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# TRENDS IN MARRIAGE AND DIVORCE RATE IN THE PAST 30 YEARS (1989–2019)

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## **Abstract**

The marriage rate, divorce rate, and the associated population structure by marital status significantly changed after 1989. The model of frequent and early marriage has turned into a model in which people postpone marriage and marry less often. Although the divorce rate was growing even before 1989, its structure changed. Changes in marriage and divorce rates were reflected in the structure of the population by marital status, where there was an increase in the proportion of single and divorced people and, conversely, a decrease in the share of persons living in marriage and slightly also in the share of widowed persons.

**Keywords:** Nuptiality, divorce rate, marital status, transition to a democratic system, Czechia

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## INTRODUCTION

Towards the end of 1989, major changes began to occur in society in connection with the fall of the communist regime and the transition from a totalitarian to a democratic system. The transition ushered in a number of economic and social changes and was reflected in demographic developments. Fertility rates have fallen well below the replacement threshold. Mortality conditions have been improving and life expectancy increasing. A dramatic decrease has been observed in nuptiality, while divorce rates have continued to rise. The share of live births outside marriage has increased significantly and the number of unmarried cohabitations has grown. Foreign migration rates have begun to increase significantly (Fiala *et al.*, 2018).

The present study focuses on the development of marriage and divorce rates and the associated change in population by marital status between 1989 and 2019. Newly emerging opportunities for individual

choices and lifestyles have brought about changes in marital behaviour and supported the continued growth of divorce rates. At the same time, the generation of the 1990s created new forms of cohabitation as alternatives to marriage (Rabušic, 1996). The aim of the article is to capture the key effects of these changes.

## CHANGES IN NUPTIALITY AND IN MARRIAGE BEHAVIOUR

The marriage behaviour of the population in Czechia has undergone a significant transformation in the past 30 years. The year 1989 can be described as the last year in which marriage rates were characterised by high intensity and early timing (Fialová – Kalibová, 2010). In absolute numbers, 81.3 thousand marriages were concluded in 1989, the mean age of a single groom was 24.6 years and 21.8 years in the case of a single bride. The years 1990 and 1991 were

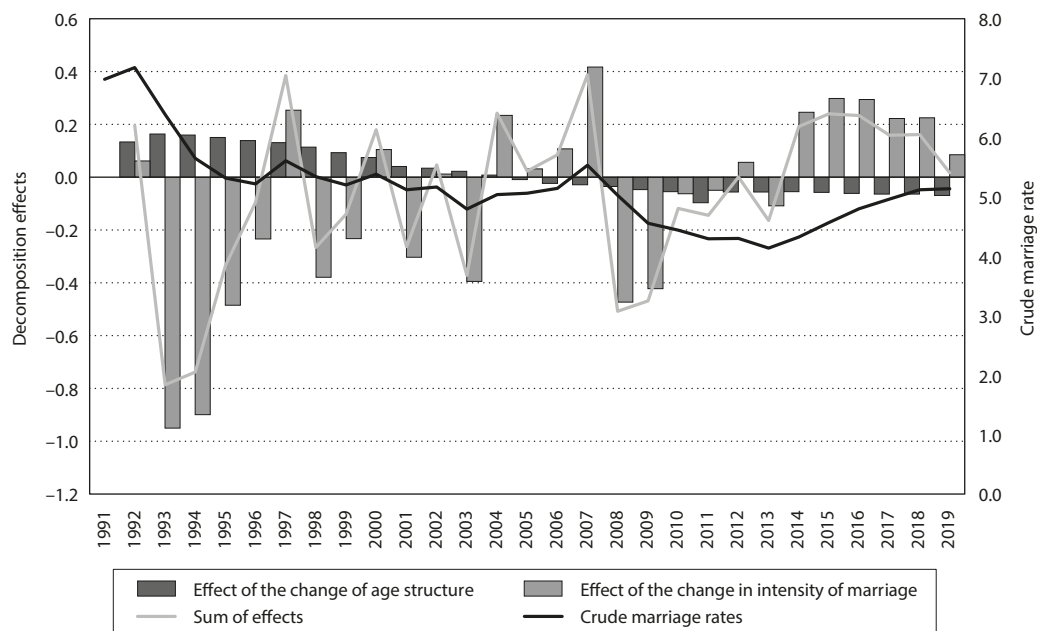
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strongly affected by the significant reduction in marriage loans (in effect from 1 January 1991), which led to early entry into a first marriage in 1990, increasing the number of marriages (in absolute numbers 91.0 thousand) and reducing the mean age (to 24.0 years for men and 21.4 years for women). This also resulted in a decrease in the number of marriages in 1991 to 72.0 thousand (Rychtaříková, 2007). Since 1992, the number of marriages has shown a long-term declining trend and marriage behaviour has shifted to the model of postponing marriage to a higher age or not getting married at all. The number of marriages reached a local maximum in 2007 when it was at a level of 57.2 thousand (a relative year-on-year increase of 8 percentage points; the next year the number decreased by 8 percentage points). This increase was influenced by particularly attractive data for this year (4.4 thousand marriages were concluded on 7 July 2007). A historical low in the number of marriages was recorded in 2013 (43.5 thousand). The number of marriages has been growing every year for the last six years; in the last year observed 54.9 thousand new marriages were registered.

