

# PARTNERSHIPS AND MARRIAGE

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## MAIN FINDINGS

- » After decades of decline, and after hitting a low point in 2010, there was a rise in the number of marriages in Hungary to 51,805 in 2016, marking a growth of 45.8% over 2010. However, the surge did not continue: there were 2.3% fewer marriages (50,600) in 2017 than in 2016.
- » At the end of the first decade of the 2000s, the general Europe-wide decline in the propensity for marriage continued; however, the recent increase mentioned above is not an exclusively Hungarian phenomenon. After 2010, the number of marriages increased in several European countries (for example, in Eastern Central Europe and the Baltic region), compensating for the weddings postponed during the economic crisis.
- » The total female first marriage rate grew from 0.39 in 2010 to 0.66 in 2016, which means that in 2016 a woman had a 66% probability of marrying in her lifetime.
- » On average, women marry for the first time at the age of 29.7 years, while the mean age for men is 32.5. The mean age at first marriage stopped increasing in 2014.
- » Since the turn of the millennium, the proportion of those who have never married in the population aged 15 or over has grown significantly, from 27% to 34%.
- » Currently, over a million persons cohabit in Hungary – 13% of the population aged 15 or over. At the turn of the millennium, this figure stood at only 6.6%.
- » The age structure of the cohabiting population has changed in recent years. Whereas in 2001, the largest age group were young people aged 25–29, by 2016 the share of those over 30 had grown.
- » Since the turn of the millennium, the proportion of those people who have never been married among those cohabiting has grown from 53% to 70%, and an increasing number of couples choose cohabitation as a long-term alternative to marriage. At the end of the 1980s, the majority of people living in unmarried unions were either divorced or widowed, but the proportion of such people has dropped significantly since then.

» Acceptance of cohabitation is now virtually universal, and an increasing number of people believe that it is preferable for a couple to move in together before they get married; yet public opinion still considers marriage to be the ideal form of partnership: 9 out of 10 persons would recommend marriage to young couples.

## MARITAL AND PARTNERSHIP STATUS

With the diversification of partnership forms and family situations, it is becoming increasingly difficult to keep track of the composition of the population by partnership status. Information about the official composition of the population by *marital status*<sup>G</sup> and trends in *cohabitation*<sup>G</sup> can be found primarily in censuses and micro censuses carried out every five years.

On the basis of the distribution of the adult population by marital status, the trends of recent years appear to be continuing. Since the turn of the millennium, the proportion of *never married*<sup>G</sup> men and women in the population aged 15 and over has grown further: while in 2001, 27% had never been married, in 2016 over a third of the population was in that situation. The extent of the increase differs by sex: since the turn of the millennium, the proportion had grown by 8 percentage points among men, but by only 6 percentage points among women. Thus, in 2016, 41% of men and 29% of women in the population aged 15 and over had never been married. At the same time, the proportion of those *married*<sup>G</sup> had declined significantly, and there had been a small decrease in the percentage of those *widowed*<sup>G</sup> and a moderate increase in the share of those *divorced*<sup>G</sup> (Table 1). Multiple causes underlie the decline in the proportion of married persons: age at first marriage has increased, cohabitation has become more frequent, fewer divorced and widowed persons remarry, and there are more people who are *single*<sup>G</sup>. With regard to the differences between men and women, the different proportions of those widowed are striking: while barely 4% of men were widowers, over 17% of women were widows in 2016.

Studying the distribution of the population according to official marital status no longer gives an accurate overview of the actual partnership situation. One of the primary reasons for this is the growing popularity of cohabitation. In 1990, 3% of the population aged 15 and over were cohabiting; in 2001 the figure was 7.1%; and in 2016 it was 13% – thus its prevalence has more than quadrupled since the change of regime, and has doubled since the turn of the millennium. Before the regime change, it was primarily the divorced and the widowed who chose unwed cohabitation (Carlson and Klinger 1987); but ever since then, increasing numbers are cohabiting with their partners either before or instead of marriage (Spéder 2005). In step with these changes, public opinion has also become increasingly accepting of cohabiting relationships and of the families that come about in this way.

Table 1: Composition of the population aged 15 and over, by marital status and sex, 2001, 2005, 2011, 2016

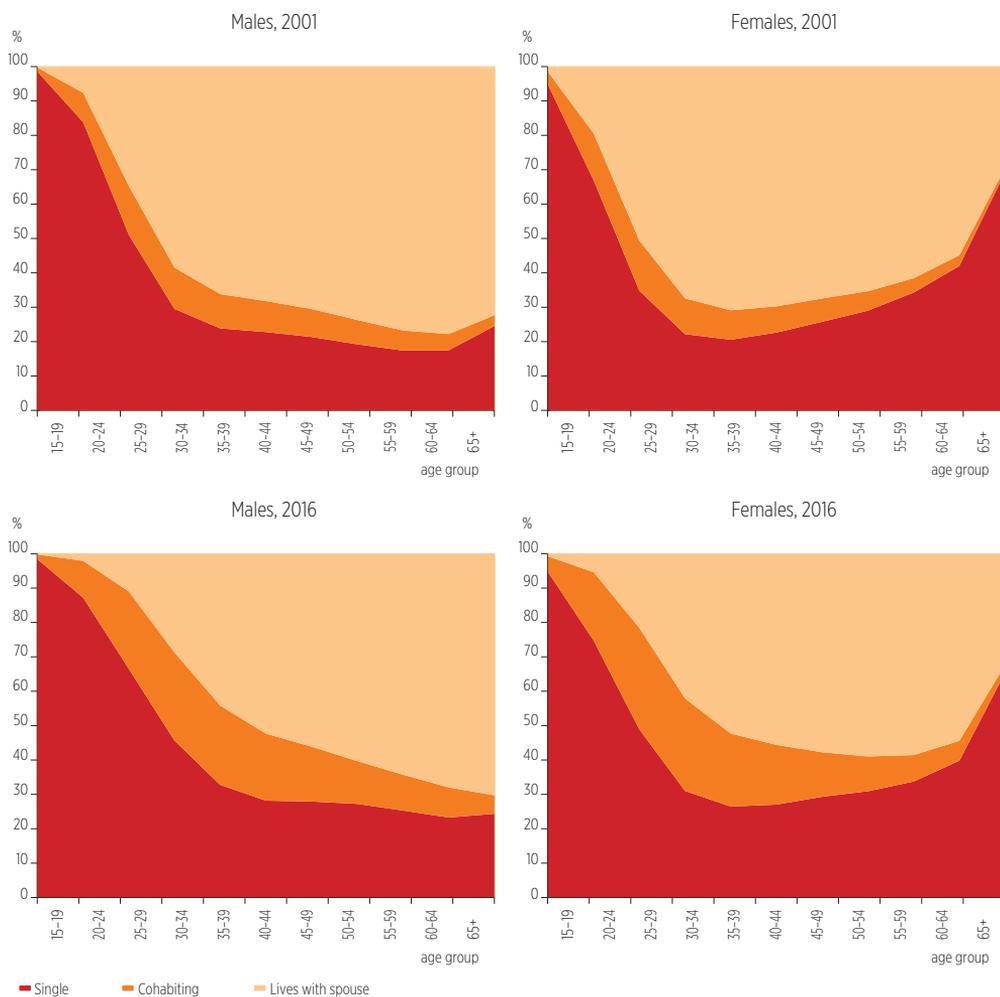
	Never married	Married	Widowed	Divorced	Total
	(%)				
<b>Men</b>					
1990	32.9	55.6	3.8	7.7	100.0
2001	35.3	52.4	4.3	8.1	100.0
2011	38.8	47.2	3.8	10.1	100.0
2016	40.8	46.5	3.7	9.0	100.0
<b>Women</b>					
1990	22.1	49.4	18.5	10.0	100.0
2001	24.0	46.5	18.9	10.6	100.0
2011	27.0	41.9	18.2	12.8	100.0
2016	28.6	41.7	17.5	12.2	100.0
<b>Total</b>					
1990	27.2	52.3	11.6	8.9	100.0
2001	29.3	49.2	12.1	9.4	100.0
2011	32.6	44.4	11.5	11.6	100.0
2016	34.3	44.0	11.0	10.7	100.0

