The effect of same-sex marriage laws on different-sex marriage: Evidence from the Netherlands

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Abstract

It has long been argued that the legalization of same-sex marriage would have a negative impact on marriage. In this paper, I examine what happened to different-sex marriage in the Netherlands after the enactment of two laws: in 1998, a law that provided *all* couples with an institution almost identical to marriage—registered partnership—, and in 2001, a law that legalized same-sex marriage for the first time in the world. I construct a unique data set covering the period 1995–2005 by matching individuals from ten waves of the Dutch Labor Force Survey with their marriage and residence history from official records. I first estimate the first-marriage decision using a discrete-time hazard model with unobserved heterogeneity. I find that the marriage rate rose after the registered partnership law but fell after the same-sex marriage law. The effects of the two laws are heterogeneous: individuals in more liberal areas (the four largest cities) marry less after both laws, individuals in more conservative locations (the Dutch Bible belt) marry less after the registered partnership law but return to their long-term trend after the same-sex marriage law, and individuals outside these two regions exhibit the same pattern as the overall marriage rate. Next, I construct a synthetic control for the Netherlands as a weighted average of OECD member countries over the period 1988–2005. A comparison of the marriage rates in the Netherlands and the synthetic control confirms the findings from the individual-level analysis and a placebo test supports the validity of the results. The results suggest that same-sex marriage leads to a fall in the different-sex marriage rate, but not in the different-sex union (marriage plus registered partnership) rate. In contrast, same-sex registered partnership does not affect different-sex marriage negatively and the availability of an alternative institution increases the different-sex union rate.

Keywords: Age at first marriage, same-sex marriage, discrete-time hazard model, synthetic control.
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1 Introduction

Economists have long been interested in the effects of various policies on individuals' decision to marry. Some of the policies studied are aimed directly at the institution of marriage, such as no-fault divorce laws (Allen et al., 2006; Rasul, 2006) or minimum age requirements (Blank et al., 2007). Other policies alter monetary incentives associated with marriage, such as the welfare reform (Bitler et al., 2004), or reduce the cost of premarital sex arising from a reduction in the legal age for use of oral contraceptives (Goldin and Katz, 2002). The common theme in all these studies is that the policies each alter the value of marriage relative to alternative arrangements.

It has been argued recently that another policy that could affect the value of marriage and implicitly the incentives to marry, particularly for heterosexual couples, is the legalization of same-sex marriage. The "end-of-marriage argument" holds that opening marriage to same-sex couples would lead to a fall in the number of different-sex marriages because the value of marriage would be reduced: "It demeans the institution. [...] The institution of marriage is trivialized by same-sex marriage." (Rep. Henry Hyde, House subcommittee meeting, as cited in Mohr, 1997) This argument has been mentioned frequently in the same-sex marriage debate, both in the media and in the political discourse, and was used to justify amendments to state constitutions such as Proposition 8 in California, or the Defense of Marriage Acts, laws meant to protect the federal or state governments from having to recognize a (same-sex) marriage performed elsewhere.[1]

However, it is theoretically ambiguous whether same-sex marriage should have a negative effect on heterosexual marriage. For example, the legalization of same-sex marriage might be perceived as a move toward a more secular, less traditional institution, increasing its value for some different-sex couples. The evidence in support of or against the end-of-marriage claim is remarkably sparse and rests on the interpretation of aggregate numbers on marriage and divorce rates, on indirect evidence such as the out-of-wedlock birth rate or the cohabitation rate, and on anecdotal evidence reported in local media.[2]

In this paper I conduct the first analysis of the effects that same-sex marriage has on heterosexual marriage by studying its effect in the Netherlands. The Netherlands is a good candidate for such an analysis for three reasons. First, it was the earliest (2001) country to allow same-sex couples to marry, thus offering the longest period with which to examine the impact of this law. Second, prior to legalizing same-sex marriage, the Dutch legislature formalized in 1998 the legal concept

[1] By the end of 2008, Congress and forty states had enacted such acts (Stateline.org, 2009). Thirty states also had constitutional amendments that specifically defined marriage as the union between a man and a woman, with voters in Arizona, California and Florida approving constitutional bans on same-sex marriage in November 2008.

[2] For arguments against the legalization of same-sex marriage, see Kurtz (2004a,b,c,d). Responses from proponents of same-sex marriage can be found in Badgett (2004a,b); Mello (2004); Cahill (2004) or Eskridge and Spedale (2006).

of registered partnership, an institution that is identical to marriage in almost every respect but name and tradition. Unlike the Nordic countries, the Dutch registered partnership is also open to different-sex couples. Since this contract is virtually identical to marriage, this offers a unique opportunity to distinguish between a change in the marriage rate itself and a change in the number of couples who wish to legally formalize their relationship. It also allows for the distinction between the effects of granting same-sex couples the rights and benefits of marriage through an alternative institution and the effects of same-sex marriage itself. Finally, the same-sex marriage debate in the Netherlands was also subject to a vigorous end-of-marriage argument.[3]

I conduct my analysis both at the individual level and in the aggregate. I first construct a unique and highly confidential individual-level data set that includes demographic characteristics as well as information on the marriage decisions over the period 1995–2005 for a significant fraction of the Dutch population. I then use a duration model for age at first marriage. Using multiple specifications, I calculate the effect of the registered partnership law and of the same-sex marriage law on the first-marriage rate. I find that not controlling for unobserved heterogeneity in the propensity to marry introduces significant biases in the results. My estimates from specifications with unobserved heterogeneity suggest that the marriage rate increases after the enactment of the registered partnership law and falls after the same-sex marriage law came into effect. However, this pattern is not uniform. Individuals living in the more conservative municipalities commonly called the Dutch Bible belt tend to marry less after the registered partnership law, but their marriage rate returns to the long-term trend after the same-sex marriage law. In contrast, individuals living in the four largest cities (the more liberal areas) marry less after both laws. Finally, people residing outside these two regions follow the same pattern as the overall marriage rate, marrying more after the registered partnership law and less after the same-sex marriage law.

A limitation of the individual-level analysis is that I cannot construct a counterfactual—what the marriage rate would have been in the absence of same-sex marriage laws. To address this concern, I turn to aggregate data and I use the method developed by Abadie and Gardeazabal (2003) to construct a synthetic control for the Netherlands. This synthetic control is a set of weights for the OECD member countries such that the weighted average of their marriage rates before 1998 (the year when the registered partnership law was enacted) matches the evolution of the marriage rate in the Netherlands. The weights for each country are data-driven, calculated by matching the values

[3] In personal correspondence with the author, Boris Dittrich, former member and floor leader of the Dutch Parliament and a supporter of the same-sex marriage bill, recalls: "I distinctly remember my former colleague, Kees van der Staaij from the Orthodox Christian Party SGP, using those arguments. He even said that God would punish those who are destroying the institution of marriage between a man and a woman. [...] That night of the debate (we were debating same-sex marriage for two full days) I drove home very carefully. I thought: if I will get into a car accident tonight, people will think God has punished me."

of the marriage rate and its determinants in the synthetic control to the corresponding values in the Netherlands for the period 1988–1997. A comparison of the Dutch marriage rate to the synthetic marriage rate confirms the average findings from the individual-level specifications: different-sex couples marry more after the registered partnership law, but less after the same-sex marriage law.

Another advantage of the aggregate data is that it allows me to analyze both different-sex marriages and different-sex unions, i.e. marriages *and* registered partnerships. The results suggest that the rate of different-sex unions increases after the registered partnership law (not surprisingly, since the marriage rate increases) and then falls after the enactment of the same-sex marriage law, so that the rate of different-sex unions after 2001 remains close to the rate predicted by the synthetic control. Additional evidence from the survey conducted by Boele-Woelki et al. (2006) suggests that the post-2001 result might be explained by two effects. First, some couples learn over time about registered partnership and therefore there is a continued increase in the rate of more couples choosing registered partnership over both marriage and cohabitation. Second, the same-sex marriage law reduces the value of marriage relative to alternatives for some couples, and those who value registered partnership below cohabitation end up choosing cohabitation over marriage.

Three lessons can be learned from the Dutch experience. First, legalizing same-sex marriage leads to a fall in the different-sex marriage rate, but not in the different-sex union rate. Second, the introduction of same-sex registered partnership does not affect different-sex marriage negatively. This suggests that there might be no negative effects on the institution of marriage from allowing same-sex couples access to an institution that grants the same rights as marriage but does not carry its traditional meaning. Finally, granting different-sex couples access to an alternative institution to marriage increases the different-sex union rate, extending the economic and social benefits of marriage to a larger group of individuals.

The rest of the paper proceeds as follows. The next section introduces the legal background in the Netherlands. The empirical strategy is presented in section 3, followed by a brief description of the data in section 4 and an interpretation of the results in section 5. Section 6 provides additional evidence from the aggregate analysis and section 7 concludes.

2 The Dutch legal environment

The road to same-sex marriage in the Netherlands was long and bumpy.[4] At the beginning of the 1990s, gay rights organizations in the Netherlands tried to build on the success of their Danish counterparts, who had obtained the enactment of a registered partnership law in 1989, and push

[4]The presentation in this section draws extensively on van Velde (2005) and Merin (2002).

for the legal recognition of same-sex couples. The first move was to suggest in 1991 the creation of a symbolic registry, which could have evolved into an alternative to the marriage registry and to which municipalities would participate voluntarily. Under this arrangement, same-sex couples were allowed to register their relationship with the municipality, a registration that did not involve any benefits or obligations from either the couple or the municipality or the Dutch government. This suggestion was not in conflict with the general feelings of the population, as opinion polls showed that almost 53% of the population supported same-sex marriage in 1990, a share that increased over time to around 63% in 1991 to about 73% in 1995 (van Velde, 2005). More than 100 of the 650 Dutch municipalities voluntarily decided to participate within the first year, thus paving the way for the introduction of the registered partnership system.

The government was to set up a committee of legal advisers (the Kortmann Committee) to inquire into the legal effects and the desirability of the legal recognition of same-sex couples. The committee recommended the introduction of a Danish-style partnership, a proposal warmly received by the government. A bill for the new institution was introduced in the Parliament in 1993, but held up because of the 1994 elections. After the elections, the governing coalition in the Netherlands did not include the Christian Democrats, the largest party opposing same-sex marriage, for the first time in almost eighty years. In 1995, the new cabinet presented a white paper that suggested the introduction of registered partnerships for same-sex couples and, in a departure from the Danish model, for different-sex couples as well. The argument was that the new institution was not supposed to discriminate based on sexual orientation and that heterosexuals not willing to marry should have access to this alternative contract (Merin, 2002).

Therefore, the registered partnership was designed to be almost identical to marriage and, in the case of different-sex couples, an almost perfect substitute. Waaldijk (2004) compares the two institutions based on their "levels of legal consequences" (the rights and obligations derived from a contract) and finds only three differences for heterosexual couples. First, a married man is automatically acknowledged as the father of a child born in that marriage, whereas a man in a registered partnership has to explicitly claim the child before or after birth (although this is rather a formality). Second, both contracts can be terminated in court, but registered partnerships can also be dissolved at the civil registry by mutual agreement.[5] Finally, couples in registered partnerships are prohibited from engaging in international adoption. This restriction can be circumvented by

[5]Starting from 2001, married couples can change their marriage to a registered partnership. Statistics Netherlands reports that, in more than 90% of the cases, this is part of a two-step procedure commonly called "flash divorce", where the partnership is dissolved by mutual agreement. This is a cheaper alternative to divorce when there is an understanding with respect to the division of common property. Therefore, the rest of the analysis will only include new partnerships rather than the total number of partnerships.

one partner adopting the child as a single individual and the other partner subsequently adopting the child as the partner of the adoptive parent.

Since the planned legislation granted same-sex couples access only to registered partnerships, there was an argument that same-sex couples would still face discrimination. A motion calling for the opening of civil marriage to same-sex couples was introduced in 1996, when the white paper was presented as a bill in the Dutch Parliament. While the registered partnership bill was making its way through the Parliament's two chambers, the government acknowledged the request to open up marriage and appointed a new panel of experts (the second Kortmann Committee) to analyze the desirability and consequences of same-sex marriage. In the meantime, the registered partnership bill was approved and signed into law, becoming effective on January 1, 1998.

The report of the Kortmann Committee, released in October 1997, recommended the legalization of same-sex marriage while dismissing the arguments against it. In particular, it addressed the issue of a possibly negative effect on heterosexual marriage: "The argument that a large part of the population would no longer be able to identify with marriage if it were opened up, applies to an ever diminishing part of society. They can continue to identify with a marriage in church." (Kortmann Committee report, as quoted in van Velde, 2005) Still, the government opposed opening up marriage to same-sex couples in its February 1998 answer, which prompted another request in the second chamber of the Parliament for new legislation to allow same-sex couples to marry. The 1998 elections allowed the same coalition to remain in power, and the ensuing negotiations for the formation of a new cabinet led to an agreement for the introduction of same-sex marriage during that term. Finally, in 2000, the bill legalizing same-sex marriage was introduced in the Parliament and was approved in September by the House of Representatives and in December by the Senate (Merin, 2002). On April 1, 2001, the Netherlands became the first country in the world to allow same-sex couples to marry, granting them access to an institution that was traditionally available only to different-sex couples.

In conclusion, the road to the opening of marriage was long and uncertain. There was no sudden overhaul of the marriage law, but rather a series of small changes: starting from 1998, both same-sex and different-sex couples could form registered partnerships. From 2001, same-sex couples are allowed to enter marriage. Some scholars argue that the success of the gay rights movement in the Netherlands was actually due to this small-steps approach (Waaldijk, 2001). For the purpose of this paper, however, the fact that there was uncertainty with respect to the timing of the laws allows for an interpretation of them as "exogenous". Individuals could not anticipate perfectly the enaction date of each law and marriages, as they are usually scheduled in advance, would have already been planned by the time the laws were announced.

3 Empirical strategy

3.1 Specification of the hazard function

Duration models are regularly used in economics when the outcome measures the length of stay in a particular state. Common examples include the study of unemployment spells (Ham and Rea, 1987; Meyer, 1990; Addison and Portugal, 2003) or of strike duration (Kennan, 1985; Gunderson and Melino, 1990; Campolieti et al., 2005). Although the research question in this paper is not one of the usual suspects, a duration model is particularly useful for at least two reasons. First, this type of models can easily handle individuals who do not marry while under observation (censored spells), a useful feature given that the fraction of people who are not married is rather high in the Netherlands: on average, 33 percent of the marriage-age (18 year old and above) men and 25 percent of the marriage-age women had never married between 1995 and 2005. Second and most importantly, duration models allow for time-varying variables such as the enactment of the two laws.

