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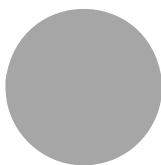
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Divorce trends and variations along the rural-urban gradient in France, 1884-1913

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Résumé

Cet article se propose de relire l'histoire des divorces depuis le rétablissement du divorce en France en 1884 jusqu'à la veille de la Première Guerre mondiale en distinguant trois grands ensembles de population : la population rurale, la population urbaine et celle du département de la Seine considérés séparément. Pour affiner l'analyse, des données seront ajoutées qui distinguent, au sein du département de la Seine, Paris de sa banlieue. Les sources disponibles fournissent par ailleurs des détails sur les divorces, en général indisponibles autrement qu'à l'échelle nationale, telles que l'époux ayant obtenu le divorce, le motif de celui-ci, la durée du mariage, l'âge et l'écart d'âge des époux ou encore le nombre d'enfants des couples divorcés. Plusieurs résultats ressortent de l'analyse. Les populations urbaines divorcent plus que les populations rurales, en particulier dans le département de la Seine et il n'existe pas d'homogénéisation des comportements entre 1884 et 1913. Les caractéristiques des divorces sont également différentes dans les territoires et distinguent souvent le département de la Seine du reste de la population. Enfin, un des apports majeurs de cet article permis grâce aux données distinguant Paris de sa banlieue au sein du département de la Seine, est de mettre en lumière les niveaux extrêmement élevés de divorce dans la banlieue parisienne.

Mots-clés

Divorce, France, population urbaine et rurale, Paris, banlieue.

Abstract

This paper offers a rereading of the history of divorce from the reinstatement of divorce in France in 1884 until the eve of the First World War, by comparing three major population groupings: the country's rural population, its urban population, and that of the Seine department, considered separately. To refine the analysis, data will be added that distinguishes, within the Seine department, Paris from its suburbs. The available sources also provide detail on divorce that is generally unavailable other than at the national level, such as which spouse obtained the divorce, the

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grounds cited for the divorce, the duration of the marriage, the ages of and age difference between the two spouses, and the number of children the marriage produced.

Several results emerge from the analysis. Urban populations divorced more than rural populations, particularly in the Seine department, and there was no homogenisation of behaviours between 1884 and 1913. The characteristics of divorce also differed between the population groupings, with the Seine department often distinct from the rest of the population. Finally, one of the major contributions of this article, thanks to the data differentiating Paris from its suburbs within the Seine department, is to highlight the extremely high levels of divorce in the Parisian suburbs.

Keywords

Divorce, France, urban and rural population, Paris, suburbs.

Introduction

In France, research on pre-Second World War separation and divorce from a sociodemographic perspective is scarce, especially at the individual level. While aggregated studies taking into account spatial aspects at the departmental (*département*) level do exist², they often highlight the urban manifestation of divorce: there is no research, to our knowledge, that distinguishes between rural and urban municipalities (*communes*) to complement the standard departmental breakdown. The *Annual Statistics on Population Movement*³ distinguishes between three mutually exclusive population groupings: France's rural population, France's urban population, and the population of the Seine department (encompassing Paris and its suburbs).

Divorce had been allowed in France between 1792 and 1816 and was banned again until the 1884 Naquet Act reinstated it. Our analysis will focus on the period from 1884 to 1913, after which data according to these three groupings are no longer available. Our analysis will thus be focused on the divorces in the initial period after the Naquet Act.

2. Thus, in terms of the period preceding the 1975 divorce reform law, Schnapper (1978) spatially analysed legal separations for 1837-1884, Ledermann (1948) legal separations and divorces for 1936-1937, Roussel (1970) those for 1964-1967, and Munoz-Perez (1981) those for 1970-1975. More recently, Brée (forthcoming) completed these analyses for the period 1884-1936.

3. Statistique annuelle du mouvement de la population.

Apart from measuring the intensity of divorce among these three groupings, this analysis examines whether there was a convergence of divorcing behaviour between 1884 and 1913. The data available for these groupings – which is aggregate data – also provide details on divorce that are generally only available in aggregate at the national level, such as which spouse filed for the divorce, the grounds given for the divorce, the duration of the marriage, the ages of the spouses and their age difference, and the number of children they had. Another aim will therefore be to find out whether the characteristics of divorcees are the same among them and, if not, to endeavour to understand why they diverge.

These data represent the sum of the data at the municipal level, now lost. They thus have the disadvantage of being highly aggregated, thus only allowing for descriptive analyses. However, they do make it possible to precisely differentiate between the behaviours of these three populations, rather than working according to a departmental breakdown, where some departments are considered urban but also include rural areas and suburbs and thus often behave very differently from central urban areas. The analysis of the data across these three categories – the rural population, the urban population, and the Seine department considered as a separate entity – even though they are aggregated, may be one of the only ways to distinguish clearly between urban and rural behaviour, as this is not possible through analysis by department what often contain both rural and urban populations – which differ greatly in terms of demographic behaviour.

In addition, in order to further this analysis, the data available in the *Statistical Yearbooks of the City of Paris*⁴ will be also pulled into the research. These data, specific to the Seine department, distinguish Paris proper from its suburbs within the department. This will provide additional nuance to the distinction between the three basic groupings offered by the *Annual Statistics on Population Movement*. Research on Paris's suburbs is rare even though it offers a valuable framework for analysis (Boudjaaba, De Luca-Barrusse, 2013), especially from the second half of the 19th century, when their populations grew explosively.

4. *Annuaire statistique de la ville de Paris* (since 1942 : *Annuaire statistique de la ville de Paris et des communes suburbaines de la Seine*).

Literature and hypotheses

It is highly likely that divorce was more common in urban than in rural areas, and that divorce rates in the Seine department were particularly high in comparison with the rest of the country. Phillips (1979) explains a greater tendency towards divorce in urban areas during the periods of the Revolution and the Empire as due to an increasing ease in finding housing and employment (particularly with the dissociation between the city of residence and the city of work), but also the rise in urban individualism and the weakening authority of the father and the family. Conversely, the more rural departments – where religious practice was stronger and where a certain «traditional way of life [linked] to a complex system of values, attitudes and relationships» was maintained (Roussel, 1970, p. 296) – seem to have been more resistant to marriage dissolution (i.e., divorce or legal separation). It should be noted that in Flanders, men – the effect does not appear for women – born in rural areas were found to be less likely to divorce than those born in urban areas, leading the authors of the study to posit that «rural socialization acts as a brake on divorce» (Matthijs *et al.*, 2008, p. 251). Brée and Gourdon (2020), however, rather show mobility as having a significant impact on divorce in two suburban Paris communes: migrants born in the countryside were more likely to divorce than those born in the communes under study. If rural socialization may act as a brake on divorce, rural people who moved to the cities seem to have had a relatively higher probability of divorcing, perhaps because of greater detachment from their families and communities.

The link between socioeconomic level and risk of divorce is not always obvious in the literature. In Flanders (Matthijs *et al.*, 2008) and in the Netherlands (van Poppel, 1997) in the 19th century, men working in an unskilled or low-skilled profession seem to have been less likely to divorce, partly due to their difficult socioeconomic situation: by staying together, the spouses could survive more easily with their two combined incomes. The work of Kalmijn, Vanassche and Matthijs (2011) on divorce in Flanders and the Netherlands between the late 19th and early 20th centuries suggests that it is those with higher educational attainment, as opposed to the more well-off, that were more inclined to divorce. In France, it would seem that the middle classes have been most prone to divorce, whether during the revolutionary period and the First Empire (1792-1816) (Dessertine, 1981) or in the 1970s (Boigeol, Commaille, 1974). Between 1884 and 1933, on a national scale and from a quantitative standpoint (and with the biases linked to statistical categorization),

it appears that there were many workers among the divorcees (Brée, forthcoming). The wealthiest couples did not tend to divorce, nor did farmers (Brée, forthcoming; Ronsin, 1990); among these groups it was no doubt considered preferable not to split assets, especially if the couple had children to whom they could pass on their property.

The effect of age of spouses and the age gap at marriage is broadly documented in the academic literature. The literature seems to show that marriage at a young age, especially for women (Dessertine, 1981; Matthijs *et al.*, 2008; van Poppel, 1997), may have been an important factor in the probability of divorce, but also the age difference between spouses, especially if the woman was older than the man.

The effect of prior marital status also plays an important role. In 19th-century Flanders, wives who had already been divorced or widowed were more than ten times more likely to divorce than the first-time married (Matthijs *et al.*, 2008). In The Hague, again in the 19th century, the risk of divorce was four times higher if at least one of the partners had already divorced once (van Poppel, 1997). In France at the beginning of the 20th century, having already been divorced was a (low) risk factor for getting divorced again, as in Belgium and the Netherlands; on the other hand, unlike in Flanders, widowhood protected against divorce, for men and even more so for women (Brée, forthcoming). For Matthijs, Baerts, and van de Putte (2008), these effects could be linked to a large age difference, the presence of children, material interests, and potential conflicts. Brée and Gourdon (2020) add that widows and divorced women, having already experienced the end of a union and more or less forced celibacy, would know more about how to deal with such a situation than first-time-married women, or at least be less fearful of the risks. Moreover, divorced women would by definition have knowledge of the legal workings of divorce proceedings. Both factors, especially the latter, may have alleviated fears about the prospect of a relationship breaking down, potentially leading to a greater likelihood of divorcing.

