

Marriages, separations and divorces

Year 2015

In 2015, there were 194,377 marriages in Italy, about 4,600 more than 2014. It was the most consistent increase since 2008. In the period 2008-2014, weddings declined by an average of almost 10 thousand per year.

The slight increase in the number of marriages was partially due to the increase of first weddings between Italian partners, that were 144,819 in 2015, approximately 2 thousand more than 2014. From 2008 to 2014 there was a decline of more than 40,000 first weddings between Italian partners accounting for 76% of the total fall in marriages observed in that period.

The first marriage rates increased as well, in 2015 there were 429 first marriages per 1,000 men and 474 per 1,000 women (-20% compared to 2008 rates). The mean age at first marriage was 35 for men and 32 for women (that is nearly two years older compared to 2008).

33,579 second or subsequent marriages occurred in 2015, almost 3 thousand more than in 2014 (with an increase of 9%). Their proportion in all marriages reached 17%.

88 thousand civil ceremonies took place in 2015 and they accounted for 45.3% of all marriages in the same year. Civil weddings registered an increase of 8% compared to 2014 while religious ceremonies continued to decline. This increase was mainly due to second or subsequent marriages. Nevertheless civil ceremonies are becoming increasingly popular for marriages with both Italian partners marrying for the first time (30% in 2015 compared to 20% in 2008).

Marriages with at least one foreign spouse were about 24 thousand (12.4% of all 2015 weddings), 200 fewer than in 2014.

2015 data about marital disruption reflected the impact of recent changes in the regulations. In particular, the introduction of the so called "fast divorce Law" caused a considerable increase in the number of divorces (82,469 compared to 52,355 of the previous year with an increase of 57%). The growth in the number of legal separations was less relevant (91,706 with an increase equal to 2.7% compared to 2014).

As a consequence of the introduction of the extrajudicial agreements for consensual separations and divorces, 27,040 divorces (32.8% of 2015 divorces) and 17,668 separations (19.3% of 2015 separations) were defined at the civil registry offices.

The average length of marriages ending in legal separation was approximately 17 years. The proportion of long-term marriages ended in separation had almost doubled in the last two decades (from 11.3% of 1995 to 23.5% of 2015).

In 2015 the average age at legal separation was 48 for men and 45 for women. The largest age group was between 40 and 44 years for wives (18,631 separations, 20.3% of the total) while for husbands was that between 45 and 49 years (18,055, 19.7%).

The propensity to experience legal separation in religious marriages was stable over time and lower than in civil marriages. After ten years of marriage survivor religious weddings were almost the same for 1995 and 2005 marriage cohorts (respectively 911 and 914 per 1000 marriages) while survivor civil marriages were equal to 861 for 1995 marriage cohort and to 841 for 2005 one.

In 2015, 89% of separations with children in custody was with joint custody; only 8.9% was with custody exclusively to the mother. This was the only relevant result of the application of the Law 54/2006 that introduced the joint custody as the preferred model. For instance family house assigned to wives in 2005 was 57.4% while in 2015 this proportion increased (60%).

As regards economical provisions, the proportion of maintenance for children paid by father was stable over time (94% of separations with maintenance for children). There were therefore no clear signals of a real application of the provisions that give the possibility to implement a direct support for expense items of children to the detriment of the traditional periodical support.

SUMMARY TABLE 1. MAIN CHARACTERISTICS OF MARRIAGES, SEPARATIONS AND DIVORCES. 2008, 2010, 2012, 2014 and 2015

	2008	2010	2012	2014	2015
Total marriages (absolute values)	246,613	217,700	207,138	189,765	194,377
First marriages among Italian partners (absolute values)	185,749	168,610	153,311	142,754	144,819
First marriages among Italian partners with civil ceremony (per 100 first marriages)	20.0	22.1	24.5	28.1	30.2
Marriages with at least one foreign partner (absolute values)	36,918	25,082	30,724	24,230	24,018
First marriage rate - males (per 1.000 males)	536.2	482.9	463.5	421.1	429.5
First marriage rate - females (per 1.000 females)	594.3	532.9	510.6	463.4	474.6
Marriages with civil ceremony (per 100 total marriages)	36.8	36.5	41.0	43.1	45.3
Separations (absolute values)	84,165	88,191	88,288	89,303	91,706
Total separation rate (per 1000 marriages)	286.2	307.1	310.6	319.5	339.8
Separation with minor children (%)	52.3	49.4	48.7	52.8	53.6
Divorce (absolute values)	54,351	54,160	51,319	52,355	82,469
Total divorce rate (per 1.000 marriages)	178.8	181.7	173.5	180.1	297.3
Divorce with minor children (%)	37.4	33.1	33.1	32.6	40.5

