

# The Ideal Size of the Family in Today's Societies of Southern Europe: Determinants and Constraints

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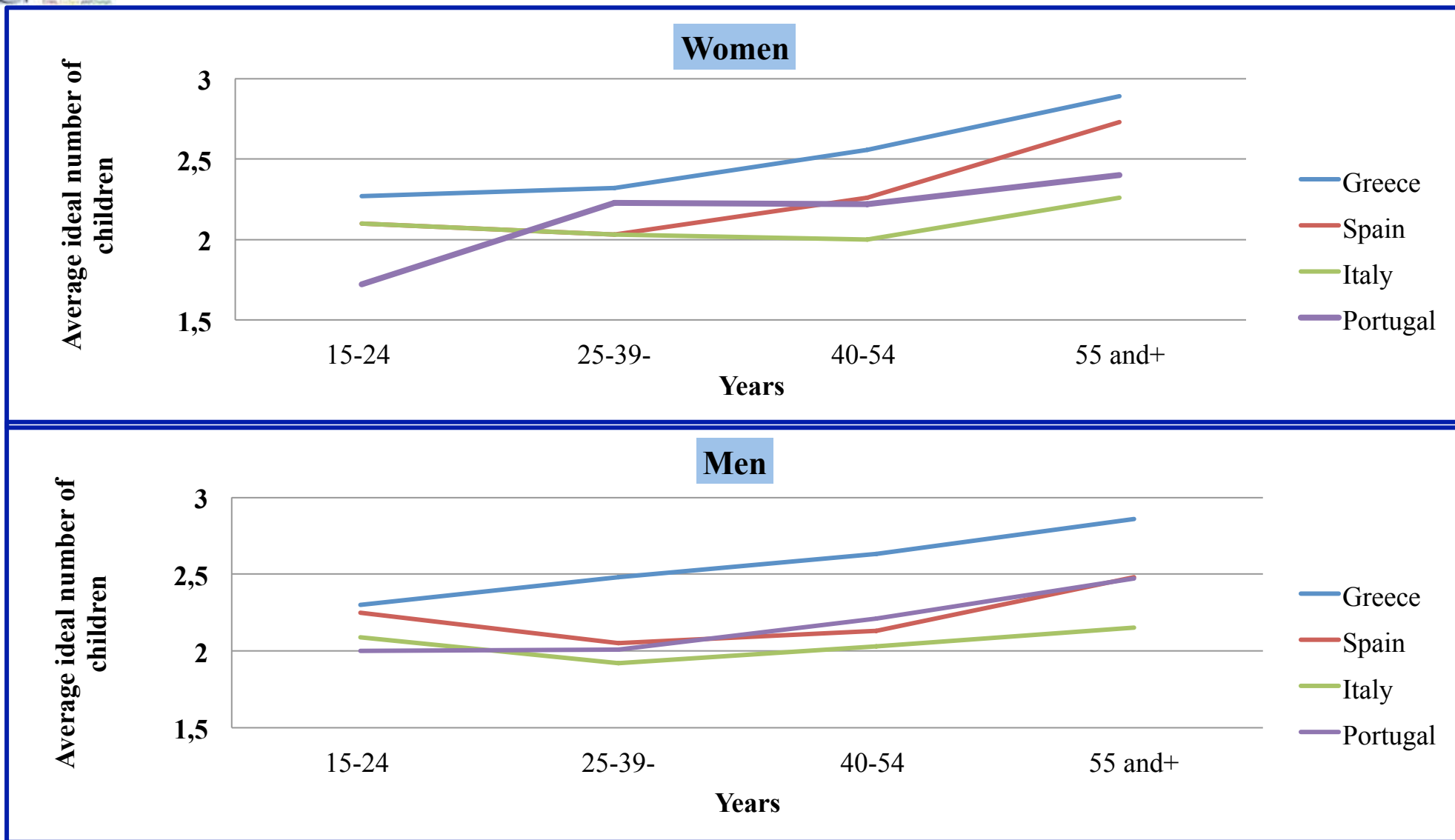
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The organization of this presentation follows the scheme:

- Overview of the ideal number of children in Portugal, Spain, Italy and Greece;
- Main goal, methods, hypotheses and the used variables;
- The results of the univariate analysis and the multinomial model adjusted;
- And, finally, the concluding remarks.

