

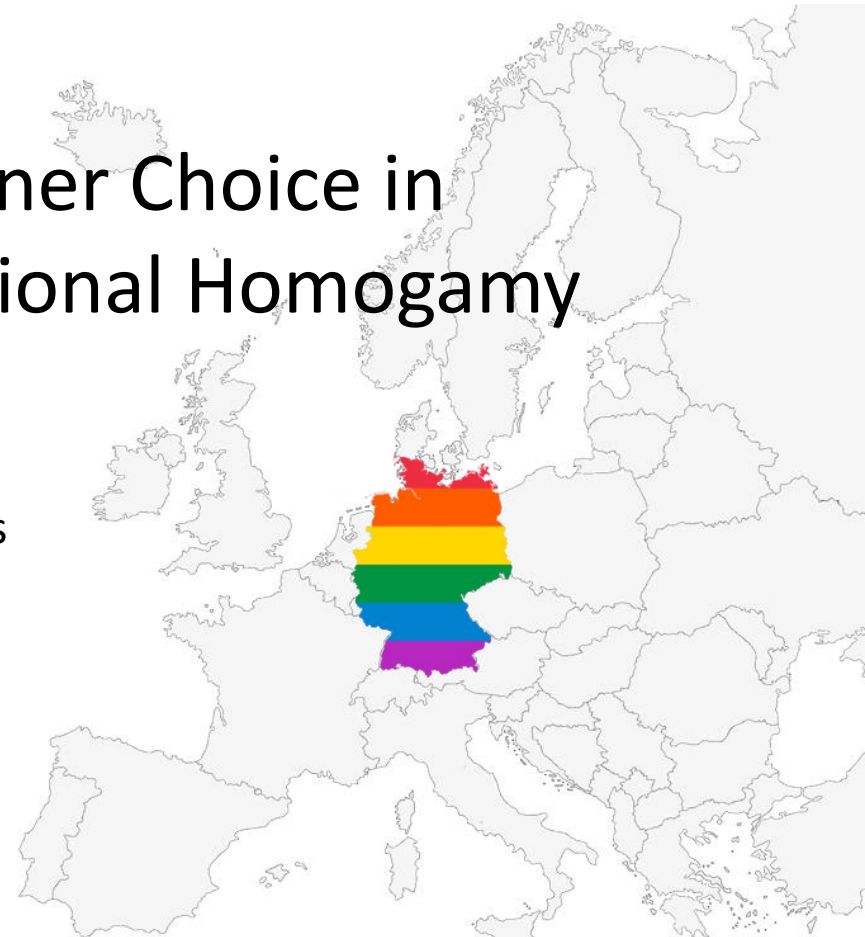
# Patterns of Same-Sex Partner Choice in Germany: Age and Educational Homogamy

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## Background

- ▶ Increasing visibility, social acceptance and legal recognition of same-sex couples
- ▶ But still limited reliable knowledge about same-sex couples
- ▶ Not only about the prevalence, trends and social demography of same-sex couples
- ▶ But also and primarily about the patterns of partner choice among same-sex couples
- ▶ Very few studies so far, no single study for Germany

## Research Question

- ▶ What are the patterns of same-sex partner choice in Germany?
- ▶ Are the patterns of same-sex partner choice similar to those of different-sex partner choice? Are there any differences?
- ▶ How do patterns of same-sex partner choice change over time?
- ▶ Examined with respect to age and education
- ▶ Using data from the German Microcensus (GMC)

## Previous Research

- ▶ Many studies on different-sex partner choice, but virtually no studies on same-sex partner choice
- ▶ Exceptions are the studies of Jepsen/Jepsen 2002 and Schwartz/Graf 2009 in the US, and Verbakel/Kalmijn 2014 in the Netherlands
- ▶ Representative studies, based on official data

## Previous Research

- ▶ Consistent evidence of positive assortative mating across all couples
- ▶ However, same-sex couples are less likely to be homogamous than different-sex couples (on a variety of characteristics such as age, education and race/ethnicity)
- ▶ Particularly true for male same-sex couples, while female same-sex couples differ slightly (or not at all) from different-sex couples
- ▶ Almost no change over time (i.e. patterns of same-sex partner choice remained stable in the 1990s in the US)

## Theoretical Considerations

- ▶ General theoretical perspectives on different-sex partner choice are used and applied on same-sex partner choice
- ▶ These are:
  - Normative approach (e.g. Hollingshead 1950)
  - Economics of the family (Becker 1981)
  - Structural theory (Blau 1994)

