

PLÁNY NA NAROZENÍ DÍTĚTE A JEJICH REALIZACE V ČESKÉ REPUBLICE

REALISATION OF CHILDBEARING INTENTIONS IN THE CZECH REPUBLIC

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Abstract

This study investigates childbearing intentions and the realisation thereof in the context of the Czech Republic, a country in which social, political and economic transformation has resulted in rapid changes in demographic trends. From 1990 onwards, family formation was postponed and fertility rates declined sharply from 1.89 to 1.18 remaining below the 'lowest-low' threshold until 2004. This paper uses Czech Generations and Gender Survey panel data from 2005 and 2008 to investigate the realisation / non-realisation of short-term fertility intentions. The author studies to what extent the intention of having a child plays a role in real behaviour and what impact might be assigned to other factors e.g. personal characteristics, life course experiences and socio-economic conditions.

Keywords: Fertility, childbearing, intentions, Czech Republic

1. Introduction

The most characteristic trend in reproductive patterns during the socialist era in the Czech Republic was a strong orientation towards the two-child family model the universality of which was apparent from fertility behaviour (Frejka, Sardon 2004, Rychtaříková 2003) and according to recent sociological surveys the ideal of a two-child family still persists (e.g. surveys carried out by the Research Institute for Labour and Social Affairs, CVVM 2003, Fialová et al. 2000, Hamplová 2000). Since 1990, two thirds of all respondents in a wide range of surveys have repeatedly advocated having two children, while only one out of five considers three children to be the ideal (Šalamounová, Šamanová 2003: 29, 2004: 8).

According to international comparative studies, the two-child family is the most pervasive ideal family size in Europe. With the exception of Austria and Romania which display ideals below replacement level among both young male and female cohorts, the mean ideal number of children is two or slightly higher, both for men and women, and across all age groups (Testa 2006).

Young, single Czechs consider having children a natural part of their lives and the two-child family model remains the ideal ("Young generation 1997" survey¹). Although the two-child norm prevails in all groups, in general the more traditional the partnership behaviour, the higher the number of children is considered to be ideal. Those who identify the

¹ The survey focused on examining the value orientations of young single people in the Czech Republic (age at last birthday of 18-29). The Institute of Sociology of the Academy of Sciences of the Czech Republic and the Research Institute for Labour and Social Affairs (RILSA) took part in the survey.

lowest number of children as the ideal often prefer life-long unmarried cohabitation; respondents who wish to marry as soon as possible, without prior cohabitation, tend to plan the highest numbers of children (Hamplová 2000: 96–97).

The ideal number of children is therefore considerably higher than the number of children actually born in the Czech Republic; where the latter is measured in terms of the observed TFR. In comparative studies the Czech Republic thus features amongst those European countries² in which declared ideals are somewhat distant from reality when measured in terms of the number of children already born and those that people intend to have in the future (Testa 2006). This measure i.e. the expected (ultimate) number of children is thought to be somewhat closer to reality (Philipov, Dorbritz 2003) since the ideal number of children is seen as an abstract notion reflecting to some extent social norms rather than rational individual intentions.

As far as the Czech population is concerned, the expected (ultimate) number of children was measured in the Generation and Gender Survey (GGS) as the sum of the number of children already born plus the additional number of children desired³. According to GGS data, the mean expected family size in 2005 declined slightly amongst younger cohorts concerning whom women frequently declared a preference for the two-child family whilst only a small number intended to have a larger family (three or more children) (Table 1). Intentions below replacement level are characteristic for cohorts born after 1980 (and who had therefore reached the age group 18-24 in the year of the interview); female respondents from which often express the intention of remaining childless or of having only one child.

Table 1: Expected (ultimate) number of children, women of reproductive age, Czech Republic, 2005

Age	Expected number of children				N	Mean***
	0	1	2	3 and more		
18-19	7.5	17.0	66.0	9.4	159	1.79
20-24	6.2	17.3	60.1	16.4	323	1.88
25-29	3.3	13.4	63.0	20.3	454	2.05
30-34	3.0	13.7	56.1	27.2	497	2.13
35-39	4.4	17.2	54.8	23.6	454	2.07
40-44	8.5	16.2	56.9	18.4	425	1.91
45-49	7.7	22.6	52.4	17.3	452	1.84
18-49	5.5	16.7	57.6	20.2	2764	1.98

Note: *** mean expected number of children differs significantly across the age groups, $p < 0.001$, (ANOVA)

Source: GGS Czech Republic 2005, weighted sample

Preferences concerning the number of children in the family differ according to the highest level of education achieved. Women with a lower education prefer a higher number of children. As the level of education increases, the average number of children desired falls, accompanied by a decrease in the proportion of women who plan three or more children. In this respect, women still in education behave in the same way as do post-secondary school graduates, though the former place a comparatively greater emphasis on the two-child family;

² In the group of countries where the ideal number of children differs from the reality are also Austria, Romania, Spain, Italy, Slovakia, Germany and Malta (Testa 2006).

