

Marriage

Cathy Day

February 2021

Marriage was considered by Malthus to be one of the preventive checks (see Fertility chapter) and was seen as one of the important features of the second demographic transition, which included ‘the baby bust, the systematic postponement of marriage and parenthood, the rise of alternative forms of partnerships, and parenthood forms of marriage.’ (Lesthaeghe 2014:18112).

Demographers are interested in a person's marital status because it is closely linked to fertility and family formation. Marital unions signal the commencement and continuation of sexual unions, one of the proximate determinants of fertility discussed in the Fertility Chapter. Family formation in turn affects household composition and the demand for residential property. Marital status is associated with mortality and migration, and also with health, wealth and social status.

DEFINITIONS AND MEASUREMENT

Defining the various types of marital unions is not straightforward since there are numerous cultural variations, but marriage is found in all societies (Ihinger-Tallman and Levison 2003:1094). This chapter will consider legal marital unions only, which commence on a defined date, involve a ceremony and are recognised by government authorities in the place in which they occur. The union is expected to be permanent and having children within such unions is accepted and encouraged.

Marriage ceremonies can be classified into three systems of law: religious law, civil law, and customary or tribal law. The details of the ceremonies themselves are not usually codified in each of these systems, however permissible partners are usually defined. In some countries, such as India and Indonesia, there are separate civil laws for adherents of different religions, and the two legal systems overlap.

Non-marital sexual unions, which are becoming increasingly more common worldwide, will be considered in the next chapter.

In Australia marriage is governed by the 1961 Marriage Act, which did not contain a definition of marriage until 2004, when it was amended to define marriage as ‘the union of a man and a woman to the exclusion of all others, voluntarily entered into for life’. This definition was further amended in 2017 to change ‘a man and a woman’ to ‘two people’, thereby legalising same-sex marriage.

MARRIAGE

The legal situation in Australia is perhaps unique in that marriage is regulated at the national level but sex is regulated at the state level. The consequence is that in some states it is legal to marry certain persons but not have sex with them (e.g. aunt-nephew and uncle-niece in Queensland) but in other states it is legal to have sex with certain persons but not to marry them (e.g. step-siblings or foster-siblings in South Australia).

The main sources of data for measuring marital status are civil or religious registers which record the marriage at the time of its occurrence; censuses which ask all members of a population for their marital status at the time of the census; and surveys which ask for current, and sometimes past, marital status.

Most measures of marriage give an incomplete picture. For example, a common measure is the Crude Marriage Rate.

$$\text{Crude Marriage Rate} = \frac{\text{Marriages registered in a year}}{\text{Mid-year total population}} \times 1000$$

This is a very unsatisfactory measure, for as Bogue (1993:2-7) has observed, 'Because the denominator of this rate is comprised primarily of population that is not eligible to marry (either already married or too young to marry), it fails by a very wide margin to meet the specification that a good demographic rate should express events as a ratio of the population "exposed" or "at risk" to the occurrence of these events.'

For a more detailed discussion of marriage and divorce rates, see also (Rowland 2003:253-255; Carmichael 2016:213-245)

Censuses and surveys have a different problem, in that they only capture the data at a specified point in time and do not provide information on previous marriages, for example. This can be overcome if a census or survey includes a marital history, where respondents are asked to recall past marriages. However, this in turn can lead to inaccuracies with recollection or misreporting, with one study in Malawi finding that 28% of men and 18% of women omitted at least one marriage in successive waves of a longitudinal study (Chae 2016).

While demographers would rather conduct analyses of all unions rather than only legally recognised marriages, they are often forced to restrict their studies to those for which registration statistics are available. In areas where the vast majority of unions are legally recognised and registered, this problem of definition is unimportant, but in many parts of the world, analyses based on marriage registration statistics would produce a totally misleading picture. This is discussed in the next chapter.

FORMS OF MARRIAGE

Monogamy refers to a system of marriage in which each man or woman has only one spouse at one time. In most countries that are historically Christian, marriages other than monogamous ones are prohibited by law. Demographic and Health Survey data show that, with the exception of Haiti and several countries in Africa, at least 92% of married women are monogamous worldwide (Fenske 2015).

Polygamy refers to a system in which a person is allowed to have more than one spouse simultaneously. Often polygamy is used interchangeably with *polygyny*; however, the latter refers specifically to a man having more than one wife.

In Africa, *polygamy* is often associated with bridewealth payments by the future husband or his family (Tambiah et al. 1989:416). Payments may be in cattle, cash or goods, with the nature of payment varying by such factors as custom, family wealth and family status (Parkin and Nyamwaya 1989).

Dowry, involving payments by the bride's family to the husband's family, was prevalent in regions influenced by Arab, Hindu and Chinese customs (Boserup 1970:50). However, in China the Marriage Law of 1950 'prohibited the extraction of gifts or money as a condition of marriage' (Arnold and Liu 1992:495). In India, dowry has been illegal since 1960, but the system is still extremely widespread.

Historically, polygyny was quite common and was found in Africa, China, Japan, India, and the Middle East. Today, in some countries polygyny is only permitted for Muslims. These include India, Singapore, Sri Lanka, the Philippines and some African countries. Cotran (1968) wrote that all the customary marriage laws in Africa allowed and even encouraged men to have as many wives as they wanted. Although the entry of Christianity and European colonialism caused conflict and confusion in this aspect of African customary law, polygyny is still comparatively common throughout Africa, with more than a third of married women in the "polygamy belt" of Senegal to Tanzania being in polygamous unions (Jacoby 1995). Polygamy has decreased in the African countries in which it is practiced from the 1960s until the 21st century (Fenske 2015).