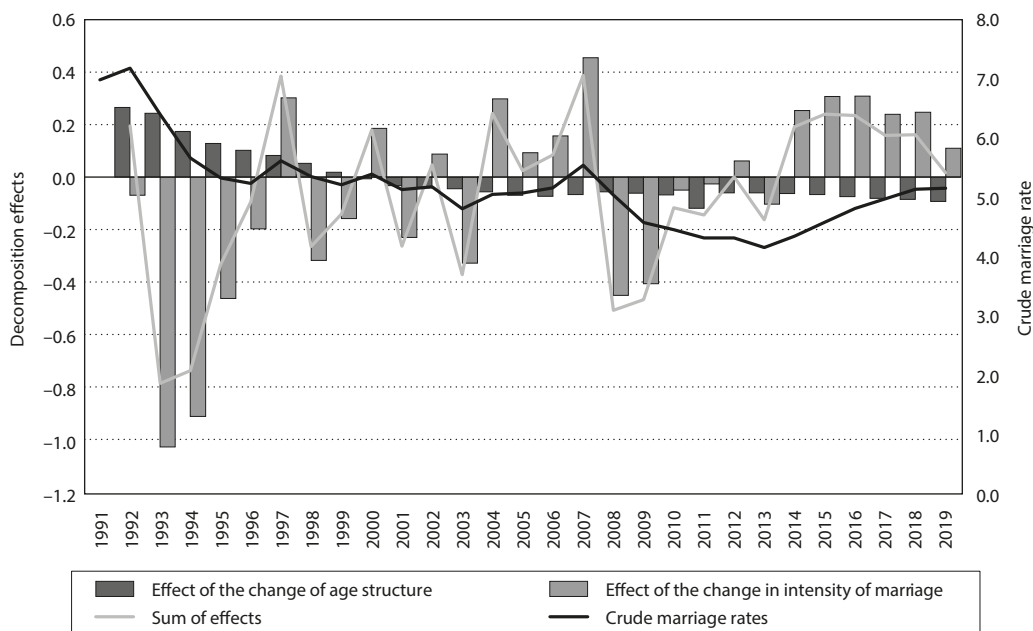
The development of the crude marriage rate indicates the trend in the number of marriages. Overall, the indicator fell from 7.8 marriages per 1,000 inhabitants in 1989 to 5.1‰ in 2019. The lowest level of 4.1‰ was recorded in 2013. Using the decomposition method as described by Kitagawa (1955), the year-on-year change in the crude marriage rate indicator can be decomposed into the effect of age structure (i.e. number of persons by age units) and the effect of intensity (i.e. number of marriages by the age of the man/the woman). According to the available data for 1991–2019, it is clear that the change in intensity played a much more significant role in the year-on-year changes of the indicator for both sexes (Figure 1a and Figure 1b). In the 1990s, the effect of age structure counteracted the total decline in the crude marriage rate. The effect of the age structure has been in negative values since 2004 for men and since 2000 for women, i.e. it has thus been offsetting the total year-on-year change. The increase in the crude marriage rate since 2013 is thus due to a change in intensity, where the effect of the age structure acts against the total increase.

Figure 1a Decomposition of the year-on-year changes in crude marriage rates, males, 1991–2019



Note: This is the decomposition of the difference between two crude marriage rates in two consecutive years.  
 Source: Czech Statistical Office; author's calculations.

Figure 1b Decomposition of the year-on-year changes in crude marriage rates, females, 1991–2019



Note: This is the decomposition of the difference between two crude marriage rates in two consecutive years.

Source: Czech Statistical Office; author's calculations.

With respect to the marital status of the couple, there have been no significant changes in the distribution, which has been the case for the past 30 years (Table 1). About three-quarters of couples are marrying for the first time. The highest share of first marriages was in 1990, when the figure approached 80% for both men and women. The share of protogamous (when both fiancés are single) was also highest that year (72%). The share of protogamous marriages in the years 1989–2019 ranged from 63% to 72%. The number of marriages of a higher order, compared with the first marriages, is about one-third and thus includes approximately one-quarter of the total number of marriages. That repeated marriages in most cases concern divorced persons who get married again is something that did not change throughout the observed period. Widowed persons rarely remarry. While in the case of divorced persons the second fiancé in the couple is usually also

divorced, in the case of widowed fiancés it is more often a marriage with a divorced person.

Conversely, what has changed significantly in the 1989–2019 period is the distribution of weddings over the calendar year (Figure 2). While previously weddings were more evenly distributed throughout the year (except for the month of May), over time they began to accumulate mainly in the summer months. Until the mid-1990s, about 40% of all weddings took place in the months from June to September, but since 2006 more than 60% do (65% in 2019). By contrast, at the start of the observed period 17–20% of all marriages occurred in the winter months (December to February); by 2019, their share had fallen to 6%. It is also worth mentioning the long-term change in the position of the month of May, which was one of the least popular months in the past (this was due to a superstition about May weddings). Measured by the value of the monthly index,<sup>2)</sup> wed-

2) Monthly index eliminates the effect of different number of days in a month and indicates the relationship of the monthly number of marriages (when converted to the same number of days) to their number in the average month of the year.

Table 1 Marriages by marital status and by order, 1989–2019 (selected years)

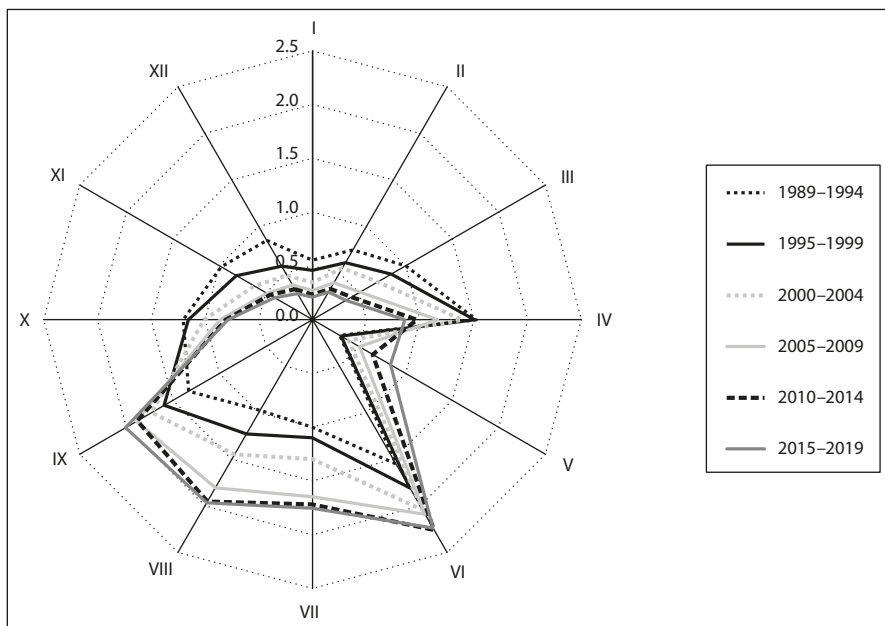
	1989	1994	1999	2004	2009	2014	2019
Total marriages	81,262	58,440	53,523	51,447	47,862	45,575	54,870
Marital status of male: single	62,545	44,374	39,819	37,940	34,865	34,691	41,606
divorced	17,396	13,122	12,961	12,857	12,454	10,466	12,802
widowed	1,321	944	743	650	543	418	462
Marital status of female: single	62,737	44,641	40,116	38,147	35,203	35,155	41,724
divorced	17,347	12,840	12,641	12,552	12,001	9,949	12,443
widowed	1,178	959	766	748	658	471	703
Marriages of singles (protogamous)	55,958	39,538	34,927	33,022	30,315	30,785	36,690
Remarriages (for both)	10,539	8,963	8,515	8,382	8,109	6,514	8,230
Protogamous marriages (%):	68.9	67.7	65.3	64.2	63.3	67.5	66.9
Remarriages (%): males	23.0	24.1	25.6	26.3	27.2	23.9	24.2
females	22.8	23.6	25.0	25.9	26.4	22.9	24.0

Source: Czech Statistical Office; author's calculations.

dings in May amounted to less than 30% of the number in an average month until the mid-1990s, but gradually its monthly index grew. In 2019, it was 0.98 (i.e. it was almost an average month), which is historically the highest value ever observed for May. It seems that nowadays, rather than tradition, the choice of a wedding day is influenced by the probability of nice weather (Tesárková – Karousová, 2009).

