

Plenary & special session abstracts.

Demography and monitoring & evaluation of health in developing countries.

J. Ties Boerma, World Health Organization

Demography is an important pillar of monitoring and evaluation (M&E) of public health programmes in developing countries. The strength of demography traditionally lies in mortality (and fertility) measurement, but has expanded into other areas of measurement (e.g. causes of death, morbidity, coverage of interventions) to meet the demand for health data in the context of for instance monitoring of progress towards the MDGs.

This session will focus on mortality and health trends and the main developments in health programmes in developing countries, and discuss the past and present implications for measurement.

1.30pm, Tuesday 14 September, Lecture Theatre Newman E

Fertility in the developed world: five key trends

Tomas Sobotka, Vienna Institute of Demography

This talk will discuss five important recent developments in fertility in the developed world, put them in a broader perspective and speculate about the new insights for fertility projections and their broader societal implications.

1. Period fertility upturns between 1998 and 2008

Most of the developed countries have seen a notable increase in fertility rates, as measured by the period total fertility rate (TFR), between 1998 and 2008. This was the first concerted rise in period fertility since the baby boom of the mid-1960s that occurred across the whole developed world, bringing an end to the era of 'lowest-low fertility' in some countries and bringing fertility close to the population replacement level in others. As many as 15 countries in Europe, including France, Russia, Spain and the United Kingdom, have seen an absolute increase in period TFR by 0.3 or more since the year the lowest TFR level was reached. Fertility reversals were particularly strong in some regions that have seen several decades of very low fertility rates, including East Germany, and parts of Italy and Spain. I draw on Kohler et al (2002) and Goldstein et al. (2008) when discussing major explanations of this fertility increase and emphasise the role of the 'postponement transition', especially of the diminishing tempo effect linked to fertility postponement.

2. The looming stabilisation in completed fertility rates

A combination of a steady increase in fertility rates at higher childbearing ages and a general upward trend in fertility has also begun impacting trends in cohort fertility rates. After falling for many cohorts, cumulated fertility rates among women below age 30 appear to have stabilised or even slightly increased in a number of countries in Western, Northern, Central and Southern Europe and a stabilisation in completed fertility can be envisioned in many countries for the women born since the mid-1970s. If this expected stabilisation indeed takes place, completed fertility would stay above 1.5 in a large majority of developed countries, with some notable exceptions including Japan, Korea, Germany and parts of Eastern Europe.

3 The effects of the economic recession

In the past, economic recessions were frequently associated with a modest decline in fertility rates, which usually did not last for long and was often overshadowed by a longer-established trend of falling or rising fertility rates. First data for 2009 indicate that the current recession has put a break

to the recent fertility increases or even led to fertility reversals in many countries. Differences in unemployment, economic uncertainty, and changes in welfare and family support are likely to account for differentiated fertility reactions across countries. Similarly, individuals' fertility reactions to the recession differ by social status.

4 The convergence in fertility between 'native' and immigrant women

Migrant women have increasingly affected number of births and fertility patterns in the developed world by a combination of their rising numbers—especially in prime childbearing ages—higher fertility rates and earlier fertility schedules. While their contribution to the number of births remains striking in many regions, their influence on 'propping up' fertility rates has diminished as a number of countries, including Denmark and the Netherlands, have recorded a remarkable and rapid fertility convergence between migrant and 'native' women.

5 Shifting associations between education, affluence, and fertility

Some of the observed aggregate fertility trends and reversals have underpinnings in changing associations between gender equality, education, affluence, marital behaviour, 'post-modern' value orientation, childcare provision, and women's labour force participation on one hand and fertility on the other hand. For some of these factors, changes in aggregate-level associations have been well-documented. For instance, Rindfuss et al. (2003), Engelhardt and Prskawetz (2004), and Kögel (2006) analyse a reversal from the negative to a positive association between female labour force participation and fertility in industrialised countries. This and other reversals have stimulated considerable discussion about their causality. A few novel associations, especially a positive link between education, affluence and fertility, have also been identified in several individual-level studies. However, the gap between the insights and conclusions provided by individual-level studies and those offered by aggregate-level analyses remains wide and little explored.

Overall, these emerging trends lead to a number of conclusions that provide important theoretical insights and that can inform fertility projections. Many rich societies do not need to be concerned about their presumably low fertility levels, either because they are not as low as previously thought on the basis of distorted period indicators or because migration and migrants' fertility help achieving population replacement despite lower fertility rates. Also the frequent notion of a substantial gap between fertility intentions and actual behaviour appears exaggerated, in part because behaviour is often measured by current distorted period indicators rather than by completed fertility rates. In addition, while childbearing has become more an 'elective' rather than 'normative' part of individual biographies, many developed countries like Denmark, France, and Sweden combine moderate fertility levels with gender equality, extensive childcare, high female labour participation and high levels of education. In other countries, including the United Kingdom, a considerable social status polarisation in fertility behaviour may also produce moderate levels of fertility of two children per woman. This indicates that the attention of population research should become much less obsessed with analysing and discussing seemingly low levels of fertility, but rather focus on new determinants and broader consequences of contemporary fertility patterns for individuals and societies (Kravdal 2010). However, analyzing fertility in isolation is not sufficient for assessing its likely societal effects as population trends will be critically influenced by both fertility and migration developments as well as interrelations between them. Societal adjustments to population ageing should focus much more on other factors like healthy ageing, increasing human capital, reducing unemployment and enabling women to participate fully on the labour market rather than trying to increase fertility rates.

