

# HUMBOLDT-UNIVERSITÄT ZU BERLIN

INSTITUT FÜR SOZIALWISSENSCHAFTEN  
MIKROSOZIOLOGIE  
DIPL. SOZ.-WISS. WIEBKE RÖSLER  
DIPL. SOZ.-WISS. STEFAN STUTH  
PROF. DR. HANS BERTRAM



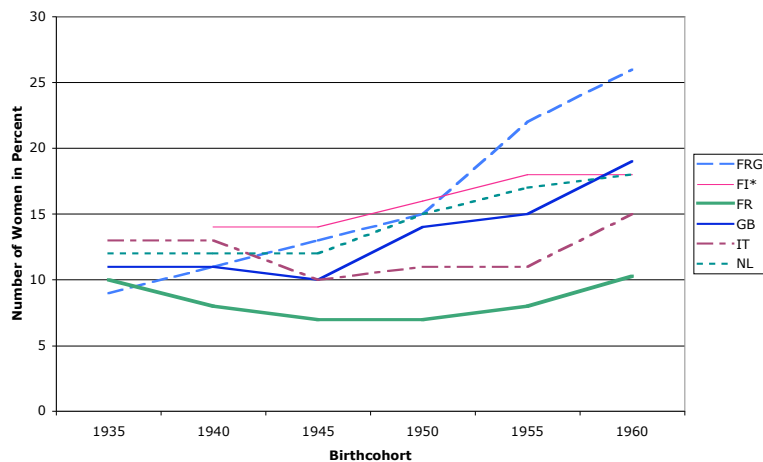
Paper for the European Population Conference in Liverpool (U.K.), 21 – 24 June 2006

## **Germany as an Example of the Significance of Labour and Preferences regarding Fertility**

German fertility trends are a good source of discussion, since they are extreme in every respect. Why is German fertility lower than that of other European countries? In order to discuss this question, we are going to stress the significance of labour and female preferences. As we see it, the importance of preferences is still widely ignored in the German fertility discussion, although there exists international evidence pointing to changes in the interrelationship between labour and fertility and preferences with respect to work and family. Our analysis uses data from the German micro-census, since it is the official census of one percent of the total population and therefore large enough to provide evidence concerning labour influence by single occupation. Now we first need to show where the main differences lie between Germany and other selected European countries.

The birth rate is determined by the number of women who decide to have children as well as by the number of children borne by these women. The steep increase of childlessness in Germany begins with the cohort born in 1950. Since the German census data doesn't go back any further than the cohort born in 1935, the official statistics show a constant increase in childlessness resulting in a much higher rate of childlessness in German women compared with other selected European countries (Figure 1).

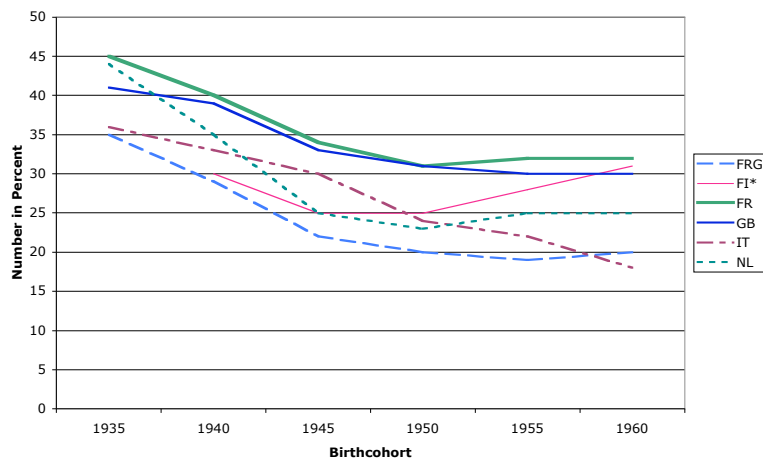
Figure 1: Childless women born between 1935 and 1960 in 6 EU countries, in per cent