## Normative Approach

- ▶ Homogamy is the norm
- ▶ Less for same-sex couples, as they are considered to be outside the norm
- ▶ Less homogamy in same-sex couples than in different-sex couples
- ▶ Over time: Increasing social acceptance might lead to similar normative expectations for same-sex couples
- ▶ Increasing homogamy in same-sex couples

## Economics of the Family

- ▶ Heterogamy (in employment and earning potential) increases the gains from specialization and division of labor
- ▶ Less division of labor in same-sex couples
- ▶ More homogamy in same-sex couples than in different-sex couples
- ▶ Over time: No change for same-sex couples



## Structural Theory

- ▶ Structural characteristics of the partner market determine the chances to find a (suitable) partner
- ▶ Market for same-sex partners is small, intransparent and less structured
- ▶ Relatively low chances of finding a same-sex partner with similar traits
- ▶ Over time: Improving market for same-sex partners
- ▶ Increasing homogamy in same-sex couples

## Hypotheses

- H1: Same-sex couples are less homogamous than different-sex couples (mainly regarding age, less regarding education)
- H2: Homogamy is increasing over time for same-sex couples (converges with homogamy in different-sex couples)

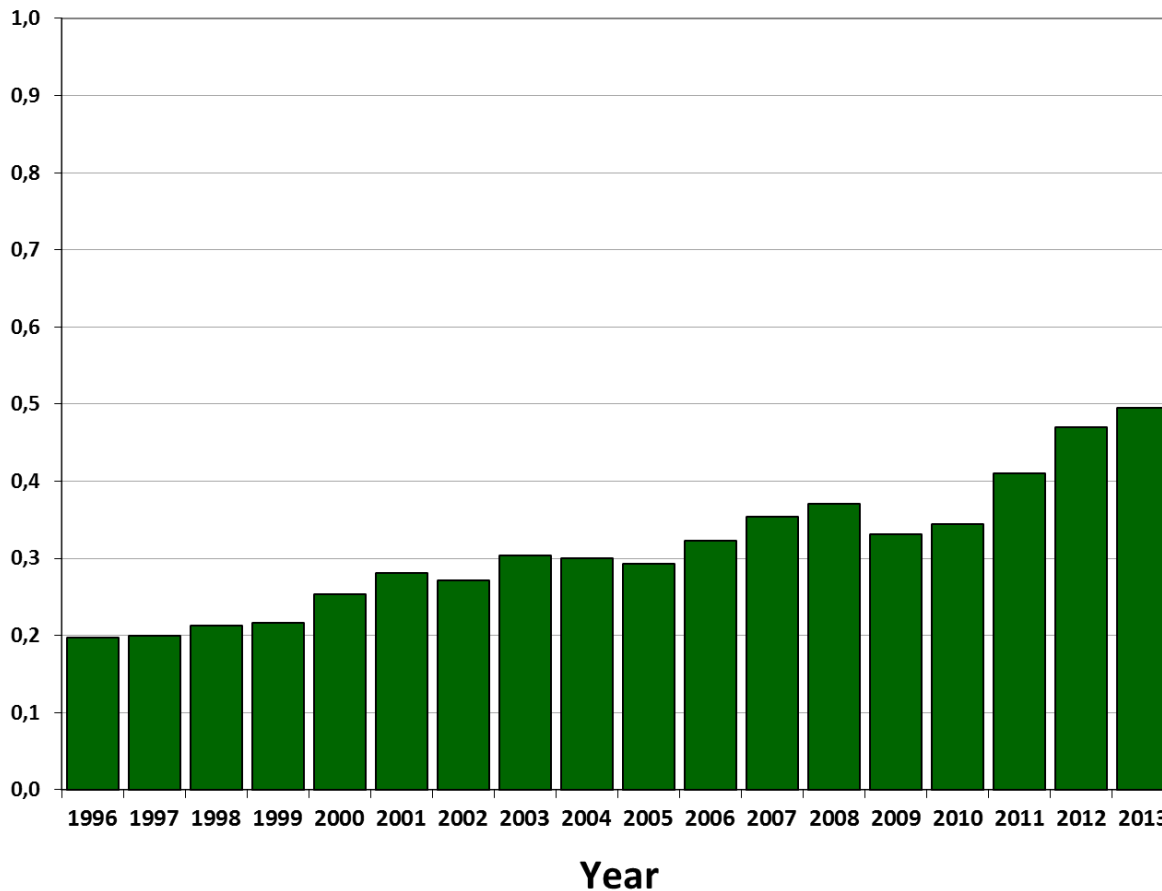
## Data

- ▶ German Microcensus (GMC): annual household survey of 1% of the population
- ▶ Scientific Use Files 1996 to 2013
- ▶ Population in private households, aged 25 to 70 years
- ▶ **Cohabiting couples**  
(Question on partner in household)