The deviation of monthly indexes compared to the surrounding years was also influenced by numerically interesting dates – for example, the value of the monthly index increased for February 2002, July 2007, August 2008, November 2011, July 2017, and August 2018. If a numerically interesting date also falls on a Saturday or Friday (the most common days in the week for a weddings), there is usually

Figure 2 Seasonality of marriage (monthly indexes), 1989–2019



Source: Czech Statistical Office; author's calculations.

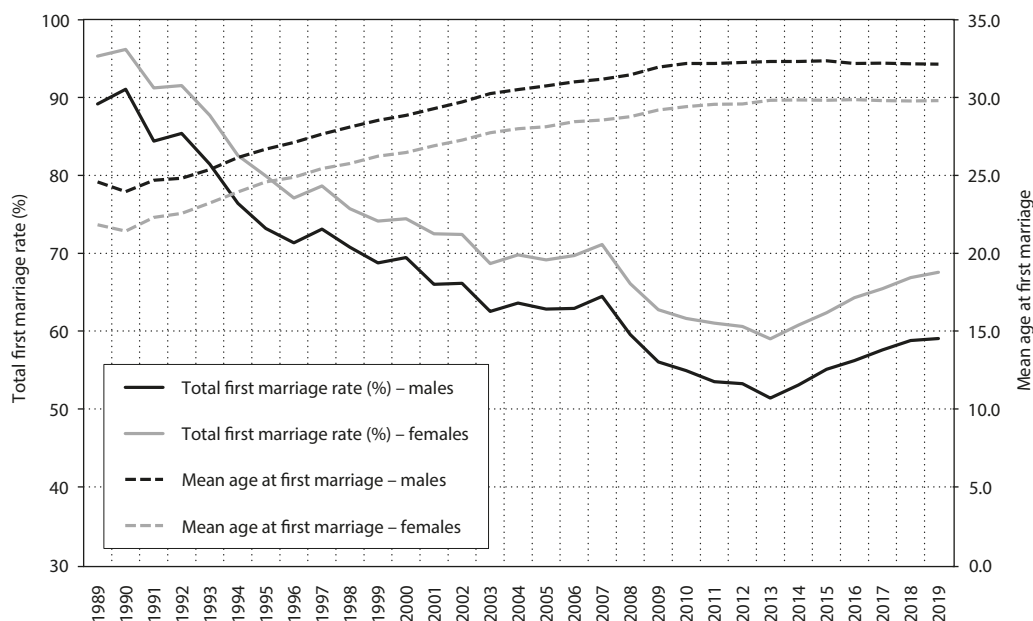
even more interest in the date. This is evidenced by the richest day in the number of marriages in the entire period under review, which was Saturday, July 7, 2007, when there were 4,406 marriages. Other examples of numerically attractive days are Friday, August 8, 2008, when there were 2,226 marriages, and Saturday, August 18, 2018, with 3,259 marriages.

The development of the total marriage rate of singles and the mean age at the time of first marriage indicate that marriage behaviour changed in the years 1989–2019 (Figure 3). At the beginning of the observed period, in 1989, 89.2% of single men and 95.3% of single women entered their first marriage before reaching the age of 50, while marriage order, mortality, and the foreign migration of singles remained unchanged. In the following year, 1990, the values were even slightly higher (91.1% for men and 96.2% for women) and were also the highest values recorded throughout the observed period. In the following years, the first-marriage rate fluctuated, reaching a local maximum in 2007 (64.5% for men and 71.1% for women), but it eventually decreased to a historically low level in 2013 (51.4% for men and 59.1% for women).

for men and 59.0% for women, i.e. 37.8 percentage points and 36.3 percentage points less, respectively, than in 1989). Conversely, since 2014, the values of the indicator have been growing every year, and by 2019 the values had reached 59.0% for men and 67.5% for women. The mean age at which men and women entered their first marriage in 1989 was 24.6 years for men and 21.8 years for women. In 1990, due to early marriages, it decreased even further – to 24.0 years for men and 21.4 years for women. Since 1991, however, it has been growing every year. Significant year-on-year changes in the indicator for both sexes mainly occurred in the period up to the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, after which they decreased, and since 2012 the mean age at first marriage for both sexes has basically stagnated. In 2019, men entered their first marriage on average at the age of 32.1 years and women at the age of 29.8 years. This was an increase of 7.6 years for men 8.0 years for women compared to the start of the observed period.

Evidence of these changes is also provided by changes in the share of singles marrying (based

Figure 3 Total first marriage rates and mean age at first marriage, 1989–2019



Note: First marriage indicators are based on the single decrement primo-nuptiality tables.

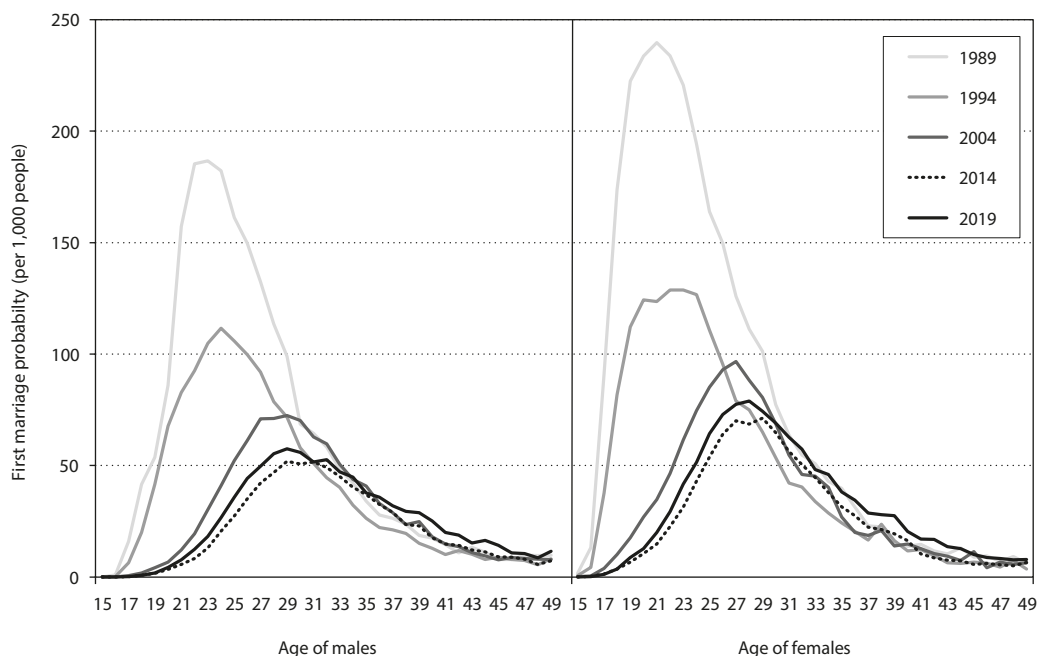
Source: Czech Statistical Office; author's calculations.

