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MigrantLife

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The intersection of fertility, partnership dynamics, and residential mobility amongst immigrants and their descendants in France

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Abstract

Life course transitions such as partnership change, childbearing, and residential mobility tend to be studied in isolation. This study examines how the propensity of these events differs between immigrants, their descendants, and the native population in France using a holistic life course approach. We apply competing-risks event history models to longitudinal administrative data from the French Permanent Demographic Sample. We study three life course domains simultaneously for those aged 16-45 between 2012 and 2019. First, we estimate the overall intensity of experiencing any life course event. Second, we compare the propensity of births, partnership changes, and residential relocations within a unified competing-risks framework, enabling direct comparison across events, generations, and origin groups.

Results show that immigrants experience fewer life course events than natives, while second-generation individuals exhibit higher intensities than the first generation but remain below native levels. Residential relocation is the most common transition across all groups; however, immigrants and their descendants are consistently less mobile than natives, with limited convergence across generations. Fertility displays strong origin-specific differences: immigrants from North Africa, sub-Saharan Africa, and Turkey have elevated birth risks that decline substantially in the second generation, though fertility remains slightly higher among individuals of Turkish and North African origin. Partnership dynamics show convergence across generations, with most second-generation groups resembling natives. Overall, the findings point to partial behavioural assimilation, revealing that social integration is likely influenced by cultural norms and structural constraints.

Keywords: Assimilation, Migrant integration, France, Life course, Administrative data

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1. Introduction

High income countries, such as France, are becoming increasingly diverse with immigrants (G1) and the children of immigrants (G2) making up approximately one fifth of the population (INSEE 2024). Previous research has uncovered that the experiences of minorities and immigrants in France can differ significantly compared to the native group (French-born individuals with two French-born parents), in domains such as union formation and fertility (Delaporte and Kulu 2022; Pailhé 2015) and also residential relocation (Acolin 2019; Harrison et al. 2025; McAvay 2018). Moreover, there is substantial heterogeneity between different origin groups. Some show a classical assimilation trajectory where subsequent generations behave more similar to the native population (Alba and Nee 2003). However, some groups do not exhibit this convergence to native behaviours and remain socioeconomically disadvantaged which perpetrates the maintenance of behaviours of the immigrant generation (Portes and Zhou 1993).

Life courses are also becoming increasingly complex across the whole of the population (Elzinga and Liefbroer 2007). The second demographic transition has seen marked changes in the timing and ordering of events in the life course (Lesthaeghe 2014; Van De Kaa 1987). This means that different events occur at different times during the life course, or not at all. Much previous migration research has placed emphasis on specific events in the study of migrant integration such as getting married, having a child, or buying a house. However, whilst focusing on a single life domain can reveal some differences/similarities between the groups, it neglects the holistic nature of the life course and can neglect differences in other domains.

This study investigates partnership, childbearing, and residential changes among immigrants and their descendants from a holistic perspective. The study makes three novel contributions. First, we consider the likelihood of any of the three types of events happening to determine similarities and differences in the migrant life courses. Second, we compare the likelihood of specific events occurring in relation to other events, for example, partnership changes relative to residential relocations. This will provide a fuller picture of potential differences between generations and origins. Third, we make a methodological contribution by applying a multistate competing risks approach to administrative longitudinal data from France between 2012 and 2019. We assess the extent to which immigrants and their descendants conform their behaviour to that of the native population across generations. Where previous research has paid attention to multiple processes the method often used is sequence and cluster analysis (Delaporte and

Kulu 2022; Harrison et al. 2023; Mikolai and Kulu 2019, 2022a, 2022b). This approach has its merits, however, it is descriptive rather than model based and relies on somewhat arbitrary decisions around substitution costs and number of clusters (Bison 2009; Mikolai and Lyons-Amos 2017; Piccarreta and Studer 2019). Our study will offer important insights into the extent to which behavioural patterns amongst immigrant populations have changed between generations alongside wider societal change.

2. Theoretical Framework and Background

2.1 Migrant integration and incorporation

Integration is the process by which subsequent generations of immigrants become gradually more similar to natives until they become indistinguishable from natives (Alba and Nee 1997). A classical integration trajectory is where subsequent generations behave more similar to the native population (Alba and Nee 2003). However, there are examples of some groups who do not show this convergence to native behaviours and remain socioeconomically disadvantaged which leads to the maintenance of behaviours of the immigrant generation (Portes and Zhou 1993; Zhou 1997). Whilst the applicability to European contexts of segmented assimilation is debated (Kislev 2019), there is increasing evidence that it does occur (Crul 2016). What can definitely be seen is a reproduction of social inequality across generations which is contrary to classical assimilation trajectories (Safi 2024).

Socialisation can be a key factor in debates around fertility and partnership dynamics amongst immigrant populations and their descendants (Kulu 2005; Wilson 2019). The idea that formative years are where later-life family preferences are formed means that socialisation within a minority subculture/-group can lead to fertility behaviours being entrenched amongst origin groups including across generations (Pailhé 2017; Wilson and Kuha 2018). Socialisation also has widespread implications for the propensity of immigrants to partner (or not) with natives (Hannemann et al. 2018; Safi 2010). This in itself can be a measure of integration (Qian and Lichter 2007) and reflect a different life course pathway where a minority is aligned to native behaviours and norms. The alternative is the theory of adaptation/integration where over time family behaviour of migrants will align closer to that of the native population (Milewski 2010). This is a gradual process but theorises that eventually immigrants will become indistinguishable from natives (Kahn 1988; Milewski 2007). The behaviour is most evident for those who arrive earlier in the life course or as children (Adserà et al. 2012), which

strengthens the idea that more socialisation with the majority population is a mechanism that leads to this outcome.

