

Pronatalist attitudes in Europe

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Background: what is pronatalism?

Demographic anxiety, fears of depopulation and also overpopulation

Pronatalism "implies encouragement of all births as conducive to individual, family and social well-being" (De Sandre, 1978, p. 145)

Two levels:

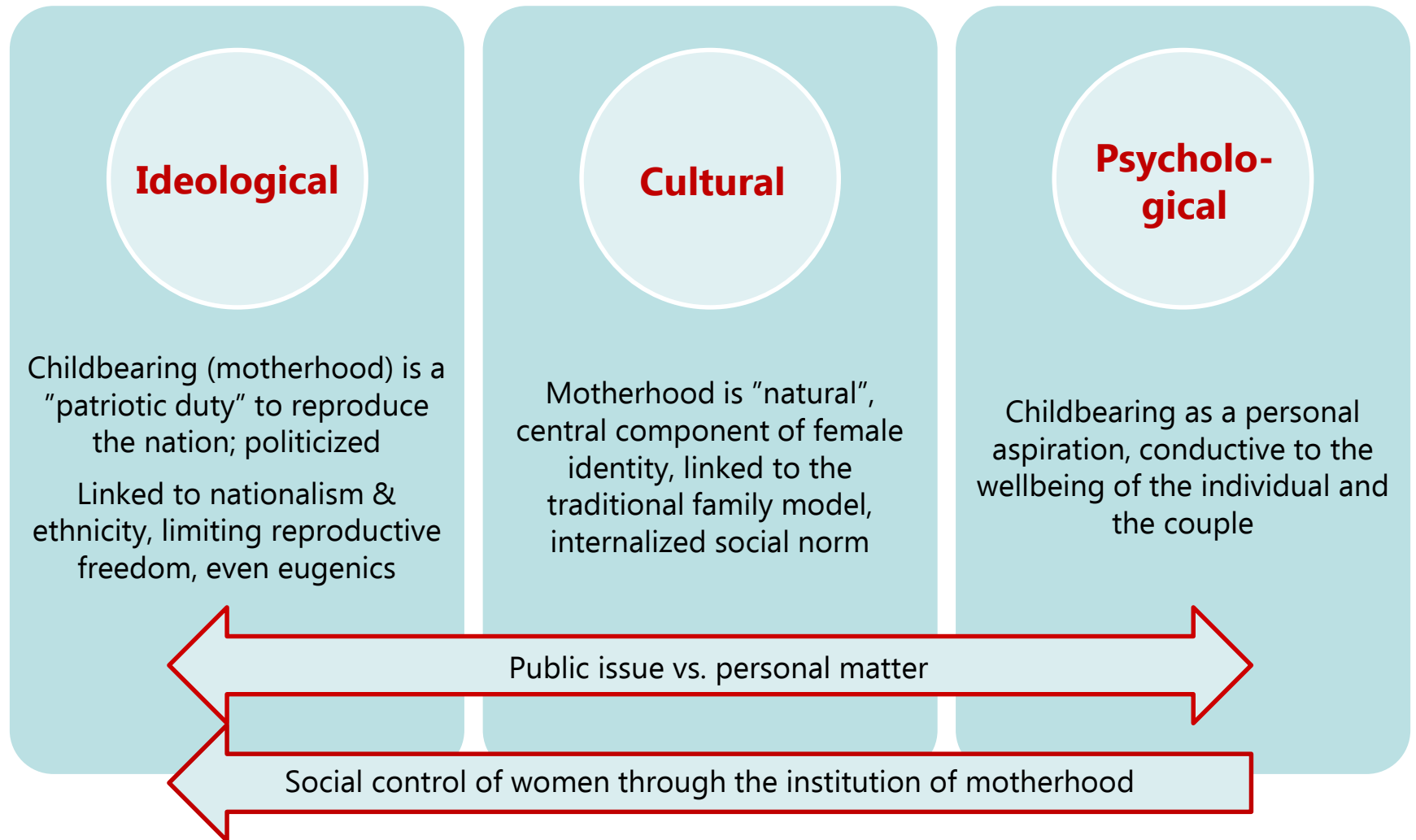
1. *Policies*: „when the state intervenes, directly or indirectly, in an attempt to regulate the dynamics of fertility and to influence its causes and consequences" (Heitlinger 1991)



