

Does exogamy (mixed marriage by religion) increase the risk of marital dissolution in Northern Ireland?

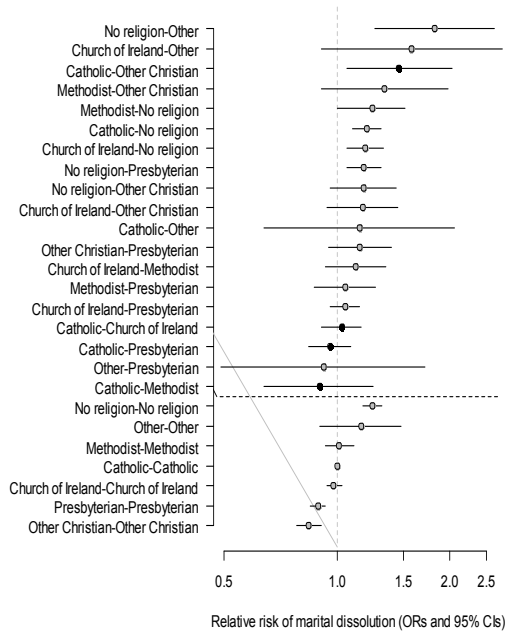
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Background

Risks of marital dissolution are often elevated when partners are dissimilar (e.g. by age, ethnicity, socioeconomic position). Northern Ireland has a history of conflict and residential segregation along religious-cultural lines. We expected marriages mixed by religion to be at increased risk of dissolution relative to non-mixed marriages with the largest increases for those crossing Protestant-Catholic boundaries.



Results

- Risk of dissolution for non-mixed marriages was lowest within the most conservative religious groups (Other Christians) and highest for people with no affiliation.
- Mixed marriages had a slightly higher risk of dissolution than non-mixed marriages but Protestant-Catholic marriages were at no greater risk than other types of mixed marriage.
- However, Protestant-Catholic marriages were rare and such couples were more likely to cohabit than other types of mixed couple.
- Mixed relationships (both marriage and cohabitation) were more common among the young.

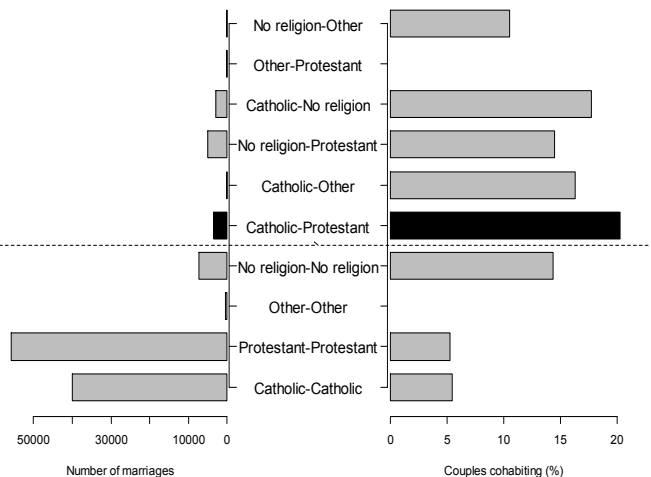
Conclusion

Social barriers to interdenominational relationships remain in Northern Ireland, particularly along Protestant-Catholic lines but there are signs that cross-community relationships may become more common in future.

Mixed marriages above dashed lines.
Protestant-Catholic marriages marked in black.

Methods

We identified 115,465 married couples in the 2001 Census and estimated the risk of marital dissolution in the subsequent decade (living apart or no longer married at the 2011 Census). Multilevel models were adjusted for age, education, economic activity, housing tenure, country of birth, history of previous marriages, presence of dependent children, housing tenure, urban/rural residence.



Acknowledgements

The help provided by the staff of the Northern Ireland Longitudinal Study (NILS) and the NILS Research Support Unit is acknowledged. The NILS is funded by the Health and Social Care Research and Development Division of the Public Health Agency (HSC R&D Division) and NISRA. The NILS-RSU is funded by the ESRC and the Northern Ireland Government. The authors alone are responsible for the interpretation of the data and any views or opinions presented are solely those of the author and do not necessarily represent those of NISRA/NILS.