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Economics of Marriage Bars

Irene Mosca* and Robert E. Wright

Abstract

A Marriage Bar is the requirement that women working in certain jobs must leave that job when they marry. In the twentieth century, Marriage Bars were not unusual internationally. In the late 1800s to early 1900s, legislative provisions that required women to resign at marriage were introduced in several countries around the world, including Australia, Canada, Ireland, the Netherlands and the UK. Spill-overs to jobs not strictly covered by the Marriage Bar were also common. This chapter critically reviews, from an economics perspective, the background, the history and the impacts of Marriage Bars. This chapter has four aims. The first is to summarise the arguments provided by government officials and employers to justify both the introduction and the retention of Marriage Bars. The second is to provide a cross-country comparison of Marriage Bars. The third is to investigate the potential impacts of the Marriage Bar on women's behavior with respect to employment, marriage and education. The fourth is to highlight potential avenues for future research. Although Marriage Bars do not exist anymore, they are still a serious topic of current debate. Much more can be learned about important topics, such as discrimination, from carrying out research focused on Marriage Bars.

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1. Introduction: What is a Marriage Bar?

A Marriage Bar is the requirement that women working in certain jobs must leave that job when they marry. In the twentieth century, Marriage Bars were not unusual internationally. In the late 1800s to early 1900s, legislative provisions that required women to resign at marriage were introduced in several countries around the world. These ranged from provisions of national scope to provisions with a narrower scope. For example, in Australia, Canada, Ireland, the Netherlands and the UK, all women employed in the regular established civil service were required to retire on marriage. In New Zealand, Portugal and Italy, regulations were confined to specific occupations. To illustrate, primary schools teachers had to leave employment at Marriage in New Zealand. In Portugal and Italy, married women could not be employed as nurses in civic hospitals and in psychiatric hospitals, respectively.

It is likely that Marriage Bars also affected jobs not strictly covered by Marriage Bar legislation. In some countries, this "spill-over" effect was quite large. For example, in Australia, France, the Netherlands, Ireland and the UK, women employed in occupations or sectors in which the Marriage Bar was not legally binding were often required to resign at marriage. Clauses were often added to contracts of employment or in collective agreements that indicated that women must leave their job when they marry. For example, in France foreign airlines entered into a verbal agreement with air hostesses on their appointment that they would resign on marriage. Air France regulations, which had to be accepted by all prospective employees, stated that "for hostesses, marriage shall involve termination of employment in that capacity … The person concerned must inform the Company of her marriage one and a-half months before it takes place". In the Netherlands, the collective agreement for the printing trade provided that "employers may dismiss a female worker when she marries".

Where spill-overs existed, the practice of dismissing women at marriage was generally more widespread among salaried employees than among hourly paid workers. It was also widespread in the in banking and insurance sectors. For example, in Western Australia, manufacturing or retail industries did not adopt a Marriage Bar. However, the general policy in banks, insurance offices and trustee companies was to require women to resign on marriage. In one Italian bank, female employees were dismissed one year after marriage. The extra year was given in consideration of the expenses women had on setting up a house. In Belgium, the practice of dismissing women on marriage applied to salaried employees rather than to hourly paid workers and was particularly widespread in banking.

In most countries, Marriage Bars were in place for three to five decades. Most were abolished, at the latest, by the 1950s. For example, in the UK the Marriage Bar was introduced in 1894 and abolished in 1946. In the Netherlands it was introduced in 1904 and abolished in 1957. In Canada it was introduced in 1921 and abolished in 1955. In New Zealand the Marriage Bar was short-lived. It was introduced in 1931 and abolished seven years later. In Australia and Ireland, the Marriage Bar was abolished relatively late compared to other countries. In Australia the Marriage Bar was introduced in 1922 and abolished in 1966. In Ireland it was introduced in 1924 and abolished in 1973.

The aim of this chapter is to critically review, from an economics perspective, the background, the history and the impacts of Marriage Bars. This should be of interest to economists, particularly labor economists, since a Marriage Bar is effectively a form of institutionalised gender discrimination. The remainder of this chapter is organised as follows. Section 2 reviews the arguments used to justify both the introduction and the retention of Marriage Bars. Two main reasons were provided by government officials and employers. The first was that married women in employment restricted opportunities for married men in other households or for single, younger women. The second was that married women were less reliable or less flexible than unmarried women because of their caring and household responsibilities. Section 3 provides a cross-country comparison of Marriage Bars. The aim of this section is to illustrate and compare the key dates and legislative moves undertaken to first introduce and then abolish the Marriage Bar in Australia, Ireland, New Zealand, the UK and the US. Evidence of the extent of spill-overs is also reported. Section 3 highlights that although Marriage Bars were a common features of many countries, important differences existed.

