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* PARTNERSHIP BREAKDOWN AND THE FORMATION OF NEW FAMILIES *
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SUMMARY

1. The information on which this analysis is based was obtained from the members of the NCDS cohort, and reflects their reports.
2. By the time they were interviewed at age 23, 56 per cent (7,012) respondents had lived with a spouse or cohabitee. The majority (84 per cent) married their first partner either before the couple started to live together or after a period of cohabitation. Sixteen per cent did not marry their first partner, or had not done so by the time they were interviewed.
3. The women in the cohort were more likely than the men to have had a partner, and to have entered their first partnership whilst still in their teens. Four out of ten first partnerships involved children. Fourteen per cent of first partnerships had broken down by the time the respondents were interviewed.
4. Life table methods have been used to examine separately for male and female respondents, the effect of a range of characteristics identified from previous research into marital breakdown, on the rate at which first partnerships broke down.
5. They reveal that the rate of breakdown is associated with the following characteristics:
 - i) Respondents, particularly men, who did not marry their first partner show a more rapid rate of breakdown than those who did marry.
 - ii) For couples who lived together before marriage, respondents who had lived with their partner for less than one year or between two and three years show a more rapid rate of breakdown than those who lived together for one to two years before marriage, particularly the men in the cohort.
 - iv) Respondents who entered their first partnership whilst still in their teens show a more rapid rate of breakdown than those who started living with their first partner when they were in their twenties.

- v) Men in the cohort who were more than five years older or younger than their partners show a more rapid rate of breakdown than in female respondents who were more than five years older than their partners, and than couples where the age difference between the partners was five years or less.
 - vi) Respondents who had known their first partner for less than a year before the couple started to live together show a more rapid rate of breakdown than those who had known their first partner for three years or more before the start of the partnership.
 - vii) Childless couples show a more rapid rate of breakdown than couples who were rearing children during the first partnership.
 - viii) Male respondents whose partners were not pregnant at the start of the first partnership show a more rapid rate of breakdown than male respondents whose partners were pregnant at that time.
 - ix) Respondents who were 19 or older when they finished full-time continuous education, and female respondents who were 17 or younger at that time, show a more rapid rate of breakdown than male respondents who finished their education when they were 16 and female respondents who finished their education when they were 18.
 - x) Respondents who were in the professional or intermediate class and those in the unskilled manual class when interviewed show a more rapid rate of breakdown than those in the skilled manual class.
 - xi) Respondents who were privately renting or living with parents when interviewed show a more rapid rate of breakdown than those who were owner-occupiers by that time.
6. Many of the characteristics associated with the breakdown of first partnerships are also associated with each other. Respondents who had not married their first partner were more likely than those who had to have been living with someone who had been married before, to have been more than five years older or younger than their first partner, to have known their partner

for less than a year before the couple started living together, to have been childless during the partnership, to have been 19 or older when they completed their education, to have been in the highest social class group when interviewed, and to have been privately renting or living with parents at that time.

7. One in ten of respondents living with a partner when interviewed were living in a reconstituted family where either the respondent had had a previous partnership or the partner had been married before. Over a third of reconstituted families had been formed by respondents whose first partnership had broken down. Women were more likely than men to have acquired a new partner following the breakdown of their first partnership, and individuals who had been married to their first partner were more likely than those who had not to have started a new partnership.
8. Male respondents with new partners were more likely at interview to be cohabiting than married. Female respondents who had been married to their first partner were more likely than those who had not to be cohabiting with their new partner.
9. Forty-two per cent of respondents were bringing up children when interviewed. One in five of these couples were living in reconstituted families. Only 57 respondents were bringing up children in a blended family which contained both the respondent's own children and their partner's children from a previous relationship.
10. One in five respondents with children whose first partnership had broken down were lone parents when interviewed. Almost all (97 per cent) were women.

INTRODUCTION

1. This paper examines the effect of the characteristics of the respondent and his or her partner on the failure rate of first partnerships, using life table methods of analysis. The relationship between the breakdown of the first partnership and the formation of a new family is also explored.
2. The extent of cohabitation has steadily increased since the early 1970s (GHS, 1982). Despite this, the dissolution of these partnerships has not been accorded the public status given to marital breakdown. Because the breakdowns of stable cohabitations outside marriage go unrecorded, factors associated with the failure of these relationships have not been explored (Levinger, 1976). Therefore, in this paper factors which previous research suggests are associated with marital breakdown will be examined in relationship to all first partnerships, whether marriages or cohabitations.
3. The implications of the 1969 Divorce Law Reform Act, and the breakdown of partnerships which have produced children, are a significant factor in the reconstitution of families. Leeke (1976) has pointed out that, given the increasing divorce rate among young people after shorter marriages, an increasing number of children will be living in two-parent families where only one of the parents is the biological parent. This paper will therefore examine the relationship between the breakdown of the first partnership and the formation of a new family.
4. The paper will address the following questions:
 - i. What is the effect of the nature of the first partnership (marriage or cohabitation) on the probability of it breaking down?

- ii. What is the effect of the respondent's characteristics and the partner's characteristics on the probability of a partnership breaking down?
 - iii. Does the likelihood of acquiring a new partner after the breakdown of the first partnership vary with the sex of the respondent and the nature of the first partnership?
 - iv. What is the relationship between partnership breakdown and the reconstitution of families?
5. In order to simplify the terms used in the paper individuals who were married to or living as married with the respondents will be referred to as "partners". Individuals married to members of the cohort will be referred to as "spouses" and those cohabiting with cohort members will be referred to as "cohabitees". It is assumed that the partners of women in the cohort were male and that the partners of men in the cohort were female.
6. The paper will first describe the measures used in the analysis, and the method of analysis. After an overview of our data on the types of first partnerships and their breakdown, we move onto examine factors affecting the failure rate of these partnerships, in the following order:
- i) The nature of the first partnership (cohabitation or marriage).
 - ii) The duration of premarital cohabitation, if any.
 - iii) The previous marital status of the respondent's partner.
 - iv) The respondent's age at the start of the first partnership.
 - v) The age difference between the respondent and his or her partner.
 - vi) The length of time the couple had known each other before the start of the first partnership.
 - vii) The presence of children in the family.
 - viii) Pre-partnership pregnancy.
 - ix) The age at which the respondent completed his or her full-time continuous education.

x) The respondent's social class when interviewed.

xi) The respondent's tenure when interviewed.

Finally, the relationship between family breakdown and family reconstitution will be examined.

DEFINITIONS AND METHODS

The definition of partnership breakdown

7. Respondents who had had at least one partnership were asked when they started and, if appropriate, when they stopped living with their first partner. However, in order to exclude short-lived temporary separations, the breakdown of a partnership is defined as a period of three months or more without the partner following the date on which the couple stopped living together, or by a change of partner. Consequently, 55 individuals who had stopped living with their first partner within three months of the date of interview, and who had not started living with a new partner during that time, are included among those whose partnership survived to interview. Stable cohabitations which had broken down are here defined as those in which the couple had lived together as husband and wife for at least six months.
8. Information reported elsewhere established that a further 55 individuals had experienced a period of lone parenthood lasting three months or more within the duration of their first partnership. These people are included among those whose partnership had broken down, the date of breakdown being set to the start date of the period of lone parenthood. Separations of three months or more within the first partnership which did not involve lone parenthood are not recorded in the questionnaire unfortunately; the prevalence of partnership breakdown may, therefore, be underestimated.
9. Respondents who were under 16 when they started living with their first partner, and those for whom the duration of the partnership cannot be established, are excluded from the analysis. For individuals who lived with their first partner before marriage,

the beginning of the partnership is the date on which they started living together and not the date of marriage. The duration of the partnership is calculated from the date on which a couple started living together to either (a) the date on which they stopped living together if the partnership had broken down, or (b) the date of interview if the partnership had not (yet) broken down.