## N of Cohabiting Couples, by Gender Composition

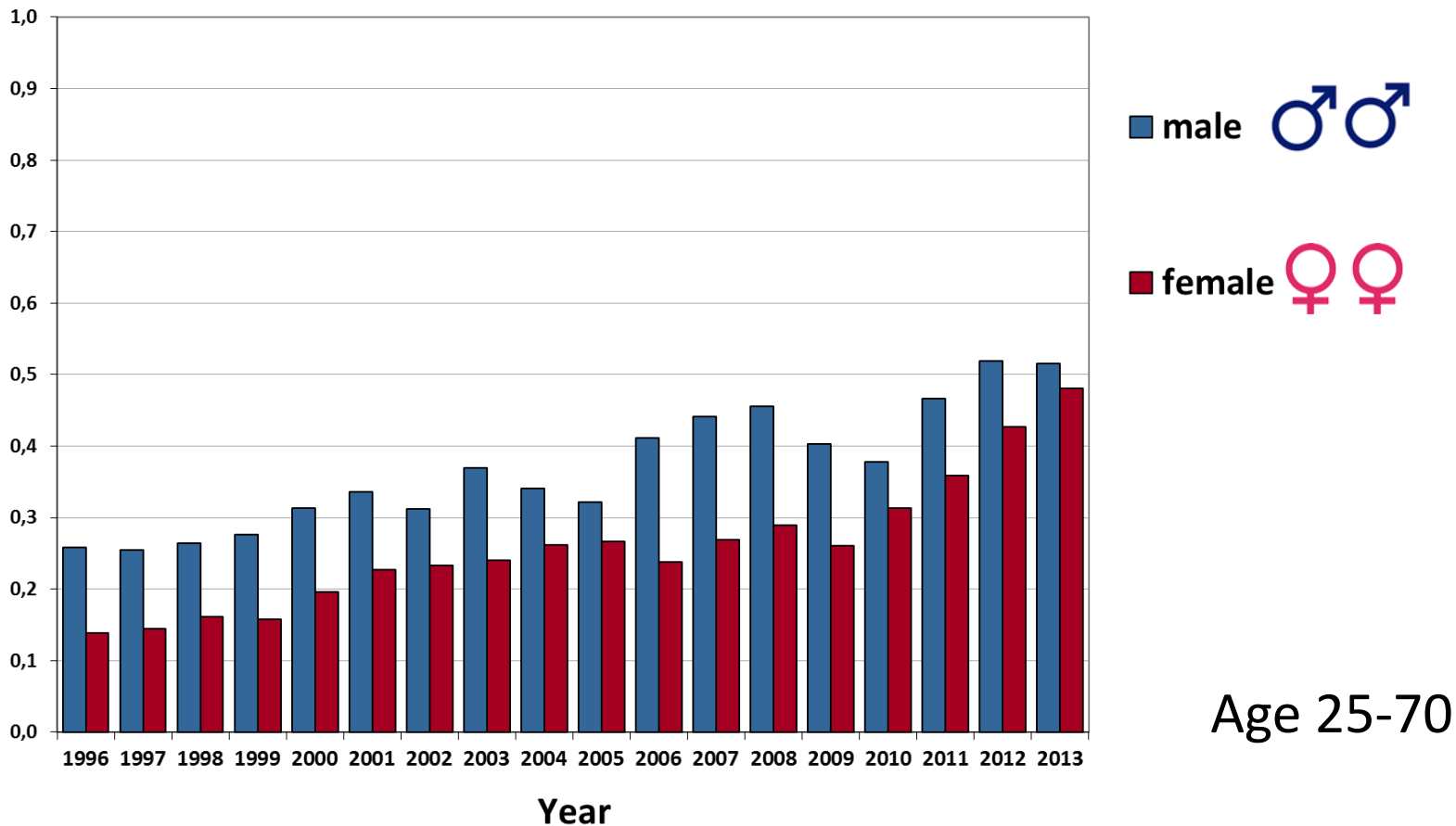
- ▶ 5,853 same-sex couples
  - 3,448 male
  - 2,405 female
  
