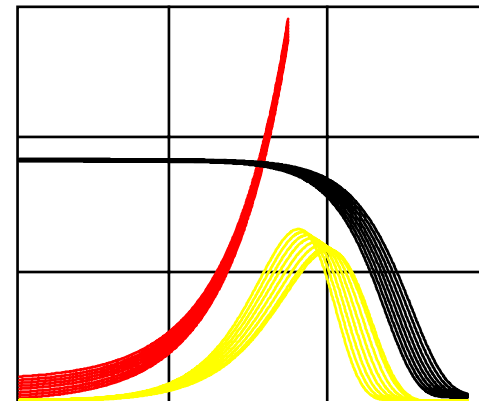


Childlessness intentions in Europe

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MPIDR Seminar on Fertility and Family Dynamics
20 February 2006



INTRODUCTION

Gradual increase in childlessness in advanced societies

Changing character of childlessness

- Importance of choice & voluntary childlessness ('childfree' lifestyle)
 - Indecision, postponement of family formation
 - Declining relevance of family status
- ♦ New variety of forms of private life: with vs. without children

Importance of attitudes & intentions:

- 'negative' intentions particularly interesting (Rovi 1994) and more permanent (predictive power? Schoen et al. 1999)
- Distinguishing 'voluntary' and 'involuntary' childlessness

AIM OF OUR RESEARCH

Main aim: to study contemporary childlessness attitudes and intentions in Europe

DATA: Population Policy and Acceptance Survey 2000-2003 (PPAS); 13+1 European societies and regions (Germany: East and West)

Analysis: Descriptive analysis + regression model of childlessness intentions and uncertainty in Belgium (Flanders), Italy, Germany, and Poland

Focus: Intention to have another child among childless respondents (M and F) aged 18-39 (response: yes, no, do not know/uncertain)

RESEARCH HYPOTHESES

- H1:** Significant minority of childless M and F intends to remain childless
- H2:** Uncertainty important as well, especially at younger ages (link to economic uncertainty)
- H3:** Men express higher rate of intended childlessness & uncertainty than women ('lower commitment' hypothesis)
- H4:** Age of paramount importance for women, partnership status for men
- H5:** Differential impact of education for M and F: High education linked to low levels of intended childlessness among M (e.g. Weston et al 2004).
- H6:** Close association of parenthood intentions with preferred living arrangement (underlying family orientation)

DATA

Main advantages:

- Number of countries (13 + East /West Germany)
- Extensive on childbearing and living arrangement intentions and preferences & reasons for not wanting a(nother) child
- Captures uncertainty (distinct from negative intentions, ‘inherent part of fertility decisions’ (Morgan 1981))