Life table methods

10. Life table methods have to be used for two reasons. First, most first partnerships had not (yet) broken down by the date of interview. These incomplete observations provide valuable information which would be thrown away if standard methods were used, such as mean duration of completed partnerships. Secondly, in our data where only 14 per cent of first partnerships are finished by interview, mean duration would provide very seriously biased estimates. In particular, differences between two groups in the mean duration of their partnerships would simply reflect differences in the date of starting, not in the rate of breakdown. Thirdly, simply tabulating the proportion whose partnerships survive to interview could also be seriously misleading: for example, two groups with the same rate of partnership breakdown will yield different proportions surviving to interview if, as is often the case in these data, the members of one group start their partnerships earlier than the members of the other group.

11. The effect of each characteristic on the breakdown of partnership is assessed in the following way. Tables are given of the proportions of each group still surviving after 1,2,3,4,5,6 and 7 years. These numbers are calculated by the SPSS Survival package. A chi-square statistic, testing the hypothesis that the groups are the same, is given in each table separately for men and women. These relate to the month by month survival calculations (not shown) from which the proportions in the tables are derived (see Statistical Appendix). Chi-square should be interpreted with caution as they are not adjusted for other correlated factors.

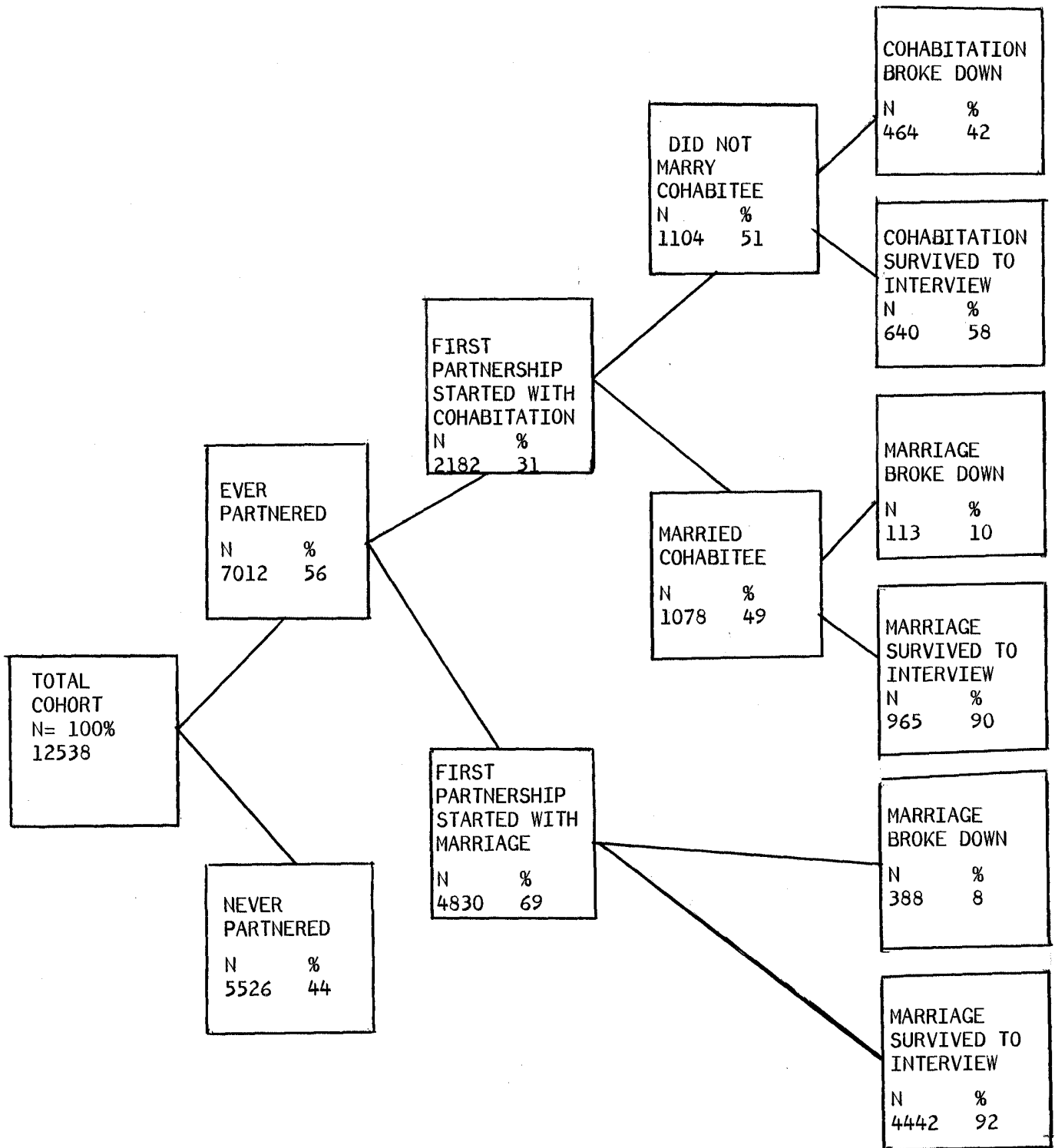
Presentation of Tables

12. In order to improve the clarity of exposition, tables have been included in the text. All tables are percentaged and percentages have been rounded to the nearest whole number. Values 0.6 to 0.9 are shown as one per cent. Where values are less than 0.6, or where 100 per cent is less than 20, the number of individuals are given in brackets. Respondents may have missing data for one or more characteristics; all tables are relevant only to those with complete data.

CHARACTERISTICS AFFECTING THE BREAKDOWN OF FIRST PARTNERSHIPS

13. Of the total sample of 12,538 respondents, 7,012 (56 per cent) had had at least one partner. Figure 1 shows that nearly a third (31 per cent) of first partnerships started as cohabitations, and that almost half (49 per cent) of those couples subsequently married by interview at age 23. Overall, 84 per cent of the respondents who had had a partner married their first partner, either before the couple started living together or later. Fourteen per cent of first partnerships had broken down, as defined above (para.7).

Figure 1. The nature of first partnerships and their status at interview



14. Table 1 shows that the sex of the respondent is not associated with the rate at which first partnerships broke down. More men (88 per cent) than women (85 per cent) were still living with their first partner when interviewed. However, women tended to enter their first partnership earlier than men (Working Paper No.9); consequently, the period during which their partnership were at risk of breakdown was longer. Using life table methods to allow for the fact that not all partnerships started at the same time, and were thus at risk for different periods, we find that the proportions of partnerships surviving to the end of each year in Table 1 are similar for men and women.

15. It should not be forgotten, in this and similar tables, that the numbers in each column are not proportions of the number of partnerships shown in the left-hand column of Table 1 which represent all first partnerships, irrespective of starting date. Partnerships starting at different dates are potentially at risk for different lengths of time, as we have explained above (para.10).

TABLE 1

Percentage of first partnerships surviving at one-year intervals by sex of respondent

	Number of partner- ships	% of partnerships surviving to end of:							% surviving at interview (average age 23.6 years)
		1st yr.	2nd yr.	3rd yr.	4th yr.	5th yr.	6th yr.	7th yr.	
Women	4230	95	90	85	80	76	72	63	85
Men	2782	93	88	84	79	75	68	62	88

$\chi^2_{n-1} = 3.27, df=1, p=.070$

THE NATURE OF THE FIRST PARTNERSHIP

16. Of the 7,012 respondents who had had at least one partner, 69 per cent married their first partner before the couple started living together, 15 per cent married their first partner after the couple had started living together, and 16 per cent never married their first partner or had not done so by the time they were interviewed.