Traditionally, polygyny was permissible in most Asian cultures. However, its practice has been limited and it is increasingly unacceptable today. India has four separate Marriage Acts: Hindu, Muslim, Christian and Special (for other religions or where the couple are from different religions). Only Muslim men in India are permitted more than one wife. Although Muslim law permits up to four wives, only a small minority of Asian Muslims living in the areas from Iran to Indonesia practice polygyny. Some have suggested that the low rate of polygyny in Asia is due primarily to economic circumstances since, under Muslim codes, a man may only marry more than one wife if he can afford to support the extra wives and children. In addition, each wife is to be accorded equal status. In Indonesia, a predominantly Muslim country, the Marriage Law of 1974, introduced severe restrictions upon the practice of polygyny and its prevalence is declining.

MARRIAGE

Traditional Chinese culture permitted polygyny but the wives subsequent to the first wife had a lower status and were referred to as secondary wives or concubines. The Marriage Law of 1950 of the People's Republic of China prohibited concubinage and monogamy is now the only legal form of marriage in China.

Polyandry is a system in which one woman concurrently has more than one husband. Polyandry is quite a rare phenomenon but has been reported among groups in Nepal, Sri Lanka, Tibet, some societies in Nigeria, the Toda of India and the Marquesas Islands of the South Pacific (Levine and Sangree 1980; Starkweather and Hames 2012). The most common form is *adelphic polyandry* and involves a woman marrying several brothers.

The predominance of a certain form of marital system in a region is related to numerous factors. The need for labour within the household is one factor. For instance, polygyny in many sub-Saharan cultures has a strong economic basis related to the nature of agricultural production (Ware 1975; Tambiah et al. 1989). Religious laws also have an influence and practices such as levirate marriage, in which a man must marry the wife of a deceased brother, encourage marriages that are polygynous. On the other hand, the areas in which polyandry is practiced are often characterised by mountainous soil of low fertility, with each family having only a small plot of arable land on which to grow crops. It has been suggested that polyandry developed as a response to this lack of arable land in order to limit population growth. If each brother had their own wife and children, the land may need to be divided into increasingly smaller portions, until it reached a size so small that it became unviable (Cassidy and Lee 1989).

MARRIAGE PREVALENCE

The prevalence of marriage is described by the proportion ever married or, alternatively, by the proportion never married.

In demography, the term *celibacy* is used to describe the state of never having been married, rather than never having had sexual intercourse. *Permanent celibacy* denotes those who remain single throughout life. The age that should be used as the best cut-off in a measure of permanent celibacy is debatable but the proportion of those aged 45 to 49 who have ever married, or never married, is commonly used. Few people marry for the first time after this age.

BEGINNING POPULATION STUDIES

TABLE 1: Men and women aged 45-49 years ever married by selected country and year (per cent)

Country	Men				Women			
	Year	%	Year	%	Year	%	Year	%
Australia	1971	91.0	2016	77.6	1971	95.1	2016	82.4
Botswana	1971	87.8	2011	75.8	1971	86.5	2011	67.7
China	1990	94.9	2013	98.0	1990	99.8	2013	99.7
Ethiopia	1967	98.9	2016	98.0	1967	98.8	2016	98.9
India	1971	97.1	2011	98.5	1971	99.6	2011	99.2
Japan	1970	98.1	2015	74.1	1970	96.0	2015	83.9
New Zealand	1986	93.1	2006	84.1	1986	95.7	2006	87.4
Papua New Guinea	1980	94.8	2011	95.2	1980	98.6	2011	98.5
Philippines	1970	96.3	2015	89.9	1970	93.3	2015	91.8
Singapore	1970	94.1	2010	86.8	1970	96.9	2010	87.2
South Africa	1980	90.1	2011	79.5	1980	90.4	2011	79.0
Sweden	1970	86.1	2016	64.1	1970	92.2	2016	70.5
Uganda	1991	91.9	2011	99.4	1991	97.1	2011	97.7
United Kingdom	1971	89.6	2011	84.5	1971	91.7	2011	88.5
USA	1970	93.4	2010	84.3	1970	94.7	2010	88.0

Source: United Nations Population Division 2017

As Table 1 indicates, the fact that marriage is considered highly desirable in many developing contemporary societies is obvious from their very high rates of marriage. In much of Africa, Asia, and the Middle East, marriage for females is close to universal. One notable exception in Asia is the Philippines. Countries with a Spanish or Portuguese colonial history such as the Philippines and the Latin American countries have higher rates of permanent celibacy than other developing countries. This is possibly related to the Roman Catholic tradition of celibate nuns, monks and priests, which in turn sanctions celibacy in the wider population. Percentages of permanent celibacy in European countries range from 4% in Eastern Europe to 15% in Ireland. Ireland has stood out for several centuries as having considerably higher rates of celibacy than its European neighbours.

For males, the prevalence of marriage in Africa is very high. Table 1 shows that for Ethiopia and Uganda, male marriage is above 98% even today. There are notable exceptions though. For example, in Botswana in the 2011 census, only 68% of women aged 45-49 years had been ever married, which is the lowest of the selected countries. In Europe, marriage for men is becoming less common. For example, only two-thirds of Swedish men aged 45-49 years had ever been married in 2016. In Asia, marriage is almost universal, but, there are exceptions. For example, 13% of Singaporean and 26% of Japanese men in their late 40s have not married. It is significant to note that Singapore and Japan are both developed countries, highlighting the complex influences on marriage patterns of culture and economics.

