



RESEARCH HIGHLIGHTS N° 19

CHANGING PARTNERSHIP BEHAVIOUR

Researcher: Marietta Pongrácz

Contact: pongracz@demografia.hu

Partnership behaviour has changed significantly over the last two decades in Hungary. Between 1990 and 2011 the total first marriage rate decreased from 0.77 to 0.39 and the number of cohabitations increased markedly. Census data on the partnership status of the population show that the number of women who live in unmarried cohabitations multiplied by 3.2 over the two decades from 1990 to 2011 and their share also increased significantly (Figure 1 and 2). Cohabitation is very popular for women in their thirties. By their forties some of these women get married with their partner, though the majority either continues to live in them or ceases to cohabit (e.g. as a result of partnership breakdown).

The rise in unmarried cohabitation did not fully compensate for the decline in marriage and the proportion of women living with no partner or spouse increased as well. The figures show that the number of women with no cohabiting partner or spouse more than doubled for those aged 25 to 29, and nearly doubled for those aged 30 to 34 over the last twenty years. This rise is not only due to postponement of initiating partnership, but probably also due to the clear increase in the proportion of young women who have only formed short-term partnerships or who have never partnered at all. These dramatic changes in partnership status signal changes in behaviour and values and are one of the main demographic factors behind low fertility and childlessness.

Figure 1-2. The distribution of women aged 15 to 40 according to partnership status by age in 1990 and 2011

Sources: *Hungarian Population Census 1990 and 2011*

- Living with no partner or spouse
- Cohabiting
- Married

