How open are the Irish?
Exploring inter-cultural family formation in Ireland

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Who marries whom?

"Marriage was no longer a union between a man and a woman arranged by others according to fixed external criteria. Instead, it had turned into an intimate and personal encounter between two committed individuals, defying the narrow lines of class and status and obeying to one authority only – to the language of the heart" Elisabeth Beck-Gernsheim 25/10/2013.

Ireland

- Despite a growing body of research on immigrants' labour market integration relatively little is known on their levels of social integration.

- Migrants a heterogeneous group: nationality, ethnicity, legal status and language skills, as well as religious affiliation.

Kalmijn states that:

> …interaction between social groups provides a fundamental way to describe the group boundaries that make up the social structure. Because marriage is an intimate and often long-term relationship, intermarriage or heterogamy not only *reveals the existence of interaction across group boundaries*, it also shows that members of different groups accept each other as social equals. *Intermarriage can thus be regarded as an intimate link between social groups*; conversely, endogamy or homogamy can be regarded as a form of group closure. (Kalmijn 1998:396)

Background: Ireland

- Traditionally, Irish families were regarded as homogenous, with low recorded levels of diversity

- Changing profile of family unions in recent decades

- In more than one quarter of young couples, those with a mean age of 30 years or less, at least one partner was of non-Irish nationality and/or non-white ethnicity (Lunn and Fahey, 2011).

- There is also slowly emerging evidence that the marriages are now more diverse than before (Chiyoko King-O'Riain 2014). "Global Love".

Immigration to Ireland

Figure 1: Inward migration to Ireland by region of origin
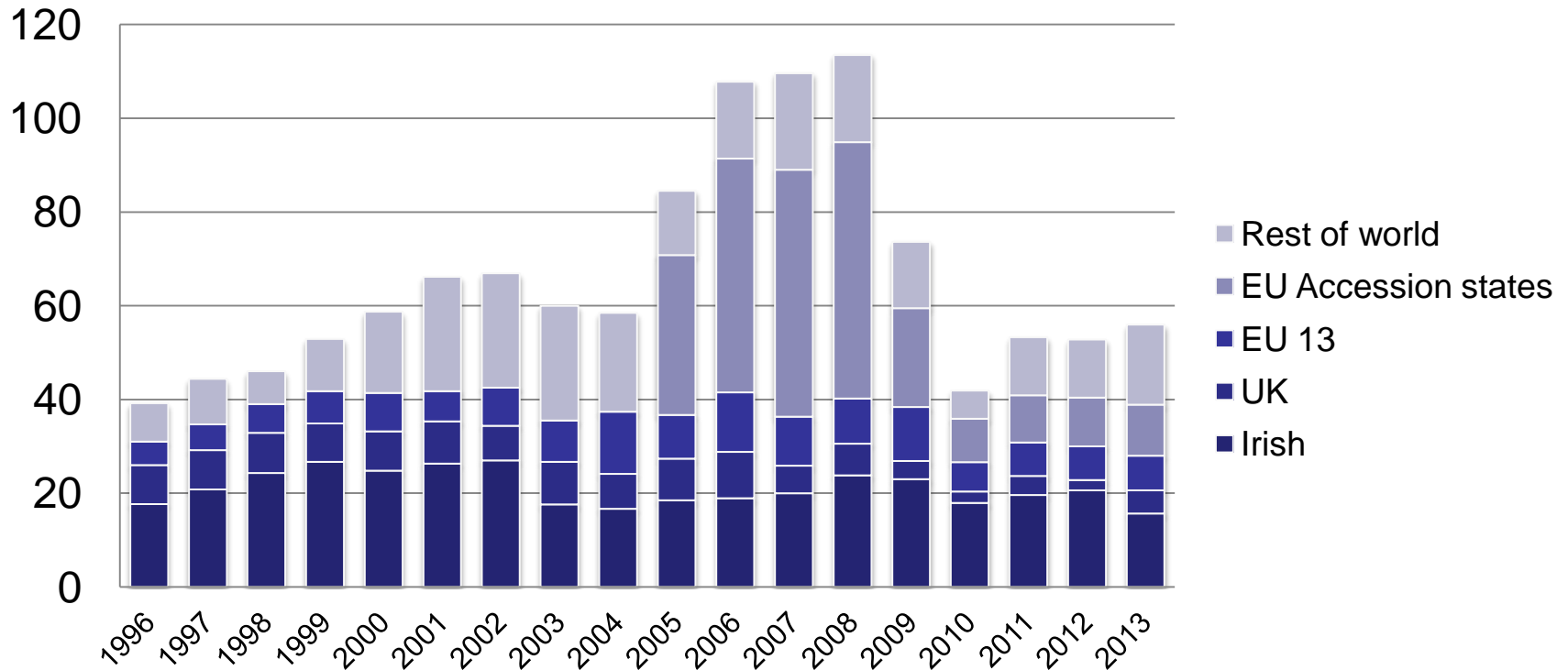
The key considerations are;

➢ Individual preferences

➢ Social norms and third party influences

➢ Meeting opportunities (Kalmijn, 1998)

