

Having the First Child in Italy in a Short-Term Period: The Cohort of Foreigners Immigrated in 2003

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Introduction

Since the last census in 2001 the number of foreigners in Italy increased rapidly. Today they represent almost 7.2% of the total population (ISMU 2009). About 4.5 million foreigners are assumed to be living in Italy at the beginning of 2008 regardless of their legal status. With the rapid increase in the number increased also the amount of demographic events related to foreigners. The number of births grew from about 41,000 in 2001 to more than 86,000 in 2007. The proportion of foreign births on the total number of births increased from 7.6% to 15.5% during this period. The Total Fertility Rate (TFR) of foreigners is higher than for Italians and the age of childbearing notably younger (Istat 2008). If we consider that Italy is one of the countries with the lowest fertility in the world (Livi Bacci and Delegado Perez 1992), this raised public interest in the fertility behaviors of foreigners in Italy. Our research questions are *Which characteristics affect the risk of having the first child in Italy? Which is the impact of the citizenship, the reason and the duration of the residence permit in this decision?*

The official sample surveys are not generally representative for foreigners (Strozza and Cibella 2006), which increased the demand for reliable administrative records as sources of statistical information on migrants, especially if the focus is on demographic behaviors. To overcome the limits of existing data and to give proper importance to the information from administrative sources we have implemented a record linkage between different datasets and between different years. Our main interest is to link the fertility behaviors of women with their migration history. Hence, we will focus on the *Survey on Live Births* of the Italian resident population and on information from the *residence permits* of the Italian Ministry of the Interior.

The main novelty of this work is the use of stock and flow data from administrative registers to construct a short term longitudinal dataset that includes information on births and migrations in a

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determinate interval of years. This information is missing until now in the Italian context. The possibility of recovering information allows us to analyze the risk of having one or more children in the period considering also the migration history.

Data and Methods

The data used come from the *Survey on Live Births* of the resident population and from the *residence permits* of the Italian Ministry of the Interior. The first are recorded in the Municipal Resident Population Registers and collected by the Italian National Institute of Statistics (Istat). In the new total survey started in 1999 the individual form used (named P4) includes information on births (date and place of birth, citizenship), parents (date of birth, citizenship, and marital status) and the main details of the head of the household. We considered the period 2003-2006 because from the beginning of this period the survey is more reliable and well-established and the number of births from foreign mothers is higher and more important than in the past.

The data on residence permits are available in Istat at individual level from 1992. They include information on the basic demographic (sex, age, civil status, citizenship) and migration (date of arrival, duration, and reason of the permits) characteristics of the foreign population “present” in Italy. We considered the period 2002-2006.

We use record linkage techniques to identify the same individual, object or event in different databases using common characteristics and the information available in the single files (Fellegi and Sunter 1969). More in detail we follow women who arrived in 2003 over time (residence permits 2002-2006) to control if they stay in Italy for the entire observation period and we link the same women with the *Survey on Live Births* to see if they have children during 2003-2006. These techniques are particularly useful for migration studies where data are sparse. Record linkage can improve the existing data by enhancing and integrating administrative sources. We tested deterministic and probabilistic strategies in this paper.

Using this new dataset we will be able to study the risk to have a first birth in Italy for the cohort of women that migrate in Italy in 2003. Particular attention we will give to the impact of citizenship and migration history of each individual on the choice to have a child. We will provide descriptive statistics and a non-parametric analysis to describe the phenomena and the various transitions we are interested in. The risk of having a first or consequent child in the period is analyzed using Event history models.

First Results

According to the literature (Andersson 2004, Sobotka 2008), we found a large heterogeneity in the reproductive behaviors by citizenships. This pattern persisted when we adjusted for other demographic characteristics of the mothers such as age, civil status, place of residence. We assume that citizenship is the main factor to distinguish the heterogeneity in the propensity to have the first child in Italy (Andersson 2004). The risk to have the first in Italy is higher for married women that come in Italy for family reunions. This let us assume that the risk in the short period is linked to the life course hypothesis (Mulder & Wagner, 1993, Andersson, 2001). We also found that the possibility to stay in Italy for a longer period increases the chances to have the first child in the host country (Coleman, 1993, Crisci, 2006).

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