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CONTEMPORARY CHANGES OF MARITAL BEHAVIOR

A CASE STUDY OF THE REPUBLIC OF MACEDONIA

Abstract

The numerous social, economic, political, cultural and other changes in all spheres of human life have greatly stimulated the demogeographic changes that the majority of the population in the world faces today. These demogeographic changes are expressed through the changes

in fertility and fertility rates, extended life expectancy, new understanding of marriage and family, reduced number of so-called "universal marriages", new types of illegitimate communities, delayed marriage, celibacy, an increased number of divorces, children born outside marriage, etc. Therefore, the marital status of the population as one of the basic demographic indicators, with all its characteristics and specificities, is very challenging to study, because it largely reflects on some segments of the demographic development of the country. Marriage as an institution is still associated with the creation of the family as one of the most important sociological forms and pillars of society. This paper elaborates the trend of marriages in the Republic of Macedonia, the crude marriage rate, the number of marriages per 1,000 inhabitants older than 15 and the general marriage rate. Marriages are processed according to certain characteristics of the bride and groom and also, an analysis of the regional differences is made.

The analysis of the contemporary demographic conditions is very important for policy makers, social scientists, demogeographers, and anyone seeking to understand society, family and marital behavior in order to predict the future trends.

Keywords: number of marriages, marriage rate, Republic of Macedonia.

INTRODUCTION

The union of a man and a woman, recognized by the society or ceremony is as old as the human civilization itself and marriage of any kind is seen in all the human societies (Rasool 2016). Marriage is most often defined as state of living together of two persons of the opposite sex, as husband and wife in an agreed relationship, regulated by law or custom (Kjurciev et al., 2011). In fact, marriage represents the social framework of reproduction (Devedžić 2004).

The right to marriage is one of the basic human rights and according to the legislation in the Republic of Macedonia, it can be concluded between the citizens of our country, but also between our citizens and foreigners (Madjevikj 2009). According Marriage Law, the lowest limit for marriage is determined by adulthood, with the age of 18 years (there are cases of marriage under the age of 18 while the upper age limit for marriage is not determined). The age of 18 years is the minimum legal age for marriage without parents' approval and 16 years with parents' approval in the Republic of Macedonia, both for men and women (Miladinov 2015).

Marriage has its social and individual significance. The social significance refers to the perception of marriage as an institution, i.e. a social structure that ensures the maintenance of cultural needs; it is a system of obligations, rights and privileges of roles that are legalized by a civil contract that can be terminated if both sides agree. Individual significance is reflected in the intimate connection and commitment to the sustainability of a relationship with the loved one (Pernar 2010).

Marriage and divorce behaviors are of interest to both demographers and the general public as they shed light on family formation, family composition and fertility (Hong Kong Monthly Digest of Statistics 2015), but over time, the marriage has evolved and has taken different forms. In this regard, people today marry less than before, and when they decide to do so, then it happens later in life.

However, we must mention the influence of the increasing number of illegitimate communities (cohabitation). The practice of living together without a legal marriage is widespread and is on the increase worldwide. In some areas, it is a well-established practice; in other areas, it is fairly new (Faust K 2004). In fact, cohabitation before marriage is considered as a substitute for marriage (Golubović and Marković Krstić 2004) and with the rise of cohabitation, the marriage rates decline (Devedžić 2004). These kinds of communities in the Republic of Macedonia are particularly frequent in the last ten years, but no state institution keeps any records.

However, apart from new thoughts about life and new types of informal communities, in most countries, even in the most developed, the expectations of marriage as a lifetime commitment in their own marriages remain strong (Thornton and Young-DeMarco 2001; Byrt 2009). The research on population marriage trends,

followed by the analysis in the composition of the population by marital status are of great importance because within marriage occurs the majority of the population reproduction (Golubović and Marković Krstić 2004).

