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Union formation and fertility in Bulgaria and Russia: A life table description of recent trends

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Abstract

The paper provides an extensive descriptive analysis and comparison of recent trends in union formation and fertility in Bulgaria and Russia. The analysis is based on data from the Generation and Gender Surveys (GGs) carried out in 2004. We generate a large number of single- and multi-decrement life tables describing various life course events: leaving home and separation from the parental family, entry into union, first and second childbirth, divorce. Life tables are constructed for real cohorts as well as for synthetic cohorts. We study four real cohorts, born in 1940-44, 1950-54, 1960-64 and 1970-74. Synthetic-cohort life tables are constructed for three periods of time, referring to the pre-transitional demographic situation (1985-1989), the beginning of the transition (1990-1994) and recent demographic developments (1999-2003). We study also Roma and Turkish ethnic groups in Bulgaria. The life tables deliver detailed information that is otherwise unavailable. Our tentative findings indicate that societal transformation had a stronger impact on family-related behavior in the Bulgarian population than in the population of Russia. There is evidence that in some aspects Bulgaria is lagging behind other former socialist and Western European countries where the second demographic transition is more advanced. Evidence also suggests that Russia is lagging behind Bulgaria. However, certain specific features distinctive to Russia, such as the low level of childlessness, a drastic drop in second and subsequent births, and very high divorce rates even compared to Western European countries (it is a long-standing, not just recent trend), lead us to think that Russia may have a model of change particular to the country.

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