

Changes of fertility plans in Austria due to the COVID-19 pandemic

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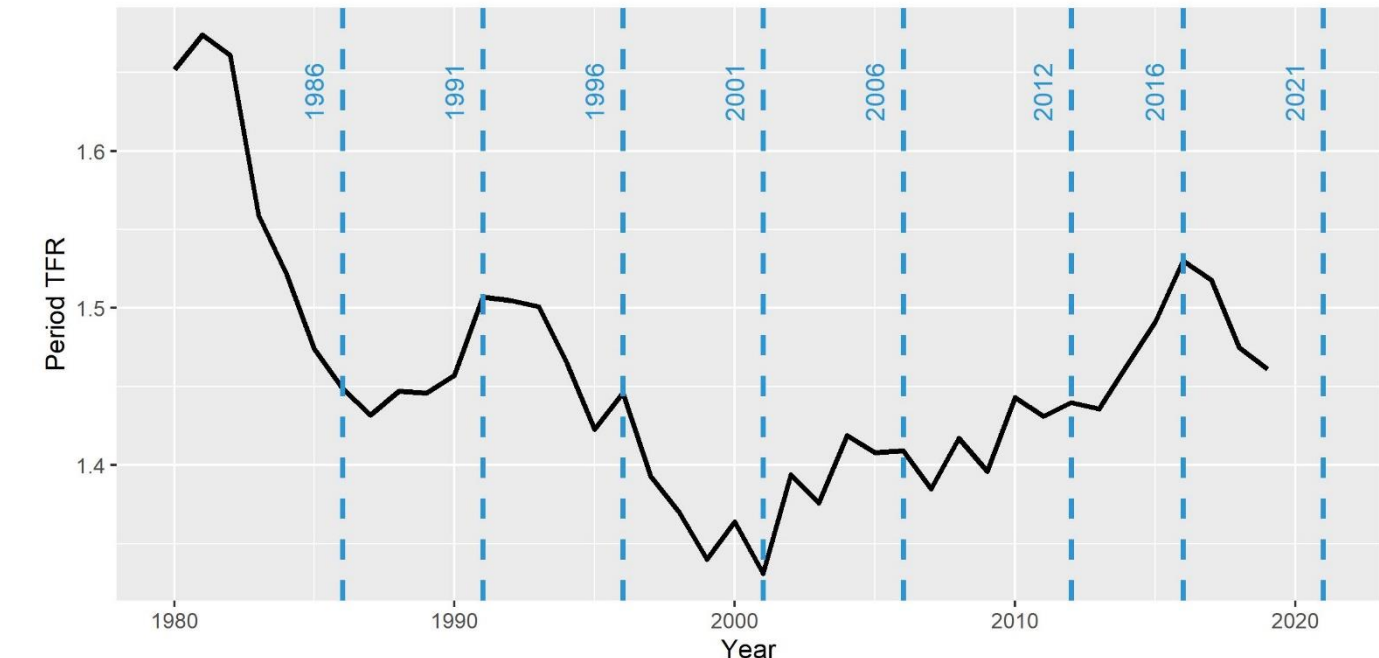
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Background

