

Why Do Intimate Partners Not Live Together? Understanding Diversity in LAT Relationships Across Europe

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Abstract

The prevalence and meaning of Living Apart Together relationships across Europe is examined. Persons in a LAT-relationship view themselves as intimate partners but do not live together. Three main reasons for not living together are distinguished: partners can feel that they are not ready yet to start living together, they can opt for a LAT for practical reasons, or they can choose to do so to secure their autonomy. Using data from the Generations and Gender Survey on seven European countries, the prevalence and correlates of these types of LAT-relationships is examined. In addition, hypotheses on variation in the prevalence of these different types of LAT-relationships across countries are tested. To many, not living with a partner does not simply constitute some kind of extended dating period. Practical constraints seem to matter particularly much in Eastern European countries. In France and Germany, LAT as a conscious choice is more prevalent.

Introduction

In the last decades, the ways in which people structure their intimate relationships have diversified across developed societies. During most of the 20th century, marriage was the dominant way to structure relationships. Since the 1970s, unmarried cohabitation has become more popular (Bumpass & Lu, 2000; Kiernan, 2004). In more recent years, attention has also focused on people who have someone whom they consider to be an intimate partner, but who are not living with them (Strohm et al., 2009). Whereas this was considered to be a short-lived experience in the past, just a kind of prelude before entering marriage, it has allegedly become a more conscious long-term way of structuring relationships in recent years. De Jong-Gierveld (2004, 2008), for instance, uses the term LAT or Living Apart Together, and defines this as a relationship in which partners choose to keep separate households, and only live together on a part-time basis. Strohm et al. (2009) define it as people keeping separate households, but defining themselves as part of a couple.

As yet, little is known about the prevalence of LAT relationships across developed societies, about the reasons why people opt for this arrangement and about the characteristics of those in a LAT relationship. This situation makes it difficult to decide whether we are dealing with a really new phenomenon that warrants attention both from a scientific and a policy perspective, or that it basically is a variation of the old extended dating arrangement.

This paper aims to extend our knowledge about LAT relationships in developed countries. It sets out to answer three interrelated questions:

1. How prevalent is having an intimate partner outside the household across a range of developed countries?
2. Why do people opt for this living arrangement? Could different types of LAT relationships be distinguished?
3. What is the socio-demographic and attitudinal profile of people who have a LAT relationship, does this profile differ by type of LAT, and how does it compare to that of people with other partner statuses?

To answer these questions, we will use data from the Generations and Gender Survey (GGS; www.ggp-i.org). The GGS is a comparative panel survey conducted in a large number of European and other developed countries (United Nations, 2005; Vikat et al., 2007). It offers a unique opportunity to examine cross-national differences in intimate relationships. An additional attractive feature of the GGS is its broad age-range (18-79 years of age), that allows one to examine to what extent LAT relationships are a phenomenon that is basically restricted to younger age groups or is prevalent among older adults as well.

Understanding LAT relationships

Different types of LAT

Why would people who have an intimate relationship not live with one another? This question is relevant given that most people who have a partner, live together with him or her (either married or unmarried). Starting from the assumption that people's behavior is influenced by both preferences and constraints, one could argue that the choice not to live together is the outcome of either constraints or preferences. It could be that partners would like to live together, but are not able to do so, for instance because they are employed in different cities or because they lack the financial resources to start living with a partner. However, partners could also prefer not to live together. In the latter instance, there are two quite different reasons to do so. One reason to prefer not to live together is that one has the feeling that one is not ready yet to make this far-reaching decision. This probably pertains most to people who have only recently started a relationship. They may not yet know their partner sufficiently well to judge whether the relationship has the potential to be long-lasting. They need more time to decide whether they want to start living together. A quite different reason to prefer not to live together is that one wants to be involved in a long-lasting committed

relationship, but values one's privacy so much, that one prefers to keep separate households. This reason to be in a LAT relationship tunes in with the alleged increased preference for autonomy that permeates modern societies (Lesthaeghe, 2010). Often, it is assumed that this last element – the preference to safeguard one's autonomy – is a defining feature of the alleged rise in LAT (De Jong Gierveld, 2004, 2008; Strohm et al., 2009). However, a French survey (Régnier-Loilier, Beaujouan, & Villeneuve-Gokalp, 2009), suggests that practical reasons are most important to the majority of people who live in a LAT. It could well be that people who have a LAT relationship are a rather heterogeneous group. To examine this issue, we will classify people having a LAT relationship in different European countries according to the main reasons they provide for their choice for this living arrangement. Clearly, this typology of reasons to be in a LAT relationship is analytical in nature. In practice, it is very likely that people are motivated to be in a LAT relationship for a mix of reasons, and that both preferences and constraints play a role.

