

# What's special about Russia's fertility and reproduction? *A comparative European perspective*

Tomáš Sobotka

Vienna Institute of Demography (Austrian Academy of Sciences),  
Wittgenstein Centre for Demography and Global Human Capital

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Trends in Russia*, Moscow, 22 November 2019



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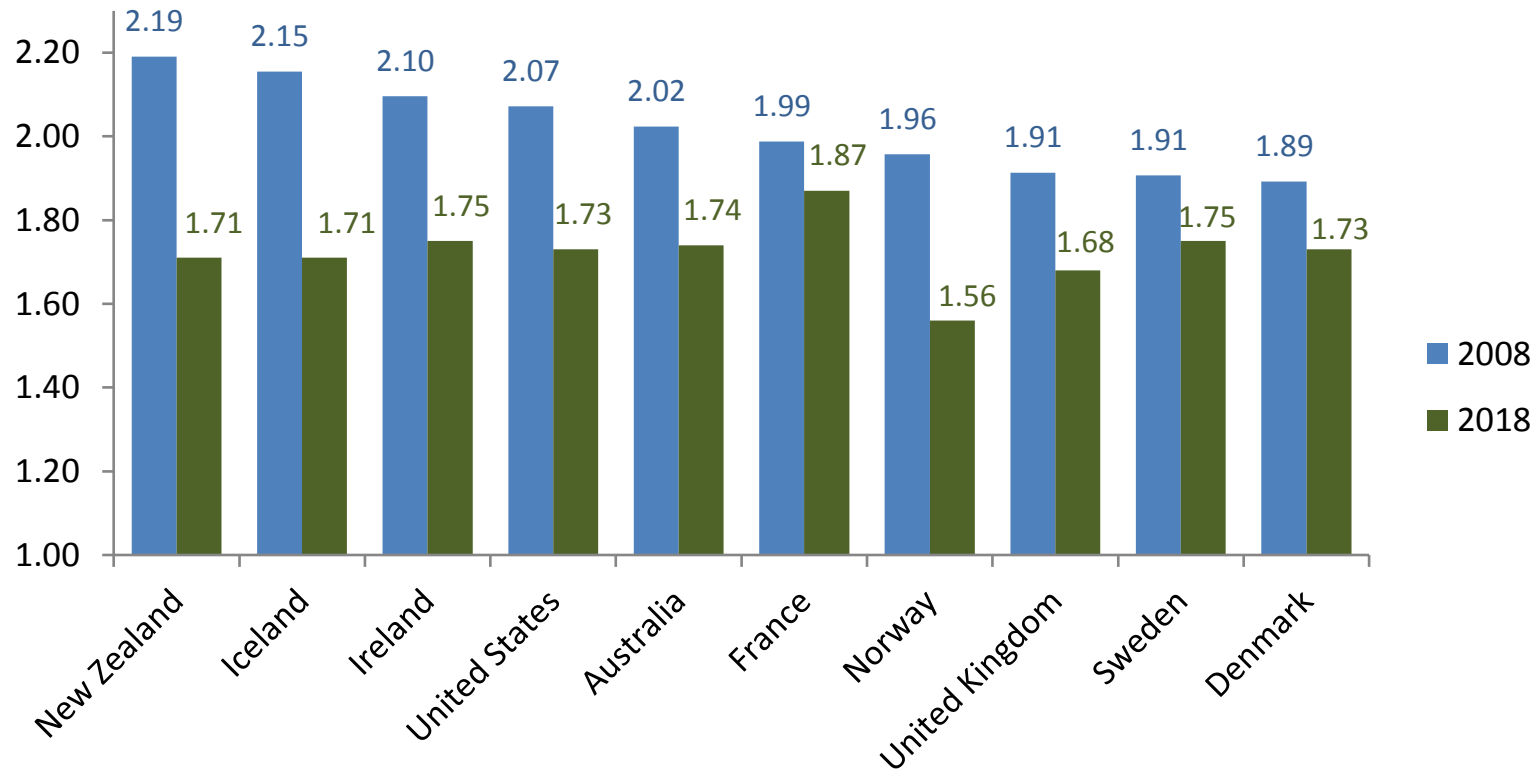
# Background: the diversity of low fertility

*Highly developed countries & broader regions: contrasts in low fertility trends and their underlying factors*

- The “*Great divergence*” in fertility? (Billari 2018)
- The “*ultra-low*” fertility: Southern Europe, East Asia
- The *postponement transition*: Continuing influence of delayed parenthood on period fertility trends
- Increasing *family complexity*
- The bumpy *post-communist transition*: specific pathways of fertility change in Central and Eastern Europe
- Unexpected period fertility declines after the “*Great Recession*”
- Diverse *policy responses*: pro-natalist policies in parts of Central & Eastern Europe and East Asia

# Falling period Total Fertility Rates (TFR), 2008 - 2018

10 developed countries with the highest TFR in 2008



Sources: Human Fertility Database (2019), Eurostat (2019), national statistical offices



Photographer: Rick Matman

Benchmark

# Finland's Welfare State Has a Massive Baby Problem

The number of newborns has fallen to its lowest level in 148 years

By Raine Tiessalo

September 19, 2017, 6:00 AM GMT+2

NEWS in ENGLISH . no  
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## Record-low fertility rate raises concern

March 7, 2018

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Only 56,600 children were born in Norway last year, 2,300 fewer than in 2016 and resulting in the lowest national fertility rate ever recorded. With immigration growth also down, the declines are raising new worries about the consequences for the social welfare state.



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## Low birth rate "approaching epidemic"

Medical professionals encourage government to create incentives for children

February 13th, 2013 11:19 am | by admin

HEALTH NEWS NOVEMBER 29, 2018 / 3:00 PM / 10 MONTHS AGO

# Record-low birth rate threatens Finland's welfare system: Finance Minister

Anne Kauranen, Jussi Rosendahl

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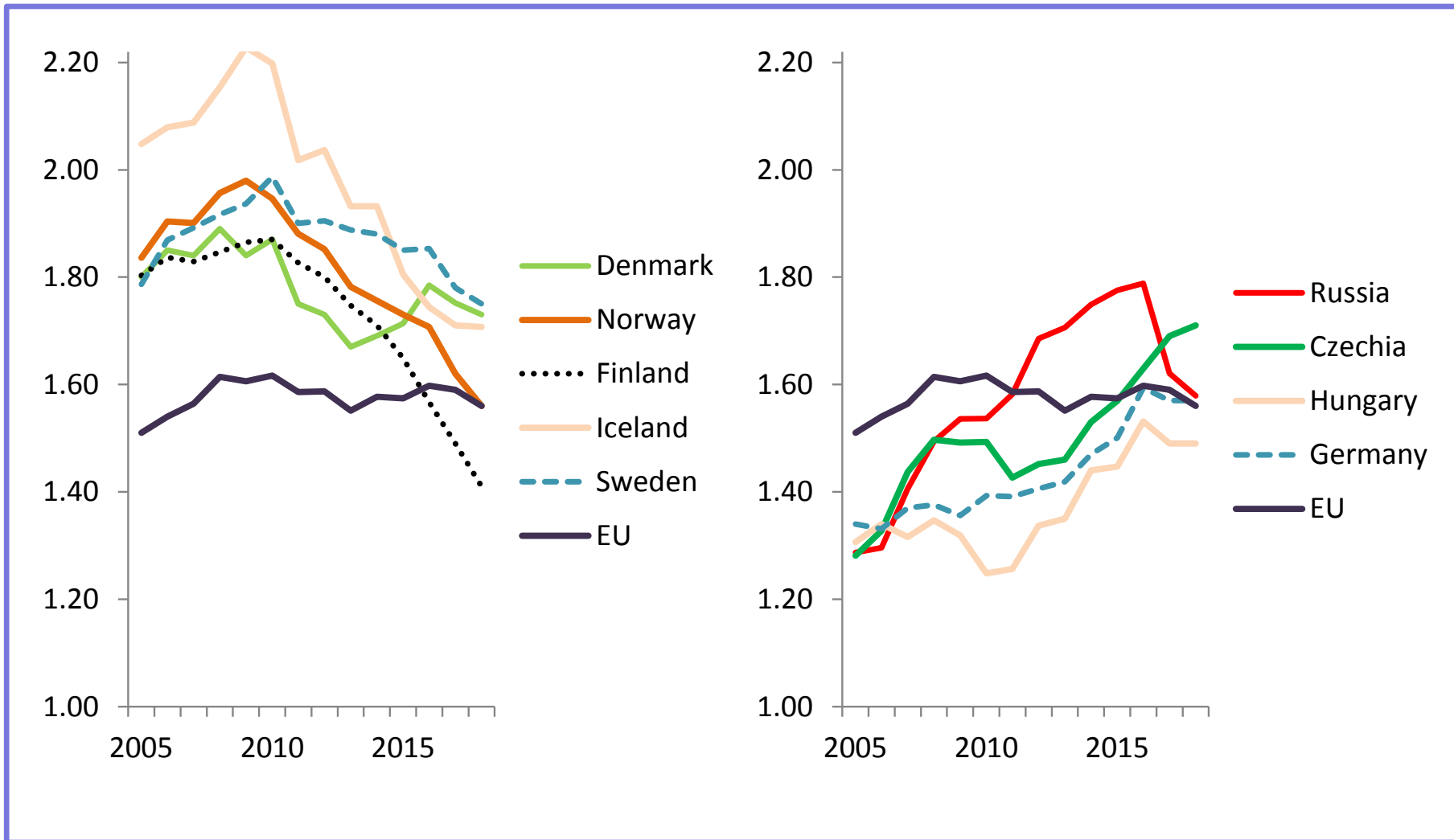
## The U.S. Birth Rate Just Hit a Record Low, but Don't Panic



Source:  
<https://www.healthline.com/health-news/u-s-fertility-rates-hit-all-time-low>

- The CDC reported U.S. fertility rates declined by 2 percent between 2017 and 2018.
- The current rate is now at a historic low that follows a pattern of continual decline over several years in the United States.
- Experts say the declining rate is due to many contributing factors, including obesity, pollution, lower teen pregnancy rates, and decisions to start families later in life.

