

4. GENERAL CONTEXT INDICATORS

Fertility

The total fertility rate indicates the number of children an average woman would have if she were to experience the exact age-specific fertility throughout her life. Allowing for some mortality during infancy and childhood, the population is replaced at a total fertility rate of a little over two.

Over the last decades, fertility declined dramatically across OECD countries, falling on average from 2.8 children per woman of childbearing age in 1970 to 1.7 in 2016 (Figure 4.4). The decline was particularly pronounced – by at least three children per woman on average – in Korea, Mexico and Turkey. There was a moderate recovery in average fertility rates between 2000 and 2008, but this rebound stalled in many OECD countries in 2009, probably as a consequence of the crisis.

In 2016, fertility was well below the replacement level in most countries, averaging 1.7 across the OECD (Figure 4.4) and still below the pre-crisis level. The highest rate was recorded in Israel at 3.1, where women had on average one child more than women in Mexico and Turkey, the countries with the second and third highest rates, respectively. These three countries were the only OECD countries with a level above the replacement fertility rate (2.1 children per woman). Ireland and France have the highest fertility rate in Europe (and the fourth and fifth highest rates in the OECD), but also Anglophone and Nordic countries were typically at the higher end. The lowest fertility rates are found in South Europe, Japan and Korea, with on average just one child per women in the latter.

Fertility rates are generally higher in key partner economies than in OECD countries; rates are above replacement levels in Argentina, India, Indonesia, Saudi Arabia and South Africa. With the exception of the Russian Federation, fertility decreased in all key partner economies between 1995 and 2016.

Rising female education and employment, a delayed entry in the labour market, growing housing problems and in some cases insufficient support for families juggling work and children, have all played a role in declining fertility. The postponement of family formation is reflected age-specific fertility trends. **Since 2000, fertility rates have been declining for women under 30 years old whereas they been rising for those aged 30 years and older** (Figure 4.5). In the last few years, the average OECD fertility rate of 30-34s exceeded the fertility rate of 25-29s, and so did the rate of 35-39s compared to 20-24s. The average 40-44s fertility rate is about to surpass the adolescent fertility rate, as it already does in two-thirds of OECD countries. The adolescent fertility rate has fallen to low levels at under three births per 1 000 adolescents in Korea, the Netherlands and Switzerland, but it remains high at above 60 in Mexico.

The postponement of family formation is also reflected in the increase in the mean age of women at first childbirth,

in all 30 OECD countries for which data are available (Figure 4.6). **Between 1995 and 2016, the mean age at first birth has risen by almost three years on average in the OECD, from 26.0 to 28.9 years old.** In 2016, mean ages at first birth were lowest at around 27 years in the United States and some Eastern European countries (Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland and Slovak Republic), whereas they were above 30 years in Japan, Korea, Ireland, Luxembourg, Switzerland, Greece, Italy and Spain.

Definition and measurement

The total fertility rate is the expected number of children born to each woman at the end of the childbearing years (i.e. if the likelihood of her giving birth to children at each age was the current prevailing age specific fertility rates). It is computed by summing up the age-specific fertility rates defined over five year intervals. Assuming there is no net migration and mortality remains unchanged, the total fertility rate of 2.1 children per woman ensures broad population stability (“replacement rate”).

The age-specific fertility rates are the number of births per 1 000 women of a given age in a given year. They are presented here per five-year age group.

Fertility data typically come from civil population registers or other administrative records. The data are harmonised according to United Nations and Eurostat recommendations.

Mean ages of women at first birth are from the OECD *Family Database*, based on Eurostat demographic statistics and United Nations World Fertility Data 2017.

Further reading

OECD (2018), “SF2.1 Fertility rates”, *OECD Family Database*, <http://oe.cd/fdb>.

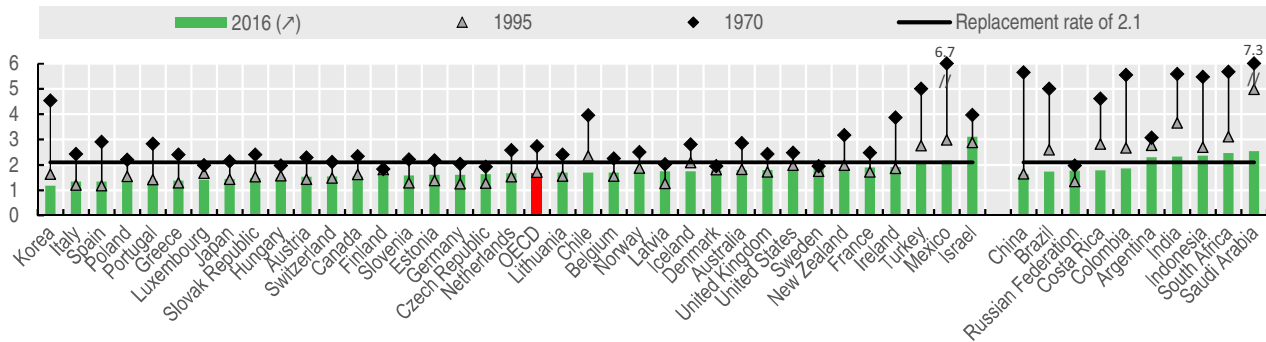
OECD (2018), “SF2.3 Age of mothers at childbirth and age-specific fertility”, *OECD Family Database*, <http://oe.cd/fdb>.