Socio-demographic and attitudinal profile of persons having a LAT relationship

What kind of people are living in a LAT relationship? Again, we know relatively little about this topic. If people mainly opt for LAT based on considerations of autonomy, it could be expected that groups that are often viewed as forerunners in the process of the Second Demographic Transition will be overrepresented among those that opt for this living arrangement. Thus, the higher educated, the young and those who are not or not very religious could be expected to be overrepresented among those in a LAT relationship (Strohm et al., 2009). It could also be expected that people who opt for LAT have attitudes concerning family-related issues that are often linked to the Second Demographic Transition, e.g. not very marriage-minded and opposed to a gendered division of labor (Lesthaeghe & Moors, 2002). However, one could also argue that there probably will be much heterogeneity in the socio-demographic and attitudinal profiles of people who opt for LAT. E.g., one could assume that LAT is primarily a kind of relationship that is prevalent among young age groups. One reason for this is because many young people may only know their partner for a relatively short period of time, and thus they will not be ready to enter into cohabitation as yet. Another reason could be that the emphasis on autonomy and privacy as key individual values is a relatively recent phenomenon and may resonate to a much stronger extent among younger cohorts than among older ones. A third reason could be that the restrictions on living together are potentially stronger for young people than for older people, as the former are more likely to live at home or lack the resources to have adequate housing for a couple. On the other hand, one could argue that older people might hold a stronger preference for LAT. One reason could be that singles among them may have got used to a 'single' lifestyle and may not be willing to sacrifice this by starting to cohabit. Another reason could be that people may have had negative experiences in married or cohabiting relationships in the past and may want to avoid this in the future. The educational profile of people in a LAT relationship is not clear either. On the one hand, one could argue – like we did above – that the higher educated may value autonomy and privacy more than people with a low level of education. On the other hand, one could argue that people with a low level of educational attainment may lack the resources to start living together, and thus are more likely to end up in a LAT relationship. To examine this issue, we will compare people in a LAT relationship with singles, cohabitants and married people on a number of socio-demographic and attitudinal characteristics. To examine heterogeneity, we will also compare different types of LAT on these characteristics. It is expected that people who opt for LAT out of ideological reasons have a quite different socio-demographic and attitudinal profile than people who opt for LAT out of practical reasons.

Cross-national differences in LAT relationships

Cross-national information on the prevalence of LAT relationships and on the relative importance of the different types of LAT relationships is lacking. To date, studies have mainly focused on specific countries, like the USA (Strohm et al., 2009), France (Régnier-Loilier et al., 2009), and the

Netherlands (De Jong Gierveld, 2004, 2008). If LAT is a heterogeneous living arrangement, it could well be that country-differences exist, both in the proportion of people opting for this living arrangement and in the distribution of these people across different types of LAT. For instance, in countries with large housing shortages, people could be 'forced' to have a LAT relationship for a considerable amount of time. Housing shortages are more likely in Eastern European countries than in Western European ones. On the other hand, Eastern European countries have a long tradition of dealing with such shortages by having the partner of a child moving in with the parents (Fokkema & Liefbroer, 2008). Thus, it is unclear whether LAT for practical reasons will be more common in Western than in Eastern Europe. With regard to opting for a LAT relationship out of considerations of autonomy and privacy, this could be expected to be more common in Western European countries that are more 'advanced' in the Second Demographic Transition (Sobotka, 2008).

Methods

Data

The data are from the Generations and Gender Survey, a series of comparative panel surveys conducted in many European and other developed countries (United Nations, 2005; Vikat et al., 2007). Currently, first waves of the longitudinal survey have been conducted in 19 countries. Harmonized datasets are available for eleven countries. The current analysis is based on seven countries that have full information on all the questions on LAT relationships¹. These countries are France, Germany, Austria, Bulgaria, Romania, Russia and Georgia². Data were collected between 2004 and 2008. An advantage of the GGS is its large data size and the coverage of a broad age-range. This allows one to study the prevalence of different types of LAT relationships across the age spectrum. The number of respondents across countries varies between 10,000 and 12,858 and the age range is from 18 to 79. Austria constitutes an exception with 5,000 respondents and an age-range from 18 to 49.

Measurement

Partner status All respondents who indicated that they did not have a partner in the household were asked whether they currently had 'an intimate relationship with someone they were not living with'. They were explicitly reminded that this could also be their spouse or a partner in a same-sex relationship. Based on this and on additional information on whether respondents were living with a partner and whether they were married, four different types of partner statuses were distinguished: single, cohabiting, married, and LAT.

Types of LAT relationships. We further distinguished between different types of LAT relationships based on a series of questions. Respondents who indicated that they had a partner with whom they were not sharing a household were asked 'Are you living apart because you and/or your partner want to or because circumstances prevent you from living together?' Answer categories included 'I want to live apart', 'Both my partner and I want to live apart', 'My partner wants to live apart', and 'We are constrained by circumstances'. Finally, the main reason why partners lived apart (financial reasons, to keep independence, because of children, not yet ready for living together, other), or the main constraining circumstances (work circumstances, financial circumstances, housing circumstances, legal circumstances, my partner has another family, other) were acquired about. Based on the answers to these questions, four types of LAT were distinguished. If respondents felt

¹ Norway, The Netherlands, Hungary and Estonia have information on whether respondents have a LAT relationship, but lack questions on the reasons for being in a LAT relationship. Thus, it is not possible to classify respondents into types of LAT. In the full paper version, descriptive information on the prevalence of LAT in these countries, plus Belgium, will also be provided.

² In the full paper version, Belgium will also be included in the analyses.

that either they themselves or their partner was not ready to start living together yet, they were classified as 'LAT – not ready yet'. If respondents indicated their need to keep their autonomy, they were classified as 'LAT – independence'. Respondents who emphasized practical reasons were classified as 'LAT – practical reasons'. Finally, respondents in a LAT relationship for whom it was unclear what their main reason for LAT was, were classified as 'LAT – other'.

