



Is childbearing postponement ending? An historical and cohort perspective

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Background

Postponement of childbearing key feature of fertility in developed countries in the 1970s-1990s

- ❑ Western societies – progressing fast in the 1970s-1990s
- ❑ Central and Eastern Europe – started in the 1990s, then progressing fast in Central Europe
- ❑ Period mean age at first birth surpassed 30 in some countries
- ❑ Fertility rates among teenage & young adult women reached extreme low levels

- **How late can first births be postponed?**
- **Are the limits to postponement reached?**
- **Are there signs of fertility postponement coming to an end?**

Agenda

- 1) **Data and methods**
 - 2) **Cross-country analysis of cohort trends: Is childbearing postponement coming to an end?**
 - 3) **Which factors driving the slow-down or ending of fertility postponement?**
- **Discussion and future outlook:
Ending, stalling or continuing postponement?**

Data & Methods

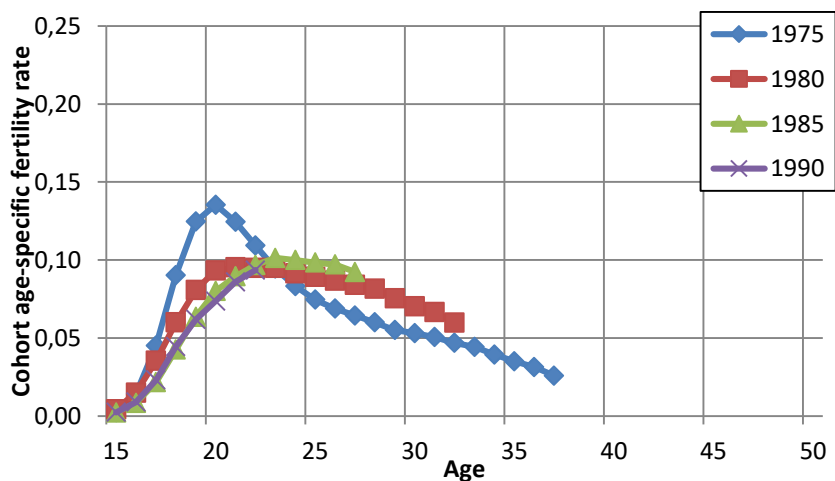
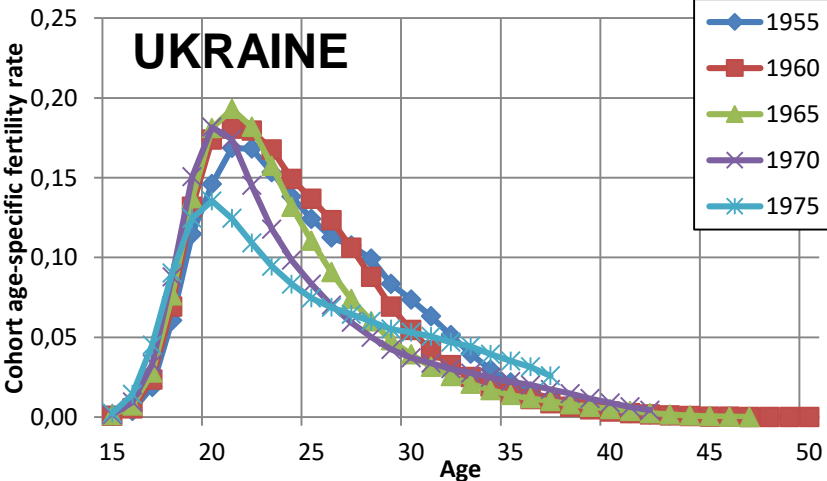
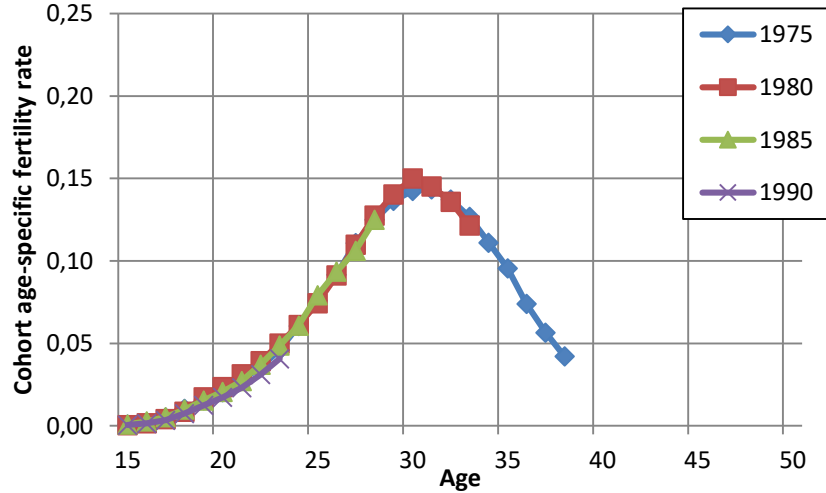
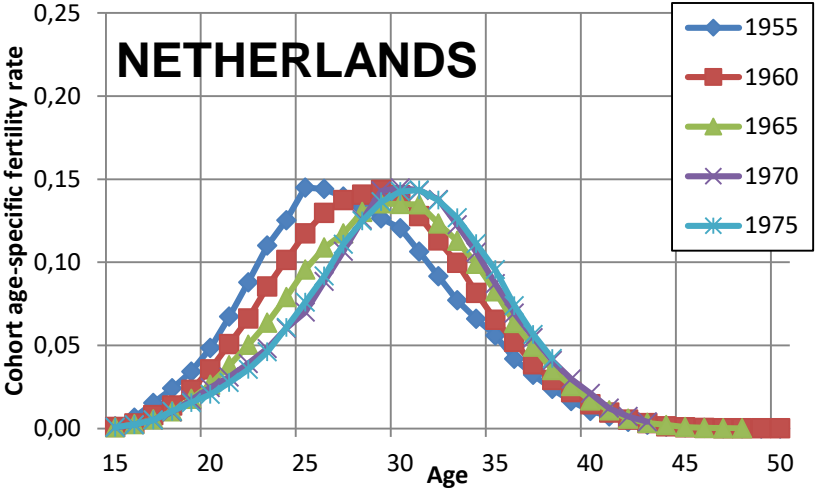
Methodology:

