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Wealth, marriage and prenuptial agreements in France (1855 - 2010)

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Abstract

This paper investigates the evolution of prenuptial agreements, matrimonial property regimes and dowries in France over the period 1855-2010. These trends indicate that the financial characteristics of marriage have significantly changed over time. First, we note that prenuptial agreements have been widely used by the French couples to amend the default matrimonial property regime, in order to limit the husband's discretion over the couple's financial affairs or to protect the surviving spouse for instance. Second, this paper highlights the change in the nature of wealth caused by the decline of community regimes and the rise of separate property regimes since the 1960s. This individualisation of wealth contrasts with the preeminence of community regimes since the creation of the Civil Code in 1804. This evolution can be seen as a female empowerment as married women become more emancipated from the authority of fathers and husbands. From a wealth perspective, this paper shows that the return of wealth in France goes along with a change in the nature of wealth, which needs to be considered when studying historical trends.

Keywords: wealth, marriage, prenuptial agreements, matrimonial property regimes, dowry, inheritance

JEL Codes : N33, N34, J12, E21

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1 Introduction

The history of wealth and inheritance in France brings to light an interesting paradox. On the one hand, the French legislation promotes gender equality in terms of rights by establishing the gender neutrality of the estate laws since 1789. On the other hand, the surviving spouse was not considered as a heir until the end of the nineteenth century. As a consequence, the surviving spouse (the wife in most cases) had no claim to the estate of the deceased partner. Moreover, during marriage, the wife had very limited power on the household wealth since the administration of all assets (the community assets but also the separate assets of both spouses) lay with the husband. This inequality was particularly substantial given that the default regime of married couples from 1804 to 1965 was the community of movables and acquisitions in which most assets were community assets.

This paper investigates this paradox by studying the long-run evolutions of marriage, prenuptial agreements and matrimonial property regimes in France. Most papers in the economics literature ignore the legal status of couples and consider, at best, marriage as a necessary step to formalise a relationship between two partners. As a consequence, we know little about the economic content of marriage, its evolutions over time and its effects on wealth. However, these aspects of marriage matter for several reasons. First, the economic content of marriage allows us to take into consideration how the French couples deal with this gender inequality. Indeed, the prenuptial agreement is a way to reestablish some equality between spouses by protecting some assets (dowries), opting for alternative matrimonial regimes or by including clauses to protect the surviving spouse. Second, the economic content of marriage goes hand in hand with the analysis of wealth. The return of wealth in most rich countries (Piketty and Zucman (2014)) raises the question of the evolution of its nature. Specifically, matrimonial property regimes and inheritance (including dowries) directly affect the nature of wealth. Dynastic or individualistic wealth holding may lead to opposite conclusions not only in terms of public policies and more generally in terms of economic modeling¹. Third, the analysis of the legal status of couples is a necessary complement to research about the marriage market and the collective models (Chiappori, Fortin, and Lacroix (2002)). The matrimonial property regime is a crucial parameter which can affect the bargaining power of spouses. Specifically, community or separate property regimes impact the distribution of resources between spouses not only during marriage but also when the couple separates (by divorce or death)². Therefore, by studying the sole characteristics of spouses there is a risk of missing important information about the matching, its stability and

¹See the controversy between Kotlikoff and Summers (1981) and Modigliani (1986, 1988) about the share of inheritance in the US aggregate wealth for example.

²Hamilton (1999), Laferrère (2001)

the decisions made by households.

The main contribution of this paper is to provide homogenous series about marriage, prenuptial agreements³ and matrimonial property regimes in France from the middle of the nineteenth century. We complete these series by analyzing the evolution of dowries and wealth at marriage. To construct these series, we use several types of data. First, for marriage and matrimonial property regimes, we use administrative data from 1855 to 1972. Then we use surveys to estimate the trends on the period 1972-2010. For dowries and wealth at marriage, the main information comes from fiscal data. Detailed information is available from 1882 to 1977 for dowries and from 1894 to 1962 for wealth at marriage. By using this kind of aggregate data, this paper differs from the microeconomic approach of papers like Botticini (1999), Hamilton (1999) or Ashraf, Bau, Nunn, and Voena (2015) for instance. Actually, we face a trade-off: on the one hand, by using macro data, we know that we will not be able to test microeconomic mechanisms; on the other hand, our data (mostly administrative) allow us to provide analysis on longer periods than what we can generally do with micro data and to have a better understanding of the scope of the phenomena. Moreover, this consistent long-run analysis is more generalisable than information extracted data about one country (or region) at one point in time.

The long-run analysis of marriage and prenuptial agreements indicates that the economic content of marriage has significantly changed over time. We distinguish 4 phases. First, until the 1880s, marriage contracts and dowries are widespread in France. Both economic and cultural motives explain these practices. We note large heterogeneity across regions depending on the type of legislation in place before the introduction of the Civil Code in 1804. Specifically, we find more frequent prenuptial agreements in regions where inheritance was unequally distributed. Second, from the 1880s to World War I, the number of marriage contracts declines and the value of dowries significantly rise. While the decrease of prenuptial agreements is more pronounced in rural areas and among poor families, the dowry inflation is more marked for upper-class families in which this practice becomes a key aspect of matrimonial strategies. The increase of wealth-to-income ratios and wealth inequality as well as the rapid urbanisation during this period are the main explanations for these evolutions. Third, the stability of the share of marriage contracts between 1914 and 1965 hides important transformations: the disappearance of dowries and the economic and legal empowerment of women. Specifically, the female labor supply significantly increases and women progressively acquire rights to become the equal of their husbands with the 1965 reform of matrimonial property regimes. Since 1965, we observe two complementary trends: the rise of the separate property regime for married couples and the expansion of

³Throughout this paper, the expressions “prenuptial agreement” and “marriage contract” will be synonym.

cohabitation and civil union. These evolutions lead to a growing wealth individualisation for couples as the share of community assets decline. Marital instability as well as the return of wealth are complementary explanation to these evolutions.

What do we learn from these findings? These series demonstrate that the evolution of marriage is far from being continuous. One of the main findings of this paper is to highlight the decline of community regimes and the rise of separate property. This individualisation of wealth within couples is not only due to the growing use of separate property regime but also to the decline of marriage since the 1970s. This evolution is all the more noteworthy given the preeminence of community regimes in France since the creation of the Civil Code. We can interpret the results from a gender inequality perspective. Specifically, the evolution of prenuptial agreements and the transformation of the legislation about matrimonial property regime could be seen as a female empowerment since the married women emancipated from the authority of fathers and husbands. However, the current growing individualization does not mean that husbands and wives are equal since the choice of the separate property regime is more frequently made when the wealth or income inequality are in favor of the husband. More generally, this paper emphasizes the need to analyse the economic content of marriage to understand the evolution of wealth. In that sense, it is particularly informative to provide international comparisons. The evolution of estate laws indicates that in France and in other countries, like the United States or Germany, there is an improvement of the position of the surviving spouse and more generally a female empowerment on both the economic and legal aspects. However, the starting point and the pace of this evolution were not the same in all countries. By excluding the surviving spouse from the estate until the end of the nineteenth century, the position of the surviving spouse was weaker in France than in the USA or Germany. However, this comparison could be somehow misleading if we ignore the rules of matrimonial property regimes and the status of spouses during marriage. Again, it is complex to provide an unambiguous judgment. On the one hand, French women had to wait until 1965 to become the equal of their husbands regarding the administration of the assets. While a similar law passed in 1958 in Germany, the Married Women's Property acts which guaranteed married women to control their assets as soon as the 1830-1840s in most US states. On the other hand, the default community regime of married couples leads to a redistribution between spouses since the community assets are shared on a 50-50% basis between spouses (unlike Germany where this measure was voted only in 1958). On this aspect, the situation of American women is more complex to determine since we need to distinguish the common-law states (absence of redistribution) from the community property states (equal sharing of accrued assets). As a

conclusion, one of the main findings of this paper is to show that in absence of testamentary freedom (unlike the United States) matrimonial strategies have probably played a bigger role in France for couples who wanted to depart from the default scheme⁴. From a wealth perspective, this paper completes the recent findings on wealth by indicating that the return of wealth in France goes along with a change in the nature of wealth, mostly driven by demographic evolutions, which needs to be considered when studying historical trends. It also opens prospects about the implications of these results, particularly in terms of public policies about taxation and the economic consequences of divorce.

The rest of this paper is structured as follows. Section 2 presents the related literature. Section 3 provides definitions of matrimonial property regimes. In section 4, we present the data. Section 5 presents and interprets the results.

2 Related literature

Wealth and inheritance Marriage and matrimonial property regimes are directly linked to the long-run evolution of wealth and inheritance for at least three reasons. First, the long-run evolutions of matrimonial property regimes must be seen as an analysis of the nature of wealth. In that sense, this paper is complementary of Piketty and Zucman (2014) since we show that the return of wealth goes hand in hand with a change in its nature. Specifically, it seems difficult to compare the dynastic nature of wealth which was prevalent during the nineteenth with the individual wealth of the early twenty-first century. Moreover, the choice of a matrimonial property regime affects wealth inequality between spouses during marriage and at divorce or death. While community regimes divide accumulated wealth on a 50-50% between spouses, separate property regimes maintain the initial inequality. Therefore, without information about the intra-household distribution, we ignore an important aspect of wealth inequality. Research about gender wealth inequality is not new. Based on estate data, Atkinson and Harisson (1978) and Harbury and Hitchens (1979) estimate the share of women at the top of the distribution and notice a female empowerment during the first half of the twentieth century. More recent papers follow a similar approach (Bourdieu, Postel-Vinay, and Suwa-Eisenmann (2008)) or develop other methods to measure the wealth gap between men and women (Bonnet, Keogh, and Rapoport (2014), Sierminska, Fricky, and Grabkaz (2010)). Our paper takes somehow a step back and shows that the significant decline of community regimes over the past decades in France can affect the level of gender wealth inequality. Interestingly, Lampman (1962) develops

⁴Actually, it was possible to use settlements in the United States but they were difficult to implement and as a consequence rarely used

this intuition and notes a higher share of women among the top wealth holders in the US states where the community property prevails. Moreover, the share of women at the top of the wealth distribution may be considered as incomplete information if we ignore the wife's property rights during marriage. In other words, being a self-made woman is different from having inherited from a husband at an advanced age. This limitation is particularly important in France given the weak position of married women until the middle of the twentieth century. The study of matrimonial property regime is therefore a first and necessary step to study comprehensively the intra-household wealth distribution.

Inheritance is also closely related to the issue of marriage and prenuptial agreements because of dowries. In Becker's (1981) seminal model, the dowry payments are a way to clear the marriage market: when grooms are scarce, brides are forced to increase dowries (and vice-versa). However, this model does not consider the gender specificity of the timing of intergenerational transfers. Parents provide dowries to their daughters and bequests to their sons (Goody (1973); Zhang and Chan (1999); Botticini and Siow (2003)). Even if wealth transfers between families at the time of marriage have almost disappeared in rich countries, they have been prevalent until the middle of the twentieth century. In most developing countries, these transfers are still in use and are even rising in India (Deolalikar and Rao (1998), Anderson (2003)). In most cases, the payment comes from the bride's side and represents a financial contribution of the bride to the household in exchange for being (financially) supported by her husband⁵. In other words, the dowry payment is the price of the bride's "idleness". Most empirical studies in western countries focus on premodern societies (Goody (1973); Cox (1995); Botticini (1999); Micheletto (2011)). In France, Laroche-Gisserot (1988) show that, until the French Revolution, the dowry payments are a way to disinherit the daughters. The equality between inheritors (and so between daughters and sons), brought by the Revolution, transforms the dowry into a pre-mortem inheritance and as an instrument of the matrimonial strategy. In most cases, the dowry was not saleable and so was a way to favor the lineage over the spouse. It was more important to consider the returns to the dowry than the value of the dowry itself⁶. The nature of the dowry differs depending on the social class and on the region⁷. Piketty (2011) constructs long-run series of inherited wealth for France without decomposing inter vivos gifts by their nature. One of our contributions is to provide homogenous series about dowries and also wealth at marriage in order to document the evolution of this type of gifts and also to complete the

⁵For counterexamples see Groppi and Fine (1998)

⁶In most nineteenth century novels, wealth is often estimated in terms of annuities rather than in terms of capital.

⁷The dowry payments can come from the groom's side in some regions (Fine, 1987) while in some others the payments directly go to the groom's father (Fine, 1982).

analysis of prenuptial agreements.

Third, the levels and types of wealth affect the choice of a matrimonial property regime (and more generally the legal form of the relationship between spouses). In absence of wealth, all options are equivalent since there is nothing to manage during marriage and nothing to be distributed between spouses in case of divorce or death. Piketty and Zucman (2014) estimate the evolution of wealth-to-income ratios for several rich countries including France and show that these ratios are back or close to their late nineteenth century levels. As a consequence, this evolution can affect the choice of a regime since the rules about the intra-household distribution of wealth varies across matrimonial property regimes.

Marriage market and collective models The legal aspects of the relationship between spouses have rarely been studied. Becker (1981)'s analysis of marriage market mostly focuses on the issue of assortative mating. Moreover, the unitary approach developed by Becker prevents the matrimonial property regimes to play a role since the spouses are not influenced by the intra-household distribution of assets or incomes.

On the contrary, in the collective models developed by Chiappori (1992), matrimonial property regimes can affect the couples' behavior. Specifically, the household's decisions depend on the bargaining power of each spouse. This bargaining power is directly influenced by the distribution of economic resources within the household. In that sense, community or separate property regimes are not equivalent because they do not create similar incentives to specialisation within the household. Several papers study the role of marriage and matrimonial property regimes on the investments in public goods made by the household. Cigno (2012) argues that marriage is a way for the couple to commit in compensating the spouse who specialises in household production. As a consequence, the default regime as well as the costs of divorcing influence the labor market participation of spouses. For example, according to Fisher (2011), full community would allow compensating the lack of investment caused by costless divorces. For Bayot and Voena (2015), costless prenuptial agreements (with separate property) create incentives for female labor participation and can lead to welfare gains for both spouses.

However, these papers assume that people marry to favor these investments. Other motives can explain the decision to marry. For example, Rowthorn (2002) or Bishop (1984) present marriage as a signal couples would like to send to show the stability of their relationship. In that sense, prenuptial agreements could be seen as a way to precise this signal. Taxation also creates incentives to marry (Buffeteau and Echevin (2003), Alm and Whittington (1997), Alm and Whittington (1999)) but the matrimonial property regimes would not influence the decision.

In France, the tax unit is the household. Cohabiting couples are considered as two separate tax units while married couples or couples opting for civil union are a unique tax unit. However, the matrimonial property regime is not taken into account.

The main contribution of our paper is to construct series about the evolution of prenuptial agreements and matrimonial property regimes in France over the period 1855-2005. These series allows us to investigate the changing nature of marriage over time. More specifically, this long-run perspective is likely to be the relevant way to study the economic content of marriage.

3 Marriage and prenuptial agreements: definitions

3.1 Prenuptial agreements

The role of a marriage contract is to define the property rights of each spouse. Specifically, it contains 4 types of information: the matrimonial property regime, the list of assets of the bride and the groom when they marry, the dowries and the clauses (mainly the rules applying to the household wealth when one of the spouses dies⁸). The marriage contract is the only way to avoid the legal (or default) regime applying to the married couples. As a consequence, to fully understand the evolution and the determinants of the prenuptial agreements, it is necessary to know both the features of the legal regime and the alternatives to the legal regime. In theory, a marriage contract can lead to a continuum of matrimonial property regimes. In practice, most couples choose their regime from a menu of existing options.

From the creation of the Civil Code in 1804 to the reform of the matrimonial property regimes in 1965, the wife has limited rights on the household wealth and even on her separate assets. Specifically, the Civil Code gives full power to the husband and considers the married women as legally incapable⁹. He can manage, use and sell the community assets without the approval of his wife. Moreover, he can use his own separate assets but also those of his wife. Conversely, the wife needs the approval of her husband to sell her separate assets. With the default regime, in which most of the assets are community assets, this characteristic of the Civil Code creates a sizable imbalance between husband and wife. As a consequence, the choice of a regime which reduces the size of the community limits the power of the husband. Appendix A provides synthesis of the women's property rights depending on the matrimonial property regime.

