

A STUDY ON ATTITUDES ABOUT REMARRIAGE

What were the aims of the study?

This scientific study, carried out in collaboration with the National Statistics Office, investigated the attitudes of married or previously married persons (with annulled marriages, separated or divorced) towards remarriage, if divorce legislation is enacted in Malta. It provides quantitative information and may aid in the ongoing public debate.

The main question of the survey asked: 'If divorce is introduced in Malta and you decide to divorce, would you consider remarrying?' (In Maltese: *Jekk f'Malta jidhol id-divorzju u tiddeciedi li tiddivorzja, tikkunsidra li terga' tizzewweg?*)

How was the study carried out?

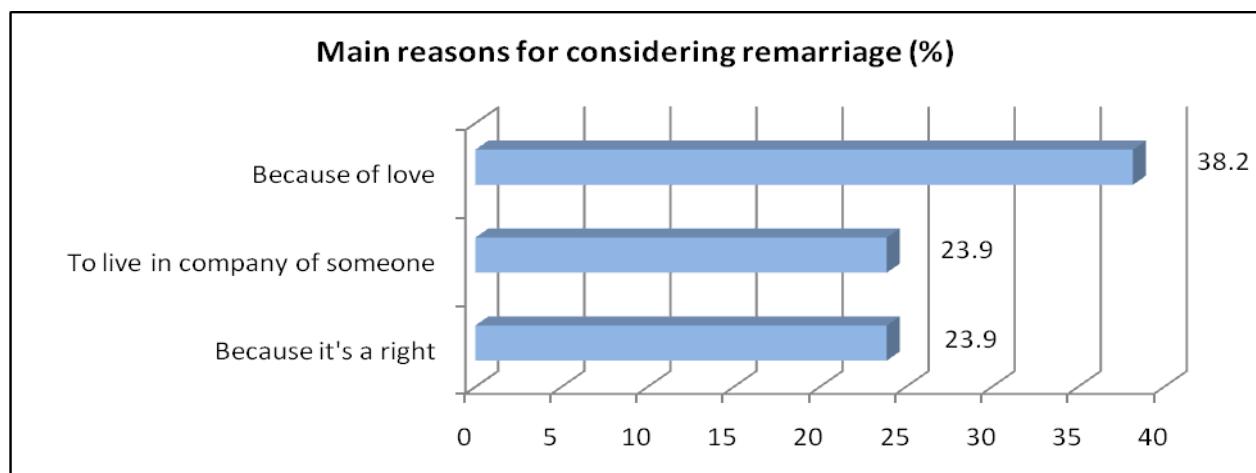
The survey's target population encompassed all individuals who were either married or previously married at the time of the last Census (2005). A total of 2,840 persons were contacted and 2,006, or 70.6%, participated in the survey.

Data were collected by means of Computer Assisted Telephone Interviews (CATI) in March 2011. Descriptive and inferential statistics about the relationships among the most relevant variables were derived through the Predictive Analytics SoftWare Statistics (PASW Version 18.0).

What were the main findings of the study?

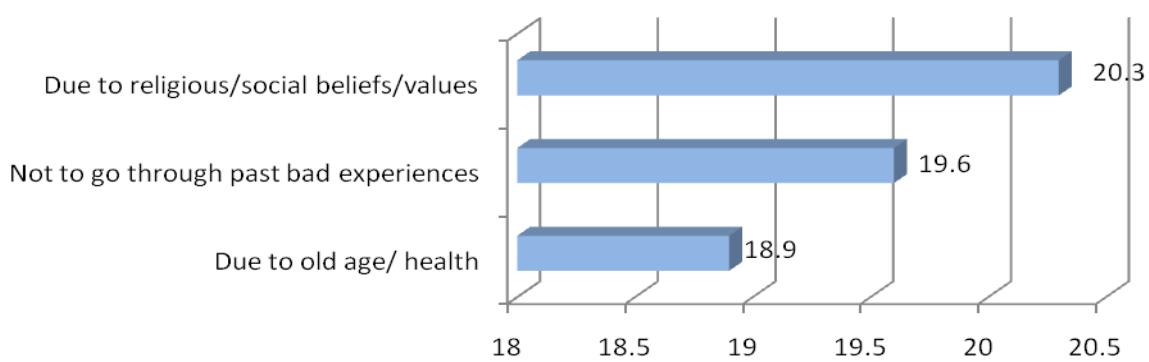
- The majority of the surveyed persons, or 67.4%, would not consider remarriage if divorce legislation is introduced in Malta, whereas 18.1% would. The remaining 14.5% are undecided. Gender is not a significant factor to the consideration of remarriage.
- The younger a person is, the greater the likelihood of considering remarriage. While nearly a third (30.2%) of the respondents aged 40 or younger answered positively, this rate drops to 7.3% among persons over 60.
- Parents are less likely to consider remarriage than non-parents (16.6% and 38.1% respectively). However, out of the cohort of parents, 57.8% of the respondents who have children from their present relationship outside marriage, and potentially other relationships, would consider remarrying; this represents a significantly higher percentage than those whose children are from within marriage only (13.8%) or from other relationships (31.6% respectively).