- ❑ **Cohort measures: age-specific cohort fertility rates, cumulated cohort fertility rates by age**
 - True reflection of childbearing postponement or advancement
 - Completed fertility not affected by changes in timing
- ❑ **International comparative analysis:**
 - 14 Western societies (Western Europe, Nordic countries, Southern Europe, US, Canada, Japan)
 - 11 former state-socialist countries in Central & Eastern Europe

Data sources:

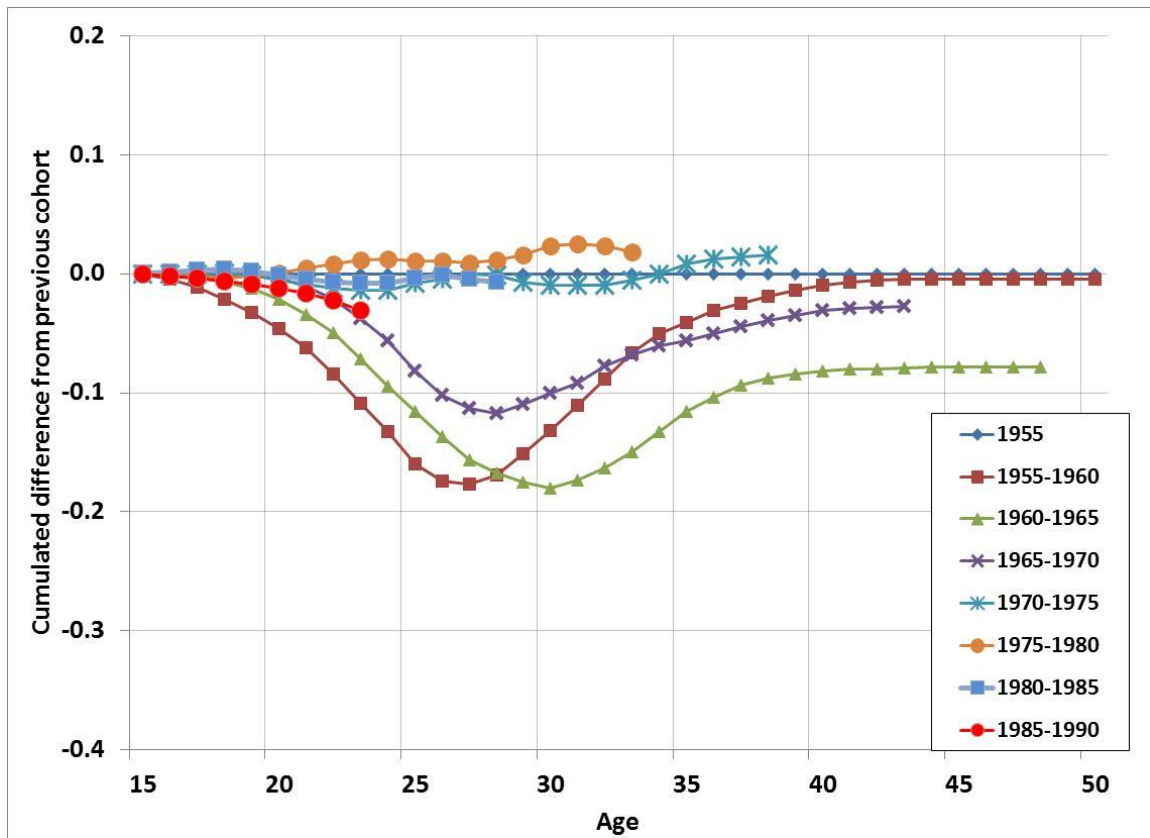
- ❑ **Human Fertility Database (fertility) and other (factors)**

