



Centre d'Estudis Demogràfics

**ARE COHABITING AND BEING MARRIED DIFFERENT?
DIFFERENCES IN THE SOCIO-DEMOGRAPHIC
COMPOSITION OF PARTNERSHIPS IN WESTERN
EUROPEAN COUNTRIES**

Pau MIRET
María José GONZÁLEZ-LÓPEZ
Rocío TREVIÑO

360

*PAPERS
DE
DEMOGRAFIA*

2010



Centre d'Estudis Demogràfics

**ARE COHABITING AND BEING MARRIED DIFFERENT?
DIFFERENCES IN THE SOCIO-DEMOGRAPHIC
COMPOSITION OF PARTNERSHIPS IN WESTERN
EUROPEAN COUNTRIES**

Pau MIRET
María José GONZÁLEZ-LÓPEZ
Rocío TREVIÑO

360

El document es va presentar, en format pòster,
a la *XXVI IUSSP International Population Conference*.
Marrakech (Marroc), 27 de setembre - 2 d'octubre de 2009.

Centre d'Estudis Demogràfics

2010

Are cohabiting and being married different?

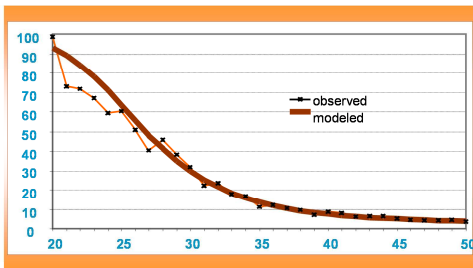
Differences in the socio-demographic composition of partnerships in Western European Countries*

Introduction

- Recent demographic trends show a steady increase of consensual unions in most Western European Countries. However, there is a good deal of diversity across countries in the prevalence of cohabitation
- Current literature has documented the selection process which takes place through the transition to cohabitation and marriage and that factors associated with a higher likelihood of forming a cohabiting couple differ according to the current diffusion of cohabitation
- We explore current characteristics and differences between cohabiting and married couples across thirteen European countries

Results

1. Percentage of cohabiting couples by age of male



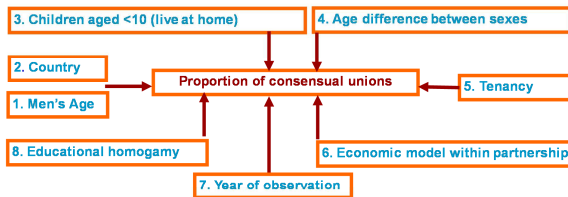
Age is the most important variable in explaining cohabitation

The older the person is, the lower his or her probability of cohabiting as opposed to being married

Data, Hypothesis and Methods

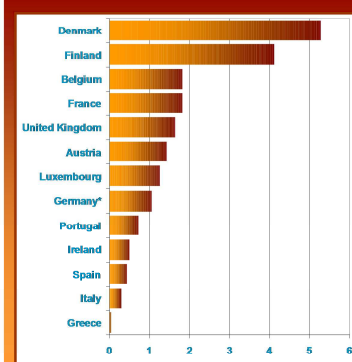
- The empirical research is based on the eight waves of the European Community Household Panel (ECHP), from 1994 to 2001
- The main hypothesis is: the indicators associated with propensity to cohabit are fundamentally different from the indicators associated with the propensity to marry
- Logistic regression is used to explore explanatory variables associated with the likelihood of individuals within a partnership who are cohabiting instead of being married
- Eight explanatory variables summarised in Figure 1:

Figure 1. Explanatory variables for the prevalence of consensual unions



Net effects of the explanatory variables on the odds ratios of being in a consensual union instead of in a marriage, keeping other variables constant (reference: general pattern)

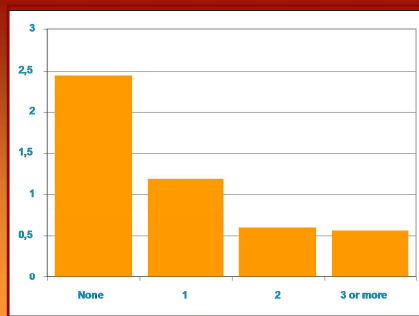
2. Country effect



Great differences in the prevalence of consensual unions

Three clusters can be identified: a) low levels, Southern Europe and Ireland; b) high levels, Nordic countries; c) medium levels, in the remaining countries