Source: Eurostat, 2001, Europäische Sozialstatistik Bevölkerung 2001, Luxemburg; Data for France for birth cohort 1960 taken from: Daguet, Fabienne: Un siècle de fécondité française. Caractéristiques et évolution de la fécondité de 1901 à 1999, Insee Paris; Data for Germany for birth cohort 1960 taken from: Birg, Herwig, 2001: Die demographische Zeitenwende. pp. 77

With this in mind, the more important factor influencing the birth rate level is the number of women who have children. The number of German women giving birth to three or more children is lower than in other European countries. Using data from Eurostat, we can show that the percentage of families with three and more children already stopped declining with the cohort of women born in 1945. Around one of five German women born between 1945 and '60 decided to have three children or more, while in France every third woman did (Figure 2).

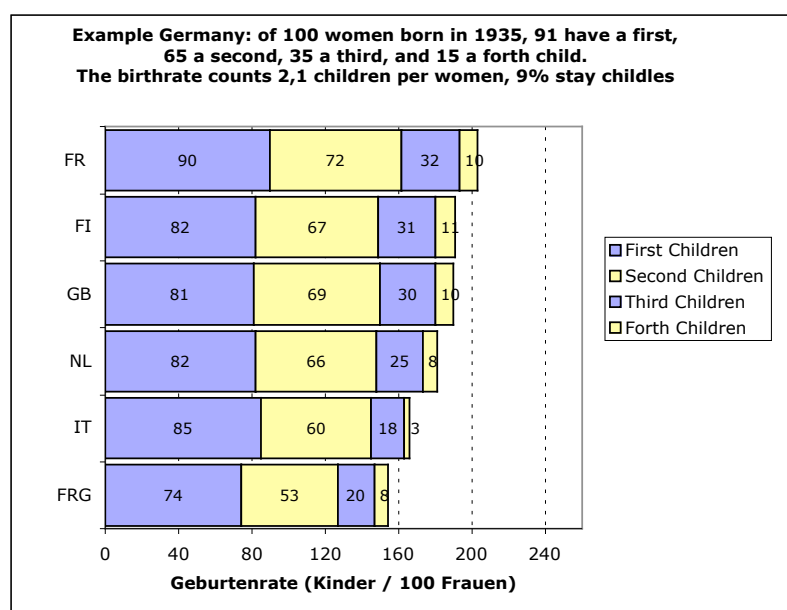
Figure 2: Number of women with 3 or more children for the birth cohorts 1935 to 1960 in 6 EU countries, in per cent



Source: Eurostat, 2001, Europäische Sozialstatistik Bevölkerung 2001, Luxemburg; Data for France for birth cohort 1960 taken from: Daguët, Fabienne: Un siècle de fécondité française. Caractéristiques et évolution de la fécondité de 1901 à 1999, Insee Paris; Data for Germany for birth cohort 1960 taken from: Birg, Herwig, 2001: Die demographische Zeitenwende. pp. 77

It is often assumed (e.g. Rürup: 2005) that the high rate of childlessness in Germany is the reason for the low birth rate of approximately 1.5 children per women. Breaking down birth rate in terms of first, second, third and fourth children shows that replacement level fertility in France is sustained by very large first and second order fertility rates and likewise large fertility rates of orders three and higher. In Finland and Great Britain there are proportionally as many third and higher order births as in France, but there are fewer first and second order births. As a result, the total fertility rate is 0.2 children per women under replacement. In Germany, birth rates of all orders are low, but while the difference between Germany and France is just 18 children per 100 women due to a higher rate of childlessness, the differences on account of lower second, third and fourth order births are 35 children per 100 women taken together. In short, the gap between France and Germany is high primarily because of the fewer women deciding to have two or more children, and not because of a higher rate of German childlessness.