Section 4 investigates the potential impacts of the Marriage Bar on women's behavior. One can think of the introduction or abolition of a Marriage Bar affecting the life-time earnings of women. Likewise, one can think of women affected and not affected by a Marriage Bar having different life-time earnings. If Marriage Bars do affect the life-time earnings of women in a significant way, one would expect that introducing or abolishing a Marriage Bar would affect a woman's decision relating to (1) Employment; (2) Whether she marries or not; (3) The age at which she marries if she does; and (4) The choices she makes about education and other forms of human capital investment. Therefore, Section 4 investigates trends in employment, marriage and educational attainment in four countries in which the Marriage Bar was widespread: Australia, Ireland, the UK and the US. In each of these countries, trends which were in place before the abolition of the Marriage Bar are compared with trends which were in place after the abolition of the Marriage Bar. Section 5 concludes the chapter and highlights

potential avenues for future research. Although Marriage Bars do not exist anymore, they are still a serious topic of current debate. Much more can be learned about important topics, such as discrimination, from carrying out research focused on Marriage Bars.

2. Why Were Marriage Bars Introduced?

There are several reasons behind the introduction of Marriage Bars. One reason was that married women in employment restricted opportunities for married men in other households or for single, younger women. This was particularly the case in periods of high unemployment. It was also the case in the teaching sector. For example, in New Zealand the Marriage Bar was justified by education officials as an "emergency measure" necessitated by high teacher unemployment during the Depression (Aitken 1996, p.86). In New South Wales, the main reason given was lack of employment for single ex-student teachers (Aitken 1996, p.86). In 1923 a top official of the British Board of Education observed that "it is common ground that the elimination of married women teachers whose husbands are able to support them is the most obvious and natural way of mitigating the extensive unemployment of young teachers which is almost inevitable in the autumn" (Aitken 1996, p.87). According to The Irish Department of Education "married women teachers restricted opportunities for other women and created social tensions if married to a farmer, shopkeeper or teacher" (O'Leary 1987, p. 50).

Another reason was that married women were less reliable or less flexible than unmarried women because of their caring and household responsibilities. Married women were also perceived to be costly to employers in terms of absenteeism, lateness and turnover. For example, the view in the British civil service was that "…[S]ingle women were more reliable and more geographically mobile than married women" (The Spectator 1946). The view of the Irish Department of Education was that women could not satisfactorily attend to the duties of both home and work (O'Leary 1987, p. 50). The 1962 ILO report on discrimination in employment or occupation on the basis of marital status found that efficiency and reliability were often a concern for employers. One reply stated that employers considered that married women were more prone to irregularity of attendance and absenteeism. Another reply mentioned staffing difficulties arising out of the fact that all married women tended to want to take their annual holidays at the same time (ILO 1962b, p. 387). A personal officer in a Philadelphia insurance firm noted that although in his firm the Marriage Bar was not legally

binding, he preferred that women left employment upon marriage because "they were less efficient after marriage – too much temporary didn't care attitude" (Goldin 1990, p. 168).

Cohn (1985), Goldin (1990) and Zimmeck (1984) argue that the Marriage Bar was a socially acceptable way of terminating the employment of young women whose wages would eventually exceed their addition to firm revenue (marginal product). In jobs in which salaries increased with tenure more than with productivity, some experienced workers would eventually become too expensive and cheaper beginners were preferred. In other words, the Marriage Bar ensured that women left after a relatively short period, before they became too expensive. As one British official remarked "it must be remembered that it is cheaper for us to get rid of the ladies in this way than to keep them on until pensioned" (Zimmeck, 1984, p. 904). One Irish firm that required women to quit at marriage also re-employed the same women part-time on some occasions, such as during the lunch hour rush. The explanation provided was that by doing so the firm had the added advantage of recruiting only efficient employees to return to work in this part-time, temporary capacity (Commission on the Status of Women 1972).

Young women could evade "early retirement" through marrying later. Cohn (1985) argued that to counter this, employers paid a so-called "marriage gratuity". This was money given to women at marriage. Marriage gratuities were meant to encourage young women to marry and thus leave the firm in the face of their rising real wages but assumed constant productivity. Marriage gratuities were used extensively in Ireland and the UK. In Ireland teachers and civil servants needed a minimum of seven years of service to qualify for the marriage gratuity (O'Leary 1987). For teachers the marriage gratuity was equal to one month's salary per year of service, or a year's salary, whichever was the lesser (O'Leary 1987). In the UK, Great Western Railway and the General Post Office offered marriage gratuities after six years of employment. The size of the gratuity varied, but it was often the equivalent of a month and a half's salary.

3. Cross-country Comparison of Marriage Bars

In the early 1960s, the International Labour Office (ILO) commissioned an extensive study of discrimination in employment or occupation on the basis of sex and marital status. Qualitative information from around 60 countries was collected and the results were later published in two reports (ILO 1962a; ILO 1962b). Three main findings emerged. The first was that regulations or laws that required women to resign at marriage existed in many countries. The second was that the practice of dismissing women at marriage was also common in sectors

or occupations in which the Marriage Bar was not legally binding. The third is that although Marriage Bars were a common features of many countries, important differences existed. These were primarily differences in the timing of introduction and abolition of the Marriage Bar and in the magnitude of spill-overs to jobs not strictly covered by the Marriage Bar.

The information provided in the two ILO reports, and from a number of other sources, is summarised in Table 1. Column (1) and (2) in Table 1 illustrate and compare the key dates and legislative moves undertaken to first introduce and then abolish the Marriage Bar in Australia, Ireland, New Zealand, the UK and the US. Where possible, the original regulation or law that was used to introduce the Marriage Bar is reported. Column (3) provides some evidence on the extent of spill-overs.

