

Home

About the Institute

Research

Staff

VID Publications

News & Events

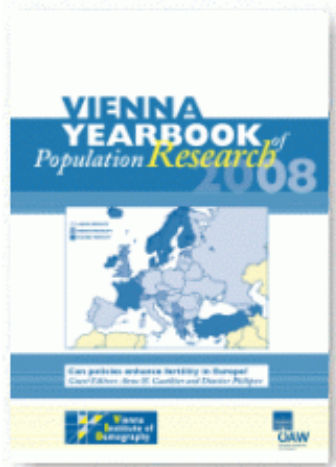
Job vacancies

Information for the Public

Links

SEARCH

## The Vienna Yearbook of Population Research 2008 online



Available as of 1 Dec 2008

[more](#)

## Does Postponement Explain the Trend to Later Childbearing in France

**Journal:** Vienna Yearbook of Population Research

**Volume:** 2005, pages 83-107

**Publisher:** [Verlag der Österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften](#)

**DOI:** 10.1553/populationyearbook2005s83

Máire Ní Bhrolcháin (1) and Laurent Toulemon (2)

(1) Division of Social Statistics, School of Social Sciences, University of Southampton, Southampton, United Kingdom. (Author for correspondence, Email: [mnb@socsci.soton.ac.uk](mailto:mnb@socsci.soton.ac.uk))

(2) Institut national d'études démographiques, Paris, France.

### Abstract

Fertility rates in most developed societies have been declining at younger ages and rising at older ages. This phenomenon is widely referred to as reflecting the postponement of fertility. But is this an accurate description? The present paper considers whether recent changes in the age-pattern of childbearing in France can be described as postponement. The statistical features of time series of rates are distinguished from the underlying behavioural process generating them. Criteria for the presence of postponement are proposed. In the absence of detailed, longitudinal information on intentions, the occurrence or otherwise of postponement is assessed by indirect means. Some evidence is found consistent with fertility postponement in recent decades. However, it cannot be interpreted causally, and so cannot be used either to explain recent trends or to anticipate future trends. Much more detailed evidence is required to establish the existence of postponement in the behavioural sense than is generally assumed.

[Full article](#)