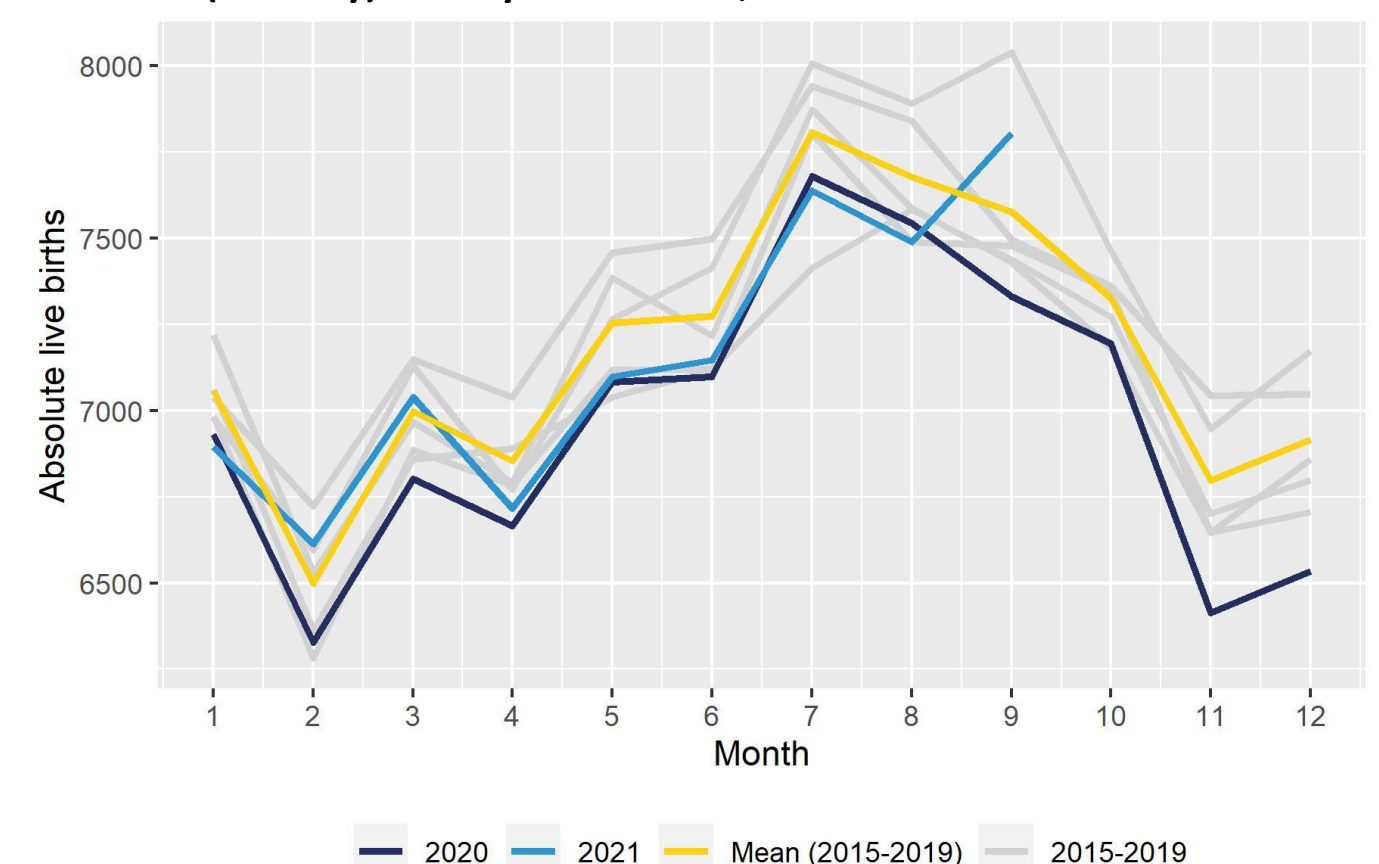
Austria is a low fertility country and has witnessed minor fluctuations in births since the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Since 1986, the Austrian Labor Force Survey (LFS) includes specific modules on ever-born children and fertility intentions of women every five years. The most recent data collection stems from the third quarter of 2021, which also captures the ideal number of children as well as possible impacts of COVID-19 on fertility intentions.

Period total fertility rate and the LFS survey years of the fertility module, Austria



