

Partnership Formation and Dissolution among Immigrants and their Descendants in France

Background and research question

In contemporary Europe, the integration of immigrants and their children is a major policy issue. The family formation behaviour is an important component of the integration of immigrants and second generation immigrants into their host society. It reflects the extent of maintenance of social norms, family values and cultural identity vs. adaptation to the host society (Gordon, 1964).

France has a long tradition of immigration and the population living in France is increasingly diverse as recent immigration waves have been added to the various strata of earlier waves (Beauchemin et al., 2010). Immigrants living in metropolitan France come from an extremely wide range of geographical zones. In some of these, marriage may be almost universal and age at first marriage may still be very young, while in others unions may be formed very much on the model that prevails in France today (Milewski & Hamel, 2010; Hamel et al., 2013). To what extent does migratory context influence couple formation? This raises the question of the inter-generational transmission of partnership formation and dissolution patterns. In other words, to what extent do they reproduce their parents' behavior, or that of the native population?

For several decades, in France as in the rest of Europe, marriage has been losing ground to cohabitation, and the age at which first-time couples are formed has risen considerably, as a result of longer years spent in education and job scarcity. Moreover, family life courses have become increasingly diverse as the sequence of events and the pace at which they occur have become less standardized than before. Thus, we need to study family changes among immigrants and their descendants over their life courses and not only one transition at a time.

This paper examines partnership trajectories among immigrants and their descendants in France. We examine union formation and dissolution among immigrants and their descendants by comparing their patterns to those of the native population.

Data and sample selection

Our research design uses the Trajectories and Origins survey, a survey on population diversity in France conducted in 2008 on a sample of 22,000 persons aged 18-60 and living in metropolitan France. The survey examines the living conditions and social trajectories of immigrants, sons and daughters of immigrants born in France and members of the mainstream population (neither immigrants, nor children of immigrants). It places special emphasis on tracking individuals' educational, occupational, residential, conjugal, familial, and health trajectories. Central to the survey's analyses are the destinies of immigrants' children compared to those of their parents. The data contains standard socio-demographic information and includes retrospective individual

biographical data concerning family, residential and employment history. To study the timing of partnership all women and men aged 18-50 are selected.

Empirical strategy

The timing of first partnership is estimated through Cox proportional hazards models (Cox, 1972). The dependent variable is the transition to first partnership. People are followed from the age of 16 and right-censored at the date of interview. We also estimate competing risk model for timing of first cohabitation/first direct marriage, i.e. marriage without cohabitation before. Then we estimate the timing of first union dissolution.

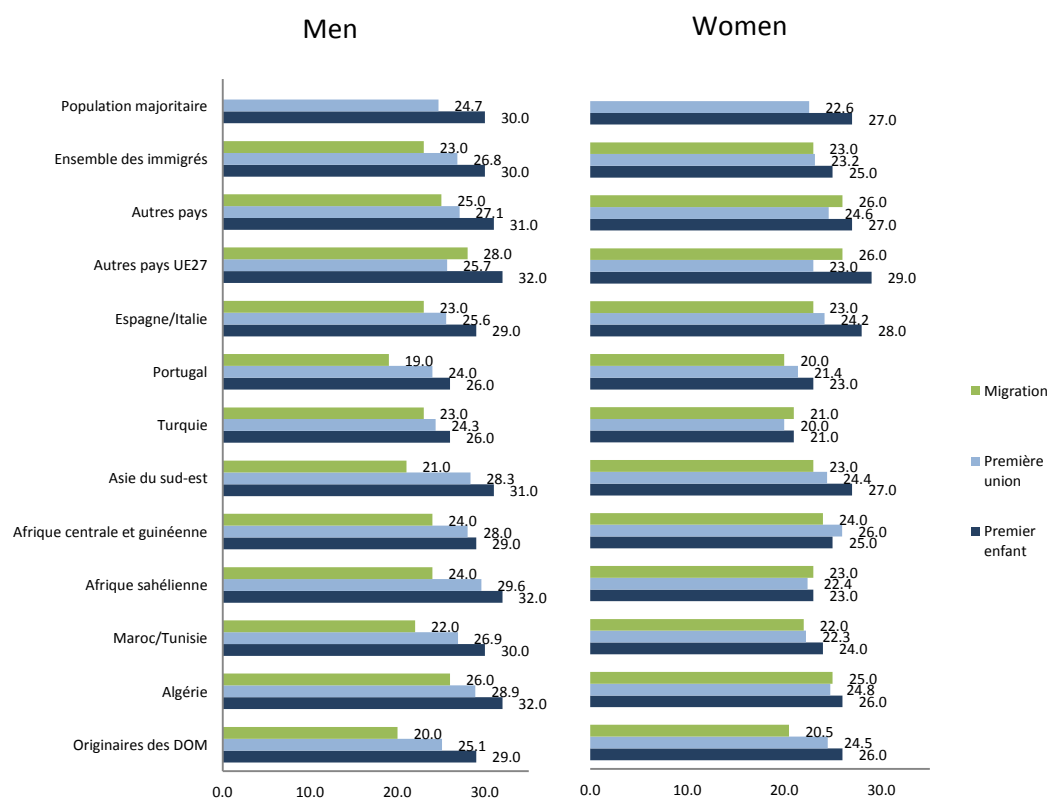
In these models, the same set of control covariates is used. Above origin separating French natives from second generation and immigrants, characteristics of the family of origin include the number of siblings and the importance of religion during childhood, the level of education, parents' social class, religion, level of education, language skills.