METHODS OF WORK AND DATA SOURCES

The available census data, as well as the data from the vital statistics, enable analysis of the population structures and processes (Madjevikj 2005). Observed through the published statistical data by the official statistics, which refer to the Population Natural Change in the Republic of Macedonia, among the other data on the vital events and processes (number of births, deaths, number of divorces), also can be find data on the number of marriages, the number of marriages by the age of the spouses, marriages according to the marriage order, marriages according to the previous marital status of the groom and the bride, as well as the number of marriages according to certain characteristics of the spouses as ethnicity and educational attainment. By examining the marital status in relation to other demographic and socioeconomic characteristics such as age, race, ethnicity, income, and education, understanding marital status as a demographic characteristic can be advanced.

A much clearer picture of the number of marriages can be obtained through calculating the marriage rates. The simplest measure of marriage is the crude marriage rate, or the number of marriages in a year per 1,000 population at midyear. Rate, as a relative number that represents the frequency of an event in a given time interval, is one of the most important indicators of certain events. The crude marriage rate has disadvantages since it expresses the number of marriages compared to the entire population, including children and singles, instead of concentrating on the population at risk, that is, of married people.

The marriage rate is directly conditioned by the number of marriages. The greater the number of marriages is, the highest the marriage rate will be and vice versa (Ivkov 2005; Blagojević et. al, 2015). Crude marriage rates are used most effectively for gross analyses in areas that may not have the additional data to calculate more refined measures. Note that the crude marriage rate represents the number of marriages, not the number of people getting married (Faust 2004).

In addition to the crude marriage rate, the marriage rate according age is also calculated. That is, the number of marriages in a given year is divided by the number of the population aged over 15 in the same year, as well as the general marriage rate, which is expressed as the number of marriages per 1,000 women aged 15 and over (Faust 2004). Changes in the number of marriages do not explain

marriage trends, unless account is taken of the number of people available to marry (Wilson and Smallwood 2007). This way, the research could give even stronger results. In order to calculate the marriage rates, it is necessary to have available data on the total number of the population. Therefore, the data from the regular annual publications by the State Statistical Office, Population estimates by sex and age by municipalities and statistical regions for the analyzed years and the Statistical Yearbooks were used, taking into account the fact that the last Census of the population, households and dwellings in the Republic of Macedonia was conducted in 2002.
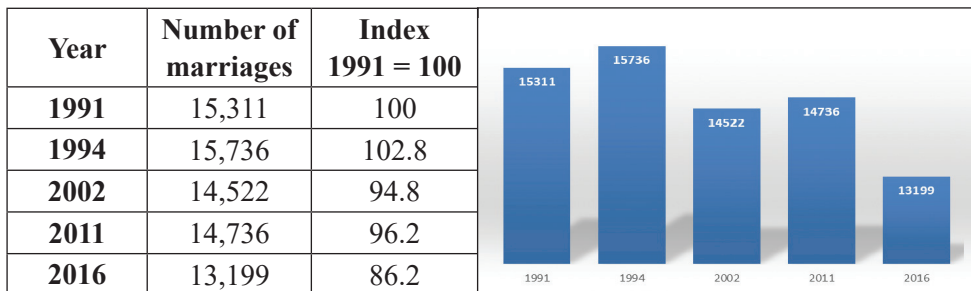
For the purposes of this research, analytical-statistical, mathematical-statistical and comparative methods were used. During the analysis and data processing, the results of the research were compared to what has been done so far, and treats this issue, that is, relevant demogeographic studies.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The marital status of the population with all its characteristics and specificities is a special challenge for studying by geographers, because it reflects at some segments in the demographic development of the country or its separate regions (Madjevikj 2009). Unfortunately, the experiences point out that marriage, although one of the oldest universal institutions of humankind, in the post-transitional phase of European societies gradually loses its significance.

T - 1: *Number of marriages in the Republic of Macedonia in the period 1991-2016*

G - 1: *Number of marriages in the Republic of Macedonia in the period 1991-2016*

Year	Number of marriages	Index 1991 = 100
1991	15,311	100
1994	15,736	102.8
2002	14,522	94.8
2011	14,736	96.2
2016	13,199	86.2

Data source: SSORM, Natural population change, 1991-2016.