Cohort age patterns of childbearing



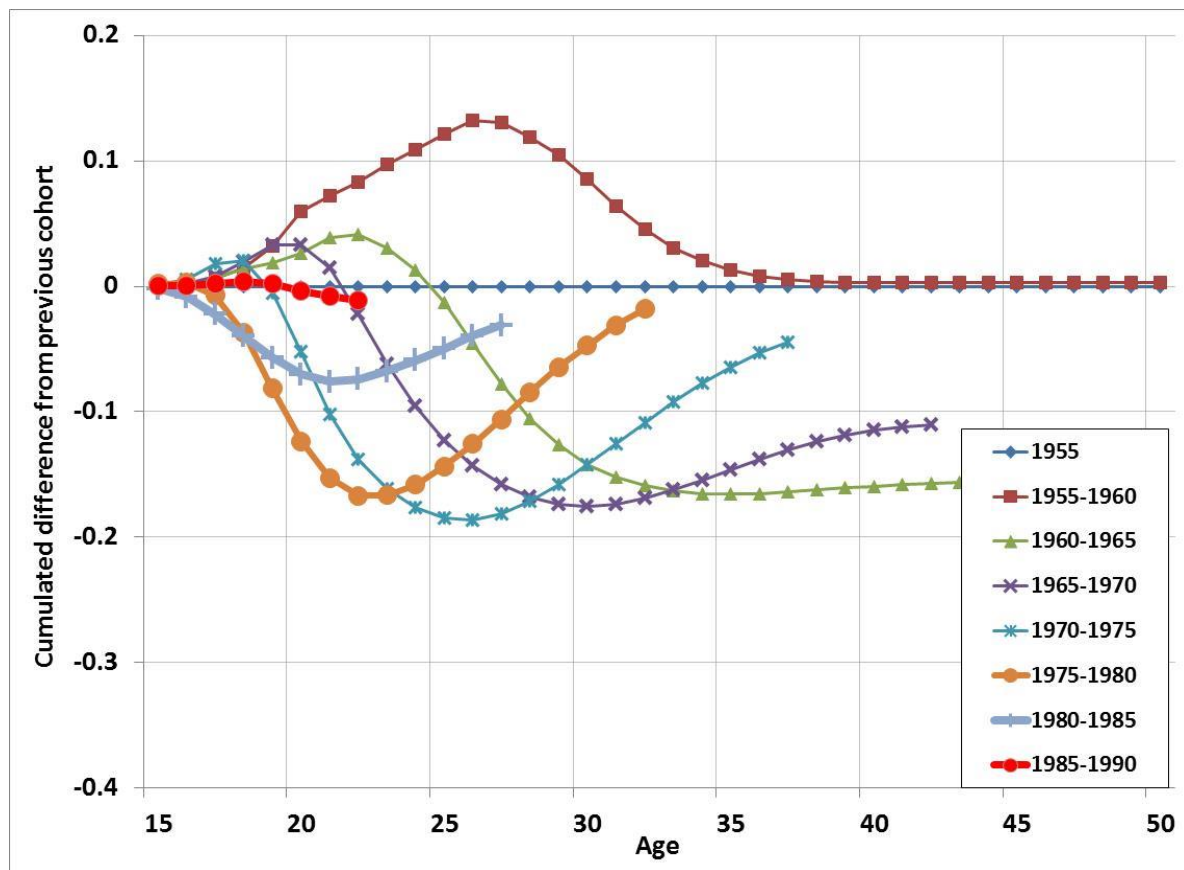
Comparing cumulated cohort fertility rates with *moving benchmark cohorts*

