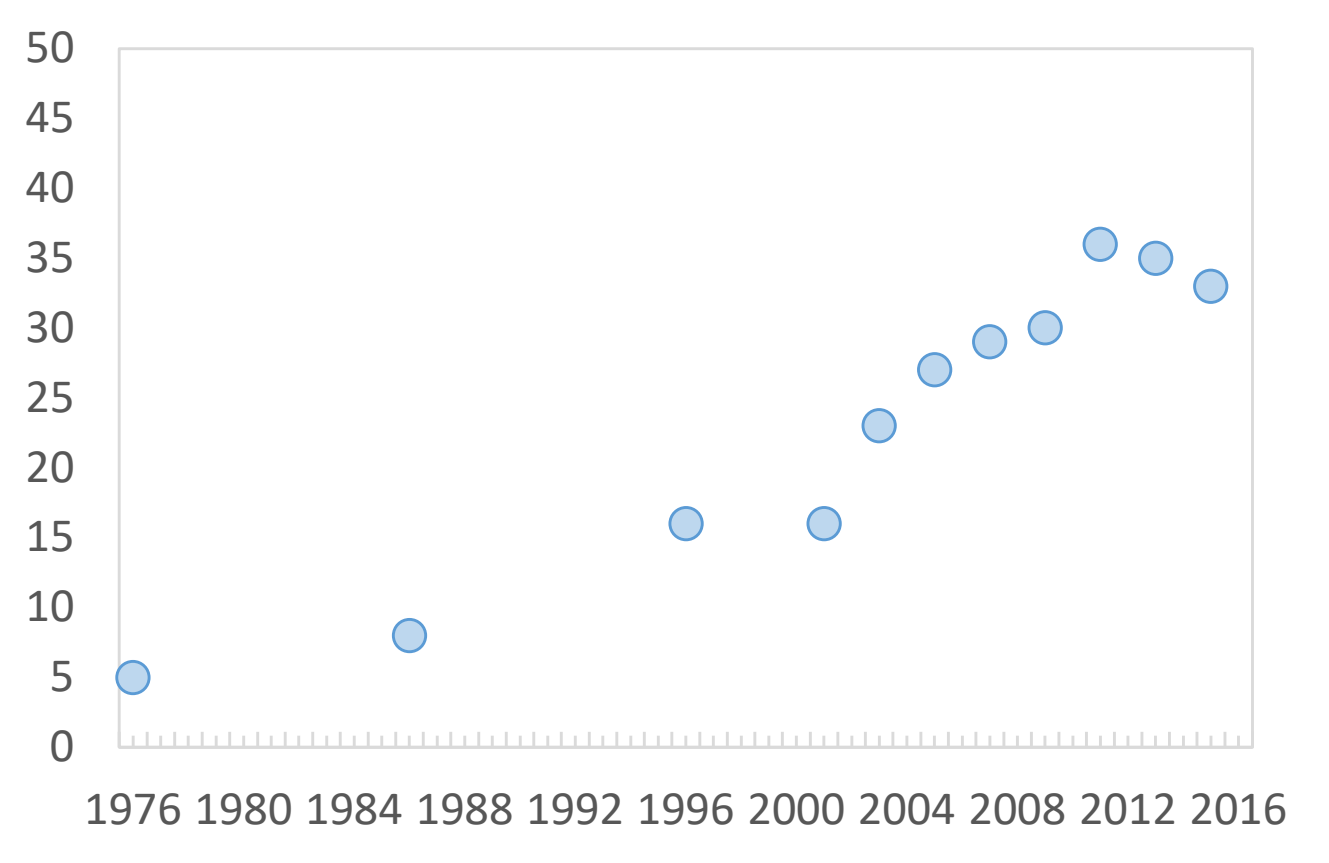
Some alarming reactions to persistent low fertility





Policy concerns: the global rise of pronatalism

Number of countries that aim to increase their fertility rate, out of 50 developed low-fertility countries globally



UN World Population Policies Database, 1976-2015

Agenda

- Fertility in rich countries: Towards a “bifurcation”?
- Fertility trends after the economic recession: surprising regional contrasts
- The continuing shift to delayed childbearing
- Unstable period fertility vs. stable preferences
- The contribution of migrants to births & fertility rates
- Changing education gradients?
- Discussion: main surprises and uncertain future

Focus: highly developed low-fertility countries and regions: Europe, North America, East Asia, Australia, New Zealand with some insights on China

Fertility in rich countries: Towards a “bifurcation”?

The new fertility divide?

- A broad stabilisation in cohort fertility and childlessness in most countries (Myrskylä et al. 2013)

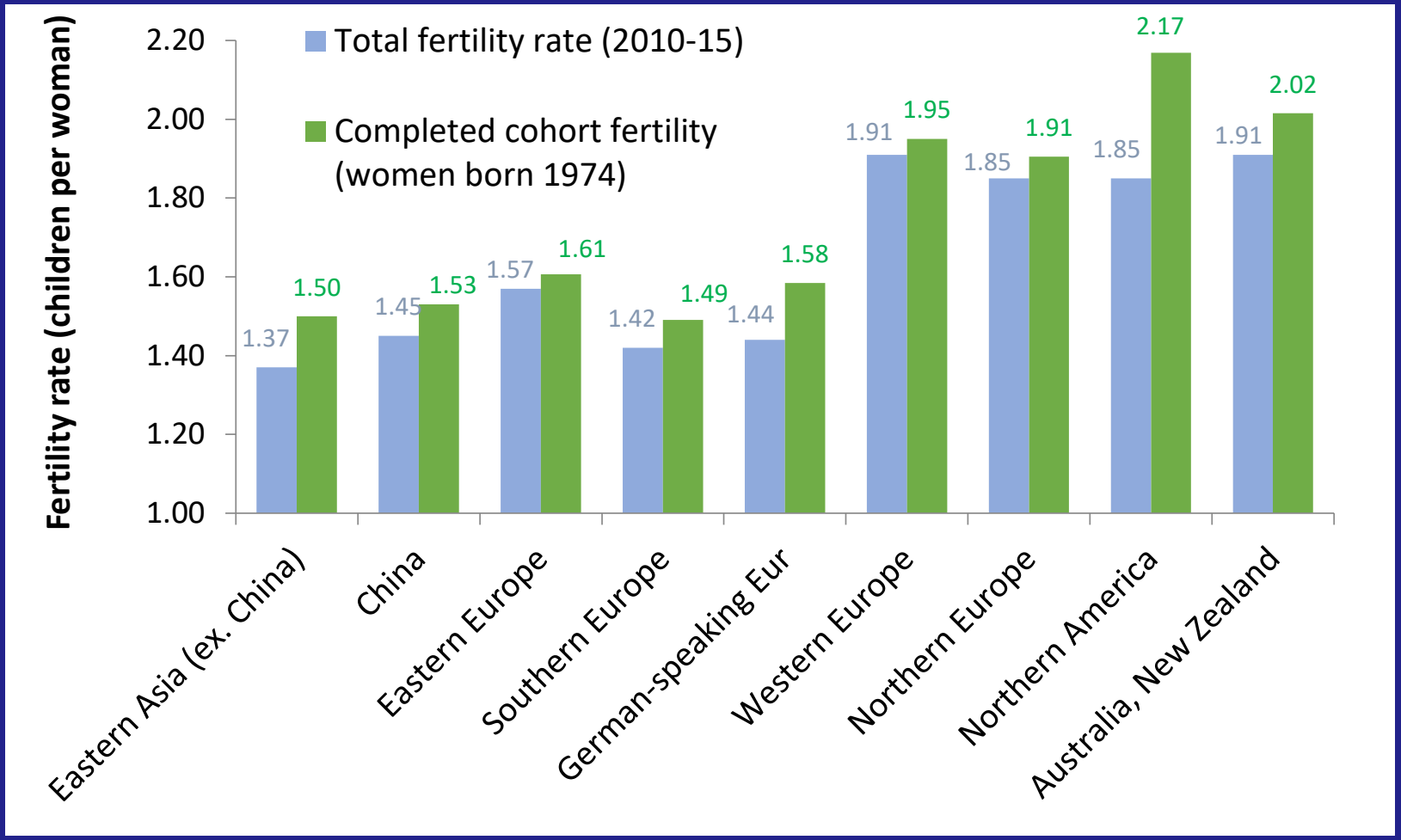
Regional differentiation: Very low fertility in East Asia, Southern, Central and Eastern Europe

- McDonald (2006): cultural/regional divide between countries having “very low fertility” (period Total Fertility Rate below 1.5) and other countries with higher fertility; the role of policies
- Rindfuss et al. (2016): A global “bifurcation” in low fertility levels; two distinct fertility “regimes”
- Billari (2018): A new “Great Divergence” in fertility?

Key issues with the “bifurcation” idea

  - The regional divisions often identified on the basis of period TFRs which may change fast and which are affected by tempo effect

