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**TRENDS AND DIFFERENTIALS IN JORDANIAN
MARRIAGE BEHAVIOR: MARRIAGE TIMING, SPOUSAL
CHARACTERISTICS, HOUSEHOLD STRUCTURE
AND MATRIMONIAL EXPENDITURES**

Rania Salem

Working Paper No. 668

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Abstract

This paper employs the 2010 Jordan Labor Market Panel Survey to analyze patterns in marriage behavior over time and across socio-demographic groups. Using retrospective reports from ever-married respondents, I describe the postponement of first marriage to successively older ages for both men and women, and I trace the decline in consanguinity and the rise in nuclear family living arrangements over time. I find that husbands' age seniority has fluctuated over time, but that the education gap between husbands and wives has closed over successive marriage cohorts. I also describe how these trends differ between rural and urban residents, as well as between members of different regional and socioeconomic groups in Jordan. Finally, I analyze trends in matrimonial expenditures in Jordan, finding that contrary to popular discourse, the costs of marriage have not increased in recent years. I describe variations over time in the components of marriage costs, and examine how these differ for various socio-demographic groups.

ملخص

توظف هذه الورقة المسح التتبعي لسوق العمل في الأردن 2010 لتحليل انماط السلوك في الزواج مع مرور الوقت وعبر المجموعات الاجتماعية والديموغرافية. باستخدام التقارير بأثر رجعي من المتزوجات المستطلعين، سوف أصف قرار تأجيل الزواج الأول إلى أعمار أكبر على التوالي لكل من الرجال والنساء، وسوف اقتفى أثر الانخفاض في زواج الأقارب وارتفاع ترتيبات المعيشة العائلية مع مرور الوقت. أجد أن أقدمية سن الأزواج قد تقلبت على مر الزمن، إلا أن الفجوة التعليمية بين الأزواج والزوجات قد أغلقت أكثر. أصف أيضا كيف يمكن لهذه الاتجاهات ان تختلف بين سكان الريف والحضر، وكذلك بين أعضاء المجموعات الإقليمية والاجتماعية والاقتصادية المختلفة في الأردن. وأخيرا، أقوم بتحليل الاتجاهات في نفقات الزواج في الأردن، وإيجاد انه على النقيض من الخطاب الشعبي، فان تكاليف الزواج لم تزد في السنوات الأخيرة. و أصف التغيرات في مكونات تكاليف الزواج على مر الزمن ، ودراسة كيف يمكن لهذه ان تتباين بين الفئات الاجتماعية والسكانية المختلفة.

1. Background and Introduction

In recent decades, Jordanian society has undergone dramatic change in the realm of marriage and the family, and many of these changes are consistent with the classical demographic transition undergone by Western industrialized countries. The international social science literature on Jordanian marriage has been dominated thus far by studies of the continued practice of kin marriage and its effects on population health (Hamamy et al. 2005; Houry and Massad 1992; Obeidat et al. 2010). Popular discourse in Jordan as represented by articles in the press, on the other hand, has been more concerned with the late age at which many young people find themselves financially capable of marrying, and the resulting rates of celibacy (Alshuwayki 2011; Khalifa 2009; Shaker 2008; Alasmar 2007; Badran and Sarhan 1995). Although information on age at marriage in Jordan has thus far been limited to women (Department of Statistics Jordan and ICF Macro 2010), Jordan is located in the region which records the oldest male singulate mean age at marriage among all world regions (Mensch et al. 2005).

This paper employs the first wave of the Jordan Labor Market Panel Survey (JLMPS), fielded in 2010, to analyze patterns in marriage timing and marriage behavior over time and across socio-demographic groups in Jordan. The JLMPS also includes a module of questions about marriage costs in Jordan, and I incorporate into my analysis a description of how marriage expenditures have varied across marriage cohorts and different socio-demographic groups.

2. Duration of Engagement

The marriage process in Jordan encompasses several stages. For the majority Muslim population, the first step in getting engaged is an event called the *qirayetfatiha*, followed by an event called the *tolba*, followed by an engagement party, followed by the signing of the legal marriage contract (*katbkitab*), and finally there is a wedding party (*'urs*) and the start of cohabitation by the new couple (Khuraisat 1990). Two or more of these events can be combined and held on the same day, or they may be separated by several months or years. I investigate the duration of engagement in Jordan by examining the time elapsed between the *fatiha* and the *katbkitab* on the one hand, and between the *katbkitab* and the start of cohabitation on the other. The questions regarding the duration of engagement were posed to ever-married women aged 15-60 in the JLMPS.

While some women reported having been engaged for months or years, the average length of the *fatiha* stage in the JLMPS sample as a whole is approximately 1.1 months. 45.3 percent of respondents had the *fatiha* and the *katbkitab* in the same week, and 28.4 percent held the two events one week apart. As for the *katbkitab* stage, its average length was considerably longer – 7.2 months.

To illustrate differentials in the length of the *fatiha* and *katbkitab* stages across socio-demographic characteristics,¹ I created a variable that combines the two stages. Overall, the average time between the start of engagement and the start of cohabitation was 8.4 months. The time to marriage is slightly longer in urban areas compared to rural areas, and the time to marriage is longest in central Jordan (Table 1). Table 1 also shows that there are minimal differentials according to wealth, and that those with intermediate levels of education have the longest engagement durations.

What about the evolution of engagement duration over time? By disaggregating respondents according to their date of marriage, we may observe trends in engagement duration over time. According to Figure 1, the average months to marriage decreased somewhat between the

¹Socio-demographic characteristics are based on current reports. Unfortunately, the JLMPS does not contain measures of respondents' residence, wealth or education at the time of marriage.

mid-1960s and the mid-1980s, and since then, engagements have become slightly lengthier in Jordan.

3. Current Marital Status

Marriage is virtually universal for Jordanian women and men alike. In the JLMPS 2010 sample, 6.5 percent of women aged 45-49 had never married, and 1.9 percent of men aged 45-49 had never married. This may be compared to the 2009 Jordan Population and Family health Survey (JPFHS), which found that 8.5 percent of women had never married by the same age (Figure 2) (Department of Statistics Jordan and ICF Macro 2010). Although current concerns regarding high rates of celibacy among Jordanian women are largely unfounded, the popular perception that celibacy among women is more common than it is among men is borne out by the JLMPS data.

Table 2 shows the age pattern of other marital statuses, such as divorced or separated and widowed. It is important to bear in mind that the JLMPS only collected data on respondents' *current* marital status. So for example, if a woman had married, divorced, and remarried, and was thus in her second marriage at the time of the JLMPS interview, she would have been classified as married by the survey. Therefore, the proportions divorced or separated in the JLMPS are an underestimate of the total divorce rate in Jordan. One would expect divorce and separation to increase steadily with exposure to marital disruption, but the percentage of those in this category does not rise within successively older age groups. Rather, the proportion divorced or separated is highest among those currently aged 35-39 in Jordan (Table 2). This might suggest an increase in divorce rates over time, though this would have to be confirmed with data from vital statistics.

4. Marriage Timing

The fact that men marry considerably later than women is apparent from the age pattern of first marriage displayed in Figure 2. Men's median age at first marriage² in the JLMPS sample stands at 28.7 years overall. Women's median age at first marriage in Jordan is 23.8 years of age. We see in Table 3 that both men and women marry earlier in urban areas compared to rural areas. Moving on to other socio-demographic differentials in age at first marriage, I find minimal variation in age at first marriage across Jordan's three regions. Women and men living in central Jordan, however, stand out in having lower ages at first marriage relative to their counterparts in northern and southern Jordan. Table 3 indicates that the wealth gradient in age at first marriage is steepest among women, with the poorest Jordanian women marrying at age 21.9, those in the middle third marrying at age 23.0, and the wealthiest marrying at age 25.5. Men's wealth differentials in marriage timing are less pronounced, with the poorest Jordanian men marrying at age 28.2, and the wealthiest marrying at age 29.9. Women's age pattern of first marriage by education mirrors the wealth pattern of first marriage, with the more educated marrying later than the least educated (women with basic education are an exception to this general pattern, marrying earliest of all). Among men, however, those with the lowest and the highest educational attainment marry at the oldest ages (Table 3).

Another set of measures can be used to examine marriage timing, namely the proportions of men and women married by ages 18, 20, 25 and 30. These measures confirm many of the patterns in marriage universality and marriage timing revealed by the median age at first marriage. Among women in the JLMPS sample, 22.6 percent had married by age 18, 37.8 percent had married by age 20, 72.9 percent had married by 25 and 85.4 percent had married by age 30. Consistent with Table 2, Table 3 shows that rural women begin entering into marriage later than urban women, and a higher proportion appear never to wed. In addition,

² The measure utilized here, the indirect median age at first marriage, is calculated in a manner that takes into account the fact that some of those who will marry have not yet entered into their first union (Siegel and Swanson 2004).

a greater proportion of women in central Jordan had married by every age than those in northern or southern Jordan. Although the poorest women in Jordan are the ones most likely to marry in their teens, a larger proportion remain unmarried at age 30 compared to those in the middle or highest wealth categories. Table 2 indicates that the wealthiest women marry the latest, but this is not because a large portion of them remain unmarried. It seems from Table 4 that the wealthiest women are *least* likely never to have married by age 30, followed by those in the middle wealth category, and finally the poorest women. Finally, the largest proportion of women to have married by age 30 according to educational attainment are those with less than basic education, and the smallest proportion of women to have married by 30 are those with post-secondary education (Table 4).

As for men in the JLMPS sample, 1.8 percent had married by age 18, 5.5 percent had married by age 20, 36.5 had married by age 25, and 76.4 had married by age 30 (Table 4). Early marriage is rare among both rural and urban men, but urban men appear to postpone or forgo marriage to a greater extent compared to rural men, contrary to the findings reported in Table 2. There are minimal differences in men's marriage timing by region. Men in central Jordan are very unlikely to marry in their teens, but in all regions men enter into marriage predominantly between the ages of 25 and 30 and are about as likely to have married by age 30. The poorest men in Jordan tend to marry earlier than their wealthier counterparts, and they are more likely to have married by age 30. Table 3 also shows that the greater the educational attainment of a Jordanian man is, the later he is likely to marry.

Several sources have documented rising ages at first marriage in Jordan in recent decades, although few have been able to make gender comparisons. According to the Jordan Population and Family Health Survey (JPFHS), for example, the percentage of women who had never married has grown over successive waves of the survey, particularly in the period 1990-2002. Since 2002, the upward trend in women's ages at first marriage have leveled off, and among those aged 20-34, there are even signs of a slight dip in the age at first marriage (Department of Statistics Jordan and ICF Macro 2010). This pattern is not apparent in the 2010 JLMPS. Utilizing measures of the proportion married by certain ages, I show in Figure 3 that Jordanian women's age at marriage has generally been rising across birth cohorts. The proportion marrying by each age considered has dropped over time. However, a temporary return to earlier ages at marriage is evident among the 1955-59 birth cohorts, and the 1970-74 birth cohorts of women. Figures 4 and 5 show that this pattern is driven largely by rural women. It is not clear what may have led to these spikes in early marriage. These women would have been marrying in the late 1970s and early 1990s, periods which contrast in terms of the geopolitical climate and levels of migration and remittances. In addition, Figures 4 and 5 indicate that trends in the postponement of marriage over time have been more pronounced among rural women compared to urban women. In Figures 6 to 9, I disaggregate trends in the proportion of women married by educational attainment. These trends likely reflect changes in women's marriage timing behavior, as well as changes in the composition of various educational groups over time.

Trends in the proportion of men married by ages 18, 20, 25 and 30 show that men's marriage under the age of 20 has been and remains uncommon in Jordan (Figure 10). Over time, a larger proportion of Jordanian men are postponing marriage to their late twenties. Comparing Figures 3 and 10 reveals that successive generations of Jordanian men have been delaying marriage at a slower rate than women have. Among all men represented in the JLMPS, those born in the early 1940s and those born after the early 1970s have postponed marriage the most. If we disaggregate these trends by rural/ urban residence, we find that rural men underwent the most dramatic delay in their marriage transitions from the birth cohorts of the late 1940s to the early 1960s. Urban men's age at marriage appears to have declined less

steeply than rural men's (Figures 11 and 12). Trends in men's marriage timing according to educational attainment can be seen in Figures 13 to 16.

5. Spousal Age and Education Gaps

I next consider spousal characteristics such as age, education, and kinship status. Age seniority of the husband is preferred in many countries, and Arab societies are no exception to this general pattern. For currently-married women, I identified those whose husbands were present in the household and interviewed by the JLMPS in order to calculate the age difference between husbands and wives. Across Jordanian society, women were married to men 6.1 years their seniors in age on average, according to the JLMPS. No difference in husband's age seniority could be observed in rural versus urban areas, but husbands tended to be older than their wives in southern Jordan, followed by central Jordan and finally northern Jordan. The poorest Jordanian couples have the smallest age gap between them, but those women with less education generally have a smaller spousal age gap than those women with more education (Table 5).

