

FAMILY FORMATION AND CHILDBEARING IN THE 1990S AND AT THE TURN OF THE MILLENNIUM

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INTRODUCTION

The study of the relationship between demographic processes and the socio-economic environment has remained one of the most exciting areas of research in demography. The closeness of this relationship and its direction and its direct or indirect character have been disputed issues. Studies of this nature are usually conducted with the expressed or unexpressed intention of finding some explanation for the influencing factors and the motivations of change. It does not, however mean that with a parallel analysis of demographic trends and the social environment, we should assume a causal relationship between studied events. An identical or similar social environment may lead to profoundly different demographic situations and conversely, demographic processes of the same level or direction may emerge under significantly different social or economic conditions.

The social and demographic events of the past decade deserve particular attention in so far as the nature of this relationship is concerned. The 1990s was a spectacular period of political, economic and social systemic change, accompanied by a rapid change of demographic phenomena and behaviour. The nature of the relationship between the two processes has not yet been clarified by close scholarly scrutiny. Such analysis requires a serious overview with a historical perspective and the work of empirical investigations exploring the causes and interrelationships. But it should be made clear that unusual and new demographic phenomena have appeared in processes of family formation and childbearing that did not exist before, or only decades earlier, in a different social environment. At the same time those demographic processes that continue to determine the changes of our population into an unfavourable direction have accelerated.

There is not only some relationship between the social and demographic processes, but also among certain demographic phenomena, that may mutually strengthen or weaken each other's effects, thus shaping the entire demographic situation. Thus the decline of the marital movement not only promotes the spread of co-habitation and enhances the number of extra-marital births but also generates a decline in fertility. Fertility that steadily remains under the simple reproduction level makes the age composition of the population older, thus

increasing the number of deaths. Family stability is related to fertility, since married couples support more children than single people or divorcees, on the other hand remarriage encourages childbearing as those who marry again bring up more children than those who marry only once. Changes in the composition of the population by marital status reduce fertility while increasing levels of mortality, since the life expectancy of the unmarried is less favourable than that of the married population living in families. With falling fertility and growing mortality, the rate of the decline of the population speeds up.

In the 1990s all these processes appeared to have strengthened, offering a demographic reflection of the system change and its painful years. This paper primarily concentrates on changes in nuptiality and fertility. Without aiming at a complete overview it attempts to explore background factors which have played a role in the trends of family formation and childbearing. Wherever it is justified and seems necessary, the paper relies on the results of representative surveys in order to give a more differentiated presentation of the explanatory variables. Based on the most recent data of 2000, it analyses changes of direction in the movements of birth and marriage and it also dwells on the more important characteristics of social and regional differences.

CHANGE OF STRATEGY IN MARRIAGE BEHAVIOUR

The British demographer of Hungarian origin, *John Hajnal*, when studying the history of the European customs of marriage, discovered two distinct behavioural patterns (Hajnal 1965). Countries east of the line linking Trieste and Saint Petersburg (named after him as Hajnal-line) were characterised by early marriage and a low proportion of people who never married, whereas in countries west of that line a relatively late marriage age was accompanied by a relatively high proportion of 'bachelors' and 'spinsters'. Historically Hungary was located at the eastern rim of the Hajnal-line, and until the mid 20th century it was characterised by family formation at a young age and a high proportion of those getting married. This historical image has undergone significant changes over the past two decades, profoundly redrawing the European map of nuptiality. The decline in nuptiality was already apparent in the 1980s, and the process of decline intensified in the 1990s. Clearly reflecting the dynamics of current trends the proportion of marriages per thousand unmarried persons aged 15 and over decreased by 30% in the 1980s, while dropping by 43% between 1990 and 1999. Among those getting married 83% were entering their first marriage, thus the inclination of unmarried people to getting married is of decisive significance in nuptiality.

An increasing abstention of women from marriage is particularly conspicuous, characterised by the fact that the proportion of never married women getting married was halved as late as in the 1990s. In the former rise of nuptiality

the remarriage of divorcees and widowed persons played a significant role; in the present decline there is an increasing number of divorcees who do not marry again. This is an important factor due to the prominence of this group. The age composition of those getting married has significantly changed. Young married couples aged 20 or 25 are increasingly less in number. Ten years ago 28% of brides were teenagers when they pronounced the 'I will', now their proportion is below 10%. 20 to 24 year-old bridegrooms have become increasingly rare, suggesting a markedly differentiated decrease in the inclination to marry by age. The younger the age the more significant is the extent of disinclination. During the 1990s the inclination to marry dropped in the most frequent age of marriage to one-third of women between 20 and 24, and to almost one-fourth of teenagers. An inclination for marrying has not grown within older age groups either, yet their proportion has grown among those marrying, and this has almost automatically raised the average age of couples. During the past ten years the average age of first married brides and bridegrooms has grown by almost 3 years, that of women from 21.5 to 24.2 years, and of men from 24.2 to 26.8 years. The well-considered and increasingly postponed remarriage of the divorced is characterised by a significant growth of time between divorce and remarriage. Almost twice as much time is taken by divorced men and three times as much by divorced women in order to make up their minds to remarry than ten years ago. As a result the mean age of divorcees who remarry has overtaken the age of those getting married for the first time. It continues to be the case that the divorced men are more 'sought after' than females of the same marital status, since the proportion of those remarrying is significantly higher in their case. However this also depends on age. Divorced women below the age of 25 are more 'wanted' than older women and men of the same age and marital status, whereas over the age of 30 the chances of remarriage would differ more between divorced men and women to the advantage of the former (Table 1).

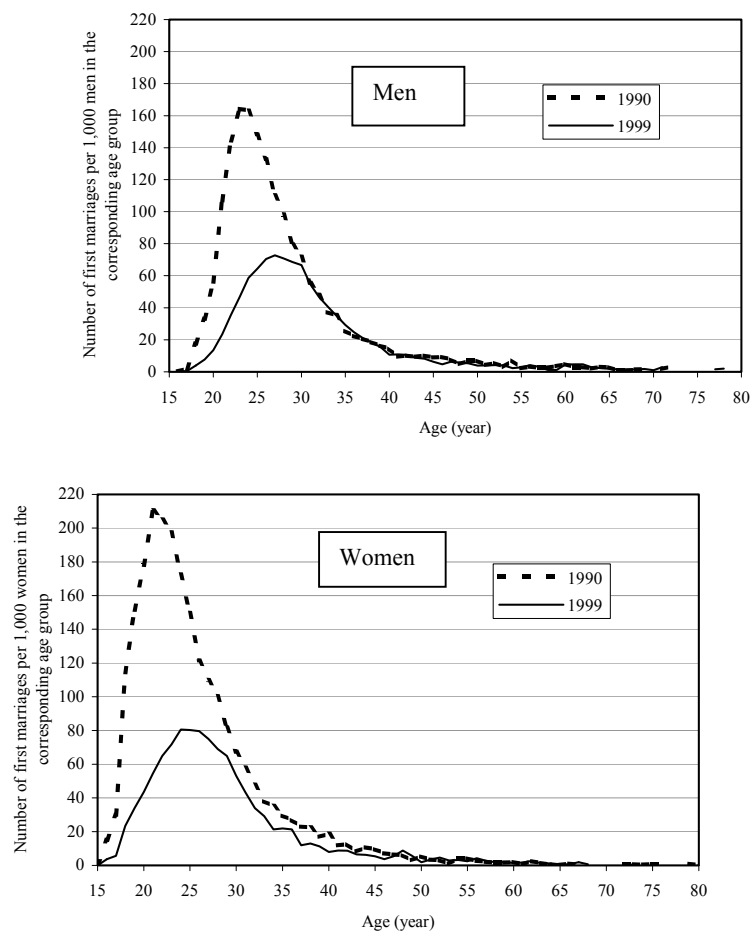
Table 1
Mean age of divorcees at divorce and remarriage (years) (1990, 1999)

Gender	1990			1999		
	Divorced	Remarriage	Difference	Divorced	Remarriage	Difference
Male	36.7	38.0	1.3	38.6	41.5	2.9
Female	33.8	34.4	0.6	35.6	37.4	1.8

Source: Demographic Yearbooks.