⁸This aspect of marriage contracts was important because, until the end of the nineteenth century, the widow was not consider an heir unless it was mentioned in the marriage contract

⁹The article 1124 of the Civil Code gives very limited rights to wives since they needed the agreement of their husband in most situations (even for the administration of their own inherited assets, for instance). This legal incapacity was also applied to children, criminals and mentally ill people.

The importance of prenuptial agreements also lies in their effects on inheritance¹⁰. Until the end of the nineteenth century, the surviving spouse was not considered as a heir. In other words, the union between families and their wealth comes to an end with the death of one spouse. The prenuptial agreement was a solution because it was possible to introduce clauses in order to protect the surviving spouse. In 1891, the surviving spouse acquires usufruct rights on the decedent's estate. However, the law which gives full rights of ownerships was only passed in 2001. Next to common children, the surviving spouse now inherited 25% of the decedent's estate in full ownership (50% alongside parents) or 100% in usufruct.

It is noteworthy that a marriage contract has a cost. Beyond the legal fees, there are also administrative and fiscal costs. Specifically, the fiscal cost depends on the couple's wealth (at the time of marriage). During the nineteenth century, a proportional rate of 0.20% of the couple's wealth was applied. This rate has increased during the twentieth century to reach 1% after World War I before varying between 0.5 and 0.8% between 1930 and 1965¹¹. Nowadays, the fiscal cost is a regressive function of the couple's wealth. In absence of wealth, the couple has to pay a fixed amount. The introduction of supplementary clauses to the marriage contract increases its costs. The financial cost of a marriage contract still takes the form of an administrative registration more than a taxation whose purpose would be to create disincentives to establish a marriage contract.

3.2 Matrimonial property regimes

The wealth of a couple can be decomposed into three parts: the community assets (*biens de communauté*) jointly held by the spouses, the husband's separate assets (*bien propres du mari*) and the wife's separate assets (*biens propres de la femme*)¹². The size of these parts varies depending on the matrimonial property regime.

3.2.1 Community regimes

Community of movables and acquisitions This regime was the default regime from the creation of the Civil Code in 1804 to 1965. Most assets are community assets. Specifically, all the financial assets are community assets whatever their status (inherited, acquired before or after the marriage). The real-estate assets acquired during the marriage are also community

¹⁰See Beckert (2008) for a detailed description.

¹¹See Table 6 in Appendix C.1.2 for more details

¹²The reallocations of the spouses' separate assets are tracked because the separate assets remain separate independently on the way it was used. For example, if a bequest is used to buy an asset during marriage, it does not become a community asset. The community will owe the spouse who received this bequest the value of this bequest. This tracking also applies to assets or cash that the spouses brought at marriage

assets. Only the real-estate assets acquired before the marriage or inherited are separate assets. Each spouse is the sole owner of his/her separate assets but the returns to these assets fall into the community property as well as all incomes received by each spouse. In case of divorce, the community assets are divided on a 50-50% basis (independently on the financial contribution of each spouse).

Community of acquisitions From 1966, this regime becomes the default matrimonial property regime. The share of community assets is smaller since it only includes acquired assets during marriage whatever their nature (financial or non-financial). All the inherited assets as well as the assets acquired before marriage are separate assets. The rules applying to the community or separate assets are the same as above.

Full (or universal) community All the assets whatever their nature (financial or non-financial, inherited or acquired before or during the marriage) are community assets. The choice of this regime has never been superior to 2% of the married couples. The main goal of this regime is to protect the surviving spouse from the other heirs.

3.2.2 Dowry regime

The dowry regime does not only imply the existence of a dowry. Actually, dowries can be transmitted independently on the matrimonial regime. This regime implies some rules relative to the return of the dowry. It is a way to protect the bride's wealth from her husband. In absence of any partnership of acquests (*société d'acquêts*), there are only two types of assets: the wife's assets and the husband's assets. More importantly, the wife's assets are divided into two categories:

- the dotal assets, strictly tracked: neither saleable nor mortgageable by the husband (even with the approval of his wife); managed or used by the husband as a usufructuary asset during the marriage. It is not allowed to modify the dowry during the marriage. These assets are returned to the wife (in case of divorce) or her heirs (in case of death).
- the non-dotal assets, on which the wife has the same rights as in the separate property regime (see below): she can manage and use all her assets but can only dispose of financial properties. For the real-estate assets, the approval of the husband is necessary.

The dowry regime was suppressed by the 1965 reform. For a more detailed description of this regime see Pascaud (1899).

3.2.3 Separate property regime

The separate property regime is close to the dowry regime since there are two types of assets: the wife's assets and the husband's assets (in absence of any partnership of acquests). For all the assets acquired during the marriage, the financial contribution of each spouse is clearly determined.

Moreover, this regime is close to the dowry regime because it protects the wealth of each spouse from the other partner. In case of second marriages, the separate property regime favors the children of the first marriage with respect to the current spouse.

This regime is especially useful for the self-employed people because it allows them to protect their non-professional wealth. If all the non-professional wealth is considered as the spouse's property then it cannot be seized as collateral in case of professional bankruptcy.

4 Data

In this section we provide information about the sources and the type of data we use. We focus on three types of information: 1) marriages, 2) prenuptial agreements and matrimonial property regimes, and, 3) inter vivos gifts (including dowries) and wealth at marriage.

Appendix B provides information about the data sources.

4.1 Marriages

The information about the annual number of marriages is available during all the period. These information comes from administrative data (marriage registers). These data also allow providing evidence the geographical distribution of marriages (by *département*).

4.2 Prenuptial agreements and matrimonial property regimes

4.2.1 Administrative data (1855-1972)

From 1855 to 1965, the existence of a prenuptial agreement is mentioned in the marriage registers¹³. Then, from 1966 to 1972, the information about the number of marriage contracts is released by both the Ministry of Finances and the notaries¹⁴. In these administrative data, the

¹³The information is also available in fiscal data but the number of prenuptial agreements does not exactly coincide with marriage registers because the fiscal data only include the prenuptial agreements for which the administrative fees have been paid.

¹⁴Faucheux (1972)

annual number of both marriages and prenuptial agreements is exhaustive¹⁵. We are therefore able to estimate the flow of marriages for which marriage contracts have been established over this period. These administrative data also allow us to establish a geographical decomposition (by *département*) of this flow.

The information about the type of matrimonial property regimes is exclusively based on the information released by the notaries. Specifically, in 1898, 1962 and between 1966 and 1972, the notaries were asked to provide data about all the marriage contracts and the type of matrimonial property regimes for the current year. In 1898 and 1962, the matrimonial property regimes are classified into 4 categories: community of acquisitions, separate property regime, dowry regime and full community. From 1966 to 1972, they add the community of movables and acquisitions (because of the 1965 reform of the default regime). Based on these surveys and on the evolution of the number of marriages with marriage contracts, we estimate a long-run evolution for each category of matrimonial property regime over the period 1855-1972. Appendix C.1.1 provides tabulations of these estimations and Appendix C.2 describes the methodology used for the estimations of the series.

Unfortunately, we do not have information about the clauses included in the marriage contract to protect the surviving spouse. Boudjaaba (2011) indicates than clauses in order to protect the surviving spouses were frequently included in the prenuptial agreements (whatever the matrimonial property regime). In most cases, the spouses mutually agreed to give the surviving spouse the usufruct on the decedent's separate assets.

4.2.2 Surveys (1972-2005)

Since 1972, the existence of a marriage contract is not mentioned in administrative data (even though the yearly number of marriages is still available). In order to extend our series after 1972 we use two surveys providing information about the matrimonial property regimes. First, the wealth survey *Patrimoine* conducted every 6 years since 1986 by the French national statistical office (INSEE) provides information about the matrimonial status of the couples (cohabitation, civil union or marriage) and the matrimonial property regime in case of civil union or marriage (default, separate property, full community or other regimes)¹⁶. We also use the 2010 wave of the *Emploi du Temps* survey (INSEE-INED) in which similar information is available.

The change of the source of data leads to a break in the series. Specifically, we certainly underestimate the share of marriage contracts in the survey data since we cannot observe all

¹⁵ Actually, from 1966 to 1972 we only rely on data released by the notaries for which there is, in average, a 10% non-response rate. However, the non-responses are randomly distributed and are not likely to bias our estimates.

¹⁶ These information is absent for the first wave of this survey, in 1986, so we only use the 1992, 1998, 2004 and 2010 waves

marriage contracts. Indeed, we only know the matrimonial property regimes of married couples. We deduce that there is a marriage contract when the matrimonial property regime is different from the legal regime. However, we cannot apply this definition when the couples keep the same matrimonial property regime in their marriage contracts. This practice was rare before 1965 but became more frequent afterwards. Complementary data suggests that we underestimate the share of marriage contracts by 20-25%. However, this underestimation is not likely to change the observed trend. Appendix C.2 provides more details about the estimations based on survey data.

4.3 Dowries and inter vivos gifts (1882-1977) and wealth at marriage (1894-1962)

The information about dowries is complementary from those about matrimonial property regimes for two reasons: first, a marriage contract is necessary to transmit a dowry; second, dowries can be used as a proxy for the wealth of a couple (or of their parents')¹⁷ and so as information about the characteristics of the married couples opting for a contract. Fiscal data provide information about the number and the values of inter vivos gifts and their types (dowries or not) at the aggregate level for the period 1882-1977¹⁸. Actually, the number of gifts is not fully informative because, with this sole aggregate information, we can know neither the origin nor the destination of the gift. In other words, the same marriage contract can include several dowry payments. For example, in 1898 there are 86,054 marriage contracts and 73,971 dowries. We could conclude that almost 90% of marriage contracts include a dowry. However, administrative data¹⁹ indicates that only 53% of all contracts include dowries in 1898 (the only year for which we have this information). Based on regional archives, Laroche-Gisserot (1988) confirms that this share is actually close to 50%. In this paper, we use the information about the values of gifts to estimate the wealth transmitted through dowries as a share of inheritance of all types (dowries, other gifts or bequests).

The information about wealth at marriage (net of dowries, if any) is available from 1894 to 1962 and comes from fiscal data. These information is important at divorce or death (especially for the community regimes) to distinguish the separate assets from the community assets. We have annual data for the share of marriage contracts with positive wealth at marriage, the value of wealth and the level of taxation (flat tax).

Appendix C.1.2 provides detailed tabulations for dowries and wealth at marriage.

¹⁷See Laroche-Gisserot (1988) and Anderson (2007)

¹⁸From 1882 to 1964, the information comes from fiscal returns. Then in 1977 there we use a survey conducted by the fiscal administration on gifts and inheritance. After 1977, there is no distinction based on the type of gifts (dowries or standard gifts).

¹⁹Bulletin de Statistique et de Législation comparée, vol. 3, 1899

5 The evolution of marriage and prenuptial agreements

Until the 1970s, the marriage was the sole way to legally exist as a couple. Moreover, the social, religious and family norms created supplementary incentives to marry. Therefore, to live together, to inherit or transmit wealth, the spouses had to be married. Figure 1 describes the annual number of marriages and the marriage rate in France for the period 1855-2014. Except during and immediately after the World Wars, marriage appears steady from 1855 until 1945 when measured in terms of annual number of marriages or marriage rates (number of marriages / population). Other features like the age at first marriage are also stable during this period (around 27-28 for men and 24 for women) even if differences exist especially between social classes²⁰. The increase in the number of marriages between 1965 and 1975 is mainly explained by the marriages of the baby-boomers. After 1975, we observe a decline in both the number of marriages and the marriage rate. This decline should be put in perspective with the generalisation of pre-marital cohabitation and with the creation of the civil union in France in 1999. As a consequence, there is a transformation of the roles of marriage and marriage contracts from the 1970s. However, the analysis of the economic content of marriage provided in the remainder of this paper indicates that, even before its decline, this institution significantly changed over time.

5.1 1855-1885 - A false stability of prenuptial agreements?

The first period of our analysis presents several stable features. First, the annual flow of marriages with prenuptial agreements is around 40% over all the period (Figure 2). Between 1855 and 1885, the most frequently chosen matrimonial regimes in case of prenuptial agreement are the community of acquisitions (80%) and the dowry regime (20%) (Figure 3(b)). From a gender inequality perspective, a marriage contract can be a way to limit the husband's power. Indeed, the legal regime implies a large share of community assets on which the husband has full-authority. The dowry regime is a more protective but more dynastic regime and opposes, in a way, the lineage to the spouse. The change of matrimonial property regime (towards the community of acquisitions or the dowry regime) is also necessary to protect the dowries which would become community assets with the legal regime since dowries are mostly movable assets²¹.

The large heterogeneity for both levels of prenuptial agreements and type of matrimonial property regimes across regions (Figure 4) can be seen as a consequence of the unification of

²⁰Grange (1996), Mignot (2010)

²¹In 1898, administrative data about marriage contracts and dowries indicate that movables assets (cash, bonds, stocks, life insurance contracts...) represent 86% of the total value of dowries (see Bulletin de Statistique et de Législation comparée, vol. 3, 1899).

the French legal system in 1804 with the Civil Code. Before 1804, several legal systems coexist. The regions where the prenuptial agreements are more frequent are the former regions where the law is written (mainly in the south of France) as opposed to regions with a legal system based on customary law. The dowry regime is common in the former (and in Normandy) and the prenuptial agreements necessary to transmit wealth. Because of these traditions the share of marriage contracts is still high in these *départements* during the nineteenth century. Moreover, it was also common in these regions to favor the sons in the distribution of inheritance. In a way with the principle of equality in intestacy law imposed by the Civil Code, the prenuptial contracts and dowries are the last way for families to have a direct control over their children's wealth. It can explain why prenuptial agreements are more frequent in these regions.

However, this period of stability may be misleading and could be seen as a period of transition. Indeed, it follows and precedes (see below) significant declines of the share of prenuptial agreements. This share equals 76.5% in Paris, reaches 90% in Lyon and is around 45-50 in Aix-en-Provence or Rouen. Even though not exhaustive, these data shows that prenuptial agreements are much more frequent in the early 1800s than in 1855. The pace of this decline is however impossible to determine.

5.2 1885-1914 - The uneven decline of prenuptial agreements

During the period 1885-1914, the prenuptial agreements experience a continuous decline. In 1914, only 20% of married couples establish a marriage contract. The distribution of matrimonial property regimes remains roughly similar: around 80% of married couples with a prenuptial agreement opt for the community of acquisition regime. The reform of inheritance in March 1891 gives more rights to the surviving spouse. This change is especially important for women because they often survive their husband and because taxation rates on inheritance penalize the surviving spouses compared with the children (Bourdieu, Postel-Vinay, and Suwa-Eisenmann (2008)). As a consequence, the prenuptial agreement may become less useful for couples who used it as a way to protect the surviving spouse. Unfortunately, our data do not allow us to test the effects of this reform. However, the decline of the prenuptial agreements begins before this reform suggesting that other motives may be at stake.

First, the decline of prenuptial agreements is more pronounced among the poorest part of the population. The average value of dowries almost doubles between 1882 and 1913 (Figure 5). Specifically, we observe a large decline of the number of dowries (from 103,000 in 1882 to 47,000 in 1913) and, at the same time, a stability of the aggregate values of dowries (Figure 6)²².

