

参考网站:

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问题:

1. What is the current state of marriage around the world?
2. What is the relationship between marriage and fertility?
3. What is the current state of divorces around the world?

文章:

The proportion of people who are getting married is going down in many countries across the world. The chart shows this trend for a selection of countries.

For the US we have data on marriage rates going back to the late 19th century. This lets us see when the decline started, and trace the influence of social and economic changes during the process.

In 1920, shortly after the First World War, there were 12 marriages annually for every 1,000 people in the US. Marriages in the US then were around twice as common as today.

In the 1930s, during the Great Depression, the rate fell sharply. In the 1930s marriages became again more common and in 1946 – the year after the Second World War ended – marriages reached a peak of 16.4 marriages per 1,000 people.

Marriage rates fell again in the 1950s and then bounced back in the 1960s.

The long decline started in the 1970s. Since 1972, marriage rates in the US have fallen significantly, and are currently at the lowest point in recorded history.

The chart also shows that in comparison to other rich countries, the US has had particularly high historical marriage rates. But in recent decades, marriage rates have decreased in almost all countries.

This chart looks at the change in marriages from a different angle and answers the question: How likely were people of different generations to be married by a given age?

Some countries have statistical records going back several generations, which allow us to estimate marriage rates by age and year of birth. The charts here show this data for women and men born in England and Wales as early as 1900.

For instance, you can see what share of 30-year-olds have ever been married, depending on their birth year. Of the women born in 1940, more than 90% were married by age 30, and 83% of the men. Meanwhile among those born in 1990, only about 29% of women were married by age 30, and just about 20% of the men.

The trend is stark: women and men from England and Wales born in recent decades are much less likely to have married, and that's true at all ages.

There are two causes for this: an increasing share of people in later cohorts are not getting married, and a higher share of people in later cohorts marry later in life.

In many countries, declining marriage rates have been accompanied by an increase in the age at which people get married.

This is shown in the chart here, where we plot the average age of women at first marriage for a selection of countries from around the world.

A few decades ago, the average woman got married in her early or mid-twenties across the countries shown. More recently, the average woman gets married in her later 20s or even early 30s

in most countries.

In recent decades there has been a decline in global marriage rates, and at the same time, there has been an increase in partnerships outside of marriage. What's the combined effect if we consider these changes together?

The chart below plots estimates from the United Nations.

Overall, we see a global decrease – but only a relatively small one, from 69% in 1970 to 64% in 2024. At any given point in the last five decades, around two-thirds of all women were married or in a union.

There are differences between regions: the share of women married or in a union has changed less in Asia and South America, and more in Africa, Europe, and North America.

Similarly, there are different trends across age groups: while the share of women in their teens and twenties who are married or in a union has declined significantly, older women today are about as likely to be married or in a union as they were half a century ago.

An arrangement where two or more people are not married but live together is referred to as cohabitation. In recent decades, cohabitation has become increasingly common around the world. In the US, for example, the US Census Bureau estimates that the share of young adults between the ages of 18 and 24 living with an unmarried partner went up from 0.1% to 9.4% over the period 1968-2018; and according to a survey from Pew Research, today most Americans favor allowing unmarried cohabiting couples to have the same legal rights as married couples.

The increase in cohabitation is the result of the two changes that we discussed above: fewer people are choosing to marry, and those people who do get married tend to do so when they are older and often live with their partner before getting married. In England and Wales, for example, around 90% of people who got married in 2022 cohabited first.

Long-run cross-national data on the share of couples cohabiting is not available, but some related data is. In particular, the proportion of births outside marriage provides a useful proxy measure, allowing comparisons across countries and time. If more unmarried people are having children, it suggests that more people are entering long-term cohabiting relationships without first getting married. It isn't a perfect proxy – as we'll see below, rates of single parenting have also changed, meaning that rates of births outside marriage will not match perfectly with cohabitation rates – but it provides some information regarding the direction of change.

The chart here shows the percentage of all children who were born to unmarried parents.

As we can see, the share of children born outside of marriage has increased substantially in almost all OECD countries in recent decades. The exception is Japan, where there has been only a very minor increase.

In 1970, less than 10% of children were born outside of marriage in most OECD countries. In 2020, this share had increased to more than 30% in most countries and to more than half in some.

The trend is not restricted to the richest countries. In Mexico and Costa Rica, for example, the increase has been very large, and today the majority of their children are born to unmarried parents.

The next chart shows the share of households comprised of a single parent who lives with dependent children. There are large differences between countries, but rates are increasing in many of them.

A different way to examine this question is to calculate the share of children who live with a single parent. The picture is less clear there, with the share increasing in some rich countries, but remaining unchanged or falling in others.