Union formation intentions. Every respondent who had a partner outside the household was asked 'Do you intend to start living with your partner during the next three years?' Answer categories were 'definitely not', 'probably not', 'probably yes' and 'definitely yes'. A dichotomous variable was created, by contrasting those who answered 'probably yes' or 'definitely yes' to the others.

Educational attainment. Respondents were asked what the highest level of education was that they completed successfully. Answers were coded according to the International Standard Classification of Education (ISCED), although some countries used a slightly different country-specific coding scheme. Respondents were categorized into three groups. Those with ISCED codes 0 through 2 (lower secondary education or less) were classified as 'low education', those with ISCED codes 3 or 4 (higher secondary education) were classified as 'medium education', and those with ISCED codes 5 or 6 (tertiary education) were classified as 'high education'.

Religiousness. Three questions were posed on the importance of baptism, having a religious wedding and having a religious funeral. An example is 'It is important for an infant to be registered in the appropriate religious ceremony'. Respondents could answer on a five-point scale ranging from 'strongly disagree' to 'strongly agree'. In all countries, the three items form a reliable scale with Cronbach's α ranging from 0.79 in Russia to 0.90 in Germany. A higher scale score indicates a stronger commitment to institutionalized religion.

Attitudes. Two attitude items were selected, one tapping into respondents' opinions about marriage and one about their views on gender roles. First, respondents had to respond to the item 'Marriage is an outdated institution'. Answers run from 'strongly agree' (1) to 'strongly disagree' (5). A higher score indicates a more favorable view on marriage. Second, respondents had to answer the item 'Looking after the home or family is just as fulfilling as working for pay'. Answers range from 'strongly agree' (1) to 'strongly disagree' (5). A higher score is interpreted as indicating a stronger preference for gender equality.

Age. Four age-categories were distinguished: 18-25, 26-35, 36-50, and 51-79 years of age.

Analysis strategy

First, descriptive information on the prevalence of LAT relationships and the distribution across different types of LAT relationships are presented, separately per country and for different age groups. Next, the socio-demographic and attitudinal profiles of people in LAT relationships are compared, both among themselves and to respondents in other living arrangements. For this analysis, data from the seven countries are pooled.³ Five sets of regression analyses are performed, with partner status being the main independent variable of interest. The five dependent variables are union formation intention, educational attainment, religiosity, marriage-mindedness and gender equality.⁴ In all instances except the first, it is examined whether respondents who have a LAT relationship differ from respondents in other partner statuses. Controls are added for age, gender and country. In each instance, several models are estimated. In the first model, all respondents who are in a LAT relationship are compared to respondents in other partner statuses. In the second model, respondents having a LAT relationship are subdivided according to their reason for LAT. Next, the second model is repeated for Eastern and Western countries separately. Binomial logistic regression

³ In the current version, no weighting has been applied. For the full paper version, it is planned that the data will be reweighted so that each country is equally represented in the pooled data set.

⁴ The use of the terms 'independent' and 'dependent' variables does not imply that we assume a causal relationship between these variables with partner status 'causing' differences in socio-demographic and attitudinal profiles.

is used for the analysis of union formation intention, multinomial logistic regression is used for the analysis of educational attainment, and OLS regression is used for the analyses of the other dependent variables.

Results

Descriptive analyses

To get a first impression of the prevalence of LAT, we focus on respondents who are not living with a partner, and calculated what percentage of them could be classified as having a LAT relationship (Figure 1). The highest percentage is observed in Austria, but only respondents aged 50 and below were interviewed in that country. Almost a quarter of non-cohabiting respondents in France, Germany and Russia identify themselves as having an intimate partner outside the household. This percentage is between 10 and 15 in Romania and Bulgaria. In Georgia, the percentage is by far the lowest.

Figure 1 and Figure 2 about here

A next question is for what reasons people in these countries do not live with their partner, but decided to keep separate households. In Figure 2, the distribution of persons not living with their partner across the types of the LAT typology is shown. In all countries, practical reasons are mentioned most often. The percentage of respondents mentioning practical reasons ranges from 47 per cent in Germany to 75 per cent in Georgia. Employment-related reasons are the most common types of reasons mentioned by respondents in France and Germany. In Eastern European countries, housing-related reasons are most often mentioned, followed by financial reasons (results not shown). 'Not being ready yet' is mentioned most often in Bulgaria and Romania – by 22 and 24 per cent, respectively. In Georgia, only six per cent of respondents mention this reason. Not living with one's partner for reasons of independence is mentioned most often in France and Germany – by 21 and 25 per cent, respectively. The percentage of respondents not living with their partner that mention this reason in Romania, Bulgaria and Russia varies between 12 and 14. Again, the percentage is lowest – at eight per cent – in Georgia. Finally, there is a relatively small residual category that states other reasons in all countries.

Table 1 about here

Additionally, we performed some descriptive analyses on the gender and age profiles of the different types of LAT relationships. No large gender differences in the distribution of respondents across the categories of the LAT typology appeared (results not shown). However, clear age patterns in the distribution across categories of the LAT typology were observed. In Table 1, the percentage of all respondents in a LAT relationship who mentioned practical reasons, independence and no readiness for living together are presented, per country and per age category. In all countries with the exception of Georgia, respondents over the age of 50 are more likely than younger age groups to mention independence as a reason for not wanting to live together. In France and Germany, this increase over age categories in independence as a reason to keep separate households mainly occurs at the expense of practical reasons. Practical reasons are important to option for a LAT-relationship, but become somewhat less important among older respondents. In Bulgaria, Romania and Russia, the increase in independence as a reason for opting for LAT among older respondents is mainly compensated by a decrease in the proportion of respondents who state that they are not ready yet to enter into a union. In Austria, a strong increase in respondents mentioning independence as a reason for LAT is observed across age categories, but this increase occurs at the expense of both other types of categories.

