Introduction

The aim of this research is to gain insight into the stalling of the demographic transition in Sub-Saharan Africa, by analyzing the variation in desired and in excess fertility across and within four countries of the East-African Community: Kenya, Tanzania, Uganda and Rwanda.

Research questions

To what extent does the desired family size vary between countries, and between different communities within countries?

To what extent do socioeconomic and socio-cultural factors impact the change of desired family size in the selected countries?

Methodology

Data are derived from the latest Demographic and Health Surveys (DHS) of the selected countries.

Poisson regression is used to determine factors associated with the desired fertility at national level (1) and at community level (2).

Preliminary results

Woman’s educational level, that of her partner and wealth of the household are negatively associated with the desired family size, much more in Kenya than in Tanzania and Uganda. There is no relation in Rwanda. Having an independent income and partner’s occupation do not influence the preferences for children in any country.

Religion and number of siblings constitute two socio-cultural discriminators of intended family size only in Kenya and Tanzania: Muslims desire more children than Christians. Women born in smaller families prefer fewer children than their counterparts from larger families.

Higher educated groups show similar patterns regardless of their religious affiliation, but among lower status groups religion discriminates. Rural Muslims are more conservative than rural Christians.

Conclusion

Fertility differences are the largest in Kenya, suggesting that the demographic transition is more advanced: excess fertility appears mostly among lower social categories. The fertility transition is at the starting point in Tanzania: excess exists among higher social classes, not yet among lower status groups.

Rwanda and Uganda have higher excess fertility, but contrary to the other two countries, it is more spread in almost all categories of population. Education and not economic position shape excess fertility.