- ▶ 1,896,223 different-sex couples

# Prevalence of Cohabiting Same-Sex Couples in Germany, 1996 to 2013 (in %)



Age 25-70

# Prevalence of Cohabiting Same-Sex Couples in Germany, 1996 to 2013 (in %)

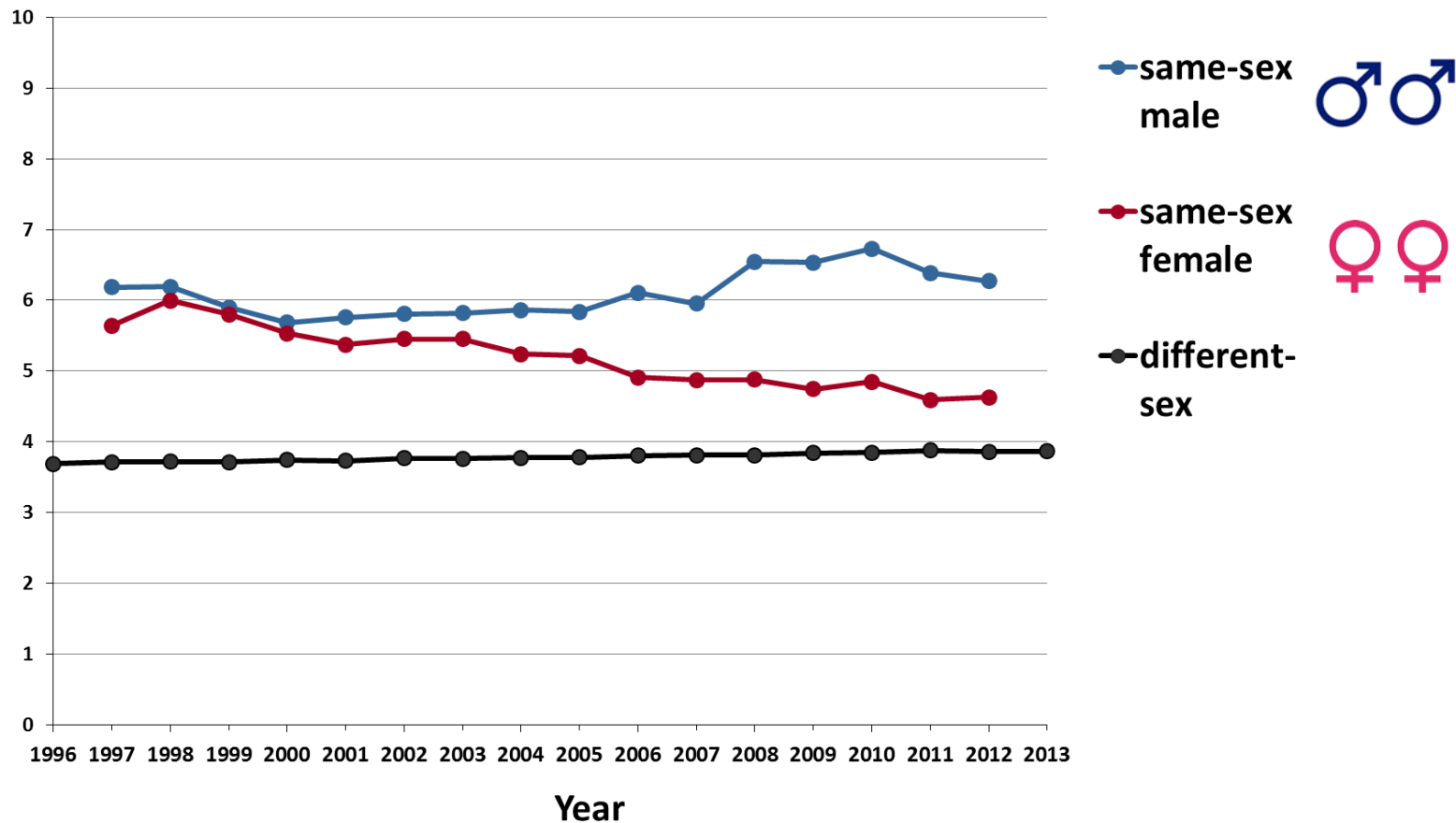


## Age Homogamy by Gender Composition

	Same-sex male	Same-sex female	Different-sex
Mean age difference in years [SE]	6.11* [0.10]	5.05* [0.10]	3.78* [0.00]
Age homogamy (in %)			
Max. 2 yrs. difference	32.3	39.4	45.3
Max. 5 yrs. difference	59.9	65.3	77.5

