

Desired and achieved fertility in the low fertility context - realization of childbearing intentions with reference to the Czech Republic

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The social, political and economic transformation experienced by the former socialist countries of Central and Eastern Europe since the beginning of the 1990s have resulted in rapid changes in demographic trends. In the period since 1990 in the Czech Republic family formation was postponed and fertility rates declined sharply from 1.89 to 1.18 remaining below the 'lowest-low' threshold (at 1.1-1.2) until 2004. Only the most recent data suggests a slight recovery in total fertility with an increase to 1.44 in 2007.

The two basic lines of interpretation addressing the changes in reproductive behaviour in Central and Eastern Europe (e.g. Philipov 2002) and among the younger generation of Czech men and women rest in the one case on argumentation emphasizing structural effects and, in the other case, on the theory of the second demographic transition (van de Kaa 1987). The first approach points to the greater economic and social insecurity associated with transformation processes in the Czech Republic and, in particular, to the increase in the direct costs of child-raising, the decrease in living standards of families with children and poor housing opportunities for young people, which have led to a pragmatic tendency to postpone family formation (e.g. Rychtaříková 1996).

The second approach stresses the striking change in ideas, values and culture resulting in multiple forms of cohabitation, the individualization of values and life styles and, in consequence, a drop in fertility far below replacement level (e.g. Rabušic 2001a; Rabušic 2001b; Sobotka, Zeman, Kantorová 2003). In sociological literature new forms of family behaviour (including cohabitation and non-marital fertility) have been interpreted as a sign of the process of individualization of life courses and the development of Western European and North American society towards a new modernity (Beck 1992; Giddens 1990). Thus the transformation of intimate relationships, described by Singly (1999) or Sullerot (1998) e.g., within which the role of procreation in intimate relationship recedes and aspects of sexual attraction or shared intimacy take on greater importance, constitutes an ever greater influence on issues related to the arrangement within partnership relationships, parenthood and the ultimate number of children in families.

The most characteristic trend in reproductive patterns during the socialist era in the Czech Republic was a strong orientation towards the two-child family model. The universality of a two-child family model was apparent from fertility behaviour (Frejka, Sardon 2004) and according to recent sociological surveys the ideal of a two-child family still persists (e.g. surveys carried out by the Research Institute of Labour and Social Affairs, CVVM 2003, Fialová et al. 2000, Hamplová 2000). Since 1990, two thirds of all respondents in surveys have repeatedly advocated having 2 children, while only one out of five considers three children to be the ideal (Šalamounová, Šamanová 2003: 29, 2004: 8). Young, single persons also consider children as a natural part of their lives and the two-child family model remains the ideal ("Young

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generation 1997” survey²). Although the two-child norm prevails in all groups, in general the more traditional partnership behaviour, the higher the number of children is considered as ideal. Those who identify the lowest numbers as the ideal for children often prefer life-long unmarried cohabitation; respondents who want to get married directly, without prior cohabitation, tend to desire the highest numbers of children (Hamplová 2000: 96–97).

The ideal number of children is therefore considerably higher than the number of children actually born in the Czech Republic; where the latter is measured by the observed TFR. However the ideal number of children is an abstract notion. Closer to reality is the expected (ultimate) number of children (Philipov, Dorbritz 2003). This was measured by the Generation and Gender Survey (GGS) as the sum of the number of children already born, plus the desired additional number of children³. According to GGS data, the mean expected family size in 2005 is slightly declining in younger ages where women also expect the two-child family more frequently and only a few of them intend to have a larger family (three and more children) (Table 1). Intentions below the replacement level are characteristic for cohorts born after 1980 (and therefore reached age 18-24 in the year of the interview). Those women proclaim more often the option of remaining childless or having only one child.

