



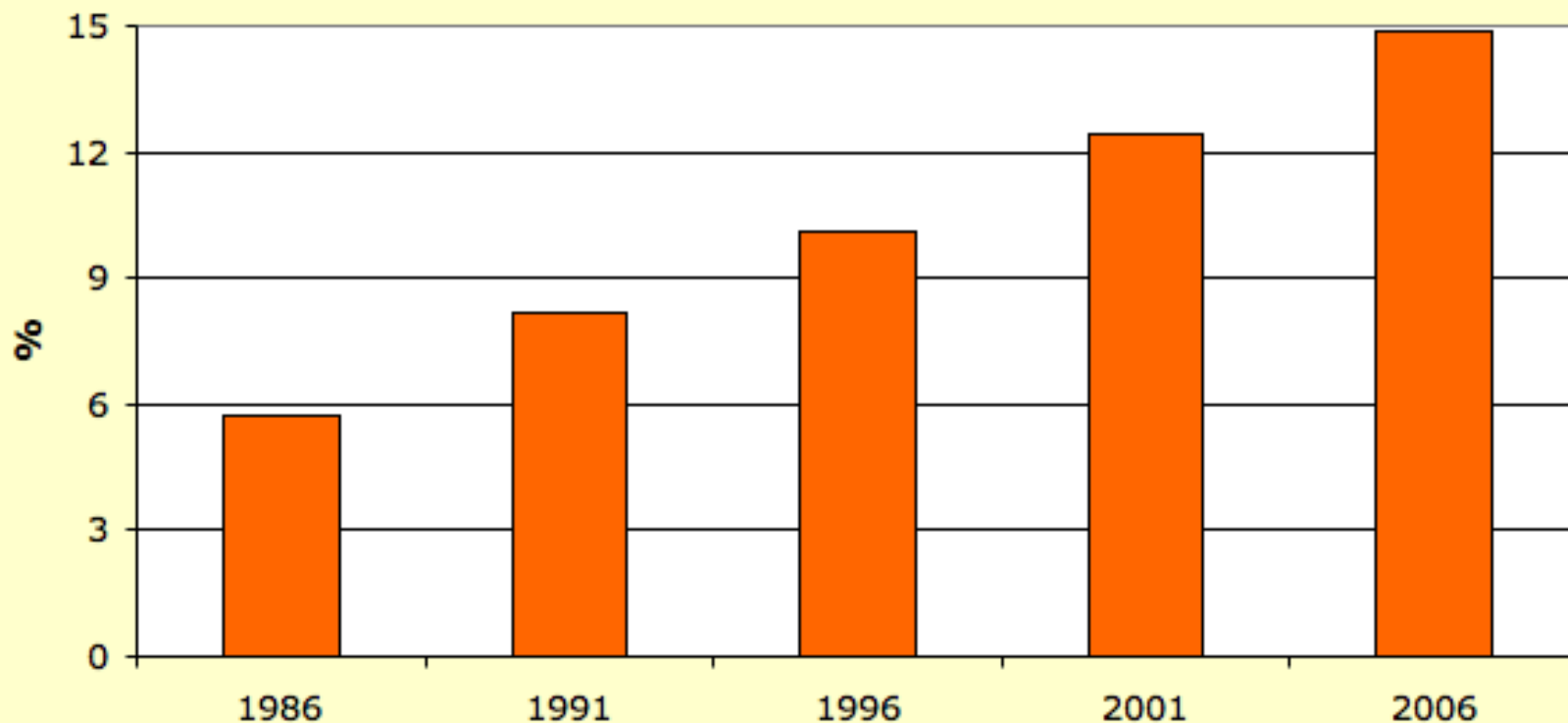
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# **Cohabitation Outcomes: The Effect of Fertility Intentions, Relationship Satisfaction and Union Length on Cohabitation Transitions**