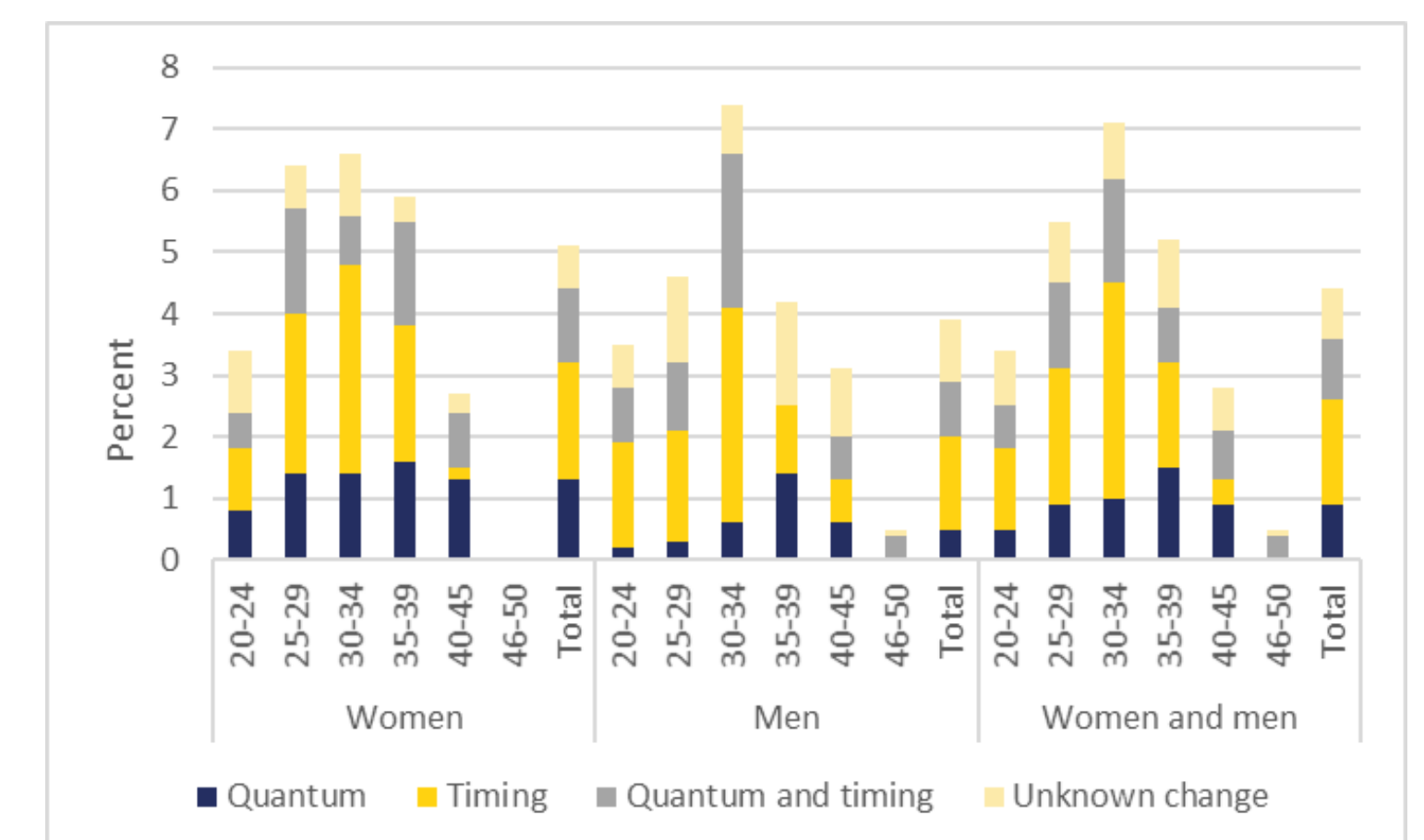
Short-term (monthly) fertility fluctuations, Austria