Thus, I will use the framework of a duration model to analyze age at first marriage. This choice of outcome variable is justified by several arguments. First, the evolution of the marriage rate is largely driven by first marriages. As figure 1 shows, the variation in the number of marriages which are the first for either one of the spouses closely tracks the variation in the total number of marriages. Second, people who marry for the first time are on average 12–13 years younger that people who re-marry. This makes them both potentially more impressionable to changes in the perception of the institution of marriage, and more likely to be in the sample (I will return to this last aspect at the end of this section and again in section 4). Finally, previously-married people are likely to already have a formed opinion on marriage and are not likely to change it just because of the enactment of the registered partnership law or of the same-sex marriage law. On the other hand, all of these also imply that the conclusions of this analysis cannot be directly extended to the rest of the population, especially those in older age groups.

Let T_i be the random variable representing the age at first marriage age of individual i, measured in full years, and define $h_i(t)$ as the probability that an individual marries between ages t and $t+1$ conditional on never having married by age t. The function h_i is the discrete time hazard of marriage. As in Ham and Rea (1987), I will assume that it has the logit form[6]

$$h_i(t) = \frac{1}{1 + \exp\{-y_i(t)\}},$$

where

$$y_i(t) = \theta + X_i(t)'\beta + p_1(t)\lambda_1 + p_2(t)\lambda_2 + \gamma(t).$$

In this equation, θ is a constant and X_i is a vector of potentially time-varying individual characteristics. The function $\gamma(t)$ represents the form of duration dependence, i.e. the common way age influences the probability of marriage for any given person. The actual form of duration dependence is driven by the data in the sense that $\gamma(\cdot)$ is the highest degree polynomial in $\ln(t)$ supported by the data.[7]

The coefficients of interest are λ_1 and λ_2, corresponding to $p_1(\cdot)$ and $p_2(\cdot)$, two indicator variables for the period 1998–2000 and after 2001, respectively. They capture the change in the hazard (probability) of marriage during these two periods as compared to the period before the enactment of either law. There are a few reasons why these coefficients might not cleanly identify the effect of the two laws. First, the laws could have delayed effects as people's attitudes toward marriage might not change instantaneously and marriages are planned ahead of time. In this case, the coefficients would capture the short-term effect of the two laws. Second, the long-term effect of the registered partnership law cannot be distinguished from the long-term effect of the same-sex marriage law, simply because of the overlap in the period when both laws are in effect. Finally, the effect of the same-sex marriage law alone, both in the short term and in the long term, is unidentifiable: it is virtually impossible to estimate the effect of this law in the absence of the registered partnership law.

[6] Alternatively, the hazard function can be assumed to have the extreme value (complementary log-log) form

$$h_i(t) = 1 - \exp\{-\exp y_i(t)\},$$

which can be derived from an underlying continuous-time proportional hazards model (Prentice and Gloeckler, 1978; Meyer, 1990). The results from both specifications are qualitatively and quantitatively similar, but the logit specification performed better by yielding higher values of the log-likelihood (hence lower values of the Bayesian information criterion). Moreover, the likelihood function with unobserved heterogeneity is much less well-behaved in the extreme value case.

[7] To determine the degree of $\gamma(\cdot)$, I keep adding higher order terms until they become insignificant, as suggested by Eberwein et al. (2002).

3.2 Likelihood function and unobserved heterogeneity

The contribution to the likelihood function of person i, who is observed to marry at age a_i before the end of the study period, is the probability of marriage at age a_i:

$$P(T_i = a_i) = h_i(a_i) \cdot \prod_{t=1}^{a_i-1} [1 - h_i(t)] \tag{1a}$$

This can be interpreted as being the product of the conditional probability of marriage at age a_i and the probabilities of not having married at each age prior to a_i. If the person does not marry by the end of the observation period, then the observation is censored. Let a_i be the last observed age of the individual. The contribution to the likelihood function in this case is the survivor function, i.e. the probability of marriage at an age higher than a_i:

$$P(T_i > a_i) = [1 - h_i(a_i)] \cdot \prod_{t=1}^{a_i-1} [1 - h_i(t)] \tag{1b}$$

The likelihood function for a sample of N individuals is obtained from the combination of equations (1a) and (1b):

$$L = \prod_{i=1}^{N} [P(T_i = a_i)]^{\delta_i} [P(T_i > a_i)]^{1-\delta_i}, \tag{2}$$

where δ_i equals one if person i is observed to marry and zero otherwise. As long as $h(\cdot)$ does not include an unobserved heterogeneity term, this likelihood can be estimated using standard programs for logit specifications.[8]

A duration model without unobserved heterogeneity, however, will suffer from a serious flaw that can be seen from the following example. Suppose people fall in two categories: some which are more likely to marry young and some which are more likely to delay marriage. Over time, individuals of the first type will marry and exit the sample at a faster rate than individuals of the second type and the sample will increasingly become a selected sample of people who are more likely to delay marriage. Failure to account for this selection could severely bias the estimated results. A natural extension is to introduce unobserved heterogeneity through the term θ (Ham and Rea, 1987). Following Heckman and Singer (1984), I will assume that θ follows a discrete distribution with K points of support $\theta_1, \ldots, \theta_K$ and corresponding probabilities $\pi_1, \ldots, \pi_K$ (where, obviously, $\sum_{k=1}^{K} \pi_k = 1$). In this case, the contribution to the likelihood function of an individual observed to

[8] In the case of a extreme value hazard, the likelihood function can be estimated using standard complementary log-log programs.

marry at age a_i is

$$P(T_i = a_i) = \sum_{k=1}^{K} \left\{ \pi_k h_i(a_i; \theta_k) \prod_{t=1}^{a_i - 1} [1 - h_i(t; \theta_k)] \right\} \tag{3a}$$

and that of a censored observation is

$$P(T_i > a_i) = \sum_{k=1}^{K} \left\{ \pi_k \prod_{t=1}^{a_i} [1 - h_i(t; \theta_k)] \right\}, \tag{3b}$$

where

$$h_i(t; \theta_k) = \frac{1}{1 + \exp\{-y_i(t; \theta_k)\}}$$

and

$$y_i(t; \theta_k) = \theta_k + X_i(t)'\beta + p_1(t)\lambda_1 + p_2(t)\lambda_2 + \gamma(t).$$

A related issue concerns initial conditions. People become "at risk of marriage" when they turn 18, the legal age of marriage for both men and women. Following the same argument as above, a sample that includes persons who were observed for the first time (entered the sample) when they were older than 18 is a selected sample because people who are less likely to marry are over-represented. The contribution of individual i to the likelihood function should be conditional on them not having married by age a_{0i}, their age at entry into the sample:

$$P(T_i = a_i | T_i \geq a_{0i}) = \frac{P(T_i = a_i)}{P(T_i \geq a_{0i})}, \tag{4a}$$

$$P(T_i > a_i | T_i \geq a_{0i}) = \frac{P(T_i > a_i)}{P(T_i \geq a_{0i})}. \tag{4b}$$

Unless $P(T_i \geq a_{0i})$ is somehow known, an estimation based on the unconditional contributions (3a) and (3b) will lead to incorrect estimates.[9] One possible approach is to make some additional assumptions about the distribution of unobserved heterogeneity in the period before entry into the

[9] This problem is strictly related to unobserved heterogeneity. If there is no unobserved heterogeneity, the conditional probabilities in equation (4) depend only on the *observed* data from entry into the sample:

$$P(T_i = a_i | T_i \geq a_{0i}) = \frac{h_i(a_i) \cdot \prod_{t=1}^{a_i - 1} [1 - h_i(t)]}{\prod_{t=1}^{a_{0i} - 1} [1 - h_i(t)]} = h_i(a_i) \cdot \prod_{t=a_{0i}}^{a_i - 1} [1 - h_i(t)],$$

$$P(T_i > a_i | T_i \geq a_{0i}) = \frac{\prod_{t=1}^{a_i} [1 - h_i(t)]}{\prod_{t=1}^{a_{0i} - 1} [1 - h_i(t)]} = \prod_{t=a_{0i}}^{a_i} [1 - h_i(t)].$$

sample (Ridder, 1984). However, the data on the evolution of the time-varying elements of X over this period is not always available. To avoid these issues, I restrict the analysis to a "flow sample" of individuals for whom the denominator in the equations (4) above is close to one. I return to this issue in the next section.

4 Data

I create the data using ten waves of the restricted version of the Dutch Labor Force Survey (1996–2005) and the January 2006 snapshot of the highly confidential Dutch Municipal Records. The Labor Force Survey (*Enquête Beroepsbevolking*, or EBB) is an annual cross-sectional random survey of the population 15 years of age and older. It includes information on educational attainment, ethnicity, employment and other demographic and labor market characteristics at the time of the interview. In addition, the restricted version provides an identification number that can be used to match the individuals to other data sets maintained by Statistics Netherlands. The ten waves of the survey combined yield information on almost 950,000 individuals, or approximately six percent of the average population over the period 1995–2005.

The Dutch Municipal Records (*Gemeentelijke Basis Administratie*) include detailed information on changes in the marital status and residence of the entire resident population for the period between January 1, 1995 and January 1, 2006. Statistics Netherlands made available to me information on the individuals included in the ten waves of the Labor Force Survey. Using the identification number, these individuals are matched to their full marriage and residence history, both before and after their survey interview. The result is a longitudinal data set for the period 1995–2005 including information on ethnicity, marital status and residence over the whole period, and educational attainment and school enrollment at the time of the Labor Force Survey interview. Finally, the data is augmented with the yearly unemployment rate at the regional level.[10]

The variables included in the analysis measure the attractiveness of an individual on the marriage market (age, education and ethnicity), the thickness of the market (location and ethnicity), and business cycle fluctuations (the regional unemployment rate). As long as the variables from the Labor Force Survey are time-invariant, their inclusion in the final longitudinal data set will not cause problems. However, there are two cases when this does not hold. First, about 15 percent of the sample was still enrolled in some form of education at the time of the survey (approximately 9 percent full-time and 6 percent part-time). To increase the probability that the highest educational

[10]The Netherlands is divided into twelve provinces: Drenthe, Flevoland, Friesland, Gelderland, Groningen, Limburg, Noord-Brabant, Noord-Holland, Overijssel, Utrecht, Zeeland and Zuid-Holland.

level reported, either completed or in progress, would not change over the period of the study, I restrict the initial sample to individuals who were at least 20 years of age the year of the interview.[11]

Second, some variables such as age, residence or the unemployment rate can change continuously. These variables need to be aggregated because I am using a discrete-time approach. I do this on a calendar year basis (rather than according to the birth dates of individuals) for two reasons. First, it would be practically impossible to measure the regional unemployment rate on a different scale than the calendar year. Second, the strong seasonal pattern in marriages evident in figure 2 suggests that people make marriage decisions based on the calendar year rather than their own birth dates. Therefore, I will measure age as the age in full years at the *end* of the calendar year, so that 17 year-old persons at the beginning of the year who get married by the end of the year (after turning 18) are included in the sample. In contrast, I will consider the residence at the *beginning* of the year, under the assumption that most marriage decisions are made in advance and thus the location at the beginning of the year is likely to influence the marital decision. Finally, the regional unemployment rate is the *average* over the calendar year provided by Statistics Netherlands.

Recall that, as explained in section 3, using data from all the individuals can be problematic due to initial conditions. Ideally, I would discard all the individuals who were older than 18 when first observed, but this can cause more problems. The average age at first marriage increased during this period from 29.6 to 32.4 years for men and from 27.4 to 29.7 years for women. If the sample includes only individuals who turned 18 in or after 1995, the oldest person in the sample would be 29 years old in 2005. This is below the average age at first marriage for both men and women, so the number of observed marriages will be low and so will be the power of the estimation. The compromise is to include individuals in an age group that accounts for a small fraction of the total number of marriages (in other words, keep individuals such that $P(T \geq a_{0i})$ in equations (4) is close to one). Men 18–24 years old account for about 10 percent of first marriages, so I keep only men 18–24 years old in 1995 or when first observed. In other words, men enter the sample in the calendar year they turn 18 or in 1995 if they were never-married at the beginning of the year and were 18–24 year old. I restrict the sample similarly to women 18–22 years old.

Finally, I conduct the analysis separately by gender because men and women seem to have different attitudes toward marriage. For example, men tend to marry later than women: between 1995 and 2005, the average age at first marriage in the Netherlands is consistently higher by about 2 years for men than for women (29.5 to 32.5 years of age for men, compared to 27.5 to 30 years

[11] A small fraction of the individuals still in school were enrolled in a lower educational level than their highest level completed (for example, persons with a college degree in science enrolled in professional economics or business courses). The highest of the two educational levels was used for these cases. The Dutch education system, the flows among different educational attainments and the grouping of educational attainments used are shown in figure A1.

of age for women). Also, women tend to marry previously-married opposite-sex partners relatively more than men do. During the same period, 10.3 to 11.6 percent of all women marrying for the first time and 8.6 to 9.7 percent of all men marrying for the first time had a partner who had been married.

The Municipal Records provide very detailed data and, like many administrative data sets, reduce or eliminate the measurement error in the variables. However, they also present several disadvantages. First, no distinction is made between same-sex and different-sex marriages—they are both coded as "marriage". Second, due to the sensitive nature of the data, I have no data on individuals who did not participate in the Labor Force Survey. Thus, there is no information on the spouse of an individual unless he or she also participated in the Labor Force Survey. Finally, the coding of addresses changed over time and was aggregated at the street address level since 2003, making it practically impossible to identify the spouse of an individual even if the information for that person were made available. As a result, I am unable to separate individuals contracting a different-sex marriage from those contracting a same-sex marriage. This induces an upward bias in the estimate of the different-sex marriage rate after 2001 and is problematic only if I find that the effect of the same-sex marriage law is positive. I further address this issue in section 6 by using aggregate data, where I can distinguish between different-sex and same-sex marriages.

A second disadvantage of the data is that the information on labor market outcomes applies to only one point in time. The highest level of education attained is plausibly constant over the eleven years of the study period, but this is less likely to be the case with employment status, industry or occupation. Therefore, I cannot use any of these variables from the Labor Force Survey, except for what is implicitly included in the regional unemployment rate.

The final sample includes 70,718 men and 53,883 women. The higher number of men is simply due to the selection process. In addition, since women tend to marry younger, there will be more never-married men then women for every single age group. Descriptive statistics for the sample, separately by sex, are listed in table 1. All the statistics and the subsequent analysis use the sample weights provided in the Labor Force Survey.[12]

The youth of the sample is evident from the first statistic. The average age at first marriage is around 27 years for men and 25 years for women, significantly lower than the average age at first marriage in the entire population during this period. Censored individuals (persons who do not marry until the end of 2005) have a similar age distribution, with only slightly higher average age. This is not surprising given that figure 3, which plots the Kaplan-Meier estimates of the probability

[12]The sample weights refer to the year of the interview. Under the assumption that the structure of the population did not change significantly during the period under study, I rescale the weights to represent the probability of interview relative to the entire sample of ten waves of the Labor Force Survey.

of being single by age, shows that about half of the oldest individuals had not married by 2005. Overall, only 26.29 percent of men and 33.30 percent of women married by the end of 2005.