First descriptive results

The pace of couple formation varies considerably according to the migration wave. Thus, while more than 50% of immigrants from Turkey and Portugal form their first union between the ages of 18 and 25 years, immigrants of other origins do so somewhat later, as fewer than 40% of them in the 18-25 years age group live with a partner. Algerian and Sahelian African immigrants form couples even later than members of the mainstream population. Country of origin influences union formation not just in terms of timing but also in terms of the type of union. Immigrants far more frequently live in marital union than members of the native population, who more frequently live in consensual unions or, to a lesser extent, in civil partnerships. This difference is particularly striking among young adults.

The age at first union greatly depends on the family situation migration. Immigrants who have met their first partner before they arrived in France form their first partnership earlier than immigrants who were single when they migrate. The latter form their first union later than the native population, especially women.

Median age at migration, first union and first childbearing



Source : Enquête Trajectoires et Origines, INED-INSEE, 2008

Sample : Immigrants aged 18 - 60, who immigrated in France after 11 years old

Median age at first union formation and first childbearing for second generation immigrants

	Men		Women	
	first union formation	first childbearing	first union formation	first childbearing
Algeria	27,5	31,0	24,8	28,0
Morocco or Tunisia	27,5	32,0	24,3	28,0
Sahelian Africa	29,3	33,0	26,3	28,0
Central or Guinean Africa	26,0	31,0	26,5	32,0
South-East Asia	27,5	32,0	24,3	31,0
Turkey	25,4	29,0	22,6	25,0
Portugal	24,5	30,0	23,4	28,0
Spain or Italy	25,3	30,0	23,0	27,0
UE27	24,2	31,0	23,3	28,0
other countries	26,4	32,0	24,2	30,0
Second generation immigrants	26,0	31,0	23,9	28,0
Native population	24,7	30,0	22,7	28,0

Source : Enquête Trajectoires et Origines, INED-INSEE, 2008.

Champ : Descendants d'immigrés et population majoritaire âgés de 18 à 50 ans, qu'ils aient eu ou non des enfants.

Transitions to first union (odds ratios)

	Men	Women
Origine (ref= Native Population)		
Immigrant from Algeria	0,646 ***	0,588 ***
Immigrant from Morocco or Tunisia	0,814 **	0,738 ***
Immigrant from Sahelian Africa	0,684 ***	0,46 ***
Immigrant from Central or Guinean Africa	0,973	0,536 ***
Immigrant from South-East Asia	0,646 ***	0,696 ***
Immigrant from Turkey	1,263 **	0,922
Immigrant from Portugal	1,347 ***	0,928
Immigrant from Spain or Italy	1,106	0,886
Immigrant from UE27	0,92	0,982
Immigrant from other countries	0,837 **	0,713 ***

Controls: father's religion, cohort, level of education, number of siblings, social origin, employment

References

- Cris Beauchemin, Christelle Hamel, Patrick Simon, 2010, Trajectories and Origines. Survey on Population Diversity in France. Initial Findings, Document de travail de l'Ined, N°168, 152 p.
- Gordon M., 1964, *Assimilation in American Life: The Role of Race, Religion and National Origins*, New York, Oxford University Press.
- Hamel, C., Lhommeau, B., Pailhé, A., & Santelli, E. (2013). *Rencontrer son conjoint dans un espace multicultural et international*. Documents de Travail 189. Paris: INED. Available at: http://www.ined.fr/fichier/t_publication/1624/publi_pdf1_document_travail_2013_189_rencontre_conjoint.pdf.
- Kulu, H., & Milewski, N. (2007). Family change and migration in the life course: An introduction. *Demographic Research*, 17, 567-590.
- Hill Kulu and Amparo González-Ferrer, 2013, Family Trajectories among Immigrants and their Descendants, State of the art, Families and societies Collaborative project
- Milewski, N., & Hamel, C. (2010). Union formation and partner choice in a transnational context: The case of descendants of Turkish immigrants in France. *International Migration Review*, 44(3), 615-658.
- Zhang, Y., & Van Hook, J. (2009). Marital dissolution among interracial couples. *Journal of Marriage and Family*, 71(1), 95-107.