The large number of marriages among young people that for a long time characterised Hungarian patterns of nuptiality was marked by the frequent marriage of girls between ages of 20 and 24 throughout the 20th century, and most

probably even before. The modal age of women getting married for the first time was 21 years even in 1900; in other words the proportion of first marriages was the highest in that age. In 1999 this age was between 24 and 25 years, and 30 year old never married women married in the same proportion as those of 20. This tendency had never happened earlier. Due to a shift in age of first marriages, from the mid-1990s onwards marriage became the most frequent in the case of single females in the 25–29 year age group can be observed (Figure 1).



Source: Demographic Yearbooks.

Figure 1
Ratio of persons marrying for the first time by gender and age (1990, 1999)

Is it only the timing of marriages and their postponement to a later date that is behind these phenomena, or are we facing a manifestation of mistrust in the institution of marriage, or even a crisis in family life based on marriage? The answer is uncertain for the time being. Demography often uses indicators that project the present situation and study what would happen if there were no changes whatsoever and current forms of behaviour became lasting and permanent, at least for a generation. In the case of marital movement such a projection would suggest that less than half of currently 15 year-old girls would marry by the age of 50; in other words, more than half of them would spend their lives without a legal husband (Recent 1999). This data should be handled with care as in reality the situation may change from one year to another. Yet the indicative value of perspective indices is significant, particularly at a time when the actual situation is deteriorating in contrast to an assumed one of no change. Marriage patterns in 1990 indicate that more than three-fourths of single women would have married before the age of 50, whereas only 46% of them would do so according to marital tendencies in 1999. Could the prestige of marriage have fallen to such an extent within ten years? Probably not rather individual careers and the social environment have shaped changes pushing family formation towards a later age.

In general the cohort figures of nuptiality which can be read from the annual data of the calendar do not present too much of a discouraging image, but the changes characterised above are already faithfully reflected in the behaviour of younger generations. The female generations born after World War II and currently in their 50s still followed the traditional 'East European' marriage pattern. 95 to 96% of the generations born in the second half of the 1940s and in the 1950s married at least once. The first signs of change appeared in the generations of the 1960s, and became increasingly marked in the case of young people born in the 1970s and later. The dynamics of change are characterised by changes in the proportion of those getting married up to a given age. Accordingly more than half of teenagers married for the first time up by the age of 20 in 1980, compared with only a little more than one-third of them in 1990. Today 10% of them would get married by the age of 20. A little less than four-fifths of the more than 90% of women who got married by the age of 30 ten or twenty years ago are currently still married. Thus with progressing age, the differences due to timing have been dropping and have practically balanced out by the age of 50 (Csernák 1994). At least this has been the situation up to now. Today however, there is such a lagging behind on the part of young people that it is doubtful whether the formerly high rates of ever married will survive in the future. For this to happen proportion of married people should grow five times among 20 year olds over the coming five years and eight times over the coming ten years so that the proportion of those getting married for the first time should reach the values measured in the case of women currently at the age of 30.

There is little chance of this, though it is beyond doubt that the declining trend of marriage s seems to halt by the end of the decade, and a modest increase can be detected in the past two years (Table 2).

Table 2
Percentage of females having got married for the first time by the given age (1980–2000)

Age	1980	1990	2000	1980	1990	2000
	Married for the first time			Remained unmarried		
20	51.4	36.1	10.0	48.6	63.9	90.0
25	85.3	81.0	48.2	14.7	19.0	51.8
30	92.6	91.4	79.6	7.4	8.6	20.4
35	94.8	94.1	89.9	5.2	5.9	10.1
40	95.6	95.4	93.6	4.4	4.6	6.4
50	95.8	96.3	95.8	4.2	3.7	4.2

Source: Demographic Yearbooks.

A significant drop in marriages and their postponement to a later age do not necessarily mean that the establishment of partnerships for life would also become rare to the same extent. Data available from various sources confirms unanimously that the number and proportion of partnerships established outside wedlock have significantly grown over the past ten years. (KSH 1996/1; KSH 1996/2; KSH 1999). The problem is that the continuous statistics of demographic movement do not offer a possibility for measuring the spread of cohabitation outside marriage, as its establishment and termination does not come into the purview of official statistics. Thus a comprehensive analysis of the situation is only offered by the decennial censuses and the micro-censuses in between. Partial and indirect information may be obtained about the partnership relations of women in reproductive age from changes in the number of extra-marital births. Representative survey results that explore the history of partnerships are also useful.

The characteristics of those living in partnership were presented in detail and were processed along identical principles by the 1990 census and the micro-census that followed six years later. As far as childbearing is concerned it is particularly the behaviour and practice of the female population at reproductive ages that deserves attention, therefore the analysis is restricted to them. During the six years surveyed the number of women living in cohabitation increased by about 65%, hence their proportion in the non-married population has grown to 13.5% from 8.7% in 1990. An overwhelming majority of those living in cohabitation are either divorced or single by marital status. The thrust forward in the proportion of never married women is conspicuous in the case of couples

living in cohabitation. In 1990 it was still the divorced who constituted the bulk of those living in partnership, whereas six years later more than half of those living in cohabitation came from among single (never married) women, and one-third of them from divorced women. The composition by age of those living in cohabitation is strongly differentiated if (former) marital status is taken into consideration. In view of childbearing it is important that 85% of women below the age of 30 and living in cohabitation are women who have never got married, while above that age it is increasingly the divorced that dominate. The picture becomes remarkable if the 'popularity' of cohabitation is considered regarding people with certain kinds of marital status. In this respect it is divorced women that take the lead, as almost one-fourth of them live together with their partners in this form. A special group is formed by those women who live in cohabitation 'within marriage', though naturally not with their legal husband. One-fifth of the legally married but separated women live in cohabitation, and the proportion of those who have chosen this special kind of marital status has grown by more than three times over the six years surveyed. Their weight is not significant as they constitute only 7% of those living in cohabitation. Only one type of marital status could be found where the establishment of cohabitation has been declining: that of the widows. It is not only that their proportion has dropped among those who live in cohabitation, but widowed women choose this form of partnership with less frequency.

The fact that cohabitation is still the rarest among unmarried single women is misleading, because one-tenth of women of reproductive ages live in cohabitation without being married. Due to the fall in the number of first marriages the number of never married women has significantly grown and therefore, regardless of the relatively low rates of cohabitation, their importance has grown among those living in cohabitation. Their role is also significant regarding changes in the behaviour of women of reproductive age in family formation and childbearing. In six years the proportion among them living in cohabitation outside marriage has increased more twofold, in other words the establishment of cohabitation is becoming increasingly popular among a growing number of never married women. For these women cohabitation may be regarded as a trial marriage that may be subsequently followed by marriage, whereas motivations may be different among those who have already been married once before. In the case of divorcees the increasing popularity may rather be attributed to caution deriving from earlier experiences, whereas widowed women consider cohabitation to be undignified, hence its decline in this later group. It can be assumed in the case of married but separated women that some common interest legally upholds the marriage; fear from loneliness, new opportunities, and even a mutual agreement with the legal husband creates a condition that is practically not within the marriage but legally not outside it (Table 3).

