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Influences of origin and destination on migrant fertility in Europe

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Abstract

The current study examines the quantum of childbearing of migrants from low-fertility contexts (Poland and Romania) at multiple destinations (Italy and the United Kingdom), and compares them to stayers at origin and to nonmigrants at destination, combining the multiorigin/multidestination approach with the 'context-of-origin' perspective. Using data from the Labour Force Surveys (2009–2015) and adopting a gender and a couple perspective, we show that Polish and Romanian women have fewer children than nonmigrants at destinations. Romanian migrant women and men have a fertility similar to that of stayers at the origin, especially in United Kingdom, suggesting a socialization pattern for this group. Our findings also suggest the presence of the disruption mechanism for migrants, mainly in the short term, combined with a 'catch-up' in the long run explained by family reunification, primarily in Italy. However, the 'catch-up' over time of residence is found to be slower compared to previous studies. Finally, we find selection into migration and into different destination play an important role.

KEYWORDS

fertility, Italy, migrants, Poland, Romania, UK

1 | INTRODUCTION

Recent literature has discussed the importance of fertility preferences and behaviours as one of the dimensions of migrants' integration (Milewski & Mussino, 2018). On the one hand, fertility preferences and behaviours have been framed as one indicator of cultural integration (Algan et al., 2012; Milewski & Mussino, 2018), as they are the results of the influence of the social and cultural norms of the society to which the individual belongs or grew up in, as well as of his/her personal experience (Fernández & Fogli, 2006). On the other hand, fertility behaviours can be regarded as indirect indicators of migrants' socioeconomic integration as they might be driven by migrants' socioeconomic conditions and/or constraints in the

destination society (Kulu & González-Ferrer, 2014; Mussino & Ortensi, 2018). Either way, researchers have recognised the importance of looking at fertility behaviours as a key dimension of integration, and have interpreted their change over time as a sign of (missed) adaptation in the receiving society (Adserà & Ferrer, 2015).

The current study contributes to these debates by examining the quantum of childbearing of migrants from low-fertility contexts (Poland and Romania) at multiple destinations (Italy and the United Kingdom) and comparing them to stayers at origin and to nonmigrants at destination. Few studies have focused specifically on the fertility of migrants from low-fertility countries, although these groups are less likely to have children before or around the time of migration (Tønnessen & Mussino, 2020) and have consequently been claimed to

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facilitate the testing of the adaptation 'from below' at net of the impact of interrelated demographic events. And these studies have shown contradictory results, finding evidence of adaptation to the reproductive behaviours of the receiving society among some groups (Hwang & Saenz, 1997; Lübke, 2015; Nahmias, 2004; Tønnessen & Mussino, 2020), but not among others (Mussino et al., 2021; Okun & Kagya, 2012). Moreover, the studies have looked primarily at a single migrant origin in a single destination, without including the country of origin in the analytical framework, despite migrant selectivity is likely to influence migrants' fertility behaviours in terms of dissimilarities to the behaviour of stayers at origin and similarities to that of nonmigrants at destination (Lindstrom & Saucedo, 2007).

Thus, the aim of this paper is to complement existing studies on the fertility of migrants from *low-fertility* countries using a *multiorigin/multidestination* approach; that is, looking at migrants with the same origins (Poles and Romanians) at the (same) different destinations (Italy and the United Kingdom), combined into a *context-of-origin* perspective. Our emphasis on the influence of country of origin and different destinations will highlight the importance of cultural norms and practices from the origin country versus social norms and institutional contexts at destination. Context of origin reflects differences in cultural background, which can be maintained after migration (Milewski, 2007) and influences fertility patterns; the country of destination offers new norms and a new policy context. These differences may translate into different fertility patterns, reflecting underlying differences in integration into the new society.

This paper also contributes to the literature describing fertility among both migrant *women* and *men*. Although migration patterns may differ by gender, migrant men's fertility has rarely been studied (Cantalini & Panichella, 2019; Kraus, 2019; Wolf, 2016). However, when it comes to men, migration and fertility might be not interrelated to the same extent as for women (Lundström & Andersson, 2012). Men seem to need more time to settle in their new destination country, or may simply have more time to become fathers than women do to become mothers; or, they may react differently to gender norms at the destination.

Moreover, we not only include a male population in the analysis but also add a *couple perspective* (Lindstrom & Saucedo, 2007), including information on the partner and distinguishing migrants according to the type of family migration. This empirical strategy allows us to describe whether the fertility of Eastern European migrants might be related to their family migration strategies—which differ according to gender as well as countries of origin and destination—and to investigate the roles of family separation, the interrelation between migration and fertility, and family reunification.

2 | INTRA-EUROPEAN MIGRATION AND FERTILITY: THE CONTEXT

The European focus in this paper is particularly relevant in a Europe that is still transitioning from Brexit. Intra-European migration is gaining attention (Castles et al., 2014), with Poland and Romania

being two among the European countries that have experienced massive emigration, directed especially at other EU-28 countries and, more specifically, Italy and the United Kingdom (Burrell, 2016; Simionescu, 2019). This section aims to provide some basic information on intra-European migration and/or fertility trends in the four studied countries, which can be used in interpreting and discussing our results.

2.1 | Polish and Romanian migration in Italy and the United Kingdom

In recent years, the intra-European migration by EU-28 citizens has been dominated by Romanians and Poles, and the main destinations for these country groups have been the United Kingdom for Polish migrants and Italy for Romanian migrants (Eurostat, 2015).

Since the late 1970s, Italy has become an immigration country, initially attracting migrants from North Africa, the Middle East and Southeast Asia. After the fall of the Berlin Wall and the dissolution of the Soviet Union, other groups began moving to Italy, including Poles and Romanians as job migrants (Buonomo et al., 2020). Today, the prominence of Central Eastern European migrants has increased in both absolute and relative terms, and, due to the advantage of the free movement, particularly involves migrants from Romania and Poland (Strozza, 2019). Romanian migration was initially male-dominated, comprising low-educated men employed in the construction and secondary sectors; later, especially with the entry of Romania into the European Community, this was followed by female migrants employed in the (health- and child-) care sector (Cela et al., 2013). Women currently represent more than half of the Romanian population in Italy (57%). Migration from Poland has always been female-dominated and related to easy access to the domestic sector (Cela et al., 2013) as well, with women today representing 74% of the Polish population in Italy.

The United Kingdom has a longer history as an immigration country in general, but also as a centre of the polarization of European migrants. While Poles originally settled in the United Kingdom after the Second World War (Małkosa, 2018; Trevena, 2009), it was upon the European Union's expansion that Polish and Romanian people began massively migrating there, constituting one of the largest migration movements in contemporary Europe (Burrell, 2016). Today, Poles and Romanians are ranked the second- and fourth-largest migrant groups in the United Kingdom, and women represent the 55% and 47% of their population, respectively. Polish and Romanian migrants in the United Kingdom tend to be employed in low-paying jobs in the agriculture, light industry, and care sectors, despite possessing relatively high levels of education (Clark & Drinkwater, 2008; Drinkwater et al., 2009), especially compared to their counterparts moving to Italy. However, while most of their migration is tied to work reasons, it also affects their family strategies and fertility behaviours, with the majority of women migrating to join their first-mover husbands (Ryan et al., 2009; Waller et al., 2014).

2.2 | Fertility contexts

Italy, Poland and Romania have long been included among the 'lowest-low fertility' countries (Kohler et al., 2002), experiencing a period total fertility rate (TFR) below 1.3 (Table 1). The low fertility in Italy has been associated with the persistence of traditional family patterns, a postponement of leaving the parental home and becoming parents, low female employment, and high unemployment among young adults (Dalla Zuanna, 2001). In Central and Eastern Europe, the low fertility has been mainly driven by the economic difficulties related to the collapse of state socialism around 1990 (Perelli-Harris, 2005). In Poland, traditional norms might have also had an impact, with an emphasis on marriage as the proper context for childbearing and low social acceptance of mothers working if they have young children (Matysiak & Vignoli, 2013). More recently, the postponement of family formation and first births have characterized a rebound of fertility in Romania, Poland, and Italy, slightly increasing these countries' TFRs to above 1.4 (De Rose et al., 2008, Matysiak & Vignoli, 2013, Mureşan et al., 2008).

