Union dissolution and internal mobility:
a comparison among natives and migrants

Helga A.G. de Valk[1,2]

Didier Willaert[2]

Maaike Jappens[2]

[1] Netherlands Interdisciplinary demographic institute

[2] Vrije Universiteit Brussel, Interface Demography

October 2011

Preliminary DRAFT: Please do not cite or quote

All correspondence to:

Helga de Valk

valk@nidi.nl

Union dissolution and internal mobility:
a comparison among natives and migrants

Helga A.G. de Valk, Didier Willaert, Maaike Jappens

Abstract

In this paper we first study patterns of separation and divorce among natives and migrants of different origin in Belgium. Second we link the divorce to internal mobility and test whether previous documented residential mobility patterns of divorced also apply for migrant populations. This study is novel in at least three respects. First of all only few studies have addressed levels and characteristics of divorce among migrant groups compared to the majority group population. We even go beyond a simply dichotomy and address the diversity in divorce among different origin groups living in Belgium. Second, our analyses not only cover divorce among married couples but we will just as well address separation among unmarried cohabiting couples. Third, we test what mobility patterns are predominant after divorce/separation among migrants and the majority group. Our multivariate analyses include factors of importance at the individual, couple and neighbourhood level and cover both levels and direction of moves. The analyses are based on the 2001 Belgian census, linked with population register data for 2006. All individuals who were part of a couple in 2001 are studied and we assess the levels of breakup of married and unmarried unions four years and three months later (in 2006). The data have rich information on individual and couple characteristics that will be taken into account in the multivariate analyses. For migrant origin we distinguish between six different (regions of) origins including both European and non-European migrants. We analyse the level of mobility linked to the divorce and study the direction of the residential moves of the partners as well as its determinants in more detail.

Key words: divorce, separation, migrants, Belgium, mobility

Union dissolution and internal mobility:
a comparison among natives and migrants

Helga A.G. de Valk, Didier Willaert, Maaike Jappens

Background

All over Europe divorce has been on the rise in the past decades and in several countries nowadays about a third of all recently contracted marriages ends in a divorce (Statistics Netherlands). More and more studies address the questions of causes and consequences of divorce for the individual, the family and society. Also Belgium has witnessed a considerable increase in divorce rates in recent decades, while marriage rates have been decreasing dramatically. Although a similar trend has been observed in other European countries, with more than 30,000 divorces every year and a crude divorce rate of 3 divorces per 1,000 persons, Belgium now takes a leading position within Europe (Eurostat 2011). Within Belgium, divorce rates are higher in Wallonia and the Brussels capital region and lower in Flanders (Statistics Belgium 2011).

However, most of the existing literature on divorce focus on the majority population and are not analyzing the migrant population in detail. For the studies that do distinguish migrant groups, are focusing on divorce among intermarried couples in particular. These latter studies start from the hypothesis that heterogamous marriages are more prone to dissolution than homogamous marriages. Several empirical studies have indeed confirmed this effect and in particular in the case of larger cultural differences the likelihood of a divorce increases (Kalmijn & De Graaf 2005; De Valk et al., 2004). Also in Belgium the few available studies from the National Population Register show that divorce is not only occurring among inhabitants of Belgian origin, but also among European and – to a slightly lesser extent – non-European migrants living in Flanders (Corijn & Lodewijckx 2009).

Studies on divorce however also predominantly address the dissolution of married unions. This is unfortunate as unmarried cohabiting unions are getting more and more important in many European countries, including Belgium. Although it is often suggested that these unmarried unions are less stable due to a lower level of commitment of partners, the levels of dissolution and the consequences for the partners are not yet studied in detail. This is mainly due to the limited available data on unions between unmarried partners in population

registers and surveys. Also in Belgium official statistics on the number of unmarried cohabitation unions and separations among those couples are not available, estimates indicate that these numbers are rising too (Deboosere et al. 2009; Corijn 2010).

In this study we try to overcome these two limitations of previous studies and focus on union dissolution among married and cohabiting couples of diverse origin in Belgium. This allows us to disentangle the main patterns of divorce for different type of unions. In addition we are able to answer the question on the likelihood of divorce among homogamous and heterogamous unions of different origin. Our data allow for a detailed analysis by origin and also in comparison to couples of the majority group. Finally, one of the key consequences of divorce is related to residential relocation of the partners. Several studies among majority group populations have shown that mobility is frequent and in particular movement back into the city is common for partners who are divorcing (Feijten & Van Ham 2007). Most of these studies have focused on characteristics of the partners in explaining the levels and direction of the move after divorce. Our data include detailed information on the composition of the neighborhood before and after divorce. This makes a more detailed study of patterns of internal mobility due to divorce possible. Again the main aim is to study whether same patterns of mobility are found for different origin groups in Belgium and to what extent individual, couple or neighborhood characteristics are explaining the internal mobility levels and direction.

