Changing Dynamics of Repartnering after Divorce and Separation in Europe and in the United States

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Abstract

This study investigates cross-national differences in re-partnering patterns in contemporary Europe and in the United States. We provide a description of the state of repartnering dynamics, i.e. the level, pace and type (cohabitation or marriage) of second unions across countries and cohorts. Our analyses use the "Harmonized Histories", which contains cleaned and harmonized partnership histories collected from individuals in 14 European countries and in the United States. We apply cumulative percentages and life table estimates. Our results show significant cross-national differences in the level of repartnering across cohorts. However, in all studied countries and across cohorts, second partnerships start predominantly with cohabitation. Furthermore, the pace of repartnering has significantly increased across cohort. Previously cohabiting women whose first union dissolved are likely to form a second union at a faster pace than their divorced counterparts. The differences in repartnering behaviour by first union status are rarely significant, however.

Introduction

Unions have become less stable over the past decades ending more often in divorce or separation rather than due to partner's death. Consequently, an increasing number of individuals re-enter the partner market after union dissolution and may eventually form a new union. Finding a new partner is likely to affect the economic, emotional and physical well-being of repartnered individuals and their children (Sweeney 2010). Repartnering may also present an opportunity for (further) childbearing (e.g. Beaujouan 2011, Griffith et al. 1985, Holland and Thomson 2011, Meggiolaro and Ongaro 2010) with implications for population fertility (Beaujouan and Solaz 2008, Thomson et al. 2012, Van Bavel et al. 2012). Furthermore, it challenges the social norms of traditional family systems (Cherlin 2004, Cherlin and Furstenberg 1994), by introducing complex kinship relations and living arrangements related to stepfamily formation (Allan et al. 2011). As union dissolution may have different consequences for divorced and formerly cohabiting women (Avellar and Smock 2005, de Regt et al. 2012, Manting and Bouman 2006), the implications of repartnering are also likely to depend on the type of the second union, i.e. cohabitation or marriage (de Regt et al. 2012, Morrison and Ritualo 2000, Sweeney 2010, Vikat et al. 1999, Wilmoth and Koso 2004).

A large body of literature has mainly examined repartnering behaviour in a single country (for example: in France: Beaujouan 2012, in the US: Bumpass et al. 1990, in Germany: Jaschinski 2009, in Italy: Meggiolaro and Ongaro 2008, in the Netherlands: Poortman 2007, in Canada: Wu and Schimmele 2005) or only in few countries in comparison (Blanc 1987, Ivanova et al. 2013, Skew et al. 2009). Also, previous research has largely focused on the effect of the demographic and socio-economic characteristics of individuals (e.g. gender, age, previous fertility and education) and those of a previous partnership (e.g. duration, union type, number of previous partners and exit status) on the chances of second

union formation (e.g. Blanc 1987, Bumpass et al. 1990, de Graaf and Kalmijn 2003, Ivanova et al. 2013, Poortman 2007, Shafer and James 2013, Teachman and Heckert 1985a, Wu 1994). Yet, despite the numerous studies investigating the determinants of repartnering in detail, in some of the countries, there is little information on prevalence and type of a second union in cross-national comparison. The study conducted by Fürnkranz-Prskawetz and colleagues (2003) is the only one, to the best of our knowledge, which has provided comparisons of second and third partnerships across Europe. However, their analyses, based on the Fertility and Family Surveys (FFS), were restricted to women aged 35 or younger in the early 1990s and did not distinguish between union status. Therefore, there is still a great need to investigate the increase and diversity in repartnering over time and across countries.

In this study, we intend to fill this gap and to provide a description of the state of repartnering dynamics in 14 European countries and in the United States. Cross-national comparison allows us to examine repartnering behaviour in various cultural and institutional settings. Much of the existing re-partnering literature comes from the US (Bumpass et al. 1990, Koo et al. 1984, McNamee and Raley 2011, Mott and Moore 1983, Shafer and James 2013, Sweeney 1997, 2002, Teachman and Heckert 1985b). However, the results may not necessary hold for Europe, for which generally different and also across countries varying family patterns have been documented (e.g. Cherlin 2009, Lesthaeghe and Neidert 2006, Raley 2001, Sobotka 2008, Sobotka and Toulemon 2008). Repartnering, thus, may have different meaning and implications for individuals who enter a second union across Europe and in the US. We first establish cross-national variations in the population at risk of repartnering, addressing in particular the questions: (i) what is the proportion of all women who enter a first union by union type? (ii) What proportion of all women experience a first union dissolution by union type? We then estimate (iii) the proportion of women who ever repartner by union type. In answering all three research questions, we are interested in family

changes at the population level. However, we also determine the pace at which repartnering occurs across countries and its changes across cohorts. Finally, given the gradual increase in a prevalence of cohabitation in Europe and the US (Kennedy and Bumpass 2008, Kiernan 2001, 2002, 2003), which has accompanied the decline in the propensity to marry and a rise in divorce rates, we further contribute to the existing literature by focusing on both previously married and previously cohabiting women whose first union dissolved. Studies conducted thus far have predominantly looked at repartnering after divorce (Bumpass 1990, de Graaf and Kalmijn 2003, Ivanova et al. 2013, Meggiolaro and Ongaro 2008, Shafer and James 2013, Sweeney 1997, Wu 1994), while only few have included formation of a new partnership following a non-marital union dissolution (e.g. Blanc 1987, Poortman 2007, Skew et al. 2009, Wu and Schimmele 2005). Yet, since cohabiters have been found to differ from their married counterparts in their individual characteristics, such as gender-role and family attitudes (e.g. Clarkberg et al. 1995), as well as in demographic aspects (e.g. age at dissolution and number of children), individuals who have experienced a non-marital union dissolution may show different re-partnering behaviour than divorcees (Blanc 1987, Wu and Schimmele 2005) and/or face different restrictions and opportunities at repartnering market (de Graaf and Kalmijn 2003, Ivanova et al. 2013). We investigate this aspect in more detail, while analysing (iv) the pace of repartnering by previous union type.

Theoretical framework

Increasing fragility of unions – deinstitutionalisation of marriage

In all Western societies, the institution of marriage has undergone profound changes over the last decades (Cherlin 2004, 2009, 2010, Kiernan 2001, 2002, 2004a, Seltzer 2000, Smock 2000); generally, marriage has become increasingly deinstitutionalised and has lost its supremacy as a setting for childbearing. Several factors have contributed to these

developments. From the beginning of the 1960s onwards, increases in employment and financial independence for females, together with changes in the division of labour in the home, have decreased the traditional benefits of marriage (Cherlin 2004), i.e. gained from specialisation (Becker 1991). Moreover, a stronger emphasis on intimate romantic relationships, self-development and flexibility of spouses' roles has caused a transition in the cultural ideal from the "companionate marriage" to the "individualized marriage" (Cherlin 2004, p. 852). Marital unions which do not satisfy emotional and personal needs increasingly dissolve. Consequently, the divorce rates have raised and the perception of marriage as a life-long commitment has decreased; a trend that may have been reinforced by liberalization in law and weakening normative barriers (ref).

With increasing divorce rates, repartnering has become more common, especially the prevalence of stepfamilies, as many divorcees entering a new union (or their partners) may have children from the previous relationships. However, repartnering is likely to differ from the first union formation. Generally, first partnership, particularly marriage, is believed to be a "marker in a process of becoming adult" (Bumpass et al. 1990, p.747). It is associated with a long-term commitment, establishing an independent household, and childbearing. These aspects often play a less important role in a second union formation. Since divorce has wide-ranging consequences for the economic, emotional and physical well-being of adults and their children (Amato 2000, 2010, Härkönen 2013, Sweeney 2010), repartnering, in many cases, is regarded as a way to increase psychological well-being and to counteract economic deterioration following marital breakdown (de Regt et al. 2012, Dewilde and Uunk 2008, Jansen et al. 2009, Ozawa and Yoon 2002, Shapiro 1996, Wang and Amato 2000). Furthermore, it has been argued that the second union, particularly remarriage, is an incomplete institution as it lacks behavioural norms that could guide stepfamily members in creating and sustaining a relationship to each other (Cherlin 1978, 2004, Cherlin and

Furstenberg 1994). Unlike first marriages, second unions, especially stepfamilies, often have a more complex family structure (Allan et al. 2011, Cherlin and Furstenberg 1994, Macdonald and Demaris 1995). The challenge for repartnered couples is to maintain not only a family unit comprising a biological parent, stepparent, pre-union and possibly joint children, but relationships to a non-residential biological parent, and in some cases to a previous spouse. Most notably, repartnering is less institutionalised than the first marriage, in terms of the role of the stepparent and the child's relationship to stepgrandparents (Cherlin and Furstenberg 1994). In addition, negative stereotyping of stepparents (Ganong et al. 1990) and insufficient legal regulations governing stepparents rights and obligations are common issues (Fine 1998, Fine and Fine 1992). A greater complexity of family structure in remarriage constitutes the main risk factor for dissolution. Existing literature provides evidence that second marriages are more fragile than first marital unions (Booth and Edwards 1992, Cherlin 1978, Teachman 2008); remarriages end more frequently in divorce, and typically after a shorter duration (Booth and Edwards 1992, Cherlin 1978, Teachman 2008).

Furthermore, the role of marriage in family life has also been undermined by the implications that marital instability may have for choosing cohabitation as a second union. Previous research has shown that most second unions begin with cohabitation, whereas direct remarriages are, in many countries, very rare (e.g. in Sweden and Norway: Blanc 1987, in the UK: Kiernan and Estaugh 1993, in the Netherlands: Poortman 2007, in Canada: Wu and Schimmele 2005). The preferences for a certain type of relationship are likely to change through the first marriage and the subsequent divorce (de Graaf and Kalmijn 2003). Some evidence suggests that divorcees may learn from their experience, and become more cautious about entering into and committing themselves to a new union (Poortman 2007). Consequently, starting a second union which is cohabitation is often preffered; non-marital unions may involve less risk as they are generally considered to have a lower emotional

investment (Wiik et al. 2009) and a weaker economic consolidation (Lyngstad et al. 2011). On the other hand, post-marital cohabitation offers many benefits which are similar to those from remarriage, without the high expectations of its persistence and stability (Blanc 1987) and the legal constraints of marriage (Perelli-Harris and Gassen 2012). Although many post-marital cohabiting unions are a stage in the remarriage process (Bumpass and Sweet 1989), studies have indicated that increasing prevalence of consensual unions accounts for the general decline in remarriage rates observed from the early 1980s (Blanc 1987, Bumpass et al. 1991). However, post-marital cohabitation is by no means a new living arrangement; it had been practised in times when divorce was stigmatized or difficult to obtain (Kiernan 2004a, Kiernan and Estaugh 1993).

Marital instability and a rise in post-marital cohabitation may have changed first partnership formation (Kiernan and Estaugh 1993, Prinz 1995, Spéder 2005). Historically, in many countries, non-marital unions were more frequent among previously married (divorcees or widowers) than among never-married individuals (e.g. in the US: Bumpass and Sweet (1989), Bumpass et al.(1991), in the UK: Haskey (1995), Kiernan and Estaugh (1993), in France: Villeneuve-Gokalp (1991), in Hungary: Spéder (2005)). From the early 1980s, cohabitation among never-married individuals has become increasingly common and socially accepted, in some settings, constituting even a normative living arrangement for a first union (Bumpass and Sweet 1989, Cherlin 2004, 2009, Kiernan 2002, 2003, 2004b, Seltzer 2000, 2004, Smock 2000). Depending on duration, stability and childbearing behaviour, cohabiting first unions may be considered a trial marriage, alternative to marriage or alternative to being single (Heuveline and Timberlake 2004, Rindfuss and VandenHeuvel 1990, Villeneuve-Gokalp 1991). Irrespective of the meaning and function of cohabitation, the rising prevalence of non-marital first partnerships has resulted in the postponement and decrease in first marriage rates (Sobotka and Toulemon 2008).