Multivariate analyses

To further examine the attitudinal and socio-demographic profiles of respondents who opt for LAT, regression analysis were performed. A first analysis examined whether there were differences among respondents in different types of LAT relationships in their intention to start living with their partner. In Table 2, results of a binomial logistic regression analysis are presented in which it is examined to what extent people intend to start living with their partner within the next three years. In Model 1, data for all seven countries are pooled. Respondents who are LAT because of independence have by far the lowest intention to start living with their partner. The odds ratio of doing so for respondents who are in a LAT relationship because they feel not ready yet to enter into a union are more than twice as high ($\exp(0.85) = 2.34$) and those for respondents who are in a LAT relationship for practical reasons are even four times as high ($\exp(1.39) = 4.01$). Respondents who are in a LAT relationship for 'other' reasons are more similar in their intentions about future union formation, but still have an odds ratio that is 88 per cent higher than that of respondents who are in a LAT relationship because they value their independence. The results in Model 1 further show that respondents aged 26-35 are most likely to intend to start living with their partner within the next three years, followed by those aged 18-25 and those aged 36-50. Respondents over the age of 50 are by far the least likely to intend to start living together. Country differences in the intention to start living with one's partner in the next three years are relatively small. Respondents in France and Romania are most likely to do so, whereas respondents in Russia are least likely.

Table 2 about here

The next two models in Table 2 repeat the analysis, but now separately for respondents living in Eastern European countries and respondents living in Western European ones. The pattern of differences between respondents in different LAT statuses is similar in both parts of Europe, but the difference between those who are in a LAT relationship because they value independence and those who are in a LAT relationship for any of the other reasons is more pronounced in Western Europe than in Eastern Europe.

Next, we examined differences in educational attainment between respondents in different partner statuses. Results of multinomial logistic regression analyses are presented in Table 3. In Model 1, respondents in a LAT relationship are compared to respondents who are single, cohabiting or married, respectively. Overall, clear differences between respondents in a LAT relationship and other respondents emerge. Respondents in a LAT relationship are less likely than singles, cohabitants and married respondents to have a low rather than a medium level of education, and are more likely to have a high rather than a medium level of education. This implies that those in a LAT relationship generally are more highly educated than those who are married, cohabiting or single. Age differences suggest that the youngest age group is less likely to have a high level of education than others. This probably reflects that many respondents under the age of 26 have not yet completed their education yet. Overall, women are both more likely to have a low and a high level of education than men are. Country differences are hard to interpret, as these partially reflect large differences across countries in educational systems.

Table 3 about here

In Model 2, those in a LAT relationship are further subdivided into four groups. Results show that the differences in educational attainment between respondents in different types of LAT are statistically non-significant. The analysis that focuses on Eastern European countries generally mirrors the full model, with one exception: Those who are in a LAT relationship because they value their independence are less likely to have a low rather than a medium level of education than those who are in a LAT relationship for 'other' reasons. Finally, the analysis for Western European countries shows that there is very little difference in educational attainment across partner statuses, with one

exception: single respondents are more likely to have a low level of education and less likely to have a high level of education than respondents in a LAT relationship.

Table 4 about here

Next, analyses were performed on partner status differences in the importance that individuals attach to religion. The results of these analyses are presented in Table 4. Model 1 shows that respondents in a LAT relationship attach less importance to religion than married and single respondents, but that they attach more importance to religion than cohabiting respondents. In addition, the oldest age group attaches most importance to religion, women attach more importance to religion than men, and respondents in Eastern Europe generally attach more importance to religion than respondents in Western Europe. Religion is least important in Germany and France and most important in Romania and Georgia.

In Model 2, respondents in a LAT relationship are subdivided. Respondents who are in a LAT relationship because they value independence and for 'other' reasons attach less importance to religion than respondents who are in a LAT relationship for practical reasons or because they do not feel ready yet to live together. Respondents who are in a LAT relationship because they value independence do not differ from cohabiting respondents. Respondents who are in a LAT relationship because they are not ready to enter into a union yet and respondents who are in a LAT relationship because of practical reasons, do not differ much from singles.

In the last two models, separate analyses on Western and Eastern Europe are reported upon. Clear differences between both sets of countries emerge. In Eastern Europe, there are hardly any differences across partner statuses in the importance that respondents attach to religion. Respondents who are in a LAT relationship for 'other' reasons and cohabiting respondents are slightly less religious than respondents who are in a LAT-relationship because they value their independence. No other major differences emerge. In Western Europe, though, clear differences emerge. Respondents who are in a LAT relationship because they are not ready yet to enter into a union or because of practical reasons attach more importance to religion than those who are in a LAT relationship because they value independence or for 'other' reasons. Those who are in a LAT relationship because they value independence do not differ much in the importance they attach to religion from cohabitants, but they are clearly less religious than single and married respondents.