- Respondents in favour of considering remarriage do not vary when analysed according to their district of residence.
- Educational attainment is highly related to the consideration of remarriage. Those who have a pre-primary/primary level of educational attainment are less likely to have answered positively when compared to those with a tertiary level of education (15.6% and 25.5% respectively).
- Respondents in paid employment tend to consider more the possibility of remarriage if divorce legislation is available than those who are economically inactive. Professionals, managers and senior officials (34.4%) are more likely to consider remarriage than respondents in other occupations (22.3%).
- The three most common reasons given for remarriage are love (38.2%), to live in company of someone (23.9%) and the assertion that it is a right (23.9%). Fewer persons justify remarriage by referring to their rights and entitlements (12.9%), to enhance the commitment of the present relationship (8.8%), their belief in marriage (8.5%), or for the sake of children (8.0%).



- Only 3.4% of parents whose children were all born within marriage would consider remarriage for the sake of the children, when compared to 29.2% of parents of one or more children born outside marriage, including from their present relationship, and 8% of parents with children from other relationships.
- The three most common reasons for not considering remarriage are religious/social beliefs/values (20.3%), not to go through past bad experiences (19.6%), and old age/health (18.9%).

Main reasons for not considering remarriage (%)



What were the main findings according to the marital status of respondents?

- Married respondents are less likely to consider remarriage if divorce legislation is introduced when compared to the previously married respondents (11.0% and 26.2% respectively).
- Among married respondents, gender is not significantly related to whether one would consider remarriage. On the other hand, among previously married respondents, males are more likely than females to consider remarriage. Indeed, about a third (32.9%) of previously married males answered the question positively when compared to less than a fourth of females (22.5%).



- In general, persons over the age of 41 are less likely to consider remarriage among both married and unmarried respondents. Previously married persons aged 40 or younger are the most likely to consider remarriage (40.9%).
- Married or previously married respondents are more likely to consider remarriage if they do not have children. At 45.8%, previously married respondents without children are those who would most likely consider remarriage. On the other hand, married respondents with children are the least likely (9.9%).
- The higher the level of formal education, the greater the probability in both married and previously married respondents to consider remarriage. Over a third (35.3%) of previously married respondents with a high level of education would consider remarriage. 9% of married persons with a low level of education would consider remarriage.
- A larger number of economically active respondents tend to consider remarriage when compared to economically inactive respondents. This result holds true among both married and previously married persons. 35.2% of previously married economically active respondents answered positively. 8.5% of the married economically inactive respondents answered positively.
- Married respondents are significantly more likely than previously married respondents to justify remarriage on the basis of wanting to live in the company of someone (36.8% and 17.8% respectively). On the other hand, previously married respondents are more likely to consider remarriage to have their rights and entitlements (15.4 and 7.7% respectively) and for the sake of the children (10.1% and 3.4% respectively).

Reasons for considering remarriage by marital status	Married	Previously married
Because of love	35.0	39.7
To live in company of someone	36.8	17.8
Because it's a right	23.9	23.9
To have their rights and entitlements	7.7	15.4
To enhance commitment of present relationship	5.1	10.5
Believe in marriage/family	5.1	10.1
For the sake of the children	3.4	10.1
Other reasons	6.8	4.0

- Previously married respondents are significantly more likely than married respondents not to consider remarriage in order not to go through past bad experiences (31.4% and 10.4% respectively), because they see no particular personal need (15.7% and 10.8% respectively) and they do not want to have any commitment (13.7% and 9.4% respectively). However, they are less likely to state that there should be only one marriage in life (4.6% and 9.6% respectively), and that they do not consider remarriage due to their religious/social beliefs/values (16.5% and 23.2% respectively) or old age/health (16.4% and 20.9% respectively).

Reasons for not considering remarriage by marital status	Married	Previously married
Due to religious/social beliefs/values	23.2	16.5
Not to go through past bad experiences	10.4	31.4
Due to old age/health	20.9	16.4
There is no particular personal need	10.8	15.7
Not to have any commitment	9.4	13.7
There should be only one marriage in life	9.6	4.6
Because of children	5.9	5.6
Doesn't make sense/don't believe in marriage	4.2	5.7
Burden of marriage process/marriage	3.3	2.0
Other reasons	13.6	9.9

Centre for Family Studies

The Centre for Family Studies was set up at the University of Malta during academic year 2008/09 as an inter-faculty institution. The aims of the Centre are:

- to organise, encourage and promote research on all aspects of family life with particular reference to the Maltese cultural context
- to offer certificate, degree and postgraduate courses including professional courses in the field of family studies
- to organise and promote multidisciplinary workshops, seminars and conferences on family issues
- to network and liaise with centres and organisations related to Family Studies, both local and overseas and to serve as a resource centre
- to offer consultative services in the field of family related matters to institutions assisting families, governmental and non-governmental agencies

<http://www.um.edu.mt/familystudies>