The literature also shows that in France, as elsewhere, women were the most frequent divorce applicants (Bertillon, 1883; Brée, forthcoming). According to Bertillon (1883, p. 120), women asked for divorce because men were «more often unbearable husbands than [the women] are sometimes unbearable wives». The differences in the gendered distribution of divorce filings should instead be interpreted in terms of the benefits of divorcing (despite gender inequality in terms of marriage as a system and the economic difficulties that a divorce can generate; see Brée forthcoming) and particularly the possibility of women to ensure their safety that of their children. The stories they told in the divorce procedures (Sohn,

1996) show that a number of them were beaten, injured, or assaulted by their husbands. Women sought protection in asking for divorce, but those women who could afford to divorce without threatening their reputation and economic status were also those with the education and legal and institutional knowledge to do so (Simonsson, Sandström, 2011). This can refer to the *willingness* component of Coale's theory when applied to divorce (Simonsson, Sandström, 2011). Coale's theory (1973), summarized by the formula «ready-willing-able», suggests that the adoption of a new demographic behaviour is the result of a set of factors and requires three prerequisites: individuals must consider the adoption of the new behaviour to be advantageous (they must be *ready*), it must be socially and morally accepted (they must be *willing*), and individuals must be in the position to adopt it (they must be *able*). Simonsson and Sandström (2011) applied this theory to divorce (but only on a national scale) by showing that changes in the economic, social, cultural, legal, and political context in Sweden had an impact on divorce rates.

The above-mentioned studies are based on statistical data that provide information at the national level (and sometimes the regional level, but only for divorce rates) or on individual data that provide very valuable information but only for geographically or historically limited populations. However, there has been no research on the characteristics of divorce among urban populations as opposed to rural.

Our research questions thus focus on different aspects of divorce in terms of the groupings we are analysing:

- What are the divorce rates in the groupings studied, and do the gaps between them narrow over the period 1884-1913?
- Is the proportion of women filing for divorce the same in all the groupings, and how can this be explained?
- What grounds for divorce are used among the different groupings, and what can they reveal about the different marital and family relationships that characterize these groupings?
- How long do marriages last, and what does this say about the acceptance of divorce?
- What are the characteristics of the divorcees in terms of age, age gap, previous marital status, family size, and socioeconomic profile?
- What are the specificities of the groupings (education, religion, migration, age, socioeconomic level, illegitimacy) that could help explain the incidence of divorce, the proportion of applicants that are women, and the grounds given for divorce?
- In sum, what can a study differentiating between urban and rural populations contribute to the discussion on the socioeconomic aspects of divorce?

Sources and measures

Definitions and sources

Until the end of the 18th century, the designation of the different types of inhabited places was mainly based on the distinction between towns, villages, and hamlets, but with no precise definitions applicable at the national level. The term «rural» was not yet in use; the world of small towns and villages dominated by farming families was referred to as *la campagne* or the countryside (Bontron, 2015). Shortly after the Revolution (1793), with the establishment of the commune system, all town and village names were abolished by decree and replaced by the name of the commune in which they were located. It was only in 1846 that the *Bureau de la statistique générale de France* began to distinguish between rural and urban communes in the five-yearly censuses (Bontron, 2015). The distinction was made as follows:

- To qualify as urban, a commune must have at least 2'000 inhabitants living in its administrative centre.
- Communes are considered rural if fewer than 2'000 inhabitants live in the administrative centre.
- The Seine department, encompassing Paris and its suburbs, is considered separately, as a category of its own: all its communes are considered urban, even those whose administrative centres have fewer than 2,000 inhabitants.

The distinction between France's rural population, its urban population, and the Seine department was made in the *Annual Statistics on Population Movement* from its first edition in 1851 to 1913. The data produced by this categorization cannot be replicated since this would require access to the data at the commune level, which was discarded and is no longer available. After the First World War, a distinction is only made between the Seine department and the rest of France. The exception is between 1946 and 1952, when the classification was re-taken up and refined, with the urban communes grouped by number of inhabitants: 2'000-5'000, 5'001-10'000, 10'001-50'000, 50'000-100'000, and more than 100'000. However, the Seine department was then no longer considered in distinction to the other urban communes. Moreover, the data under this classification is less detailed, with no information on number of divorces, marital status prior to marriage, number of children at the time of marriage, or indications on marriage duration. For these reasons, this article will focus on the 1884-1913 period.

The *Annual Statistics on Population Movement* provide extensive information on births, marriages, deaths, and divorces (from 1885 for the latter).

The data in relation to divorce do not come from the statistics on the court rulings themselves (available in the *General Accounts of Civil Justice*)⁵ but are based on transcriptions of divorce certificates in the civil status registers of the town halls where couples married (on average six months after the divorce was pronounced). The following analysis will therefore focus on the divorces of couples according to their place of marriage – and thus capture the impact of the social environment at the time of marriage – and not their place of divorce. According to Ledermann (1948), these data are statistically reliable. However, a portion of divorces were not recorded (10%) in the civil status registers because of the death of one of the spouses or through negligence, and thus are not reflected in the *Annual Statistics on Population Movement* (Ledermann, 1948).

Data from the *Annual Statistics on Population Movement* provide, for the three population groupings – France’s populations categorized as urban, rural, or within the Seine department – from 1885 to 1913, data on the number of divorces per month, the age of the spouses at the time of divorce, the duration of marriages, and, for the first few years, the divorce figures according to the occupations of the divorced men (Table 1). Two volumes are particularly detailed (1907-1910 and 1911-1913) since they provide, in addition to data on marital status prior to marriage, data on the grounds on which divorce was granted, the spouse who obtained the divorce, the number of children born of the marriage, and the number of divorces dissolved for which a prenuptial agreement had been drawn up or which had been preceded by legal separation; all these data are provided in relation to the age of the women.

Not all the data that appear in these specific volumes are available in the other volumes of the publication. This means that most of the detailed information about divorces are only available for the 1907-1913 period.

5. There are two main sources that can be used for the quantitative analysis of divorce: the *General Accounts of Civil Justice* and the *Annual Statistics on Population Movement*. Only the latter distinguishes between the groupings we are dealing with here. The *Annual Statistics on Population Movement* summarize the transcriptions of divorce certificates in the civil status registers of the town halls where couples married, whereas the data from the *General Accounts of Civil Justice* pertain to the requests (made and granted) made in the courts where couples resided at the time of applying for divorce (Brée, 2019, forthcoming).

TABLE 1 Data available in the sources for the geographical population groupings (1885-1913)

Type of data	Population groupings			
	Urban	Rural	Seine department	Paris City
Source	<i>Annual Statistics on Population Movement**</i>			<i>Statistical Yearbooks of the City of Paris***</i>
Number of divorces per month	1885-1913	1885-1913	1885-1913	1885-1913
Age of spouses*	1885-1913*	1885-1913*	1885-1913*	1885-1913
Age difference between spouses				1885-1913
Duration of the marriage	1885-1913	1885-1913	1885-1913	1885-1913
Husband's occupation	1885-1913	1885-1913	1885-1913	1885-1913
Previous marital status	1907-1913	1907-1913	1907-1913	1885-1913
Grounds for divorce	1907-1913	1907-1913	1907-1913	1885-1913
Spouse who obtained divorce	1907-1913	1907-1913	1907-1913	1885-1913
Number of children	1907-1913	1907-1913	1907-1913	1885-1913
Legitimacy of children				1885-1913
Prenuptial agreement	1907-1913	1907-1913	1907-1913	
Divorces preceded by legal separation	1907-1913	1907-1913	1907-1913	1885-1896
Judgement in the first instance or on appeal				1885-1896

* In the *Annual Statistics on Population Movement*, the data for age of spouse is cross-tabulated.

** In the *Annual Statistics on Population Movement*, for the period 1907-1913, all data are broken down by age of wife.

*** In the *Statistical Yearbooks of the City of Paris*, the data is available for the city proper only (with the exception of number of divorces, available for the largest suburban communes from 1893). In these publications, the duration of marriage is cross-referenced with the number of surviving children from the union and the occupation of the husband with the sex of the spouse who obtained the divorce.

Also, the number of surviving children from the marriage is noted, but nothing is specified in the *Annual Statistics on Population Movement*.

The data for Paris, available in the *Statistical Yearbooks of the City of Paris*, are for the city proper only (with the exception of the number of divorces, available for the largest suburban communes from 1893⁶), which makes it possible to differentiate the city from its suburbs by subtraction. These data provide information on the age of the spouses at the time of the divorce, their age difference, marriage duration, the number of children born of the union (and their legitimacy), the occupation of the husband, the civil status of the spouses prior to the marriage, the grounds for divorce, the sex of the spouse who obtained the divorce, and finally whether the judgment was pronounced in the first instance or on appeal and whether the divorce was preceded by legal separation (Table 1).

