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NEWSLETTER

Demographic information

Editorial

Family models have become more diversified in Switzerland over the last few decades and marriages more frequently end in divorce. Minors are involved in half of all cases; most of them stay with their mothers. Do these mothers find a partner to form a blended family more often than they used to in the past? How is the tendency of Swiss nationals and foreigners to form mixed marriages evolving? And how stable are these marriages? Do women with an immigration background really have more children than women of Swiss origin? These are the themes covered in this Demos Newsletter.

Most of the data on which these contributions are based are taken from the Families and Generations Survey (FGS) conducted by the Federal Statistical Office (FSO) in 2013. The authors are researchers from the national centre of competence in research, LIVES, co-funded by the Swiss National Science Foundation. This publication bears testimony to the research world's interest in the data that official statistics produce and the significance of the results from such a partnership for various groups.

The FGS collects information in particular on the family life biography of the people interviewed. The authors have exploited these data to their limits. These limits are partly due to the low number of observations in some cases. It should be noted that the authors are solely responsible for the analysis and interpretation of the data from the FSO and their opinion doesn't bind the FSO.

We hope you find our newsletter interesting.

■ Yvon Csonka, Federal Statistical Office

SUMMARY

Family, migration

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The Families and Generations Survey 2013

The Families and Generations Survey (FGS) is part of the survey programme of the Federal Population Census. It was carried out for the first time in 2013 and will be repeated every five years. The data were collected during computer assisted telephone interviews (CATI) and via complementary online and paper questionnaires (CAWI/PAPI).

Conducted in three languages, the survey concerns the permanent resident population aged 15 to 80. 17,288 people participated in the survey, 53% women and 47% men. 82% of these persons have Swiss nationality and 18% are foreign nationals. The data have been weighted and calibrated to take into account the sampling plan and missing responses.

For more information about the FGS, please see

www.efg_f.bfs.admin.chn

Lone mothers with children: continuity and change over time

One-parent households represent a growing phenomenon in many European countries. More importantly, the spread of separation and divorce rates across different social groups is fostering greater heterogeneity in the population of lone parents. While census data show that between 1970 and 2010 the share of lone parent households in Switzerland, i.e. individuals living alone with one or more children below age 25, was stable at around 4%, the experience of lone parenthood has substantially changed. Before the 1980s in Switzerland, as in other European countries, one parent households were relatively stable living arrangements: once begun, lone parenthood was there to stay. In contrast, since the 1990s, we observe more frequent and faster transitions out of lone parenthood, especially because of the higher rates of second union formation and family recomposition (Kiernan et al., 1998). This development is partially related to the changes in the population composition of lone parents as well as in the normative frame regulating union formation and dissolution. Such dynamics pose new challenges for defining, measuring, and imagining efficient policies that support individuals through the transitions in and out of lone parenthood (Bernardi and Larenza, forthcoming).

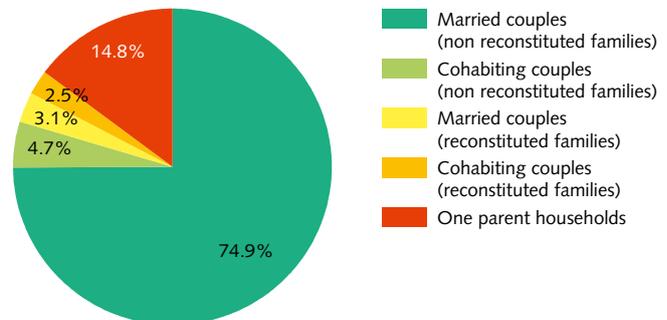
Prevalence of lone parenthood in Switzerland

According to the Swiss Federal Statistical Office (FSO), in 2012 one-parent households represented 15% of households with at least one child below the age of 25 (cf. Graph 1). The great majority of the households was formed by "intact" families (children living with both biological parents). Recomposed families (children living with one biological parent and his or her partner) represented 6% of the households with at least one child below the age of 25. While these cross-sectional data offer an overview of the dimension of the phenomenon at a given point in time, they do not allow an estimate to be made of how many people experience lone parenthood during their lifetime. The new Families and Generations Survey (FGS) collects retrospective information on the living arrangements of its interviewees allowing the family trajectory of the individual to be reconstructed. Our analyses of the FGS show that women between 15 and 55 years old living without a partner and with at least one child of their own below age 18¹ accounted for 6% of the

total survey sample in 2013. However, the number of women who have been lone parents at some point in their life is higher than the number that can be detected by looking at cross-sectional data only. Retrospective information on family histories confirms that 13% of women in the sample experienced lone parenthood at least once between 1953 and 2013. Many of them formed a new union after a period of lone parenthood of varying length.

Households with at least one child below the age of 25, 2012

G 1



Source: FSO – Structural survey

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Lone parenthood is a highly relevant phenomenon for social policies because one-parent households are over-represented among those below the poverty threshold, and therefore parents and children are exposed to different kinds of short and long-term vulnerabilities (OFS, 2015a; OFS, 2015b; OECD, 2014; Lopez Vilaplana, 2013; Brady and Burroway, 2012; Letablier, 2010). The great majority of one-parent households are headed by women. Since women suffer from a number of disadvantages in the labour market, the transition to lone motherhood is a particularly critical one in terms of disposable income (Mortelmans and Defever, forthcoming; Hansen et al., 2006).

Although women's presence in the labour market is very high compared to other European countries, in Switzerland women are mainly employed in part-time jobs, and in these cases their income is fairly low. Furthermore, there are substantial gender pay gaps and large pay differences depending on education and both such gaps have increased over time (Bühlmann et al., 2012). Lone mothers are exposed to the challenge of having to work more to increase their disposable income (since they need to provide a great part of their and their children's income), but at the same time they have to continue devoting time to care (being primary caregivers).

¹ Official statistics usually refer to dependent children below the age 25. But a lively debate exists in academic research about what is the best threshold and most frequently age 18 is adopted, especially for comparative purposes across countries.

Experiencing lone parenthood: individual and household characteristics over time

The population of lone mothers has become more heterogeneous first of all in terms of the age at which women experience lone motherhood. The following results concern a subsample of the FGS data that includes women who, when aged between 15 and 55, headed at least once a one-parent household with at least one underage child (below 18) in the period between 1953 and 2013.

Graph 2 shows that the share of women who experienced lone motherhood at a very young age (15–24) decreases across cohorts of entry into lone parenthood.