The main difference in the two subsamples is due to the initial age restriction. While the bulk of the individuals in the sample were born between 1970 and 1984, the age distribution is different for men because the sample includes older people. The 1970–1974 birth cohort consists of men who were between 21–24 years old in 1994, but only 21 and 22 year-old women, which explains why it accounts for 41.04 percent of men and only 23.79 percent of women.

Note also that the distribution of education is skewed toward higher levels of education. Only about 28 percent of men and 23 percent of women have at most a high school (general secondary) degree. Almost 40 percent of both men and women have some post-secondary vocational training, while higher vocational training and college degrees account for 23.16 and 9.05 percent of men and 28.39 and 8.67 percent of women, respectively. Approximately 83 percent of the sample are natives and almost 8 percent are Western immigrants, i.e. people from Europe (except Turkey), North America, Oceania (including Australia and New Zealand), Japan, and Indonesia. Immigrants from potentially more conservative areas such as the predominantly Muslim countries Turkey and Morocco, or Dutch current and former territories Aruba and Suriname, account for about 6 percent of both men and women.

The Netherlands is one of the most urban countries in Europe, as approximately 63 percent of the sample resides in urban areas. However, there is geographic heterogeneity with respect to people's attitudes toward marriage and cohabitation. One area that I will focus on comprises the four largest cities (Amsterdam, the Hague, Rotterdam and Utrecht) and exhibits low fertility and marriage rates and high non-marital birth and divorce rates, as well as low frequency of church-going. Another area of interest is the so-called Dutch Bible belt (*De Bijbelgordel*), a set of municipalities characterized by relatively high church participation, high fertility rates, low cohabitation and divorce rates, low non-marital birth rates, and high frequency of church-going (Sobotka and Adigüzel, 2002; Statistics Netherlands, 2003). These two areas are shown on the map in figure 4.

Summary statistics for each region are shown in table 2. About 10 percent of both men and women resided in the four largest city at entry into the sample, while only about 3 percent were located in the Bible belt. At exit from the sample, i.e. when marrying or at the end of 2005 for individuals still single, the fraction of people in the four largest cities increased to 15.16 percent for men and 16.26 for women and the fraction of people in the Bible belt declined to about 2.7 percent. The explanation for this is that single people tend to move to cities, where the marriage markets are thicker, but (married) couples tend to move outside of the cities, where housing is cheaper (Gautier et al., 2005). Thus, the number of single individuals in the cities tends to be higher than in the more rural areas that comprise the Bible belt.

As expected, a disproportionately large fraction of people living in the Bible belt married between 1995 and 2005: 42.6 percent of men and 53.9 percent of women, compared to overall averages of 26.29 and 33.3 percent, respectively. Marriages contracted in the Bible belt also represent a disproportionately high fraction in the total number of marriages (about 4.4 percent of first marriages, for both men and women). On the other hand, people in large cities married less than the average, only 21 percent of men and 24.6 percent of women contracting a first marriage, and these marriages comprised only slightly above 12 percent of all marriages. Based on this evidence and the patterns of church-going, fertility and divorce mentioned above, I will consider the four largest cities to represent mostly liberal individuals and the Bible belt municipalities to include mostly conservative people. This distinction can be used to determine the impact of the two laws on individuals based on their degree of conservatism.

5 Results

5.1 Baseline regressions

I first estimate the discrete-time duration model in section 3 without unobserved heterogeneity. Recall that the coefficients represent the effect of the corresponding variables on the probability that a given individual marries during the calendar year. In other words, they represent the effect of the variables on the marriage rate in a given year.

Recall also that the sample of men and of women are not the opposite sides of an accounting relationship. The spouses of the men in the sample who marry are not necessarily in the sample of women, and vice-versa. As a result, there are differences in the coefficient estimates between the two genders and in the estimated marriage rates.

The results from the baseline regressions for men are listed in table 3 and for women in table 4. To show the importance of taking individual-level characteristics and aggregate factors into account, I start with a simple set of covariates and then discuss the change in the coefficients as new variables are added. Some of the variables are common to all the specifications. First, I always include the two dummy variables that represent each of the two new law regimes. I also add a linear trend to capture changes in marriage behavior not accounted for by the other explanatory variables, such as the increased secularization of the Dutch society. Thus, the coefficients on the two period dummies should be interpreted as deviations from the long-term trend in the marriage rate. Also present in all specifications is one of two forms of duration dependence: a sixth-degree polynomial in the natural log of age minus 17 (since 18-year old individuals are the first to be "at risk of marriage"), represented by "poly" in the table, or an exhaustive set of age dummies, indicated by "np". Finally, a set of dummy variables representing five-year birth cohorts is included in all but the first specification.

The first column in both tables controls only for duration dependence and is similar to the type of aggregate analysis present in the media. For both sexes there is a secular decline in their first-marriage rate, as shown by the estimated negative trend terms. In the sample of men, both laws were followed by a higher propensity to marry, which is basically Badgett's (2004b) argument that the marriage rate did not fall after the enactment of same-sex marriage laws once the downward trend is taken into account. Women, however, are estimated to marry less after the enactment of the same-sex marriage law.

The difference in the pattern of the marriage rate still holds after adding controls for demographic characteristics (education, ethnicity and birth cohort) as shown in column 2: men are again estimated to marry more after both laws, while women marry less after the same-sex marriage law. This is not surprising because none of the variables added change over time and therefore they should have no impact on the coefficients of time-varying variables such as the trend or the two law regime dummies. What does emerge from this exercise is that the relationship between education and marriage is also different between men and women. The estimates show the propensity to marry relative to the omitted category, which is an intermediate level of education between the general secondary and higher professional levels.[13] They suggest an almost inverted U-shaped pattern for men, with the least and the most educated having the lowest propensities to marry. For women, on the other hand, the relationship is more skewed, lower educated women having higher propensities to marry but higher educated women being much less likely to marry. These patterns are consistent with a scenario of female hypergamy (women "marry up") and male hypogamy (men "marry down"), such that lower educated women have a better chance of finding a match, and higher educated people have lower propensities to marry, in general.

Ethnicity influences the decision to marry in an expected way. Compared to natives, both men and women with a Western background or from Suriname and Aruba are less likely to marry in the Netherlands, while people from the more conservative Turkey and Morocco are much more likely to marry. Men from other countries seem to have higher tendency to marry, while women they seem to be similar to natives in this regard.

Finally, the addition of demographic characteristics improves the fit of the model. The values of

[13] Keep in mind that the numbers are not comparable across equations because logit coefficients are measured with respect to the standard deviation of the dependent variable.

the log-likelihood can be directly compared since the specifications are nested. The log-likelihood in column 3 is higher by 0.88% for men (from −9973.84 to −9885.94) and 2.11% for women (from −8966.37 to −8777.34).[14]

Column 3 adds the regional unemployment rate, an indicator of the business cycle that varies both over time and cross-sectionally. Higher unemployment is associated with lower marriage rates for both men and women, which could be due to couples delaying marriage during economic downturns. Its inclusion does not affect the estimated effects of education and ethnicity, which are the time-invariant variables. It does, however, change significantly the estimated trend in the marriage rate and the period dummies. Unlike in the first two columns, column 3 shows that both men and women are estimated to marry less after each law, while the long-term trend becomes less negative.

Column 4 adds information on the residence of individual which, as mentioned before, can and does change over time. Living in an urban area is associated with a lower propensity to marry, even lower if the individual resides in one of the four largest cities. In contrast, individuals who live in the Bible belt are estimated to marry significantly more. The effects of education and ethnicity are virtually unaffected, as are the effect of the unemployment rate and the long-term trend. The estimates of the period dummies change yet again, becoming even more negative. This suggests that the marriage patterns were influenced by the migration patterns described in section 4. Over time, people are more likely to move to urban areas or to one of the largest cities in order to find a better match. People (already) living in these urban areas are less likely to marry because of lower religiosity (Sobotka and Adigüzel, 2002). These two effects offset each other and lead to overestimated marriage rates in the later periods represented by the two period dummies. Once controls for the migration patterns are included, the marriage rate is estimated to be fall by even more after the enactment of two laws. Finally, also note that including the location variables increases the likelihood function by much more than the inclusion of the regional unemployment rate (from −9884.76 to −9846.89 for men and from −8776.94 to −8732.63 for women), one more indication of the importance of these variables.[15]

The magnitude of the estimated effects on the marriage rate is relatively large, considering the marginal effects calculated for the specification in column 4. The marriage rate of men over the

[14] The values of the log-likelihood are divided by 1,000 throughout the paper in order to improve readability.

[15] In column 5 I test whether the polynomial form of duration dependence is a good approximation by replacing it with a set of age dummies (indicated by "np" in the bottom of the tables). Most of the coefficients are virtually unchanged. A comparison of the fit of the model with the previous case can be performed using the Bayesian (or Schwartz) information criterion (for which lower values indicate better fit). The BIC is almost the same for the models in columns 4 and 5 in tables 3 and 4, suggesting that the polynomial form is a good approximation for the actual form of duration dependence.

1995–2005 period is, on average, 2.99 percent and is estimated to fall by 0.06 percentage points after the registered partnership law and by 0.16 percentage points after the same-sex marriage law, compared to a long-term downward trend of 0.05 percentage points per year. In the case of women, the average marriage rate is 4.07 percent and the decline is 0.14 percentage points and 0.65 percentage points, respectively, while the downward trend is 0.05 percentage points per year.

5.2 Unobserved heterogeneity

As mentioned in section 3, a duration model without unobserved heterogeneity can yield severely biased estimates. I assume that the unobserved heterogeneity term follows a discrete distribution with two mass points.[16] An issue related to the inclusion of unobserved heterogeneity is duration dependence. Previous studies found that non-parametric duration dependence (in the form of a set of age dummies) leads to identification problems when unobserved heterogeneity is also modeled non-parametrically (Narendranathan and Stewart, 1993). This should not be a problem in this case because, as shown in the previous section, the parametric form of duration dependence provides a good approximation. Therefore, I will use only the parametric form in the specifications with unobserved heterogeneity.

The last column in tables 3 and 4 shows the results from the models including unobserved heterogeneity. For both men and women, the registered partnership law (period 1) is now associated with an increase in the marriage rate, while the same-sex law (period 2) is followed by a decline. The reduction in the marriage rate after 2001 is, however, much smaller than estimated by the model without unobserved heterogeneity (columns 4 and 5).

The inclusion of unobserved heterogeneity leaves some of the estimates virtually unchanged, such as the regional unemployment rate or the long-term trend. It does, however, alter some of the other coefficients. For instance, the relationship between education and marriage changes slightly. The pattern remains more or less the same for men, but it becomes steeper and more linear for women. This lends even more support to the idea that women tend to marry up, making it more difficult for higher educated women to find a match. Ethnicity seems to influence the propensity to marry in similar ways for both men and women, unlike the results with no unobserved heterogeneity. In particular, women of non-Western background seem to marry more than natives, whereas before they were estimated to marry less. Residence seems to influence the marriage rate even more than before: living in an urban area or in one of the four largest cities is associated with even lower

[16] Previous research found that two mass points are in general sufficient (Narendranathan and Stewart, 1993; Ham and Rea, 1987). A distribution with three mass points produced basically unchanged estimates and increased the log-likelihood function only by about 0.5%, but the likelihood function converged with much more difficulty.

propensities to marry. In contrast, residence in the Bible belt increases the probability of marriage by even more.

The magnitude of the marginal effects is much smaller than in the case when unobserved heterogeneity was ignored.[17] The marriage rate of men increases by 0.02 percentage points after the registered partnership law and falls by 0.13 percentage points after the same-sex marriage law, while the downward trend is 0.12 percentage points per year. Women experience an increase in the marriage rate after 1998 of 0.13 percentage points, but a larger decline after the same-sex marriage law at -0.59 percentage points. The downward trend in their marriage rate is estimated at 0.09 percentage points per year.

Finally, controlling for unobserved heterogeneity improves the fit of the regression. The BIC in the models with unobserved heterogeneity is smaller than the BIC in the corresponding model with unobserved heterogeneity (column 4).

5.3 Heterogeneous effects by location

The results presented in the previous section suggest that the residence of individuals is related to the timing of marriage. In this section, I analyze in more detail this relationship by modifying the specification of the hazard function, still using the logit form

$$h_i(t) = \frac{1}{1 + \exp\{-y_i(t)\}},$$

but where

$$\begin{aligned} y_i(t) = \theta + X_i(t)'\beta + p_1(t)BB_i(t)\lambda_1^{BB} + p_2(t)BB_i(t)\lambda_2^{BB} + p_1(t)LC_i(t)\lambda_1^{LC} + p_2(t)LC_i(t)\lambda_2^{LC} \\ + p_1(t)[1 - LC_i(t) - BB_i(t)]\lambda_1^{OTH} + p_2(t)[1 - LC_i(t) - BB_i(t)]\lambda_2^{OTH} + \gamma(t), \end{aligned}$$

[17] There are several possible ways to calculate marginal effects. In this paper, I calculate the average marginal effects as sample averages of numerical derivatives, using the formula

$$AME(Z^k) = \begin{cases} \frac{1}{N}\sum_{i=1}^{N}\left[h_i(t;1,Z_i^{-k}) - h_i(t;0,Z_i^{-k})\right], & \text{for dummy variables,} \\ \frac{1}{N}\sum_{i=1}^{N}\frac{h_i(t;Z_i^k+\Delta,Z_i^{-k}) - h_i(t;Z_i^k,Z_i^{-k})}{\Delta}, & \text{for continuous variables,} \end{cases}$$

where N is the number of individuals in the sample, $Z = (X(t), p_1(t), p_2(t), \gamma(t))$, Z_i^{-k} is the set of variables for individual i other than the variable Z_k, for which the marginal effect is calculated, and Δ is an arbitrarily small number.

$X(\cdot)$ includes the same set of variables as before, and $BB_i(t)$ and $LC_i(t)$ are dummy variables for individual i residing in the Bible belt or in one of the four largest cities in year at the beginning of year t. In this specification, λ_1^{BB} and λ_2^{BB} represent the change in the propensity to marry among individuals living in the Bible belt after the enactment of the registered partnership law and of the same-sex marriage law, respectively. Similarly, λ_1^{LC} and λ_2^{LC} represent the change in the marriage rate among individuals residing in one of the four largest cities following the legalization of registered partnership and of same-sex marriage, respectively. Finally, λ_1^{OTH} and λ_2^{OTH} capture similar changes for individuals living outside the Bible belt or the four largest cities.

As before, I start by estimating a model with no unobserved heterogeneity. The results are shown in columns 1 and 3 in table 5. As before, residence in the Bible belt is associated with a higher probability of marriage and residence in the four largest cities is associated with a lower marriage rate as compared to the rest of the Netherlands, for both men and women. The registered partnership law was followed by reductions in the marriage rate in both areas. However, a one-sided F-test indicates that the decline in the marriage rate between 1998 and 2001 in the four largest cities is significantly larger than the decline in the bible belt (F-statistic = 19.67 for men and 19.02 for women). In contrast, the same-sex marriage law was also followed by a reduction in the marriage rate in both areas, but larger in the Bible belt than in the four largest cities (F-statistic = 359.74 for men and 32.84 for women). Within each region, the marriage rate fell even more after the introduction of same-sex marriage, with the exception of men in the four largest cities.[18] Finally, individuals living outside these two areas seem not to be affected by the introduction of registered partnership, but they do marry less after the legalization of same-sex marriage.

