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Bulgaria: Ethnic differentials in rapidly declining fertility

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Abstract

This chapter provides a detailed description of the fertility changes in Bulgaria during recent decades and discusses possible reasons and consequences. It also gives an overview of the steps that the government has undertaken to offset the considerable decline in fertility. Before the fall of communism, fertility trends in Bulgaria were stable and characterized by a nearly universal entry into parenthood, dominance of a two-child family model, an early start and early end of childbearing, stable mean ages at entry into childbearing and marriage, and low percentages of non-marital births. During the 1990s and in the first years of the new century, we observe a marked, rapid change in fertility behaviour. Together with the severe decline in overall fertility rates, demographic data reveal a significant postponement of entry into motherhood and marriage, a decline of the two-child family model, and an emergence of new family forms. Most research attributes these changes to the particular political and social situation in Bulgaria since 1989.

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