Residential relocation amongst immigrants is a salient example of a measure of integration. Moving to areas populated by the majority and out of areas of co-ethnics would suggest preferences which match the majority population. However, residential mobility is a complex process as without knowing the reason for moving it is difficult to know whether it is a move of necessity or choice. Previous work has observed high and low mobility for immigrants and their descendants relative to natives; some argue that immigrants and their descendants end up more mobile due to precarity and socioeconomic disadvantage (Finney and Harries 2015). Yet there are other studies which observe lower mobility for immigrants and see it as a sign of stability and satisfaction with their current position (Fischer and Malmberg 2001). However, some researchers argue that low mobility may reflect the lack of opportunities for immigrants and their descendants (Bolt and van Kempen 2010; Coulter and Scott 2015).

Naturally, life course events are interrelated. Despite the second demographic transition there remains a strong normative trend of union formation followed by childbearing across all high income societies (Delaporte and Kulu 2022; Harrison et al. 2023; Kulu et al. 2024). Partnership change is also highly related to residential relocation. To form a cohabiting union one of the partners (at least) will change residence. Dissolution is also inherently linked to the process of mobility and housing tenure, as at least one partner will leave the shared unit (Mikolai et al. 2020; Mikolai and Kulu 2018a, 2018b, 2019; Mulder and Wagner 2010). Childbearing also has important implications for residential mobility, future intentions can impact housing change as there is a desire to be in a property of the correct size prior to having additional children (Kulu and Steele 2013).

2.2 French context

France has a long history of migration which remains in place today, with various origins which have been subject to different selection policies (Chiswick 1999) and arrival contexts. In total around 10% of the population in 2021 were born outside France without French citizenship, and a similar proportion approximately 11% were born in metropolitan France with a parent who immigrated to France (INSEE 2021a). Migration streams were formerly labour migrants from Southern Europe, North Africa, Turkey, and Southeast Asia (Algan et al. 2010). Family migrants, typically women, often joined their spouses when the migration became permanent.

More recently EU membership expansion has offered the opportunity for more migrants to come to France from the rest of Europe, particularly from Eastern Europe.

Previous research has uncovered that the experiences of immigrants and minorities in France can differ significantly compared to the native group, in domains such as union formation and fertility (Delaporte and Kulu 2022; Pailhé 2015, 2017) and also residential relocation (Acolin 2019; Harrison et al. 2025; McAvay 2018). Migrants from Turkey are found to display conservative family norms with large families and highly stable unions (Delaporte and Kulu 2022). Immigrants from North and sub-Saharan Africa also tend to display more family oriented behaviours compared to natives, however, they are more likely to be single and childless (Delaporte and Kulu 2022). Amongst the second-generation, family processes of all of the aforementioned groups are closer to that of the native population with later transitions to marriage (Pailhé 2015) and evidence of lower fertility (Pailhé 2017). However, for the people of Turkish origin there is clear evidence of higher union stability and fertility (Pailhé 2015, 2017). European and South Asian immigrants and their descendants show similar patterns of family processes as natives, and this is even more strongly the case for their descendants.

Previous research has studied tenure types and access to homeownership amongst immigrants in France. The housing market in France has a relatively high provision of social housing, and findings indicate that some immigrant groups are overrepresented in these (Acolin 2019; Harrison et al. 2025; McAvay 2018). The propensity to move in France is lower amongst immigrants compared to the native population, and on the whole the second generation individuals of North African, Turkish, and sub-Saharan African backgrounds move even less frequently (Harrison et al. 2025). Extended periods of time spent in the parental home is a possible reason behind this pattern (Ferrari and Pailhé 2017). Moreover, the extensive use of social housing in a constricted social housing market can also have an impact, particularly for North and sub-Saharan African immigrants and their descendants (Acolin 2019; Fougère et al. 2013) who may be less willing to leave particular areas even when having adequate socioeconomic resources. These groups also suffer extensive racialised experiences in accessing credit and undeniable discrimination in access to housing which can both inhibit mobility (Acolin et al. 2016; Pan Ké Shon and Scodellaro 2016) or necessitate more moves due to less stable tenure (Finney and Harries 2015). We must also understand that cultural values placed upon housing and place can vary which may determine different levels of

mobility, and are potentially transmitted through immigrant generations (Huber and Schmidt 2022).

In summary, much previous research in France has placed emphasis on specific events in the study of migrant integration. There is a need to study the intensity of these life course events in relation to each other to gain a more holistic understanding of the life courses of immigrants. This study therefore addresses the following three research questions.

- (1) Is there a difference in the propensity of experiencing life course events by immigrant background in France?
- (2) To what extent are differences driven by specific events experienced by specific groups?
- (3) How different are second generation groups from the native population, is there evidence of assimilation to native behaviours or persistent differences, in the frequency of any event and also specific events?