17. The failure rate of first partnerships is associated with the nature of the partnership, as Table 2 shows. Cohabitations broke down faster than marriages, particularly for male respondents.

TABLE 2

Nature of first partnership by percentage surviving at one-year intervals by sex of respondent

	Number of partner- ships	% of partnerships surviving to end of:							% surviving at interview
		1st yr.	2nd yr.	3rd yr.	4th yr.	5th yr.	6th yr.	7th yr.	
<u>Women</u>									
Marriage only	2975	98	95	92	88	83	80	71	90
Marriage after cohabitation	658	99	97	92	86	80	78	72	87
Cohabitation only	597	81	63	47	36	29	27	9	58
$\chi^2_{n-1} = 618, df=2, p<.000\phi$									
<u>Men</u>									
Marriage only	1855	99	96	93	90	85	85	85	95
Marriage after cohabitation	420	99	97	96	92	87	79	65	93
Cohabitation only	507	72	53	38	27	22	11	0	58
$\chi^2_{n-1} = 666, df=2, p<.000\phi$									

18. It has already been shown that respondents who did not marry their first partner tended to be older at the start of the partnership than those who did (Working Paper No.9). They were therefore at risk of breakdown for a relatively shorter period. Yet despite this the failure rate for these partnerships was faster than that for marriages. The characteristics of cohabiting respondents who had never been married, and the characteristics of their partners, differed markedly from the characteristics of married couples (Working Papers No. 20 and 23). We shall see that the characteristics associated with the nature of the first partnership are also associated with the rate at which these partnerships broke down.

THE DURATION OF PREMARITAL COHABITATION

19. The rate of marital breakdown varied with the duration of premarital cohabitation. Table 3 shows that the rate of marital breakdown is faster for couples who had lived together for less than one year or between two and three years before marrying than for those who had cohabited between one and two years. Superficially, premarital cohabitation which had lasted for three years or more is associated with the slowest rate of breakdown, few people had lived together for this length of time before marriage. These figures should therefore be treated with caution. The optimum period for premarital cohabitation appears to be one to two years for people in this age group, as far as the stability of the partnership is concerned.

TABLE 3

Duration of premarital cohabitation by percentage of first partnerships surviving at one-year intervals by sex of respondent

Women	Number of partnerships	% of partnerships surviving to end of:							% surviving at interview
		1st yr.	2nd yr.	3rd yr.	4th yr.	5th yr.	6th yr.	7th yr.	
Less than 1 year	346	98	95	88	80	75	73	67	85
1 year but less than 2	187	100	99	95	94	90	82	82	93
2 years but less than 3	79	100	100	94	83	71	71	57	82
3 years or more	46	100	100	100	95	89	84	84	89
$\chi^2_{n-1} = 16.3, df=3, p=.0010$									
<u>Men</u>									
Less than 1 year	250	99	94	94	87	87	87	75	93
1 year but less than 2	110	100	99	97	97	91	80	80	96
2 years but less than 3	44	100	100	100	96	76	65	49	86
3 years or more	16	100	100	100	100	100	75	0	(15)
$\chi^2_{n-1} = 8.26, df=3, p=.0410$									

Duration of premarital cohabitation and partner's previous marital status

20. The General Household Survey (1982) found that couples lived together longer before marriage if one of the partners had been married before. Five per cent of the spouses had been married before. Very few people had lived with their partners for more than three years before the couple married, but Table 4 confirms that premarital cohabitation tended to last longer if the partner had been previously married. However, the relationship between the rate of marital breakdown and the duration of premarital cohabitation is not explained by the spouse's previous marital status.

The spouses with whom respondents had lived for less than a year before marriage, and the wives with whom male respondents had lived for two to three years before marriage were less likely than other spouses to have been married before. It may be that some marriages were precipitated by a pregnancy or birth during the period of premarital cohabitation, and that this event is associated with the rate of marital breakdown. Further analysis will explore the effect of events which occurred during the first partnership on the failure rate of that partnership.

TABLE 4

Spouse's previous marital status by duration of premarital cohabitation by sex of respondent

<u>Women whose husbands had:</u>	DURATION OF PREMARITAL COHABITATION				N=100%
	Under 12 mths	1-1.11 years	2-2.11 years	3 yrs or more	
Not been married before	56	27	11	6	524
Previously married	41	33	15	11	133
<hr/>					
<u>Men whose wives had:</u>	Under 12 mths	1-1.11 years	2-2.11 years	3 yrs or more	N=100%
Not been married before	60	25	12	2	365
Previously married	55	34	2	9	55

THE PARTNER'S PREVIOUS MARITAL STATUS

21. Respondents were asked whether their first partners were single, separated, divorced or widowed before the start of the partnership. Although the partner's previous marital status has no bearing on the rate of marital breakdown associated with the duration of premarital cohabitations, it is associated with the failure rate of first partnerships. Table 5 shows that first partnerships broke down faster, particularly for male respondents, if the partner had been married before.

TABLE 5

First partner's previous marital status by percentage of partnerships surviving at one-year intervals by sex of respondent

Male partner	Number of partnerships	% of partnership surviving to end of:							% surviving at interview
		1st yr.	2nd yr.	3rd yr.	4th yr.	5th yr.	6th yr.	7th yr.	
Never married	3834	97	92	87	82	77	74	66	86
Previously married	393	89	84	76	71	69	64	53	77
$\chi^2_{n-1}=38.9, df = 1, p<.0001$									
<u>Female partner</u>									
Never married	2601	95	90	86	82	76	71	64	89
Previously married	180	83	74	71	55	55	-	-	75
$\chi^2_{n-1} = 43.9, df=1, p<.0001$									

22. Thirty years ago Monahan (1952) found that the probability of divorce was heightened by a previous marriage ending in divorce. This analysis, which broadens the concept of breakdown to include marital separation and the breakdown of cohabitations, confirms previous research. Furthermore, a separated partner awaiting divorce may have placed a stress on the partnership which contributed to the rate of breakdown for respondents living with previously married partners. However, the nature of the first partnership has a more powerful effect on the rate of breakdown than the partner's previous marital status, although these two factors are associated.

Partner's previous marital status and the nature of the first partnership

23. Cohabitations, the partnerships with the most rapid failure rate, involve the highest proportion of previously married partners (Table 6). And marriages preceded by cohabitation contain a higher proportion of previously married partners. Thus, respondents whose partners had been married before were more likely to cohabit, even if they eventually married, and this appears to have placed their partnerships additionally at risk. A number of these partners may have been awaiting divorce before they were able to marry, which may have increased the stress on the partnership.

TABLE 6

Nature of first partnership by partner's previous marital status by sex of respondent

	<u>Partner prev- iously married</u>	<u>Partner never married</u>	
<u>Women</u>	%	%	<u>N=100%</u>
Marriage only	3	97	2974
Marriage after cohabitation	20	80	657
Cohabitation only	27	73	596
TOTAL	9	91	4227
<hr/>			
<u>Men</u>			
Marriage only	1	99	1854
Marriage after cohabitation	13	87	420
Cohabitation only	19	81	507
TOTAL	6	94	2781

Partner's previous marital status and partner's age at the start of the first partnership

24. Day (1964) found that divorce rates were higher among men whose wives were more than five years older than themselves than among couples whose ages were within five years of each other. Partners who had been married before were older than those who had not, as Table 7 shows. A partner aged 30 or older when the couple started living together must have been at least seven years older than the respondent. Generally, male partners were older than female partners. However, both male and female partners who had been married before were very much more likely to have been 30 or older at the start of the partnership than those who had never been married.

