

## SF2.4: Share of births out of wedlock and teenage births

### Share of births outside marriage

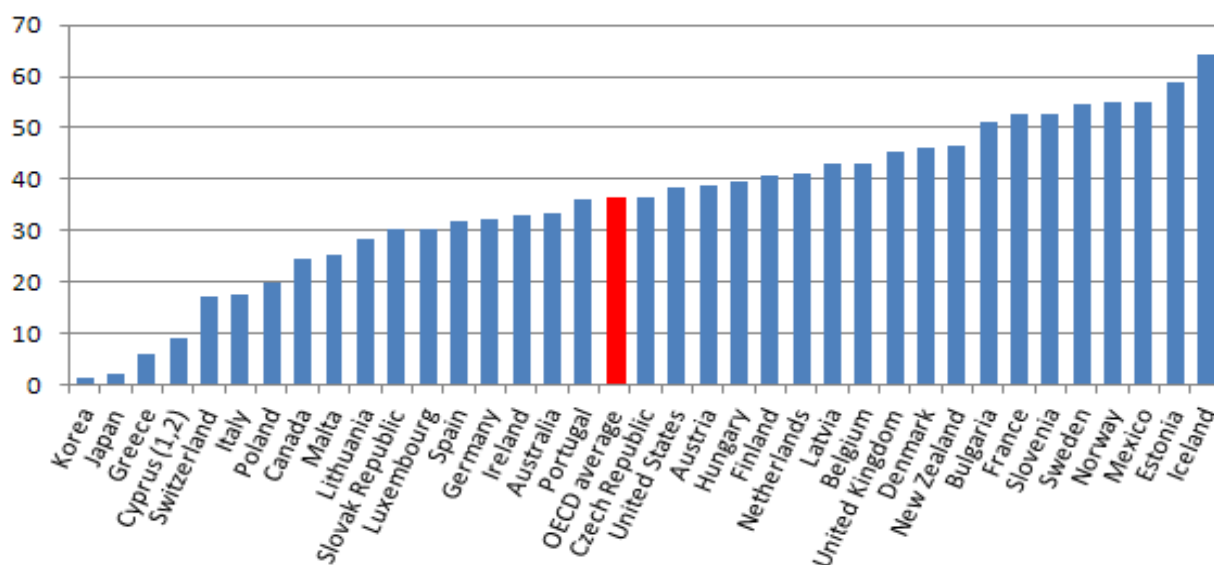
#### Definitions and methodology

Trends in fertility rates have often been accompanied by changes in the prevailing attitudes towards marriage, family formation and parenthood. In many OECD countries, but by no means all, the number of parents who were not married at the time of birth of their first child has increased. The definition of marriage includes married couples and those who are living in a legally declared civil partnership; it does **not** include couples who are in “common-law” relationships or “de facto” relationships where by default adults in couples have legal obligations to each other similar to those under a “civil union” after a certain period of time (SF3.3). The proportion of births out of wedlock is calculated as the percentage of all children born to parents who are not married (nor living in a legal partnership), occurring during that year.

#### Key findings

There are large differences across OECD countries in the proportion of children born outside of marriage: this proportion varies from less than 10% in Korea, Japan and Greece, to 50% or more in France, Slovenia, Mexico and the Nordic countries (except Denmark) (Chart SF2.4.A).

**Chart SF2.4.A: Proportion of births out of wedlock, 2009\***



Countries are ranked in ascending order of the proportion of births out-of-wedlock in 2009.

Note: \* Data refers to 2007 for Japan, Italy, Ireland, Australia, the United States, Belgium and New Zealand; 2006 for Korea; 2005 for Canada.

1 Footnote by Turkey: The information in this document with reference to “Cyprus” relates to the southern part of the Island. There is no single authority representing both Turkish and Greek Cypriot people on the Island. Turkey recognizes the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus (TRNC). Until a lasting and equitable solution is found within the context of United Nations, Turkey shall preserve its position concerning the “Cyprus issue”.