Changes in the number and proportion of children born outside marriage are indirect indicators of the spread of cohabitation. During the 1990s the number of births dropped by 31 thousand, but the number of children born outside marriage increased by 10 thousand within a declining total number of births. As a result the proportion of 'illegitimate' children has more than multiplied reaching 28% in 1999. Apparently a larger proportion of children are born outside marriage than the proportion of those living in cohabitation would justify. According to the data of the micro-census completed in April 1996, 5.9% of women of reproductive age, and 13.5% of never married women lived in cohabitation, while 22% of children were born outside marriage at the same period of time. The difference suggests that some of the children born outside marriage are from cohabiting couples. Others are from mothers not in permanent relationships. On the basis of data concerning the father, 60% of extramarital births originate from cohabitation, and 40% from mothers living alone. The majority of mothers bringing up their child alone are unmarried and young. This conclusion can be drawn from the fact that the age composition of single (never married) women is the youngest among women giving birth; 80% of children born outside marriage originate from never married women; while their proportion among those living in cohabitation is much lower (53%). The results of representative surveys indicate that the younger the age the more frequent cohabitation and childbearing is outside marriage. The results however have shown different proportions concerning the nature of the partnership. Among mothers who had borne their first child outside marriage the proportion of those who undertook childbearing without a partner was constantly higher than among those who delivered their child in cohabitation. It should be taken into consideration however that these results pertain only to the first child.

Table 3
*Females of reproductive age living in cohabitation by age-groups
and marital status (1996)*

Age-group	Marital status				
	Single (never-married)	Divorced	Widowed	Married, separated	Non-married, or living separately together
	Proportion of those living in cohabitation (percentage)				
15–19	3.3	–	–	14.0	3.3
20–24	13.5	31.9	28.0	16.1	14.0
25–29	23.3	25.2	18.1	21.2	23.4
30–34	22.6	27.2	18.8	24.7	24.6
35–39	20.0	26.7	18.1	21.5	23.8
40–44	18.1	20.9	14.4	14.4	19.2
45–49	16.0	18.8	9.6	15.3	15.5
15–49	10.3	23.2	13.1	20.0	13.5

Source: Micro-census, 1996.

An essentially similar picture is obtained on the basis of representative surveys exploring the history of partnership formation already indicated by statistics on population movement. The Fertility and Family Survey conducted in 1993, studied the history of partnership formation in the case of women between 18 and 41, and men of 20 to 44 on the basis of a representative sample (KSH 96/1). With the establishment of the first partnership two opposite trends could be observed. In the case of the younger generations the proportion of those for whom this relationship also meant marriage has been decreasing, contrasted with a dynamic increase of those choosing cohabitation outside marriage. A significant change in marriage patterns is reflected in the fact that only 20% of women of the age of 20–24 married by the age of 20, whereas double proportion of women around 40 already lived in marriage by that age. In the case of young women four times as many had started their partnership career with cohabitation by the age of 20 (17%), than women over forty by a similar age (4%). Men marry for the first time at a later age and in smaller proportion than women. On the other hand there are more of them who try cohabitation, and the younger the generation under survey, the larger the proportion of those who establish such relationships by the same age. This survey also demonstrates that a significant part of partnership relations outside marriage end up in marriage at a later stage. In the case of women 37% of cohabitation for a period shorter than one year led to marriage, and about three-fourths of them married after cohabitations of four years. Men marry less frequently than women after periods of cohabitation (KSH 1996/1) (Table 4).

Table 4
Establishing the first partnership relation (1993)

Cumulative proportion of those entering partnership up to the given age	Female age-group at the time of the survey (1993)					
	18–19	20–24	25–29	30–34	35–39	40–41
15	0.7	0.9	1.6	1.7	0.7	0.9
16	3.4	3.5	3.0	2.9	1.4	2.3
17	6.1	6.0	4.4	4.3	2.7	2.7
18	10.2	8.9	7.0	6.9	4.2	3.2
19	11.6	13.5	8.8	8.3	5.4	3.2
20		17.1	11.5	10.1	6.5	4.1
21		19.0	13.5	11.6	7.6	5.0
22		20.7	15.6	13.3	7.9	5.4
23		20.7	16.9	14.4	8.3	6.8
24			18.1	14.8	8.9	6.8
25			18.8	15.5	9.3	7.7
26			18.9	15.8	9.9	8.1
27			19.2	15.8	10.4	9.0
28			19.4	16.5	10.7	9.0
29			19.4	16.7	10.8	9.0
30				16.7	10.9	9.5
31				16.9	11.1	9.5
32				16.9	11.1	10.0
33				16.9	11.1	10.4
34				16.9	11.1	10.4

Source: Fertility and Family Survey 1993.

Cohabitations are more vulnerable and less stable than marriages. The results of the survey show that the institution of marriage links members of the family more tightly than cohabitation outside marriage. Surprisingly marriages following cohabitation dissolve more frequently than those not preceded by cohabitation (UN 1999). The institution of the test marriage is not necessarily accompanied by a more stable family life. The least stable partnership relations are cohabitations even if a common child is born. This is supported by findings of Hungarian and international research (Kiernan 1999). The growing proportions of cohabitation outside marriage are currently unable to counterbalance the strongly decreasing trend of marriages, thus the youth of today establish their first partnership later and in smaller proportions than older generations had done by a similar age. As a consequence the median age of the first partnership has increased; it was 21.4 years for women of 20–24 in contrast with

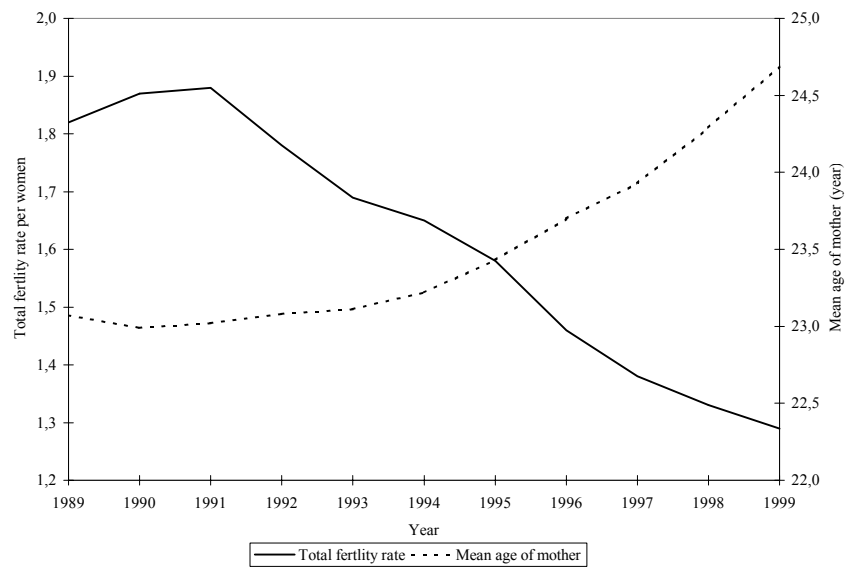
the 20.5 years of those of 40–41, and it was 24.2 years in contrast with men between 25 and 29, as contrasted to 23.7 years of men above 40.