on the single decrement primo-nuptiality tables). Compared to 1989, the share of singles marrying increased significantly until 2019. While, for example, only 37.2% of men aged 25 were single in 1989 and only 16.1% of women, by 1989 the share of singles at that age had risen to 93.0% for men and 84.2% for women. Conversely, 10.8% of men and 4.7% of women were still single at age 50 at the beginning of the observed period, while in 2019, 41.0% of men and 32.5% of women were single at that age. These changes reflect the shift in the age of people at first marriage to a higher age and the total lower intensity of the first marriage at the end of the observed period compared to the beginning. However, the shares of singles did not change smoothly. In general, there was a slight increase in the share of singles among older people over time, i.e. previously postponed marriages were later compensated for in both sexes at an older age. From 2014 to 2019, the share of single people decreased (except in the youngest age groups), owing to an increase in the total intensity of marriage in this time period.

In 2019, men of the age of 29 entered into their first marriage with the highest intensity, when more than 57 out of a thousand single men got married. For women, the highest intensity was at the age of 28, when 79 out of a thousand single women got married (Figure 4). The age at which the marriage of singles peaked changed during the observed period, as it moved to an older age, and the maximum intensity also decreased. For comparison, in 1989 the intensity peaked at the age of 23 for men, when marriage intensity reached 187‰ and at the age of 21 for women (240‰). Within the age spectrum, the marriage rate decreased significantly in younger ages compared to the 1990s and did so up until recent years, while it increased slightly in the older ages. The increase in the total intensity of first marriage in the 2014–2019 period was reflected in growth in all age groups, not only as a result of previously postponed marriages, but also as a reflection of a general increase in the marriage rate of singles.

Although changes in the first marriage rate are key to evaluating the development of marriage, about a quarter of all marriages are of a higher order,

Figure 4 First marriage probabilities by sex and age, selected years



Note: Based on the single decrement primo-nuptiality tables.

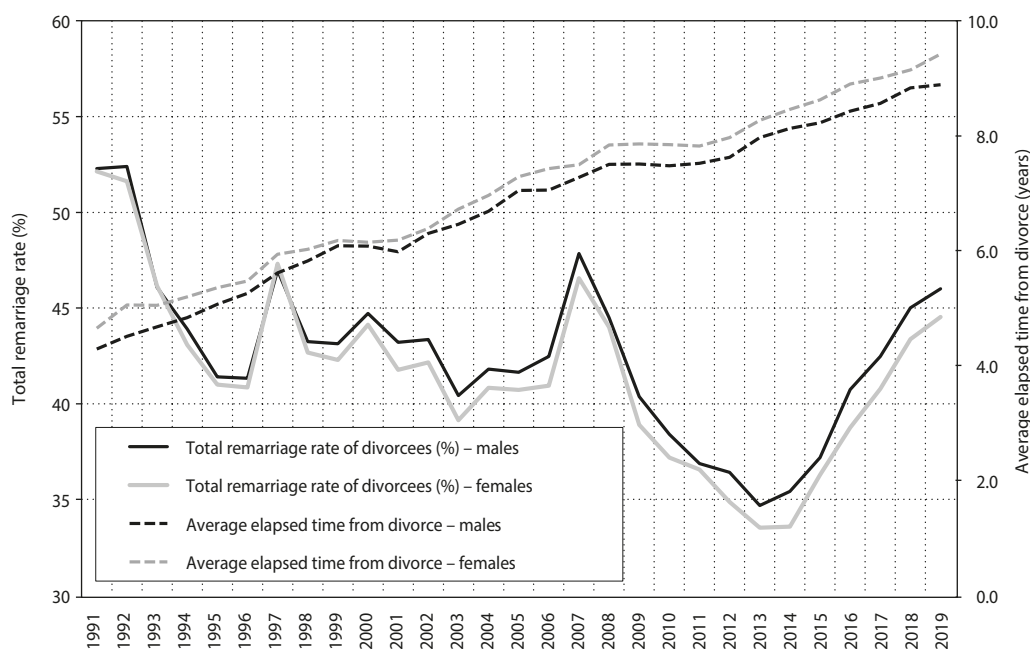
Source: Czech Statistical Office; author's calculations.

so repeated marriage plays a role in evaluating marriage behaviour. Given that it is almost always divorced persons who enter repeated marriages, the total intensity of repeated marriages is usually assessed by the total remarriage rate of divorcees. In 1991 (data are not available for previous years), 52.3% of divorced men and 52.1% of divorced women would remarry if the remarriage rates of divorcees by length of marriage remained unchanged (Figure 5). In the following years, the total remarriage rate of divorced people fluctuated, reaching its lowest level in 2013, when it was 34.7% for men and 33.5% for women. In the last six years, it has been growing alongside first marriage rates. In 2019, if the remarriage rates of divorcees by the length of marriage remained unchanged, 46.0% of divorced men and 44.5% of divorced women would enter into another marriage (these figures are 6.3 percentage points and 7.6 percentage points, respectively, less than in 1991).

