

Fertility patterns and aspirations among women in Europe

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Presentation for conference: "Can policies enhance fertility in Europe?", Austrian Academy of Sciences, Vienna, Austria, 6-7 Dec. 2007



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Difference between family size ideals and outcomes

- Take account of over-attainment as well as under-attainment ('too many' as well as 'too few')
- Note differences in over-attainment and under-attainment by educational level
- Draw implications for policy



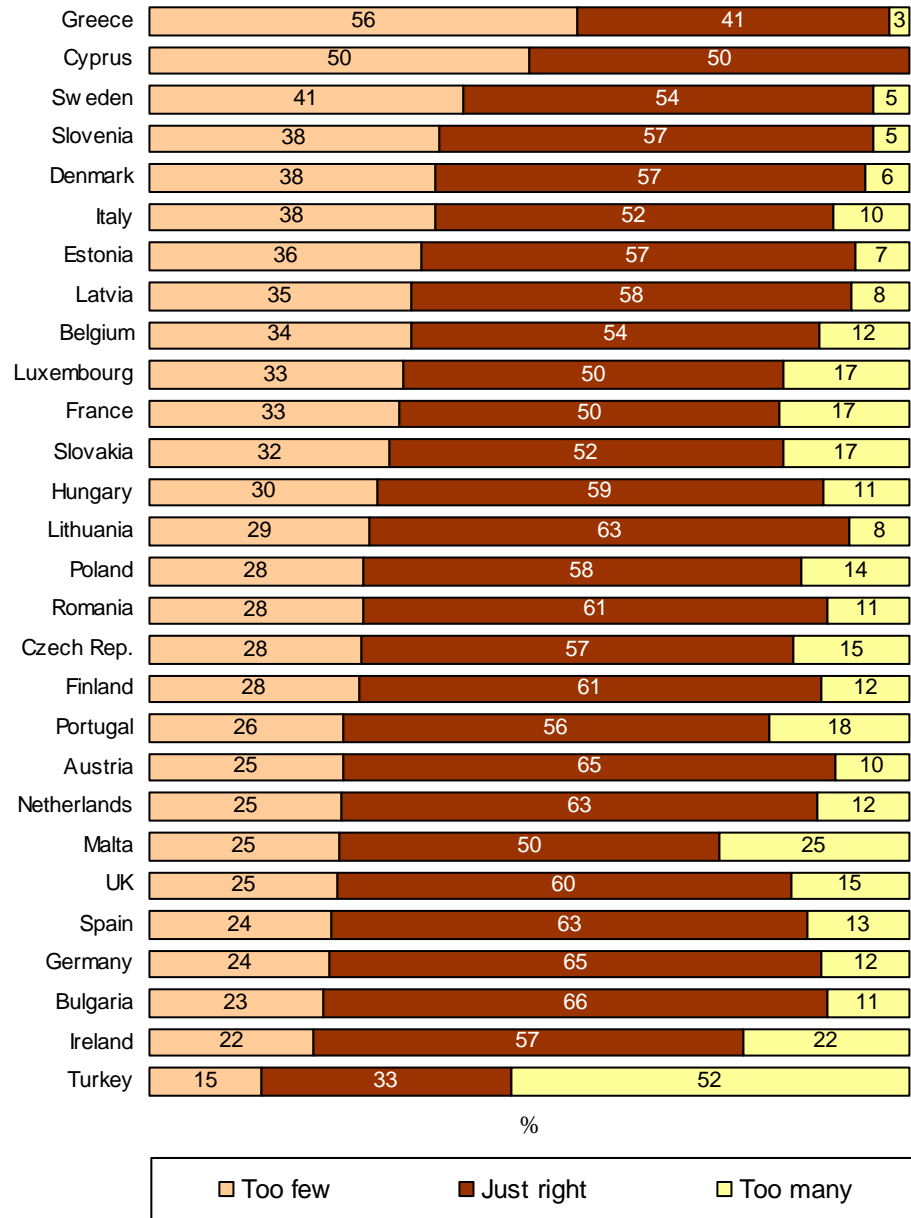
Data and measures

- Eurobarometer 56.2 (2001) – EU15
- Candidate Country Eurobarometer 2002 – 10 accession states (NMS) + candidate countries Bulgaria, Romania & Turkey (CC3)