[Table 1 around here]

Empirical evidence on the extent of Marriage Bars has been collected in the twentieth century in the US and more recently in Ireland. Several surveys were carried out between 1931 and 1956 in the US. In 1931 and 1940, the Women's Bureau carried our two surveys to assess the extent of the Marriage Bar in office work in the US (US Department of Labor, 1934 and 1942). The 1931 survey sampled mainly large firms in seven cities. The firms sampled included insurance companies, investment houses, banks, publishing firms, advertising companies, public utilities and mail-order firms. The 1940 survey sampled a wider range of firms, but in five cities only. Added in the 1940 survey were manufacturing firms, retail stores, wholesale outlets, small professional offices and firms in the transportation and communication sector. The evidence collected showed that in 1931, 12% of all firms in the sample had a formal policy of not retaining women on marriage. However, 25% of all female employees were in firms having such a policy. Therefore, larger firms were more likely to implement such policies (Goldin 1990, p. 163).

Studies of the Marriage Bar in the US have also been conducted in a wider range of industries. In 1936, Purdue University surveyed 250 American firms on their policies concerning married women. The survey found that 50% of the factories and 61% of the offices had some sort of restriction – formal or discretionary – on the hiring of married women. Forced resignation was somewhat rarer (Best 1938). A comparable survey was performed by the National Federation of Business and Professional Women's Clubs in 1940. The study found that 43% of public utilities, 29% of large manufacturing concerns, 23% of small private businesses and 13% of department stores had some sort of restriction on the employment of

married women (Oppenheimer 1970). Between 1928 and 1956, the National Education Association monitored the use of the Marriage Bar in the public school systems of American cities of 2,500 inhabitants. The evidence collected showed that in 1928, 61% of all urban school districts did not hire married women and over 52% required resignation soon after marriage. In 1941, the comparable figures were 87% and 61% (Oppenheimer 1970). By 1951, only 18% of the school systems would not hire a married woman and 10% would require a woman to retire at marriage.

More recently, women participating in The Irish Longitudinal Study on Ageing (TILDA) were asked specific questions about their experience of the Marriage Bar. TILDA is a nationally representative sample of community-dwelling individuals aged 50 and above in Ireland. In 2014/2015, TILDA female respondents who ever married and ever engaged in paid work were asked whether they ever had to leave a job because of the Marriage Bar. Interviewers were instructed to explain what the Marriage Bar was in case the respondent was unsure. The specific question asked was: 'Did you ever have to leave a job because of the Marriage Bar?'. If the answer was 'yes', respondents were asked to report which job it was that they had to leave and whether they ever returned to work. TILDA is the first nationally representative survey that includes specific questions on respondents' personal experience of the Marriage Bar. Mosca and Wright (2020) used TILDA data to investigate how widespread the Marriage Bar was in Ireland and which jobs and sectors were mostly affected by it.

Mosca and Wright (2020) found that 21% of TILDA female respondents who ever married and ever engaged in paid work reported that they had to leave a job because of the Marriage Bar. About 42% of these women were in the public sector. About 8% were into commercial bodies (such as companies) beneficially owned, either completely or in majority, by the Irish Government. The remaining 50% were in the private sector. About half were employed as clerks, typists, secretaries, telephonists or receptionists. The remaining half were spread across a range of occupations. About one in five of those affected by the Marriage Bar were in occupations such as sale assistants, waitresses, factory workers or dress-makers. A large share (nearly 14%) were nurses and radiographers.

4. Impacts of the Marriage Bar on the Behavior of Women

There is a large literature, beginning with Becker's 1957 influential book, *The Economics of Discrimination*, concerned with understanding the causes and consequences of discrimination. Discrimination refers to the different valuation of personal characteristics related and unrelated

to productivity. These personal, or "human capital", characteristics include factors such as education, tenure and work experience. If men have more human capital than women, one would expect men to have higher earnings than women. If this is the case, then any observed gender gap in earnings is justified (or at least understood). However, if men receive a higher "return" (earnings reward) to human capital than women, then any observed gender gap in earnings is not justified assuming that men and women have the same human capital. There should be no gender gap in earnings if men and women have the same human capital. If this not the case, then women are discriminated against. In Becker's terms, if employers have a "taste for discrimination", they have an aversion to employing women for reasons not related to their productivity. Therefore, in a sense if women want to work they must "compensate" employers by lowering their reservation wage and accept a wage offer lower than what their productivity implies. That is, what men would be paid with same human capital. It follows that discrimination lowers current earnings, it also lowers life-time earnings. In many economic models of behavior, differences and changes in life-time earnings is a key determinant of behavior.

