

Marriages, separations and divorces

Year 2014

In 2014, there were 189,765 marriages in Italy, about 4,300 fewer than in 2013. This decrease is part of a downward trend in marriages: in the 2009-2014 period there was a decline of nearly 57,000 weddings. However, the 2014 drop is the least pronounced since 2008.

The decrease in the number of marriages is mainly due to the decline of first weddings between Italian partners that were 145,571 in 2014, approximately 40,000 fewer in the last five years. This difference accounts for 76% of the total fall in marriages between 2009 and 2014.

The drop in marriages is partially due to the decline in the absolute number of young adults. The latter is in turn attributable to the sharp reduction in fertility occurred after the 1970s. Young Italians aged 16-34 accounted for less than 11 million in 2014 (-1.3 million compared to 2008).

In 2014 the marriage rates declined as well. In particular the first marriage rate was 421 per 1,000 men and 463 per 1,000 women. Compared to 2008 it has declined by close to 18.7% and 20.2% respectively in relative terms. This drop was even more noticeable (25%) if we consider first marriages among people aged up to 35 years.

Men and women are getting married increasingly later in life. In 2014, the mean age at first marriage was 34 for men and 31 for women (that is one year older compared to 2008).

30,638 second or subsequent marriages took place in 2014. Even if their number declined slightly compared to the previous year, the share of second and subsequent marriages in all marriages has risen from 13.8% in 2008 to 16.2%.

Civil ceremonies accounted for 43% of all marriages in 2014. Both in the North and in the Centre areas of Italy, civil marriages exceeded those with religious ceremonies, respectively 55% and 51%. Civil ceremonies are becoming increasingly popular for marriages with both Italian partners marrying for the first time (28.1%).

Marriages with at least one foreign spouse are about 24 thousand (12.8% of all weddings). Their decline is due to the decrease of marriages involving foreign partners.

Marriages where one partner is Italian and the other is a foreign citizen represent the prevalent type of mixed marriage (78% of marriages with at least one foreign spouse) and amount to 17,506 in 2014. The vast majority of mixed marriages involved foreign brides marrying Italian men. One out of two foreign brides comes from Eastern Europe.

According to the most recent data, marital disruption is roughly stable over time. In 2014 there were 89,303 legal separations (+0.5% compared to 2013) and 52,335 divorces (-0.6% compared to 2013).

72.3% legally separated and 64.6% of divorced couples had one or more children. 89.4% of parents agree to have joint custody of their children after legal separation.

The average length of marriage ending in legal separation is 16 years and the trend towards marital disruption intensifies with more recent marriages. Marriages ended in separation within 10 years have almost doubled. They were 4.5% of all marriages celebrated in 1985, compared to 11% of those celebrated in 2005.

The average age at legal separation is 47 for men and 44 for women, while that of people divorcing was 48 and 45 respectively. The average age at union disruption continues to rise, and much of this trend appears due to the postponement of marriage to later ages. It is worth noting the increase of legal separation with at least one partner over 60 (7.5% in 2014).

The dynamics of nuptiality and marital disruption varies greatly from region to region. Their analysis strongly suggests the presence of a geographical gradient, with first marriages with civil ceremony among Italian couples, legal separations and divorces more common in the more secularised regions in the North area than in the South and Islands areas.