Source: HCSO, Microcensus 2016. Part 3: Demographic data, 2017; HCSO, Microcensus 2005. Part 2: Main characteristics of the population and dwellings, 2005.

If we examine the period following 2001 according to actual partnership status – irrespective of official marital status – by age group, the shift in recent years is very clear (*Figure 1*). As a continuation of earlier trends, there has been a significant decrease in the number of those married and an increase in the number of those cohabitating in all age groups and among both men and women. This change has impacted not only the youngest age groups,

but also 30–40-year-olds, more of whom had been married. Among 20–24-year-olds, hardly anyone lives with a spouse: only 2% of men and 5% of women. In the age groups immediately above this, the proportion of married persons begins to increase; but it barely exceeds 50% even among those in their early 40s. However, a quarter of 25–39-year-olds and about a fifth of 40–44-year-olds were cohabiting in 2016. This is not simply a question of

Figure 1: The distribution of the population aged 15 years and older, by partnership status and sex, 2001, 2016



Source: HCSO Microcensus 2016, Part 3: Demographic data, 2017.

postponing the first stable relationship, but also of remaining single. The increase in the proportion of single women aged 20–40 and single men aged 20–64 between 2001 and 2016 confirms the above.

Non-marital cohabitation does not necessarily mean that the partners have not previously been married. Nonetheless, census and microcensus data show that since the turn of the millennium, the proportion of people in the cohabiting population who have never been married has clearly increased in every age group: in 2001, 87% of 25–29-year-olds who were cohabiting had never been married, whereas in 2016 the figure was 99%. The rise is also present in older cohorts: around the turn of the millennium, 29% of cohabiting partners in their early 40s had never been married, while the figure was over two-thirds (69%) in 2016.

Apart from the spread of cohabitation, a comparatively small-scale rise in the proportion of singles can be observed – though this does not necessarily mean a complete lack of partnership (see the section ‘Living-apart-together partnerships’). The share of singles in the population aged 15 and over was 41% in 1990, 42% in 2001 and 44% in 2016. One factor is the postponement of the first stable partnership to a later age – part of a long-term process. Reasons for this include a higher proportion of young people in tertiary education; greater age at completion of their studies; later entry into the labour market; and leaving the parental home later. In addition to these social phenomena, currently public opinion also considers it better to settle into a relationship or establish a family later (see the section ‘Partnerships in the light of public opinion’).

As *Figure 1* shows, the shift of stable partnerships to a later age has speeded up since the turn of the millennium – and even more so among men than among

women. Examining the two age groups most affected first, between 2001 and 2016 the proportion of people in their late 20s who were living with a partner or spouse fell by 15 percentage points among men and by 14 percentage points among women. Meanwhile, the decrease among men aged 30–34 was 16 percentage points, but in the case of women it was only 9 percentage points.

The difference between men and women is significant even in the oldest age groups. Due to the lower life expectancy of men, there is a surge in the proportion of singles among women aged over 60 (*Figure 1*). It is important, however, to emphasize that in the two oldest age groups the sex difference has been moderated somewhat since 2001 by the narrowing mortality gap between women and men. In older age groups, the proportion of those divorced and widowed has increased among singles. In 2016, over three-quarters (77%) of singles aged over 60 were either widowed or divorced. The falling remarriage rate has caused the proportion of singles to rise among those previously married (see the section ‘The probability of marriage’).

On the whole, it is clear that between the turn of the millennium and 2016, the proportion of singles grew, albeit slightly, in all age groups. In Hungary, the two largest groups of singles are young people who have not yet established a stable partnership, and people over 60, the majority of whom are single on account of their partner’s death. An earlier analysis established that the majority of those in their 30s and 40s are probably not living without a partner by choice: compared to their partnered peers, singles are somewhat less educated, their position on the labour market is worse, more of them are divorced and more often they live with their parents or in a one-person household (Murinkó and Spéder 2015).

## LIVING-APART-TOGETHER PARTNERSHIPS

Not every person who shows up in the official statistics as single is actually without a partner: some have a long-term, stable relationship, but do not live with their partner for a variety of reasons. The literature calls such partnerships *living-apart-together relationships (LAT)*<sup>6</sup>.

According to data from the survey Turning Points of the Life-course (Hungarian Generations and Gender Survey), in 2016 close to 6% of the population aged 22 and over were living in LAT partnerships. As pointed out in earlier analyses (Kapi-tány 2012; Murinkó and Spéder 2015), this form of relationship is primarily – though not exclusively – characteristic of younger age groups, and presumably precedes cohabitation. Our results from 2016 also show that 40% of those in LAT relationships were aged under 30; 19% were in their 30s; 20% in their 40s; and about a fifth were over 50 years old. Furthermore, two-thirds of those not living with their partners were never married; importantly, a quarter of them were divorced. Over three-quarters of those living in a LAT relationship did not have any children aged under 18 in the household (*Table 2*), and only 38% were parents.

The majority of people in a LAT partnership (82%) had not previously lived with their present partner (and so these were not couples who had moved apart for external or personal reasons), but many of them would like to move in with their partners within a few years: 29% would definitely like to do so and 38% had less-definite intentions. However, only 44% were considering marriage. It is primarily those in a LAT partnership who have never been married who entertain such plans: 8 out of 10 never-married persons want to move in with their LAT partners within three years, and 6 out of 10 would also marry within

this period. By contrast, only 4 out of 10 divorcees with a LAT partner plan to move in together, and only 14% seek marriage in the near future.

