

Family Change in Global Perspective

FRANK FURSTENBERG
UNIVERSITY OF PENNSYLVANIA
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Overview: Understanding the Process of Family Change



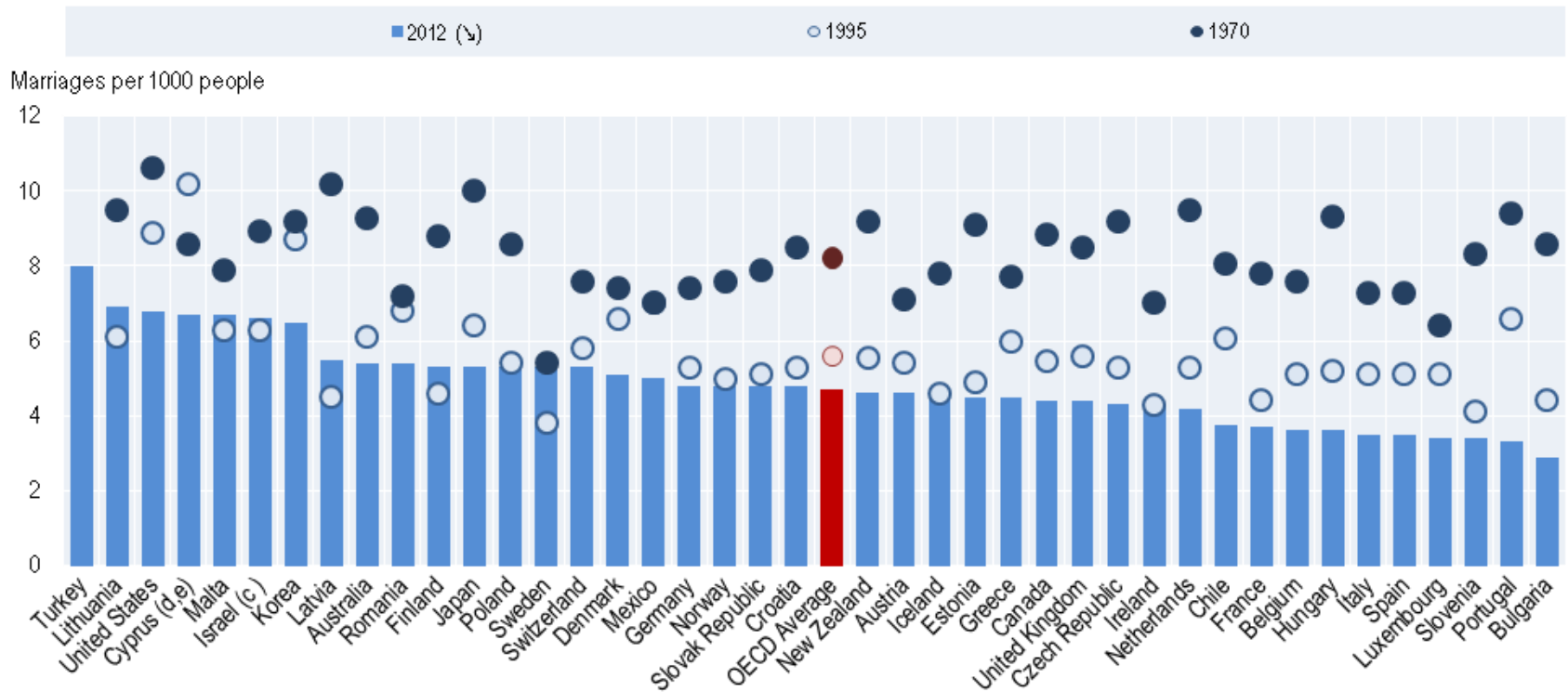
- Understanding the Impact of the Global Family Change (GFC) and its consequences for children has been a life long quest.
- Paper places the growing diversification of family forms in the U.S. and globally in an historical context.
- Discuss sources of change: why and how the family systems are changing in advanced as well as low and middle income nations.
- Rapid change (especially in Western nations) in late 20th Century initially took social scientists by surprise.
- Family change accompanied by social inequality among children and families. Cause or consequence?
- Introduce new study designed to understand dynamics of GFC