³ Data on numbers of children desired includes data concerning both childless women and women who already have one or more children (question: “How many (more) children in total do you intend to have?”). Thus the variable represents something of a synthesis between the plans of childless women and realised fertility among women with children, including their intentions with respect to additional children.

of those women attaining the highest level of education, just over one in five plans to have only one child.

An interest in fertility plans, intentions and declared ideal family size is closely linked with the possibility of predicting fertility. This paper investigates childbearing intentions and the realisation thereof in the context of a country in which substantial social, political and economic transformation has resulted in rapid changes in demographic trends. The author has studied short term intentions with regard to having a child (within the next three years) and the realisation thereof by men and women born between 1960 and 1987 by means of a longitudinal study which considered fertility intentions within a three-year period and included subsequent follow-up work which monitored actual childbirth as well as respondents' "new or revised" childbearing intentions at the end of the period.

This study's prospective view is particularly important; the author uses Czech Generations and Gender Survey panel data from 2005 and 2008 and focuses on factors explaining the realisation / non-realisation of fertility intentions. Fertility intention is only one of several factors that can play a role in the whole of the decision-making process. Further factors that have to be taken into account consist of personal characteristics, a respondent's surrounding environment and social ties as well as changes in living conditions that might lead to a redefinition of the individual's initial plan. In addition, the author intends to include the labour-market factor since parenthood is often, especially for women, perceived as a negative influence on their occupational and therefore financial conditions.

This paper will analyse and discuss four principal and closely interrelated research topics:

1. To what extent have different childbearing intentions "resulted in" childbirth over a three year period?
2. What kind of childbearing intentions are more likely to be realised? This leads on to a further closely related topic that is particularly important for fertility studies in demography: the question of the predictive power of declared intentions.
3. Which individual characteristics play a role in the realisation or non-realisation of time-specific fertility intentions?
4. What is the level of stability of such intentions should they not be realised? The author will study the stability of childbearing intentions with regard to those respondents who did not experience childbirth during the time period studied.

Over the period of observation considered in this study (2005-2008) the TFR in the Czech Republic increased from 1.28 in 2005 to 1.50 in 2008. Therefore the realisation of intentions and their predictive power were studied under what might be seen as relatively favourable conditions in which the populous cohorts of the 1970s realised their postponed childbearing in relatively advantageous societal conditions and in an atmosphere in which the media frequently explained the numbers of newborn babies in terms of a "baby-boom". Moreover, this period of time saw changes in the amount of the birth allowance and the introduction of new parental leave conditions. From April 2006 the birth allowance increased from 8,750 to 17,500 CZK per child; however in 2008 the allowance was reduced to 13,000 CZK per child. In January 2008 a more flexible 'multispeed' parental allowance was introduced which allows parents to choose between receiving the allowance for periods of 2, 3 or 4 years according to which the monthly amount of the benefit is based i.e. the higher rate (11,400 CZK) which can be drawn up to the child's 2nd birthday, the basic rate (7,600 CZK) drawn up to the child's 3rd birthday and the reduced rate (3,800 CZK) for the last 27 months when claiming parental allowance up to the child's 4th birthday.

2. Studying Childbearing Intentions in Demography

In the background of any study on fertility intentions lies the assumption that individuals are able to make rational choices concerning if and when they would like to have children (Toulemon, Testa 2006, Philipov et al. 2009). Most theoretical explanations also assume that behaviour reflects the informed decisions of an individual or couple.

The prospective GGS study which is used as a data source in the study was inspired by a variation on the theory of “reasoned action” which provides an insight into the intention formation process. The project was inspired by the most recent version of this theory i.e. the “Theory of Planned Behaviour” (Ajzen 1991) and therefore a consistent set of questions on intentions concerning several choices was designed for the questionnaire in order to allow an analysis of such choices as interdependent and competing processes in the life course (Vikat et al. 2007).

