

Union dissolution and repartnering in the Netherlands

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INTRODUCTION

In the past three decades important changes in union formation have taken place in the Netherlands.

Alongside the traditional married couple with children, other household types have now become an accepted part of Dutch society: one-person households, single-parent families, and cohabiting couples with and without children. Single-parent families numbered 466 thousand in January 2008, about half of which were formed after a divorce.

The number of marriages ending in divorce boomed in the 1970s and early 1980s; in the 1990s the annual number exceeded 30 thousand. It peaked in 1994 following a simplification in divorce legislation in 1993. The increasing number of divorces in the past century is related to social changes, such as the emancipation of women and the declining influence of religion. The breakdown of traditional religious and socio-political barriers in the Netherlands has contributed to gradually fading social norms and values.

The character of marriage has changed. Educational attainment and labour participation of women have risen considerably, making women less financially dependent on their husbands. This has reduced the practical advantages of the traditionally strongly specialised man-woman role marriages. Further expansion of social security has made it possible even for women with the traditional homemaker and child-rearing role to lead an economically independent life. (Fokkema et al. 2008). Relaxation of divorce legislation in 1971 made divorce easier, and the stigma of divorce gradually disappeared.

In this paper, we examine recent developments in divorce and dissolution of cohabitation, and the reasons why people dissolve their unions. We also look at who takes the initiative, who leaves the home, and the level of contact between ex-partners. Lastly, we look into repartnering after union dissolution.

THEORY AND HYPOTHESES

Cohabitation and marriage

While living together without being married used to be a short trial period preceding marriage, it has gradually developed into a serious alternative to marriage. Although cohabitation today is more common and less stigmatised, most cohabiting couples will get married, especially when they enter the stage of parenthood, or expect to do so in the near future (Alders and De Graaf 2001, De Jong and De Graaf 1999, Fokkema et al 2008). Marriage rates for women have decreased but are still considerable: while 95 percent of women born between 1940 and 1950 ever married, this share is expected to be just over 75 percent for cohorts born in the 1970s. Fewer unmarried couples get married when they become parents, and therefore the number of children born out of wedlock has risen. In 2007 over half of newborn first children had unmarried parents. The number of higher order children whose parents are not married is also clearly increasing. More and more parents retain their unmarried status after the birth of their first child (De Graaf, 2008). These developments indicate that the spread and acceptance of cohabitation in the Netherlands is on its way towards a transition from the 'permanency stage' to the 'family arrangement' stage, as described by Sobotka and Toulemon (2008). In other words: the stage of cohabitation before marriage lasts longer than before and is less frequently converted into marriage, but is not yet seen as a complete alternative to marriage when it comes to childrearing. It can be said to have a high level of diffusion into Dutch society.

Union dissolution

With the growing prevalence and acceptance of unmarried cohabitation, divorce rates tell only part of the story when it comes to union dissolution: the number of separations of unmarried couples outnumbers the number of divorces (Steenhof and Harmsen 2002). This is not only a consequence of the increased prevalence of cohabitation, but also of the higher dissolution risk of unmarried couples, as shown in many studies (e.g. De Graaf 2005, Fokkema et al. 2008, Stevenson and Wolfers 2007, Liefbroer et al 2006). Cohabitation involves fewer formalities than marriage, and so does dissolution of this unmarried union. Expectations may be different from the start: partners see the union as a trial marriage or even just as an alternative to being single (Rindfuss and VandenHeuvel 1990). Investments by both partners are lower and so are the costs of ending the relationship. If the relationship works out well, partners may decide to get married after a while. If not, they separate. This way, the ‘bad’ matches are weeded out while the good ones remain intact. This often used ‘weeding’ theory explains the higher dissolution rates of cohabitation compared with divorce rates (Liefbroer and Dourleijn 2006). But the theory cannot fully explain why marriages preceded by cohabitation with the spouse are often found to have higher dissolution rates than marriages without previous cohabitation. After the ‘weeding’, a good quality pool of cohabitants should remain, who enter sustainable marriages after their successful ‘trials’. Partners marrying without living together first only go through the ‘trial period’ at the beginning of their marriage, and should run a higher risk of being ‘weeded out’. Most research, however, shows the opposite to be true: premarital cohabitation increases the risk of divorce. Van der Meulen and De Graaf (2006) found the divorce risk of Dutch couples who married in the 1970s without living together first was only half the risk of premarital cohabitants. The divorce risks for the two groups seem to converge in later marriage cohorts, however. This is also found in Canadian studies (LeBourdais et al. 2000). Budinski and Trovato (2005) found a duration effect in the divorce risks of Canadian married couples: those who cohabited before marriage had a higher risk in the first ten years of their union, while the risk for non-cohabitants was higher after ten years. This result seems to support the weeding theory further.

The lower stability of marriages preceded by cohabitation is often attributed to selection: presumably cohabitants are ‘a different kind of people’ than those who choose not to live together without being married. They are supposed to have personal or economic characteristics that contribute to less stable unions: they hold less traditional values, lead a more independent life and consequently are less committed to marriage. This is also explained by economic independence theories of marriage: the gains from marriage are lower when both partners participate on the labour market and have an income. Consequently, the costs of separation are lower than in a marriage with a traditional breadwinner and homemaker pattern (Stevenson and Wolfers 2007).

Liefbroer and Dourleijn (2006) compared divorce risks in 16 European countries and report significant differences between married couples who did and those who did not cohabit with their spouses for just half of the countries. The higher risk for premarital cohabitants is only found in countries where cohabitation is either hardly diffused into society, or is widely accepted. In the first case, the cohabiting couples form a selective group, whereas in a society where most couples cohabit before or even instead of getting married, couples who do not are selective. Similarly, the risk of unmarried union dissolution is highest in countries with either high or low prevalence of cohabitation.

In this paper, we analyse the dissolution risks of first unions of cohabiting couples and married couples who did and those who did not cohabit prior to marriage. As a result of increasing individualism and female independence over the years, we expect to see higher

dissolution risks in younger marriage cohorts. Earlier findings from the FFS show a convergence of dissolution risks between premarital cohabiting couples and those who married without living together first. However, if we assume that in the younger cohorts surveyed in the FFS2008 non-cohabitants are becoming the more selective group with deviant norms and values that contribute to more stable relationships, further convergence is not plausible.

Our analysis also includes other factors that have often shown to have an effect on divorce risk. Parenthood is a strong factor: in general children, especially while living in the household, have a binding effect on a relationship. Another factor is age at the start of the union: younger ages in particular have an increased divorce risk (Janssen et al. 1999, Budinski and Trovato 2005, Raley and Bumpass 2003), and some studies indicate that unions formed at older ages also have higher risks (Liefbroer and Dourleijn 2006). The role of educational attainment is not clear-cut: some studies find no effect (Stevenson and Wolfers 2005), others see increased divorce risks related to lower education levels (Budinski and Trovato 2005, Raley and Bumpass 2003), and others again for higher educated women or men. Liefbroer and Dourleijn (2006) found higher divorce risks for higher education levels in Flanders, the opposite effect in Spain and no effect in the other countries. Janssen et al. (1999) found increased risks only for couples with clear differences in education level between partners. Kalmijn (2008) gives an overview of recent studies showing a negative relationship between education and divorce risk in younger marriage cohorts since 1965; there was no significant effect of education for older marriage cohorts (De Graaf and Kalmijn 2006).

