

Fig. 1: Divorce in Hungary per 1000 marriages, 1949–2002

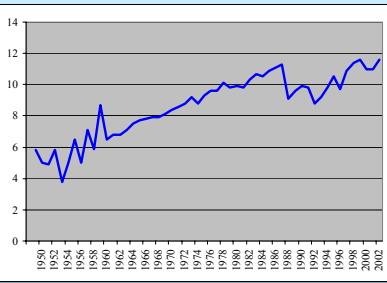


Fig. 2: Average age at divorce by sex, Hungary, 1973–2001

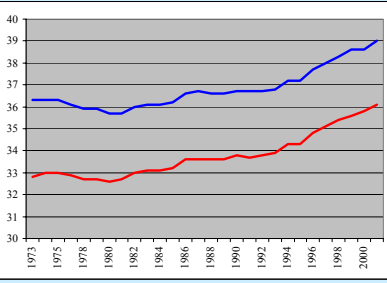


Fig. 3: Average marriage duration at divorce (year), Hungary, 1973–2001

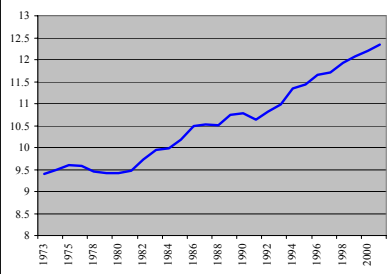
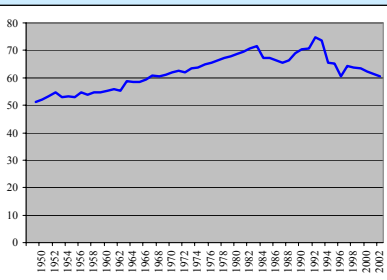


Fig. 4: Divorce in Hungary: divorce by common children born in marriage (%) 1949–2002



Data (Fig. 1–4): Demographic Yearbook 2001, 2002. HCSO, Budapest.

Introduction

Divorce rates have been rising in Hungary since the 60s (Figure 1.), which has been a clear sign of the transformation of marriage as an institution and its changing role in the life course. Demographic characteristics of divorce have also changed: average age of divorcees has been continuously increasing (Figure 2), average duration of dissolved marriages is getting longer (Figure 3), and there is a growing proportion of divorcees in which children are affected (Figure 4). In this latter case divorce leads to single parent families, which are known to be one of the most disadvantaged social groups.

Data and method

The present analysis examines the structural and demographic factors influencing divorce, with a special focus on marriages with children (factors are listed in Table 2.). The analysis also looks at temporal changes in the pattern of selected factors influencing divorce. Two birth cohorts, 1935–1939 and 1955–1959 are analyzed and compared here. The applied method is event history analysis.

Data used in this analysis are drawn from the survey „Turning Points of the Life Course” („Hungarian GGS”), carried out by the Demographic Research Institute in 2001–2002. The sample consists of more than 16 000 respondents, and it is representative of the Hungarian population aged 18–75. For this analysis we used a subsample of 1696 first married people from the two birth cohorts (Table 1).

Results

As the Kaplan-Meier estimate shows (Figure 5.) the divorce is more prevalent in the latter birth cohort.

Different factors influence divorce according to sex and cohorts. Among women the role of children are more important than among men. Demographic factors have a greater impact on divorce risk in the latter cohort – especially in the case of women.

In the earlier cohort among 30–39 year old men divorce risk is four times higher than those are under the age 30, and the risk is 1,5 times higher even among 40–49 year old men. In the latter birth cohort similar effect can be seen in the age group 30–39. Parental divorce increases the risk of dissolving marriage among the respondents, the father’s education level also increases the risk, but only among respondents having father with college or university education. The number and age of children do not play a fundamental role in the case of men getting divorced. There is only one exception, namely the latter birth cohort, when a father has two or more children, from which at least one is 0–5 year old, the divorce risk is less than half of the value measured among childless men. Cohabitation before marriage increases the divorce risk to 1.8 in the latter birth cohort.

Among women the picture is more complex and there is a greater variety between the two cohorts concerning factors of divorce. While in the earlier birth cohort the number and age of children and education have substantial impact on the break up of marriage, in the latter cohort almost all selected factors have significant impact. In the earlier cohort childless women have the highest divorce risk – it is true for the latter cohort too –, and with the same number of children the risk is lower if there is at least one 0–5 year old child. The secondary level of education increases the risk of dissolving marriage to 2.31 as compared to the reference category (basic education). In the latter birth cohort higher current age, growing up with siblings and higher age at first marriage decrease the divorce risk, while parental divorce, cohabitation before marriage, premarital child(ren) and lack of religiosity increase the risk. Divorce risk is the lowest in that group where the youngest child is 3–5 year old, relatively low when the youngest child is 1–2 year old, and it is highest among childless women.

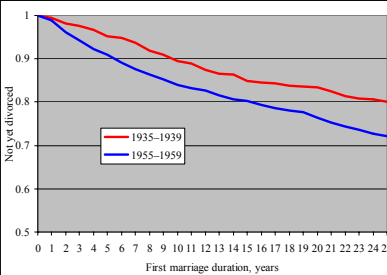
Table 2: Relative risks of divorce in the first marriage for Hungarian men and women born in 1935–1939 and 1955–1959, by sex and current age of respondent, family background (intact family, number of siblings, education level of father and mother), marriage characteristics (cohabitation before marriage, any child born before marriage, number and age of children, marital duration – absolute risks per 1000 months in marriage, age at first marriage), education level and religiosity

		Men		Women	
		1935–1939	1955–1959	1935–1939	1955–1959
Age of respondent	–29	1	1	1	1
	30–39	4.47 **	1.65 ^^	0.95	1.29
	40–49	2.47 ^	0.59	1.34	1.02
	50–75	1.24		0.27	0.29 **
	yes	1	1	1	1
Education level of father	elementary	2.37 ^	1.53	1.04	1.42 ^
	vocational	1.89	0.88	0.79	1.1
	secondary	4.41 *	1.98	1.3	1.96 **
	college or university	15.1 **	3.73 **	2.46	2.46 **
	less than elementary	1	1	1	1

Table 1: Subsample of first married people

Birth cohort	Men		Women		Total	
	First married	Divorced	First married	Divorced	First married	Divorced
–5–1939	295	60	353	84	648	144
–5–1959	477	120	571	146	1048	266
al	672	180	924	230	1696	410

Fig. 5: Kaplan–Meier survival estimate of divorce, by birth cohorts



Data: „Turning Points of Life Course” panel survey, first wave.

^^ p<0.15 ^ p<0.1 * p<0.05 ** p<0.01 *** p<0.001
 * absolute risks