Columns 2 and 4 show the results from the specification including unobserved heterogeneity. While location still has the same overall effect on the marriage rate, higher in the Bible belt and lower in the four largest cities, its evolution after the enactment of the two laws is now significantly different. The marriage rate in the Bible belt fell after the registered partnership law came into effect, by 0.15 percentage points for men and 0.19 percentage points for women. However, it *increased* (relative to the long-term downward trend) after the enactment of same-sex marriage law (the F-statistic for the test of equality of the coefficients is 66.82 for men and 3.47 for women, rejecting the hypothesis in both cases). People residing in the four largest cities also married less after the registered partnership law by approximately -0.60 percentage points for both men and women, but they married even less after the enactment of the same-sex marriage law (F-statistic

[18]The F-statistics for the one-sided tests comparing the estimates for period 1 and period 2 are: 1044.35 (men, Bible belt), 1885.10 (women, Bible belt), 0.005 (men, four largest cities) and 2251.92 (women, four largest cities). In all cases but the last they fail to reject the hypothesis that the decline in the marriage rate after 2001 is larger than during 1998–2000.

= 183.82 for men and 5604.64 for women, not rejecting the hypothesis that the estimate for period 2 is lower than the estimate for period 1). Moreover, the initial decline in the four largest cities is larger than in the Bible belt, with an F-statistic of 130.92 for men and 47.38 for women. Finally, both men and women residing outside of the Bible belt or the four largest cities married more after the registered partnership law (by 0.12 percentage points for men and 0.25 for women) and less after the same-sex marriage law (by 0.03 and 0.33 percentage points, respectively), consistent with the results from the previous section.

These results indicate that there is variation in the response to the enactment of the two laws. Individuals residing in the more conservative municipalities included in the Bible belt seem to have been affected by the registered partnership law, but their marriage rate recovers after 2001 and they do not seem to be affected by the same-sex marriage law. A possible explanation for this pattern is that these individuals had strong beliefs about the institution of marriage that were not easily changed by the legalization of same-sex marriage.

On the other hand, individuals living in the more liberal four largest cities marry relatively less after the enactment of the registered partnership law and even less after the enactment of the same-sex marriage law. The first effect may be driven by the existence of more individuals on the margin (who are swayed away from marriage toward registered partnership) in the four largest cities than in the Bible belt. The second effect is more intriguing, as one would expect people living in more liberal areas to be unaffected by the same-sex marriage law. However, recall that it is practically impossible to separately identify the influence of the two laws separately on marriage decisions because of their overlap. Figure 5 suggests that there might have been a learning process involved, as the number of new registered partnerships contracted by different-sex couples increased in each year after 2000. This could explain the fall in the propensity to marry after 2001, as more couples consider this alternative to marriage.

Finally, individuals residing outside of the Bible belt or the four largest cities tend to marry more after the enactment of the registered partnership law, but less after 2001, when the same-sex marriage law was enacted.

6 Additional evidence from a cross-country approach

6.1 Estimation method

The major drawback of the individual-level approach in the previous sections is that it uses the period before the enactment of the registered partnership law as the counterfactual. In other words, since the two laws apply to all Dutch residents, I must interpret the change in marriage rates after each law change as resulting directly and only from the laws themselves. In this section I present additional evidence from a cross-country analysis that alleviates this concern.

The idea is to construct a hypothetical country that is identical to the Netherlands in every respect, except that it never legalized registered partnership or same-sex marriage. Then I could use a difference-in-difference approach to estimate the effects of the two laws on the marriage rate:

$$m_{it} = X_{it}'\beta + p_1\delta_1 + p_2\delta_2 + C_i\delta_3 + p_1C_i\delta_4 + p_2C_i\delta_5 + \epsilon_{it}, \tag{5}$$

where m_{it} is the marriage rate in country i and year t, X_{it} is a vector of variables influencing the evolution of the marriage rate, p_1 and p_2 are dummies indicating the period 1998–2000 and 2001 and after, respectively, and C_i is an indicator for country i being the hypothetical control country. The effects of the two laws would be given by δ_4 and δ_5.

In the absence of a real control group,[19] Abadie and Gardeazabal (2003) and Abadie et al. (2007) suggest a method for creating a synthetic control. The synthetic control is set of weights assigned to potential "donor" countries such that the weighted average of their marriage rates and determinant variables closely match the marriage rate and the determinant variables in the Netherlands during the "pre-treatment period" (before the enactment of the first law, the registered partnership law). These weights are entirely data-driven and are the results of a two-step maximization problem. In the first step, each variable (both in the set X of determinants and the marriage rate) is assigned a loading and the country weights are calculated as a function of these loadings so as to minimize the (weighted) distance between the synthetic control and the Netherlands in terms of all the variables. In the second stage, the variable loadings are chosen so that the marriage rate in the control group matches the marriage rate in the Netherlands as closely as possible. Thus, the synthetic control provides a credible counterfactual because it takes into account the evolution of both the marriage rate and its determinants. The technical details of the construction of the synthetic control are presented in the appendix.

6.2 Data

The list of potential donors includes all the OECD member countries that did not enact a registered partnership or same-sex marriage law during the period 1988–2004. The data on marriage rates and their determinants come from the OECD, Eurostat or national statistical offices. After excluding

[19] For historic and demographic reasons, the best choice for a control country would have been Belgium. However, Belgium followed closely in the footsteps of the Netherlands, enacting a registered partnership law in 2000 and a same-sex marriage law in 2003.

Mexico and the Slovak Republic, for which not enough data are available, the sample of potential donors consists of 19 countries: Australia, Austria, Czech Republic, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Ireland, Italy, Japan, Korea, Luxembourg, New Zealand, Poland, Portugal, Spain, Switzerland, Turkey, United Kingdom, United States.

The ideal outcome variable would be the marriage rate measured among the "population at risk," i.e. single individuals legally allowed to marry. Unfortunately, statistics agencies commonly report a different measure, the crude marriage rate, defined as the total number of marriages per 1,000 inhabitants. Figure 6 plots these two different indicators using data on different-sex marriages and population from Statistics Netherlands over the period between 1988 and 2004 (the two vertical dotted lines correspond to 1998 and 2001, the years when registered partnership and same-sex marriage were introduced). Since the marriage rate among unmarried individuals of legal age to marry (the "correct" marriage rate) is much higher than the crude marriage rate, the two measures are plotted on separate but proportional axes. It is clear from the figure that although the "correct" marriage rate drops relatively more sharply than the crude marriage rate, the two measures exhibit extremely similar patterns. Therefore, the crude marriage rate can provide an accurate indication of the evolution of the "correct" marriage rate.

The figure also shows that changes in the crude marriage rate understate changes in the "correct" marriage rate. Indeed, the percentage change in the crude marriage rate between 1989 and 1997 was smaller by an average factor of 1.19 than the percentage change in the "correct" marriage rate. The difference between the evolution of the two indicators is much smaller after the enactment of the two laws, the average factor during the period 1998–2005 being 1.02. The crude marriage rate is thus a better indicator of the "correct" marriage rate after the enactment of the two laws.

The data available for Statistics Netherlands allows for a breakdown of marriages into different-sex and same-sex marriages. In addition, it includes information on new registered partnerships, again separately for same-sex and different-sex couples. This makes it possible to study in turn the evolution of three different indicators: the different-sex marriage rate, the overall marriage rate, and the different-sex union rate (marriages and registered partnerships), all defined as the corresponding number of contracts per 1,000 individuals.

As in the individual-level analysis, the variables included in the vector of determinants X can be classified in three groups. First, there are the variables that describe the number of people at risk of marriage and the probability that they will meet, or the thickness of the marriage market. This group includes the fraction of the population in the 25–44 age group, the fraction of population living in urban areas, the ratio of women to men in the population, and the age at first marriage of both men and women. The second set of variables describes the attractiveness of individuals in the marriage market in terms of their current or potential earnings and in terms of fertility. These variables are the labor force participation of both men and women aged 25–34, the total fertility rate (the average number of children that would be born by women of bearing age), and girls' enrollment share in tertiary education. Finally, the unemployment rate of individuals in the 25–34 age group describes business cycle fluctuations.[20]

The first two columns in table 6 list the mean of each variable for the Netherlands and for the potential donors as a group (unweighted average) for the period between 1988 and 1997. The differences in the numbers range from very small (labor force participation of men) to relatively large (unemployment), indicating that there are some significant differences between the potential donors as a group and the Netherlands. Therefore, the unweighted average of the potential donors might not be an appropriate control group and the construction of a synthetic control is required.

6.3 Results

The procedure described in section 6.1 and in the appendix produces three quantities of interest: a diagonal matrix V^* of optimal loadings for each determinant variable X, a vector W^* of optimal weights for each potential donor, and the synthetic control constructed as a weighted average of marriage rates in the potential donors by applying the optimal weights W^*.

Recall that the matrix V includes loadings for both the determinant variables X and the average marriage rate for the period before the intervention. In order to assess the importance of each variable in X in the construction of the synthetic control, column 4 in table 6 lists the loadings for the determinant variables in X rescaled so as to sum to one. The table indicates that the variables with the most predictive power are the fertility rate and inflation, followed by the age at first marriage of women and the labor force participation rate of men between 25 and 34 years of age.

The means of the determinant variables for the synthetic control are listed in column 3 of table 6. It is apparent that the differences between the Netherlands (column 1) and the synthetic control are much smaller than the differences between the Netherlands and the unweighted average of potential donors. Indeed, the largest percentage difference between columns 1 and 3 is about half the largest difference between column 1 and 2, supporting the idea that the synthetic control is a more appropriate control group than the group of potential donors.

[20]The results are robust to the inclusion of additional variables, such as the difference in life expectancy between women and men, the inflation rate (measured as the year-to-year change in the CPI) or the growth rate of real GDP, as well as to the matching on post-1998 values for variables which are not likely to be affected by the two laws (e.g., women-men ratio or GDP growth).

The weights assigned to each country in the synthetic control are listed in column 1 of table 7. Note that the non-negativity restriction on the weights leads, in general, to corner solutions: 10 of the 17 countries have zero weight. Of the seven countries with non-zero weights, Switzerland has almost three times more weight than any other country and together with Italy, Austria and New Zealand accounts for more than 75 percent of the synthetic control. Finally, the mean squared error of the marriage rate in the synthetic control relative to the actual marriage rate in the Netherlands is 0.18, or 3 percent of the average crude marriage rate of 5.84 over the same period (before 1998).

Figure 7 plots the marriage rate in the Netherlands and the synthetic control. The two lines are relatively close for the period 1988–1997, before the registered partnership law was enacted, a reassuring finding since this is the period when the treated and the control group have to be similar. Between 1998 and 2000, when registered partnership was made available to both same-sex and different-sex couples, the marriage rate in the Netherlands is slightly higher than in the synthetic control, though still relatively close. However, the marriage rate in the Netherlands falls rapidly after 2001 but it increases slightly in the synthetic control.

One relatively straightforward way to gauge the decline in the marriage rate is to compare the largest gap between the actual marriage rate in the Netherlands and the synthetic control in each of the three periods: before 1998, between 1998 and 2000, and after 2001. Column 1 in table 8 lists these numbers. Note that the largest absolute difference between the marriage rate in the Netherlands and the synthetic control after 2001 occurs in 2005 and is equal to 0.61, or approximately 13.8% of the crude marriage rate in 2005. In contrast, the largest relative difference between the two measures during 1988–1997 is 0.28, or 4.8% of the average crude marriage rate during this period, and between 1998 and 2000 it is 0.34, or 6.10% of the average crude marriage rate during this period. This suggests that the decline in the marriage rate after 2001 is rather significant, being at least twice as large (relatively) than any difference between the synthetic control and the real marriage rate in the previous periods.

The aggregate analysis above suggests that the marriage rate did not decline after the introduction of registered partnership, but it did after the legalization of same-sex marriage. This pattern is exactly the same as the one found in section 5, supporting the validity of the individual-level analysis. In particular, there is no negative effect of the registered partnership law on the marriage rate, but there is such an effect for the same-sex marriage law.

Although the results using both methods are similar, there is still the concern that the synthetic control method might not produce an appropriate control because, for example, the set of determinants X is not well chosen. Abadie and Gardeazabal (2003) and Abadie et al. (2007) suggest two ways to conduct placebo tests that would confirm or reject the choice of determinant variables.

The first type of placebo test is to choose a period of analysis prior to the intervention and assign an artificial "intervention year" during this period. The synthetic control constructed in this way should not differ from the treated group either before or after the artificial intervention. Unfortunately, there is not enough historical data on all the variables included in the analysis to conduct such a placebo test.

The second type of placebo test consists of choosing some of the countries with the highest weight in the synthetic control and assume that they actually experienced the same type of intervention at the same time as the treated group. A synthetic control can be constructed for each of these experiments using the rest of the donor countries. These synthetic controls should not be different from the "treated" countries since there is no intervention.

I conduct this second type of placebo test to confirm the validity of the method. I focus on Switzerland, the country with the largest weight in the synthetic control for the Netherlands. I eliminate it from the pool of potential donors and I construct a synthetic control for Switzerland in the same way as before, using the method in section 6.1 and data for the period between 1988 and 1997. The weights of each country in the synthetic Switzerland are listed in column 2 of table 7. As before, only a few of the potential donors have non-zero weights and three countries (Germany, Korea and Ireland) account for more than 86 percent of the synthetic control. Figure 8 plots the marriage rate in Switzerland and the corresponding synthetic control. Unlike the case of the Netherlands, the two lines are remarkably similar for the whole period of analysis. This is reassuring, as there should have been no effect of the placebo laws on the marriage rate in Switzerland.

As before, we can compare the largest absolute differences between the crude marriage rate in Switzerland and its synthetic control for the three periods. The corresponding numbers are listed in column 4 of table 8. Note that the synthetic control for Switzerland is a relatively poorer match than the one for the Netherlands during the period used for its construction: the absolute difference between 1988 and 1997 is 0.51 in Switzerland, or 8.03% of the average marriage rate during the period. In contrast, the absolute difference in the Netherlands during the same period is only 4.81% of the average marriage rate. However, the relative differences for Switzerland get only smaller in the subsequent periods: 0.22 (4.05% of the mean) during 1998–2000 and 0.32 (6.08% of the mean) after 2001.

In conclusion, the placebo test suggests that the synthetic control method constructs an appropriate control group and that the conclusions reached earlier in this section are valid.

