

The Changing Educational Gradient in Non-Traditional Family Ideals: A Cross-National Study

Katrin Schwanitz ^{1,2}, Lydia Veronica Palumbo ¹, Ann Berrington ³, Marika Jalovaara ¹

¹ *INVEST Research Flagship Centre, University of Turku, Turku, Finland*

² *Estonian Institute for Population Studies, Tallinn University, Tallinn, Estonia*

³ *University of Southampton, Southampton, UK & Centre for Population Change (CPC)*

Paper submitted for presentation at the IUSSP Conference, Brisbane, Australia
13–18 July 2025

1. Introduction

Over the last decades, families have become more diverse. It is more uncertain whether a couple will have any children, and if they do, how many (Agrillo and Nelini 2008; Albertini and Brini 2021; Balbo et al. 2013). Additionally, the sequencing of events, such as marriage and childbirth, has become less standardised (Elzinga and Liefbroer 2007; Perelli-Harris et al. 2010, 2012). The potential causes underlying these changes are a continuous source of debate. Some theorists have emphasized economic factors, including the increasing economic independence of women (Becker 1993a; Oppenheimer 1977) and the increasing economic uncertainties couples face (Alderotti et al. 2021; Vignoli et al. 2020). Other theories, such as the second demographic transition (SDT), have emphasised ideational change, increased individualism and secularisation (Lesthaeghe 2020). One key tenet of SDT is that a shift in values from traditional to more individualistic ones underlies the decline in birth rates, postponement of marriage and childbirth, and rise of voluntary childlessness.

Psychosocial studies have emphasized the interplay between individual values, social norms and demographic behaviours (e.g., Ajzen 1991; Bachrach and Morgan 2013; Johnson-Hanks et al. 2011). If individuals often base their life course decisions on societal and personal ideals or expectations, then non-traditional ideals should be crucial precursors to actual non-traditional demographic behaviour. Examples of non-traditional ideals include the approval of unmarried

cohabitation, children born outside of marriage, and whether certain life situations (e.g., employment and childcare) should be combined.

The importance of the structuring force of ideas, beliefs, and thoughts (or ideations) for people's life courses has been demonstrated by previous research (e.g., Guetto et al. 2016). A study by Lappegård et al. (2018) specifically highlighted that social norms and ideals at the country level were more important than structural economic conditions for explaining cross-national variation in fertility behaviours. These and other studies have highlighted the presence of heterogeneities in how ideations are spread across the population: individuals' ideations are not static but may evolve and are shaped by broader historical or cultural changes, and they may also vary by socioeconomic status.

Despite these theoretical perspectives, prior research on nonstandard family behaviours has often prioritised behavioural indicators of the SDT over ideational ones (Brzozowska 2021; Martín-García et al. 2023), and the literature on non-traditional family ideals and norms remains relatively limited. Nonetheless, some studies attempt to study the SDT changes by mapping cross-national differences in changing family ideals over time and examine their simultaneous correlation with economic and educational changes. Brzozowska (2021) found a positive correlation between attitudinal and behavioural indices of SDT across 23 European countries, but this correlation depended on the particular historical period. Hofäcker and Chalupokova (2014) analysed data from the 2006 European Social Survey to investigate how family life courses correspond to cross-cohort changes in socially established norms regarding family transitions. They found that changes in family-related norms often precede actual demographic behaviour but that the extent and speed of these changes vary across European countries.

Education played a significant role in the diffusion of the SDT, with highly educated individuals being the forerunners of more liberal values. Those with lower levels of education later aligned with these ideals and behaviours, ultimately internalising these non-standard behaviours to an even greater extent (Sobotka 2008). Nowadays, there is clear evidence that behaviours associated with

the SDT are more diffused among lower-educated individuals. For instance, individuals with higher educational levels are, on average, more likely to postpone marriage and childbearing (Lappegård et al. 2018; Perelli-Harris et al. 2010) but to have a more traditional sequence of family events with births within marriage. In contrast, those with lower education levels are more likely to have children within cohabitation (Wood et al. 2014). However, some scholars who have examined these diverging trends have suggested that the patterns reflect less differences in values and norms but a "pattern of disadvantage". That is to say the negative educational gradient in non-marital fertility could be due to involuntary disadvantaged circumstances, such as economic uncertainty, and may not reflect less traditional values. (Sobotka 2008). There is clear evidence that behaviours associated diffused among lower-educated individuals. For instance, individuals with higher educational levels are, on average, more likely to postpone marriage and childbearing (Lappegård et al. 2018; Perelli-Harris et al. 2010) but to have a more traditional sequence of family events with births within marriage. In contrast, those with lower education levels are more likely to have children within cohabitation. However, some scholars who have examined these diverging trends have suggested that the patterns reflect less differences in values and norms but a "pattern of disadvantage". That is to say the negative educational gradient in non-marital fertility could be due to involuntary disadvantaged circumstances, such as economic uncertainty, and may not reflect less traditional values. The current paper takes a fresh look at how ideations are socially stratified by examining in more detail how changes in family attitudes have or have not occurred among different educational groups, and whether this differs across European countries. We address the following research questions: (1) Are there differences in the approval of non-traditional family behaviours across country groupings (consistent with the SDT progression)? (2) Are there differences in the approval of non-traditional family behaviours across educational levels? (3) Do educational differences differ across European countries? 4) Do the educational differences differ over historical time?

2. Theoretical background

2.1 Defining non-traditional family ideals: Theoretical perspectives and key examples

A key focus of this study is non-traditional family ideals and their *prima facie* evidence in non-traditional behaviours within the European context. Non-traditional family behaviours have been described similarly by several scholars, albeit with some distinctions in focus and theoretical framing (Beck 1992; Giddens 1991; Lesthaeghe 1995, 2010, 2020). The SDT specifically identifies several non-traditional family behaviours that diverge from the historically dominant model of early and universal marriage, high fertility, and gender-specialized roles (Lesthaeghe 1995, 2010). Drawing largely on SDT conceptualization of non-traditional family behaviours—while acknowledging overlaps with other theoretical perspectives on individualization and modernization—the following non-traditional family behaviours can be distinguished: voluntary childlessness (which represents the decoupling of marriage, sexuality, and parenthood); unmarried cohabitation (reflecting the shift away from marriage as the dominant form of partnership); and non-marital childbearing (which illustrates the decoupling of marriage and parenthood). Furthermore, non-traditional family behaviours are closely linked to women's childcare responsibilities and the partnership context of childrearing. Examples include full-time employment when children are 3 years or younger, signalling a weakening of traditional gender specialization in caregiving, and divorce when children are 12 or younger, which reflects both increased union instability and changing family structures. The extent to which Europeans approve of such non-traditional behaviours reflects the acceptance of shifting family norms and values.

Studies linking demographic behaviours to psychological mechanisms provide a conceptual bridge between non-traditional family ideals and behaviours, positing that behaviours often reflect underlying values, norms, and ideals (e.g., Ajzen 1991; Bachrach and Morgan 2013; Johnson-Hanks et al. 2011). They furthermore suggest that changing family ideals precede behavioural shifts, which aligns with SDT's proposed role of changing values and cultural shifts in demographic change (Lesthaeghe 2010). The argument of the SDT about non-traditional family ideals suggests that societal changes in values, such as a shift towards individual autonomy, gender equality, and the breakdown

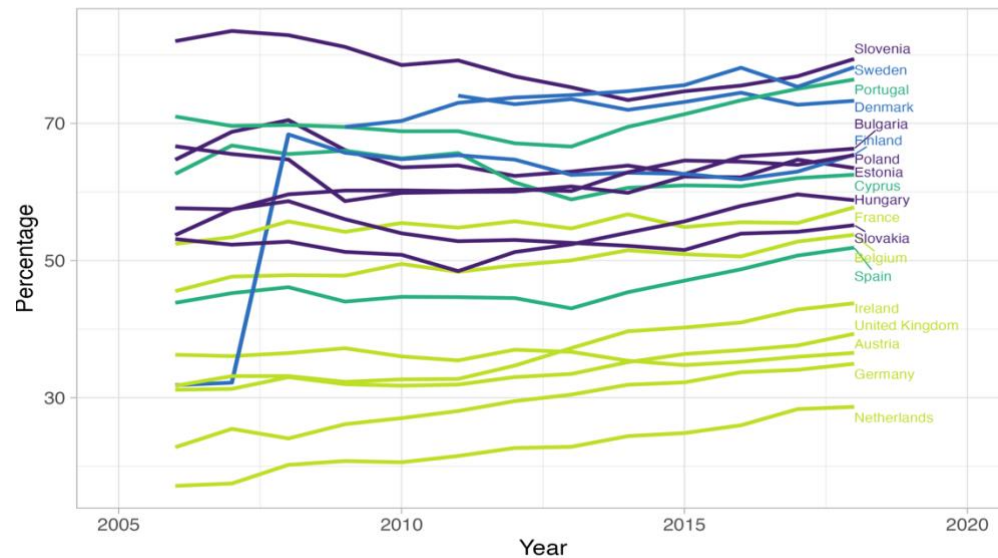
of rigid family structures, and emancipation from traditional norms, have led to new forms of family life and a reduction in fertility rates (Lesthaeghe 2020). These non-traditional ideals now govern decisions around marriage, childbearing, and family life.