On the other hand, the UK has been defined as a country with 'highest-low fertility' (Andersson, 2008); in fact, despite experiencing subreplacement fertility, until recently the TFR there had stabilized to an average of 1.8 children for women (Sigle, 2016). It has been challenging to explain this relatively high level from a policy perspective, as it has been achieved with fairly high female employment but without generous universal welfare like in the Nordic countries (UN, 2015). However, in the most recent years a decreasing trend has been observed in the United Kingdom as well (see Table 1).

3 | PREVIOUS THEORIES ON THE FERTILITY OF MIGRANTS

Previous research has outlined five, not mutually exclusive, hypotheses behind migrant fertility, which were developed with migration from high- to low-fertility contexts in mind. Although some of these explanations are applicable to our object of study, that is, migration from low- to low-fertility or low- to high-fertility contexts, they may take on a different character.

The *socialization* hypothesis follows the idea that fertility preferences are formed during childhood through the role of social norms and cultural values (Duncan, 1965). This would explain why migrants, even after spending time in the destination country, exhibit

patterns similar to those of stayers at origin (Milewski, 2010), and also why in the same destination country we can find different levels of childbearing propensities between women from different origins (Andersson, 2004). Evidence supporting the socialization hypothesis has been found regarding migration from high- to low-fertility countries (e.g., Impicciatore et al., 2020; Milewski, 2010), as well as from low- to low-fertility countries, including that from Romania to Italy (Mussino & Strozza, 2012b).

Previous studies looking at different aspects of the migrant population have underlined how those who migrate are a selected group from the population at origin (e.g., Van Tubergen et al., 2004). When looking specifically at fertility behaviours, the *selectivity* hypothesis argues that preferences regarding fertility behaviours might be more similar to those of people living in the country of destination (Bagavos et al., 2008) compared to those of the people they left behind (FitzGerald, 2012), and that the similarity in these preferences might actually contribute to the selection of destination country. This argument is consistent with the 'anticipatory socialization' theory (Merton, 1949), according to which nongroup members (immigrants) tend to take on values of the group they want to join (population of the receiving society), to ease their future integration into the group. Earlier studies on this hypothesis are largely from a US context (Lindstrom & Saucedo, 2002, 2007), and it is only recently that increased attention to 'context-of-origin' has led to some examinations in Europe as well (e.g., Baykara-Krumme & Milewski, 2017; Güveli et al., 2016; Impicciatore et al., 2020). As both observed and unobserved characteristics may contribute to the selection process (Adserà & Ferrer, 2014; Kulu & González-Ferrer, 2014), it is essential to account for the role of sociodemographic characteristics in analysing migrants' fertility behaviour, such as education, and study whether part of the fertility differences between migrant and stayer can be explained by the different compositions of the two groups (Baykara-Krumme & Milewski, 2017).

Longer term differences, as well as the convergence of migrant to native fertility, are explained in terms of the *adaptation* hypothesis, a gradual process in which exposure to new social structures and ideas shifts one's preferences and behaviours toward those of the destination country (S. Goldstein & Goldstein, 1981). Previous research has found evidence of adaptation among migrant groups from high-fertility countries, decreasing their fertility over time (Andersson, 2004; Milewski, 2007), as well as among some migrant groups from low-fertility countries, increasing their fertility after some years after migration (Tønnessen & Mussino, 2020). However,

TABLE 1 Total fertility rate in the four studied countries, 2000–2019

Country name	2001	2003	2005	2007	2009	2011	2013	2015	2017	2019
United Kingdom	1.63	1.70	1.76	1.86	1.89	1.91	1.83	1.80	1.74	1.65
Italy	1.25	1.29	1.34	1.40	1.45	1.44	1.39	1.35	1.32	1.27
Poland	1.31	1.22	1.24	1.31	1.40	1.33	1.29	1.32	1.48	1.42
Romania	1.27	1.30	1.40	1.45	1.66	1.47	1.46	1.62	1.71	1.76

Source: Worldbank.

when studying migrants from high-fertility countries, adaptation is difficult to reach because migrants may migrate already with a higher number of children than the norm at the destination (Mussino et al., 2021). In this respect, it has been claimed that migrants from low-fertility countries facilitate the testing of the adaptation 'from below', as they are less likely to already have children at the time of migration (Tønnessen & Mussino, 2020). Additionally, previous studies concluded that to distinguish between the relative roles of selection and adaptation, stayers from the countries of origin must be considered (e.g., Hwang & Saenz, 1997).

The *interrelation* or life course hypothesis views migration and childbearing as synchronized parallel careers (Mulder & Wagner, 1993). Several studies have confirmed an 'arrival effect' on fertility, manifested in the short timing between migration and first pregnancy (Andersson, 2004; Milewski, 2007; Mussino & Strozza, 2012a), underlining that migration is often driven by motives related to family formation. Focusing on migrants from low-fertility contexts offers help in overcoming one of the main methodological issues involved in studying migrants' fertility. When migrants come from high-fertility countries, in fact, both the adaptation and interrelation hypotheses predict a decline in fertility by duration of stay. On the contrary, if migrants from low-fertility countries move to a relatively higher-fertility destination, this will take one of two directions (Tønnessen & Mussino, 2020).

Finally, the *disruption* hypothesis views the migration process as a stressful event that has a direct negative impact on childbearing in the short term (Hervitz, 1985). Periods shortly before and after migration may show depressed fertility, subsequently compensated for by an acceleration in fertility after migrants have settled down in a new country (Ford, 1990). The degree of stress associated with migration is generally greater for those from less similar normative and institutional contexts (Milewski, 2010).

A couple perspective might offer help in understanding and distinguishing the mechanisms behind migration and fertility (Lindstrom & Saucedo, 2007; Nie, 2020). For instance, an important disruptive factor depressing migrant fertility in the short term can be marital separation (Lindstrom & Saucedo, 2002, 2007), that is, migrants moving alone to the destination country without their families and children, which is a frequent case in the migratory patterns of Eastern Europeans. Consequently, for this group, fertility can increase over the duration of stay because of family reunification; that is, spouse (and children) joining migrants after the disruptive costs have been paid off. On the other hand, a joint migration with shared costs (both material and psychological) and without being apart might favour fertility. Previous studies have also shown that a native partner might accelerate the adaptation process (Mussino & Strozza, 2012b). Additionally, couple migration, as well as couple behaviours, might be driven by different forms of selectivity, such as similar fertility preferences (Lindstrom, 2003) and high aspirations for children, for example, looking for contexts that offer the best educational opportunities for them (Jasso, 2004; Lindstrom & Saucedo, 2007).

For someone in a couple migrating, whether solo or jointly, is linked to the stage in the family lifecycle, in this sense 'lives are lived interdependently' (Elder et al., 2004, p. 13) and this is strongly linked to age, gender and economic opportunity (Massey et al., 1984). Previous studies on gender and migration underline how women and men have different propensities and reasons for migrating, and how they have or build different social networks at destination (Caarls et al., 2018; Curran & Rivero-Fuentes, 2003; Eremenko & González-Ferrer, 2018). The case of Romanians and Poles is especially interesting in this respect, as the reasons behind migration and family strategies differ according not only to gender but also to destination country. For instance, among Eastern Europeans moving to the UK, families follow two main migration strategies (Ryan et al., 2009). Either men migrate first to reduce the costs of migration and women migrate later for family reunification, or couples migrate jointly and live together in the host country. Migration strategies for migrants in Italy are more mixed, as both men and women often move alone—or as forerunners—for work reasons (see above). Moreover, among women moving alone, especially from Poland, a nonnegligible proportion ultimately marry an Italian man (Kloc-Nowak, 2018).

4 | RESEARCH HYPOTHESES

The data used in this study, which do not offer access to (time-constant and time-varying) information on migrants both before and after the geographical movement (see Section 5), make it difficult to measure the causal mechanisms linking migration and fertility. For this reason, the aim of our paper is not to directly test the mechanisms of socialization, adaptation, interrelation, disruption, and selection discussed above but rather to describe the fertility of migrants from low-fertility countries—compared to both stayers at origin and nonmigrants at destination—and to study whether the trend over time of residence is consistent with these mechanisms. Built on the previous research and the specific fertility regimes and migratory patterns presented above, the following hypotheses are highlighted.