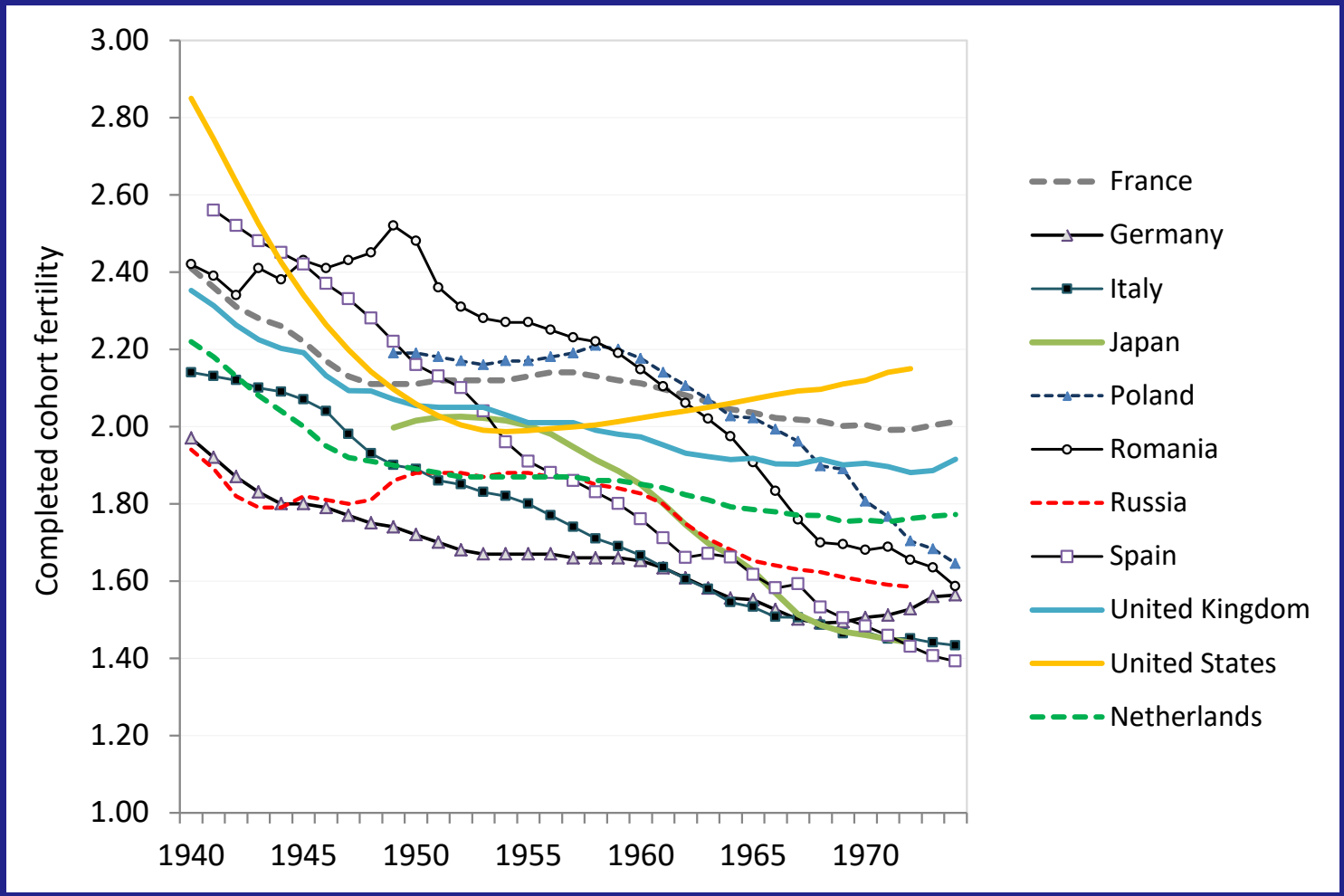
Period TFR (2010-15) and completed cohort fertility; women born 1974



Sources: Sobotka / Figure 31 in State of the World Population Report 2018 (UNFPA); period TFR data for China estimated (Basten et al. 2014). Completed Cohort Fertility: WIC (2016), Human Fertility Database (2018). Data for China: 1% Population Sample Survey of 2015.

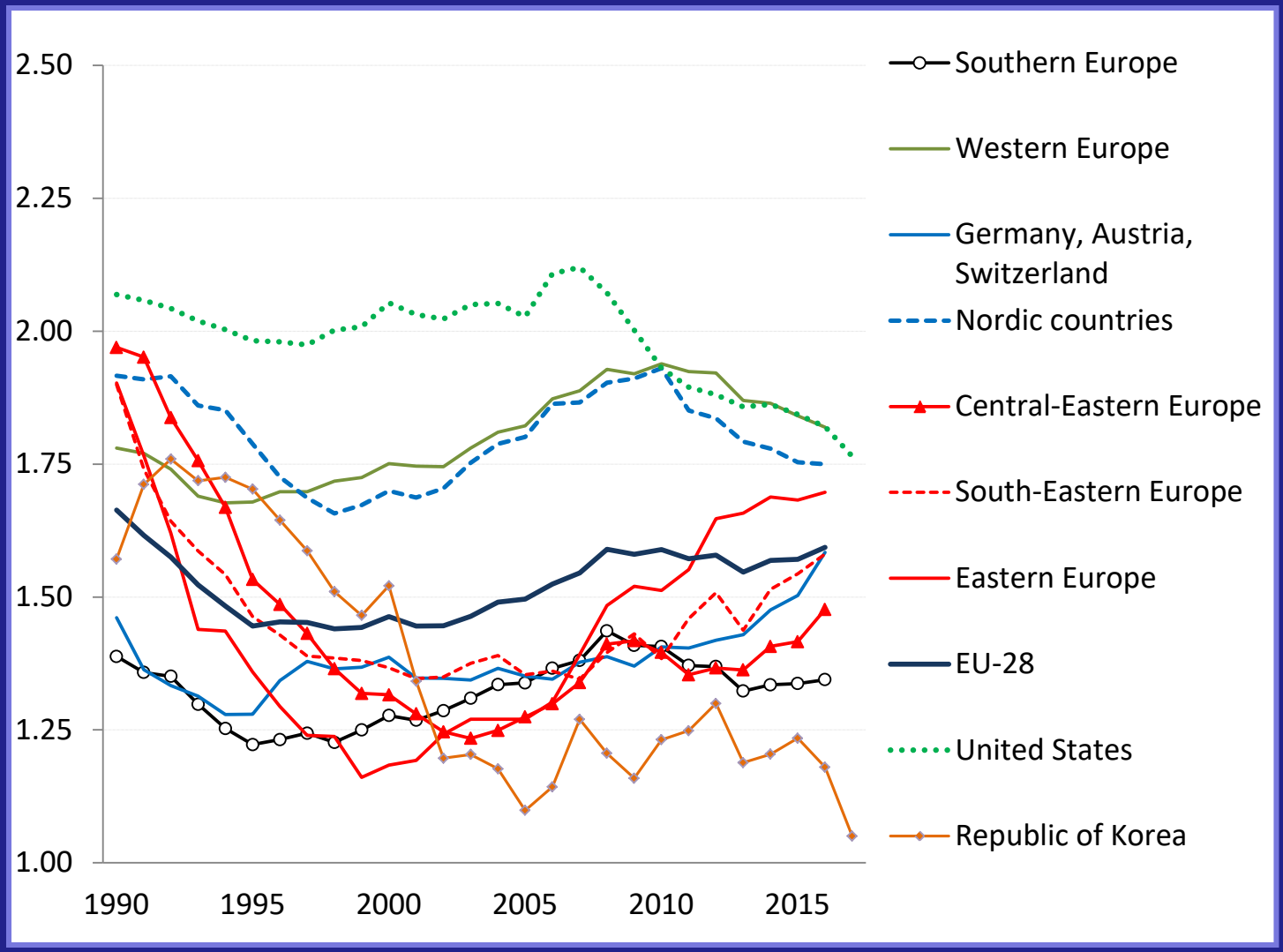
Cohort fertility trends: Not so easy to spot the divide

Completed fertility (children per woman), selected countries, women born 1940-1975



Sources: Sobotka (JBS, 2017); data based on Human Fertility Database, Council of Europe (2006), CFE database, national statistical offices, Census data, and own computations and projections

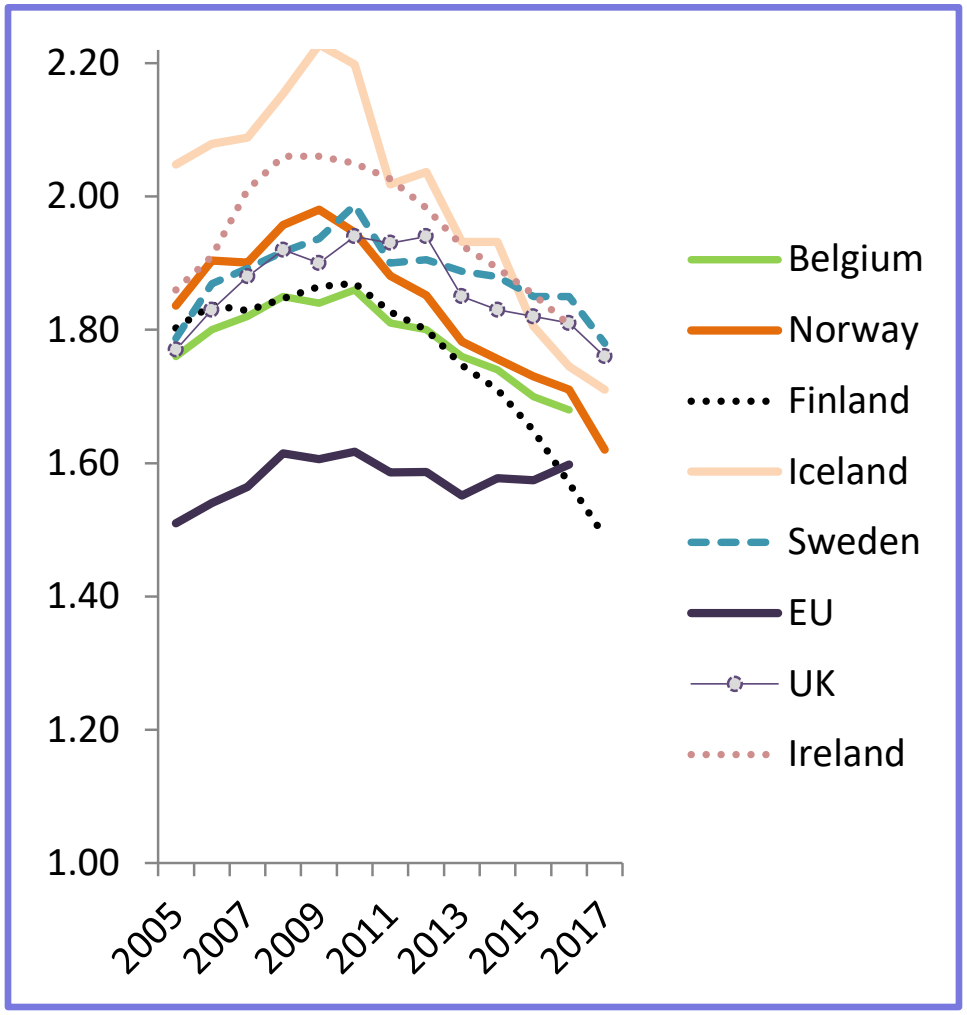
Period fertility rates: the end of the „Great divide“?