Increasing number of pro- (and anti-) natalist policies worldwide
(Skirbekk 2022)

2. *Attitudes*: 3 dimensions

Background: dimensions of pronatalist attitudes



Our research aims

1. To study pronatalism as an attitude and its dimensions
 2. How pronatalist attitudes are reflected in the demographic situation of different countries in Europe
 3. How individual-level socio-demographic factors are related to pronatalist attitudes
- ☞ Help better understand the fertility decision-making process and the diverse demographic landscape of Europe

Data, variables, methods 1



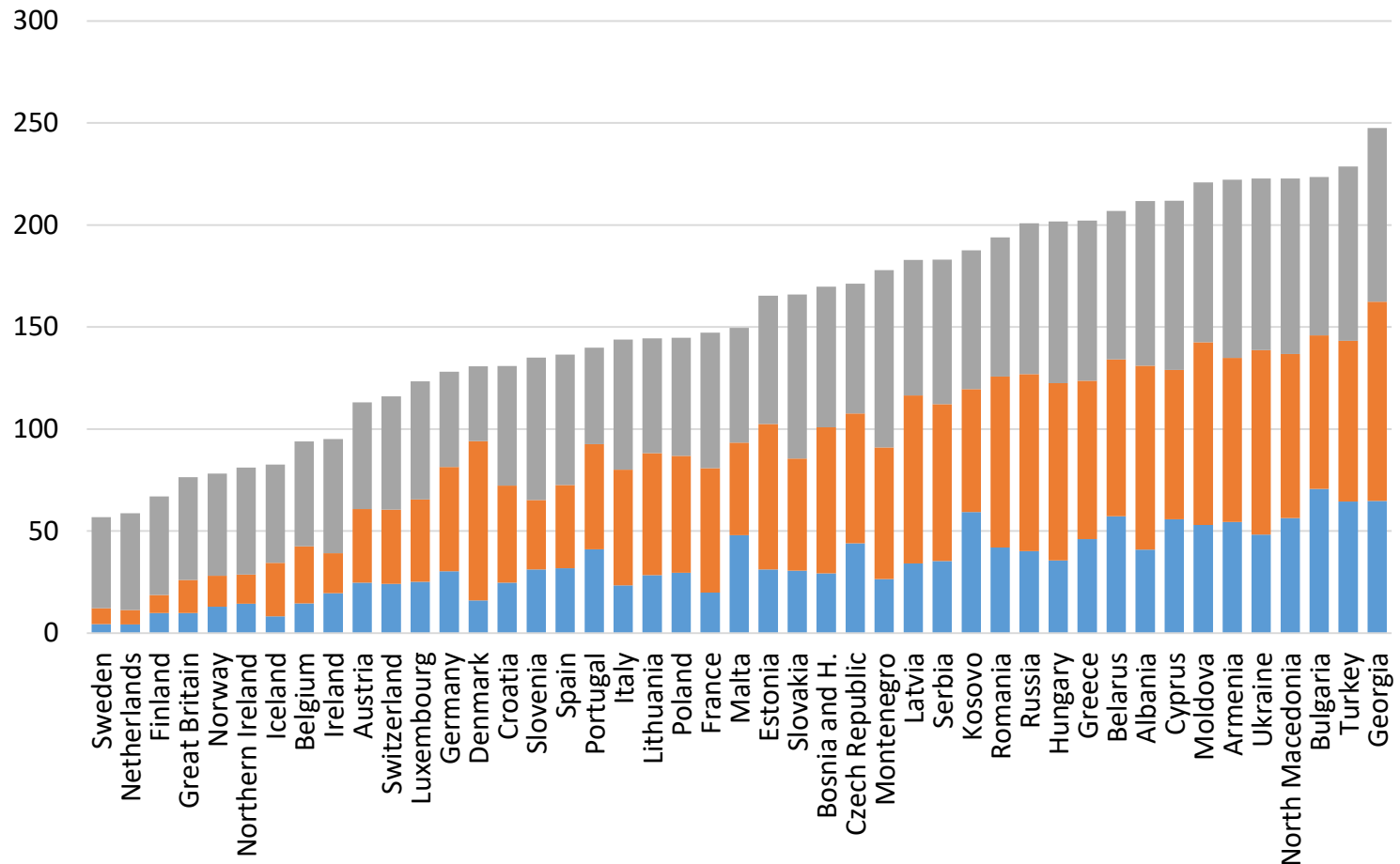
- Data: European *Values* Study
- Wave 4 (2008–2010) and wave 5 (2017–2020)
- 45 countries, ~70 thousand respondents
- 3 dimensions of pronatalism – measured by 3 variables
 - **IDEOLOGICAL:** "Childbearing is a duty towards society"
 - **CULTURAL:** "A woman needs to have children to be fulfilled"
 - **PSYCHOLOGICAL:** "A child is necessary for a successful marriage/partnership"