We expect that, if the socialization hypothesis applies (e.g., Milewski, 2010), *migrants should have fertility similar to that of stayers at the origin (H1a), and this should be true regardless of the time spent in the destination country (H1b)*. When considering the selection hypothesis (e.g., Baykara-Krumme & Milewski, 2017), *the fertility differential between origin and destination should decrease or disappear once individual observable characteristics such as education are controlled for, primarily in the United Kingdom, to which a relevant portion of highly educated migrants move (H2a)*. However, as migrant fertility can be also explained by selection according to unobservable characteristics (including the same fertility preferences as those at destination or higher aspirations for their children, see Ribe & Schultz, 1980), *we can generally expect migrant fertility to resemble the patterns of the destination country to a greater degree, without noticeable change according to time since migration (H2b)*.

By focusing on migrants from low-fertility countries, including stayers in the analysis and adopting a multidestination approach, we take a step forward with respect to previous research in the study of the adaptation mechanism (see Andersson, 2004). According to this argument, *we expect fertility to increase over time since migration, especially for Eastern Europeans moving to a high-fertility country such as the UK (H3a), and having a native partner—i.e., living in a mixed couple—to strengthen the adaptation process (H3b).*

Because 'lives are lived interdependently' (Elder et al., 2004, p. 13), looking at migrants from low-fertility countries to those with comparably higher fertility, *we expect to see a declining trend in fertility by duration of stay if the processes of migration and fertility are interrelated (H4a).* In studying the interrelation argument, a couple perspective is particularly useful. Indeed, in order for this hypothesis to apply as it is, migrants should not move alone or as forerunners but rather need to move together with their spouse or join him/her for family reunification. Thus, according to the interrelation hypothesis (e.g., Milewski, 2007), *we also expect higher fertility if migrants move together with their spouse or as tied movers, independent of origin or destination country (H4b).*

According to the disruption argument (e.g., Mussino & Strozza, 2012b), *we expect Eastern European migrants to have low fertility in the short period after migration in both Italy and the United Kingdom (H5a), especially if they migrate alone or as the first migrant (H5b).* However, since migrants from lowest-low-fertility contexts may consider themselves to have more time to achieve their (low) fertility goals, it is also possible that they 'react' more slowly after migration (despite different norms at the destination) and do not show any 'catch-up' of fertility in the long term, thus resulting in *lower fertility compared to both origin and destination (H5c).*

Given the differences in the migratory patterns according to gender, origin and destination, we can expect the above-mentioned hypotheses to apply for both immigrant men and women, despite with different patterns in the different contexts. Since previous research on male immigrants is scarce compared to the one focusing on females, we refrain to outline specific hypotheses on gender differences, although we can assume the effect of migration to be more pronounced for women than men (Kraus, 2019).

5 | DATA, VARIABLES AND METHODS

5.1 | Data, variables and their critical use

Our analysis was based on three data sources, which have been merged in a unique, large data set covering the period 2009–2015. Data on *migrants* as well as *nonmigrants* (i.e., natives) in Italy were taken from the Italian Labour Force Survey (IT-LFS), whereas data on *migrants* and *nonmigrants* in the UK were drawn from the British Labour Force Survey (UK-LFS). The IT-LFS and UK-LFS provide detailed information on country of birth, helping us distinguish specific groups of migrants and allowing us to select migrants from Poland and Romania. Information on Poles and Romanians in the

origin countries (i.e., *stayers*) was taken from the European Labour Force Survey (EU-LFS). The final analytical sample included 1,161,175 women and 1,446,892 men.

Labour force surveys, the primary source regarding the labour market at household level in Europe, provide information on employment status and other sociodemographic characteristics for all household members. Although fertility is not the main concern of these surveys, their large sample size allows us to study the fertility of Polish and Romanian migrants, comparing them not only with nonmigrants at the destination but also with stayers in the country of origin. The main limitation of these data is their cross-sectional structure, which prevents the access to (time-constant and time-varying) information on the migrant population both before and after the geographical movement, making it difficult to measure the causal mechanisms linking migration and fertility and to control for the selectivity of migrants over time of residence in the destination country. In other words, these data do not allow us to directly test the mechanisms described above, but rather give us the opportunity to descriptively study the fertility of migrants from low-fertility countries and analyse whether the trend over time since migration is consistent with these mechanisms.

Another limitation of these data is the lack of individual-level information on fertility behaviours. The dependent variable, that is, number of children, was thus constructed using the 'own-child method' (Cho et al., 1986). This method has been extensively used with the same aim with LFS data (e.g., Bordone et al., 2009), specifically to study migrant fertility (e.g., Alderotti et al., 2019; Cantalini & Panichella, 2019; Coleman & Dubuc, 2010; Dubuc, 2012; Mussino & Cantalini, 2020; Waller et al., 2014). It links children to their (supposed) mothers (or fathers) in the same household, assuming that minor children recorded in a household comprise all the children born (and still alive) to the parents in that household. This technique enables us to detect only those children still living with at least one parent at the time of the interview. This issue is addressed in our analysis, including relatively young women (aged 25–45) and men (aged 25–50), which made it possible to assume that there were no (or few) children living outside the household. However, the number of children might still be underestimated, especially for men—due to the higher likelihood that a child lives with his/her mother in cases of separation or divorce—and for (short-term) migrants—because their children can stay in the country of origin and join their father or mother later through family reunification (see Appendix A).¹

Previous literature has nevertheless shown that immigrants from low-fertility countries of origin are less likely to have children before migration (Tønnessen & Mussino, 2020), which reduces the possible

¹The own-child method is a measure of the *quantum* of parenthood and it makes it difficult to disentangle the role of its *timing*, which is the main focus of some of the hypotheses presented above, such as interrelation and disruption. However, studying the quantum of parenthood does not need to be regarded as a limitation, as it allows us to describe the contribution of migrant families to the population of the receiving societies. Additionally, although the disruption and/or interrelation hypotheses better predict the fertility *tempo* effects, they also have a direct impact on the completed fertility and consequently the *quantum*.

underestimation of the number of children of immigrants due to family separation. We also tackled this issue by performing analyses which consider only men and women living as a couple (see below). In general, we decided not to distinguish children of migrants according to their place of birth but rather to include children born both at origin and at destination, thus describing the total contribution of Polish and Romanian migrants' fertility to Italy and the United Kingdom (see Cantalini & Panichella, 2019). Empirically, this is also important because focusing only on those children born after migration would have systematically shown lower fertility among migrants, as longitudinal data providing time-varying information on reproductive and migration behaviours were not available. Indeed, although premigration fertility is relatively low for migrants from low-fertility countries, for them we would have considered only a portion of the life course, that is, the period after migration, whereas for nonmigrants we could have exploited the whole life course.

The independent variable was geographical origin, distinguishing immigrants from stayers at origin and nonmigrants at destination according to the country of birth. Individuals were divided into eight categories: *Polish stayers*; *Romanian stayers*; *Italian nonmigrants*; *British nonmigrants*; *Polish migrants in Italy*; *Polish migrants in the United Kingdom*; *Romanian migrants in Italy* and *Romanian migrants in the United Kingdom*. Moreover, to study the trends over time in the migrants' fertility (see below), the last four categories were further divided into four groups according to the number of years spent in the destination country (1–2; 3–5; 6–10 and more than 10 years). Finally, to study the role of family migration (see below), we also split migrants into five categories according to the type of family migration, reconstructed using the elapsed time between the migration of both partners (see Ballarino & Panichella, 2018): *lone migrants*, residing in the country of destination alone, regardless of marital status; *first migrants*, residing in the destination country with a migrant partner and having moved before him/her; *tied migrants*, residing in the destination country with a migrant partner and having moved after him/her; *joint migrants*, having moved to the country of destination the same year as their partner; and *mixed couple migrants*, living with a partner born in the destination country.

We included a set of control variables in the analysis, measured at the time of the interview. The first was education, coded into three categories: lower-secondary or less (ISCED 0-2); upper-secondary or postsecondary nontertiary (ISCED 3-4) and tertiary (ISCED 5-6). The second was employment condition, operationalized in dummy variables through the ISCO-88 code at one digit of the occupation, also including two additional categories for the unemployed and the inactive. Models also controlled for the year of the survey. When we focused on fertility among couples, we also controlled for the partner's age, country of origin (whether the partner was born in the country of the interviewee's current residence) and employment condition (operationalized as above).