Period TFR, European regions, US and Korea, 1980-2016 or 2017

Source: UNFPA SWOP 2018; European Demographic Datasheet 2018

Contrasting period fertility trends in Europe,1980-2017



Source: Human Fertility Database, Council of Europe 2006, Eurostat, national statistical offices

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Benchmark

Finland's Welfare State Has a Massive Baby Problem

The number of newborns has fallen to its lowest level in 148 years

By Raine Tiessalo
September 19, 2017, 6:00 AM GMT+2

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Low birth rate "approaching epidemic"

Medical professionals encourage government to create incentives for couples to have more children

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Record-low fertility rate raises concern

March 7, 2018

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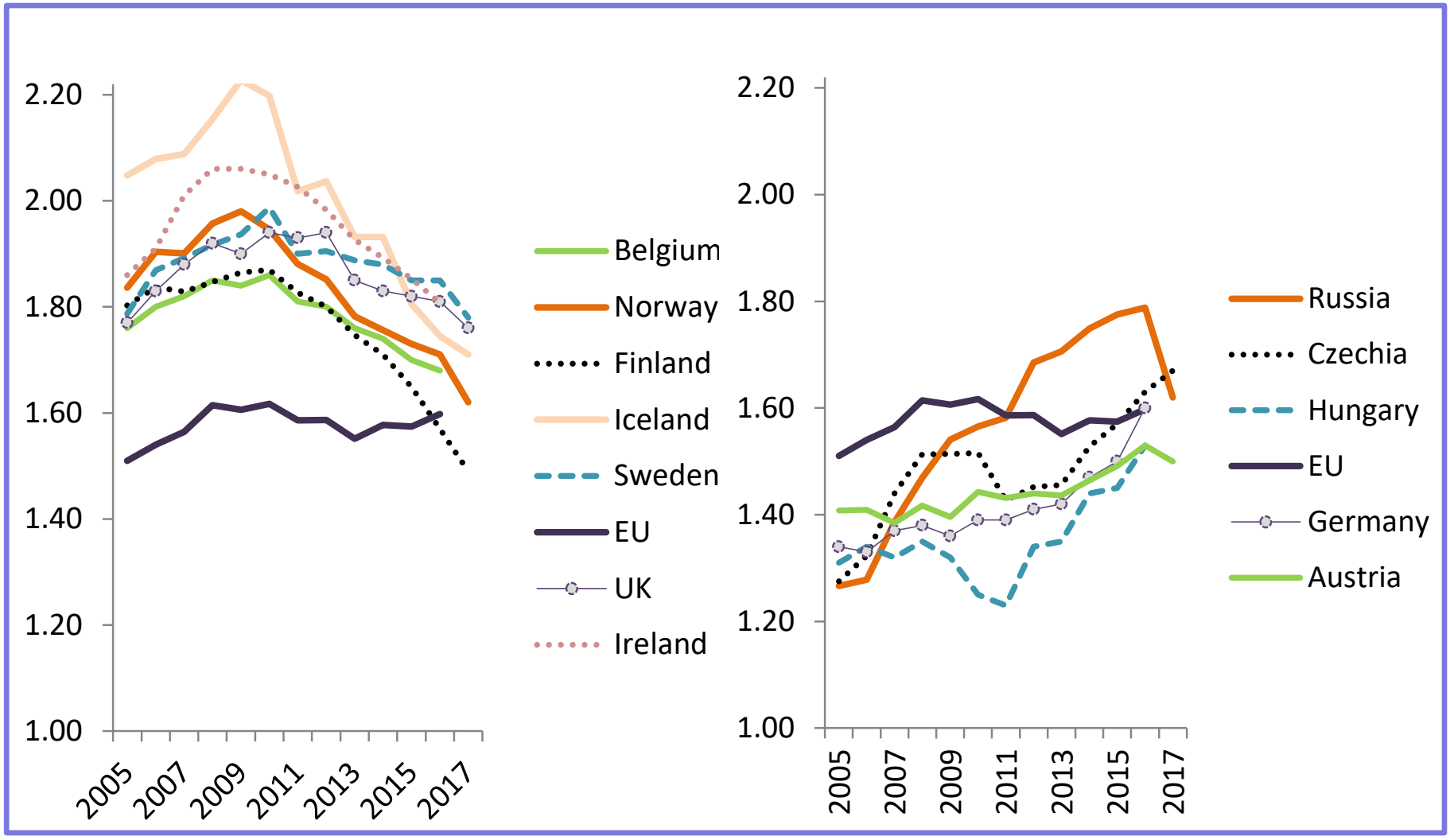
Only 56,600 children were born in Norway last year, 2,300 fewer than in 2016 and resulting in the lowest national fertility rate ever recorded. With immigration growth also down, the declines are raising new worries about the consequences for the social welfare state.

Contrasting period fertility trends in Europe,1980-2017



Source: Human Fertility Database, Council of Europe 2006, Eurostat, national statistical offices

A continuing shift to delayed childbearing

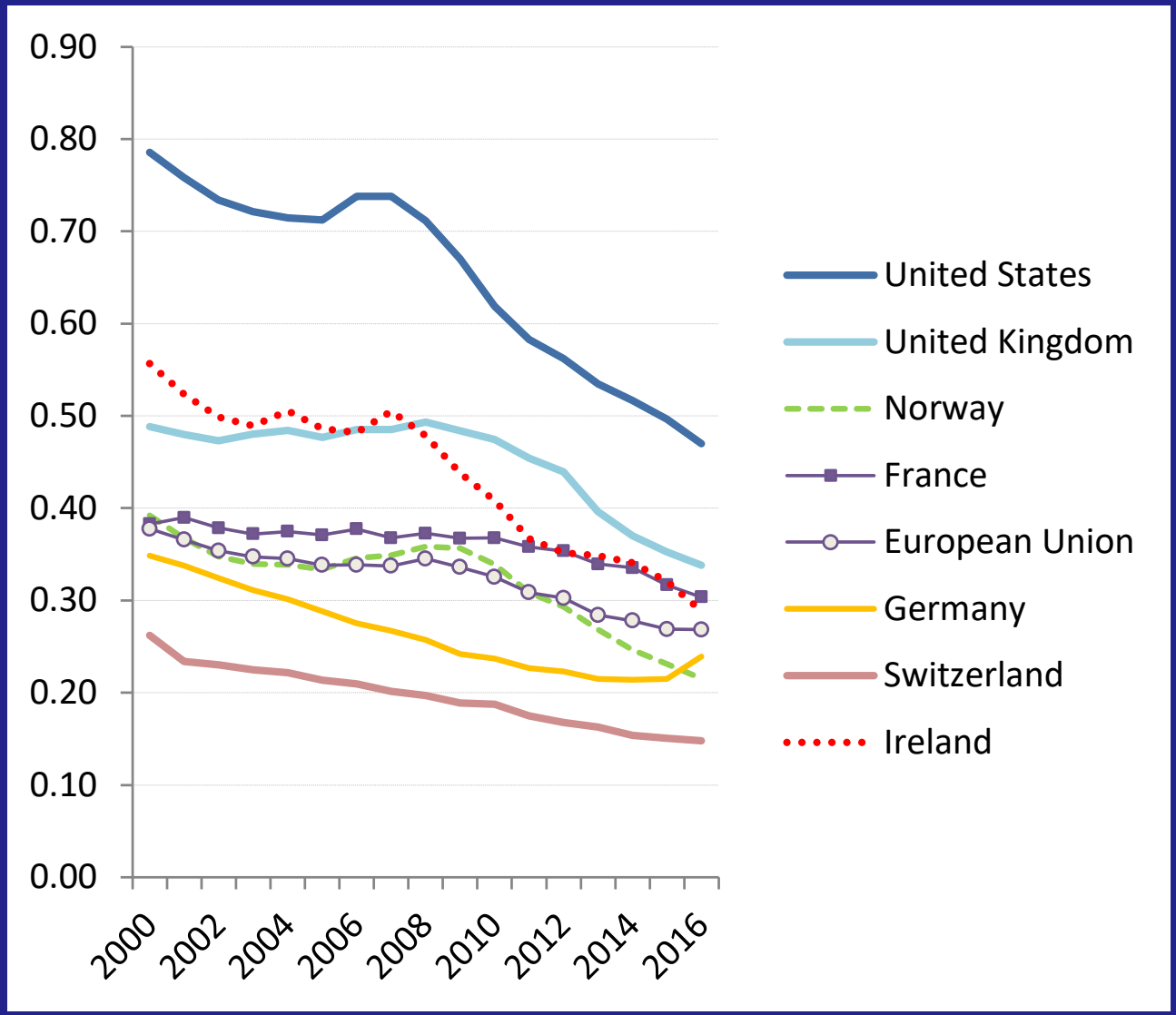
What explains the unexpected fertility declines after the economic recession?

Was the decline in TFR driven mainly by the shift in fertility timing?

A renewed postponement of childbearing: continuing trend post-recession; probably also a “squeeze” in fertility of lower-educated women

- Fertility declines especially strong among young women < age 25
- Fertility decline also among migrant and lower-educated women
- Continuing economic instability & precarious jobs among lower-qualified women?
- Later onset of dating and sexual activity? (Twenge 2017 for the US, NIPSSR / Japanese National Fertility Survey 2015)

