Planning to have a child: a socially conditioned decision? – Evidence from the European Social Survey (Round 2) for Spain and Portugal[1]

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Abstract

In a demographic situation characterized by exceptionally low period fertility levels, can we say that the social background of individuals is crucial for the planning of their future childbearing? In what way does it interfere in the shape of the expected fertility trend?

Facing a very low fertility level in the last decades, the European Southern Countries belong to the group that presents the lowest-low fertility, according to the terminology adopted by Kohler, Billari and Ortega (2002). Although Portugal maintains a relatively higher level of period fertility, the decline observed in the last few years suggests that soon it will reach the same standard. We believe that both the future level of period fertility and its evolutionary trend will be related to the manner the future parents (mothers and fathers) will face their fertility decision. That decision making in the forthcoming times could be associated with some specific behaviour patterns, socially

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differentiated, according to age, educational level, marital status and level of participation in the labour market. Assuming that values, attitudes and beliefs also influence the fertility decision, we utilised data from the European Social Survey (Round 2) to analyse the young people characteristics which could be more relevant to explain the intention of upcoming childbearing. We have found that, nowadays, in Spain and Portugal, to be married, to participate in the labour market and to have tertiary education still increases the probability of being a parent in the next future. We can expect that the mean age of childbirth will remain high because we found that this probability rises for the age's bracket 25 to 29 years and it is slightly higher for those aged 30 to 34 years. The Spaniards have shown higher probabilities than the Portuguese, for all the fertile ages.

1. Introduction

In the last decades the sustained decline of fertility in the Southern European Countries turned them into the group of countries that reveals, at the present time, the lowest-low levels of period fertility. Several authors described and explained that particular trend (Bongaarts, 1999; De Santis and Livi Bacci, 2001; Kohler, Billari and Ortega, 2002; Kohler and Ortega, 2002; Goldstein, Lutz, and Testa, 2003; Sobotka, 2003; Frejka and Sardon, 2006, among others), but the persistence and the deepening of that decline became a concern for governments and a central issue for demographers. Particularly, it became critical to predict the most likely future paths by anticipating the fertility behaviour of the youngest. Our contribution in this study was based on the analysis of the characteristics of those people who declared to plan to become parents in the next future aiming a better understanding of what will influence mostly the childbearing decision, focusing on Spain and Portugal.

In the beginning of the 80's, both Spain and Portugal showed levels of period fertility which guaranteed the replacement of the generations (see total fertility rates in Table 1).

Table 1 – Demographic indicators for Spain and Portugal (1980-2005)

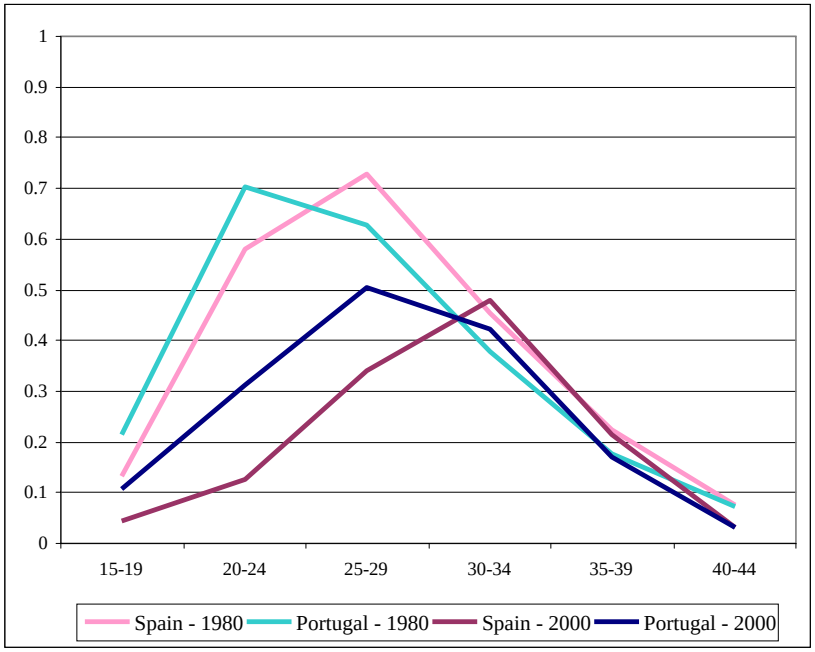
time	Total fertility rate		Mean age of women at childbirth (years)		Mean age of women at birth of first child (years)		Proportion of live births outside marriage	
	Spain[a]	Portugal[b]	Spain[a]	Portugal[b]	Spain[a]	Portugal[b]	Spain[a]	Portugal[b]
1980	2.22	2.18	28.20	27.17	25.05	24.04	3.93	9.20
1981	2.04	2.13	28.23	27.23	25.23	24.00	4.42	9.50
1982	1.94	2.07	28.32	27.16	25.41	23.96	5.12	10.04
1983	1.80	1.95	28.37	27.13	25.51	23.90	5.21	10.71
1984	1.73	1.90	28.42	27.08	25.65	24.00	6.76	11.48
1985	1.64	1.72	28.45	27.15	25.78	24.16	7.97	12.34
1986	1.56	1.66	28.53	27.11	25.89	24.21	8.01	12.76
1987	1.50	1.62	28.56	27.20	26.13	24.34	8.27	13.25
1988	1.45	1.62	28.57	27.18	26.25	24.51	9.12	13.71
1989	1.40	1.58	28.72	27.22	26.56	24.65	9.35	14.55
1990	1.36	1.57	28.86	27.32	26.81	24.9	9.61	14.71
1991	1.33	1.57	29.04	27.50	27.15	25.1	10.01	15.60

