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International Seminar

**Looking backward, looking forward: African demography in
historical perspective**

Ol Pajeta, Kenya, 30 November - 2 December, 2021

**Critical perspectives on
marriage and unions in DHS
surveys in Kenya and Uganda**

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Ined

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SALMEA

Self-Accomplishment and Local Moralities in East Africa



A decline of marriage in sub-Saharan Africa

- Converging results by many (from demographers – Westoff, 2003; Antoine, 2006; Shapiro and Gebressalassie, 2014; ... as well as anthropologists – Hakansson, 1988; Pauli, 2016; ...)
- ‘Marriage remains the rule’ (Tabutin and Shoumaker, 2004, 2020) : few people remain unmarried
- But marriage a ‘developing process’ (Radcliffe-Brown, 1950), a ‘blurry concept’ (Van de Walle 1993) difficult to measure (Antoine, 2002; Hertrich 2014; Golaz, 2014).

Quantitative surveys / DHS surveys : what do we measure?

Marriage as a process, torn between

-Norms / values

Laws and public policies

Local moralities (bridewealth, introduction, church ceremonies...)

-Difficulties at meeting the expectations

=> Practices : Negotiation of a social status

Marriage/bridewealth as a sensitive issue

=> Self declaration of marital status and importance of union over marriage in demographic and reproductive health studies

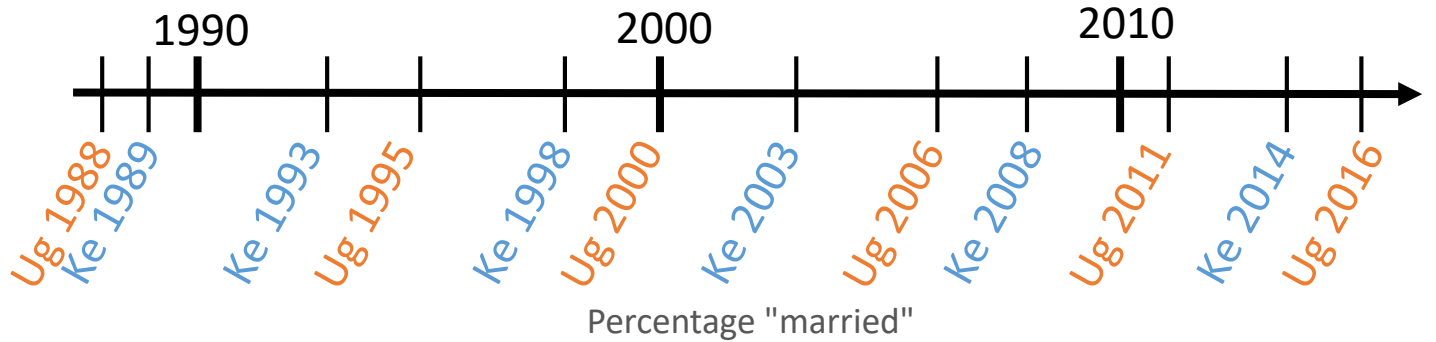
Outline

- Published trends and data limitations
- Marital status by age groups emphasizing differences between Kenya and Uganda
- Regional trends : an anomaly

