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# Is cohabitation an alternative to marriage in Russia?

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# Theoretical pre-conditions

Non-marital unions is a substitute for the institution of legal marriage (Gerber 2009)

Before becoming a substitute, a cohabitation had to go a long evolutionary way away from a 'deviant' relationship to a legal 'alternative' to marriage, or a selection process to filter weak unions (Mills 2004)

Russia, much in contrast to Western European countries, was characterized by an early and universal marriage (Avdeev and Monnier, 2000; Puur et al., n.d.; Scherbov and van Vianen, 2004; Zakharov, 2008). The age at the first marriage started to decrease (Philipov and Jasilioniene, 2008) and decreased between 1960 and 1993

The average ages of marriage have been rising since then because of the broad and long-term changes in norms and values that many other countries faced between the mid-1960s and the end of the 1980s (the late Second Demographic Transition coming to Russia (Zakharov, 2008))

Cohabitation as a symbol of a new freedom of thinking and behaving comes to represent a legitimate alternative to marriage rather than just a trial marriage or the first step to marital union (Gerber, 2009).

# The research goal

**The major goal of this research is to find out whether the cohabitation is an independent social institution or just the first step on the path to marriage**

## The Hypothesis

**Cohabitation is not an independent social institution in Russia but the perception of cohabitations is changing from Soviet generations to modern ones**

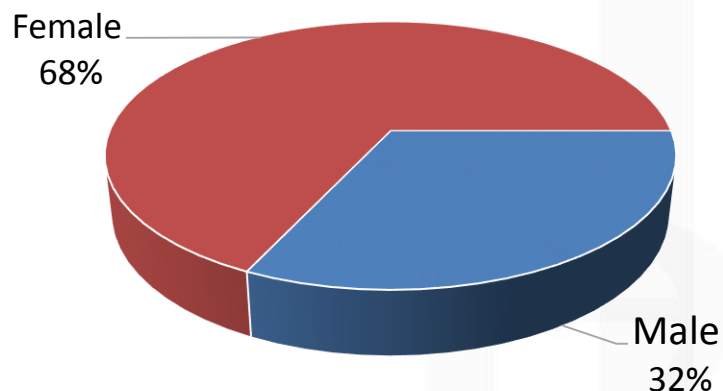
- The average ages of entry to the first matrimonial unions change from generation to generation: the age of the first cohabitation decreases while the age of the first marriage increases
- The probability to start the first cohabitation is higher and the risk to have a marriage is lower for modern generations than for Soviet ones
- Cohabitation turns into the first marriage more often than finishes as an independent institution
- The proportion of people for whom the first cohabitation does not turn into a marriage increases for the representatives of the generations born after the 1960s

# Data description



The panel data of the Russian part of Generations and Gender Survey (**GGs-panel: 2004, 2007, and 2011**)

**5451 cases:** generations born between the 1930 and the 1986



The questionnaire distinguishes two types of unions: marriages and cohabitations. Marriages are legally registered unions and cohabitations are not registered ones

# The amount of cohabitations and dissolutions before and after the data cleaning

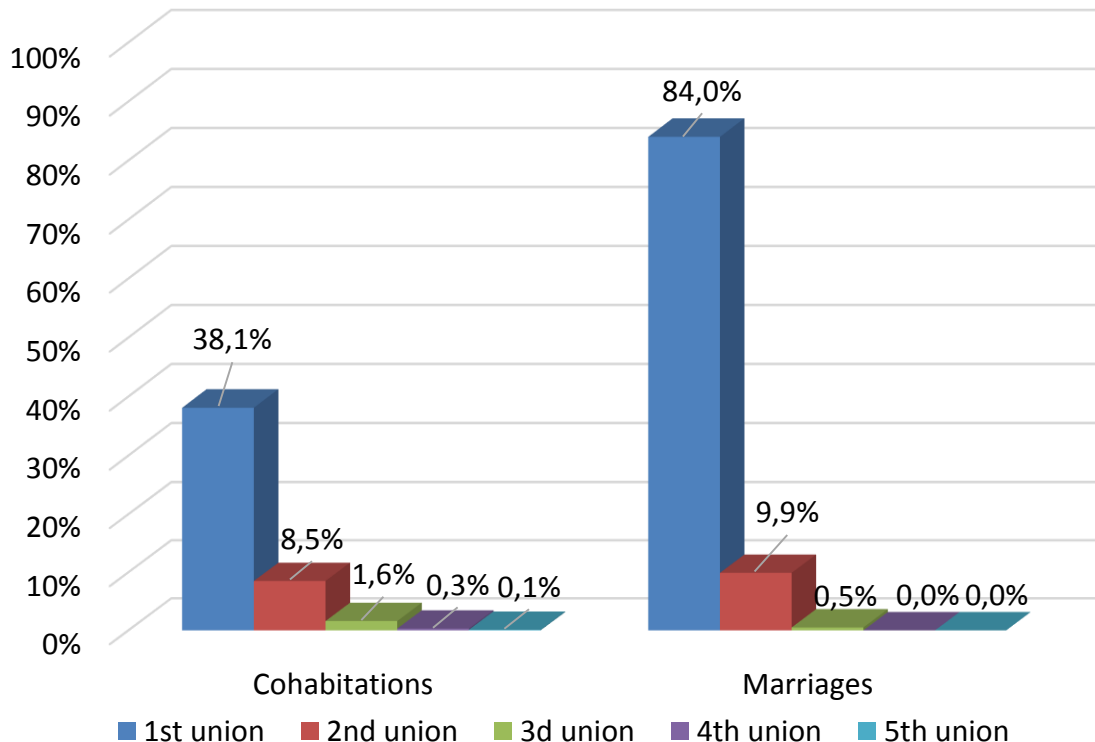
| An order of unions  | Before the cleaning | After the cleaning |
|---------------------|---------------------|--------------------|
| <b>Cohabitation</b> |                     |                    |
| 1                   | 5138                | 2151               |
| 2                   | 1130                | 482                |
| 3                   | 175                 | 90                 |
| 4                   | 26                  | 15                 |
| 5                   | 6                   | 4                  |
| <b>Dissolutions</b> |                     |                    |
| 1                   | 2375                | 1085               |
| 2                   | 527                 | 244                |
| 3                   | 86                  | 41                 |
| 4                   | 11                  | 8                  |
| 5                   | 3                   | 3                  |

