

EVOLVING PATTERNS OF UNION FORMATION IN AUSTRALIA:

UNRAVELLING URBAN-RURAL DIFFERENTIALS IN MARRIAGE AND COHABITATION

Edith Gray, Anna Reimondos, Ann
Evans

School of Demography
Australian National University

Edith.gray@anu.edu.au



Australian
National
University

Background

Stark spatial disparities between urban and rural areas in Australia (Hugo, 2002).

Renewed interest in spatial demography

Significant changes in recent decades in marriage and cohabitation trends at the *national* level in Australia.

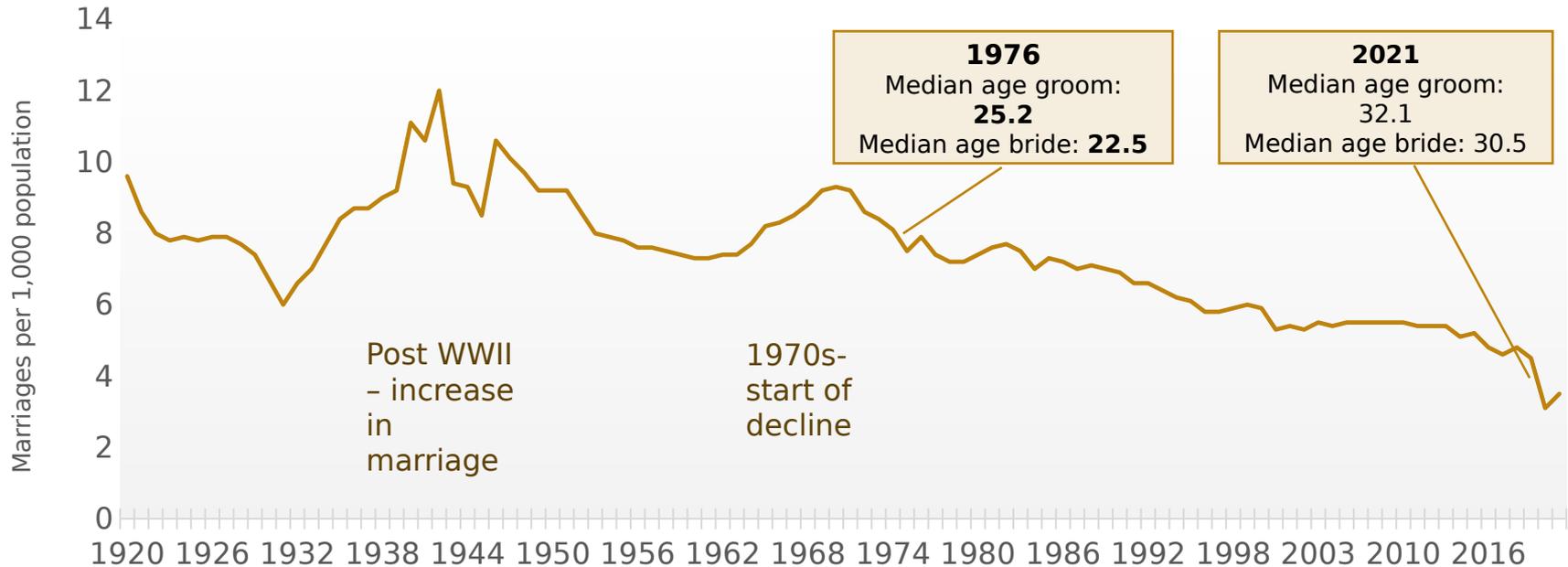
But how have these trends out played out in urban and rural areas?



Background:

National trends in marriage and cohabitation

Crude marriage rate, Australia 1920-2021



Data

Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS)
Census of Population and Housing

Years: 2001, 2006, 2011, 2016 and 2021.

Each person classified by census year, sex, age, relationship status and geography (urban or rural).

Relationship status: married, cohabiting, and total in relationship



Geography: Urban or rural based on Significant Urban Area (SUA) structure. Identifies significant towns and cities of 10,000+ people

~ 1,561 urban areas and 589 rural areas.