As mentioned above, a Marriage Bar is effectively a form of institutionalised gender discrimination. In many countries it was a legal requirement. In several countries, it was mimicked by employers that were not required by law implement it. One can think of the introduction or abolition of a Marriage Bar affecting the life-time earnings of women. Likewise, one can think of women affected and not affected by a Marriage Bar having different life-time earnings. If the Marriage Bars do affect the life-time earnings of women in a significant way, one would expect that introducing or abolishing a Marriage Bar would affect a woman's decision relating to (1) Employment; (2) Whether she marries or not; (3) The age at which she marries if she does; and (4) The choices she makes about education and other forms of human capital investment. The remainder of this section investigates trends in employment, marriage and educational attainment in four countries in which the Marriage Bar was widespread: Australia, Ireland, the UK and the US. In each of these countries, trends which were in place before the abolition of the Marriage Bar are compared with trends which were in place after the abolition of the Marriage Bar. Therefore, the focus is exclusively on the abolition of Marriage Bars. Data are drawn from a variety of sources, including published aggregate data from census reports, from reports on vital statistics and from reports on the labor force.

4.1 Employment Effects

Figure 1 shows trends in employment of married and single women before and after the abolition of the Marriage Bar in Australia, Ireland, the UK and US. For Australia, the employment rate of married women is defined as the ratio of married women in employment to the employed population. The employment rate of single women is defined as the ratio of single women in employment to the employed population. For Ireland and the UK, the employment rate of married women is defined as the ratio of married women in employment to the population of married women. The employment rate of single women is defined as the ratio of single women in employment to the population of single women. For the US, trends in labor force participation are shown. Labor force participation rate of married women is defined as the ratio of married women in the labor force to the population of married women. Labor force participation rate of single women is defined as the ratio of single women in the labor force to the population of single women.

Figure 1 shows that in the four countries in focus, the employment rate of married women increased sharply after the abolition of the Marriage Bar, whereas the employment rate of single women remained relatively stable or slightly decreased. To illustrate, in the UK the employment rate of married women more than doubled from 11.3% to 25.7% between 1931 and 1951. This compares to a smaller increase from 75% to 82.2% for single women. Similarly, in Ireland the employment rate of married women more than doubled 9.3% to 20.7% between 1971 and 1981. This compares to a slight increase from 77.4% to 77.9% for single women.

[Figure 1 around here]

4.2 Marriage Rates Effects

Figure 2 shows trends in marriage rates before and after the abolition of the Marriage Bar in Australia, Ireland, the UK and US. Marriage rate is defined as "marriages per 1,000 population" for Australia, Ireland and the US and as "females marrying per 1,000 unmarried females" for the UK. Figure 2 shows that in Australia, the UK and the US, the marriage rate first increased and then decreased after the abolition of the Marriage Bar. In Ireland, it steadily decreased. The largest increase following the abolition of the Marriage Bar is observed in the US, where the number of marriages per 1,000 population spiked at 16.4 in 1946. However, it is important to

note that in the US the abolition of the Marriage Bar coincided with the end of the Second World War. Therefore, trends in the US have to be interpreted with caution.

[Figure 2 around here]

4.3 Age at Marriage Effects

Figure 3 shows trends in women's age at marriage before and after the abolition of the Marriage Bar in Australia, Ireland, the UK and US. Age at marriage is defined as median age at first marriage for Australia and the US. It is defined as average age at marriage in Ireland and as average age at first marriage in the UK. It is important to note that age at marriage is not available for all years for Australia and the US. Figure 3 shows that in Australia and Ireland, women's age at marriage first stabilised or slightly decreased, and then increased after the abolition of the Marriage Bar. In the UK, it steadily declined. In the US, it first declined and then slightly increased.

[Figure 3 around here]

4.4. Educational Effects

Figure 4 shows trends in educational attainment for both men and women before and after the abolition of the Marriage Bar in Australia, Ireland, the UK and US. Educational attainment is defined as percentage of population aged 25+ with tertiary education in Australia and Ireland. It is defined as percentage of population aged 25+ completing four or more years of college in the US. In the UK, it is defined as percentage of population aged 18 to 20 in full-time higher education. Figure 4 shows similar trends in educational attainment in the countries in focus. For Ireland, Figure 4 shows nearly parallel trends in education levels for males and females before and after the abolition of the Marriage Bar. In the UK and the US, the gap appears to have widened with men investing more than women in education after the abolition of the Marriage Bar.

[Figure 4 around here]

5. Conclusion

A Marriage Bar is the requirement that women working in certain jobs must leave that job when they marry. In the twentieth century, Marriage Bars were not unusual internationally. In the late 1800s to early 1900s, legislative provisions that required women to resign at marriage were introduced in several countries around the world, including Australia, Canada, Ireland, the Netherlands and the UK. Spill-overs to jobs not strictly covered by the Marriage Bar were also common. When spill-overs existed, the practice of dismissing women at marriage was generally more widespread among salaried employees than among hourly paid workers and was followed particularly – but not only – in banking and insurance.

The evidence to date suggests that Marriage Bars did not likely have a major effect on women's behaviors in relation to employment, marriage and education. Some might find this assessment surprising given that economic theory suggests that there should be effects of this type. One explanation for this relies on the historical and socioeconomic context of the period when the Marriage Bar was in place. Previous research has highlighted that the norms and societal expectations in terms of the roles of men and women at the time are very different from today's norms and expectations. The Marriage Bar was accepted in society and leaving work at marriage was "the norm" at the time both for women in and not in jobs affected by the Marriage Bar. In O'Leary's words "the history of the [Irish] Marriage Bar cannot be understood in isolation from the society that produced it" (O'Leary 1957, p.51). Economics theory is very much about making choices. However, in the time periods in which Marriage Bars were in place, the choices that women (and men) could make were very limited for most of population. For example, when the Marriage Bar was introduced in Ireland, the issue for women was not what job to choose since for most women the only job available was farm service. Choice only matters if one has the opportunity to choose.