+ Major Descriptive Changes in Advanced Economies

- **Link between initiation of sex and marriage broken down.**
- **Postponement of adult transitions**
 - Delay of Family Formation
 - Delay of Economic independence and Homeleaving
- **Weakening of marriage institution, permitting more alternative forms (cohabitation in particular)**
 - Breakdown of gender-based division of labor in marriage
 - Growth in non-marital childbearing
 - Growth of childlessness
- At a country level “**convergence to divergence**” (Billari and Liefbroer, 2010)
- Widening of social class differences in the family in the U.S., Europe, and the Anglo-speaking nations: **Emergence of Two-tier Family**

+ Marriage Occurs Less Often in Nations with Developed Economies

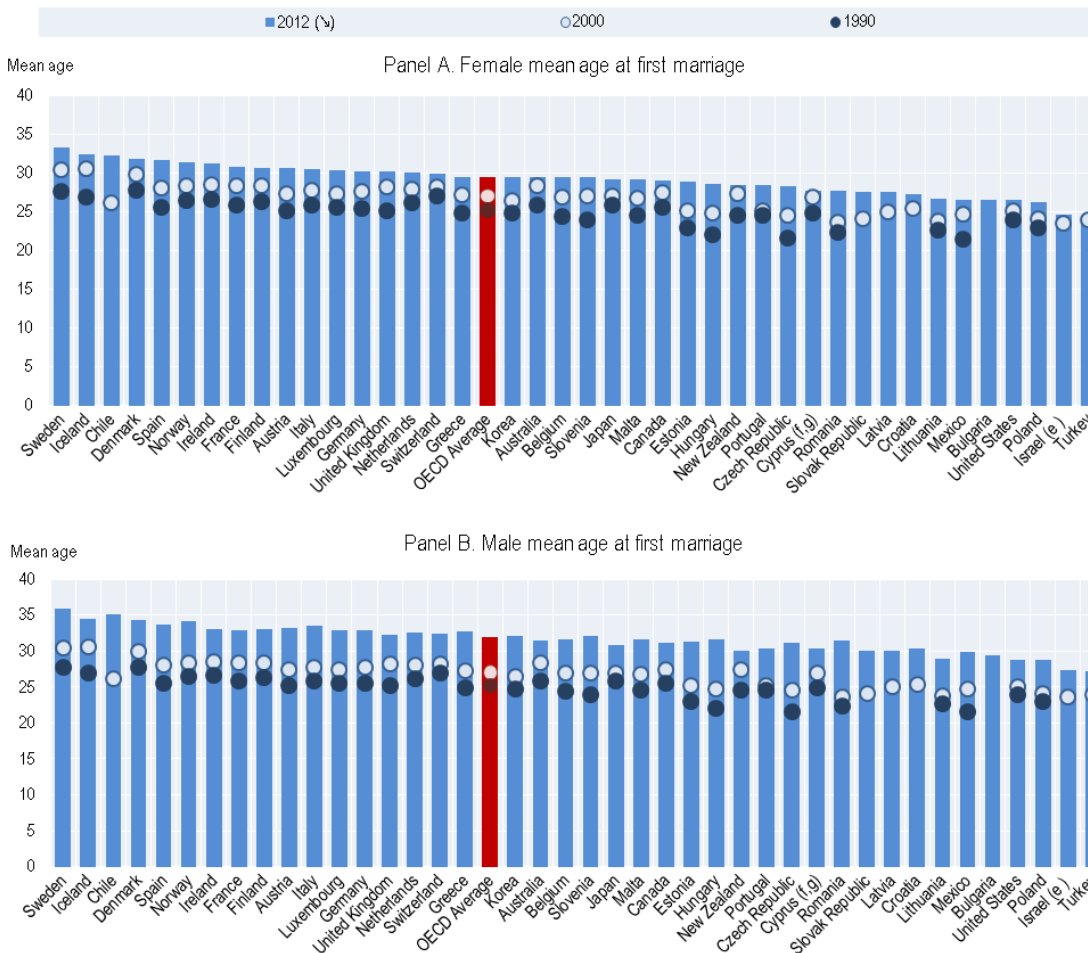
Crude marriage rate, 1970, 1995 and 2012a



