

## 2.2 MARITAL STATUS IN PRAGUE

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The structure of population by marital status reflects long-term effects of a number of factors, such as demographic and economic situation of the area, attitudes and values of the population or the state family policy and legislation. The development of the population structure in Czechia by marital status has felt the impact of both world wars, economic depression in the 1930s, “pro-family” approach of the communist regime and changes in the demographic behaviour reflected in the age structure of the population. However, the turn which occurred after 1989 cannot be explained by these factors alone. We are currently witnessing changes in the value system of society, including changing attitudes towards the institution of marriage (Fialová 2006)<sup>1</sup>. In Czechia, there is an increasing number of couples living in unmarried cohabitation, people living alone (singles), children born out of wedlock, an increasing age at marriage and increasing age of women at first childbirth (Bartoňová 2005, Fialová 2005, Tomášek 2006, Chaloupková 2011). While some consider this shift problematic, others describe it as an inevitable consequence of new opportunities for self-fulfilment and differentiation of lifestyles (Šamanová 2006, Tomášek 2006).

The specialized map aims to assess the development and spatial differentiation of the population structure in Prague by marital status in the course of the 20<sup>th</sup> and early 21<sup>st</sup> century. The data are based on censuses and apply to population older than 15 years. Despite excluding children, the data are influenced by the age structure of the population, especially by the number/percentage of singles (marriage may be entered into only by people who have reached age of majority, which was 21 years until 1945, today it is 18 years) and widowed persons (it is also linked to the percentage of older people in the population). In 1921–1950, the results refer to the actual population, in 1980–2001 to permanent residents and in 2011 to usually resident population. All analyses are based only on the amount of people who stated their marital status in the census form. The share of those who did not state it was highest in 2011 when it amounted to 1%<sup>2</sup>.

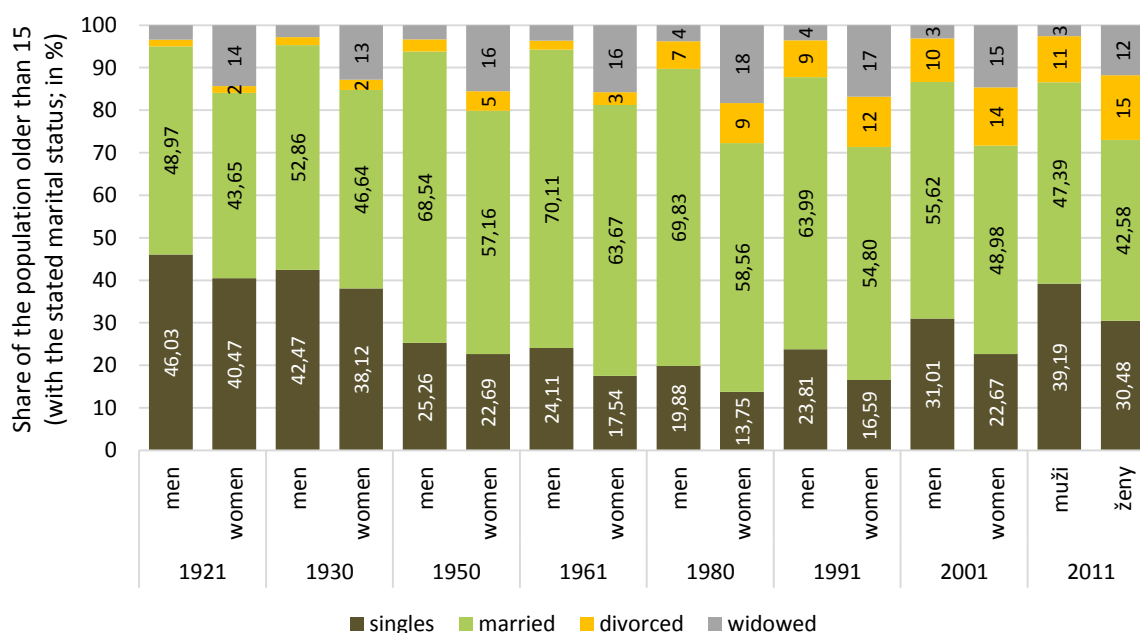
The map sheet and Figure 2.2.1 show profound changes in the population structure by marital status in Prague in the course of the 20<sup>th</sup> and early 21<sup>st</sup> century. In the interwar period there was a very high share of singles as a consequence of the relatively low marriage rate in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, deepened by the First World War. While the early 19<sup>th</sup> century was still characterized by a high marriage rate and low marriage age (Fialová 1987), approximately in the mid-1920s there was a turning point. The age at marriage