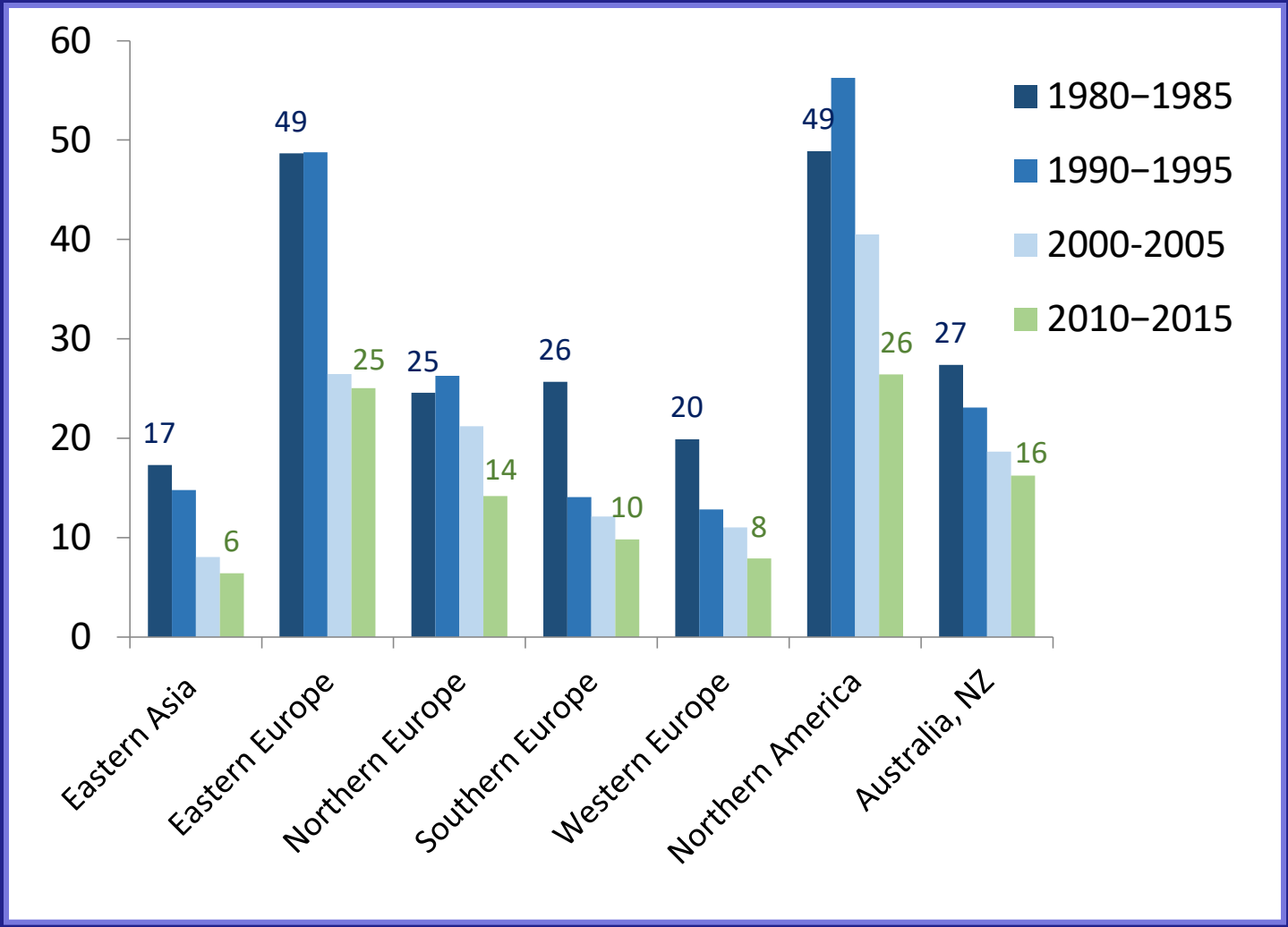
Falling fertility among teenage & young adult women



Cumulative age-specific fertility rates at ages 15-24, selected countries, 2000-2016

Source: Eurostat (2018), Human Fertility Database (2018)

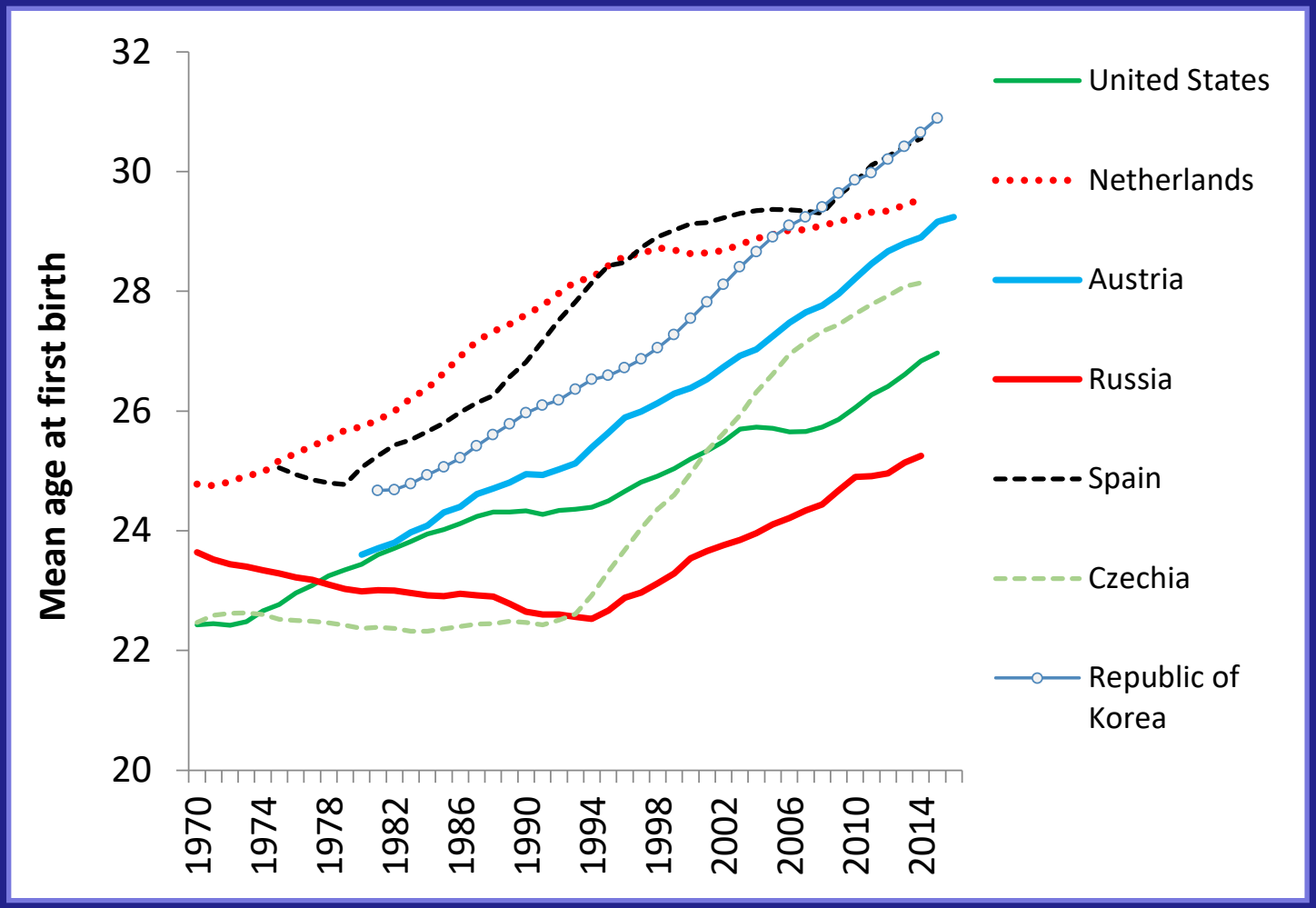
Early childbearing out of fashion



Births per 1,000 women aged 15-19, 1980-2015

Source: UNFPA SWOP 2018; European Demographic Datasheet 2018

The continuing postponement of first births



Mean age at first birth, selected European countries, South Korea and the US, 1970-2016

Source: UNFPA SWOP 2018; European Demographic Datasheet 2018

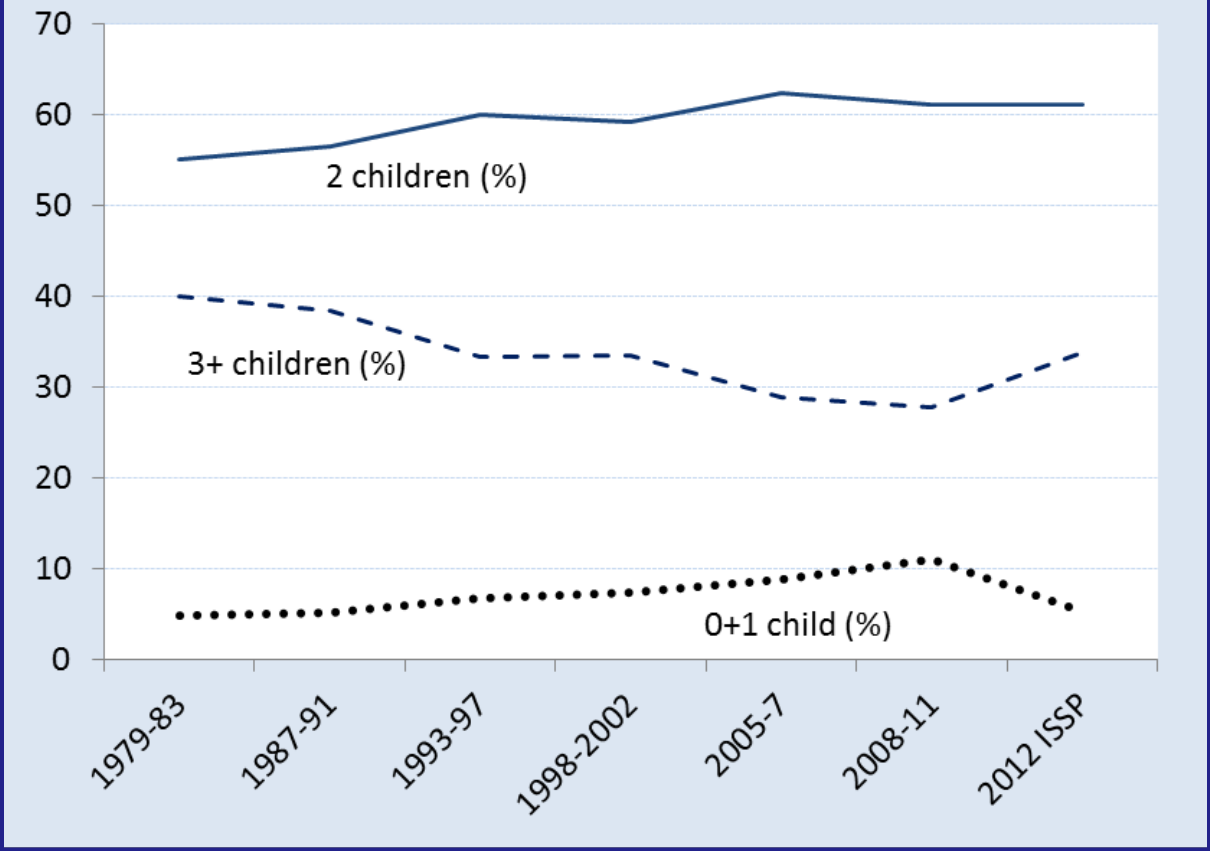
Unstable fertility, stable preferences?