2.2 Changing family behaviour in Europe

Before examining data on ideational change, we briefly review key shifts in non-traditional family behaviour across Europe. This helps identify major trends and cross-national behavioural patterns, particularly in countries such as the former socialist states, which were less prominent in the original SDT formulation (Van de Kaa and Lesthaeghe, 1997). At the macro level, this is reflected in a greater diversity of life and family forms, particularly an increase in nonmarital childbearing, non-marital partnerships, single-parent households, as well as later union formation, marriage, and reproduction, with key family transitions increasingly occurring among women aged 30 or older (see Figure 1). Increasing female labour force participation (particularly when children are young) and caregiving becoming more shared between partners is similarly reflective of a greater acceptance of mothers reconciling family life and labour market opportunities (Figure 2). However, these changes have occurred at different speeds and with varying intensity across the continent, and they have not all led to a convergence in family behaviour among European countries. The cross-national landscape of family behaviours in Europe remains characterised by a lack of convergence toward a common European pattern of non-traditional family behaviours, with distinct sub-regional patterns persisting. Life course scholars have emphasised that distinct historical, cultural, institutional, and policy influences—while not necessarily mutually exclusive—help account for cross-national differences in non-traditional family behaviour (Esping-Andersen 1999; Lesthaeghe 2010; Mayer 2009).

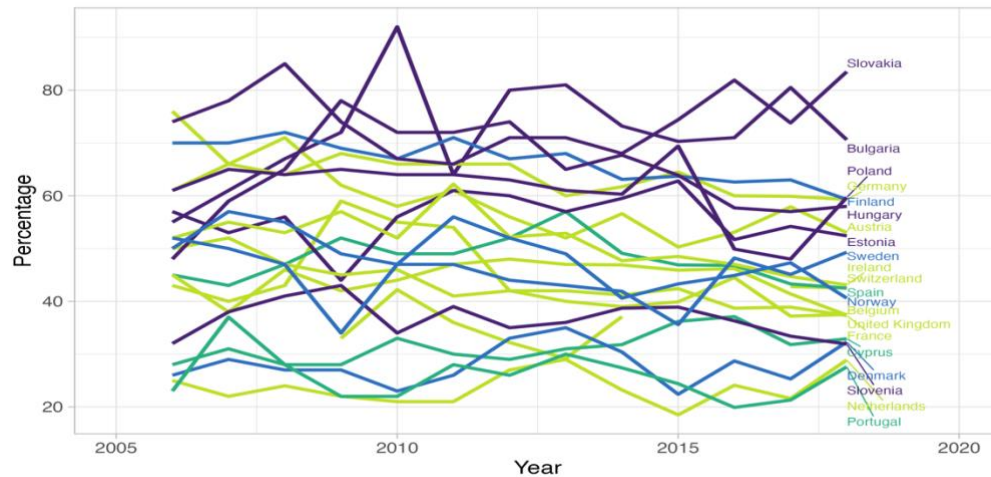
Figure 1 Trends in Maternal Employment and Childcare Enrolment Across Europe

Full-time employment rates for women aged 25-54 with at least one child aged 0-14



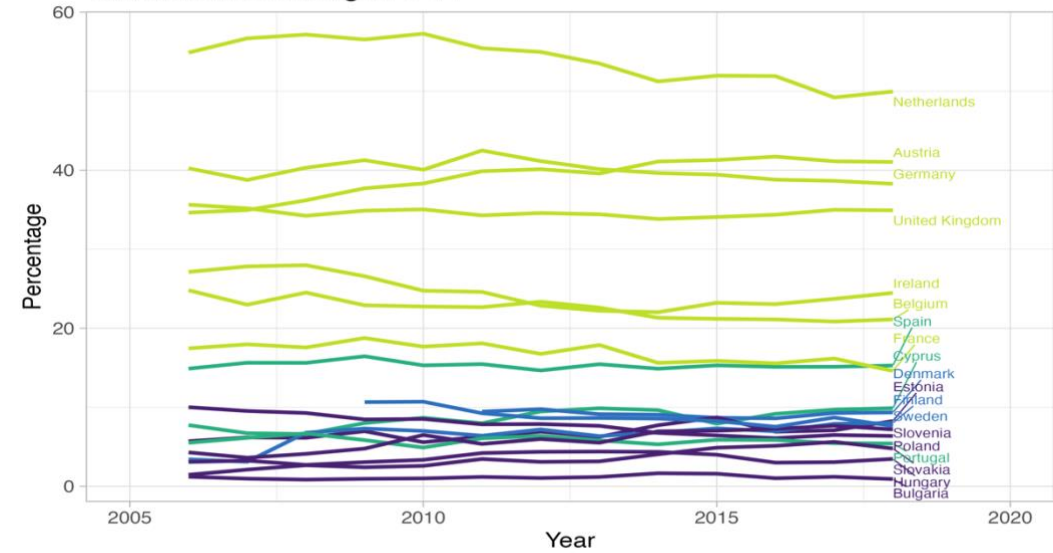
Country groups: — East European — Nordic countries — Southern European — West European

Children aged younger than 3 cared for only by their parents
(% of age group)



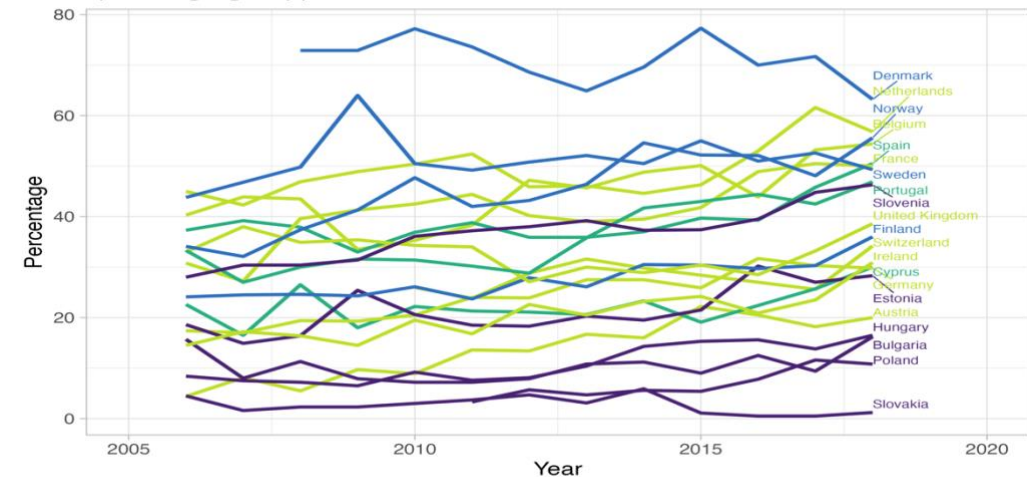
Country groups: — East European — Nordic countries — Southern European — West European

Part-time employment rates for women aged 25-54 with at least one child aged 0-14



Country groups: — East European — Nordic countries — Southern European — West European

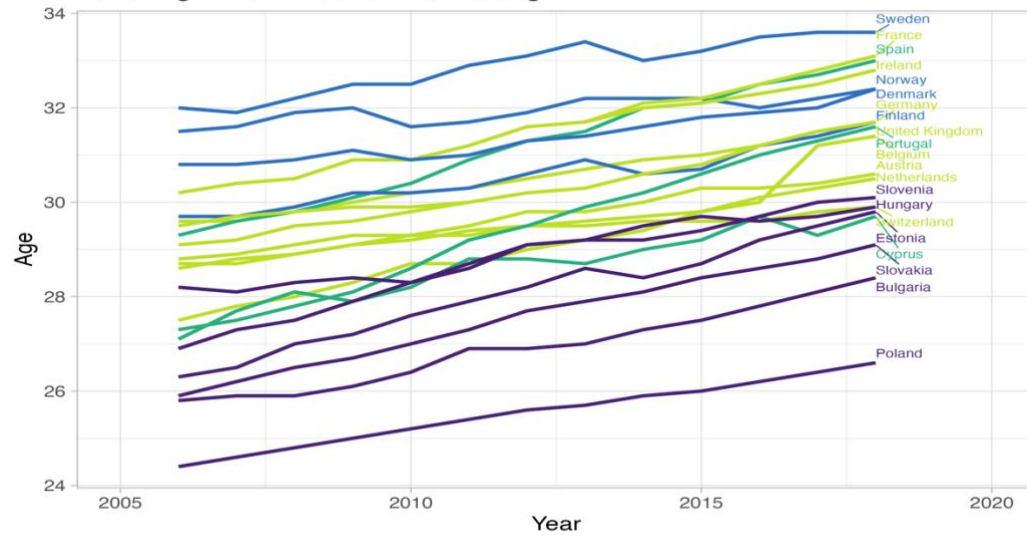
Children aged younger than 3 in formal child care for at least 1hr per week
(% of age group)



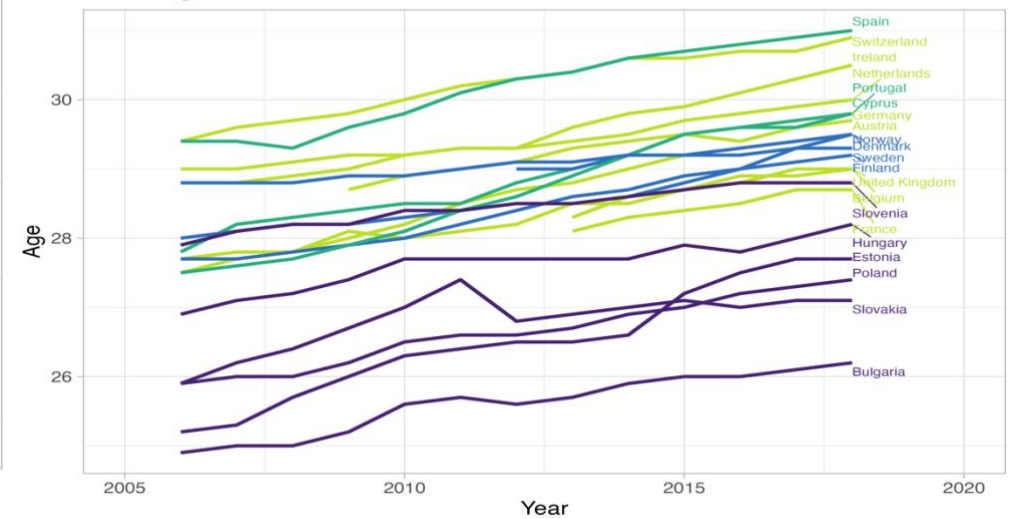
Country groups: — East European — Nordic countries — Southern European — West European