TABLE 7

First partner's previous marital status by age of partner at start of partnership by sex of partner

	Age of partner at start of partnership							N=100%
	14-19	20-24	25-29	30-34	35-39	40-44	45+	
<u>Male Partner</u>	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	
Married	1	20	41	23	10	4	1	393
Never married	12	66	19	2	(9)	(1)	-	3825
TOTAL	11	62	21	4	1	(16)	(3)	4218
<u>Female Partner</u>								
Married	4	41	38	14	2	1	-	179
Never married	42	56	2	(6)	(1)	-	-	2597
TOTAL	39	55	5	1	(5)	(1)	-	2776

25. To summarise Tables 6 and 7, the partner's previous marital status was associated with his or her age and with the nature of the first partnership. Cohabitees of both sexes were more likely to have been married before and to have been aged 30 or older at the start of the partnership. This suggests that the

characteristics of cohabitees, as well as the nature of the partnership per se, contributed to the probability of breakdown. Generally, the characteristics of respondents were similar to those of their partners (Working Paper No.23). Perhaps these discrepancies in age and marital status threatened the stability of first partnerships; people have been found to prefer partners similar to themselves in age and social characteristics (Kerckhoff, 1974).

THE RESPONDENT'S AGE AT THE START OF THE FIRST PARTNERSHIP

26. In general, the longer a marriage has lasted, the less likelihood there is of divorce (Jacobson, 1959), and this may also apply to cohabitations. However, the maximum period the first partnership of an NCDS subject could have lasted was seven years and ten months. In order for it to have lasted this long the couple would have to have started living together when the respondent was very young. The prognosis for early marriage is not good, and almost a third of the respondents - mostly women - were still in their teens when they entered their first partnership (Working Paper No.9).

27. Early partnership is confounded with early parenthood (Working Paper No.9). McCarthy and Menken (1979), in a study of the marital careers of teenage mothers which used life table methods of analysis, showed that premarital pregnancy precipitates early marriage. Table 8 shows that first partnerships which started whilst the respondent was still in his or her teens broke down faster than those which started later. The effect of age at the start of the partnership on the percentage surviving to interview is clearly shown in Table 8. Nevertheless, the effect of the respondent's age at the start of the partnership on the rate of breakdown is less powerful than the effect of the nature of the partnership.

TABLE 8

Respondent's age at start of first partnership by percentage of partnerships surviving at one-year intervals by sex of respondent

Women	Number of partnerships	% of partnership surviving to end of:							% surviving at interview
		1st yr.	2nd yr.	3rd yr.	4th yr.	5th yr.	6th yr.	7th yr.	
Under 20	1770	95	90	84	79	74	71	63	75
20	766	97	92	89	0	0	0	0	89
21	739	96	92	0	0	0	0	0	92
22 or over	955	95	0	0	0	0	0	0	96
$\chi^2_{n-1} = 20.7, df=3, p<.0001$									
<u>Men</u>									
Under 20	598	93	86	81	76	71	66	59	73
20	518	94	89	86	0	0	0	0	85
21	646	94	89	0	0	0	0	0	89
22 or over	1020	97	0	0	0	0	0	0	98
$\chi^2_{n-1} = 18.4, df=3, p=.0004$									

THE AGE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN RESPONDENT AND THE FIRST PARTNER

28. Bumpars & Sweet (1972) found that the greater the age difference between husband and wife the greater the instability of the marriage, and this finding is confirmed, for male respondents, in Table 9. The greater the age difference between men and their partners, the faster first partnerships broke down. In general, male respondents were older than their first partners, as we know (see Table 7 above). The men who were six or seven years older than their first partners would have started living with a girl when she was 16 or 17. However, a difference of eight years or more means, in the majority of cases, that the female partner was older than the respondent. Again, the effect of the age difference between the respondent and his partner is less powerful than the effect of the nature of the first partnership on the rate of breakdown.

TABLE 9

Age difference between partners by percentage of first partnerships surviving at one-year intervals by sex of respondent

Women	Number of partnerships	% of partnership surviving to end of:							% surviving at interview
		1st yr.	2nd yr.	3rd yr.	4th yr.	5th yr.	6th yr.	7th yr.	
5 years or less	3416	96	91	86	82	77	74	65	86
6-10 years	612	94	90	86	79	74	70	70	83
11-15 years	146	93	85	83	77	75	71	71	81
Over 15 years	56	94	90	83	76	76	70	35	79
$\chi^2_{n-1} = 6.9, df = 3, p=.0742$									
<u>Men</u>									
5 years or less	2671	95	90	85	81	76	70	63	88
6-10 years	87	81	76	74	59	59	0	0	76
11-15 years	17	66	66	66	66	66	0	0	(12)
Over 15 years	7	80	80	80	80	80	0	0	(6)
$\chi^2_{n-1} = 35.3, df=3, p<.0001$									

Age difference between partners and the nature of the first partnership

29. The effect of the age difference between the respondent and the partner on the failure rate of the first partnership is partly explained by the nature of the partnership. Table 10 shows that the age difference between cohabiting couples was greater than that between married couples, and greater between couples who had lived together before marriage than between those who had not.

TABLE 10

Nature of first partnership by age difference between partners by sex of respondent

	AGE DIFFERENCE AT START				N=100%
	5 yrs or less %	6-10 yrs %	11-15 yrs %	Over 15 yrs %	
<u>Women</u>					
Marriage only	85	12	2	1	2975
Marriage after cohabitation	72	20	5	3	658
Cohabitation only	68	20	9	3	597
TOTAL	81	14	3	1	4230
<u>Men</u>					
Marriage only	98	1	(4)	(5)	1855
Marriage after cohabitation	95	4	1	-	420
Cohabitation only	89	9	2	(2)	507
TOTAL	96	3	1	(7)	2782

30. It has been pointed out above (para.28) that an age difference of six years or more between a man and his partner means either that his partner was in her mid-teens at the start of the first partnership, or that his partner was older than he was. The association between the rate of partnership breakdown and the age difference between men and their partner may therefore reflect the combined effect of some of the partnerships starting when the female partner was in her teens, and others in which the direction of the age difference was unconventional. Further analysis is needed in order to compare the failure rate for couples where the man is the older partner with the failure rate for couples where the women is the older partner.

LENGTH OF TIME THE COUPLE HAD KNOWN EACH OTHER BEFORE THE FIRST PARTNERSHIP

31. Levinger (1976) reports that the longer a couple had known each other before marriage, the greater the stability of the marriage, and Table 11 confirms this. Levinger does not specifically exclude the time a couple spent living together before marriage, whereas the analysis presented here refers to the period between the couple's first meeting and the date on which they started living together.
32. The shorter the period between meeting and starting to live together the faster the rate of partnership breakdown. For example, couples who had known each other for less than one year before they started living together show the fastest rate of breakdown, whereas those who had known each other for three years or more before living together show the slowest rate of breakdown. Although the effect of this factor on the rate of breakdown is relatively powerful, it is not as powerful as the effect of the nature of the partnership.

TABLE 11

Years between couple meeting and start of first partnership by percentage of partnerships surviving at one-year intervals by sex of respondent

	Number of partnerships	% of partnership surviving to end of:							% surviving at interview
		1st yr.	2nd yr.	3rd yr.	4th yr.	5th yr.	6th yr.	7th yr.	
<u>Women</u>									
Under 1 year	442	86	77	65	60	56	50	50	65
1 year	896	92	88	84	79	74	71	67	81
2 years	946	97	92	88	85	80	78	65	87
3 years or more	1911	98	94	90	85	81	77	58	91
$\chi^2_{n-1} = 176, df=3, p<.0001$									
<u>Men</u>									
Under 1 year	388	78	69	62	54	48	38	0	66
1 year	525	93	89	86	80	75	63	0	86
2 years	516	96	90	87	81	79	79	79	90
3 years or more	1318	97	94	93	90	87	80	80	95
$\chi^2_{n-1} = 218, df=3, p<.0001$									

Years known before first partnership and respondent's age at start of the partnership

33. Table 12 shows that the age at which the respondent started living with his or her first partner is associated with the length of time the couple had known each other before they started living together. Respondents who were still in their teens at the start of their first partnership were most likely to have known their partner for less than a year before the couple started living together. Respondents who were aged twenty-two or over were most likely to have met their future partners three or more years before the start of the first partnership. Clearly, the younger the respondent at the start of the first partnership, the longer the period at risk of breakdown, and therefore the greater the probability that the partnership would break down by the date of interview (Table 8). Table 12 suggests that partnerships which started when the respondents were in their twenties were more likely to have been postponed than those which started when the respondents were in their teens. The reasons for postponing the start of the first partnership require further analysis; perhaps partnerships postponed until the respondent had acquired educational qualifications, a steady job, completed a training course or an apprenticeship, or until the couple had acquired property were less likely to have broken down by the time the respondents were interviewed.

