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Spain: Short on children and short on family policies

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Abstract

Spain's total fertility rate has more than halved since 1975, when it was 2.8, to the present 1.3 (the lowest rate on record, 1.2, was reached in 1995). At the same time, the mean age at first childbirth has grown continually, seriously hindering any sustained recovery of fertility. Cohort fertility, in turn, has declined uninterruptedly since the 1941 cohort, and according to all estimates, this will drop to 1.6 for women born in the 1960s. A downturn in nuptiality, which has not been offset by a rise in consensual unions, along with the prevalence of contraceptives and abortion, have contributed substantially to falling fertility. Underlying this decrease is the profound cultural, social, and economic change that has raised the perceived costs of leaving the parental home and having children. The lack of any explicit family policy or transfers to compensate for such costs has reinforced that perception.

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