

# Marital status of parents in European comparison

The influence of partners' relative  
status and social context

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# Overview

- Motivation
- Research Design
- Data and Methods
- Hypotheses
- Results
- Conclusion

# Motivation

- The percentage of births outside of marriage in the EU has increased rapidly over the last decades
- 1990: 17,4%; 2000: 27,4%; 2010: 38,3% (Eurostat)
- The majority of this increase can be attributed to births in cohabiting unions (Kiernan 2004)

# Motivation

- Only recently has research begun to consider the contextual nature of decision making (Lappegard et al. 2014, Klüsener et al. 2013)
- Research often focuses on mothers and disregards role of fathers (Perelli Harris et al 2010)
- In order to be able to consider father characteristics this research focuses on couples as unit of analysis
- Decision to have a child within a marital or cohabiting union

# Research Design

- Analysis examines ,first births‘ to couples and their marital status on the basis of EU-SILC data
- EU-SILC offers large samples for all countries in Europe
- Thus it allows to observe a large number of ,first births‘
- EU-SILC provides detailed sociodemographic information for mothers and fathers
- Additionally it contains retrospective employment histories

# Research Design

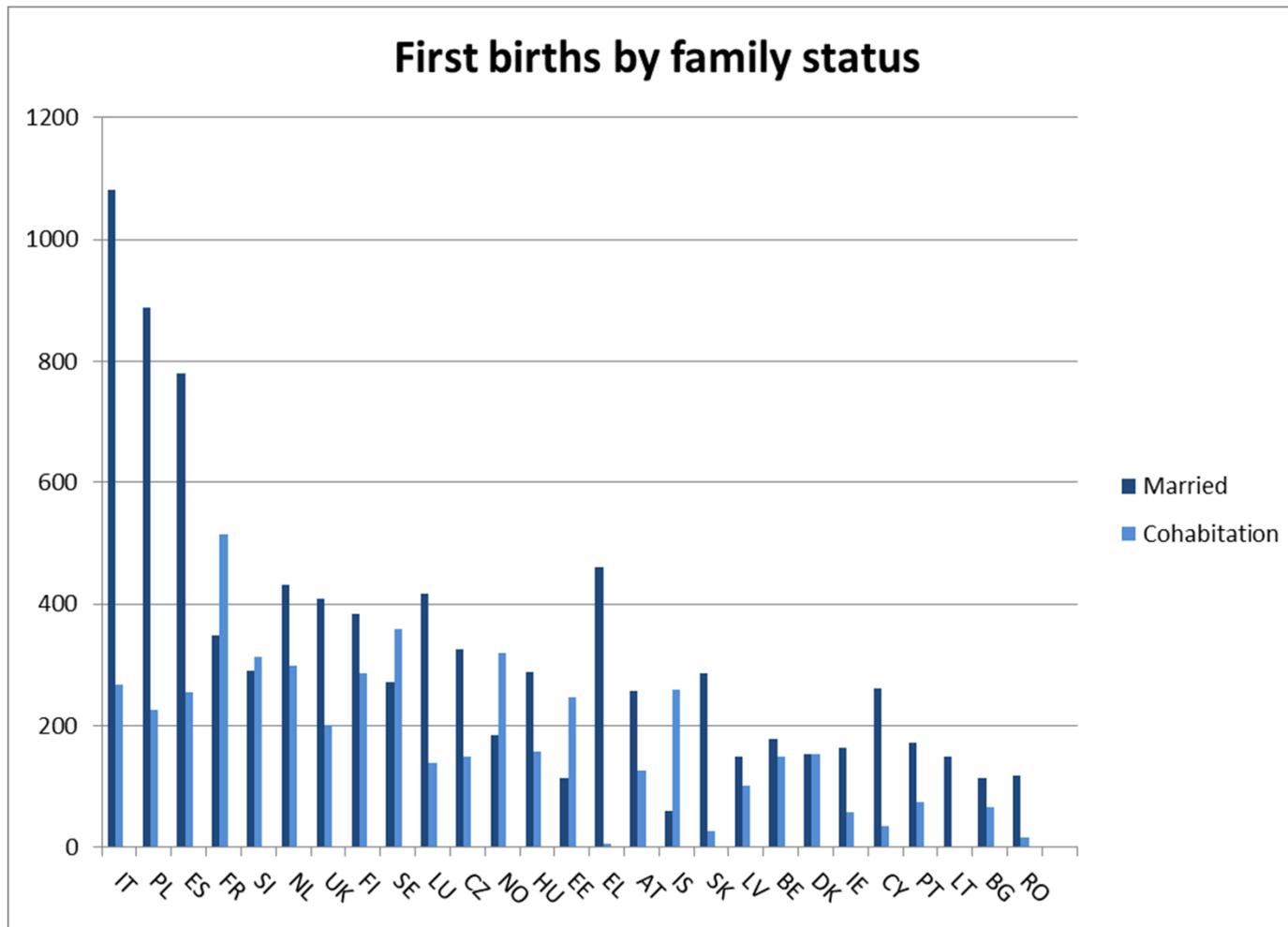
Defining ,first births' to couples

- Child aged under 1 in HH at time of interview
- Both father and mother live in HH
- Child has no siblings and parents have no other children in HH
- Only mothers 40 or younger are included