MARRIAGE

In most countries, the level of female permanent celibacy is lower than that of men. The exceptions in the selected countries in Table 1 are South Africa and Uganda, in which the percentage of females aged 45 to 49 years who were unmarried was slightly higher than the percentage of males in that category.

Social customs, rewards, and penalties play an important role in determining marriage rates. For instance, in countries where alternatives to married life are available and accepted, such as a career, or where sexual activity outside of marriage is accepted, marriage prevalence is lower. Other factors affecting the prevalence of marriage are patterns of remarriage and differential marriage rates of men and women.

Further, mate compatibility and availability affect the prevalence of marriage. Spouses are normally chosen from a subgroup of the society having the characteristics considered desirable for a match. These characteristics vary by culture but often include age, marital status, kin relationship, education, religion, socioeconomic status, ethnicity, and place of residence. The lack of suitable partners can affect the rate of marriage, as will be discussed later.

In Australia, the absolute number of marriages rose steadily from 1901 until 1970, after which it fluctuated between 102,000 and 120,000 over several decades. However, the Crude Marriage Rate has fallen from 79.3 marriages per 1,000 population in 1970 to 4.8 in 2018, because the population continues to increase.

AGE AT MARRIAGE

The timing of marriage is of interest largely because of its relationship to fertility trends (see Fertility Chapter). First, age at marriage affects the number of years a woman is exposed to the chance of having a child. Women who marry early tend to have more children than those who marry late. Second, the age at marriage affects the length of successive generations – early marriages can significantly increase the birth rate by shortening the length of a generation (measured by the average number of years between a cohort of women and their daughters). Thirdly, if the bride is significantly younger than the bridegroom, this increases the probability of her becoming a widow and potentially limiting fertility.

For these reasons, demographers are interested in measuring the distribution of age at marriage and the age at which the marriage was consummated (the first occurrence of sexual intercourse after marriage). When consummation occurs very soon after marriage, and this is commonly the case, the age at first marriage can be taken to be equivalent to the age at entry into a marital, sexual union. However in the past, in some societies (particularly in Asia) a young girl was married to her husband a number of years before the intended consummation of the marriage. Usually this delay was due to the fact that the girl was still a child and thus sexually immature at the time of the marriage. Child marriages were very common in both Indian and Chinese traditional societies and were found throughout Asia. In 2016 in India, 7% of married women aged 20-24 years had been married before the age of 15 years (Unicef 2020).

In every human society, the husband is typically older than the wife. In most cultures, he is substantially older. The exception is the Northwest European marriage pattern, which is extended to former European colonies including Australia, Canada and the US. In these cultures, there is typically only a two-year age difference between husband and wife, and it is not uncommon for a wife to be of the same age as, or even somewhat older than, her husband (Hajnal 1965).

Wives who are much older than their husbands are rare and are often the subject of public censure. For example, the age difference between the spouses of the American President, Donald Trump, and the French President, Emanuel Macron, is almost identical. However, the American President is 24 years older than his wife and this is rarely remarked upon, whereas the French President is 25 years younger than his wife and has been subjected to much comment and ridicule, including from the American President.

In traditional Tiwi Islander society in Australia's Northern Territory, females were married almost every day of their life. A girl was first married on the day of her birth, usually to an elderly man with several other wives, and to whom she had been promised even before she had been conceived. A woman's first husband would almost invariably pre-decease her and she would be re-married to another man on the day of her husband's death, usually at the graveside, with the next husband usually identified well in advance (Goodale 1962).

The codification by civil authorities of legal minimum ages of marriage somewhat above the age of puberty is a phenomenon of the 20th century in almost all countries, whether developed or developing. For example, the United Kingdom set a legal minimum age of marriage for the first time in 1928. Such regulations now exist in most countries of the world. In China, the 1950 Marriage Law restricted marriage to females who had reached the age of 18 and males who had reached the age of 20; in 1980, these ages were raised by two years. In Australia, the Marriage Act of 1961 set the minimum age for marriage at 16 for females and 18 for males. In 1991 the age of marriage for females was raised to 18 years, but in exceptional circumstances, both males and females can marry from 16 years of age, with parental consent. Worldwide, the lowest minimum legal age of marriage without parental consent is in Sudan and is the imprecise 'puberty', or 10 years with judicial consent. The highest minimum legal age of marriage without parental consent is 23 years in Equatorial Guinea.

In most developed countries and in some developing countries, the impact of these new civil laws regulating the age of marriage was slight because at the time of enactment only a small proportion of marriages occurred to persons younger than the new legal minimum ages. However, in South Asia and parts of Southeast Asia, marriage of a girl as close as possible to puberty was regarded as ideal. In addition, in these countries early marriage ensured that the girl did not disgrace her parents by losing her virginity before marriage, and it established her parents' status in society because she was considered desirable. In these countries, implementation of higher minimum ages at marriage has not been an easy task. Despite the legal minimum age of marriage for a girl in India being set at 18 years, today 27% of married women aged 20-24 years were married below this legal age (Unicef 2020).

MARRIAGE

The frequency of marriages by age usually increases very rapidly at the younger marriage ages, but after the peak there is a wide span of ages over which marriages still occur. With such a skewed distribution, the median rather than the mean marriage age of a population is a better measure of 'average' age of marriage. In Australia in 2018, the median age at marriage for males was 32.4 years and for females was 30.5 years. Around 80% of marriages were the first time for each partner (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2019).