Data, variables, methods 2

- Individual-level covariates:
 - *Socio-demographics*: gender, age group, marital/partnership status, parenthood status, education, employment, income, immigration background
 - *Religion*: religiosity, denomination
 - *Family values and gender roles*: marriage is an outdated institution, divorce is justifiable, what women really want is home and children
 - *Ethnic nationalism* (... ancestry makes someone a real ...), *xenophobia* (would not like immigrants/foreign workers as neighbours)
- Macro-level demographic indicators:
 - Change in the number of population in 10 years (%) (UN)
 - Total fertility rate (UN)
 - Rate of childlessness (EVS)
 - International migrant stock as compared to the total population (%) (UN)
- Method: multilevel logistic regression models

Results: dimensions of pronatalism

The 3 dimensions of pronatalist attitudes in Europe



Means across all countries:

- Ideological: 33.7
- Cultural: 56.7
- Psychological: 65.0

Correlation coefficients: 0.73–0.76

■ Necessary for a successful marriage (PSYCHOLOGICAL)

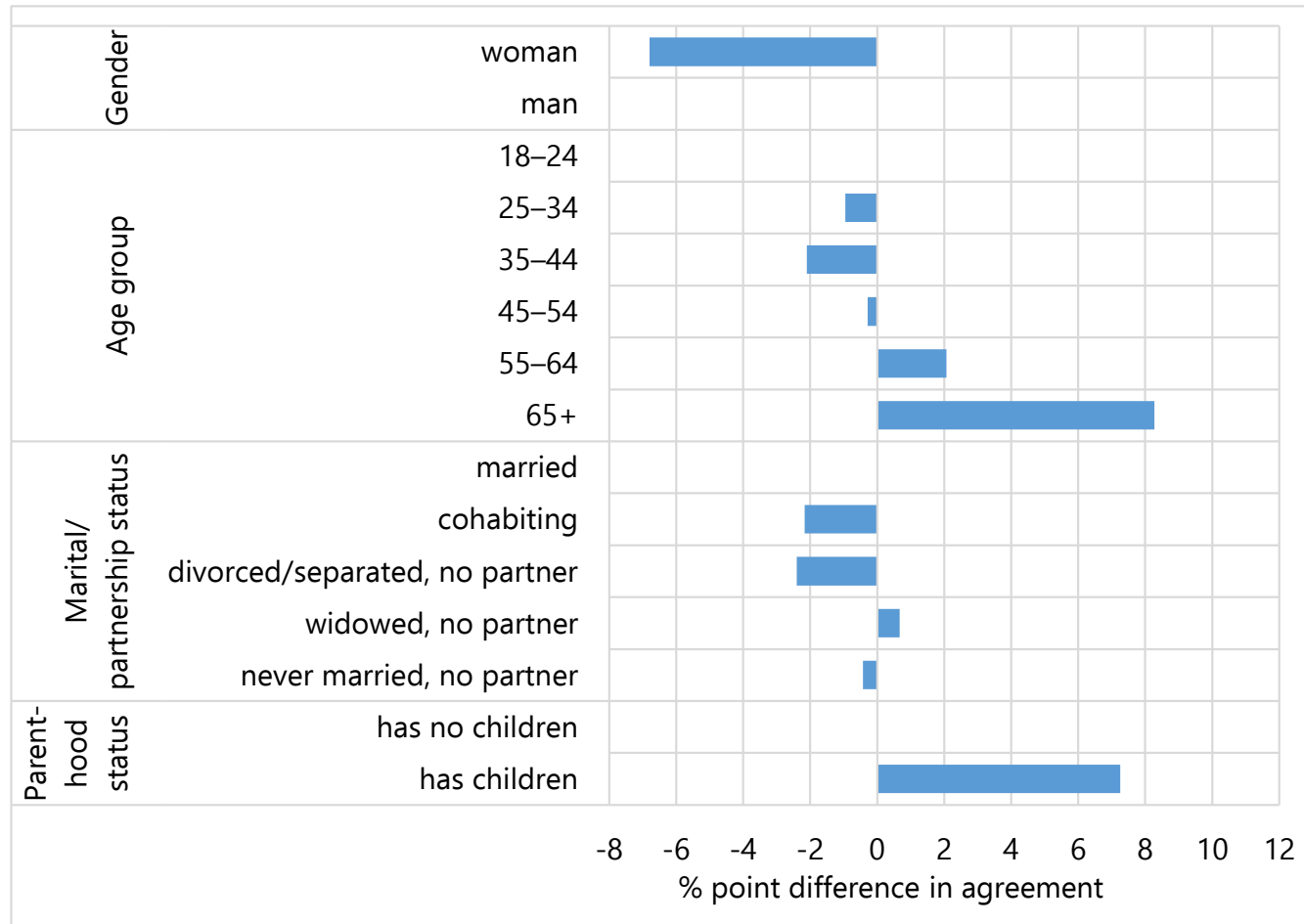
■ Women need children to be fulfilled (CULTURAL)