Dependent variable ,cohabmar'

- Marital status of parents is checked if both are married (1 married) otherwise (0 cohab)

# Data and Methods



# Data and Methods

- Analysis pools data from the 2004-2012 EU-SILC cross sections for 26 countries
- 12486 first births after listwise deletion (~66% marital)
- Additionally country level indicators are merged to microdata
- Multilevel random intercept logistic regression models (Stata 13:melogit) are estimated

# Hypotheses

## **H1: Status Attainment (Cherlin)**

Higher social status of parents should increase the likelihood of a marital birth.

→ *HH-income/Home ownership/Education*

This effect is expected to be more pronounced in contexts with higher acceptance of alternative family forms.

→ *Interaction with macro variable ,okaycohab' (ESS 2008)*

# Hypotheses

## **H2: Specialization (Becker)**

The more unequal parents are in terms of labor market orientation the more likely a marital birth.

→ *Education*

→ *Work intensity (calculated from retrospective work history)*

# Hypotheses

## H3: Independence (Becker)

The better the labor market position of mothers the less likely a marital birth.

→ Work intensity/education

The higher the compatibility of work and family life in a country the lower the likelihood of a marital birth.

→ *Female Labor Force Participation Rate*

In contexts with greater compatibility of work and family life a lesser status effect of mothers' education is expected

→ *Interaction FLFPR and Education*

# Hypotheses

## **H4: Insecurity (Oppenheimer/Blossfeld+Drobnič )**

The more insecure the labour market situation the more likely a non-marital birth.

→ *Unemployment rate (mean value for the 5 previous years)*

# Results



**Table 2: relative position of parents**

household income	0
household income <sup>2</sup>	0
home ownership	0.209**
mother's age	0.238**
mother's age <sup>2</sup>	-0.008**
age difference	-0.012*
education father - mother	
low low	-0.212*
low med	-0.139
low hi	0.26
med low	0.065
med med	reference category
med hi	0.301***
hi low	0.931**
hi med	0.321***
hi hi	0.625***
difference in work intensity	0.131*
year dummies	not shown
constant	-.506
var_cons	2.140**
ICC	.394
AIC	13198.59
BIC	13384.36
N	12468

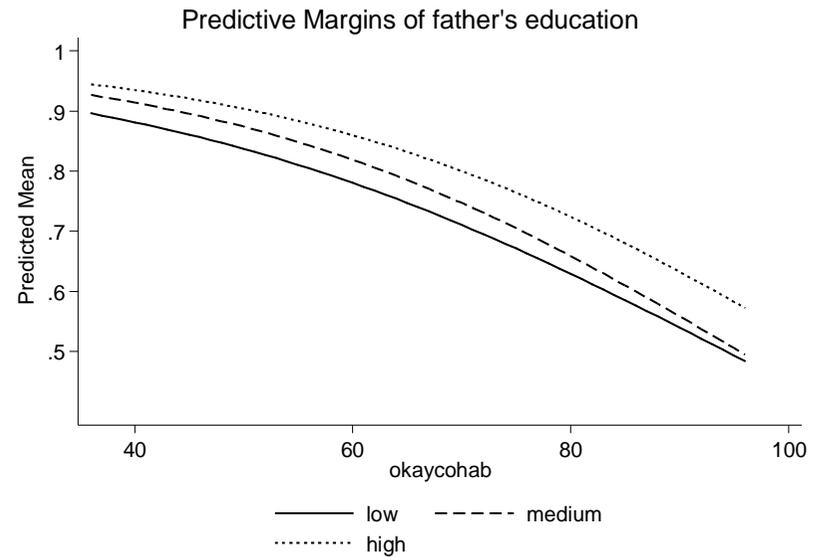
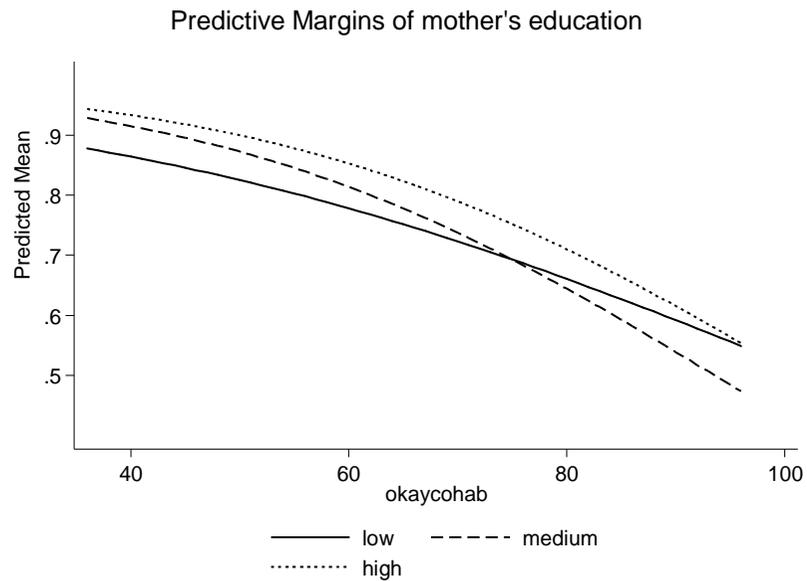
**Table 3: Predicted probabilities of marital birth dependent on education**