Source: OECD Family Database

+ In almost all nations, marriage occurs later

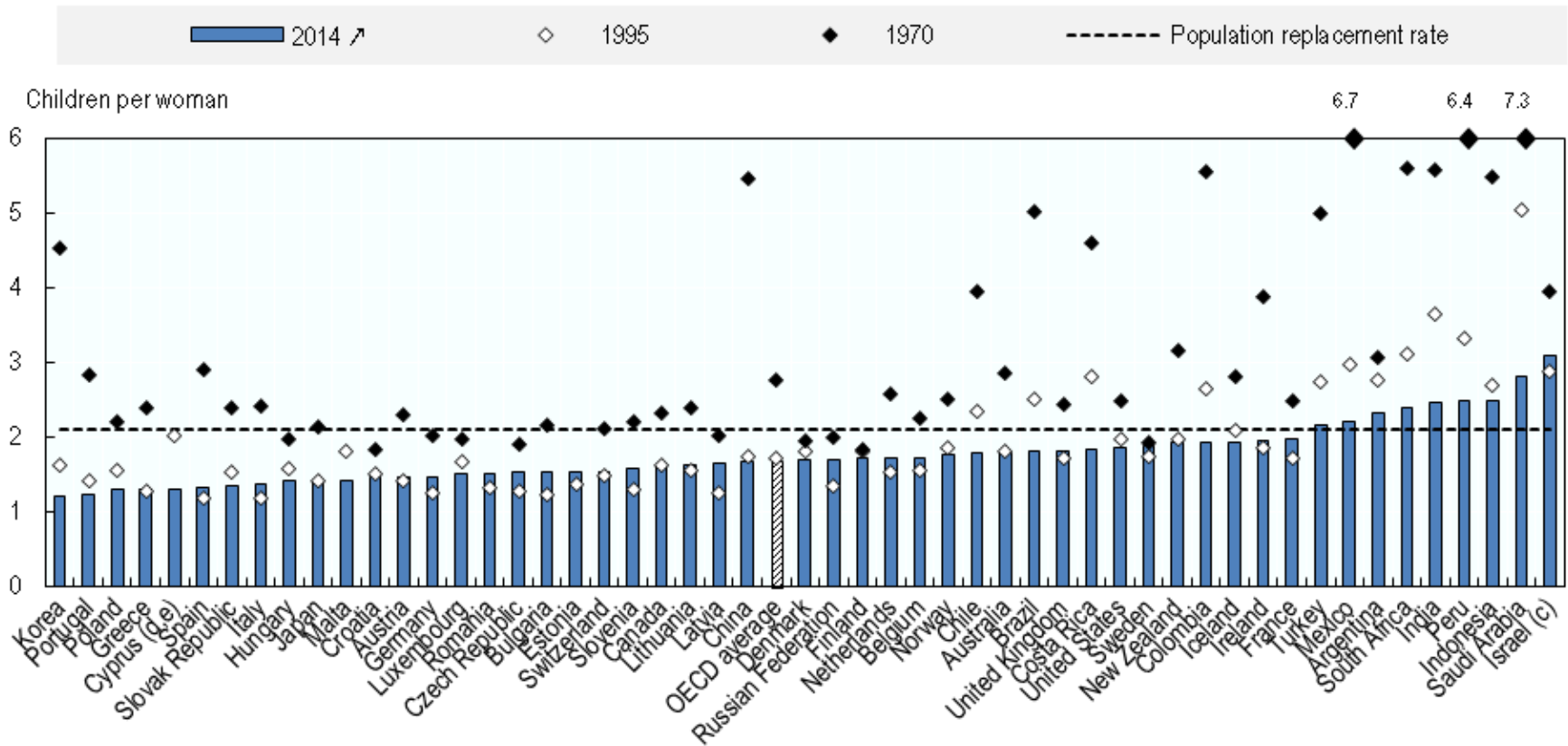
Mean age at first marriage by sex, 1990, 2000 and 2012