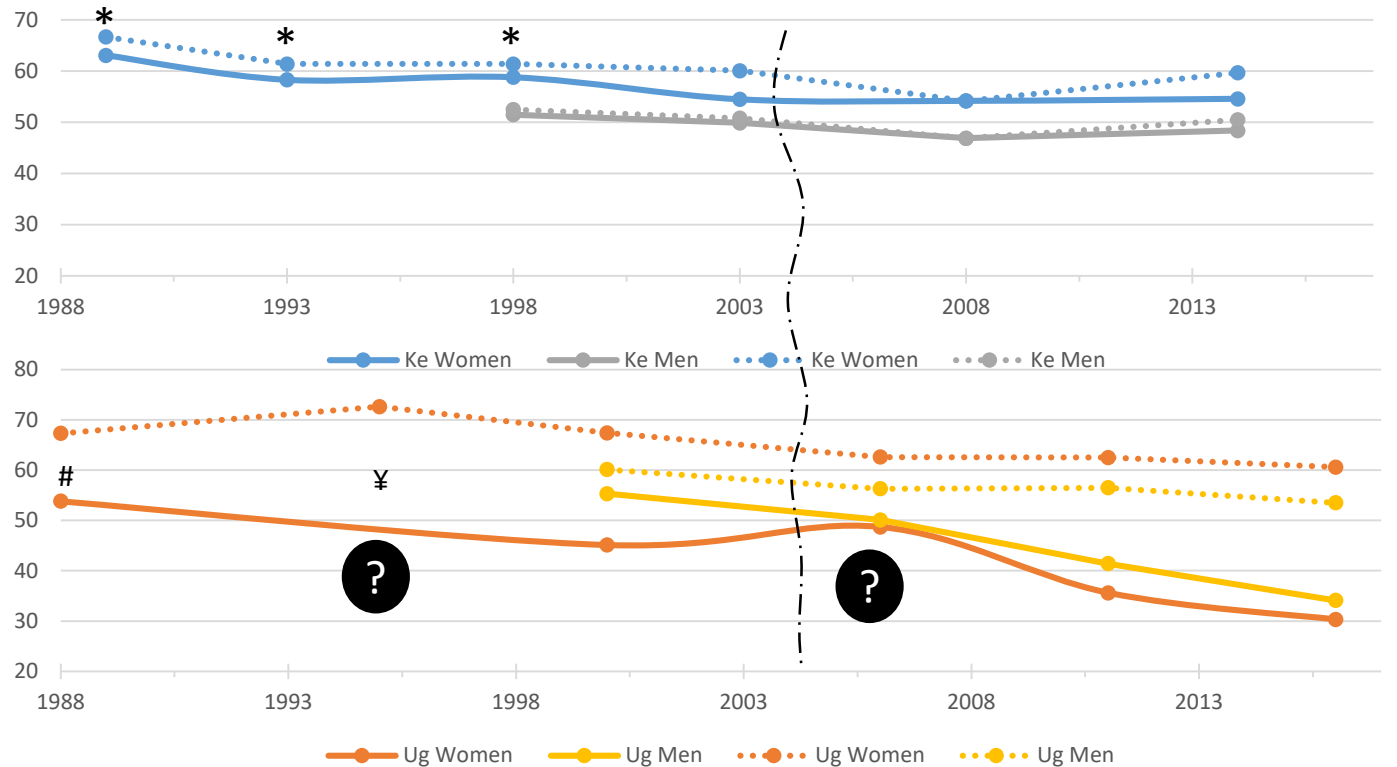
UDHS

-

KDHS



Percentage "married"



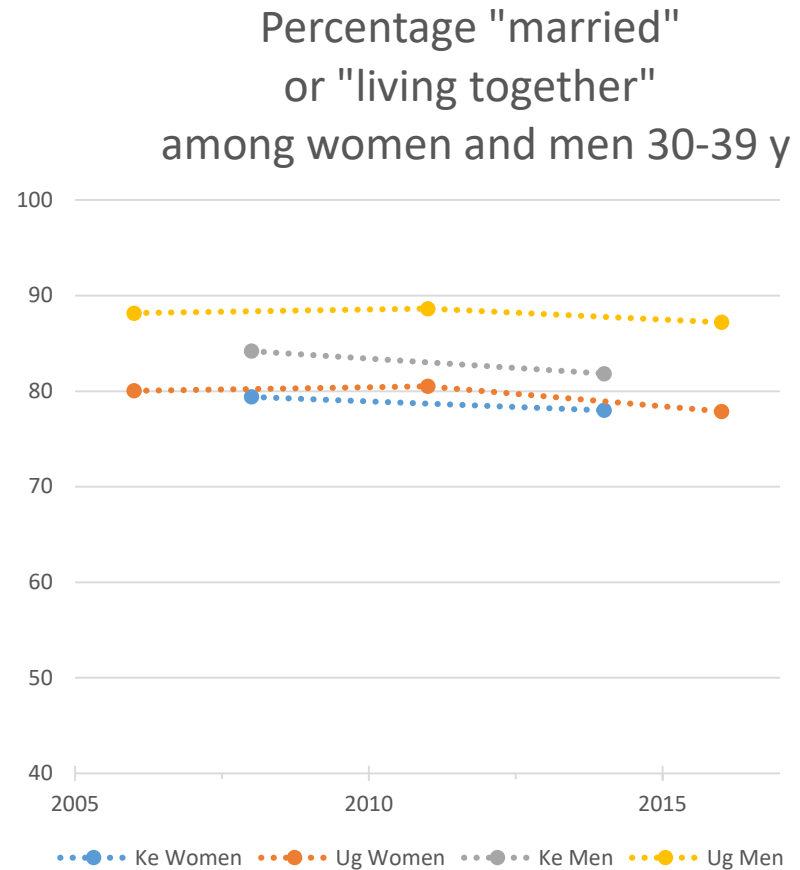
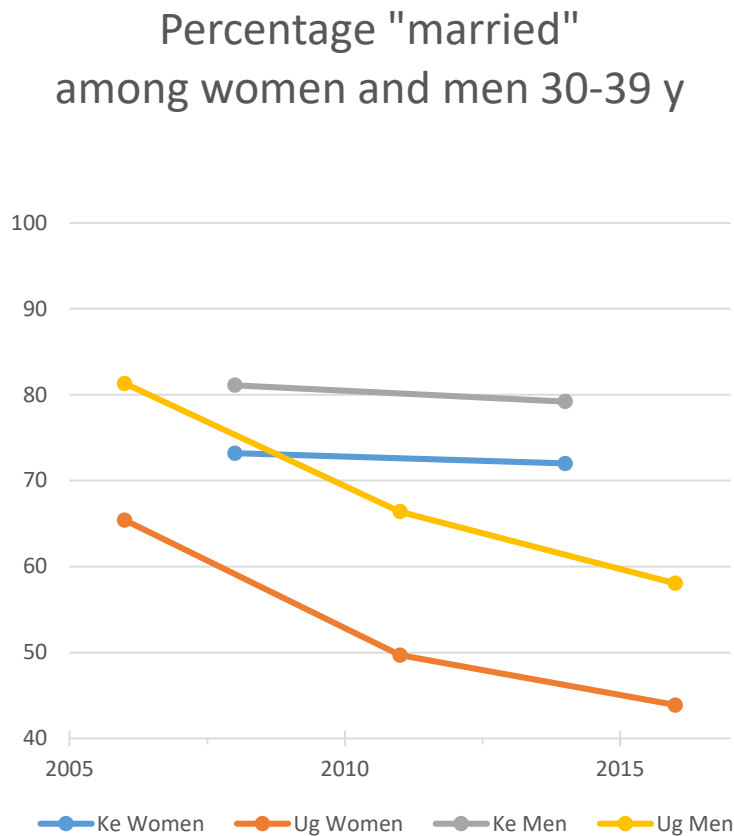
Note: when age is not stated, men 15-54; women 15-49