6. From 1893, a new section was added to the *Statistical Yearbooks of the City of Paris*, entitled «Demographic Bulletin of the Communes of the Seine Department», providing information about the number of births, deaths, marriages, divorces, etc.

The yearbooks provide data on Paris's suburbs within the Seine department from 1893 onwards (not shown in Table 1), but only on the number of divorces (detailed for certain cities). The other information detailed in Table 1 – age of spouses, previous marital status, etc. – is only available in the yearbooks for the population of Paris city proper. We have therefore estimated the data for Paris's suburbs from the two indirect sources of information available to us (by subtracting the data for Paris from the data for the Seine department), not a straightforward task.

Measures

Usually, specific divorce rates⁷ are calculated by relating the number of divorces over one year to the number of marriages over the same year. This measurement is easy to make since the researcher only needs to find the data for one year.

Another measurement⁸ would consist in relating the number of divorces in year Y to the number of marriages having taken place x years before, x being the average duration of marriages that ended in year Y (12 years on average for our study; see below). This measurement is complicated by the fact that marriages do not last the same number of years everywhere and for all periods, and this is probably why it is not used very often. Another reason is that it is necessary to take into account circumstantial events that took place in each of the two years in question, that of the marriage and that of the divorce, to explain variations in divorce rates.

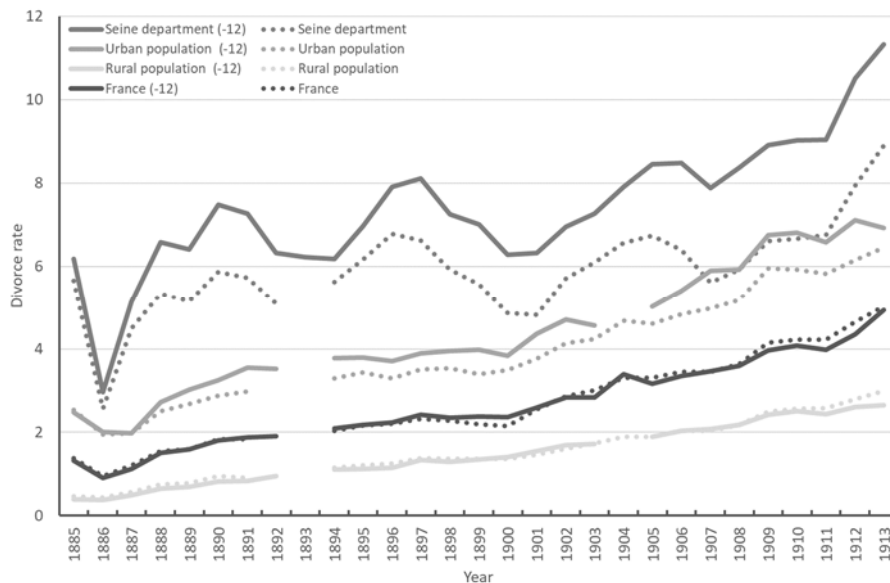
However, as Figure 1 shows, the comparison between the two indicators shows substantial differences, especially for the urban populations, and within the Seine department above all. This seems logical since the urban areas, and especially greater Paris, gained many inhabitants between 1880 and 1913. Consequently, the number of marriages is higher in 1910 than in 1898 for instance. Therefore, the divorce rate calculated for the same year is much higher than the one measured by relating the number of divorces to the number of marriages 12 years before. Overall, the movements are the same, but the gaps are stronger with the -12-years indicator than with the one-year indicator. This should be remembered

7. The crude divorce rate is the number of divorces occurring among the population of a given geographical area during a given year per 1'000 for the mid-year total population of that geographical area for that same year.

8. One can also measure the divorce rate relating the number of divorces per 10'000 married men or women, but we do not have the required data for the population groupings we are working on here.

when analysing the data with the indicator we have chosen, the one with a 12-year lag (see Figure 1).

FIGURE 1 Divorce rates according to two different measurements



Source: Annual Statistics on Population Movement, 1885-1913.

Note: The -12 curves reflect the rate that relates the number of divorces in year y relative to the number of marriages in year $y-12$.

Overview of the geographical population groupings

France's massive industrialization in the 19th century led to significant urbanization. Consequently, the proportion of France's population categorized as rural, which by 1861 had already declined to 71% (compared with 82% in 1806; Dupâquier, 1989; Le Mée, 1989), fell to 55% in 1913. At the same time, the proportion in urban areas increased: from 29% of the population in 1851 (of which 5% were in Seine department) to 45% in 1913 (of which 11% were in Seine). Within the latter, the population of Paris proper accounted for 4.7% of the population of France in 1861 and 7% in 1913, and that of Paris's suburbs 0.7% in 1861 and 3.4% in 1913.

The age structure is known to have been younger in the cities (especially in the largest ones) than in the countryside, with the age structure of the urban population showing an imbalance: adults aged 20-39 are overrep-

resented, and young people under 20 and adults over 60 are underrepresented (Bourdelaïs, 1988; Bourillon, 1992). This is due to *significant migration* from the countryside (and abroad) to the cities. In 1891, 55.6% of the suburban population was born outside the Seine department and «barely one person in five is of commune origin» (Farcy, 1991, p. 41). This proportion is much higher than that of the capital, which stood at 36.4% in 1891 (39% in 1911). According to some estimates, in 1914, 8% of the urban population was of foreign origin and 75% of rural origin (Garden, Le Bras, 1988). Nevertheless, it is mainly Paris and its metropolitan area that carried weight in France's urban population, with the other large cities remaining quite small in comparison because of much weaker growth⁹. Indeed, if we take out the Paris agglomeration, 63% of the French population was still rural in 1911 (Garden, 1988).

Despite their younger age structure, urban populations tended to experience excess mortality (Bocquier, Brée, 2018; Biraben, 1975; Dupâquier, 1990; Eggerickx, Debuissou, 1990), linked in particular to sanitation and population density. In the rural population, while the high proportion of young children and older people were major factors in the overall mortality rate, mortality was still lower than in urban areas.

*As to crude birth rates, they were higher in provincial urban areas than in rural areas prior to 1836 but did not differ much in urban and rural areas thereafter, being slightly lower in urban areas from 1836 to 1872 and slightly higher at the end of the century. During the first decade of the 20th century, the levels are the same in the rural and urban areas in Provincial France and even in the Seine department (respectively 20‰, 19.7‰, and 18.7‰ for the period 1904-1913). However, crude birth rate are highly dependent on the structure of the population (Brée, 2017)¹⁰. Tugault (1975) showed that the trends are the same for fertility, but the reversal seems to have taken place a little after what is observed for the birth rate. Fertility in provincial towns was, on average, slightly higher than in the countryside around 1860, and it was during the second half of the 19th century that the relatively large differences in fertility between cities and the countryside widened, leading to urban underfertility and rural overfertility, with the Seine always having much lower fertility levels than everywhere else. Similarly, the *crude marriage rate* was higher in*

9. About the urban transition in provincial France, see Bocquier and Bree (2018).

10. Brée (2017) shows that the birth rate in Paris was higher than for all of France during the 19th century, while its fertility rate – which takes into consideration the age structure of the population – was much lower.

the Seine department – and particularly in Paris – than elsewhere in France¹¹. However, when the number of marriages is compared to the so-called «marriageable» population, i.e., the number of adults aged 15-60, the marriage rate was actually lower in the Seine department than elsewhere in France.

TABLE 2 Proportion of marriages per 100 marriageable people in the Seine department and France's other départements (single adults aged 15-60)

	Seine	Other départements	France
1874-1878	6.28	7.32	7.22
1879-1883	5.86	6.66	6.59
1884-1888	6.04	6.32	6.30
1889-1893	5.98	6.50	6.44
1894-1898	6.12	6.50	6.46

Source: Annual Statistics on Population Movement, 1899.

The marriage rate is lower in the cities, but non-marital cohabitation (concubinage) is more frequent in the largest ones, such as Paris (Battagliola, 1995), and also in the most industrialized ones, such as Le Creusot (Bourdelaïs, Demonet, 1998). Due to concubinage but also the high numbers of what was termed «*filles-mères*» (single mothers) whose children were not recognized by the father – *nonmarital childbearing* was much more frequent in the cities than in the rural areas. Out-of-wedlock births accounted for 23.2% of births in the Seine department between 1904 and 1913, 12.2% of births in urban areas, and 4.6% of births in rural areas. In other words, illegitimacy was twice as high in the Seine department as in other urban areas, and six times as high as in rural areas. Within this department, illegitimacy was slightly higher in Paris (26% in 1902) than in the suburbs (20% in 1902) (Brée, 2014, 2017).