1992	1.32	1.54	29.25	27.60	27.49	25.2	10.52	16.10
1993	1.27	1.51	29.46	27.70	27.8	25.4	10.75	16.96
1994	1.20	1.44	29.72	27.80	28.11	25.4	10.76	17.84
1995	1.17	1.41	29.96	28.00	28.39	25.6	11.09	18.67
1996	1.16	1.44	30.19	28.10	28.45	25.8	11.68	18.66
1997	1.18	1.47	30.37	28.30	28.68	25.9	13.12	19.56
1998	1.16	1.48	30.54	28.40	28.87	26.1	14.51	20.15
1999	1.19	1.50	30.66	28.50	28.97	26.4	16.3	20.85
2000	1.23	1.55	30.72	28.60	29.08	26.5	17.74	22.20
2001	1.24	1.45	30.75	28.70	29.1	26.8	19.73	23.78
2002	1.26	1.47	30.79	28.90	29.18	27.0	21.78	25.46
2003	1.31	1.45 [c]	30.84	29.02 [c]	29.24	27.05 [c]	23.41	26.90 [c]
2004	1.33	1.40 [c]	30.86	29.15 [c]	29.29	27.14 [c]	25.08	29.06 [c]
2005	1.35	1.41 [c]	30.90	29.26 [c]	29.33	27.30 [c]	26.57	30.74 [c]
2006	1.38	1.36 [c]	30.89	29.44 [c]	29.31	28.1	28.38	31.61 [c]

Source: a) Instituto Nacional de Estadística (Spain), for Spanish data, http://www.ine.es/; b) Instituto Nacional de Estatística (Portugal), http://www.ine.pt/, and Eurostat, http://epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/, for Portuguese data; c) computed by the authors

Simultaneously with the decrease of the total fertility rate there was an increase in the mean age of women at childbirth, consequently rising too the mean age of women at the birth of the first child. These two components of the fertility behaviour, average number of children per woman and mean age at childbirth, implied that in the second half of the 90's both countries attained the lowest level of period fertility for Spain (1.16 children per woman, in 1996 and 1998) and one of the lowest for Portugal (1.41, in 1995). The period fertility measures reflect an interaction of both *quantum* and *tempo* components. The "lowest-low fertility" is usually associated with a visible postponement of childbearing (Sobotka, 2003). The changes in the *quantum* and in the *tempo* of fertility, between 1980 and 2000, are reflected in the shape of the fertility curves, between the ages of 15 to 19 and 40 to 44 years, represented for those periods (Figure 1).

Figure 1 – Fertility rates by group of ages (years) in Spain and Portugal (in 1980 and 2000)



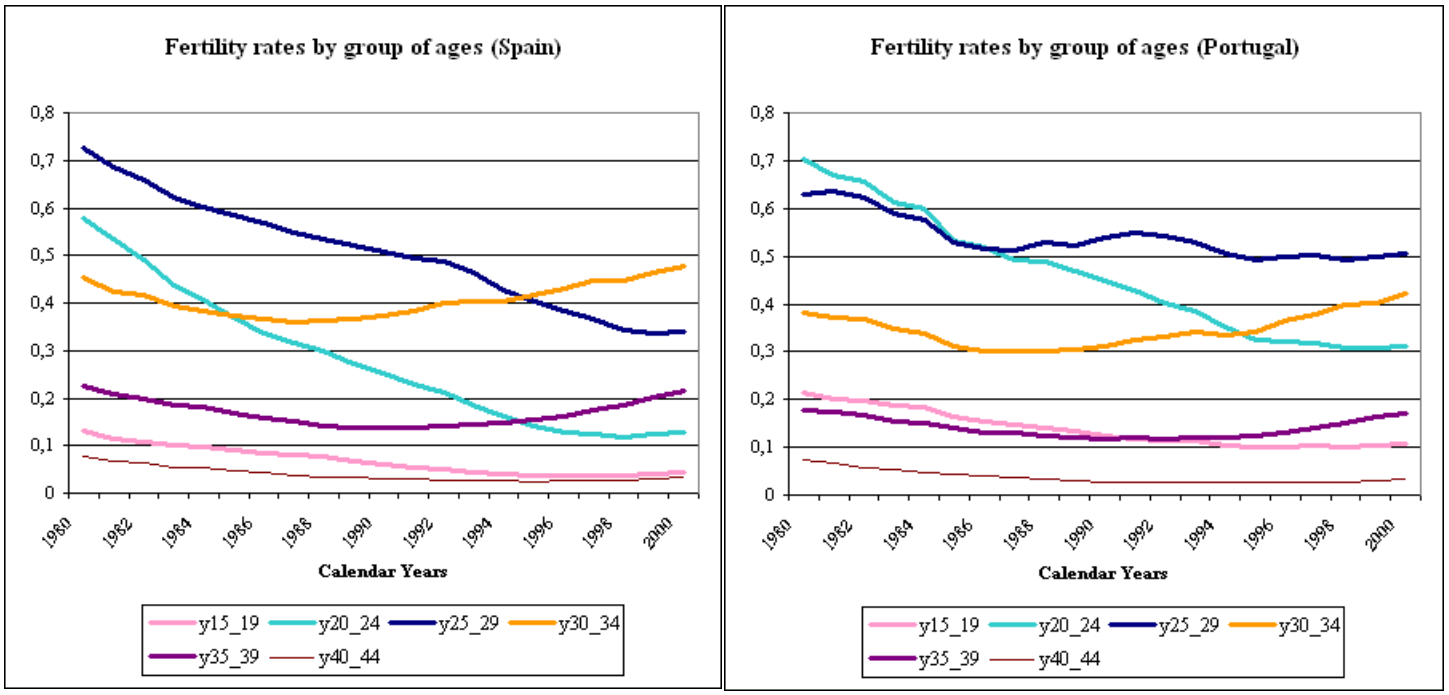
Source: Eurostat data; computed by the authors.