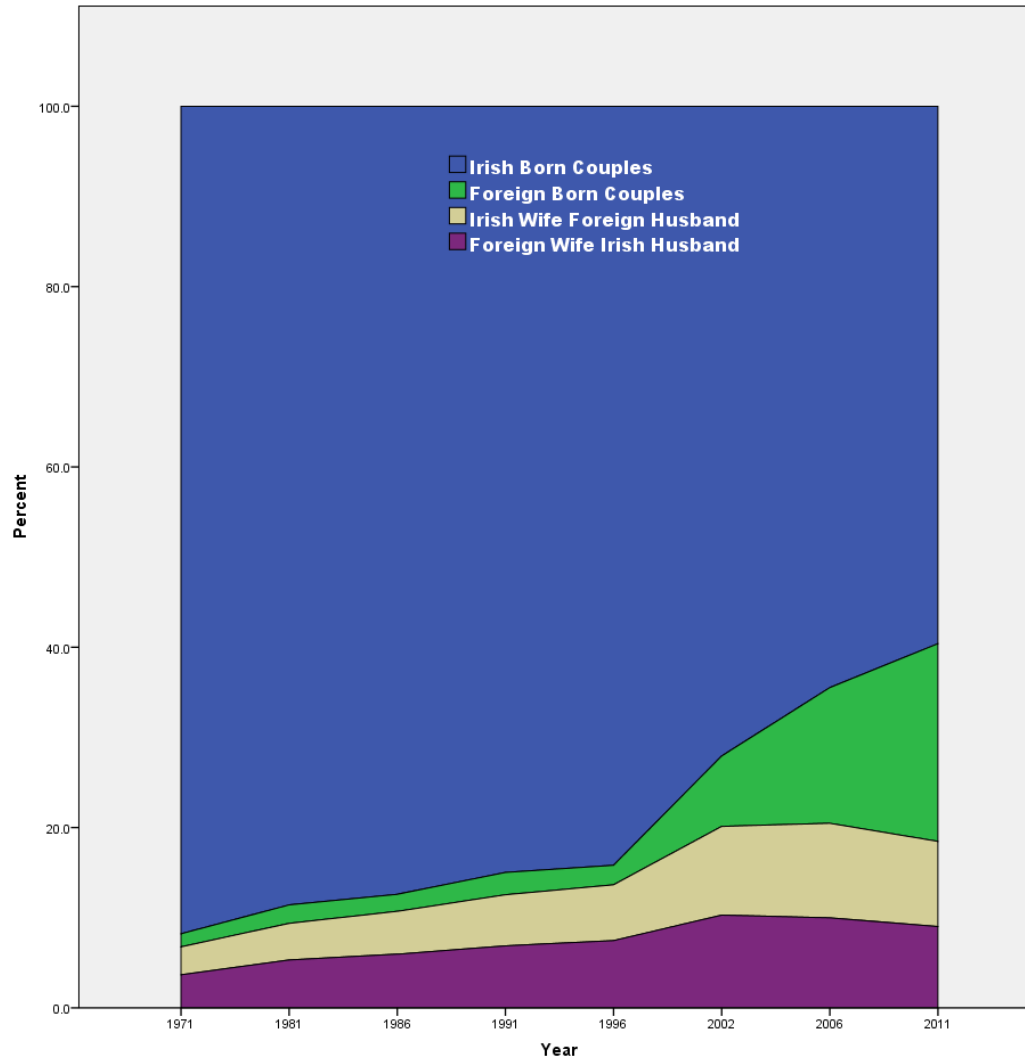Ireland is an intriguing context for examining the interplay of these social factors.

The Main Aim

- With a highly heterogeneous migrant population in Ireland - do Irish people form relationships with other, culturally different groups?

- Census Trends – by nativity status.