The total remarriage rate of divorcees is slightly higher among men than women. The difference

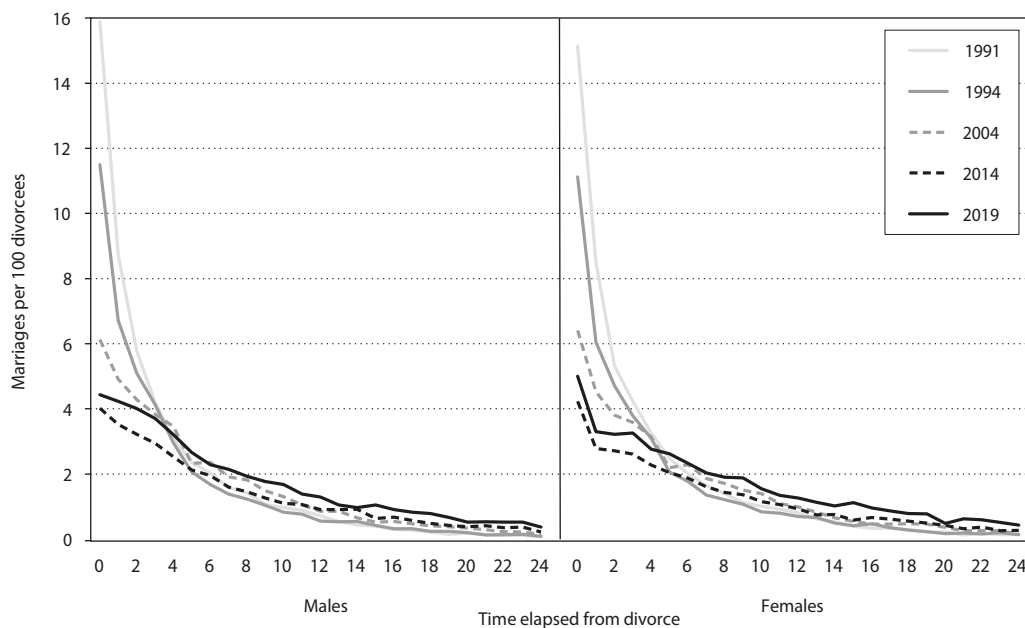
arises within the shorter period after a divorce (up to and including 5 years), when divorced men remarry slightly more often than women (Figure 6). In the case of other lengths of time since divorce (after 6 or more years), the remarriage rate of divorced men and women is almost the same. The remarriage rate of divorced persons is also highest within the period shortly after a divorce, and the remarriage rate of divorcees gradually decreases as the time that has elapsed since the divorce increases. The average length of time from a divorce to a next marriage increased relatively smoothly during the observed period. In 1991 it was 4.3 years for men and 4.8 years for women, while by 2019 it had increased to 8.9 years for men and 9.4 years for women (i.e. a total increase of 4.6 years and 4.8 years, respectively). The increasing interval between a divorce and a next marriage was caused mainly by a decline in the rates of marriage occurring within in the shorter period of time since a divorce and the increase in the remarriage rate after 15 or more years since a divorce.

Figure 5 Total remarriage rate of divorcees and the average length of time after a divorce before remarriage, 1991–2019



Note: The remarriage rates of divorcees are constructed from the distribution of remarriage rates by the length of time elapsed after a divorce.  
Source: Czech Statistical Office; author's calculations.

Figure 6 The remarriage rates of divorcees by sex and the average length of time after a divorce before remarriage, selected years



Source: Czech Statistical Office; author's calculations.

## CHANGES IN THE DIVORCE RATE

Along with changes in marriage behaviour over the past 30 years, the character of divorce has also changed. Development in the 1990s did not bring about any dramatic changes in the divorce regime, but rather changed the external circumstances that affected the level of divorce. The divorce rate was gradually rising before 1989, which had to do with women being able to gain a certain degree of economic independence and to establish contacts at the workplace, and with the poor housing situation, problems with childcare given that women were working full time, and the limited availability of necessary services, etc. (Rychtaříková, 2018). After 1989, the continuing growth of divorce rates was mainly influenced by the rise of individualism and new possibilities for self-realisation (Kocová *et al.*, 2015).

At the beginning of the observed period, a total of 31.4 thousand marriages ended in a divorce (Table 2). In the following years, the number of divorces had a fluctuating trend, but by 2019 the number had fallen to 24.1 thousand, while the declining trend in the number of divorces had been steadier since 2013.

The lowest number of divorces was recorded in 1999 (23.7 thousand), which was connected to the Family Act amendments (e.g. which made it more difficult for marriages with minor children to divorce). Leaving aside 1999, the number of divorces in 2019 was the lowest since 1973. The declining number of divorce was connected to the declining number of marriages in previous decades (until 2013) and to changes in the divorce structure.

Most men and women who divorce are doing so for the first time. The share of repeated divorces in the 1989–2019 period ranged from 17% to 20%. In 85–90% of the cases of repeated divorces, the man or the woman was divorcing for the second time. Until 2014, it was predominantly women who were the ones who filed for a divorce (in 64–68% of cases in 1989–2014), while the man filed for the divorce in 32–36% of cases. Since the beginning of 2014, it has also been possible to file a joint petition for a divorce, but statistical records of this type of divorce exist only since 2015. Gradually, joint petitions for divorce have become the main type, as in 2019 were 51% of divorce petitions filed jointly.



**Table 2 Divorces by order, 1989–2019 (selected years)**

	1989	1994	1999	2004	2009	2014	2019
Total divorces	31,376	30,939	23,657	33,060	29,133	26,764	24,141
Male order of divorce: first order	25,521	25,551	18,825	26,607	23,488	21,391	19,506
second order	4,987	4,648	4,163	5,714	4,973	4,792	4,098
third and higher order	868	740	669	739	672	581	537
Female order of divorce: first order	25,272	25,463	18,878	26,793	23,593	21,582	19,797
second order	5,246	4,748	4,126	5,562	4,944	4,602	3,840
third and higher order	858	728	653	705	596	580	504
Percentage of repeated divorces: males	18.7	17.4	20.4	19.5	19.4	20.1	19.2
females	19.5	17.7	20.2	19.0	19.0	19.4	18.0

Source: Czech Statistical Office; author's calculations.

The age structure of people who divorce has changed with the changes that have occurred in the age structure, with the shift of entry into marriage to an older age, and with the increasing length of marriage before a divorce (Fialová – Kalibová, 2010). In the 1989–2019 period, the number of divorces among couples under the age of 30 significantly decreased (from 29.4% to 4.8% for men, from 40.8% to 9.2% for women). Between 1989 and 2019, the proportion of divorced men and women increased the most among people aged 50 and over (from 8.4% to 27.1% for men and from 4.8% to 17.7% for women). In the terms of five-year age groups, 25–29-year-olds predominated among divorced men until 1995, 30–34-year-olds until 2007, 35–39-year-olds until 2013, and 40–44-year-olds since 2013. In the case of divorced women, a slightly younger age structure is evident, because they generally marry at a younger

age than men. Until 2002, women aged 25–29 were the most represented in the five-year age groups, in 2003–2008 it was women aged 30–34, by 2015 it was women aged 35–39, and in the last four years, as in the case of men, it is women aged 40–44 years.