It is evident the diminishing values of fertility rates (for all age groups, with exception for the oldest women) and the clear shift to the right of both curves concerning all groups till the one aged 35-39 years. After these specific ages the curve shift in the opposite direction. The major decline was observed in the youngest ages (15 to 19 years and, specially, 20-24 years). For the group of ages from 25 to 29 years, the fertility rate diminished too but less than the verified in the first two age's brackets. The increase registered in the groups aged 35-39 and 40-44 years has been insufficient to compensate the fertility loss in the youngest ages.

Comparing to Spain, Portugal maintained higher fertility rates in the group aged under 25 years, during all the studied period (the Annexe A presents the evolution for each group of ages, easing these analysis); concerning the group of ages from 25 to 29 years, Spain had higher values than Portugal only until 1989; for ages over 30 years, Spain always had higher fertility rates. We should stress that, despite the higher fertility in Spain for the ages over 30 years, the sustained raise of those specific fertility rates begun in the early 90's.

During the latest years of the studied period, the fertility rates were slightly higher for all groups of ages, in both countries. Nevertheless, the more considerable increase was observed for those aged from 30 to 34 years, followed by those old 35 to 39 years (Figure 2).

Figure 2 – Fertility rates by group of ages, for Spain and Portugal, between 1980 and 2000



Source: Eurostat data; computed by the authors.

Finally, it is worth to note the profound change in the fertility behaviour in what concerns the number of births inside and outside marriages. In both countries, the proportions of live births outside marriage raised considerably: from 3.93% and 9.20% in 1980 to 26.57% and 30.74% in 2000, for Spain and Portugal, respectively.

In spite of similar patterns of age fertility rates, Spaniards remained with a total fertility rate lower than the Portuguese's. However, it seems probable that a future rise in the Spanish fertility, together with the maintenance (or decline) of Portuguese fertility

behaviour could get closer the levels of period fertility in both countries. We raise the hypothesis that the analysis of the intentions and plans of becoming parents made by the persons aged from 15 to 49 years could predict the near future fertility. We also suggest that understanding the demographic and social characteristics of that particular group, formed by those who plan to have children at short time, will contribute for a first forecast of the path of the fertility curves. Therefore, this paper intent to give an answer to the following question: What are the main characteristics that differentiate the persons who plan to have a child in the next three years in Spain and Portugal?

1. Data and Methods

We have utilised data from the European Social Survey (Round 2 – 2004/2005)[2] . The survey was carried out between the final of 2004 and the beginning of 2005. The sample included 1729 Spaniards and 1511 Portuguese. The planning of childbearing concerning the next three years, following the inquiries date, was questioned in the round 2 of the survey. First of all, we have utilised a multivariate model for analysis of qualitative data (HOMALIS) to analyse the association between the multiple variables (Carvalho, 2004). After this exploratory treatment of the data, the evaluation of the differences in the probability of planning proximate fertility in a positive way was performed by using a logit model.

The fertility situation, similarly to others demographic processes, is embedded in a specific economic and social environment and simultaneously affects it and is influenced by it.

[2] European Social Survey (Round 2), 2004/2005, available in http://ess.nsd.uib.no/

The explanation of the fertility decision is usually linked to the behaviour of a set of variables which includes a person's educational level, his/her participation in the labour market and his/her marital status (Engelhardt and Prskawetz, 2004; Billari, 2004, among others). The childbearing decision may also vary with the sex and the age of a person. Besides, it is also assumed that the fertility decision may be related with social and psychological variables (Mendes, 1992). The framework of the Second Demographic Transition where values such hedonism, individualism are taken into account against altruism and the importance of "familism", helped us to better identify the variables of interest in a changing process of fertility decision (Dalla Zuanna, 2001; van de Kaa, 1998, 1999; Surkyn and Lesthaeghe, 2004).