Some evidence suggests that cohabitation may gradually develop towards a "marriage-like" relationship (Smock 2000; Heuveline and Timberlake 2004), which is particularly seen with the increase in childbearing within cohabiting unions (Kennedy and Bumpass 2008, Kiernan 2001, 2004a, b, Perelli-Harris et al. 2012, Perelli-Harris et al. 2010, Raley 2001). Although the majority of women who conceived their first child within cohabitation eventually marry their partner (Perelli-Harris et al. 2012), the shift from childbearing in marriage to childbearing in non-marital unions is a major factor contributing to the declining significance of marriage. Also, as children born to cohabiting parents have gained the same rights as those born within marriage, cohabitation has become increasingly legally regulated (Perelli-Harris and Gassen 2012). Cross-national variation in the extent to which cohabitation has been legally recognised is large, and in none of the Western societies is cohabitation equal to marriage. However, the trend in the law towards providing more rights and responsibilities to cohabiting couples has decreased the social and financial benefits of marriage (ibid.), and thus further reinforced its de-institutionalization.

On the other hand, although recent trends have shown increasing stability of non-marital unions from the early 1990s (Kennedy and Bumpass 2008), cohabitation is considerably more fragile and of a shorter duration than marriage (Cherlin 2009, 2010, Kiernan 2002, 2003, Smock 2000). While a large, yet over time decreasing, proportion of cohabiting unions is converted into marriage, a significant share ends in separation (Bumpass and Lu 2000, Bumpass and Sweet 1989, Wu and Balakrishnan 1995). Also, cohabiting unions with children dissolve more frequently than marriages with children (Andersson 2002, Heuveline et al. 2003, Toulemon 1995).

Moreover, previous research has provided evidence that cohabitation may influence marital stability. For the first marriage, the findings for the effects of premarital cohabitation on divorce risk are mixed; while some studies have shown a negative effect (Berrington and

Diamond 1999, Dush et al. 2003), others support this finding only partially stressing the cross-national differences (Kiernan 2002, Liefbroer and Dourleijn 2006, Poortman and Lyngstad 2007). A few American studies investigating the impact of post-marital cohabitation on remarriage have also found that post-divorce and multi-partner cohabitation may delay remarriage and increase the risk of a second marital breakdown (Xu et al. 2011, Xu et al. 2006).

Finally, a rise in cohabitation has increased the complexity and diversity of stepfamilies (Bumpass et al. 1995, Sweeney 2010). They are increasingly formed within cohabiting unions, and not only by divorced parents but more often by never-married previously cohabiting mothers and fathers. The incomplete institutionalisation of second partnerships combined with the features of non-marital unions may further enhance the instability of stepfamilies and thus increase the adverse consequences of multiple family transitions for adults and children (Lichter et al. 2010). This is in line with the fact that a shift from a life-long marriage towards less stable und shorter unions implies that individuals may increasingly experience multiple partnerships in their family life-course (Bumpass and Lu 2000). In support, some very recent studies have indicated an increase in serial cohabitation (Bukodi 2012, Cohen and Manning 2010, Lichter and Qian 2008, Lichter et al. 2010).[1]

The increasing prevalence of divorce and cohabitation have not only eroded the institution of marriage but most certainly also changed the character and meaning of repartnering. Research can no longer look at repartnering as second union formed in a later life, usually after partner's death or after a long marriage. Presumably, the population at risk of repartnering has become younger and more diverse. For example, a few individuals may indeed experience a breakdown of a long-term marital union; an increasing group of young

[1] For example, in 2002 nearly 25% of cohabiting American women have reported to have three or more co-residential partners in their life (Lichter et al. 2010).

individuals may, by contrast, have lived in a relatively short cohabiting first union which dissolves; a large group of middle aged people with children may end their marriage in divorce, etc. Depending on the first union characteristics, the expectations and motives for the second union may differ among the individuals re-entering the marriage market. For example, for childless individuals whose first cohabiting union dissolved without transformation into marriage, entering into parenthood may be the driving force for repartnering (De Graaf and Kalmijn 2003, Ivanova et al. 2013). For the divorced parents, on the other hand, economic factors may play a more important role. Indeed, repartnering may be seen as a strategy of improving women's and their children economic well-being (de Regt et al. 2012, Dewilde and Uunk 2008, Jansen et al. 2009, Ozawa and Yoon 2002) with divorced women benefiting economically more from repartnering than formerly cohabiting women (de Regt et al. 2012).

Family patterns across Europe and in the United States

Since 1960s, family changes towards higher age at marriage, lower (re-)marriage rates, higher union instability, more prevalent cohabitation and childbearing out-of-wedlock, and lower and postponed fertility have been observed in Western societies (Cherlin 2009, Sobotka 2008, Sobotka and Toulemon 2008). The described changes in family behaviour constitute the major part of the Second Demographic Transition (SDT) (Lesthaeghe 2010, Lesthaeghe and Neidert 2006, Van de Kaa 1987). Accordingly, a new family behaviour is associated with increase in individualistic values, personal autonomy and self-realisation, as well as secularisation, development of welfare states, and spread of modern contraception (Sobotka and Toulemon 2008). However, whereas the postponement of both marriage and childbearing is quite universal in Europe and the United States, the differences in timing and sequencing of these events as well as variation in prevalence of cohabitation and union

dissolution rates are remarkable (Billari and Liefbroer 2010, Sobotka and Toulemon 2008).[2] The proponents of the SDT argue that the currently existing cross-national differences result from the different onset and the pace at which the changes have occurred. In the long-run, the Western societies are expected to converge in their family patterns (Billari and Liefbroer 2012), but they have not yet.

And yet, many scholars have emphasised the long-term persisting differences in institutional arrangements (i.e. welfare state regimes and policies) and a historical cultural tradition which may make convergence of family patterns rather unlikely (Billari 2004, Billari and Liefbroer 2010, Buchmann and Kriesi 2011, Kalmijn 2007). Accordingly, cross-national differences in family patterns may vary depending on the type of welfare regime. Esping-Andersen (1990, 1999) proposes typology which builds upon the relationship between state, market and family. Initially distinguishing between the liberal, social-democratic and conservative welfare regimes, the typology has been eventually extended by "the Mediterranean" welfare regime (Esping-Andersen 1999). Scandinavian countries are typical examples for a social-democratic welfare state regime. The regime is oriented towards individuals, whereas rights and generous social benefits are characterised by universalism and egalitarianism. In the liberal welfare regime service is provided by the market and it is individual's responsibilities (Esping-Andersen 1999, p.76); the role of the state is limited to an intervention only in case of market failure, and a few social benefits are means-tested. This regime is typical for Anglo-Saxon countries. The conservative welfare regime aims to preserve status differentials, i.e. the social rights and services are attached to a certain group, usually defined by the labour market position; social insurance system and few family

[2]Scholars conducting cross-national analyses usually distinguish between, more or less similar across studies, four main regions in Europe: Northern Europe (Scandinavian countries), Western Europe (France, the UK, Ireland, German speaking and Benelux countries), Eastern European (post-socialistic countries) and Southern (Italy, Spain, Portugal and Greece). Large differences have been found not only between but also within the groups (Kalmijn 2007, Billari and Liefbroer 2010).

benefits sustain traditional family model and the state interferes only if the family fails. Countries assigned to this regime are Austria, Belgium, France, Germany, and the Netherlands. The Mediterranean or "familialistic" welfare regime arises from the conservative welfare type. In this regime again, the family is a welfare provider and the overall level of benefits transferred to the head of the household in time of need is very low. However, the state provides a strong employment protection and a generous pension for the employed (male) head of the family.

Apart from welfare state regimes differences, cross-national variation in policies may be also responsible for between country variation in family patterns. Gauthier (2002) shows that since 1970s the state in all European countries has become more supportive for families with working parents. Yet, the cross-national divergence has rather increased, as the countries differ significantly in the magnitude of family related policies. Further differences are also seen in the way the countries legally treat marital and cohabiting unions (Perelli-Harris and Gassen (2012)). Although national policies have increasingly recognised non-marital unions, the degree to which cohabitation is regulated, varies significantly across the continent. Finally, divorce legislation may have an impact on cross-national differences in family behaviour as it has been shown that reforms towards liberalization of divorce laws may affect divorce rates (González-Val and Marcén 2012a, b, González and Viitanen 2009, Wolfers 2006). Apart from Italy (1971), Portugal (1976), Spain (1981) and Ireland (1997), the legal act of divorce was introduced in most countries European countries before 1950 (for an overview, see Gonzalez and Viitanen 2009), and in the US in the 1960s[3] (Fine and Fine 1994). There are common trends in reforms across countries which have made divorce easier to obtain comprising a gradual implementation of "no-fault" divorce (mainly in the 1970s) and more recently incorporation of unilateral divorce (Kneip and Bauer 2009). However,

[3] In the US divorce laws is decentralized i.e. determined at the state level (Fine and Fine 1994).

cross-national differences are striking in the way divorce is legally obtained (e.g. separation period) and in how the aftermath of divorce (e.g. child and spouse support, custody arrangement) is regulated (for an overview, see Beaujot and Liu 2004 Appendix, Fine and Fine 1994, Coleman and Ganong 1999).

Finally, historical demographers stress cultural continuity in family patterns (timing and prevalence) across Europe (Hajnal 1965, Hajnal 1982, Reher 1998). The deep rooted cultural differences are observed nowadays and likely to prevail in the future, making convergence to a one general pattern less likely. Haynal (1965) distinguishes between West and East marriage pattern by drawing a line from St. Petersburg to Trieste. Accordingly, "West pattern" is characterised by late, however, not universal marriage and the norm of a nuclear family. To the East of the "Haynal line", in contrast, marriage was early, almost universal and family systems more complex (joint families). Reher (1998) emphasizes over the centuries prevailing differences in the strength of family ties across Europe, particularly distinguishing between strong family system in the Mediterranean countries and weak family ties in Northern and Central Europe (and also the United States). In Southern Europe children co-reside long with their parents, usually until they marry, familial solidarity is strong and societies tend to have greater social cohesion (social control of behaviour). In Northern and central European countries, in contrast, children leave parental home and establish their own household relatively early in life, mostly long before family formation, personal autonomy is valued high, and *social and emotional support* mainly provided by public institutions and civil society.

Much of research on cross-national differences in family patterns has addressed transition to adulthood (Billari and Liefbroer 2010, Breen and Buchmann 2002, Buchmann and Kriesi 2011, Corijn and Klijzing 2001, Elzinga and Liefbroer 2007). Comparative studies have also examined union dissolution, particularly divorce (Amato 2010, Amato and James

2010, Andersson 2003, Andreß et al. 2006, de Graaf and Kalmijn 2006, de Regt et al. 2012, Dronkers and Härkönen 2008, Härkönen and Dronkers 2006, Kalmijn 2007, 2010, Kalmijn and Uunk 2007, Uunk 2004). To our knowledge, apart from one study on stepfamily formation which includes information on repartnering level in Europe in mid-1990s (Fürnkranz-Prskawetz et al. 2003), virtually nothing is known on differences in repartnering dynamic, i.e. level and union type, in Western societies. However, a few recent studies have looked at females' repartnering as a strategy to diminish economic consequences following divorce in cross-national comparison (Dewilde and Uunk 2008, Jansen et al. 2009). Although, they have not investigated the level of repartnering explicitly, the results may give some hints about the impact of different context in which repartnering occurs.

