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Attitudes towards unmarried cohabitation in Europe

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Motivation

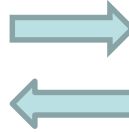
- Starting point:
 - transformation of partnership behavior as a key demographic change
 - huge differences in the diffusion of unmarried cohabitation, its meanings, in the level of its acceptance even within Europe
- Our focus:
 - the driving forces behind cross- country differences in the **attitude** towards cohabitation
- Aim:
 - to offer explanations for attitudinal differences among European countries from a **macro-level** perspective



Country-level hypotheses

1. *Institutionalization* (Cherlin 1992, Piroux 2006, Kalmijn 2007, Sobotka & Toulemon 2008)

Higher prevalence
of cohabitation



More permissive attitude
towards cohabitation

2. *Insecurity* (Tiziano & Blossfeld 2002, Mills & Blossfeld 2005, Friedman et al. 1994)

Higher level of perceived
job insecurity



a. Flexible partnership forms
are more acceptable **OR**
b. Reduction of uncertainty

3. *Secularization* (SDT, Thornton 1985, Thornton et al. 2007, Inglehart & Baker 2000)

Higher level of
secularization
(lower religiosity)



Unmarried unions are more
accepted



Data and methods 1

- European Social Survey, 3rd round (2006)

$N_1 = 41,573$; $N_2 = 25$



- *Dependent variable:*

”How much do you approve or disapprove if a woman/man lives with a partner without being married to her/him?”

1 – strongly disapprove → 5 – strongly approve

- *Individual-level independent variables:*

- control variables: gender, split ballot, age, place of residence
- social status: education, subjective household income
- partnership experience: cohabitation, marriage, divorce
- labour market uncertainty: unemployment experience in the last 5 years, job loss worry
- ideational factors: religiosity, position on a left-right political scale



Data and methods 2

- *Country-level independent variables:*

Hypothesis	Variable name	Variable description
1. Institutionalization	COHAB	Percentage of ever cohabited among aged 25-39 ever in union
2. Perceived job insecurity	INSEC	Percentage of respondents in paid work who think they are (very) likely to become unemployed in one year
3. Secularization	RELIG	Percentage identifying with any religion and/or denomination – dummy for the highest tercile

Source: ESS 2006

- Multilevel regression models, random slope, ML estimation
- Direct and indirect effects of macro-level factors on macro-level outcomes