NETHERLANDS



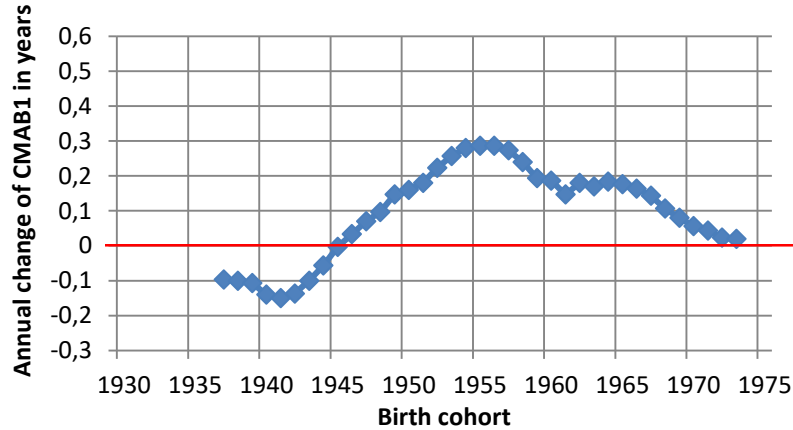
Comparing cumulated cohort fertility rates with *moving benchmark cohorts*

UKRAINE

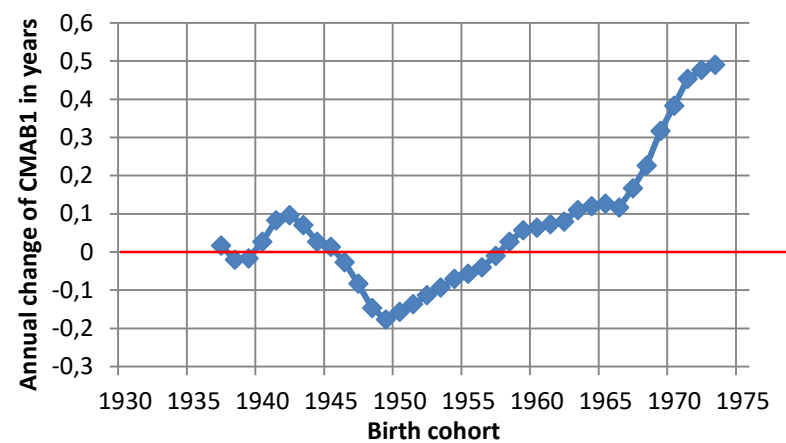


Changes in the cohort mean age at first birth

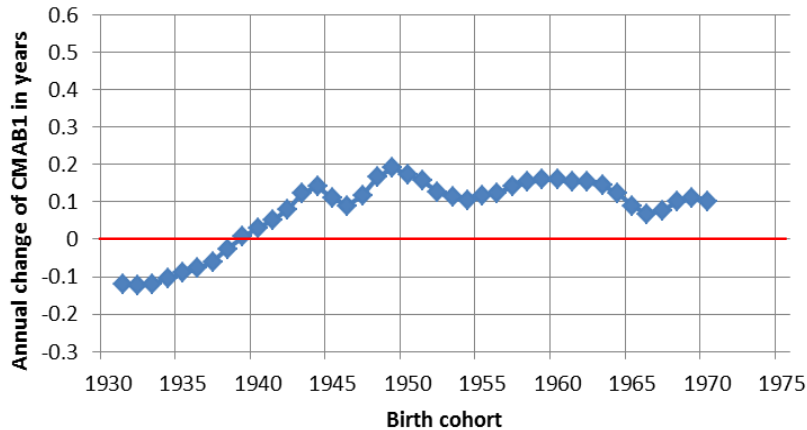
