Forced Migration and Fertility in Germany

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Short Abstract: A large body of literature has shown that birth rates of international migrant accelerate around the time of migration. The spike in birth rates is more pronounced for first than for higher order births and it is stronger for women than for men. A conventional explanation for the strong interrelation of childbirth and migration is that international migration is often based on the legal grounds of spousal reunion. Little is known, however, how patterns differ across different migrant populations. In particular, it is unclear whether prior findings translate to the growing group of forced migrants. In this paper we use data from the microcensus to examine the birth dynamics of forced migrants in Germany and compare it to that of other recent migrants. In particular we examine whether migration leads to a postponement or an acceleration of births. Based on event history techniques, we model how birth rates develop by duration of stay in the country and how they differ across migration subgroups. We show that large differences exist between migration populations. Women who originate in conflict and war zones experience elevated first birth rates around migration similar to migrants of Turkish origin. This patterns stands in stark contrast to female migrants from Central and Eastern European countries, which make up another large migration group to Germany. Duration of stay has only a minor impact on birth dynamics of women originated in the latter region.

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Research Question: A large body of literature has shown that birth rates of international migrant accelerate around the time of migration. The spike in birth rates is more pronounced for first than for higher order births and it is stronger for women than for men. A conventional explanation for the strong interrelation of childbirth and migration is that international migration is often "spousal reunion" (Mulder and Wagner 1993; Andersson 2004; Toulemon 2004; Milewski 2007; Lübke 2015). Little is known, however, how patterns differ across different migrant populations. In particular, it is unclear whether prior findings translate to the growing group of forced migrants. In this paper we examine the birth dynamics of forced migrants in Germany and compare it to that of other recent migrants. In particular we examine whether migration leads to a postponement or an acceleration of births. Based on event history techniques, we model how birth rates develop by duration of stay in the country and how they differ across migration subgroups.

Data: The data for this analysis comes from the German microcensus 2016 (and 2017, when made available). The German microcensus is a representative sample including 1 % of the population residing in Germany. It is one of the few data sets that conains a sufficently large number of cases to study the birth dynamics of forced migrants in Germany. Other data sets, such as the IAB-BAMF-Refugee Sample also provide rich information to investigate attitudes and labor market behavior of forced migrants (Bürmann et al. 2018). However, the number of births is too low in this type of data to study the fertility of forced migrants after their arrival in Germany. Another advantage of the microcensus is that the date of migration to Germany is included in the questionnaire, so that it can be examined how duration of stay in Germany is related to birth behavior.

Limitation: There are several caveats to be mentioned. Most importantly, dates of childbirth are not surveyed and we have to asses this information based on the number and ages of children who live in the same family unit. The drawback of this approach is that deseased children, children who still live in the country of origin or do not live in the parental household for other reasons are not considered. Albeit that a significant fraction of male refugees and asylmn seekers have been found to have children in their country of origin or another country, this fraction is rather low for females (Brücker 2017, Gambaro et al. 2018). As we focus on female fertility, the analysis should not be seriously affected by the undercoverage of children who are still in countries of origin. A caveat of this data is that refugees and asylmn seekers in reception centers are not included. Thus, the refugee and asylmn seekers that are included in the

investigation are primiarly those who have already moved to private accomodation. As allocation to private housing is contingent on pregnancy status and number and age of children, our investigation may be biased to some extent (BAMF 2018).

Study Population: We have grouped migrants by their country of origin. In a first step of our investigation, we have focused on the largest migration groups in Germany. We have contrasted the fertility patterns of migrants from a) Poland, Hungary, Bulgaria and the Czech Republic, b) Turkey and c) Syria, Afhanistan, Iran and Irak. The microcensues 2016 does not survey the legal status of migration or the reasons for migration. However, data from the microcensus 2017 as well as official data from the BAMF show that migrants from Syria, Afhanistan, Iran and Irak are heavily overrepresented among those who seek for asylmn or refugee status (BAMF 2019).

Method: As a method, we employ event history techniques. We estimate first and higher order birth risks by duration of stay in the country. The model is sparse and only controls for age, region of origin and duration of stay in the country. The latter two variables are inserted as interaction terms, so that we can asses of how the effect of duration of stay varies by country of origin. We estimate seperate models for first and higher order birhs. The models for higher order births includes an additional variable for birth parity and another one for time since last birth. We use a piecewise linear model for the specification of the baseline intensities.

Preliminary Results: Figure 1 displays the predicted annual first birth probabilities of an event history model that controls for age and level of education by broad countries of origin. These primarily results support earlier findings that show an acceleration of first birth rates around the time of migration for the case of Turkish migrants (Wolf 2016). We also observe a spike for women who originate in conflict and war zones (namely who originate in Syria, Afghanistan, Iran and Irak). Patterns are markedly different for migrants from Central and Eastern European countries where birth rates only increase mildly around migration.

Figure 1: First birth probabilities of women by duration of stay in Germany
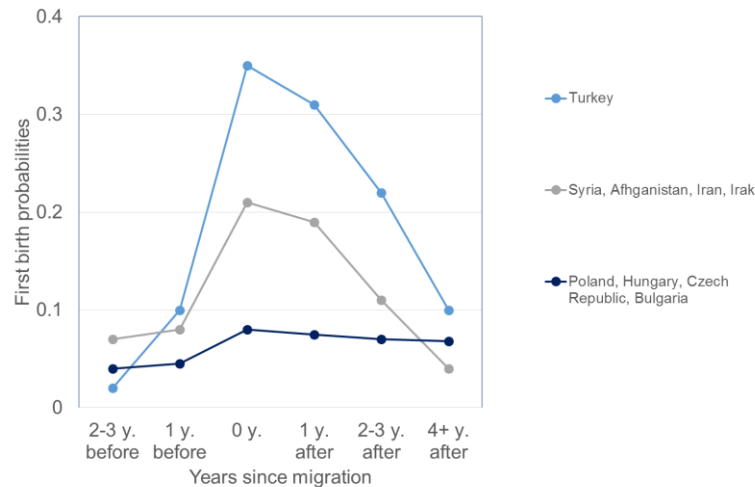
Note: Predicted annual first birth probabilities (at the means of other covariates) of an event history model that controls for age and level of education.

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