

3. GENERAL CONTEXT INDICATORS

Family

The number of adults in a household illustrates additional information about household composition and how people live together, while indicators on marriage and divorce reflect on “adult partnership” status.

Marriage is the most common form of adult partnership in the OECD as a whole (Figure 3.8). There are, however, large differences across countries. The share of married adults is highest in Japan and Turkey where more than 65% were married in 2012. The share is lowest in Chile and Estonia where only about 40% were married. The share of cohabitation is generally high in countries with low marriage rates. In Estonia, Iceland and Sweden, about one in five adults cohabited with a domestic partner.

The share of single/never been married also varies greatly across countries. In Chile and Korea, close to four out of ten adults were single/had never been married. In Estonia, Hungary and the United Kingdom this share was close to one out of five.

Measurable changes in family patterns and the breakdown of families may, however, not be immediately observable. In a long run perspective, marriage rates have dropped significantly (Figure 3.9). Both the level of and change in divorce rates differ across countries (Figure 3.10), but in a long run perspective, back to 1970, divorce rates have increased significantly. Overall, it is difficult to gauge the effect of the crisis on family breakdown. Economic stress may lead to family breakdown and more divorces, but due to the increased economic costs of divorce and the greater income potential for couples, these factors may also account for a decrease in the number of divorces.

As a result of changing partnership patterns and lower fertility rates, the share of households without, or with only one or two children has increased. Children today are also more likely to live with just one parent. This can change the role of family as a safety network. The share of multi-generational households varies across the OECD area, but **on average, there is no observed correlation between change in GDP and change in the number of people above the age of 15 in the household over the period 2007 to 2012.**

The family structure varies across the emerging economies. While more than 70% of the adult population are married in China, India and Indonesia, the share is close to 25% in South Africa (Figure 3.8). Only Argentina and Brazil have shares of cohabitation above the OECD average. The Russian Federation has a divorce rate of 9% which is higher than all of the OECD countries except for the Czech Republic and Finland.

Definition and measurement

Data on household structure are drawn from the Gallup World Poll. The Gallup World Poll is conducted in more than 150 countries around the world based on a common questionnaire, translated into the predominant languages of each country. With few exceptions, all samples are probability based and nationally representative of the resident population aged 15 years and over in the entire country, including rural areas. While this ensures a high degree of comparability across countries, results may be affected by sampling and non-sampling error, variation in response rates. Sample sizes vary between around 1 000 and 4 000, depending on the country and data should be interpreted carefully. These probability surveys are valid within a statistical margin of error, also called a 95% confidence interval. This means that if the survey is conducted 100 times using the exact same procedures, the margin of error would include the “true value” in 95 out of the 100 surveys. With a sample size of 1 000 the margin of error for at 50% is ± 3 percentage points. Because these surveys use a clustered sample design, the margin of error varies by question.

Respondents aged 15 years and over are asked to reply to the following question ie. What is your current marital status? The categories are self-assessed by the respondent.

Marriages and divorces rates are taken from OECD *Family Database*. The crude marriage rate is the number of marriages formed each year as a ratio to 1 000 people. This measure disregards other formal cohabitation contracts and informal partnerships. The crude divorce rate expresses the ratio of the number of marriages which are dissolved in a given year to the average population in that year. The value is given per 1 000 inhabitants. For more information, www.oecd.org/social/family/database.

Further reading

OECD (2013a), *OECD Family Database*, www.oecd.org/social/family/database.

OECD (2013b), “Changes in Family Policies and Outcomes in EU and OECD Countries: Is There Convergence”, OECD Publishing, Paris, forthcoming.

United Nations (2011), *UN Demographic Yearbook 2011*, Washington, DC.

Figure note

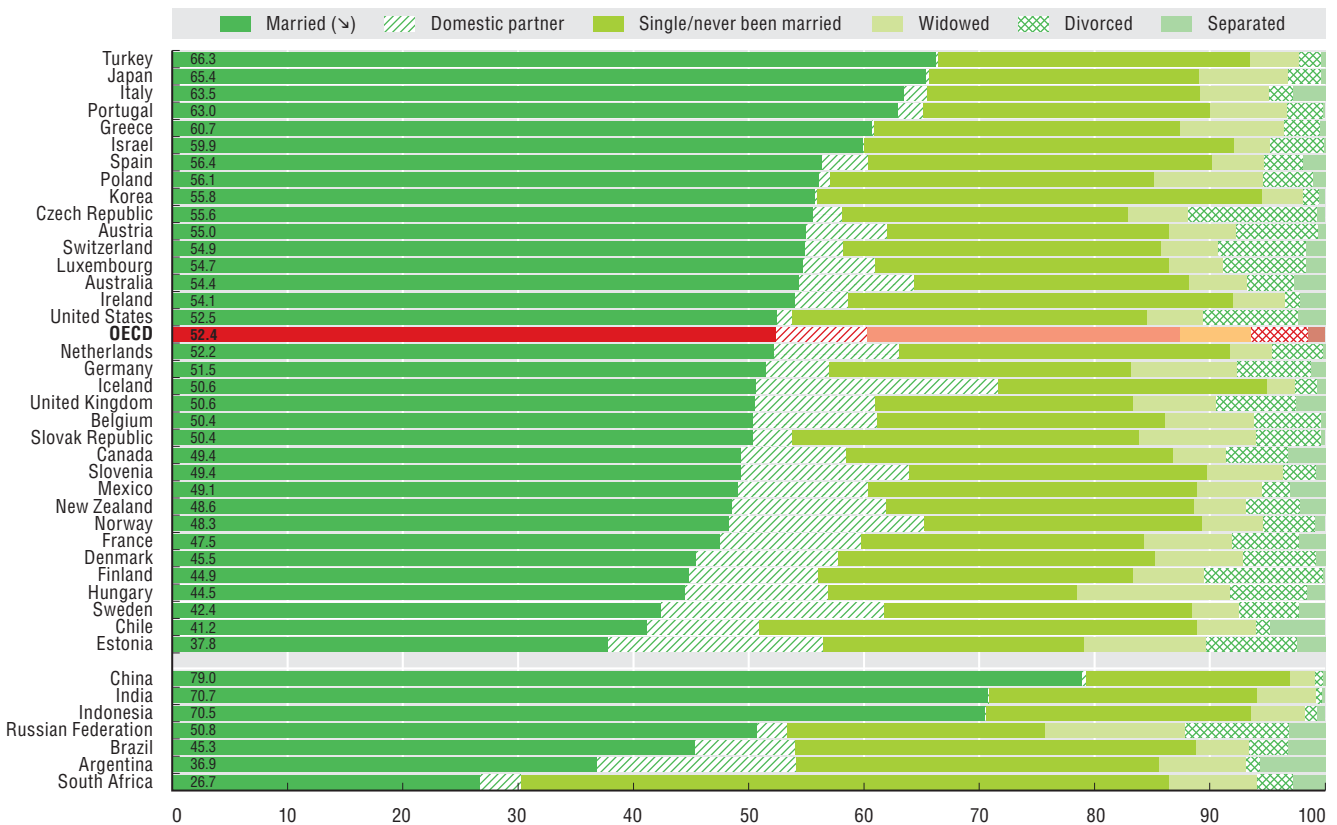
Figure 3.8: Data for Chile refer to 2011.