TABLE 12
Age at start of first partnership by years between couple meeting and start of the partnership by sex of respondent

	YEARS BETWEEN COUPLE MEETING AND START OF PARTNERSHIP				N=100%
	Under 1 yr	1 year	2 years	3 yrs.or more	
<u>Women</u>	%	%	%	%	
Under 20	15	23	27	30	1747
20	7	19	22	52	761
21	8	16	19	56	736
22 or over	7	14	18	61	951
TOTAL	10	21	23	46	4195
<u>Men</u>					
Under 20	24	27	20	30	582
20	12	20	23	44	511
21	14	17	17	52	639
22 or over	10	16	17	58	1015
TOTAL	14	19	19	48	2747

Years known before first partnership and the nature of the partnership

34. Table 13 shows, as we would expect, that the nature of the first partnership is also associated with the length of time a couple had known each other before starting to live together. Individuals who married before living together were more likely to have known each other for three years or more, whereas individuals who cohabited - and particularly those who did not marry - were more likely to have known each other for less than a year before the start of the first partnership.

TABLE 13
Nature of first partnership by years between couple first meeting and start of the partnership by sex of respondent

	YEARS BETWEEN COUPLE MEETING AND START OF PARTNERSHIP				N=100%
	<u>Under 1 yr</u>	<u>1 year</u>	<u>2 years</u>	<u>3 yrs.or more</u>	
<u>Women</u>	%	%	%	%	
Marriage only	5	16	24	55	2969
Marriage after cohabitation	22	35	21	22	642
Cohabitation only	28	30	17	25	584
TOTAL	10	21	23	46	4195
<u>Men</u>					
Marriage only	5	15	21	59	1849
Marriage after cohabitation	25	29	16	30	410
Cohabitation only	40	26	13	21	488
TOTAL	14	19	19	48	2747

35. To summarise Tables 12 and 13, the younger the respondent at the start of the first partnership the greater the likelihood that the couple had known each other for less than a year before they started living together. In addition, respondents who had not married their first partner by the time they were interviewed were most likely to have known their partner for less than a year before the start of the partnership. This suggests that the failure rate of partnerships is fastest for respondents who started living with their first partner within a year of first meeting him or her, who were still in their teens at the start of the partnership, and who did not marry before starting to live together. In short, precipitate teenage cohabitations appear to have been most at risk of breaking down by the time the respondent was interviewed. However, further analysis is necessary in order to establish the relative effects of the length of time the couple knew each other before living together, the respondent's age at the start of the partnership, and the nature of the partnership on the rate at which first partnerships broke down.

THE PRESENCE OF CHILDREN IN THE FAMILY

36. Overall, 42 per cent of couples were caring for one or more children during their first partnership. These children include not only those who were born during the partnership and who survived the first month of life, but also surviving children born before the start of the partnership. Childless partnerships involving pregnancies that resulted in a stillbirth, the death of the child during the first month of life, or which broke down before the child was born have been excluded from this analysis.
37. Levinger (1976) suggests that the presence of children in the family, among other things, constitutes a barrier to the breakdown of a partnership. Bane (1976) found that, although the differences between childless and child-rearing couples had decreased over the previous 20 years, childless couples had higher separation rates than couples with children. Table 14 confirms this; the failure rate of first partnerships is faster for childless couples than for couples who were bringing up children.

TABLE 14

Presence of child(ren) in family by percentage of first partnerships surviving at one-year intervals by sex of respondent

	Number of partnerships	% of partnerships surviving to end of:							% surviving at interview
		1st yr.	2nd yr.	3rd yr.	4th yr.	5th yr.	6th yr.	7th yr.	
<u>Women</u>									
Without children	2331	93	85	79	73	66	63	63	85
With child(ren)	1866	98	95	91	87	83	79	68	86
$\chi^2_{n-1} = 103, df=1, p < .0001$									
<u>Men</u>									
Without children	1734	89	81	75	64	60	45	0	85
With child(ren)	1037	99	96	94	90	86	79	73	92
$\chi^2_{n-1} = 137, df=1, p < .0001$									

38. Of course, the number and ages of children may affect the stability of a partnership, but further analysis is needed to explore these factors. It is known that the absence of children is associated with the probability of both partners being economically active (Working Paper No.20) and previous research suggests (Levinger, 1976; Cutright, 1971) that wives with their own income are more likely to divorce than those without, although this depends upon the proportion of family income contributed by the wife.

Presence of children in the family and the nature of the first partnership

39. Predictably, respondents who did not marry their first partner were more likely to be childless, as Table 15 shows. It is worth noting that respondents who married after a period of premarital cohabitation were more likely to have had children than those who did not. The relationship between the start of the partnership, the timing of marriage, and the conception and birth of children requires further analysis. It has already been pointed out (para.20) that premarital conception during the period of cohabitation may have precipitated the marriage.

TABLE 15

Nature of first partnership by presence of child(ren) in the family by sex of respondent

<u>Women</u>	<u>No children</u>	<u>Child or pregnancy</u>	<u>N=100%</u>
	%	%	
Marriage only	52	48	2975
Marriage after cohabitation	46	54	658
Cohabitation only	80	20	597
<hr/>			
<u>Men</u>			
Marriage only	58	42	1855
Marriage after cohabitation	48	52	420
Cohabitation only	89	11	507

PRE-PARTNERSHIP PREGNANCY

40. This analysis assumes that pregnancies lasted for nine months.

Respondents who had a child between one month and eight months after the start of the first partnership are assumed to have been expecting the child when they started living with their partner. McCarthy and Menken (1979) suspected that pre-marital pregnancies were under-reported in their study of the marital careers of teenage mothers, but their analysis was based on retrospective information supplied by the respondents. However, under-reporting may be less of a problem in NCDS IV since respondents were asked for the date of birth of all children born to them and subsequently were asked when they started living with their first partner.

41. The pregnancy of the female partner at the start of the partnership is associated with the rate of breakdown for male respondents, but not for female respondents, as Table 16 shows. The rate at which the partnership broke down was faster for men whose partners were not pregnant before the couple started living together than for men whose partners were pregnant at that time.

TABLE 16

Pre-partnership pregnancy by percentage of first partnerships surviving at one-year intervals by sex of respondent

	Number of partnerships	% of partnerships surviving to end of:							% surviving at interview
		1st yr.	2nd yr.	3rd yr.	4th yr.	5th yr.	6th yr.	7th yr.	
<u>Women</u>									
Pregnant	537	96	92	87	82	76	73	62	78
Not pregnant	3693	96	91	86	81	77	73	67	86
$\chi^2_{n-1} = 3.03, df=1, p=.8595$									
<u>Men</u>									
Partner pregnant	357	98	94	90	85	81	81	81	89
Partner not pregnant	2425	94	88	84	79	73	66	55	88
$\chi^2_{n-1} = 11.8, df=1, p<.0001$									

42. We have already shown that the failure rate was slower for child-rearing couples than for childless couples (para.37). Pre-partnership pregnancy is related to child-rearing and it is therefore not surprising that the partnerships of male respondents whose partner was pregnant when the couple started living together show a slower rate of breakdown than those where the partner was not pregnant. Further analysis would show whether child-rearing couples who started their partnership when a child is expected differ from those who did not.

