

Marriage and Development: Cross-country Evidence

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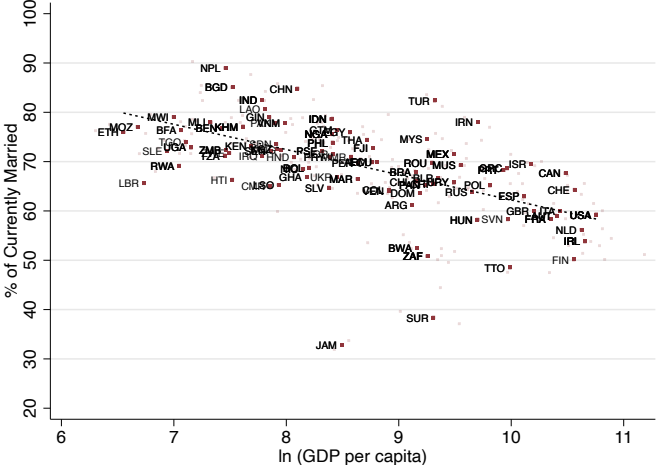
the 2022 ASSA Annual Meeting

This paper: How does marriage vary with development?

- Use micro data from 92 countries from all income levels to document that marriage rate decreases with development
 - One log point increase in GDP per capita associated with around 5 p.p. decline in marriage rate
 - Pattern robust over the life cycle of both genders
 - Magnitude in line with time series evidence within a country
- Demographic distributions of age, education, and urban-rural status account for the pattern?
 - *At most one-third* of the marriage-development slope
- A simple model to decompose the contributions of two factors
 - Declining desired fertility with development
 - Increasing wage in market work with development

Key Fact: Marriage Rate decreases with GDP per capita

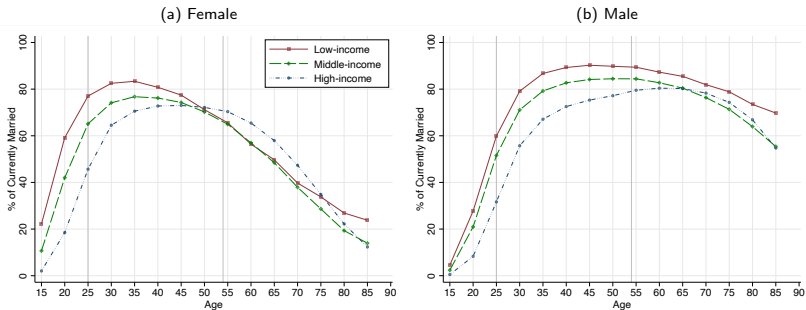
- **Marriage Rate:** the fraction of adults (age 22+) who are currently married or in consensual unions.



Regression Results of Aggregate Marriage Rates

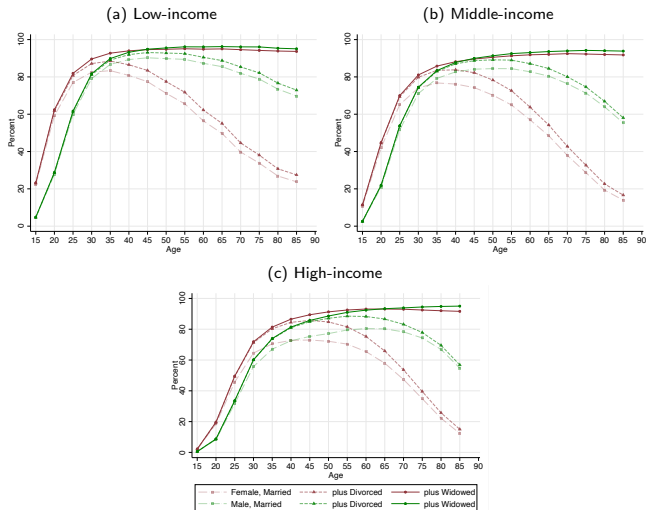
	All Surveys			All Country Averages		
	All	Female	Male	All	Female	Male
Panel A. Age 22+						
ln (GDP per capita)	-5.128*** (0.383)	-5.423*** (0.405)	-4.813*** (0.416)	-4.737*** (0.605)	-5.203*** (0.623)	-4.226*** (0.670)
R^2	0.343	0.351	0.299	0.308	0.330	0.245
Panel B. Prime Age						
ln (GDP per capita)	-5.929*** (0.459)	-5.333*** (0.476)	-6.538*** (0.498)	-5.347*** (0.686)	-4.868*** (0.679)	-5.814*** (0.778)
R^2	0.339	0.282	0.365	0.301	0.256	0.312
Panel C. Age 15+						
ln (GDP per capita)	-2.686*** (0.359)	-3.962*** (0.396)	-1.311*** (0.375)	-2.332*** (0.551)	-3.766*** (0.597)	-0.772 (0.584)
R^2	0.146	0.246	0.038	0.117	0.231	0.013
Observations	216	216	216	92	92	92