The cohort of entry into lone parenthood is defined by the year in which lone parenthood began. For instance, a woman who is born in 1955 and experiences lone parenthood for the first time in 1974 belongs to the lone parent cohort of 1974 and therefore is classified in the 1967–1975 group in our analyses.

In a complementary way, the recent cohorts of lone mothers (1991–1999, 2000–2013) are relatively older, with double the share of women aged between 36 and 55 compared with the older cohorts (1953–1966, 1967–1975). This is likely to be due to the effect of the continuous and generalised increase in the age at birth for all mothers.

Women's age at the transition to lone parenthood by year when it occurred (N=820)

G 2



Source: FSO – FGS 2013 (Authors' calculations)

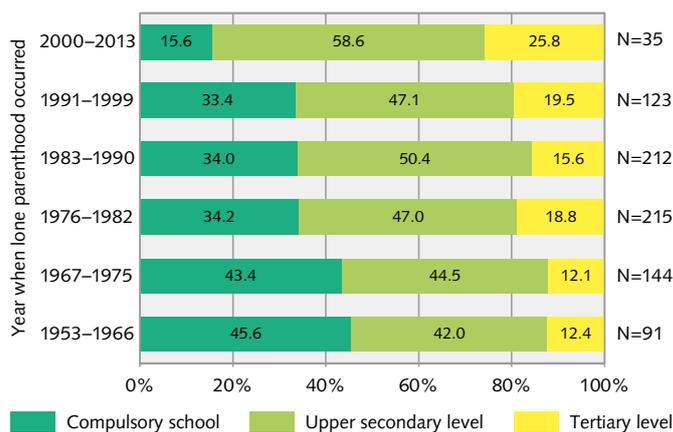
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Just as in the general population, the population of lone mothers is also increasingly more educated over time (cf. Graph 3). The older cohorts of lone mothers held either lower or intermediate educational qualifications. The share of less well educated mothers progressively decreases, while the highly educated, holding tertiary qualifications, represent 25.8% of the lone mothers who experienced lone parenthood between 2000 and 2013 (vs. 12% between 1953 and 1975).

Not only have the individual characteristics of lone mothers been changing over time, but also the composition of one-parent households has evolved (cf. Graph 4). The oldest cohort mainly cared for relatively younger children (45.3%), probably due to the high share of mothers who entered lone parenthood as single women and at younger ages, while the younger cohorts become lone parent at older ages and as a consequence of union disruption. The middle cohorts (1976–1999) were more likely to head families with older children, while more recent

Educational level of lone mothers by year when lone parenthood occurred (N=820)

G 3



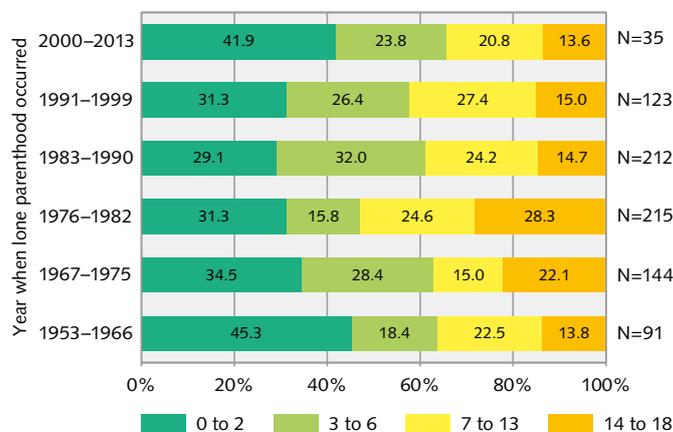
Source: FSO – FGS 2013 (Authors' calculations)

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lone mothers (2000–2013) mainly care for toddlers or pre-school aged children (41.9% plus 23.8%) similar to the eldest cohorts in our study (this last observation is however based on a rather small number of observations). The younger age of lone parents' children in the more recent period is probably due to the increase in the normative acceptance of divorce and separations – as well as their occurrence – regardless of the age of the child.

Age of the youngest child in the household by year when lone parenthood occurred (N=820)

G 4



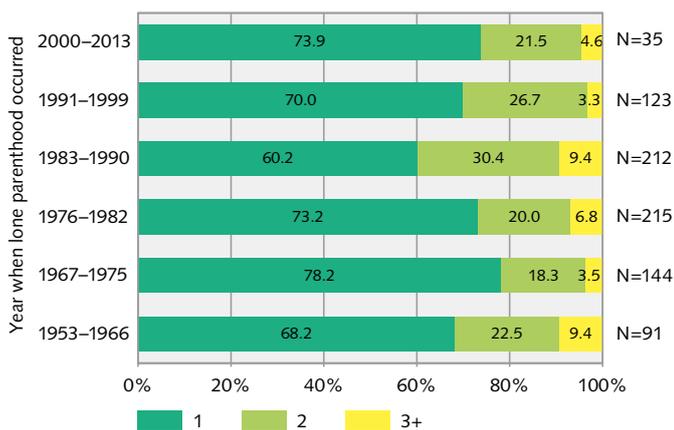
Source: FSO – FGS 2013 (Authors' calculation)

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While the children's age varies, the size of one-parent households does not show clear-cut changes across cohorts (cf. Graph 5). The large majority of women had one child when becoming a lone mother (between 60% and 78%) regardless of the cohort of entry into lone parenthood, while approximately 25% had two children, and only a very small share (3.3 to 9.4%) three or more. Only women who experienced the transition to lone parenthood between 1983 and 1990 differ somewhat from the previous and the following cohorts: those women were in fact more frequently heading one-parent households with 2 or 3 or more children compared to the others.

Number of children in the household by year when lone parenthood occurred (N=820)

G 5



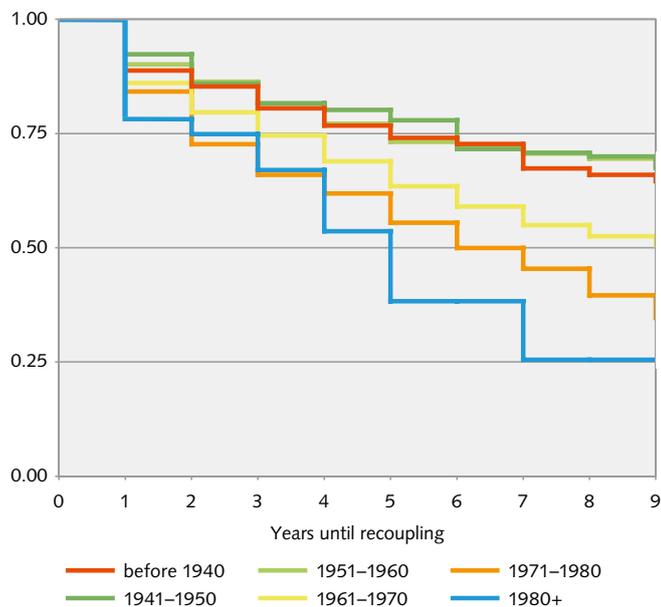
Source: FSO – FGS 2013 (Authors' calculations)

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Shorter stays in one-parent households and faster transitions to recomposed families?