Generally, women are more affected by economic consequences of partnership dissolution than men which is attributed mainly to the presence of dependent children (custody arrangement), gender income gap and general lower labour market participation (ref). Female's income deterioration following divorce varies considerably across Europe (for review: Andreß et al 2006, Uunk 2004) and in US (Morrison and Ritualo 2000). Divorce-related policies and welfare state arrangements (particularly single parent allowances and public child care provision) are likely to mitigate the negative consequences of divorce (Andreß et al. 2006, Uunk 2004) and have implications for the choice of the second union type (de Graaf and Kalmijn 2003, Dewilde and Uunk 2008). Uunk (2004) has shown that females' economic deterioration following divorce across Europe depends on the welfare state: following Esping-Andersen classification (1990, 1999), the income decline is the weakest in countries with socio-democratic regime and the strongest in Southern European countries. Similar conclusions about short and long-term economic consequences of a union dissolution, based on their own typology, have been drawn by Andreß et al. (2006). Regarding the type of a second union, in some countries (e.g. the Netherlands), remarriage

means disentitlement to welfare benefits (de Graaf and Kalmijn 2003, Dewilde and Uunk 2008); empirical studies have shown that divorced women who receive alimony or welfare payments have a significantly lower risk of remarriage than those who are not benefit claimants (ibid). Furthermore, some evidence suggests that also cohabiting women suffer from a non-marital union dissolution (Avellar and Smock 2005 for the US, de Regt et al. 2012 for Belgium, Manting and Bouman 2006 for the Netherlands). The short-term income decline following non-marital separation is likely to be smaller than after divorce (de Regt et al. 2012, Manning and Smock 2002).[4] Cross-national studies on this topic are missing, however.

Expectations

As European countries and the US, differ in their welfare state arrangements, policies and cultural background, the prevalence, type and pace of repartnering is likely to vary across countries as well. We expect that repartnering level will be higher in countries where union dissolution is increasingly common, cohabitation widespread and socially accepted, and females' family-life trajectories are more de-standardized. We recognise, however, institutional and cultural idiosyncrasies of the studied countries (Ivanova et al. 2013). In particularly, in more secularized societies, with weaker family ties, females' higher economic autonomy (Andreß et al. 2006), and/or welfare state and policies addressing individuals' independence, second union formation will be more frequent. For similar reasons, we presume that repartnered women will more often opt for cohabiting second union than direct marriage. In contrast, in countries where cohabitation and union dissolution are not very common, and thus family-life trajectories rather traditionally standardized, repartnering level

[4] Smaller short-term income decline among previously cohabiting women who experienced union dissolution in comparison to divorcees be may be explained by the fact that divorced women were more often financially dependent on their partner, have children and are older at union dissolution than their formerly cohabiting counterparts (de Regt et al. 2012, Manning and Smock 2002).

will be naturally low. This is expected to be the case in religious countries with strong family ties and low women's economic autonomy. Also,, given the changing family and fertility behaviour observed in the Western societies since 1960s (Lesthaeghe 2010, Sobotka 2008, Sobotka and Toulemon 2008, Van de Kaa 1987), decreasing stigma of divorce and increasing social acceptance of non-traditional family behaviour as well as changes in law towards unilateral divorce (Wolfers 2006, Stevensons & wolfers 2007, Gonzalez and Viitanen 2009), repartnering is expected to be more frequent among younger cohorts. Finally, we hypothesise that previous cohabitors will repartner faster than divorcees. It can be argued that cohabitors whose first partnership dissolves are in a better position on the partner market than their divorced counterparts. Given that non-marital unions are usually of shorter duration and of lower investment (time and resources), separated cohabitors are likely to be younger and more often childless at the union dissolution than their divorced counterparts (Blanc 1987, Wu and Schimmele 2005). Furthermore, Blanc (1987) argues that divorcees need a longer "recovery" time as the end of a marriage means failure of fulfilling a formal commitment.

Data and method

Harmonized histories

Our analyses use a unique cross-national data set "Harmonized Histories" created by the team of "The Non-marital Childbearing Network" (Perelli-Harris et al. 2010). It contains cleaned and standardised retrospective partnership histories collected from individuals in the United States (National Survey of Family Growth 1995, 2007) and within various European surveys: the British Household Panel Survey (2005), the Dutch Fertility and Family Survey (2003), the Polish Employment, Family and Education Survey (2006), the Spanish Fertility Survey (2006), and the Generations and Gender Surveys in Austria (2008), Belgium (2008), Bulgaria (2004), France (2005), Germany (2005), Hungary (2004), Italy (2003), Lithuania (2006),

Norway (2007), Romania (2005), and Russia (2004). Apart from a partnership biography the dataset includes the respondent's fertility history, highest education level and some other background measures, e.g. regarding parents, ethnicity and religion. For some countries the characteristics of the partner are also available.

In this paper, we had to exclude Germany, Belgium and Hungary as the quality of partnership histories in the original datasets has been questioned in the literature (Kreyenfeld et al. 2010). We concentrate on women in three birth cohorts: 1945-1954, 1955-1964 and 1965-1974. Accordingly, depending on the country, the oldest respondents in the sample were around 60 years old and the youngest in their earlier 30s at the time of the survey. We use the cohort approach as evidence from divorce literature suggests that women from different cohorts may have *different resources and expectation*s of a partnership (Lyngstad and Jalovaara 2010) and also various generational attitudes towards repartnering (Skew et al. 2009).

Due to differences in the survey designs and to ensure cross-national comparability, our analyses are restricted to females' partnership biographies; in many surveys information about men was not collected (the United States, Spain, Italy), or the quality of this data was very poor (Poland). We selected respondents who ever formed a union and whose partnership histories were complete (year and month). In majority of the studies, a union is defined as a co-residential partnership which lasts at least 3 months. Cases where respondents reported the same month of first union dissolution and second union formation as well as where partnership biographies were implausible (e.g. first union ended before or without it started) were excluded from the sample. While investigating repartnering, we focus only on divorced or separated women as widows may differ in their unobserved characteristics and thus in their re-partnering behaviours. Also, since death of the partner is not a main cause of a union dissolution among the younger cohorts, the number of widowed women in our samples is too

small to allow any meaningful interpretation. In case of marital dissolution, the *de facto* separation, not the date of divorce which might occur much later, is considered as the event ending spouses' co-residence. The overall sample size varies considerable across countries and ranges from 1440 women in Austria to 10885 in Italy. Table 1 contains description of the samples for each country.

Method

Repartnering is defined as forming a second co-residential union (living together) which lasts at least 3 months after experiencing a union dissolution from the first married or cohabiting partner. We investigate cross-national repartnering patterns using basic demographic methods of (i) cumulative percentages and (ii) life tables (cumulative probabilities). We believe that these two methods are complementary in order to provide an accurate picture of second union formation. Cumulative percentages are a very useful tool to assess how common a certain demographic behaviour, e.g. experiencing first union dissolution, is in a country. We use this approach to describe the population at risk of repartnering and to present the prevalence of second union formation. The focus is on the frequencies of repartnering in the entire female population. The advantage of cumulative percentages is that they enable us to identify cross-national differences of repartnering levels within a particular birth cohort. However, as women from different birth cohorts are exposed to repartnering risks for various lengths of time, no comparisons of trends across cohorts within a country are possible. Women born 1965-74 are comparably young and possibly they may have not yet experienced union dissolution or repartnering. For the purpose of analysing changes in repartnering patterns we thus apply life tables. These estimate the probabilities of entering a second union in predefined time intervals (months) after union dissolution. As women are exposed to the risk of repartnering for the same period of time, particularly 5 or 10 years, this approach enables us to detect changes in repartnering behaviour within a country across cohorts and to compare

the pace at which repartnering occurs between the countries within a cohort. The duration is measured in months passing from a marital or cohabiting union dissolution until the start of a second co-residential partnership. Women who experienced first union dissolution and have not repartnered by the time of the survey are right censored, i.e. they contribute to the population "at risk" until the date of the interview. In order to take account of the right censoring, the Kaplan-Meier method (Product Limit Estimator) will be applied. It calculates the cumulative survival probability *S(x)* of non-experiencing an event (i.e. staying single after union dissolution) from the beginning of observation to time *x*. *S(x)* is defined as follows:

$$S(x) = p_0 \times p_1 \times \ldots \times p_{x-1} = \prod_{n=0}^{x-1} p_n$$

where p_x denotes the conditional probability of surviving (i.e. not repartnering) the time interval *x* (given that the individual did not experience the event in previous time intervals). Following, the cumulative probabilities of repartnering (failure) *F(x)* can be obtained as a complement to *S(x)*, i.e. $F(x) = 1 - S(x)$.

Results[5]

In order to give a broader picture of the pathways to repartnering, we will first provide general information on the population at risk of repartnering across cohorts and countries. We will then answer the first research question: what is the proportion of women who enter first unions by union type and what proportion dissolves by union type?

Population at risk of repartnering

First union formation – cumulative percentages

[5] Our results refer to population of women who experienced separation and possible formed a new union. Women whose first partner died are excluded from the analyses on repartnering.

Figure 1 shows a general high proportion of women who have ever had a partner; in Europe and in the United States 9 out of 10 women enter a first union by interview date.[6] The high level of partnership formation is observed in all cohorts; however, the cross-national differences in the type of first partnership have remarkably increased from the oldest to the youngest cohort. In Europe and in the United States, the vast majority of women born 1945-54 have married their first partner by the time of the survey. The marital unions are entered mainly directly; except Bulgaria (47%) in all other countries from around 60% in Belgium and Estonia up to around 90% of all women in Italy, Spain and Hungary marry their partner without pre-marital co-residence. Long-term cohabiting partnerships are less frequent and they often transit into a marriage. The percentage of women in persistent cohabiting unions is almost negligible in most European countries and relatively low (8%) in the United States.

[Figure 1 about here]

Among women born 1955-64 marriage remains the dominant form of a first partnership, however, the entry into a marital union varies significantly across countries. In Southern and Eastern European countries, e.g. Italy and Romania, 8 out of 10 women marry their partner directly, whereas at the other end of scale, in Austria and Norway, only a quarter of women do so. Similarly, increasing differences are seen in a cross-national level of pre-marital cohabitation, which is the lowest in Italy (6%) and the highest in Austria (54%). Cohabiting with a first partner becomes generally more common albeit a prevalence of women in persisting non-marital unions is still relatively low; it ranges from less than 3% in Bulgaria and Romania to around 22% in France and Norway.

[6]A slightly lower level of first union formation in Italy in the youngest cohort is due to the fact, that Italian women form first partnership at higher age than women in other European countries. As they were 30-40 years old at the time of the survey, the proportion of women entering first union, may still increase in the future.