We assume lower education to be related to holding more traditional values and hypothesise a lower divorce risk for the lower educated, at least in more recent marriage cohorts. A similar and stronger relationship with values holds for religion; therefore we assume that religious people have more stable relationships. They will also be more prevalent in the groups that never cohabited, and thus account for the selectivity described above. (*+Residency, urban environment higher risk, to do*)

We analyse the dissolution risk of cohabitation and marriage separately.
To summarise the expected effects on dissolution risks:

	Cohabitation	Marriage
Preceded by cohabitation	n.a.	+
Younger birth cohort	+	-
Marriage cohort	+	-
Age at start of union	Low +, high ?	Low +, high ?
Presence of children	-	-
Higher education level	+	+
Religion	-	-
Parents divorced	+	+
Urban residency	+	+

Repartnering

The growing prevalence of union dissolution increases the number of singles and single-parent families. However, most separated people enter into a new relationship after some time.

(TO DO)

DATA AND METHODS

Data

The main data source for this paper is the Dutch Family and Fertility Survey (FFS) 2008. The other source of information is the municipal population registration system, which contains information on divorce, flash annulments and dissolution of non-marital unions. The five-yearly FFS Survey is conducted by Statistics Netherlands, using face-to-face interviews. It gives retrospective information on the course of relationship and family formation and their backgrounds in the Netherlands. Data are obtained on socio-demographic characteristics of Dutch inhabitants, e.g. relationship history, present household composition and relationships, and also expectations about future relationships and parenthood. In the most recent FFS, 3.8 thousand men and 4.0 thousand women were interviewed between March and August 2008. Only one person per household was interviewed. The sample was weighted using a number of variables: sex, age, marital status, degree of urbanisation, country of birth and number of children.

Analyses

Divorce risks are analysed using log linear regression.
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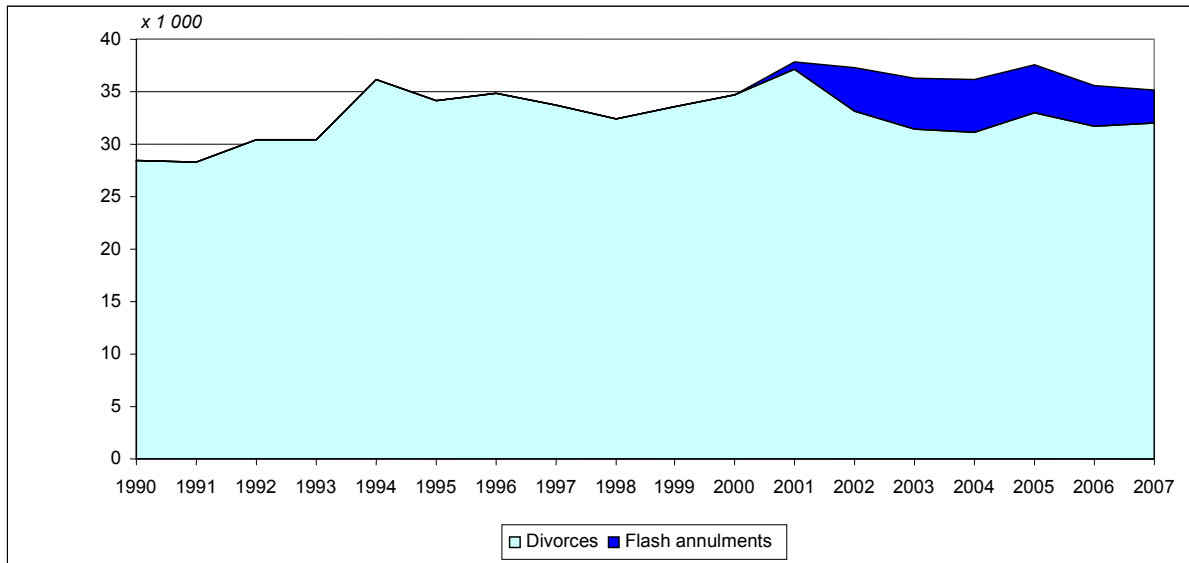
RESULTS

Stable number of divorces

In 2008, 32 thousand marriages ended in divorce (*figure 1*). Since 2001 married couples can downgrade their marriage to a registered partnership and subsequently dissolve this partnership. This ‘flash-annulment’ option turned out to be a serious alternative to a formal divorce. In 2007, 3.2 thousand couples opted for this much quicker procedure, effectively circumventing longer divorce procedures. The law has now been changed, and from 1 March 2009 onwards it is no longer possible to convert a marriage into a partnership; from this date flash annulments are a thing of the past.

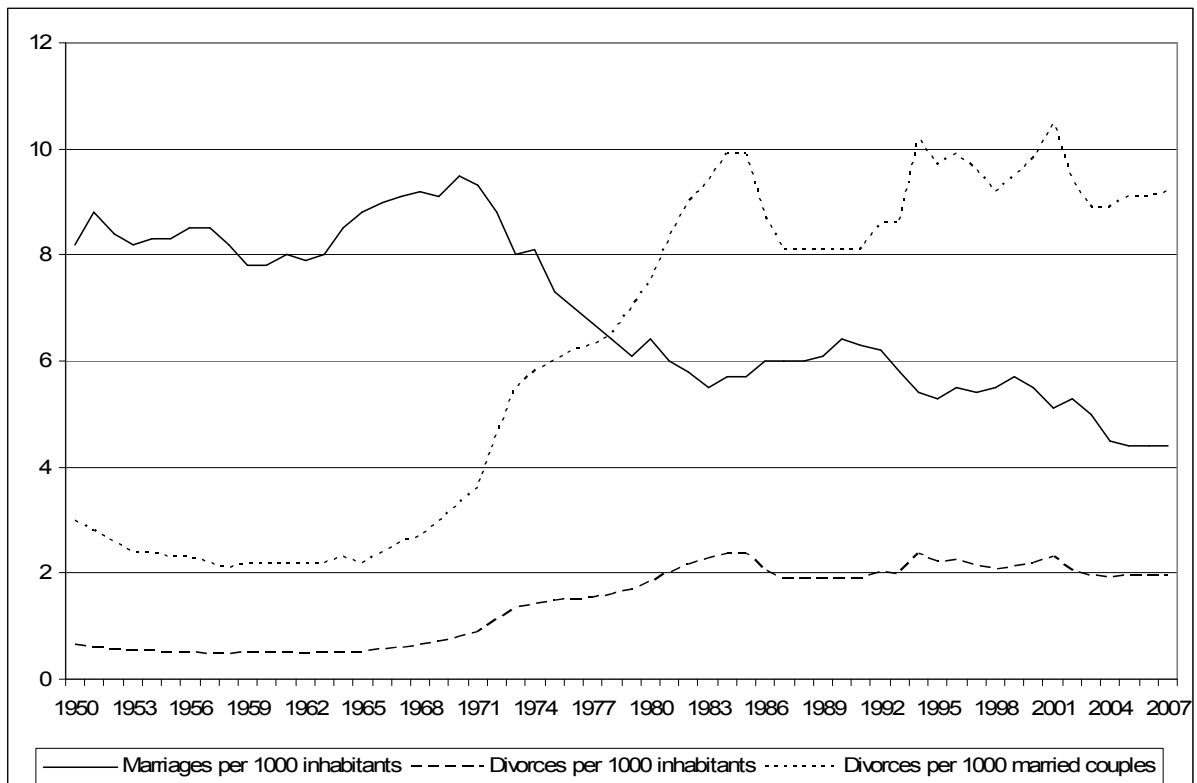
Although the number of divorces has been fairly stable since 2003, the total number of union dissolutions has increased. This is the result of a growing number of cohabitants ending their relationships.