■ Duty towards society (IDEOLOGICAL)

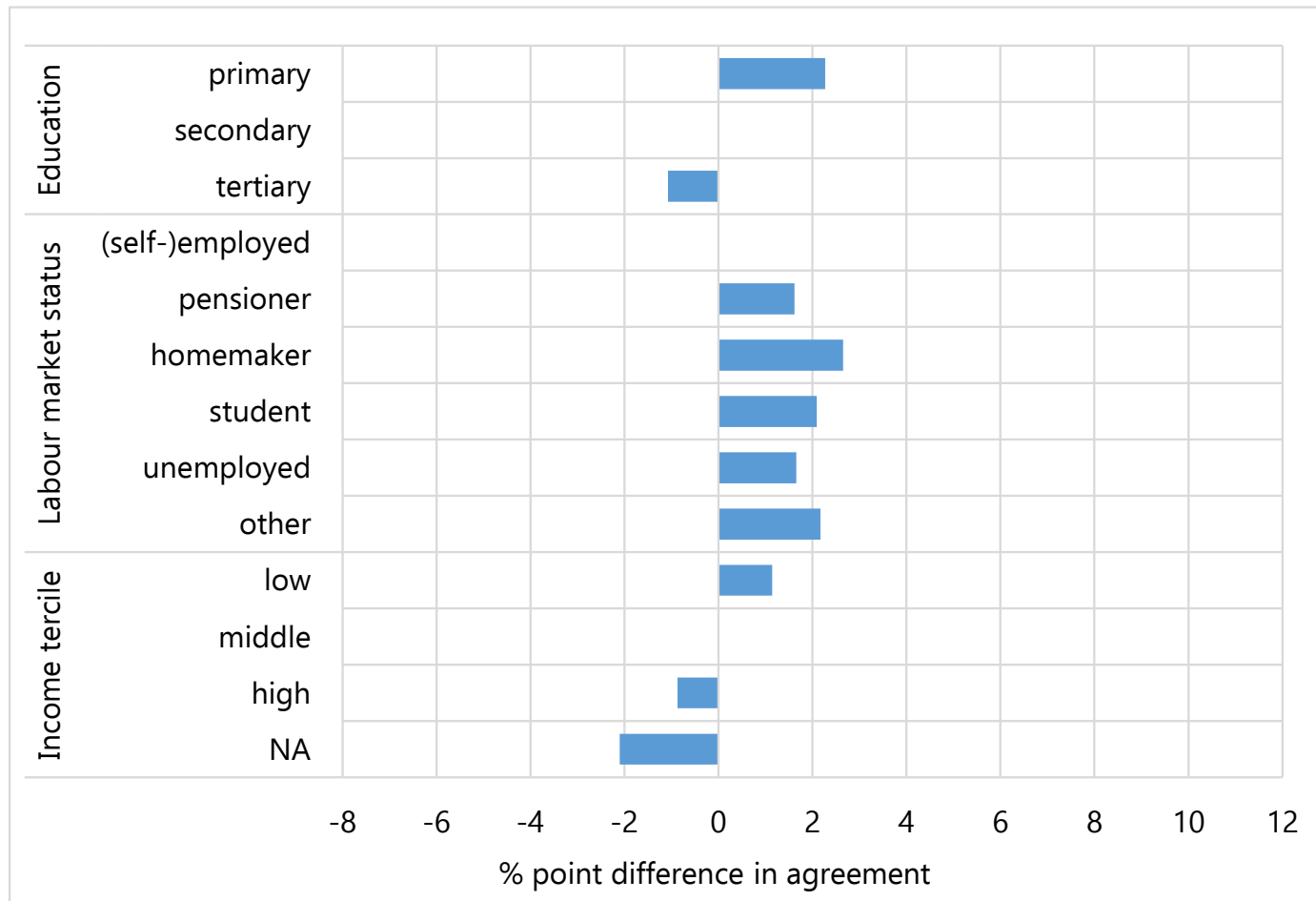
Data: EVS 4 (2008–2010)