²²We have to keep in mind that a marriage contract can include more than one dowry so the dispersion of the

Dowries represent 55% of all inter vivos gifts during this period and around 9% of inheritance (defined as the sum of all inter vivos gifts and bequests). Piketty, Postel-Vinay, and Rosenthal (2014) note that the share of dowries is even higher in Paris since it represents 75% of all inter vivos gifts. This dowry inflation is however heterogeneous across social classes and is more pronounced at the top of the distribution²³. The value of wealth at marriage follows a similar path even if the rise is more modest (increase by 20% between 1894 and 1913)²⁴. How can we explain these evolutions? First, the role of dowries changes over the period and becomes a key element of the matrimonial strategies of wealthy families. Specifically, Anderson (2003) explains the dowry inflation as a response to a modernization process in which there is increasing income dispersion for a given level of inherited wealth. Similarly, Chojancki (2000) invokes the competition on the marriage market between old noble families and newer ones as an explanation to the dowry inflation in early Renaissance Venice. The growing wealth inequality in France during this period and the progressive fall of aristocratic fortunes (Piketty, Postel-Vinay, and Rosenthal, 2006) makes this explanation plausible. Second, the increase of the average value of dowries is also explained by the progressive disappearance of low-value dowries transmitted by poor households. Goody (1973) argues that the decline of dowries begin with the urban households. During this period, France experiences a rapid phase of urbanisation caused by the industrialisation. This phenomenon gives credit to Goody (1973)'s model. Third, part of this evolution is due to the 1901 tax reform. While the taxation of bequests becomes progressive, gifts still benefit from quasi proportional tax rates as well as other tax advantages. This partly explains why the share of all gifts (including dowries) rapidly increases around 1900²⁵.

Second, the geographical heterogeneity persists (Figure 4) but the decline of prenuptial agreements is more significant in the regions where the rate was very high, especially in the South West. Two complementary mechanisms are at stake here. First, France experiences a phase of rapid urbanisation during this period. The urbanisation increases by 10 points (from 35% to 45%) between the 1880s and World War I²⁶. The geographical dispersion of families weakens the link between parents and children and so the influence of parents on the matrimonial decisions of their children²⁷. The cultural determinants of the choice of a marriage contract have probably been affected by this phenomenon. Second, there is a significant decline

average value of dowries is likely to be large

²³Chaline (1979), Daumard (1970) and Voilliard (1979)

²⁴See Appendix C.1.2

²⁵Since 1942, the same graduated tax schedule apply to both gifts and bequests. However, in practice, bequests are more taxed than gifts.

²⁶See Appendix C.1.3 for complete data.

²⁷I.F.O.P (1963) indicates that family was the main instigator of the prenuptial agreements. Even if this survey has been conducted in 1963, we may assume that the influence of parents was at least as important at the end of the nineteenth century.

of the number of notaries over the period. During the first half of the nineteenth century, the number of notaries is divided by 2 (from 20,000 to 10,000 around 1850). Thereafter, this decline continues but slows down: 9,000 notaries in 1882, 8,787 in 1895 and 8,298 in 1910²⁸. More importantly, this decrease is more marked in rural areas²⁹. Because of these two phenomena, the influence of parents and notaries on the decisions of newlyweds has considerably decreased resulting in an ending of the practice of prenuptial agreements by the couples for which the economic interest was limited.

Last, we could also consider the re-establishment of divorce in 1884 as an exogenous shock which could explain this decline of marriage contracts. Indeed, the divorce is unsteady during the nineteenth century: the Civil Code restricted the grounds for divorce and, from 1816 to 1884, the divorce was banned. In 1884, the divorce is allowed but its grounds are still limited (adultery, court conviction...). However, divorce is not likely to explain the decline of marriage contracts. First, the increase of divorces is slow (4,000 divorces in 1885, 7,000 in 1900³⁰) compared with the rapid decline of marriage contracts. Second, the decrease of prenuptial agreements during the first half of the nineteenth century coexisted with an absence of divorce. Third, we could expect divorce to positively affect the probability of establishing prenuptial agreements since people may want to be insured against this risk. Actually, this is one of the channels explaining the return of prenuptial agreements since the 1970s³¹.

In that sense, this decline cannot be seen as the continuity of the first decreasing phase during the first half of the nineteenth century. The role of prenuptial agreement changes and is now more and more used as a part of the wealth strategy of families. Moreover, the dowry inflation shows the growing importance of wealth on the marriage market at this time.

5.3 1914-1965 - The progressive end of traditional marriage

Between 1914 and 1965, the share of prenuptial agreements stabilises around 20%. The World War I causes a dramatic drop in the number of both marriages and prenuptial agreements followed by a catch-up effect after the end of the war. After a period of stability, the number of prenuptial agreements decreases during the 1930s. The effect of World War II on marriages has been much less significant but follows similar patterns. This stability is however misleading.

First, the relative stability of the share of prenuptial agreements hides the decline of both dowry and community of acquisitions regimes and the progressive rise of the separate property

²⁸Moreau (1989)

²⁹Barrière (1987)

³⁰Ledermann (1948)

³¹Frémeaux and Leturcq (2013)

regime (Figures 3(a) and 3(b)). Specifically, in 1962, 56% of couples opting for a marriage contract choose the community of acquisitions regime against 39% for the separate property regime. The dowry regime has almost disappeared at this date.

Second, the geographical distribution of marriage contracts becomes progressively homogeneous (Figure 4) with more frequent marriage contracts in Paris and in the northern regions.

Third, we notice a progressive decline of dowries until their disappearance during the 1970s. Specifically, Figure 6 shows that the dowry payments (as a share of inheritance) fall from 9% during the 1910s to 6% in the 1920s and to less than 2% in the 1960s. In the 1960s, dowries remain frequent for farmers' children (especially in the North of France) but they have almost disappeared elsewhere. The decline of wealth-to-income ratios during this period (caused by the destructions of capital and the implementation of progressive taxation on inheritance and income in France³²) may explain this decrease since these economic shocks lead to the financial ruin of upper class families for whom the dowries were a well-established tradition. However, the relative stability of inter vivos gifts (20-25% of all inheritance flows) rather indicates that the transmission of wealth between parents and children take different forms. More specifically, the necessity for the bride's parents to provide a replacement income at marriage to compensate economic inactivity becomes less relevant as the attitudes towards the role of wives evolve with the rise of female employment. Moreover, the decrease of the age at first marriage during the first half of the twentieth century (by 3 years for the grooms and 2 years for the brides³³) may explain why wealth is more frequently transmitted after marriage. The economic literature also explains the decline of dowries by a substitution between dowries and human capital. Ashraf, Bau, Nunn, and Voena (2015) evoke this channel to explain the heterogeneous increase across ethnic group of female educational enrollment in developing countries. The rise of female educational enrollment in France during this period gives credit to this explanation. DeSingy (1977) argues that the role of education also depends on the bride's social background: the lower the social background, the more important is the role of education of the marriage market. With a different approach, Chiappori, Iyigun, and Weiss (2009) emphasizes the role of education on the marriage market as a channel to explain the rise of female educational attainment.

Fourth, the evolution of the legislation results in the equality of spouses as regards rights and duties³⁴. Several laws, passed during the first half of the twentieth century, increased the wives' rights³⁵. The balancing of spouses' rights reaches its peak with the 1965 reform of matrimonial

³²The taxation of dowries was actually slightly lower than the taxation of other gifts.

³³See Henry and Houdaille (1979) and Appendix C.1.1

³⁴DiMatteo (2013) suggests that female empowerment in Ontario was rather the consequences of socioeconomic changes than legal ones. It is likely that the situation in France supports this theory but a clear answer to this debate is beyond the scope of this paper.

³⁵In 1895, the wife is allowed to depose or withdraw money from the household's saving account. In 1907,

property regimes³⁶. The goal of this law is twofold. First, the legal matrimonial regime becomes the community of acquisitions regime. The size of the community assets is reduced. Specifically, all the financial assets acquired before marriage or inherited are excluded from the community assets. The community assets only include acquired assets during marriage (independently of their nature). This reform also suppresses the dowry regime and allows the married couples to modify their initial matrimonial regime during marriage. Second, this reform establishes a greater independence between the spouses. The wife now has equal rights compared with her husband. She can not only manage and sell her separate assets (without the approval of her husband) but there is also a joint management of the community assets. In practice however, the joint management is not complete. For financial assets, the husband can still take some decisions without the approval of his wife in case an immediate decision is needed. As mentioned in the introduction, the female empowerment regarding the administration of assets is established later in France than in Germany or the United States where similar laws are passed in 1958 and in the 1830-1840s, respectively.

5.4 1965-2010 - The decline of marriage and the rise of wealth individualisation

As expected, the prenuptial agreements become progressively less frequent after the 1965 reform. Before 1965, most couples opt for a marriage contract to choose the community of acquisitions regime. Starting 1966, this regime becomes the default regime so there is no need for prenuptial agreement for couples who would have chosen it. In the late 1960s, the share of marriages with prenuptial agreements falls to 10%. Since then we observe a continuous and progressive rise of prenuptial contracts. In 2010, the share of marriages prenuptial agreements is back to 20%, similar to levels observed before the 1965 reform³⁷.

This return of prenuptial contracts is mainly due to the significant increase of the separate property regime which becomes the main alternative to the legal regime (Figures 3(a) and 3(b)). Several complementary hypotheses explain this evolution. The philosophy of a community regime is to protect the spouse who has not financially contributed to the wealth accumulation of the household. In absence of community, this spouse would own no assets. When the

the wife can freely use her earnings and can alienate the assets acquired with these earnings. More importantly, the legal incapacity of wives is suppressed in 1938; women acquire the right to vote in 1944. Moreover, two laws, in 1891 and 1925, improve the right of the surviving spouse by giving them usufruct rights. During all the nineteenth century, the usufruct rights could exist but only in case of a specific clause in the marriage contract.

³⁶The first discussions about this reform started in 1932 with the Renault bill.

³⁷After 1972, we use surveys to estimate the evolution of marriage contracts. Complementary data suggest that we underestimate the share of marriage contracts by 20-25% because we cannot observe all marriage contracts. However, this underestimation is not likely to change the upward trend. See section 4.2.2 for more details.

spouses' contributions are similar then this insurance mechanism becomes less useful (Bayot and Voena, 2015). This growing economic independence can be measured by the rise of female labor supply. Specifically, the activity rate of females aged between 15 and 64 has continually increased over the past decades, from 53% in 1975 to 67% in 2013. As a consequence, two-thirds of couples are now dual-earner³⁸. The marital instability is another explanatory channel. In Frémeaux and Leturcq (2013), we show that the decrease of marriage and the rise of the separate property regime is mostly attributed to changes in the behavior of couples and not to changes in the characteristics of newlywed couples. It would be however misleading to consider separate property as a sign of mistrust towards the partner. Indeed, the increase of clauses in order to protect the surviving spouse³⁹ (*donation au dernier vivant*) provides evidence that separate property should rather be seen as an insurance against divorce. Last, the role of self-employed may not be invoked as an alternative explanation. Even if it is true that self-employed people more frequently opt for separate property regime (to protect their non-professional assets from a potential professional bankruptcy), the share of self-employed in the active population has significantly declined over the twentieth century (from 48% in 1901 to 10% in 2013)⁴⁰.

The 1977 administrative survey about inheritance confirms the disappearance of dowries during the 1970s. Again, this change does not mean that inter vivos transmissions disappear since gifts dramatically increase over the period to reach 45% of all inheritance flows in 2008. In Frémeaux and Leturcq (2013), we show that inherited wealth is positively correlated with the likelihood of opting for the separate property regime. The separate property regime prevents the returns of these assets from falling into community⁴¹. Moreover, the choice of separate property is more frequent for unequal couples and even more when the husband is favoured. Specifically, in the French wealth survey, 28% of couples declared unequal wealth when they met in 1992 against 40% in 2010. For married couples with separate property regimes, these shares reach 53% in 1992 and 78% in 2010. In two-thirds of the cases the husband is wealthier.

Analysing the matrimonial strategies of French couples through the evolution of marriage and matrimonial property regimes is sufficient as long as the alternatives to marriage are marginal. But, since 1975, both the annual number of marriages and the marriage rate significantly decline. Furthermore, marriage experiences deep transformations: people marry later (the age at first marriage has increased by 8 years for men and women since the 1970s) and the

³⁸Stancanelli (2006)

³⁹In the French wealth survey, we find that 53% of married couples with separate property regime opt for this protection against 45% for the default regime. We note a 5 points increase for the separate property regime since 1992.

⁴⁰See Appendix C.1.3 for detailed data.

⁴¹We may also invoke the lack of information regarding the legislation about marriage contracts that would lead to "overprotect" these assets (which are separate assets because accumulated before marriage). For more information, see Terré (1965)

share of remarriages increases (from around 8% to 20% between 1973 and 2013). The decline of marriage is however heterogeneous. For instance, couples who marry are significantly wealthier than the other types of couples (Frémeaux and Leturcq (2013)).

The emergence of cohabitation (Toulemon (1996)) and civil union reinforces the trend observed for married couples since cohabitation is *de facto* a way to separate property and the default matrimonial regime of civil unions is that of separate property (since 2006). As a consequence, the growing wealth individualisation would be underestimated by only observing married couples. In Figure 7 we divide the stock of couples into married and non-married couples. We note the rapid increase of the share of non-married couples from 1975. In 2011, only 75% of French couples are married and almost 4.5% opt of the civil union. Given that the share of married couples with separate property regime equals 10% in 2010⁴², this means that around only two-thirds of all couples opt for the community of acquisitions regime. Moreover, the return of inherited wealth, the increase of age at marriage and the growing proportion of remarriages contribute to increase the share of separate assets even when couples choose the default regime. Last, it is important to note that the married couples with separate property regime are much richer than the average. In other words, the decline of community assets (as a share of household wealth) is likely to be even more pronounced than the evolution of marriage and matrimonial regimes might suggest. In Frémeaux and Leturcq (2015), we tackle this issue by investigating the changes in the nature of wealth by decomposing the wealth of French households along the dimension of individual or joint ownership status of assets.

6 Concluding comments

The series about marriage contracts and matrimonial property regimes highlight some striking facts. Specifically, these series reveal that the French couples use the prenuptial agreements as a way to depart from the French legislation. The goals may vary: reducing the size of the community, balancing the power of spouses during the marriage or at death, protecting some assets through dowries... Therefore, ignoring the economic content of marriage in the analysis of wealth or gender inequality leads to forget some decisive aspects. Furthermore, these series emphasize the decline of community regimes and the rise of separate property from the 1960s leading to the individualisation of wealth within couples. As a consequence, the return of wealth in France goes along with a change in the nature of wealth which needs to be considered.

This paper opens wide prospects for future research. First, we should replicate these series for other countries to know if this individualisation also applies elsewhere. The decline

⁴²Frémeaux and Leturcq (2013)

of marriage is documented in many countries but we have less information about matrimonial property regimes⁴³. Second, this growing separate property causes a growing wealth individualisation. This phenomenon must be documented with more precise data on wealth and also from a microeconomic perspective. Third, we should consider the policy implications of these changes. The fact that the default regime seems to suit less and less couples raises the question whether the separate property regime should become the default regime for married couples. Moreover, this growing individualisation addresses the question of the relevant tax unit. While this question has been widely studied about income taxation and its effect on the spouses' labor supply, the same issue about wealth or capital income taxation is less straightforward. Future research should address the effect of the joint or individual taxation on wealth accumulation and on gender wealth inequality.

⁴³With the exception of Italy where Bayot and Voena (2015) note an increase of the separate property regime among married couples.