Although, in the youngest 1965-74 birth cohort, the vast majority of women marry their first partners, the proportions differ substantially across European countries. In Norway half of women and in the Netherlands, France and the UK 6 out of 10 women enter a marital union. In contrast, in most Eastern European countries and also in Italy and Spain first marriage is almost universal in women's lives (around 90%). In the US 4 out of 5 women marry their first partner. European countries and the US differ also in the level of direct marriages and prevalence of cohabitation. The proportion of women who directly marry varies across studied countries from the lowest in Norway (11%) to the highest (79%) in Poland. Cohabitation, on the other hand, is increasingly frequent not only as a living arrangement preceded marriage but also as a persistent partnership; 50-80% of women in Western Europe, Estonia, Bulgaria and in the US live at one stage in their lives in a non-marital co-residential first relationship. Within the before mentioned countries, from 34% in the US and up to 54% of women in Bulgaria eventually transition their first union into marriage. In comparison, in the remaining Eastern European countries as well as in Italy and Spain, the percentage of women who have ever experienced cohabitation at the population level, while forming their first union, varies from 13% in Poland to 40% in Russia. Accordingly, in the same country order, from 9% in Poland and up 28% of women in Russia enter marriage after a period of non-marital co-residence. Finally, the share of still cohabiting women at survey at the population level is considerably higher in Western Europe than in the Eastern and Southern part of the continent.

First union dissolution

Having examined patterns of first union formation, we now turn to cross-national differences in a first union dissolution. Figure 2 presents the cumulative percentage of women who have experienced first partnership dissolution in Europe and in the United States by birth cohort.

Within-cohort comparisons reveal a strong variation in the level and the type of dissolved first unions among studied countries.

In the 1945-54 birth cohort, almost every second woman in the US, every third in Norway, Estonia and Russia, but fewer than 10% of the female population in Italy, Spain, Romania and Bulgaria have ever experienced first union dissolution. The vast majority of women whose first union dissolved were previously married. Among all separated women, the percentage of those whose marital first union dissolved varies from 78% in France to 94% in Spain. In all countries, most women who experienced divorce had entered their marital union directly (i.e. without co-residing with their first partner). At the population level, the proportion of women who separated from their first marital partner ranges from around 8% in Southern Europe and Bulgaria, to around 30% in Norway, Estonia and Russia and 40% in the US. Since in the oldest cohort cohabitation is mainly premarital, the percentage of women who experienced a non-marital first union dissolution has not exceeded 5% in Europe and accounts for only 6% of cases in the US.

[Figure 2 about here]

The cross-national differences in the percentage of women whose first union dissolved are somewhat smaller in the middle 1955-64 cohort. The US no longer differs substantially from the European countries: the proportion is comparable with those in Norway and Estonia, with 40% of women separated from their first partner, at the population level. The percentage of women who experienced first union dissolution is again the smallest (around 12%) in the Mediterranean countries, as well as in Romania and Bulgaria. The other Western European countries (Austria, France, the Netherlands and the UK), but also Russia and Lithuania, with 27-33%, show a rather moderate proportion of women whose first union dissolved. In all countries - similar to the earlier cohort, however, to a lesser extent - women

born in 1955-64 who separated from their first partner were predominantly married. The percentages of disrupted marriages among all dissolved first unions varies from 51% in France to 95% in Bulgaria and Lithuania. At the population level, the proportion of women whose first marital union dissolved varies from around 10-12% in Southern Europe and in Bulgaria and Romania, to around 28-30% of all women in Estonia, Russia and the US. An increasing proportion of separated women had cohabited prior to marriage (up to 17% of all women in Norway). Yet, in a majority of countries (except France, Austria and Norway), most of women whose first marital union ended in divorce had married directly. With the increase in cohabitation in the 1955-64 birth cohort, in some countries, the proportion of women whose cohabiting first unions ended in separation has also increased. For example, in Norway, France, the UK and the US, between 13-16% of all women separated from their non-marital first partner. In contrast, this percentage is marginal in Southern Europe and in a majority of Eastern European countries (fewer than 3%). Interestingly, in all countries studied, the proportion of women who separated from their non-marital partner has not exceeded the proportion of women who experienced a marital union dissolution.

Before looking at the birth cohort 1965-74, it is important to keep in mind that these women are comparably young, aged 30-40 at the time of the survey, and thus have been observed only for a relatively short period of time. While right censoring is less of a problem for the previous cohorts (women were 40-60 years old when interviewed), it has to be taken into account when interpreting the results for the youngest cohort. Firstly, given the increase in the age at first marriage, some women might have not been captured in our analyses because they have not had yet enough time to enter a marital union. Secondly, the differences in the age at union dissolution among previously married and cohabiting women must be taken into account. Because the age at first marriage is higher and the marital union is usually more stable than cohabitation, we have observed all divorces that women in this cohort may

have experienced (some marriages may be intact at the time of the interview but are likely to dissolve in the future). Hence, for the youngest cohort, it must be particularly stressed that the following findings, though not always mentioned, refer to events that occurred by the time of the survey.

In the 1965-74 birth cohort the cross-national variation in the prevalence of women who experienced first union dissolution has slightly increased; however, the order of countries does not differ dramatically from the previous cohorts. Italy, Spain, Romania, Bulgaria, and also Poland record the lowest percentage (around 10%) and US and Norway, with 41%, the highest percentage of women who separated from their first partner. In the remaining Western European countries but also in Estonia, Russia and Lithuania, the percentage of women whose first union ended in separation varies between 23-33%. A great heterogeneity has been observed in type of dissolved first unions across countries. In many countries, as cohabitation at first partnership has increased, a rising percentage of women had either cohabited prior to their dissolved first marriage or separated from their non-marital first partner. In some countries, the percentage of women with disrupted cohabiting first unions even exceeded the percentage of women who experienced a marital first union dissolution. In Norway, France and the Netherlands around 70%, in the UK and Austria around 60% of all women whose first union dissolved, had by the time of the survey separated from their cohabiting first partner. At the population level, 30% of women in Norway and between 17-23% in Austria, France, the Netherlands, the UK and the US experienced a non-marital first union dissolution. At the other end of the scale, fewer than 5% of all women in Southern and in most of Eastern European countries (except Estonia and Russia) entered a repartnering market after separation from a cohabiting first partner. On the other side, marital first union dissolutions among all first union dissolutions are particularly common in Southern and Eastern European countries. In these regions, among all women whose first partnership ended

in dissolution, around 63% in Italy and Estonia up to 80% in Bulgaria, Lithuania, Poland and Russia divorced their first partner. Corresponding with the country-specific prevalence of first union dissolution, the highest percentage of women whose marital first union dissolved, at the population level, is found in Russia and the US (24%), Estonia (20%) and Lithuania (18%). On the contrary, in line with the comparable low prevalence of dissolving first unions, fewer than 8% of all women in Italy, Spain, Poland, Bulgaria and Romania experienced divorce from their first partner. Very small percentages of married women who divorced their first partner, in the entire female population, have also been observed in the Netherlands (7%), France (8%) and Norway (10%). Here, however, the patterns of first union formation and dissolution differ substantially from those in Southern and Eastern Europe as marital first unions are generally less common, and so their dissolution account for less than one third of all dissolved unions. The countries differ in the type of marital first unions which dissolved. In the US and Western Europe most of women who experienced marital first union dissolution had cohabited with their partner prior to marriage. In Southern and Eastern Europe, in contrast, women who experienced divorce mainly married directly, which reflects the patterns of first union formation in these regions. At the population level, the proportion of women whose marital first union was preceded by cohabitation and ended in divorce ranges from fewer than 1% in Italy and Poland to around 13% in Estonia and the US. Furthermore, the percentage of those who experienced divorce from the direct married first partner varies between 2% in Norway and the Netherlands to 14% in Russia and Lithuania.

Repartnering

Cumulative percentages

Figure 3 presents the percentage of women who have experienced a second union formation by the type of the union at its start in Europe and in the United States. The differences in repartnering level across countries reflect mainly the population of women whose first union

dissolved; while in some countries (e.g. the US and Norway) a second union formation is very common, in the others, primarily in Southern and most of Eastern European countries, having more than one partner in the lifetime is still very rare. Corresponding to the first union dissolution patterns, cross-national differences in repartnering level are especially pronounced in the oldest 1945-54 birth cohort. Firstly, the difference between the country with the lowest and the highest level of repartnering is striking. Fewer than 3% of women in the Mediterranean countries compared to 36% of American women have repartnered after first union dissolution. Secondly, the US differs greatly from the European countries; in Norway, Estonia and the UK, i.e. in countries with the highest proportion of women who have ever entered a second union in Europe, one in five women at the population level have experienced repartnering. The differences between countries within cohort have become smaller with successive birth cohorts; particularly, the US does not stand out from Europe among younger women. In the 1965-74 birth cohort the percentage of women who have experienced a second union ranges from 2-8% in Southern and most of Eastern European countries, to around 30% in the US, Norway and the UK. Given that women in the youngest cohort have been observed for the shortest period of time, the relatively high level of repartnering provides further evidence for changing partnership patterns. Note, however, that cross-national differences have remained as the order of countries from the lowest to the highest level of repartnering has not changed much across cohorts.

[Figure 3 about here]

Interesting, despite cross-national differences in first union dissolution patterns and repartnering level, the vast majority of second unions in Europe and the US start as cohabitation, with direct marriages becoming less common across cohorts. In the 1945-54 birth cohort, the percentage of second unions which were direct marriages ranges from 7% in France to 41% in Romania and 49% in Lithuania. These figures are striking giving that in the

oldest cohort most of the formed and dissolved first unions were direct marriages. At the population level, 11% of women in the US and fewer than 6% of women in Europe have entered a second union through direct marriage. In comparison, in the youngest 1965-74 cohort, among all second unions entered by the time of a survey, fewer than 5% in France, the Netherlands and Norway up to 23% in Lithuania and 32% of second unions in Romania were direct marriages. Looking at the entire female population, 5% in the US and fewer than 3% of women in the European countries repartner marrying their partner without cohabitation.

Life table estimates

We now focus on the pace of repartnering across countries and investigate how the pace of repartnering has changes across cohorts. For this purpose, we calculated cumulative probabilities of a second union formation within 5 and 10 years after union dissolution. As we have showed earlier that repartnering predominantly starts with cohabitation, we do not, unlike some previous studies (Wu/Schimmele 2005, Blanc 1987), differentiate between marital and non-marital second unions. We do, however, examine the differences in the pace of repartnering depending on the first union type.

Figure 4 presents the cumulative probabilities of women who repartner within 5 years after a first marital or cohabiting union dissolved. The first striking finding is a remarkable cross-national variation in a pace of repartnering. In some countries women repartner very quickly; in Austria, Estonia, France, Norway, UK and US around two third and in the Netherlands even 75% of women born 1965-74 enter a second union within 5 years after first union disruption. In the Southern and most of the Eastern European countries, on the contrary, forming a second union occurs at a much slower pace; in a birth cohort 1965-74, one third of women in Italy, Bulgaria and Lithuania, and 4 out of 10 in Spain, Russia and

Romania start a co-residential second partnership within 5 years after first union dissolution. The slowest pace of repartnering records women in Poland where only 23% enter a new partnership within 5 years after a union dissolution.