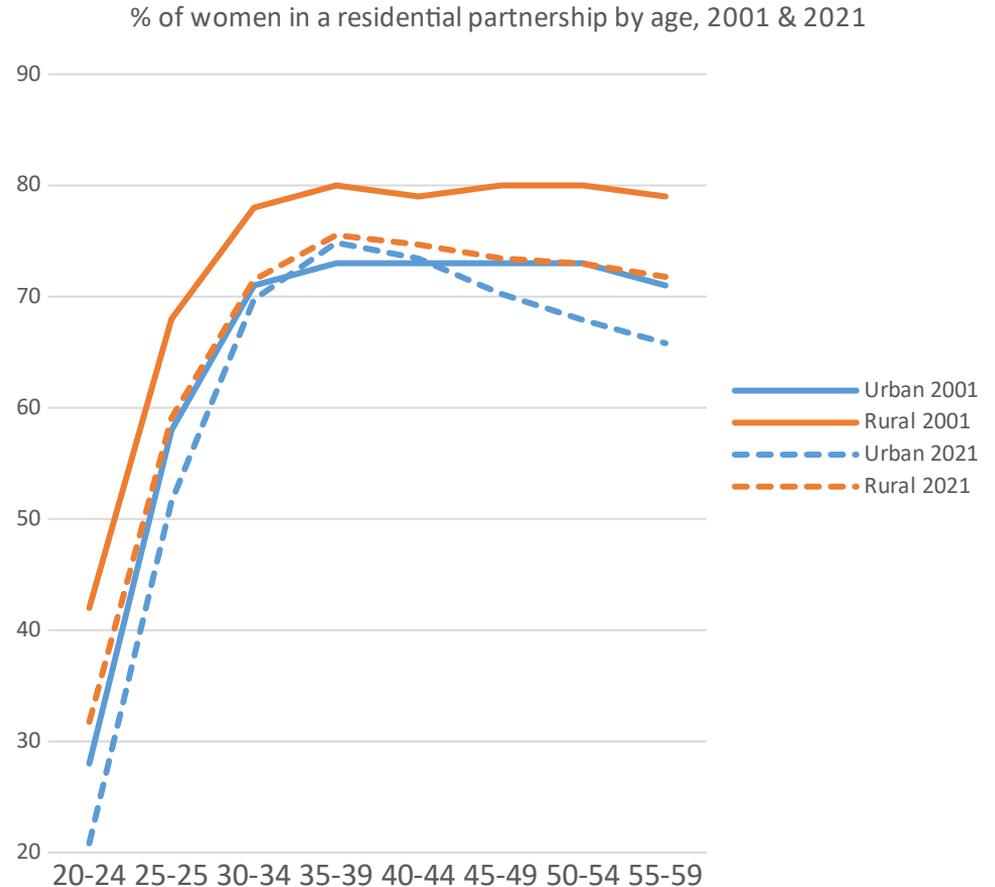


Results: Women

Women in rural areas are more likely to be living with a partner (married or cohabiting) than their urban peers.

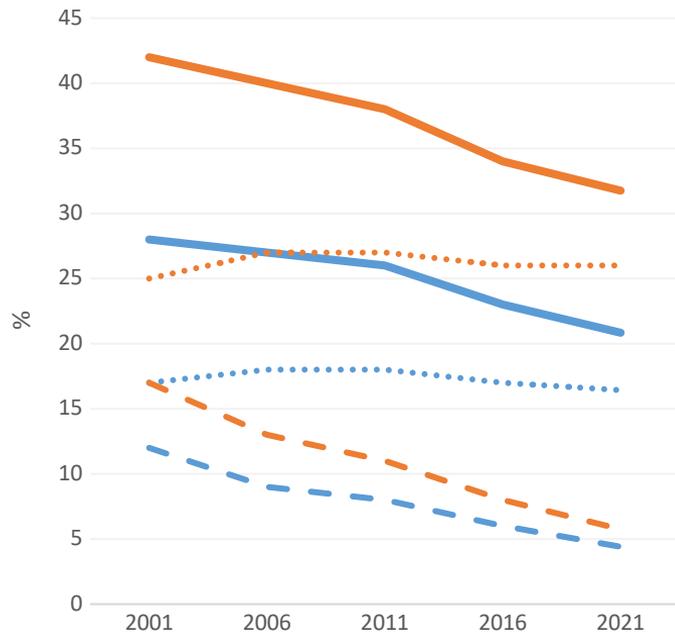
Rural women more likely to be living with a partner in early 20s.

However the gap between rural and urban women has decreased between 2001 and 2021.