Source: GMC 1996-2013, both partners aged 25-70, \* p<0.001

# Mean Age Difference, by Gender Composition and Year





## Age Difference (value) by Gender Composition

	Model 1	Model 2 Trend over years	Model 3 Trend over years & age	Model 4 + IA Couple * year	Model 5 + IA Couple * age
Couple (ref. DSC)					
Male SSC	2.33***	2.31***	2.58***	2.58***	3.76***
Female SSC	1.27***	1.26***	1.55***	1.70***	2.33***
Year (cent. 2004)		0.01***	0.01***	0.01***	0.01***
Age of partner 1			0.04***	0.04***	0.04***
IA: Couple * Year					
Male SSC x Year				0.01	-0.07***
Female SSC x Year				-0.09***	-0.11***
IA: Couple * age of partner 1					
Male SSC x age					0.17***
Female SSC x age					0.09***
Constant	3.78***	3.78***	3.78***	3.78***	3.78***
R <sup>2</sup>	0.00	0.00	0.02	0.02	0.02
N	1,902,076	1,902,076	1,902,076	1,902,076	1,902,076

Source: GMC 1996-2013, coefficients of linear regression models, \* p<0.05; \*\* p<0.01; \*\*\* p<0.001

## Results on Age Homogamy

- ▶ Generally: less age homogamy in SSC (*H1* ✓)
- ▶ Age difference in SSC markedly higher than in DSC
- ▶ For SSC gender matters: Partners in male SSC have a significant higher age gap than those in female SSC
- ▶ The age difference for SSC decreases since 1996 (till 2013); even more so for female SSC ⇒ converges with DSC (*H2* ✓)

Side note: We find a positive age effect that is even more pronounced for SSC (the older, the greater the age diff.) and strongest for male same-sex couples

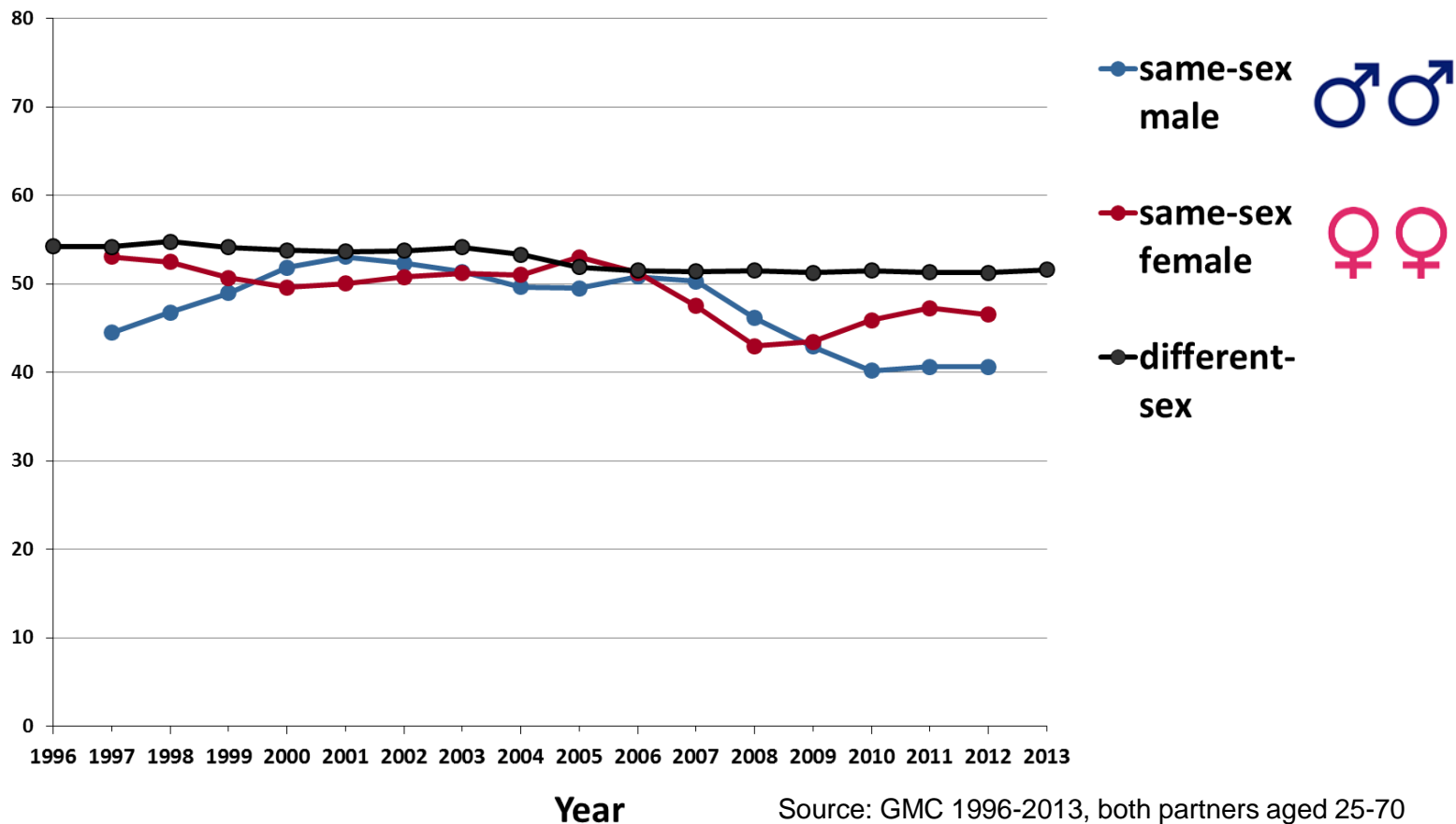
Marginal distribution of age (of potential partners) not controlled for (& generally poor model fit)!