Table 1: Expected (ultimate) number of children, women of reproductive age, 2005

Age	Expected number of children				N	Mean***
	0	1	2	3 and more		
18-19	7,5	17,0	66,0	9,4	159	1,79
20-24	6,2	17,3	60,1	16,4	323	1,88
25-29	3,3	13,4	63,0	20,3	454	2,05
30-34	3,0	13,7	56,1	27,2	497	2,13
35-39	4,4	17,2	54,8	23,6	454	2,07
40-44	8,5	16,2	56,9	18,4	425	1,91
45-49	7,7	22,6	52,4	17,3	452	1,84
18-49	5,5	16,7	57,6	20,2	2764	1,98

Note: *** mean expected number of children differs significantly across the age groups, $p < 0.001$, (ANOVA)

Source: GGS Czech Republic 2005, weighted sample

Preferences concerning the number of children in the family differ according to the highest level of education achieved. Women with lower education prefer higher number of children. As education increases, the level of the average number of children desired falls, accompanied by a decrease in the proportion of women who would plan three or more children. In this respect, women still in education

² The survey focused on examining the value orientations of young single people in the Czech Republic (age at last birthday of 18-29). The Institute of Sociology of the Academy of Sciences of the Czech Republic and the Research Institute for Labour and Social Affairs (RILSA) took part in the survey.

³ The data on numbers of children desired include both data from childless women and women who already have one or more children (question: “How many (more) children do in total do you intend to have?”). Thus the variable represents a sort of synthesis between the plans of childless women and realized fertility among women with children, including their intentions with respect to additional children.

behave in the same way as do post-secondary school graduates, though the former place a comparatively greater emphasis on the two-child family. Among women with the highest level of education, more than one in five want only one child.

To study fertility intentions and its realization we have to proceed from the most common approach, that simply compares fertility intentions at a given point in time with actual fertility level, to longitudinal approach based on re-interviewing men and women in order to verify whether their childbearing plans have come into reality (Toulemon, Testa, 2005). Generation and Gender Survey is a longitudinal study initiated with a panel in 2005 that was repeated in 2008 in the Czech Republic. The second wave (and additionally the third wave, if it takes place) will provide a unique opportunity to compare current opinions and plans with its future realisation. In 2005, women and men in the Czech Republic were asked about their future childbearing plans and expectations concerning having a (another) child within the next three years; thus after the second wave collected in 2008 we are able to assess whether those expectations were genuinely met and whether and to what extent the women's and men's original opinions and attitudes with regard to children and their influence on family life have been reflected in actual reproductive behaviour.

From analysis of the data from the first wave of survey we know childbearing intentions (table 2) as well as factors associated with childbearing decisions-making process, including the conditions that women take into consideration when deciding whether to have a(another) child. Unlike women who have received post-secondary education and women who are still studying, women with primary or secondary educations emphasize the importance of living conditions, i.e. financial and housing situation and employment, but also their health and suitable childcare. Women with primary educations (along with students) also place greater emphasis on the importance on a suitable partner, including his employment and health situation. By contrast, women with one child do not differ very much in their assessments of the importance of objective living conditions and the partner when deciding whether to have a second child. From the standpoint of values, the phase of life in which the woman finds herself (including whether or not she is living with a partner) and her future plans concerning family size appear to be the determining factors in this respect. Neither education nor age is as important in this regard (Št'astná, 2007a).

Women and men who actually plan to have a child assess the impacts of that event on all aspects of their live substantially more positively than do those who are not planning to have any (more) children. The new-born child is expected to have a very positive impact above all on the personal live, whether that is perceived as joy and satisfaction in life, the partnership or a feeling of security in life (including the idea that the children will care for their parents in their old age). Another domain in which a child is expected to have a positive influence is the individual's social bonds, both within the family and within the framework of wider social ties. The only areas in which a/another child would have a more negative influence are those of the financial situation, occupational life and personal independence.

The differences in reported perception of impact are associated more with aspirations with respect to parenthood and with the concrete stage of family cycle, and the opinions vary according to number of children that respondents have at the time of the interview (more on that issue Šťastná 2007b).