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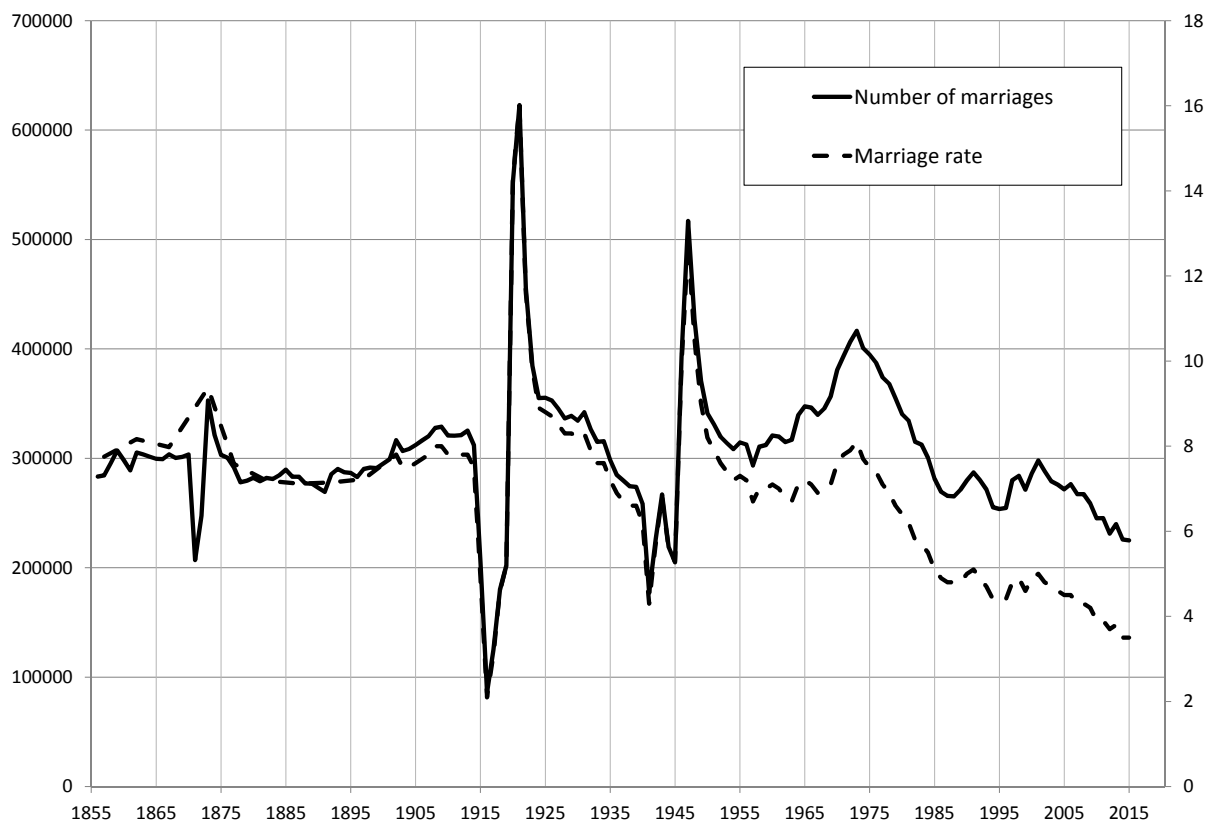
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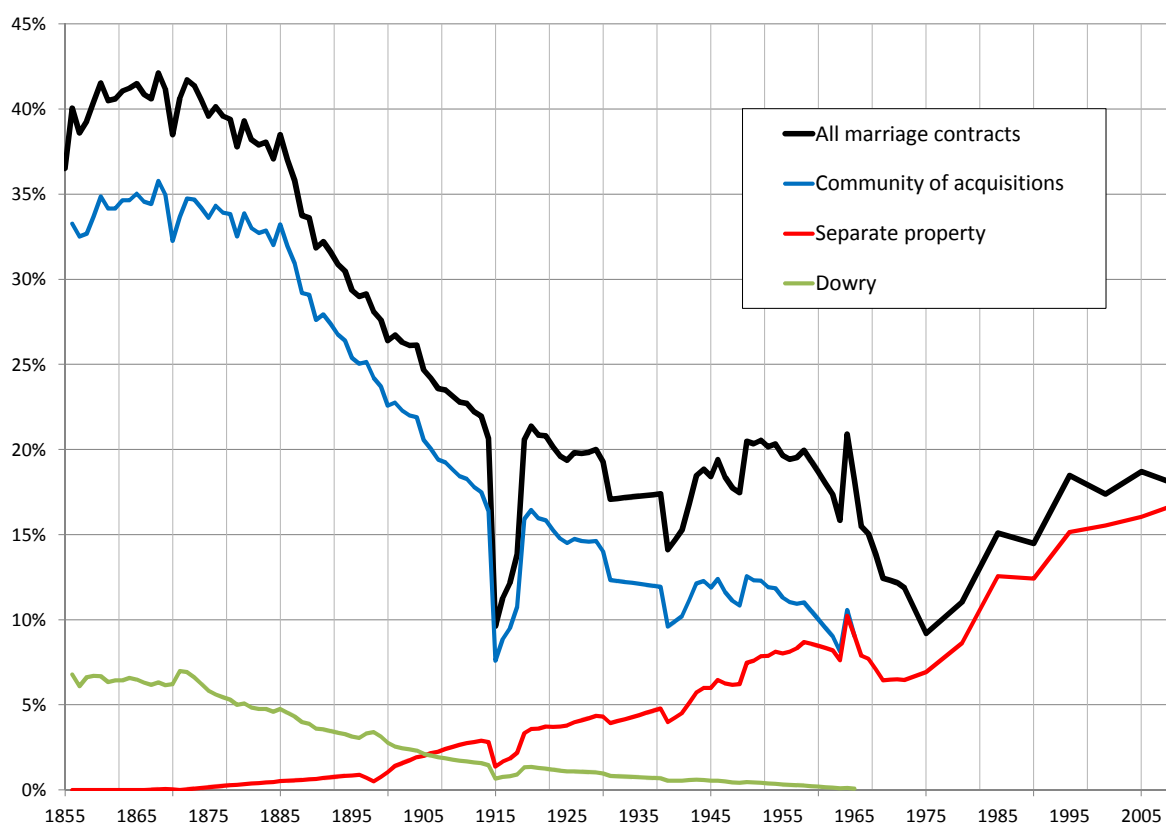
Figure 1: Marriages and marriage rate (1855 - 2014)



Source: marriage registers

Note: marriage rate = number of marriages / population (in thousands)

Figure 2: Annual flow of marriage contracts by matrimonial property regimes (1855 - 2010)



Source: administrative data from 1855 to 1972; *Patrimoine et Emploi du temps* surveys after 1972

Note: we only represent the main matrimonial property regimes: community of acquisitions, dowry and separate property regime before 1965; separate property regime after 1965.



(a) All married couples



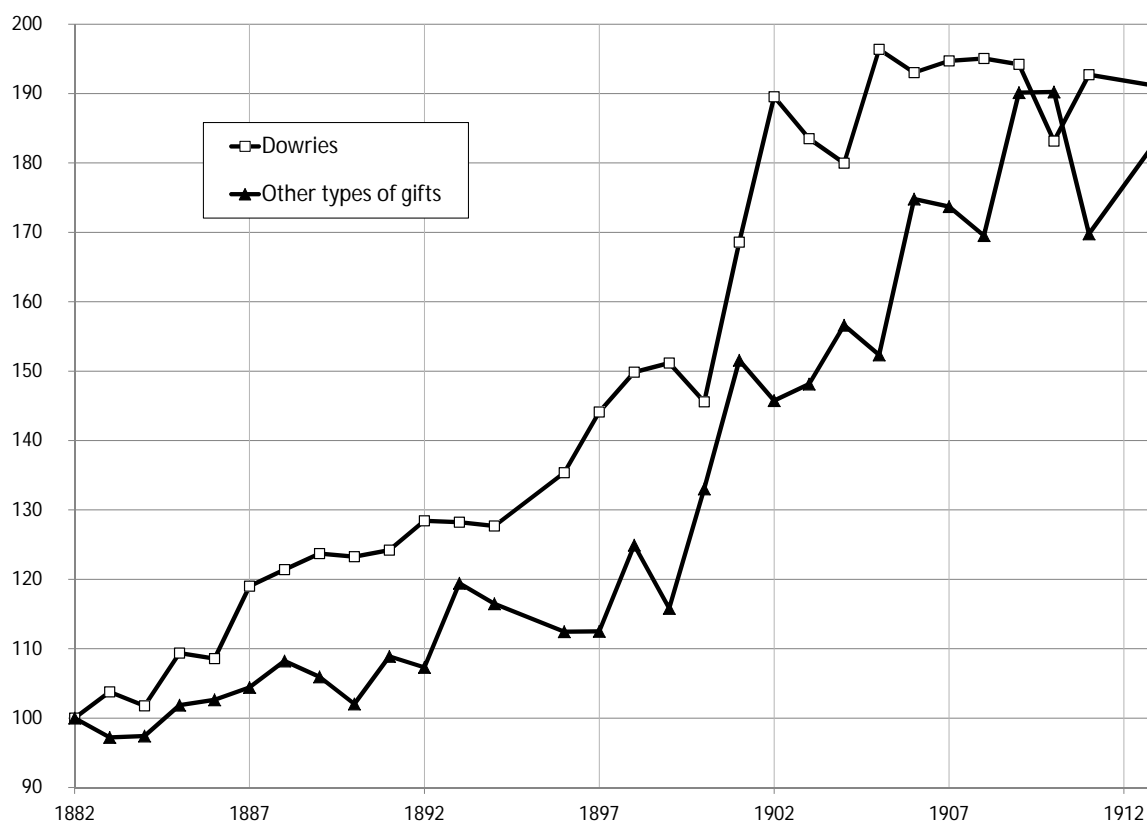
(b) Married couples with prenuptial agreements

Figure 3: Matrimonial property regimes

Figure 4: Density of marriage contracts by *département*

Note: estimations with kernel density

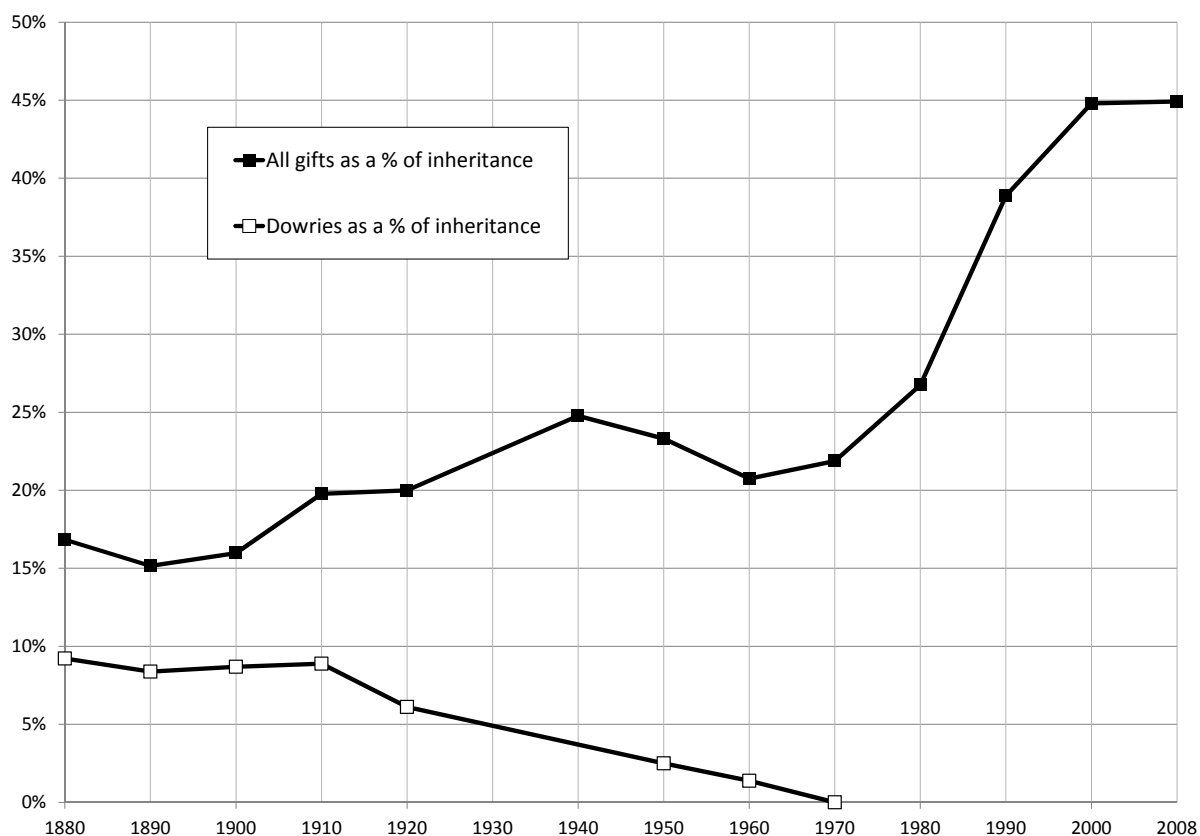
Figure 5: Evolution of the average value of dowries and other types of gifts (1882 - 1913)



Source : Ministry of Finances - Bulletin de statistique et de législation comparée / Statistiques et Etudes Financières (1882 - 1964)

Note : index base 100 in 1882; value in constant 1900 old francs

Figure 6: Inter vivos gifts and dowries as a % of inheritance (1882 - 2010)

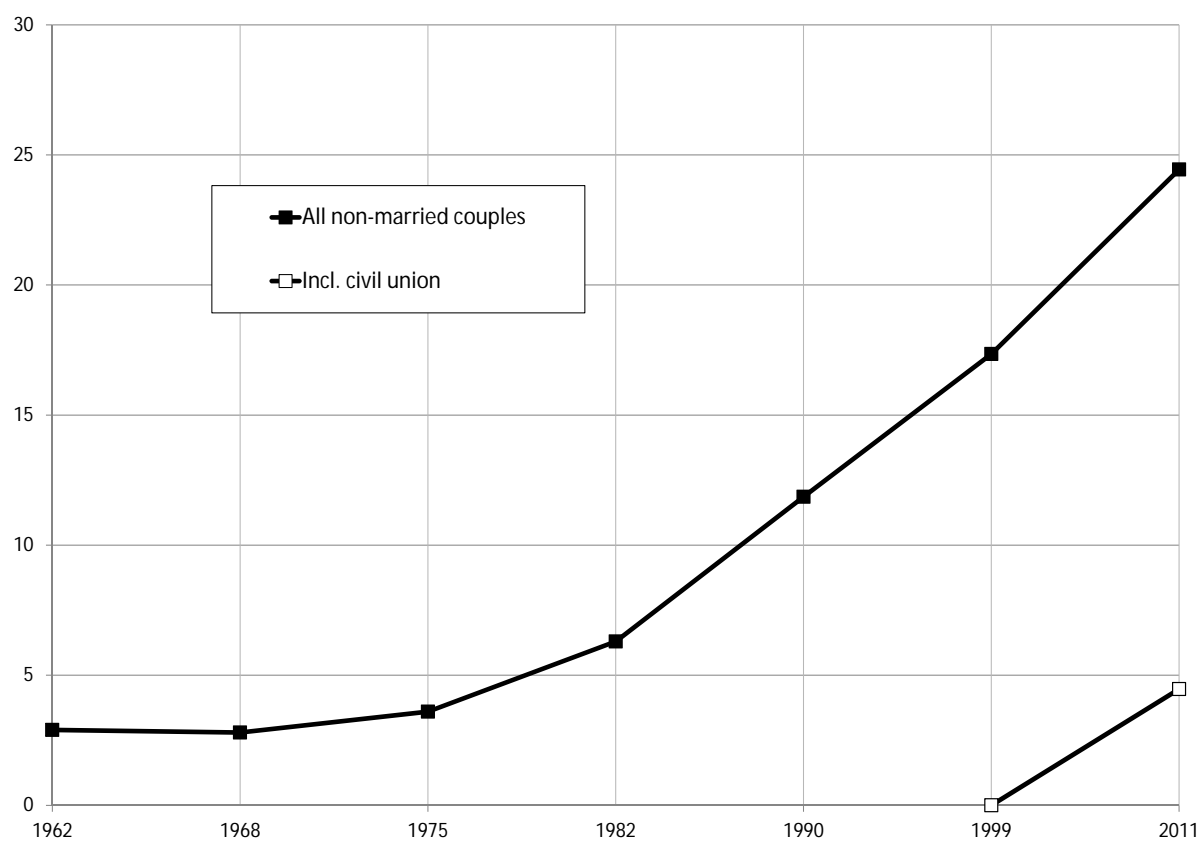


Source: Ministry of Finances - Bulletin de statistique et de législation comparée / Statistiques et Etudes Financières (1882 - 1964); administrative data on inheritances and gifts (DMTG): 1977, 1984, 1987, 1994, 2000, 2006; national accounts: 2008

Definition : inheritance = inter vivos gifts (dowries or standard gifts) + bequests

Note : the distinction between the type of gifts (dowries or standard gifts) is available until 1977; estimates are decennial averages

Figure 7: Share of non-married couples among all couples (1962-2011)



Source: census and *Famille* survey;

Note : the non-married couples include cohabiting couples and civil union. We present the share of civil union in 2011 (only available year).