2. Results

The variables utilised in the model are listed in Table 2.

Table 2 – List of variables in the model

Variables in the model	*Categories*
Country	*1 – Spain, 2- Portugal*
Future Parents	*1 – Yes, 2 - No*
Sex	*1- Male, 2 - Female*
Belonging to a religion at the present	*1 – Yes, 2 - No*
Foreign	*1 – No, 2 - Yes*
To live in a big city	*1 – Yes, 2 - No*
Basic education	*1 – Yes, 2 - No*
Secondary education	*1 – Yes, 2 - No*
Tertiary education	*1 – Yes, 2 - No*
To participate in the labour market	*1 – Yes, 2 - No*
To do housework and do not participate in the labour market	*1 – Yes, 2 - No*
To be married	*1 – Yes, 2 - No*
To live currently with a partner	*1 – Yes, 2 - No*
To live with children at home	*1 – Yes, 2 - No*
To have voted in the last national elections	*1 – Yes, 2 - No*
Placement on left right scale political scale: left	*1 – Yes, 2 - No*
Placement on left right scale political scale: centre	*1 – Yes, 2 - No*
Placement on left right scale: right	*1 – Yes, 2 - No*
To be happy	*1 – Yes, 2 - No*
To be healthy	*1 – Yes, 2 - No*
A person's family should be main priority in life	*1 – Yes, 2 - No*

Important if choosing job: job allowed you to combine work and family	*1 – Yes, 2 - No*
Age Groups	*1 - 15 - 19; 2-20-24; 3-25-29; 4-30-34; 5- 35-39; 6- 40-44; 7-45-49*
Tradition[3]	*1- Very traditional ; 3 – Neutral; 5 – Not at all traditional*
Hedonism[4]	*1- Very Hedonist; 3 – Neutral; 5 – Not at all hedonist*

The measures of the model fit are presented in Table 3.

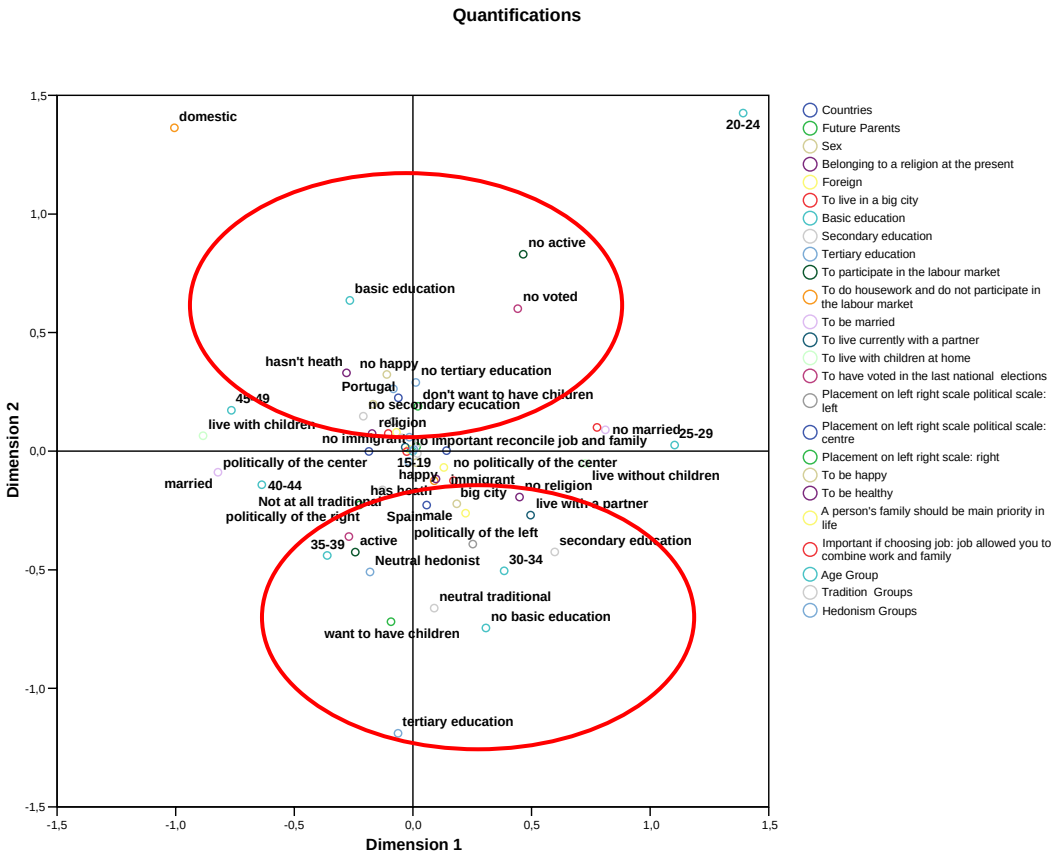
Table 3 – Measures of model fit

Observations		2039
Fit		0.199570
	Dimension 1	Dimension 2
Eingenvalue (by dimension)	0.108	0.092

In the dimension 1 the results of the homogeneity analyse evidences "the level of education" (secondary), "to be married", "to live with children in the household" and "to have voted in the last national election"; the dimension 2 is characterized by the variables "future parents", level of education (basic and tertiary), "labour market participation" and "participation in the last national elections" (Figure 3).