Figure 1. Divorces and flash annulments in the Netherlands, 1990-2007



The number of divorces strongly depends on the number of existing marriages. In the last ten years, about 1 percent of the 3.5 million Dutch married couples divorced (*figure 2*). Emancipation and secularisation in particular have played an important role in the massive increase of the divorce rate in the past century. These processes were reflected in women's growing independence from their husbands, stimulated by improved regulations and government facilities in the areas of legislation, and social and financial provisions. Changing opinions on the sustainability of marriage also influence the increasing number of divorces (Van den Akker, 1982).

Figure 2. Marriage and divorce in the Netherlands



Dutch marriages ending in a divorce in 2007 had lasted an average 14 years. At the time of the divorce the men's mean age was 44.6 years, the women's 41.5 years. Both duration and age at divorce have increased, as a result of the higher age at marriage. As most married couples cohabit before getting married, partners are older when they marry. Despite the higher age at divorce, the number of divorced couples with children under 18 has grown to just over half of the cases.

Table 1. Figures on divorces in the Netherlands

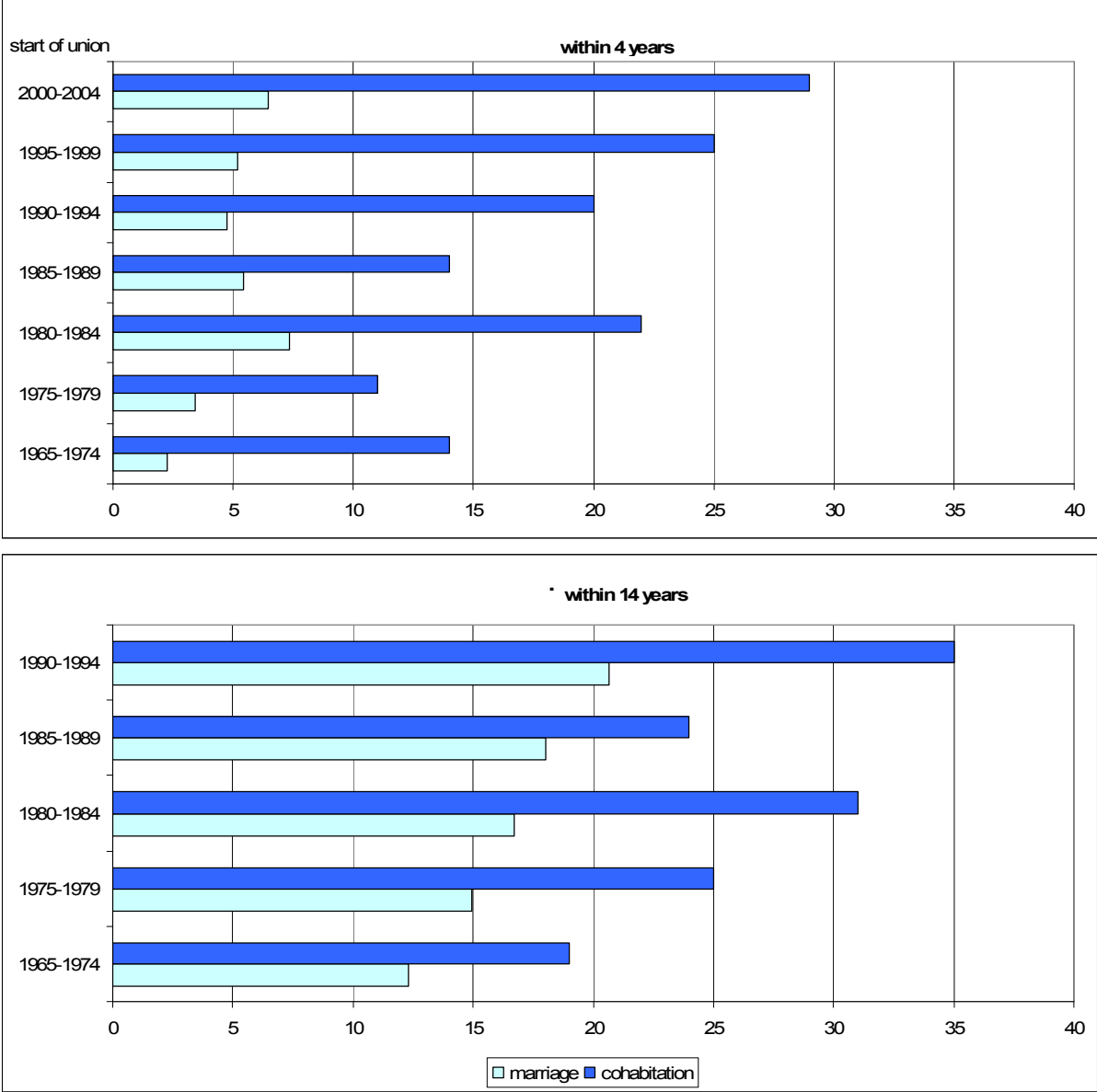
	Mean duration of marriage	Mean age at divorce		Share of divorces with children under 18 involved	Number of children under 18 involved in divorce
		man	woman		
				%	x 1 000
1996	12,2	40,8	38,1	46,4	29,5
1997	12,3	41,0	38,4	47,4	29,5
1998	12,7	41,6	38,7	48,8	29,3
1999	12,9	41,8	38,8	51,1	31,8
2000	12,9	41,9	39,0	51,8	33,0
2001	13,1	42,1	39,2	53,0	36,3
2002	13,6	42,7	39,8	56,3	34,7
2003	13,6	43,0	40,0	58,1	33,9
2004	13,6	43,3	40,3	58,1	33,6
2005	13,8	43,7	40,7	57,4	33,9
2006	14,0	44,1	41,1	56,9	33,3
2007	14,1	44,6	41,5	56,2	33,1

The number of cohabitants has increased substantially since the 1980s. In 2008, about 800 thousand couples lived together without being married. This is much lower than the 3.4 million married couples, but cohabitants have a higher dissolution risk than married couples. In recent years the absolute number of cohabitation dissolutions is estimated to be twice that of divorces. This means that about 100 thousand unions per year were dissolved (Steenhof and Harmsen, 2002).

Cohabitants together for a shorter period

Marriages not preceded by a period of cohabitation are much more stable than cohabitant unions, especially in the early years. Four years after the start of the union the number of divorced women varied between 2 and 7 percent, depending on the period in which they married (*figure 3*). The share of cohabiting couples who had already split up after 4 years was 11 to 29 percent. As the duration of the union increases, the differences in dissolution risk between the two groups decrease. This is related to the fact that the share of cohabitants who marry increases with the duration of their union. After 14 years, one in seven marriages contracted in the first half of the 1980s ended in divorce. Three out of ten women who started cohabiting in that period are no longer with their partner; six out of ten couples got married sometime in the course of the years and only one in ten were still cohabiting after 14 years.

