

### **SF3.2: Family dissolution and children**

#### *Definitions and methodology*

SF3.1 shows that the frequency of divorce has increased over the last decades. Partnership dissolution may happen before partners have given birth to any child or once children have become adult and have left parental home. However, in many cases, divorce occurs while children are still in the household.

This indicator presents the percentage distribution of divorces legislated by number of dependent children (Table SF3.2.A). This percentage refers to the number of divorces and not to the number of persons divorcing. “Divorce” is here defined as the final legal dissolutions of a marriage, which confer on the parties the right to remarry as defined by the laws of each country or area. Legal separations which do not allow remarriage are excluded from divorce statistics.

The percentage of divorce is broken down by the number of children under the age of 18 who depend on either of the parties to a divorce at the time the petition for divorce is filed. Children of any previous partnership are also included.

These statistics are derived from civil registration data. Not all countries provide such statistics on a regular basis however, and the latest year available vary from 2003 to 2007 (see comparability and data issues). All the persons living within the borders of a country are covered, unless otherwise specified.

Partnership dissolution can also happen to couples who are not legally married. Charts SF3.2.A and B cast light on the proportion of either separated or divorced adults in relation with the number of children they ever had. This information is taken from the World Values Surveys in which respondents are asked about their marital status at the time of the survey. The experience of partnership dissolution is partially addressed through these surveys however, since a separation is not identified when parents have entered into a new partnership.

#### *Key findings*

Table SF3.2.A shows that more than half of the divorces legislated involves dependent children in a large majority of OECD countries. The proportion is above two thirds of divorces in Luxembourg, the Slovak Republic and Portugal. In most countries, one fifth or more of divorces are granted to partners with one dependent child. However, in general, the risk of divorce decreases with family size.

Other relevant indicators: Family size and composition (SF1.1); Fertility rates (SF2.1); Mean age of mother at first childbirth (SF2.3) and Share of births outside marriage (SF2.4); Marriage and divorce rates (SF3.1); and, Cohabitation rates and prevalence of other forms of partnership (SF3.3).

**Table SF3.2.A: Distribution of divorces by number of children involved, 2007 or latest year available<sup>1</sup>**

	Divorce without any child	Divorces involving children				Unknown
		Total	1 child	2 children	3 or more children	
Australia	50.7	49.3	18.5	21.2	9.6	..
Austria <sup>2</sup>	42.5	57.5	23.5	25.3	8.7	..
Bulgaria <sup>3</sup>	48.0	52.0	39.1	12.0	1.0	..
Cyprus <sup>4,5</sup>	51.2	48.8	26.9	17.5	4.4	..
Czech Republic	40.9	59.1	33.2	23.1	2.8	..
Estonia	47.4	52.6	34.5	15.0	3.1	..
Finland <sup>6</sup>	36.6	63.4	22.1	26.1	15.3	..
France <sup>7</sup>	42.6	57.4	24.4	23.6	9.4	..
Germany	51.0	49.0	26.4	18.1	4.6	..
Greece	29.7	61.4	27.4	27.4	6.6	8.9
Hungary <sup>8</sup>	39.5	60.5	32.8	20.8	7.0	..
Iceland	39.8	60.2	23.5	25.0	11.7	..
Italy	62.9	37.1	26.8	9.3	0.9	..
Japan <sup>9</sup>	43.2	56.8	26.7	22.3	7.8	..
Korea <sup>10</sup>	38.8	60.7	26.8	29.6	4.4	0.5
Latvia	41.8	58.2	41.4	14.1	2.7	..
Lithuania	37.3	62.7	41.9	17.3	3.5	..
Luxembourg	33.6	66.4	25.4	29.4	11.6	..
Mexico	24.3	58.4	28.6	20.7	9.2	1.8
Netherlands	43.8	56.2	20.3	26.8	9.2	..
New Zealand	55.3	44.7	18.0	19.3	7.5	..
Norway <sup>11</sup>	43.8	56.2	23.3	23.8	9.0	..
Poland	38.7	61.3	39.3	17.5	4.4	..
Portugal	29.5	70.5	39.5	24.9	6.2	..
Romania	52.1	47.9	35.3	10.6	1.9	..
Slovak Republic	34.3	65.7	38.5	22.5	4.7	..
Slovenia	48.5	51.5	27.0	22.0	2.5	0.0
Spain	44.9	49.0	31.8	15.1	2.0	6.1
Sweden	42.7	56.6	23.4	22.9	10.3	0.7
Switzerland	54.9	45.1	21.8	18.7	4.6	..
Turkey	43.5	56.5	23.3	19.5	13.7	..
United Kingdom	32.0	54.6	21.9	23.0	9.7	..