Data and analyses

For this paper we use data from the 2001 Belgian census (1/10/2001), individually and anonymously linked to the National Population Register (situation on 1/1/2006). Couple dissolution is measured by comparing household situations in 2001 and 2006. If both partners of a (married or unmarried) couple in 2001 are not in the same household anymore in 2006, then they are considered as divorced/separated. Internal migration is assessed by comparing municipal residences in 2001 and 2006. The analyses only apply to male-female couples. To exclude internal migration as a result of the death or emigration of one partner, we only include those households where both partners are still alive in 2006.
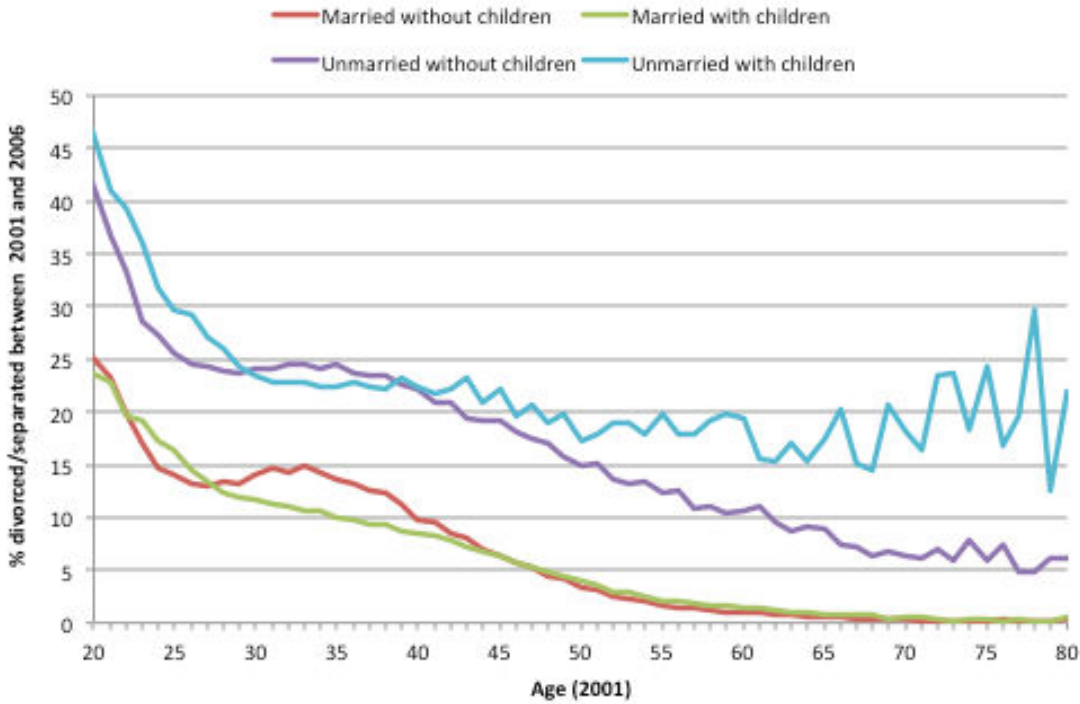
We start from descriptive analyses on the levels of union dissolution among those in a married and cohabiting couple. These analyses are furthermore split by origin of the partners. In order to capture migrant background in more detail we distinguish the two largest non-western immigrant groups in Belgium (Turks and Moroccans) as well as four other regional origins (both within and outside Europe) in addition to those individuals of native origin.

For the multivariate analyses we include a range of explanatory variables which are all measured before the divorce or separation and are derived from the 2001 census. This includes covariates such as educational level, household income, housing characteristics and composition of the neighbourhood.

Preliminary findings

First of all we study the levels of divorce in studied time period 2001-2006. Of all 2,270,443 couples present in Belgium at the moment of the 2001 census, about 7.5% broke up between 2001 and 2006. More detailed information on union status (married or not) indicates that levels of separation are higher for those who are not married (Figure 1). This finding holds for all ages. Overall separation is more common among younger persons. Having children only partially seems to be related to union dissolution: only between ages 30 and 40 levels of separation are somewhat higher for those without children than is the case for couples with children.