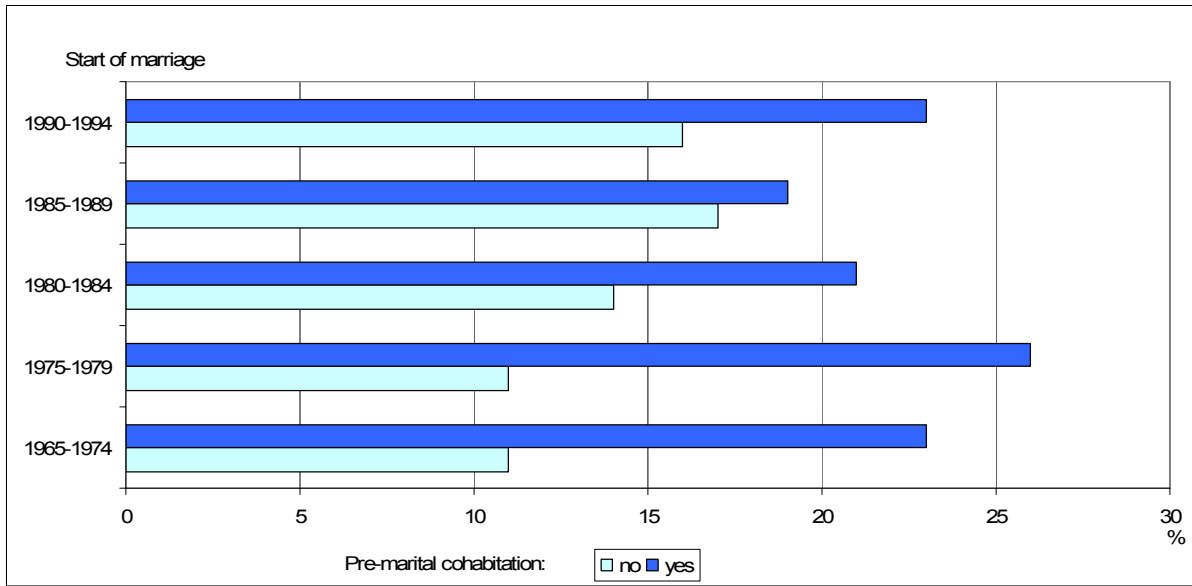
Figure 3. Share of union dissolutions after marriage and cohabitation, within 4 and 14 years



Most couples cohabit before marriage

The number of divorces preceded by a period of cohabitation with the spouse largely increased in recent decades. Only one in ten marriages contracted around 1970 followed a period of cohabitation. This increased to seven in ten by the turn of the century. Living together without being married can be seen as a ‘trial marriage’. The least stable relationships will already have ended before marriage is considered. When a relationship has proven to be stable, or when parenthood is considered, many cohabitants decide to get married. Despite the ‘trial period’, these marriages are less stable than marriages not preceded by cohabitation (figure 4). The differences have diminished over time, but in the youngest marriage cohort the risks have started to diverge again. This supports our hypothesis about non-cohabitants becoming the more selective group.

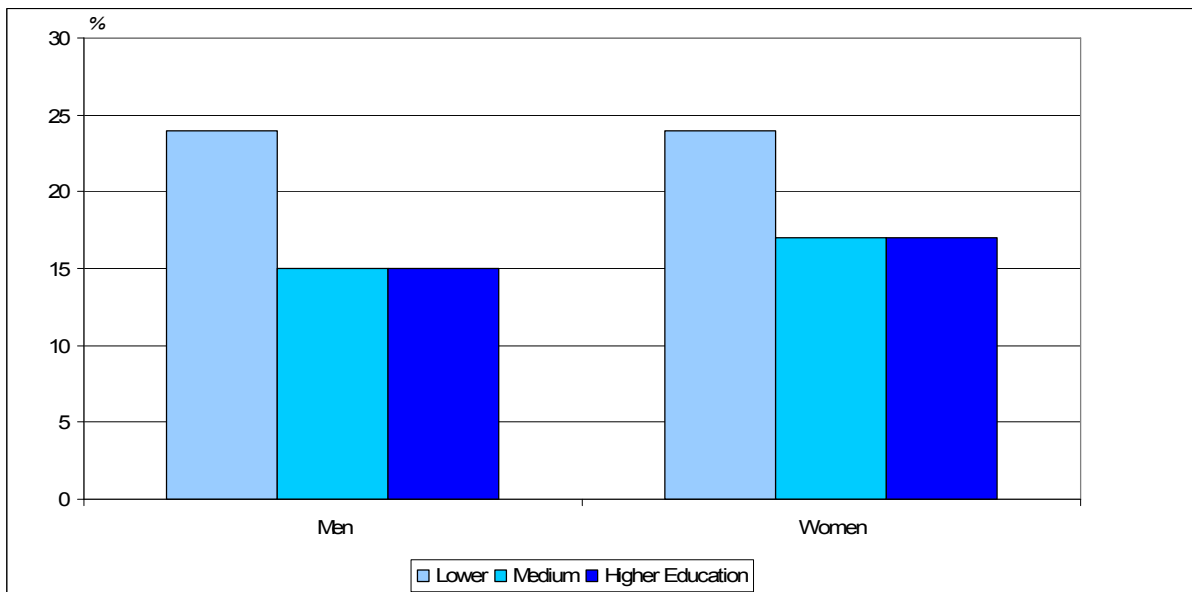
Figure 4. Share of divorces within 14 years



Lower education, more divorces

As more women are staying in education longer, they are older at the start of a relationship and motherhood. Women’s increased educational attainment has also strongly pushed up their economic independence. It is therefore likely to assume that higher educated women, who are more independent, have a higher divorce risk. Our results show the opposite (*figure 5*). We analysed the divorce risks of people married between 1985 and 1994. Both men and women with lower education levels have a higher divorce risk than men and women with medium or higher education levels. Age at marriage may also play a role in this: lower educated people marry younger, and a younger age at marriage is related to higher divorce risk. This result is in line with the findings by De Graaf and Kalmijn (2006).

Figure 5. Share of divorced men and women married between 1985 and 1994, by educational attainment



Relationship with someone else often triggers divorce

FFS respondents who had experienced a union dissolution were given a set of reasons and asked to indicate which one best fit their last dissolution. People who mentioned more than one reason, as most people did, were asked to the main reason.

The most frequently mentioned reasons are personal: ex-partners indicate they had grown apart or got tired of each other, or their characters clashed. In many cases, one of the partners had had a relationship with someone else: this was the main reason to end the union for almost one third of men and women (*table 2*).

For ex-cohabitants this is less often the most important trigger. More often than divorced people they said they split up because of incompatible plans for the future. This supports the idea of cohabitation being a ‘trial marriage’.

One notable finding was that more women than men indicated physical or mental violence and/or drug or alcohol addiction problems had led to the end of their marriage or cohabitation. Such reasons were a crucial factor for 15 percent of married women and 10 percent of cohabiting women in the break-up of their union. Men hardly mentioned these problems at all. Whether these reasons related to the man or the woman in the former union is not clear from the data. However, it is plausible that women more often experience violence or addiction as a problem in their relationship. In four in five cases, domestic violence - either physical, psychological or sexual- is committed by men (Eggen and Kalidien. 2007).