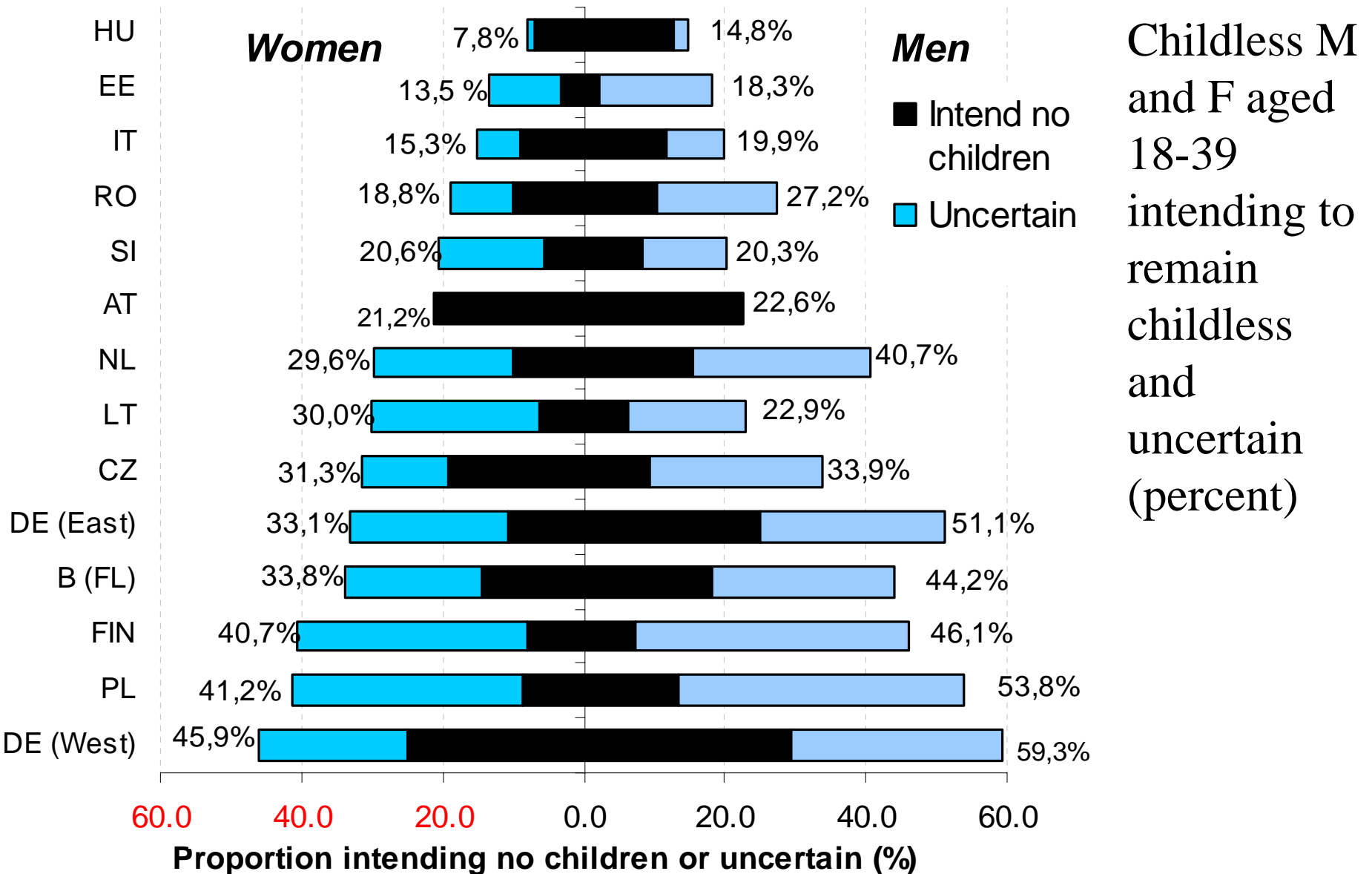
Main drawbacks:

- Small sample size; differences in weighting
- Some questions not included in many countries
- Differences in question wording
- Imbalances in responses to questions with multiple answers
- No time specification for fertility intentions
- No data on partner’s family size preferences and respondent’s family of origin