3. Data and Methods

To answer these questions, we use individual level data from the French Permanent Demographic Sample or '*Echantillon Démographique Permanent*' (EDP). This is an administrative data set which covers approximately 6% of the population. It links tax records, census records, and vital statistics to give a detailed account of the demographic and socioeconomic experiences across the population. For this study we categorise sample members as immigrants (G1), those with at least one immigrant parent (G2), and the native French population with two French born parents. We classify origin by initially looking at country of birth and citizenship at birth. Individuals born in France with parents who were also born in France are deemed the native population. Immigrants are those born outside of France without French citizenship. The descendants of immigrants are those born in France with a parent who was not born in France and did not have French citizenship. We assign origin based on the immigrant parent. Where parents are from different countries we prioritise the mother's origin. We exclude those born outside of France but with French citizenship and those whose background is not in metropolitan France. We include all individuals with a foreign background in the final sample but retain only 20% of the French native sample to ensure a better comparability across population subgroups.

3.1 Events

We consider three life course events in this study: births, partnership changes, and residential relocation. We use the vital event registrations to identify live births to EDP members which are available at the precision of a month of birth. We use the fiscal records to identify partnership changes analysing year on year changes in partnership status declared on the tax record. We do not distinguish between different types of partnership status. If individuals live together and file a joint tax declaration they are considered as being in a union. We take a similar approach to residential relocations, identifying changes in the housing code where individuals declare their tax record thus enabling us to identify the year of a relocation. The number of unique individuals, person time observed, and the number of events across origin groups can be seen in Table 1.

The use of annual data means that those who experience many short-term changes to partnership status and residential relocation may be undercounted. However, we anticipate this being rare. As partnership and housing change can only be measured annually, we assign the date of these events as the mid-year point. If both events occur in the same year, which may be common since there are distinct links between union dissolution and housing change (Kulu et al. 2021; Mikolai and Kulu 2018b), we assign the timing in the year randomly.

Table 1 - Number of individuals, person years observed, and the number of events by origin group and sex

Women					
	N	Person Years	Births	Partner Changes	Relocations
French native	105571	604533.0	35576	47343	90213
Western Europe	8571	36836.0	1892	2212	4498
Eastern Europe	11396	49136.6	3555	2382	6170
SE Asia	2998	14408.0	814	626	1513
Turkey	6731	35132.1	2772	738	3144
sub-Saharan Africa	21976	102748.4	10196	7159	12864
Other	21651	91412.8	7028	4530	11327
Southern Europe	9236	37991.8	2208	2424	4916
North Africa	33589	164232.8	19521	6266	20050
Western Europe G2	2986	15941.9	682	1241	2132
Eastern Europe G2	1252	6370.4	262	460	746
SE Asia G2	1073	6435.7	388	580	935
Turkey G2	1917	9603.1	582	535	926
sub-Saharan Africa G2	4982	24860.1	1405	1694	2737
Other G2	3056	15279.8	632	1134	1692
Southern Europe G2	9186	53275.6	2548	4514	7039

North Africa G2	19092	105893.7	6545	7539	13489
Total	265263	1374091.9	96606	91377	184391
Men					
French native	108349	609179.0	32017	49137	83686
Western Europe	7469	31218.7	1479	1939	3567
Eastern Europe	8562	34073.4	2551	1787	4158
SE Asia	2102	9672.9	484	604	1097
Turkey	7770	41242.8	3921	1359	4312
sub-Saharan Africa	21529	91270.0	8931	7019	12408
Other	19115	76308.5	5243	4584	9455
Southern Europe	9898	40511.3	2362	2810	5376
North Africa	35294	168570.1	18656	9971	23434
Western Europe G2	3168	7029.4	266	1188	2119
Eastern Europe G2	1416	6528.1	312	428	671
SE Asia G2	1136	10891.4	521	516	768
Turkey G2	2161	25098.3	1122	739	885
sub-Saharan Africa G2	5242	17325.1	526	1658	2406
Other G2	3509	60361.4	2488	1188	1595
Southern Europe G2	10392	109963.1	6166	5163	7231
North Africa G2	20448	58782.2	2434	7964	12383
Total	267560	1398025.6	89479	98054	175551

3.2 Analytical Strategy

Our period of analysis is the years 2012-2019. We study individuals between ages 16 and 45. Individuals can enter the risk population at age 16, at entry to the country (notified by first tax record), or at the start of the study period in 2012. Censoring occurs at age 45, death, multiple births, and upon their last recorded tax record (no tax record implies emigration).

We first present age standardised rates for the occurrence of any event and each specific event. This adjustment is conducted to the age structure of the native population. We then consider two event history models. First, we fit a model to study the risk of any event occurring by origin group. Second, we estimate a competing-risks model (Mikolai and Kulu 2022b). Individuals are at risk of experiencing any of the three events from entry and can enter in any state. We present the results of both models as hazard ratios. Results are given for each combination of origin background and generation, meaning comparisons can be made through generations and between different origins.

The competing-risks model can be formalised as follows (1):

$$\ln h_{ij}^k(t) = \ln h_o^k(t) + \sum_l \beta_l^k x_{ijl}(t)$$

where h_{ij}^k is the risk of experiencing a transition of type k (birth, partnership, or residential change) of order j (first or higher order event during the observation window) for individual i . $\ln h_0(t)$ is the baseline log-hazard to measure the effect of an individual's age (or time since age 16); we specified the baseline log-hazard as piecewise constant. $x(t)$ represents time-constant and time-varying variables, β is the parameter estimate for these variables, with l variables (including migrant status). We adjust standard errors for the clustering (i.e. waiting spells for events nested within individuals). This is a conventional competing-risks model. However, we develop this model further in order to measure the relative importance of each transition (2):