In most countries, Marriage Bars were abolished in the 1950s at the latest. For example, the Marriage Bar was abolished in 1938 in New Zealand, in 1946 in the UK, in 1947 in the Netherlands and in 1955 in Canada. Most of the women affected by the Marriage Bar in these countries are likely to have died or to be very old. Australia and Ireland were somewhat unique in this respect since they abolished the Marriage Bar only in 1966 and 1973, respectively. This means that some of the women who were affected by the Marriage Bar in these two countries are still alive. In Ireland, some of these women were asked a limited set of questions about their personal experience of the Marriage Bar in the third wave of The Irish Longitudinal Study on Ageing (2014/2015). The TILDA sample is the *only* currently available sample for any country

of women interviewed in a large-scale survey who were affected by the Marriage Bar. It is the historical oddity of the late abolition of the Marriage Bar in Ireland that has made it possible to collect in recent years information directly from the women who were affected by it at least four decades ago.

While Marriage Bars do not exist anymore, they are still a serious topic of current debate. For example, on the fiftieth anniversary of the 1966 abolition of the Australian Marriage Bar, Colley reflected "[O]n the policy change process and lessons that can be applied to the continuing struggle for gender equality at work" (Colley 2018, p.228). In Ireland, one outcome of the Marriage Bar is that it created a group of women who do not have the minimum number of contributions needed to qualify for a (full) State pension. This is because they had to leave employment at relatively young ages and many did not return to the labor market for many years (if at all). This outcome was a central concern in the Green Paper on Pensions (DSFA, 2007). Its publication was followed by a consultation exercise where the public was invited to express their views on any of the topics discussed in it. A very large number of submissions were about the pension consequences of the Marriage Bar (DSFA, 2008).

The Irish government responded to the submissions raised by the women affected by the Marriage Bar two years later, in the 2010 National Pension Framework. The conclusion of the Framework was that 'the Government cannot address shortcomings which have arisen from gaps in social insurance coverage in the past' (DSFA, 2010, p.26). In December 2017, the Minister of Finance Paschal Donohoe was asked to clarify the government's position on the pension consequences of the Marriage Bar. Mr Donohoe reinforced that the government cannot compensate the women affected by the Marriage Bar. He also referred to the Marriage Bar as a 'bonkers law' and stated that 'the way those women were treated was wrong' (The Irish Times, 2017).

Australian and Irish women are the last sizeable living group of women subject to what was effectively legal institutionalised gender discrimination. Therefore, Australia and Ireland provide a "last chance" opportunity to research further the Marriage Bar. However, as every year passes, there are fewer and fewer women who are still alive and who were affected by the Marriage Bar. Given prevailing mortality rates, in a decade from now there will only be a small number who are still alive. Analysing the impacts of the Marriage Bar is important for both academic and social justice reasons. Collecting more information will require a dedicated survey of women both affected and not affected by the Marriage Bar.

It is clear that the opportunity to analyse women who lived through periods in which Marriage Bars were in place is slipping away. It is important to note that these women were of

working age when Marriage Bars were abolished. There are no women alive who were of working age when Marriage Bars were introduced. However, this does not mean that there is no serious future research agenda concerned with the economics of Marriage Bars. We believe the opposite is the case. We believe that much can be learned about important topics, such as discrimination, from carrying out research focused on Marriage Bars. However, future research will most likely need to be based on the methods used in social and economic history. With these methods, research could be carried out concerned with the effects of abolishing Marriage Bars. This research may cast a new light on the current view that Marriage Bars had little effect on the behavior of women. In addition, with these methods, research could be carried out to investigate the effects of introducing a Marriage Bar. Much of what we know about Marriage Bar through conventional empirical research is based around their abolition. This is a deficiency that needs to be addressed.

