



DRŽAVNI ZAVOD ZA STATISTIKU
REPUBLIKE HRVATSKE
CROATIAN BUREAU OF STATISTICS

INTERESTING FACTS

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For better or for worse...

There is a funny proverb which says that marriage is a mutual attempt to solve common problems that you did not have before getting married. Whether you believe in marriage as an institution or not, the fact is that in Croatia the tradition of marriage is still very much strong, but looking at the trends over several decades, it is clear that they are changing.

The number of new marriages nearly halved

According to the 2011 Census, out of the total population aged 30 years and over, 66.1% of them were married, while 13.8% of people never got married. There were 14.3% widows/widowers and 5.5% divorced persons. Looking at the past, it can be seen that the number of new marriages has had a declining trend in the last half century. More specifically, in 2015, there were nearly half as much new marriages as back in the 1950s. Looking at the rates, that is, the number of new marriages per 1 000 inhabitants, it is evident how drastic a change it is. Namely, in 1950, the rate of new marriages was 11.4 and in the years that followed, the trend of decline continued. In 2015, the rate was 4.7, that is, it decreased two and a half times compared to the 1950s.

The data on the EU level do not differ much from the data for Croatia. According to Eurostat¹⁾ data, the rate of new marriages per 1 000 inhabitants in EU-28 countries amounted to 4.2 in 2011, the last year in which data are available for all member countries, which is also almost half as much as, for example, in 1965, when the rate was 7.8. In terms of individual countries, in 2011, Lithuanians had the highest rate of marriages – 6.2, while Bulgarians had the lowest rate – 2.9.

What are the most popular months for saying the fateful 'yes'?

In addition to the fact that the number of new marriages each year is sharply decreasing, a change in trend can also be seen in the choice of season for the wedding. In the fifties, sixties and seventies of the 20th century, the most popular months for saying the fateful "yes" were January, February and December. In the eighties, winter months were replaced by April. In the last fifteen years, most new marriages were formed in late summer and early autumn, in

1) Eurostat; Key figures on Europe- 2016 edition (<http://bit.ly/2kKldfc>)

September and October. Thus, for example, in January 2015, there were only 754 new marriages, which is about seven times less than in January 1960. In December 2015, there were four times less new marriages than in 1970.

Decrease in the number of religious and an increase in the number of civil marriages

Over the years, another trend can also be seen, the one that refers to the forming of new marriages. Namely, observed since 2000, the number of civil marriages has been growing, followed with a steady decline in the number of religious marriages. Although in 2015, out of the total number of new marriages there were slightly more new religious marriages, namely 55.9%, compared to 2000, the figure dropped by almost a quarter, while the number of civil marriages increased by 13%.

The average age of bride and groom increased by five years

Due to a complex of socio-economic factors which indirectly affect entering into marriage, the average age of bride and groom at first marriage is steadily increasing over the years. Thus, for example, in 1960 the average age of brides at first marriage was 22.6 years and 25.8 years for grooms, while in the next half century the average age increased by five years. So, in 2015, average bride was 28.2 years old and groom 31 years old.

The greatest age difference between bride and groom - 69 years

It is known that love knows no boundaries, not even those of age, so it is not surprising that in the last thirty years many glaring examples of this can be found. However, the largest age difference between bride and groom were recorded in 1992 and 1994, when the groom was younger than the bride and two years later the other way around - the groom was older than the bride by 69 years. The oldest couple who entered into marriage in 1996 shows that it is never too late for love - he was then 91 years old and his bride was 86 years old. However, the 91 years of age is not a record because, in the observed reference period since 1984, the oldest grooms were recorded in 1994 and 2010, with 97 years of age at the time they entered into marriage.

I do on a Thursday - why not?!

Incurable romantics do not shy away from anything, not even from entering into marriage on a week day, of course, if that day is Valentine's Day. Thus, for example, in 1985, Valentine's Day fell on Thursday and there were 24 couples that entered into marriage on that day, while in 2000, on a Monday, there were 13 couples that entered into marriage. Who knows how many couples will decide to put an official legal seal on their relationship this year on the most romantic day of the year? Let us also mention that Valentine's Day fell on Tuesday in 2012, when a total of thirty couples entered into marriage. However, looking back at the last thirty years, most couples entered into marriage on Valentine's Day in 2004, 546 of them, which is not surprising given the fact that that year's Valentine's Day fell on a Saturday.