

## **Postponed Births in Bulgaria - Essence, Consequences, Prospects**

### **SUMMARY**

The most significant change in the fertility patterns of Europe in the last few decades concerns the postponement of births with low and declining birth rates in the background. The development of this process has made a major contribution to the uprising of the so-called “lowest low” fertility since 1990, which is widespread in the countries of Southern and Eastern Europe.

The process of postponing of births in Bulgaria is underexplored and poorly understood. Moreover, in Bulgaria, there is practically no research on cohort fertility, mainly due to the high requirements for the information base. The study of fertility only on the basis of period measures, such as the total fertility rate, does not allow to study in depth all its characteristics and determinants. This may lead to distortion of the conclusions about the current and even more about the future regime of fertility and demographic reproduction.

**The subject** of this study is the fertility of the cohorts of women born in Bulgaria after 1932. **The object** of the study are the size and structure of delayed births – total and by rank of child born, for the calendar period 1980-2018 and for cohorts of women born in the period 1932-1990.

**The aim** of the present dissertation is to study the changes in the fertility levels in Bulgaria in the context of the ongoing transition to postponement of births and the observed changes in the fertility age patterns in cohort and period perspectives.

The current study maintains the thesis that the low birth rate in Bulgaria is determined by the change in the fertility regime which occurred after the mid 1950s in combination with the start of the transition to postponement of births.

The complexity of the studied phenomena and of the multilayered period of the research determined the need of applying a systemic and complex approaches. The analysis was performed in a period and cohort aspect embracing births of different parity.

The main source of statistical information are the National Statistical Institute and the Max Planck Institute for Demographic Research (HFD) databases.

The first chapter presents the theoretical and methodological foundations of the study of postponed births and low fertility. The theoretical framework of the study is the theory of transition to postponement of births. Methods for adjusting period measures of fertility, methods for decomposing changes in births by parity, method for predicting cohort fertility, method for reconstructing cohort fertility history, etc., were used in the analysis.

The second chapter presents the results of the cross-sectional analysis of fertility in Bulgaria and Europe. Based on the analysis of data on fertility, the beginning and stages of the transition to postponement of births in Bulgaria have been determined. Adjusted fertility measures have been calculated. The missing births of tempo, quantum and generational effects have been decomposed.

The third chapter examines the completed cohort fertility rates for 40 generations of women born in the period 1930-1970 in Bulgaria. The changes in the fertility patterns – in total and by rank, were studied in the longitudinal aspect. The results of the analysis provided grounds to determine the generations of women with whom the transition to postponing childbirth began. Childlessness levels have been established in generations of women who have completed their reproductive lives. The specific changes in the cohort fertility model were studied on the basis of a method for decomposing the reduction of the completed cohort fertility rate by parity components.

Chapter four contains the results of the forecast of the completed cohort fertility rates of women still in childbearing age by the method of the “reference cohort” proposed by K. Zeman. The main differentiating factor for the forecast variants is the degree of recovery of postponed births disaggregated by rank.