Figure 2 Trends in Marriage, Fertility, and Childbearing in Europe

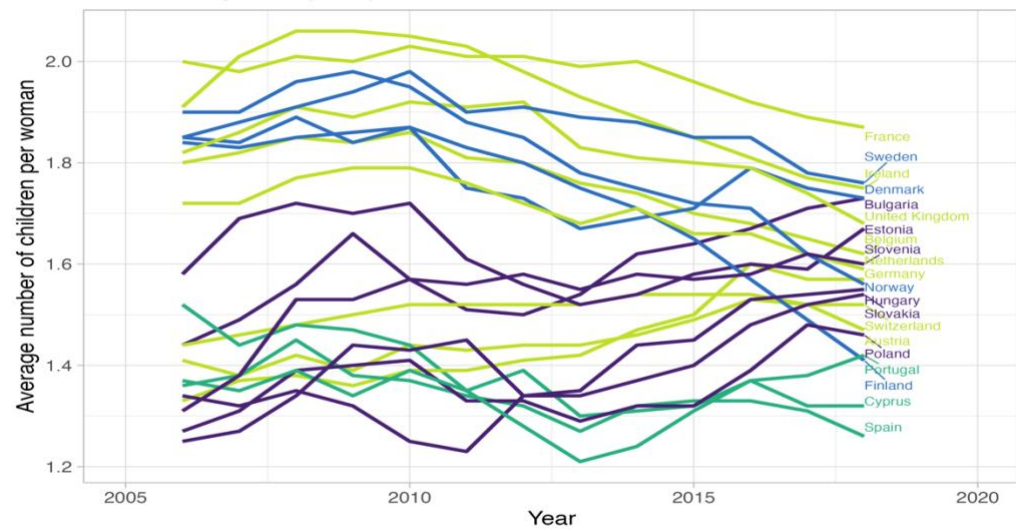
Mean age of women at first marriage



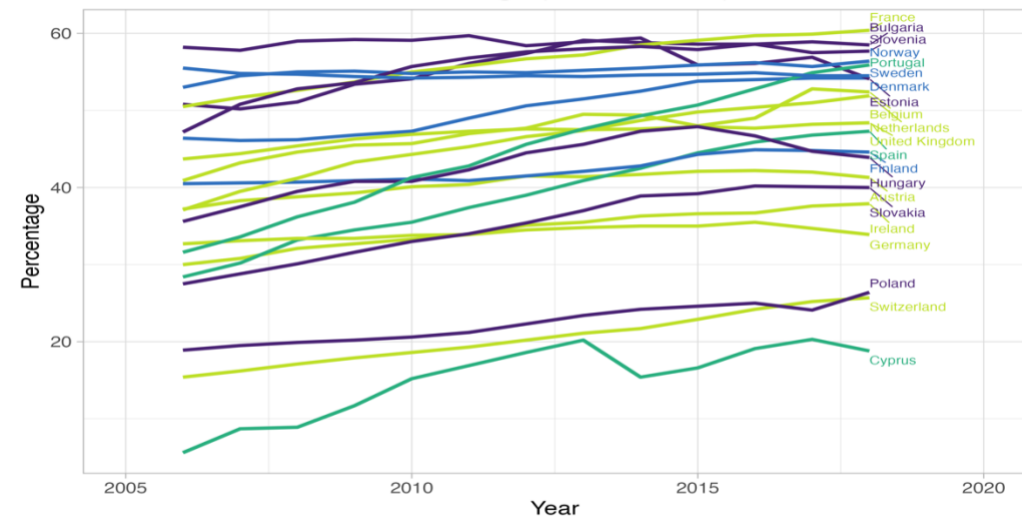
Mean age of women at birth of first child



Total fertility rate (TFR)



Share of births outside of marriage (% of all births)



2.3 Variation in non-traditional family ideals across socio-political regimes in Europe

A useful heuristic for classifying the 'convergence to diversity' of non-traditional family behaviour within Europe more distinctly is socio-political regimes. These regimes allow for the grouping of different countries that share strong similarities in socio-political framework conditions, which act as opportunity structures and shape non-traditional family behaviours and, in turn, reflect distinct historical and cultural influences on family norms, as well as gender roles in the labour market and within the family. The extent to which non-traditional family ideals and behaviours are embraced is, therefore, likely similar among countries within the same socio-political regime and relatively distinct between different socio-political regimes. Recent research by Zimmermann et al. (2024) has shown that socio-political regimes can effectively delineate patterns of differentiation and de-standardization in family life courses across Europe. We adopt the proposed socio-political regimes (with minor modifications) to map intra-European differences in non-traditional family ideals and behaviours. Notably, these socio-political regimes align with country groupings according to their progression in the SDT (Lesthaeghe and Surkyn 2007). It is also unsurprising that countries within socio-political regimes are geographically proximate, as spatial diffusion is a key component of the SDT (Vitali et al. 2015; Vitali and Billari 2017).

As shown in Figure 1 and Figure 2, the *Nordic countries* (Denmark, Finland, Norway, and Sweden) are characterized by high gender equality and strong and progressive welfare states which support a dual-career model (with generous parental leave, subsidized childcare, and work-life balance policies). There is also strong support and legal protection for non-traditional family forms (Goldscheider et al. 2015). The Nordic countries are often considered SDT “forerunners”, exhibiting low marriage rates and high rates of children born outside of marriage. Many couples cohabit before or instead of marriage (Perelli-Harris et al. 2012). Hofäcker and Chaloupková (2014) also generally find high tolerance for the non-traditional behaviours of voluntary childlessness, unmarried cohabitation, and non-marital childbearing in the Nordic countries (except for Finland). *Western*

Europe (Austria, Belgium, Switzerland, Germany, France, United Kingdom, Ireland, The Netherlands) is characterised by a mix of progressive welfare state policies and traditional influences. For example, the dual-career model is supported in France, Belgium, and The Netherlands (with relatively strong childcare policies), but weaker in Germany and Austria (where tax systems favour single earners). Unmarried cohabitation is especially common in France and The Netherlands (where unmarried couples can formalise their relationship through specific legal contracts), but less so in Germany, Austria, and Ireland (see Figure 1 and Figure 2). Nonmarital births are widespread in France and the UK (~50%), but lower in Germany, Austria, and Ireland (~30%). Western Europe is often considered an early adopter of the SDT, with the Netherlands, Belgium, and France being closer to the Nordic countries, Germany and Switzerland having similarly low fertility and delayed family formation as the Nordic countries but being less progressive on gender roles (e.g., stronger male-breadwinner norms). Ireland and the UK have seen SDT changes later than the Nordic countries, but with high variation (Ireland has historically been more conservative; (Sobotka and Berghammer 2021). Regarding non-traditional family ideals, previous research by Hofäcker and Chaloupková (2014) suggests that the UK, the Netherlands, and Switzerland exhibit levels of tolerance for non-traditional behaviours that are comparable to those of the Nordic countries, whereas Ireland shows notably lower tolerance for non-marital childbearing.

In *Southern Europe* (Cyprus, Spain, Portugal), there is overall lower acceptance and weak institutional support for non-traditional family forms, despite growing societal changes. The dual-career mode is weakly supported by policies; childcare availability and workplace flexibility are limited (particularly compared to the Nordic countries or Western Europe), making it difficult for women to balance work and family (see also Figure 1 and Figure 2). Southern Europe can be described as a late adopter of the SDT, where SDT trends such as low fertility and delayed family formation are evident, but unmarried cohabitation and nonmarital births remain lower due to strong family-oriented cultures and Catholic influence (Sobotka and Berghammer 2021). Economic insecurity and weak state

support for families also make it harder for individuals to follow the "Nordic model" of SDT. In most Southern European countries, there is relatively low tolerance of voluntary childlessness, unmarried cohabitation, and non-marital childbearing (Hofäcker and Chaloupková 2014). *Eastern Europe* (Bulgaria, Estonia, Hungary, Poland, Slovenia, Slovak Republic) is characterised by mixed support for non-traditional family forms, influenced by post-socialist legacies and religious traditions. The policy support for the dual-career model varies across countries: Estonia and Slovenia have relatively strong work-family policies, whereas Poland, Slovakia, and Hungary favour the male breadwinner model. Poland and Hungary have also actively pushed back against non-traditional family ideals and emphasise traditional family roles. Unmarried cohabitation is overall increasing, but still less accepted than in the Nordic countries or Western Europe (see Figure 1 and Figure 2). It is also more common in Estonia and Slovenia than in Poland and Slovakia (Sobotka and Berghammer 2021). Nonmarital births are relatively high in Estonia and Bulgaria (~50%), but lower in Poland and Slovakia (~25-30%), reflecting religious influences. Eastern Europe can also be described as a late adopter of the SDT, where SDT trends were delayed due to socialist regimes that prioritized marriage and fertility. After the post-communist transition, there was a sudden drop in fertility, rise in nonmarital cohabitation, and postponement of marriage—aligning with SDT, but often driven by economic instability rather than cultural shifts. Some countries (e.g., Estonia, Slovenia) are closer to Nordic or Western trends, while others (e.g., Poland, Hungary) remain more traditional (see also Figure 1 and Figure 2). According to previous research by Hofäcker and Chaloupková (2014), Eastern Europe exhibits the lowest levels of tolerance—or even outright rejection—toward non-traditional family behaviours such as voluntary childlessness, unmarried cohabitation, and non-marital childbearing.