# Contrasting period fertility trends in Europe, 2005-2018



Source: Human Fertility Database, Council of Europe 2006, Eurostat, national statistical offices

# Agenda

Focus: Fertility shifts in Russia since 1990 in a European comparison

- Fertility levels and trends: period and cohort perspectives
- Diversity, disparities and contrasts in low fertility
- The new cultural divides? *Slow contraceptive revolution & stalled second demographic transition*

Questions, issues

- *What are the defining trends and shifts in Russian fertility?*
  - *Commonalities with other parts of Europe vs. unique characteristics*
- Ten messages on the distinct patterns & features in Russian fertility

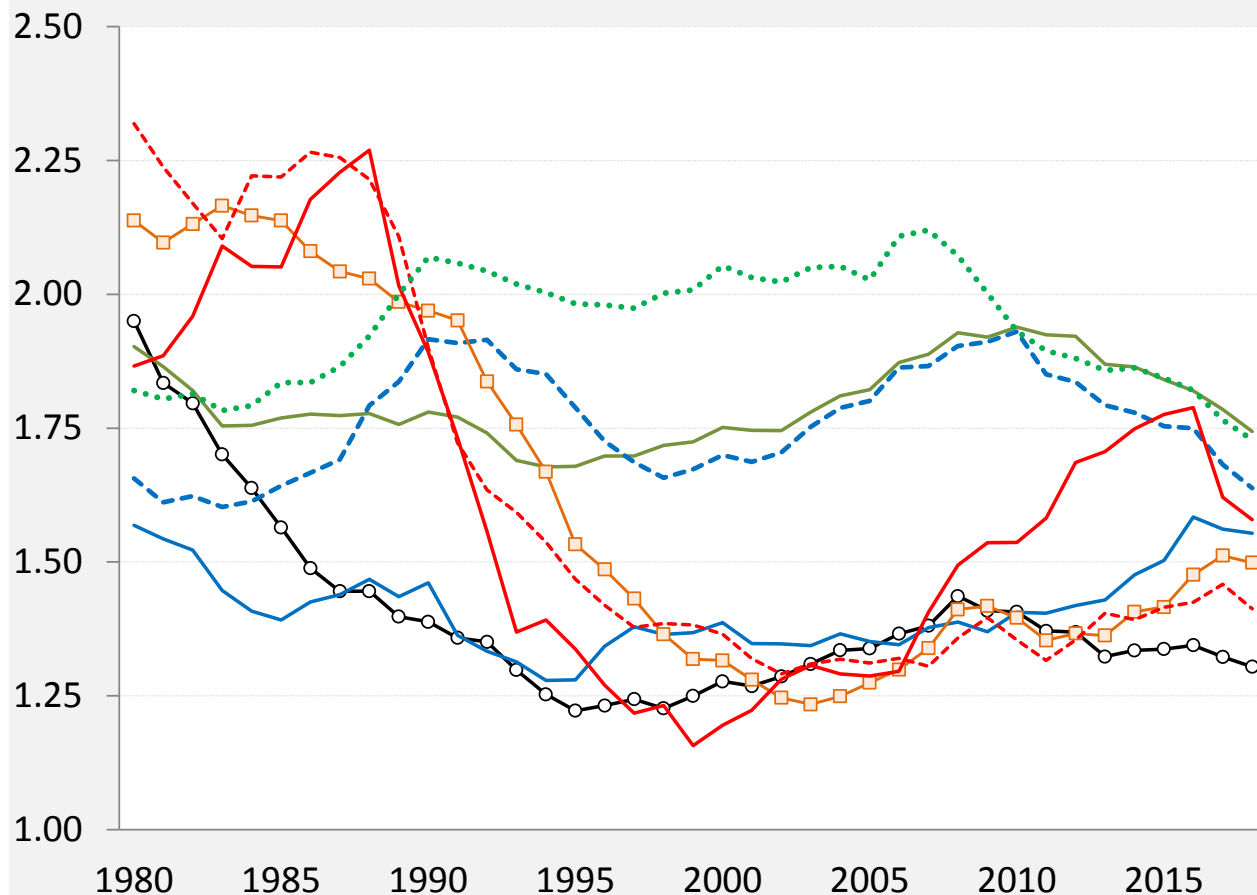
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# Fertility levels and trends: period and cohort perspectives

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# Period total fertility rates in Europe & the United States: Regional ups, downs and cross-overs

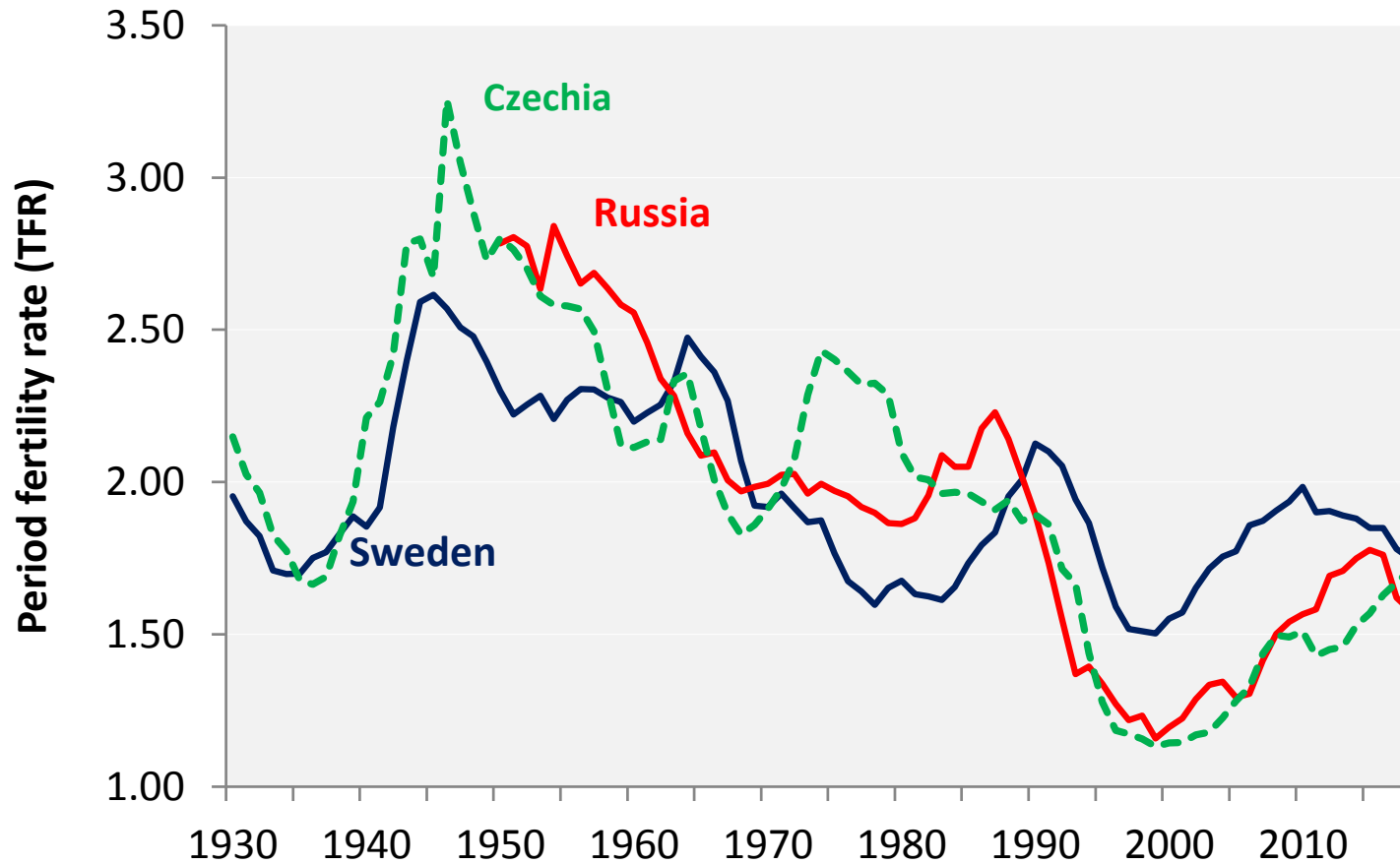


—○— Southern Europe  
— Germany, Austria, Switzerland  
—□— Central-Eastern Europe  
— Russia  
— Western Europe  
- - - Nordic countries  
- - - South-Eastern Europe  
... United States

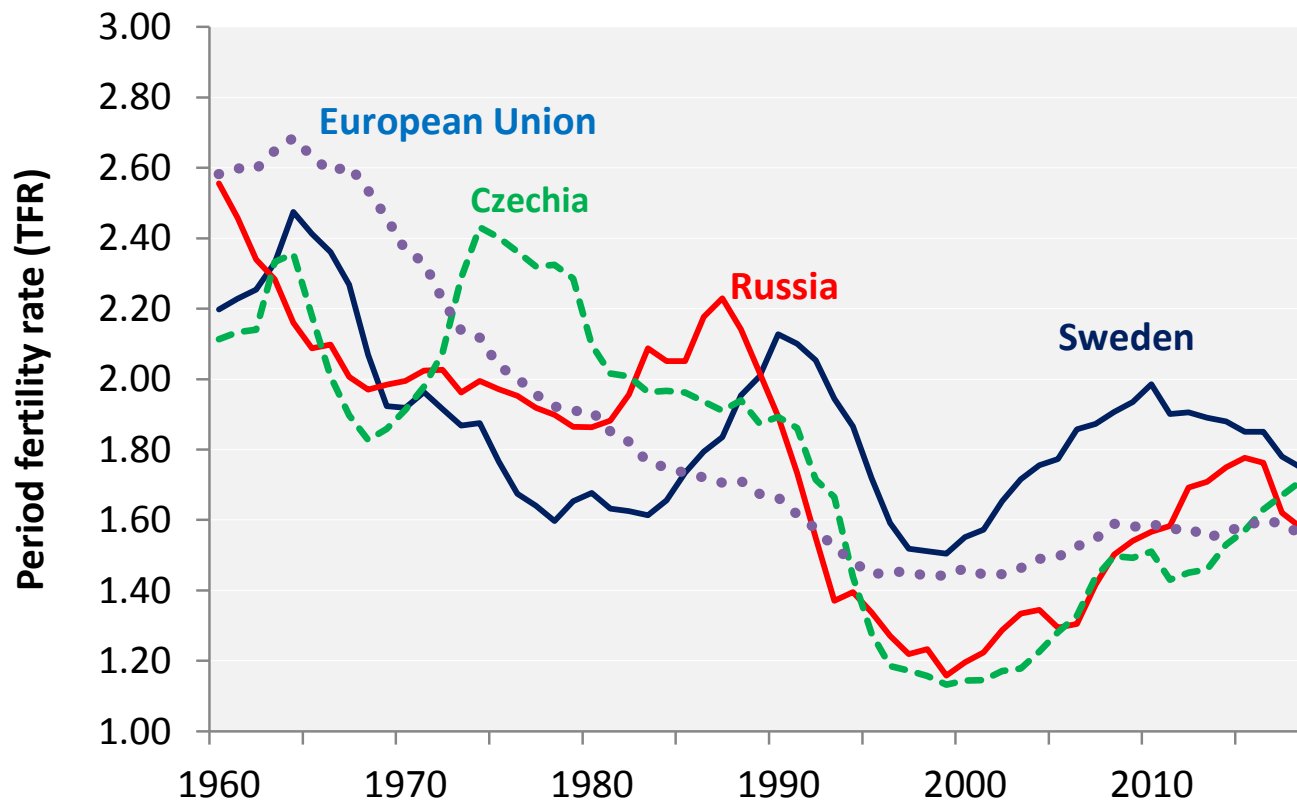
Period TFR,  
European  
regions, Russia  
and the United  
States, 1980-  
2018

Source: National  
statistical offices  
(2019), Eurostat  
(2019), Human  
Fertility Database  
(2019)

# Message #1: Period fertility in Russia unstable: cycles of booms and busts



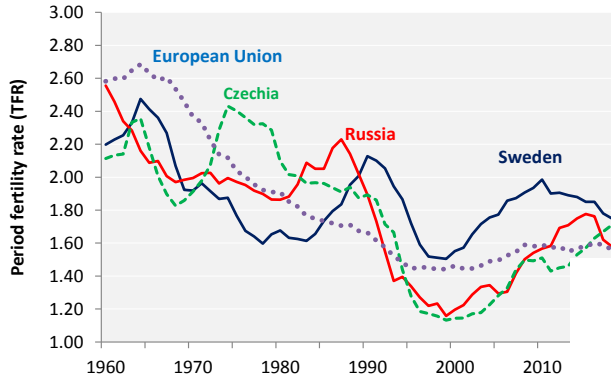
**Sources:** Human Fertility Database, Statistics Sweden 2018, Czech Statistical Office 2018, Rosstat 2018