Jordanians' trends in marriage timing suggest that men and women's ages at marriage may be converging in Jordan, but Figure 17 indicates that there has been no such narrowing of the spousal age gap over successive marriage cohorts. Jordanian husbands' age advantage has followed a cyclical pattern, and after declining in the late 1970s and 1980s, it has generally increased since the marriage cohorts of the early 1990s. When spousal age gaps are broken down by rural/urban residence, it becomes clear that this pattern is driven largely by urban couples (Figure 17).

Boys' educational attainment has historically exceeded girls' educational attainment in many Arab societies, and Arab culture dictates that the husband's education should be equivalent to or greater than his wife's. However, spousal education gaps are quite narrow in Jordan. On average, Jordanian husbands have only 0.4 years more education than their wives. Table 5 displays differentials in husband-wife educational gaps by socio-demographic group. Differentials are generally quite small, but what is noteworthy is the fact that Jordanian wives with secondary and post-secondary degrees have *more* years of education on average than their husbands, a pattern that does not hold for less educated women in the JLMPS (Table 6).

Figure 18 shows that couples in which the wife has more years of education than her husband are becoming more common over time in Jordan. In the earliest marriage cohorts represented in the JLMPS, men had about 3 years more of education than their wives, but by the 1990-1994 marriage cohort, the mean spousal education gap was zero. Since then, Jordan's most recently married women have achieved a slight educational advantage over their husbands, on average. This pattern holds in both urban and rural areas (Figure 18). In marriages contracted since 1990, the JLMPS shows that 41.9 percent of all wives had exceeded their husbands in educational attainment, and 25.4 percent of wives were equivalent in years of education to their husbands.

6. Consanguinity

The JLMPS contains questions regarding the kinship relation between husbands and wives which were posed to all ever-married women aged 15-60. Overall, 35.3 percent of all ever-married women interviewed for the survey reported that their first marriages were consanguineous. Of these consanguineous marriages, 44.4 percent involved a union with a paternal cousin, 26.9 percent involved a union with a maternal cousin, 24.6 percent involve a union with another blood relative, and 4.1 percent involved a union with a relative by marriage.

In the JLMPS sample as a whole, kin marriages account for 42.0 percent of all rural marriages and 33.9 percent of all urban marriages. Consanguinity is also practiced most

often in northern Jordan, followed by southern Jordan, and finally central Jordan. If consanguineous marriage is broken down by socioeconomic status, we find that kin marriages are most common among the least wealthy and least common among the wealthiest. Those with modest educational attainment are more likely to marry relatives than those with more education (Table 7).

My analysis also shows that the practice of kin endogamy has declined steadily over time for the Jordanian population as a whole. A full 41.4 percent of all marriages contracted in 1965-69 were between relatives, but by 2005-10 this percentage had declined to 26.1 percent (Figure 19). However, this belies important differences in the trajectory of consanguinity by residence. Since the marriage cohorts of the 1960s, consanguineous marriages have dwindled in urban areas. In rural areas, however, kin marriage followed a general upward trend until the marriage cohorts of the late 1990s, after which it followed a downward trend.

Household Structure

The JLMPS contains a question posed to ever-married women aged 15-60 regarding the structure of the household they entered upon marriage, which allows us to explore nuclear versus extended family living arrangements. In the JLMPS sample as a whole, 64.2 percent of these women reported that they had established an independent nuclear family when they entered into their first union. Nearly all of the remaining women went to live with their husbands together with the husband's family. Surprisingly, nuclear family living at the start of marriage was reported slightly more frequently among women living in rural areas, compared to women living in urban areas. This may be because the high cost of purchasing or renting a home in the cities forces urban Jordanian newlyweds to live with relatives at the start of their married lives. As we might expect, the rich are most likely to live in nuclear households at the start of marriage, and the poor are least likely to live in nuclear households. There is also a steep educational gradient in nuclear family living, with the most educated setting up independent living arrangements at the start of marriage nearly twice as often as the least educated. Furthermore, in the JLMPS sample as a whole, nuclear family living arrangements at the start of marriage are most common in southern Jordan, followed by northern Jordan and central Jordan (Table 8). Again, this may be due to expensive real estate prices in the central and northern regions, or it may be due to different customs in each of these regions.

The practice of extended family living has also diminished in favor of nuclear family living, which has increased in prevalence over time (Figure 20). In the 1960-64 marriage cohort, 39.0 percent of all Jordanian couples lived as a nuclear household at the start of their marriages. By the 2005-10 marriage cohort, twice as many couples lived as nuclear families upon marriage. If we compare the trajectory of nuclear family living in urban and rural areas, we find that nuclear family arrangements were much less common in rural areas than urban areas in the earliest marriage cohorts. Nuclear family living has grown in frequency among rural and urban residents, with the exception of the 1990-1994 marriage cohort, in which extended family living spiked briefly. This may have been due to the 1991 Gulf War, which saw many Jordanians return to the Kingdom from the oil-rich countries of the Persian Gulf. This return migration may have driven up housing prices in Jordan, forcing newlywed couples to temporarily reside with relatives.

Marriage Expenditures

The JLMPS contains a number of questions posed to ever-married women aged 15 to 60 on expenditures related to their first marriages. Respondents were asked to report the Jordanian Dinar (JD) value of the *mahr* (prompt dower) given by the groom to the bride,³ the jewelry

³ The *mahr* (also called the *mahr muajjal*) is only practiced among Muslims.

given by the groom to the bride, the furniture and appliances purchased for the conjugal home, the costs of housing, and the costs of celebrations including the engagement and wedding parties. Information was collected on two other items that are not included in my calculation of the total costs of marriage, namely the value of the furniture recorded in the marriage contract, and the value of the *muakhar* (deferred dower) recorded in the marriage contract.⁴

First I explore the average cost of each of the expenditures made at the time of marriage in marriages contracted since 1990, disaggregating these expenditures by socio-demographic characteristics of the respondent. Jordanian Dinars are standardized to 2010 values, and therefore are adjusted for inflation.⁵ Table 9 shows that the average cost of marriage in Jordan is approximately 9,900 JD, or about \$14,000 US.⁶ If we compare average marriage costs by socio-demographic characteristics, we see that total marriage costs are actually slightly higher in rural Jordan compared to urban Jordan, primarily due to higher expenditures on jewelry and housing in rural areas (Figures 21 and 22). Not surprisingly, the poor spend less on marriage in absolute terms than wealthier Jordanians. There are also some differentials in marriage outlays across Jordan's three main regions. Respondents in northern and southern Jordan reported spending nearly equal sums on marriage overall, and respondents in central Jordan spent the least among all regions. Figure 22 shows that generally, the costliest component of marriage expenditures is furniture and appliances, which represents 35 percent of total marriage costs on average. This is followed by celebrations (24 percent), jewelry (15 percent), and finally housing and *mahr* (each accounting for 14 percent).

Finally, using retrospective reports on marriage costs from marriage cohorts dating back to the 1970s,⁷ I examine trends in matrimonial expenditures in Jordan. Contrary to popular discourse, the costs of marriage have *not* increased in Jordan in recent years. When marriage expenditures are standardized to current values, the total cost of marriage rises and then falls over the 40-year period under consideration. Compared to those who married in 1970-74, those who married in 1985-89 spent about 30 percent more on their marriage preparations. Marriage costs for those who married in 1980-84 were significantly higher than for those who married five years earlier, and although those who married in 1985-89 spent even more than those who married five years earlier, this increase was not statistically significant. After the 1985-89 marriage cohorts, however, marriage costs dropped precipitously and significantly, and have hovered around JD10,000 ever since the marriages of the early 1990s. Figure 24 shows that the trend of increasing then diminishing marriage costs is most pronounced in rural areas. The inflation in marriage costs witnessed in the 1980s was steepest in rural areas, and even when they declined, they plateaued at a level higher than urban areas. The 1980s were a period of relatively high remittances from the oil-rich countries of the Gulf, which might account for more lavish spending on marriage during those years. Overall, the pattern in average total marriage costs provides little evidence suggesting that the rising age at first marriage for Jordanian men or women is a response to inflation in the costs of marriage.

⁴ The *muakhar* (also called the *mahr muajjal*) is a sum of money, agreed upon at the time of marriage, that Muslim brides can claim if they are widowed or divorced. Because it is not actually paid to the bride at the time of marriage, I exclude it from my calculation of the total costs of marriage. Similarly, the JD value of furniture recorded in the (Muslim) marriage contract is meant to document the property to which the bride would be entitled upon divorce. In this analysis I assume that this furniture represents the value (perhaps inflated) of the furniture and other household goods purchased by the bride and groom (Moors 1994), which is captured in another question in the JLMPS questionnaire.

⁵ I also eliminated outliers in the costs of marriage data by using the Cook's D statistic. This ensures that the reported means are not unduly influenced by exceptionally large values of the costs of marriage.

⁶ I used an exchange rate of 1.4117 US dollars to JD (<http://www.oanda.com/currency/historical-rates/>)

⁷ A longer time trend could not be constructed because historical inflation rates for the Jordanian Dinar are not available earlier than 1967.

Examining proportional spending on marriage cost components over time reveals that housing has grown most as a proportion of total marriage costs. Housing expenses comprised 2 percent of marriage costs among those marrying in 1970-74, and 18 percent among those marrying in 2005-10. Considering that more and more young couples report living as nuclear family households at the start of marriage, the growing resources devoted to housing expenses are not surprising. This has been compensated for by a decline in the proportion of expenditures made on celebrations, and on the *mahr* to a lesser extent (Figure 25).

Conclusions

This chapter has described marriage behavior in contemporary Jordan by utilizing a unique data source, the 2010 JLMPS. Questions contained in the JLMPS questionnaire allow for the exploration of several facets of marriage behavior in the Jordanian population, including the duration of engagements, current marital status, marriage timing, spousal characteristics, household structure, and marriage expenditures.

Across Jordan, the average length of engagement among ever-married women was approximately 8 months. Disaggregating engagement durations by socio-demographic characteristic revealed that engagements were longest among urban dwellers—those residing in central Jordan—among the wealthy, and among women who had intermediate education. Trends in engagement durations are such that engagements became shorter over successive marriage cohorts until 1980-84, after which time engagements have lengthened slightly in Jordan.

Virtually all Jordanians will enter into a marital union in the course of their lifetimes. Among those aged 45-49, only 2 percent of men and 7 percent of women had never married, according to the JLMPS. These rates of never-married indeed confirm that women are more likely than men to remain single, but they do not represent the emergence of a pressing social problem, as some sources would suggest.

Marriage timing in the JLMPS is examined here through the use of two measures: the median age at marriage, and the proportions married by ages 18, 20, 25 and 30. At the national level, the median age at marriage in Jordan is 24 for women and 29 for men. These two measures both indicate that women marry later in rural areas compared to urban areas, but they yield contradictory findings with regards to whether rural or urban men marry later. Both measures suggest that the transition to marriage occurs latest in north and south Jordan compared to central Jordan, although the differences among men are minimal. Women's median age at marriage increases with increasing wealth, but the proportion of married women at every age indicate that the poorest women begin marrying earliest, but at the same time a larger fraction of these women remain unmarried at age 30. Men's median age at marriage increases with increasing wealth according to both measures of marriage timing. Both measures also confirm that the more education women have attained, the later they tend to marry. However, the two measures disagree in terms of the education gradient in men's marriage timing. Transitions to marriage have generally been occurring at later ages over time in Jordan. Trends in the proportions married at certain ages show that the proportion of women who are married at certain ages have decreased over time, suggesting a rise in the female age at marriage. Men's ages at marriage also appear to have been delayed over successive birth cohorts, although the climb in men's ages at marriage is considerably flatter than women's. Comparing rural and urban populations, we see that rural women and men have undergone greater change in marriage timing than their urban counterparts.

I next examined spousal characteristics, beginning with differences in age and education between husbands and wives. Across Jordan, husbands are 6 years older than their wives on average. There are no rural-urban differences in husbands' age seniority, but the greatest age advantage exists among southern Jordanian couples, among the wealthy, and among the least

educated. The spousal age gap has fluctuated over time in Jordan, but has generally failed to narrow over successive marriage cohorts. As for educational differences between husbands and wives, they are minimal in Jordan, with husbands having less than half a year more education on average than their wives. Disaggregating educational differences by socio-demographic characteristic yields few contrasts, but highly educated women are distinct in that their education exceeds that of their husbands, on average. If we look at trends over time, we find that husbands' education exceeded their wives in the earliest marriage cohorts. In the most recent marriage cohorts, however, wives have achieved a one-year educational advantage over their husbands on average. The final spousal characteristic explored in this chapter had to do with kinship. Thirty-five percent of all marriages represented in the JLMPS data were between relatives. Kin marriages are more common in rural areas, in northern Jordan, among the poorest Jordanians, and among the least educated. Consanguineous marriages have generally declined in prevalence over time, but still, approximately one-quarter of all marriages contracted in the most recent marriage cohort were between relatives.

There are important variations by socio-demographic characteristic in household structure in Jordan. Those living in rural Jordan, those residing in the south, wealthy Jordanians, and highly educated Jordanians are most likely to live in a nuclear family household (rather than an extended family household) at the start of marriage. Over time, nuclear family living has become more common in Jordan, as modernization accounts of economic development would predict.