Further, because the frequency of marriage can be strongly influenced by events such as economic recessions, marriage statistics ideally should be analysed for birth cohorts (all persons born in the same period) rather than for marriage cohorts (all persons marrying in the same period). The proportion of an age group who are married is a simple cohort index of age at first marriage. Table 2 shows these measures for males and females aged 15-19 and 20-24 years for several countries.

TABLE 2. Persons ever married, specified age groups in selected countries (per cent)

Country	Year of Survey	Men		Women	
		15-19 yrs	20-24 yrs	15-19 yrs	20-24 yrs
Australia	2016	0.4	3.8	0.6	8.1
China	2013	2.1	20.3	3.2	35.6
Ethiopia	2016	2.6	27.6	22.5	68.9
India	2011	4.9	34.7	21.5	73.9
Japan	2015	0.3	5.0	0.6	8.6
New Zealand	2006	0.5	5.1	0.8	10.0
Papua New Guinea	2011	3.8	20.8	13.2	54.9
South Africa	2011	3.4	9.9	6.3	22.1
Sweden	2016	0.0	2.1	0.3	6.0
Uganda	2011	3.0	34.2	20.2	76.0
United Kingdom	2011	1.2	15.1	3.0	26.2
USA	2010	1.1	11.6	2.1	19.9

Source: United Nations Population Division 2017

The differences in age at marriage are striking. For example, three-quarters of Indian women are married before the age of 24 years, compared to 8% of Australian women and just 6% of Swedish women. Similarly, over one third of men in India and Uganda are married before the age of 24 years, compared to less than 4% of Australian men and 2% of Swedish men.

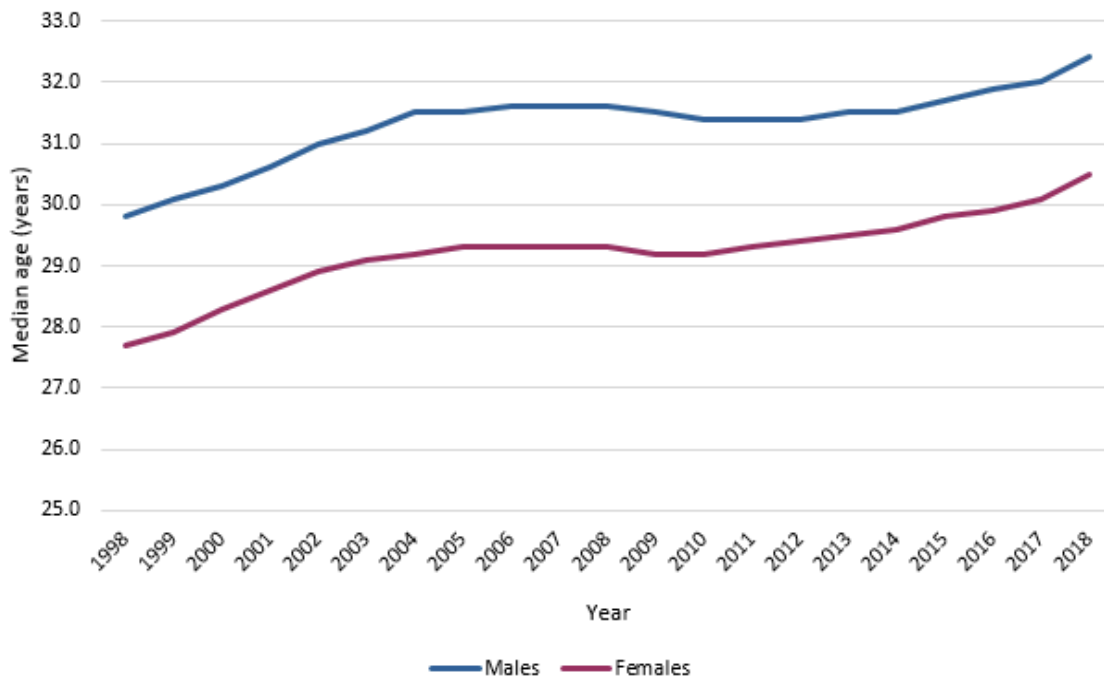
The proportion of Asians not marrying by certain ages varies considerably, although both men and women are marrying later than in the past (Cho et al., 2002:30). Teenage marriage for women is common in India, as demonstrated in Table 2. Considerably later ages of marriage are found for both men and women in Japan.

Relatively later ages of marriage characterise the industrialised nations, but there are significant variations. The percentage of men and women married aged under 25 years is similar for Australia, New Zealand and Japan, but the percentage is two to four times higher in the United Kingdom and USA.

Trends in age at marriage

For many centuries, an age at marriage for women substantially above the age of puberty has been a phenomenon of Northwest European culture (Hajnal 1965). In the 19th century, quite high proportions of the population in most European countries adopted the strategy of moral restraint advocated by Malthus (see Chapter 12), by delaying marriage to unprecedented high age levels (van de Walle 1972). For example, at the beginning of the 20th century, among women aged 20 to 24 years, the proportion never married was over 70% in most European and European settlement countries. Then a decline in age at marriage took place, beginning slowly in the 1920s and 1930s. During World War II and the following decade, the downward trend in marriage age became quite dramatic and this period has since been referred to as the 'marriage boom'. Since the 1970s, the trend has been upwards and later ages of marriage are again found in developed countries. Figure 1 shows the rise in median age at marriage (including 2nd and subsequent marriages) in Australia from 1998 to 2018. The increase from 2017 to 2018 was largely driven by the older age at marriage of same sex couples (44.9 years for males and 39.3 for females) (Australian Bureau of Statistics 2019).