The causes and situations leading to single parenting are varied, and unsurprisingly, single-parent families are very diverse in terms of socio-economic background and living arrangements, across countries, within countries, and over time. However, there are some common patterns:

Women head the majority of single-parent households, and this gender gap tends to be stronger for parents of younger children. Across OECD countries, about 10% of children aged 0-5 years live with only their mother, but less than 1% live with just their father.

Single-parent households are among the most financially vulnerable groups. This is true even in rich countries. According to Eurostat data, across European countries, 47% of single-parent households were “at risk of poverty or social exclusion” in 2017, compared with 21% of two-parent households.

Single parenting was probably more common a couple of centuries ago. But single parenting back then was often caused by high maternal mortality rather than choice or relationship breakdown; it was also typically short in duration since remarriage rates were high.

How have divorce rates changed over time? Are divorces on the rise across the world?

When we zoom out and look at the large-scale picture at the global or regional level since the 1970s, we see an overall increase in divorce rates. The UN in its overview of global marriage patterns notes that there is a general upward trend: “at the world level, the proportion of adults aged 35-39 who are divorced or separated has doubled, passing from 2% in the 1970s to 4% in the 2000s.”

But when we look more closely at the data we can also see that this misses two key insights: there are notable differences between countries; and it fails to capture the pattern of these changes between the 1990s and today.

In the chart here we show the crude divorce rate — the number of divorces per 1,000 people in the country.

As we see in the chart, divorce rates increased markedly in many countries between the 1970s and 1990s. In the UK, Norway, and South Korea, divorce rates more than tripled.

Since then, however, trends have varied substantially from country to country. The US stands out as a bit of an outlier, with consistently higher divorce rates than most other countries, but also an earlier 'peak'. South Korea had a much later 'peak', with divorce rates continuing to rise until the early 2000s. In other countries — such as Norway or Turkey — divorces have stayed high or continued to rise.

The pattern of rising divorce rates, followed by a plateau or fall in some countries (particularly richer countries) might be partially explained by the differences in divorce rates across cohorts, and the delay in marriage we see in younger couples today.

Economists Betsey Stevenson and Justin Wolfers looked in detail at the changes and driving forces in marriage and divorce rates in the US. They suggest that the changes we see in divorce rates may be partly reflective of the changes in expectations within marriages as women enter the workforce.

Trends in crude divorce rates give us a general overview of how many divorces happen each year,

but they need to be interpreted with caution. First, crude rates mix a large number of cohorts – both older and young couples; and second, they do not account for how the number of marriages is changing.

To understand how patterns of divorce are changing it is more helpful to look at the percentage of marriages that end in divorce, and look at these patterns by cohort.

Let's take a look at two regions where divorce rates have been declining in recent decades.

In the chart here we show the percentage of marriages that ended in divorce in England and Wales since 1963. This is broken down by the number of years after marriage – that is, the percentage of couples who had divorced five, ten, twenty, thirty, and forty years after they got married.

Here we see that for all three lines, the overall pattern is similar:

The share of marriages that end in divorce increased from the 1960s to the 1990s.

In 1963, only 1.5% of couples had divorced before their fifth anniversary, 7.8% had divorced before their tenth, and 19% before their twentieth anniversary. By the mid-1990s this had increased to 11%, 24%, and 38%, respectively.

Since then, divorces have been on the decline. The percentage of couples divorcing in the first five years has approximately halved since its 1990s peak. And the percentage who got divorced within the first 10 years of their marriage has also fallen significantly.

What might explain the recent reduction in overall divorce rates in some countries?

The overall trend can be broken down into two key drivers: more recent cohorts being less likely to get a divorce, and having been married for longer before divorcing.

We see both of these factors in data on divorce rates from England and Wales. The chart maps out the percentage of marriages ending in divorce by cohort: each line represents the year the couple got married (those married in 1965, in 1970, etc.), and the horizontal axis is the number of years since the wedding.

A useful way to compare different age cohorts is by the steepness of the line: steeper lines indicate a faster accumulation of divorces year-on-year, particularly in the earlier stages of marriages.

We see that the share of marriages ending in divorce increased significantly for couples married in the 1980s and 1990s compared to those who got married in the 1960s and 1970s. The probability of divorce within 10 years was more than twice as high for couples married in 1995 versus those who got married in 1965.

But since then, the likelihood of divorce has fallen, and marriages have tended to last longer. It fell for couples married in the 2000s and again for those in the 2010s. Both the likelihood of divorce has been falling, and the length of marriage has been increasing.

Still, we don't know yet how long the marriages of these younger couples today will last. It will take several decades before we have the full picture of more recent marriages and their eventual outcomes.