

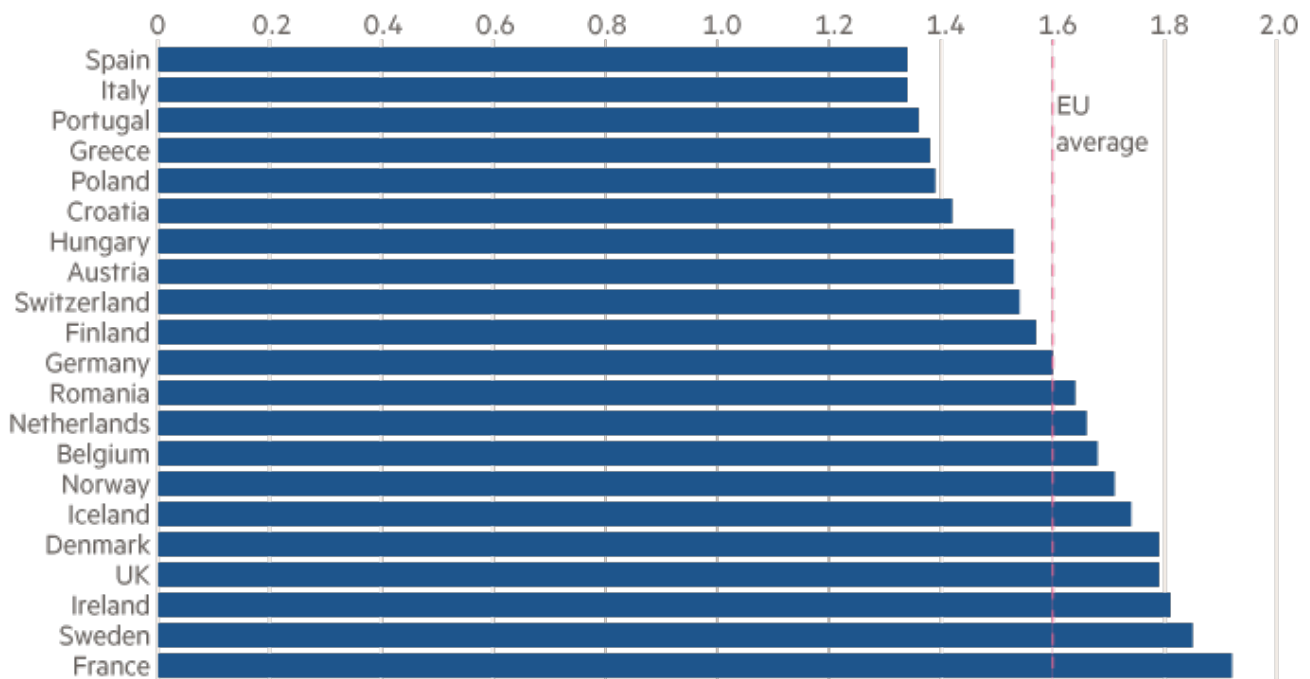
Highest fertility rates in Europe still below 'replenishment level'

France and Sweden have highest birth rates while southern European countries lag behind

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France and Sweden have the highest fertility rates in Europe

Fertility rate*



*Number of children a woman is expected to have over a lifetime

Source: Eurostat

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France and Sweden hold the record for the highest fertility rates in the EU, but their rates are still far from replenishment level needed in a modern society to avoid population decline without migration, according to data published by Eurostat, the bloc's statistical office.

Women in France and Sweden can expect to have 1.92 and 1.88 children over their lifetimes respectively, but it is [generally accepted](#) that fertility rates have to exceed around 2.1 in order for a population to replace itself without inward migration boosting numbers.

Across the EU the average fertility rate is 1.6.

Eurostat, which for comparative purposes also publishes data of countries outside the trading bloc, showed that in the continent only Turkey, at 2.08, has a higher fertility rate than France.

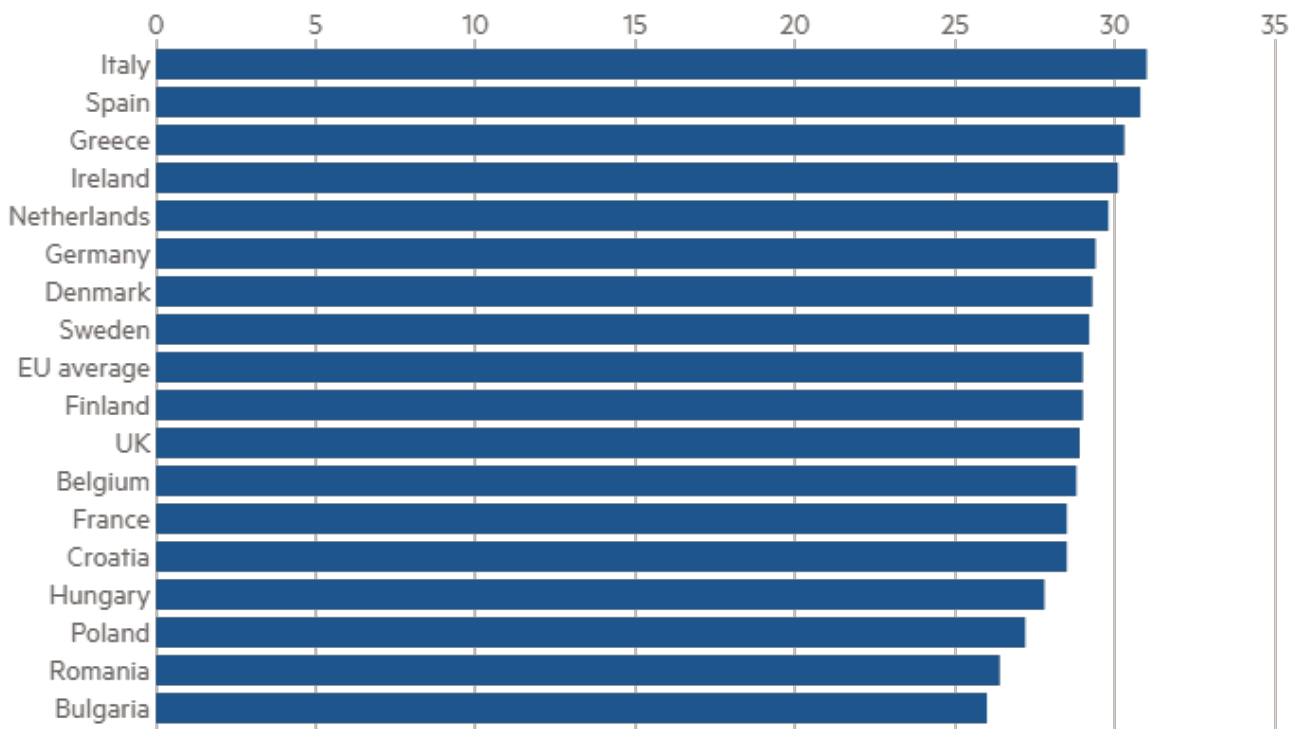
The lowest fertility rates were recorded in the southern European countries of Italy, Spain and Portugal where they range between 1.34 and 1.36.

Eurostat's report also showed that over the last five years the average age of first time mothers has gone up in all countries for which data is available, with the exception of the UK. In Britain, the average age has dropped from 30.6 in 2010 to 28.9 in 2016 – roughly in line with the EU average of 29.



First time mothers youngest in Bulgaria, oldest in Italy and Spain

Average age of first-time mothers



Source: Eurostat

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