THE RESPONDENT'S AGE AT THE END OF FULL-TIME CONTINUOUS EDUCATION

43. Levinger (1965) suggested that the higher the husband's educational level the more stable the marriage because of the association between the level of education and family income; the higher the family income the greater the stability of the marriage. However, Cutright (1971) and Norton and Glick (1976) found that high educational level combined with low income was associated with higher rates of marital breakdown. The cohort members were only 23 years old when interviewed, and it is unlikely that those who had achieved a high level of educational attainment had also achieved a high income.
44. The age at which respondents completed full-time education excludes interruptions of less than six months between leaving school and entering higher education. Respondents represented in tables as having completed their education at 16 are those who left school between their sixteenth birthday and the following August. Those who completed their education during the academic years September 1974 to August 1975 and September 1975 to August 1976 are shown as having done so when they were 17 and 18 respectively. Those who completed their education after August 1976 are shown as having done so when they were 19 or older.
45. The age at which respondents completed their education is associated with the rate at which first partnerships broke down, as Table 17 shows. However, this association varied with the sex of the

respondent. For male respondents, the older the individual when he completed his education, the faster the rate of breakdown. Female respondents were similar to the men in that the rate of breakdown was fastest for those who were 19 or older when they completed their education, but differ from the men in that those who completed their education when they were 18 show the slowest failure rate. For male respondents, those who completed their education when they were 16 show the slowest failure rate.

TABLE 17

Respondent's age at completion of full-time continuous education by percentage of first partnerships surviving at one-year intervals by sex of respondent

	Number of partnerships	% of partnerships surviving to end of:							% surviving at interview
		1st yr.	2nd yr.	3rd yr.	4th yr.	5th yr.	6th yr.	7th yr.	
<u>Women</u>									
16	2824	96	92	86	82	77	73	67	84
17	509	96	92	88	82	75	71	0	87
18	515	97	93	90	87	86	86	0	92
19 or older	376	92	81	72	66	59	59	0	84
$\chi^2_{n-1} = 25.2, df=3, p<0001$									
<u>Men</u>									
16	2105	96	91	87	82	78	74	66	89
17	237	94	90	88	84	61	37	0	89
18	210	88	82	77	63	63	0	0	84
19 or older	225	87	76	66	66	66	66	0	82
$\chi^2_{n-1} = 39.2, df=3, p<.0001$									

46. A major difficulty with the interpretation of Table 17 is that the age at which full-time continuous education ended may itself be associated with the start of the first partnership. For example, the respondent's education may have been curtailed by the start of the partnership or, alternatively, the duration of the respondent's

educational history may have effectively postponed the start of the first partnership. Further analysis is needed in order to examine the relationship between the economic and social antecedents of first partnerships and the stability of those partnerships.

Respondent's age at completion of education and the nature of the first partnership

47. The age at which a respondent completes education is associated with the nature of the first partnership. Predictably, Table 18 shows that respondents who did not marry their first partner were more likely than those who did to have completed their education when they were 19 or older. And male respondents who lived with their first partner before marriage tended to be older when they completed their education than those who married at the start of the partnership. Again, this analysis reveals that the characteristics associated with the failure rate of the first partnership are also associated with the nature of the partnership.

TABLE 18

Nature of first partnership by respondent's age at completion of full-time continuous education by sex of respondent

	AGE AT COMPLETION OF F/T EDUCATION				N=100%
	16 %	17 %	18 %	19 or older %	
<u>Women</u>					
Marriage only	70	12	11	6	2975
Marriage after cohabitation	68	10	11	10	658
Cohabitation only	50	12	17	22	597
TOTAL	67	12	12	9	4230
<u>Men</u>					
Marriage only	81	8	6	6	1855
Marriage after cohabitation	74	10	8	7	420
Cohabitation only	58	10	14	18	507
TOTAL	76	8	7	8	2782

THE RESPONDENT'S SOCIAL CLASS WHEN INTERVIEWED

48. The social class of the respondent is based upon the Registrar General's 1980 Classification of Occupations, and is derived from the classification of the job held by the respondent at the time of the interview, or, if unemployed or out of the labour force at that time, the last job held. The relatively high proportion of women in non-manual occupations or in full-time housework and the relatively high proportion of men in manual jobs creates difficulties in comparing the economic activity of the sexes. Therefore, the presentation of differences in class position will concentrate on comparisons within each sex.

49. Social class is, of course, associated with educational level which in turn is related to the age at which education is completed. It is therefore not surprising that social class is associated with the failure rate of the first partnership. Table 19 shows that the failure rate is fastest for respondents in the highest and the lowest social classes. Respondents in the skilled manual group show the slowest rate of breakdown.

TABLE 19

Respondent's social class at interview by percentage of first partnerships surviving at one-year intervals by sex of respondent.

	Number of partnerships	% of partnerships surviving to end of:							% surviving at interview
		1st yr.	2nd yr.	3rd yr.	4th yr.	5th yr.	6th yr.	7th yr.	
<u>Women</u>									
Professional & intermediate	676	94	86	81	74	68	61	36	85
Other non-manual	2130	97	92	88	83	78	76	68	87
Skilled manual	394	97	93	87	82	77	76	76	85
Other manual	930	95	90	85	81	77	73	65	81
$X^2_{n-1}=15.1, df=3, p=.0017$									
<u>Men</u>									
Professional & intermediate	441	92	86	78	69	56	56	0	85
Other non-manual	398	95	89	81	74	74	64	64	89
Skilled manual	1255	95	90	87	84	80	77	72	89
Other manual	564	93	87	85	82	71	62	45	85
$X^2_{n-1}=8.86, df=3, p=.0311$									

50. One would expect respondents in the professional and intermediate group, which shows the most rapid rate of breakdown, to have spent longer in full-time education than other social groups. We know that the respondents who spent longest in full-time education show the fastest rate of partnership breakdown. However, it could also be argued that respondents in the lowest social class - those in the semi-skilled and unskilled manual group - probably completed their education when they were 16, and we know that male respondents who had completed their education at this age show the slowest rate of partnership breakdown. Of course, it is important to remember that the social class of the respondent when interviewed may have changed since the breakdown of the first partnership. Indeed, a change of social class may have been an outcome of the breakdown. Further analysis is needed in order to examine this possibility.

Respondent's social class at interview and the nature of the first partnership

51. By now, we should not be surprised to find that social class was associated with the nature of the first partnership (Table 20). Respondents in the professional and intermediate group were least likely to have married their partners. Among those who did marry, respondents in the semi and unskilled manual group were most likely to have lived together before marriage. This suggests that cohabitations, whether or not the couple later married, and irrespective of the social class of the respondents when interviewed, broke down more rapidly than marriages which were celebrated before the couple started living together. The nature of the first partnership thus partly explains the rapid rate of breakdown for the semi and unskilled manual group of respondents.