Marriage expenditures are the final feature of marriage behavior investigated in this chapter. The various material requirements that accompany marriage in Jordan include a dowry for the bride, jewelry, furniture, appliances, housing costs, and celebration costs. Together these items require an average outlay of about US\$14,000 with housing and celebrations being the costliest two components overall. Those in urban areas, those in central Jordan, those in the poorest third of the wealth distribution, and those with the least education spend the least on marriage. Variations in marriage expenditures over time are apparent in the JLMPS data, but they are not in the expected direction. I find that the costs of marriage followed an upward trajectory between the marriage cohorts of the early 1970s and those of the late 1980s. However, marriage costs in Jordan subsequently declined by a factor of about 20%, and have remained more or less constant since the early 1990s. These findings are in contrast to Jordanians' popular perceptions, which hold that marriage costs have been rising dramatically over time. This dissonance between perception and reality is difficult to account for, and unlocking this puzzle will require further research.

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Figure 1: Mean Months from Engagement to Marriage across Five-Year Marriage Cohorts, Ever-Married Women Aged 15-60, JLMPS 2010

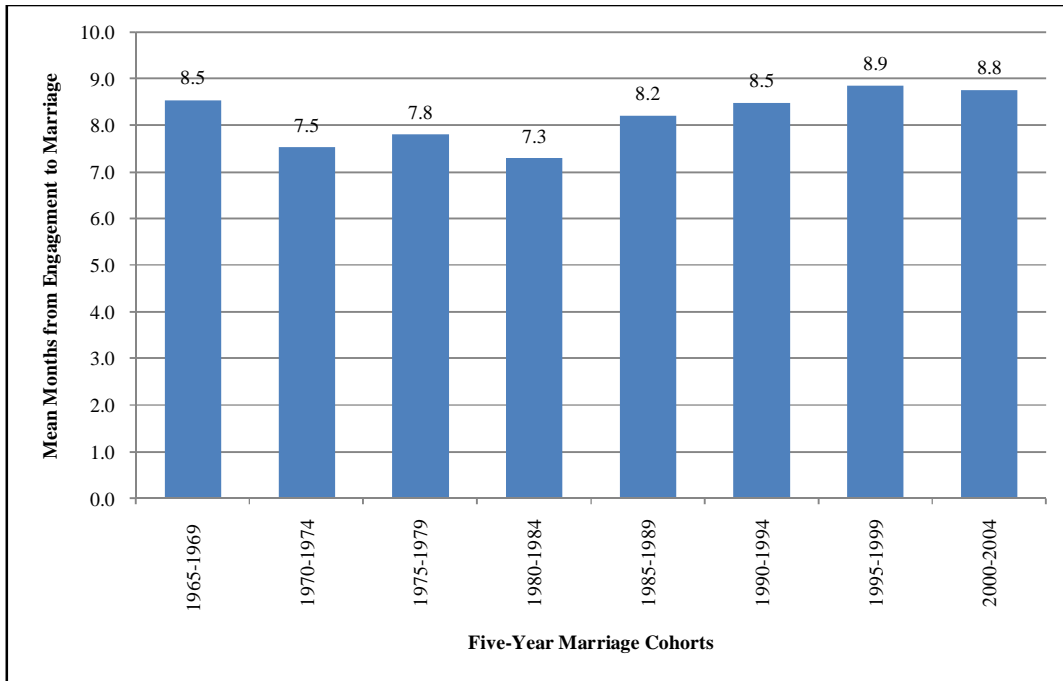


Figure 2: Proportion of Women and Men Never Married by Age Group, JLMPS 2010 and JPFHS 2009

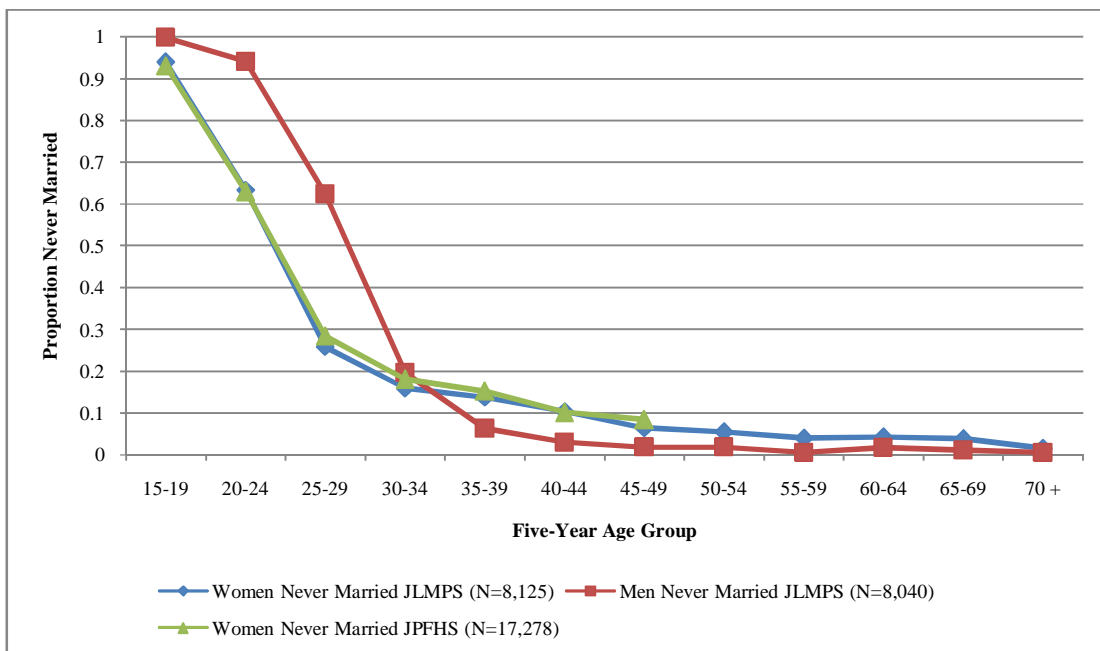


Figure 3: Proportion of Women Married by Age 18, 20, 25 and 30 across Five-Year Birth Cohorts, JLMPS 2010

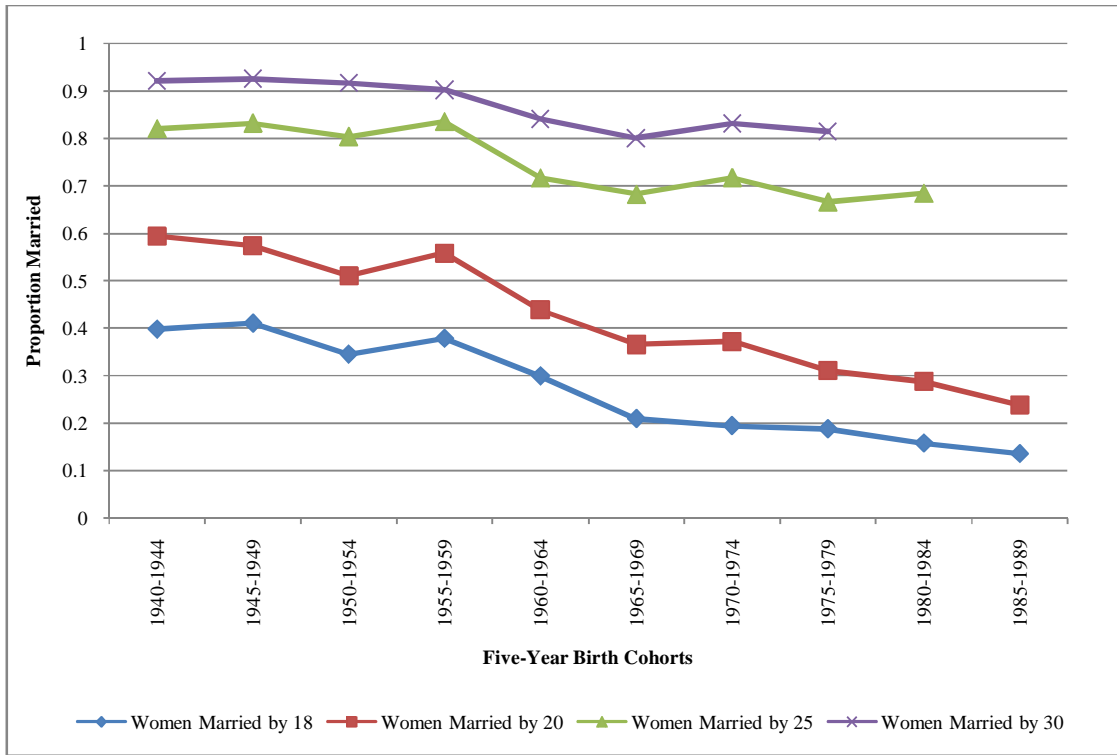


Figure 4: Proportion of Rural Women Married by Age 18, 20, 25 and 30 across Five-Year Birth Cohorts, JLMPS 2010

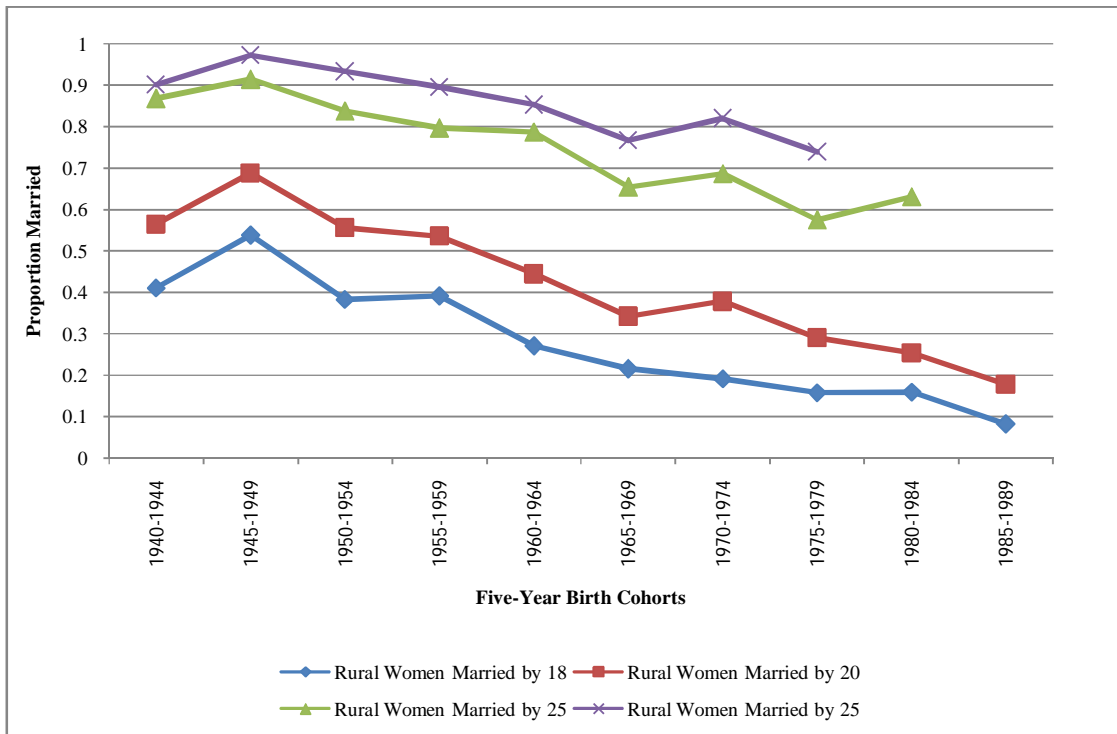


Figure 5: Proportion of Urban Women Married by Age 18, 20, 25 and 30 across Five-Year Birth Cohorts, JLMPS 2010

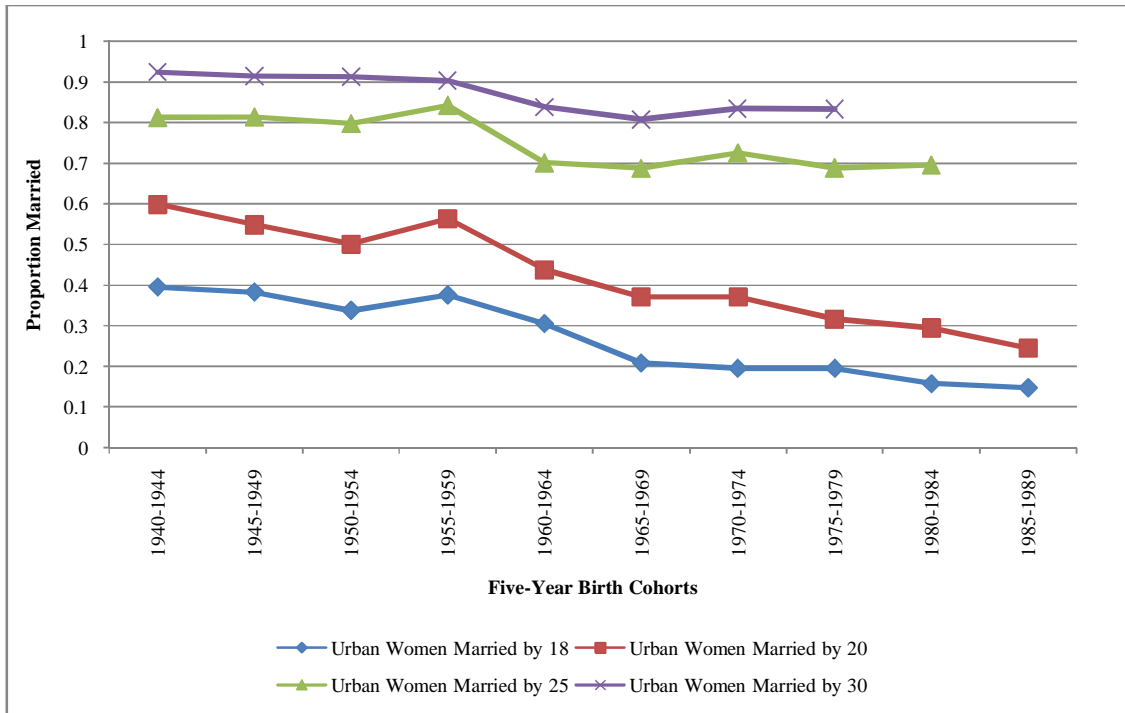


Figure 6: Proportion of Women with Less than Basic Education Married by Age 18, 20, 25 and 30 across Five-Year Birth Cohorts, JLMPS 2010