Given that the spread of non-traditional family behaviours follows different patterns across European socio-political regimes, it is plausible that there is a gradient in the approval of non-traditional family ideals across socio-political regimes, too.. Specifically, our first hypothesis (H1) is:

“The approval for non-traditional family ideals will be highest in Nordic countries, moderate in Western Europe, and lowest in Southern and Eastern Europe.”

2.4. Variation in non-traditional family ideals across educational groups and socio-political regimes in Europe

Theory and prior research suggest that non-traditional family ideals may vary not only across but also within European socio-political regimes, particularly across educational groups. According to the SDT, the cultural shift from “traditional” to “non-traditional” family ideals began among the highly educated. One explanation could be in terms of highly educated individuals being more open towards nonconformist and anti-authoritarian attitudes and rejecting traditional behaviours. Similarly, they would be more open towards the use of contraception. Third, another explanation, especially regarding non-marital cohabitation, regards timing. When cohabitation became more common, university students who delayed marriage to complete their studies were more likely to cohabit than their less educated counterparts who did not delay marriage (Bhrolcháin and Beaujouan 2013). This shift led to an initial rise in non-traditional family behaviours among this group, which, then, gradually diffused to other educational groups (Lesthaeghe 1995, 2010, 2014, 2020; Lesthaeghe and Surkyn 2007).

The pattern of diffusion of non-traditional family ideals unfolded roughly between 1960 and 2000, with differing onsets and paces across European countries. In the first two decades of the new millennium, non-traditional family ideals and behaviours are expected to have more broadly diffused across educational levels in European societies (Lesthaeghe 1995, 2010, 2014, 2020; Lesthaeghe and Surkyn 2007). However, the extent to which non-traditional family ideals have spread across educational groups—and whether this diffusion has eroded the educational gradient—remains an open question.

Existing studies on non-traditional family behaviours find a positive educational gradient (Trimarchi and Van Bavel 2017; Van Winkle 2018; Vitali et al. 2015; for an overview: Vasireddy et

al. 2023; Kuang et al. 2025), which, in some European countries, has either remained stable or even strengthened across birth cohorts (Wood et al. 2014). If we assume that non-traditional family behaviours serve as *prima facie* evidence of non-traditional family ideals, this would suggest a similar positive educational gradient in family ideals. However, research on this relationship is scarce, and findings are mixed. Some studies find that highly educated individuals tend to embrace less traditional values, compared to those with lower levels of education (Grunow and Evertsson 2019), while others report no consistent differences in traditional attitudes between educational groups (Martín-García et al. 2023). Grunow and Evertsson (2019) conducted interviews with 156 dual-earner couples from eight countries (Sweden, Germany, Austria, Switzerland, Italy, Spain, Poland and the Czech Republic) to understand their views on sharing childcare and employment. These qualitative results at least indicate an educational gradient in traditional values regarding parenthood. Using data from the 2018 ESS for five European countries (Germany, Poland, Spain, Sweden, and the UK), Martín-García et al. (2023) found that while university education is positively correlated with the age considered ideal for fatherhood, there is no empirical support for a similar positive correlation between university education and the acceptance of male childlessness, male nonmarital childbearing, or full-time employment for fathers with small children. We will comprehensively examine the relationship between education and non-traditional family ideals and test the assumed diffusion process of non-traditional family ideals. Our second hypothesis (H2) is: “The Approval for non-traditional family ideals will be highest among the highly educated individuals and lowest among the lower-educated individuals.”

Alternative theories to SDT emphasize the role of economic uncertainty, particularly among lower-educated groups, in shaping non-traditional family behaviours such as unmarried cohabitation or non-marital childbearing (Alderotti et al. 2021; Becker 1993b; McLanahan 2004; Vignoli et al. 2020). A common trend across Europe is the ‘pattern of disadvantage’ (PoD), where non-marital childbearing is more prevalent among those with lower educational attainment, although having initially emerged among the highly educated in most European contexts (Perelli-Harris et al. 2010).

There is also further research supporting a negative educational gradient in non-traditional family behaviours in different European countries (e.g., Lappegård et al. 2018; Zimmermann and Konietzka 2018). This arguably challenges SDT assumption that the highly educated are the forerunners in embracing values such as individual autonomy, gender equality, and self-actualisation, which then drive non-traditional family behaviours (Zaidi and Morgan 2017). However, the PoD thesis implies that non-traditional family behaviours may be a more often deliberate choice among the highly educated, enabled by economic security and liberal values. In contrast, among the lower-educated, these behaviours may be more a result of economic constraints (e.g., precarious jobs) and not necessarily driven by ideological shifts.

Linking this theoretical argument back to socio-political regimes, educational groups may experience differences in access to resources and supportive policies in some regimes but not in others (Mayer 2009; Perelli-Harris and Gassen 2012). In particular, if a socio-political regime is characterised by weak support for work-life balance, high income inequality, or strong religious traditions, traditional family ideals may be reinforced among lower-educated groups. Conversely, if a socio-political regime is characterised by strong support for work-life balance, low-income inequality, or a high degree of secularisation, non-traditional ideals may be already widely accepted among the different educational groups, weakening the gradient. We will comprehensively examine the educational gradient in non-traditional family ideals across socio-political regimes. Our third hypothesis (H3) is: “The educational gradient in the approval for non-traditional family ideals is weakest in Nordic countries and strongest in Southern and Eastern Europe.”

2.5. Variation in non-traditional family ideals across educational groups, socio-political regimes, and historical time in Europe

SDT suggests that the shift from “traditional” to “non-traditional” family ideals eventually—and irreversibly—takes place in all European countries (Lesthaeghe 1995, 2010, 2014, 2020; Lesthaeghe and Surkyn 2007). However, the timing and speed of SDT progression have differed across socio-

political regimes, with some countries acting as forerunners and others as laggards. Since the mid-to-late 20th century, this transition has unfolded at varying paces, influenced by structural and cultural factors such as economic development, religious influence, and social policies (Sobotka and Berghammer 2021). While some countries experienced an early and rapid shift, others have seen a slower and more gradual progression. Over time, however, cross-national differences in SDT progression are expected to level out, with laggard countries (Italy, Spain, Portugal, Greece, Ireland) catching up to the forerunners (Sweden, Denmark, Norway, Netherlands, France) (Van De Kaa 1987). As a result, societies are to become more liberal, fully embracing non-traditional family ideals through their broad diffusion across all educational levels.

Criticisms towards the SDT involve the unidirectional process of change and its failure to predict certain contemporary patterns of family change (Zaidi and Morgan 2017). Research on non-traditional family behaviour suggests, for example, that the cultural shift may stall or even reverse in some contexts (Perelli-Harris et al. 2010; Sobotka 2008). Other studies contrast the top-down, unilinear SDT progression with a more complex and, to some extent, path-dependent process across countries or socio-political regimes (Lappegård et al. 2018; Van Winkle 2018; Zimmermann et al. 2024). Furthermore, Hofäcker and Chaloupková (2014) identify a general trend of liberalization in family norms across Europe, although European countries vary in the degree and pace at which these normative changes have occurred.

Despite extensive research on non-traditional family behaviours, there is a notable paucity of studies examining the diffusion of non-traditional family ideals over time across educational groups in Europe. Therefore, we will examine the educational gradient in non-traditional family ideals over (and across socio-political regimes). Our fourth hypothesis (H4) is: “The educational gradient in the approval for non-traditional family ideals has become smaller over time, across all country groups.”

Data and method

Our data are from two rounds (Round 3 in 2006 and Round 9 in 2018) of the European Social Survey (ESS), which included the specific ‘Timing of Life’ question module (ESS 2006, 2018). The ESS surveyed respondents aged 15 and older in more than 30 countries. We restricted the cross-national sample to countries included in both survey rounds; as a result, data for the Czech Republic, Croatia, Iceland, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Montenegro, Russia, Serbia, and Ukraine were excluded because they only took part in one of the survey rounds. We considered individuals born between 1940 and 1999. Our final sample has information from 63,330 respondents in 21 countries (the sample size may decrease if missing values for dependent variables are considered). We selected the following questions from the ‘Timing of Life’ question module to create our outcome measures that refer to the approval of non-traditional family behaviour. All questions were administered using a split-ballot design, meaning that respondents were randomly asked to answer questions about women’s or men’s behaviours, irrespective of their own gender: *“How much do you approve or disapprove if a man/woman: 1) ...chooses never to have children?; 2) ...lives with a partner without being married to her/him?; 3) ...has a child with a partner he/she lives with but is not married to?; 4) ...has a full-time job while he/she has children aged under 3?; 5) ...gets divorced while he/she has children aged under 12?”*. Regarding questions 3) and 4), we only consider attitudes towards women’s work and divorce, as one of the major peculiarities of the SDT is the change in women’s societal role. The response alternatives on these Likert-type items ranged from “strongly disapprove” to “strongly approve”. We recoded “strongly disapprove” and “disapprove” to “disapprove”; “neither approve nor disapprove” to “neutral”; and “strongly approve” and “approve” to “approve”.