Tables and Figures

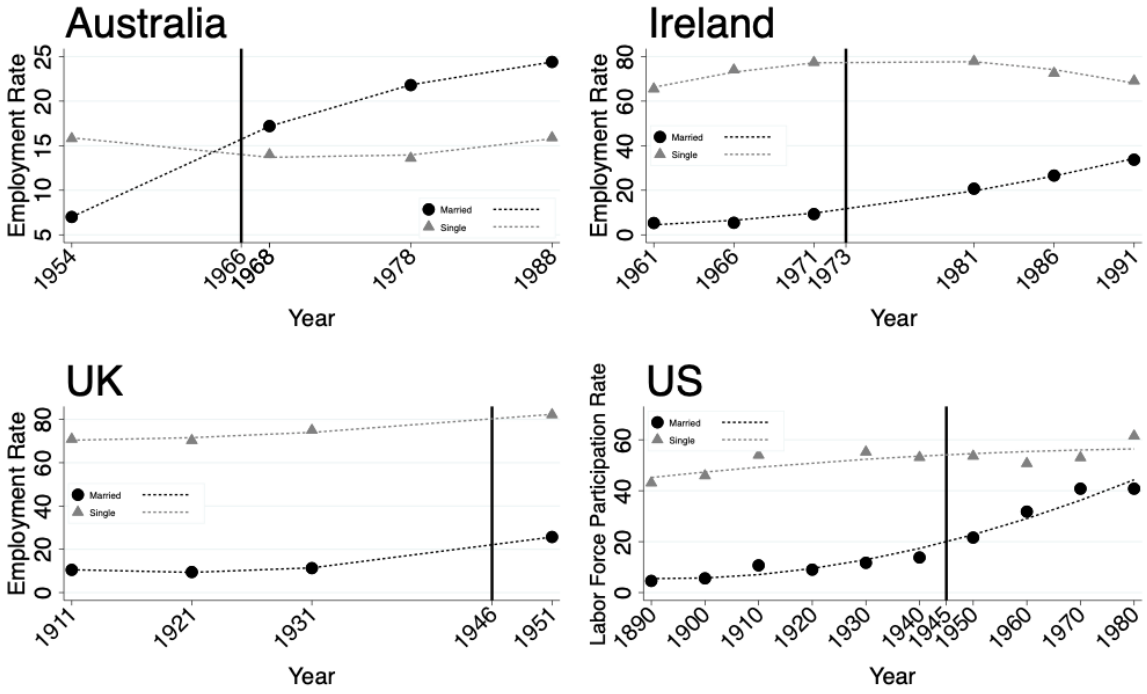
Table 1: International Evidence on Marriage Bars

	Column (1)	*Column (2)*	*Column (3)*
Country	*Introduction of the Marriage Bar*	*Abolition of the Marriage Bar*	*Evidence of Spill-overs?*
Australia	The 1922 Public Service Act (Commonwealth), section 49 provided that: "No married woman shall be eligible for employment, either permanently or temporarily, in the Commonwealth Service, unless the Board certifies that there are special circumstances which make her employment desirable. Every female officer shall be deemed to have retired from the Commonwealth Service upon her marriage, unless the Board certifies that there are special circumstances which make her employment desirable." The Commonwealth Banks Act, 1959, section 104, provided that: "A married woman shall not be appointed to the Service except in special circumstances. A female officer shall cease to be an officer on her marriage unless the Corporation is satisfied that there are special circumstances which make it desirable that she should continue in the Service."	In 1966, the Australian Public Service officially removed the Marriage Bar. The Bill was introduced and passed in October 1966 and came into effect in November 1966. Discussions had begun eight years earlier. In 1958, the Boyer Committee reviewed the organisation of the Commonwealth Public Service and recommended that the Marriage Bar be removed.	In Western Australia, manufacturing or retail industries did not adopt a Marriage Bar. However, the general policy in banks, insurance offices and trustee companies was to require women to resign on marriage. In Queensland, South Australia and Western Australia women teachers were required to resign on marriage, although in view of the shortage of teachers they could have been re-engaged in a temporary capacity. In Queensland and Western Australia nurses were required to resign on marriage, although in case of labor shortage they could have been re-employed.
Ireland	The 1924 Civil Service Regulation Act stated that: "…female civil servants holding established posts will be required on marriage to resign from the civil service". In 1932, coverage was expanded to include primary school teachers. A letter from the Department of Education stated that female primary school teachers are required to leave their job when they marry. The Marriage Bar in the civil service was bolstered by the 1956 Civil Service Regulation Act. The requirement became: "…women employed in positions in the civil service, other than those employed in certain excluded (non-pensionable) posts, are required to retire on marriage".	In June 1958, the Marriage Bar for primary school teachers was abolished. In 1973, the Marriage Bar in the civil service was abolished. Beginning in 1974, it was abandoned by local authorities and health boards. In 1977, discrimination in employment on the grounds of sex or marital status was made illegal by the Employment Equality Act.	The practice of ending the employment of women when they married was practised by local authorities, health boards and state-sponsored bodies such as Córas Iompair Éireann (the national public transport provider). Most banks and financial institutions adopted a Marriage Bar. Two large private sector employers, Jacobs Biscuits and Guinness Brewers, required female employees to leave when they married.
New Zealand	In 1931, the government gave – through legislation – education boards the power to refuse to employ married women in	It was abolished in 1938. Compared to other countries, the Marriage Bar	Evidence of spill-overs has not been reported.

	primary schools and to dismiss married women already holding positions.	in New Zealand was short-lived.	
United Kingdom	In March 1894, the Treasury introduced the requirement that "the service of a woman ceases as a matter of course on marriage". Resignation on marriage had been the general rule in the majority of departments (e.g. the General Post Office had introduced it in 1876) although there were a few isolated instances where some women had been allowed to stay after marriage. By November 1895, the Marriage Bar was extended to all established female labor in 'public' departments, although it was not universally applied.	In 1946, the Marriage Bar was abolished by resolution of both Houses of Parliament.	Marriage Bars were enforced by a number of private British firms including: Bank of England, Boots Pure Drugs, British Overseas Airways, Cadbury, Great Western Railway, Imperial Chemical London, Midland and Scottish Railway, London and Northeastern Railway, Rowntree and Co. Southern Railway, Unilever and Sainsbury's. The British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) introduced a Marriage Bar in 1932 and abolished it in 1944.
United States	Goldin (1988) identifies two types of Marriage Bars in the US: one against the hiring of married women and the second concerning the retention of existing female employees when they married. Goldin (1988) refers to the first as "Hire Bar", and to the second as the "Retain Bar". The Hire Bar and the Retain Bar were instituted in public school teaching sometime in the late l800s and were expanded in the early 1900s.	Both the Hire Bar and the Retain Bar disappeared during the Second World War.	The Hire and Retain Bars were also widespread in clerical work.