Instability in period fertility trends

- Modern contraception allows couples to react to changing period conditions, economic and labour market trends, family policies, expanding education and other factors
- Planned or intended births can be – to some extent –flexibly “postponed”, “advanced” or “given up”
- Tempo effects still drive ups and down in period fertility
- Period TFRs can also show remarkable increases
- Cohort fertility shows much more stability

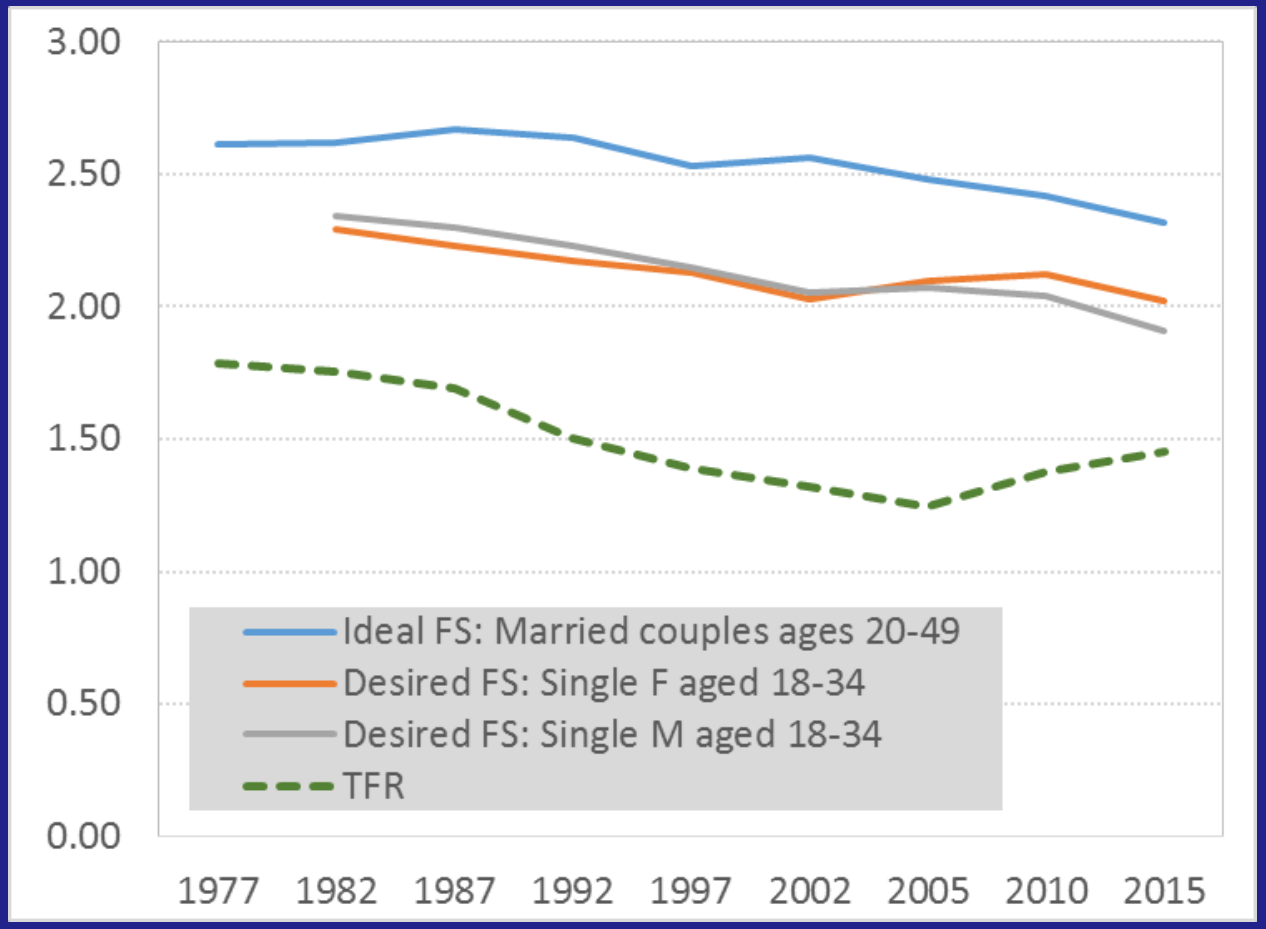
Stability in fertility ideals and preferences

Ideal family size in Europe: mean % distribution across analysed countries



Source: Sobotka, T. and E. Beaujouan. 2014. Two Is best? The persistence of a two-child family ideal in Europe. *Population and Development Review*, *40*(3), pp.391-419.

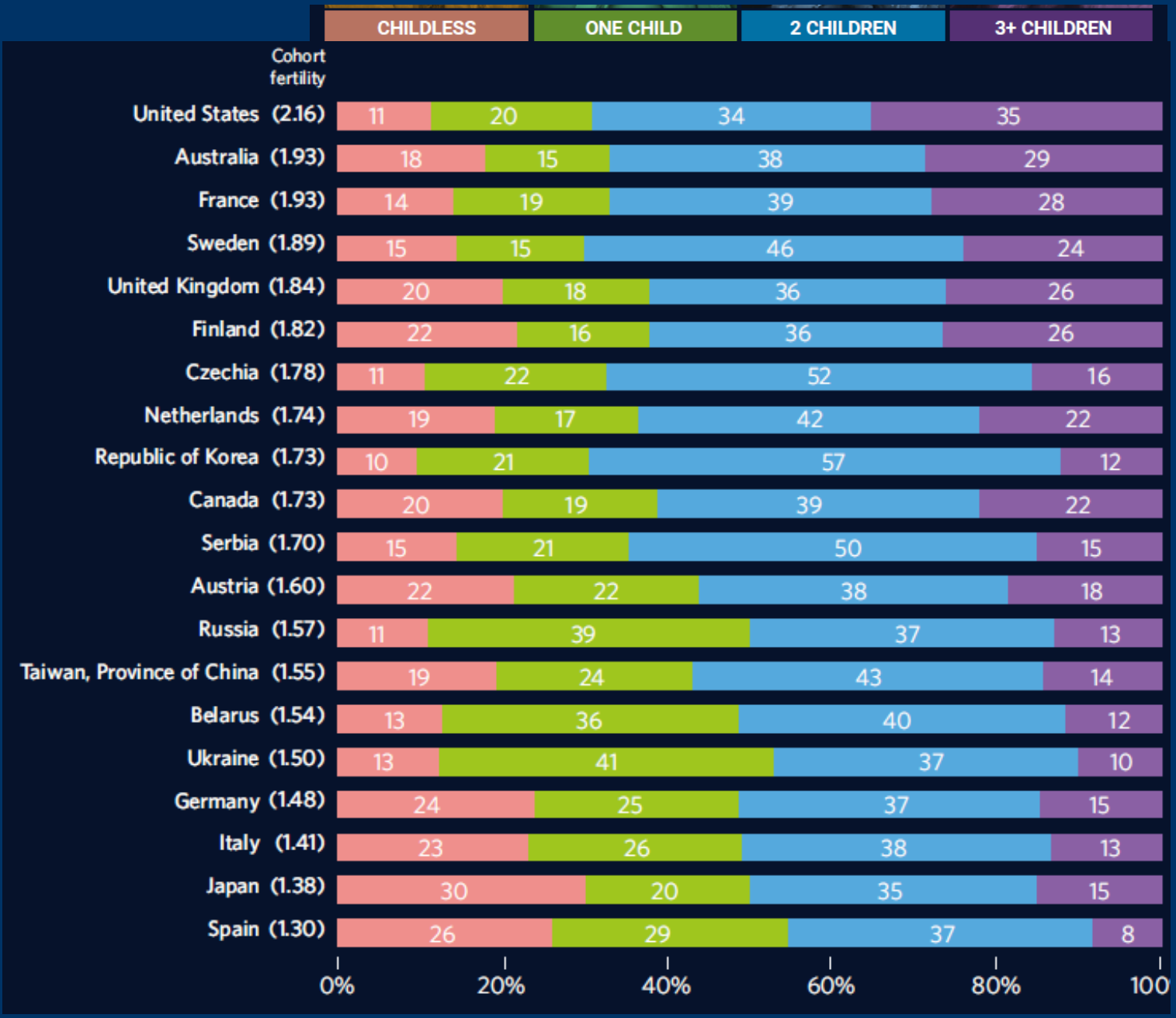
Japan: a wide “gap” between ideal/desired FS and period TFR



Data source:

Japanese National Fertility Surveys

(*Highlights of the results for Married couples/Singles*, National Institute of Population and Social Security Research, September 2016)