Figure 3: Total Fertility Rates of Women born in 1960 by Birth Order, selected European countries

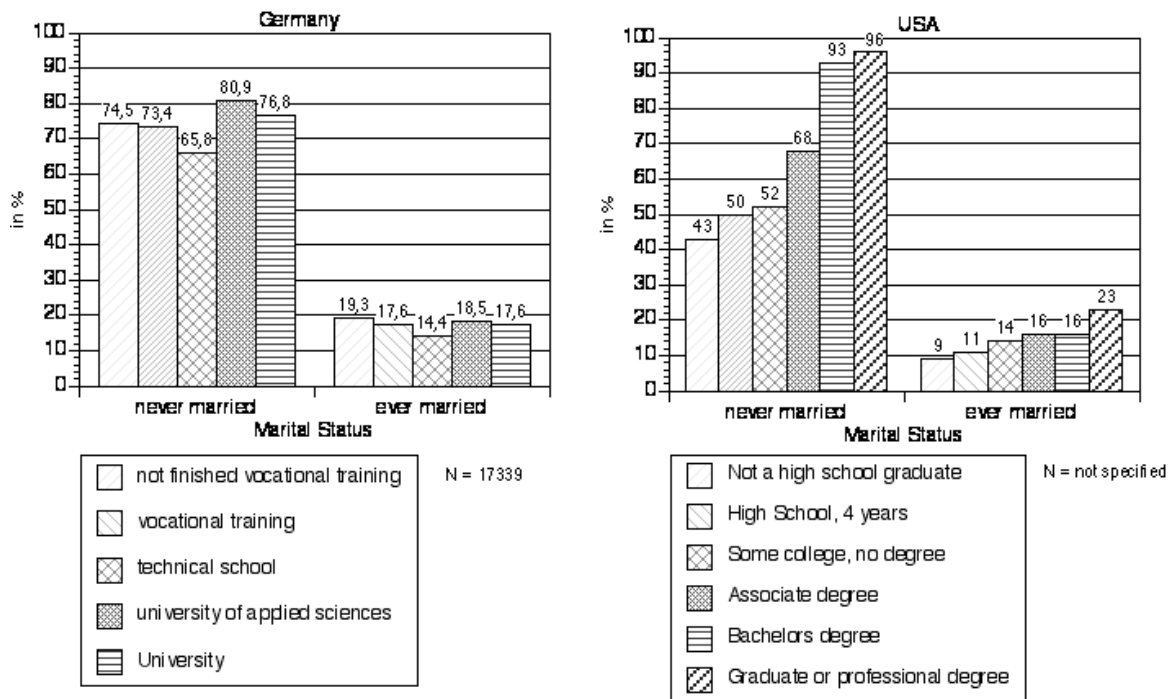


Sources: Eurostat, 2001, Europäische Sozialstatistik Bevölkerung 2001, Luxemburg; The data for France is taken from: Daguët, Fabienne: Un siècle de fécondité française. Caractéristiques et évolution de la fécondité de 1901 à 1999, Insee Paris

But why is German fertility lower than that of other European countries? Castles (2002) shows that the first aspect of fertility revealed by a cross-national analysis is the introduction of clinical and supply methods of contraception, which have been available in most European countries since the late 1960s. As far as we are concerned, the fact that women born in 1945 or later have the power to control their own fertility does not explain why just one in every five women decides to have three children or more in Germany, while in France every third woman does.