Figure 1: Couple dissolution between 2001 and 2006 by age and LIPRO household type in 2001

In a second step we analyse the diversity in union dissolution by nationality of origin of both partners (Table 1). In line with previous studies we also find that ethnic homogamous couples have the lowest percentages of dissolution between 2001 and 2006. However, levels of divorce among migrants are not necessarily higher among migrants than they are for native Belgians. We find for example that 7.1% of Belgian-Belgian couples separate whereas the percentage for western-western origin partners is 4.2%. For intermarriages of native Belgians with migrants we see that in particular unions between a Belgian woman and a Turkish or Moroccan men were relatively often ended in the studied time period (respectively 22.8% and 25.8%). Levels of dissolution were lower for the western and European binational couples. These first descriptive findings seem to confirm results from previous studies in other countries in which homogamy and cultural distance were found to be important indicators for union dissolution.

Table 1: Percentage of union dissolution between 2001 and 2006 by nationality of origin of male and female partners

Male \ Female	1*	2*	3*	4*	5*	6*	7*	Total
1*	4.2	10.6	11.2	14.7	10.7	13.2	8.8	7.2
2*	10.4	5.3	12.4	22.8	21.4	17.1	12.2	8.4
3*	8.4	10.6	5.8	23.5	7.3	10.6	10.5	8.3
4*	19.4	25.4	23.3	7.7	20.7	21.0	25.8	11.0
5*	15.8	29.2	19.1	28.4	7.7	10.0	22.8	9.5
6*	16.3	20.9	16.7	24.7	11.6	10.1	20.8	14.9
7*	8.6	12.4	12.0	22.4	14.3	15.1	7.1	7.3
Total	7.3	8.1	9.9	9.6	8.2	12.8	7.4	7.5

*Migrant origin group: 1=Western 2=Southern European 3=Eastern European 4=Moroccan 5=Turkish 6=Other non-Western 7=Native Belgian
(males in rows; females in columns)

The next step in the bivariate analyses focuses on the internal mobility of separated couples (Table 2). In order to assess the level of mobility we also provide internal mobility of intact couples (third and fourth data column Table 2). For all groups we find that levels of internal mobility of separated men and women are much higher than those of men and women still in a union in 2006. This is the case for all origin groups. Nevertheless we find clear differences in the level of internal mobility after separation by origin group. Turkish men and women have the lowest level of moving to another municipality following a divorce and those of other non-western origin (including a range of different origin groups predominantly from African, Latin American and Asian origins) have the highest level of mobility. Native Belgians take an intermediate position in the level of mobility after union dissolution between these extremes. With the exception of Belgian nationals we overall see that more men than women move to another municipality after they separated. Gender differences in this sense are most pronounced for the Turkish group followed by those of Moroccan origin.

Table 2: Percentage of partners living in another municipality in 2006 than in 2001 by nationality of origin and sex

	Couple dissolution		Intact couple	
nationality of origin	male	female	Male	Female
Western	44	43	9	9
Southern European	42	37	7	8
Eastern European	45	44	10	12
Moroccan	47	40	12	12
Turkish	35	24	7	12
Other non-Western	49	45	16	16
Native Belgian	41	41	6	6

The final sets of descriptive Tables we present here analyse the direction of the move after separation. We compare net migration rates of those who separated of native origin (Table 3a) and foreigners (Table 3b). For reasons of comparison we present similar figures for natives and foreigners who did not separate in the studied time period (Table 3c and 3d). In line with earlier research we also find for Belgium that persons who experience a separation not only move more often but also more often move to cities than those who are in an intact couple. Previous studies did not disentangle migrant groups separately. Our data show interestingly enough that exactly the same patterns of direction of mobility are found for foreigners (even somewhat more pronounced) as what was observed for the native majority group.