FIGURE 1. FIRST MARRIAGES (CIVIL CEREMONIES) BETWEEN ITALIAN PARTNERS BY REGION OF RESIDENCE OF THE BRIDE AND MARRIAGES WITH AT LEAST ONE FOREIGN SPOUSE. 2015, %

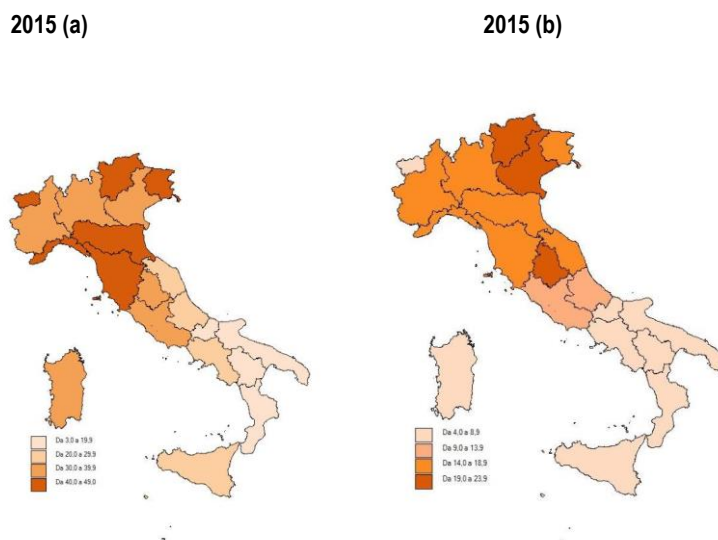
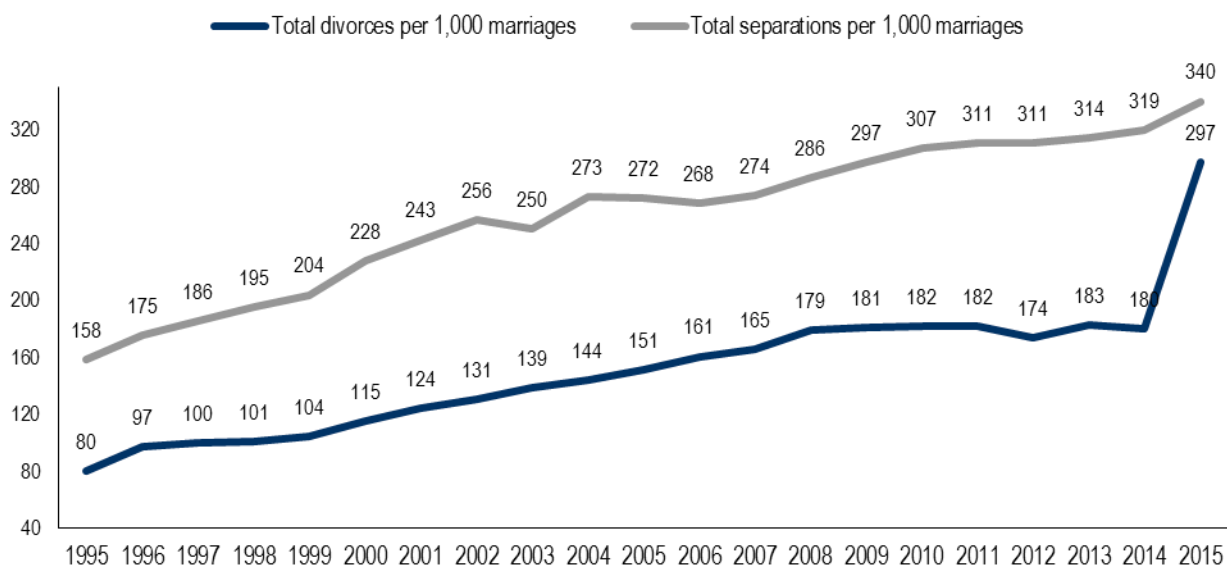