6.4 Different-sex marriage and union rates

Recall that the end-of-marriage argument holds that the different-sex marriage rate would fall after the legalization of same-sex marriage or even the introduction of same-sex registered partnership. In the individual-level analysis, I could not separate different-sex from same-sex marriages as there was no information on the gender of the spouse. However, Statistics Netherlands provides aggregate data for each type of marriage, allowing a separate analysis of different-sex marriage. Since the crude marriage rate used above includes both different-sex and same-sex marriages after 2001, it is an overstatement of the (crude) different-sex marriage rate. Indeed, as it can be seen in figure 9 (compared to figure 7), the fall in the marriage rate after 2001 is even greater if only different-sex marriages are considered.[21] Column 2 in table 8 lists the largest absolute differences between the different-sex marriage rate and the synthetic control for each period. The differences for the periods 1988–1997 and 1998–2000 are the same as in column 1, since the different-sex marriage rate is just the crude marriage rate prior to 2001. The absolute difference in 2005 is 0.68, 15.62% of the marriage rate that year, larger than in column 1. In other words, the decline in the different-sex marriage rate is even larger than suggested by the crude marriage rate.

One aspect that was not taken into account until now is that different-sex couples have access to an alternative institution after the introduction of registered partnership. If registered partnership is perceived as a reasonable alternative to marriage, then it is possible that some couples might choose it over marriage. In a world where marriage and registered partnership are equivalent, we would expect couples to select randomly into an institution and thus have approximately half of them choosing marriage and half registered partnership. In practice, the legal differences between the two institutions, however minor, and the difference in traditional values ensure the fact that the distribution of couples across institutions is not even. Thus, one can make the argument that what matters is the total number of unions, i.e. marriages and registered partnerships, rather than just marriages. Figure 10 plots this different-sex union rate in the Netherlands and the marriage rate from the synthetic control. Again, the synthetic control is the same as above. Note also that the different-sex union rate is the same as the different-sex marriage rate and the overall marriage rate prior to 1998 since the institution available to couples was different-sex marriage.

As before, we can compare the differences between the different-sex union rate and the synthetic control over the three periods. The numbers are shown in column 3 of table 8. While the difference before 1998 is the same as in the previous two columns, it is higher between 1998 and 2000 at 0.44,

[21] Note that the synthetic control is the same as before because the counterfactual is the same: what the marriage rate would be in the Netherlands if the two laws were not enacted, i.e. if only different-sex couples were allowed to marry.

or 7.67% of the mean union rate. This is not surprising since the union rate is the marriage rate plus the registered partnership rate and the marriage rate was already higher than the synthetic control during this period. The difference becomes smaller after 2001, however, to 0.33 (6.98% of the union rate in 2005 or 6.55% of the average union rate over the period), which is relatively smaller than both the corresponding differences in columns 1 and 2 and the difference between 1998 and 2000. Moreover, the difference is comparable to the difference prior to the introduction of registered partnership, which suggests that there is not much change in the total number of unions in recent years relative to the baseline period (prior to the registered partnership law), but rather sorting across the two institutions.

6.5 Additional evidence

These results are consistent with two explanations. One the one hand, there might be a learning process: people learn over time about registered partnership and start switching away from marriage. This seems to be suggested by the evolution of the registered partnership rate described in figure 5. Under this scenario, the same-sex marriage law could have no effect and the observed decline in the marriage rate is simply due to couples choosing registered partnership over marriage. Alternatively, the legalization of same-sex marriage could have changed the value of marriage relative to registered partnership. Recall that the only major difference between the two institutions is in the traditional value of marriage. If same-sex marriage reduces the traditional value of marriage, then it is possible that more people switch to registered partnership. Under this scenario, the decline in the marriage rate is directly due to the legalization of same-sex marriage and the registered partnership law could have no negative effects.

As long as the different-sex union rate is not larger than the marriage rate in the synthetic control after 2001, there has to be some sorting of couples out of marriage and into registered partnership. The number of different-sex registered partnerships almost quadruples between 1998 and 2005, but most of the increase occurrs after 2001, which suggests that the legalization of same-sex marriage might have accelerated the learning process, the sorting process, or both. It is impossible to distinguish between the two alternatives with the data available. Fortunately, some additional evidence is provided by an evaluation study of the two institutions commissioned by the Dutch Ministry of Justice in 2005. Although there is no historic information included, the results of the survey presented in Boele-Woelki et al. (2006) can help shed some light on these two scenarios.

First, there is clear evidence of learning as some of the couples interviewed who were in registered partnership report finding out about the institution after its introduction, usually from a notary.[22]

[22] The couples report being told about registered partnership by a notary they visited for drawing up or renewing

Second, 57 percent of the couples in registered partnership acknowledge not having considered marriage as an option. If at least some of these couples entered registered partnership after 2001 and if the number of different-sex unions is the same as in the absence of registered partnership and same-sex marriage, as suggested by figure 10, then some of the couples who would have gotten married in the absence of the laws choose not to formalize their relationship anymore. Since the trend in the marriage rate and in the registered partnership rate accelerate after 2001 in different directions, this supports the idea that the same-sex marriage law might have a negative effect on different-sex marriage.

In conclusion, there is suggestive evidence that confirms both scenarios. Over time, different-sex couples become increasingly aware of registered partnership and start choosing it over marriage, but some different-sex couples choose either registered partnership over marriage or no formal relationship at all after the enactment of the same-sex marriage law.[23]

7 Conclusions

In this paper, I analyze the validity of the claim that the institution of marriage is negatively affected when opened to same-sex couples. I focus on the Netherlands, the first country to legalize same-sex marriage in 2001, which also introduced in 1998 an alternative institution, identical in almost all ways to marriage—registered partnership. I first conduct my analysis at the individual level, where I construct an individual-level data set with information on demographic characteristics as well as marriage decisions over the period 1995–2005 for about 10 percent of the Dutch population. I then estimate a duration model for age at first marriage. My estimates from specifications with unobserved heterogeneity suggest that the marriage rate increases after the introduction of registered partnership and falls after the legalization of same-sex marriage. However, this pattern is not uniform: individuals living in the more conservative municipalities commonly called the Dutch Bible belt tend to marry less after the registered partnership law, but their marriage rate returns to the long-term trend after the same-sex marriage law. In contrast, individuals living in the four largest cities (the more liberal areas) marry less after both laws. Finally, people residing outside

cohabitation agreements (privately-drawn contracts between cohabiting partners) or for inheritance issues (Boele-Woelki et al., 2006).

[23] At this point, it would be useful to compare these patterns to a model of first formalization of a relationship through either registered partnership or marriage, similar to the model in section 3. However, Boele-Woelki et al. (2006) report that registered partnership seems to be the choice for older couples. The average age at partnership registration among the couples surveyed was over 38 years for different-sex couples and over 43 years for same-sex couples, compared to 33 and 41 years for married couples. Indeed, only 701 men and 647 women in my sample enter registered partnership, compared to 20,670 and 19,865 marriages, and the results in section 5 are qualitatively the same if age at first marriage is replaced by age at first registration.

these two regions follow the same pattern as the overall marriage rate, marrying more after the registered partnership law and less after the same-sex marriage law.

Since the individual-level data does not provide a counterfactual—what the marriage rate would have been in the absence of same-sex marriage laws, I turn to aggregate data, where I use the method developed by Abadie and Gardeazabal (2003) to construct a synthetic control for the Netherlands. This synthetic control is a weighted average of the marriage rates of the OECD member countries such that its evolution before 1998 (the year when the registered partnership law was enacted) matches the evolution of the marriage rate in the Netherlands. A comparison of the Dutch marriage rate to the synthetic marriage rate confirms the average findings from the individual-level specifications: different-sex couples marry more after the registered partnership law, but less after the same-sex marriage law. The aggregate data also allows for a separate analysis of different-sex marriages and different-sex unions, i.e. marriages *and* registered partnerships. The results suggest that the rate of different-sex unions increases after the registered partnership law (not surprisingly, since the marriage rate increases) and then falls after the enactment of the same-sex marriage law, so that the rate of different-sex unions after 2001 remains close to the rate predicted by the synthetic control.

In conclusion, the introduction of registered partnership, both for same-sex and for different-sex couples, does not seem to have negative effects on different-sex marriage in the short term—indeed, there is an increase in the different-sex marriage rate between 1998 and 2000. However, the different-sex marriage rate falls after the legalization of same-sex marriage. There can be at least two explanations for the decline in the diferent-sex marriage rate after 2001 and for the fact that the different-sex union rate returns to the long-term trend during the same period. The first explanation is that couples learn over time about registered partnership and shift gradually from marriage to registered partnership. The long-term effect of the introduction of (different-sex) registered partnership would therefore be to sort couples across the two institutions without changing the total number of couples willing to formalize their relationship.

The second explanation is the end-of-marriage argument: the same-sex marriage law changes the value of marriage for some couples, who choose not to marry anymore. The fact that some of these couples choose cohabitation over registered partnership would be offset by the fact that some other couples who were not considering marriage would enter registered partnership, such that the total number of different-sex unions stays more or less the same (around the long-term trend).

Finally, note that it is practically impossible to disentangle the long term effects of the registered partnership law from the (short-term) effects of the same-sex marriage law. In fact, additional evidence from the survey conducted by Boele-Woelki et al. (2006) suggests that the post-2001 evolution of the marriage rate might be due to both effects. It is also infeasible to gauge the relative magnitude of each effect, i.e., it is impossible to attribute the decline in the marriage rate after 2001 to either the long-term effect of the registered partnership law or to the short-term effect of the same-sex marriage law.

The analysis also provides two additional interesting results First, the introduction of same-sex registered partnership does not affect different-sex marriage negatively. This suggests that there might be no negative effects on the institution of marriage from allowing same-sex couples access to an institution that grants the same rights as marriage but does not carry its traditional meaning. And second, granting different-sex couples access to an alternative institution to marriage increases the different-sex union rate, extending the economic and social benefits of marriage to a larger group of individuals.

Appendix: Construction of the synthetic control

Similar to Abadie et al. (2007), let subscript 1 indicate the Netherlands and let $W = (w_2, \ldots, w_{J+1})$ be a vector of weights assigned to the J potential donor countries. Without any restrictions on the weights, a sufficiently large number of potential donor countries and of determinant variables will lead to a synthetic control that matches perfectly the evolution of the marriage rate in the Netherlands prior to the introduction of the two laws. However, negative weights or weights larger than one would be difficult to interpret. Hence, the weights are restricted to lie in the unit interval ($0 \leq w_j \leq 1$ for all j) and to sum up to one ($\sum_{j=2}^{J+1} w_j = 1$), which results in a synthetic control that will likely not match perfectly the trend in the marriage rate before the two laws.

For the synthetic control, the marriage rate m_1^* and its determinants X_1^* are calculated as weighted averages of the corresponding variables in the donor countries:

$$m_{1t}^* = \sum_{j=2}^{J+1} w_j m_{jt},$$
$$X_{jt}^* = \sum_{j=2}^{J+1} w_j X_{jt}.$$

Let T_0 be the number of available periods before 1998 and let the vector $K = (k_1, \ldots, k_{T_0})$ define a linear combination of the pre-1998 marriage rates for any country i:

$$\overline{m}_i^K = \sum_{t=1}^{T_0} k_t m_{it}.$$

Now consider M such linear combinations for the Netherlands: $\overline{m}_1^{K_1}, \ldots, \overline{m}_1^{K_M}$, and define $Z_1 = \left(X_1', \overline{m}_1^{K_1}, \ldots, \overline{m}_1^{K_M}\right)'$ as the vector obtained by combining the determinants of the marriage rate prior to 1998 (T_0) and these M linear combinations of the pre-1998 marriage rate in the Netherlands. Next, consider the matrix Z_0 constructed by combining similar vectors for the J potential donors, such that the j-th column of Z_0 is $\left(X_j', \overline{m}_j^{K_1}, \ldots, \overline{m}_j^{K_M}\right)'$, where X_j is the set of determinants of the marriage rate prior to 1998 in country j.

In principle, the linear combinations $(K_1, \ldots, K_M)$ are arbitrary. In practice, Abadie et al. (2007) suggest choosing $M = 1$ and $K = \frac{1}{T_0}$, such that the linear combinations amount to the average over the period before the intervention:

$$\overline{m}_i^K = \frac{1}{T_0}\sum_{t=1}^{T_0} m_{it}$$

Thus, the vector of data for the Netherlands becomes $Z_1 = (X_1', \overline{m}_1)'$, while the corresponding matrix Z_0 for the donor countries has columns of the form $\left(X_j', \overline{m}_j\right)'$ for the j-th donor country.

Given this structure of the Z matrices, let V be a diagonal matrix of loadings corresponding to all the variables (both the determinants X and the marriage rate m). The optimal set of weights is the one that minimizes the weighted distance between Z_1 and Z_0:

$$W^*(V) = \text{argmin}\sqrt{(Z_1 - Z_0W)'V(Z_1 - Z_0W)}.$$

The matrix V can be arbitrary, but a natural choice is the one that minimizes the mean squared error of the marriage rate in the synthetic control relative to the actual marriage rate in the Netherlands (Abadie et al., 2007):

$$V^* = \text{argmin}\sqrt{[m_1 - m_0W^*(V)]'[m_1 - m_0W^*(V)]},$$

where m_1 is a $(T_0 \times 1)$ vector containing the marriage rate in the Netherlands and m_0 is a $(T_0 \times J)$ matrix of marriage rates of the potential donors in the pre-1998 period. This ensures that the marriage rate in the synthetic control constructed using the resulting weights $W^*(V^*)$ is the best match to the marriage rate in the Netherlands in the period before 1998.

In conclusion, the synthetic control is constructed by assigning a set of data-driven weights to potential "donor" countries such that the weighted average of their marriage rates and determinant variables closely match the marriage rate and the determinant variables in the Netherlands during the "pre-treatment period" (before the enactment of the first law, the registered partnership law). These weights are calculated via an iterative two-step maximization problem. In the first step, each variable (both in the set of determinants X and the marriage rate) is assigned a loading and the country weights are calculated as a function of these loadings so as to minimize the (weighted) distance between the synthetic control and the Netherlands in terms of all the variables. In the second step, the variable loadings are chosen so that the marriage rate in the control group matches the marriage rate in the Netherlands as closely as possible. Finally, the two steps are repeated until convergence is achieved.