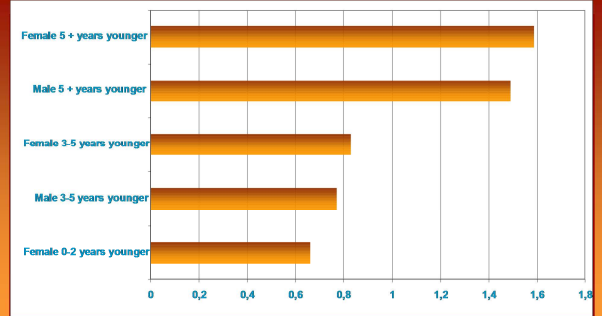
3. Age of residential children effect



Cohabiting entails lower probability of having children at home (aged less than ten years)

Only in Denmark there are no substantial differences between not having and having just one child (interaction effect with country)

4. Difference of age between partners effect



The effect of the age gap between partners has a "U" form: it was more likely to be a cohabiting couple when the age gap between partners was very high

This pattern is registered in all analysed countries

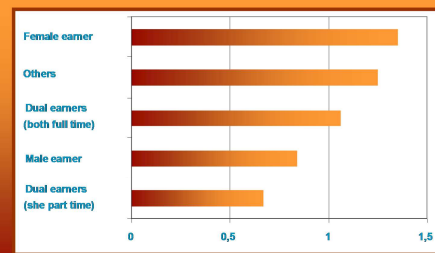
5. Tenancy effect



Homeownership appears to be associated with lower cohabitation

Belgium is an exception to this pattern: there are no differences between owners and renters (interactions effect with country)

6. Effect of the couple's economic model



The high odds of being in consensual unions were for those partnerships where females are the main breadwinners

More unstable and unfavourable couple's economic situations (i.e. both unemployed) that were included in the "others" category, was also associated with cohabitation

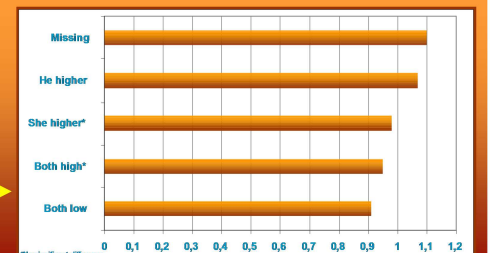
There are great interactions effects with country: in Denmark, only male earners are significantly associated with cohabitation; in Finland only dual earners are significantly associated.

7. Year of observation

There was not a large variation in the prevalence of cohabitation across time period analysed

Educational homogeneity has almost no importance in the variation of prevalence in cohabitation

8. Educational homogeneity effect



Concluding remarks

- Cohabiting couples have very distinct features and show large variance in terms of occurrence across Western European countries: are rather low in Ireland and Southern countries and rather high in countries such as Denmark, Finland and France
- Cohabitation is chosen by young adults, is more common among couples with large age differences, normally brings fewer children than marital unions, is associated with renting and to "atypical" family economic models
- These patterns are registered in almost all countries analysed

**ARE COHABITING AND BEING MARRIED DIFFERENT?
DIFFERENCES IN THE SOCIO-DEMOGRAPHIC COMPOSITION
OF PARTNERSHIPS IN WESTERN EUROPEAN COUNTRIES¹**