Appendices

A The rules of matrimonial property regimes: summary

Table 1: Wives' rights across matrimonial regimes before 1965

	Separate assets		Community assets
	Movables	Non-movables	
Movables and acq.	See "Community assets"	Manageable by women and saleable (with the husband's consent)	Saleable by the husband
Acquisitions	Manageable by the wife but saleable by the husband (without his wife's consent)	Manageable by the wife and saleable (with the husband's consent)	Saleable by the husband
Separate property	Manageable and saleable by the wife	Manageable by the wife and saleable (with the husband's consent)	No community assets
Dowry			
<i>Dotal assets</i>	Husband's property until the middle of the 19 th century then non-saleable	Non saleable (even with the consent of both spouses)	No community assets
<i>Non dotal assets</i>	Manageable and saleable by the wife	Manageable by the wife and saleable (with the husband's consent)	

Note: For the separate property and the dowry regimes, some assets can be held jointly. The administration of these assets lays with the husband. In case the husband wants to sell his wife's non movable assets, her consent is necessary.

Table 2: Wives' rights across matrimonial regimes after 1965

	Separate assets	Community assets
Movables and acq.	Manageable by the wife and saleable (without the husband's consent)	Coadministration for the main decisions
Acquisitions	Manageable by the wife and saleable (without the husband's consent)	Coadministration for the main decisions
Separate property	Manageable by the wife and saleable (without the husband's consent)	No community assets

B Data sources

B.1 Marriages, prenuptial agreements and matrimonial property regimes

Data about marriages are exclusively administrative (civil registry of marriages) and are available online: [INSEE website](#)

The presence of marriage contracts was mentioned in the civil registry of marriage until 1965. Data are available (at the national and regional levels - *départements*) in two publications of the Ministry of Finances and INSEE:

- Statistique générale de la France (1855-1931)
- Bulletin de Statistique (1938-1964)

From 1966 to 1972, the information is not publicly available and comes from Faucheux (1972). There are two different sources:

- Ministry of Finances (1966-1968)
- Registries of notaries (1966-1972)

The type of matrimonial property regimes of married couples is only available in reports released by the notaries in 1898 (Bulletin de Statistique et de Législation comparée, vol. 3, 1899) and in 1962 (Compte général de la Justice, 1966, pp. 441-443 or Carbonnier (1964)). From 1966 to 1972, the information is available in Faucheux (1972).

After 1972, we use surveys (*Patrimoine* and *Emploi du Temps*) in which there is information about matrimonial property regimes.

B.2 Wealth at marriage and inter vivos gifts

The information about wealth at marriage is available from 1894 to 1962 and has been published by the Direction de l'Enregistrement, des Domaines et du Timbre. There are two series of publication:

- Bulletin de Statistique et de Législation comparée
- Statistiques et Etudes Financières

The information about inter vivos gifts is available from 1826 to 1964 and has been published by the Direction de l'Enregistrement, des Domaines et du Timbre. The decomposition between dowries (gifts by marriage contracts) and the other types of gifts is available from 1882 to 1964. There are two series of publication:

- Bulletin de Statistique et de Législation comparée
- Statistiques et Etudes Financières

After 1964, we can only rely on surveys (DMTG) from the Ministry of Finances (1977, 1984, 1987, 1994, 2000 and 2006) but there is no decomposition by types of gifts (except in 1977). For 2008, we rely on Piketty (2011)'s estimates based on national accounts.

C Data appendix

C.1 Raw data

C.1.1 Marriages and matrimonial property regimes

Table 3: Marriages and marriage rate (1855-2014)

	Number of marriages	Average age at first marriage		Marriage rate
		Women	Men	
1855	283 335	na	na	7.8
1856	284 401	na	na	
1857	295 510	na	na	
1858	307 056	na	na	
1859	298 417	na	na	
1860	288 936	na	na	8.2
1861	305 203	na	na	
1862	303 514	na	na	
1863	301 376	na	na	
1864	299 579	na	na	
1865	299 242	na	na	8.0
1866	303 634	na	na	
1867	300 333	na	na	
1868	301 225	na	na	
1869	303 482	na	na	
1870	207 003	na	na	9.4
1871	247 562	na	na	
1872	352 754	na	na	
1873	321 238	na	na	
1874	303 113	na	na	
1875	300 427	na	na	7.6
1876	291 393	na	na	
1877	278 094	na	na	
1878	279 580	na	na	
1879	282 276	na	na	

	Number of marriages	Average age at first marriage		Marriage rate
		Women	Men	
1880	279 046	na	na	7.2
1881	282 079	na	na	
1882	281 060	na	na	
1883	284 519	na	na	
1884	289 555	na	na	
1885	283 170	na	na	
1886	283 208	na	na	7.1
1887	277 060	na	na	
1888	276 848	na	na	
1889	272 934	na	na	
1890	269 332	na	na	
1891	285 458	na	na	
1892	290 319	na	na	7.1
1893	287 294	na	na	
1894	286 662	na	na	
1895	282 918	na	na	
1896	290 171	na	na	
1897	291 462	na	na	
1898	291 000	na	na	7.2
1899		na	na	
1900	299 084	na	na	
1901	316 540	na	na	
1902	306 682	na	na	
1903	308 510	na	na	
1904	312 134	na	na	7.6
1905	316 195	na	na	7.7
1906	320 208	na	na	7.8
1907	327 723	na	na	8.0
1908	328 877	na	na	8.0
1909	320 871	na	na	7.8
1910	320 644	na	na	7.8

	Number of marriages	Average age at first marriage		Marriage rate
		Women	Men	
1911	321 089	na	na	7.8
1912	325 272	na	na	7.8
1913	312 036	na	na	7.5
1914	205 000	na	na	4.9
1915	86 000	na	na	2.1
1916	125 000	na	na	3.1
1917	180 000	na	na	4.6
1918	202 000	na	na	5.2
1919	552 683	na	na	14.3
1920	622 724	na	na	16.0
1921	455 543	na	na	11.6
1922	384 585	na	na	9.8
1923	355 066	na	na	8.9
1924	355 401	na	na	8.8
1925	352 830	na	na	8.7
1926	345 415	na	na	8.5
1927	336 364	na	na	8.3
1928	338 804	na	na	8.3
1929	334 322	na	na	8.2
1930	342 059	na	na	8.3
1931	326 661	na	na	7.9
1932	314 980	na	na	7.6
1933	315 668	na	na	7.6
1934	298 482	na	na	7.2
1935	284 895	na	na	6.9
1936	279 902	na	na	6.7
1937	274 506	na	na	6.6
1938	273 917	na	na	6.6
1939	258 429	na	na	6.2
1940	177 000	na	na	4.3
1941	226 000	na	na	5.7

	Number of marriages	Average age at first marriage		Marriage rate
		Women	Men	
1942	267 000	na	na	6.8
1943	219 000	na	na	5.6
1944	205 000	na	na	5.3
1945	393 000	na	na	9.9
1946	516 882	24,3	27,4	12.8
1947	427 113	24,0	27,2	10.5
1948	370 769	23,8	26,9	9.0
1949	341 091	23,5	26,5	8.2
1950	331 091	23,3	26,2	7.9
1951	319 651	23,3	26,2	7.6
1952	313 892	23,2	26,1	7.4
1953	308 426	23,2	26,0	7.2
1954	314 453	23,2	26,0	7.3
1955	312 703	23,2	26,0	7.2
1956	293 450	23,4	26,1	6.7
1957	310 509	23,3	26,0	7.0
1958	312 133	23,2	26,0	7.0
1959	320 821	23,1	25,8	7.1
1960	319 944	23,1	25,7	7.0
1961	314 841	23,0	25,7	6.8
1962	316 873	23,0	25,5	6.7
1963	339 463	22,8	25,1	7.1
1964	347 525	22,7	25,0	7.2
1965	346 308	22,7	24,9	7.1
1966	339 746	22,7	24,9	6.9
1967	345 578	22,7	24,9	7.0
1968	356 615	22,7	24,8	7.1
1969	380 829	22,7	24,8	7.6
1970	393 686	22,6	24,7	7.8
1971	406 416	22,6	24,6	7.9
1972	416 521	22,5	24,6	8.1

	Number of marriages	Average age at first marriage		Marriage rate
		Women	Men	
1973	400 740	22,5	24,5	7.7
1974	394 755	22,5	24,6	7.5
1975	387 379	22,5	24,6	7.4
1976	374 003	22,6	24,7	7.1
1977	368 166	22,7	24,8	6.9
1978	354 628	22,8	25,0	6.6
1979	340 405	22,9	25,0	6.4
1980	334 377	23,0	25,1	6.2
1981	315 117	23,1	25,3	5.8
1982	312 405	23,3	25,5	5.7
1983	300 513	23,6	25,7	5.5
1984	281 402	23,9	25,9	5.1
1985	269 419	24,2	26,3	4.9
1986	265 678	24,5	26,5	4.8
1987	265 177	24,8	26,8	4.8
1988	271 124	25,0	27,1	4.8
1989	279 900	25,3	27,3	5.0
1990	287 099	25,6	27,6	5.1
1991	280 175	25,8	27,8	4.9
1992	271 427	26,1	28,1	4.7
1993	255 190	26,4	28,4	4.4
1994	253 746	26,7	28,7	4.4
1995	254 651	26,9	28,9	4.4
1996	280 072	27,4	29,4	4.8
1997	283 984	27,6	29,6	4.9
1998	271 361	27,7	29,8	4.6
1999	286 191	27,8	29,9	4.9
2000	297 922	28,0	30,2	5.0
2001	288 255	28,1	30,2	4.8
2002	279 087	28,3	30,4	4.7
2003	275 963	28,5	30,6	4.6

	Number of marriages	Average age at first marriage		Marriage rate
		Women	Men	
2004	271 598	28,8	30,8	4.5
2005	276 303	29,1	31,1	4.5
2006	267 260	29,2	31,2	4.3
2007	267 194	29,5	31,4	4.3
2008	258 739	29,6	31,6	4.2
2009	245 151	29,8	31,7	3.9
2010	245 334	30,0	31,8	3.9
2011	231 100	30,1	31,9	3.7
2012	239 840	30,2	32,0	3.8
2013	225 784	30,5	32,3	3.5
2014	225 000	na	na	3.5

Source : Insee - Marriage registers; France metropolitan area

Note : Marriage rate = number of marriages / population (in thousands); same-sex marriages are excluded; na : not available

Table 4: Marriage contracts (1855-1972)

	Number of marriages	Number of marriage contracts	Share of marriage contracts
1855	283 335	103 428	36.5%
1856	284 401	113 922	40.1%
1857	295 510	114 066	38.6%
1858	307 056	120 624	39.3%
1859	298 417	120 536	40.4%
1860	288 936	120 019	41.5%
1861	305 203	123 571	40.5%
1862	303 514	123 234	40.6%
1863	301 376	123 763	41.1%
1864	299 579	123 500	41.2%
1865	299 242	124 154	41.5%
1866	303 634	124 044	40.9%
1867	300 333	121 944	40.6%
1868	301 225	126 872	42.1%
1869	303 482	124 918	41.2%
1870	223 705	86 088	38.5%
1871	262 476	106 689	40.6%
1872	352 754	147 125	41.7%
1873	321 238	132 905	41.4%
1874	303 113	122 871	40.5%
1875	300 427	118 947	39.6%
1876	291 393	116 940	40.1%
1877	278 094	110 086	39.6%
1878	279 580	110 149	39.4%
1879	282 776	106 856	37.8%
1880	279 046	109 684	39.3%
1881	282 079	107 731	38.2%
1882	281 060	106 451	37.9%
1883	284 519	108 266	38.1%
1884	289 555	107 325	37.1%

	Number of marriages	Number of marriage contracts	Share of marriage contracts
1885	283 170	109 002	38.5%
1886	283 208	104 792	37.0%
1887	277 060	99 190	35.8%
1888	276 848	93 423	33.7%
1889	272 903	91 694	33.6%
1890	269 332	85 791	31.9%
1891	285 458	91 925	32.2%
1892	290 319	91 725	31.6%
1893	287 294	88 733	30.9%
1894	286 662	87 407	30.5%
1895	282 918	83 034	29.3%
1896	290 171	84 091	29.0%
1897	291 462	84 924	29.1%
1898	287 179	80 670	28.1%
1899	295 752	81 660	27.6%
1900	299 084	78 910	26.4%
1901	303 469	81 053	26.7%
1902	294 786	77 528	26.3%
1903	295 996	77 288	26.1%
1904	298 721	78 052	26.1%
1905	302 623	74 685	24.7%
1906	306 487	74 148	24.2%
1907	314 061	74 029	23.6%
1908	315 641	74 163	23.5%
1909	307 687	71 151	23.1%
1910	307 710	70 120	22.8%
1911	308 018	69 938	22.7%
1912	312 139	69 384	22.2%
1913	298 866	65 598	21.9%
1914	168 923	34 880	20.6%
1915	75 242	7 243	9.6%
1916	108 099	12 180	11.3%

	Number of marriages	Number of marriage contracts	Share of marriage contracts
1917	158 431	19 248	12.1%
1918	178 283	24 673	13.8%
1919	446 985	91 950	20.6%
1920	622 724	133 034	21.4%
1921	455 543	94 975	20.8%
1922	384 585	79 982	20.8%
1923	355 066	71 552	20.2%
1924	355 401	69 716	19.6%
1925	352 830	68 326	19.4%
1926	345 415	68 391	19.8%
1927	336 364	66 468	19.8%
1928	338 804	67 179	19.8%
1929	334 322	66 810	20.0%
1930	342 059	65 987	19.3%
1931	326 661	55 779	17.1%
1938	273 917	47 638	17.4%
1939	247 358	34 932	14.1%
1941	216 770	33 043	15.2%
1942	257 271	43 234	16.8%
1943	210 151	38 809	18.5%
1944	199 361	37 572	18.8%
1945	376 033	69 246	18.4%
1946	516 882	100 253	19.4%
1947	427 113	78 451	18.4%
1948	370 769	65 779	17.7%
1949	341 091	59 569	17.5%
1950	331 091	67 810	20.5%
1951	319 651	64 971	20.3%
1952	313 892	64 482	20.5%
1953	308 426	62 183	20.2%

	Number of marriages	Number of marriage contracts	Share of marriage contracts
1954	314 453	63 878	20.3%
1955	312 703	61 410	19.6%
1956	293 450	57 009	19.4%
1957	310 509	60 650	19.5%
1958	312 133	62 290	20.0%
	320 821		
1962	316 873	54 974	17.3%
1963	339 463	53 770	15.8%
1964	347 525	72 638	20.9%
1965	346 308	63 035	18.2%
1966	339 746	52 594	15.5%
1967	345 578	51 932	15.0%
1968	356 615	49 329	13.8%
1969	380 829	43 026	11.3%
1970	393 686	44 089	11.2%
1971	406 416	44 947	11.1%
1972	416 521	44 929	10.8%

Source: Statistique de la France from 1855 to 1931, Bulletin de Statistique du Ministère des Finances from 1938 to 1964, transmitted by the DGI from 1965 to 1968 and Conseil supérieur du notariat from 1969 to 1972

Table 5: Matrimonial property regimes (1898)

		Community			Separation			Dowry	
	Number of marriage contracts	Movables and acquisitions	Acquisitions	Full	No community	Separation	Without separate assets	With separate assets	With community
Number	82 346	866	67 288	258	1 694	2 128	2 489	2 703	4 560
Share (in %)		1.1%	81.7%	0.3%	2.1%	2.6%	3.0%	3.3%	5.5%

Source: Ministry of Finances

Table 6: Matrimonial property regimes (1962)

		Community			Separation			Dowry	
	Number of marriage contracts	Movables and acquisitions	Acquisitions	Full	No community	Separation with community	Separation without community	Without community	With community
Number	54 974	65	30 687	2 525	23	965	20 473	21	7
Share (in %)		0.1%	55.8%	4.6%	0.0%	1.8%	37.2%	0.0%	0.0%