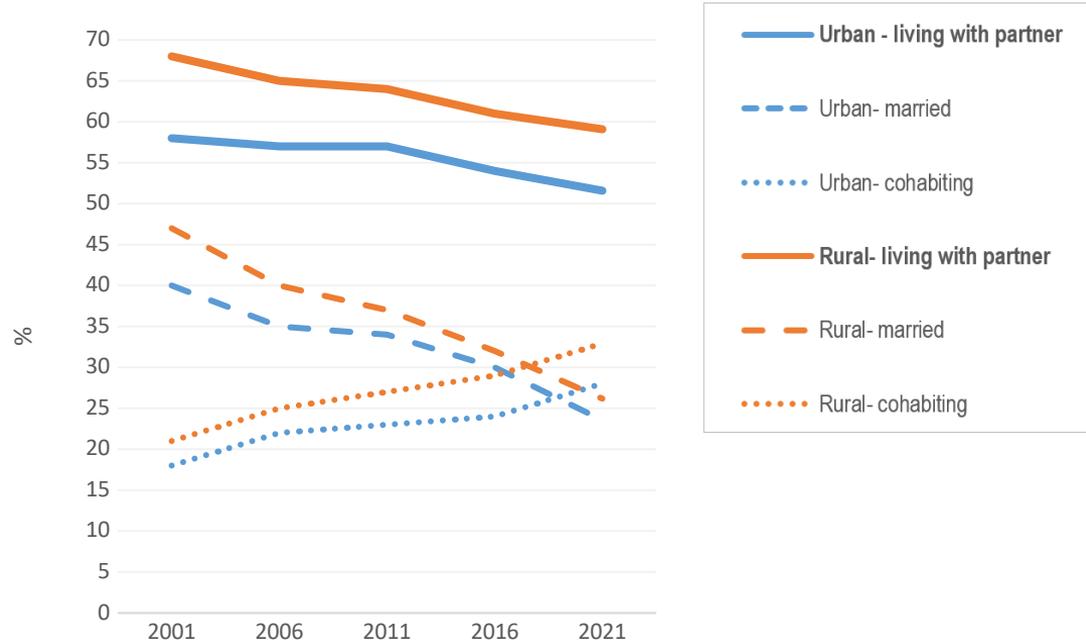


Results: Women (20s)

Women 20-24, % distribution of relationship status by census year

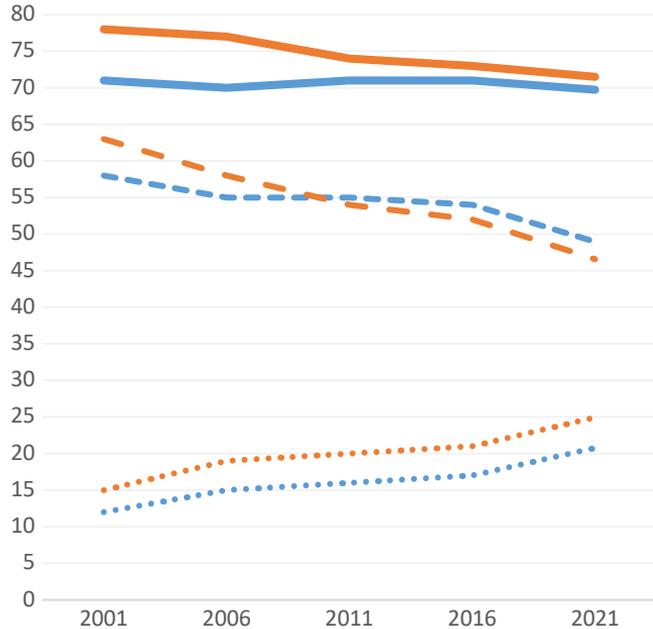


Women 25-29, % distribution of relationship status by census year

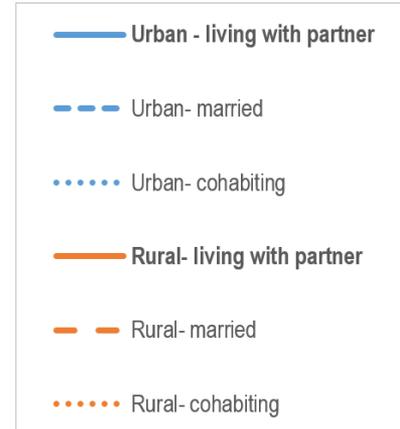
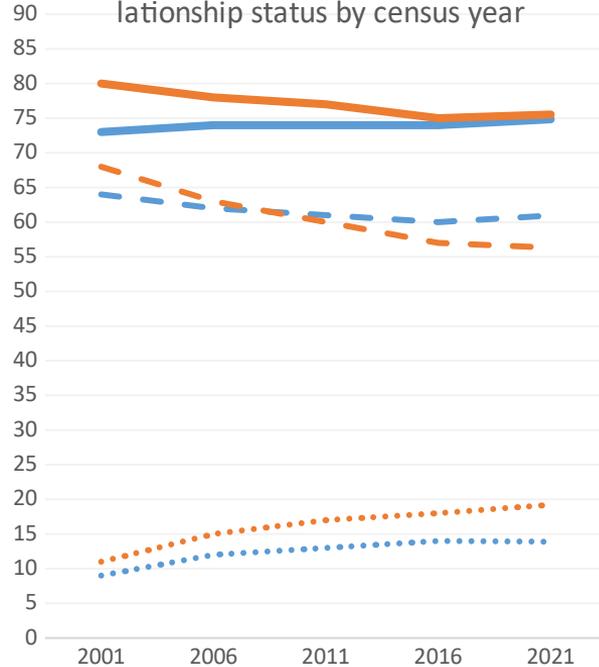