*Table 2: Composition of people in a LAT partnership by age, marital status and number of children aged 18 or under living in the household, 2016*

	(%)
Composition	
<b>Age</b>	
22–29	40.0
30–39	18.6
40–49	19.8
50+	21.6
<b>Marital status</b>	
Never married	65.6
Divorced	24.3
Married, lives apart from spouse	5.7
Widowed	4.4
<b>Number of children aged 18 or under living in the household</b>	
No children	88.3
1 child	8.6
2 children	2.3
3 children	0.8
<b>Total</b>	<b>100.0</b>

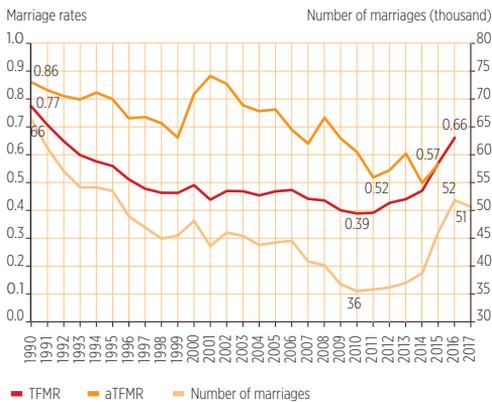
Source: HDRI GGS Turning Points of the Life-course survey, Wave 5 (2016–2017); authors' calculation (N=540).

## THE PROBABILITY OF MARRIAGE

In recent decades, the transformation of marital behaviour has been one of the most important on-going changes related to partnership practices. Observing changes over the longer term, we can see that the decreasing tendency in the number of marriages between the mid-1970s and the end of the 1990s was followed by stagnation from 1998 to 2006 and a further decline from 2007 onwards. In recent years, however, the low point of 2010 (35,520 marriages) was followed by an initial slow rise, and then more rapid growth after 2013.

There were 46,137 marriages in 2015 and 51,805 in 2016 (*Figure 2*), which means an overall growth of 45.8% over 2010. In 2016, the number of marriages reached the level of the mid-1990s. However, this growth did not continue: 2.3% fewer marriages (50,600) took place in 2017 than in 2016.

*Figure 2: The number of marriages, total first marriage rate (TFMR) and adjusted total first marriage rate (aTFMR) for females, 1990–2017*



Source: HCSO, Demographic Yearbooks, authors' calculation.

If we examine quarterly data and compare them to the same period in the previous year, we can see that there were two periods after 2010 when the number of marriages rose. In the first and second quarters of 2014 there was a slight upturn; and then another period of growth began in the first quarter of 2015, which peaked in the first quarter of 2016 (33% more marriages were held in the first three months of 2016 than in the same period of the previous year). After a steep drop starting in the third quarter of 2016, the number of marriages did not grow any further in 2017.

It seems, therefore, that the decades-long decline in the popularity of marriage has stopped – for the time being, at least. We must nevertheless repeat our statement formulated in 2015 (Murinkó and Spéder 2015) that we cannot predict whether the growth will continue (after the halt in 2017)

or will prove transitory, or at what level the number of marriages will stabilize in the long term (see also the box ‘Who tops the marriage charts?’).

Total first marriage rate (TFMR)<sup>6</sup> is an important indicator of the propensity to marry. On the basis of this indicator, a woman currently has a 66% probability of getting married at least once by the age of 49 (*Figure 2*). The rate decreased continuously from 0.77 in 1990 to 0.46 in 1998, and then fluctuated at between 0.44 and 0.49, before dipping to its lowest point in 2010–2011 (0.39); this has been followed by a slow but steady rise since 2012. The value of the TFMR was 0.47 in 2014, 0.57 in 2015, and 0.66 in 2016, which is the highest figure since the early 1990s (the figure for 2017 is not yet known).

The value of the TFMR is distorted if, in the period under examination, the mean age at first marriage decreases or increases: if it increases, then the indicator provides an underestimation; if it decreases, the likelihood of marriage is overestimated. In order to filter this distortion, as with fertility, it is possible to calculate *the adjusted total first marriage rate (aTFMR)*<sup>6</sup>. This shows what the probability of marriage would be, had the mean age at first marriage remained unchanged. *Figure 2* shows this indicator for the period 1990–2015. We can see that the TFMR declined until the middle of the first decade of the 2000s, mainly because people married later and not because they did not marry at all. The aTFMR shows that the probability of someone marrying at least once in their lifetime was between 70% and 80% – higher than the TFMR would suggest. As the rise in the mean age of first marriage slowed down, the values of TFMR and aTFMR started to converge. Following the 2010 low point in marriages, the values of both the TFMR and the aTFMR began to rise, and in 2015, when the age at first marriage stabilized, the values of the two indicators were the same. We can therefore

conclude that between 1990 and 2014, the actual propensity to marry was higher than indicated by the total first marriage rate, and in 2015 the probability of a woman marrying in her lifetime was 57% according to both indicators. The ‘marriage boom’ of recent years is not reflected in the aTFMR, which again seems to confirm that we cannot speak of a steady growth – only of a halt in the tendency to decrease.

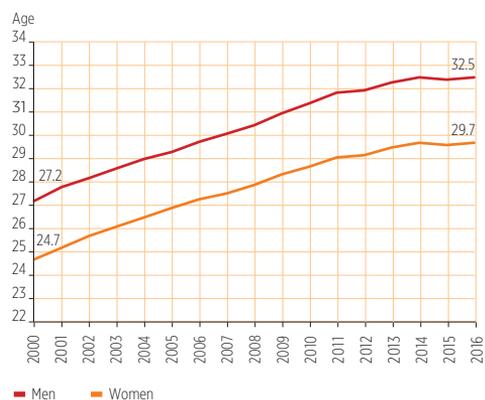
How marriage practices have changed is well demonstrated by the typical age at which women and men exchange vows. The mean age at first marriage increased continuously from the regime change until 2014, but has stagnated since (*Figure 3*). Whereas in 2000, the mean age was 24.7 for women and 27.2 for men, in 2016 women married for the first time at the age of 29.7 and men at 32.5, on average. The mean age increased by about three years in the first decade after 1990, and then by four years between 2000 and 2010, but by only one year after 2010. So it seems that the postponement of first marriage has halted in the case of both sexes.

Looking at differences by education, it becomes clear that the mean age at first marriage stopped increasing because the mean age of marriage for women with at most eight years of primary school or vocational school fell between 2014 and 2016 (from age 27.1 to 26.8, and from 30.3 to 30, respectively). Meanwhile, a slow growth continued for women with secondary and tertiary education (from age 29.1 to 29.4 and from 30.5 years to 30.8, respectively) (HCSO 2017).

The first decade of the new millennium was the period that witnessed the fastest increase in the mean age at first marriage. The same phenomenon can be observed with regard to the frequency of marriage by age group (*Table 3*). Between 2000 and 2010, the number of first marriages per thousand women and men of corresponding age dropped significantly in every age

group below 30 (and also for men aged 30–34), and increased slightly in the population aged 35 and over (although this rise did not compensate for the drop among younger people). Between 2000 and 2010, the most frequent age at which men married shifted from 25–29 to 30–34 years. In 2010, the probability of marriage continued to be highest in the age group 25–29 for women, but the marriage propensity of women aged 30–34 did not lag far behind.