Source: Published survey reports



- Later marriages and changes in age structure blur the trends ?
- Partner age difference and polygamy
- Differences between Kenya and Uganda highlight local specificities?

Married and/or 'as if married' ... when 30 to 39 y old



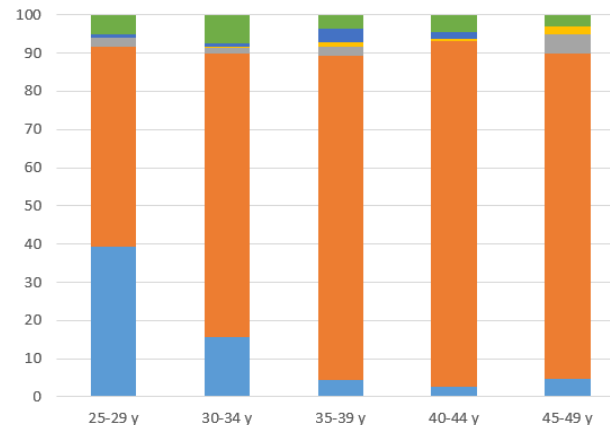
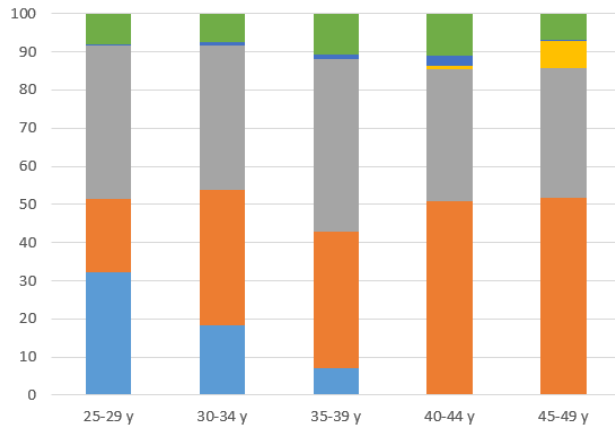
Source (here and in the next slides): DHS microdata analysis