A second aspect of fertility change revealed by the cross-national analysis concerns labour: While fertility rates were likely to be highest where women's participation in the labour force was low, this is no longer the case at the macro level. Esping-Andersen (1999), Castles (1998), and the OECD (1999) have all identified a similar reversal in the sphere of labour market behaviour, with high levels of fertility occurring precisely in those countries where women's labour force participation is greatest (Castles: 2002). The patterns of traditional factors (Catholicism, total divorce rate, service employment, female employment, female labour force, female tertiary education and female unemployment) that influence levels of fertility have complete reversal. As Castles mentions, this points to a world in which fertility is now associated with weak family-oriented values and high levels of female employment opportunity. Our analysis shows that in Germany the decision to have a child is still associated with the decision to marry. For this reason, we cannot find a link between weak family-oriented values and high fertility. The same is also true of the United States. Exploring childlessness in 1998 the American Bureau of Census identified family status as the most important factor (Bachu: 1999). Whereas in the United States, childlessness also increases with higher educational attainment, this is not the case in Germany as long as the marital status (never married or married at least once) variable is controlled: Women with university degrees who were married at least once or were never married are not found to be more frequently childless compared to women with lower educational attainment and the same marital status (Figure 4).

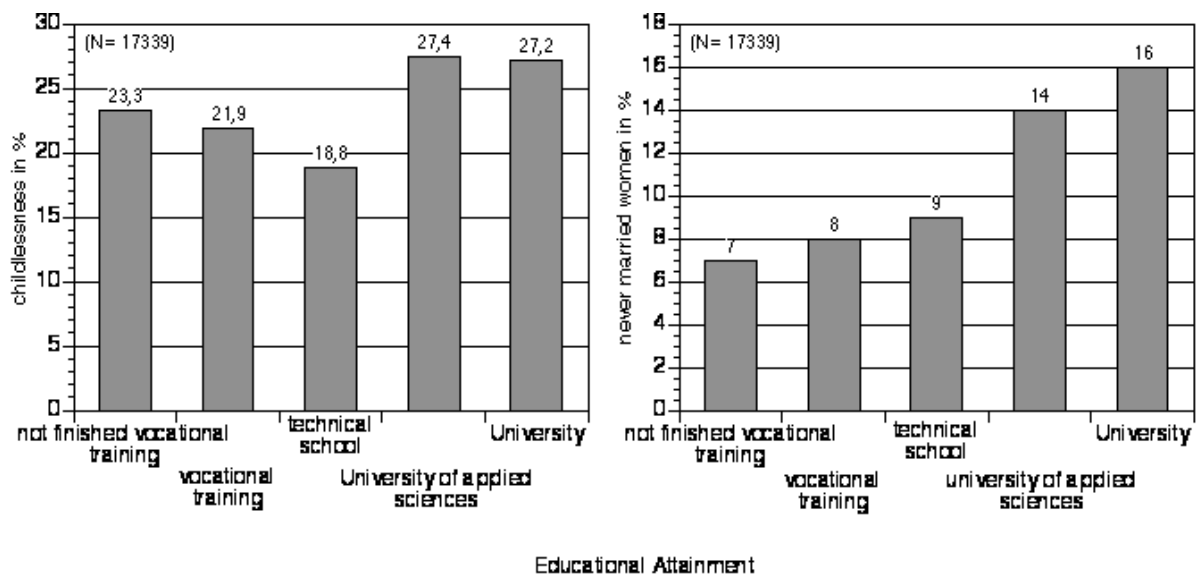
Figure 4: Childlessness among Women aged 40 to 44 Years by Marital Status and Educational Attainment in Germany and the USA, 1998



Sources: Micro-census 1998: Own calculations; U.S. Census Bureau: Calculations by A. Bachu

The higher rate of childlessness of persons with higher school degrees in Germany can be seen against the greater percentage of them who are unmarried (Figure 5).

Figure 5: Childless women aged 40 to 44 years who were never married, by educational attainment in Germany, 1998