[Figure 4 about here]

The second noteworthy finding is an almost universal increase in a proportion on women who enter a second union 5 years after union dissolution across cohorts; in the vast majority of the studied countries (except the US) women born in the youngest cohort repartner much faster than their older counterparts. In France, Italy, Lithuania, the Netherlands, Norway, Romania and the UK the proportion of women who repartnered within 5 years has somehow doubled from the earliest to the youngest cohort. In Spain, while only 6% of 1945-54 born women repartnered within 5 years from union dissolution, among the youngest 1965-74 cohort already 42% did so (increase by a factor 7). In other countries the increase was less dramatic (Estonia, Russia), or has a U-shape pattern (Belgium, Bulgaria). The US is the only studied country where women born in the youngest cohort repartner slower than women born 1955-64. However, this result may be, at least partially, related to the fact that women born 1965-1974 come from 2007 National Survey of Family Growth (NSFG) as oppose to women born 1945-64 who were selected from the 1995 NSFG. It could also be the fact that divorce rates have recently levelled-off in the US, and thus that women who experienced first union dissolution are a more selective group that it was the case of the older counterparts. However, this explanation is speculative and needs to be examined in more detail in further research.

In most countries, except Spain, the acceleration in repartnering has occurred from 1955-64 to 1965-74 birth cohorts. Interesting, despite the increase in a proportion of women who repartner within 5 years after first union dissolution, the ranking of the countries

regarding the pace of second union formation has remained relatively unchanged across cohorts. In other words, women in Sothern and most of the Eastern European countries have shown the slowest and women in the US, UK and Norway the fastest pace of repartnering in all three birth cohorts. Note, that the differences between cohorts for each country are statistically significant (log-rank test).

The patterns of repartnering within 10 years after first union dissolution are very similar to those after 5 years (Figure 5). Again, women born in the more recent cohorts repartner to a greater extent than their older counterparts whose first union dissolved. Up to 80% of separated women in Belgium, Estonia, France, Norway, the UK, the US and the Netherlands find eventually a new partner. On the other end of the scale is Poland where only one third of women born in 1965-74 repartner within 10 years after first union dissolution. In all studied countries, repartnering has become significantly more frequent across cohorts. Also, the order of countries with the lowest to the highest cumulative probabilities of repartnering has not altered much from 1945-54 to 1965-74 birth cohort. However, in contrast to the oldest birth cohort, Mediterranean women born 1965-74 enter a second union more often than their Eastern European counterpart. This is particularly true for Spanish women, whose repartnering behaviour in the youngest cohort, 10 years after first union dissolution, resembles increasingly the one in the Western European countries.

[Figure 5 about here]

The rise in proportion of women who have had more than one partner and the increase in a pace at which repartnering occurs among women born in the youngest cohort 1965-74 are remarkable given that these women are comparable young and may not have yet had enough time to repartner. In fact, changes in repartnering behaviour are very likely to reflect some changes in the first union formation. Women in more recent cohorts opt more often for

cohabiting unions which tend to be less stable. Consequently, they are younger at union dissolution than their older counterparts, born 1945-54 and 1955-64, for whom first unions were mainly marital, and divorce may have been still more socially stigmatized or legally restricted. Hence, cross-cohort differences in repartnering behaviour may be due to differences in a first union type; cohabiting women who experienced union dissolution are likely to differ from their previously married counterparts; they are likely to be younger at union dissolution, more often childless, and have less traditional attitudes towards family and thus be more prone for a second union formation.

Life tables by union status

We address this issue in further analysis where we examine the probability of repartnering among previously married (including those women whose first marriage was preceded by cohabitation) and previously cohabiting women whose first unions dissolved. However, due to the small number of cohabiting women who experienced first union dissolution in the oldest cohort, our analysis focuses only on women born 1955-64 and 1965-74 in selected countries (see Appendix).

Figure 6 show proportions of women who have ever repartnered within 5 and 10 years after union dissolution by cohort and first union type. Cross-national variation in the level of second union formation among previously married and cohabiting women whose first union dissolved reflects the probability of repartnering in those countries; it is the highest in Norway, the Netherlands, the UK and the US, and the lowest in Italy. In most countries, except France in 1955-64 birth cohort, previously cohabiting women repartner faster than their counterparts married at first union. In France in 1955-64 birth cohort the opposite has been found: 49% of previously married women compared to 44% of women who separated

from their non-marital first partner have entered a second union within 5 years and 65% and 60%, respectively, within 10 years.

[Figure 6 about here]

However, it appears that there is no universal pattern of second union formation by first union status in Europe and the US, as the repartnering gap between cohabiting and married women at first union varies over time and across cohorts. First, there is no clear trend in duration after dissolution (from 5 to 10 years after first union dissolution) by cohort. In Italy, repartnering gap between married and cohabiting women at first partnership has widened between 5 and 10 years after union dissolution in both birth cohorts. Most often, however, changes over time vary considerably from 1955-64 to 1965-74 birth cohort. For example, in Estonia and the Netherlands the differences in repartnering between previously married and cohabiting women have increased over time in 1955-64 birth cohort, but decreased among those born in 1965-74. A reverse trend, by contrast, has been observed in Norway. In the UK, on the other hand, the difference in a pace of repartnering depending on first union type decreased over time in 1955-64 birth cohort but remained comparable stable among women born in 1965-74.

Second, repartnering behaviour by first union type has changed substantially across cohorts, yet again no common pattern has emerged across countries. In Estonia, Italy and the Netherlands in 1965-74 birth cohort previously married and cohabiting women at first union differ much more from each other in their probability to repartner within 5 and 10 years after first union dissolution than their counterparts born in 1955-64. The opposite has been found in the UK and the US, whereas in Norway the repartnering gap between married and cohabiting women at first union has narrowed within 5 years after dissolution but widen in the longer period (10 years) across cohorts.

Russia is somewhat puzzling. While in 1955-64 birth cohort women cohabiting at first partnership have repartnered faster 5 and 10 years after first union dissolution, among women born in 1965-74 this is only the case within 5 years following first union breakdown. In the long-run, however, 65% of previously married women compared to 57% of their counterparts cohabiting at first union, have formed a second partnership. We speculate that this surprising result is due to selection. As most Russian women marry their first partner at young age, those who did not transition their first union into marriage and experienced union dissolution are likely to be relatively young when they re-enter the partner market as well. Given that a young age at dissolution facilitates repartnering (Kalmijn and de Graaf 2003, Ivanova et al. 2013), if women cohabiting at first partnership have not formed a second union in the first few years after, they may be less prone for commitment and will repartner slower.

The differences in repartnering behaviour by first union status are rarely significant, however; only in a few countries previously cohabiting and married women who experienced first union dissolution show a significantly different pattern of second union formation. This is particularly the case in the UK and Norway in 1955-64 birth cohort, and in the Netherlands and Norway among women born 1965-74. Nonetheless, it seems that in Europe and the US, the rising level of repartnering is increasingly a result of a relatively fast second union formation among women whose non-marital first union dissolved.

Conclusions

This study provided basic information on repartnering dynamics in cross-national comparison by three different cohorts. First, we have shown the great heterogeneity of population at risk of repartnering across countries and cohorts. Whereas in some countries a significant percentage of female population experience first union dissolution, in other countries only a fraction of women become exposed to a risk of a second union formation. Looking only at

the youngest cohort, the percentage of women who ever experienced union dissolution ranges from less than 10% in Southern and most of the Eastern European countries to over 40% in Norway and the US. Interestingly, the order of the countries remains relatively stable in all cohorts. Furthermore, the population at risk of repartnering has become increasingly diverse in terms of a type of the first dissolved partnership across cohorts. In the oldest cohort, women whose first union ended in separation were mainly direct married. On contrary, in the youngest 1965-74 cohort, the majority of women who separated from their first partner either cohabited before marriage or remained unmarried in a co-residential relationship. Population at risk does not only increasingly differ across countries, but also within a country women who re-enter partner market are increasingly heterogeneous in terms of their first partnership experiences, which may imply different demographic characteristics (age, fertility) and motives for repartnering (parenthood, economic security after union dissolution, etc.).

In the next step, we identified the level, type and the pace of repartnering in Europe and the United States. We have shown huge cross-national differences in the level of repartnering. Lifetime experience of repartnering is much higher in the US and Northern and Western Europe as compared with Southern Europe and majority of Eastern European countries. However, given the great diversity in population at risk of repartnering, we have not found a lot of variation in type of second union across countries. It is remarkable that in all countries within each cohort a majority of second unions start as cohabitation. We have identified these same repartnering patterns even in the regions with very strong marriage norms (Mediterranean and most of Easter European countries). As women who experienced first union dissolution increasingly opt for a less institutionalised type of a partnership our results may suggest that they may become more careful when they repartner (Poortman 2007).

Countries differ, however, in the pace at which repartnering occurs. In Norway, the UK and the US women repartner very quickly. In Southern and most of the Eastern European countries, on the contrary, forming a second union occurs at a much slower pace. We have found an almost universal increase in a proportion on women who repartner across cohorts, particularly from 1955-64 to 1965-74 birth cohorts. Interestingly, the order of countries with the lowest to the highest cumulative probabilities of repartnering have not changed much from 1945-54 to 1965-74 birth cohort.

In most countries and across cohorts, previously cohabiting women repartner faster than their counterparts married at first union. However, there is no universal pattern of a second union formation by first union status in Europe and the US as repartnering gap between cohabiting and married women at first union varies over time and across cohorts. It seems that women repartner at the fastest pace in countries with the highest level of women who have experienced first union dissolution (Appendix). However, the differences in repartnering behaviour by first union status are rarely significant. Only in Norway, the UK (1955-64 birth cohort) and the Netherlands (1965-74 birth cohort) we found that previously married and cohabiting women significantly differ in a second union formation. The results are in line with previous studies based on multivariate analyses in the UK (Skew et al. 2009) and the Netherlands (Poortman 2007) and an older study using life table estimates in Norway (Blanc 1987). We were rather surprised by the results for other countries, as the literature suggested the opposite (Wu and Schimmele 2005). It is unclear to which extent our not significant results are caused by a relatively small sample size. Nonetheless, it seems that in Europe and the US, the rising level of repartnering in the youngest cohort, is increasingly results from a greater proportion of women who repartner within 5 years among women whose non-marital first union dissolved.

Discussion

In Europe and the US, the level and pace at which repartnering occurs have increased across cohorts. However, the rank of the countries has not changed much from 1945-55 to 1965-74, which implies persistent cross-national differences. Furthermore, population at risk of repartnering has not only become more diverse across cohorts and countries, but also within a country women who re-enter partner market differ increasingly in their first union experience. Yet, our results showed that type of a second partnership does not vary across countries, and has remained unchanged across cohorts; women have started their second union as cohabitation. Regarding the union type, while the first partnership has dramatically changed, our results suggest a relatively stable pattern of second union formation. In 1978 Cherlin claimed that second unions, particularly remarriages, are incomplete institutions, but they would become more institutionalized as remarriage becomes more spread. A quarter century later he revised his view stating: "Remarriage has not become more like first marriages; rather, first marriage has become more like remarriage" (Cherlin 2004, p. 848). Our results support this view in terms of a union type. However, investigating the fate of the second unions, i.e. if they transition into marriage, remain persistent or dissolve, was beyond the scope of this study. We aim to address the stability of second unions and its changes across cohorts in our future research.