father/mother	low	medium	high
low	0.581	0.606	0.693
medium	0.58	0.634	0.67
high	0.753	0.666	0.732

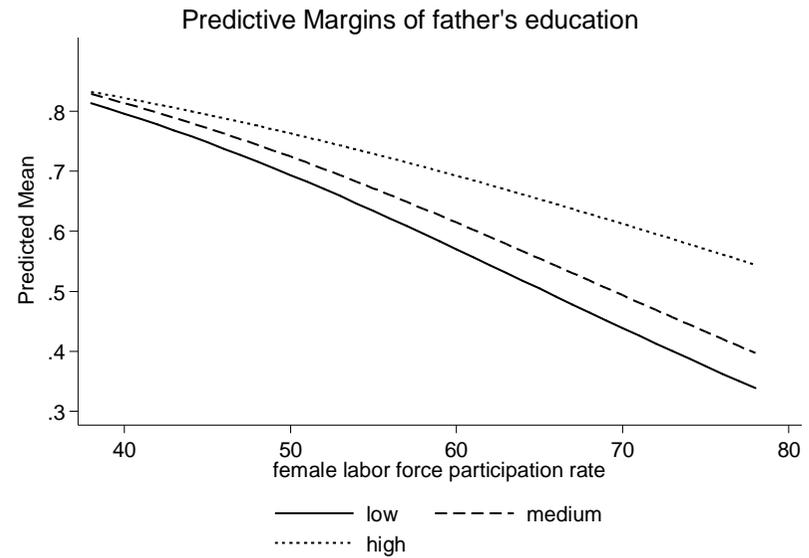
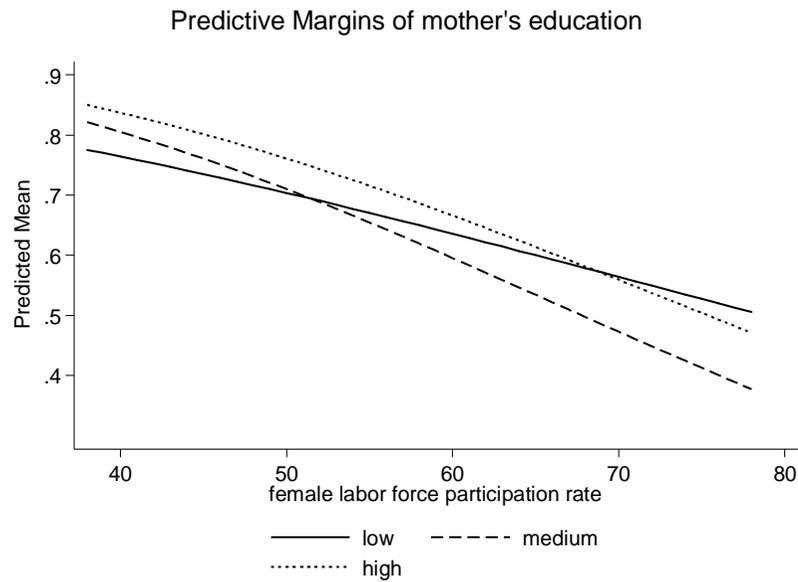
**Table 4: Regression model with country level variables**

Micro level predictors	Not shown
GDP per capita	0.001
female labor force participation rate	-0.053**
unemployment rate (mean of 5 previous years)	0.039*
“okay to live together without marriage”	-0.046**
<u>_cons</u>	5.177**
var(_cons[~])	0.733**
ICC	0.182
AIC	13161.76
BIC	13354.96
N	12468

# Cross-level interactions



# Cross-level interactions



# Conclusion

## **H1: Status attainment**

- Can be confirmed
- However effect of education overshadows income
- Weak evidence for contextual effect

## **H2: Specialization**

- Can be confirmed

## **H3: Independence**

- Can be confirmed

## **H4: Insecurity**

- Rejected
- Higher levels of unemployment associated with higher likelihood of marriage

# Thank you for your attention!

Questions, Comments?

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