$$\ln h_{ij}^k(t) = \ln h_0(t) + \sum_l \beta_l x_{ijl}(t) + \gamma z_i$$

Models in equation 1 and 2 are similar; the main difference is that model 2 also includes interaction term z_i between migrant origin and the transition type; γ is a transition-specific parameter. Model 2 also assumes a common baseline (or age-patterns) for all transitions and the same effect of control variables across the outcomes. However, the effect of migrant status is allowed to vary by transition. The advantage of the proposed model is that all transition rates by migrant status can be compared as they now have one reference point (Putter et al. 2007). The models include time varying controls for parity: “No children”, “One child”, “Two or more children”, and binary partnership status (being in a union or not). We also include annual measures of the tenure reported in the fiscal record “Homeowner”, “Social renter”, “Other renter” and the household level disposable income tercile; this is derived from a measure provided by INSEE which accounts for household composition and purchasing power to compare relative socioeconomic status (INSEE 2021b). Lastly, we include a fixed variable of the maximum education ever reported in the study period, “No education”, “Low education”, “Secondary education”, “Professional qualifications”, and “University”. For partnership, tenure, standard of living, and education we also retain a small missing/unknown category.

4. Results

Results in Figure 1 show the age standardised rates of any event occurring and of each specific event occurring by origin group. We see that, in general, native men have a higher intensity of any event occurring than other groups. The only exception being G1 men from North Africa

and sub-Saharan Africa (SSA). For women we see a general pattern that G2 groups have intensity of events more similar to that of the natives than G1. The notable exception being G2 SSA women who experience a far lower rate of events than G1 SSA women. For men there is less indication that the G2 have a more similar experience to the natives: for many G2 groups there is actually a lower rate of occurrence of any event compared to the G1, meaning they are further from the natives.

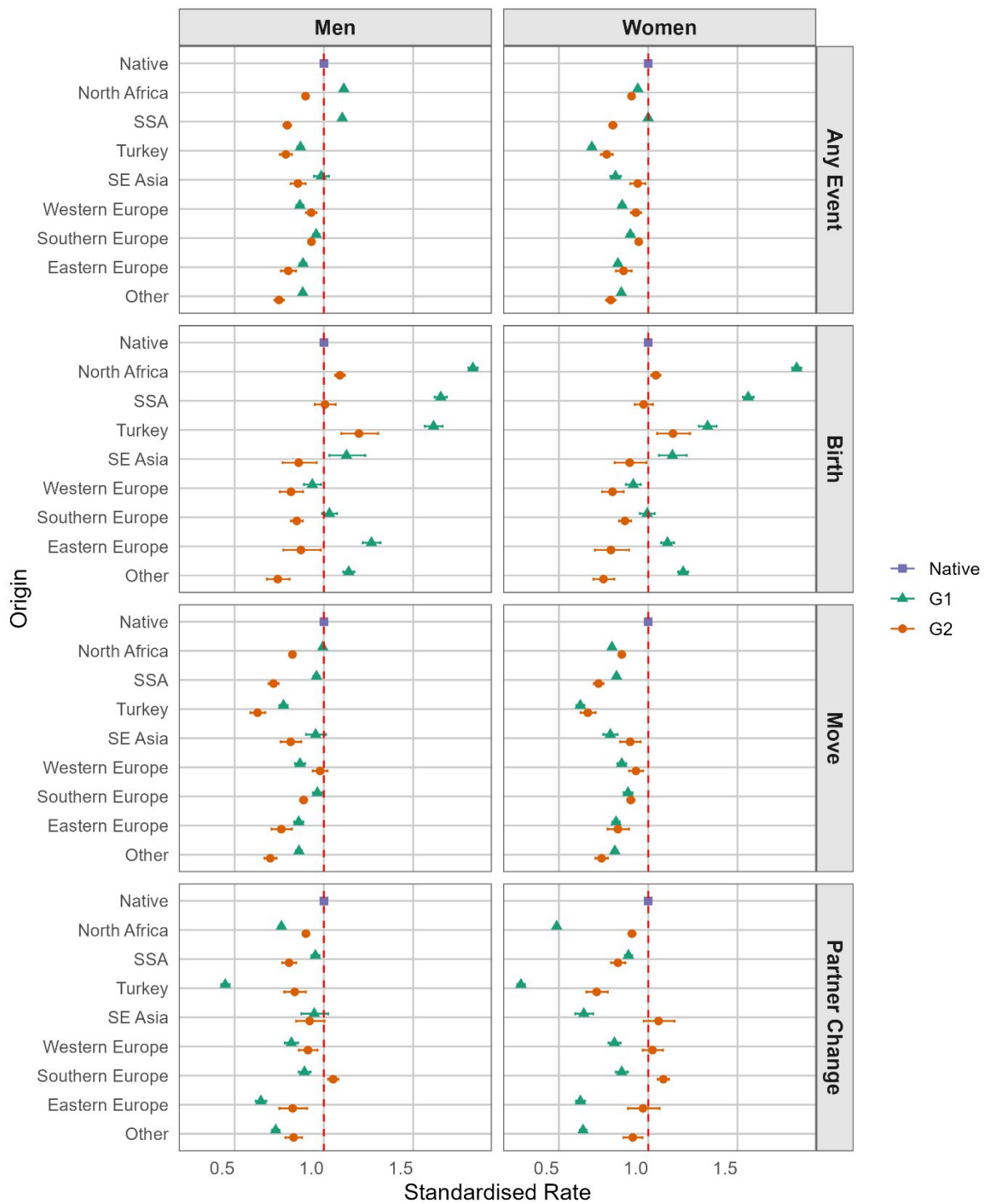
When looking at rates by the specific type of events results show that the age-standardised fertility rate is substantially higher compared to natives for those born in North Africa, sub-Saharan Africa, and Turkey. It is also higher for immigrants from Southeast Asia, Eastern Europe, and other origins. Immigrants from other Western European countries show a lower birth-risk than the French natives. All G2 groups have substantially lower rates of experiencing a birth compared to the immigrant generation of the same background and there is less heterogeneity between G2 groups compared to the G1. Amongst the G2 only those with Turkish or North African backgrounds show slightly elevated fertility compared to the native population.