# Crisis, Critique and change.



Source: Own elaboration with data from the Eurobarometer 2006

Since fertility ideals are part of the reproductive decision-making process (Hin et al. 2011), understanding people's preferences about ideal family size can throw light about future fertility levels (Testa & Grilli 2006; Van Peer 2002; Goldstein et al. 2003; Testa 2010).

The ideal number reflects normative pressures and contexts (Buber & Fliegenschnee 2011; Hagewen & Morgan 2005; Newman et al. 2005; Ajzen & Fishbein 2005; Berrington 2004; Hin et al. 2011) are relatively stable, but may change over time and experience readjustments - usually downward - according changes in the individual's life course and circumstances (Liefbroer 2009; Regnier-Loilier 2006; Testa 2012a; Van Peer 2002; Weinstein 1980).

Age (Liefbroer 2009, Berrington 2004; Van Peer 2002) , partnership (Adsera 2006; Lim 2002; Sobotka 2008), education (McDonald 2008; Testa 2012b), religiousness (Adsera 2006; Merz & Liefbroer 2010) and gender relationships have also been highlighted as an important element in reproductive decisions (Morgan & Rackin 2010; Van Peer 2002).

**Main goal:** investigate the profile of those people who are more likely to deviate from the standard of two-child, for an ideal number of children **lower than two** and **higher than two**, in the Southern European Countries.

**Methodology:** Multinomial Regression Model.

**Data:** Eurobarometer– 2006.

## Adjustment of the Multinomial Regression Model with **Response variable** defined as:

- 0** – ideal number of children **equal** two (reference);
- 1** – ideal number of children **lower** than two (“lower ideals”);
- 2** – ideal number of children **more** than two (“higher ideals”).

**Sample:** 3689 men and women aged from 15 years old, residents in Portugal (919), Spain (916), Italy (874) and Greece (980).

## Research Hypotheses

- **Hypothesis 1** – the ideal number of children increases with age.
- **Hypothesis 2** – **higher education** is negatively correlated with higher ideals.
- **Hypothesis 3** – the lack of the **conjugal ties** are negatively correlated with the higher ideals.
- **Hypothesis 4** – **women** are more likely to have lower ideals.
- **Hypothesis 5** – a **higher level of religiosity** is positively related with higher ideals and less religious people related with lower ideal family sizes.



# The explanatory variables used were

Variables	Categories
<b>Country</b>	1:Portugal (ref); 2:Italy; 3:Greece; 4:Spain;
<b>Gender</b>	1:Male; 2: Female
<b>Religion</b>	1:Less (about each 2 or 3 month to never); 2: More (at least once a month).
<b>Marital status</b>	1:Married; 2: Unmarried (single, separated/divorced and cohabiting); 3:widowers
<b>Education</b>	1: Without higher education; 2: higher education (completed or in progress)
<b>Age</b>	1: 15-24 Years; 2: 25-39 Years; 3: 40-54 Years; 4:55 Years or above

- **Religion level:** using the survey question - Apart from weddings or funerals, about how often do you attend religious services?
- **Education level:** the highest level of education successfully completed.