Source: Ministry of Finances

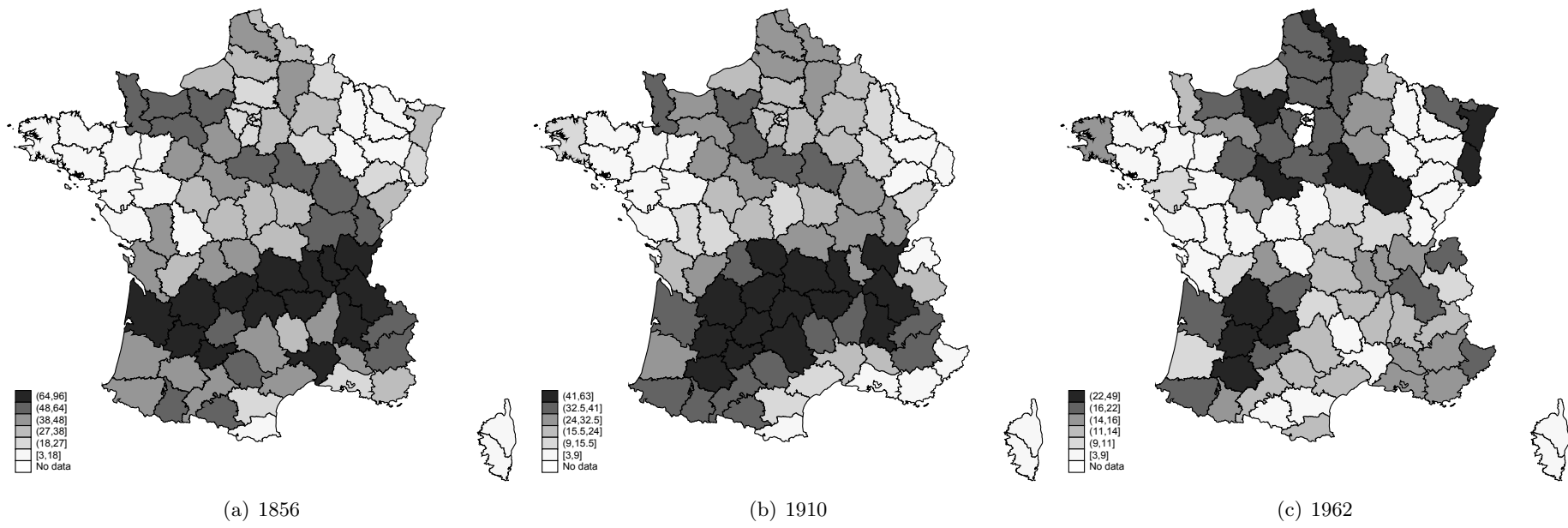


Figure 8: Prenuptial agreements (in %) by *département*

C.1.2 Wealth at marriage, inter vivos gifts and dowries

Table 7: Wealth at marriage (1894-1962)

	Number of marriage contracts	Number of marriage contracts with wealth>0	Share of marriage contracts with wealth>0	Tax rate	Wealth declared in all marriage contracts (1900 billion old francs)
1894	86 532				1.158
1895	84 997				1.163
1896	85 625				1.191
1897	88 704	82 393	93%	0.2%	1.191
1898	86 054	79 651	93%	0.2%	1.183
1899	84 913	79 654	94%	0.2%	1.162
1900	84 006	79 626	95%	0.2%	1.229
1901	83 279	79 053	95%	0.2%	1.203
1902	82 042	77 291	94%	0.2%	1.183
1903	81 105	77 126	95%	0.2%	1.188
1904	79 700	76 580	96%	0.2%	1.230
1905	78 805	75 423	96%	0.2%	1.224
1906	78 706	75 207	96%	0.2%	1.232
1907	76 528	73 251	96%	0.2%	1.224
1908	77 125	73 866	96%	0.2%	1.187
1909	74 912	71 705	96%	0.2%	1.130
1910	73 970	70 668	96%	0.2%	1.183
1911	73 965	70 922	96%	0.2%	1.081
1912	73 418	70 198	96%	0.2%	1.070
1913	69 783	67 182	96%	0.2%	1.066
1914	40 092	38 476	96%	0.2%	0.650
1915	9 377	8 576	91%	0.2%	0.184
1916	14 115	13 258	94%	0.2%	0.227
1917	22 477	21 525	96%	0.2%	0.328
1918	30 844	13 214	43%	0.2%	0.180
1918		16 320		1.0%	0.147

	Number of marriage contracts	Number of marriage contracts with wealth>0	Share of marriage contracts with wealth>0	Tax rate	Wealth declared in all marriage contracts (1900 billion old francs)
1921	99 099	94 667	96%	1.0%	0.703
1922	91 584	82 668	90%	1.0%	0.653
1923	86 186	73 816	86%	1.0%	0.585
1938	47 638	41 666	87%	0.5%	
1939	34 932	31 162	89%	0.5%	
1941	33 043	30 200	91%	0.5%	
1942	43 234	39 676	92%	0.5%	
1943	38 809	35 486	91%	0.5%	
1944	37 572	33 951	90%	0.5%	
1945	69 246	62 047	90%	0.5%	
1946	102 139	68 647	67%	0.5%	
1947	85 099	44 551	52%	0.5%	
1948	71 675	37 040	52%	0.6%	0.120
1949		34 112		0.6%	0.115
1950	67 810	34 181	50%	0.6%	0.119
1951	64 971	32 570	50%	0.7%	0.125
1952	64 482	32 535	50%	0.7%	0.128
1953	62 183	31 430	51%	0.7%	0.139
1954	63 878	32 240	50%	0.7%	0.152
1955	61 410	31 999	52%	0.7%	0.161
1956	57 009	28 987	51%	0.7%	0.151
1957	60 650	30 414	50%	0.7%	0.161
1958	62 290	29 836	48%	0.8%	0.133
1959		30 606		0.8%	0.135
1960		28 267		0.8%	0.133
1961		27 136		0.8%	0.135
1962	54 974	27 912	51%	0.8%	0.142

Source: Direction de l'Enregistrement, des Domaines et des Timbres

Table 8: Dowries and gifts (1882-2008)

	Number of:			Value (in billion current francs from 1882 to 1959; in billion current euros since 1960)						
	Dowries	Other gifts	All gifts	Dowries	Other gifts	All gifts	Bequests (gross)	Bequests (net)	Inheritance (gross)	Inheritance (net)
1882	103 096	70 039	173 135	0.563	0.483	1.046	5.027	4.775	6.073	5.822
1883	101 830	70 760	172 590	0.583	0.479	1.062	5.243	4.981	6.304	6.042
1884	101 612	69 489	171 101	0.560	0.463	1.023	5.078	4.824	6.101	5.847
1885	97 932	69 086	167 018	0.558	0.463	1.022	5.407	5.137	6.428	6.158
1886	97 640	68 955	166 595	0.552	0.466	1.018	5.369	5.101	6.388	6.119
1887	90 624	66 264	156 888	0.551	0.447	0.998	5.409	5.139	6.407	6.137
1888	87 720	64 839	152 559	0.523	0.435	0.958	5.372	5.104	6.331	6.062
1889	85 231	61 657	146 888	0.528	0.414	0.942	5.059	4.806	6.001	5.748
1890	81 569	64 240	145 809	0.514	0.423	0.937	5.811	5.521	6.748	6.458
1891	85 815	63 181	148 996	0.555	0.453	1.008	5.792	5.502	6.800	6.511
1892	85 327	63 816	149 143	0.566	0.447	1.012	6.405	6.085	7.417	7.097
1893	82 679	59 077	141 756	0.531	0.447	0.978	5.741	5.454	6.719	6.432
1894	80 923	59 493	140 416	0.539	0.456	0.995	5.750	5.462	6.745	6.457
1895				-	-	0.995	5.976	5.677	6.971	6.672
1896	79 033	59 090	138 123	0.536	0.421	0.957	5.503	5.228	6.460	6.185
1897	78 675	61 873	140 548	0.551	0.428	0.979	5.622	5.341	6.600	6.319
1898	73 971	59 689	133 660	0.550	0.467	1.017	5.701	5.416	6.719	6.434
1899	74 906	56 823	131 729	0.567	0.417	0.984	5.836	5.544	6.820	6.528
1900	76 374	54 817	131 191	0.557	0.462	1.019	6.737	6.400	7.756	7.419
1901	65 532	49 755	115 287	0.559	0.482	1.041	5.259	4.996	6.300	6.037
1902	61 337	45 274	106 611	0.577	0.414	0.990	4.937	4.691	5.928	5.681
1903	61 673	46 494	108 167	0.561	0.432	0.993	5.016	4.765	6.009	5.758

	Number of:			Value (in billion current francs from 1882 to 1959; in billion current euros since 1960)						
	Dowries	Other gifts	All gifts	Dowries	Other gifts	All gifts	Bequests (gross)	Bequests (net)	Inheritance (gross)	Inheritance (net)
1904	61 415	46 964	108 379	0.543	0.456	0.999	5.330	5.064	6.329	6.063
1905	59 764	46 488	106 252	0.570	0.435	1.005	5.755	5.467	6.760	6.473
1906	57 964	44 449	102 413	0.555	0.487	1.042	5.675	5.391	6.717	6.433
1907	56 443	44 400	100 843	0.551	0.488	1.039	5.901	5.606	6.940	6.645
1908	55 585	43 741	99 326	0.554	0.479	1.033	5.905	5.610	6.938	6.643
1909	54 733	43 467	98 200	0.543	0.534	1.077	6.169	5.861	7.246	6.938
1910	54 729	47 488	102 217	0.527	0.601	1.128	5.331	5.064	6.459	6.192
1911	49 749	42 948	92 697	0.557	0.536	1.093	5.762	5.474	6.854	6.566
1912	51 043			-	-	1.062	5.943	5.646	7.005	6.708
1913	46 962	41 975	88 937	0.530	0.576	1.106	5.532	5.255	6.638	6.361
1914	28 537	26 484	55 021	0.316	0.406	0.722	-	-	-	0.722
1915	3 156	9 871	13 027	0.047	0.127	0.175	-	-	-	0.175
1916	5 627			-	-	-	-	-	-	-
1917	10 359	15 585	25 944	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
1918	13 249	15 190	28 439	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
1919				-	-	-	-	-	-	-
1920				0.257	-	-	-	-	-	-
1921	54 729			0.805	1.260	2.065	-	8.260	2.065	10.325
1922	48 970	51 042	100 012	0.800	1.197	1.997	-	7.988	1.997	9.985
1923	43 404	50 984	94 388	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
1924				-	-	-	-	-	-	-
1925				-	-	-	10.398	9.802	-	-
1926				-	-	-	11.664	11.058	-	-
1927				-	-	-	12.748	12.143	-	-

	Number of:			Value (in billion current francs from 1882 to 1959; in billion current euros since 1960)						
	Dowries	Other gifts	All gifts	Dowries	Other gifts	All gifts	Bequests (gross)	Bequests (net)	Inheritance (gross)	Inheritance (net)
1928				-	-	-	14.196	13.478	-	-
1929				-	-	-	16.607	15.894	-	-
1930				-	-	-	16.664	15.979	-	-
1931				-	-	-	16.901	16.064	-	-
1932				-	-	-	16.055	15.226	-	-
1933				-	-	-	15.354	14.490	-	-
1934				-	-	-	15.745	14.660	-	-
1935				-	-	-	16.034	14.938	-	-
1936				-	-	-	15.919	14.820	-	-
1937				-	-	-	15.920	14.886	-	-
1938	15 301			-	-	-	18.390	17.242	-	-
1939	10 179			-	-	-	17.637	16.696	-	-
1940				-	-	-	14.138	13.420	-	-
1941	10 543			-	-	-	21.703	20.731	-	-
1942	8 659			-	-	-	29.523	28.506	-	-
1943				-	-	-	38.526	37.785	-	-
1944				-	-	5.497	41.084	39.400	46.581	44.897
1945				-	-	19.616	49.263	47.682	68.879	67.298
1946				-	-	19.926	53.184	51.220	73.110	71.146
1947				-	-	21.645	72.218	70.378	93.863	92.023
1948				-	-	30.333	84.344	81.898	114.677	112.231
1949				-	-	34.303	112.272	108.202	146.575	142.505
1950				-	-	48.038	-	127.656	-	175.694
1951	22 089	78 851	100 940	-	-	44.311	-	165.154	-	209.465

	Number of:			Value (in billion current francs from 1882 to 1959; in billion current euros since 1960)						
	Dowries	Other gifts	All gifts	Dowries	Other gifts	All gifts	Bequests (gross)	Bequests (net)	Inheritance (gross)	Inheritance (net)
1952	22 032	65 762	87 794	6.302	46.271	52.573	-	226.880	-	279.453
1953	23 520	70 108	93 628	7.606	59.073	66.679	-	238.854	-	305.533
1954	24 717	68 120	92 837	8.331	57.917	66.248	-	302.545	-	368.793
1955	23 865	67 176	91 041	9.079	65.906	74.985	-	291.613	-	366.598
1956	19 451	66 596	86 047	8.403	95.034	103.437	-	259.391	-	362.828
1957	20 428	67 120	87 548	8.844	81.844	90.688	-	286.688	-	377.376
1958	19 411	66 459	85 870	9.414	86.747	96.161	-	353.680	-	449.841
1959	19 327	60 436	79 763	9.463	69.759	79.222	-	403.573	-	482.795
1960	16 421	58 745	75 166	0.015	0.138	0.153	-	0.655	-	0.808
1962	14 839	65 407	80 246	0.017	0.232	0.250	-	0.929	-	1.178
1964	12 766	79 364	92 130	0.018	0.330	0.348	-	1.285	-	1.633
1977	500	144 362	144 862	-	-	1.776	-	6.343	-	8.119
1984				-	-	5.046	-	17.516	-	22.562
1987				-	-	8.324	-	19.101	-	27.424
1994				-	-	17.062	-	26.835	-	43.896
2000				-	-	31.306	-	38.865	-	70.171
2006				-	-	47.994	-	58.850	-	106.844
2008				-	-	59.133	-	72.510	-	131.643

Source : Ministry of Finances - Bulletin de statistique et de législation comparée / Statistiques et Etudes Financières (1882 - 1964); administrative data on inheritances and gifts (DMTG): 1977, 1984, 1987, 1994, 2000, 2006; national accounts: 2008

Definition : inheritance = vivos gifts + bequests

Note : the distinction between the type of gifts (dowries or standard gifts) is available until 1977

Table 9: Dowries and gifts - Decennial average (1882-2008)

	Value (in billion current francs from 1882 to 1959; in billion current euros since 1960)							Share (in %)		
	Dowries	Other gifts	All gifts	Bequests (gross)	Bequests (net)	Inheritance (gross)	Inheritance (net)	Dowries / all gifts	Dowries / inheritance	Gifts / inheritance
1880	0.552	0.456	1.009	5.245	4.983	6.254	5.992	54.8%	9.2%	16.8%
1890	0.545	0.440	0.986	5.814	5.523	6.800	6.509	55.3%	8.4%	15.2%
1900	0.557	0.467	1.024	5.668	5.385	6.692	6.409	54.4%	8.7%	16.0%
1910	0.396	0.449	0.881	5.642	5.360	6.739	4.454	44.9%	8.9%	19.8%
1920	0.621	1.229	2.031	13.123	11.232	2.031	10.155	30.6%	6.1%	20.0%
1930	-	-	-	16.462	15.500	-	-			
1940	-	-	21.887	51.626	49.922	90.614	88.350			24.8%
1950	8.430	70.319	78.749	-	295.403	-	337.838	10.7%	2.5%	23.3%
1960	0.017	0.233	0.250	-	0.956	-	1.206	6.7%	1.4%	20.7%
1970	-	1.776	1.776	-	6.343	-	8.119	0.0%	0.0%	21.9%
1980	-	-	6.685	-	18.308	-	24.993			26.7%
1990	-	-	17.062	-	26.835	-	43.896			38.9%
2000	-	-	39.650	-	48.858	-	88.508			44.8%
2008	-	-	59.133	-	72.510	-	131.643			44.9%

Source : Ministry of Finances - Bulletin de statistique et de législation comparée / Statistiques et Etudes Financières (1882 - 1964); administrative data on inheritances and gifts (DMTG): 1977, 1984, 1987, 1994, 2000, 2006; national accounts: 2008