Residential mobility shows more similarities between generations compared to fertility and partnership change. Overall, a change of residence is less common for all groups compared to the natives. Patterns differ slightly between men and women. For example, G1 men from North Africa move at a similar rate to native men, whereas G1 North African women move less frequently. Similarly, there are gender differences in the changes between generations. For example, G1 Southeast Asian men exhibit residential relocation patterns more similar to that of natives than to the G2; however, for women this is reversed with G2 women showing behaviour more like that of the natives.

For partnership changes we see high heterogeneity across groups, particularly amongst women. For women, in nearly all cases, rates for the G2 are higher than that of the G1 and more like those of the natives. The only exception being amongst the sub-Saharan African group, where G1 women experience more partnership changes than the G2. Rates for G1 are lower for all immigrant women compared to natives, they are particularly low amongst women born in Turkey and North Africa with rates half that of the natives. European and Southeast Asian immigrant women exhibit a rate of partnership change that is lower than that of the natives, but their descendants show no difference in this rate. Amongst men the pattern is similar where G2 groups are typically closer to the natives compared to G1 groups; however, the overall

magnitude of differences between those of a foreign background and natives is smaller for men compared to women.

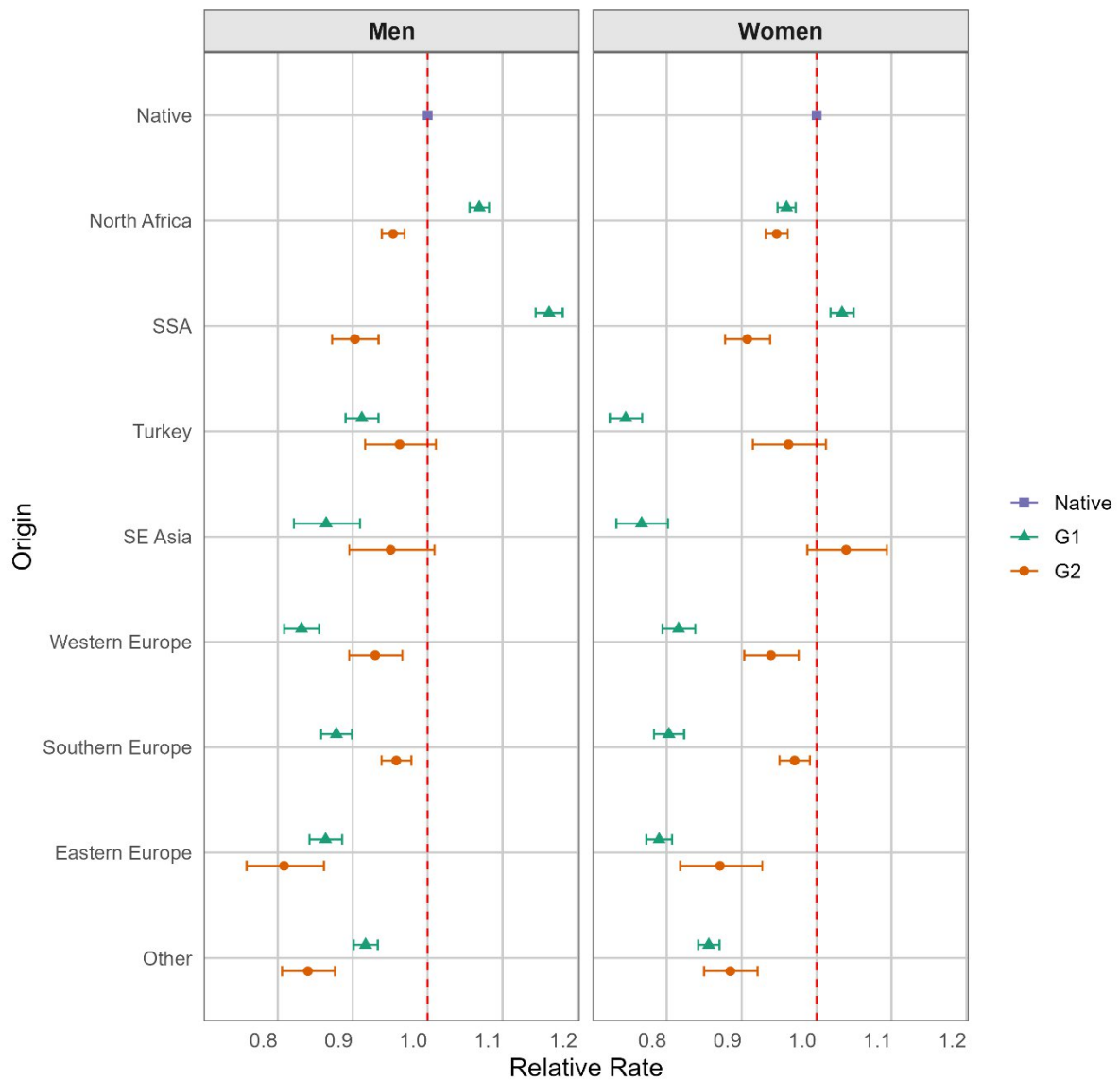
Figure 1 - Age-standardised rates of experiencing any event and specific events for immigrants and their descendants by sex



Source: French Permanent Demographic Sample, authors' own calculations.

