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Estimating the contribution of mothers of foreign origin to total fertility: The recent recovery of period fertility in the Belgian region of Flanders

By [Lisa Van Landschoot](#), [Jan Van Bavel](#), [Helga A. G. de Valk](#)

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Abstract

Background: Since the early 21st century, period total fertility has been recovering from (very) low levels in many European countries. This trend is partly attributable to the end of the postponement of childbearing. The question has risen, however, to what extent this recovery is also related to the changing ethnic composition of European populations.

Objective: In this paper, we investigate to what extent the population of foreign origin contributed to the recent (2001/2008) recovery of period fertility in the Belgian region of Flanders.

Methods: We use data from the Flemish Family and Child Care Agency for calculating time trends in the share of births to foreign origin groups. We furthermore propose a counterfactual method that allows us to assess indirectly the role played by births to women of foreign origin in the recent recovery of fertility.

Results: Overall, we find that births to women of foreign origin have made increasingly important contributions to the number of children born in the Flemish region: between 2001 and 2008, the share of births to women of foreign origin grew from 16% to 20%. Nevertheless, the results from our counterfactual fertility analysis indicate that the recovery of fertility in Flanders would have occurred even in the absence of any births to women of foreign origin. The recovery can in large part be attributed to births among the native Belgian population.

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