TABLE 20

Nature of first partnership by respondent's social class at interview* by sex of respondent

	RESPONDENT'S SOCIAL CLASS AT INTERVIEW				N=100%
	Professional & intermediate	Other non-manual	Skilled manual	Other manual	
<u>Women</u>	%	%	%	%	
Marriage only	13	55	10	22	2905
Marriage after cohabitation	21	44	9	26	637
Cohabitation only	28	43	9	20	588
TOTAL	16	52	10	22	4130
<hr/>					
<u>Men</u>					
Marriage only	14	15	50	21	1767
Marriage after cohabitation	17	12	47	24	405
Cohabitation only	25	16	39	20	486
TOTAL	17	15	47	21	2658

THE RESPONDENT'S TENURE WHEN INTERVIEWED

52. In order to simplify the presentation of tables, respondents who were not owner-occupiers, council tenants or private renters have been grouped as "other". This category consists of 1,139 people sharing with parents, parents-in-law or other relatives, people sharing with non-relatives, people living in tied or rent-free accommodation, and those in lodgings. Respondents who were in prison or borstal, in hostels, or in long-stay hospitals are excluded. The majority (65 per cent) were sharing with parents, other relatives or friends, 24 per cent were living in tied or rent free accommodation, and 11 per cent were in lodgings or hostels. Respondents renting from housing associations are included with private renters, and those renting from New Town Corporations are included with council tenants.

Owner-occupation includes respondents who are living in a property which is in their partner's name only, as well as those who own the property jointly with their partner, and those who own the property independently.

53. Levinger (1965, 1976) suggests that home-ownership acts as a barrier to marital breakdown. The cost of dissolution is high since it may involve the loss of a major capital investment for both partners. This analysis is concerned with the respondents' tenure when interviewed. Further information would have to be collected in order to establish tenure at the time of the breakdown of the first partnership. However, the respondent's tenure at interview is associated with the rate at which the first partnership broke down as Table 21 shows, and confirms previous research.
54. Owner-occupiers show a relatively slow rate of partnership breakdown, particularly among female respondents. Respondents living in "other" accommodation or privately renting when interviewed show the fastest failure rate. Among council tenants the rate of breakdown is faster for the women than for the men.

TABLE 21

Respondent's tenure at interview by percentage of first partnerships surviving at one-year intervals by sex of respondent

	Number of partnerships	% of partnerships surviving to end of:							% surviving at interview
		1st yr.	2nd yr.	3rd yr.	4th yr.	5th yr.	6th yr.	7th yr.	
<u>Women</u>									
Owner-occupiers	2168	99	97	95	94	92	92	92	96
Council tenants	982	96	91	85	79	73	69	59	78
Private renters	466	92	84	75	67	63	57	38	77
Sharing, rent-free, lodging etc.	571	90	75	65	57	49	44	39	66
$\chi^2_{n-1}=343, df=3, p<.0001$									
<u>Men</u>									
Owner-occupiers	1208	99	96	95	91	88	81	0	96
Council tenants	643	98	97	96	95	94	94	89	96
Private renters	322	92	86	76	66	64	64	64	83
Sharing, rent-free, lodging, etc.	568	83	70	59	52	39	31	0	67
$\chi^2_{n-1}=336, df=3, p<.0001$									

55. It is important to stress that the respondent's tenure when interviewed may have changed from the tenure during the first partnership; and such changes of tenure may have been a consequence of the breakdown of that partnership. For example, the collapse of the partnership may have involved a move out of owner-occupation or a council tenancy into privately rented or shared accommodation. This may explain the rapid rate of breakdown shown for respondents who were living in "other" accommodation or privately renting at the time of the interview. Furthermore, it is rare for men to remain in council accommodation after the breakdown of a partnership; if there are children in the family the existing tenancy is usually transferred to the mother. This may explain the rate of breakdown for the women relative to the men among those in council tenancies when interviewed. However, in order to examine the relationship between tenure at interview and tenure during the first partnership, further analysis will be necessary.

Respondent's tenure at interview and the nature of the first partnership

56. Predictably, tenure at interview is associated with the nature of the first partnership, as Table 22 shows. Respondents who did not marry their first partner were least likely to be owner-occupiers when interviewed, despite the relatively high proportion in the professional and intermediate group. They were also unlikely to be council tenants, perhaps because relatively few had become parents. They were most likely to be renting privately or to be in "other" accommodation. Conversely, respondents who married their first partner without previously living with him or her were most likely to be owner-occupiers and least likely to be in "other" accommodation.

TABLE 22

Nature of first partnership by respondent's tenure at interview by sex of respondent

	RESPONDENT'S TENURE AT INTERVIEW				N=100%
	<u>Owners</u>	<u>Council tenants</u>	<u>Private renters</u>	<u>Other accomm.</u>	
<u>Women</u>	%	%	%	%	
Marriage only	59	23	7	11	2959
Marriage after					
cohabitation	43	32	14	11	650
Cohabitation only	24	19	27	30	578
TOTAL	52	23	11	14	4187
<hr/>					
<u>Men</u>					
Marriage only	53	23	7	16	1837
Marriage after					
cohabitation	31	36	15	18	413
Cohabitation only	20	14	26	39	491
TOTAL	44	23	12	21	2741

57. Table 23 presents the details of the tenure position of respondents in "other" accommodation, and shows that those whose first partnership had broken down were more likely to be living with parents when interviewed than those whose partnerships had survived up to interview. It is possible that couples who were living with parents during their first partnership were more likely to have experienced the breakdown of their partnership. Alternatively, respondents whose first partnership had broken down may have returned to their family of origin. Further research is needed in order to explore these alternative explanations for the high proportion of respondents whose partnerships had broken down living with parents when interviewed.

TABLE 23

Status of first partnership at interview by nature of respondent's "other" tenure at interview by sex of respondent

	NATURE OF "OTHER" ACCOMMODATION						N=100%
	Tied	Rent Free	Parents	Other Relatives	Non-relatives	Lodging & other	
<u>Women</u>	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
Survived	23	12	39	6	6	14	378
Ended	4	2	69	5	15	5	193
TOTAL	17	8	50	5	9	11	571
<hr/>							
<u>Men</u>							
Survived	23	10	43	5	6	13	379
Ended	1	1	72	8	12	6	189
TOTAL	16	7	53	6	8	10	568

58. The financial circumstances of respondents whose first partnership had broken down is clearly relevant. However, further research would be necessary in order to compare changes in income as a result of the breakdown of the first partnership. The financial circumstances of interview of respondents whose first partnership had broken down will be compared with those of other respondents in a subsequent Working Paper.

THE RECONSTITUTION OF BLENDED FAMILIES

59. This analysis defines a reconstituted family as one in which either partner had been married before, or - in the case of respondents - had previously lived with, but not married a different partner. Respondents who had returned to a first partner after a separation of three months or more are not included in this definition unless their partner had been married before. These are respondents who became lone parents for three months or more after the start of their first partnership, but who subsequently returned to their first partner and were still living with that partner when interviewed. Eight per cent of first partnerships consisted of reconstituted families because the

first partner had been married before. We do not know how many first partners had previously lived in a stable cohabitation and therefore the number of reconstituted families among first partnerships may be underestimated.

60. A blended family is an extension of a reconstituted family, and its definition derives from the relationship of children to the respondent and his or her partner. Blended families consist of children being brought up with step-brothers and sisters or with half-brothers and sisters. This analysis may underestimate the proportion of blended families because, in families which contained only the respondent's natural children, it is not possible to determine the relationship of these children to the partner. The partner may not have been the biological parent of all the children, in which case half-brothers and sisters were being brought up together. Further analysis may clarify the situation.

61. The family situation under discussion is that which existed at the time of the interview. Information is available for 7,009 individuals who had had at least one partner, 91 per cent of whom were living with a partner when interviewed.

RECONSTITUTED FAMILIES

62. When interviewed, 706 couples were living in a reconstituted family, either because the partner had been married before, or because the respondent's first partnership had broken down, or both. This constitutes 10 per cent of those living with a partner when interviewed. Well over a third (38 per cent) of these reconstituted families had been formed by a respondent whose first partnership had broken down. Table 24 shows that 28 per cent of those whose first partnership had broken down had acquired a new partner by the time they were interviewed. Although the majority of those who had experienced the breakdown of their first partnership were without a partner (67 per cent), female respondents were less likely (60 per cent) to be in this situation than male respondents (79 per cent). It

is important to bear in mind that the likelihood of having acquired a new partner may be related to the amount of time available between the breakdown of the first partnership and the date of interview. It is possible that the earlier the first partnership broke down, the greater the likelihood of a new partnership having started by the time the respondent was interviewed.