Source: OECD Family Database

+ Fertility Decline is Widespread in Regions of the World

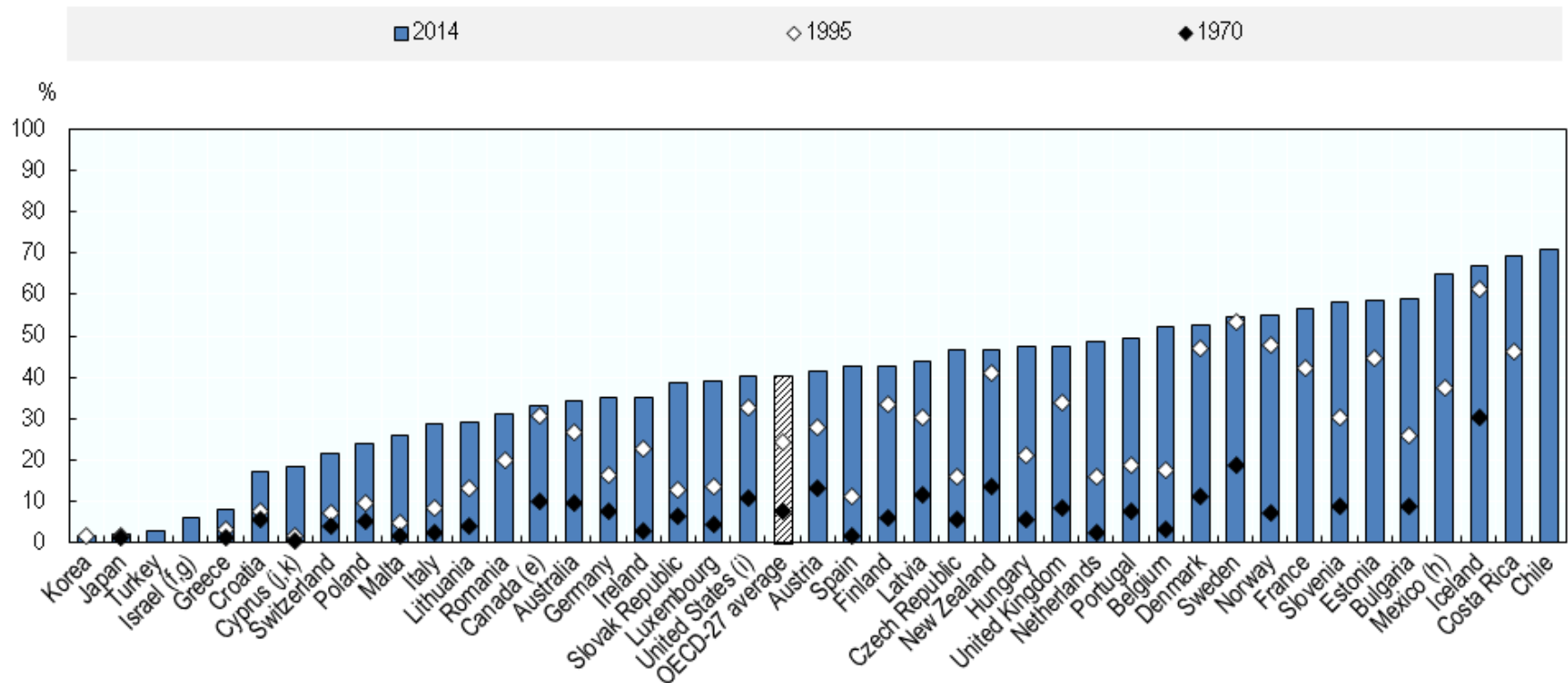
Total fertility rate, 1970, 1995 and 2014