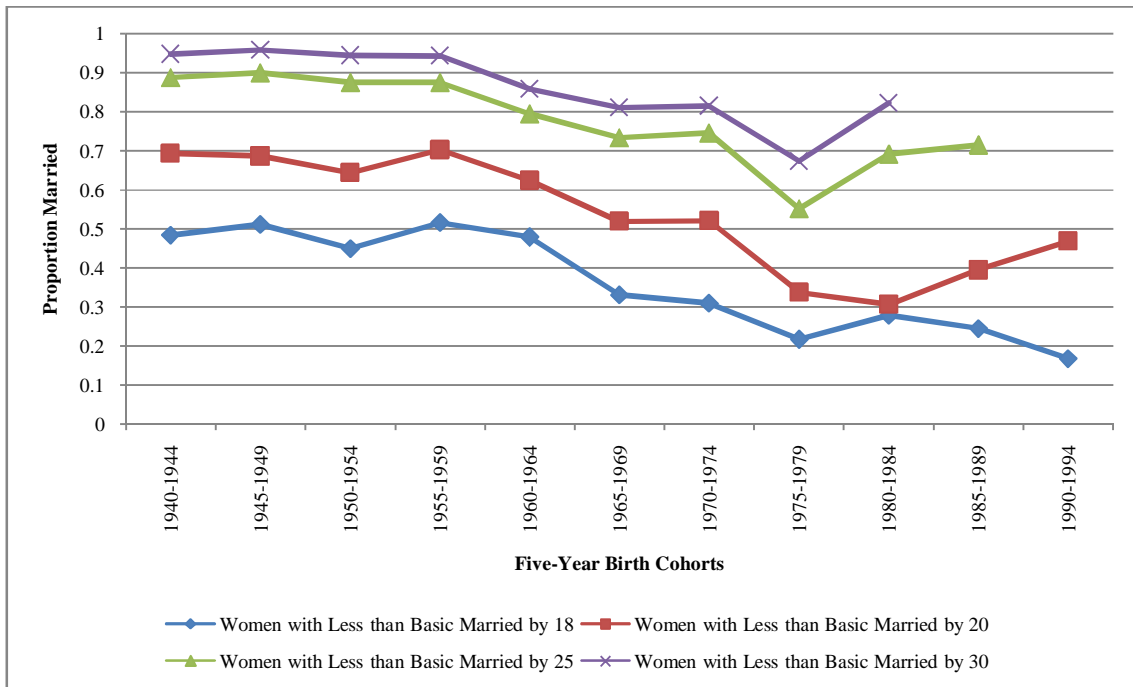


Figure 7: Proportion of Women with Basic Education Married by Age 18, 20, 25 and 30 across Five-Year Birth Cohorts, JLMPS 2010

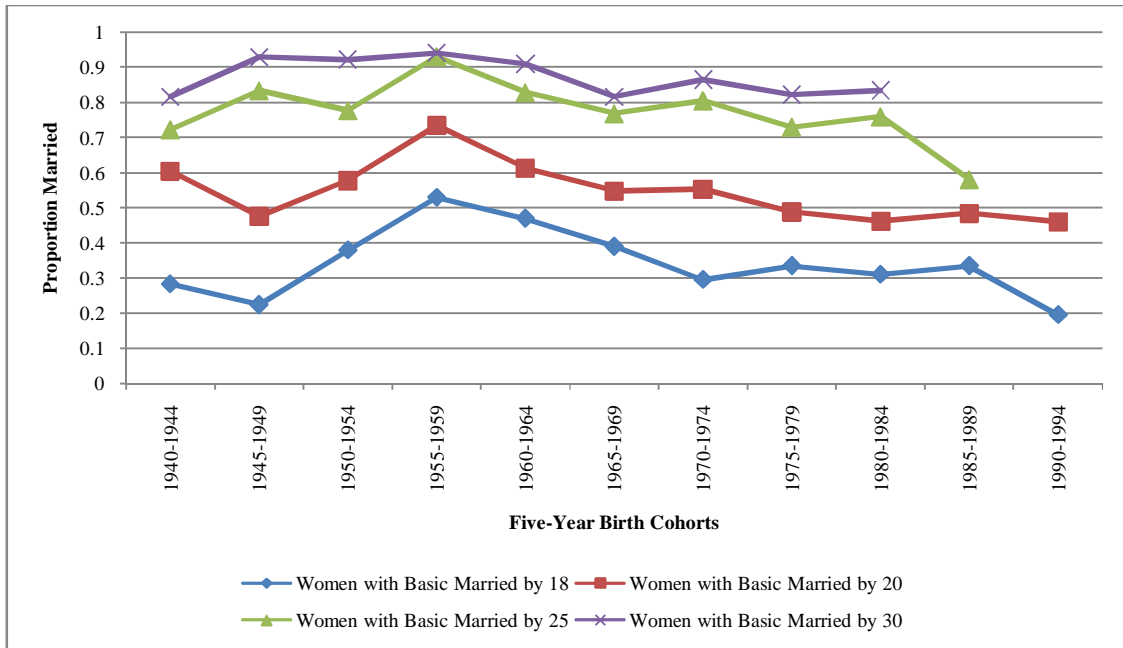


Figure 8: Proportion of Women with Secondary Education Married by Age 18, 20, 25 and 30 across Five-Year Birth Cohorts, JLMPS 2010

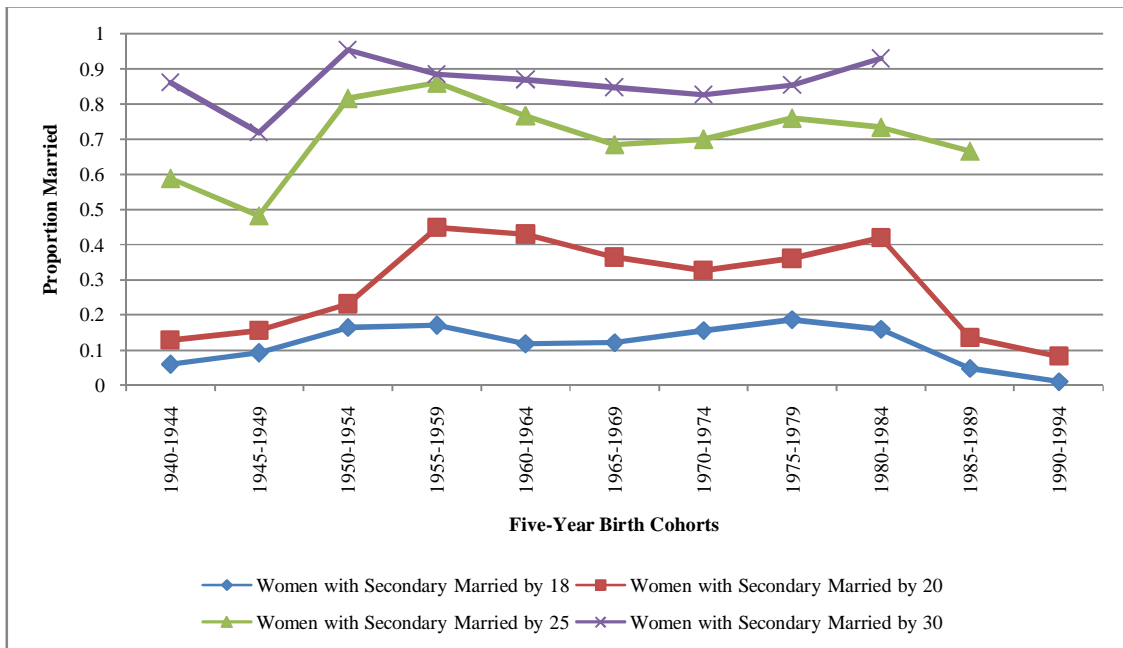


Figure 9: Proportion of Women with Post-Secondary Education Married by Age 18, 20, 25 and 30 across Five-Year Birth Cohorts, JLMPS 2010

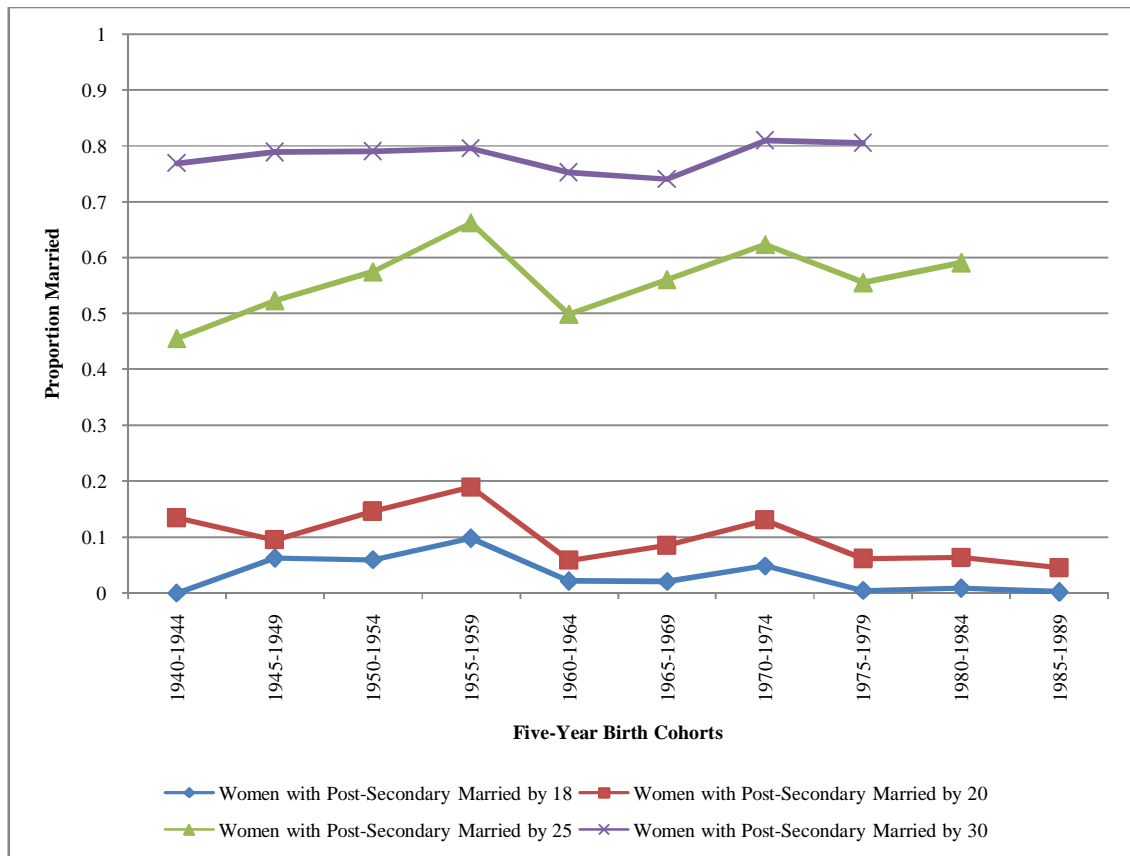


Figure 10: Proportion of Men Married by Age 18, 20, 25 and 30 across Five-Year Birth Cohorts, JLMPS 2010