The theory of planned behaviour suggests that “intentions to perform behaviours of different kinds can be predicted with high accuracy from attitudes toward the behaviour, subjective norms, and perceived behavioural control; and these intentions, together with perceptions of behavioural control, account for considerable variance in actual behaviour” (Ajzen 1991). Hence intentions to behave in a specific way are formed with regard to the contribution of three conceptually independent determinants: (1) attitudes towards behaviour – a person’s individual evaluation of the positive or negative outcomes of behaving in a particular way, (2) *subjective norms*, which are determined by normative beliefs and is linked to perceived social pressure to behave or not to behave in a certain way and (3) *perceived behavioural control* - i.e. a person’s perception of the ease or difficulty of behaving in a certain way (Ajzen 1991).

This social-psychological model provides a potential framework in which to explain not only the decision-making process but also potential correspondence with subsequent outcomes, i.e. with real behaviour. According to this theory, behaviour is a joint function of intentions and perceived behavioural control. The relative importance of intentions and perceived behavioural control in the prediction of behaviour is expected to vary with regard to specific situations and across different behaviours (Ajzen 1991). Possible inconsistencies are explained either by the strength of the attempt at performing or by the degree of control over behaviour which includes internal and external constraints. It is supposed that when behaviour affords a person complete control over behavioural performance, intentions alone should be sufficient to predict behaviour.

Attention to fertility intentions research in demography is closely linked with the possibility of predicting fertility, and the realisation or non-realisation of individual childbearing intentions has become the important question for demographers over recent years (Philipov et al. 2009). A major obstacle to the research of this issue is the availability of both appropriate and detailed data at the micro-level. At least two waves of longitudinal data are required in order to track the behaviour of individuals and to study the likelihood of the realisation of measured fertility intentions or the stability of those intentions.

Moreover the definition of childbearing intentions differs from survey to survey. In some surveys the ideal number of children only is studied, however the ideal number of children is an abstract notion and refers to social norms rather than to a realistic individual target. In addition, surveys of the younger generation document the necessity of carefully considering responses especially when they refer for example to the value of children and plans regarding strategies for taking care of them, since such surveys can never determine exactly how the answers represent the internalised values of that generation and to what extent the response is stereotypical. A further complication concerns the fact that the

responses of the younger generation often reflect how vague their views are on this subject (Fialová et al. 2000: 80).

Therefore intentions are usually defined with respect to the intended (ultimate) number of children a respondent would like to have by the end of that individual's reproductive lifespan (Philipov, Dorbritz 2003, Philipov et al. 2009) (see table 1). According to Lee's distinction used by Philipov et al. (2009) the intended number of children defined in this way is referred to as a *fixed target*. Several theoretical and interpretational obstacles with regard to the intended number of children in a lifetime issue particularly from the very long time-scale that younger respondents have for the realisation of their intentions and from the different factors in play during the life course of the respondent that might considerably modify not only the realisation of the intention, but the intention itself. Analysing a sequence of 21 General Household Surveys carried out in Great Britain from 1979 to 2001, Smallwood and Jefferies (2003) found that average intended family size moves downward over time and thus the intended number of children declines with increasing age. However they conclude that this should not necessarily be interpreted as what they call an "unmet need for fertility". The disparity between intentions collected through surveys and subsequent fertility levels is likely to be both a result of the uncertain nature of many intentions and the modification of those intentions by subsequent life events and circumstances. The case in which individuals can change their fertility intentions according to their life conditions and adjust the intended number of children over the course of time might be termed a *moving target* (Lee 1980, cited from Philipov et al. 2009: 58).

A further important issue in the study of intentions is the question of *timing* i.e. whether one studies defined short-term or general, lifelong childbearing intentions. According to recent studies the more "powerful" fertility intentions predictions have been determined when the timing of the behaviour is specified (Philipov et al. 2006). Thus in studies measuring fertility intentions and the realisation thereof the intention of having a child within the next few years is commonly used (within two years – Philipov, Testa 2008, within three years – Kapitány, Spéder 2008, within five years Toulemon and Testa 2006).

3. Data and method

3.1 Sample

When studying fertility intentions and desires several options present themselves in terms of what to measure and how dependent on particular questions is a given questionnaire. The intentions of respondents may refer to "ever" having a child without indicating the time period within which those intentions will be realised. A further option is that in which intentions are measured within a certain time-frame and the respondent declares his/her fertility plans within a specific time-period or at / up to a certain age.