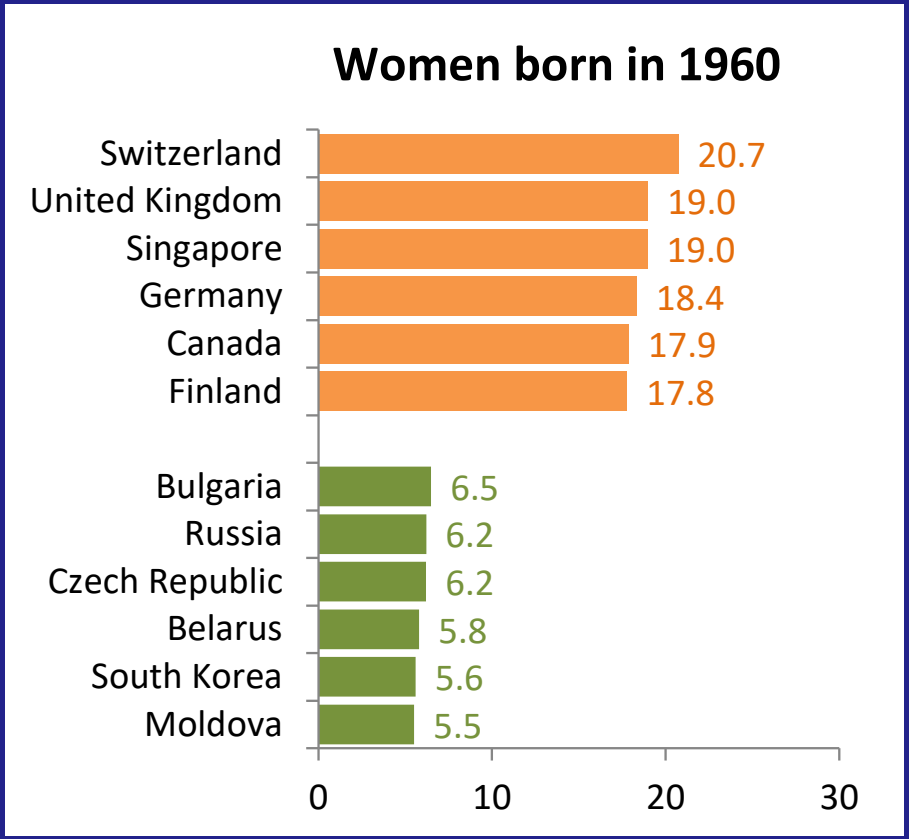


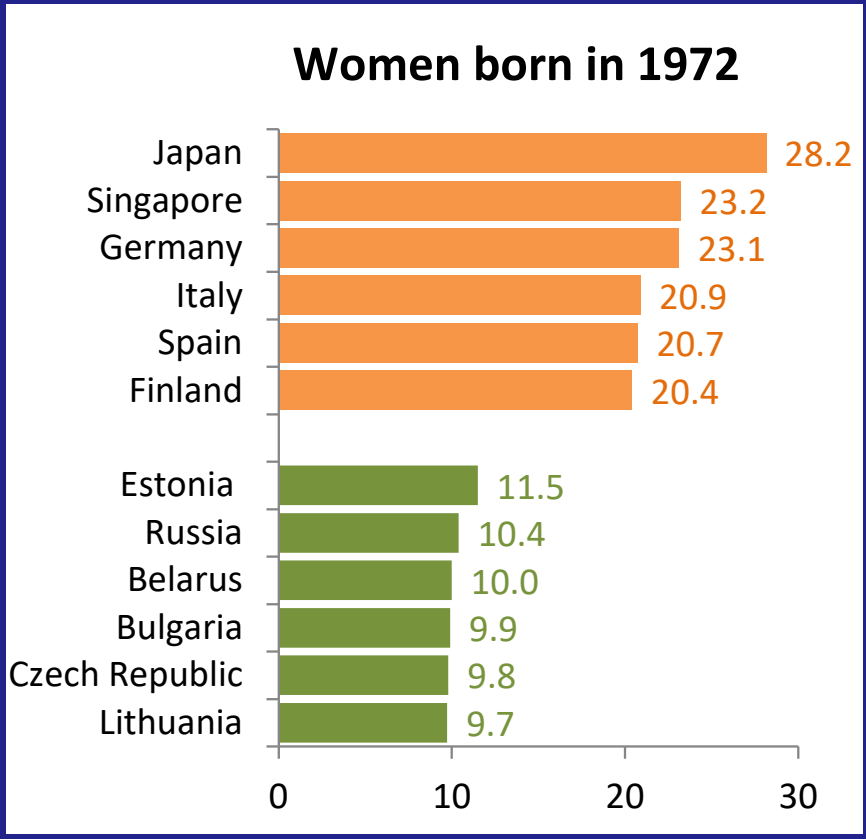
Family size distribution, women born 1974 (in %)

Source: State of the World Population 2018, Figure 32

Childlessness rankings and change: East Asia and Southern Europe jumping up

(top 6 and bottom 6 countries)





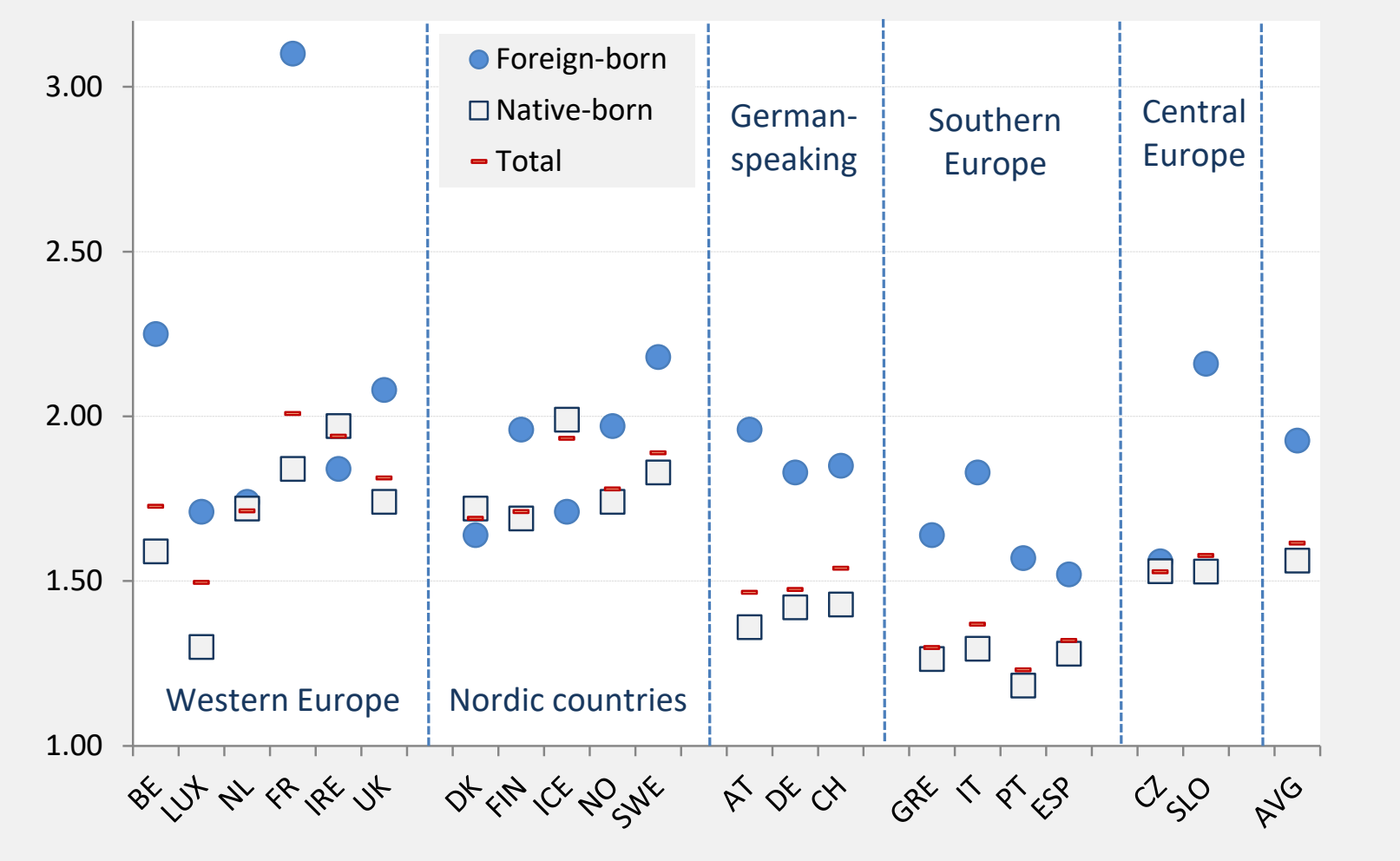
- Fastest increases in childlessness: Japan, Korea, Spain, Taiwan, Italy

Data: 46 low-fertility countries; based on Cohort Fertility and Education (CFE) database (www.cfe-database.org) and Human Fertility Database (HFD)

Does migration make a difference: Trends in migrant women's fertility in Europe

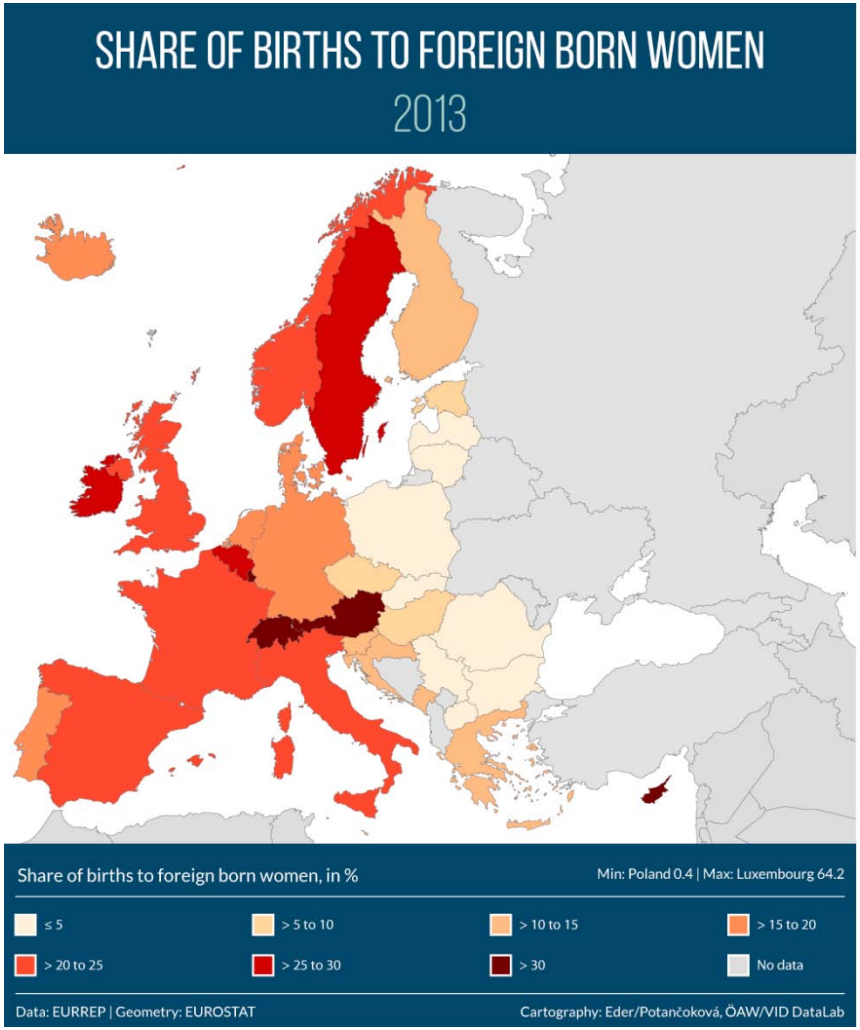
Source: Sobotka, T. 2018. "Migrant Fertility in Europe: Accelerated Decline During the Recession Period?", presented at the European Population Conference, Brussels, June 2018