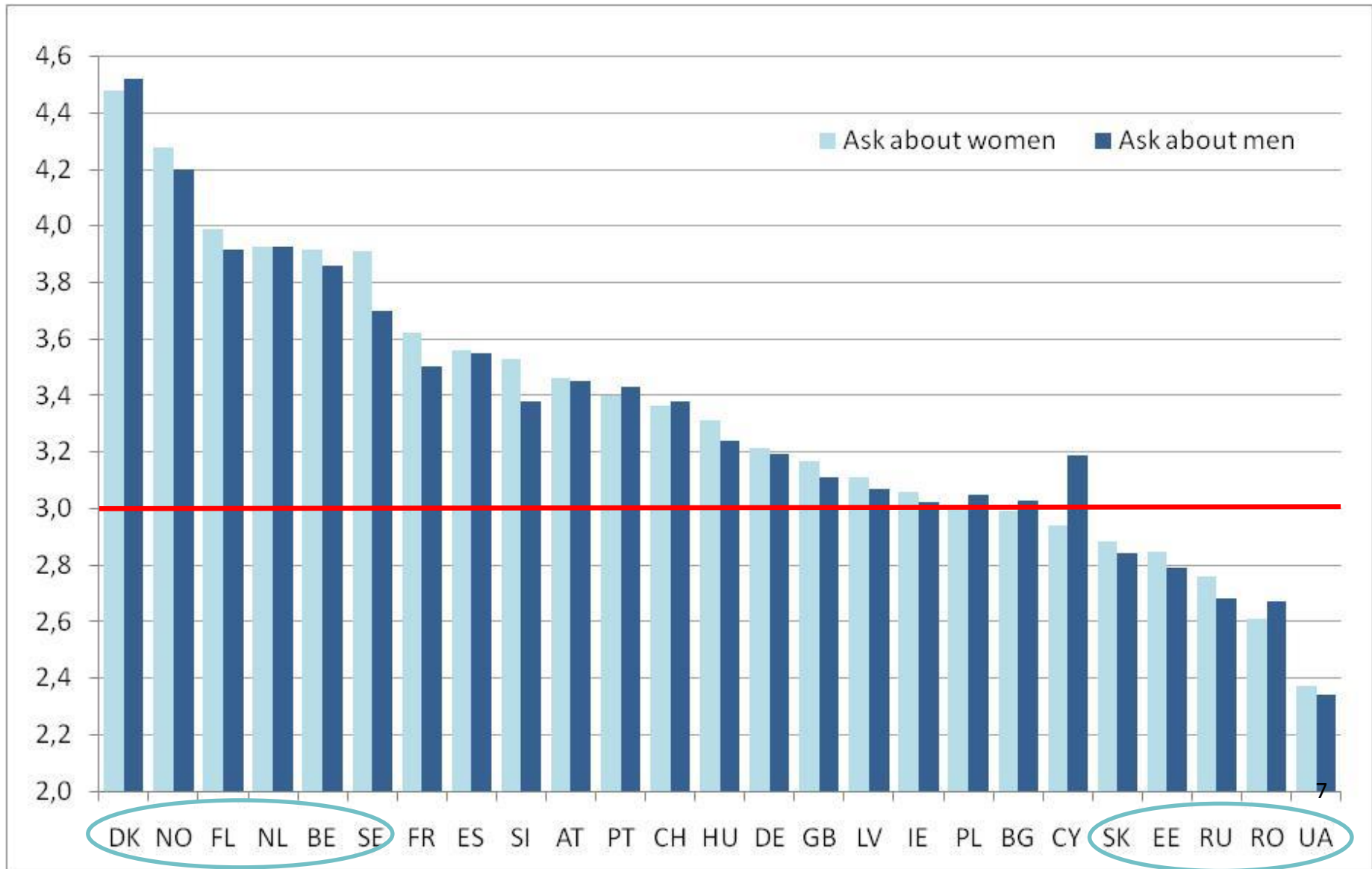


Research questions

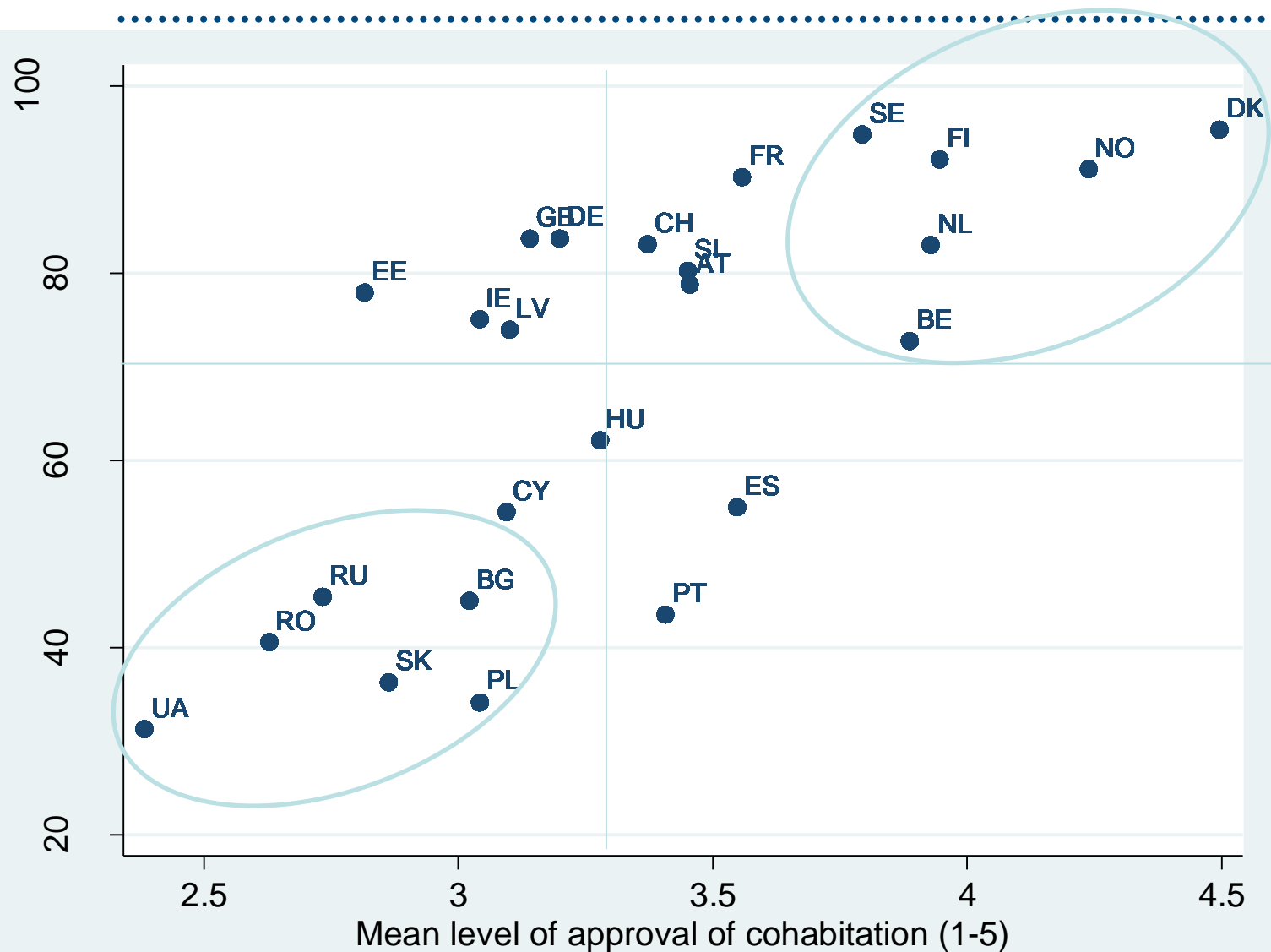
- How great is the variation in the approval of unmarried cohabitation from country to country?
- Can clear links be established at the macro level between attitude towards cohabitation and the level of institutionalization of cohabitation, the level of perceived job insecurity and secularization?
- To what extent are these relationships be attributed to differences in the composition and life course experiences of national populations?
- To what extent are these country-level relationships are modified by personal characteristics?