For the number of marriages in the Republic of Macedonia and how their number has changed over the years, we can see data in Table 1 and Graph 1. The number of marriages significantly decreased in the analyzed period, i.e. 13.8%. The highest number of marriages was recorded in 1994 and this number was only slightly lower in 1991. The lowest number of marriages was recorded in 2016, or 1,537 marriages less compared to the previous analyzed year. However, a clearer picture of the trend in the number of marriages can be obtained by calculating the crude marriage rate and the general marriage rate. The highest value of the crude marriage rate in the analyzed period was recorded in 1994, and since then it is constantly decreasing, reaching 6.4 in 2016. This same trend is recorded in the general marriage rate and in the number of marriages per 1,000 inhabitants older than 15. The number of divorces per 1,000 marriages points out to the fact that the number of marriages in the Republic of Macedonia is decreasing, while the number of divorces is continually increasing. Following consistent falls in marriage rates in the last quarter of the 20th century and the early years of this century have seen some relatively large fluctuations in marriage numbers and rates (Wilson and Smallwood 2007).

T - 2: *Marriage rates in the Republic of Macedonia in the period 1991-2016*

Year	Crude marriage rate	General marriage rate	Number of marriages per 1,000 inhabitants older than 15 years	Number of divorces per 1,000 marriages
1991	7.5	20.1	10.0	32.4
1994	8.1	21.4	10.8	38.9
2002	7.2	18.2	9.1	90.2
2011	7.2	17.2	8.7	119.0
2016	6.4	15.2	7.6	150.4

Data source: Authors' calculations using SSORM data.

The changes in the marriage rate are related to the idea of changes, the increased level of education and changes in women's participation in the labor market, the manner of choosing a spouse, changes in the age of getting married, etc. Therefore, significant results can be gained when analyzing the demographic characteristics of married people (Madjevikj 2009).

NUMBER OF MARRIAGES ACCORDING TO THE AGE OF THE BRIDE AND GROOM

The lifetime in which most men and women enter a marital union is determined by the characteristics of the global social system, family and marriage (Petrović 1981; Golubović and Marković Krstić 2004). The age of marriage to a large extent depends on the territorial and ethnic affiliation and the cultural characteristics and accepted norms of behavior. As the age of getting married is one of the most important determinants of reproductive behavior, the best years of marriage are those in which there is a maximum of biological preconditions in order to achieve the greatest reproduction. However, with the changes in the lifestyle in contemporary societies, with the process of individualization and the adopted system of values, the attitude of individuals to marriage as an institution, as well as the "ideal time" for marriage changes (Golubović and Marković Krstić 2004).

T - 3: *Marriages by the age of the bride and groom in the period 1991-2016*

Year	Total	≤ 20	20-24	25-29	30-34	35-39	40-49	50-59	60 ≤	*
Percentage share of the number of marriages by the age of the bride										
1991	100	28.2	45.7	17.7	4.3	1.6	1.2	0.5	0.4	0.4
1994	100	27.7	44.2	18.3	4.6	1.8	1.4	0.6	0.4	1.0
2002	100	19.8	44.1	23.8	6.3	2.6	2.3	0.7	0.3	0.1
2011	100	13.1	36.5	30.4	11.6	4.2	3.0	1.0	0.2	0.0
2016	100	9.0	33.7	31.8	13.7	5.1	4.6	1.6	0.5	0.0
Percentage share of the number of marriages by the age of the groom										
1991	100	4.2	40.3	37.1	11.5	3.2	1.9	0.8	0.9	0.1
1994	100	5.1	39.8	35.5	11.8	3.7	2.3	0.8	0.9	0.1
2002	100	3.3	34.1	38.0	14.5	5.3	3.0	0.8	1.0	0.0
2011	100	2.1	24.0	37.9	20.7	7.6	5.2	1.8	0.7	0.0
2016	100	1.4	20.0	37.1	23.0	8.6	6.3	2.4	1.2	0.0

* unknown

Data source: SSORM, Natural population change, 1991-2016 and authors' calculations.