Netherlands CMAB40_1



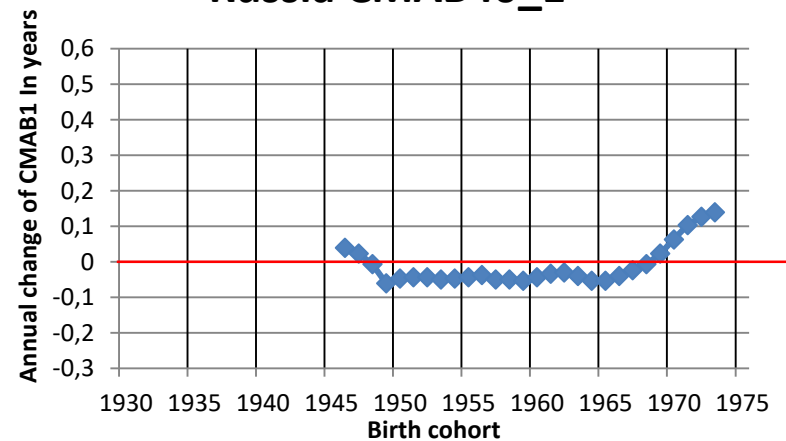
Czech Republic CMAB40_1



Canada CMAB40_1

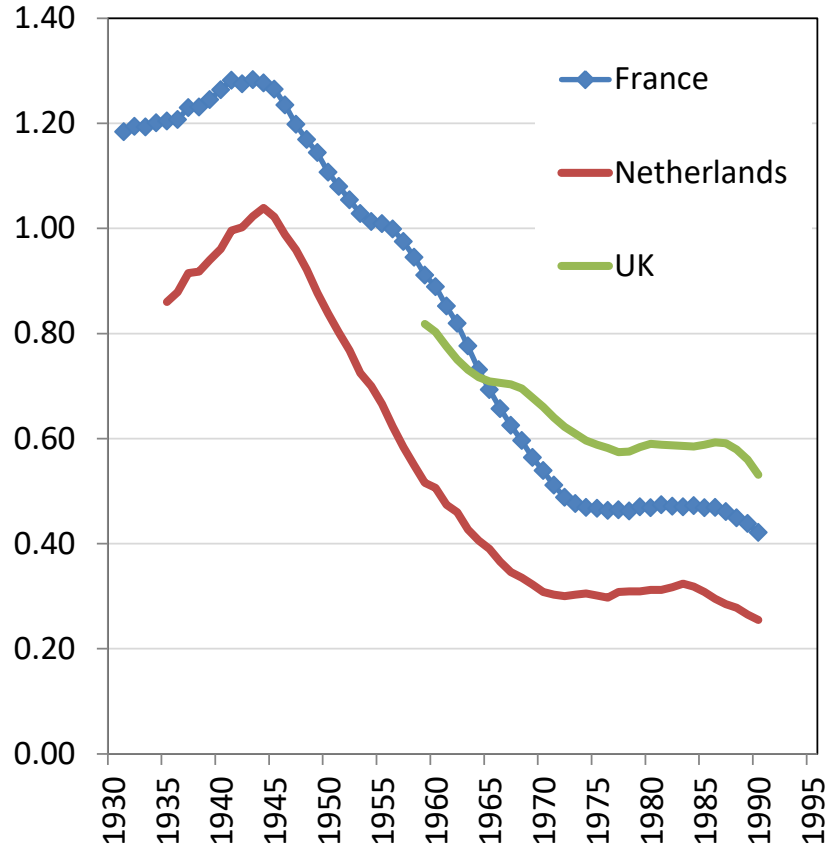


Russia CMAB40_1

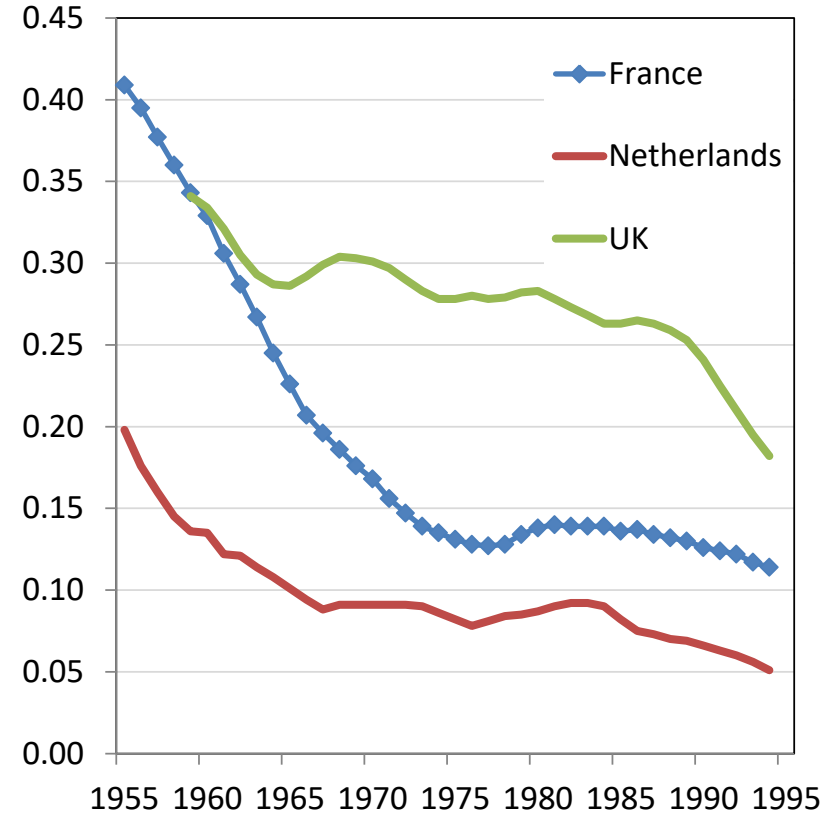


Cohort cumulative fertility rates

WESTERN EUROPE: age 26 (C 1930-95)

