Is two best for everyone? Trends in parity distribution across education in low-fertility countries

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Motivation
Two has been a universally shared ideal number of children in low-fertility countries since at least the 1980s (Sobotka & Beajouan 2014).

Among women born in the 1950s and 1960s, the share of two-child families usually stopped rising (Frejka 2008).
Share of two-child families

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Share of two-child families</th>
<th>Clearly higher &amp; declining more steeply in the East</th>
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<tbody>
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<td>English-speaking</td>
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<td>Northern Europe</td>
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<td>Western Europe</td>
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<td>German-speaking</td>
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<td>Southern Europe</td>
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<td>Eastern Europe</td>
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End of the baby boom
Two has been a universally shared ideal number of children in low-fertility countries since at least the 1980s (Sobotka & Beajouan 2014).

Among women born in the 1950s and 1960s, the share of two-child families has stopped rising (Frejka 2008).

After the baby boom the educational differences in the share of two-child families (and generally in the parity distribution) increased in many countries (Berrington et al. 2015, Wood et al. 2014).
Share of two-child families by edu
Questions

Why did the share of two-child families start to decrease earliest and/or fastest among

- Highly educated women in the German-speaking and Southern-European countries?
  - Increases in childlessness and decreases in transitions to second child
    - Shown for childlessness (Beaujouan et al. 2015)
    - For one child: probably similar mechanisms (high opportunity costs)

- Low educated women in the East?
  - More frequent transitions to third child
    - Low opportunity costs
    - Selectivity
Data & Method

Data
- Census and large-scale survey data mostly from the CFE database ([www.cfe-database.org](http://www.cfe-database.org))
- 22 countries (19 European, Australia, New Zealand & USA)
- Women born between 1916-20 and 1966-70 (-> having children 1940s-2010s);

Method
- Analysing parity distribution and progression ratios by education
- Education categories (ISCED 1997):
  - Low (ISCED 0-2), Medium (ISCED 3-4), High (ISCED 5-6)
- 3 regions:
  - German-speaking countries & Southern Europe (G-S),
  - West
  - East
- Regional aggregates
  - start from the 1936-40 cohorts
  - exclude Austria, Belgium, Switzerland, Bulgaria, Poland, Romania and Slovenia (no data for the 1960s cohorts)
Results
Share of two-child families by edu
Childlessness and PPR 12

![Charts showing the relationship between childlessness and PPR 12 across different cohorts](chart.png)
Conclusions
Why did the share of two-child families start to decrease earliest and/or fastest among:

- **Highly educated women in the German-speaking and Southern-European?**
  - Increases in childlessness and decreases in transitions to second child
- **Low educated women in the East?**
  - More frequent transitions to third child
  - Strongly increasing childlessness in the 1960s cohorts
In the 1966-70 cohort...

- Childlessness highest in Germany, Italy and Spain (G-S), lowest in the East
- PPR 12 lowest in G-S, highest in the West
- PPR 23 lowest in G-S, highest in the West (among low edu: East & West)

Very low fertility in Germany, Italy & Spain: decreasing PPR 01, 12 & 23 across education

Very high shares of two-child families in the East among the medium & high-educated in the 1950s cohorts: high PPR 01 & low PPR 23

Biggest regional contrasts among the highly educated -> most sensitive to context?
THANK YOU

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