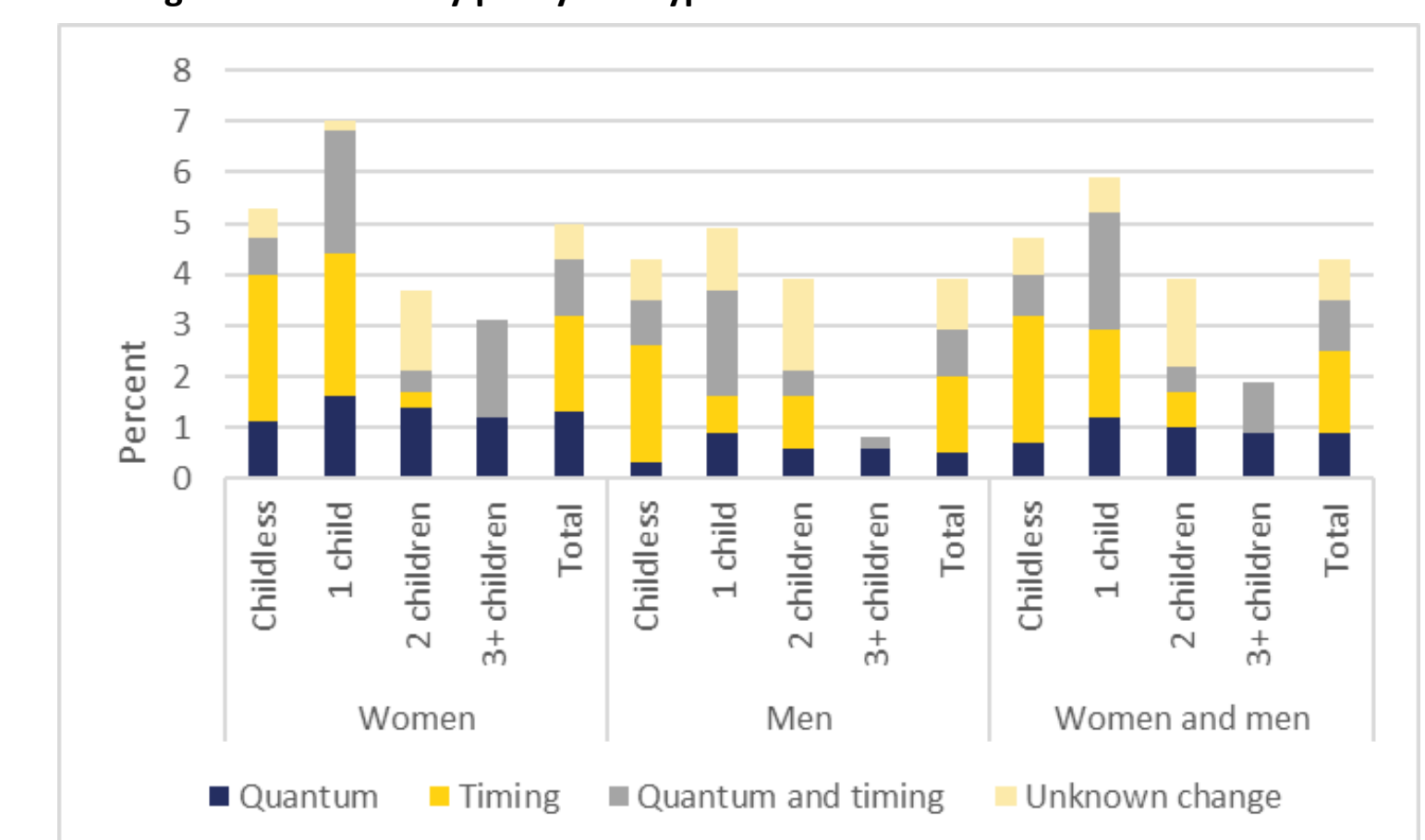
Changes in fertility intention due to the COVID-19 pandemic

- Only 5.1% of women (age 20-45) and 4.4% of men (age 20-50) changed their fertility plans due to the COVID-19 pandemic.
- Changes in timing was more frequent than in quantum.
- Age matters: changes mainly in mid 30s.
- Parity matters: changes more frequent at parity 1. Childless mainly postpone.
- Changes were mainly due to postponement and to reduction of the number of (additionally) intended children.
- Crowded housing mattered.

