

The influence of parental socio-economic status on the timing of first union across European countries

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Abstract

Past empirical research has demonstrated the importance of parental socio-economic status (SES) as a determinant for entry into a first union. The majority of existing studies found that young adults growing up in high socio-economic status families delay their first unions compared to those from lower socio-economic backgrounds. Most studies examined the impact of parental SES on the timing of first union within one context or one country only. However, it can be assumed that the strength of the link between parental status and the timing of first union depends on the societal context. Therefore, this study examines the link between parental SES and the timing of first union for 25 European countries participating in the European Social Survey (2006). Results from discrete-time hazard models show that in almost all countries young adults from advantaged backgrounds delay their entry into first union, although the strength of this effect differs between countries. Moreover, the impact of parental status on the timing of first union is stronger for women than for men. The impact of parental SES is also stronger at early ages and did not change much over historical time. Lastly, for almost all European countries, the impact of parental status on the timing of first union is partly mediated by individual educational attainment.

Keywords: parental socio-economic status, timing first union, European countries

¹ The presented results are preliminary. Direct all correspondence to M.D. Brons, brons@nidi.nl