1) 2006: Cyprus, France, Korea, Italy; 2005: Greece, Spain; 2003: Portugal; United Kingdom, and Turkey.

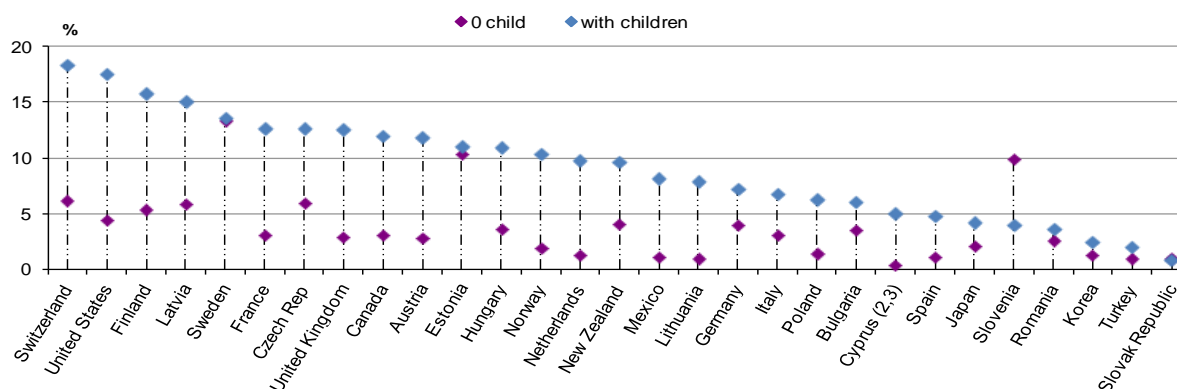
2) Footnote by Turkey: The information in this document with reference to "Cyprus" relates to the southern part of the Island. There is no single authority representing both Turkish and Greek Cypriot people on the Island. Turkey recognizes the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus (TRNC). Until a lasting and equitable solution is found within the context of United Nations, Turkey shall preserve its position concerning the "Cyprus issue".

3) Footnote by all the European Union Member States of the OECD and the European Commission: The Republic of Cyprus is recognized by all members of the United Nations with the exception of Turkey. The information in this document relates to the area under the effective control of the Government of the Republic of Cyprus.

Source: Demographic Yearbook, United Nations – as at August 2011.

Chart SF3.2.A shows that adults with children are more likely to divorce or separate than childless adults. The difference is very small, however, in countries at the right hand side of the chart – Japan, Korea, Turkey and the Slovak Republic) where divorce rates remain low.

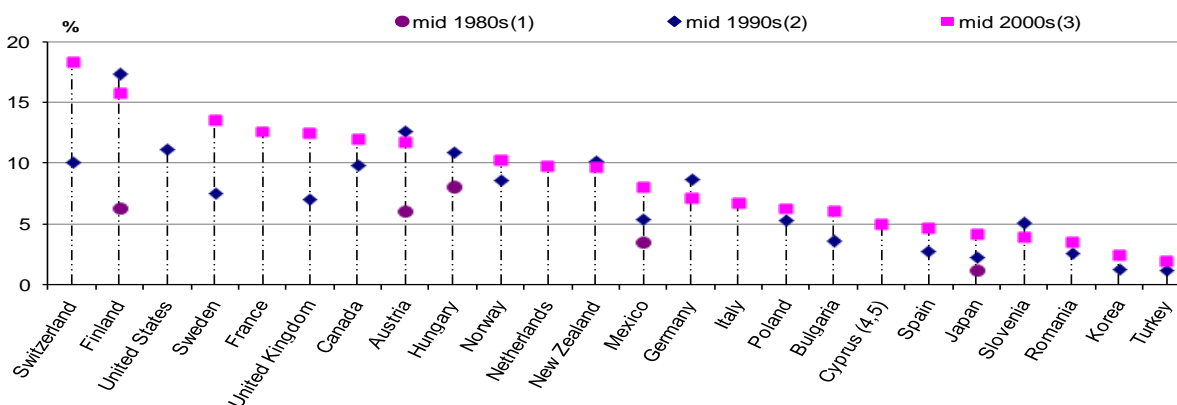
**Chart SF3.2.A: Proportion of divorced or separated adults with or without children, 2007 or latest year available<sup>1</sup>**