Thus, in the analyzed period, a significant "marriage aging" was recorded, that is, postponing the first marriage in the older year of the marital contingent, and accordingly, the "aging of fertility" can be expected (Golubović and Marković Krstić 2004). In Table 3, we can note that in the entire analyzed period, the highest share in the number of marriages was recorded in the age group of 20 to 24, but

with an increased participation of the age groups of 25-29 and 30-34 in the recent years for the bride, i.e. the age groups of 30 to 39 years for the groom, also with an increased participation of the age group of 40-49 in the recent years. The general trend of moving the age limits when getting married (Madjevikj 2005), to a large extent is due to the appearance of many adults cohabiting with a partner before ever marrying (Copen et. al, 2012). Demographic data support later ages of first marriage. Marital timing is impacted by school enrollment and higher levels of education; conversely, income, employment stability, and home ownership facilitate marriage formation, particularly for men (Lloyd and South 1996; Byrd 2009). Also, late marriages in recent years can be explained by the way of thinking of modern girls, their higher level of education, and poor material conditions because of which the young people are deciding for later marriages (Blagojević et. al, 2015). In other words, females are getting into marriage later year by year due to the growth of urbanization and engagement among women in economic areas (Karimov 2014).

T - 4: *Number of marriages by the average age of the bride and groom*

| Year	Average age of bride	Average age of groom	Average age of bride at first marriage	Average age of groom at first marriage
1991	23.0	26.3	-	-
1994	23.0	26.4	22.9	26.0
2002	24.3	27.4	23.8	26.8
2011	25.9	29.1	25.4	28.3
2016	27.1	30.1	26.5	29.3

Data source: SSORM, 25 years of Independent Macedonia, and authors' calculations.

It is noted that the increase in the mean age occurs for both men and women, as we approach the end of the research period. Men marry for the first time at older ages than women (Copen et. al, 2012), but, while men continued to marry at older ages than women, the gap narrowed for about 3 years.
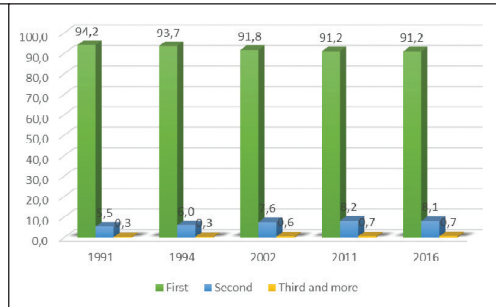
NUMBER OF MARRIAGES BY THE MARRIAGE ORDER FOR THE BRIDE AND GROOM

In the graphs below, we can note that the most of the marriages that were recorded in the analyzed period were first marriages for both, bride and groom.

G - 2: *Marriages by marriage order for the bride, in %*
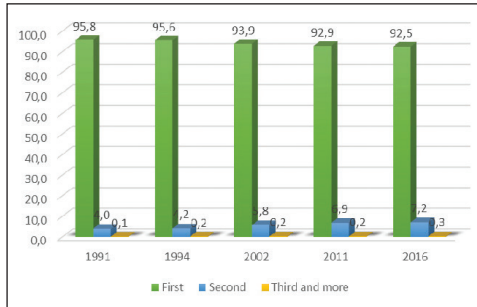
**G - 3:** *Marriages by marriage order for the groom, in %*

Data source: SSORM, Natural population change, 1991-2016 and authors' calculations

Although this trend continues in recent years, the number of marriages of higher order for the spouses is constantly increasing, especially for the groom.

MARRIAGES BY FORMER MARITAL STATUS OF THE BRIDE AND GROOM

Most of the spouses that are getting married were never married before, but the share of the never married before brides is higher than the share of the never married before grooms. The number and share of the spouses that were divorced is increasing for both, bride and groom. The participation of the widowers in the number of people getting married is insignificant, with less than 1% for the bride and less than 2% for the groom.