CHILDBEARING PATTERNS, FERTILITY

For a long time, in addition to getting married childbearing patterns have been characterised by motherhood at an early age. Voluntary childlessness was not typical, everybody wanted at least one child, and the two-children family model became a general one. Childbearing above the age of 30 or 35 was rare, and the rate of extra-marital births was low. The first signs of the change of this fertility pattern appeared in the early 1980s and became increasingly marked throughout the 1990s. The declining trend of fertility, noted for a longer period of time, has not only continued over the past ten years but it became even stronger. 126 thousand births in 1990 dropped to 100 thousand, considered critical in 1998 and did not reach even 95 thousand in 1999. Such an extensive drop was unexpected in some ways.

The number of births in a given period is basically influenced by two factors: the number of women of reproductive age and their willingness to bear children, or (in other words), the actual level of fertility. During the past ten years there have been favourable changes in the number of women of reproductive age as generations of larger numbers, born twenty years earlier, entered into their most fertile age from the mid-1990s onwards. As a result the number of women between 20 and 29, decisive from the aspect of the number of births, continuously increased and is now higher by about 160 thousand than ten years ago. The growth in numbers could have counterbalanced a less extensive fall of fertility, or, at least it could have moderated its speed. This is what was expected by the population projections prepared in the early 1990s, indicating a moderate growth of the number of births from the middle of the decade onwards. This did not take place however, because willingness to give birth had dropped to such an extent that it pushed the positive effects of increasing number of women in the above category entirely into the background; it is the level of fertility that has become the decisive factor of the number of births of the day. The most frequently used index is the total fertility rate, which gives the average number of children to be born during the life of women under the fertility conditions of the given year. The value of this rate dropped by 30% between 1990 and 1999, but the extent of decrease is even more significant if only the period between 1991 and 1999 is examined. In the first two years after the change of the political system, in 1990 and 1991, the number of births and the fertility level did not fall but experienced some, though only moderate growth. Decline started in 1992, and accelerated from the middle of the decade. The annual rate of decline was uneven. The greatest decline compared to the previ-

ous year was reached in 1996 and 1997 with 7.6 and 5.5% respectively, and it was the lowest in 1994 with 2.4%. In 1998 and 1999 the rate of the decline of fertility became moderate, and it was lower than the one measured in the previous year by 3.6% in 1998, and 3.0% in 1999 (Figure 2).



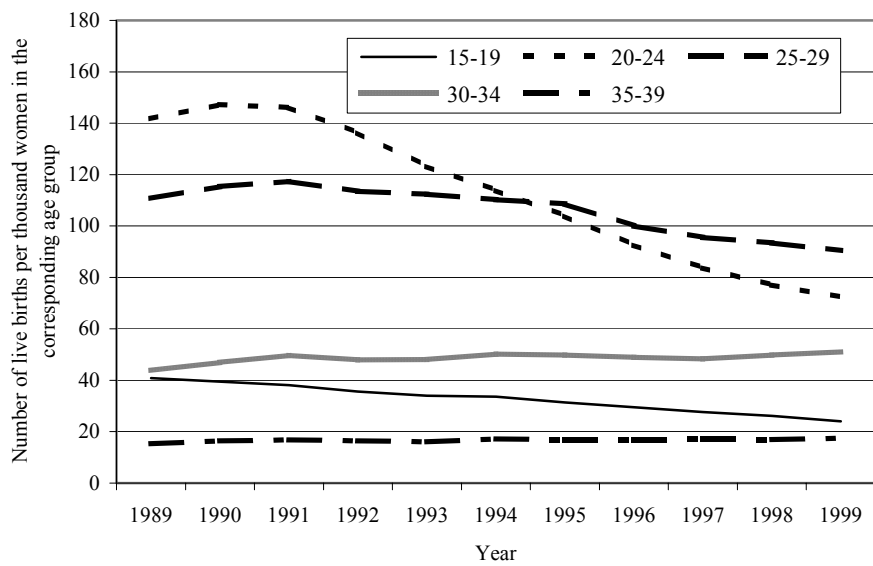
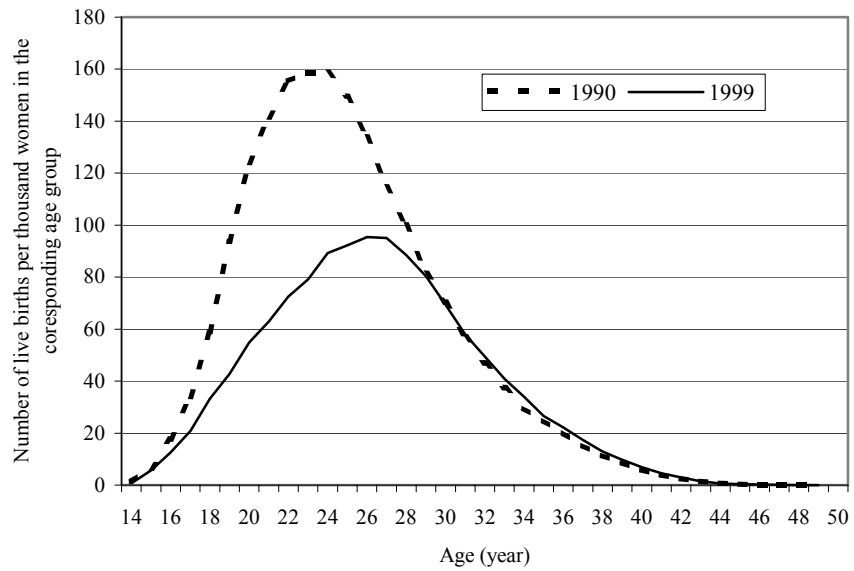
Source: Demographic Yearbooks.

Figure 2
*Total fertility rate and mean age of mother at the birth of first child
(1989–1999)*

Different female age groups have contributed to the level of general fertility to varying degrees and so it is relevant to examine that which has contributed to the decline taking the various age groups into consideration. Childbearing above the age of 40 is rather rare; therefore the size of these generations, or the fluctuation of their fertility does not play a decisive role in the changes of the number of births. Though the fertility of the age-groups in their 30s did fluctuate during the past decade, its basic trend is nevertheless an increasing one. The frequency of their childbearing surpasses that of ten, or twenty years ago. After a long period of time childbearing has become most frequent in the female age group of 20–29, thus the changes of their fertility significantly influence the level of general fertility and the number of births of the day. The childbearing

behaviour of this age group has, however, significantly changed. With some exaggeration it can be said that there has been a change of the system in the patterns of family formation and childbearing as well besides the social, economic and political transformations of the 1990s. New phenomena appeared that had not been present, or only occurred decades earlier. While fertility has been continuously falling and childbearing has shifted to an older age, the mean age of childbearing women has increased. As a result it is the frequency of births in the age group between 25 and 29 that has become the highest instead of those between 20 and 24. This phenomenon occurred last in the 1920s, when the family size of three or four children was a general one and childbearing at a later age was more frequent. Now this phenomenon has reoccurred in conjunction with a formerly never experienced low level of fertility. Similarly the fertility of teenagers has only become lower than that of the age group between 30 and 34 in the last few decades.