- Samples c. 1000 adults (500-600 in small countries)
 - Focus on women with completed fertility (ages 40-64)
 - Grouped by region (population-weighted) because of small Ns
- Measures:
 - A. For you personally, what is the ideal family size?
 - B. How many children have you had?
 - Ideal-actual gap = $A - B$
 - 3 possibilities: too few; just right; too many
- Paper forthcoming in J. Alber, T. Fahey & C. Saraceno (eds.) *Handbook of Quality of Life in the Enlarged European Union*. London: Routledge (January 2008), pp. 27-46

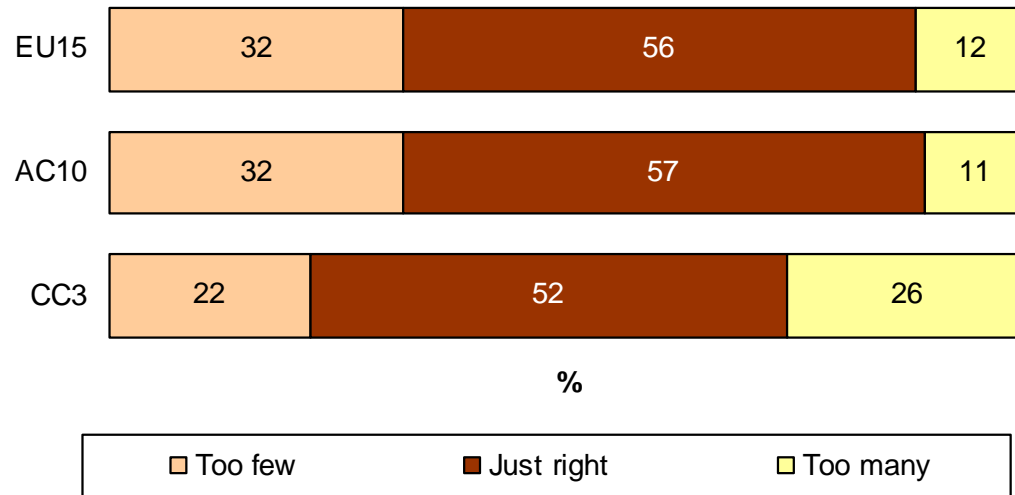


Ideal-actual gap among women with completed fertility (ages 40-64) ...

by country

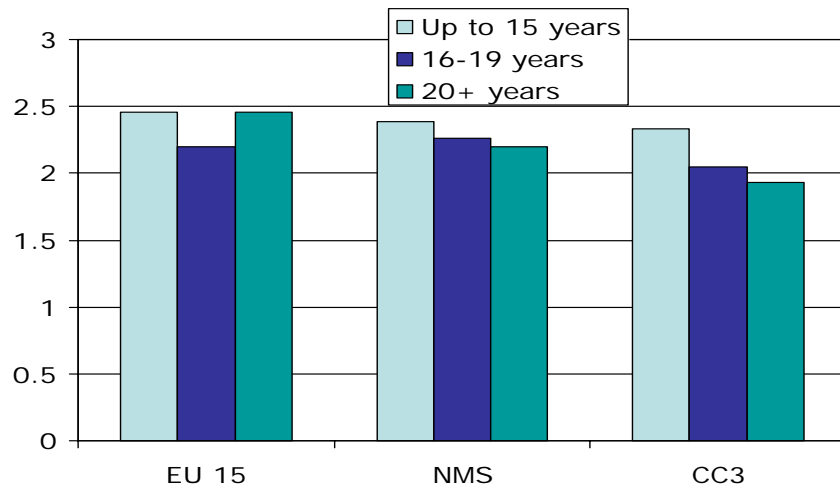


by region (population weighted)