Results: individual-level associations with ideological pronatalist attitudes

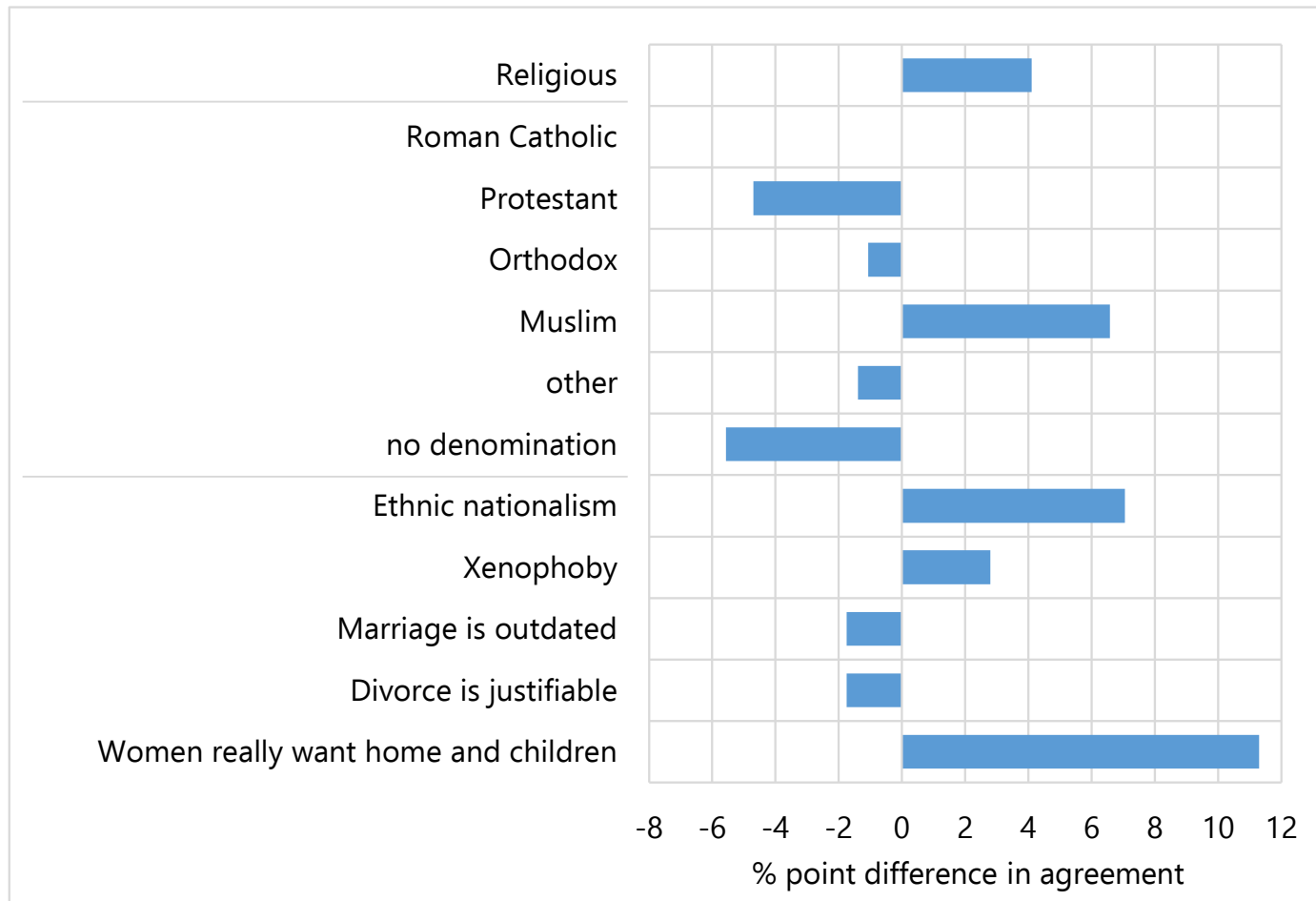
Individual factors – demographics



Individual factors – social position