Changes in intention by age and type



Changes in intention by parity and type



Research questions

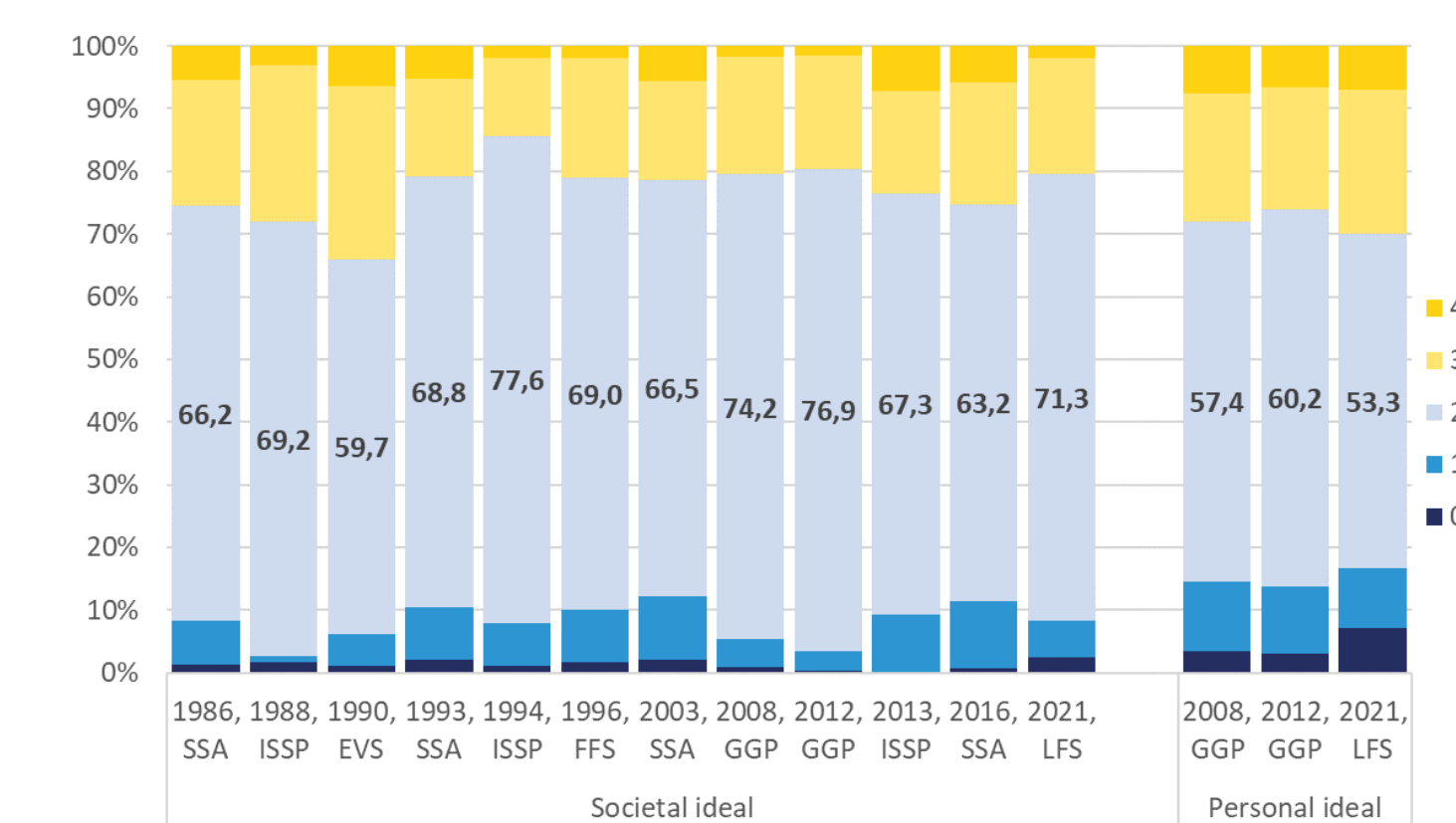
- How did fertility plans evolve over time in Austria?
- How many and who changed fertility intentions due to the pandemic?
- Did the ideal number of children change over time?