FIGURE 1: Median age at marriage by sex, Australia 1998-2018



Source: Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2019

MARRIAGE

In countries other than those of Europe and European settlement, the increase in age at marriage from a level close to puberty appears to have taken place only during the last 100 years and the trajectory has been entirely upward. For example, in Japan, the percentage of men married by age 24 years decreased from 12% in 1970 to 5% in 2015. For women, the decrease was even steeper, going from 28% ever married by age 24 years in 1970 to just 9% in 2015 (United Nations, 2017). After centuries of very early ages at marriage, the rapid increases in ages at marriage in recent decades for women in some Asian countries are a phenomenon in the field of social change.

Numerous factors affect the timing of marriage. One significant factor is the educational level attained by women: higher levels of female education are associated with delayed marriage. Female employment outside of the home is also generally associated with later ages of marriage.

Most of the non-industrialised countries which have achieved a decline in fertility in recent years have also experienced a significant increase in age at marriage for women. This has led to the suggestion that increased age at marriage may be a necessary precondition for the adoption of modern methods of fertility control within marriage. The effect of later age at marriage upon fertility can be both direct and indirect. The direct effect is that the woman has a shorter time at risk of having a child. The indirect effect may be the lowering of fertility because of changed attitudes to marriage and the family. These revised attitudes may cause a woman to delay marriage and restrict the number of births.

CHOICE OF PARTNER

Another factor influencing marriage rate and age is the availability of appropriate partners. Since spouses usually come from slightly different age groups, disproportionate numbers of any one sex in corresponding age groups can limit access to suitable partners for one of the sexes. Such a situation is referred to as a *marriage squeeze* and can result from various factors such as excess migration of males into or out of an area, loss of many men due to war, or from differences in adjacent birth cohort sizes. As a result, marriage might be delayed as the search for an appropriate partner takes longer. On the other hand, marriage might be hastened if those of the sex who are in shorter supply are induced to marry earlier than would have been the case otherwise.

For males, France provides an example of a marriage squeeze, with around 1.4 million men killed in the World War I. Many of these would have been in the age group 18-38, resulting in women having difficulty in finding a spouse. Furthermore, birth rates were very low in the war years, creating a birth cohort that was smaller than the adjacent cohorts (Glass and Blacker 1938:84-5).

For females, China is an example of a marriage squeeze, with the former 'one child policy' and a cultural preference for boys leading to sex-selective abortions and increased marginalisation of girls. The result is a dearth of females of marriageable age. In 2020, for the age group 15-24 years, China had 117 males for every 100 females (CIA 2020).

The amount of free choice involved in spouse selection also affects the timing of marriage. *Arranged marriages* usually occur at younger ages than do marriages of free choice. In cultures which are historically Christian, individuals have almost complete freedom in choice of marriage partner. In the developing world, arranged marriages are common in many countries. Arranged marriages are less likely to be found in nuclear family systems (families that include husband, wife, and children) than in extended family systems (families that include additional kin members) because the marriage of the family member affects the extended family members in many ways, including economically and socially. Thus, marriages become the responsibility of the family and are arranged by such persons as parents, other relatives, or matchmakers (United Nations 1988). According to Choe et al.(2002:32), later marriage in Asia is associated with a decline in arranged marriage.

In many cultures, the 'ideal' partner in an arranged marriage is a cousin or other relative of a specified degree. Although cousin marriage is uncommon in historically Christian countries, it is the preferred form of marriage in many cultures, particularly in sub-Saharan Africa, the Middle East and parts of Asia. Currently, 10.4% of the global population are married to someone related as 2nd cousins or closer, or are the offspring of such couples (Bittles and Black 2010). Over a billion people live in countries in which more than 20% of all marriages are consanguineous (Bittles et al. 2001). Historically, cousin marriage has never been common in the United Kingdom and was related to the economic structure of villages and the religion and social status of the individuals. For example, in southwest England in the 19th century, around 2% of marriages were between 1st cousins and a similar proportion were between 2nd cousins (Day and Smith 2013).

ENDING MARRIAGE

Thus far we have discussed the formation of marriages. The remainder of this chapter will look at the dissolution of such unions. A legal marriage can end in three ways: divorce, annulment, and death. These are considered separately, below.

Divorce and Annulment

Divorce is a legal declaration that the marriage has been dissolved. Most often, the couple has permanently parted ways, or separated, prior to this legal dissolution. Thus when studying the end of marriages, many look at the timing of both separation and divorce. Yet in some cultures, the distinction between divorce and separation may be vague.

The crude divorce rate in Australia has decreased from 2.7 divorces per 1,000 people in 1998 to 2.0 divorces per 1,000 people in 2018 (Australian Bureau of Statistics 2019). This is similar to the UK (1.8 per 1,000 people) but well in excess of Ireland at 0.7 per 1,000 people, for example (Eurostat 2018).

MARRIAGE

The median age of divorce for males in Australia was 45.9 years of age in 2018 (compared to 40.5 years in 1998) and for females it was 43.2 years of age (compared to 37.8 in 1998) (Australian Bureau of Statistics 2019).