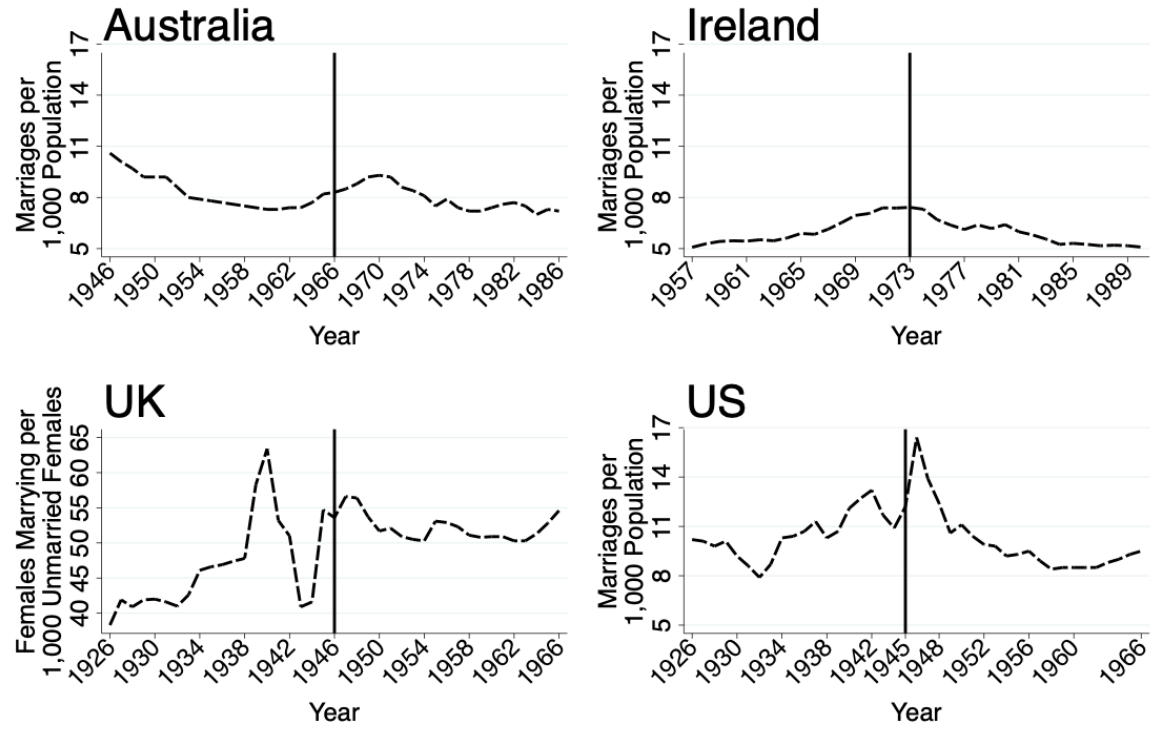
Sources: Aitken (1996); Cohn (1985); Colley (2018); Goldin (1988), ILO (1962a, 1962b); Mosca and Wright (2020), Murphy (2014)

Figure 1: Historical Trends in Women's Employment Rates, Australia, Ireland, UK and US, 1890-1991