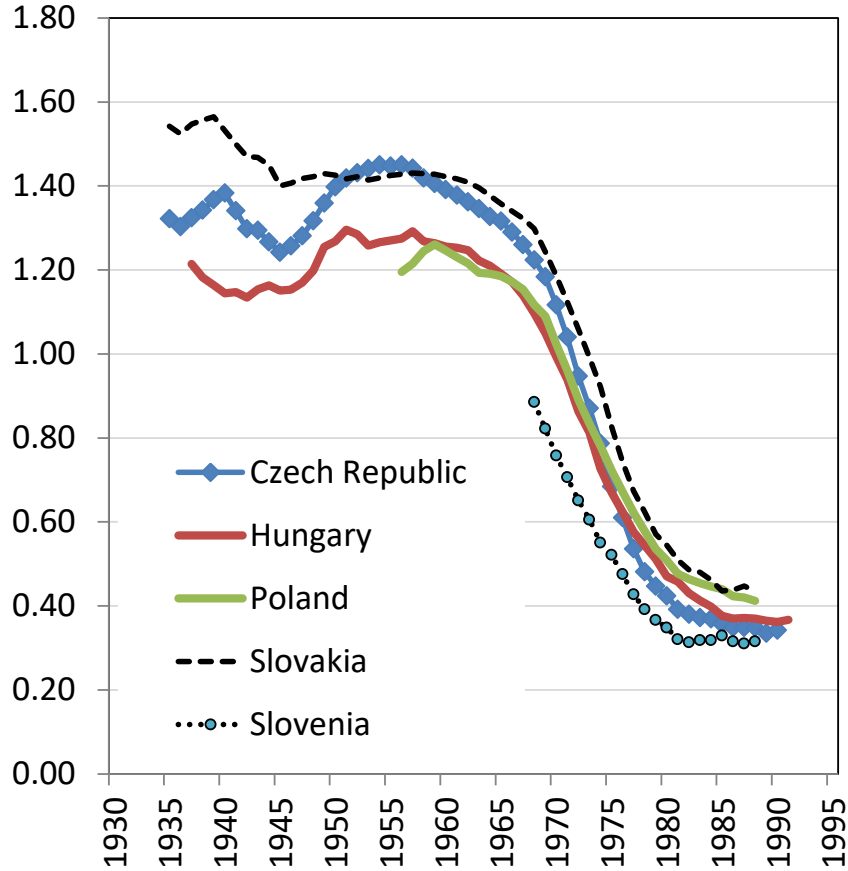


Age 22 (C 1955-95)

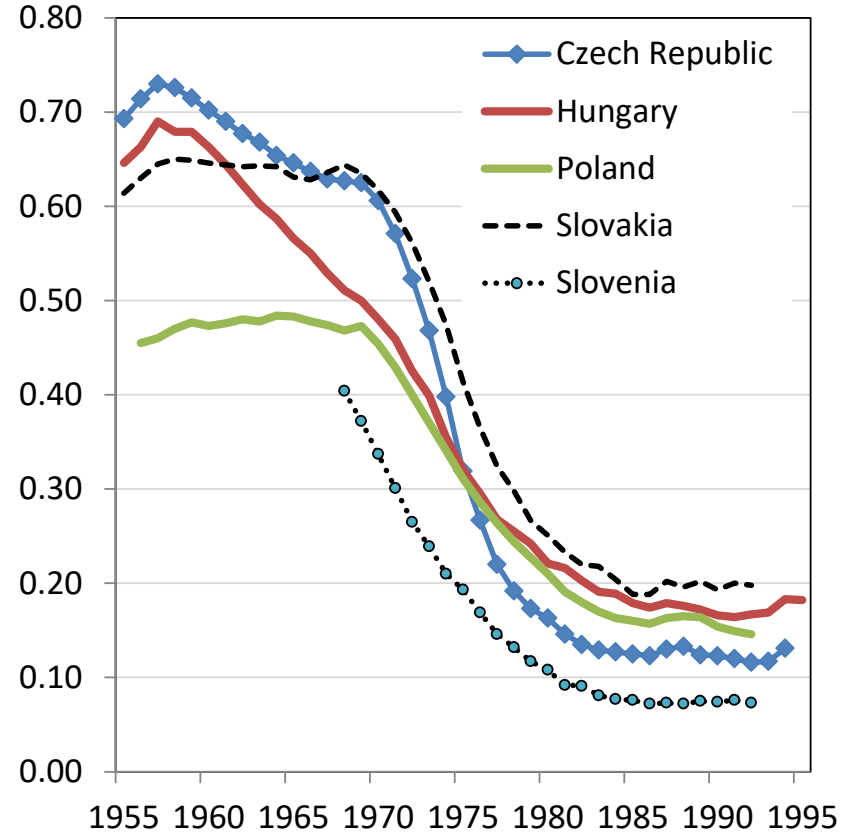


Cohort cumulative fertility rates

CENTRAL EUROPE: age 26 (C 1930-95)



Age 22 (C 1955-95)



Why did childbearing postponement stall?