When a marriage is *annulled*, the marriage is legally said to have never been valid; thus the individuals regain the marital status they held prior to the marriage, which in most cases is single. Unlike divorce, an annulment is granted based on some condition existing at the time of the marriage. In some societies, the inability to consummate a marriage is taken as a reason for annulment rather than divorce. Among groups where re-marriage after divorce is not permitted, such as among Catholics, annulments may be more common. In cross-cultural comparisons then, annulments and divorces are normally considered as one category of marital dissolution.

Laws permitting divorce in historically Christian countries have come into existence only during the past two centuries and have been progressively liberalised, with Ireland only permitting divorce in 1995. In the Catholic Church, divorce is still prohibited. Dissolution of marriages by divorce or separation is low in the Middle East, South Asia, and East Asia, but high in Africa and Southeast Asia (McDonald 1985). In Southeast Asia, divorce is particularly high among Malays and Indonesians. In Indonesia, Islamic marriage contracts come with a conditional divorce certificate, to enable Muslim women (who cannot commence divorce proceedings themselves) to obtain a divorce if their husband fails to meet agreed commitments (for example, by abandoning his wife and family) (Nakamura 2006). In Islamic countries, divorce is legally permitted but due to cultural and religious beliefs, it is not common. In India, Muslim men could divorce their wives by 'triple talaq', meaning that the man repeats the word 'talaq' (Arabic for divorce) three times. In recent times, Islamic marriage courts in India have upheld the view that this can be achieved by email, voicemail, text message, Skype or Facebook, and that the wife need not be present when it occurs. 'Triple talaq' was legally banned in India in 2018, but is still considered valid by some Indian Muslim scholars.

The probability of divorce or separation is highest in the first five years of marriage. As one would expect then, most divorces and separations in both developed and developing countries involve women under the age of 35. Numerous factors are related to the likelihood of divorce and separation. One is age at marriage – those who marry at younger ages are more likely to part ways. Religious beliefs, ethnicity, and customs also affect the way in which marriage is perceived and, in turn, whether divorce is common. For instance, in countries where it is considered most desirable for a man to marry a woman who is a virgin, divorce rates are often low. This is due to the presence of a large number of divorced women being considered to be a source of significant social problems in these societies. Other influences on divorce rates include region of residence (rural or urban), educational level of the couple, kin networks, whether there are children, and whether the wife is employed (Amoateng and Heaton 1989).

Kippen et al. (2013:213) used the Household, Income and Labour Dynamics in Australia Survey to track married couples over six years to identify factors associated with marital instability. In testing the role of *homogamy* (similarity between partners) they found that 'concordance in age, education, preferences for future children and

smoking and drinking practices are associated with marital stability. Perhaps surprisingly, we find that differences in country of birth and religiosity are not associated with separation.' In addition, the following factors were associated with a higher rate of marital separation: dissatisfaction with the relationship; low household income; husband's unemployment and perceived financial stress; young age at marriage; separation of parents; second-plus marriage; and resident children born before marriage. Low household income was of particular interest since the government could intervene through social security and tax policy (Kippen et al. 2013:241).

In the study of marriage, an important distinction is made between first marriage and remarriage. In a first marriage, an individual changes from being single to being married; in remarriage, there is a change from being divorced or widowed to being married. Re-marriages are different from first marriages in a number of ways, including average ages and often the parenthood status of those marrying.

Widowhood

The death of one of the spouses also serves to dissolve a marriage; the surviving spouse is termed a widow (if a woman) or widower (if a man). In many countries, being widowed is much more likely to be experienced by women than by men. This is because women usually have lower mortality rates than men, and because women usually marry men older than themselves. In areas where this age difference is large, the chance that the wife will eventually become a widow is high.

Another factor that effects the gender distribution and number of widowed persons is remarriage patterns. In some societies, such as sub-Saharan Africa, remarriage of a widow to a member of her former husband's kin is almost automatic (McDonald 1985). In other societies, such as in South and East Asia, a widow generally does not remarry, although widowers often do. The extreme case of aversion to the remarriage of widows was the practice of *sati* in India, in which the widow was burned alive on the same funeral pyre as her deceased husband. This practice was outlawed by the British in India in 1829. Opposition to the remarriage of widows is prominent in societies which place a high value on the virginity of brides. Even in societies in which the remarriage of widowed women is quite acceptable, remarriage rates following widowhood are usually lower for women than for men and depend heavily upon age at the time of widowhood.

The number of dependent children that a widow brings to a potential marriage also affects her opportunities for re-marriage, in that women with higher numbers of small children are less likely to re-marry compared to widows with no children, or children who are of working age (Wrigley et al. 1997:178). A similar effect on marriage prospects of mothers caused by the presence of dependent children was observed in mothers of illegitimate children in the 18th and 19th centuries, whose likelihood of marriage decreased with increasing numbers of dependent children co-resident with them (Day 2013).

Measurement of the extent of widowhood is usually difficult because census

statistics normally only provide information on current marital status. Thus widows who have remarried cannot be counted as former widows. Therefore the proportion currently widowed is a poor index of the incidence of widowhood. Death registration statistics provide some indication of rates of widowhood. However, often such statistics do not include the age of the surviving spouse and this age must then be estimated from the age of the deceased person.

In a comparison of widowhood rates in 28 developing countries, the lowest widowhood rates were found in Latin America (Costa Rica, Panama, Venezuela) while the highest rates were found in Africa and Asia (Bangladesh, Senegal, Lesotho) (Smith et al. 1984). In these 28 countries, the proportion of women widowed in the first 10 years of marriage rarely exceeded 5%; in the first 20 years, the rates of widowhood were about 12% to 13%.