# The data restrictions

## 1. The percentage of respondents of the panel who have a union

The most typical model of matrimonial behavior of Russians is to have only one union of both types or one type → we will pay the most of attention to the first unions

## 2. The numbers and shares of unions started under the age of 25, 30, 35 years



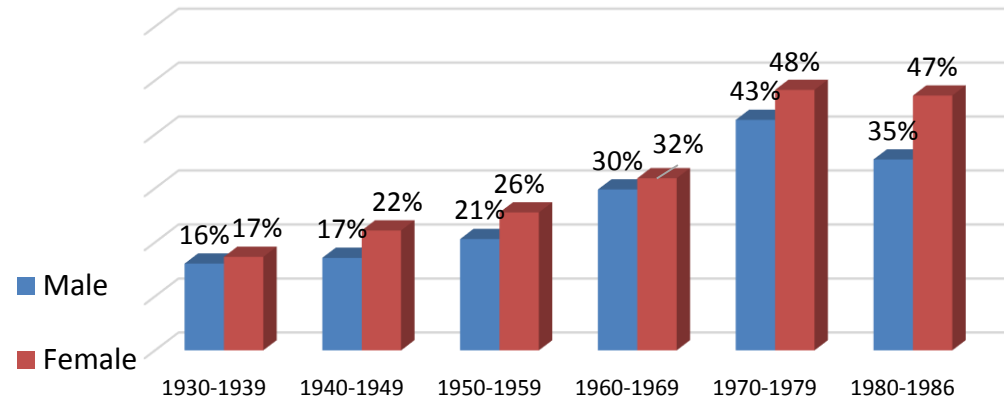
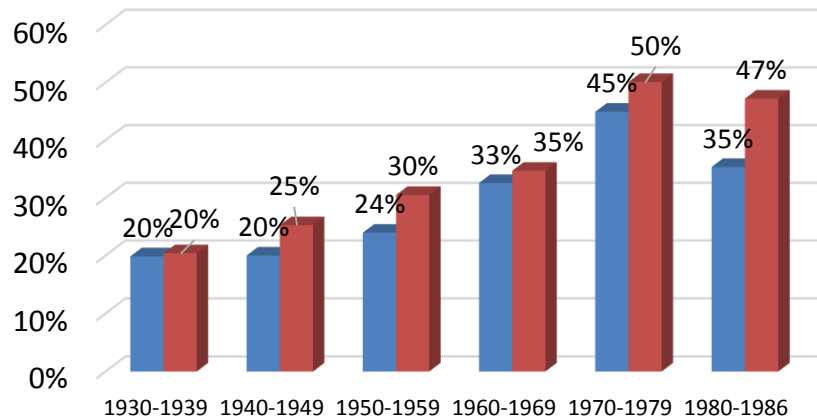
| An order of unions   | Under the age of 25 |                 | Under the age of 30 |                 | Under the age of 35 |                 |
|----------------------|---------------------|-----------------|---------------------|-----------------|---------------------|-----------------|
|                      | Number of unions    | Share of unions | Number of unions    | Share of unions | Number of unions    | Share of unions |
| <b>Cohabitations</b> |                     |                 |                     |                 |                     |                 |
| 1                    | 1395                | 65%             | <b>1708</b>         | <b>79%</b>      | 1859                | 86%             |
| 2                    | 387                 | 80%             | <b>450</b>          | <b>93%</b>      | 471                 | 98%             |
| 3                    | 79                  | 88%             | <b>88</b>           | <b>98%</b>      | 89                  | 99%             |
| 4                    | 15                  | 100%            | <b>15</b>           | <b>100%</b>     | 15                  | 100%            |
| 5                    | 4                   | 100%            | <b>4</b>            | <b>100%</b>     | 4                   | 100%            |
| <b>Marriages</b>     |                     |                 |                     |                 |                     |                 |
| 1                    | 3944                | 83%             | <b>4517</b>         | <b>95%</b>      | 4737                | 100%            |
| 2                    | 515                 | 92%             | <b>549</b>          | <b>98%</b>      | 560                 | 100%            |
| 3                    | 28                  | 100%            | <b>28</b>           | <b>100%</b>     | 28                  | 100%            |
| 4                    | 1                   | 100%            | <b>1</b>            | <b>100%</b>     | 1                   | 100%            |