## Odds Ratio, Confidence intervals and *p-values* of Univariate Analysis

Ideal =2 (ref.)		Ideal < 2			Ideal >2		
Variables	Categories	OR	CI <sub>95%</sub>	<i>p-value</i>	OR	CI <sub>95%</sub>	<i>p-value</i>
Country	Italy vs Portugal	1,38	1,06; 1,79	0,13*	0,82	0,65; 1,02	0,077*
	Greece vs Portugal	0,47	0,33; 0,66	<0,001***	2,17	1,78; 2,64	<0,001***
	Spain vs Portugal	1,00	0,76; 1,33	0,988	1,34	1,09; 1,65	0,005**
Gender	Female vs Male	1,37	1,11; 1,69	0,003**	1,28	1,10; 1,48	0,001**
Religiosity Level	More vs Less	1,10	0,89; 1,36	0,408	0,53	0,45; 0,62	<0,001***
Marital Status	Unmarried vs Married	1,86	1,50; 2,30	<0,001***	0,63	0,53; 0,75	<0,001***
	Widowers vs Married	1,35	0,94; 1,94	0,104	1,40	1,12; 1,76	0,003**
Education	With vs without higher education	1,53	1,24; 1,88	<0,001***	0,75	0,64; 0,87	<0,001***
Age	25-39 Years vs 15-24 Years	1,17	0,84; 1,63	0,333	1,04	0,80; 1,37	0,731
	40-54 Years vs 15-24 Years	0,99	0,71; 1,40	0,974	1,28	0,98; 1,67	0,071*
	55 or + Years vs 15-24 Years	0,86	0,62; 1,20	0,376	2,35	1,84; 3,01	<0,001***

## Coefficients, standard deviation and p-values from Multinomial model adjusted

Ideal = 2 (ref)	Ideal < 2			Ideal > 2		
<i>Variables</i>	<b>Coef.</b>	<b>SD</b>	<i>p-value</i>	<b>Coef.</b>	<b>SD</b>	<i>p-value</i>
<b>Intercept</b>	-2.346	0,338	<0,001***	-1.629	0,348	<0,001***
<b>Age</b>						
25-54 vs 15-24	0,294	0,344	0,393	0,883	0,353	0,012*
55+ vs 15-24	0,235	0,352	0,504	1,342	0,50	0,001***
<b>Gender</b>						
Female vs Male	0,306	0,114	0,007**	0,168	0,081	0,039*
<b>Country</b>						
Greece vs Portugal/Italy	-0,976	0,165	<0,001***	0,906	0,090	<0,001***
Spain vs Portugal/Italy	-0,136	0,130	0,295	0,524	0,098	<0,001***
<b>Religiosity level</b>						
More vs Less	-0,128	0,337	0,704	0,446	0,350	0,202
<b>Education</b>						
With vs without higher educ.	0,762	0,171	<0,001***	-0,055	0,122	0,654
<b>Marital Status</b>						
Unmarried vs Married	0,975	0,164	<0,001***	-0,374	0,133	0,005**
Widow vs Married	0,591	0,219	0,007*	-0,078	0,136	0,567
higher educ*Unmarried	-0,585	0,238	0,014*	0,336	0,197	0,089
higher educ*Unmarried	-1,113	0,673	0,098	-0,410	0,423	0,332
25-54*Less religious	0,183	0,380	0,631	-1,056	0,370	0,004**
55 or +*Less religious	0,357	0,393	0,363	-0,896	0,369	0,015*

\*significance at 10% level, \*\*significance at 5% level, \*\*\*significance at 1% level

## Multinomial Model

Odds Ratio, Confidence Intervals and *p-values* of variables without interactions

Variables	Categories	OR	CI <sub>95%</sub>
<b>Ideal &lt; 2</b>			
Gender	<b>Women vs Men</b>	1,4	1,1; 1,7
Country	<b>Portugal and Italy vs Greece</b>	2,7	1,9; 3,7
	<b>Portugal and Italy vs Spain</b>	1,1	0,9; 1,5
<b>Ideal &gt;2</b>			
Gender	<b>Women vs Men</b>	1,2	1,0; 1,4
Country	<b>Portugal and Italy vs Greece</b>	2,5	2,1; 2,9
	<b>Portugal and Italy vs Spain</b>	1,7	1,4; 2,1