COUNTRIES, SAMPLE SIZE

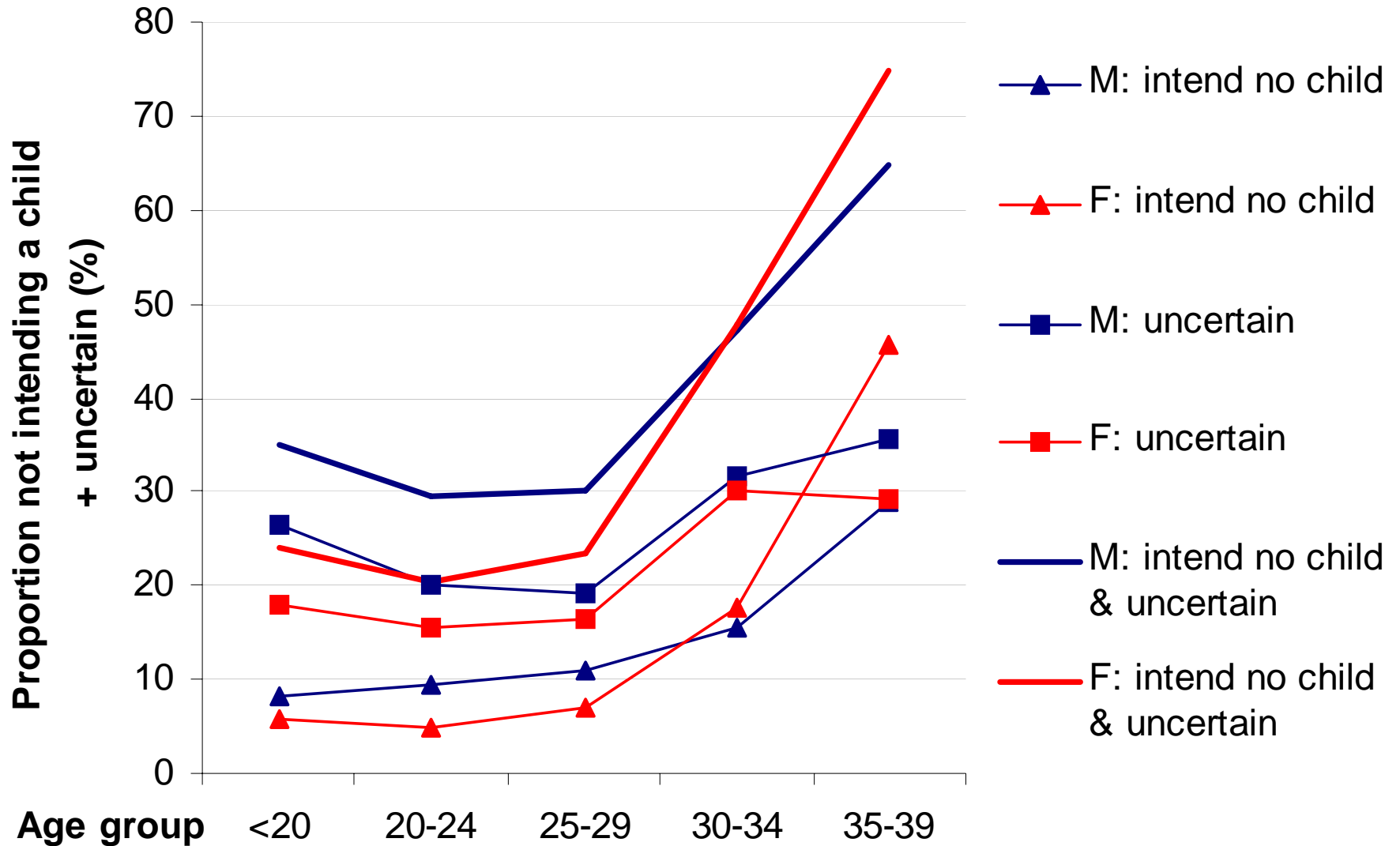
	Women			Men		
	Total	Childless	% childless	Total	Childless	% childless
Austria (AT)	505	200	39.6	353	212	60.1
Belgium (Flanders) (B-FL)	913	441	48.3	814	472	58.0
Czech Republic (CZ)	308	84	27.3	168	98	58.3
Germany (East) (DE-E)	387	166	42.9	364	239	65.7
Germany (West) (DE-W)	468	246	52.6	459	311	67.8
Estonia (EE)	427	258	60.4	275	185	67.3
Finland (FIN)	853	429	50.3	559	358	64.0
Hngary (HU)	573	229	40.0	520	290	55.8
Italy (IT)	1194	610	51.1	1226	810	66.1
Lithuania (LT)	323	80	24.8	275	110	40.0
The Netherlands (NL)	394	202	51.3	319	190	59.6
Poland (PL)	1137	469	41.2	1040	597	57.4
Romania (RO)	315	131	41.6	320	147	45.9
Slovenia (SI)	362	146	40.3	382	212	55.5