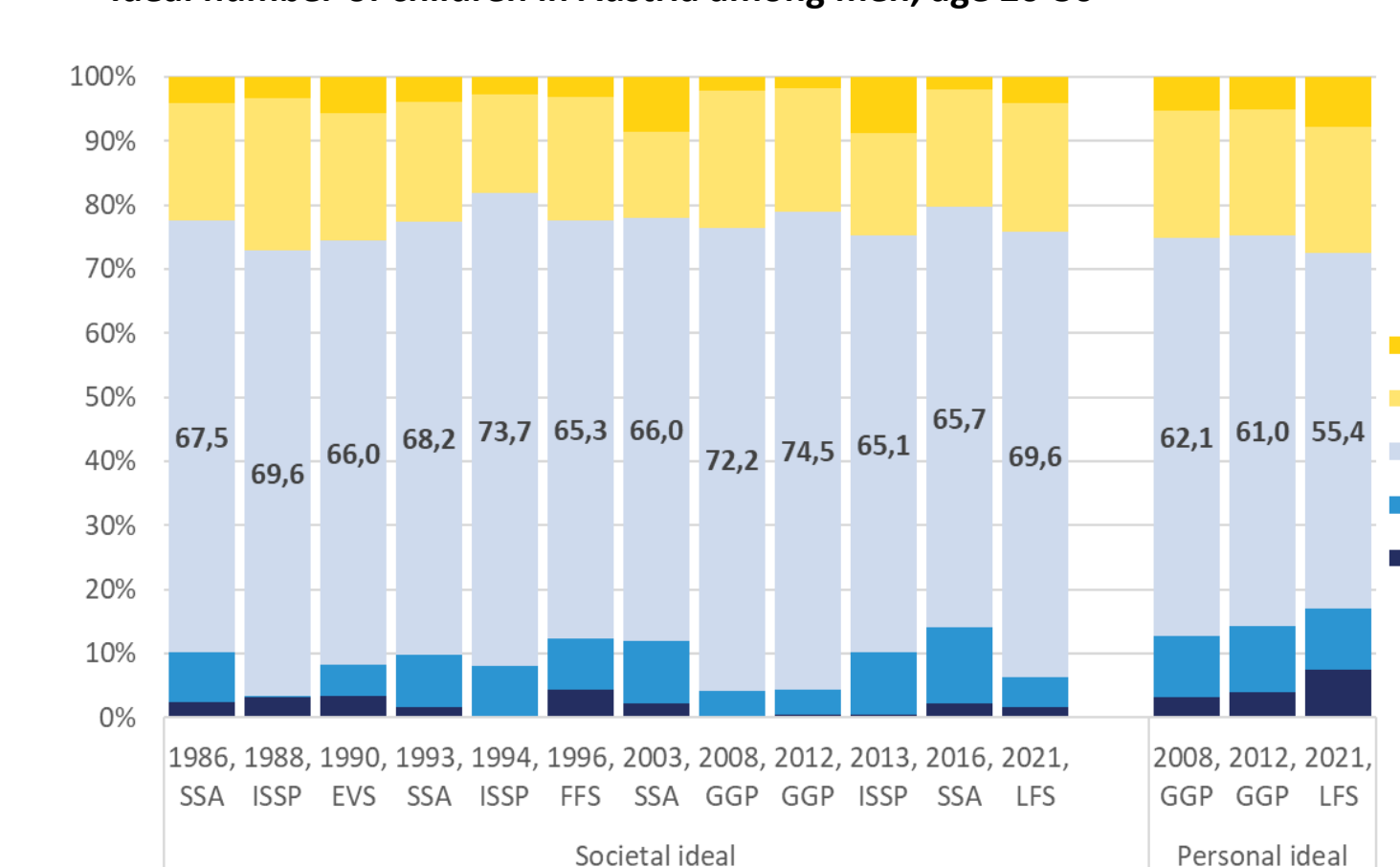
Ideal number of children

- Despite fluctuations, two-child ideal still dominant.
- Hardly any gender differences.
- Two-child ideal also prevailing on individual level, albeit less than on societal level.
- Both shares of those with a personal ideal of less and more than two children slightly increased.
- Parity matters: e.g., 90% of parents of 3+ children perceive 3+ to be ideal.
- Share of women perceiving childlessness to be ideal decreases with age; men 30+ tend to favour a higher number of children than men in 20s; age differentials largely driven by parity.