Pau MIRET

pmiret@ced.uab.es

María José GONZÁLEZ-LÓPEZ

mjose.gonzalez@upf.edu

Rocío TREVIÑO

rtrevino@ced.uab.es

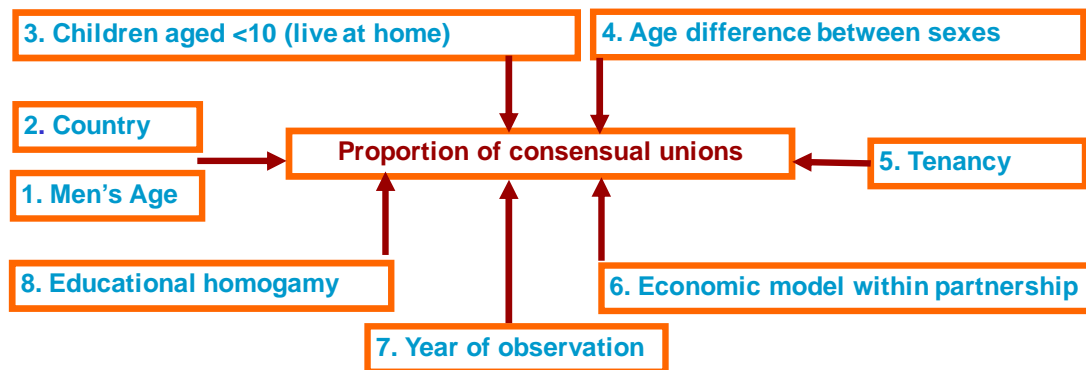
1.- Introduction

- Recent demographic trends show a steady increase of consensual unions in most Western European Countries. However, there is a good deal of diversity across countries in the prevalence of cohabitation.
- Current literature has documented the selection process which takes place through the transition to cohabitation and marriage and that factors associated with a higher likelihood of forming a cohabiting couple differ according to the current diffusion of cohabitation.
- We explore current characteristics and differences between cohabiting and married couples across thirteen European countries.

¹ Funding research projects: Ministerio de Educación y Ciencia. 1.- *Hogares de familias reconstituídas y equidad de género ¿nuevas paradojas?* (CSO2008-00654); 2.- *Juventud, género e inmigración ante la inserción en el mercado laboral en España ¿Substitución o complementariedad? ¿Efecto edad o efecto cohorte?* (SEJ2007-67569).

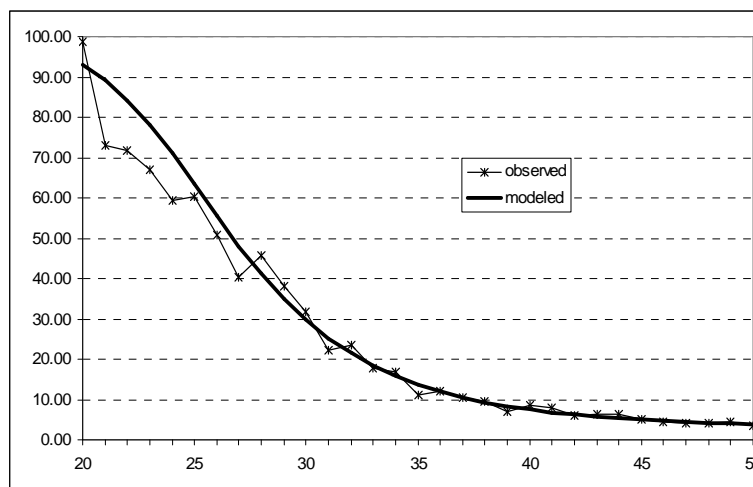
2.- Data, Hypothesis and Methods

- The empirical research is based on the eight waves of the European Community Household Panel (ECHP), from 1994 to 2001.
- The main hypothesis is: the indicators associated with propensity to cohabit are fundamentally different from the indicators associated with the propensity to marry.
- Logistic regression is used to explore explanatory variables associated with the likelihood of individuals within a partnership who are cohabiting instead of being married.
- Eight explanatory variables summarised in the next Figure:



3.- Results

3.1.- Percentage of cohabiting couples by age of male

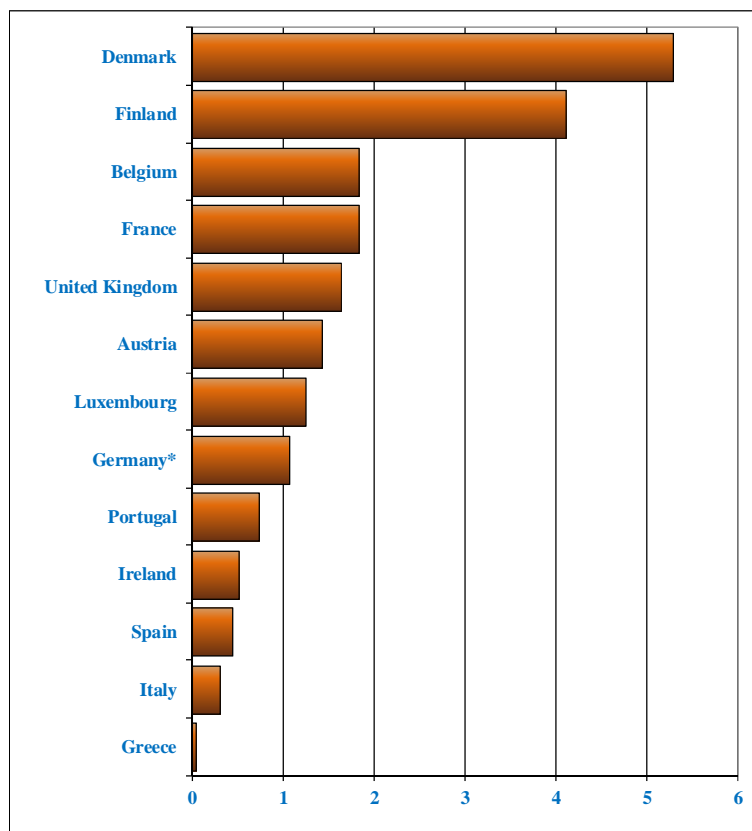


- Age is the most important variable in explaining cohabitation.
- The older the person is, the lower his or her probability of cohabiting as opposed to being married.

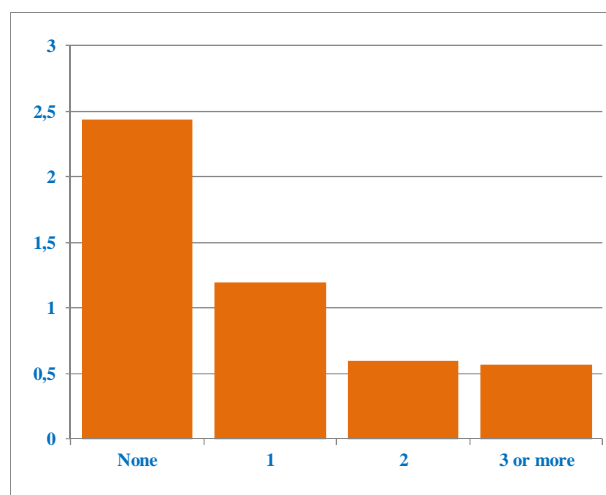
3.2.- Net effects of the explanatory variables on the odds ratios of being in a consensual union instead of in a marriage, keeping other variables constant (reference: general pattern)

3.2.1.- Country effect

- Great differences in the prevalence of consensual unions.
- Three clusters can be identified:
 - a) low levels, Southern Europe and Ireland
 - b) high levels, Nordic countries
 - c) medium levels, in the remaining countries

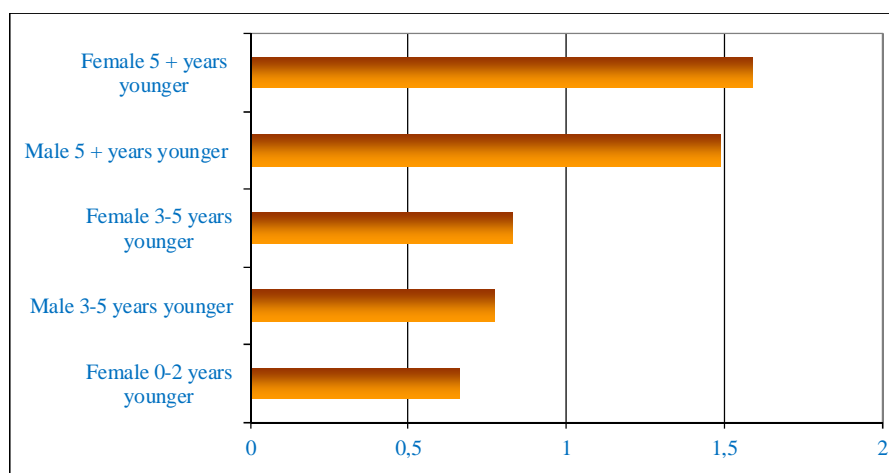


3.2.2.- Age of residential children effect



- Cohabiting entails lower probability of having children at home (aged less than ten years).
- Only in Denmark there are no substantial differences between not having and having just one child (interaction effect with country).