The timing of exiting the condition of lone parenthood by moving in with a new partner – and thus creating a recomposed family – have changed substantially over time². The Kaplan-Maier curves in Graph 6 show the timing for recoupling after lone parenthood: lone mothers born after the 1970s recoupled faster than those belonging to older birth cohorts, among whom only around 25% changed to a recomposed family by the eighth year after the transition to lone parenthood. We observe similar trends when looking at women who experienced lone motherhood at younger ages.

Likelihood of mothers exiting lone parenthood by moving in with a new partner, by cohort (N=820) G 6



Pr>Chi²=0.000

Reading example: among women of the 1980+ cohort, only 25% hadn't moved in with a new partner after 7 years.

Source: FSO – FGS 2013 (Authors' calculations)

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² There are two possible exits out of lone parenthood, one is entering a cohabiting or married union, the other is the child(ren)'s age (turning 18, which is the conventional threshold we use to define independent children). While ageing develops through time and depends only on duration from birth, re-partnering involves a more complex and differentiated sociological and demographic process, which deserves to be analysed per se.

Conclusions

A number of demographic and social indicators provide evidence for continuity and changes in the characteristics of one-parent households in Switzerland between 1955 and 2011. There is substantive continuity in the fact that the large majority of lone parents are women. However, the age at the transition to lone motherhood, the level of education of lone mothers, as well as the age of the children in the household changes at different paces. Such changes in the population of lone parents (and in their families) have consequences on the demographic dynamics of lone parenthood, the life courses of those who experience it and society in general.

We would like to conclude by pointing out two crucial consequences of such changes. First, the shorter duration of spells spent in one-parent households and the subsequent transition to recomposed families are differently distributed across population subgroups and may drive new forms of social inequalities among lone parents. With the spread of divorce and separation, and the consequent widening of the marriage market for second unions, an increased number of lone mothers find a new cohabiting partner within a shorter time, especially those with more resources (i.e. with higher education and in employment) and who are possibly more attractive in the marriage market. Second, the normative frame regulating union disruption and family recomposition has also increasingly relaxed during the period under examination, so that both being separated and being a lone parent are likely to be less socially stigmatised. While the plurality of family forms emerging from these dynamics is largely socially accepted, differences in treatment across families persist in legal terms. When family forms are fluid and transitions from one to another type of household occur more rapidly, one major challenge for policies is certainly to ensure that children are treated equally, regardless of the kind of household they happen to transit through.

Lone parenthood, vulnerabilities and resources

The NCCR LIVES project on lone parenthood in Switzerland analyses the life courses and situations of lone parents to contribute to the public debate on social inequality among families. The project includes longitudinal statistical analyses and biographic interviews. Using representative surveys of the Swiss population, such as the Swiss Household Panel, the Labor Force Survey, and the Families and Generations Survey, the project examines the occupational trajectories of lone parents before and after the transition to lone parenthood; how employment characteristics are related to the health of lone mothers compared with mothers living in couples; how these relationships vary according to the characteristics of lone parents and their household. The biographic interview data cover parents – men and women – who live in French-speaking Switzerland and who were lone parents at the moment of entering the study in 2012–3. The study aims at gaining insights on their experience of the transition to lone parenthood, on their daily organisation to reconcile work and family responsibilities, on the challenges and the positive aspects of raising children in a one parent household; on their social network and relationship with the local welfare institutions.

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On lone parenthood and vulnerability in Switzerland:

Struffolino, E., Bernardi, L., Voorpostel, M. (2016, in press) Self-reported health among lone mothers: Do employment and education matter? *Population*.

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Letablier, M. -T. (2010). La monoparentalité aujourd'hui: continuités et changements. In E. Ruspini (Ed.), *Monoparentalité, homoparentalité, et transparentalité en France et en Italie: Tendances, défis et nouvelles exigences* (pp. 33–68). Paris: L'Harmattan.

Lopez Vilaplana, C. (2013). Children were the age group at the highest risk of poverty or social exclusion in 2011. *Statistics in focus*, 4/2013, Eurostat.

Mortelmans, D. and Defever C. (forthcoming 2016). Labor and income trajectories of lone parents after divorce. In L. Bernardi & D. Mortelmans (Eds.) (in press). *Lone Parenthood in the Life Course*. New York, NY: Springer.

OECD (2014) Family Database, www.oecd.org/social/family/database

OFS (2013) Ménages privés, en 2012 OFS – Relevé structurel. www.statistique.ch → Thèmes → 01 – Population → Familles, ménages → Données, indicateurs → Structure des ménages et formes de vie familiale → Types de ménage

OFS (2015a) Pauvreté et aide sociale, www.statistique.ch → Thèmes → 01 – Population → Familles, ménages → Données, indicateurs → Situation financière des familles → Pauvreté et aide sociale

OFS (2015b), *Rapport social statistique 2015*, Neuchâtel.

Comparing fertility patterns of migrants and Swiss natives

The fertility behaviour of first and second generation migrants is a crucial determinant of population dynamics, particularly so in Switzerland, a country with a high proportion of migrants and a very diverse composition by ethnic group. We describe the differentials in the number of children and the timing of births between Swiss natives and different migrant groups and we interpret them as indicators of integration. We use information gathered in the Families and Generations Survey of 2013 complemented with data from the Swiss census of 2000.

Introduction

Most past research on the fertility of migrants has looked at people moving from high fertility to low fertility countries in Europe and North America. The usual pattern observed was that migrants, although initially having higher fertility than natives, adapted to the fertility patterns of the local population over time. Variations in the process of fertility adaptation depend on the timing of migration and duration of stay in the new country, the reasons for migration, and participation in the labour force. When looking at the fertility behaviour of migrants' children, research across Europe suggests that they generally have fewer children than their parents, but somewhat more than the majority population (Kulu et al., 2015). Given the relevance of differential fertility by population subgroups in driving population composition, we investigate migrant fertility in Switzerland and compare it to the native population.