[3] & [4] We used a Human Values Scale and we have computed the scores on the scale according to the instructions of the ESS documentation.

Figure 3 –
HOMALS



The results of the model evidence a relationship between the "purpose of becoming a parent in the next three years" and the following characteristics: to be a Spaniard, to have secondary or tertiary education, to belong to the group aged from 25 to 29 years; to place himself in the left of the left right political scale; to participate in the labour market and to live with a partner. On the other hand, the "purpose of do not become a parent in the next three years" is more associated with the feature of being Portuguese, having a basic level of education, not being very happy, not participating in the labour market and not voting in the last national elections.

After that exploratory treatment of the data, we used a logit model to evaluate the differences in the probability of planning proximate fertility in a positive way (see

variables summary in Annexe B). We found that the majority of the model variables influence significantly the planning of childbearing (variable "fparents"), specially the age (agi), the marital status (lms), the level of participation in the labour market (pw) and the educational level (educbas, educsec and educter) (Table 3).

Table 3 – Logit model

Logistic regression — Number of obs = **1925**
LR chi2(13) = **421,06**
Prob > chi2 = **0,0000**
Log likelihood = -779.83 — Pseudo R2 = **0,2126**

fparents	Coef.	Std. Err.	z	P> | z |	[95% Conf.	Interval]
es	**0,236**	**0,129**	**1,83**	**0,068**	**-0,017**	**0,488**
male	**0,258**	**0,130**	**1,98**	**0,047**	**0,003**	**0,512**
educbas	**-0,428**	**0,158**	**-2,70**	**0,007**	**-0,739**	**-0,118**
educsec	**-0,300**	**0,177**	**-1,69**	**0,090**	**-0,647**	**0,047**
pw	**0,559**	**0,158**	**3,54**	**0,000**	**0,249**	**0,869**
lms	**1,051**	**0,150**	**7,00**	**0,000**	**0,757**	**1,346**
agl5	**-2,622**	**0,734**	**-3,57**	**0,000**	**-4,061**	**-1,183**
ag25	**0,576**	**0,208**	**2,76**	**0,006**	**0,168**	**0,984**
ag30	**0,592**	**0,219**	**2,71**	**0,007**	**0,163**	**1,020**
ag35	**-0,697**	**0,247**	**-2,83**	**0,005**	**-1,181**	**-0,214**
ag40	**-1,837**	**0,294**	**-6,26**	**0,000**	**-2,413**	**-1,262**
ag45	**-3,807**	**0,618**	**-6,16**	**0,000**	**-5,019**	**-2,595**
he	**-0,001**	**0,001**	**-2,10**	**0,036**	**-0,003**	**0,000**
_cons	**-1,677**	**0,255**	**-6,57**	**0,000**	**-2,177**	**-1,176**

The dependent variable varies significantly and negatively with the level of hedonism, i. e., persons considered more hedonist show lower probabilities of becoming parents in the next future[5]. Having a basic or a secondary educational level also lowers that probability. Similarly, being male, to be married and to participate in the labour market increases the probability of becoming parents, as well as belonging to the groups aged

[5] The index "hedonism" belongs to a Human Scale Values and has been compound from the answers to the following questions: "Important to seek fun and things that give pleasure" and "Important to have a good time" according to the ranking "Very much like me; like me; somewhat like me; a little like me; not like me; not like me at all".

25-29 and 30-34 years, whereas being a teenager or being older than 35 years decreases the chances of childbearing when compared with those aged between 20 and 24 years.

We used the parameter estimates in Table 3 to retrieve the predicted probabilities (shown in Annexe C). The baseline probability of "becoming a parent in the next three years when all covariate values are zero (i. e., for Portuguese females, with a tertiary educational level, not married, not participating in the labour market and belonging to the group aged from 20 to 24 years) is 0.157. The higher estimates refers to married men in Spain, aged 30 to 34 years, working in the labour market and having tertiary education (0.35), followed closely by those who was 25 to 29 years old (0.731). For Portuguese men showing analogous characteristics, the estimated probability was lower, (0.686 and 0.683, respectively). The estimated values for married and working females of the same groups of ages and with tertiary education are lower, either in Spain (30 to 34 years: 0.681; 25 to 29 years: 0.678) or in Portugal (0.628 and 0.625, respectively). For the same group of ages, men in Spain with lower levels of education (secondary and basic) revealed higher probabilities of becoming parents than Portuguese females with tertiary education.