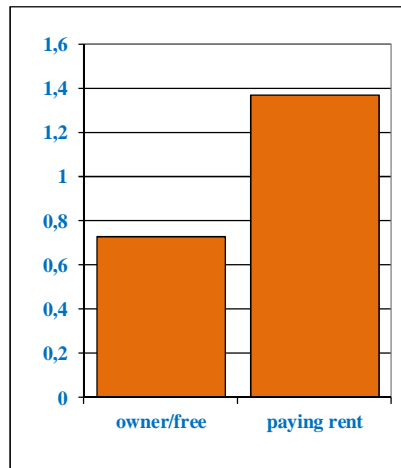
3.2.3.- Difference of age between partners effect



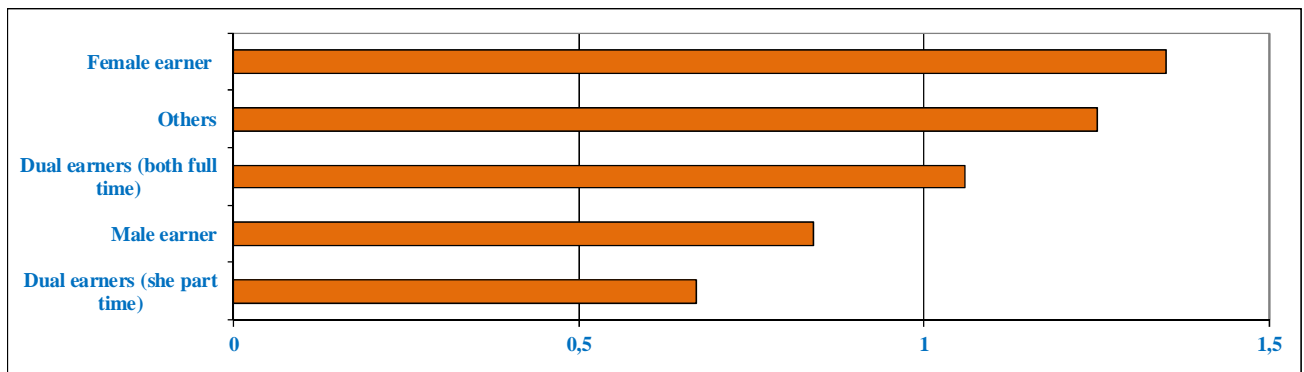
- The effect of the age gap between partners has a “U” form: it was more likely to be a cohabiting couple when the age gap between partners was very high.
- This pattern is registered in all analysed countries.

3.2.4.- Tenancy effect

- Homeownership appears to be associated with lower cohabitation.
- Belgium is an exception to this pattern: there are no differences between owners and renters (interactions effect with country).



3.2.5.- Effect of the couple's economic model



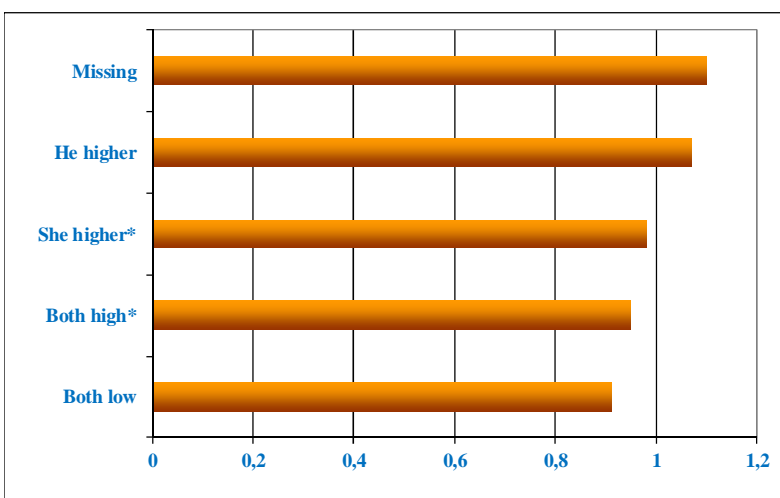
- The high odds of being in consensual unions were for those partnerships where females are de main breadwinners.
- More unstable and unfavourable couple's economic situations (i.e. both unemployed) that were included in the "others" category, was also associated with cohabitation.
- There are great interactions effects with country: in Denmark, only male earners are significantly associated with cohabitation; in Finland only dual earners are significantly associated.

3.2.6.- Year of observation

- There was not a large variation in the prevalence of cohabitation across time period analysed

3.2.7.- Educational homogamy effect

- Educational homogamy has almost no importance in the variation of prevalence in cohabitation



4.- Concluding remarks

- Cohabiting couples have very distinct features and show large variance in terms of occurrence across Western European countries: are rather low in Ireland and Southern countries and rather high in countries such as Denmark, Finland and France.
- Cohabitation is chosen by young adults, is more common among couples with large age differences, normally brings fewer children than marital unions, is associated with renting and to “atypical” family economic models.
- These patterns are registered in almost all countries analysed.