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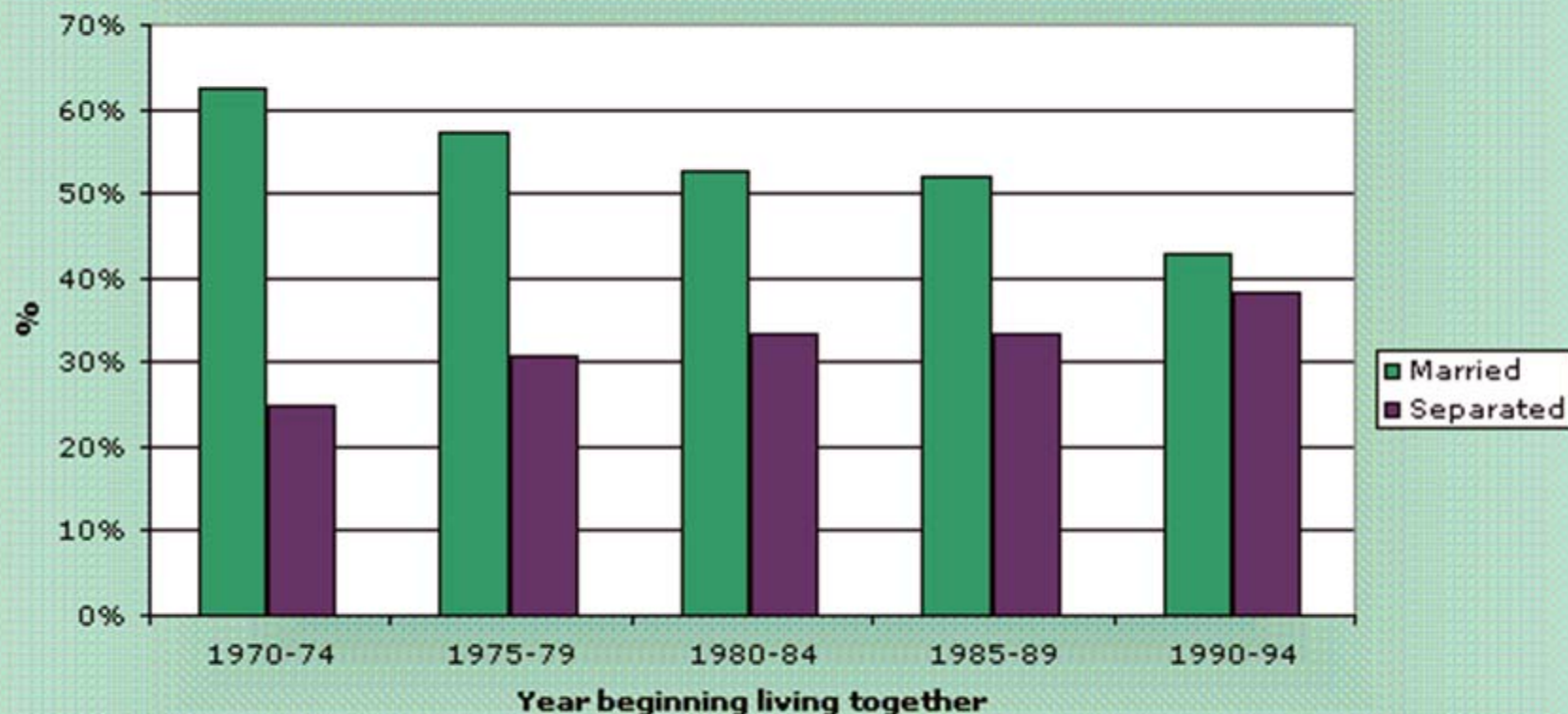
Presentation prepared for the HILDA Survey Research Conference 2009,  
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### Couples who were cohabiting as percentage of all couples, 1986-2006



Sources: ABS (1995), *Australian Social Trends 1995*, Catalogue No. 4102.0; ABS (2003), *Australian Social Trends 2003*, Catalogue No. 4102.0; ABS (2007), 2006 Census of Population and Housing Australia, Catalogue no. 2068.0- 2006 Census Tables

### Percentage of cohabiting couples who married or separated within five years of living together



Note: cohabitation as a first union for one or both partners.

Source: *Household, Income and Labour Dynamics in Australia survey 2001*

# Outline

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- Background
- A proposed cohabitation typology
- Research objective and aims
- Data, variables and analyses
- Findings
  - The likelihood of transitioning to single
  - The likelihood of transitioning to married
- Discussion and Conclusion

# Background- Australian Research

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- Weston, Qu and de Vaus (2005)
- Marriage was more likely if:
  - male partner had a degree
  - high level of relationship satisfaction for *both* partners
  - female partner wanted a child
- Separation was more likely if:
  - some discomfort in the couple's financial situation
  - if only one partner wanted to have children
  - at least one partner was not satisfied with the quality of the relationship

# Background-

## Fertility intentions

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- Childbearing within cohabiting unions has increased from 2% in 1970 to 16% in 2004.
- Prominent reason to marry is the decision to have children.
- Sassler and Cunningham (2008)
  - Cohabitation as an alternative to marriage, but only until children come along.