# The share of the first matrimonial events in the total number of people of the same gender and generation

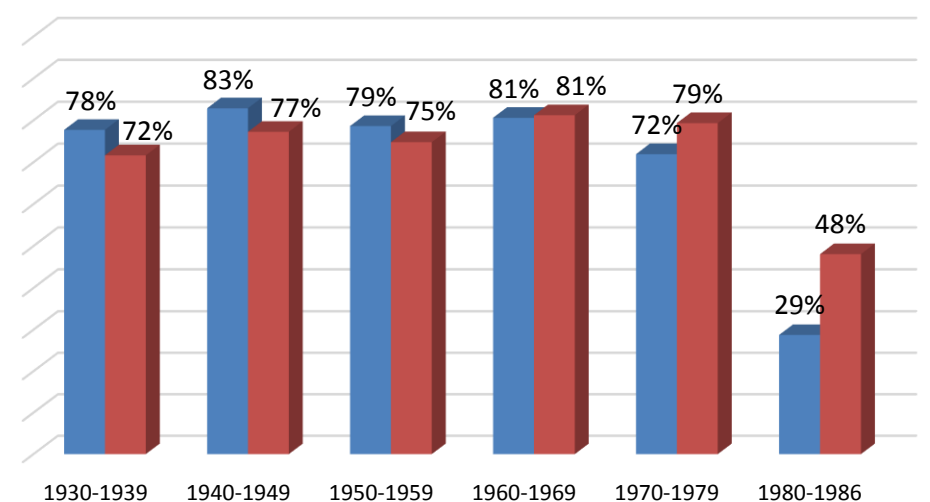
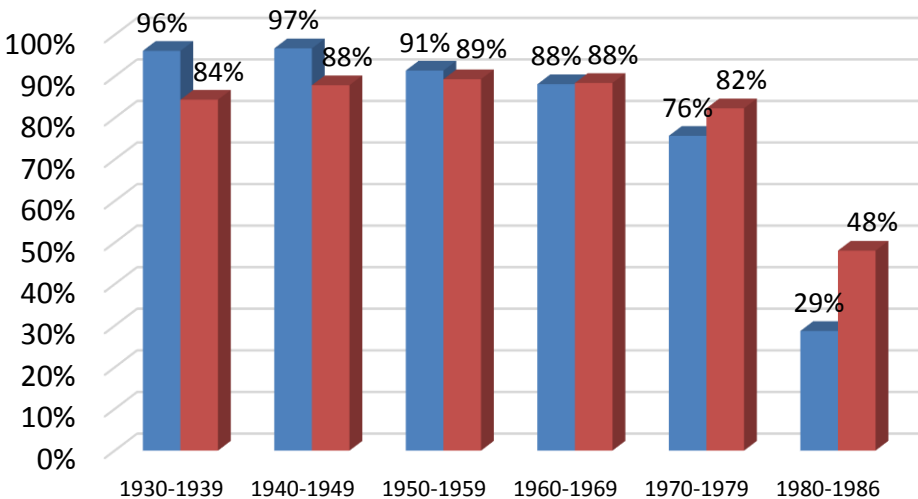
## Without restrictions