- GUI Infant cohort data – oversampled migrant families.
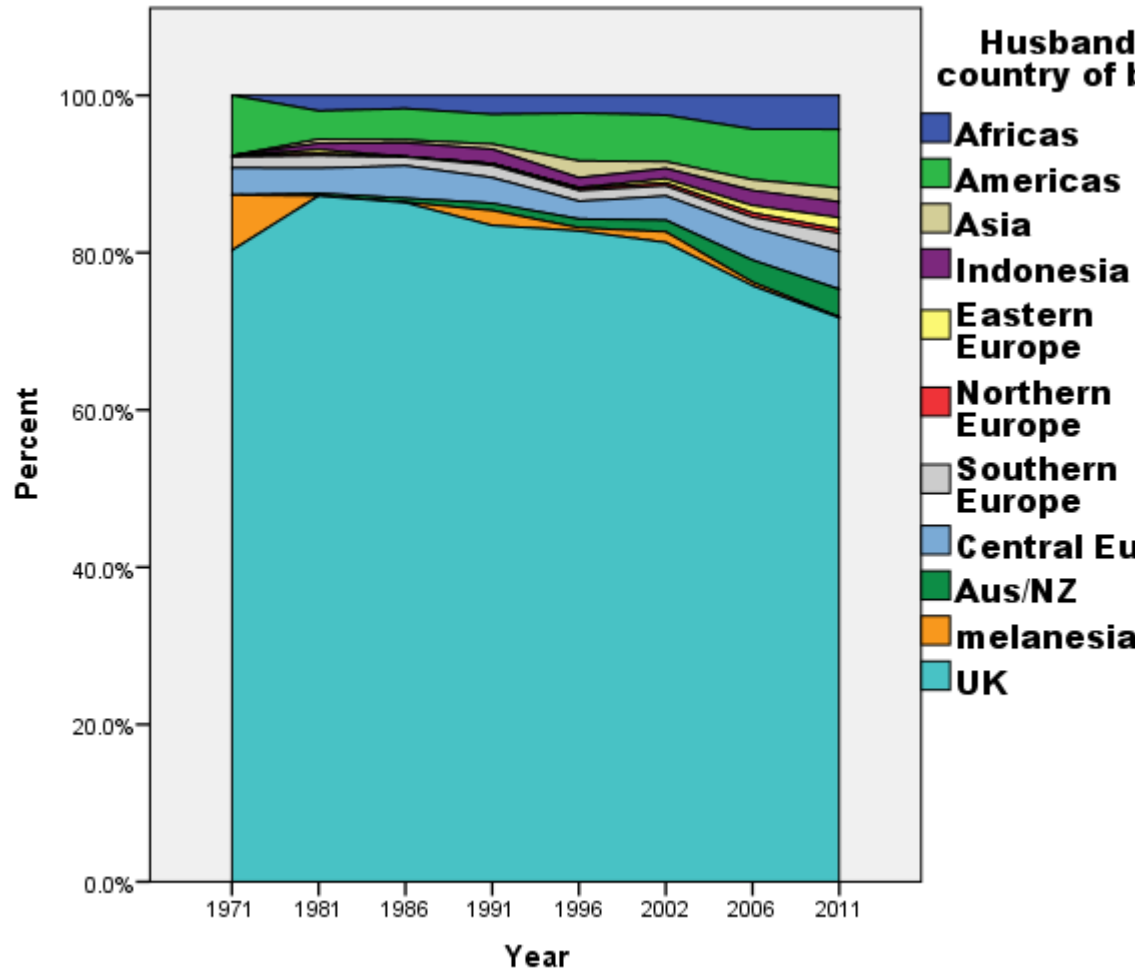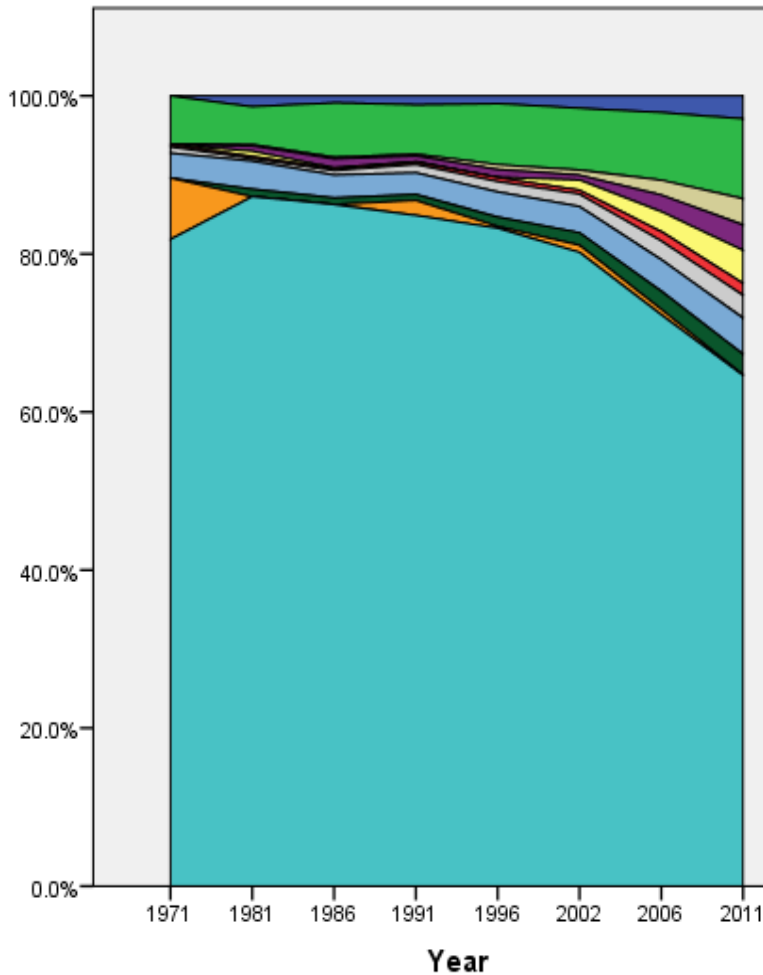
Trends 1971-2011