Table 2. Main reason for union dissolution, after marriage and cohabitation

	Marriage		Cohabitation		
	Men	Women	Men	Women	
	%				
Someone else involved		30	26	21	23
Tired of each other		24	17	29	21
Clashing characters		18	14	22	16
Incompatible plans for the future		6	5	11	11
Drug/alcohol addiction		2	10	1	6
Social or cultural differences		4	4	3	5
Physical or mental violence		1	8	0	4
Health problems		4	5	3	3
Jealousy, lack of trust		0	1	1	2
Disagreed about having children		2	1	1	2
Sexual problems		2	2	1	0
Financial problems		2	2	2	1
Other reasons		6	7	5	4
	abs.=100%				
Total		375	460	537	584

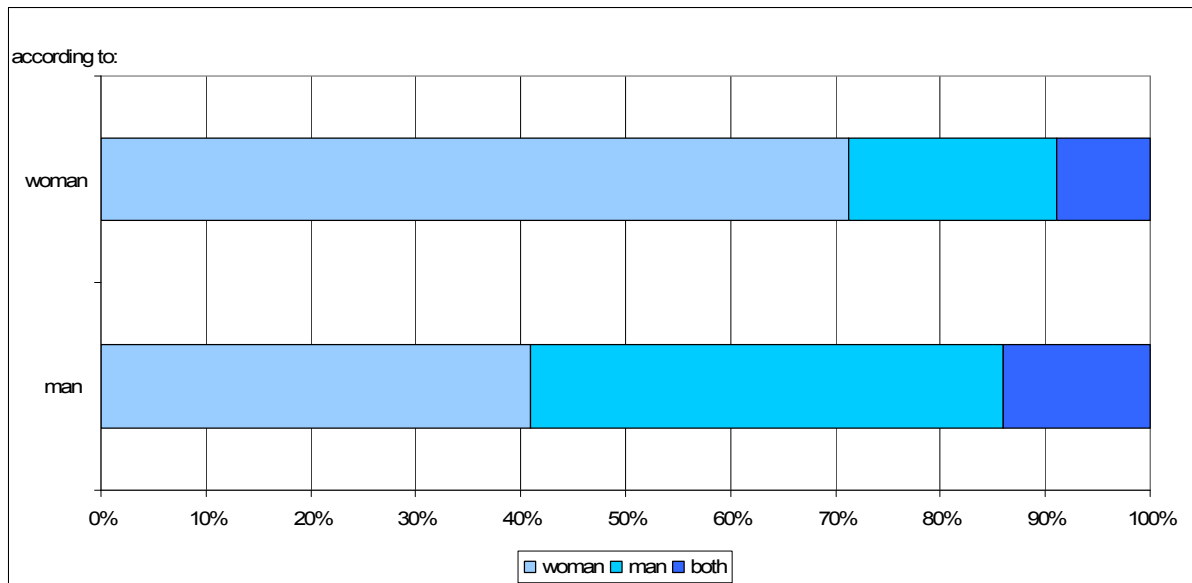
More children experience divorce

More than half of the divorced couples had children under 18 who were living in the household at the time of divorce. Four in ten divorcing couples had one child, but in most cases two or more children were involved. In recent years, some 34 thousand children a year have experienced their parents’ divorce. In the early 1990s this number was lower, at around 25 thousand. The increase is caused by both the higher divorce rate and the growing number of divorces where children are involved. The latter is a result of the fact that today (expected) parenthood is often an important reason for cohabitants to get married. Since the 1990s the share of broken marriages with children has risen from 45 to 55 percent (*table 1*). Only in one in five unmarried unions that are dissolved involve children.

Women file for divorce

According to the interviewed women, it was them who the first step towards the decision to break up the union in 70 percent of (marital) dissolutions. However, according to the men, the women were the first to decide in only 40 percent of cases (*figure 6*). Slightly more men than women reported that both partners more or less simultaneously decided to split up. Some men and women apparently have different opinions about the onset of the dissolution, or feel better thinking they were the one who pulled the strings. The submission of the divorce petition is in line with the decision to separate: today, 60 percent of divorces are filed by both partners, 30 percent by wives and only 10 percent by husbands.

Figure 6. Who took the initiative to union dissolution, according to men and women



Home ownership decides who stays

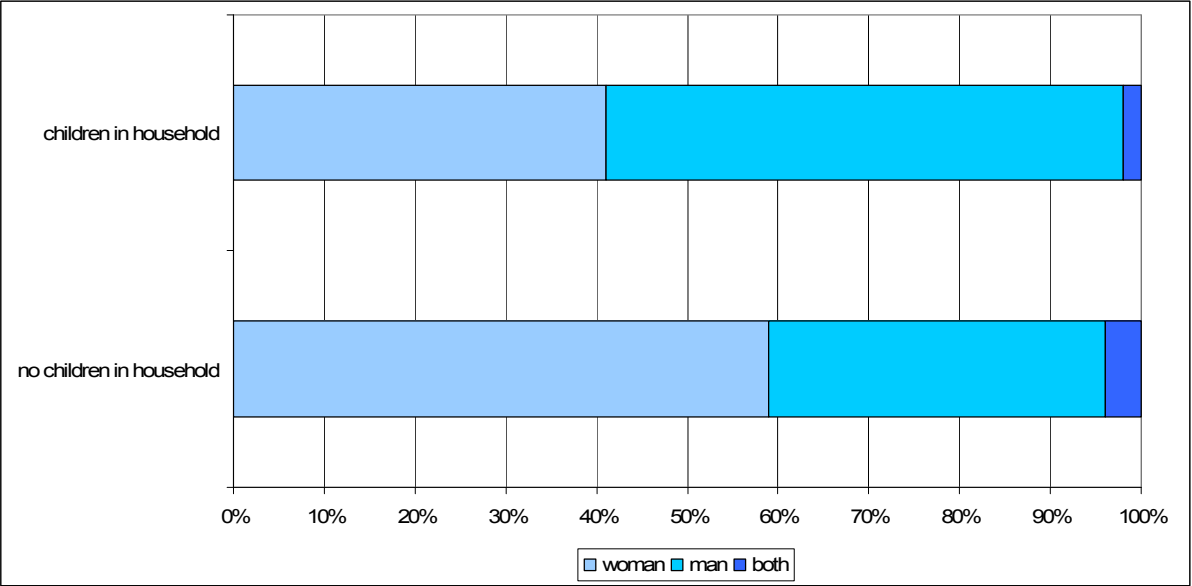
Once the decision has been taken to dissolve the relationship, one of the partners usually leaves the house. To get more information on the movement patterns of ex-partners, the FFS included a question on who was the first to leave. In half of the cases in the group that had experienced (marital) dissolution, the woman moved out (*table 3*). It is rare for both ex-partners to leave the house directly after the dissolution. Both men and women were asked this question, and the answers were very similar. Further analyses show a strong correlation between home ownership and the person moving out. In over 80 percent of the dissolutions the home owner stayed in the house.

