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“The Role of Culture in Contraception Demand”

Abstract

This paper studies the effect of culture on the demand for a new technology, the birth control pill in Sweden. Historical factors are economically significant determinants of demand for the pill. Localities with higher out-of-wedlock births or less favorable marriage market conditions for women at the turn of the century have higher demand for the pill six decades later, while localities where the age of first marriage was lower have relatively lower demand for the pill. These findings are robust to controlling for contemporaneous economic, demographic, and epidemiological factors as well as alternative historical factors such as women’s level of literacy and religious composition.