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Extramarital births in Poland and social policy

Extramarital birth share in Poland almost tripled between 1988 and 2003. The highest share is seen not only in Polish big cities (according to expectation based on 2nd Demographic Transition unmarried fertility should be mainly related to aware choice made in condition of economic prosperity – in Polish case living in big city is closely related with better education and relatively low unemployment) but in poor, affected with high unemployment regions. In our opinion poverty is the most important reason why young unemployed people prefer to live in cohabiting and especially LAT unions and stay to live in the unions despite their child delivery.

Our study will be based on theoretical survey of existing body of research, data from population register on fertility (esp. extramarital fertility) and from census 2002 (data on cohabitation and marital status of alone parenting mothers).

According to statistical data on main sources of maintenance of unmarried mothers proportion of women living on unemployment benefits and other social benefits is growing. We try to prove that in the Polish case the economic deprivation is more important than mental changes and that 2DT is still not right to explain changes in extramarital fertility in Poland. The better way to understand extramarital fertility evolution is to observe two spheres: labour market and social policy measures. Increase in extramarital proportion was closely – but with delay – related to changes in unemployment rate (esp. for people aged 24 and less), so we can assume that it is result of increase in uncertainty. Social policy was changed in Poland in 1990s several times and each new amendments to the social benefits programs limited the number of people authorized to obtain support. Increase in extramarital fertility may be treated as result of individual level “preventive measure” against the mentioned above restrictions.