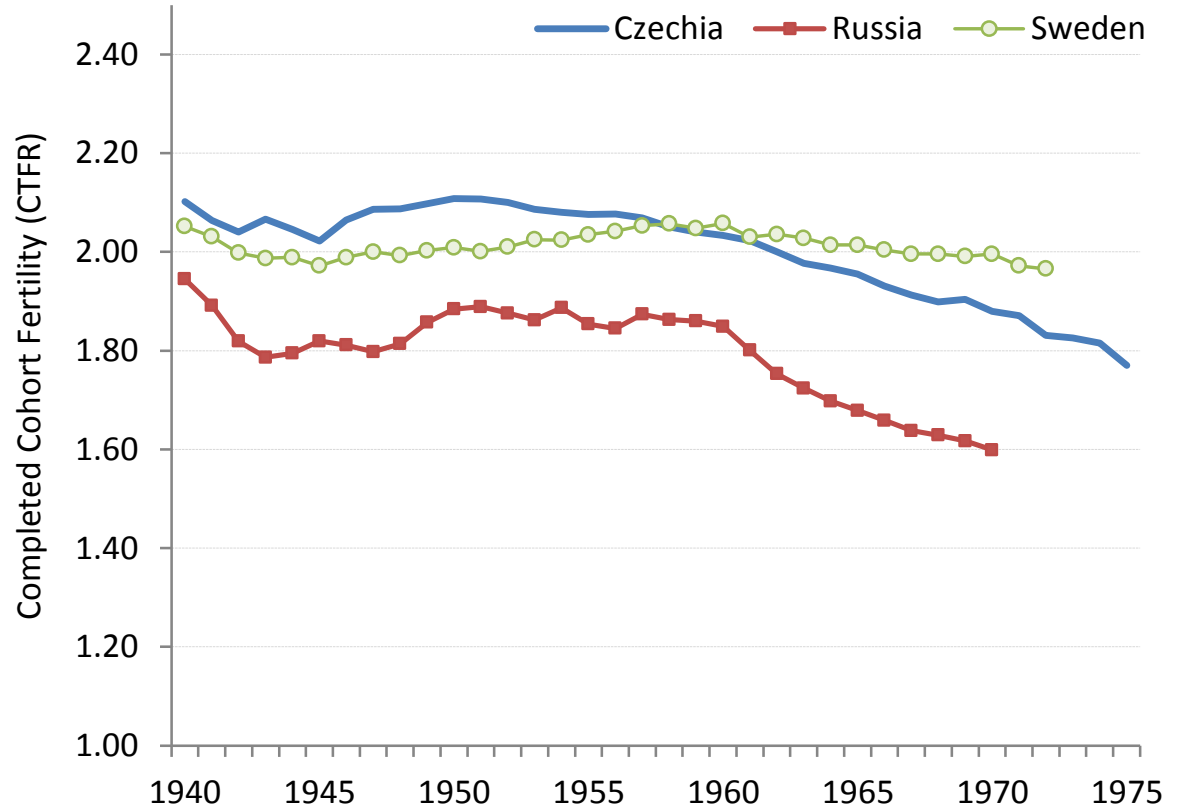
### Average absolute annual TFR change, 1980-2017:

- Russia: 4.1%
- European average 2.7%
- France: 1.4%; EU-28: 1.3%

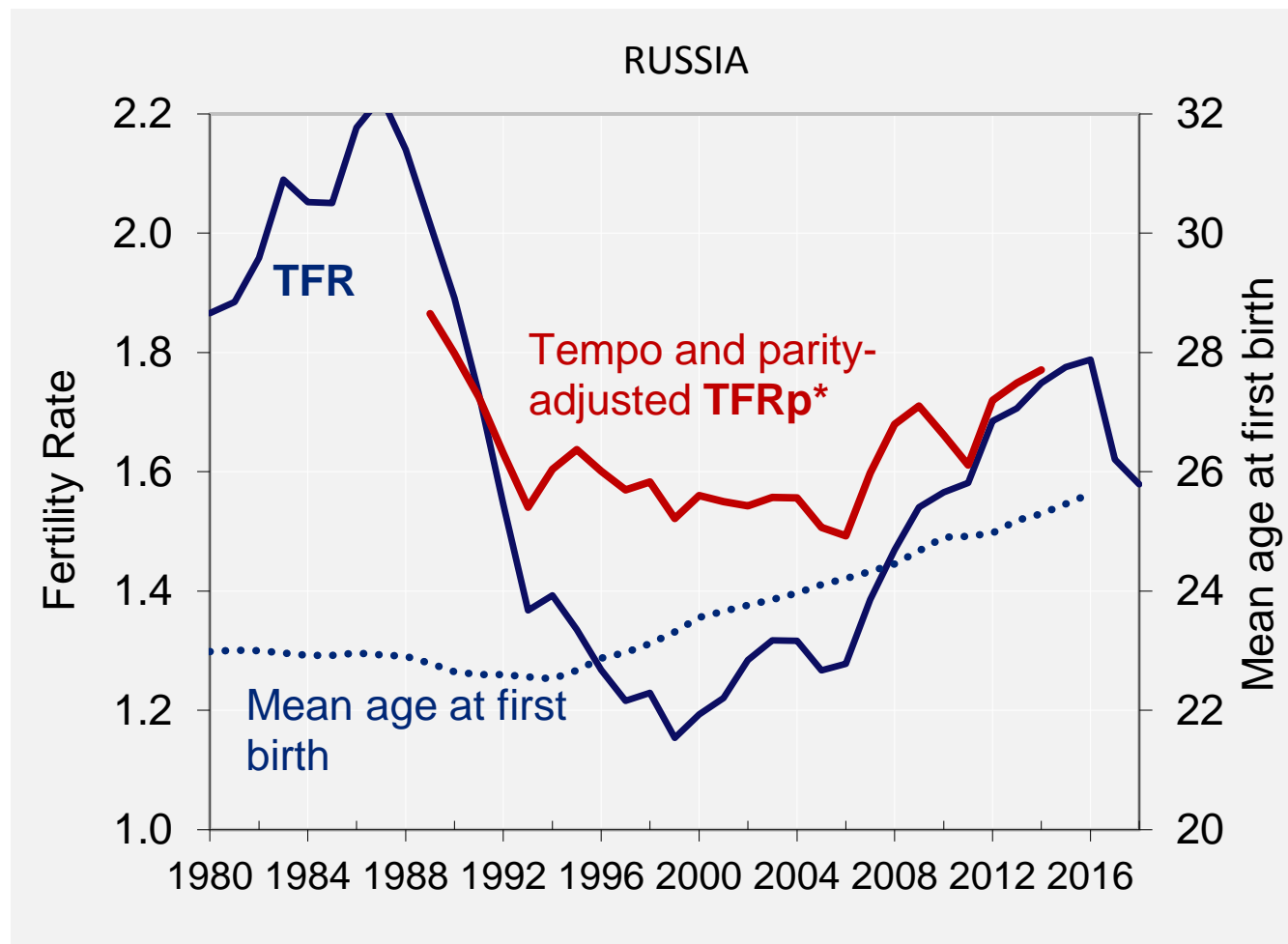
# Period TFR booms and busts not reflected in cohort fertility trends



Completed cohort fertility in  
Czechia, Russia  
and Sweden,  
women born  
1940-75