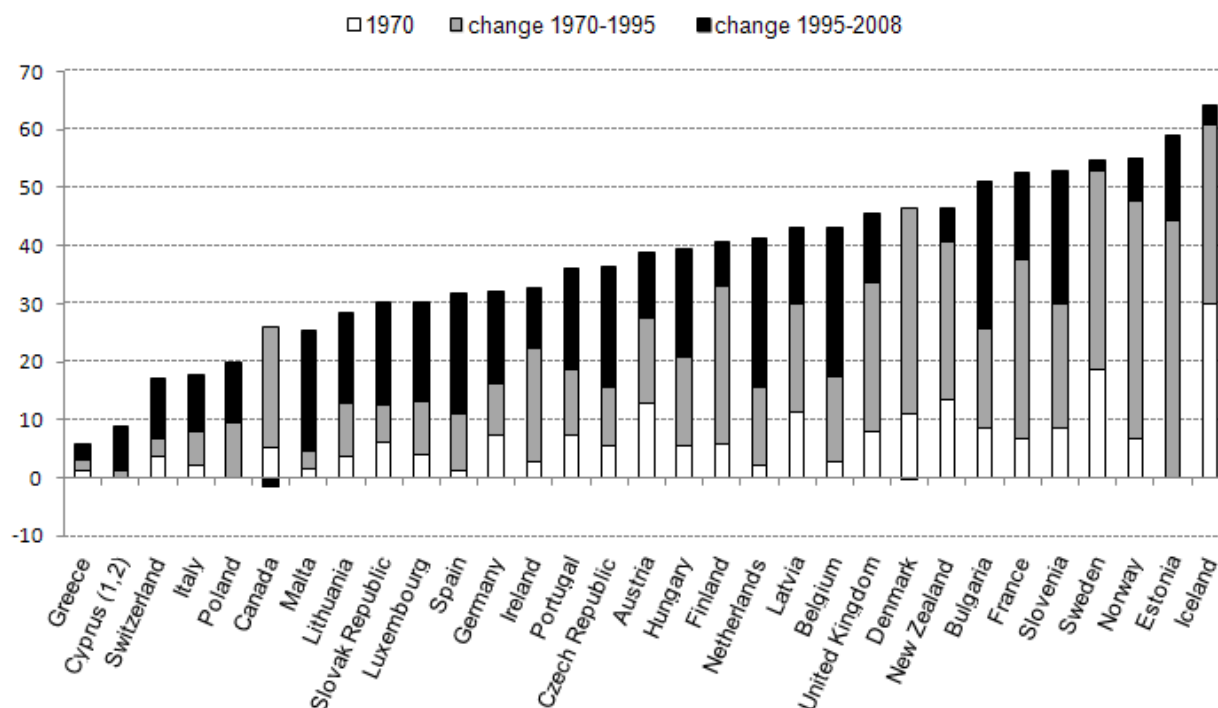
2 Footnote by all the European Union Member States of the OECD and the European Commission: The Republic of Cyprus is recognized by all members of the United Nations with the exception of Turkey. The information in this document relates to the area under the effective control of the Government of the Republic of Cyprus.

Source: Eurostat, 2012, United Nations Statistical Division, 2011, and National Statistical Offices, 2011.

Other relevant indicators: Family size and composition (SF1.1); Fertility rates (SF2.1); Mean age of mother at first childbirth (SF2.3); Childlessness (SF2.5); and, Marriage and divorce rates (SF3.1).

Chart SF2.4.B shows that the proportion of extra-marital births out of total births was quite low in all countries in 1970 (less than 1/3 of the total), but has increased significantly since. The increase was particularly pronounced from 1970 to the mid-1990s in Canada, Estonia, France, Ireland, New Zealand, the Nordic countries and the United Kingdom. In most Eastern European countries, Belgium, Germany, Greece, Luxembourg, and Spain, the increase was most significant after 1995.

**Chart SF2.4.B: Changes in the proportion of births out of wedlock from 1970 to 2009\***



Countries are ranked in ascending order of the proportion of births out-of-wedlock in 2009.

Note: \* Data refers to 2007 for Italy, Ireland, Belgium and New Zealand; 2005 for Canada.

