

**Having the next child in times of economic crisis?  
Mobile and Non-mobile Eastern Germans around unification**

*Extended Abstract  
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In this study, we analyze the impact of the economic crisis in the former German Democratic Republic following German reunification on family extension. We differentiate between women who have stayed in the region and those that have moved to the more prosperous region of western Germany in the course of mostly employment-related migration. These women could profit from more favorable economic circumstances than the non-mobiles but at the same time suffered from disruption of their social networks. Western German women are included as a control group. We focus on second births because economic disruptions show more clearly in second birth patterns than in first births. While it is known that reunification was followed by a steep decline in period fertility rates which subsequently have recuperated, we as yet do not have a comprehensive picture of the development of order specific behavior. In particular, it is unclear how changes in second birth behavior have contributed to the recent increase in total fertility rates.

Against this background we focus on the impact of reunification on family extension in eastern Germany and on the possible recuperation of births postponed during the early 1990s due to economic upheavals. If recuperation took place, are cohorts hit differently depending on the stage of their family life course in 1990? Could mobility to western Germany serve as a tool to escape the crisis and promote recuperation of family extension?

We use data from BASiD, a large scale data set linking information from the German employment and pension registers. Detailed monthly longitudinal information on the region of employment and residence make it possible to identify non-mobile eastern

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and western Germans as well as East-West migrants, West-East migrants, and those with multiple migrations between the two regions. While surveys like the German Socio Economic Panel or the Generations and Gender Survey cannot supply sufficient sample sizes of the mobile groups, BASiD allows for separate analysis of mobiles.

The analyses focus on women born between 1955 and 1974, who had their first child between 1980 and 2000. Descriptive results show no major changes in transition patterns to second birth over cohorts in the western part of Germany, where 75 percent of first time mothers continue to have a second child (see Fig. 1). In eastern Germany, second birth behavior has radically changed since cohorts born 1960-64, who were in their late twenties at the time of unification. For the latter cohorts, only about 50 percent of first time mothers had a second child. Mobility of eastern German women had a positive impact on second birth probabilities, likely owing to the more advantageous labor market situation in the receiving region (see Fig. 2). The spacing of births was impacted by unification as well. While the mean duration between a first and second birth has consistently been 3-4 years in western Germany, it strongly changed over time in eastern Germany, with women who had their first child just around unification spacing their children on average more than 5 years apart (see Fig. 3). Event history models show that reunification impacted second birth risks of eastern German women negatively, especially if they had their first child around 1990 (see Fig. 4). For those who experienced family formation following reunification, second births recuperated, but did not reach either the western German level, nor the eastern German level of the 1980s.

Fig. 1: Transition to second child by region (Kaplan-Meier survival curves)

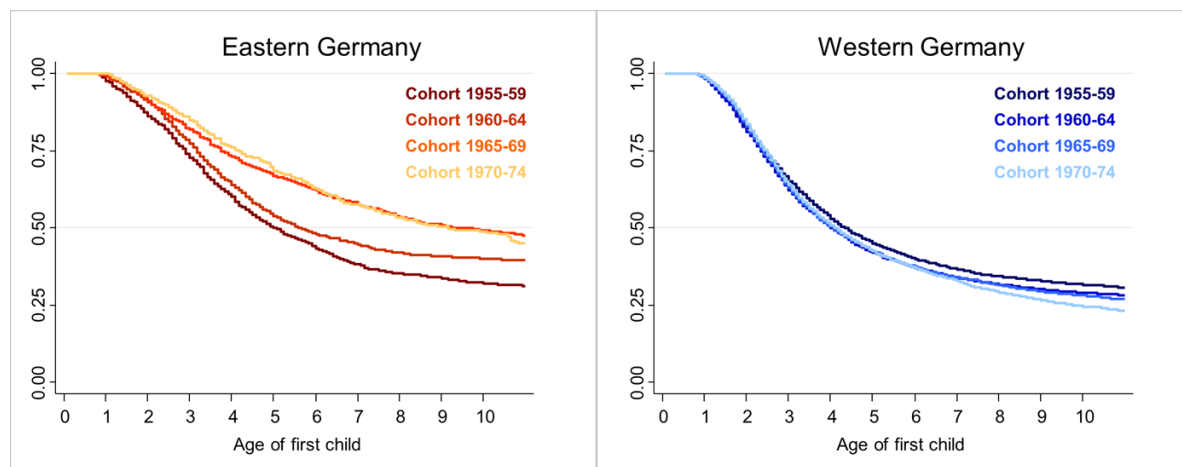


Fig. 2: Transition to second child by mobility status (Kaplan-Meier survival curves)