Table 3. Who left the house after dissolution. by home ownership

Home owner	Who left first			Total number of respondents
	man	woman	both	
	%			abs.=100%
Man	14	85	1	226
Woman	83	16	1	129
Both	42	54	3	683
Rental house	49	47	4	998
Total	45	52	3	2036

In couples who still had children at home at the time of divorce it is usually the mother who stays in the house with them. In couples with no children it is the men who stay (*figure 7*). Partners without children often cohabit. If they live in a rental house, in six out of ten cases it is the woman who moves out. One possible explanation for this is that cohabitants often live in a house rented by one of the partners. As this is more often the man than the woman, he is most likely to stay.

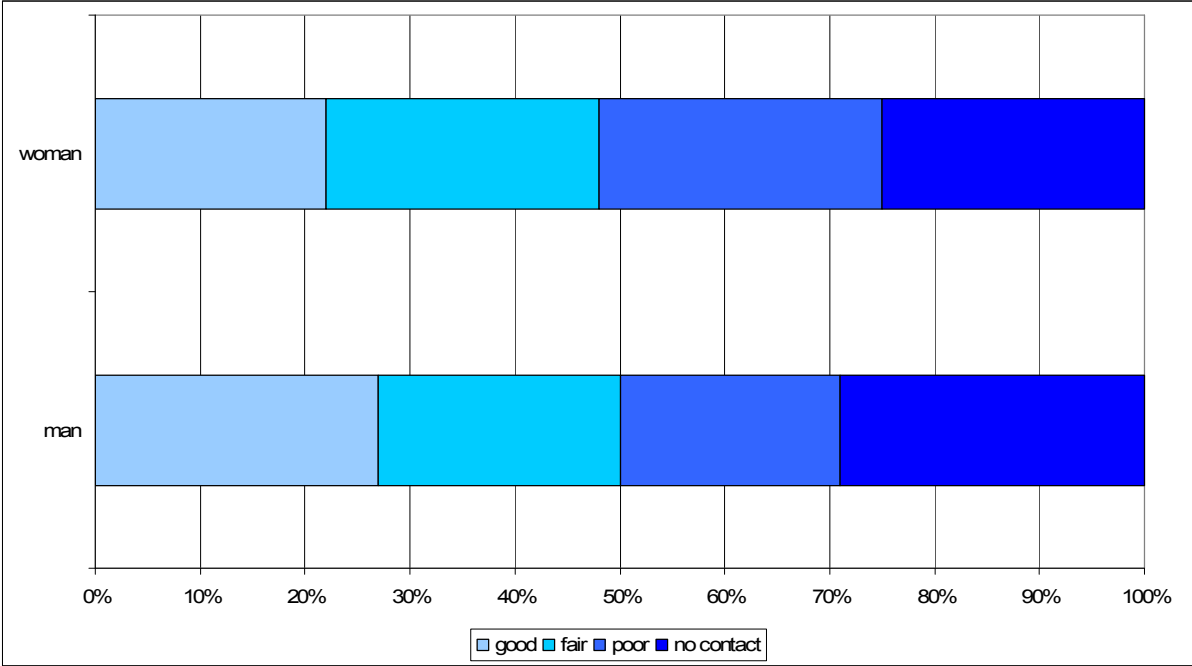
Figure 7. Who left the house after dissolution, by presence of children in the household



Most ex-partners stay in contact

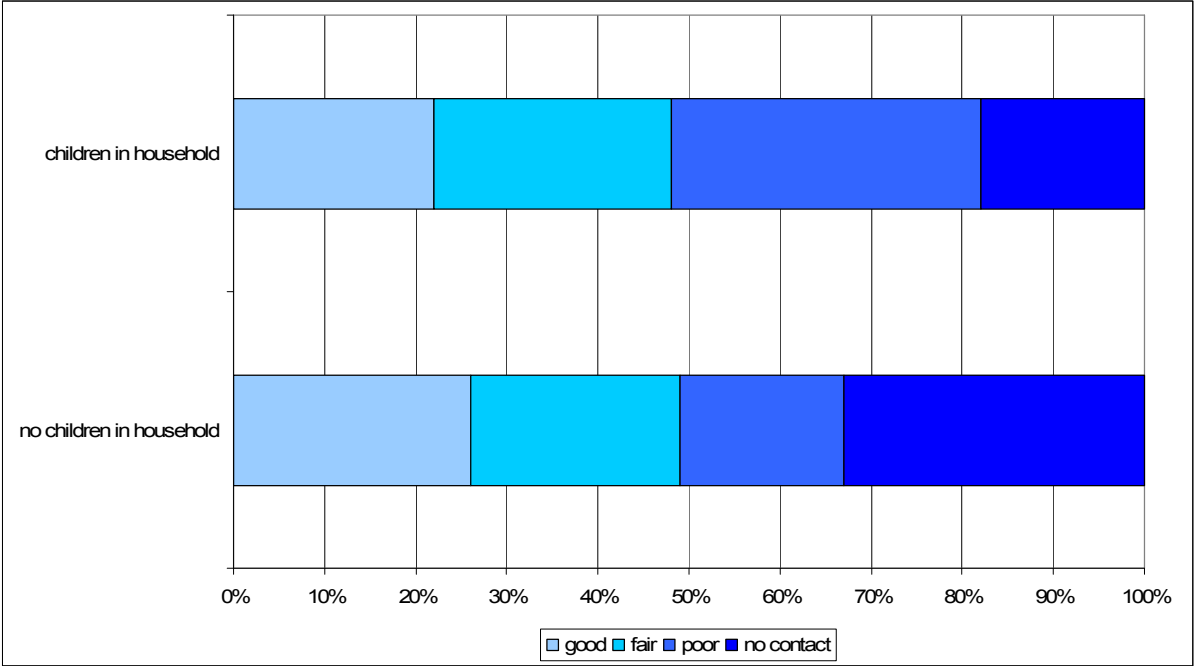
After one of - or both - the ex-partners has found a new place to live, about half of them describe the contact they have in the first year after their dissolution as fair to good (*figure 8*). In general, women are slightly more negative than men about the contact with the ex-partner: more than a quarter of them said that communication with the ex-partner shortly after the divorce was poor. Men are slightly more positive: only one in five reported a poor level of contact. The frequency of contact tends to decrease as time passes after the divorce (Fischer, 2004).

Figure 8. Contact between ex-partners in first year after union dissolution, according to men and women



Presence of children in the household at the time of union dissolution is a strong predictor of whether or not the ex-partners stay in contact. Where no children were involved, 30 percent of ex-partners did not stay in contact (*figure 9*). For ex-couples with children, this was 20 percent. Surprisingly, communication between ex-partners with children is often is poor (34 percent). Half of ex-partners maintain fair to good relations, regardless of whether or not they have children. Fischer (2004) also found a strong connection between the presence of children and contact between parents after divorce. Over 30 percent of childless ex-couples lost touch in the first year after divorce. For ex-partners with children this was only 10 percent. From the FFS 2003 results it was derived that yearly about 11 thousand children do not have any contact with a divorced parent, while about 19 thousand have divorced parents whose mutual relations are poor.

Figure 9. Contact between ex-partners in first year after union dissolution, by presence of children in household



Repartnering

Introduction

Divorce and separation are important factors underlying the increase in the number of young and middle-aged single people. The strong increase in the number of cohabiting couples is an important factor in this development, as unmarried cohabitants have a higher risk of breaking up (see section 3).