Previous research has shown that women in the United States differ significantly from women in Europe in their family behaviour (Cherlin 2009). However, it seems that the differences in repartnering level, pace and type between the US and Europe, increasingly disappeared across cohorts. On the other hand, differences in population at risk of repartnering in terms of first partnership experience have remained substantial. The increase in pace of repartnering among women born in the youngest cohort may reflect family changes observed in the last four decades. As women increasingly start their first union with

cohabitation which tend to be less stable than marriage (which are also less stable than in the past), they are likely to be younger at union dissolution than their married counterparts. Also as cohabitation has become increasingly common women born in the earliest cohort were presumably older at union dissolution than their counterparts born 1965-74. Age at union dissolution is considered one of the most important determinants of repartnering, as it predicts an individual's chances on re-partner market (Bumpass et al 1990). With increasing age the pool of potential partners decreases and thus the likelihood of a second union formation (Meggiolaro and Ongaro 2008, Poortman 2007, Skew et al. 2009, Wu and Schimmele 2005). The effect is particularly strong for women (Wu/Schimmele 2005, Skew et al. 2009). Women's pool of potential partners diminishes also because men tend to form a union with younger women (Dean and Gurak 1978). Also, especially at higher ages, women face a disadvantage sex-ratio on the partner market, which results from existing gender specific differences in mortality. Finally, Skew et al (2009) argue that age may reveal some generational attitudes towards repartnering. People older at union dissolution may have a more traditional view on union formation and therefore be more reluctant to repartner. We intend to address the effect of age at union dissolution and its changes over time on repartnering behaviour by previous union status in our future work,

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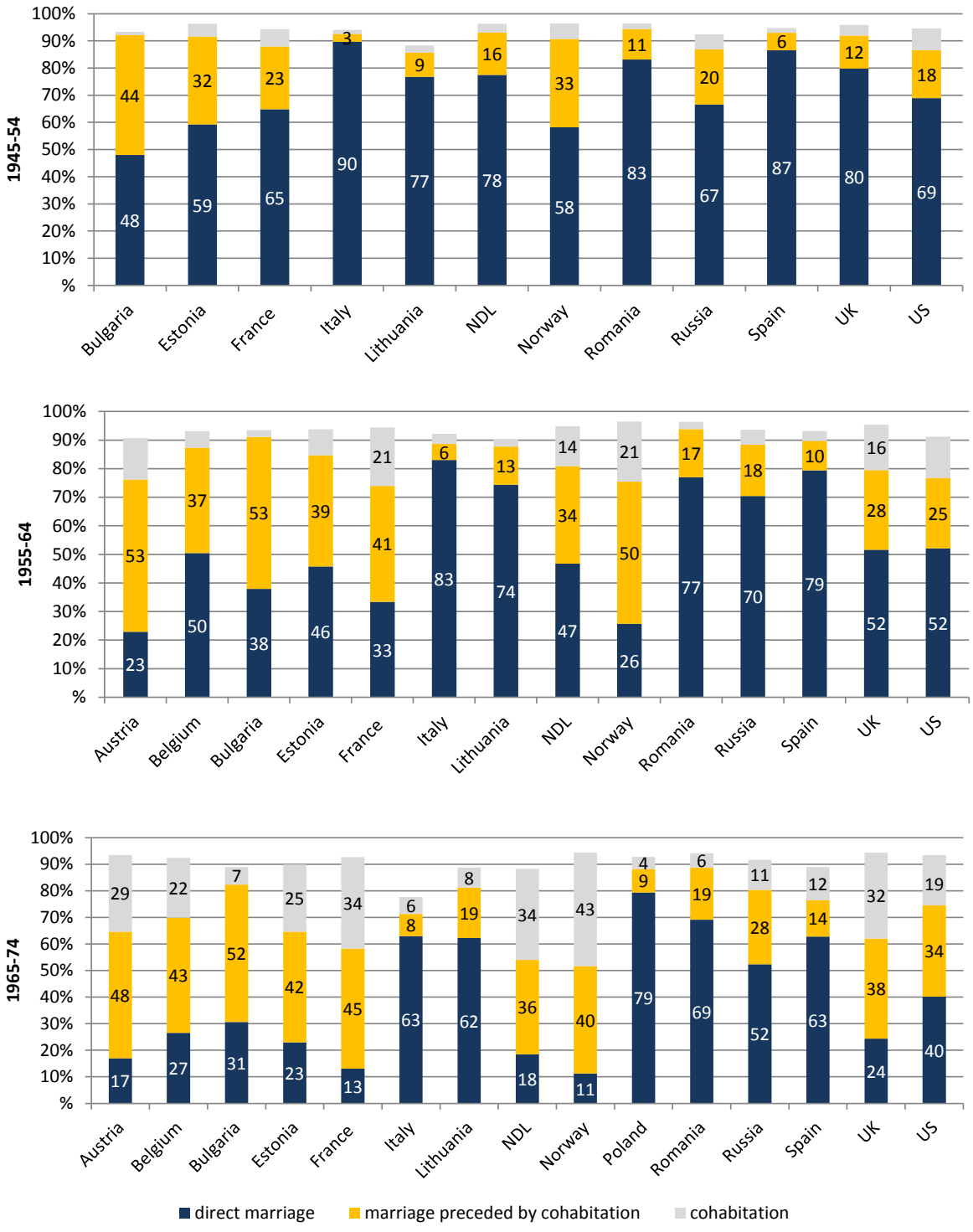
Tables and figures

Table 1: Description of the samples for each country and cohort

Country and survey	*Number of women in the sample*		
	1945-54	*1955-64*	*1965-74*
Austria GGS	-	194	1,252
Bulgaria GGS	856	1,259	1,756
Estonia GGS	857	913	870
France GGS	998	998	1,070
Lithuania GGS	685	886	839
Italy GGS	3,475	3,732	3,678
Netherlands FFS	925	1,064	1,004
Norway GGS	1,189	1,306	1,539
Poland EFES	-	-	1,512
Romania GGS	1,198	954	1,164
Russia GGS	1,182	1,381	1,071
Spain SFS	1,105	1,487	1,605
UK BHPS	740	860	1,084
US NSFG	1,691(1)	4,190(1)	1,979(2)

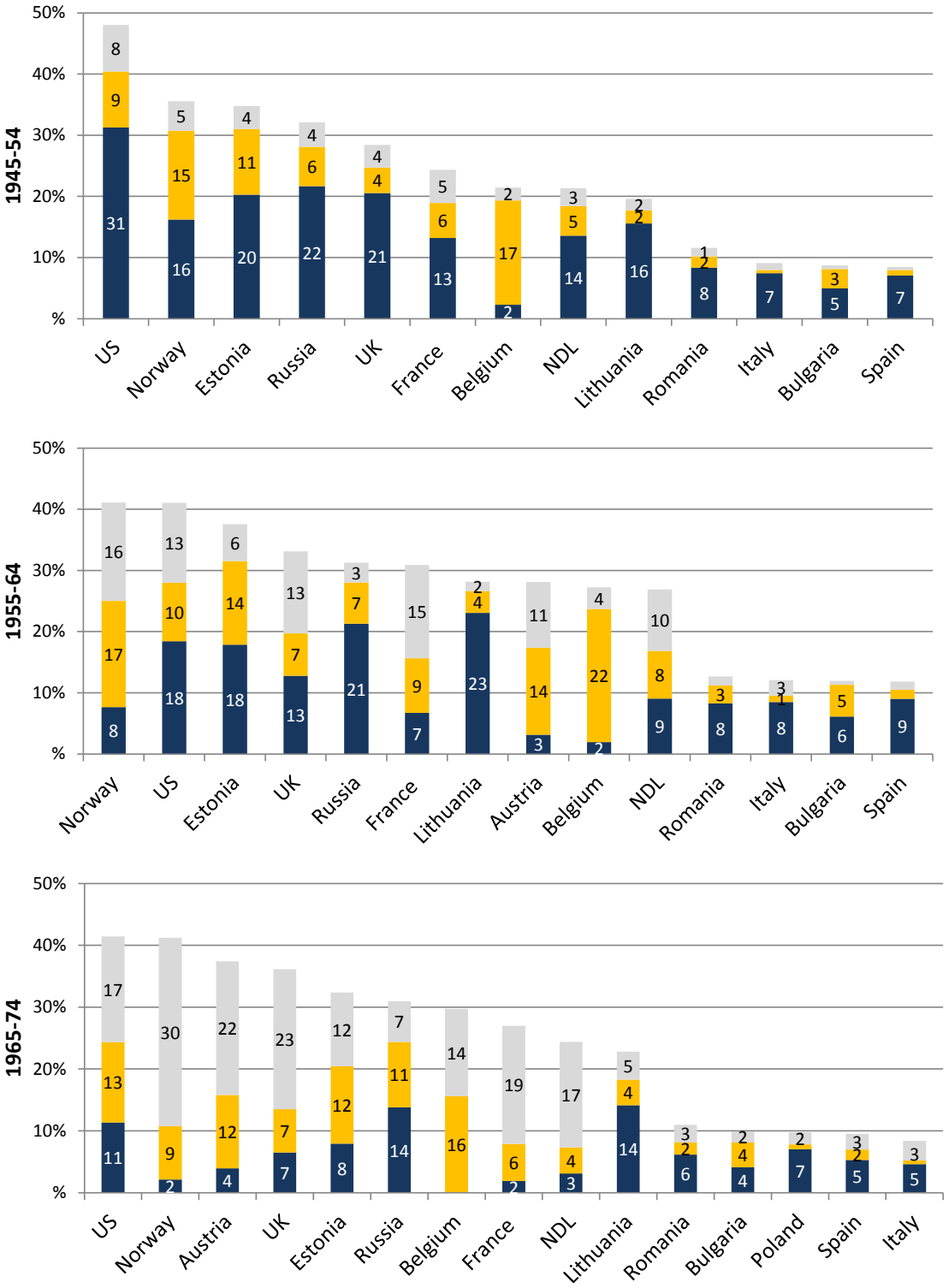
Note:
(1)data are from 1995 National Survey of Family Growth
(2)data are from 2007 National Survey of Family Growth
Sources: Harmonized Histories.

Figure 1: Percentage of women who experience first union formation, by union type and birth cohort