Source: OECD Family Database

+ Sharp Rise in Non-marital Childbearing

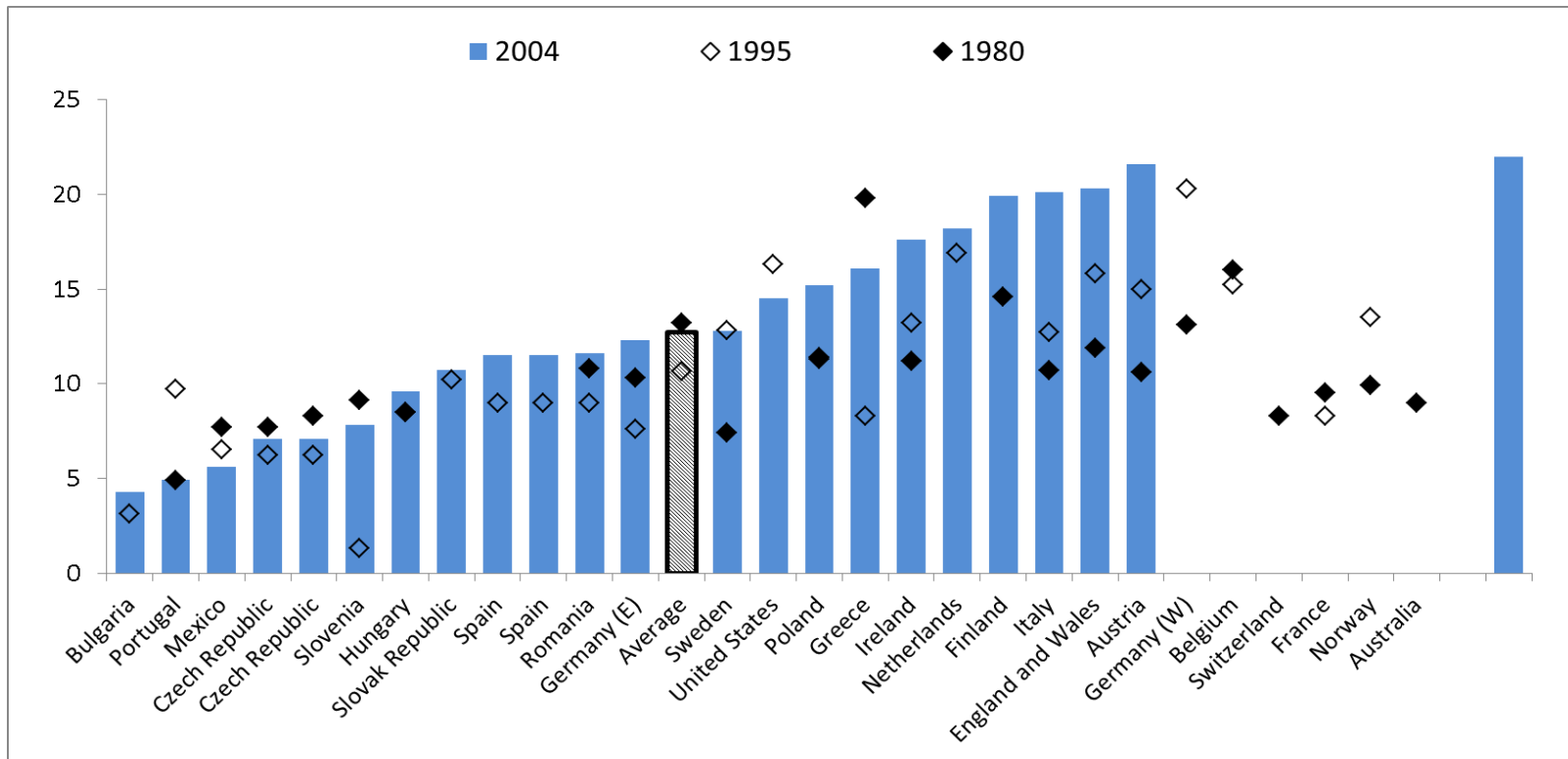
Share of births outside of marriage, 1970, 1990 and 2014 or latest available year