For the lower ages the chances of childbearing decreases, particularly in Portugal, for females and men and women having basic education. The estimated values are much lower for those who were not working in the labour market and in the case of the "not married" ones. Concerning the age's bracket 20 to 24 years, the highest estimated values were observed for Spaniards working married men with tertiary education (0.605), while in Portugal the equivalent estimation have shown a lower value (0.548). Regarding the educational levels the estimation varied from 0.542 (tertiary education, working and married) to 0.435 (basic education, working and married) for Spaniards

females, and from 0.483 to 0.379 for the Portuguese ones, both presenting identical ranking, i. e., from tertiary till basic.

3. Concluding Remarks

For both countries, the legal marital status is still a relevant variable regarding the planning of childbearing in a next future. Similarly, the level of participation in the labour market is also crucial to increase the probability of becoming a parent. Additionally, that probability increases for higher levels of education. Finally, men show always higher probabilities than women.

For the same level of education and for each category of labour market participation, the planning of childbearing reveals higher probabilities inside the groups aged 30 to 34 and 25 to 29 years. It seems reasonable to assume that those who have an older age and want to become parents plan the childbearing for the next years, but it should be stressed that those are the ages of the fertility "focus", concerning both the achieved fertility (in the last calendar years) and the planned one (for the next years). It is expected that the "peak" of the fertility curve in Portugal will keep changing, shifting towards the 30 to 34 years group, remaining the highest fertility level in Spain in that group of ages. Spaniards always have shown higher probabilities of being parents than the Portuguese for all the fertile age groups. So, we can expect that the fertility rates in Spain will attain higher values than in Portugal in the next future.

Concerning the human values, nowadays, religion belonging, placement on left right political scale and the importance of tradition in a person's life did not influence significantly the childbearing planning in the Iberians Countries. Only hedonism affects it in a negative way.

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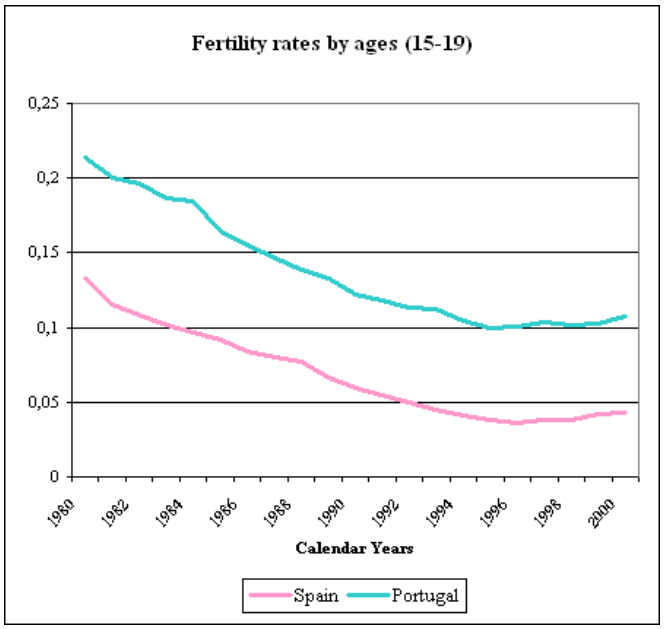
Annexe A -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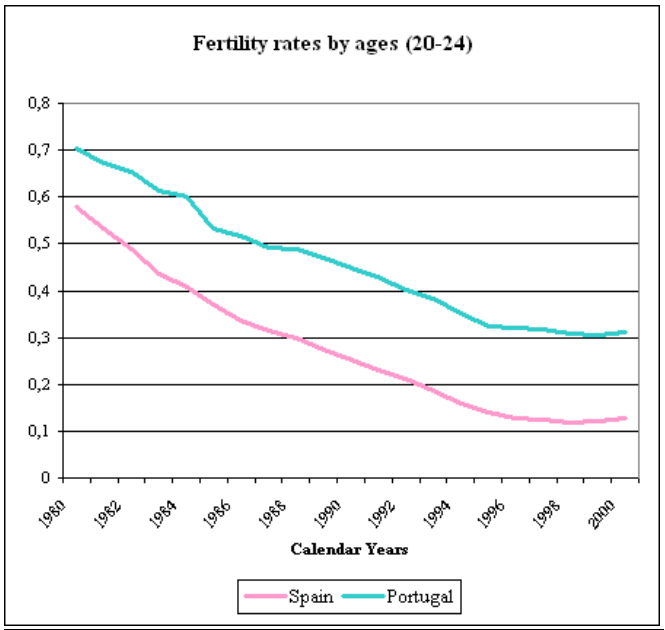
0,2
0,15
0,1
0,05
0
1980
1982
1984
1986
1988
1990
1992
1994
1996
1998
2000
Calendar Years
Spain
Portugal