Results: Women (30s)

Women 30-34, % distribution of relationship status by census year

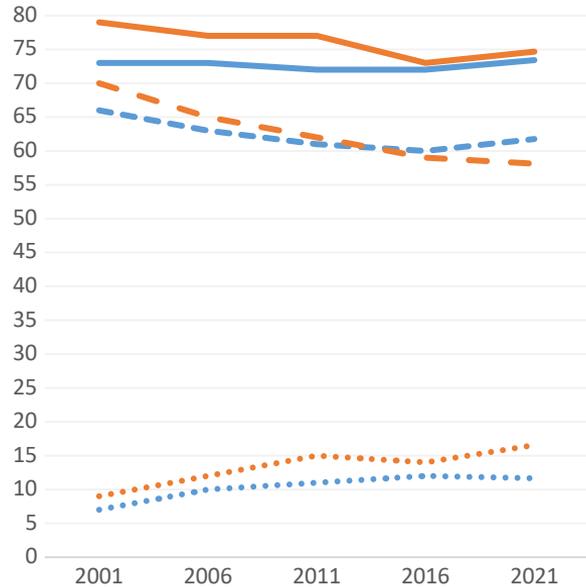


Women 35-39, % distribution of relationship status by census year

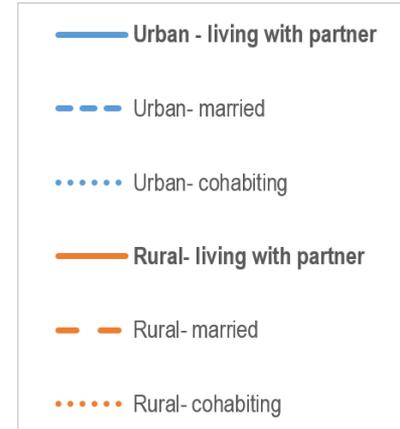
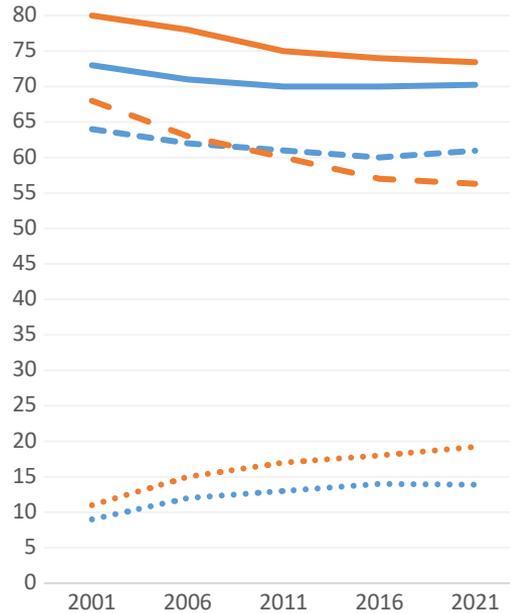


Results: Women (40s)