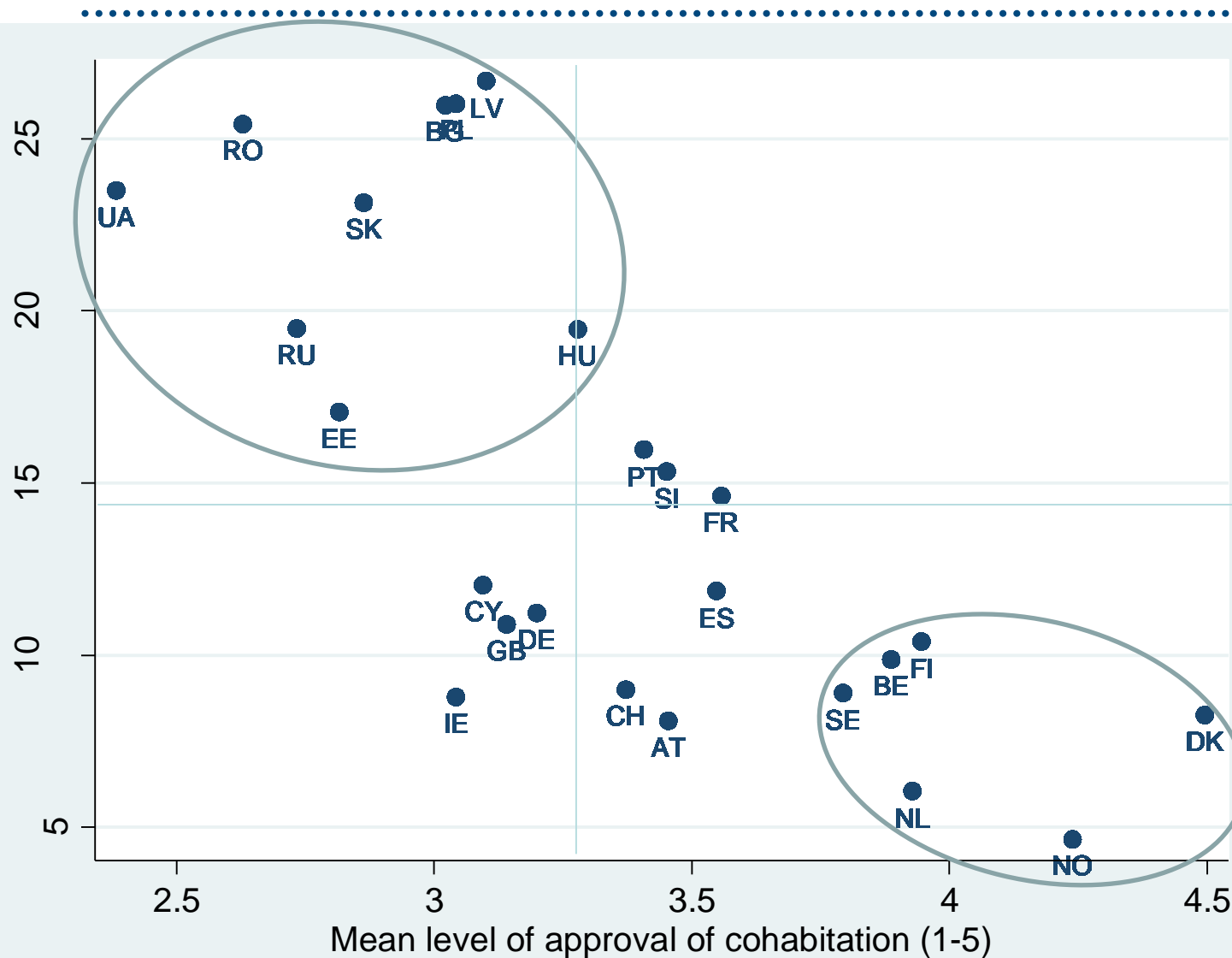
Mean approval of unmarried cohabitation (scale: 1-5)