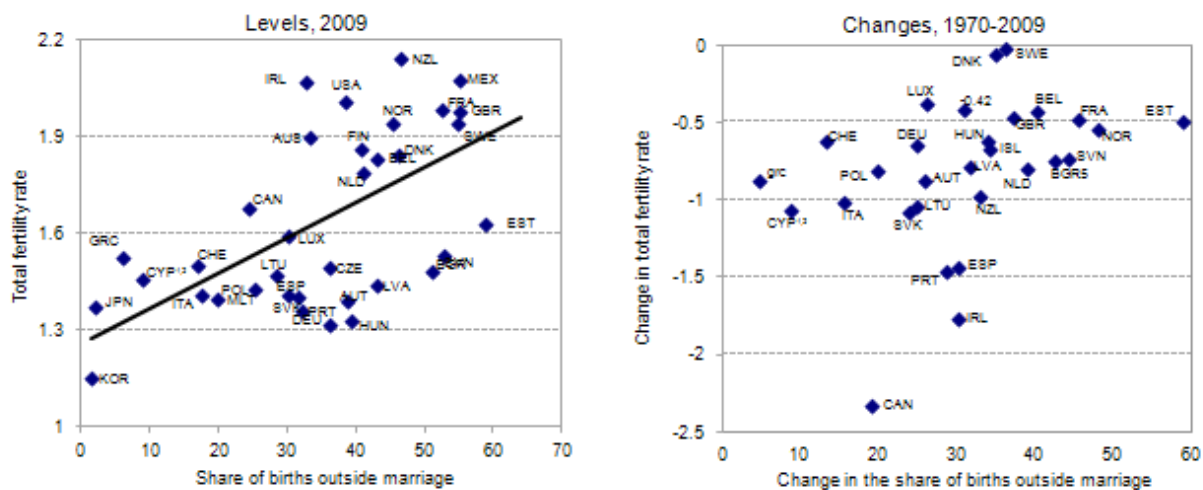
1 and 2, see notes 1 and 2 for Chart SF2.4.A

Sources: Eurostat, 2012, United Nations Statistical Division, 2011, and National Statistical Offices, 2011.

Chart SF2.4.C illustrates the relationship between the share of births outside marriage and the total fertility rate. The left-hand panel presents the situation in 2009 (or latest available year) whilst the right-hand panel looks at changes in both the share of births out of wedlock and the total fertility rate from 1970 to 2009. In general, countries with higher fertility rates in 2009 also display higher share of out-of-wedlock births. In Japan and Korea, where having children is still closely associated with being married, both the proportions of out-of-wedlock births and fertility rates are low. Although cross-country variations are large, the correlation between share of births out-of-wedlock and fertility rates is moderately strong with a correlation coefficient of 0.58.

There is no clear relationship between the increase in births out of wedlock births and changes in fertility (the relevant correlation coefficient is less than 0.5). Trends differ considerably across countries. For example, Denmark and Sweden experienced a significant increase in births out of wedlock since 1970s with fertility rates changing little; in the Netherlands and Hungary trends in births out of wedlock are comparable but the fertility decline was more significant since 1970.

**Chart SF2.4.C: Cross-country relationship between the share of births out of wedlock and the fertility rate, 1970 and 2009\***



Note: \* For births outside marriage, 2009, data refers to 2007 for Japan, Italy, Ireland, Australia, the United States, Belgium and New Zealand; 2006 for Korea; 2005 for Canada.  
 1 and 2, see notes 1 and 2 for Chart SF2.4.A  
 Source: Eurostat, 2012, United Nations Statistical Division, 2011, and National Statistical Offices, 2011.

#### Comparability and data issues

Data on marriage are based on administrative data sources and only include those couples who are living in a legally declared civil partnership or union. The children of co-habiting adults who have not entered a legal agreement on their partnership status (even though they have obtained a similar status upon expiration of a certain period of time in some countries, e.g. Australia and New Zealand) are classified here as being born out-of-wedlock. The increase in the share of births out of wedlock is largely due to the increase in couples co-habiting outside of a legally declared partnership (SF3.3). This is particularly true in Mexico where “free unions” (cohabiting, but not legally married) are increasingly common among low income couples.

Data on births are collected through administrative sources based upon head counts, while the marital or partnership status of parents should be recorded for all births. For comparability and data issues surrounding the total fertility rates presented in Figure SF2.4.C please refer to indicator SF2.1.