*Figure 3: Mean age at first marriage, by sex, 2000–2016*



Source: HCSO, Demographic Yearbooks.

In contrast to the postponement characterizing the first decade of the new millennium, more (first) marriages were contracted in all age groups between 2010 and 2016 (*Table 3*). The number of first marriages per thousand never-married persons grew by 50% in the period under examination. The growth was largest among people older than the age considered to be the most probable age for marriage – men aged 35–49 and over 60, and women aged 30–59. Given the stabilization in age at first marriage, we can infer that – in addition to a general rise in the propensity to marry – the post-2010 rise is, at least partly, a result of those marriages that had been postponed actually taking place (see also the box ‘Who tops the marriage charts?’).

*Table 3: First marriages per thousand never-married men and women of corresponding age, 2000–2016*

Age group	Men			Women		
	2000	2010	2016	2000	2010	2016
–19	2.2	0.9	1.3	11.7	3.3	4.7
20–24	32.5	7.4	10.9	60.8	18.1	25.2
25–29	72.9	30.1	42.2	82.8	48.5	68.2
30–34	53.2	41.0	59.2	42.4	41.4	63.6
35–39	22.2	26.9	40.6	19.6	21.5	32.7
40–49	8.0	10.4	17.1	6.8	8.8	13.8
50–59	3.3	3.9	5.6	2.8	2.7	4.7
60+	2.1	2.1	3.4	0.6	1.0	1.3
<i>Total</i>	<i>29.5</i>	<i>17.4</i>	<i>25.0</i>	<i>38.9</i>	<i>22.2</i>	<i>31.5</i>

Source: HCSO, Demographic Yearbooks.

And so, the age structure of those marrying for the first time altered significantly prior to 2010, but no important change has occurred since 2010. Women continue to have the highest probability of getting married for the first time at age 25–29, and men at age 30–34 (Table 3). In 2016, the majority first married at 30 or older (52.7% of women and 69.6% of men). While the proportion of marriages at a relatively young age has continued to drop (from 17.9% to 15.9% for women and from 7.5% to 7.1% for men between 2010 and 2016), now every fourth man (25.4%) and every sixth woman (17.7%) marries for the first time at 40 or over.

In the case of first marriages at 40 and over, childbearing becomes an important issue due to the biologically restricted fertility of women over 40. The proportion of mothers and fathers among newly weds aged over 40 grew significantly between 2010 and 2016: in 2016, 51.9% of women and 41.5% of men already had children (usually one) before they married (Figure 4). These may be children that the couple had together before they got married, or they may be from an earlier relationship. More women who marry for the first time at 40 or over have children (mostly two) than never-married women of the same age. This suggests that a significant proportion

of couples with children marrying at a relatively late age are having the marriage they postponed earlier.

*Figure 4: Distribution of women and men who got married for the first time at 40 or above, by the number of children born alive before the marriage, 2010, 2016*



Source: HCSO, Demographic Yearbook 2010, 2016; authors' calculation.

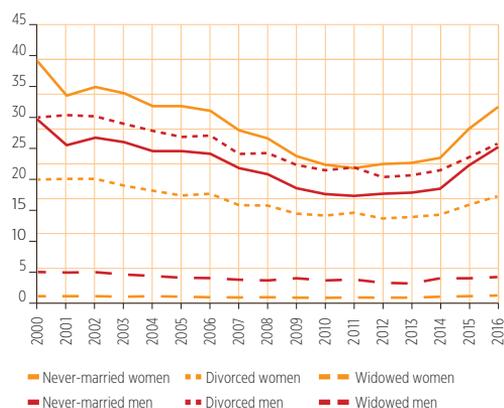
Although the majority of marriages involve both parties marrying for the first time, the proportion of remarriages is not negligible. The decreasing trend in first-time marriages turned after 2011, and the number and proportion of couples where both parties are

marrying for the first time began to increase (from 66.9% in 2010 to 69.5% in 2016), while the proportion of those remarrying decreased – even if their number continued to increase. In 2016, in 17.9% of marriages, one of the two parties (and in 12.6% of cases, both of them) had previously been married. And so, the growing propensity to marry over recent years has affected both those marrying for the first time and those remarrying; but there are more of the former.

The drop in the proportion of people remarrying between 2010 and 2016 is explained by lower growth in the probability of divorced and widowed people marrying than in the likelihood of never-married women and men doing so (Figure 5). The earlier tendency was reversed and the differences in the probability of marriage by marital status began to increase again. The probability of marriage is relatively low for widowed persons; and with significantly more women than men in the older age groups, it is no surprise that widowed men are four times as likely as widowed women to marry again. Divorced men are only one

and a half times more likely to remarry than are divorced women. Never-married women are still more likely to marry than divorced women; however, since 2000, divorced men are marrying more frequently than their never-married counterparts, though the difference between the two groups of men had almost closed up by 2016.

Figure 5: Marriages per thousand women and men of corresponding marital status in the population aged 15 and over, 2000–2016



Source: HCSO, Demographic Yearbooks.

## WHO TOPS THE MARRIAGE CHARTS?

The increasing marriage propensity between 2010 and 2016 is an unusual phenomenon – though not unprecedented internationally – in that it runs counter to the partnership trends typical of most European countries in recent decades, with ever more cohabiting couples and singletons, and a decline in the institution of marriage. Given the changes in recent years, the question is no longer just about why people in Hungary do not marry, but also why they do. Hence this overview of which socio-demographic groups saw the greatest increase in the number of marriages between 2010 and 2016 (Table B1).

The total number of marriages rose by 145.8% over the period under review. An increase can be observed in every age group, but there was a higher-than-average propensity to marry among those aged over 35, and especially among people in their 40s or over 60. The increase was greater among people marrying for the first time than among people remarrying. Of the latter, the increase was more significant among those whose previous marriage had been dissolved over 15 years previously.

Among the childless, the rise in the number of marriages was below average; meanwhile, men and women with at least one child had about twice as many weddings in 2016 as in 2010. In the case of

childless couples, those in their 40s stand out: the number of marriages among them rose by 2.3 times in the period.

We have no information as to whether the proportion of marriages was higher among couples who had already been cohabiting for a while or among those for whom the relationship was new. However, the age pattern and results with regard to time since the dissolution of a previous marriage and the number of children suggest that a significant proportion are marrying after a lengthy period of cohabitation.

The number of marriages among the unemployed and the dependent population decreased significantly for men, but only slightly for women; meanwhile, the increase was significant among the employed and women on childcare leave (the latter are included among inactive earners). The number of marriages doubled among couples marrying for the first time where the man was employed and the woman was on childcare allowance (gyes) or childcare benefit (gyed) – that is, a couple with small children. If both parties are remarrying, a different pattern emerges: growth was average among the employed and above average among inactive couples.