Sources: Micro-census 1998: Own calculations

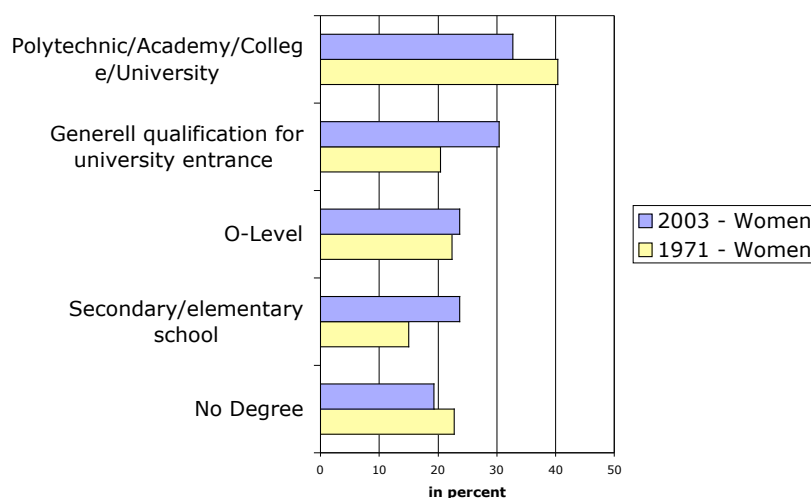
From an analysis of our results, there appears to be no link between weak family-oriented values and high fertility in Germany. Childlessness is much higher among persons who were never married. Also, the higher the educational status, the higher is the percentage of persons that were never married, which leads to a higher rate of childlessness among persons with more advanced degrees. The standard assumption underpinning the higher rate of childlessness among women with more advanced school degrees is that more work means less fertility. Castles (2002), however argues that the greater the availability of women's work (more female labour force participation, female employment, service jobs), the easier it is for women to get that work (higher levels of female employment), and the less forceful are the voices telling women that work and family are incompatible (low salience of traditional values), the more likely it is that the birth rate will be relatively high. Following these arguments, would lead us to the conclusion that the number of female job opportunities in Germany is lower than in other European countries. This would then explain the higher numbers of women who decide not to marry and have children as well as the very small number giving birth to two or more children, especially among women with more advanced degrees and better job opportunities. Castles (2002) assumes that the reversal of the patterns of traditional factors, which can be found at a national level as mentioned above, can only be explained by a change in preferences among women. "In a world where women's work is an economic necessity and a cultural preference, factors promoting women's work are simultaneously and necessarily factors promoting higher national levels of fertility" (Castles, 2002: pp. 26). From this argument it follows that the gap between women's preferences and the reality of the labour market is greater in Germany. But what are women's preferences?

Preference theory is a theory for explaining and predicting women's choices between employment and the home, which was developed by C. Hakim (2000), who teaches at the London School of Economics. According to Hakim women choose three different lifestyles: home-centred, work-centred or adaptive. "Adaptive women prefer to combine employment and family work without giving a fixed priority to either (...) Adaptive women are generally the largest group among women, and will be found in substantial numbers in most occupations. Certain occupations, such as school-teaching, are attractive to women because they facilitate an even work-family balance" (Hakim, 2003: pp. 6). Using census data from Sweden, Neyer (2005) shows that there is a significant relationship between childlessness and area of

education. Women with an educational background in teaching or social services have a lower rate of childlessness than women in administrative jobs or in the financial sector. By using data from the micro-census, we can show that women working in the educational or teaching sector have more children in Germany, compared with women with office jobs, in administration or for example in management positions. Based on Neyer (2005), we assume two effects are at work. First of all, women who know that they want to have children decide early for an occupation, which offers them sufficient opportunities to combine work with a family. Besides this there are also adaptive effects: Women in occupations in which a combination of work and family is difficult, scale down or set aside their plans for a family.

According to Hakim, the second type of lifestyle, work-centred women, “are in a minority, despite the massive influx of women into higher education and into professional and managerial occupations in the last three decades” (Hakim 2003: pp.6). In Germany, using data from the micro-census, we can show that the quota of childlessness in women with academic degrees has decreased over the last three decades. As a result, we can conclude that the increasing numbers in higher education does not lead to a higher number of work-centred women, but instead to an increase in adaptive women wanting to combine work with a family.