In this study, the author intends to focus on short-term intentions within a time-frame of three years following interview in order to be consistent with the length of the follow-up period. In order to study the realisation of such intentions one has to proceed from the most common approach that simply compares fertility intentions at a given point in time with the actual fertility level, to a longitudinal approach based on the re-interviewing of respondents in order to verify whether their childbearing plans came to fruition (Toulemon, Testa, 2005). The author uses data from the Czech Generation and Gender Survey which took the form of a longitudinal study with a panel in 2005 and that was repeated in 2008. The second wave thus provides a unique opportunity to compare original opinions and plans with their future realisation. In 2005, both women and men were asked about their future childbearing plans and expectations concerning having a (another) child within the next three years; thus after

the second wave in 2008 it was possible to assess whether those expectations had been met and whether and to what extent respondents' original opinions and attitudes with regard to children and their influence on family life were reflected in actual reproductive behaviour.

In this study the author uses the following basic question for the measurement of intentions: "Do you intend to have a (another) child during the next three years?" Possible answers consisted of: "definitely yes; probably yes; probably not; definitely not". For logistic regression analysis purposes the additional question "Supposing you do not have a/another child during the next three years, do you intend to have any (more) children at all?" was included to create a variable defining short-term intentions according to declared certainty and longer-term intentions. By combining both questions a new variable was constructed and coded into the following categories: "definitely yes within 3 years", "probably yes within 3 years" and "yes, but later".

Pregnant women and male respondents with pregnant partners were not asked this questions in the 1st wave of the survey therefore they were omitted from the analysis. In addition, respondents who defined themselves as infertile were excluded from the analytical models; however they are covered in the descriptive findings. The realisation of childbearing intentions after 3 years was defined as being either when a child was born during the inter-survey period or there was a pregnancy at the 2nd interview (i.e. potential live births were considered to be achieved children).

Of the initial sample of 10,006 respondents consisting of men and women aged 18-79 years in 2005 this study is concerned with men and women aged 18-45 (generations 1960-1987). In 2005 the refined sample consisted of 5,199 respondents and was representative of the Czech population in that year. A total of 1,506 people from the generations selected for study were re-interviewed in 2008.

Panel attrition in this age group was high at 71%; this was due principally to refusals but also due to respondents moving, to death or simply because interviewers were unable to contact respondents. Since panel attrition was very high it was necessary to analyse it according to interest variables since such attrition might be connected with both positive and negative fertility intentions and their certainty thus rendering the results biased. The test consisted of a comparison of respondents from defined generations who participated in the second interview and those who were not re-interviewed and in which their declared childbearing intentions within the following three years were studied, controlling for other covariates. The research found that there was no bias due to attrition in the sub-sample with regard to declared short-term fertility intentions. In addition, it was found that gender, partnership status, infertility and education parameters were also not biased by attrition. Conversely, attrition was found to be slightly higher for younger respondents (18-29 years in 2005) and childless respondents. The attrition rate was lower for women on maternity/parental leave "all other things being equal".

3.2 Methodology and variables

Due to the limitations of the data and the small sample size the author was, to a considerable extent, limited in terms of running more stratified analysis by gender, age or parity. Therefore binary-logistic regression models were designed in order to analyse the realisation of positive childbearing intentions for both men and women and for all parity and this characteristic was employed as a covariate in the models. Only those respondents who declared positive short-term or longer-term childbearing intentions and who participated in both waves of the panel survey were included; the response variable was equal to 1 if they had a child during the inter-survey period or declared a pregnancy at the second interview.

Several demographic and socio-economic characteristics collected in 2005 are included in the models as **explanatory variables**. All the following covariates are categorical and were transformed into dummy variables:

- gender
- age, coded into four groups: 18-24, 25-29 (reference category), 30-34 and 35-45 years
- number of children that respondents had when declaring their future childbearing intentions – coded into four groups – no child (reference category), 1 child and 2 and more children. This covariate includes biological children only. In this stage of the research the role of step-children, adopted or foster children living in the respondent's household was ignored, however their role could, in certain cases, be more important than for example the role of biological children who do not live in the same household as the respondent.
- education - refers to the highest level of completed study and is coded as basic/lower secondary, secondary/certificate, secondary/leaving exam (reference category) and tertiary (post-secondary vocational schools or universities)
- partnership status, coded as: single (reference category), LAT – living apart from the partner irrespective of the respondent's legal marital status, cohabitation and married (this category implies not only legal marital status but also sharing the same household with the respondent's spouse)
- employment status, coded as employed (reference category), unemployed, maternity/parental leave, studying, not working (housewife, other)