Ideal number of children in Austria among women, age 20-45



Ideal number of children in Austria among men, age 20-50



Data

Austrian LFS (1986-2021) provided by Statistics Austria

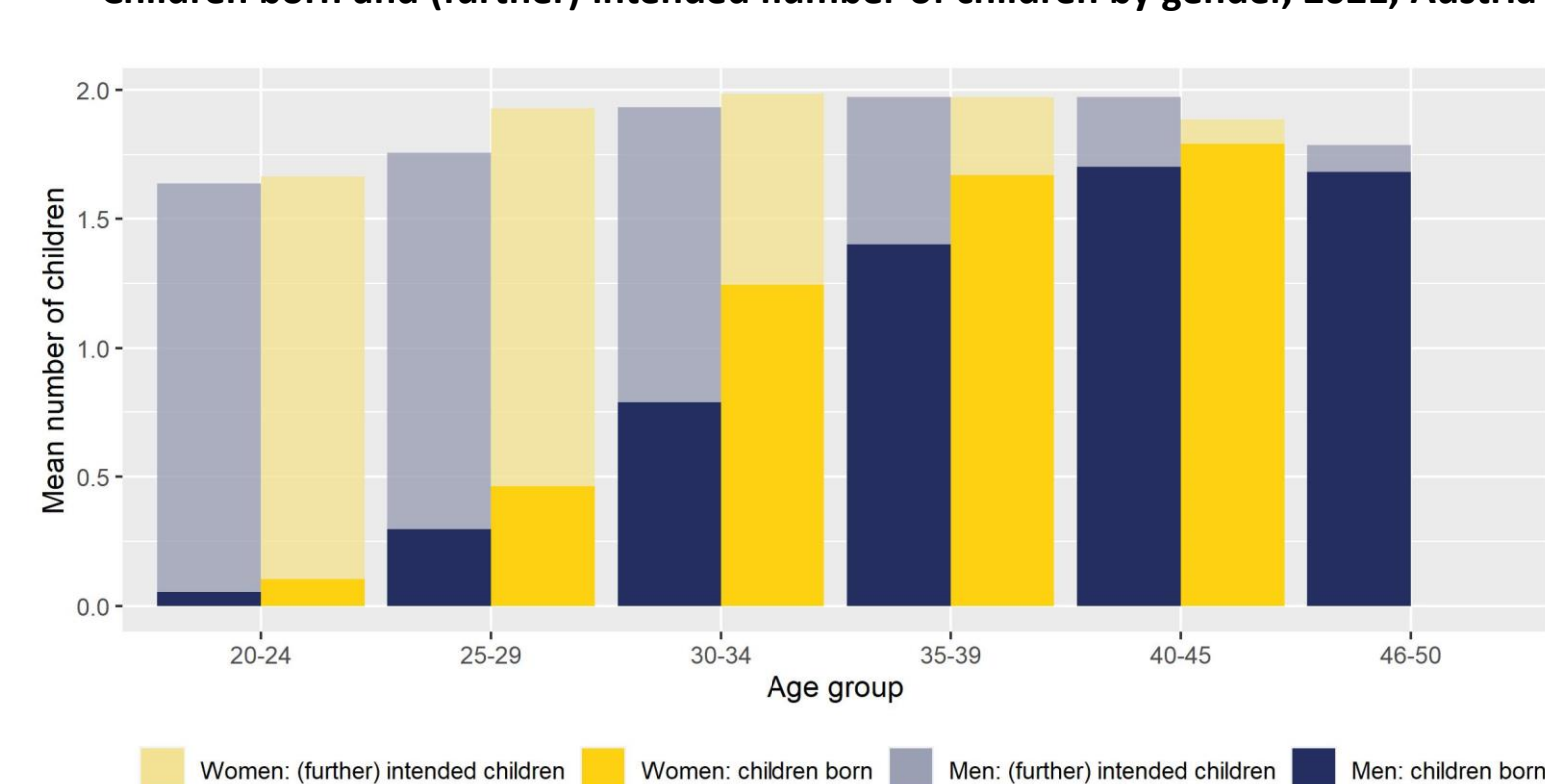
- Target group** Women aged 20-45 year
Men aged 20-50 years
- Large sample** Questions on fertility intentions and ideals in 2021
Roughly 5.600 persons answered

