

## **Change and Variation in Men's and Women's Repartnership Patterns across Europe**

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### Extended Abstract

Rising divorce rates across Europe have intensified interest in patterns of repartnership, which is associated with improvements in well-being and economic security after a first marriage ends. Although these benefits of repartnership tend to be greater for women than for men – at least in part due to the larger economic decline experienced by women upon divorce -- it is men who are generally most likely to repartner in industrialized countries. Growth in men's responsibilities for childcare and shifts in the labor market positions of both sexes, however, may be fundamentally reshaping the gendered nature of repartnership. Yet little work explicitly investigates whether the gender gap in repartnership has changed over time or whether key correlates of repartnership (e.g., education level, prior childbearing, and age at separation) similarly influence higher-order union transitions of women and men.

In the current research, we examine trends and differentials in repartnership after separation or divorce using data from available countries in the Generations and Gender Programme. We address a number of specific questions in this research about the nature of repartnership. First, have patterns of repartnership changed over time? Second, do repartnership patterns vary by education level, history of prior childbearing, or age at separation? Finally, are the answers to these questions similar for men and for women? In other words, to what extent is repartnership gendered in our study countries? Results will be considered in light of country-specific contexts of parenting responsibilities and labor market opportunities for women and men.

### Data and Method

Our research is broadly historical and comparative. We rely on data from the Generations and Gender Program (GGP). To date, we have conducted preliminary analysis of repartnering in Belgium, France, Hungary, Russia, and Sweden. The samples sizes are relatively large and designed to be broadly representative of men and women aged 18 to 79 (aged 21-78 in Hungary) in each country. Our study countries vary in institutional contexts such as generosity of social transfer programs, frequency and acceptability of divorce, availability and acceptability of paid childbearing.

We focus on three distinct repartnership transitions: (a) legal remarriage after a first marriage ends in separation or divorce, (b) any new co-residential partnership after a first marriage ends in separation or divorce, and (c) any new co-residential partnership after a first co-residential partnership ends in separation or divorce. Our approach is thus both flexible to account for differences across countries in the place of cohabitation in partnership regimes and also maintains comparability with prior studies, which have taken various approaches to defining repartnership.

Our focal independent variables include separation cohort, education level, prior childbearing, and age at separation. We take a cohort-comparison approach to study the nature of historical change in repartnering, focusing on shifts in the experiences of successive separation cohorts. Within countries, we consider how repartnering patterns have changed over time, comparing patterns for cohorts experiencing divorce or separation in 1975-84, 1985-94, 1995-99, and after 2000. We hypothesize that the gender gap in repartnering will have declined over time in our study countries, to the extent that male and female gender roles in the home and labor market have increasingly come to resemble one another. (The extent to which this is true, of course, will vary across our study countries.) Next, we investigate whether repartnering patterns differ for those at the top versus bottom of the educational distribution -- groups which often face very different prospects in the labor market. Here we compare survivor functions for groups with low (ISCED 0-2), medium (ISCED 3-4), and high (ISCED 5-6) education levels. We then investigate whether repartnering patterns differ for parents versus non-parents and across groups with relatively younger versus older ages at separation (<25 years, 25-29 years, 30-39 years, 40+ years). The latter measure is intended to reflect differences across countries in the extent to which age is differentially associated with attractiveness on the repartnering "market" for women versus men.

We first illustrate change and differentials in repartnering patterns by plotting Kaplan-Meier survival estimates of the transition to repartnering, stratified by separation cohort, education level, prior childbearing, and age at separation in each of our study countries. To consider how each of our independent variables is associated with repartnering transitions, net of other correlates of repartnering, we also estimate Cox Proportional Hazards models. Because our particular interest lies in gender differences in repartnering patterns, all analyses are conducted separately by sex. All analyses are also conducted separately for each of the three types of repartnering transitions described above.

### Preliminary Results

#### *Have repartnering patterns changed over time?*

We identify significant changes in repartnering patterns in select countries. In Hungary, we identify significant declines in legal remarriage after divorce and informal repartnering both for women and men. In Russia, we find evidence of a large and significant drop in legal remarriage after divorce for women and men, but relative stability in broader patterns of repartnering which include all co-residential unions. In Sweden, we find some evidence of declines in both legal remarriage and repartnering following divorce, although these are significant only for women. On the other hand, we find no change in levels of repartnering after first union dissolution in Sweden. We identify relative stability in repartnering patterns in other study countries, with generally similar patterns by sex.

#### *Do repartnering patterns differ by education?*

We identify significant differences across educational groups in repartnering only for men in two countries: France and Hungary. For Hungary, sex differences in education effects are significant for all three transitions. For France, sex differences are significant only in the case of

repartnership after union dissolution. We also find some suggestive evidence that education may be associated with repartnership among women in Russia, but further attention to this intriguing finding is required.

*Do repartnership patterns differ by prior childbearing status?*

We find more limited effects of children on legal remarriage than on repartnership more broadly defined. Having had a child with the first spouse reduces women's propensity to repartner in most study countries, although the strength and significance of this effect varies across our three transition types. Only for repartnership after union dissolution in Sweden do we see any evidence of a depressing effect of prior childbearing on repartnership among men.

*Do repartnership patterns differ by age at separation?*

We find that age at separation is associated with repartnership in most study countries, often for men as well as women. Again, however, the strength and significance of this effect varies across our three transition types. We find evidence that the magnitude of these effects differ significantly by sex in Belgium, Russia, and interestingly also Sweden -- a country which had displayed notably similar effects of children on repartnership for men and women.