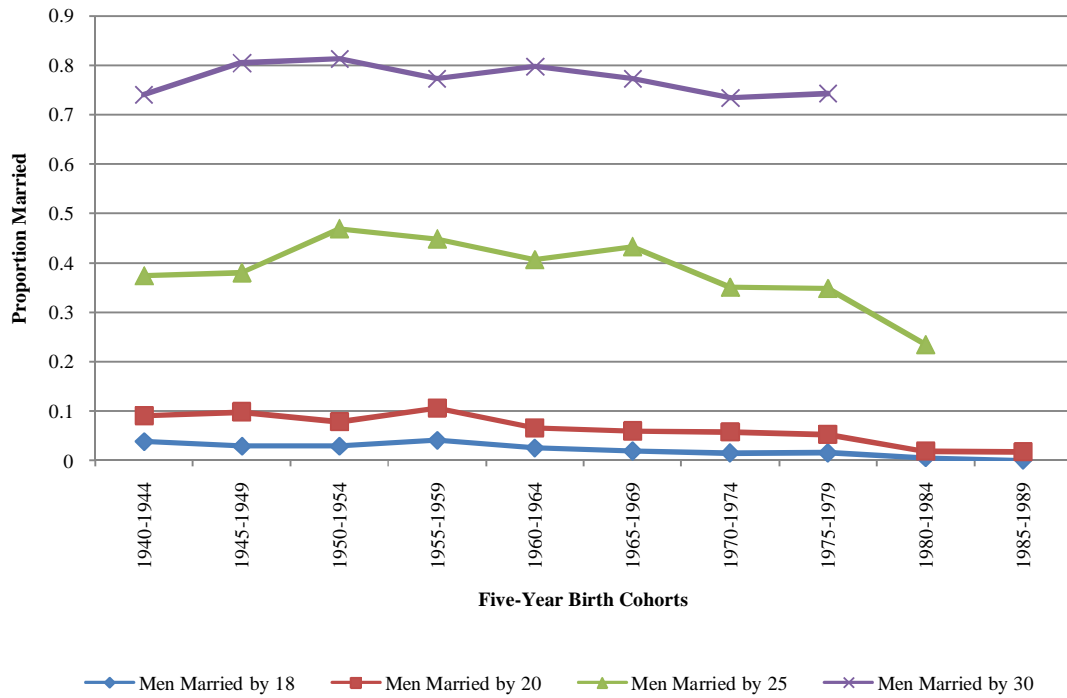


Figure 11: Proportion of Rural Men Married by Age 18, 20, 25 and 30 across Five-Year Birth Cohorts, JLMPS 2010

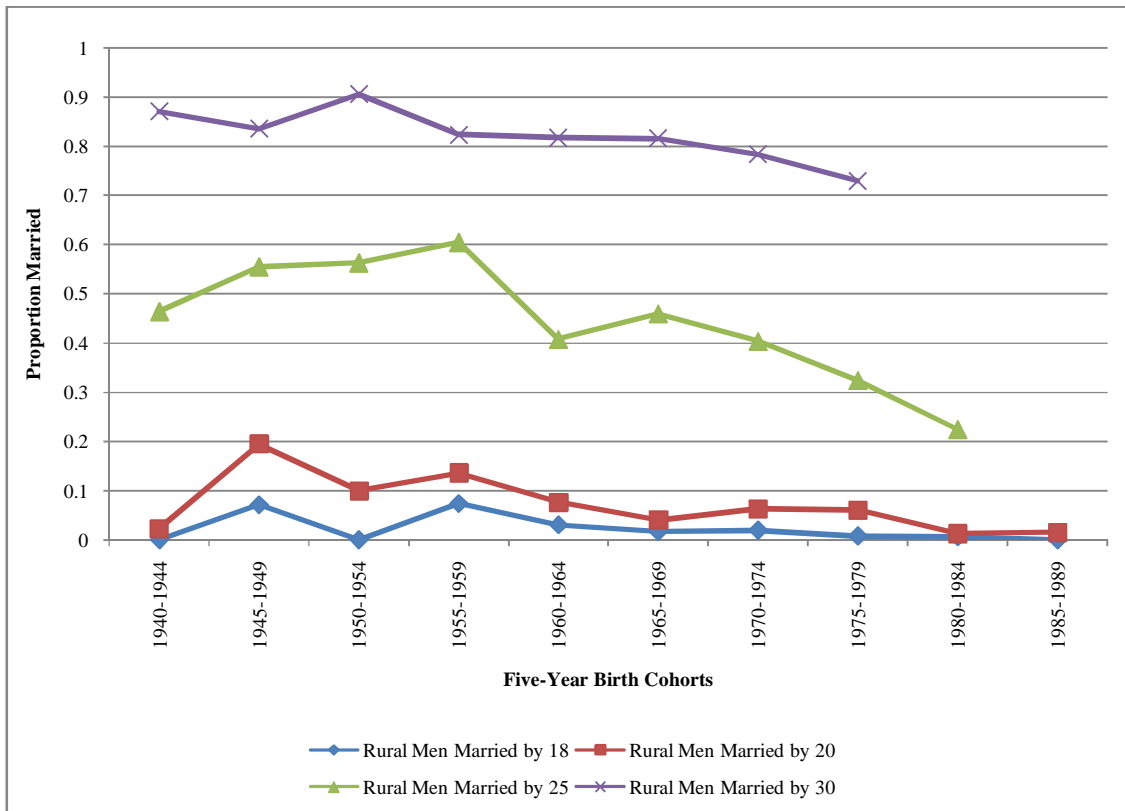


Figure 12: Proportion of Urban Men Married by Age 18, 20, 25 and 30 across Five-Year Birth Cohorts, JLMPS 2010

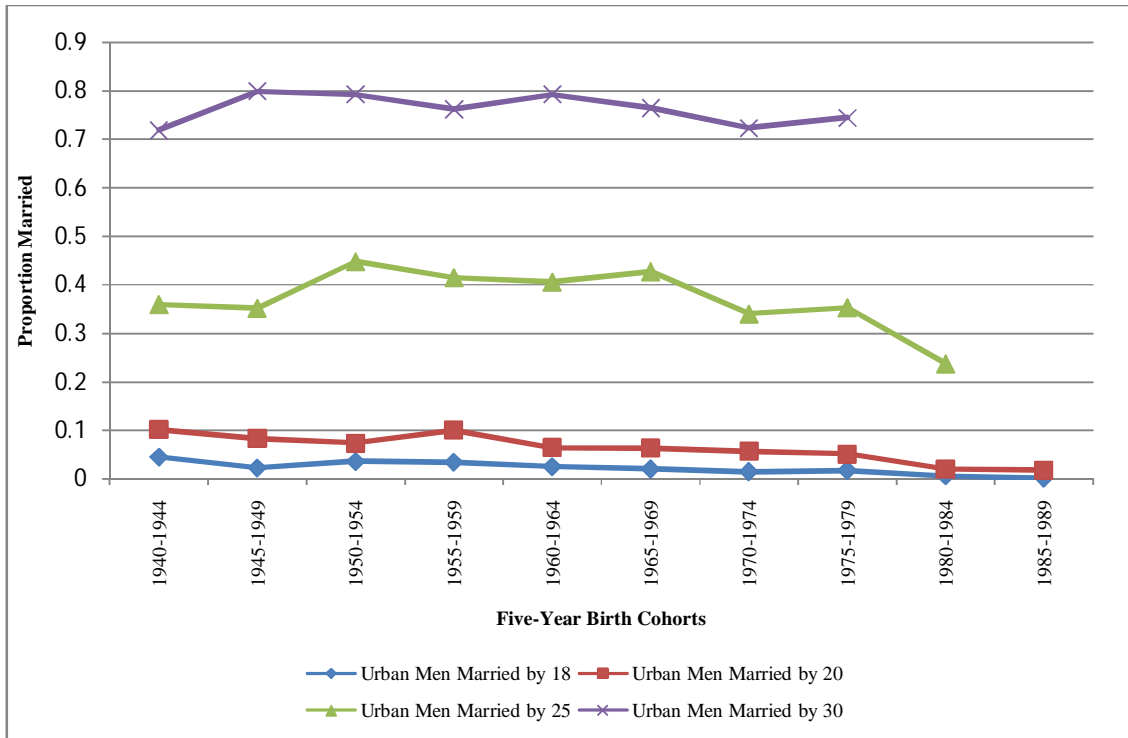


Figure 13: Proportion of Men with Less than Basic Education Married by Age 18, 20, 25 and 30 across Five-Year Birth Cohorts, JLMPS 2010

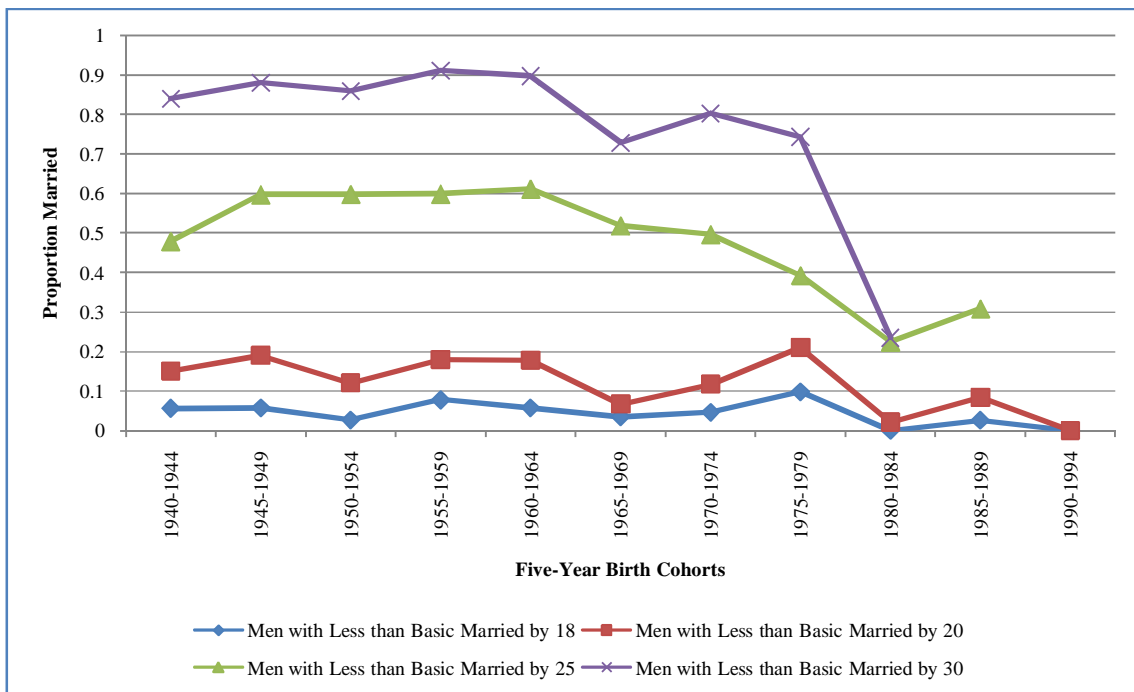


Figure 14: Proportion of Men with Basic Education Married by Age 18, 20, 25 and 30 across Five-Year Birth Cohorts, JLMPS 2010

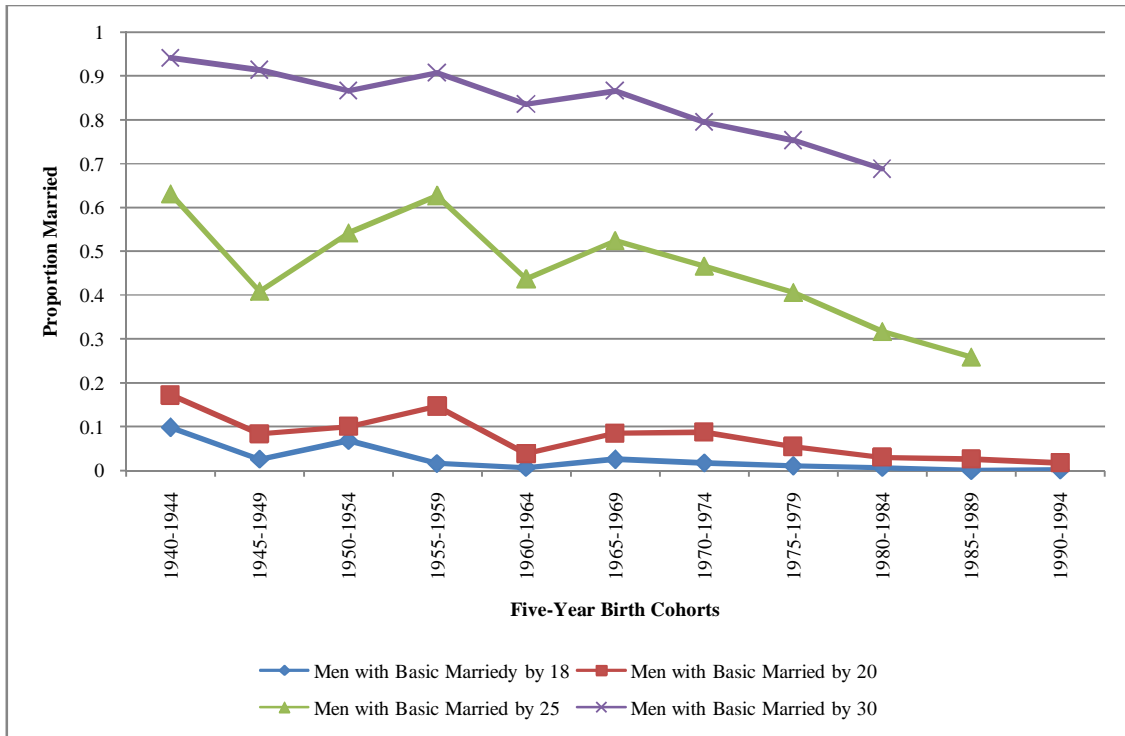


Figure 15: Proportion of Men with Secondary Education Married by Age 18, 20, 25 and 30 across Five-Year Birth Cohorts, JLMPS 2010