Marital status by age group in the central region+capital city

CENTRAL **UGANDA** / KAMPALA
2016

CENTRAL **KENYA** / NAIROBI
2014

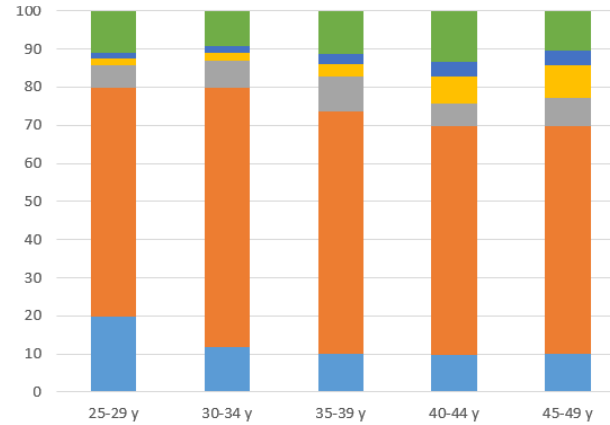
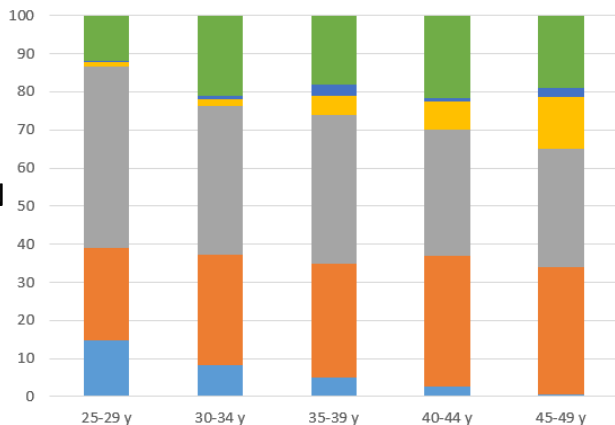
MEN



- Not living together
- Divorced
- Widowed
- Living together
- Married
- Never married

-10% women (and men) remain single in Kenya
 -25% of 45-49 y age group In unstable /single situation
 -As many women married as in informal unions in Central Ug among women 45-49y

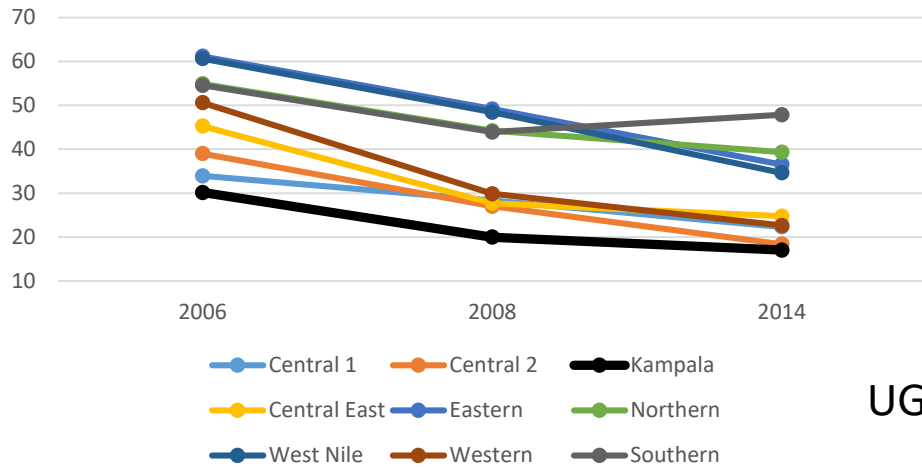
WOMEN



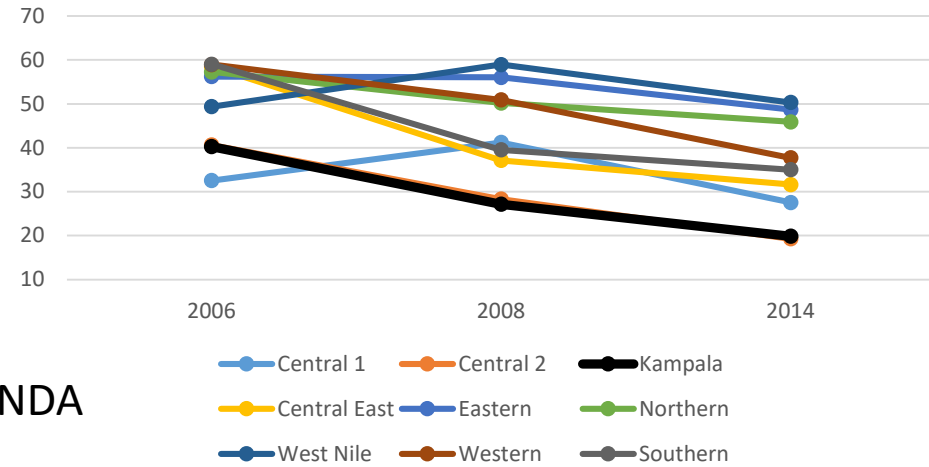
Although figures are definitely different for Uganda, can we compare the two countries?