## With restrictions

### Cohabitations



### Marriages

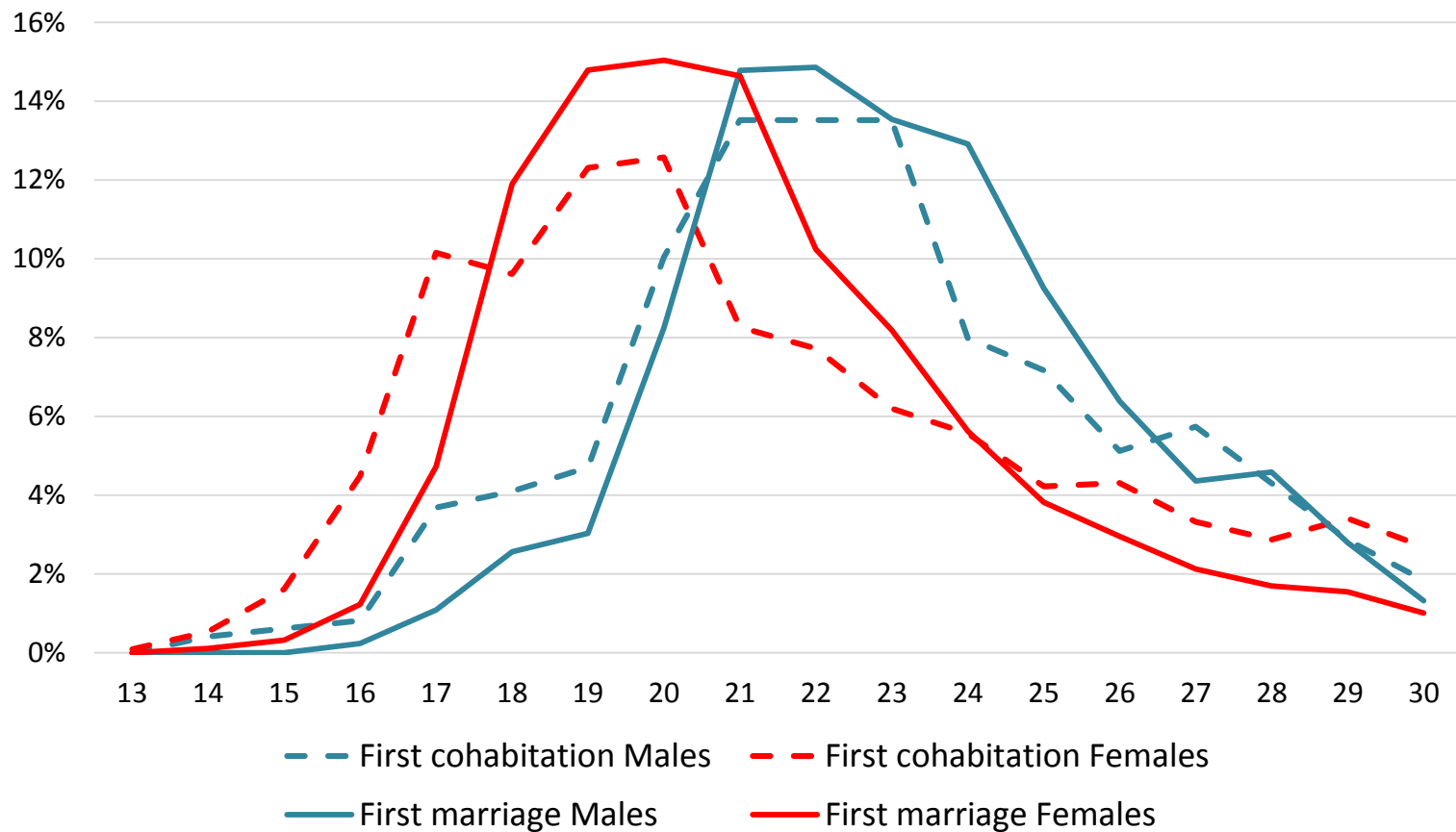




# The average ages of the first unions in the perspective of gender and generations

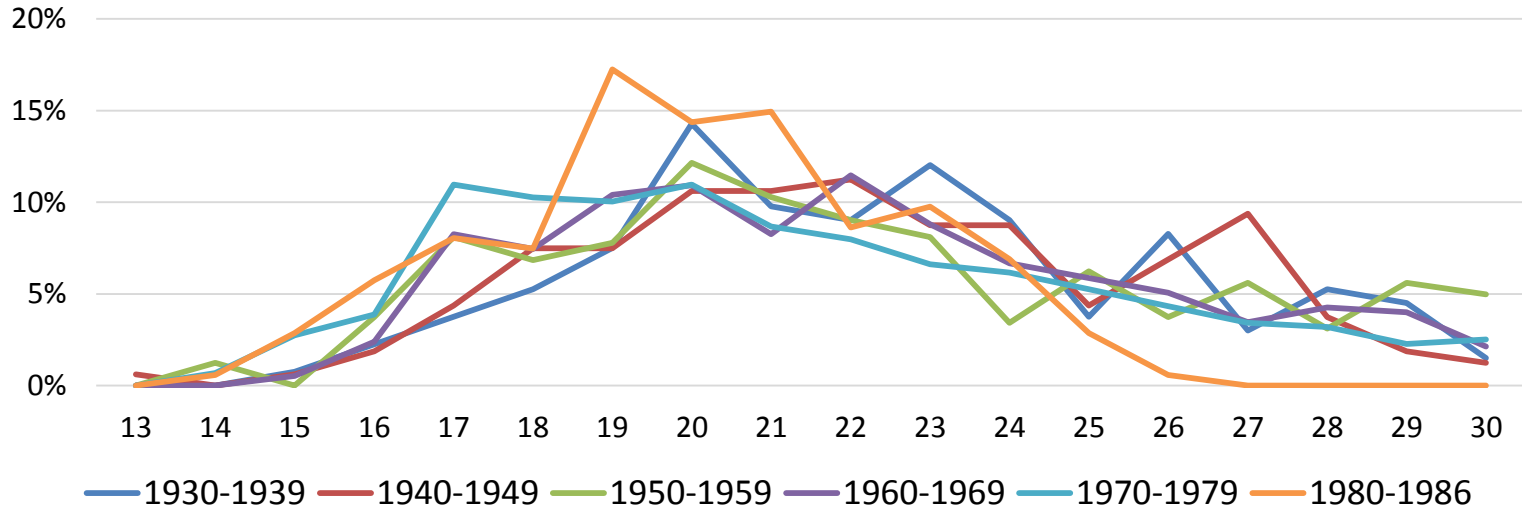
| Categories         | 1st cohabitation | 1st marriage |
|--------------------|------------------|--------------|
| <b>Gender</b>      |                  |              |
| male               | 22.66            | <b>23.15</b> |
| female             | 21.24            | <b>21.12</b> |
| <b>Generations</b> |                  |              |
| 1930-1939          | <b>22.45</b>     | <b>22.63</b> |
| 1940-1949          | 22.32            | 22.00        |
| 1950-1959          | 22.16            | 21.85        |
| 1960-1969          | 21.97            | 21.67        |
| 1970-1979          | 21.20            | <b>21.01</b> |
| 1980-1986          | <b>20.10</b>     | 21.11        |
| <b>Total</b>       | <b>21.67</b>     | <b>21.76</b> |

