Research on fertility and partnership using the General Household Survey

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Outline

• CPC GHS time series data set
• Validation, correction and weights
• Selected findings
  Fertility intentions: trends, uncertainty
  Partnership trends
• Summary and further research
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CPC General Household Survey
time-series 1979-2007

Combining 25 rounds of GHS, in collaboration with Dr. Ann Berrington

Demographic histories
  birth histories, women 16-44/49/59
  partnership histories, men and women

Other data
  household composition
  socio-economic factors: education, economic activity, tenure, country of birth,…
The Family Information section

Fertility – problematic since late 1990s
  – missing births in fertility histories
    (Murphy 2009)
Recovery and adjustments
  – fertility histories largely corrected (Ní Bhrolcháin et al., 2011)
  – two new sets of weights
Partnerships – good quality (Berrington et al., 2011)
Revising fertility histories by adding “own children” substantially corrected defective fertility information

Source: Ni Bhrolchain et al, Population Studies 2011
CPC weights improved the fit between GHS and vital statistics period TFR series

Source: Beaujouan and Ni Bhroilchain, Population Trends 145
What caused the errors in GHS fertility histories 1998-2007?

Primarily changes in survey procedures
1. change in question routing
2. change in interviewer instructions
3. expansion of FI section
4. introduction of CASI in 2003 Family Information section: childbearing history under-reported in computer assisted self-completion

Source: Ni Bhroilchain et al, Population Studies 2011
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Per cent intending to have at least one child steady or increasing 1991-2007

-contrasts with trend in fertility in 1990s

-only possible to show this with repeated cross-sections

Source: Ni Bhrolchain et al, Population Trends 2010
Prevalence of uncertain fertility intentions high throughout 1991-2007: e.g. 2005-7 graph

Source: Ní Bhrolcháin et al (2010), Population Trends no. 141
Uncertain intentions ~ 40% before 35: more prevalent than generally recognised

Mainly associated with demographic life stage:

– childless > mothers
– no partner > partner
– short > longer duration after birth

Also, surprising level of uncertainty among women 35+

But, question wording matters!..
Change in wording 1990/1991: people overstate certainty when uncertainty precodes not available

Source: Beaujouan and Ni Bhrolchain, Vienna Yearbook 2011
Definition matters too: uncertainty greater when expected wait of 3+ or 5+ years included

Source: Beaujouan and Ni Bhrolchain, Vienna Yearbook 2011
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Cohabitation rising; some decline in marriage, but mainly a timing change

% ever having cohabited, married, or entered any union

By age 25

By age 40

Source: Beaujouan and Ni Bhrolchain, Population Trends 145, 2011

Women aged 25-29 or 40-44, GHS 2000-07, GB
Fewer cohabiters marry, more separate…

% of cohabiting partnerships that end in …

- marriage
- separation

Source: Beaujouan and Ni Bhrolchain, Population Trends 145, 2011
... cohabitation remains short-lived

% still cohabiting 10 years later

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>1980-84</th>
<th>1995-97</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Men</td>
<td>10.7</td>
<td>11.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Women</td>
<td>12.1</td>
<td>12.4</td>
</tr>
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Has cohabitation contributed to recent stabilisation and decline of divorce rates?

Cohabitation has become more common
Cohabitation spells now longer
Proportionately fewer cohabiters marry
More cohabiters separate without marrying

Cohabitation trends may thus have contributed to incipient decline in divorce rates (aggregate effect)
Summary and further research

GHS: rich but challenging resource
  – revision of the childbearing history and construction of weights series
Useful source for studying time-trends in family formation and its context

Further research:
  – changes in entry into adulthood
  – trends in fertility and partnerships linked with other socio-demographic factors
References

http://www.statistics.gov.uk/cci/article.asp?id=2580


http://www.cpc.ac.uk/publications/

Acknowledgments

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