

Couple's Religious Composition and Family Dynamics: Religious Exogamy's Influence on Fertility, Division of Domestic Labor, and Income in Sweden, 2000-2017

Elis Carlberg Larsson¹, Vegard Fykse Skirbekk^{2,3} and Weiqian Xia^{4,5}

¹ Institute for Analytical Sociology, Linköping University

² Center for Fertility and Health, Norwegian Institute of Public Health

³ Columbia Aging Center, Columbia University

⁴ Department of Sociology, Stockholm University

⁵ Department of Social Sciences, Åbo Akademi University

This study investigates the impact of couples' religious compositions on various aspects of family life, using data from Swedish administrative records from 2000 to 2017. The study delves into three primary areas: family formation patterns, division of domestic labor, and income. In terms of family formation, the study finds that religious homogamy significantly influences marriage and divorce rates, as well as fertility behavior. Couples sharing the same religious affiliation are more likely to marry, less likely to divorce, and have more kids compared to fully secular couples. The results also suggest a more significant role of women's religious norms in influencing fertility decisions. Regarding the division of childcare, the results indicate a gendered imbalance in domestic labor, influenced by the couple's religious composition. It reveals that men's religious norms have a more substantial impact on the distribution of domestic labor. Secular couples show a smaller difference in domestic labor division, though women generally carry a larger share. However, further analyses show that income disparities, rather than religious composition, are the primary drivers of uneven childcare distribution. Lastly, we explore the relationship between couples' religious composition and income. It uncovers a wage premium for secular men who have religious partners, which seems to be driven by men's reduced involvement in domestic labor. This pattern is not mirrored for secular women with religious men. Overall, our study presents a nuanced understanding of how the religious composition of couples may influence key aspects of family life, revealing complex dynamics in family formation, domestic responsibilities, and economic outcomes.