Table 5 about here

In Table 5, results are presented on respondents views on marriage. In Model 1, the views of respondents in a LAT relationship on whether marriage is an outdated institution are compared to those who are single, cohabiting or married. Respondents in a LAT relationship are less likely to think that marriage is an outdated institution than respondents who are cohabiting, somewhat more likely to think so than singles, and much more likely to think so than married respondents. In addition, respondents aged 50 and over were least likely to agree that marriage is an outdated institution, and those aged 26 to 50 were a bit more likely to do so than the youngest age category. Women are more likely to agree that marriage is an outdated institution than men. Bulgarian respondents are clearly least likely to agree that marriage is an outdated institution, followed by respondents in Russia and Austria. Differences between other countries are limited.

From Model 2, it becomes clear that respondents who are in a LAT relationship because they value independence clearly stand out. Whereas Model 1 shows that, in general, respondents in a LAT relationship are less likely to agree that marriage is an outdated institution than those who cohabit, Model 2 shows that respondents who are LAT because they value independence are more likely than cohabitants to agree that marriage is an outdated institution. Respondents who are in a LAT relationship because they value independence are more likely to feel that marriage is an outdated institution than respondents who are in a LAT relationship for other kind of reasons.

The separate models for Eastern and Western Europe show that attitudes toward marriage differ much more by partner status in Western than in Eastern Europe. In Eastern Europe, those who are in a LAT relationship because they value independence hold attitudes that do not differ much from cohabitants and from other respondents in a LAT relationship – with the exception of those who are in a LAT relationship because of practical reasons. This latter group has a more favorable attitude towards marriage. In Western Europe, differences are much more pronounced. Those who are in a LAT relationship because they value independence agree by far the most that marriage is an outdated institution. The attitudes of other respondents in a LAT relationship compare more to those of singles, and occupy a middle ground between cohabiting and married respondents.

Table 6 about here

The final issue on which respondents in LAT relationships and others are compared is with regard to their attitude towards gender equality. In Table 5, results are presented of a regression analysis of disagreement with the statement that looking after the home or family is just as fulfilling as working for pay. The results in Model 1 show that there are only limited differences in this attitude across partner statuses. Married respondents are less likely to disagree with this statement than the other groups. Respondents in a LAT relation do not differ much from single or cohabiting respondents. Age differences are limited as well. Those aged 51 and over are more likely to agree that household labor is as fulfilling as paid employment than respondents aged 50 or less. Women are a bit more likely to disagree with the statement than men. Country differences are larger. Respondents in Bulgaria and Romania are more likely to disagree with this statement than respondents in other countries.

In Model 2, the LAT category is subdivided, leading to larger differences by partner status. Respondents who are in a LAT relationship because they value independence are more likely to disagree that household labor is as fulfilling as paid work than respondents who are in a LAT relationship for practical reasons. In addition, respondents who are in a LAT relationship because they value independence are also more likely to disagree with the statement than single, cohabiting and married respondents.

Results presented in the last two columns of Table 6 again show that the differences across partner status are more pronounced in Western than in Eastern Europe. In Eastern Europe, those who are in a LAT relationship for ‘other’ reasons are more likely than those in a LAT relationship for reasons of independence to disagree that household labor is as fulfilling as paid labor. Differences between other partner status categories are relatively limited. In Western Europe, those who are in a LAT relationship because they value independence are more likely to disagree that household labor is as fulfilling as paid labor than all other partner statuses – with the exception of those who have a LAT relationship for ‘other’ reasons.

Conclusion and discussion

In line with recent literature on the Second Demographic Transition, Living Apart Together is often viewed as a living arrangement that indicates that nowadays independence and autonomy are valued more and commitment is valued less in intimate relationships. This paper examined the prevalence of LAT in different European countries and – more importantly – the meaning attached to LAT in these countries, and whether that meaning varies across the continent.

The prevalence of LAT was – generally – higher in Western European countries than in Eastern European countries, but there were exceptions to this rule. In Russia, for instance, 25 per cent of those not living with a partner were in a LAT relationship, a percentage that is comparable to that in France and Germany. Although informative, it is hard to draw strong conclusions from these data on prevalence. For one, one would need trend data to examine whether the prevalence of LAT has increased over time. For another, one would need information on the meaning of LAT for those involved to examine whether LAT can be interpreted as an indicator of weak commitment to intimate relationships.

Information on the reasons respondents gave for their choice of LAT allowed us to delve deeper into the 'meaning' of LAT. In all countries, practical reasons for opting for a LAT relationship were cited most often. Another frequently cited reason was that respondents felt that they were not ready yet to start living with a partner. LAT for reasons of independence and autonomy was only mentioned by a minority. In France and Germany, for example, it was mentioned by 20 to 25 per cent of all respondents who had a LAT relationship. These figures suggest that – in contrast to what is often assumed – LAT is mainly a living arrangement that people enter into because of practical reasons. One reason that is often cited is that partners hold jobs in places that are too far apart to allow establishing one household. Another reason that is often mentioned – in particular in Eastern European countries – is the absence of suitable and affordable housing. Ideological reasons for opting for a LAT relationship are generally more important among older age groups than among younger ones.

The multivariate analyses show that the profiles of respondents who opt for LAT because they value independence and of respondents who do so for practical reasons or because they do not feel ready to enter into a union differ strongly. The latter groups are largely comparable to singles in their level of religiosity and in their attitudes towards marriage and gender equality. Respondents who are in LAT because they value independence resemble cohabitants, but often are even more liberal than the latter. For instance, respondents who opt for LAT because they value independence are more likely than cohabitants to view marriage as an outdated institution and are less likely to view household labor as just as fulfilling as paid labor. Thus, they take a more liberal stance with regard to family life issues than cohabitants.

