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Men's childbearing desires and views of the male role in Europe at the dawn of the 21st century

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Abstract

The development of modern family patterns of the past decades has been accompanied by substantial changes in social norms, values and gender relations. There is theoretical support for the assumption that the persistence of low fertility levels across Europe is likely to be linked to the incomplete gender revolution, more specifically to the lack of, or only limited changes in the male gender role as opposed to women's role. In order to have a deeper understanding of the development of fertility, we aim to shed more light on the impact of men's role orientation on their fertility intentions in this study. Our analyses include men aged 20-44 years in eight countries: Austria, Estonia, East Germany, West Germany, Italy, Lithuania, the Netherlands and Poland. The data are extracted from the Population Policy Acceptance Study of the early 2000s. Examining within-country differences, we find that men with egalitarian attitudes seem to have higher fertility aspirations than their traditional counterparts in contemporary Europe. This is supported by both the descriptive and the multivariate analyses. The picture is somewhat less conclusive though when we focus on country-rankings by intended family size and by the prevalence of egalitarian versus traditional attitudes.

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