1) 2007: Spain, Switzerland, Turkey; 2006: Bulgaria, Canada, Cyprus, France, Germany, Netherlands, Sweden, United Kingdom; 2005: Australia, Finland, Italy, Mexico, Romania, Slovenia; 2004: New Zealand; 2001: Korea; 1999: Latvia, Lithuania, United States; 1998: Slovak Republic; 1996: Estonia.  
 2) and 3) see footnotes in Table SF3.2.A.

The likelihood of parents to divorce or separate has increased across OECD countries since the mid-1980s (Chart SF3.2.B). This increase has been particularly high in Switzerland and Finland where the proportion of parents divorcing/separating is at 15% significantly higher than in other countries.

**Chart SF3.2.B: Evolution of the percentage of divorced or separated adults with children**



1) 1981: Australia, Belgium, Denmark, France, Ireland, Italy, Japan, Netherlands, Spain; 1982: Canada, Hungary, Norway, Sweden; 1984: Iceland; 1990: Austria, Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Estonia, Finland, Korea, Lithuania, Mexico, Poland, Slovak Republic.  
 2) 1995: Australia, Spain; 1996: Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Korea, Mexico, Norway, Sweden, Turkey; 1998: Hungary, New Zealand, Slovak Republic; 1999: France, Germany, Greece, Iceland, Ireland, Italy, Latvia Lithuania, Luxembourg, Netherlands, Poland, Romania and the United States; 2000: Canada, Finland and Japan,  
 3) 2001: Korea; 2004: New Zealand; 2005: Australia, Finland, Italy, Mexico, Romania, Slovenia; 2006: Bulgaria, Canada, Cyprus, France, Germany, Netherlands, Sweden, United Kingdom, and the United States; 2007: Spain, Switzerland and Turkey.

### *Comparability and data issues*

Data on divorce reproduced in table SF3.2.A are derived from civil registers of divorces, as reported in the UN Demographic Yearbook. Divorce, like marriage, is a legal event, and this has implications for international comparability of data. Divorce has been defined, for statistical purposes, in terms of the laws of individual countries. However, the laws pertaining to divorce vary considerably from one country to other, and this variation also affects the incidence of divorce, which is relatively low in countries where divorce decrees are difficult to obtain. In some countries (Hungary), annulments and/or legal separations may be included in the data, but their incidence is low.

Data on divorces by number of children for Belgium and Canada are available in the UN *Demographic Yearbook* but have not been reproduced in table SF3.2.A because of comparability problems. In Belgium, the total number of divorce is estimated but the involvement of children is frequently unknown. In Canada, the involvement of children is identified only if the care arrangements are stipulated by the Court.

Not all countries provide registered statistics on divorce however, in which case survey-based data can be used. For example, the American Community Survey carried out in 2008 in the United States can be used to determine which adults divorced in the past year, and these data will be included in the indicator as soon as they become available.

The World Values Survey (WVS) is a worldwide network of representative national surveys carried out in 97 societies covering almost 90 percent of the world's population. Five waves of surveys have been released from 1981 to 2007. The last wave was carried out over the 2005-2007 period. Sample sizes in OECD countries varied from approximately 1000 individuals in France, the Netherlands, New Zealand, Poland or the United Kingdom to more than 2000 in Canada or Germany. The limited sample size affect the consistency of time series derived from this survey.

Sources and further reading: Andersson G. 2002, Children's experience of family disruption and family formation: Evidence from 16 FFS countries, *Demographic Research* 7(7), 343-347; Garib G, Th. Martin Garcia, J. Dronkers (2007), "Are the effects of different family forms on childrens' education performance related to the demographic characteristics and family policies in modern societies?", in Moerbeek H., A. Nierhof, J. VAN Ophem *Changing families and their lifestyle*, Wageningen Academic Publishers; OECD 2009, *Doing Better for Children*, Paris; OECD 2011, *Doing Better for Families*, Paris