MAIN RESULTS: CHILDLESSNESS INTENTIONS

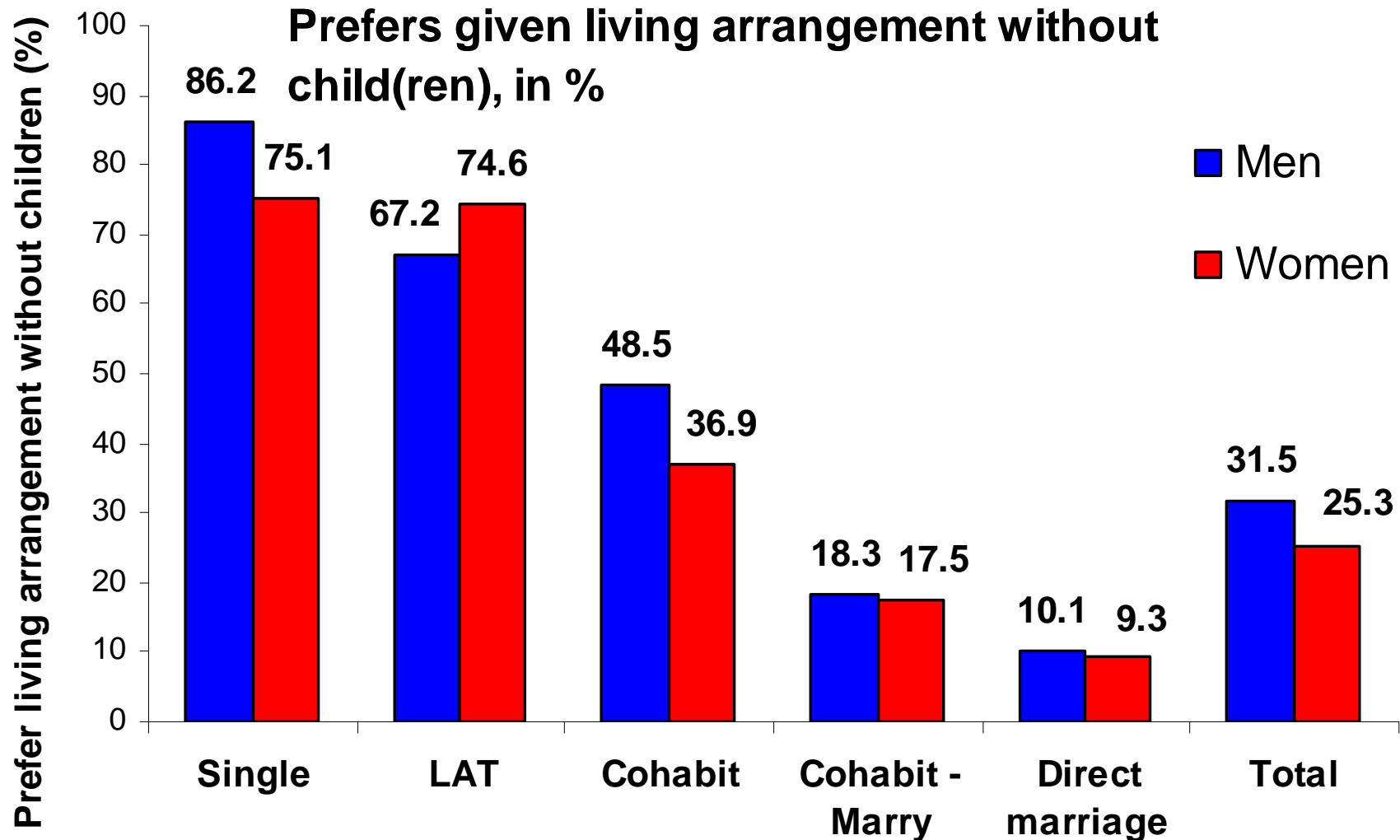


CHILDLESSNESS INTENTIONS BY AGE

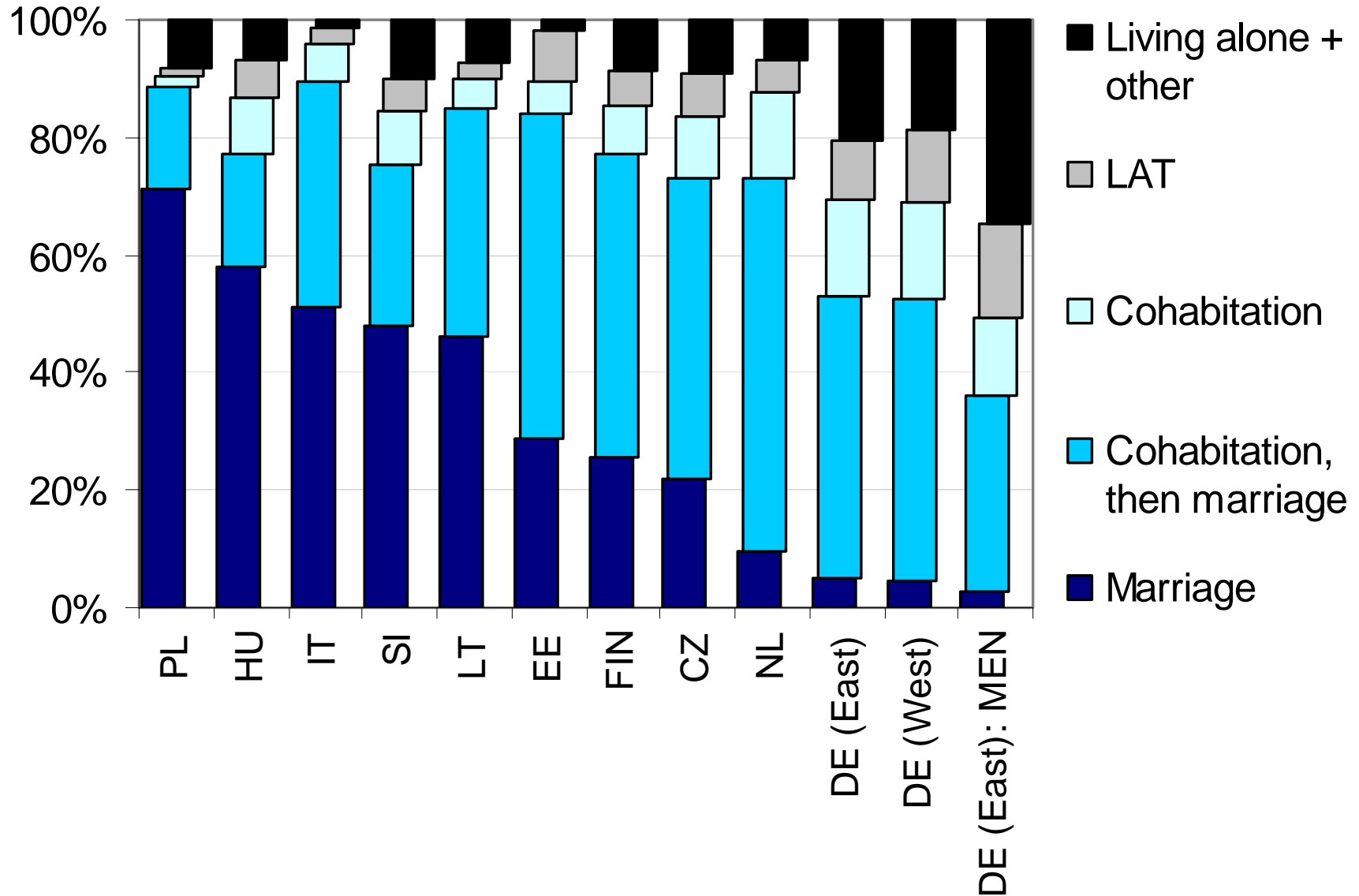
(mean values for 12 countries and regions)