As to *socioeconomic structure*, unsurprisingly the rural population mainly worked in agriculture: in 1911, 68% of rural households were considered as farming households (Molinier, 1977) and consisted of around 35% of the working population (Marchand, Thélot, 1991). In the cities, 45% of the working population worked in non-agricultural sectors (Marchand, Thélot, 1991). Cities had many more workers but also people working in liberal or administrative occupations. In the suburbs, the working class

11. It was 93‰ for the Seine department between 1875 and 1913 against 73‰ for France's urban population and 72‰ for its rural population. Unfortunately, the data does not distinguish between the urban and rural populations.

was also very numerous. In the case of the Seine department, at the end of the 19th century, 10% of the active population worked in agriculture – and this population was relegated to the outer reaches of the department, far from Paris – 44% worked in industry and 21% in trade, and 12% lived off of annuities (Brée, 2015).

The *level of education* differed widely across the three groupings. People in urban areas, and even more so in the Seine department (especially Paris), were much better educated than people living in the countryside, even though literacy inequalities diminished, and almost disappeared, between 1869 and 1906 (Table 3).

TABLE 3 Proportion of women and men signing their marriage certificate in 1869, 1885, and 1906 in the Seine department (Paris and suburbs) and among the rest of the country's rural and urban populations

		Seine	Paris	Urban pop.	Rural pop.
Men	1869	96.0	97.2	79.8	71.6
	1885	98.3	99.7	90.5	84.4
	1906	100	100	98.0	97.0
Women	1869	88.4	91.6	66.2	59.8
	1885	96.7	99.3	82.3	76.4
	1906	99.0	99.9	96.0	95.0

Sources: *Annual Statistics on Population Movement*, 1885 (for the years 1869 and 1885) and 1906; *Municipal Statistics of the City of Paris*, 1869; *Statistical Yearbook of the City of Paris*, 1885 and 1906.

Finally, it is known that *the rural population was more attached to the Catholic Church* than the urban population (Boulard, 1982; Morlet, 1990). In 1911-1912, Lenten practices were still well entrenched in the countryside (during the periods of Lent and Advent in the religious calendar devotees abstained from sexual relations). Advent was no longer widely observed, and there was even a peak in marriages in December in the Seine department (Segalen, 1988). Indeed, religious practice, which was greatly reduced in Paris in the 18th century (Chaunu *et al.*, 1998), weakened even further over the 19th century (Boudon, 2001). In Paris's suburbs, Easter practices were weaker than in Paris at the end of the century (Boulard, 1982).

Divorce in urban and rural France

A short history of divorce in France

Until the Law of Floréal year II (20 September 1792), which introduced divorce by mutual consent, for incompatibility of temperament and other «specified reasons» (*raisons déterminées*), only separation from bed and board could break a marriage and remarrying was not allowed. The new law was quickly criticized for being too liberal, and when the Civil Code was adopted in 1804, the possibility of divorce was maintained but the rules were tightened (Goy, 1988; Ronsin, 1990). The procedure was made more strict and the formalities more rigorous, and as a result divorce became exceptional from then on (allowing only for divorces due to «fault»). Eventually divorce was abolished in April 1816, under pressure from the Church. After many campaigns for reinstatement – notably in 1830, in 1848, and during the Paris Commune of 1871 (Ronsin, 1992) – it was finally achieved 27 July 1884 with the promulgation of the Naquet Law. The legitimization of personal fulfilment, the right to love, and the right for a woman's claim to be heard were much less emphasized in the 1884 law than they were in the claims of the *Divorçiaires* (proponents of legalized divorce) earlier in the 19th century (Ronsin, 1992). This law upheld the spirit of a sanction imposed on a spouse who has not stood by his or her commitments and was guilty of a serious fault (adultery, criminal conviction) or of excessive, abusive, or insulting behaviour. It was not until almost a century later, in 1975, that divorce by mutual consent was reinstated.

As soon as divorce was reauthorized applications came flooding in: 3'322 in 1884 alone, whereas the law was enacted in July. By way of comparison, legal separations amounted to about 3'000 per year in the early 1880s. In 1885, more than 4'000 divorces were granted; the figure was, nearly 7'900 ten years later, 10'850 in 1904, and 15'113 in 1912 (Brée, forthcoming).

Urban divorce

The spatial analysis of divorce between 1884 and 1913 shows a predominance of divorce in an area located in the Paris basin and to its north, from Haute-Normandie to Champagne-Ardenne, as well as in the Mediterranean basin (Brée, forthcoming). Beyond this spatial distribution, the most urbanized departments were Seine (Paris's department), Rhône

(Lyon's), Bouches-du-Rhône (Marseille's), and Gironde (Bordeaux's). Conversely, some regions had very low divorce rates, such as Brittany, the Basque country, and the southern Massif Central.

As in previous periods¹², divorce seems to have been rather an urban phenomenon; however, while the most urbanized departments had, on average, the highest divorce rates, there was no systematic correlation between level of urbanization and level of divorce (Brée, forthcoming; Ronsin, 1990). Roussel (1970) points this out again for divorces granted between 1936 and 1967.

Data show that between 1884 and 1913, 44% of divorces took place in an urban commune, 24% in the Seine department, and 31% in a rural commune, while the proportional distribution of marriages was 30%, 11%, and 59%, respectively (and the populations 28%, 8%, and 55%, respectively). Much higher divorce rates in urban areas, especially in the Seine department, as already mentioned, were indeed emerging and deserve further analysis.

For the period 1885-1900, the proportion of divorced people per 10'000 inhabitants was 10.3 in the Seine department, 4.4 in the urban population, and 1.4 in the rural population. In 1885, the year following the reinstatement of divorce, the proportion of divorced people was 15 times higher in the Seine department than in the countryside and 6 times higher than in the cities. These remarkably high rates are the result of the long period during which couples could not divorce (1816-1883) and thereafter remarry. These ratios shrank to 5 and 2 times higher, respectively, by 1900.

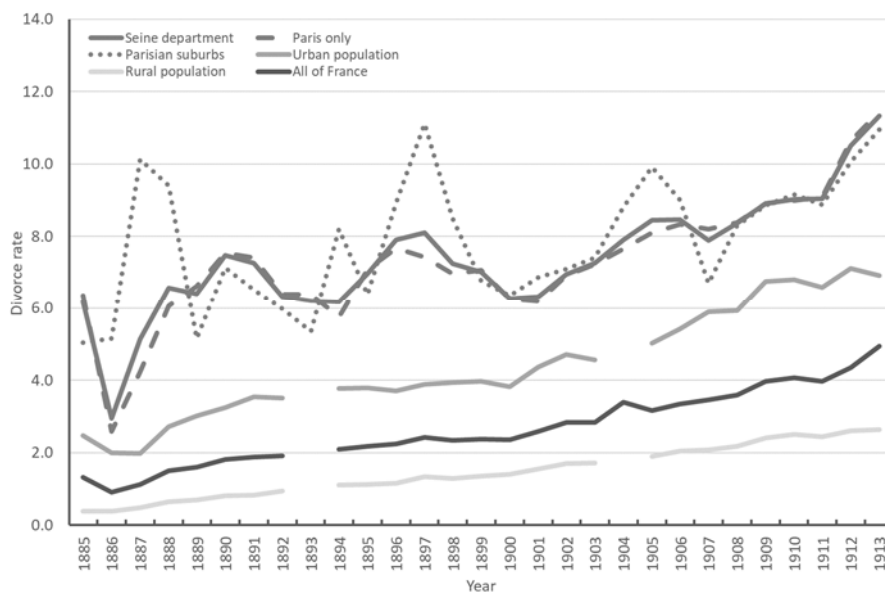
Specific divorce rates (12-year lag) were twice as high in the Seine department as in the rest of France's cities and seven times as high as in rural areas (Figure 2). Between 1885 and 1913, the ratio between the divorce rate in towns and in the Seine department was fairly stable, around 2, although it fell slightly (1.9 in 1886 compared with 1.7 in 1913). While the population of the Seine had a divorce level twice as high as that of France's other cities, the divorce growth rate between 1886 and 1913 was fairly similar for both groups (1.9 for the Seine department, 2.2 for urban communes). On the other hand, divorce in the countryside, which

12. During the Revolution and the Empire, most divorces took place in Paris (50 to 60 percent of all divorces) and in large cities, such as Rouen, Marseille, Lyon, Bordeaux, and Toulouse, whereas they were very rare in smaller towns or in the countryside (Ronsin, 1990). Paris remained predominant afterwards for legal separations, accounting for 13.5% to 27% of separations between 1837 and 1883 (whereas its marriages accounted for 3% to 7% of all marriages) (Brée, forthcoming).

was rare, grew at a slightly faster rate of 3.6. Despite this slightly higher growth rate in rural areas, we cannot characterize the behaviours as homogenizing, and the curves remained parallel through the period.

Looking more specifically at the Seine department, it appears that, contrary to what might be expected, the divorce rate was equivalent in Paris and its suburbs (the curve for suburban divorces was much more uneven because the numbers were quite low): 7.8 divorces per 100 marriages contracted 12 years earlier for the period 1885-1913.

FIGURE 2 Divorce rates in the geographic population groupings between 1885 and 1913



Reading: Number of divorces in year n relative to the number of marriages in year $n-12$.