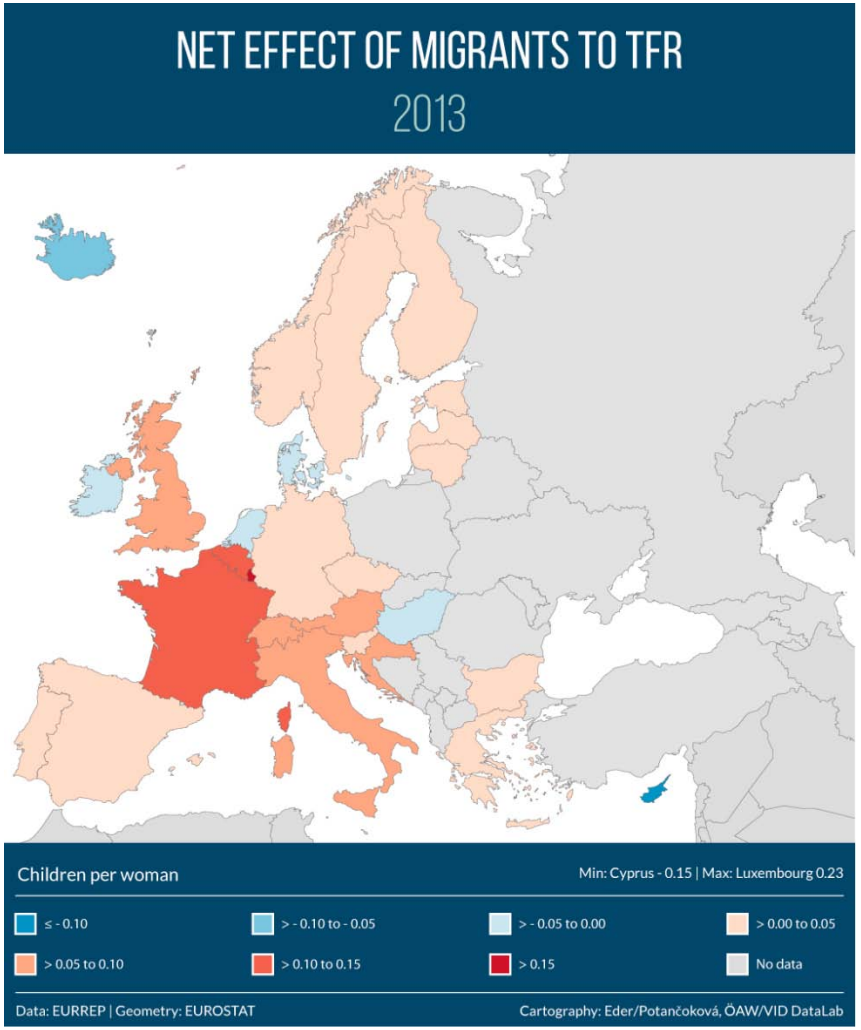
TFR by migration status, 2014 (2013)



Notes: Data for Germany, Switzerland and Greece by citizenship
Sources: Eurostat (2017), own computations and national statistical offices

Share of births to foreign-born mothers & net effect of migrant fertility on the TFR, 2013





Source: European Fertility Datasheet 2015; www.fertilitydatasheet.org

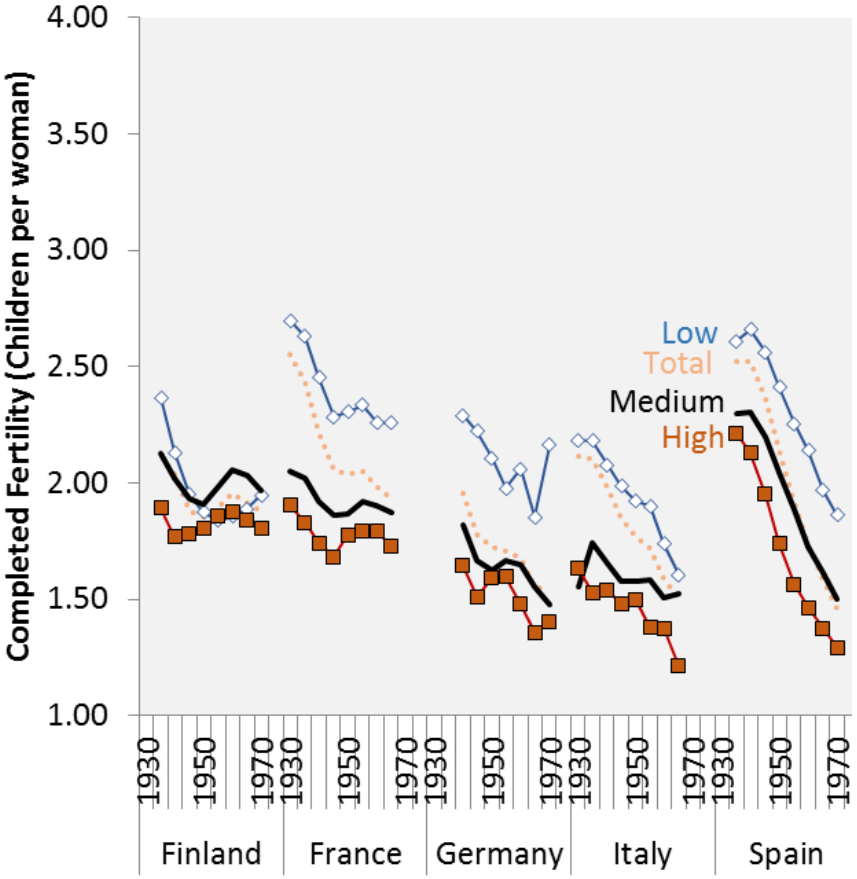
Education and fertility: shifting relationship

Diminishing education differentials in fertility?

What factors could drive the diminishing or reversing fertility gradient?

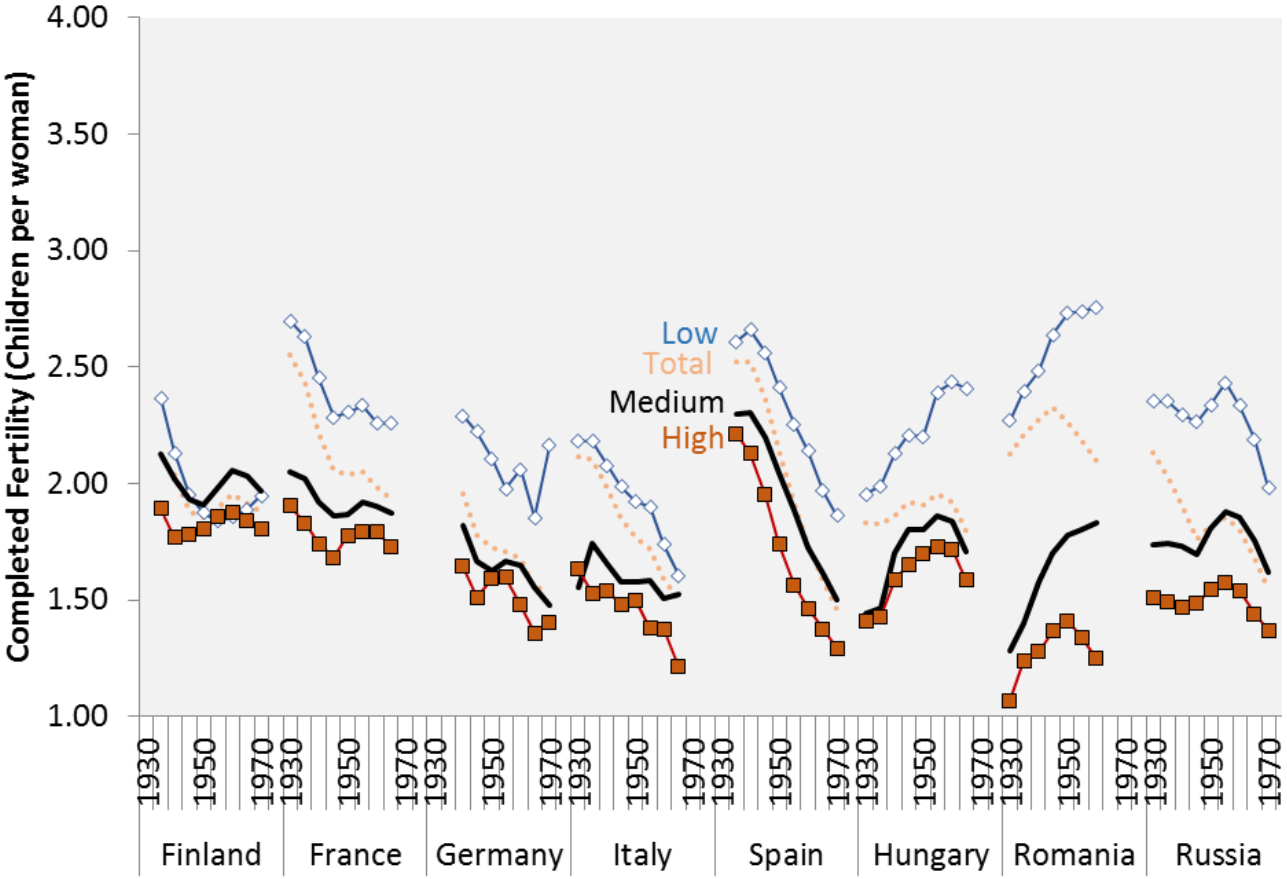
- Higher gender equality, the second stage of the “gender revolution” (Goldscheider et al. 2015; Esping Andersen and Billari 2015)
- Changing patterns of union formation → dual earner couples; high earning potential among women new advantage (Van Bavel 2012, 2017)
- Higher educated women more “empowered” (information, knowledge, abilities) to act on their family plans (Lutz 2017; Testa 2017)
- Declining selectivity of the better educated
- Unstable labour market and social status disadvantage of the lower educated women (more remain without a partner & kids), disappearing jobs for the middle-educated (Adsera 2017)
- Evidence for fertility convergence for the Nordic countries (Jalovaara et al. 2018), Belgium, possibly, US (Hazan & Zoabi 2015)

Continuing wide diversity in education gradients across countries: women born 1930-1970

