

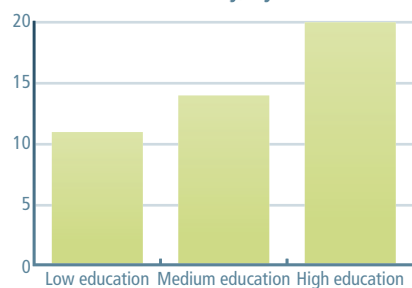
Demography & Social Inequality



INSTITUTE OF SOCIOLOGY
AND SOCIAL PSYCHOLOGY

Demographic change – that is, increasing life-expectancy, declining fertility, and increasing migration – constitutes a major challenge (and opportunity) for advanced societies in the 21st century. The research initiative “Demography & Social Inequality” aims at improving our understanding of individuals’ demographic behavior and its embeddedness in economic, social, and cultural contexts by employing state-of-the-art social science theories and methods. Focusing on the interrelationship of demographic change and social inequalities – along the lines of the “social demography” approach established in the US – we will thus close a gap in the German university landscape.

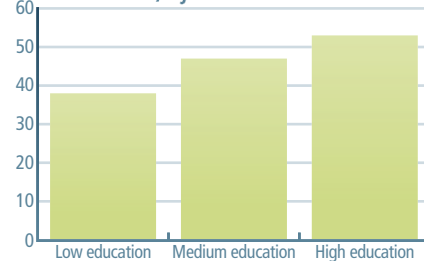
Proportion of childless women aged 35-55 in Germany, by education



There is a clear social gradient in all demographic processes and outcomes. For example, research has shown that (a) wealth is positively associated with longevity, (b) socio-economic status is strongly correlated with childbearing behaviors, and (c) education is an important resource for migrants and their successful integration. The causal relationship between demographic

behaviors and social inequalities, however, is complex and often bi-directional: Wealth is likely to impact individuals’ health, but health is also likely to impact individuals’ capacity to accumulate wealth.

Proportion of the population aged 25-75 in Germany rating their health as ‘good or better’, by educational level

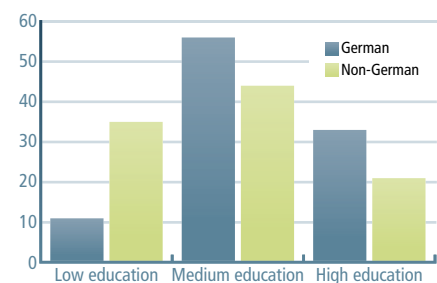


Recent years brought about significant improvements in our – theoretical and empirical – understanding of the causal mechanisms underlying demography-social-inequality nexus as described above. Another important aspect we still know relatively little about, though, relates to the coping strategies of actors facing the demographic challenges lying just ahead of us. Leading research questions of the “Demography & Social Inequality” network thus are:

- How do actors at different levels of aggregation (macro-, meso-, and micro-level) adapt their behaviors to fundamentally changing (social, economic, demographic) environments, coping with new challenges and opportunities?
- How do changes in individuals’ demographic behaviors result in structural changes at higher levels of aggregation? And how are such

behavioral changes related to social inequalities (both as a determinant and as a consequence)?

Distribution of educational levels in the age group 25-75: Germans vs. Non-Germans



These questions relate to all three demographic processes – fertility, migration, and mortality – and various dimensions of social inequality – education, income, social participation, etc. – alike. Answering them requires competence in several substantive fields as well as broad methodological expertise and knowledge of a variety of theoretical approaches to human behavior. The research network clusters the individual competences of its members, thereby offering the broad expertise necessary to advance our knowledge in the field of “Demography & Social Inequality”.

Although the network “Demography & Social Inequality” is already well established within the UoC and the WiSo-Faculty – having a particularly strong basis in the work of the Institute of Sociology & Social Psychology – we invite interested colleagues to join us in our effort to gain further insights into the field of “Demography & Social Inequality”!

Selected recent publications

- Brandt, M., Deindl, C. & Hank, K. (2012): Tracing the Origins of Successful Aging: The Role of Childhood Conditions and Social Inequality in Explaining Later Life Health, *Social Science & Medicine*, 74 (9), 1418-1425.
- Ellwardt, L., Peter, S., Präg, P., & Steverink, N. (2014): Social Contacts of Older People in 27 European Countries: The Role of Welfare Spending and Economic Inequality. *European Sociological Review*, 30(4), 413-430.
- Ellwardt, L., Van Tilburg, T., Aartsen, M., Wittek, R., & Steverink, N. (2015): Personal networks and mortality risk in older adults: A twenty-year longitudinal study. *PLoS ONE*, 10(3).
- Jacob, M. & Kleinert, C. (2014): Marriage, gender, and class: Partner resources and unemployment exit. *Social Forces*, 92 (3), 839-871.
- Kroneberg, C. & Wimmer, A. (2012): Struggling over the boundaries of belonging. A formal model of nation building, ethnic closure, and populism. *American Journal of Sociology* 118: 176-230.
- Lersch, P.M. (forthcoming): Family migration and subsequent employment: The effect of gender ideology. *Journal of Marriage and Family*.
- Pelzer, B.; Te Grotenhuis, M.; Eisinga, R. & Schmidt-Catran, A.W. (2015): The Non-uniqueness Property of the Intrinsic Estimator in APC Models. *Demography*, 52(1), 315 - 327.
- Schmidt-Catran, A.W. & Spies, D. (forthcoming): Immigration and Welfare Support in Germany. *American Sociological Review*.
- Wagner, M., Schmid, L., & Weiß, B. (2015): Exploring Increasing Divorce Rates in West Germany: Can We Explain the Iron Law of Increasing Marriage Instability? *European Sociological Review*, 31, 211-229.
- Ziller, C. (2015): Ethnic Diversity, Economic and Cultural Contexts, and Social Trust: Cross-Sectional and Longitudinal Evidence from European Regions, 2002–2010, *Social Forces*, 93(3), 1211-1240.

Selected research projects

- Panel analysis of intimate relationships and family dynamics (pairfam); German Research Foundation
- Partner relationships, residential relocations and housing in the life course (PartnerLife); German Research Foundation
- Violent delinquency in adolescence: Inter-ethnic differences, action-theoretic mechanisms and friendship networks; German Research Foundation
- NRW-Fortschrittskolleg "Well-Being in Later Life" (co-ordinated by S. Zank)
- UoC Forum "Quality of Life and Subjective Well-Being of the Very Old in NRW" (co-ordinated by S. Woopen & M. Wagner)

Selected research topics

Intergenerational relationships
Marriage & divorce
Migration & the welfare state
Labor market integration of immigrants
Social determinants of health & mortality
Social integration & well-being in later life

COOPERATING WITH NATIONAL AND INTERNATIONAL PARTNERS, WE AIM TO IMPROVE OUR UNDERSTANDING OF DEMOGRAPHIC PROCESSES AND THEIR RELATIONSHIP WITH SOCIAL INEQUALITIES BY TAKING A MULTILEVEL PERSPECTIVE, BUILDING ON THEORIES OF SOCIAL ACTION AND CARRYING OUT COMPARATIVE EMPIRICAL RESEARCH.



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