Sources: *Annual Statistics on Population Movement, 1885-1913*; *Statistical Yearbook of the City of Paris, 1885-1913*.

Who gets divorced, and on what grounds?

Outside times of war, women are more likely than men to file for divorce and to obtain it (Brée, forthcoming)¹³. For the period for which data are

13. The General Accounts of Justice provide data on the spouse who applied for the divorce while the Annual Statistics on Population Movement data refer to the spouse(s) who obtained it.

available for the population segments under study (1907-1913), women in France obtained and therefore presumably filed for; divorce (Brée forthcoming) in 51.3% of cases, but they were slightly more likely to obtain it in the Seine department (54%) (Table 4). The gaps between this department and the rural and urban populations were, however, fairly small. On the other hand, there seems to be a significant gap between the Paris suburbs and the other segments, since women in the Seine department obtained divorce much more often than elsewhere. As these figures have been calculated based on statistical yearbooks for two different years, however, they should be taken with a grain of salt.

TABLE 4 Spouse who obtained the divorce in the Seine department (Paris and suburbs), France's rural population, its urban population, and for all of France (average 1907-1913)

Spouse who obtained divorce	Seine dept.	<i>Seine: Paris</i>	<i>Seine: Suburbs</i>	Urban population	Rural population	All of France
Man	39.7	41.2	34.3	42.6	42.2	41.8
Woman	54.1	53.0	58.1	49.9	51.2	51.3
Both	6.1	5.7	7.5	7.4	6.6	6.9
Total	100	100	100	100	100	100
Number of divorces	20'534	16'068	4'466	40'085	29'011	89'630
Undeclared	131	126	5	631	161	923

Source: Annual Statistics on Population Movement, 1907-1910 and 1911-1913; Statistical Yearbooks of the City of Paris, 1907-1913.

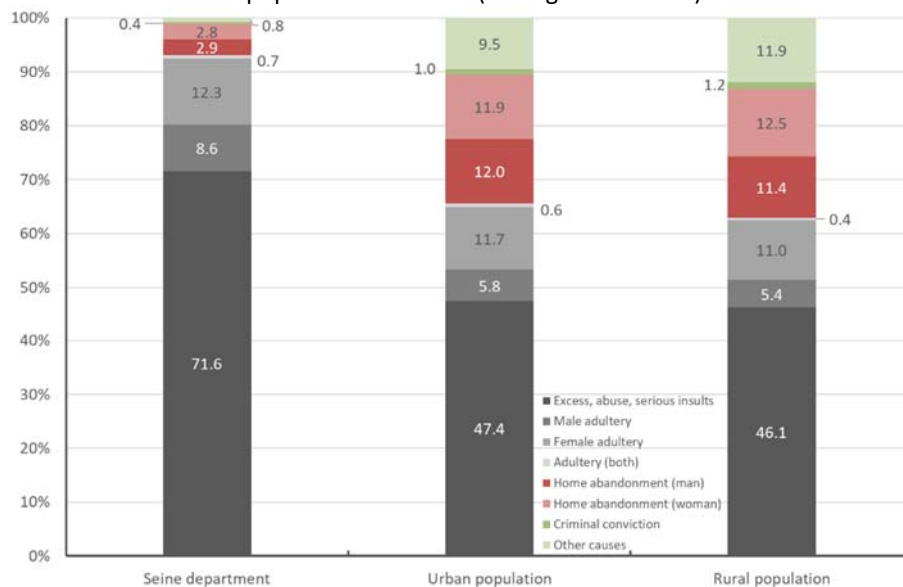
Returning to research hypotheses, the link between education level (Table 3) and the proportion of women being the ones obtaining the divorce (Table 4) is not truly clear or systematic. Because there is no reason to suppose that women are more likely to be injured or assaulted by their husbands in rural or urban areas (Tanguy, 2015), following (Sohn, 1996), explains that this phenomenon does not seem to belong to a particular environment or be more urban than rural¹⁴), this confirms the hypothesis that divorce may be more accepted in some areas more than others.

The grounds for the divorces granted also vary across the three groupings studied, with the Seine department clearly distinguished from the rest of

14. Note the link Bertillon (1883, pp. 71-72) makes between divorce, suicide, and insanity. He explains that a country with a high degree of social malaise has lot of marital discord and thus a higher suicide rate, and that ever-increasing deranged behaviour is related to the stresses of modernity. He adds that the big cities, centres of human thought and activity, produce more madmen, more drunks, and more suicide (and also more unbearable husbands) than do the countryside and small towns.

France (Figure 3). As Bertillon (1883) and Ronsin (1990) point out, it seems that couples state the grounds that will allow them to divorce as quickly and cheaply as possible, even if these grounds do not (or do not completely) correspond to reality. However, the grounds for divorce in the three jurisdictions studied are invoked with very different frequencies. While «excesses, abuse, and serious insult» is the grounds most often invoked throughout France, it is much more often given in the Seine department (72%) than elsewhere in France (46%-47% in both rural and urban populations). Conversely, abandonment of the family home, for both men and women – and this almost-even gender distribution is notable – is given as grounds four times more often outside the Seine department, whether among rural or urban people (11%-12%), than in the department itself (3%). Finally, adultery by men is cited twice as often as adultery by women in the rural and urban populations, whereas in the Seine department, this ratio is much lower (1.4).

FIGURE 3 Grounds for divorce for the Seine department, other urban, and rural population of France (average 1907-1913)



Source: Annual Statistics on Population Movement, 1907-1910, 1911-1913.

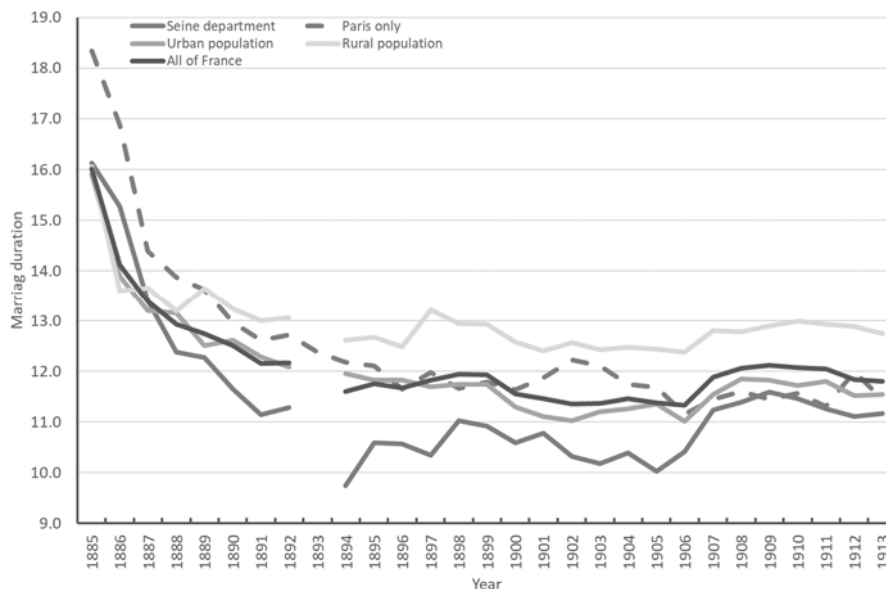
Unfortunately, the *Statistical Yearbooks of the City of Paris* do not describe the motives in as much detail as do the *Annual Statistics on Population Movement*, but they do provide the official motives of divorces, broken down as follows for the period 1907-1913: excesses and abuse (17.9%),

serious insult (62.1%), female adultery (8.4), male adultery (11.2%), and criminal conviction (0.4%). It is therefore difficult to compare these data with those available for the Seine department and the urban and rural populations. It may simply be noted that the proportion of divorces granted for female adultery and male adultery are very similar, which implies that the same is true for the suburbs.

Marriage duration

Marriages that end in divorce were somewhat shorter (Figure 4) in the Seine department (11 years on average between 1890 and 1913) than in the rest of the urban (11.8 years) and especially rural (12.9 years) population. Seine couples had a higher divorce rate after 5 to 10 years of marriage (34% of marriages) than did rural couples (27%), who in turn had a higher rate after 20 years of marriage (19% compared with 11% for Seine couples).

FIGURE 4 Mean marriage duration at the time of divorce for the groupings studied



Reading: Number of years elapsed between the year of marriage and the year in which the divorce ruling is transcribed in the civil register.

Sources: *Annual Statistics on Population Movement, 1885-1913*; *Statistical Yearbook of the City of Paris, 1885-1913*.

Married couples in urban areas were three times more likely to divorce with prior judicial separation than those in the Seine department, and couples in rural areas were four times more likely (3% of divorces preceded by judicial separation in the Seine department, 9% in urban areas, and 12% in rural areas in 1907-1913). The longer marriage durations of urban and especially rural populations can therefore be explained in part by a higher rate of transition to divorce via legal separation, whereas Seine couples were more likely to turn to direct divorce. This may indicate greater social acceptance of divorce in the Seine department than elsewhere, whereas in rural areas, attempts were made to postpone divorce as much as possible, particularly through legal separation, which is less radical since the couple remained married and legal separation did not allow for remarriage.