Figure 2 shows relative rates of experiencing any event for men and women; these models are controlled for parity, partnership status, highest education, housing tenure, and household disposable income tercile. Naturally, these results share similarities with the rates shown in Figure 1, but there are some differences. The overall pattern suggests that amongst both men and women those with an immigrant background are less 'at risk' of experiencing a life course event compared to the native population. The only exception being amongst North African men and sub-Saharan African men and women. We also see clear patterns of change between immigrant generations. The G1 experience less intensity of events compared to the G2 and this difference between generations is larger for women compared to men. There remain some exceptions to this, for example G1 immigrants from Africa experience events in higher rates than their children. Furthermore, amongst those of Eastern European background for men the G2 experience fewer life course events compared to the G1, and for women the opposite is the case. The increase in propensity of events for the second generation compared to the first also means that G2 Turkish and Southeast Asian immigrants have the same likelihood of an event as natives.

Figure 2 - Relative rates of experiencing any event for immigrants and their descendants by sex



Notes: Model is controlled for age, partnership status, parity, standard of living tercile, highest education and tenure.

Source: French Permanent Demographic Sample, authors' own calculations.

Figure 3 shows the results of the full competing risks model with all covariates included, comparing the risk of having a birth, moving and partnership changes to each other and across groups. The reference category is the risk of a French native having a birth. The results demonstrate that residential changes are the most common event across all groups. The difference between births and partner changes are less consistent, amongst natives and G2 groups partner changes are more likely to happen than births. Yet for the G1 there is higher propensity of having a birth than a partner change for those born in North Africa, SSA, Turkey, and Eastern Europe.

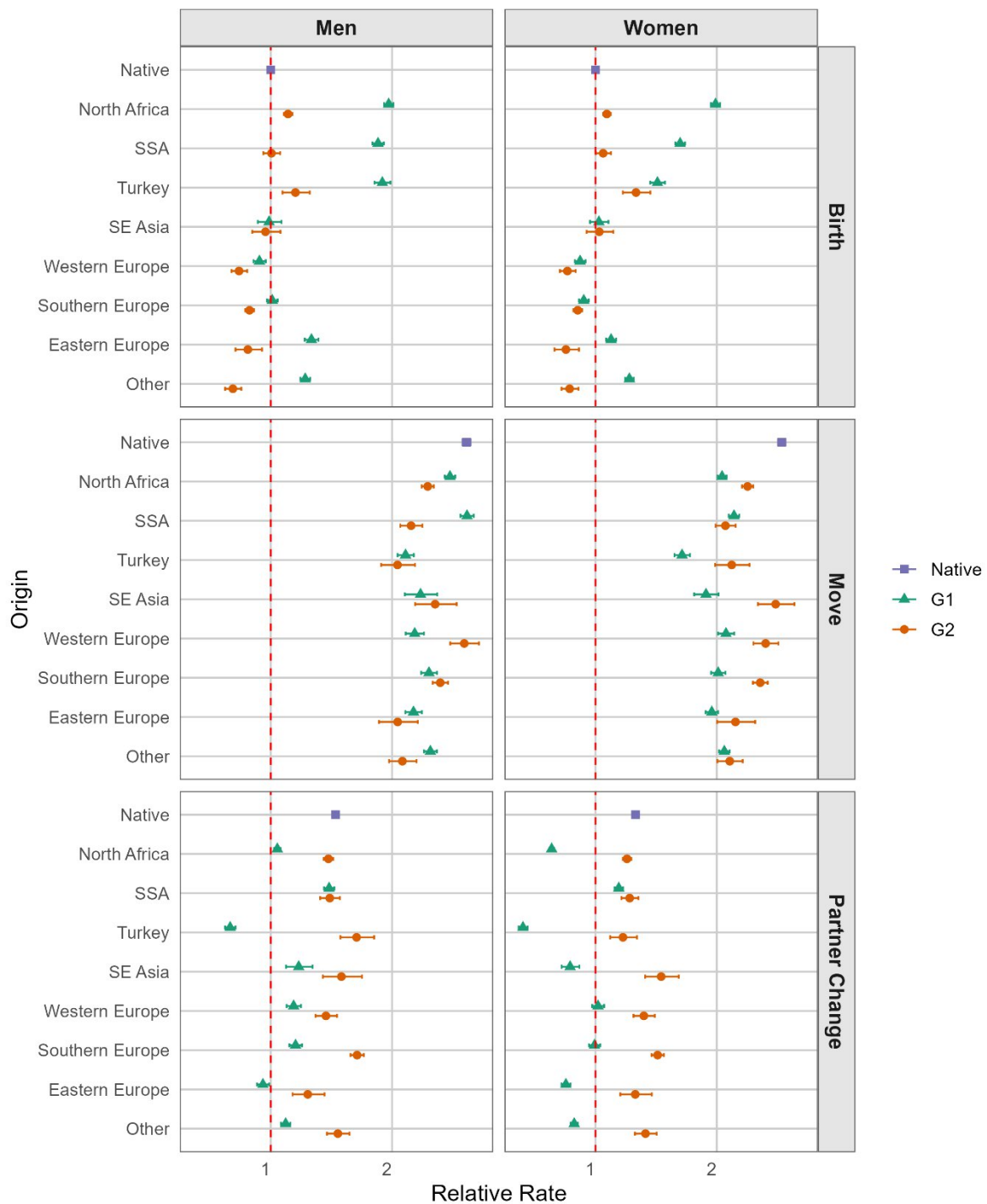
Within specific event types we see a clear pattern that for immigrants born in North Africa, sub-Saharan Africa, Turkey, and Eastern Europe the risk of having a(nother) birth is higher than that of the native-born population. For these groups there is strong convergence to the natives for subsequent generations. The risk of a birth remains higher for the descendants of Turkish and North African immigrants but for the descendants of sub-Saharan African immigrants there is no difference from the natives. In contrast, the descendants of Eastern European immigrants have a lower risk than the natives. In fact, all G2 groups of European origin have a lower risk of birth compared to natives. For Southeast Asian, Southern and Western Europeans there are very similar risks of birth for both the G1 and G2, both of which are also close to the risk for the native population.

