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# Quantifying paradigm change in demography

By [Jakub Bijak](#), [Daniel Courgeau](#), [Eric Silverman](#), [Robert Franck](#)

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## Abstract

**Background:** Demography is a uniquely empirical research area amongst the social sciences. We posit that the same principle of empiricism should be applied to studies of the population sciences as a discipline, contributing to greater self-awareness amongst its practitioners.

**Objective:** The paper aims to include measurable data in the study of changes in selected demographic paradigms and perspectives.

**Methods:** The presented analysis is descriptive and is based on a series of simple measures obtained from the free online tool Google Books Ngram Viewer, which includes frequencies of word groupings (n-grams) in different collections of books digitised by Google.

**Results:** The tentative findings corroborate the shifts in the demographic paradigms identified in the literature -- from cross-sectional, through longitudinal, to event-history and multilevel approaches.

**Conclusions:** These findings identify a promising area of enquiry into the development of demography as a social science discipline. We postulate that more detailed enquiries in this area in the future could lead to establishing History of Population Thought as a new sub-discipline within population sciences.

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