In the Seine department, suburban couples clearly divorced much earlier than others (deduced from the fact that Paris city couples divorced later than couples in the rest of the department¹⁵), whereas the marriage duration in Paris city was closer to that of the rest of the urban population (this is particularly true for the period 1889-1906). Research conducted on two cities in Paris's suburbs shows that marriages broken by divorce between 1885 and 1912 in these two cities were indeed very short, 8.2 and 9.9 years, respectively (Brée, Gourdon, 2020). Couples in the Paris suburbs were more likely to divorce and did so sooner than in the rest of France. Brée and Gourdon (2020) show that those who moved to the cities they studied statistically divorced more than those born in them; they argue that a sense of detachment from communities of origin could be an important factor in the higher divorce rate and thus in their social acceptance. The proportion in the suburbs of those born elsewhere is higher than it is in Paris and could indeed explain this difference in behaviour, which cannot be explained by education levels since Paris's population has, on average, a better level of education than its suburban population.

Thus it seems that divorce was even better accepted in the suburbs than in the capital. While this statement may come as a surprise, since large cities are often seen as places where innovative behaviours are adopted (birth restrictions, for example), it should not be forgotten that at the end of the 19th century the proportion of children born out of wedlock was

15. When cross-checking the data published in the Annual Statistics on Population Movement for the Seine department and those published in the Statistical Yearbooks of the City of Paris for the city of Paris in order to derive data for the Paris suburbs alone, the results sometimes seem inconsistent. We have therefore chosen to work only on the data published in both publication series.

particularly high in Paris's suburbs and close to levels in Paris city (Brée, 2014). Also noteworthy is the higher proportion of children born to unmarried couples in the suburbs than in Paris (Brée, forthcoming). Suburbs may thus be a place where more «marginal» behaviours such as having children out of wedlock, concubinage, and divorce are more socially accepted. Here we can probably distinguish innovative behaviours from «marginal» ones that are not practiced by exactly the same population even if the two types of behaviours have urban features.

The characteristics of divorce in the population groupings

Age of divorcing spouses and age differences

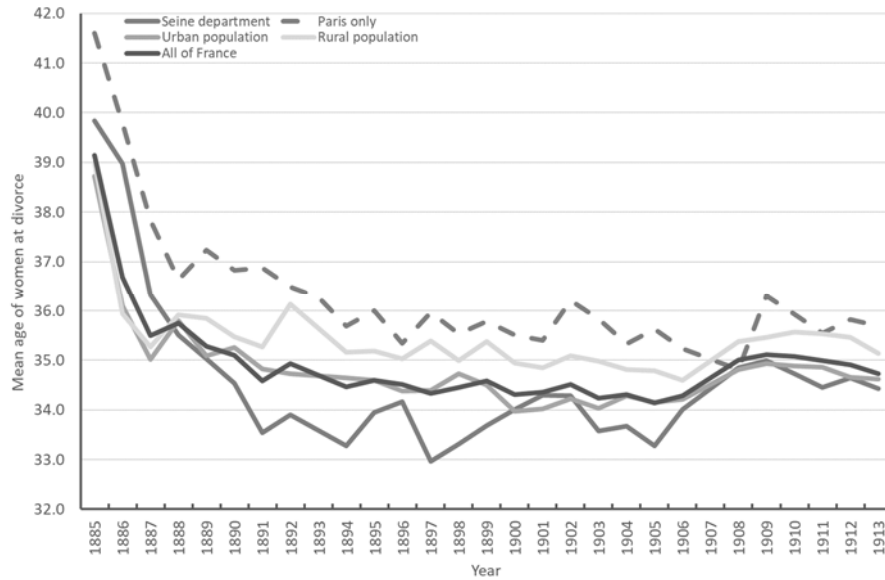
Age at divorce is determined by the combination of age at marriage and duration of marriage. Men and women divorced at younger ages in the Seine department and among the urban population than among the rural population but also Paris¹⁶ (Figure 5).

For the urban population and the Seine department, the age at divorce was about the same, although age at marriage¹⁷ was a little older for the Seine department and marriages lasted a bit longer among the rest of the urban population. But what is most surprising is that age at divorce in Paris and among the rural populations is the same. Age at first marriage was higher in Paris than among the rural populations (an almost two-year difference for men and more than two years for women), but marriages lasted much longer in the rural areas.

16. Women's age at marriage was around 25 years old for the Seine department, 23 years and 4 months to 23 years and 10 months for the urban population, and 23 years to 23 years and 6 months for the rural population. For men, ages at marriage were respectively 28 years and 10 months to 29 years and 8 months for the Seine department, 27 years and 5 months to 28 years for the urban population, and 27 years and 8 months to 28 years for the rural population.

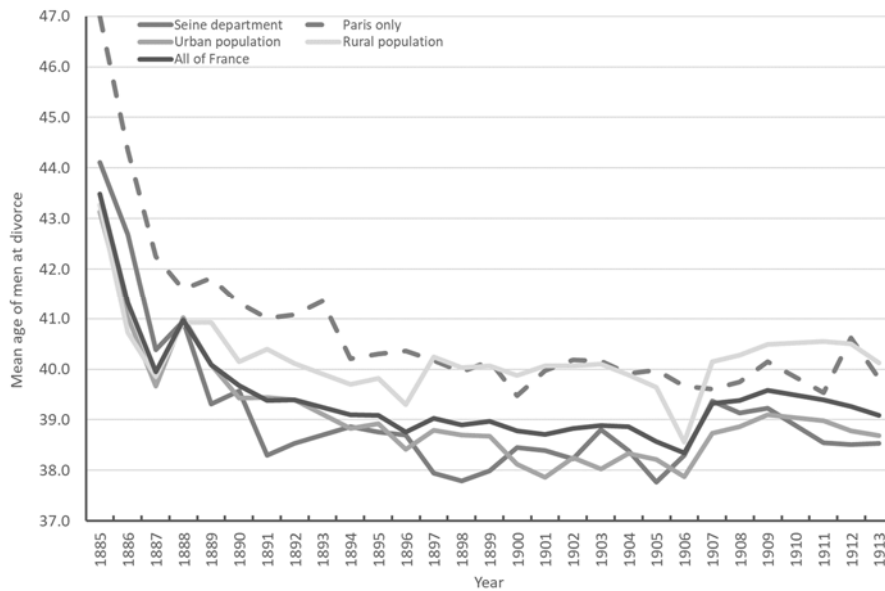
17. Women's age at divorce was 33 years and 10 months between 1894 and 1913 in the Seine department, 34 years for urban populations, and 34.5 years for rural populations. For men, ages at divorce were, respectively, 38 years and 6 months for both the Seine department and the urban populations and 39 years and 8 months for the rural populations.

FIGURE 5 Mean age of women at divorce for the groupings studied (1885-1913)



Sources: Annual Statistics on Population Movement, 1885-1913; Statistical Yearbook of the City of Paris, 1885-1913.

FIGURE 6 Mean age of men at divorce in the groupings studied (1885-1913)



Sources: Annual Statistics on Population Movement, 1885-1913; Statistical Yearbook of the City of Paris, 1885-1913.

There are also age differences between spouses that differ across the populations (Figure 7). For the urban population, including Paris and the Seine department, for 80% of the marriages the husband is older and for 20% the wife is. On the other hand, for the rural population, as in suburban Paris, men are more likely to be older than their wife. Obviously, no conclusion can be drawn without some means of comparing differences in age at marriage. Unfortunately, while the ages at marriage of the two spouses are indicated in the *Annual Statistics on Population Movement*, they are given for five-year age groups, so we cannot know the age difference between the spouses. The information is partially available for 1910-1913 since we know whether the husband was older than the wife but not by how many years, and it is not available for 1895-1901, which would allow us to compare couples divorced in 1907-1913 to their marriage cohort. Nevertheless, if we compare these data with great caution, it appears that among couples married in 1910, the husband was likely to be older than among those divorcing in the same period for urban (77.9 versus 76.5%) and especially rural (85.2 versus 82%) populations. Conversely, they were a little likely to be older in the Seine department (75 versus 76.3%). Surprisingly, even if the husband is more often older in the rural population, it is not there that the larger age gaps when the man is older are observed but in suburban Paris and the urban population (36%-37% of men older by 10 years or more), whereas it is in Paris that women are more often the oldest (20%).