Table 3a: Net migration rates per 1,000 inhabitants between urban zones, migration after couple dissolution, native Belgians

Urban zone (rows vs. columns)	(a)	(b)	(c)	(d)	(e)
		more urban → less urban			
Central city (a)	-	0.8	1.0	0.7	0.3
Morphological agglomeration (b)	-1.7	-	0.2	-0.2	-0.3
Urban fringe (c)	-1.7	-0.1	-	-0.5	-0.3
Commuter zone (d)	-0.8	0.1	0.3	-	-0.3
Other municipalities (e)	-0.3	0.1	0.2	0.2	-

Table 3b: Net migration rates per 1,000 inhabitants between urban zones, migration after couple dissolution, foreign origin

Urban zone (rows vs. columns)	(a)	(b)	(c)	(d)	(e)
		more urban → less urban			
Central city (a)		0.7	0.5	0.5	0.3
Morphological agglomeration (b)	-2.3		0.0	0.0	-0.1
Urban fringe (c)	-2.9	-0.1		-0.3	-0.1
Commuter zone (d)	-2.6	-0.1	0.3		-0.3
Other municipalities (e)	-1.0	0.1	0.1	0.2	

Table 3c: Net migration rates per 1,000 inhabitants between urban zones, migration of intact couples, native Belgians

Urban zone (rows vs. columns)	(a)	(b)	(c)	(d)	(e)
		more urban → less urban			
Central city (a)	-	-4.1	-5.1	-4.2	-2.4
Morphological agglomeration (b)	8.7	-	-3.4	-2.8	-1.8
Urban fringe (c)	8.4	2.7	-	-2.2	-1.4
Commuter zone (d)	4.8	1.5	1.6	-	-1.2
Other municipalities (e)	2.2	0.8	0.8	1.0	-

Table 3c: Net migration rates per 1,000 inhabitants between urban zones, migration of intact couples, foreign origin

Urban zone (rows vs. columns)	(a)	(b)	(c)	(d)	(e)
		more urban → less urban			
Central city (a)		-6.1	-3.0	-2.1	-0.9
Morphological agglomeration (b)	21.0		-2.7	-1.3	-0.7
Urban fringe (c)	16.1	4.1		-2.0	-1.3
Commuter zone (d)	10.5	1.9	1.9		-1.4
Other municipalities (e)	2.8	0.6	0.7	0.9	

In the multivariate analyses of the paper we will shed further light into the determinants of mobility following union dissolution of married and unmarried couples of diverse ethnic origin in Belgium. We specifically address the role of neigborhood characteristics and ethnic composition. We will build on the hypothesis that ethnic specific capital in the neighbourhood may be a push as well as a pull factor for mobility decisions of in particular migrants after separation.

References

Corijn, M. (2010). Het profiel van de niet-gehuwd samenwonenden in het Vlaamse Gewest. *SVR-Webartikel 2010/18*. Brussels: Studiedienst van de Vlaamse Regering.

Corijn, M. & Lodewijckx, E. (2009*).* Echtscheiding en leefvorm na echtscheiding in het Vlaamse Gewest: verschillen naar herkomst*. SVR-rapport 2009/4.* Brussels: Studiedienst van de Vlaamse Regering.

Deboosere, P. et al. (2009). Huishoudens en gezinnen in België. *Monografieën Sociaal-Economische Enquête 2001, vol. 4*. Brussels: FOD Economie, ADSEI.

De Valk, H., Liefbroer, A. C., Esveldt, I., & Henkens, K. (2004). Family formation and cultural integration among migrants in the Netherlands. *Genus*, 55, 9–36.

Eurostat (2011). *Statistics* [electronic resource]. Luxembourg: European Commission. http://epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/portal/page/portal/statistics/themes.

Feijten, P. & Van Ham, M. (2007). Residential mobility and migration of the divorced and separated. *Demographic Research,* 17, 623-654.

Kalmijn, M., De Graaf, P., & Janssen, J. (2005) Intermarriage and the risk of divorce in the Netherlands: The effects of differences in religion and in nationality, 1974–94. *Population Studies*, 59, 1, 71-85

Mulder, C. & Wagner, M. (forthcoming). Moving after separation: The role of location-specific capital. *Housing Studies.* Earlier version presented at the EPC 2010, Vienna.

Statistics Belgium (2011). *Evolutie van het aantal echtscheidingen per gewest, 1990 – 2009* [electronic resource]. Brussels: FOD Economie, ADSEI. http://statbel.fgov.be/nl/statistieken/cijfers/bevolking/huwelijken_echtscheidingen_sa menwoning/echtscheidingen.

Van Imhoff, E. & N. Keilman, (1991), "LIPRO 2.0 – An application of a dynamic demographic projection model to household structure in the Netherlands", *NIDI-CBGS rapport 23*, Nederlands Interdisciplinair Demografisch Instituut.