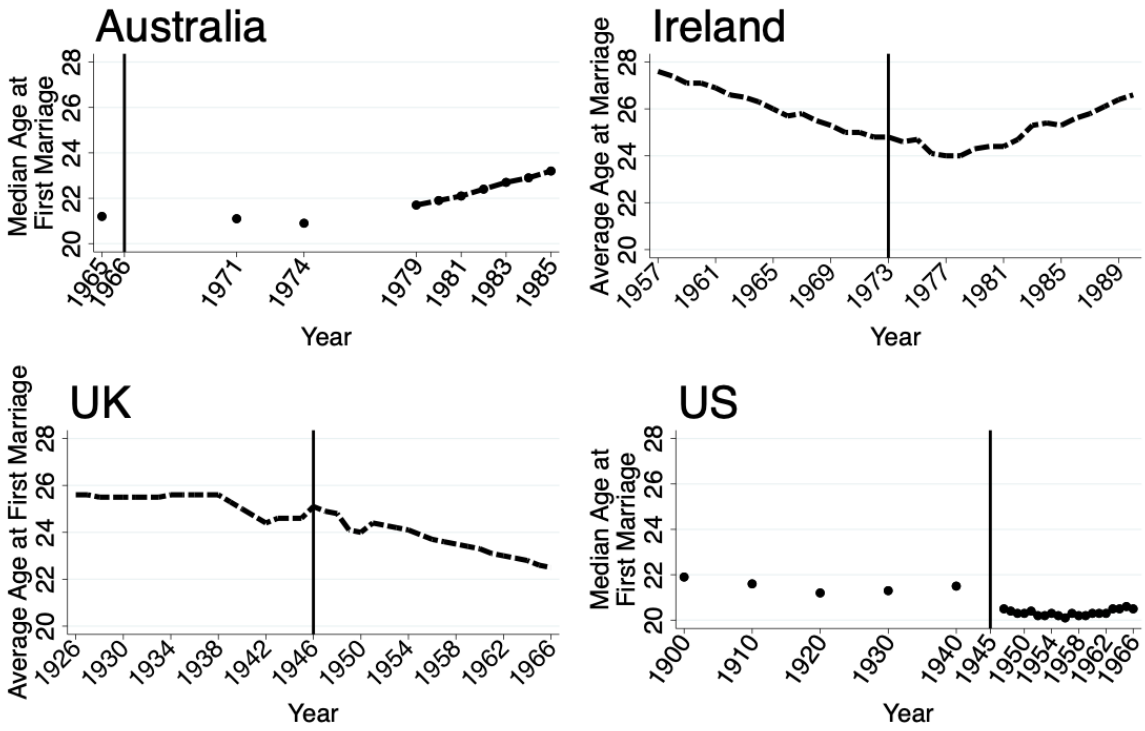
Notes: Smoothed using fractional polynomial regression
Vertical line indicates abolition of Marriage Bar
See text for explanation of employment rate and labor force particiaption rate
For the UK, data are for England and Wales only
Sources: McLennan 1998; CSO 1961-1991; Gales and Marks 1974; Killingsworth and Heckman, 1986

Figure 2: Historical Trends in Marriage Rates, Australia, Ireland, UK and US, 1900-1990



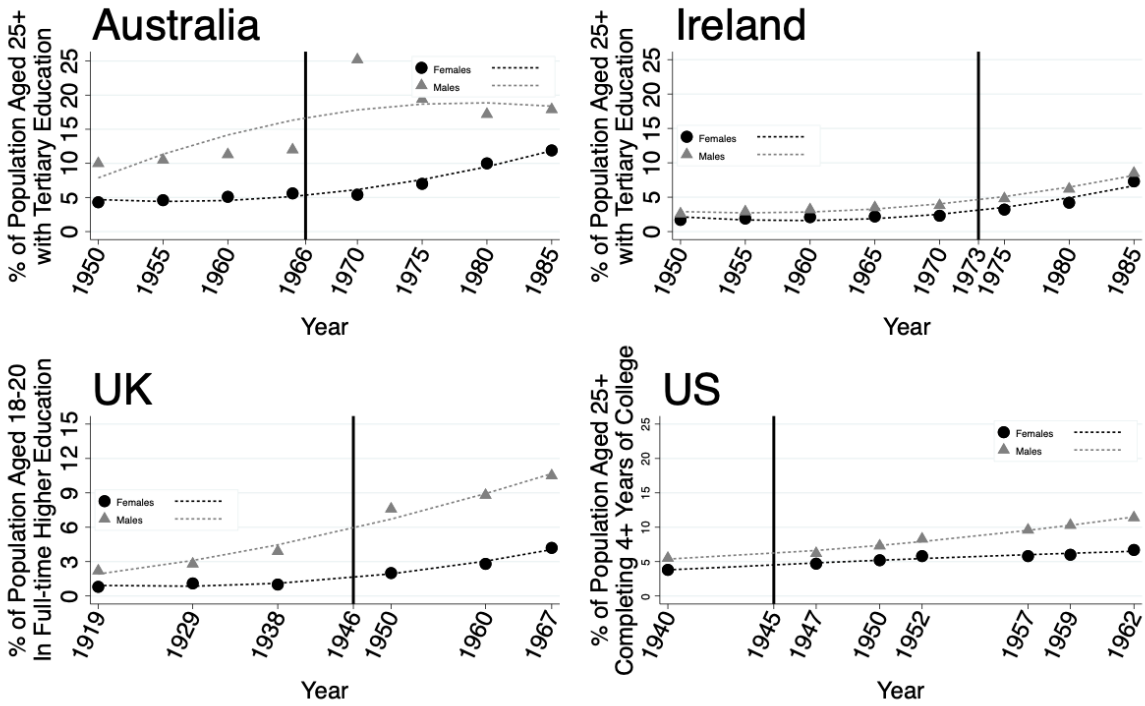
Notes: Vertical line indicates abolition of Marriage Bar
For the UK, data are for England and Wales only
Sources: AIFS 2021; CSO 1957-1990; ONS 2014a; Curtin and Sutton 2020

Figure 3: Historical Trends in Women's Age at Marriage, Australia, Ireland, UK and US, 1900-1990



Notes: Vertical line indicates abolition of Marriage Bar
For the UK, data are for England and Wales only
Sources: AIFS 2021; CSO 1957-1990; ONS 2014b; US Census Bureau 2020

Figure 4: Historical Trends in Educational Attainment, Australia, Ireland, UK and US, 1919-1985



Notes: Smoothed using fractional polynomial regression
Vertical line indicates abolition of Marriage Bar
For the UK, data are for Great Britain as a whole
Sources: Barro and Lee 2018; Halsey 1972; US Census Bureau 2021

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