Source: OECD Family Database

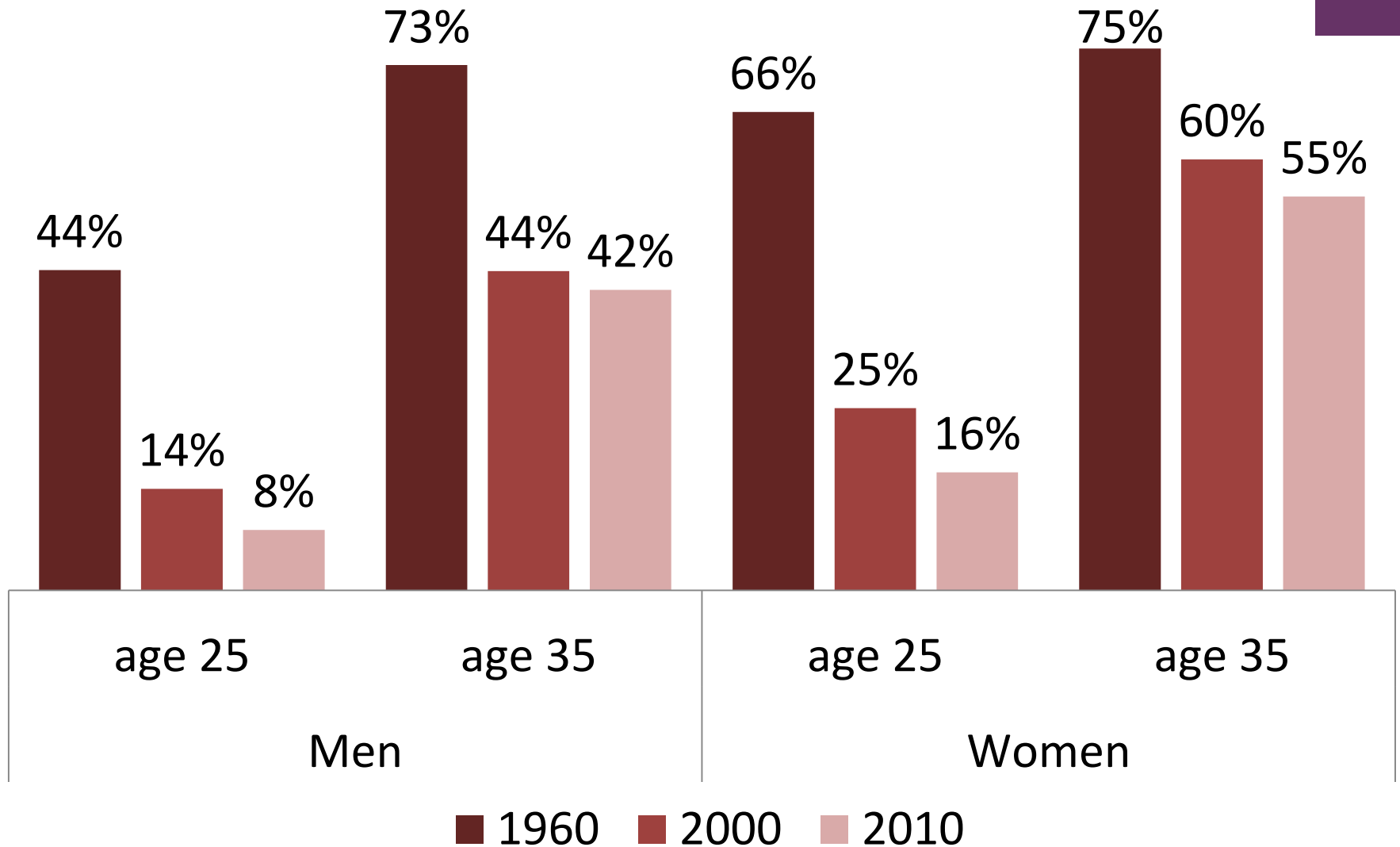
+ Growing Levels of Childlessness

Percent of definitive childless women per cohort



Source: OECD Family Database

+ Percent completing transition to adulthood in 1960, 2000, and 2010 using traditional benchmarks, ages: 25 and 35, USA (Census)





Sources and Mediators of Change

What accounts for Country-level Differences?