The basic tenets of the attitudinal profiles of the different categories of people in a LAT relationship are the same in both Eastern and Western European countries. However, differences – both between LAT and other partner statuses and across types of LAT – were much more pronounced in Western Europe than in Eastern Europe. This suggests that opting for LAT out of reasons of independence is much more of an ideologically imbued decision in Western European countries than in Eastern European ones.

Some of these findings are in line with expectations from Second Demographic Transition theory, in particular if one focuses on people who opt for a LAT relationship because they value independence. The fact that this option is more prevalent in Western Europe than in Eastern Europe and the fact that ideological reasons differentiate much more in Western Europe than in Eastern Europe resonate with other evidence that the SDT is much more advanced in Western European countries than in Eastern European ones (Liefbroer & Fokkema, 2008). That people who opt for LAT because they value independence have more liberal views than people in other partner statuses and that the higher educated and the less religious are overrepresented among them, also fits with expectations from SDT theory. At the same time, our results show that only a minority of people in a LAT relationship do so for ideological reasons. For most, it is a living arrangement entered into out of necessity. For others, it is a convenient – and probably temporary – arrangement to find out whether one wants to take further steps towards committing oneself, much like steady dating.

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Figure 1 Percentage of persons not living together that have a LAT relationship, per country

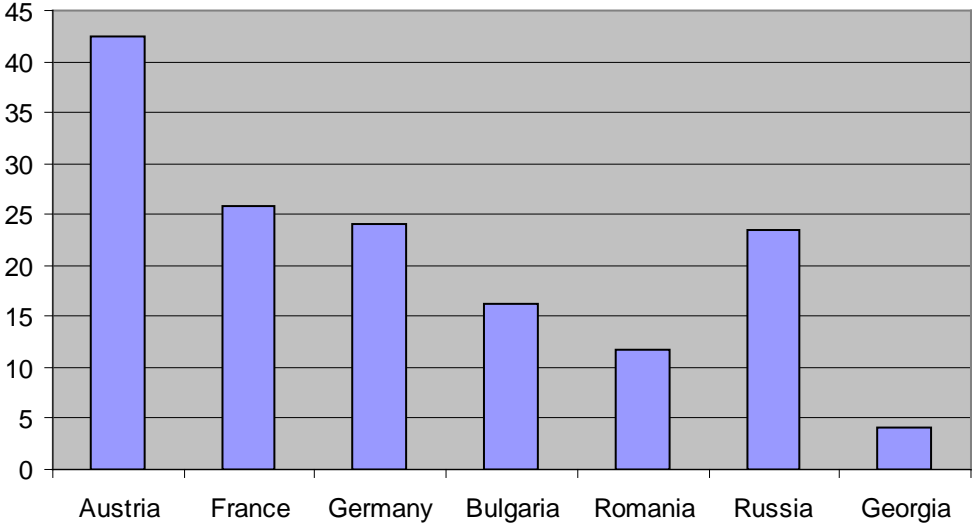


Figure 2 Reasons for opting for LAT, per country

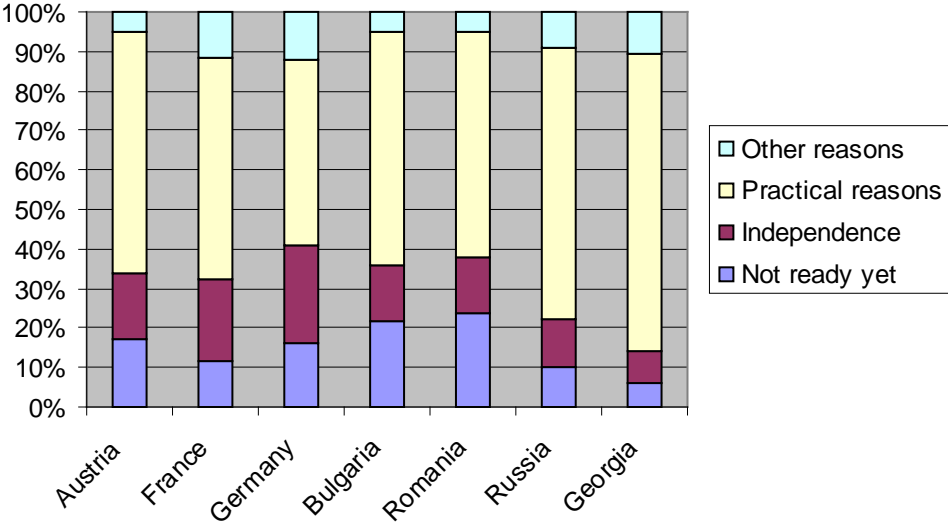


Table 1 Percentage of respondents who have a partner outside the household by reasons of being in a LAT relationships, country and age category