Regional trends

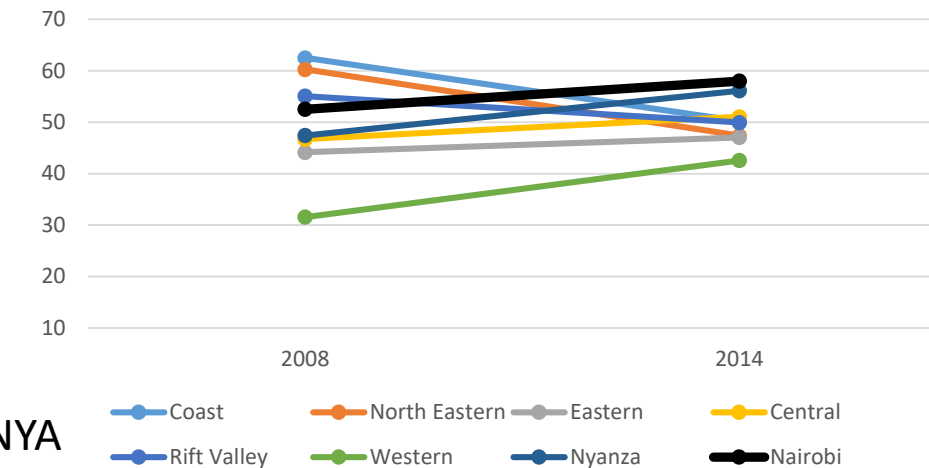
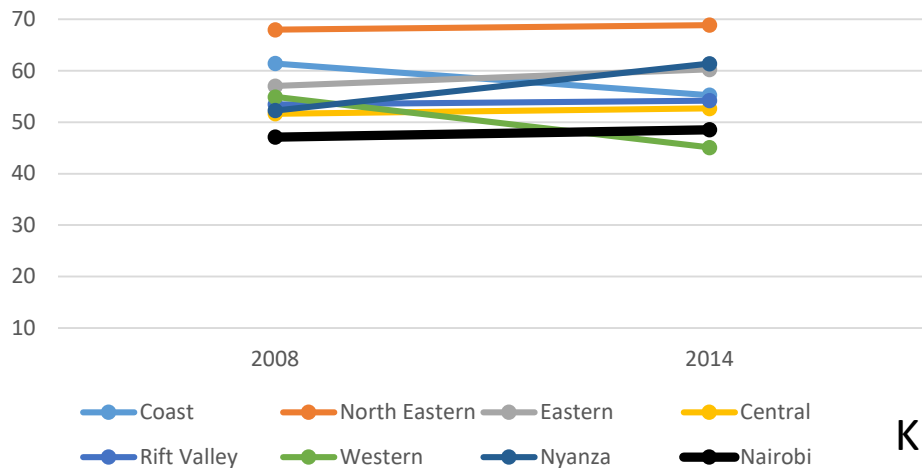
Proportion of married women



Proportion of married men



UGANDA



KENYA

Regional trends of marriage and union rates among men and women 30-39 years old in Kenya

Married

	Men 2008	Men 2014	Women 2008	Women 2014
Nairobi	52,53	58	47,12	48,54
Central	46,69	51,06	51,64	52,68
Coast	62,52	50,2	61,41	55,26
Eastern	44,16	47,06	57,04	60,26
Nyanza	47,41	56,14	52,29	61,39
Rift Valley	55,07	49,94	53,46	54,21
Western	31,54	42,56	54,93	45,1
North Eastern	60,27	47,4	67,98	68,89

In union (not married)

	Men 2008	Men 2014	Women 2008	Women 2014
Nairobi	1,19	1,69	2,81	7,62
Central	0,15	1,47	7,44	5,49
Coast	0,42	0,68	1,97	3,94
Eastern	0,64	0,73	4,3	0,69
Nyanza	2,88	0,96	7,65	1,14
Rift Valley	0,99	2,15	3,09	4,84
Western	12,22	8,61	0,98	15,35
North Eastern	0,88	0,18	2,46	0,62

Conclusions

-A marked decline in Uganda, where marriage is less of a norm

-An apparent stability in Kenya where it remains a major step in life

+Uncertainties...

Local norms driving survey respondents?
and Field Surveyors/Field Supervisors?

Thank you!