Source: IPUMS

Intercultural Marriage

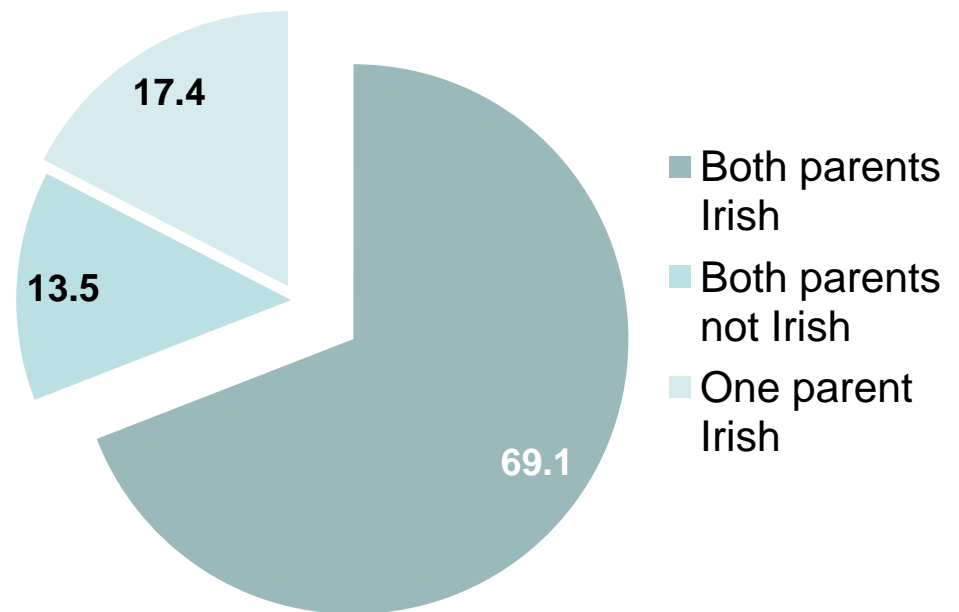Source: IPUMS

Intercultural Marriage

By 2011, there was a clear increase in inter-cultural marriage among Irish born natives.

➢ By 2011, Irish born men who married a non-Irish born women were still most likely to marry someone from the UK (60%), followed by the US (9%), Central Europe (4.3%) and Eastern Europe (3.9%).

➢ By 2011, Irish born women who married a non-Irish born man were also still most likely to marry someone from the UK (63%), followed by the US (6.5%), Central Europe (4.2%) and Africa (3.8%).

Mixed families in GUI
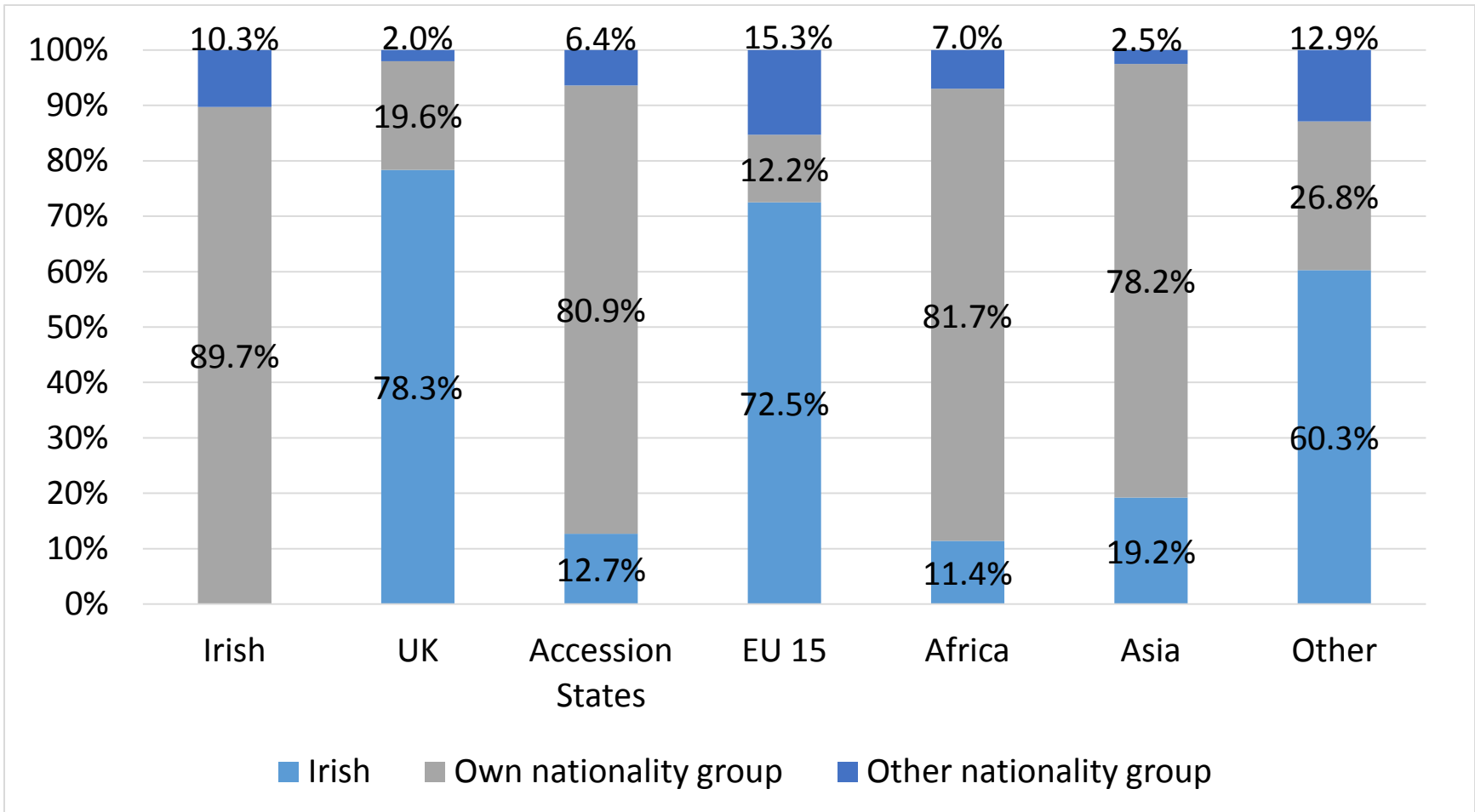
- 'Mixed' couples larger proportion than 'migrant only' couples