For our analyses we used data from the large Swiss Families and Generations Survey of 2013 (FGS) and supplemented our results with older data from the Swiss census of 2000. Comparable results were found from the two data sources. The population subgroups for our analyses were the following: Natives are individuals who were born in Switzerland and whose parents were also born in Switzerland. For our analysis we also compared Swiss natives from the German, French and Italian-speaking regions. First generation immigrants are those who were born outside Switzerland and who arrived in the country after the age of 15. The second generation are those who were born in Switzerland but have at least one parent born outside Switzerland plus those who were born outside Switzerland but moved here before the age of 15. For second generation individuals with parents coming from two separate immigrant groups, the father's origin was used to assign them to a given group:

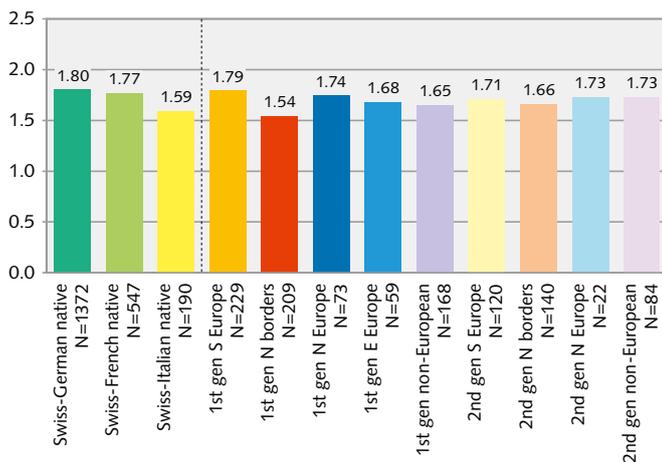
- Southern Europe: originating from Italy, Spain, Portugal and Greece
- Northern bordering countries: Austria, France, Germany, Liechtenstein, Luxembourg
- Eastern Europe: ex-communist states including former Yugoslavia, plus Turkey
- Northern Europe: all the other western European countries not in the previous groups, including the UK and Scandinavia
- Non-European: all other countries of origin, some developed (North America and Australasia) and others less developed (South America, Asia, Africa).

Some of the migrant groups have been coming to Switzerland for many decades, such as those from Southern Europe, whereas the inflows from Eastern Europe and, especially, former Yugoslavia are more recent.

How many children does each group have?

Despite the common perception that immigrant families are large, this is not, in fact, generally the case. Graph 7 shows the average number of children born to women coming from the different regions of origin and who have completed their reproductive life, i.e. were over 49 years at the time of the survey.

Average number of children per woman by migrant generation and population subgroup (cohorts 1943–1963) **G 7**



Note: There were no 2nd generation women with Eastern European origins who had completed their childbearing years in 2013, as emigrating from that area was rare in communist times.

Source: FSO – FGS 2013 (Authors' calculations)

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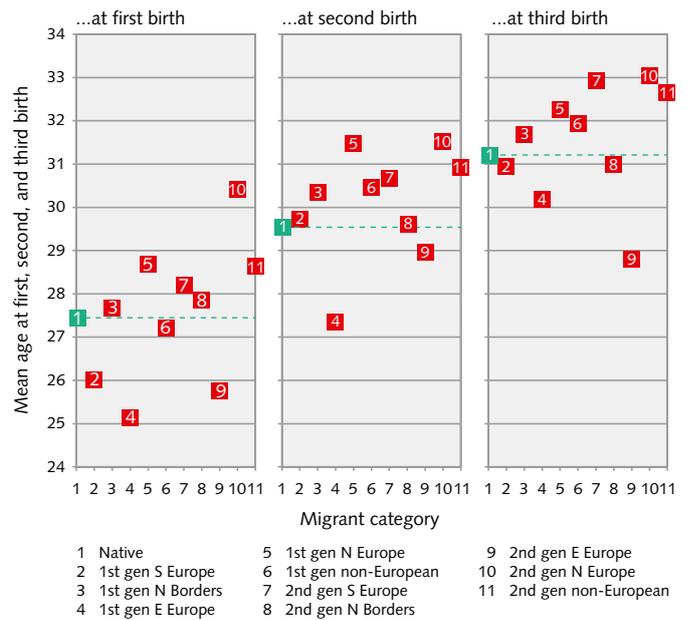
What we see is that migrants from the northern border countries (dominated by Germany and France) have lower fertility than other groups, and for the other groups they are little different from the Swiss norms. From the census returns we know that migrants from former Yugoslavia have larger families (2.3 children per woman on average in 2000) compared to those originating from other areas of Eastern Europe (with just 1.3). The second generation tend toward the Swiss average.

How old are mothers when they have their first, second and third child?

Compared to the rest of the world, women in Switzerland have their first child very late: the average age of first birth has been increasing steadily over the past 40 years and has now reached over 30. In the countries of origin of migrants to Switzerland, there are wide variations in the normal age band when women have children. In Eastern Europe the modal age for having a first child was as low as 19–20 when these countries were under a communist regime. Since the fall of communism in 1989 the age of entering motherhood has risen, often precipitously. However, the usual age for having a first child is still younger than in the Western nations. Many migrants tend towards the age norms of childbearing from their country of origin which differ from those prevalent in the population of Swiss natives, and these are reflected in the patterns we see (cf. Graph 8).

Mean age at first, second and third birth for women born between 1940 and 1998 by migrant generation and population subgroup

G 8



Source: FSO – FGS 2013 (Authors' calculations)

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In contrast to Eastern Europeans, women from Northern Europe have, on average, a much later fertility schedule. If women migrate in early adulthood – a very common pattern – this can often delay entry into parenthood and push the arrival of a first child even higher than that of natives. First generation women from Southern Europe generally have a younger age of entry into motherhood than the Swiss, but it exceeds that of native Swiss by the second generation.

Which groups are more likely to stay childless?