Western countries (cohorts born 1965/70 to 1985)

- ❑ **Slowing expansion of higher education?**
- ❑ **Economic prosperity, more stable labour market conditions in the 1990s and 2000s**
- ❑ **Very low rates of early childbearing: not much scope for further declines in early childbearing**
- ❑ **Compositional effects: Persistently higher early fertility among migrants and ethnic minorities**
- ❑ **Gender equality & improved work-family balance in some countries**

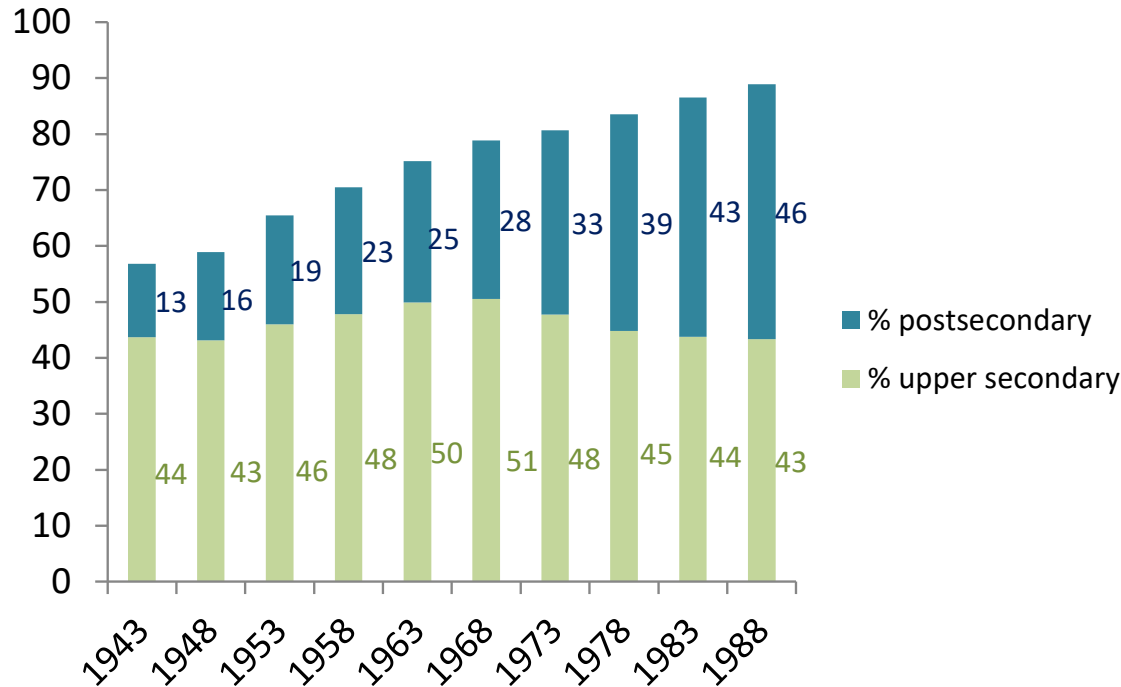
Why did childbearing postponement stall?

Central and Eastern Europe (cohorts born 1980+)

- ❑ Economic and labor market stabilisation since the late 1990s
- ❑ Economic growth and labour market expansion since 2000
- ❑ Early childbearing reached very low levels compared with the initial values
- ❑ The impact of family-friendly and pronatalist policies, better housing availability
- ❑ Widespread effective contraception prevalence

Higher education attainment slowdown?