All this is the outcome of a changing strategy of family formation and childbearing amongst the young. Early marriage and young motherhood have been relegated to the past, and it is a question whether this behavioural pattern will ever return. Change has its well-definable socio-economic reasons and its demographic consequences can be felt. It should be accepted as a fact that the fertility of the age groups below 25 has drastically dropped, almost to half over the past ten years. According to some views this is only a temporary decline, and what is involved here is only the birth of children at a later age; i.e. it is only the timing of childbearing that has changed. More frequent childbearing at a later age, however, cannot counterbalance the loss of the number of children born at an earlier age. To do so the fertility of women above the age of 25 or 30 should grow far more markedly than it does at present (Figure 3).



Source: Demographic Yearbooks.

Figure 3
Live births by age of mother (1989–1999)

In the 1990s only one significant demographic category can be found showing a definite increase in fertility: unmarried women and particularly those who have never married. Fertility of the unmarried has grown by almost one-fourth during the past ten years; as a result the rate of children born out of wedlock has significantly increased. Almost one-fourth of extra-marital births were due to teenagers, and about 60% to women below the age of 25. The earlier the pregnancy occurs the higher the possibility of extra-marital births. In the case of mothers below the age of 20 every 7 children out of 10 will be born outside marriage, which means an almost twofold growth since 1990. As far as its dynamics is concerned, this growth is even more significant; it is almost three times higher among those in their twenties. In 1999 every third child was born outside marriage to women between 20 to 24, and every fifth in the case of women between 25 and 29. While childbearing at a young age is becoming increasingly rare, if it takes place, it is far more frequently outside marriage than in the past. Cohabitation has not spread to such an extent that the number of extra-marital births has grown. Therefore, particularly in the case of young people below the age of 25, childbearing without lasting partnership relations may be of great significance.

The formerly close correlation between marriage and childbearing has weakened due to the growing role of extra-marital births. Though a decreasing proportion, but children are still mostly born in marriage. Therefore the question emerges of how fertility is influenced by a drop, by a postponement of the choice of partner to a later age, and concomitantly, by structural changes in the marital status of female population of reproductive age? How far can the growing number of extra-marital births and the fertility of cohabitation compensate the shortage produced by the falling proportion of those living in marriage and of children born in marriage? The question can be studied and assessed from various perspectives. It is not easy, if at all possible, to influence habits of choosing partners and the practice of family formation by external means. Therefore the changes have to be rather accepted as parts and corollaries of social processes rather than as targets of intervention. In this approach each child born is considered equally important to the population and society irrespective of the fact whether the parents live in marriage or in cohabitation, or even undertake to bring up their child alone.

Demographically the issue is more complex. Marriages are more stable, they represent greater security for the married couple and for the children, and together they are more fertile than cohabitating couples. Therefore the decrease in the proportion of married population, particularly among young and middle-aged strengthens the decreasing trend of fertility. The dissolution of marriage by divorce or widowhood can also be assessed in a qualified way. Divorced women bring up fewer children than married ones, but the difference is decreasing which may also mean that the number of children is less able to pre-

vent the dissolution of a deteriorated marriage. Therefore the growing proportion of divorces and divorcees has also had a diminishing effect on fertility. The situation is different if divorce is followed by a new marriage, or the dissolved marriage is followed by cohabitation. Women who have repeatedly married have had and continue to have more children than those who marry only once. Thus divorce may have a benevolent effect on fertility, provided it is followed by another marriage in time. The situation is similar in the case of cohabitation, which, in this respect is a substitute for remarriage. Women who have divorced, or were widowed but living in cohabitation bring up more children not only in comparison to women of a similar marital status, but in the absence of a partner, to women living in marriages. Therefore it is significant regarding fertility whether someone chooses cohabitation as a form substituting marriage, or, handling it as an alternative to marriage, wishes to spend her time as an unmarried single person living in cohabitation. It is a fact that women who cohabit without marrying have far less children by the end of their reproductive years than those who had once married (Table 5).

Table 5
Women living in cohabitation by age-groups, marital status and number of children (1996)

Age-group	Marital status					
	Single (never married)	Divorced	Widowed	Married, separated	Living in cohabitation together	Married, living with husband
Children per 100 women living with partner						
15–19	52	–	–	–	51	62
20–24	59	120	200	101	63	96
25–29	79	155	200	181	101	149
30–34	138	187	222	197	172	194
35–39	155	213	267	258	209	203
40–44	190	189	225	206	196	203
45–49	141	198	273	194	203	199
15–49	81	191	248	196	136	181

Source: Micro-census, 1996.

The spread of cohabitation is a relatively new phenomenon in our country, therefore at least a generation has to pass until its influence on childbearing intentions, plans, and on actual fertility can be investigated. Recent researches based on representative surveys cannot be disregarded in this field. Research projects in other countries have proved that the arrival of the first child encourages couples living together to get married, but even in case of desiring more

children couples rather prefer marriage to cohabitation (Barber 1998). As an increasing number of young people begin their partnerships with extra-marital cohabitation, its influence on later childbearing should be clarified. On the basis of 1996 micro-census it appears unambiguously that the earlier marriage takes place, the more children are brought up by married couples, whereas a postponement of marriage to a later age does not only mean later childbearing but also fewer children. The relatively high Hungarian fertility of the 1970s was also caused by the large number of marriages at an early age and rapid childbearing. Its effect became apparent later on, since the young generations of the 1970s brought up more children during their lives than the older generations who were young in the 1950s or 1960s (KSH 1996/3.). The positive interrelationship between early marriage and fertility was also recognised and applied differently, when a reduction of high fertility was achieved by encouraging and rewarding increasingly late marriages (like in China) (Table 6).

Table 6
Impact of age at first marriage on fertility (1996)

Age at the time of first marriage (year)	Age at the time of data collection				
	20–24	25–29	30–34	35–39	40–49
	Live births per 100 women				
–19	119	187	218	224	221
20–24	62	125	181	191	194
25–29		70	142	175	172
30–34			93	145 ^a	143 ^a
35–39				100 ^a	124 ^a
40–49					88

^a Partly an estimated figure.
Source: Micro-census, 1996.

To continue, it is a question how far the cohabitations spreading among the young substitute for the role of early marriage. The fertility trends of the 1990s so far have not shown positive signs. In the changes of fertility in 2000, however, it would seem as if there were some signs of change in the pattern. The adjectives should be used with utmost care, as so far there is no definite trend (yet unable to develop) on the basis of which assessment might be made. Though the trend of decrease seems to halt, little time allowing for change has passed. It is a fact, however, that with an exception of three months the number of births grew in each month in 2000, in comparison to the same period in the previous year, which meant almost 3,000 more newborn babies than the previous year.

Statistically this growth is not much, only 3.1%, and it should also be taken into account that the trend has taken place from a low point of births never before experienced. For the time being it is uncertain how lasting this process might be. After a long decrease even stagnation is regarded as an achievement, and an increase, even if uncertain or modest, is a favourable phenomenon. Earlier too there have been similar, and even longer periods when the fall in the number of births was a lasting one. But the situation that has emerged during the past decade is different. In addition to the fertility conditions of the year 1999, 100 women gave birth to only 129 children, which means a net reproduction rate of 0.615; in other words, even if mortality were totally disregarded the up and coming child generations would lag behind the number of parental generations by 40%. In other words a potentially large population decrease lies in the permanence of such fertility conditions. The inclination to have children became more distanced from the simple reproduction level. The favourable movement of last year took place from this low point (Table 7).