In this paper we study the short time intentions to have a child (within three years) and the realisation thereof. We use Czech Generations and Gender Survey panel data from 2005 and 2008 and we focus on factors explaining the realization / non-realization of fertility intentions. Fertility intentions and anticipated impact of a (another) child on different life domains are only selected factors that could play the role in the whole process. Other factors that have to be taken into account are personal characteristics and his/her surrounding environment and social ties as well as changes of the living conditions that could redefine the initial plan. Namely such demographic events as divorce, widowhood, and new partnership could entirely change original plans concerning childbearing. Beside those factors we will include the factor of labour-market, because parenthood is especially for women perceived as negatively influencing occupational and financial situation.

The study investigates to what extent the intentions, values associated with children and perceived impact of having child play a role in real behaviour and what impact might be assigned to other factors - personal characteristics, life course experiences and socio-economic situation.

Table 2 Birth intention by gender, age and number of biological children (%)

Number of biological children	Do you intend to have a/another children? within given time span	women					men						
		age					age						
		18-24	25-29	30-34	35-39	40-49	total	18-24	25-29	30-34	35-39	40-49	total
total	<i>N</i>	489	440	508	473	953	2863	578	479	482	482	864	2885
	now	28	40,5	22,8	6,6	1,3	16,6	23,2	36,3	29,9	16,8	4,7	19,9
	during the next 3 years	9,2	18	10	3,4	0,7	6,9	6,7	18	13,5	5,6	2,2	8,2
	later	54,4	14,5	6,9	2,3	0,3	13,2	58,3	26,7	13,9	7,9	3,4	20,8
	no, do not intend to have any (more) children	7,8	23,4	59,4	85,4	92,4	60,4	10,2	15,7	40	65,8	85,9	48
childless	<i>N</i>	443	189	86	41	91	850	568	353	220	111	186	1438
	now	25,3	48,1	46,5	29,3	5,5	30,6	22,4	36,3	36,8	25,2	9,7	26,6
	during the next 3 years	9,5	25,9	19,8	9,8	1,1	13,3	6,7	19	17,3	8,1	1,6	10,8
	later	58	15,9	8,1	2,4	1,1	34,8	59,3	33,1	21,4	15,3	6,5	36,9
	no, do not intend to have any children	6,5	6,9	24,4	58,5	85,7	19,4	10	7,9	20	46,8	75,3	22,3
1 biological child	<i>N</i>	38	139	151	95	199	622	8	75	110	107	165	465
	now	65,8	52,5	39,7	12,6	1	27,7	87,5	54,7	40,9	32,7	4,8	29,2
	during the next 3 years	7,9	17,3	14,6	9,5	1	9,6	12,5	24	21,8	11,2	4,2	13,3
	later	15,8	12,2	7,9	4,2	-	6,3	-	10,7	4,5	9,3	4,8	6,7
	no, do not intend to have more children	10,5	14,4	38,4	73,7	89,4	53,1	-	9,3	32,7	46,7	83,6	49,7
2 biological children	<i>N</i>	8	98	220	254	506	1086	2	42	133	219	390	786
	now	-	12,2	6,4	1,6	0,8	3,1	-	11,9	9	7,3	3,6	6
	during the next 3 years	-	6,1	5	1,2	0,8	2,2	-	2,4	2,3	2,7	2,1	2,3
	later	37,5	15,3	5,9	1,6	0,4	3,4	-	7,1	9	5	0,8	3,7
	no, do not intend to have more children	62,5	61,2	81,4	92,1	93,7	87,7	100	78,6	76,7	80,4	90	84,5
3 and more biological children	<i>N</i>	-	14	51	83	157	305	-	9	19	45	123	196
	now	-	14,3	3,9	3,6	0,6	2,6	-	-	31,6	4,4	0,8	4,6
	during the next 3 years	-	-	2	-	-	0,3	-	-	-	-	-	0,5
	later	-	14,3	5,9	2,4	-	2,3	-	-	15,8	-	4,9	4,6
	no, do not intend to have more children	-	71,4	86,3	91,6	96,2	92,1	-	77,8	57,9	86,7	91,9	86,7

Source: GGS Czech Republic 2005, men and women aged 18-49, weighted sample.

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