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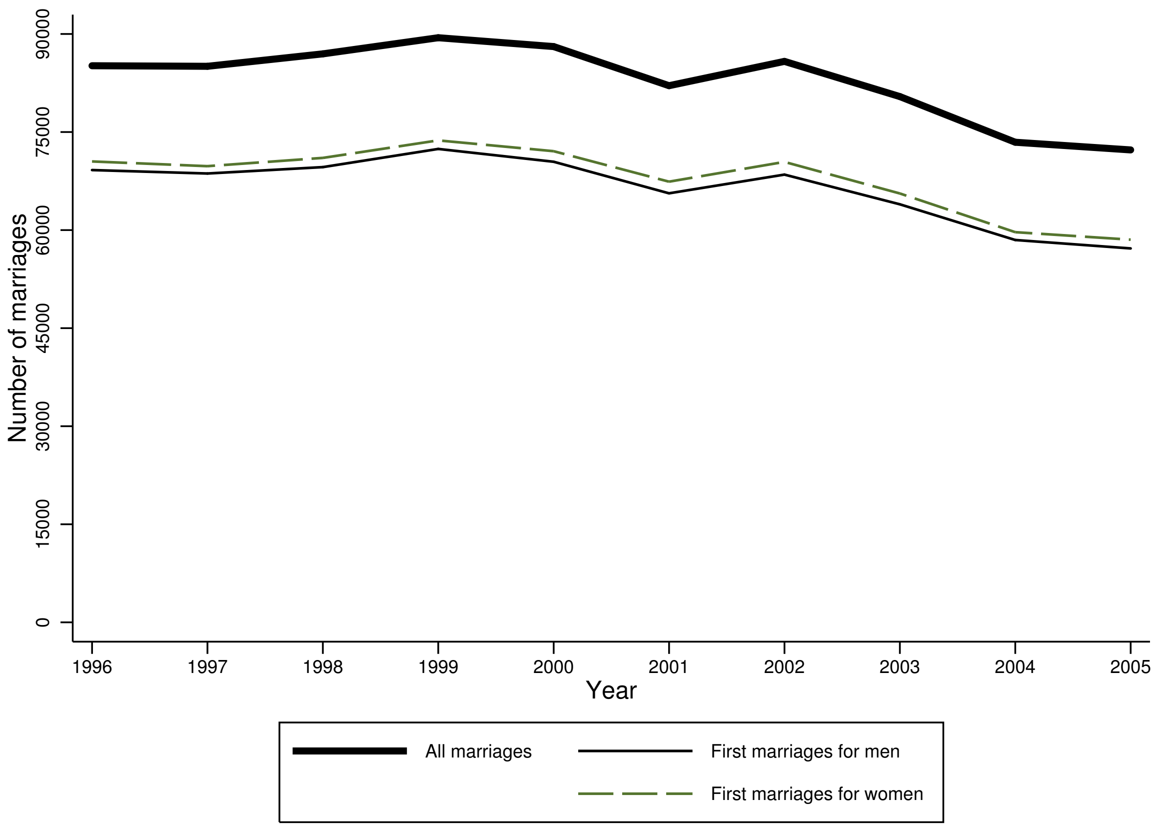


Figure 1: The evolution of all marriages and first marriages for one of the spouses

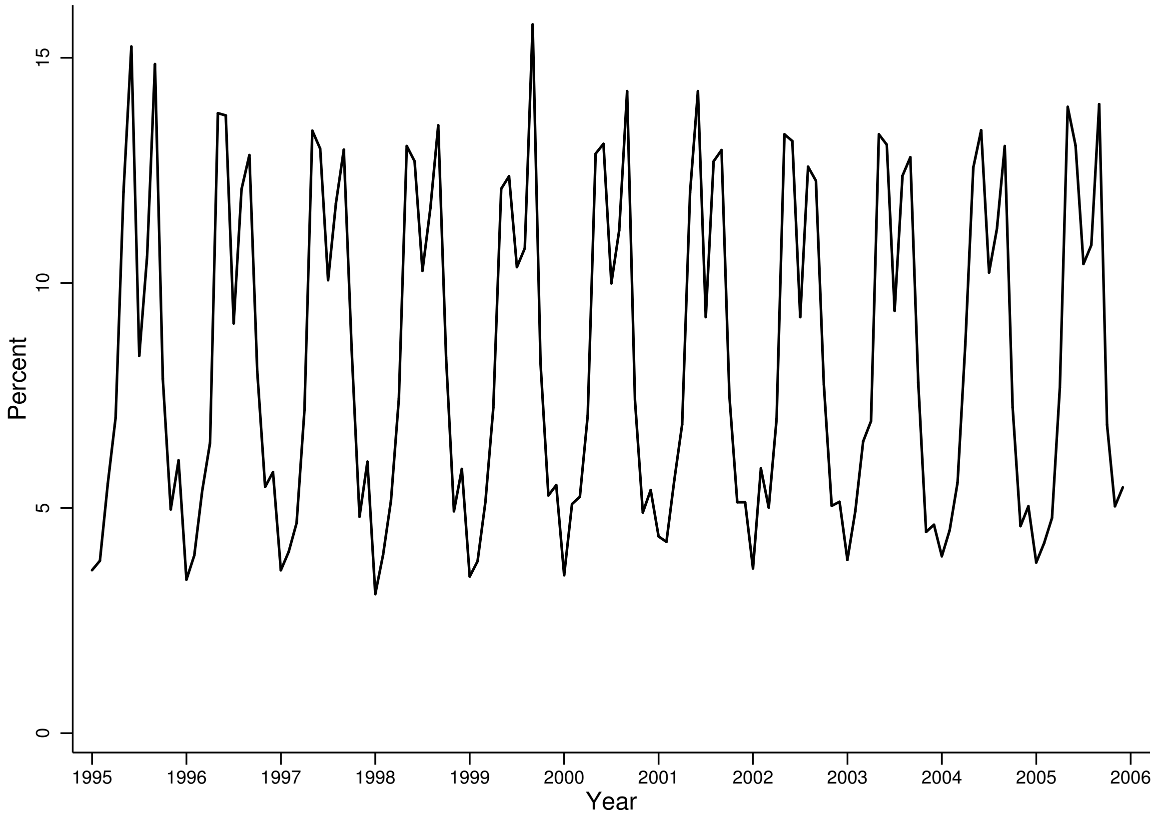


Figure 2: The seasonal pattern of marriages in the Netherlands

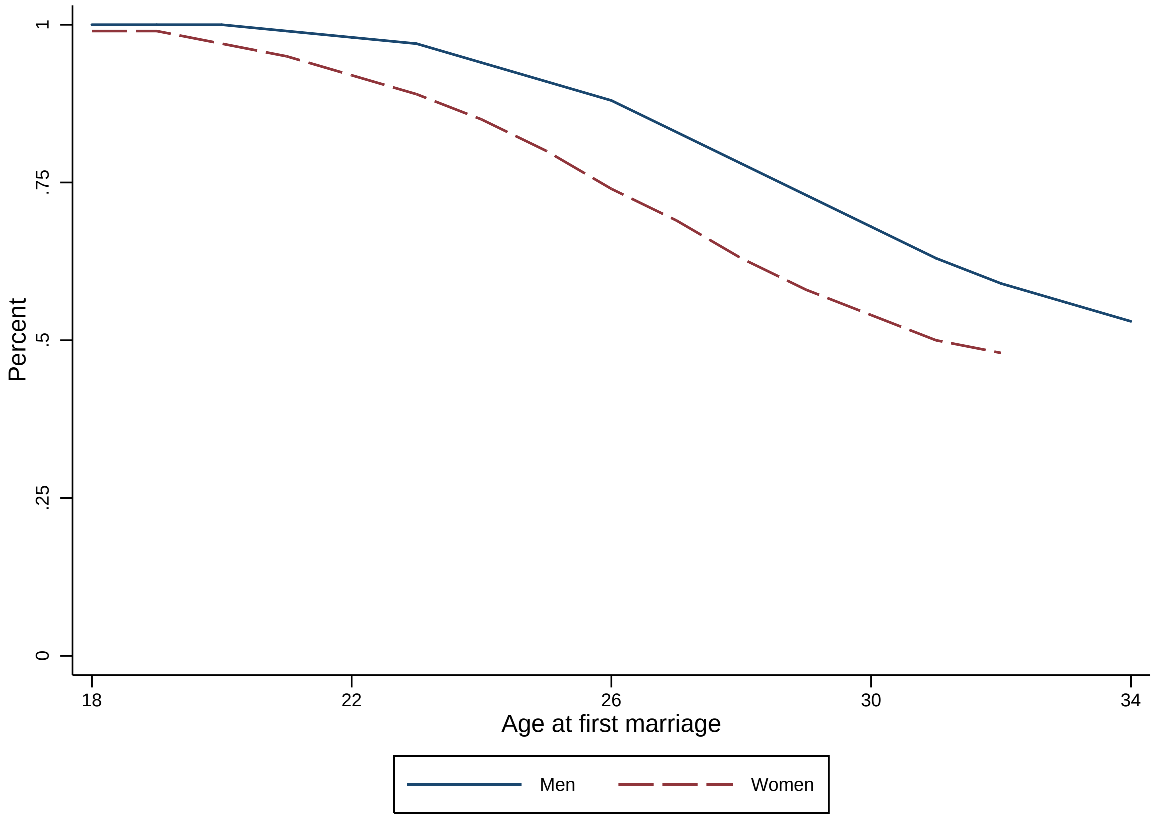


Figure 3: Kaplan-Meier estimates of the survival function (the probability of still being single, by age)

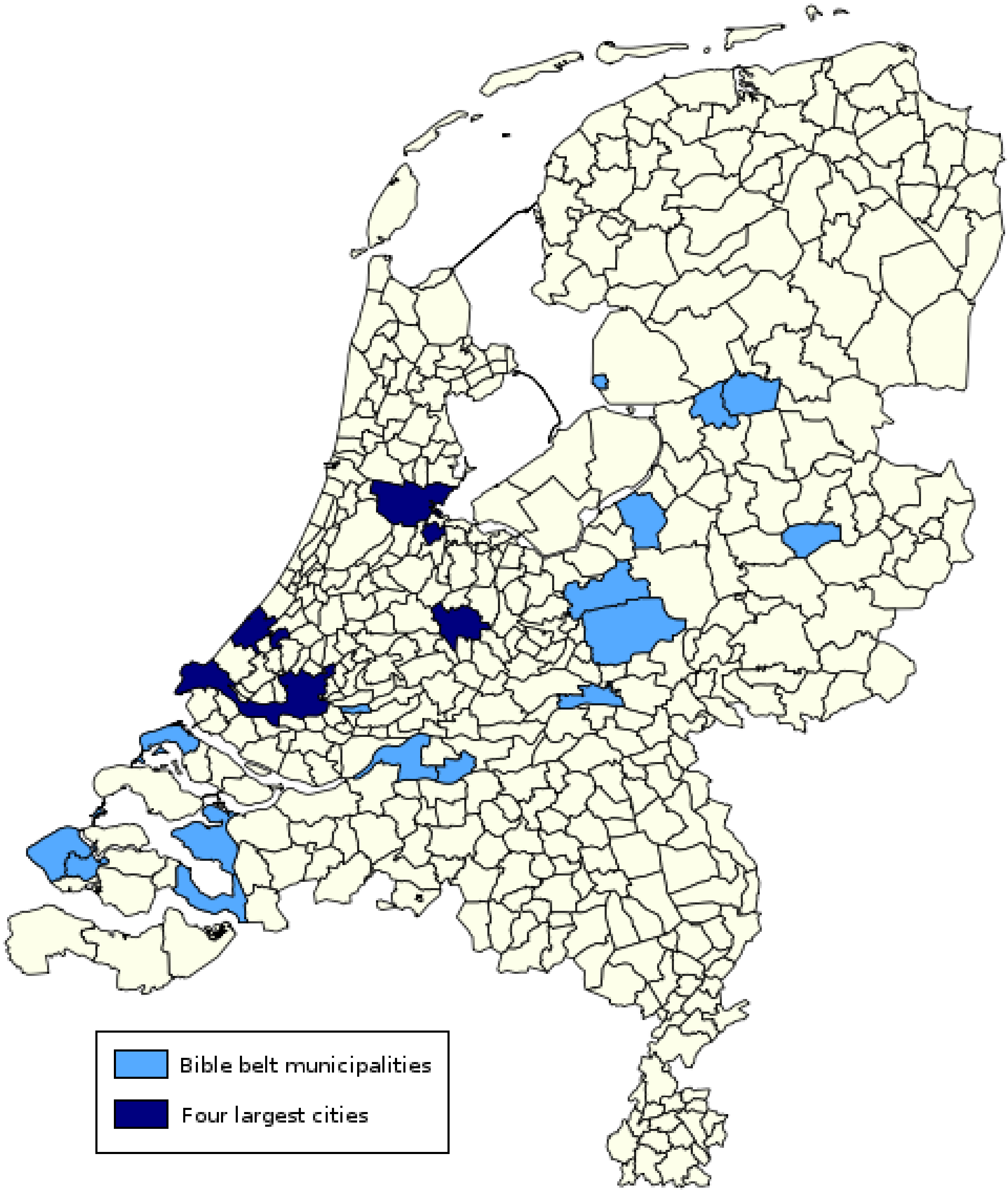


Figure 4: The four largest cities and the Bible-belt municipalities.

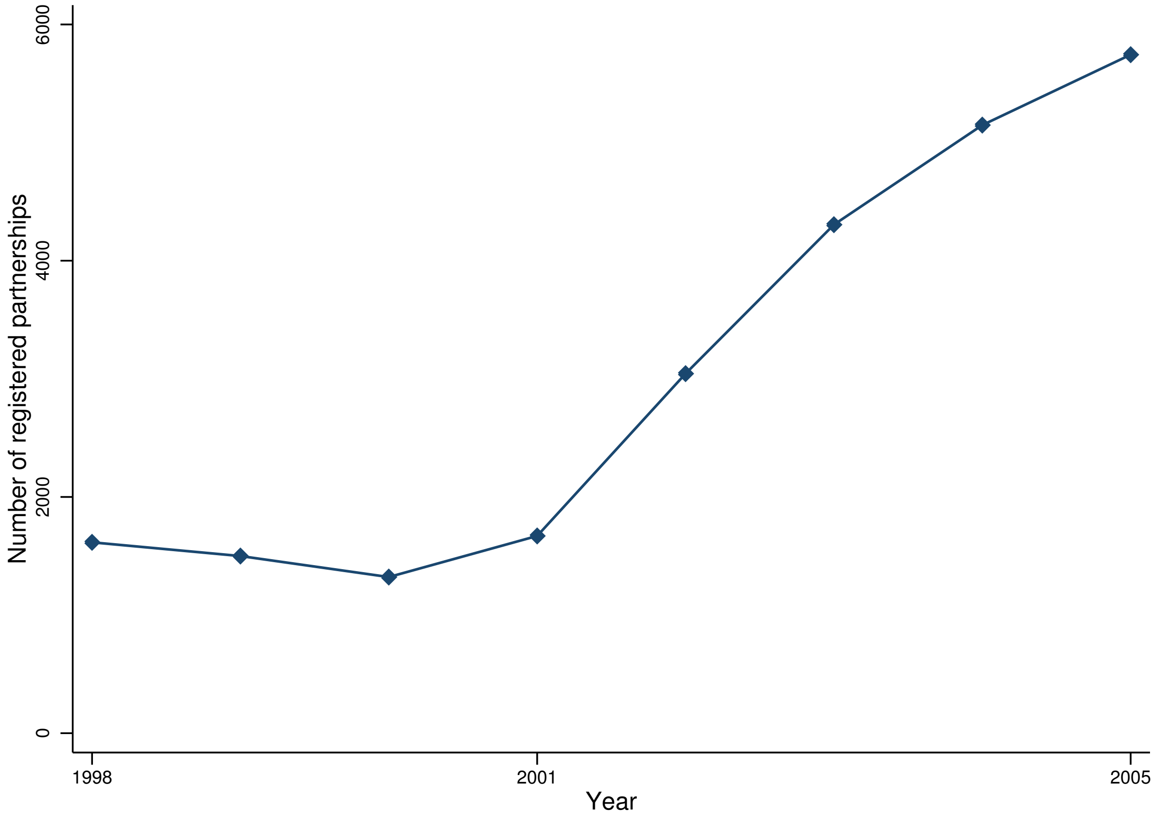


Figure 5: The number of new different-sex registered partnerships in the Netherlands, 1998–2005

Notes: The crude marriage rate is measured on the left axis, while the "correct" marriage rate is measured on the right axis. The two axes are proportional: a one percent change in the crude marriage rate (on the left axis) is projected onto a one percent change in the "correct" marriage rate on the right axis.