Preferred living arrangement with or without children among childless M and F (mean value for 8 countries and regions)



Living arrangement preferences among childless women aged 18-39



Logistic regression: intended childlessness and uncertainty in Belgium (Flanders), Germany, Italy, and Poland

MODEL SPECIFICATION:

- odds ratios of intended childlessness and uncertainty; standardised to 1 for the baseline level of each variable
- 4 countries with sample size > 400 childless M and F aged 18-39
 - Model 1: not intends to have a child vs. intends to have a child; separate model for F and M)
 - Model 2: uncertain vs. intends to have a child (F and M)
 - Only one basic model; alternative specifications not shown
 - Main focus: Intended childlessness (Model 1)
 - Results for East vs. West Germany do not displayed

MODEL SPECIFICATION (2)

- **INDEPENDENT VARIABLES**
- **Demographic variables**
 - **Age:** 18-24, 25-29, 30-39
 - **Partnership status:** ‘single’, with partner (includes LAT), married
- **Socio-economic variables**
 - **Place or residence:** urban, rural (including small towns)
 - **Employment status:** employed, not employed
 - **Education:** low (until lower secondary), medium, high (university), currently studying (only in Germany and Poland)
 - **Income** (only Germany and Flanders)
 - **Partner’s characteristics:** Employment status and Educational attainment

MODEL SPECIFICATION (3)

- **Values & attitudes**

- **Religiosity:** religious (important & very important role of religion in respondent's life), not religious
- **Childbearing attitudes:** agree, indifferent, disagree
 - (1): *“The only place where you can feel completely happy and at ease is at home with your children”*
 - (2): *“It is your duty towards society to have children”*
- **Preferred living arrangement:** (direct) marriage, cohabitation then marriage, cohabitation only, LAT, living alone (also flat-sharing and other arrangements)

RESULTS (1): Age & partnership status

WOMEN		odds ratios: does not intend a child vs. intends a child				
Age	B (FL)	DE	IT	PL		
Age 18-24	0.86	0.28 ⁺	0.53	0.43		
Age 25-29	1	1	1	1		
Age 30-39	17.2 ***	3.05 ⁺	3.38 *	4.79 ⁺		
Partnership status						
Single, no partner	2.93	0.13 *	5.94 *	1.23		
With partner	1.74	0.12 *	2.33			
Married	1	1	1	1		
MEN						
Age	B (FL)	DE	IT	PL		
Age 18-24	0.33 *	0.64	0.82	0.40		
Age 25-29	1	1	1	1		
Age 30-39	7.66 ***	1.2	2.35 *	3.07		
Partnership status						
Single, no partner	4.25 *	0.24 *	2.64 ⁺	1.48		
With partner	0.89	0.12 ***	0.84			
Married	1	1	1	1		
log-likelihood	-110.8	-151.3	-208.7	-110.3		
N	296	343	699	318		

*** p<=0.001; ** p<=0.01; * p<=0.05; ⁺ p<=0.10

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Strong effect of age, also for men; similar results for uncertainty

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Married	1	1	1	1		

Partnership status: expected effect, except for Germany (West)