Odds Ratio, Confidence Intervals and *p-values* of interaction **Education Level\*Marital**

		Categories	OR	CI <sub>95%</sub>
Ideal < 2	Among those <b>without higher education</b>	Unmarried vs Married	2,7	1,9; 3,7
		Widowers vs Married	1,8	1,2; 2,8
	Among those with higher education	Unmarried vs Married	1,5	1,0; 2,1
		Higher education vs without higher education	2,1	1,5; 3,0
Ideal >2	Among those <b>without higher education</b>	Married vs Unmarried	1,4	1,1; 1,9

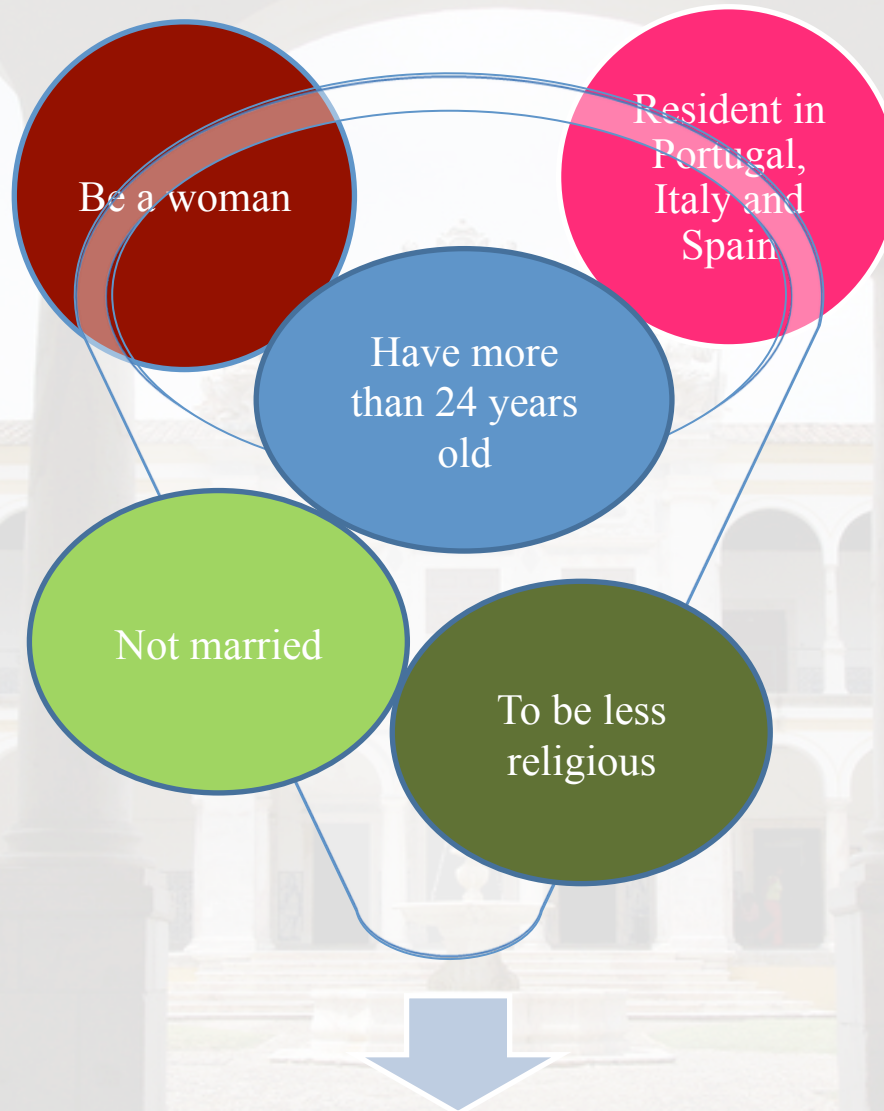
- ◆ Among those **without higher education**: Unmarried and Widowers are more likely to have below-replacement family size ideals (<2); while Married are more likely to have an ideal higher than 2.
- ◆ **Among married people**, those with higher education are more likely to have an ideal<2;
- ◆ **Unmarried**, regardless of the educational level, are more likely to have an ideal <2; and more **unlikely** to have ideals >2.