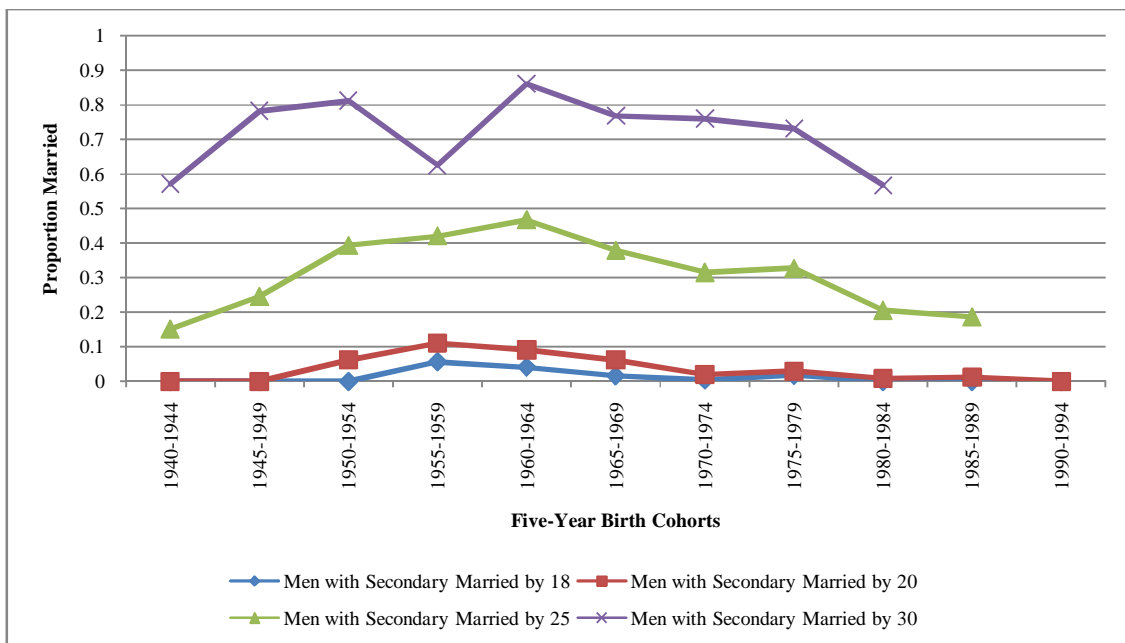


Figure 16: Proportion of Men with Post-Secondary Education Married by Age 18, 20, 25 and 30 across Five-Year Birth Cohorts, JLMPS 2010

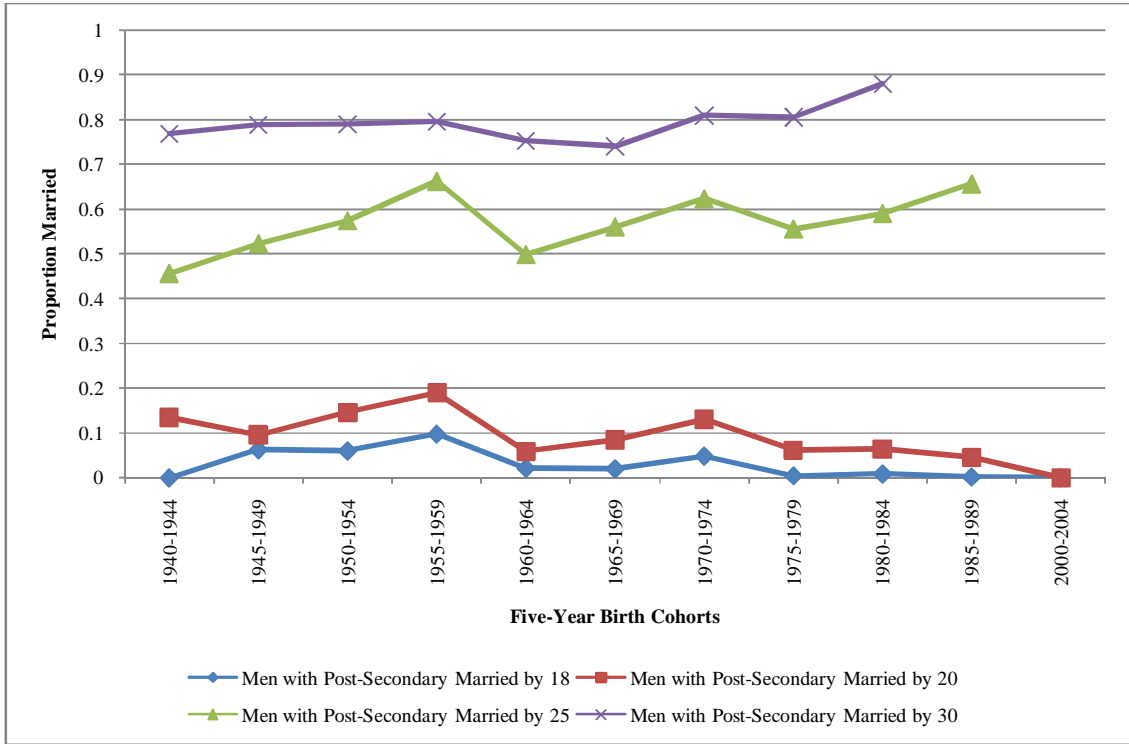


Figure 17: Husband's Mean Age Advantage by Rural/Urban Residence across Five-Year Birth Cohorts, Ever-Married Women Aged 15-60, JLMPS 2010

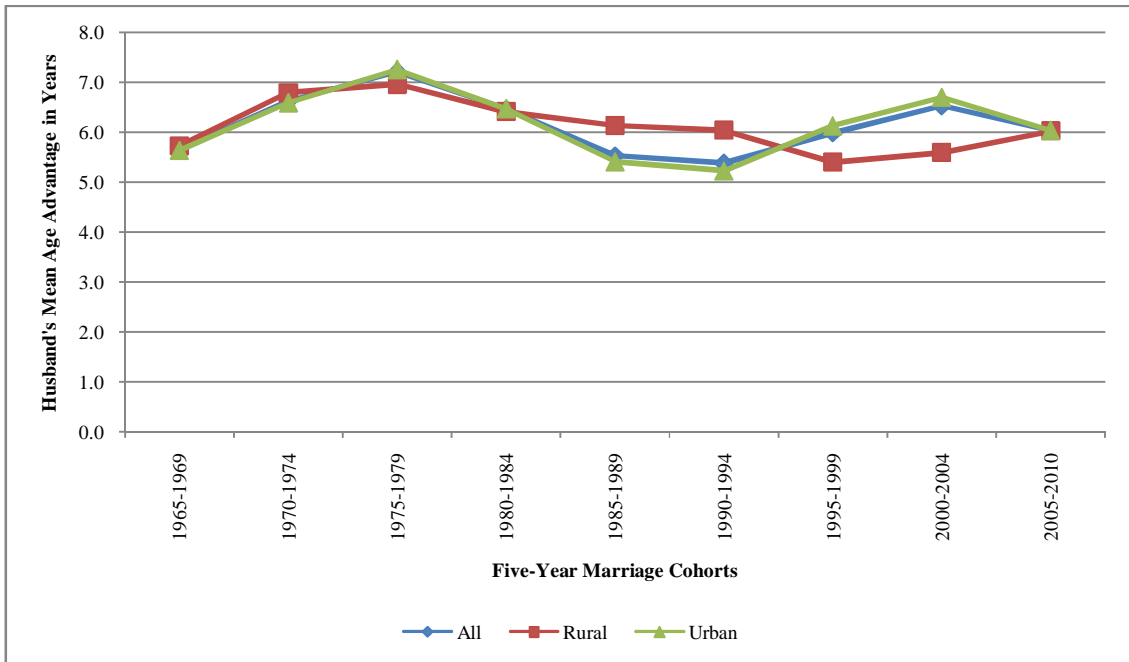


Figure 18: Husband's Mean Educational Advantage by Rural/Urban Residence across Five-Year Birth Cohorts, Ever-Married Women Aged 15-60, JLMPS 2010

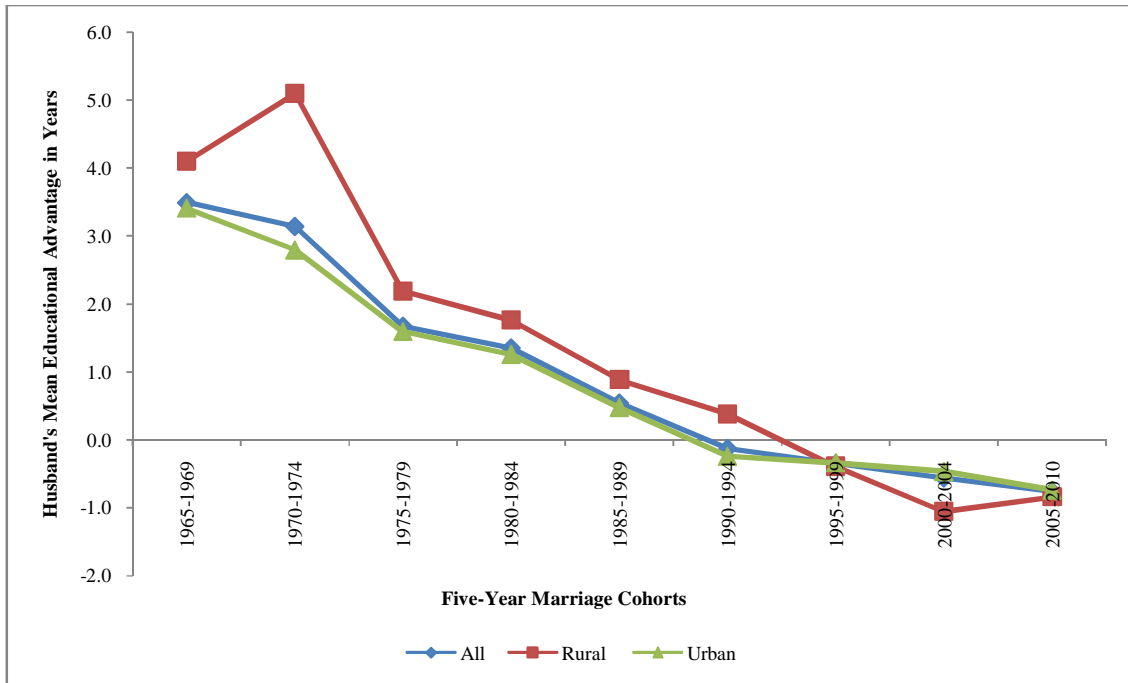


Figure 19: Proportion of Marriages that were Consanguineous by Rural/ Urban Residence across Five-Year Marriage Cohorts, Ever-Married Women Aged 15-60, JLMPS 2010

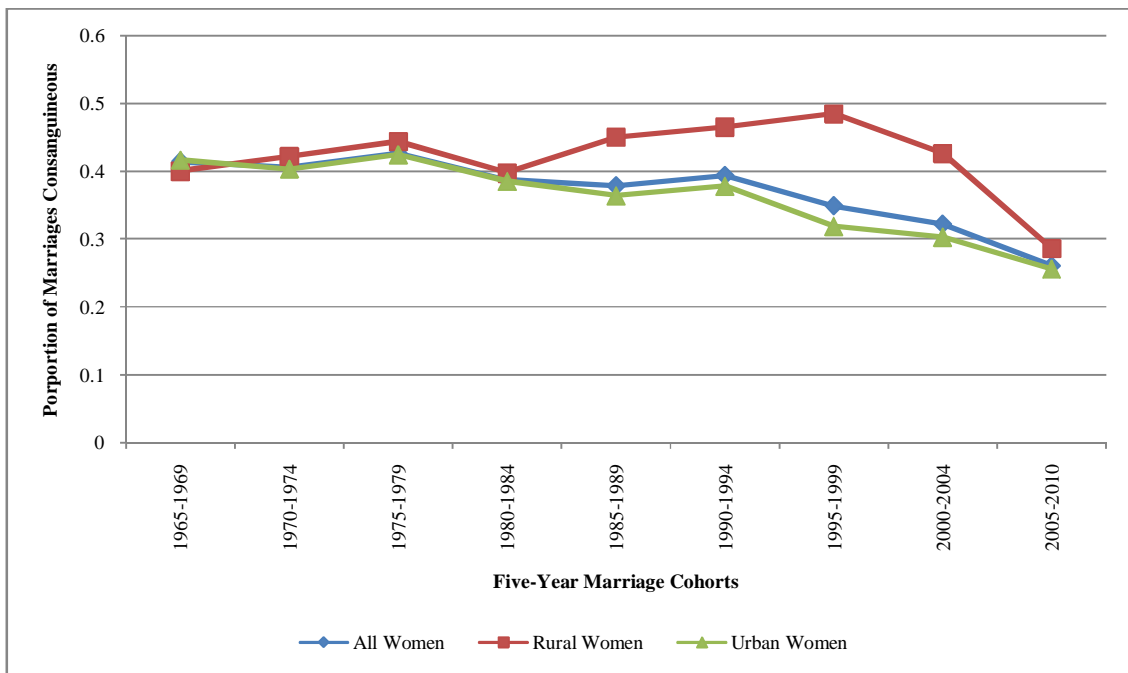


Figure 20: Proportion Living as Nuclear Family at Start of First Marriage by Rural/Urban Residence across Five-Year Marriage Cohorts, Ever-Married Women Aged 15-60, JLMPS 2010

