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Insecurities in employment and occupational careers and their impact on the transition to fatherhood in Western Germany

Angelika Tölke
Martin Diewald

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Abstract

This paper examines the relationship between work and family among men in Western Germany. We investigate the extent to which a difficult start in working life and insecurities during the working life affect men's transition to fatherhood, and how this effect is influenced by characteristics of the family of origin and the respondents' own relationship history. We use proportional hazards models to analyze data of the third "Familiensurvey" conducted by the German Youth Institute in 2000. In accordance with the spillover hypothesis which assumes that labor market success (or failure) leads to success (or failure) in family behavior as well, we found that under difficult and/or insecure circumstances in their career, men delay their transition to fatherhood. In particular, the delay was related to being unemployed, being self-employed or working part-time. On the other hand, a successful career development increases the propensity to have a child soon after the career step. Contrary to a hypothesis of individualization, the social status and the composition of the family of origin still have an impact on the fertility behavior of men in adulthood. In particular, the transition rate to fatherhood was higher if the man grew up with at least one sibling, while losing a parent through death decreased it. Both employment career and parental home influence the formation of steady relationships, which explains part of their effect on the transition to fatherhood.

Author's affiliation

[Angelika Tölke](#)
Max Planck Institute for Demographic Research, Germany
[Martin Diewald](#)
Gerhard-Mercator-Universität Duisburg, Germany



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