From a regional point of view, growth was above average in villages (especially in settlements with populations of below 2,000), in the eastern half of Hungary and in Southern Transdanubia (i.e. primarily in the less-developed regions), while in Budapest, for example, the number of marriages increased by only 20%.

How can we explain the rising propensity for marriage? It is probably impossible to isolate one single reason: several factors are at play, exerting their influence on different socio-demographic groups. One such factor is the economic crisis and its after-effects: in 2009–2010,

the number of marriages fell in parallel with the drop in GDP; numbers then began gradually to increase as the economic situation improved. However, the reasons for the significant increase of 2015–2016 are different: the addition of the earlier delayed marriages on the one hand, and newly introduced government measures and legal amendments that offered advantages to married couples on the other. These measures included a tax break for first-time married couples (as of January 2015) and the Family Housing Support Programme (CSOK, as of July 2015). First-time marriage propensity increased most among the employed, which suggests that the tax break had some effect. The HUF 5,000 (about EUR 15) monthly tax break, offered for a period of two years, presumably motivates mainly low earners: this is supported by the twin facts that the number of first-time marriages among those with at most primary education doubled between 2010 and 2016, and that the growth was above average in the underdeveloped regions of the country. According to the rules for CSOK, the subsidized loan and the support by right of future children are only available to married couples, while children not common to the spouses only ‘add up’ in the case of married couples. This may explain the above-average increase in marriage among parents aged below 50.

According to the new Hungarian Civil Code (in effect since March 2014), cohabiting partners do not count as close relatives. This means that many rights that are available to married partners do not apply to cohabitants, especially if they have no children in common. This may partly explain the increase in the willingness of childless people in their 40s to marry. The new Civil Code also institu-

ted changes in the order of inheritance that are advantageous to people who remarry: for example, a widow's (or widower's) pension does not cease upon remarriage, and the surviving spouse does not get usufructuary rights to all the property (this is advantageous to the children of the deceased from a previous relationship).

*Table B1: The changing number of marriages by the main socio-demographic characteristics of wife and husband, 2010–2016\**

		(%)	
		Wife	Husband
Age group	15–19	117.8	128.3
	20–24	131.2	140.3
	25–29	135.0	130.8
	30–34	131.7	121.3
	35–39	180.4	173.6
	40–49	216.4	208.5
	50–59	150.3	143.9
	60+	211.3	173.9
Previously married	neither party	151.4	
	one of the parties	134.9	
	both parties	134.1	
Time since the previous marriage ended (among people who remarried)	0–1 year	110.7	103.8
	2–4 years	110.4	113.0
	5–14 years	145.2	141.1
	15+ years	181.3	192.3
Number of children	0	124.8	127.1
	1	193.1	196.5
	2	197.9	198.2
	3+	210.5	178.1
	Level of education	at most eight years of primary school	166.4
	vocational school	153.4	146.1
	secondary school	156.9	153.8
	tertiary education	127.2	129.2
Labour market status	employed	148.1	154.2
	unemployed	98.1	76.0
	inactive earner	192.4	12.4
	dependant	95.6	74.8
Region	Central Hungary	128.8	
	Central Transdanubia	145.4	
	Western Transdanubia	146.1	
	Southern Transdanubia	151.9	
	Northern Hungary	163.5	
	Northern Great Plain	162.8	
	Southern Great Plain	157.5	
Type of settlement	Budapest	120.5	
	City or town	146.0	
	Village	168.8	
<i>Total</i>		<i>145.8</i>	

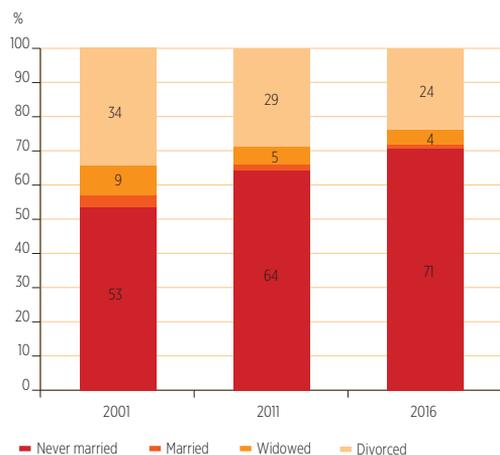
Source: HCSO, Demographic Yearbook 2010, 2016; authors' calculation.

\* 2010=100%.

## THE FEATURES OF COHABITATION

The number of cohabiting people is now over 1 million in the Hungarian population aged 15 and over, and their share is growing increasingly rapidly. It grew by 1.6 percentage points between 2001 and 2005; by 2 percentage points between 2005 and 2011; and by 2.3 percentage points between 2011 and 2016. Apart from the fact that the popularity of unmarried cohabitation is growing fast, the social composition of the group is also changing conspicuously. Since the turn of the millennium, the proportion of those who have never been married has grown significantly among cohabitees: it barely exceeded 50% in 2000, but by 2016 it had surpassed 70%. At the end of the 1980s, the majority of cohabiting partners were divorced or widowed, but since then their share has dropped significantly: now 4% are widowed and 24% are divorced. The proportion of officially married people living in a cohabiting union barely exceeds 1% (Figure 6).

Figure 6: Distribution of the population aged 15 and over living in cohabitation, by marital status, 2001, 2011, 2016

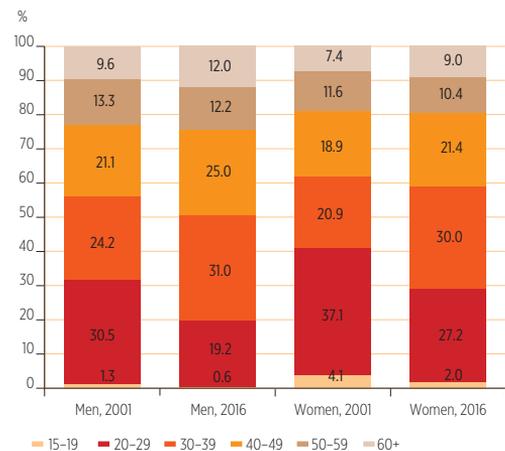


Source: HCSO Microcensus 2016. Part 3: Demographic data, 2017.

In terms of marital status, there is hardly any difference between cohabiting men and cohabiting women. Only among widowed cohabitees can a more notable difference be observed: among cohabiting men, the proportion of widowers is only around half the proportion of widows among cohabiting women (2.9% and 5.7%, respectively). The cause is simple: different mortality rates (there are far more widows than widowers), since the difference is primarily limited to older age groups.

In addition to the composition by marital status, the composition by age has also changed. In 2001, 13% of cohabiting men and 22% of cohabiting women were under the age of 25, while 3 out of 10 men and 4 out of 10 women were under 30. In 2016, only a fifth of cohabiting men and less than a third of cohabiting women (29%) were under 30 (Figure 7).