Women 40-44, % distribution of relationship status by census year

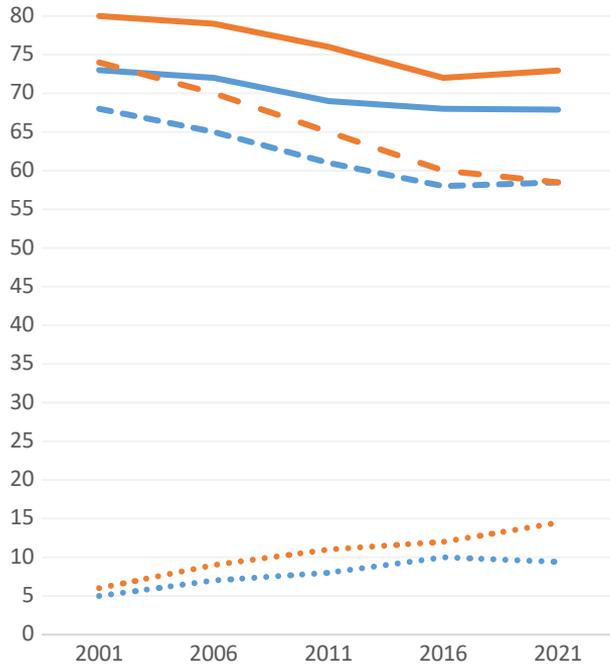


Women 45-49, % distribution of relationship status by census year

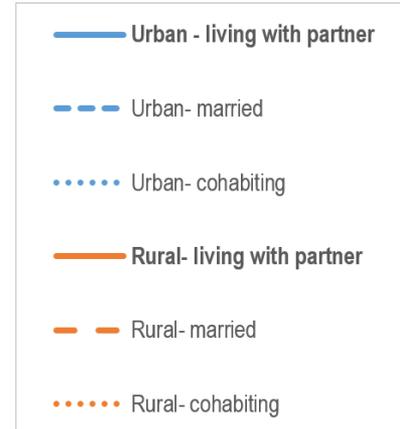
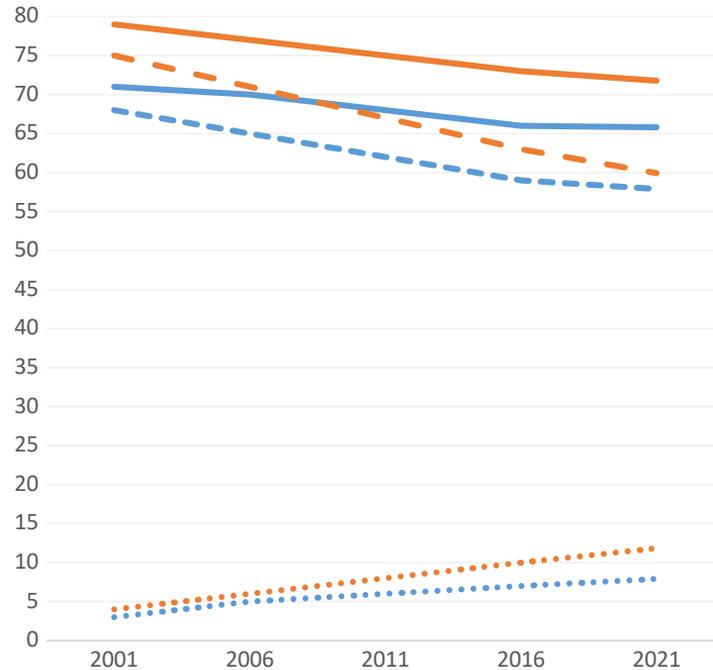


Results: Women (50s)

Women 50-54, % distribution of relationship status by census year



Women 55-59, % distribution of relationship status by census year

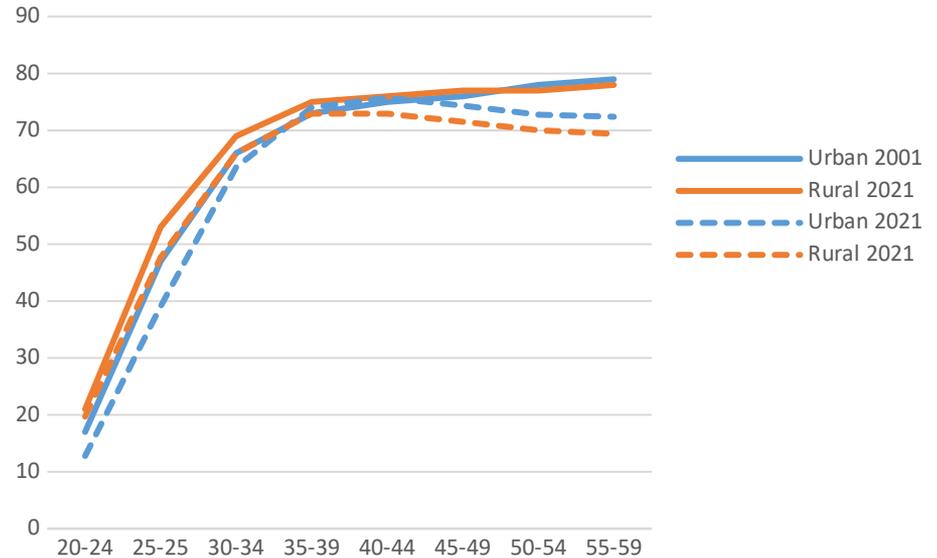


Results: Men

Men in rural areas are more likely to be living with a partner (married or cohabiting) than their urban peers...until older ages when pattern is reversed.