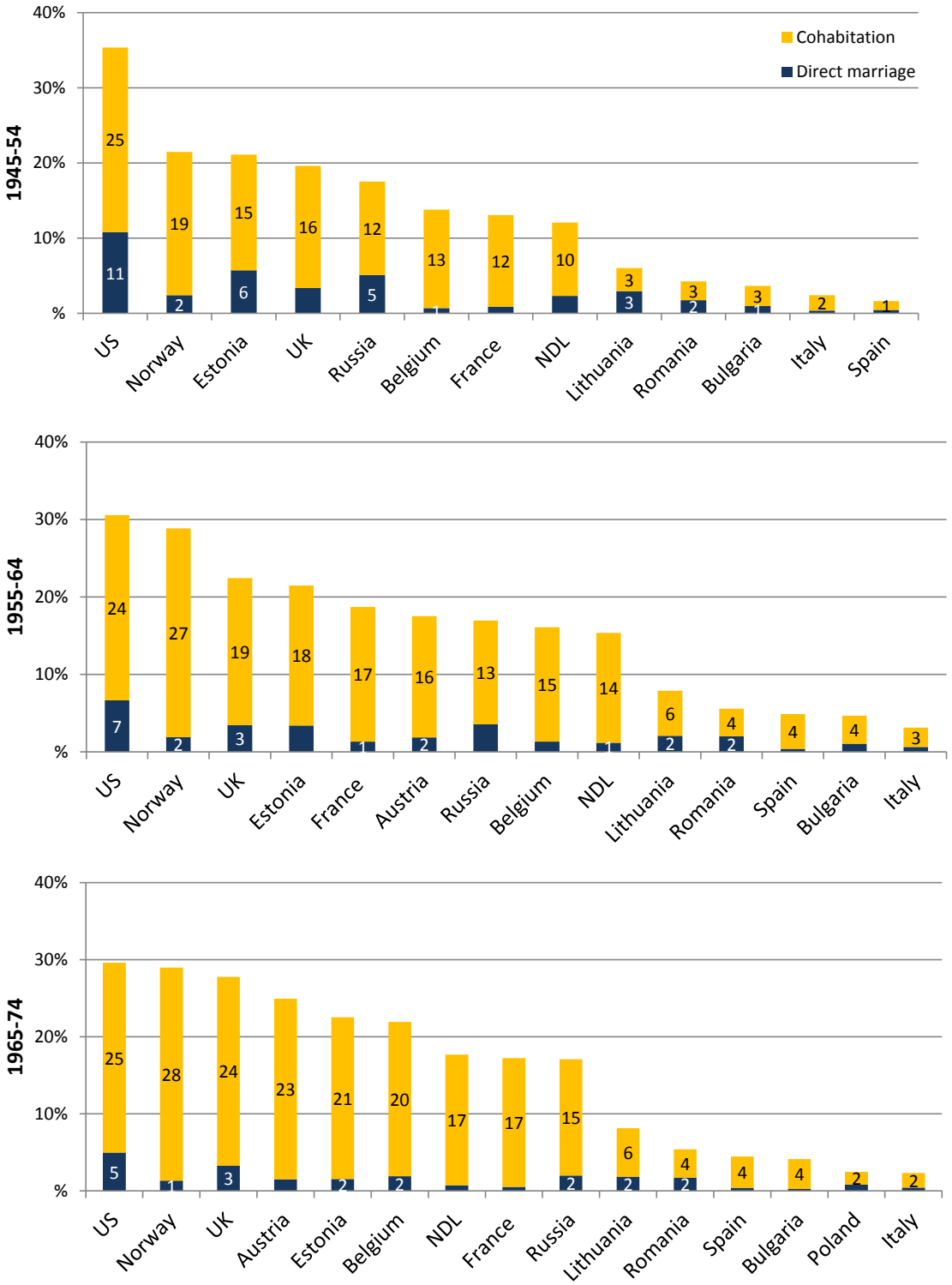
Note:
(1)data are from 1995 National Survey of Family Growth
(2)data are from 2007 National Survey of Family Growth
Weights have been applied if available.
Sources: Harmonized Histories, authors' calculations.

Figure 2: Percentage of women who experience first union dissolution, by type of first union and birth cohort



Note:
(1)data are from 1995 National Survey of Family Growth
(2)data are from 2007 National Survey of Family Growth
Weights have been applied if available. *Sources: Harmonized Histories, authors' calculations.*

Figure 3: Percentage of all women who ever repartner, by type of second union at the beginning and birth cohort



Note:
(1)data are from 1995 National Survey of Family Growth
(2)data are from 2007 National Survey of Family Growth
Weights have been applied if available. *Sources: Harmonized Histories, authors' calculations.*

Figure 4: Cumulative proportions of repartnering 5 years after union dissolution by cohort

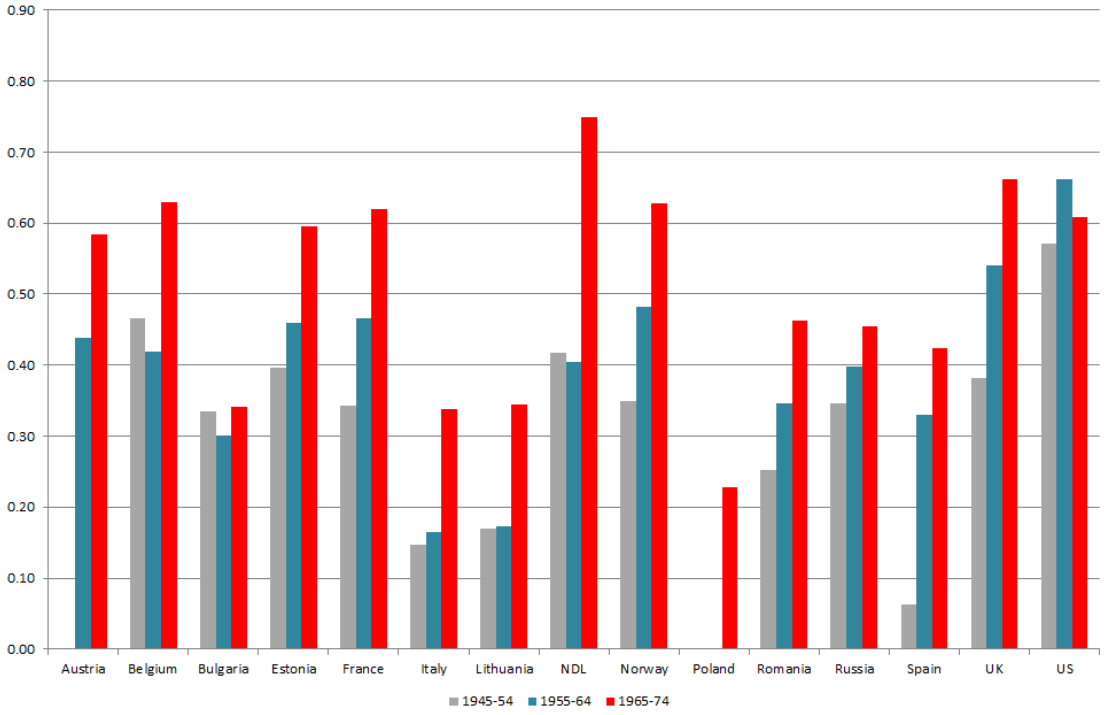
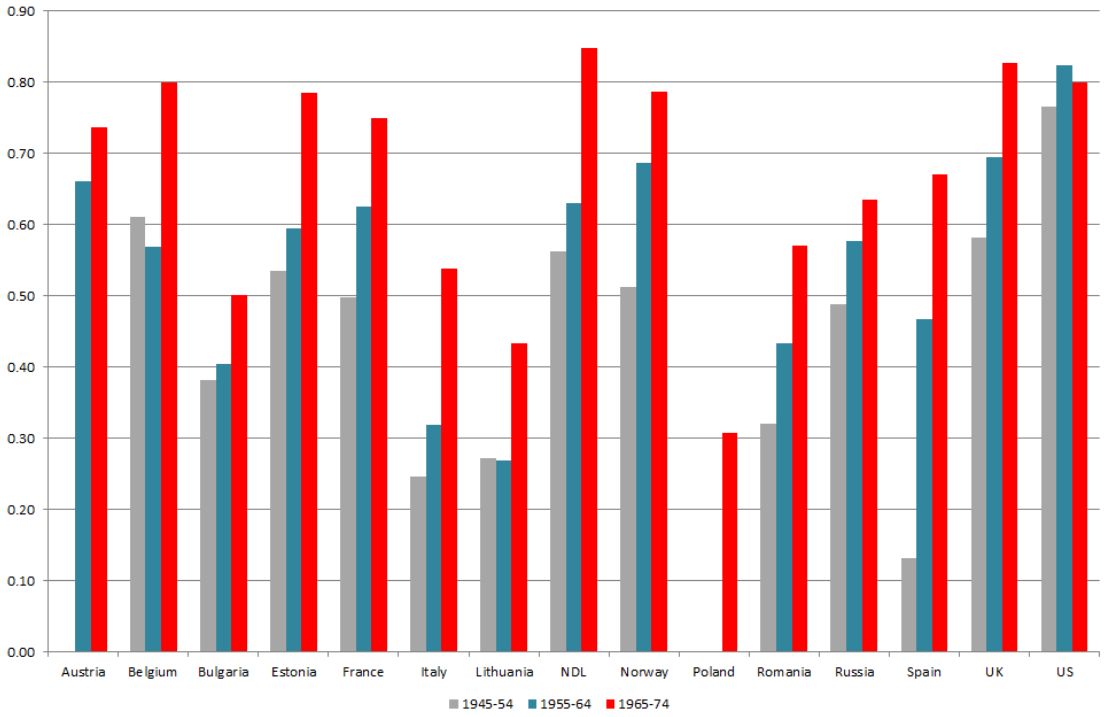


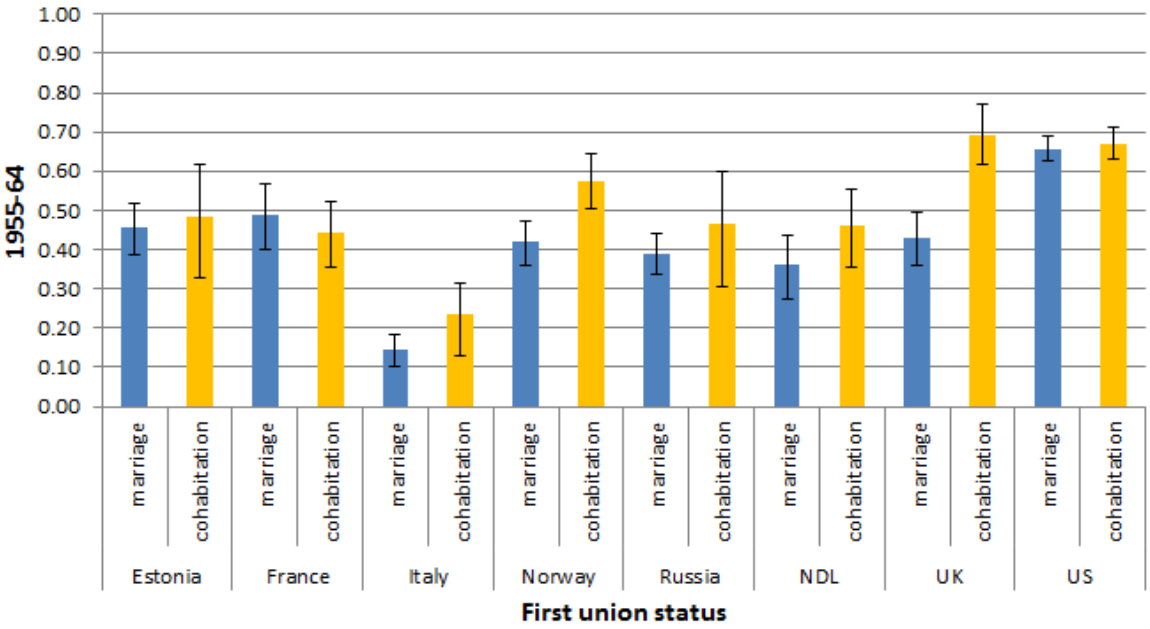
Figure 5: Cumulative proportions of repartnering 10 years after union dissolution by cohort

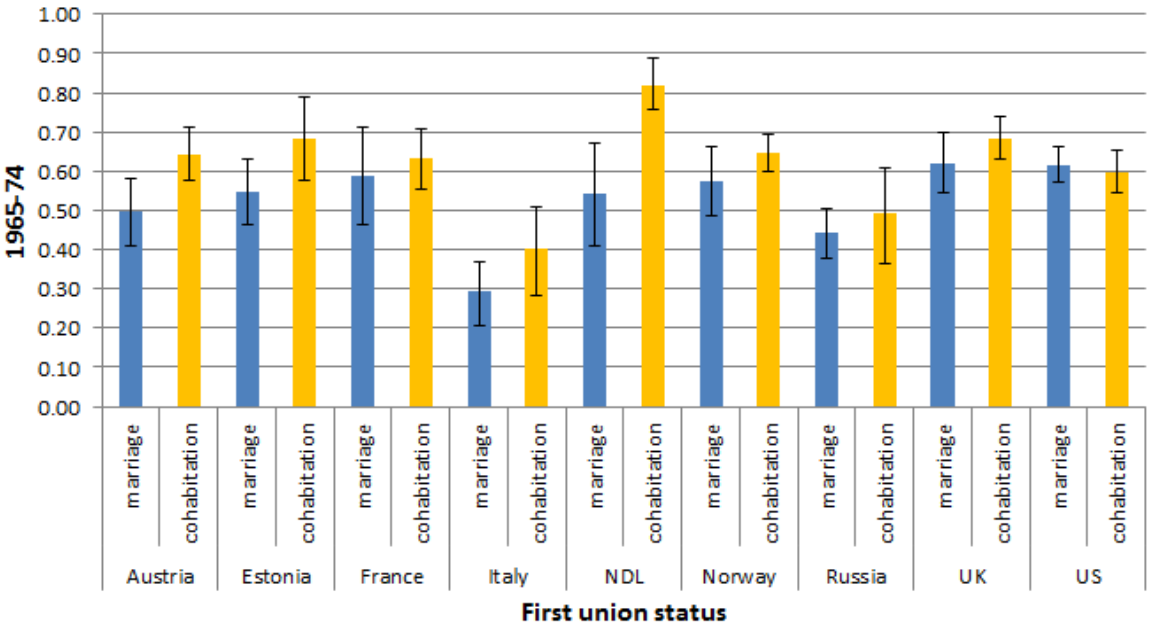


Note:

[(1)]data are from 1995 National Survey of Family Growth
[(2)]data are from 2007 National Survey of Family Growth
Weights have been applied if available.
Sources: Harmonized Histories, authors' calculations.