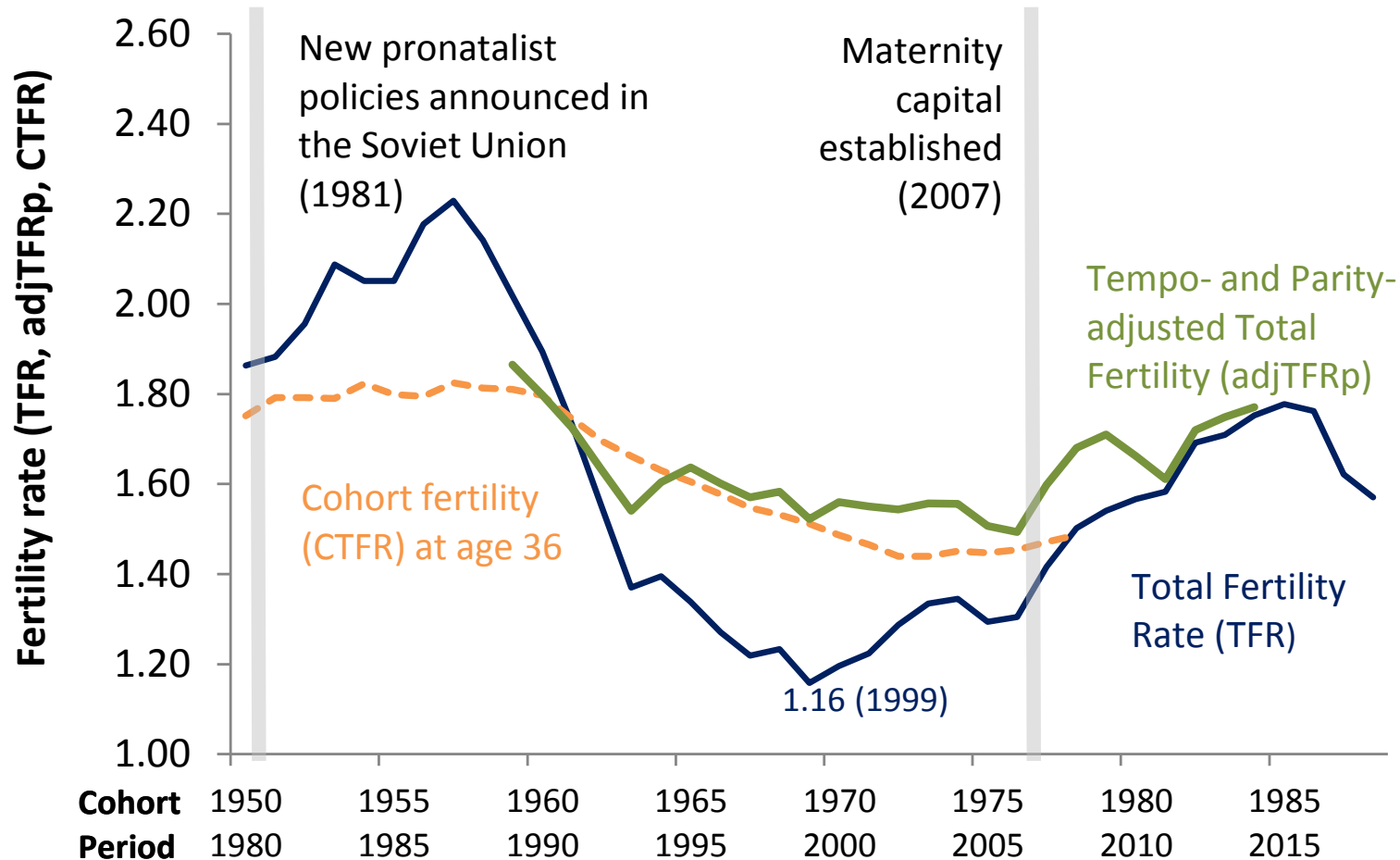


## Message #2: Period TFR fluctuations largely driven by timing shifts / *tempo effect*



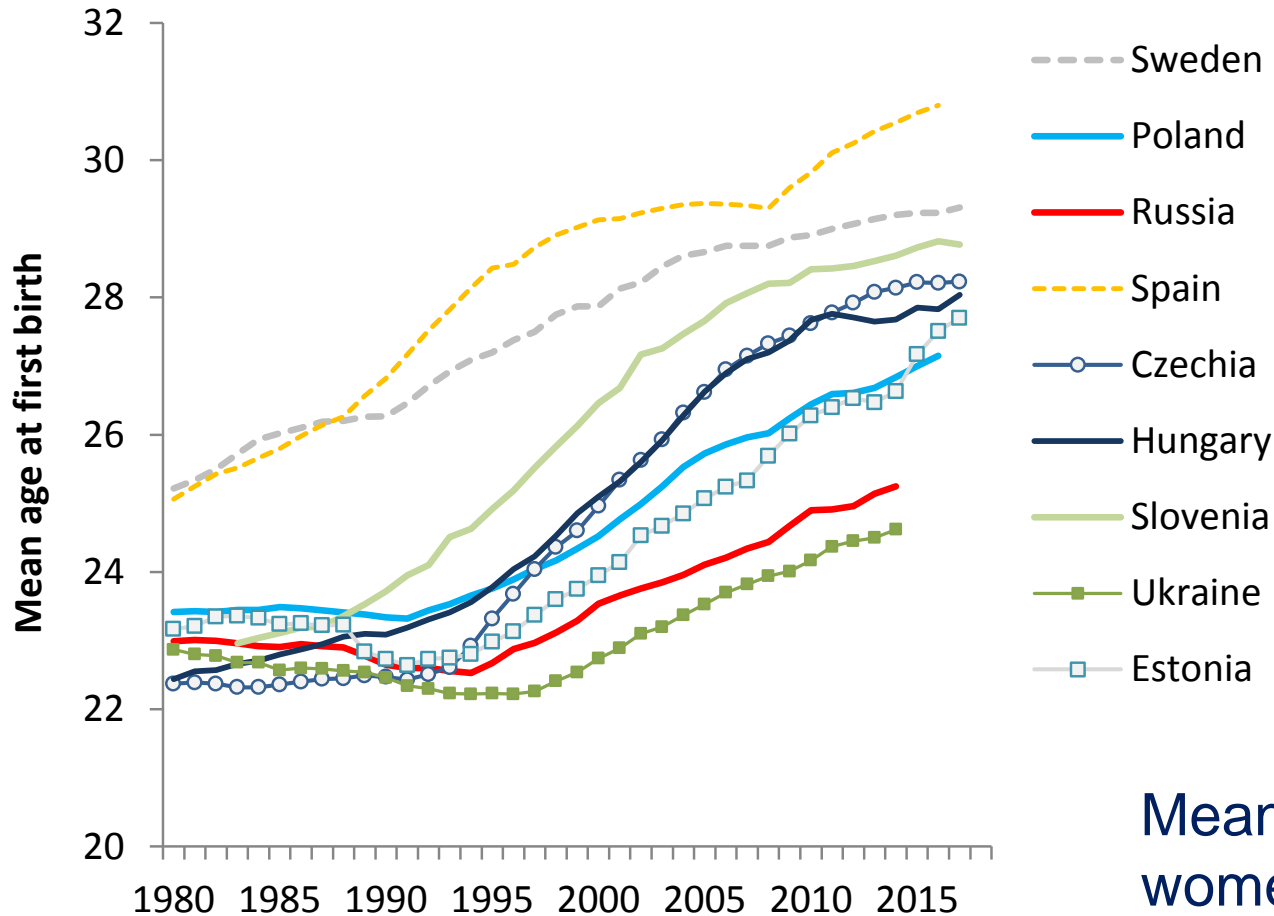
**Sources:** Adopted and updated from *European Demographic Data Sheet 2018*

# Message #3: Period TFR fluctuations (& timing shifts) partly linked to policy interventions



**Sources:** Sobotka, Matysiak and Brzozowska (2019) *Policy responses to low fertility: How effective are they?* UNFPA report, forthcoming

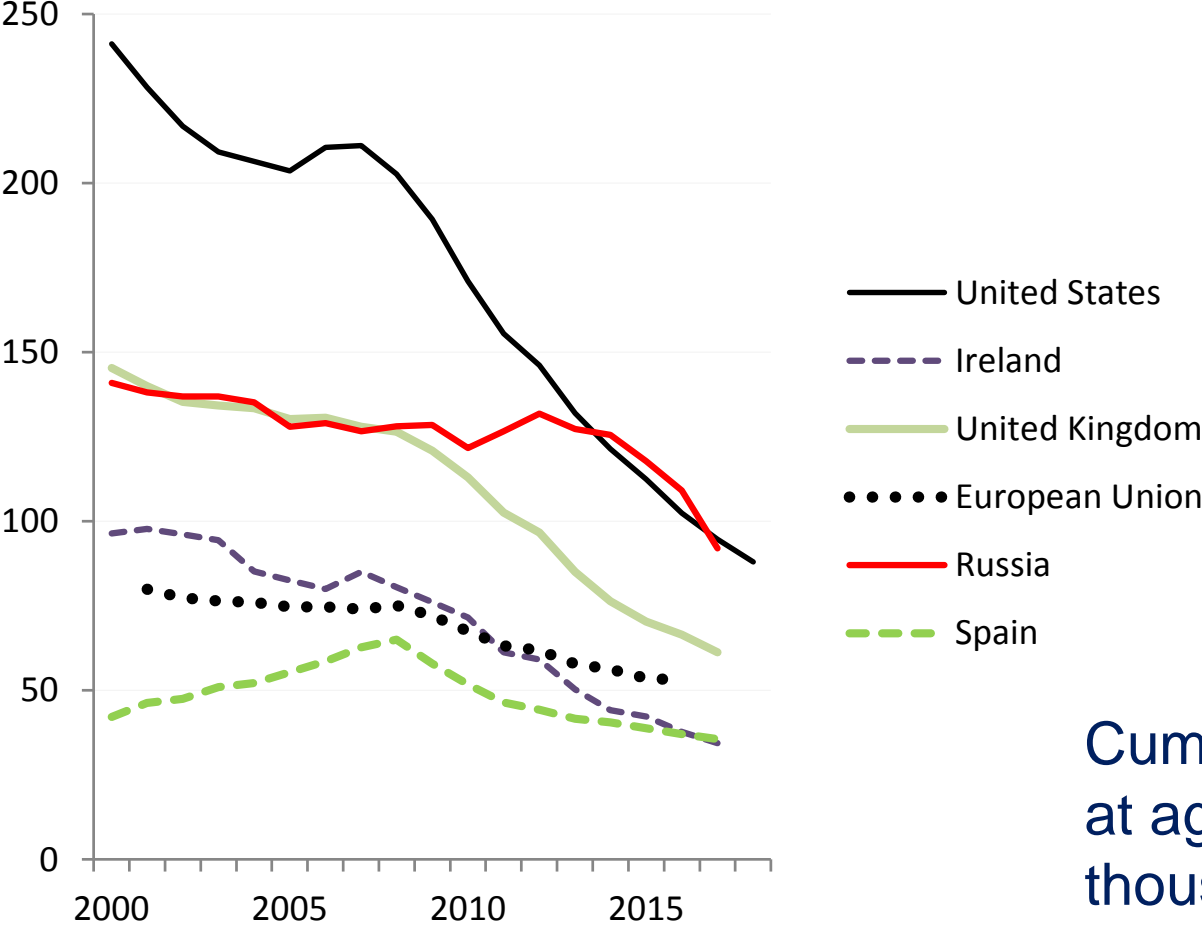
## Message #4: The „postponement transition“ in Russia proceeding slower than in most other CEE countries



Mean age at first birth,  
women, 1980-2017

Sources: Human Fertility Database (2019)

# An accelerated decline in teenage fertility rates: Russia compared with selected other countries, 2000-2018



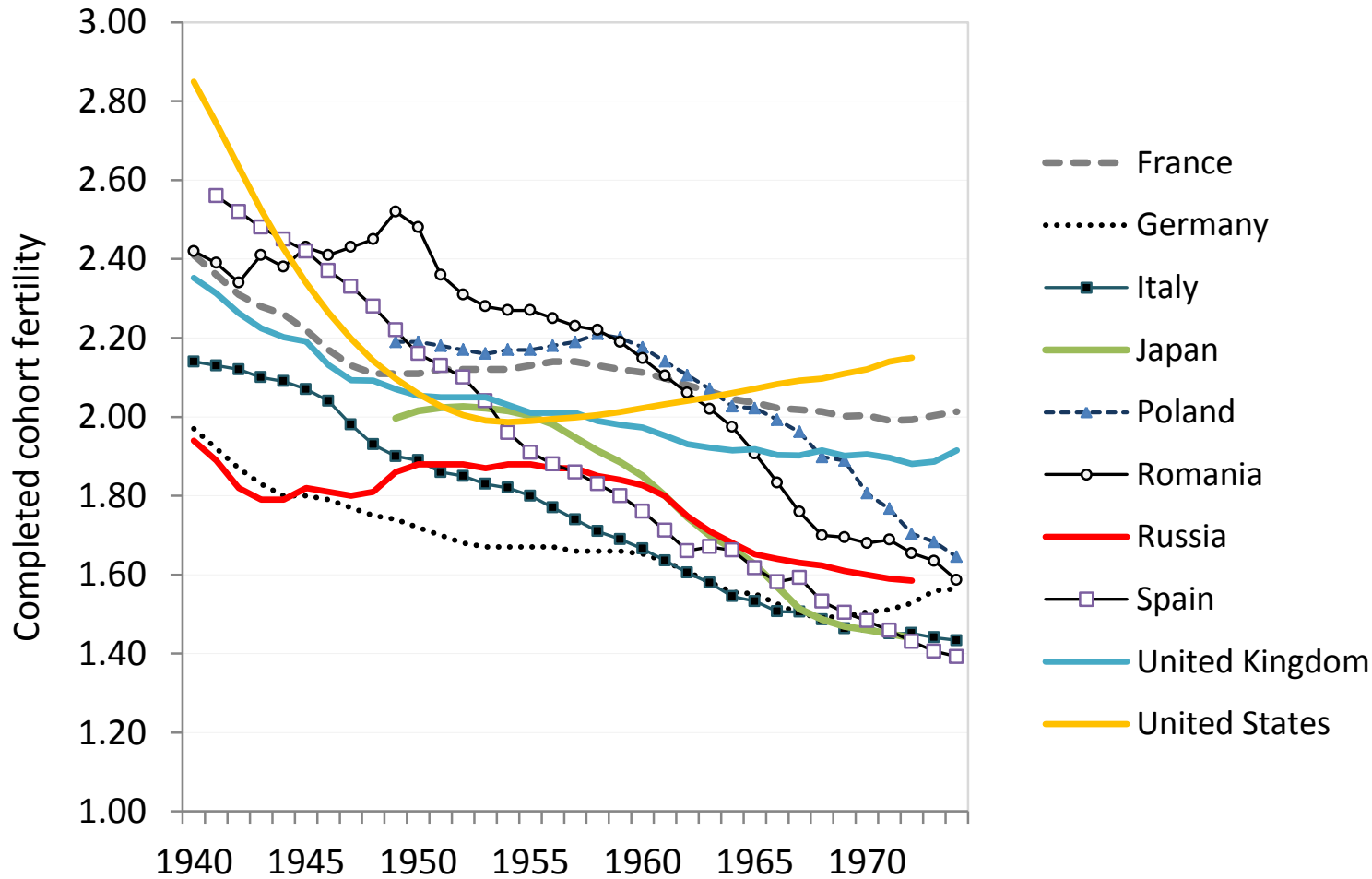
Cumulated fertility rate at ages 12-19 (per thousand women)

Sources: Eurostat database (2019); Human Fertility Database (2019), national statistical offices



# Cohort fertility: Gradual changes, no clear divides

Completed fertility (children per woman), selected countries in Europe, Japan and the US, women born 1940-1975