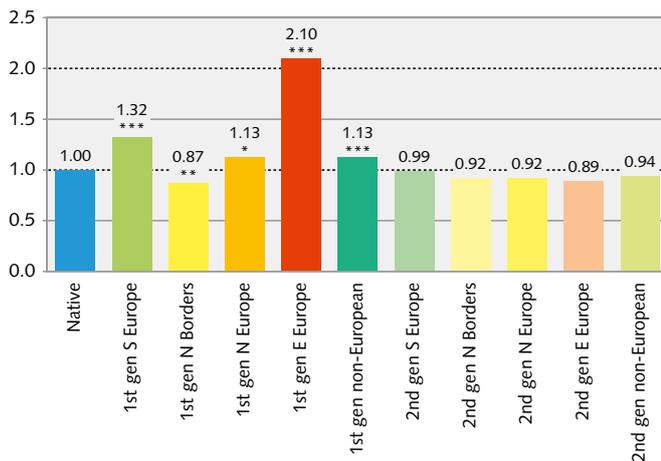
There are quite wide variations between subgroups in the proportion of women (and men) who remain childless. Census data show that childlessness is rather common for Swiss natives (over 20%), though there are also variations between the different linguistic areas of the country. The Italian-speaking part of Switzerland has the highest frequency of childlessness (23% of women who have recently completed their reproductive period), followed by the Swiss-German region (22%), with the French-speaking areas having the lowest levels (19%), at least for the post-war generations (Burkimsher, 2016).

Comparing the migrant groups, women from Eastern and Southern Europe are the least likely to remain childless (5–9% of those born 1930–1960). In contrast, women coming from Northern Europe are even more likely than the Swiss to remain childless (25% or even higher for some countries of origin). This reflects the norms of their country of origin; the German- and English-speaking countries have relatively high levels of childlessness.

Looking at the patterns for second generation migrants, we find that, on average, they are slightly more likely to remain childless than Swiss natives. It would appear that the second generation migrants find entering parenthood more difficult than their parents and, for many origins, slightly more difficult than the Swiss as well (cf. Graph 9).

Relative probabilities of having a first birth for women aged 15–49 by migrant generation and population subgroup

G 9



Note: The likelihood of remaining childless is the inverse of the likelihood of having a first child, so a value <1 indicates a higher likelihood of childlessness. Figure 9 shows the odds ratios calculated using Cox regression models with Swiss natives being the reference category. Individual level data are right-censored either at the interview date, or at age 45. Control variables included were gender, cohort, level of education, number of children and educational level of parents. The number of asterisks indicates the strength of the association.

Source: FSO – FGS 2013 (Authors' calculations)

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Which groups move rapidly on to having a second child?

For some subgroups, the likelihood of having a second child is the exact opposite of the likelihood of having a first child. Swiss-Germans, although they have a relatively higher likelihood of remaining childless, move on to a second child more readily than French-speaking Swiss. In contrast, Southern Europeans, having commonly had a first child, are less likely to move on to have a second child compared to Swiss natives, and the delay before having a second child is much longer (a median interval of just over 3 years for Swiss-German women compared to over 6 years for some Southern and Eastern European countries of origin). By contrast, the English-speaking and Scandinavian countries show the reverse pattern and are similar to the Swiss-Germans. Many women from those origins remain childless, but if they do have one child the likelihood of having a second is relatively high and the spacing between first and second child is comparable to that of the Swiss-German.

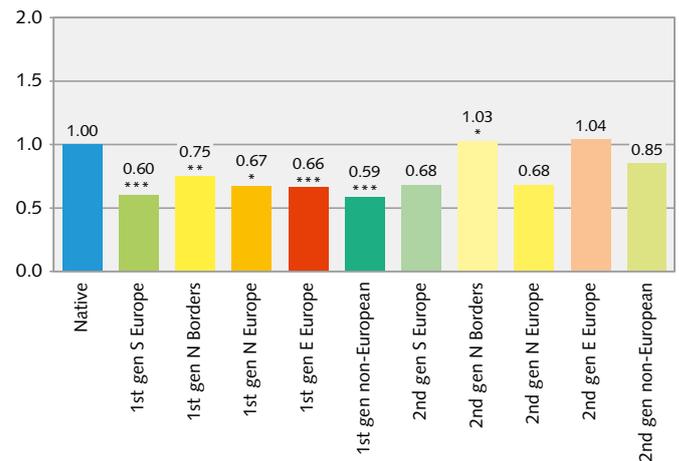
However, this mirroring of the transitions to first and second birth is not universal. For women from some regions there seem to be barriers for all progressions, e.g. women in the Italian-speaking part of Switzerland.

Graph 10 shows the odds ratios calculated using Cox regression models with Swiss natives being the reference category. This measure reflects not only the likelihood of having a second child after a first but also the duration of lag time between the first and second.

The pattern for the second generation shows indications of integration: despite the first generation having a subdued intensity of having a second child, for the second generation the likelihood is tending towards the Swiss norm. The number of asterisks indicates the strength of the association.

Relative probabilities of having a second birth for women aged 15–49 by migrant generation and population subgroup

G 10



The number of asterisks indicates the strength of the association.

Source: FSO – FGS 2013 (Authors' calculations)

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Is the family size of migrants bigger than the Swiss – or not?

We have already mentioned that women from Southern Europe and former Yugoslavia have a higher than average number of children and yet they have a lower propensity to have a second child than the Swiss. Do these migrants move on to have a third child more often than the Swiss? In fact, analysis of census records show that variations in transition to a third child by origin are less marked than for the second child. Women from Southern European countries have a lower propensity than the Swiss, and migrants from former Yugoslavia and the Scandinavian countries have a somewhat higher propensity.

There are several explanations for why the average family size of some immigrant groups is larger than the average Swiss family, but yet their intensity of progression on to a second and (also, generally) a third child is lower than the Swiss.

Firstly, the proportion of women who remain childless in each sub-population has a very large influence on the calculation of 'average' family size. The frequency of childlessness amongst Swiss women is high, but for those from Southern and Eastern Europe, it is much lower. This suggests that Swiss women who become mothers are a more selected group than the latter. If we look only at family sizes where a woman has had at least one child (i.e. 'mothers'), then the differentials between the groups are small and are all close to 2 children. For *mothers* from former Yugoslavia, the average family size is 2.5, followed by Swiss-Germans and non-Europeans, both averaging 2.2 children. The high ranking of Swiss-Germans in average family size of *mothers*, in contrast to their low rank in average family size when looking at *all* women, is explained because of the high proportion of Swiss-Germans who remain childless. Those who do become mothers in this group may have a stronger family orientation compared to those who stay childless and therefore, all things being equal, their propensity for higher order births is greater.

Secondly, the proportion of women who have larger families affects the average family size. Whereas an average of 6% of women in Switzerland have four or more children (although in the Italian-speaking region it is only 2%), amongst women from former Yugoslavia the proportion is 17%. This clearly boosts the 'average' family size, even though the majority of women do not progress beyond one or two children. In contrast, it is rare for Southern European women to have large families; their higher-than-average family size is explained solely because of their low frequency of childlessness.