Combined with data from European Value Study (EVS), Family and Fertility Survey (FFS), Generations and Gender Programme (GGP), International Social Survey Programme (ISSP), Social Survey Austria (SSA)

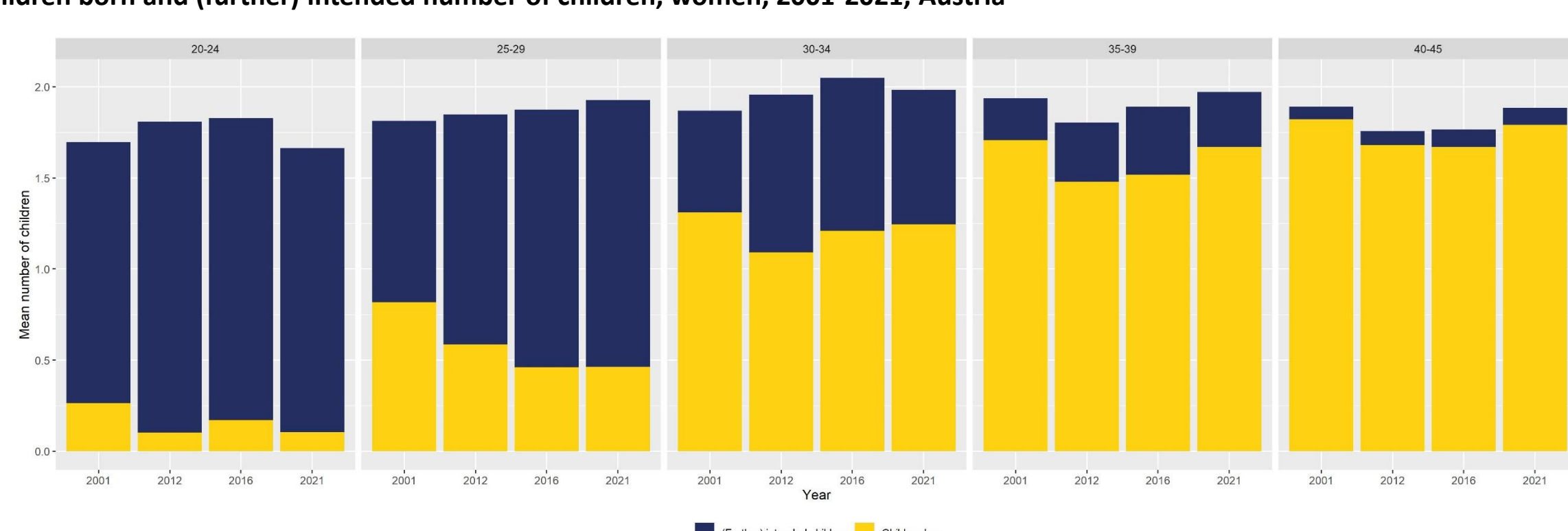
Fertility intentions

- The intended number of children is similar for women and men.
- Realized fertility is higher for women in each age group (e.g., 1.25 for women aged 30-34 versus 0.8 for men).
- Over time, intended family size increases slightly, but decrease at young age.

Children born and (further) intended number of children by gender, 2021, Austria



Children born and (further) intended number of children, women, 2001-2021, Austria



Conclusion

First results from a representative survey on fertility intentions and ideals carried out in the fall of 2021 as part of the LFS reveal that changes in fertility plans due to the COVID-19 pandemic were rare in Austria. Postponement of childbearing and reduction of (further) intended children were by far the most important reasons for changes in fertility plans. Few wanted to have (another) child or more children sooner than in pre-pandemic times. Changes in fertility plans differed by gender, age and parity: Especially persons in their mid-30s and women with one child indicated changes in fertility plans due to the pandemic. Although the two-child ideal is persistent, 12% of women aged 20-24 perceive childlessness as ideal in 2021. Accordingly, family plans at younger ages tended to decrease during the last two decades.

Data:
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