Descriptive statistics on the analytical sample are provided in Tables A1 and A2 in Appendix B, which also present additional information measured only among the migrant group (e.g., age at

migration, percentage of educational titles obtained before and after migration, type of family migration).

5.2 | Methods and analytical strategy

We estimated Poisson regression models separately by gender and country of destination. Poisson regressions are preferred to ordinary least squares (OLS) regressions for nonnegative count-dependent variables, such as number of children, and fit models of the number of occurrences (counts) of an event, such as the birth of a child. Count data often have an exposure variable, indicating the number of times the event could have happened. In our case, we used years since age 15 (generally regarded as the start of childbearing age) as the exposure variable.

The empirical strategy was divided into three steps. The first aimed to offer a general picture of the fertility of migrants in the two destination countries, compared to nonmigrants in the country of destination and stayers in the country of origin. Three models were estimated: Model 1 estimated the difference in the predicted number of children of migrants with respect to both nonmigrants at destination and stayers at origin, controlling only for the year of the survey; Model 2 also included educational attainment to control for one of the main sources of selectivity of migrants according to observed characteristics and finally Model 3 controlled for the employment condition, to analyse whether the gap between migrants and nonmigrants at destination depends on their different inclusion in the labour market and in the occupational hierarchy (Ballarino & Panichella, 2015, 2018).

The second step of the empirical strategy focused on the trends over time in the fertility of migrants. Model 3, with full controls, was estimated using a combination between geographical origin and the immigrants' years of residence in the country of destination as the main independent variable. In absence of longitudinal data, we were not able to follow the same individuals over time since migration or study the timing of their parenthood in the new society, but were forced to compare the fertility of different individuals who settled in the country of destination in different periods. We thus cannot exclude the possibility that the changes in migrant fertility depend on their selectivity over time since migration, as in the case of short-term migrants opting not to have children shortly after the move because they expect to return to the country of origin soon. Moreover, the (possible) high fertility of long-term migrants (i.e., settled for more than 10 years) might actually be driven by their relatively higher age. We tried to avoid this bias with our exposure variable in the Poisson models and by estimating Poisson and OLS models while controlling for age as sensitivity checks (see below).

The last step of the empirical strategy focused specifically on couples and family migration. This helped us describe whether migrants' fertility (and its trend over time spent in the host country) can be related to family migration strategies, consistent with the disruption (e.g., marital separation) as well as the interrelation of events (e.g., family reunification) arguments. Moreover, such a

perspective considers couples to be the locus of strategies related to migration and fertility, and allows us to distinguish the underlying determinants of men's and women's migration, based on whether the geographical movement occurs alone or jointly, who in the couple migrates first, and where the partners are located with respect to one another and the border (Lindstrom & Saucedo, 2007). We investigated the role of family migration in two ways: First, the model analysing the trends over time of residence was replicated only among men and women living as a couple at the time of the interview. This model followed the same specification of Model 3, but also included additional controls for the partner's age, country of origin and employment condition; second, Model 3 was estimated using a combination between geographical origin and type of family migration as the independent variable.

We performed a wide range of robustness checks (available on request), which substantially confirmed the results presented here. They included: estimation of OLS models; estimation of Poisson models without controlling for exposure but including age as a covariate; replication of the analyses excluding those migrants who had moved at school age (generation 1.5); replication of the analyses on samples with narrower age ranges; estimation of pooled models (i.e., not separated by destination country) including all the groups of migrants, nonmigrants and stayers; estimation of models comparing migrants with nonmigrants at destination, excluding stayers from the sample; estimation of models comparing migrants with stayers at origin, excluding natives from the sample; and estimation of models comparing the two groups of migrants (with controls for individual information by definition only available for them, such as age at migration and place of education), excluding nonmigrants and stayers from the sample.

6 | EMPIRICAL RESULTS

6.1 | The fertility of Eastern European migrants: A comparison with nonmigrants and stayers

Figures 1 and 2 show the results from the first part of the analytical strategy, focusing on the fertility of Eastern European migrants compared to both the nonmigrants in the destination country and stayers in the origin country. Female Polish and Romanian migrants have a lower number of children with respect to nonmigrants, especially in the UK (Figure 1, Mod. 1). The differences only slightly increase if education (Mod. 2) and employment condition are controlled for (Mod. 3), mainly for Romanians in Italy and Poles in the United Kingdom, despite the different socioeconomic composition compared to nonmigrants at destination (see Table A1).

Moreover, female Polish immigrants in Italy and the United Kingdom have much lower fertility compared to their counterparts in Poland. The gap is especially large in Italy, where Poles' fertility is closer to that of Italian nonmigrants than to that of Polish stayers. This gap increases further if education is controlled for, with Polish

immigrants to Italy seeming to be negatively selected in educational attainment (Mod. 2; see also Table A1).

On the contrary, female Romanian immigrants' fertility is not different—or is even higher—compared to that of Romanian stayers. Moreover, the differences between migrants and stayers do not substantially change if one controls for individual characteristics such as education and employment condition. However, Romanian females' fertility is higher in the United Kingdom than in Italy compared to that of stayers, possibly because immigrants with higher fertility preferences may be attracted by a country with a keener policy interest in migrants' fertility (see Wilson, 2020).

Looking at men (Figure 2), Poles do not substantially differ from nonmigrants in the UK and have small (lower) differences in Italy, whereas Romanians have a lower number of children in the former country and higher in the latter (Mod. 1). Education does not account for these differences (Mod. 2), although migrants have a lower educational level compared to nonmigrants at destination—as well as compared to stayers at origin if immigrants to Italy are considered, confirming a negative selection according to education for Eastern Europeans moving to this country (see Table A2). Occupational condition does not cause the migrants' 'penalty' or 'premium' to substantially change, either (Mod. 3). Compared to stayers in the country of origin, Polish migrants have a lower number of children, especially if migrants to Italy are considered, which is also found for women. On the contrary, Romanians' fertility is higher compared to stayers at both destinations.

In the second part of the empirical strategy, we focus on migrants' fertility over years of residence in the destination country. The upper part of Figures 3 (female) and 4 (male) shows the difference in the predicted number of children of Eastern European migrants settled in Italy and the United Kingdom for different numbers of years, and stayers at the origin (dashed line) compared to nonmigrants at the destination. Concerning women, migrants' fertility increases over time of residence in both destinations, although to a lower extent for Romanians in the United Kingdom (Figure 3).

The reduction in fertility differences with respect to nonmigrants at destination is more visible in Italy. Here, the predicted number of children of female migrants recently settled in the destination society is greatly lower than that of the native population, whereas it is almost nondistinguishable from the latter for those settled for more than 10 years. This might be due to the low fertility rate in Italy compared to the United Kingdom, making it easier for migrants from low-fertility countries to approximate it in the long term and even slightly surpass it. In line with the frequent movements of Eastern European women to Italy as first migrants (see also Table A1), evidence for this country thus suggests disruptive costs partially related to marital separation in the short term and family reunification in the long term.

The evidence concerning men is more mixed (Figure 4). Poles' fertility in Italy is closer to that of the nonmigrant population rather than that of stayers in Poland, although its trend over time of residence in the destination country is not clear. Meanwhile, Romanian migrants in Italy first exhibit lower fertility—compared to

