

The thesis focuses on the patterns of nonmarital childbearing and its influence on the health of newborns in the Czech Republic between 1990 and 2010. Numerous and profound social changes took part in these two decades after the fall of state socialism. Socioeconomic inequalities grew, a competitive job market was introduced and social policy was reformed. Family behaviour changed, as well. A more than four-fold rise of the proportion of children born outside marriage was among the most remarkable changes in this regard. Two research questions were addressed: 1. how did unmarried motherhood and its socioeconomic background change; 2. how did these changes influence disparities in the health of newborns by family arrangement. Data from the birth register are used for answering these questions and analysed with multilevel regression models. The method was aimed at explaining variability between contexts defined by time and space. Health of newborns is measured by birth weight. Family arrangement of mothers is measured with their marital status. Unmarried mothers are further split by the presence of a partner measured with the mother's willingness to declare child's father. The results show that birth outcomes on nonmarital children improved and marital status gap in birth weight closed substantially in the study period. The mechanisms that generate the health disparity between marital and nonmarital children transformed in two ways. First, the composition of unmarried mothers by partnership arrangement shifted in favour of partnered mothers whose outcomes dominated the overall trend. Second, the educational structure of unmarried mothers became a more salient factor that defines the size of the marital status gap because the direct effect of unmarried status diminished due to rising social acceptance.