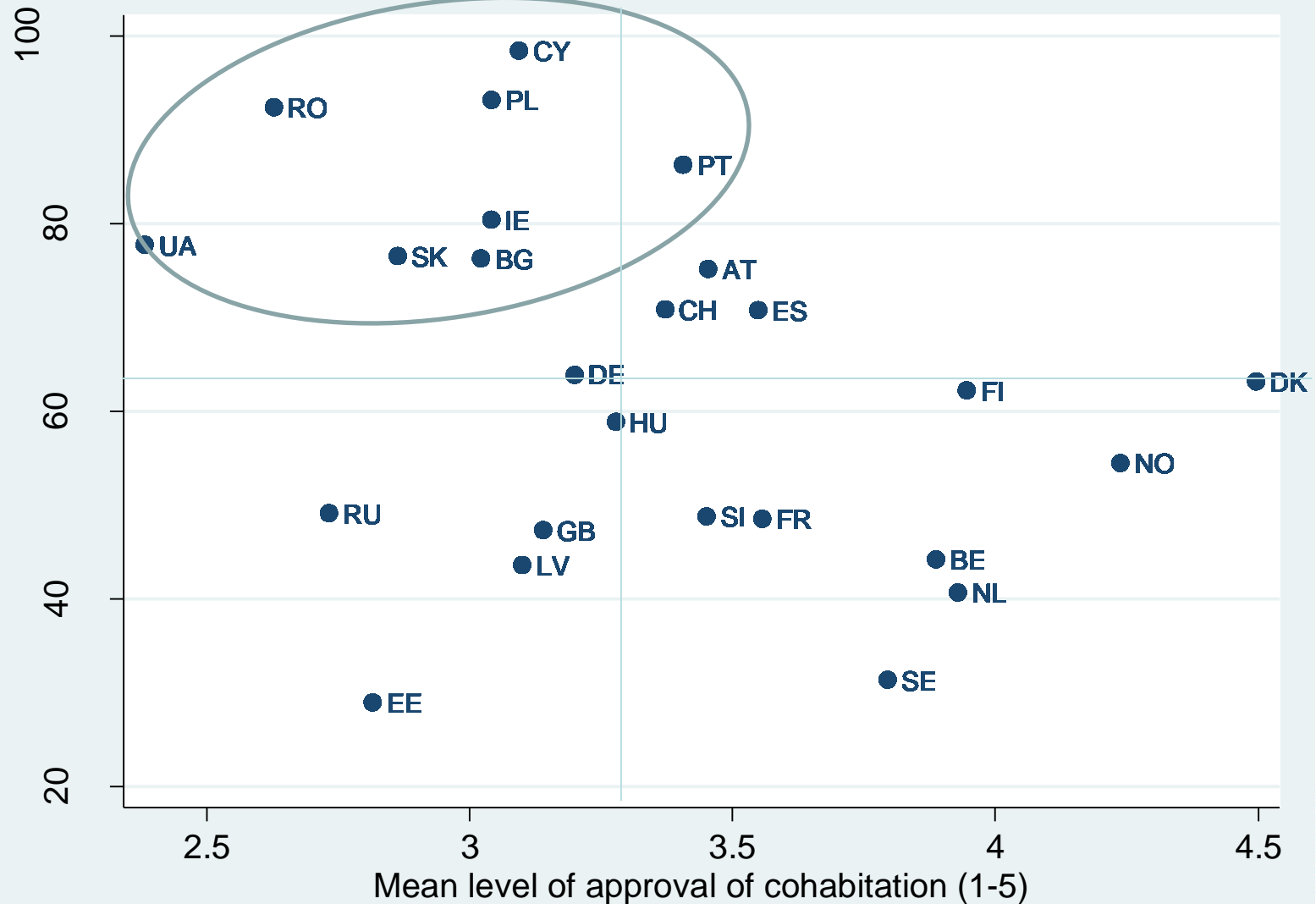
Relationship between approval of cohabitation and the prevalence of cohabitation