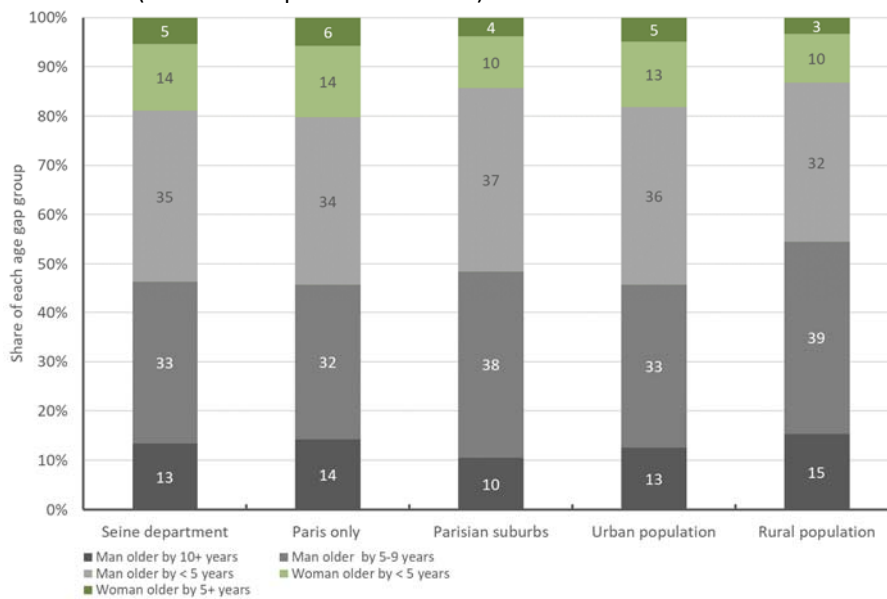
It is difficult to know whether this is actually linked to the fact that among divorcing couples, men are slightly less likely to be older (which would, however, be consistent with the idea that divorcing couples have smaller age differences than others). However, these differences are small and probably not very significant.

The *Statistical Yearbooks of the City of Paris* provide statistics on age differences in marriage certificates. They show that among the divorcees of 1907-1913, men were slightly older than among all the couples who married in 1895-1901, and women were likely to be older¹⁸. Couples seem to be more likely to divorce when the man is older, and mainly when he is 5 to 9 years older (but not 10 years older or more), and less likely to divorce when the woman is older. The gender imbalance favours divorce when

18. In Paris, 6% of couples married in 1895-1901 were the same age, compared with 5% of divorced Parisians in 1907-1913; for 30% and 31% of couples, respectively, men were older by 1 to 4 years; 28% and 32% were older by 5 to 9 years, and 14% were older by more than 10 years in both groups; the woman was 1 to 4 years older for 13.7% of couples married in 1895-1901 in Paris and 11.8% of divorced Parisian couples in 1907-1913 and, respectively, 7.4% and 5.8% older by 5 or more years .

the husband is older but prevents it when the wife is older. In contrast, couples with a small age difference therefore were not more likely to divorce than others and were even very slightly underrepresented.

FIGURE 7 Age difference of divorced spouses for the three groupings studied (divorced couples in 1907-1913)



Sources: Annual Statistics of Population Movement, 1907-1913; Statistical Yearbook of the City of Paris, 1907-1913.

Previous marital status and remarriage of divorced people

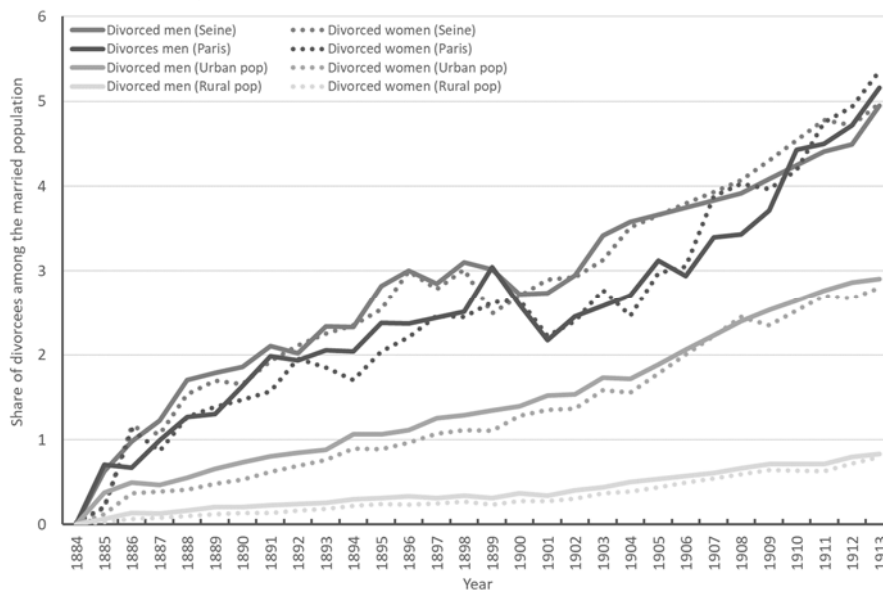
In all the groupings, people whose marriage was their first are overrepresented among individuals whose marriages ended in divorce compared to their marriage cohort (Table 5). However, the gap is much higher in the Seine department than in the rest of the urban population and especially than in the rural population. Conversely, a far lower proportion of widowers were divorced in the Seine department than elsewhere. As for those previously divorced, their probability of divorcing again was lower than others in the Seine department but higher in other cities and especially in the countryside.

TABLE 5 Previous marital status of those divorced between 1907 and 1913 and those married 12 years earlier (%)

		Men				Women			
		Seine dept.	Paris only	Urban pop.	Rural pop.	Seine dept.	Paris only	Urban pop.	Rural pop.
Married between 1895 and 1901	Single	85.6	87.8	88.9	92.0	87.4	89.5	91.4	94.9
	Widowed	11.4	9.6	9.9	7.7	9.8	8.1	7.5	4.8
	Divorced	2.9	2.6	1.2	0.3	2.8	2.4	1.1	0.2
Divorced between 1907 and 1913	Single	93.6	93.4	92.2	93.6	94.4	94.0	93.5	94.9
	Widowed	4.3	4.4	5.9	5.1	3.8	4.0	4.8	4.0
	Divorced	2.1	2.2	1.9	1.2	1.8	2.1	1.7	1.1

Sources: Annual Statistics on Population Movement, 1895-1901 & 1911-1913; Statistical Yearbook of the City of Paris, 1895-1913.

Reading: In the Seine department, among the men married between 1895 and 1901, 85.6% were single when they married, 11.4% widowed, and 2.9% divorced. Among men divorced between 1907 and 1913, in the same department, 93.6% were single at their marriage (estimated 12 years earlier, i.e., during the period 1895-1901), 4.3% widowed, and 2.1% divorced.

FIGURE 8 Proportion of previously divorced men and women among the married population, 1884-1913

Source: Annual Statistics on Population Movement, 1884-1913; Statistical Yearbooks of the City of Paris, 1884-1913.

In sum, the fact of having previously divorced seems to have offered protection against a second divorce in the Seine department but to have favoured a second divorce for the rest of the French population. Widowhood also protected against divorce, especially in the Seine department.

Divorced people did not remarry everywhere the same rate, but everywhere men remarried more than women (the differences were, however, very small in Paris and the Seine department). Their share among married people in the Seine department was much higher (and slightly higher in the suburbs than in Paris) than among married people in other cities and even higher than among married people in the countryside (Figure 8). Of course, this proportion depends, in particular, on the rate of remarriage of widowers for the different populations studied (but widowers and widows were more numerous than elsewhere among the married, so the effect is the opposite) but also on their age structures. Thus, the later age at divorce in the countryside may explain why fewer people remarried there than in the cities, especially in Paris, but it is also likely that marriage to a divorced man or woman was better accepted in urban areas than elsewhere. In view of the appreciable differences between each population, we can hypothesize that it was more conceivable, or even acceptable, to marry a divorcee in the Seine department than in other urban areas and especially in the countryside. Moreover, the gender gap in couple involving a divorcee remarrying was smaller in the Seine department (even if men were more likely to remarry than women) than in urban and especially rural areas, which supports the hypothesis of social acceptance.

Socioeconomic level of those divorced

The *Annual Statistics on Population Movement* provide, between 1885 and 1890, the distribution of divorces according to the husband's occupation (Appendix 1). This statistic is not really instructive unless it can be compared to the distribution of occupations of married people in the same cohorts. Unfortunately, this information is not given in the source.

It is possible to compare the proportion of previously divorced people who signed a marriage prenuptial agreement with the proportion of those that had done so 12 years earlier (average marriage duration) with the limitation that these data are not available in the *Statistical Yearbooks of the City of Paris* for those divorced.

It appears that couples who divorced between 1907 and 1913 were less likely to have signed a prenuptial agreement at the time of their marriage

than all couples in their marriage cohort (Table 6). This result therefore runs counter to our hypotheses, since it seems that it is not the wealthiest households, nor those who could rely on their personal wealth, that were most likely to divorce – quite the contrary. It is possible that this result is linked to the fact that prenuptial agreements were more frequent among rural populations, perhaps for couples with real estate assets that could not easily be broken up. Nevertheless, if we look at the rural population, we see that the gap between married and divorced couples for the presence of a prenuptial agreement is very small. Could the prenuptial agreement therefore be an indicator of the proportion of the population that held assets, whether agricultural or real estate? We would then return to the conclusion that those who had personal wealth had a low probability of divorce (Brée, forthcoming)¹⁹, but without any further implications except that the gap between the share of married people having signed a prenuptial agreement and the share of divorced people having done so was much higher in the urban populations and the Seine department.