Residential relocation as a life course event is most prevalent for natives. Amongst women the G2 are more mobile compared to the G1, although some groups show no differences between groups. For men the pattern is less consistent. Residential relocation for G1 men from North and sub-Saharan Africa is more prevalent than amongst the G2 of the same origin and along with G2 men of western European origin have a risk of relocation like natives. For men of other backgrounds there are only slight differences between G1 and G2, but they are both lower than the risk of moving for natives.

The last domain of interest is partnership changes. Here we see similarities between men and women, likely related to norms of homogamy across groups. The risk of a partnership change for the G2 tends to be higher than the G1, with the exception being SSA where there is no difference. Compared to natives most G2 groups have a similar risk unlike the G1 groups who have a lower risk of a partnership change compared to natives. The exception again is immigrants from SSA who are at a risk of a partnership change to the same extent as the natives.

The Turkish immigrants stand out as having very low risks of a partnership change compared to other groups.

Figure 3 - Relative rates of experiencing specific life course events for immigrants and their descendants by sex



Notes: Model is controlled for age, partnership status, parity, standard of living tercile, highest education and tenure.

Source: French Permanent Demographic Sample, authors' own calculations.

5. Discussion

This paper sought to apply a holistic approach to study the life course events of immigrants and their descendants in France. Using multi-state competing risks models we identified transitions in three domains of the life course over an eight-year period (2012-2019). We found differences in the intensity of experiencing any event across immigrants and their descendants. In general, immigrants experience events at a lower intensity than their descendants, but descendants still have a lower intensity of events compared to natives. Residential relocation is the most commonly occurring life course event for all groups. Experiences of fertility and partnership changes varied across groups. Our results also highlighted some gender differences.

Our findings confirm previous work on fertility with North African, sub-Saharan African, and Turkish immigrants having higher risks of a birth, persisting to some extent to the second generation (Delaporte and Kulu 2022; Pailhé 2017). Moreover, experiences of union dissolution and formation being low for immigrants from Turkey (Pailhé 2015). Lastly, we confirmed previous findings on residential relocation in France (Harrison et al. 2025; Verdugo 2011). The fact that our findings are in line with previous work which has studied events separately adds validity to the use of this novel methodological approach. What we contribute is an ability to put these events in reference to each other, to identify that fertility amongst North African and sub-Saharan African immigrants is what drives a relatively high level of life course events in those groups. Whereas for Turkish migrants the low partnership churn equalises with the high propensity to have children to show relatively similar event intensity to the majority population.

The results provide support for classical assimilation/integration/adaptation theories, particularly with respect to generational change (Milewski 2007). Across most origin groups, second-generation individuals exhibit life course patterns that are closer to those of the native population than immigrants. This holds for both combined event intensity and individual domains. For fertility behaviour, elevated birth risks observed among North African, sub-Saharan African, Turkish, and Eastern European immigrants are substantially reduced in the second generation (Pailhé 2017). Partnership dynamics show a strong pattern of convergence, with second-generation groups displaying risks of partnership change similar to natives. At the same time, this convergence is neither complete nor uniform. Fertility rates remain elevated among second-generation individuals of Turkish and North African origin (Pailhé 2017), while residential mobility shows limited generational change for many groups. Overall, generational

convergence for residential relocation is far smaller than that of partnership and fertility events. These findings suggest that while exposure to the host society and early-life socialisation facilitate adaptation, they do not eliminate all differences. Assimilation in France thus appears to vary across domains with certain behaviours converging more rapidly than others.

There are notable differences between origin groups. Rather than a single pathway towards convergence experienced by all immigrant groups, the results point to multiple trajectories shaped by cultural transmission, structural constraints, and context (Crul 2016; Safi 2024). Immigrants originating in other European countries and southeast Asia are much more closely aligned to that of the French natives and amongst their descendants there is clear evidence of assimilation towards natives in the intensity of any event experience and in particular fertility assimilation (Pailhé 2017). Reasons behind this could stem from the differing propensities in which immigrant groups have exogamous relationships. North African, Turkish, and sub-Saharan African migrants display tendencies to partner within group, compared to European and Southeast Asian migrants where partnership with a native is more common and often part of their selectivity into migration in the first place (Safi 2008). Amongst the second generation this is even more prevalent with unions to French natives very common for those born to European immigrants. Since relocation and fertility are generally household-level decisions the differences in the probability of partner homogamy could explain why there is divergence in groups.