Relationship between approval of cohabitation and perceived job insecurity



Relationship between approval of cohabitation and level of religiosity



Country-level effects

	COHAB	INSEC	RELIG	Cross- country variance	Within- country variance	Log likelihood
Direct effects						
0. Null modell				0,248	0,919	-57299
1. Institutionalization	0,017 ***			0,121	0,919	-57291
2. Insecurity		-0,05 ***		0,116	0,919	-57290
3. Secularization			-0,544 **	0,180	0,919	-57295
4. All together	0,010 †	-0,03 *	0,001	0,099	0,919	-57288
Indirect effects						
1. Institutionalization	0,012 ***			0,123	0,799	-54404
2. Insecurity		-0,04 ***		0,104	0,799	-54402
3. Secularization			-0,347 *	0,153	0,799	-54406



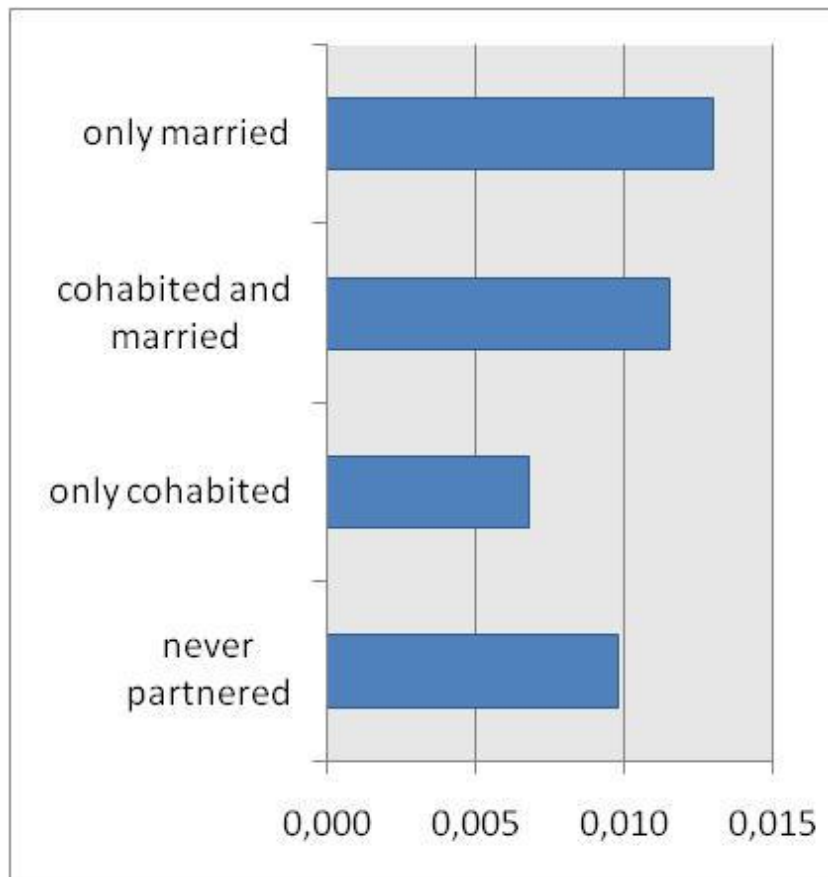
Individual-level effects

Positive	Negative
	job loss worry (ref: work and do not worry)
ever cohabited, esp. if never married (ref: never partnered)	ever married and never cohabited
ever divorced (ref: never married)	
	religious
female respondents about women	age and age square
	rural residence
tertiary education (ref: secondary)	primary education or less
higher subjective household income	
left-wing (ref: centre)	right-wing

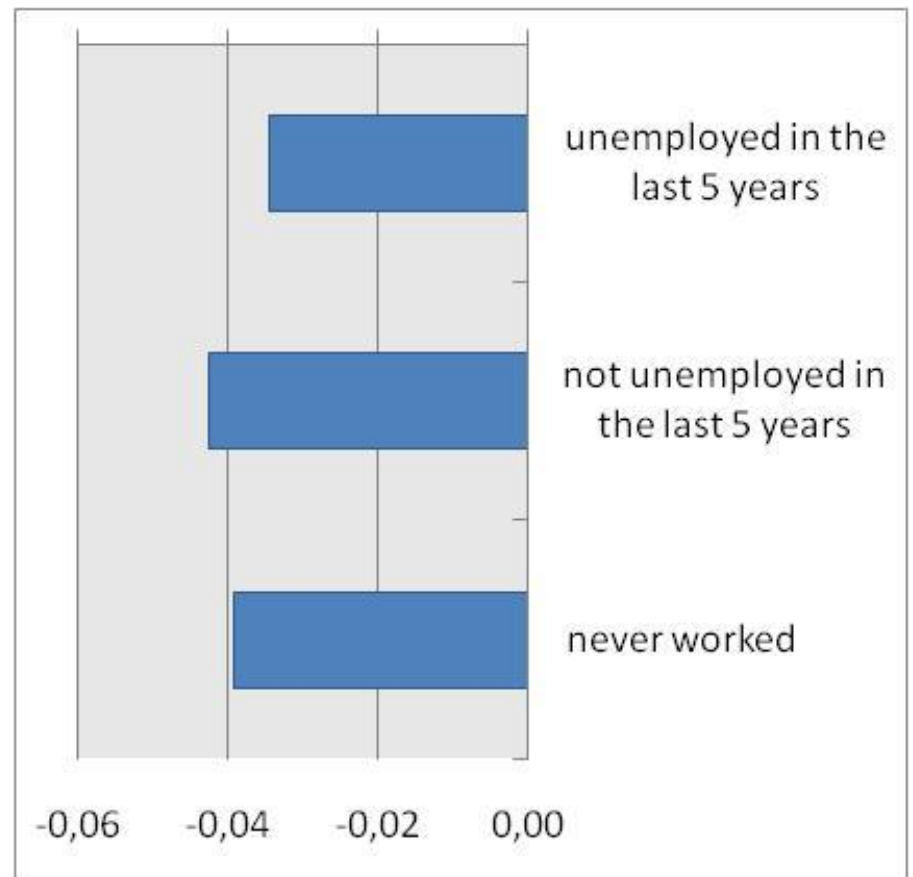


Cross-level interaction effects

The effect of cohabitation prevalence dependent on personal partnership experience



The effect perceived job insecurity dependent on personal unemployment experience



Conclusions

- *High level of cross-country variation*
- *Institutionalization of cohabitation:*
 - strong positive effect
 - especially on those who have experienced only marriage or are married
 - the smallest (but still positive) effect on those who have lived only in unmarried union
- *Perceived job insecurity:*
 - the highest explanatory power
 - higher perceived insecurity means lower tolerance towards cohabitation = reduction of uncertainty
 - less negative effect for those who have experienced unemployment
- *Secularization:*
 - the lowest explanatory power, but significant
 - negative effect of living in a highly religious country
 - becomes weaker when individual characteristics are controlled for
 - the effect is independent of the respondent's religiosity



Thank you for your attention!

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