Odds Ratio, Confidence Intervals and *p-values* of interaction Age\*Religious level

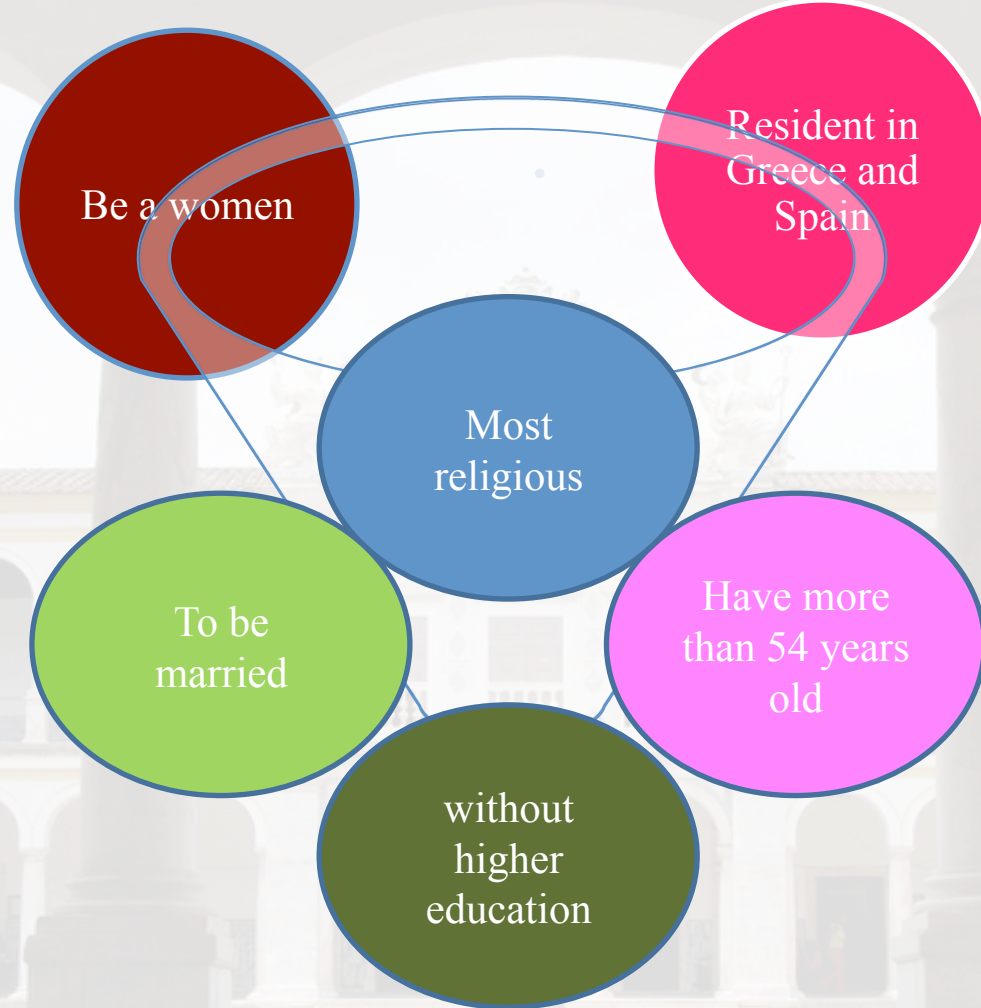
		Categories	OR	CI <sub>95%</sub>
Ideal < 2	Among those less religious	25-54 years vs <25	1,6	1,1; 2,4
		55 or + years vs <25	1,8	1,1; 2,9
Ideal > 2	Among those more religious	25-54 years vs <25	2,4	1,2; 4,8
		55 or + years vs <25	3,8	1,9; 7,6
	Among those less religious	55 or + years vs <25	1,6	1,1; 2,3