# The age of the first unions in the perspective of gender

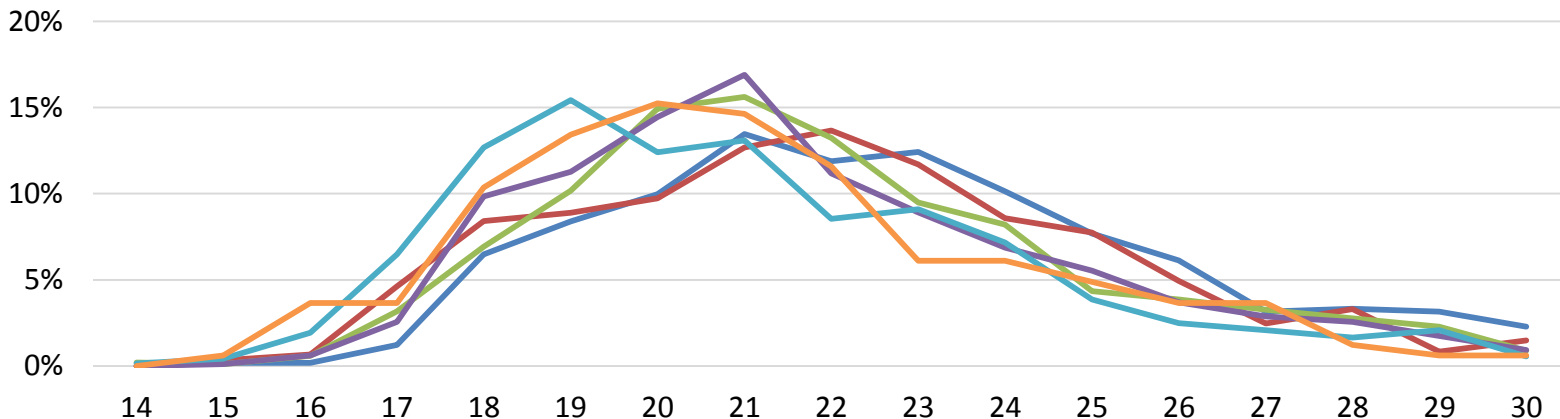


# The age of the first unions in the perspective of generations

## Cohabitation