Table 7
Number and dynamics of births by main demographic characteristics of mothers (1999, 2000)

Characteristics	Year		Difference	Change
	1999	2000	Absolute figure	100% of previous year
Age-group				
-19	7 979	7 799	-180	97.7
20-24	30 648	28 338	-2 310	92.5
25-29	32 782	35 673	2 891	108.8
30-34	16 593	18 525	1 932	111.6
35-39	5 382	5 933	551	110.2
40+	1 261	1 329	68	105.4
Marital status				
Single				
(never married)	21 855	23 868	2 013	109.2
Married	68 180	69 255	1 075	101.6
Widowed	453	415	-38	91.6
Divorced	4 157	4 059	-98	97.6
Total	94 645	97 597	2 952	103.1

Source: Demographic Yearbooks.

It is worth noting where and among whom has number of births has grown. The results are surprising in a certain sense. Growth can be experienced exclusively in the case of women above 25, and particularly of those between 30 and

39, where growth is almost 10%. On the other hand the number of births has dropped further among women below 25. The further decrease of the fertility of the age group 20–24 is conspicuous; it meant a fall of more than 8% in 2000. Thus a transfer of childbearing to a later age continues, but formerly postponed children are now born in bigger proportions in more ‘mature’ female age groups. Together with increasing levels of education of mothers additional births have also grown. In the case of women with college and university education this growth reaches almost 10%, whereas the number of child births on the part of women who have not completed primary education dropped by 0.3, and of those who have completed the eight years of primary education by 2.0%. An improvement can be sensed by all birth orders but half of the growth has been derived from the additional number of first births. The number of newborn babies of subsequent order has also grown, and the most significant growth has occurred in the proportion of the fourth children, now more than 4% compared to the previous year. The most surprising result appears in the case of surplus births by marital status. In this respect more than three-fourths of the growth came from the childbirth by never married women, further increasing the proportion of extra-marital births. The number of childbirths by married women has experienced only a moderate growth, and that of the divorced and widowed women has fallen. Thus the emerging picture is a rather complex one, further complicated by the situation that in addition to the growth of births, the number of marriages has also grown by about 6%. The extent of increase here too is the most significant in the group of women between 25 and 34 who completed their university or college studies, namely in the case of age groups and higher education from where the majority of additional births come. It is unknown whether they are couples living in cohabitation earlier on and then getting married, but it is a fact that the proportion of those remarrying has also increased more than the average in addition to those who married for the first time. For the time being it can only be assumed, or rather hoped for, that additional marriages will subsequently show results in additional births within marriage as well.

SOCIAL AND REGIONAL DIFFERENCES

Educational levels and status in the labour market are two important events of life history that fundamentally influence family formation and childbearing patterns. They are interrelated too, but it is the level of education, that is of decisive significance. The longer the schooling period the more the beginning of the taking up of job is postponed; therefore growth in the participation in education automatically reduces the proportions of activity among the young. At the same time as higher qualifications create better positions in the labour market, they enhance chances of employment and reduce the risk of unem-

ployment (Nagy 2001). The increase of the schooling period is also accompanied by a postponement of family formation, but does not necessarily increase the later chances of marriage. Better-educated women become more attractive on the marriage market because they enhance the material security of the family. This is, however, accompanied by changes in the family division of labour and in the gender roles, that may encourage men to consider or even be frightened away from marrying women who are well-educated and have achieved high profile career at work. Research showing that women with university degree not only get married at a later age, but marry in smaller proportion than those of lower levels of education is worth considering. However, it is true that disadvantages experienced by better-educated women have significantly decreased in the 1990s, which is a phenomenon suggesting changes in traditional family roles and norms. Whereas economic activity and a more favourable status on the labour market enhance chances of marriage in the case of women above 26 as opposed to those who are inactive (Bukodi 2001). The different educational level of men and women may create tension in the marriage market too. Analyses of life courses by representative surveys have shown that almost half of the men (48%) reach their highest level of training by the age of 17, whereas this proportion is only a little more than one-third (34%) in the case of women (KSH 1996/1.). More teenage girls complete their secondary schools and pass the secondary final exam than boys, a significant part of who are satisfied with a skilled worker's qualification. And in 1996 more women between the age of 20 and 24 attended university (12.4%) than men of the same age (10.0%). Young girls and women of higher qualifications find it increasingly difficult to find a boy, or man of similar qualifications in the marriage market. Therefore heterogamy (different educational levels of those getting married) is of the highest proportion among women of secondary education.

There is yet another important phenomenon that may explain the negative relationship between the level of education and inclination to marry. And this is the growing popularity and spread of cohabitation among women of higher education. Cohabitation and childbearing outside marriage is no longer the speciality of a relatively narrow social group today, as it used to be decades ago when this proportion was much lower than the present one but quite stable over time. The tolerance of society has grown together with the acceptance of these phenomena. Concomitantly the proportion of women with a higher education has grown among those who live in cohabitation. Change has been particularly dynamic in the case of women between the ages of 20 and 29 who completed secondary school, college or university education. As a result cohabitation was rarest among women of various age groups who completed their studies in vocational schools in 1996, and from that year onwards women have increasingly chosen this form of partnership alongside the growth of their school education (Szukicsné, 2001). Regarding the growth of extra-marital births in the

1990s the fact that the average increase of the rate of children born outside marriage was much higher among the better-educated women, has played a significant role. All this has notably reduced differences in educational levels. Analysis of the births in 2000 will become possible only later, but it is conspicuous that one major cause of growth has been again children delivered outside marriage and additional childbirths to women with university or college education.

The interrelationship between education and fertility has been the focus of demographic researches for a long time. The increasing level of education is a necessary corollary and consequence of modern socio-economic development. It should not only be accepted, but also encouraged and supported. All this tends towards a general decline in fertility even if the fertility of women of higher qualifications has demonstrably increased in the 1990s (Szukicsné 2001). Education plays a dominant role in the timing of childbearing, but the earlier phenomenon, that higher education was accompanied by fewer children is not necessarily true. There may be significant differences between the number of children born up to a certain age according to levels of education, particularly in younger ages. Later on, however, these differences are moderated, or may even disappear. According to a representative survey of 1993, containing also data on the history of fertility, four times as many women who completed primary school education delivered their first child by the age of 24 (67%) than women with university degrees (19%). With the process of aging these differences are moderated, and are practically counterbalanced during the second part of the reproductive period. About 91% of degree-holding women over the age of 35 gave birth to at least one child, and though this lags somewhat behind the 92–96% proportion of those of lower qualifications, the differences are insignificant. Elements of timing similarly appear in the case of second children, but they are less counterbalanced with the passage of time; finally the proportion of those women with secondary school final exams or university degrees who delivered a second child as well is about 10% lower, than those women with primary or vocational school education. This survey has also pointed out that the proportion of women delivering their third child does not automatically fall with better educational levels. Moreover, its effects are manifest in the average number of children, since women with university degrees over the age of 35 gave birth to more children than women of the same age with secondary education. In the case of the younger age group the postponement of the first and second children can be observed in the case of every educational level and this delaying behaviour is becoming increasingly marked with the growth of general educational levels. Thus it is a question whether second and third children will be born to the youth of today in the same proportion, as is currently visible in the case of women above 35, irrespective of their school education.