Figure 6: Evolution of two measures of the marriage rate in the Netherlands

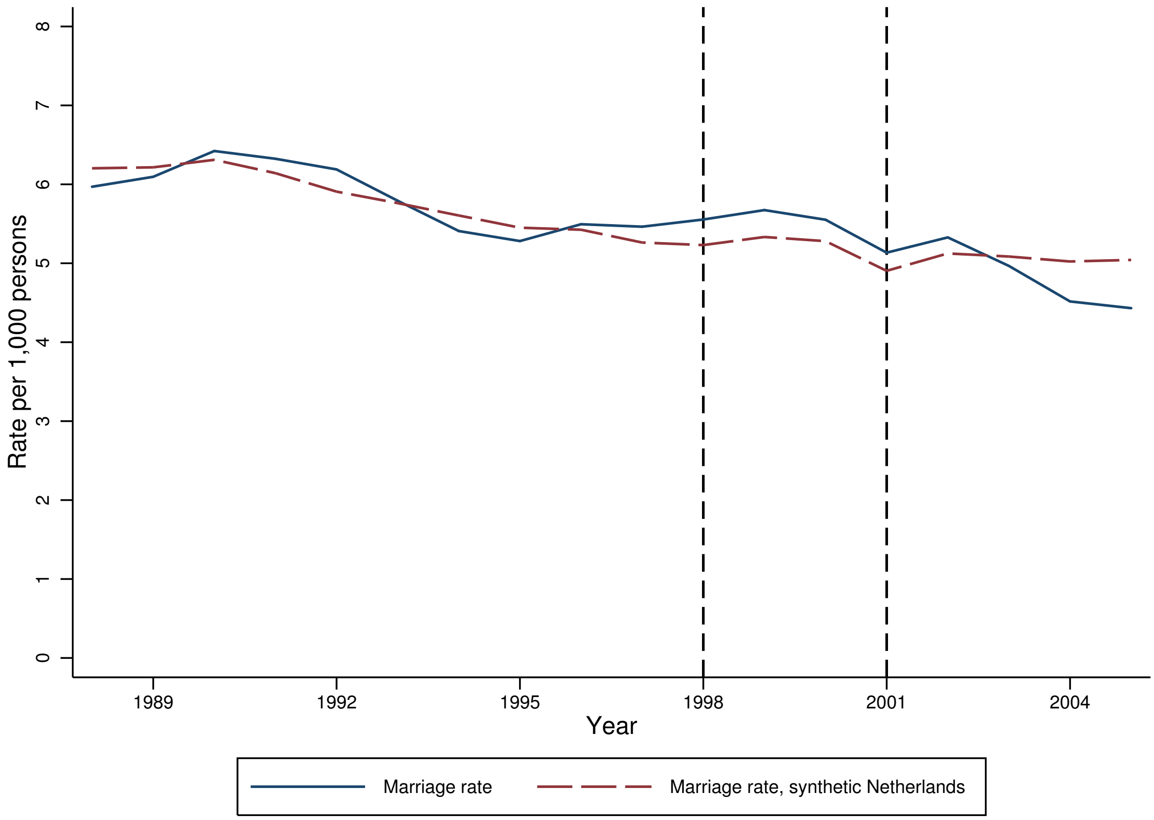


Figure 7: Evolution of marriage rate in the Netherlands and in the synthetic control

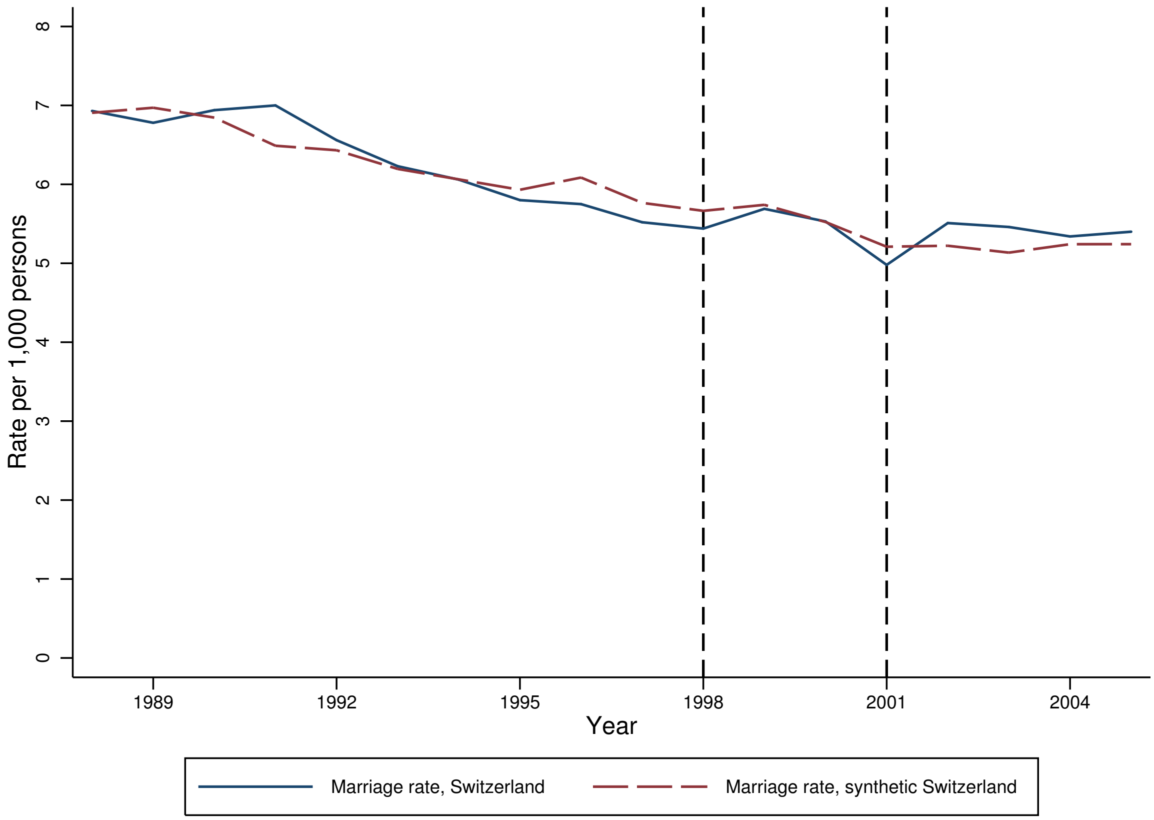


Figure 8: Placebo test: Switzerland

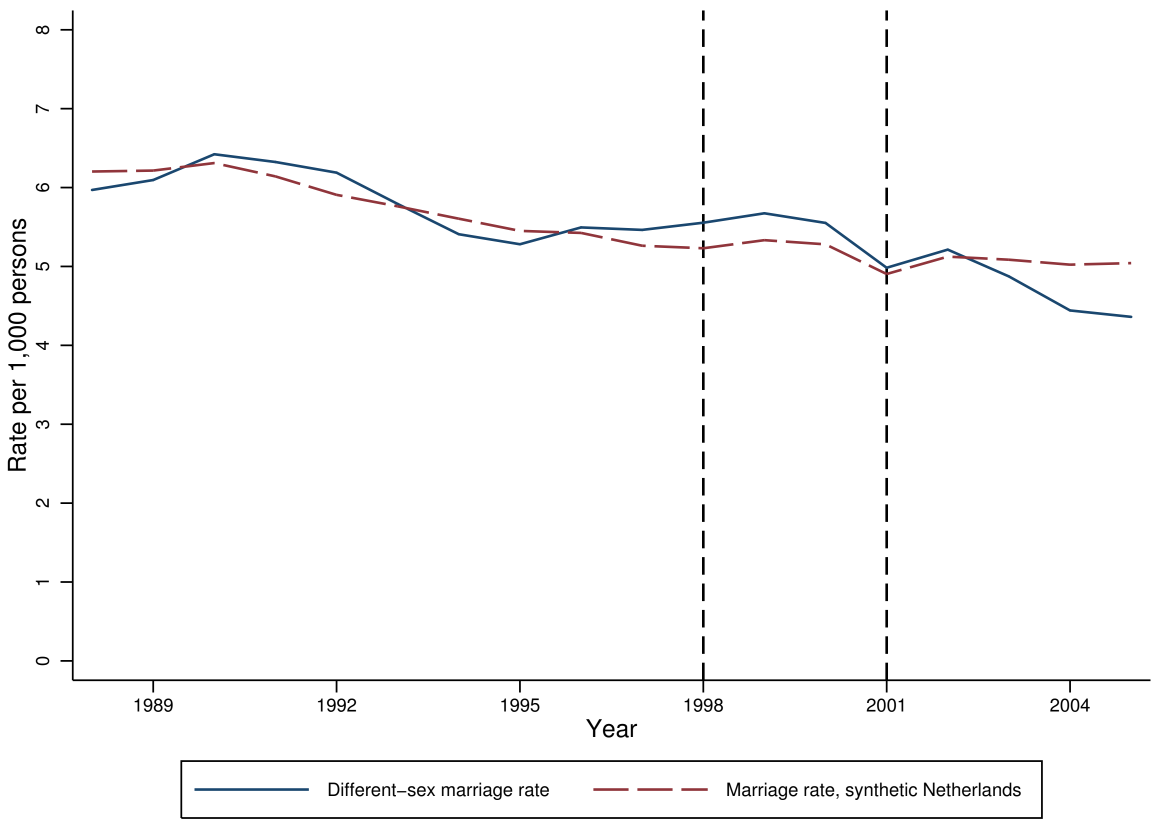


Figure 9: Evolution of the different-sex marriage rate in the Netherlands and in the synthetic control

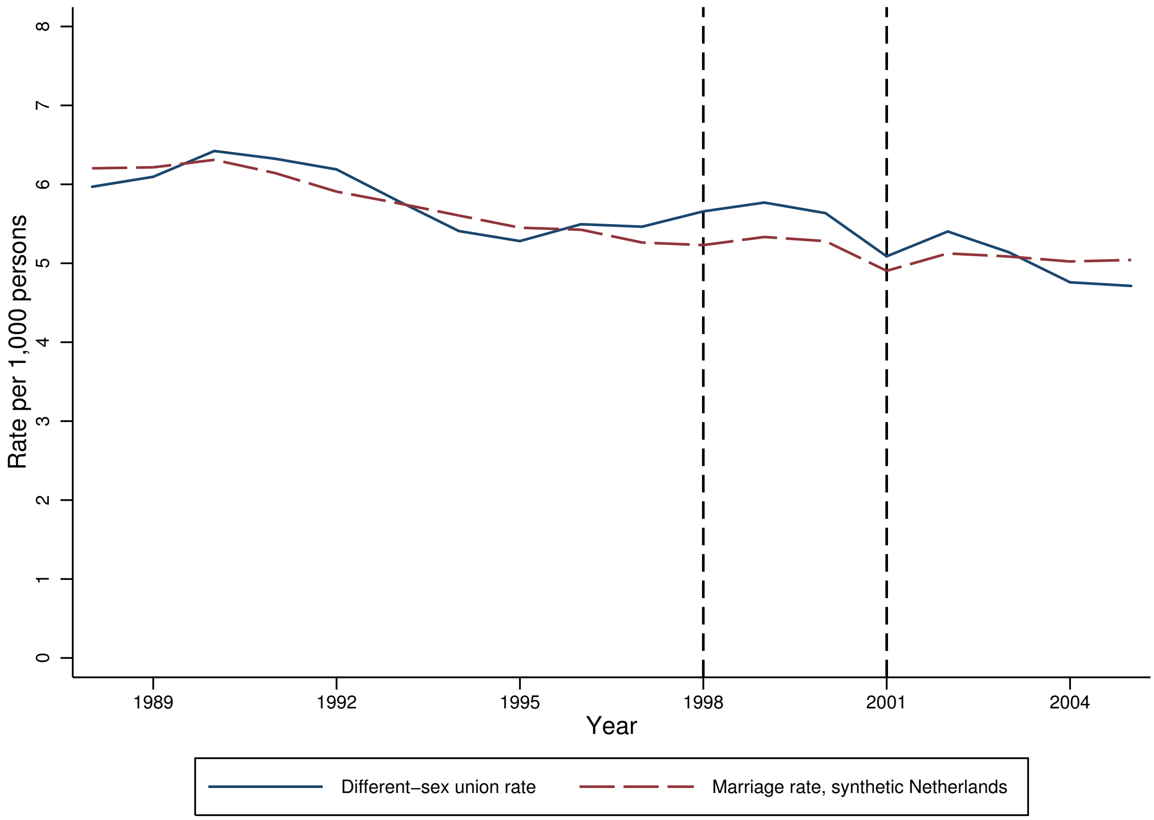
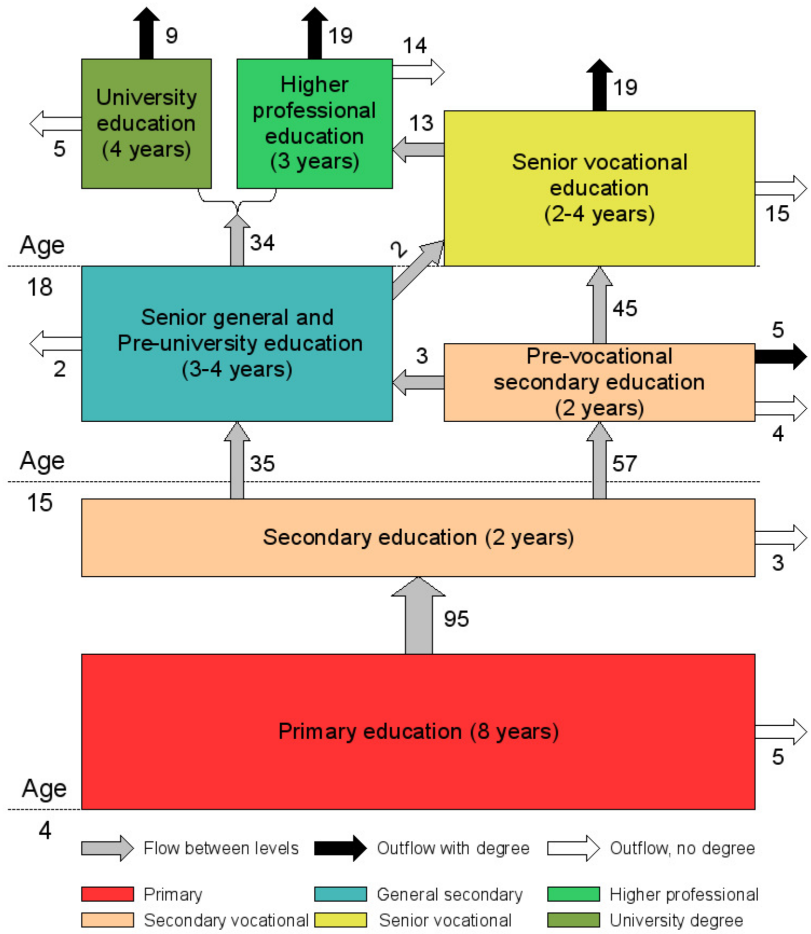


Figure 10: Evolution of the different-sex union rate in the Netherlands and in the synthetic control



Note: Numbers next to arrows represent percentages of a cohort.