CHANGING PATTERNS OF MARRIAGE

The nature of marital unions is changing in most societies both in terms of timing and prevalence. In Africa, bridewealth is still very important but its form has been altered (Parkin and Nyamwaya 1989). In much of Asia, marriages were traditionally arranged by parents and families, but these systems have almost disappeared in East Asia and Southeast Asia over the last two generations. On the other hand, arranged marriages are still the norm in South Asia, particularly India and Pakistan (Jones 2018). Whilst the incidence of arranged marriages is not declining in India, it is changing, with more female participation in spouse choice, less cousin marriage and more intercaste marriage (Allendorf and Pandian 2016).

In Asia, particularly East and Southeast Asia, the prevalence of marriage is declining and the age of first marriage is rising (Jones and Gubhaju 2009). Divorce rates in Asia continue to rise, particularly in developed countries such as Japan, South Korea and Singapore (Jones 2018).

These changes in marital union trends point to one important conclusion: the number in any society who have a particular marital status is not based simply on demographic factors such as the age-sex structure and mortality patterns of a population. Instead, numerous other factors must be taken into account when examining marriage trends. Cultural factors and inheritance rules are critical influences on marriage patterns. The laws of a country have considerable effect on the timing and rates of marital unions and dissolutions, as do religious, economic, and development factors. Due to this wide range of factors affecting marital unions, and because of the consequences of changes in marriage trends on other demographic patterns, marriage trends have been referred to as pivotal in demographic change.

However, as indicated, the prevalence of formal marriage is in decline in almost every country, only the rate of decline differs. People have not stopped forming pairs and producing children, but have begun increasingly to turn to consensual unions, or marriage-like personal relationships that are not formally commenced with some kind of ceremony. The next chapter deals with these consensual unions and considers the issues for demographers related to measuring such unregulated activity.

Acknowledgements

Peter McDonald has kindly agreed to the use of material from his 1980 Chapter: McDonald, Peter, 1980. 'Marriage and Nuptiality', in D. Lucas et al. (eds), *Beginning Population Studies*, Development Studies Centre, Australian National University, Canberra:93-109.

This Chapter has also been informed by: VandenHeuvel, Audrey, and McDonald, Peter, 1994. 'Marriage and divorce', in D. Lucas and P. Meyer (eds), *Beginning Population Studies*, National Centre for Development Studies Centre, Australian National University, Canberra:69-90.

REFERENCES

- Allendorf, Keera and Pandian, Roshan, 2016. 'The decline of arranged marriage? Marital change and continuity in India', *Population and Development Review*, 42(3):435-464.
doi.org/10.1111/j.1728-4457.2016.00149.x
- Amoateng, Acheampong and Heaton, Tim, 1989. 'The sociodemographic correlates of the timing of divorce in Ghana', *Journal of Comparative Family Studies*, 20(1):79-96.
doi.org/10.3138/jcfs.20.1.79
- Arnold, Fred and Liu, Zhaoxiang, 1992. 'Sex preference, fertility and family planning in China', in D. Poston and D. Yaukey (eds), *The Population of Modern China*, Plenum Press, New York:491-523.
- Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2019. *3310.0 Marriages and Divorces, Australia, 2018*. Available at:
<https://www.abs.gov.au/statistics/people/people-and-communities/marriages-and-divorces-australia/latest-release>
- Bittles, Alan and Black, Michael, 2010. 'Consanguinity, human evolution, and complex diseases', *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences*, January 26, 107 (suppl 1):1779-1786.
doi.org/10.1073/pnas.0906079106
- Bittles, Alan, Savithri, H.S., Venkatesha Murthy, H.S., Baskaran, G., Wang, W., Cahill, J. et al., 2001. 'Human inbreeding: a familiar story full of surprises', in H. Macbeth and P. Shetty (eds) *Ethnicity and Health*, London: Taylor and Francis, London:68-78.
- Bogue, Donald, 1993. 'Marriage and nuptiality rates', in D. Bogue, E. Arriaga, and D. Anderton (eds), *Readings in Population Research Methodology*, Chicago Social Development Center for United Nations Population Fund, 1:2-7-2-8.
- Boserup, Ester, 1970. *Women's Role in Economic Development*, St Martin's Press, New York.
- Carmichael, Gordon 2016. *Fundamentals of Demographic Analysis: concepts, measures and methods*, Springer, New York.
- Cassidy, Margaret and Lee, Gary, 1989. 'The study of polyandry: a critique and synthesis', *Journal of Comparative Family Studies*, Spring, 20(1):1-11
- Chae, Sophia, 2016. 'Forgotten marriages? Measuring the reliability of marriage histories', *Demographic Research*, 34:525-562.
doi.org/10.4054/DemRes.2016.34.19
- Choe, Minja, Westley, Sidney, and Retherford, Robert, 2002. 'Tradition and change in marriage and family life', in *The Future of Population in Asia*, East-West Center, Honolulu:28-39.

