

## **The Relationship Between Religion and Fertility: Evidence for Austria**

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Religions differ with regard to fertility norms. For example, Mormon and Catholic faith embodies strong pro-natalist ideologies. While such differences inherently suggest for fertility differences across religions, sociological and economic theory furthermore suggests that partners or spouses who do not share the same religious belief are more likely to postpone childbearing and to have smaller family sizes. This is because partners in inter-faith unions are more prone for conflicts regarding fertility decisions which may also raise the expected probability of union dissolution. Evidence in support of both postponed childbearing and smaller family size of inter-denominational unions is given by, e.g., Lehrer (1996) for the US and Adseira (2004) for Spain.

This study adds to the literature by examining the relationship between religion and fertility using data from the 1996 Austrian Family and Fertility Survey. Notwithstanding that Austria is a Catholic and a low-fertility country, the analyses show that both women's denominational affiliation and religiosity affects the number as well as the timing of births: First, Catholic and religious females are more likely to have a higher number of children. Furthermore, compared to homogamous Catholic couples, inter-faith unions have fewer children. Further specifications that additionally employ indicators for individuals' religiosity yield similar substantive results, though statistically weaker.

Results from Cox proportional hazard models do not suggest for effects of females' religious involvement on the timing of the first birth. However, there is evidence that inter-faith unions postpone the birth of the first child. While the timing of the second birth is neither affected by females' religion nor the union's religious composition, the estimates suggest, in contrast to prior expectations, that women with other than Catholic affiliation or no religious affiliation have faster transitions to third births than their counterparts. However, compared to a homogamous Catholic union, there is a strong decrease in the hazard rate of the transition to a third birth for Catholic women with a partner of other religious affiliation.

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