4. Results - realisation of childbearing intentions

4.1 Descriptive findings

Of all the men and women in the panel sample aged 18-45 in 2005 and who (or whose partner) were not pregnant at the first interview 9.7% gave birth to a (another) child during the period observed or declared a pregnancy at the second interview. Table 2 shows the distribution of men and women according to their short-term childbearing intentions as declared in 2005. One quarter of both men and women declared that they intended to have a (another) child within the following three years, the difference lies in the level of certainty of the intention, since women declared such an intention more often and with a higher level of certainty than men. The second column of the table provides the proportions of those who experienced childbirth during the three-year period or declared a pregnancy at the second interview according to their initial intentions. For example 27% of men who definitely wanted a child in 2005 actually had a child during the period compared to only 3% of those who initially intended strongly not to have a child.

The rate of realisation in table 2 thus shows to what extent the initial intention – positive or negative in respect to subsequent childbearing – was fulfilled. The results indicate that the zero short term childbirth intention (no childbirth during the following three years) was realised with a very high rate of probability. Conversely, a considerable proportion of those who had a positive intention did not realise their stated birth intentions during the given time period. The level of certainty of the intention also determines its fulfilment, at least when it concerns “positive” intentions; short term intentions are more likely to be realised if there is a higher level of certainty (the “definitely yes” response).

The gender difference in the realisation of the intention is evident in the case of planning a birth. Women's intentions to have a child are much more likely to be realised than those of men – 45% of female respondents who definitely intended to have a child in the near

future fulfilled their plan (compared to 27% of men) and 22% of those who had a probable intention of having a child did so (compared to 10% of men).

Table 2: Childbearing intentions, proportion of those having a child within the 3-year period and the rate of realisation of initial intention, by gender, Czech Republic (in %)

Short-term childbearing intention 2005	Men			Women			Overall rate of realisation
	Distribution 2005	Had a child within 3 years	Rate of realisation	Distribution 2005	Had a child within 3 years	Rate of realisation	
Definitely yes	6.4	26.7	26.7	12.1	44.9	44.9	38.8
Probably yes	17.3	9.9	9.9	12.7	21.5	21.5	15.0
Probably no	24.5	7.0	93.0	18.2	7.5	92.5	92.8
Definitely no	50.7	3.1	96.9	52.4	4.7	95.3	96.1
Cannot have (more) children	1.0	28.6	x	4.6	0.0	x	x
Total	100.0	7.0	x	100.0	12.1	x	x

Note: N = 698 men and 735 women aged 18-45 years in 2005. Current pregnancies included in the % of births (realisation of positive intention).

Source: GGS 2005 and 2008, panel data

The number of children that an individual currently has is an important factor in both measuring intentions and in predicting future realisation. The argumentation behind which is based on the qualitative disparity between the two different stages in the life course defined by parenthood – the intention of having and the timing of a first birth, thus the intention of entering into parenthood, can be seen as qualitatively different from the decision to have subsequent children.

When comparing short-term fertility intentions and the realisation thereof according to the number of a respondent's existing biological children, the idea of a two-child family being realised over the short period of time is a distinctive feature and is obvious from the research results (table 3):

Firstly, when comparing the intentions of respondents according to the number of children they had when first interviewed, those with one child declared a positive intention of having another within 3 years more frequently (more than one third) than childless respondents and respondents who already had 2 children. Families with more than two children make up a minority reproduction group (Rychtaříková 2003) in the Czech Republic; the probability of the birth of a third child has remained very low among Czech women for some time and continues to fall from one generation to the next (Pikálková 2003). Therefore, not surprisingly, respondents overwhelmingly declared zero short-term birth intentions in terms of having a 3rd child.

Secondly, short-term intentions of having a second child are more likely to be realised than those of having a first child, particularly when the intention is certain (half of the respondents who definitely intended to have a 2nd child did so within the 3-year period).