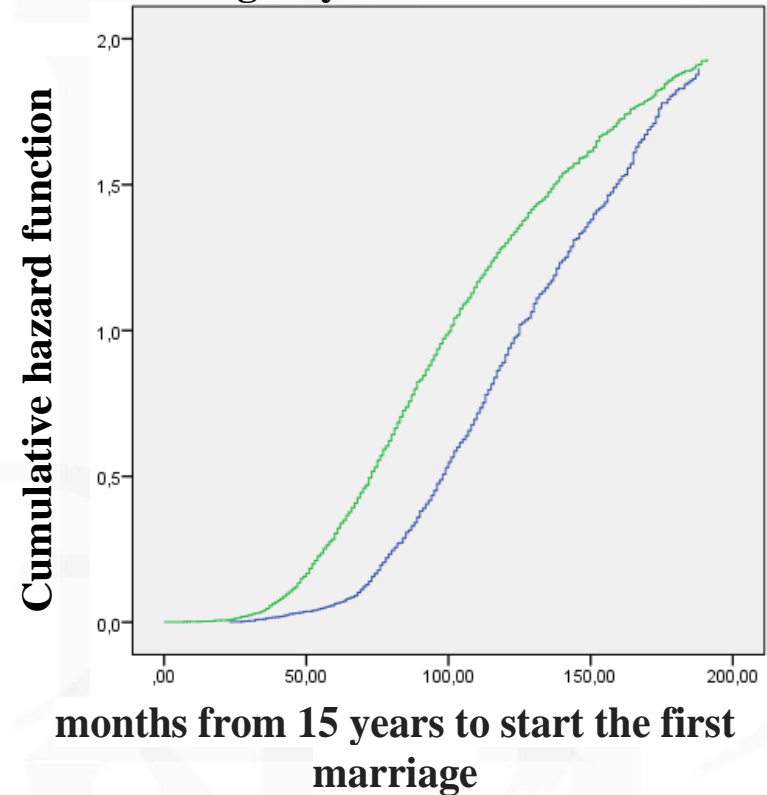
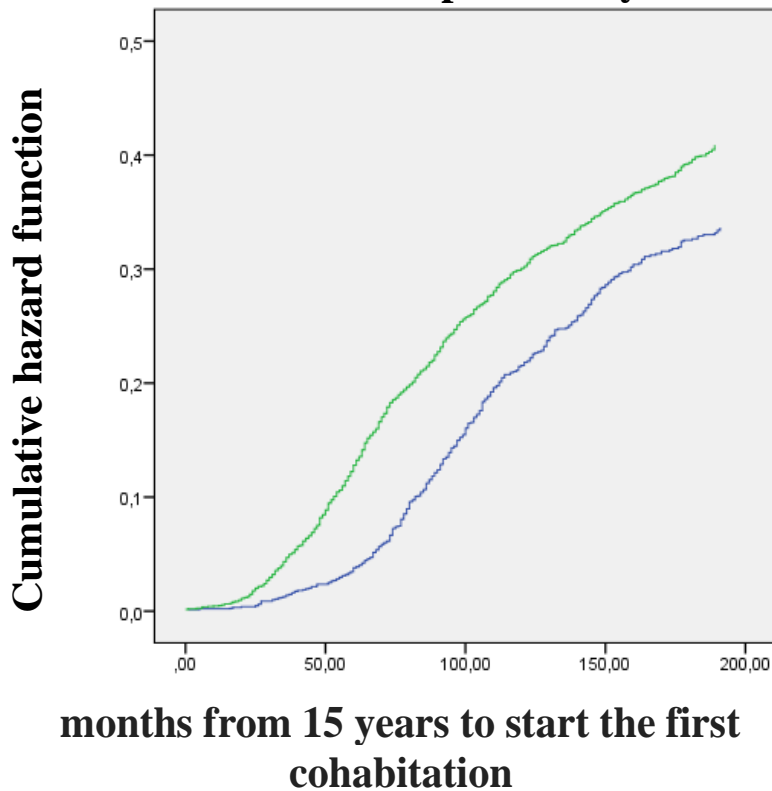


## Marriage



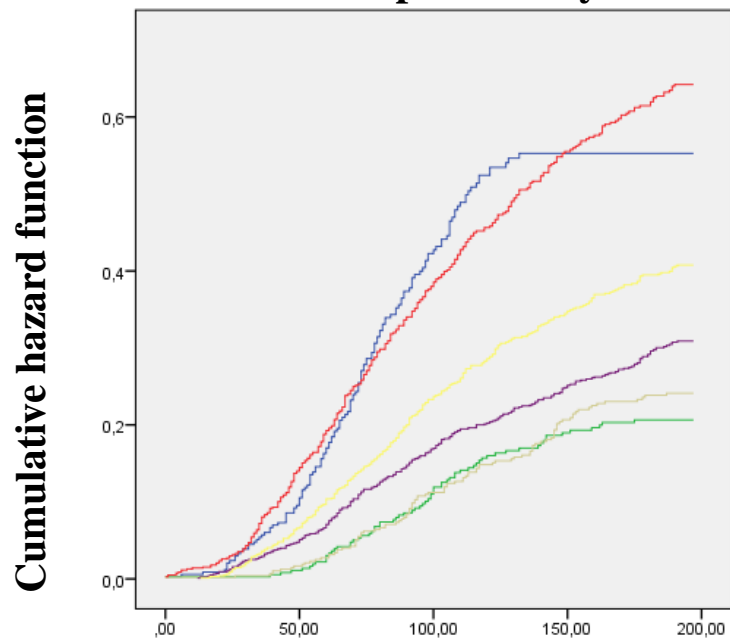
# Hazard curves for the first unions (stratification by gender)

