

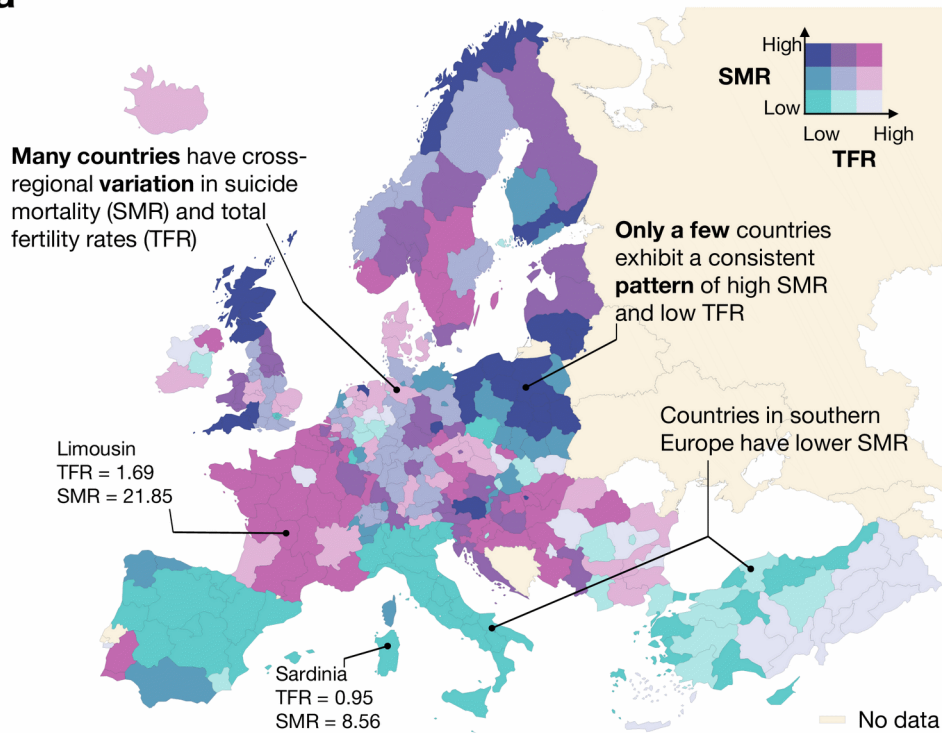
Category: Research Snapshot

Declining birth rates are drawing attention to reproductive health and fertility

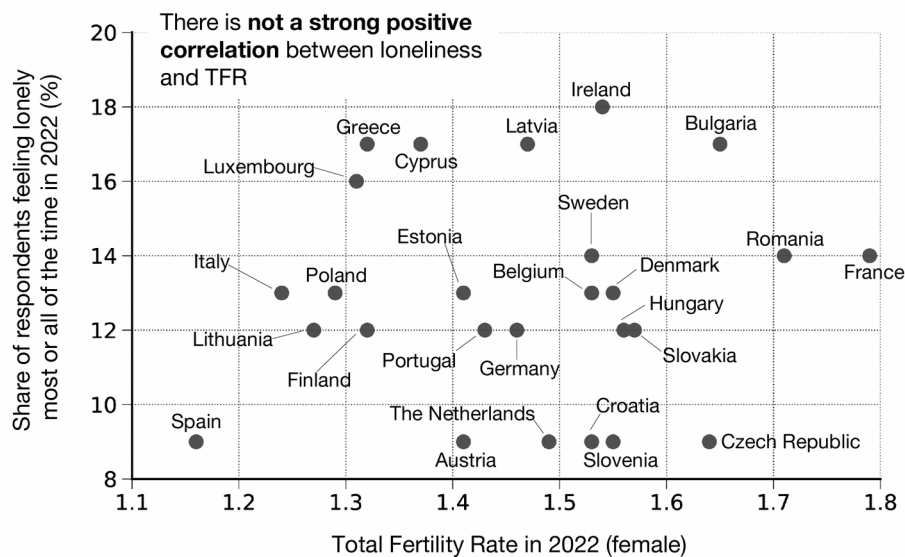
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a



b



It has recently been suggested that an epidemic of despair may be the cause of declining fertility (Platt & Sterling, 2024). However, mapping the relationship between total fertility rate, suicide mortality rate and loneliness across Europe at a regional and national level tells a different story. **a**, Total fertility rate (TFR) and suicide mortality rate (SMR) across Europe by

NUTS level 2 regions, expressed as the number of children per female, based on age-specific fertility rates in 2022, and standardised death rates for intentional self-harm per 100,000 inhabitants in 2021. **b**, The correlation between TFR in 2022 and loneliness prevalence across Europe, measured as the share of respondents who felt lonely most or all of the time over the past four weeks in 2022. In my ongoing research I am aiming to unravel the links between fertility trends, mental health and reproductive health behaviours.

Reference

Platt, M.L., Sterling, P. Declining human fertility and the epidemic of despair. *Nat. Mental Health* 2, 463–465 (2024). <https://doi.org/10.1038/s44220-024-00241-1>

Vincent is a MSCA Doctoral Fellow at the Leverhulme Centre for Demographic Science in the Nuffield Department of Population Health. His interdisciplinary research combines epidemiological methods with large-scale data analysis alongside work on policy, ethics, and governance. His PhD research examines the potential of Our Future Health, the UK's largest health research programme, and the origins and consequences of health risk behaviours with a focus on reproductive health. As a practising multimedia artist and writer, Vincent has exhibited works with the Tate Collective in Tate Modern and in Amsterdam's Stedelijk Museum with the Blikopeners collective. Learn more about Vincent [here](#).