Source: Dutch Ministry of Education and Science (2003)

Figure A1: The education system in the Netherlands and the definition of educational attainment used

Table 1: Summary statistics

	Men (%)	Women (%)
First marriages		
Percent	26.29	33.30
Average age (years)	27.37	25.25
	(2.97)	(2.96)
Censored observations		
Percent	73.71	66.70
Average age (years)	28.19	26.96
	(3.70)	(3.23)
Birth cohort		
1970–74	41.04	23.79
1975–79	39.54	51.19
1980–84	18.43	23.79
1985–89	0.99	1.23
Education		
Primary education	4.24	3.03
Secondary vocational	16.83	12.95
General secondary	6.83	7.10
Senior vocational	39.88	39.85
Higher professional	23.16	28.39
College	9.05	8.67
Ethnicity		
Natives	83.11	82.84
Western immigrants	7.71	7.80
Turks/Moroccans	3.21	3.43
Surinamese/Arubans	3.01	3.26
Other non-Western immigrants	2.97	2.66
Urban area	62.86	63.80
Number of individuals	70,718	53,883

Note: All statistics weighted using sample weights.

Table 2: Summary statistics, four largest cities and the Dutch Bible belt

	Four largest cities (%)	Bible belt (%)
	Men ($N = 70,718$)	
Location at exit from sample	15.16	2.71
Percent of total marriages	12.11	4.39
Percent of residents marrying	21.00	42.60
	Women ($N = 53,803$)	
Location at exit from sample	16.26	2.73
Percent of total marriages	12.03	4.42
Percent of residents marrying	24.64	53.93

Note: All statistics weighted using sample weights.

Table 3: Discrete-time duration model for the age at first marriage, men ($n = 70,718$)

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
Period 1 (1998–2000)	0.094*	0.095*	−0.031*	−0.040*	−0.028*	0.005
	(0.003)	(0.003)	(0.004)	(0.004)	(0.004)	(0.004)
Period 2 (2001–2005)	0.070*	0.074*	−0.089*	−0.101*	−0.087*	−0.038*
	(0.004)	(0.004)	(0.006)	(0.006)	(0.006)	(0.006)
Linear trend (1995=0)	−0.057*	−0.051*	−0.035*	−0.034*	−0.035*	−0.035*
	(0.001)	(0.001)	(0.001)	(0.001)	(0.001)	(0.001)
Education (omitted category: Senior vocational)						
Primary education		−0.272*	−0.271*	−0.258*	−0.258*	−0.127*
		(0.004)	(0.004)	(0.004)	(0.004)	(0.006)
Secondary vocational		−0.055*	−0.055*	−0.053*	−0.053*	0.035*
		(0.002)	(0.002)	(0.002)	(0.002)	(0.003)
General secondary		−0.422*	−0.423*	−0.342*	−0.342*	−0.501*
		(0.003)	(0.003)	(0.003)	(0.003)	(0.004)
Higher professional		−0.220*	−0.221*	−0.169*	−0.169*	−0.331*
		(0.002)	(0.002)	(0.002)	(0.002)	(0.003)
College		−0.289*	−0.292*	−0.172*	−0.172*	−0.395*
		(0.002)	(0.002)	(0.002)	(0.002)	(0.004)
Ethnicity (omitted category: Natives)						
Western immigrants		−0.201*	−0.202*	−0.157*	−0.157*	−0.180*
		(0.003)	(0.003)	(0.003)	(0.003)	(0.004)
Turks/Moroccans		1.156*	1.153*	1.270*	1.270*	2.282*
		(0.003)	(0.003)	(0.003)	(0.003)	(0.006)
Surinamese/Arubans		−0.289*	−0.288*	−0.155*	−0.155*	−0.079*
		(0.005)	(0.005)	(0.005)	(0.005)	(0.006)
Other non-Western immigrants		0.050*	0.050*	0.141*	0.141*	0.229*
		(0.004)	(0.004)	(0.004)	(0.004)	(0.006)
Regional unemployment rate			−0.029*	−0.032*	−0.030*	−0.033*
			(0.001)	(0.001)	(0.001)	(0.001)
Urban indicator				−0.171*	−0.170*	−0.201*
				(0.001)	(0.001)	(0.002)
Bible belt				0.665*	0.665*	0.904*
				(0.003)	(0.003)	(0.005)
Four largest cities				−0.248*	−0.247*	−0.376*
				(0.002)	(0.002)	(0.003)
Constant	−7.094*	−6.997*	−6.801*	−6.739*	−6.745*	−6.117*
	(0.019)	(0.019)	(0.020)	(0.020)	(0.020)	(0.020)
Five-year birth cohorts	no	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes
Duration dependence	poly	poly	poly	poly	np	poly
Unobserved heterogeneity	no	no	no	no	no	yes
Log-likelihood / 1000	−9973.84	−9885.94	−9884.76	−9846.89	−9846.28	−9802.94
BIC / 1000	19947.86	19772.28	19769.93	19694.24	19693.22	19606.25

Notes: Duration dependence "poly" represents a sixth-degree polynomial in $\ln(age - 17)$ and "np" an exhaustive set of age dummies. BIC is the Schwartz Information Criterion. All specifications are weighted using sample weights. Starred coefficients are significant at the 1 percent level.

Table 4: Discrete-time duration model for the age at first marriage, women ($n = 53,803$)

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
Period 1 (1998–2000)	0.031*	0.039*	−0.034*	−0.052*	−0.046*	0.028*
	(0.003)	(0.003)	(0.004)	(0.004)	(0.004)	(0.004)
Period 2 (2001–2005)	−0.127*	−0.116*	−0.210*	−0.234*	−0.230*	−0.130*
	(0.005)	(0.005)	(0.006)	(0.006)	(0.006)	(0.006)
Linear trend (1995=0)	−0.029*	−0.029*	−0.020*	−0.017*	−0.017*	−0.020*
	(0.001)	(0.001)	(0.001)	(0.001)	(0.001)	(0.001)
Education (omitted category: Senior vocational)						
Primary education		−0.027*	−0.027*	0.011*	0.011*	0.545*
		(0.004)	(0.004)	(0.004)	(0.004)	(0.007)
Secondary vocational		0.094*	0.094*	0.098*	0.098*	0.400*
		(0.002)	(0.002)	(0.002)	(0.002)	(0.003)
General secondary		−0.344*	−0.345*	−0.265*	−0.265*	−0.418*
		(0.003)	(0.003)	(0.003)	(0.003)	(0.004)
Higher professional		−0.449*	−0.450*	−0.397*	−0.397*	−0.691*
		(0.002)	(0.002)	(0.002)	(0.002)	(0.003)
College		−0.786*	−0.786*	−0.647*	−0.647*	−1.101*
		(0.003)	(0.003)	(0.003)	(0.003)	(0.004)
Ethnicity (omitted category: Natives)						
Western immigrants		−0.255*	−0.255*	−0.194*	−0.194*	−0.173*
		(0.003)	(0.003)	(0.003)	(0.003)	(0.004)
Turks/Moroccans		1.469*	1.467*	1.608*	1.608*	2.822*
		(0.003)	(0.003)	(0.003)	(0.003)	(0.006)
Surinamese/Arubans		−0.519*	−0.518*	−0.330*	−0.330*	−0.164*
		(0.005)	(0.005)	(0.005)	(0.005)	(0.008)
Other non-Western immigrants		−0.130*	−0.130*	−0.009	−0.009	0.175*
		(0.005)	(0.005)	(0.005)	(0.005)	(0.007)
Regional unemployment rate			−0.017*	−0.022*	−0.022*	−0.022*
			(0.001)	(0.001)	(0.001)	(0.001)
Urban indicator				−0.238*	−0.238*	−0.324*
				(0.002)	(0.002)	(0.002)
Bible belt				0.661*	0.661*	1.004*
				(0.004)	(0.004)	(0.005)
Four largest cities				−0.268*	−0.268*	−0.370*
				(0.002)	(0.002)	(0.003)
Constant	−5.021*	−4.948*	−4.830*	−4.705*	−4.710*	−8.209*
	(0.007)	(0.007)	(0.008)	(0.009)	(0.009)	(0.013)
Five-year birth cohorts	no	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes
Duration dependence	poly	poly	poly	poly	np	poly
Unobserved heterogeneity	no	no	no	no	no	yes
Log-likelihood / 1000	−8966.37	−8777.34	−8776.94	−8732.63	−8732.27	−8641.61
BIC / 1000	17932.91	17555.08	17554.29	17465.73	17465.14	17283.57

Notes: Duration dependence "poly" represents a sixth-degree polynomial in $\ln(age - 17)$ and "np" an exhaustive set of age dummies. BIC is the Schwartz Information Criterion. All specifications are weighted using sample weights. Starred coefficients are significant at the 1 percent level.

Table 5: Discrete-time duration model for the age at first marriage, by location

	Men		Women	
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
Bible belt				
Main effect	0.968*	0.922*	0.994*	1.021*
	(0.008)	(0.008)	(0.007)	(0.008)
Period 1 (1998–2000)	−0.232*	−0.044*	−0.283*	−0.041*
	(0.010)	(0.011)	(0.010)	(0.011)
Period 2 (2001–2005)	−0.483*	0.029	−0.640*	−0.022
	(0.010)	(0.012)	(0.010)	(0.012)
Four largest cities				
Main effect	−0.029*	−0.166*	0.076*	−0.047*
	(0.006)	(0.006)	(0.006)	(0.006)
Period 1 (1998–2000)	−0.283*	−0.185*	−0.333*	−0.127*
	(0.007)	(0.008)	(0.007)	(0.008)
Period 2 (2001–2005)	−0.283*	−0.260*	−0.580*	−0.556*
	(0.008)	(0.009)	(0.008)	(0.009)
Rest of the Netherlands				
Period 1 (1998–2000)	0.006	0.035*	0.006	0.055*
	(0.004)	(0.004)	(0.004)	(0.005)
Period 2 (2001–2005)	−0.053*	−0.009	−0.158*	−0.072*
	(0.006)	(0.006)	(0.006)	(0.006)
Linear trend (1995=0)	−0.035*	−0.035*	−0.017*	−0.020*
	(0.001)	(0.001)	(0.001)	(0.001)
Constant	−6.784*	−6.128*	−4.765*	−8.233*
	(0.020)	(0.020)	(0.009)	(0.013)
Unobserved heterogeneity	no	yes	no	yes
Log-likelihood / 1000	−9845.00	−9802.21	−8729.29	−8638.51
BIC / 1000	19690.54	19604.85	17459.12	17277.43
Number of individuals	70,718		53,803	

Notes: All specifications include controls for eduction, ethnicity, regional unemployment rate and urbanization, and are weighted using sample weights. Starred coefficients are significant at the 1 percent level.

Table 6: Descriptive statistics and variable weights, synthetic control

Variable	Mean, 1988–1997			Loading
	Netherlands	Potential donors	Synthetic control	
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
Crude marriage rate	5.84	6.31	5.85	—
Population 25–44 y.o. (%)	32.32	29.52	30.20	0.00002
Urban population (%)	70.87	70.36	68.99	0.00001
Ratio of women to men	1.01	1.03	1.03	0.00002
Age at first marriage, men (years)	28.51	27.08	28.24	0.00001
Age at first marriage, women (years)	26.28	24.8	26.28	0.01606
Labor force participation, men 25–34 y.o. (%)	94.22	94.04	94.21	0.00869
Labor force participation, women 25–34 y.o. (%)	69.67	64.13	69.62	0.00110
Fertility rate	1.57	1.7	1.57	0.94617
Girls' enrollment share in tertiary education (%)	46.56	47.99	44.03	0.00018
Unemployment, all 25-34 y.o. (%)	6.67	8.39	6.67	0.00303
Inflation (%)	2.21	14.87	3.00	0.02470

Table 7: Optimal weights in the synthetic control

Country	Synthetic control for: Netherlands (1)	Synthetic control for: Switzerland (2)
Australia	0	0
Austria	0.138	0.089
Czech Republic	0	0
Germany	0.074	0.441
Greece	0	0
Hungary	0	0
Ireland	0.097	0.189
Italy	0.139	0
Japan	0.068	0.001
Korea	0	0.238
New Zealand	0.103	0
Poland	0	0
Portugal	0	0
Switzerland	0.381	—
Turkey	0	0
United Kingdom	0	0.042
United States	0	0

Table 8: Differences between marriage and union rates and synthetic control

	Absolute difference between synthetic control and			
	Netherlands			Switzerland
	Crude marriage rate (1)	Different-sex marriage rate (2)	Different-sex union rate (3)	Crude marriage rate (4)
1988–1997				
Max	0.28	0.28	0.28	0.51
% of mean during period	4.81	4.81	4.81	8.03
% of year when max occurred	4.54	4.54	4.54	7.29
1998–2000				
Max	0.34	0.34	0.44	0.22
% of mean during period	6.10	6.10	7.67	4.05
% of year when max occurred	6.01	6.01	7.56	4.13
2001–2005				
Max	0.61	0.68	0.33	0.32
% of mean during period	12.53	14.27	6.55	6.08
% of year when max occurred	13.78	15.62	6.98	5.95
2005 only				
Max	0.61	0.68	0.33	0.16
% of value	13.78	15.62	6.98	2.92

Notes: "Max" is the largest absolute difference between the synthetic control and the corresponding measure. "% of mean during period" refers to the ratio of the max defined above to the average of the corresponding measure during the indicated period, expressed as a percentage. "% of year when max occured" is the ratio of the max to the value of the corresponding variable during the year when the largest absolute difference is observed, expressed as a percentage. For "2005 only", only the last ratio is defined.