SUMMARY TABLE 1. MAIN CHARACTERISTICS OF MARRIAGES, SEPARATIONS AND DIVORCES. 2008, 2010, 2012, 2013 and 2014

	2008	2010	2012	2013	2014
Total marriages (absolute values)	246,613	217,700	207,138	194,057	189,765
First marriages among Italian partners (absolute values)	185,749	168,610	153,311	145,571	142,754
First marriages among Italian partners with civil ceremony (per 100 first marriages)	20.0	22.1	24.5	27.3	28.1
Marriages with at least one foreign partner (absolute values)	36,918	25,082	30,724	26,080	24,230
First marriage rate - males (per 1.000 males)	518.1	461.9	460.0	431.6	421.1
First marriage rate - females (per 1.000 females)	580.4	516.6	506.9	475.5	463.4
Marriages with civil ceremony (per 100 total marriages)	36.8	36.5	41.0	42.5	43.1
Separations (absolute values)	84,165	88,191	88,288	88,886	89,303
Total separation rate (per 1.000 marriages)	286.2	307.1	310.6	314.0	319.5
Separation with minor children (%)	52.3	49.4	48.7	51.9	52.8
Divorce (absolute values)	54,351	54,160	51,319	52,943	52,355
Total divorce rate (per 1.000 marriages)	178.8	181.7	173.5	182.6	180.1
Divorce with minor children (%)	37.4	33.1	33.1	34.8	32.6