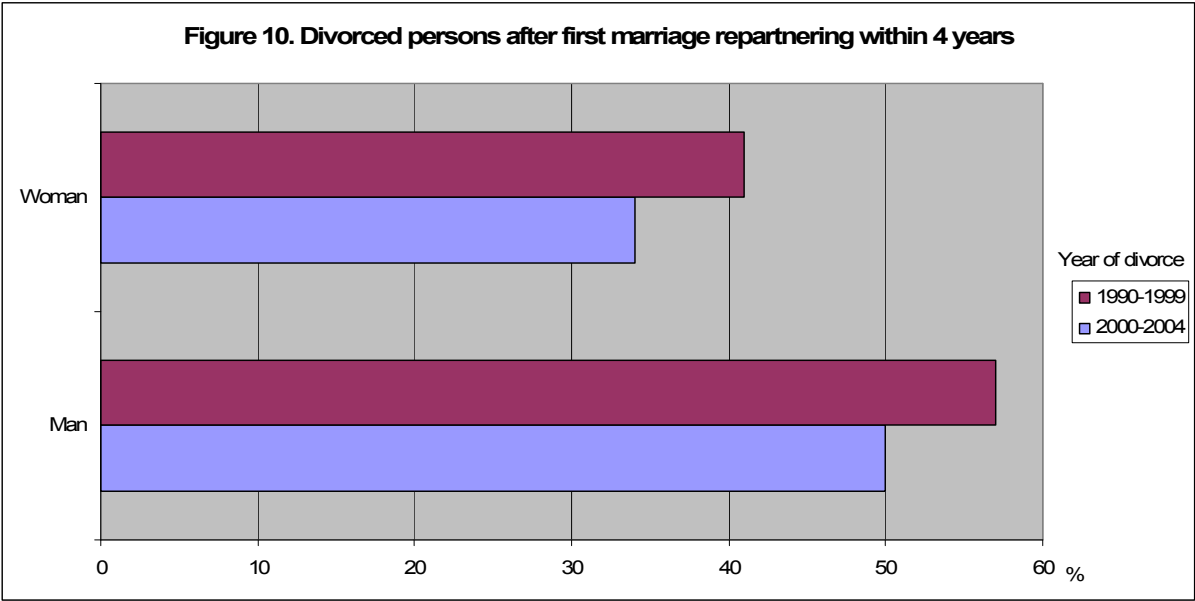
One reaction of separated partners to the break-up of their relationship may be to quickly find a new partner. This will certainly be the case if the presence of a new partner was the reason for the break-up in the first place. Not only the mental state, but the age at which a person separates or divorces plays a part in settling down with a new partner.

In general, the younger someone is when they separate, the quicker they will find a new partner, as only few young people consider living alone as an ideal living situation in the long term.

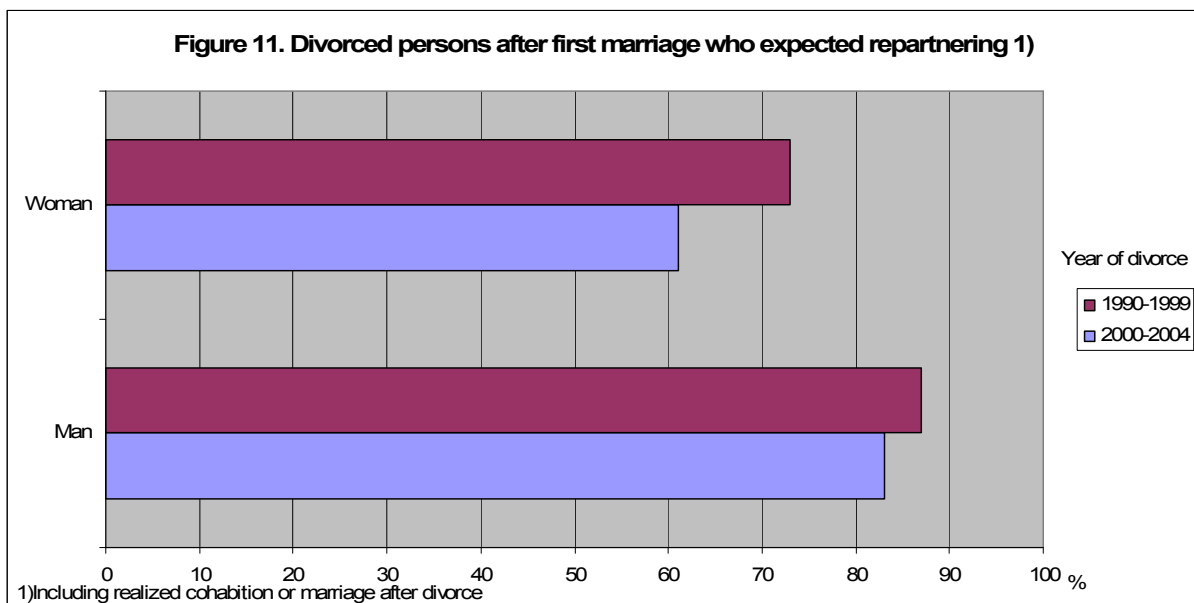
Indeed only few people prefer a single life to living together, married or unmarried, with partner. It often turns out that people live alone not out of choice, but a result of circumstances such as divorce or widowhood. At the age of 20, nearly no-one wants to remain single in the future, while by middle age more than half of single people want to stay single (De Graaf, 2009). The following section looks into how many formerly married partners have a new relationship after a certain time, and live together married or unmarried; and into how many formerly unmarried cohabiters have a new relationship after a certain period.

Ex-married partners

Six out of ten men who divorced in the 1990s had remarried or were living with a new partner within four years of their divorce. Men's average age at divorce is 38 years. For women the percentage finding a new partner is lower: four out of ten women were married or living together four years later. Women are three years younger than men on average when they divorce. For both men and women divorced in the period 2000-2004 the share who marry or live together within four years is lower. The average age at divorce for this divorce cohort is older than for the cohort 1990-1999, and this may have an effect on cohabiting experience, as the likelihood of cohabiting again after divorce correlates strongly with age. The older someone is when they divorce, the smaller the chance that they will live together with another partner (Van Huis and Visser, 2001).