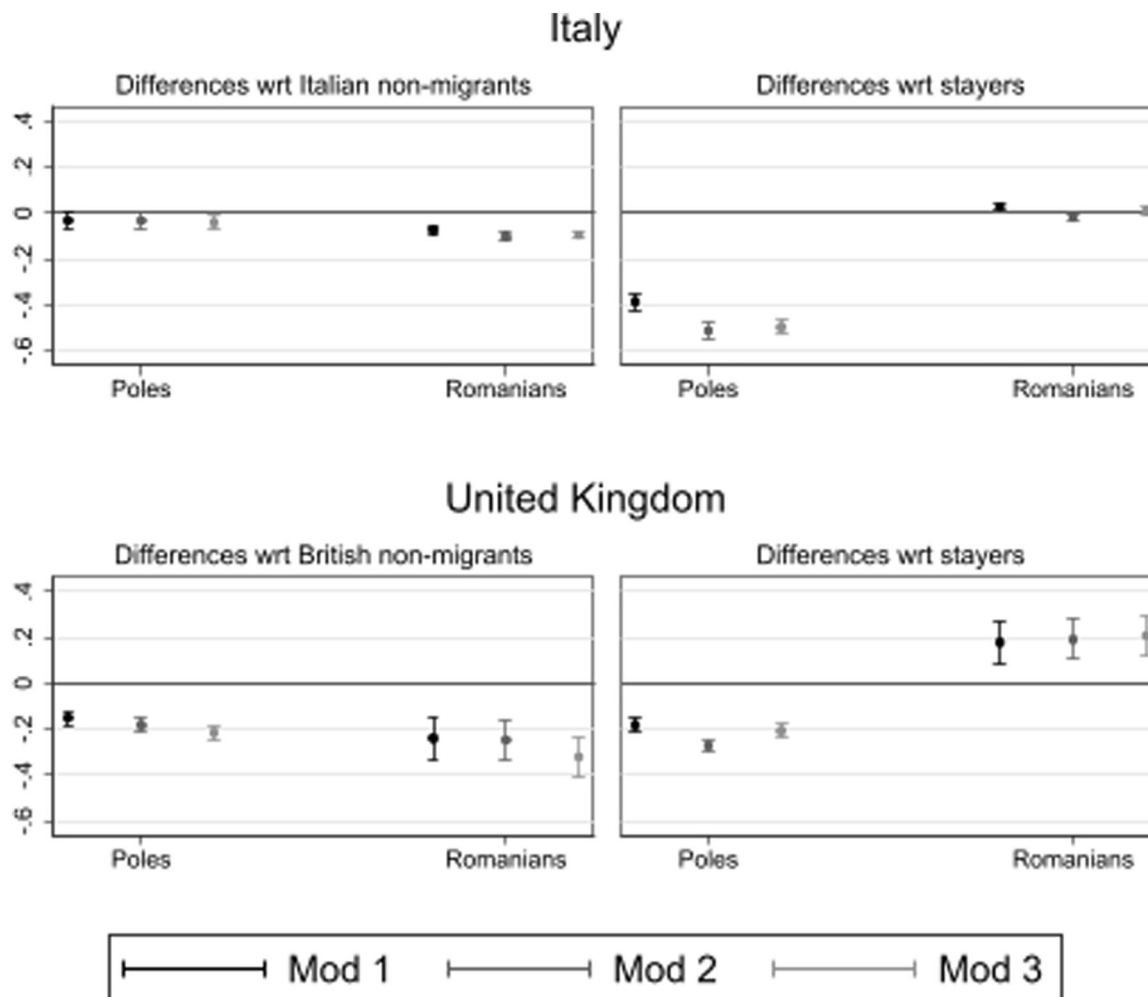


FIGURE 1 Differences in predicted number of children for Poles and Romanian migrants with respect to nonmigrants and stayers, by country of destination: women. Poisson models (exposure variable: years since age 15). Average marginal effects. Controls: year of survey (Mod. 1), education (Mod. 2) and employment condition (Mod. 3). *Source:* own elaboration on EU-LFS (2009–2015); IT-LFS (2009–2015) and UK-LFS (2009–2015). EU-LFS, European Labour Force Survey; IT-LFS, Italian Labour Force Survey; UK-LFS, British Labour Force Survey.

both nonmigrants at destination and stayers at origin—if settled for less than 2 years in the new country, but after this their predicted number of children catches up with and even surpasses that of the reference groups. This is stronger, but consistent with the pattern found for Romanian women in Italy, and can be explained by tied migrant men joining their spouses in the long term, often together with children born before migration. Moreover, this group of migrants includes a large proportion of couples moving together to the new country (see Table A2), which may account for the low disruption in the short term.

Finally, some differences emerge in fertility trends among Eastern European migrants in the United Kingdom. Romanians' fertility resembles that of stayers in the country of origin, without large changes over time since migration, as also found among women. On the contrary, Poles face disruptive costs compared to both nonmigrants and stayers in the short term, whereas their fertility becomes similar to that of the two reference groups in the long term.

6.2 | The fertility of couples and the role of family migration

We finally move to the third step of the empirical analysis, focusing on couples and on the strategies of family migration. The lower part of Figures 3 and 4 presents results only for those individuals living as a couple (ethnically endogamous or mixed) at the time of the interview. Trends over time of residence among women in a couple are highly similar to those of the whole sample of women, showing a reduction in the fertility gap between migrants and nonmigrants/stayers over the years since migration (Figure 3).² However, compared to the whole sample, the migrant-stayer gap is lower in

²Results involving couples are confirmed by additional analyses (available on request) that compare models controlling (or not) for marital status. Moreover, we estimated these additional models only on ethnically endogamous couples to control for the selection of migrants according to marital status. In this case as well, the interpretations of results are in line with those presented here.

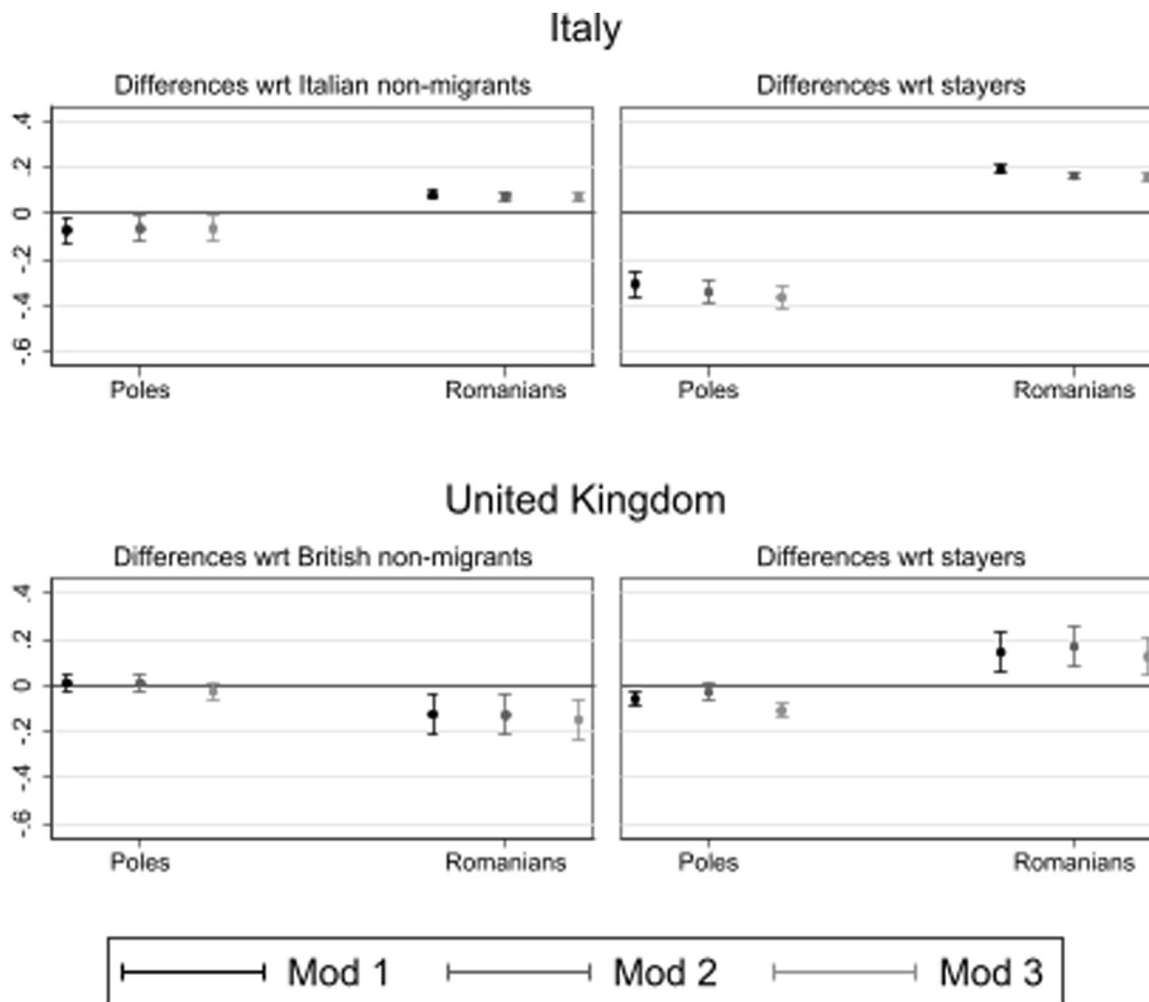


FIGURE 2 Differences in predicted number of children for Poles and Romanian migrants with respect to nonmigrants and stayers, by country of destination: men. Poisson models (exposure variable: years since age 15). Average marginal effects. Controls: year of survey (Mod. 1), education (Mod. 2) and employment condition (Mod. 3). Source: own elaboration on EU-LFS (2009–2015); IT-LFS (2009–2015) and UK-LFS (2009–2015). EU-LFS, European Labour Force Survey; IT-LFS, Italian Labour Force Survey; UK-LFS, British Labour Force Survey.

both the short and long terms in Italy, especially for Poles, who primarily move to the new country alone and remain alone even several years after migration (see Table A1). On the contrary, in the UK the ‘penalty’ of female migrants in a couple is larger than the one found for all women, as most Eastern Europeans migrate to the United Kingdom as tied movers or jointly with their spouse (see Table A1).