Our key variables of interest regard country groupings and education. Country groupings represent four distinct socio-political regimes—with minor modifications based on Zimmermann et al. (2024)—that align with country classifications according to their progression in the SDT (Lesthaeghe and Surkyn 2007). Socio-political regimes are considered as follows: Nordic countries (Denmark, Finland, Norway, Sweden); Western Europe (Austria, Belgium, Switzerland, Germany, France, United

Kingdom, Ireland, The Netherlands); Southern Europe (Cyprus, Spain, Portugal); and Eastern Europe (Bulgaria, Estonia, Hungary, Poland, Slovenia, Slovak Republic). was re-coded as 'low' (ISCED 1-2), 'medium' (ISCED 3-4), and 'high' (ISCED 5-~~6~~~~7~~~~8~~~~9~~) interview, and country groups. In further analyses, we also introduced religion to see whether it could confound the relationship of interest. we also introduced religion to see whether it could confound the relationship of interest.

The findings are based on multinomial logistic regressions of the likelihood of reporting each category of the Likert scale. Although the scale of the dependent variables is ordinal and a proportional-odds cumulative logit model represents the standard to analyze these types of outcomes, we do not consider that the effect of the covariates is similar when shifting from one category of the dependent variable to another. Results have been weighted using analysis weights provided by the ESS team.

Results

The analysis of non-traditional family ideals associated with the SDT shows several patterns across different socio-political regimes. As shown in *Table 1*, the approval of non-traditional family behaviours is consistently highest in Nordic countries compared to other regimes. What stands out from the analysis of the approval of childlessness is the high percentage of individuals who are neutral towards this behaviour in Western countries, exceeding 50%. In contrast, a large share of people in Eastern European countries disapprove of childlessness, reaching 47.3%.

A similar trend is observed for non-marital cohabitation and childbearing. In Western Europe, a large proportion of respondents were either neutral or approving of these behaviours, with neutrality being the most common response (45-47%). Other socio-political regimes exhibited higher levels of approval, though Eastern Europe also had a non-negligible share of individuals disapproving (24.8%). The patterns are somewhat different when it comes to women being full-time employed or divorcing while having young children. Here, the percentage of people disapproving of these behaviours was high across most socio-political regimes, except in the Nordic countries, and was similar or even higher

than the percentage of approval or neutrality. For instance, in Eastern European countries, the share of individuals not accepting divorce with children under 12 (37.5%) exceeded those who were neutral or approving of this behaviour (33% and 29.4%). Finally, we also focused on the distribution of education by socio-political regimes, as education represents an important variable for our analyses. Overall, medium-educated individuals are the largest share across socio-political regimes (around 50%), apart from Southern Europe, where low-educated individuals are quite prevalent (55.2 %).

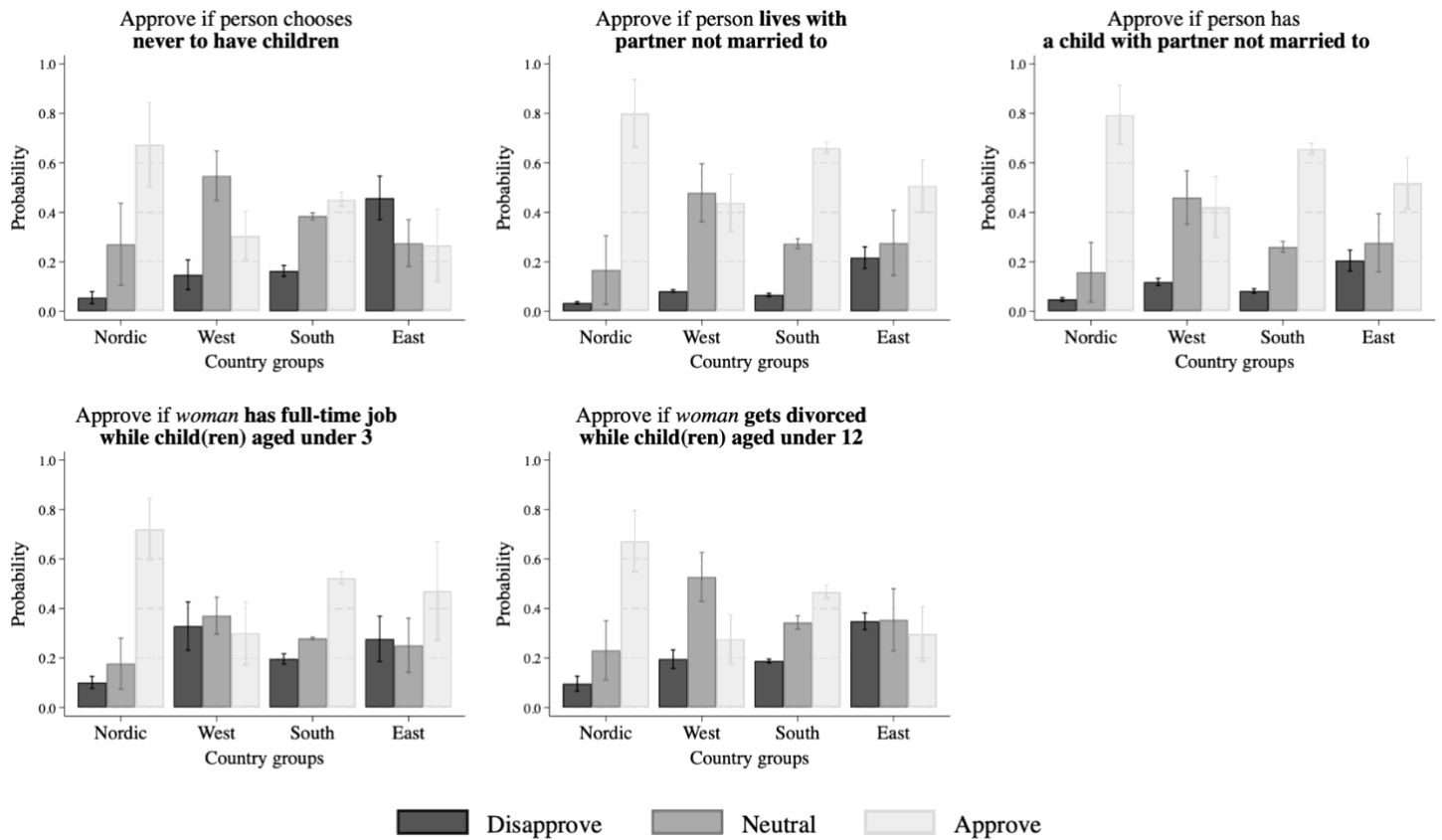
Table 1: Descriptive statistics for non-traditional family ideals by socio-political regime

	Socio-political regimes				
	Nordic	West	South	East	Total
Approval if a person chooses not have children					
Disapprove	306 (7.2%)	7,346 (16.7%)	1,890 (19.8%)	4,967 (47.3%)	14,508 (21.2%)
Neutral	1,207 (28.4%)	23,546 (53.5%)	3,536 (37.1%)	2,776 (26.4%)	31,065 (45.5%)
Approve	2,738 (64.4%)	13,156 (29.9%)	4,108 (43.1%)	2,763 (26.3%)	22,766 (33.3%)
Approval if a person chooses to live unmarried with a partner					
Disapprove	197 (4.6%)	4,483 (10.1%)	1,064 (11.1%)	2,650 (24.8%)	8,394 (12.2%)
Neutral	767 (18.0%)	20,957 (47.5%)	2,596 (27.1%)	2,899 (27.1%)	27,219 (39.6%)
Approve	3,303 (77.4%)	18,725 (42.4%)	5,911 (61.8%)	5,134 (48.1%)	33,073 (48.2%)
Approval if a person has a child with a partner not married to					
Disapprove	285 (6.7%)	6,285 (14.2%)	1,220 (12.7%)	2,466 (23.1%)	10,257 (14.9%)
Neutral	728 (17.1%)	19,896 (45.0%)	2,472 (25.8%)	2,910 (27.3%)	26,007 (37.9%)
Approve	3,255 (76.2%)	17,994 (40.7%)	5,890 (61.5%)	5,279 (49.5%)	32,418 (47.2%)
Approval if a woman has a full-time job while the child is under 3					
Disapprove	283 (13.4%)	7,896 (35.7%)	1,089 (22.3%)	1,580 (29.7%)	10,848 (31.5%)
Neutral	388 (18.3%)	7,770 (35.2%)	1,389 (28.5%)	1,308 (24.6%)	10,857 (31.5%)
Approve	1,450 (68.3%)	6,425 (29.1%)	2,399 (49.2%)	2,432 (45.7%)	12,706 (36.9%)
Approval if a woman gets divorced while the child is under 12					
Disapprove	277 (13.1%)	4,979 (23.4%)	1,259 (26.0%)	1,938 (37.5%)	8,453 (25.3%)
Neutral	499 (23.6%)	10,636 (50.1%)	1,536 (31.7%)	1,706 (33.0%)	14,378 (43.1%)
Approve	1,338 (63.3%)	5,624 (26.5%)	2,047 (42.3%)	1,520 (29.4%)	10,530 (31.6%)
Education					
Low	1,140 (26.7%)	13,899 (31.5%)	5,282 (55.2%)	3,407 (31.4%)	23,728 (34.5%)
Medium	2,031 (47.6%)	20,490 (46.4%)	2,182 (22.8%)	5,537 (51.1%)	30,241 (43.9%)
High	1,097 (25.7%)	9,777 (22.1%)	2,107 (22.0%)	1,896 (17.5%)	14,877 (21.6%)

Note: weighted statistics from ESS data. Attitudes were originally asked as Likert-type items ranging from “strongly disapprove” to “strongly approve”. We recoded “strongly disapprove” and “disapprove” to “disapprove”; “neither approve nor disapprove” to “neutral”; and “strongly approve” and “approve” to “approve”.