Table 3: Childbearing intentions, proportion of those having a child within the 3-year period and the rate of realisation of initial intention, by number of children in 2005, Czech Republic (in %)

Short-term childbearing intention 2005	Distribution 2005	Had a child within 3 years	Rate of realisation
Intention to have a 1st child			
Definitely yes	11.2	37.8	37.8
Probably yes	19.6	13.1	13.1
Probably no	26.5	5.7	94.3
Definitely no	41.3	6.6	93.4
Cannot have (more) children	1.4	11.1	x
Intention to have a 2nd child			
Definitely yes	15.7	50.0	50.0
Probably yes	21.4	23.3	23.3
Probably no	17.8	8.0	92.0
Definitely no	41.6	5.1	94.9
Cannot have (more) children	3.6	20.0	x
Intention to have a 3rd child			
Definitely yes	4.1	12.5	12.5
Probably yes	5.1	5.0	5.0
Probably no	15.4	6.7	93.3
Definitely no	71.3	1.4	98.6
Cannot have (more) children	4.1	0.0	x

Note: $N = 663$ childless respondents, $N = 281$ respondents with 1 child and $N = 390$ respondents with 2 children in 2005. Men and women aged 18-45 years in 2005. Current pregnancies included in the % of births (realisation of positive intention).

Source: GGS 2005 and 2008, panel data

In addition to short-term intentions, longer-term plans declared in 2005 might have been realised during the inter-survey period. Concerning those respondents who did not plan to have a child within the following three years, the additional question was asked as to whether they intended to have a child later. A combination of questions addressing the certainty of short-term intentions with a timing perspective was used for the creation of the variable used both in table 4 and for the regression model (part 4.2). The results show that those who planned to have a child later were very consistent in their subsequent behaviour and only 4% of men and women gave birth to a child during the period studied. This proportion is even smaller than the percentage of those who did not want to have a child at all in 2005 but finally had one (5% of men and 6% of woman).

Table 4: Childbearing intentions according to certainty and timing, proportion of those having a child within the 3-year period, Czech Republic (in %)

Childbirth intention in 2005 (intention within 3 years)	Men		Women	
	Distribution in 2005 (in %)	Had a child within 3 years	Distribution in 2005 (in %)	Had a child within 3 years
Definitely yes within 3 years	6.5	26.7	12.3	44.9
Probably yes within 3 years	17.5	9.9	12.8	21.5
Yes, but later	34.5	3.8	14.5	3.8
No	40.4	4.7	55.8	5.7
Cannot have (more) children	1.0	28.6	4.7	2.9
Total	100.0	7.0	100.0	12.1

Note: $N = 690$ men and 726 women aged 18-45 years in 2005. Current pregnancies included in the % of births (children within three years).

Source: GGS 2005 and 2008, panel data

4.2 The realisation of childbearing intentions and intervening factors

The author has shown that a considerable proportion of men and women who initially declared the intention of having a child in the near future did not do so in the given time period. Several factors could explain why those intentions remained unrealised e.g. the revision of intentions over the course of time, highlighted e.g. by Smallwood and Jefferies (2003) or Monnier (1987), as a result of changes in an individual's private life, personal experiences or societal changes.

Moreover, the same set of factors – demographic and social criteria and life course events – could lead to a change in timing (non-realised births could be postponed) or total rejection.

Therefore in the next part of the study, the author proposes to analyse to what extent demographic and selected socio-economic criteria influence childbirth and the role played by childbearing intentions and to outline which characteristics are strongest in influencing eventual realisation. Table 5 reveals probability ratios of having a (another) child as estimated by logistic regression models. The first model includes the fertility intentions variable only. Subsequent models control for the effects of relevant background variables: model 2 controls for selected demographic variables only and model 3 controls for both demographic and socio-economic variables. The final model (model 4) contains all the afore-mentioned variables.

The main background factors predicting who will actually have a (another) birth in the following three-year period consist of partnership status and the number of children the respondent already has. Interestingly, employment status and level of education do not play a significant role.

Results show that partnership status is the most relevant life course variable influencing childbearing. This finding is consistent with other longitudinal studies (e.g. Toulemon and Testa 2006 for childless people in France; Kapitány and Spéder 2008 using the comparable data source of the Hungarian GGS; Philipov and Testa 2008 using the Bulgarian GGS) as well as with previous findings concerning declared required conditions for positive childbearing intentions in the Czech Republic. Great emphasis is placed on the importance of a suitable partner including his employment and health status among other factors associated with the childbearing decision-making process. Moreover, the importance of having a suitable partner is more stressed by certain social groups than others, particularly by Czech women with primary education only and women still in education (Šťastná 2007).