Trends over time since migration among individuals in a couple are highly similar to those of the whole sample for men as well (Figure 4). Among Romanian immigrants living as a couple in Italy, differences with respect to the stayers are lower than for the whole sample, because a large group move to this country alone, facing disruptive costs related to family separation in the short term and benefiting from family reunification in the long term. Concerning Poles living as a couple, the small sample size of those in Italy does not allow us to reach substantive conclusions. For instance, the positive gap between those settled for less than 2 years and both natives and stayers is driven by a very low number of cases ($N = 15$),

among which there is a large proportion of tied or joint movers with a very high number of children. In the case of the United Kingdom, the reduction in the migrant–stayer gap among couples is less visible, as the short-term disruption of first migrants is counterbalanced by the large proportion of those moving together with their partner (see Table A2).

Figures 5 and 6 shed further light on the relationship between family migration strategies and migrants’ fertility. The bars show the difference in the predicted number of children among five groups of immigrants distinguished according to the migration strategy compared to nonmigrants at destination, whereas the dashed line refers to the stayers at origin. Migrant men and women moving alone are ‘penalized’ with respect to stayers and natives, regardless of origin and destination, confirming the lower fertility of those not living as a couple. Moreover, this is consistent with the disruption argument, as some lone migrants can actually be first movers who have left spouse and children behind, thus facing disruptive costs related to family separation.

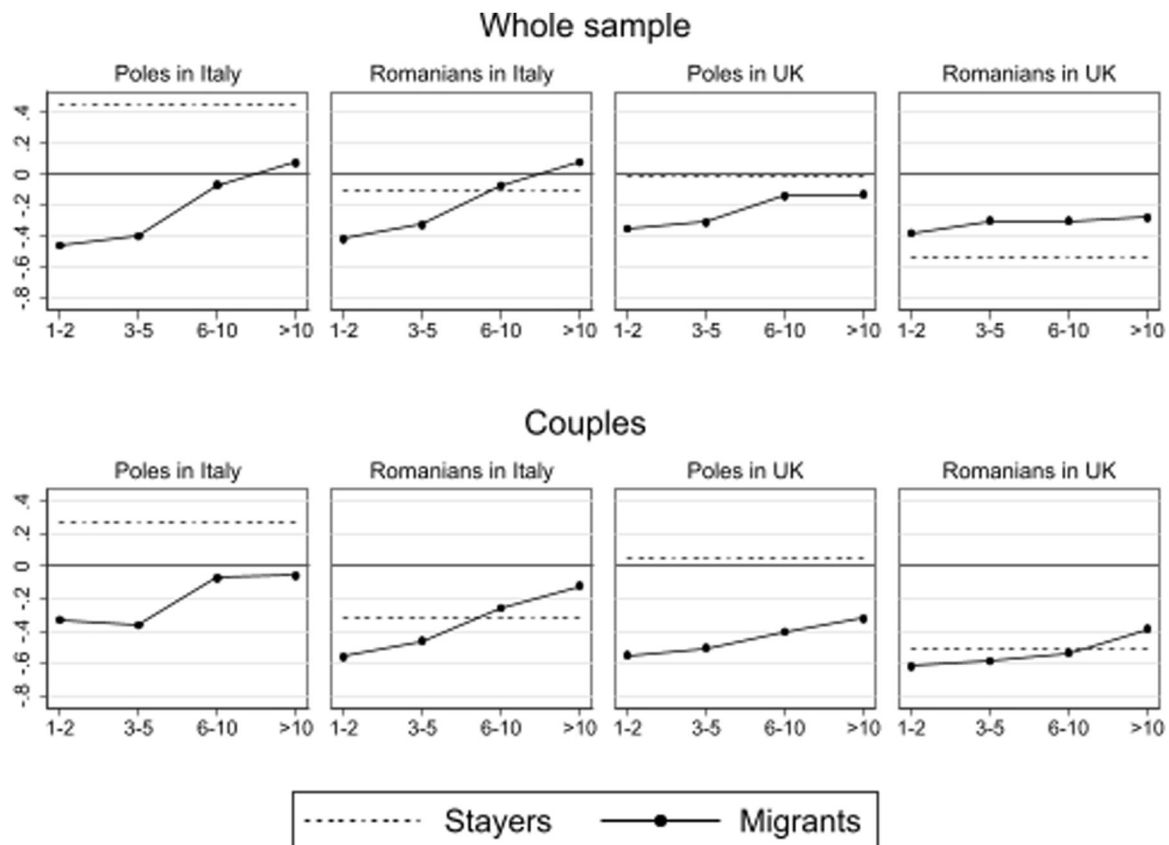


FIGURE 3 Differences in predicted number of children for Poles and Romanian migrants with respect to nonmigrants and stayers, by country of destination and years since migration: women. Poisson models (exposure variable: years since age 15). Average marginal effects. Controls: year of survey, education, employment condition (whole sample), as well as partner's age, partner's country of origin, partner's employment condition (couples). *Source:* own elaboration on EU-LFS (2009–2015); IT-LFS (2009–2015) and UK-LFS (2009–2015). EU-LFS, European Labour Force Survey; IT-LFS, Italian Labour Force Survey; UK-LFS, British Labour Force Survey.

Figure 5 additionally shows that women in a mixed-origin marriage are among those with the lowest fertility, with the sole exception of Poles in Italy. First migrants have low fertility in the United Kingdom, whereas in Italy their fertility is slightly higher than that of the nonmigrant population as, among other reasons, this group comprises all the women who have been joined by their partner in the long term through family reunification. Tied and joint-mover women, on the contrary, are among those with the highest fertility, confirming the interrelation between migration and family events. Indeed, they can either bring their children born in the country of origin or give birth to new children in the destination society, especially in the case of those joining their spouse for family reunification. Among Romanian migrants in the UK, tied and joint movers are the only ones who approximate the fertility of British nonmigrants more than that of Romanian stayers, whereas the fertility of those married to a nonmigrant man is highly similar to that of their counterparts in Romania.

If we look at men, the gap between first migrants and natives/stayers is generally positive or not substantially relevant, because this group of migrants includes first movers joined by their spouse (and children) after several years spent in the country of destination,

whose contribution to fertility more than compensates for the disruption related to the marital separation of recent migrants (Figure 6). Tied, and especially joint, movers have high fertility in all contexts (except tied Romanians in the UK, where the migrant–nonmigrant gap is not substantially relevant), confirming the importance of migrating with one's spouse and, to a lower extent, joining the woman already settled in the destination country, according to the interrelation of events argument. Finally, the evidence for Eastern Europeans married to a woman born at destination is mixed. Following our expectations, Poles living in a mixed couple seem to 'adapt' to the fertility norms of the country of destination, although the cases are very few, especially in the UK. On the contrary, the fertility of Romanians living with a British woman is more similar to that of stayers in Romania.

7 | DISCUSSION

This study focused on women and men from low-fertility origins (Poland and Romania) in two relatively different fertility regimes (Italy and the UK), including a 'context-of-origin' perspective (stayers).