- 'Mixed' proportion depends strongly on origin group
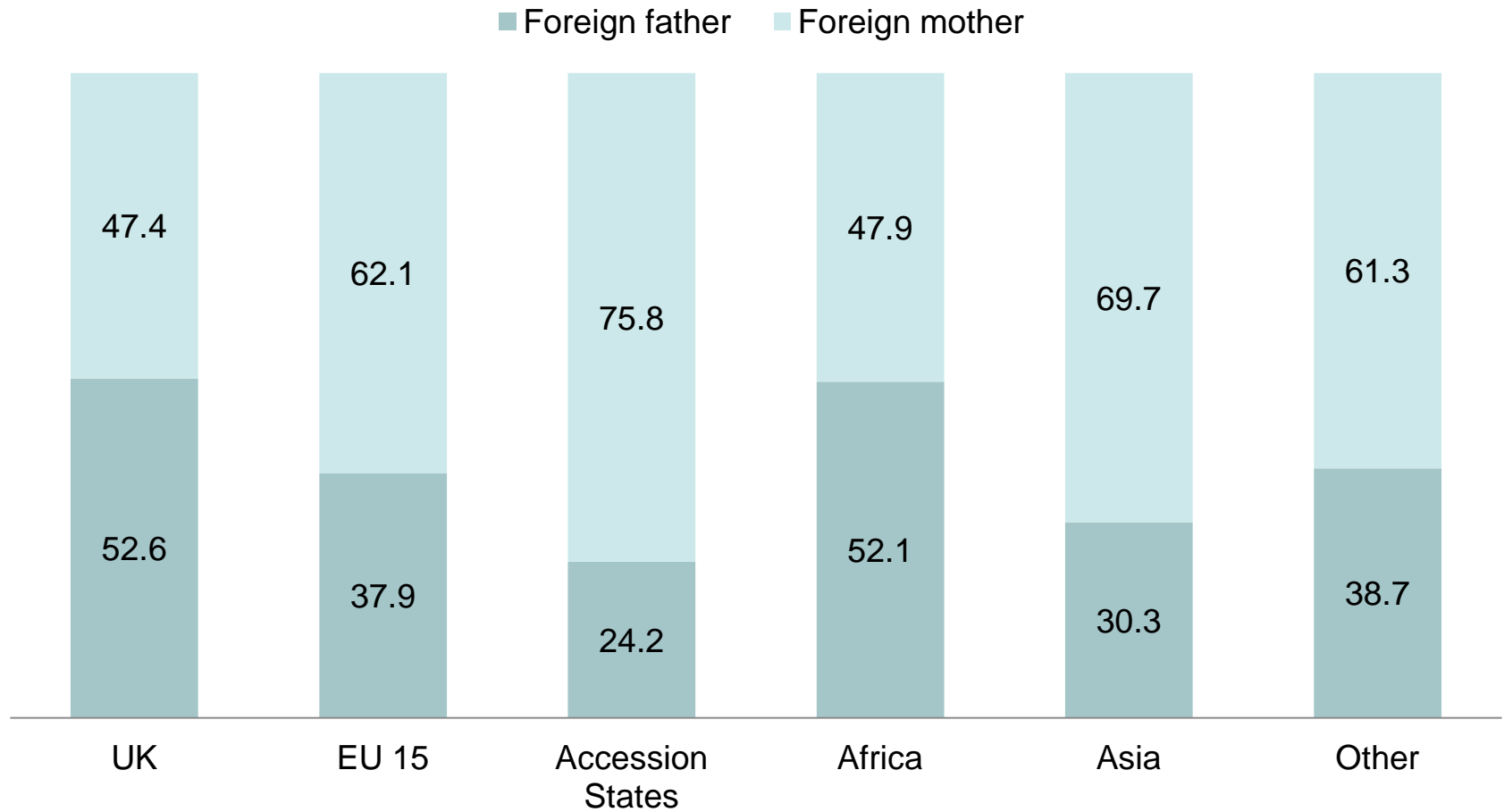
Two parent families by place of birth

- Both parents Irish
- Both parents not Irish
- One parent Irish

69.1
17.4
13.5

Nationality group of mothers' partner

	Irish	UK	Accession States	EU 15	Africa	Asia	Other
Other nationality group	10.3%	2.0%	6.4%	15.3%	7.0%	2.5%	12.9%
Own nationality group	89.7%	19.6%	80.9%	12.2%	81.7%	78.2%	26.8%
Irish		78.3%	12.7%	72.5%	11.4%	19.2%	60.3%

Legend: ■ Irish ■ Own nationality group ■ Other nationality group

Gender composition

Legend: ■ Foreign father ■ Foreign mother

	UK	EU 15	Accession States	Africa	Asia	Other
Foreign mother	47.4	62.1	75.8	47.9	69.7	61.3
Foreign father	52.6	37.9	24.2	52.1	30.3	38.7