# Background- Relationship satisfaction

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- Brown (2000)
  - Positive assessments reduced the likelihood of separation, but did not increase the likelihood of marriage.
  - Outcomes of discordant relationship assessments were strongly influenced by gender.

# Background- Union Length

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- Union duration was negatively associated with both the likelihood of marriage and separation.
- Many cohabitor's union transitions occur quickly.
- The longer the cohabitation the less likely a transition will take place.

# A proposed cohabitation typology

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- *Marriage intentions*

- “How likely are you to marry your current partner?”

- *Previous marital history*

- “How many times have you been legally married?”

premarital cohabitators - not previously married & intending to marry

non-marital cohabitators - not previously married & not intending to marry

post-marital cohabitators - previously married & not intending to marry

re-marriage cohabitators - previously married & intending to marry

# Research objective and aims

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Does the likelihood of transitioning into either a married or single state vary for different types of cohabitators?

What effect do fertility expectations, partner satisfaction and union length have on the likelihood of transitioning from cohabiting to either married or single for the different types of cohabitators?

# Data, variables and analyses

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- Waves 1-7 of the HILDA Survey
- Final analytical sample comprises just over 85,000 observations.
- Marital status: 'married', 'single' and four categories for cohabiting
  - Lagged variable measures marital status in previous wave
  - Dummy categories

# Data, variables and analyses -continued

Number of transitions to married and to single that occur for married and each cohabitation typology

Transition from:		To:	Number of occurrences
Married	→	single	692
Premarital cohabitor	→	single	210
Non-marital cohabitor	→	single	216
Post-marital cohabitor	→	single	117
Re-marriage cohabitor	→	single	46
Married	→	married	33,898
Premarital cohabitor	→	married	525
Non-marital cohabitor	→	married	29
Post-marital cohabitor	→	married	34
Re-marriage cohabitor	→	married	175

# Data, variables and analyses -continued

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- Independent variables (lagged):
  - fertility intentions – “How likely are you to have a child/more children in the future? ”
  - relationship satisfaction – “How satisfied are you with your relationship with your partner?”
  - union length
- Interaction terms
- Control variables:
  - Gender, age and education

# Data, variables and analyses -continued

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- Logistic regression
  - Stage 1 - transition to single
  - Stage 2 - transition to married
- Six models for each stage.
- Linear combinations of estimators
- Robust estimator of variance

# Findings-

## The likelihood transitioning to single

Model predicting likelihood of a cohabiting group transitioning to Single

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
<b>Previous Marital Status</b>						
Lag premarital	1.29***	1.16***	1.02***	0.58**	1.40***	0.72*
Lag non-marital	1.92***	1.62***	1.35***	1.58***	1.67***	1.33***
Lag post-marital	1.56***	1.42***	1.31***	1.36***	1.51***	1.33***
Lag re-marriage	1.04***	1.09***	1.10***	0.079	1.13***	0.16
<b>Control Variables</b>						
Female (male=0)		0.071	0.068	0.065	0.070	0.061
Age (years)		-0.0062	-0.0049	-0.0063	-0.0068	-0.0056
Degree (no degree=0)		-0.46***	-0.45***	-0.46***	-0.46***	-0.46***
Lag expect child		0.016	-0.019	0.014	0.015	-0.018
Lag partner satisfaction		-0.28***	-0.28***	-0.29***	-0.28***	-0.29***
Lag union length		0.00082	-0.0027	0.00099	0.0018	-0.0015
<b>Interaction Terms for Expect Child</b>						
Lag premarital			0.043			0.034
Lag non-marital			0.090***			0.089**
Lag post-marital			0.045			0.040
Lag re-marriage			-0.013			-0.023
<b>Interaction Terms for Relationship Satisfaction</b>						
Lag premarital				0.087***		0.085***
Lag non-marital				0.0073		0.0020
Lag post-marital				0.011		0.011
Lag re-marriage				0.14*		0.14*
<b>Interaction Terms for Union Length</b>						
Lag premarital					-0.073	-0.066
Lag non-marital					-0.0085	0.0023
Lag post-marital					-0.020	-0.015
Lag re-marriage					-0.0064	-0.019
Constant	-3.89***	-1.41***	-1.36***	-1.32***	-1.40***	-1.27***
Observations	41617	41617	41617	41617	41617	41617
Pseudo R <sup>2</sup>	0.0607	0.1057	0.1074	0.1068	0.1061	0.1089

\*\*\* p<0.001, \*\* p<0.01, \* p<0.05

Note: the reference category for previous marital status and the interaction terms is Married.