Conscious childbearing is based on a couple's joint decision, but does not always mean an agreement on the number of children desired in the family. In cases of disagreement one party carries weight and education may play an important role in the decision. The fertility results of the 1996 micro-census contain relevant data that demand attention (KSH 1999). Though the desired numbers of children are unknown, the actual family size shows an interesting correlation with the parties' educational level. Couples with completed equal secondary education have the smallest number of children and the largest number of children are born to families where the parents did not complete primary school education. The difference is more than double; in the former group 181, and in the latter one 408 children were born to 100 families. Children are smallest in number in families where couples do not possess university degrees. The educational level of men and women differently influences family size and it becomes obvious in the case of different levels of school education between a couple. The higher education of husbands favourably influences childbearing, while that of wives moderates it. This proves that more children are born to families where the husband's level of qualification is higher, than to those, where the wife's qualification is higher. The smallest number of children can also be found in families where the qualifications of wives are one or more levels higher than those of their husbands (Table 8.).

Table 8
Completed fertility of 40–49 years old married women by their own and by their husband's educational level (1996)

Wife's educational level	Husband's educational level					Together
	Less than 8 classes of primary education	8 classes of primary education	Completed vocational school	Completed secondary school	Completed higher education	
Average number of children per 100 women						
Less than 8 classes of primary education	408	350	277	200	–	322
8 classes of primary education	250	226	209	197	197	217
Completed vocational school	244	203	199	186	184	197
Completed secondary school	126	184	188	181	185	184
Completed higher education	–	187	164	177	187	183
Together	310	221	199	184	187	201

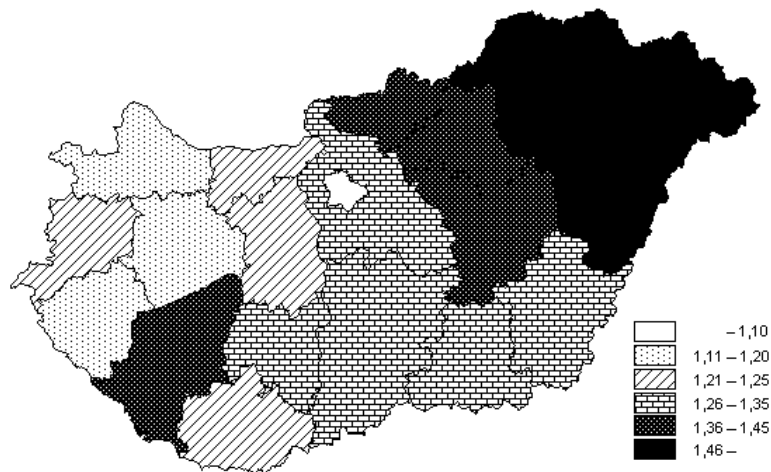
Source: Micro-census, 1996.

Significant differences in demographic behaviour may develop in even a geographically small country, and they can be mostly traced by the presentation of regional differences. Statistical regions often contain territorial units with different demographic behaviour. This is particularly relevant to the central Hungarian region, containing Budapest, but can be found elsewhere as well, depending on the investigated demographic phenomenon. Therefore differences by counties in addition to regional analysis can be pointed out, wherever justifiable. The regional differences, noted for long and understood as historically developed, can be found mostly between the eastern and western parts of the country, and are also manifest in the patterns of family formation and childbearing. The level of fertility was traditionally higher in the eastern part of the country, and the birth frequency of northern Hungary and of the regions in the northern part of the Great Plain is even today almost 30% higher than that of western Transdanubia (the region west of the river Danube). It is mainly due to the importance of Budapest and the demographically diverse behaviour of its population that childbearing is rarest in the central Hungarian region. In this region motherhood undertaken at a young age is not characteristic at all, whereas it is here that childbearing over the age of 30 is the most frequent in the whole country. Extra-marital births are commonest here and mothers are 2.3 years older than average age at the birth of their first child compared with mothers in northern Hungary and of the regions of the northern Great Plain. It is conspicuous that mothers have their first baby at the average age of 26.7 years in the capital city; hence they are more than 3 years older than mothers in Northern Hungary or in the regions of the northern Great Plain. According to the fertility indices of the capital in 1999 the women of Budapest deliver only one child during their life span – below the similar indices of Italy, or Spain, belonging to the countries with the lowest fertility rates in the world.

It is remarkable that the extent of fertility decline was not the most significant in the capital during the 1990s. In contrast to 30% in the capital, the fall of fertility was 37-39% in Veszprém, Fejér, Tolna and Zala Counties. Yet in 1999 the rate of decrease was the smallest in the counties of Szabolcs-Szatmár-Bereg and Borsod-Abaúj-Zemplén with traditionally high fertility rates. Next to Budapest fertility was lowest in the counties of Zala, Győr-Moson-Sopron and Veszprém during the same year, all of them with a total fertility rate below 1.20. Differences in age specific fertility are rather significant by region. Differences as large as three times occur between fertility rates of young generations under 25, and these differences have been growing during the past ten years. The low decrease of fertility of women over 30 on the other hand, is accompanied by the moderation of regional differences. The tradition of childbearing at an early age is found only in the county of Szabolcs-Szatmár-Bereg, where women still deliver their children most frequently between the ages of 20 and 24. Late childbearing is most characteristic of the capital. Therefore it is

conspicuous that the fertility of women between 30 and 39 is nationally the highest in Budapest. It is only here that the frequency of childbearing in the age of 30 to 34 years higher than the fertility of women between 20 and 24 years (Figure 4).

Growth of extra-marital births is most dynamic in the counties of north Transdanubia where formerly the proportion of these babies used to be relatively low. Regional differences have decreased, yet the difference is still one and a half times between Vas County in the West with the lowest proportion (20%) and Budapest, where 31 babies of every 100 were born outside wedlock in 1999. It is difficult to discover an interrelationship between levels of fertility and proportions of extra-marital births on the basis of regional differences. The highest and lowest rates of extramarital birth are equally characteristic of low and medium fertility counties, whereas in the case of high fertility counties the proportion of births outside marriage is not conspicuously high. The diversity of regional differences may be motivated by cultural traditions, and not by the proportion of urban population, since (curiously) there is hardly any difference between the proportions of extra-marital births in towns and villages, and those years are not rare when these proportions were often higher in villages than in cities. In 1999 the proportion of extra-marital births was consistently higher in the village population of the northern Great Plain and southern Transdanubia, than among those living in cities. The situation was also similar in the county of Zala in western Transdanubia and in the county of Heves in Northern Hungary.



Source. Demographic Yearbooks.

Figure 4
Total fertility rate by counties, 1999

No definite differences can be demonstrated in the regional variance of nuptiality patterns by which the eastern, or western part of the country might be markedly characterised. Undoubtedly the inclination to marry is the highest in the eastern regions of the country, but close behind comes western Transdanubia; in each of the Transdanubian regions people also get married in larger proportions than, for instance, in the southern Great Plain. The differences are not dramatic, unless the capital is considered as a separate region, since Budapest is conspicuous with its extremely low nuptiality rates as well. As a result the difference between the highest rates of marriage in Szabolcs-Szatmár-Bereg and the lowest ones in Budapest is more than 40%. As with births, it is only Budapest where the age of marriage has been pushed to a later one to such extent that marriage has become more frequent among women between 30 and 34 than in the age group between 20 and 24.

