

# Why European women are saying no to having (more) babies<sup>3</sup>

FEBRUARY 2017

Matthias Doepke, Fabian Kindermann

---

## Summary<sup>4</sup>

- Europe is in the midst of a major demographic crisis, with many countries facing ultra-low fertility rates. The low levels of fertility in Europe are even more surprising considering that national governments are already doing a lot to push people towards having children.
- Data from 19 European countries show how low fertility can be traced to disagreement within couples about having babies. Our analysis confirms that disagreement within couples about having babies is indeed a major factor behind low fertility across Europe.
- In low-fertility countries, it is usually the women who bear most of the burden of childbearing, and who veto having more babies. Fertility can be raised by policies that specifically lower cost to women of child care, whereas general subsidies for childbearing are much less effective.
- A policy that lowers the child care burden specifically on mothers can be more than twice as effective at increasing the fertility rate compared to a general child subsidy.
- In the countries with high fertility rates men do more childcare work, and agreement and disagreement with having more children is balanced between the sexes.
- In the countries where men do the least amount of childcare work, women are especially likely to disagree with their man's wish for a child.

---

<sup>3</sup> Translated from the original text by Mathias Doepke and Fabian Kindermann to be found at VOX CEPR's Policy Portal <http://voxeu.org/article/why-european-women-have-few-babies> .

<sup>4</sup> Authors of the Summary are Ondřej Lukáš and Filip Pertold.