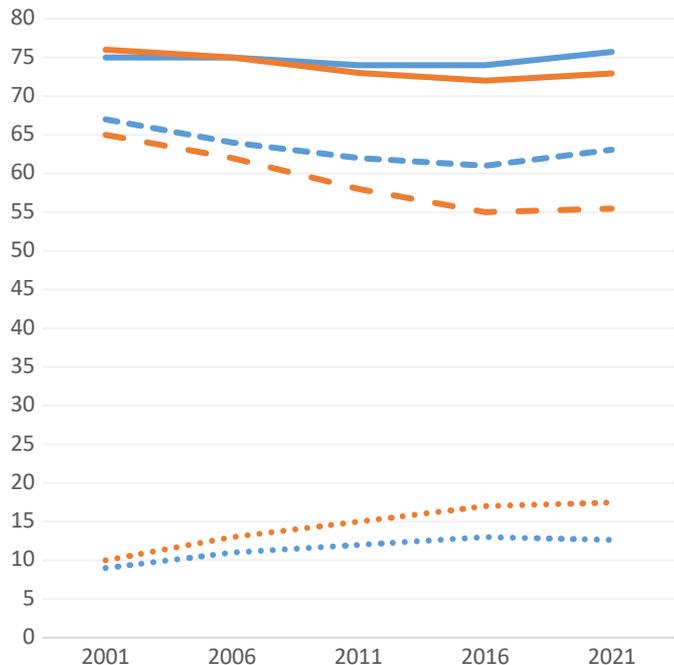
From 30s onwards, men in urban areas in 2021 more likely to be living with partner than their rural peers.

% of Men in a residential partnership by age, 2001 & 2021

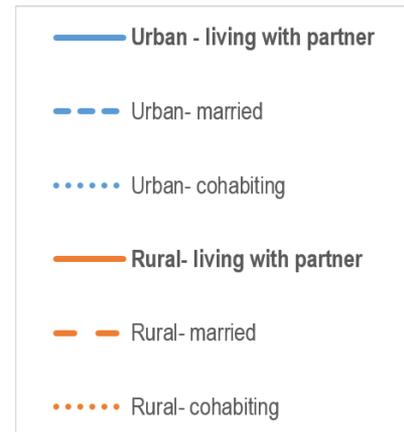
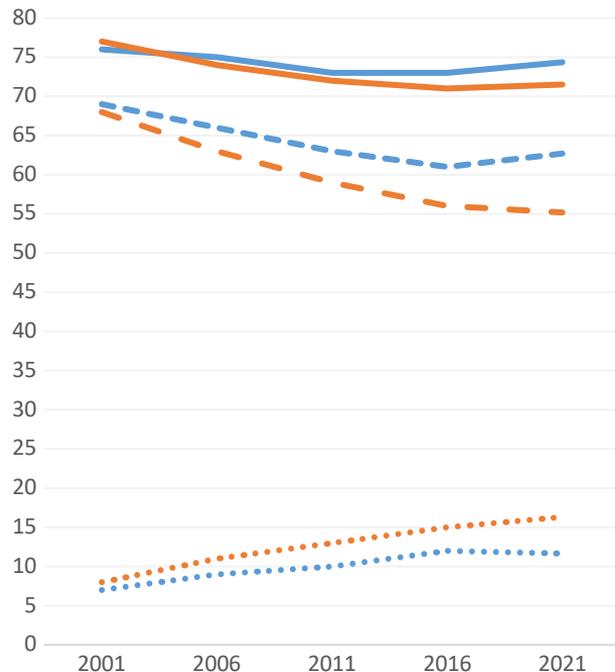


Results: Men (40s)