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<sup>1</sup> Not everyone sees changes in the family and reproductive behaviour as a result of changing values, some point out the economic factor (lower living standards, financial uncertainty; see also Šídlo 2008).

<sup>2</sup> A high share of people who did not state their marital status in the 2011 census is evident in some cadastral territories of central Prague (Staré Město 17 %, Malá Strana 13 % and Nové Město 11 %).

started to increase and part of the population did not get married at all (Fialová 1987)<sup>3</sup>. The high share of singles in the interwar period was also influenced by the young age structure of population in Prague (see map sheet section B Age structure in Prague). Apart from the decrease in marriage rate during the war and the subsequent post-war compensation, the 1920s and 1930s are considered as a relatively stable period (see Figure 2.2.2; Fialová 2006). The tendency of postponing marriage until a later age remained (Šubrtová 2006) and Fialová (2006) states that 25 years for women and 30 years for men was the former standard age of entering into marriage<sup>4</sup>. The share of singles in Prague was by 6 percentage points higher than in Czechia. Singles concentrated more in the central parts of Prague and wealthy neighbourhoods of the inner city (e.g. Vinohrady). On the contrary, marriages were more often entered into by people living on the outskirts of Prague with rural character and working-class neighbourhoods of the inner city. Marital status of the population was linked to the social status of the neighbourhoods (Boháč 1923).



**Figure 2.2.1:** The population structure by marital status in the years of the censuses, 1921–2011

**Source:** ČSÚ, 1961, 1980, 1991, 2001, 2011; SÚS, 1928, 1934

*Note:* Data from 2011 also include people in registered partnerships

In retrospect, the share of divorced persons was low in the 1920s and 1930s. Besides legal reasons (members of the Roman Catholic Church could divorce only since 1919), it was caused by the fact that the overall societal climate did not favour divorce. However, Boháč (1923) claims that the number of divorced and separated persons increased manifold in comparison with the previous development. On the contrary, when taking

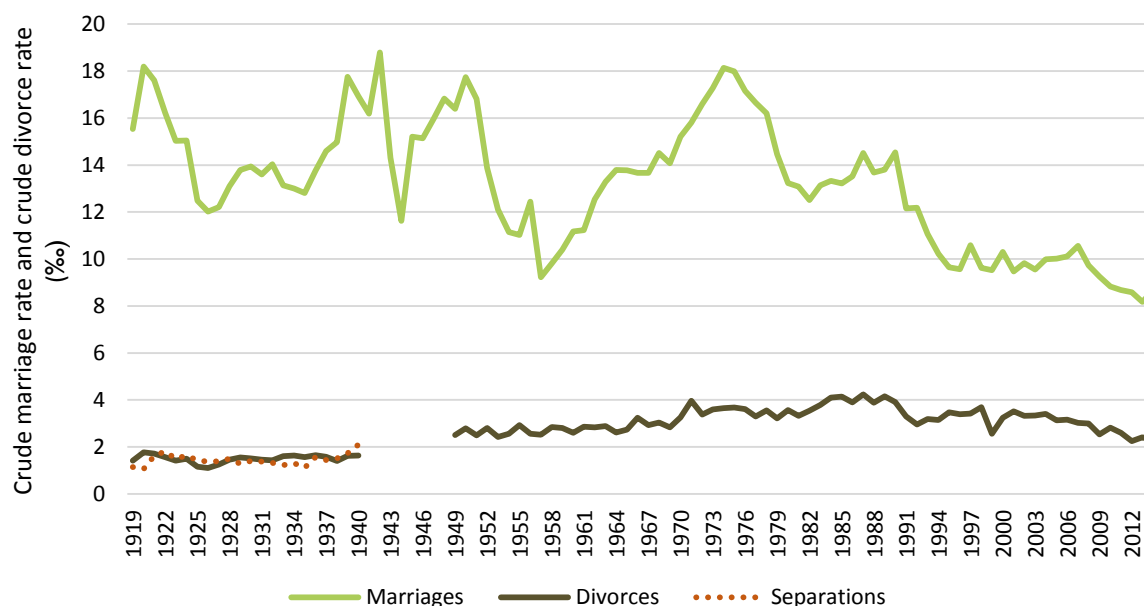
<sup>3</sup> This does not apply to domestic servants, where this trend was already observed earlier (Fialová 1987).