G - 4: *Marriages by the former marital status of the bride*
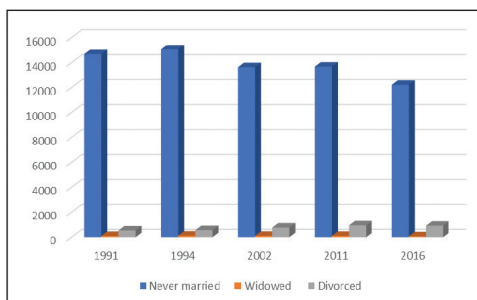
G - 5: *Marriages by the former marital status of the groom*
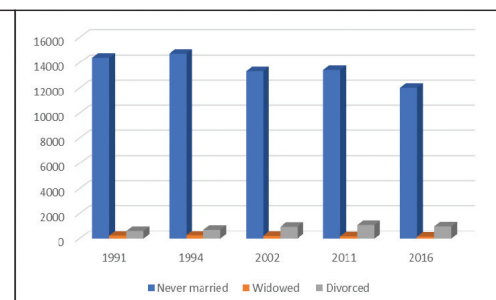
Data source: SSORM, Natural population change, 1991-2016 and authors' calculations

NUMBER OF MARRIAGES ACCORDING TO THE ETHNIC AFFILIATION OF THE BRIDE AND GROOM

In the mutual connection of traditional understandings, cultural achievements, religious affiliation, and other, the ethnic affiliation, to some extent, influences some of the following: age of getting married, norms and attitudes for the number of children, size of family, divorces and more.

T - 5: *Marriages by the ethnic affiliation of the bride and groom in the period 1991-2016*

	1991	1994	2002	2011	2016	1991	1994	2002	2011	2016
Marriages by the ethnic affiliation of the bride						**Percentage share**				
Total	15,311	15,736	14,522	14,736	13,199	100	100	100	100	100
Macedonians	9,082	8,794	7,710	7,572	7,042	59.3	55.9	53.1	51.4	53.4
Albanians	3,940	4,853	4,773	5,134	4,428	25.7	30.8	32.9	34.8	33.5
Turks	647	638	568	653	496	4.2	4.1	3.9	4.4	3.8
Roma	667	500	551	645	437	4.4	3.2	3.8	4.4	3.3
Vlachs	0	19	7	25	17	0.0	0.1	0.0	0.2	0.1
Serbs	0	227	122	140	149	0.0	1.4	0.8	1.0	1.1
Bosnians	0	0	0	120	91	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.8	0.7
Other	941	550	733	428	522	6.1	3.5	5.0	2.9	4.0
Unknown	34	155	58	19	17	0.2	1.0	0.4	0.1	0.1
Marriages by the ethnic affiliation of the groom						**Percentage share**				
Total	15,311	15,736	14,522	14,736	13,199	100	100	100	100	100
Macedonians	9,160	8,852	7,819	7,704	7,162	59.8	56.3	53.8	52.3	54.3
Albanians	3,998	4,938	5,033	5,059	4,508	26.1	31.4	34.7	34.3	34.2
Turks	661	673	572	697	523	4.3	4.3	3.9	4.7	4.0
Roma	685	525	574	656	454	4.5	3.3	4.0	4.5	3.4
Vlachs	0	32	16	17	17	0.0	0.2	0.1	0.1	0.1
Serbs	0	221	130	138	101	0.0	1.4	0.9	0.9	0.8
Bosnians	0	0	0	123	108	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.8	0.8
Other	777	369	337	328	308	5.1	2.3	2.3	2.2	2.3
Unknown	30	126	41	14	18	0.2	0.8	0.3	0.1	0.1

Data source: SSORM, Natural population change, 1991-2016 and authors' calculations

In Table 5 we can note that in the number of marriages, dominant are the marriages of the bride and groom of Macedonian ethnicity, by more than 50% in all analyzed years, (although a decreasing trend is noted), followed by the number of marriages by the bride and groom from the Albanian ethnic affiliation. This can be explained by the percentage share of the Macedonian and Albanian population in the total. The number of marriages for brides and grooms by other ethnic affiliation participates in the total number of marriages with less than 5% per year.

NUMBER OF MARRIAGES BY THE EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT OF THE BRIDE AND GROOM

Important to this research is the availability of data on the educational attainment of both spouses (SSORM publications), so that analysis of the trend of marriages according to the educational attainment can be done.