WESTERN EUROPE: Share of women aged 25-29 with higher education attainment; cohorts born ca. 1943 – ca. 1988



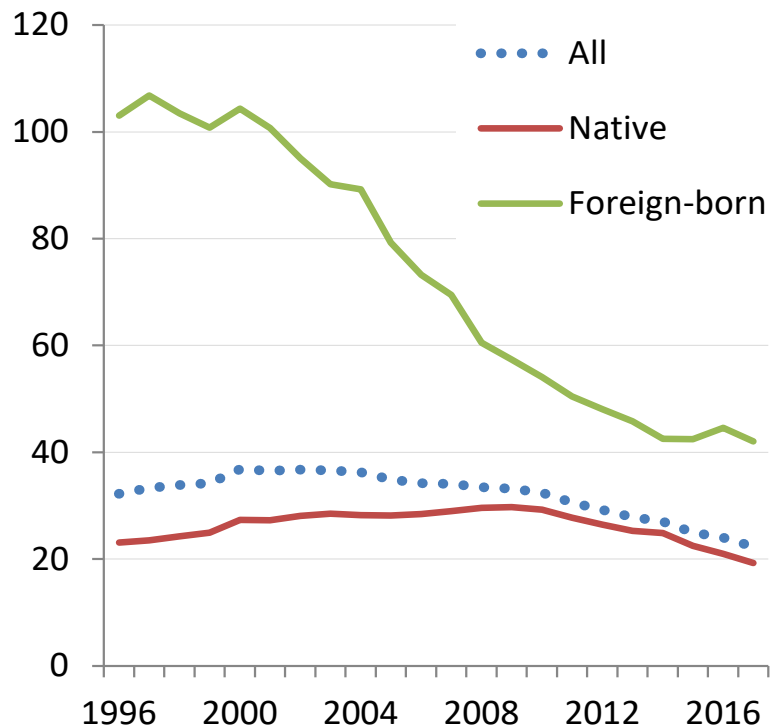
Source: *Wittgenstein Centre Data Explorer*
Version 1.2.

Ambiguous results: Slow-down in the share with secondary+ edu among the early 1970s cohorts, but accelerating share with post-secondary edu

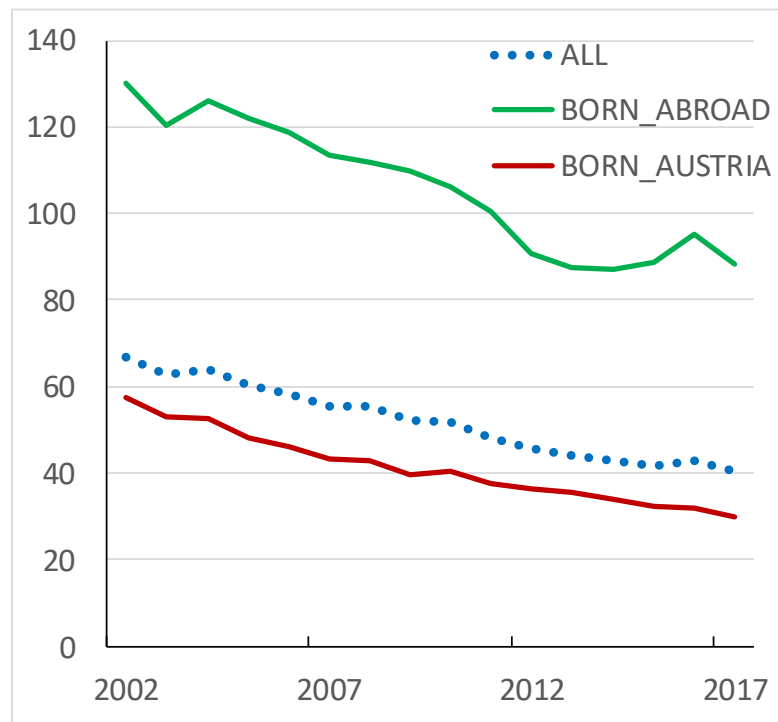
High early fertility among migrant women?

NETHERLANDS:

Fertility rates per 1,000 women aged <25



AUSTRIA:



Key findings

Continuing, stalling or ending fertility postponement?

- ❑ **Broad stabilisation in fertility rates at younger ages among women born after 1965/1970 in Western countries and after 1980 in Central & Eastern Europe**
- ❑ **Cumulative cohort fertility rates below age 26 at very low levels (excl. East Europe and USA)**
- ❑ **A mixture of factors – difficult to pinpoint a dominant driver, but as a whole, a diminished potency for postponement**
- **The factors fueling postponement are (more or less) running out of steam**

Future outlook

BUT: renewed trend towards gradual postponement in many Western countries among women born after 1985

- ❑ **Especially in countries with historically higher early fertility**
- ❑ **Early fertility further declining among higher-fertility groups (migrant women and lower-educated women)**
- ❑ **Trend reversal for cohorts affected by recession 2008-2012**
- ❑ **NEW TRENDS: Possible role of social media, emergency contraception**
- **Further childbearing postponement likely...**
- **...but moderate**