FIGURE 2. AVERAGE NUMBER OF SEPARATIONS AND DIVORCES PER 1,000 MARRIAGES
1995-2015, total separation and divorce rates



For more details please refer to the Italian version

Contact persons:

Sabrina Prati (prati@istat.it)

phone +39 06 4673.7337

Maura Simone (simone@istat.it)

phone +39 06 4673.7588

Istat – National Institute of Statistics

Viale Liegi, 14 – Rome 00198 Italy

Glossary

Absolute change. Difference between the total of a phenomenon at the end of the period considered and the one at the beginning.

Average annual percentage change (or average annual rate of change). Obtained by dividing the percentage change, with reference to a multi-year time period, by the number of years in the period.

Average duration of marriage. The difference, in completed years, between the date on which separation proceedings (or divorce proceedings) are filed and the date of marriage.

Consensual separation. Based on an agreement between the spouses which establishes the rules for custody of children, any family allowances and division of property. As a consequence of the provisions relating to legal separation and divorce by Articles 6 and 12 of Decree Law 132/2014, two new cases are being introduced for those who intend to separate by mutual consent as an alternative to the traditional ratification by the court: lawyer assisted negotiation (art. 6); agreement before the civil registrar in the absence of patrimonial issues and underage children, or adult children who are legally incompetent, severely handicapped or not economically self-sufficient (Art. 12).

Custody of minor children. Custody of minor children in separation or divorce proceedings until 15th March 2006 was governed by the Civil Code (article 155) and by Law no. 898 of 01st December 1970 as amended by Law no. 74 of 06 March 1987 (article 6). Law no. 54 of 08th February 2006 (in force since 16th March 2006) established that, in separation and divorce cases, the judge's priority must be to assess the possibility of awarding joint custody of minor children to both parents or establish which parent should be awarded custody, ruling on schedules and rules regarding their presence with each parent, as well as setting to what extent and in what way each of them must contribute to their maintenance, care, schooling and education. The judge also takes into consideration any agreements that have been made between the parents – if these are not against the interests of the children – and adopts any other measures regarding the children.

Divorce. The annulment and termination of the civil effects of marriages in the case, respectively, of marriages celebrated with a civil ceremony or marriages celebrated with a religious ceremony. Divorce was introduced in Italy by Law no. 898 of 01st December 1970; Law no. 74 of 06th March 1987 reduced the number of years required for the divorce judgment to be issued from five to three; Law 55/2015 further reduced the period to six months if the divorce is based on mutually-requested separation and to twelve months if the divorce is based on a judicial separation.

First marriage. Marriage in which the marital status of the bride/groom at the moment of the wedding is single.

First-marriage index (or rate). Sum of specific marriage-rate ratios calculated from the ratio, for each age class, of the number of first marriages to the average total annual population.

Judicial separation. Actual legal proceedings initiated at the request of one of the two spouses, the subsequent case and pronouncement of separation judgment.

Marriage rate (ratio). Ratio between number of marriages celebrated in a year and average total resident population (per 1000).

Marriage rite. Marriages can be celebrated before a registrar, a Catholic minister or minister of one of the other religions recognised by the Italian State. In the latter case, the marriage may in any case produce civil effects (termed *matrimonio concordatario*, that is, a marriage contracted in keeping with the Concordat).

Mean age at first marriage. It is the mean age of men or women at first marriage if subject throughout their lives to the age-specific marriage rates of first marriages only in a given year.

Mixed marriage. Celebration in which one of the two partners has foreign citizenship and the other has Italian citizenship.

Percentage change. The ratio between the absolute change and the initial total. It is then multiplied by 100.

Property regime. Marriage automatically establishes the property regime of community of property (legal community of property), introduced by the family law reform of 1975. With the separation of property regime (article 215, Civil Code), in contrast, each partner retains exclusive ownership of any property acquired during the marriage.