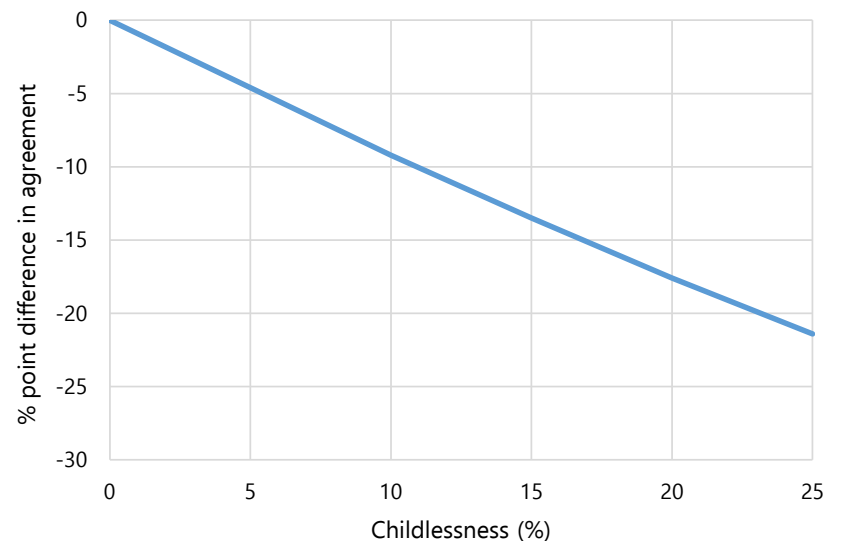
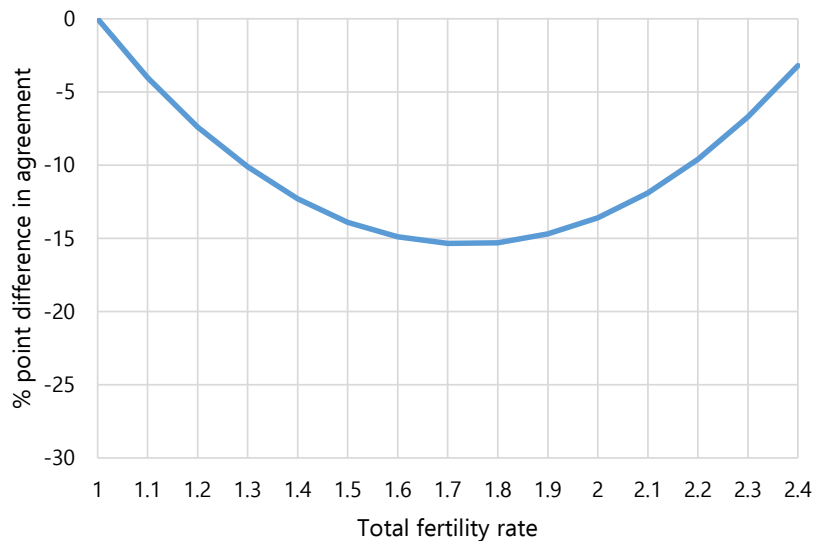
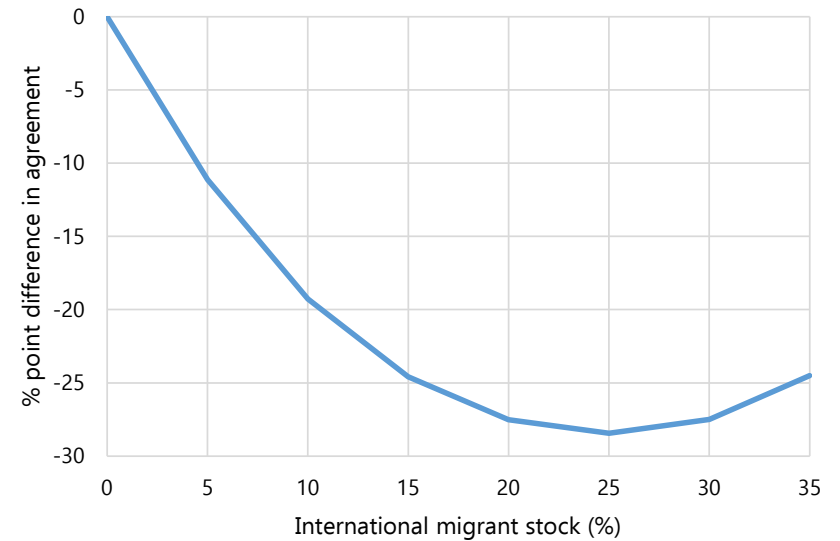
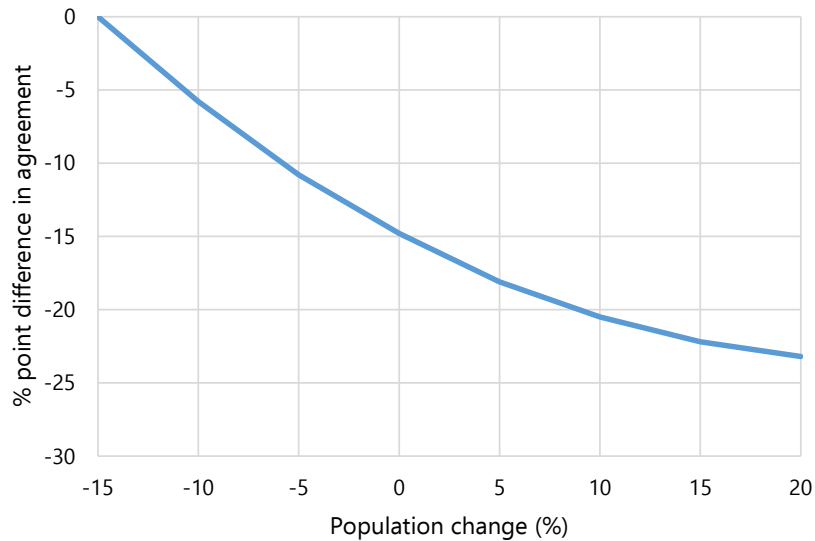