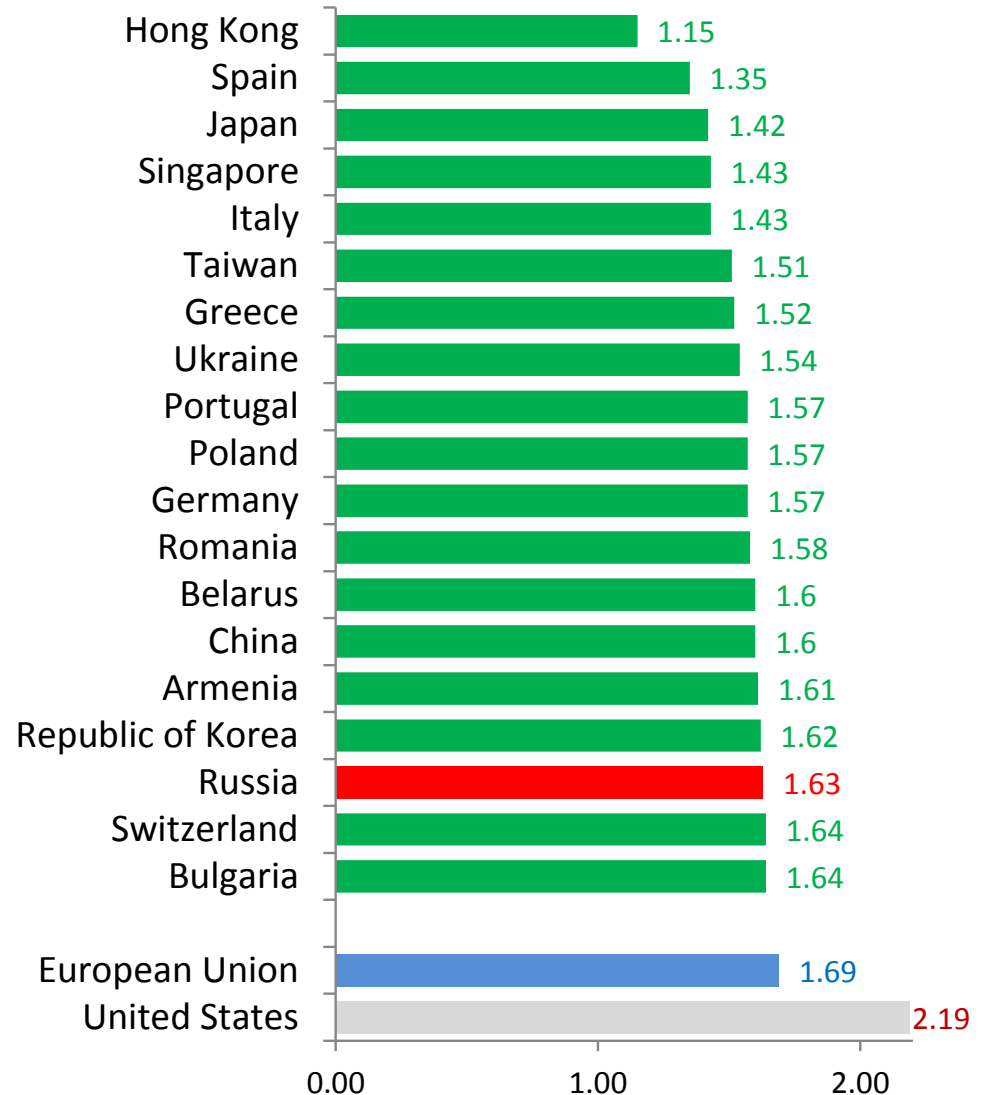


Sources: Sobotka (JBS, 2017); data based on Human Fertility Database, Council of Europe (2006), CFE database, national statistical offices, Census data, and own computations and projections

# Russia ranking low, but not very low in completed fertility

Countries with the lowest cohort fertility rate globally (women born in or around 1976)

Completed fertility (children per woman born in 1976)



Sources: European Demographic Data Sheet 2018 , Census data, Human Fertility Database (2019), national statistical offices and own computations

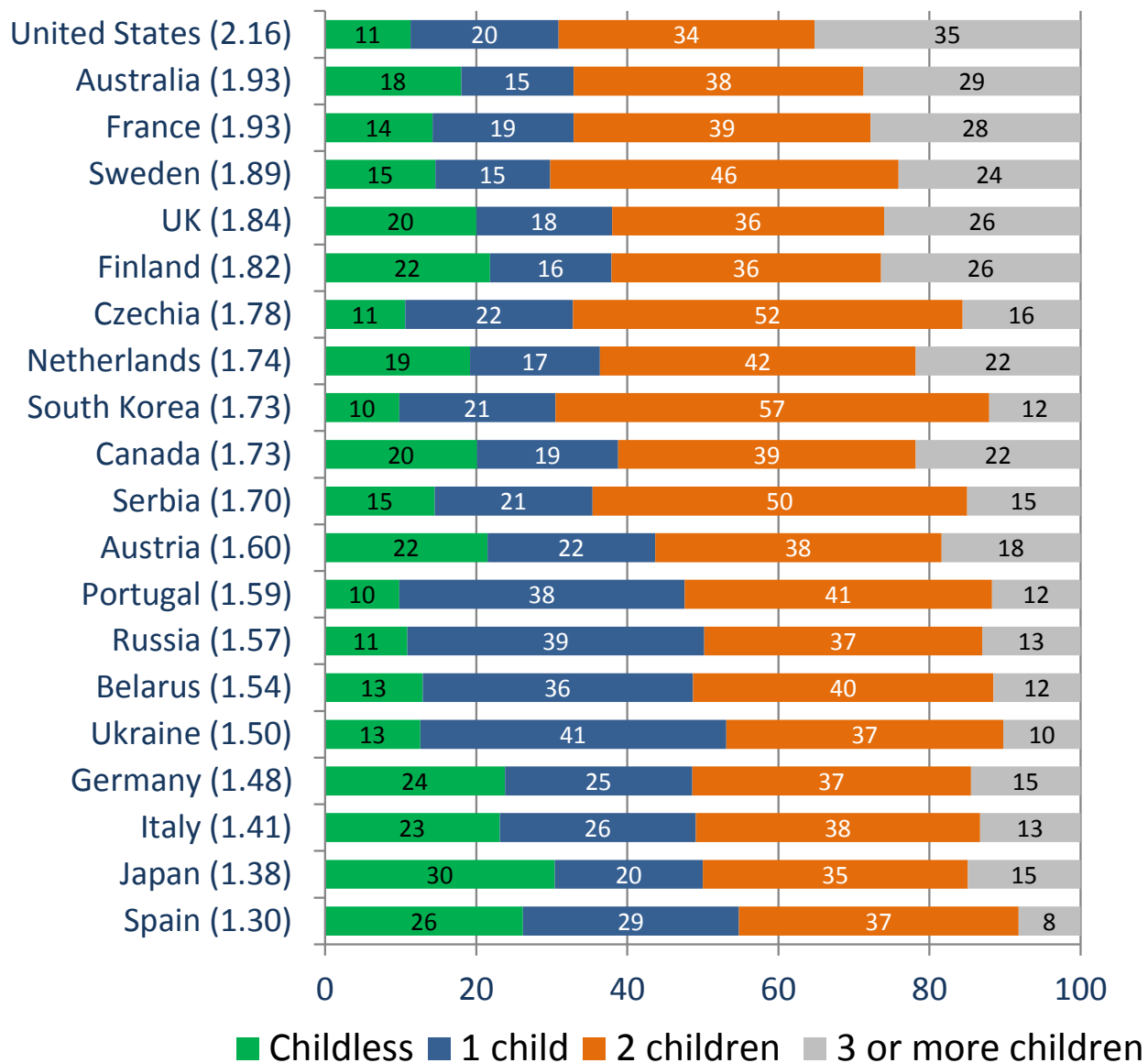
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# Diversity, disparities and contrasts in low fertility

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# Cross-country contrasts in family size and parity distribution

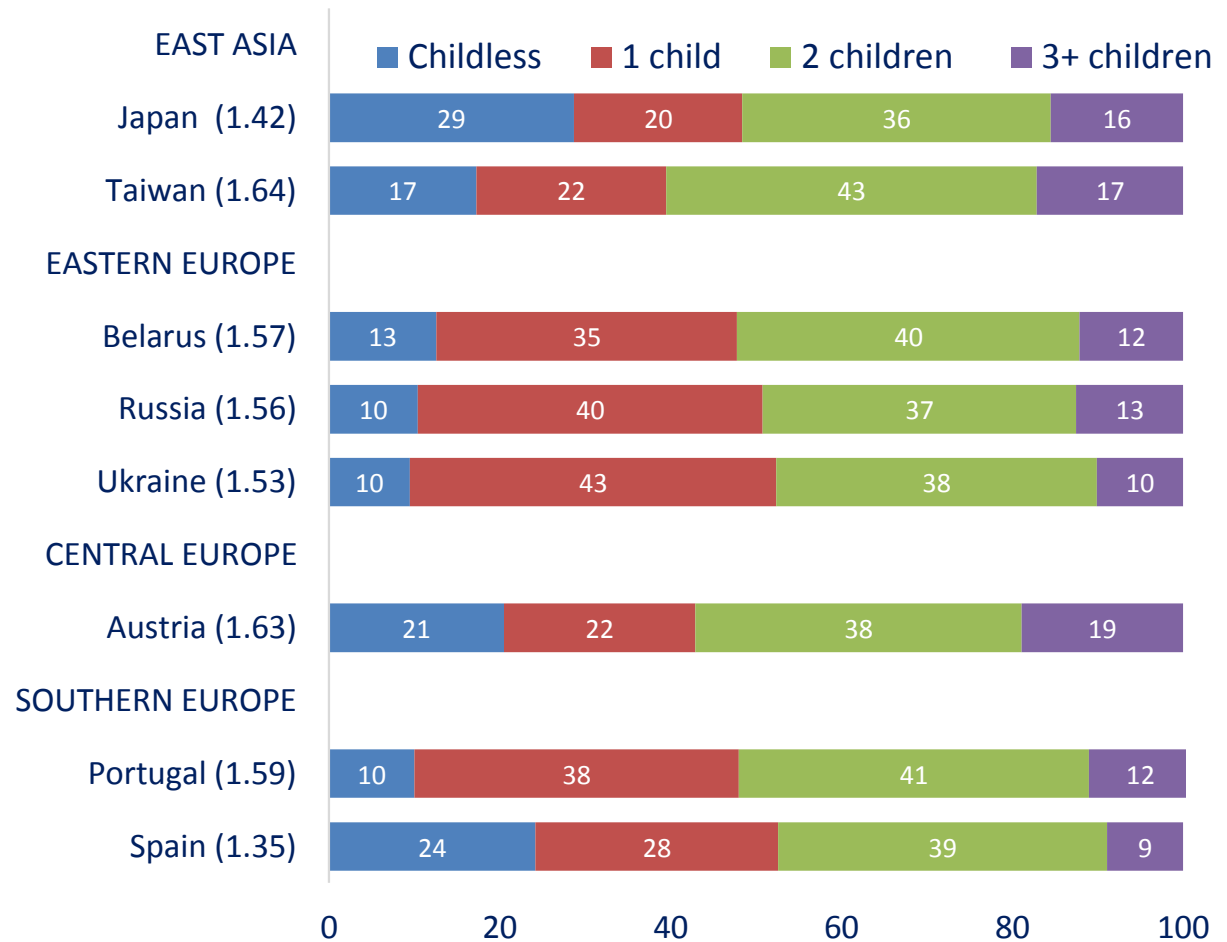
Family size distribution at age 40, women born in 1974



Sources: *State of the World Population 2018*, Figure 32 and HFD (2019)