One of the key factors in a court's decision on a divorce is the number of minor children a couple has, and statistics in 1989–2019 monitored this (Table 3). In the past 30 years, the proportion of divorces without minors has increased (from 27.9% to 41.0%), while, conversely, the proportion of divorces with minor children has decreased (from 72.1% to 59.0%), reflecting both the lower birth rate and the increased proportion of divorces of couples married for a longer time (by which time the children have reached the age of majority). Another reason may be that there has been a change in social attitudes resulting in a decrease in marriages concluded solely because

**Table 3 Divorces by number of minor children, 1989–2019 (selected years)**

	1989	1994	1999	2004	2009	2014	2019
Divorces without minor children	8,754	8,650	9,480	12,255	12,282	11,557	9,905
Divorces with minor children	22,622	22,289	14,177	20,805	16,851	15,207	14,236
including 1 minor child	12,319	12,902	8,199	11,802	9,533	8,265	6,866
2 minor children	8,766	8,124	5,248	7,993	6,538	6,133	6,489
3 and more minor children	1,537	1,263	730	1,010	780	809	881
Number of minor children in divorced marriages	x	33,143	21,005	31,008	25,094	23,119	22,644
Average number of minor children per divorce with minor children	x	1.49	1.48	1.49	1.49	1.52	1.59
Divorcees with minor children (%)	72.1	72.0	59.9	62.9	57.8	56.8	59.0
including 1 minor child (%)	54.5	57.9	57.8	56.7	56.6	54.3	48.2
2 minor children (%)	38.7	36.4	37.0	38.4	38.8	40.3	45.6
3 and more minor children (%)	6.8	5.7	5.1	4.9	4.6	5.3	6.2

Source: Czech Statistical Office; author's calculations.

a woman becomes pregnant (*Langhamrová – Vaňo, 2014*). Available data indicate that 32.0 thousand children were affected by divorce in 1991, while in 1999 the number had decreased to 21.0 thousand due to a change in legislation, and in 2019 the number of minor children registered in the divorce proceedings of their parents was 22.6 thousand. In most divorced families with minor children, there was one child at the time of the divorce. The average number of children per divorced marriage with children increased from 1.52 to 1.59 children in the observed period.

The distribution of divorces according to the duration of the marriage changed significantly. In previous periods, people divorced mainly within the first five years of marriage, but since the 1990s this trend has changed, and divorces are growing also among long-lasting marriages. When considering the length of a marriage before a divorce in five-year intervals, every year since the mid-1990s the most divorces have been found to occur after 5–9 years of marriage (Table 4). In 2019, 19.9% of all divorces occurred after this length of marriage; while in 1989 it was 24.1% (divorces within the first five

years represented 32.1% of divorces in 1989). Since 1989, there has also been a steadily increasing trend in divorces occurring after 25–29 years of marriage and after 30 years. In 1989, 3.3% of marriages were divorced after 25–29 years and 2.0% after 30 or more years; by 2019 their shares had risen to 8.7% and 9.2%, respectively.

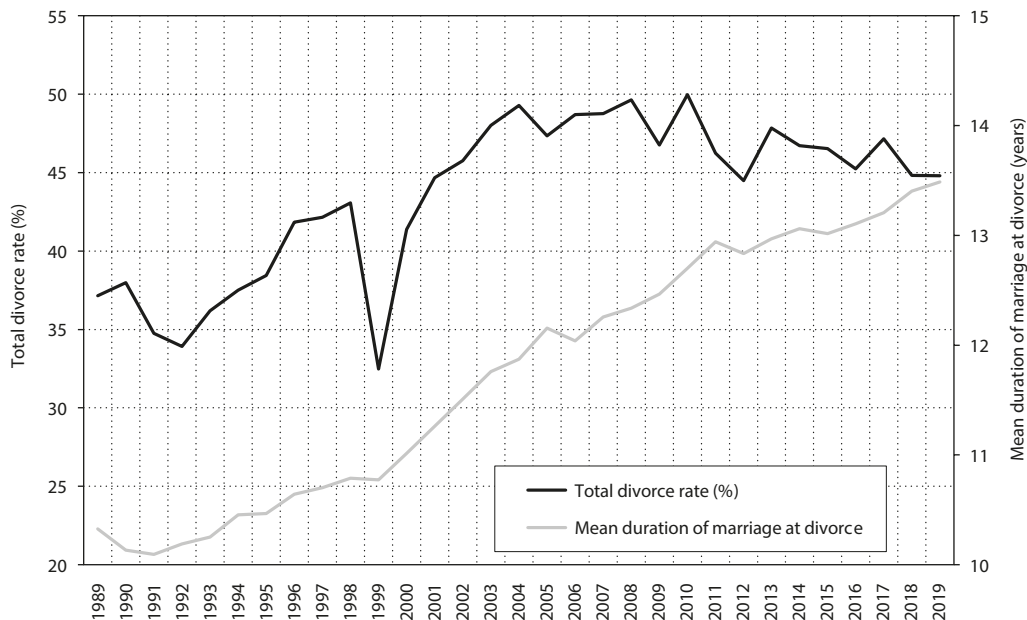
Since the mid-1990s, the intensity of divorce has also been found to peak in the interval of 5–9 years of marriage, with the length of marriage then decreasing (Figure 8). During the years observed here, the divorce rate decreased among the marriages of the shortest lengths, the peak divorce rate widened (within one-year lengths, the divorce interval extended to the usual 2 to 6 years after marriage), and the divorce rate increased in long-lasting marriages. Between 1989 and 2019, the number of divorces per 100 marriages contracted before the respective number of years for the 25–29 year marriage group increased from 0.28 to 0.56 divorces per 100 marriages (reaching a peak of 0.61 in 2017). In the case of divorces that occurred after 30 years or more of marriage there was an increase from 0.08 to 0.28 divorces per 100 marriages (Table 4).