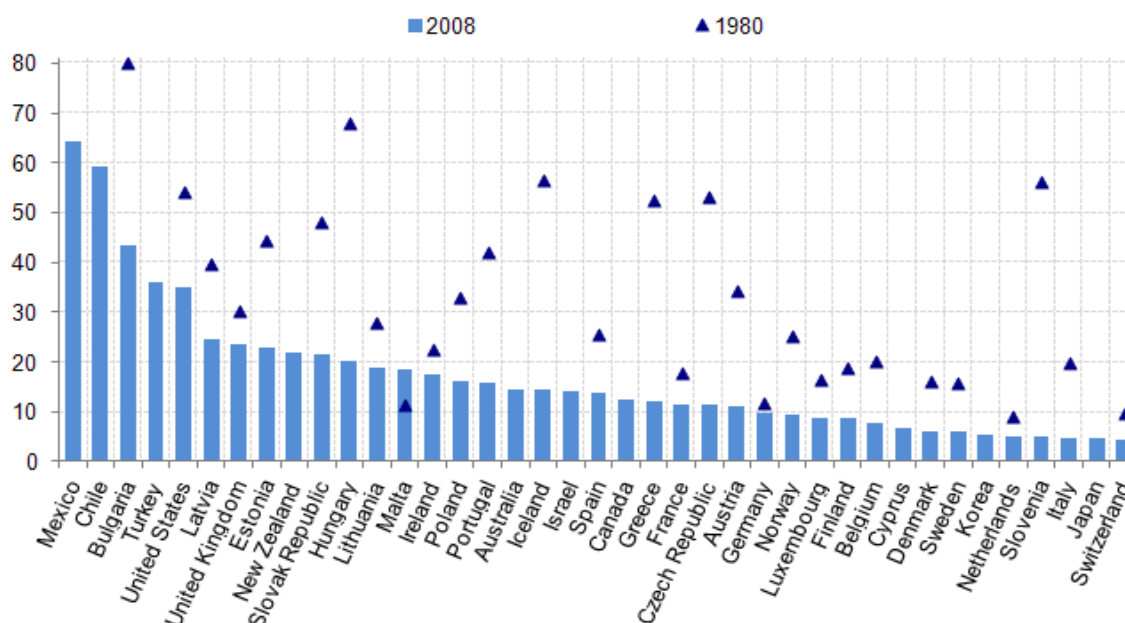
## Teenage births

### Definitions and methodology

Teenage births, along with other factors, are an important indicator of future opportunities for women to pursue education and of career prospects. Young mothers are more likely to drop out of education and work in low-paid jobs with long-term consequences on family welfare.

The *Adolescent Fertility Rate* or *Teenage Birth Rate* is defined as the number of children born alive to women aged 15-19 per 1000 women of this age range. In all OECD countries for which data is available the teenage birth rates have decreased over the last twenty five years. At over 3% of the female adolescent population, the rate is especially high in Chile, Mexico, Turkey and the United States.

**Chart SF2.4.D: Adolescent fertility rates, 1980 and 2008**



Countries are ranked in descending order of teenage births in 2008.

1 and 2, see notes 1 and 2 for Chart SF2.4.A

Source: Eurostat, 2012, for EU and countries, and World Bank World Development Indicators, 2010, for non-EU countries.

### Comparability and data issues

Data shown above only refer to the age-cohort of 15 to 19 years and children being borne to those not yet 15 are not captured. Data are collected from administrative sources and are based upon head counts, thus provide an accurate cross-country comparison over time.

Sources and further reading: Calot G., Sardon J.P. (2003), *Methodology for the calculation of Eurostat's demographic indicators, Population and social conditions* 3/2003/F/no 26, Eurostat, [http://epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/cache/ITY\\_OFFPUB/KS-CC-04-004/EN/KS-CC-04-004-EN.PDF](http://epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/cache/ITY_OFFPUB/KS-CC-04-004/EN/KS-CC-04-004-EN.PDF); D'Addio, A.C and M. Mira d'Ercole (2005), "Trends and Determinants of Fertility Rates in OECD Countries: the Role of Policies", OECD Social, Employment and Migration Working Paper, No. 27, Paris; OECD (2009), *Society at a Glance*, Paris; Kamerman S., Neuman M., Waldfogel J., Brooks-Gunn J. (2003), "Social Policies, Family Types, and Child Outcomes in Selected OECD Countries", Social, Employment, and Migration Working Papers no. 6. OECD, Paris; Eurostat (2011); UN Statistical Division (2011).