Men 40-44, % distribution of relationship status by census year

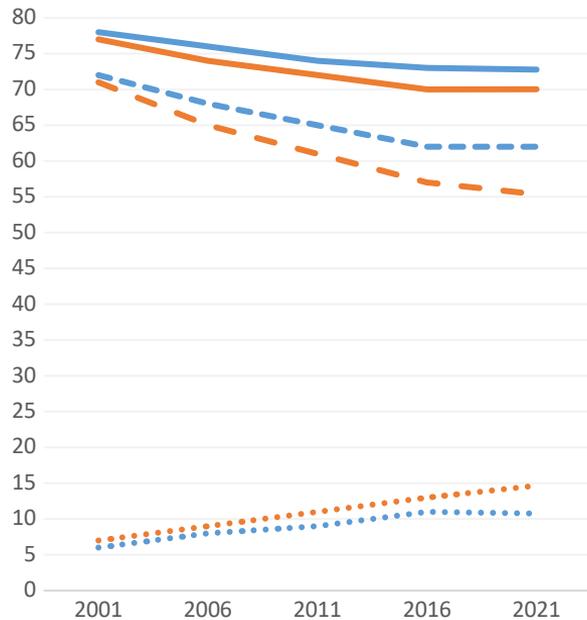


Men 45-49, % distribution of relationship status by census year

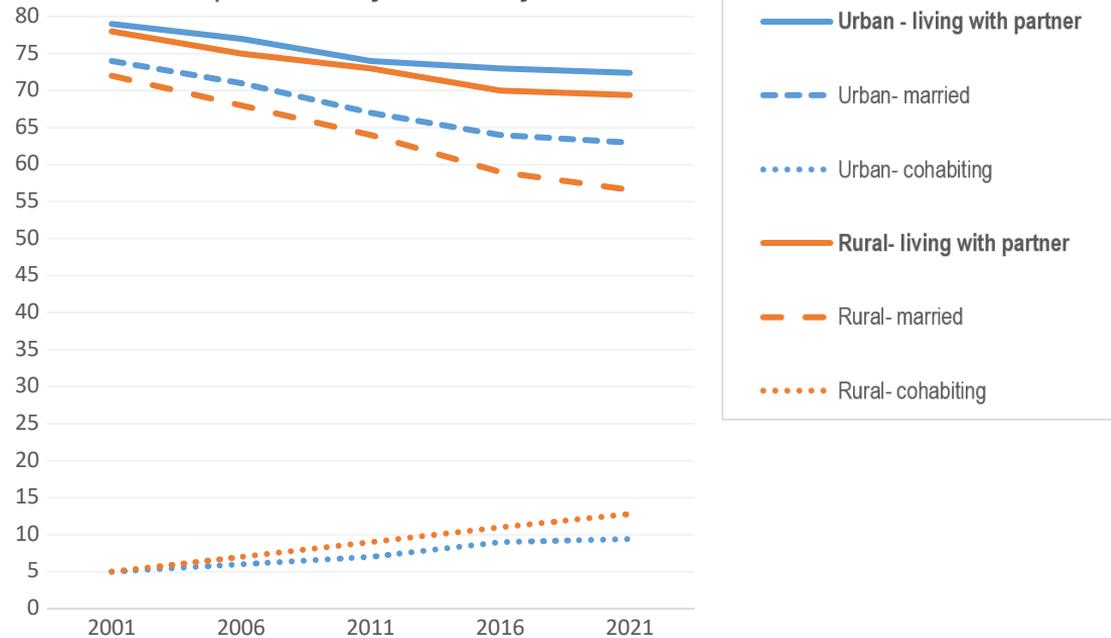


Results: Men (50s)