A single person was shown to have the lowest chance of having a child during the following three years whereas married couples had the highest chance. The effect of having a partner but not being married to him/her is slightly lower for respondents living apart (LAT) from the partner than for those cohabiting, but the difference is negligible and the odds of their having a child is still substantially greater than that of a single person.

The static approach of the analysis led to certain limitations in the findings since the author had to work with a variable describing the partnership status of the respondent in 2005. Thus it was not possible to cover possible changes of partner and forms of partnership during the inter-survey period.

In step with the descriptive findings, the number of children a respondent has significantly determines the chances of having a (another) child in the given time period,

notably having two and more children significantly lowers the chances of realising the initial positive intention⁴.

Childbearing intentions appear to be a very significant covariate in terms of explaining the birth of a child during the inter-survey period; the highest coefficients can be seen in the intentions-only model (model 1). Even though coefficients characterising short-term intentions are lower in the full model (model 4), the chances of realising a declared certain positive intention remains very high compared to long-term plans and remains highly significant when controlling for other explanatory variables.

The results of model 4 (table 5) also indicate that childbearing intentions represent specific information explaining childbearing behaviour and have their own interpretative potential. This conclusion is based particularly on results which document that the effects of demographic and socio-economic variables do not vary substantially between the model that includes and that which excludes the intentions covariate. The two distinctive variations in the significance of the gender and age covariates are clearly mediated through different intentions in terms of timing – the youngest age group more frequently contains those who plan to have a child but later than within 3 years. As for gender, women often declared a firm short-term intention in contrast to men who tended to express longer-term intentions.

Table 5: Probability ratios concerning having a (another) child between 2005 and 2008 (inter-survey period), Czech Republic

		Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4
		Exp(B)	Exp(B)	Exp(B)	Exp(B)
Childbearing intention (ref. Wants a child later)	Definitely wants a child within 3 years	16.10 ***			5.46 ***
	Probably wants a child within 3 years	4.46 ***			2.11
	Wants a child later	1			1
Gender (ref. Male)	Male		1	1	1
	Female		2.41 ***	2.17 **	1.67
Age of respondent in 2005 (ref. 25-29)	Age 18-24		0.28 ***	0.39 *	0.51
	Age 25-29		1	1	1
	Age 30-34		0.56	0.56	0.55
	Age 35+		0.50	0.56	0.57
Number of children (ref. Childless)	0		1	1	1
	1		0.72	0.57	0.65
	2 and more		0.22 **	0.19 **	0.26 *
Partnership status (ref. No partner)	No partner		1	1	1
	LAT		3.00 **	3.40 **	3.26 **
	Cohabitation		5.13 ***	4.81 ***	3.60 **
	Married		11.64 ***	9.99 ***	6.22 ***
Education (ref. Upper secondary)	Basic/lower secondary			1.31	1.33
	Secondary/certificate			0.73	0.74
	Secondary/leaving exam			1	1
	Tertiary			1.29	1.39
Socio-economic status (ref. Employed)	Employed			1	1
	Unemployed			1.38	1.31
	Maternity / parental leave			1.76	1.76
	Student			0.99	1.76
	Not working			0.28	0.21
Constant		0,039 ***	0.059 ***	0.069 ***	0,04 ***
N		691	691	691	691

$p < 0.5$; ** $p < 0.01$; *** $p < 0.001$

Note: N = 691 men and women aged 18-45 years in 2005 who declared a positive intention of having a (another) child within the next three years or later. Dependent variable: realisation of the intention (having a child during the period between the two interviews or pregnancy at second interview).

Source: GGS 2005 and 2008, panel data

⁴ Note once more that only those respondents who declared an intention of having a (another) child within the following three years or later were included in this analysis. The author created the category “2 and more children” because of the very small number of observations in the initial “3 and more children” category.

4.3 Stability of intentions among those who did not have a child between 2005 and 2008

In the inter-survey period changes may well have occurred in the respondent's personal circumstances, life course or within the surrounding environment that will have an impact on his/her original intentions and will lead to a revision of his/her plans. Not only external factors influence the process of changing or redefining childbearing intentions; the individual might well modify his/her previously declared intention after discovering that his/her evaluation of the factors taken into account in the decision-making process was biased.

Therefore the author provides an overview of the stability of childbearing intentions for those respondents who did not experience childbirth between the two interviews. The study will investigate what happened to declared intentions during the period in which their realisation was expected and, in fact, for the majority of respondents, were also fulfilled (those who did not want to have more children).

