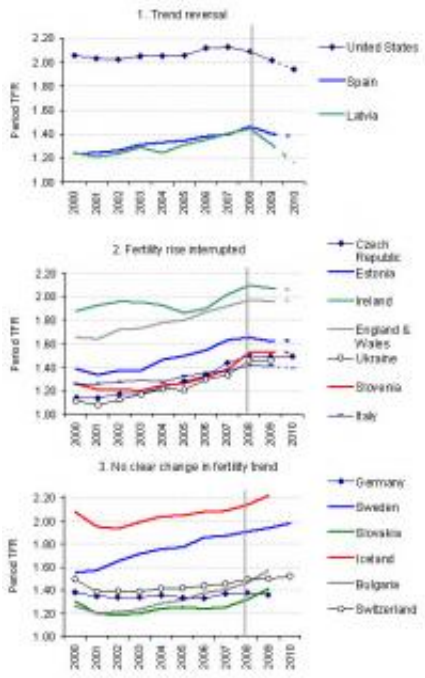
Medical Xpress

Fertility rates affected by global economic crisis

June 28 2011



The global economic recession of 2008-09 has been followed by a decline in fertility rates in Europe and the United States, bringing to an end the first concerted rise in fertility rates in the developed world since the 1960s, according to research published today.

"In a new study, scientists from the Vienna Institute of Demography of

the Austrian Academy of Sciences (VID) and the International Institute for Applied Systems Analysis (IIASA) identify that economic recessions tend to be followed by a decline in fertility rates - and also identify how specific groups of people are influenced by a recession."

The 2008-09 global economic recession, the first major recession since that caused by the oil shocks of the 1970s, brought a sudden trend reversal to the previous pattern of rising fertility rates in several highly developed countries, including Spain and the United States. A larger group of countries including England and Wales, Ireland, Italy, and Ukraine experienced stagnation of fertility rates, following a decade of generally rising fertility after 1998 (see figure below).

The study found that individual reactions to the recession vary by sex, age, number of children, education level, and migrant status.

"We have noted some specific patterns of behavior; the young and the childless, for example, are less likely to have children during recessions," says Tomáš Sobotka from the VID, one of the authors of the study.

"Highly educated women react to employment uncertainty by adopting a 'postponement strategy,' especially if they are childless. In contrast, less-educated women often maintain or increase their fertility under economic uncertainty."

The patterns differ for men—those with low education and low skills face increasing difficulty in finding a partner or in supporting their family and often show the largest decline in first child birth rates.

The recent global economic recession has brought to an end the first concerted rise in fertility rates across the developed world since the 1960s. Of the 27 countries of the European Union, fertility rates increased in 26 countries in 2008 (with stagnation in Luxembourg). In

2009 as many as 13 countries saw their fertility rates decline and another four countries experienced stable fertility rates. A rise in unemployment and employment uncertainty was a key factor behind this trend. In many developed countries cuts in social spending driven by the need to address ballooning budget deficits may prolong the fertility impact of the recent recession well beyond its end.

The study focuses on the most developed countries (including Eastern and Southeastern Europe) which were hardest hit by the recession. Limited attention is paid to less developed countries where the effects of the recession may differ.

The study by Tomáš Sobotka and Dimiter Philipov from the Vienna Institute of Demography of the Austrian Academy of Sciences and Vegard Skirbekk from the International Institute for Applied Systems Analysis is published in the latest issue of *Population and Development Review*.

More information: Economic recession and fertility in the developed world. Population and Development Review (Vol. 37, No. 2) June 27, 2011.

Provided by International Institute for Applied Systems Analysis

Citation: Fertility rates affected by global economic crisis (2011, June 28) retrieved 4 May 2024 from https://medicalxpress.com/news/2011-06-fertility-affected-global-economic-crisis.html

This document is subject to copyright. Apart from any fair dealing for the purpose of private study or research, no part may be reproduced without the written permission. The content is provided for information purposes only.