Simple index number. An index number is a number that expresses the change in intensity of a given phenomenon in different circumstances. A simple index number is the ratio between two numbers. The number placed as the denominator is called the index base.

Specific separation (or divorce) rates by duration of marriage. Calculated as the ratio between the number of separations or divorces recorded during a calendar year t alongside each duration x of the marriage and the number of marriages celebrated $t-x$ years previously (i.e. the cohort of marriages of time $t-x$). They measure the proportion of marriages celebrated in year $t-x$ which end in separation or divorce after a duration of $(t-x)$ years.

Total separation (or divorce) rate. The indicator obtained from the sum, in relation of the durations of marriages, of the specific separation or divorce rates described in the preceding entry. The sum expresses the proportion of marriages that end in separation or divorce during a calendar year t . It may also be defined as average number of separations or divorces per 1,000 marriages.

Methodological note

Marriages

The survey of marriages from registry office sources was established by Istat in 1926. The subject of the survey, which is individual and exhaustive, is all marriages of the present population, and makes it possible to analyse the phenomenon of the marriage rate in relation to the main socio-demographic characteristics of the partners.

Conduction of the survey is based on the Istat D.3 form completed by the registrar of the municipality in which the marriage was celebrated.

The form is divided into two parts: information about the marriage and information about the partners. For each event, in the section dedicated to the marriage, the following information is collected: date, type of ceremony (religious or civil), municipality of marriage and property regime chosen by the couple (community or separation of property). Information collected for each partner regards: date of birth, municipality of birth, municipality of residence at time of marriage, couple's future place of residence, previous marital status, level of education, occupational status, position within profession, branch of economic activity, and citizenship.

The most recent changes to the form were made in 1995, with the addition of the variable regarding property regime and in 1997 with more precise information regarding citizenship, asking in the case of Italian citizenship whether this is by birth or acquired.

The release of the main statistical information takes place ever more promptly following the date of the event to which it refers. For this purpose the information contained in Form D.7.A. (survey of demographic events by registry office records) is also processed, providing – on a monthly basis and by the municipality in which the event occurred – the number of religious and civil marriages (provisional data, subject to correction when data from the individual surveys is made available).

The data collected through the survey were published for a long time jointly with information on separations and dissolutions and terminations of the civil effects of the marriage. In the Istat Yearbook *Matrimoni, separazioni e divorzi (Marriages, Separations and Divorces)*, published up until the 2003 survey year, the main summary indicators are published, compared yearly with the preceding four-year period, and a series of analytical tables at the national and provincial geographical levels. Summary data are also published (at the regional level) in the *Annuario statistico italiano (Italian Statistical Yearbook)* and in the volumes *Italia in cifre (Italy in Figures)* and *Noi Italia*.

The main results are available online by consulting the I.Stat datawarehouse at <http://dati.istat.it/> and Demo, the topic-based system, at <http://demo.istat.it/altridati/matrimoni/>.

Legal separation and divorces

Every year Istat publishes the main results of its surveys of separations and divorces conducted at the registries of the civil courts, collecting data concerning every single procedure which was concluded in judicial terms during the reference year.

Since 2013 data on separation and divorces are estimated by exploiting both the Istat surveys and the information collected by the competent courts and published by the Ministry of Justice.

As a consequence of the introduction of the extrajudicial agreements for consensual separations and divorces, in 2015 for the first year Istat disseminates data collected with a new information flow created with the civil registrar offices. These new data refer in particular to the two new cases introduced for those who intend to separate by mutual consent as an alternative to the traditional ratification by the court: lawyer assisted negotiation (art. 6); agreement before the civil registrar in the absence of patrimonial issues and underage children, or adult children who are legally incompetent, severely handicapped or not economically self-sufficient (Art. 12).

These data make it possible to update trends in the two phenomena over time and monitor their main characteristics: the duration of marriages and the age of spouses upon separation, the type and duration of proceedings, the number of children involved and custody of minors.

In-depth datasets with the main results of surveys on separations and divorces are available in Excel format in the data warehouse I.Stat (<http://dati.istat.it/>) and at <http://demo.istat.it> in the “Other data” section.