The interrelationship between births and marriages is also a delicate one in the various regions of the country. The interrelationship is unambiguous if county of Szabolcs-Szatmár-Bereg and Budapest are compared, because in these cases the highest and the lowest rates of marriage are coupled with differences of a similar proportion in fertility. In contrast the low fertility rate of western Transdanubia has evolved parallel to relatively high rates of nuptiality, and was accompanied by a moderate rate of extra-marital births. The interrelationships between the intensity of nuptiality, the level of fertility and the rates of extra-marital births are so multi-faceted and complex within and among the individual regions that they make the exploration of unambiguous relations and the drawing of clear conclusions extremely difficult (Figure 5).

The regional differences in childbearing patterns express, if indirectly, the population-retaining strength of areas and the reproductive capacity of the population. The significance of the gross reproduction rate calculated on the basis of the actual level of fertility is that it disregards mortality conditions; in other words, it presents the extent of the replacement of population up to the end of the reproductive age without taking into account the impact of mortality. The 1999 value of this index indicated that on a national level the number of children born was about 39% lower than in the parental generation, even if none of the newborn girls died before the age of 50. Based on this index, reproduction was guaranteed for the last time in 1991 in the two counties of highest fertility – counties of Szabolcs-Szatmár-Bereg and Borsod-Abaúj-Zemplén. Since that time there has been no major territorial unit in the country where the replacement of local population can be guaranteed despite completely disregarding the impact of mortality during reproductive age. Under the fertility conditions of 1999, the gross deficit of reproduction was 20% in the most fertile county of Szabolcs-Szatmár-Bereg, and was 51% in the least fertile: Budapest.

Fertility being for a longer period below the reproduction level characterises the whole country and every region. Due to the high levels of mortality and the aging of the population the number of deaths exceeds that of births in every region of the country. The extent of natural decrease emerging as its consequence differs significantly by region. The extent of natural decrease is the most significant in the regions of the southern Great Plain and of Central Hungary and is the smallest in the regions of the northern Great Plain and of central Transdanubia. Fertility is higher in the regions of the northern Great Plain, but more favourable mortality moderates the speed of natural decrease in the central Transdanubian region. The situation of Budapest differs significantly from the other regions in this respect too. More favourable conditions of mortality cannot counterbalance extremely low fertility; therefore natural decrease is of the largest extent in the capital city.

An extremely variegated image emerges of the actual increase, or decrease of the number of people if internal migration is also taken into consideration. There are regions where emigration increases the extent of natural decrease, whereas in other cases immigration moderates its rate. On a regional level the country has no attractive area where, as a result of the positive balance of immigration the number of inhabitants would significantly grow. As far as internal migration is concerned, the situation of the central Hungarian region is the most contradictory one. The population of Budapest not only decreases naturally but also through emigration. This is, however, mostly directed towards the neighbouring county of Pest, but the agglomeration of the capital attracts migrants from other parts of the country as well. Therefore considering the region as a whole, internal migration moderates the extent of natural decrease. The situation is similar in the central and west Transdanubian regions, as internal migration is mainly directed towards these counties of dynamic economic development, reducing the extent of natural decrease. On a county level the country had two territorial units where, due to the positive balance of internal migration, the population has actually grown over the past years. These are the counties of Fejér and Pest. On the other hand emigration affects the regions of the Great Plain and northern Hungary most, increasing the rate of natural decrease. As a result of internal migration, the number of people has been decreasing most significantly in the regions of the southern Great Plain, northern Hungary and of southern Transdanubia, whereas the extent of actual decrease is the smallest in the central Transdanubian region. Taking Budapest out, the picture is altered in so far as emigration is bigger than the extent of natural decrease – as a result of which the actual population is annually reduced by 15 persons per one thousand inhabitants of the capital city. Already in the year 2000 it depleted the number of inhabitants in the capital by about 28 thousand people.

CONCLUSION

Patterns of family formation and childbearing have changed radically during the last decade in Hungary, which changes significantly alter the future demographic development of the country. Due to the change in the timing of family formation and childbearing, the spread of cohabitation in the younger generations and the alteration of social and regional patterns of demographic behaviour it is safe to conclude that the country has already passed through a systematic change in spheres of reproduction concomitantly to the political and economic changes. On the basis of this radical shift it is safe to conclude that for a longer period of time Hungary will not be characterised by a general pattern of relatively high and early nuptiality and fertility, which has been understood as some kind of 'Eastern' pattern. It is for further research to understand the social and political processes underlying this change of patterns and to see whether this change is only a temporary phenomenon or the establishment of long lasting new trends.

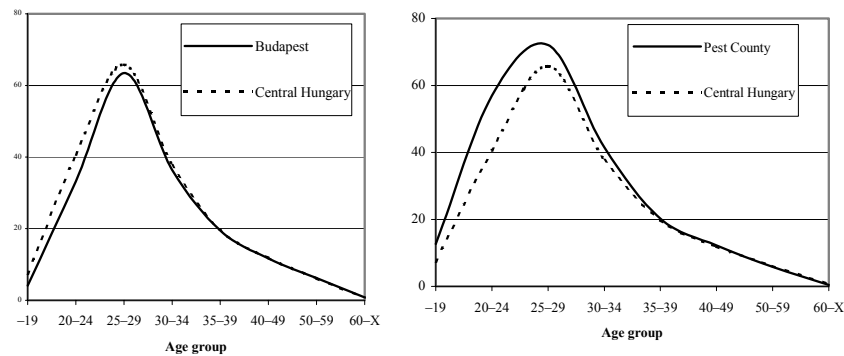
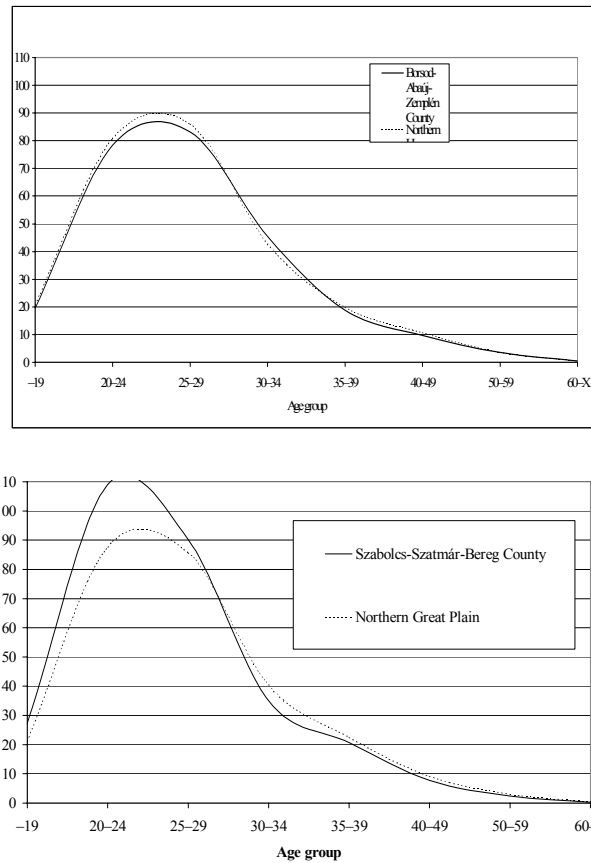


Figure 5
Marriage patterns by counties and regions (1999)



Source: Population movement database.

Figure 5
Marriage patterns by counties and regions (1999) (cont.)

Translated by Vera Gáthy

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