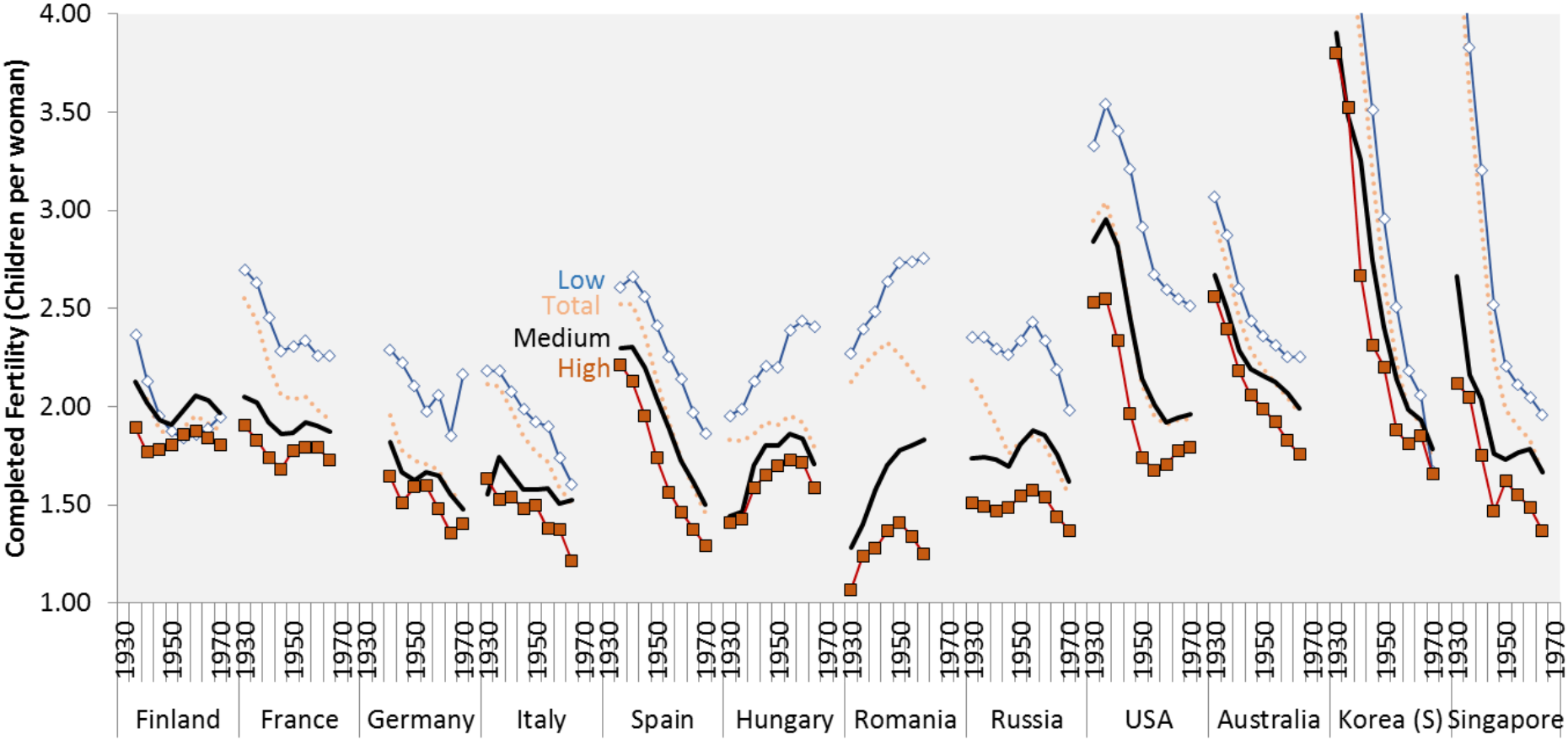


Source: T Sobotka, É Beaujouan, and Z Brzozowska. 2018. “Reversals, diminishing differentials, or stable patterns? Long-term trends in educational gradients in fertility across the developed countries.” Paper presented at EPC Conference, Brussels, June 2018

Continuing wide diversity in education gradients across countries



Continuing wide diversity in education gradients across countries

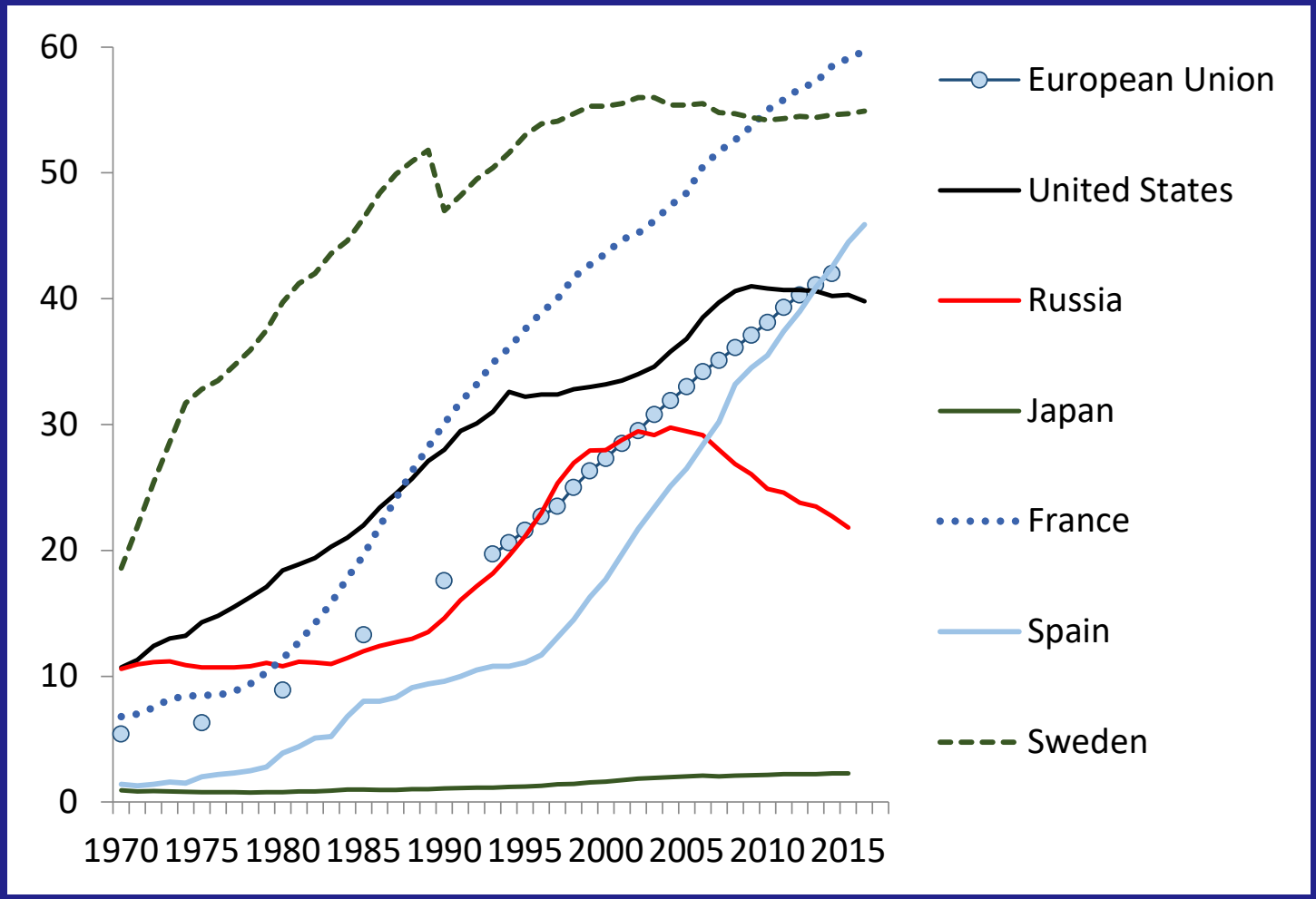


Discussion

Main trends & surprises

- East Asia (followed by Southern Europe) a new “hotspot” of very low fertility across education groups
- “Ultra-low fertility” in East Asia: high & rising childlessness and non-marriage and absence of significant immigration
- South Korean TFR of 1.05 in 2017 (0.83 in Seoul) lowest globally despite increasing spending on families & pronatalist policies
- Period fertility instability (both ups and downs) during the time of economic recovery past 2012
- Surprising continuation in period TFR declines in higher fertility regions contrasting with the broad stabilisation in cohort fertility
- Changes in regional rankings; temporary convergence?
- Renewed falls in young age fertility in most countries, continuing postponement → fertility at young ages becoming marginal
- Contrasting trends in the shift away from marriage

Shifting childbearing away from marriage: contrasting trends



Percentage of births outside marriage, 1970-2016

Source: UNFPA SWOP 2018;

Why do countries and regions differ?

Selected factors discussed in the literature

- The incomplete “gender revolution”
- Economic and labour market instability
- Precarious position of young adults: unstable employment, low incomes, unaffordable housing (especially in Southern Europe and among lower-educated)
- Family policies, cost of children
- Work-family conflict

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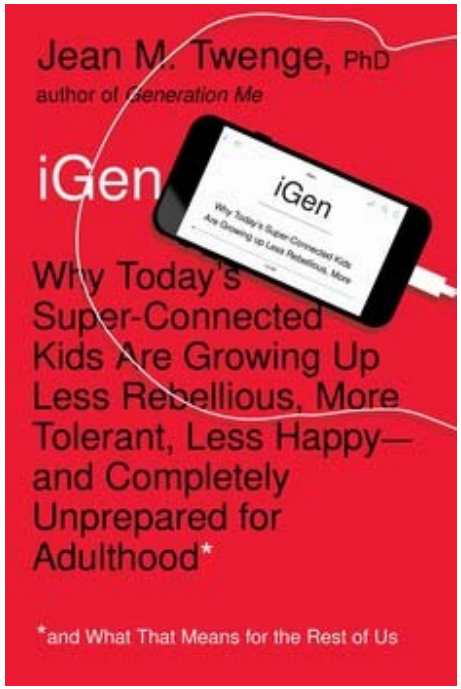
Factors that need to be be explored more

- The multifaceted effects of internet and technological change
- The role of new values, pressures, norms and standards related to parenthood

iGEN: New technologies changing future partnerships and fertility?



Generation born 1995+

- Abrupt change in values, attitudes, behaviour since around 2011-12
- Growing up slowly
- Spending up to 6 hours/day on smartphones & social media
- Fewer having sex, fewer in relationship, fewer prioritize marriage and family, socialization often online
- Obsessed with safety and security: Fragile, insecure, not ready for adult responsibilities
- Complementary evidence for Japan (2015 National Fertility Survey)

Parenthood: Never has been so complicated?