Individual factors – values, attitudes



Results: macro-level associations with ideological pronatalist attitudes

Demographic indicators



Conclusions 1

- High diversity across Europe regarding pronatalist attitudes – NW ⇔ SE scale
- Ideological, cultural and psychological pronatalist attitudes are closely related
- Those dimensions are more often accepted that relate to individual benefits and that are not prescriptive
- Micro-level associations: those people are more pronatalist (ideologically) who...
 - are not held responsible for reproduction (men, older people)
 - embody the traditional family ideal (married, parents)
 - have lower social status (not employed, lower education, lower income)
 - are religious
 - endorse traditional family or gender values
 - accept ethnic nationalism or xenophobic

Conclusions 2

- Ideological pronatalism is highest in countries with...
 - strongly decreasing population
 - low international migrant stock
 - low childlessness
- What can we say about the mechanisms? – the direction of causality is unclear
- Pronatalist attitudes may be seen as...
 - reactions to population decrease, (the possibility/threat of) immigration or even high mortality
 - preconditions or motives for childbearing
 - related to low childlessness but not to high fertility
 - why? selective pronatalism
 - why? unfounded intentions (pronatalist public attitudes enhance childbearing intentions but do not make it easier to realize them, e.g. Spéder 2022)
 - parts of a set of interrelated values

Thank you for your attention!

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