- Market Capitalism (corruption of family authority) Formation of an industrial, job based economic.
- Cultural and historical differences among countries
 - Gender Role Attitudes and Practices: degree of embedded patriarchy
 - Institutional Differences (schooling, labor market)
 - Policy-orientations (political and legal response)
- Technology and the role of digitization (media)
- Demography : change plays out differently depending on the age structure of the population.





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Family Change and Economic Inequality



- Adaptations are experienced differently at different social strata
- As inequality grows globally, family change will manifest itself different depending on the distribution of wealth and economic opportunities
- In the U.S., we are seeing the development of a two-tiered family system



Change Occurred Differently Among Privileged and Disadvantaged



- The widening of social class differences in family types
- Marriage, family formation, parenting practices all become differentiated.
- Two family forms: *conjugal* (marriage-based) and *matrilineal*
- Is this a cultural or structural change? A mindless debate!
- Reciprocal relationship between economic inequality and family change.

+ Privileged Family Form

- Larger parental investment owing to resources and small family size.
 - Concerted Cultivation (Lareau)
 - Social Capital through family connections
 - Family Management of social environment (class containment)
- Lengthy Transition to Adulthood with education and subsidized work experience
- Late marriage pattern (growing marital homophily)
- Planned parenthood





Disadvantaged Family Form

- Early and often unplanned family formation
- Cohabitation as alternative to marriage
- Unstable Unions
- Complex families (multi-partnered fertility, that is childbearing across households)
- More children, fewer resources, and hence lower investment
 - Less human, social, and cultural capital
 - Lower opportunities
- Lower social mobility



+ Families in the Middle



- Pulled in both directions
- Parents attempting concerted cultivation without the resources of the privileged
- Parental skills and knowledge become more important.
- Necessary downgrading of expectations



Consequences for Child Welfare in Advanced Societies



- All advanced societies have developed social welfare systems but they vary enormously in scope
- Among others, Espe-Anderson has contended that welfare states may mediate both family change and its consequences
- Evidence is at best equivocal though clearly the emergence of a two-tier family system is most evident in Anglo-speaking countries.
- Child welfare is clearly related to a variety of macro-level factors such as investment, institutional arrangements, commitment to gender and economic equality
- Understanding specific links of these macro-level conditions in economically advanced nations to child well being is a topic that will be explored in subsequent presentations in this seminar.
- I will conclude by a few comments about a new project just underway.

+ Global Family Change

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Project goals



- (1) Macro-level overview on the changing nature of *families* across 84 Lower and Middle Income Countries
 - DHS data files
 - National Census Data (Catalonia Research Institute)
- (2) Examining (L&MI) countries now in the process of witnessing changes in their family systems across the globe
- (3) Understanding both the macro-level drivers of change and how and why family systems change
- (4) The consequences of system change for the welfare of children



What indicators of child welfare will examine?



■ At the National Level

- Virtual all health and well-being data collected can be appended to the information on country-level context
- This could include: mortality, neo-natal mortality, health, nutrition, schooling, and so on.
- We plan to do this but currently lack the funding.

■ At the Individual Level (From the DHS)

- Early Childhood Mortality
- Maternal and Child Health: Child health includes data on many aspects including birth weight and size, immunization, and the extent and prevalence and treatment of important childhood diseases (diarrhea, acute respiratory infection, and fever).

+ Indicators from DHS (continued)

- **Nutrition**
- **HIV/AIDS**