The probability to start the first union after reaching 15 years



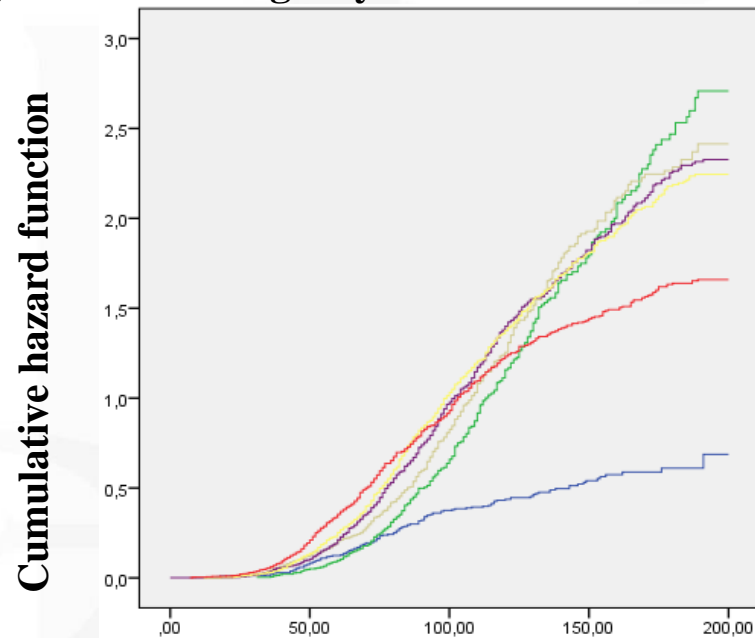
# Hazard curves for the first unions (stratification by generations)