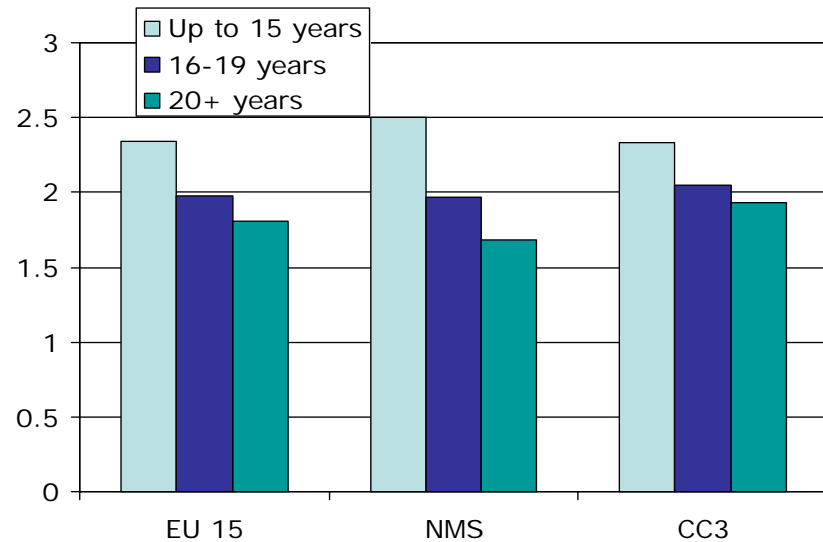


Ideal and actual number of children by age completed education, women aged 40-64

Ideal number of children

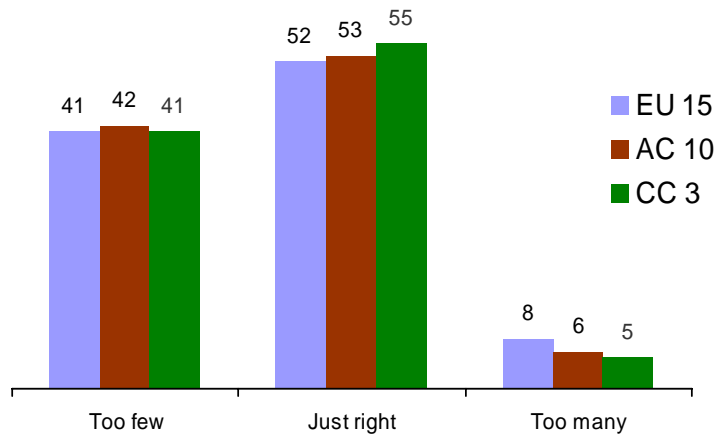


Actual number of children

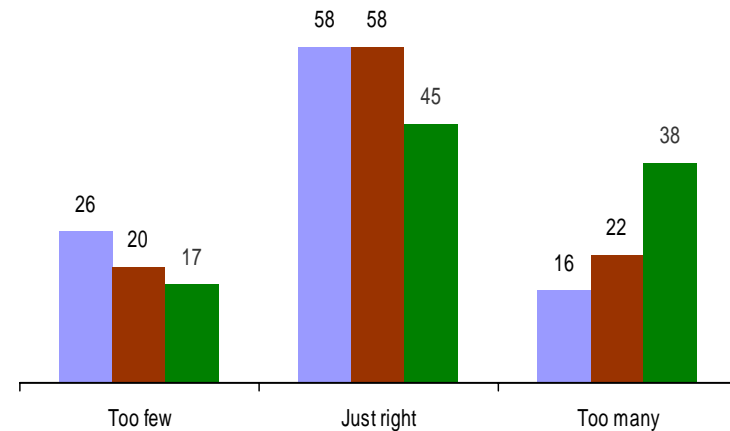


The ideal-actual gap by education, women with completed fertility (ages 40-64)

Women with high education %
(completed education age 20+ years)



Women with low education %
(completed education age <16 years)



Key conclusions

- Attainment of family size ideals, not the ideals themselves, varies by education level
- Under-attainment more common among better educated
 - a function of social *advantage*
- Over-attainment still significant among less educated (as common as over-attainment)
- Pro-natalist supports most likely to be effective if targeted on better-off women
- ... but this would cut across traditional progressive focus of family supports on less well-off