Figure 7: Distribution of the population aged 15 and over living in cohabitation, by age group, 2001, 2016

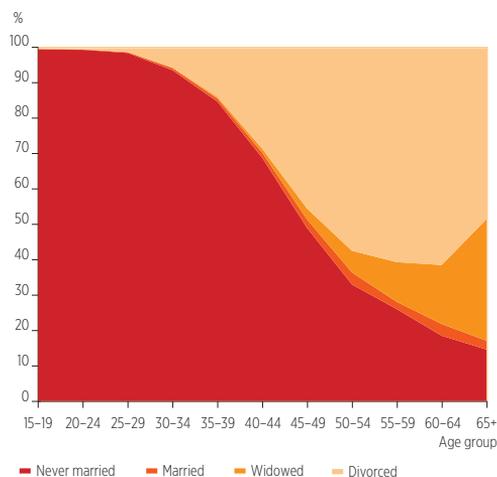


Source: HCSO Microcensus 2016. Part 3: Demographic data, 2017.

Thus, the census and microcensus data show that cohabitation is fast becoming the preferred form of partnership among those who have never married. At the

same time, cohabitation does not necessarily lead to marriage; instead it functions as an alternative to marriage: the share of the youngest age groups is decreasing, while the share of cohabiters in their 30s and 40s is growing. Those never married dominate the cohabiting population aged under 45, but half (49%) of those aged between 45 and 49 have never married either (*Figure 8*).

*Figure 8: Distribution of the cohabiting population, by age group and marital status, 2016*



Source: HCSO Microcensus 2016. Part 3: Demographic data, 2017.

We can categorize cohabiting people into several types. Some look upon their partnership as a sort of trial marriage and plan to get married later; others have no such plans, for various reasons, and their partnership can be seen as an alternative to marriage. According to the results of the Turning Points of the Life-course survey, in 2016 over half (57%) of cohabiting respondents aged 22 and over did not plan to marry their partner within the next three years: close to a third (31%) reject the possibility outright, while a quarter (26%) are rather not planning a wedding. Only 18%

said that they definitely intended to marry their partner in the near future. The plans of male and female respondents do not differ significantly, with similar proportions considering marriage. If we examine the findings by age, however, it becomes clear that it is partners in their late 20s and early 30s who want to get married, while that holds true for only a smaller proportion of those above this age or below 25. There is also a sharp divide between those who have never been married and those couples where one or both partners have previously been married. Plans for marriage are also influenced by whether the couple has children in common, as well as by the age of the children: couples without children and with small children (aged 0–3) are more inclined to be intending to marry. Concerning marital status and common children, age also has a bearing, since in the older age groups there are more divorced and widowed persons than in the younger age groups (*Table 4*).

It seems that couples think relatively alike about plans for marriage. The greatest agreement is apparent among those planning to marry: more than three-quarters (77%) of people who intended to marry soon said that their partners thought the same; and only 6% of respondents said their partners were of a different mind. There is less agreement among those not planning to marry: 16% believed their partner would like to marry them within the next three years.

The majority of those not planning to wed their partners either do not consider marriage important (45%) or think their partnership is just right as it is (37%). Less than a tenth of this group said that material or family reasons had prompted their stance, and only a handful mentioned lack of partnership stability as the primary reason.

Table 4: Marriage intentions within the next three years among people in cohabitation, 2016

(%)

		Has marriage intention	Has no marriage intention	Total
Sex	Man	44.4	55.6	100.0
	Woman	41.6	58.4	100.0
Age group	22–24	57.8	42.2	100.0
	25–29	71.6	28.4	100.0
	30–34	64.6	35.4	100.0
	35–39	43.8	56.2	100.0
	40–44	34.8	65.2	100.0
	45–49	24.2	75.8	100.0
	50+	16.7	83.3	100.0
Age of common children	No common children	49.3	50.7	100.0
	0–3 years	49.6	50.4	100.0
	4–10 years	30.7	69.3	100.0
	11+ years	18.0	82.0	100.0
Previously married	Neither party	54.6	45.4	100.0
	One of the parties	21.5	78.5	100.0
	Both parties	29.1	70.9	100.0
<i>Total</i>		<i>42.9</i>	<i>57.1</i>	<i>100.0</i>

Source: HDRI GGS Turning Points of the Life-course survey, Wave 5 (2016–2017); authors' calculation.

## REGISTERED PARTNERSHIP

Hungarian statistical reports add the records of same-sex couples<sup>1</sup> living as *registered partners*<sup>6</sup> to those of the married population; if registered partners break up, they are included in the divorce statistics, and if a partner dies, the surviving partner is listed as a widow or widower. Same-sex couples were offered the opportunity to register their partnership in 2009, and 454 registrations took place between 2009 and 2016. In total, there were 80 new partnerships registered in 2010; after

that the number decreased until 2013. An increase in the number of partnerships registered has been observed in recent years.

In 2016, 6 out of 10 registered partnerships were between two men. The average age at the time of registration was 40.9 for men and 38.1 for women. The age difference between partners is relatively large: on average, 8.4 years between men and 6.3 years between women. The registration of a civil partnership with an official registrar is most frequent among those people with tertiary education:

<sup>1</sup> In Hungary, only couples of the same sex can establish registered partnerships that are authorized by the public notary and taken into account in records as their official marital status. Couples of both the same and the opposite sex do also have the opportunity to register their civil partnership with a public notary, to be entered in the Register of Declarations of Cohabitation. This does not ensure rights equivalent to those of marriage, but if necessary (e.g. in the case of the unexpected death of one party) does help to prove that the cohabitation existed. However, registration in the Register of Declarations of Cohabitation does not count as official marital status, which means that statistical data sources do not include the data from these entries.

in 2016, 4 out of 10 couples had at least one partner with a tertiary degree, and in 3 out of 10 cases both partners had a degree.

The registration of cohabitation by the registrar confers many legal advantages, since the rights that are gained by same-sex couples living in a registered partnership are equal to those of married couples in numerous fields (e.g. they can have shared matrimonial property; they can inherit from each other; and they have the right to alimony if the partnership is dissolved). However, there are several differences in terms of family rights: registered partners cannot take one another's surname; also they cannot initiate an adoption process together or take part together in artificial insemination (they can only undertake

these things as single individuals); and if one of them has a child, the partner does not automatically become a parent of the child (Act XXIX of 2009).

Figure B1: Number of registered partnerships, 2009–2016



Source: HCSO Demographic Yearbooks.

## PARTNERSHIPS IN THE LIGHT OF PUBLIC OPINION

Public opinion has altered, along with the changes in partnership behaviour. As part of this change, not only has the first stable partnership been postponed, but the ideal age for marriage and childbearing has increased as well. Cohabitation is now almost universally accepted as a form of long-term union; however, this does not mean an overall decline in the preference for marriage.