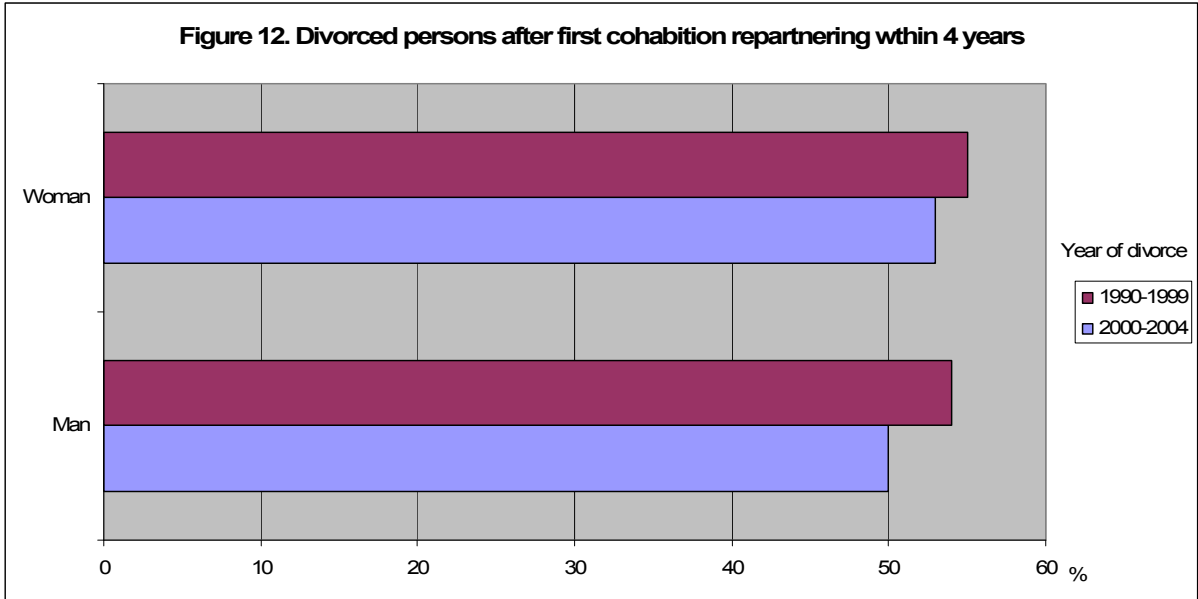


The repartnering survey examined a period of four years for both divorce cohorts. To compile the likelihood of ultimately cohabiting again for men and women in these divorce cohorts, respondents' intentions concerning cohabitation and marriage in the future were included in the analysis. Figure 11 shows that four out of five divorced men think they will eventually cohabit or marry again. For women this is between 60 and 70 percent. This means that the likelihood of women cohabiting again after divorce is smaller than for men. Studies have shown that parents who bring up children on their own take longer to cohabit with a new partner because they have fewer opportunities of meeting a new partner because of the care for the children (Kalmijn en De Graaf, 2000). Single parents also turn out to consciously postpone a new relationship until the children have left home. As nearly 80 percent of children stay with their mothers after their parents' divorce (De Graaf, 2005), the likelihood is smaller for women than for men to live together with a new partner in the short but also in the long term. To examine the effects of the presence of children during a divorce, the intentions of divorced women with children at home were looked at. They turn out to have a smaller likelihood of starting a cohabitation relationship. Between 50 and 70 percent of women expect to live together with a new partner in the future. But postponing this often results in it not happening at all. The increasing age of singles also plays a part in this.

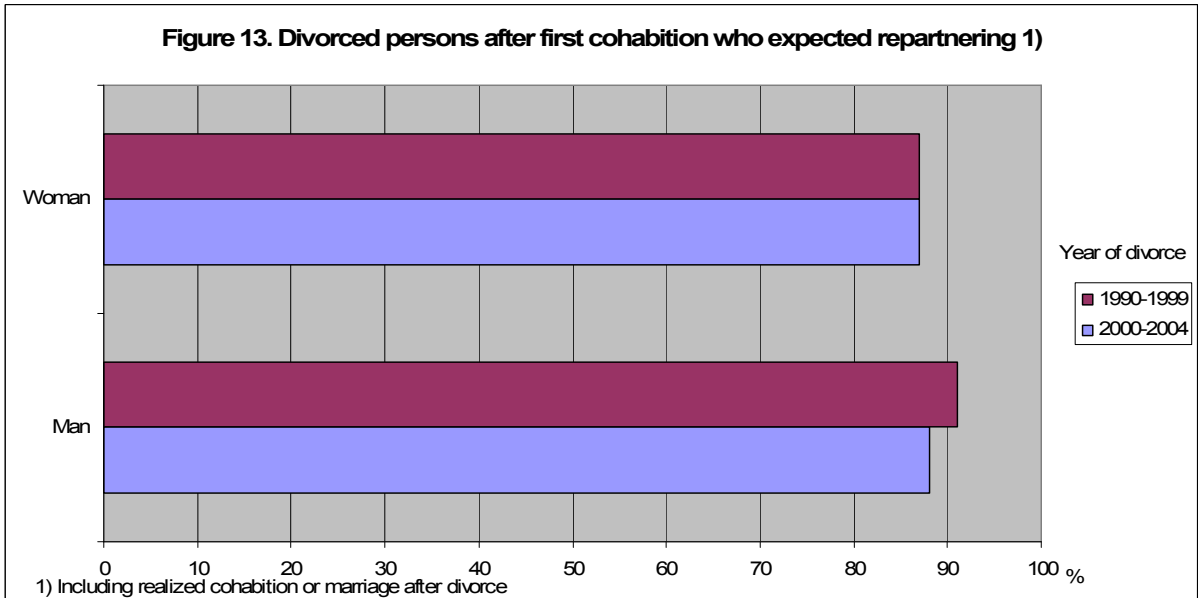


Ex-unmarried partners

Unmarried partners who break-up after a cohabiting relationship are generally younger than married partners who divorce. The likelihood of living together again depends on among other things the age at break-up. The average age of unmarried men is around 28 years and for unmarried women 26 years when they break up. For married couples the age is ten years older when they divorce. Within four years of the break-up, just over half of both men and women who broke up in the 1990s or the beginning of this century were in a married or unmarried cohabiting relationship. The surprise is that there is no difference between men and women. This is because most young unmarried couple who break-up do not have children.



Never married people who had ever cohabited and had not got together with a new partner to cohabit within four years were asked whether they wanted to cohabit again in the future. The ultimate likelihood of living together again was around 90 percent for both men and women. In other words, nine out of ten young ex-cohabiters will live alone for a number of years at the most and say they intend to live together with someone again in the future. Their young ages, and the absence of children at the time of separation increase their chance of a new cohabiting relationship. Many people do not see being single as the ideal way to live their lives.



Findings of regression analyses divorce and repartnering:
(TO DO)

CONCLUSION AND DISCUSSION (**DRAFT or TO DO**)

The number of divorces in the Netherlands has not increased since the 1990s. The total number of union dissolutions, however, has grown. Every year, some 100 thousand unions are dissolved.

Although male and female respondents in the FFS survey were not each other's ex-partners, the response to questions asking for objective answers is expected to be consistent as the sample was re-weighted on a large number of variables. For this paper all answers relating to dissolution were analysed for men and women. For a number of objective questions like 'Who was the first to leave the house?' the answers given by both sexes are more or less similar. This finding suggests that the answers are representative for the population. Answers to more subjective questions, like the one asking for the reasons for the divorce, were sometimes very different for men and women. In their divorce survey, Kalmijn and De Graaf (2000) also found differences in subjective answers between men and women. This is probably related to the 'question of guilt' related with the divorce.

The rather objective question about who first decided to end the union did result in differences between answers. The majority of the men asked, but also – and to a greater extent - the majority of the women asked were of the opinion that they had taken the initiative to dissolve the union. Both sexes less frequently stated they were the one who left home. Respondents were probably influenced by their ideal situation (see also Kalmijn and De Graaf. 2000). The varying male and female views on the process of union dissolution is also clear from the reasons mentioned. Respondents tend to blame the ex-partner rather than themselves.

In order to obtain an accurate picture of the occurrences around the dissolution, two things are important: the respondents' perception and the weighing of the sample. It is important to ask both men and women about the divorce or separation. Interviewing only women or only men will result in a one-sided picture of reality. The truth will often lie in between the male and female versions. It is not important whether both ex-partners or only one of them is interviewed. A well-weighted sample of persons will give similar results.

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