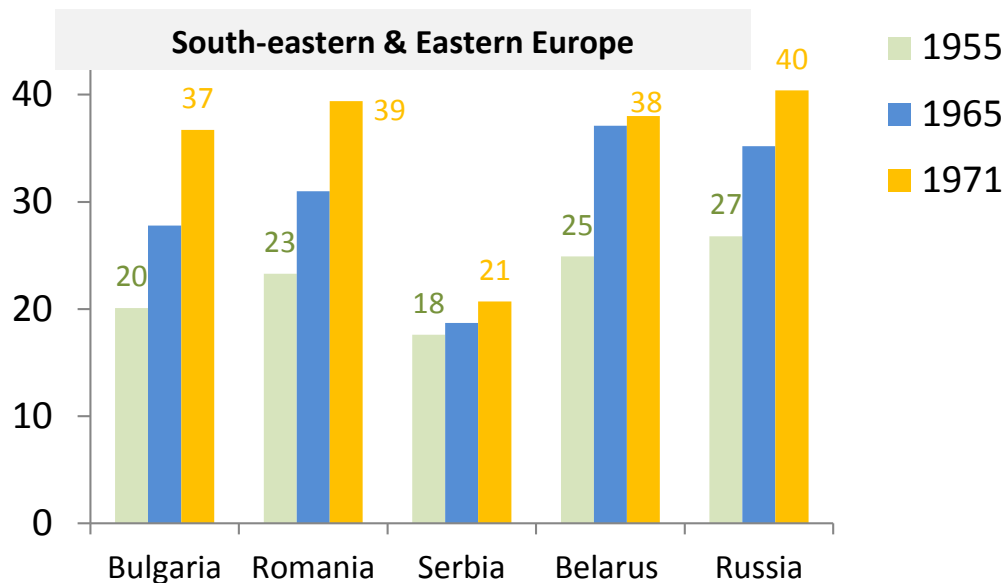
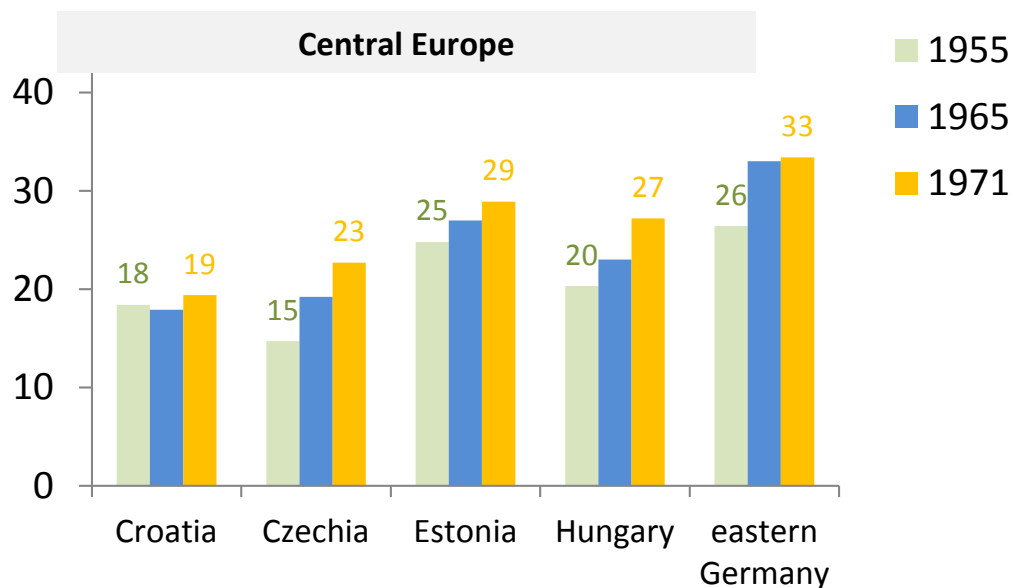
# Cross-country contrasts in family size and parity distribution

Family size distribution at age 40, women born in or around 1974 (low-fertility regions)



Sources: *State of the World Population 2018*, Figure 32 and HFD (2019)

# Message #5: cohort fertility declines driven by rising share of women with one child

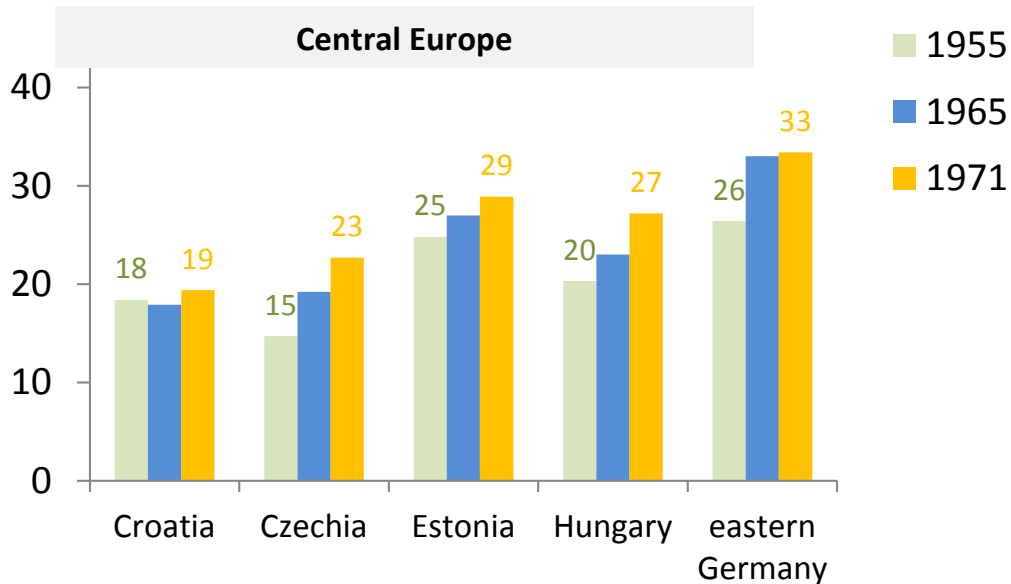


Share of women with one child (cohorts 1955, 1965, 1971)

Russia, Belarus, Bulgaria: prominent role of declining second birth rates

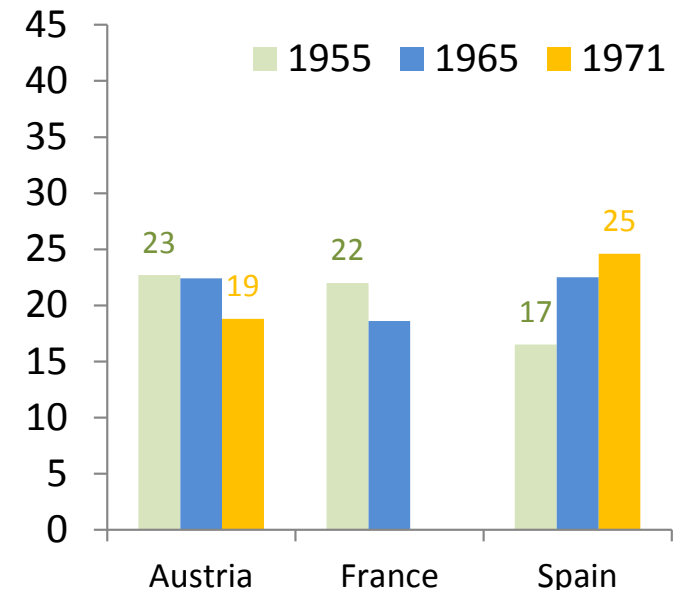
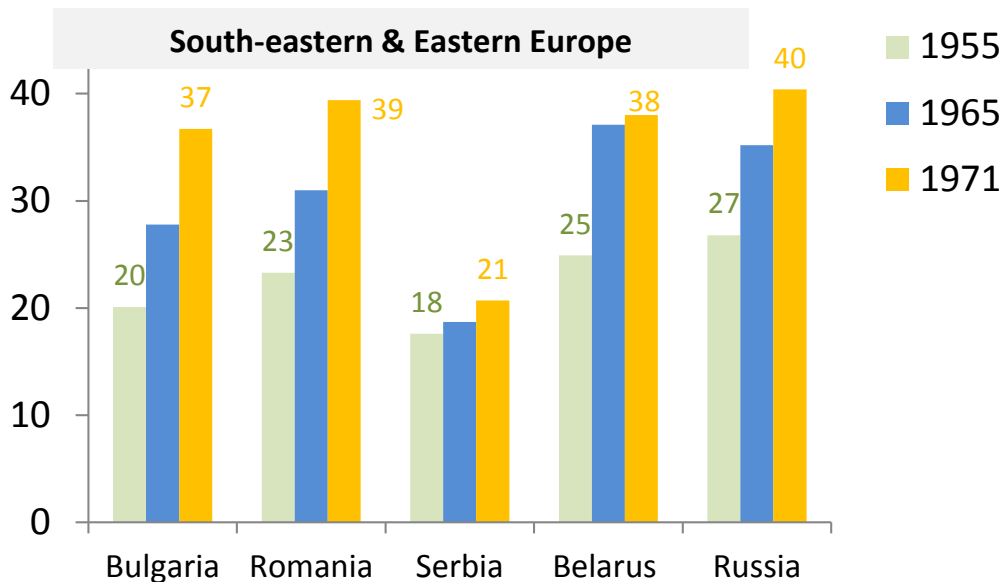
Zeman, K. et al. 2018. "Cohort fertility decline in low fertility countries: Decomposition using parity progression ratios", *Demographic Research* 38(25): 651-690.

# Message #5: A rise in one-child families driving cohort fertility declines

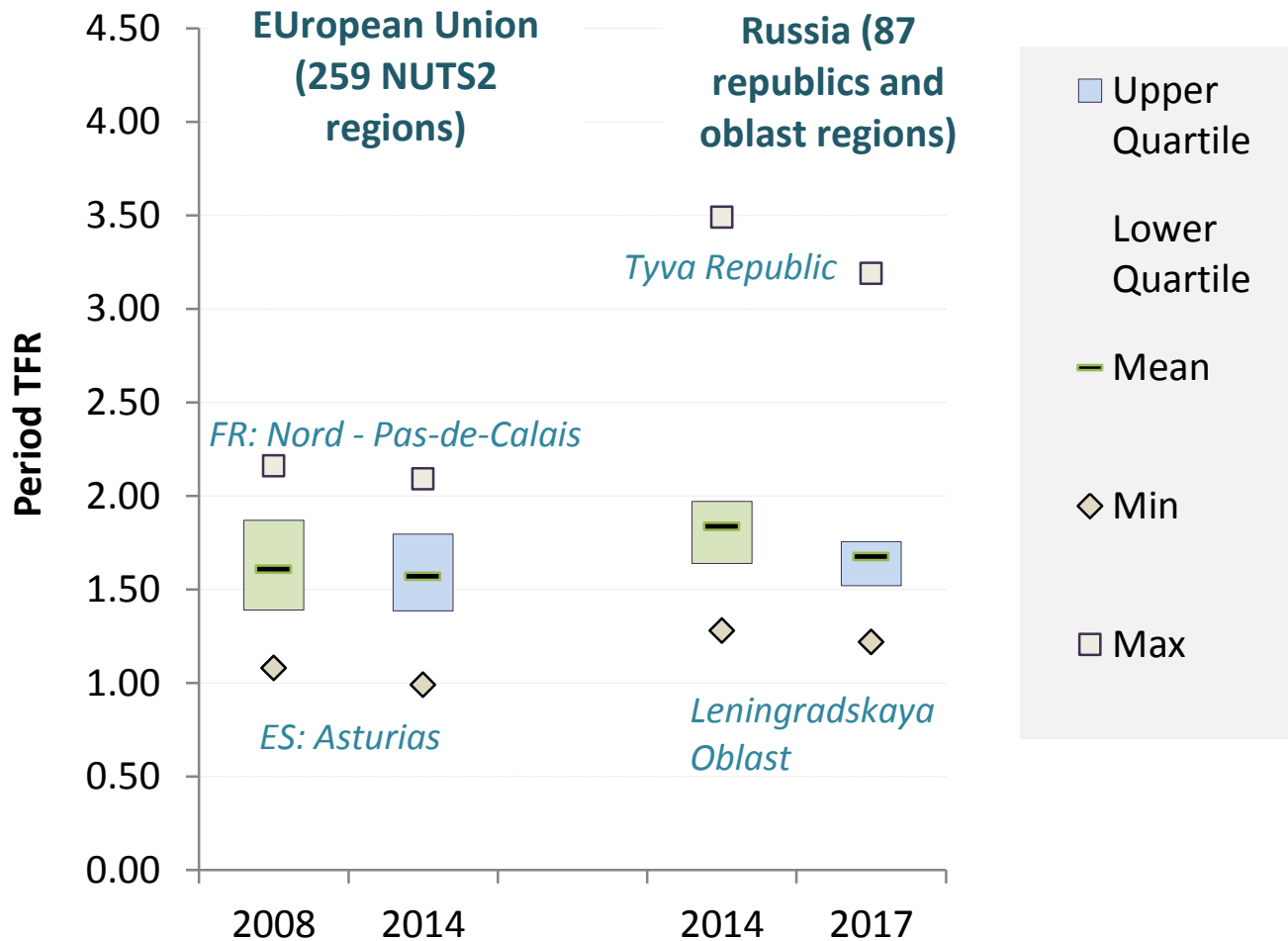


Share of women with one child (cohorts 1955, 1965, 1971)