<sup>4</sup> The age of majority was lowered to 21 years only in 1918 (from 24 years).

into account the young age structure, the share of widowed persons, women in particular, was relatively high, which is mainly a consequence of the First World War (Boháč 1923).

After the war, the age at marriage was decreasing again and the number and share of married women and men was increasing at the expense of singles (Jureček 1966). In the first post-war census in 1950, the newly established trend already started to manifest itself. The share of singles remained highest in the central city and there was also a difference between the right-bank (higher share of singles) and left-bank part of the city. However, the share of singles in Prague reached the mean value of Czechia. On the contrary, the share of divorced persons in Prague remained above average despite the fact that since the end of the First World War the divorce rate had the slowest increase (Vitouš et al. 1963). The newly established trend of an increasing share of married persons in the population reached its peak in the 1960s and approximately in the mid-1960s began to stagnate (see Figure 2.2.1). Stagnation or a slight decline continued despite the increasing marriage rate in the 1970s (see Figure 2.2.2, Fialová 1991). The share of married persons in population at that time was not decreasing at the expense of singles, but rather the divorced and widowed. This was most apparent among women due to the excess mortality of men and a lower rate of re-married women than men (Kučera 1994). The map sheet depicting the structure of population by marital status in 1980 shows a relatively low spatial differentiation in comparison with the previous period. The share of singles in population was very low throughout the city, slight differences may be seen in the share of divorced persons between the central neighbourhoods and the rest of the city and in the share of widowed persons between the older and newer neighbourhoods. Musil (1977) describes socialist Prague as a city with a family character different from typical metropolitan populations.

Post-revolutionary period "establishes a new mode of demographic behaviour, both the form and nature of family life" (Kučera, Fialová 1996, p. 6). The annual number of marriages is decreasing (see Figure 2.2.2), marriages are postponed to a later age and there is an increase in the number of de facto unions and tolerance towards them (Fialová 2006). The share of singles in the population began to increase again in the 1990s, even though it did not reach the pre-war level, mainly due to the older age structure in present-day Prague. The share of divorced persons increased as well. Despite the decline in the marriage rate and postponing marriage to a later age, the divorce rate is high in Prague and Czechia as well (Kučera 2008). In the contemporary period the territorial differentiation has deepened again. An above-average share of single and divorced persons is again evident in the city centre and inner city neighbourhoods. The highest share of singles is in the cadastral territories Vyšehrad, Vysočany and Nové Město, divorced persons in Nusle and Karlín. Several housing estates (e.g. Černý Most, Stodůlky) also show a high share of singles. At present, however, a connection between the marital status and the social status of neighbourhoods would be hard to find.



**Figure 2.2.2:** Marriage, divorce and separation rates per 1000 inhabitants in 1919–2014

**Source:** ČSÚ, 2014

*Note 1:* Data from 1945 and 1946 do not include German inhabitants.

*Note 2:* Until 1950, there were two forms of marriage termination: separation (legal termination) and divorce (without legal termination).

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