Firstly, when one investigates positive short-term childbearing plans from 2005 that were not realised it is evident that a proportion of respondents had decided to postpone childbearing until later (16.9%) and a very significant number had abandoned their childbearing plan altogether (35.5%). 45% remained consistent and after three years declared once more the intention of having a child within the next 3 years.

Those who constructed their childbearing plans over the longer time period also remained relatively consistent in their attitudes and after 3 years once more declared their desire to have a child but later than within the next 3 years (43%). Almost one third of respondents had accelerated their plans and intended to have a child in the short-term. However once more, almost a quarter had abandoned their childbearing intentions.

The most consistent group of respondents contained those who had no future fertility plans only around 12% of whom subsequently considered having a (another) child now or later; more than 80% however remained negative in terms of future fertility plans.

Table 6: Stability of childbearing intentions among those who didn't experience childbirth between 2005 and 2008. Czech Republic (abs. and %)

Childbearing plan in 2005	Childbearing plan in 2008				Total
	Child within next 3 years (definitely + probably)	Child later	No child (neither within 3 years nor later)	Cannot have children	
Child within next 3 years (definitely + probably)	111 44.8	42 16.9	88 35.5	7 2.8	248 100.0
Child later	91 31.9	123 43.2	68 23.9	3 1.1	285 100.0
No child (neither within 3 years nor later)	43 7.0	29 4.7	504 82.1	38 6.2	614 100.0

N = 1147 men and women who did not experience childbirth between the two interviews and who, in 2005, declared they could have (in physiological terms) a child.

Chart 1 summarises the overall stability or redefinition of childbearing intentions among the sub-sample of men and women who did not have a child within the inter-survey period or a pregnancy at the second interview in 2008. The results show the obvious dominance of the confirmation of intentions, both positive and negative (zero), the latter being dominant. In terms of redefinition, positive childbearing intentions were more frequently abandoned (14%). Only 6% of those respondents who initially rejected having a child in the future subsequently expressed the desire to have a child.

confirmation	43.9%		32.0% (both short-term intentions 9.7%)
revision - lowering			13.6%
revision - increase			6.3%

Chart 1: Stability of childbearing intentions (in %)

Note: -... zero intention (intention not to have another child), +... intention to have a (another) child. $N = 1147$. 4.2% of the total comprises those who declared they could not have children in 2008. Including this number, the total sum of the bold percentages in the chart = 100%.

5. Conclusion and issues for ongoing research

In this paper the author studied to what extent childbearing intentions play a role in real behaviour. The intention to have a child appears to be an important covariate expressing the chances of giving birth during a defined period of time. The highest chances of realising positive fertility intentions pertain particularly to those who expressed a declared certain positive short-term intention. Even though intentions themselves affect the chances of having a child they represent a somewhat uncertain predictor of future fertility.

The analysis of longitudinal data documents a high level of consistency between zero fertility plans and subsequent behaviour. The highest proportion of “consistent” respondents consists of those who did not want and subsequently did not have any (additional) children. Mixed results were obtained concerning the predictive power of short-term fertility intentions resulting in an overestimation of the number of actual births. This overestimation could be affected both by postponement and by intervening factors impacting upon a respondent’s original plans. As fertility plans and their certainties vary according to parity, better predictive qualities were observed when the level of certainty of intention was highest.

As mentioned above, due to the limitations of the data set, the findings must be considered with a certain amount of caution due principally to the high level of panel attrition. Moreover, the small sample size prevented the author from performing a more stratified analysis. However, the author has attempted to test the potential for the selectivity effect in the data set and presents those results having a high level of significance. A certain limitation in the approach is the result of using time-constant covariates in the analysis. Therefore the next stage in the ongoing research will take the form of a dynamic approach that will allow the study of the effect of diverse changes during the inter-survey period. The author intends to focus particularly on changes in partnership and socio-economic status (position in the labour market).

A more dynamic approach will allow a more detailed analysis of those changes in a given respondent’s private and social lives and overall living conditions that lead to a change in his/her original plans concerning childbearing. The dynamic analysis of the status of the partnership would imply a control for those living as a couple but who separated or became widowed or for those who lived alone but started to live together with a partner during the inter-survey period (but before the potential conception of a child).

In addition, the labour market factor should be investigated in more detail so as to include questions concerning employment security since parenthood is, especially for women, perceived as having a negative influence on both one's occupational and financial conditions.

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