- ◆ Among the **less religious**, people aged 55 or above are more likely to deviate the two-child norm; while people under 25 years old are more **linked** with an ideal equal 2;
- ◆ Among those **more religious**, people aged 55 or above (followed by those aged 25-54 years) are more likely to have ideals > 2;
- ◆ **An increase in the age** reveals a positive correlation with ideals > 2 for **more religious** people, but it makes those **less religious, more likely** to have an ideal < 2.



More likely to intend to have ideal lower than 2 children





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# Concluding Remarks

- ✓ Despite the norm of two-child family being present in all countries, the Spaniards showed more possibilities to deviate from this ideal for an ideal number of children lower or higher than two;
- ✓ Residents in **Italy and Portugal** are more likely to have an ideal **lower** than two; while the **Greeks** are **more** likely to have an ideal **higher** than two;
- ✓ Women, differently from men, demonstrated a greater chance of not being so attached to the two-child as the ideal family size. They revealed, specially, more possibilities to have **below-replacement family size ideals**.



## The importance of the family...

As the Southern European Countries are characterized by a high centrality of marriage with long-term commitments (Kohler, Billari and Ortega 2006), the achievement of a stable marital relationship continues to be an essential element for the fulfilment of reproductive plans (Maciel *et al.* 2013; Testa 2006) and for the configuration of the ideal family size.

Besides the lack of a suitable partner and the occurrence of marital disruptions are strong reasons for people don't perform their fertility desires (Berrington 2004, Maciel *et al.* 2012; Rackin & Morgan 2010; Testa 2006, 2007), our results suggest that people in this situation, are more likely to desire smaller families than those who still live in a stable marital relationship.

Even family background continues to be an essential element in reproductive behaviour, it is closely linked to the issue of education...

In addition to younger cohorts with higher education that results in a progressive delay of parenthood (Sobotka 2008), they have the greatest deficit of children in relation to their intentions (Morgan & Rackim 2010; Testa 2012a) and may scale down their initial desired family size (Van Peer 2002).

This may be due to the fact that ideals are often seen as an upper bound to be performed under optimal conditions (Sobotka 2009; Testa 2012a, 2012b; Testa and Grilli 2006; Westoff and Ryder 1977).

Therefore, unexpected constraints (such as difficulties in reconciling work and family life) can lead to the readjustment of ideals (Liefbroer 2009; Morgan & Rackim 2010; Regnier-Loilier 2006; Van Peer 2002; Weinstein 1980).

It is quite possible that people with higher education (and not only women as noted by Becker and Lewis 1973) tend to substitute the number of children by an increase in their quality.



## The importance of the religiosity....

Our analysis, in line with Adsera (2006), Westoff & Frejka (2007) and Testa (2010), suggests that the level of religiosity remains an important element in fertility decisions and in the definition of the ideal family size - although closely linked to age.

Among Southern European Countries, adults and those most aged, less religious, are more likely than younger generations, to opt for smaller families, while the more religious ones are more likely to opt for larger families.

## Changing generations behaviour...

The generations behaviour concerning the definition of the ideal family size seems to undergoing a gradual transformation over time, despite the two-child family continues to be the most frequent ideal.

Our results, as well as of Testa (2006; 2012a), show that large families are becoming a more frequent option for the oldest cohorts.

In this case, the age overlaps the level of religiosity, because, regardless religiosity, they are more likely to prefer broader families compared to the younger ones.

But, we should be kept in mind that at older ages, individuals could have adjusted their ideals in order to combine them with their own actual family size (Testa 2012a).



Thank you for your attention!  
Your comments and suggestions are  
welcome!

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