Figure 6: Women aged 40 to 44 without children in their family by highest school degree, West Germany 1971 & 2003



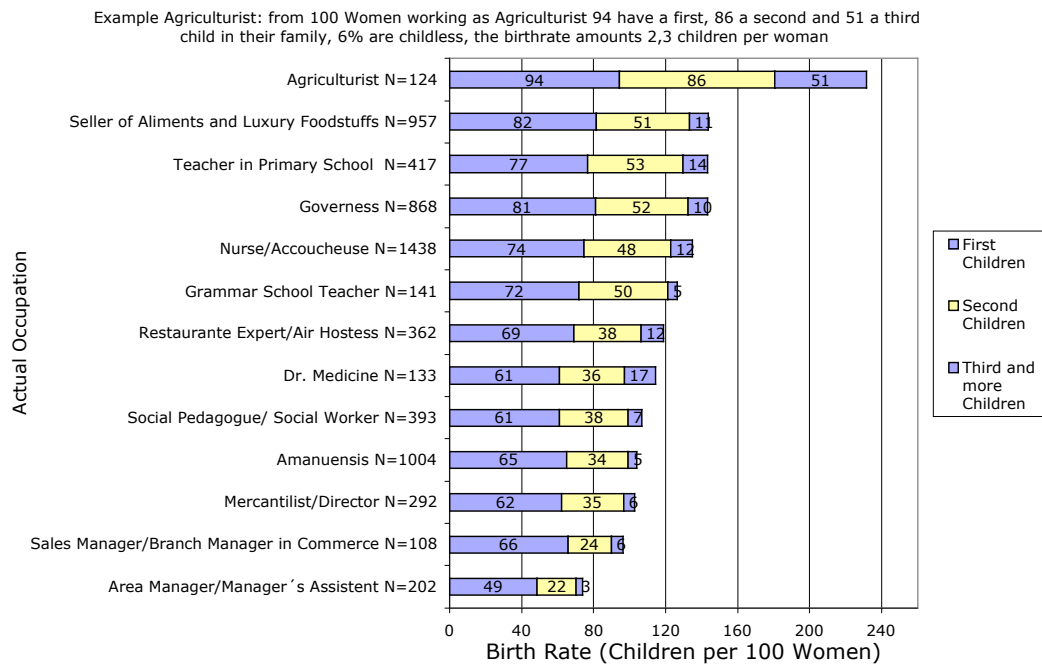
Sources: Special Analysis of the 1971 Micro-census by ZUMA, Mannheim; and Analysis of the 2003 Micro-census by the Statistical Office, Wiesbaden

The third group, home-centred women, “is also a minority, and a relatively invisible one, given the current political and media focus on working women and high achievers” (Hakim: 2003).

Summing up, we have seen that in Germany, whilst most women are adaptive, fertility is higher under labour conditions, which allow women to combine work with a family. This is true not only for jobs in the teaching and social sector, but also for more traditional jobs such as agriculturist. Among the latter, just 6 percent of women are childless and every second woman has given birth to three and more children. We should keep in mind here Lesthaeghe and Wilson (1986)’s hypothesis that the speed of the fertility transition depends on the nature of the economic circumstances of the household. They suggest, that, “where the prevailing situation is one of dependence on a familial, labour-intensive mode of production – as is characteristic among farmers, tenants and owners, and workers in cottage industries – the onset of a fertility transition will be late or the pace of the transition will be slow” (Laesthaeghe/Wilson, 1986: pp. 273). Nevertheless, especially for men, we can show that men who have more traditional jobs such as carpenter and bricklayer father more children and are more likely to live with a partner than those in “modern jobs” such as computing or PR, where we tend to find more of a “modern celibacy” (Figure 8). However, we can also find people with more advanced degrees with higher levels of fertility: 17 percent of female doctors of medicine have three or more children- much more than is usually the case (only 5 percent of grammar school teachers do). On the other hand, almost 40 percent of the same group remain childless, which gives credence to the theory that spending longer in education and delaying childbearing lowers fertility (Figure 7). At the same time however, the large number of women in medicine with three or more children shows that despite a long education, which is the basis of our “knowledge-based society”, it is still possible to have both children and high job aspirations.