Definition : inheritance = inter vivos gifts + bequests

Note : the distinction between the type of gifts (dowries or standard gifts) is available until 1977

C.1.3 Supplementary data

Table 10: Labor force composition (1901-2013)

	All workers	Salaried	Non salaried	<i>Including farmers</i>	% salaried	% non-salaried	<i>Including % farmers</i>
1901	19 401	10 085	9 271	5 274	52%	48%	27%
1906	20 482	10 024	10 459	6 151	49%	51%	30%
1921	21 183	11 461	9 723	6 159	54%	46%	29%
1926	21 151	12 007	9 144	5 801	57%	43%	27%
1931	21 159	12 169	8 990	5 532	58%	42%	26%
1936	19 396	10 697	8 699	5 260	55%	45%	27%
1946	20 520	13 392	7 129	3 952	65%	35%	19%
1954	18 824	12 382	6 442	3 984	66%	34%	21%
1962	18 956	13 784	5 174	3 012	73%	27%	16%
1968	20 002	15 388	4 613	2 460	77%	23%	12%
1975	20 940	17 352	3 589	1 652	83%	17%	8%
1982	21 472	17 954	3 517	1 466	84%	16%	7%
1990	22 270	19 204	3 065	1 005	86%	14%	5%
1998	23 870	21 579	2 291	576	90%	10%	2%
2006	26 130	23 794	2 336	478	91%	9%	2%
2013	26 507	23 821	2 686	420	90%	10%	2%

Source: 1901-1990: census; 1998-2013: Insee, labor force surveys

Table 11: Total and urban population (1856-2007)

	All population	Urban popula- tion	Share of urban pop.
1856	35,588	9,719	27.3%
1861	37,386	10,790	28.6%
1872	36,102	11,224	31.1%
1876	36,906	11,971	32.4%
1881	36,672	13,097	34.8%
1886	38,219	13,767	36.0%
1891	38,343	14,311	37.3%
1896	38,518	15,026	39.0%
1901	38,962	15,957	41.0%
1906	39,252	16,537	42.1%
1911	39,602	17,509	44.2%
1921	39,210	18,205	46.4%
1936	41,813	22,120	52.9%
1954	42,705	24,456	57.3%
1962	46,425	39,370	63.2%
1968	49,712	34,834	70.1%
1975	52,592	38,351	72.9%
1982	54,335	39,861	73.4%
1990	56,615	41,898	74.0%
1999	58,518	44,197	75.5%
2007	61,795	47,883	77.5%

Source: census

C.2 Simulations

C.2.1 Administrative data (1855-1972)

The information about the existence of prenuptial agreements is available from 1855 to 1972, the goal here is to estimate the annual distribution of matrimonial property regimes. We note M_t the number of marriages in France in year t and C_t the number of marriage contracts. We note $c_t = \frac{C_t}{M_t}$ the proportion of marriages for which a marriage contract has been established. Appendix C.1.1 indicates that c_t is observed during the periods 1855-1931, 1938-1939, 1941-1958 and 1962-1972. Moreover, we note M_{dt} and C_{dt} the number of marriages and marriage contracts at the regional level (*départements*). c_{dt} is the share of marriage contracts at the regional level. c_{dt} is observed in 1856-1869, 1871, 1876, 1881, 1886, 1891, 1896, 1898, 1901, 1906, 1910, 1912, 1930, 1946, 1949, 1962 and 1966-1972.

There are K types of matrimonial regimes, $K+1$ if we include the default regime⁴⁴. C_t^k is the number of matrimonial regimes of type k at the national level and C_{dt}^k at the regional level, respectively. As a consequence:

$$C_{dt} = \sum_{k=1}^K C_{dt}^k \text{ et } M_{dt} = \sum_{k=1}^{K+1} C_{dt}^k$$

$c_{dt}^k = \frac{C_{dt}^k}{M_{dt}}$ is the proportion of marriages for which the matrimonial property regime k was chosen, at the regional level d in year t . Moreover, we note $\alpha_{dt}^k = \frac{C_{dt}^k}{C_{dt}}$ the share of matrimonial regimes k among all marriage contracts, at the regional level d in year t . α_{dt}^k , C_{dt}^k and c_{dt}^k are observed in 1898 and 1962. The goal is to estimate the evolution of c_t^k . To do so, we have to make two important assumptions.

Assumption 1: α_{dt}^k is linear in t , $\forall d, k$.

This assumption allows us to write $\alpha_{dt}^k = b_d^k + a_d^k \times t$. b_d^k and a_d^k can be estimated thanks to the observation of C_{dt}^k in 1898 and in 1962. By interpolating between 1898 and 1962 and by extrapolating for the periods 1855-1898 and 1962-1965, we can estimate $\widehat{\alpha_{dt}^k}$ for all t ⁴⁵. We

⁴⁴It is actually possible to establish a prenuptial agreement and to keep the default regime. However, this practice only became frequent after 1966 and was rare before. That is why we consider all prenuptial agreements as modifications of matrimonial property. By doing so we probably underestimate the share of prenuptial agreements.

⁴⁵The French territory has been modified during the period 1855-2010. First of all, the départements *Alpes Maritimes*, *Savoie* and *Haute Savoie* were annexed to France in 1860 (*Treaty of Turin, 1860*). For these regions, we only extrapolate until 1860. Moreover, the départements *Haut Rhin* and *Bas Rhin*, as well as a large part of *Moselle* and a small part of *Meurthe* were annexed to Germany between 1870 and 1918. The remaining parts of *Meurthe* and *Moselle* were then merged into one département, *Meurthe-et-Moselle*, until today. When France got back these regions, the *Haut Rhin* and *Bas Rhin* départements became again the départements they were before 1870. However, the parts of *Meurthe* and *Moselle* that were given back to France had been merged into one département called *Moselle*. To maintain a geographical stability over the period, we consider all the territories of *Meurthe* and *Moselle* as a whole geographical entity. However, we do not have data about these regions in 1898.

know C_{dt} for the years: 1856-1869, 1871, 1876, 1881, 1886, 1891, 1896, 1898, 1901, 1906, 1910, 1912, 1930, 1946, 1949, 1962 and 1966-1972. We estimate the missing years by interpolation. As a consequence, we can build: $\widehat{C}_{dt}^k = \widehat{\alpha}_{dt}^k \times C_{dt}$. Based on these estimates at the local level, we aggregate of each type of matrimonial regime at the national level: $\widehat{C}_t^k = \sum_d \widehat{C}_{dt}^k$. This gives us an estimates of the proportion of each type of matrimonial regime at the national level: $\widehat{c}_t^k = \frac{\widehat{C}_t^k}{\widehat{M}_t}$. This means that \widehat{C}_t^k is not necessary linear in t . In the end, we easily obtain an estimate of \widehat{c}_t car : $\widehat{c}_t = \sum_{k=1}^K \widehat{c}_t^k$.

Assumption 2 $\frac{\widehat{c}_t^k}{\widehat{c}_t}$ is a good proxy of $\frac{c_t^k}{c_t}$

According to this assumption and by using the observations of c_t (for the periods 1855-1931, 1938-1939, 1941-1958 and 1962-1972), we can adjust the estimate \widehat{c}_t^k :

$$\widehat{c}_t^k = c_t \times \frac{\widehat{c}_t^k}{\widehat{c}_t}$$

\widehat{c}_t^k is our estimate of the proportion of each type of matrimonial regime among marriages in France.

Table 12: Simulations of marriage contracts and matrimonial regimes (1855-1972)

Year	Marriage contracts (all matrimonial reg.)	Separate property	Dowry	Community of acquisitions
1855	0.365			
1856	0.401	0.000	0.068	0.333
1857	0.386	0.000	0.061	0.325
1858	0.393	0.000	0.066	0.327
1859	0.404	0.000	0.067	0.337
1860	0.415	0.000	0.067	0.349
1861	0.405	0.000	0.063	0.342
1862	0.406	0.000	0.064	0.342
1863	0.411	0.000	0.064	0.346
1864	0.412	0.000	0.066	0.346
1865	0.415	0.000	0.065	0.350
1866	0.409	0.000	0.063	0.346
1867	0.406	0.000	0.062	0.344
1868	0.421	0.000	0.063	0.358
1869	0.412	0.001	0.061	0.350

Because there were few separate property regimes among marriage contracts at this period, we assume that we would have observed only community regimes. These assumptions are necessary to extrapolate the proportions of each type of matrimonial regimes before 1970.

Year	Marriage contracts (all matrimonial reg.)	Separate property	Dowry	Community of acquisitions
1870	0.385	0.000	0.062	0.323
1871	0.406	0.000	0.070	0.337
1872	0.417	0.000	0.069	0.347
1873	0.414	0.001	0.066	0.347
1874	0.405	0.001	0.062	0.342
1875	0.396	0.002	0.058	0.336
1876	0.401	0.002	0.056	0.343
1877	0.396	0.002	0.054	0.339
1878	0.394	0.003	0.053	0.338
1879	0.378	0.003	0.050	0.325
1880	0.393	0.003	0.051	0.339
1881	0.382	0.004	0.048	0.330
1882	0.379	0.004	0.048	0.327
1883	0.381	0.004	0.048	0.329
1884	0.371	0.005	0.046	0.320
1885	0.385	0.005	0.047	0.332
1886	0.370	0.005	0.045	0.319
1887	0.358	0.006	0.043	0.309
1888	0.337	0.006	0.040	0.292
1889	0.336	0.006	0.039	0.291
1890	0.319	0.006	0.036	0.276
1891	0.322	0.007	0.036	0.279
1892	0.316	0.007	0.035	0.274
1893	0.309	0.008	0.034	0.268
1894	0.305	0.008	0.033	0.264
1895	0.293	0.008	0.031	0.254
1896	0.290	0.009	0.031	0.250
1897	0.291	0.007	0.033	0.251
1898	0.281	0.005	0.034	0.242
1899	0.276	0.008	0.031	0.237
1900	0.264	0.010	0.028	0.226
1901	0.267	0.014	0.026	0.227
1902	0.263	0.016	0.025	0.223
1903	0.261	0.017	0.024	0.220
1904	0.261	0.019	0.023	0.219
1905	0.247	0.020	0.021	0.206
1906	0.242	0.022	0.020	0.200
1907	0.236	0.023	0.019	0.194
1908	0.235	0.024	0.019	0.192
1909	0.231	0.025	0.018	0.188

Year	Marriage contracts (all matrimonial reg.)	Separate property	Dowry	Community of acquisitions
1910	0.228	0.027	0.017	0.184
1911	0.227	0.028	0.017	0.183
1912	0.222	0.028	0.016	0.178
1913	0.219	0.029	0.016	0.175
1914	0.206	0.028	0.015	0.164
1915	0.096	0.014	0.007	0.076
1916	0.113	0.017	0.008	0.089
1917	0.121	0.018	0.008	0.095
1918	0.138	0.022	0.009	0.108
1919	0.206	0.033	0.013	0.159
1920	0.214	0.036	0.013	0.164
1921	0.208	0.036	0.013	0.160
1922	0.208	0.037	0.013	0.158
1923	0.202	0.037	0.012	0.153
1924	0.196	0.037	0.011	0.148
1925	0.194	0.038	0.011	0.145
1926	0.198	0.040	0.011	0.147
1927	0.198	0.041	0.011	0.146
1928	0.198	0.042	0.010	0.146
1929	0.200	0.044	0.010	0.146
1930	0.193	0.043	0.010	0.140
1931	0.171	0.039	0.008	0.123
1932	0.171	0.040	0.008	0.123
1933	0.172	0.042	0.008	0.122
1934	0.172	0.043	0.008	0.122
1935	0.173	0.044	0.008	0.121
1936	0.173	0.045	0.007	0.120
1937	0.173	0.047	0.007	0.120
1938	0.174	0.048	0.007	0.119
1939	0.141	0.040	0.005	0.096
1940	0.147	0.042	0.005	0.099
1941	0.152	0.045	0.005	0.102
1942	0.168	0.051	0.006	0.111
1943	0.185	0.057	0.006	0.121
1944	0.188	0.060	0.006	0.123
1945	0.184	0.060	0.005	0.119
1946	0.194	0.065	0.005	0.124
1947	0.184	0.063	0.005	0.116
1948	0.177	0.062	0.004	0.111
1949	0.175	0.062	0.004	0.108

Year	Marriage contracts (all matrimonial reg.)	Separate property	Dowry	Community of acquisitions
1950	0.205	0.075	0.005	0.126
1951	0.203	0.076	0.004	0.123
1952	0.205	0.078	0.004	0.123
1953	0.202	0.079	0.004	0.119
1954	0.203	0.081	0.004	0.118
1955	0.196	0.080	0.003	0.113
1956	0.194	0.081	0.003	0.110
1957	0.195	0.083	0.003	0.109
1958	0.200	0.087	0.002	0.110
1959	0.193	0.086	0.002	0.105
1960	0.187	0.085	0.002	0.100
1961	0.180	0.083	0.002	0.095
1962	0.173	0.082	0.001	0.090
1963	0.158	0.076	0.001	0.081
1964	0.209	0.102	0.001	0.106
1965	0.182	0.091	0.001	0.091
1966	0.155	0.079		
1967	0.150	0.077		
1968	0.138	0.071		
1969	0.124	0.064		
1970	0.123	0.065		
1971	0.122	0.065		
1972	0.119	0.065		

C.2.2 Surveys (1972-2010)

Data and information about marriage contracts From 1972, we rely on survey data. Specifically, we use two types of survey: the French wealth survey *Patrimoine* (1992, 1998, 2004 and 2010) and the *Emploi du Temps* survey (2010). Both surveys provide information about the matrimonial status of the couples (cohabitation, civil union or marriage) and the matrimonial property regime in case of civil union or marriage (default, separate property, full community or other regimes). However, the reliability of this information differs. The way the information relative to the matrimonial property regime is provided changes from a wave of the wealth survey to the other. In 1992 and 2004, there are two questions: 1) “Has a marriage contract been established?” then 2) “What matrimonial regime did you choose?”. In case of negative answer to the first question, the default regime (community of acquisitions) is assigned to the couple. In case of positive answer to the first question, the respondents have four options:

default regime, separate property, full community or other regime. In 1998 and 2010, the first question disappears and the question about the type of matrimonial regime is asked to all married couples. In the *Emploi du Temps* survey, there are two questions like in the 1992 and 2004 *Patrimoine* survey.

This change modifies the results. Table 13 indicates that the proportion of couples opting for the full community regime is around 2% in 1992 and 2004 but reaches 15% in 1998 and 2010. The category “other” is also affected. We assume that this variation is due to the way the questions about matrimonial regimes are asked. Indeed, most couples have limited knowledge of matrimonial regime and confound community of acquisitions and full community⁴⁶.

We note c_i a dummy equal to 1 if the couple i establishes a marriage contract⁴⁷ and r_i is the type of matrimonial regime chosen. r_i equals 0 for the default regime, 1 for the full community and 2 for the separate property regime. We note \tilde{c}_i a dummy equal to 1 if the spouses believes they has established a marriage contract and \tilde{r}_i the matrimonial regime they think they choose. The goal is to estimate: $P(c_i = 1)$ and $P(r_i = k)$ for $k \in \{0, 1, 2\}$.

Assumption 3 Let assume that (i) $\tilde{c}_i = c_i$; (ii) $P(r_i = k|c_i = 1) = P(\tilde{r}_i = k|c_i = 1)$; (iii) $P(r_i = 0|c_i = 0) = 1$; (iv) $P(\tilde{r}_i = 2|r_i = 0) = 0$

Assumption 3-(i) indicates that couples are fully aware of the fact that they chose a matrimonial regime different from the legal regime. Indeed, signing a contract requires going to the notary. Moreover, Assumption 3-(ii) states that if couples signed a contract, they remember what type of matrimonial regime they chose. Assumption 3-(iii) goes with Assumption 3-(i), saying that if couples remember that they did not sign any contract, meaning that they are married under the default option. Eventually, Assumption 3-(iv) indicates that couples tend to confuse the different community contracts, so they are not likely to think they are married under a separate property regime while they are not.

Proposition 1 Under Assumption 3, $P(r_i = 2)$ is identified in all the different surveys. However, $P(r_i = k)$ for $k \in \{0, 1\}$ is not identified in 1998 and in 2010.