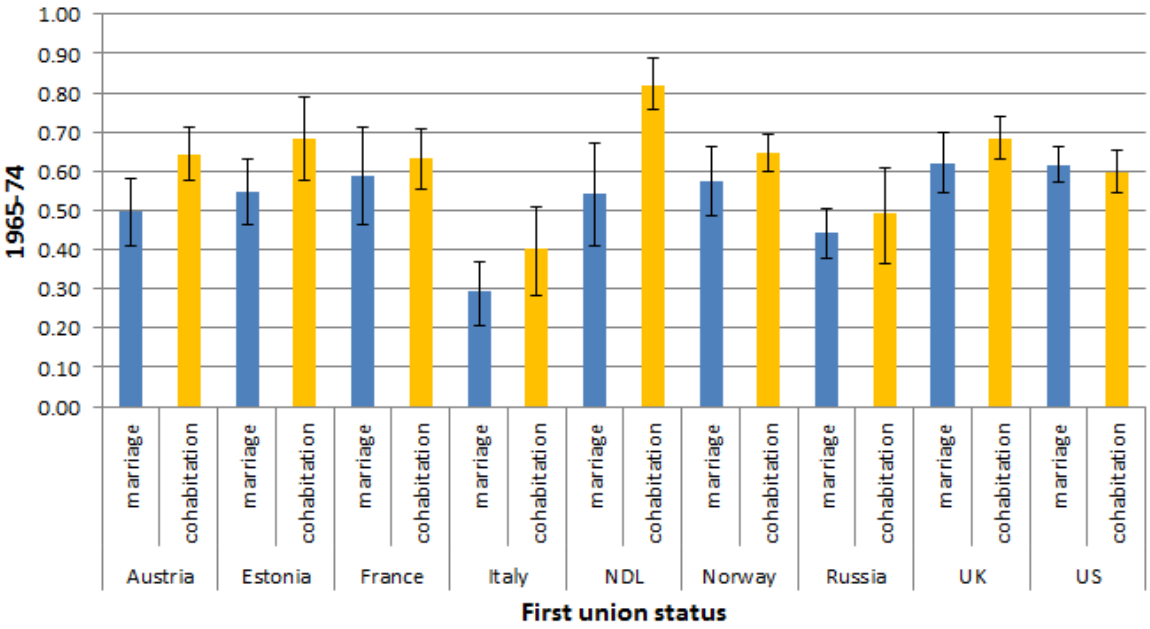
Figure 6: Proportion of women who have ever repartnered within 5 years after union dissolution by cohort and first union type

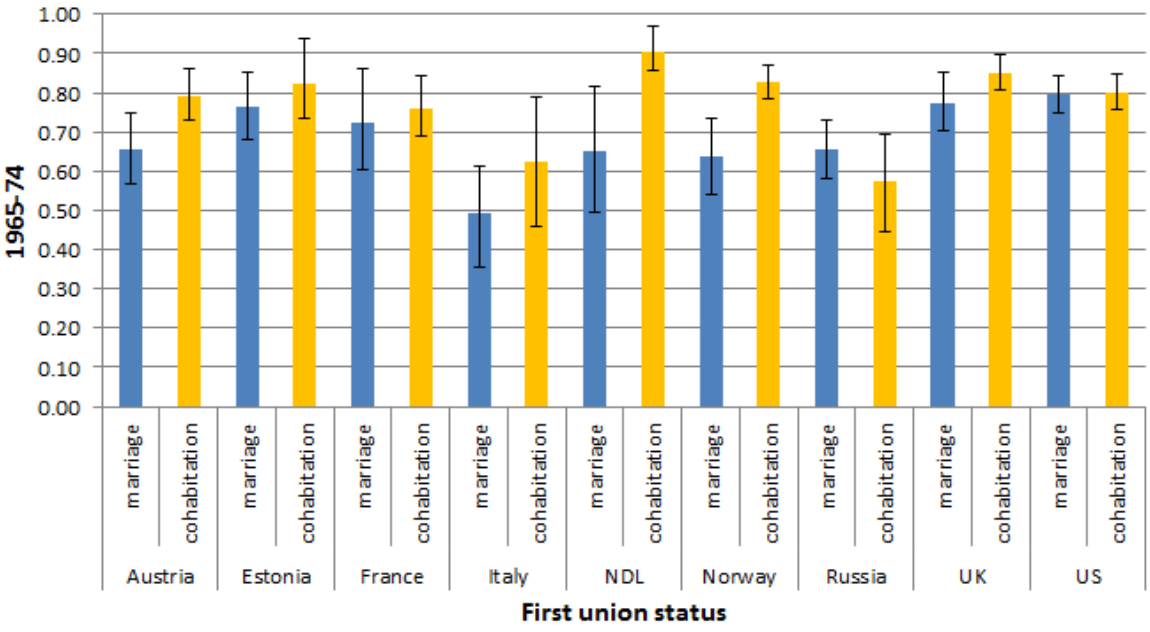




Note:
(1)data are from 1995 National Survey of Family Growth
(2)data are from 2007 National Survey of Family Growth
Weights have been applied if available.
Sources: Harmonized Histories, authors' calculations

Figure 7: Proportion of women who have ever repartnered within 10 years after union dissolution by cohort and first union type





Note:
(1)data are from 1995 National Survey of Family Growth
(2)data are from 2007 National Survey of Family Growth
Weights have been applied if available.
Sources: Harmonized Histories, authors' calculations

Appendix

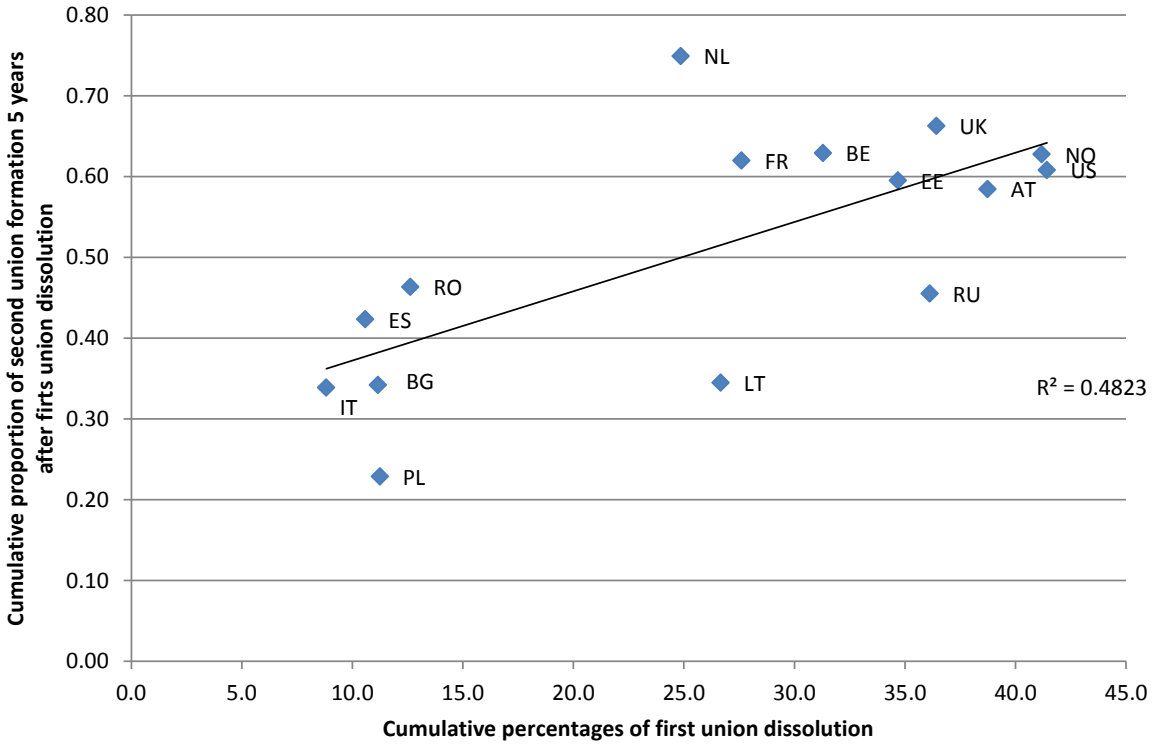
Life tables - description of the samples: number of observations and events (second union formation), by cohort (Only counts without weights)

Country	*1945-54*		*1955-64*		*1965-74*	
	obs.	*event*	*obs.*	*event*	*obs.*	*event*
Austria	-	-	53	34	445	307
Bulgaria	72	30	147	57	168	70
Estonia	297	181	343	196	280	195
France	289	137	361	188	332	180
Italy	301	71	446	106	317	86
Lithuania	133	41	248	71	193	68
NDL	188	108	230	149	202	161
Norway	407	241	525	368	614	434
Poland	-	-	-	-	147	36
Romania	140	48	117	52	131	60
Russia	379	207	431	234	330	182
Spain	91	21	168	71	136	57
UK	258	174	345	209	374	266
US	806	576	1,742	1,251	905	605

Life tables - description of the samples for each country by first union type and cohort (Only counts without weights)

Country	*1955-64*		*1965-74*	
	marital	*cohabiting*	*marital*	*cohabiting*
Austria	34	19	188	257
Belgium	145	23	79	71
Bulgaria	139	8	137	31
Estonia	288	55	176	104
France	187	175	98	235
Italy	353	93	195	122
Lithuania	235	13	157	36
NDL	147	83	64	138
Norway	313	212	151	463
Poland	-	-	117	30
Romania	103	14	97	34
Russia	385	46	259	71
Spain	150	18	104	32
UK	256	89	171	203
US	1193	549	506	399

Level of union dissolution vs. pace of repartnering, birth cohort 1965-74 (correlation coefficient=0.69)



Note:
[1]data are from 1995 National Survey of Family Growth
[2]data are from 2007 National Survey of Family Growth
Weights have been applied if available.
Sources: Harmonized Histories, authors' calculations