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Lowest-Low Fertility: Signs of a recovery in Italy?

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Abstract

This study aims to describe the process of birth postponement and recovery in Italy, a country with persistent very low fertility levels. The case of Italy is particularly significant given that this country carries great demographic weight in "Southern Europe"; an area characterized by cultural and institutional specificities which have important implications for the timing of family formation and the final number of children. We use data recently published by the Italian National Institute of Statistics (Istat), applying a cohort approach to show changes in CTFRs and the timing of births for the 1950-1980 cohorts. In order to further evaluate the evolution of Italian "fertility ageing" across social groups (with a focus on female education) we also use individual level data from the 2003 Istat multipurpose survey "Famiglia e soggetti sociali". We find that a recovery is presently in progress in the northern regions of Italy, even if not all postponed births are recovered. As expected, signs of recovery are above all evident among the youngest generations and more educated women.

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