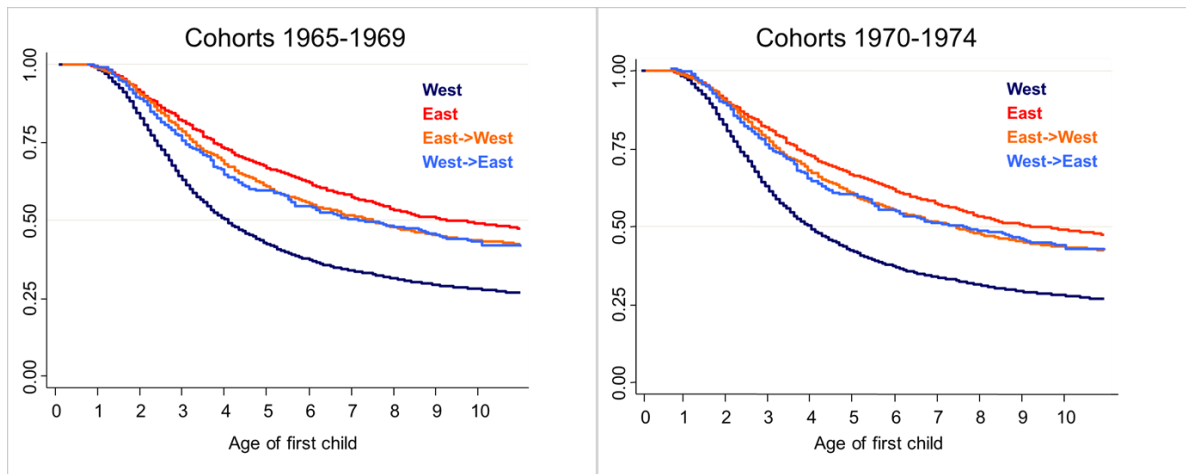


Fig. 3: Mean difference between first and second child

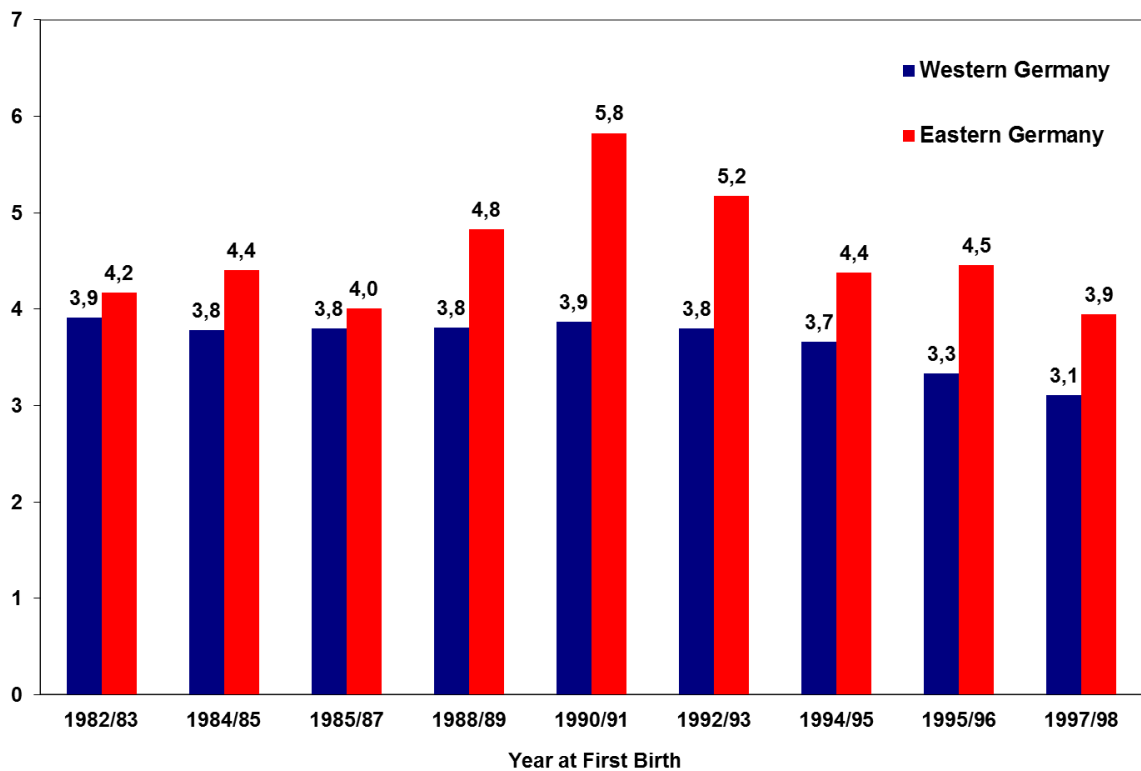


Fig. 4: Second birth risks by region and year of first birth