Special session:

Nothing new under the sun: a brief history of the Census in the UK

Ian White, Office for National Statistics

In this session, Ian White from the 2011 Census Team at the Office for National Statistics will present a non-statistical look at the history of the census, focusing mainly on England and Wales (but relating it to the situation in Northern Ireland and Scotland) from the Domesday Book to the present day. He does not intend to present a series of dull, dry, dusty statistics, but prefers to focus on some of the characters and events that have helped to shape the modern census, including: Alexander Webster, Sir John Sinclair, The Reverend James Whitelaw, Thomas Malthus, John Rickman, William Farr, Herman Hollerith, the suffragette Emily Davison, Horatio Bottomley MP, World War II and Eamonn Andrews. He will attempt to show that history teaches us that, as far as modern census taking is concerned, there is, perhaps, little that is new under the sun."

Ian White has worked at ONS (and its predecessors, the Office for Population Censuses and Surveys, and the General Register Office) for more years than he cares to remember, and has been involved - in one way or another - in every census since 1971. He claims to be the last remaining active member of the ONS staff who has worked at Somerset House, the home of the very first GRO census in 1841 - though he does not remember that. He currently leads the ONS Census Legislation and Parliamentary Liaison Team; is involved in working within Eurostat and the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe on international census matters; and is writing a book on the history of the UK Census for publication in the New Year.

5.30pm, Monday 13 September, Lecture theatre Newman E.

Fringe sessions: Monday 13 September, 5.30pm, Seminar Rooms 1 & 2.

Radical Statistics

Hosts: Lee Williamson, Ludi Simpson

The meeting will provide a background to the Radical Statistics Group, discuss a new initiative to monitor cutbacks in statistics worldwide, and suggest some relevant examples within population studies.

The Radical Statistics Group, usually abbreviated to RadStats, was formed in 1975 as part of the radical science movement associated with the establishment of the British Society for Social Responsibility in Science (BSSRS).

RadStats members (not limited to researchers and statisticians) share a common concern about the political implications of research, and an awareness of the actual and potential misuse of statistics:

- The mystifying use of technical language to disguise social problems as technical ones
- The power structures within which statistical and research workers are employed and which control the work and how it is used
- The challenge of defining democratic research methods.

The group works through a three-yearly newsletter/journal, an annual conference in February, and support to campaigns when the opportunity arises.

A recent RadStats initiative compiles instances of reductions in public statistics worldwide, which will be summarised in this talk.

Population studies have been closely allied to policy concerns, so it is not surprising that a political context often influences the choice of topic matter and the weight given to different assumptions in demographic work. On the one hand standard demographic models can obscure alternative approaches. On the other hand, a demographic approach can often clarify policy debates to helpfully distinguish fact from wishful thinking or manipulation.

Participants in this session will be invited to discuss examples from population studies in which powerful political influences may influence the approach taken, and the response of researchers.

Radical Statistics: www.radstats.org.uk

ReducedStatistics blog: <http://radstats.wordpress.com/>

POPGROUP's new clothes

Host: Peter Boden

The latest development in the POPGROUP suite of software will be described, demonstrated and discussed: the Derived Forecast module. It provides flexibility in defining forecasts of any characteristic closely related to age and sex, including household formation, economic activity and disability.

The UK-based population projection software POPGROUP has outgrown its origins 10 years ago, expanding from five English local authority users to over 80 users spread across countries in and beyond the UK, across different public service sectors, and including national agencies.

Based in Excel, it allows users to set up an annual single age component cohort projection for any set of areas, ethnic or social groups, and subsequently to project the number of households and the labour force consequent on the demographic dynamics.

Central to POPGROUP's working has been its integration into projections of known estimates. It allows historical series to precede projections in the same model, and enables 'dwelling-led' projections where migration is determined by the levels of planned housing.

In particular, the Derived Forecast module available later in 2010 will replicate any of the four approaches to sub-national household projections published in the UK for England (by CLG), Wales (WAG), Scotland (GROS) and Northern Ireland (NISRA), which are substantially different. This flexibility will extend to specifications used in other countries, and characteristics other than households.

Peter Boden: pete@edgeanalytics.co.uk

POPGROUP: www.ccsr.ac.uk/popgroup