Figure 3.9: No data for Turkey in 1970.

Information on data for Israel: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/888932315602>.

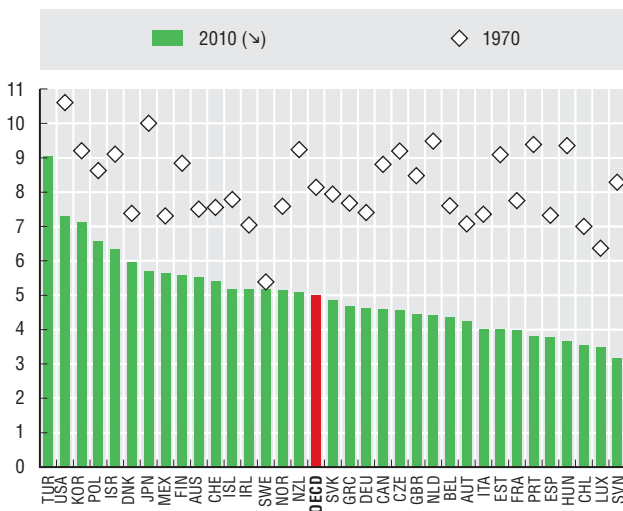
3.8. Large differences in households composition

Proportion of respondents aged 15 and over by relationship status, 2012, percentages sorted by married



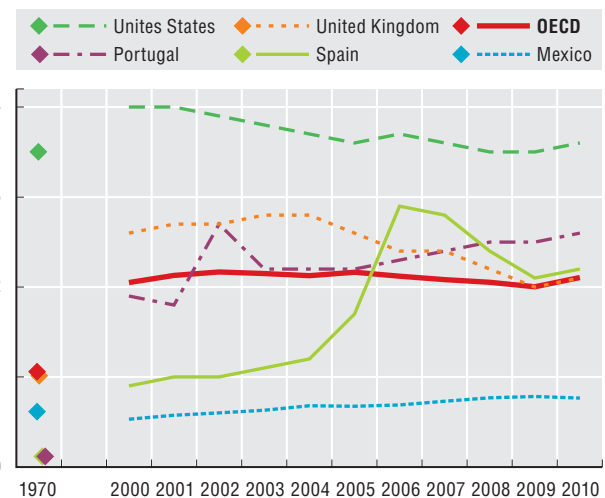
3.9. Marriage rates have decreased in the last four decades

Number of marriages formed each year as a ratio to 1 000 people (crude marriage rate) in 1970 and 2010



3.10. Divorces slightly picked up during the crisis in some countries

Number of divorces per 1 000 population (crude divorce rate), selected countries, 1970 and 2000-10



Source: Gallup World Poll (www.gallup.com), OECD Family Database as in September 2013 (www.oecd.org/social/family/database), UN Demographic Yearbook 2011.

StatLink <http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/888932966333>



From:
Society at a Glance 2014
OECD Social Indicators

Access the complete publication at:
https://doi.org/10.1787/soc_glance-2014-en

Please cite this chapter as:

OECD (2014), "Family", in *Society at a Glance 2014: OECD Social Indicators*, OECD Publishing, Paris.

DOI: https://doi.org/10.1787/soc_glance-2014-10-en

This work is published under the responsibility of the Secretary-General of the OECD. The opinions expressed and arguments employed herein do not necessarily reflect the official views of OECD member countries.

This document and any map included herein are without prejudice to the status of or sovereignty over any territory, to the delimitation of international frontiers and boundaries and to the name of any territory, city or area.

You can copy, download or print OECD content for your own use, and you can include excerpts from OECD publications, databases and multimedia products in your own documents, presentations, blogs, websites and teaching materials, provided that suitable acknowledgment of OECD as source and copyright owner is given. All requests for public or commercial use and translation rights should be submitted to rights@oecd.org. Requests for permission to photocopy portions of this material for public or commercial use shall be addressed directly to the Copyright Clearance Center (CCC) at info@copyright.com or the Centre français d'exploitation du droit de copie (CFC) at contact@cfcopies.com.