

20 - 22 February 2026

Barcelona , Spain

Digital Pathways to Marriage: Online Partner Meeting and Educational Homogamy in Italy

Laura Arosio*University of Milano Bicocca, Italy*

Abstract

In recent decades, digital technologies have increasingly reshaped intimate relationships. This paper investigates the role of the Internet as a context for partner meeting in contemporary Italy, with particular attention to its implications for educational homogamy and social stratification. The study compares couples who first met online with those who met in offline settings, examines trends over time and differences in assortative mating. Both descriptive analyses and multivariate models are employed to assess whether online partner meeting is associated with a higher likelihood of educational heterogamy. The findings show that while the proportion of marriages originating from online encounters remains relatively small in Italy, it has increased markedly across marriage cohorts. However, meeting a partner online does not significantly affect the probability of forming an educationally heterogamous marriage compared to offline meeting contexts. Levels of educational homogamy among couples who met online closely resemble those observed among couples who met in traditional offline venues. The analyses suggest that online environments tend to reproduce social inequalities in marital formation

Keywords: Assortative mating; couple formation; internet dating; marriage; social stratification