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An Assessment of Policies that Support Having Children from the Perspectives of Equity, Efficiency and Efficacy

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Abstract

In a context where 46 countries now consider their fertility rate to be too low, attention is turning to the need for policy actions to increase fertility rates. This article discusses the reasons why action is required and why countries have been slow to take policy action. It then considers a wide range of possible policies and assesses them against a set of eleven social policy principles. The policies examined include tax-transfer policies, subsidised services, childcare and early childhood education, parent leave and working hours policies, employment policies for young people, public education campaigns and broader social arrangements. The conclusion drawn is that the focus of policy should not be pronatalism as such but support for families with children. Support for families with children means good family policy, good gender policy, good employment/human capital policy, good child development policy and, if there is a need to increase or sustain birth rates, it will also mean good birth policy.

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