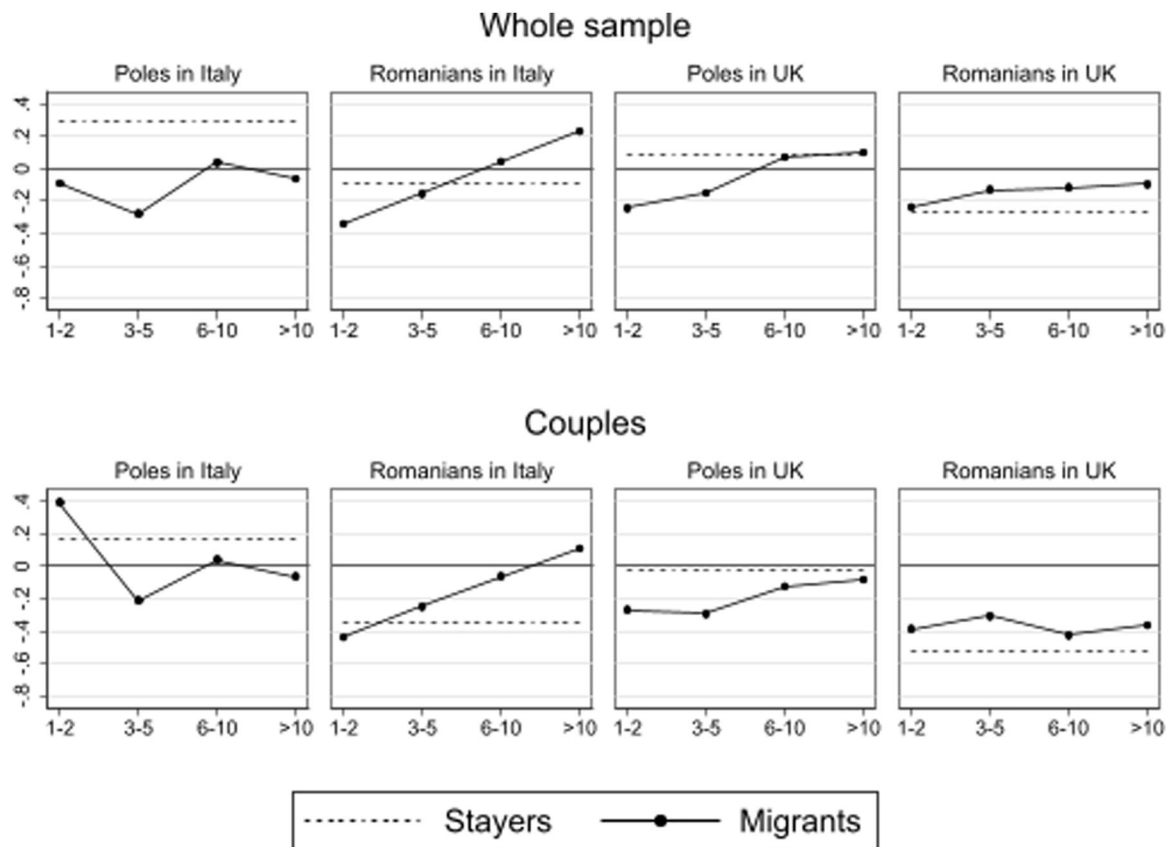


FIGURE 4 Differences in predicted number of children for Poles and Romanian migrants with respect to nonmigrants and stayers, by country of destination and years since migration: men. Poisson models (exposure variable: years since age 15). Average marginal effects. Controls: year of survey, education, employment condition (whole sample), as well as partner's age, partner's country of origin, partner's employment condition (couples). *Source:* own elaboration on EU-LFS (2009–2015); IT-LFS (2009–2015) and UK-LFS (2009–2015). EU-LFS, European Labour Force Survey; IT-LFS, Italian Labour Force Survey; UK-LFS, British Labour Force Survey.

Looking at men and women with the same background in different destination countries should help to distinguish—at least from a descriptive point of view, as in our case—the main hypotheses on migrants' fertility outlined in literature, and to better study the role of the cultural and normative effect of the destination country in fertility behaviour. Despite methodological advances (Wolf & Mulder, 2019), few studies in Europe to date have compared the fertility of migrants to that of stayers at origin taking a 'context-of-origin' perspective (e.g., Güveli et al., 2016), or looked at the same origins at the (same) different destinations simultaneously (Mussino & Cantalini, 2020).

In general, we showed that Polish and Romanian women have fewer children than nonmigrants at destinations, confirming previous research (e.g., Waller et al., 2014). Romanian migrant women—as well as men—also have fertility similar to that of stayers at the origin (H1a), especially in the United Kingdom, where patterns do not change over time spent in the destination country, consistent with the socialization hypothesis (H1b). Among Romanian women, the socialization argument is also confirmed by findings on mixed couples, who exhibit fertility similar to that of stayers at origin.

We also found relevant compositional/selection effects, as the two migrant groups have different sociodemographic profiles at origin and at destination. Indeed, regardless of gender, Eastern European immigrants seem to be differently selected—in terms of individual characteristics such as education—depending on the country of destination. Although they have a lower education compared to nonmigrants at destination, only the low- and medium-educated migrate to Italy, whereas the UK attracts a larger proportion of tertiary-educated compared to stayers, especially if Romanians are considered (Clark & Drinkwater, 2008; Drinkwater et al., 2009). Whereas these compositional effects do not contribute to decreasing the fertility differences between migrants and nonmigrants, they slightly reduce the gap between migrants and stayers in the UK, given that Eastern European migrants are more similar to British nonmigrants than to their counterparts at origin, in line with H2a. However, despite the relevance of observable characteristics, unobserved factors (e.g., fertility preferences, ambitions, etc.) seem to be at play in explaining fertility differentials between migrants and nonmigrants as well as stayers, as expected (H2b).

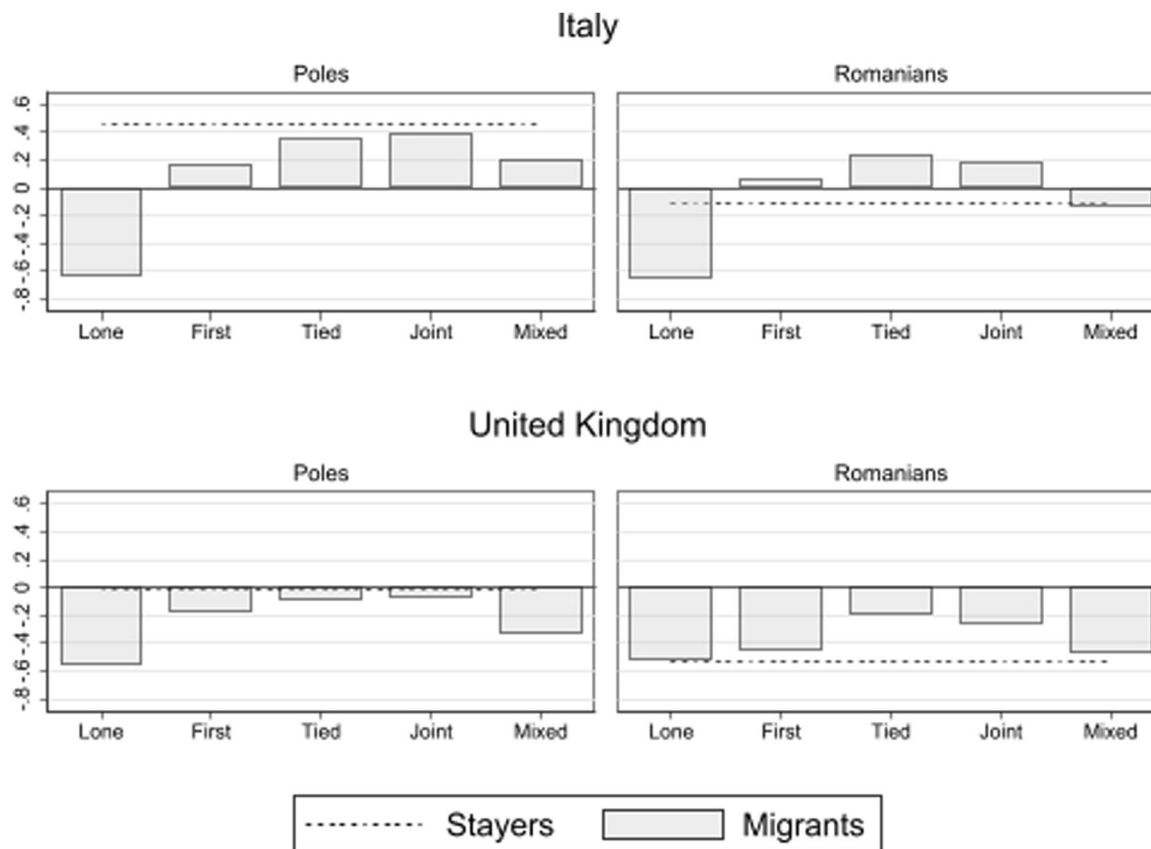


FIGURE 5 Differences in predicted number of children for Poles and Romanian migrants with respect to nonmigrants and stayers, by country of destination and type of family migration: women. Poisson models (exposure variable: years since age 15). Average marginal effects. Controls: year of survey, education, employment condition. Source: own elaboration on EU-LFS (2009–2015); IT-LFS (2009–2015) and UK-LFS (2009–2015). EU-LFS, European Labour Force Survey; IT-LFS, Italian Labour Force Survey; UK-LFS, British Labour Force Survey.