Fertility rates by ages (20-24)
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0,7
0,6
0,5
0,4
0,3
0,2
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1980
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1986
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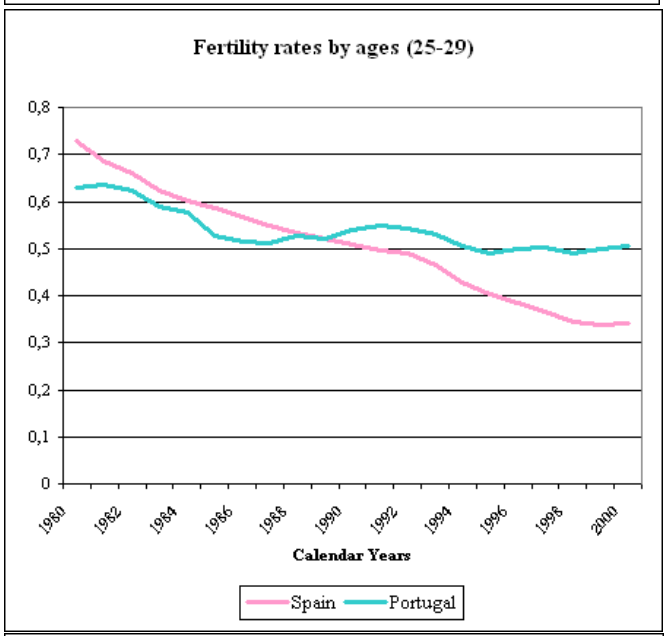
2000
Calendar Years
Spain
Portugal


Fertility rates by ages (25-29)
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0,6
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1980
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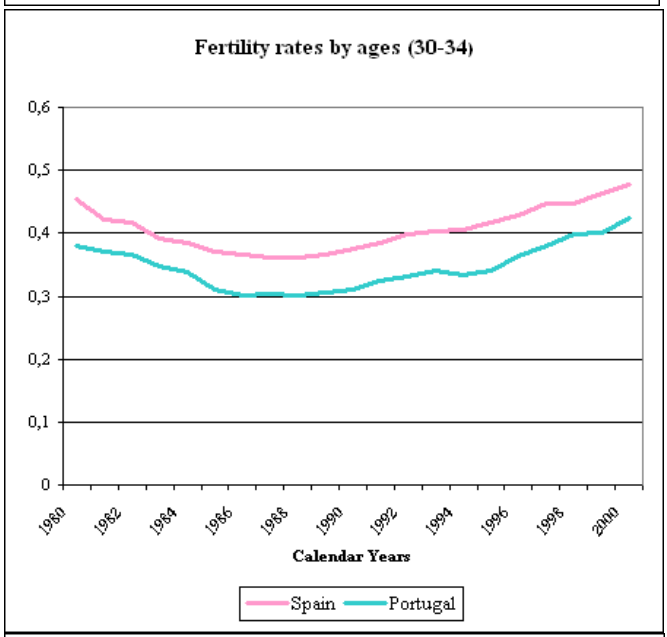
Calendar Years
Spain
Portugal


Fertility rates by ages (30-34)
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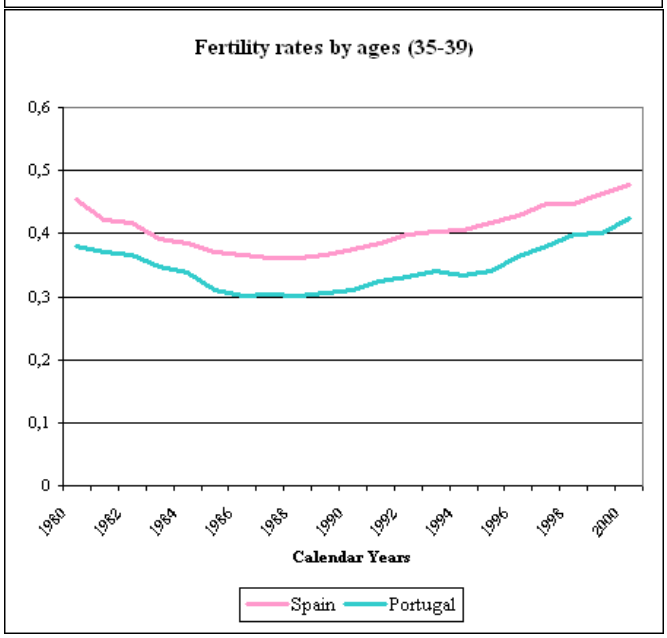
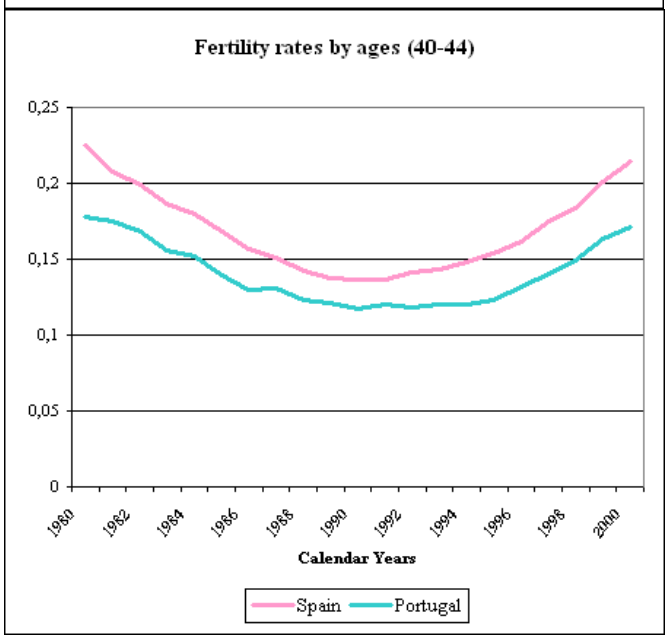
0,5
0,4
0,3
0,2
0,1
0
1980
1982
1984
1986
1988
1990
1992
1994
1996
1998
2000
Calendar Years
Spain
Portugal