Marriage Rates over the Life Cycle



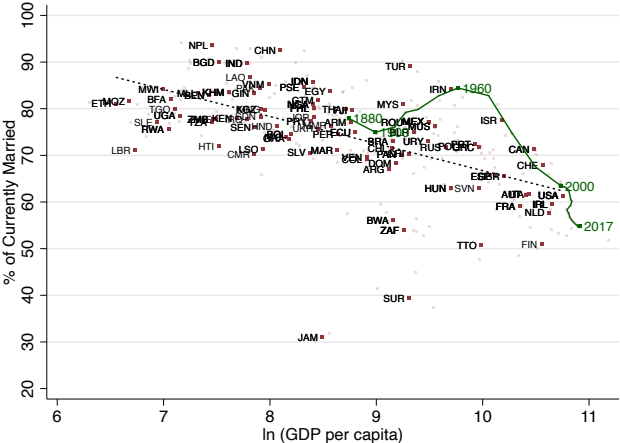
- Both genders have higher marriage rates in poor relative to rich countries in most 5-year age bins.
- Females' marriage rate declines sharply after age 55.

Ever-married Rates Decomposition over the Life Cycle

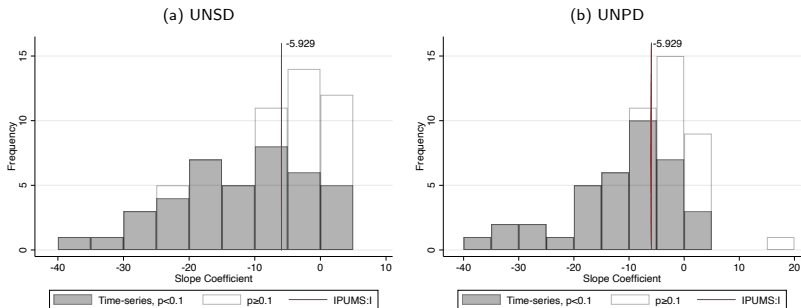


- Gender difference at older ages mainly comes from the widowed.

Cross-country Evidence in Line with the U.S. Time-series



Time-series Evidence from More Countries (UN datasets)



- The slope coefficients of marriage rate on log GDP per capita feature the mean at -8 (UNSD) and -9 (UNPD) and the median at -6.

Individual Level Regressions of *Currently Married, Female*

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)	(9)
ln (GDP per capita)	-0.081***	-0.082***	-0.083***	-0.066***	-0.067***	-0.068***	-0.068***	-0.057***	-0.060***
Age			0.002***			0.001***	0.002***		0.001***
Primary completed				0.017***		0.020***		0.027***	0.030***
Secondary completed				-0.048***		-0.044***		-0.027***	-0.022***
University completed				-0.111***		-0.106***		-0.086***	-0.080***
Urban Dummy					-0.086***		-0.085***	-0.076***	-0.077***
Constant	1.473***	1.476***	1.429***	1.356***	1.392***	1.324***	1.348***	1.310***	1.276***
Non-missing		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
R ²	0.035	0.035	0.036	0.043	0.044	0.043	0.045	0.049	0.050

- Almost 90 millions prime-age females from 155 country-year surveys

Individual Level Regressions of *Currently Married, Male*

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)	(9)
ln (GDP per capita)	-0.085***	-0.085***	-0.095***	-0.075***	-0.077***	-0.089***	-0.088***	-0.070***	-0.085***
Age			0.012***			0.012***	0.012***		0.012***
Primary completed				0.007***		0.029***		0.011***	0.033***
Secondary completed				-0.047***		-0.017***		-0.037***	-0.008***
University completed				-0.065***		-0.037***		-0.051***	-0.023***
Urban Dummy					-0.049***		-0.044***	-0.041***	-0.040***
Constant	1.513***	1.516***	1.143***	1.445***	1.472***	1.091***	1.106***	1.420***	1.066***
Non-missing		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
R ²	0.039	0.039	0.098	0.043	0.042	0.100	0.100	0.045	0.102

- More than 85 millions prime-age males from 155 country-year surveys

Conclusions

- Microdata to document that marriage rate decreases with development across countries
- A quantitative analysis in progress
- Broadly, marriage and development interact with each other
 - This paper: a first step of new facts
 - Other routes: labor force participation, females' bargain power, children's human capital investment, demographic transitions, etc

Thank You!