Men 50-54, % distribution of relationship status by census year

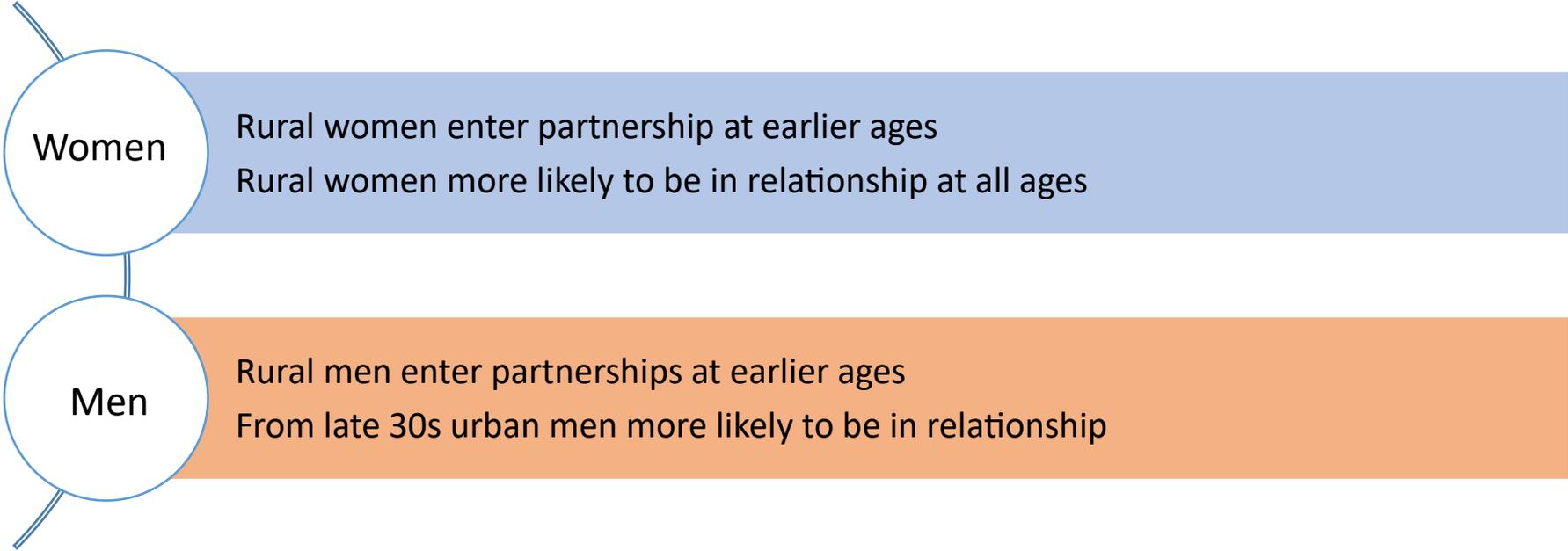


Men 55-59, % distribution of relationship status by census year



Discussion

Shifts in relationship patterns are crucial for understanding fertility trends as most births occur within a marriage or cohabitation.



Women

Rural women enter partnership at earlier ages
Rural women more likely to be in relationship at all ages

Men

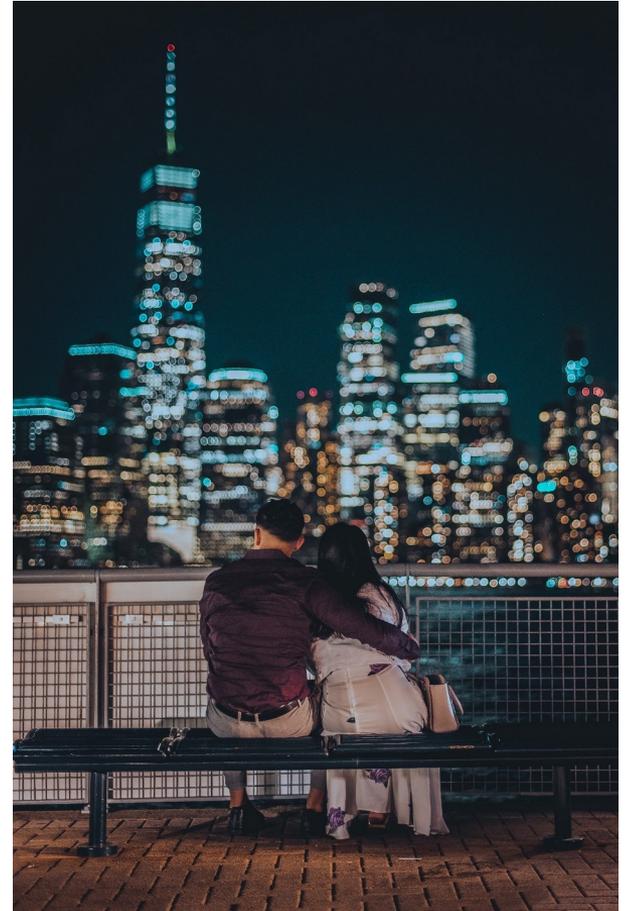
Rural men enter partnerships at earlier ages
From late 30s urban men more likely to be in relationship

Discussion

Urban-rural differences explained by...

- composition effect?
- Selective migration? (Gautier, et al 2010)
- Size of partner market?

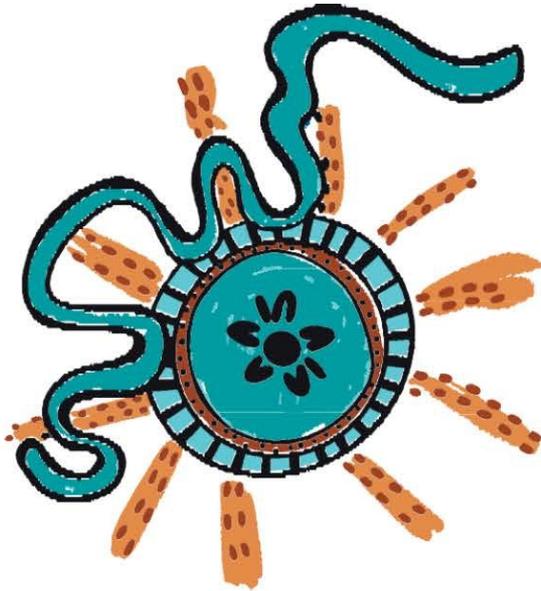
Different results if used different geographical units-
which geography matters?



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