Figure 3 shows the predicted probabilities of being in each response category estimated from the multinomial logit. Figure 3 shows significant differences across the socio-political regimes in the approval of non-traditional family behaviours consistent with H1, highlighting that the “*Approval for non-traditional family ideals will be highest in Nordic countries, moderate in Western Europe, and lowest in Southern and Eastern Europe.*” Nordic countries are forerunners of non-traditional family ideals: the predicted probabilities of approval of all non-traditional family behaviours are highest in the Nordic countries. Additionally, we observe that Western countries stand out for their probability of being neutral towards these non-traditional family behaviours. Contrary to our expectations, Southern and Eastern Europe present a more complex pattern, which exhibits different shares of approval, neutrality and disapproval, depending on the specific behaviour. Southern European countries present, overall, approval or neutrality towards non-traditional family behaviours, despite their probability of disapproval increasing when considering items related to women’s behaviours. In contrast, Eastern European countries tend to approve of behaviours like non-marital cohabitation and childbearing, as well as mothers being full-time employed with small children, although there is a non-negligible share of individuals disapproving. Instead, there is considerable disapproval of behaviours such as childlessness or women divorcing when children are 12 or younger in this socio-political regime.

Figure 3: Predicted probabilities of the attitudes towards non-traditional family behaviours

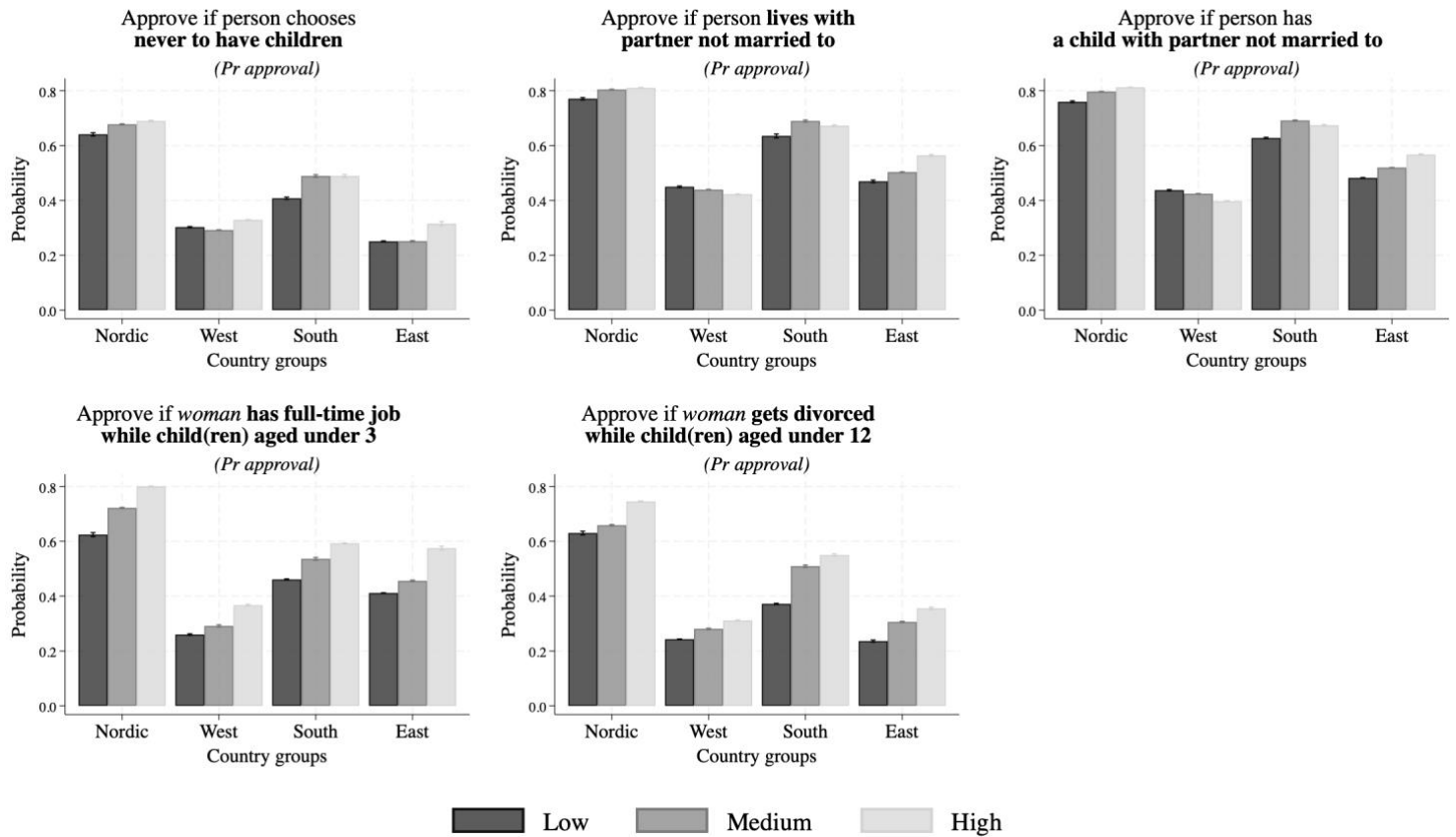


Source: Authors' weighted computations from ESS round 3 (2006) and 9 (2018) from a multinomial logit regressing approval on country groups and controls

Error! Reference source not found. and Figure 4 present the probabilities of approval and disapproval of the considered non-traditional family behaviours according to education and socio-political regimes. This way, we aim to test H2, i.e., “*Approval for non-traditional family ideals will be highest among the highly educated and lowest among the lower-educated.*” and H3 “*The educational gradient in the approval for non-traditional family ideals is weakest in Nordic countries and strongest in Southern and Eastern Europe*”. H2 is confirmed partially. Although we do not find major educational differences in the likelihood of approving childlessness, nonmarital cohabitation and childbearing, there is a mild positive gradient (i.e., higher predicted approval with increasing education) in the Nordic, Southern, and Eastern European regimes. Also, in Western countries, neutrality regarding involuntary childlessness increases with education (not shown). A strong positive gradient exists across all socio-political regimes for questions regarding women divorcing while their

children are younger than 12 and being full-time employed when the child is less than three. Contrary to what has been hypothesised with H3, Nordic countries do not seem to present the narrowest gradient.

Figure 4: Educational differences in the probability of approval of non-traditional family behaviours and whether these differences are moderated by country group



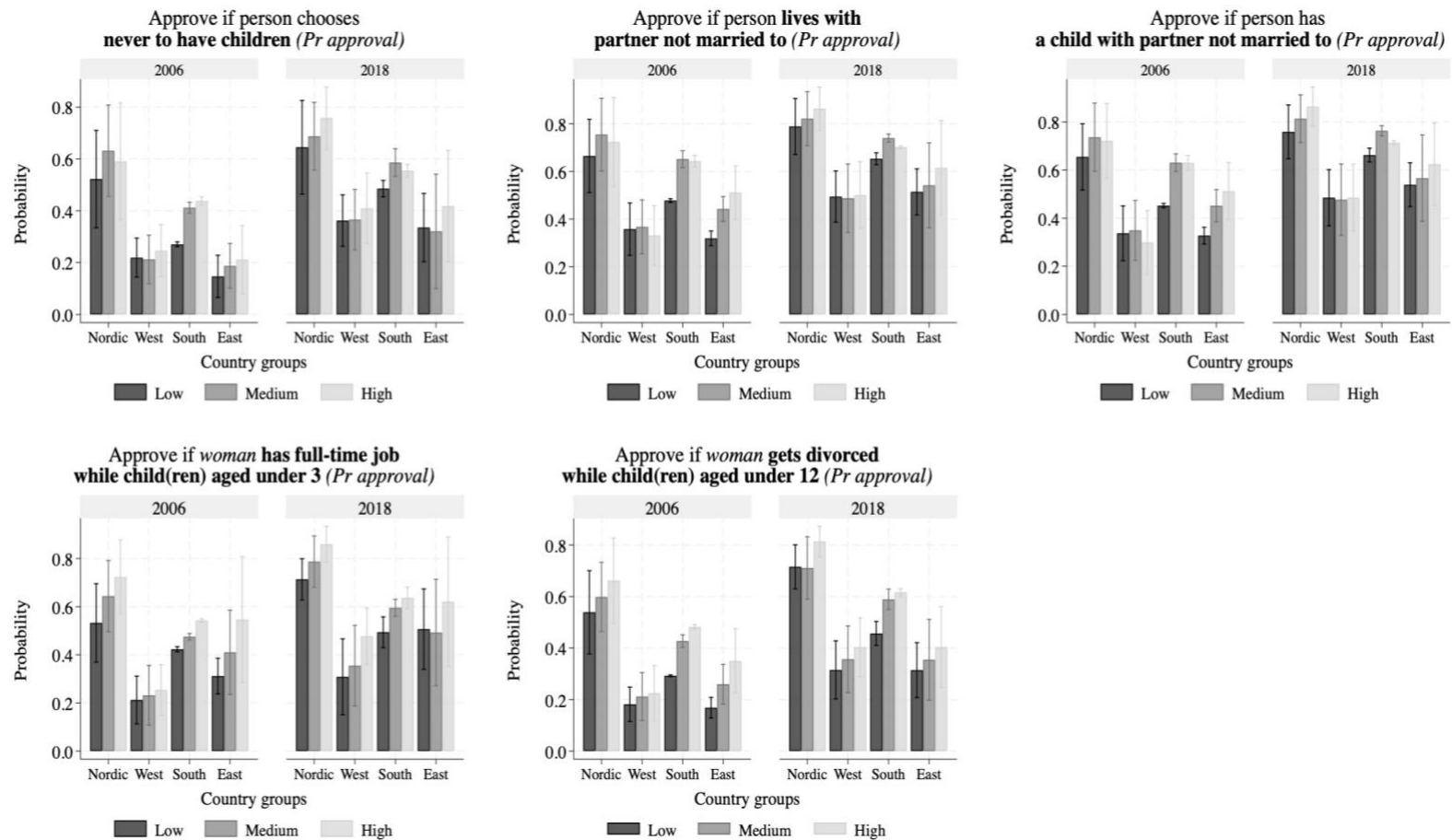
Source: Authors' weighted computations from ESS round 3 (2006) and 9 (2018) from a multinomial logit regressing approval on country groups, education, their interaction and controls