TABLE 24

Partnership status at interview of respondents whose first partnership had broken down by sex of respondent

	RESPONDENT'S STATUS AT INTERVIEW			N=100%
	<u>Returned to first partner</u>	<u>New partner</u>	<u>No partner</u>	
	%	%	%	
Women	8 (49)	32 (199)	60 (377)	625
Men	1 (3)	20 (69)	79 (265)	337
TOTAL	5 (52)	28 (268)	67 (642)	962

The nature of reconstituted families and the nature of the first partnership

63. Table 25 shows that the likelihood of acquiring a new partner after the breakdown of the first partnership was, predictably, associated with the nature of that partnership. Respondents who married their first partner were more likely than those who did not to be living with a new partner. This is to be expected since those who married their first partner tended to be younger at the start of the partnership than those who did not. The average duration of partnerships which had broken down by interview is two years and six months (see para.15). Consequently, the earlier the first partnership started, the earlier it ended and longer the time available in which to start a new partnership. However, the relationship between the nature of the first partnership, its duration, and the likelihood of forming a new partnership requires further analysis.

TABLE 25

Nature of first partnership which broke down by respondent's partnership status at interview by sex of respondent

	RESPONDENT'S STATUS AT INTERVIEW				N=100%
	<u>Returned to same partner</u>	<u>New marriage</u>	<u>New cohabitation</u>	<u>No partner</u>	
<u>Women</u>	%	%	%	%	
Marriage	11	14	21	53	376
Cohabitation	2	16	10	71	249
TOTAL	8	15	17	60	625
<hr/>					
<u>Men</u>					
Marriage	2	4	22	71	122
Cohabitation	-	7	10	83	215
TOTAL	1	6	14	79	337
<hr/>					
<u>All respondents</u>					
Marriage	9	12	21	57	498
Cohabitation	1	12	10	77	464
TOTAL	5	12	16	67	962

64. The relationship between the nature of the first partnership and the nature of the new partnership varies with the sex of the respondent. Male respondents, irrespective of the nature of their first partnership were more likely to be cohabiting with their new partner (14 per cent) than married to her (six per cent). On the other hand, female respondents who had been married to their first partner were more likely to be cohabiting with their new partner (21 per cent) than those who had not been married (10 per cent).

Reconstituted families and children

65. Forty-two per cent of the respondents who were living with a partner when they were interviewed were caring for children. Table 26 shows that the majority of these people (91 per cent) were still living with their first partner, either because the partnership had not broken down by that time, or because the respondent had returned to his or her first partner after a period of lone parenthood. However, four per cent of child-rearing respondents had formed a new partnership after their first partnership had broken down, and five per cent of those whose first partnership had ended were lone parents.

TABLE 26

Partnership status of respondents with children at interview by sex of respondent

<u>Respondent's status at interview</u>	<u>Women</u>	<u>Men</u>	<u>TOTAL</u>
% First partnership survived	84	97	89
% Returned to first partner	3	(3)	2
% New partner after breakdown	5	2	4
% No partner after breakdown	8	(4)	5
N = 100%	1909	1038	2947

Blended families

66. Table 27 shows that only 57 respondents were caring for blended families when interviewed. This constitutes two per cent of child-rearing couples. Although the number of blended families is very small, male respondents were more likely (4 per cent than female respondents (one per cent) to be caring for such families.

TABLE 27

Partnership status of respondents with children at interview by status of children in family by sex of respondent

	<u>1st partner- ship survived</u>	<u>Returned to 1st partner</u>	<u>New partner</u>	<u>No partner</u>	<u>TOTAL</u>
<u>Women</u>					
% Respondent's child(ren) only	99	98	96	99	98
% Partner's child(ren) only	(7)	-	3	-	1
% Respondent's and partner's child(ren)	1	2	1	1	1
N = 100%	1613	49	101	146	1909
<u>Men</u>					
% Respondent's child(ren) only	90	(3)	57	(4)	89
% Partner's child(ren) only	6	-	30	-	7
% Respondent's and partner's child(ren)	3	-	13	-	4
N = 100%	1008	3	23	4	1038

67. The proportion of blended families among respondents living with a partner and bringing up children when interviewed may be underestimated, as we have pointed out (para.60). An unknown proportion of families containing only the respondent's children, where the partner was not the biological parent of some of the children, are also have been blended families.

68. Apart from families which contained only the respondent's children, or lone parents, 137 respondents were caring for their partner's children from a previous relationship. These families were, by definition, reconstituted and represent five per cent of all families with children at interview.

CONCLUSION

69. It is possible that the very powerful effect of the nature of the first partnership on the rapidity with which first partnerships broke down reflects the combined effect of the characteristics of respondents and partners. Respondents who did not marry their first partner differed from their partners more than those who did marry. Cohabiting couples were more likely to differ in age and in previous marital status than married couples, and this may have introduced instability. It would be premature to assert that young people in the age group 16 to 23 who cohabit before marriage or who do not marry their first partner are more at risk of experiencing the breakdown of their first partnership than those who follow a more conventional route. The characteristics associated with the nature of the first partnership may independently affect the rate at which these partnerships broke down. Further analysis is needed in order to examine the independence of both partners' characteristics on the probability of breakdown.

PROPOSALS FOR FURTHER ANALYSIS

70. Further analysis of factors associated with the probability of the first partnership breaking down should address the following questions:
- (a) Is the effect of the nature of the partnership on the failure rate of first partnerships independent of the effects of the age difference between partner and respondent, the length of time the couple knew each other before living together, whether or not they were rearing children, the age at which the respondent completed full-time education, and the respondent's social class and tenure at interview associated with the nature of the partnership?
 - (b) What effect do the respondent's social class and labour market experience prior to the start of the first partnership have on the respondent's age at the start of the partnership, and the failure rate of the partnership?
 - (c) What effect does the respondent's age on completion of full-time continuous education have on the age at which he or she started living with the first partner, and the failure rate of the partnership?
 - (d) What effect does the timing of events during the first partnership (e.g. conceptions, births, marriage) have on the probability of the partnership breaking down before interview?
 - (e) What effect does the breakdown of the first partnership have on the respondent's social class, economic activity, financial situation and tenure at interview?
71. Further analysis of factors associated with the reconstitution of families should address the following questions:
- (a) What effect does the nature of the first partnership, and the respondent's age and parental status when it broke down, have on the probability of starting a new partnership by the date of interview?
 - (b) Do characteristics associated with the failure rate of the first partnership have any effect on the interval between that partnership breaking down and the start of a new partnership?
 - (c) What is the relationship between the births of the respondent's children, if any, and the sequence of his or her partnerships?

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STATISTICAL APPENDIX: Survival Methods

1. The essence of the method as applied here is that time is measured from the start of each partnership, and our observation of its duration ends at breakdown (or failure) or at interview (or incomplete observation).
2. The hazard (h) is calculated at each month as the probability that a partnership fails in that month, given that it had lasted that far:

$$h = \frac{d}{n-c/2}$$

Where d is the number of failures that month, n is the number at risk of failure at the start of the month, and c the number of censored (or incomplete) observations that month.

3. The probability (s) of surviving to month j is given as:

$$S_j = (1-h_1)(1-h_2)\dots(1-h_{j-1})$$

It is the probabilities S_j , $j=12,24,36,48,60,72,84$ that are given in the text of the paper.