T - 6: *Marriages by the educational attainment of the bride and groom in the period 1991-2016*

Year	Total	No education	Less than primary	Primary school	School for skilled and high-skilled	Secondary school	Vocational school, faculty and higher	*
Marriages by the educational attainment of the bride								
1991	15,311	380	1,090	5,868	1,757	4,773	1,229	214
1994	15,736	285	781	6,549	1,215	5,383	1,299	224
2002	14,522	289	474	5,418	980	5,724	1,456	181
2011	14,736	451	124	4,218	0	6,137	3,679	127
2016	13,199	227	96	2,587	0	5,861	3,888	540
Marriages by the educational attainment of the groom								
1991	15,311	171	694	4,610	3,114	5,033	1,497	192
1994	15,736	137	518	5,417	2,340	5,735	1,383	206
2002	14,522	161	362	5,169	1,729	5,617	1,318	166
2011	14,736	332	93	3,840	0	7,592	2,759	120
2016	13,199	148	79	2,444	0	6,964	3,043	521

*= unknown

Data source: SSORM, Natural population change, 1991-2016 and authors' calculations

G - 6: *Percentage share of marriages by educational attainment of the bride in the period 1991-2015*

G - 7: *Percentage share of marriages by educational attainment of the groom in the period 1991-2015*
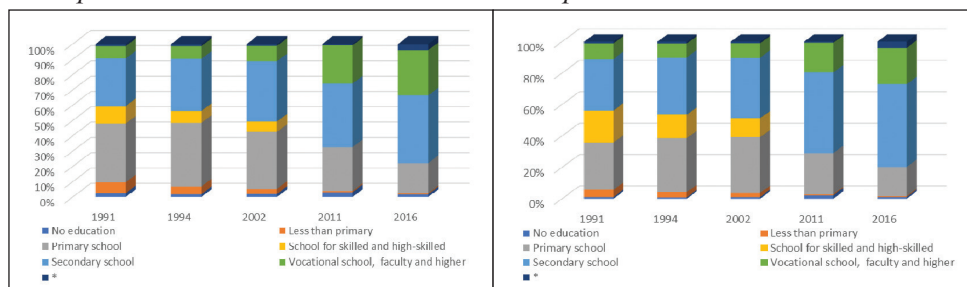
Data source: SSORM, Natural population increase, 1991-2016 and authors' calculations

The number of marriages in which the spouses have completed university is increasing, especially among women, but on the other hand, increasing the level of education, increases the age of marriage (Golubović and Marković Krstić 2004). To enter the university and get higher education means to get into marriage at higher ages (Karimov 2014).

Women with more education and better economic prospects are more likely to delay first marriage to older ages but are ultimately more likely to become married and stay married (Copen et. al, 2012).

REGIONAL DIFFERENCES IN THE NUMBER OF MARRIAGES

The place of residence we choose affects every aspect of our being. It can be determined by the income we earn, the people we meet, the friends we create, the partners we choose, and the opportunities offered to our children and families (Scott et. al, 2011). It also affects acquired attitudes about life, habits and customs, while cultural and demographic differences that refer to marriage, can also play an important role.

Given the differences in the distribution of the population and its structure, as well as the differences in the level of development among regions, there are certainly regional differences in the marriage trend. To a large extent, despite other factors influencing the territorial concentration or dispersion of the total population, depending on its ethnic affiliation of traditional views and opinions; cultural achievements, the enclosure of the environment, the religious structure of the population in mutual connection with the ethnic affiliation, social and political situations in the state, inter-ethnic relations and other also have their influence (Madjevikj 2009).

G - 8: *Number of marriages per regions* **G - 9:** *Number of marriages per regions (%)*
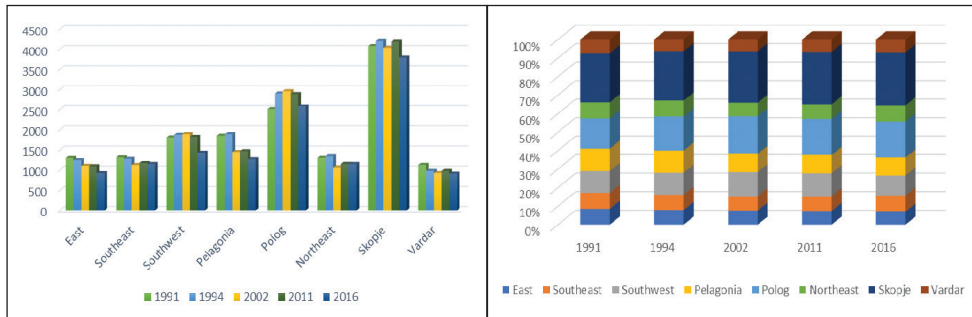
Data source: Authors' calculations using SSORM data.