Length of residence

Legend:
- >20 years
- 11-20 years
- 6-10 years
- < 5 years

Categories:
UK mixed, UK migrant, EU 15 mixed, EU 15 migrant, Accession mixed, Accession migrant, Africa mixed, Africa migrant, Asia mixed, Asia migrant

Religion within couples
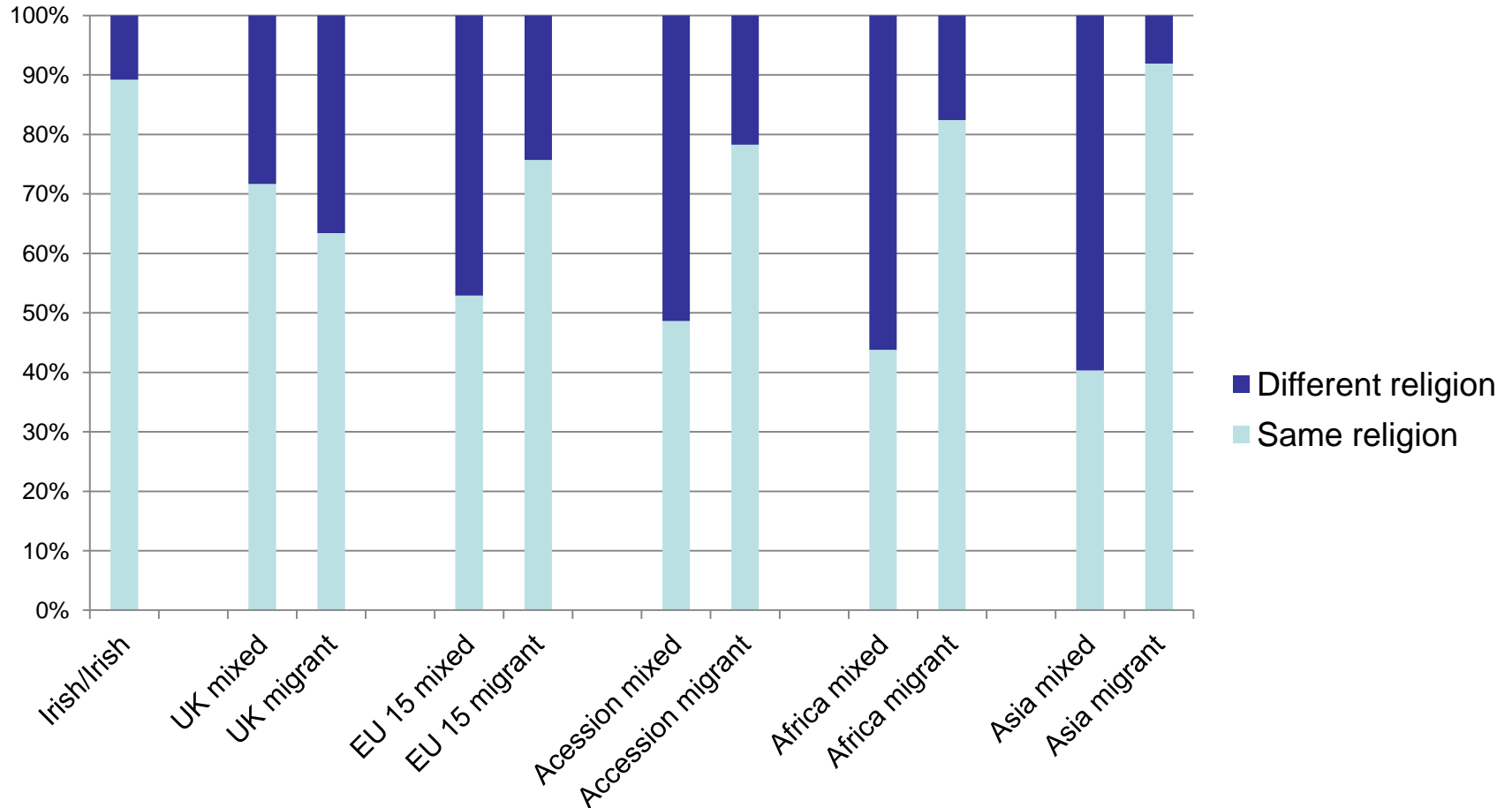
Mixed religion across couples

Social class

Legend:
- Unclassified
- Semi/un-skilled
- Skilled manual
- Non-manual
- Managerial/technical
- Professional