Table 4 Divorces and divorce rates by duration of marriage, 1989–2019 (selected years)

Time elapsed (years)	1989	1994	1999	2004	2009	2014	2019
Divorces by time elapsed since entering into marriage							
0–4	10,076	8,998	5,371	6,019	5,760	4,523	4,450
5–9	7,550	8,375	6,589	7,396	5,925	6,153	4,800
10–14	5,561	4,935	4,418	6,994	4,771	4,298	4,534
15–19	4,142	4,029	2,759	5,439	4,933	3,682	3,444
20–24	2,373	2,749	2,343	3,609	3,899	3,659	2,590
25–29	1,050	1,240	1,407	2,127	2,101	2,343	2,097
30+	624	613	770	1,476	1,744	2,106	2,226
Divorce rates by time elapsed since entering into marriage							
0–4	2.46	2.41	1.93	2.30	2.18	1.99	1.74
5–9	1.91	2.05	1.77	2.66	2.26	2.33	2.11
10–14	1.19	1.25	1.08	1.88	1.72	1.64	1.72
15–19	0.88	0.86	0.70	1.33	1.32	1.33	1.32
20–24	0.55	0.58	0.50	0.91	0.95	0.98	0.93
25–29	0.28	0.29	0.30	0.46	0.53	0.57	0.56
30+	0.08	0.08	0.10	0.16	0.19	0.24	0.28

Source: Czech Statistical Office; author's calculations.

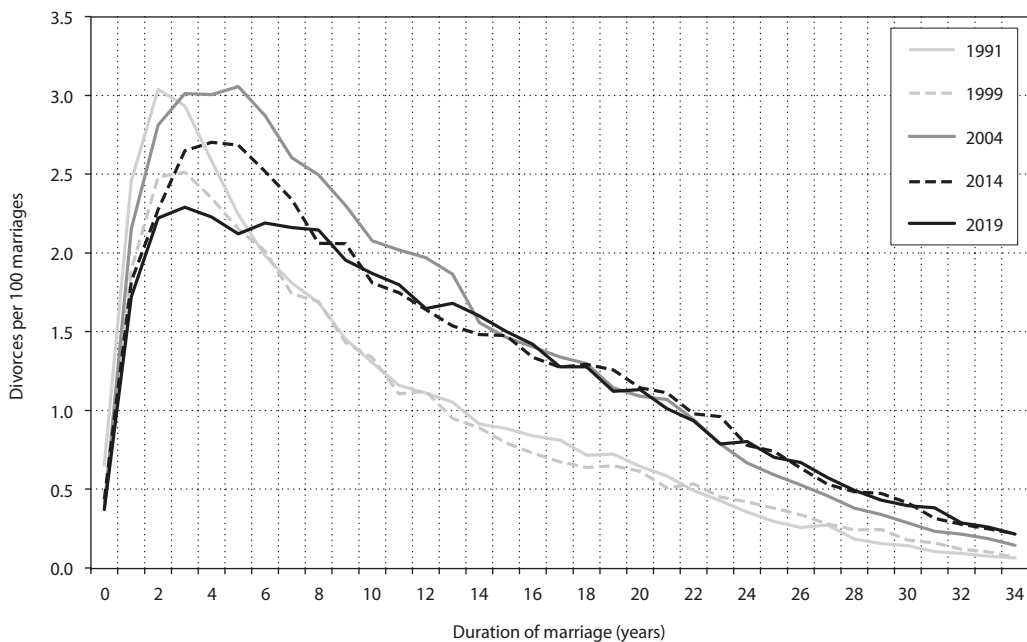
Figure 7 Total divorce rate and mean duration of marriage at divorce, 1989–2019



Note: Total divorce rate and mean duration of marriage at divorce based on the distribution of reduced divorce rates by time elapsed since entering into marriage.

Source: Czech Statistical Office; author's calculations.

Figure 8 Divorce by duration of marriage, selected years



Source: Czech Statistical Office; author's calculations.

The increase in the divorce rate of long-term marriages is also related to the increase in the mean duration of marriages. It has been growing since the 1990s with smaller fluctuations. While in 1989 it was 10.3 years, by 2019 it was already 13.5 years, and thus it was 3.2 years longer than at the beginning of the period (Figure 7). If the intensities of divorce by length of marriage remained at the level of 1989, 37.1% of marriages would end in divorce. Up to 2001, the total divorce rate grew irregularly, except for a significant decrease to 32.5% in 1999. Since 2001, the total divorce rate in the Czech Republic has been in the range of 45–50% and reached its highest level at 50.0% in 2010, while its lowest level was in 2012 at 44.5%. In 2019, 44.8% of marriages would end in divorce, which is 7.7 percentage points higher than in 1989.

## CHANGES IN POPULATION STRUCTURE BY MARITAL STATUS

The structure of the population by marital status reflects changes in age structure, marriage, divorce, and mortality. The change in family behaviour since the 1990s, which led to a decline in marriage and a high level of divorce, and the change in age structure and decrease in mortality have together led to an increase in the proportion of single and divorced people and slightly also in the share of widowed persons in the past 30 years.

At the end of 1989, a total of 19.8% of the population aged 15 and over were single *de jure* (Table 5). During the observed period, their share grew steadily every year and reached 31.7% in 2019, which was 11.9 percentage points more than in 1989. The difference in the share of singles among men and among women has long hovered around nine to ten percentage points. In 1989, 24.6% of men were single and 15.4% of women were single, and by 2019 their shares had increased by 12.4 percentage points for men and 11.2 percentage points for women. However, married men and women still make up the majority group in the population of the Czech Republic. Their share has, however, been declining (more significantly since the early 1990s). In 1989, 63.5% of the total population aged 15 and over were married, 66.3% in the case of men and 61.0% in the case of women.

The share of married people in the total population fell below 50% for the first time in 2010 (for men only in 2013, for women earlier, already in 2007). In the last year observed here, 47.8% of men, 45.3% of women, and 46.5% of the total population aged 15 and over were married. The share of divorced persons has shown a steadily growing trend since the 1960s. Between 1989 and 2019, the share of divorced persons increased from 7.0% to 13.6%, and the share increased by 6.1 percentage points to 12.3% for men and by 7.3 percentage points to 15.0% for women. What lies behind the higher proportion of divorced women (compared to men) is the fact that men are slightly more likely to marry after divorce (*Fialová – Kalibová, 2010*). The share of widowed persons in the population changed the least during the observed period, decreasing from 9.7% to 8.2%. The decrease was mainly the result of a decrease in the share of widows among women (from 16.0% to 13.2%), thanks to a faster improvement in male mortality. There tend to be significantly fewer widowers among men, and during the observed period there were around 3%.

