

# Households

## Marriages

The figures on marriages are based both on the monthly summary survey of demographic events gathered by the registry office and on the individual marriage data, gathered at municipal level by the local civil records offices.

The monthly summary survey was first conducted in 1862. At the beginning, the statistics on marriages were based “sometimes on the data sent by the ministries of the individual religions and sometimes, on those collected by civil status Officials”<sup>1</sup> and sent to the prefectures who in turn, through a process that has remained partly unaltered to the present day, forwarded them to a central body aimed at collecting demographic statistics. For the first decades, the latter role was played by the General Statistics Division of the Ministry of Agriculture, Industry and Commerce while since 1926 this role was played by ISTAT. Starting from 1863, in addition to the number of marriages by month of celebration, the distribution of marriages by couple’s civil status was also published, although only on a national level, and – since 1865 – also by age. The first figures relating to the couple’s ability to sign the marriage certificate, a crucial indicator of illiteracy in Italy, were published in 1867.<sup>2</sup>

The first edition of the individual survey on marriages dates back to 1883. This survey made information on the spouses ever more accurate and more details on marriages were published, as the figures were made available at department level (modern-day regions) and, afterward, by provinces. Over the course of time the survey has also been extended to include information on the demographic characteristics of the couple; for some periods of varying lengths, moreover, information was provided on their religion, consanguinity and their ability to sign the certificate.

Concerning the marriage rite, it should be remembered that during the first years following national unification, marriage was disciplined by the legislation in force in the various States that composed Italy, and a coherent legislative order was not introduced until the first Civil Code of the Kingdom of Italy (1st January 1866). According to the new legislation and until 1929, civil marriage only had legal effects for the couples. The validity of the legal effects of Catholic marriage was recognised following the Lateran Treaty, and the distinction between religious and civil weddings began from 1930 onwards.<sup>3</sup>

The setup of the current surveys on marriages is only slightly different from the past: the modern-day surveys still cover the entire population, the municipality is still the territorial base unit of reference and prefectures still act as an intermediate stage in data collection. However, the contents have been extended and the transmission methods have changed. The individual data form now contains numerous information such as spouses’ level of education, their professional status, position and branch of economic activity and their demographic characteristics (age, place of birth, place of residence, civil status, citizenship).

<sup>1</sup> Published by the Ministry of Agriculture, Industry and Commerce, 1864. *Statistica del Regno d'Italia: popolazione: movimento dello stato civile nell'anno 1863* (Statistics of the Kingdom of Italy: population: civil status flows in 1863). Florence.

<sup>2</sup> The figures relating to couples who signed the marriage certificate are presented in: [Education](#).

<sup>3</sup> Over the course of time, other Christian churches and religions have signed Agreements with the Italian State to regulate the civil effects of marriages celebrated by their own rites. Therefore, from a legal point of view marriage can now be divided into three types: civil marriage, celebrated by a civil records clerk; Catholic marriage with civil effects, celebrated by a Catholic priest; non-Catholic marriage celebrated by the ministers of the other religions admitted by the State. Nonetheless, statistical surveys only distinguish between religious and civil marriages, without specifying the type of religion.

The following Christian churches are admitted and regulated by Italian legislation: marriage by Waldesian rite (Law no. 449 dated 11 August 1984); marriage by Seventh Day Adventist rite (Law no. 516 dated 22 November 1988); marriage by Assemblée di Dio in Italia (Adi) rite (Law no. 517 dated 22 November 1988); marriage by Jewish rite (Article 14 in Law no. 101 dated 8 March 1989); marriage by Christian Evangelical Baptist rite (Article 10 in Law no. 116 dated 12 April 1995); marriage by Evangelical Lutheran rite (Article 13 of Law no. 520 dated 29 November 1995).

The forms are acquired by ISTAT both in paper and electronic format. The paper forms are sent by municipalities to prefectures. Prefectures then sent them to ISTAT regional offices, that check the completeness of the data by comparing them with the monthly summary forms before forwarding them to the central Office for demographic statistics, which lastly prepares them for electronic data capture. Since 1996, ISTAT has developed an online data collection system for demographic information in collaboration with the Association of Italian Municipalities and this process was re-engineered in 2000. The service, known as Istatel, allows for data to be directly transmitted to ISTAT by municipalities and ensures that prefectures (using a specific account) can check the state of the online transmissions. Today the system is used by more than 6,300 municipalities, although not all of them use all the functions available.

### *Warnings for time series comparisons*

- The figures presented refer to the events that took place in the Italian municipalities according to the borders of the time. Rates also are therefore calculated according to the resident population within the same borders.
- On 1st January 1866 the first Civil Code of the Kingdom of Italy came into force. Religious marriages were no longer recognised by the State and the civil rite become compulsory in order to obtain legal effects. Many marriages were anticipated to 1865 to avoid the new legislation, and many couples abandoned civil weddings, the only type of marriage with legal effect, in the following years. This Code came into force in the Province of Rome from 1 February 1871 and in the areas of Veneto and Mantua from 1 September 1871.
- In the period between 1883 and 1892, the classification of marriages by the age of the spouses was changed. To make the data more comparable with the ones from previous and later periods, the figures have been recalculated according to the distribution of spouses by age groups as recorded for the 1878-1879 period.
- As no classification of marriages according to spouses' age was performed in 1887, the distribution was calculated using average values of the years immediately before and after that date, 1886 and 1888 (compare: Istat. 1965. *Annali di Statistica (Statistics Yearbooks)*, vol. 17, series VIII, 382).
- As for all demographic events, marriages were strongly affected by the two World Wars. In particular, the years between 1915 and 1918 saw a fall in the number of weddings, balanced by a subsequent clear recovery from 1919 up to 1925. A similar decrease took place in the 1940-45 period, with a recovery in 1946-1949.
- In 1929 the Lateran Pacts between the State and the Vatican resulted in the recognition of the legal effects of Catholic religious marriages (Law no. 847 dated 27 May 1929 "Application of the Pact dated 11 February 1929 between the Holy See and Italy, relating to marriage").