To test H4, i.e. whether “*The educational gradient in the approval for non-traditional family ideals has become smaller over time*”, we tested the interaction between education, socio-political regime, and historical time. The results are shown in

Figure 5, which reports the predicted probabilities for approval of non-traditional family behaviours. We do not notice a decrease in the educational gradient over time in Northern and Western European countries. However, we see a clear reduction of the educational differences in approval in the data regarding the Eastern and Southern European countries and the outcomes for nonmarital childbearing

and cohabitation. While in the 2006 round of ESS highly educated individuals were more likely to approve of such behaviours by a large amount, this trend narrowed by 2018 (the difference is significant at the 99% level of confidence, after applying a Bonferroni correction).

Figure 5: Educational differences in the approval of non-traditional family behaviours by education and country groupings (Pr. approval)



Source: Authors' weighted computations from ESS round 3 (2006) and 9 (2018) from a multinomial logit regressing approval on country groups, education, year of the interview, their interaction and controls

As further analyses, we analysed the probability of disapproval. This analysis shows that disapproval is always higher among the least educated across all outcomes, whereas the one of neutrality (here not shown) does not follow a regular pattern. We also see a constant gradient over time, showing that the least educated tend to be the most disapproving of non-traditional family behaviours at both survey rounds and that this gradient has not become smaller.

Discussion and conclusion

Family behaviours have undergone significant changes since the second half of the 20th century, such as a decline in fertility and marriage rates, and the presence of new family forms (Lesthaeghe 2020; Van De Kaa 1987). Multiple explanations have been put forward for these trends including changing ideals, fuelled by individualisation and secularisation, the increasing access to birth control, and, finally, the presence of socioeconomic changes, such as the increase in women's education and employment. Although these changes have been happening at a different pace across countries, one of the arguments of the SDT was that these differences in behaviours across Western countries would disappear once all countries had internalised these changes. While the SDT has mostly focused on behaviours, it has not yet explored cross-country differences in attitudes towards the “new” or non-traditional behaviours introduced in the last century and whether countries that started adopting them earlier are now more accepting. For this reason, in this paper, we start by exploring whether individuals' attitudes towards five non-traditional behaviours vary across different socio-political regimes, aligned with the SDT progression. The SDT progression is closely tied to the geographical and institutional contexts of the countries.

Concurrent frameworks to the SDT have indicated that uncertainties in economic resources could also diversify family behaviours, such as the pattern of disadvantage by (Perelli-Harris et al. 2010) or the globalisation framework by (Blossfeld et al. 2005). If we consider family behaviours as the result of ideals and attitudes, we would observe socioeconomic differences in family behaviours across various countries, such as non-marital cohabitation or childbearing. However, these differences may vary according to the institutional context in which individuals live (Blossfeld et al. 2005; Mills and Blossfeld 2013). For this reason, we also investigated differences in non-traditional family ideals across education and whether these differences would change by socio-political regime.

Our first hypothesis theorised different levels of approval by socio-political regime, starting with the Nordic countries, then the Western countries and finally the Eastern and Southern ones. This

hypothesis was partially supported. On the one hand, we found that Nordic countries appear to fully embrace the SDT, while other regimes show a more moderate stance. However, what stands out is that non-marital cohabitation and childbearing, as well as working women with small children, receive widespread support across all socio-political regimes, indicating that these practices have become normative in contemporary Europe. Other non-traditional behaviours, such as voluntary childlessness and divorce with young children, remain more difficult to accept in certain socio-political regimes. For instance, Eastern European countries show a high share of disapproval for voluntary childlessness and divorce with children under 12. These findings would align with the idea of partial convergence of the attitudes towards non-traditional family behaviours across Western countries, which is consistent with the idea that family changes progressed at different speeds across the continent.

For our second and third hypotheses, we analysed the differences in approval probability by education. We first hypothesised that the approval for non-traditional family ideals would be highest among the highly educated and lowest among the lower-educated. Then, we also hypothesised that the educational gradient in the approval for non-traditional family ideals is weakest in Nordic countries and strongest in Southern and Eastern Europe this gradient was less pronounced in Nordic countries. Our expectations are confirmed by the positive educational gradient found across all socio-political regimes when we consider behaviours related to women's work or divorce with small children. However, they are contradicted by the very modest educational differences in the approval of voluntary childlessness, nonmarital childbearing and cohabitation across all socio-political regimes. This last finding may be motivated by the consistent diffusion of these non-traditional behaviours among the least educated, thus resulting in their approval.

We also explored whether educational differences by socio-political regime would change over time. We specifically hypothesised that the educational gradient in the approval for non-traditional family ideals has become smaller over time. We found no differences by education and historical period in Nordic and Western European countries. However, in Eastern and Southern European

countries, low-educated individuals have become increasingly favorable toward non-traditional family behaviors. These findings would be consistent with the more recent diffusion of non-traditional family behaviours in Southern and Eastern Europe than in Nordic and Western Europe (Sobotka and Berghammer 2021). Recent literature on the increasing economic uncertainty in Southern European countries would enhance the less normative behaviours of low-educated individuals (Vignoli et al. 2016).

Overall, our findings highlight the complex nature of the cultural and socioeconomic changes associated with changes in family formation over the past decades. While certain non-traditional behaviors have become widely accepted, such as non-marital cohabitation, non-marital childbearing, and women's full-time employment when children are young, attitudes remain more divided on others, such as on voluntary childlessness and women's divorce with young children. These results show both convergence and persistent differences in the approval of non-traditional family behaviours across the various SDT-aligned socio-political regime. The inconsistent patterns observed in terms of the educational gradient in approval suggest that socioeconomic factors alone cannot fully explain the attitudinal changes. Further, the increasing approval among lower-educated individuals in Southern and Eastern European countries highlights the importance of considering contextual factors.

Acknowledgements

This research was partially supported by the Strategic Research Council (SRC) of the Academy of Finland, FLUX Consortium (decision numbers: 345130 and 345131), the INVEST Research Flagship (decision number: 320162) and the ESRC Centre for Population Change: Connecting Generations (ES/W002116/1).

References

- Agrillo, C., & Nelini, C. (2008). Childfree by choice: a review. *Journal of Cultural Geography*, 25(3), 347–363. <https://doi.org/10.1080/08873630802476292>
- Ajzen, I. (1991). *The Theory of Planned Behavior* (Vol. 50, pp. 179–211).
- Albertini, M., & Brini, E. (2021). I've changed my mind. The intentions to be childless, their stability and realisation. *European Societies*, 23(1), 119–160. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14616696.2020.1764997>
- Alderotti, G., Vignoli, D., Baccini, M., & Matysiak, A. (2021). Employment Instability and Fertility in Europe: A Meta-Analysis. *Demography*, 3(58), 871–900. <https://doi.org/10.1215/00703370-9164737>
- Bachrach, C. A., & Morgan, S. P. (2013). A cognitive-social model of fertility intentions. *Population and Development Review*, 39(3), 459–485. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1728-4457.2013.00612.x>
- Balbo, N., Billari, F. C., & Mills, M. (2013). Fertility in Advanced Societies: A Review of Research: La fécondité dans les sociétés avancées: un examen des recherches. *European Journal of Population = Revue Européenne De Demographie*, 29(1), 1–38. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10680-012-9277-y>
- Beck, U. (1992). *Risk Society: Towards a New Modernity*. London: SAGE Publications.
- Becker, G. (1993a). *A treatise on the family: Enlarged edition*. Cambridge, MA and London: Harvard University Press.
- Becker, G. (1993b). *A treatise on the family: Enlarged edition*. Cambridge, MA and London: Harvard University Press.
- Bhrolcháin, M., & Beaujouan, É. (2013). Education and cohabitation in Britain: A return to traditional patterns? *Population and Development Review*, 39(3), 441–458. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1728-4457.2013.00611.x>