Sources: Human Fertility Database (2019), CFE database (2019), German *Microcensus* 2012



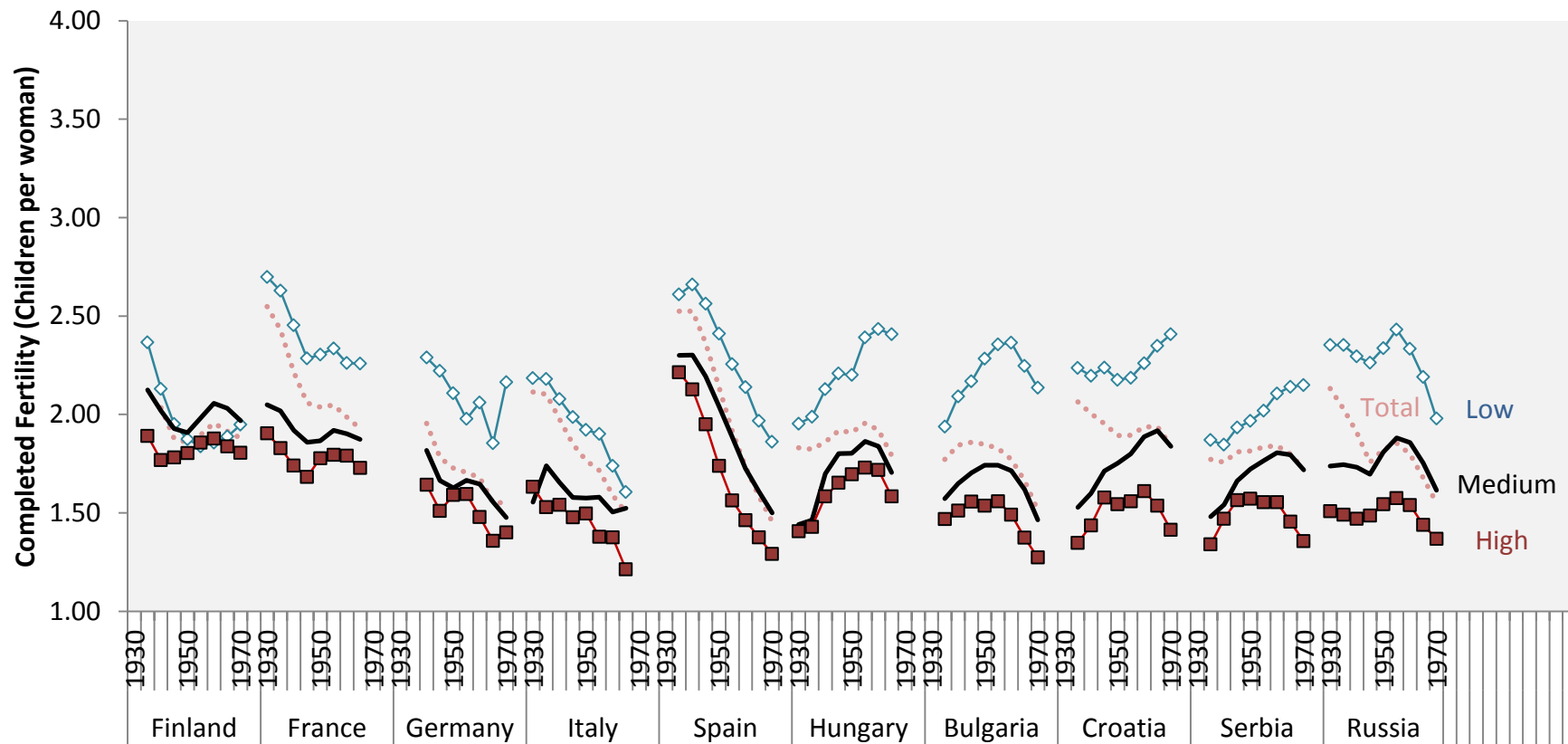
# Message #6: Regional disparities: more regions with high high fertility in Russia



Sources: Eurostat database (2019); Rosstat, Demoskop



# Message #7: Social status disparities: Very low fertility among highly educated women

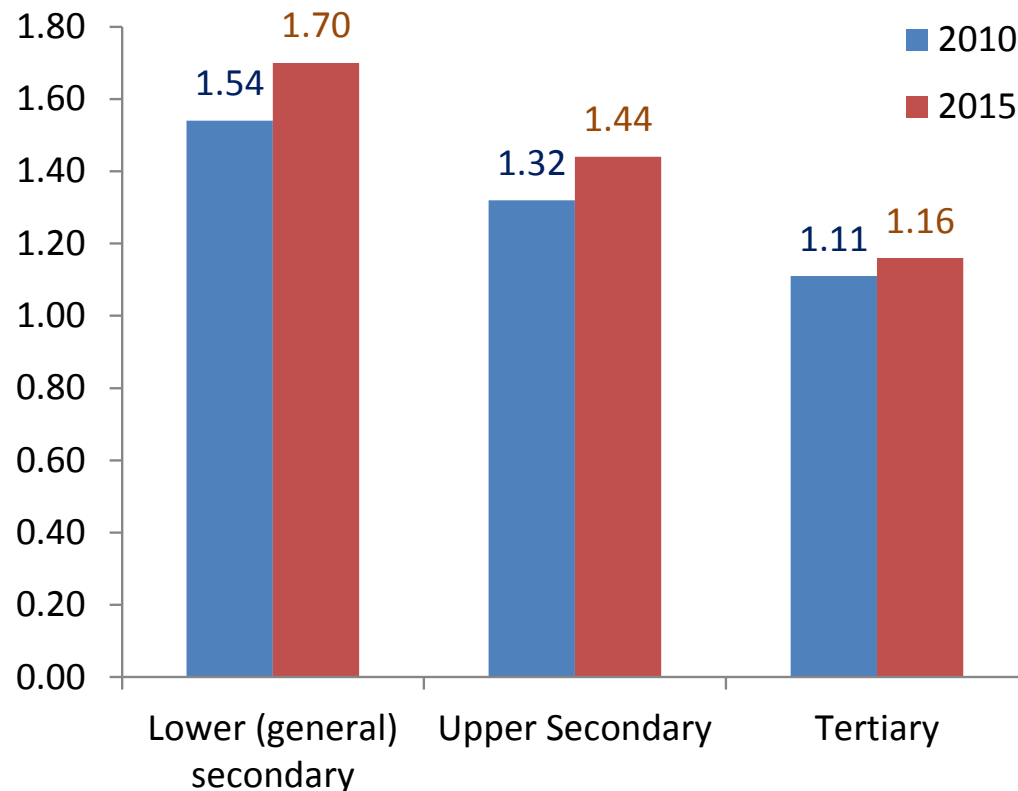


## Completed fertility by level of education, women born 1930-1970 (selected European countries)

**Source:** CFE database (2019). Based on T Sobotka, E Beaujouan & Z Brzozowska: "Reversals, diminishing differentials, or stable patterns? Long-term trends in educational gradients in fertility across the developed countries", presented at the IUSSP conference, Cape Town, October 2017

# A minor fertility recovery in Russia not affecting the highly educated

Cohort fertility by education reached at age 30-34 in 2010 and 2015



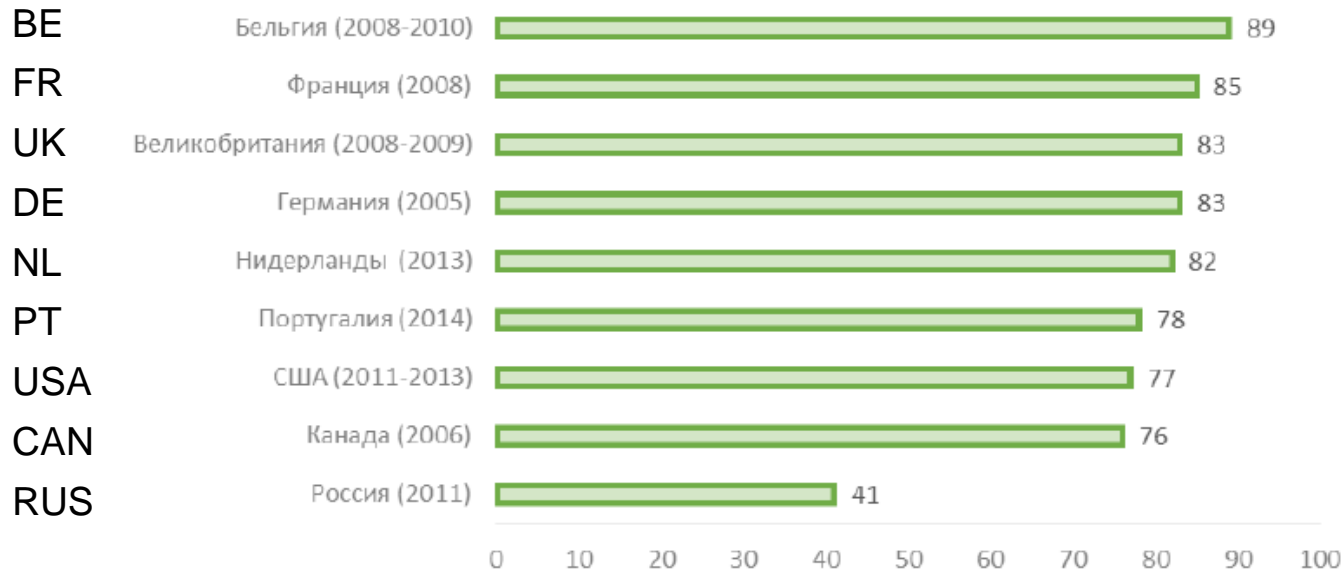
Source: Data from the 2010 Census and 2015 Microcensus analysed by Andreev and Zakharov (2017):  
Микроперепись - 2015 ставит под сомнение результативность мер по стимулированию рождаемости; *Demoskop Weekly* No. 711-712, January 2017

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The new cultural divides?  
*Slow contraceptive revolution &  
stalled second demographic  
transition*

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# Message #8: A slow contraceptive revolution: low share of women using modern contraception