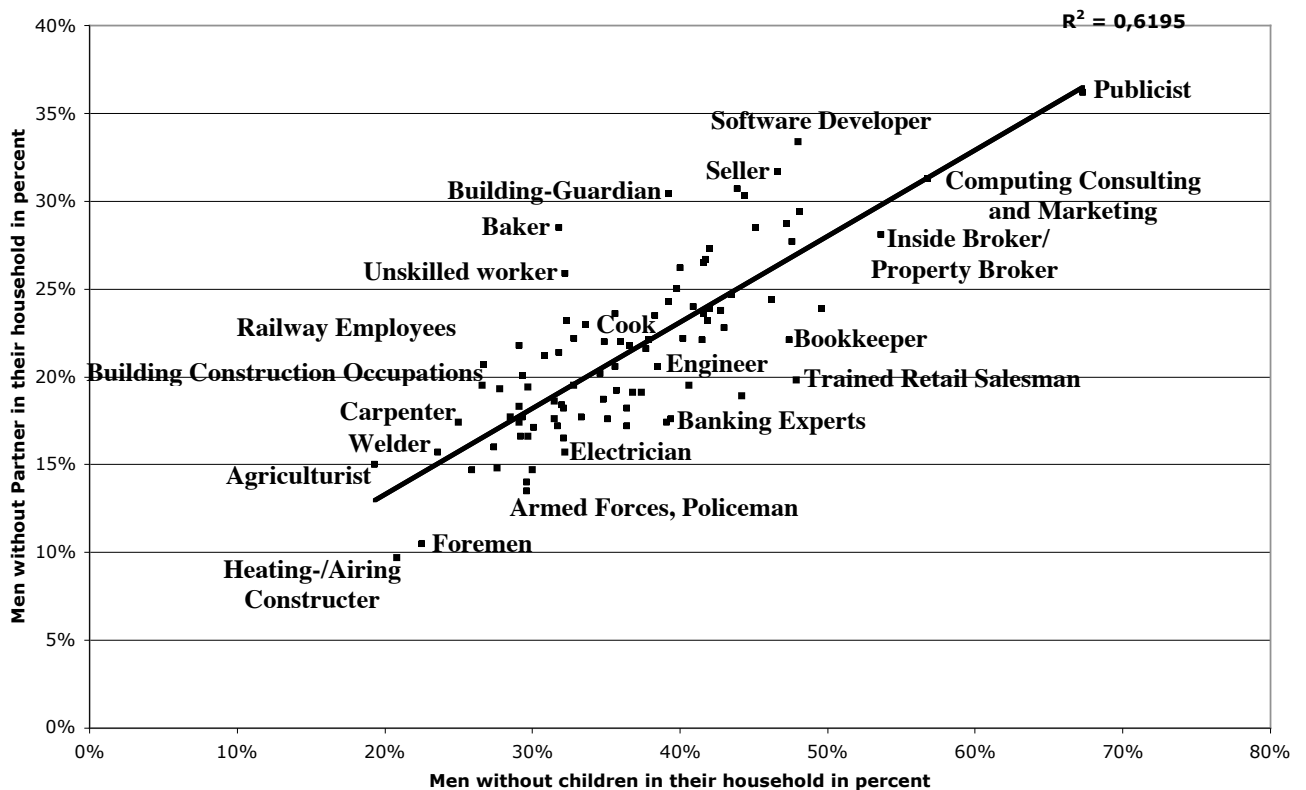


Figure 7: 35- to 45 year old women with children in their families by birth order according to selected occupation



Source: Micro-census 2000, own calculations

Figure 8: 35- to 45- year old men without children and without a partner, by selected occupation



Source: Micro-census 2000, own calculations

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