

# **The Fertility of East to West German migrants**

## *Extended Abstract*

*European Population Conference, 2010, Vienna*

*Anja Vatterrott<sup>1</sup>*

Twenty years after the political change in East Germany and the reunification with the Federal Republic of Germany millions of people have migrated from the Eastern to the Western part due to high unemployment, shutting-down of industries, and economic deprivation in the East. A large share of people has moved from the East to the West mainly for economic reasons shortly before and since reunification. These movements somehow fall between the definitions of international and internal migration. Until the official reunification contract the two Germanies were defined as one state by the Federal Republic of Germany, which makes up the Western part today, but the German Democratic Republic in the east defined itself as an independent state of its own. Even after the reunification it is questionable whether a move between the two territories can be treated accordingly to regional moves within the Western or Eastern part. The East is characterised by higher unemployment rates, a worse economic infrastructure, but also considerably better availability of public childcare than the West.

There are two phases of strong East-West migration in Germany. The first begins in 1989 and holds through the beginning of the 1990s. Directly after the German reunification over one third of East Germans could imagine to move to the West. Those who realised such a move are disproportionally young and skilled and faced with unfavourable employment positions – being layed-off, unemployed or in temporary working contracts (Büchel and Schwarze; Hunt 2000). After 1997 out-migration from the East to the West, especially of the young and educated, increased again and peaked in 2001. Between 1990 and 2006 2.8 Million migrated from the East to the West with a negative net migration of 1.3 Million for the East of Germany. Because migrants from the East to the West of the second wave are disproportionally young and female the Eastern federal states are “losing” births to the Western states (Mai and Scharein 2009).

While mortality and – after a steep decline in the beginning of the 1990s in the East – total fertility rates have converged, there are differences remaining in fertility patterns and the share of out-of-wedlock births in East and West Germany. In the East almost

---

<sup>1</sup> Max Planck Institute for Demographic Research, Konrad-Zuse-Str. 1, 18057 Rostock, Germany, phone: 0049-(0)381-2081 217, email: vatterrott@demogr.mpg.de

60 percent of children are born outside of marriage while in the West only less than 30 percent are. Also there are less childless and less two-child families to be found in the East while in the West there seems to be a polarization taking place between the childless and those with more than one child. First children are born earlier and the timing between a first and second child is wider spaced in the East than in the West (Kreyenfeld 2003). This is due to differing cultures of dealing with uncertainty. Women in the West have a stronger feeling of an urgency to decide between employment and motherhood or to establish themselves as their partner securely in the labour market before family formation. Contrary to this sequential approach employment and family are rather seen as compatible and parallel careers in the East (Bernardi et al. 2008).

The study of migrant fertility behaviour is of interest to understand the effects and importance of cultural, institutional and socio-economic determinants and changes for demographic outcomes. Although East and West Germany have considerable differences in these dimensions they are still comparable on a higher level than different countries.

Migrants are generally theorised to behave according to four competing hypothesis. Either they will follow the behaviour prevalent at their place of origin (socialisation hypothesis) or adapt to the behaviour at their destination. They could be a selected group with preferences that resemble that of people at their destination. Disruption effects can occur, that delay demographic events shortly after migration because migrants have to get accustomed to their new place of stay. Moreover, there can be an interrelation of events in the different domains with events scheduled closely together (Kulu and Milewski 2007). The latter has been observed for the family formation of international migrants in West Germany. For them the events of migration, marriage and first birth are strongly interrelated. The transition to a first pregnancy is highly elevated in the first year after migration and lowers over time as migrants adapt to the behaviour at destination (Milewski 2007). However, the behaviour of internal migrants in Germany differs considerably from that of international migrants, since the largest share of relocations is not marriage-related but due to employment reasons (Schneider 2008).

We use data from the yearly German Socio Economic Panel (SOEP), carried out by the German Institute for Economic Research, Berlin. The advantage of the SOEP is that there is an oversample of East Germans, which are covered in Sample C of the panel. Furthermore, sample D also oversamples East West migrants. We use data from the waves of 1990 to 2008, looking at both men and women and their first birth behaviour. Our special interest is in individuals who have migrated from East to West Germany after 1990. We compare their first birth patterns with that of non-migrants in the East and the West. In our model being a resident of either region (East

Germany, West Germany) is treated as a time-varying variable. Other covariates are education, employment and partnership status, as well as partners' characteristics.

### References:

Bernardi, L., Klärner, A. and H. von der Lippe 2008: Job insecurity and the timing of parenthood: a comparison between Eastern and Western Germany. In: *European Journal of Population* 24, 287-313.

Büchel, F. and J. Schwarze 1994: Die Migration von Ost- nach Westdeutschland – Absicht und Realisierung. *Mitteilungen aus der Arbeitsmarkt- und Berufsforschung* 27.

Hunt, J. 2000: Why do people still live in Eastern Germany. *IZA Discussion Paper* 123.

Kreyenfeld, M. 2003: Crisis or adaptation – reconsidered: A comparison of East and West German fertility patterns in the first six years after the 'Wende'. In: *European Journal of Population* 19, 303-329.

Kulu, H. and N. Milewski 2007: Family change and migration in the life course: An introduction. In: *Demographic Research* 17(19), 567-590.

Mai, R. and M. Scharein 2009: Effekte der Binnenmigration auf die Bevölkerungsentwicklung und Alterung in den Bundesländern. In: Cassens, I., M. Luy and R. Scholz (eds.): *Die Bevölkerung in Ost- und Westdeutschland. Demografische, gesellschaftliche und wirtschaftliche Entwicklungen seit der Wende*. Wiesbaden: VS Verlag für Sozialwissenschaften, 75-99.

Milewski, N. 2007: First child of immigrant workers and their descendants in West Germany: Interrelation of events, disruption or adaptation? In: *Demographic Research* 17(29), 859-896.

Schneider, N.F., Ruppenthal, S., Lück, D., Rüger, H. and A. Dauber 2008: Germany – A country of locally attached but highly mobile people. In: Schneider, N.F. and G. Meil (eds.): *Mobile living across Europe I. Relevance and diversity of job-related spatial mobility in six European countries*, 105-147.