Fertility rates by ages (35-39)
0,6
0,5
0,4
0,3
0,2
0,1
0
1980
1982
1984
1986
1988
1990
1992
1994
1996
1998
2000
Calendar Years
Spain
Portugal


Fertility rates by ages (40-44)
0,25
0,2
0,15
0,1
0,05
0
1980
1982
1984
1986
1988
1990
1992
1994
1996
1998
2000
Calendar Years
Spain
Portugal

Annexe B – Variables list and summary

Variable	Obs	Mean	Std.	Min	Max
fparents	1942	0,209	0,407	0	1
male	1942	0,473	0,499	0	1
es	1942	0,498	0,500	0	1
pt	1942	0,502	0,500	0	1
religion	1942	0,731	0,443	0	1
nforeign	1942	0,908	0,289	0	1
urban	1942	0,365	0,482	0	1
educbas	1942	0,542	0,498	0	1
educsec	1942	0,258	0,438	0	1
educter	1942	0,200	0,400	0	1
pw	1942	0,663	0,473	0	1
hw	1942	0,086	0,280	0	1
lms	1942	0,504	0,500	0	1
childliv	1942	0,454	0,498	0	1
age	1942	32,607	9,290	15	49
ag15	1942	0,093	0,291	0	1
ag20	1942	0,141	0,348	0	1
ag25	1942	0,161	0,367	0	1
ag30	1942	0,170	0,376	0	1
ag35	1942	0,152	0,360	0	1
ag40	1942	0,160	0,367	0	1
ag45	1942	0,122	0,327	0	1
vot	1942	0,639	0,480	0	1
bhappy	1942	0,871	0,335	0	1
bhealthy	1942	0,744	0,436	0	1

Annexe C – Estimated probabilities of "becoming parents in the next three years" by country, sex, age, level of education, participation in the labour market and legal marital status (some results)

Country	gender	age	education	working	married	Odds
Spain	male	30-34	tertiary education	working	married	0.735
Spain	male	25-29	tertiary education	working	married	0.731
Portugal	male	30-34	tertiary education	working	married	0.686
Portugal	male	25-29	tertiary education	working	married	0.683
Spain	female	30-34	tertiary education	working	married	0.681
Spain	female	25-29	tertiary education	working	married	0.678
Spain	male	30-34	secondary education	working	married	0.672
Spain	male	25-29	secondary education	working	married	0.669
Spain	male	30-34	basic education	working	married	0.643
Spain	male	25-29	basic education	working	married	0.640
Portugal	female	30-34	tertiary education	working	married	0.628
Portugal	female	25-29	tertiary education	working	married	0.625
Portugal	male	30-34	secondary education	working	married	0.618
Portugal	male	25-29	secondary education	working	married	0.615
Spain	female	30-34	secondary education	working	married	0.613
Spain	male	30-34	tertiary education	not working	married	0.613
Spain	female	25-29	secondary education	working	married	0.609
Spain	male	25-29	tertiary education	not working	married	0.609
Spain	male	20-24	tertiary education	working	married	0.605
Portugal	male	30-34	basic education	working	married	0.588
Portugal	male	25-29	basic education	working	married	0.584
Spain	female	30-34	basic education	working	married	0.582
Spain	female	25-29	basic education	working	married	0.578
Portugal	female	30-34	secondary education	working	married	0.556
Portugal	male	30-34	tertiary education	not working	married	0.556
Portugal	female	25-29	secondary education	working	married	0.552
Portugal	male	25-29	tertiary education	not working	married	0.552
Spain	female	30-34	tertiary education	not working	married	0.550
Portugal	male	20-24	tertiary education	working	married	0.548
Spain	female	25-29	tertiary education	not working	married	0.546
Spain	female	20-24	tertiary education	working	married	0.542
Spain	male	30-34	secondary education	not working	married	0.540
Spain	male	25-29	secondary education	not working	married	0.536
Spain	male	20-24	secondary education	working	married	0.532
Portugal	female	30-34	basic education	working	married	0.524
Portugal	female	25-29	basic education	working	married	0.520
Spain	male	30-34	basic education	not working	married	0.508
Spain	male	25-29	basic education	not working	married	0.504
Spain	male	20-24	basic education	working	married	0.500