Individuals of Turkish origin exemplify selective integration to native levels. Across generations, they exhibit relatively high fertility and very low partnership churn, indicating strong continuity in family norms. This high partnership stability combined with unique patterns of leaving the parental home for the second generation (Ferrari and Pailhé 2017) likely also explains the low residential mobility observed. Despite some convergence in overall event intensity, these persistent patterns suggest that assimilation in family behaviour is partial and selective, reinforced by high levels of homogamy for this group (Safi 2010). This contrasts to North African groups who display partnership behaviour which converges to native levels in the second generation, but fertility remains slightly elevated and residential mobility remains low. These patterns are consistent with a combination of cultural persistence and structural constraint, particularly related to discrimination in accessing credit and housing and wider experiences of labour market discrimination, all of which may constrain socioeconomic

capacity and limit residential assimilation (Acolin et al. 2016; Brinbaum et al. 2018; L’Horty et al. 2019).

Beyond these two groups, the patterns observed for sub-Saharan African immigrants and their descendants warrant attention. While immigrants from sub-Saharan Africa exhibit relatively high levels of partnership change and overall life course event intensity, their descendants display markedly lower intensities across domains. This pattern of generational change challenges both classical assimilation and adaptation models. Rather than integration, lower life course activity among the second generation may reflect delayed transitions, extended co-residence with parents, or constrained opportunities to form independent households (Ferrari and Pailhé 2017; McAvay and Pailhé 2022). In this sense, the findings are consistent with a segmented assimilation perspective in which cumulative disadvantage may suppress or postpone key life course transitions (Crul 2016; Portes and Zhou 1993).

The results for residential mobility provide a clear illustration of how assimilation varies across groups. Across most origin groups, immigrants and their descendants are less likely to relocate than natives, and generational convergence in mobility is limited. Immigrants may display lower mobility compared to their descendants due to different age structures with higher rates of homeownership amongst the older birth cohorts leading to less residential moves (Harrison et al. 2025). To consider this, we conducted additional age-stratified analyses across different life course stages (ages 16–30, 25–45, and 30–49), which yielded results consistent with those presented in the main models. This indicates that the observed group differences are not driven solely by age structure, nor by tenure composition or socioeconomic resources which are controlled for but instead reflect enduring differences in life course trajectories across origin groups.

Residential mobility should be interpreted with caution. Mechanisms that create the need for relocation and individual preferences will vary within and between groups. Cultural preferences and intentions to return to origin countries (Bettin et al. 2018; Huber and Schmidt 2022) may affect the relationship immigrants have to their place of residence and their desire to invest in it. Complicated further by the French market context which has relatively high social renting opportunities compared to other countries; however, they may not be in locations where immigrants are (Harrison et al. 2025; Verdugo 2016). Moreover, cultural norms related to partnership stability and family formation, particularly among Turkish and North African groups, may reduce the need or desire to relocate, especially in contexts where union

dissolution is rare. The holistic approach adopted in this study allows these mechanisms to be considered jointly, rather than attributing residential outcomes solely to structural disadvantage.

Gender differences in life course dynamics are present but generally modest. Where differences do emerge, they often reflect compositional patterns rather than fundamentally distinct assimilation processes. For example, among Southeast Asian migrants, women are more likely than men to partner with French natives (Safi 2008, 2010). Such differences may help explain why there are different event intensities as foreign-born women partnered with native men may have more socioeconomic resources which results in a higher likelihood of living in an owned home¹.

We must acknowledge the limitations of this study. As our data comes from annually reported fiscal records, we randomised event timings within years if partnership change and residential relocation both occurred. These transitions do often occur simultaneously. However, extensive robustness checks, including alternative timing assumptions, produced results consistent with those presented here. We also accept that we are only studying a relatively short period of time between 2012 and 2019. Therefore, our results may not be applicable to older migrant cohorts and instead reflect a set of migrants who were selected differently.

Future research should continue to levy this methodological approach to incorporate additional individual data on other life course domains. Employment would be an obvious choice, sadly the reliability of employment in EDP is limited as information is all based on earnings not specific employment. However, uncovering more about how these events intersect with labour market entry and exit would be interesting. Similar analytical strategy has been applied in the UK context to research the family formation process with respect to labour market changes (Christison et al 2025). Similarly multi-process analysis in France has found distinctive temporal patterns of increased labour market exit relating to childbearing behaviours of non-European second generation groups (Delaporte and Kulu 2024). This area of research relating to the timing of life course events should continue to be developed and consider intergenerational assimilation.

What this study sought to introduce is a reflection on life course events as a singular entity, removing the need to consider one event as a trigger of another and applying a hierarchy of

¹ Our data and analysis are unable to disentangle which of the partners own the home.

importance to events. In doing this prior to analysis on specific events we can uncover that assimilation and life course transitions do differ, and that the assimilation process is not consistent across groups in France. Immigrants from Western Europe and their descendants behave most similarly to natives, with total convergence of the second generation to native levels. This seems logical given the more similar origin context that these individuals come from and the cultural similarities that mean lower barriers and less discrimination in French society.

For those from low-income countries, the findings highlight elevated fertility which persists into the second generation among women of both North African and Turkish origin. We also see that partnership changes are rare for these groups, with these groups having an increased tendency to partner early and remain stable. The finding of low residential mobility for these groups is likely related to this low union instability. These results challenge previous narratives that low residential mobility is solely down to poor socioeconomic experiences and a lack of opportunity as it can reflect different norms around partnership behaviour. This study design contributes substantially to our knowledge of integration and the migrant experience in France. It applies an innovative methodology that allows for simultaneous analysis of different life course processes, showcasing that migrant incorporation is not linear between generations and varies substantially across domains and groups.

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