FIGURE 1. AVERAGE NUMBER OF SEPARATIONS AND DIVORCES PER 1,000 MARRIAGES

1995-2014, total separation and divorce rates

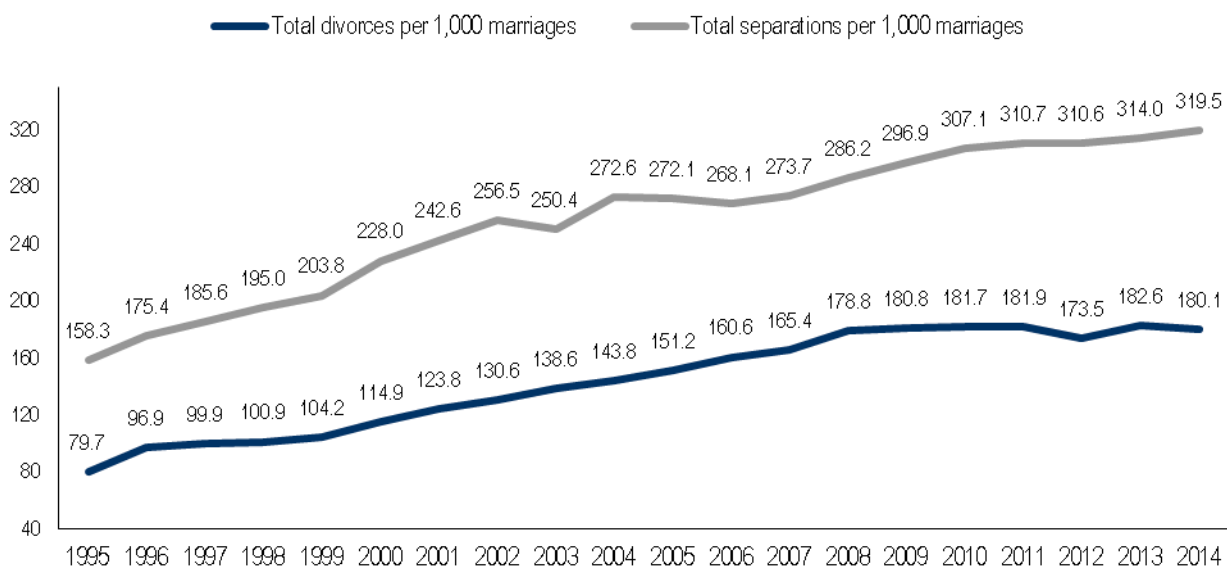


FIGURE 2. POPULATION PYRAMID BY AGE AT MARRIAGE AND AT SEPARATION. Years 2000 and 2014, %

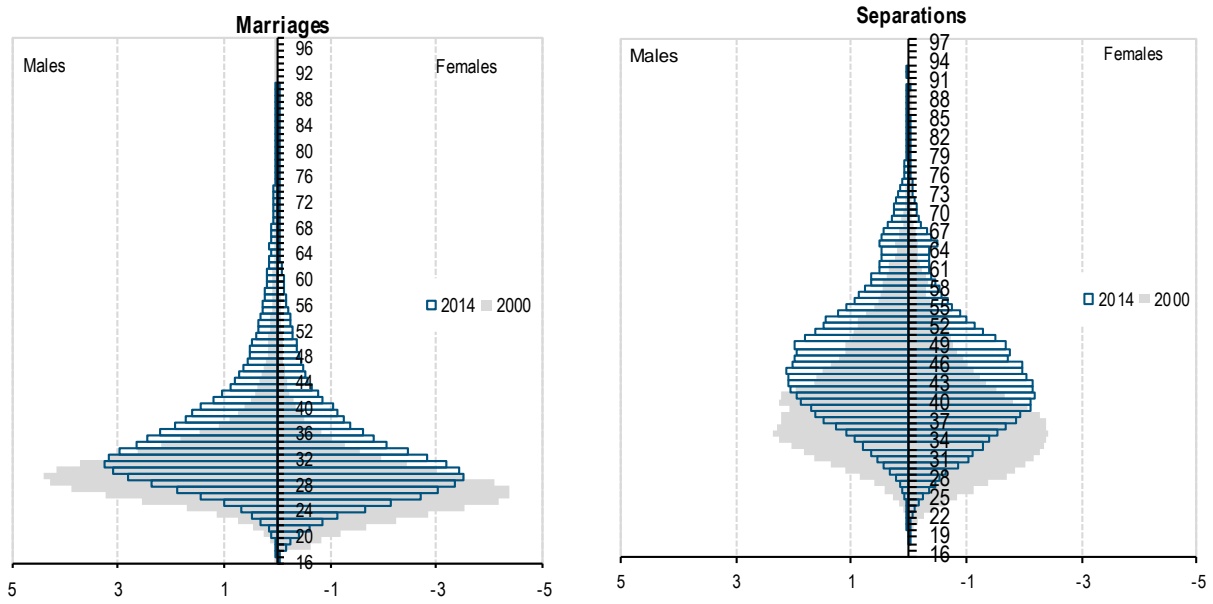


FIGURE 3. FIRST MARRIAGES (CIVIL CEREMONIES) BETWEEN ITALIAN PARTNERS BY REGION OF RESIDENCE OF THE BRIDE. 1995 and 2014, %