Thirdly, the statistical method used to compare the probability of having a first or second child, as presented in Graphs 9 and 10, summarises the *intensity* of these transitions. The spacing between first and second (and third) child is commonly much wider for immigrant groups of Eastern and Southern European origin compared to native Swiss. Eastern and Southern European women commonly have their first child at a fairly young age (cf. Graph 8), but then they wait much longer than native Swiss before having a subsequent child.

What makes Switzerland different from other countries?

Examining both the FGS and census data, we found that migrants have a lower intensity of having a second child compared to natives and have longer intervals between births. This pattern has not been observed in other European countries, where migrants generally have faster and more frequent transitions to a second birth (Kulu et al, 2015). In what ways could this be related to the Swiss context and the wider implications concerning social inequalities in fertility? The arrival of a child is linked to additional costs. One possible reason is the relatively low level of public funding of child support for parents and the high costs of childrearing in Switzerland, which may discriminate against some migrants who have, on average, lower economic resources than the native population and who may have higher expectations concerning public funding of child support for families, depending on the welfare regime of their country of origin. Immigrants also generally have smaller social and family networks able to support them during parenthood (Moret and Dahinden, 2009). They tend to have high educational aspirations for their children, as this is perceived as the path towards social mobility in the host country (Fuligni & Fuligni, 2007). The wider spacing between children may also reflect the lower opportunity costs for women who have lower income, whereas rapid transitions, as seen in Swiss-German women, may reflect their desire for minimising their time out of the labour force.

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Mixed marriages and their dissolution

Mixed marriages are defined as marriages between two individuals of different origins. The predominance of such marriages indicates the social and cultural distance between the native population, on the one hand, and different immigrant groups, on the other. In this report, we examine how common and how stable mixed marriages are in Switzerland by asking the following questions: Which immigrant groups have more chances of marrying Swiss natives? And which ones are more likely to divorce their Swiss spouse? Have younger generations better or worse chances of forming and ending a marriage with a native?

Switzerland has a long history of immigration initiated after the Second World War (Fibbi et al., 2007), which includes mass migration flows coming from Southern European countries (mainly Italy, Spain, and later, Portugal), driven by labour market demands. After the mid-1980s, immigrants also arrived from former Yugoslavia, Albania, and Turkey. Immigrants from the Balkans and Turkey currently represent one of the largest foreign communities in Switzerland (Gross, 2006). Swiss immigration history also includes highly skilled immigration flows from neighbouring Western European countries (e.g., Germany, France, and Austria) and worldwide, related to the high density of international firms and administrations headquarters. Switzerland nowadays has one of the highest shares of the foreign-born population in Europe. In 2014, the proportion of foreign-born residents accounted for 28.6% of the total population. If one includes both the foreign-born and the native-born with foreign nationality, the percentage of the population that has some immigrant background in Switzerland exceeds 33.3%. However, Switzerland relies on restrictive immigration legislation, which is currently on the verge of being reinforced as a consequence of the popular poll in 2014 demanding the limiting of immigration. Using up-to-date large-scale Swiss data from the 2013 Families and Generations Survey, we investigate mixed marriages in a country with a large and ever-rising immigrant population, and currently strengthening restrictive immigration rules. We seek to understand how changes in the population structure and Swiss policies towards immigration influence the prevalence and the stability of marriages between immigrants and Swiss natives. Firstly, we specifically look at the chance of starting a mixed marriage for people who marry for the first time, and then we examine the risk of their marriage ending.

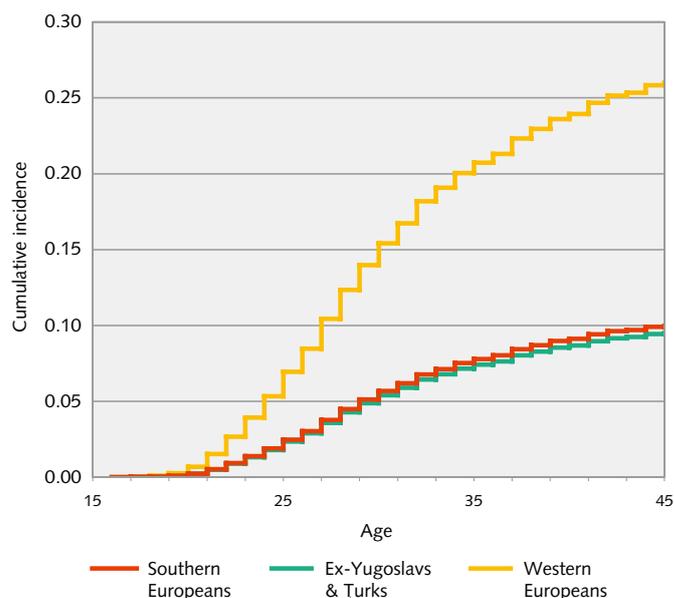
Different probabilities of marrying Swiss natives by immigrant group

Immigrants originating from neighbouring Western European countries are more likely to enter a mixed marriage with a Swiss native (cf. Graph 11). Compared to Southern Europeans, immigrants from former Yugoslavia and Turkey have similar chances of marrying a native in their first union.

Respondent's origin was computed based on extensive information on current nationality, nationality at birth, country of birth, and both parents' country of birth. If the individual currently has Swiss nationality, were he or she Swiss-born, and were at least one of his or her parents born in Switzerland, the respondent was coded as 'native'. If both parents were born abroad, irrespective of the respondent being foreign- or native-born, he/ she is coded as immigrant and receives the specific origin of the country where the mother was born. Since the first spouse can be either a current or a previous partner, we measure *partner's origin* by looking at either the current or past spouse's background. *Current partner's origin* is only measured via the following variables: current nationality, nationality at birth (either Swiss or foreign), and country of birth. If the partner is currently a Swiss national and had Swiss or double nationality at birth, irrespective of country of birth, he/ she is categorised as 'native'. If the partner had a non-Swiss nationality at birth, then information on country of birth is used to gauge partner's immigrant origin. *Previous partners' origin* was measured solely by asking for information on their nationality when the relationship began. Therefore, if the precedent partner had Swiss nationality, he/she was coded as 'native', whereas if the previous partner had non-Swiss nationality, he/ she was categorized as immigrant. We group immigrants in the following main categories: 1) Southern Europeans (originating from Italy, Spain, Portugal or Greece), 2) former Yugoslavs and Turks, 3) Western Europeans (from the neighbouring countries of Germany, France or Austria), and 4) other countries. Since immigrants categorized as 'other' represent a highly heterogeneous group, we only report findings in connection to the first three immigrant groups.