Figure notes

Figure 4.6: Data for the United Kingdom refer to England & Wales only; 2011 for Canada instead of 2016; 1998 for France and Sweden, 1999 for the Slovak Republic, 2000 for Latvia instead of 1995; no data available around 1995 for Germany; no data available for both years for Australia, Chile, Colombia, Mexico, New Zealand and Turkey.

4.4 Fertility rates across the OECD are typically below the population replacement rate

Number of children per woman aged 15 to 49, in 1970, 1995 and 2016 or nearest years

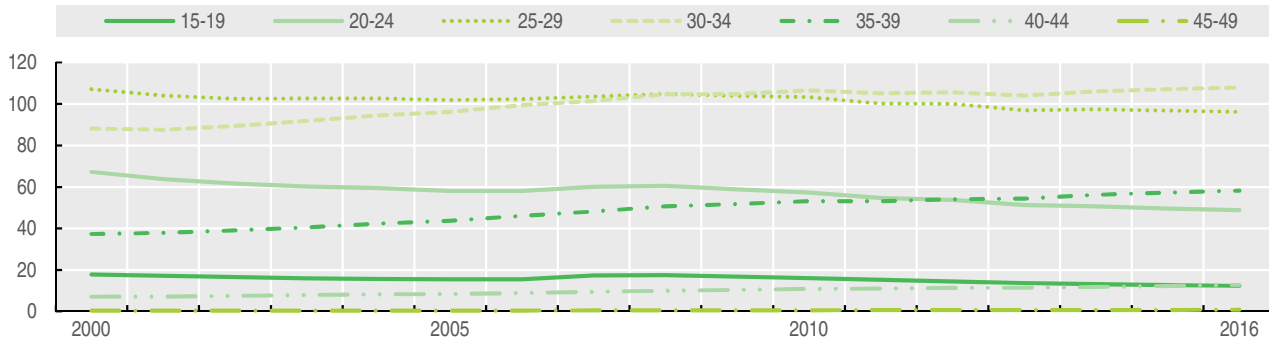


Source: OECD (2018), "SF2.1 Fertility rates", OECD Family Database, <http://oe.cd/fdb>.

StatLink <http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/888933938515>

4.5. Decline in fertility rates for women under 30 years old and increase for those aged 30 years and older

Births per 1 000 women by five-year age group, 2000 to 2016 or nearest year, OECD average

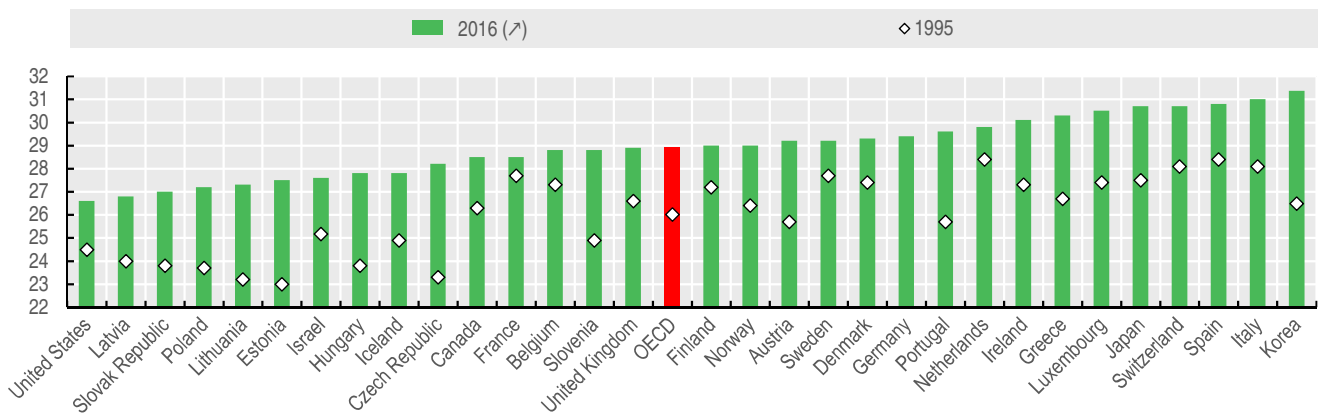


Source: OECD (2018), "SF2.3 Age of mothers at childbirth and age-specific fertility", OECD Family Database, <http://oe.cd/fdb>, based from Eurostat demographic statistics (<http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/web/population-demography-migration-projections/population-data/database>) and United Nations World Fertility Data 2017 (www.un.org/en/development/desa/population/publications/dataset/fertility/wfd2017.shtml).

StatLink <http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/888933938534>

4.6. The mean age of women at first birth has risen by three years within two decades

Mean age of women at first birth, 1995 and 2016 or nearest year



Source: OECD (2018), "SF2.3 Age of mothers at childbirth and age-specific fertility", OECD Family Database, <http://oe.cd/fdb>, based from Eurostat demographic statistics (<http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/web/population-demography-migration-projections/population-data/database>) and United Nations World Fertility Data 2017 (www.un.org/en/development/desa/population/publications/dataset/fertility/wfd2017.shtml).

StatLink <http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/888933938553>



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