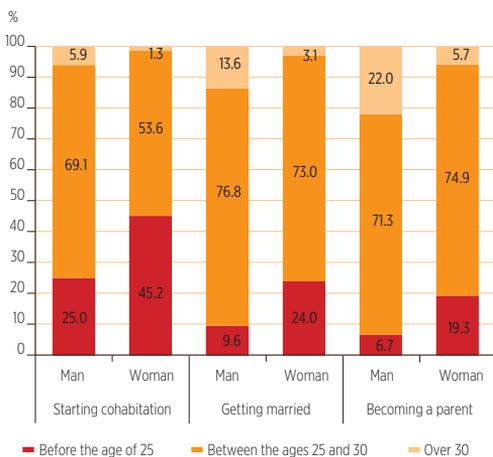
Not only has the timing of certain life events, such as marriage and childbearing, shifted to a later age in practice, but public opinion has also adapted to this change. Nowadays, there are relatively few people who believe that a person should have moved in with his or her partner, got married or had their first child by the age of 25. Public opinion sets different 'deadlines' for the life events of men and women; however, we can say that most believe these milestones should occur between the ages

of 25 and 30. Over a fifth of people believe that the ideal time for men to have children is when they are over 30. Few respondents suggest that women should marry before they turn 25 (24%), and even fewer (19%) consider it good for a woman to have a child in her early 20s (Figure 9). In 2001, the majority (53%) thought it ideal if marriage took place before the age of 25, and many said the same about having children (39%). The public perception of gender differences on this issue was still strong then: only a fifth of people recommended that men should marry before they were 25, and 12% thought they should have kids before that age; meanwhile, over half of respondents (53.7%) thought it was ideal for women to marry before they were 25, and 39% thought it ideal for women to have children before then.

Even in 2016, an overall chronological pattern can be observed in the way people think individual life events should be scheduled: public perception puts the ideal age for embarking on (unmarried)

cohabitation lower than the ideal age for marriage, for both sexes. Whereas for men, the ideal age for marriage and parenthood differs (parenthood comes somewhat later), the difference is less conspicuous in the case of women – public opinion draws no significant distinction between when a woman ideally should marry and have a child (Figure 9).

Figure 9: Ideal age for starting cohabitation, getting married and becoming a parent for women and men, 2016



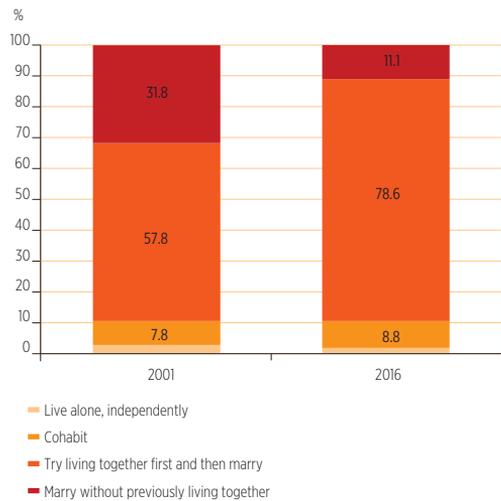
Source: HDRI GGS Turning Points of the Life-course survey, Wave 5 (2016–2017); authors' calculation (N=8,480).

Since 2001, public opinion has altered with regard to the form of partnership that is recommended for young people. In 2001, close to a third of Hungarians aged 22–75 thought young people should marry without having lived together previously. Fifteen years later, in 2016, just 11% thought that would be ideal: the proportion of those advising marriage only after cohabitation has grown significantly. Nevertheless, as in 2001, 9 out of 10 people still preferred marriage to stable cohabitation or life alone (albeit possibly in a LAT partnership) (Figure 10).

In 2016, hardly anyone in their 20s thought marriage without prior cohabitation was a good idea, though a fifth of those aged

over 60 still recommended this to young people. Nonetheless, 85% of those under 30 and 94% of those over 60 support marriage. There was also almost complete consensus that marriage is not an outdated institution: three-quarters of 22–75-year-olds supported it in 2016, and only 16% said that it had become unnecessary.

Figure 10: Type of partnership recommended to young people, 2001, 2016

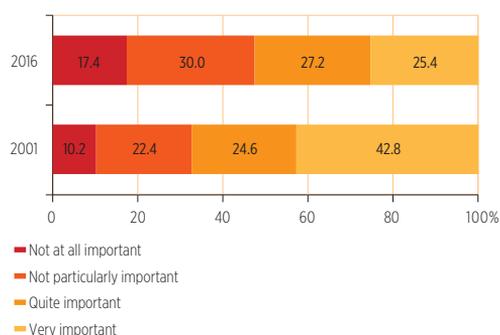


Source: HDRI GGS Turning Points of the Life-course survey, Waves 1 and 5; authors' calculation (2001 N=14,664; 2016 N=8,420).

Long-term cohabitation is mainly supported by those who live as cohabiting couples. In 2016, twice as many in this group recommended this type of partnership as in society as a whole. All the same, public opinion is accepting of couples choosing cohabitation: 7 out of 10 thought there was nothing objectionable if a couple wanted to live together without marriage. This attitude is also gaining currency. Whereas in 2001, two-thirds of respondents considered it important to marry if a cohabiting woman became pregnant (and almost everyone thought the marriage should take place before the child was

born), in 2016 only about half thought that (*Figure 11*). Unsurprisingly, opinions are strongly influenced by respondents' own partnership statuses: 7 out of 10 cohabitantes think marriage is not important even if a child is on the way, while among those who are married, close to the same proportion believe that marriage is important in such circumstances.

*Figure 11: How important is it to get married if a woman is cohabiting and becomes pregnant? 2001, 2016*



Source: HDRI GGS Turning Points of the Life-course survey, Waves 1 and 5; authors' calculation (2001 N=14,664; 2016 N=8,420).

## MARRIAGE AND COHABITATION IN AN INTERNATIONAL COMPARISON

The decline in the number of marriages – which began in the 1970s – has affected virtually every country in Europe over recent decades. This decline generally slowed down or stopped in the first decade of the 2000s, and the number of marriages began to climb in some countries (e.g. Romania, Poland, Latvia). During the economic crisis of 2008–2009 and the years that followed, there was a universal drop: in countries with a declining propensity for marriage, the earlier trend continued; elsewhere the previous rise stopped or went into reverse.

The recent growth in the propensity for marriage is not a solely Hungarian

phenomenon: following the years of crisis, after 2010 marriage rates began to rise (again) in a number of European countries, and the pace of growth has often outstripped the rate in Hungary (*Figure 12*). This is especially typical of Central Eastern Europe (e.g. Czech Republic, Romania, Slovakia, Bulgaria, Hungary) and the Baltic countries; but in recent years the number of marriages has also risen in Ireland, for example, and the stable rise in the Swedish propensity for marriage since 1998 has likewise continued. The rate of growth has been different in each country: while relatively volatile in Romania and Latvia, for example, it has been quite stable in Germany and Sweden. In certain countries of Southern or Western Europe (e.g. Italy, Greece, Spain, the Netherlands, Belgium, Switzerland) there was no change even after the years of crisis, and marriage rates have continued to decrease.