Probability of marrying Swiss natives, by immigrant group

G 11



Note: Based on competing risks models, which account for three other possible outcomes: not marrying, having a same-origin spouse, or having a spouse belonging to another immigrant group. It also adjusts for gender, education, age at marriage, cohort, generation type, linguistic region and whether marriage happened before or after migration. The graph plots the yearly probability of marrying natives, from age 15 to age 45.

Source: FSO – GS 2013 (Authors' calculations)

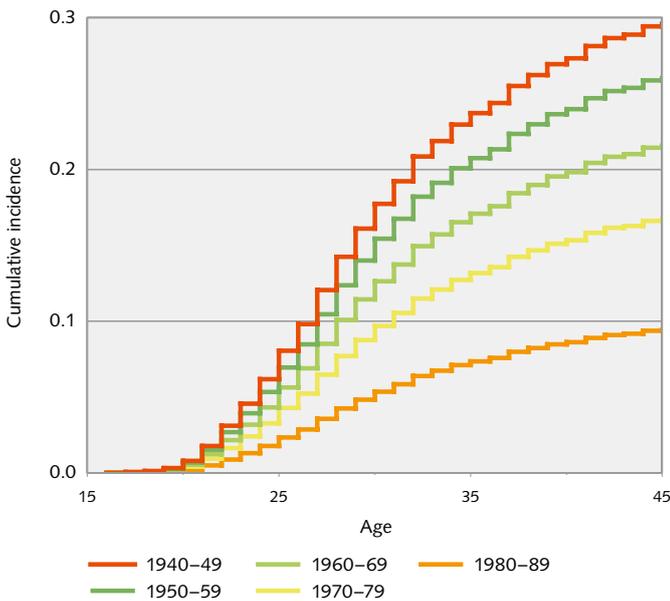
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Different probabilities of marrying Swiss natives by cohort group (immigrants)

Immigrants belonging to younger cohorts are progressively less likely to have a Swiss native as first spouse (cf. Graph 12). This could be related to the substantial growth of immigrant populations occurring in recent decades and the coming of age of second and third generations of immigrants. This allowed for more opportunities of choosing a same-origin rather than a different-origin partner. Moreover, the increasing popularity of online dating as a mainstream channel for finding a partner in the last decade, particularly for minority groups, means an easier access and more possibilities for selecting a partner with the same background.

Probability of marrying Swiss natives among immigrants, by cohort

G 12



Note: Graph similar to Figure 11, adjusting for immigrant group, gender, education, age at marriage, generation type, linguistic region and whether marriage happened before or after migration. For the younger cohorts, the curves are partially based on modeling.

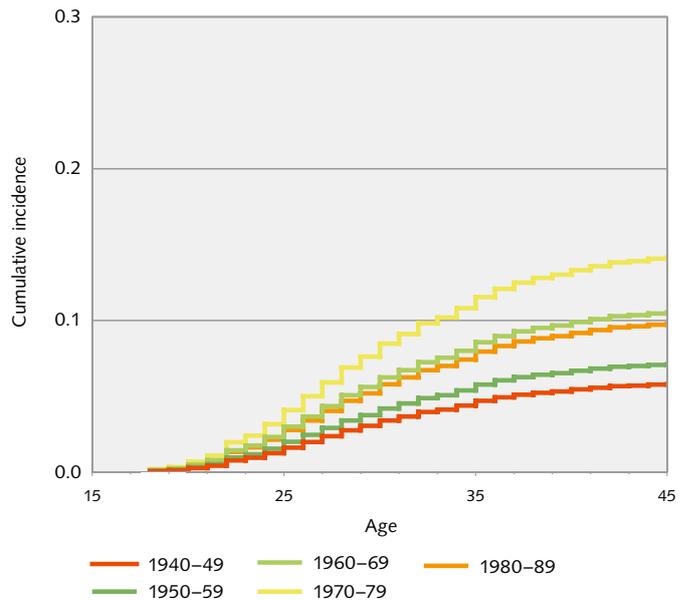
Source: FSO – GS 2013 (Authors' calculations) © FSO, Neuchâtel 2016

Different probabilities of marrying immigrants by cohort group (natives)

Graph 13 suggests that, as opposed to immigrants, Swiss natives born in recent decades have a significantly higher chance of entering a mixed marriage. Such development may be related to the increase in the immigrant population in recent decades, which arguably translates into an increasingly ethnically diverse pool of potential partners for marriage. A relatively smaller national marriage market makes it more likely to develop inter-group relationships. Moreover, Swiss natives have recently been shown to have relatively more favourable attitudes towards mixed marriages than natives from other Western European countries (Carol, 2013).

Probability of marrying immigrants among Swiss natives, by cohort

G 13



Note: Based on competing risks models, which account for two other possible outcomes: not marrying or having a same-origin spouse. It also adjusts for gender, education, age at marriage, and linguistic region. The graph plots the yearly probability of marrying immigrants from age 15 to age 45. For the younger cohorts, the curves are partially based on modeling.

Source: FSO – GS 2013 (Authors' calculations)

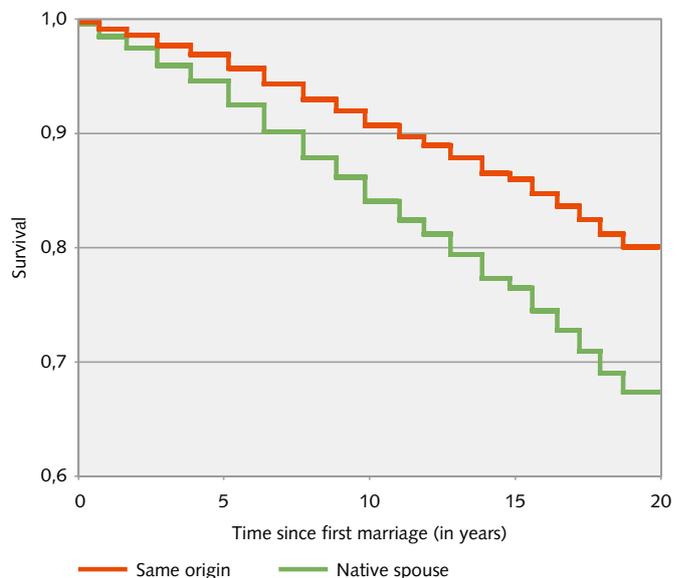
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Mixed marriages are more likely to end in divorce

Marriages between individuals who have different origins are more at risk of not surviving compared to marriages between spouses that share the same origin (cf. Graphs 14a and 14b). This is the case for both immigrants and Swiss natives.