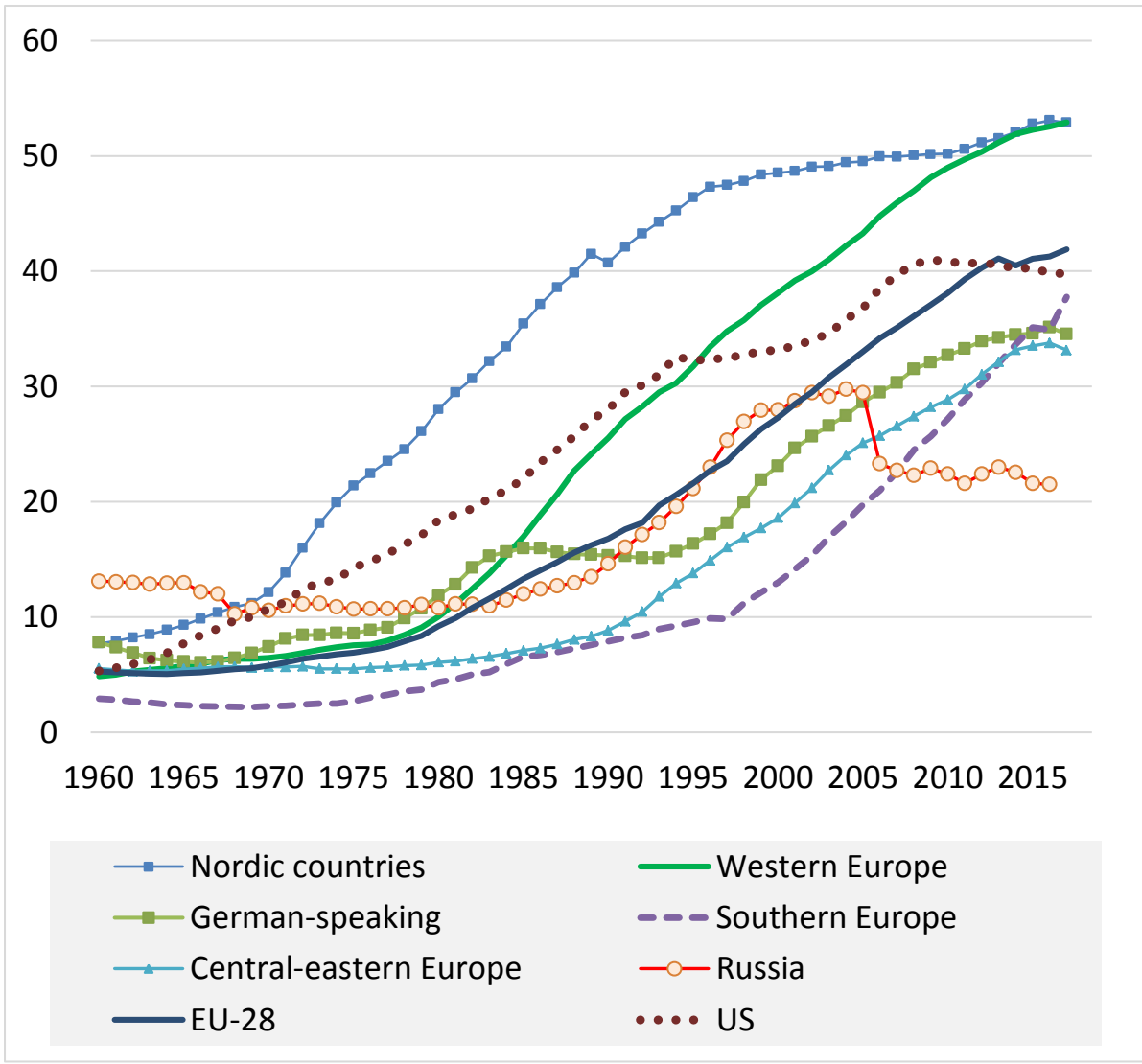


**Рисунок 5. Доля женщин, применяющих три вида контрацепции (гормональную\*, внутриматочную и стерилизацию), среди всех женщин, состоящих в браке/партнерстве и прибегающих к контрацепции, %**

Women in union using the pill, the IUD or sterilised; Russia (2011) compared with selected countries in Europe, Canada and the US

Source: Figure 5 in A. Vishnevskii, B. Denisov and V. Sakevich. 2017. КОНТРАЦЕПТИВНАЯ РЕВОЛЮЦИЯ В РОССИИ. ДЕМОГРАФИЧЕСКОЕ ОБОЗРЕНИЕ. 2017, ТОМ 4, №1: 6-34.

# Message #9: Partial re-traditionalization of family behaviour: trend reversals in non-marital childbearing



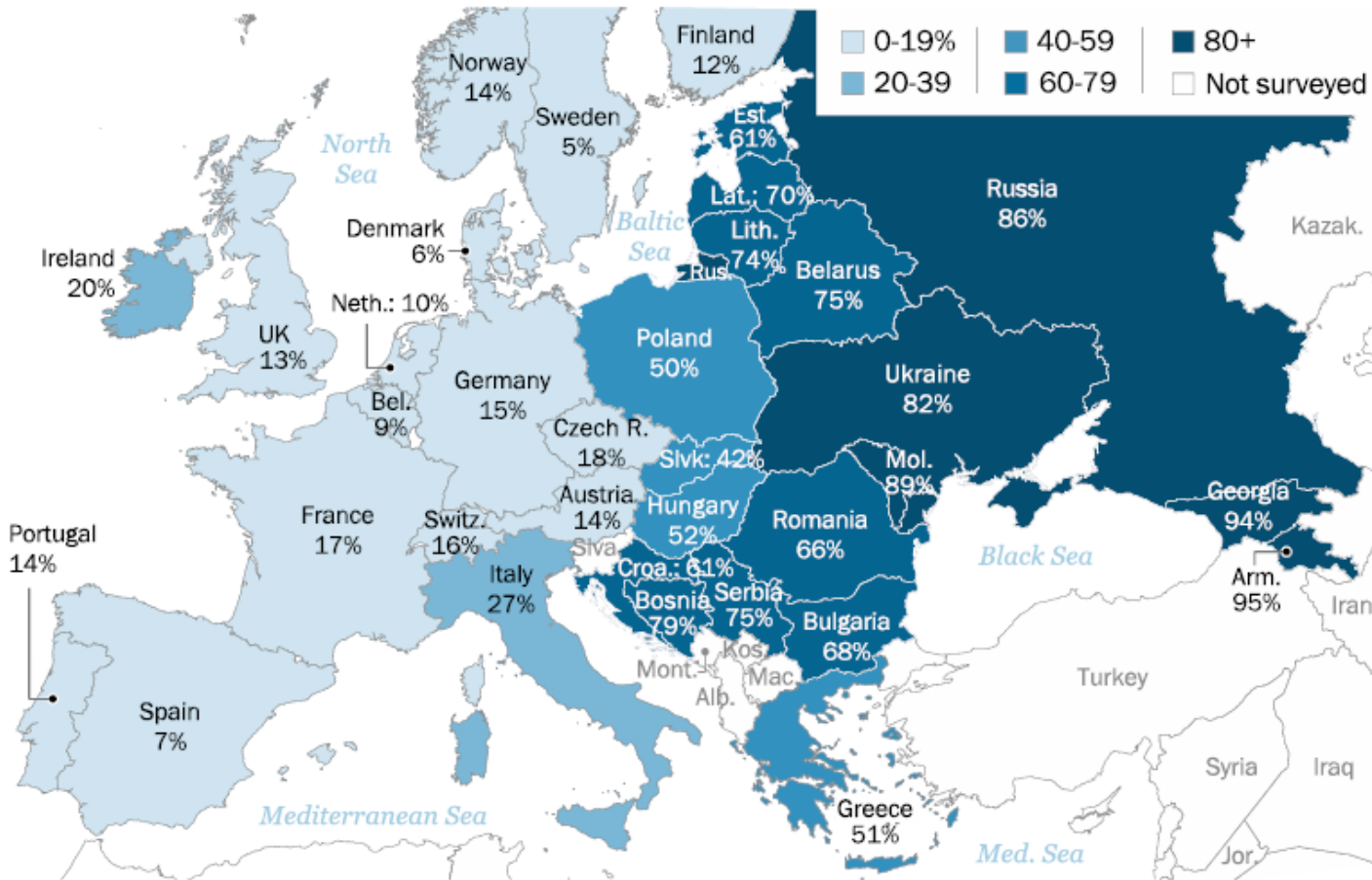
Share of non-marital birth (%) in Russia, USA, and broader European regions, 1960-2017

Sources: National statistical offices (2019), Eurostat (2019), Council of Europe (2006)

# The cultural & values divides across the region: attitudes to same-sex marriage (2015-17)

## Young adults in Central and Eastern Europe largely oppose gay marriage

*% of those ages 18 to 34 who say they oppose/strongly oppose allowing gays and lesbians to marry legally*



Source: Surveys conducted 2015-2017 in 34 countries. See Methodology for details.

"Eastern and Western Europeans Differ on Importance of Religion, Views of Minorities, and Key Social Issues"

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Discussion: Reproduction: an  
uncertain future?

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# Distinct features of Russian fertility and reproduction?

- *The big shifts mostly following other European regions: low fertility, low family size ideals and intentions, postponement transition, fewer unwanted pregnancies and births*

Distinct features broadly shared with two neighbouring countries – Belarus and Ukraine; partly also Bulgaria and Romania



## Unstable period fertility rates:

- Instability driven by changes in birth timing and spacing / *tempo effect*
- Partly fueled by family policies, but also economic cycles
- Little affecting cohort fertility

## Fertility disparities and differences

### Low fertility in Russia characterised by

- Regional and urban/rural contrasts
- High share of one-child families
- Low fertility of higher-educated women

## Slow postponement transition

## Slow contraceptive revolution

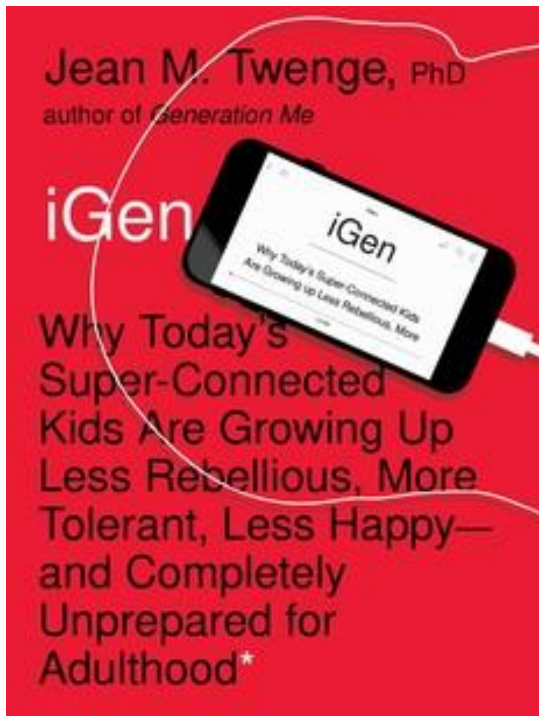
## Slow gender revolution and stalled second demographic transition

# Message #10: Ambiguous role of pronatalist policies

- Financial incentives addressing mainly the needs of lower-income and lower-educated parents
- Inadequate support for childcare, flexible parental leave, work-family combination
- *Instrumentalization* of birth rates for the purpose of government population policy goals may make fertility decisions increasingly contingent on external stimulation (Botev 2015)
- Partly feeding the boom and bust cycles of births and fertility rates in Russia

# *European fertility: Uncertain future*

- *Missing the compass*: No strong unifying narrative to guide our thinking about future trends
- Unclear how low can period and cohort fertility go
- No conclusive evidence on which factors are driving fertility shifts
- Period fertility likely to fall yet lower, often below the projected levels
- Most challenging in societies without immigration or with outmigration (especially Eastern & South-eastern Europe except Russia)



## New technologies changing future partnerships and fertility?

### Generation born 1995+

- Change in values, attitudes, behaviour since around 2011-12
- Growing up slowly
- Spending up to 6 hours/day on smartphones & social media
- Fewer having sex & relationship, fewer prioritize marriage and family, socialization often online
- Obsessed with safety and security: Fragile, insecure, not ready for adult responsibilities
- Complementary evidence for Japan (2015 National Fertility Survey)