To circumvent the failure of identification, we are going to assume that $P(r_i = 1|T)$, where T is the date of marriage, does not change in time. Therefore, as we can observe $P(r_i = k|T)$ in 1992 and in 2004, we can approximate $P(r_i = 1|T)$ in 1998 and in 2010. This assumption basically means that the separation rate (by death or divorce) is not higher or lower for k

⁴⁶For an old but still interesting survey about this topic, see Terré (1965).

⁴⁷From now on, establishing a marriage contract implies to opt for another matrimonial regime than the default regime.

matrimonial regime type than other types of matrimonial regime. So we randomly assign a “full community or other” regime type to a certain proportion of the population declaring being married with a full community regime so that the proportion of full community regime among couples married in T is now the estimated $\hat{P}(r_i = 1|T)$. Table 13 presents the corrected distribution of matrimonial regimes.

Table 13: Distribution of matrimonial regimes among married couples

	1992	1998	2004	2010
Observed distribution				
Default regime	92.1%	76.3%	89.6%	71.3%
Full community and others	1.8%	16.4%	2.6%	18.7%
Separate property	6.1%	7.3%	8.8%	10%
Corrected distribution				
Default regime	92.1%	90.8%	89.6%	87.3%
Full community and others	1.8%	1.9%	2.6%	2.7%
Separate property	6.1%	7.3%	8.8%	10%

Source: *Patrimoine* surveys 1992-2010

Estimating the year of marriage As we aim at reconstructing the flow of marital contracts, the year of marriage is a key information. Unfortunately, it is not observed in the wealth survey, but it is observed in the *Emploi du Temps* survey 2010. For all data, we observe the year the couple was formed. However, the year of marriage, in addition to the year the couple was formed, is observed in the Family Survey (*Enquête Famille*) conducted by the INSEE in 1990 and 1999. They are conducted at the same time as censuses: a large subsample (about 300,000 women) is asked detailed questions about her family history.

We use the information from the Family surveys and the *Emploi du Temps* survey to estimate the year of marriage in the wealth Survey. In that purpose, we study the duration, in months, between the moment the couple was formed and the year of marriage. In the Family Surveys, the months and years of the formation and the marriage are known. Months are unknown in the *Emploi du Temps* surveys: we randomly assign a month of formation and a month of marriage using a uniform distribution⁴⁸. To avoid small sample sizes, we pool the years of the formation of couples into 6 years brackets. We also pool women’s years of birth by decades. Then, we assume that the duration can be written as:

$$d_i^T = \alpha_0^T + \beta_a^T + \gamma_c^T + \varepsilon_i^T \quad (1)$$

⁴⁸Using Family Surveys, we can test if a uniform distribution suits well the observed distributions of months. A uniform distribution reproduces the distribution of months for the formation of couples, but not for the marriage of couples because of the seasonality of marriage. However, the use of another distribution that would reproduce the seasonality of marriage does not modify the results.

where d_i^T is the duration in months between the marriage and the formation of the couple i , given that it is married at date T . c stands for the period the couple was formed (6 years brackets), a is the decades the female partner was born and ε_i^T is the error terms. We assume the ε_i^T are uncorrelated. The model is estimated by OLS, on couples married at time T , for each value of $T \in \{1992, 1998, 2004, 2010\}$. We can then construct \hat{d}^T for couples observed in the Wealth Survey conducted in T . This method of selection of the subsample allows us to reproduce the censored nature of data. Table 14 gives the estimation of the coefficients for equation 1.

Table 14: Estimation of the duration (in months) between the formation of the couples and the marriage

	(1)		(2)		(3)		(4)	
	T=1992		T=1998		T=2004		T=2010	
Year of formation of the couple								
1951-1955	-0.119	(0.201)	0.000119	(0.248)	0.0107	(0.271)	0.0217	(0.295)
1956-1960	-0.229	(0.220)	-0.00225	(0.271)	0.0146	(0.296)	0.0506	(0.322)
1961-1965	1.415***	(0.228)	1.854***	(0.281)	1.876***	(0.307)	1.906***	(0.334)
1966-1970	2.358***	(0.242)	3.249***	(0.298)	3.164***	(0.325)	3.145***	(0.354)
1971-1975	5.078***	(0.246)	6.358***	(0.302)	6.555***	(0.330)	6.359***	(0.359)
1976-1980	8.403***	(0.253)	9.349***	(0.311)	9.846***	(0.340)	9.903***	(0.370)
1981-1986	11.55***	(0.261)	14.68***	(0.319)	15.79***	(0.348)	16.50***	(0.378)
1987-1992	8.289***	(0.273)	16.69***	(0.329)	19.07***	(0.358)	20.11***	(0.389)
1993-1998	2.044***	(0.425)	16.97***	(0.359)	21.81***	(0.383)	24.30***	(0.414)
1999-2004	0	(0)	4.567***	(0.483)	5.979***	(0.434)	11.03***	(0.457)
≥ 2005	0	(0)	0	(0)	0	(0)	1.145*	(0.688)
Decade of female birth								
1900-1909	-64.85***	(11.10)	-65.06***	(13.73)	-65.45***	(14.99)	-65.48***	(16.31)
1910-1919	-78.26***	(10.94)	-77.53***	(13.53)	-77.73***	(14.77)	-77.73***	(16.08)
1920-1929	-79.99***	(10.93)	-79.76***	(13.52)	-79.93***	(14.77)	-79.95***	(16.07)
1930-1939	-80.80***	(10.93)	-80.70***	(13.52)	-80.90***	(14.77)	-80.93***	(16.07)
1940-1949	-82.82***	(10.93)	-82.98***	(13.52)	-83.02***	(14.77)	-83.01***	(16.07)
1950-1959	-83.85***	(10.93)	-83.63***	(13.52)	-83.97***	(14.77)	-83.62***	(16.07)
1960-1969	-80.58***	(10.93)	-80.76***	(13.52)	-80.73***	(14.77)	-80.53***	(16.07)
1970-1979	-82.96***	(10.94)	-77.21***	(13.52)	-73.73***	(14.77)	-71.40***	(16.07)
1980-1989	-89.23***	(15.05)	-99.12***	(14.02)	-74.74***	(14.78)	-60.11***	(16.08)
1990 +	0	(0)	0	(0)	0	(0)	-62.64***	(16.09)
Region								
Bassin Parisien	0.0418	(0.111)	-0.143	(0.131)	-0.197	(0.140)	0.971***	(0.151)
Nord	-2.759***	(0.147)	-3.962***	(0.173)	-4.134***	(0.185)	-2.675***	(0.199)
Est	-2.020***	(0.134)	-2.245***	(0.158)	-2.353***	(0.169)	-1.425***	(0.183)
Ouest	-1.108***	(0.118)	-1.028***	(0.139)	-1.221***	(0.149)	-0.172	(0.161)
Sud-Ouest	-0.793***	(0.130)	-0.625***	(0.154)	-0.533***	(0.164)	-0.0545	(0.177)
Centre Est	-0.574***	(0.124)	-0.0691	(0.146)	-0.0778	(0.156)	0.706***	(0.167)
Méditerranée	0.414***	(0.125)	0.743***	(0.148)	0.368**	(0.158)	1.029***	(0.170)
Constante	83.72***	(10.93)	83.44***	(13.52)	83.72***	(14.77)	82.92***	(16.07)
N	368968		394548		400027		400302	
R^2	0.041		0.070		0.093		0.107	

Standard errors in parentheses

* $p < 0.1$, ** $p < 0.05$, *** $p < 0.01$

Reweighting *Patrimoine* survey 2010 and *Emploi du Temps* survey 2010: In 2010, we observe couples from two different surveys. The *Patrimoine* survey 2010 is supposed to be representative of the population, while the subsample of couples of the “Decision within couples” section of the *Emploi du Temps* survey is also representative of the subpopulation it represents. As a consequence, we need to reweight observations for both surveys to make the

combination of the two samples representative of the population in 2010. For that purpose, we select households in the *Patrimoine* survey 2010 who correspond to selection criteria of the subsample “Decision Within Couples” (hereafter named “Eligibles DWC”)⁴⁹. Therefore, they are representative of the same sub population. Then we test for the compatibility of information about marriage contracts they provide. For that, we check if the proportion of contracts and, more specifically, the proportion of separate property regime are the same in both surveys, for each marriage period, after controlling for age, the decade of birth and the region. Table 15 indicates the results. A significant coefficient means that the Time Use Survey shows a significantly different proportion of marriage contracts (or separate property regime) compare to the *Patrimoine* survey. The estimates indicate that the two datasets provide comparable information. Therefore, they can be used together, after reweighting the observations. Let N_{TUS}^{DWC} be the sum of weights in the DWC subsample of the *Emploi du Temps* and N_{WS}^{DWC} of similar couples observed in the *Patrimoine* survey. We multiply each sample weight by $N_{WS}^{DWC} / (N_{TUS}^{DWC} + N_{WS}^{DWC})$ so that the sum of new weights is still equal to N_{WS}^{DWC} .

Table 15: Test for the compatibility of information in *Patrimoine* survey and the *Emploi du Temps* survey

Marriage in...	1966-1970	1971-1975	1976-1980	1980-1986	1987-1992	1993-1998	1999-2004	≥ 2005
Contract	0.0486 (0.0497)	0.0593* (0.0316)	0.0348 (0.0261)	0.0657** (0.0304)	0.0109 (0.0320)	0.0813** (0.0319)	0.0566** (0.0274)	0.0557 (0.0413)
Separate Property	0.00747 (0.0355)	0.0517** (0.0230)	0.0161 (0.0196)	0.0196 (0.0256)	-0.00691 (0.0280)	0.0133 (0.0290)	0.0228 (0.0251)	0.0265 (0.0381)
<i>N</i>	127	424	583	687	839	717	832	503
Controls	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y

Standard errors in parentheses

* $p < 0.1$, ** $p < 0.05$, *** $p < 0.01$

Source: *Patrimoine* surveys 1992-2010, INSEE.

Lecture: Test for the compatibility of *Patrimoine* and the *Emploi du Temps* surveys. OLS regression of the dummy “contract” or “separation of goods” on a dummy “*Emploi du Temps* survey”, in the subsamples of couples, with at least one active member. Controls include: region dummies, decade of birth (female partner), age (female partner)

Estimating the series of marriage contracts since 1950 The goal is to reconstruct the proportion of marriage among which couples established a marital contract, for each year since 1950, from couples observed in 1992, 1998, 2004 and 2010. Even though we need these estimates only from the 1970s, it is interesting to implement this simulation from the 1950s to compare estimates to administrative data. Let α_{ct} be the proportion of contracts S among marriages contracted in c and observed in t . Let p_{ct}^k the proportion of dissolution of type k marriages contracted in c between $t - 1$ and t . k takes the values R (default regime) and S (separate property regime) but the following result can easily be extended to more than two contracts.

Proposition 2 $\alpha_{ct} = \alpha_{ct-1} \Leftrightarrow p_{ct}^R = p_{ct}^S$

⁴⁹The subsample is composed of couples (with and without children) with at least one active adults (it represents 60% of the sample of the *Patrimoine* survey 2010)

The proof is straightforward and it is given *infra*. Proposition 2 says that we can recover the proportion of marriage contracts made in c from couples observed in t provided the separation rate has been the same among different marriage types. This assumption can be tested on the recent period. For that, we estimate equation 2 where y_c indicates if the married couple in c has signed a marriage contract, and α_c^T is a dummy indicating if the couple is observed in T . We test the stability of coefficients $\alpha_t^{1998} = \alpha_t^{2004} = \alpha_t^{2010} = 0$.

$$y_c = \alpha_c + \alpha_t^{1998} + \alpha_c^{2004} + \alpha_c^{2010} + \beta_c X + \varepsilon_t \quad (2)$$

Results of the tests are given in table 16. The joint stability is most of time not rejected, especially for older cohorts, for which this assumption is crucial. Indeed, we almost directly measure the proportion for couples who just married at the time of the survey, but not for couples who got married in the 1950s, 1960s, 1970s and 1980s. Notice that the tests are not rejected when controls are not accounted for. This means that the impact of controls on separation might change over time, as a consequence it is better not to take them into account in the reconstruction of the proportion. The test of stability of coefficients gives support to the crucial assumption of stability of separation rates but also gives some insights on the way to estimate the proportion of marital contracts: when the joint stability is not rejected, all waves can be pooled together to obtain more precise estimates. But if the test of stability of coefficient is rejected, it is better to take those differences into account by controlling for the date the couple is observed. Results are presented in table 17. It shows that we tend to find a lower proportion of separation of assets than the proportion we expected given the results on the series 1855-1972.

Demonstration of Proposition 2: Let m_{ct} the number of marriages made in c and observed in t . There are two types of contracts: S and R . m_{ct}^S is the number of marriages with a contract S , made in c and observed in t , and m_{ct}^R for marriages of type R . α_{ct}^S is the proportion of contracts S among contracts made in c and observed in t . Couples have a probability of separation (death or divorce) p_{ct}^S (resp. p_{ct}^R) between $t-1$ and t , that depend on the contract S (resp. R) and c . Therefore $m_{ct}^S = (1 - p_{ct}^S)m_{ct-1}^S$.

Moreover, $m_{c,t}^S = \alpha_c m_{ct}$ and $m_{ct-1}^S = \alpha_{ct-1} m_{ct-1}$. So, $(1 - p_{ct}^S)\alpha_{ct-1} m_{ct-1} = \alpha_{ct} m_{ct}$ and $(1 - p_{ct}^R)(1 - \alpha_{ct-1})m_{ct-1} = (1 - \alpha_{ct})m_{ct}$.

$$(1 - p_{ct}^S) \frac{\alpha_{ct-1}}{\alpha_{ct}} = (1 - p_{ct}^R) \frac{(1 - \alpha_{ct-1})}{(1 - \alpha_{ct})}$$

So, $\alpha_{ct} = \alpha_{ct-1} \Rightarrow p_{ct}^S = p_{ct}^R$

Table 16: Stability of the proportion of marriage contracts

	separation of assets		contracts (all types)	
≤ 1950	0.6494	0.6797	0.8311	0.8369
1951-1955	0.0102	0.0009	0.0304	0.3385
1956-1960	0.8607	0.1330	0.9605	0.6015
1961-1965	0.6064	0.2430	0.9292	0.0136
1966-1970	0.1381	0.1091	0.3969	0.0124
1971-1975	0.2123	0.0268	0.1632	0.0119
1976-1980	0.7670	0.3531	0.1293	0.0859
1981-1986	0.5223	0.2612	0.4294	0.0144
1987-1992	0.0000	0.3251	0.0000	0.3293
1993-1998	0.1426	0.0448	0.0013	0.0020
1999-2004	0.8005	0.5988	0.5261	0.1570
≥ 2005	0.002	0.058	0.0000	0.018
Controls	N	Y	N	Y

Controls include: region dummies and decades of birth dummies

Data: *Patrimoine* surveys 1992-2010 and *Emploi du Temps* survey 2010

F-statistics of equality of coefficients

Table 17: Proportion of marriage contracts

	Contracts (all types)	Separate property
≤ 1950	0.0425	0.0238
1951-1955	0.0561	0.0336
1956-1960	0.0639	0.0397
1961-1965	0.0724	0.0460
1966-1970	0.0751	0.0536
1971-1975	0.0779	0.0589
1976-1980	0.0918	0.0693
1981-1985	0.1103	0.0861
1986-1990	0.1509	0.1256
1991-1995	0.1448	0.1241
1996-2000	0.1847	0.1515
2001-2005	0.1738	0.1554
≥ 2005	0.1869	0.1605

Data: *Patrimoine* survey 1992-2010 and *Emploi du temps* survey 2010

Which gives

$$\alpha_{ct-1} = \frac{(1 - p_{ct}^R)\alpha_{ct}}{(1 - p_{ct}^S) + (p_{ct}^S - p_{ct}^R)\alpha_{ct}}$$

For this, we have: $p_{ct}^S = p_{ct}^R \Rightarrow \alpha_{ct} = \alpha_{ct-1}$, and the equivalence.