- Central Intelligence Agency (CIA), 2020. *The World Fact Book*. Available at: https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/resources/the-world-factbook/geos/print_ch.html
- Cotran, Eugene, 1968. 'The changing nature of African marriage', in J.N.D. Anderson (ed.), *Family Law in Asia and Africa*, Allen and Unwin, London:15-33.
- Davis, Kingsley, 1985. 'The meaning and significance of marriage in contemporary society', in K. Davis (ed.), *Contemporary Marriage: comparative perspectives on a changing institution*, Russell Sage Foundation, New York:1-21.
- Day, Cathy, 2013. *Wiltshire Marriage Patterns 1754-1914: Geographical mobility, cousin marriage and illegitimacy*, Cambridge Scholars Publishing, Newcastle upon Tyne.
- Day, Cathy and Smith, Malcolm, 2012. 'Cousin marriage in south-western England in the nineteenth century', *Journal of Biosocial Science* 45(3):405 – 414. doi.org/10.1017/S0021932012000491
- European Commission Eurostat, 2018. Available at: [https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php?title=File:Crude_divorce_rate,selected_years_1960-2017\(per_1_000_persons\).png](https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php?title=File:Crude_divorce_rate,selected_years_1960-2017(per_1_000_persons).png)
- Fenske, James, 2015. 'African polygamy: past and present', *Journal of Development Economics*, 117:58–73. doi.org/10.1016/j.jideveco.2015.06.005
- Glass, David and Blacker, C.P., 1938. *Population and Fertility*, Population Investigation Committee, London.
- Goodale, Jane, 1962. 'Marriage Contracts among the Tiwi', *Ethnology*, 1(4): 452-466. doi.org/10.2307/3772851
- Grebenik, Eugene and Hill, Althea, 1974. *International Demographic Terminology: fertility, family planning, and nuptiality*, International Union for the Scientific Study of Population, Liege.
- Hajnal, John, 1965. 'European marriage patterns in perspective', in D. Glass and D. Eversley (eds), *Population in History*, Arnold, London:101-42.
- Ihinger-Tallman, Marilyn and Levison, David 2003. 'Marriage, definition of', in J.Ponzetti (ed.), *International Encyclopedia of Marriage and Family*, Macmillan, New York, 3:1094-1098.

MARRIAGE

- Jacoby, Hanan, 1995. 'The economics of polygyny in Sub-Saharan Africa: female productivity and the demand for wives in Côte d'Ivoire', *Journal of Political Economy*. 103 (5): 938–971.
- Jones, Gavin, 2018. 'Changing marriage patterns in Asia'. *Routledge Handbook of Asian Demography*, Routledge, Oxford.
- Jones, Gavin and Gubhaju, Bina, 2009. 'Factors influencing changes in mean age at first marriage and proportions never marrying in the low- fertility countries of East and Southeast Asia', *Asian Population Studies*, 5(3): 237– 265.
doi.org/10.1080/17441730903351487
- Kippen, Rebecca, Chapman, Bruce, Yu, Peng and Lounkaew, Kiatanantha, 2013. 'What's love got to do with it? Homogamy and dyadic approaches to understanding marital instability', *Journal of Population Research*, 30(3):213-247.
- Lesthaeghe, Ron, 2014. 'The second demographic transition: a concise overview of its development', *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences*, 111 (51):18112-18115.
doi.org/10.1073/pnas.1420441111
- Levine, Nancy and Sangree, Walter, 1980. 'Conclusion: Asian and African systems of polyandry', *Journal of Comparative Family Studies*, 11(3):385-410.
doi.org/10.3138/jcfs.11.3.385
- McDonald, Peter, 1985. 'Social organisation and nuptiality in developing societies', in J. Cleland and J. Hobcraft (eds), *Reproductive Change in Developing Countries*, Oxford University Press, Oxford:87-114.
- Nakamura, Hisako, 2006. *Conditional Divorce in Indonesia*, Harvard Law School, Occasional Publications, July.
- Parkin, David and Nyamwaya, David, 1989. 'Transformations of African marriage: change and choice', in D. Parkin and D. Nyamwaya (eds), *Transformations of African Marriage*, Manchester University Press, Manchester:1-34.
- Rowland, Donald, 2003. *Demographic Methods and Concepts*. Oxford University Press, Oxford.
- Shryock, Henry and Siegel, Jacob, 1976. *The Methods and Materials of Demography*, Academic Press, New York.
- Smith, David, Carrasco, Enrique and McDonald, Peter, 1984. 'Marriage Dissolution and Remarriage', *WFS Comparative Studies* 34, International Statistical Institute, Voorburg, Netherlands.
- Starkweather, Katherine and Hames, Raymond, 2012. 'A Survey of Non-Classical Polyandry', *Human Nature*. 23(2):149-172.
doi.org/10.1007/s12110-012-9144-x
- Tambiah, Stanley, Goheen, Mitzi, Gottlieb, Alma, Guyer, Jane, Olson, Emelie, Piot,

Charles, Van Der Veen, Klaas and Vuyk, Trudeke, 1989. 'Bridewealth and dowry revisited: the position of women in Sub-Saharan Africa and North India', *Current Anthropology*, 30(4):413-26.

Unicef, 2020 'Child marriage'. Available at:
<https://data.unicef.org/topic/child-protection/child-marriage/>

United Nations, 1988. *First Marriage: patterns and determinants*, United Nations, New York.

United Nations, 2017 Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Population Division *World Marriage Data 2017* (POP/DB/Marr/Rev2017). Available at:
<https://www.un.org/en/development/desa/population/theme/marriage-unions/WMD2017.asp>

van de Walle, Etienne, 1972. 'Marriage and marital fertility', in D. Glass and R. Revelle (eds), *Population and Social Change*, Arnold, London:137-51.

Ware, Helen, 1975. *The demography of polygyny*, Department of Demography, The Australian National University, Canberra.

Wrigley, Edward Anthony, Davies, Ros, Oeppen, Jim and Schofield, Roger, 1997. *English Population History from Family Reconstitution 1580-1837*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, Cambridge.