RESULTS (2): Education

WOMEN	odds ratios: does not intend a child vs. intends a child			
	B (FL)	DE	IT	PL
Own education				
Low	3.13 ⁺	6.74 ^{**}	2.25	4.08 ⁺
Medium	1	1	1	1
High	0.80	3.63 ⁺	1.03	0.92
Still studying		1.29		1.44
Partner's education				
Low	7.12 [*]		1.47	2.07
Medium	1	1	1	1
High	1.06	0.19 [*]	0.13 [*]	0.16

Women: both own and partner's education matter

Unexpected link: low educational attainment = high intended childlessness

- this association does not hold for uncertainty

Germany: a U-shaped pattern of education and childlessness intentions among F

RESULTS (2): Education

WOMEN		odds ratios: does not intend a child vs. intends a child			
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Own education					
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Partner's education					
Low	7.12 [*]		1.47	2.07	
Medium	1	1	1	1	
High	1.06	0.19 [*]	0.13 [*]	0.16	
MEN					
	B (FL)	DE	IT	PL	
Own education					
Low	1.27	1.70	1.15	2.70 [*]	
Medium	1	1	1	1	
High	0.41 [*]	0.85	0.46	0.06 ^{**}	
Still studying		0.29 [*]		1.62	
Partner's education					
Low	1.32		0.43	9.04	
Medium	1	1	1	1	
High	0.47	2.18	0.18 [*]	1.78	

M: high education = low intended childlessness; holds also for uncertainty

RESULTS (3): Employment status

WOMEN	odds ratios: does not intend a child vs. intends a child			
	B (FL)	DE	IT	PL
Employment				
Employed	1	1	1	1
Not employed	1.18	0.81	1.28	2.39 ⁺
Partner's employment				
Employed	1	1	1	1
Not employed	1.22	0.56	0.63	1.62
MEN				
	B (FL)	DE	IT	PL
Employment				
Employed	1	1	1	1
Not employed	0.87	0.50	0.84	1.31
Partner's employment				
Employed	1	1	1	1
Not employed	1.86	2.76	1.84	1.01

No sizeable effects; gender differences: Non-employment not linked with higher intended childlessness among M, but their partner's employment does have some effect on their intentions

- Problematic specification

RESULTS (4): RELIGIOSITY

odds ratios: does not intend a child vs. intends a child

WOMEN	B (FL)	DE	IT	PL
Religiosity				
Not religious	1	1	1	1
Religious	0.75	0.25 **	0.72	0.83
MEN	B (FL)	DE	IT	PL
Religiosity				
Not religious	1	1	1	1
Religious	1.89	0.35 *	0.99	0.60

Strong and significant effects only for Germany (West)

- also for uncertainty among German F and Polish M

RESULTS (5): ATTITUDES TO CHILDREN

odds ratios: does not intend a child vs. intends a child

WOMEN	B (FL)	DE	IT	PL
<i>Only feel happy at home with children</i>				
Agree	1	1	1	1
Indifferent	0.75	1.54		1.12
Disagree	3.56 *	2.49	2.47 *	0.64
<i>Duty towards society to have children</i>				
Agree	1	1	1	1
Indifferent	0.65	1.68		1.95
Disagree	0.56	1.15	1.14	1.50
MEN	B (FL)	DE	IT	PL
<i>Only feel happy at home with children</i>				
Agree	1	1	1	1
Indifferent	1.63	3.36 **		1.85
Disagree	4.08 **	2.58 +	1.34 *	0.26 *
<i>Duty towards society to have children</i>				
Agree	1	1	1	1
Indifferent	0.97	1.48		0.96
Disagree	4.15	1.44	1.40	1.23

RESULTS (6): Preferred living arrangement

odds ratios: does not intend a child vs. intends a child

WOMEN	B (FL)	DE	IT	PL
Marriage		5.46	0.84	1.82
COH -> MAR		1	1	1
Cohabit only		32.92 ***	4.05 *	14.83 ⁺
LAT		29.25 ***	14.07 ***	
Single + other		46.09 ***	2.03	20.38 ***
MEN	B (FL)	DE	IT	PL
Marriage		2.29	1.90 *	2.47
COH -> MAR		1	1	1
Cohabit only		6.27 **	6.09 ***	1.82
LAT		8.32 ***	5.80 **	32.59 ***
Single + other		22.13 ***	28.27 ***	68.47 ***

Those who prefer to cohabit and marry are even more likely to intend to have a child than those who prefer direct marriage

Preference for cohabitation only associated with much higher level of intended childlessness! (holds also to a smaller extent for uncertainty)