The probability to start the first marriage after reaching 15 years

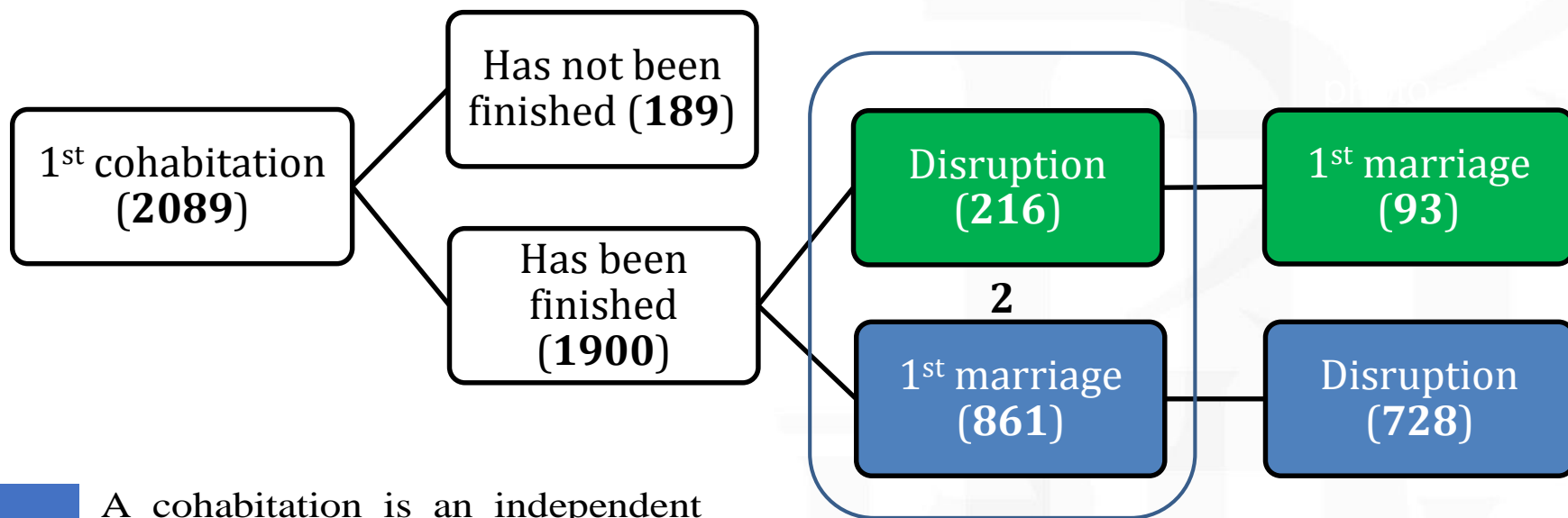


Generations


- 1920-29
- 1930-39
- 1940-49
- 1950-59
- 1960-69
- 1970-79
- 1980-89



# The ways of the first cohabitations development



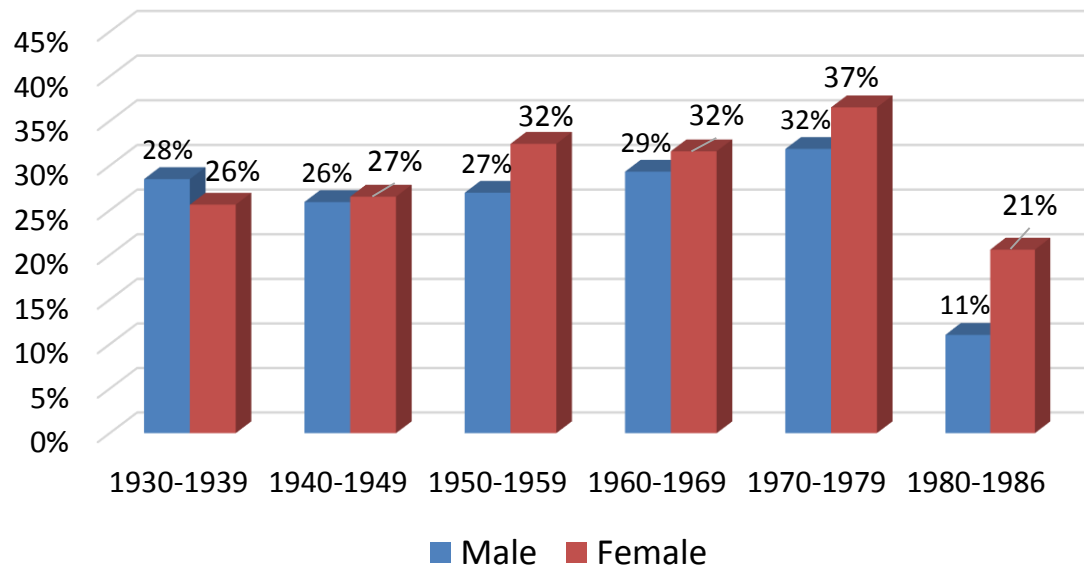
 A cohabitation is an independent social institution

 A cohabitation is only the first step on the path to a marriage

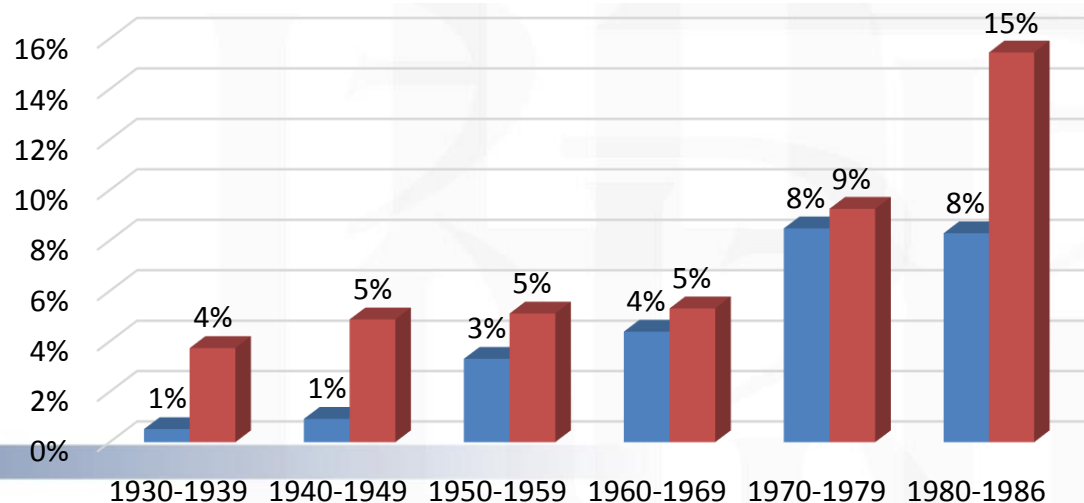
# The nature of cohabitation in Russia



The patterns of matrimonial behavior proved that cohabitation is a “trial marriage”



The patterns of matrimonial behavior proved that cohabitation is an independent social institution



# Main results

There is an increase in cohabitations and decrease in marriages for modern generations in comparison with the Soviet ones.

Males start their both events later than females and in a different order: their marriages are occurring 6 months later than their first cohabitations.

Women have a higher probability to experience the first union than men.

Young people are starting cohabitations with higher probability than previous generations, but the youth is not in a hurry to register their relationships.

83% of the first finished cohabitations were just a “trial marriage” while only 16% had the characteristics of an independent social institution

The proportion of Russians for whom cohabitation does not grow into a marriage rises for the representatives of the generations born from the 1970s to the 1980s

Cohabitations are becoming widespread among young people and slowly but surely becoming more distant from marriages



# References



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Main results

- The average ages of the first unions
- The age of the first unions in the perspective of gender
- The age of the first unions in the perspective of generations
  - Hazard curves for the first unions
- The ways of the first cohabitations development
  - The nature of cohabitation in Russia

References