Marriage survival, by type of union (immigrants)

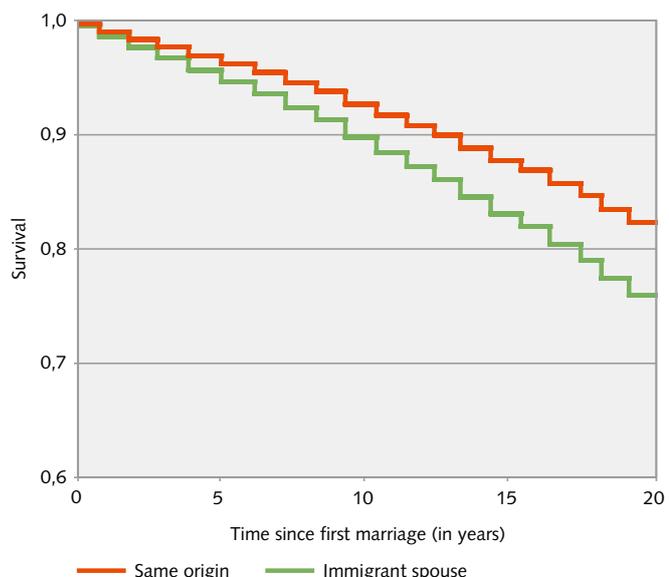
G 14a



Note: Based on Cox proportional hazards models. The graphs plot the yearly chances of staying married between the year in which the first marriage occurred and the subsequent 20 years. The graphs adjust for gender, education, age at marriage, cohort, number of children, linguistic region, (and only in the case of immigrants: immigrant group, generation type and whether marriage happened before or after migration).

Source: FSO – GS 2013 (Authors' calculations)

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Note: Based on Cox proportional hazards models. The graphs plot the yearly chances of staying married between the year in which the first marriage occurred and the subsequent 20 years. The graphs adjust for gender, education, age at marriage, cohort, number of children, linguistic region, (and only in the case of immigrants: immigrant group, generation type and whether first marriage happened before or after migration).

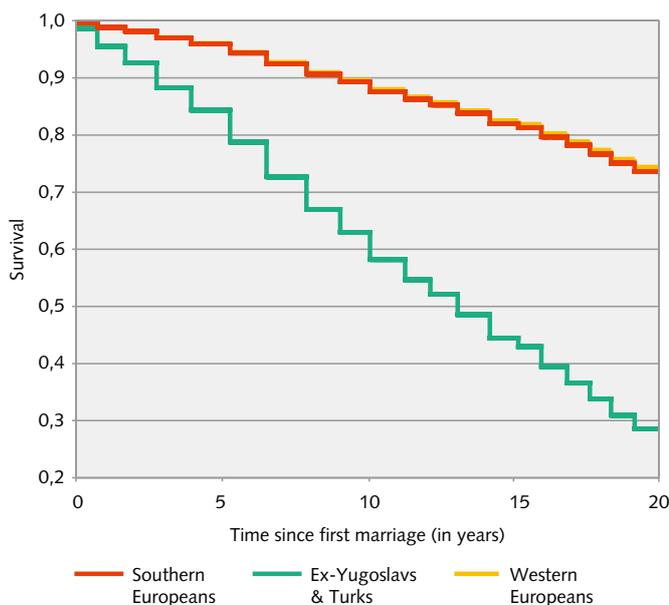
Source: FSO – GS 2013 (Authors' calculations)

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The divorce risk of marriages with Swiss natives varies between immigrant groups

Immigrants from former Yugoslavia and Turkey who married a native are more likely to divorce (cf. Graph 15). On the other hand, immigrants from Southern Europe and neighbouring Western European countries are significantly less at risk of dissolving their marriage with a Swiss native spouse.

Survival of marriage with natives among immigrants, by immigrant group



Note: Graph similar to Figure 14, adjusting for gender, education, age at marriage, generation type, number of children, linguistic region and whether marriage happened before or after migration.

Source: FSO – GS 2013 (Authors' calculations)

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Conclusions

Results point to the existence of a segregated marriage market, with immigrants from former Yugoslavia and Turkey having both lower chances of starting a marriage with a native and, when they do marry one, a higher risk of divorcing. At the opposite side of the spectrum, immigrants originating from neighbouring Germany, France or Austria have better chances of marrying a Swiss and are more likely for their union to remain intact. Finally, the Southern European group appears to rank in the middle, not distinguishable from ex-Yugoslavs and Turks when it comes to propensity to marry a native, but when they do have a Swiss spouse, being less likely to divorce them. Being culturally closer to the native population, having higher-ranked and recognised educational credentials, as well as a favourable labour market performance (Lagana et al., 2014), migrants from neighbouring Western European countries establish themselves as the most integrated minority group on the Swiss marriage market (Schroedter & Rössel, 2014). This also reflects the immigration policies and discourse promoted by the Swiss state, which favours skilled and culturally proximate EU residents in terms of immigration rights and access to citizenship (Riaño & Wastl-Walter, 2006). For example, different conditions apply for a residence in Switzerland for nationals of EU/EFTA countries compared to non-EU/EFTA nationals.

We also observed that compared to older generations, immigrants born in more recent decades are progressively less likely to start a marriage with a Swiss native. This suggests that immigrants from younger generations are reacting to the transformation of marriage market conditions. Immigrants from more recent cohorts may also take advantage of new opportunities of interaction over the last decades, such as online dating sites (Potârcă & Mills, 2015) to meet and marry other migrants.

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Additional information

Statistical data and publications

- The [initial results of the Families and Generations Survey 2013](#) were published by the FSO in 2015.
- The publication [Relations de couple](#) is also based on the results of the Families and Generations Survey.
- The 19th international colloquium of the International Association of French-Language Demographers has the theme of “family configurations and dynamics”. University of Strasbourg, 21–24 June 2016. www.aidelf.org
- In response to the Fehr postulate (12.3607) “Code civil. Pour un droit de la famille moderne et cohérent”, in 2015 the Federal Council published the report “[Modernisation du droit de la famille](#)”.
- In response to the Tornare postulate (13.3135) “Politique de la famille”, in 2015 the Federal Council published the report “[Politique familiale: Etat des lieux et possibilités d'action de la Confédération](#)”.
- In 2017 a report will be published by the Federal Council in response to the Meier-Schatz postulate (12.3144) “[Troisième rapport sur la situation des familles en Suisse](#)”. Statistics will form an important part of the report.

Imprint

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