

VID Colloquium

# Further Estimates of the Contribution of Rising Educational Participation to Fertility Postponement: A Model-Based Decomposition for the UK, France and Belgium

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Date: Wed, 8 July 2015, Time: 2:00 - 3:00 pm

Delayed childbearing has been a prominent feature of fertility trends in Europe and other developed countries since the 1970s. More recently, the same has been true of Southeast Asia and Latin America. Research and discussion of the phenomenon has been extensive but its causes are not well understood or documented. Some recent findings suggest that the upward shift in the mean age at entry into parenthood is closely linked to educational expansion. Earlier estimates suggest that rising educational participation may, by raising the average age at completing education, explain up to 80 per cent of the rise in mean ages at first birth in some countries over the final decades of the twentieth century. This paper analyzes variation in first birth rates by age at leaving education and duration since leaving education in Britain, France and Belgium between 1970 and 2000. Based on rates estimated in generalized additive models (GAM), direct and indirect standardization by age at leaving education and duration since leaving education are used to decompose variation of first birth schedules by age in terms of composition effects and rate effects in the countries considered. Our results indicate that increasing educational participation accounts for a substantial part of delay in childbearing during the final decades of the twentieth century. Moreover, in all three countries compositional change by enrolment/ duration has contributed both to the decline in age-specific first birth rates at younger ages and to the increase in age-specific rates at older ages.

## About the presenter

Karel Neels is an Assistant Professor for demography and quantitative methodology at the University of Antwerp and the University of Leuven. His research focuses on the impact of rising education, economic context and social policies on family formation in Belgium and Europe, as well as patterns of family formation in migrant populations. © VID