		Age			
		under 26	26-35	36-50	over 50
Austria	practical reasons	65.0	62.1	53.0	
	independence	9.3	17.4	31.0	
	not ready yet	22.7	14.6	8.5	
France	practical reasons	67.2	64.4	50.2	40.5
	independence	9.0	12.0	26.3	39.3
	not ready yet	12.6	10.0	11.5	10.7
Germany	practical reasons	58.2	43.4	41.8	34.8
	independence	11.6	23.8	33.2	43.5
	not ready yet	12.6	10.0	11.5	10.7
Bulgaria	practical reasons	59.8	59.4	56.0	59.5
	independence	9.4	15.8	24.0	21.6
	not ready yet	26.9	18.8	12.0	13.5
Romania	practical reasons	52.7	55.5	64.9	63.1
	independence	14.7	11.7	8.8	24.6
	not ready yet	27.3	30.	17.5	6.2
Russia	practical reasons	70.5	68.4	68.1	65.6
	independence	9.4	13.5	13.4	16.7
	not ready yet	15.0	10.1	6.4	4.0
Georgia	practical reasons	60.9	70.0	83.0	78.1
	independence	13.0	10.0	3.8	9.4
	not ready yet	8.7	10.0	5.7	0.0

Table 2 Logistic regression effects on the log odds ratio of entry into a union within three years

	Model 1	Model 1 - East	Model 1 - West
Constant	0.02	0.25	0.21
Partner status			
<i>Lat - not ready yet</i>	0.85 **	0.59 **	1.03 **
<i>Lat - independence</i>	ref	ref	ref
<i>Lat - practical reasons</i>	1.39 **	1.15 **	1.49 **
<i>Lat - other reasons</i>	0.63 **	0.22	0.83 **
Age			
18-25	ref	ref	ref
26-35	0.45 **	0.45 **	0.47 **
36-50	-0.59 **	-0.46 **	-0.72 **
51-79	-1.38 **	-0.75 **	-1.94 **
Gender			
<i>male</i>	ref	ref	ref
<i>female</i>	-0.11 †	-0.16 †	-0.07
Country			
<i>Bulgaria</i>	ref	ref	
<i>Russia</i>	-0.52 **	-0.57 **	
<i>Georgia</i>	0.12	-0.02	
<i>Romania</i>	0.62 **	0.50 **	
<i>Germany</i>	0.22 †		0.55 **
<i>France</i>	0.68 **		-0.28 *
<i>Austria</i>	0.04		ref
pseudo R ²	0.12	0.09	0.16

† p < 0.10 ; * p < 0.05; ** p < 0.01

Table 3 Multinomial regression effects on level of educational attainment

	Model 1		Model 2		Model 2 - East		Model 2 - West	
	low vs medium	high vs medium	low vs medium	high vs medium	low vs medium	high vs medium	low vs medium	high vs medium
Constant	-1.96 **	-1.61 **	-1.95 **	-1.66 **	-2.40 **	-1.71 **	-2.52 **	-1.91 **
Partner status								
<i>Single</i>	0.64 **	-0.31 **	0.64 **	-0.26 **	1.14 **	-0.33 *	0.44 **	-0.30 **
<i>Cohabiting</i>	0.72 **	-0.29 **	0.71 **	-0.24 **	1.59 **	-0.49 **	-0.01	-0.05
<i>Married</i>	0.29 **	-0.24 **	0.29 **	-0.19 *	0.76 **	-0.29 *	0.19	-0.12
<i>Lat</i>	ref	ref						
<i>Lat - not ready yet</i>			-0.07	-0.01	0.34	-0.04	-0.18	0.00
<i>Lat - independence</i>			ref	ref	ref	ref	ref	ref
<i>Lat - practical reasons</i>			0.00	0.07	0.25	0.03	0.01	0.07
<i>Lat - other reasons</i>			0.06	0.08	0.75 **	-0.02	-0.26	0.14
Age								
18-25	ref	ref	ref	ref	ref	ref	ref	ref
26-35	-0.20 **	0.83 **	-0.20 **	0.83 **	-0.21 **	0.78 **	-0.18 *	0.90 **
36-50	-0.13 **	0.66 **	-0.13 **	0.66 **	-0.33 **	0.54 **	0.19 **	0.85 **
51-79	1.24 **	0.71 **	1.24 **	0.71 **	1.25 **	0.67 **	1.12 **	0.73 **
Gender								
<i>male</i>	ref	ref	ref	ref	ref	ref	ref	ref
<i>female</i>	0.34 **	0.19 **	0.34 **	0.19 **	0.33 **	0.32 **	0.37 **	-0.04
Country								
<i>Bulgaria</i>	ref	ref	ref	ref	ref	ref		
<i>Russia</i>	-0.54 *	0.85 **	-0.54 *	0.85 **	-0.55 *	0.84 **		
<i>Georgia</i>	-1.01 **	0.20 **	-1.01 **	0.20 **	-1.03 **	0.21 **		
<i>Romania</i>	0.29 **	-0.72 **	0.29 **	-0.72 **	0.32 **	-0.71 **		
<i>Germany</i>	-1.17 **	0.02	-1.17 **	0.02			-0.49 **	0.48 **
<i>France</i>	0.24 **	0.48 **	0.24 **	0.48 **			0.92 **	0.94 **
<i>Austria</i>	-0.60 **	-0.44 **	-0.60 **	-0.44 **			ref	ref
R ²	0.09		0.09		0.11		0.07	