- Blossfeld, H. P., Mills, M., Klijzing, E., & Kurz, K. (Eds.). (2005). *Globalization, uncertainty and youth in society* (Vol. 15). London, UK and New York, NYC: Routledge.
<https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203003206>
- Brzozowska, Z. (2021). Attitudinal and behavioural indices of the second demographic transition: Evidence from the last three decades in Europe. *Demographic Research*, 44, 1115–1132.
- Elzinga, C. H., & Liefbroer, A. C. (2007). De-standardization of Family-Life Trajectories of Young Adults: A Cross-National Comparison Using Sequence Analysis. *European Journal of Population / Revue européenne de Démographie*, 23(3), 225–250.
<https://doi.org/10.1007/s10680-007-9133-7>
- Esping-Andersen, G. (1999). *Social Foundations of Postindustrial Economies*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- ESS. (2006). European Social Survey, Round 3, Data file edition 3.7. NSD - Norwegian Centre for Research Data, Norway - Data Archive and distributor of ESS data for ESS ERIC.
<https://doi.org/10.21338/NSD-ESS3-2006>.
- ESS. (2018). European Social Survey, Round 9, Data file edition 3.7. NSD - Norwegian Centre for Research Data, Norway - Data Archive and distributor of ESS data for ESS ERIC.
<https://doi.org/10.21338/NSD-ESS9-2018>.
- Giddens, A. (1991). *Modernity and Self-Identity: Self and Society in the Late Modern Age*. Stanford: Stanford University Press.
- Goldscheider, F. K., Bernhardt, E., & Lappegård, T. (2015). The Gender Revolution: A Framework for Understanding Changing Family and Demographic Behavior. *Population and Development Review*, 41(2), 207–239. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1728-4457.2015.00045.x>
- Grunow, D., & Evertsson, M. (2019). *New Parents in Europe. Work-care practices, gender norms and family policies*. Cheltenham, UK: Edward Elgar Publishing.
<https://doi.org/10.4337/9781788972970>

- Guetto, R., Mancosu, M., Scherer, S., & Torricelli, G. (2016). The Spreading of Cohabitation as a Diffusion Process: Evidence from Italy. *European Journal of Population = Revue Européenne de Démographie*, 32(5), 661–686. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10680-016-9380-6>
- Hofäcker, D., & Chaloupková, J. (2014). Patterns of Family Life Courses in Europe – between Standardisation and Diversity: A Cross-national Comparison of Family Trajectories and Life Course Norms in European Countries. *Comparative Population Studies*, 39(3), 559–586. <https://doi.org/10.12765/CPoS-2014-11>
- Johnson-Hanks, J. A., Bachrach, C. A., Morgan, S. P., & Kohler, H.-P. (2011). *Understanding Family Change and Variation: Structure, Conjuncture, and Action*. Dordrecht: Springer. <https://doi.org/10.1007/978-94-007-1945-3>
- Kuang, B., Berrington, A., Vasireddy, S., & Kulu, H. (2025). The changing inter-relationship between partnership dynamics and fertility trends in Europe and the United States: A review. *Demographic Research*, 52(7), 179–228. <https://doi.org/10.4054/DemRes.2025.52.7>
- Lappegård, T., Klüsener, S., & Vignoli, D. (2018). Why are marriage and family formation increasingly disconnected across Europe? A multilevel perspective on existing theories. *Population, Space and Place*, 24(2), e2088–e2088. <https://doi.org/10.1002/psp.2088>
- Lesthaeghe, R. (1995). The second demographic transition in Western countries: An interpretation. In K. Mason & A. Jensen (Eds.), *Gender and Family Change in Industrialized Countries* (pp. 17–62). Oxford, UK: Clarendon Press.
- Lesthaeghe, R. (2010). The unfolding story of the second demographic transition. *Population and Development Review*, 36(2), 211–251. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1728-4457.2010.00328.x>
- Lesthaeghe, R. (2014). The second demographic transition: A concise overview of its development. *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences*, 111(51), 18112–18115. <https://doi.org/10.1073/pnas.1420441111>

- Lesthaeghe, R. (2020). The second demographic transition, 1986–2020: sub-replacement fertility and rising cohabitation—a global update. *Genus*, 76(1), 10. <https://doi.org/10.1186/s41118-020-00077-4>
- Lesthaeghe, R., & Surkyn, J. (2007). When History Moves On: The Foundations and Diffusion of the Second Demographic Transition. In *International Family Change*. Routledge.
- Martín-García, T., Seiz, M., & Castro-Martín, T. (2023). Ideals and norms related to fatherhood in Europe: A comparative perspective from the European Social Survey. *Journal of Family Research*, 35, 17–36. <https://doi.org/10.20377/jfr-795>
- Mayer, K. U. (2009). New directions in life course research. *Annual Review of Sociology*, 35, 413–433. <https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev.soc.34.040507.134619>
- McLanahan, S. (2004). Diverging destinies: How children are faring under the second demographic transition. *Demography*, 41(4), 607–627. <https://doi.org/10.1353/dem.2004.0033>
- Mills, M., & Blossfeld, H. P. (2013). The Second Demographic Transition Meets Globalization: A Comprehensive Theory to Understand Changes in Family Formation in an Era of Rising Uncertainty. In A. Evans & J. Baxter (Eds.), *Negotiating the life course. Life Course Research and Social Policies* (Vol. 1, pp. 9–33). Dodrecht: Springer. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-90-481-8912-0_2
- OECD, Eurostat, & Statistics, U. I. for. (2015). *ISCED 2011 Operational Manual Guidelines for Classifying National Education Programmes and Related Qualifications: Guidelines for Classifying National Education Programmes and Related Qualifications*. OECD Publishing.
- Oppenheimer, V. K. (1977). The sociology of women's economic role in the family. *American Sociological Review*, 42(3), 387–387. <https://doi.org/10.2307/2094746>
- Perelli-Harris, B., & Gassen, N. S. (2012). How similar are cohabitation and marriage? Legal approaches to cohabitation across western Europe. *Population and Development Review*, 38(3), 435–467. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1728-4457.2012.00511.x>

- Perelli-Harris, B., Kreyenfeld, M., Sigle-Rushton, W., Keizer, R., Lappegård, T., Jasilioniene, A., et al. (2012). Changes in union status during the transition to parenthood in eleven European countries, 1970s to early 2000s. *Population Studies*, 66(2), 167–182.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/00324728.2012.673004>
- Perelli-Harris, B., Sigle-Rushton, W., Kreyenfeld, M., Lappegård, T., Keizer, R., & Berghammer, C. (2010). The educational gradient of childbearing within cohabitation in Europe. *Population and Development Review*, 36(4), 775–801. <https://doi.org/10.1111/J.1728-4457.2010.00357.X>
- Sobotka, T. (2008). Overview Chapter 6: The diverse faces of the Second Demographic Transition in Europe. *Demographic Research*, 19, 171–224. <https://doi.org/10.4054/DemRes.2008.19.8>
- Sobotka, T., & Berghammer, C. (2021). Chapter 10: Demography of family change in Europe. In N. Schneider & M. Kreyenfeld (Eds.), *Research Handbook on the Sociology of the Family*. (pp. 162–186). Cheltenham, UK: Edward Elgar Publishing.
<https://doi.org/10.4337/9781788975544.00019>
- Trimarchi, A., & Van Bavel, J. (2017). Education and the transition to fatherhood: The role of selection into union. *Demography*, 54, 119–144. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s13524-016-0533-3>
- Van De Kaa, D. J. (1987). Europe's second demographic transition. *Population Bulletin*, 42(1), 1–59.
- Van Winkle, Z. (2018). Family trajectories across time and space: Increasing complexity in family life courses in Europe? *Demography*, 55, 135–164. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s13524-017-0628-5>
- Vasireddy, S., Berrington, A., Kuang, B., & Kulu, H. (2023). Education and fertility: A review of recent research in Europe. *Comparative Population Studies*, 48, 553–588.
<https://doi.org/10.12765/CPoS-2023-21>

- Vignoli, D., Bazzani, G., Guetto, R., Minello, A., & Pirani, E. (2020). Uncertainty and narratives of the future: A theoretical framework for contemporary fertility. In R. Schoen (Ed.), *Analyzing contemporary fertility* (pp. 25–47). Cham, CH: Springer International.
https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-48519-1_3
- Vignoli, D., Tocchioni, V., & Salvini, S. (2016). Uncertain lives: Insights into the role of job precariousness in union formation in Italy. *Demographic Research*, 35, 253–282.
- Vitali, A., Aassve, A., & Lappegård, T. (2015). Diffusion of childbearing within cohabitation. *Demography*, 52(2), 355–377. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s13524-015-0380-7>
- Vitali, A., & Billari, F. C. (2017). Changing Determinants of Low Fertility and Diffusion: a Spatial Analysis for Italy. *Population, Space and Place*, 23(2), e1998.
<https://doi.org/10.1002/psp.1998>
- Wood, J., Neels, K., & Kil, T. (2014). The educational gradient of childlessness and cohort parity progression in 14 low fertility countries. *Demographic Research*, 31, 1365–1416.
<https://doi.org/10.4054/DemRes.2014.31.46>
- Zaidi, B., & Morgan, S. P. (2017). The second demographic transition theory: A review and appraisal. *Annual Review of Sociology*, 43, 473–492. <https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev-soc-060116-053442>
- Zimmermann, O., & Konietzka, D. (2018). Social disparities in destandardization—Changing family life course patterns in seven European countries. *European Sociological Review*, 34(1), 64–78. <https://doi.org/10.1093/esr/jcx083>
- Zimmermann, O., Konietzka, D., & Deppe, M. (2024). Differentiation and destandardization of family life courses: Theoretical and empirical links to sociopolitical regime types. *Population Studies*, 1–16. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00324728.2024.2376060>