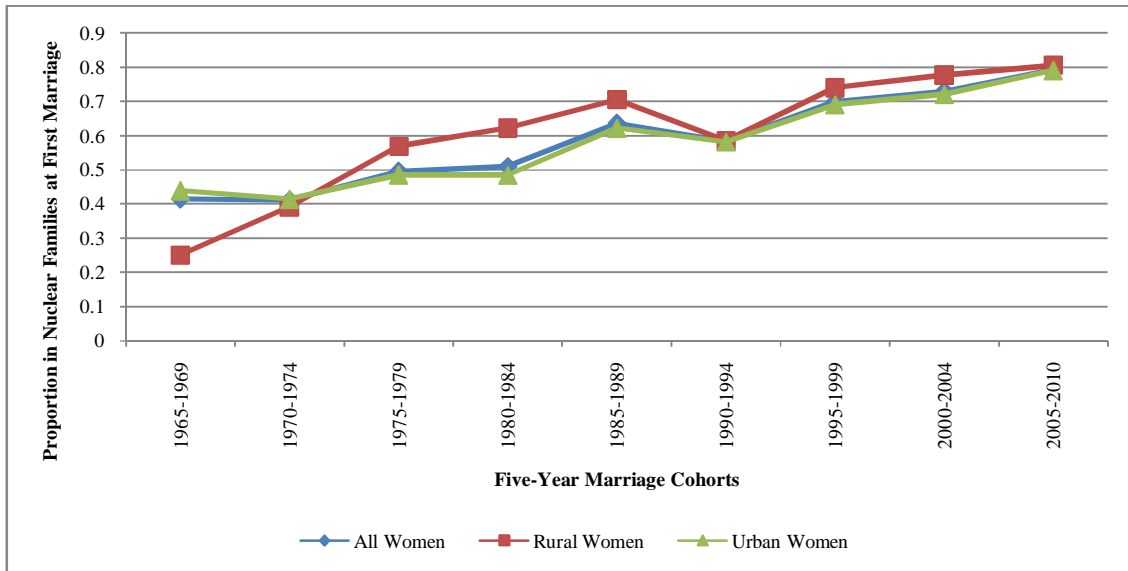


Figure 21: Mean Spending on Marriage Cost Components by Socio-Demographic Characteristic of the Wife, Among Ever-Married Women Aged 15-60 who Married in 1990 or Later, JLMPS 2010

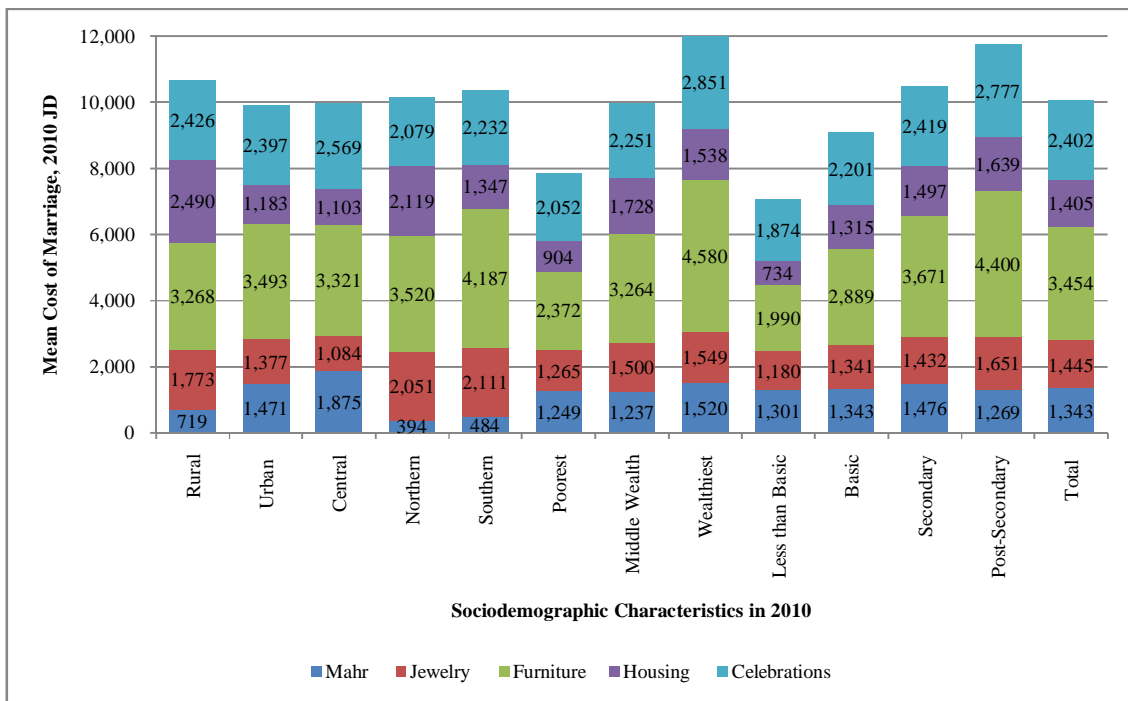


Figure 22: Proportional Spending on Marriage Cost Components by Socio-Demographic Characteristic of the Wife, Among Ever-Married Women Aged 15-60 who Married in 1990 or Later, JLMPs 2010

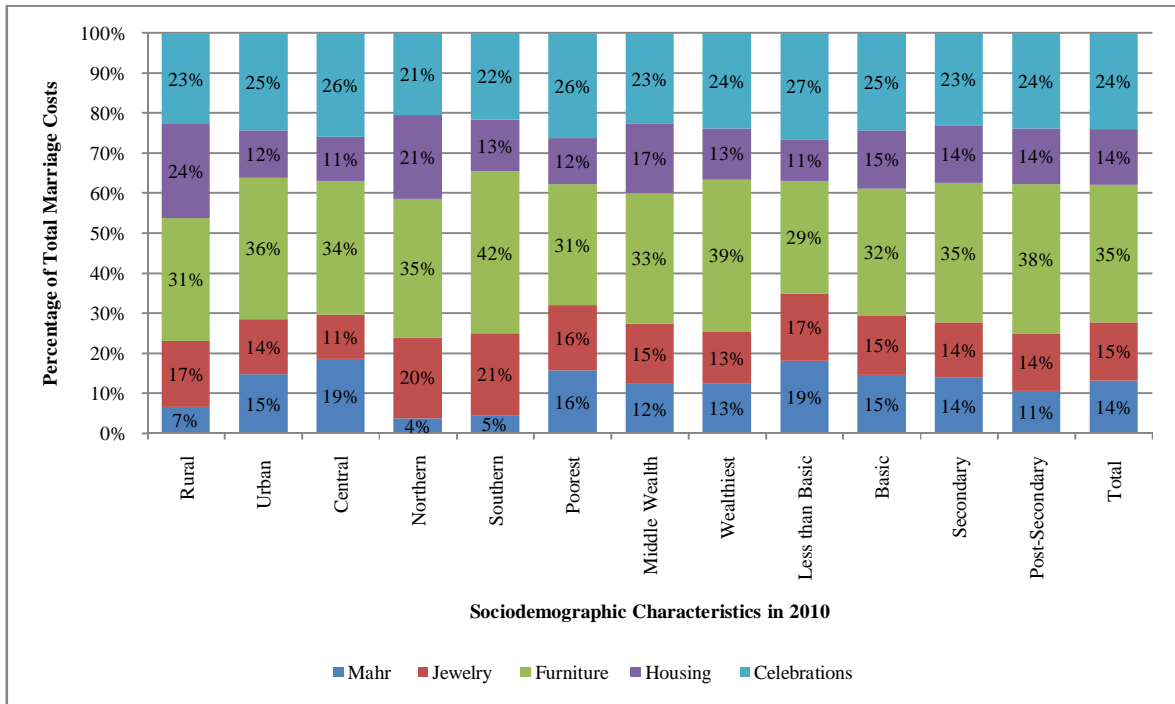


Figure 23: Mean Spending on Marriage Cost Components across Five-Year Marriage Cohorts, Ever-Married Women Aged 15-60, JLMPs 2010

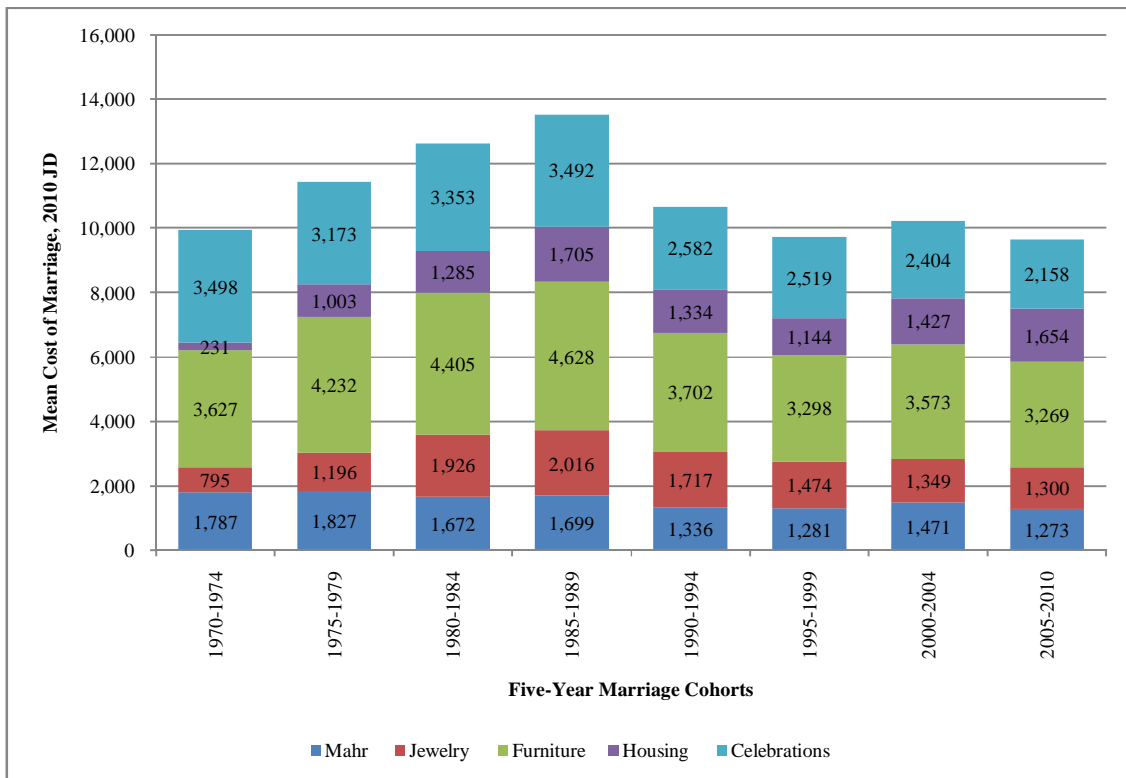


Figure 24: Mean Spending on Total Marriage Costs by Urban/ Rural Residence across Five-Year Marriage Cohort, Ever-Married Women Aged 15-60, JLMPS 2010

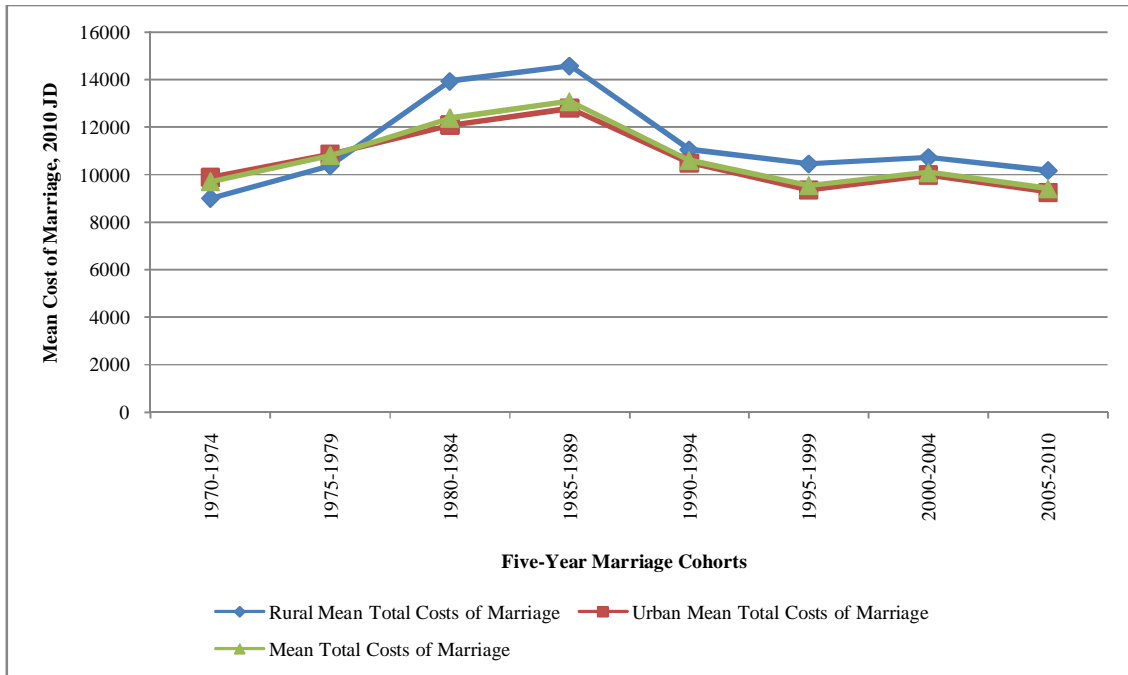


Figure 25: Proportional Spending on Marriage Cost Components across Five-Year Marriage Cohorts, Ever-Married Women Aged 15-60, JLMPS 2010