Categories: Irish/Irish, UK mixed, UK migrant, EU 15 mixed, EU 15 migrant, Acession mixed, Accession migrant, Africa mixed, Africa migrant, Asia mixed, Asia migrant
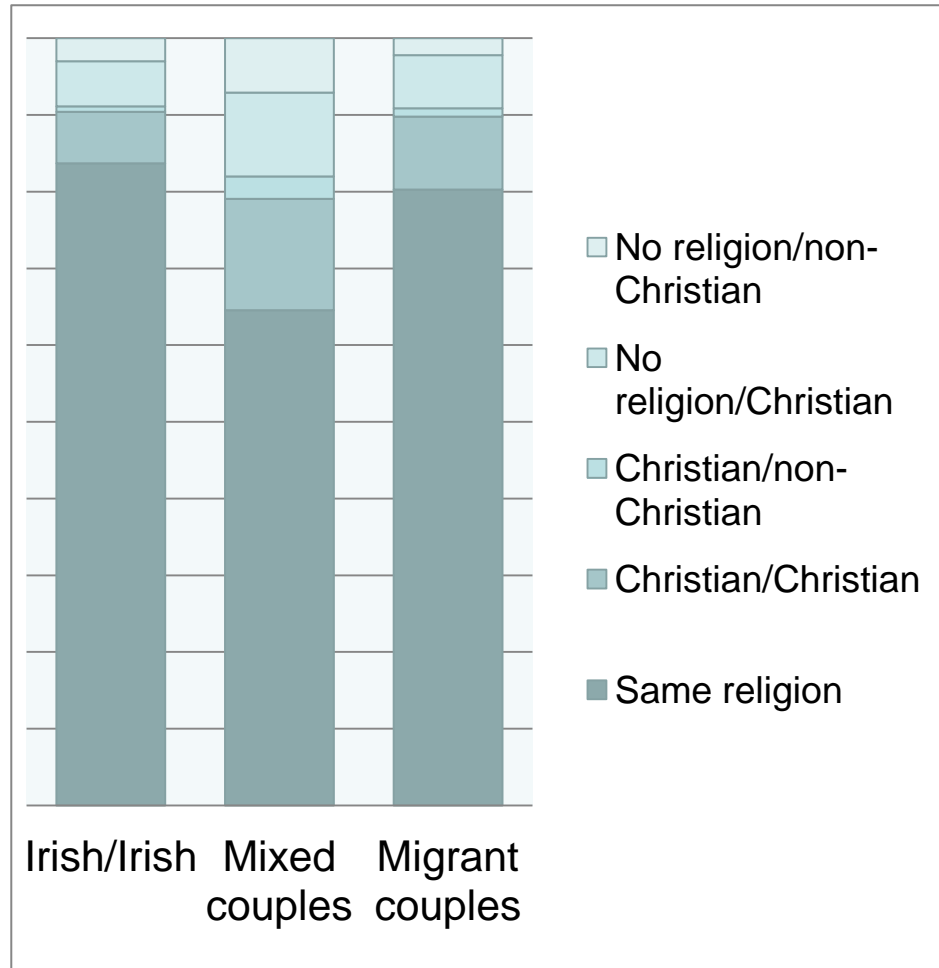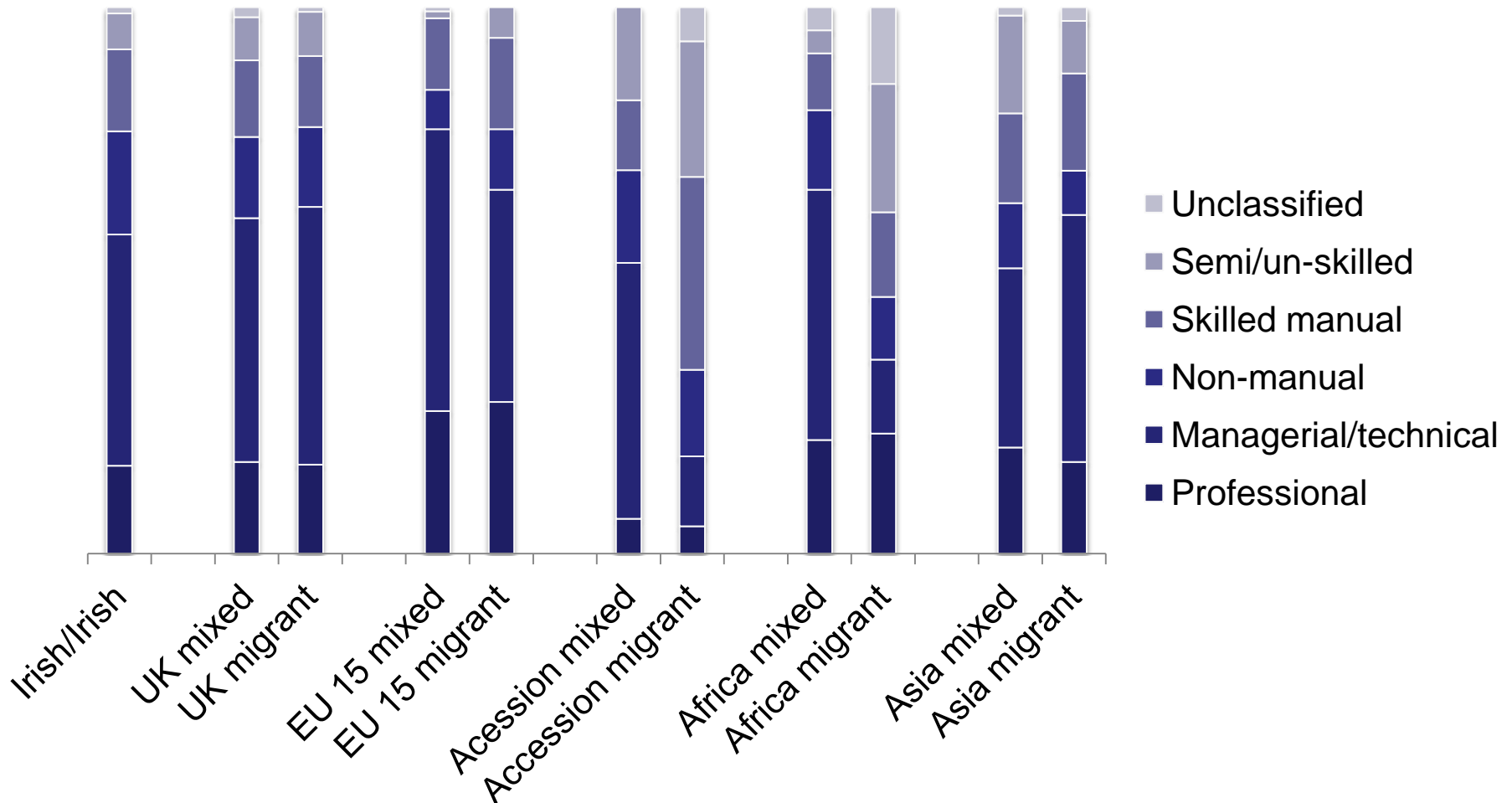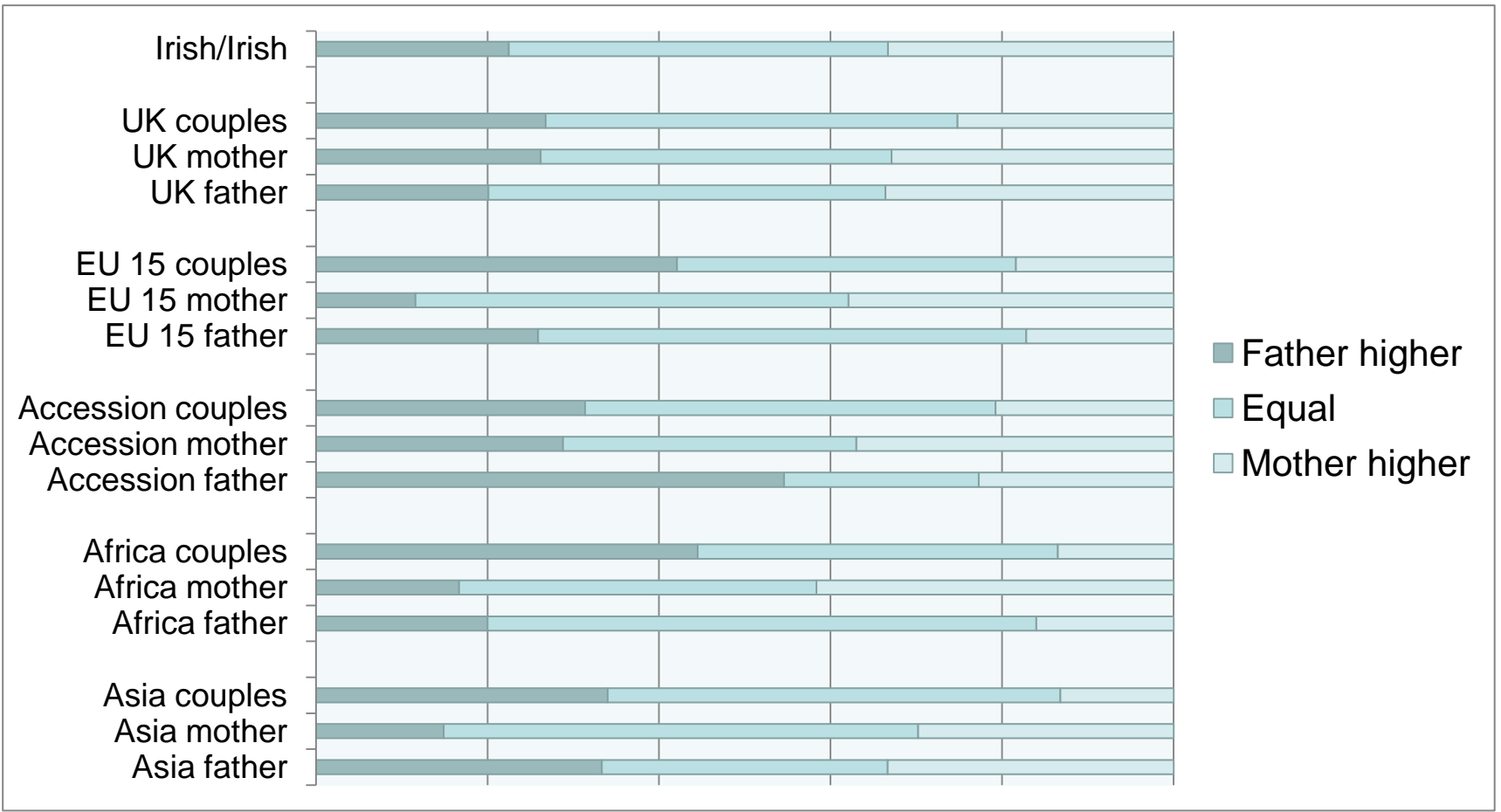
Relative education in couples

Future Directions

❑ **Census Trends:**

Changing patterns of homogamy over time across groups:

Age, social class, education, occupation, religion.

❑ **GUI Families:**

• Important to take account of migrant families in the Infant Cohort as they differ significantly on a range of factors.

• As more data is collected, we can study the implications of family type on child wellbeing such as educational scores and health, as well as child self-identity