

Legalizing same-sex marriage matters for all same-sex couples' subjective well-being

EPC 2018 / Brussels

Diederik Boertien

Daniele Vignoli



Main Question



Has the subjective well-being of same-sex couples increased after the introduction of same-sex marriage?

Case: Legalization of same-sex marriage in England and Wales in
March 2014

Why Marriage Could Matter (1)



The Marriage Premium Hypothesis

Marriage provides direct benefits to individuals

Wage and wealth premiums, relationship stability, social status

H1: Increases in well-being concentrated among same-sex couples who marry

Why Marriage Could Matter (2)



Structural Stigma Hypothesis

Discrimination affects the well-being of groups and not just that of individuals directly involved

E.g. a hate crime can increase anxiety among those who were not direct victims too

H2: Increases in well-being for all same-sex couples

Data and Method



UNIVERSITÀ
DEGLI STUDI
FIRENZE



CED
*Centre d'Estudis
Demogràfics*



Data:

Annual Population Survey (UK) (includes LFS)

Yearly cross-sectional data 2011-2016

Individuals only once in data

N = 476,411 (4,112 in same-sex couple)

Measurement of same-sex couples:

Same-sex couples identified based on co-residence rather than identity:

Couples of the same-sex co-residing and declaring to be in a union

Subjective Well-Being



1. Overall, how **satisfied** are you with your life nowadays?
2. Overall, to what extent do you **feel the things** you do in your life **are worthwhile**?
3. Overall, how **happy** did you feel yesterday?
4. Overall, how **anxious** did you feel yesterday?

Scale of 0 to 10, where 0 is “not at all” and 10 is “completely”.

Assessment of their life overall, as well as an indication of day-to-day emotions.

Mostly face-to-face interviews, but non-negligible share by phone

Control and Mediating Variables



Control variables

Foreign Born; Ethnicity; Region; Sex; Age; Year

Education (No qualifications / GCSE+ / University)

Possible Mediators

Net weekly pay (quintiles where lowest quintile is no pay)