Reasons for not intending a child or being uncertain selected by the respondents

Women: reasons by relative importance					Men: reasons by relative importance			
Rank	Question number	Reason	Relative weight	Adj. %	Question number	Reason	Relative weight	Adj. %
1	Q8	Concerned about the future	1.45	47.8	Q3	No steady partner	1.72	51.7
2	Q6	Maintain standard of living	1.29	42.9	Q8	Concerned about the future	1.46	46.5
3	Q9	Would not enjoy life	1.23	37.3	Q6	Maintain standard of living	1.31	43.5
4	Q3	No steady partner	1.19	39.3	Q9	Would not enjoy life	1.13	36.1
5	Q7	Child would cost too much	1.13	39.3	Q7	Child would cost too much	1.05	36.4
6	Q2	State of health	1.09	40.0	Q5	Leisure time	0.92	32.1
7	Q4	Job	0.93	33.5	Q4	Job	0.89	31.3
8	Q5	Leisure time	0.92	31.8	Q2	State of health	0.75	25.8
9	Q10	Too old	0.71	26.7	Q1	Does not want a child	0.62	23.2
10	Q1	Does not want a child	0.64	25.7	Q10	Too old	0.61	21.9
11	Q11	Partner does not want	0.60	23.1	Q11	Partner does not want	0.55	22.6

SUMMARY: MAIN FINDINGS

- (Lifetime) childlessness considered as a possible option among many younger men and women
- Men consistently more inclined to intend to remain childless or to be uncertain than women
- Surprising strong effect of low education on women's childlessness intentions
- Education: both own and partner's education matters
- Strong interrelation between preferred living arrangement and intended childlessness
- Childlessness as a mixture of lifestyle choices and constraints and adverse personal circumstances

SUMMARY: were the hypotheses correct?

H1: YES (Significant minority of childless M and F intends to remain childless)

H2: PARTLY: uncertainty important, but not associated with (younger) ages

(Uncertainty important as well, especially at younger ages)

H3: YES (Men express higher rate of intended childlessness & uncertainty than women ('lower commitment' hypothesis))

H4: PARTLY: Age and partnership status important for both M and F
(Age of paramount importance for women, partnership status for men)

H5: PARTLY: effects for M predicted by H5, surprising effect of low education for childlessness intentions among F (Differential impact of education for M and F)

H6: YES (Close association of parenthood intentions with preferred living arrangement (underlying family orientation))

DISCUSSION (1): Gender differences

- **Male ‘blocking power’?**
 - M in all analysed societies more likely to intend to remain childless and/or uncertain (M/F difference by a factor of 1.3 among childless and 1.8 among all respondents)
 - Partly conditioned by their partnership status, but a role of preferences important as well
 - M also consistently display stronger preference for less-committed living arrangements & lower preference for having children in cohabiting partnership
 - Some explanations: evolutionary / genetic perspective, happiness research (Kohler et al. 2005: first child provides a vital part for women’s fulfillment in life, but not (directly) for men’s fulfillment)
 - Differences in partner’s preferences: possible consequences for fertility (and increasing childlessness)
 - a “double-veto model” (Thomson & Hoem 1998)

DISCUSSION (2): The effects of education for women's intentions

High intended childlessness among low educated women at odds with

- Economic theory of rational decision-making (Becker)
- Theory of the value of children (Friedman et al 1994)
- Theories on lower family-orientation among highly educated women
- Findings on high childlessness level among highly educated

Spurious effect?

- No time horizon provided in the questions on intentions
- Modelling: an effect of 'controlling' for too many covariates in the regression equation?
- Unsubstantiated optimism among highly educated?

DISCUSSION (2): The effects of education for women's intentions

Supporting evidence:

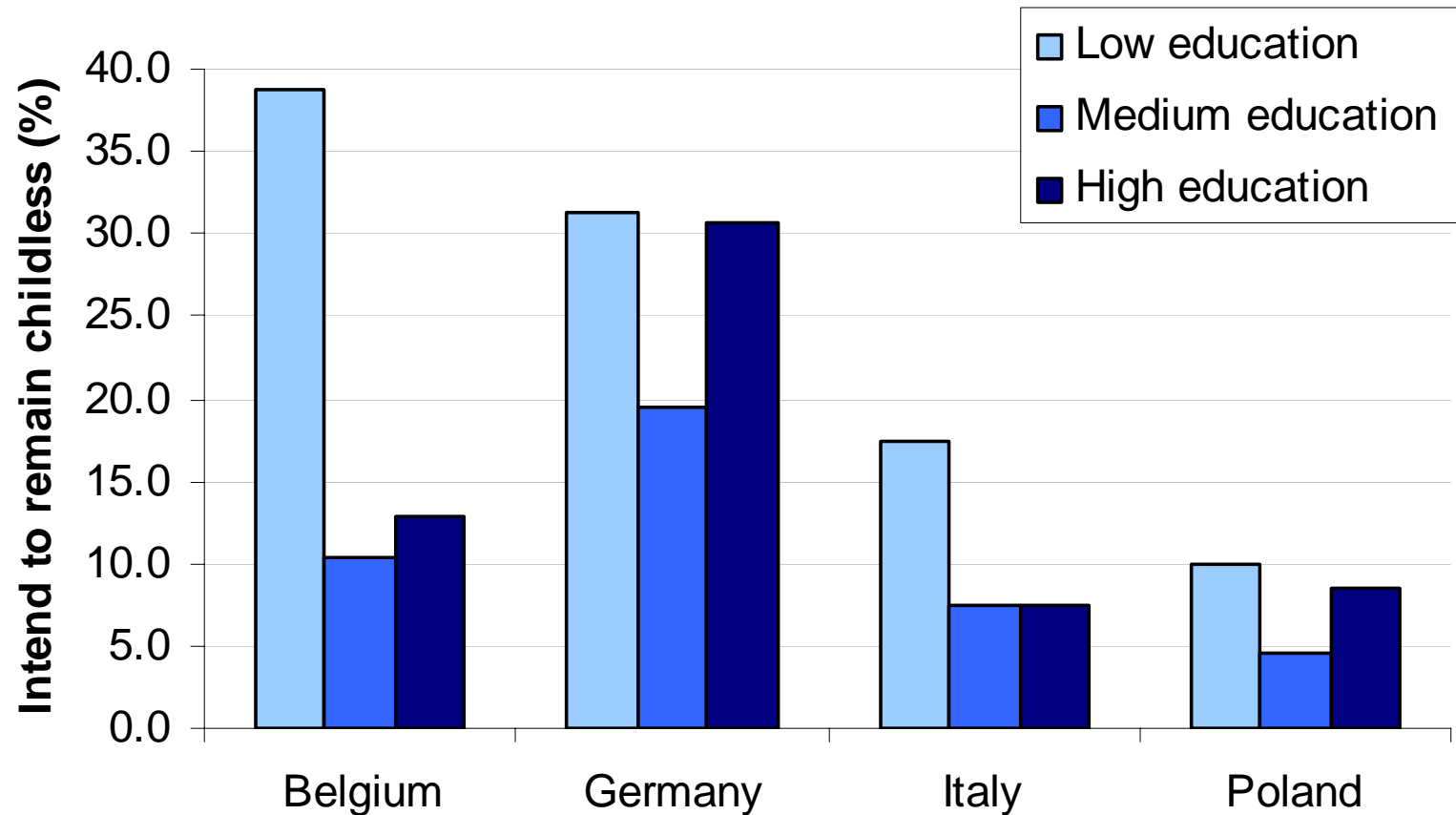
- Low intended childlessness among high-educated women in Finland (PPAS data, Miettinen and Paajaenen 2005) and Germany (Heiland et al. 2005)
- Bivariate analysis: partial support (high childlessness intentions among low-educated, but also a U-shaped pattern of intentions by educational attainment in Germany, Poland, and partly Flanders)

Possible interpretations:

- Exclusive career orientation rare
- High level of ambition both in career planning and family intentions (not necessarily matched with real behaviour!)

DISCUSSION (2): The effects of education for women's intentions

- Bi-variate analysis: intention to remain childless by achieved level of education, childless women aged 18-39



DISCUSSION (3): Peculiar position of Germany

- High level of both childlessness intentions and uncertainty
- Strongest preference for non-traditional living arrangements
- High intended childlessness among highly educated women
- Prevailing East-West differences
- Very high levels of lifetime childlessness in West Germany (ca 25% among women born in the late 1960s)

DISCUSSION (3): Peculiar position of Germany

INTERPRETATION:

- ‘Polarization’ between family life and other forms of private life? (Federkeil 1997)
- Continuing structural and institutional constraints to parenthood for highly educated women
- ‘Culture of childlessness’ as a consequence of increasing childlessness in the past?
 - New, initially ‘deviant’ behaviour, which emerged as a reaction to institutional constraints, gradually accepted and subsequently adopted as a lifestyle option (Rindfuss et al 1988)

CONCLUDING REMARKS

- Intended childlessness likely to become more frequent (also US: Hagewen & Morgan 2005)
- Links between (1) partnership and family intentions and preferences and (2) partnership and family behaviour over the life course: reciprocal influence, gender differences

Further research:

- education and childlessness intentions among women;
- further look at Germany:
 - Do other data (e.g., GGS) support our findings and interpretations?
 - Persistent differences between East and West Germany

- Questions?
- Comments?

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