In the analyzed period, most of the marriages were recorded in the Skopje region. This can be related to the massive internal migrations, mainly directed towards the Skopje region, which caused the highest concentration of population in the region, i.e., almost 1/3 of the total population in the Republic of Macedonia lives in this region. However, if we analyze the crude marriage rate, we will note that the primacy is recorded in the Polog region, followed by the Southeast, Southwest and Northeast region.

T - 7: *Crude marriage rates by regions for the period 1991 - 2016*

Regions	1991	1994	2002	2011	2016
East	7.1	6.9	6.0	6.1	5.3
Southeast	7.7	7.6	6.5	6.7	6.6
Southwest	8.2	8.9	8.5	8.2	6.5
Pelagonia	6.9	7.8	6.1	6.3	5.5
Polog	8.5	10.3	9.7	9.1	8.0
Northeast	7.6	8.2	6.1	6.5	6.5
Skopje	7.2	7.7	7.0	6.9	6.1
Vardar	7.3	6.4	6.0	6.4	6.0
R. Macedonia	7.5	8.1	7.2	7.2	6.4

Data source: Authors' calculations using SSORM data.

The changes arise from the changes in the total number of population and its ethnic structure, the spatial distribution of the population, the concentration of nationalities in certain regions or their dispersion to a larger area, migration, social relations, political events in the state and immediate

surroundings, inter-ethnic relations, the general marriage trends, the educational and cultural achievements, the attitudes about marriage etc. The results of the regional analysis show that there are differences in the number of marriages and the geographical location that could serve as a basis for new, additional research on multiple indicators in order to determine the impact of culture, tradition, customs and habits in all of the regions.

CONCLUSION

The opinion of marriage and divorce is of interest to demographers as well as the general public, since they participate in the formation of the family, the composition of the family and the fertility. Marriage (partnership) and family (parenthood) represent very important life goals, both at the level of value preferences and life practices (Bobić 2003). Namely, the study of marriages is usually approached from the perspective of the importance of marriage for reproduction, bearing in mind that marriage is a dominant frame for the population reproduction (Ivković et. al, 2014).

Changes in the marital behavior of the population are considered in the context of socioeconomic transformation and in line with the peculiarities of modern society: urbanization, long-lasting education process, increased consumer opportunities, emancipation of women, aspiration to personal success, individualization etc. The main reasons that condition the changes in the number of marriages are in the socioeconomic sphere, sex and age-related irregularities expressed at the regional and local level, the migration, social and political changes, stability of the state, transition processes and more (Madjevikj 2009).

Preference of people to have a career before tying the knot is the main reason that more and more people are opting to marry in their thirties. Education and finding a job are both time consuming. By the time people find some sort of financial stability, and this is irrespective of gender, they have already crossed the 30age mark. There is not a single cause that is associated with the delayed marriage of either one or both the sexes (Rasool 2016).

The changes in the marital behavior that the most of the World is facing today are also present in the Republic of Macedonia. They can be recognized in the reduced number of marriages, reduced marriage rates, increased age at the time of getting married, increased participation of the brides and grooms with university education in the total number of marriages, etc.

Therefore, the analysis of the unemployment rates from the aspect of the demographic variables (as the age and the marital status of the population), social variables (such as education and traditions) and economic variables (such as

income and participation in the labor force), as well as the definition of the main reasons to get married or not, the regional differences in the number of marriages and, ultimately, their impact on the fertility is more than necessary. Our findings are the first stepping-stone to the new, additional researches on the subject, which would eventually help create social policies, as well as create a population policy in harmony with the trend of the population development and population marital status.

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