Having a child under age 5

Having a child between ages 5 and 18

Reported disability

Time since moving to current address

Results

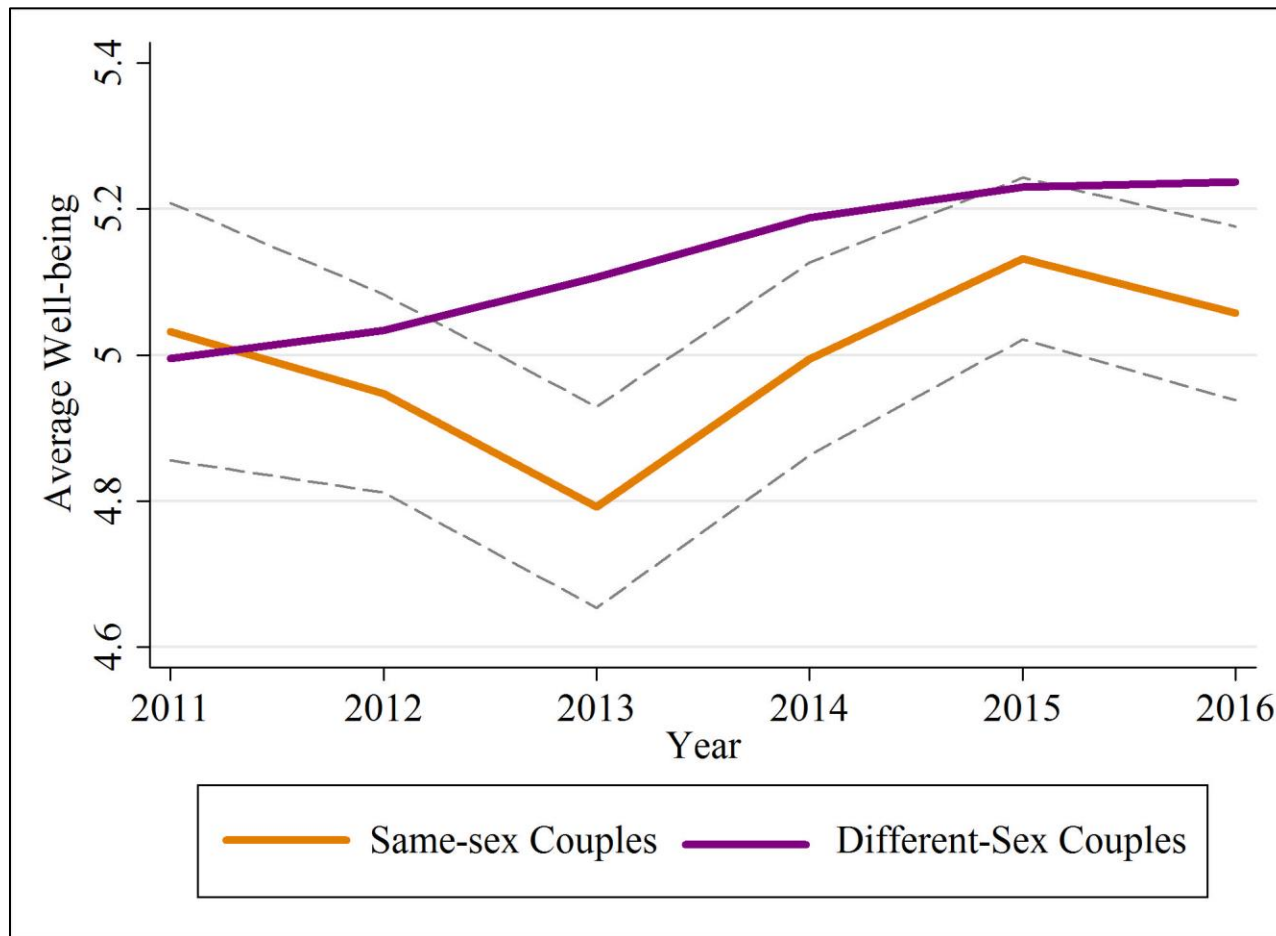


UNIVERSITÀ
DEGLI STUDI
FIRENZE

Yearly Changes in Well-Being



Figure 1. Yearly average well-being by sex-composition of couple (95% CI)





Pre-post analysis (12 months before and after)

Table 1. OLS models explaining subjective well-being

	Happiness		Anxiety		Satisfaction		Worthwile		Overall	
	Coef.	SE	Coef.	SE	Coef.	SE	Coef.	SE	Coef.	SE
Post-legalization <i>(ref. pre-legalization)</i>	0.08**	0.01	-0.08**	0.02	0.11**	0.01	0.08**	0.01	0.09**	0.01
In same-sex couple <i>(ref. different-sex)</i>	-0.31**	0.10	0.58**	0.12	-0.13	0.08	-0.22*	0.10	-0.31**	0.08
Same-sex couple, post-legalization <i>(interaction)</i>	0.31*	0.13	-0.34†	0.18	0.15	0.10	0.26*	0.11	0.26**	0.10



Marriage Premium

Table 2. OLS models explaining subjective well-being among same-sex couples

	Pre-legalization		Post-legalization period			
	Controls		Controls only		Mediators Included	
	Coef.	SE	Coef.	SE	Coef.	SE
Civil Partnership (Ref. Informal Union)	0.14	0.09	0.01	0.09	0.04	0.09
Married	.	.	0.33*	0.15	0.36**	0.14