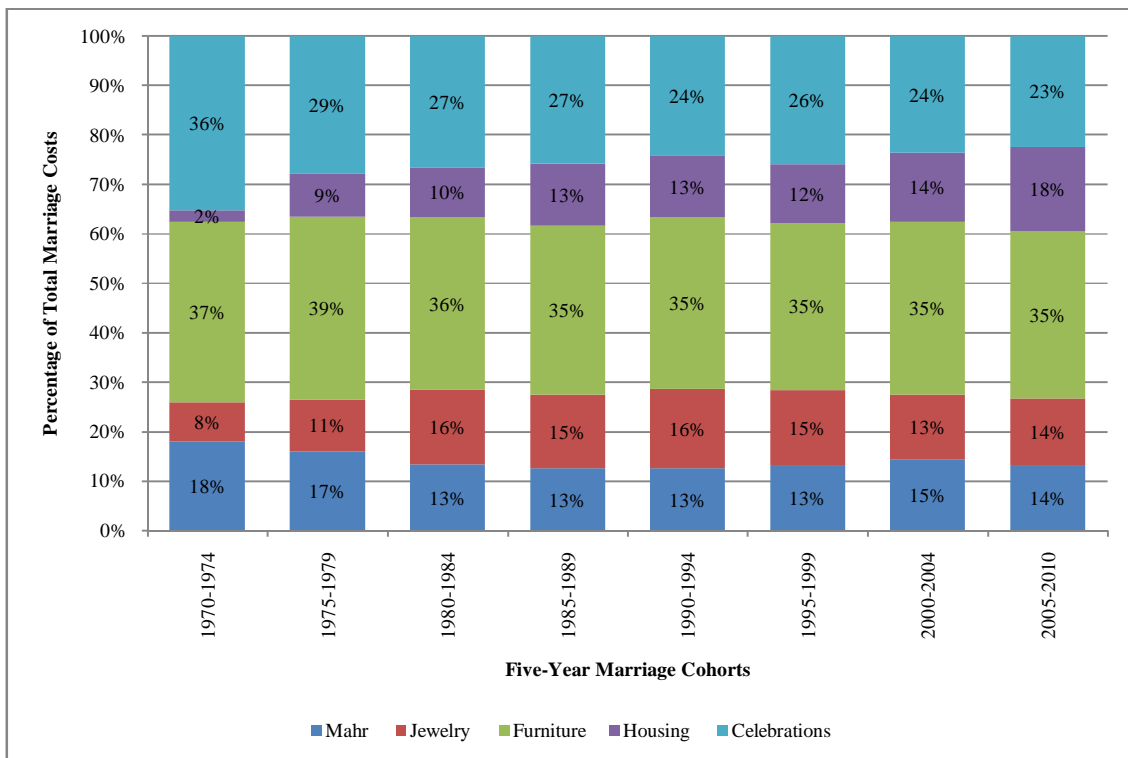


Table 1: Mean Months from Engagement to Marriage by Socio-Demographic Characteristic of the Wife, Ever-Married Women Aged 15-60, JLMPS 2010

	Months from Engagement to Marriage	N
Residence		
Rural	8.1	1205
Urban	8.4	3306
Region		
Central	8.6	2371
Northern	8.0	1473
Southern	7.9	667
Wealth		
Poorest	8.3	1423
Middle Wealth	8.4	1546
Wealthiest	8.4	1542
Education		
Less than Basic	7.0	1035
Basic	8.6	1550
Secondary	9.3	780
Post-Secondary	8.5	1146
Total	8.4	4511

Table 2: Current Marital Status of Women and Men by Five-Year Age Group, JLMPS 2010

Five Year Age Group	Marital Status								N	
	Never Married		Married		Divorced/Separated		Widowed		Women	Men
	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men
15-19	94.0	100.0	6.0	0.1	0.1	0.0	0.0	0.0	1486	1488
20-24	63.4	94.2	35.8	5.8	0.8	0.1	0.1	0.0	1194	1240
25-29	26.0	62.5	72.0	36.9	2.0	0.6	0.0	0.1	1006	1050
30-34	16.0	19.8	81.9	79.7	1.7	0.5	0.4	0.0	905	858
35-39	13.8	6.3	81.0	92.1	3.9	1.6	1.3	0.0	870	800
40-44	10.4	3.1	84.8	95.8	1.9	0.8	2.9	0.2	679	698
45-49	6.5	1.9	82.0	97.7	2.4	0.4	9.1	0.0	504	516
50-54	5.4	2.0	76.5	96.6	2.9	1.4	15.1	0.0	406	328
55-59	4.0	0.7	75.5	98.0	0.8	0.9	19.7	0.4	296	292
60-64	4.3	1.8	57.2	93.5	2.6	1.3	35.9	3.4	265	244
65-69	3.9	1.2	55.6	97.3	2.6	0.0	38.0	1.5	187	213
70 +	1.6	0.6	31.3	86.0	1.4	0.8	65.6	12.6	327	313
Total	34.4	43.6	56.5	55.2	1.7	0.6	7.5	0.7	8125	8040
Total both Sexes	39.0		55.8		1.1		4.1		16165	

Table 3: Median Age at First Marriage for Women and Men by Socio-demographic Characteristic, JLMPS 2010

	Women's Median Age at First Marriage	N	Men's Median Age at First Marriage	N
<i>Residence</i>				
Rural	24.5	2,283	29.1	2,259
Urban	23.6	5,842	28.7	5,781
<i>Region</i>				
Central	23.6	4,073	28.5	4,026
Northern	24.1	2,765	29.2	2,797
Southern	24.1	1,287	29.3	1,217
<i>Wealth</i>				
Poorest	21.9	2,606	28.2	2,627
Middle Wealth	23.0	2,659	28.1	2,571
Wealthiest	25.5	2,860	29.9	2,842
<i>Education</i>				
Less than Basic	22.3	2,197	29.7	1,651
Basic	20.8	2,664	27.6	3,264
Secondary	24.1	1,568	29.1	1,571
Post-Secondary	25.0	1,696	29.6	1,553
Total	23.8	8,125	28.7	8,040

Table 4: Proportions Married by Various Ages by Socio-demographic Characteristic, JLMPS 2010

	Proportion Married by 18	Proportion Married by 20	Proportion Married by 25	Proportion Married by 30	N
All Women	0.226	0.378	0.729	0.854	7169
Residence					
Rural Women	0.211	0.352	0.699	0.829	1986
Urban Women	0.230	0.383	0.735	0.860	5183
Region					
Central Jordan Women	0.231	0.384	0.735	0.860	3602
Northern Jordan Women	0.225	0.379	0.720	0.845	2438
Southern Jordan Women	0.201	0.337	0.714	0.845	1129
Wealth					
Poorest Women	0.275	0.430	0.718	0.835	2305
Middle Wealth Women	0.242	0.400	0.737	0.856	2319
Wealthiest Women	0.182	0.326	0.730	0.865	2545
Education					
Less than Basic	0.453	0.622	0.827	0.902	1805
Basic	0.326	0.515	0.770	0.853	2102
Secondary	0.097	0.288	0.730	0.854	1566
Post-Secondary	0.022	0.082	0.580	0.787	1696
All Men	0.018	0.055	0.365	0.764	7128
Residence					
Rural Men	0.018	0.056	0.395	0.802	1990
Urban Men	0.018	0.055	0.359	0.757	5138
Region					
Central Jordan Men	0.014	0.047	0.362	0.760	3575
Northern Jordan Men	0.022	0.070	0.372	0.775	2463
Southern Jordan Men	0.027	0.059	0.363	0.760	1090
Wealth					
Poorest Men	0.031	0.083	0.432	0.794	2320
Middle Wealth Men	0.016	0.051	0.375	0.766	2310
Wealthiest Men	0.010	0.037	0.306	0.742	2498
Education					
Less than Basic	0.061	0.147	0.535	0.825	1257
Basic	0.013	0.056	0.421	0.806	2751
Secondary	0.008	0.029	0.322	0.748	1567
Post-Secondary	0.006	0.014	0.204	0.675	1553
Total	0.122	0.216	0.548	0.810	14297

Table 5: Husband's Mean Age Advantage by Socio-demographic Characteristic of the Wife, Ever-Married Women Aged 15-60, JLMPS 2010

	Husband's Mean Age Advantage	N
Residence		
Rural	6.1	1,169
Urban	6.1	3,108
Region		
Central	6.2	2,189
Northern	5.9	1,446
Southern	6.4	642
Wealth		
Poorest	5.9	1,343
Middle Wealth	6.0	1,460
Wealthiest	6.3	1,474
Education		
Less than Basic	6.6	1,091
Basic	6.8	1,406
Secondary	5.9	716
Post-Secondary	5.0	1,064
Total	6.1	4,277

Table 6: Husband's Mean Educational Advantage by Socio-demographic Characteristic of the Wife, Ever-Married Women Aged 15-60, JLMPS 2010

	Husband's Mean Educational Advantage	N
Residence		
Rural	0.5	1,169
Urban	0.3	3,107
Region		
Central	0.3	2,188
Northern	0.5	1,446
Southern	0.2	642
Wealth		
Poorest	0.3	1,343
Middle Wealth	0.0	1,459
Wealthiest	0.7	1,474
Education		
Less than Basic	3.3	1,091
Basic	0.2	1,406
Secondary	-0.5	716
Post-Secondary	-1.2	1,063
Total	0.4	4,277

Table 7: Percentage of Marriages Consanguineous by Socio-demographic Characteristic of the Wife, Ever-Married Women Aged 15-60, JLMPS 2010

	Percentage of Marriages Consanguineous	N
Residence		
Rural	42.0	1,205
Urban	33.9	3,306
Region		
Central	33.2	2,372
Northern	39.5	1,472
Southern	37.3	1,472
Wealth		
Poorest	41.8	1,424
Middle Wealth	36.8	1,546
Wealthiest	29.5	1,541
Education		
Less than Basic	45.5	4,511
Basic	40.5	1,551
Secondary	32.0	780
Post-Secondary	23.6	1,145
Total	35.3	4,511

Table 8: Percentage of Households Nuclear at First Marriage by Socio-demographic Characteristic of the Wife, Ever-Married Women Aged 15-60, JLMPS 2010

	Percentage of Households Nuclear at First Marriage	N
Residence		
Rural	67.8	1,205
Urban	63.5	3,306
Region		
Central	62.6	2,372
Northern	63.1	1,472
Southern	78.5	667
Wealth		
Poorest	56.3	1,424
Middle Wealth	61.9	1,546
Wealthiest	71.7	1,541
Education		
Less than Basic	45.0	1,035
Basic	57.6	1,551
Secondary	70.3	780
Post-Secondary	82.6	1,145
Total	64.2	4,511

Table 9: Mean Total Cost of Marriage in 2010 Jordanian Dinars by Socio-Demographic Characteristic of the Wife, Among Ever-Married Women Aged 15-60 who Married in 1990 or Later

	Total Costs of Marriage (JD)	N
Residence		
Rural	10,575	726
Urban	9,756	2,041
Region		
Central	9,808	1,473
Northern	10,046	927
Southern	10,048	367
Wealth		
Poorest	7,749	947
Middle Wealth	9,941	999
Wealthiest	11,765	821
Education		
Less than Basic	6,850	255
Basic	8,954	1,123
Secondary	10,409	541
Post-Secondary	11,551	848
Total	9,895	2,767

Table 10: Mean Total Cost of Marriage in 2010 Jordanian Dinars across Five-Year Marriage Cohorts, Ever-Married Women Aged 15-60

Marriage Cohort	Total Costs of Marriage	N
1970-1974	9,707	161
1975-1979	10,813	255
1980-1984	12,391**	287
1985-1989	13,088	380
1990-1994	10,601***	634
1995-1999	9,555***	624
2000-2004	10,093*	728
2005-2010	9,418**	781