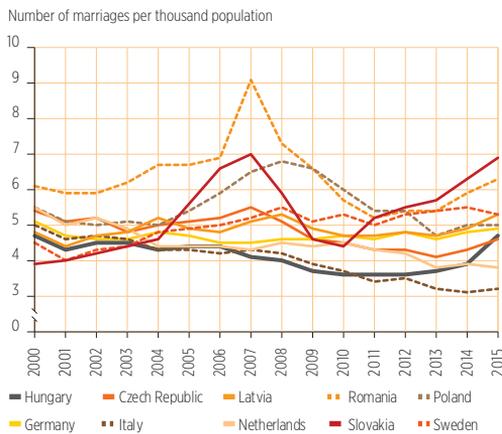
Hungary's relative position among European countries has also changed. While the *crude marriage rate*<sup>6</sup> in 2009 was below the Hungarian level only in Slovenia and Bulgaria, by 2010 the propensity for marriage in a number of Southern European countries (Italy, Spain, Portugal) had fallen below the Hungarian rate; and by 2015, the Hungarian marriage rate was somewhere in the European lower midfield. In 2015, Slovenia and Southern Europe saw the fewest marriages; and the most were celebrated in the Baltic states, Romania and Sweden.

In 2007, the number of marriages was exceptionally high in Romania: this coincided with the introduction of significant financial benefits for people marrying for the first time (the support scheme was scrapped in 2010). The impact proved temporary: in 2008, the number of marriages fell to the level seen before the measures were taken, and the drop continued even after 2009. The temporary growth was due solely to timing: it caused marriages that were already planned to be brought forward.

The drop in the years following its introduction was exacerbated by the economic crisis.

Unlike Romania, a slow but persistent rise in the number of marriages has been typical of Sweden (and Finland and Denmark) since 1998 – apart from the few years of stagnation after the economic crisis. Researchers attribute this to a transformation in the practice and concept of marriage: marriage has become an optional element of the life course, which does not limit individual autonomy and self-fulfilment.

Figure 12: Crude marriage rate in selected European countries, 2000–2015

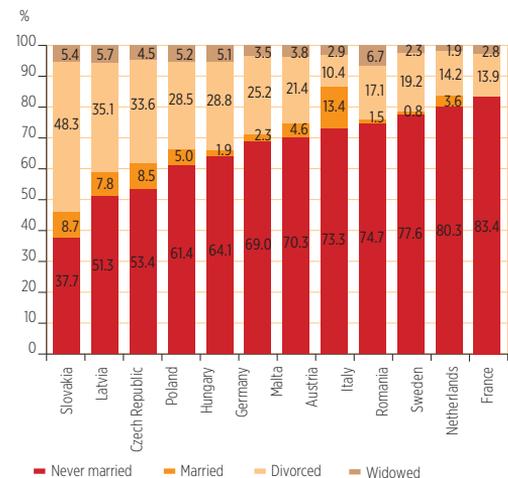


Source: Eurostat (Marriage indicators), 2017.

It is not just the propensity for marriage that shows wide variation across European countries: so, too, do the proportions and the composition of cohabiting partnerships (Figure 13). In most countries, cohabitation is primarily characteristic of the never-married population, and so it can be considered a relationship form chosen prior

to (or as an alternative to) marriage. In all member states of the European Union, with the exceptions of Slovakia and Lithuania, the proportion of never-married people among cohabiters is over 50%. Cohabiting unions after marriage – as an alternative to remarriage – are most frequent in Central Eastern Europe and the Baltic states. The proportion of people who are divorced or married (though probably in the process of divorcing) in the cohabiting population is highest in Slovakia (57%), whereas it stands at a mere 14% in France – accordingly, the overwhelming majority of cohabiters in France have never been married, whereas in Slovakia only one in three has never been married. The proportion of widows or widowers is similarly low among cohabiters in all the countries considered, ranging from 2% to 7%. The figures are very similar for men and women, the only difference being that unmarried cohabitation is more common among widowers than among widows.

Figure 13: Distribution of people cohabiting, by marital status, selected European countries, 2011



Source: Eurostat, Census 2011; authors' calculation.

## GLOSSARY

*Marital status:* The categorization of the population by marital status is based on the existing legal status. *Never married* is a person who has not (yet) married or been in a registered partnership. *Married* is a person who has contracted a marriage and whose legal marriage has not been dissolved in a final judgement and whose spouse is alive, regardless of whether or not the spouses live together. *Registered partner* is an individual who has registered a partnership with a same-sex partner in front of a registrar. (The small size of this group means that data on persons living in a registered partnership are included in the married group; widowed registered partners are included among all widowed persons; and separated registered partners are with the divorced.) *Widowed* people are those who have not remarried (or registered a civil partnership) after the death of their spouse. *Divorced* people are people whose marriages have been dissolved by a final judgement and who have not remarried (or registered a civil partnership). (Persons living separately without an official judgement are included among those married.) The marital status of cohabittees is defined on the basis of their legal status (HCSO 2013).

*Cohabitation:* Long-term marriage-like relationship between two individuals who are not married to each other, regardless of their marital status and whether they are of the same or opposite sexes. The number of cohabittees includes both those couples who have registered their relationship with a notary and those who have not.

*Living-apart-together relationship (LAT):* a long-term, monogamous relationship that the partners publicly acknowledge,

while not living together in the same household. (For alternative definitions of the concept, see: Kapitány 2012.)

*Single:* Broadly defined, single people are those who are neither married nor cohabiting with a partner. A narrower definition includes only those who neither live in a co-resident union (marriage or cohabitation) nor have a long-term LAT partner.

*Crude marriage rate:* The number of marriages that took place among the population of a given geographical area during a given year, per 1,000 mid-year total population.

*Total first marriage rate (TFMR):* This indicates what proportion of people aged over 15 are likely to marry by a certain age (49 years for women, 59 years for men). It is based on the assumption that any woman (or man) who turns 15 in a given calendar year will have the same probability of marrying by a given age as women (or men) of corresponding age in the given year.

*Adjusted total first marriage rate (aTFMR):* A modified version of the total first marriage rate that also takes into account changes in the mean age at first marriage (postponed or brought forward). The aTFMR shows what the probability of marriage would have been if the timing of marriage had remained the same. It is computed by subtracting half of the difference between the mean ages at first marriage at years  $t+1$  and  $t-1$  from 1, and then using this to divide the TFMR value of year  $t$ . The value of aTFMR will be higher than the TFMR for the same year if the mean age at first marriage is increasing, and will be lower if the mean age is decreasing.

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