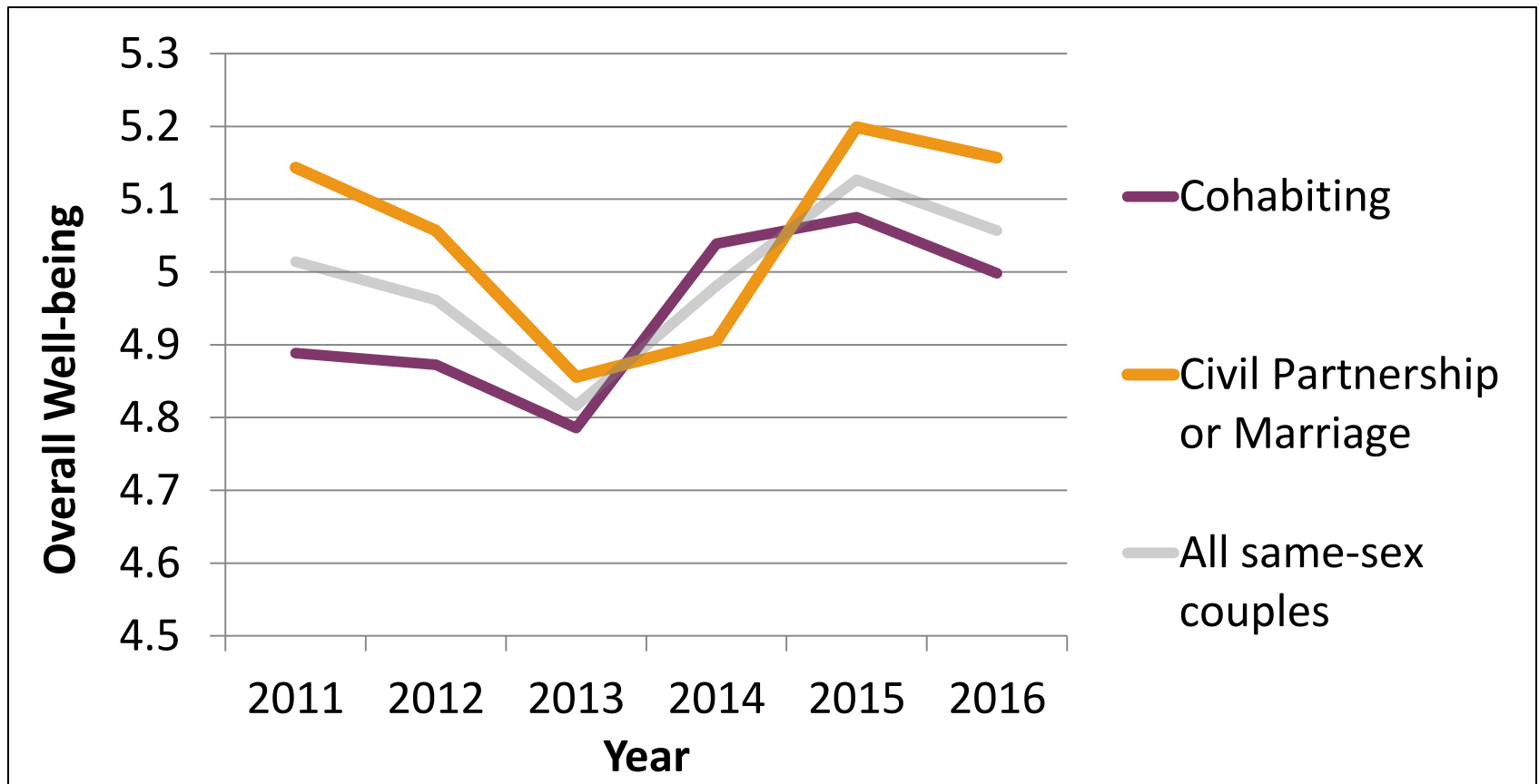
But: Primarily produced by wrong components (satisfaction with life)

Only 8% of post-legalization same-sex couple sample is married



Analysis by Union Status

Figure 2. Subjective well-being by union status.



Conclusion



UNIVERSITÀ
DEGLI STUDI
FIRENZE



CED
Centre d'Estudis
Demogràfics



The subjective well-being of same-sex couples increased significantly after the legalization of same-sex marriage

Some evidence for a marriage premium

But, well-being of all same-sex couples improved regardless of marital status

Reduction in structural stigma likely important mechanism

Gràcies.

Diederik Boertien &

Daniele Vignoli

dboertien@ced.uab.es

vignoli@disia.unifi.it