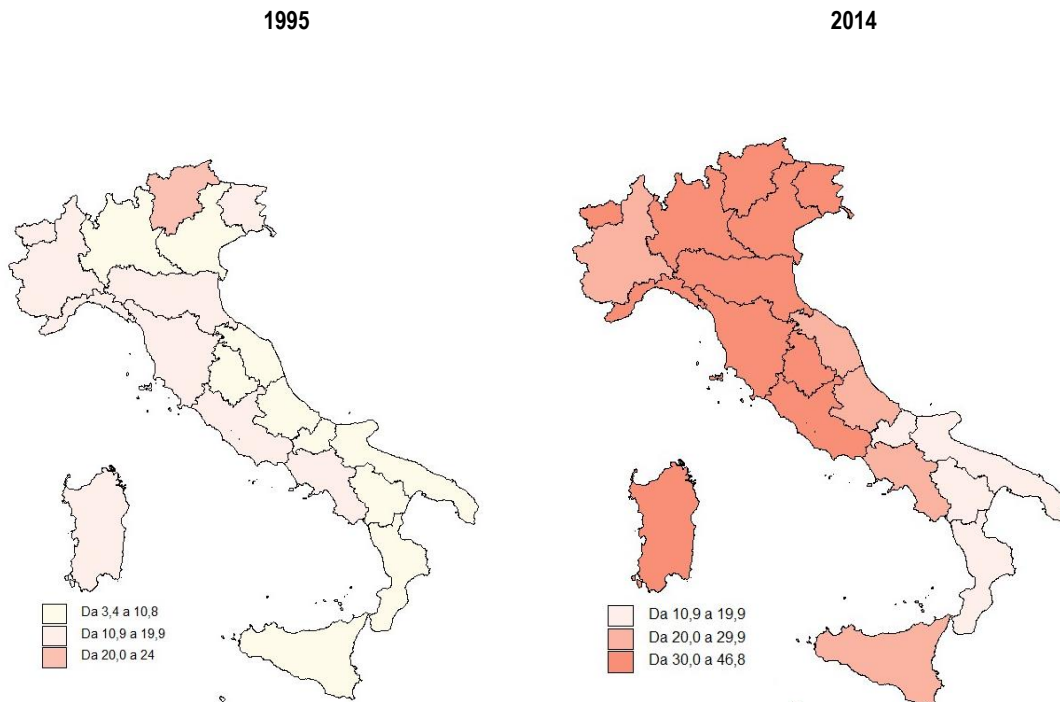
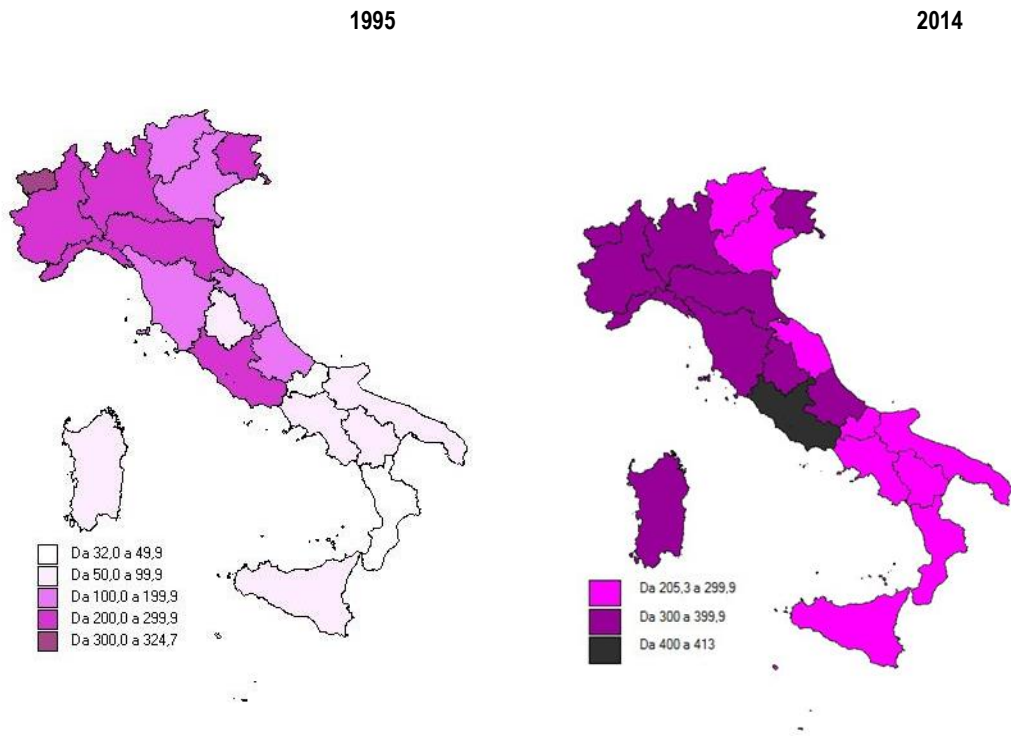


FIGURE 4. AVERAGE NUMBER OF SEPARATIONS PER 1,000 MARRIAGES BY REGION. 1995 and 2014 (total separation rates)



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. In order to have legal validity it must be ratified by the judge.

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 06th 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.

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.

Marital status. The condition of each citizen in relation to their status concerning marriage.

- Single: a male or female citizen who has never entered into marriage.
- Married: a married citizen who has not obtained the dissolution or termination of the civil effects of the marriage.
- Divorced: a married citizen who has obtained the dissolution or termination of the civil effects of the marriage.
- Widow/Widower: a citizen whose marriage has ended due to the death of her/his partner.

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.

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.

From 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.

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.

For more details please refer to the Italian version

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