# Findings-

## The likelihood transitioning to single

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- Main findings:
  - Intentions to have a child have a destabilising effect on a cohabiting relationship if there are no plans to marry *and* the cohabitor has not been married previously.
  - Given a high level of relationship satisfaction, the two cohabiting groups who do not intend to marry are less likely to separate than the cohabiting groups who intend to marry.

# Findings-

## The likelihood transitioning to married

Model predicting likelihood of a cohabiting group transitioning to Married

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
<b>Previous Marital Status</b>						
Lag premarital	-5.39***	-5.77***	-6.20***	-5.35***	-5.71***	-5.74***
Lag non-marital <sup>^</sup>	-7.92***	-7.99***	-7.92***	-7.01***	-7.75***	-6.73***
Lag post-marital	-7.46***	-7.39***	-7.61***	-5.81***	-7.16***	-5.93***
Lag re-marriage	-5.16***	-5.26***	-5.25***	-4.08***	-5.29***	-4.11***
<b>Control Variables</b>						
Female (male=0)		-0.066	-0.072	-0.062	-0.067	-0.069
Age (years)		-0.0031	-0.0034	-0.0027	-0.0034	-0.0031
Degree (no degree=0)		0.52***	0.53***	0.53***	0.53***	0.53***
Lag expect child		0.044***	0.0039	0.045***	0.043***	0.0042
Lag partner satisfaction		0.29***	0.29***	0.31***	0.29***	0.31***
Lag union length		0.013**	0.010*	0.012**	0.013**	0.010*
<b>Interaction Terms for Expect Child</b>						
Lag premarital			0.085***			0.087***
Lag non-marital			-0.0019			-0.0039
Lag post-marital			0.16**			0.14**
Lag re-marriage			0.00032			0.0051
<b>Interaction Terms for Relationship Satisfaction</b>						
Lag premarital				-0.057**		-0.061**
Lag non-marital				-0.13*		-0.13*
Lag post-marital				-0.21***		-0.20***
Lag re-marriage				-0.15***		-0.15***
<b>Interaction Terms for Union Length</b>						
Lag premarital					-0.016	-0.0046
Lag non-marital					-0.063	-0.060
Lag post-marital					-0.057	-0.036
Lag re-marriage					0.011	0.0042
Constant	3.82***	1.36***	1.45***	1.23***	1.36***	1.33***
Observations	41617	41617	41617	41617	41617	41617
Pseudo R <sup>2</sup>	0.5925	0.7587	0.7621	0.7599	0.7993	0.8003

\*\*\* p<0.001, \*\* p<0.01, \* p<0.05

<sup>^</sup> N smaller than 30.

Note: the reference category for previous marital status and the interaction terms is Married.

# Findings-

## The likelihood transitioning to married

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- Main findings:
  - Cohabitors who intend to have a child are more likely to get married if they have not been married before.
  - If a cohabiter who has been married previously aspires to have a child, they are likely to get married, even if they did not intend marry in the previous wave.
  - Cohabitors who have been married and who have a high level of relationship satisfaction are not as likely to get married as a cohabitor who has not been married.

# Discussion

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- Marriage may be more important for never married persons.
- The experience of a failed marriage that did not fulfil fertility intentions greatly increases the likelihood of a cohabiter getting married again, regardless of marriage intentions.

# Discussion -continued

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- Cohabitators with high levels of relationship satisfaction and no plans to marry reject the institution of marriage.
  - Alternative form of marriage for couples that have either fulfilled their fertility intentions or who do not intend to have children?
- Union length does not drive transitions out of cohabitation.

# Conclusion

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- Fertility intentions are the driving force behind cohabiters decisions to separate or marry.
- Cohabiters are not a homogeneous group.
- Future research should couple level data

Thank you

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