Moreover, our findings suggest the presence of the disruption mechanism for migrants, primarily in Italy. Eastern European immigrants have low fertility in the first years after the geographical movement, both because of the costs and difficulties encountered immediately after migration (e.g., search for a job, interruption of social networks, change in life conditions, etc.) and due to family separation (Milewski, 2010). Indeed, both male and female migrants to Italy frequently move as forerunners, leaving their spouse and children in the country of origin and thus depressing fertility in the short term (H5a). Similarly, the ‘catch-up’ of Eastern Europeans in Italy can be partially driven by family reunification; that is, partner and children joining the spouse/parent after the disruptive costs of migration have been paid off. In this respect, our couple perspective allowed us to find family reunification as the main sign of interrelation of events, confirmed by the high fertility of tied movers (H4b). On the contrary, although joint movers—a frequent group especially in the UK—exhibit relatively high fertility, we found no evidence of a declining trend in fertility for women with different durations of stay (H4a rejected).

However, the ‘catch-up’ over time of residence was found to be slower compared to previous studies (e.g., Lübke, 2015). This slower fertility increase with duration of stay seems consequently linked

more to the disruption hypothesis—coupled with family reunification in the long term—rather than to the adaptation hypothesis. This would also explain why particularly Poles overall have lower fertility compared to both nonmigrants and stayers (H5c). However, a finding supporting the adaptation hypothesis involves Polish men and, especially, women living in a mixed couple in Italy, who seem to ‘adapt’ to the fertility norms of the country of destination. Most migrants in a mixed couple, however, are predicted to have a lower number of children, especially compared to nonmigrants, not totally confirming the expectation that having a native partner would strengthen the adaptation process (H3b not supported).

Despite the data limitations discussed above (Section 5.1), this paper contributes to the literature on international migrants in several ways. First, despite the rising number of Eastern European migrants in the EU, few studies have looked at Romanian and Polish migrants, either in general or focusing particularly on fertility. Second, we find evidence of disruption for both origins regardless of the context in which the migration took place—albeit in Italy to a greater extent, presumably because of the different family migration strategies—while most of the previous literature on migrants from high-fertility countries to other European countries does not (e.g., Baykara-Krumme & Milewski, 2017).

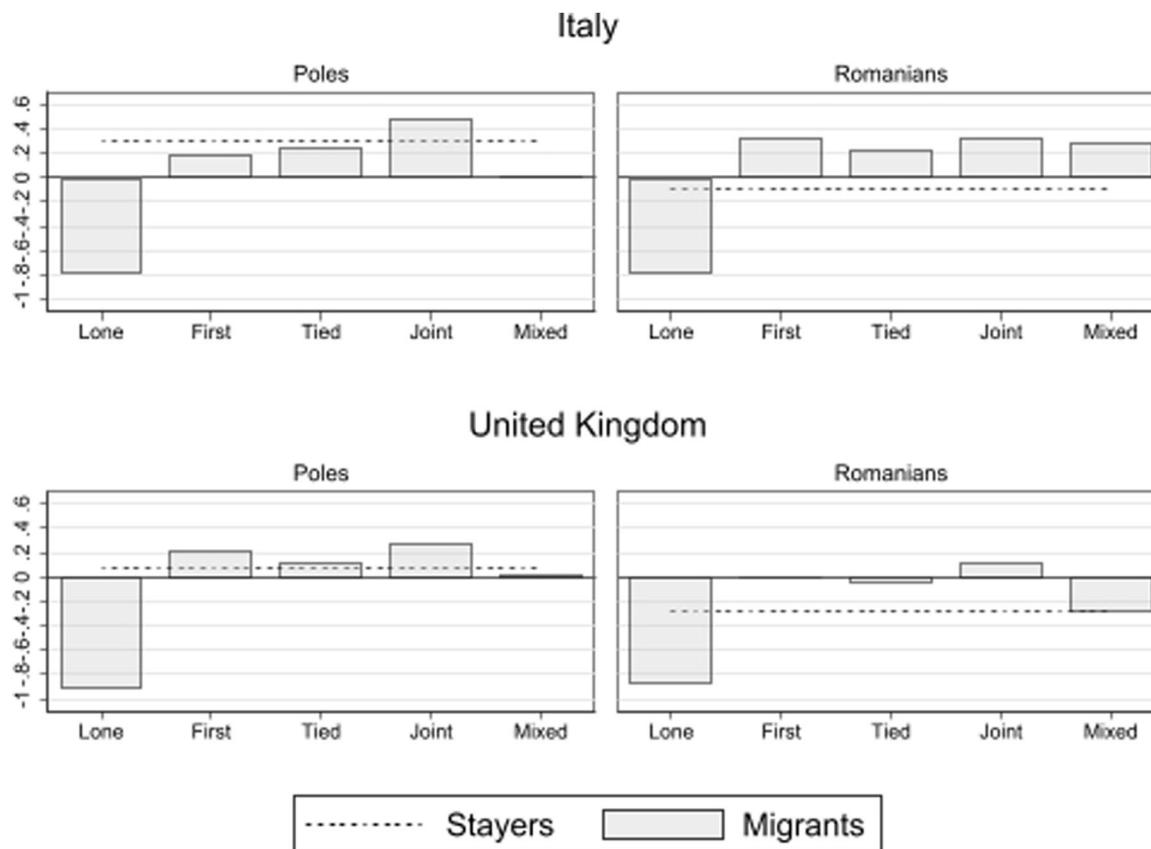


FIGURE 6 Differences in predicted number of children for Poles and Romanian migrants with respect to nonmigrants and stayers, by country of destination and type of family migration: men. Poisson models (exposure variable: years since age 15). Average marginal effects. Controls: year of survey, education, employment condition. Source: own elaboration on EU-LFS (2009–2015); IT-LFS (2009–2015) and UK-LFS (2009–2015). EU-LFS, European Labour Force Survey; IT-LFS, Italian Labour Force Survey; UK-LFS, British Labour Force Survey.

Third, we raise the potential of using a male and couple perspective when looking at migrants’ fertility, which can indeed be affected by the family migration strategies (Ortensi, 2015). This study, among other things, shows how a couple migration experience (even if not synchronized) does not negatively affect fertility despite the immediate effect of the separation (Lindstrom & Saucedo, 2002).

Finally, without the innovative combination of the multi-origin/multi-destination approach with the ‘context-of-origin’ and looking at migrants from low- to low- as well as high-fertility countries, it would not have been possible to reach the same conclusions regarding the role of selection in migrants’ fertility or the importance of the norm at the destination. For instance, smaller differentials between migrants and nonmigrants in Italy are explained by the smaller fertility differentials between the origin and destination countries compared to the UK, and the destination effect explains the overall higher fertility of migrants in the UK than in Italy. Although it is difficult to state whether origin or destination is the most important for migrants’ fertility, our approach is a first step toward answering this question. Future studies are encouraged to include in their theoretical and empirical framework migrants from different origins in different destinations and to compare them with both stayers at

origin and nonmigrants at destination, to further deepen the knowledge of the influence of origin and destination on migrant fertility.

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DATA AVAILABILITY STATEMENT

The data that support our findings are available from EUROSTAT, ISTAT and ONS. Restrictions apply to the availability of these data, which were used under license for the current study, and so are not publicly available.

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SUPPORTING INFORMATION

Additional supporting information can be found online in the Supporting Information section at the end of this article.

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