† p < 0.10 ; * p < 0.05; ** p < 0.01

Table 4 Regression effects on importance that individual attaches to religion

	Model 1	Model 2	Model 2 - East	Model 2 - West
Constant	3.53 **	3.38 **	3.58 **	2.76 **
Partner status				
<i>Single</i>	0.08 **	0.22 **	-0.01	0.33 **
<i>Cohabiting</i>	-0.11 **	0.03	-0.08 †	0.02
<i>Married</i>	0.16 **	0.30 **	0.02	0.50 **
<i>Lat</i>	ref			
<i>Lat - not ready yet</i>		0.17 **	0.03	0.21 *
<i>Lat - independence</i>		ref	ref	ref
<i>Lat - practical reasons</i>		0.19 **	0.03	0.23 **
<i>Lat - other reasons</i>		0.05	-0.04 *	0.10
Age				
18-25	ref	ref	ref	ref
26-35	-0.02 †	-0.02	0.02	-0.08 **
36-50	-0.05 **	-0.04 **	0.02 *	-0.15 **
51-79	0.13 **	0.13 **	0.08 **	0.27 **
Gender				
<i>male</i>	ref	ref	ref	ref
<i>female</i>	0.11 **	0.11 **	0.13 **	0.08 **
Country				
<i>Bulgaria</i>	ref	ref	ref	
<i>Russia</i>	-0.03 *	-0.03 *	-0.04 **	
<i>Georgia</i>	0.70 **	0.70 **	0.71 **	
<i>Romania</i>	0.88 **	0.88 **	0.90 **	
<i>Germany</i>	-0.51 **	-0.51 **		0.18 **
<i>France</i>	-0.34 **	-0.34 **		0.44 **
<i>Austria</i>	-0.17 **	-0.17 **		ref
R ²	0.25	0.25	0.27	0.05

† p < 0.10 ; * p < 0.05; ** p < 0.01

Table 5 Regression effects on level of disagreement with statement that 'marriage is an outdated institution'

	Model 1	Model 2	Model 2 - East	Model 2 - West
Constant	3.09 **	2.75 **	2.85 **	2.97 **
Partner status				
<i>Single</i>	0.12 **	0.45 **	0.36 **	0.40 **
<i>Cohabiting</i>	-0.13 **	0.21 **	0.06	0.25 **
<i>Married</i>	0.49 **	0.83 **	0.62 **	1.01 **
<i>Lat</i>	ref			
<i>Lat - not ready yet</i>		0.31 **	0.11	0.40 **
<i>Lat - independence</i>		ref	ref	ref
<i>Lat - practical reasons</i>		0.45 **	0.26 **	0.52 **
<i>Lat - other reasons</i>		0.27 **	0.08	0.33 **
Age				
18-25	ref	ref	ref	ref
26-35	-0.06 **	-0.06 **	-0.02	-0.11 **
36-50	-0.04 **	-0.03 **	0.08 **	-0.23 **
51-79	0.18 **	0.19 **	0.31 **	-0.07 **
Gender				
<i>male</i>	ref	ref	ref	ref
<i>female</i>	0.08 **	0.08 **	0.08 **	0.07 **
Country				
<i>Bulgaria</i>	ref	ref	ref	
<i>Russia</i>	0.19 **	0.19 **	0.17 **	
<i>Georgia</i>	0.43 **	0.43 **	0.42 **	
<i>Romania</i>	0.36 **	0.36 **	0.35 **	
<i>Germany</i>	0.30 **	0.30 **		0.19 **
<i>France</i>	0.31 **	0.31 **		0.21 **
<i>Austria</i>	0.17 **	0.17 **		ref
R ²	0.08	0.09	0.10	0.08

† p < 0.10 ; * p < 0.05; ** p < 0.01

Table 6 Regression effects on level of disagreement with statement that 'looking after the home or family is just as fulfilling as working for pay'

	Model 1	Model 2	Model 2 - East	Model 2 - West
Constant	2.73 **	2.81 **	2.74 **	2.45 **
Partner status				
<i>Single</i>	-0.01	-0.09 *	0.11 †	-0.18 **
<i>Cohabiting</i>	-0.01	-0.08 *	0.06	-0.14 **
<i>Married</i>	-0.06 **	-0.13 **	0.08	-0.27 **
<i>Lat</i>	ref			
<i>Lat - not ready yet</i>		-0.08	0.08	-0.15 †
<i>Lat - independence</i>		ref	ref	ref
<i>Lat - practical reasons</i>		-0.11 **	0.09	-0.21 **
<i>Lat - other reasons</i>		0.04	0.20 *	-0.05
Age				
18-25	ref	ref	ref	ref
26-35	0.00	0.00	-0.02	0.03 **
36-50	-0.01	-0.02	-0.05 **	0.04 **
51-79	-0.10 **	-0.11 **	-0.08 **	-0.17 **
Gender				
<i>male</i>	ref	ref	ref	ref
<i>female</i>	0.04 **	0.04 **	-0.04 **	0.19 **
Country				
<i>Bulgaria</i>	ref	ref	ref	
<i>Russia</i>	-0.37 **	-0.37 **	-0.36 **	
<i>Georgia</i>	-0.50 **	-0.50 **	-0.50 **	
<i>Romania</i>	0.01	0.01	0.00	
<i>Germany</i>	-0.37 **	-0.37 **		-0.13 **
<i>France</i>	-0.52 **	-0.52 **		-0.29 **
<i>Austria</i>	-0.19 **	-0.19 **		ref
R ²	0.04	0.05	0.05	0.03

† p < 0.10 ; * p < 0.05; ** p < 0.01