TABLE 6 Proportion of couples having signed a prenuptial agreement
(married 1895-1901; divorced 1907-1913)

	Seine dept.	Urban population	Rural population	All of France
Married 1895-1901	19.4	25.4	31.1	26.3
Divorced 1907-1913	14.6	18.2	30.2	21.3
Relative deviation	-25%	-28%	-3%	-19%

Sources: Annual Statistics on Population Movement, 1885-1890.

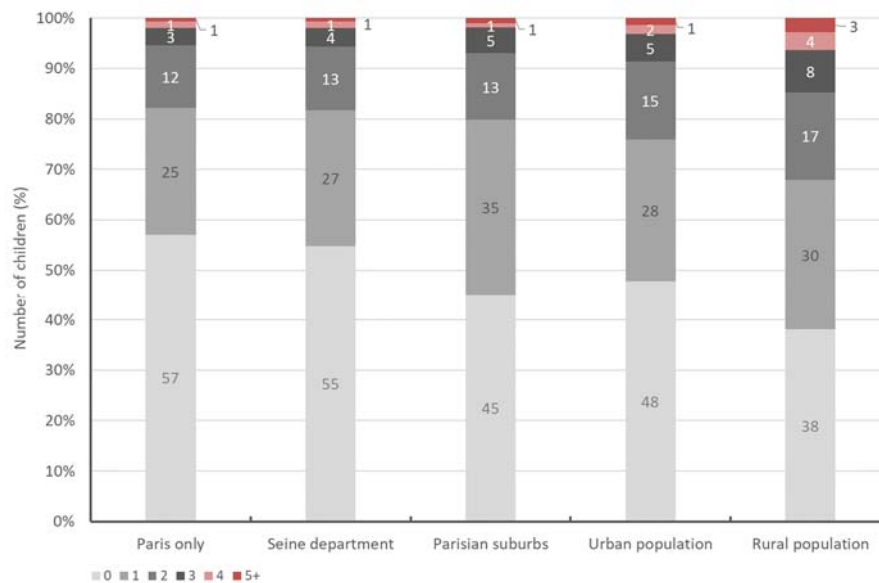
Family Size

Many divorced people did not have children at the time of their divorce (Figure 9). This could be related to their age at divorce, where couples had not necessarily had the time to have children. However, infertility could also be a cause of divorce. Conversely, having one or more children may have encouraged some couples not to divorce. Fertility differences were significant among the three populations studied. It is in the Seine department that the proportion of childless couples among the divorced was highest, followed by the urban and then the rural population. Since fertility in Paris was much lower than fertility in the cities, which in turn had lower fertility than rural areas, it is hard to know whether the divorced were broadly representative of the rest of their marriage cohort.

19. Like the better-off, they turned more to legal separation than to divorce (Brée, forthcoming).

Since data are available by age group, however, we observe that three-quarters of couples who divorced before the age of 20 did not have children. Then in the next age group, the proportion of childless couples fell, before rising again for divorces involving women between the ages of 40 and 49. Conversely, couples that divorced after the wife had passed her childbearing years (about age 50) were mostly childless: 65%, or even 72% for those over 60 years of age. However, the proportion of these couples that divorced late in life without children was much higher in the Seine department (87%) than in other urban areas (77%) and especially in the countryside (59%). While it may seem that this could be linked to the proportion of widows and widowers or divorced people in these higher age groups who did not necessarily have children after remarriage, in fact widowers were more numerous in the rural population than in the urban population or in Paris. It therefore seems that childlessness favoured divorce, whether it was to eventually remarry and have the possibility of having children with the new spouse or the fact that having children was an obstacle to divorce and that childless people could divorce more easily. This childlessness of those divorced was much higher in the Seine department.

FIGURE 9 Number of children (%) at the time of a couple's divorce, 1907-1913



Sources: Annual Statistics on Population Movement, 1907-1913; Statistical Yearbook of the City of Paris, 1907-1913.

Conclusion

Populations residing in urban communes, and particularly in the Seine department, began to divorce earlier and at a greater rate than their rural peers. The divorce curves of these groupings were parallel from the end of the 1880s and still were on the eve of the First World War.

Our data also show that the trend observed for the divorce rates is the same as for the duration of marriages and the probability of remarrying: all these indicators are higher in the Seine department than in the rest of the urban population, and higher in the urban than in the rural population. All this may point to a greater social acceptance of divorce in the Seine department than elsewhere, whereas in rural areas, attempts were made to postpone divorce as much as possible, particularly by means of legal separation, which was less radical since the couple remained formally married and were not permitted to remarry. However, there is very little difference in the gender of the spouse who obtained the divorce, even if the proportion of women who did so in the Seine department is a little more than in urban and rural areas. Gender differences in receiving the divorce are the same for urban and rural populations, and the distribution of divorces by grounds is also almost equivalent in these two populations. Everywhere the most common grounds cited is «excesses, abuse, and serious insult», but much more so in the Seine department than elsewhere in France. These differences are linked to the fact that home abandonment was not often cited in the Seine department, unlike in the other populations. In summary, there is a gradient according to the urban hierarchy: the more urban the territory, the higher the divorce rates and the shorter the duration of marriage. However, the Seine population differs from the others in terms of low gender differentiation for the filing of the divorce but especially of the grounds for divorce, whereas for these last two elements, the urban and rural populations show similar behaviour. The Seine therefore still stands out from the other two territories in terms of the specific grounds cited for divorce and, as expected, adopted divorce faster and more emphatically than the others, with a slightly higher involvement of women (but the difference with the other populations is less than expected here). More surprisingly, some indicators distinguish urban from rural populations (divorce rate, marriage duration) and others do not (the gender of the spouse who obtained the divorce and the grounds cited for divorce). It would be worthwhile doing further research to try to understand why.

The distinction between Paris and its suburbs within the Seine department nuances these findings. The level of divorce was equivalent in Paris

and in its suburbs, and most of the available data seem to indicate a higher acceptance of divorce in the suburbs than in Paris (shorter duration of marriages, greater likelihood of divorced men and women remarrying, greater proportion of women obtaining the divorce). A major contribution of this paper is to bring to light the extremely high levels of divorce in suburban Paris. This brought us to re-examine the question of the adoption of innovative and marginal behaviours. City centres are often seen as places where modern behaviours are first adopted, such as birth control. They are also places where «marginal» behaviours are more common, such as having children out of wedlock or concubinage, but these behaviours are also found a lot, if not more, in the suburbs.

This leads to the question of the specificity of the geographical population groupings studied in this paper that could explain the high, or low, levels of divorce. We have noticed that the levels of divorce were higher where education levels were highest. However, we can find no clear link between the proportion of women filing for divorce and their level of education. As to the link between divorce and secularization, our research is in line with the literature that shows that divorce rates are higher where religion is little practiced. This distinguishes the rural and urban population, but also the population within the Seine department, since secularization is even higher in suburban Paris than in Paris city. We have also pointed out that the proportion of migrants is higher for the populations where divorce is frequent, including within the Seine, where the proportion of migrants in the suburbs is even higher than in Paris city proper. Our research does not provide any significant results at the socioeconomic level. We can only suggest that those populations among which divorce is lowest are perhaps those where rates of transmission of inheritance are highest, which would tend to lead to an avoidance or a delay of divorce (the rural population has a higher tendency to opt for legal separation before proceeding to divorce).

All this broadly points in the same direction: divorce seems to be more accepted in the urban communes, especially in Paris and maybe even more in its suburbs. Detachment from the family and the community brought about by migration but also detachment from religion may be important factors in a higher acceptance of divorce (perhaps more than a higher level of education). Also, migration may have another impact: migrants may try to marry rapidly after migration or may have fewer opportunities in terms of partner choice, and this could also lead to more divorces and shorter marriages. This is in line with previous findings at the individual scale (Brée, Gourdon, 2020) and encourages further re-

search on the demographic behaviours of the urban and suburban populations, and especially on what could be termed «marginal» behaviours such as out-of-wedlock childbearing, concubinage (and the separation of these non-married couples), and divorce, especially since these behaviours would become more and more widespread, especially after the Second World War and during the second demographic transition.

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Appendix 1: Distribution of divorces from 1885 to 1890 according to the occupation of the husband

(%)	Seine dept.	Urban pop.	Rural pop.	All of France
Military and marine	0.6	2.4	0.8	1.5
Civil servants	3.7	4.0	3.9	3.9
Landlords and rentiers	10.0	5.7	7.4	7.4
Liberal professions	7.1	5.2	3.2	5.3
Farmers and settlers	0.8	2.5	14.1	5.0
Industrial bosses	9.3	8.3	6.9	8.2
Merchants	11.6	10.1	6.7	9.7
Commercial and industrial employees	18.8	15.2	7.3	14.2
Industrial workers and day labourers	27.7	32.6	24.0	28.9
Farm workers and day labourers	1.8	7.2	18.4	8.5
Domestic staff	2.7	1.9	2.2	2.2
Other	5.9	4.9	4.9	5.2
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

Source: Annual Statistics on Population Movement, 1885-1890.