The population structure by marital status has changed over time not only in terms of the total population aged 15+ years, but also in terms of age, and the changes have occurred with different degrees of intensity and in different directions. If we look at the years 1989 and 2019, the largest changes occurred among men aged 25–34 and women aged 20–29. In these age categories, the shares of single people increased the most, while the shares of married people decreased the most. Between 1989 and 2019, the proportion of single men increased by 57 percentage points to 85.0% in the 25–29 age group and by 51 percentage points to 60.0% in the 30–34 age group; the proportion of single women increased by 62 percentage points to 73.1% in the 25–29 age group and by 59 percentage points to 94.0% in the 20–24 age group. Between 1989 and 2019, the share of married men decreased the most in the 25–29 age group (by 54 percentage points to 14.2%) and in the 30–34 age group (by 47 percentage points to 31.1%). The biggest decrease in the number of married women was in the 25–29 age group, where it fell by 57 percentage points to 25.1%, and in the 20–24 age group, declining by 56 percentage points to 5.8% in 2019.

Table 5 Population 15+ years by sex and marital status, 1989–2019 (selected years) (31 Dec.)

Sex, marital status	Population (thousands)			Percentage of the population 15+ years						
	1989	2004	2019	1989	1994	1999	2004	2009	2014	2019
Total - single	1,606.9	2,368.9	2,849.0	19.8	22.4	24.9	27.2	29.6	30.8	31.7
- married	5,153.1	4,638.0	4,176.2	63.5	60.2	57.1	53.3	50.5	47.8	46.5
- divorced	563.6	922.2	1,225.5	7.0	7.8	9.1	10.6	11.6	13.0	13.6
- widowed	785.8	764.6	733.1	9.7	9.6	8.9	8.8	8.3	8.4	8.2
Males - single	957.1	1,355.9	1,628.1	24.6	27.2	29.8	32.3	34.7	36.0	37.0
- married	2,573.6	2,317.2	2,099.6	66.3	62.8	59.3	55.2	52.0	49.2	47.8
- divorced	240.7	404.7	539.0	6.2	7.0	8.2	9.6	10.5	11.8	12.3
- widowed	111.7	118.9	129.0	2.9	3.0	2.7	2.8	2.7	3.0	2.9
Females - single	649.8	1,012.9	1,220.9	15.4	17.8	20.3	22.5	24.8	25.7	26.6
- married	2,579.5	2,320.8	2,076.5	61.0	57.9	55.0	51.6	49.0	46.5	45.3
- divorced	322.9	517.5	686.5	7.6	8.6	10.0	11.5	12.7	14.2	15.0
- widowed	674.1	645.7	604.1	16.0	15.6	14.8	14.4	13.6	13.6	13.2

Source: Czech Statistical Office; author's calculations.

These changes are due to a reduction in the intensity of nuptiality and the postponement of entry into marriage. Owing to the rising level of divorce, the increasing average length of marriages at divorce, and the postponement of marriage to a higher age, the proportion of divorced persons increased over time, especially among people over the age of 45. In 2019, the largest share of divorcees by five-year age groups was in the 50–54 age group, both for men (25.3%) and for women (29.2%). In 1989, by contrast, the maximum shares were significantly lower and were recorded for both men and women in the 40–44 age group (10.8% for men and 12.5% for women). The proportion of widows was affected by the improving mortality rate, and there was a significant decrease in the number of widows among women (decreasing by as much as 24 percentage points to 32.0% in the 70–74 age group).

## SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

The marriage rate, divorce rate, and the associated population structure by marital status significantly changed after 1989. Until the early 1990s, marital behaviour was dominated by a model of frequent and early marriage. The new opportunities ushered in by the democratic system have transformed this model into one in which people marry at a later

age and less often. The links between marriage and family have weakened. The number of long-term unmarried cohabitations has increased and more and more children are being born out of wedlock. There are more and more young people who do not favour marriage at all (*Langhamrová – Vaňo, 2014*).

The mean age at first (and therefore also the next) marriage shifted to a higher age, and the proportion of those who never entered into a marriage increased. Marriage has lost its former significance and, unlike the family, does not have as firm a place in the value ladder of today's society as it used to (*Kuchařová et al., 2019*). Conversely, more and more unmarried cohabitation changes from marriage to trial to a lasting relationship (*Štátná – Palonciová, 2012*). For example, in the 2017 CVVM survey, almost three-fifths of respondents believed that it is alright to live together without planning to marry (*CVVM, 2017*). There are various factors that may lead people to just postpone getting married, such as economic insecurity, (relative) poverty, and / or a precarious position in the labour market (*Hašková – Rabušic, 2008*). Another important factor is the increasing share of the population who have higher education, which can lead to marriage being postponed to a later age (*Hamplová, 2006*).

The intensity of the marriage rate decreased sharply for singles and even fluctuated for divorced

persons. The average time between divorce and re-marriage has increased, both because people do not remarry soon after a divorce or after being divorced for more than 15 years. The seasonality of weddings also changed; marriages began to be concentrated more in the summer months, and the month of May also became more popular as the influence of the May superstition weakened. In the last six years, marriage has experienced a revival, and marriages are increasing among both singles and divorcees. This is mainly due to the influence of intensity, i.e. people enter into marriage more often.

The divorce rate did not change dramatically after 1989, but rather continued the trends that had begun before the transition to a democratic system. However, it was affected by new factors; the rise in the divorce rate was no longer driven by the high economic activity of women, but rather by individualism and a general openness to divorce. In the observed period, the number of divorces was most affected by the Family Act amendments of 1998, which led to a decline in the number of divorces in 1999. With changes in the age structure, the postponement of marriage altered the age structure of divorcees. There has been a significant decrease in divorces among couples under the age of 30, and there has been an increase in divorces among older people. At the end of the

observed period, persons aged 40–44 predominated among divorced men and women. Because of lower birth rates fewer marriages taking place due to an unplanned pregnancy, there has been a reduction in divorces among couples with minor children. Divorce rates also increased for long-term marriages and the mean duration of marriages increased. Divorce rates reached their highest level in 2010, when half of all marriages divorced.

Changes in the marriage and divorce rates were reflected in the structure of the population by marital status. In the past 30 years, there has been an increase in the share of single and divorced people and, conversely, a decrease in the proportion of people living in a marriage and also, slightly, in the share of widowed persons.

Demographic developments after the transition to a democratic system have resulted in the fact that families today are less stable than they were before 1989. At the same time, the increase in life expectancy has led to the possibility of people starting a second family and living more years with a chosen partner (Rychtaříková, 2007). The increase in marriage rates and the moderation in the growth [the slower rise] in divorce rates in recent years suggest a revival of interest in entering into marriage and a possible reversal of the negative developments in previous years.

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