## Educational Homogamy by Gender Composition

	Same-sex male	Same-sex female	Different-sex
Educational homogamy (in %)			
School education, 3 categ.	60.3	62.0	66.5
Occup. education, 4 categ.	57.9	61.0	59.9
School/occup. educ., 5 categ.	46.6	48.5	52.8

Source: GMC 1996-2013, both partners aged 25-70

# Educational Homogamy, by Gender Composition and Year (in %)



# Educational Homogamy by Gender Composition (OR)

	Model 1	Model 2 Trend over years	Model 3 + Education	Model 4 + IA Couple * education
Couple (ref. DSC)				
Male SSC	0.78***	0.79***	0.86***	1.01
Female SSC	0.84***	0.86***	0.90*	0.76*
Year (cent. 2004)		0.99***		
Education of partner 1 (ref. basic voc.)				
No/inadequately compl.			2.29***	2.30***
Intermediate voc.			1.84***	1.84***
Higher voc.			0.44***	0.44***
Tertiary education			0.74***	0.74***
IA: Couple * educ.				
Male SSC * no/inadequately compl.				0.48***
Male SSC * Intermediate voc.				0.50***
Male SSC * higher voc.				0.98
Male SSC * tertiary edu.				1.40**
Female SSC * no/inad. compl.				0.49***
Female SSC * Interm. voc.				0.75*
Female SSC * higher voc.				1.28
Female SSC * tertiary edu.				2.78***
Constant	1.12***	1.12***	1.00	1.00
McF.-Pseudo-R <sup>2</sup>	0.00	0.00	0.04	0.04
N	1,809,760	1,809,760	1,809,760	1,809,760

Legend: Logistic regression models (homogamy y/n) with odds ratios, \* p<0.05; \*\* p<0.01; \*\*\* p<0.001

## Results on Educational Homogamy

- ▶ Generally: less educational homogamy in same-sex couples (SSC)
- ▶ Male SSC are also significantly less homogamous than female SSC
- ▶ Slight decrease over time for all couples  
(no sign. IA effect with SSC!)
- ▶ For SSC positive effect of education: the higher the educational level, the more homogamous



But: SSC differ in educational levels, partners generally higher educated! ⇒ Control for marginal distribution (opportunity structure) of education essential!

## Educational Homogamy over time (preliminary results from log-linear models)

- Strong educational homogamy for different-sex couples (higher IRR), most pronounced at the «ends» of the educational distribution (i.e. lowest & highest levels)
- SSC also show patterns of homogamy, but less pronounced than for DSC (esp. less homogamy for tertiary education in comparison to DSC)
- Overall educational homogamy slightly decreases over time (esp. for lower educational levels, but increase for higher educational levels) → no sign. difference between SSC and DSC

## Conclusion & Outlook

- ▶ Less age and educational homogamy in SSC (*H1* ✓)
- ▶ Age difference for SSC has decreased over time (esp. for female SSC) ⇒ converges with DSC (*H2* ✓)
- ▶ No clear trends over time for educational homogamy
- ▶ Male SSC generally less homogamous than female SSC
  
- ▶ Next steps: more refined log-linear models 😊



## Thank you for your attention!

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